

Ottawa Report

Thoughts are turning to a federal election

Last week marked three years that I've been an MP. Some days it's hard to believe that time has flown by so quickly, and other days I just feel baffled from all the travelling and stress.

On balance, it is a true honor to be a Member of Parliament - despite the criticism and the fact I know I can never make all the 85,000 people in this riding happy. Politics, I have learned, is all about compromise - and that is something I never did well. Every day, I still struggle with it.

I ran for this job because I felt taxes were too high, the government was too much in debt and the future was at risk. Three years later, those are still my

concerns. As one MP, I have not been able to change the world. But there have been small victories - getting the GST put against the deficit; having the right to own property in the constitutional proposals; seeing legislated limits on government spending.

The job is far from being done, and there's a great deal more I'd like to do on behalf of the people who live on my street. The system itself, I now know, needs changing. MPs should be freer and more influential.

I sense that change is in the air. As we improve the economy and heal the national unity wounds, I think Parliament itself will

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become more representative and effective. This will be a good thing. Part of the current constitutional proposals is about hav-

ing more free votes and independence for MPs - which I fully support.

In the meantime, every day that I'm in the House of Commons, I make a point to get up and speak, because every day there is a privilege. And three years into the job, I'm being told to start thinking about the next election.

In fact, I have a meeting this week with a guy who says he plans moving into the area just so he can run against me for another political party! With the standing of the government in the polls right now, I'm sure there will be lots of people who figure they can

knock off the current MP for Halton-Peel.

Maybe - but I'm not going to spend time dwelling on it. I have never had a great deal of respect for politicians who get into the business to make a career of it - it's too easy for them to lose perspective. Still, there's something to be said for experience. It takes time to understand how the system works; what can realistically be done, and how to steer through the rules.

Elections are important, for sure. But they can't get in the way of governments doing what they should do. Politicians should never do things just to gain re-election.

The current federal government is in trouble partly because it has cut back spending, raised taxes, focused on reducing the deficit and tackled the question of national unity. We've also just been through a miserable recession and a great many people are unemployed. Interest rates and inflation are down, but that doesn't mean much when you don't have a job.

Things, in short, could be a lot better. The critics say this government is responsible for all of these problems. Others say it wouldn't matter who formed the government, because the problems would be there anyway. The national debt took 25 years to accumulate. And since they voted to stay in Canada in the 1980 referendum, Quebecers have been waiting for a new deal within Canada.

Well, after three years in Ottawa, I certainly have a new appreciation of how difficult it is to help Canada. But I also have no less desire to do so. The people on my street want a stable economy, low interest rates, secure jobs, a united country, peace, reasonable taxes, fair government and a promising future.

This is one of the few nations on earth which actually has the potential of delivering all of that. I am proud to fight for such goals.

Queen's Park Report

Workers investment proposals discussed

Back in August I mentioned that our government had been working on a couple of groundbreaking proposals to make it easier for workers to invest in their workplaces. Those proposals have since been introduced as legislation at Queen's Park. The Ontario Investment and Worker Ownership Program received first reading about three weeks ago and I'd like to tell you more about this creative and cooperative approach to economic renewal in our province.

During September, our government consulted with about 30 major labour, business, and investment groups about the proposals, and the draft legislation was modified somewhat to reflect those consultations. The program was designed to provide business with new sources of capital and to give workers a bigger voice in workplace decision-making. The Ontario Investment and Worker Ownership Program operates in two ways:

1. Investment. Part one operates very much like a mutual fund and will provide a tax credit to encourage workers to invest in small and medium-sized businesses through a labour-sponsored investment fund. Workers would receive an Ontario tax credit of 20 per cent on annual investments of up to \$3,500.

2. Ownership. Part two will provide enhanced tax credits to foster employee ownership. Workers investing in their own places of employment would be entitled to an Ontario tax credit of 20 per cent on the first \$3,500 invested, and up to 30 per cent on incremental investments. The maximum annual investment would be \$15,000.

The benefits are obvious. Businesses will have access to another source of capital to help them grow and modernize - and important factor for economic rebuilding. The program will help save jobs by supporting viable companies that might otherwise shut down, and employees will have a greater opportunity to share in workplace decision-making - an important factor in job satisfaction. The program should build better



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understanding between business and labour as each becomes aware of the other's needs and challenges.

Workers' investments will be covered under the Ontario Securities Act. In advance of making investments, workers will be encouraged to complete a feasibility study and must file a business plan which will be reviewed by an advisory panel. This process will ensure that employees have weighed the risks associated with acquiring a stake in the business and will promote investments in only those firms which have a reasonable opportunity for success. Workers in some cases will have an opportunity to invest in highly successful enterprises - for example in profitable businesses where the owner is retiring.

Only the labour-sponsored investment fund component of the program will apply to new ventures. For the employee-ownership provisions, the business must have been in existence for at least two years.

If you have any comments about the program please call my Milton office at 878-1729 Tuesdays through Fridays.

I also wanted to let you know that Tourism and Recreation Minister Peter North has decided to tour Halton North on December 3rd. He will be meeting with local municipal officials and visiting some of the attractions of the area. I'm looking forward to showing him a sample of what this riding has to offer in the way of planned facilities, attractive communities, and natural features.

And speaking of natural features, by now you've probably heard that the province and the Halton Region Conservation Authority completed negotiations to obtain the LAC Minerals property next to the Kelso Lake Conservation Area in the Town of Milton. Funding for the purchase came from the Niagara Escarpment Trust Fund. The group called K.E.E.P. (Keep the Escarp-

ment Environment Protected) had been attempting for some time to prevent mining on the land by having the 390 acres of forest and wetlands rezoned under the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act. The members of K.E.E.P. deserve a lot of praise for their longstanding and dedicated efforts to protect this important natural asset for everyone's benefit.

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