



BRUCE FITCH/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

Riverview Progressive Conservative candidate Bruce Fitch watches early election results last night with son Lucas and daughter Lauren at his campaign headquarters. Fitch defeated Liberal candidate Ward White and John Robert Falconer of the NDP.

Bruce Fitch maintains Riverview for Tories

■ Popular mayor defeats Liberal candidate Ward White by approximately 500 votes

By CHARLES PERRY
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Popular two-term Riverview Mayor Bruce Fitch emerged as the winner for the Progressive Conservatives last night in his town's riding, defeating Liberal challenger Ward White, a retired school principal and former town councillor.

In a constituency which has sent representatives for three different parties to the legislature in the past dozen years, Fitch was able to hold onto the seat for the Tories, although by a considerably-reduced margin from the party's previous victory.

With all 38 polls reporting, the Riverview mayor garnered 3,794 votes compared to White who tallied 3,287, a margin of about 500 votes.

In 1999, PC candidate Pat Crossman, who died earlier this year after a lengthy battle with cancer, defeated Liberal incumbent Al Kavanaugh by 2,288 votes.

"I feel very relieved right now," Fitch said after being declared elected. "It has been a lot of hard work, not only on my part, but also by my family, friends and a great many volunteers and workers. I appreciate the vote of confidence by the people of Riverview.

"It will be a learning experience, but I am ready to roll up my sleeves and go to work for them. I plan to exceed their expectations," Fitch said. He will be following in "good footsteps," he said, referring to his predecessor Crossman.

He conceded the provincial 1999-

Issues such as education, hospitals and insurance rates were on the forefront, Fitch said. But he laughed in noting that people still brought their municipal concerns to his attention during his door-to-door campaigning, "asking me to pave their street or do something about the mosquitoes."

Noting he has until his swearing-in ceremony before having to resign as mayor, he said he would certainly look into any of the local issues brought up to him during the campaign.

As for the rumours that the Riverview mayor might be cabinet bound, with municipal affairs being the most touted portfolio for him, Fitch declined to speculate on the prospect. "I will leave all that up to the premier," he said.

Meanwhile, he had praise for the campaign waged against him by his nearest opponent. "Ward White fought a very good campaign. I felt his breath on my neck all the way."

In all fairness, "we have no regrets about the campaign," White said last night. "We fought a good fight and we had lots of fun. Bruce and I have been friends for a long time and I am pleased with the effort we put up against him. There is nothing more we could have done that we didn't do," he said.

White said he was not surprised about the strong provincial showing by the Liberals, noting that on the campaign trail, there were lots of indications that the people wanted change.

White anticipated it would be a close election in Riverview, but he took nothing for granted, he said, noting that as his father-in-law once told him: "You will get a lot more votes before an election than after it."

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