

Meet Your Candidates: Janice Hagan ? New Democratic Party (Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill)



In her professional life, Janice Hagan's colleagues often vote for her to be a voice for their concerns.

It is not a role that she takes lightly and, as the NDP candidate for Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill, Ms. Hagan is hoping to be a voice for local concerns in Ottawa following the September 20 Federal Election.

Ms. Hagan, an employee at Seneca College, has entered the race to carry the orange banner. This will not be the first time she has stood as a candidate for the NDP and has, in fact, been on the ballot before when portions of Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill were in different ridings.

Now, as the confirmed candidate, she is eager to take her message to voters, one that is focused on the environment and climate change.

?This year, the big issues are environment and climate change because we have 10 years really to make a huge difference in turning this around ? and it's now or never, right??

Addressing climate change is not, she says, ?about passing laws to give people tax breaks if they don't pollute? as the impacts of climate change are ?interwoven into everything else.?

?You can't just fix one problem,? says Ms. Hagan on why she aligns with the NDP's environmental platform versus those of other parties. ?The NDP is about putting in plans right now to start re-training, to start making strategies of how we can create green jobs to move people into. By 2030, we want to cut emissions by 50 per cent, where the Liberals are more about by 2050 we will have no more emissions ? but how do we get there? We have to start now.?

Part of that starting off point is what she describes as the ?Just Transition? focusing on people who will be ?affected the most? by these policies, particularly people who work in ?carbon-based industries.?

?The NDP understands that all these things are connected,? she says, citing rising temperatures and the impact this has on the Gulf Stream. ?You can't just reduce emissions ? that's a popular notion ? but you have to actually look at the whole problem and fix everything. I love their idea of a Climate Corps, like a Peace Corps for young people on climate change. One of the things I like to

do with my husband in our spare time is we work on the waterways and the wetlands around where we live [and take out invasive species] to bring in more native plants. We can have people doing that ? maybe not getting paid a lot but getting food and board like in the Peace Corps, getting experience on their resumes, getting outside and learning about the environment, which we really need. It's hard to expect the private sector to clean up the waterways; we have to do it as a community.?

Ms. Hagan says her party ?has always been on the side of the working class? but it's getting harder to live in Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill. There is a ?serious problem? with housing costs and to address this problem she says it is essential to ?get the Federal government into building houses again.? Another key factor in addressing the issue of affordability is an expansion of health care, she says.

?The government is already paying for so many people's drugs as it ? all the public workers who have benefits plans, everybody who is on social assistance, seniors, people in hospital ? and it is not going to cost that much to be able to add more people to it,? she says. ?If there is one buyer for drugs, we can negotiate better prices. [We want] a health care system that includes drugs, mental health care for people who are vulnerable in our society who can't afford it.?

As a mom of three who are just getting past the university age, she says she knows firsthand the problem of student debt and addressing this is also a matter of affordability, which can be tackled by having people ?who have made \$17 billion more since the lockdown last year to start paying for some of the services that help people build this society where they are able to make so much money.?

?They are benefiting from a workforce that gets free healthcare, gets good, strong education and they can pay a little bit more for those services and help us get out of the recession instead of it just coming off the backs of our young people who can't even afford a place to live,? she says, before touting the benefits of instituting a living wage. ?If everyone has a living wage, which is different from minimum wage which means you can buy food and shelter for your family but you can also send your kids to swimming lessons or buy a new shirt, having people with a little bit of extra income actually improves our community because people can buy things, store owners can make money, they can pay better taxes and the money moves faster. Money being hoarded in bank accounts in nice, hot countries is not really helping our economy at all.

?People like to think the NDP likes to spend, spend, spend, but there are certain things we're not going to spend on like subsidies for oil companies to do further exploration on an old technology that is not going to move forward for the planet. There is money there we can spend and just getting the economy going again, giving people spending money, creating decent jobs where people make good money, this is how to improve our communities, but a lot of people think we'll go into debt and that's not the case. You go into debt when you divide the rich and the poor so far that the poor can only pay their necessary bills and buy food and the rich are putting all their money overseas. That does not help our economy.?

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter