

Somerville enters Progressive Conservative race



By Brock Weir

Aurora's Stephen Somerville has joined the race to take over from Frank Klees as the Progressive Conservative candidate for Newmarket-Aurora.

Mr. Somerville threw his hat into the ring on Monday, nearly two weeks after Mr. Klees' surprise announcement he would not be seeking re-election.

The Auroran columnist joins Newmarket Councillors Maddie Di Muccio and Jane Twinney as the third candidate in the PC race thus far. Perennial candidate Dorian Baxter, who has often run on the Federal ticket for the Progressive Canadian party, also plans to put his name into the mix later this week.

Active with the conservatives on both the national and provincial levels for over 30 years, and with a 15-year career background in the energy sector, Mr. Somerville says he wants to continue where Mr. Klees will leave off at the end of the next provincial election.

"I have had a really good chance to work with two of the finest representatives that we have in Lois Brown and Frank Klees, and I have had a really good chance to work with them and watch how they operate," he says. "I can tell you one thing: I think what this community really wants is a continuation of the first-class customer representation they have come to expect from a representative in our community."

With his career background in energy, it should come as no surprise this is a portfolio he has watched intently from the sidelines, both as a member of the party and a member of the public at large. As such, if elected to Queen's Park, it is one issue on which he plans to be particularly active.

"One priority is respect for taxpayer dollars," he said. "The second is accountability within our public organizations. The third is a strong and sensible energy policy. Energy and economy are very important. When you look at some of the other issues, it is all about jobs and the local economy. It's about gridlock and the local commute to work. There have been scandals in the finances here which are not very good in Ontario, and when you look at the energy and gas plant fiasco, I have had very serious concerns as someone in my community."

?I think I have something to bring to the party to help on that.?

Having written nearly 300 columns for The Auroran over the past six years, as well as being an active member in the Aurora community, he is not an unfamiliar face here. To reach new audiences ? and potential new party members ? he plans a series of coffee parties, and a number of meetings with people in both Newmarket and Aurora to introduce himself, including an official campaign launch at King Richard's English Pub in Aurora on Saturday at 2 p.m.

Sizing up his fellow candidates who, aside from Councillors di Muccio and Twinney, and Mr. Baxter also include Councillor Chris Ballard, who is seeking the local provincial Liberal nod, he says they are going to have a ?good race? based on respect.

?I am going to be focusing on the positive attributes I bring to this race and the positive message I can move forward on,? he says.

Although he has yet to formally file his papers, Mr. Baxter told The Auroran he intends to do so this week. Mr. Baxter has often stood as a Federal candidate in Newmarket-Aurora, as well as in other by-elections throughout the Greater Toronto Area as a member of the Progressive Canadian Party, a group formed by former Federal cabinet minister Sinclair Stevens, protesting the merger of the Federal PC party and the Canadian Alliance to form today's Conservative party.

An Anglican minister, Mr. Baxter is known as the leader of the Christ the King Graceland Independent Anglican Church, in which he melds Christian teachings with rock and roll as ?Elvis Priestly.? He praised Mr. Klees for maintaining the ?progressive? arm in his party.

?The big thing here for me is to bring integrity and accountability [into the race],? he said. ?[Stevens and I] thought it would be certainly worthwhile seeing if the powers-that-be would have an interest in having me as a candidate for nomination.?

It is time, he said, for politicians to put the needs of their fellow Canadians ?above their own? and tackle the root causes of poverty to build a better society.

?We need to have leadership by example,? he said.

For more information on Mr. Somerville's candidacy, visit www.stephensomerville.ca.