

## Acclamations blamed for low voter turnout in Mono

By **JAMES MATTHEWS, LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER**

About a quarter of Mono's eligible voters marked ballots in the municipal election on Oct. 24.

Only 1,880 residents voted out of a pool of 7,486 eligible voters. That's a hair over a quarter for a 25.1 per cent voter turnout to choose three councillors from a field of nine candidates.

The mayor and deputy mayor positions were filled by acclamation weeks earlier. And Fred Simpson, the town's clerk, believes acclamations to those key council positions may be to blame for the low voter turnout.

Mono made online and telephone voting available this year, just as it was in the last election in 2018. And, while that's hoped to make the voting process easier, it's more designed to address poll accessibility rather than voter turnout.

"The people who can't get out (to vote)," he said. "When weather's an issue, it can come to be a factor then. Though it wasn't an issue with this election. We had pretty good weather."

Mono saw a higher voter turnout in 2018, with 33 per cent of eligible voters having marked ballots.

"Neither of them (percentages) are stellar by any measure," he said. "But it did go down this election compared to the previous election."

In fact, low voter participation was the norm in many other Ontario municipal elections.

Brampton and Mississauga each drew 25 per cent of their eligible voters to the polls. In Ottawa, still less than half of eligible voters marked a ballot. A mere 44 per cent voted in the municipal contest in Canada's capital city, the seat of our national Parliament.

Even in the June 2022 provincial election, Ontario recorded its lowest voter turnout ever with about 43 per cent of 11 million registered voters having participated.

That's almost 14 per cent lower than in the 2018 provincial election.

Some political scientists and election veterans have pegged the cause of low turnout in the municipal elections on there being few competitive races in most municipalities.

"One of the things that comes into play, and this isn't unique to Mono, is that when you have acclamations such as we did ... in this election, you tend not to get as high of a turnout," Simpson said.

"And that was seen as probably a trend across the entire province this last election. Acclamations were up, the number of people who ran for offices across the province was down."