

Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill Liberals name Alleslev Federal candidate



(Ms. Alleslev and challenger Jason Cherniak, pictured before Sunday's vote. Auroran photo by Brock Weir)

By Brock Weir

We need to take back our country, and that effort starts right here and now.

That was the rallying cry of Leona Alleslev, an Oak Ridges resident and former officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force, as she was formally elected as the Liberal Party of Canada's candidate in the next Federal election for the newly created riding of Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill.

Ms. Alleslev emerged triumphant against candidate Jason Cherniak, a lawyer based in Richmond Hill, after several hours voting at H.G. Bernard Public School in Richmond Hill's north end on Sunday afternoon.

Before voting began, however, each candidate had a chance to state their case on why they would be the best person to challenge Conservative MP Costas Menegakis, who was acclaimed earlier this year as his party's candidate for the riding, in the next election widely expected to be held next fall.

"I am not asking you to vote for me based on what I did 20 years ago, I am asking you to vote for me because of what I have been doing my entire life, what I am doing today, and what I will keep doing for the rest of my life," said Mr. Cherniak, in the first speech of the day highlighting his activism within the Liberal Party and the wider community.

"[After the] 2011 election and we were decimated across the country? I wasn't willing to give up because I believe in Liberal values. I believe that if you are born into poverty that you don't have to live that way for the rest of your life. I believe we need a clean environment to keep protecting the Oak Ridges Moraine. I believe we need to return to the role of peacekeeper in the world. If we're going to beat Stephen Harper we need to win everywhere in the province, not just here."

Ms. Alleslev, on the other hand, reflecting on the Air Force background not only of her and her husband, but also her father, said Canada needs to work just as hard to "broker peace as we do fighting for it."

"November is a month of Remembrance, this year in particular with the 100th anniversary of World War One," she said. "We remember the sacrifice of the many who gave their lives so that we might have freedom and peace. These great sacrifices contributed to making the world the place that it is today, but it also reminds us that we must remain vigilant and work as hard to broker peace and prevent war as we do fighting for it."

?No one understands the value of peace like a soldier. I was a soldier, like my father before me, and like his father before him, and like my husband. My father was a General in the Canadian Armed Forces. My grandfather was in the Danish Underground during the German occupation of World War 2, and my husband. We understand the concerns and fear that these turbulent times mean for all of us. In these times of uncertainty and unrest, we must choose leaders to shape our country and the world according to the principles that we cherish. We must choose leaders who will bring communities together and value uniqueness and the strength that each one brings. Our leaders must see our similarities and not our differences.?

For Ms. Alleslev, that leader is Justin Trudeau. Regardless of how Sunday's vote went, she said when she looked out into the room she saw the ?passion? of ?Team Trudeau? and the opportunity of ?leading a campaign to take back our country?and that campaign starts today ? right here, right now.?

?Our leaders believe in unity across religions, ethnicities and geographical regions,? she said. ?Our strength as Canadians is our ability to unite and achieve a common vision and to celebrate our diversities. As Canadians, we have the freedom to choose and the right to choose those leaders who govern us. We also have the responsibility to exercise that right and ensure that those reflect our core principles. We must choose leaders who reflect the principles of fairness, inclusiveness, justice and peace.

?I grew up in a Canada that welcomed people from all over the world with open arms. I grew up in a Canada that sent peacekeepers around the world. In fact, we were recognized as peacemakers. We all remember that Canada. We must once again be that Canada ? a Canada where we must take our place in a world of peacemakers and peacekeepers. We must take back our country from those who would seek to erode everything that defines us as Canadians and that we hold dear.?

Ms. Alleslev is the latest candidate confirmed for Aurora in the next Federal election. She will face off against Conservative Costas Menegakis in the new riding which encompasses all of Aurora south of Wellington Street, Oak Ridges, and northern Richmond Hill. Portions of Aurora north of Wellington Street will remain in the reconfigured riding of Newmarket-Aurora. Confirmed candidates for Newmarket-Aurora include incumbent Conservative MP Lois Brown, who will once again go head-to-head with Liberal Kyle Peterson.



Volunteers worked hard for their candidates before the polls opened Sunday afternoon.