

Green candidate jumped into race to ensure their voices were heard



By Brock Weir

A month ago, Michelle Boudreau probably didn't expect to be making a sales pitch in front of a room full of neighbours and politicians — let alone be a politician herself.

Yet, that's exactly what she's doing in the 2018 Provincial Election Campaign, carrying the Green Party banner for the riding of Newmarket-Aurora.

Ms. Boudreau addressed a crowd of community members Tuesday night as the Aurora Public Library hosted a meet and greet evening for candidates in both of Aurora's Provincial Ridings.

'One month ago today, I had no idea I would be standing up here in this election,' said Ms. Boudreau, a Newmarket resident. 'I think like a lot of people I have been feeling very confused and conflicted about who to vote for. I feel more and more disconnected from the three major parties. I ended up emailing the Green party and said, 'Who is my candidate? I might vote for you.' And they were like, 'We don't have anyone. Are you interested?' I thought about it for 24 hours and said, 'What the heck? Why not. You can't complain if you're not willing to do something.''

Ms. Boudreau says she was drawn to the Green Party for its 'forward-thinking innovative approach' to move Ontario forward. Their platform, she says, focuses on three pillars: jobs, people and the environment.

This platform includes strategies to increase social equality, support small business and clean technology companies, promote education and life-long learning, elevate the healthcare system and emphasize preventative care, protecting environmental systems, particularly in the face of climate change, 'all with a balanced budget.

'I was talking to my neighbour the other day and I was surprised because he said to me, 'I wish we could send them all (political parties) back to the drawing board, but, unfortunately, we cannot,' says Ms. Boudreau. 'I started a moms group in Newmarket-Aurora last fall and I have had the privilege of meeting many different types of moms. One thing I found we have in common is we all just want to live a safe life. When I say safe, I mean things like housing, food, good jobs, inclusivity and equality, health care and a safe environment. Our world is constantly changing. Ontario needs to build resilient communities that can manage risks, seize opportunities and adapt to changes.

'I don't self-identify as a politician. I have a science degree and have been working as an environmental professional for over 10 years. I have worked for for-profit, not-for-profit, government agency, and presently I work for a municipality. I have experience with research program and project management, provincial policy analysis and developing municipal policies. I have also spent a lot of volunteer time on community-building projects, through neighbourhood associations, environmental initiatives, and recreational sports.

'My approach would be thoughtful and evidence-based. I want to collect all the information I can before making a decision. That includes consulting with public experts and other stakeholders. Most importantly, if something isn't working, I am willing to change course. So, I used to vote strategically for the second best because I was worried about throwing my vote away, as they say, with the Green Party. But, consider this: for every vote you cast, that party receives provincial funding and that will help [us grow].'