

Candidates talk about issues

Profiled next week will be the mayoral candidates plus candidates from Wards 2 and 3

TOWN COUNCILLOR

Ward 1

Follow-up on issues

Repaying Acton people who have been good to him is a major reason why Ken Owen, lifelong resident of Acton, is running for town councillor in Ward 1, he said.



Ken Owen

To him the issues have been established and it would be his job to make certain they are followed up on. Taxation equalization is one of the issues he "would like to be involved in and make sure it goes through," he said.

Water in Acton is another of his priorities. "We have the water supply. I don't see why we don't proceed with it. From what I've heard everything is going in the right direction but at a slow pace," he said.

"In order for Acton to attract suitable industry the taxation issue and the water issue must be resolved," he said.

"Suitable industry means service industry but not manufacturing," he said. He is not supporting an Energy From Waste plant in Acton.

"It better be studied before recommendations are made. That may be just one more industry not projecting a favorable image of the town," he said.

Growth for Acton is important to Mr. Owen, but he favors "limited growth. I would not like to see Acton become a carbon copy of Brampton. I would like enough growth to support the business in Acton, but to keep the town of Acton the town of Acton," he said.

One addition to the town he hopes to see is the arrival of VIA Rail. The process has started and he would like to see it finished, he said.

Building a municipal complex for Halton Hills, housing all departments, is not necessarily the solution to the problem of a town office that's unsuitable, he said. "Maybe it would be better to expand the present site. Trafalgar Road is convenient to a lot of people. It could be enlarged for a lot less money," he said.

"I feel I have a lot of interests in the town. I grew up here, and I want my kids to grow up here. Whether I am the best candidate for the job will be the voters' decision, not mine," he said.

'Personality, experience'

Jim Kinnear is a candidate for town council in Ward 1 who says he deserves the job for two reasons - his experience and personality (his "ability to get jobs finished"). Working with families, schools, social agencies and children as a professional therapist has trained him in what he calls "small politics". His gift is the rapport he develops with people, getting them to air their concerns and putting those concerns into action, he says.



Jim Kinnear

He identifies Ross Knechtel as the man most responsible for Acton's new tax assessment, "but I haven't heard anyone say they're going to pick up the ball and go with it." Following up on this issue is one of his objectives. "I've already spoken with Ross and got some background on the problem he has been working three years on, and I look forward to spending more time with him," he says.

Property standards should be enforced, he says. By doing so not only will Acton "be something to be proud of", but more people will be attracted to settle in Acton, he said.

More residents in Acton would be nice, but not too many is his hope. "A lot of people live here because we like the size of the town. People believe residential expansion is the answer to our problems, but we must look carefully at what it costs," he said. He supports healthy growth and careful growth, he says.

The little problems of the town like why the Acton Library doesn't have a wheelchair ramp are important issues, he said.

He has studied Energy from Waste plants and says, "I support the idea. Some are good and some are dangerous. We need more information and public participation," he said. Financial and environmental impact are two major considerations to be studied, he says.

Mr. Kinnear would like to see the GO Train come to Acton and if not that, then at least partial train service. As long as train service wouldn't mean too much growth, as it did in Milton, he supports it, he says.

The municipal complex is not a priority issue with Mr. Kinnear. He says he would "like some sections of the municipal government in Acton."

Three good councillors

Three good councillors for Ward 1 is the most important issue of the election, said Norm Elliott, town councillor candidate for Ward 1.



Norm Elliott

Many people asked him to run for "the very important position," he said. Those people represent the people of Acton have in his abilities, he said.

Issues of this election may not be as important as the issues of today. "Councillors must handle issues effectively by working together. I want good councillors elected in all wards," he said. And most importantly Acton must have strong councillors, he said.

Water is the key problem to growth in Acton and he feels more research is needed into sources other than Fairy Lake. The long-term effects of using Fairy Lake are not clear enough, he said.

A water conservation program should also be considered, he said.

Acton's growth is something "council has got to isolate as a concern and work effectively on," he said. He criticized the region for not doing enough about Acton's growth, especially when Georgetown is growing so much in comparison. He does not support "widespread growth" in Acton he said.

Of an Energy from Waste Plant in Acton he said, "Anything that has to do with disposal should be located away from urban areas." He would only support a plant if the "benefits" exceeded the negative effects.

Mr. Elliott was critical of town council not announcing their plans for a municipal complex after purchasing the Stevens Estate in March, 1984, for the purpose of building one. He believes the present municipal offices are inadequate and has some "ideas to bring forward" if he is elected, he said.

He believes that Acton will get VIA Rail service in the "next term of council. I can't see any major drawbacks, only minor problems," he said.

