

Ballard and Twinney to be acclaimed as Liberal, PC candidates next week



By Brock Weir

Ontarians still don't know when they will be going to the polls just yet, but the upcoming Provincial Election race will be solidified next week.

Ontario Liberal candidate ? and Aurora Councillor ? Chris Ballard is slated to be formally nominated and acclaimed as Newmarket-Aurora's provincial Liberal candidate next Wednesday, March 19, at the Aurora Cultural Centre.

The following evening, at The Mansion on Industrial Parkway South, Progressive Conservative Candidate ? and Newmarket Councillor ? Jane Twinney will also be acclaimed to carry her party's banner.

Although Councillor Ballard has been unchallenged in the Liberal race, the same cannot be said for Councillor Twinney.



(Top) Councillor Chris Ballard and his wife Audrey celebrate his campaign launch last fall, while (above) Councillor Jane Twinney greets supporter Pat Carabine at a recent campaign event at Chinook restaurant. (Auroran photos by Brock Weir and Diane Buchanan)

Progressive Conservative members jostled to fill the impending vacancy to be left by incumbent MPP Frank Klees, after he surprised many of the community with his announcement he would not be seeking re-election. Joining Councillor Twinney in the race were Auroran columnist Stephen Somerville and Newmarket Councillor Maddie di Muccio.

Councillor di Muccio's candidacy, however, courted controversy after her nomination was nixed at the party level. The next twist in the local Progressive Conservative race happened February 19 when Mr. Somerville withdrew his name from the race after receiving ?threats? against himself and his family.

Following his departure, Councillor Twinney remained unchallenged.

Speaking to supporters shortly after announcing his candidacy last fall, Councillor Ballard hailed his local roots.

"Aurora and Newmarket have been like second homes to me," he said, joined by his wife Audrey, his brothers Michael and Ed, and their families. "My children are all products of the public school system here in Aurora and they have found Aurora to be a very special place, as have I. It is the same sort of thing we hear from those who grew up in Newmarket."

Jumping into the provincial arena, he said, was not a step he took lightly and before making the leap, he took "many months" talking with friends and family on his next steps, asking what they think an MPP should do for them.

If elected MPP, Councillor Ballard says among the issues he will fight for are making Aurora a "sustainable community", working with citizens, business, labour groups, and municipal governments to anticipate the issues to come, rather than simply reacting to them, health care, education, transportation, the Oak Ridges Moraine, and making sure citizens can "access" their government, something he said he "learned from the master" in former mayor Phyllis Morris.

At the end of the day, he said, Premier Kathleen Wynne made supporting the Liberal party an easy choice.

"She is a phenomenal woman," he said. I have met a lot of leaders in my career and not many of them have a very contagious enthusiasm she brings to the table."

As the nomination window closed for PC nominations last week, Mr. Klees said Newmarket-Aurora would be well-served by Councillor Twinney.

"She has conducted herself with grace and dignity," said Mr. Klees. "She has demonstrated she is a hard worker. I have observed her advocacy on behalf of constituents. She is not afraid to take a stand, but she does so with civility and I believe she has the respect of all of her colleagues, which is one thing I think is going to be a significant advantage for her."