

Yaqubian kicks off Liberal campaign in Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill



By Brock Weir

It will take more than an ice storm to keep Naheed Yaqubian from the business at hand.

Ms. Yaqubian, who will carry the Liberal banner for the riding of Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill in this spring's Provincial election, formally launched her campaign on Sunday and she was joined by a host of Cabinet ministers and party faithful who dug out just for the occasion.

"I am a kid from Richmond Hill, a local girl who grew up here who is deeply, deeply involved in the community," said Ms. Yaqubian before formally cutting the ribbon to her King Road campaign office with Environment Minister Chris Ballard, Minister of Economic Development & Growth Steven Del Duca and Minister of Research, Innovation & Science Reza Moridi. "But our community grows and prospers not only when we have these amazing ministers in government, but when we have community bake sales, where people are setting up and taking down those bake sales, when we have an office opening like this one and we have [people] just coming here to paint the walls and make sure every little detail is taken care of. Our community grows when we all pitch in."

Speaking with *The Auroran* before the dignitaries arrived, Ms. Yaqubian, a lawyer by profession, said seeking public office is the most "fulfilling" thing she has ever done.

"I love law, I love my career, and the prospect of public service is honestly the most genuinely fulfilling thing I have ever done," she said. "Just to knock on doors and listen to people's stories, and have the privilege of them putting their confidence in you is incredible."

Door knocking, she said, is her mantra and one of the Liberal platform planks she said she has particularly enjoyed taking to local residents involve the party's day care priorities.

"Our new Child Care program will provide universal preschool to children between the ages of 2.5 and five and that will impact families because they will save approximately \$17,000 per year per child, and even more in Toronto where daycare is more expensive," she said. "In terms of having an impact on families' bottom lines but also on quality of life, that is one of my favourite things to talk about."

"Another great part of our platform is our record investments in transit, more of which you will see in the coming weeks. We have two new GO stations in the riding, one at Gormley and Bloomington. Whenever I go to the doors I hear a lot about traffic congestion and going to work. We think right now is a pivotal time to be investing in transit to ensure our community has what they need to get up and get to work every day. The Liberals don't think Mr. Ford's comebacks are going to solve that problem; in fact, they are going to make it worse."

Regarding the election of Mr. Ford as leader of the Progressive Conservative party, Ms. Yaqubian says she and her team were "surprised" by the turmoil within Progressive Conservative ranks but, on their side of the floor, it provided some clarity.

"We realised quickly it didn't really matter who their leader was," she said. "All that matters is who we're fighting for because our

priorities don't change depending on who their leader is and I think that that provides a very clear contrast in this election. We are focused on the programs and services that we, as the current government provide, and that we can deliver for the people. I think of regardless of who our opposition leader is and regardless of what their platform is, we know that their priorities are not every day people. We know that by Mr. Ford's words, Mr. Ford's actions and his record as a one-term city councillor.

? I think that resonates from what I am hearing at the doors, I think that our platform and our policies, our plan, which we do have, resonates really well with voters when they realise we have a very intelligent, competent government that is looking to make policy using scientific evidence, using the best evidence available to us.?

That being said, the Liberal party has faced accusations of spending money it doesn't have and throwing money around in order to better their chances at an election victory. While Ms. Yaqubian says that ?winning? is indeed important; what is far more important is to ?govern.?

?Winning is not the prize; governing is the prize,? she said. ?As a government, we know how to govern. At this time, there are people who are not receiving the benefits from our strong and growing economy. We have made a conscious choice to run a deficit in order to give people the services they need. I think that is resonating really well with people who believe government is a force for good in people's lives.

?I am really looking forward to meeting voters. We have already done a lot of work with our amazing volunteers in this riding. We have been knocking on doors, making phone calls, holding events. I am really excited to be meeting with more voters in Aurora, Oak Ridges and Richmond Hill, listening to their priorities and concerns, and delivering it to them on June 7.?