

## Aurora's southern Liberals and PCs make their pitch at Library

**By Brock Weir**

It was a friendly meet and greet with little chance to get down to the nitty-gritty of the campaign, but local candidates in the June 7 Provincial Election had a chance to meet voters at the Aurora Public Library on Tuesday night.

Open to all candidates seeking office in Newmarket-Aurora and Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill, at the event, dozens of Aurora residents were joined by Christine Elliott (PC, Newmarket-Aurora), Michael Parsa (PC, Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill), Melissa Williams (NDP, Newmarket Aurora), Bob Yaciuk (Trillium Party, Newmarket-Aurora), and Naheed Yaqubian (Liberal, Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill).

Newmarket-Aurora Liberal candidate Chris Ballard was not in attendance.

While they weren't able to spar with each other, they were able to lay out their and their party's respective visions for the Province.

First up was Michael Parsa.

A resident of Richmond Hill, he said his experiences as a small business owner in Richmond Hill spurred his political interest.

"Some of the pressures that has mounted on us as small business owners got me interested in politics," he said. "I have been involved in politics for quite some time, but I [decided to run] a few years ago. I was a candidate in the last Federal election. I ran for the Federal Conservative party in 2015 in the southern riding and lost by three per cent. This election, I wanted to run where I reside, which is in Oak Ridges, and I wanted to run in this riding.

"Since being nominated in November of 2016, I have done a lot of door knocking, had a chance to meet many of you at the doors, and I have heard a lot of concerns, a lot of issues around transportation. Small businesses are unhappy that their voices are not being heard. In Aurora, there are a lot of small businesses and entrepreneurs. I want to let you know that as a small business owner, I have done my very best and as a small business owner, you have to make sure you provide services for your people or else you're not going to be in business very long.

"If I am lucky enough to be elected after June 7, I promise you I will serve you as best I can as a small business owner, and that is to reach out to you every single day to hear your concerns. I will not be able to help you with everything, but you will see I will try my very best."

Ms. Yaqubian, on the other hand, said her experience as in-house legal counsel for businesses, universities and non-profits, for management and for employees, has fostered a "strong and fair balance" which makes her a Liberal.

"I am a life-long resident of Oak Ridges and I have seen it grow immeasurably over the last 20 years," said Ms. Yaqubian. "I think as our Town grows, we need more services, not less. And we need reasonable, intelligent, rational solutions to the challenges we face. I don't think the solutions to the challenges we face are tax cuts. I think they are having intelligent governance to be able to address our challenges in a head-on way. Whether it is being able to provide pharmacare for youth and seniors, or expanded home care for seniors so our seniors have a chance to receive the support they need, or whether it is increasing funding to education in our schools.

"I work really closely with the York Region District School Board and our budget is \$1.44 billion, and that includes the equity committee, on which I am the public chair. At the York Region District School Board level right now, we have 2,000 students who arrive at school homeless every single day. That is here in Aurora, in York Region, in one of the richest towns, in one of the richest regions in the richest province in the world. To me, that is unacceptable. As a life-long resident of Oak Ridges, that is unacceptable. "Us Liberals, we've made a choice. In this economy, we have decided to strategically invest in services that help all of us. To make sure all of us are benefiting from our boom economy, because we know that growth hasn't reached everybody. We're also strategically choosing to propose solutions that address the problems and challenges we face; not solutions that throw money at the problem, not solutions that cut money from the problem, but solutions that structurally address the issues that we have today. I am very much looking forward to speaking with all of you, I can't wait to hear your voice, and I can't wait to represent your voice at Queen's Park."

For more on the positions of our Newmarket-Aurora candidates, please see our coverage of Thursday's all-candidates forum, hosted by the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce on page 14.