

# LONDON WEST BY-ELECTION IS THURSDAY, AUGUST 1, 2013



By London lawyer **Edward C. Corrigan**  
SPECIAL TO ALTLONDON



On Thursday August 1, 2013, there will be five by-elections held in Ontario. One is being held in London West and the other by-elections are in Ottawa South, Etobicoke-Lakeshore and Scarborough-Guildwood (both in Toronto) and in Windsor-Tecumseh.

This “mini-election” will give the voters in Ontario a chance to give their opinion on Dalton McGuinty’s Liberal government’s legacy and new Ontario Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne.

“By-elections are unpredictable. They’re tough for government,” Premier Kathleen Wynne says. “There’s no way whatever happens in these by-elections that there will be a Conservative or an NDP government so it’s a pretty risk-free way for people in ridings to send a message to government about upping a game,” Wynne adds.

Even if the Liberals lose all five by-elections there will be no immediate political change at Queens Park as the Liberals will still lead a minority government. The Liberals currently hold 48 seats, the Tories 36 and the NDP 18.

The results of the five by-elections, however, will effect the three main party leaders.

Can Progressive Conservative leader Tim Hudak make a breakthrough in urban Toronto? Can Andrea Horwath improve the NDP’s fortunes? Can Kathleen Wynne strengthen Liberal rule in Ontario?



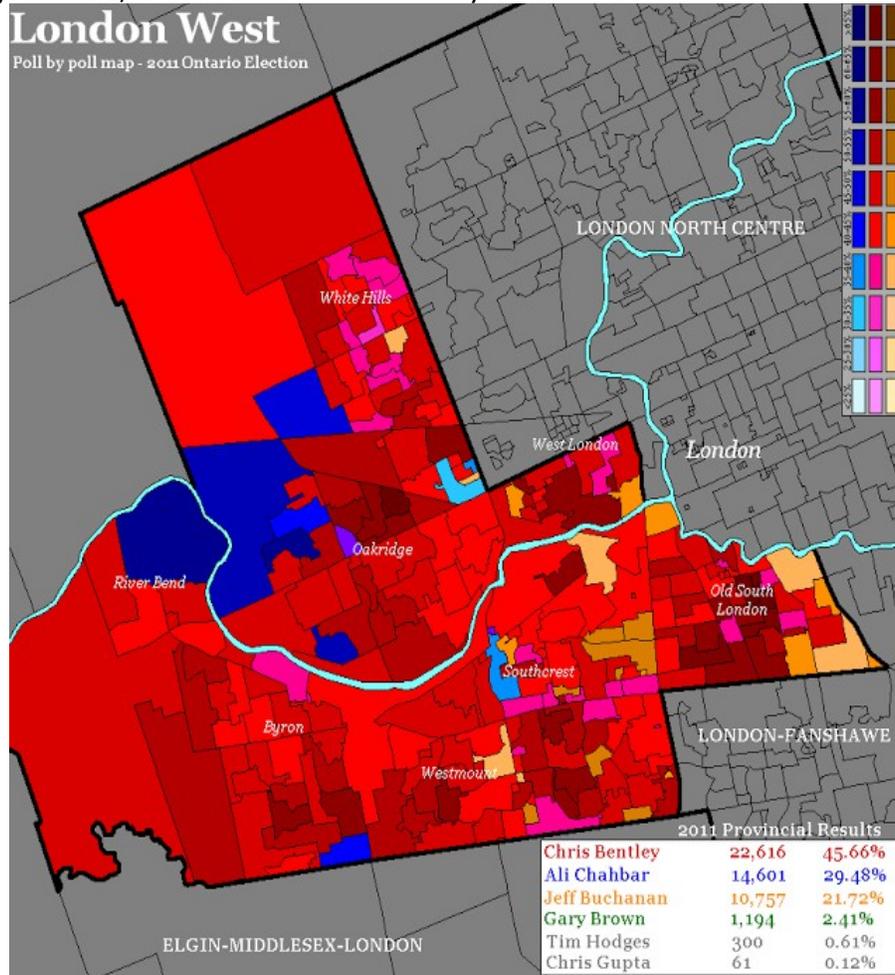
## Six candidates in London West

Six candidates are seeking the support of London West voters.

: The candidates are:

- Gary Brown, Green Party of Ontario
- Ali Chahbar, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario

- Ken Coran, Liberal Party of Ontario
- Al Gretzky, Freedom Party of Ontario
- Peggy Sattler, New Democrat Party (NDP)
- Geoffrey Serbee, Ontario Libertarian Party



## Chahbar leading with 8 days to go, according to polling

A recent **Forum Research** poll showed the NDP were on track to win Windsor-Tecumseh, which had been held by former Ontario treasurer Dwight Duncan.

Additionally, the most recent Forum Research survey also indicated the Tories could take retired Liberal energy minister Chris Bentley's London West riding.

According to Forum Research, London West is shaping up as a lively contest with Conservative lawyer Ali Chahbar ahead with 36 per cent, followed by the NDP's Peggy Sattler, a Thames Valley District School Board trustee, at 29 per cent.

Liberal Ken Coran — the former president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation recruited as a star candidate — was a disappointing third with 24 per cent and the Greens' Gary Brown was at eight per cent.

The poll surveyed 471 people in London West and results are considered accurate to within five percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

London West has been held by the Liberal since 2003 when Liberal Chris Bentley defeated Conservative incumbent Bob Wood 25,581 to 15,463 votes. Bentley won with 51.5 per cent

of the vote. The popular Bentley easily won re-election in the 2007 and 2011 Ontario General Elections.

In 2011, Bentley beat current Progressive Conservative candidate Ali Chahbar with Bentley winning 22,610 or 45.65 per cent of the vote to 14,603 votes or 29.49 per cent of the vote. Chahbar did, however, increase the Conservative vote by over 5 per cent.

## **Gary Brown, Green Party**



Green Party candidate **Gary Brown** is very active with environmental and community groups in the City of London. He serves as a board member on the Old South Community Organization. Gary has also run twice for provincial office in London West. In the 2007 Ontario General Election Brown won an impressive 5,184 votes or 10.47 per cent of the total vote in London-West.

Brown holds a HBSC from the University of Guelph in Biochemistry and Biotechnology, as well as a diploma in Science Lab Technology from Fanshawe College. Professionally, Gary has worked in federal, municipal and commercial labs performing environmental analysis and for the last several years, has worked as a technical service and sales rep in the IT sector.

Brown has an impressive command of the issues and is a strong public speaker. He would make an excellent representative but is a long shot to win the London West by-election.

## **Ali Chahbar, PCs**



Progressive Conservative **Ali Chahbar** is running for the second time as a candidate in London West. He is the son of long time former City Councilor Ab Chahbar. Ali was born and raised in London, Ontario. He attended the University of Western Ontario where he completed an Honors degree in Political Science. Ali obtained his Bachelor of Law degree from the University of Windsor and now practices law in London.

Ali has been active in London's political community for more than 15 years, having participated in varying capacities for campaigns at the municipal, provincial and federal levels of government. He previously served on the Board of Directors of the London North Centre PC Association and currently sits on the Board of Directors of the London West PC Association.

Ali is actively involved in the London community. He serves on the Board of Directors for the Boys and Girls Club of London as well as Board of Directors for the London Elgin Middlesex Crimestoppers Association. He has taught part-time as an instructor at Fanshawe College. Ali also is a supporter of local charitable organizations, including the London-Elgin-Middlesex Crime Stoppers Jail-A-Thon, the Sunshine Foundation Charity Golf Tournament and the London United Way Stair Climb.

## **Ken Coran, Liberals**



Liberal candidate **Ken Coran** has lived in London West for nearly 40 years. For the past five years, Ken served as President of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF) representing 61,000 teachers and

educational support staff. He is a former school teacher and department head with the Thames Valley School Board. Ken has also served as a Vice President for the Ontario Federation of Labour.

Coran was a strong critic of the provincial Liberal's education policy when he led the OSSTF. The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation's District 11, which covers Thames Valley, has endorsed Coran. The announcement comes as the union representing elementary school teachers threw its support behind Coran's NDP rival and School Board Trustee Peggy Sattler.

Some have criticized Coran for running for the Liberals and betraying his Union ideals. Others have applauded Coran as an individual who can work with others and negotiate deals. He has the experience and policy background and experience to make a good provincial representative.

## **Al Gretzky, Freedom Party**



Freedom Party candidate **Al Gretzky** has one of the most recognizable names in Canada. His nephew is hockey legend Wayne Gretzky.

