

Stouffville party worker NDP's candidate in Oak Ridges

BY HANNELORE VOLPE
Staff Writer

The upcoming provincial election will result in at least a minority government with the New Democratic Party holding the balance of power, NDP deputy leader Marilyn Churley predicted Tuesday.

"People are getting interested in the New Democrats again," she said.

Fueled, the party believes, by public disaffection with the Conservatives' privatization agenda, membership in the party's Oak Ridges Riding Association has tripled in the past year. Oak Ridges includes Whitchurch-Stouffville and Markham north of 16th Avenue.

Ms Churley was at the Rouge Woods Community Centre in Richmond Hill to endorse Pamela Courtot, who was acclaimed as the NDP candidate in Oak Ridges. Ms Courtot has an MBA from York University and works at a high tech firm in York Region.

She ran her own business from 1979 to 1986 and was a single mother for a number of years. It is the first time in the political ring for the mother of two, but not her first time in the political sphere.

SLAMS PC PRIVATIZATION

She has worked on NDP campaigns since she was 18, including Bob Rae's and Lynn MacDonald's

successful federal campaigns and Ms Churley's provincial campaign.

Ms Courtot decided to go for the NDP nomination because "the Conservatives' privatization agenda has been so detrimental to Ontario. Even in our riding, the expansion of the Markham Stouffville Hospital will be a public/private partnership," she said.

The NDP's "public power" platform, which includes keeping drinking water safe, stopping hydro privatization, freezing rents, building more affordable housing and raising the minimum wage to \$8 per hour, was outlined by Ms Churley at the meeting.

The veteran MPP, who was first

elected in 1990, has fought to keep water testing labs in public ownership, believing it could prevent another Walkerton-style tainted water tragedy.

GAS TAX FOR TRANSIT

Ms Churley wants to see her drinking water source protection act passed to prevent water from being contaminated in the first place, she said. The NDP claims to be the first party to have an urban plan dealing with sprawl and transportation, which includes putting gasoline tax money into public transportation.

Ms Courtot will push to have higher density of construction in York Region.

"We have to take a serious look at our development plans and incorporate public transit," she said.

On the standard of living front, Ms Courtot said pushing the minimum wage to \$8 will help families, who now pay so much for housing they have to rely on food banks in York Region, and students working to pay university tuition.

Finally, Ms Courtot noted, with the large number of seniors in York Region, and especially the Whitchurch-Stouffville area, fees for seniors' homes have to be decreased and the number of home care hours increased to improve quality of life for seniors.



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