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## Parliament Hill report

Garth Turner MP  
Halton Peel

Over the next few weeks, we're all going to be swamped with messages about how we should vote in the October 26 referendum on Canada's constitution.

So far, Ottawa (including the three main political parties) and the provinces, along with the territories, aboriginal and business leaders say we should vote "yes". Quebec separatists, some provincial Liberal leaders and the Reform Party say the vote should be "no".

I have told you recently that while this is not the deal I would have written, I can — and will — support it. This, however, does not mean I'll be telling you to vote the same way. You have a choice, and a responsibility to listen to all the arguments, then make up your own mind.

I've been talking to some of my friends in the Reform Party over the last few days, and they are having a tough time with the advice of their leader. For a "no" vote would likely send a message of rejection to the aboriginal and Quebec, stoke the fires of uncertainty and just bring on another constitutional crisis. Who needs that?

My advice to them is the same advice to everyone: Don't vote for the political reasons, because this is a referendum, not an election. Vote for what's best for Canada in your view. The election will come soon enough.

But as important as this referendum is, it should not paralyze the government or your Member of Parliament. And it won't. During the many days of campaigning for Canada and the dozens of public evening meetings which I will be hosting, the hope is we can also talk about those economic issues which are vital.

Many companies in Halton and Peel, for example need better and secure access to the foreign markets they trade into. So we have to strengthen our hand at the GATT talks, make sure the North American free trade deal will work

and win our trade disputes with the Americans.

Airline workers right now also need the full attention of elected people. The proposed merger of Air Canada and Canadian needs to be studied and scrutinized to make sure the industry is viable; that experienced employees are not tossed out needlessly; and that government takes up its responsibility to ensure fairness.

Small business has to be supported wherever possible. The recession took a heavy toll in this sector which is Canada's leading creator of jobs, I intend later this fall to put together some seminars for government official and small business operators in Halton-Peel so they can co-operate on boosting business in this area.

Finally, I am not going to let the referendum — as important as it is — blind me to my ongoing fight to have less government spending, a control on your deficit and ultimately lower taxes.

The special interest groups continue to overrun this country. The middle class struggles to be heard above the cries of people who want more attention and more dollars, without accepting more responsibility.

Listen, I really worked hard to have property rights included in the constitution — something which would have given middle-class people more protection while at the same time reducing the power of politicians and bureaucrats. In the end, the premiers defeated the issue.

So, I didn't get it, but this does not mean the battle stops. I lost the round, not the fight. Hundreds of people from the riding also were crusading with me, and I thank them for the support. But this certainly does not give us reason enough to vote against the package of changes which can bring some peace and stability.

Canada's the prize here. It may be flawed, but I wouldn't trade it for any other nation on the planet.

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