

Ontario Election 1987



Election notebook

Popular Peterson

The victory party at the Acton Royal Canadian Legion for the Liberal supporters of Walt Elliot was in festive spirits compared to the PC gathering.

"So far it's been great. I'm very happy. We've been working a long time for this," said Kay Lawson of Fourth Line, Acton.

For 41 years she has supported the local Liberal party in the riding. "I think David Peterson is so popular," she said, summing up the results of Thursday's election. "He's just an ordinary guy. People like what he has done over the past two years," she said.

Blistering feet

Anyone with their eyes on a public office in the future had better be ready for blisters on their feet and callouses on their knuckles.

Liberal candidate Walt Elliot had a team of canvassers working the riding's 42,000 voters throughout the campaign but he estimated that he personally knocked on 3,000 to 5,000 doors.

Missing candidate

Halton North NDP candidate Fern Wolf missed congratulating winner Walt Elliot Thursday night, but not for lack of trying.

Campaign manager Patrick Clancy told supporters at the CAW Union Hall that he phoned Mr. Elliot's Milton headquarters at about 9:30, but the Liberal candidate was not there. Mr. Clancy then called the Acton Legion, where Liberal supporters were celebrating their landslide victory. Mr. Elliot had not arrived.

"We don't know where he is, but somewhere in Halton Walt Elliot's having a helluva party," Pat Clancy said.

Rebate coming

NDP Riding Association President Patricia Clancy could hardly contain her enthusiasm Thursday night when she found out her party received 23.7 per cent of the popular vote in Halton North.

She said Fern Wolf's was the first NDP campaign she had worked for which received the provincial rebate.

Candidates must receive 15 per cent of the popular vote to be eligible for the subsidy.

A subsidy is then based on a percentage of the allowable spending in the riding. Individuals may donate as much as \$7,000 to a candidate during an election.

Donuts brigade

Halton North Liberal candidate Walt Elliot followed up election day tradition Thursday by Julian Reed.

Mr. Elliot visited every polling station bearing handfuls of donuts for the people working the polls.

The only polling station he didn't make it to was Milton Manor.

It was all closed up by the time we got there, he explained.

The Liberals lost Milton Manor in 1985.

They won it this time.

Undecided vote

The last day of the election campaign there was a "huge amount of undecided voters," said Milton's Mike Clements, a Tory supporter.

The Progressive Conservatives calculated that 50 per cent of the people in the Halton North riding hadn't made up their mind by Sept. 9.

Surveys showed that undecideds would be a big factor in the local riding, but they all jumped on the Liberal bandwagon, said candidate Dave Whiting. Campaign manager Carlo Testa predicted Acton would be a strong supporter of his candidate, but the surveyed popularity couldn't be translated into votes.

Singing the Tory Blues in Milton

By DAVE ROWNEY
Herald Staff

It didn't take long before those at the Tory campaign headquarters were singing the Blues.

Halton North candidate Dave Whiting suffered the fate of many of his fellow Conservative candidates across Ontario last night. He was defeated and defeated badly mostly by what observers felt was Premier David Peterson's popularity.

The advance polls, which were known to PC headquarters staff by 8:05 p.m., told a story of what was emerging across the riding. In Georgetown the Tories had 136 votes, compared to 270 for the Grits and 106 for the NDP.

At that moment, Georgetown resident and campaign worker Neil MacKinnon spoke out. "I thought Georgetown would be heavy for Whiting."

Carlo Testa, Dave Whiting's campaign manager said the local riding results were "unbelievable."

There is a strong wave of dissent which translated into a protest vote against the Conservatives. Mr. Testa said. Many were influenced by the unpopularity of the federal Tories, he added.

Shortly after party leader Larry Grossman was defeated in his riding, Dave Whiting emerged at the Milton headquarters on Ontario Street.

A large percentage of undecided voters identified by the PCs in the riding eventually went with the Liberals he said. "I think the 50 per cent of undecided in Halton North jumped on the Peterson bandwagon."

In the same breath he cautioned

against what the Liberal sweep will mean for Ontarians. "I think the people better wake up before they end up with a socialist government."

In his door-to-door campaigning Mr. Whiting said he found that a number of people were alarmed at the prospects of a left-leaning government.

He said the support for the NDP surprised him, but not the lack of support shown towards his own leader.

"Peterson's appeal was just too strong," he said. He suspected NDP candidate Fern Wolf was doing well in the riding because of the popularity of her party.

The candidate said he wasn't disillusioned by the vote. "There was nothing we could do to turn it around. We did as well as anyone could, to try and localize this campaign."

The magnitude of the win made it easier to bear. "If we had lost by 10 votes it would've been a lot worse," he said.

"It wasn't a reflection of myself or the campaign - just Peterson," he added.

The Liberal leader will not show his true colors and he will have to be watched carefully on issues such as the deficit and free trade, Mr. Whiting said.

But he added that Brian Mulroney swept into power and his popularity now has waned badly. In fact, because of the federal Progressive Conservative sweep in 1984, there was some hope people would reject sweeping in the provincial Liberals, said Mr. Whiting.

The first returns to come into the office were from the Milton area



EYEING THE TUBE - Progressive Conservative Candidate Dave Whiting (right) and his campaign manager Carlo Testa eye the disappointing results on television at the PC party headquarters in Milton Thursday evening. Even Mr. Whiting's leader Larry Grossman couldn't survive the Liberal sweep and he was defeated in his Toronto riding.

Three consecutive ridings in south-central Milton went Liberal by wide margins with the NDP surprisingly strong.

