

Simser launches Liberal nomination campaign

By SABINE PLATZER-GIBBINS

Staff Writer

The floor was Scott Simser's on Monday night.

The candidate seeking a Liberal nod in the Carleton-Mississippi Mills riding officially kicked off his campaign that night in front of family and friends at the Ron Maslin Playhouse in Kanata.

His guest of honour was MP Dr. Carolyn Bennett who represents the Toronto riding of St. Paul's and is an advocate for social policy areas, including child care and people with disabilities.

Simser advocates equality for all people, no matter their disability. The Liberal candidate was born with a hearing impairment and has always stood up for what he believes in.

He proved this when he won a case against the Tax Court of Canada, during which he pushed for the court to allow hearing impaired or the disabled view important legal documents.

Bennett expressed her thanks for being able to be there that night and speak to many of the supporters.

She began by speaking about the importance of learning from one another, about differences within the community, and likened this to the time when she was a family physician.

"Even as a family physician, in the old days, we were criticized for thinking we could fix things," she says. "But really, the education came from the patient."

She says as time went on and she emerged in politics, she soon came to realize the specific needs and wants of people in the community were not being heard quite clearly.

It was her desire to ensure people with disabilities had a voice within the community.

"There is too little dignity and not enough sense of belonging," she says. "A sense of belonging is so

important. "We have to show so clearly it isn't just complicated. It's a practical understanding of what they contribute (to society)."

Simser, she said, is a perfect example of someone who wants to demonstrate that people with disabilities matter.

Dr. Bennett says it is "so shocking" to hear what is currently unfolding in the House of Commons.

"It's so sad that everything has to be polarized," she says. "Everything has to be good or bad. It's scary that we live in black and white."

She told the audience the atmosphere in the room that night had a very community feel to it.

Bennett also encouraged the audience to make a difference in their community by speaking out on issues important to them.

"We know we have to do a better job of keeping things well," she said. "We all have to help in the next stage of inclusion."

"I'm thrilled with the advocacy Scott has done. To have a voice in the Liberal party is exactly the type of impact we need."

Expresses thanks

Simser then took his turn to address the audience, and expressed his thanks for the support.

He told the audience he is committed to representing the Carleton-Mississippi Mills riding and "accepting people not worrying about the barriers."

With his background of making things happen, Simser promises to be an advocate for human rights and equality for all. He listed the tax system, daycare and the environment as his top concerns.

Bennett was first elected to the House of Commons in the 1997 general election and was re-elected in 2000, 2004, and 2006, representing the St. Paul's riding. On Jan. 18, Dr. Bennett was asked to serve

as the Liberal Critic for Seniors, Canadians with Disabilities and the Social Economy.

Prior to her entrance into the federal leadership race, she served as Opposition Critic for social development, a portfolio which includes social policy areas such as child care, people with disabilities, homelessness and housing.

Currently, Dr. Bennett serves as the vice-chair on the standing committee on health and also sits on the standing committee on defence.

Under the previous Liberal government, Bennett was the minister of state for public health and has served in a wide variety of roles within Parliament.

As one of Parliament's most influential women MPs, she has chaired the Liberal Women's caucus, and the All-Party Women's Caucus.

Before stepping into the political limelight, Bennett was a family physician and a founding partner of Bedford Medical Associates in downtown Toronto.

She was president of the Medical Staff Association of Women's College Hospital and assistant professor in the department of family and community medicine at the University of Toronto.

In 1986, Bennett received the Royal Life Saving Society Service Cross - a Commonwealth award recognizing her more than 20 years of distinguished service.

She was also the first recipient of the National Award of Excellence for Outstanding Leadership and Dedication to Injury Prevention and Safety promotion in Canada.

She obtained her degree in medicine from the University of Toronto in 1974 and received her certificate in family medicine in 1976.

For more information on Scott Simser's campaign, log onto www.scottsimser.ca



EMC photo by SABINE PLATZER-GIBBINS

Scott Simser, who is seeking nomination in the Liberal riding of Carleton-Mississippi Mills, poses with MP for St. Paul's (Toronto) riding, Dr. Carolyn Bennett, who was on hand at Simser's official campaign kick-off event on Monday night at the Ron Maslin Playhouse in Kanata. She says Simser is the voice for equality amongst all persons and would like nothing more than to see him represent the party in the next federal election.

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