

MANY KEY ISSUES FOR NEXT TERM: ACCLAIMED COUNCILLOR

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municipalities of Ontario (AMO).

A recent analysis by AMO shows a decline in the number of people throwing their hat into the ring across the province. Compared to the 2018 municipal election, the number of candidates in municipalities across Ontario is down from 6,658 to 6,306, while the number of uncontested seats went up from 477 to 548.

Halton is seeing a 15 per cent decrease in the number of municipal candidates, with seven acclaimed seats in 2022 — one in Halton Hills, four in

MUNICIPAL ELECTION

Oakville and two in Milton — up two from four years ago.

There's a crowded field in some open seats, including that of retiring Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette — and local council races with eight to 10 competing candidates.

In the face of voter apathy, where only 38 per cent of eligible voters cast a ballot in 2018, coupled with the low turnout in the June provincial election, Best encourages people to be more involved because

"it's your future."

"The next term ... a lot of important decisions will be made in terms of budgets, official plan, and future zoning of the area," he said.

Nelson Wiseman, professor emeritus of political science at University of Toronto, said voters tend to be less interested in municipal elections than provincial and federal elections.

"For a lot of people, federal and provincial issues," such as health care and education or immigration and the economy, "strikes them as more important," he said.

But it doesn't necessari-

ly mean the turnout this month will be even lower than before, he said.

Helping to get the vote out is Jennifer Sibbitt of the Campbellville Community Association, which at press time had hosted one of only two all-candidates meetings in Milton.

"It's so important to know who you're voting for and to know where the people stand and what they believe in. And it's a good chance to reach the candidates directly," she said. "Especially being rural, we have long driveways here, so not a lot of candidates can go door to door."

Sibbitt said outside of

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- Jennifer Sibbitt

the two council candidates running in her ward, there are many names she doesn't recognize — and getting information about them isn't so easy.

"This is a great way to just kind of get a little bit face to face and just get some real answers," she said, while calling for people to "vote and have your say."

Vanessa Warren, who owns and operates farms in Burlington and Oakville, appreciates all the ways that people can vote.

Those living in Burlington, like her, are able to cast their ballots online.

While she's "just so ecstatic about that," she would also like to see some electoral reform in the

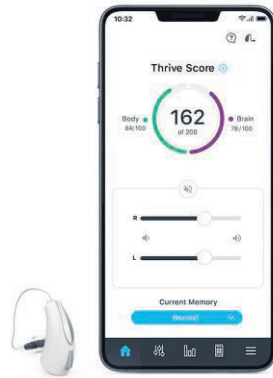
form of ranked balloting.

Best, the AMO official, said it's important to make it easier for people to vote — including online voting — while ensuring the process is secure so that people can trust the system. He's also hopeful that the federal government will look into reducing the voting age from 18 to 16.

"I've met 16-, 17-year-olds who are far more engaged than a lot of 50-year-olds," he said.

STORY BEHIND THE STORY: With the municipal election fast approaching, we wanted to compare this year's picture with 2018 and share how residents and officials feel about the upcoming vote.

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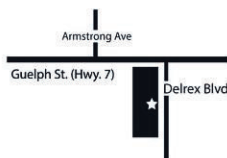
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