

## ?We pledge to stand strong and stand together in unity?



By Brock Weir

A message of strength in unity was sent out into the world Monday night as dozens of Aurorans gathered for the Town's first official Menorah Lighting Ceremony.

Held at Town Hall early Monday evening and attended by Mayor Geoff Dawe and Councillors John Abel, Wendy Gaertner and Tom Mrakas, as well as Aurora MPs Leona Alleslev and Kyle Peterson, it was, in part, an event intended to send a message to the community after a local spate of anti-Semitic graffiti incidents, most recently outside Aurora High School.

For those in attendance, it was time to shine a beacon of positivity throughout the Aurora community in response to the incidents.

?The message of Hanukkah is even in the most horrific darkness, we must stand strong and stand proud. When we stand together, when we stand unified, the force of good expels the forces of evil and spreads its wings for all to benefit,? said Rabbi Yosef Hecht.

?Another message this holiday teaches us is ?add a little light'. Light by its very nature not only benefits one's self when it shines but also everyone in the vicinity. A little light can expel a whole lot of darkness.

?In light [of recent events] in our very own back yard, we pledge tonight to stand strong and stand together in unity. Rekindle the menorah and pledge to continue to illuminate the world. With adding more light, we will act with a bit more goodness and kindness, preparing the world for a time when we will know of no evil, know of no hate, and live together in a more peaceful world.?

These sentiments were shared by Mayor Dawe and Ms. Alleslev, both of whom spoke at this week's ceremony.

?This is just not something I grew up with, it's certainly not something I want my children to grow up with, or my grandchildren who are coming soon ? and it's not something we want our residents to be experiencing,? said Mayor Dawe on the incidents.

Added Ms. Alleslev: ?Hanukkah reminds us that in dark times there is always hope and that peace can ? and must ? be triumphant. Regardless of our religion, we have shared values of peace, love, hope and understanding and that is our strength, what unites us as Canadian. That is why I was so disheartened to hear about the incidents and recent events at Aurora High School.

?This act of intolerance is an act of the few. It is not a reflection of our community, but we must remain vigilant to ensure that our values carry the day and shape the country for our future. Now is the time to be thankful for everything we have in Canada and, of course, the peace that we're fortunate enough to enjoy.?