

**Inaugural Speech
of
Mayor Phyllis Morris**

Town of Aurora

December 5, 2006

Mayor Phyllis Morris Inaugural Speech

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Councillors, honoured guests, Town of Aurora Staff, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you for joining us tonight and supporting your new Council and Mayor. It's very nice to see so many friends and neighbours in the audience.

I want to take a moment – in front of the whole community – to publicly pay tribute to my friends and supporters – who have stood by me and walked at my side – *literally at times* – whether it be on a nature trail or an election trail.

Your incredible friendships, insights, unflinching humour and caring ways have carried me to this day and to this honour.

Thank you.

To our two children, Tracey – who is with us tonight – and Brian (who is hitting the books at Carleton – and sadly couldn't join us). I want you both to know something – I appreciate that you have never wavered in your support for my passion and love of politics and Aurora.

To my husband Brian, with you, at my side constantly encouraging me and always keeping an eye out for me, I'm truly blessed. Thank you.

How exciting it is for me to stand here tonight addressing this inaugural gathering as your Mayor. It's a privilege to lead this Council and our community for the next four years.

I will respect the trust you have placed in me and will always hold sacred your confidence.

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Perhaps you've heard the joke about the little girl who asks: "Mother? Do all Fairy Tales begin with '*Once Upon A Time*'?"

Her mother replies. "No darling, there's another series of Fairy Tales that begin: '*IF ELECTED I promise*'."

Well *this* promise is *not* a fairy tale – I will work with Council and Town Staff to make our municipal government more open, more transparent, more accountable and more inclusive.

I'll strive to ensure that your interaction with us is enjoyable, productive – and, yes, sometimes maybe even *fun*!

We will not forget that you – *the people of Aurora* – are the reason our town is such a vibrant and wonderful place to live.

So let's not forget one thing.

Aurora voters - sent a strong message that they expect us – council, staff and mayor to do a better job – a better job of working together to move the business of this town forward in a positive and productive atmosphere.

The word most often used during the recent election was “*teamwork.*”

Some say there's a difference between being on a team and serving on Council.

The only difference is the lack of uniforms – not the spirit, perspective, or ethics.

I believe an effective team requires players with a diversity of strengths and points of view.

So, yes, as Mayor, I *will* stress teamwork.

As Mayor, I promise to be fair and supportive – and I believe the public expects the same of all members of Council.

You'll find that I'm a “hands on” Mayor, interested in the day-to-day operation of our town.

While I will not, micro-manage The Town's administration, council members, including myself, must be kept fully informed, so that little problems don't become big ones.

By now I hope you know I'm an energetic and optimistic person.

And, I want to know what you think. After all, this is *your* town.

My door is open. You have my phone number – please feel free to stop me in the street, call me, or e-mail me.

I'm here to listen.

As I've walked about Aurora and talked to people in the past few weeks I've noticed there is an excitement in the air – a new attitude.

I clearly hear that people are entrusting us to write a new and positive chapter in the history of our town.

Today, I think we should be confident that our prospects to accomplish this are excellent!

I'm listening closely to the views of your new Councillors.

I hear much from them that should unite us in the months and years ahead. I hear true affection for our town and its people.

I believe this will sustain us as we work together to set the town's course.

It's imperative that everyone – myself, council, town staff and the public – work together to achieve the goals the voters have set for us.

To the citizens of Aurora,

I would challenge you to get involved in your government. Your involvement, your scrutiny, your challenges and your support will ensure your Council delivers.

Please don't leave it to Council alone, to build a better Aurora – *we'll* do a better job with *your* participation.

During my last term as Councillor and throughout the election, I often heard that Aurora is at a crossroads.

I believe Aurora residents, while valuing many of the benefits brought to us by development, now want a *new relationship* with that development. One that acts on the ideas of, and meets the needs of, the existing community. One that builds on the unique heritage, culture and green spaces we treasure in Aurora, and have worked so hard to preserve.

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“Aurora” is more than a *brand* invented by marketers to sell homes.

We are a Town of History.

The Upper Canada rebellion of 1837 demanded *responsible government* and was launched from where? You've got it – *Aurora!*

When the first railroad was built in Southern Ontario, the first train to leave Toronto went, where? Correct...Aurora.

Which Canadian community led the way in agricultural engineering – helping to secure Canada's place as the food basket of the world?

Right again. Aurora -- thanks to the Fleury Plough Works, established here in 1859.

When in 1886 the people of Aurora opened a new school – was it just *any school*? No. It was a beautiful place to learn, which today we seek to restore – The Church Street School.

Aurora is *the boyhood home* of Nobel Peace Prize winner, and former Prime Minister, Lester B. Pearson.

Aurora is the location of the first commercial radio transmitter in Ontario, *built by the first Ted Rogers*.

