

WHERE THE CANDIDATES STAND ON THE ISSUES

We asked the four candidates running for the Halton-Burlington MPP's seat six questions on some of the issues of interest to voters. Here are their answers:

LIBERAL



DON KNIGHT

P C



PETE POMEROY

NDP



DOUG HAMILTON

TRILLIUM PARTY



NEIL SIVERTSON

1. All three parties have come out in favor of separate school funding. In light of some opposition to this move, how can this transition be made to appease teachers, parents and taxpayers?

1. Justifiably there has been some concern on the part of those directly and even indirectly affected by the decision to proceed with the extension of separate school funding. These concerns have surfaced because the Progressive Conservatives announced that implementation was to proceed without the proper public debate needed to resolve those concerns. Indeed the Government's inept handling has led to sectarian divisiveness which none of us want. Implementation must proceed, we must be tolerant and two things must occur. There has to be a full debate in the legislature prior to September and the question must be taken to the Court of Appeal under the Constitution Questions Act. Meanwhile implementation must proceed and if as a result of the court's decision changes must be made then the appropriate laws can be passed.

1. The first step in the transition is for the Government of Ontario to present legislation and regulations to the Legislature for debate and to the affected parties for input. The legislation should address the following concerns: a) how the funding of the two systems will take place; b) how the transfer of teachers from one system to another will take place; c) how the transfer of students will take place; d) how the transfer of property will take place; e) In certain geographical locations, where will the public school students take their studies? f) Will funding be given to any system that discriminates on the basis of sex, religion, origin, etc?

1. Initially, we must recognize that the current move concerning the funding of separate schools involves the extension of aid through to Grade 13. Separate schools are already fully or partially funded to Grade 10. Aid stopped at Grade 10 because of an historical accident since separate schools were guaranteed in 1867 by the British North America Act. Neither school system went to Grade 13 in those days. The New Democrats have supported the extension of aid for some time because of the constitutional protection given to Roman Catholic schools. It simply makes no sense to stop provincial assistance at Grade 10. The Conservative government failed to put into place proper mechanisms for consultation with all affected parties before implementing the change. Rather than immediately moving to make the change by the next school year, we should have allowed for a significantly longer period of consultation. Furthermore, the province must enshrine in law the right of teachers in the existing public secondary schools to shift to the separate school system with the rights of security and salary which they now enjoy.

1. We favor private school funding if and only if these two conditions are met. First off, the quality of public schools must not deteriorate by funding private schools. If existing programs offered in the public school system are dropped to compensate for the increased flow of public funds into private schools, then we must oppose this proposal. Secondly, if the private schools are to receive public financing they should be forced to use these funds under strict provincial guidelines. These funds should be offered to all schools not affiliated with the public school system, regardless of the moral and religious teachings practised by these private institutions. The funding each individual school receives should bear accordance to its respective numerical enrolment.

2. Milton and Burlington are candidate locations for toxic waste and landfill sites respectively. There is the obvious "not in my backyard" opposition. Would you support the most environmentally sound site, or a location with the least public opposition?

2. The landfill site which has been selected in Burlington is for solid waste only and has been selected after an exhaustive process as required under the Environmental Assessment Act. It is for garbage generated in Halton Region. In light of the technical evidence presented it would be hard to confirm another site as better. On the other hand the site selection process which has identified 3 of the 8 sites for toxic waste disposal facilities for the entire province as being in Milton is wrong. Because the selection is not being conducted under the Environmental Assessment Act we run the risk of the site selection criteria being heavily weighted in favour of the proximity to waste generation. In both cases I support the selection on the basis of appropriate scientific data. In the case of toxic waste however all sites must be weighed heavily as to their effect on the "quality of life" in the surrounding area.

2. I would support the most environmentally sound sites and technologies. I am opposed to a toxic waste site in Milton because it is close to populated areas. I believe the toxic waste treatment proposals should be reviewed by an Environmental Assessment Hearing, and the full process applied to the Ontario Waste Management Corporation. I believe the appropriate method of treatment for toxic waste should be reviewed first by a hearing under the Environmental Assessment Act to assure that the safest treatment is adopted. I believe the site hearings should stop immediately and the entire process return to establishing the safest method of treatment, e.g., treatment of toxic chemicals at source. No site should be pre-determined as acceptable until this question is resolved.

