



UPFRONT

with **Mike Wallace, MP**



A Publication of Mike Wallace, Member of Parliament for Burlington

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Committed To Cleaning Up Burlington Bay/Hamilton Harbour



As part of my election commitments to the residents of Burlington, I outlined the work I was going to do to clean up our local water resources and my support for a national water strategy.

I am pleased to say I have made significant progress in both areas.

First, on November 9, John Baird, Minister of the Environment for Canada, came to Hamilton to announce that the federal government would contribute \$30 million towards the clean-up of contaminated sediment in Randle Reef, which is part of the Hamilton Harbour. This is a project that I have been interested in and actively involved with since my days on Burlington city council.

Randle Reef is one of the largest and most contaminated sites on the Canadian side of the Great Lakes. This site contains more than 630,000 cubic meters of heavily contaminated coal tar, that has been deposited in the bay over many years. I felt it was important for the federal government to take the lead in cleaning up the site. I asked the Minister of the Environment to examine the situation for himself.

We toured Burlington Bay in the summer of 2007 and he saw the problem first-hand. The government took action and committed \$30 million to the project, the full amount requested from the federal government.

This was a great day for the harbour, Burlington Bay, the environment and area residents. The money will be used in partnership with the Province of Ontario and the local community to construct a 9.5-hectare containment facility. This containment system will be capped and have a 200-year lifespan. All residents of the bay area will benefit from a better local water quality.

Secondly, a significant investment was included as part of a National Water Strategy. We have taken steps to protect water quality, including putting in place tough new regulations against the dumping of raw sewage and improving how raw sewage is treated in municipalities and First Nations communities across Canada.

I will continue to work on the issues of clean water and a better environment for present and future residents.

Simplified Passport Renewal Program

Over the past year, you no doubt have heard a lot about the need to have a current passport when travelling into the United States. Since January 23, 2007, a new American law made it necessary for everyone entering the U.S. by air to have a valid passport.

As part of a broader effort to modernize Canadian passport services, a new simplified process to renew your passport has been introduced. It allows Canadians who currently hold a valid passport, and who meet certain eligibility criteria to renew their passport using a shorter form and without submitting proof of citizenship or a guarantor declaration. Under the new renewal program, passport applicants are only required to submit the shorter form along with two new photos, the application fee and their last passport. Renewal applications are still subject to all current security verifications.

Canadians who meet the following eligibility criteria will be able to benefit from this program:

- They must live in Canada at the time they apply.
- They must have lived in Canada at the time of their previous application.
- They were 16 years old or over at the time of their previous application.
- Their previous passport:
 - ◊ Must have been valid for five years,
 - ◊ Must have been issued after January 31, 2002,
 - ◊ Was never damaged or reported as lost or stolen, and

- ◊ Must have been issued under their current name.

Although this initiative is expected to ease some of the backlog that Passport Canada is currently experiencing, we still recommend that you go to a Passport Canada office (St. Catharines, Hamilton or Mississauga) to submit your application to ensure that you receive your passport in a timely manner. If you plan to visit a Passport Canada office, to avoid waiting too long, we suggest you arrive shortly before the office opens or early in the afternoon. Mondays and Fridays tend to be the busiest days.

A simplified guarantor policy is also now in place. Under this new policy, an eligible guarantor must:

- Be a Canadian citizen 18 years of age or older,
- Hold a five-year Canadian passport that is valid or has been expired for no more than one year,
- Have been 16 years of age or older when they applied for their own passport, and
- Have known the applicant personally for at least two years.

Now, any family member as well as anyone living at the applicant's address may act as a guarantor, provided they meet the requirements noted above. To simplify the guarantor eligibility Passport Canada will use its own database, increasing the security and efficiency of the process.

Renewal applications are available on the Passport Canada website www.ppt.gc.ca, passport offices, Canada Post outlets and at Mike's office in Burlington Mall.

Please note that Canadian citizens will not require a passport or other secure document to enter the U.S. by land and marine ports of entry until the summer of 2008 at the earliest.

Project Porchlight Launch

Project Porchlight held its official Burlington launch Saturday, October 27, at Burlington Mall. Mike Wallace, Member of Parliament, Stuart Hickox, Director, Project Porchlight, and David Collie, President and CEO of Burlington Hydro Electric Inc., were present for the official kick-off. Mike was a proud supporter of Project Porchlight, an energy-efficiency campaign promoting a practical and realistic way to use less electricity. In November, volunteers went door-to-door in Burlington handing out 20,000 free energy-efficient light bulbs. Saving money and protecting the environment start with simple actions like changing a light bulb.



How Government Works: Member's staff

As elected officials, Members of Parliament are expected to respond and attend to the concerns of their constituents. To assist in meeting the various needs of my constituents I maintain an office in Burlington and an office in Ottawa. My staff members have a variety of responsibilities. The primary focus of the constituency office is assisting constituents, while the focus in Ottawa is more towards supporting my legislative and committee work.

My constituency staff members are the point of contact between residents and me. They will do an initial assessment of a situation and can often resolve most issues without involving me. However, I am very happy and prepared to meet or talk with constituents about their concerns.

Their greatest asset is the fact that they know where to get the answers. They are "jacks of all trades." It would be impossible for them to know everything about every federal department and program, but they can get the answers to most of the questions you may have. If you have a concern that does not fall within the responsibility of the federal government, my staff can direct you to the appropriate level of government that can assist you.

Here is a further list of the responsibilities of my constituency office:

- Investigating federal issues on behalf of constituents e.g. pensions, citizenship and immigration, income tax, employment insurance, passports, etc.
- Redirecting constituents to the appropriate contact to address their issue or concern e.g. regional, municipal, provincial
- Arranging for federal greetings to commemorate milestone birthdays or anniversaries
- Certifying photocopies and commissioning
- Liaising with Burlington companies and organizations
- Media relations
- Advertising
- Scheduling my time in Burlington.

As I mentioned, my Ottawa staff's primary focus is my legislative and committee responsibilities. This is not to say they do not get involved with constituent issues – they do, but at a different level. They liaise with Ministers' offices concerning local issues. They work with Burlington companies, educational institutions, charitable groups and organizations as well as the various levels of municipal government when those groups have dealings with the federal government.

My Ottawa staff also conducts a significant amount of research for question period, for member's statements and for the various caucuses I am part of: National, Ontario, GTA, Steel, Auto and Marine.

As you would expect, they also look after a variety of administrative duties such as sending responses to my regular mail and e-mail; scheduling; making travel arrangements; monitoring the media; arranging for and hosting individuals, families and groups visiting Parliament Hill; assisting with the production of newsletters and other mailings; and assisting my Burlington office, when necessary.

I am very lucky to have such great staff in place at both my offices. Please feel free to contact them, as I know they will be more than happy to help you however they can.

In Burlington, Andrea, Dorothy and Nicole can be reached at:

Burlington Mall, Suite 209
777 Guelph Line
Burlington, L7R 3N2

Tel: 905-639-5757
Fax: 905-639-6031
E-mail: wallam1@parl.gc.ca

In Ottawa, Tom and Jennifer can be reached at:

763 Confederation Building
House of Commons
Ottawa, K1A 0A6

Tel: 613-995-0881
Fax: 613-995-1091
E-mail: wallace.m@parl.gc.ca

We ask Mike:

What have you most enjoyed about being a Member of Parliament?

I would have to say the people I have met and worked with both here in Burlington and in Ottawa are the best part of my job as Member of Parliament. I have met a tremendous number of people in Burlington who have come to our office with issues or concerns, as well as many groups who want to make a positive difference in our community.

My Burlington office works very hard to resolve the issues individual constituents and their families are facing. In most cases, but not all, we are successful. The difficult part of my role is telling people that we have tried, but we cannot provide them the outcome that they were hoping to receive.

I continue to be impressed and, frankly, overwhelmed by the organizations in Burlington who want to make a positive difference in the community. These groups are working every day to improve the quality of life for everyone in Burlington, from youth to seniors. The voluntary effort in Burlington is incredibly impressive, and I think it is the core reason that Burlington is such a great community.

In Ottawa, my dedicated staff and I work with many people from the Prime Minister, to opposition Members of Parliament, to lobbyists and political staff and departments. The one thing I can say about all the individuals I have met is that they are working hard to make Canada a better place.

Finally, political jobs are about people, and it is people that make my position as the Member of Parliament for Burlington so enjoyable.

Voices and Visions

The Voices and Visions conference was held October 13. Each year Voices and Visions recognizes the importance of the contributions made by women to the Burlington community through the presentation of its annual Voices and Visions Woman of the Year award. In addition to receiving the Voices and Visions award, the recipient receives national recognition through an award from Member of Parliament Mike Wallace and international recognition through the presentation of a Paul Harris Fellow.

The 2007 Woman of the Year was Louise Cooke. Mike presented Louise with his Community Woman of the Year award. Louise has been an active member of the Board of the Burlington Art Centre and has dedicated the past 17 years to volunteer activity to ensure that the visual arts are an important part of our community. She is also an active community member of Aldershot and is currently assisting the Aldershot Lions Club to launch a farmer's market on Plains Road. Congratulations, Louise, for your leadership and commitment to our city.



Mike Wallace presents his Community Woman of the Year Award to Louise Cooke

Mike's Legislative Committee Assignments

Mike has been reappointed to the Finance Committee and the Ethics, Privacy and Access to Information Committee for the next session of Parliament.

Mike is excited to be back on the Finance Committee. This committee has a reputation of being the hardest-working committee on Parliament Hill. The committee plays a significant role in gathering input from

Canadians across the country on what priorities the Minister of Finance should consider for upcoming budgets. Pre-budget consultation took place in the fall of last year and earlier this month. We will now develop a report for the House of Commons to receive as part of the advice to the Minister of Finance.

The Ethics, Privacy and Access to Information committee deals with legislation for a variety of government departments. Mike expects that the privacy issue as well as identity theft issues will be reviewed during the next session. This work will help in the development of legislation to deal with both important issues.

Town Hall Meeting

Mike hosted his regular Town Hall Meeting November 8, at the Burlington Seniors' Centre. Constituents had an opportunity to ask Mike about various federal issues, including the 2007 Throne Speech, Afghanistan and the budget.



Community Group Profile - Halton Learning Foundation

Supporting Students Strengthening Schools



A bus pass, money to pay for a class trip, even essentials like breakfast, a pair of everyday shoes or

a sweatshirt – these are just a few of the items being made available to needy Halton students through special grants from the Halton Learning Foundation (HLF).

The HLF is a relatively new foundation set up to support Halton District School Board students and schools. It is an alliance of community leaders and staff who are committed to raising funds and seeking resources to enrich the learning opportunities and eliminate barriers for students.

Many school boards are now creating foundations. The Halton public school board was one of the first. We raised over \$465,000 last year, and our goal is to raise at least \$1 million annually.

In a community as wealthy as Halton, it's hard to believe that about 10,000 children live in poverty. As a result, many children are unable to take advantage of the variety of learning opportunities that many of us have come to expect. In response to these needs, the HLF established the Eliminating Barriers Fund, which partners with corporate and community donors to assist students. The Barriers

to Learning fund provides student bursaries in addition to supporting literacy and nutrition programs.

The HLF also provides funding to programs supporting the arts, the environment, physical education and technology through enrichment fund grants. Scholarships are also provided to each high school graduating class.

Last year \$178,000 of funding was provided through the Barriers to Learning Fund: - \$60,000 to make available bursaries for more than 350 students for food, clothing, school supplies and transportation costs; \$85,000 to purchase literacy and other resources for 12 schools; and \$30,000 to support breakfast programs in 10 schools.

The enrichment fund provided \$82,000 for purchasing musical instruments, buying physical education equipment, supporting environmental projects and the annual Halton Skills Competition.

Changed funding for education is a reality. However, through the Halton Learning Foundation we can provide opportunities for our young students and truly make a difference. Dreams can become a reality.

For more information on the foundation, contact Pat Wright, HLF Executive Director, at 905-335-3665 ext. 3207 or via e-mail at wrightp@hdsb.ca.

If you belong to a local not-for-profit organization doing great things in our community, or know of a group that you feel should be highlighted here, please get in touch with us.

Income Tax – Tips from the Experts

Our local CRA office has provided the following information that will be helpful when preparing your income tax return or for keeping your records up to date.

1. Community Volunteer Income Tax Program

If you have a low income (including low household income) you may qualify for free tax return preparation from one of the local volunteer clinics. The volunteers are skilled at tax preparation and donate their time and expertise to help others in the community. Our office is provided with a list of contacts in mid-February, so please give us a call if you feel you may qualify for this service.

2. Life events

It is important to remember to inform the CRA, as well as the other applicable government departments, when you experience certain life events. Not informing the government of your life changing events in a timely manner could mean that you may be missing out on benefits that you are entitled to. On the other hand, the results could be negative and costly. Such events include, but are not limited to, the following:

- * Change in marital status – marriage, separation, divorce
- * Change of mailing address or if you have moved
- * Name change
- * Death of a parent (if you are the executor of the estate) spouse, or child
- * Birth of a child, adoption, or your minor child is no longer living with you (because of marital separation)

3. Keep tax-related documents

As a rule, it is recommended that you keep your personal income tax documents for six years, plus the current year. This includes keeping a copy of all notices of assessment received. If you are reassessed or requested to provide documentation for a given tax year, you need to have the records readily available.

Please contact the CRA at 1-800-959-8281 or Mike Wallace's office at 905-639-5757 for more information.

From Mike's Mailbox

Q: Do I need to file a tax return if my income is zero?

A: YES! Even if you have not earned any income for a given tax year, it is still necessary for you to file a tax return with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). This is called a "zero return."

Not providing the CRA with a tax return could result in loss of benefits, the Canada Child Tax Benefit for example. This particular benefit is based on your income, so if you do not provide the information required to calculate it, you will not receive the benefit. Depending on your situation, you may still be entitled to receive a refund. You may also be entitled to a GST rebate, but it is necessary to file a return to be considered for the rebate. Filing a return is simple enough to do yourself, or you may go to a volunteer tax clinic for assistance. Income tax forms are available by calling the CRA, visiting their website www.cra.gc.ca, or at a Canada Post outlet during tax time. Forms are also available year-round at our office in Burlington Mall.

Upcoming Events

Seniors Pension and Tax Seminar

Please join Mike Wallace and representatives from Canada Revenue Agency and Service Canada on Wednesday, February 20, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the Burlington Central Library.

Topics to be covered include:

- Income Tax (including foreign pension and investment income)
- Tax Credits
- Pension Splitting
- Canada Pension Plan
- Old Age Security

For further information, please contact Mike's constituency office at 905-639-5757.

On the Record

Mike tapes "On the Record" at TV COGECO with host Hillary Walker. On the Record is a weekly half-hour program with Halton's MPs, MPPs, Mayors and Regional Chair. It provides an opportunity for these elected officials to communicate with their constituents.



Please share your thoughts and concerns with Mike on issues that are important to you.

What do you think is the most serious issue facing Canada today?

What do you think is the most serious issue facing Burlington today?

Please list your top 5 issues so that we can continue to work hard on your behalf.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

The Throne Speech: what it means to you

A throne speech outlines the direction and vision a government has for its jurisdiction, in our case Canada, in the short and long term. The recent Throne Speech reflects a number of policy directions that our government is going to pursue. In the last election we outlined five main objectives, and in the first 21 months we have accomplished many of these goals. The accomplishment of so many of our objectives is why we felt a new Throne Speech needed to be presented last fall.

These were the main themes of the speech:

- A Canada that is proud of its place in the world and its economic future.
- A Canada built on a strong federation and a robust economy.
- A Canada that is safe for our families and healthy for our children.
- A Canada with principled, focused and effective leadership in return for all that its citizens give to their country.

In this session of Parliament, our government will continue to pursue an agenda of clear goals and real results, focusing on the five priorities outlined below.

First, we will rigorously defend Canada's sovereignty and place in the world, including the realization of our strong Arctic vision and a responsible and effective path forward in Afghanistan.

Second, we must strengthen the federation and modernize our democratic institutions by setting formal limits on federal spending power and a long overdue reform of the Senate.

Third, we want to provide effective economic leadership and a prosperous future by aggressively moving forward with broad tax relief that includes a further promised reduction in the GST.

Fourth, we will continue our work in tackling crime and strengthening the security of Canadians by reintroduc-

ing important crime legislation, such as the new Tackling Violent Crime Act, and by putting a strong focus towards safe communities, youth and property crime.

Finally, we will focus on improving the environment and health of Canadians by continuing to deliver realistic and achievable results in areas such as environmental enforcement and product and food safety.

These goals are not in priority order, but together are the vision for the legislative work that I and our government will be developing and delivering in the House of Commons. Further details on each of these priorities are available at www.sft-ddt.gc.ca or from my office. If you have any suggestions on how we should accomplish the goals and themes outlined in the Throne Speech, feel free to contact me with your ideas and suggestions. Together we can continue to make a difference in improving Canada at home and abroad.

Fall Economic Statement

The people of Burlington now have more money in their pockets as a result of the government's Fall Economic Statement. We provided an historic tax relief package, bringing the federal tax burden to its lowest level in nearly a half a century.

