

Provincial candidates share their views on tariffs and transit

Tariffs and transit were hot topics on the campaign trail last week, with Provincial party leaders taking their messages to voters across Ontario.

Last week began with news that President Trump's threat to impose 25 per cent tariffs had been delayed by 30 days and The Auran ended the week by asking confirmed candidates from both of Aurora's electoral ridings to weigh in on how a vote for them would be a vote for facilitating inter-provincial trade and what needed to be done to break down any barriers that might be in place to make that happen.

Their answers are here below in the order in which they were received.

DENIS HENG (NDP) ? NEWMARKET-AURORA

?The Ontario NDP are on your side with a plan to defend jobs, fight back, and build a more resilient, tariff-proof Ontario,? said Heng. ?We will work with industry and labour unions to defend every job, help industries find new markets, promote Ontario-made goods, and direct government to procure locally. We will fight back with smart, targeted tariff responses as part of a Team Canada approach.

?Previous Ontario governments have had the power to make progress in eliminating inter-provincial trade barriers but chose not to act. Political inertia and market monopolies that have benefited from the status quo have been hurdles towards breaking down these barriers, but an Ontario NDP government is ready to do the hard work to make life more affordable for everyday Aurorans. Eliminating inter-provincial barriers will benefit our wider community by expanding the economy, lowering prices and expanding productivity. An Ontario NDP government is ready to shape Ontario's future to effectively address the needs of its people, not the profits of a few.?

NAILA SAEED (NDP) ? AURORA-OAK RIDGES-RICHMOND HILL

?For seven years, Doug Ford has made Ontario harder to live in, making Ontario weaker and more vulnerable to tariffs,? said Saeed. ?Manufacturing is the backbone of many communities in Canada, including right here in Aurora. The recent American tariff threats highlight just how important it is for us to strengthen inter-provincial trade to create resilient supply chains and reduce our dependency on unpredictable international markets. The NDP is committed to breaking down barriers to inter-provincial trade by streamlining regulations, reducing red tape, and fostering stronger collaboration between provinces. This means working with all levels of government to set standards?while still protecting worker rights, environmental protections, and product safety. We believe that trade agreements shouldn't come at the expense of our core values.

?To make sure we aren't in this vulnerable position again, the Ontario NDP will better tariff-proof our economy by supporting industries in finding new markets, and invest in retraining, and accelerate local infrastructure projects to keep people working.

We will fight tariff inflation to make life affordable.?

CHRIS BALLARD (LIBERAL) ? NEWMARKET-AURORA

?First, let's be clear: Canada did not get a real reprieve from tariffs. Donald Trump's policies are unstable and unpredictable, and his decisions change based on personal interest, not economic stability. He has made it clear that his focus is on enriching his inner circle, not supporting Canadian workers or businesses. Doug Ford has aligned himself with Trump in the past, going as far as to say he was happy Trump won, despite Trump's aggressive stance on tariffs and trade barriers. Ford's approach weakens Ontario's ability to push back and negotiate fair trade terms. We need leadership that will stand up for Ontario's manufacturers, protect local jobs, and work to remove trade barriers between provinces. To facilitate interprovincial trade and protect Ontario's economy, I would advocate

for: Reducing red tape and inconsistencies between provinces to make it easier for Ontario businesses to trade and expand across Canada; Developing a national procurement strategy to support Canadian-made goods, ensuring Ontario manufacturers remain competitive; [and] Strengthening Ontario's supply chain to reduce dependency on unpredictable U.S. markets.

Transit, ridership, and simply getting from Point A to Point B in your car has always been a top of mind for Aurora, whether they live, work and play in the community or commute into the city for work. From transit network expansions to creating a tunnel underneath the 401, and, closer to home, plans for Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass, we also asked candidates to address transit and transport needs within the Aurora community, and how each of them, if elected, work to realize solutions.

CHRIS BALLARD

"I completely understand residents' frustration with traffic congestion and transit challenges," he said. "While ideas like tunnels under the 401 might seem appealing, they are neither practical nor cost-effective for our community. Instead of spending billions on such projects, we need real, tangible solutions that benefit residents today. Regarding Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass, I do not support their construction. However, since work has already started, abruptly stopping these projects could be a massive waste of taxpayer dollars. If elected, I would ensure a rigorous review so these projects are structurally sound, environmentally responsible, and contracted ethically—unlike Doug Ford's backroom Greenbelt deals.

"We need the St. John's Sideroad and Highway 404 interchange to give residents north of Aurora easier access to Highway 404 and relieve traffic going through the town and clogging traffic. But highways alone won't solve our gridlock problem. Investing in GO Transit expansion and full system electrification is the smarter long-term solution to cut congestion, reduce emissions, and support economic growth. We also need to enhance 'last mile' local transit to serve our growing aging population, students, and commuters. That means: improving bus service connectivity within Aurora and surrounding areas; supporting municipalities with better transit funding; expanding transit access to underserved neighborhoods.

NAILA SAEED

"As your NDP candidate, I believe our top priority should be investing in public transit infrastructure that reduces congestion, minimizes environmental impact, and improves affordability. This includes expanding GO Transit services with increased frequency and better connectivity, enhancing local transit routes, and ensuring that last-mile connections are accessible to everyone, including seniors and people with disabilities. When it comes to major projects like Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass, the NDP has been clear: we oppose these costly highways that threaten our environment, farmlands, and Greenbelt. Instead of spending billions on projects that benefit a few, we should be redirecting funds to public transit expansions, road safety improvements, and sustainable transportation initiatives.

"Addressing congestion on Highway 401 requires innovative solutions. While projects like tunneling may be part of the conversation, we need to prioritize smart traffic management systems, improved carpooling infrastructure, and investments that reduce dependency on cars in the first place. If elected, I will advocate for policies that prioritize people over pavement, focusing on climate-friendly, cost-effective transit solutions that serve the needs of Aurora residents today and for generations to come."

DENIS HENG

"Transit and transport needs within the Aurora community are tied to respecting residents' time and money. An Ontario NDP government will save GTA commuters money and time by taking back Highway 407 and eliminating tolls. Opposite to what the PCs claimed when they sold off Highway 407, privatization has not led to lower tolls. Toll would be removed on provincially owned sections of the highway on Day 1 of an Ontario NDP government and we would reopen the deal with the private company that runs the 407 to bring it back into public hands. This is an immediate action that will use existing infrastructure to address traffic congestion on GTA highways, achieving improved travel times and allowing for efficient flow of goods to support economic growth. It will cost less than Doug Ford's [plan] to dig a 401 tunnel from Brampton to Scarborough, a 'serious' plan that has no feasibility study, timeline, or cost estimate. We can get traffic moving without paving over parts of the Greenbelt and the Holland

Marsh.?

Responses were not received at press time from Progressive Conservative candidates Dawn Gallagher Murphy (Newmarket-Aurora) or Michael Parsa (Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill), Ontario Liberal Jason Cherniak (Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill) or from Green Party candidate David Jakubiec (Newmarket-Aurora).

By Brock Weir