

Newmarket-Aurora Votes 2022: Time is running out for meaningful change, says Green Party candidate Rodriguez



Time is running out for the change we need, but a vote can help us get closer to where we need to be, says Carolina Rodriguez, and this is what inspired her to represent the Green Party in Newmarket-Aurora in this spring's Provincial election.

Ms. Rodriguez wants to make a meaningful contribution to her children's future and those of her grandchildren, and in doing so, she says she found a perfect fit within the Green Party of Ontario.

‘Climate change is getting scarier and scarier as we move on and we’re not changing the way that we behave here in Ontario and the way our policies are in regards to energy production and fossil fuel use,’ she says. ‘We are in one of the most privileged places in the world – we have the technology, we have the funds, and the capability of moving beyond fossil fuels, but for some reason we have not been able to do that. I want to contribute to the movement.’

Being part of the movement includes a well-thought-out environmental plan, and that is why she was attracted to the Green Party. It's a platform, she says, that not only has the right ‘sense of urgency’ but looks at the environment and policy from a holistic perspective.

‘The Green Party is kind of seen in the general eye as [just] conserving things – conserve the environment, conserve the trees, don't build, don't develop – but it is really not true,’ says the 22-year-old Newmarket resident. ‘The Greens want to grow and expand into various different aspects than just planting trees or putting boundaries on lakes and rivers; we look at society as a whole and we see the different things that the environment has on every single aspect of society, and that's what makes us different from so many other parties. It's not that we ignore the other side, but we actually include the environment in everything and we want to make a holistic society that has the environment within social policy as well.’

Going door-to-door this election campaign, Ms. Rodriguez says the top issue she is hearing from voters is housing and affordability. As a recent student, she says she ‘knows we will not be able to afford homes if things continue this way’ and if the government doesn't do anything ‘than just build homes’ because that is the policy of four years ago and it only got worse.’

Making sure communities like Newmarket-Aurora are as efficient and accessible as possible is a top priority for Ms. Rodriguez should she be sent to Queen's Park on June 2. This, she says, includes the development of transportation options for the community and ensuring communities are as complete as possible.

‘Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass are not needed by us,’ she says. ‘We already have a lot of cars on the road every single morning and going back home every single night and those commutes will not change in length because of the 413 or the Bradford

Bypass ? maybe by 60 seconds maximum, while costing \$10 billion to the taxpayers. We don't need to look outwards, we need to look inwards. We need to make sure Aurora and Newmarket has the public transportation infrastructure in place and has that to be able to be affordable for so many people. We need that to be our first option. We also need people-powered transit; we need to be able to commute in our own communities for 15 minutes for everything, from work, school, play, relaxation and socialization. We need that to be in our communities and not outside of them. That is not only how we decrease our greenhouse gas emissions but it is also how we improve our own community cohesion and how we build safety in our communities.

?We really need to focus inward, we need to focus on Newmarket-Aurora and what they specifically need. We need to build small businesses to make sure people have a source of income here and don't have to look outside. We need to be able to look at affordable housing so people can live where they work.?

The voting system, she says, is ?not representative of the people who live within it? and that could be an uphill climb for Green candidates like herself. Making people feel genuinely represented at Queen's Park is something she says that needs to be earnestly tackled.

?Our leader, Mike Schreiner, was the only Green Party MPP in the last four years and the amount of change he made is significant,? she says. ?He put himself out there, he stood strong for the people who voted for him, and he made sure Green values were heard throughout Parliament. When I talk to people who want to vote strategically, I talk to them about the importance of voting for what they actually believe in regardless if it is Green or not. It is important for our democracy to be able to vote for what you believe in and even if let's say I am the only one who goes to Queen's Park with Mike, I know we can get a lot done together, especially seeing what he has done for the last four years and I know the people of Newmarket-Aurora will be adequately represented with parties that they actually believe in that will have their best interests in mind and genuinely cares about them as a community not just their own power-grabbing expansion of everything model.

?As [an immigrant] I know what it is to be an outsider and make your way here and what it feels like to completely leave a big part of your life behind. I think that gives me a lot of compassion for a lot of others who have led difficult lives, difficult stories, and the ways we all come to Newmarket-Aurora because all of us are immigrants here in Canada and we need to be able to hold that compassion with each other and be able to represent each other as adequately as possible.?

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter