

Candidates differ on who won debate

By Bill Rea

The four candidates running in Dufferin-Peel in the Oct. 19 federal election were contacted in the last week for their spontaneous responses to predetermined questions.

The replies from the candidates are presented here in alphabetical order.

Who won the Leaders' Debate on the economy?

Liberal Ed Crewson said he put that question to the staff in his insurance office the following day, and they agreed there were three clearly-defined messages.

Of course, I think Justin (Trudeau) won because he has the message that I'm championing, he commented.

We had (NDP Leader Tom) Mulcair and Trudeau literally interrupting everybody and yelling, Conservative incumbent David Tilson replied.

He added Trudeau looked desperate, while his leader Stephen Harper appeared primeministerial.

They did a lot of arguing, commented Green Party candidate Nancy Urekar. I think they should put them in separate rooms.

I don't think there was a clear winner, she added, commenting that Green Leader Elizabeth May (who was not invited to participate) drew attention by taking part on Twitter.

She blew them out of the water, she declared. She took a bad situation and made it work for her.

The other leaders, Urekar charged, were just politicking.

It makes me feel kind of sick, she said.

I definitely think Mulcair won it, commented New Democratic candidate Rehya Yazbek. He was the only one with answers on how he's going to pay for what he's doing.

She added Mulcair kept his composure and didn't interrupt much.

He acted more primeministerial, she said.

Should marijuana be removed from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act?

Crewson said the Liberal position is it should be taken off the list, as he said he understands it's already available to just about anyone who wants it.

He added he's spoken to some people who use it medicinally, and they seem to get benefit from it.

I've never smoked it, he said. I've never touched it. I don't know if I'd recognize it if I saw it.

Crewson added the government might as well profit from it, as opposed to organized crime.

No, Tilson said, observing Trudeau has said they will legalize it. The Conservatives don't agree with that.

We clearly have drug problems in this country, Tilson added, stressing it's important not to make it easier for youth to get it. It should remain as is.

Absolutely yes, Urekar declared, adding it's part of the Green platform to legalize, control and tax it.

She said that will mean it's well regulated, will reduce the demand on police resources and prevent lives from being ruined. Urekar added it will be good for government revenues and reduce the involvement of organized crime.

We have alcohol and alcohol is no better, she added.

Yazbek said yes.

It shouldn't be necessarily legalized, but it should be decriminalized, she added.

Has fixing the dates for general elections been a benefit?

For me, it has been, Crewson commented.

He added that since he knew when the election was going to be, he was able to start knocking on doors in April.

I feel that I will be a better Member of Parliament because I've had the opportunity to get to know the people of Dufferin-Caledon over this six-month period, he added. I think it's a good thing.

It makes it more certain when the election's going to be, Tilson observed, but he added this has been a very long campaign, and he

didn't see it as a benefit. ?I'm not so sure it is a good idea.?

?When we did it, it sounded like a really good idea,? Urekar replied, adding Prime Minister Harper messed things up by dropping the writ for the election weeks before he had to. ?He took a great idea and wrecked it.?

She said fixing the dates is fine, but the time for dropping the writ should be regulated too.

?They're wasting taxpayers' money,? she said.

?Obviously not,? Yazbek declared.

She added the whole point behind fixing the dates was positive, but the early dropping of the writ meant more money has to be spent.

?The whole reasoning of it sort of went out the window,? she said.