

# transport minister has reputation as fast learner

By Alex Binkley

OTTAWA – Just as **Tony Valeri**, the new federal transport minister, has a lot to learn about his new portfolio, the transportation industry has a lot to learn about Mr. Valeri.

Although the MP for Stoney Creek near Hamilton was a frequently mentioned candidate for the transport job, he was also the least known because he had little prior involvement with the transportation industry. In fact, that may be the most likely reason why Prime Minister **Paul Martin** chose him. Transport will be a sensitive post in a Martin government because of the prime minister's links to Canada Steamship Lines.

Mr. Valeri was a parliamentary secretary to Mr. Martin when he was finance minister. The former insurance executive has served on the Commons industry committee and chaired the Liberal economic development committee.

However, Mr. Valeri will only have to look around the cabinet table to find ready advice on transport issues. Mr. Martin made cabinet ministers or parliamentary secretaries out of virtually the entire Liberal roster of the Commons transport committee in the previous session of Parliament.

**Stan Keyes**, a former parliamentary secretary for transport and transport committee chairman, got the demanding post of revenue minister. **Joe Comuzzi**, transport committee chairman in the last session of Parliament, is the minister of state for Northern Ontario development. (He would have got a Canada-U.S. relations post but for the last-minute defection of **Scott Brison** from the Conservatives). **Joe Volpe** was appointed minister of human resources and skills development.

Two former transport committee members were named parliamentary secretaries, but as members

of the Privy Council, they will be eligible to attend cabinet meetings. **Joe Fontana** will be a parliamentary secretary to Mr. Martin with a special emphasis on science and small business. He was a parliamentary secretary for transport in the **Chrétien** government. **Roger Gallaway**, chairman of the marine subcommittee in the last session, will be assisting the government house leader in the Commons.

In addition to learning the transport post, Mr. Valeri also has to think about his re-election in the 2004 vote. His biggest challenge may be defeating former heritage minister **Sheila Copps** for the nomination in his riding. Its boundaries have shifted, while Ms. Copps' riding has disappeared largely into Mr. Valeri's riding.

While he is a newcomer to transport, Mr. Valeri, a former school principal, has established a reputation as quick learner since his first election win in 1988. He was the chairman of the Commons health committee when it wrestled with the controversial topics of natural health products regulation and organ transplantation.

**Jim Karygiannis** of Scarborough-Agincourt is the new parliamentary secretary for transport, while **Paul Bonwick**, who was the chair of the Liberal railway caucus, is the new parliamentary secretary for human resources and skills development.

