RESPONSE BY: CHRIS BALLARD, MAYORAL CANDIDATE, AURORA

COMMUNITY / PROMOTION / ACCESS:

What will you do to ensure the general public has greater access to experience and enjoy the arts in your municipality?
*More art in more public places. I will work with a*ll *arts communities to feature them in more mainstream activities, publicize their special activities and integrate opportunities into all developmental activity like the major investments being made for the downtown area.*

What is one small concrete example of supporting the arts that you can do on a monthly basis?
I plan on developing weekly communications vehicles through a variety of platforms and will include any information on arts and cultural activities provided to me.

With many jobs being developed in media arts related fields, what are your plans to ensure talent stays in the region instead of moving to innovative hubs like Waterloo, Vancouver and Silicon Valley?
Arts and cultural jobs need to be part of a larger economic strategy that also include affordable housing, tech jobs and transportation opportunities. Whether it music or visual arts, the town needs to look at this area as more than hobbies … arts and culture can create good jobs.

We hear about sports tourism a lot in Aurora, but in reality, cultural tourism accounts for 97 per cent of tourism dollars. This needs to be pursued, together with sport tourism.

How will you contribute to growth of the arts in the future for the next generation of artists?

By paying attention to and promoting arts and culture to all ages. We need to get art out of schools and have it displayed in areas where everyone can enjoy it -- and where it will inspire future artists to study art.

INTRINSIC VALUE:

What municipal arts and culture events/programming do you attend and support, and have you purchased work created by local artists?
As Chair of Aurora's Economic Development Advisory Committee, I helped to bring the Aurora Cultural Centre to town. I understand the economic value for our town of a thriving arts and culture scene.

I support the Aurora Historical Society's annual Ball, I am a member of that group; I have purchased art by local artists and it all hangs in prominent places in my house. I regularly attend events at the Aurora Cultural Centre and at the Town of Aurora gallery. As MPP for Aurora, I partnered with SOYRA to feature local artists' work in my Aurora office. On a six-week cycle, we had a new artist display their work. Hundreds of people a month -- many unaware of the local arts scene -- discovered what local artists had to offer. In all my office meetings, I made sure to point out the art and talk a little about the artist. People were very impressed by the quality of art created locally.

PLATFORM:

In your list of the ten top priorities of your platform, where would supporting the arts place on your list? Why there?

Preserving our historic area, developing cultural tourism and having the arts represented in every part of development will be a key part of my administration, in priority place just behind increasing accountability and opening up communications

Arts and culture are a barometer of the health of a community, town, or city. How will you profile/give a place to arts and culture in your municipal structure, strategic planning, marketing and reporting of achievements?

I agree and believe I have covered this issue

What kind of municipal policy would you propose to encourage artists to be able to work and live in your municipality?

The first question is what type of housing would attract, and keep, artists to Aurora? I will be happy to entertain ideas as the arts community has clearly been giving this considerable thought. In general, Aurora needs a broader range of housing styles, including purpose-built rental, studio, etc. What appeals to artists? The town should be able to make inroads here.

SPACE:

How will you ensure that artists in your municipality receive affordable space to create and showcase their work?

This is clearly an opportunity to integrate arts and culture presence in municipal buildings and activities. I will work with our local artists to make that happen. I will also work with businesses in Aurora to try and create space in private areas. Why not art at the local food store, or art at a local manufacturer cafeteria, etc.?

How do you envision the inclusion of local art in the public realm

Art should not be a last minute "add on." It should be included in the foundation of the community. As a well-rounded community I see the arts involved in all areas, and from the planning stage forward. Aurora had a policy that made a commitment to art in public spaces based on the budget of the public space. But it has been ignored for the past eight years.

EDUCATION:

Where do you see arts education fitting into your electoral platform - in school programming, health programs and/or community programs?

We will continue to grow arts programming through our avenues, like the Aurora Cultural Centre, library, student camps, etc. We need partners to grow these programs, like schools boards.

FUNDING:

Do you believe that it's vital to have municipal granting programs to fund local artists and arts organizations to create and present work in your municipality? If so, how will you advocate for this funding?

Yes. And I will bring this to staff and council's attention for the next budget.

There is a noticeable gap between arts spaces (studio, exhibition, performing, etc.) for emerging and professional artists in York Region, making it challenging for artists to stay in the area while growing their professions. What do you think the municipality's role is in funding spaces for emerging to mid-career artists?

Again, this goes hand-in-hand with the question of what do artists need and what can a municipality – especially a small one like Aurora – provide? I think we can better use our public spaces to include art. We don't have enough dedicated space for art display or performance, but if we are creative and willing to partner, we should be able to meet at least some of the need.