

Report from

PARLIAMENT HILL

By Mike Chong

MP Wellington/ Halton Hills



Every election one must re-earn the right to sit in the House of Commons to represent the people, and this past election was no exception. I want to thank the people of Wellington-Halton Hills for re-electing me to the House of Commons. I also want to thank all the volunteers who worked on our election campaign. Hundreds and hundreds of volunteers worked on the various local campaigns, donating thousands of hours of time, many taking time off work. It is humbling to see that level of commitment from ordinary Canadians, who do it for no other reason than a deep belief in their country and in their party.

I was also especially heartened to see the high level of civic engagement in Wellington-Halton Hills. As it was in the 2004 election, voter turnout was over 70% in our riding, and higher than the national average.

Now the real, difficult work of governing begins. As indicated during the election, we have a number of priorities.

The first priority of our government will be to introduce sweeping new accountability rules by passing the Federal Accountability Act.

Our second priority will be to provide tax relief to lower and middle income Canadians by cutting the GST 1%.

Our third priority will be to strengthen the criminal justice system so that our communities are safer.

Our fourth priority will be to help parents with the cost of raising children, through our proposal to give parents \$1,200 for each pre-schooler in their family. Our childcare proposal is far more flexible than the previous government's proposal, as this money can be used for daycare, for a baby sitter, or to help a parent stay at home. Our proposal will help not only double-income families working 9-to-5, but also shift workers, farmers, and single income families, people who were left out of the previous government's plan.

Finally, our fifth priority will be to improve public healthcare by working with the provinces to establish the Patient Wait Times Guarantee. Since Canadians have given us a minority government, these priorities will need the support of the other parties, something I believe will be found on an issue-by-issue basis.

By voting for a minority Conservative government, Canadians have given us their trust and dreams for this great country. I know that this trust and these dreams can be quite fragile. As a new government not having been in power for over 12 years, there is no doubt that we will make some mistakes as we transition into government.

But rest assured that you have my and my colleagues' commitment to work our hardest and to do our best for you, for this great riding of Wellington-Halton Hills and for the greatest country in the world, Canada.

Valentine's Day

Turn on the heat without turning up the heat

The Ontario Ministry of Energy, perhaps aware of the shock residents got when they opened their January gas bills, has suggested there's a way to turn on the heat on Valentine's Day next Tuesday without turning up the heat. Or maybe they are just trying to show they have a heart.

Their five point list includes:

"Lower the lights and have a romantic dinner." Turn your lights off when they're not needed. Installing compact florescent bulbs will also cut your lighting bill in half.

"Cuddle under a fuzzy blanket and give one to your water heater." Wrapping your electric heater in a tank blanket reduces the amount of energy it uses.

"Turn the thermostat down and snuggle." Turning the thermostat down by 2 degrees when you go to bed and when you leave for the day saves up to \$100 a year.

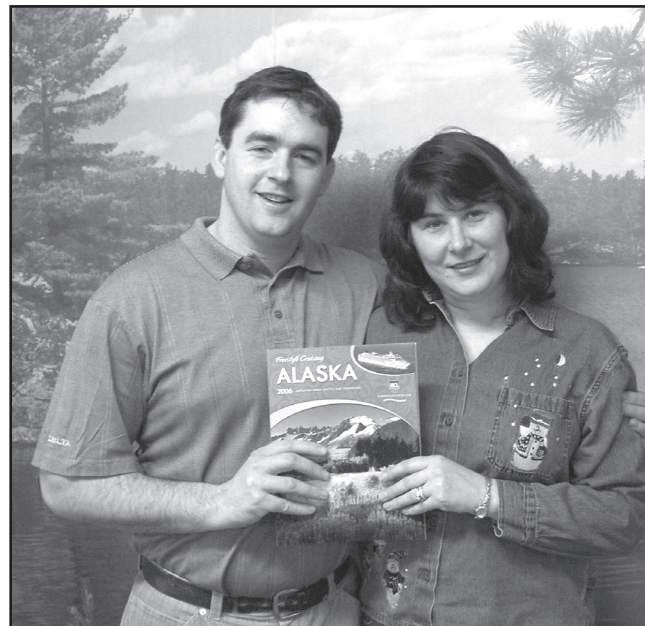
"Spend time together and do the dishes and laundry another day." Waiting until you have a full load of laundry or dishes before running the machines saves energy.

"Close the curtains, turn off the lights and go to bed early." At night, pull your window coverings closed to avoid warm air from escaping through windows. Open your window coverings during the day to let the sun warm up the rooms."

More energy conservation tips can be obtained by visiting www.energy.gov.on.ca.



MOZART'S PARTY: Members of the Acton Citizens' Band, including Katrina Beeney and Harvey Dewhurst celebrated the 250th anniversary of Mozart's birth with a party, including cake and punch, following band practice at the band hall last Wednesday – Frances Niblock photo



GOING TO ALASKA: Winners of the dream cruise at the Rotary Club's draw last week were Mrs. Donna Love and Tobe Otvos of Bowmanville who were Tyler Travel at arranging the trip this week. Ted Tyler photo

Update home business zoning

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

Outdated and inconsistent zoning bylaws offer a mish-mash of rules for Town staff when it comes to trying to control home occupations, and underscore the need for a comprehensive bylaw review according to Town staff.

