

Editorial ? It should be a good local result

Whatever else might be said about Monday's election returns, they should prove positive for the hopes and dreams of the residents of Dufferin-Caledon riding.

As expected, David Tilson was elected to his fifth term as a Member of Parliament, but this time he didn't get an overall majority of the votes, falling well short of the nearly 60 per cent of votes cast in 2011.

In fact, although he received nearly as many votes (27,929) as he did four years ago (28,647), his share of the overall vote fell to 46.1 per cent, and the gap between him and the runner-up shrank from 21,515 in 2011, when Green candidate Ard Van Leuwen got 7,132 votes, to just 4,319 between himself and Liberal Ed Crewson, who polled 23,610.

And just as the Liberal share of the national vote soared from a paltry 18 per cent in 2011 to roughly 45 per cent this time around, the Liberal vote in Dufferin-Caledon more than tripled, from 6,361 in 2011 to the 23,610 Mr. Crewson received.

Another way of looking at it was that only slightly more than 30 per cent of the 92,461 eligible voters cast ballots for the winner. All this adds up to our submission that Dufferin-Caledon should no longer be considered one of the safest Conservative seats east of Alberta and with that in mind the senior levels of government (now both Liberal) should start looking at investing in a riding that until now has been the recipient of little more than downloading of government services. (Today, all federal and provincial services are being offered in unimpressive quarters leased from private owners.)

So much for the local scene.

Nationally, the longest federal election campaign since 1874 certainly didn't turn out the way the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and Conservative party headquarters had expected.

Eleven weeks ago, polls showed the three parties neck-and-neck, with the New Democrats slightly ahead of the Conservatives and the Liberals well back in third place. Everyone tended to accept the likelihood of no party winning a majority of the 338 Commons seats, and all the speculation was on what would happen if the Conservatives fell slightly short of a majority.

The polling then seemed to show the NDP as solid in Quebec as they were in the wake of the 2011 'Orange Wave,' and the Liberals as doing well only in Atlantic Canada.

But the scene may have been set by the Conservative attack ads, which began long before the election writ was dropped and for some reason ignored the NDP, simply targeting Justin Trudeau as 'just not ready' to become prime minister.

Was that simply because some of the Tory 'backroom boys' saw Trudeau and the Liberals as a more serious threat than the polls-leading New Democrats? That's obviously something we'll never know.

However, the attack ads seem to have backfired, with the Liberals opting to respond to them, initially with the leader agreeing that he wasn't ready to do some of the things the Harper Tories were doing, but was ready to give Canadians 'real change.'

And perhaps the clincher was in a late-day commercial in which Hazel McCallion, Mississauga's nonagenarian ex-mayor, corrected a Conservative claim that the Liberals were going to end income-splitting for senior couples, and the commercial ended with a one-word slogan, 'Ready.'

With 183 other MPs to choose from and members in all provinces (even Alberta), Trudeau should have little difficulty finding suitable occupants for cabinet seats.

Two of his biggest challenges will be to strengthen the role of MPs and to reduce that of the PMO, while hopefully instructing all government employees that they were working for the Government of Canada, not the 'Trudeau government.'

Another significant challenge will be what to do with the Senate. While the PM-elect has talked of having them appointed by an independent body, our strong preference would be for him simply to invite the provinces to fill vacancies by whatever means they prefer, with the federal cabinet implementing their choices by order-in-council.