

Ontario students send different message to Queen's Park ? but Aurora bucks the trend

By Brock Weir

Aurora might have crested a blue wave in the June 7 Provincial election, which sent PC candidates Christine Elliott and Michael Parsa to Queen's Park ? but if local students had their say, this blue wave might have been doused by an orange crush province-wide. Local teens in the province-wide Student Vote program bucked the Provincial trend which sent Doug Ford's Progressive Conservatives to Toronto with a decisive majority; instead, these teens, most of whom were below voting age, elected Andrea Horwath and the NDP into a majority government.

By the afternoon of election night, 2,166 schools across Ontario, representing all 124 electoral districts, reported their results. While the students voted Ms. Elliott and Mr. Parsa into office, they would have been part of the official opposition. Province-wide, participants elected Andrea Horwath and the Ontario NDP to form a majority government with 66 seats and 32 per cent of the vote. Doug Ford and the Progressive Conservatives took 45 seats and 27 per cent of the popular vote.

As far as students were concerned, however, it was very much the same story for Kathleen Wynne and the Ontario Liberals ? but just slightly better than the actual results of just seven seats, one seat shy of official party status.

Students elected 11 Liberal members, handing them 19 per cent of the popular vote. Ms. Wynne, however, would have lost her seat to NDP candidate Amara Possian.

Rounding out the results was the Green Party with two seats.

?What makes this even more incredible is the timing,? said Taylor Gunn, President and CEO of CIVIX. ?This is the busiest time of year for schools with culminating activities, assessments and exams, and more than 5,000 teachers have made citizenship education a priority. We are sincerely grateful for the time and energy dedicated to the program by teachers.?

Student Vote is the flagship program of CIVIX, a national civic education charity focused on developing the habits of active and engaged citizenship among young people. CIVIX programming focuses on the themes of elections, government budgets, elected representatives and news literacy.

Participating Aurora schools voting in Newmarket-Aurora ? that is, on the north side of Wellington Street ? included St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School, St. Jerome Catholic Elementary School, Our Lady of Grace Catholic Elementary School, and Lester B. Pearson Public School.

Riding-wide, Ms. Elliott of the PC Party placed first with 639 student votes, followed by Melissa Williams of the NDP with 449. Coming in third was incumbent Liberal Chris Ballard with 358, followed by Michelle Bourdeau of the Green Party with 183 and independent Dorian Baxter with 60.

At St. Max, Christine Elliott came in first place with 58 votes, followed by incumbent Liberal Chris Ballard with 39, NDP candidate Melissa Williams with 24, and Michelle Bourdeau of the Green Party with 20.

Ms. Elliott also took the St. Jerome poll with 52 votes to 15 for Mr. Ballard, 14 for Bob Yaciuk of the Trillium Party, and Ms. Williams and Ms. Bourdeau tied with 10 votes apiece.

Ms. Elliott handily won the Our Lady of Grace ballot with 71 votes to Ms. Williams 54. Coming in third was Mr. Ballard with 28. It was a different story over at Lester B. Pearson where Ms. Bourdeau came out on top with 35 votes, with Mr. Ballard coming in second with 31. Third place went to Ms. Elliott with 27 and Ms. Williams 19.

A total of seven schools on the south side of Wellington Street participated in the race for Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill. Mr. Parsa won the riding with 1,284 votes. Katrina Sale of the NDP was second with 741 votes, followed by Liberal Naheed Yaqubian with 580 and Stephanie Nicole Duncan with 304.

It was a tight race between Mr. Parsa and Ms. Sale at Aurora High School, with the PC candidate receiving 85 votes compared to the NDP collecting 80. In third place came Liberal Naheed Yaqubian with 41, followed by Ms. Duncan with 39.

Mr. Parsa won Cardinal Carter by a wide margin, taking the poll with 73 votes compare to second place finisher Ms. Sale with 24. Ms. Yaqubian was third with 16, followed by Ms. Duncan with 13.

It was a similar affair at Holy Spirit Catholic Elementary School, where Mr. Parsa cleaned up with 67 votes compare to Ms. Sale's 42. Ms. Yaqubian came third with 35, followed by Ms. Duncan with 19.

Light of Christ Catholic Elementary School was a different story altogether. Ms. Yaqubian and Ms. Sale tied with 43 votes each, compared to 34 taken by Mr. Parsa. Coming in fourth was Santiago Amesh Desilva of the None of the Above Direct Democracy Party with 14 votes.

Regency Acres Public School also bucked the trend with Ms. Duncan and the Greens taking the poll with 22 votes, compared to Ms. Sale's 15. Mr. Parsa was third with eight and Ms. Yaqubian fourth with six.

Over at St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School, Ms. Sale took the poll for the NDP with 23 votes, followed by Mr. Parsa with 16, Ms. Yaqubian with six and Ms. Duncan and Margarita Barsky of the Ontario Moderate Party tied with one apiece.

Ms. Yaqubian was victorious at ESC Renaissance with 23 votes, followed by a tight race between Ms. Sale and Mr. Parsa with 17 and 16 respectively.