

Lambropoulos wins St-Laurent nomination

Montreal Gazette · 9 Mar 2017 · · T'CHA DUNLEVY tdunlevy@postmedia.com twitter.com/TChaDunlevy

The race appeared fixed, but a dark horse came through in the clutch. Emmanuella Lambropoulos won the Liberal nomination in the federal Montreal riding of St-Laurent Wednesday night. She will run as the party's candidate in the April 3 byelection.



Lambropoulos, a 26-year-old teacher at Rosemont high school, beat out rumoured Liberal favourite and presumed front-runner Yolande James as well as lawyer and economics professor Marwah Rizqy; Rizqy ran for the Liberals in the 2015 federal election in the riding of Hochelaga, losing to the NDP's Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet.

"I'm shocked," Lambropoulos said afterward.

"I'm surprised I won. The media had no idea I was running. A lot of people came here not knowing who I was. But going door to door, and showing my true self in my speech and in the email that I sent to all the members — people saw it was someone really from St-Laurent who knew their concerns."

Voting began at 5:30 p.m., followed soon after by speeches. Lambropoulos spoke of her long ties to St-Laurent, noting that she was born, raised, lives and has taught in the borough.

She also emphasized her longstanding working relationship with borough St-Laurent Mayor Alan DeSousa.

James emphasized her track record as a member of the National Assembly with the Quebec Liberals, whom she served for a decade representing the Nelligan riding.

In pamphlets handed out to voters on their way in, Rizqy presented herself as a candidate for economy and fiscal justice, fighting for the middle class and against tax evasion, and as a proponent of cultural diversity.

The three candidates were vying for the job previously occupied by Stéphane Dion, who

retired from politics in January after being shuffled out of the cabinet of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. He was replaced by Chrystia Freeland as minister of foreign affairs, before going on to become Canada's ambassador to Germany and the European Union.

Lambropoulos won in the second round of voting, edging out Rizqy by a count of 626 to 508 by the time the final numbers were crunched, past 10 p.m.; James was eliminated in the first round.

James's candidacy came amid accusations that the "star candidate" was parachuted in.

DeSousa, St-Laurent borough's mayor since 2001, had wanted to seek the nomination, but was informed by the party's national candidate-vetting committee last week that his name would not be on the ballot. Specific reasons were not given.

The borough's offices were raided in 2013 by UPAC, the provincial anti-corruption squad; but no charges followed, and until last week DeSousa appeared to have the party's blessing to run.

Things changed quickly, however, once James officially threw her hat into the ring. DeSousa's exclusion cleared the path for James, a former Quebec Liberal minister — this despite Trudeau's campaign promise that all the party's candidates would be chosen by votes of their constituents.

Asked if she felt James had been the favourite, Lambropoulos replied, "No. I think if she was the favourite I wouldn't have won."

Lambropoulos chalked up her good fortune to hard work and being close to the constituents of her riding.

"I went around for three hours a day, for a month and-a-half, and I knocked on everyone's doors. I had the support of the community. I know the people here. When your friends know you're going into politics, they come out and support you."

Now that she has the nomination, Lambropoulos appears to be a shoo-in to win her next battle on April 3. Simply being the Liberal candidate is generally enough to win the riding in this party stronghold.