



Why We Celebrate World Homeless Day of Homelessness

By Margaret Eskins
Executive Director DARS
Dedicated Advocacy Resource Support

Every year on October 10th, communities around the world recognize World Homeless Day. It is a day to acknowledge people experiencing homelessness, raise awareness about the causes and realities of homelessness, and, most importantly, remind ourselves that housing is not simply a roof over someone's head but the foundation from which people can begin to rebuild their lives.

For organizations like DARS — Dedicated Advocacy Resource Support — World Homeless Day is an opportunity to bring an issue that is often overlooked into the centre of the community conversation.

Homelessness can happen to people for many different reasons. A person may lose employment, experience a relationship breakdown, face rising housing costs, leave an unsafe home, struggle with untreated or unsupported challenges, or simply find that there are no affordable housing options available when they need them. For some, homelessness is a sudden crisis. For others, it is the result of years of instability. What is important to understand is that homelessness is not an identity. It is a circumstance. Behind every statistic is a person with a history, relationships, skills, hopes and the potential to contribute to their community.

A home is the beginning, not the end...

When we talk about homelessness, the conversation often focuses on emergency shelters, warming centres and the immediate need for a safe place to sleep. Those services are essential. They save lives but emergency responses alone cannot solve homelessness. A person needs more than a bed for one night. They need a pathway forward. That pathway may include affordable housing, income support, employment, education, health services, food security, transportation, mental-health or addictions supports, community connections and someone who will help them navigate the system.

At DARS, we see every day how important that continuum of support can be. Our work is grounded in the belief that people need opportunities to stabilize their lives, develop routines, build relationships and ultimately move toward safe and secure housing. Sometimes that means meeting someone where they are at; with food, hygiene services, outreach or a safe place to stay. Sometimes it means helping someone obtain identification, complete an application, connect with a landlord or navigate community services, post secondary education, a new career or another meaningful facility. And sometimes it means creating a different kind of housing opportunity altogether because one size shoe does not fit all.

This is why World Homeless Day matters. It encourages us to look beyond the immediate crisis and ask a more difficult question: Homelessness is not something that can be solved by one organization, one level of government or one sector of the community. It requires collaboration with our counterparts in the sector as well as those we serve.. Municipalities, provincial and federal governments, landlords, developers, nonprofits, churches, businesses, healthcare providers, community organizations and individual residents all have a role to play. It also requires us to consider how we use the spaces and resources already available in our communities.

World Homeless Day is about hope

World Homeless Day is sometimes described as a day to recognize homelessness. I believe it should also be a day to recognize possibility.

We should recognize the person who moved from a warming centre into permanent housing. The individual who found employment after years of instability. The person who obtained identification, opened a bank account and signed their first lease. The tenant who finally has a place to call home and the stability to begin planning for the future. These moments may seem small to some people. They are not small to the people experiencing them. World Homeless Day gives us an opportunity to challenge assumptions, listen to people with lived experience and recognize that homelessness is a community issue that requires community solutions. Most importantly, it reminds us that everyone deserves the opportunity to have a safe place to call home.

At DARS, we believe that housing is the beginning of a journey, not the finish line. When we provide people with safety, stability, dignity and the support they need, we create the conditions for people to move forward.

On October 10, let us recognize World Homeless Day not only by acknowledging the problem, but by asking what each of us can do to be part of the solution.

Join DARS on October 10th from 2-4pm at our Transitional Farm House - 690 Third Concession Rd., Pickering where we will recognize the homeless situation in Durham Region, celebrate the achievements and bring HOPE together and towards great POSSIBILITIES



I wanted to bring something to your attention

By John Meloche

I wanted to bring something to your attention regarding the Pickering Professional Firefighters Association's endorsements in the 2026 municipal election that I believe warrants some straightforward journalistic scrutiny.

The PPFA has been publishing "Official Endorsement" announcements for members of the current Pickering Council, including Mayor Kevin Ashe, Regional Councillors Linda Cook and David Pickles, and City Councillors Mara Nagy and Shaheen Butt.

What initially concerned me was that I had never been contacted by the Association despite being a certified candidate for City Councillor in Ward 2.

I have since gone considerably further.

