



UPFRONT

with **Mike Wallace, MP**



A Publication of Mike Wallace, Member of Parliament for Burlington

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Improvements to our Immigration System

If you have been directly involved in the immigration system, you likely have a true picture of the challenges and opportunities for improvement. The wait times have increased significantly over the years. I was surprised to find out how long it takes for someone to receive a determination on their application to immigrate to Canada.

The majority of applicants have to wait at least four to six years to hear the fate of their application, which has created a waiting list backlog of 900,000. Our government has realized the need to do something about this problem.

To clarify, the Conservative government is pro-immigration. We value the contribution newcomers have made in building Canada. We want more newcomers to join us, to be re-united with their families and to become successful Canadians. Conservatives have a proud history of supporting immigrants and new Canadians: the first Multiculturalism Act, Canada's first Bill of Rights, and the highest level of immigration in our history.

The Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, has taken direct action on this issue with a number of proposed changes to the Immigration and Refugee Act. The purpose of these changes is to modernize Canada's immigration system and significantly reduce the time it takes to bring newcomers and their families to Canada.

Under the proposed changes to the Act, the Minister would have the authority to issue instructions to immigration officers related to the processing of applications. Anyone will still be able to apply, but CIC will no longer be required to process all new submissions. The new provisions will allow the Department to choose those that best meet Canada's labour market needs. This would allow people with skills and experience to immigrate to Canada more quickly. Newcomers will have more opportunities to

find work sooner, to provide a better life for themselves and their families, and to benefit from life in Canada. Under the current system, which is much less flexible, CIC processes applications from skilled workers in the order in which they are received.

Once passed, the changes will include ministerial instructions on prioritizing and processing immigration applications as follows:

- Identify priority occupations based on input from provinces and territories, the Bank of Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, employers and organized labour.
- Ensure fairness by making decisions on cases faster, while meeting immediate labour market needs.
- Respect the goals of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, which are to support Canada's economy and competitiveness, support family reunification and uphold Canada's humanitarian commitments.
- Comply with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which prevents discrimination based on factors such as race, country of origin and religion.
- Respect commitments to provinces and territories regarding the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) and the Canada-Quebec Accord. The government has also removed the limit on how many newcomers provinces can accept under the PNP.
- Complement commitments made in Advantage Canada, the Government of Canada's economic plan, to align the immigration system with labour market needs.

- Be published in the Canada Gazette and Citizenship and Immigration Canada's annual report, which is tabled in Parliament.

During the past two years our Conservative government has already improved the family reunification program by up to 40 per cent. Our changes to the immigration system will be Charter compliant. Our approach to immigration will continue to be universal and non-discriminatory.

It is apparent that improvements to the system are long overdue. It is not fair to potential immigrants and their families that they have to wait up to six years to find out if they are eligible to immigrate to Canada. The proposed changes will reduce the backlog, bring fairness to the applicants, and benefit Canada overall.



Mike and staff assisted Sant Mohinder Pal Ji to obtain a visitor visa. He is the spiritual leader and head priest of Guru Ravi Dass Gurdwara Sahib, located in Burlington.

Taking Action on Food and Consumer Safety

In late fall of last year, we announced a Consumer Safety Action Plan. In Budget 2008 we followed up this commitment with an investment of \$113 million. This was followed by a recent announcement that our government has taken steps to make legislative changes to protect Canadians. The Food and Drugs Act has not been updated since 1953 and the Hazardous Products Act since 1969.

My office has heard from many Burlington residents on the issue of consumer product safety and protection. All of our Government members have heard from their constituents asking for something to be done to protect Canadians and give them confidence in the products they purchase. The proposed legislation will modernize the Canada Food and Drugs Act and introduce the new Canada Consumer Product Safety Act - both aimed at bringing Canadian laws up to speed with the rest of the world.

Taken together, these measures represent an extraordinarily tough approach to consumer safety. Our aim is to target the highest risks, prevent problems from occurring, and to respond rapidly to problems that do occur.

In addition, our Government will devote new resources to enhanced surveillance of products already on the market and introduce a requirement for manufacturers to report incidents causing illness or injury within seven days. We are improving the Government's ability to respond rapidly by introducing the power to recall consumer products, a power which has been in place with food products for years.

