



Lawyer seeking NDP nomination in Ottawa-Vanier isn't taking anything for granted

By Michael Woods, Metro News Ottawa, July 7, 2015

Emilie Taman understands if people think her decision to almost certainly give up her job as a government lawyer to seek the NDP nomination in Ottawa-Vanier is “a bit crazy.”

But the prosecutor with the Public Prosecution Service of Canada said the decision to run for office in a longtime Liberal riding was “a simple calculus.”

“I’m not naïve, and I don’t take anything for granted,” she said. “I understand what I’m up against. I think if there was ever a time for the NDP to be successful in Ottawa-Vanier, this is the time.”

By seeking the nomination, Taman is defying a decision by the Public Service Commission, the watchdog of Canada’s non-partisan public service, forbidding her from seeking office.

The commission’s decision was in December. Taman filed an application for judicial review, but her hearing in Federal Court is scheduled for Sept. 1. The election is scheduled for Oct. 19 under the government’s fixed election date law.

“It kind of boiled down to: do I want to do this or not? Because I think waiting and running was not really a viable scenario,” Taman said.

Taman, the daughter of former Supreme Court justice Louise Arbour, has not officially quit her job; rather, she has taken an unauthorized leave of absence. “I’ve taken a unilateral leave, and there will likely be consequences to that,” she said.

She has left a secure job as a federal Crown lawyer for the uncertainty of an election campaign. Ottawa-Vanier has been Liberal since 1995, and incumbent MP Mauril Belanger is running for re-election.

“If I don’t win the election, if I don’t win the nomination, I’m going to have to find new employment, and I’m prepared to do that,” she said.

Since announcing her decision on social media Saturday, she has received support from hundreds of people and hear from and a number of strangers offering to volunteer and donate to her campaign.

“It’s a huge boost, just in terms of my spirits,” she said. “But you have to translate those expressions of enthusiasm into votes at the nomination meeting and votes in an election.”

Taman, who started her career as a Supreme Court of Canada clerk, said her professional background situates her well to deal with important issues, particularly related to the Conservative government’s legislative agenda.

“I think that this current government has really underestimated people’s ability to understand the issues and to take the time to communicate with people about the merits of good policy, and have favoured instead populist, easy to pitch, sound bite-driven law,” she said. “I think I am the kind of person who can take the time to explain things to people, and I think I’m going to be able to be a voice for change that’s not necessarily easy to pitch, but that’s important.”

An NDP nomination meeting for Ottawa-Vanier has yet to be scheduled.