

**Climate Action Newmarket-Aurora All Candidates Forum – Ontario  
Summary of Candidate Responses  
Feb 12, 2025**

Participating Candidates:

Chris Ballard (CB) – Ontario Liberal Party

Denis Heng (DH) – Ontario New Democratic Party

Regrets:

David Jakubiec – Ontario Green Party

Dawn Gallagher-Murphy – Ontario Conservative Party

**Prepared Questions**

*Q1: Where will protecting the environment and addressing the climate crisis fall on your list of priorities once you take office? What will be the first steps you take to protect the environment?*

DHj

- If you look at Marit Stiles platform, Climate is not there – affordability is the key issue but the NDP is looking at everything through a climate lens: affordability, economic sustainability, ....
- Climate lens means finding the best solutions for the community that are environment friendly.
- Hwy 413 and Bradford bypass are not needed – the 407 and other infrastructure can be better utilized
- NDP will remove 407 tolls

CB

- Bonnie Crombie is very knowledgeable about the Environment file. They are now working on policy development
- Liberals will strengthen environmental protections - greenbelt, farmland and will restore the authority of the Conservation Authorities
- Invest in climate resilience, reduce waste, encourage circular economy
- Requires a made in Ontario Climate plan including sustainable energy sources
- 2-way GO Train all day

*Q2: How will you support greener building codes and cleaner, cheaper energy efficiency in new affordable housing?*

CB

- Buildings in Toronto account for 50% of emissions. Need to get on board with adopting one building code rooted on Passive Housing standards
- Metrics need to be baked into the Ontario building standard to gain energy efficiency – to reduce maintenance requirements and improve affordability
- Durable buildings are practical and simple

- Need a green building standard here in Ontario

DH

- Agree with Chris, Ontario NDP platform would strengthen agriculture and wetland protection and reduce urban sprawl – ample room available
- Appropriate density matched with public transit
- Want to build affordable housing in the right places
- Building toward net-zero using greener materials, increase efficiency, decrease greenhouse gas and pollution

*Q3: What steps will you take to support the growth of the clean energy industry and create clean energy jobs?*

DH

- Tricky question as we have not made the progress we should have in Ontario to move forward. Now we have crossed the line where easy solutions are no longer possible
- Gas is not the solution – not sustainable. Need to invest in hydro, wind and solar to promote cleaner energy sources
- Will build energy into the economic plan – work with industry leaders to support investment that is for the good of the community
- By the next election, NDP will have made tangible progress

CB

- This can be an opportunity to reboot industry – get off fossil fuel, reduce GHG emissions – help companies to restart
- In 2018 there were 140K Ontarians working in the green economy (almost the same number as in the auto industry). These are good jobs. Now there are far less – Doug Ford tore up Cap and Trade, stopped innovative research and stopped derisking innovation. Need to kick start this again

*Q4: Electric vehicles are much cheaper to operate and maintain than gas powered ones. What will you do to make it easier for Ontarians to realize these savings?*

CB

- Bring back EV subsidy, bigger than before
- Continue to work with Automotive companies. We have a well trained workforce: engineers, electricians, operators, etc. We need to make sure we continue to have this skilled workforce
- Work on batteries but should question are these the right batteries
- Attract new investment from other countries

DH

- Use the environmental lens to build the economy.
- Should be building EV's in Ontario – this should have been done 7 years ago

- Ontarians should drive EVs – incentive EV purchases. Address the fear/anxiety of driving EVs by building infrastructure
- New homes should be built ready for EV charging
- Ontarians have to have the confidence to buy EVs. They need to be attainable

## **Audience Questions**

*Q: What are your plans for: the Bradford Bypass, Hwy 413 and Conservation Authorities?*

DH

- Conservation Authorities are the experts – need to listen to them as well as to community members
- 413 and Bradford Bypass are unnecessary
- Need to build homes in the right places

CB

- Not a fan of building more highways. CB stopped 413 in 2016-17
- Does not support Bradford Bypass but may be difficult to stop. This rewards other municipalities to our north for building so many homes without a plan for public transit

*Q: How will you engage more young people to vote?*

CB

- Difficult to engage if the group has been ignored for so long. Between elections need to listen to younger voices – find young people and ask them what is affecting them
- Let young people know they can influence government by getting involved

DH

- Requires systemic change. Youth are enthusiastic and they are very engaged. Need to lower the voting age to 16 or 17 years to have them participate
- Need to provide them with hope. Their thoughts need to be heard. Need to address affordability

