

WRITTEN DOCUMENTARY TO: Town of Aurora Council

FROM: Bonnie Fleischaker

SUBJECT: Mayor's Notice of Motion, April 4, 2023

RE: Feasibility of Building New Town Hall

DATE: Council Meeting of April 25, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to present my view on this motion. I have chosen to provide a written delegation. However, if I am well enough, I intend to connect on Zoom to be present should you have any questions.

Although born in Newmarket, I have lived in the Aurora area my entire adult life. My children and grandchildren were raised here. My ancestors settled in the area just north of here in the early 1800's. I have been involved in politics since the age of 13 and have seen government grow more costly and more complex.

When I first became aware of this motion, I mistakenly thought it was to be discussed under Item 10 on the agenda for the General Committee Meeting on April 4th. When that didn't happen, I called the Mayor the next day. We discussed the matter but ended agreeing to disagree.

The citizens of Aurora elect you, pay you and trust you to make prudent decisions that benefit the majority. You are the keeper of the purse and we depend upon you to spend our tax dollars wisely, while being fully transparent.

I am adamantly opposed to this motion and to the sale of the current Town Hall which is centrally located, has ample parking especially in the evenings when most public meetings are held.

I agree the pandemic has led to alternative work arrangements in the short term. However, **it is far too early to determine if working remotely will continue for**

the long term. There are psychological and physical consequences for both the employer and employee if such an arrangements persist for an extended period of time.

In the meantime, if the present Town Hall has unused space, how about being creative to discover ways to use it, ie. renting out space or offer space for community events.

I, like you and many others, wish we could have a Main Street like Newmarket where the "Commons" with its artificial ice surface, Fairy Lake and walking trails attract people to the downtown core. Their Main Street, however, is not on a historic north/south corridor highway. Their Main Street also consists of few retail stores but many restaurants. The Yonge and Wellington Street intersection has been a nightmare for over 50 years. Most of us avoid the area whenever possible. Regardless, you cannot make lemonade out of turnips no matter how much money you throw at it.

There are many vacant office and retail buildings in Aurora. I believe the former post office on Wellington Street remains mostly, if not completelt vacant.

1. Purchasing the Yonge and Mosley Street property for \$7,500,000 to encourage redevelopment in Aurora's "downtown" was a mistake. The Mayor and former Council need to own it. In addition to the purchase price, the Town is now responsible for the maintenance and repair costs. When I voiced my opinion to the Mayor in a telephone conversation, he stated that he made the Town a 12 million dollar profit by purchasing the property. **It should be sold.** Then *the Town could use that profit to give an unprecedented refund to every Aurora property owner!!!* LOL

2. Building a new Town Hall there would only exacerbate the current traffic and parking situation. In a recent visit to our library, I asked about parking when the Town Square finally opens. I was told parking would be on Mosley Street. Is the plan to demolish the existing building to provide parking and a new smaller Town Hall?

3. The Yonge and Mosley Street location is much more suited to its current use,

that is, retail/office space with housing above. With this in mind, I asked the Mayor if he knew **what impact the two new condo buildings on Yonge Street had on the few retail stores and restaurants in the area.** He promised to get back to me on that. In the meantime, I made some of my own inquiries and learned that the new condos had absolutely no impact on the stores there.

Is it possible that a proposal has already been received to purchase the John West Way property which is likely far more valuable than the Yonge & Mosley Street property?

The Town Square project is not yet complete. We are just now coming out of a global pandemic no one has experienced in our lifetime. **This motion is premature** pending the impact of that project and future long term Town Hall office space requirements are determined. The online, email and telephone responses I have received support my opinion, sometimes not quite so politely.

There is no rush here. Such a project should be part of an election platform for those seeking office, or even a referendum at the next election. That way, the citizens will make the decision one way or the other.

I respectfully request the Mayor to withdraw this motion. If he chooses not to do so, I urge all Councillors to vote NO. Nip this notion in the bud before one penny is spent.