

Wellington - Halton Hills candidates debate the issues

Anti-wind turbine groups hijacks all candidates meeting

While fears of potential safety threats from anti-wind turbine protesters prompted the Wellington Federation of Agriculture to cancel two scheduled all-candidates meetings recently, three of four Wellington-Halton Hills candidates in the October 6 provincial election did debate the issues at another meeting at the

Grand Theatre in Fergus last Tuesday.

After seeing a Wind Concerns Ontario e-mail that urged members to bring their placards to protest plans for wind turbine technology to the all-candidates meeting, and another with a man wearing boxing gloves that said both sides would “duke it out,” Dave

Parker, President of the Wellington Federation of Agriculture, said he decided to cancel the meeting to ensure safety of the candidates and the public.

Angry that Wind Concerns Ontario was able to hijack the democratic process, Parker said to go ahead with the meeting would

have been a “recipe for disaster.” Voters are invited to send their questions to the Wellington Federation of Agriculture, which will forward them to the candidates and post their answers at www.wfea.on.ca

The wind turbine issue was raised at the all-candidates meeting in

Fergus, and here is what the candidates – Tory incumbent Ted Arnott, Liberal hopeful Moya Johnson and the NDP’s Dale Hamilton – had to say about that, and other issues. The Green Party candidate Raymond Dartsch did not attend.

Locally, the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce will host a meet the

candidate business breakfast on Tuesday, September 27 at the Eagle Ridge Golf Course, on Tenth Line at 7:30 a.m. On Friday, September 30, the Georgetown Canadian Federation of University Women will host an all-candidate meeting at the Gellert Centre in Georgetown South at 7:30 p.m.

Questions	Ted Arnott	Dale Hamilton	Moya Johnston
It is obvious that the Liberals believe, or deny that there are no negative human health concerns regarding wind turbines. It can be proven that there are negative impacts property values in communities where wind turbines are located. What are the Liberals going to do to compensate affected landowners?	“I brought forward a Private Member’s resolution in the Ontario Legislature calling on the McGuinty government to place a moratorium on the approval of any wind farms, pending a health and safety study that was truthful and honest, and also restoring the municipal planning authority so the local council would have a say. It’s interesting with the planning laws, a local council has a great deal of say whether a Tim Hortons is going to be built on a Main Street, but has absolutely no say whatsoever, because of the Green Energy Act, on a decision whether or not a big wind farm is going to be built.”	“The NDP would require a full provincial environmental assessment of the long-term impacts of the plan, and further would ensure there is a mix of energy sources. We would be quite aggressive about bringing Green Energy on line, but one of the big difficulties with this is the lack of communication...so we would definitely be looking at community-based projects, developed by and with local communities with lots of consultation...”	“The Liberal government implemented the wind turbine system because it is clean energy, it is renewable energy. I am aware that there are people that believe there are health risks with wind turbines, and I know the government is continuing to study wind turbines and affects on people. I do acknowledge that people don’t like to look at them... I would challenge people that don’t like the look of wind turbines to tell me what the alternative is. Would you rather live beside a coal plant or would you rather see clean energy being generated?”
The existence of different municipal, provincial and federal standards and requirements cause businesses to lose valuable time and money. How would your party work with other levels of government to eliminate excessive red tape?	“We believe that red tape is killing Ontario jobs...(Leader) Tim Hudak is committed to appointing a Minister responsible for reducing the regulatory burden by a minimum of 30 per cent, and that is something I very strongly support.”	“Here is a specific example. If elected we are suggesting that we re-combine the three, or is it four entities that Ontario Hydro has been split into, because it was an experiment that I believe hasn’t worked and there is excessive red tape, excessive bureaucracy and excessive expenditure.”	“The Liberal provincial government has done lots of work to reduce red tape.” The HST is one that has reduced paperwork for small businesses (and) has reduced taxes they pay on goods, and actually created at least 90,000 jobs all across Ontario.”
How do you justify the cost related to your government’s plan to tear up the Green Energy Act?	“The premise of that question is inaccurate. What we have said is that we will no longer sign Microfit and Fit contracts at inflated prices. Right now, there are a number of contracts that have been signed by the Liberal government under the Microfit program to pay up to 80-cents per kilowatt hour for the generation of electricity through solar – and the actual price of the electricity being sold is a fraction of that – so of course, the puts upward pressure on hydro bills...”	“The NDP, wherever possible, will honour existing contracts so that there aren’t huge fees – millions, perhaps of dollars being wasted in that way, but going on into the future, our priority would be for small operators, co-operatives and individuals who want to participate in Green Energy in the province, as opposed to putting it in the hands of large corporations.”	“I’m very proud of the Liberal government’s clean Green Energy program and the fact that our air is a lot cleaner since eight coal plants have been closed, and the rest will be closed by 2014. We all experienced a very hot July this summer...there were no brown-outs because the Liberal government has invested in the distribution and generation of energy and Green Energy and there were no smog days during that time.”
Each of your parties has formed a majority government in Ontario. What was your biggest policy mistake, or failed policy, and how would you do things differently if elected, or re-elected?	“I have to say I regret the tenor and tone of the debate in education when we were in government. It unfortunately degenerated into a situation where the kids lost out, and we were part of that obviously, but I would suggest and hope in the future, both government and Teachers’ Federation leaders will try to work together and not allow it to fester into something like we saw in the late 1990s.”	“I ran in the (Bob) Rae years – nobody thought we were going to win – it was shocking, number one. Number two, there was a huge recession we were facing...the Rae Days were very unpopular, and now we are in a position of being within grasp of governing, 20 years later.”	“I think I would have to say that a Liberal government should have had more consultation with the Green Energy Act with both municipal government and with the public. As a municipal councillor, when edicts come down from any government that affects municipal government, there’s always an attempt to work together and sometimes when that doesn’t happen the way that it should, I think that’s disappointing.”

Note: the Candidate’s responses have been edited for space and to equalize coverage.