

# 'High-profile' battle in the Beaches [CA-ON]<sup>[1]</sup>

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One of the GTA's fiercest election battles may be fought on Toronto's beaches.

With veteran Liberal MP Maria Minna and New Democrat MPP Marilyn Churley vying for Toronto's Beaches-East York riding, both parties have major players competing for the left-leaning east-end bastion.

Conservative Peter Conroy is also contending.

"It's going to be a very important and interesting contest between two high-profile, long-standing women elected politicians in Toronto," says Myer Siemiatycki, a political scientist at Ryerson University.

"They have each made a significant contribution to politics in Toronto and have been pioneering women in public and political life."

Both braved yesterday's rain to kick off their door-to-door campaigns, and large troops of volunteers were busy hammering signs into the soggy ground.

While Churley - who officially resigned her provincial seat yesterday - is new to federal politics, she's no stranger to the neighbourhood, where she has fought most of her environmental and political battles.

"I'm very well-known here ... I've been an east-end politician for 17 years," says Churley, who first won a Toronto City Council seat in 1988. "And of course that's why this is considered to be a hot race. A lot of the work I've done has been for all of the east end," the former Toronto-Danforth MPP says.

"I'm a well-known, hardworking local politician. I have a reputation for that and quite rightly deserved," Churley says.

But she says she'll also concentrate, 50/50, on pushing the NDP's national agenda.

Minna, the former international co-operation minister, is not about to roll over.

"People know me well in this riding and I've worked very hard for the last 12 years both in terms of programs for the riding ... and for child tax credits for families."

Minna says she'll emphasize her efforts to help children. "We now have a national child-care program which every province in the country has signed on to," she says. "And I worked on that assiduously for 10 years to make sure it came in. So on both the local and national level I have a very strong record."

Minna says that record has helped her beat back star NDP candidates in the past, and she sees no reason she can't prevail again. It's a riding with strong NDP sentiments; all of its provincial and municipal representatives are New Democrats. But Minna has taken it handily in four successive elections.

Her campaign organizers hope her commanding 7,000-vote margin over high-profile NDP candidate Peter Tabuns last year - plus the recent entry of New Democrat City Councillor Olivia Chow into the federal race - bode well for another Liberal victory in the riding.

"We have a bit of breathing room," says Minna campaign spokesman Robert MacBain. "But will Marilyn (narrow) the gap? Absolutely."

Beaches-East York has a population of 108,913, with 73,623 registered voters, according to Elections Canada.

Churley may have a head start on campaigning. While Minna's office was frantically trying to get phones installed yesterday, Churley has been actively stumping since May.

She can also count on support from the NDPers representing the same constituency MPP Michael Prue and Councillors Janet Davis and Sandra Bussin.

- Reprinted from the Toronto Star

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