

Town and York University announce further collaborations for community



York University has expanded its outreach to Aurora through its Scholar's Hub, a successful series of virtual programs hosted in conjunction with the Aurora Public Library ? but this could be just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the university's presence in the community.

On Monday, the Town and York University signed a Memorandum of Understanding to foster mutually-beneficial initiatives in the community.

Signed by Mayor Tom Mrakas and York University President & Vice Chancellor Rhonda L. Lenton in the Skylight Gallery at Town Hall, Mayor Mrakas says the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will look at ?further enhancement of community technology, professional development opportunities for Council and staff, learning and employment options, such as experiential education, and learning opportunities in key areas of urban planning and legal services.?

?We have had a long-standing relationship with York University,? says Mayor Mrakas. ?We have worked together on many things [such as] the scholar hub with the Library and we have always looked at how we can improve and enhance the Aurora Community. The MOU formalizes our relationship with York University and how it can partner and work with things in the future.

?Ultimately this is a great opportunity for the Town as well as for York University. I think that is something that will help us continue to develop strategic goals to enhance the life of our residents, our employees, students of York University. Ultimately it is going to serve as a model for other communities to follow. There are lots of exciting possibilities through the partnership and we're going to be part of many things to come as far as that partnership with York University. I think we're excited, I know York University is excited and I think ultimately the community will be excited with a lot of outcomes that develop through this partnership.?

Future opportunities could include ?places where people can gather and learn, and opportunities in urban planning.?

?There are opportunities where possible you have internships and also where we work with students that are coming in and develop new types of plans, more geared towards pedestrian-friendly complete communities; those types of things where we can work with students where they get to put forward their expertise but we get to basically reap the benefits of their expertise and their learnings and get to implement them within the Town and the downtown core as we continue to revitalize,? says Mayor Mrakas.

?The MOU strengthens that partnership and an agreement that kind of bonds us together. We are going to have a strong partnership and we're going to continue to work on things to continue to make sure that partnership benefits the Town and the university.

Ultimately what it does is help our residents and anyone who is looking at furthering their education, possibly. Those are all the things we're going to continue to work through as this partnership continues to grow and flourish.?

From the perspective of Ms. Lenton, this MOU is an extension of York's commitment to serving the wellbeing of communities.?

“We have so many bold aspirations for the university and see what we can do for students, for communities, but we need the collaboration,” she said at Monday's signing. “When you think about experiential education and research collaboration, even space infrastructure, it is all now through partnership. In many ways this pandemic has really served to underscore that: the urgent need for cooperation and collective action to ensure we have the talent that is needed, that we're feeding that talent pipeline, that we're undertaking the research that is needed, driving the innovation, to really invest and build the socio-economic sustainability of the global communities we serve.

“At York and Aurora, we share the common goals of mobilizing new knowledge, innovation and learning experiences. The MOU we're signing today will help York University and the Town of Aurora explore more opportunities for collaboration. For example, together we can create opportunities for smart communities, cities that are equipped with the skills, tools, expertise to apply digital and data technology, to optimise and improve how we live, work and interact with each other. The MOU will also foster opportunities in professional development, experiential education, work-integrated learning --- all key elements of delivering a 21st century education and training for the next generation.?”

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