Acton high holds debate

Students question candidates on gay marriage, voting age

Acton High School students had a chance to grill local federal election candidates on several issues Thursday morning.

All six Wellington-Halton Hills candidates— Brent Bouteiller (Green Party), Michael Chong (Conservative), Noel Duignan (NDP), Rod Finnie (Liberal), Mike Wisniewski (Independent) and Carolann Krusky (Christian Heritage Party)— attended a debate hosted by the school's student council.

A student asked about Chong's view on gay marriage and if his party would use the not withstanding clause to change the current law. She also asked about his view on abortion.

"A Conservative government would not use the not withstanding clause to legislate in this area," said Chong.

He said if the issue comes up again Harper would allow a free vote on whether to reopen the issue.

"I will consult my constituents and based on their feedback make a decision as to how I'm going to vote," said Chong, who would not give his opinion on the issue because he said he didn't want to prejudge what the voters will tell him.

Reading from his party's platform he said a Conservative government would not "initiate or support any legislation to regulate abortion."

"I'm in favour of gay marriages," said Duignan, who also responded. "This is an issue where you stand up and say I'm in favour of this because this is a basic human right."

"I agree with Mr. Duignan," said Liberal candidate Finnie.

Krusky said she had the courage to disagree.

"Marriage is between a man and a woman. It is the foundation of our society," said Krusky.

"I care about homosexuals...It would be our government who would be there nurturing them when they're ill and they have HIV because we don't believe in euthanasia either. We support life."

She asked how many future skilled workers and doctors have been killed through abortion.

Another student asked the candidates about their views on lowering or raising the voting age.

"Our party's position is to reduce the voting age to 17," said Bouteiller.

"I think right now it's probably best left where it is," said Chong.

Wisniewski said there are arguments to both raise and lower the age.

Any change he said however should be test-run in a provincial election first.

Finnie said he wouldn't have a problem lowering the voting age, and Duignan said his party's policy is to lower it to 16.

Krusky said she would have to look at the implications of lowering the age.

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer

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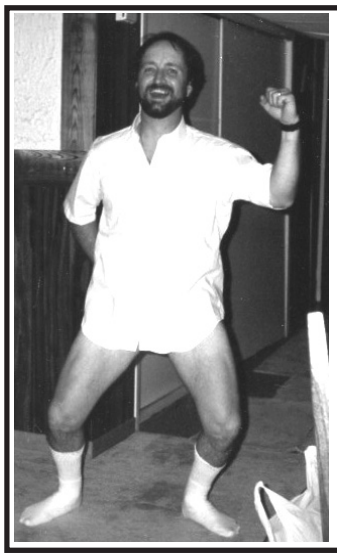

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