

The best of three candidates

By Todd Taylor

Have you talked to your friends and neighbours about the upcoming provincial election? I bet the conversation covered a large array of emotions.

The overwhelming sentiment seems to be one of disillusionment, mistrust, and disenfranchisement. I am personally worn out by the propensity of our provincial parties to make grandiose promises and then simply let us down four years later. In addition, I struggle with the leadership style of Doug Ford and openly wonder why the Liberal party has had such a difficult time in government. For me, this election is less about provincial politics; instead I am focusing on what the local candidates will do for Dufferin County. Over the last week I have met with the three candidates whom I believe have a legitimate chance of representing the riding post-June 7th. It is not a stretch to suggest that the incumbent, Progressive Conservative candidate Sylvia Jones, and Liberal challenger Bob Gordanier should be in the conversation about who could be our MPP. Both Ms. Jones and Mr. Gordanier are long-term Dufferin county residents with impressive resumés and name recognition. That said, I think it is time for us all to recognize that there is an emerging third party in our region. The Green party, represented by local business person Laura Campbell, have now inserted themselves into the conversation. I can unabashedly tell you that I am impressed with each candidate, as they are passionate, intelligent and benevolent people who clearly want to make a difference in our community. Unlike some ridings in Ontario, Dufferin-Caledon has strong options to determine who will be our parliamentary representative.

I really like Bob Gordanier. In our intense conversation he was feisty, thoughtful and real. Mr. Gordanier was emphatic when he shared his approach to politics. In the Liberal candidate's view, the most important thing is people, agriculture is second, and his party is third. The Mono native describes himself as a straight-shooter who is thoughtful and dedicates much time and thought on the issues. Bob Gordanier, has never held public office, but he believes strongly that solid relationships will ensure productive initiatives are achieved. The Liberal candidate thoughtfully shared that there was much work to be done if we are to accommodate Dufferin county's anticipated population growth. Affordable housing will be key, as is protecting our water, clean air, and food security. The Greenbelt ?is one of the best things that can be done. It is a world issue and not just about Ontario?. He would also like to have a county-wide transit solution and ensure that our community care (hospitals, meals on wheels, etc.) are adequately funded.

The Green party has one of its strongest areas of support right here in Dufferin County. In fact, many local political pundits believe that someday the Green party could very well find themselves representing our region. Laura Campbell is the local political candidate and owner of Pia's Bakery in Orangeville. Like Mr. Gordanier, candidate Campbell has not previously run for political office. It was clear to me early on in our conversation that Laura is well-spoken, thoughtful and extremely bright. She shared that her approach to politics is a community-based model that values honesty, integrity, and putting people first, not the corporations. It is true that the Green party has a significant part of its mandate focused on environmental issues, yet Laura impressed upon me the need to make economic decisions that stabilize economies. The Green party would manage Ontario in a way that would grow the economy and provide savings. Ms. Campbell articulated the idea that ?any efficiency money will be reinvested in our mental health service which would enable problems to be acted on ahead of time. Reacting is tiring?. She shared that the ?Greens are more than a political party, instead they are a social movement?. Laura Campbell believes that the Green party movement will expand over time. ?We will continue to be a force for good in our community through events such as tree planting and cycling. We will inspire more young people to be involved. Climate change will cost us \$4.9 billion in insurable losses this year. We simply must change the future?.

Sylvia Jones is the Conservative representative in a riding that many believe is Tory Blue safe. My visit to her campaign office witnessed a bustling office of staff and volunteers doing everything but taking this election for granted. I shared my reluctance about the leadership of her new leader, Doug Ford, with our local MPP. Ms. Jones passionately argued that Mr. Ford ?has successfully engaged and energized the electorate. He has done so by connecting with others through his impressive communication style?.

To me, I do think the party made a mistake with its choice of Mr. Ford, and that instead the Conservatives should have supported Christine Elliot or Caroline Mulroney as the next leader. Regardless of the party's position, Sylvia Jones has certainly been a respected force in Dufferin county for some time now. I can tell you that having a detailed discussion with our sitting MPP about the issues is like playing an enjoyable game of chess. Sylvia understands all the issues and easily explains her position as each move is made. She believes that the issues facing Dufferin county are high taxation, health care (we want seniors to live in their homes), transportation (access to GO), road safety, child care, and Headwaters hospital funding.

The good news for all of us in this election is that we have three vibrant, qualified candidates who will represent us well at Queen's Park. To me, I think it is important that whoever wins the riding, their party should also win the election. Candidly, I am tired of our

area being passed over for projects such as highway 10 safety improvements or wasted assessment monies for a proposed 400 series highway. Sylvia Jones is someone I have dealt with on many community projects and I have been impressed with how much she cares for our area. With all due respect to the outstanding challengers Bob Gordanier and Laura Campbell, I think Sylvia Jones is in the best position to represent our area over the next four years.