Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill Votes 2022: Green Party?s Zheng says it?s time to move past ?short term gains? on climate change

As a software engineer, Kevin Zheng's career has focused on making data-driven decisions and, if elected to Queen's Park by the residents of Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill on June 2, this is an approach he hopes to bring to policy-making.

Zheng is carrying the Green Party banner in Aurora's south riding and says the climate emergency spurred him to stand up and be a difference-maker in this year's Provincial election.

?We are in a climate emergency and I believe the Greens have by far the most ambitious, proactive and data-driven and team-oriented strategy to tackle the existential crisis of our species and our planet's,? said Zheng, responding to questions from The Auroran via email. ?Climate change is the number one long term problem the entire world is facing and it's time to stop making short-term gains at the expense of our ? and our children's ? future. We need to work together as a planet to disrupt our status quo in order to make these necessary dramatic changes and the Green Party is Ontario's only party that has this mindset.

?A few weeks ago, I wanted to check who the Green Party candidate is for my riding and wanted to send them a message to support and was surprised to find there was no active member. Climate change is not going to stop itself and someone had to take a lead, so I

decided I will.?

If elected, his top three priorities for Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill include ?aggressively phasing out fossil fuels,? to incentivise people in taking transit over driving, and establishing a 15-minute framework for more complete communities.

?We plan to completely phase out fossil fuels by 2030 to reach net zero by 2045. This includes stopping building new gas stations by 2025, stop production of gas/diesel vehicles by 2030, require 50 per cent of vehicles on the roads to be zero-emission by 2030 and 100 per cent zero-emission by 2040. We will incentivize electric vehicles by building more charging stations. We will invest in re-training those working in the fossil fuel industry to work in the green energy sector. [We will incentivize] people taking transit over driving. This includes re-purposing the money to invest in Ford's plans to build highways to instead focus on improving the public transit system by reducing the transit cost (to help people deal with rising gas prices), converting existing buses into electrical buses, and increasing the number of dedicated bus lanes.

?To minimize sprawl, we will build strategically to ensure all core necessities (grocery stores, pharmacies, schools, offices, etc.) are a 15-minute walk/bike/transit ride away. This includes building more low-rise apartments to make land usage efficient.?

Over five years of working as a software engineer at Amazon, Zheng says he has learned the importance of making data-driven decisions, ?which means fully listening to the science experts who actually know what it takes to stop climate change.?

?[I've also learned the importance of] taking responsibility of problems outside of your domain. There's no such thing as being outside of your domain. You have a responsibility to fight climate change regardless of what is the underlying issue and whose ?ballpark' the issue is in; and the importance of hustling and taking quick action using calculated risk in the face of ambiguity. This means making drastic decisions to fight climate change and pivoting as we go along.?

By Brock Weir EditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter