



Message from Queen's Park



OCTOBER 2011 COLUMN

As this is my first column since the October 6th provincial election, I'll start by extending a warm and heartfelt thank you to all those who expressed their confidence by returning me to Queen's Park once again. And even though the level of support was incredibly gratifying, I must make the point that such a result will never be taken as a reason for complacency on my part, but rather as call for the continuation of the hard work I hope many of you feel I bring to the table as your elected member in the Ontario Legislature. I am honoured by your support, and pledge to move forward with my very best efforts on your behalf and on behalf of the people of Ontario.

As you may be aware, the night of October 6th was bittersweet for Vicky and myself, if bittersweet can be taken as the correct term. Vicky's brother, Rob, was taken from us that same day, and his passing remains a difficult blow to absorb. Still very much a young man, Rob's loss at age fifty-one defies an easy explanation, and only serves to illustrate and remind us that we know not the hour or the day. As it is, we place his fate and ours in God's hands, and we move forward.

Vicky and I have been incredibly touched by the outpouring of support and condolences we've received from all over the riding, and it brings us a great measure of comfort to know that we are in the hearts and prayers of so many people who wish us well in our time of sadness. Your efforts to reach out to us, and share the comfort of your love and companionship, will remain with us always. We are so thankful to count ourselves members of such a warm and caring community, and wish to indicate our most profound gratitude.

I entered into the election period as the Opposition House Leader, and I've emerged as the Opposition Whip, a position significant with responsibility and made only more so in the environment of a minority parliament. I recognize the confidence that my party leader, Tim Hudak, has placed in me, and will endeavour to carry out my new responsibilities in a manner consistent with the responsibilities I've carried to this point on behalf of my constituents, my party, and as a member of the Ontario Legislature. Mr. Hudak has placed a lot of faith in me, and it's my intent to demonstrate that faith as being justified.

As we enter November, we enter the period of Remembrance, a time of reflection and thanks. We are blessed to be citizens of the greatest nation on Earth, a nation well-regarded as one of peace, but well-respected as one willing to make the necessary sacrifice to defend what we consider to be basic and fundamental human precepts, prominent among them the idea of freedom. And while peace-loving, we are a proud people who will rise to fight in defence of those who become threatened by others intent

on taking these freedoms away, and degrade the beauty of life as they do so. We fight, not for riches, nor territory, nor to plunder from others what is not rightfully ours.

We fight, rather, so that others may be free.

I plan to attend the many Remembrance Day observances that will be held across the riding in the next couple of weeks, and encourage all readers to do the same in their communities. It's part of our shared responsibility as citizens to demonstrate our deep appreciation for the sacrifices that have been made on our behalf by men and women who have placed themselves in harm's way to defend a nation, its people, and the principles for which it stands. Cenotaphs across Renfrew County bear the names of brave people dear to us who have paid the most costly price, that of their very lives, in defence of the Canadian flag and all it stands for. Truly, it is only right we honour them, take note of their names, and honour their sacrifice.

As well, we must remain further committed to the support of our troops in Afghanistan, to pray for their safety in-theatre, and for their safe return home. As we transition to a new role in that war-torn country, we must continue to honour those who bear our flag on their uniform, and do all we can to ensure that their arrival home is both safe and sound. Be sure to wear a poppy and thank any veteran you meet through Remembrance week and every day of the year.