

# Attewell's coxswain may not be all wet

Among the dignitaries saluting the provincial championship-winning individuals and teams of Whitchurch-Stouffville at that town's celebration of athletic excellence this past Wednesday night was Bill Attewell.

And while the Markham Whitchurch-Stouffville MP got a rise out of the audience for his reminiscences of his younger days spent as the pint-sized coxswain of a less-than-successful Argonaut Rowing Club squad, there were some like myself who were anxious to corner him and talk politics.

Thanks to the efforts of Bill's Vandorf neighbor and Whitchurch-Stouffville town councillor Ivanka Bradley, I was given the opportunity to ask the Tory house member a few questions about the looming federal election.

Ever the gentleman, Bill was co-operative and direct.

He told me he thinks the election will be called in early to mid August for late September or early October. And there's still lots of time for a shift in public opinion toward the conservatives, he suggested.

The key lies in the economy. The American economy is showing signs of coming around, he offered. And with our biggest



From Where I Live

Bruce Stapley

trading partner coming to life, we can't be far behind.

Bill readily acknowledged the global trend towards jettisoning incumbent governments, especially conservative regimes.

But he made the point that while it may indeed be the Canadian way to vote governments out rather than in, there is a strong feeling across this country that the alternatives just aren't worth the risk.

Ontario in particular, having accidentally voted in the NDP and its team of incompetents who can't even manage a half decent scandal, (my words, not his), are likely to resist giving Jean Chretien or Audrey McLaughlin a try.

As for the bit players - the Reform Party, the Bloc Quebecois, or Mel Hurtig's proposed NDP off shoot outfit - Bill said he thought they could have a minimal impact on the outcome.

The Reformers, he predicted, would pick up seats in Alberta,

while acting as spoilers in a few Ontario ridings.

He refused to accept that the Bloc Quebecois would take anywhere near the 50 out of 75 Quebec seats the party has claimed it will collect.

As for Hurtig's leftist lot, not a chance, said Bill.

A recent poll shows the Tories almost neck and neck with the Grits if Joe Clark replaced Mulroney at the helm. When I asked him if his party might be better off with a new leader, Bill reiterated his point about there still being time for his boss to make a comeback.

Bill finished up by telling me he had enjoyed his years in office, and that while there was still more work to be done, he was well on his way to getting organized for the next election.

And I couldn't help but think of his rowing story related earlier in the evening about how he never once got thrown in the water, which is the standard reward for coxswains of winning boats.

For it could be that despite Bill's optimism, he and his Tory team mates just might not get the chance to throw Brian Mulroney in the drink after next fall's election.

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