

Throngs greet Trudeau at final Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill stop



By Brock Weir

He didn't have much to say on his final campaign stop in Aurora, but the crowds that greeted Liberal leader Justin Trudeau on his final campaign stop in Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill on Friday afternoon spoke volumes.

Hundreds of Liberal supporters turned out at Gramma's Oven bakery in Oak Ridges to shake hands and take selfies with Mr. Trudeau who spent about 15 minutes on the whistle-stop, joined by several area candidates including Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill candidate Leona Alleslev and Newmarket-Aurora candidate Kyle Peterson.

"It signals very strongly that York Region is in play, which is good because going into this election, a lot of York Region ridings were Conservative and I think every York Region seat is now in play," said Mr. Peterson on what it meant to him that Mr. Trudeau was in York Region in the final 48 hours of the lengthy Federal campaign. "It is a very good sign and a positive sign from my standpoint. We have three days to go and we have to work as hard as we can. Having the leader in the Region is a good boost and lets everyone know that things are happening and there is change in the air."

A similar view was offered by Ms. Alleslev, who said it also signalled that Canada is "at a crossroads."

"This election is really about choosing which direction we want to go in for our country and who we are as Canadians," she said. "It is inspiring to have met so many Canadians who are this excited, engaged, and active in the election."

Both candidates said during the course of the campaign they had received significant support going door to door, and they attributed that to two factors: a desire for change and, in particular, the desire for "real change." And, to Liberals, there was a clear distinction between the two.

"Our platform is actually the most distinct from the Conservative platform," said Mr. Peterson. "We're going to create jobs, invest in the economy, grow infrastructure, invest in the middle classes, increase the Child Benefit and things Canadians really want. It is one thing to talk about change, but it is another to actually have a platform that embodies that change."

"Mr. Trudeau has run a stellar campaign right from the get go and I think most reviews have been that he has been the strongest performer to date as well, which has been helpful in Newmarket-Aurora."

When she secured the Liberal nomination for Aurora's south riding, Ms. Alleslev told *The Auroran* she wanted to have a conversation with area residents about the "issues that matter." With just a few days before these same residents went to the polls on Monday, she said she believed she achieved that goal.

"I had these conversations over and over again, to the extent I had people on the phone with me and telling me at my office saying

they have lived here for 50 years and have never voted," says Ms. Alleslev. "[They asked why they should vote now], about the Liberal platform and what we're going to do. At the end, they say, "then I am going to vote because this is the kind of Canada I want. That is, in itself, the most powerful thing when you can re-engage people to have conversations around democracy and the vision and future of the country that we all want."

According to nation-wide polls, it was a sentiment shared across the country as, at the time of Mr. Trudeau's visit, tracking placed his party in the realm of forming a minority government. It was a confidence boost to both of Aurora's candidates in the home stretch, but they were not prepared to simply ride that crest through Election Day.

"We want to make sure people don't take it for granted and are still engaged enough to know that each and every vote matters, simply the act of voting," said Ms. Alleslev.

Added Mr. Peterson: "We need to keep knocking on doors and plugging away to make sure we get to as many voters in Newmarket-Aurora to let them know we are the voice of change in Newmarket-Aurora."