

Local Liberals? resolution adopted at Halifax convention

Written By Constance Scrafield

Ed Crewson is very happy with the results for the resolution which he and his fellow party members of the Dufferin-Caledon Federal Liberal Association took to Halifax to present to the convention of the Federal Liberal Party there last weekend. The resolution concerned itself with the protection of pensions in the event of a company's being dissolved.

In an interview from his car, Mr. Crewson told the Free Press his personal history with the writing of the resolution, "My cousin was living in Etobicoke when Conrad Black closed the Dominion stores and took the pension fund [leaving the dependent pensioners without their income]. Because of this, my cousin's neighbour committed suicide."

Mr Crewson's commented, "I don't think people realize that these people depend on that pension they've paid into all those years. I hope this resolution will get incorporated and prevent it from happening in the future."

The outline of the resolution, titled "Employee Pension Protection Strategy", according to the Dufferin-Caledon Liberal Party's press release is as follows:

"The resolution's adoption is a significant call to action. As official party policy, the federal government is called upon to consult with relevant stakeholders, consider options, and close the existing loopholes in federal bankruptcy and insolvency law that companies, like Sears Canada, have used to rein in on commitments they've made to fund employee pensions plans."

What it means is that the pensions that companies have encouraged or, indeed, demanded that their employees invest in and which funds the companies usually match or contribute, have, historically, been used (and, too often, abused) as investment capital in the company itself or for other means of accessing moneys which are not actually borrowed. Up to now, in the event of bankruptcy, too often that pension money has been spent, mis-invested or otherwise dispensed, leaving pensioners seriously out of pocket. Too few employees could have invested in both a company pension and government funds. Hence, if the company pension goes, they have no savings.

These pensions are not gifts, not freebies, they are the weekly or monthly, usually obligatory, contributions and are, in fact, "deferred pay," as the press release rightly points out.

The satisfaction of the resolution's official adoption as party policy comes with the numbers of resolutions there were to thin out. There 129 resolutions, of which only 15 were to be adopted. Of some of the others that were adopted, were pharmacare, rural telecommunications infrastructure and affordable housing.

Before being brought to the Liberal Party's National Convention, the resolution underwent strenuous consultation and "vetting" by registered Liberals on every level. The credit for its success was given, in part, to the very enthusiastic support by registered Liberal party members, not only attending the convention but also from across the country.

Mr. Crewson, principal broker and co-owner of Crewson Insurance, has been involved in local politics for many years. He was on the Shelburne Council for 26 years, 17 of which he was Mayor. He resigned from the post in 2014, having, as he said, "completed everything I intended to do."

His affiliation with the Liberal Party led him to run as the Liberal candidate against incumbent, David Tilson, in 2015. He was not successful in the election.

Given his enthusiasm for politics and the Liberal Party, will he consider running again in 2019?

"I've not ruled it out," was his answer, with the condition, "... it's important to be represented by the best possible candidate. If that

person comes along, I won't be running but I will support the right candidate.

?At the moment, I've not ruled it out.?