

MP set to make the big move to Georgetown

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OTTAWA—Almost 12 months ago I was elected a member of parliament. In no other year of my life have so many changes taken place. Sometimes it's simply hard to believe.

The latest change will take place in a few days, when Dorothy and I move into a home in Georgetown.

For the past 11 years we have been in the country - on a farm in Nassagaweya, the rural township which now forms the top end of the town of Milton. We've been used to having acres around us; used to wandering outside in the morning in pj's; used to opening the door and letting the dog take off; used to having crops grow up around the house, insulating us from the rest of the world.

Politics, now, is a new master. Because half my time is spent in Ottawa, and another third on airplanes, keeping up an old farmhouse and the land around it is impossible. As well, the farm is a half-hour drive from my constituency office in Georgetown, and when I am back from Ottawa it means wasted hours each weekend in the car.

So, with some sadness, the farm has been sold. We leave behind us a lot of close friends and supportive neighbors. The latest change will not be without mixed emotions.

GST and free trade topics at chamber dinner

Why has the Canadian Manufacturers' Association supported the concept of the Goods and Services Tax?

Why did the Canadian Manufacturers' Association (CMA) endorse the Free Trade Agreement with the United States?

To get the answers to these questions and to find out more of the aims of objectives of the CMA plan to attend the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce Annual Fall Dinner to be held Nov. 22. The featured guest speaker for the evening will be Laurent (Larry) Thibault, president of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association. The dinner will be held at the North Halton Golf and Country Club commencing at 6:30 p.m. Chamber members should return the flyer mailed to them in October to reserve their tickets.

Mr. Thibault has been with the CMA since 1972, becoming president in 1985 and now acts as the chief spokesman of this most influential business group. The CMA dates its origins back to 1871 and today the CMA represents businesses producing 80 per cent of goods manufactured in Canada.

Tickets are available through the Chamber office at 877-7119 and cost \$30 for members and \$35 for non-members.

The Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce is committed to serving the businesses in Halton Hills.

But while leaving is hard, arriving in Georgetown will be a genuine pleasure. The past year has brought us, literally, hundreds of new friends in that area - and now we will live close by them. This is a vibrant and growing community, and we're proud to be a part of it.

The pick-up truck is sold; the tractor and wagon are on their way to a neighbor's; and the corn is harvested. All I have to remember now is to put my pants on before opening the door.

A week ago I stood up in the House of Commons and tabled a report on credit cards in this country. Then I went over to the National Press Building and gave a press conference on the report, along with two Opposition members of the committee I'm chairman of - Don Boudrio (Liberal) and John Rodriguez (NDP).

It's not all that often that members of political parties can agree on things, but the report I tabled had been a unanimous one, and recommended some sweeping changes. It was the first report the Consumers and Corporate Affairs committee had produced and it sent out the kind of signal which I wanted - we intend to be a strong protector of consumers in Canada.

There are 13 recommendations and I guess the most controversial one is to have a floating ceiling put on the rates that credit card companies can charge us. The committee decided that bank cards shouldn't charge more than eight per cent above the Bank of Canada rate and retail cards should not exceed that rate by more than 16.5 per cent. That's pretty well where rates are today - so we accepted that status quo but suggested a mechanism that would protect consumers from being penalized in the future.

As well, the report said an end should be put to the practice of demanding a valid credit card as a form of identification - these cards were never intended to serve as i.d., and those people without plastic are now discriminated against.

We also said that any partial payment a consumer makes on an outstanding balance should result in lower interest charges. Right now you can pay \$500 of a \$550 balance and still suffer interest to be applied to the full amount.

To be honest with you, I think the report was a tad too radical for some of the political gods in the government. And there are those people in my own political party who cocked their eyebrows at my working so closely with opposition MPs to come up with a joint report.

Fortunately, I don't much care. The important thing, it seems to me, is to get good laws in Ottawa - to be responsible and give folks the kind of changes they want.

There are people sitting on the other side of the House of Commons who are intelligent, capable, experienced and want to make a contribution. Not working with them - because they have a different political stripe - strikes me as childish and narrow.

The real threat we face as a country is breaking down along some kind of partisan lines. That could be Liberal and Conservative, French and English, Atlantic and Central Canadian, or urban and

rural. There are always people there ready to build walls, instead of bridges.

So, I'm proud of what my committee was able to do in many hours of negotiating behind closed doors - to focus on helping consumers, rather than playing politics.

Now we're into a series of hearings on the future of Canada Post - how it's doing its job today and whether or not it makes sense to consider selling it to employees and other shareholders.

It's another controversial issue, and I have no idea if the whole thing will collapse along party lines - with Tory MPs calling for privatization and the opposition guys fronting for the union. Writing a report for Parliament will be several months in the future - and it will be a big sucker.

If you have any thoughts for me on Canada Post - or anything else - please be in touch. Your guidance is always important.

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