

Four candidates confirmed for upcoming Dufferin-Caledon Conservative nomination

Written By MIKE BAKER

While three local parties have already started campaigning ahead of October's federal election, the Dufferin-Caledon Conservative Party have still yet to officially set a date for a second attempted nomination meeting, although we do now know there will, once again, be four names on the ballot.

Following confirmation from two reliable Party sources, the Citizen reported back on June 27 that the new nomination committee charged with organizing this second vote had decided on hosting the meeting on July 31. In an email distributed to media on Tuesday (July 9), Andrew Carson, the new chair of the local Conservatives' nomination committee, stated a date and location had yet to be finalized.

He did, however, confirm the four candidates in the running for nomination. Former Caledon regional councillor Barb Shaughnessy and former Orangeville mayor Jeremy Williams will return for a second crack at becoming the local candidate, with former Brampton MP Kyle Seeback and Brampton realtor Gurminder Gill rounding out the nominees.

Mr. Carson did not respond to a request by the Citizen seeking clarification regarding when each of the four candidates were approved, and when the public would hear about an official date and location for the nomination meeting, before our press deadline.

Ms. Shaughnessy confirmed she had been approved as a candidate on July 5. In an email distributed to Party members on Monday (July 8), she called on prospective local voters to stand up and take advantage of their 'second chance' later this summer.

'We have new faces in this nomination race. We also know two special interest groups - Campaign for Life Coalition and Parents as First Educators - are supporting a candidate,' Ms. Shaughnessy stated. 'As members, you have the right to know who is supporting each candidate and what commitments they have made to that organization or group. You deserve transparency.'

She added, 'You told me loud and clear - no parachute candidate with limited ties and knowledge of the community, and no rerun of identity politics. Dufferin-Caledon deserves a candidate who will always put the needs of our riding and its residents ahead of special interests.'

The previous nomination process, which concluded back on March 19, saw Harzadan Singh Khattrra emerge victorious in what was a landslide vote. After talking with local voters and investigating further, Ms. Shaughnessy filed an official appeal contesting that result with the Conservative Party's National Candidate Selection Committee. In her appeal, Ms. Shaughnessy claimed ineligible members had been allowed to vote during the nomination. She contested that both international students and out-of-riding residents helped to swing the vote in Mr. Khattrra's favour. On April 25, the Party confirmed it had disqualified Mr. Khattrra, paving the way for this new process.

It didn't take long for former MP Mr. Seeback to register his interest in running in this nomination once it was formally announced on June 13. Mr. Seeback, a member of the Dufferin-Caledon Conservative Party board, sent out a notice of his own to members on Tuesday (July 9), seemingly seeking to clarify rumours that he is, simply, a parachute candidate looking to take advantage of an opportunity here in Dufferin-Caledon.

'My young family moved to Amaranth in December of 2009. My children were three and nine, and it's the only home they've known,' Mr. Seeback wrote. 'I've witnessed firsthand the strengths of this community, as I've spent endless hours in hockey arenas, soccer fields and at community events. I've seen the warmth, the compassion, the charity and the support this community fosters.'

He added, 'I want my home and my children's home to be the best place it can possibly be. I want to ensure that the people of

Dufferin-Caledon continue to focus on that things that matter, knowing that their Member of Parliament has their best interest at heart and is advocating for them in Ottawa.?

In an email distributed on May 15, Jeff Gunnarson, National President for Campaign Life Coalition stated ?another pro-life, pro-family person will throw their hat in the ring of the re-opened nomination contest? in Dufferin-Caledon. Mr. Gunnarson went on to note that, while he wouldn't identify the individual for ?strategic reasons?, he believes whoever it is to be ?a very strong person with an excellent chance of winning?. It is strongly believed the candidate he is talking about is Mr. Seeback.

Things took another turn last Friday (July 5) when Tanya Granic Allen sent an email to Parents as First Educators (PAFE) members in Dufferin-Caledon, asking them to sign up for a Conservative Party membership to be able to vote for a candidate she believes shares the same values as PAFE.

?We need to defeat the Trudeau Liberals and we need to replace them with Conservative MPs who share the family values that we have in common. We need good people who agree with PAFE ? that parents are and should be the first and primary educators of their children,? Ms. Granic Allen wrote. ?PAFE has been informed by reliable sources that there is at least one such candidate already running for the CPC nomination. Will you help elect a strong voice for families in Dufferin-Caledon??

While Ms. Granic Allen suggested the deadline to buy a Conservative membership and be eligible to vote in this upcoming process was July 5, we understand that deadline actually passed on July 4.

Despite receiving just 73 votes in that initial nomination held in March, Mr. Williams told the Citizen last month that there was never a doubt in his mind about running, once again, in this second process. He has remained fairly quiet on social media in recent weeks, with his sole federal-related post condemning Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as a ?weak leader who isn't taken seriously? after two Chinese fighter jets buzzed a Canadian warship in the East China Sea last month.

Little is known about the fourth candidate, Gurminder Gill, outside of the fact he is listed as a real estate professional with Century 21 in Brampton. Mr. Gill appears to be an acquaintance of disqualified candidate Harzadan Khattrra, with Mr. Khattrra posting at least twice on Mr. Gill's Facebook account.

The Canadian federal election will be held on October 21. Locally, Michele Fisher is representing the Liberals, Stefan Wiesen will stand for the Green Party, while Chad Ransom will serve as the first ever People's Party candidate in Dufferin-Caledon. A nomination meeting to decide who will serve as the Conservative candidate will take place on, or before, Aug. 6.