

## Area council candidates discuss staying within budget

By Bill Rea

Ward 5 voters in Caledon can't say they don't have a choice when it comes to deciding which area council candidate to vote for later this month.

There are five seeking the job, and four of them faced the public and each other in an all-candidates' meeting hosted by the Caledon Chamber of Commerce last week. Candidate Kevin Junor was not there, as he had a prior family commitment.

'Elections are about choices,' Andrei Belousov told the audience, adding they are also about results. He also said change can drive things in the right direction, and that's what he's been proposing.

'I'm not a politician,' he said. 'A politician will promise you a bridge even if there's no river around.'

Belousov is an engineer and he said they solve problems every day. He added he's run an engineering company and said he has the ability to make right, practical, efficient solutions and to make compromises.

Trudy Valier focused on her 15 years living in Bolton and her experience as a business owner and a volunteer.

She cited the need for real representation on Town council and the need for a real vision for Bolton's success. Valier also stressed the need to involve the community, commenting that people are tired of paying high taxes with little in the way of results.

As well, she pointed to the need for affordable housing for seniors.

Adam Romasco, a realtor, said he was raised in Brampton, having started out in the construction business. He also said he's learned that when one knocks on the door of opportunity, it's hard work that answers.

He also stressed the importance of customer service, and being able to listen to the concerns of clients.

He also promised that as councillor, he would respond to inquiries within 24 hours.

Incumbent Rob Mezzapelli said he moved to Bolton 17 years ago.

'I'm running for office because I care about our town,' he declared.

He said he's learned a lot about public process while on council and wants to apply that experience.

'I know I've had a positive impact on the community,' he said.

The topic of trails in Caledon was raised with the candidates.

Belousov said the Town is lucky to have them, and pointed to the need to have people involved in the decisions regarding them.

He said there are too many decisions being made without consideration of the technical factors involved.

Valier would like to see more money set aside for the trails, also suggesting more in the way of advertising. She said a lot of people don't know about them. She also suggested parts of trails should be paved to make them more accessible to people in wheelchairs.

Romasco called for more education of young people about the trails so they'll develop an appreciation of them. That means getting families to make more use of them.

Mezzapelli said trails are important to him.

'Trails keep us active,' he said, adding money has been budgeted to maintain them, but he also said more could be done. He said they could be more functional, so people could use the network to actually get to destinations.

The candidates were asked what was to be done about spending increases and keeping projects from going over-budget.

Belousov cited the Pan Am games, likening them to the Olympics.

'All these games are just political games,' he said, adding they have nothing to do with sports. 'Of course, it's a waste of money, in my opinion.'

Valier spoke on the need to prioritize needs and wants, pointing out people don't get raises on the order of the tax increases they've been dealing with.

Romasco commented that if people are going to be seeing tax hikes, they need to know why. 'It needs to be clear for us,' he said.

'Each and every day is budget day at council,' Mezzapelli contended, adding he always looks at the financial implications when dealing with issues.

He said that while he supports preserving heritage, he was opposed to preserving the Orange Hall in Caledon East because of the cost. He also mentioned the new fire hall in Bolton, pointing out it's important because the current hall is in a flood plane.

'I'm a taxpayer,' he said. 'I'm no different than anybody else.'

Addressing what could be done to instill trust in public process, Belousov brought up the massive Canadian Tire facility in Bolton.

He said he doesn't see any business people on council, and he said business people need to be involved in the decision making.

Valier suggested council meetings be televised so people can be better informed.

Romasco observed the Canadian Tire development is going forward, adding to avoid it, community involvement would have been

needed from the start.

Mezzapelli maintained he's conducted himself with integrity, adding he studies issues and asks questions.

?If things don't site right with me, I don't support them,? he said.