

Geoff Dawe launches bid for third Mayoral term



By Brock Weir

He may have announced his bid for a third term as Aurora's mayor this past winter, but Geoff Dawe kicked his re-election campaign into high gear last month.

Mr. Dawe formally launched his campaign before a group of approximately 100 supporters at St. Andrew's Valley Golf Course, stressing the importance of leadership and team-building.

"Under my leadership, we finally have a resolution in Library Square, one that creates an incredible opportunity for a renewed sense of community," said Dawe. "We have business investment and development at Yonge and Wellington and we're enriching the vibrancy of our downtown core. We have created four new parks, including a fully accessible Queen's Diamond Jubilee Park down by Town Hall and more are planned. We have recently added a dozen kilometres of trails to an already extensive trails system, we have renovated the popular [Aurora Family Leisure Complex] to add new amenities for our members and to meet the needs of a growing community.

"We have much to be proud of over the last eight years and the foundation of our success stems from my earliest commitment to a few fundamental principles: a long-term strategic approach to community investment, stable, sustainable and competitive taxes, and reliable service delivery to our residents."

To this end, Dawe cited the establishment of a 10-year planning horizon for major capital investments, along with his "insistence that we respect our capital reserves." This moves hand in hand with long-term planning, and preparing for "unforeseen needs" which create an environment where taxes can be better managed, stable and predictable.

But, in stressing his leadership, Dawe went back further than just his two terms as mayor, citing the issues he felt needed to be addressed left over from the previous term when he was first elected in 2010.

"When I first took office, there was a critical need to rebuild trust: rebuild trust with staff, with businesses, with residents and with our partners," he said. "Trust must be earned, so I led by example and I started by opening the doors both literally and figuratively. We aggressively pursued a course to be more business-like in serving our community by listening to all of our residents, by respecting our taxpayers, and by forging a strategic vision for Aurora. It wasn't easy, but with patience and leadership and vision, we gradually fixed what was broken, restored the trust that was lost and we brought back that aura.

"Through our efforts, Aurora has become the jewel of York Region, boasting the highest rate of new job growth. As your mayor, I am proud to have established the foundation for these accomplishments. I am proud to see that Macleans and Money Sense magazine both list Aurora as one of the most desirable places to live and do business. I am proud that under my leadership Aurora is now a headline, no longer a punchline."

Not keen to rest on any laurels, Dawe told the audience that in coming to his decision on whether or not to seek re-election, he asked himself if he still had the "fire" needed for both the election and "governing" Aurora. That answer, he said, was a resounding yes.

The past eight years as mayor have been "tremendously rewarding" ones that he says have broadened his horizons on municipal affairs, civic engagement, "the power of working collectively to give back" to the community, all the while working with "a broad range of colleagues, often with forceful personalities and sometimes with polarizing ideas." But, he said, he came into the job with

the experience to find consensus where none appeared possible.

As we look to a new Council term with potential for a great deal of change, the relationships that I have built, and the reputation I have established will be critically important to keeping Aurora on a sustainable path to health and prosperity, he said. Now, with an elected Regional Chair, Aurora has an even greater need for a strong, seasoned voice at that table.

That seasoned voice has now pledged to encourage appropriate, multi-unit residential development in Aurora's downtown core to support existing businesses and attract new ones, building on the momentum that is already underway in the heart of Aurora. He pledged to bring Library Square into fruition while working with developers to address vacant lots on Yonge Street.

With a mandate from the Province to meet growth targets, and with the community at almost full build-out, strategic intensification will be a key to our community's future. As the chair of the newly-formed Regional Planning Advisory Committee, I am especially cognizant with the fact that redevelopment of established areas of Town has and will continue to produce friction and resistance.

We must strive to ensure that redevelopment conforms to the scale and the aesthetic of surrounding neighbourhoods.

Change cannot be stopped. However, change can be well-managed and executed to ensure that community needs are met and the features that attracted people to Aurora are maintained. We have a number of challenges ahead of us. These are challenges that require a mayor who understands that leadership is not about making reflex decisions, responding to the most vocal elements of our community, who understands that leadership is about shaping community expectations and managing change, who understands that leadership is about considering the various viewpoints and then making decisions that can best meet the needs of the larger community interest.

Over the last eight years, my primary goal is to keep the greater good at the heart of all my decisions. My background in engineering, business, and the last eight years has firmly cemented the fact that teamwork is a critical element of success in actually getting things done. As your Mayor, you have my promise I will work with integrity, advocate strongly and use the relationships I have developed locally and regionally to always further your interests in continuing to build a strong, caring and prosperous Aurora.