

PC nomination candidate Di Muccio encouraged by new party leadership

By Brock Weir

Only two years may have passed, but even a week is a long time in politics ? and in just that time, former Newmarket councillor Maddie di Muccio is seeing significant change in the party she hopes to represent.

Ms. di Muccio, who sought Newmarket-Aurora's Progressive Conservative nomination ahead of the 2014 municipal election is back in the game, challenging former Aurora councillor Bill Hogg for the local nomination.

Following her last kick at the can, which proved controversial after her public criticisms of then PC leader Tim Hudak led to her experiencing roadblocks in her quest to take the nomination, she says new leader Patrick Brown has been a game changer.

?Last time, what you saw were a lot of partisan games,? she says. ?The Ontario party has moved on from what we once were and, under Patrick Brown, we're a much more evolved party. We're talking about issues like gender equality, LGBT, carbon pricing. Our party is seeking to become this Province's most modern, inclusive, pragmatic organization and that means including women and young people, new Canadians, business people, doctors and nurses, teachers, and regular folks from every walk of life. We're no longer that party that uses wedge tactics and over the top ideological viewpoints to appeal to our base.

?Patrick Brown has brought in so many new members since the Tim Hudak days. When Tim Hudak was leader, there were about 10,000 members in the Province and now we're shooting for over 100,000. Any influence a retired Tim Hudak-era politician? is lessened because of the great numbers of new people who have joined in the last few years. I can't stress enough how different the PC party is today than when I put my name in the first time.?

After losing her seat on Newmarket Council in the fall of 2014, Ms. di Muccio says her involvement in the community has only increased, serving as a board member with the Toronto Taxpayer Coalition, branching out to form the York Region Taxpayer Coalition, encouraging Regional Council to create a municipal ombudsman, and working with the York Regional Police on diversity and equality programs.

?I love Newmarket-Aurora and I certainly love York Region, and I have worked hard to make our community better,? says Ms. di Muccio, dismissing any suggestion she has a divisive style of politics. Anybody can assign someone in a biased way and say they are divisive. That is a partisan comment. There is nothing further from the truth. I was recognized by the York Regional Police for my work in the community bringing together against discrimination. I don't think that is somebody who is divisive. I think somebody like that is the opposite of divisive. I don't think a divisive person would have that track record.?

Instead, Ms. di Muccio says her campaign will focus on ?issues that unite us together? as a community. With her ear to the ground, she says some of the primary issues facing the community is homelessness, seniors on fixed incomes who are struggling with hydro rates, and people living paycheque to paycheque.

?A lot of people are struggling with the economy,? she says. ?We have youth, for example, and they are struggling with jobs and I worry about their future a lot. I have three boys in school and I see some of their struggles. I wonder about their future. It is getting expensive. Housing, for example, is becoming impossible for a lot of young people to get ahead.

?We used to be a very prosperous province. I want to go back to those days of prosperity where you could go into a grocery store and afford food as opposed to going to food shelters. I read things every day about that sort of thing and it is terrifying. The economic track record here in Ontario has been really, really lagging. We have had such job growth in our community and that is a huge issue for me. If I were to represent Newmarket-Aurora, one of the biggest things would be encouraging and supporting small to medium businesses.

?My campaign is about empowering the community. It is about making jobs, it is about making youth prosperous, families being able to afford things like groceries and it is about a lot of positivity. One of the messages I loved about Patrick Brown is that he is modern, inclusive and pragmatic. Those are all qualities I think that create a welcoming party.?