

Small crowd questions public school trustee candidates

Incumbent disputes challenger's claim that board funds have been mismanaged

By Melanie Hennessey
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Those running for Milton public school trustee and regional chairman squared off during the last all-candidates meeting of the season Friday evening.

The event at Country Heritage Park drew a small crowd of local citizens looking to hear more from incumbent trustee Paul Tate and contender Donna Danielli and the four men running for regional chairman — Brian Burton, Gary Carr, Brent Marshall and Robert Plaschka.

The trustee hopefuls kicked off the session in a somewhat heated exchange. The pair was asked to describe what role they felt fundraising plays in quality education.

Danielli alleged the board has "mismanaged" its money, so fundraising has become crucial for schools. She also contended that funds schools raise used to

be for extras, but now they're used for essentials like books.

Tate disagreed and said using fundraisers for essentials is the "old way of doing things."

"Fundraising in the community should be for one thing — the extras," he said.

Another question posed was how they would work with parents, students, school councils and the community if they're elected.

Tate said he's already doing that quite extensively.

"I think I've been very active," he said.

Danielli went on to question Tate's involvement. She said she spoke to principals at the two local schools her children attend and one said they hadn't talked to Tate in a year, while the other said it had been three years.

"Those principals were mistaken or the question was asked wrong," Tate responded.

What they would do to secure school funding to support Milton's growth was also

asked.

Danielli said improving the board's reputation would go a long way. She also suggested arranging a deal with local developers to prepay development fees for schools, thus getting them built before the new students move to town.

Tate said the board already has the funding in place, but pointed out it's hard to build new schools when the infrastructure to get to them isn't there.

"The funding issue was solved. It was solved by me," he said. "We have a deal unique to Halton."

Then, the regional chairman candidates took the stage to respond to questions like how they would protect Milton's interests at the Region, since the town only has three representatives on regional council out of 21.

Burton said it's up to the chair to keep control of meetings and ensure every member of council has his say.

"That is the primary role of the chair," he said.

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