Since coming to office 21 months ago, we have reduced the tax burden of Canadians by about \$190 billion. We have delivered this relief in every way the government collects taxes: personal taxes, consumption taxes, business taxes and excise taxes.

Our Fall Economic Statement provided an additional \$60 billion in broad-based tax relief over the next five years for individuals, families and businesses.

At the heart of this effort was an additional one per cent reduction in the GST, moving it from six per cent to five per cent effective January 1, 2008. This is a permanent tax cut for all Canadians. Individual savings will be significant.

Here are some examples of the savings that are achieved by reducing the GST to 5 per cent.

- A family purchasing a new \$300,000 home in Burlington will save \$3,840 in GST, or
- A family spending \$10,000 on home renovations will save \$200 in GST, or
- A Burlington family spending \$30,000 on a new minivan will save \$600 in GST.

We also took steps to reduce personal income taxes. The Fall Economic Statement increased the basic personal exemption amount to \$9,600 retroactive to January 1, 2007. The basic personal exemption amount will be increased to \$10,100 on January 1, 2009. This is the total amount all Canadians can earn without paying any federal income tax.

In addition, our government is reducing the lowest personal income tax rate to 15 per cent from 15.5 per cent retroactive to January 1, 2007.

Together, these income tax cuts will deliver relief on spring income tax returns.

Families earning between \$15,000 and \$30,000 will pay on average almost \$180 less in tax in 2008 as a direct result of the tax measures announced in the Fall Economic Statement.

Families earning between \$45,000 and \$60,000 will pay on average almost \$400 less in tax in 2008 as a direct result of the tax measures announced in the Fall Economic Statement.

Families earning between \$80,000 and \$100,000 will pay on average \$602 less in tax in 2008 as a direct result of the tax measures announced in the Fall Economic Statement.

We also put business taxes on a five-year track downward. We ushered in a new era of declining business taxation in Canada. It will be a steady, predictable decline that businesses can count on and plan for.

In the Fall Economic Statement we cut the corporate income tax rate by one per cent for 2008. This will be followed by ongoing reductions that will bring the tax rate down to 15 per cent by 2012, from more than 22 per cent today. With these reductions, Canada's general federal corporate income tax rate will fall by one-third between 2007 and 2012, and Canada's corporate tax rate will become the lowest among the major industrialized economies.

We are leading the way with our tax cuts, our debt reduction and our focused and responsible spending. Our fundamentals are strong and we are well positioned to weather any sudden economic storms, but we must continue to look ahead and keep moving forward. Our government is pressing ahead and building on our achievements. This way, we will make our strong economy even stronger and ensure a brilliant future for the people in Burlington and throughout Canada.

Income Tax 2007

Important dates and information

The deadline for filing your 2007 income tax return is **Wednesday, April 30, 2008**, at midnight. If you are mailing your return on April 30, please ensure to have it date-stamped at the post office.

The deadline for RRSP contributions is **Friday, February 29, 2008**. As a result of a change in the legislation, you can now make contributions up to age 71.

A new tax measure for 2007 returns will allow pensioners to allocate up to half of their income that qualifies for the existing pension income tax credit to their resident spouse (or common-law partner). The new Form T1032, Joint Election to Split Pension Income, will be available January 2008.

If you have questions about your income tax or would like more information on the tax topics mentioned in this newsletter, there are many resources available to you. If you have access to the internet, the CRA website www.cra.gc.ca is an excellent resource. If you would like to speak to someone, you can contact the CRA at 1-800-959-8281. Please note during income tax season, there is an increase in caller volume which may cause delay in speaking with an agent. You are also able to contact Mike's office at 905-639-5757 for assistance.

Human Trafficking

On November 5, Mike hosted a public meeting on Human Trafficking with guest speakers, Joy Smith, MP Kildonan-St. Paul, and Corporal Brian Reed, Human Trafficking Coordinator, Hamilton/Niagara Regional Detachment RCMP. Mrs. Smith is recognized as an expert on the growing crime of human trafficking and is working at the national and international level to end this horrendous crime. An estimated two million people are trafficked each year. Eighty per cent of trafficked victims are women, and over 50 per cent are children. Canada is a transit and destination country but is increasingly becoming a source country for trafficked victims. Non-government agencies estimate 12,000 - 15,000 people are trafficked to and through Canada each year.



From left to right, Corporal Brian Reed, David Sweet, MP Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale, Mike Wallace, MP Burlington, and Joy Smith, MP Kildonan-St. Paul.

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with **Mike Wallace, MP**

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