

Ballard launches Provincial campaign

By Brock Weir

Councillor Chris Ballard has thrown his hat into the Provincial arena.

The Councillor, who was elected to Aurora Council in 2010, told The Auroran he hopes to challenge incumbent Progressive Conservative MPP Frank Klees in the next Provincial election.

In this minority provincial government, there is no certainty on just when the next election might be called, but Councillor Ballard said he will "step aside" as Councillor when the writ is dropped, if ultimately chosen as candidate.

"I am going to continue to work hard in being an effective Councillor and representing those people who voted for me in representing all of Aurora," he says. "We'll see what happens when the writ drops [but] at that point I will step aside. Until then, even if I am chosen as the candidate, I will keep working to represent the people of Aurora."

Councillor Ballard says he has heard from "elected officials in our communities, businesses, and regular folk" they want better representation at Queen's Park and believes he is the man for the job.

"I have heard concerns that the focus has been on leadership issues and other issues that are important, but not as important to the people of Aurora and Newmarket," he says. "I think I will be able to do a better job for the citizens of both communities. I won't be spending any time chasing leadership hopes and that type of thing, but I will be really focusing on what these communities need, and that is what I have been hearing for a number of years now."

"I think you have to live in this riding, work in this riding constantly and I am prepared to do that. This area has been my home my entire life, and I think it is time we improve the quality of representation we're getting at Queen's Park."

With scandal and controversy still swirling around the Liberal government of Premier Kathleen Wynne, as it did in the last days of her predecessor, Councillor Ballard said he is ready to tackle them, adding Premier Wynne has been "a phenomenal leader in addressing those issues" and he will be prepared to tackle the questions head-on.

"I hear from [residents] jobs and the economy are very important, transportation is very important, environment is very important and what can be done to build more sustainable communities in Newmarket-Aurora," he said. "I think they are absolutely critical to what I want to put on the table. My focus will be to do what I have done as a Councillor - listen to people, understand what their concerns are and match those concerns with appropriate actions at Queen's Park."

As for his time as Councillor "and, if selected as the local candidate, that time could be up as early as January" he said he wants to focus on getting Aurora's "financial house in order", something he says is one of the biggest issues facing this Council. This can be seen in potential debt financing for big ticket items like the Joint Operations Centre and Community Space for Youth, set for final approval this week, he added.

"We have to give our heads a shake and re-evaluate these big projects."

Councillor Ballard will launch his campaign this Wednesday at 7 p.m. at Theatre Aurora "a symbolic choice he says, as that was the King native's first introduction to Aurora as a youngster."

Looking ahead, he rejects any criticism that could come from residents chalking this up as looking for an opportunity to jump to the next level.

"When I first decided to run for Council, I had no expectations of making politics a career beyond some time in municipal government, but as the months and years have gone by, I have seen where I can make a contribution to the quality of lives in our

communities at a municipal level.

?I think representation is representation and I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the citizens of Aurora. I have spent the last few months listening to people and asking them what they want in terms of representation at a different level at Queen's Park and I am quite comfortable in saying I will continue to work for the people of Aurora, whether on Town Council or Queen's Park.?

So far, among the three parties currently represented in Queen's Park, Mr. Klees is the only confirmed candidate. He says he welcomes Councillor Ballard into the fray.

?Chris has always conducted himself in a very respectful way as a Councillor and I would welcome him as a provincial candidate,? said Mr. Klees. ?I assume he may have some competition for the candidacy, so it remains to be seen who will end up as the Liberal candidate. Whoever that may be, it won't be easy defending the McGuinty-Wynne record.?