

Former MPP Carr seeking federal Liberal nomination

By JASON MISNER

The Champion

Former Oakville Tory MPP Gary Carr — best remembered for blasting his government over the release of last spring's provincial budget — is trading in his coach's whistle for a shot at Parliament Hill.

Mr. Carr, who had been coaching a hockey team in British Columbia after retiring from politics last year, said he will seek the Liberal nomination in the Halton Riding.

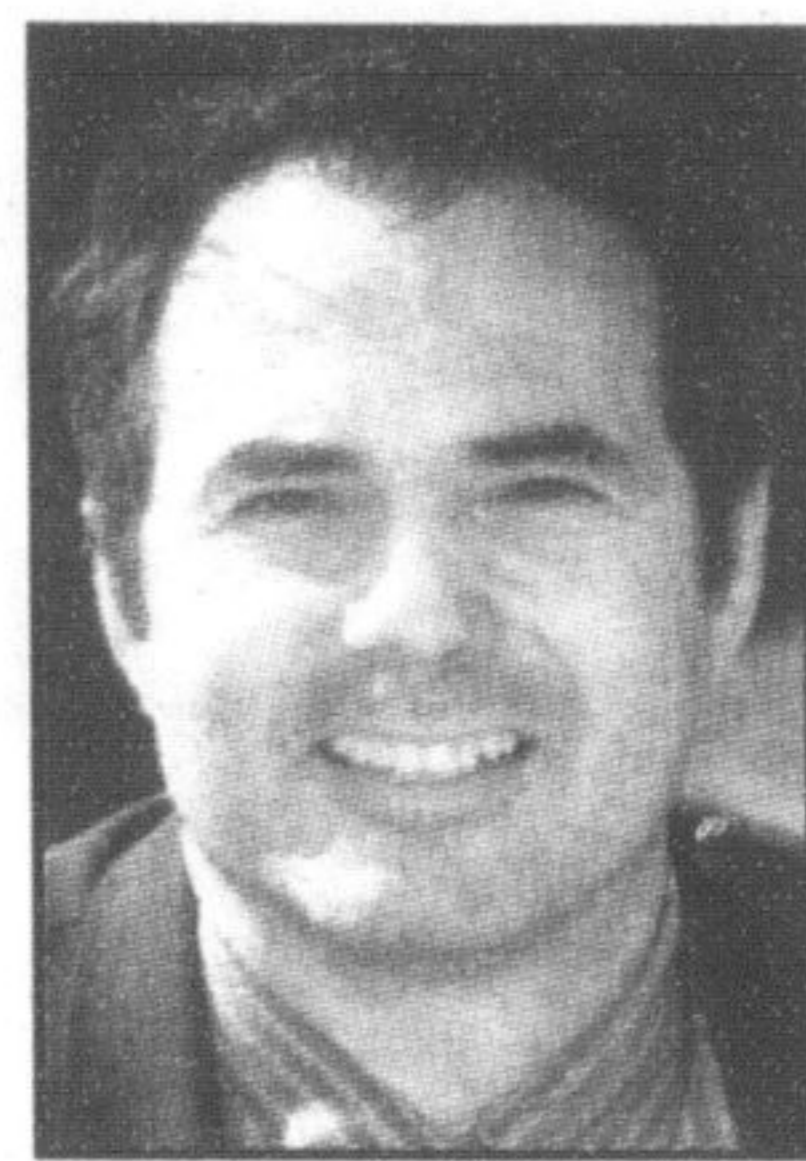
His decision comes two days after Halton Liberal MP Julian Reed's surprise announcement that he wouldn't seek a fourth consecutive term.

"I wouldn't have run had Julian been involved," Mr. Carr said in an interview, noting he's been thinking about seeking the riding nomination for some time.

"I think we need people that have served, that have some experience and some integrity, and I think I've got that and hopefully the people of Halton will see that. I'm ready to go any time."

There has been much speculation Prime Minister Paul Martin would call a spring election. But the recent money-funneling sponsorship scandal may put that off, making for a longer nomination process.

Mr. Carr wants to address two key issues as MP — more funding for health-care and more govern-



Gary Carr

ment grants and scholarships for people wanting to pursue a post-secondary education.

His decision to seek the local seat means there's once again a battle for the Liberal nomination of Halton riding, which will be re-drawn to include Milton and northern portions of Oakville and Burlington. Halton Hills will form the new riding of Wellington-Halton Hills.

Mr. Carr said he's been encouraged by the Halton Liberal riding association to run for the nomination. He will square off against Peter Duffus, a well-known Halton entrepreneur and immediate past-president of the Halton Liberal riding association.

Mr. Duffus said he isn't fazed by the news he will again have to fight for the Liberal nomination.

"I welcome a good discussion on the issues," he said. "The question will be whether the (party) members want to be represented by a person who has been a (long-time) Liberal or do the Liberals want a Conservative candidate."

"My committee has been overwhelmed by the response of the

membership. Anyone is more than welcomed to run against us."

Mr. Carr, who is living in Rexdale with his in-laws as his family searches for a home in the riding, was a Progressive Conservative representing Oakville from 1990 until 2003. But his last few months in office, where he was also Speaker of the House, were highlighted by his stinging criticism of his government's controversial decision to release the provincial budget at a Brampton car parts plant last March.

He launched an investigation into whether the budget released outside of the Legislature was illegal. It wasn't.

Mr. Carr said he spoke to Mr. Martin during the Ontario budget conundrum, who "congratulated" him for the way he spoke out.

Mr. Carr said Mr. Martin's call for MPs to have greater freedom to vote to best represent their constituents and his openness to work with premiers across Canada lured him back into politics and to run for the Liberal party. "I'm a big believer in the prime minister," he said, adding he thinks Mr. Martin has handled the sponsorship scandal well. "I've been impressed with his ability as finance minister. I think he's a terrific leader."

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