

Gilliland candidacy nixed by Conservatives

Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland's bid to carry the Conservative Party of Canada banner for Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill in the next Federal election has been nixed by the Party.

In a statement to supporters and media on Wednesday afternoon, Gilliland said the Conservative Party (CPC) had denied her bid to be on the ballot ahead of this Tuesday's riding meeting where local party members will ultimately vote on the winning candidate.

In her statement, Gilliland said the party had "denied" her the opportunity to participate in the riding contest, a move which has left her with more questions than answers.

"I decided to run for federal office on a platform to protect our democracy, keep our communities safe, and bring back pay cheques that provide us with the very basics of food and shelter," she said in the statement. "I started my campaign for the federal Conservative nomination a year ago by stating that I would be running a clean campaign. 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."

Many of those she signed up, she said, "have never been in a political party before."

The CPC, she contended, has not given her any reason for rejecting her bid and giving residents the "choice to decide for themselves."

The CPC, however, says Gilliland did not abide by Party 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."

The decision pertaining to Councillor Gilliland is just the latest turn in the fraught race to challenge Liberal MP Leah Taylor Roy in Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill in the next Federal campaign.

Earlier this month, former Postmedia columnist Sabrina Maddeaux suspended her bid for the riding citing a lack of "faith in the integrity" of this election process.

"Despite raising concerns to the Conservative Party nearly two weeks ago ?? despite submitting clear evidence of a corrupted process and potential illegal actions taken by another campaign ?? nothing has been done," said Maddeaux in her statement. "There has been no evidence that a promised internal investigation is actually underway. No next steps shared."

"Despite repeated requests, there's been zero communication to candidates or our riding's Conservative voters to make them aware of interference with the democratic process. Zero communication that my campaign has been the clear target of highly unethical, and potentially illegal, efforts to sway the vote. Zero meaningful reassurance to me, other candidates, or voters, that this will still be an open and fair election."

Many of these sentiments were echoed by Gilliland this week.

Gilliland said she had been "very concerned and troubled" by what she described as a "number of irregularities and suspected contravention" of nomination rules, including "negative character emails against three candidates sent to new members prior to the

release of any final lists, targeted emails and door knocks on new members as recent as April 2024, current EDA Board President and other Board members actively campaigning in favour of a candidate.?

?I believe strongly in the values and principles of fairness and transparency and this extends to my public work, my personal decisions, and to my conduct in the local nomination process,? Gilliland concluded. ?I have provided all evidence of inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour by one of the current candidates' campaigns that was forwarded to me by many of my supporters to the Conservative Party of Canada to aid in their internal investigation.?

Asked for a response to Fischer's statement, Gilliland added that while she understood that the CPC's decision did not need to be accompanied by reasons, ?obtaining this information is crucial for my professional development and future participation within the party.?

Still in the race are former Richmond Hill MP Costas Menegakis and Richmond Hill Councillor Carmine Perrelli.

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