

Tilson unimpressed with Trudeau bouncing senators

By Bill Rea

Federal Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau recently kicked all 32 of his party's senators out of caucus, announcing they will now be independents.

But Dufferin-Caledon MP David Tilson didn't think the move would amount to much.

My personal view is he's trying to get into the news, Tilson told the Citizen last Thursday.

Trudeau made the announcement last Wednesday, commenting that the Senate, through extreme patronage and partisanship, has become an institution that poorly serves the interests of Canadians.

As of today, the National Liberal Caucus will only include elected Members of Parliament, and not senators, he added. This action will immediately mean that each of the 32 current Liberal senators will become independent of the Liberal Caucus.

He also called for an open, transparent and non-partisan appointment process for Senators.

I believe that Canadians are rightly seeking an effective institution that debates the difficult issues they are facing today, Trudeau remarked. Equally, I believe that Canadians have no desire to re-open the Constitution. I am taking action today with these reforms, and I hope to earn the opportunity to go further as Prime Minister.

It's all very strange that Trudeau has done what he has, Tilson commented. There was no consultation. The Liberals were taken completely by surprise.

Tilson also said he had been talking with Liberal Senator James Cowan, who didn't think the change impacted him much.

He's not a former Liberal, Tilson said. He's a Liberal and he's a Liberal senator.

It sounds like there's a change, but there really isn't, Tilson added. The opposition in the Senate will still be Liberal. He also said party members receive funding to do research, and that will continue.

The announcement of an independent body to appoint senators was a little confusing.

Who's going to choose the independent body? Tilson wondered. Where are they going to come from?

Tilson said the Conservative position is to have an elected Senate.

If we can't do that, we want it abolished, he said. They're not accountable. Now Liberals aren't even accountable to their own party.

Conservative senators do attend caucus meetings and take part in debates. That won't be happening in the Liberal caucus.

I guess they're going to have a smaller room, Tilson observed.

He also pointed out the Grit senators are not going to be as aware of party policies.

He also observed New Democrats want the Senate abolished, he said a Constitutional amendment would be needed, meaning cooperation from the provinces.