



Photo by Mari Hiramoto

From left, Egerton Boyce, Mitch Panciuk, Taso Christopher and Jodie Jenkins during the municipal debate at the Empire Theatre, organized by the Belleville and District Chamber of Commerce.

## Mayoral candidates debate issues

By Mari Hiramoto

Belleville's mayoral candidates, including incumbent Taso Christopher and incumbent city councillors Egerton Boyce and Mitch Panciuk, and candidate Jodie Jenkins participated in another municipal debate last week. The four candidates answered questions from members of the Belleville Chamber of Commerce, as well as from the public in front of an audience that almost filled the 700-seat theatre.

The questions asked for specific suggestions from the candidates, including how to improve work environments for tradespeople, plans to boost the city's revenue to pay off infrastructure debt, concerns regarding road safety downtown and retaining international students from Loyalist College following their graduation, among others. They also responded to individual questions about cannabis use, the city's procurement process and more.

During closing statements, Panciuk said that the biggest choice voters have is "if they want change" and "want something better than a one-man show." He also told the audience that the differences among the four candidates

were likely becoming pretty distinct. He then asked the audience to visualize a Belleville with more green space, improved track system, affordable housing, arts and culture that attracts more tourists, and a town that looks after its most vulnerable populations.

Jenkins said he did not make the decision to run lightly and that he's enthusiastic about public service. He said he would tackle the long-term health of the city and promised there would be an alternative approach to dealing with health-care related issues under his leadership.

"We need a new approach to economic development, a frank discussion on the BDIA, to improve the downtown and to find ways to ease the tax burden," he said.

Boyce admitted his lack of interest in political advertising and said, "I don't believe all the money in the world can buy you integrity."

He told the audience that even though he may not be the best speaker, he is a hard worker who has been leading people behind the scenes and can relate to the electorate. He also said ever since he was elected in 2003, he has proven that he can leave his ego at the door, admit when he's doing wrong and make flexible decisions

that fit the needs from the public.

Christopher posed some rhetorical questions for the audience: "What if we didn't complete Build Belleville, or water/sewer and road upgrades, or new bridges, parks and pools? "What if we didn't complete our new firehalls, or upgrades to the Quinte Sports and Wellness Centre, or have doctor recruitment?"

He emphasized the numerous infrastructure projects that have been accomplished under his leadership, and stressed the need to redevelop the waterfront, attract more tourists, develop the economy and improve regional transit to help the city grow.

Panciuk said that "if you compare our downtown with others, it's safe, but some people don't feel that way." He noted the key to dealing with this issue is to increase business and social activities. He also believes that making the downtown an "arts and culture hub" will bring more people, therefore, ease the safety concerns.

Boyce said, "the biggest safety issue in the city isn't the downtown, it's on our roads."

He suggested that the city needs to initiate different traffic calming measures

to keep the public safe. He also said there needs to be a continuation of ongoing initiatives regarding bike safety.

Jenkins pointed out negative aspects of the downtown saying, "getting rid of safety concerns comes with improving the downtown and getting more people there."

Christopher, on the other hand, commented, "The BDIA is doing a phenomenal job" and referred to the contribution of the Belleville Police Service in keeping residents safe. He said the police service has increased foot patrols in the downtown by 150 hours and that they have also started a number of other programs to make Belleville the safest city in Ontario.

Jenkins said, "It would be nice to think that all international students would fall in love with the city and want to stay here" but added that this wouldn't happen without an effort. He said the council needs to build better relationships with the college and to reach out to international students and let them know about possible career opportunities.

Boyce told the audience that the easiest way to retain graduates from Loyalist College with diverse backgrounds is to improve the transit system. But he

also referred to his recent work on the city's Inclusion Committee. "We need to continue to offer a warm and welcoming approach to new residents," to make them want to stay in Belleville, he said.

Panciuk thinks there needs to be more co-operation between city council and Loyalist College, as there hasn't been any collective discussion between them in the last four years, he said. He also noted the improved transit system and a vibrant downtown will "attract more young people and people from all over the world."

Christopher's parents moved from another country to Belleville and opened two successful businesses. He said that "we need to appreciate that immigration builds our country" and that "Loyalist is a world-class college and they are doing a great job bringing international students."

Christopher noted that waterfront development is one of the highlights in his platform for 2019 and beyond. "It's the number one under-utilized asset we have," he said.

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## Community enjoys sights and sounds of night market

By Natasha MacDonald

The crisp, cool air may have chilled the noses of those attending the night market, but they were distracted by the delicious smells of food frying and the flaming fireplace.

