

## Federal Conservatives tap Menegakis as Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill nominee

Former Richmond Hill MP Costas Menegakis is looking to return to the House of Commons.

Menegakis, who served as Member of Parliament from 2011 to 2015, was tapped by local Conservative Party of Canada members at a riding meeting last Tuesday afternoon to be their representative for Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill.

After a fraught campaign which saw two candidates denied a place on the ballot and another candidate suspending their campaign alleging a 'corrupt' process, Menegakis emerged the winner against former Richmond Hill councillor Carmine Perrelli.

Menegakis told The Auroran outside the meeting place, Bond Lake Arena, he was ready to 'hit the ground running' as soon as an election is called.

'I know what it's like to be in government, I know what needs to be done, and I know I can work in a team environment, certainly within the Conservative team,' he said. 'I know what our community needs. I am in this community. Unlike some of the other people that ran, and I am not going to name names, I have been out on Community Clean Up Day picking up garbage, I have stood in front of the grocery store collecting food items for the food bank. I am a member of the Rotary Club, a member of the Lions Club. I am out in my community, I live in this community, so I care about my community, which is why I am doing this.'

'I have fresh ideas, I have new ideas, we have a new leader, we have a fresh team, a good outlet, I think we have a good plan moving forward and, when our platform is released next year, I think Canadians will be pleasantly pleased.'

The campaign to be Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill's next Conservative candidate was originally a five-person race. Among the other contenders were Postmedia columnist Sabrina Maddeaux and Ward 2 Aurora Councillor Rachel Gilliland.

Maddeaux suspended her campaign at the beginning of May due to what she described as a 'lack of integrity' in the election process, while Gilliland was 'denied' the opportunity to be on the ballot without, she said, any reasons provided.

'I started my campaign for the federal Conservative nomination a year ago by stating that I would be running a clean campaign,' said Gilliland at the time. 'I believe people deserve to have their elected officials possess the basic integrity needed when making decisions on their behalf and I am proud to say I have kept this promise. I was overwhelmed with the support I have received for my candidacy and am proud to have signed up over 580 members for the Conservative Party in Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill.'

Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) Director of Communications Sarah Fischer, however, said the Councillor did not abide by CPC rules.

'Rachel Gilliland was in clear violation of rules outlined in the CPC 'Rules and Procedures for Candidate Nominations',' said Sarah Fischer, the CPC's Director of Communications. 'The local Candidate Nomination Committee (CNC) recommended disqualification and the National Candidate Selection Committee upheld the local CNC decision. After review, the National Council did not accept Ms. Gilliland's appeal of this decision.'

No further reasons were provided.

Despite these challenges, Menegakis said that, in his view, the race was not 'fraught.'

'It has been clean 100 per cent,' he said. 'They can say whatever they want. I ran a very clean campaign and I am very proud of the effort and the work that my team has put in.'

Following his victory last week, Menegakis says he's ready to continue knocking on doors between now and whenever the Federal writ is dropped.

?I happen to think the next election is not only a pivotal election but also one of the most historic in Canadian history because it will follow what I believe has been ten years by then of abysmal performance by the current Trudeau Liberals,? he said. ?There has been no focus on the economy, certainly no focus on any kind of affordability issues. Young people can't afford to buy a home in the community in which they grew up in. Seniors can't? they're stretching their pension dollars to eat the same way they were eating three years ago. It's sad and I heard that door after door after door. Immigration has gone through the roof with no plan. It makes no sense whatsoever. Prior to the Trudeau Liberals, we welcomed 250,000 to 275,000 newcomers per year in Canada. We did that because we could assimilate those people, train them, bring them to Canada and they could contribute to their families and the Canadian economy. Last year over 1 million people came in. It makes no sense.

?[Trudeau] says he focuses on crime Immigration has gone through the roof with no plan. It makes no sense whatsoever. By implementing gun legislation, he's focusing on the wrong thing. Crime has gone up, police chiefs across the country have told us that the weapons that criminals are using to perpetrate the crime are coming off the back of a car, the back of a truck, across the border with the United States. Money and focus should be put into empowering our border services to catch these things before they come. The law-abiding sportsmen, sportswomen, outdoorsperson who has a firearms license and goes to the shooting club or is in the hunting community is not the person who has their registered weapon and goes out to perpetrate a crime. His focus has been so skewed away from reality that every year we hear the annual budget come out, it's \$30 billion, \$40 billion, \$28 billion ? at one point it was as high as a \$90 billion deficit. That is just passing the debt onto the next generations. It's unfair. It's time we had some common sense back in government.?

**By Brock Weir**