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Residents call for changes in political system

By **ROBIN DOWNTON-POIRIER**

Special to *The Champion*

An "acrimonious" political system, health-care and immigration were among the hot topics discussed at the town hall meeting hosted by MP hopeful Garth Turner Wednesday night in Brookville.

The meeting held at the Nassagaweya Community Centre on Guelph Line drew about 40 area residents.

Mr. Turner, a Conservative, graciously accepted each comment and criticism from the audience and stressed that he would like to help change the political system in Canada if he attains his goal of becoming an MP in the next federal election and representing Halton in the House of Commons.

"I feel we need a better political system. Things are pretty acrimonious and ugly and we need to change that (before) people step back and become cynical about it," he

said at the opening of the meeting.

"I feel that I have an obligation and a duty to talk to people to find out what's important to them and I know from past experience that these town hall meetings are a great way to do this."

Bob Clark, a Halton resident, commented that improvements in the communication process are needed.

"When you (Mr. Turner) were an MP before, initially the communication was a good two-way street (between the residents and the House of Commons) and you would take information back to Ottawa from Halton, but then it changed," he said.

"It became a one-way street and it was as if you were selling residents on the happenings in Ottawa. Re-instilling confidence and dignity in Ottawa is needed."

Many residents agreed with Mr. Turner and Mr. Clark about the political system and passionately offered their opinions.

"There is too much short-term vision in the political system now. The politicians are only seeing what will happen in the immediate future, but the next four years is not good enough. They need to be thinking more long term, like the next 15 to 20 years."

JOHAN CHERRIER

Johan Cherrier expressed his belief that there's a lack of long-term planning and vision in today's political system.

"There is too much short-term vision in the political system now," said Mr. Cherrier. "The politicians are only seeing what will happen in the immediate future but the next four years is not good enough. They need to be thinking more long term, like the next 15 to 20 years."

Another topic that was discussed at length was the health-care system and the way Canada is moving toward an "American-style system", whereby people may have to pay for some health-care options.

Mr. Turner expressed his concern that with an ageing population, medical demands will overwhelm the health-care system, and that changes are needed to compensate for this.

He said the Conservative Party of Canada believes in exploring ways to improve health care and possibly blending public and private care providers to ensure Canadians have access to all health care options.

Immigration hot topic

When the discussion turned to immigration, residents told Mr. Turner that Canada's health-care system and affordable housing are both already stressed and allowing more immigrants will only make things worse.

He said that the Conservative Party feels strongly that the 600,000 people in the "immigration queue," those who have applied for entry into Canada, should be handled first before any further immigration is considered.

He added people that can be a benefit to Canada, such as doctors, should be given consideration first.

Other topics that were touched one briefly included taxation, control over gasoline prices and the criminal justice system.

On each seat, Mr. Turner placed a Voter's Guide. It covers many of the topics discussed as well as some others that were raised when he does door-to-door canvassing for support.

