

# What issues do candidates want to highlight?

West Carleton-March candidates list waterfront taxes, long-term vision and relations with city as important

**DEREK DUNN**

derek.dunn@metroland.com

With two of the three city council candidates holding meet-and-greet events this week, the question was put to all three: what issues would you like to focus on in the lead-up to the Oct. 25 election?

James Parsons said he wants people to talk about waterfront issues like the difficulties he is experiencing on his Hydon Acres property. He has a longstanding beef with Ottawa Power Generation regarding it.

He said mayoral candidates can promise tax freezes or rate of inflation increases all they want, but the mill rate and nearby home sales are what costs taxpayers more. Parsons, who owns a landscaping business, said homes next to water are sold for much more than their worth, which is driving up assessments for those nearby, making it nearly unaffordable for working class people to own waterfront.

"This is happening all the time in Constance Bay, too," said Parsons. "Assessments were phased in for a while, but it doesn't seem that way anymore. Now they just go by sales in the area (before issuing assessment notices).

He said some properties next to waterfront in Constance Bay don't have legal water access but are taxed as if they do.

He added the provincial government appears to be making changes to the system, but slowly. Parsons offered no solutions.

**WHAT'S YOUR VISION?**

Alex Aronec wants voters to ask candidates about long-range vision plans.

"What is our vision for the future. Everyone has their pet project, but I think people should ask candidates about the next four, 10, 20 years," he said. "I'm hearing too much fighting about past events we can't change. We could have done this better, not done this better."

Aronec is in the midst of putting together a five-point plan. It includes:

- Freeing council and staff to respond to constituents' needs;
- Being fiscally responsible by "not robbing the future to pay the present";
- Adopting some private sector practices such as using fixed prices or cost incentives before awarding contracts;
- Responding to rural needs such as more resources for emergency services and widening traffic bottlenecks;

He also said offering cost parity between urban and rural ParaTranspo should become a reality.

"We need to have it as an equal funding level," Aronec said, adding he disagrees sharply with incumbent Coun. Eli El-Chantiry's assessment that if West Carleton residents are granted a reduction for disabled and senior users, all homeowners will eventually have to pay for the entire OCTranspo service. That would add another \$600 on the average tax bill,



ALEX ARONEC



ELI EL-CHANTIRY



JAMES PARSONS

El-Chantiry argued. "You could say everything is a slippery slope," Aronec said. "You have to look at this as a social service, not a transportation service."

He likens it to another issue he encourages voters to raise: user fees on activities such as sports. He noted that user fees have skyrocketed in recent years.

He favours subsidizing rates in order for all youths to access sports. The adult rate could be a bit higher, but he wouldn't want to see revenue generated from adult rates go directly toward subsidizing youth rates.

"It should be nominal across the board," Aronec said. "Right now youth sports are underfunded. It's basically a market system. I favour subsidies."

El-Chantiry has long maintained that every kid who wants to play a sport should be granted the opportunity, regardless of their parents' income.

He refused to make any promises on the issue, saying it is tantamount to promising "no rain." The fact is that insurance and related costs are rising every year, and that people will either have to pay a user fee or feel it on their

property tax.

"It's about trying to create a balance between user fees and property taxes," El-Chantiry said. "But basically everybody that wants to play should be able to play."

Parsons said he likes the provincial government's idea to provide a credit on tax returns for people who sign kids up for health activities. It is similar to a popular federal program already in place. But he also said governments are spending too much money on building rinks and new fields. That money should go toward fees.

"What's the point of having all these facilities if kids don't use them," he said. "The fees keep going up, then they spend it at the other end building new buildings."

El-Chantiry said he would love to hear

what is truly on the minds of voters when he goes door to door; not simply the good things. But when it comes to his issues he would like to discuss during the campaign, at the top is the ward's relationship with city hall.


good relationship with the city," he said. "I think Rural Summit 1 and 2 built a good, solid foundation."

The de-amalgamation movement seems all but abandoned, but El-Chantiry doesn't cite that as reason for the city's success in rural areas.

"We've come a long way, it's true. And now we are building on that relationship and it's important to continue that."







**GOOD RELATIONS**

"I would like to continue building a



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