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?It was truly an honour to serve,? says Chris Ballard

I am grateful to the residents of Aurora and Newmarket for giving me the privilege to serve as your Member of Provincial Parliament. A special thank you to my dedicated staff, both in my constituency office and at Queen's Park. I wish Christine Elliott all the best as the new MPP for Newmarket-Aurora.

While I will miss the work on behalf of the residents of our communities, I leave with great memories. Our communities are unique and wonderful places to live, work and play. While growing in size, they haven't lost their small town appeal.

Back in 2014, when I was elected, I promised to work on a number of issues that are important to local residents: protecting the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Greenbelt, improving GO Train service, increasing funding for our hospital, working closely with municipal government; advocating for jobs and reforming the Ontario Municipal Board ? to name a few.

I can honestly say that all the ?boxes? have been ticked, and even more was accomplished in four busy years. But the most fulfilling part of the job was constituency work ? the day-to-day work helping residents and businesses access government services, or simply helping them with a personal problem. My staff cared a great deal about people and I am thankful for their work in helping thousands of constituents.

I was excited when my very first Private Member's Bill to have the Chair of York Region Council directly elected by residents was made law. In the upcoming municipal election, you and I will ? for the first time ? have the opportunity to vote for the person who is the most powerful politician in York Region.

Before my Bill was made law, the Chair was appointed by fellow councillors.

As a new MPP, I soon learned how underserved York Region is for mental health services and how dire the situation is. I worked to bring new mental health beds to Southlake and to gather stakeholders to create a Mental Health Hub in our area for adults and teens. That hub proposal is almost ready and I hope the new government will see fit to properly fund it.

I got into politics to help people. That was always my focus.

As a first term MPP, I was humbled to be asked by the Premier to join her Cabinet as Minister of Housing and Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Later, I was thrilled to be made Minister of Environment and Climate Change, two areas I am passionate about. As with my time on Aurora Town Council, my priority at both ministries was making our communities sustainable.

So, friends, both new and old, I will see you around town. I'll have a bit more time to chat at the Farmers' Market, when shopping locally or at any number of local events.

Above all, thank you for entrusting me with this wonderful riding. It was truly an honour.

Chris Ballard
Aurora