

Chudleigh says Harris did a tremendous job

By RICHARD VIVIAN
The Champion

Premier Mike Harris will be missed as leader of the Ontario PCs, says party mate Halton MPP Ted Chudleigh.

"He was a great leader and I'm sorry to see him go," Mr. Chudleigh said.

"When you hear his announcement made you can't help but think back at the tremendous job he's done for the people of Ontario who are now experiencing economic times they wouldn't have dreamed of in 1995."

Mr. Harris resigned as premier of the province Tuesday, citing "very personal reasons." His resignation will come into effect following the election of a new party leader, expected early next year.

Following an appropriate grace period, several would-be party leaders will start down the campaign trail. The most likely place for such announcements, Mr. Chudleigh said, is the party's annual convention in two weeks.

"I think that over the course of the next few weeks you'll see a number of people that will express an interest in the job."

Though Mr. Chudleigh was reluctant to suggest who may step forward, the front-runners are generally seen to be Finance Minister Jim Flaherty, Health Minister Tony Clement, Education Minister Janet Ecker and Environment Minister Elizabeth

Whitmer.

Mr. Chudleigh listed Mr. Harris' accomplishments in office as government restructuring as well as health care, welfare and education reform.

Mohan Anand, who ran for the Liberals in the last provincial election, suggested it was the premier's critics who drove him to leave office.

"His popularity was actually dwindling somewhat and I think Mike recognized that," he said.

"He brought in some changes in the name of his 'Common Sense Revolution' and had, at least in his mind, achieved whatever he could and wanted to give the chance to others to carry on with the mission he started."

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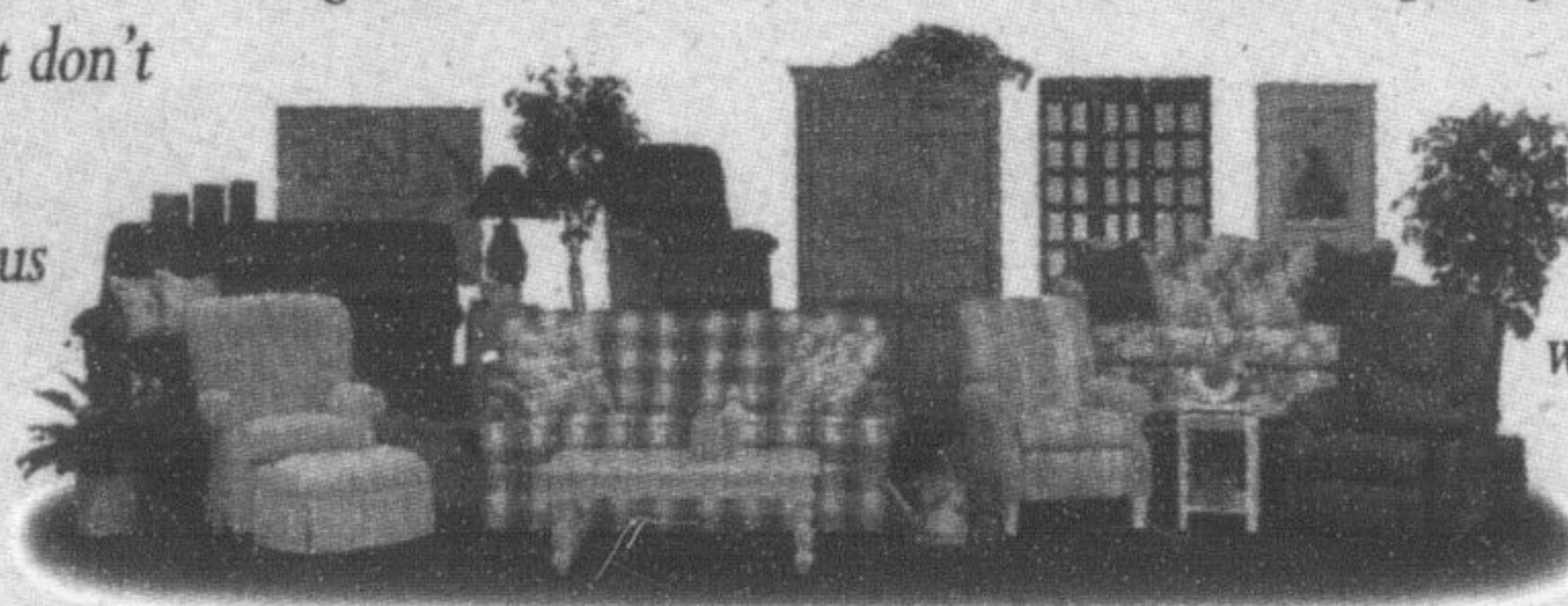
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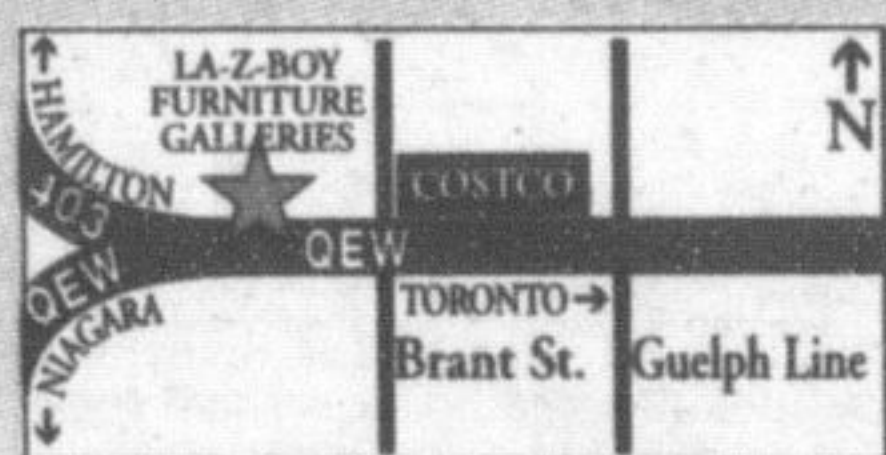
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