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I entered public life more than a quarter of a century ago. I have had the honour and privilege of receiving a mandate from the constituents of my riding for 7 straight elections. That is a responsibility I have never taken lightly. It is a very diverse riding comprised of citizens of all backgrounds socially, culturally and economically. I have learned far more from my constituents than they have ever learned from me. It is my job to understand them in order to defend their interests in the Legislative Assembly. It is my fundamental belief that understanding your constituents is the primary responsibility of every member of the House and being able to bridge the concerns of all citizens to find common ground. I have believed since I was a young person that the Progressive Conservative Party was the best vehicle by which to drive change in our Province. Having campaigned at a very early age for Premier Richard Hatfield, I have dedicated my entire life to this Party and ultimately the Province as a result. I have served in the Cabinet of 3 separate Premiers. I have always fought for my constituents within a party and caucus structure. My respect for that process has led to better results for my community and my province - until recently. Under the leadership of Premier Higgs, caucus has been less about consensus and more about him getting his own way. While I have tried my best to continue to work to maintain the integrity of the caucus system, I have finally come to the conclusion that this is no longer possible. On several occasions, I have sat down with Mr. Higgs to explain and instil in him the importance of working more collaboratively with caucus and offered whatever help might be needed in that regard. Unfortunately, this offer to help has simply been met with nothing but more frequent caucus meetings where he simply tells us his position and that if we don't agree with him then we don't have the resolve needed for the job. With all due respect, sincerely disagreeing with Mr. Higgs, be it myself or any member of caucus, is not demonstrating a lack of resolve but simply having a position different than his. His lack of empathy as well as his inability to listen to valid concerns of all members of his caucus demonstrates a further inability to lead the citizens of New Brunswick. No one has a monopoly on wisdom. The Party is greater than any one person. I have always believed that those of us in public life are called to serve something greater than ourselves and that we have a social responsibility to leave this community better than we found it. That was what I was raised to believe and that is what I hope my children and those that come after remember me for. After long, careful consideration this week, I have arrived at the decision that I can no longer serve in a Cabinet under Blaine Higgs. It is my full intention to continue as the member for Portland Simonds and honour the commitment that I have made to my constituents.

This decision has not been taken lightly. However, for the reasons stated above, I now find myself in a position where I need to do some significant soul searching after a 24 year legislative career. I would ask the public and the media to allow me some time and space for this reflection to take place. I would encourage my party to continue its own soul searching. We need to build a thoughtful, conservative movement in this province that brings people together rather than divide them. I hope and pray that this is possible.



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