

MP is back in the capital

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MP
Halton-Peel
PROGRESSIVE
CONSERVATIVE



Well, I'm back in Ottawa this week, as Parliament resumes sitting for what will likely be a marathon session. And coming back here with me are the voices of a lot of people who took the time to speak up.

Last week I held two Town Hall meetings, one in Glen Williams and the other in Bolton. They were amazingly similar. In both cases people packed the hall - by the time the meeting started, all the chairs were full and people were lined up two or three deep at the back of the room.

I've now held 14 of these meetings over the past 15 months, and these last two were the best attended, the noisiest and the most intense. For a couple of hours on each night people held me accountable for the actions of the government, the GST, spending cuts, the deficit, the Quebec situation, agricultural policies and the environment. Hell, I even got blamed for the Avro Arrow incident in 1959. (I was ten at the time).

I won't kid you - standing at the front of the room is not easy. But it's my job. As tough as some of the questions and comments are, it is still a honor to be a Member of Parliament. Last week I got heckled, and I got applauded - so I guess it kind of evened out.

Last week I wrote here about my brochure called "You be the Finance Minister" which was sent around to every home. An initial flurry of response came in from a number of people who did not see this as an attempt to involve everybody, but as more government waste.

Since then, hundreds more people have sent in their national budgets - and it's been wonderful! I can't believe the work which has gone into scores of them. Almost all of returns are in meticulous detail, and are accompanied by long and thoughtful letters spelling out why budget decisions were made.

My office has been dishing out extra copies to people who are holding "Finance Minister" parties - group discussions on national finances, held for friends or neighbors. Classes are using the brochure for a school project. The response everywhere has pleased me no end.

This is my idea of what democracy should be. On one hand, I've got the finance minister of Canada anxious to find out what decisions regular Canadians would make about the country's spending. And on the other here are hundreds (hopefully soon thousands) of people in Georgetown, Acton, Burlington, Bolton and Caledon putting in the time it takes to tell him.

Frankly, there are some wonderful ideas coming through.

One taxpayer, Rob Sylvester, of Georgetown, brought his completed budget to the Glen Williams meeting. Included was a masterful suggestion that we create a national mortgage out of the existing public debt, with repayment terms which would pay it out over 15 years.

When he described this concept to the crowd, they spontaneously applauded him - which he richly deserved. This, and other ideas which are coming forward, I intend to discuss specifically with Wilson.

There is a lot of creativity outside government. People are concerned about the future of Canada, and they have the skills to improve it. For too long politicians have pretended to have the corner on wisdom - telling the people they knew what was best.

But for the past 15 years those same politicians - Tories and Liberals alike - have continued to run deficits, borrow against the future and get us to a point where we owe vast amounts of money.

I know that average people did not ask for that. I know they want the situation fixed, and are willing to do their share to accomplish that.

The people who came to my meetings, and who are taking the time to devise budgets for me really care about Canada. It's easier to stay at home and watch television, or to throw my brochure in the trash when it arrives in the mailbox. It's easy to condemn the government and to assume that your voice does not matter. It's easier to retreat into your own backyard when facing the big problems of the economy, the potential breakup of the country and the environment, saying what can one person do?

But that attitude is exactly what threatens us - along with the attitude some politicians have that they know better than those who elected them.

Sometimes I am accused of asking for too much input. And I won't defend myself.

Events of last week proved to me again that I can have no better advisors than you. The meetings and the mail just pumped me full of energy. This week in Ottawa I know exactly why I'm here. Sure, the polls are lousy and we've got some tough legislation to face.

But that doesn't matter. I went home - away from the self-importance of Ottawa - and I felt the electricity of the people. Thank you. That power will not be wasted.

Young parents can get support in special classes

Are you a pregnant teenager? Do you know someone who is? A new session of seven prenatal classes specifically for teens begins Feb. 7, offered by the Young Parents Support Services and the Public Health Department.

