

## Suzuki's 'Blue Dot' movement will give Aurorans say in environmental policy: Councillor

**By Brock Weir**

Residents of Aurora should have a direct say in the environmental issues that affect them the most and, if Councillor Tom Mrakas gets his way, they will through the adoption of the Blue Dot campaign.

This month, Council will consider a motion from Councillor Mrakas calling on the Town of Aurora to endorse the principles of the Blue Dot movement, which has been spearheaded by David Suzuki and his namesake foundation.

The Blue Dot movement – so-called because of Earth's status as just one life-supporting blue dot in an infinite universe – focuses on bringing neighbours together to change where they live, giving them a direct link on local lawmakers to encourage them to step up and reiterate their residents' right to live in a healthy environment, particularly when it comes to access to fresh air, clean water and healthy food.

Over 100 municipal governments across Canada have stepped up so far and given this endorsement and now, according to Councillor Mrakas, it is Aurora's turn.

If endorsed, Aurora would recognize the right to breathe clean air, drink clean water, consume safe food, have access to nature, the right to know about pollutants and contaminants released into the local environment, and the right to participate in decision-making that will affect the environment, while recognizing the role the municipality has in respecting, protecting, fulfilling and promoting these rights.

In addition to this recognition, the motion goes a step further in calling on the municipality to set targets, timelines and actions, to foster these rights including ensuring infrastructure and development projects to protect these rights, addressing climate change, prioritizing walking, cycling and public transit, reducing waste while encouraging composting and recycling, emphasising green spaces and, in a time when a significant chunk of Aurora is focused on the proposed redevelopment of the former Highland Gate golf club, responsibly increase density.

'We are in the midst of updating our Environmental Action Plan and that is part of the work [the Environmental Advisory Committee] is going to be doing over the next year, and this is a good opportunity for us to incorporate the Blue Dot movement into any updates that we are going to be doing,' says Councillor Mrakas. 'At the end of the day I think it is important we bring forward environmental initiatives and look to create an environment that is going to benefit our future generations.'

'I think all municipalities should get on board with this. The environment is important to everyone. It is not just a segment of the population and it is not just for the now, it is for the future. It is something important and we need to speak up and take care of the environment and also lobby our Federal and Provincial governments to be stronger, move forward, and do more proactive things to protect the environment. I am looking forward to the Federal government doing more. They have said they are looking to do more at the recent conference in Paris, so hopefully they will continue to do that and we will see more things come out of that.'

First, however, Aurorans are likely to see an update to the Town's Corporate Environmental Action Plan (CEAP), which is currently being drafted. The Environmental Advisory Committee recently suggested a number of potential revisions to the plan, including exploring a potential Aurora-wide ban on the sale of water bottles. Such change, however, begins at home, and a ban could first be implemented at municipal facilities.