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## Queen's Park Report



**Noel Duignan MPP**  
Halton North

When I told you about the proposed constitutional agreement last week, I mentioned the fact that women will be better represented in the proposed Senate.

Overall, the agreement will strengthen and protect equality rights. While it may not be perfect, it does provide a new foundation for a stronger Canada without sacrificing anyone's rights. It's a good deal for Ontario and for all Canadians, women as well as men and today I'd like to talk about the constitutional changes in terms of women's rights.

Will new provisions like the Canada Clause and self-government for the First Nations weaken the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Charter?

Absolutely not. The Canada

Clause is an interpretative clause that doesn't remove or weaken any rights or freedoms protected in the Charter. Specifically, the recognition of gender equality as a fundamental characteristic of Canada doesn't threaten in any way the gains women have won so far in Charter-based court decisions.

Concerning First Nations women, the rights flowing from the recognition of self-government will apply to women and men equally. And, First Nations women will continue to benefit from the same gender equality clauses as all Canadian women. The central role of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms has not been diminished.

Won't increased powers for provinces and restrictions on the federal spending power rule out any future national social programs like day care?

No. Ontario fought to retain a strong national government and these constitutional changes will maintain a central role for the federal government in the area of social policy.

The restrictions on the federal spending power apply only in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction. Provinces have always had the power to "opt-out" of shared-cost programs; they'll now receive fair compensation only if they meet national objectives. In addition, the Social Charter, which is based on Ontario's original proposals will help protect the right of all

Canadians to social programs.

What about the negotiating process — why were women excluded?

Actually, women were involved throughout the negotiations. Two delegations, the North West Territories and the Inuit Tapirisat, were led by women and many of the officials in the other delegations were women. The extensive process of public consultation that led up to the negotiations also offered many opportunities for women to express their views on constitutional change. Nevertheless, Ontario would have preferred a more open and inclusive process of negotiations.

Anyway, that's enough about the constitution for today other than to say again I'll be supporting the agreement and voting "yes" on October 26. I urge you to do the same.

In a completely different vein, I've been asked to relay some information to those of you who are pet owners.

The Toronto Academy of Veterinary Medicine is organizing a number of low-cost (\$8) Rabies Clinics on Saturday, October 17th from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. The project is subsidized by the T.A.V.M. and by the veterinarians themselves to encourage people to immunize their pets. Two Clinics will be held in Halton North on October 17th: one at City Park in Acton and the other at Cedarvale Park in Georgetown. You don't have to live in those two communities to take your pet to either place.

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### Are you a pregnant teenager? New classes starting

Are you a pregnant teenager? Do you know someone who is? A new session of seven prenatal classes specifically for teens begins late September, offered by the Young Parents Support Services.

Pregnant teenagers have special needs and concerns that will be addressed in these classes. Being part of a group with other teens gives them a chance to share their feelings and discuss their fears. Participants discuss what it's like to be a pregnant teen and a teen parent and what options they have.

Besides preparing for labour and delivery and attending a hospital tour, group members also learn about

community resources and assistance available for teen parents.

The first three classes are for the expectant mothers only, and the "coaches" (who may be the baby's father, a friend or a relative) are invited to the last four classes. Volunteer coaches can be provided for support during labour and delivery if needed.

Transportation to the sessions can be provided from anywhere in Halton. Pregnancy counselling is also available through the Young Parents Support Services.

For further information, call Susan Stuart at 844-5502.

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