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## Conservatives hang on to Calgary Centre after by election win

Joan Crockatt squeezes by Liberals' Harvey Locke in close battle

Written by Ian Esplen, Sharday Isaac, Ashley Materi, Conor Mahoney, and Karry Taylor



Archives

After a night of see-saw results, Conservative Joan Crockatt won the Calgary Centre byelection with 36.9 per cent of the vote.

She was followed by Liberal Harvey Locke with 32.7 per cent and the Green Party's Chris Turner with 25.6 per cent. NDP candidate Dan Meades ended up with 3.8 per cent of the vote.

The Conservative Party claimed victory in two of the three federal byelections held on Nov. 26, retaining the party's previously-held seats in Calgary Centre and Durham, Ont. The NDP held onto its seat in Victoria, B.C.

Although none of the ridings had been expected to change parties, the race for the Calgary Centre seat — held by the right since 1968 — garnered national attention when both the Liberal and Green Parties presented a strong challenge with their campaigns.

Interest in the election was high, with Elections Canada reporting lineups at polling stations as early as 7:30 a.m. and throughout the day. Voter turnout was 29.4 per cent with 27,650 of 93,984 registered electors casting their ballots.

## Crockatt criticized, but wins victory

Crockatt, a former *Calgary Herald* editor, was criticized by Mayor Naheed Nenshi and others for not taking part in several public debates and forums held during the campaign.

The criticism, however, was largely forgotten by the time Crockatt's supporters gathered on Monday night at the Barley Mill Pub and Restaurant to watch the election results.

With her victory, Crockatt will now represent the Calgary Centre riding as a Member of Parliament.



Liberal Harvey

Locke (left) congratulates Conservative Joan Crockatt for becoming the MP for Calgary Centre.

A crowd of roughly 200 people packed the normally rustic looking Barley Mill, which was decked out for the night with blue Joan Crockatt signs and Conservative banners. A flat-screen television along the back wall broadcast the election results.

The blue clad supporters grew anxious, as the first polls were counted and Liberal Locke held a slight edge.

#### Photo by Ian Esplen

Thirty minutes later, a sense of calm came

over the crowd as Crockatt began to pull away.

That calmness quickly turned to excitement and loud cheers as it was revealed online that Conservative Erin O'Toole had won the Durham, Ont. riding with more than 50 per cent of the vote.

By 10 p.m., the crowd knew it wasn't a matter of if Crockatt would be going to Ottawa, but more a matter of by how much she would retain the seat for the Conservatives.

Crockatt finally arrived at around 10:30 p.m. and was greeted by a joyous crowd that was chanting her name. The chants continued as the she spoke to her supporters and answered a few questions from the media.

"As I look around this room, I see so many friends and I see so many new faces as well. That has been a hallmark in this campaign," Crockatt said. "I've just been completely overwhelmed by how many people have come out to help us volunteer and help us win this riding tonight."

Adding to this, she thanked each of her competitors for running and giving the voters a selection of choices on the ballot.

Crockatt concluded her speech with a passionate promise to the community to go to work for them as a Member of Parliament.

"There is no question that I will work tirelessly on your behalf in Ottawa, and I will proudly stand up for Calgary Centre, for its diversity, for its economy, for its environment and for our responsible, sustainable energy development," she said.

## Liberals say results send important message

Though the mood grew increasingly sombre as hundreds of Harvey Locke's Liberal supporters gathered and viewed results at The Garage in downtown Calgary, an upbeat Locke addressed his team.

"I've always said that you either have a victory party or wake, so let's have a good wake," Locke conceded while champagne was passed around.

"I have to accept that I lost it, but the Conservatives must realize they are not invisible and the political climate in Calgary is changing."

Locke then headed to Tory headquarters to congratulate Crockatt, speaking briefly with the media about his own campaign.

"About 63 per cent of people in Calgary Centre did not vote Conservative — that tells you something about diversity here," Locke said.

"I think we've shown that the Liberal Party of Canada is competitive to win an election in Calgary."

## Green Party candidate inspired by campaign

For Green Party candidate Chris Turner, whose strong showing in pre-election polls helped the Calgary Centre race gain national attention, a third-place showing was anything but a defeat.

"This is not any kind of loss," Turner told a large group of supporters gathered at the Commonwealth Bar and Stage.

"This was Calgary's moment and we seized it together."

Turner, a 39-year-old author and journalist, decided to run in the byelection after a conversation with federal Green Party leader Elizabeth May.

He said he was initially unsure about his first foray into running for political office. The success of his campaign surprised even himself.

"I was scared to take the kind of risk that you have to take to do this — which means embracing hope," Turner said. "I have to admit that I thought it would be too hard to make a difference, and that we would not be able to get to this point.

"I underestimated Calgary."

Turner said that the attention his campaign received showed that the political landscape in Calgary is changing.



Green

Party candidate Chris Turner said the by-election campaign "inspired" him and helped change Calgary's image across Canada.

Photo by Karry Taylor

"We absolutely proved, even though we were defeated in the polls, that Calgary cannot be taken for granted. This is a city ready for change," Turner said. "We changed the way people think about Calgary across the country.

"I have never felt more inspired by politics in my life."

Turner's optimism about his campaign was shared by many of his volunteers gathered at the Commonwealth.

Campaign volunteer Dale D'Silva said he hopes Turner serves as an example for others who might be encouraged to either volunteer for campaigns or to run for political office.

"It was exciting to see this campaign attract volunteers from across all ages and political affiliations," D'Silva said.

"I hope that carries forward and allows other stellar candidates to come forward and build on this momentum in upcoming elections."

## NDP candidate looks to the future

Although NDP candidate Meades understood that a loss was knocking at his door, it did not stop him from enjoying the success of running as a Calgary Centre candidate for the first time.

Meades, the director of a public policy advocacy organization, had campaigned on a platform heavily focused on social issues. His supporters gathered at the Melrose Café to watch results.

The crowd had its own rhythm — with hoots 'n' hollers — while glasses tapped and fellow New Democrats cheered Meades on.

"I didn't know it until now, but the first time I have ever really had the chance to live my values is when I ran for NDP," Meades said to a crowd of supporters.

"This is the party that represents the core values of Canadians."



NDP candidate Dan Meades thanks his supporters on election night.

Photo by Sharday Isaac

With the byelection for the Calgary Centre seat among the tightest federal races in nearly four decades, Meades believes his fourth-place showing "does not limit the potential of the NDP in Calgary.

"We got caught in a bit of a vote squeeze in this election," Meades said.

"Byelections are funny thing — anything can happen."

Meades said his volunteers, friends and supporters continue to "humble" him and that the NDP will celebrate a job "well done."

"We celebrate what we know happens in 2015 when we take over this country," Meades said.

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