

Ballard to run in Newmarket-Aurora in 2018



By Brock Weir

When Ontarians next go to the polls in 2018, Aurora voters will find themselves voting once again in a split riding.

Following the Federal Government's lead, the Province has redrawn its electoral boundaries, splitting Aurora on the north side of Wellington Street to the riding of Newmarket-Aurora and the south side of Wellington to the new riding of Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill.

Last week, local Liberals met to formally establish the new Provincial Liberal Riding Association of Newmarket Aurora and, following the meeting, Aurora's incumbent MPP Chris Ballard made clear his intentions to seek re-election in Aurora's new north riding.

"It seems like a good fit, quite frankly," says Mr. Ballard, Ontario's Minister of Housing and Poverty Reduction, who actually lives just on the south side of Wellington Street. "I feel like Aurora and Newmarket have always been my traditional stomping grounds when I grew up in King City, whether it be what high schools we competed against in football, or went shopping, this area is home. I think that was a major deciding factor for me. I am very close to Newmarket-Aurora."

He also cites "strong support" in Newmarket and encouragement from our northern neighbours.

"I have had constituents from the south end of Aurora ask me to consider running for the south end of Aurora. I have had people in the north end of Richmond Hill and Oak Ridges talk to me about representing their area but, at the end of the day, I have really enjoyed strong support in Newmarket-Aurora and I feel comfortable running in that area."

Newmarket-Aurora's new Provincial Liberal riding association was established at a meeting on Thursday night and a similar meeting to found the inaugural riding association in Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill will follow in due course.

Nevertheless, there is still some discontent over Aurora being split down the middle, electorally speaking, says Mr. Ballard, before noting he too shares the sentiment.

"Ontario made the decision a long time ago, to the best of its ability, to follow the Federal boundaries so we don't have too much overlap," he says. "The only thing that has been expressed to me is just continued disappointment that Elections Canada made the decision to split [Aurora] in half."

There is no shortage of talent to go around in forming the southern riding association, but focus will soon shift to selecting a candidate.

It should be someone who is well connected to the community, says Mr. Ballard. My political philosophy is whether you're a town councillor, an MPP or an MP, you have to have strong roots in the community and good connections, not just with the power brokers, not just with the elected officials, [but] with the regular folks whose lives your decisions will impact.

The most important thing to understand is I am the MPP for Newmarket-Aurora, all of Aurora is in my riding, and I will continue to work on everyone's behalf. Even with the new boundaries, I will work on behalf of Aurora, whether a resident is north or south of Wellington, or an institution is north or south of Wellington, it won't really matter to me. Whatever I can do to help Aurora, I will do it.