

## VOTE 2014: Abram wants to bring environmental, business eye to Council table



**By Brock Weir**

This is the second time around for Aurora's Jim Abram.

Mr. Abram, who ran for Council in the October 2010 election, has once again declared his candidacy. Now, in this campaign, he promises to do things a little bit differently.

"In 2010, I ran but I didn't make a very big effort at it," says Mr. Abram. "What I was doing at that time was learning the process, learning the players, and understanding how politics works in the Town of Aurora. This time around, I will make a very honest, strong effort to win a seat on this Council."

Mr. Abram says he has always wanted to have an impact on the Aurora community, having lived here for over 20 years. His 30 years in business, specifically with Petro Canada, where he worked in various capacities, retiring as a real estate manager looking after land cleanup and environmental remediation, has given him a keen interest in environmental matters as they relate to Aurora.

One thing he is paying particular attention to, he says, is when legislation surrounding the Oak Ridges Moraine comes up for review next year.

"I think we can better delineate the boundary of the Oak Ridges Moraine because the boundary that was drawn was rather arbitrary," says Mr. Abram. "I think we need to look at how abutting urban development co-exists with those lands that are protected under the Moraine and make sure that boundary is properly delineated. We need to look at the edge of the Oak Ridges Moraine as well as focus on 2C lands and intensification."

Since the October 2010 election, Mr. Abram says he has watched the current Council closely. With many Councillors having been elected, at least in part, on a mandate of bringing "civility" to public discourse, this is a key area on which Mr. Abrams says the incumbent Council has fallen short.

Many of the 2010 candidates, he says, were unhappy with the previous Council and what they saw on TV every Tuesday night; what they saw was "often described as dysfunctional", he says, but decisions now often come down to a 4-4 vote.

"That is unfair for the Mayor to always be breaking the tie," says Mr. Abram. "I think there could be a better way for this Council to work with a greater degree of decorum, civility and not waste opportunities by actually attacking each other rather than tackling the issues."

One of these issues, he says, is the development of the Joint Operations Centre, slated to be built on Industrial Parkway North. With some Councillors questioning the expanding price tag, Mr. Abrams says residents need a better understanding of what they're going to be getting.

Additional focus needs to be placed on Aurora's Downtown Core, he adds. As an active member of the Aurora Seniors Association, this is an issue he says is often on the minds at the Aurora Seniors' Centre, disappointed with the loss of retail, especially grocery stores and drug stores. A balance needs to be struck between retail and residential, but also in addressing transportation "so it becomes a vibrant downtown that has been promised for the 20 years I have lived in Aurora."

"I have heard about it, but I am not seeing much of an improvement on the Yonge Street corridor," he says, noting an additional focus is on municipal finances. "The reserves are under stress. There is only one taxpayer and we're going to have to treat that taxpayer not only as our only customer, but our only boss, and be respectful of how we spend their money."

"Governments do not create wealth; they redistribute wealth. We are custodians of your money. You have got to rely upon the decision-making skill of your Councillor, or the Mayor, and staff in order to optimise how your dollars are spent."