

## **Comment**

**Does it matter where a candidate lives?**

**By Bill Jackson – The Regional  
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**One of the most intriguing elements to the 2008 federal election in Haldimand -Norfolk is the way voters perceive geographical representation in relation to candidates' residency.**

**A candidate trying to represent a riding while living outside its boundaries is something many people often frown upon with disdain. Many people tend to think that a politician must live in a riding they intend to represent, but this isn't always the case. People will recall that Liberal deputy leader Michael Ignatieff was criticized during the last election for living out of the country for years, but ended up winning the Etobicoke -Lakeshore riding.**

**In municipal elections, candidates must reside within the geographical boundaries of the municipality they run in for obvious reasons pertaining to day to day business and the inner workings of a municipal corporation. But that isn't the case when it comes to federal ridings that are represented in Ottawa. Candidates are often parachuted in to represent political parties where there's little association.**

**Running federally, independent candidate Gary McHale is thought by many to represent the interests of Haldimand County in relation to issues surrounding the native occupation and law enforcement that have been front and centre here during the past three years.**

**However McHale doesn't reside in Haldimand. He has fallen under much criticism in the past for his actions dubbed "interloping." The majority of this criticism has been from people residing in Caledonia where some of McHale's rallies have been blamed for sparking volatile confrontations, leading many to believe that he has negatively interfered, rather than positively intervened.**

**Yet one could also make the argument (and many people do) that no one has taken the concerns of Haldimand to heart more than Gary McHale. Although people have questioned his actions at times, most would admit that his reasoning is predominantly justified. Many people would also say that he's done more for Haldimand than any other politician, simply by putting local issues on a bigger map.**

**McHale, a Binbrook resident, lives closer to Haldimand than the majority of candidates in Norfolk, even though he lives outside the political riding. And Haldimand has elected many MPs in the past that live at a greater distance from Haldimand than he does.**

**There are no candidates from Haldimand running in this year's election except for Stephen Elgersma who represents the Christian Heritage Party, and it is unlikely that he will make much of an impact at the ballot box. Neither the Green party candidate or NDP candidate – both of whom are from Norfolk – have any real stronghold on Haldimand County voters and aren't intimate with the issues here. Liberal candidate Dr. Eric Hoskins, a Norfolk native, has lived outside the riding for years.**

**Incumbent Conservative MP Diane Finley, also a Norfolk resident, has been criticized in the past for a lack of visibility. She argues that she has been in the local riding more than some people think but that her job entails representing it in the nation's capital.**

**This is true, but the fact that no one knows what it is exactly that she's done has hurt her chances of being re-elected by people in Haldimand.**

**Thing is, people in this riding have elected MPs and MPPs from Norfolk many times in the past, no matter what political stripe. And as long as political lines in the sand don't cloud people's thinking, it's representation and communication that should matter first and foremost to voters, not necessarily visibility or residency.**