The Brake Room in downtown Belleville is known for its recent and weekly Friday Night Bites evenings, but this time, there was more gear for the Fall Night Market.

"Once we came up with the idea [of the Fall Night Market], we just reached out to our friends and so this was a good example of what they're doing in the County and bring it here to Belleville," says Adam Tilley, owner of The Brake Room.

"It's a good time, good food, good tunes, and good friends. For Friday Night Bites, we bring in the vendors to have something to do and the people from around here to also have something to do. It's all about bringing people together. Tonight, is like a pop-up shop and community dinner. It crosses off all the boxes."

The packed parking lot was pet, child and parent friendly. Whether it was warming up by the fire pit, consuming a freshly made pizza, or a meat or meatless grilled cheese sandwich, there was something for everyone.

"In general, we like to anticipate between 100 to 300 people. A hundred is fun, cozy, intimate and a 300-person event comes in waves, but sometimes it's pretty chaotic. But considering everyone here is so good at doing what they're doing, it just comes down to organizing permits," says Tilley.

The message for the Night Market was well received. It's all about the community and bringing people together. Seeing



Photo by Natasha MacDonald

Sneaking a peak behind the bikes in The Brake Room, people patiently wait for their patty melts made by Matthew DeMille. The Fall Night Market was a great opportunity for vendors to share their passions with the community.

neighbours, co-workers and friends and family emerge from the comfort of the couches and Netflix, the Fall Night Market had people enjoying food and music with one another.

Some of the Belleville-based vendors had good reviews of the evening. They got a chance to get to know their community more, while showing their unique businesses.

"I'm new to the area, about a year and a half ago, from Toronto. I started the online store front about a year ago," says W. Greg Taylor, owner of Samson Books, mobile and online second-hand book sales. "In the spring, I got a van and put bookshelves in and usually pop up with the van and have 10 times the books you see here, but for this, there's not space.

"I'm very happy to be here at the Brake

Room's Fall Night Market. There's a lot of other great vendors. It's great to make connections here and in the County, making some good friends and having cool interactions from connecting people with books there."

Another vendor, Max Valyear, is the owner of Green Wheel Farms.

"It's a sustainable education centre. I use my yard and other people's yards to

grow greens and micro-greens. They are great, and nutrient-dense, and a way to get you nutrient source through the winter." Valyear owns the "Bicycle Powered" Green Wheel Farms.

"We're out here chillin' at the Fall Market. I'm promoting sustainability. I think tonight is amazing. The parking lot is packed and there are more coming in." "I've even got little kids buying micro-greens. It's excellent. Kids are playing and there's a fire, it's great. It could be a little warmer, but it's a great time." Other vendors also praised the Fall Market, including Amanda Keenan, designer and letterpress printer of Silver Plate Press.

"What I do is print on an antique printing press to make all my prints, either greeting cards, poster, and coasters. That sort of thing, it's all made by hand. I'm in the east end of Belleville. "Tonight, there is a great vibe. It's my favourite place in Belleville," she says.

Smiles, satisfied tummies and laughter seemed to be contagious. The buzzing from coffee or cider added to the atmosphere of good times and great people.

For more munchies to satisfy and coffee to consume, the Brake Room has some upcoming events to stay tuned for.

"We're a couple weeks out for the next Friday Night Bites that will be starting up again on Oct. 26, so that's a weekly event. And complementing that, we do Sunday brunch, for a few hours every Sunday, and that will be starting the following Sunday."

"Based on the success of this market, we're going to be planning more, probably the next one for January but before then, you can find us at the Signal Market," says Tilley.



Photo by Kyle Visser

Erica Palen and Serge Hallé work in the Marantha Church kitchen preparing for the annual free turkey dinner. Hosted by Marantha as a community outreach, the dinner was free to anyone and donations were accepted.

# Turkey fills the air at church supper

By Kyle Visser

It all started on the cool, quiet morning of Oct. 8, Thanksgiving Monday. Marantha Church was holding its smaller Monday service in the chapel. Tables made up the night before were waiting for their seats to be filled as the delicious scent of cooked turkey lingered in the air.

In the kitchen, Erica Palen was busy with her preparations for the incoming guests. For her, this is far from where it all started. On the previous Thursday morning, she and her volunteers had been hard at work preparing the full “Thanksgiving meal,” including cooking seven large turkeys, pounds of mashed potatoes, gravy, vegetables, cranberry sauce and homemade stuffing. She had worked over for 30 hours at this point, for an estimated 325 guests. And it’s all for free.

“It’s worth it,” she said. “It gives me satisfaction to work hard. I’m a senior after all, I need something to get me out of bed in the morning.”