Acton's problems should be treated like the follow-up to the tax equalization problem, he said. "It has been resolved but we (the councillors) have got to keep hammering away at it to be completely resolved," he said.

Twice the work done

If you vote for Maury Saad as town councillor in Ward 1 you will be getting twice as much representation. Mr. Saad plans to work with his wife as a "team". Being an accessible candidate is important to Mr. Saad.



Maury Saad

"There will always be someone available to talk to. I want to create an atmosphere where you can talk to your councillor," he said.

His family and home in Acton are interests that make him especially concerned about the town's future, he said. Property taxes are an issue affecting everyone in the town and one he wants resolved.

He is also concerned how an Energy from Waste plant will affect land values in Acton. "We must know all the facts up front. Oakville rejected a similar project because of toxic waste. People want the value of their homes going up, not down," Mr. Saad said.

"Before doing anything we must discuss the ramifications," he concluded.

Growth for Acton is another topic that needs attention in his view. "We need to see controlled, smart business growth. Acton people don't want Acton to become a Mississauga," he said.

A greater variety of stores is needed to attract people to Acton and to keep Acton people shopping in their town, he said. Looking at putting a plaza in is a step in the right direction, he added.

The water issue is one he feels cannot be ignored or forgotten by town councillors. "It's a regional issue but a town councillor can't let them think we've fallen asleep. We must keep putting pressure on until finally it gets resolved," he said.

"My aim is to accomplish better things without raising taxes. I've seen it done in business and I think we can do it on council. I think we have to get our money's worth by getting our priorities right," he said.

Making better use of the school and programs like the YMCA is a low cost way of answering "the teenage complaint there is not enough going on," he said. Trying to improve the town's appearance is another one of his concerns, as is working closer with Acton schools to encourage community involvement.

Emphasis on co-operation

Ed Wood, town councillor candidate for Ward 1, believes good relations between councillors and municipal employees is the way to make the Halton Hills' government more efficient.



Ed Wood

"I have an ability to communicate with staff and councillors and I have a rapport with staff and work crews. If I tell them something, they can take it to the bank," he said.

"I believe nothing is impossible. Things just take a little longer to get done when you're dealing with government," he added.

Improving the image of Acton is a concern of Mr. Wood. "If we market Acton better it would develop a more positive image for the town which has a lot to offer - the lake, parks, The Olde Hide House."

"Every place needs to grow. Acton's growth in the past 13 years has been nil. We need some to help offset taxes and for places to live for new families. There is a shortage of starter homes right now," he said.

Industrial growth is important to residential growth, Mr. Wood said, which is linked to the water shortage in Acton. The province's permission to use Fairy Lake as a water source is holding up development, he said. "Anything the town can do to speed up the process, the better off we'll be."

He would like to see better access to Halton south for those needing regional services but do not have their own transportation. "There are no buses going to Oakville or Milton where most of the social services are," he said.

Efficiency in local government could be increased if a municipal complex is built. "From a business management standpoint it would make good sense to have all department heads and staff in one building," he said.

"Anything of benefit to my community I support wholeheartedly," he said. Even an Energy From Waste plant in Acton might be valuable, he said.

"We have to know what it might do to the environment and be damn sure we keep the public informed," he said.

'Acton needs strong voice'

Ward 1 candidate Gerald Rennie says Acton needs a strong voice on town council so it "doesn't become a backwater."



Gerald Rennie

"People who live in Acton are not regarded as an important part of Halton Hills and they need that attention (a strong voice). All issues come under this umbrella," he said.

The former Presbyterian minister stated his experience in problem solving would be an asset to council. "In Winnipeg where I was a minister, I was clerk of the presbytery (chief administrative officer) for half the population of Manitoba." Legal, financial, moral and educational are some of the disputes Mr. Rennie said he helped resolve.

There is no single issue that has brought Mr. Rennie into politics. "I think that is foolish. I hope councillors are not caught in an emotional tide. It's not that kind of work," he said.

Mr. Rennie, who sees all issues as connected, is concerned with Acton's image as much as anything else.

"I think we could do a lot to make the town more attractive so when people come from out of town they see a picturesque place," he said. "I think people ought to be proud of the town."

Population growth is a way of improving the town's image and industrial growth is a way of increasing the population, he said.

"There isn't enough major industry and I don't think much is being done to promote Acton as a place for industry," Mr. Rennie said.

An energy from waste plant for Acton is "no problem" for Mr. Rennie "provided it doesn't pollute the land, water and air."

Sensible growth is acceptable to Mr. Rennie. Another 3,000 people is sensible, he said. "We're in a scenic area and you don't want to turn it into downtown Toronto," he added.

