

Animal instinct

Karen Levenson promises to give animals voice in Guelph byelection

Rob O'Flanagan
roflanagan@guelphmercury.com

GUELPH — Animals now have a voice speaking for them in the upcoming Guelph byelection.

Karen Levenson of the Animal Alliance Environment Voters Party of Canada has entered the race. In the past, the Guelph political activist was content to be a thorn in the sides of the major political parties — advocating for the protection of animals and stronger environmental protection measures.

But when a piece of Liberal legislation, known by some as the “gag law,” restricted third party involvement in federal elections, the AAEV became a political party in 2005 to maintain its national political voice.

Levenson, 50, said she has a number of reasons for running locally.

“This is an important election, and we believe this is an important riding,” she said. She is pushing for Guelph-specific policies, in particular an anti-trapping bylaw for the city.

“A little dog was killed in December of 2006 in a conibear trap while walking in an area used as an off-leash

dog park in the city,” Levenson said. “There shouldn’t be traps set within the city limits of Guelph.”

Levenson, who holds a master’s degree in film and video studies from York University, said animal rights issues should be raised during the campaign.

That’s what she plans to do with her candidacy, through door-to-door canvassing and at the all-candidates’ debates.

There are a number of animal rights issues in Guelph that must be addressed, Levenson said, including the treatment of food animals, and those used in research at the University of Guelph. Many scientists today are speaking out against animal-based research, she said, adding it is virtually useless to use them to test drugs intended for humans.

AAEV considers experimentation on animals to be an act of cruelty and a waste of both money and time.

“The Green party probably has the strongest stance in terms of the environment, but nobody is really talking about animals,” she said. “They are the voiceless and they need to be talked about.”

Levenson said global



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Karen Levenson of the Animal Alliance Environment Voters Party of Canada has entered the race for the upcoming Guelph byelection.

warming is decimating many animal species. Habitat destruction — from both climate change and the growth of human communities — is reducing animal populations, and more people should be concerned.

“Animals need to be talked about,” she said. “Humans are

animals. We are part of the animal chain, yet we do not recognize that and often separate ourselves from looking at animal issues.

“We are inextricably intertwined with animals, and the more animal species decline, the closer we are to our decline.”