

Federal candidates identify environmental priorities

Environmental protection is something most people agree on, but the nuts and bolts on what needs to be done ? and how ? can vary from candidate to candidate and from party to party.

With just days to go before the April 28 Federal Election, The Auroran is concluding its weekly poll of leading registered candidates by asking them to identify their top environmental priority at the community and national levels, and what they would advocate for if elected to the House of Commons.

Here is how they answered.

NEWMARKET-AURORA

?The Liberals destructive environmental policies have not achieved their targets and have meant companies move their operations to other countries,? said Conservative candidate Sandra Cobena. ?Under the Liberals, environmental goals are not achieved and jobs leave Canada. The Conservatives will bring those jobs home while allowing low Carbon projects such as LNG to displace higher Carbon fuels around the world. We will unleash our mining sector to produce the minerals needed to make electric cars more affordable and Canadian-made. We will provide tax credits and encourage technology to allow industry [to] become more efficient and environmentally friendly. Less government. More innovation and jobs.?

Liberal candidate Jennifer McLachlan, however, had a very different perspective on her party's record.

She identified ?the intensifying impact of climate change? as the ?most urgent environmental threat we face.?

?Here in Newmarket?Aurora, we've seen first-hand the consequences: from increasingly frequent flood events to scorching heat domes that jeopardize human health?especially for seniors, children, and other vulnerable populations. And just two years ago, our skies turned hazy and our air quality deteriorated due to smoke drifting across the GTA from wildfires in Quebec. These are not distant warnings?they are real and immediate threats affecting our daily lives,? she said.

?That's why protecting our urban tree canopy, green spaces, and natural heritage?including Lake Simcoe and the Oak Ridges Moraine?is more important than ever. These ecosystems not only safeguard biodiversity but also help regulate temperatures, absorb carbon, and clean our air.?

A Liberal government, she continued, would: Invest in local resilience by restoring the Lake Simcoe Clean-Up Fund and partnering with municipalities to expand green infrastructure and protect our watersheds; Build a clean economy that creates good, middle-class jobs through investments in battery manufacturing, clean tech, and the adoption of zero-emission vehicles; support Canadians with incentives like \$5,000 toward the purchase of a zero-emission vehicle and \$100 million to retrofit homes and buildings for energy efficiency and EV charging; ensure all new vehicle sales are zero-emission by 2035, with 50% of sales reaching that goal by 2030, supported by 50,000 new charging and hydrogen stations across the country; accelerate wildfire preparedness by investing \$500 million to train 1,000 community-based firefighters, equip provinces and territories, and expand Indigenous-led fire management programs; and strengthen environmental accountability, including phasing out coal exports by 2030, reducing emissions from oil and gas to net-zero by 2050, and accelerating our plan to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies.?

?We've already invested over \$100 billion?including \$53.6 billion for a green recovery?but these efforts must continue. That's why we'll keep holding major emitters accountable while also making life more affordable for Canadians,? she concluded. ?And we'll work globally with our allies to ensure fair climate standards and competitiveness through tools like Border Carbon Adjustments. In short, we don't have time for inaction. We need a government with a real plan?one that protects our environment, supports innovation, and leaves no one behind. I'm ready to be that strong local voice for climate action in Ottawa.?

AURORA-OAK RIDGES-RICHMOND HILL

In her response, incumbent Liberal candidate Leah Taylor Roy also cited climate change as the "most urgent environmental threat facing our community and our country."

"But for me, it's not just about global trends—it's about the places we love, the water we drink, and the future we're building for our children," she said. "Here in Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill, our green spaces define who we are. The Oak Ridges Moraine, Lake Wilcox, the David Dunlap Observatory lands, and the extensive forested trails and wetlands throughout our community are more than landscapes—they're part of our heritage and our responsibility. I've been proud to work hand-in-hand with local environmental advocates, youth leaders, and conservation groups to protect these places. And I've consistently fought for federal investments that turn climate promises into real results here at home."

Deliverables cited by Taylor Roy achieved by the Liberals in the outgoing parliament include: \$96 million in public transit investment, plus \$76 million for electric buses to expand green transportation across York Region; nearly \$1 million in green infrastructure funding through the Low Carbon Economy Fund, supporting local sustainability and job creation; \$2.8 million in energy efficiency and conservation projects in Aurora, including over \$1 million directly for our riding; over \$120,000 for home and small business retrofits to lower emissions and costs; support for the upgraded weather radar station in our region—improving severe weather tracking and preparedness for York Region and the GTA; and a national commitment of \$650 million to conserve 30% of Canada's lands and waters by 2030, including restoration efforts for Lake Simcoe—a crucial resource for drinking water, biodiversity, and recreation."

The plan of Liberal leader Mark Carney, she added, will expand electricity and green technology across Canada, deliver "targeted investments in climate resilience, zero-emission transportation, and sustainable housing; and "put Canada at the forefront of the global clean economy " creating jobs while protecting the planet."

"Because the fight against climate change starts right here—in our neighbourhoods, on our trails, and at our lakeshores. It starts with leaders who listen, communities who care, and action that matches the scale of the moment," she concluded. "I'm proud of the work we've done, but I know there's so much more to do. With your support, I will continue to be a strong voice in Ottawa—pushing for climate solutions, protecting the places we love, and building a healthier, more sustainable future for the next generation."

Conservative candidate Costas Menegakis said that his party recognizes the "importance of protecting our environment while ensuring economic prosperity.

"When elected to the House of Commons, I will champion the creation of a 'Canada First' National Energy Corridor that will strengthen our environmental and economic sovereignty," he said. "This corridor will fast-track critical infrastructure projects, including clean energy transmission lines, while reducing our dependency on foreign markets. By involving First Nations from the outset and streamlining regulatory approvals, we can address climate challenges through responsible resource development that creates powerful paycheques for Canadian workers.

"Unlike the current approach that has canceled \$176 billion worth of energy projects, our plan balances environmental protection with the need to build infrastructure that enables Canada to stand on its own two feet, bringing home jobs and dollars while positioning us to address environmental threats from a position of strength."

By Brock Weir