

Taylor Roy hopes community will be well-served by new MP following election



It may not have been the result she worked hard for, but outgoing Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leah Taylor Roy hopes the community will continue to be well-represented after falling short of the victory in the April 28 Federal Election.

First elected to represent Aurora's south riding in 2021, last week was a poignant one as she packed up her offices in Oak Ridges and Ottawa to make way for incoming Conservative MP Costas Menegakis.

"I have a lot of fond memories and I am getting kind of sentimental as it was such a great experience," she told *The Auroran*. "I am completely grateful to our community giving me this opportunity and for being able to do this work. I know they have made a different choice this time, and I really wish everyone in the community well and that our new Member of Parliament serves them well, is out there in the community, and gives 100 per cent to this position because it's an honour, a privilege, and it deserves someone who really is here because they believe in our community and our country."

Taylor Roy hails from a political family. Her mother is a long-time community leader, her father previously served as Mayor of Newmarket, and her brother, John Taylor, currently serves in the same position. She grew up in an environment of service, and representation, she said, has been an integral theme in how she approached her position as Member of Parliament.

In fact, she cites "representation" as an accomplishment she is most proud of.

"I felt like I really tried to reach out to every corner of our community and have conversations with people, hard conversations, listening and trying to do my best to promote positions in caucus and in Parliament that reflected the best way forward for our communities," she said. "There are diverse views? I always listened and tried to really think hard, given my values, liberal values, and people had elected me as a Liberal, what the best way forward was, taking into consideration the concerns in our communities."

This was reflected, she said, in her advocacy work on the cost of living crisis, ensuring women's voices were heard as Chair of the Liberal Women's Caucus, her work with the Liberal government to realize \$10-a-day childcare, youth mental health programs, advocating for the health of Lake Simcoe, for the Iranian community, particularly in light of the Women Life Freedom movement, and in bringing in the Housing Accelerator Fund.

"This ensures that we had investments in our communities to help us build the housing that people needed," she said. "That was another accomplishment I look back on, but there were also a lot of small things: working with so many students and young people in our community, getting them engaged?. The number of really lovely notes and emails I've received just saying, "You made a

difference to me' ? politics is personal. It's about people and issues.?

Describing Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill as 'usually a swing riding,' she said she went into election night 'optimistic' but the numbers 'the extent of the win' were something that did surprise her.

'We had a great campaign, we did everything we could, but there was just something else,' she says. 'There was a different kind of campaign being run by the Conservatives and I think it wasn't really something that was picked up in poll numbers or anything else. What was a shock, to me, was not that I lost; what was a shock was the extent of the loss.'

'We ran a very traditional campaign. We went to the debates, we responded to interview requests with newspapers, we had volunteers out knocking on doors, and we had a lot of conversations and responded to constituents. I know Costas had been canvassing for quite some time, but during the election, we really didn't see him once'. Clearly we saw that they didn't want to answer questions [and] they just wanted to get their message out, but not to be responsive or to be challenged or questioned on anything, and they did that very well.'

Misinformation 'through different channels' was also a factor, in her view.

'We had a very positive campaign and I don't think we said anything negative about Costas at all, or personally about Poilievre; the only thing we did was contrast the experience of the two leaders, and that was really what we were focused on,' she said. 'But, on the other side, there was a lot of personal kind of misinformation and rumours being spread and attacks'. A lot of it was done through social media channels like Facebook groups that [weren't] necessarily open to the general public, so you couldn't really even see sometimes what was happening, but you'd hear it from individuals.'

'There were different ways of doing these things, and I think they did it very well, and I think with the way people are getting their information in news today, where a lot of people don't check in with anything other than the feeds they're getting through social media, and where you can't reach a lot of people because they don't read what you send, or they don't open the doors, or they don't read the papers or come to debates, they just heard one narrative and believed it'. There was really no way of having the conversation and that has always been my concern with democracy right now, with social media and disinformation. I didn't feel like I was running against my Conservative opponent; I felt like I was running against disinformation and misinformation.'

Taylor Roy remains proud of the campaign she ran and while she says she will continue to be engaged in the community, she's going to take some time to consider what form that might take, and what's next, over the summer months.

She hopes that the minority Liberal government under Prime Minister Mark Carney will 'last for a long time' as it is a 'strong' minority and 'given the challenges Canada is facing right now because of the upheaval in the world' we need time for a stable and pragmatic government to address these issues, and it's going to be hard in the short- to medium-term for Canadians.'

'I really wish and I really hope [the residents of Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill] feel represented,' she said. 'I hope they will continue to be well-represented, and I hope that, [with] divisions and anger, that we will move forward in a way that lessens that, and that the good I saw here, and I saw so much of it 'so many wonderful people working hard to achieve unity and to help people and to move forward on all sorts of important issues 'continues and that the next MP is a great leader in that respect and continues to serve the people and move things forward in a really positive direction.'

By Brock Weir