

Work on GTA?West will proceed under PCs

By Bill Rea

A Progressive Conservative government will complete the environmental assessment (EA) on the GTA?West Corridor.

PC?Leader Patrick Brown made the announcement last Wednesday night when he addressed about 100 of the party faithful. The event was held at the Brampton Fairgrounds.

Work on the EA for the corridor that traverses Caledon was suspended in December 2015 to conduct an internal review of the work undertaken since 2007, and ensure that the project still aligned with current government policy and emerging technologies. Caledon residents and officials have been in the dark on what's being planned for the lands. The corridor was created to provide a transportation link heading west from Highway 400, and there has been considerable talk about a 400-series highway going in.

Brown, in his remarks last week, lashed out at the current Liberal government for its lack of action on the corridor.

?This government seems intent on kicking the can down the road on this decision,? he declared, adding completing the EA will be a benefit to Caledon.

Brown used the occasion to promote the Tories' policy statement for next year's election, which was unveiled last weekend. It's called People's Guarantee, and pledges a 22.5 per cent reduction in income tax for the middle class, 85 per cent refund for child-care expenses, an additional 12 per cent cut to residential hydro bills, a massive financial commitment to mental health and a first-ever Trust, Integrity and Accountability Act.

Brown has also pledged that if his government does not achieve the goals set out in its first mandate, he will not seek a second one.

?There's no wiggle room here,? he declared, noting he signed the pledge in front of the party membership and the Queens Park media.

He also had praise for local MPP?Sylvia Jones, calling her a hard worker and an integral part of the Tory Caucus at Queen's Park.

Brown told the audience when people get into politics for the right reasons, they can improve the community in which they live.

That's why he got in, running for Barrie City council when he was just 22, trying to get a recreation facility in the north end of the city. He was successful, and now he's anxious to apply that philosophy on a provincial scale.

There had been criticism that the Conservatives had been slow in revealing what they planned to do if elected.

?We took our time,? he said, adding the plan works. ?It's change that works for you . . . not the insiders.?

?It's fully costed and affordable,? he added.

Brown also said the plan is one that respects taxpayers' dollars, adding a PC?government wil stop wasting billions of dollars that can go to help those who really need the money.

In addition, he pledged it will not allow climate change to be used as an excuse for government tax grabs. He promised taxpayers will pay less and get more from a PC?government because of the elimination of waste.

Brown charged that middle class workers in Ontario have not seen a raise since 2003. They are now poorer than the average Canadian.

Making life more affordable for people is the justification for the planned 22.5 per cent cut for middle class income taxes.

Brown also observed that hydro rates have tripled since the Liberals first came to power in 2003, but that is not because there is a shortage of power.

?We are awash in electricity,? he declared, pointing to massive over-generation of power. There is enough water-generated electricity to power some 500,000 homes, with much of it being given away or sold at a loss. Brown said there are cases of families being forced to choose between paying their hydro bill or the mortgage.

He added these hydro rates have gone to help Liberal insiders and supporters, while according to the Auditor General, families overpay to the tune of about \$9.2 billion.

Ontario has among the highest hydro rates in North America, and that's likely to continue if the Liberals get back in.

?They're content with what they've created,? Brown said.

He added the Tories' plan, with the 12 per cent average cut, will deliver real and lasting savings.

Addressing the child-care issue, Brown observed that families are struggling to find care, and to afford it. It can currently cost more than \$1,000 per month.

The Conservatives propose to create 100,000 more child-care spaces without compromising standards, and to make it affordable, they are proposing the 75 per cent refund.

Brown said he's proud of Ontario's health care system, but pointed out it does have gaps than have to be addressed, and one of the biggest involves mental health.

'The government has dropped the ball; dropped the ball on mental health,' he declared.

Brown pointed out that a person breaking a leg can go to a hospital and be treated quickly, but they can wait months to have mental health issues dealt with. He added politicians at Queen's Park keep encouraging those with mental health problems to come forward, but only about six per cent of the Province's budget goes to address those issues. That figure was 11 per cent in 1979.

The PCs are committing themselves to an investment of \$1.9 billion over the next 10 years, to be matched by the commitment from the federal government.

Brown also stressed the need for trust in government.

'Kathleen Wynne has betrayed the trust that people put in her,' he declared, as he pledged to bring back accountability. 'This is real change that works for people, not insiders at Queen's Park.'

He said Wynne promised to reduce auto insurance rates by 15 per cent, then later said that was a 'stretch goal.' He said a Tory government will get rid of geographic discrimination when it comes to auto insurance.

Brown said the months leading up to the next election are not going to be easy.

'We're going to be tested,' he told the faithful. 'I'm going to be tested.'

But he added he's seen the party rise to such challenges.

Membership is up to 180,000, he said, adding that means 'more messengers to tell our story.'

He also said he's got a strong work ethic, adding he sees it in the party membership too, as he vowed to out-work the Liberals.

'We're never going to stop working,' he declared. 'We're never going to stop working for the people of Ontario.'



Ontario Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown addressed the faithful at Brampton Fairgrounds last Wednesday night.



Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones and PC Leader Patrick Brown were making the rounds through the crowds at last Wednesday's event. Photo by Bill Rea