

Tommy Sheppard: “I think it’s going to be one of our worst election results in a long time”

The SNP is set to suffer its worst electoral night in quite some time, says the SNP’s Tommy Sheppard.

Mr. Sheppard, who represented Edinburgh East since the 2015 SNP landslide in Scotland and was running for the new Edinburgh East and Musselburgh constituency, foresees that Labour will make huge gains at the SNP’s expense; including, potentially, his own expense.

Mr. Sheppard said: “Overall, it’s not looking like a vintage night for the SNP. I think it’s going to be one of our worst election results in a long time. We’re not immune to the tide that is washing over the country. It is pretty close apparently, but you know, I’m not conceding anything yet. But I won’t be surprised if we don’t keep this.”

A loss for the SNP candidate would be a stark contrast to the 2019 election, where Mr Sheppard won his seat with a majority of over 10,000 votes.

When I asked Mr Sheppard why he thinks the vote this time is projected to be so close, he told me that it was down to two factors: Labour’s messaging and voter apathy.

He said: “An awful lot of people were seduced by the Labour message, that you can protest against The Tories all you like, but you can only replace them with a Labour government. It is

a seductive message and given the entire sort of discussion about this election has been seen through the prism of Keir Starmer versus Rishi Sunak and people aren't immune to that, they're bombarded with that in the media. That's the story of the election, that's what they respond to and I think a lot of them have decided, "well getting rid of The Tories is the priority. Whilst I tried to argue with them that I can do that too, they went with the rising tide of the Labour Party.

"I think the other one is that a significant – not sure how big yet – but a number of people who voted for me in the past have chosen to stay at home and not vote for this time and I think they're sending the party a message [that] they're not happy with us. Some people have lost trust and confidence and we need to win that back."

The SNP candidate explains the reasons for this anger toward his party, including how they've governed in Scotland.

He said: "A whole lot of reasons to do with performance in government, to do with our internal divisions and discussions, the way we've conducted ourselves... a variety of reasons, to be honest, some of are even contradictory factors. But for whatever reason, a significant number – maybe 5 or 10%, have just decided they're going to sit this one out and those two factors combined have flipped the balance from you."

And regarding Labour's messaging that only they can stop the Tories; was there any validity to that?

Mr. Sheppard said: "Well, my message was that I've been engaged in every general election since 1979, in one way or another, and I have never known the difference between Labour and Conservative to be so little. If you think about the overall economic framework, on Brexit, on nuclear weapons or nuclear power, on not taxing millionaires, on keeping tax on benefits... I mean, really they agree on an awful lot.

"The only thing you could say about the benefits of a Labour

government are that, hopefully, it would be easier to push a Labour government to do the right thing rather than a Tory gun. The problem is, you need people in the House of Commons pushing them rather than just stacking up a majority for Keir Starmer. We'll need to see when the night pans out how many people are in the new House of Commons who we're going to do that."

The results of all five Edinburgh constituencies is due to be announced around 4.30am.