*Q: The Municipal Economic Prosperity Review expresses concerns about the financial sustainability of municipalities in Ontario. How do you plan to address the fiscal challenge of municipalities?*

DH

- Canada has 3 levels of government and we expect them to work together but they each have their own roles and priorities. Need to have more collaboration and cooperation
- Put municipalities in a position to succeed. NDP will upload some of the services to the province that have been downloaded to municipalities

CB

- Bonnie Crombie is a former mayor and Chris has experience on council. They know these challenges. Liberals will create a new deal for municipalities.
- Determine how to best fund municipal infrastructure to take the load off individuals
- Reduce burden on municipal government and remove development charges – requires the province to step up

Q: *Why doesn't the 'left' unite to defeat the Conservatives?*

CB

- CB hears this a lot at the door. We all want to defeat Doug Ford. Need individual candidates to defeat individual MPPs across Ontario. In some ridings, the Orange may have the best opportunity to win with support from the red. The red has the advantage in other ridings.
- Need to think strategically – there are models of cooperation like this in Europe or England – could be considered. Right now voters need to think about who can defeat Dawn Gallagher-Murphy

DH

- DH has some concerns about having a 2-party system – thinks of the US. It does not provide enough perspectives and leads to narrow thinking. This is not in everyone's best interest – especially marginalized voices within our population
- Require a plurality of voices. Ideally people working together
- Not first past the post. Can we trust Liberals who promised this but did not deliver

Q: *The provincial government continues to request more money from the Federal government but the provincial health budget has not kept up with Federal Transfer funds that were distributed. How will you deal with the struggling health care system?*

DH

- I would spend the money on Health Care. Its appalling that there is no accountability – Ford did not spend the money he had been asking for
- 2 priorities: affordability and health care – looked at through and environmental lens to benefit everyday Newmarket and Aurorans

CB

- Ontario is now a 'have not' province. Ford has ground down the province. He did not spend the money on health care, the green economy, etc. We don't need a \$50 B tunnel. We need doctors and nurses now.

Q: *When will interprovincial tariffs and barriers be eliminated?*

CB

- If we eliminate interprovincial trade barriers, GDO would be increased by 4%. CB is in favour of reducing these barriers – required political will to get it done

DH

- Requires hard work. It's not sexy. Need to work together to get it done. There is political inertia but some companies benefit from the status quo. There will be winners and losers. What government will take on these businesses? Who will put in the political effort?

Q: *What are your plans to manage homelessness and what is your position on Treatment hubs?*

DH

- DH works in public health. He sees we are just papering over marginalized people. Need supervised injection sites. Show respect and caring for people. Develop evidence based policies on how to treat marginalized people.

CB

- This should be a 'no brainer'. People with addictions and homeless are not receiving enough support from Ontario.
- Wrap around supports with housing were being developed – Ford unfunded this
- Mental health supports are required in communities to enable people to be more productive – which is what they want for themselves

*Q: What actions can the province take to better support municipalities?*

CB

- Province can write legislation – better to use the carrot with municipalities. Fund infrastructure. Change procurement policy to enable buying 'green' even if it's a little more expensive. New deal is required.

DH

- NDP will take the lead to set up Best Practices for municipalities. Show leadership to bring municipalities together. Ford is not providing enough for municipalities
- Adopting new building codes is the best way to bring change into effect

*Q: Schools are underfunded. What is your plan to address the problems with the education system in Ontario ?*

DH

- Appropriately fund education to ensure enough people are in the classroom to educate all kids
- Provide a safe environment for educators
- Ensure an appropriate ratio of educators to learners
- It will take effort to build up schools – talk to teachers, parents, administrators to learn how to do it right

CB

- Takes money, planning and commitment. Ford is destroying public education.
- Hire more teachers and support folks. Teachers and EAs are burn out
- Need a 10 year plan and commitment to turn things around

*Q: Although the Conservative candidate is not here to answer this question, why does the Ford government need a snap election?*

CB:

- Ford is very cynical. He is ahead in the polls. Captain Canada gives him traction but people are upset and frustrated with this unnecessary election. Time should be focused on building Ontario up. Ford has not approached the 6 states Ontario does the most business with to lobby Washington on our behalf.