Canadians rightly expect their federal government to police the safety of consumer products. I share their concern that while consumer products are generally safe, the fact of the matter is they could be safer. Approximately 65 per cent of products sold in Canada are imported, which means we need to set and enforce stringent safety standards on both domestic and imported goods.

We believe that the vast majority of Canadian manufacturers, importers, and sellers are conscientious corporate citizens that take their responsibilities for

safety seriously. With this Bill, we will level the playing field for law-abiding Canadian businesses. These legislative changes will affect four key areas.

First, there will be a general prohibition against the manufacture, importation, advertisement or sale of consumer products that are a danger to human health or safety.

Second, there will be a requirement for mandatory reporting by suppliers of serious product-related incidents, including near-misses and defects. This would enable activities to be more closely monitored.

Third, we have introduced a new power for the federal government to order recalls of unsafe consumer products.

Finally, we have dramatically increased fines for violations and for those irresponsible few who do put consumers at risk. Proposed fines will increase from the current maximum of \$5,000 to a new maximum of up to \$5 million.

I am very supportive of the action we are taking on this issue, further protecting consumers in Burlington and across the country.

How Government Works: The Role of the Governor General of Canada



The Governor General's powers are legally extensive; however, not all are practiced regularly. The Governor General is a symbolic and nominal chief executive, acting within the constitutional convention and precedent. Although the Queen or sovereign is the head of state in Canada, therefore the Governor General has been delegated the powers and authority of the sovereign, he or she is in effect, Canada's head of state.

The Governor General of Canada is said to be *Primus inter pares*, 'first among equals' with the other ten representatives of the Crown in Canada. This role is selected by the Prime Minister of Canada, although the formal appointment is made by the Queen. The term is five years and can be extended to seven years. Past Governor General Lorne said of the job, "It is no easy thing to be a Governor General of Canada. You must have the patience of a saint, the smile of a cherub, the generosity of an Indian prince, and the back of a camel."

The role of the Governor General dates as far back as the seventeenth century, but most notably changed greatly after the Rebellions of 1837 when the British government agreed to grant the Canadian provinces responsible government. As a result, the Governor Generals and Lieutenant Governors became largely nominal heads while democratically elected legislatures and provincial premiers held real authority. After the establishment of the Dominion of Canada in 1867, the arrangement continued and remained representative of the Crown and of the British government vested with executive authority via the monarch. The Lieutenant Governors remained representatives of the Dominion

government, while political power was actually exercised by the Canadian Prime Minister and the Premiers, in the federal and provincial jurisdictions.

The duties of the Governor General are largely ceremonial. The official duties include giving Royal Assent to bills passed in the Canadian House of Commons and Senate, reading the Speech from the Throne, which outlines the Canadian federal government agenda for a new session of Parliament, executing orders-in-council or cabinet decisions, appointing superior court judges on the advice of cabinet, summoning, closing, and dissolving Parliament, on the advice of the Prime Minister, making state visits abroad and hosting heads of state to Canada. While in office, the Governor General plays a strong role in encouraging excellence in Canada through a system of honours and awards, such as the Order of Canada, and promotes national identity and national unity. He or she also serves the primarily symbolic role as the Commander-in-Chief of the Canadian Armed Forces.

While in office the Governor General and his or her spouse, the vice-regal consort, is styled "His Excellency" or "Her Excellency," and are entitled to the title, "The Right Honourable" for life.

Her Excellency, the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean is the current Governor General, and has served since September 27, 2005. She and her husband, the vice-regal consort, Jean Daniel Lafond, reside in Ottawa at Rideau Hall, the official residence of the Governor General.

For more information regarding the Governor General please visit www.gg.ca

We ask Mike:

Why is Canada Day so important to you?

We are all busy with our daily schedules and it is easy to take the commonplace things for granted, including the country in which we live. Canada Day is a time for us to reflect on what it means to be a Canadian or to be a resident here. It provides an opportunity to remember our past, celebrate our present, and look towards our future. We live within a rich tapestry of heritage, culture and diversity. We enjoy freedom, thanks to our veterans and the men and women that continue to serve Canada. We should take time every day to reflect on the fact that we live in an amazing country.

