

Political Forum

Ottawa Report

Viewing issues through others eyes

We all view things in our own way, and sometimes it's good to use somebody else's eyes for a while.

Example: Last Friday morning I spent time with a group of 13 young mothers in a church hall, in a discussion group while their children played in another room. I talked about politics for a while, and then we all got into the issue of national unity.

After an hour or so, the topic changed abruptly - first to personal financial security, and then how Governments tax families.

I was struck by how one woman put it, and how the others immediately seemed to agree and support her. She said that, as a stay-home mother, she felt she was taking a very great risk.

She was not earning any money, and wouldn't for several more years. But meanwhile those years were perhaps the most important for her to be establishing some track record in a career. At the same time she was not putting any money away for retirement. And with today's statistics on divorce, she stood a higher-than-comfortable chance of ending up losing.

"Sometimes I can't believe that I took this risk," she said. And that sure hit home.

Partners in a marriage who make the decision to stay at home and raise their children, giving up big bucks and the prospect of a career, are clearly sacrificing.

Garth Turner

MP
Halton-Peel
Progressive Conservative



And what does the tax system do in return?

It penalizes them. Let's take two families earning the same amount of money, say, \$55,000. Family A has two people working, one spouse making \$35,000 and the other \$20,000. They have two kids which they put into daycare. Family B has one person working, earning \$55,000, while the other spouse stays home and looks after the children.

In this case, because governments treat people for tax purposes as individuals, Family A pays less tax than Family B. The tax payable on two lower incomes is less than the tax payable on one higher income. And in addition, Family A can deduct daycare costs, for a further tax saving.

This system is unfair. It discriminates against families which make the decision to care

for children in the home. And I believe it should be changed.

A better way would be to have a Family Tax Return. Let's treat families as economic units instead of collections of individuals. That way, it wouldn't matter who went to work, or how much money was earned - the thing that would matter would be the total income of the family. And if people who put their kids in daycare can get a tax break, why can't equal treatment be given those who stay at home?

Making these changes to bring fairness might pose some costs to Ottawa in the form of lost taxes. But that is not necessarily the case, if we choose to make some changes elsewhere in the tax system. And I think we should. In days like these - uncertainly, rapid change, challenges to tradition - we ought to be encouraging families, not taxing them harder.

In Ottawa, I have been pursuing this change and a number of other MPs are there to also raise their voices. But to convince the government this should be done, we need more support. If you agree, please write and tell me, so I can use those letters as fresh ammunition. The address: Garth Turner MP, House of Commons, Ottawa K1A 0A6.

The young mothers I met were terrific, but they could do with a little more hope in their eyes. The system should put it there.

Queen's Park Report

Spring session promises to be busy

Spring Session

The legislature has been back in session for over a month now and the spring sitting has already promised to be at least as busy as the fall session. Finance Minister Floyd Laughren has indicated that the budget will be brought down on Monday, April 29th and it will outline the government's overall fiscal policy. Agriculture Minister Elmer Buchanan announced the 1991 Farm Interest Assistance Program prior to the budget in order to allow farmers to make decisions about spring planting. Legislation on an advocacy system for vulnerable Ontarians was recently introduced and plans are underway for a new auto insurance system.

I was pleased with the announcement of Environment Minister Ruth Grier regarding a ban on future municipal solid waste incinerators. Our local environmental group - I.C.E. - had been working for some time to ensure that incineration would not be included as an option for the disposal of garbage in Halton Region and I shared their concerns about the effects of burning solid waste.

Labour Minister Bob Mackenzie has indicated his approval of the nominations of Odoardo Di Santo as new Chair of the



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Workers' Compensation Board and Brian King as Vice-Chair and Director of Administration. Mr. Di Santo has been the Director of the Office of the Worker Adviser for the last five years and Mr. King has been a chair in the Workers' Compensation Boards of Manitoba and Saskatchewan as well as the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal in Manitoba. Mr. Mackenzie stated that the "new chair and vice-chair have an important job ahead of them to improve the effectiveness and credibility of the Board with both workers and employers." I know that many of you have faced great difficulties and delays when dealing with the Workers' Compensation Board and I too look forward to any im-

provements to a system which seems to ignore the plight of the injured worker.

Other announcements by Mr. Mackenzie included the introduction of legislation on April 11th to create Ontario's Wage Protection Program to help workers recover wages when their employer fails to pay.

As I had indicated in a previous report in November, the Employee Wage Protection Program will cover workers' earned wages and vacation, severance and termination pay owed in cases of bankruptcy, abandonment, or an employer's failure to pay. The seed money for the program came from the Ontario government's settlement with the Varsity Corporation. Eligible employees will receive a maximum of \$5,000 under the Program which will be retroactive to October 1, 1990. Employees who are not covered will include those who work for federally regulated companies such as chartered banks, Air Canada, Bell Canada, radio and television stations, foreign consulates, interprovincial trucking and transportation companies. The amendments will also provide for enhanced enforcement. For more information about the program, please call my Milton office at 878-1729.

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