

Now looking forward instead of back, Kathleen Wynne has four years of unfettered government to prove herself

More to the Story

By Ben Bennett

So Kathleen Wynne has made history and Tim Hudak *is* history, As for Andrea Horwath, we have to wait and see.

Overall, the June 2 election result, while a big surprise for many, is good news, I think.

As Ms Wynne deservedly basked in the glory of a Liberal majority, Mr. Hudak promptly fell on his sword. Ms Horwath's seat count remained the same even though she now has zero power and influence in the legislature. What happens when her leadership is reviewed will be of great interest to many, not just NDP members.

At least the Liberals can now get on with the job of running the province instead of watching their backs and apologizing for the past. I suspect this is one of the reasons they were given unfettered control of the good ship Ontario's helm.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the past, and let's not kid ourselves, there were many of the latter, at some point you have to move on.

That being said, this will be no cakewalk, and it likely won't be long before everyone is complaining again. No one likes to take the medicine when the economy is sick and there is going to be a lot of it. So it is a good thing that the government has four years to do all the unpopular things it will have to do.

By the time 2018 rolls around, the Liberals will have been in power for 15 years and whatever bloom may be left on the rose will be undetectable. Unless they get lucky and the economy turns around by itself, the electorate will ready for change.

The reality is that the ups and downs of the global economy and actions taken at the federal level have way more to do with the Ontario bottom line than anything the provincial government does, Given that the opposition parties handed the election to the Liberals, you have to reckon those horseshoes will only stay in place for so long and there will be bad luck coming their way.

With a new Conservative leader setting what will likely be a more moderate tone, the Liberal dynasty will be over. It could have happened this time but the hard right taken by Mr. Hudak pushed all the traditionally middle-of-the-road Ontario voters into Ms Wynne's camp.

With Ms Horwath moving her party to the right as well, the Liberals benefited from an influx of disaffected NDP voters, pushing them into majority territory.

Locally, Liz Sandals held her own, keeping her vote share in the low 40s as a percentage. The Tories, Greens and NDP all hovered around the 20% mark.

Newcomer Anthony MacDonald finished a distant second for the Tories. His message was a tough sell in this town and other than the die-hard PC voters, few others were buying. There was also an edge to some of his comments at the main all-candidates' meeting that may have turned off a few potential voters, especially after the bad taste left in almost everyone's mouth after the past federal campaign.

James Gordon had another strong showing and given his huge personal popularity and profile will always be a force to be reckoned with if he chooses to run again in 2018.

The Greens almost tripled their vote, bringing their total back to where they were when Ben Polley ran for the provincial Greens and Mike Nagy ran for the federal Greens a few years back. Mr. Schreiner knew he was in for an uphill battle, but his party faces that wherever he goes, given our voting system. His third-place finish and 10,000-plus votes bring the Greens back in from the wilderness and whoever carries the banner locally four years from now will be starting from a good place.

So once again, Guelph Liberals were blessed with facing three strong contenders rather than one or two. As long as that continues, they are likely a safe bet to keep the city in the red column.

Every time the city votes, 60% of the people indicate they would prefer someone else.

It is very frustrating but it's the system we've got. And with a majority government, it won't change anytime soon.

(Ben Bennett's past columns can be found at [www.bbc.guelph.org](http://www.bbc.guelph.org).)