

COMMENT

**'Quote
unquote'**

'I am pleased by the way we have responded as a community and Town.'
—Mayor Rick Bonnette see story pg. 3

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•The I/P• Halton Hills, Thursday, January 2, 2014

Readers share views on storm's aftermath

Dear editor,

Last Monday (Dec. 23), a hydro truck showed up on our street.

A lot of my neighbours came out to chat and enjoyed themselves despite the temperature. The crew was from Peterborough and we all thanked them for the work they did.

Three hours later we had our power back after an outage of 49 hours. Some may not have theirs back yet, and I feel for them.

I would like to send a great "thank you" to all the people who were involved in restoring the power in Halton Hills—hydro, Town, firefighters or out-of-town personnel, plus all the support groups behind them. Considering how bad we got hit, they did a super job.

Bob Desjardins, Georgetown

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What a great town Georgetown is!

We were among the many people in Georgetown and area who experienced the power outage—our power was out for four days and four nights. We are a senior couple who got through this experience by going to the Gellert Centre which offered hot food, coffee, showers and even cots for sleeping.

We want to thank all the wonderful people representing the Region of Halton, Halton Police, EMS Services, the Town of Halton Hills, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army etc., who made all of this possible.

The atmosphere at the Gellert Centre was up-beat with Christmas music and we met a lot of nice people during our stay.

Thanks again to all, for everything that you did to make this difficult time, bearable and memorable.

Mike and Linda Walsh, Georgetown

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Hip hip hooray to Halton Hills Hydro.

I totally agree with the editorial in last week's *Independent & Free Press*.

The Christmas we have just celebrated will be remembered for a long time as the dark days of Christmas but as true Canadians we realized just how lucky we are to live here and to appreciate the things we take for granted.

I can't express my gratitude for the men and women from Halton Hills Hydro who



worked (and are still working) tirelessly to bring our lives back to normal. This also applies to all the first responders.

Marita Northmore, Georgetown

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Our family wants to say thank you to Halton Hills Hydro, municipal staff, fire and EMS services for all your hard work during the ice storm.

We always appreciate those of you who head out in bad weather and in dangerous conditions to help keep us safe, but this past week, we realized how big your task is and how much we rely on you.

To the employees and volunteers who answer calls in the middle of the night (all year long), who spring to attention and leave family functions to keep our community safe and comfortable, we say thank you.

We are especially touched that people from other communities left their comfortable homes and families on Christmas Day to come and assist our community.

Well done all of you... our whole town is grateful!

Lois and Al Fraser, Georgetown

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To all services: Hydro, police, fire and ambulance.

We at this building (Sargent Court Seniors Apartments) needed all of you. One resident was taken out on a chair to a warming centre. A firefighter showed up to ask what we needed. A broken window was temporarily covered.

A huge thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Roscoe Petkovic who took orders for food from people and then provided three boxes of coffee and would not take any money.

Next Christmas the only thing I want is a Coleman stove for my patio!

Judy Wroblewski, Georgetown

Reforming Parliament

On December 3, 2013, I introduced the Reform Act, 2013 in the House of Commons.

The Reform Act is an effort to strengthen Canada's democracy by restoring the role of elected Members of Parliament in the House of Commons.

The Reform Act is based on the years of feedback I've received from people in Wellington County and Halton Hills.

It is clear that decades of changes to Parliament have weakened the role of MPs and centralized that power in the party leaders. As a result, your democratic representation through your elected MP has been much weakened over the past several decades.

These changes are not the result of any one party or any one leader, but are the cumulative effects of changes made over many decades that have eroded the power of the MP and centralized it in the leaders' offices.

In Canada, unlike the U.S., citizens exercise only one vote at the national level: A vote for their local MP. Canadians rightfully expect that their local member be able to represent their views in Ottawa, and not the other way around.

The Reform Act proposes three simple reforms to improve Parliament by restoring local control over party nominations, strengthening caucuses as decision-making bodies and reinforcing the accountability of party leaders to their caucuses in the House of Commons.

These reforms will better empower MPs to represent their con-

stituents and allow them to stand on issues of importance to their constituencies.

The Prime Minister and other party leaders would still be immensely powerful under the proposals in the Reform Act. It's just that they wouldn't be all-powerful.

The ideas in this bill are not new ideas, but very old ones. They are the ideas that Canada's democratic institutions were founded upon in the 1840s, after the Rebellions of 1837.

If enacted, the Reform Act would restore Parliament to the way it worked in Canada for many decades. It would strengthen Baldwin and

LaFontaine's principle of responsible government, making the government more accountable to the people's elected representatives.

Furthermore, many of the reforms proposed in the Reform Act are similar to current practices in other Westminster parliaments in Australia, New Zealand and the U.K.

Public support for the Reform Act demonstrates that Canadians want Parliament reformed. I'm optimistic we can achieve these reforms and strengthen our democracy by ensuring elected MPs have the tools they need to effectively represent their unique constituencies in Ottawa.

If you have any questions you can reach me by phone at (866) 878-5556 or by email at michael.chong@parl.gc.ca. Best wishes for a safe and prosperous 2014.

—Michael Chong is the MP for Wellington-Halton Hills



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