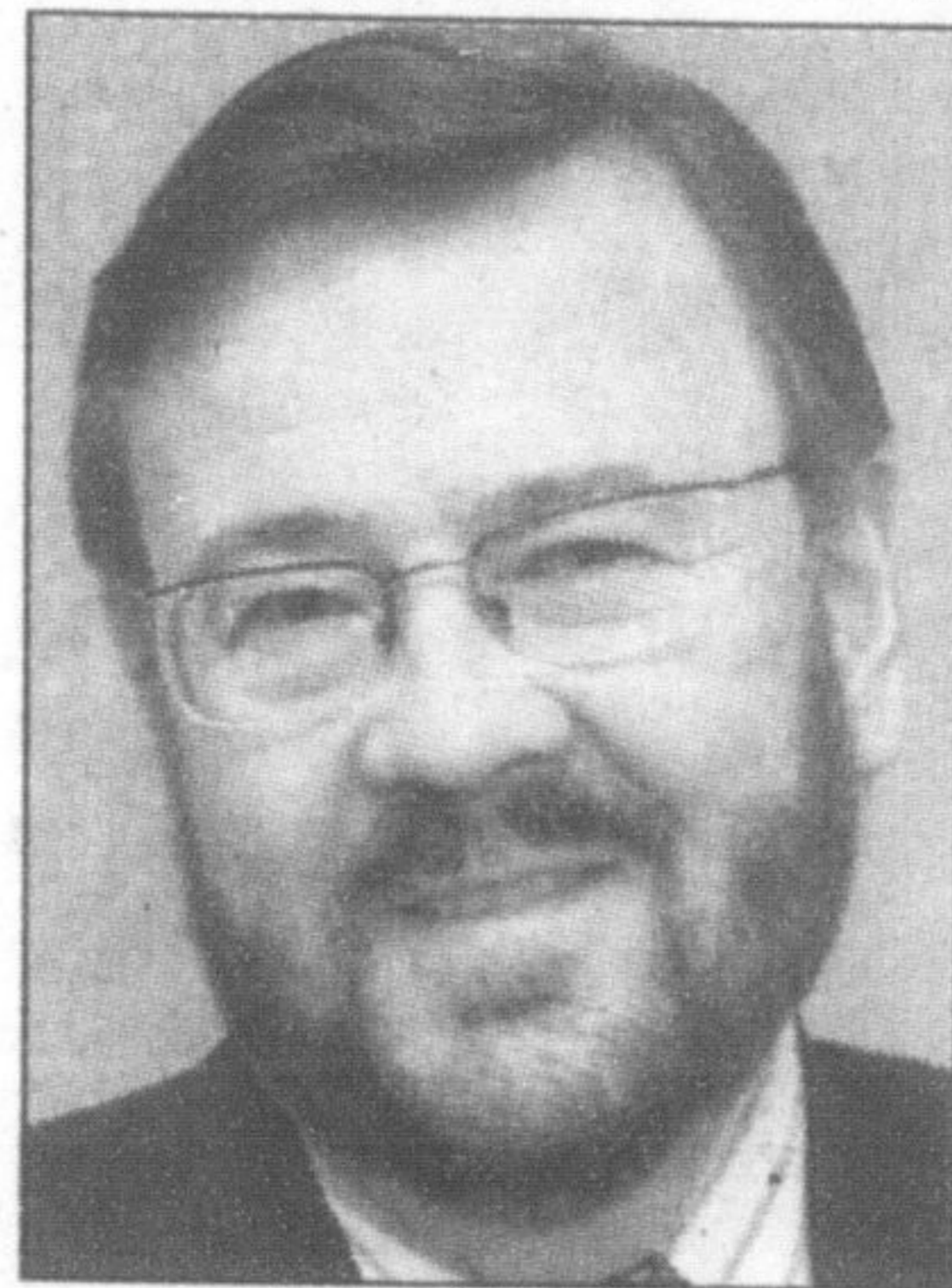


# Most rural residents support tower, fast Internet: Turner

By Robin Downton-Poirier  
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

The proposed cell tower and high-speed Internet in Nassagaweya were the prime concern of residents who attended Liberal MP Garth Turner's town hall meeting Sunday in Brookville.



Garth Turner

Although attendance was low, residents didn't hesitate to express their support for the cell tower and high-speed Internet, a common attitude Turner has found throughout the area, he said.

"I have found that, of the residents who have sent me e-mails and contacted me, that they are about nine-to-one in favour of the tower and high-speed Internet being introduced to Nassagaweya," Turner said.

