

Liberals acclaim Chris Ballard as Provincial candidate



By Brock Weir

Newmarket-Aurora's Ontario Liberal banner will be carried by Councillor Chris Ballard in the next provincial election.

Councillor Ballard was acclaimed as the riding's Liberal candidate at a meeting held last Wednesday night at the Aurora Cultural Centre.

Attended by the riding's previous Liberal candidate Christina Bisanz, former MPP Greg Sorbara, and incumbent Vaughan MPP Steven Del Duca, Councillor Ballard was hailed for his "energy" at the meeting, which turned into a rallying cry for the party faithful to ensure Newmarket-Aurora turns "red" when Ontarians go to the polls.

"Chris is someone who has dedicated so much of his time and energy to making sure this community and the broader community across York Region and beyond is stronger," said Mr. Del Duca. "Whether it is in his service in municipal council, or a lot of the other work he has undertaken from environmental initiatives to the whole broad spectrum of the work he has done throughout his career, he is someone who will bring a very strong voice to Queen's Park."

Colleagues spoke of their time working with Councillor Ballard on a number of initiatives, including non-partisan work for consumer advocacy, and told him his voice, which will come with a municipal perspective, will be a valuable asset in Toronto.

"You have done great in the community thus far and it is time to kick it up a notch and take on [the issues] not only of the people in Newmarket-Aurora, but also Ontario," said Mr. Sorbara.

It was a challenge Councillor Ballard said he was only too eager to take up.

"I grew up in a house where if you didn't like something, you worked to change it," said Councillor Ballard. "Whining was not an option. My parents made it seem absolutely normal to get involved if you saw an injustice and wanted to change it. There was no sitting on the sidelines and it was your duty to get involved."

He cited his grandfather, a former Tory who campaigned during the Depression for what was then the CCF, but also the influences of his parents. His father, who worked in the aviation industry became a union leader to "improve the lot" of his fellow workers, while his mother, who was a secretary at the same plant, faced bias against women in the workplace head-on.

By the mid-1950s, the family had settled in King City where he was brought up as a "middle class guy with small town values."

"My parents taught me that government has a central role to play in ensuring the quality of our lives," said Councillor Ballard.

?Government is not an afterthought; it is central to making sure no one is left behind. I am a product of parents and grandparents who fought for social justice, sometimes against overwhelming odds. My parents taught me it is not whether you win or lose, you must simply try to do what you think is right.

?I have tried to do that as an Aurora Councillor. That often gets me in hot water, but I can sleep at night.?

Looking ahead to the campaign, which could get underway as early as April, Councillor Ballard said his work as an entrepreneur with his wife, Audrey, has lead him to the belief governments need to be ?well managed, accountable? and able to provide a ?secure future for all of its residents through pensions, health care, education,? and providing for seniors and infrastructure.

?I believe Ontario is capable of big things but we are not going to get there by slashing and cutting support to people, communities and businesses,? he concluded. Urging the audience to lace up and knock on doors ? and open their wallets ? to help turn Newmarket-Aurora into a Liberal riding, guest speakers wasted no time in outlining a game plan.

PC leader Tim Hudak's party can do whatever they can, wherever they can, to ?find increasingly creative ways to try and divide Ontario, Ontarians and to fear monger and scare people,? said Mr. Del Duca, addressing what he described as ?fear mongering? targeted at York Region seniors to feel the Liberal government's efforts to ?build upon and expand programming is something they should be afraid of.?

?Notwithstanding all of that noise that particular caucus and party puts out, there is good news for us as progressive Ontarians, there is good news for us as Ontario Liberals,? he said. ?We have seen this movie before. We have seen them try this. They tried it in 2003. They took it to the people of Ontario under different leadership and were resoundingly rejected. They took it out again in 2007 and 2011 and were rejected again.

?The good news for us is whenever the election happens to roll around again, I have no doubt they will continue to peddle that same approach dividing one part of Ontario against another and trying to scare people into voting for their reckless agenda, and I have no doubt they will once again be rejected by the people of Ontario.?