

**Subject: Report on meeting with Mike Colle**

*Hello Voices members. As Rosemary has asked us to send materials directly rather than always going through her, I am herewith sending our report on the meeting that we had with Mike Colle last Tuesday morning. The materials from Voices such as questions for candidates, the "leave behind", and reports on other meetings with candidates were very helpful in preparing for this meeting. Dave Clemens.*

Date of meeting; Tuesday, September 27, 2011, 10 a.m. The meeting lasted for over an hour, even though we had requested 30 minutes.

Those present: Mike Colle and George Clarke; Members of Eglinton St. George's United Church – Jim Black, Jean Bruce, Dave Clemens, Geegee Mills. Chris Levan joined us briefly at the end.

We found Mike to be very knowledgeable about the issues, and generally supportive of our concerns. At the same time, he pointed out some of the realities in having to deal with the concerns of all constituents, and trying to counter the general bias that exists relative to people on social assistance. He is obviously very involved in the community and speaks with a lot of folks at the "grass roots" level. He rightly pointed out the numerous actions that the Liberal government has taken, and at the end of the meeting endorsed the initiative to institute a healthy food supplement. As the meeting was ending, he mentioned that we might want to link up with the most vulnerable community in our riding, the Lawrence Heights community. He suggested that there might be opportunities for mentoring, and other activities that would help that community.

Some of the points that Mike made:

- We have been and are in the worst recession in 80 years.
- The Liberal government went to deficit financing to keep jobs and not cut services.
- They went ahead with the Ontario Child Benefit (every child receives

\$1,200/year).

- They have increased funding for schools and added teachers despite declining enrolments.
- They have added nurses.
- The tax cuts are limited to companies that want to stay in Ontario.
- The business community is not voting Liberal, saying they haven't done enough for business.
- Banks and insurance companies are the third largest employers in Toronto.
- All-day kindergarten will save families approximately \$6,000 per year.
- The poverty rate for single mothers is astonishing.
- Social assistance to people living in poverty is more than monthly payments; programs in health, education and child care are also necessary supports.
- Those enrolled in the Adult Education programs of the Toronto District School Board are mostly people on social assistance. The programs are free for them, and free child care is provided.
- The Liberals promise to give modest support to students, \$1,500 off the cost of tuition, at an ultimate cost of \$ several billion.
- The Social Assistance Review will try to get rid of clawbacks and reduce the 1000 regulations.
- The Liberals have expanded the level of child dental care.
- Mike receives many criticisms of people on social assistance.
- Folks on social assistance do have total access to health care, especially through the Anne Johnson Centre.
- The Liberal government got rid of the \$6 billion deficit inherited from the Conservatives, and have now built up the deficit to \$14 billion rather than cutting services; if you cut services, you will see a spiralling effect, and businesses will suffer too.
- The Liberals have uploaded \$600 million per year from municipalities.
- They have also put \$600 million into housing over the last 3 years.
- They have increased funding for the Pathways program that reduces the high school drop-out rate and increases post-secondary attendance.
- Mike is supportive of the \$100 Healthy Food Supplement. He also

pointed that the special dietary allowance is still in effect, with more supervision to eliminate misuse of the program.

In summary, it was a pleasant, informal, informative meeting, which demonstrated that Mike Colle understands and shares our concerns. We pointed out to him that if he is re-elected we are here to provide support for initiatives to reduce poverty.

Respectfully submitted, Dave Clemens.