

Tilson points out budget had nothing for seniors, agriculture or defence

By Bill Rea

The federal budget, brought down Tuesday by Finance Minister Bill Morneau, had several provisions aimed at women, with little else going in other directions, according to David Tilson.

‘There’s nothing in it really for the ordinary person,’ Dufferin-Caledon’s MP observed. ‘It’s all about specialized things.’

The Toronto Star reported Wednesday that it’s a budget that ‘doubles down on a progressive agenda with billions to boost women in the workforce, back a feminist foreign aid agenda and improve indigenous services.’

But Tilson pointed out there are several sectors that don’t seem to be addressed in the budget, such as seniors or agriculture. He also said there is mention about spending millions on ‘symposiums.’ He wasn’t sure what that was supposed to mean, but assumed it had something to do with gender issues.

There was mention of moving toward pay equity, but Tilson commented the references were vague.

‘They’re not very clear,’ he added.

Tilson also pointed out there’s a commitment to spend \$2 billion for ‘international feminism.’

‘I don’t know what that means,’ he said, but added it looks like that’s \$2 billion that will be leaving the country

In terms of focusing on a gender-based budget, Tilson wondered about Morneau’s consistency, pointing out the Minister heads up Morneau Shepell, Canada’s largest human resources services organization, yet he said only three members of its nine-member board are women.

Tilson also observed there’s nothing in the budget for tourism or infrastructure. He said Dufferin-Caledon has seen nothing in infrastructure spending, adding the government seems to have trouble finding ways to spend the infrastructure money it has. Yet he said there are plans for infrastructure spending in Asia.

Another item he mentioned was a plan to spend \$800 million in the effort to legalize cannabis, while spending \$80 million to encourage people to stop smoking.

‘That’s an interesting contradiction,’ he remarked.

Tilson was concerned there was no mention about doing anything to compete with the business tax cuts American President Donald Trump is promoting. He said that’s a concern in Southern Ontario and in the riding, because if Trump cuts taxes and Canada doesn’t, that’s going to cost a lot in lost investment, with the money going south of the border.

There are also plans to spend \$200 million to help process illegal immigrants from the U.S., while those trying to enter the country legally are expected to wait for their visa.

As well, a lot of Canadians are nervous about the possible scrapping of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). There are many in and around Dufferin-Caledon employed in the automotive industry, and their jobs could be at risk.

‘There’s nothing set aside to deal with that,’ Tilson remarked.

He also observed there was no mention of pipe lines in the budget.

‘It’s part of the Canadian economy,’ Tilson said.

And no money was set aside for defence, meaning Canadian Forces personnel are being expected to continue working with out-of-date equipment.

Things were not all negative, as far as Tilson was concerned. He said money has been set aside to assist with autism.

‘I can be positive about that,’ he said.

He observed the deficit for this year is budgetted at \$18 billion. Tilson recalled a couple of years ago, when Justin Trudeau was promising if he got elected the deficit would be down to about \$6 billion by 2018, and gone by 2019.

‘It’s going to be very difficult to get rid of it now,’ Tilson said, ‘because all he’s doing is spending.’