I invite you to join me at Spencer Smith Park for this year's celebration. I look forward to seeing you there!

**Canada Day 2008
A Reason to Celebrate!**

The 65th Anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic

This year the 65th anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic offered us an opportunity to remember and honour the brave Canadians who sacrificed dearly so that we can be free today.

The Battle of the Atlantic was the longest battle of the Second World War, continuing unbroken from September 1939 to May 1945. More than 4,600 courageous service men and women lost their lives at sea.

The Battle of the Atlantic is commemorated by Canada's Navy, Merchant Navy, Air Force and Veterans on the first Sunday in May. Sixty-five years ago, in May 1943, the Battle of the Atlantic turned significantly in favour of the Allies after they

received more training, air cover, special intelligence and better equipment. Canadians recognized the 65th anniversary of the turning of the tide with commemorative ceremonies and events in Halifax and throughout Canada. In Burlington, services were held by the Burl-Oak Naval Veterans and the Royal Canadian Naval Association at Spencer Smith Park.

I encourage everyone, especially youth and community organizations, to get involved by learning more about the great achievements of our country during the Battle of the Atlantic, and by participating in the yearly commemorative events in Burlington.

For more information on the Battle of the Atlantic, visit www.vac-acc.gc.ca.

NEW Website

www.mikewallacemp.ca

There is a new website address! Please visit the site and check it often for updates. You will find community information, useful local and government links, and information about my work as your Member of Parliament in Burlington and in Ottawa.

If you have any suggestions or comments about the website, I welcome your feedback. Please contact my office or use the on-line submission form on the site.



Thank you to everyone who participated in the 2008 Burlington Community Cleanup. We were encouraged to see so many citizens take a few hours from their busy schedules to make a positive difference to our community. We look forward to your participation again next year.



Mike updates Burlington residents on Federal issues at his bi-annual town hall meeting. He holds public forums each spring and fall as well as other information sessions throughout the year. Information about upcoming events are advertised before each meeting in the Burlington Post.

Community Group Profile - Participation House



Participation House Hamilton & District Our 30th Year!

Three Decades of Dedication to Independent Living 1978 to 2008

Participation House - Hamilton & District enhances the quality of life of adults with disabilities so they can experience life similar to others in their community.

Participation House - Hamilton & District is a non-profit organization that provides adults with disabilities personal support services that are based on their needs and aspirations. For 30 years we have provided exemplary service in areas such as personal care, homemaking, life skills support, and assistance with personal goal outcomes.

We adhere to the fundamental philosophy of "Independent Living", whereby clients are expected to make their own decisions and direct the extent and method of assistance provided by our staff; to personally customize the services they receive. Our clients find solutions, get involved, maximize freedom and enhance their quality of life, even if some of those decisions involve risk. This is the cornerstone of the values and beliefs of our organization. We believe that people have the right to lead their lives and direct their own care.



Three Decades of Dedication! We have been providing services since 1978 and currently provide supportive housing and a variety of services for adults with disabilities who reside in Hamilton, Binbrook, Stoney Creek, Burlington and Mississauga. Our roots stem from the Hamilton Cerebral Palsy Parent Council, but we have grown substantially over the past three decades to help individuals not only with cerebral palsy but with any disability, which may include muscular dystrophy, arthritis, multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury, developmental delay, brain injury, spina bifida, visual impairment, etc.

We believe in the uniqueness and value of each and every individual. Our support for adults with disabilities in our community is proactive and service is provided with spirit. Opportunities for skills training and self-development are available for all clients. Interaction between clients, staff and volunteers is

client-centered, respectful and dignified. We offer the continuity of reliable and responsive attendant and housekeeping services around-the-clock.

Our clients currently number about 225 with many more on a waiting list. In addition to our seven housing projects, some of which offer short-term rental units, Participation House also provides outreach services in clients' homes, including both attendant and homemaking services.

Participation House is a non-profit organization and registered charity. While funding from the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care supplies the bulk of our funding, we rely on donations and fundraising to provide additional resources and assets to develop new initiatives and meet the growing

need. Our connection with our community will always be an important component of how we are able to provide exemplary care for our clients. We have been fortunate to initiate relationships within our community that help us work towards achieving our common goals.

