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Energy, economy key election issues in North Vancouver

Jeremy Shepherd / North Shore News

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Expanding pipelines and diminishing opportunities were two of the issues discussed by North Vancouver's federal candidates in a debate held Thursday at North Lonsdale United Church.

While no candidate on the stage on Thursday supported Bill C-51, Green Party candidate Claire Martin pointed out that Green Party leader Elizabeth May was first in the pool when it came to opposing the anti-terrorism legislation.

"May actually was the first MP to stand up against Bill C-51 a full 17 days before anybody else denounced it."

For NDP candidate Carleen Thomas, one of the election's biggest issues is putting a new tenant into 24 Sussex Drive in Ottawa.

"We are tired of Harper and all the brokenness he's caused our country," Thomas said in her opening remarks.

Canada's handling of the humanitarian crisis in Syria is indicative of a country that has lost its way, argued Thomas.

"Canada should be leading the way, not participating in a civil war," she said. "Canada needs to re-establish, reassert itself as a peacekeeping country."

The Conservative Party also received a lambasting from Liberal candidate Jonathan Wilkinson, who said the country was moving backwards on many issues including environmental assessments and diversifying the economy.

"In 1994 Canada was the highest ranked country in terms of gender equality measures," he said. "Now, we rank 23rd . . . I wish that . . . Mr. (Andrew) Saxton had done us the courtesy of being here today to have that conversation," he said, referring to the absent Conservative incumbent.

Wilkinson also took issue with the Conservative Party's approach to major energy projects like the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion. Rather than serve as neutral arbiters, the ruling party have become advocates for energy projects, according to Wilkinson.

"They've given people the impression that the process actually isn't fair," he said.

While Thomas and Martin were steadfast in their opposition to pipeline expansion, Wilkinson – despite his background

with green tech firms – cautioned against issuing a blanket ‘no’ on any type of project.

“If you want to pay for health care, if you want to pay for education, you need to be able to get to ‘yes,’” he said. “It is a pipe dream to think that we can switch off the oil and switch on the solar panels and that is actually a solution.”

Martin acknowledged the need to maintain Canada’s economy, but called for a broader and faster plan to “switch us off oil.”

If the NDP forms Canada’s next government, one of the top priorities will be education, according to Thomas.

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