

Provincial politicians prepare for possible spring election



By Brock Weir

Ontarians ?deserve the opportunity to pass judgement? on the Provincial Government if a budget is tabled at the beginning of May.

That is the word of outgoing Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees, responding to documents released by the Progressive Conservative party that the incumbent Liberal government is on track to deliver its budget in the first half of May.

It came on the heels of rife speculation and innuendo flying from all angles of the Ontario Legislature last week, including threats of a legal wrangle between Premier Kathleen Wynne and PC Leader Tim Hudak over allegations of wrongdoing surrounding the closure of the Ontario gas plants.

Included in the possible forecast is support of wide-ranging programs for children to seniors, including long-term care for Ontario's elder population. This, said Mr. Klees, is encouraging, given last week's talks at Queen's Park with area residents.

?The fact they are committing to doubling its investment in grants for programs to seniors is positive,? says Mr. Klees. ?I welcomed the fact the Minister of Health finally agreed to change its mind about the cancelling of the Alternative Community Living program and, after challenging the Premier last Wednesday, later on that evening they announced they would continue that program.

?I am hoping to see a commitment to seniors that will ensure not intermittent programming, but underline services that are going to give them security and a sense of confidence their needs would be looked after through programs such as Alternative Community Living and on-side care that is going to keep our seniors out of long-term care homes and remain relatively independent, whether it is in their own homes or whether it is in supportive housing, such as we are experiencing.?

Additional supports are needed for mental health services, adds Mr. Klees, particularly in the mental health of children. That, he says, is a ?huge issue? for York Region and there are ?unconscionable? waiting lists, particularly for younger people, facing these challenges. There is not nearly the kind of commitment there should be for people left vulnerable for mental illness.

Although there are positives on the table if this budget forecast proves accurate in the coming weeks, it is not enough to convince him to support the budget, and Ontarians should be given the chance to pull the plug.

?I believe we're at the point in this province that we have seen far too much of this government's conduct that undermines any sense of credibility that this government may have,? he says. ?I believe that regardless of what the numbers are that may be tabled by way of a budget document, we cannot under any circumstances prolong the life of this government because all we're going to get is more of the same.

?Whether it is ORNGE, whether it is e-Health, the gas plants, or the most recent allegations of criminal activity with the Premier's office relating to the destruction of records, I believe the people of this Province deserve the opportunity to pass judgement and the only way that can happen is through a general election.?

In the election, whenever it happens to be, the Progressive Conservatives will be represented by Newmarket Councillor Jane Twinney. Councillor Twinney agrees with Mr. Klees' assessment.

'Enough is enough,' she says. 'Every day there seems to be a new scandal coming forward. At this point, it definitely should be up to Ontario to vote and put the government they want in place. It has been going on way too long at this point. Everybody I talk to is more than ready to go and they are fed up with what has been going on with this government and want an opportunity to cast their ballot on who they want to be representing their province.'

Councillor Chris Ballard, who was recently acclaimed as the Liberal candidate for the upcoming election says he is not so sure. What Ontarians want, he says is 'good government.'

'There are some politicians perhaps who are a little too eager to rush us to the polls who really should step back and ask what is best for Ontario,' says Councillor Ballard. 'I want what is best for Ontario and Newmarket-Aurora and I don't think having an election because some politicians want an election is the best thing, and that is not a reason you go to the polls.'

If the budget comes down in the first half of May ' and at this point Councillor Ballard said he was unconvinced that was the case ' he said he would be looking for programs related to skills training, particularly for youth, youth jobs strategy, and steps to balance the budget 'without endangering recovery' or current services.

If the government indeed presents its budget in the beginning of May, and it fails to gain the support of the Legislature, an election would be triggered and Ontarians would be bound for the polls in early June.