

Former MP?Sinclair Stevens is glad Harper is out

By Bill Rea

One positive result of the Oct. 19 federal election is Stephen Harper is out as Prime Minister.

That is the feeling of former local MP?Sinclair Stevens.

The former representative for York-Peel, which included the Town of Caledon and much of King Township, was first elected to the House of Commons in 1972, leaving Parliament in the 1988 election.

?I think it was good to get rid of Harper,? Stevens said in an interview Monday. ?He's very right wing.?

?He brought in a lot of things that will have to be undone,? he added.

Stevens said he's surprised the pollsters haven't been called to account more for the numbers they were giving out in the days before the election.

?I don't know why the pollsters were so wrong,? he said, pointing out they were calling it pretty much a three-way race until the end.

?Nobody was anticipating a landslide.?

?I expected the Liberals would lead the rest, but I didn't expect they would get the number of seats that they got,? he remarked, adding he was giving his head a shake when he heard election night that the Grits had swept the Maritimes. ?I could hardly believe it.?

Stevens had quite a bit of criticism for Harper, calling him a ?non-politician.?

?He seemed to go out of his way to antagonize people,? he commented. ?He seemed to rely on a majority of the seats to have his way.?

Justin Trudeau raises different reactions. Stevens said he's met the new Prime Minister a couple of times.

?I'm a little surprised at how effective he is as a politician,? he observed, pointing out Trudeau seems to be able to join a group of people and electrify it. ?He seems to have developed a style that's very effective.?

?It will take a while for him to correct some of the mistakes Harper made,? he added.

Stevens observed that Harper let about 2,000 engineers go, pointing out that the government needs such experts in today's technological times.

He said there were other examples of things that Harper did wrong. Stevens also said he's curious as to what's going to happen with the trial of Senator Mike Duffy, noting that things were pretty quiet on that issue during the campaign. ?I guess his lawyer told him to shut up.?

Stevens had a few observations on the future of the Conservative Party, with Harper away from the helm.

He said he attended a meeting last week of the Albany Club, with former prime minister Brian Mulroney as the featured speaker.

?I was surprised to see there were 600 registered guests,? he commented, adding the crowd was so large, they had to move the event to the Imperial Room at the Fairmont Royal York. It was the biggest crowd the club had ever had, he said, with a lot of former politicians there. Former Harper cabinet minister Peter MacKay, who was the last leader of the federal Progressive Conservative Party, introduced Mulroney with a lengthy 20-minute address of his own. Stevens couldn't say if MacKay plans to seek the leadership, but added a man who makes such a long introduction might have something planned.

Mulroney, he said, ?was his old self.?

?He's a good audience pleaser,? Stevens observed.

Stevens was never a fan of the merger that saw the Canadian Alliance join with the Progressive Conservatives to form the Conservative Party of Canada. That led to the formation of the Progressive Conservative Party. Stevens said at first they had thought of calling it the Progressive Conservative Party, but the Chief Electoral Officer objected, stating the name ?Conservative? had already been taken.

?We're still on the record as the Progressive Conservative Party,? Stevens said, adding they're still trying to decide what to do with it.

?The reason for forming the Progressive Conservative Party is now passed.?

?What will happen over the next four years we'll have to watch,? Stevens commented, recalling he got to watch Trudeau's father in action as Prime Minister from the Opposition benches in the House of Commons. He recalled that Pierre Elliott Trudeau was very opinionated. He remembered that he put more questions to the Prime Minister during Question Period than any of his caucus colleagues.

?I?think the son has a more winning way with him, as far as the public is concerned, than the father,? he commented.