

Newmarket-Aurora voters send Ballard to Queen's Park



By Brock Weir

Aurora and Newmarket residents are sending Chris Ballard to Queen's Park.

The Aurora Councillor took the Newmarket-Aurora riding on June 12 with a decisive 22,294 votes to Progressive Conservative candidate Jane Twinney's 19,510.

Across the riding, 6,092 votes went to Angus Duff of the NDP, 2,167 to Andrew Roblin of the Green Party, 925 to Dorian Baxter of the Canadians' Choice Party, 579 to Libertarian Jason Jenkins, and 164 to Bob Yaciuk of the Trillium Party of Ontario.

Speaking to a crowd of supporters at his campaign party, held at the Newmarket branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, Ballard said he was "absolutely overwhelmed and overjoyed" to be elected to Queen's Park.

"I want everyone here to know the debt of gratitude I owe you for your countless hours of work and your support, and your belief that not only could I win, but the Liberals could win in Newmarket-Aurora once again," Ballard told supporters. "What a good feeling it is!"

Looking ahead to his first days in the Ontario Legislature, Ballard said he was eager to "get the ball rolling." One of his core platform planks this election campaign was the protection of the Oak Ridges Moraine. A top priority now, he said, was convening a "citizens' roundtable" on the Oak Ridges Moraine legislation before it comes up for review next year.

"We need citizens from Aurora and Newmarket to be a part of shaping that new legislation and protecting the Oak Ridges Moraine," he said.

Earlier in the evening, Ballard was speaking to The Auroran when excitement in the room was kicked up to eleven.

"Without getting maudlin, I wish my dad was here. He was the real political guy in our family and he would have appreciated this," said Ballard when asked what was going through his mind as his polling numbers continued to steadily climb "and then his campaign manager, Cathy Gapp, interrupted to say CBC had projected him the winner.

After a brief pause, he continued, shifting gears slightly.

"I don't want to disappoint them!" he said, looking across the room to his supporters, noting he was cautious not to jump the gun too early on his victory. "So many people have come out of the woodwork to help me, help Kathleen, and so many friends here and family members, people from all parties have got behind me right from the beginning. I am feeling a tad overwhelmed with their

support ? but I am excited at the same time. I am excited about what is to come. This is like a big family and I am looking forward to working with them in the months and years ahead.?

Joining him at the election night party were his wife, Audrey, their children, and Ballard's mother, Dawn. For Dawn, it was an evening of excitement but not altogether unexpected.

?As a young boy, his Kindergarten teacher told me Chris was going to go very far in life,? said the proud mom. ?That's true. He was very serious for his age. I can't say anything more than how exciting this is. He has worked very hard for it, been on Aurora Council for four years, and has always been involved in the community, kept an eye on what is going on and keeps involved in things.?

Similar views were expressed by Audrey, who said she had been ?nervous all day? but that was quickly giving way to excitement.

?When tomorrow hits, it will likely be with a little more reality, but it has been a lot of work and we have had a lot of fun,? said Ms. Ballard of the lead-up to Thursday. ?This election was a little bit different because of the level of commitment and volunteerism. People have been wonderful, so helpful, and we wouldn't have been able to do it without them.

?[Chris and I] have been through so many things over our lifetime and this is just one more adventure!?

While Ballard's win in Newmarket-Aurora was decisive, it was even more so for Kathleen Wynne, who was elected not only with a majority, but also earning a footnote in history by being Ontario's first duly elected female premier. This, Ballard said, was not particularly surprising to him as the more he knocked on doors, the more he heard people liked Ms. Wynne and ?liked her sense of optimism.?

?I am humbled that the people of Newmarket-Aurora have put their faith in myself and Kathleen and I am going to be a strong voice for all of us at Queen's Park,? said Ballard.