

Candidates debate gets rowdy

BY LINDA JOHNSON
Staff Writer

If all-candidates meetings are intended to persuade the undecided, then the three candidates who attended the Oak Ridges debate Thursday found their work was done before they arrived.

Most of the residents who came out to the meeting, at the Richmond Hill Chinese Community Church, came prepared with their views firmly set and clearly in support of one candidate or another.

Frequently rowdy, the 2-1/2-hour meeting was sometimes interrupted by hecking or spontaneous campaigning.

The meeting was presented by the Richmond Hill Chamber of

Commerce, the Richmond Hill and Markham Chinese Business Association, the Rotary Club of Richmond Hill and the York Region Newspaper Group.

NDP candidate Pamela Courtot, who noted she was the only one of the three candidates who had been employed in the corporate sector, said Ontario has the lowest corporate tax rate in any jurisdiction bordering the province.

While raising the rate for the largest corporations, her party would reduce the tax rate for small businesses.

"We make no bones about it. You need taxes to support vital, essential services such as hydro, health care, transit and food and water inspection," she said, adding residents will also save

money with a public auto insurance system the NDP plans to introduce.

Tory MPP Frank Klees, said his party is "unashamedly" committed to reducing corporate taxes because corporations are comprised of individuals.

"To look at corporations as demons is to go back to the dark days of the Liberals and NDP," he said.

Dr. Helena Jaczek said the Liberals intend to return the corporate tax rate from its current 12.5 per cent back to the 2001 rate of 14 per cent. At the same time, they will increase the small business deduction to keep their taxes the same.

"So it will be exactly the way it is," she said, adding later, personal tax rates will stay the same.

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