

Tilson says Prime Minister proroguing Parliament no big deal

By Bill Rea

Prime Minister Stephen Harper's plan to prorogue Parliament raised some eyebrows earlier this week, but Dufferin-Caledon MP David Tilson maintained it was no big deal.

News that Harper plans to end the current session of Parliament was announced Monday.

"It's nothing out of the ordinary," Tilson commented the following day, pointing out all prime ministers use that practice. He said the only ones who didn't were Joe Clark, John Turner and Kim Campbell, and all three of those were only in office a matter of months. "Every majority government has used it at least once in a Parliament," he observed, pointing out it enables a government to restart things.

"(Jean) Chretien did it three times," he added.

Tilson also recalled that former premier Dalton McGuinty prorogued the Provincial legislature when he announced his resignation, commenting that gave the concept a bad name.

Parliament is expected to resume in October with a speech from the throne, with the public hearing what the government's upcoming plans are, although the exact date will be up to Harper.

"It's his decision," Tilson observed. "It's his sole prerogative to do that."

When Parliament is prorogued, that usually means legislation that's in process dies. Tilson has his private members bill, which deals with vandalizing or damaging war memorials, but he said he didn't think that would be impacted because it passed the House of Commons in October, and is before committee in the Senate, having passed second reading there.

"I'm trying to get that confirmed," he said.