

Year after entering politics, MP promises best



On The Hill
With Garth Turner

First, let me be personal for a minute.

Last weekend, Dorothy and I made it back to the farm from Ottawa, and actually managed to have a day and a half to ourselves. This trip home was important, because exactly a year ago last Victoria Day weekend, I decided to get into politics.

I was getting tired of being a critic of things and wondered about trying to influence "the system" from within. But I knew, if successful, it would involve great change for us. So, Dorothy and I talked for two days while we worked outside and then, on Sunday morning, she said, "Let's go for it."

Twelve months later, we have an army of new friends. We've had wonderful experiences, and horrible ones. I have been praised, and I have been condemned. Some people have expected me to be a rebel, and some a team player - and I have had to learn just how effective and independent it is possible to be in Ottawa. The learning goes on, and I can promise you no more than to try to do my best and not turn into a guy who puts power before people.

Along the way, I have been helped by more of those people than I can count. Without their advice, guidance, candor, caution and commitment I would not be a Member of Parliament.

Hopefully you'll have received by now my Citizen's Guide to a Better Environment, and had a chance to leaf through it. Of course, we need more than mere words to help make this a better world.

So, partly because Environment Week is coming up, and partly because it's the right thing to do, we're organizing three clean-up days in the riding. Members of the Halton-Peel Environment Committee will join me at separate times in Bolton, Halton Hills and Burlington - to pick up litter and polluting trash in sensitive areas.

If you'd like to join us for one (or all) of the clean-ups; or if you'd like to join our growing Environment Committee; then

please call my office and sign up. The toll-free number is 1-800-868-4322.

A brief update on what we've been up to in Ottawa.

The House of Commons committee which I was elected Chairman of has decided to take a look at the issue of credit cards. Some banks are moving above the 2 per cent mark on outstanding balances, while some stores and oil companies are nearly 30 per cent.

As well, there are user fees, shorter interest-free grace periods and different ways of calculating interest. All this can be pretty confusing for people who use plastic to buy things. And I think that when inflation is around six per cent, companies which charge almost 30 per cent interest should come and let us know why.

So, starting June 12 my committee will start conducting hearings into credit cards, with witnesses coming from banks, consumer groups and retailers.

Some congratulations are in order.

Last week I was at the annual general meeting of the Halton

Hills Chamber of Commerce - a special meeting after the Georgetown and Acton chambers amalgamated. The association does a lot of good for the community, and several members have given me valuable input on things like the recent federal budget.

The new president is Dave Page, and I think this was an excellent choice.

Also excellent is the latest endeavor of Acton's Dawkins family. I couldn't believe it last Friday when two vintage aircraft swept over us as we stood on Main Street outside Flight-Line, ready to cut the ribbon opening the store.

Finally, I was really cheered to see so many people out at Limehouse School last Thursday night for a meeting of the environmental group POWER. Obviously their message of caring

for the future is getting out, as they struggle against a dumb proposal for a new landfill site, and to change people's attitudes about waste.

POWER is involved in an exciting conference on the environment, set for the Riviera Centre

in Norval on the weekend of June 10.

The cost is a very small \$10 (which even buys you lunch). For tickets, write Box 273, Acton L7J 2M4, or call for more info: Rita at (416) 878-7817 or John at (416) 877-8994.

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