

The way we were



In Victorian times

Wilber Lake behind St. George's Church was a popular place to canoe in the summer and play ice hockey in winter. It was drained in 1915 when the Radial Railway was built.

Esquesing Historical Society photo

From our readers

A FROZEN WONDER

On his trip to the bottom of the world in June Don Parker of Halton Hills encountered a phenomena that even the locals had not seen... the ocean around Cape Town, South Africa had frozen over.

Got a photo you want to share?

Email: cgamble@theifp.ca.



Reform Act a step toward improving democracy

Last December, the Reform Act was introduced in the House of Commons. The Reform Act is a set of reforms aimed at strengthening and restoring the role of elected Members of Parliament in the House of Commons and making party leaders more accountable.

The Reform Act proposes three simple reforms to strengthen Parliament and reduce the centralization of power in party leaders' offices. First, it removes from the Canada Elections Act the power of the party leader to approve or veto party candidates. Second, it mandates that caucus chairs be elected by caucus (rather than appointed by the party leader) and that MPs be only expelled from caucus on a secret ballot vote (rather than by a unilateral decision of the party leader). Finally, it specifies the rules for caucus to review and remove the party leader.

Since the bill's introduction, the Reform Act has been making its way through the legislative process. This September is an important month for the bill.

On Wednesday, Sept. 24, the Reform Act will face its first vote in the House of Commons. To ensure that the bill passes this first vote, I have been consulting many people, including MPs from all parties and Canadians across the country. Many have suggested improvements that would strengthen the bill and broaden support for it in the House of Commons. Based on the feedback received, I plan to make public suggestions on further changes to

the bill that I hope the committee amending the bill will adopt. These suggested changes will strengthen and improve the bill while remaining true to the underlying principles of the original bill.

Last April, the Reform Act had its first hour of debate. During this first hour of debate, MPs on both sides of the aisle stood to voice their support and suggestions for further improvement. On Sept. 18, the bill will have a second hour of debate with the first vote following on the ensuing Wednesday. If this first vote is successful, the Reform Act will proceed to committee for further study and amendment.

Your support for the Reform Act has been important. It is because of support from Canadians like you that we have been able to raise awareness about the state of our democratic institutions and the need to reform Parliament. Your continued support is important to ensure that the Reform Act becomes the law of the land.

If we can achieve the changes proposed in the Reform Act, we will have come a long way in addressing the long-standing problem of the centralization of power in party leaders, and restore Canada's Parliament to the way it once worked. And that is good news for those who believe that MPs should represent your views in Ottawa, and not the other way around.

Michael Chong is the MP for Wellington-Halton Hills



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