

VOTE 2014: Thompson has tried to get back to basics as Councillor

By Brock Weir

With the 2014 election little more than 10 months away, Councillor Michael Thompson says there is still much work to be done.

The first-time Councillor, who placed second in the polls behind John Abel, says he and the incumbent Council have tried to get back to basics in moving the Town's business forward.

Stability, he says, will likely be seen as the hallmark of this term, as well as accentuating the positive.

"The comment I have heard most often from people is they appreciate the fact they weren't reading about us in a negative light on a repetitive basis," he says. "To them, this Council has been more functional and we have stuck to getting the Town's business done. It hasn't been the case week-in and week-out, but more so this term than last."

In the three-plus years he has been at the Council table, Thompson says it is "certainly more" than he thought it would be, but it is rewarding to serve.

"It has been very fulfilling and very rewarding and I feel grateful I was given the opportunity to represent everybody in the Town of Aurora," he says. "It has been a phenomenal experience for me."

It is a phenomenal experience he says he would like to experience once again, but he is not yet ready to formally throw his hat back in the political ring. Although he says being a Councillor is technically considered a part-time job, he personally doesn't consider that to be the case.

"It is an honour to serve and I continually want to do more, give more and bring more value to the community. The challenge, of course, is time, but I am very fortunate to have the support of my family and workplace, so I can fulfil my duties as Councillor."

"While I would like to continue serving as a Councillor past 2014, I will take the next few months to confirm the support of my family and workplace, as well as speak with residents to ensure that I can continue providing the representation they need and deserve."

In the meantime, the next few months will also be dedicated to the tasks at hand. Over the past three years, Councillor Thompson says he believes this Council has many achievements under its belt, including the establishment of the Town's Strategic Plan, the renovation and expansion of the Aurora Family Leisure Complex, the new agreement between with the Aurora Cultural Centre, the acquisition of the Aurora Collection and the first steps to re-establish a museum, solar and other green initiatives, financial groundwork, collaboration with other York Region municipalities, and "disassociating the Town from the SLAPP suit and addressing the issues it has caused."

"There is still lots to do," he says. "I certainly want to see us complete some of our projects or at least move them significantly more forward than we have at the table like the Community Improvement Plan, the Museum, Library Square, and I would like to see the Leisure Complex completed before the term is done."

"I'd like us to move forward with the eco park and to continue to work with Seneca College or some other post-secondary institution with regards to the FabLab and anything else that might be out there. The Region is very much interested in bringing post-secondary education to the area and I would love Aurora to be a part of that in any way, shape, or form."

Looking back, the municipal world might have been a slight culture shock to what he has been accustomed to in the private sector, such as the length of time it takes to make a decision, and the inner-workings of government.

?I don't know if I will ever be too comfortable [with the politics] but I guess that is natural for the course,? he says. ?Some of the politics that have gone on and some of the grandstanding [has been challenging], but I guess that can be expected. It is a bit of the nature of the role and I certainly came into the role hoping we could all work together towards the common goal, which is the Town's good and unfortunately that has not always been the case. Sometimes issues and agendas have taken precedence, and that has been unfortunate, but sometimes that will happen.

?[The most rewarding aspect of the job] is when an individual resident just thanks you for the effort. They recognize some of the things you have done and they appreciate the effort and the fact you are essentially bringing their thoughts and concerns to light in representing them and, at the end of the day, that is all you try to do.?