"There has been some concern about the effects on the children in Nassagaweya, but there is still a strong support for the tower overall."

Another resident expressed concern about the premiums for the Employment Insurance (EI) Program that are paid by employers.

Ontario employers pay the same premiums as other provinces including Alberta and Newfoundland where it is more difficult to get work, yet Ontario EI recipients are paid less.

"On average, \$5,000 is paid to Ontario EI recipients and \$9,000 is paid to a recipient in Alberta although employers in both provinces pay the same premiums," said Turner.

"I agree that it does not seem equal. It was originally set up as a temporary measure to compensate for the difficulty finding employment in provinces such as Alberta and Newfoundland. There is a gigantic surplus in the EI fund right now and it will be brought before Parliament when it resumes."

Even with the light attendance, Turner gave his presentation in its entirety to show the residents what has been happening with the Canadian government and what will be 'hot topics' when Parliament is back in session including the war in Afghanistan and the Canadian economy.

"The war in Afghanistan will be a major topic when Parliament resumes because the Canadian mission is scheduled to end in February 2009 and Canada is to give our NATO partners a one-year notice if we are withdrawing our troops," said Turner.

"As well, the economy and financial issues will be discussed with the new budget coming up. Interest and mortgage rates are going up and the markets are very volatile right now. These will all be major topics over the next few months."

Turner said the income trust issue was a bad decision that has hurt many seniors. He said retirement savings are also of concern.

"It is a proven fact that Canada has an aging population and living to be over 100 years old is very common now. Unfortunately, many of our seniors cannot afford to retire as they have little or no savings and what they do have is tied up in their homes. In Canada, 85 per cent of savings is in real estate. If the real estate market plummets as it has in the United States, then we will be in a very bad situation as people lose all the equity they've built. The government needs to make plans (to deal with this) 20 to 30 years in advance."

In closing, Turner said that he's concerned about the current direction of the government and that, ultimately, the United States' economy will impact the Canadian economy in many ways.

"I honestly don't think that the government is moving in the right direction. If something happens (with respect to the economy), it may not be a disaster but it can always be better so I am definitely concerned," he said.

"The important thing is to try to do the right thing for Canada and that is what (the government) needs to keep in mind."

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# COUNTDOWN

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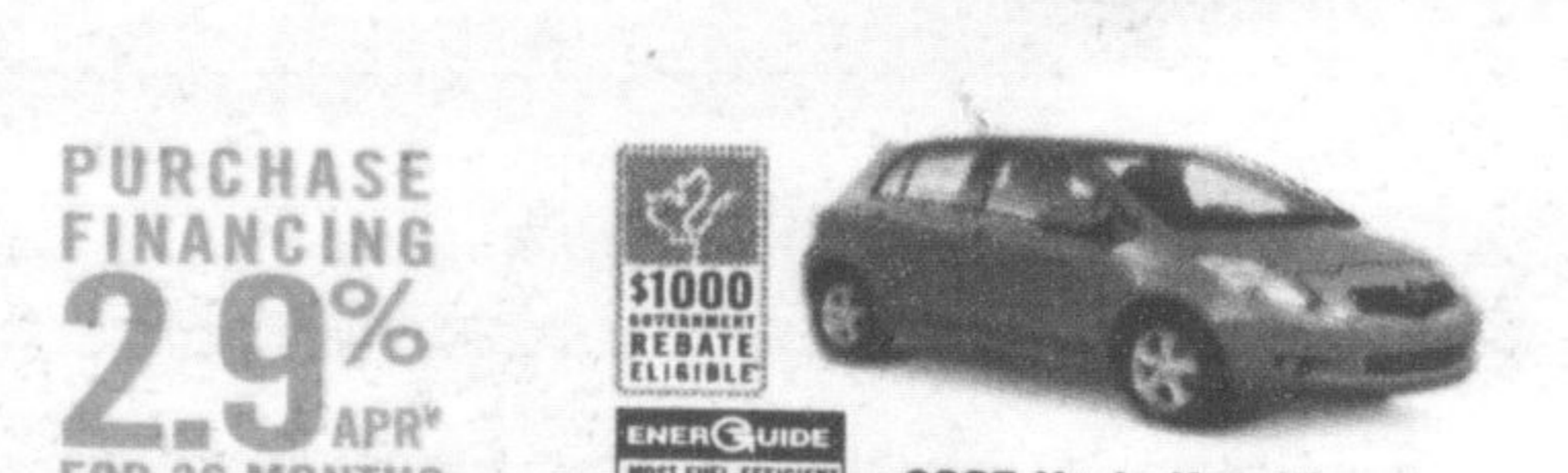
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