

Alleslev launches bid to lead ?united? Conservative party



Former Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leona Alleslev has formally announced her bid to become the next leader for the Conservative Party of Canada.

Ms. Alleslev, who served as Member of Parliament for Aurora's south riding between 2015 and 2021, until her defeat in last fall's Federal election, made things official last Wednesday afternoon in Ottawa, a day before Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland delivered the Federal Budget in the House of Commons.

Ms. Alleslev framed her announcement around what she believed the Federal Budget should reflect, including an overhaul of the ?carbon tax? to put a price on energy ?being delivered to Canada that doesn't meet our standards,? ?serious? greenhouse gas reduction strategies ?that will actually deliver results,? further investments in defence and security, and enhanced efforts on defending Canada's sovereignty.

?Not all points in history are equal,? said Ms. Alleslev last week. ?The global balance of power is shifting. Canada's security and prosperity are at risk. We are divided at home and, for the first time in our history, many Canadians believe tomorrow may not be better than today. Canada is at a crossroads. Failure to deal with the challenges facing our country will affect not only tomorrow but Canada's future for generations to come.

?Canada's economy has been challenged by COVID, but let's be clear: it was already faltering under this government before the pandemic began. Economic growth for our country starts with a frank conversation on energy security and the carbon tax. Canada is one of the largest and cleanest producers of oil and gas in the world, but we cannot sell our own energy to our citizens. Instead, the energy supply that comes through Enbridge Line 5 through Ontario and Quebec can be shut down arbitrarily by the Governor of Michigan while the east coast imports oil from countries that don't meet our environmental standards. Our commitment to climate change starts with a commitment to use energy that meets the highest environmental standards in the world: our own.?

Importing oil, she said, ?weakens? the national economy and ?supports countries with questionable human rights standards.?

The ?carbon tax,? she contended, was ?designed to raise the cost of energy as an incentive for consumers to drive less,? but inflation has made energy ?even more expensive than what the carbon tax intended.?

?Canadians are not driving less and greenhouse gas emissions are not being reduced,? she said. ?Individuals are suffering under this punishing carbon tax with the Parliamentary Budget Officer stating that 60 per cent of households are worse off. These Liberals have not made the necessary investments in public transit and other infrastructure to give Canadians viable alternatives.

“Canada's defence and security has also been compromised under this Liberal government. A government has no greater responsibility than to protect the sovereignty and security of its citizens. But money laundering, cyber-hacking, foreign interference and influence are all increasing unchecked. The United States tells us we're not meeting our commitments to our collective North American defence, NORAD, because we have failed to invest in critical infrastructure modernization. All Canadians should be embarrassed when our NATO allies point out that we rank among last among the 29 NATO countries in our defence spending. All this while the Ukraine is at war.”

A veteran of the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Canadian Armed Forces with a specialization in military contracts and procurement, she said Russia's war in Ukraine has highlighted gaps in military investment under the Liberal government.

“This Liberal government may say they stand with Ukraine but their actions tell a different story,” she said. “We have known for years that we've needed to do more in support of Ukraine. My MP colleagues and I wrote a Defence Committee report in 2017 clearly stating what needed to be done, but five years later this government has failed to act. The Liberals must do more for Ukraine. They must remove the visa requirements for Ukrainians wanting to come to Canada, they must expedite the export permits that are preventing critical military items from leaving Canada and provide increased support for their transportation to Ukraine.”

Highlighting the need for further investment in defending sovereignty in the Arctic, an area she described as “Canada's next frontier,” Ms. Alleslev said in this moment in our history “leaders matter” and that is why she was putting herself forward to head the Conservatives.

Her vision of Canada, she said, is one that is “united” from coast to coast where Canadians from every region are “valued, where our differences are respected and our unity is our strength,” where goods and labour can move freely and a “country where Canadians decide our future” and “foreign influence and undue economic and political pressure have no power.”

“I saw how the Liberal party works, how its leadership operates and how they have divided Canada,” said Ms. Alleslev, who was first elected as a Liberal MP for Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill before crossing the floor to the Conservatives in 2018. “Why I left the Liberals and joined the Conservatives is the easiest question I will ever be asked: I left the Liberals on principle. I joined the Conservative party on principle. As a member of Canada's military, I swore an oath to put service to country above all else. I will never waver from that obligation. Canada is at a tipping point. We must change course. We can change course. Once again, my country is calling. Once again, I will answer that call. Together, we will create a more united, more secure and prosperous Canada.”

But, following Wednesday's announcement, Ms. Alleslev was pressed on whether Conservatives would support her bid if she lost her last local campaign.

“I am sure there are many candidates out there who will share my perspective, understanding that even the best candidate can only do so much in an election. They actually also need a strong party and a strong leader and that is why I am running for leader of the Conservative party,” she said, declining to answer directly when asked whether she blamed her loss on former Conservative leader Erin O'Toole.

“I think it would be unwise to identify any specific reason for the loss,” she said. “There is always any number of reasons for a loss, but all of those reasons [are why] we need a strong Conservative party and we need a strong leader for the future.”

By Brock Weir
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