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# Ron Stewart calls it quits

BY JOHN CAMPBELL  
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Former health minister Ron Stewart called it quits Monday, opening his Cape Breton North seat for an expected by-election run by Premier Russell MacLellan.

The doctor had no comment on how the political situation might unfold, but praised MacLellan as "truly a gentleman and a friend, and he can count on me for any help I might be in the weeks and months to come."

MacLellan's principal assistant Sandy MacNabb told the Post Monday the premier has not yet made a decision on where he'll run but must decide before Sept. 26 if he's to contest a by-election Nov. 4.

Stewart's resignation ends months of speculation that began in 1996 with his resignation from cabinet and his increasingly low profile after three stormy years in the health portfolio.

He told the Post his main consideration in deciding his political future was "what's best for my people in Cape Breton North, who are the salt of the earth."

He said his involvement with international health issues has kept him increasingly absent from the riding and the situation came to a head with his involvement in the worldwide campaign to ban land mines.

"I'm hoping we can bring a number of conferences to Cape Breton in relation to the anti-mines campaign and I'm working on a number of initiatives that I hope will benefit health care in Cape Breton," he said, promising to elaborate when the timing is right.

The Sydney Mines native, who earned an international reputation in

the field of emergency medicine, is on leave of absence from his teaching position at Dalhousie Medical School and expects to return there within a few weeks.

He'll be teaching community health and epidemiology as well as emergency medicine while pursuing his humanitarian interests with the World Association of Emergency and Disaster Medicine, of which he's a founding member.

He'll be attending a meeting of the association in Germany next week and preparing an international seminar on land mines which is tentatively scheduled for October.

Sadly, he said, the keynote address was to have been given by Diana, Princess of Wales.

Stewart said while many politicians come away from the field "sadder but wiser," he's exiting politics "wiser, but anything but sad. I'm coming away with a sense of optimism and I'd like people to know that I have a high regard for most politicians, regardless of their political stripe. I can say I've met as many honest people in politics as in medicine."

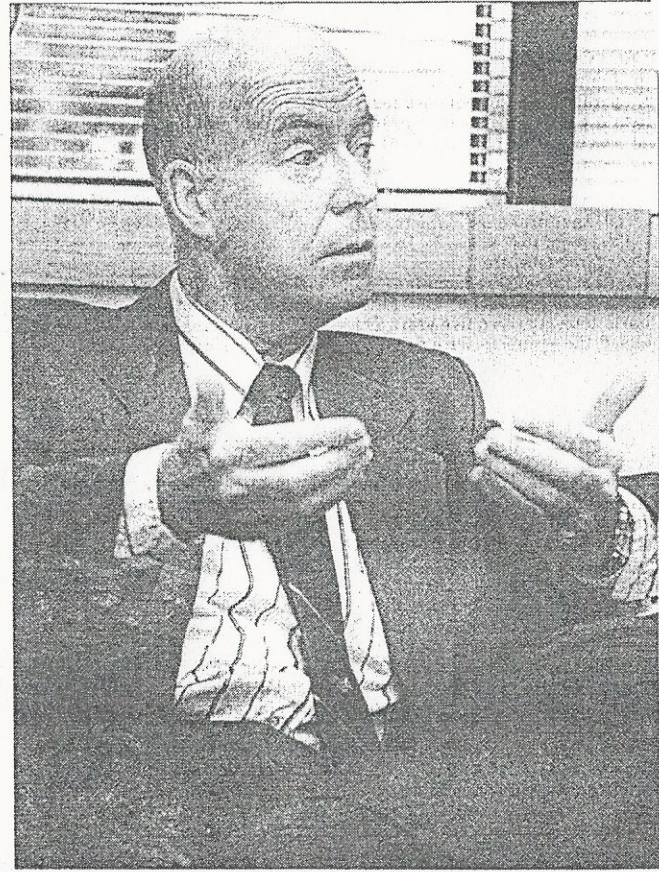
The political experience, he said, "hasn't dulled by enthusiasm for my colleagues on all sides or for the media. I can say nobody ill-used me."

He believes history will say he "left the provincial health care situation better" than he found it, citing major improvements in statistical reporting and emergency medicine as well as advances in tele-medicine as examples. "The culture and the direction have changed and it might be years before the benefits are realized, but I think it will happen."

Regrets?

"I think everyone has regrets, not

## Quitting time



RAY FAHEY/CAPE BRETON POST

Dr. Ron Stewart MLA for Cape Breton North talks to Cape Breton Post reporter John Campbell during an interview Monday. Dr. Stewart, the former provincial health minister, resigned his post effective midnight, Monday.

about entering public life, because it's been an honor to serve such wonderful people, but because I've been unable to fulfill everyone's expectations, which were so high because I was a high profile candidate."

As for a possible return to politics, Stewart said, "it's a given that you never say never in political life. But I can say never and say it with conviction."