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Weatherbee seeks Tilson seat

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Walking into Dufferin-Caledon MP David Tilson's campaign office one afternoon ahead of the 2006 federal election, a teenaged Kevin Weatherbee, inquiring about volunteering opportunities, had absolutely no idea what he was setting himself up for.

Sitting down with the Citizen recently, a smile quickly stretches across Mr. Weatherbee's face as he pinpoints the exact moment he realized his future would be steeped in political activism.

?I was just a young lad when I first started volunteering with David Tilson. I walked in, fresh off the street and asked how I could help. They put me to work on the campaign trail right away, and I never looked back,? Kevin remembers. ?I was just looking for some volunteer hours I needed for high school, but I very quickly completed those (and kept on going). The experience I gained during those weeks really has helped to shape my life.?

As one of two individuals currently in the running to replace Mr. Tilson as the Conservative candidate in the Dufferin-Caledon riding, Mr. Weatherbee has an extensive history representing Conservative values both federally and provincially over the past five years.

From 2011 to 2015 he worked under local MPP Sylvia Jones, serving as her chief and staff. Since leaving, he has helped to run his father's business, EDPRO Energy Group, while maintaining a provincial political presence as a member of the Progressive Conservative executive.

?Since starting out with David, I've really taken every opportunity to get more and more involved with politics. I really loved my time working with Sylvia, and it's been a fantastic learning curve serving on the PC executive,? Mr. Weatherbee said. ?I was there back in January when we had the issues with (former PC leader Patrick Brown) and we had a decision to make. I'm very proud of the role I played in the process.?

The decision to potentially jump back into a political role full-time isn't one Kevin has taken lightly, but it's one he feels he has been forced to make. Now, with the blessing of his family behind him, Mr. Weatherbee hopes to be afforded the opportunity to take a stand on ?the issues that matter? to residents in Dufferin-Caledon.

?Since getting back into the world of business, the amount of red tape and regulation my dad and I deal with on a daily basis is insane. The straw that broke the camel's back for me, and the reason I'm putting my name forward, came last year when Prime Minister Justin Trudeau brought in his changes to the way small business and personal corporation taxes work,? Mr. Weatherbee said.

?I sat there absolutely disgusted, watching and listening as our prime minister and finance minister talk about how small business owners are tax cheats. These changes directly affected my, my family, my business and I found myself asking how this was fair,? Kevin said. ?We're following the rules completely and yet we're being demonized by our own government.?

Discussing some of the issues he is most passionate about, Mr. Weatherbee believes the federal government needs to do more to help young Canadians break into the housing market.

He talks about his ability to bring a ?different generational perspective? to the issues of the day. A relatively new homeowner himself, Kevin knows all too well the struggles people are going through as they attempt to juggle Canada's new mortgage rules with finding an affordable home in the region.

Brought in on Jan. 1, 2018 all Canadian buyers borrowing from a federally regulated lender will be subject to a ?mortgage stress test'. This test means all conventional mortgages will need to be qualified using the Bank of Canada's 5-year benchmark rate, currently hovering around 5 percent. In order to qualify for a mortgage, buyers' total debt should not exceed 44 percent total debt ratio, while people will also be required to spend less than 32 percent of their income on housing costs, such as utilities, mortgage payments and real estate taxes.

?This is a government making an arbitrary decision that effects thousands of people, but it effects young people the most. It effects those trying to get their foot through the door,? Mr. Weatherbee said. ?If we are going to have a set of rules, they should be benefitting Canadian citizens, they should be benefitting young people who are trying to play by the rules.?

Mr. Weatherbee notes he is an advocate for supply management, he's against the federal government's carbon tax and is ?dead set against? Prime Minister Trudeau's plans to implement a gun ban in Canada.

But the number one issue, federally speaking, heading into next year's election centres on immigration. Having taken a trip out to Roxem Road recently ? the spot asylum seekers are using to cross the border from the US into Canada ? Kevin believes something has to be done, and soon, before this issue escalated more than it already has.

?It's absolutely crazy what is happening out there each and every day. These people are trained to cross the border, accept that they

will be transported to a processing facility, then, once they've been processed, they're put out on the streets,? Mr. Weatherbee said. ?They're all seeking refugee status, the catch is there is a nine-year backlog on applications, so these people are turned loose almost immediately. It makes absolutely no sense.?

?You have people trying to immigrate to Canada legally, spending years and thousands of dollars on consultants trying to come here. They do everything right, yet we have these other people crossing the border illegally and they're able to stay,? Kevin said. ?It's just wrong.?

One possible solution, Kevin says, is for the federal government to designate the entire Canadian/US border as a legal port of entry, which would allow officers to turn people away unless they have a valid reason for entering the country. According to Kevin, the Liberal government has shown little interest in moving forward with this idea.

As he prepares himself for what will surely be an interesting nomination process, Mr. Weatherbee is focusing on reaching as many people as possible over the next few weeks to explain exactly why he is the right man to replace the outgoing Mr. Tilson.

?I think I have a very unique skillset and background, having worked at Queen's Park and being so involved at the provincial level. I believe strongly that in the 21st century we need politicians who are just like us, who can communicate effectively and get things done,? Mr. Weatherbee said.

?I have a lot to offer in terms of proactive solution making. I'm not afraid to let my voice be heard ? I believe I can be an effective voice and advocate for the area,? Kevin added. ?We are going to have a new MP in Dufferin-Caledon, there is going to be a change in Ottawa. I'm hoping it will be a Conservative government following the 2019 election and I'm confident in the job I can do if I were to be so lucky as to become the next MP for this riding.?