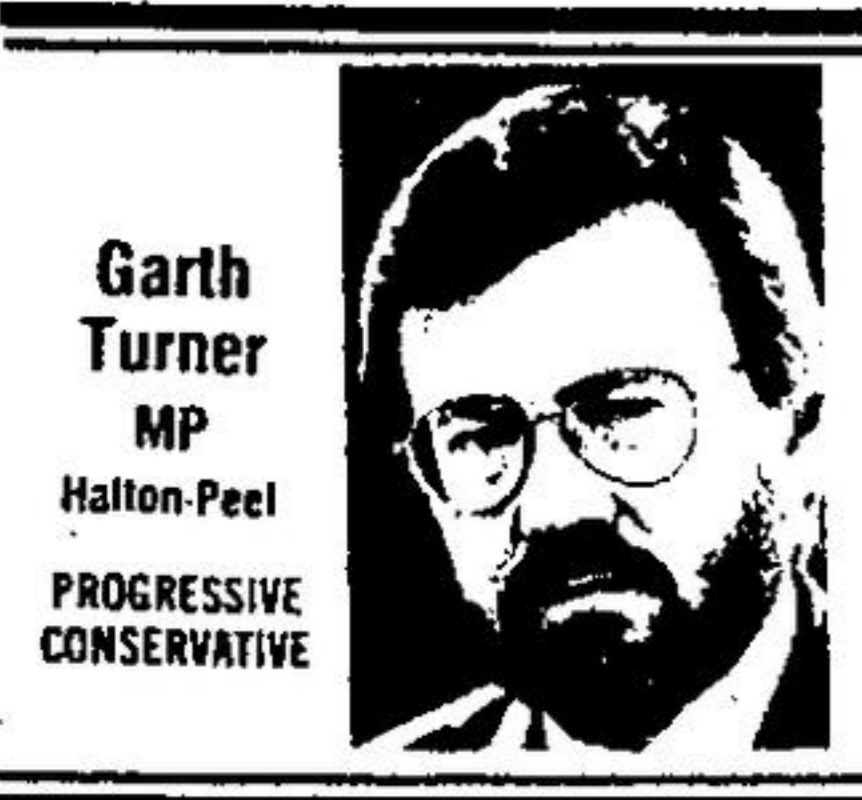


# Public will get to speak out at town hall meetings



**Garth Turner**  
MP  
Halton-Peel  
PROGRESSIVE  
CONSERVATIVE

So far, we've got two out of three and I'm working on the rest.

The meetings this time: Glen Williams Town Hall, Wednesday, Jan. 17 at 7:30 p.m. and Albion-Bolton Community Centre, Bolton, Thursday, Jan. 18 at 7:30 p.m.

Everyone is welcome. Every topic is open for discussion.

A consistent theme which has come out of former meetings, from your letters to me and from my discussions with community groups is that the feds spend too damn much money.

While the government has trimmed its fat a lot in recent years, the perception remains that more needs to be done. This year Ottawa will spend about \$30 billion more than it takes in - a situation which obviously can't continue.

The GST, as I mentioned, is designed to help. But I have always said that reducing the deficit can't be done solely on the backs of middle-class taxpayers. I said that before I got into politics, and I am saying it now in Ottawa. We also need real spending cuts in some of our established programs. Maybe we could even eliminate an entire federal department.

Many people have asked me to provide them with something spelling out exactly where all the tax dollars go - so they could give valid suggestions on where the government should slash.

In the next few days, you'll be getting exactly that.

It's a brochure called "You be the Finance Minister," and I've designed it so you can actually come up with a federal budget - tailoring where tax revenues

should come from, and where they should be spent.

You'll find the complete spending of more than 30 federal departments - including about 180 programs. Everything from health care to pensions to defence and foreign aid.

I talked with Finance Minister Mike Wilson the other day, showing him the brochure and telling him that each of you were going to get a copy. His response was really positive - and he's spoken to me a couple of times since, asking to get copies of all the brochures which you return to me.

In fact, he's encouraged all other government MPs to use the same brochure across the country - so he can get some real feedback from normal Canadians (as opposed to politicians) on where cuts should happen.

So, I really hope you will pretend to be finance minister, fill in the brochure and then fire it back to me. When they're all back, I'll let you know what government spending the taxpayers of Halton-Peel want trashed.

Lastly, one of the newspapers honored me (I think) with the title of Personality of the Year. My weekly column, the paper said has "given new meaning to the words political propaganda."

I'm also said to have "walked the edge of politics, never outright offending his constituents, rarely completely at odds with his own party."

Well, I won't try to defend myself - heaven knows how many people I skewered when I used to write a newspaper column (instead of this propaganda). But my point is this: I'll attempt to do what's right.

Sometimes that will be what my party also wants and sometimes it won't.

I didn't get into this as a career. Instead, I did it to try and influence the decision-makers. The old ways of over-taxing so government can over-spend must end. The days of caving in to special interest groups must be over. The constant threat to our environment must be addressed.

To help achieve that, I'll walk lots of edges.

Happy new year; happy new decade.

Well, the GST (Goods and Services Tax) is down to seven per cent, the feds are debating a new abortion bill, Mike Wilson is pondering what spending cuts to make and there's pressure on Ottawa to ban semi-automatic rifles.

The RCMP seem to be doing a number on the image of MPs and the government could be losing the battle with the deficit - largely because of a high interest rate policy at the Bank of Canada. Finally, every agricultural program and subsidy in the country is being re-examined, and the soaring Canadian dollar seems to be blowing holes in our exports.

In short, there's a lot to talk about right now.

And as a result, I think it's time for a Town Hall meeting or two. As before, I'd like to make myself available to answer questions, to do a lot of listening and then to take your messages back to Ottawa.

The last time I had a series of these meetings was in late summer, just after details of the Goods and Services Tax had been revealed. There were some lively moments - and I met a lot of people who came so they could yell at me.

Out of that I got the clear message that any GST acceptable in these parts would have to have a lower rate, come with serious cuts in government spending and result in a lower deficit.

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