

NEWS

▼ KELOWNA BYELECTION

Young candidate tapped into youth support

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Some 10 hours into door knocking last Saturday, Okanagan College student K.J. Hanson could taste his first political victory.

And he wasn't even running in the byelection he campaigned to win.

As the City of Kelowna's 2009 Young Male Citizen of the Year, Hanson was exercising his typically exemplary commitment to the cause to see a former Young Male Citizen of the Year, Kevin Craig, become Kelowna's youngest ever city councillor—and he got a real crash course in municipal politics in the process.

"There was actually quite a few people who didn't even know there was an election happening," Hanson said in interview after the marathon effort.

While he's not particularly politically motivated himself, watching Craig perform in the general election last year inspired him to join a Facebook group of supporters Craig was building.

Then this fall, after city councillor Brian Given passed away, he noticed Craig was in need



BARRY GERDING/CAPITAL NEWS

OKANAGAN COLLEGE student K.J. Hanson knocked on doors to help the civic election campaign effort for his candidate of preference, Kevin Craig.

of some ground support and attended a campaign meeting.

Little did he know he would become part of the critical inner circle who helped clinch the seat for the young candidate as they whittled down the

final hours of the election.

Though the official election results will not be read until Wednesday afternoon in council chambers, unofficial results show Craig won by just over 400 votes, earned almost exclusively

in the Anne McClymont Elementary School neighbourhood where Hanson and Craig spent Saturday day campaigning.

Watching the results pour in from polling stations around the city, the group of enthusias-

tic young supporters who had become interested in politics through Craig's campaign were able to literally witness the returns on their labour when the Anne McClymont numbers arrived.

Seated in the city council chamber Monday afternoon with their candidate, the young people added a unique twist to a council meeting centered almost exclusively on issues facing their generation.

From the need to reduce carbon emissions to the contributions of the Central Okanagan Boys and Girls Club, the meeting took a rather poignant turn toward the issues this generation faces as they shape the face of Kelowna in years to come.

Seated in the front row was a group of Grade 11 and 12 students involved in one of the same programs that helped bolster Craig's political aspirations while attending Okanagan Mission Secondary School.

Involved in Mayor Sharon Shepherd's youth forums, the students were there to make a presentation to council on sustainability, their vision and demands for the future.

Meanwhile, between

Byelection vote results

Kevin Craig became Kelowna's new city councillor after receiving 2,863 votes in the 2009 byelection held last Saturday.

The unofficial results at the close of voting show that 10,146 votes were cast in this byelection.

The unofficial vote totals for the other candidates were Todd Sanderson (2,427), Vern Nielsen (1,665), Mary-Ann Graham (1,004), Ernie Patterson (527), Mark Thompson (406), Matthew Reed (280), Valerie Hallford (270), Rocky Mix (270), Michael Loewen (172), Dennis William Rojern (116), Clay Kessler (53), Kim Ouellette (45), Andy Utivugt (30) and James Murphy (18).



Kevin Craig

juggling telephone calls and interviews from the gallery, Craig appeared poised and confident, though he told camera crews outside his win, at just 19 years old, comes with a lot of pressure and high expectations.

With hopes of one-day becoming prime minister and feelers in every level of politics, Craig has already brushed elbows, in a roundabout way, with the only other municipal political candidate whose ever won a seat at this young age.

The Nanaimo politician was one year younger than Craig when he achieved his goal of getting on council at 18 years of age. This made Terry Beech the youngest ever municipal politician in B.C.

Last September, Craig was attending a confer-

ence in Ottawa when he got chatting with another delegate in a cab and discovered he was Beech's twin brother.

The young man immediately started calculating his age and how old he would be when he won to see if he could strip his brother's title.

While that feat will have to wait for another inspiring young person, it appears Craig will at the very least be carrying the hopes of a whole new generation to city hall when he takes his council seat in two weeks.

Sunday afternoon he told the *Capital News* he received plenty of text messages from first time voters telling him they had taken the time out to send a vote his way and he's glad to have had such an impact.

However, he was equally proud of winning over a 90-year-old woman who told him she would rally more supporters to help him win the seat.

Craig will be sworn into office Dec. 14 in time to take part in the marathon budget negotiations which will layout the economic outlook for the City of Kelowna in the coming year.

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