

Seniors cheer end of mandatory retirement

BY LISA QUEEN
Staff Writer

Forced out to pasture before he was ready, York Region senior Allan Lofsky and his wife, Myrna, are thrilled to hear the Tories will scrap mandatory retirement in the Throne Speech next week.

"I'm not in agreement with mandatory retirement," said Mr. Lofsky, an Aurora resident and former computer design draftsman for an engineering company.

"If you have a job and you like the job and you're good at the job, why should there be a limit (on your employment) because of your age?"

Mr. Lofsky, 67, lost his job seven years ago when his company was taken over by another firm.

But even if he hadn't been laid off, Mr. Lofsky would have faced mandatory retirement at 65.

He and Mrs. Lofsky have survived on her small business and the patchwork of jobs he has picked up over the years from employers willing to give work to an older person.

But Mr. Lofsky admits many of his applications go unanswered.

The Tories have indicated mandatory retirement will be eliminated during the Throne Speech April 30.

"It will be a high-level commitment in the Throne Speech that will allow people to retire when they want to on their own," a top aide to Premier Ernie Eves said last week.

Two years ago, Human Rights Commissioner Keith Norton urged the province to scrap mandatory retirement and pressed for changes to the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Organized labour opposes the move.

"Generally, we believe people should retire at 65 after putting in a good working life and let the next generation of workers have a chance at the jobs," said John Cartwright, president of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council.

Mrs. Lofsky does see some drawbacks to scrapping mandatory retirement, fearing some seniors will be forced to continue working after age 65 while more wealthy seniors can choose whether to keep their jobs or leave the workforce.

She acknowledged it may be harder for younger workers to find jobs if sen-

iors don't retire.

But, overall, she's pleased with the Tories' plans.

"Your mind doesn't become jelly because of a birthday. Seniors have become disposable in our society. Society ages you artificially," she said.

"You have a wealth of knowledge in these seniors that is being wasted. Give kids the opportunities, but don't leave out seniors."

Mrs. Lofsky said many seniors need to work to support themselves, pointing out company pension plans are

often non-existent or meagre.

"Not everybody is in a position to go to the golf course every day or travel. I put my kids through university and I have six of them. I'm broke," she laughed.

"There is a dignity to doing something and contributing. There is a lack of dignity to waking up and realizing no one wants you.

"Age doesn't say how your mind works. You can be 90 and be on the ball or you can be 50 and be a dud."



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York Region seniors Allan and Myrna Lofsky are happy to hear the provincial government plans to end mandatory retirement. "Your mind doesn't become jelly because of a birthday," Myrna said.