

Menegakis launches Conservative bid for Aurora's south riding



By Brock Weir

Former Richmond Hill MP Costas Menegakis has launched his bid for the Federal Conservative Party's nomination in Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill.

Mr. Menegakis launched his nomination campaign before a room full of supporters and former staffers at Aw, Shucks! on Saturday morning.

The move to strike out early on the campaign trail to secure the currently vacant Federal nomination follows on the heels of former MP Lois Brown, who launched a similar early campaign this fall to re-claim the riding of Newmarket-Aurora.

In his speech over the weekend, Mr. Menegakis pointed to a number of controversies swirling around the Liberal Government, currently represented in the riding by Leona Alleslev.

?What we have seen over the last two years has been a big derivation from what we expect from our Federal Government,? he said. ?The Conservative Party has always stood for business, always stood for ensuring Canadians have an economy in which they can flourish. You lead by example when you're in governance and certainly the focus on how we manage your taxpayer dollar is paramount in showing to Canadians that indeed the way we manage government dollars is prudent.

?That is not something we can say about the current Liberal government. They came in on a promise that they were going to have teeny little deficits of \$10 billion a year. Sadly, that ballooned to \$30 billion in each of the two budgets since they have been in power. We have seen an attempt by the Finance Minister to put some very strong, very tough controls on small business people. Fortunately, Canadians spoke resoundingly, with great leadership [from Conservative head Andrew Scheer] and the caucus to ensure that those changes they want to put in place were somehow curtailed, if not eliminated.?

On the subject of taxation, Mr. Menegakis focused on Federal Finance Minister Bill Morneau, who has recently been embroiled in a controversy surrounding shares from his family company leading to accusations of a potential conflict of interest from the opposition benches.

?You have to pass the ethics test and you have to pass the optics test,? he said. ?I don't know about the legal or ethical side, there are people responsible for monitoring and managing that effort, but certainly on the optics side there is a lot to be desired. It is important that when you're transparent you're transparent in every possible way because when you sit in an elected post, you are sitting in a borrowed chair.

?The privilege of sitting in that borrowed chair is given to you by residents and your constituents. The way you behave, the way you act, the way you vote, the way you conduct yourself and your business affairs is a way of leading by example. It is sad that these things have transpired.?

That being said, Mr. Menegakis said the 92 members of the Conservative caucus will continue to hold the government to account. Integral in this effort, he said, will be Mr. Scheer, who was voted party leader in May.

Describing the party leader as ?young?, ?dynamic? and ?energetic?, he said the party will stand for the principles it has always stood for: ?putting Canadians first? with low taxes, job creation, being ?tough on crime,? strong on international trade and ?strong on

defending the brave men and women who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces and those Canadian values that are so dear to every single person that lives in this country.?

Bolstering these platform planks, Mr. Menegakis cited the recent \$10 million settlement reached between the Federal Government and Omar Kadr and the Federal Government's plan to ?rehabilitate? former ISIS fighters returning to Canada.

?My position, and I am certain the position of pretty much everyone in this room, and I can tell you with great confidence that the people of Aurora and Richmond Hill would prefer to see those 60 people in jail where they belong,? said Mr. Menegakis. ?To speak about rehabilitating them and their ability to [re-enter] Canadian society is to disrespect the people that put their life on the line and served for us. It is not the Canadian way and I submit to you that I highly doubt anyone in this room can find someone in their community who can say, ?I will happily have one of these 60 people as my neighbour around my children, around the schools, around our malls and plazas and around our community centres. They should be in jail.

?There should be unequivocal, focused attention from our elected representatives on what they do every day that supports their community and the people that voted for them. Our representatives need to speak to us and I will tell you that Costas Menegakis will always put Richmond Hill and Aurora first.?