

Mayor, Youth Committee leaders launch Youth Week with flag-raising ceremony



Mayor Tom Mrakas and the Town's Youth Engagement Committee members delivered a series of engaging speeches at Town Hall on Thursday afternoon to usher in Youth Week.

Director of Community Services Robin McDougall implemented her rainy-day plan and welcomed over forty attendees into Aurora Council Chambers.

McDougall highlighted the importance of recognizing the work that is done by the Youth Engagement Committee.

"The week ahead is all about celebrating youth across Canada," she said. "The youth of our community are not only the leaders of our future, but they are also leaders today. We want our youth to be valued and heard in Aurora."

McDougall introduced a triumvirate of youth leaders who delivered concise keynotes about the YEC and the value of their experience after serving three-year terms.

YEC President Naya Mueller outlined the importance of activities coordinated by the YEC, including "the 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament at SARC, the Drop In Centre, and the Take Over Event at the AFLC."

Co-President Jessica Nigul spoke glowingly of the "YEC's participation in the Haunted Forest and Youth Skate Night which were exciting initiatives for local youth."

Nigul also made a pitch for "teens 12-17 to join the committee and see the inner workings of the Town."

Co-President Dabria Peta-Dragos closed the keynote addresses by noting the importance of the flag-raising ceremony in "raising hope and raising unity in the community."

"We are the change-makers of today," she said. "As the Youth Week flag raises today, we are raised, too."

After Peta-Dragos's soaring oratory, Mayor Mrakas praised all three leaders for their powers of articulation and public presence.

"Three impressive speeches this afternoon—these three could be sitting at this [Council Chamber] table right now," he said.

The Mayor recognized Mueller, Nigul, and Peta-Dragos collectively: "To these three high school seniors—your message is inspiring to so many of us. Thanks for your contributions to our community for the last three years. We deeply appreciate everything you have done for our Council. By investing in our youth as we do, we provide them with the tools to build a better future for us and for

themselves.?

Mayor Mrakas delineated the impressive list of youth programs in Aurora and expressed much interest in competing in the Table Tennis tournament organized by the YEC.

After mulling over his participation in the tourney, Mrakas shifted gears from his ping pong prowess and formally proclaimed May 1-7 as ?Youth Week.?

Following the formal proclamation, the group of 40 reconvened outside at the Town Hall's flag poles. With brisk efficacy in the pouring rain, the Mayor and the YEC members performed the flag-raising ceremony without a hitch and overcome the challenges of the inclement weather.

The rain in no way dampened the intrepid quartet's effort to formally commence Youth Week.

Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese, an ardent advocate of youth recreation both in his role as Town Councillor and as the long-time President of Sport Aurora, praised the dedicated leadership of the Youth Committee after the ceremony.

Councillor Weese was duly impressed by the oratory skills demonstrated by Mueller, Nigul, and Peta-Dragos in their respective keynote addresses.

?They showed poise and confidence this afternoon and they loved contributing to the community. It's a great message for everybody to get involved in local government. There were so many positives here this afternoon and it's so inspirational to see the youth of Aurora take a leadership role whether it's sports or recreation. These aren't just the leaders of tomorrow?they're leading today and learning about the business of government.?

By