

Voters need an alternative voice, says Green Party candidate



By Brock Weir

Andrew Roblin is not your run of the mill candidate.

The Aurora native, who secured the Newmarket-Aurora nomination for the Green Party of Ontario last week, has heard all the arguments before. His friends, for instance, often share his views and buy into his vision but, at the end of the day, like so many voters, fall one step short of casting their vote for the Greens. And this is a mindset he hopes to change by the June 12 election.

“People need to be aware there is an alternative choice and they don't have to keep going back and forth to the same parties,” he says. “It is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.”

While he has always had an interest in politics, Roblin says he typically shies away from the spotlight. This election, however, provides a “unique opportunity” both for Newmarket-Aurora and Ontario as a whole to “take a stand” at the ballot box on how Ontarians want to be governed.

After graduating in environmental studies from York University, he kept seeing throughout his studies how “everything is deeply related to environmental issues, social justice and economics and there is no way to escape this.” This, he says, drew him to the Green party.

“I feel like the Liberals and Conservatives, and the NDP as well, that they are using their old ideology to address 21st century issues and I feel like the Green Party says, “Let's take a step back. Let's take these issues, contextualize them, and approach them on an independent basis.”

If elected, Roblin's top priorities are youth employment, something he says is a top concern for everyone, doing away with the minimum wage in favour of a “liveable wage on par with the cost of living”, and better broadband internet for all Ontarians, particularly for businesses.

“With jobs, a lot of parties say they are going to create jobs, etc., but most of them are far away,” he says of the other parties using old ideas to address newer issues. “People are travelling, creating pollution, causing traffic, taking time away from their families. The Greens are proposing to create more local jobs, and we address transit issues by doing exactly that.”

Another issue which Roblin says should be tackled differently is the issue of rising electricity costs. While the NDP will give families \$100 rebates to pay for their electrical bills, this, he says, will just encourage people to use more electricity. The Greens, on the other hand, want to encourage people to retrofit their homes to conserve energy.

?People should have the freedom to do what they want, but at the same time they should make the conscious decision that if we do this now, we will be able to handle further issues down the road, as population increases and power becomes more expensive or, at the very least, we are starting to transition to more alternative energies.

?Energy conservation has to be a part of it. There is no way around that and buying energy is going to be cheaper for us in the long run. We keep revamping these nuclear power plants, it is going to cost us more because they are never on budget and never on time. That is one way we will offset a lot of those issues that people have been having with the high cost of energy for business.?

As for business, Roblin and the Greens are focused on local job creation. Redirecting corporate tax breaks ?from Bay Street? to small businesses will create more local jobs for local people, he says, as well as provide incentives for entrepreneurs who want to start innovative businesses locally in such areas as the technology sector.

?Part of the program of having a lower tax rate is it allows them to be more innovative?and they can be more creative with regards to how they are going to be adaptive to new fluctuating markets,? he says. ?Just adding more [traffic] lanes and increasing the frequency [of trains and buses] will be an immediate transit resolution, but it is not going to solve the issue of transit. A transit solution will be bringing more local jobs to the area as well as investing in broadband internet in smaller towns so they can do their work from home.?

Roblin, a newlywed, divides his time between Aurora and Mississauga, where he is about to begin a new job.