

Continued from page 4

ment and Opposition members, the Speaker must refrain from making partisan public statements on issues which are before the House. It is also true that the Speaker presides over the debates in the House, and by tradition does not vote except in the event of a tie. Even then, the Speaker is expected to vote according to the traditions of Parliament.

There are times when a Speaker must bite his or her tongue. But, it is also true that a Speaker seeks to be an influential MPP, and exert that influence toward positive outcomes for his or her riding and the province.

Question: Why does the Speaker have an apartment at Queen's Park?

Answer: This is a good question, and I've raised it too.

Since the Speaker is responsible for the legislative building, including its staff, maintenance and security, the Speaker has been always expected to take up residence in the building, and be available night and day when the House is in session.

The day I was elected Speaker, they told me it was now "my house." I replied that I hoped I didn't have to pay the property

taxes!

The Speaker's apartment comes furnished, and it's similar in appearance to a nice hotel suite. The Speaker is expected to use the apartment to host visiting dignitaries.

Question: How long is your "appointment" as Speaker?

Answer: While some people may still believe the Speaker is "appointed" by the premier, this is not the case, and hasn't been so since 1987.

To reiterate, the Speaker is elected by a secret ballot vote in which all MPPs can participate. The premier has one vote, just like all the other MPPs.

The Speaker's tenure is defined by the length of the Parliament, which according to the Canadian Constitution, can be up to five years. The current 42nd provincial parliament exists until it's dissolved and a new provincial election is called. The next election is expected to take place in 2022.

Question: Does the Speaker get a government limousine and driver?

Answer: While I was informed that the Speaker is entitled to a government car and driver, I have not asked for either.

Provincial cabinet ministers definitely need a government car and driver, and I can't speak for my predecessors as Speaker who may have needed a car and driver.

However, I feel it's unnecessary for me to have a government car, and to have one would be a waste of taxpayers' money. I can drive myself to where I need to go, so hiring a driver is also unnecessary.

Once again, I want to thank everyone who has offered me their kind wishes as I've undertaken my new responsibilities.

It is an honour to serve you at Queen's Park. As always, we're here to help anyway we can on matters involving the provincial government.

Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott can be reached at ted.arnott-co@pc.ola.org or by phoning 1-800-265-2366.

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