

NDP candidate says hydro, health, housing are priorities as election begins

Lindsay Advocate Publisher Roderick Bennis will be interviewing all provincial candidates in the Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock riding in the coming days. Today, we speak with new NDP candidate Zac Miller.

Bennis: *As you see it, what are three of the top issues in this provincial election?*

Miller: The first issue for the upcoming provincial election is our sky-rocketing hydro bills. Hydro isn't a luxury and it shouldn't be priced like one. We will return Hydro One back into public ownership and control because we should not have to pay for a company's profits.

We want to end time-of-use pricing as this system of billing adds extra stress onto small businesses and individuals who can't control when they need to use power. We need to equalize delivery rates for rural consumers to urban rates. We shouldn't be discriminated against because of the location we choose to live. The NDP believe in helping the consumer and actually lowering bills by 30 per cent, not adding \$40 billion of debt for future generations unlike the Liberal and Conservatives' plan.

Fixing our broken healthcare system needs to be another election issue. With Liberal and Conservative cuts and freezes to our hospital budgets, it has left our hospitals overcrowded, creating a hallway medicine crisis. The NDP will raise hospital funding 5.3 per cent immediately and fund 2,000 new beds to end overcrowding. We will invest \$19 billion dollars to expand hospitals to meet the needs of our growing

population. New Democrats believe that nurses and frontline workers should not be cut and are not inefficiencies. We will stop the further layoffs of nurses and healthcare workers.

The last issue is our affordable housing crisis. At this moment right now, we have 185,000 individuals on waitlists for affordable housing, up from 50,000 15 years ago. New Democrats will create 65,000 new affordable housing units over a 10-year period and immediately build 12,000 new social housing units. This is a crisis that Liberal and Conservative governments have created and then ignored. We must protect renters and keep rent controls, unlike the Conservatives who will allow rents to be raised drastically every year.

Benns: *What are the answers to poverty and low incomes for many people in this riding?*

Miller: In order to combat poverty and help low income workers propel into good, stable paying jobs, we will raise Ontario Works rates by 10 per cent, 7 per cent, and 5 per cent and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) rates by 5 per cent for the next three years, which were cut by the previous Conservative government. Along with raising social assistance rates, we will continue the Ontario Basic Income Pilot Program. We will be increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and strengthening our labour laws. The NDP believe in ending poverty, improving and making life more affordable for everyone. Universal access to dental and pharma care will help do that.