

## Ballard named candidate for Newmarket-Aurora Ontario Liberals



Former Ontario Cabinet Minister and Aurora councillor Chris Ballard will carry the Ontario Liberal banner for Newmarket-Aurora in the next Provincial election.

Ballard was acclaimed as candidate for Aurora's northern riding at a meeting held Sunday in Newmarket amid growing speculation that Progressive Conservative Premier Doug Ford will call an early election, possibly as soon as next month.

"It is well within our grasp to make this riding red again," Ballard told *The Auroran* last week. "We can win this riding, we have done it before, we will do it again" and now is the time."

Ballard served as an Aurora Councillor from 2010 to 2014, vacating his seat just a few months before the end of term after winning Newmarket-Aurora for the Ontario Liberals in the 2014 election. He subsequently served as Minister of Housing and Minister of the Environment in Kathleen Wynne's Cabinet.

Since losing his seat to Progressive Conservative Christine Elliott in 2018, he has worked as CEO of Passive House Canada.

"I have grown increasingly concerned by the inaction I see at Queen's Park with regards to our riding of Newmarket-Aurora," he says. "All of the many things that we have started have fallen aside or have fallen way behind, everything from investments in Southlake to investments in improved GO Train service, to improvements in affordable housing in this area. I have grown more and more worried as I have talked to people in the riding and talked to organizations in the riding about how life has not been made easier but has, in fact, become more difficult.

"The economy across Ontario" and StatsCan backs this up "was slowly crumbling and on the Provincial level we need to fix that. We need to stop the loss of good-paying manufacturing jobs and here" we need to build the local economy, and all of the things I am hearing from people that need to be dealt with "things like healthcare, things like affordable housing, things like local jobs. I hear this time and again."

Re-entering politics under the leadership of Bonnie Crombie, he says he has found a leader in whom his values align. He was a strong supporter of former leader Steven Del Duca, now Mayor of Vaughan, but at the time of the last Provincial election, Ballard says it wasn't the right time for him to re-enter the fray.

"Bonnie has run a big municipality, she has experience beyond municipal government, being a one-time MP," says Ballard. "She has the experience, she has the platform, she has a really good team she has assembled behind her. She is a good communicator and

I am aligned with her core values in terms of wanting to build Ontario's economy and how we address the shortcomings of the current government.

?It is a very inequitable Provincial government that is playing out time and time again when we look at developers and the perks that only certain developers get ? [but] not all developers. I think what Bonnie brings to the table is a much more equitable approach to making sure that we get affordable housing built, that we bring jobs to all areas of Ontario.?

Key priorities this election, he says, will be healthcare, transit and the environment, particularly areas related to climate change and climate adaptation, better supports for seniors, including homecare.

?A lot of these concerns have just continued to grow, especially over the past four years,? he says.

**By Brock Weir**