

Federal Conservatives select Menegakis as candidate for new Aurora riding



By Brock Weir

As local political eyes turned to the Provincial scene as Newmarket-Aurora decided its Liberal and PC candidates, another political acclamation, this time at the Federal level, took place under the radar.

Richmond Hill MP Costas Menegakis was acclaimed last week as the Conservative Party's candidate for the newly created Federal riding of Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill, which will come into effect in the next Federal election in 2015.

Mr. Menegakis declared his candidacy last fall after redrawn electoral maps, which will split Aurora into two Federal ridings at Wellington Street, were given formal approval. He went through the race unchallenged and the window for opposing candidates closed on Thursday.

"I am really looking forward to 2015 now," Mr. Menegakis told *The Auroran*. "I was fortunate enough to get the support of the membership in the new riding and I am humbled and excited at the same time. In this game, you don't take any chances and I actually ran my nomination campaign as if I was being challenged because you never know."

Last fall, Mr. Menegakis, then a resident of Unionville, was preparing to make a big move into the new boundaries. Since then, he has settled at Lake Wilcox in the north end of Oak Ridges, and he says he is now ready to get down to business.

"I am very riding-centric," he says. "I take my work in Ottawa very seriously, but I deeply value my work back in the riding. My goal is to be accessible, to be out there, to listen to my constituents and represent them in the best way possible. That is what I have tried to do in the last three years after being elected in Richmond Hill."

Making himself better known within Aurora, he says, is one of his foremost goals at the moment. He says he wants to "reach out" to Aurorans, tell the community what he stands for, and also find out what issues matter to them. He met with Mayor Geoffrey Dawe last fall to discuss issues at the municipal level and now he wants to take things down to the voters.

"Governing is a collaborative effort and I have always believed that," he says. "Irrespective of political party colours, once you are in office, you have a responsibility to work with everyone for the good of your constituents and the neighbours you represent."

This outreach has already started to happen. This month, he held a coffee session with his current constituents, and potential constituents up to Wellington Street, also showed up to hear what he had to say, and also tell them what was on their minds. Among their chief concerns were cutbacks to Canada Post, as well as transportation challenges, he says.

?Even though transportation is a provincial issue, there is the requirement for infrastructure funding,? he says. ?I think once the budgets are balanced, we can put together a comprehensive, cohesive proposal. I think we can present a pretty strong case that we need some infrastructure funding to improve transportation in the riding.

Once the Federal budget is balanced, Mr. Menegakis says the government can then focus on ?big ticket? items such as working with the province for transportation solutions. Asked whether he would support a National Transit Strategy, something that has been a perennial discussion point in this part of Ontario, he said he is in agreement with York Region mayors about the need.

?Aurora is a municipality that is growing by leaps and bounds and there are needs,? he says.

Also vying to represent residents in the new riding of Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill is Jason Cherniak, who is seeking the Federal Liberal party nomination. A formal nomination date has not yet been set by the party.

Aurora residents living on the north side of Wellington Street or above will continue to vote in the riding of Newmarket-Aurora. Incumbent MP Lois Brown has said she will seek re-election once again in the riding, while Kyle Peterson is seeking the Liberal nomination.