

Municipal ballot grows with new candidates in Wards 3 and 4

The ballot for October's Municipal Election grew last week as two further candidates threw their hats into Council races.

Putting themselves forward last week were Robert James Fraser, who is seeking election in Ward 3, and Shaheen Moledina, who is the first candidate to formally seek election in Ward 4.

This will be the second municipal campaign for Fraser, who last sought election in the 2022 Municipal Election, that time in Ward 6, and the first for Moledina.



ROBERT JAMES FRASER, CANDIDATE ? WARD 3

?My decision to run in Ward 6 was to essentially stop the acclamation of Harold Kim, who was running in Ward 6. I thought there needs to be a race here rather than somebody just being acclaimed, and that's why I decided to run outside my ward,? says Fraser, a media sales professional. ?The decision this year has been to go into my home ward where I have way more brand recognition because I have been in Aurora for 30-plus years.?

While Kim ultimately won the last race in Ward 6, it didn't sour Fraser on the municipal process and he says running again was always on his mind.

?I'm a big fan of this Town, I'm a big fan of certain things and pieces of direction that I believe need to change in this Town,? he says. ?The Mayor's vision of spending a lot of money in Aurora to create what I've heard referenced as a tourist destination, tourist hotspots, I think is delusional thinking. I still have a big commitment to the environment in terms of preserving our existing green spaces and I think we need to be really, really cognizant of, if we're going to start to increase density, where is that density [for new residential] going to go? We all know there's an affordable housing crisis. Some of the things around that point are not in the purview, necessarily, of the Town, but we have greenfield development that could be slated for industrial.

?One of the other things I am contemplating as I formulate my platform, is I would love to see [something like what] the Province

forced upon Toronto ? some consolidation in the Region. I look at what I pay in property taxes a year for the privilege of living here and if you take a look at York Region ? between Richmond Hill, Markham, Vaughan, Aurora, Newmarket, there's a ton of duplication, and I really think we need to stop with the NIMBYism between different towns within the Region, really look at the Region as a whole, that has some Aurora representation, that has representation from all the communities, but isn't necessarily doubling up on the admin that is repetitive from town to town.

?Maybe one of my goals for my platform is going to be to force myself out of a job four years from now because we get some consolidation in the Region with the aspect of bringing savings back to taxpayers right across the Region and getting rid of redundancies.?



SHAHEEN MOLEDINA ? CANDIDATE, WARD 4

Moledina, founder of Active Minds Activity Centre, is the first candidate to put themselves forward for Ward 4.

She says standing for Council is an extension of her community-building work, and the legacy of service instilled in her by her parents after they came to Canada from Tanzania more than 50 years ago.

?We're a very proud Canadian family and we've always believed in doing community service where we live,? she says. ?I'm running to be Ward 4 Councillor in Aurora to ensure families, children, seniors, and businesses have a Councillor that will take their voice to Town Hall. Some of the key concerns and priorities in Ward 4 from what I'm hearing in the last while?are traffic and development, and the economic revitalization of the downtown core because there's vacant commercial spots. As a small-business owner, I want to see a strong BIA in Aurora again.

?It's also about increasing local tree planting?. That comes from my land-based background as my education was done through the Indigenous First Nations Technical Institute [because] I feel connected to the land, and that is something really important to me.?

At the end of the day, she says it's about ensuring Ward 4 residents ?have a strong voice on Council, who is visible, present at all times, with a particular focus on maintaining the ward, and also integrating new Aurora residents in our boundaries.?

Moldedina is an active member of the community. In addition to her work with Active Minds, she has previously served on Aurora's Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, and Mayor's Golf Classic Funds Committee. She's also an active member of her

children's school community ? St. Anne's School for her daughter, and Highview Public School for her son, where, at Highview, she has worked with administration to support lunch programs.

?Aurora is one of the most affluent communities and if our children don't have lunch there's a problem,? she says. ?I feel we all need to tap into all the resources we have as a community to take care of the future and our seniors.?

?I will be taking Ward 4's voice to the table, and that's why my slogan is, 'Your Councillor, Your Voice',? she adds. ?My personal goal is I'm going to have an open-door policy.?

By press time this week, the campaign for Mayor was a three-person race with, in alphabetical order, resident Shawn Deane, incumbent Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo, and incumbent Mayor Tom Mrakas seeking the Town's top job.

It's a two-person race so far in Ward 1 with Lauren Hanna and Rocco Morsillo registered as formal candidates. Incumbent Councillor Ron Weese has not yet made his intentions known.

Ward 3 is also a two-person race with Nikki Alber and Robert James Fraser running for community support. Alber has already received the endorsement of long-time Councillor Wendy Gaertner, who is not seeking re-election after serving on Council since 2003.

Moledina is, so far, the lone official candidate in Ward 4 although incumbent Councillor Michael Thompson has confirmed his intention to seek re-election.

There were, at press time, no confirmed candidates for the campaigns in Ward 2, Ward 5, and Ward 6.

The Municipal Election will take place October 26.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter