

Candidate aims to raise awareness of wildlife and biodiversity on Moraine



By Brock Weir

Living around Lake Wilcox, 24-year-old Kyle Bowles has seen development rapidly spring up in the area, but as development grew, so did his concern with its impacts on local wildlife.

Mr. Bowles has always had a love of animals, fascinated with the "mystery" of the creatures and he says he felt he needed to explore every avenue to save wildlife on the Moraine.

He has found a way to do this by standing for office in this month's Federal election, carrying the banner for the Animal Rights Environmental Voters Party in Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill.

"Over the past few years with the amount of development that has increased so rapidly, I felt I didn't have any other options," he says. "I could advocate on a local level, but [at] a Federal level, maybe I could have a bit more impact and save our community from following the development patterns of a lot of the Greater Toronto Area. Hopefully we can reverse that type of development and have a better plan for development in the future."

Through the political process, one has a chance of having an impact on how things happen through legislation and raising awareness.

"I think it is important that people participate in the democratic process as much as they can ensure it is not only stable, but serves the needs of what you, as a citizen, are looking for and what other citizens will be looking for as well," he says.

Mr. Bowles says he found a good fit within the Environmental Voters because it is recognizing animal welfare as a "cornerstone" to our future. It is important to educate people with what ecology does for us and how native animal species maintain the important ecosystems on the Oak Ridges Moraine.

"It is about educating them on why it matters, why it is important and, at the end of the day, how we plan to develop our communities will also affect the cost of living, increase the money we have to pay municipalities, provinces, and the Federal government in terms of services," he says. "It is about educating people about the connection between what we do with our ecology and how we develop and grow our community will impact us going into the future. We need to have a long-term plan that benefits the community and doesn't just benefit the developers."

Looking ahead to his game plan for the final days of this election, Mr. Bowles says what will hold him in good stead is his "honest, genuine sincerity" in wanting to represent the concerns that are on residents' minds in the House of Commons. Within his party, which obviously focuses its platform on animal and environmental welfare, he is able to listen to what residents have to say on a

wide range of issues and advocate for them outside of strict platform planks.

?A lot of the time people vote to elect a certain person as Prime Minister rather than electing a candidate to represent their riding and I think the biggest challenge I have is connecting to people and saying this election is more about more than electing a Prime Minister; it is about electing an honest voice that will represent your concerns and the things that matter to you.

?My success is going to be determined by how much I have made issues of wildlife and our biodiversity as part of the election discussion. If I have been able to get that on the minds of the person who might get elected, if I am not elected, that will be a real key indicator of how successful I was during the course of my campaign.?