

Deputy Mayor position should be rotated among Council members: staff

Going forward, the position of Aurora's Deputy Mayor should be taken in turn by Council members, according to recommendations up for consideration from municipal staff this week.

This fall, Aurora will see a drastically different municipal election as the Town develops a Ward system.

Here, instead of voting for a Mayoral candidate and up to six Council members, voters will be asked to pick one Mayoral candidate and a single Council candidate to represent the interest of their specific neighbourhood, or ward.

Aurora will be divided into six wards, according to population.

In the current system of government where the entire community elects all six Council members, the top vote-getter from across Aurora has traditionally served as Deputy Mayor. But, as this is impossible in a ward system, how a Deputy will be chosen has been an open-ended question.

This week, Council will be asked to make a decision.

Town Clerk Michael De Rond suggests in his report to local lawmakers that taking the Deputy position in turns is the most common approach in similarly structured governments.

?The appointment of the Deputy Mayor, or whether that position exists at all, varies depending on the municipality and often the circumstances of the municipality,? he said, noting that communities that have a Regional Councillor in addition to their Mayor representing the community in the upper tier, often make the Regional Councillor the Deputy Mayor.

?The most common approach for municipalities using a ward system, where a Deputy Mayor is not elected, and the only member of the upper-tier Council is the Mayor, is to rotate the position amongst the elected Councillors. This method is employed by fellow York Region municipalities King, East Gwillimbury, and Whitchurch-Stouffville ? as well as Halton Hills.

?The adoption of a rotation for the Deputy Mayor position represents the most equitable way for the Town's ward Councillors to share the appointment. Staff also recommend that should a rotation of the Deputy Mayor position be adopted, that the monthly appointment also include the responsibility of chairing General Committee meetings (currently rotated amongst Councillors after chairing twice).?

Should Council move in this direction, each Councillor would hold the position of Deputy Mayor for seven non-consecutive months throughout the entire Council term ? but some additional provisions would be in place depending on the time of year.

?It is generally accepted that the months of July and August are slower for municipal business than the others, and these months would be split evenly so a member is only Deputy Mayor in July/August once over the course of the term,? Mr. De Rond suggests. ?To ensure Councillors are given the same amount of opportunities to hold the Deputy Mayor position, there would not be a designated Deputy Mayor in December 2022 or from July to October 2026 (which is considered to be the window of the 2026 municipal election).

?Councillors would be permitted to trade months should they know of an absence beforehand and can find a willing partner to trade with. When an unexpected absence occurs, the member would retain the designation of Deputy Mayor, but the Mayor would be tasked with chairing any General Committee meeting that occurs during the absence.?

Other presented ? but not recommended ? methods of choosing the Deputy Mayor include designating a single Councillor to the position either by a Council motion or ?some electoral process?, or putting the appointment process in the hands of the Mayor.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter