

# Ontario Election 1987



## No more fights about 'dirty rotten Liberals'

By DAVE ROWNEY  
Herald Staff

Gone are the days when Walt Elliot's son gets beat up for having a dad who is a "dirty rotten Liberal".

Thursday the Halton North candidate breezed to the biggest local riding victory by the Grits in over 10 years.

Mr. Elliot received 11,644 votes, compared to his nearest rival, Progressive Conservative candidate Dave Whiting, who collected 6,933. NDP campaigner Fern Wolf managed 23.7 per cent of the popular vote, finishing with 5,782.

Defeated three times previously in provincial election campaigns, the 53-year-old school teacher was a candidate whose time had finally come.

Across the province, his provincial Liberal counterparts were winning big, thanks in large part to the popularity of leader David Peterson. The total count across Ontario gave the Liberals an overwhelming majority of 95 seats, the NDP 19 seats and the Progressive Conservatives,

Under sunny and warm skies, voter turnout was 57 per cent in Halton North, down from about 60 per cent in the 1985 election. Of 42,590 eligible voters, 24,369 cast their ballots.

Mr. Elliot had vowed to his son after an unsuccessful election attempt that someday being a Liberal in Ontario wouldn't be considered a bad thing.

As soon as the results became

known from the election returning office, a trend was emerging in favor of the Liberals. Mr. Elliot didn't lose a single poll after the results of almost 30 polls were first announced.

The winning candidate said voters liked what they saw from the Party, the policies and his own candidacy. "My perception is that the people were coming on-side the last ten days right across the riding."

Judging on the coattails of David Peterson's popularity was a factor in the election race. Said his campaign manager David Blaney: "Our campaign was conducted to make sure that Walt was associated with the Liberal party and David Peterson."

About 40 Progressive Conservative campaign supporters crowded into their Milton headquarters on Ontario Street to receive distressing news. In the last provincial election in 1985, the Tories only lost by 179

## Elliot sweeps Halton North

The Tories were hoping a large number of undecided voters identified during surveys taken days before the election would materialize into PC ballots. Instead, people in the riding and across the province voted Liberal in unprecedented numbers.

Campaign manager for Dave Whiting of the PCs, Carlo Testa, said he felt the federal Conservatives were unpopular and that hurt the provincial campaign.

Added candidate Whiting: "Peterson's appeal was just too strong. There was nothing we could do to turn it around. We did as well as anyone could, to try and localize this campaign."

The atmosphere at the NDP camp a few blocks away was a bit more

buoyant. In the last provincial election in the area, the New Democrats had only collected 4,902 votes and 13.4 per cent of the popular vote. With 5,782 votes and 23.7 per cent of the popular vote this time, NDP candidate Fern Wolf had reason to smile.

Ms. Wolf said she expected the NDP to do better across the province, although the strong support in the local riding was a pleasant and encouraging surprise.

Said Acton NDP supporter: "Fern Wolf was a heck of a candidate. And more people are starting to respond to the party now."

Campaign manager Patrick Clancy had never worked with a female candidate before, but he was full of praise for the single mother.

## Grit victory is heaven for our new MPP

By BRIAN MacLEOD  
Herald Staff

Liberal Walt Elliot reacted calmly

at first to his victory by 4,711 votes over his closest competitor, Conservative Dave Whiting.



CELEBRATE! Victorious Liberal candidate Walt Elliot (left) is congratulated by former MPP Julian

Reed at the victory party in the Acton Legion Thursday night. Mr. Elliot won Halton North by 4,711

votes over Conservative Dave Whiting. NDP candidate Fern Wolf placed third with 5,782 votes. Mr. Elliot is the first MPP to represent the new riding of Halton North. This was his fourth run at provincial politics. (Herald photo)

At his campaign headquarters in Milton, Mr. Elliot accepted the victory with poise as the early returns gave him a clear victory.

"The feeling that I've got isn't really one of sheer ecstasy. It's just a chance to do the job," the veteran of four political campaigns said of his first trip to Queen's Park.

Later that night Mr. Elliot's emotions began to perk up.

"If there's a heaven there's a lot of good Liberals up there saying '87 is a very good year,'" Mr. Elliot told about 150 party supporters in his victory speech at the Acton Legion.

Results pouring into the campaign headquarters indicated an easy victory for Mr. Elliot, who didn't lose a poll until 8:30 p.m. - after almost 30 other polls were reported.

Mr. Elliot, who had earlier said he would win Halton North by between 500 to 1,500 votes, was obviously pleased at the margin of victory.

"Doesn't that look nice," he said after viewing the flashing sign on the television screen in his campaign headquarters declaring him the victor.

"My perception is that the people were coming on-side the last ten days right across the riding," he said.

Mr. Elliot watched the results from his home in Milton until a Liberal majority government was declared a scant 18 minutes after the polls closed.

He spent the day delivering 30 dozen donuts to workers at the polls throughout the riding.

He said voters were wooed by the Party, the policies and the candidate.

Mr. Elliot sipped champagne from a styrofoam cup at his campaign headquarters 30 minutes after the polls closed.

"After the '71 election on Halloween night we lost that night the next day my kid got beat up in the schoolyard for being a dirty

rotten Liberal," Mr. Elliot recalled.

He said he had vowed to make good one day for his son Paul.

"Yahoo," Mr. Elliot yelled on the podium in Acton with his clenched fist raised in the air.

Conservative candidate Dave Whiting came to Acton to congratulate Mr. Elliot at 10:30 p.m. "Dave Whiting congratulated me on a well-run campaign and accepted defeat most graciously," he said.

"I complimented him for staking out a position and sticking by it because he did do that."

Mr. Elliot's campaign manager David Blaney was fairly confident for Mr. Elliot before the returns came in. "Locally, I felt one and a half weeks ago that we'd won," Mr. Blaney said.

Before the returns came in, Mr. Blaney predicted a Liberal victory by between 1,000 to 2,000 votes.

"Our campaign was conducted to make sure that Walt was associated with the Liberal Party and David Peterson," Mr. Blaney said.

"Two years ago we were a big experiment. We were something that hadn't been tried for 42 years," Mr. Blaney said.

"We didn't bankrupt the Province.

We've lowered the deficit. They (voters) found out that you can have an activist, reformist government that is fiscally responsible."

Acton Liberal Director Dave Steckley expected Mr. Elliot's big win but he thought the race for Acton's voters would be tougher. Mr. Steckley thought New Democratic Party candidate Fern Wolf would either win Acton polls or place a strong second.

Halton Hills councillor Al Cook expected Mr. Elliot's victory.

"People were happy and comfortable with Walt Elliot," he said at the Acton celebration.

Former Liberal MP Rud Whiting said Mr. Elliot's victory was a team effort.

"We took the high road in this campaign," he said.

Mr. Elliot's wife Anne, daughter Tina and son Paul were on hand in Acton to help celebrate the victory.

Election day co-ordinator Tina said this was a different kind of campaign for her father because he wasn't facing a Conservative incumbent and cabinet minister this time (Mr. Elliot ran twice in Oakville against Jim Snow). "We could afford to be a bit more optimistic."

## Challenge for Peterson

Former Liberal MPP Julian Reed said the Grit majority will pose a problem for Premier David Peterson. Surprised at the landslide win, Mr. Reed said he felt the Liberal leader is up to meeting the challenge.

"The problem is so many new MPPs will have great expectations. He'll have to handle that with real diplomacy," said the former politician.

Mr. Peterson has already tempered expectations by developing a policy which discourages patronage, he said. Compared to Prime Minister Mulroney, people can put a lot of faith in the Liberal

leader, said Mr. Reed. Walt Elliot is a devoted party worker and it's nice to see him win the Halton North riding, said the former MPP. "No Liberal was more deserving than Walt. He worked very hard."

Mr. Reed said he hoped the candidate will have his expectations met at Queen's Park. It is a job that is fulfilling, challenging and full of hard work, he said.

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