

ALBERTA IS MOVING FORWARD

Kevin Taft's Statement On The June 12th Alberta By-Elections

First, I want to congratulate and thank our new Alberta Liberal MLA for Calgary Elbow, Craig Cheffins, his family and volunteers.

This is a significant and substantial victory. We've laid the foundation for more electoral success in Calgary.

And, while we didn't win in Drumheller Stettler last night, I also want to thank our candidate, Tom Dooley and his family and volunteers.

Together, we made tangible progress there too. We didn't even run a candidate in the last election.

This time, we had a stellar representative with an incredible base of family and community support. We won the city of Drumheller, and we won nine polls. We're very proud of the foundation we've laid there.

In all, these were both incredibly well run campaigns and I want to thank everyone who came out to vote, regardless of which candidate you chose to support.

Voters are the heart of democracy. Participation makes it work.

Yesterday, the voters of Calgary Elbow put their trust in Craig Cheffins and the Alberta Liberals. I will not take that trust for granted.

Speaking for all Alberta Liberal Caucus MLA's, we will continue to earn your trust every day as we work for an open, accountable government and a sustainable future for Alberta.

Today, Albertans across the province are looking at the tealeaves and asking - what does this victory mean for the political future of our incredible province?

Well, let me give you my take on it. As I traveled the doorsteps of these constituencies I've come away with a feeling.

There's something going on in this province - something that's much bigger than Calgary Elbow or Drumheller-Stettler - that's much bigger than a referendum on Ed Stelmach's government. It's a feeling that people are beginning to realize that changing governments once in a lifetime just isn't enough.

Let me be more specific. I was there on the doorsteps as Craig Cheffins listened to voters voicing their concerns on environmental sustainability, the preservation of the Weaselhead, Glenmore Park and the Elbow River Valley.

I was there to hear the concerns about the deteriorating state of our roads, schools, and hospitals. And I was there to hear the frustration with Calgary's role in the current government.

And I was there too on the doorsteps with Tom Dooley and his team as we listened to voters in Stettler, Hanna and Drumheller express their concerns about bad highways, inadequate schools, the future of their water supply and their sense this province could be doing so much better.

And at those doorsteps it felt to me people are thinking, after nearly 40 years, that a fresh approach to government is worth considering. They're looking - maybe they haven't made up their mind completely yet - but they are looking.

I think Alberta is at the cusp. As of last night the Klein era is over. Albertans are looking around and saying - hang on - maybe we should reassess where we've been. There is another way.

It's still too early to say what will happen in a year and I'd be breaking a trust with yesterday's vote if I read too much into the tea leaves. But I sense the beginning of movement - perhaps an awakening to the need for a new kind of government.

As leader of the Alberta Liberal Caucus I'll look every Albertan straight in the eye and I'll tell you this group of MLA's and the others who are in Edmonton today - each one of us will work harder than ever to earn your respect and to show you and the voters of Calgary-Elbow that they made the right choice.

Your vote is safe with us. We can lead this province in a direction that captures its incredible opportunity.

Congratulations again to Craig and welcome to the Alberta Liberal Caucus.

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