

UPDATED: Aurora's Somerville enters PC race



By Brock Weir

Aurora's Stephen Somerville has joined the race to take over from Frank Klees as the Progressive Conservative candidate for Newmarket-Aurora.

Mr. Somerville threw his hat into the ring on Monday, nearly two weeks after Mr. Klees' surprise announcement he would not be seeking re-election. The Auroran columnist joins Newmarket Councillors Maddie Di Muccio and Jane Twinney as the third candidate in the PC race thus far. Perennial candidate Dorian Baxter, who has often run on the Federal ticket for the Progressive Canadian party, also plans to put his name into the mix later this week.

Active with the conservatives on both the national and provincial levels for over 30 years, and with a 15-year career background in the energy sector, Mr. Somerville says he wants to continue where Mr. Klees will leave off when his term wraps up at the end of the next provincial election.

"I have had a really good chance to work with two of the finest representatives that we have in Lois Brown and Frank Klees, and I have had a really good chance to work with them and watch how they operate," he says. "I can tell you one thing: I think what this community really wants is a continuation of the first-class customer representation they have come to expect from a representative in our community."

With his career background in energy, it should come as no surprise this is a portfolio he has watched intently from the sidelines, both as a member of the party and a member of the public at large. As such, if elected to Queen's Park, it is one issue on which he plans to be particularly active.

"One priority is respect for taxpayer dollars," he said. "The second is accountability within our public organizations. The third is a strong and sensible energy policy. Energy and economy are very important. When you look at some of the other issues, it is all about jobs and the local economy. It's about gridlock and the local commute to work. There have been scandals in the finances here which are not very good in Ontario, and when you look at the energy and gas plant fiasco, I have had very serious concerns as someone in my community."

"I think I have something to bring to the party to help on that."

Having written nearly 300 columns for The Auroran over the past six years, as well as being an active member in the Aurora community, he is not an unfamiliar face here. To reach new audiences ? and potential new party members ? he plans a series of coffee parties, and a number of meetings with people in both Newmarket and Aurora to introduce himself, including an official campaign launch at King Richard's English Pub in Aurora on Saturday.

Sizing up his fellow candidates who, aside from Councillors Di Muccio and Twinney, also include Councillor Chris Ballard, who is seeking the local provincial Liberal nod, he says they are going to have a ?good race? based on respect.

?I am going to be focusing on the positive attributes I bring to this race and the positive message I can move forward on,? he says.