

## Farmers? Market awaits word on location for outdoor season



**By Brock Weir**

Saturday shoppers descended on the Aurora Armouries this past weekend for the final indoor installment of the Aurora Farmers' Market for the 2015 ? 2016 season.

The large doors were thrown open to take advantage of the warmer-than-seasonal sunny weather, and larger-than-usual numbers of customers were there to take advantage of some local deals.

However, the Market is now awaiting word from the Town over their plans for the upcoming year.

As The Auroran reported last week, the Market is looking for a significant change to their layout this spring ahead of the anticipated move-in of residents to the Wells Street Schoolhouse Lofts.

While the Market hopes to retain some of their larger-scale vendors on Wells Street, they hope to be able to expand further into Town Park to maintain the local Saturday tradition that features nearly 60 vendors.

?It is an exciting time for us because we're setting up for this year's season, but we are faced with a few challenges,? said Market Chair Andy Sampogna, who approached Council last week to speak in favour of a motion presented by Councillor Sandra Humfryes to move the new layout along. ?The challenge is location. We love the park and we want to remain in the park, but we have to adjust to the upcoming changes the Schoolhouse Lofts will provide.?

The ?mantra? of the Market is all about the community and connecting it with local growers while encouraging healthy eating, creating an enriched cultural environment promoting local artists and the Town itself, and that's what the 55 anticipated vendors hope to continue, he said.

?What we bring to Aurora ? and it is a grind ? is we are there 26 Saturdays every year, not including our indoor involvement ? and that is 26 reasons to visit the park every summer, spring to fall, and we fill the park,? he said. ?That park is 4,000 ? 5,000 [people] strong on some of our event days. That is what we choose to do and that is what we wish to continue to do.?

Underscoring the importance of the Market to the Aurora community, Mr. Sampogna emphasized its role as a gathering place for residents, politicians, and service groups to engage with one another, as well as being a venue for arts and crafts, live music, and even a ?training ground? for over 350 student volunteers that come through the market annually.

But, something has to give.

Moving the market into Town Park in its entirety is not an option that will work due to some of the heavy vehicles and equipment required each week by some of the vendors, which could damage the grass and the land. To this end, they propose keeping the heavy vendors on the east side of Wells Street with the rest moving into Town Park.

This is the ideal situation for us in 2016, he said. This is the future of the market. This will be the way we approach it in the coming years. I don't see any other way of doing it. We want to avoid a situation where we are completely in the park.

We are a sustainable organization and we believe in sustainability. Certainly damage to grass or park facilities isn't something we would wish to consider and it would happen if we are completely in the park.

Councillor Humfryes' motion, which was approved by Council, calls on staff to work directly with the Aurora Farmers' Market and Artisan fair as well as Council's liaison with the Market Councillor Humfryes herself to develop a revised plan and layout for the market by the end of this month.

Time is of the essence, she said. A lot of work has been done already by the Aurora Farmers' Market.