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You've got a date with a candidate

By MIKE ADLER
Staff Reporter

Candidates beginning the battle for Oak Ridges are staking out policy areas they think count most with local voters.

Liberal candidate Bryon Wilfert said people in the new federal riding want strong representation, someone with "hands-on ability" who can involve them constantly in politics.

Nationally, voters will be looking at the direction Canada's economy has taken, and how to build on it, he said, adding Liberals will be stressing their party's "strong economic record" and "good government" in the campaign, which began officially on Sunday.

"Economic issues are always going to be at the forefront," said Wilfert, a Richmond Hill town councillor and current president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

Conservative John Andersen, however, says the record of Prime Minister Jean Chretien's government shows high unemployment and tax increases.

A former anchor on The Regional cable newscast, Andersen said his party platform details a 10 per cent tax cut and a plan to break barriers to inter-provincial trade. "We want to put real dollars back in the hands of real people," he said yesterday.

Jobs and job security are the real issues, both locally and nationally, Andersen said, arguing there's a critical need for high tech training in Markham and Richmond Hill, towns with a concentration of high tech industries.

"We're certainly of the opinion that it's not a necessary election," he added.

Reform candidate Edward Sarafian said he has no doubt the top issues are tax relief and jobs for Canadians.

"We are worse off than we were in 1993," he said. "We have to work harder, longer, faster just to stay still and not slide back."

Sarafian, a former lawyer who works at the Ontario Realty Corporation as a corporate title searcher, puts the blame squarely at the hands of previous governments' "insatiable appetite for tax dollars."

He said the Reform's plan would lower taxes \$2,000 a year by the year 2000, pass tax laws that favour families and increase the basic personal deduction for every Canadian.

"All those steps will spell tax relief and that,

with reducing the size of government, will create more jobs," said Sarafian, who said he'll also target victim's rights and national unity during the campaign.

The New Democratic candidate, Richmond Hill resident Winne Hartviksen, has predicted local voters will respond well to the party's positions on jobs, health care and education.

A new riding, Oak Ridges includes the towns of Stouffville, Richmond Hill and the portion of Markham north of 16th Avenue.

Wilfert, a teacher at a Toronto private school for 20 years, said his first federal campaign is "like studying for exams."

"Your goal, your focus is to do the best you can do, keeping that date in mind," said Wilfert, who opened his campaign headquarters last week.

"I was thinking it's going to be a whirlwind 36 days," he said.

Sarafian says his team is putting the finishing touches on his campaign.

"We have the team together and all the players are in place," Sarafian said, adding yesterday that phones, signs and literature are on the way to his constituency office on Woodbine Ave.

"It will all come together within the week," he said.

With files from Julie Caspersen, Kathleen Griffin and Joan Ransberry



A tree grows in Stouffville

Students from Orchard Park P.S. in Stouffville planted some cedar bushes at the Peace Park in Stouffville last week as part of Earth Week celebrations with the help of Town Councillors Mike Watson and Ivanka Bradley.

Photo/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Board, gallery closer to a final settlement

The Latcham Gallery and the local library board are one step closer to getting a friendly divorce.

A committee to look into having the 17-year-old, 1,100-square-foot gallery, located in the library complex, has recommended that the facility stand on its own, a move supported by many, including Whitchurch-Stouffville mayor Wayne Emmerson.

The change will not be immediate. Last week, library officials opted to wait six months before putting the wheels in motion for the separating.

