

Colleagues pay tribute to John Abel

By Brock Weir

Former deputy mayor John Abel's death on December 6 sparked a flood of tributes across Aurora from those who encountered him as a community leader to those who served with him across the Council table.

These tributes continued into this week, with a moment of silence in his honour at the Council's December 11 General Committee meeting and a Celebration of Life held at the Royal Canadian Legion this past Monday afternoon.

Since his sudden passing, a number of his Council colleagues have paid tribute to John Abel, a selection of which are included here.

Councillor Harold Kim

One memory of John that, to me, encapsulates him is when Carol and I had a gathering at our home early in my first term. John and Tracy were among a few of our invitees of old and new Town friends. Some people brought flowers, some a bottle of wine. What did John bring? He brought a plate of home-made crab cakes!

As Carol and I were busy hosting, John kept reminding us to have a taste of his 'specialty' crab cakes before they disappeared. Sure enough, when we did, they were delicious! All I can say is that the look of satisfaction on his face as we were enjoying them spoke volumes about his heart.

I know that many people who knew John also have such little (and large) nuggets they remember him by. I believe that the one trait that connects them all would be his generosity. In the age of giving quick and easy gift cards, John goes against the grain. He was a man willing to go that extra mile to show some thought and care to his giving. In the brief four years that I have known John, I saw how much he loved to serve others. It was his joy and passion.

Councillor Sandra Humfries

John was a passionate Deputy Mayor who loved his Town and gave back so much. His love of music and the arts were evident in his many Town initiatives such as Music Fest, Winter Blues Fest and especially one of John's most favourite events with his Tragically Hip concert in the Park. Just recently John mentioned to me personally that that was one of his favourite events because we all worked together (Councillors and their families) serving corn on the cob to residents while the concert was going on - he loved the camaraderie.

Each time John and I met, he had a smile, a quick witted joke and always asked about my father and family every time. When we spoke about our families, his eyes would light up when speaking of his children Devon, Eric and new son in law Ian. He was so proud of his lovely wife Tracy. He cared so much about people and hearing all the amazing stories of John over the last few days he is leaving us with a wonderful legacy.

Councillor Wendy Gaertner

John really cared about our residents. He worked tirelessly to help them and to communicate his vision for Aurora.

Councillor Michael Thompson

Like many, I was shocked and saddened to hear the news of John. He cared deeply for our community and, as Deputy Mayor, served Aurora well. He will be missed. My deepest condolences to Tracy, Devon, Eric and the Abel family.

Evelyn Buck

Former Mayor, Councillor

John Abel did the best he knew to serve the community. He will be missed by many.

Chris Ballard

Former MPP, Councillor

I never once doubted John's sincere love of Aurora and its residents. Whether it be municipal government policy or simply making music in our Town, John wanted to make our lives better. I worked with John in my role as councillor and, later, as Member of Provincial Parliament. We could passionately disagree and butt heads at work, but then enjoy a coffee together later to talk about other Aurora issues. And that's what John believed local politics should be like. He will be missed.