

Local Democracy Pledge (the Pledge)

Municipalities are the order of government closest to the people and are empowered to implement the will of local electors within areas of municipal jurisdiction. Democratic municipal elections enable residents to select representatives who make decisions to create and sustain viable communities.

The Pledge

To support democratic local elections that select representatives to serve the best interests of the entire community, as a candidate I pledge to:

- **Keep local elections local** by focusing my campaign on issues that municipal elected officials can influence.
- **Maintain independence and non-partisanship** by rejecting any endorsements which would undermine my accountability to municipal residents or the autonomy of the municipality.
- **Demonstrate transparency** by sharing my vision for the municipality and providing pre-election disclosure of campaign contributions and spending.
- **Engage in respectful behaviour** by sharing my perspective, while respecting and seeking to understand differences.

To take the Pledge visit: auma.ca/pledge

Background on the Local Democracy Pledge

Why keep local elections local?

- The 2021 municipal elections provide the opportunity to address the wide variety of local matters that deeply impact the everyday lives of residents. It is important that candidates and voters seize this opportunity and avoid getting sidetracked by debates on senate elections and referendum questions which municipalities do not have a role in influencing.
- It is recognized that some provincial referendum questions may have relevance for municipalities. In addition, the jurisdictional lines between the federal, provincial, and municipal government can be blurry.
- However, it is still essential that municipal elected officials understand the core roles of municipalities and stay focused on addressing local needs.

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for Municipal
Office?**

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Why avoid partisanship?

- Municipal elected officials are accountable to their residents and have a duty to consider the welfare and interests of the municipality as a whole.
- Candidates for municipal office may have affiliations with provincial or federal political parties or other organizations. However, there is a significant difference between having affiliations and being beholden to a party or group.
- Given the scale of provincial and federal governments, political parties are a necessity. In contrast, municipalities are the level of government closest to the people, enabling more direct accountability between councillors and the residents they represent.
- To deliver services efficiently and effectively to businesses and residents, councils must work collaboratively with the province and neighboring municipalities. Council members also need to be able to work with each other and their municipality's administration to make decisions and have roles on quasi-judicial and utility/service delivery boards.
- Partisanship would undermine the ability of councils to effectively fulfill these roles.
- Some, though not all, third party advertisers, otherwise known as political action committees (PACs), can add a great deal of negativity and even misinformation to campaigns. Also, many are not transparent about their funding sources.
- Candidates should disavow any groups which seek to undermine honest and respectful political discourse.

Why is transparency important?

- Municipal decisions, including budgets, are deliberated in public with a great deal of engagement with residents and businesses. Candidates should demonstrate their commitment to transparency by exemplifying the behaviour through their own campaigns.
- It is important that each candidate articulate their vision for the municipality to enable voters to make an informed decision on voting day.
- Disclosure of financial contributions as they are received in advance of the elections provides voters access to information such as the amount and source of campaign contribution, and can serve as a deterrent to the influence of big money.

Why is respectful behaviour important?

- There is significant evidence that the toxicity of political discourse both online and in person is a deterrent to seeking office for new and returning candidates.
- Respectful dialogue enables candidates and voters to have productive, solutions-oriented conversations about issues facing communities.
- It does not mean that there will not be disagreement or conflict about the right approach to various issues, but it means the conflict will more constructively focus on issues as opposed to personal attacks.
- All candidates are negatively impacted by violent outbursts, but this is heightened for women and cultural minorities. Respectful dialogue can help create a safer and more inclusive environment for all candidates.

