

Parliament Hill report



by Garth Turner MP
Halton Peel

There's now just a short time left until Canadians vote in the referendum. Frankly, I have no idea of what the outcome will be, or what exactly a national "yes" or "no" vote will yield in the future.

But the last two weeks have been extremely interesting, as I traveled around this big riding, talking to people about their perceptions, fears and hopes.

In the last nine days I've spoken to just over 2,100 people in Burlington, Brampton, Caledon East, Alton, Nassagaweya,

Georgetown, Milton and Bolton. This is my report:

At the meetings, the majority of people are quiet and attentive. They are clearly coming out for as much information as possible on what all the changes would mean. I have the feeling that most voters don't know how they'll be marking their ballots yet. Many others are looking for reasons to vote yes. Those who have already decided to vote no are working hard to persuade others to follow them.

The question asked the most often: Is this referendum binding?

And my answer: Legally, there is no way the constitution can be changed by a popular vote. But I can't imagine the federal or provincial governments not following the results of the vote - after all, why hold this referendum if the voice of the people is not to be obeyed?

Anyway, in Halton-Peel, your MP is going to vote in Parliament according to the results of this referendum. If the riding says yes to the Charlottetown accord, then so will I. If you say no, then that will be my vote, regardless of what the party or prime minister wants.

The second most common question: What are the consequences of a yes or a no vote? My answer:

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With a yes vote, governments will start implementing the 20 pages of the accord. We'll get a reformed Senate, more MPs in Ontario, native self-government and a transfer of some powers to the provinces with a leaner federal government.

With a no vote, I have no idea what will happen. Pierre Trudeau and Preston Manning say nothing will happen. The Royal Bank and the Canadian Federation of Small Business say the economy will end up in the dumpster. Truth may lie somewhere in the middle.

The most common complaint: That some politicians and groups are trying to scare people into voting yes. People don't want to be

bullied or pushed. They are tired of threats about Canada breaking up. This is almost becoming a moment of final decision - when voters will make up their own minds based on the information they've received.

To that end, my job as the Member of Parliament is to provide all the help I can. The packed rooms each night tell me that people will do the right thing for Canada when they feel they understand the issues, and the stakes.

The second Georgetown meeting will be held Wednesday, Oct. 21 at the North Halton Golf Club in Georgetown. On Monday, Oct. 19 there will be a live phone-in show on Channel 4, Halton Cable.

What's black and white, and read all over?

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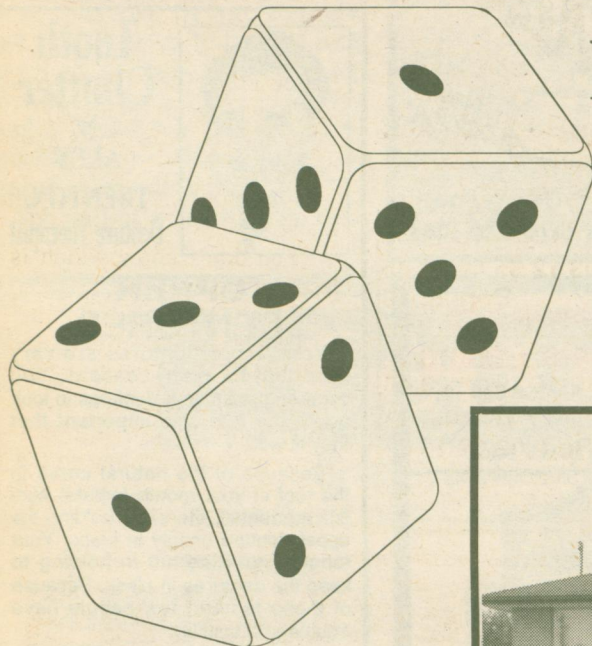


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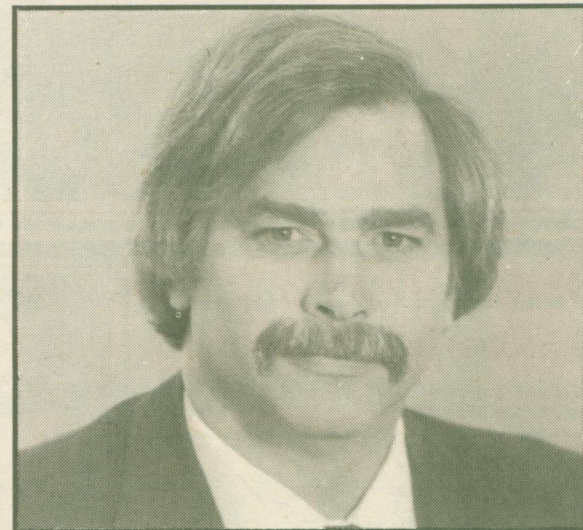
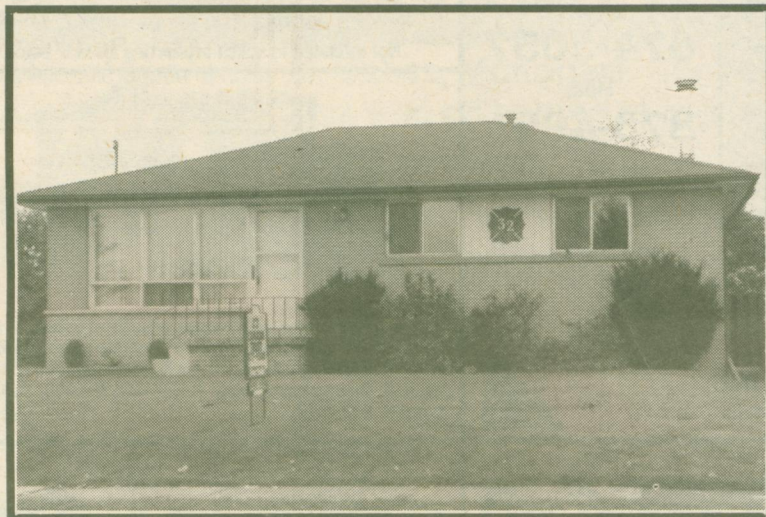
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