

Mayor questions provincial candidates

Concerns raised over arena funding

Funding for the proposed new Acton Arena, promised in a provincial jobsOntario capital grant, could be in jeopardy, depending on which party comes into power on June 8.

It was one of the Acton issues which took centre stage Wednesday night at the well attended Halton North all-candidates meeting, sponsored by the Georgetown University Women's Club.

Halton Hills mayor Marilyn Serjeantson questioned the five candidates whether provincial funding for the Acton Arena would continue, and at the one-third level promised.

Progressive Conservative Ted Chudleigh led off with the bad news, stating the jobsOntario funding program would be cancelled if his party attains power. While the current agreement may be maintained, Chudleigh said he could not ensure one-third funding.

The grant program would also be cancelled under a Liberal regime, but that party's candidate, Walt Elliot suggested the one-third funding may continue, if the project was reworked with larger community involvement. He pointed to the Milton Leisure Centre as a role model.

Family Coalition Party's Alex McKee suggested that private enterprise could meet the one-third funding requirement, "not the taxpayer." He also introduced his party's agenda to dissolve Halton Hills as a town, and restore separate town status to Acton and Georgetown. Acton, he said, would then have control over their own future.

Only two of the five, proposed no

changes to the Acton Arena funding — incumbent Noel Duignan (NDP) and Libertarian John Shadbolt.

Duignan said he has always supported the funding of the Acton Arena, and was disappointed with the other parties' plans to cancel the jobsOntario program.

If that happens, he said, "240 people hired through jobsOntario in Halton North will be fired on June 9."

Libertarian John Shadbolt said if the infrastructure funding was there now, he'd go along with it, but pointed to his party's X Plan which calls for a fundamental tax funding change — municipalities would have complete allocation control over all of the public tax purse.

Candidates also tackled the current dispute between Acton Precision Millwrights (APM) and a labor union. The millwrights union has taken the company to the Labor Relations Board to force the company to hire union employees which could result in 20 local, non union, employees to lose their jobs. APM president Ted Lyons asked the candidates if their party leader would guarantee a resolution to the dispute.

While all candidates pledged their support for APM, New Democrat Noel Duignan, Liberal Walt Elliot, and PC Ted Chudleigh would not pledge their leader's support without their confirmation. As the Leader of the Ontario Libertarian Party, John Shadbolt, said that unions have their place in the workforce, but should not use excessive might against any company. He supported the choice of

individual to choose whether or not to join a union.

Other questions handled by the candidates Wednesday included whether they would support a same sex benefits bill.

Incumbent Noel Duignan pointed out he took a strong stand for the bill the last time in the Ontario Legislature, and he would again. He said it is question that belongs in the Legislature, not in the courts.

However, Shadbolt disagreed saying it is a question politicians should not be involved in. McKee said he would speak for traditional family values — meaning he would vote against the bill, as would Chudleigh and Elliot. Chudleigh said it was not a high priority issue and would cost too much to implement, while Elliot suggested one aspect of the bill did not protect the rights of the children.

On education, Elliot's Liberals would pledge consistent funding for four years, reduce the bureaucracy and give the savings to the classroom.

Chudleigh's PCs say too much is being spent on education now, and it would be reduced, but none would come out of the classroom funding.

Duignan's New Democrats would continue to implement the recommendations listed in the Royal Commission on Learning such as capping salaries of trustees and administration, and putting more money into the classroom. Both the Libertarian and Family Coalition Party support an education voucher which would give parents the right to choose their children's schools.

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