

Candidates make their final pitches ahead of Monday's Federal election

As a record number of voters came out to cast their ballots in advance polls over the Easter Weekend, candidates vying to be Aurora's next Members of Parliament were making their final pitches to voters.

All-candidates meetings were held in both Newmarket-Aurora and Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill last week, with varying levels of participation by those whose names are on the ballot.

The session, hosted by the Richmond Hill Board of Trade in Oak Ridges on April 15, focused on Aurora's south riding and saw the participation of incumbent Liberal candidate Leah Taylor Roy, Green Party candidate Tom Muench, and Igor Tvorogov of the People's Party of Canada.

In Newmarket-Aurora, which is fielding a ballot that includes Sandra Cobena of the Conservative Party of Canada, Anna Gollen of the New Democratic Party, and Jennifer McLachlan of the Liberal Party, only McLachlan turned up at the event organized by Christian organizations at the Newmarket Legion.

The Richmond Hill debate covered a range of topics, from tariffs, to abortion rights, to the Israel-Hamas conflict, but given the Board of Trade's role, business and taxes were primary concerns.

Candidates were asked what specific taxation policies they and their parties would bring forward to alleviate the financial burden on small businesses and how each of these steps would, in turn, foster business growth and job creation.

Cutting taxes and balancing the budget across the board was priority number one for Tvorogov, who said Canada's is not a real economy.

Our economy is based on the financial market where value is not determined by the value of real goods, but is determined by [how] you speculate on stocks, he said. The financial market is highly volatile; it's dependent on politics rather than the value of real-world goods. We need to invest in our industry and we need to prioritize the creation of industrial jobs in the real sector.

The Green Party, said Muench, stands behind small business and views small business as essential for healthy quality of living. With that said, he questioned Canada's debt and said we, as a nation, have a productivity challenge.

We have the worst productivity in Canada in any of our G7 countries, he said. It's not a great stat. We should not be lagging behind others. The bottom line is lower taxes. We need to get our government more efficient and effective and we need to be more responsible to try and create job growth.

Taylor Roy said the Liberal government, when it was first formed in 2015, reduced taxes on small businesses, a trend that has continued in the ensuing decade.

Canada did far better than other countries with its small businesses during COVID because of the supports that this government put in place to ensure that they could continue to operate, she said. We regained one million jobs quickly after COVID because we had allowed these businesses to continue to operate. I think supporting small businesses is more than just taxation; but taxation matters and we have one of the lowest tax rates on small businesses anywhere.

I will also just mention, because some of my colleagues did, the national debt: the debt per capita is six times higher in the United States than in Canada. We're actually doing well considering the times we've been through, but we need to do better.

Taylor Roy was first to field a question on carbon pricing both at the consumer and industrial level.

Candidates were specifically asked whether the consumer carbon tax, which was nixed by Liberal leader Mark Carney when he first took the reins as Prime Minister in March, would 'return' after the election as is or in another form.

The Liberal candidate said the consumer carbon tax would not return if the party once again forms government on April 28.

'The levy on consumers has been a source of division in the country,' she conceded. 'I will say that we did not do a good job as the Liberal government explaining this program and how divisive it was. One thing that is very important for me and our leader is that Canada is united, especially facing the challenges [we're facing] now from the United States. That is why this program has been cancelled. It will not be reinstated'. We still believe, however, that we must address the problem of climate change and pollution, but there are other ways to do that 'cap and trade systems.'

Tvorogov said 'everyone was happy' when the consumer carbon tax was 'taken away temporarily' but said his party had actively opposed it since 2019.

'As for putting the cap and trade, the price on the pollution for developers, well, guess who they are going to pass these prices onto? They're going to pass it on to consumers. At the end of the day, you still end up with a high cost of living,' he said. 'You know our competitors on the global market 'China, Russia' they do not care about the climate alarmists. They do not have a price on pollution and they allow their energy industry to thrive.'

Muench described himself as 'the lone wolf' in favour of carbon taxes and said it was one of the 'more efficient taxes' introduced.

'No one likes to pay taxes, but there is a cost to pollution and believe it or not, the manufacturing sector is fully on side, the steel industry on side, the oil and gas industry on side,' he said.

Following questions from the floor, each of the participating candidates had the chance to make their final pitches to voters in attendance.

Tvorogov said that those in attendance might not have agreed with him, but 'we offer something different.'

'Other parties are either on board with the destructive or regressive agenda, or they believe throwing money at a problem will make it go away. I am the only candidate here tonight and we are the only party that has a vision for our future on the long-term plan,' he said.

'I want to leave with one more observation: We start events with the land acknowledgement. Back in the day when Christianity was the moral foundation of Canada and they would start with a prayer. This may not have been a perfect society, but you know what they had that we don't have anymore? Men and women love each other and live in happy, big families. Their children spent their day outside instead of being glued to their phones? Home and land ownership was a realistic milestone to everyone willing to put in the effort.

'Now, what we have is the establishment parties that have been screwing us over for generations. Don't you think it is time to try something different? Holding the people who are not beholden to lobbies, people with real-world experience who run for politics not because they want to make a career out of it, but they are concerned with the direction their country is headed.'

Muench had the second slot and said voters should be 'excited' about the vote ahead, seeing it as a 'great opportunity.'

'Today, you are having the opportunity to discuss who is going to be your representative,' he said. 'For me, it is about low inflation, but quality of life, affordable living, having a pride for Canada, building dreams for people in this and the next generation'. As a team, everybody achieves more. Vote for you, vote for your families, vote for your kids. Don't vote for yesterday and don't vote for entitlement. You might be disappointed.'

Taylor Roy closed out the evening stating that conversations like the evening's all-candidates meeting and parsing out 'real information' is 'essential to our democracy,' taking aim at candidates who were not in attendance.

'I am not a career politician. I have only been in office for three-and-a-half years. It has been a privilege and I have worked hard. I have done this because I believe in our country. I believe that we can be better. I believe that Canadians' wellbeing and our unity as a country is what matters a great deal. Our unity as a country and as a sovereign nation, of course. I used to not have to say that, but in these days, we have to mention that as well. We are a great country. We have so much to offer. We have so much to work with, so much talent, education, people who have come to our country from all over the world, with different backgrounds, different religions, different goals and visions for their lives, different beliefs? we have all come together as Canadians and it has made our country great. I want to continue to work towards that.

'I am not running for MP for any of the reasons I think you have heard from my colleagues?I am running because I believe in community and country. I want to work for you as your representative, I want to listen to you, hear your dreams, your concerns, and I want to work to make our country the best country on earth. I think it is, but we can always do better, and I believe that the Liberal party under the leadership of Mark Carney can do that. So, please support the candidate that showed up and has a real agenda for our country.'

By Brock Weir