2. Dealing with the problem of toxic wastes should start initially with a serious examination of whether or not a mega project of the kind envisioned by the Ontario Waste Management Corporation is even desirable. The recent spill of highly toxic PCB's in northwestern Ontario once again point to the obvious dangers of transporting dangerous wastes over long distances by road and rail. The establishment of a single site anywhere in Ontario would increase the potential for dangerous accidents which could do irreparable damage to our environment. Further, a serious accident at a single, huge facility would obviously have much more serious effects than anything we could not contemplate. New Democrats believe that much more serious efforts should be made to reduce waste at the source, to change industrial processes as to minimize the production of toxic wastes and to research disposal methods which could be directly tied to the sites which produce the waste. Very simply, environmental assessment and effects on people are the same thing.

2. We believe that the mishandling of toxic materials will produce an environment in the near future which is beyond repair. If society's ongoing technical advances are to continue it should not be at the expense of our environment and its preservation. We believe that increased research and developing is needed immediately to provide an ultimate solution to our waste disposal problems. We should not be satisfied with temporary measures. While this research is ongoing we should store it in the most environmentally sound place. If it happens to be in Halton-Burlington, then so be it. The cost of storing this waste should draw off existing programs, with the government providing generous compensation for those required to relocate.

3. Do you believe job creation programs come before attempting to reduce our provincial deficit?

3. There is no greater or more important challenge confronting our governments today than the issue of how to create jobs. In fact in terms of job creation our economy is stagnant. The Ontario Liberal Party proposes an Employment Tax Credit program for small businesses to create a minimum of 22,000 new jobs. We also propose an increase in expenditure for road improvements and capital funding for universities. These initiatives would create at least 12,000 new jobs. Being recognized cognizant of the fact that these initiatives cost money and so as not to increase the provincial deficit and hopefully to reduce it the Liberal Government would: sell our share of Sunco; sharply curtail use of public opinion polls and advertising; sell off the Tory landbank holdings.

3. It is not a question of either-or. Reduction of the provincial deficit can be realized by more jobs being created by the private sector. As the private sector becomes stronger, the dependency upon government-sponsored jobs will diminish. That is what Enterprise Ontario is all about. It is about creating more jobs through the private sector by ensuring companies have the latest technologies, by encouraging new investments in small companies - by improving access to private sources of capital, and by providing people with the information they need to make a success of new ventures. The stronger our economy becomes, the faster the deficit can be reduced.

3. In the modern age government has a fundamental responsibility to intervene in the economy in ways which produce jobs. There is a great deal which can be done in Ontario to generate new employment. For example, significant parts of our infrastructure are in decline, from roads to extended care hospitals. In each case the Ontario government should move to commit funds to generate work which will produce jobs. New Democrats have set a target of a reduction of two per cent in the unemployment rate in the first year of an NDP government. This will mean an increase in the Ontario deficit in the short term. However, the increased economic activity which would be created will have the effect of generating growth in several sectors of the economy, including small business, and will have the obvious effect of generating greater tax revenue for Ontario. The Ontario deficit is relatively low, and has been covered without any need for borrowing outside the province. Most of the funds, in fact, come from the pension funds of Ontarians.

3. The government should allocate funds to fledgling industries to be used strictly for research and development. Through technological breakthroughs, new and better production methods will be developed. These new production methods will provide an increased flow of capital in the business society. These businesses must be made to invest their new found profits into job creation, programs relying heavily on these fledgling technologies and shying away from existing stagnant programs. New jobs will be created as a result and eventually the deficit will be reduced by the increased amount of capital available in the system.

4. Party politics is strong in Ontario and, at times, an MPP is called upon to support policy which may not be in the interest of his or her constituents. Would you follow party policy or heed the call of your constituents?

4. An MPP has an obligation to support policies that are in the best interests of his or her constituents and also to strongly lobby within his or her caucus against those policies which are not in the constituent's best interests.

4. On local issues of importance, I would put the interests of my constituents first. If my constituents disagreed on the broader issues of government policy it would be my job as the representative of the people of Halton-Burlington to take those concerns to the government and try to resolve the issue to both parties' satisfaction. As Progressive Conservatives, we are always open to new approaches. We welcome the opinions and suggestions of the general electorate. As your elected representative for the past nine years I have dedicated myself to serving your needs and resolving your concerns. This same representation will continue when I go to work for you at Queen's Park.

