

Three locals hurt in crash

Wellington Rd. 124 was closed for several hours near Brisbane Saturday afternoon while Wellington OPP accident reconstructionists investigate a collision that sent three Halton Hills residents to hospital. Police are seeking witnesses to the crash that occurred when a southbound vehicle skidded across the road into the northbound lanes and struck another vehicle.

Photo by Sandra Traversy



80 turn out for Fergus event

Candidates square off in tame affair

No serious fight meant no clear winner emerged from a Wellington-Halton Hills all-candidates debate Monday night in Fergus. About 80 people turned up at the Fergus and District Community Centre—a majority of them grey-haired and many with predetermined political affiliations.

A steady queue of questioners ensured that a rather tame affair went the two-hour distance.

Veteran Progressive Conservative MPP Ted Arnott is the man to beat in the riding, but only an upstart Green party candidate appeared willing to go toe-to-toe with Arnott, who has held the former Waterloo-Wellington riding for 17 years. The Green's Martin Lavictoire took aim at Arnott from the sounding of the bell.

"Mr. Arnott seems to be for everything," Lavictoire charged in his opening comments, suggesting Arnott supports all things good but has no solid plan or budget for his all-embracing ideas. "So I ask him, 'Where is the money? Where is the beef?'"

The subject of the referendum question—which will ask voters if they favour a mixed-member proportional electoral system—was raised a number of times throughout the evening, which was sponsored by the *Guelph Mercury*, 570 News and Rogers.

Again Lavictoire took a poke at Arnott, who clearly expressed his appreciation for the current first-past-the-post system.

"Mr. Arnott says the current system has stood the test of time," Lavictoire said. "No kidding—it's kept him in office all this time."

Arnott didn't take Lavictoire's soft backhands and turn the other cheek. Since candidates earned 30-second rebuttal rights when their name was mentioned during another candidate's comments, Arnott used the opportunity to counter Lavictoire.

"I am pleased to be getting so much attention from the Green party," he said,

looking directly at Lavictoire. "And I hope I can count on your support on Oct. 10." The Green party candidate was clearly not amused



by the suggestion that his growing knowledge of the Progressive Conservative platform might turn him into a voter for the party.

Questioners wanted to hear the candidates' position on everything from gravel pit development to job creation, funding for faith-based schools to restricting the bottled-water business. The financial pressures faced by farmers was also foremost on the minds of Fergus and area voters.

Liberal candidate Marg Bentley said the public school system—which also includes the publicly-funded Catholic system—ensured equal access to education in the province and must be enhanced. Funding faith-based schools, she said, would drain hundreds of millions of dollars from the public system.

On the issue of faith-based school funding, Arnott defended the position of Ontario Progressive Conservative Leader John Tory, saying only schools that conformed to strict curriculum guidelines and professional standards would qualify for government funding.

New Democratic Party candidate Noel Duignan, along with Arnott and Bentley, strongly cautioned against draining Ontario's drinking water sources. Arnott said water-taking operations should not be approved until it can be clearly demonstrated that no harm will come to the water source or local wells. Permits should be revoked if the holder takes more than their

limit.

Duignan and Bentley favour tighter restrictions on bottled-water businesses, while Lavictoire said he was strongly opposed to the practice of bottling water for sale.

"This is our water and it's not for sale," he said. Even this strong statement failed to get a rise out of a largely docile audience.

On the question of making life easier for farmers, all five candidates seemed to agree that government must work to stabilize farm incomes through a risk-management program and ensure strong local markets for Ontario-grown products.

The Family Coalition Party's Giuseppe Gori, while promoting a platform based largely on traditional family values and an anti-abortion philosophy, said Ontario farmers need "a level playing field" in relation to heavily subsidized U.S. and European farmers.

—Torstar News Service

Candidates to tangle in Georgetown Oct. 4

The Georgetown University Women's Club will host an all-candidates meeting for the riding of Wellington-Halton Hills on Thursday, October 4, in preparation for Ontario's 2007 Election and Referendum.

The meeting will be held in the John Elliott Theatre at the Cultural Centre, 9 Church St. from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

An impartial speaker from Elections Ontario will explain the referendum during a short talk before the debate begins. Candidates will answer questions on policy.

Members of the community are welcome to attend and meet the five candidates.

Look for a full report on the meeting on *The Independent & Free Press* website at www.independentfreepress.com Friday, Oct. 5.

Police car stolen with gun inside

A Halton Police officer had an unpleasant surprise Monday morning when he returned to the unmarked police vehicle he had parked the night before in a Dundas neighbourhood and found it was gone.

And that wasn't all that was missing, so was his gun—a 40-calibre Beretta pistol—ammunition, a canister of pepper spray, and other police equipment he had left in the car—a 2004 four-door Buick Century.

The officer had parked the car at about 6 p.m. Sunday and returned to where he left it shortly after 6 a.m. Monday. Also taken in the theft was an ASP expandable baton, Smith and Wesson handcuffs, a blue bulletproof vest, five black t-shirts with Halton Police markings and a General Electric police radio.

The vehicle was recovered nearby in Dundas Tuesday along with the t-shirts, but the officer's gun and other use of force equipment, which were stored in a steel lock box in the trunk, were not.

The officer, a 22-year veteran detective constable is assigned to an undercover position on a joint forces operation. He continues in that capacity.

Hamilton Police are leading the investigation into the theft.

Anyone who has information on the whereabouts of the handgun and other police equipment or the person(s) responsible is asked to contact Hamilton Police, Division Three Detective Office at 905-546-3851 or Halton Police at 905-825-4747 Ext. 5129 or anonymously by calling Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477).

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