

Incumbents begin making intentions known ahead of Municipal Election

As the Town of Aurora gears up for this fall's Municipal Election and the opening of candidate registration at the beginning of May, incumbent members of Aurora Council are beginning to make their intentions known.

Ward 4 Councillor Michael Thompson is the first to confirm he will be seeking re-election.

While he says he will be on the ballot this October, he says he remains focused firstly on the balance of the 2022-2026 term of Council.

"I'm proud of serving the residents of Aurora and the progress we've made, but there's more to do and I want to keep working for them and our community," he says.

In Ward 3, Councillor Wendy Gaertner, the Town's longest-serving Council member, says she hasn't yet decided whether to seek re-election but suggests she might consider stepping back from municipal politics should the right person put themselves forward in the Ward.

"I am trying to decide if I want to be on a future Council that may continue to have democratic decisions overturned by a Mayor; where money is spent on decisions that I do not consider in our taxpayers' best interests," she says, referring to the contentious issue of Strong Mayor powers. "I feel that I have a responsibility to my residents. I would consider stepping down if someone steps forward who I believe is capable, who believes in transparent decision-making, and spending tax dollars as if this was their own money."

Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese also said Strong Mayor powers were a factor in deciding whether or not to seek re-election.

"In my opinion, the municipal vote is the most important because it affects residents' quality of life each day. It is also where local taxes levied affect the services provided locally and the long-term financial health of our community," he said. "In particular, I hope to see more young voters supporting candidates who represent their many concerns. At this point, I remain undeclared regarding the upcoming election. My primary priorities are to ensure that progress continues in Ward 1 and that representation of the residents endures. Every resident in every Ward should care about their representation. Of importance to every candidate and resident should be the role of the Head of Council and the use of Strong Mayor Powers."

Councillor Weese said that despite Mayor Mrakas stating as a candidate that Strong Mayor powers weren't needed, they were ultimately used and this fall's election will be the first time residents can vote on this issue by asking questions of the Mayoral and Councillor candidates.

"Regardless of the dubious effect Strong Mayor Powers have had on its housing purpose, I have been a vocal opponent of these Powers, as they are, in my opinion, pervasive, obstructive and undemocratic," Weese continued. "With very few guardrails in place, local governance is weaker, and the protection of resident interests fades. I will be watching the campaigns as Council candidates declare intentions for all positions as I consider my role and personal voting choices."

Also leaving their options open at press time this week was Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo.

"Like many who are considering serving, I'm taking the time to carefully evaluate a number of factors, including how I can best continue to contribute to the community, the priorities I am hearing from residents, and where I believe I can be most effective moving forward," said Councillor Gallo. "For now, my focus remains on the work in front of me, serving Ward 5 residents, advancing key initiatives at Council, and ensuring we continue to make responsible decisions for Aurora."

Ward 6 Councillor Harold Kim declined to expand upon his intentions until next month, while no response was received by Ward 2

Councillor Rachel Gilliland by press time.

CHECK VOTER STATUS, LEARN MORE ABOUT RUNNING

As residents across Aurora consider whether to put themselves forward for a position on Council, the Town is encouraging residents to check to make sure their information is accurate on voting rolls and learn more about the democratic process should they be considering a run.

Candidate information sessions in York Region, which began Monday with an in-person and virtual session in East Gwillimbury hosted by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, will continue Monday in a session hosted by the Towns of Aurora, Newmarket, Stouffville, the City of Markham and the Region of York.

This virtual session will take place over Zoom on April 20 at 6 p.m., with registration taking place at aurora.ca/candidates.

A further hybrid session is set for Thursday, April 23, at 7 p.m. at the East Gwillimbury Civic Centre, again hosted by the Ministry. Interested parties are invited to register at the same link.

Whether you're interested in being on the ballot or simply casting your vote, it's important to make sure you review and update your voter information at registertovote.on.ca.

With election day approaching, eligible residents are encouraged to confirm they are registered to vote and that their voter information is accurate and up to date, says the Town of Aurora. Residents who are Canadian citizens, 18 years or older, and live in or own property in Aurora are eligible to vote in the Ontario Municipal Election. Every vote counts in shaping the future of our Town and the services that matter most to our community.

Keeping the voters' list accurate and up-to-date helps ensure everyone receives timely information about when and where to vote, and it also provides an opportunity to update records for household members who have moved or to update the list for loved ones who have passed, helping maintain a current and accurate list for the community.

Voting is the cornerstone of local democracy. Participation allows residents to decide who will lead Aurora and shape decisions on community issues, from roads and programs to parks, recreation, and local services. Every vote matters and every vote counts.

For more information about this fall's Municipal Election, visit aurora.ca/vote2026.

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