

Chong considers Conservative leadership bid

By Rob O'Flanagan
Special to The IFP

Michael Chong has not made a decision, but he says he is considering a run at the leadership of the Conservative Party of Canada.

The new leader will be selected on May 27, 2017.

"I've not made a decision to run," said Chong Monday afternoon, in a telephone interview. "I am considering it, but I have not yet made a decision."

The longtime Wellington-Halton Hills Member of Parliament, a moderate among Conservatives, said Monday that hundreds of people, including a great many of his constituents, are urging him to seek the party's leadership.

He has been inundated with encouragement to do so, and that has spurred him into taking it seriously and actively investigating the possibility.

Chong, 44, said he is considering the many layers of the possibility, and the enormous responsi-

bility that goes with it, saying that leading a political party would be an immense task. He admitted he is both excited and a bit terrified by the prospect.

"Leading a party is an immense task, and the road back to power isn't going to be an easy one," he said. "For me, what I really want to see is a renewed Conservative Party that has a renewal of its principles and policies. Whatever role I play in that excites me."

He is committed to that process of renewal.

"I am committed to playing a role in the renewal of my party, whether that is as a candidate in a leadership race, or whether that is simply participating in the leadership race in another way," he said.

Canadians have just elected a new government, lead by a new generation, Chong indicated. The Canadian public has signaled that a new era in Canadian politics has been ushered in. Chong sees himself as fitting into that new dynamic.



Wellington-Halton Hills MP Michael Chong won a sizeable victory in the fall federal election. Chong said many of his constituents are urging him to seek the party leadership.

He said it is in the vital interest of the country to have two strong national parties, each holding the other accountable. He said he is

excited about the prospects for his party.

"I've been urged by a number of Conservatives to seek the lead-

ership of the party," he said. "As you know, it is a big decision, and in order for me to make a decision based on all the facts I am currently talking to Conservatives, talking to my colleagues both in caucus and those defeated in the last election, in order to gather information to make a decision."

There are pragmatic aspects to the decision, not the least of which is whether the financial support is there.

"A leadership contest requires a significant amount of money, and so one of the considerations is to gauge what kind of financial support is out there," he said. "Another part of information gathering is to talk to Conservatives about what kind of leader they think the party should elect, and what direction the Conservative Party, and Canada, should be taking over the next decade."

The final decision, he said, will be a family decision, one made between himself, his wife Carrie Davidson,

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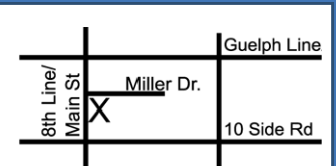
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