



Sep. 30, 2003. 01:00 AM

## NDP will beat Tories, Hampton says

Predicts victory in at least 30 ridings

Sees role as leader of the opposition

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STAFF REPORTER

HAMILTON—The New Democratic Party will win more seats than the Conservatives in the provincial election, party leader Howard Hampton has predicted.

The NDP leader acknowledged the party is focusing on 30 ridings in the province where it thinks it has the best chance of winning.

"We will beat the Conservatives Thursday night; I have no doubt about that," Hampton told supporters in Hamilton yesterday.

Later in Toronto, he returned to the theme at a rally for party workers held in a Bloor St. W. coffee shop:

"You may well see Howard Hampton as leader of the opposition; you may well see something better than that," he said.

When the Legislature was dissolved Sept. 2, the Tories held 56 seats, the Liberals had 36, and the NDP held nine. There was also one independent and one vacant seat.

Hampton, 51, zeroed in on polls released over the weekend showing the Liberals clearly in the lead. An EKOS poll conducted for the Star shows the Liberals with nearly 48 per cent support, the Tories with 31 per cent and the NDP with 17 per cent.

The strong Liberal showing means it's safe for voters who want to throw out the Tories to support the NDP without fear of fragmenting the anti-Tory vote, he said. Hampton has battled the spectre of such strategic voting from the opening days of the campaign.

"We don't have to vote out of fear any more — fear the Conservatives might get elected," Hampton said. "Fear is something we can put behind us ... People can vote for what they believe in now."

Hampton claimed the Liberals peaked in the polls 10 days ago, and have run out of "emotional energy" while the New Democrats are gaining momentum.

"Our polling shows that in the 30 ridings we follow closely around the province, our support is going up every day," Hampton told party workers.

"In the 30 ridings where we have lots of NDP activism, our polls show the NDP could win almost all these ridings," he said.

The NDP is gaining support not only in Hamilton, but in former Tory strongholds such as Peterborough, Lindsay, and Whitby, he said.

Hampton made a strong pitch for electing a minority government in a speech to party workers at NDP candidate Sid Ryan's campaign office in Oshawa last night. Ryan stepped down as president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees Ontario to run for the NDP.

"The experience over the last eight years has been that huge majority governments don't listen to the people," Hampton said. "I believe people are weighing that. People don't want that kind of lopsided majority."

Hampton got a boost from former federal NDP leader Ed Broadbent, who represented the area as an MP and predicted the NDP will retake the Oshawa riding from the Conservatives.

Earlier, Hampton returned to his attacks on the Liberals, saying they'd be ineffective in dealing with a federal Liberal government in Ottawa.

"The Liberals take Ontario for granted, because they know they can do nothing in this province and still win 102 federal seats," he said.

"So if you add another 50 provincial seats, you're not going to make a difference. They'll just take us for granted more than ever."

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