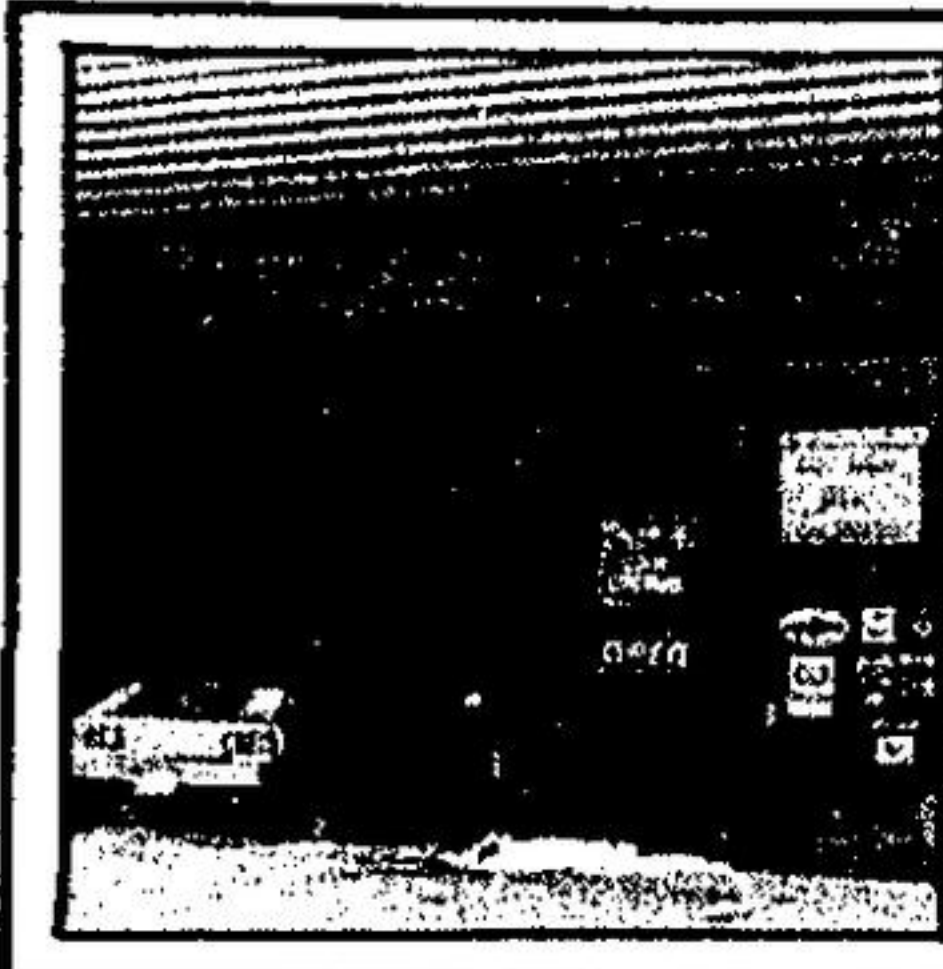
Pregnant teenagers have special needs and concerns that will be addressed in these classes. Being part of a group with other teens gives them a chance to share their feelings and discuss their fears. Participants discuss what it's like to be a pregnant teen and a teen parent and what options they have. Besides preparing for labor and delivery

and attending a hospital tour, group members also learn about community resources and assistance available for teen parents.

The first three classes are for the expectant mothers only, and the "coaches" (who may be the baby's father, a friend or a relative) are invited to the last four classes. Volunteer coaches can be provided for support during labor and delivery if needed.

Transportation to the sessions can be provided from anywhere in Halton. Pregnancy counselling is also available through the Young Parents Support Services.

For further information, call Susan Stuart at 844-5502.



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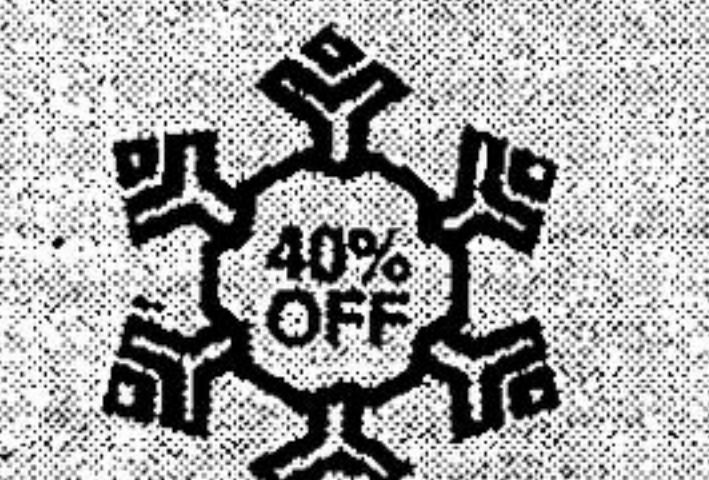
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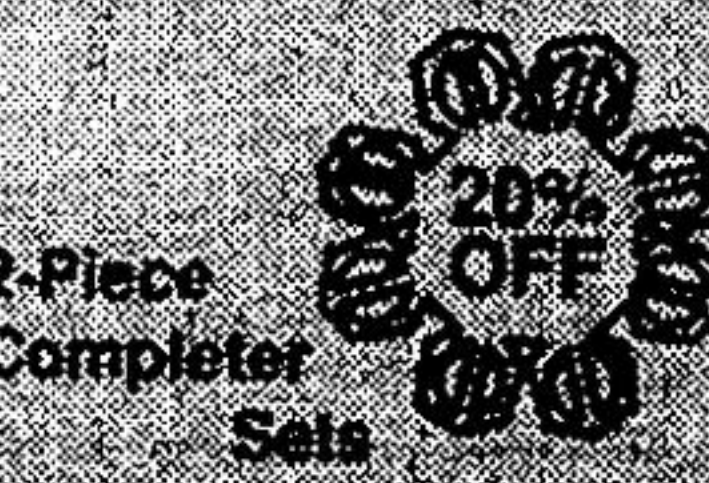
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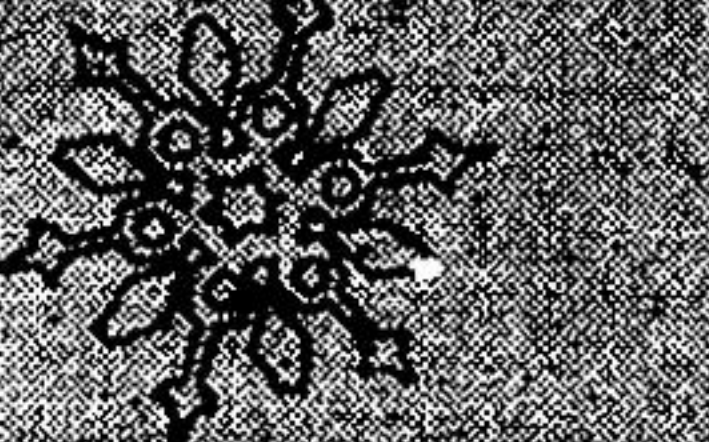
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