

Tilson enthused about women's pictures on bank notes

By Bill Rea

The federal government wants more women depicted on Canadian bank notes, and Dufferin-Caledon MP David Tilson is enthused about the notion.

"I think it's a great idea!" he told the Citizen last week.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made the announcement last Tuesday, as part of the observances for International Women's Day.

"In this country, we can be immensely proud of a long line of strong women who have stepped up time and time again to make history against all odds," the PM was quoted as saying in last Wednesday's Toronto Star.

"I think women have made tremendous progress," Tilson observed, although he added there's still much more to be accomplished.

"We've come a long way, but we need to go further. Women have made tremendous contributions."

He added the Bank of Canada will be inviting public suggestions on which women should be depicted on the bills.

Tilson had a couple of possibilities to suggest.

One was Nellie McClung, who led the effort a century ago to get the right to vote for women in Manitoba. She was born in Chatsworth, and became known as a passionate orator. Tilson also said she set up a mock Parliament that helped satirize the foolishness of the arguments against giving the vote to women.

"It was as a result of her that women in Manitoba were granted the right to vote," Tilson said. "Other provinces followed suit."

Another possibility he suggested was Agnes Macphail, the first woman elected to the House of Commons.

Tilson also suggested Flora MacDonald. He said she spoke at one of his Seniors' Forums. Everyone loved her," he said.

One of the stipulations, according to the story in the Star, is that a person being recognized in this manner has to have been dead for at least 25 years. MacDonald died last year.

Tilson added he was sure there are plenty of other worthy women to include on money.

It's possible that if a woman is to go on a bank note, someone already there will have to be removed. That didn't bother Tilson, however. "I don't think they should be on there for ever," he remarked.

Tilson also stated the Monarch should be depicted on money too.

"There's no reason in the world that some of these women, who have made contributions to the development of Canada shouldn't be included," he declared.

The Bank of Canada's website states the plan is to issue new bills in late 2018. The central bank is inviting the public to nominate women from Canada's past who are deserving of this recognition. The open call for nominations is now under way and will close April 15.

The criteria is the woman must be Canadian (by birth or naturalization) who has demonstrated outstanding leadership, achievement or distinction in any field, benefiting the people of Canada, or in the service of Canada. They have to have been dead for at least 25 years and cannot be a fictional character.