

Chong rides Tory wave across the GTA

Incumbent MP outdistances Liberal Bowser by wide margin

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Conservative incumbent MP Michael Chong took the lead early Tuesday night and never looked back.

By the time all the votes were in, Chong had easily won the federal Wellington-Halton Hills seat again, beating rookie Liberal candidate Bruce Bowser by more than 17,000 votes.

In 2006 Chong's margin of victory was just under 11,000 over Liberal challenger Rod Finnie.

This time Chong garnered 29,191 votes compared to Bowser's 11,312. Green candidate Brent Bouteiller finished third with 4,997 votes, narrowly edging out NDP candidate Noel Duignan who had 4,747. Jeffrey Streutker of the Christian Heritage Party was a distant fifth with only 414 votes.

Chong, with his wife Carrie by his side, was greeted with a hearty round of applause and cheers from the approximately 100 supporters who filled the Mill St. Crossing in Acton election night.

"I had no idea what the result would be," said a jubilant Chong. "We knew we were in a good position, but we had no idea what the result would be."

He said he was "delighted and honoured the people of this riding have re-elected me to be their representative in Ottawa."

Chong said by far the economy was the election's defining issue.

"As the global, fiscal crisis unfolded, what we saw were people increasingly concerned about their jobs, about the economy.

I think our government illustrated it had a plan and tonight's results in the riding validated that plan."

Throughout the campaign the key local issue that arose was how to manage the growth that is expected for the area, and how to manage the "ever-growing infrastructure needs that come along with that growth," said Chong.

He said that's an issue he plans to continue to focus on "to ensure we can maintain the quality of life we have come to enjoy in Halton."

Chong said he heard that people didn't want to see the "unbridled, uncontrolled growth" that's been seen in other parts of the GTA.

When he gets back to Ottawa Chong said his number one priority would be "to assuage Canadians concerns about their jobs, and the economy."

On the fact the Conservatives did not achieve a majority government Chong said he respected the results of the election.

"I respect that Canadians have not given us a majority government. I think that means that all parties will have to work constructively in the House of Commons to ensure a stable government."

"I hope we will have a constructive Parliament," he said.

During his speech to his supporters Chong thanked his wife Carrie and all the many volunteers who helped to make his campaign so successful and urged his supporters in the restaurant to "celebrate" the victory.

"It was a great experience," said Bowser of Georgetown in a late-night telephone call to *The Independent & Free Press*.



Liberal candidate Bruce Bowser (left) concedes defeat to incumbent Conservative Michael Chong at Mill St. Crossing in Acton Tuesday night. Chong easily outdistanced the first-time Liberal candidate to win re-election. Photo by Ted Brown

"For a newcomer I was extremely pleased from the reception we got and the work the team put into it. ... I have no regrets."

Bowser said he and his team would analyze the numbers to determine whether he'll repeat his candidacy.

"It was a positive experience and I'm leaving my mind open to it," he said.

Bowser called it a challenging campaign with the focus changing from local issues in the early weeks to national issues as the world's economic situation began a "melt-down."

Bowser added he has a lot of respect for Chong, who is well regarded and is a great opponent.

Bowser is the president and CEO of Canada's largest moving company—AMJ Campbell Van Lines based in Georgetown. He is active volunteer and supporter for local charities. He lives in Glen Williams with his wife and two daughters.

Bouteiller was pleased with his showing. "From our standpoint, we met our goals," said Bouteiller, of Fergus.

He said those goals were to finish third and garner 5,000 votes in the riding, he finished just shy of that total.

Although his party did not achieve a seat, Bouteiller still sees the campaign as a success.

He credits that to the fact that "people are starting to listen," and that party leader Elizabeth May's participation in the leader-

ship debates showed the electorate that the Green Party has a platform that calls for both a strong economy and clean environment.

Although Green Party leader May did not win her seat, Bouteiller said he thought "it was a great idea for her to run there."

He's pleased that the main parties are adopting some of the Green Party's policies and plans to run again as the Green Party candidate.

Streutker, who filed a few days before the nomination deadline, blamed his poor showing on Prime Minister Stephen Harper's fall election call, despite Tory legislation setting a specific election dates.

Streutker, 42, a customer trainer and IT specialist for a Vaughan construction company, said, "I was unable to schedule time off from work and unable to organize my campaign and that slightly reflected in the results for the CHP here in Wellington-Halton Hills."

That was about equivalent to showings by previous CHP candidates in previous elections. He said a scheduled election would have allowed him to organize a campaign through brochures and signs to get his message out to people.

However, Streutker felt encouraged by those who did vote him and by their phone calls and letters of support.

Duignan was unavailable for comment last night.



Re-elected Conservative MP Michael Chong conducts an interview at the Mill St. Crossing in Acton prior to meeting supporters while his wife Carrie looks on.

Photo by Ted Brown

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