

Trudeau hits Aurora in 'unofficial start' of Federal campaign



By Brock Weir

Transit riders had a bit of a surprise on Thursday afternoon as Federal leader Justin Trudeau hopped on a northbound Viva bus stopped near Yonge and Wellington.

Greeting travellers with handshakes and answering some questions accompanied by local candidates Leona Alleslev and Kyle Peterson, he came out the other side and continued his circuit meeting local retailers, business people, and the public at large in Downtown Aurora.

For Mr. Peterson, who will represent the Liberals for Newmarket-Aurora in this fall's Federal Election, it was the 'unofficial start of what is going to be a summer of campaigning.'

Mr. Trudeau arrived in Aurora around 4.30 p.m. after making a number of stops in surrounding municipalities, beginning at T.C.'s burgers for an impromptu chat with local students before heading north on Wellington Street, stopping in at Caruso & Company, Aw, Shucks!, taking in the images of his father and fellow Liberal Marc Garneau on the Wellington Street mural, and continuing south at a number of businesses, concluding at the Aurora Public Library.

'The fabulous warmth of the crowd' is what Ms. Alleslev, Liberal candidate for Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill, said would be her impression of the day, and a good sign of things to come.

'I was very surprised how well received he was when they didn't know he was coming,' she said. 'Just for them to burst into smiles and waves and honks shows that he has the support of the people, even if the polls might say something different.'

During their brief stop at Aw, Shucks!, one patron approached Mr. Trudeau and his two local candidates about the legalization of marijuana. Elsewhere, they said, issues on the minds of voters included quality and quantity of jobs, support for the arts, open and transparent government, and peacekeeping.

'This shows Mr. Trudeau is quite down to earth and he is happy to walk the streets anywhere in Canada,' said Mr. Peterson. 'He is on his own, he approaches people and there is no security around him. He is unscripted, he loves chatting with everybody he can, and I think the reception was warm. There was a personal connection made with a lot of people.'

Touring Aurora's historic downtown core was a way to give Mr. Trudeau 'a good taste' of what Aurora stands for, agreed both candidates.

'[It showed him] what it's about, the family businesses that are on Yonge Street, and how it is the heart and soul of Aurora, and the importance of these types of areas to all towns,' said Mr. Peterson. 'This is, in a way, the unofficial start of what is going to be a summer of campaigning, so it is great Mr. Trudeau knows the importance of Aurora to the Federal election and this is one of the first

stops on the unofficial campaign, so that was a positive sign for the people of Aurora.?

For Aurora, this will be a different style of election to what the Town has become used to. This fall, Aurora will be split into two electoral ridings ? with Aurora lying north of Wellington Street voting in the riding of Newmarket-Aurora and south of Wellington with the new riding of Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill.

Watching the election closely will be Mayor Geoff Dawe, who was on hand to meet Mr. Trudeau at the Aurora Public Library. In particular, it will be important to pay attention to each party's pledge on infrastructure dollars.

?I think there should be a national transit policy and I would like to see clarification around the whole cell tower implementation process because it really should be a Federal responsibility as the goal is to equalize communications capability across Canada,? said Mayor Dawe. ?That really has to be done at a higher level so all those pieces of the jigsaw fit. Quite frankly, [the current process] is not working.?