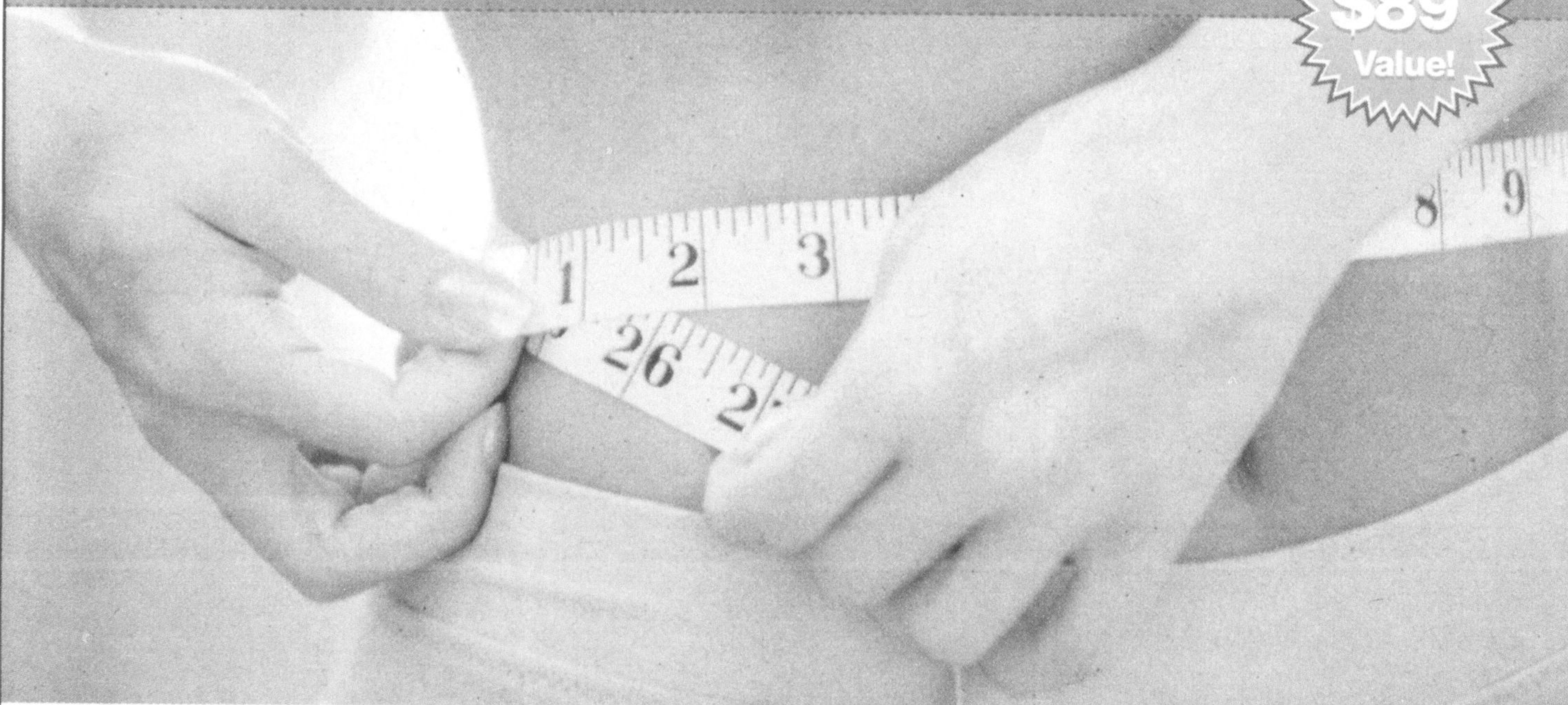
The MP hopeful concluded the meeting by stating that the political system has been receiving a great deal of negative publicity lately with the Liberals being accused of corruption and cover-ups, as well as the defection of Belinda Stronach.

He said he believes that this negative stigma can be alleviated, and the best way to do that is "one leader at a time."

He added that he's older and more experienced since his last time in office in 1988 and has a better perspective now in order to fairly represent Halton constituents.