To learn more about Participation House, please visit our web site at www.participationhouse.hamilton.on.ca or call 905-333-3553 ext. 243.

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.

From Mike's Mailbox

Q: When is the Government going to start the savings program for parents with a disabled child so they can ensure their child's financial security in the future?

A: In Budget 2007 the Government announced the introduction of a new registered disability savings plan (RDSP). The plan is based generally on the existing registered education savings plan (RESP) design. An individual eligible for the disability tax credit (DTC), their parent or other legal representative, may establish a RDSP, with the DTC-eligible individual being the beneficiary.

The plan consists of three parts:

1. Parents, beneficiaries and others will be able to contribute to a RDSP. These contributions will be limited to a lifetime maximum of \$200,000, with contributions permitted up until the end of the year in which the beneficiary turns 59 years of age.

2. Annual RDSP contributions will attract Canada Disability Savings Grants (CDSGs) at matching rates of 100, 200 or 300 per cent, depending on family income and the amount contributed, up to a maximum lifetime CDSG limit of \$70,000.
3. Canada Disability Savings Bonds (CDSBs) of up to \$1,000 per year will be provided to RDSPs established by low and modest-income families, up to a maximum lifetime CDSB limit of \$20,000, and will not be contingent on contributions.

The RDSP product itself will be provided by banks and financial institutions, much like RRSPs and RESPs. The Government passes the necessary legislation and sets up the required regulations.

The legislation and amendments to the Income Tax Act and Regulations were passed with the second Budget 2007 Bill. Human Resources and Social Development Canada put out draft regulations for consultation on March 19, 2008. These consultations with financial institutions and other stakeholders are ongoing right now. These are the regulations that will allow financial institutions to build the systems to implement RDSPs. We are hoping for their final publication in June.

Apply for Child Benefits Online

The application process is safer and more convenient than ever. The *Apply for Child Benefits* service is available through *My Account* on the CRA website seven days a week.

The newest addition to the electronic services offered through *My Account* allows Canadians to do all of the following at once: apply for the Canada Child Tax Benefit and related provincial and territorial programs; register their children for the goods and services tax/harmonized sales tax credit and related provincial programs; and enroll for the Universal Child Care Benefit directly online, on a secure website.

For a full list of *My Account* services, visit www.cra.gc.ca/myaccount. A Government of Canada epass is required to access *My Account*. Individuals can register for an epass on the *My Account* home page.



I welcome your feedback and appreciate being informed of the issues that are important to you. Please take a few moments to complete the questionnaire and mail it to me, free of charge. I look forward to hearing from you.

www.mikewallacemp.ca

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. _____

Status of Government Business

The following is a list of the status of Government business in the second session of the 39th Parliament.

House of Commons

- S-3 Investigative Hearing and Recognizance with Conditions Bill (second reading)
- C-4 Pilotage Act (second reading)
- C-5 Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage in Case of a Nuclear Incident Bill (report)
- C-6 Visual Identification of Voters Bill (committee)
- C-7 Aeronautics Act (third reading)
- C-14 Canada Post Corporation Bill (second reading)
- C-16 Expanded Voting Opportunities Bill (report)
- C-17 Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (committee)
- C-19 Senate Tenure Bill (second reading)
- C-20 Senate Selection Bill (committee)
- C-21 First Nations Human Rights Bill (report)
- C-22 Democratic Representation Bill (second reading)
- C-23 Canada Marine Act (report)
- C-24 Non-registration of Firearms Bill (second reading)
- C-25 Youth Criminal Justice Act Bill (committee)
- C-26 Controlled Drugs and Substances Act Bill (committee)
- C-27 Identity Theft Bill (committee)
- C-29 Loan Accountability Bill (report)
- C-30 First Nations Claims Tribunal Bill (committee)
- C-32 Sustainable Development of Canada's Seacoast and Inland Fisheries Bill (report)
- C-33 Canadian Environmental Protection Act Amendments Bill (report)
- C-34 Tsawwassen First Nation Final Agreement Bill (second reading)
- C-35 Supplementary Estimates Implementation Bill (second reading)

