

If you have what it takes, it's time to talk the talk and walk the walk

By Grant Lee,
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Be prepared to serve for four years, if you are thinking about a run for the Mayor's job, or any one of the eight Town council or two Regional council seats. The province intends to amend the *Municipal Elections Act* to change the current three-year term of council to a four-year term. Election Day is November 13. The last day for filing nominations is September 29 (Nomination Day). For many people in Ontario, the campaign for election has already started. By Nomination Day, there is always a gaggle of political wonks assembled to compete for votes. Some will celebrate late into the evening of the 13th while others will go home and wonder what that was all about!

For all hopefuls, there are key dates and rules that need to be remembered. There are also certain costs to bear, and many responsibilities that only those who are elected must carry.

council, the filing fee is \$100. A candidate shall not receive any campaign contributions or expend any funds on a campaign until nomination papers are filed.

Once a campaign has started, a candidate must have a strategy for getting elected. To have a good chance of success, campaign workers are needed. Mailers, handout flyers and brochures have to be crafted, printed and distributed. Most candidates use campaign signs, and these need design and assembly. Yard campaign signs (24"x16" to 24"x24") are likely to run \$4 to \$8 a unit, depending upon design complexity, number of colours, number of units, size and structure. It is not unreasonable to spend \$1,000 - \$2,000 for coloured three-panel brochures in quantities from 5,000 to 10,000 units. Ads in local papers may run from \$200 - \$1,500+ depending upon size and number of colours. Remember that a cost would also have to be incurred in the design of



any ad, or ad campaign. Flyers distributed with local newspapers may be effective for some candidates. In addition to the traditional campaign collateral material, candidates may look at the costs involved in setting up a Website, blog (Weblog), radio time and cable television advertising. Once products for the campaign are assembled, then it is time to "knock and walk", explaining an election platform to voters.

Before anyone jumps into the fray of a municipal election, it is important for the

candidate to understand the commitment and burden that his or her family may carry. Attending the average two council meetings a month is the minimal time requirement. Councilors are appointed to committees, and serving on three committees that meet regularly plus council may take up to 30 hours a week. Much of this time is in the evening, but meetings during the day are often required. Holding down a full-time job and finding time to spend with family will test the best of strong

wills. The two Regional/Town Councilors are full-time elected representatives. Councilors can expect calls from constituents and many email messages demanding a response. Some may say that compensation for the job is hardly worth the time and commitment. The Mayor earns a salary of \$85,998. The eight town councilors are paid \$21,047, and the two Regional Councilors \$57,582.

Municipal governments have no constitutional powers. Councils are at the mercy of provincial policy makers and legislators. Most candidates do not realize the power that the province holds over council and the municipality. Idealists and one-issue candidates are sure to be disappointed if they are elected, and will be of little use to the electorate. With the stroke of a pen, the provincial government can change the agenda of council. Small accomplishments, however, are the most rewarding for most councilors. Others get a chance to play a major role in solving a local problem that marks his or her action as historic or remarkable.

The Town of Halton Hills has an excellent Candidates Guide that details the required forms, legislation affecting a run for office, critical dates and details about the roles of Councilors and the Mayor. The Chamber of Commerce, its members and citizens of Halton Hills want the best people possible elected to council. Before you make the decision to run for office this year, think hard about your commitment to the electorate. Four years could be a very long time.

BusinessLink Profile

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BusinessLink on Holiday

Brenda and George Vanderleest from North Halton Roofing reading their BusinessLink in sunny Florida.

The Butlers from Colonial Tree Services on holiday in Cairns, Australia.

Karen Hughes of Elliott Custom Brokers & Storage Ltd./Georgetown Terminal Warehouses Ltd. recently visited Hawaii and dropped in at the Chamber of Commerce on Bishop Street in Honolulu.

Send in your pic reading BusinessLink on holidays, and you'll be on the front page, too!

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