

Klees passes Progressive Conservative torch to Jane Twinney



By Brock Weir

Frank Klees has officially passed Newmarket-Aurora's Progressive Conservative baton to Jane Twinney.

Ms. Twinney, who serves as Councillor for Newmarket, was formally acclaimed as the riding's Progressive Conservative candidate for the forthcoming Provincial election at a meeting at The Mansion on Thursday night.

It was the end of a dramatic nomination race which saw Councillor Twinney square off against fellow Newmarket Councillor Maddie di Muccio and long-time Conservative advocate (and Auroran columnist Stephen Somerville) for the party's banner.

Last month, Councillor di Muccio's application to seek the nomination was controversially rejected by the Party and, later, Mr. Somerville bowed out of the race citing threats to himself and his family.

All of that was put aside last week, however, as supporters saluted Councillor Twinney for her ability to engage the community.

"I found her to be very approachable and a very good listener," said Newmarket resident Diane Wood who lives in Councillor Twinney's ward. "With Jane, I have found there is no beating around the bush. She has always addressed my concerns with diplomacy. She has never put down anybody that is involved in a situation and is willing to have kind words about everybody and unwilling to get involved in burning bridges."

Similar sentiments were expressed by fellow Newmarket resident Mike Smith, a long-time volunteer who said he doesn't necessarily subscribe to any political stripe. When he thinks about people he wants to lead in Newmarket-Aurora, he looks for someone who will not only lead in legislation, but also someone who will lead from the "grassroots."

"When I think about someone I want to represent me, and you, in our community I want somebody who is connected to our community, someone who is approachable, understands our local issues, and someone who also thinks in the big picture and is a relationship builder," he said. Before he invited her to come up on stage to address her supporters, Mr. Klees said the evening was "bittersweet" and thanked the PC crowd for their support over the last nearly 19 years. Recalling the day he first walked into the Legislature, he recalled the journey it took to get him that far and paid tribute to his parents for instilling in him the values that you can do anything you set your mind to.

"We have so much to be thankful for," he said. "It came to the point where it was time to pass the torch onto someone else who has the energy and shares the same values, it would have to be someone of whom I can be proud. When I got the phone call from Jane that evening [that she wanted to run, that] was great news to me."

?I have been observing Jane over time, I saw her engagement in the community, I saw her commitment to hard work and dedication, her desire to make life better for all people. I saw her commitment to our party, her dedication to our campaigns and I observed her as she engaged with people. [She] is the kind of person I am so proud will carry on in Newmarket-Aurora and I believe she will have a tremendous career as someone who will make a difference in people's lives in our community.?

Returning the compliment, Councillor Twinney said she had ?big shoes to fill?, adding she would not disappoint him or the residents of Aurora and Newmarket.

?I have made a commitment to carrying on that legacy and continuing to get things done for the people of Newmarket and Aurora,? she said. ?My experience as an elected official has given me a good understanding of how government works and how policies and legislation impact those living in Newmarket and Aurora. Of course, there will be things to learn at Queen's Park, but the foundation has been made locally and I promise to continue the representation that residents are used to and deserve.

?My record at the municipal level espouses my conservative values. I have voted against budgets when taxes were not kept under specified target amounts set by my council; that included a vote against a tax levy I didn't feel had the opportunity to go through proper consultation.

?I believe in the PC platform and it is the only party that can get Ontario back on track. My Ontario is one that will have well-paying skilled jobs and will help our students train for those jobs. My Ontario will ensure our most vulnerable don't pay the price for the mismanagement of the Liberal government.?

This mismanagement, she said, ranges from the cancellations of the gas plants and controversy swirling around files such as the ORNGE Air Ambulance. At the end of the day, the most vulnerable will take a hit and, she argued, those vulnerable are seniors.

?I sat on a panel with our MPP Frank Klees with respect to alternative community living centres for seniors and people with disabilities who are facing cutbacks from the government,? she said. ?Their stories are heart-wrenching and it is very upsetting to see that the most vulnerable are the ones who are facing cutbacks first. When billions can be wasted through scandals?now it is the seniors who are paying for this through cuts.?