

First all-candidates meeting held in Kanata-Carleton

Brier Dodge
brier.dodge@metroland.com

The first all-candidates gathering for the new federal riding of Kanata-Carleton Sept. 2 was held at the Richcraft Recreation Complex.

The meeting hosted by the Kanata Muslim Association wasn't a debate, but a chance for community members to meet the four candidates running in the newly formed Kanata-Carleton riding.

Imam Sikander Hashmi said that seven to 10 per cent of Kanata's population is Muslim, despite the lack of a mosque in the area, something he would eventually like to see.

He said from an Islamic faith-based perspective, people have a responsibility to take an interest in the community and country's public affairs.

"When we're consulted, our faith teaches us to give good, sincere advice," he said in the opening address to attendees. "When we're asked to judge in between people, it instructs in the Koran to judge fairly.

"Therefore, it is our responsibility to hear from all candidates with an open mind, and then decide that a vote for which candidate and which



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Kanata imam Sikander Hashmi speaks during the all-candidates meeting held at the Richcraft Recreation Complex on Sept. 2

party is most likely to be positive in terms of benefits and least harm – not only for our community, but our fellow citizens and our country."

He asked candidates to

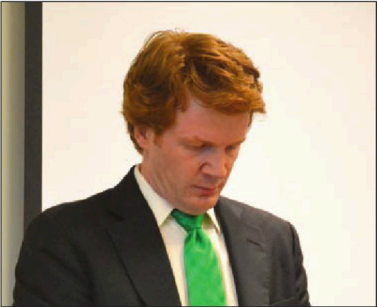
spend the time they were allotted to speak about themselves and avoid attacking other political parties as much as possible.

Each candidate addressed

the audience. After their speeches, the meeting took a break for prayer, then hosted a meet-and-greet sessions

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Meeting not a debate but an introduction to candidates



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Kanata residents heard from four Kanata-Carleton candidates at the meeting.

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for individuals to ask their questions and mingle on a one-on-one basis with the four candidates.

ANDREW WEST

The first to speak was the Green party candidate, Andrew West, who said he worked in television for about 10 years, then as a self-employed contractor. He later decided to change careers and went back to school in his 30s, studying

politics and later law.

He chose several topics to highlight, starting with Bill C-51, the controversial anti-terror bill.

"If elected, I would do whatever it took to repeal Bill C-51," he said. "There's a lot in this bill that makes Canadians unsafe."

He said the Green Party was the first party to reject C-51, though as the party doesn't whip its votes and require members to vote along party lines at all times, he would have voted against it regardless.

He also highlighted a key part of the Green Party platform: the environment.

He said that he's had a copy of the Koran for about seven years, and that there were 200 references to the earth and the environment. A recent paper published by Muslim scholars, the Islamic Declaration on Climate Change, was an endorsement for the Green Party platform.

"This declaration is an endorsement of the Green

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Four candidates, four different backgrounds

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Party platform, without the Muslim community knowing it," he said.

He also touched on the issue of homelessness in the city and the large waitlist for social housing in Ottawa. From the Green Party meeting with Ottawa's mayor, Jim Watson, he said he learned about the high cost of shelters in comparison to social housing.

He finished by encouraging people to come and speak with him after the meeting.

"The Green Party gets elected when voter turnout is high," he said. "If anything that I've

said resonates with you, please come and talk to me. If you feel that we're the party that speaks to you, vote Green."

JOHN HANSEN

Second to speak was the NDP candidate John Hansen, a high-tech executive and business owner.

He spoke at length about the high-tech industry in Kanata and the hyper-local economy.

"Kanata actually has a larger industry than the much-touted Waterloo," he said. "The knowledge industry is actually larger in a GDP footprint than the federal government. But

not all is well, Canada is in a recession."

He said the loss of Nortel was huge for the community, and the community is still suffering.

"We need to grow the innovation industry, and grow jobs in this community," he said. "We'll do

He highlighted his experience as an engineer and as a businessperson.

He also touched on Bill C-51 after West spoke about it in his speech, agreeing that the NDP would also not support the bill. He brought up Bill C-24, which deals with citizenship.

"This one touches me personally. I was not born in this country, and I fear when someone can just pull away somebody's citizenship," he said. "NDP approach is a Canadian, is a Canadian, is a Canadian."

Hansen also touted the NDP platform which would not raise income tax, retain the enriched child tax credit, and improve the Canada Pension Plan, he said.

"In summary, a vote for me is a vote for the NDP and Tom Mulcair," he said. It's a vote for Canada."

KAREN MCCRIMMON

The Liberal candidate, Karen McCrimmon, was the third to address the crowd. She introduced herself by focusing on her military background as a member of the Canadian Forces.

"I'm running to serve my country. Only this time, I'm

not in uniform," she said. "I've been all over the world and I know to the depths of my soul how precious Canada is to the people around the world who saw Canada as a beacon of hope."

She touched on the current job market, and said many of the new jobs created are contract, part-time or seasonal with no benefits.

"We are the only G8 in recession. We are in recession," she said. "Even Norway, where 13 per cent of the GDP is oil – ours is only 3 per cent – they are not in recession. This is a made-in-Canada recession."

She said investments in science, research and development are needed, especially for Kanata. McCrimmon also said the potential brain power in Kanata is currently being wasted by not having more strong jobs.

"Neither of the other parties have strong economic records," she said. "And our

economic challenges are just beginning."

She also touched on C-51, as the previous two candidates did, calling it a "controversial and unsettling piece of legislation."

She said the Liberals plan to fix the legislation.

"In closing, I want to ask you not to let your vote be driven by a single issue," she said, warning that Conservatives could come back in power if the progressive vote is split between parties.

WALTER PAMIC

Walter Pamic, the Conservative candidate, was the last to speak to the crowd.

He brought along another Conservative candidate, Abdul Abdi, and made note of the fact that he had come to Canada at 14 from Somalia.

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Appeal made to new Canadians

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“Just think of the diversity in this party,” Pamic said, mentioning other Ottawa candidates who hail from different countries.

“I’m going to use this opportunity not to talk to you about party policies, party line, but to talk to you about myself,” he said.

He talked about his early life, as his parents lived in Yugoslavia, a former communist country.

“They made their escape, running for their lives,” he said. “Six months later, they were on a ship heading for Canada.”

Pamic was born in Ottawa

after his parents landed at Halifax’s Pier 21 and made their way west.

“I’m sure everyone in this room has a similar story somewhere in their history,” he said. “They had one suitcase between the two of them and no money, but like you and me, they were willing to work hard, and Canada adopted them and gave them that opportunity.”

He studied with the hopes of being a police officer, but didn’t get hired on, and he started working as a truck driver and then an electrician. He now has a company, which employs about 60 people.

He did touch on politics when he said that his experience as a business owner has

taught him what it takes to create jobs.

“Small business is the economic engine of our country and we must make sure it remains healthy and robust,” he said. “You can trust that I will always strive to cut needless red tape.”

He mentioned he has also been a community volunteer and sports coach as a long-time Kanata resident.

“As Muslims, you are part of a great and deep and respected religion,” he said. “It is my hope going forward that I will represent you, as residents, but also as (those who practise) the principal faith of Islam. I’m asking for your vote.”