

# Chong seeks to speak his mind freely in the House of Commons

By **LISA TALLYN**  
Staff Writer



**WELLINGTON-HALTON HILLS  
MP MICHAEL CHONG**

Wellington-Halton Hills MP Michael Chong has joined other Tory MPs who have stood in the House of Commons to defend their right to speak their minds without prior consent of their party leadership.

On Monday, Chong threw his support behind Conservative colleague Mark Warawa who set off the revolt last month when his attempts to raise the issue of sex-selective abortion were stymied by Prime Minister Stephen Harper's wish to honour his promise not to visit the issue again.

An all-party committee ruled Warawa's private member's motion asking Parliament to condemn sex-selective abortion was non-votable, killing it before it could be debated. When the MP tried to complain about that in the Commons he was struck from the roster of MPs who wanted to make statements.

When asked Tuesday about joining the revolt, Chong said he wouldn't characterize the position he took as a "revolt."

"The speaker has been asked to review the rules concerning Member's statement, so he's asked for Members of the House to provide their views on this issue," said Chong. "That's exactly what I did."

"In my view it's a fundamental right by Members of Parliament to represent their constituents by speaking in the House of Commons and no party, no whip, no party house leader should be able to prevent a Member from speaking in the House of Commons."

Chong said he thinks Harper is "open to changes to member's statements."

I think he is open to a review of the rules governing Member's statements and I'm hoping the Speaker will fully consider the points I made to him

(Monday)."

Chong's been concerned about the "erosion of the role of individual MPs to hold the government accountable."

"I feel strongly over the last 40 years the role of the Members of Parliament (MPs) has been weakened and I think that's to the detriment of Canadian democracy and the very Canadians who elected us to represent them."

He said he thinks the control by whips and the party house leader "has gone too far in the House."

He acknowledges their right to discipline MPs who say things that aren't consistent with party policy, "but that discipline cannot include preventing a Member from speaking in the House of Commons."

Chong said he's heard support for his position from both other MPs and his constituents.

Glengarry-Prescott-Russell MP Pierre Lemieux also joined the rebellion Monday.

*With files from Torstar News Service*

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