- C-36 Air Canada Public Participation Act Amendments Bill (second reading)
- C-39 Canada Grain Act Amendments Bill (second reading)
- C-43 An Act to amend the Customs Act (second reading)
- C-45 National Defense Act Amendments Bill (second reading)
- C-46 Canadian Wheat Board Bill (second reading)
- C-47 Family Homes on First Nation Reserves (second reading)
- C-50 2008-2009 Budget Implementation Bill (committee)
- C-51 Therapeutic Products Oversight Bill (second reading)
- C-52 Safety of Consumer Products Bill (second reading)
- C-53 Auto Theft and Trafficking in Property Obtained by Crime Bill (second reading)

Senate

- C-10 Canadian Film Tax Credits Bill (committee)
- C-13 Criminal Procedure, Language of the Accused Bill (concurrence of House amendments)
- C-31 Increasing Number of Judges Bill (second reading)

Adopted/Royal Assent

- C-2 Tackling Violent Crime Act
- S-2 Canada-United States Tax Convention Bill
- C-3 Security Certificate and Special Advocate Bill
- C-8 Railway Transportation Bill
- C-9 Convention on the Settlement of Investment Disputes between States and Nationals of Other States Bill
- C-11 Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreement Bill
- C-12 Wage Earner Protection Bill

- C-15 Exploitation of the Donkin Coal Block Bill
- C-18 Verification of Residence Bill
- C-28 Budget Implementation Bill
- C-35 Supplementary Estimates Implementation Bill
- C-37 Citizenship Act Amendments Bill
- C-38 Operation of the National Research Universal Reactor at Chalk River Bill
- C-40 Job Protection for Reservists Bill
- C-41 Community Development Trust Bill
- C-42 Museums Act Bill
- C-44 An Act to amend the Agricultural Marketing Programs Act Bill
- C-48 2007-2008 Supplementary Estimates Bill
- C-49 2008-2009 Main Estimates Bill

Community Volunteer Income Tax Program

Thank you to the volunteers who assisted many seniors and low income individuals to complete their tax returns this year. Burlington needs community volunteers like you to provide this very important service.

Should you require more information about this program for next year, please contact my Burlington Office for details. Volunteers are registered with Canada Revenue Agency and a list of clinics is provided to our office by the end of February each year.

New Horizons for Seniors Program

Community Participation & Leadership Funding

Engaging Seniors, Strengthening Communities

The Government of Canada recognizes the important and continuing role seniors play in strengthening our communities and building our country. This is why the Government is investing in seniors and encouraging them to stay active, share their knowledge and help others within their communities.

The New Horizons for Seniors Program is currently accepting applications to fund community-based projects across Canada that:

- encourage seniors to share their skills, wisdom and experience and support social well-being in communities; and
- promote the ongoing involvement of seniors in their communities to reduce their risk of social isolation.

How does Community Participation and Leadership funding help our seniors?

Seniors are encouraged to initiate and lead projects that benefit their communities. They contribute by bringing their leadership, energy and skills to many projects.

The Program funds a wide range of non-profit activities that are led by seniors, such as volunteering, outreach, mentoring, and teaching. Each province and territory sets priorities that reflect their particular needs, and the funded projects respond to these priorities.

How can you become involved in the New Horizons for Seniors Program?

The New Horizons for Seniors Program will be accepting applications from April 7 to June 13, 2008. For more information on the Program and how to apply, visit the Human Resources and Social Development Canada Website at http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/community_partnerships/seniors/index.shtml or call 1-800 277-9914 and select "0" to speak to an agent. Persons with a speech or hearing impairment can call 1-800-255-4786 (TTY).



Mike with the Japanese Ambassador, Tsuneo Nishida, while he was visiting Parliament Hill on April 2, 2008. This year marks the 80th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Canada and Japan.

UPFRONT
with Mike Wallace, MP

Mike Wallace
MP Burlington

www.mikewallacemp.ca

Parliament Hill Office:
763 Confederation Building
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Tel: 613-995-0881
Fax: 613-995-1091
wallace.m@parl.gc.ca

Constituency Office:
Burlington Mall, Suite 209
777 Guelph Line
Burlington, ON L7R 3N2
Tel: 905-639-5757
Fax: 905-639-6031
wallam1@parl.gc.ca

Mike Wallace, MP Burlington
763 Confederation Building
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6