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Mahoney takes nomination in easy first-ballot victory

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The Mississauga West provincial Liberal riding association crowned its king Monday night and Steve Mahoney will reign as the riding's Grit candidate in the next provincial election.

Mahoney, 39, Ward 8 city councillor, defeated three longshot hopefuls in the race for the Liberal nomination in the new riding.

The Erin Mills resident beat out Dhalman Singh Gosal, Haider Khan, and Steve Nezic at a nomination meeting held at Erin Mills Secondary School.

"From here . . . I know I can count on you to help me win this election," a jubilant Mahoney told about 800 of the party faithful after locking up the first-ballot victory.

Final results showed 1,060 ballots were cast. Mahoney grabbed 610 votes while Gosal, Khan, and Nezic took 450 among them.

Although a provincial election has not been called yet, Mahoney said he

is gearing up for a late June or early July vote.

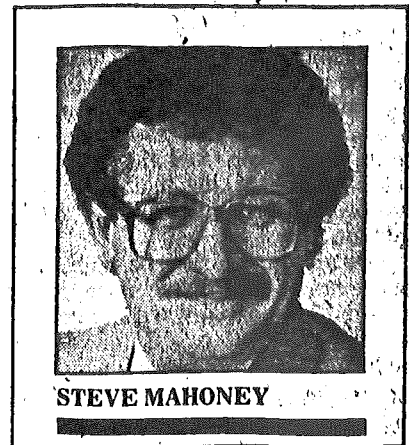
And confident of winning a seat at Queen's Park, he told the audience he plans "to kick butt and kick the Tories right the hell out of Mississauga West."

"I do not represent a community of interests," he said, "I represent the interests of the community, and I think there's a hell of a difference."

Later, Mahoney told the News he expects a close fight between himself and Darwin Kealey, the riding's Progressive Conservative candidate. New Democrat Paul Simon likely won't be much of a factor in the race, he maintained.

"The NDP is a factor only in the sense that they'll take some votes away from us. I can't see them taking any votes away from the Tories."

In his pre-election speech, Mahoney said as a city and Peel Region councillor, he has the experience required to serve in the provincial Legislature. But he told the crowd that community support is an integral part of his campaign.



STEVE MAHONEY

"The buzzword in this business is 'we' not 'I,'" he said.

Among other issues, Mahoney said he will be campaigning for better transportation in the area, more affordable housing, better day-care service, education improvements, and a tougher judicial system. "so they're not releasing convicted murderers and rapists out on weekend passes."