

Tilson gets Legion backing for his bill

Dufferin-Caledon MP David Tilson got the chance last week to promote his private member's bill before a Senate committee, and he had backing from the Royal Canadian Legion.

Tilson, appeared before the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs as they began an examination of his bill to protect war memorials and cenotaphs, Bill C-217.

During his appearance, Tilson was joined by Orangeville Legion Sergeant-at-Arms Chris Skalozub and retired Colonel Andrew Nellestyn of the Ottawa area. Both men made impassioned statements on the need to strengthen the penalties for this profoundly disrespectful offence.

"I was honoured to have these two veterans appear with me," Tilson said. "Mr. Skalozub's testimony was particularly important, given his work as Chairman of the Legion Memorial Restoration Program Fund."

"Our memorials and cenotaphs are sacred ground in our communities and we must do everything we can to protect them," he added. The Liberal members of the committee, including Senator Romeo Dallaire, challenged the notion of mandatory minimum penalties, advocating instead for leniency.

In response to a question from Dallaire, Mr. Tilson said "Yes, if you're convicted of these offences, you should have a criminal record. Absolutely. This is a serious matter. It goes beyond mischief."

Bill C-217 adds significant penalties to anyone convicted of mischief against a war memorial, cenotaph or similar structure designed to honour those who have died as a result of war. A minimum fine of \$1,000 would be imposed for a first offense, with a two-week jail term for a second offense and a 30-day jail term for third and subsequent offenses.



Col. (ret.) Andrew Nellestyn of Kinburn, Ontario, David Tilson and Orangeville Legion Sergeant at Arms Chris Skalozub of Orangeville addressed the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs.