

# Drive for top dog status takes time: prof

BY LISA QUEEN  
Staff Writer



**MARTHA HALL FINDLAY:** Former Newmarket-Aurora Liberal candidate taking run at party leadership.

Big mistake. That's what Aurora mayoral candidate Nigel Kean called his brash 1994 bid for mayor without any political experience under his belt.

"One of the dumbest things I ever did," chuckled Mr. Kean, who is now taking on Mayor Tim Jones for the town's top job after serving as a councillor for the past six years.

"I think I've learned my lesson. I've sat back and listened. You've got to serve your time."

Mr. Kean may have seen the light, but other York Region political neophytes are determined to skip climbing the ranks in favour of instant top dog status.

Martha Hall Findlay, former federal Newmarket-Aurora candidate, is the first declared leadership contender for the federal Liberal party even though she has never spent time as an MP, not even a backbencher let alone a cabinet minister.

"We have such an opportunity right now. I think a lot of people are saying we need new faces," she said.

them off, as a particularly accomplished person in some other realm," said Mr. Drummond, the university's dean of arts.

"Even Pierre Trudeau became leader fairly quickly, but he did put in time as an MP."

It's not impossible to win the leadership of a federal party without winning an election, but Mr. Drummond has his doubts.

"It would be naive to presume never having served in any political office you could serve as leader. Not impossible, but naive," he said.

"I'm trying to think, are there any people who have come full blown out on to the public stage without anybody knowing about them? I have a hard time thinking of any."

But Ms. Hall Findlay dismisses Mr. Drummond's concerns.

While never elected, she pointed out she ran for office, narrowly losing to then-Conservative candi-

date Belinda Stronach in the 2004 election.

When Ms. Stronach later crossed the floor, Ms. Hall Findlay stepped aside as the Newmarket-Aurora's Liberal candidate to allow Ms. Stronach to assume the candidacy.

That aside, Ms. Hall Findlay believes it may be to her benefit not to be shackled with the baggage of being a career politician.

"There are some people who have been politicians since their teenage years. I think you see a lot of politics breeds politics."

As warring Liberals try to untangle themselves from a decade of Jean Chretien loyalists versus Paul Martin supporters, Ms. Hall Findlay said it's time for the party to choose a leader not associated with either camp.

"What the party really needs is to put that behind them and move forward."

In the municipal world, Mr. Drummond said it's often one burning local issue

that attracts a mayoral candidate with no experience.

"You can't sustain a career on a single issue," he added.

But while a narrow range of concerns or lack of respect for the incumbent may initially draw them to politics, neophyte mayoral candidates insist they quickly become interested in a wide breadth of community topics.

"I think if I'm doing it this time, my motivation this time is less anti-Di Biase than wanting to do it. Last time was more of a protest vote," said Mr. Craig, who captured almost 40 per cent of the vote in 2003 despite mounting a last-minute campaign.

"I think he (Mr. Di Biase) has dealt with some of the problems at city hall, but I would still like to see change up there."

Mr. Ruffolo dismissed suggestions he is disgruntled because his wife is suing the city for wrongful dismissal.

Instead, he is focused on

bringing more transparency and accountability to council, promising to launch an inquiry or forensic audit into past city practices if elected.

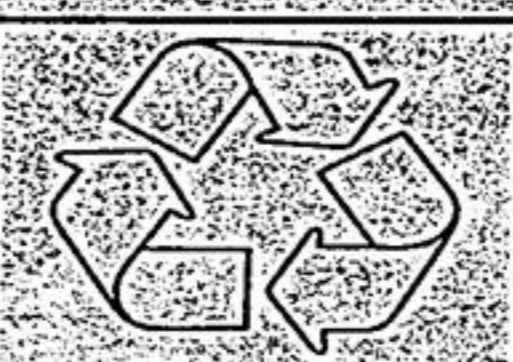
Upset property owners face higher taxes and user fees annually while politicians boost their own salaries, but Mr. Ruffolo said he would buck that trend and take an immediate 20-per cent pay cut.

He also wants to step up the city's campaign to secure a Vaughan hospital.

Meanwhile, while Mr. Juras said most residents associate his name with a controversial \$3-million recreation project proposed by Georgina council, he said his interests range from development and the environment to taxes and town services.

At the same time, he acknowledges he has his work cut out for him campaigning for mayor.

"I do need to get out earlier than most people because I am an unknown."



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