Eli El-Chantiry officially running for city council again

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BY THERESA FRITZ

EMC News - There is an official municipal election race for the Ward 5 West Carleton-March council seat.

While Dunrobin-area university student Alexander Aronec officially filed his nomination papers in January, incumbent councillor Eli El-Chantiry had only been publicly stating it was his intention to run again. But, all that changed last Wednesday afternoon.

El-Chantiry, 53, filed his papers at the West Carleton Community Complex as his wife Maha, staffers, friends and employees from his Lighthouse Restaurant and Grocery in Constance Bay looked on. Armed with the $100 fee, El-Chantiry joked that he had $200 ready to register to run for mayor.

The joke was made in reference to the fact that he had been approached about taking a run for the mayor's job, something he said he was not prepared to do this time around.

"I was seriously thinking about it," he admitted after filing his councillor's nomination papers. "I was honoured and flattered to have been asked but I love what I am doing. I am a grassroots person. But, in politics, you never say never."

El-Chantiry joked he chose last Wednesday as the day to file his papers as a "birthday gift" to his ward office assistant Lisa McGee. He said she, along with fellow staffers Kerry Bourgaize and Kelly Pohl really wanted him to get the process under way.

"I am privileged and honoured to do this (represent Ward 5). We've come a long way. I have matured on the job," he said. "There's no doubt, some days it is a thankless job."

He said sometimes, things don't work out as you might have planned. He cited the new dock in Constance Bay as one of those issues that started out with good intentions but has not been the positive addition to the community - due to construction and low water levels.

El-Chantiry said issues of importance to him include his continued involvement with Transport Pontiac Renfrew. He sits on the board of the group that has a business plan in place and is looking to take over CN Rail's Beachburg Subdivision and operate it as a community, tourism and freight line.

"We have 10,000 people commuting from the Pontiac and Renfrew County to the west end of the city," he noted. "Even if you reduced that by 25 per cent, that's 250,000 cars a day."

As well, other issues include the proposed expansion of the Waste Management landfill on Carp Road and continued roadwork.

"Even with the stimulus package and the increased investment - I initiated $10 million for rural roads - but somehow with all that money...it is never enough," El-Chantiry stated. "It is going to be tougher and tougher to get more money for roads and asphalt because the cost of those things is increasing."

As one the largest wards in the City of Ottawa, West Carleton has more roads than any other area. As well, the population has grown from 10,000 a decade ago to 26,000 today.

Also on his agenda are issues like the Carp Road Corridor and Carp Village itself, both of which are close to the urban area.

"We want to bring business to the Carp Road corridor, bring service if that is something we need to go for and bring more tenants to the Carp Airport," El-Chantiry said. "I'd like to see us as the economic employment centre for West Carleton and surrounding area."

He cited the expansion of the West Carleton Medical Centre, a new seniors residence in Carp and a proposed BIA for the Carp Road Corridor are big for the community.

"Progressive growth is needed. Without growth you are stagnant," he stated.

El-Chantiry said he is looking forward to the campaign and is hopeful residents will elect him to a third term as their municipal representative at the city council table. He said having his staff - both city and Lighthouse - behind him means a lot to him and he likes to be part of the community.

"It really gives you the feeling that 'this is where you belong'," El-Chantiry concluded.

Municipal elections take place across the province Monday, Oct. 25. Candidates can file nomination papers until Sept. 10.

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