4. You are correct in suggesting that the tradition of party politics is very strong in Ontario. In fact, this tradition is very strong in all societies which have a parliamentary system of government modelled on that in Great Britain. Very simply, parliamentary government does not work well unless there are political parties, and unless these parties exercise some discipline over their members. Individual members of the Legislature do not often have a choice on the question of whether or not they vote with their party. The structures in place make that mandatory much of the time. This is a sound approach whenever we are dealing with questions which involve confidence in the government, its tax policies, spending plans and general economic direction. However, I would personally favour the possibility of many more 'free' votes in the Legislature on questions which lie outside these basic areas. When free votes occur, I would strive to represent the opinions of people in Halton-Burlington as faithfully as possible.

4. If elected it shows the people supported myself and my party's view. Thus their support must be justified by my actions. My constituents and their needs must come first. The views I have expressed and you have voted for will not change. Being a regional group, we would not be subjected to pressure from other distant groups acting in the interest of party unity.

5. Do our present abortion laws and procedures need to be revamped?

5. Until the current Federal legislation is changed women in Ontario must have equal access to the best health care allowed under the current legislation.

5. Although this is a federal jurisdiction, I believe in the existing abortion laws. The accessibility issue should be solved so that the law can be applied equally and evenly in all regions of Ontario.

5. No one in this country favours abortion. For sometime Canada has had in place a system which allows accredited hospitals to set up committees for the approval of abortions. On the whole, this approach has met with the approval of most people. While I personally do not favour abortion, I do believe that the question is ultimately one in which a woman has to make a very profound and personal decision in consultation with her physician. As such, the real question here is whether or not we favour the right of individuals to make very personal and profoundly moral choices. New Democrats favour choice as the only fair way of putting in place institutions which serve the needs of people. This question is not one which divides people along the partisan lines of the main political parties. There are opponents of the present system in all the political parties, both pro-choice and pro-life. Our job as people ought to be to find the most acceptable possible consensus which serves women effectively.

5. There is a definite need to revamp existing abortion laws. But the actual abortion laws are not the main concern. The real problem lies in the situations leading up to where the abortion is needed. We propose that birth control be made more accessible and that the public's attitude to teenage pregnancy be more relaxed. If a young person is to be subjected to the anguish of a pregnancy, this pressure should not be accentuated by the feelings of distrust they may experience at home. The decision on abortion should not be directly affected by pressure groups who condemn young people for their so called irresponsible behavior.

6. Why are you the best candidate for the job?

6. As I have campaigned throughout Halton-Burlington in the past three weeks I have been struck by the common thread in the concerns that most people have. In all cases those concerns demonstrate clearly that people want an MPP who can speak out, an MPP who will fight on their behalf, who cannot be told by his party to be quiet. There are different concerns throughout the riding but it is clear whether the concerns are the aggregate industry, toxic waste, jobs, health care or education that people want someone to speak out. I am that person.

6. Through my experience of being a small business man, I understand the requests of the small business community. As a local councillor, mayor and Regional Chairman I understand the issues facing the people of Halton-Burlington. I have consistently demonstrated my dedication to serving their needs. I have demonstrated my commitment to tackling the tough issues and finding the best solutions. I have the proven ability to get the job done. My experience will provide a strong and effective voice at Queen's Park.

6. I decided to seek the NDP nomination in Halton-Burlington because I believe that the time has come for some change in Ontario. The Conservatives have been in power for almost 42 years, and there can be no doubt in anyone's mind that such a long stretch in power by a single party is unhealthy for our province and for the democratic system itself. The refusal of Frank Miller to even debate the other two party leaders speaks to this concern. Such a long time in power breeds arrogance and an attitude which takes the people for granted. I was born and brought up in this area. My family have farmed in Halton County since the 1830s. This is a great community to live in, but there are concerns which need to be addressed if we are not to be buried by toxic wastes, uncontrolled development, destructive expansion onto first quality farm land. I'm a New Democrat because I believe that our government has to put people first. Too often in the past, decisions have been made which helped very limited interest groups and which had terrible effects on the community as a whole. I believe that I can work with all the people of Halton-Burlington to get action in the areas of major concern.

6. We'll let the voters decide on May 2, just exactly who is the best candidate for the job.