



All-candidates night in Westmeath

See page 6

Big Bend



Marie
Zettler

The all-candidates meeting for Westmeath Township held in the Westmeath Community Hall last Thursday night was a good example of democracy in action. The candidates were well-prepared, as were members of the audience, who asked a lot of good questions about issues current in the township. Beryl McBride, president of the Westmeath Branch of the Women's Institute which sponsored the evening, did an excellent job as moderator.

Attendance could have been better, I guess. The W.I. ladies estimated there were about 85 in the audience, down from about 100 when a similar event was held in LaPasse before the last municipal election three years ago.

However, it could have been worse too. The Ottawa radio stations report a school board all-candidates night in the city attended by only one person besides the candidates.

The people who don't go are the real losers in these cases. At the Westmeath meeting, not only was the formal part most informative; the informal coffee hour following has to have had great potential benefits for councillor-ratepayer relations throughout the next term of office, no matter who is elected. The opportunity to establish lines of communication at a time other than at crisis time will surely make it easier for mutual problem-solving to happen.

Midnight Musings

Meeting Provides Venue For Election Candidates

WESTMEATH — Those acclaimed or in election races in the region recently attended an all candidates meeting at Westmeath Community Hall.

Sponsored by the Westmeath Women's Institute, the meeting provided a venue for those seeking positions on township council, Renfrew County Board of Education (RCBE) and the Renfrew County Roman Catholic Separate School Board (RCR-CSSB).

Joe Trimm, who is acclaimed as trustee on the RCRCSSB for the townships of Pembroke, Stafford and Westmeath, along with Beachburg, outlined his involvement in the board over the past few years.

"Our board looks after 5,000 students and has a budget of \$17.6 million. We have been working on Bill 82 which covers exceptional children and also on the budget this year are more computers. In addition we are investigating the possibility of trying French immersion in selected areas of the county," the present RCRCSSB chairman stated.

He pointed out his board is awaiting a court decision on full funding for Roman Catholic schools.

Two candidates are vying for

trustees on the RCBE over the same region. Jane Levoy is a registered nurse and currently president of the home and school council. She said she would like to maintain and improve education along with the studying of enrolment and transportation.

Dave Shields is a metallurgical engineer at Chalk River Nuclear Laboratories and has prior experience on Beachburg council. He would like to see children educated locally and keep Westmeath and Beachburg schools open and properly funded.

The acclaimed reeve, Gordon White, broke down how every dollar is spent in the township.

"Thirty-six cents stays with the township, nine cents goes to the county and 54 cents goes to education. The township budget is around \$3.7 million of which agriculture contributes 53 per cent; residential assessment brings in 41 per cent and commercial contributes six per cent of total revenue," he said.

Although acclaimed, deputy reeve Barry Derouin said he would have liked a challenge. Mr. Derouin was responsible for roads and pointed out it cost \$30,000 for every mile of the township's 113-mile road system.

Make Views Clear

WESTMEATH — Five men are in the running for three seats on Westmeath township council, and all made their views clear at a recent all candidates meeting.

Grant Byce of RR 1 Beachburg would like to work on an issue of high traffic on area roads during the tourist season.

"This traffic causes problems to the farmers as they move equipment and livestock between farms," he stated.

He also pointed out the previous council has been reluctant to keep road ditches clean, and said he would put forth an honest effort if confronted with a complaint.

Robert Gervais is president of the Westmeath and District Recreation Association. He feels there should be a non-farming representative on council, saying council should be made up of

the whole township.

Lapasse's Roy Gervais is retired and feels he has the time and expertise to sit on council.

"New faces are required and a time for change has come. The retiring council is out of touch with ratepayers," Mr. Gervais stated.

Incumbent Andy Gervais said the outgoing council was fair and equitable.

"Priorities have been roads, followed by agriculture, tourism, industry and now recreation is coming to the forefront," he said.

Another veteran from the prior council, Harry Hill said that while agriculture was the biggest industry, recreation should not be forgotten. He urged local residents to take an interest in the township's new official plan which will be introduced in the near future.