

More than 500 residents question candidates at forum

ROGER BELGRAVE
Staff Reporter

Jobs and the economy have surfaced as critical issues for local voters in the upcoming federal election.

Those two issues dominated

question period at last Tuesday evening's all-candidates meeting. Local election candidates faced more than 500 area residents in an Embassy Suites Hotel conference room. Incumbent Markham Whitchurch-Stouffville MP Bill Attewell was grilled by most audience members, while Reform Party candidate Joe Sherren stirred the most favorable responses from the crowd.

In total, five political parties

were represented at the meeting that included National Party candidate Sheldon Bergson, Liberal Jag Bhaduria and New Democrat Jack Grant.

Almost all of the audience members who stepped up to the microphones were looking for answers from Attewell. The recurring theme among questioners was the current economic and unemployment situation.

Attewell highlighted his government's commitment to millions of dollars for job retraining. But the retraining needs to be focused, he explained. Without focus, people could be retrained for jobs that are no longer needed.

He admitted "we're not a perfect government in terms of spending." However, the Tory government's spending is almost four times lower than the previous Liberal governments, he said at one point.

For Bhaduria, reducing the nation's deficit comes second after creating jobs. Bhaduria believes this is a Tory-made recession, prolonged by its policies. The government needs to

provide small and medium-sized businesses with incentives to create jobs, remarked Sherren.

The Reform Party plan is to reduce the nation's deficit, debt and bureaucracy to stimulate investment in business. Sherren said the government has to cut its overhead and get rid of a tax structure which impedes small business from creating jobs. The Reform Party has developed a comprehensive debt reduction plan. The document, called Zero in Three, outlines its plan to balance the federal budget in three years without any tax increases.

The New Democrats have also developed an economic paper entitled A Strategy for a Full Employment Economy.

Grant believes the government's policy for reducing the deficit is a conflicting one. Cutting transfer payments is not the answer, he suggested.

"Their way of cutting the deficit is only to increase unemployment," he said.

Besides finding adequate financing for small business,

(Please see page 3)

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As a result of growing public concern regarding crime and community safety, I'm asking for your suggestions and need you to identify specific aspects of crime, justice and community safety that deserve special attention. A panel of local experts will be present to encourage discussion on issues of reform.

Everyone Welcome!

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7:30 pm - 9:30 pm
The Markham Village Community Centre
(Highway 7 and 48)

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