

Pesky citizens stop the brown shift

June 2nd 2009

ENVIRONMENTAL GREMLIN: Maritime Noon: A rural tradition

By Stephen Hawboldt for The Spectator Annapolis Royal

By Stephen Hawboldt for The Spectator and NovaNewsNow.com Within the next few days, Nova Scotians will be electing a new government. We will also be electing a government, based on their published platforms, that seem to have limited interest in the environmental concerns facing the residents of Nova Scotia.

Some might even suggest that this is a move away from green issues. This could be termed the “brown shift,” at the risk of raising the ire of former national Liberal leader Stephane Dion.

While the political parties seem to be trying to ignore these issues, citizens are not buying the brown shift. In virtually every riding in Nova Scotia, citizens are focused on at least one local environmental concern.

Consequently, these local concerns have been featured at many of the all-candidate forums and generated many questions on local food, energy conservation, mining and related topics.

In Kings South, for example, citizens were concerned about protecting agriculture lands, uranium exploration, and cosmetic use of pesticides.

According to media reports, all candidates said they supported a legislated ban on uranium exploration in Nova Scotia.

Interestingly, the official party responses to this question in a Nova Scotia Environmental Network (NSEN) survey may not be in complete agreement with the Kings South candidates on the uranium issue. Both the PC and Liberals indicated in the NSEN survey that they would maintain the current moratorium while the NDP and Green Party support a legislated moratorium.

In Kings North, it is reported that about 200 citizens attended a community forum in that region. Again the focus was on local foods, energy issues, and the application of biosolids on agricultural lands.

Biosolids, processed and treated material from sewage treatment plants, always generate spirited public discussion.

In West Hants, the Liberal and PC candidates refused to attend because the forum was organized by Avon Peninsula Watershed Preservation Society, a citizen’s group opposed to an open pit gypsum mine in the area. The forum also focused on climate change, local foods, and green jobs.

Earlier this week, the results of an all-party survey by the NSEN were released. Each party was asked the same set of questions and were graded on their responses by teams. This yielded results on individual issues and overall scores.

The ruling PCs received a C grade. They received their lowest scores on wilderness/forestry and water issues and highest marks for climate change questions.

The Liberals received a C+ but were weakest on questions related to green jobs and economy and highest marks on questions related to climate change.

The NDP got an overall score of B receiving their lowest marks in waste management mainly because they support the recommendations of a multi-stakeholder advisory committee on biosolids. Regardless of who wins next week, the biosolids issue will not go away anytime soon.

The Green Party, as one would expect, got the highest score with a B+. Interestingly, they received their lowest marks on issues related to wilderness and forestry.

The official platforms of the three mainline parties are a bit thin on environmental concerns. Thankfully, the pesky citizens are stopping to their brown shift.