

Hassen optimistic despite defeat in Moose Jaw North

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Derek Hassen shakes hands with supporters. Photo by Nathan Liewicki.

by Nathan Liewicki

In the 2007 Saskatchewan provincial election, the riding of Moose Jaw North was decided by only 33 votes in favour of the Saskatchewan Party. However, on Monday night, in what was expected to be another tight race, New Democratic Party hopeful Derek Hassen was handily defeated by incumbent Warren Michelson.

Hassen, a first-time candidate, only managed to garner 36 per cent of the votes and lost to Michelson by 1,746 votes. He was one of 40 NDP MLA hopefuls who lost in what was a landslide election victory for Brad Wall and the Sask. Party. Among the 11 seats lost by the NDP, the biggest was leader Dwain Lingenfelter's. He fell to Russ Marchuk in the Regina Douglas Park riding and later resigned as party leader.

Surrounded by about 50 volunteers and supporters, Hassen entered the Union Centre to a warm applause, but the look on his face was one of dejection. Still, he managed to form a smile while thanking everyone for coming out.

Hassen believed he had the best support team around him. And although he said it's tough to accept defeat, he isn't entirely disappointed by the result.

"For myself, I return to a job I love. I return to being a principal at a wonderful school with wonderful students. I'm in an unenviable situation. So it's not a disappointment personally. I'm a competitive guy. I wasn't in this to lose. I wanted to win. I expected to win," Hassen said after he arrived at Moose Jaw's NDP party headquarters.

When asked if he would think about running again in 2015, Hassen said he would absolutely love to take up the torch for the NDP in Moose Jaw North.

"As far as I'm concerned, I'm part of this team. I want to be part of this team moving forward, so we need to talk internally to see if I'm that person, and if so then let's start planning for four years down the road," Hassen said.

Supporter and former NDP MLA candidate Bill Sauter said he would like to see the 37-year-old Hassen run in the next provincial election.

"I think he's a fantastic individual. He's very educated and know all the ins and outs about what's going on. He weighs both the pros and the cons and sees both sides of the situation," said Sauter. "I think he'd be a great future if he managed to become an MLA."