

Ottawa Report

Input on saving Canada greatly appreciated

First, a big thank you to all the people who have written me over the last few weeks about the country itself.

I asked for more input on how we might keep this country glued together, and a great many people responded. As you know, later this month we should get the government's suggestions on how everybody can be kept together - the native peoples, the alienated West, Quebec, and the people here in Halton-Peel who just want a stable economy and a country that works.

Over the last few months, everybody's been in on the act. There was the Spicer commission, a parliamentary committee, a unity committee of the Cabinet, a premier's meeting - and, still to come, another five-month-long series of hearings.

Enough already, right? Right. And what a number of people have been saying to me is

simple. You can put the solution to the problem in one word: Patriotism.

Canadians are not known for having much of this. At least, we don't come out like the Americans and use it for everything including beer commercials. We are quiet patriots. Scratch a Canadian and you'll find someone who is fiercely loyal to the concept of Canada, but also someone who usually doesn't understand just how people in other regions feel.

Perhaps that will start to change.

A lot of my letters say things like this: Maybe we should fly the flag more; or sing the anthem more. Maybe we should have a certificate of Canadian citizenship given to us all - new Canadians and old-timers alike. Maybe we can smooth down some of the rough patches in society by concentrating on what's right

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about Canada, instead of what could be better.

The list, of course, is endless. Being Canadian means enjoying everything from incredible space to the world's best health care to the Blue Jays (when they're winning). We have a great deal to be proud of, and to protect.

So, instead of looking at Canada as a collection of regions and provinces, cultural groups and some interesting geography,

maybe we ought to look at it as a concept, or an experiment. That's where the patriotism comes in - being proud and protective of something you can't really touch or smell. It's like being proud of your family history or your home town values.

Canada's 125th anniversary year will soon be here. This will also be the year when we have a national debate on our future, and when we could have a referendum on Quebec separation. I sure hope that vote never comes.

Those of us who remember Centennial year in 1967 know of a gentler time - days when Montreal hosted Expo 67 and seemed as Canadian as any other city. Now, in Quebec, there are separatist leaders working daily to convince Quebecois that we don't want them anymore. The separatists have to be stopped. The Canada I was born into didn't

have a big hole in it between New Brunswick and Ontario.

What can we all do? We can show our support for this thing called Canada. Put up a flag. Wear a Maple Leaf lapel pin. Put a sign in the window of your car. Take a stand for the country you live in, because that country needs you right now.

Come by my office for a lapel pin or a flag - we have limited supplies, for those who will use them. Drop me a line suggesting any ways locally that we might help celebrate the 125th anniversary year for Canada.

And stay tuned for details of an important project that will touch the lives of millions of Canadians on a single day - and which was hatched right here in this riding. There are some incredible moments where being an MP makes all the other days bearable. I'll share this with you just as soon as I can.

Queen's Park Report

Committee participation offering interesting insights

My participation on the Standing Committee on General Government took me to eastern Ontario last week - for more public hearings on the Rent Control legislation. Most of the legislative committees have finished their travels across Ontario and the members have been making arrangements to meet during September for clause by clause consideration of the particular bills which fall under their jurisdiction.

The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs - which had been holding the budget review hearings - travelled to Windsor, London and Brantford during the week of August 19th and I've been told that the response to our April budget continued to be overwhelmingly positive. About 60 groups and individuals spoke before the committee that week and the vast majority of them were supportive of the government's decision to fight the recession. I'd like to share some of their comments with you. The presentation to the committee by Canadian Auto Workers President Bob White in Windsor on August 19th raised a number of interesting points that the committee had not heard. "The problems in our provincial economy were there long before anyone contemplated the NDP would become the government."

"The well-known weaknesses in our economic structure - such as the low levels of research, development, and training - are failures of past policies and past current business practices. The issue today is, what does business have to offer in the way of ideas to reverse this weakness?" My Milton office has a copy of his entire statement if you would like to know more about his presentation. When a United Church

Minister, Reverend Susan Eagle, was asked in London to comment on the possible effects of choosing to balance the provincial budget she replied: "People would be dead without the additional support...you've got people now who can't feed their children at the end of the month." Almost everyone of the day's witnesses had something positive to say about our budget.

Some congratulated the NDP for taking a stand against the economic policies of the federal government. Dick Barry, President of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of Canada made the following observation: "No provincial government has the tools to totally neutralize the impact of disastrous economic policies of the federal Tories on the working people in its jurisdiction. However, the Ontario government has at least taken a step in utilizing the powers it does have to benefit the general population."

In Brantford, the committee toured Harding Carpet, a local company the provincial government assisted when it hit hard times late last year. The business is now back on track and, in fact, has been doing better than expected. Harding Carpet is a well-known community based company and an excellent example of government and business working together to preserve jobs.

During that week of hearings, the committee heard from people in many different occupations. Paul Born, Executive Director, Community Opportunities Development Association chose to speak about the budget in terms of the work he does. "I am not an economist and therefore cannot comment on the issues of



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spending cuts, transfer payments, tax increases and deficits. As an individual involved in Community Economic Development, I can though, comment on the issues of vision and hope and their importance to the

health of a community. I have already seen how the 1991 Ontario Budget had fostered hope for many of the people we serve."

