

MPP Elliott will not seek re-election this spring



The race to be Newmarket-Aurora's next MPP is on after Christine Elliott, who has served as the riding's Provincial representative ? along with the roles of Deputy Premier of Ontario and Minister of Health ? since 2018, announced she would not seek re-election.

Ms. Elliott formally confirmed her decision on Friday morning, a move she said was taken ?after considerable reflection? and discussion with her family.

?I sought elected office in 2006 because of my strong desire to improve the quality of life of individuals with special needs, as well as mental health challenges,? said Elliott, who previously represented the former riding of Whitby-Ajax between 2006 and 2007. ?I saw gaps in care that motivated me to action. I am so proud to have worked on these issues as the critic for the Official Opposition, Ontario's first Patient Ombudsman and most recently as Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. My passion for these issues, of course, evolved over time to include the breadth of challenges facing our health care system.

?The COVID-19 pandemic has tested us all, but none more so than our incredible frontline healthcare workers. I want to express my profound admiration of and gratitude for all who provide care to Ontarians each and every day. They do so bravely, selflessly, and at great expense to their own personal lives and circumstances.?

Ms. Elliott was appointed Ontario's Minister of Health shortly after the 2018 Provincial Election, which saw Aurorans pick the former Progressive Conservative leadership candidate over NDP candidate Melissa Williams and incumbent Liberal cabinet minister Chris Ballard.

Less than two years later, the Health Ministry was thrust into the spotlight as the world grappled with the global pandemic.

?Following a photo-finish leadership race, I was thrilled when Christine became a key part of our team and campaign,? said Premier Doug Ford on Friday on his closest rival in the leadership race. ?After voters placed their trust in us to form government, she was at the top of the list to serve as Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, posts she has held since the day we were sworn in and will continue to do so until the election.

?Christine has been at my side since the start of the pandemic. She remains instrumental in helping steer Ontario through one of the most difficult periods in our province's history, especially now as we continue to protect our hard-fought progress and ease public

health measures. I will continue to rely on her advice and counsel.

?In the shadow of the pandemic, it would be easy to forget all of Christine's many accomplishments as Minister of Health. Because of her reforms standing up Ontario Health, we have been able to reinvest hundreds of millions of dollars a year previously wasted on unnecessary bureaucracy directly into better patient care. Ontario Health Teams are up and running, providing more seamless care for patients. Roadmap to Wellness, unveiled by Christine in 2020, is better connecting the Province's long-neglected mental health and addictions system, enabled by historic funding.?

But these health measures, particularly related to the global pandemic, were not without controversy and as the Newmarket-Aurora ballot has taken shape in recent weeks, candidates with health backgrounds began lining up to challenge Ms. Elliott for the seat, including public health epidemiologist Denis Heng for the NDP and neuropsychologist Dr. Sylvain Roy for the Liberals.

Replacing Ms. Elliott as the Progressive Conservative nominee for Newmarket-Aurora is Dawn Gallagher Murphy, who has served as Ms. Elliott's constituency manager since her election.

?I have no doubt the people of Ontario will return [Premier Ford and the PC team] to government to continue the critical work of protecting Ontarians' health and safety while recovering from the pandemic,? Ms. Elliott continued in her statement. ?I want to thank my staff, as well as the public servants, particularly at the Ministry of Health, for their tireless efforts supporting and executing the absolutely herculean task of managing a once-in-a-lifetime crisis like COVID-19.

?To the people of Newmarket-Aurora and all the volunteers who have supported me, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve and fight for your interests at Queen's Park. I know that my successor will continue to advocate strongly for what matters most to you. Finally, and most importantly, I must express my love and gratitude to my family for their unconditional support not only over the past almost two decades, but throughout the last 24 months in particular. Like many Ontarians, I would not have been able to do my job day in and day out without their support.

?I am truly thankful for the journey I have taken in public life and am looking forward to what the next chapter will bring.?

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