

The Address

A lot of people are not aware that is something that has been done, with figures attached. We have been promoting such a program during the election and will continue to promote it. We know that Canadians put the highest priority on social programs like health care and education. Our program to balance spending does not jeopardize those programs. In fact it ensures, we believe, that those programs will be sustained into the foreseeable future for when I am older and need most of them and many Canadians are in the same boat.

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your appointment as a deputy speaker. I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Speaker on his election to that office. While this position has been a challenge over the years, the unprecedented number of new members in this 35th Parliament may provide the most difficult challenge of all.

As one of the new members I will do my best to learn the rules as quickly as possible and in so doing make both our jobs a little easier. Under your guidance, Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope the House will enjoy the same harmonious relationship that exists in the Ontario caucus of my party.

My congratulations go out to all members on their election or re-election to this new Parliament. From the number of new members it would appear that being re-elected was a much more difficult task, so a special bouquet goes to those members.

To those who voted for me in my riding of Simcoe Centre, I want to say how much I appreciate the honour and the opportunity to represent them in this House. The trust my constituents have placed in me will not rest lightly on my shoulders as I work hard to be deserving of that honour.

A special thanks also goes to my wife and my family for their love, support and hard work on my campaign.

I have always regarded my riding of Simcoe Centre as grassroots Ontario with a good mix of industry, tourism and farming. It has been said that as Simcoe Centre goes so goes most of Ontario.

My riding is named for the first Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe, and like the governor the riding has played an important role in the development of this province and this nation.

The agricultural community in Simcoe Centre has been a mainstay of the local economy since the land was first opened up in the early 1800s. Towns have gained prominence such as Alliston, Ontario's potato capital. Alliston is also famous as the home of Nobel prize winner Sir Frederick Banting, co-discoverer of insulin.

As a place to work and play, Simcoe Centre offers a quality of life that is second to none. Hundreds of thousands of people come to visit each year, to shop and dine as they enjoy both

skiing and cottaging in the region. Between the shores of the world's largest fresh water beach in Wasaga and beautiful Lake Simcoe we offer outstanding year-round recreation and leisure activities.

My riding also includes Canada's largest military training base, Base Borden, which has played an important role in the defence of this country since World War I.

I would be remiss if I did not speak about my own city of Barrie which is central to my riding and is the largest city. Barrie enjoys its location around the tip of Kempenfelt Bay. Its manufacturing base and service economy are prime examples of what the hard work and entrepreneurship of Barrie residents can produce.

Being situated just an hour's drive north of Toronto, one of the world's truly great cities, we can enjoy the best of both worlds in Simcoe Centre.

When I made the decision to seek office I was certainly aware of the low image of politicians held by many Canadian people. However as I went door to door I was surprised and shocked at how deeply these feelings were held. Voter after voter complained that politicians had lost touch with them, were only hearing what they wanted to hear, and were not to be trusted. Far too often I heard this comment: "I will not be voting. You are all the same". To me that hurt more than any other response.

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In addition to the cynicism and lack of trust, the main issues within Simcoe Centre were the never ending and ever increasing tax burden as well as the economy and job creation. Simcoe Centre and indeed all of Canada is on the verge of a tax revolt. The huge underground economy is evidence of how close we are.

As a youngster I was told there were only two sure things in life: death and taxes. Little did I know then that one was going to cause the other. Unless we are going to get government spending under control we will never eliminate the deficit so that we can offer Canadians tax relief.

Deficits and debt are the most serious issues we face. All others are pale by comparison. Indeed the answer to job creation, stimulating the economy and saving our social safety nets, is directly tied to the solution of this problem.

I campaigned very hard on this issue and was disappointed the throne speech contained no plans for substantial reductions in government spending. Many times I have been asked why I chose to seek office. There are two words that best describe my desire and conviction to come to Ottawa. They are Jessica and Nicholas, my grandchildren. The realization that I have been part of a generation that had lived beyond our means and was now leaving a huge debt on their shoulders did not sit well with me. I had to run for office and try to do something about it.