DH

- This is a power grab. Ford is using his old play book. He says one thing, creates an issue and then says he solved the issue. He is always reacting to 'disasters'. The other parties would have supported the government as they dealt with US tariffs. This is deplorable. Ford is suppressing the vote by having a winter election. Tonight's event is an example.

Q: *Without pollinators, much of the food we eat and the natural habitats we enjoy will not exist. What will you do to protect insects from detrimental factors such as light pollution, pesticides and climate change?*

DH

- This is not my area of expertise but I would listen to the experts and develop a plan on what to do. Could put in standards to limit light pollution – show leadership. Don't destroy habitat. Have the conversations and get to the action – immediate and longer term.

CB

- Agree with Dennis – protecting and rehabilitating habitat. Kathleen Wynn instituted banning a specific pesticide to protect bees. Ford reintroduced that pesticide. Pollinators are important – need to increase habitat

Q: *How do you plan to bring more doctors to Ontario?*

CB

- There are 1200 doctors in Ontario trained but can't get residency. Need to fund hospitals to provide residencies
- Bring on 3100 doctors. Open 2 more universities to educate more doctors
- Incent doctors to work in smaller and northern communities. Training is key

DH

- Recruitment and retention. Allow people who are ready to go to practice without putting up more barriers.
- Utilize foreign trained doctors, address the lack of residency spaces.
- Treat doctors with respect. Same for nurses. They are burnt out. Must keep the doctors we now have in addition to encouraging more.

Q: *What is your position on the plans for Ontario Place and closing the Science Centre?*

DH

- Ontario Science Centre looks like a land deal. There was no real justification - bring back the Science Centre
- Ontario Place – Ford gave them a 99 year lease – this does not look like good negotiating. Ford repeatedly puts Ontario on the hook for millions of dollars by signing contracts with wealthy developers that stretch far into the future. These contracts would cost Ontario taxpayers a lot of money to cancel even though they are not in the best interest of Ontarians
- Leaders need to push back

CB

- Reinvest in the Science Centre structure – revitalize it and reopen it. Need to put money back in and be proud of the Science Centre and Science North
- At Ontario Place, Ford made such a long term lease – it will become a Casino if Ford is in charge

Q: *How will you encourage businesses to set up in Ontario?*

CB

- It's not just money. It starts with well trained people and well funded R&D. It will be a challenge as we are no longer a gateway to the US. Ontario has good access to other markets. It requires political will. Ontario should be cautious about just investing money in any business. We need a good plan for an effective economic development strategy.

DH

- There are a number of factors: stable government, affordable housing, services to enable people to live, work and play, and a strong educated workplace.
- Starts with where we want to go and using the environmental lens. Set the building blocks now for 50 years in the future

Q: *What makes a livable city?*

DH

- A livable city is one where you can live, work and play in the same place. Building small communities with the appropriate social supports in communities.
- Affordable housing is necessary. Can build using environmentally friendly materials, requiring less cars

CB

- Livable cities are critical. Urban sprawl is destroying us. Need to be able to walk, ride a bike or take public transit. Increased intensification. Services close
- Families shouldn't need to cars
- Political will to break the way we have been building cities

Q: *What are your plans to improve Autism support and acceptance?*

CB

- Not defund it like Doug ford did
- Stress and strain on families.
- Lot of blame can be placed at the government's feet. Province must fund autism services so children and family are not forgotten
- What's the best model for autism and how to quickly ramp up funding

DH

- Key is wrap around services – people with autism exist in schools, work places, etc. We are all in this together. How do we all support this?
- Requires appropriate staffing, education and training
- Also requires supporting families and parents – mental health supports in the community

*Q: How will you redistribute wealth amongst Ontarians?*

DH

- Not \$200. This money should have been used to fund health care and education – issues facing our community.
- Tax is not a bad word. Taxes provide the services we need
- Break out of the 4 year cycle

CB

- Reduce taxes to middle income families and small businesses
- Need strong economy to pay for things we need. Economy is struggling
- Young people should not bear the burden of high costs
- Need to get the economy going

*Q: How important are gatherings like these to encourage open and honest dialogue?*

CB

- Appreciates these types of events
- Our questions inform him of what's important and top of mind
- Enjoys asking people for their priorities/concerns – helps to inform policy

DH

- Integral to democracy to represent your constituents otherwise just pitching party platform
- As a candidate, DH needs to improve on these skills – 30 second responses
- Wants to improve the community – complex issues. Slogans are not helpful
- Discussion format would be better – need to work together for solutions