

Candidates anxious to hit campaign trail

By Mark Pavilons

Ontario voters will be heading to the polls to elect Ontario's 41st Parliament on Thursday, June 12.

After NDP leader Andrea Horwath refused to support the Liberal budget, the stage was set for this spring's election.

"The Liberal budget is a mad dash to escape scandal by promising the moon and the stars," said Horwath. "It is time for a government that stands up for middle class families. It is time for a government that respects people's tax dollars. It is time for a government that makes sense."

The Liberals introduced a budget containing more than 70 new promises in a desperate bid to keep their sinking government afloat in the midst of a criminal investigation into the gas plants scandal and cover up.

"This government has no plan to get the basics right, like creating jobs, lowering hydro rates, and making life more affordable," said Horwath.

The budget comes after the Liberals failed to deliver results on a series of promises made in the previous year's budget, including reducing auto insurance rates, cutting home care wait times, and setting up a Financial Accountability Office.

"The same government that couldn't fulfill three promises over the last year is making more than 70 new promises this year. How can Kathleen Wynne build a ship, when she hasn't managed to build a raft?" asked Horwath.

The Liberal budget, her party contended, contained a new round of no-strings attached giveaways for corporations, and includes no plan to get sky-rocketing hydro rates under control or create jobs by rewarding job creators.

Dr. Helen Jaczek, MPP for Oak Ridges-Markham, said their budget received a good response at the breakfast held Friday morning. As the events unfolded, it may for an "interesting day."

The budget received some positive reception, along with kudos from labour leader Sid Ryan and the teachers' federation. She said she was puzzled as to why Horwath defeated the budget.

This election will cost millions, and may very well result in another minority government.

Oak Ridges-Markham, she noted, is the largest riding in Canada by population and she's ready to go door-to-door.

Jaczek said the Liberals did some good work in committee, despite the minority government. Partisan ideas were put aside and all the parties worked together on several initiatives. They recently put the finishing touches on a report concerning the ORNGE debacle, something that will never see the light of day. It was due out May 5.

Jaczek contends that Premier Kathleen Wynne is a person who believes in consensus, but she was stymied at every turn.

"There was the potential to make the minority government work," she said.

As the term progressed, however, the atmosphere in the House had "become toxic."

York-Simcoe MPP Julia Munro is lacing up her shoes and ready to hit the campaign trail.

The post-budget days were filled with some drama and Munro said Horwath did not let the PCs know in advance her intentions. She's pleased to be heading into an election. The PCs have a plan and they want to move on it, she said. Also, the Liberals have painted a rather "scary picture" in their proposed budget with no clear direction.

She doesn't take anything for granted regarding her chances in the election, but noted many people are ready for change. From opening up hydro bills to those struggling to make a living, change is needed.

Munro said she's heard of a great deal of frustration by small business owners who are burdened by restrictions, regulations and red tape. She encountered many local business owners at the recent Bradford home show who said they couldn't wait for an election. For many, the impacts of Liberal measures have hit home in a negative way.

Candidate Lorelea Carruthers announced that Lyn McLeod, former leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, and Mike Brown, former Speaker of the Legislature, will co-chair her campaign to be York-Simcoe's MPP.

"I'm honoured to welcome Lyn McLeod and Mike Brown to the team," said Lorelea Carruthers, speaking to a sold-out fundraiser at the Holland Marsh Winery in King. "Their combined experience and passion for public service are exemplary, and I appreciate their guidance. If the opposition forces an election this spring, we will be ready to win."

Lyn McLeod, who served as Ontario Liberal leader in the 1990s, was the first female leader of a major Ontario political party.

"I'm very happy to join Lorelea's team and support her campaign to make daily life easier. Like Lorelea, I began my political career as school trustee, and so I know we both appreciate how important it is that we continue to invest in our students' success."

Former Speaker Mike Brown remarked: "I am impressed by Lorelea's hard work and articulate advocacy for her community. She has a strong combination of local experience and a track record getting results across the province. She will make a terrific member

of the Legislature.?

Loralea Carruthers is a three-term school trustee from East Gwillimbury, currently serving as co-chair of the York Catholic and York public transportation consortium. A long-time budget chair for the school board, Loralea served two terms as vice-president of all public school boards in Ontario. She also sits on East Gwillimbury's Environmental Advisory Committee.