

## Editorial ? Will we ever be in a ?key? riding?

The blue signs say it all.

The signs that sprang up last weekend in Dufferin-Caledon and neighbouring Simcoe-Grey bore the names of Sylvia Jones and Jim Wilson, who are both set to coast to easy wins in the June 12 Ontario election.

It may be some time yet before we see the landscape littered with Liberal red, New Democrat orange and Green green signs bearing the names of the sacrificial lambs the three parties (and Libertarians) find to make a showing in two of the safest Conservative ridings in the province.

Meanwhile, the party leaders and mainstream media will be concentrating all their efforts on what have come to be known as ?key? ridings ? ridings where close battles are anticipated between at least two of the provincial parties.

That's hardly the case in either Dufferin-Caledon or Simcoe-Grey, where in the 2011 election Wilson got more than half the popular vote and Jones did nearly as well in her first bid for re-election.

Both politicians have developed high profiles within their ridings, with Jones getting noticed outside the riding when she secured all-party support for her bill designed to promote the use of recycled aggregates ? a bill that died on the Order Paper when NDP leader Andrea Horwath triggered the election call by promising to defeat the Liberal government over its left-leaning proposed 2014-15 budget.

Key ridings in Ontario are a lot like ?key? states in U.S. presidential elections. There, the candidates spend a disproportionate amount of time and money in ?swing? states that award all their electoral-college votes to the party that edges out the other party, no matter how small the margin of victory.

In Ontario, most of the key ridings are in metropolitan areas where more than one party has been victorious in recent elections and having quality candidates can make all the difference.

And one of the big benefits of being in a key riding is to see the parties virtually falling over one another in making costly promises. This time around, a common theme in the Liberal, Conservative and New Democrat campaigns is a promise to come up with billions of dollars to deal with the worsening gridlock in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). And the promise of all three seems to be to find these billions from the provincial treasury rather than just from those who'll stand to benefit.

Just why taxpayers in Thunder Bay, Sudbury or Moosonee should be on the hook is something we fail to understand.

The one certainty in this election is that no matter which party winds up forming the next government, Dufferin-Caledon's needs and aspirations will continue to be ignored.

And it's not as if we don't have significant needs above and beyond such obvious ones as a measure of local control over proposed aggregate projects and wind farms.

Were Dufferin in a key riding we might expect a commitment to reduce local property taxation by relieving the county of its need to maintain three major highways that once were, or ought to have been, provincially financed highways, County roads 109 and 124 and Airport Road (County 18).

And were we in a key riding, Orangeville would have at least the promise of a little provincial investment in the area of real estate, with Service Ontario (an oxymoron if there ever was one) being housed in a provincially owned edifice rather than leased in a unit in a strip mall with staffing, space and parking suitable for a town of 2,000.