

Candidates differ on value of long campaign

By Bill Rea

The writ has been dropped, Parliament has been dissolved and Canadians can get ready to vote Oct. 19.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper set the timing over the weekend, giving Canadians an election period that is much longer than is required.

In Dufferin-Caledon, there are currently four candidates hoping to be MP after Oct. 19, and they differed as to whether the early drop of the writ is a benefit.

Conservative incumbent David Tilson wasn't very surprised at the way things turned out.

"There's been all kinds of speculation," he observed, adding there had been a lot of talk over the weekend that Harper was going to have Parliament dissolved.

As far as the local campaign is concerned, Tilson they have an agenda in place.

"We've been campaigning," he remarked, adding they've had plans in place for months. "We've been doing things."

He did say there are still some complications, since he's still an MP and has various duties to perform in his constituency, while also running for office.

"I understand why the Prime Minister did it," Tilson commented, pointing out the party leaders have already been campaigning, and at the public's expense. "Now that the writ's dropped, they can't do that."

He did concede that the argument that the longer campaign period will be more expensive is a fair point.

Tilson also asserted he's taking nothing for granted in the coming campaign.

"I've never felt confident in elections," he said. "I've got some tough competition. They're good candidates They're going to give me a good run for my money, and I'm going to give them a good run for their money."

Green party candidate Nancy Erekar wasn't quite as in favour of Harper's action.

"It's a shame it's so long because the taxpayers pay more, a lot more," she said. "But we don't get to call the shots."

"It's not fair politics, but it is what it is, and we live with it," she added.

"But I'm glad to be in it in Dufferin-Caledon," Erekar remarked. "I can vote for the actual constituents and make a difference here.

The other party's members don't get to do that."

Liberal candidate Ed Crewson agreed there's added expense from the early call.

"It's \$2.8 million a day they say it's going to cost extra," he commented, adding it will end up amounting to more than \$100 million.

"It just seems that Mr. Harper has trouble being truthful these days," he commented. "This is just to play to the advertising because they've got more to play with than we do."

But there are going to be other factors that come into play.

Crewson was at a rally with Party leader Justin Trudeau Tuesday, and was impressed with the positive atmosphere he found. "You see the Harper rallies ? it looks like they're attending a funeral."

"It's inspiring for me, and I hope it's inspiring for everybody."

New Democratic candidate Rehya Yazbek agreed it's going to cost the taxpayers.

"It's going to be really long," she observed. "I guess this is good for the Tories because they've got the finances to do it."

Yazbek pointed out election officials like returning officers will have to be working twice as long as normal. She also said donations to political parties can be deducted from taxes, meaning less in government revenues.

She also said the longer campaign period will not have a major impact on her personally. She's still working full-time.

"I only have so much vacation time," she commented.