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MP to retire before next race: Tory Randy White says it's time for a rest after 12 years in Parliament

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ABBOTSFORD - Abbotsford MP Randy White announced Thursday he will retire from federal politics when the next election is called.

"It's just time," said White, reflecting on his 12 years as a member of Parliament. "I'm 57 years old, my wife just retired and I've been working the last 40 years non-stop. I just want to stop working for awhile."

While White said he would stay the course until the next federal election, he is confident an election will be called in the near future.

"There's going to be a federal election within the year, I'll stick it out until then," he said. "I'd expect a nomination meeting in the fall [to choose the next Conservative candidate]."

White started out as a Reform MP in 1993 and was re-elected as a Canadian Alliance MP and later as a Conservative MP. He has held roles as opposition house leader, solicitor-general critic, justice critic and currently, opposition drug policy critic.

At least two private members' bills that originated with him have become law: the national Victim's Bill of Rights (1996) and a national sex offender registry (2004). White is hoping another bill currently in the House of Commons queue will also pass -- Bill C-453 or Carley's Law, legislation that would ensure stiffer penalties for hit-and-run drivers.

White, always known for speaking his mind, recalled some incidents from his days in Ottawa, like the time he wore a wig to make a point during a speech -- a wig so similar to Quebec Liberal Party leader Jean Charest's hairstyle, many thought he was poking fun at him. "I said, 'Mr. Speaker, if you ask me to take off my hairpiece, then I'll ask that everybody here wearing a hairpiece to take theirs off as well,'" White said.

He kept the wig on.

And there was the time he dressed in a Santa suit and sat down behind former Reform MP Deb Gray, who was speaking on serious issues during question period in the House of Commons. "Everyone was laughing and [the issue] was quite serious," said White. "I don't think she ever forgave me for it."

He said he has enjoyed his work fighting for justice, victims of crime and a national strategy to address drug problems, but he will not miss the flights to and from Ottawa every week.

"My two children and my wife [Marty] haven't seen me nearly as much as they should have," White said. "Now, I'm going to have my wife all to myself for awhile and it's going to be great . . . she deserves more. We're both 57, we're in good health and now's the time to enjoy it."

White said he is not endorsing any potential replacements -- yet -- but it has always been rumoured that Abbotsford Coun. Ed Fast will vie for the position.

White said he and his wife plan to do some work in Guatemala on an orphanage and seniors' home. He has ruled out ever running again for federal or provincial politics, but leaves the door open to municipal government.

"Someday, maybe. But I'd like to get a little bit of the politics out of my blood first."

Illustration:

- Colour Photo: Don MacKinnon, Sterling News / Randy White, shown with his wife Marty, expects a nomination meeting in the fall to choose the riding's next Tory candidate.
- Colour Photo: Tom Hanson, Canadian Press / Conservative MP Randy White originated two private member's bills that became law: the national Victim's Bill of Rights (1996) and a national sex offender registry (2004).

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