I personally contacted the current certified candidates in Pickering to determine whether the PPFA had approached them as part of an endorsement process. According to the candidates I contacted, none of them had been interviewed or even contacted by the PPFA.

That is what I believe makes this worth investigating.

The City's certified candidate list shows how substantial the field is. Just in the five races represented in the PPFA posts I reviewed, there are 19 certified candidates: seven candidates for Mayor, three for Regional Councillor Ward 2, two for Regional Councillor Ward 3, five for City Councillor Ward 2 and two for City Councillor Ward 3.

Yet I have found no evidence of a candidate interview process, questionnaire, policy survey or even introductory outreach to the candidates before these endorsements were announced.

That does not mean the PPFA is prohibited from endorsing incumbents. An association is entitled to make political endorsements and may have reasons for relying on incumbents' records or its previous dealings with them.

But I believe the public deserves to know what "Official Endorsement" actually means in this case and how those decisions were reached.

This question is particularly relevant because the PPFA is not simply another community organization. It represents Pickering's full-time firefighters in its employment relationship with the Corporation of the City of Pickering. The City's own 2026 Budget Highlights specifically identified an ongoing collective bargaining process aimed at renewing the City's agreement with the Pickering Professional Firefighters Association.

That fact does not suggest anything improper by itself. It does, however, make transparency about the Association's political endorsement process particularly relevant. The individuals elected to Council make decisions involving City budgets, staffing priorities and municipal administration, while the Association represents employees of that same municipality.

There are some very basic questions the PPFA could clear up.

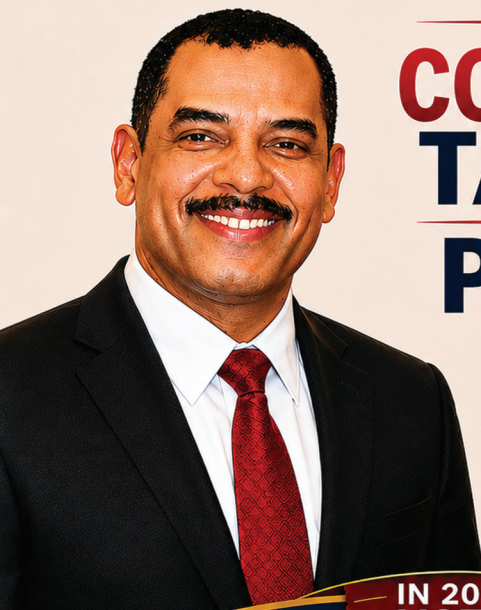
What was the endorsement process? Were any candidates interviewed? Were questionnaires sent out? What criteria were used? Were the decisions made by the executive or voted on by the membership? Were non-incumbent candidates considered at all? Were endorsements based on voting records, previous dealings with Council, responses to particular firefighter issues, or something else? There is another fact worth noting: contacting the candidates would not have required extensive investigative work. The City of Pickering maintains a public certified-candidate directory containing campaign websites, email addresses, telephone numbers and social-media information for many of the candidates. I am not asking the newspaper to accept my conclusions.

In fact, I would encourage you to independently verify what I found.

Contact the PPFA and ask how these endorsements were determined. Then contact the other certified candidates and ask one simple question:

"Before the Pickering Professional Firefighters Association announced its 2026 election endorsements, did anyone from the Association contact you, interview you, send you a questionnaire or ask you about your positions?" If the answer across the candidate field is what I have been told, I think there is a legitimate public-interest story about what process — if any — existed behind these "Official Endorsements." The issue isn't whether firefighters are allowed to support incumbents. Of course they are.

The issue is what evaluation occurred before a respected community organization attached its name and credibility to political endorsements — and whether the public understands how those endorsements were actually determined.



MY CONTROLLED TAXATION PROMISE

Proud to be Canadian.

IN 2026 VOTE:

ERROL MASSIAH

Regional Ward 3 Candidate – Ajax

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emassiah@rogers.com

EXPERIENCED
COMMITTED TO AJAX
STRONGER TOGETHER
DEDICATED

As your new Regional Ward Councillor I promise to fight for

CONTROLLED TAXATION

VOTE



HENRY

FOR MAYOR OF OSHAWA



(289) 913-6331



henryforoshawa.ca