

COMMENT

The way we were



Picnics have always been a popular summertime activity and this photo from August 1926 shows the Georgetown Businessmen's Association first annual picnic attendees gathered at Eldorado Park in Brampton. While the attire of the day was obviously far more modest than today's, it must have been an unseasonably cool day vs. the dog days of summer we've experienced this year based on the number of coats being sported by many in the photo.

Text courtesy of Heritage Halton Hills/Photo courtesy of Equestrian Historical Society

From our readers



BEATING THE HEAT

Shawn McQuaid took this photo of a raccoon at Silvercreek Towers.

Got a photo you want to share? Email cuernon@metroland.com with details.

Referendum needed on electoral reform

In recent months, the topic of electoral reform has dominated headlines. Electoral reform refers to the Liberal government's plans to change what your vote means. Aside from declaring that Canadians will never again vote the same way they did in 2015 and in every election before that they have not given any indication of what the new voting system will look like.

Over the last number of years, I have hosted dozens of town halls and consultations on reforming and improving our democracy, including electoral reform. For example, town halls and consultations were hosted in Guelph/Wellington County on April 6, 2014, and again in Cambridge on Sept. 14, 2014. Furthermore, I continuously consult with the people of Wellington County and Halton Hills on matters of democratic reform, and will continue to do so in the future.

In fact, the feedback received from these town halls and consultations with constituents over the years was the reason why I introduced the Reform Act, in December 2013. It was successfully passed into law one year ago. Input on the government's plan for electoral reform is being accepted in Ottawa, primarily through Parliament's Special Committee on Electoral Reform, which will report to the House of Commons in December. But I believe that every person in Wellington County and Halton Hills should have an opportunity to have their voice heard.

That is why I am mailing out a survey and comment card to every residence. The responses we receive will be forwarded to the Special Committee on Electoral Reform. This will give everyone an opportunity to provide their feedback. If we decide to further consult with constituents by other means, including a town hall, we will be sure to make it publicly known and accessible.

I believe that whatever changes are proposed to Canada's electoral system regardless of whether the proposals have been stud-

ied by committee must be put to a national referendum. This precedent for a referendum has been set in Ontario, British Columbia and Prince Edward Island, as well as other Westminster democracies, such as the U.K. and New Zealand.

There is another reason why a referendum is necessary. Any change to the way in which Members of Parliament (MPs) are elected by citizens is a constitutional question that underpins Confederation. The old Parliament of



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the United Province of Canada was not based on the principle of representation-by-population; the basic premise that every vote should have an equal weight when counted. Confederation and our 1867 constitution came about to resolve this issue.

Furthermore, the government's focus on electoral reform fails to address the primary problem with Canada's

democracy. The problem is not how MPs are elected, but rather what happens to MPs when they arrive in Ottawa: Once in Ottawa, MPs are too controlled by party leaders, and in particular, the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). Changing the way in which we elect MPs will not address this primary problem, and could even make it worse.

This is why, in addition to the Reform Act which aims to rebalance the power between leaders' offices and MPs I will continue to push for further reforms to the House of Commons to strengthen and restore the role of elected MPs. Further reforms, such as taking away the power of party leaders and the PMO to select committee members and committee chairs, are needed to rebalance power between a too powerful PMO and MPs who do not have enough power to represent their constituents.

Michael Chong is the MP for Wellington-Halton Hills

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