

YOUNGER PARTIES SHOW INCREASE IN POPULARITY IN HALTON HILLS

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held a majority in Canada signals an increase in popularity for younger parties.

As the NDP in the riding with candidate Andrew Bascombe saw a one per cent increase compared to the previous election with 9.2 per cent, the Green Party and its local contender Ralph Martin jumped over into the third-place position, bringing in 12.6 per cent of Wellington-Halton Hills voters.

Even electoral newcomer the People's Party of Canada, represented locally by Syl Carle, earned more votes in the riding than any fifth-placed party since 2004 with 2.2 per cent of the vote.

Overall, roughly 5,000 more votes were cast in Wellington-Halton Hills than were cast four years ago.

"I think we're quite lucky to have Michael Chong representing us again," said Gemma Patey, the Independent's citizen journalist during the election.

While Wellington-Halton Hills demonstrated voter unity, Patey said she was disheartened with the federal results.

"We see the way people voted is really divided by electing a minority government," she said. "We need to have a little more unity to address big issues like climate change and indigenous issues."

A minority government, Patey said, will face barriers going forward.

QUESTION:

WHAT DO THE FEDERAL ELECTION RESULTS MEAN FOR HALTON HILLS?

CONCLUSION: SOME COMMENTERS SAID THE MINORITY LIBERAL GOVERNMENT MAY LACK STABILITY, WHILE OTHERS SAY IT COULD BE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INDIVIDUAL MPS LIKE MICHAEL CHONG TO HAVE MORE OF A SAY.

However, it might also be an opportunity for individual MPs to have more of a say.

"In this government, Michael Chong will get his opportunity to pursue his personal beliefs a little bit further," Patey said.

Considered a moderate within the party, Chong said it's important for MPs to represent their constituents even if it means disagreeing with party leaders or prime ministers.

"It's the basis of our Westminster parliamentary system," Chong said, "and we've strayed too far from that in recent decades."

In that capacity, Chong teamed up with members from each federal party to form the Climate Caucus.



Michael Chong gets a celebratory hug after his re-election.

Bryan Myers/Torstar

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In May, he spoke in the House of Commons to urge the House to declare a climate emergency, and as a result, commit the country to meeting its national emissions target under the Paris Agreement.

But Chong's environmental focus has been evident since as early as 2004, when he declared personal support for the Kyoto Protocol despite his party's opposition.

"We don't elect parties or prime ministers," Chong said during an all candidates debate at Acton District High School just days prior to the election. "We elect legislatures."

While the federal Liber-

als have formed a minority government, Chong said constituents had raised several concerns he plans to bring back to Ottawa ranging from the environment, to the cost of living, as well as how the Liberal government handled the SNC Lavalin case.

Meanwhile, local Liberal candidate Lesley Barron attributed the outcome at the polls in Wellington-Halton Hills to vote splitting.

"I think people in this riding are ready for progressive change; we just have to get them to vote a bit smarter if we're going to do that," she told the Independent.

"But I'm very relieved to see we have a Liberal government in power," she added. "I was much more nervous about that than actually getting myself elected."

Going forward, Barron said she's not sure what the election results will mean for the riding.

"I think the team will have to get together in the coming months and look at what exactly happens with a minority government," she said. "Minority governments do not have a history in Canada of being that stable."

In local Green Party candidate Ralph Martin's eyes, there's now a risk that bold initiatives needed to address climate change and economic challenges won't be implemented for the sake of political equilibrium.

"There's an opportunity for more meaningful dialogue among MPs - within and across parties - to find buy-in to move ahead with what Canadians actually need," he said.

"For the sake of Wellington-Halton Hills, there's an opportunity for our MP to work with the minority Liberal government to support the climate emergency resolution of Halton Hills and show how our community can lead the way."

STORY BEHIND THE STORY

The Independent sent reporters to speak with candidates throughout the Wellington-Halton Hills riding about this question. We also engaged citizen journalists and heard what they had to say on the matter.