

# All-candidates meeting attracts nearly 200

There weren't many empty seats left in the John Elliott Theatre Wednesday night as a crowd of nearly 200 turned out to hear from their federal election candidates in a debate hosted by the University Women's Club.

All Wellington-Halton Hills candidates, except for Carolann Krusky of the Christian Heritage Party who did not participate, had a chance to introduce themselves and their party platforms to voters before answering several audience questions on issues ranging from immigration to foreign aid.

The candidates were asked if their parties would be willing to change the Young Offender's Act (now called the Youth Criminal Justice Act) so it is no longer a tool for people to hide behind.

Conservative candidate Michael Chong said they had no specific plans for the Act, but "we're proposing to toughen up the criminal justice system."

He said they plan to implement mandatory minimum jail terms for serious crimes involving guns, hire 2,500 additional police officers across the country, toughen up border security, and invest \$50 million in youth at risk.

"It's a difficult task to determine when people should be punished or when they should be guided into a more appropriate venue for their activities," said Liberal Rod Finnie.

He said the Liberals' three-pronged approach is to ban the use of handguns, put more RCMP officers at the border to stop the flow of handguns and impose mandatory sentencing for those caught with or committing crimes with guns.

He said the Liberals aren't planning to do anything with the Act at this point, and the long-term solu-

tion, however is to deal with problems created in inner cities 10 years ago when school boards and social agencies "were starved" of funding.

The candidates were also asked why the government maintains high rates of immigration without adequate border security and sufficient funds to integrate legitimate immigrants?

"We believe we need immigration because Canada's birth rate is falling," said Finnie. He said immigrants are needed to help fill the work gaps.

He said he didn't agree with the statement there are gaps in border

security. Noel Duignan, NDP candidate, disagreed, and said that border posts in some areas of Quebec, New Brunswick, the Prairies and British Columbia "are anything but secure."

"That's where we need to have armed customs officers and increase the presence of the RCMP," said Duignan.

Brent Bouteiller of the Green Party said when immigrants come to Canada they "find a system so convoluted and that takes so long to occur that often they give up or run out of money."

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A crowd of nearly 200 people turned out to the John Elliott Theatre Wednesday for an federal election all-candidates meeting.

Photo by Lisa Tallyn

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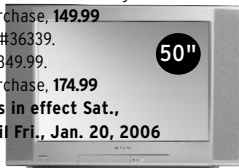
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