

Candidates offer leadership ? served three ways

By Brock Weir

When candidates put themselves forward as candidates for their respective ridings, there can be little doubt they are doing so to bring to fruition their vision for what is best for the community and the vision of the people who elected them.

Sometimes, when scandal gets in the way of a government, regardless of stripe, voters can be forgiven for having the pangs of buyers' remorse.

But, once again, there are a few days left to window shop before hitting the ballot box to make your final purchase. To help out voters in Newmarket-Aurora, candidates offered their vision of leadership at last week's all-candidates' meeting hosted by the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce.

?The wonderful thing about our democratic system in Canada is that we can have people from every walk of life participate in democracy and it isn't one set of skills people bring to the table that qualifies them to be a Member of Parliament,? said Conservative candidate Lois Brown. ?In our caucus, we see people from farmers to dentists, to teachers, to business people, and we even have some lawyers. Everyone brings with them a skillset they put on the table that makes our democracy thrive and I am thrilled when I have the opportunity to meet with young people who say they are aspiring to leadership, to advise them and advocate to them to get their education, get their experience and to think about how they might want to be an elected member to any level of government because we need good, thoughtful, conscientious people at every level of government.?

NDP leader Tom Mulcair was a driving force for candidate Yvonne Kelly to throw her hat in the ring. In Mulcair, Ms. Kelly says she saw a person who has ?integrity? and a willingness to stand up for what he believes in.

?He was able to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Quebec and he was willing to walk away from the table when he couldn't participate in certain things,? she said. ?I hope that is what people think of me when they see my work in the community. I have been a very strong voice. I am not afraid to speak out, even if what I have to say is unpopular, and I would have to say that is probably one of the things that is most important.

?Sometimes it is most difficult to disagree with those who are closest to you, but I believe we have cultivated an environment in our party and certainly in our community?that we can talk about all these issues and lead in a way that reflects everybody's opinion.?

?Empathy? the number one leadership trait Liberal candidate Kyle Peterson offered. The ability to put one's self in the shoes of another, whether they are a colleague or an adversary is particularly important, he said.

?With that comes listening and the ability to work with others, and not always thinking it is your way or the highway,? he said. ?It is the ability to compromise and take into consideration other people's points of view, perspectives, and work together to come to the best conclusion to whatever problem might be arising at that time. These can all be derived from different experiences.?

Citing a number of controversies that have swirled around the parties that have formed government in recent decades, moderator Bill Hogg cut right to the point asking why voters should place their trust in each respective candidate. This was an issue Ms. Brown said was ?incredibly important? and cited the institution of the Accountability Act.

?We took the contributions of unions and corporations out of our political system and only people can make donations,? she said. ?The maximum they can donate is \$1,500 a year. You can't buy my vote for \$1,500. As a leader, I have always had proactive disclosure of my expenses linked to my website because I believe my constituents deserve the opportunity to see how I am spending their money.?

Mr. Peterson, on the other hand, said he found Ms. Brown's extolling of the Accountability Act ?somewhat entertaining.? It was a

piece of ?gimmick legislation? that was ?meant to get headlines,? he said.

?Every election since 2006, the Conservative governments have been criminally charged,? said Mr. Peterson. ?Ms. Brown wants to talk about Gomery and things that happened when I was in university. I don't think Gomery is a good thing, but I had nothing to do with it. Mike Duffy is a bad thing and you had something to do with it.?

He went on to cite the former senator's participation in a riding association fundraiser for Ms. Brown in 2009.

?To be lectured by Ms. Brown and her government on integrity is a bit rich,? he added.

So, for Ms. Kelly, there was only one alternative on the table.

?We have had 147 years of Liberal and Conservative governments, we have had 20 years where we had one government voted out because of the Sponsorship Scandal and we had another government that came in on the coattails of that,? she said. ?We know what we have been through last summer. What I could easily say to you is give us a chance because we haven't had 147 and specifically 20 years of scandalous outrage and unaccountability. I don't think that is good enough.

?I can say very strongly as a New Democrat for the better part of my life that we have actually had governments in the provinces that have been very forthright in their expenses, very forthright in their practices, and I think one thing Tom Mulcair has done and will do is reinstate the Parliamentary Budget Officer that the Conservatives brought in, to their credit, and then decided to take away once he had disagreed with their policies.?