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Defence of Conservatives, ends year's steady work

**By Ann Harvey
Staff Writer**

Conservative MP Garry Breitkreuz spent 2008 working for and informing his constituents, ending the year with a fiery defence of his beleaguered government.

That speech to the House of Commons – the last before the governor-general prorogued it on Dec. 4 – addressed the issues in an attempt to take the reins of government with a Coalition comprised of the Liberal, NDP and The Bloc.

This act – which was democratic but profoundly disturbing to Canadians – followed the Nov. 27 economic update by the finance minister.

But, it was clear that it had been planned immediately after the Oct. 14, 2008, election of another – but stronger – Conservative minority. Prior to that the year was distinguished by a lack of controversy.

This was clear in a scrutiny of *Yorkton This Week* coverage, the MPs news releases and the MPs columns. and evidence derived from the Internet. The following sampling shows Bre-

itkreuz uses the resources of his office to inform and help his constituents.

On his website the MP identifies agriculture, gun control and family as his three main issues. But, the MP also concerns himself with Aboriginal affairs, abortion funding, bullying, government debt/finances/taxes, justice, the Outdoors Caucus (group defending hunting and fishing rights which he helped found), property rights, social programs/responsibility and any other issue facing his constituents and all Canadians.

Entering 2008, Breitkreuz summed

up 2007 for *Yorkton This Week*, saying his minority government which had already confounded expectations by being elected on Jan. 23, 2006, and staying in power for close to two years has racked up considerable achievement.

The included more paying on the deficit, improving agricultural programs and working on public safety, he said.

In Ottawa the MP continued working for farmers, advising them in a Jan. 30 news release that information

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sessions AgriStabilty AgriInvest, AgriRecovery and AgriInsurance - program announced in June 2007 - would be held in his riding through February and early March.

In his Feb. 4 column he remarked on the announcement in which Prime Minister Stephen Harper said the federal government was giving Saskatchewan \$36.4 million from the new national Community Development Trust. This \$1 billion, three-year program gives a base amount of \$10 million to each participating province and \$3 million to each participating territory.

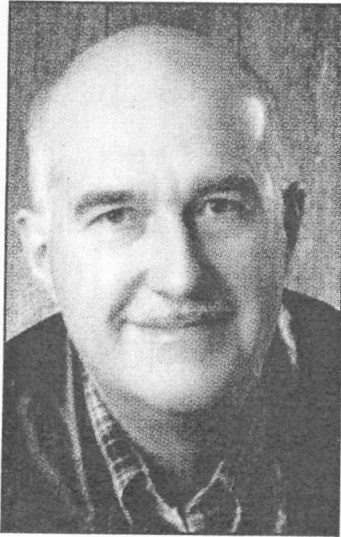
In a Feb. 13 news release the MP advised participants of the Canadian Agriculture Skills Service that the deadline for submitting claims and receipts was extended to Mar 31.

In a Feb 25 column, Breitkreuz said his government had created the Canadian Heritage Sport Fund to encourage young people to take part in sports with Canadian roots such as three-down football, wheelchair ruby, lacrosse and ringette. This and the re-introduced ParticipACTION are intended to foster mental and physical health in Canadians.

The MP added it augments to Children's Fitness Tax Credit which his government introduced starting with the 2007 tax year. The tax credit allows families to save as much as \$500 a child (under 26) if the child takes part in eligible activities.

In a Feb 26 news release, Breitkreuz advised people of a Statistics Canada study which addressed two issues that are his major concerns - gun control and the ability to engage in outdoor activities.

He said the study for 2006, Firearms and Violent Crime, reported firearms were used in only 2.4 per cent of all violent crime in Canada and handguns (supposed to have



MP Garry Breitkreuz
Yorkton-Melville
Conservative

been registered since 1934) were used almost two-thirds of those incidents.

Three-quarters of the victims of violence were assailed without any weapons. Knives, clubs and other blunt instruments were used against 9.2 per cent of the victims.

More murders, robberies, sexual assaults and assaults were committed with knives than with firearms.

"That's why the federal government introduced Bill C-2, our Tackling Violent Crime Act," he stated. "This study made it obvious that we need all governments to focus on the real problem of violent crime and especially target those criminal that use any type of weapon in the commission of an offence."

Commenting on the federal Budget 2008 in a Feb. 27 news release, the MP listed a continuation of the type of activity the Conservatives engaged in previous budgets.

On March 6 he addressed the House, supporting another members bill, C-484, the Unborn Victims of Crime Act. He and 147 MPs voted to pass the second reading.

The bill says a woman who chooses to give birth to a child has a right to protection for the child and herself

The bill would amend the Criminal Code of Canada to allow separate homicide charges to be laid in the death of a fetus when a pregnant woman is attacked, granting a type of legal personhood to fetuses.

In a March 17 column he reported his government has drafted a law - Bill C-47 - to protect Aboriginal women.

He stated, "When most Canadian couple suffer from breakdown of their conjugal relationship, there is legal protection to ensure the assets of the marriage are distributed equitably between the partners. Not so for couples who reside in communities governed by the Indian Act.