This is the seventh year of Marantha Church’s free Thanksgiving meal for the community of Belleville. What started as a meal for 150 has grown to almost 400, and continues to be a great success. “We had people calling in over a month ago to ask if we were going to do it again,” said Felix Boer, volunteer coordinator

for the event. “It started as a community outreach for those who don’t have anywhere to go for a Thanksgiving meal, lonely people, or people who can’t afford it, so we reach out to them and provide them with a place to come.” Boer managed around 30 volunteers, servers, dishwashers, and clean up.

Boer also delivered posters around the local area, advertised on the radio event calendars and encouraged everyone to spread the word. At the event, a donation box was available to those who could afford to give back.

Palen was also the buyer for all the food. “I only buy things on sale when I can help it,” she says, adding that the buying, cooking and preparing of the food by herself and the volunteers saves tons on the overall cost. “The total cost was around \$1,400 all together. Divide that by 400 people that’s a \$3.50 turkey dinner.”

“We are very happy with it,” said Boer. “We couldn’t do it without the commercial kitchen Marantha has, couldn’t do it without Erica and couldn’t do it without the volunteers from the church.”

Parkhurst Transportation also donated a bus to drive folks to and from three spots in Belleville: Giant Tiger, the bus station and the Bay View Mall.

“It’s what we do as Christians and a humans,” said Palen.



Photo by Kyle Visser

Around 360 guests attended the annual free turkey dinner hosted at Marantha Church this year.

## Debate...

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He also commented that “the city can just continue to take care of the land, or turn it into opportunities for economic growth, tourism and residential opportunities.”

Panciuk said one of the biggest concerns he believes is that there is “too much being done on the backs of the taxpayers.” He called Zwick’s Park “embarrassing” and that changes need to happen immediately.

He also thinks waterfront parking needs to be addressed, particularly in the downtown, saying “the riverside should be for people, not for cars.” He added that means looking at a parking structure project and using public-private funding.

Boyce commented that it is essential to develop a waterfront master plan, which is now proceeding. He said the best option for the city would be a combination of residential and commercial uses by the waterfront. He believes that there needs to be infrastructure upgrades to Zwick’s Park to make it sustainable. He also pointed out that Meyers Pier has not been well maintained and that “we need to address what we’ve already got before we start investing more.”

Jenkins said “we’re fortunate to be so close to an amazing body of water” but claimed it would be irresponsible just to contemplate what it could look like. He stated that we should share the public vision and have a deep dis-



Photo by Mari Hiramoto

From left, Egerton Boyce, Mitch Panciuk, Taso Christopher and Jodie Jenkins during the municipal debate. They discussed everything from the downtown to attracting tourists to the community.

cussion with council and discuss how to allocate the budget for it.

### About the candidates

Mitch Panciuk is a Belleville city councillor and was elected in October, 2014. As a councillor, he served as chair of the grant committee, the Belleville Community Arts & Culture

Fund, the traffic committee, as well as the president of the Belleville Chamber of Commerce and chair of the Quinte Economic Development Committee.

Panciuk is the owner of Boston Pizza Belleville since it first opened in November 2001 and is a member of the

national Franchisee Advisory Council for Boston Pizza International.

Taso Christopher is a current mayor of Belleville and has taken a leadership role on residential and business investment sectors. He has completed several infrastructure projects under the Build Belleville portfolio.

Christopher has managed, organized and helped direct municipal projects such as the Quinte Sports & Wellness Centre, Veteran’s Memorial Bridge, Integrated Court House Building, Shorelines Casino, the Belleville Senators, the Doctor Recruitment Program and the Build Belleville Infrastructure Deficit Program.

He was born and raised in Belleville and graduated from Quinte Secondary School and Humber College. He has been an owner of the local sporting goods retailer Four Seasons Sports for more than 40 years.

Egerton Boyce was born and raised in Belleville and graduated from Loyalist College with a diploma in law and security. He is currently employed as a youth worker in an open custody/observation facility for young offenders. Since first being elected as a councillor for the City of Belleville in 2003, he has chaired or participated in multiple municipal committees that relate to social services, long-term and emergency medical services. He joined the Board of Health in 2015 as a representative of the City of Belleville.

Jodie Jenkins served as a Belleville city councillor from 2010 to 2014. He has 20 years of experience as a radio broadcaster and is currently the general manager of 100.9FM and the chair of the Grace Inn Homeless Shelter. In addition to the responsibility as a city councillor, he was a member on a variety of boards including Downtown Facade Committee, University Attraction Committee, Hastings County Social Services Committee, and Transit Advisory Committee.