

MP says goodbye

HN Sept. 22, 2010

After 22 years on Parliament Hill, Mississauga East-Cooksville MP Albina Guarnieri is calling it a day.

Guarnieri informed Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff last Friday that she'll not seek re-election past the current term.

The 57-year-old Grit MP revealed she was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) in 2006, but has kept her disease a secret until now.

"Your health takes second place to your work," she said.

Ignatieff paid tribute to Guarnieri.

"Albina Guarnieri has served

See Guarnieri page 10



Albina
Guarnieri

Paul Bief.

GUARNIERI, Albina
Longest-serving woman in House

Guarnieri wraps up 'good run'

Continued from page 1

the community of Mississauga East for 22 years and caps her political career as the longest-serving woman in the history of the House of Commons," Ignatieff said in a formal statement.

"It's a testament to her unwavering dedication and political skill that, since 1988, she has been re-elected six times, each time with overwhelming support in the riding she knows so well."

Guarnieri says she's had a "good run" working on issues close to her heart - victims' rights and, currently, a bill demanding more transparency in charities.

But what gave her the greatest satisfaction was working for her Mississauga constituents, she told *The News*.

"They've been my extended family for 22 years, and I've tried whenever I can to help them. I certainly hope I've made a difference," she said.

Over her career, Guarnieri has served as Minister of Veterans Affairs, Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister of State (Civil Preparedness).

During her tenure at Veterans Affairs, she was responsible for a budget of \$2.8 billion and the management of 4,000 employees delivering pensions, healthcare and home care to 217,000 veterans and survivors.

Guarnieri intends to finish off the current term, but says she doesn't know what lies beyond that.

"We'll see what the future brings...tomorrow will always be a mystery," she said.

Monday, on the day the House of Commons resumed after its three-month summer break, MPs of all political stripes approached Guarnieri.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper shook her hand and wished her the best.

"People just started to drift over," said fellow Mississauga MP Paul Szabo, a longtime friend of Guarnieri.

"A lot of them weren't sure quite what to say, other than, 'I was thinking about you.' It's a courtesy. The prime minister was very courteous."

Guarnieri's taking it all in stride.

"When I started, I never thought I'd retire before Hazel (McCallion)," she said.