

# Voters telling Tory incumbent to 'stay course'

BY SANDRA BOLAN  
sbolan@yrmg.com

From election signs to anger and frustration that an election is taking place to jobs and the economy.

Incumbent Paul Calandra has heard it all while campaigning in Oak Ridges-Markham during the past two weeks. However, the overwhelming sentiment of voters is stay the course.

"There's still an overriding sense from a lot of people that, you know what, we're doing good. We've done OK. But there's still a little fear out there and that's what they ask about," Mr. Calandra said. "They want to basically tell you keep focusing on it, don't take your eye off of the economy and no matter who you talk to, it's focus on the economy, jobs, taxes and don't forget about us."

Immigration is also a big talking point.

"Ninety per cent of my resources are focused on dealing with immigration matters," he said.

Part of Mr. Calandra's 'stay the course' mantra includes improving transit within the riding, which for Mr. Calandra means continuing to invest in GO Transit, York Region Transit and TTC connections in order to get people moving, without cars.

## IMMIGRATION TAXES MP'S TIME

"We expanded Markham. We expanded Mount Joy. But they're full again. At King City (last Tuesday) morning, the parking lot is full and a lot of people were saying you've got to add space so more people can take it. It's still a pressing issue for us and something I want to see accomplished," he said.

To that, The Sun-Tribune asked Mr. Calandra what he is doing to keep jobs local, so people don't have to take GO Transit into Toronto.

"When you're on the 404, Don Valley and the traffic is as busy coming north as it is going south, by supporting the manufacturers with the tax cuts ... the reason we're doing that is to give the people who are creating jobs an opportunity to create more jobs and we've seen the benefits of that. We have Honda here, we have BMW here. I see the improvements (at) Novo Plastics, General (Switchgears and Controls). IBM is talking about greater investments."

Mr. Calandra wants to continue pushing the incentives "so that they can compete based on productivity and not on a low dollar. (I'm) very supportive of the tax credit, or dropping the duties on manufacturing upgrades".

Mr. Calandra has not forgotten about the small- and medium-sized businesses, for which he said the Conservatives have announced tax credits.

"We have to continue to focus on those so that they can actually hire more people," he said. "We've made some great strides but we've certainly got a lot more to do."



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Stouffville resident Paul Calandra won Oak Ridges-Markham by 545 votes in 2008.

While Mr. Calandra wants to keep local manufacturing lines rolling, he also aspires to continue protecting the other major industry in this riding - agriculture. Which is why he said he opposed the Rouge Park Alliance national park proposal, but is in favour of his Conservative party's recent announcement. Opponents have taken

shots at him for it.

"I'm not opposed to a national park. That's fine. But in this proposal that we brought forward, we specifically guarantee farmers we will protect farmers' rights and the interest of farmers," he said. "I had an opportunity to work with the campaign team to actually write this proposal and we

worked closely with our farmers in the area, very closely with Markham."

Having to represent two vastly different industries can be challenging, but Mr. Calandra said it has been a benefit because "I think it actually affords the member of parliament here an extraordinary opportunity to have a voice in a lot of different areas of government."

Balancing rural and urban is nothing new to Mr. Calandra, who grew up in Markham, but spent summers on a Whitchurch-Stouffville area farm his family owned.

Mr. Calandra, 40, moved to Stouffville in 1995, where he continues to live with his wife and two young daughters.

The Conservative party has been fending off criticisms of its members not being open and honest. The government fell, which forced the election, on a non-confidence motion in late March.

But Mr. Calandra sees things differently.

"Are we perfect? No. But I think we do a very good job of communicating," he said, noting his government increased access to information and made 70 organizations, that were previously unaccountable, accountable to the access to information rules.

## BRIEFLY A LIBERAL

Mr. Calandra also said the government, at one point, was chastised for communicating too much about the Economic Action Plan.

"On the one hand, we were accused of not doing projects, but then when we advertised and showed people throughout the community what projects we were doing, we were then asked to take the signs down because you're communicating too much," he said.

When it comes to him personally communicating, "I can sometimes be accused of communicating too often to the community. But I look at it as a badge of honour."

Mr. Calandra wasn't always a Conservative but makes sure to note, "I wasn't a Liberal for very long in my life". He said he was much younger and is proud of his ability to put party politics aside to get things done.

"I've always believed that a member of parliament or an elected official at any level, if they want to get something done for their community, they can get something done for their community," he said.

Although Mr. Calandra is confident about his track record in office, he is campaigning just as hard as he did in 2008, when he won by just over 500 votes.

"I have never felt that I was overly secure in my seat," he said. "I think it's a pretty good record over the last two-and-a-half years. ... If it ends tomorrow, I'll always be grateful they gave me an opportunity to do it, but we've accomplished a lot of really, really good things."

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