

?We knew this was going to be a tough election ? and it hasn't disappointed?



By Brock Weir

It ends almost as it began, but now the outcome is almost certain.

Liberal leader Kathleen Wynne began her election campaign in Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill last month in it to win it. A lot has changed over the past four weeks and, with just three campaigning days left before what she admits is the end of her premiership, Ms. Wynne started the week in Newmarket-Aurora to shore up support for Liberal candidate Chris Ballard. Ms. Wynne spoke to a room full of supporters at Newmarket's Cache Restaurant on Monday afternoon.

Flanked by Mr. Ballard and surrounded by party faithful, she defended her decision to concede the election on Saturday afternoon but said she's determined to cross the finish line spending her energy to support her local candidates.

She dismissed claims from opponents her early concession was a 'ploy' as 'cynical'.

'What I was saying on the weekend was, to everyone who wants to vote Liberal but was worried because they also want change, there is going to be a different government,' said Ms. Wynne. 'I am not going to be Premier, so it is really important that people vote locally, vote for the candidate, that voice at Queen's Park, who will be the representative that they want at Queen's Park [to] ensure that we won't have a majority Doug Ford or majority NDP government. But, I'm not giving up. The opposite. I am working so hard, right up until we get to that finish line, because we need people like Chris Ballard at Queen's Park.'

Indeed, Monday's mini-rally was very much a mutual admiration society, with Mr. Ballard noting Ms. Wynne's leadership was what inspired him to make the leap from Aurora Council to the Ontario legislature.

'I thought to myself, 'I want to aspire to the vision Kathleen Wynne has before me,' said Mr. Ballard. 'I had in those days no aspirations to be anything but a Town Councillor and really enjoy myself, then people started asking me if I would run and I thought to myself, 'I will run because Kathleen Wynne is a fantastic leader and has laid out a vision for Ontario, a vision for Newmarket and Aurora that is the best way forward' and I have not for a second regretted that decision to throw my hat into the ring. And, Premier, thank you so much for that.'

Mr. Ballard dubbed Ms. Wynne 'my leader, my teacher, and in many ways my mentor' who inspired him 'to be better every day.' In turn, Ms. Wynne said Mr. Ballard was a 'champion for people who haven't got as much as others,' and this was reflected in her appointment of him as Minister of Housing and the Minister Responsible for Poverty Reduction and, later, as a promoter of protecting Ontario's Greenbelt, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

'Doug Ford we know went into a closed door room and was willing to open up a chunk of the Greenbelt and give it away, and only stopped and changed his mind on that because he got caught,' said Ms. Wynne. 'There are so many reasons that Chris Ballard is absolutely the right person to represent this community, to continue to represent it at Queen's Park. We knew this was going to be a tough election. We came into it knowing it was going to be a tough election and it has not disappointed. It has been a tough election, thank you very much. I hate it when you get disappointed by these things!

'We know as Liberals that people want change, we get that, and that is what we said on Saturday. Because people want change, we need to say that change is coming. But we need strong Liberal voices at Queen's Park, strong Liberal voices who want to solve

problems in a practical way, who understand their communities, and understand what the solutions need to be in their communities. We need those people at Queen's Park because an unfettered Doug Ford majority government will not act in the interests of the People of this Province and that is clear.?