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Oak Ridges election audience gets feisty

Crowd heckles criticism of Tories

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Writer

The only attempt at a knock-out punch during the Oak Ridges-Markham candidates debate Thursday night came from the audience.

When New Democratic Party candidate Pamela Courtot questioned the fiscal management ability of Conservative leader Stephen Harper, former prime minister Brian Mulroney and former premiers Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, the audience yelled and booed in response.

Ms Courtot, visibly shaken, yelled back at the people.

"I wouldn't trust the Conservative Alliance," she said.

The rest of the debate, sponsored by the York Region Newspaper Group and area business organizations, was orderly. The event, attended by 150 people, was held at Holy Trinity School in Richmond Hill.

CANADA IN GOOD SHAPE

Liberal candidate Lui Temelkovski told the audience Canada is in good shape. Mr. Temelkovski stressed the fact that, unlike the United States, Canada did not slip into a recession a few years ago.

"Paul Martin has proven economic leadership ability," he said. "He solved the huge \$42-billion-a-year deficit left by Brian

See LINKING, page 13.

POLITICIANS MAKING IT PERSONAL DURING HOME STRETCH OF CAMPAIGN

Attacks leave voters cynical

BY ROY GREEN
AND MARTIN DERBYSHIRE
Staff Writer

On the patio at the Papa's All Day Breakfast and Specialty Wings Restaurant Thursday, the big question was, why vote?

"That's right. Why should we vote?" Aurora resident Joe Schmidt said. "All these guys are just in it for themselves anyway. They're all a

bunch of liars."

As the insults for each party leader began to flow as smoothly as cold beer on a sunny afternoon, veteran contractor Harry Derbyshire said the mudslinging and negative campaigning by some candidates makes the election entertaining, if nothing else.

"I think it's great," he said. "They're full of it anyway. They say

one thing during the election and do a totally different thing once they get in. The whole thing is a bit pointless. You never know what you're going to get until it's all over."

Down the street at one of the region's many strip malls, Bryan Birch said all the dirt flying back and forth between party leaders is becoming ugly.

"These are supposed to be

adults; they should handle differences in a mature way," he said. "Instead, they go around putting other people down. It's a bit childish."

But that won't stop him or friend Natalie Apostolopoulos from casting votes Monday. Because it's such a close race, this is a vote that truly counts, she said.

See LEADERS, page 10.



STAFF PHOTO/BILL ROBERTS

PRIME MINISTER POPS IN

Prime Minister Paul Martin visited Oak Ridges-Markham riding yesterday, main-streeting in downtown Markham with Liberal candidate Lui Temelkovski (left) and Regional Councillor Frank Scarpitti. See story on page 14.

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