About seven months ago, the

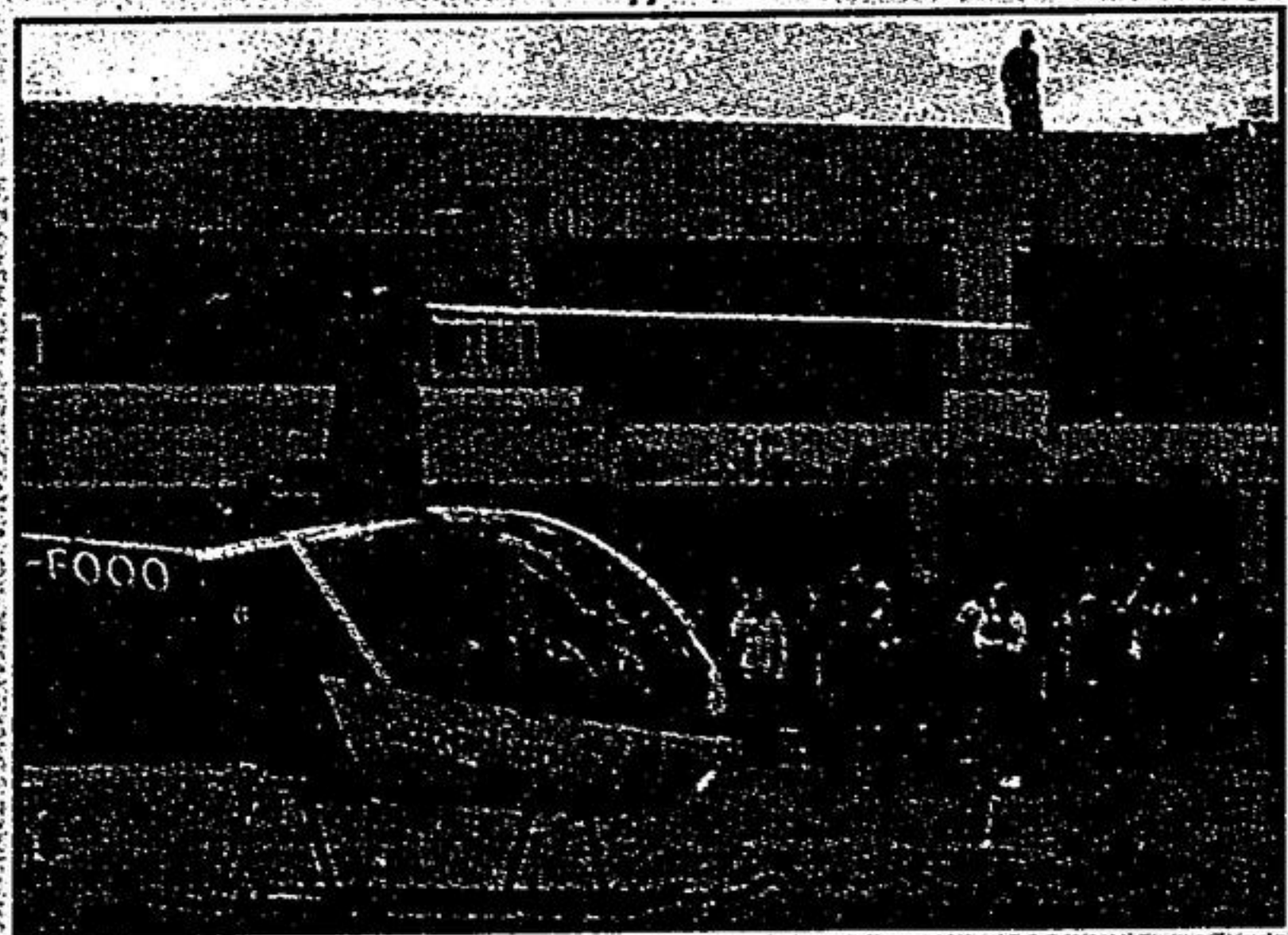
library board opted to explore the feasibility of having the gallery complete with about 250 members separate itself from the local library board.

The gallery could move from its present location, said Emmerson.

If a new home is found, it would eliminate the need to have the plan for the new town hall complex include a shared-use agreement for the council chamber and the gallery.

Whitchurch-Stouffville council will, once again, deal with the issue of a town hall-library complex soon.

Joan Ransberry



Student pilot

Students from Stouffville District Secondary School watch as co-op student Cory Hoover flies a Robinson R22 helicopter, from Canadian Helicopters Ltd. of Buttonville, accompanied by pilot Kirk Nelsen to promote the school's co-op program last Friday.

Photo/SJOERD WITTEVEEN



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