

Federal Conservatives to pick their candidate tomorrow

By Bill Rea

In the midst of a provincial election campaign, Dufferin-Caledon federal Conservatives are ready to pick their candidate for the next election.

Long time incumbent MP David Tilson will be going up against Palgrave area resident Paul Hong.

The nomination meeting is set for tomorrow (Friday) night in the Oak Room of the Orangeville Fairgrounds.

Mr. Hong, who just turned 35 yesterday is a former senior policy advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, serving six years in that role under several ministers. In addition to his work at Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hong served for 13 years as a naval officer in the Canadian military. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant (Navy) in 2004. He also served as a military aide-de-camp to the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. He is a graduate of the Royal Military College of Canada's Master of War Studies program and the Sea Cadet Program in Bolton.

He is also a lawyer by training, called to the Bar in 2007.

Mr. Tilson, 73, was a Progressive Conservative member of the Ontario Legislature from 1990 to 2002, and was first elected to the House of Commons as a Conservative MP in 2004, having resigned his legislature seat to permit a byelection that saw then-premier Ernie Eves get a seat in the House. He served nearly two years as vice-chair of the Ontario Municipal Board.

Both men said they have been working hard to drum up support.

'I've been door-knocking,' Mr. Hong said, adding he's had a good volunteer base. 'I've been getting a pretty good response.'

'Like any election, you're always nervous about what's going to happen,' Mr. Tilson remarked, adding it's all going to come down to a question of who sold the most party memberships and who gets their vote out. 'I'm confident, but not over-confident.'

The timing of the nomination meeting has raised a few eyebrows, coming in the middle of a provincial election campaign.

But Mr. Tilson said tomorrow's meeting was scheduled before the election was called, adding there are at least two other nomination meetings planned for this weekend.

'Absolutely, there's a lot happening,' Mr. Hong said. 'I think the voters get it. You can tell the difference between the provincial and federal.'