

# Comment

## The Canadian Champion

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Circulation: 905-878-5947

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## No clear-cut winner

While plenty of low blows were delivered, anyone anticipating a decisive knock-out punch during Monday night's nationally-televised leadership debate had to settle for a split decision.

For those who had already made up their mind about who to support on January 23, it's unlikely CBC's national debate between Gilles Duceppe, Stephen Harper, Jack Layton and Paul Martin offered much to alter their decision. The same is likely true for the undecided voter looking for a compelling reason to back someone — anyone.

Between defending his government's role in the sponsorship scandal and engaging Duceppe in a hair-splitting exercise over Quebec's status within Canada, Martin seemed to expend much of his energy trying to salvage the image of a Liberal Party the other three leaders characterized as arrogant, lacking ethics and dishonest.

From the evening's opening remarks Martin's was by far the most emotional delivery of the night, chastising his opponents, telling them "enough is enough" with what he called "drive-by smears."

Ironically, Martin himself waded into the mudslinging pit when he challenged Harper's past public remarks to U.S.-based conservative groups in which he described

Canada as a second-rate nation and likened it to a northern European welfare state.

The Conservative leader showed he was up to the challenge, questioning why Martin's family-owned business — Canada Steamship Lines — has operated ships under the flags of foreign governments in order to reap the benefit of lower taxes.

At times it appeared Harper was having difficulty containing his smile — perhaps a reaction to his party having scratched out what may prove an insurmountable lead in recent polls.

While Harper promised a government free of scandal, lower GST, a crackdown on crime and reduced wait times in hospitals, Layton questioned the Conservative leader's math, suggesting other services would have to be slashed in order to finance all his promises.

While Layton presented himself as a legitimate alternative to Liberal scandal and the vote-buying tactics of the Conservatives, his message was — at times — repetitious. He played on the fears of Canadians voters who worry about Quebec's separation, noting the sponsorship scandal has provided a boost to separatist recruitment, and suggesting Harper's lack of respect for Quebec's distinct society only adds fuel to the separatist fire.

## Our Readers Write

### MP's letter fails to address valid question with regard to competence of Paul Martin

Dear Editor:

I was disappointed by Halton MP Gary Carr's response to the letter in which Daryl Baswick questioned the competence of Paul Martin.

Mr. Baswick asserted that since Mr. Martin was finance minister during the sponsorship scandal, he either knew about it or should have known what was going on in Quebec.

Mr. Carr's response was that Mr. Martin made the correct choice to call an inquiry. In my opinion he failed to address Mr. Baswick's

assertion, and that speaks volumes. Mr. Carr is unable to defend the indefensible.

For some reason, rather than address this important issue, Mr. Carr chose to shift the readers' attention by pitting Mr. Martin against Brian Mulroney.

Mr. Carr points out that books have been written about scandals in the Mulroney era.

He conveniently ignores the fact that both the Pierre Trudeau and Jean Chretien governments contributed richly to the history of

Canadian political scandals.

He goes on to say that Mr. Martin cleaned up a \$42-billion deficit inherited from the Mulroney Conservatives, but neglects to mention that it was Trudeau's Liberals who ushered in 15 years of deficit financing and created a crippling national debt.

I believe Mr. Carr failed to address a valid question and instead attempted to divert attention to the bogeyman of Mr. Mulroney.

Nancy Ruhl  
Milton

### Letters welcome

The Champion welcomes letters to the editor. We reserve the right to edit, revise and reject letters. Letters must include the writer's name, address and telephone number. Letters can be e-mailed to [miltone@haltonsearch.com](mailto:miltone@haltonsearch.com), faxed to (905) 878-4943 or dropped off at 875 Main St. E.

## 2005 will be remembered as the year of growth

I was reading over The Champion's recent synopsis of what made the biggest news in 2005 and something occurred to me.

When you look back at what was on our front pages, there really weren't any major news events — which are usually bad news — in town last year.

Thankfully, there were no murders, no major accidents involving multiple deaths and no disasters. The only thing that came close to a disaster was a series of grass fires that caused chaos, but no one was hurt.

Most of the items were stories about ongoing major news events coming to a close, like the settlement that was reached in the E. coli case involving E.C. Drury High School students who became sick after attending their prom.

And sentences were handed down to the ex-wife and teenaged accomplice of Douglas Moore, who is believed to have murdered the young Joseph Manchisi.

Really the biggest news in 2005 — what the year will be known for to future generations — was growth.

No, the town's current housing boom didn't start last year, but it certainly continued in full swing and will have a lasting impact on what our town becomes.

Now, as Mayor Gord Krantz pointed out in our recent story on what lies ahead in 2006, the main area of construction will shift this year to west Milton, continuing the growth trend.

And that brings me to the question — just what will Milton become? What will it be like 20 years



From the  
editor's desk

with KAREN SMITH

from now?

While I haven't been shy to point out my displeasure with the current traffic woes caused by growth, I actually think in the long run Milton will be a better place.

Its future includes an expanded Town Hall,

library relocation and new arts centre (please hurry).

Once things are all sorted out, there will be so many more reasons to stay in the community.

Just look at the consumer picture already. I'm enjoying having a Wal-Mart so close by, and the new Zellers is a big improvement.

The overall shopping experience is only going to get better at Milton Mall and I'm looking forward to that. I see good things in the future for the downtown as well.

Ultimately, the concern is — will Milton lose its community-minded qualities? I don't think so. They're firmly planted in its roots.

And roots can be pretty tough to dig out.

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