

## Political Forum

# Turner reflects on issues of 1990

This year is almost up. Some would say it was a year to forget. For politicians, the temptation to do that is strong.

Let's face it - Oka, Meech Lake and the GST debate were not exactly examples of Ottawa at its best. Provincially we had an election which stunned David Peterson and the rest of the country. On the world stage, Maggie Thatcher was dumped, Saddam Hussein got a hormone attack and now Gorbachev is teetering on the brink.

Politics. Some days it is just too much, too intense, too twisted, too involved.

But at the end of 1990, let's reflect on a couple of issues.

Like Meech Lake, and where we go from here. The Meech Lake recognized Quebec as a "distinct society" and gave all provinces some increased powers. When the deal failed to be ratified by Manitoba and Newfoundland, a lot of Quebecers took that as meaning "English" Canada had said "French" Canada was not welcome in this country.

Now, I know most people in Georgetown and Bolton, Acton and Caledon and Burlington was Canada to stay whole, with Quebec one of ten provinces. But we have a gulf of misunderstanding to cross.

While people here think of the

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country as a family of ten equal children, people in Quebec think of Canada as a marriage of two founding people - English and French.

This is part of the reason the Belanger-Campeau commission studying Quebec's future is likely to report in three months that there should be some form of independence for that province. And how are we going to react? Are we going to negotiate the terms of the divorce - setting up some kind of economic union, deciding what the currency should be, splitting up the national debt, setting the rules for border crossings? Or do we send in the army?

It looks like, in 1991, we will have to face some of those questions.

As a Member of Parliament, the last thing I want to do is be part of the break-up of Canada.

In a few weeks I'll be having some more Town Hall meetings,

and would certainly appreciate your input on this major issue. Please come and give me your thoughts. In the meantime, if you have a minute, please write me with your thoughts on Canada. I am still putting together that "Canada Book" which I started last July 1 - a collection of feelings people have here about the country we live in. In the new year I'll be sending the book to the Spicer Commission which is studying the question of national unity, and which will report to Parliament in about six months.

Then, yes, there is the dreaded GST.

It is not perfect, of course. I have always urged that the GST be applied to everything in the economy, including food, at the lowest possible rate, and that a bunch of the money it collects be aimed straight at the deficit.

Well, it will come into effect next week after an incredible tussle in the Senate and I am sure it will take some months before the wrinkles are ironed out. The finance minister will be fine-tuning the tax, making changes where needed. And that is as it should be.

Over the past two years that we've been talking about GST, some good points have been raised about how to make it better, and fairer. This should be a living tax - able to adapt to changing circumstances, and changing times. One of the problems with the three taxes the GST will replace was that they were

unable to change, and that made them unfair.

I know a lot of people are still afraid of this change to the tax system. I also know there will be problems as we switch over to it. And I am pledging to do all I can to help.

Businesses need to register - and to do that, call the Revenue Canada Customs and Excise office listed in the blue pages of the phone book. Consumers need to be careful when shopping. The price of goods should generally be lower, while the price of services will be generally higher. Maybe you've noticed the ads lately for "GST savings" on cars and trucks and stereo equipment.

Not everything will rise in price by 7 per cent - rather prices, in general should be higher by about 2 per cent, and then decline as the months pass.

If you have a question about anything, then call The GST Consumer Information Office, toll-free, at 1-800-668-2122.

Finally, please be in touch if I can help. The year coming will be a tough one - as we are forced to face questions of national unity, the economy, political turmoil and international upheaval. I will be asking for your help and advice as I head back to Ottawa. And I thank you now for all that you've done to make this job less crazy.

Dorothy and I wish everyone the happiest of new years. Problems? Sure. But I think we're going to make it. This is still a

## An explanation of Bill 11

Bill 11 - An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act

This week I want to explain the benefits of Bill 11 - an Act to Amend the Income Tax Act. The Honourable Shelley Wark-Martyn, Minister of Revenue, moved second reading of this Bill earlier this month. The legislation implements changes to the Ontario Tax Reduction Program to provide greater relief for low-income families in Ontario with children or disabled dependants.

Section 1 of the Bill deals with administrative changes. Under the terms of the federal-provincial tax collection agreement, the federal government administers Ontario's personal income tax act. The ensure consistency in income tax administration, many provisions in the federal act also apply to Ontario income tax. For clarity, our legislation contains a table listing common words or expressions in the federal act together with their corresponding provincial replacements. For example, the "Department of National Revenue" in the federal act is read as "Ministry of Revenue" in the Ontario Act.

It is Section 2 of the Bill, however, which enriches tax relief for low-income families in Ontario. In addition to a basic Ontario Tax Reduction amount of \$167, a low-income taxpayer will be eligible for a \$200 supplement for each dependant child age 18 or under and a further \$200 for each disabled dependant. The supplement amounts to \$400 for a child with disabilities.

These supplements are totalled to arrive at a personal amount that reduces the Ontario income tax otherwise payable. If the personal amount is greater than the income tax figure, then no income tax is payable. If the per-



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sonal amount is less than the Ontario income tax, a formula is used to reduce the tax payable. The tax will be reduced by the difference where three times the personal amount exceeds twice the tax payable.

As a result of these changes, the income level where Ontario income taxes becomes payable will be increased. For example, a single working parent supporting two children currently starts to pay Ontario income tax at an income of about \$14,100. With the proposed changes in the Tax Reduction Program, the same taxpayer will not pay Ontario income tax until an income level of about \$18,700 has been reached.

When the former Treasurer introduced these changes last May, he projected that 115,000 families in Ontario might benefit from them. I believe this enrichment of the Ontario Tax Reduction Program is a step in the right direction towards our government's goal of ensuring that people who live at or below the poverty line should not pay Ontario income tax.

On that note, with the 1990 taxation and calendar year drawing to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to wish the people of Halton North all the best for 1991.

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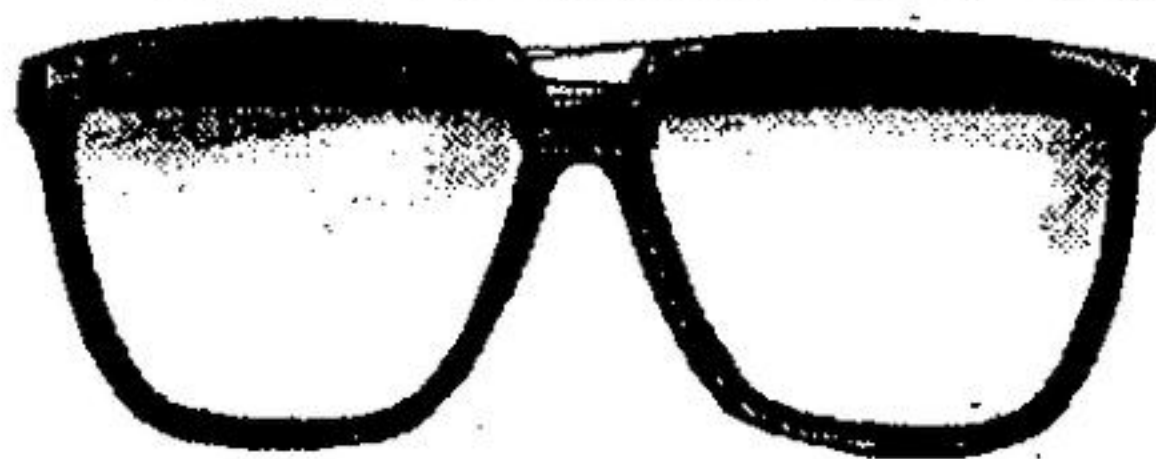
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