

Dufferin-Caledon MP candidates discuss how to handle the climate crisis

By Rob Paul

The federal election is less than three weeks away with Canadians heading to the polls September 20. MP Candidates in Dufferin-Caledon have been on the campaign trail for the last couple of weeks in preparation.

The Citizen spoke with Dufferin-Caledon MP candidates Kyle Seeback (Conservative), Lisa Post (Liberal), and Jenni Le Forestier (Green) about how Canada can best address the climate crisis at the federal level and why they feel it's important to this community.

The Conservative Party's environmental plan is something Seeback is proud of with a potential levy that would both incentivize Canadians to focus on becoming greener while dissuading them from making non-environmentally-conscious decisions.

"I think we've got a fantastic environmental platform this plan, and something that was talked about when it first came out," he said. "We're going to bring forward a carbon levy which is on fuels that emit carbon every dollar that you spend on that levy will go into your personal low carbon savings account which is going to allow you to buy things that will reduce your dependence on carbon emissions. Whether that's a more fuel-efficient vehicle or improvements to your home, this is going to be a great incentive for Canadians to not only try to reduce their own carbon emissions but use that money to reduce their carbon footprint."

Seeback knows it's on Canadians to work together to make a difference, but also points to the Conservative Party's platform incorporating a global aspect to help reduce the carbon footprint, something he doesn't see the other parties prioritizing in the climate change crisis.

"That's a big part of it, but what always gets lost in these conversations about climate change is the fact that the big emitters around the world are not actually doing a lot," he said. "What we're talking about which we're the only ones talking about it is moving towards carbon border care. This is going to have the effect of not allowing countries to have very high carbon footprints to send cheap goods into Canada to disrupt our local businesses and industry. By putting forward carbon border tariffs, those goods are going to be subject to a tariff which will do a couple of things.

"Number one, it allows Canadian companies and businesses that are trying to reduce their carbon footprint to be on a more equal playing field, and it's going to encourage other countries to make sure that they take steps towards reducing their carbon emissions. Finally, it's going to add some revenue to the government. We're the only ones talking about that, and I think it's a huge part of the actual global challenge with climate change."

Post has made it clear that for her and the Liberal Party, dealing with the climate crisis is one of the most important issues going forward, and she says major decisions at the federal level must all be viewed with climate change in mind.

"As someone who has been knocking on doors throughout this crazy heat wave, I can tell you climate change is real," she said. "We're beyond the conversation of whether climate change is real, and some of the other parties are still having that debate internally. We're seeing it happen, from the heat waves that we've got, to wildfires in the west, we're seeing the impacts of what the climate crisis is. This isn't just climate change anymore, we're into a complete climate crisis."

"There have already been measures taken federally, like the carbon tax and helping with greener homes grants, and other things to really help Canadians do their part as individuals, but on a broader spectrum, we really need to apply an environmental lens to everything that we do. With infrastructure projects we have to be making sure we're building in a better, more responsible way and the action has to happen now. If there's no action that's happening, we're going to continue to experience even worse weather-related events and disasters."

Looking at the climate crisis through a more local view, Post wants to be in the House of Commons representing Dufferin-Caledon's

best interests because she knows how important the green spaces in the area are to residents.

?All of this has been triggered by the climate change that has been happening; we've been talking about it for a long time and the announcement of all the new federal spending into environmental projects is a key piece but making sure that gets right filtered down into our community is a bigger piece. By having someone on the government side who's advocating for those environmentally responsible dollars to be coming into our infrastructure projects here locally is a big difference. That's a game changer for us here in Dufferin-Caledon, where one of the biggest conversations that I'm having with people at the door is environmental issues because we're forecasted for an unprecedented amount of growth in this area, and we need to make sure that our lands locally are protected and that the growth is happening in a responsible way. We need a strong advocate in Ottawa to make sure that as it's being filtered down into the provincial level and then into the municipal level that the environmental lens is really applied to everything. It's really the only way to make sure that our green space is protected.?

For the Green Party, and Le Forestier, the efforts being made to reduce emissions haven't been near enough and she thinks Canada has dropped the ball in some respects with environmental goals that have been set.

?There are so many things that need to be done and we're not hitting the targets, and we know that,? she said. ?Canada as a country is way behind where we need to be; we're still talking about 40 per cent, 45 per cent (reduction in emissions from 2005 levels by 2030)?the Green Party platform is 60 per cent, that's the number we need to be striving for. To do that we need to stop infrastructure that we don't need at this time ? I've been opposing the (Highway) 413. It's also pretty clear that we need to get off fossil fuels, we need to stop relying on these companies that through the pandemic needed \$70 billion in payouts. There's lots of things we can do locally and there's lots of things that we can do federally to start to get in line with our climate responsibilities as far as the rest of the world is concerned. We're a leading country in so many things, yet, in the climate emergency, we're falling way behind.?

As an environmental activist in Caledon, Le Forestier thinks she brings a unique perspective to the decisions both provincially and federally that go into impacting the climate crisis.

?The 407 sits there empty, it's losing money. Why aren't we talking about expropriating a couple of those lanes of that highway, rather than expropriating taxpayers' property to build a mega series highway through prime farmland that won't only cutoff half the community and box them in with sprawl and highways, but it's also putting at risk our last five per cent of farmland. As a taxpayer, I would much rather see money invested in transit, better and safe schools, long-term care that's actually addressing the needs of our community. That's what I would be talking about on the doorstep and federally. The federal government has had to step in and look at these projects because the environmental assessments are not up to snuff?that needs to be addressed in Ottawa as well.?