

Oakville resident gets Liberal nod

By Kim Arnott
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

Against the backdrop of (then) an almost certain spring election, Halton's Liberals nominated a federal candidate on Wednesday night.

North Oakville resident Connie Laurin-Bowie captured the nomination after 372 votes were cast in a three-way battle.

"I've brought my running shoes with me in another bag because we're going to be running in an election in a couple of days," she joked as she accepted the nomination in front of a crowd of about 50 cheering supporters at Oakville's St. Volodymyr Cultural Centre.

With election-style signs, buttons and literature prepared, and a noisily enthusiastic group of followers, Laurin-Bowie appeared the most election-ready of the three candidates.

Running against her were Jan Mowbray, a former Milton councillor, and Mississauga information technology professor Sheref Sabawy.

As executive director of Inclusion International, a global non-governmental organization



Connie Laurin-Bowie

which represents more than 200 groups like the Canadian Association for Community Living that work for the rights of intellectually-disabled individuals, Laurin-Bowie emphasized her skills in working with diverse groups on social policy issues.

"My life's work is as an advocate," she said. "I've stood up for people whose voices otherwise wouldn't have been heard."

In her nomination speech, Laurin-Bowie said residents of Halton are telling her they're concerned with rising costs for gas, groceries and post-secondary education, afraid of losing their jobs and worried about flat-lining RRSPs.

"What's at stake in this election is the very definition of Canada,"

Laurin-Bowie said.

In her nomination speech, Mowbray said: "Harper doesn't care about pulling the country together — he seems intent on driving in wedges. I am a consensus builder, a communicator, a hard worker and a believer. I want to be right there beside Mr. Ignatieff and my fellow Liberals when those wedges are kicked aside."

In his speech, Sabawy said he had been an active member and volunteer with the Liberal party for the last 12 years. "I believe very strongly in the value of that volunteer work."

Married, with two teenage sons, Laurin-Bowie has been a Halton resident for 20 years.

The Liberals were forced to find a new candidate after former candidate Deborah Gillis resigned in January in order to take a work promotion. Gillis was appointed the Halton candidate by Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff in August 2009.

The Halton riding, which encompasses north Oakville, north Burlington and Milton, is currently held by Conservative Lisa Raitt.

Last federal election in 2008

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about the environment as a single social issue, but no one looks at the economical benefits, such as the reduction of health care costs. It's an all encompassing issue."

The party is expected to select a Halton candidate later this week.

Describing a Green government as a "very, very unlikely situation," Flood said he hopes the party can secure some seats in Parliament this election.

"Having some members (in the House of Commons) will change the tone of the conversation and get people to work together to come up with solutions rather than just look out for their party's interests," he said.

Laurin-Bowie described Halton as "a riding to watch."

"All the issues playing out on the national stage are going to play out in our own riding. We have a big race and I believe it's going to come down to the candidate."

Raitt said she plans to spend the coming weeks talking to constituents about the Conservative's record and Stephen Harper's leadership.

"I would like their vote again and I leave it to them to decide," she said.

Heroux said she hopes the current fighting in the Middle East

helps break the spell of Canadian apathy.

"People are dying for the rights we have, and we're not exercising that right," she said, pointing to the 59 per cent voter turnout during the 2008 federal election — the lowest in Canadian history. "It's intolerable."

In the 2008 federal election, Raitt won with 48 per cent of the 69,112 ballots cast, followed by Liberal incumbent Garth Turner with 36 per cent, NDP's Rob Wagner with nine per cent and Amy Collard of the Green Party with seven per cent.

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