



## Social service agencies optimistic

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York Region social service providers view Tuesday's federal election results with optimism and as an opportunity.

Social Services Network of York Region executive director Dr. Charanjit Bambra feels the reinstalled Conservative government is in sync with the growing needs of the communities his organization services.

"I look at it positively," he said.

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The information and referral service linking the South Asian community in York Region to service providers targeting newcomers, families and youth will focus on incumbents and new MPs.

"Politicians realize they can't pay lip service," Dr. Bambra said.

"In light of Statistics Canada information stating York Region is one of Canada's fastest growing newcomer populations, we will definitely make (York Region MPs) aware of our agenda and the issues.

"The only (election) disappointment is that it's still a minority government."

United Way of York Region CEO Daniele Zanotti equated the election results in lyrical terms.

"I think the song remains the same in many ways," he said.

"That's positive. We, in the social services sector, have been singing the consistent melody at the federal, provincial and regional levels and we've had great discussions with all levels of government.

"The good part of this is we can continue to have meaningful discussion with government about the pace and face of growth in York Region and chronic underfunding in the 905 area."

Mr. Zanotti, whose organization is in the midst of an ambitious \$9.5-million fundraising campaign to support 100 regional programs

administered by 40 member agencies, is buoyed at the prospects the new regime.

"We're hopeful," he said.

"We won't relent from singing the 905 song — we need funds to support our growth."

York Region Food Network executive director Joan Stonehocker, is in the home stretch of an autumn drive to collect 150,000 pounds of food by tomorrow for distribution to its eight-member food banks.

"I will connect with all the MPs," she said.

"I'll let them get a bit of sleep first."

The electorate didn't alter York Region's political landscape too drastically, she said.

"To me, there are minor changes," she said.

"We still have a minority government. We'll have to wait and see how we can work together.

"The issues haven't changed. The economic issues and how parties can work together is what we have to look at. Hopefully, they haven't lost sight of poverty issues."

Blue Door Shelter executive director Patti Bell is pleased to know who she can approach to address homelessness in York Region.

"I'm going to make a desperate plea to Prime Minister (Stephen) Harper to have a national strategy for homelessness and for him to consider much more than his current two-year plan," she said. "The plan now will only maintain current levels."