

ONTARIO VOTES 2018: 'I'm not going anywhere,' says defeated Ballard, predicting 'a very interesting next few years'



By Brock Weir

Chris Ballard is predicting 'a very interesting next few years' for Newmarket-Aurora as he looks to life away from Queen's Park. The riding's former Member of Provincial Parliament who most recently served as Minister of the Environment in Kathleen Wynne's cabinet, was defeated in last Thursday's election, coming in third place behind victor Christine Elliott of the Progressive Conservative party and Melissa Williams of the Ontario NDP.

Speaking to The Auran after the results were clear while waiting to formally concede to Ms. Elliott, Mr. Ballard suggested that the riding might be in for several changes under a Doug Ford government.

'I think given Mr. Ford's platform, we're going to see a very interesting four years for the people of Ontario and certainly here in Newmarket-Aurora,' he said. 'There is a lot of change coming and I don't think people will necessarily be pleased by it when they see what they've got.'

Top of mind, he said, are 650 jobs at a Magna plant in Newmarket which, he said, were kept in Canada due to an investment from Ontario's Jobs & Prosperity Fund, 'which Mr. Ford said he would axe,' along with the pending new GO Train station planned for Mullock Drive.

'I suspect we're not going to see that, given the Tories axed GO Transit the last time they came into power,' said Mr. Ballard. 'There are all of those things ' continued investments in our hospital, the mental health hub I have been a champion of ' all of those things I am very concerned about for our local riding.'

Before heading to Ms. Elliott's victory party at her Yonge and Savage campaign office, Mr. Ballard spoke to supporters at his own event at the Newmarket Legion.

He said he had been 'blessed to help shape the destiny of this great province and this wonderful community of Newmarket-Aurora we call home.'

'We fought a great campaign and I can't think of anything else I would do different, quite frankly,' Mr. Ballard told his team. 'Without your help, I wouldn't have (a) had the most amazing four years where we have done some fantastic things for this province. I thank each and every one of you for your dedication to the Liberal philosophy of care and opportunity. It really speaks to who you are that you would support me and support the Liberal party in that area.'

'We really can hold our heads up high and say our Liberal government was the government that looked out for the little guy. We looked out for the most vulnerable members of our society. It was a government that protected our environment and took real strong steps to fight climate change. As tonight demonstrates, politics can often serve up a rather bitter pill to swallow, but that is what it is. In a few minutes, Cathy [Gapp, Campaign Manager] and I will drive to Christine Elliott's campaign and I will offer her my congratulations and I am going to say a couple of things: I am going to tell her to take good care of our community, a community that we all cherish; a place where we live.'

'We (the Newmarket Aurora Federal Liberal Association) will work to hold this government accountable. We will seek Liberal values and we will restore this party. I want to thank everybody for your hard work, dedication, and above all, thank you for your friendship.'

?Let me end with Hillary Clinton on her concession speech. She said, 'This loss hurts, but please never stop believing that fighting for what is right is worth it.' It is worth it and the fight, ladies and gentlemen, friends, if I can paraphrase Mr. Ford, the fight starts tonight. As you leave here tonight, hold your head up high. We had a great campaign, we have some great people in this room. I am going to hold my head up high when I leave this room.?