

Trudeau campaign event in Bolton cancelled due to safety concerns

By Rob Paul

On Friday evening in Bolton, at the Hampton Inn and Suites by Hilton, there was a large area of the parking lot roped off as a crew worked to prepare for the arrival of Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau.

With the federal election set for September 20, Trudeau's Friday was planned around making stops on the campaign trail. After making an announcement that morning in Mississauga, he made quick stops in Richmond Hill and Nobleton before arriving in Bolton.

The roped off area was initially surrounded by Liberal supporters and volunteers, but slowly protestors began to trickle in. One of the first protestors to arrive, just after 4 p.m., was a person decked out in a People's Party of Canada shirt and hat and filming a video denouncing Trudeau's stance on masks and the vaccines?from there, more and more protestors showed up.

Seemingly a large group of them were led by people carrying an explicit sign and a megaphone to lead chants about their displeasures with Trudeau, the COVID-19 vaccine, and Canadians who follow mask mandates.

By 5 p.m.?when the event was supposed to begin?there were far more protestors than supporters with many lining a fence that ran parallel to the event.

The security detail got more involved when one of the ropes stopping those in attendance from entering the area Dufferin-Caledon Liberal MP candidate Lisa Post, volunteers, Caledon Mayor Allan Thompson and Councillors, local leaders, and media were invited to stand fell down.

Police officers and volunteers did their best to keep protestors from inching closer, but the sheer number made it a difficult situation.

At 6:55 p.m., a police officer made an announcement over the PA system that the event would not be going forward due to safety issues as a group of people with the Liberal party, as well as Mayor Allan Thompson and Councillors were rushed inside a side door of the Hampton Inn and Suites.

?I'm sorry folks, unfortunately for safety reasons this event will no longer be taking place here today,? he announced. ?Thank you for your support and everything you're doing. Our top priority is always everybody's safety, so please, safely make your way home.?

The main topic the protestors were focused on centred around Trudeau's handling of COVID as well as his encouragement for every Canadian to get vaccinated. But, at times, the chants from the crowd turned to vulgar and unfounded statements regarding the Liberal leader.

After the event was cancelled, Trudeau made his way to Brampton to comment on the cancellation of the campaign event due to the security concerns.

?We had a lovely event planned tonight,? he said. ?Supporters had come out to Dufferin-Caledon from across the northern part of the GTA to see (Dufferin-Caledon Liberal MP candidate) Lisa Post and show our support for the great work that she's going to be doing on the ground as a candidate and hopefully as an MP.?

Speaking directly to the people in attendance to support him and the Liberal party, as well as those who were working the event, Trudeau expressed his worries if the event went on as planned.

?Thank you for stepping up?young people in their first political rally, active volunteers who had been going door to door, seniors,?

he said. "There are political rallies like this across the country with all parties almost every evening, it's an important part of our politics in this country. Unfortunately, tonight we had to cancel because going ahead with the event would have put those people at risk."

On Saturday, Conservative Party Leader Erin O'Toole addressed the situation after multiple Conservative campaign workers were spotted among the protestors in Bolton. "The campaign workers are no longer associated with the Conservative Party."

"We're running on a positive campaign for the future of this country," he said. "I strongly condemn any form of harassment and protest the like we've seen. We're a democracy, we should be having a healthy and respectful debate of ideas and we have no time for people who bring in negativity to campaigning."

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh also made a statement on the situation while campaigning in Sudbury.

"No one should have to cancel their events where we have students, we have young people, we have volunteers, we have organizers, no one should have to cancel an event because they're worried about a danger to the safety of people coming out to a political event," he said.

After being acclaimed as the Liberal candidate for Dufferin-Caledon in April, Post was excited to see the campaign event take place in her constituency but looks forward to continuing to focus on the safety of Canadians through the pandemic.

"I'm proud to live in a democracy where civil discourse is not only permitted, it's encouraged," Post said. "But what we saw on Friday night was not civil discourse. It was violent and aggressive and threatened the safety of my family, my volunteers and those of my candidate colleagues from Mississauga and Brampton."

"The RCMP absolutely made the right decision to cancel the event and keep all of us safe. The last 18 months have been incredibly hard for people on many levels, and I understand the frustration and anger that many are feeling. I am running to be your next Member of Parliament because I believe that the people in our community deserve every opportunity to be safe, included and thrive."

Mayor Allan Thompson has no issue with those opposing any specific Party peacefully, but said it was the way the protestors went about it that left a bad taste in his mouth.

"I share the deep concerns of all party leaders in the federal election on the protest in Bolton on Friday night," said Thompson. "While I respect the right to peaceful protest and to exercise democratic freedoms, I do not condone the actions of the protestors on Friday."