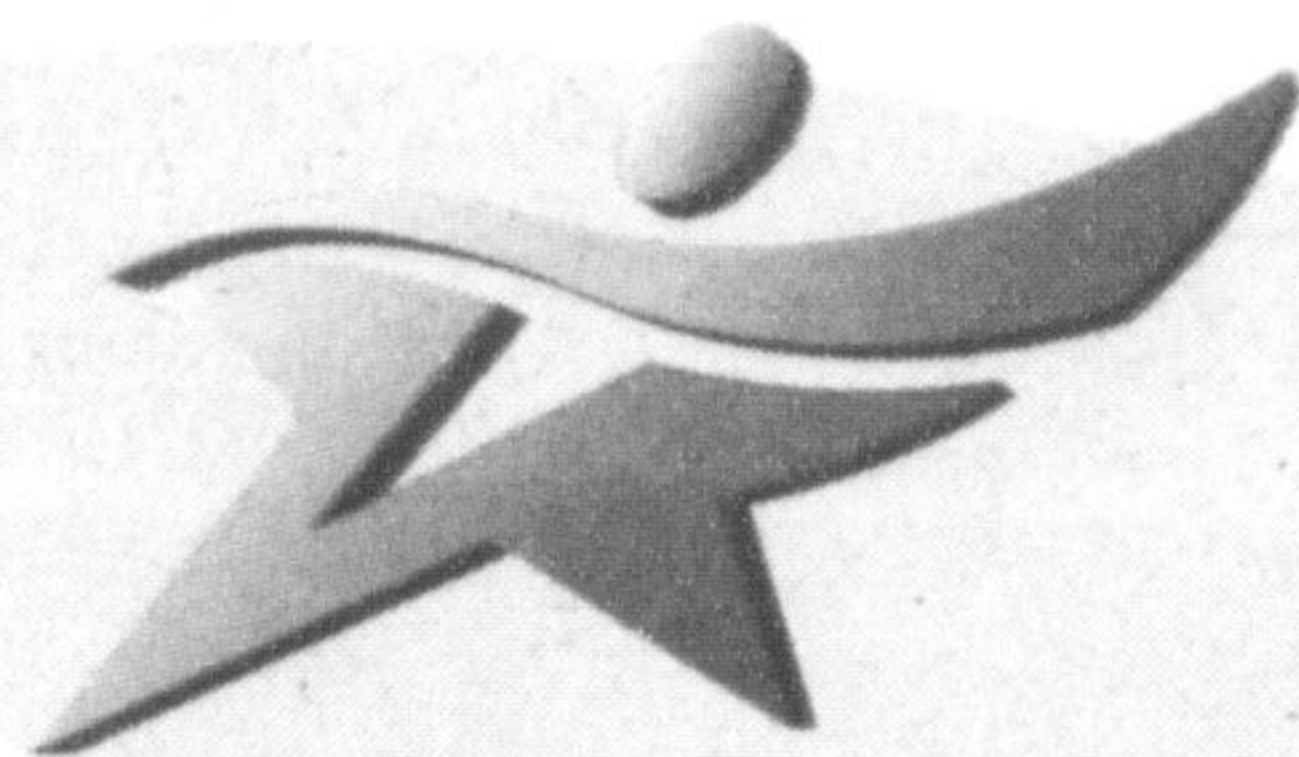
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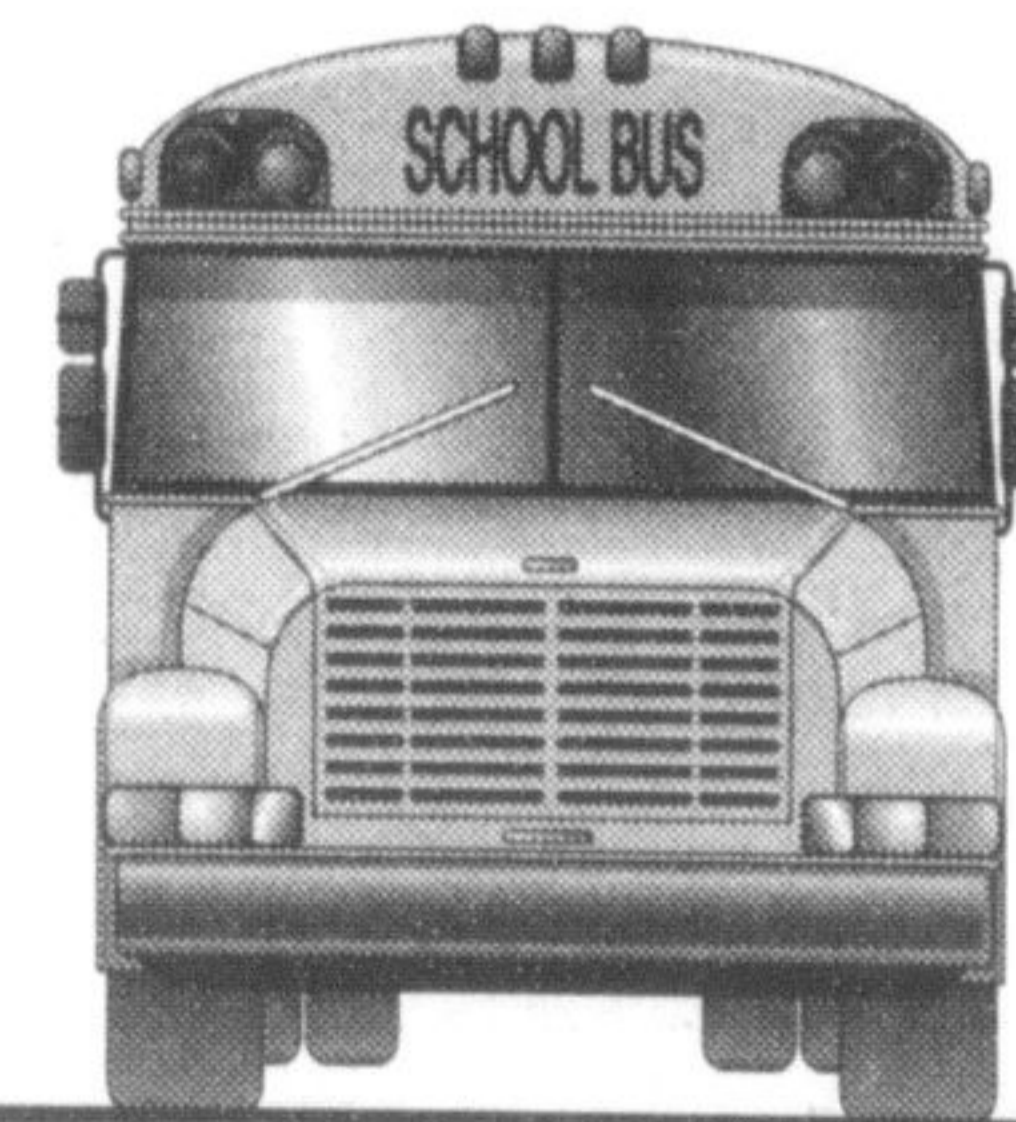
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