

POLITICS: Polling firm will no longer do work for provincial Conservative party

Holocaust question shocks Jewish community

BY CHRISTOPHER DOURIS
STAFF WRITER

The Jewish community and provincial party members alike are outraged over "inappropriate" and "unacceptable" questions posed by a Tory pollster in Thornhill.

"This was bad judgment and bad questions," said Jewish resident Reuben Devlin, a member of the local Tory riding association and president of the provincial party.

"I think all that I can say is these (questions) were unacceptable to us — certainly to me, they're unacceptable."

Tory pollster John Mykytyshyn has been fired after complaints arose over the survey of Thornhill residents that questioned if know-

ing a candidate in the provincial election was a member of the Canadian Jewish Congress and was the son of Holocaust survivors would influence their vote.

Tory candidate says she will not tolerate such actions by pollsters or the party

Thornhill Liberal candidate Dan Ronen's brother, Moshe, is president of the CJC and his father, Mordechai, is a Holocaust survivor.

He called the poll "an affront to the intelligence of the voters."

As a candidate, Ronen said, "I should be judged by the voters of Thornhill by my record in the com-

munity... it should be (on) what I believe in.

"I was very saddened to hear a political party would conduct a poll with these types of questions,"

Exactly who commissioned the poll is unclear.

Thornhill Tory candidate Tina Molinari said, "I am just totally appalled. I wish to certainly apologize to the Canadian Jewish Congress and any individual who may have been offended by these questions."

"I'm deeply disturbed."

Molinari would not say if any of her campaign staff were involved in the poll.

"As soon as this was brought to my attention, I instructed my campaign team to dismiss the services

of the research company and anyone else involved in this project," she said.

"I have also instructed my team not to receive the results of this survey, as I do not wish to have any part of it. While I have been assured that there was no hurt intended, I will not tolerate any action of this nature, whatever the intent."

Premier Mike Harris has also denied the Ontario Conservative party or Molinari asked for the poll.

Thornhill resident Bernie Farber, executive director of the CJC, wrote to provincial campaign chairperson Tom Long complaining about the questions.

His first call on the issue came just over a week ago from a resi-

dent "who was just fuming." As the details came out, "I was just flabbergasted... these questions are just off the wall," he said.

He spoke to Mykytyshyn about his concerns.

"He would accept absolutely no responsibility — he thought the questions were acceptable," Farber said.

Mykytyshyn wouldn't reveal who had commissioned him to do the poll, Farber added.

He added he has accepted apologies from Molinari and the provincial Tories.

"I think they handled this very well," he said.

"They attempted to close the book on it in an honourable manner."

Unionville's St. Augustine high school slated for construction

Separate board approves building of three new schools

BY PATRICK CASEY
STAFF WRITER

The long wait for new Catholic high schools in York Region is over after the board approved an aggressive construction schedule to build three new schools within the next two years.

At a board meeting Tuesday night in Aurora, trustees unanimously agreed to construct a new 800-pupil high school for Georgina that will be opened by September 2000.

In addition, the board will also build 1,300-student secondary schools in both Richmond Hill and Unionville that will be open for business a year later.

The decisions took less than 10 minutes to complete and are a direct result of the Ministry of Education's new capital funding formula that recognizes the need where enrolment exceeds capacity and allows school boards the flexibility to determine their own priorities.

The board will receive a maximum of \$48

million in construction costs from the provincial government to complete the three projects.

It also ends 10 years of suffering for parents and children in all three communities, who have pressured the board relentlessly to relieve overcrowding in neighbouring high schools.

Students often spent long hours on buses being transported back and forth to schools in Newmarket, Aurora, Thornhill and Markham.

Unionville's St. Augustine high school will be built between Woodbine Avenue and Warden Avenue, north of Sixteenth Avenue.

The Richmond Hill school will be built near Bathurst Street, between Elgin Mills and Gamble Road, while the Georgina site is located on Woodbine Avenue, between Ravenshoe Road and Glenwoods Drive.

When the Georgina school opens next fall, it will mark the first time in seven years that the Catholic board has added to its family of nine secondary schools.

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