



Photo by Graeme Murphy

Sofia Christopher (left), Taso Christopher's aunt, gives her nephew a loving embrace after Christopher's mayoral election victory at Belleville's Greek Hall community centre Monday night.

Taso takes on task of mayor

By Graeme Murphy

"What time is it?" Taso Christopher calls over a thrilled assembly.

"Taso time!" The slogan for Christopher's campaign gleefully echoes back to him.

After a close battle with Belleville's six other mayoral candidates, Christopher won the night with Pat Culhane trailing close behind by 161 votes.

Christopher takes over the job from Neil Ellis, a man now graduated to federal politics.

An eager Christopher was joined by many of his close family, friends, campaign team, and campaign supporters on Monday evening in Belleville's Greek Hall Community Centre. Celebrations rang through the night.

With 44.72 per cent of eligible electors voting, Christopher, a previous two-term city councillor from Thurlow ward, ac-

cumulated a total of 3,914 votes over runner-up Culhane's 3,753 votes. Christopher scored 25.98 per cent of the total number of votes.

"It's a fantastic feeling," Christopher said to reporters.

"I'm very proud of the campaign team, proud of all the residents of the city of Belleville and I am excited to get going."

Asked about fellow councillor and election opponent Culhane, Christopher regarded her with sincere words.

"Pat's a fantastic lady whom I've had the profound privilege of working with for eight years. She's an absolutely beautiful person.

"But the situation - when it comes to democracy, you can only have one starting goalie," he added in fitting words, because he and his brother Ike own a sporting goods shop in Belleville.

Christopher previously served as councillor for Belleville for eight years. He has been a key member of council, helping

with the orchestration of many of the city's projects including: the construction and inauguration of the Quinte Sports and Wellness Centre, the integrated court house building, the Veterans Memorial Bridge, Belleville's doctor recruitment program and Build Belleville's infrastructure deficit program.

Asked by reporters about his immediate action plans, Christopher recited:

"My first priority is to take it all in, celebrate with the campaign team and the residents here and my second priority is to get my feet landed on the ground and to start addressing some of the issues that were on our platform."

Asked by reporters about creating a stronger city relationship with Loyalist College, Christopher said in a profound tone:

"The biggest thing we have on Loyalist College right now is getting the trails engaged which is the bike trails. So

hopefully we'll go forward in the February budget, get that approved, get that project executed and connect Loyalist College."

"I want to talk a bit about the campaign and about the action items we talked about earlier. We mentioned we would like to go forward and get support from council for mayor's implementation team. I'll work on that ASAP. And that's the team that will get together, get build Belleville executed, get the plans going and get the jobs done and on time.

"Also very important of what I talked about earlier in the campaign was bus shelters. I think it's very important that we can do it as long as council supports me when I take it forward. Building bus shelters and a bus terminal for all the individuals that ride our buses."

Christopher then addressed his belief in building a stronger relationship with Belleville's OHL team, the Belleville Bulls.

"What I mentioned earlier also is our

relationship with the Belleville Bulls. I will make it a longterm priority to make a lease with the Belleville Bulls and the Belleville Bulls brand. It will be a priority.

"Something that will also be our priority and the first thing on our mind is our roads. Our roads are poached and I fully understand and accept full responsibility of it and we will address and move forward with a plan on that."

Christopher then briefly reflected on his position as a two-term city councillor.

"Summing things up, it's been a profound privilege to serve the residents and the city of Belleville for eight years as a councillor. Going forward, I would ask one thing: Please do not shut the door on the new council and the mayor's office.

"I think we need your support, we need your guidance, and we need your patience. We can do a job and we can do a better job by putting good communication and people first."

Pat Culhane places close second in race

Only 161 votes separates retired nurse from first-place finisher

By Adrienne Powell

Pat Culhane gave Taso Christopher a run for his money in Belleville's municipal election Monday night.

Culhane came in second place in the race for mayor with 3,753 votes, just 161 less than Christopher. It looked like Culhane would be the new mayor of Belleville, because she spent most of the night in the lead, until almost 10 p.m. when the final votes came in, when Christopher moved into first.

Culhane predicted Christopher would be her closest competition, because they have both spent two terms as councillors, and she wished him all the best.

"The only thing that would have saddened me was if I hadn't tried," said Culhane during her speech at the Masonic Lodge.

Culhane is a retired nurse who first ran for council in 2006 and then again in 2010, spending the last eight years serving the citizens of Belleville. Becoming a council member was a lifelong goal that Culhane never thought would happen.

After her children were grown up and moved out, she decided to go for it. Culhane decided to run for mayor and to keep projects, like the Build Belleville



Photo by Adrienne Powell

Pat Culhane (right) and her sister Anne Bunnnett watch as the results for Belleville's municipal election come in at the Masonic Lodge in Belleville on Monday. Culhane came in second place for mayor with just 161 votes less than Belleville's new mayor Taso Christopher.

project, alive and to help rejuvenate the downtown core.

Culhane said would have liked to address several other problems if she took office, such as the lack of care beds for the elderly, the fact that the area does not have enough hospice facilities for end-of-life-care, and the need for more family doctors.

Culhane has been a strong supporter of ongoing projects such as sewer separation projects, Haig Road and Station Street extensions, the Catherine Street footbridge replacement, and the Sidney Street water main replacement.

Culhane is the third of nine children and is very close to her family. Ann Bunnnett, Culhane's sister, was Culhane's campaign manager.

"She is the best campaign manager ever," said Culhane.

Culhane said the hardest part about running for mayor was being put in situations where you have to answer questions about anything and everything. From July on, she tried to read up on everything there was to know about running a city and said she found it was impossible.

After losing the race for mayor, Culhane said she plans to take some time off and decide what she wants to do next.

"I want to do something, but I don't know what yet. I have been working really hard since July, so I'm going to take a few days off to rest and relax and get all my mess cleaned up."