"It's important that the three councillors, whoever they are, work together for Acton by acting together. I have had success in getting people working together for a common goal, in taking diverse groups and getting co-operation," he said. That is one of his goals if he gets on council.

TOWN COUNCILLOR

Ward 3

Town growth inevitable

Growth is inevitable for the town, says Ward 3 town councillor candidate Pam Johnston. She'd like to make sure that that growth is well planned. "While we're developing, we have to assure ourselves we're not losing our downtown business."



Pam Johnston

She's concerned that new services to meet the needs of the new residents will take away business from the downtown area.

"I think there should be a road through to Eighth Line so at least the new residents have access to the downtown area," Mrs. Johnston said. "From her door-knocking so far, she's been told by residents that another access for the hospital is needed. Mrs. Johnston said drainage problems have to be worked out before development can take place in future."

"No, I'm not that pro development that I'm in a hurry to have everything," Mrs. Johnston said. "I just want to ensure dollars are spent properly and that with development, the present taxpayers aren't paying for the new people coming into town."

She said she doesn't anticipate a municipal complex for the town staff will be built during the next three years, "but I think things like that need to be planned for."

Extending the property standards bylaw to the whole town, as Halton Hills Legal Clinic lawyer Jack Fleming has requested, is a complicated issue, Mrs. Johnston said.

"I think it has merit," she said. Mrs. Johnston called herself a hard worker, one who reads up and studies matters before making a decision. "I promise to work hard and speak my mind on people's concerns in Ward 3," she said. "I think my financial background would be an asset to the town."

The Georgetown born and raised woman has been a long time volunteer in the community, working with organizations like the Georgetown Memorial Hospital, Canadian Cancer Society, Red Cross, churches and schools.

Town land is an issue

Within the next three years, Ward 3 town councillor candidate Betty Fisher would like to see action on the Stevens property. Monday, she told The Herald she would like to see that part



Betty Fisher

of the Stevens land not needed for a municipal complex, sold off, and a new town hall erected on the remainder.

"I believe the town must decide exactly how much land they need for the town hall, then I believe the excess lands should be sold to private business and developed," Mrs. Fisher said. "The money from that sale should go into the reserve funds to offset taxation."

Expressing the opinion that the property across from the North Halton Golf and Country Club was bought at an "excessive" price, the candidate said she'd only want to see it sold at the same price or higher, and not at a loss.

Mrs. Fisher said she'd like to see a municipal complex built within her term of office, if elected.

"I want to see it built by the reserve funds and not extra taxation," she said, pointing to the Peel board of education head office and the Oakville municipal complex as examples of smart financing.

Mrs. Fisher said the development proposed for the town in its Secondary Plans is reasonable and won't produce a situation like the exploding growth in Bramalea-Brampton areas.

She hopes the new developments will add new students to the existing community schools and help preserve them.

Although landlords may have difficulty with the extension of the property standards bylaw beyond the Acton and Georgetown downtowns, Mrs. Fisher said she supports the extension.

People must be able to enjoy quality of life and shouldn't have to live in substandard conditions because there is no other place to live, she said. "I can promise honesty and dedication and compassion for their issues."

Industry to offset taxes

There should be more land for industry, says a Ward 3 candidate for town council. Bob Gougeon said he'd like to see more industries in Georgetown's boundaries to offset taxes.



Bob Gougeon

"Over the years, a lot of industrial property has been zoned for commercial use," he said, expressing strong opposition to it. "I've seen it happen, that just by rezoning, a property is sold for profit. A good example is the land for the Halton Hills Plaza. It was industrial before it was rezoned and sold."

When it comes to the property maintenance standards which the town is considering to extend beyond the downtown areas, Mr. Gougeon is in full support.

"My feeling on that is, if it's good enough for part of the town, it's good enough for all of the town," the candidate said. "It would clean up a lot of backyards."

Mr. Gougeon said he thought the Stevens property would be the number one issue in this election.

"It's something I think should be looked into," he said. "I have to familiarize myself with the whole thing to see the feasibility of it in terms of location and servicing costs."

There must be added costs in having town staff at different quarters about town rather than at one location, Mr. Gougeon said.

He said the public works and recreation departments wouldn't have to be at the municipal complex with the rest of town staff. He could see them moved outside the urban area to a central spot between Georgetown and Acton, such as Limehouse. Mr. Gougeon said that would be more convenient for the two departments in serving area residents. "Cost is the bottom line on everything," he concluded. Mr. Gougeon said he hoped to see things happening with the municipal complex before the costs become too huge to do anything.

Must protect all tenants

The bylaw that only protects tenants in the downtown Georgetown and Acton areas should apply for the whole of Halton Hills, Ward 3 contender Phil Carney said.



