

Di Muccio wants answers after campaign is 'deep-sixed' by party

By Brock Weir

Newmarket Councillor Maddie di Muccio is calling foul after her campaign to replace Frank Klees as the next Progressive Conservative candidate for Newmarket-Aurora was scuttled by the party.

Councillor di Muccio says she was 'stunned' to receive word on Tuesday evening that the local nominating committee had rejected her application 'acting on advice' of PC leader Tim Hudak.

The Councillor, and columnist for Sun Media, cites criticism over Mr. Hudak's leadership through her columns as a reason for being 'deep-sixed', but says she was told that would not be an issue before entering the race.

'I was stunned because not only did I not think it was going to be an issue, but I thought the party would love that I am running because I had a conversation with Tim's Chief of Staff earlier when I found out Frank Klees was retiring and he said, 'absolutely, we'll put your name on here' and that there were no issues whatsoever,' Councillor di Muccio says.

'I know some people'are alluding to an earlier column I wrote which had mild criticisms of Tim Hudak's leadership at that time. I was reflecting what the grassroots members were saying, which is my job as a media person. I think that criticism in our jobs makes us better people; it makes us fix the things that other people are saying are wrong, so that was my intention with the column. To hold that as a reason to not have me as a candidate is absolutely ridiculous.'

Looking over the entire PC picture Ontario-wide, Councillor di Muccio claims there is a 'double standard' when it comes to potential candidates who have been critical of Mr. Hudak's leadership, including those in the National Capital Region. She adds she has called on the party to 'address the double standard' but does not expect to receive a response.

Since the party's decision was made public, social media was quick to jump in, with some, including those who have followed the controversial Councillor, agreeing with the party's decision, and others, who are vehement supporters of di Muccio and her style of politics, taking their concerns directly to the leader himself.

'I am getting calls from people in the riding here in Newmarket-Aurora who are requesting their money back and they will not be voting in the next election,' says Councillor di Muccio. 'They are very upset. I think it is an outrage for them because they wanted an opportunity [to vote for their] candidate and not have the party leader intervene.'

As to her future 'whether she will turn her attentions to seeking re-election as Councillor for Newmarket's Ward 6 or perhaps exploring other provincial opportunities 'she says she will take the next few days to weigh her options. At the end of the day, however, she remains a member of good standing in the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario 'and that is never going to change.'

'I believe in the party and the grassroots, I believe in the Progressive Conservative movement in Ontario and that is never going to change,' she says. 'I think what I have addressed here is questionable leadership. We can't have a leader who intervenes in the grassroots. That is a disaster for the party. I don't know what the future holds and I don't know what the future holds for Tim Hudak, either.'

While the Party has yet to respond to The Auroran's request for comment, the two remaining candidates in the race, fellow Newmarket Councillor Jane Twinney, and Aurora resident Stephen Somerville were reluctant to weigh in on the issue.

'I have been concentrating on my campaign and trying to move our party forward,' said Mr. Somerville. 'This is a decision taken by the central party headquarters, so I have no comment.'

Added Councillor Twinney: ?I am busy running my campaign, and focused on running a positive campaign. I have been a positive, professional person on Council for the last three-plus years and that is all I am thinking about right now. Whatever their decision is, is their decision.?