



A student at the microphone poses a question to Wellington-Halton Hills MP Michael Chong during the Report-Back Session last Friday at Halton Hills Christian School. The question-and-answer session was billed as the United Nations Simulation on Education. Pictured at right is Grade 8 HHCS student Jade Hoekstra.

Photo by Eamonn Maher

Local-area MP visits Halton Hills Christian School

Chong up to the challenge

By **EAMONN MAHER**
Staff Writer

Michael Chong, Member of Parliament for Wellington-Halton Hills, was on the hotseat last Friday as students from Halton Hills Christian School peppered him with questions on Canada's position on a number of issues regarding education at home and abroad.

The 90-minute interactive "Report-Back Session" resulted from a letter sent to Chong by a group of Grade 8 students who participated in a mock United Nations symposium last year at HHCS in the international development course for the graduating students overseen by former UN staff member Wayne Gill, who volunteers to teach the program at the school.

One student asked Chong about what Canada was doing to protect women and girls in Afghanistan who in the past had been banned from even appearing in common public areas.

"We're putting pressure on Afghanistan's president, Hamid Karzai, by withholding aid money if they don't

preserve the rights of those people," Chong responded.

"But ultimately, the Afghan people need to control and govern themselves in the long run."

Chong was also queried on the state of education amongst aboriginals in Canada, 40 per cent of whom don't graduate from high school. In some cases, students must move hundreds of kilometers away from home in order to attend school almost year-round.

The MP responded by pointing to the establishment of the Indian Residential Schools Truth & Reconciliation Commission in October of last year to investigate human rights abuses on native reserves in this country.

Chong acknowledged that the federal government's track record with respect to providing education to aboriginals in remote areas has been poor, given that schools usually fall under provincial jurisdiction.

In response, more financial support has been forthcoming from the Canadian government and a better working relationship has been forged with provinces in order to provide better education on reserves.

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