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Collenette gets Liberals' nod

By AEDAN HELMER, SPECIAL TO SUN MEDIA

Scotiabank Place was not the only place in town awash in a sea of red yesterday, as more than 700 federal Liberal supporters chose a familiar name to represent them in Ottawa Centre.

Penny Collenette, wife of former Liberal cabinet minister David Collenette, defeated political newcomer Scott Bradley in a vote at the Continuing Education Centre on Albert St.

While it's Penny Collenette's first run for elected office, her Liberal roots run deep.

LINKS TO TRUDEAU

She volunteered with Pierre Trudeau's government in 1969, and was Jean Chretien's director of appointments in the Prime Minister's Office from 1993-1997.

Collenette will face NDP incumbent Paul Dewar in the next election.

"I don't see any voice for the people of Ottawa Centre on the Hill," said Jay Nordenstrom, a defeated city council candidate who seconded Collenette's nomination.

"Managing the riding is one thing, but getting the job done on Parliament Hill is quite another, and I know that Penny will do an exemplary job in that role."

Collenette had high-profile Liberals on her side, including husband David, who was recently appointed to head Mayor Larry O'Brien transit task force.

'READY TO GO'

In her nomination speech, Collenette identified climate change and water quality as defining issues in Ottawa Centre.

Former mayor and current Ontario Health Promotion Minister Jim Watson -- Liberal MPP for Ottawa West-Nepean -- was also on hand to lend his support to Collenette.

"Penny has a great blend of community experience, professional experience and political experience," said Watson. "She can hit the ground running and be ready to go."

Ottawa Centre Liberal MPP Richard Patten, meanwhile, echoed federal leader Stephane Dion's recent commitment to fielding more female candidates.

"Both (federal and provincial Liberal) parties have to make a conscious effort to elect some more women," said Patten. "But that's not the only reason I voted for her, I think she has the talent to do the job."

Bradley, a community leader, was a key campaign organizer behind Gerard Kennedy's failed federal Liberal leadership bid.