

ETCETERA



STAFF PHOTO/ROBYALARY

Sign, sign, everywhere a sign

Big and bold, small and sassy, signs promoting candidates are popping up everywhere

BY ROGER VARLEY
Staff Writer

After a seemingly slow start, election campaign signs are mushrooming across the region.

Nevertheless, with less than a week left until the municipal election Nov. 13, some declared candidates remain practically invisible in terms of signage. In many rural areas, physical evidence of the election is almost non-existent.

Even in Markham's urban areas, where 11 candidates are vying for the four seats on regional council, voters were hard-pressed to find any signs promoting the campaigns of Mitch Klinger, Marilyn Head, Surinder Issar and John Kay.

But John West, seeking re-election to council in Aurora, may have part of the reason for the dearth of signs.

"I never put them out until after Halloween," he said, adding it's something he has learned over 23 years of campaigning for local office.

Another reason could be the cost.

Steve Pelligrini, running in King's Ward 1, said he has only about 150 signs, with no slogans and no photo.

"I don't have a large machine behind me," he said. "My wife and I are funding this (campaign)."

Campaign signs that have emerged

appear to have been erected higgledy-piggledy. For those who think about such things, it might seem there are no regulations governing their placement on municipal or regional property. There are rules, however — lots of them.

York Region and its nine municipalities all have their own bylaws covering campaign signs. With requirements differing from one municipality to the other, commuters travelling through several jurisdictions could be confused. So could candidates and their campaign workers.

And small wonder — even York Region is confused.

The region was recently forced to re-examine its policy on temporary signs, less than two months after approving a bylaw that set down the rules. Regional council finally decided halfway through the campaign to ease some of the restrictions and requirements that had been written into the bylaw, leading Newmarket Regional Councillor Diane Humeniuk to conclude bylaw officers "are very confused".

"They are not sure what is applicable and what is not," she said.

For example, York Region's original bylaw allowed signs to be erected at some major intersections — such as Hwy. 7/McCowan Road in Markham and Leslie Street/Davis Drive in Newmarket — while others — such as Yonge Street/Major Mackenzie Drive in Richmond Hill and Hwy. 7/Weston Road in Vaughan — were off limits.

Similarly, there is confusion regarding the size of signs. On York Region roads, signs exceeding 1.5 square metres are prohibited, while Georgina allows signs up to two square



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Phyllis Morris, running for Aurora mayor, doesn't have her picture on her signs. "I didn't want someone putting a moustache and glasses on me," she said.

metres and King Township is generous in approving signs as large as three square metres.

In Markham, however, council went the other way. It placed a minimum size requirement on signs, nothing smaller than 0.74 square metres allowed.

Placement can also be confusing. Some jurisdictions allow signs to be posted within one metre of the travelled portion of a roadway, while others — Georgina, for example — insist they must be set back a minimum of two metres. Some municipal bylaws prohibit posting signs on trees; others make no mention of the practice.

However, it's likely the signs themselves, rather than the rules covering their location, will be more confusing to voters.

A total of 171 candidates are running in the region for nine mayoral chairs, nine regional councillor positions and 55 council seats, not to mention the 40-odd people running for school trustee positions. Only one mayor — Tom Taylor in Newmarket — and four council seats are uncontested.

One area where campaign signs could become a jungle is Newmarket. Although voters there won't be casting ballots for a mayor, that will be more than offset by the race for council, which has no ward system. Voters will be asked to elect seven councillors. With 21 candidates seeking those seven positions, the electorate must deal with a bumper crop of signs.

"I think it's going to be a zoo," predicted Victor Woodhouse, one of the 21 candidates. "There'll be sign after sign after sign. The people who are going to have the best chance (of being elected) will be named Burger King or McDonald."

Woodhouse said he expects to put up 200 residential signs and about 25 large signs "on key properties". He said he hasn't been able to

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