

Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill candidates make final pitches at Library meeting

By Brock Weir

Five of the six candidates vying to be Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill's next representative in Ottawa stood before a packed house at the Aurora Public Library on Tuesday night to make their final pitches to local voters on their home turf.

Although the Richmond Hill Board of Trade is slated to hold a final all-candidates debate for local candidates as The Auroran went to press this week, this was the last chance for candidates to make their pitches in a public setting hosted at an Aurora venue.

Stepping up, in speaking order, were incumbent Leona Alleslev of the Conservative Party, Priya Patil of the People's Party, Aaron Brown of the NDP, Leah Taylor Roy of the Liberal Party, and Tim Flemming of the Green Party.

A meet-and-greet rather than a debate, the Library's event was a chance to speak directly to residents. Excerpts from their respective pitches are included here.

LEONA ALLESLEV (CONSERVATIVE)

I attended Royal Military College in Kingston. I served as an officer for 10 years. I have worked in the Federal Government in Industry Canada, Defence Procurement. I was a senior program manager at IBM, having the opportunity to implement large systems across both the United States, Canada and in Europe and China. I was at Bombardier Aerospace as an aircraft manufacturing manager, building really, really cool airplanes.

The Federal Government matters in the lives of Canadians, and during this election Canada finds itself at a critical moment. More than 150 years ago, we came and built this nation because we knew that our vast geography, our small population, the only way that we could protect our sovereignty and grow and be competitive was if we united. As my friends out west say, this election is for all the marbles. The country is at stake. I swore an oath to give my life for this country and now I am asking for the privilege to do that once again. I promise that I will always put you and the country first and together we will build a strong, secure, and prosperous Canada ? not only for tomorrow but for generations to come.

PRIYA PATIL (PEOPLE'S PARTY)

I am an immigrant from India. I came here 32 years ago? I went to law school here, practiced law with General Motors and some of the big law firms. I moved to California and became a lawyer there and worked with a lot of technology companies, but mainly as a finance lawyer. When I came back, I again worked for big public companies and moved into investment banking. My career has been in finance as an attorney and as an investment banker.

The reason

I am elaborating on that is that has allowed me to be able to read the balance sheet really well and the balance sheet I see right now, Provincially and Federally, I do not like. I think a lot of the deficits and debts, that really worries me and I don't even have children, but I worry about our future generations because they will be paying for all this debt and deficits. That's what I will focus on and at least bring [this] very important topic of money to the table and have discussions. I am not a career politician, I threw my hat in the ring about 18 days ago and I am working hard on getting the word out.

AARON BROWN (NDP)

I have some questions I want you to think about. Is life getting easier for me and my loved ones? Is this the Canada I want to live in? Is this the Canada I want to leave behind? I have been lucky enough to be able to canvass and interact with people in this community ? my neighbours and your neighbours ? and unfortunately people are worried and I don't like the answers to those questions. We're worried about the cost of living, housing, phone bills, medicine and dental that all add up. We're worried about national issues like Climate Change that both the Liberals and Conservatives have failed to address.

The New

Democrats and I are in it for you. We're on the side of hard-working everyday Canadians, not the big corporations and lobbyists that are currently running our country. We know that Canadians want a more affordable life; services like universal pharmacare and action like the big issues like housing and climate change. That's why we're going to fight to save families over \$1,000 a year on their phone and hydro bills. That's why we're going to stop profiting off our young people's student loans. That's why we're going to push forward with a bold plan on climate that creates 300,000 meaningful and sustainable jobs. That's why we're trying to make your life easier and better.

Don't let

them tell you it can't be done. Listen tonight with an open mind and reimagine what's possible.

LEAH TAYLOR ROY (LIBERAL)

I really

believe that politics is about people. It is about you, and it is about community. I grew up in a family where community was very important. My father was a small businessman, a community organizer, and eventually served as Newmarket's mayor for almost 10 years. My mother was a nurse and I worked with her at an old age home, that was my first job. We grew up with the values of hard work and giving back to our community and that's why I am running: I am running because this is a very, very important election and that it is time for me to put my hat in the ring and say, 'I want to make a difference.'

A lot of things have been said about what has or hasn't been done. I have been told I am not committed to climate change because I am a Liberal, I am told I don't care about debt because I am a Liberal. Well, I am here to tell you that those things aren't true. Climate change is an incredibly important issue and I think the Liberal Party has shown their commitment by putting a price on pollution, something that is a bold and recognized way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

If you look at 50 countries around the world, most of the experts would agree with that. Liberals do care about the debt. We were left with a debt of 39 per cent of GDP from the Harper government. It is now 31 per cent. Liberals have brought it down. We don't know what the Conservatives are going to do moving forward because they haven't given us the cost of their plan. They can say they are going to balance the budget, although they don't say they are going to do it anymore this term, but we have no plans. I don't know what you're thinking about, but I am thinking that until we have a costed plan we don't know that for sure.

I hope you'll support a committed, concerned Liberal.

TIM FLEMMING (GREEN)

I just got involved in this recently and I am going to tell you why. Walter (Bauer, Green Party Candidate for Newmarket-Aurora) emphasized what is a core part of the Green platform, and [what] it is, but when I decided to move, I went deep into the platform overall and it is actually the only plan out there that addresses the key measures that we, as Canadians, need to move forward with. Beyond the climate, which is an emergency, we need to address it for sure, but we're going to right those Indigenous wrongs and we're going to fix it once and for all. We're going to transition to a green economy. Those aren't words, the reality is we're going to find the right environmental jobs, a fair taxation system, we're going to find the things that are important. We're going to fix ecological damage and the only way to do that is to take the things that have our knowledge about, like single use plastics, apply our ecological wisdom to correct the situation.

We're

going to renew the social contract. What that means is at the end of the day, whether that be veterans, seniors, young kids, anything, we're going to bring the social greatness of Canada, reinvigorate and it bring it to each individual. We're going to bring a just society. You rarely see it except when people need to put it up front, but whether it be the rights of every gender, every individual, they are going to be front and centre in a just world. It is critical for us. We're going to have good governance. Remember the last time we were going to drop first-past-the-post? We're going to inform that, bring it back, bring all levels of government together in a coordinated fashion.