Al previously has run as a Federal Conservative candidate and finished second, 1,329 votes behind incumbent Liberal Sue Barnes in the 2006 Federal Election. Al has been a resident of Byron and London West for the last 25 years. He is active in the community, giving his time in support of such causes as the Thames Valley Children's Centre, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the Canada Games, and the Palace Theatre.

Al Gretzky did not participate in the Rogers TV-London televised debate recorded on July 17. Gretzky also did not show up for the only public all-candidates' meeting to date held at Oakridge Presbyterian Church on Oxford St. West on July 18.

Reportedly, he had a "prior family commitment." Robert Metz, president of the Freedom Party, stood-in for Gretzky at the live debate on July 18.

## **Peggy Sattler, NDP**



NDPer **Peggy Sattler** is the only candidate running that has public elected experience. She has served as a School Trustee for the Thames Valley District School Board, for 13 years including a term as Board Chair. She reportedly, "balanced a \$660 million budget during her term as Chair."

She is also Director of Policy at a local research firm where she is leading a project to connect employers with job seekers in London.

Sattler is a strong public speaker and has a good grasp of the issues. Many believe she would make a good provincial representative for London West in

Queens Park.

## **Geoffrey Serbee, Libertarians**

Libertarian **Geoffrey Serbee** is 24 years old and works in the software development field. He is also serves on the board of his housing co-operative. This is Serbee's first run for public office.

The Libertarian Party will not be a serious factor in the race and will be vying for the same vote as the Freedom Party.

Together, however, these two right-wing parties may take enough votes away from the Progressive Conservative candidate Ali Chahbar to affect the by-election outcome.

## **By-election issues**

Jobs, health care and education are the big issues. Also in play are the Liberals' green energy policies and a series of government scandals, including the \$585 million it spent to cancel and move two unpopular, natural gas-fired power plants in Liberal ridings in the Toronto area before the last election.

It was London West's last MPP — former energy minister Chris Bentley — who bore the brunt of the fallout in the legislature, then announced he was quitting.

While the Liberals have been pounded over the gas-plants cancellations the other parties were campaigning to do the same. The Liberals simply agreed with the Progressive Conservative and NDP positions on this issue. The closure and money is now being used as a partisan political football.

All candidates and party leaders have been talking about the importance of jobs in London and they are all striving for the best solution. Their solutions all sound pretty much the same.

## **Dirty Tricks?**

Local issues include: Peggy Sattler's campaign team is demanding a government regulator step in after voters complained an automated phone poll listed the London West hopeful as a candidate for the wrong party.

The "Robocall Poll" incorrectly listed Sattler as the Green Party nominee instead of representing the New Democrats. This tactic is similar to the vote suppression tactics that Federal Conservatives were accused of using in the last Federal Election.

This confusion is the latest in a string of identity issues during campaign season.

Liberal candidate Ken Coran previously had ties to the NDP before he secured the Liberal nomination. A photo has also emerged of Progressive Conservative candidate Ali Chahbar at a Federal Liberal nomination supporting a Liberal candidate and former Federal Conservative candidate Al Gretzky is now running for the Freedom Party.

## **ADVANCE VOTING**

Voters of London West can cast their ballots anytime during office hours by presenting a photo ID and filling in a Special Ballot Request at the Returning Office located at 611 Wonderland Road North (just south of Oxford Street, east side of Wonderland, behind the Sears Outlet store).

Advance polls will be open daily from Saturday July 20 to Friday July 26, 2013. For locations of the Advanced Polling Stations please visit [Elections Ontario](#).

This riding will be a close race between the three main political parties.

Peggy Sadler has a proven track record as a 13-year School Board Trustee. Ken Coran has a

strong political and policy background as former head of OSSTF and a proven track record as a consensus builder between teachers and the Ontario government.

Ali Chahbar, although a relative newcomer to politics, is an articulate speaker and shows a strong grasp of the issues. Gary Brown is also a very strong candidate with an excellent understanding of the issues but he is a long shot.

Al Gretzky has the benefit of having wide name recognition but is unlikely to make a breakthrough for the London-based Freedom Party.

It is up to the voters of London West provincial riding to decide who will represent them in the Ontario legislature. So vote on Thursday August 1, 2013 or at one of the advance polls. If you do not vote then someone else will decide who represents you at Queens Park.

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