

MPs need to listen, understand

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Some important things happened to me last Friday. In a way, I think, that day symbolized much of what being a member of Parliament can be all about. This job demands listening, and it demands understanding.

At Bishop Reding high school - a \$20 million showpiece in Milton - I listened to a theatre full of Grade 10 students as they peppered me with questions about the proposed GST - Goods and Services Tax. Most of them had sheets of paper in their hands - flyers protesting the tax which were distributed by A and W. What was printed on those flyers heavily influenced the questions I fielded; like why will fast food be taxed when groceries won't?

A and W, of course, wants an exemption from the GST. So do a lot of other people - and with each exemption granted, the rate of the tax goes higher. As most of you know by now, I have proposed some changes to the tax and hope Mike Wilson responds favorably. But standing in that high school Friday morning I tried to make the point that the students themselves have the biggest stake in seeing the GST take effect.

Because only by raising revenues and slashing its own spending can the feds hope to ease the deficit. If that doesn't happen, the next generation of taxpayers will wonder why we left them to inherit an indebted, bankrupt and sinking country.

Later in the day that's exactly what a committee of the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce wanted to talk to me about in a long meeting in Georgetown. They gave grudging approval to Ottawa's plans - as long as the government gets a lot more serious about cutting back on expenditures.

That I sure agree with - and it was the same message I got over and over again at the seven Town Hall meetings I held over the last

few months. Since going back to Ottawa I've been working with deputy PM Don Mazankowski in identifying areas where we can cut deeply. Last Wednesday morning I handed him my report, containing suggestions for several hundred million dollars in immediate reductions. I have high hopes now that action is at hand.

The day also took me into a sometimes emotional meeting with several people from Georgetown, Guelph, Collingwood and Dundas who are sickened by their perceived erosion of our justice system. They gave me petitions with over 12,000 names of citizens who want major changes made to the controversial Young Offenders Act. I promised to table those in the House of Commons, and to make sure Doug Lewis, the justice minister, knows about it.

I can't help but agree with those people - we need changes in the act. Young offenders now often believe that they'll get special, lenient treatment and so the deterrent of punishment is almost removed.

That shouldn't be the case. It's also wrong in this country that people can profit from crime; that surveys show women are afraid to walk in the dark; that South American drug runners are gaining a foothold on Canadian soil; and that victims of crime don't have a bill of rights of their own. It's wrong that violent offenders can get slap-on-the-wrist jail sentences and that police officers themselves feel frustrated and shackled by the courts. In Ottawa I will do all I can to try and change some of these things - and I'd appreciate any comments you might have for me on the crucial issue of

justice.

Well, Friday evening saw an important meeting of the co-ordinators of the Halton-Peel Environment Committee. We're getting well-organized now - with sub-committees, a regular newsletter, a list of projects, about five dozen eager volunteers and now a chairman. I'm delighted to report that Acton area resident Bill Paterson has agreed to quarterback the committee.

Clearly, environmental issues are so important to all our lives. Our region has a major garbage problem and a key role of the committee will be to raise awareness of recycling, environmentally-friendly products, practices for the home or office and ways all levels of government can work together. Everybody on the committee invites everybody else to get involved. Just call the office (toll-free 1-800-668-4322) for news of the next meeting.

Finally, my day ended - as it did for many others - hearing news of a massive drop on the stock markets. Clearly there are big tensions in the North American economy which could impact on all our lives. It is not an easy time for governments, and the coming months promise to challenge all the politicians.

We need to listen, and understand and then not be afraid to act. The future's still what we make it.

Ballet opens "Super Series"

The Super Sunday Series, presented by the Georgetown University Women's Club, begins its three-concert series on Oct. 29 with a presentation by the Ontario Ballet Theatre. The talented dancers will perform "Beauty and the Beast" at 1:30 and 3:30 p.m. at the Halton Hills Cultural Centre.

The tale "Beauty and the Beast" tells the story of an ill-fated merchant and his three daughters. On returning from a journey, he plucks a rose from the Garden of the Beast. The Beast is angered... and the audience is entranced as the story develops.

Based in Toronto and founded in 1979, this unique dance ensemble is dedicated to bringing ballet to the community. During its 10-year history, the Ontario Ballet Theatre has delighted more than 450,000 people throughout Ontario.

The cost is \$15 per person for the three-concerts and tickets are available for the 3:30 p.m. showings only. They can be purchased, until Oct. 27, from Pen-niesworth or Georgetown Fabrics. There will be a limited number of tickets available at the door prior to the 3:30 presentation. The other two series' concerts are the musical "The CATS - Getting Ready for Christmas" and singer/songwriter Charlotte Diamond.

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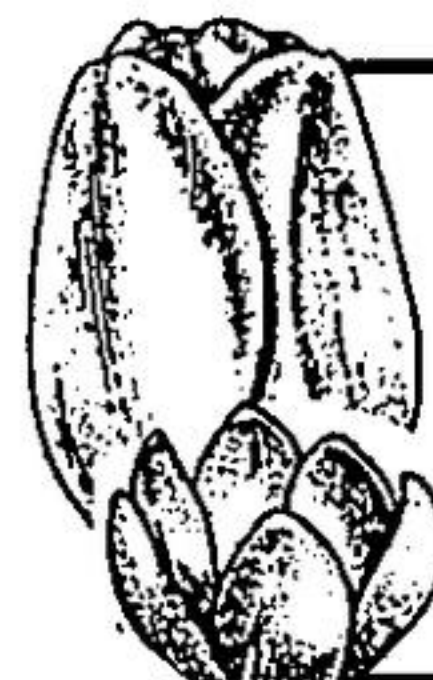
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