

## **Halton Compass column – June07**

### **Environment cannot be ignored**

Our environment is inspiring a lot of talk these days.

No matter what you believe, there is an understanding that we cannot pollute the place we live. In fact, I believe strongly that a large part of my personal legacy as a holder of elected office will be reflected in how the environment was handled under my watch.

So I have taken stands that were unpopular in certain circles, such as voting against my own party to quash development on the Oak Ridges Moraine or advocating successfully against a major commercial development on the face of the Niagara Escarpment.

I have argued long and loud for improved emissions technology on Ontario's coal plants and talks with nearby American states to improve their emissions from coal fired generating stations. Given the length of time it will take to remove our existing coal plants from service, the cost of improved emissions technology was easily justified. The McGuinty Liberals steadfastly refused to budge even when it was impossible for their plans to end our dependence on coal to bear fruit.

I have championed a number of environmentally sound investments by the Ontario government in Halton, including the purchase of a number of tracts of sensitive land which were given to the Halton Conservation Authority and added to the Bruce Trail, as well as prying the initial 470 acres of land away from the Oakville Land Assembly. Much of that land has become Glenorchy Conservation Area in north Oakville. Fifty acres will become the site of Oakville's new hospital.

Of course there are a number of people who had a hand in making these good things happen. So often it is by working together that we achieve notable results for Halton.

It seems to me that the air we breathe, the safety of our water and the ability of our land to produce the nourishment we need is paramount in our quest for a healthy environment. These things must be achieved while creating a fertile playing field for business and while ensuring we have the power necessary to live our lives in a northern climate. We must keep striving for excellence by providing ourselves those opportunities that allow us to know with certainty that our children's lives will be better in their turn than ours were.

I am appalled at how we have come to accept the all too-often blanket of air pollution over southern Ontario. While the extent of the pollution is hard to predict we know with absolute certainty that it will happen several times each summer.

While working with our American neighbours to reduce this pollution is difficult because of the multiple jurisdictions involved that difficulty shouldn't preclude us from making the effort, and then making it again and again until we are successful.

I've participated in the process that doubled Ontario's provincial park lands and that identified the northern shore of the Lake Huron and Lake Superior as being in need of significant environmental protection. I've planted trees, arranged for remedial work to be done on streams in Halton, and watched closely as old quarries were returned to nature. My concerns regarding air pollution have not been taken up by the current Liberal government, but that will not stop me from continuing to take on this most significant scourge of this young century.