

Newmarket-Aurora has 'appetite for change', says Liberal Peterson



By Brock Weir

This isn't the first time Kyle Peterson has carried the Liberal banner in Newmarket-Aurora in the midst of a Federal election; but in this, his second time out, there is something different in the air.

During the last Federal election, the Liberals were running under a different leader, and Conservative Stephen Harper had not yet received his parliamentary majority. But, a lot can happen in four years – and, in the view of Mr. Peterson, what hasn't happened can too speak volumes.

‘There is certainly an appetite for change that wasn't there four years ago,’ says Mr. Peterson, a lawyer and resident of Newmarket. ‘That is certainly a fundamental difference but, on a personal level, any time you have experience doing something, the second time is always a little bit better.’

‘I think Harper has had a majority for four years he really hasn't done anything with. The excuse used to be when he was in a minority people used to think once he gets his majority we will be able to see what his real objectives and goals are. I think the only thing he has done is come up with policies that attract his base more and alienated more progressive Canadians. I think Canadians are starting to see the real Stephen Harper.’

This time around, Mr. Peterson says he has the sense Canadians, not just residents of Newmarket-Aurora, see the Liberal Party as ‘certainly a more attractive option’ than it once was and that can be attributed to many factors: leader, a ‘great team’ and a ‘robust, strong and progressive platform.’

As he goes door to door to meet with residents, Mr. Peterson says the concerns he is encountering are as diverse as the community itself: jobs, future prospects, taking care of aging parents, and making ends meet.

‘The pocketbook issues, for a lot of people, are top of mind and rightfully so,’ he says. ‘With the refugee crisis, some people are obviously starting to talk about that with people saying Canada should be doing more. We used to be a leader in this field and we aren't now. Then you get people who are worrying about how they are going to pay for their children's education, about whether their children are going to have the same prospects they did. Newmarket and Aurora have a lot of young families and I can certainly empathise with a lot of the issues that are on people's minds.’

A tax cut for Canada's middle class is a key way the Liberal party plans to address this top-of-mind issue, he says. The middle class is overly taxed and ‘the only tax breaks Mr. Harper seems to give is to the wealthy.’ By cutting taxes for the middle class, Mr. Peterson says that puts money directly into their pockets. A fair and tax free expanded child benefit would also go a long way under

a Liberal government as it is geared more towards income than just anyone getting a cheque.

?I think it is ridiculous that millionaires in this country under Mr. Harper's plan are getting cheques to raise their kids and Mr. Mulcair is not going to change that,? says Mr. Peterson. ?The more you need, the more you should get when it comes to child benefits.?

Also helping to tackle that ?pocketbook issue? is job creation. To create jobs, Mr. Peterson says you have to invest.

?Nobody created jobs by cutting,? he says.

Employment is hurting, particularly when it comes to youth looking for jobs. Youth unemployment, he contends, is extremely high, making Canada run the risk of having a ?lost generation of youth? with university and post-secondary degrees, but no well-paying jobs to show for it. People with skills training need to be able to find those high-paying jobs that would enable them to buy houses, start a family, and consider high ticket items which, in turn, creates growth in the economy, he says.

Investing in infrastructure across the board is also a key tenet of this growth, he adds.

?To grow the economy, you have to invest,? says Mr. Peterson. ?You can't just invest in anything; you have to invest in the things that have the biggest return from a business standpoint?and that is infrastructure investments. Not only will there be assets after the fact, transportation grids, and things that aren't as sexy such as sewers and water mains, but both Aurora and Newmarket have an infrastructure deficit. The spin-off [of investment] is that it creates good, high-paying jobs, those people then pay taxes, which helps to generate growth. Right now it is the time to do it because the borrowing rate is quite low.?

Mr. Peterson says he is also proud to take the Liberal veterans' platform to the electorate. He characterises the Conservative government's treatment of veterans as ?disgraceful?, particularly the closure of veterans' services offices. A Liberal government will re-open those offices that are closed and provide in-person support for those who have put their lives on the line.

There is also a commitment to implement the recommendations stemming from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, including the establishment of a committee into the missing and murdered indigenous women.

Mr. Peterson first became engaged in politics as a teen at Huron Heights Secondary School. From those early days he says he was guided by ?a sense of fairness and equality? and that is still the case today. That is also why he says he found a fit in the Liberal Party.

?Every Canadian should have the same opportunities in life regardless of what country they came from, who their parents were, and that has guided me throughout my political life,? he says. ?Canada can be so much better. It can always be better. Improvements can be made all the time and I think the Liberals are the ones that best push for those changes, progression, and improving Canada.

?People need to ask themselves: has this government done all it can over the last decade to make Canada a better place, to make our economy stronger, to make opportunities available for all Canadians? I think the resounding answer to that is a no.?