

Five candidates in race to succeed MP David Tilson

Written By BRIAN LOCKHART

With the deadline for filing an intention to run for the Conservative Party nomination for Dufferin-Caledon approaching, five candidates have so far entered the race.

Current Dufferin-Caledon MP, David Tilson, announced in October that he will not be seeking the nomination for a sixth consecutive term in office.

"There comes a point when it is time to step back and let others serve the community. I have reached that point now and wish to thank all those who have supported me over the years," Mr. Tilson said in an announcement to the media back in October.

The cut-off date for a person to apply for their intention to run for the nomination is Feb. 7. The party sent out a notification to all members stating there will be a nomination. From that point the party constitution rules take over regarding times lines for entries and when a vote must take place.

Anyone can file papers with intention to run, however potential candidates must go through an interview process that will determine if they are approved for the nomination.

A date and location for the vote has not yet been set, however by constitution rules, it must take place within a 42-to-54-day window after the notice was sent to party members and the notice was sent on January 17.

Each potential candidate has their own reasons and vision when submitting their application for nomination.

Former Orangeville Mayor Jeremy Williams said his experience will bring a strong candidate to the riding.

"I feel strongly that the federal government in Ottawa is not representative of how the people in our area feel. I think I can bring a lot to the people when it comes to ideas that are not reflected in the current government of our local area residents. Being mayor and being on council for eight years has given a great deal of knowledge of what our residents want. I know the other candidates and they are good people, however if I thought they were the best candidates I would not run."

Mr. Williams said that despite being a traditionally Conservative riding, Liberal supporters moving into the area could present a challenge and residents need a strong candidate to represent Conservatives.

Caledon resident Kevin Weatherbee has been politically active for several years working at both provincial and federal levels, notably serving as chief of staff for local MPP Sylvia Jones.

"My motivation to run? I believe our country right now is on the wrong track and I think we need to shift course if we are to have a better and more prosperous future for our families. I see the spending in Ottawa which is a big issue for me. As a younger person myself with a young family it's going to be up to me and my young son to pay off that spending and I don't think that's responsible. I've been involved for a long time, over 10 years, in Conservative politics in this riding. This is my home. I spoke to my wife and my family and decided I wanted to take a stab at this. I think there's a lot of people who agree with me and I think if you care about something and you're engaged, sooner or later you have to step up and fight for it."

Mr. Weatherbee said building partnerships with both municipal representatives and local non-profit organizations and service clubs is important strategy to build the community.

Caledon resident Barb Shaughnessy made clear her priorities as a candidate.

She listed quality of life, the environment, and infrastructure as her main concerns in the riding.

The former regional councillor and mayoral candidate explained her experience in both public service and the work force has prepared her for the role.

'I'm young enough to have a lot of vitality and old enough to have a lot of experience,' Ms. Shaughnessy said. 'Everyone runs on their own merit. I bring a wealth of experience from serving the public and as part of the work force.'

Having lived in Caledon since 1968, she said she is very familiar with all the towns that make up the riding and the urban and rural areas that are represented.

A priority, she said, is quality of life for seniors.

'We have a rising population of seniors. It's important for them to be able to age in place. Also important are young families who have had to move away from their home towns to find an affordable place to live.'

Ms. Shaughnessy said infrastructure, especially roads, is a main concern to provide appropriate commuting routes for those that drive north/south to places of employment.

Candidate Harzadan Singh Khattrra, owner of Orangeville Taxi / CAAC limousine, did not return calls from the Citizen.

Realtor Sarbjit Sra also has intentions to run for the position.

A spokesperson for the Conservative Association confirmed that of the five applicants, Mr. Weatherbee and Mr. Khattrra have been approved as candidates in the riding.

Ms. Shaughnessy has completed her application and will now move on to the interview stage.

Both Mr. Williams and Mr. Sra still have some work to do on their applications before things proceed.