

Aurora Votes 2022: No need for ?Strong Mayor? legislation in Aurora, say candidates

As the Province of Ontario grants so-called ?strong mayor? powers to the leaders of Toronto and Ottawa, with the door open for further expansion, Aurora's mayoral candidates have rejected the idea.

They made their positions known at an all-candidates meeting hosted by the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, where Phiona Durrant, Anna Lozyk Romeo, and incumbent Tom Mrakas were asked by Chamber President & CEO Sandra Ferri how they would use additional powers ? purportedly put in place to encourage affordable housing developments ? if they were granted.

?I can't answer that question because I do not believe the Mayor should have extra powers,? said Lozyk Romeo. ?I think we should work as a Council to make decisions. We had one situation prior to the pandemic on March 30, 2020 when an emergency bylaw came in that there were actually delegated powers? The Town has tried to give themselves delegated powers to become involved in the planning applications and I think that it's a whole Council decision, not just Mayors, who should have the power to make those decisions.?

Similar views were shared by Mrakas, who said he stands with the ?majority? of Mayors across Ontario who have said the powers ?are not necessary and not needed.?

?We work collaboratively with our Councils and we believe we will continue to do so,? he said. ?I don't think it is needed?and above and beyond that, we have also heard from the Premier in regards to that it might expand, but also the expansion would only be to communities that have residents of 100,000 or more population. It's kind of a moot point discussing Aurora and I don't expect to ever come to Aurora?and I am actually thankful for that.?

In responding to the question, Durrant said what needs to be on the table is ?returning that power to residents and the taxpayers.?

?The people's voice has been silenced and the power been taken from our community,? she said. ?If any power is going to be issued, it should be back to the people who knew exactly what their community needs; the power we need as a Council to really provide affordable homes, power that we really need, and fresh perspectives. I don't see why right now that's something we experience?. We do need power back into people's hands.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter