

## BROCK'S BANTER: Are they ready? Are you ready?

By Brock Weir

Like countless others across the country, I figured taking a few minutes out of this Thanksgiving mayhem to vote for the Newmarket-Aurora candidate of my choice would save a bit of time in the long run.

After all, October 19 promises to be a very busy day ? particularly for this writer who has two Federal ridings to cover, two winners and, by the night's end, eight others who?well, let's just say eight others who didn't fare so well at the mercy of the voters.

I was wrong. Arriving at Town Hall with my voter card and ID in hand, I was immediately struck by the sea of humanity seeming to be in all corners of the main floor. There were scores of individuals, with similar piece of paper and plastic in their mitts, filling up foldout chairs in the lobby, spilling down the hallway, and filling row upon row of benches in the Council Chambers.

After one of the voting clerks checked my card, I was shuffled into the Council chambers and the second row from the top, casting an eye across the room to my typical post at a Tuesday night Council session. Our line moved relatively swiftly, only having to wait about 35 minutes before all was said and done.

Others, however, did not fare as lucky and some had been waiting there over an hour with the light at the end of their respective tunnel no bigger than a pinprick. Others had waited so long they had to finally abandon their mission, having popped their turkeys in the oven before coming to flex their democratic muscles, sure in the knowledge this would be a walk in the park.

The wait at the advance polls left a bit of time to soak everything in. By the time I was lined up near my polling booth, with little else to do, I perused the latest class photo of Mayor and Council on the wall. I have passed this photo numerous times, and gone in for a close look once or twice, but this was the first time I noticed Councillor Harold Kim's name misspelled on the legend.

(Actually, that's being kind. The legend misses the mark on Councillor Kim by a wide margin!)

It offered the chance to eavesdrop in the politest possible way on why voters were planning on voting the way they were going to ? some reasons being more grounded in logic than others ? and it also provided the opportunity to do some meditation on the election campaign thus far. And it has been an interesting one.

Nobody can say that over the last several weeks we have experienced anything but a bounty of democracy in its best and worst forms. All sides have accused each other of fear-mongering, all sides have proposed some policy planks based on a solid foundation all the while peppering their platforms with bizarre proposals often trying to capitalize on a wave of brief public sentiment.

An example? The Conservative Party's plan to double Canada's panda population following the recent infanticipation at the Metro Toronto Zoo. A fun little plank, perhaps, but really ? there's no place for the state in the enclosures of our zoos!

Last week, I was particularly transfixed by the Newmarket-Aurora All-Candidates meeting hosted at Newmarket Theatre by the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce. Beginning with the decision of Green Party candidate Vanessa Long to pull out of the proceedings during her opening remarks in solidarity with Progressive Canadian candidate Dorian Baxter who was not invited to participate, it was the start of a wild ride.

It was a raucous affair to be sure, and a session I found particularly revealing about the three remaining candidates. The debate format allowed a few opportunities for the polished veneers of each candidate to give way just a little bit to reveal a bit about the person behind the candidate, and each participant gave a variety of good points.

While this edition of The Auroran goes into greater detail on some of these points on other pages, for the purposes of this column I would like to focus on one particular question which I found particularly interesting with less than a week before polls open on Monday.

The question posed to the candidates was this: ?If your party was found to have misled the public and broke the public trust, are you prepared to step down from public office??

Conservative Lois Brown: ?No, I am hired by the people of Newmarket-Aurora.?

NDP Yvonne Kelly: ?Yes, because the reasons I am involved in this go beyond just politics.?

Liberal Kyle Peterson: ?Yes, it is a question of integrity.?

All reasonable answers, to be sure, but in this instance I think I have to give a point to Ms. Brown.

She is absolutely correct. Every candidate in this race, whether they are running for the top job in Newmarket-Aurora or Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill, are all rowing in the same direction. They are in the biggest job interview of their lives ? some for a second or third kick at the can ? and their futures lie in the hands of you, the voters.

Your career prospects resting in the hands of the fickle fingers of tens of thousands of eligible voters in Aurora, Newmarket, Oak Ridges and Richmond Hill is not an enviable position for anyone to be in, but these 10 candidates are stepping up to the plate to help

shape the future of this community and, indeed the nation, in the best way they know how.

Whether or not you subscribe to any of these visions in particular is up to you.

And that, at the end of the day, is the big question. While these candidates are putting themselves out there for your vote, knocking on your door, or pitching themselves to you in a public venue, it is your job to take note, see what works for you and vote for how you want Canada to be.

It is a sacred trust. As Ms. Brown says, people in the position she is vying to keep, are ?hired by the people.?

Let's all be informed prospective employers and make sure we are armed with as much information as possible before we make a decision on who we want to fill our job vacancy. It is the only way forward within a healthy company, and it is the only way forward for a healthy democracy ? and every voice counts.

To all ten candidates looking to serve both of Aurora's ridings and hit the ground running on October 20, I wish you the best of luck at the ballot box. It has been a good fight, and I am sure everyone will be a bit relieved when it is over.

To the voters, I wish you the best of luck in your very important deliberations.

See you after the chips fall.