

## Canada Votes 2025: Supporting veterans key for all candidates

Canada's veterans have given the best of themselves to serve King, Queen and Country for generations.

Yet, as much as they have contributed to the country, those who serve often cite a lack of resources and supports to help them adjust back to civilian life, whether these supports are related to mental health, finding a job, or even securing a home.

This week, as the Federal election campaign enters its final heat ahead of the April 28 poll, The Auroran what candidates would do to support those served, if elected to represent our community.

### NEWMARKET-AURORA

In answering this question, Conservative candidate Sandra Cobena looked back on a conversation she had with Second World War veteran Wilf O'Hearn, saying veterans ?deserve our respect and support.?

The Conservative plan starts with ensuring benefits are in place before an individual leaves the military, and will include: automatically approving disability applications if they are not processed within 16 weeks; giving veterans full control over their medical records; allowing military doctors to assess injuries ?using one standardized system;? ensuring PTSD support dogs are available to veterans who need them, with a national standard for support; and making education and training available to veterans immediately after their release date.

?A new Conservative government will prioritize Veterans for jobs in the public service, give preference to veteran-owned businesses in federal contracts, double the hiring target at Veterans Affairs and fast-track the renewal of security clearances for those who already have them and need them for a new job,? Cobena continues. ?We will also add spouses of Veterans and Canadian Armed Forces Members who want to work for Canada into the Veterans Hiring Act.?Proposed supports for those going back into civilian life include providing veterans the ?documentation they need to have their skills recognized by employers through a red-seal system; ensuring veterans get post-secondary course credits for the skills and knowledge they gained in the Canadian Armed Forces?; and reviewing and removing claw backs of military pensions for Veterans who get jobs, ensuring their new income is on top of their pension, not in place of it.?

?A new Conservative government will also make sure that our military Veterans get the recognition they deserve for putting their lives on the line, and country before self. This includes recognizing Veteran Service Cards as valid government ID nationwide. We will also immediately complete the National Monument to Canada's Mission.?

Liberal candidate Jennifer McLachlan says veterans have ?served Canada with pride and dedication, and just as they stood up for us, we must always stand up for them. They deserve more than our gratitude ? they deserve real, tangible support as they transition to civilian life.?

?A Mark Carney-led Liberal government is delivering exactly that,? says McLachlan. ?First, our ambitious housing plan will play an important role in ensuring that veterans and their families have access to affordable, quality homes. Just as Canada did after the Second World War, we will mobilize the federal government to build the homes Canadians ? including our veterans ? need. But it goes beyond housing. Last year, we launched Service after Service: The National Veterans Employment Strategy ? Canada's first-ever dedicated strategy to improve employment opportunities for veterans. This strategy recognizes that every veteran's journey is different, and it focuses on helping veterans find meaningful, well-paying careers that suit their unique skills and leadership experience.?

Strategies include improving services and expanding programs to make the job search easier and more efficient; creating and promoting ?Veteran-ready employers? across Canada; positioning the public service as a leader in veteran hiring; building trusted partnerships between employers, post-secondary institutions, industry, and non-profits to understand veterans' skills and connect

them to opportunities.

?This is personal for me because employment is about more than a paycheque. For our veterans, meaningful employment touches on purpose, financial security, and social connection ? it supports their overall well-being,? says McLachlan. ?There are thousands of job opportunities across Canada today, and we know veterans have the leadership, discipline, and experience to step into these roles and thrive. And we know the Royal Canadian Legion is an essential part of this effort. Our local branches in Newmarket?Aurora and across the country play an invaluable role in supporting veterans and their families, preserving our history, and building community. As your MP, I will be a strong advocate for our Legion branches to ensure they have the resources and support they need to continue their critical work. In Newmarket?Aurora and across Canada, I will be a strong voice for veterans ? to ensure they have the housing, the health care, the community supports, and the careers they deserve when their service to our country transitions to civilian life.?

## **AURORA-OAK RIDGES-RICHMOND HILL**

Incumbent Liberal candidate Leah Taylor Roy says she's proud to stand with Mark Carney ?behind a renewed and strengthened commitment to the people who served this country ? not just in words, but through meaningful action.?

?Supporting veterans isn't optional. It's a responsibility,? says Taylor Roy. ?These are people who put on the uniform, left their homes and families, and served with courage ? and when that service ends, they shouldn't have to struggle to access care, support, or housing. I've had the chance to speak with veterans here in our community ? at local Legion events, during roundtables, and one-on-one. What I hear is consistent: they're proud of their service, but the system often makes them feel like they have to fight again just to get the help they need. That shouldn't be the case

?We need to ensure that every veteran ? no matter where they served or when they returned ? can count on their government to be there for them.?

The Liberal plan to do just that includes: Expanding access to mental health support, including trauma and PTSD care, and peer-led services that understand the unique experiences of veterans and their families; Reducing wait times for benefits and pensions, by hiring more staff and modernizing the system at Veterans Affairs ? so support doesn't take months to arrive; Increasing funding for the Veteran and Family Well-Being Fund, which supports local programs focused on housing, family counselling, and reintegration; Helping veterans find meaningful work through a strengthened Veterans Employment Strategy ? with better job-matching tools and recruitment efforts across public and private sectors; Investing in veteran-specific housing solutions, including supports for those at risk of homelessness, through programs like Reaching Home ? because no one who served this country should be without a safe place to live.

?This isn't just about a policy platform ? it's about real people, and the commitment we owe them. Veterans in Aurora?Oak Ridges?Richmond Hill should know that their voices are being heard,? says Taylor Roy. ?I've worked with local groups and will continue listening, showing up, and advocating to make sure they receive the care and respect they deserve.

?Under Mark Carney's leadership, we're putting forward a plan rooted in respect, built on compassion, and focused on results. No one who served this country should ever feel left behind ? and I'll keep doing everything I can to ensure they never are.?

Conservative candidate Costas Menegakis notes the Conservative plan for veterans starts with ensuring benefits are in place before service personnel leave the Armed Forces.

?We'll automatically approve disability applications not processed within 16 weeks, give veterans control of their medical records, standardize injury assessments by military doctors, provide PTSD service dogs with consistent national standards, and make Education and Training Benefits immediately available upon receiving release dates,? he says.

?We'll prioritize veterans for public service jobs, give preference to veteran-owned businesses in federal contracts, double hiring targets at Veterans Affairs, and fast-track security clearance renewals. For those transitioning to civilian life, we'll provide

documentation for skill recognition through a red-seal system, ensure post-secondary course credits for military experience, and remove pension claw backs for employed veterans. We'll also recognize Veteran Service Cards as valid government ID nationwide.

?Unlike the previous government that fought veterans in court and broke promises on lifelong pensions while cutting case managers, our government will restore Canada's promise to veterans with the respect and support they've earned.?

**By Brock Weir**