

## Progressive Conservative platform should be led by grassroots: Hogg



**By Brock Weir**

Ontarians might not have to go back to the Provincial Polls until the summer of 2018, but the race to represent the Progressive Conservative party in Newmarket-Aurora heated up last week.

Former Aurora councillor Bill Hogg formally announced his intention to seek the PC nomination last week at an event with supporters at Aw, Shucks! Joined by his family and a host of local politicians and dignitaries ? including event emcee Costas Menegakis, former Conservative MP for Richmond Hill, Mr. Hogg said several factors were weighed in his decision to join the race, which is also being contested by former Newmarket councillor Maddie di Muccio.

?I wondered if I could really make a difference,? said Mr. Hogg about the issues weighing in his mind after being approached by former Aurora councillor Don Constable to seek the nomination. ?I wondered if I had what it took to make a different community, and the reality is I spent a year talking to people in the community, asking for their input, trying to make the decision as to whether or not this is the right place at the right time for me to take this next step. I finally decided that I could and it was only because people like you folks in this room encouraged me to do so.?

They encouraged him, they said, based on his municipal experience, involvement as an advocate for community ratepayers, and his background of advocating for change at Service Ontario.

?I spent 18 months fully embedded in the government and I have seen that it is truly possible to create change in the government, although I think most of us would say that it is fundamentally broken,? he said, citing Ontario's \$350 billion deficit which, he says, will be paid down on the backs of the next generations.

?The last step I took before I made the decision to run is I sat down with Patrick Brown in March and I wanted to look him in the eye because I wanted to make a decision: is this the guy who I could feel comfortable being on his team? If he is successful, he is going to be my boss. I wanted to know whether we were aligned. My big question for him was, is the party going to be community-based? Is it going to be driven by the community from the ground up, or is it going to be top down? Time will tell, of course, but he has assured me that is the case and the policy development process is intended to get input from people at the frontline grassroots.?

What Mr. Hogg says he is hearing at the grassroots are concerns about rapidly escalating hydro costs, the view that Ontario, once a ?have? province is now firmly on the ?have not? side of the ledger, and access to healthcare. Indeed, he said the struggles faced by his daughter Kerry in recovering from the effects of a brain tumour was one of the issues that spurred him to turn his attention to the Provincial rather than municipal level of government.

?We need to spend time thinking about those kinds of things as opposed to gas plants and wind turbines,? he said. ?These are the kinds of things that effect real people.?

?I expect [the Liberals] will try and divert attention away from the real issues and I fully expect the troubling trend we have seen in politics of trying to tear people down personally will be something we will have to deal with here in Newmarket-Aurora. But, the issues in my mind are too important to be intimidated by that, too important to back down, so I want to tell you I am prepared to stand up for what I believe in.?

Turning his attention to the only other candidate in this race so far, Mr. Hogg said she has "a bit of a reputation" of a certain type of politics but that is not what he believes in.

Ms. Di Muccio previously sought the riding's PC nomination but faced roadblocks from the party following public criticism of then PC leader Tim Hudak. The eventual victor was her fellow Newmarket Councillor Jane Twinney.

"I believe in working based on collaboration, not based on divisiveness," said Mr. Hogg. "I don't believe that we serve our communities by tearing each other down. I believe we have to do it by building each other up. That is the kind of politician I hope to be. Earning a place of leadership is about integrity, it is about trust. I believe that each candidate should endeavour to win an election based on ideas and arguing and debating those ideas.

"My commitment is to be respectful on all sides. It is not to engage in the negativity we see in politics. It is to focus on the issues and if people want to say the things we have seen on social media, well, I choose not to get into that. I choose to focus on the issues."