

Not much reaction to budget

By Bill Rea

Reaction to last week's federal budget appeared to be somewhat lacking.

Even Dufferin-Caledon MP David Tilson didn't have a great deal to say about it.

"It was really a do-nothing budget," he remarked, although there were some points in it that caught his attention.

One of the items he noted was the fact the government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is calling for a deficit of \$23 billion this year, and that figure is expected to be up to \$28.5 billion in the 2017-18 fiscal year. Tilson pointed out that during the 2015 election campaign, Trudeau had promised the deficit would be no more than \$10 billion.

"That's the big issue," Tilson declared, adding Finance Minister Bill Morneau was asked about plans to get rid of the deficit. "He didn't have an answer."

A provision that Tilson warned would impact some of his constituents involved removing the public transit tax credit. He said people in the riding take public transit to get to work or school in Toronto, and he said that's going to drive their expenses up.

Tilson also pointed to plans to extend maternity leave to 18 months.

"That probably sounded good," he observed, pointing to a catch.

He explained a person taking the full 18 months will only be entitled to 33 per cent in benefits, as opposed to 55 per cent if they went on Employment Insurance. And if it does benefit some families, he wondered what the impact on employers will be.

"There's been no discussion on how that's going to affect jobs; affect the economy," he said. "It sounds good, but I'm not so sure it's good."

Tilson also observed the government is going to increase taxes on beer and wine, commenting that's a sign they're getting desperate.

Tilson said he's expecting Trudeau and his colleagues to talk about how this budget helps the middle class.

"Budget 2017 is about jobs," Morneau in a statement on the budget issued by the government. "It's about creating good middle class jobs today, while preparing Canadians for the jobs of tomorrow."

"I don't see how this helps the middle class," Tilson declared. "I don't even know what the middle class is."