Phil Carney

He said he'd like to see the property maintenance bylaw extended and not just restricted to the downtown cores.

The 57-year-old James Street, Georgetown, resident is going for his second term on town council.

Coun. Carney said one of the big issues facing the town is that of equalized assessment. Last week, Coun. Ross Knechtel said it was time the town accepted the province's Section 63 of the Assessment Act which bases taxation on market value assessment.

"It's pretty hard to argue against equalized assessment as being unfair, but it has some definite reverberations in the community," Coun. Carney said. He said he'd like more information before approving the move to go with Sec. 63. The councillor said he was especially concerned over how the new system of taxation may affect people on fixed incomes.

Acknowledging growth was inevitable for the municipality over the next few years, Coun. Carney said he wanted the character of the town to be maintained despite that growth.

He said the town is a bedroom community in a lot of ways, and much of the new growth will be that type of commuter growth.

"Unless we're fortunate enough to get a great big industrial park, which we're working on," Coun. Carney said. "Let's face it, any major industries coming to Halton Hills - we don't have any place to accommodate them, zilch space. If Toyota had wanted to come, we would have had to pass on it," he said.

As for putting up a municipal complex for Georgetown, Coun. Carney says he doubts it will be in the next three years. He thinks interim steps will be good enough to accommodate town staff.

REGIONAL COUNCILLOR

Ward 1

An interest as citizen

Rick Bonnette, regional councillor candidate for Ward 1, has keen interests as a citizen and as a businessman in the future of Acton, he said. His "livelihood" is in Acton, he said. "I have three years (experience) as a local representative



Rick Bonnette

which is more than any recent regional councillor has had before they went to the region. I am a dedicated and determined councillor," he said.

Some examples of his "determination", he said, are "initiating talks for VIA Rail in Acton and retaining the tax and Hydro offices in Acton. If you take away the tax and Hydro offices, Acton would be like a subdivision," he said.

The most important Ward 1 issue in this election to Mr. Bonnette is water. A fast resolution is needed because without water the town won't grow, he said. "We've been told that by the province. The region must put pressure on the province," he said.

Water means growth which would improve the downtown through the opening of a variety of stores, he said. "It's (water) the foundation of the community. Acton has had a water problem for ten years. Obviously enough isn't being done," he said.

Acton's growth should be restricted, he said. Mr. Bonnette would not like to see Acton grow beyond 10,000 people "because it would lose the flavor of a small town," he said. Nor should every industry interested in locating in Acton be accepted.

He sees an Energy from Waste plant a precarious proposal that should be investigated. "On the surface it sounds great. But on the other hand, what if it means two to three hundred garbage trucks going through Acton daily. A lot of study by the region, province and especially by the public must take place," he said.

The role of watch dog at the region for the people of Acton would be Mr. Bonnette's role. "My job would be to make sure Acton gets its share of regional money," he said.

Purchasing the Stevens property for a municipal complex was not in the best interests of the town, he said. "The town staff have to have some accommodation, but does that mean a municipal complex - what the best plan is I don't know."

'Good record experience'

Five years experience as a regional councillor for Ward 1 and a good record are two reasons Dave Whiting said he should be re-elected. "It's a time consuming job and I've got the time," he said.



Dave Whiting

Tax equalization was the biggest problem for Ward 1 residents. Now it is what should they do with their garbage, Mr. Whiting said. "An inexpensive solution must be found."

Mr. Whiting has been studying the Energy from Waste solution for three years and supports building one in Acton. However, he believes the people must be provided with as much information as possible so they can make the final decision.

Energy from Waste would create jobs, solve the garbage problem and attract industry by lowering local energy prices, he said.

He stressed that he and his family live in Acton and that he is concerned with safety as much as anyone. "If we don't ask for it (the plant) we won't get it," he said. Burlington also wants the plant, he said.

Mr. Whiting would like the town population to reach 15,000 by year 2000. He believes that \$1.2 million from regional government for a water treatment plant will make that a realistic increase. "We've been working on the water problem and within the year it should be resolved. The province must move," he said.

A social service program for children in crisis, those with family problems, to be run out of the Old Stone School, is a program Mr. Whiting is interested in and is now working on. The program is in the organizing stage but could be started in one and a half to two years if the province funds it, he said. The distance children must travel for services to southern Halton would be eliminated and a use would be found for the Old Stone School, he said.

A municipal complex for Halton Hills is not supported by Mr. Whiting, but maybe in ten or 15 years the town will be ready to build one, he said. "We don't have the assessment to pay for it and if we have to borrow money we're looking at an 8 per cent increase in taxes," he said.