

Liberal-NDP deal will allow government to 'get things done,' say MPs

Last week, the Federal Liberal government announced it had struck a confidence deal with the NDP that could pave the way for the government to stay in power until 2025.

A key part of the agreement from the NDP's perspective is to further their goals towards national plans for both pharmacare and dental care.

While critics have characterised the move as a 'power grab' by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Aurora's two Liberal MPs say the agreement will allow the government to further goals shared with the New Democrats.

'I was surprised (by the deal) even though there have been talks since the fall,' says Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leah Taylor Roy. 'Of course, being someone who has worked in business and has an economic background, the thought of additional spending was concerning; however, that really wasn't my first thought. My first thought was more about the fact it would give us stability and help us get things done.'

Things have been 'very toxic' in the House of Commons, she adds, and this atmosphere has translated to Committee work where there has been difficulty moving some agenda items forward.

'On reflection, I thought this [agreement] is good because we're going to be able to deliver on the things we told Canadians we were going to do during the election,' she says, noting Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland assured Liberal MPs that eyes would be firmly kept on the budget for 'fiscal prudence.'

Dental care, for instance, will be phased in first with children under the age of 12 and the goals will be carried out over 'numerous budgets.'

'That allows us, quite frankly, to really focus on managing our country's finances as well, which we all know is needed,' she says.

This perspective is shared by Newmarket-Aurora MP Tony Van Bynen who says his background as Mayor of Newmarket has given him an appreciation for the 'level of collaboration' that has come out of the deal.

'[Parliament] had become hyper-partisan and it is time to focus on getting things done,' he says. 'This doesn't change the way our government operates, except the fact we do know that the government will be going forward over the next four budgets. The confidence vote doesn't mean we can't disagree. There will be times that we disagree with the New Democratic Party, but this allows us to focus on the things we do agree on and that allows us to go forward.'

Pharmacare and dental care are things he says 'we all agreed on' and says he sees particular merit in dental care.

'There's a lot of support for the idea of how important it is to have proper dental care,' he says. 'What's important for us is on a very responsible basis that we phase it in on the basis that it is sustainable in the longer term and I think we will be able to come to those terms. The framework that has been identified talks about phasing it in and making some substantial progress.'

Both MPs stress that the agreement does not mean Canadians have a coalition government.

Mr. Van Bynen says Canadians voted 'for a government that goes forward on the priorities that we set out in our platform.'

'What this does is create an environment [through which] we can make some significant and meaningful progress,' he says. 'It's all about working together and we have negotiated with different parties on different issues. It gives us a degree of stability that we can go forward in aggressively delivering on the promise we made in the platform.'

Newmarket-Aurora's Conservative candidate of record, Aurora Councillor Harold Kim, however, has a different perspective. While Mr. Kim says he supports the idea of pharmacare and dental care, he says "the wishes of the Canadian people were essentially t-boned" in the deal.

"It is my belief that Canadians wanted a minority government as a result of the last Federal election in 2021 and the public is smart: they deliberately voted in a minority government because they felt a minority government would be best in this current environment," he says. "But Trudeau circumvented the public's wishes by striking a deal with the NDP and now active, democratic discussions will be pointless because all policy decisions have been determined.

"Pharmacare and dental care - those are positives. For the people who cannot afford a drug plan or they don't work in a company that offers those benefits, and certainly a dental plan is crucial for quality of life? I welcome it. What's missing are the details: how is the government going to pick? How are we, as taxpayers, going to pay for that? Having policies and providing service is great [but] we need to have more information on the other side of the equation: how is the government going to pay for it?"

"Trudeau said the purpose of the coalition was to provide Canadians with predictability and stability and it will certainly do that. The coalition will continue to provide Canadians with exacerbated inflation, bloated housing prices beyond the reach of most Canadians and those in Newmarket-Aurora and a growing national debt with no plans to rein in our debt. Is that going to change? That is the trend line right now and that is what we're going to experience based on Trudeau's announcement."

HAVE YOUR SAY ? Do you support the Liberal-NDP deal? Do you think it will have a positive or negative impact on the community? Send your views to brock@lpcmedia.ca.

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