During debate on the Town's first ever licensing fees for retail businesses – amended to a one-time \$90 fee after local businesses rallied loud and long against

an annual fee – staff used the example of a home hair cutting salon to show how the old Esquesing, Acton and Georgetown bylaws are inconsistent.

At a recent licensing review committee meeting, Brian Murdoch, the manager of zoning said that the Acton zoning bylaw is quite restrictive, Esquesing is "middle of the road" and Georgetown's is quite open.

Asked what would happen if someone came to the Town and said they wanted to open a hair cutting salon in their home in Acton, Mur-

doch said they'd be "out of luck," but they could do it with some conditions under the zoning bylaw (there would not be a licence fee) in Georgetown.

In the debate over the new retail licensing fees, several business owners said if they had to pay the fees, then other similar businesses operating in private homes should have to pay them as well.

Murdoch said he could not guarantee that there are no home hair cutting salons operating in Acton, and added it is not possible

to licence them because of the discrepancies in the three zoning bylaws.

Murdoch said if they received a complaint about a home occupation they would turn it over to the bylaw enforcement staff for investigation, but that they have no staff to "proactively chase" them.

He also said the Town needs to look at a wider variety of home occupations, not just the traditional ones.

Planing director Bruce MacLean said, subject to public input and Council approval, the old outdated and inconsistent zoning bylaw will be changed in the current review of the Official Plan, which will have a specific section to deal with criteria for locating home occupations.

He hopes to have a new comprehensive zoning bylaw ready for Council in 2007

Concerns are raised about new houses on Churchill S.

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

Concerns about noise, vibration, fire risk, odours, tree loss and devalued properties were among the issues raised by several Acton residents at a public meeting on Monday into plans for 16 single-family lots on the east side of Churchill Road South, opposite the Devon Place subdivision.

The Acton East Housing Corporation, which developed the Devon Place subdivision, is negotiating to purchase parts of a Third Line unopened road allowance from the Town to add to its property, enabling it to build 16 single-family detached houses on the land between Churchill Road and the railway tracks, south of the Region's sewage treatment plant.

A rezoning would be required for the proposal to proceed on the 2.2-acre site that has 600-feet of frontage on Churchill Road.

Acton East Housing Corporation agent Bruce Donaldson said his client has submitted an environmental impact study and a noise study, recognizing the possibility of noise and vibration from the trains using the tracks that the new houses would back on to.

Rachlin Drive resident Jennifer Morris said she "strongly urged" councillors not to sell the unopened road allowance to the developer or approve the rezoning, arguing that staff's own report shows there is not enough water "to go around."

Noting that Donaldson said the railway tracks were depressed in the area, she said that is not enough to stop the noise and vibration.

"Where I personally live, about 500-metres away from the CN Rail (track), the entire house shakes when the trains go by," Morris said, adding this could lead to future complaints to the Town.

She noted that passing trains caused a number of grass fires over the dry summer, and is also worried about possible odours from the water treatment plant and Union Gas facility in the area.

Morris said many residents on Churchill Road purchased those properties so they could have an unobstructed view of the forests and fields across the road and asked the Town to zone it as parkland.

Rachlin Drive resident Ian McLean, who said he'd been following recent budget debates and comments made by staff and councillors that development does not pay for itself, asked if this development was really necessary.

He said in spite of growth in the tax base in the past five years, Council still had to increase property taxes and still

Continued on page 18

Congratulate Chong

Halton Hills Council will send congratulations to Wellington-Halton Hills MP Michael Chong who was named President of the Queen's Privy Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of Sport in Prime Minister Stephen Harper's new cabinet on Monday.

"It doesn't matter which political stripe you belong to, I think it's quite a feat, at his age, to have been recognized," Mayor Rick Bonnette said.

Council also voted to send letters of congratulations to Harper, Paul Martin and the Liberal Party and Jack Layton and the NDP Party.

The letters ask each party to work together to implement the components of each of their election platforms – identified for Council in a report from CAO Dennis Perlin – that would help Halton Hills achieve its strategic objectives.

Georgetown Councillor Mike Davis raised the political hackles of several councillors when he suggested that letters also be sent to Bloc Quebecois leader Gilles Doucette and the one Independent MP.

"Hell will freeze over before I would write a letter to the Bloc Quebecois congratulating them on their endeavours which might split up the country," Mayor Bonnette said, adding he thinks it's a "shame" that there is a party like the Bloc in Canada.

Acton Councillor Mike O'Leary echoed Bonnette's comments, adding the Bloc's policies have interfered with the workings of Parliament.

"I certainly can't support a party that I regularly refer to as 'that bunch of traitors,'" O'Leary said.

After several other councillors also refused to congratulate the Bloc, Davis saw that he had no support for his suggestion and was forced to withdraw his amendment.