

Christine Elliott confirms Newmarket-Aurora PC run



By Brock Weir

After weeks of swirling rumours, Christine Elliott has formally put her name forward for the Newmarket-Aurora PC nomination. In a statement released Monday night, the former MPP and PC leadership candidate said, "I have never been more convinced of just how much Ontario needs us. I would be privileged to join our slate of candidates."

"To all residents of Newmarket-Aurora, you can count on me to do everything I can to fight for you at Queen's Park," she continued. "I hope I can earn your trust."

She joins Newmarket resident Joe Wamback in the race.

Ms. Elliott tells *The Auroran* her top priority between now and a formal nomination meeting later this month will be to meet the residents of the riding she seeks to represent this June.

"I really need to listen to their concerns and issues and make sure I understand them, so that if I am given the honour to be their representative at Queen's Park, I will know what their biggest priorities are and be able to start advocating for them right away," says the former MPP for Whitby-Oshawa.

In explaining her decision to seek the local nomination, Ms. Elliott cites the similarities between the ridings of Newmarket-Aurora and Whitby-Oshawa.

"As I said throughout the leadership campaign, I really wanted to run in a riding where (a) I was hoping people would want me there, and (b) I would be able to be a meaningful representative for the community," she says. "I think Newmarket-Aurora has many similar qualities to Whitby-Oshawa, the riding I last represented, in the sense it is a fast-growing area, it has a lot of issues relating to growth with a lot of people commuting downtown and needing GO Train and other options for vehicles travelled, but you also want to make sure that things like health care and educational facilities and so on can keep up."

"Those are the issues I certainly am familiar with, they seem to be also relevant in Newmarket-Aurora and I look forward to speaking with residents about their concerns and working on them."

Monday's announcement came with key endorsements, including those from former PC nomination candidate Bill Hogg and former Newmarket-Aurora Member of Parliament ? and 2019 Federal candidate ? Lois Brown.

"I have every confidence that Christine Elliott is the right candidate to lead Newmarket-Aurora into the next election," said Ms. Brown. "She has a proven track record of fighting for local communities at Queen's Park, and I look forward to working with her."

Shortly after Ms. Elliott's announcement, a further endorsement came out ? this time from Charity McGrath who was, until March 15, the confirmed PC candidate for the riding

Controversy dogged Ms. McGrath since securing the nomination last April over Mr. Hogg and Newmarket Councillor Tom Vegh.

Citing 'irregularities' in the votes, members of the Newmarket-Aurora PC riding association launched a number of appeals against the close results to top party brass, each of which was turned down under the leadership of Patrick Brown.

Shortly after Mr. Brown was replaced by Doug Ford as the party's permanent leader, Newmarket-Aurora was one of three ridings which had their nominations overturned and Ms. McGrath was barred from running again. Although she, in turn, appealed this move, her appeal was turned down last Tuesday evening.

'After working countless hours over the past year as the PC Candidate in Newmarket-Aurora, I have decided to step aside and work with a wonderful person,' said Ms. McGrath in an email. 'Today I am proud to stand with an extraordinary Conservative, Christine Elliott. We are excited knowing that she has served this province in an exemplary way and will continue that legacy of work for our riding.'

'We will continue to see unity strengthened through the support of Bill Ballantyne, President of the Newmarket-Aurora Riding Association. I personally believe that unity needs to be a top priority. I appreciate Christine's desire to work closely with myself and honour the time and work I have put in alongside the volunteers who have invested time in the riding. I look forward to us working closely for the betterment of the riding and community.'

Keeping these issues in mind, Ms. Elliott says she is committed to welcoming anyone who wants to lend a hand with an aim of securing victory this June.

'I think the most important thing for everyone at the end of the day is to win,' says Ms. Elliott. 'I think it is fair to say that across the Province people want change. We all know that we need to work together in order to make that happen. What I plan to do is welcome anyone who wants to come and help on the campaign. I see this as the start of a new day and we all have an opportunity to be a part of this going forward, and I am looking forward to working with anyone who wants to come forward to do that.'

Derek Murray, who led the Newmarket-Aurora PC riding association during the appeals until he and fellow members resigned, welcomed Ms. Elliott's decision to throw her hat into the ring.

Until her formal announcement this week ? and amid the rumours ? Mr. Murray said the riding would benefit from a 'high profile' PC candidate in this spring's election.

'As an MPP for almost a decade, Christine has the experience we need to champion the issues that matter to Newmarket-Aurora residents,' said Mr. Murray in a statement. 'I know she will do incredible work in the region as a member of the next PC government.'

Once confirmed, Ms. Elliott will face off against incumbent Liberal MPP Chris Ballard, who currently serves as Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, and NDP and Green candidates yet to be determined.

They will vie for votes in Newmarket-Aurora, which encompasses the Town of Newmarket as well as parts of Aurora on the north side of Wellington Street.

Voters on the south side of Wellington will vote in the newly-created Provincial riding of Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill. There, the Ontario Liberal banner will be carried by Naheed Yaqubian while the PCs will be represented by Michael Parsa, who endorsed Ms. Elliott's leadership bid.