

Leadership is the watchword for Green Party's Tim Flemming



By Brock Weir

As Green Party candidate Tim Flemming goes door-to-door in Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill, the number one issue he's hearing at the door is not climate change, but rather a question of leadership.

Residents in the riding are looking to their leaders, whether here at the local level or at the national level, to guide them in the right direction, and, for Mr. Flemming, a first-time candidate, the leader today to address the needs of tomorrow is Green leader Elizabeth May.

Economic output, reaction to green challenges, responses to Indigenous challenges, they become actions, and they are all driven by the quality of the leader, he says, of what he's hearing from voters. There is sometimes apathy towards current leaders, so I try to focus on what can be done and less so about everything else. As a leader, [May] has a sound plan, very well-thought-out.

A leader needs to translate their initiatives, their own thoughts, into rallying the folks who are going to be behind her and she can do that. She, to me, has the integrity and honesty which, to me, is the base foundation of a leader. Sometimes to the chagrin of some, she is very much grounded in science and she bases those thoughts to build out a plan. As a leader, she is longer-viewed than some.

This was, in part, one of the factors in making Mr. Flemming think Green. Although he says he has voted for every colour over the years, he has most recently planted roots in the Federal NDP, having worked for Newmarket-Aurora NDP candidate Yvonne Kelly in the last Federal election.

This time around, however, the landscape has changed, and the issue of climate change spurred him to shop around.

I read the Green platform at length and they had a very

fulsome, well-informed program," he said. "I thought to myself, this is the way to move forward. It had a bit of everything in my mind and it was the only party as well, very distinctly, that actually had a financially-balanced plan to approach it. There is no question that there is a material spend up front, in any environment, but at least there is a defined acknowledgement and a plan to fund it - the right 'grown up' approach, as Elizabeth May would say."

This detailed financial planning within the Green platform was particularly attractive to Mr. Flemming, a CPA and financial advisor by trade. Sweetening the pot, he said, was the Green Party's approach to tackle the Federal deficit, a concern, he says, that is shared by the residents at the door.

"People know that their grandchildren and children are going to be paying that for years to come," he says.

Key to the future is investment, he says, such investments can be found in the Green Party's plan for climate change. Investments will be made to "divest ourselves of fossil fuels in a relatively short period of time, re-engineering the environment to an electrical workplace that is going to replace the jobs that are lost, yet are going to satisfy the energy needs that we, as Canadians, are going to have."

"You need an absolute well-thought-out transition plan that is going to require, from a climate perspective, a significant investment, people understand that," he says. "Certainly, we build a financial plan out to deliver that. No question, a lot of the climate dialogue is around the carbon tax. There is always a distinct affirmative that we will continue with the carbon tax. It is an initiative that my experience at the door is most Canadians, most Aurorans, have embraced, understand it, it is a small price to pay. None of them misunderstand the economic value of it."

In this election, it is also important to consider "social supports" such as health care and education.

"The Green Party addresses a social contract, but what they are embracing is everything that we, as a community, need to have from a government, with some level of continuous insurance, people at the door are concerned it is going to be erosions to that and want that to continue. On a very surgical level, certainly there's some discussion with education but lesser about the financial funding of it. They just want to make sure at the end of the day there is an opportunity for kids to get the right skills in education to have a proper job in the world of tomorrow."

But the perennial "and unavoidable" question remains at the door: Is a vote for a smaller party like the Greens worth it in this era of strategic voting? That answer, from Mr. Flemming's perspective, is an unequivocal yes.

"Many politicians say we have a choice, but we, as

individual community leaders, adults, the grandparents of our grandchildren and the parents of our children, we need to absolutely make the right, bold decisions that are going to enable them to have the same enjoyment, health and life that we have had," he says. "I am a Baby Boomer and we grew up through the most affluent economically-rapid growth period of the 20th century, absolutely so. We have created a culture of almost indebtedness" from a broader sense, their governmental debt, and we have this extremely challenging climate that we must act on "not hope to, want to, pray to, but we must act on. It is not a dream, it is what embraced me to come over because I think it is what is necessary and I would ask everyone to not just consider, I would suggest they need to send the right message to Ottawa and to the world that Canada is serious and we're going to act."