

# Paul Calandra will be federal Conservative candidate in Oak Ridges — Markham

By Bill Rea

The second time was the charm for Paul Calandra.

The 36-year-old Stouffville area resident secured the nomination to carry the Conservative banner in Oak Ridges — Markham in the next federal election.

He beat out Oak Ridges resident Caroline Alleslev and Andrew Keyes of Markham.

Party officials wouldn't reveal the tallies from the roughly 500 members on hand for the vote at Brother Andre Catholic High School in Markham. It was a preferential ballot, meaning voters listed their first and second choices, so they only had to vote once. A source, who was close to one of the candidates, would only say the vote was "really close."

An insurance broker, Calandra had sought the nomination in the riding in 2004, but lost out to Bob Callow. He also ran for the old Canadian Alliance party in a Scarborough riding in the 2000 election.

He wasn't surprised that this effort was successful. "We worked extremely hard," he commented, adding he had been confident going in.

He also said the campaigning was going to start right away, although he couldn't speculate on when the election might be. He did say he expects good things for the party when the election takes place.

"I think people are becoming more confident with the Conservatives every day," he remarked, adding the party is doing a good job of communicating its message. "I think it will culminate in a strong majority government."

Calandra's political experience includes having worked as chief of staff in the office of former Scarborough area MPP Steve Gilchrist during the days when Mike Harris was premier. Gilchrist was among those speaking on his behalf, praising Calandra's commitment and passion, as well as his numerous connections in government.

"It's about delivering great things for this riding," he declared.

In his address to the voters, Calandra said his campaign slogan has been, "It's time for a fresh start."

"I believe that's what tonight represents," he added.

"I am not a Conservative of convenience," he said. "I am a Conservative by choice and conviction."

The evening included

numerous references to current riding Liberal MP Lui Temelkovski, and Calandra didn't pass up the opportunity.

"Tonight, I serve notice to Lui Temelkovski that his time is up," he declared.

Calandra also stressed his belief in a strong, united Canada that provides people with opportunities for success, lower taxes and the chance to keep more money in their pockets so they can invest in their future. He also believes in an environmental protection balanced with economic prosperity, and in putting the rights of victims ahead of those of criminals. As well, he expressed his support for a strong military.

"What I believe will not matter unless we elect a Conservative MP to

Ottawa," he declared.

Calandra also spoke of the need for a plan that will attract the diverse population of the riding.

He said he did a detailed analysis of the last two elections, and found that newer areas of Markham were not in the Tory camp. As well, some of the old areas of Conservative support did not come through.

He also told the audience the road to victory will be hard, and will require conviction and integrity.

Calandra said his campaign will be built on his 21 years of service to the party, and will not take a single voter for granted. He promised to develop relationships with like-minded Conservatives in the riding, including those areas

they need to carry in the election. He said they will start knocking on doors, adding "our canvass will be relentless."

"We cannot and we will not take anything for granted," he said.

"I have a vision, I have a plan and I have a team," he said. "I ask for your support. help me."

Concerns have been expressed that Prime Minister Stephen Harper has not been very receptive to his MPs being forward in representing their constituents, but Calandra wasn't worried.

"I think what we do locally is not something that the prime minister looks upon," he remarked, adding the officials in Ottawa are more interested in the national agenda. "I've never

had nothing but support from the prime minister and other members of caucus."

Calandra was also confident he'd been getting the support of the other two contenders for the nomination.

"Absolutely," he declared. "We all believe in the same things."

"I congratulate Paul and look forward to working with him and sending a new Conservative to Ottawa," Alleslev commented at the end of the evening.

"I knew it was going to be a very close race," she added, "and I don't think any of us knew who was going to win until the announcement was made."

Alleslev stressed an energetic approach to her campaign when she made her remarks. "My goal was

to go to each and every one of your doors," she declared, adding she detected a lot of diversity. But those differences didn't conceal the general desire to win the riding for the Tories.

Keyes was almost conversational in his remarks. He runs a communications agency, and he said he wanted to combine his business experience with his energies to promote the ideals of the party.

"I'm certainly not a career politician," he said, adding he joined the party because its ideals are very important to him. "These are noble ideals and they are great founding principles."

Keyes also said he too would work for Calandra in the coming campaign.

"I have no regrets," he remarked after the results were announced. "I plan to continue working for the party in this riding."



Paul Calandra was flanked by his opponents Andrew Keyes and Caroline Alleslev as he accepted the Conservative nomination in Oak Ridges — Markham Thursday night.

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