The trend continued throughout the night with the NDP and Conservatives in Halton North battling for second place.

Mr. Testa said his candidate did a good job of going door to door and one more week on the campaign

trail would have helped. "Direct contact is best for changing people's minds," he said.

The main thing was to get across to people Mr. Whiting's character and experience, his campaign manager said. Before the counts began he said: "If people are voting for a candidate we will win, if they are voting for the party (sigh) ...you know as much as I do."

Fern Wolf will try again

Feeling far from defeated, Fern Wolf said she plans to begin preparations for her next election campaign.

The 36-year-old mother of two said she matured during her campaign. "There aren't many things I plan to do differently," the candidate said. "But, we'll start earlier and try to get more supporters."

Ms. Wolf's Campaign Manager Patrick Clancy agreed that the party's biggest problem in the Halton North riding was a lack of campaign workers. He added though that he is encouraged by the support Fern Wolf received in the areas they were able to canvass.

Campaign workers in Acton, Milton and Georgetown said the party will target the riding's rural areas strongly in the next election. The NDP rarely receives many votes in rural polls.

"Not in Halton," Patrick Clancy said. "There are too many rich farmers in this area."

Georgetown supporters John and Bernice Nichols said in one rural poll they covered, only 43 out of a possible 350 eligible voters showed up to cast ballots.

But Mrs. Nichols added support for the party increased this election over previous years.

"Fern Wolf is a likeable person," she said. "She's an honest candidate and very concerned about people."

Voters didn't judge candidates

Supporters of the Dave Whiting campaign were surprised and disappointed at the election results putting their candidate in second place far behind the leader Walt Elliot.

Mr. Whiting collected 6,933 votes, which is 1,151 more than NDP candidate Fern Wolf received. Elected MPP Walt Elliot garnered 11,514 votes.

Said Georgetown's Alex McKee: "I'm disappointed at what the people are saying." Voters are "disregarding the cost of socialism", which is natural when the economy is buoyant, he said.

Halton North PC executive member Sarita Purdy felt people decided to go with a trend rather than judge the candidates.

"I think a lot of it was that people didn't assess Dave on his merit." People see what's been happening at the federal level and they are showing their dissatisfaction with the Tories "...but they're not voting for Dave - the best candidate."

Mr. Whiting has got energy and drive and is the kind of person who would not sit back. "He would have stood up and spoken out for the good of the riding," she said.

NDP campaign happy with popular vote

By MARY-LIZ SHAW
Herald Staff

Less than a half hour after the polls closed, campaign workers at the NDP party headquarters in Milton heard that candidate Fern Wolf had won the first poll.

Although Ms. Wolf would finish third place in the riding, Riding Association President Patricia Clancy said the early poll result was a good sign.

Halton North New Democrats

received 23.7 per cent of the popular vote in the riding, almost doubling their support from the 1985 provincial election.

Candidate Fern Wolf, who was running for the first time, said she "totally" believed the results.

"Over Ontario as a whole the Liberals, it will be more than happy to put the NDP in office," she said. "We'll wipe them off the map next time."

Patricia Clancy said she was not

expecting such a margin of support for the NDP in the newly-formed riding of Halton North. Ms. Clancy, who has worked for the NDP in ridings across south-western Ontario, noted she has never worked on a campaign which has received more than 10 per cent of the popular vote.

Fern Wolf's showing matches that of the party across Ontario.

Loyal NDP supporters in Halton said they are optimistic about the party's future. Fern Wolf confirmed she will run for the NDP in the next provincial election.

"We're doing better now than we've ever done before," Fern Wolf said. "This campaign was a marvelous experience. I wouldn't have missed it for the world."

Fern Wolf expressed disappointment over the large Liberal majority in Queen's Park.

"I really expected the NDP to do better (across the province)," she said. "But, it just means that we'll have to yell louder and we're used to that."

Campaign manager Patrick Clancy, who first began working for the NDP in the 1980s, said he has never worked for a female candidate before.

"She's the best I've ever worked for," he said. "She's tireless, she wore me out."

Mr. Clancy said he would have liked to have had more campaign workers because not all of the 147 polls in North Halton were covered during the campaign. Because Ms.

Wolf was not nominated until 10 days after the election was called, Mr. Clancy said NDP supporters lost valuable canvassing time.

"Campaigns are a campaign," he said. "I wish there was a way to extend the support you need."

Mr. Clancy noted staff were trying to fool themselves into winning a seat, which meant the strong support the party received in her riding was a pleasant and encouraging surprise.

Acton supporter Allan Foster said the NDP did the best it has ever done since he began working on elections ten years ago. The NDP gained 37 per cent of the popular Acton vote, a 16 per cent increase in its support over the last provincial election in 1985.

"Fern (Wolf) was a heck of a candidate," Allan Foster said. "And more people are starting to respond to the party now."

But, the NDP lost about four seats in the province. Tensions ran high in the Milton headquarters as supporters watched the incoming results from York South. Bob Rae's riding. For most of the evening Mr. Rae was running second to the Liberal candidate.

"That's dreadful," Fern Wolf said. By 10 p.m., however, Bob Rae had regained his seat. Party supporters gathered at the Canadian Auto Workers Union Hall in Milton cheered when it was announced the NDP will be the official opposition party.



SUPPORT DOUBLED - Campaign Manager for the NDP Patrick Clancy stands with candidate Fern Wolf to congratulate campaign workers on achieving 23.7 per cent of the popular vote in Halton North Thursday night. Fern Wolf said she is going to begin preparing for the next provincial election. (Herald photo)