"Bill C-47 is the product of nationwide consultation with First Nations members, leaders, national organizations and the provinces and territories."

On April 11 Breitkreuz once again hosted his Agricultural Forum in Yorkton. For the fourth year in a row the agriculture minister joined the speakers.

On April 28 in his column the MP advised constituents of the BizPal program, an online service designed to help Canadian businesses when they gather licence and permit information from multiple levels of government.

The same day he addressed the House, deploring the Liberal's opposition to biofuel development. "The Liberals are turning their backs on Canadian farmers and the bio-fuel industry.

"Two canola crushing plants have been developed in my constituency and the resulting oil could be used to produce diesel fuel," the MP said. "Biofuels will help provide the boost our farmers need."

In his May 12 column, Breitkreuz said, "On My 1, a portion of the Tackling Violent Crime Act came into full force, and with it comes increased safety and security for all Canadians."

He said provisions of the bill include more protection for youth from predators and has tougher mandatory jail time for serious gun crimes.

The MP's May 19 column detailed an initiative to allow his business-owner constituents a chance to be suppliers for the \$15 billion of goods and services the federal government requires each year. Invited by him and the Yorkton Chamber of Commerce, federal government representatives had travelled to the area to explain how to sell to them.

On June 2 his column described the welcome Ukraine President Victor Yushchenko was given at a special sitting with MPs, senators and invited guests in Ottawa. "The assembly was reminded that the Government of Canada under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney was the first western nation to recognize Ukraine independence from Russian tyranny in 1991.

"The prime minister also noted a private members bill currently before Parliament to provide legal recognition of the genocide in Ukraine under the brutal communist dictatorship of Joseph Stalin. On this 75th anniversary of Holodomor, we must remember the past so that it can never again be repeated.

"Canadian are not afraid of history or the truth, and we embrace our cousins in Ukraine in their quest for peace and prosperity."

On June 5 Breitkreuz spoke up for his constituents on the on-going issue of changing the Canadian Wheat Board. He reminded the House that the CWB chair (quoting the CWB's own survey) had just admitted the majority of farmers are asking for marketing freedom for barley.

"This is absolutely in line with what farmers in my riding are telling me."

In his June 23 column he said the carbon tax proposed by Liberal leader Stéphane Dion would make life worse for Canadians.

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"This ill-conceived tax pretends to decrease environmental harm by making the prohibitive cost of fossil fuels even higher. A carbon tax would cripple the economy and still fail to protect the environment, because polluters could purchase the right to increase their fuel consumption."

On July 2 in a news release the MP opposed awarding an Order of Canada to Dr. Henry Morgentaler who is well known for doing abortions. "This appointment is opposed by millions of Canadian who believe all life is sacrosanct."

Through the rest of the summer the MP explained government initiatives and their significance to his constituents in his column.

On Sept. 8 he explained the Memorandum of Understanding on First Nations Health and Well-Being which the federal and Saskatchewan governments and the Federation of Indian Nations signed on Aug. 19 saying, "the need for this agreement is a sad reminder that some among our Aboriginal population have fallen behind."

On Oct. 14 Breitzkreuz was returned for his sixth term. He finished with 19,824 for the 29,142 valid votes, 68 per cent.

On Nov. 3 in his column he commented on Canada's chance in the worldwide economic downturn.

"No country is immune from international financial problems because we are all connected through import-export agreements.

"With that said, Canada is better off than most because our economic system has built-in checks and balances.

"If that's not enough, the government under Prime Minister Stephen Harper has anticipated the trouble brewing for some years and took early measures to fend off major problems."

The MP said the prime minister had also outlined more immediate measures for protecting the Canadian economy.

He said Finance Minister Jim Flaherty has reported the World Economic Forum found Canada's financial system to be the most sound in the world. "Likewise, the International Monetary Fund concluded that Canada's financial system is unique, sophisticated, well managed and able to withstand sizeable shocks.

"It would appear that during the economic downturn, Canada is the place to be."

Following the Throne Speech in which Harper announced he would devise a budget in the new year, the Liberals, NDP and The Bloc

announced their intention to form a coalition and wrest control from the newly-elected government.

This set off a storm of controversy and anxiety in Canadians. Finally, at Harper's request, the governor general prorogued the House until Jan. 26.

Breitzkreuz defended his government in the House saying, "For all its merits, the economic update presented by the Minister of Finance on Nov. 27 has singularly flushed out the opposition's pent-up need to wrest power from the government.

"I have received many phone calls from my constituents. They are puzzled, disappointed and outraged by the opposition's unprecedented attempt to form its own government illegitimately.

"The three opposition par-

ties are desperate enough to form an unholy alliance that runs counter to the conventional wisdom, and worse, counter to the desire of voters in the recent federal election."

He also said Harper is a good leader for these times of worldwide economic trouble.

"The naysayers have obscured the fact that the government has reduced the federal debt by \$37 billion.

He explained, "Over 2007-08 and the five years following, we will have reduced taxes by nearly \$200 billion. That too will be an unbelievable accomplishment.

"We will have reduced the tax rate on new business investment to the lowest level in the G7 by 2010.

"When people talk about an economic stimulus, we have already done it."