

## Ontarians to go to the polls February 27 following snap election call

Ontarians will be going to the polls on February 27, following a snap election call from Progressive Conservative Premier Doug Ford.

Ford followed through Tuesday afternoon on comments he made in Brampton last week that he would ask Lieutenant-Governor Edith Dumont, the King's representative in Ontario, to dissolve the Legislature.

The Premier said an election nearly a year before one was scheduled would put his government in a better position to fight US President Donald Trump on his pledge to impose significant tariffs in Canada.

"We need a mandate from the people to fight against Donald Trump's tariffs ? the attack [against] our families, our businesses, our communities," said Ford on Friday afternoon at a Brampton transit event. "With a strong mandate, we will be able to fight [against] Donald Trump to make sure we stop the tariffs and make sure that we give certainty to the people of Ontario."

Dubbing the Province the "Engine of Canada," he suggested a stronger mandate would be "protecting all Canadians" against the economic threats from the south.

"There is a lack of leadership on the Federal level and on the Federal level we don't know who is going to be the next Prime Minister," he continued. "Right now, we need strong leadership in this country, we need strong leadership in this Province."

While he cited a power vacuum at the Federal level as a reason to call an early election to bolster his "mandate" he argued the time leading up to the February 27 election would not put Ontario in a similar position as he would stay active on the economic file.

Some, however, weren't buying it.

Indeed, on a visit to the Aurora Seniors' Centre on Thursday afternoon, Ontario Liberal Bonnie Crombie said an election call was "unnecessary and expensive" given Ford and the PCs' majority in the legislature.

Crombie was accompanied by Ontario Liberal candidate Chris Ballard, a former Ontario Liberal Cabinet Minister, on her stop in Newmarket-Aurora. Her time in the local community continued in Aurora-Oak-Ridges-Richmond Hill where she joined the riding's Ontario Liberal Candidate, Jason Cherniak, at the Chartwell Oak Ridges retirement residence.

"We both enjoyed meeting the people who live there and appreciate the opportunity," Cherniak shared on social media following the meeting. "Like most Ontarians, nobody we spoke to believed Doug Ford's excuse for calling an election."

As the countdown to the Provincial Election begins, ballots in Aurora's two ridings are yet to fill up.

In Newmarket-Aurora, incumbent Dawn Gallagher Murphy will once again represent the Progressive Conservative party, seeing a second term, while Chris Ballard will represent the Liberals. The Green Party banner will be carried in Newmarket-Aurora by David Jakubiec, who is described as a "passionate advocate for social justice and mental health, dedicated to fostering inclusion, independence, and community well-being through compassion and volunteer work."

Progressive Conservative MPP Michael Parsa will seek a third mandate as MPP for Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill, while he will be challenged by Liberal Jason Cherniak.

At press time this week, there was not a confirmed NDP candidate for Newmarket-Aurora or Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill, nor was there a confirmed Green candidate for Aurora's south riding.

If re-elected, Gallagher Murphy will serve Newmarket-Aurora for a second term after being elected in the last Provincial Election after a time as Constituency Manager for Christine Elliott while she represented the riding at Queen's Park. In addition to her MPP role, she also serves as Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health.

Should Ballard take Newmarket-Aurora, it will be a return to Queen's Park after losing re-election to Elliott in 2018. First elected to the Legislature in 2014, where he served as Minister of Housing and Minister for the Environment and Climate Change, he was an Aurora Councillor from 2010-2014.

Parsa was first elected in Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill as Progressive Conservative MPP in 2018, after previously running for the Federal Conservatives in the riding of Richmond Hill in 2015, where he placed second. Since he arrived as Queen's Park, he has served as Parliamentary Assistant to both the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade and to the President of the Treasury Board. He currently serves as Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

A lawyer by trade and active community member, including in the Richmond Hill Board of Trade, a success for Jason Cherniak in Aurora-Oak-Ridges-Richmond Hill as an Ontario Liberal candidate would be something of a political return, having sought to secure the riding's Federal Liberal nomination against future MP Leona Alleslev ahead of the 2015 election.

**By Brock Weir**