

Profiling Your Ward 2 candidates

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

In the last election, Ward 2 had the lowest turnout of eligible voters - 31.8 per cent of a potential 8,392 voters cast ballots compared to 36.8 per cent town-wide - but with one of two sitting councillors, Kathy Gastle, in the race for mayor, there's been a lot of interest in the huge rural ward where three candidates are vying for two local seats.

One of the biggest challenges facing Ward 2 politicians is preserving the rural way of life and prime agricultural land in the ward that includes all of the rural area from Highway 401 north to 32 side Road and from the Nassagaweya- Esquesing Town Line east to Winston Churchill Boulevard

Kevin Kuiack

Kuiack left his decision to run quite late. He recently was promoted to vice-principal with the Peel board of education and needed time to see that he could handle both jobs.

Kuiack, who lost the 1994 Ward 2 election by 20 votes, was appointed to the seat when Regional Councillor Bill Robson (late husband of Kuiack's challenger Joan Robson) died suddenly. Ward 2 local councillor Kathy Gastle was elevated to the regional seat and Council named Kuiack to the town ward 2 seat.

"Rural roads continue to be the top priority as far as voters have been telling me at the door," Kuiack said, adding people are also concerned about the quality and quantity of their well water.

Kuiack said most people don't want rural Halton Hills to turn into another Brampton with wall-to-wall development on prime agricultural land.

"The biggest key is to look at the Official Plan review process and make sure that people who know the rural area and the farmers are part of the process so limit development to a very specific area," Kuiack said.

Bryan Lewis

Long-time rural Halton Hills resident and NHL referee-in-chief Bryan Lewis said he has no "miracle cure" for the long list of issues he's hearing about on the campaign trail - clean water, improved roads, lack of communication with existing ward councillors - but will work with whoever else is elected to help the ratepayers.

"I will work hard on people's behalf. I will listen and my skills as a communicator will help at the council table," Lewis said.

"Voters aren't looking for miracle solutions to rural problems, but are looking for councillors with the ability to work their way through rural problems."

Joan Robson

Long-time Glen Williams resident Joan Robson is mak-

ing her first run for office - her husband Bill held the Ward 2 Regional seat until his death five years ago - and said she's hearing a deep concern from rural residents that they don't want to lose the character and flavour of their villages and hamlets.

"I would work to beef up the Official Plan and the secondary plans so when we face development we need to express our needs very clearly in terms of what we want from the builder or developer so we don't end up rubber stamping Ontario Municipal Board decisions," Robson said.

"It's long been an interest of mine to enter the public arena and I'm at a stage now where I have the time and energy. I think I have an excellent chance to be elected and represent the rural area," Robson said, adding she's running a flat-out campaign with door-to-door campaigning and all-candidates meetings and isn't accepting any campaign donations.

Ward 1 and 2 Regional seat

Incumbent Councillor Rick Bonnette

Bonnette is being challenged by environmentalist Rita Landry who entered the race at the last minute and is running a very low-key campaign.

Bonnette, first elected 18 years ago to Acton Town Council and elected as the regional rep in 1985 and had held the seat ever since. In the last election Bonnette easily won the newly combined Wards 1 and 2 seat, garnering 71 per cent support of voters in a two-way race with former councillor Rob Heaton who is running for mayor in this election.

Bonnette, who chaired the Town's budget committee in the past and currently is chair of Halton's powerful planning and public works committee, said voters are concerned with clean water, industrial growth and review of the Official Plan to guide future growth.

"Acton voters are also saying they hope I get re-elected because they're going to miss (councillor) Norm (Elliott).

Whose going to replace Norm - that's the number one question issue in Acton right now," Bonnette said.

"The residents of the hamlets and rural areas are worried about losing their way of life to development - I can be a strong voice to preserve our rural character and heritage during the review of the Official Plan, the blueprint for the future because I have the experience and the ability to work as part of a team," Bonnette said.

Rita Landry

Environmentalist Rita Landry did not respond to repeated requests for an interview for this election profile.

TOWN DIGEST

Teacher cutbacks?

As contract talks drag on between the province and teacher's union, teacher morale continues to deteriorate at Acton District High School, where the 32 full and part-time teachers each made their own decision about extra-curricular activities.

Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation branch

president, English teacher Dave McConnell said, "the longer the talks go, the teachers feel the weigh of the snail's pace more and moral suffers."

"Over the last week or so, we're seeing more teachers out with sickness and on any given day we're seeing two or three out which is a good

number from our school and there's a sign there that teachers are feeling more and more stress."

Acton has not been targeted for further cutbacks by teachers - including not filling out report cards and supervising lunch rooms - but some after-school activities - band and drama club - are not being supervised by teachers.

★★★

High school students in Georgetown and Burlington

may protest against the loss of teacher-supervised after-school activities - but in Acton, actions speak louder than words.

The parent of one Acton High School student said instead of moaning about what they didn't have, Acton students organized the band by themselves - with older students teaching younger students - and arranged for parents to over-see the practices. The student-run band's first performance is at Commencement.



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