

MUCH STILL TO BE DONE: THE DOWN SIDE OF PROROGATION

For those of you who may have missed the news, the Government of Canada's legislative agenda for September has now officially been cancelled. The Prime Minister has decided to wipe the slate clean by proroguing parliament and presenting a Speech from the Throne, which will set forth a new set of priorities for the fall.

On the face of it, this looks like a bold move and a sign that this government is not sitting still. You could say it wants to set forth an agenda that better reflects the priorities of Canadians, to be as progressive and responsive as possible.

Sitting here in Ottawa on the last meeting of my committee, Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, I am finding it hard to agree with such an assessment. I have sat through witnesses from the department of Foreign Affairs trying to explain why this government decided that mention of torture and abuse of detainees in Afghanistan had to be blacked out from human rights reports. It is frustrating to realize that prorogation means this committee's work will lose all momentum. A new committee will have a new Chair, and it will vote on a new set of priorities for the fall, which may or may not include getting to the bottom of who decided Canadians should not know about how this government managed such an important issue, one that has profound implications for Canada's place in the world.

However, this is far from the only matter of significance that has been sent back to the legislative drawing board. Perhaps the most urgent in question is the Clean Air and Climate Change Act. It had endured months of committee meetings, yet we got to a place where Canadians could hope for an actual commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from this government. Closer to home here, there was hope that all parties would support my Private Member's motion to recognize February 21st as International Mother Language Day, an initiative first legitimized by UNESCO in 1999, in an effort to preserve and celebrate all vernacular languages. That too will have to be reintroduced as legislation in the House in the fall.

As I wait for yet another month to return to the House of Commons, I am eager to keep these issues – and more – on this government's radar. And by more I want to emphasize my office is open and I am eager to hear your suggestions for what this government should focus on when we return. The only up side of a blank slate is the chance to bring fresh ideas, your ideas to Ottawa and give them some legislative weight.

I look forward to hearing from you.



Sukh Dhaliwal, Member of Parliament
Newton - North Delta

Unit 113 - 8532 120 Street
Surrey, BC V3W3N5
Phone 604-598-2200
Fax 604-598-2212
www.sukhdhaliwal.ca