Last week, the committee travelled to Kingston, Cornwall and Ottawa, and again encountered widespread support for our government's decision to invest in Ontario and its people. During the sixteen days of hearings in all, the committee heard from almost two hundred individuals and organizations representing 10 communities. Committee member Margaret Ward, MPP for Don Mills and Parliamentary Assistant to Government Services Minister Fred Wilson, summed up the public sentiment with the comments she made in Ottawa on the last day of the hearings. "Those

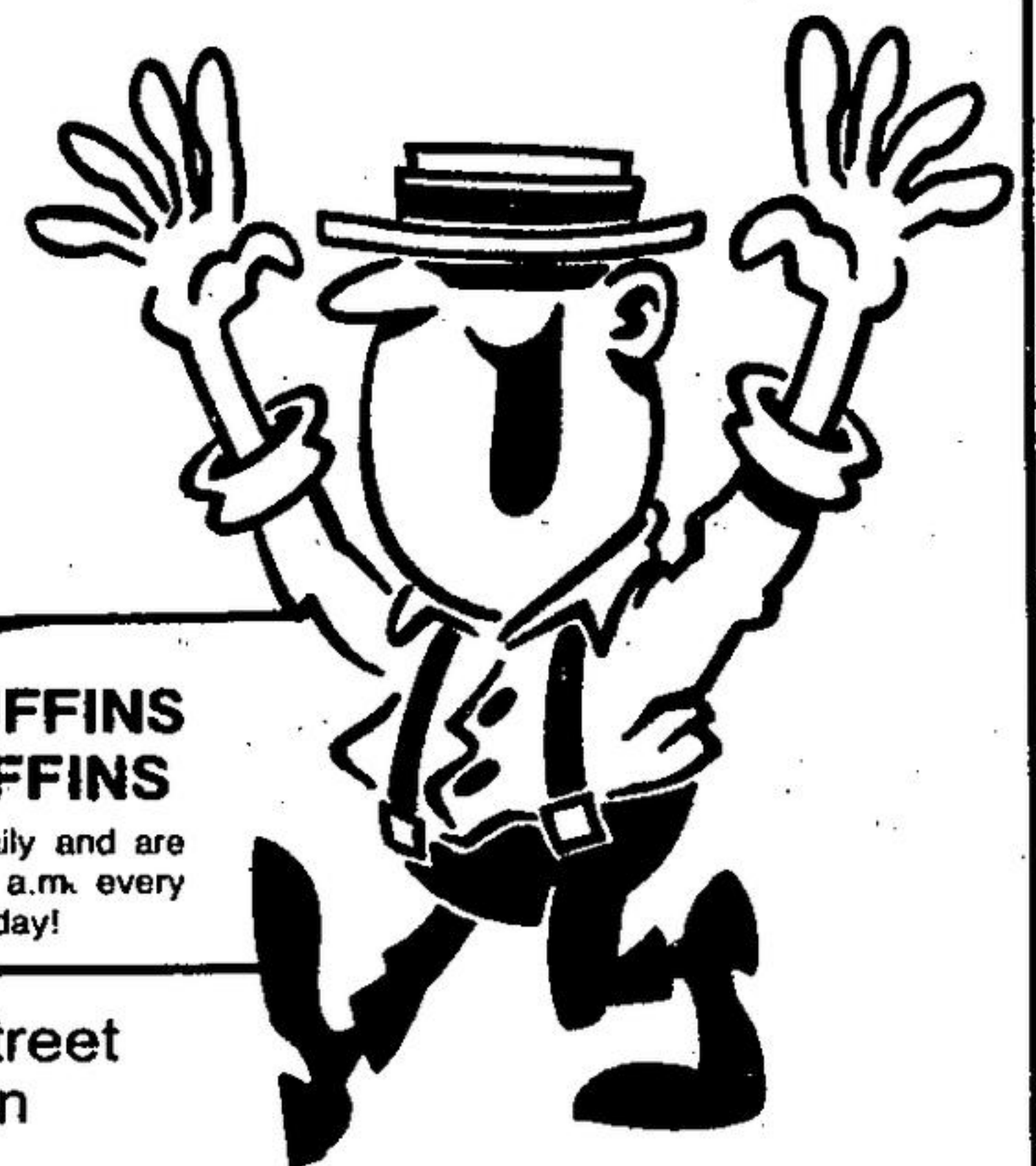
who deliver social and other services told the committee that the recession has really hurt their communities and thanked the Province for not abandoning them in their time of need. Educators applauded the Government's investment in the education of young Ontarians. And municipal leaders expressed support for the Government's job creating Anti-Recession Program. The one consistent criticism was that the Province hasn't done enough to assist people during these tough times."

If you want a copy of the statements by Bob White or Paul Born, please call my Milton office Tuesdays through Fridays at 878-1729. The committee will submit a final report early this fall to Treasurer Floyd Laughren.

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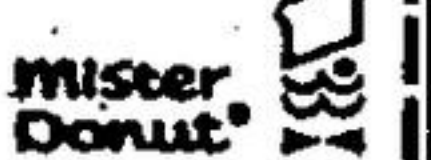


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