

Walter Bauer wants to turn Aurora's north riding Green



By Brock Weir

Climate change drove thousands to take to the streets in city after city last week, and that same issue is fuelling Walter Bauer in his campaign to be Newmarket-Aurora's next MPP.

The long-time Aurora resident is carrying the banner of the Green Party of Canada in this month's Federal election and he says the climate crisis spurred him to take his support for the Green party and its environmental platform to the next level, taking it door-to-door and, he hopes, to Ottawa.

'I pay attention to scientists and there are 300-odd scientists who say we're heading for a crisis and that concerns me,' he says. 'The other reason I am running is I am really angry at politicians, the spin and the double-speak about critical issues. [Politicians] say things that are skewed and just untrue.'

A prime example, he says, is the Conservative leader's pledge to put in place tax credits for taking transit should his party form government on October 21. Bauer says his first reaction was, 'That's a good idea,' but digging deeper he found that it was an initiative the previous Conservative government pursued and didn't meet its objectives to get more people to park their cars and take transit.

Yet, climate change tops the list of issues he is hearing at the doorstep, he says.

'The way I approach a resident [at the door] is I ask them if they are concerned about climate change and I swear to God that 90 per cent of them say they are,' he says. 'That doesn't mean they're voting Green, but 90 per cent of them say they are concerned.'

With that opening Bauer says he takes the time to explain

the Green Party's platform on climate change, which he says is the 'most extensive' of the Federal parties, as well as the platform with the 'most aggressive targets' that apply to all of Canada.

'As Canadians we have the largest carbon footprint in the world,' he says. 'It is around 28 tonnes per person. It is difficult for us to see the Amazon forest burning in Brazil and say, 'You have to do something about it,' when our carbon footprint is so high. In my mind, to talk about the riding in that sense is the wrong message. We have to deal with this as a country, we have to lead by example.'

First and foremost in this national strategy is a price on pollution, which the Greens coin as 'Fee & Dividend,' similar to the structure floated by the incumbent Liberal government.

Housing is another issue that crops up at the door and, as a community volunteer, Mr. Bauer says this concept should be broadened to include shelter as well.

'For two years, I worked for Inn from the Cold (the Newmarket-based homeless initiative) and I was serving breakfast throughout the winter for two years,' he says. 'I spoke to the management there and there were individuals I thought who, with a little bit of a push, they could get out of this. [The manager] said to me, 'You're assuming they want to get out of it. What they need is shelter. They don't need anything else.'

'In terms of housing, I volunteered for Habitat for Humanity, so we were building houses and I got firsthand knowledge and appreciation from residents who are moving into these houses. They couldn't afford a house in any other way, so we need low-cost housing, we need high-density housing, we need coop housing. There is room for all that in Newmarket-Aurora.'

The Green Party, he adds, will commit \$750,000,000 for new builds, as well as rental assistance programs that will benefit 125,000 households. The Party also will move forward in financing more co-op housing initiatives and appointing a housing minister to oversee the program.

Yet inequities remain outside of housing, says Bauer, and the Greens are committed to closing the gaps. Citing wealth inequities, he says further taxation on 'the super-wealthy' is necessary as well as closing tax loopholes for capital gains. Off-shore 'tax-dodging' also needs to end, and new taxes need to be introduced for e-commerce giants like Amazon, Netflix and Uber to make sure they are taxed in an equitable manner.

Looping back to housing, a financial transaction tax needs to be introduced to apply to those flipping houses rather than opening them up for rental income.

'We need a guaranteed livable income,' he adds. 'If people

know they have a guaranteed liveable income, what they are going to do with the money is not invest it like you and I might; they are going to buy things and they are going to buy things locally. That is going to improve the economy. We need a \$15 minimum wage. Right now, people are working two jobs, they are not getting benefits and that has got to end. They are working 10 ? 12 hours a day and they are worn out. All these things need to take place to make a more equitable society.

?If you don't vote for what you believe, you're voting for mediocrity. You're voting for primarily two parties that have been back and forth forever and they don't really care anymore about what they say. You're not voting for what you believe. Even if we (the Greens) don't win, I am trying to move the needle. If we get a large enough percentage, these two major parties are going to start saying, 'Maybe we better start paying attention.' They have to pay attention to it.?