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VOTING GETS RESULTS: PROVINCIAL ELECTION OCTOBER 6

With education a hot topic for the provincial election, students have a responsibility to understand what each party brings to the table. The MSU is hosting an All-Candidates Debate on September 28th.



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On October 6, students all across our province will have the opportunity to make an electoral decision. At McMaster, the choice is even more complicated, as we're in a political riding with seven candidates. So what's the deal with a provincial election? Why should you care? Many students don't realize that voting in a provincial election is an extremely powerful tool. First and foremost, the provincial government holds jurisdiction on various elements of our education while in university – namely issues of tuition, financial assistance (think OSAP) and educational quality. The parties are vying hard for the student vote – as post-secondary education has made it into each of the big four parties' platforms. So what issues are you voting on this year? What are

your priorities?

The MSU is running a campaign called "Voting Gets Results". We encourage students to make an informed vote, because that informed vote can actually translate into results in our education. And that's the beauty of an education – if we educate ourselves on the issues, and we make an informed decision, the power is in our hands. Here at McMaster, we have a population of over 20,000 undergraduate students. Assuming at least 17,000 are 18 years or older on Election Day (legal voting age), this amount would be more than enough to swing the riding of Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale (ADFW). Students could even run their own candidate and likely see him or her elected as a Member of Provincial Parliament. Sound crazy? It isn't – it just takes movement, desire and a little bit of education.

So why vote? The MSU is running a campaign on affordability and quality of education. The Conservative Party of Ontario is vying for your vote with a promise to reduce the parental contribution for

student loans – sound good? What about the Liberal Party wanting to keep student debt capped at \$7300 and reduce tuition by 30% for families in the income bracket of under \$160,000? The NDP are dedicated to freezing tuition for 4 years – the span of your undergraduate education, followed by eliminating the provincial interest on student loans. And oh yes, the Green Party wants to see a tuition freeze for the 2012-2013 year, but indexing further increases in tuition to the rate of inflation.

Now this is only half the story. Make sure to check out each party website, and visit www.votinggetsresults.ca for more on not just affordability, but quality of education. Every qualified student should be able to go to university, so on Wednesday, September 28, ask your candidates how they will make this a reality in Ontario. There will

be an All-Candidates Debate taking place in Gilmour Hall, Room 111 on Wednesday, September 28 from 5-7pm followed by the Party Party with the candidates at TwelvEighty, featuring free appetizers and political party themed shots! Come out and meet the candidates.

We are happy to take your questions to the candidates in advance, please submit them to vped@msu.mcmaster.ca.

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On October 6, make your vote count. If you live in residence, take your proof of residence and photo ID to CIBC Hall – or if you live off campus, check out www.wemakevotingeasy.ca

type in your postal code and find your local voting station. To make the process even easier, there is a University-wide test ban on Election Day to ensure that students have the time they need to vote.

Voting Gets Results. Make this election count.

MSU MOVES TO ELIMINATE PLASTIC BOTTLES

As part of a greater commitment to sustainability, the Student Representative Assembly enacts policy ensuring that no MSU funding will be spent on single-use plastic containers.



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This past Sunday at a meeting of the Student Representative Assembly (SRA), an exciting milestone in sustainability efforts was achieved when the proposed Plastic Bottle Free Policy was adopted with unanimous consensus from the assembly's voting members. This policy officially commits that no MSU money will go towards the purchasing of beverages in single-use plastic bottles.

The move to go Plastic Bottle Free stems from McMaster waste audit results that show plastics have

a much higher rate of being disposed of on campus, in comparison to glass and aluminum. Work to generate this policy was done with the support of the McMaster Office of Sustainability and the MSU's MacGreen.

This impressive commitment results from an initiative started last February when full-time staff of the MSU signed a pledge to designate the MSU Main Office (MUSC 201) a Plastic Bottle Free Zone. A Plastic Bottle Free Zone is a physical office location or area that prohibits the use of single-use plastic bottles by individuals when they are within that zone. Other services of the MSU, specifically MacGreen, the Student Health Education Centre (SHEC) and COMPASS, followed suit soon after and also pledged their spaces as Plastic Bottle Free Zones. At this time, MSU affiliated individuals as

well as McMaster University staff, faculty and students are encouraged to take an individual Plastic Bottle Free Pledge. This pledge is still available at plasticbottlefree.com and states; "I pledge to use a refillable bottle whenever possible, drink tap water where public drinking water is available, or opt to purchase beverages in aluminum cans or glass bottles". Also included is information about the health, economic and environmental benefits of going Plastic Bottle Free.

McMaster has supported the use of refillable bottles as a campus sustainability initiative aimed at decreasing waste on campus by encouraging reuse. Beginning in 2009, the University began the Water Fountain Retrofit Program to ensure that campus fountains included a bubbler for drinking, a gooseneck spout for bottle refilling and a chiller

to provide cold water. Each retrofit location was also outfitted with an educational sign stating "tis better to refill than to landfill". Starting in 2010, all retrofitted fountains also include a filter as well as an electronic counter which tracks the number of single-use plastic bottles saved as a result of refilling. To date, over 45 water fountains have been retrofitted on campus. In the MSU Main Office alone, the retrofitted fountain has refilled the equivalent of more than 5000 plastic bottles. A list of all retrofitted fountain locations can be found online at: www.mcmaster.ca/sustainability/waste_fountainlocations.html.

If you would like to find out how to make your space a Plastic Bottle Free Zone or have any questions or comments regarding the Plastic Bottle Free Policy, please don't hesitate to contact me.



The President's Page is sponsored by the McMaster Students Union. It is a space used to communicate with the student body about the projects, goals and agenda of the MSU Board of Directors.

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