

Candidates slam Grit record

Oak Ridges candidates talk issues and records in public forum

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Writer

Harsh criticism was levelled at an Oak Ridges all-candidates' forum held in Stouffville Thursday.

Local Progressive Conservative candidates John Ostrom and Canadian Alliance candidate Bob Callow had nothing good to say about the Liberals, party leader Jean Chretien or Oak Ridges incumbent Bryon Wilfert. Voters across Canada go to the polls Nov. 27.

About 50 members of the business community were breakfast guests at the forum, sponsored by the chambers of commerce of Whitchurch-Stouffville and Richmond Hill and local Metroland newspapers.

Ostrom stressed that the Progressive Conservatives have ruled Canada for a total of 133 years.

"I'm not giving up on them," the former MP said. Ostrom was an MP, representing Willowdale in the mid 1980s. He immigrated to Canada from Holland in 1952. Ostrom is multilingual, speaking English, Dutch, French, Spanish and German.

Over the past decade, the Liberals have neglected to upgrade the country's military, both the Alliance and the PC candidates charged.

"We're the laughingstock of the world," said Ostrom. Under the Liberals, Canada's armed forces have been reduced to rely on "World War II" equipment, Ostrom said. He then suggested the military be upgraded to enable Canada to deliver "a rapid response force" when required.

CANADIANS RALLY

Wilfert, meanwhile, stressed that history shows that when there's a battle cry, Canadians rally, they rally quickly and they rally with conviction. As well, Wilfert said, Canada's role as an international peacekeeper has earned us world-wide respect.

Callow chastised the Liberals for calling an election with 18 months still left in the term. When parliament was dissolved, 20 bills died on the order paper, said Callow. The legislation in question dealt with such matters as child pornography, men stalking women and the Young Offenders Act.

"In calling an early election, the Liberals put themselves ahead of the safety of women and children," said Callow. During his closing remarks, Callow took the gloves off and charged the Liberals with "conceit, arrogance and vanity".

As well, Callow said, the Liberals used fear-mongering tactics to win Ontario in the last election. To top it off, the Canadian Alliance candidate cautioned the audience to be especially weary of Chretien. "Be careful, he's a cagey politician," said Callow.

Despite the harsh remarks from his opponents, Wilfert said, he was proud of the Liberal record and proud of his service as an MP. The Grit pointed out that, last year, the Liberals paid down the national debt by \$12.3 billion, "the largest in Canadian history".

As well, Wilfert defended the Liberals' handling of health care.

"Nothing is more important than health care. This is why the Liberals will invest more than \$21.2 billion in health care over the next five years," Wilfert said.

The candidates also cited transportation as a critical federal issue. The Pickering airport should be built as soon as possible, Callow said, while Ostrom suggested a rail system could link the Pickering airport to Toronto's Union Station.

Wilfert pointed out that a few years ago, the federal government committed billions of dollars in the tri-partnership infrastructure program which involved the municipal, provincial and federal levels of government. Most of the money has gone to roads and sewers.

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Correction Notice

The Irwin LeapFrog LeapPad interactive book, shown on page 1 of our November 11th Toyland flyer will be sold at a Rollback price of \$74.88 each.

WE APOLOGIZE FOR ANY INCONVENIENCE THIS MAY HAVE CAUSED.

Local Canadian Tire Gears Up For Giving

On Friday Oct. 27, 2000 Canadian Tire employees used pedal power to kick off the Canadian Tire Foundation for Families' Annual Family Tree program which raises money for families in need, in Markham and across Canada. Employees from every Canadian Tire location across Canada pedalled for families in need. Pictured here is Doug Fleming, Canadian Tire Associate Dealer on 8675 McCowan Rd. in Markham.

The Family Tree program is a national fundraising initiative of the Canadian Tire Foundation for Families. During the holiday season, \$5.00 will be donated from the sale of every 4 1/2 foot or larger artificial tree will be donated to the Foundation in support of local charities. An additional \$5.00 will be donated for purchases on the Canadian Tire Card or Options MasterCard Card. Last year the program raised more than \$700,000 for families in need across Canada.