

Not many torches carried for the penny by candidates

By Bill Rea

The federal candidates in Dufferin-Caledon were again contacted in the last week for their spontaneous responses to some predetermined questions.

The answers from the candidates are presented here in alphabetical order.

Do you miss the penny?

"I haven't given it a lot of thought," commented Liberal candidate Ed Crewson. "So I guess I don't miss it. If I did miss it, I'd know that."

Conservative incumbent David Tilson said he put forth a private member's bill when he was an MPP, calling on the federal government to get rid of the penny.

"They're a thing of the past and they just weigh down your pockets," he added.

Green Party candidate Nancy Urekar commented that as a business owner, she thought at first that the government's getting rid of the penny would be a detriment.

"I thought it would be hard," she commented. "But you know, it's not at all."

"I can do without the penny," she added.

"I would say not really," commented New Democratic candidate Rehya Yazbek. "I think I have a few of them lying around."

"The penny isn't worth anything any more," she added. "I don't miss having pennies in my purse."

Is the monarchy a benefit to Canada?

Crewson observed he's from United Empire Loyalist stock and had an ancestor killed in the Revolutionary War. Canada has a British Parliamentary form of government, with the monarch as the head of state and the governor general as the Queen's representative.

"It would be a great disruption in our system to become a republic," he remarked. "I'm quite happy to be in the Commonwealth of Nations with the Queen as the head of state."

"I think it's part of our heritage," Tilson said, adding he thinks the Queen "makes people feel good."

Tilson also pointed out Canada is a constitutional monarchy, and losing the monarchy would mean the next step would be to become a republic.

"Our parliamentary system is one of the best, if not the best in the world," he added.

"That is something I think about a lot," Urekar said. "I don't want Canada to spend a lot on the monarchy."

She added she didn't see it as a great benefit, but she would be reluctant to give it up, commenting she understands why some people follow the Royal Family. "They're like other popular cultural icons," she said.

"I guess it's always important to be a part of something bigger and greater," Yazbek observed. "It's always good to have allies."

"In our day-to-day life, I don't really feel the presence of it," she added.

Would you support proportional representation in the House of Commons?

"We're considering that, along with ranked voting," Crewson said. "Certainly, I would consider it."

"It's got merit," he added. "Ranked ballots has merit as well."

He also said that Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau has said if he's elected, this will be the last election decided by first past the post.

"No," Tilson said, adding there have been referendums of the topic held in Ontario and British Columbia. "It's been resoundingly defeated by the public."

He pointed out it would mean appointing MPs, commenting there are many people complaining about the appointment of senators.

"All members of the House of Commons should be elected, not appointed," he declared.

"Absolutely," Urekar declared. "We need proportional representation in order to support and represent all Canadians."

She added that the way things currently are, a lot of Canadians are not represented in Parliament. Urekar also pointed out that 27 of 34 member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have proportional representation.

?Yes, I would,? Yazbek quickly replied. ?That's an easy one.?

She added that under the current system, some parties will never get a say in government.

?You're just wasting your vote voting for them,? she observed. ?They will never have a strong presence.?

?At least with proportional representation, your vote will count for something,? she added, pointing out it works well in other countries and leads to more democracy.