

Ford revs up local PCs as they pledge to listen to 'grassroots'?



By Brock Weir

The Progressive Conservative Party will listen to their riding associations, said Doug Ford at a fundraising event Sunday for Newmarket-Aurora PC candidate Charity McGrath.

Mr. Ford, the former Toronto councillor and brother of late Toronto mayor Rob Ford was at the Royal Canadian Legion to help Ms. McGrath raise funds ahead of the next Provincial Election slated for June.

It was a packed house, including members of the recently installed Newmarket-Aurora Riding Association, which is largely a clean slate after the previous executive resigned in protest after party officials rejected their calls, citing 'irregularities', for an audit of nomination results.

'I think everyone is going to have their voice heard at the Convention that is coming up,' said Mr. Ford, speaking to *The Auroran* after brief remarks to the enthusiastic audience. 'I was with [PC Leader] Patrick Brown the other day and he came right out and told me that we're going to listen to our associations right across the province because every association is unique and every area has its needs.'

Both Mr. Ford and Ms. McGrath emphasised the need of listening to the 'grassroots,' the voices they hear going door to door, 'and actually listening to their concerns.'

'It is not rocket science; it is about engaging and actually caring about what people are thinking, feeling and saying,' said Ms. McGrath. 'Grassroots is what everybody says, but people don't understand. It's not glamorous, but it is really needed and it is very important to hear people where they are at. What are their concerns? What might be a concern for one person might not be a concern for another person. We're engaging, we're talking to people, and that is what matters? getting down to what people really care about, what they are concerned about, and people appreciate when that happens.'

The duo were joined at the Legion by Michael Parsa, the Ontario PC candidate for Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill and the riding's Federal Conservative candidate Costas Menegakis, all of whom were greeted by supporters ready to rally 'and have some food at the late afternoon \$100-a-head barbeque.

In his remarks, Mr. Ford said Ms. McGrath and the slate of PC candidates would bring 'integrity, transparency, and accountability back' to Ontario taxpayers.

'We have to make sure that we go into the bureaucracy at Queen's Park and across the Province and make sure we deliver the same value for hard-earned tax dollars that each and every one of you put forward,' he said. 'People don't mind paying their fair share of taxes, but when you see scandals and stuff that stinks to high heaven being wasted day in and day out, people are fed up.'

The message was continued by Ms. McGrath who praised the Fords for saving Toronto taxpayers 'over a billion dollars.'

'I believe very strongly in less big government and more real political connection, grassroots, and putting the people of Ontario '

and Newmarket-Aurora specifically ? first,? said Ms. McGrath. ?It is extremely important and Doug Ford is an incredible example of doing that.

?Ontario residents deserve better: they deserve more integrity, they deserve to be treated with more respect, and I personally am a social conservative and I am 110 per cent behind the leader Patrick Brown. It is an honour to be his candidate and I know Michael and I both feel the same way. We're here for you, we're open books and that means everything from A ? Z. We're here, we want to listen and address each and every one of your concerns because they are all important to us. There is not one concern more than another. Let's just bring integrity back to Provincial government.?

If a snap election were held today, both Ms. McGrath and Mr. Ford agreed the number one issue at the ballots would be hydro rates following the steep rise Ontarians have been experiencing. While there are other issues also on the table, Ms. McGrath said the current situation is simply ?unacceptable.?

?We're selling off rates that are unacceptable to our neighbours and I think that is a big issue,? she said.

Added Mr. Ford: ?It's all about respecting the taxpayer.?