

Full house, but not full panel, for all-candidates meeting

By **LISATALLYN**
Staff Writer

It was a full house for the all-candidates debate in Georgetown Friday night but not all the candidates were there.

Green Party candidate Brent Bouteiller, Conservative Michael Chong and Liberal Barry Peters attended, but candidates for the NDP—Anastasia Zavarella—and Christian Heritage Party—Jeffrey Streutker—didn't show up for the debate sponsored by the Canadian Federation of University Women at the Gellert Centre due to previous commitments.

"This election is about our government's economic record," said Chong in his opening remarks. He said due to his government's Canadian Economic Action Plan the Canadian economy has "emerged stronger out of this recession than any other single developed advanced economy in the world." He added the recovery is fragile, however, so the country needs to continue with the plan.

"People are tired of what's going on in Ottawa, they want change," said Peters. He said, "Harper's not investing in families or things that matter most."

He said the Liberals would provide an alternative government "built on compassion and opportunity for everyone."

Bouteiller said he expects those



Liberal candidate Barry Peters (left) and Conservative candidate Michael Chong (right) check their notes while Green Party candidate Brent Bouteiller makes a point during Friday's Wellington-Halton Hills all-candidates' debate at the Gellert Centre.

Photo by Jon Borgstrom

elected "to go to parliament and negotiate together to create solutions Canadians need. Green Party candidates can do this."

An audience member asked how the Conservative Party rationalized using public funds to pay for advertising for the Economic Action Plan.

"I'm very upset about this and it should not happen," said Bouteiller.

"If there's one thing the Conservative government proved is they're great at signs and advertising. But they missed an opportunity to invest this money into things that can create jobs," said Peters. He added more funds went to Conservative ridings.

"The ads were not partisan," said Chong to a chorus of boos from some in the crowd. "These ads were approved by the public service. To accuse the ads of being partisan is to accuse Canada's premier world-class public service of being partisan themselves," said Chong.

He said over the last two-and-a-half years the government, in conjunction with the Province, embarked on an unprecedented post Second World War stimulus plan.

He said the Conservatives felt the public needed to know what they were doing with that money.

The candidates were asked what

their government would do to eliminate the Canadian municipalities' \$123 billion infrastructure deficit.

Chong said his government had invested \$60 billion in record stimulus to municipalities and stressed it's not true it went disproportionately to Conservative ridings.

"The reality is we delivered on what we said we would do in record time," said Chong.

He said they also doubled the gas tax money for local municipalities, and the Town of Halton Hills will see \$1.7 million, and Halton Region \$13 million this year for infrastructure needs.

Peters said it was proven Conservative ridings received a lot of extra funding.

"Lisa Raitt's riding (Halton) got twice what we got here," said Peters.

"Municipalities need predictable, stable, steady funding," said Peters.

Another question posed was what they would do about the pending crisis in health care for the elderly.

Peters pointed to the Liberals family care plan and stressed the need to keep seniors in their own homes.

"There's a lack of doctors, nurses and other medical practitioners in this country," said Bouteiller. He said the government needs to create more funding to train more doctors and nurses.

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