And ... the list goes on.

Today, we are home to great athletes, musicians, writers, artists, educators, lawmakers, inventors, managers, engineers, and business and medical professionals.

And this list, *too*, goes on.

People choose to live in Aurora because of *what* and *who* we are as a community. And that makes us “distinct” in every way from other communities across the GTA.

For that reason, we must preserve and enhance our community. We must maintain the distinct *sense of place* that those who have gone before us worked so hard to create.

To accomplish this, I invite you to seek a place on a Town Council advisory committee, to join one of our town’s many voluntary associations, or start something new for the benefit of the community.

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If I were to pick a slogan for the next four years it would be: *Together We Can*.

You see ...

Together We Can ... create an Aurora of tomorrow that sets the standard for urban living in the GTA and Canada.

Together We Can ... be a more caring community, improving life for people who need our support.

Together We Can ... build an Aurora filled with future possibilities for our children as they graduate, get married and look to put down roots in *their* Aurora.

Together We Can ... foster an open and accountable government, where leadership is impartial and allows ideas to be discussed, where teamwork is valued. And where the public is invited to contribute

Together We Can ... ensure we are well represented at other levels of government, and have a united voice so that decisions affecting Aurora *are made with Aurora’s interests in mind*.

To that end, together we must insist on greater representation on York Region Council, and we must make our voice heard at Queen’s Park, and in the media.

Together We Can ... improve and protect our green space; protect and restore our heritage buildings; improve our public infrastructure and create initiatives that strengthen recreation, arts and sports.

Together We Can ... build a solid economic base for Aurora that supports our aspirations for what we want our town to become.

Your Council will be busy in the coming years. There are many challenges.

I believe our priorities will need to include:

- Balancing taxes against public expectations of services;
- Creating a capital asset management plan for the town to ensure our reserves are adequate *and the necessary services and infrastructure are in place.*
- Reviewing the Leisure Services master plan in order to prioritize new recreational services, such as artificial turf, baseball diamonds and hiking trails, and to determine how these new costs will be borne by the public;
- Public safety, including addressing traffic congestion and calming;
- Keeping Aurora clean, of garbage and graffiti;
- Developing a plan for our downtown and heritage areas, including Library Square;
- Economic development and renewal;
- And carefully evaluating the risk factors for developing the 2C lands, Aurora's last large undeveloped tract.

At the end of our term, here's how *I'll* measure our success:

- Were we smart and innovative in making Aurora a better place?
- When a visitor approaches Aurora by road and rail can they *see* and *feel* they have arrived somewhere special?
- Have we been good stewards of our environment?
- Have we looked after our finances?
- Are more of us living a complete life here – able to work, live and play in Aurora?
- Is family life better?
- Have we provided our youth with a variety of opportunities – and do they feel listened too, as an important part of the community
- Are our seniors and their caregivers well supported?
- Is our community well connected by convenient transportation, to and from Toronto, and points in-between?
- Have we built upon the strength of our community's heritage and historic character?
- And, do we celebrate our accomplishments together?

But let's not wait until the end of our council term to measure the success of our accomplishments.

I'll be suggesting to Council that a process be put in place to regularly determine public satisfaction with the work we do.

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In closing ...

Come join me on a stroll through one small part of a future Aurora that I can envision.

Imagine... our historic rail station with the lands around it being brought back to life as an all-day transportation hub – a place to enjoy – a welcoming centre of public life.

Imagine them as an attractive, first impression of our community – as people come and go – an area full of lovely homes, vibrant commercial activity and life.

Imagine if our downtown was linked to the hub, with nice lighting, attractive landscaping, places to stroll – a fashionable place to live and work.

Graced by many interesting venues, to be entertained, to shop and to dine.

Imagine a downtown where our heritage architecture is preserved and replicated, and compliments the existing neighbourhoods.

Imagine... an Aurora that is able to attract and build new businesses to employ a large share of our working population, and to create a strong economic base for the town.

Imagine... our town as an appealing place for hikers to stop and rest a while along the Oak Ridges Trail system surrounded by the natural beauty of the moraine.

There will be many other important challenges facing Council, and I'm certain we can also be creative in addressing them.

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Ladies and Gentlemen, Councillors ...

I believe in Aurora – that the possibilities are endless. Together we can turn positive visions of Aurora, into reality.

This Council represents a fresh start. We have the opportunity to take the first steps toward a new and exciting vision for Aurora.

Councillors, staff, my fellow Aurora residents...

Our challenge is to build an Aurora that looks to the future while not forgetting the past – an Aurora that boasts a quality of life second to none.

Aurora is a fabulous place ...

And I am convinced that *Together we can* make it even better!

Thank you your support tonight – and thank you for your support in the future.