

Aurora MP resigns from Deputy Leader post to support leadership candidate

Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leona Alleslev has stepped down from her position as Deputy Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada to support leadership hopeful Peter MacKay.

Ms. Alleslev, who will continue as the Conservative Member of Parliament for Aurora's southern riding, formally resigned from her position within the shadow cabinet on Sunday and announced her support for the former Nova Scotia MP the following day.

Her party is facing an 'important decision', she says, and she doesn't want to 'stand to the side' while Mr. MacKay, along with incumbent MPs Erin O'Toole and Derek Sloan, along with lawyer Leslyn Lewis vie to replace outgoing Conservative leader Andrew Scheer.

'I think a political party is made up of the people who are in it at the time and what the country needs at the time,' says Ms. Alleslev. 'In choosing the leader for the Conservative Party, I think we need to focus on what the party and the country needs in a leader. We need someone with extensive experience in the areas that really matter [like] defence, security and international relationships.'

'Our economy is definitely in disarray, our international relationships are strained, which affects how we're viewed on the world stage, but it also affects our trading relationship and things at home.'

The best candidate to mend those issues, she says, is the former cabinet minister.

'To have a candidate who was Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was Minister of Justice and Attorney General, who was Minister of Defence, it means [he has] the wisdom and experience to be able to understand what the country needs now and how to get it done' and has shown that he is able to deliver,' says Ms. Alleslev.

Unity within the party as well as the country as a whole is very important, she adds, and says she believes Mr. MacKay has the ability to 'engage and have his message resonate with Canadians and every part of the country.'

'I think that he has the ability to understand the strengths and challenges of all of those communities and being able to prioritize the greatest good for the greatest number of Canadians from each of those areas,' says Ms. Alleslev. 'He values the big tent of Conservatives and all the perspectives in the Conservative Party and will ensure that we all have the opportunity to have our voices heard and, therefore, make the whole greater than the sum of its parts. At this point in our history, we're only 37 million people in Canada and the world has become a much more hostile and difficult

place. We're going to need unity of purpose and focus to be able to navigate the challenges in front of us and come out stronger as a result.?

Ms. Alleslev, who began her political career as a Liberal Member of Parliament before crossing the floor in 2018, was appointed Deputy Leader by Mr. Scheer last November.

It has been an eventful eight months since taking the post of second-in-command and Ms. Alleslev says, from a national perspective, it has been a ?challenging time.?

?From the oil and gas industry being decimated, to auto manufacturing plants being closed, to aerospace manufacturing declining, to loss of capital investment, to increases in personal household debt, all of those things were putting us in a very challenging perspective, then we had the blockades which essentially shut down our economy and had a drastic impact on Canada, and then we found ourselves facing the challenge of a virus,? she said.

?So, my term as the deputy leader has basically witnessed a rapid acceleration in economic challenges and decline at a time when we needed to be moving in another direction. Now we find ourselves in an uncertain period because we don't really know what it is going to take for us to start regaining our economy and when and how. We don't know what the criteria are to open borders, we don't know what the plan is to get to a stage where we can live with COVID or are we going to be in this period until there is a vaccine ? when will the government not be providing these benefits and under what criteria? Essentially Canadians find themselves almost in a period of limbo, not really knowing what's going to happen next.?

By Brock Weir