

Southlake is top priority for Newmarket-Aurora PC candidate Dawn Gallagher Murphy



As constituency manager for outgoing Newmarket-Aurora MPP ? and Ontario Health Minister ? Christine Elliott, Dawn Gallagher Murphy has had a front row seat to the importance residents place in Southlake Regional Health Centre.

Now that Ms. Elliott has stepped aside as the riding's Progressive Conservative candidate ahead of June's Provincial Election, Ms. Gallagher Murphy, a 13-year resident of Aurora has been tasked with carrying the PC banner in Newmarket-Aurora and, if elected, promises to make local health care her number-one priority.

Since the Ford government was first elected in 2018, Ms. Gallagher Murphy says millions of dollars in public investments have come into the Newmarket-Aurora community, with a significant share of these funds going to the local hospital.

?This will be the Number One priority for me as well moving forward,? she says of investments in Southlake. ?In 2020, we announced \$3.5 million to add 16 additional beds to increase the capacity at Southlake. Last year, we announced \$6.5 million to add 12 inpatient adult mental health and addiction beds to the hospital. Over the past four years, we have been providing funds under the Health and Infrastructure Renewal and those funds have been helping them with infrastructure, electrical upgrades and things like that. That, to me, has been great to be able to support Southlake with what their local needs have been.

?[Another priority] I would say is long-term care. Last year in 2021 we announced 576 new long-term care spaces in Newmarket and just [this month] we announced another 157 spaces plus 163 redeveloped spaces. For Newmarket alone, that is 733 new long-term care spaces that will be built by 2028 and these will be state-of-the-art, comfortable, and safe spaces. If I compare that to the previous government between 2011 and 2018, 611 net new spaces were developed across the Province. Here we are developing them in just Newmarket alone [at] 733. That to me is excellent progress our government is making.?

Another mark of progress, she says, is a grant of \$200,000 to the Canadian Mental Health Association of York Region and South Simcoe for the planning and development of a York Region Mental Health and Addictions Hub which, she says, will be a ?centre of excellence? not just for York Region but the Province of a whole.

?When we look at the big picture when it comes to mental health and addictions, this new hub will be able to take youth and adults and really go into a space where you're dealing with mental health professionals and people with lived experience,? she says.

In addition to Southlake and local health care, another top priority should she receive the confidence of local voters is helping businesses recover from the global pandemic.

Ms. Gallagher Murphy comes into the race with more than 25 years in the private sector, including 15 as a business owner, providing consultative work with the credit card payment industry. One of the issues businesses have brought up over the last four years, she says, is an emphasis on local manufacturing and ?Ontario-Made? options.

?We have to look at even our government's procurement,? she says on underscoring Made-in-Ontario options. ?We really have to be pushing Ontario-made because that is going to help with our economic recovery. On March 9, our Government announced the Business Initiatives Act and what that does is for all the public sector procurements, the focus is going to be on Ontario-made goods and services. This is something we have been advocating for and it is our Government who is doing it. We're getting it done.?

As she goes knocking on doors in the lead-up to the election, Ms. Gallagher Murphy says she is looking forward to having further conversations with residents on the issues that matter to them.

?When I am knocking on doors and speaking with residents, this is what's resonating with them: we have been getting it done through the pandemic really ensuring that our constituents are feeling attended to because we are addressing the healthcare, we're addressing the long-term care, we're addressing the mental health and addictions challenges, we're addressing our local businesses' needs and listening to them. That is what our government is doing and that's what we're getting done now and that's what we'll be getting done into the future.

?What is resonating with them is we need to build Ontario. Everybody recognizes we have huge population growth and we cannot be stagnant. We need to move forward. That is what I am looking forward to: speaking to them about what we've been doing to get it done and build Ontario. One of these infrastructure items is housing and the supply crisis we have going on right now. We want to ensure everybody has a home. How do you do that? Our government has been taking part in a three-part consultation process and this process has been all about how do we take these diverse perspectives and implement a policy that is forward-thinking, that will allow us to unlock and fast-track the housing opportunities in our Province.?

?I am extremely honoured to be named candidate for Newmarket-Aurora,? she concludes. ?This is a dream and I am humbled by this opportunity; I will be working tirelessly for every single vote out there in Newmarket-Aurora.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter