

Locke to carry the Green?Party banner in election

By Mark Pavilons



The Green Party will be represented in the June provincial election.

Greg Locke, King resident, local businessman and environmental advocate, has been named the candidate in King-Vaughan. He's a Schomberg-based glass artist, long-standing volunteer, and father together with his wife, two cats and their border collie. Commitment to community, an enthusiasm towards the environment, and active advocacy are his driving forces.

Locke said the party approached him and asked if he would stand as their preferred candidate.

?It may sound cheesy, but I realized I needed to run when my 11-year-old daughter Brianna asked me what party I'm going to vote for. I couldn't look her in the eye and rationalize any other preference! The challenges facing our environment, our children, our seniors, and the legacy that decades of accumulated private and public debt have taken on our society, they all weigh on me. I'm concerned for her, even for her children. We've dug a very big hole for ourselves.?

Locke said Ontarians have become polarized and mainstream parties are moving way left and way right to attract or keep voters. Personality and populism, he said, are the orders of the day.

?There is another choice, and that is for voters to consider the merits of voting Green.?

Locke said he wants his name on the ballot in King-Vaughan to give voters a choice and get the word out why the Green?Party is ready to address the many challenges facing Ontario. He shares the Green Party's vision and values, and he's proud to have Mike Schreiner as leader.

?The Green Party is fiscally conservative and socially progressive. Many voters don't realize this. If you're concerned about the devastation that deficit spending, and promises of much more, will have on our future, you have another choice. If you're in favour of continuing social investments and support mechanisms that have made Ontario such a great place to live, you have another choice.?

Locke was particularly struck by a recent encounter with David Suzuki at a local Green Party Earth Week event in Stouffville.

?His message, like the party's, is simple and honest: we don't have time to waste to save our environment from ourselves. We have to act now. It's clear to me that other parties don't want this as central to their mandate ? it needs to be. As an environmental advocate, I?embrace this.?

Greg became an environmental advocate soon after moving to York Region 12 years ago. Having searched for a more rural, small-town setting for he and Tracy to relocate their home and studio, he became disillusioned with the seemingly insensitive pace, scale and form of development across King's villages and hamlets. Having served as president on his previous condominium board, Greg jumped in with a local citizen's group trying to work with a local developer to improve the site's respect for surrounding neighbours and pre-existing environmental features. Greg became passionate when he saw the indifference to being heard by the developer and numerous local officials. He realized that the lifestyle and values he so wanted to see flourish in his new community, could only be sustained by getting more involved.

Locke ran for King Township council, first in 2010 and again in 2014, on a banner of ?positive leadership.? He joined CCKT as a board member to support and advance CCKT's mandate, becoming chair in 2011. He's also served and supported the volunteer

boards of Arts Society King and York Region Arts Council.

His community and business experience is complemented by his Master of Business Administration (MBA) and Bachelor of Arts (Economics) degrees, both earned at York University.

Locke sees this as a critical juncture in Ontario, both for the "rural" communities of King and the more "urban" City of Vaughan.

There are several reasons compelling him to participate.

He said there's no choice for voters, especially now, who value fiscal responsibility and social progressiveness.

"There's no reason we can't appoint leaders who support both. I want to be one of them."

Locke stressed we must ensure we focus on people "supporting our youth and seniors with programs and policies that will ensure we can grow in this new technology-driven world, without leaving anyone behind.

"We must continue targeted investments in education, health, child care and affordable housing."

We must continue to invest in key infrastructure, including education, public transit, high speed internet, and efficient road and rail networks to ensure our cities, Vaughan especially, continue to be the social and economic engines of wealth we so rely on them for.

"Let's get out of the way of Metrolinx."

Locke also noted debt has to be addressed. We must support policies that nurture and grow our biggest assets, including small business and our youth, filled with ideas in world-embracing technological innovation, to create new streams of sustainable wealth.

"We've being governed as though we're living in a 1960s world where our economy was delivering high wage and salary jobs in largely manufacturing and resource based industries. We must focus on our relative strengths to build a sustainable economy, including key manufacturing and building industries."

The investments we've made in the reviews of our major environmental plans (Green Belt and Oak Ridges Moraine) must be sustained.

"It's critical we protect and grow the legacy of these key pieces of environmental legislation. Over 80% of King is within the Greenbelt or Moraine. There is more work to be done here."

The Places to Grow legislation mandates intensification targets across the GTA. Municipal governments are challenged to identify locations for potential infill development, especially in King-Vaughan, where infrastructure is at or near capacity, and few harmonious locations exist. This is causing much stress between residents, developers and municipalities.

"I want the Province to work harder to define targets that are reasonable on a community by community basis, maintaining our goals of growing our housing stock, conserving our scarce rural and farm lands."

The out-dated Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) has just been replaced by a long overdue regimen now in effect (Local Planning Appeal Tribunal). Positive change was critical in this area of land use appeal. LPAT is problematic in several of its new objectives, requirements and processes; amendments are surely needed.

"Without active review and engagement with this new legislation, citizen and community voice for land use appeal will once again be a mostly losing game."

Locke is confident that "real solutions exist," and he's ready to jump into the fray at the provincial level.

He'll be at The Roost Café (12974 Keele St, King City) this Saturday from 1:30 to 3 p.m., and at The Grackle Coffee Company (208 Main St. Schomberg) this Sunday from 1:30 to 3. There will be more opportunities to meet Greg over the coming weeks.

You can contact him at greglocke@gpo.ca or visit greglocke.ca