

State Farm affirms commitment to Aurora with plans for January

By Brock Weir

State Farm's head office is remaining in Aurora, despite comments made at last week's inaugural all-candidates' debate.

Opening statements are typically intended to lay the groundwork of a platform before settling in to flesh out the full details as questions roll in, but a few gasps went into the air at the Royal Canadian Legion on Wednesday night when mayoral candidate John Gallo dropped the proverbial bomb.

"Over the last year I have been listening to residents imagining Aurora," said Mr. Gallo. "You know what I keep hearing? Why are over 30 shops on Yonge Street closed? Why are so many small businesses suffering? Why is State Farm's head office leaving Aurora? Ladies and gentlemen, you know what I am hearing. Aurora is not in good shape, but I have hope."

The comment did not just sit where Mr. Gallo left it, but raised further comments and questions over the course of the evening, particularly from challenger Geoffrey Dawe.

"State Farm is news to me, and it is probably news to State Farm that they are moving," he said.

Audience members then questioned Mr. Gallo on what he knew that Mr. Dawe did not.

"My understanding is Desjardins has taken over State Farm and they are leaving," said Mr. Gallo. "That is my understanding."

Responded Mr. Dawe: "The Desjardins folks came up and met with us shortly after the announcement was made [that they were buying State Farm] and indicated to me and senior staff members they had no intentions of leaving Aurora."

Moving out of Aurora was indeed news to State Farm and Desjardins when The Auroran contacted them last week for further information. Valerie Lamarre, spokesperson for Desjardins, said she did not know how someone could have gotten the impression they were moving out of Aurora.

"We are not moving out of the building ? in fact, we are buying this location. Desjardins still expects the transaction to lead to job creation in the coming years in Canada."

Ms. Lamarre added Desjardins and State Farm expected the deal to purchase the existing State Farm building to be finalized in January 2015.