

Growth, population shifts spark support for ward system

By Brock Weir

Not all municipal candidates have thrown cold water on the idea of a ward system for Aurora, some have been firm in their convictions that it is the right way to go from the start, while others have changed their minds on the campaign trail, seeing practical benefits and solutions a shakeup can offer.

They say they either support implementing a ward system, or see the value in exploring it further. Incumbent John Abel, for instance, said he began this campaign in favour of keeping the at-large system but has subsequently changed his mind.

“As a Councillor, I often engage with residents on the topic of wards and I had an interesting conversation,” said Mr. Abel, suggesting splitting Aurora into three wards – one between Bathurst and Yonge, one between Yonge and Bayview, and one between Bayview and Highway 404, each represented by two councillors. “All the wards would have commonality. They would have the moraine, residential, and commercial [interests]. I have to thank former mayor Tim Jones for this interesting proposal. I think it would work.”

Candidate Bob Chapman has also voiced his support, stating “it is difficult for voters to pick the best eight councillors out of 28, or a large number of candidates.

A vocal supporter of a ward system from the early days of the campaign is candidate Anthony Pullano, who said a ward system would help cut through the “nonsense.”

“If citizens are upset, they are upset with one Councillor as opposed to being upset with all nine,” he said. “They are bringing their grievance to one particular Councillor who brings the point to Council as a whole on behalf of citizens.”

Linda Stephens is also one candidate whose opinion has changed over the course of time. Originally opposed to the concept, she says with growth across Aurora it is now time to have that dialogue.

“We have very distinct areas of Town,” she said. “We have a lot of newcomers to the east, we have Old Aurora central, very diverse neighbourhoods to our north and south, we have a great diversity in levels of income, so perhaps a ward system might be something to consider so residents have someone in their immediate neighbourhood they know they can trust and respect.”