

Liberals elected in Province-wide Student Vote



By Angela Gismondi

Voters under and over the voting age elected a Liberal majority government in Ontario last week.

After learning about the democratic process, meeting the candidates running in the Newmarket-Aurora riding, researching the candidates and party platforms and debating the future of Ontario, students cast their ballots for official candidates running in their electoral district in Student Vote 2014.

About 167,416 students under the voting age from 1,261 schools representing 107 electoral districts across Ontario cast ballots throughout the week. The results were released after the polls closed on election night.

The Liberals won a majority government in the student vote with 62 seats, increasing their seat count from 39 in 2011 and increasing their share of the popular vote to 32.4 per cent. Party leader Kathleen Wynne won in her electoral district and is elected Premier by the students of Ontario.

The NDP won 33 seats, losing seven seats since the last Student Vote. Party leader Andrea Horwath kept her seat in Hamilton Centre. The party received the same share of the popular vote as in 2011 (26 per cent).

The Progressive Conservatives took 11 seats, down from 25 in 2011. Their share of the popular vote decreased to 18.4 per cent and leader Tim Hudak lost in his own electoral district.

The Green Party won one seat with 14.6 per cent of the popular vote, while leader Mike Schreiner lost in his own electoral district. The party won two seats in the last Student Vote.

Nelson De Castro, a Grade 7 teacher at St. Jerome Catholic Elementary School in Aurora said it's important to get students involved in the democratic process from an early age.

‘It encourages the next generation of voters to become aware of the issues and the candidates,’ said De Castro. ‘They go through the physical process of voting so they can see what it’s all about. It gets them on the early path to voting.’

Candidates in the Newmarket-Aurora riding visited the school and spoke with Grade 7 and 8 students. They answered a series of questions and students were encouraged to ask questions of their own. Students were also split into groups and asked to research each party, its leader and the party platforms and present them to the class.

‘We tried to make the election have a more local, personal connection to the students instead of a provincial context,’ De Castro stated.

The program was successful, De Castro explained.

‘We know that they raised their awareness and engagement,’ said De Castro. ‘Students are talking about it on their own and they are talking to their parents about it which was one of our goals.’

Students agreed the exercise was educational.

‘I think it’s really good because we get to see what it will be like in the future when voting and what our parents go through to elect someone for the government,’ said Chloe, a Grade 7 student at St. Jerome. ‘I loved learning more about the different parties. It was very interesting to me.’

Dorian Baxter of the Canadians’ Choice Party of Newmarket-Aurora stopped into the school on election day.

‘I think it’s wonderful,’ said Baxter about engaging the students in the democratic process. ‘It’s important because it introduces students to the need to exercise their democratic rights. I am an educator as well and I’m very happy to see this happening.’

Student Vote is the flagship program of CIVIX. CIVIX is a national registered charity building the capacity and commitment of young Canadians to participate in their democracy.

Elections Ontario has engaged CIVIX to deliver the Student Vote program in conjunction with the 41st general election. Complete results from Student Vote 2014 can be found at www.studentvote.ca/on/results.

Result highlights of Student Vote 2014

+ Only two leaders of the major political parties won their seats: Kathleen Wynne in Don Valley West and Andrea Horwath in Hamilton Centre. In Niagara West ? Glanbrook, PC leader Tim Hudak finished in third place behind the Liberal and NDP candidates. Green Party leader Mike Schreiner finished second in Guelph.

+ 8 per cent of the popular vote went to parties who did not win seats. The relatively unknown Libertarian Party won 3.3 per cent of votes cast.

+ Markham-Unionville had the most students reporting results with 4,251 votes cast.

+ Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and Brant each had 22 schools report results - more than any other electoral district. Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke also had the most schools report results in the 2011 Student Vote.

+ Preliminary results from Whitby-Oshawa, Chatham-Kent-Essex and York West showed very close races. Candidates have been declared with less than 15 votes separating winners. Late-reporting schools could change those results. In Whitby-Oshawa, the top three candidates are separated by just 31 votes.