

Mayor touts Joint Operations Centre and leadership in annual address



By Brock Weir

Taking risks ? calculated risks ? is an integral component to success, according to Mayor Geoff Dawe, as he made his annual address to the Aurora Chamber of Commerce last week.

In his yearly speech to Aurora's business and community leaders, Mayor Dawe said success is ?born by recognizing opportunity? and strategizing based on the best information at hand.

?Too often we are governed by a patchwork of ad-hoc policies, practices and procedures,? he said. ?We do so in the name of expediency and the result is often short-term gain for long-term pain. I have always felt that there is no excuse for not doing your homework. There is no justification for not considering carefully as many options as possible for making a decision.

?In 2010, our residents took a tremendous leap of faith with someone who had no political experience. I was humbled and honoured by that endorsement and subsequent affirmation in 2014. It emboldened me to continue my efforts to make strategic and accountable investments in our community.?

Leadership, community and business were the three primary themes of the Mayor's address. Looking into the recent past, Mayor Dawe cited the Town of Aurora's renegotiation of its cultural services agreement with the Aurora Historical Society as just one example of this three-fold philosophy bearing fruit.

Although he said the debate leading up to the renegotiated contract was ?emotional? and often fraught by ?misinformation? and ?fear mongering? being broadcast to the community, the end result was well worth it.

?The results were palpable,? said Mayor Dawe. ?The Town's relationship with the Aurora Cultural Centre has never been stronger. The Centre is a thriving community hub. We have moved towards increasing accountability and reducing the Centre's dependence on the taxpayer. I am extremely proud of how the Cultural Services Agreement was strengthened to bring prudent value to our community. I believe it has been proven in hindsight we were absolutely correct with how we move forward.?

Looking ahead to the future, Mayor Dawe indicated he sees the continued construction of the Joint Operations Centre, the new multimillion dollar facility being built near the top of Industrial Parkway North to combine the Town's parks and works departments under one roof, as having a similar outcome.

This too will do away with a further 'patchwork' of operations which will result in a more efficient municipality, he said.

'I strongly advocated for making this facility a reality because it had a strong business case,' said Mayor Dawe, on the new facility which is slated to cost, in total, \$26 million - a cost primarily covered by development charges and the sale of business lands in Aurora's northeast quadrant.

'It served a strategic, long-term need for our municipality and had a viable funding solution. It makes no strategic sense to hope a community that contains \$450 million in assets, home to over 70,000 residents by 2031, should be serviced by a 40-year-old facility that was built to service a community of 30,000. The JOC will eliminate duplication by consolidating several different operations at one facility, will improve our emergency readiness and add additional capacity to maintain increasing demands and service expectations of our growing population.'

The JOC is a 'judicious investment' in Aurora as a community, a 'triumph of sound planning' and 'forward thinking' based on 'rigorous and critical analysis' of current and future needs, he added, noting he believed both the Cultural Services Agreement and JOC marked 'significant turning points' in how business was conducted at Town Hall.

'It paved the way for making strategic assessments and decision-making,' said Mayor Dawe. 'I believe these are the real hallmarks of leadership, responsible governing and delivering value to our community.'