



Federal election 2015

Monday, Oct. 19

Lively crowd at CFUW's federal election all candidates meeting

By **Melanie Hennessey**
Special to The IFP

The Syrian refugee crisis, health-care funding and international climate change were all on the table for debate by the area's federal election candidates this past week.

The four Wellington/Halton Hills contenders came together for an all-candidates' meeting at the John Elliott Theatre, which was packed by a lively crowd that wasn't afraid to express its support or displeasure of the thoughts expressed throughout the night.

The event was hosted by the Georgetown branch of the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW), in partnership with the Halton Hills Public Library. CFUW members accepted written questions from the audience and selected a wide variety to ask the candidates: Conservative MP Michael Chong, Liberal contender Dr. Don Trant, NDP candidate Anne Gajerski-Cauley and Brent Bouteiller of the Green Party.

The evening kicked off with the candidates being asked to share what they think about their party leaders.

"I respect my leader. I think he's done a good job," said Chong, noting that "being a Prime Minister in this country is not a likeability contest."

He also used the opportunity to discuss how he feels about Liberal leader Justin Trudeau, describing him as a colleague and a friend.

"But I can tell you that he is not ready to govern," he said, which was met with a chorus of booing from the audience.

Trant didn't take the commentary lying down, going on to defend Trudeau and fire back at the PCs.

"Justin Trudeau is an intelligent, engaging, motivating individual. He brings a new style of leadership that's entirely refreshing," he said. "He's not afraid to ask questions. The Prime Minister can't know everything, but Stephen Harper thinks he does."

Bouteiller described Green Party head Elizabeth May as a hardworking person who has consistently provided excellent leadership.

"She provides all of us with the facts and policy that's based on the facts," he said. "This is the kind of lead-

ership we need in this country."

And to Gajerski-Cauley, NDP leader Tom Mulcair is "enormously courageous," telling the audience about his decision to resign from his post as Quebec's environment minister because he didn't agree with the government's plans to build condominiums over parkland.

"He's a man of fire; he's a man of strength; he's a man of vision," she said. "I think he will make an outstanding Prime Minister."

The foursome was then questioned

KEY DATES

Close of nominations for candidates

• Monday, Sept. 28

Election Day

• Monday, Oct. 19

Advance voting takes place on:

• Friday, Oct. 9

• Saturday, Oct. 10

• Sunday, Oct. 11

• Monday, Oct. 12



BRENT BOUTEILLER
Green Party



MICHAEL CHONG
Conservative



ANNE GAJERSKI-CAULEY
NDP



DON TRANT
Liberal

on how Canada should respond to the situation in Syria and resulting refugee crisis.

Bouteiller said the Greens feel the situation in Syria is being made worse by Canada's military involvement.

"We believe at this point we can open our arms and bring quite a few refugees in to this country," he said. "As a country, we should have brought in quite a few more refugees earlier on."

Trant said if the Liberals are elected they would take in 25,000 refugees through an expedited process that doesn't shortchange security checks.

"It's time that we reached out and assisted those in need," he said. "Canada has always been a nation of immigrants. Many of our families came over during times of crisis where they lived."

Gajerski-Cauley shared similar sentiments, noting her ancestors came to Canada from Ireland during the potato famine.

"This is a long and deep part of our history. We need to adhere to that heritage and welcome people when they're in desperate straits," she said. "We really ought to be using our military equipment and resources to scoop

them up and save them and bring them here."

She said the NDP plans to honour the United Nations' request to immediately accept 10,000 refugees.

Chong said that Canada has already committed to helping 44,800 refugees from that region of the world, with 24,800 already admitted and resettled in Canada.

He also said that Canada needs to provide both military aid and humanitarian assistance in Syria.

"I believe we, as Canadians, cannot just do one thing in the region and not the other," he said.

On the health-care front, a local resident asked if the candidates would back a new federal health accord to

support the needs of all citizens.

"The answer is yes," said Trant, who went on to explain the federal government's role in health care is to transfer funding to the provinces, which in turn have to make improvements to things such as wait times.

He said the federal and provincial governments need to sit down together and address the "tsunami" of seniors on the horizon, along with rising Alzheimer's and mental health issues.

Gajerski-Cauley again echoed Trant, emphasizing that more funding

"The Conservative government put Canada's health-care system on a sustainable track. It's going to be there for Canadians when they need it," he said. For the Green Party, the issue isn't just about health care, said Bouteiller.

"We also care about prevention of illness and health promotion," he said. "We have to remove the dangerous chemicals from our environment so that we provide good, clean air, water and soil."

He noted the Greens would also like to develop a publicly-administered pharmacare program.

When it comes to the environment and international climate change, Trant said the Liberals would work with the provinces to set a limit on greenhouse gas emissions, use a carbon pricing system, develop clean technologies and "unmuzzle our scientists." The latter received a round of applause from the audience.

Gajerski-Cauley said the NDP would implement a cap and trade system, establish green jobs and put money into transit and unlocking gridlock.

Chong was critical of his party when it comes to environmental efforts.

"While the government has made some progress, it hasn't gone nearly far enough," he said, emphasizing that emission regulations need to be set for the oil and gas industries.

And Bouteiller said his party would like to implement a carbon fee and dividend system that would impose a fee on the purchase of carbon-based fuels, which would then be saved and distributed at the end of the year to Canadians.

Other topics discussed throughout the evening included addressing the societal issue of violence against women, the government's role in helping the less fortunate and promoting Canadian culture.

Town seeking answers from candidates

Town Council is putting the Wellington/Halton Hills federal election candidates to the test with a series of municipal-focused questions.

A memo from Mayor Rick Bonnette that details three questions related to federal funding for municipi-

alities, emergency preparedness and connecting Halton Hills in the global marketplace was endorsed by council on Monday. The candidates will be asked to provide written responses to the questions, which will then be posted at www.haltonhills.ca for lo-

cal residents to read. The deadline for their submissions is Friday, Sept. 25.

The questions come as part of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' push for federal candidates to debate municipal issues during the election.