

Fringe candidate boasts he's proud of his ousters

One of the four fringe candidates who weren't invited to take part in Monday's televised debate spent almost half an hour haranguing the crowd before he was finally escorted out by police.

The four main candidates were already seated at a table in the River Run Centre's Co-operators Hall waiting for the debate to start when John Turmel suddenly started pacing in front of them, talking loudly.

"You know, in Brantford the police took me away four times" from debates where he wasn't invited to participate, he told the crowd.

"This is going to happen every meeting where I can't go . . . I do this every time," said Turmel, a Brantford resident who is running as an independent in the Guelph byelection. He said his platform includes "interest-free banking . . . I want to get rid of debt slavery."

Some members of the crowd tried to convince him to leave, and one asked him how he could justify turning the event into "a three-ring circus." Another audience member called for a show of hands about whether he should be stay. Most people in the crowd voted for him to go.

But Turmel, whose online Wikipedia entry states that the 57-year-old has unsuccessfully run for government positions 66 times before now, refused to leave until four Guelph Police officers arrived at about 7:12 p.m. - 12 minutes after the scheduled start of the debate. The Wikipedia entry says Turmel holds the record in the Guinness Book of Records for participating in and losing the most elections.

At one point before the scheduled start, debate moderator and Guelph Chamber of Commerce

president Lloyd Longfield took hold of a square piece of baggage that Turmel had brought and tried to remove it. Both men ended up tugging at the baggage, and there was some shoving before Turmel managed to retrieve it from Longfield.

Turmel was eventually joined at the front of the hall by Karen Levenson, who is running in the local byelection as the Animal Alliance Environment Voters candidate, and by her party leader, Liz White. They smiled and nodded as Turmel kept talking loudly.

White told reporters her party is lodging a complaint with Elections Canada about not being

invited to Monday's debate, on the grounds that the Guelph Chamber of Commerce is making a "non-monetary contribution" to the campaigns of the four main candidates by inviting only them.

Two other fringe candidates - Libertarian Philip Bender and Marijuana Party candidate Korneilis "Kase" Klevering - are also running in the byelection.

The *Guelph Mercury*, which is organizing this byelection's other televised debate along with Rogers Television, has indicated all eight candidates can take part in its debate set for Wednesday Sept. 3 from 7-9 p.m. at Guelph Place on Michener Road.

To be accepted by Elections Canada as a candidate in a riding, there is no need to live there. However, a candidate needs to get at least 100 signatures from residents of the riding, said returning officer Anne Budra. She said her office checks the names listed to ensure they match up with the addresses listed.

Candidates also need to pay a \$1,000 deposit "to sort of show they are serious about running in the campaign," Budra said Wednesday.

Turmel was joined at the front of the hall by Karen Levenson and Liz White of the Animal Alliance Environment Voters