

Search Articles:

News & Views

NEWS

Email this

Life & Style

Conservative discontent brews in Calgary

Music

'It's time they get sent off for four, maybe eight years,' says lifelong Tory

Arts

Published February 14, 2008 by [Jeremy Klaszus](#) in [News](#)

Movies

Movie Listings

Like many Albertans, Ron Wood has voted for conservative parties — both federally and provincially — his entire life. Wood, 65, has also been a financial supporter of the Alberta Conservatives, and spent many years working as a strategist and press adviser for the federal Reform, Alliance and Conservative parties. "I even voted in the leadership convention that selected [Alberta Conservative leader Ed] Stelmach," he says.



Jeremy Klaszus

Ron Wood, Preston Manning's former press secretary, plans to vote for Calgary-North Hill Liberal candidate Pat Murray

Given these facts, it's a bit surprising to pull up to his home in North Haven and see a giant red Alberta Liberal sign planted between two spruce trees in his front yard. "That swooshing sound you just heard was a lot of people taking me off their Christmas card lists," he jokes. "But I don't care. Alberta's too important." On March 3, Wood says he'll break his decades-long Progressive Conservative voting streak and vote Liberal — even though he's still a "staunch, unwavering federal Conservative."

Wood believes the Alberta Conservatives need a few years "in the wilderness" after 37 years of one-party rule. "I just think they're not progressive [and] they're not conservative," says Wood. "I don't know what they are, and I don't think they know what they are. So I think it's time they get sent off for four, maybe eight years." Wood says he's also been impressed with the Liberal campaign so far. "I like some of the stuff that [Liberal leader] Kevin Taft is tossing out," he says. "I think [the Liberals] are pretty middle-of-the-road."

For Pat Murray, the Liberal candidate in Wood's riding of

Dickens Pub
 1 BLOCK SOUTH OF TRAIN STATION UNDER CORNER OF 9TH & 9TH
MON-COMEDY MONDAY NIGHT
 STAND-UP COMEDY AT ITS BEST
 SHOW STARTS @ 8:00PM NO COVER CHARGE
TUES-BANDWARS
 LOCAL BANDS COMPETE FOR MAJOR PRIZES
 CALL ROLI TO ENTER @ 209-2413
 SHOW STARTS @ 9:00PM
WED-WING NIGHT • 25 CENTS WINGS • 4-11PM
THURS-WING NIGHT • 25 CENTS • 4-11PM
FRJ & SAT-LIVE BANDS
 THE BEST LIVE BANDS ON THE CIRCUIT.
 DRINK SPECIALS, SHOOTER SPECIALS
LIVE AT DICKENS FEB 15 & 16
NO SUCH RULES
 (FROM LETHBRIDGE)
 #1000-9TH AVE SW • 233.7550

THE SUCCESS WORKSHOPS™
 WITH JACK CANFIELD

Featured teacher in The Secret

Coming to Telus Convention Centre

6 full hours with Jack Canfield

Feb 19, 2008

Click this ad for more information and tickets

CONNECT TO

MOVIE



Volume 13 No. 9
 February 7, 2008
 Classifieds
 Advertising
 Contests

Calgary-North Hill, the endorsement of Preston Manning's former press secretary is "like Christmas in February." Murray, a small business owner who ran in the riding in 2004 and lost to Conservative Richard Magnus by over 1,100 votes, says he's encountering more people like Wood who are willing to shift their loyalties from the Progressive Conservatives on March 3. "It's just a whole different thing in the air," Murray, 44, says. "People are much more receptive.... People will look harder or scratch a little deeper towards the candidate, towards the policies and the platform, whereas before it was a lot of the 'I'm a lifelong conservative and I'm going to vote Conservative till my last breath.'"

Voter discontent with the Conservatives was already evident in the 2004 election, when most voting Albertans cast a ballot for a party other than the Conservatives. (The Conservatives took 46.8 per cent of the vote, while the Liberals took 29.4 per cent. The NDP got 10.2 per cent, and the Alberta Alliance took 8.7 per cent.) Even though most voting Albertans voted against the Conservatives, the party still won a majority thanks to the first-past-the-post election system. In that election, and in the Calgary-Elbow byelection of 2007, many Conservatives stayed home on voting day.

The stay-at-home voters cost the Conservatives the Calgary-Elbow seat. (Liberal Craig Cheffins won with 4,823 votes — 115 votes less than the Liberal candidate received in 2004. However, the Conservative vote in the riding plummeted by almost 3,000 votes between 2004 and 2007). University of Calgary political scientist Doreen Barrie says that instead of staying home again, many of these disaffected Conservatives will likely make up their minds and vote on March 3. "In the past, the election was hardly competitive," says Barrie. "So if you stayed home, the government wasn't going to lose. But things have changed, I think — particularly in Calgary. I think there's going to be much more competition. And there's quite a lot of criticism of Stelmach in Calgary."

Kyle Fawcett, a former public school board trustee and the Conservative candidate in Calgary-North Hill, says he's not worried about Wood's endorsement of Murray. "I think the impact has been very minimal," says Fawcett, 28. "To be honest, no one even knows who he is." Fawcett acknowledges that in past elections disaffected Conservatives have stayed home on voting day, but he says he's giving these voters in North Hill a reason to cast a ballot. "We're trying to offer them an alternative — someone new," says Fawcett. "I'm a fresh face. I wasn't there for

the last 15 years, but I'm here to offer a vision for the next 15. We're hoping that motivates people to get out and vote on election day."

NEWS IN THIS ISSUE

All shall be revealed — after election day

Stelmach Tories accused of withholding public information

by Angela Brunschot

Calgary-Currie: Battle of the Broadcasters

by Jeremy Klaszus

Fire and brimstone on the campaign trail

by Jeremy Klaszus

Government picks Tory-friendly returning officers

by Jeremy Klaszus

Tory disability plan backfires

by Jeremy Klaszus

'Scud stud' takes aim at Hollywood

Tory candidate's footage used in Charlie Wilson's War without credit

by Jeremy Klaszus

[More News...](#)

JEREMY KLASZUS IN THIS ISSUE

Calgary-Currie: Battle of the Broadcasters

in News

Fire and brimstone on the campaign trail

in News

Government picks Tory-friendly returning officers

in News

Tory disability plan backfires

in News

'Scud stud' takes aim at Hollywood

Tory candidate's footage used in Charlie Wilson's War without credit

in News

[More by Jeremy Klaszus...](#)