

Abel, Ballard, Dawe and Mrakas confirmed for Mayoral bid

By Brock Weir

The nominations have been filed, the list of nominees has been finalized, and now it's time for candidates to hit the pavement and Aurorans to make a very important decision in this fall's municipal election.

Nominations closed Friday afternoon and by the time 2 p.m. arrived, four men filed their papers to be Aurora's next Mayor while 16 residents threw their hats into the race for six Council seats.

Vying for the Mayoral Chains are, in alphabetical order, John Abel, Chris Ballard, Geoff Dawe, and Tom Mrakas.

Mr. Abel, an incumbent Councillor, is now coming to the end of his second term on Council after being elected in 2010.

A former municipal Councillor first elected in 2010, Mr. Ballard came into the race just weeks after his defeat in June's Provincial Election, prior to which he served as Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, following a time as Minister of Housing and Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

He was elected to Queen's Park in 2014 with just months left in his term on Aurora Council.

Mr. Dawe was among the first candidates to file his nomination papers as soon as the nomination period opened on May 1. He is seeking his third term as Mayor of Aurora after first being elected in 2010.

Mr. Mrakas was also at Town Hall as the doors opened on May 1 to file his nomination papers in the Mayor's Race. A first-time Councillor, he was elected in 2014.

After the nomination period closed, The Auroran reached out to each Mayoral candidate to look at the state of the race so far.

'I would like to commend the many residents who have put their names forward for Council consideration and the countless others volunteering on campaigns,' said Mr. Dawe, the first candidate to respond. 'Government works best with public involvement, and the level of public involvement is both refreshing and a sign that democracy is alive and well in Aurora. I know from experience how grueling an election campaign and a Council term can be. It is time sacrificed from family and many long hours of work. To those who have taken time to get more involved, my hat is off to them!'

With that said, Mr. Dawe said he was concerned with the 'rising levels of nastiness and disinformation emanating primarily from online and social media' over the course of the campaign thus far.

'This is not a new thing,' he continued. 'It has long been said that to be in politics you need a thick skin! What is particularly distressing is the level of personal attacks online and the increase of deliberately biased information masquerading as public discourse. We see on a daily basis how deliberate misinformation negatively affected the recent US election. While not nearly as calculated, it is on the rise locally as well. As always, I will advocate for issues-based civil discourse and ask the electorate to get involved and do your research before voting!'

Mr. Mrakas, the second candidate to respond, said this election is about 'a choice of leaders' and a choice between 'positive change or more of the same.'

'Since elected, I have worked hard to provide the leadership that residents and businesses expect; leadership that gets things done,' he said. 'I've taken the time to listen and bring issues to the Council table, and found solutions to problems and introduced innovative possibilities. I have worked with members of Council, residents, businesses and all three levels of government and together we got things done -- building a solid track record of successful collaboration, consensus building and decisions that serve all members of our community.'

My focus has always been Aurora 'the needs, the concerns, the issues of our community. I believe Aurora's future is bright, but a future of positive change needs responsive, decisive leadership; leadership with fresh ideas, and has a passion for this Town.'

On the part of Mr. Ballard, the third candidate to respond, he said Aurorans have the opportunity to 'put Aurora back on a more fiscally responsible course, one that respects the views of the public.'

'It's no secret that residents are growing uneasy and are truly concerned about the rate of residential growth and excessive municipal spending,' he said. 'I'm hearing they want a mayor who is committed to protect and grow the investment residents and business owners have made in this community. Instead of Aurora falling behind in the GTA, Aurorans want to move our Town forward in a fiscally responsible way.'

'I'm hearing that the community wants to have a mayor who cares, who doesn't focus just on getting elected. They want a mayor who they can count on to passionately speak up and work relentlessly to protect and enhance their quality of life, security and

prosperity in Aurora; one who is engaged, knowledgeable, not afraid to work hard and takes a hands-on approach. Town Council needs a mayor who will commit to working with all of council to get the right things done.

?My three opponents are all members of the current Town council, so they all share some responsibility for the pressing problems Aurora now faces. The last four years have seen an obviously divided council where the divisiveness has led to wasted time and costly flip-flops, where decision making has been unnecessarily sidetracked and has, often, been mired in petty disagreements, personality conflicts and block voting. It's time for leadership that leads, not divides.?

Mr Abel also weighed in on the state of the race.

?Having four qualified mayoral candidates presents quite a challenge,? said Mr. Abel. ?I'll be employing a similar campaign strategy that netted top results the last two elections when I ran for Councillor. It will be important to differentiate myself from the others, that under my leadership we will do a much better job with the taxpayers' money. Changes that will improve the lives of the residents.?

THE COUNCIL RACE

This fall, Aurora will see Council reduced from the current roster of a Mayor and eight Councillors to a Mayor and just six elected members.

Vying for these six seats are, in alphabetical order, Matthew Abas, Ian Clark, incumbent Wendy Gaertner, John Gallo, Rachel Gilliland, Derek Hammett, David Heard, James Hoyes, incumbent Sandra Humfries, incumbent Harold Kim, Anna Kroeplin, Daniel Lajeunesse, Vicky McGrath, Adam Mobbs, incumbent Michael Thompson, and Denis Van Decker.

In joining the Council race, Ms. Gaertner seeks a fifth term at the table, while Ms. Humfries and Mr. Thompson are looing for a third mandate. Mr. Kim, first elected in 2014, seeks a second term.

Mr. Gallo, who ran for Mayor in 2014, seeks his second term on Council. He was previously appointed to the table by the 2006-2010 Council early in the term following a resignation, and he served until the end of the term. He was elected to the 2010-2014 Council.

Mr. Clark, Mr. Heard, and Mr. Hoyes all ran in the 2014 Council race.

In the running for the position of York Region District School Board trustee are incumbent Peter Adams-Luchowsky, former councillor Bob McRoberts and Ken Turriff.

Elizabeth Crowe seeks a further mandate as York Catholic District School Board trustee in a race that includes Paul de Roos and Laura Ronco.

Kathleen Beal and Maxime Papillon seek to represent this area on the Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir, the French Catholic Board which includes ESC Renaissance at Bathurst Street and Bloomington Road.