

Surviving Liberal MPP talks to Dufferin-Caledon Grits

Michael Coteau, one of the seven Liberals who survived in the 2018 provincial election, spoke to the Dufferin-Caledon Provincial Liberal Association about building a new, modern Ontario Liberal Party.

The third-term MPP for Toronto's Don Valley East riding presented a talk about his own local organisation and approach running a successful reelection campaign, in which he defeated a star Conservative candidate, the Deputy Mayor of Toronto, by over 1,000 votes in the swing North York riding. Despite the overall Liberal collapse, Mr. Coteau won his sixth straight election victory.

He also spoke more broadly about building an effective and modern Liberal Party.

"I truly believe that building a good government starts with first building a good party. I'm working hard to speak with Liberals about building a new, modern party that is ready to earn the trust of the voters," he said.

"I'm committed to ensuring Dufferin and Caledon have a government in 2022 that invests in this community. I'm excited to be meeting with local Liberals to discuss the path forward for our party."

The MPP is on a listening tour of communities across Ontario as he gears up to present himself as a candidate in the upcoming Ontario Liberal leadership race.

Mr. Coteau has lived a Canadian success story as an immigrant who worked hard to get ahead. He has focused his career in business, education and public service on giving back to his community.

He was born in Yorkshire, England in the early 1970s. His mother is English and his father is Grenadian, and they immigrated with their young family to Canada when Michael was a toddler. Growing up in a proud, hard-working but economically challenged neighbourhood taught Michael the value of community, the importance of education, but also the challenges facing working-class neighbourhoods across the province.

He was the first member of his family to graduate high school and university. He became president of the Carleton Young Liberals, and graduated with degrees in history and political science.

After graduation, he worked as an English-as-a-Second-Language teacher. He started his own small business in web development and became executive director of a national literacy nonprofit. He also worked as a community organiser with a United Way affiliate.

He ran for school board trustee in 2003, and was re-elected to serve his ward two times. At the school board, Michael fought for better student nutrition programmes, after-school programming and the incorporation of digital technology in the classroom. He was elected by his colleagues as vice-chair of the board.

Mr. Coteau was first elected MPP for Don Valley East in 2011. In government, he took on challenging files, including serving as Minister of Children and Youth Services tasked with reforming supports for autism, and Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, with responsibility for delivering a successful Pan and Parapan Am Games. He also served as Minister of Community and Social Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism. The Toronto Star called him "the busiest MPP 3 times over" because he ran three ministries at once in the former government.

In 2018, Michael defeated star Conservative candidate Denzil Minnan Wong, Toronto's deputy mayor, to win his third election serving his North York constituency.

He and his wife Lori have two young daughters.