

Chong: This is a time for the party to renew itself

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and their sons William, Alistair, and Cameron.

Raised in Fergus, Chong is the son of a Chinese immigrant and a Dutch mother. His father was a physician and his mother a nurse. His mother died in an automobile crash in 1978, when Chong was just six-years-old. His father died in 1999, in a crash at the same rural intersection.

Chong was first elected in Wellington-Halton Hills in 2004, and has been re-elected five times. He has a somewhat maverick reputation in Canadian politics. He supported the Kyoto Protocol when the official stance of his party was in opposition to it.

In 2006, while in his mid-30s, Chong served briefly as Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of Sport, resigning the same year in protest to Prime Minister Stephen Harper's motion to recognize the Québécois as a nation within a united Canada.

In recent times, Chong has made headlines as the author and champion of the Reform Act, which is said to strengthen the House of Commons by giving party caucuses the power to remove the party leader, elect and review the caucus chair, expel and reinstate caucus members, and elect an interim leader. The bill was passed in 2015.

"There's a sense that this is a time for the party to renew itself, to talk about our policies and to talk about new ideas," Chong said, speaking of the current mood



MP Michael Chong still takes time out for local affairs, such as the Acton Santa Claus Parade, above.

among Conservatives.

He said there is a general sense of opportunity, given that this is the first time in 10 years that the party will engage in a lengthy discussion about leadership. It is a time of renewal.

"I think it's clear that power in Canada has passed to a new generation," Chong said. "Mr. Trudeau is 44-years-old, and is the first Canadian prime minister elected from a generation that comes after the baby boomer generation."

Chong said he is the son of immigrants, and a reflection of the "growing diversity" of Canada. He has taken controversial stands on issues in the past, and these qualities may be why many consider him a potential party leader.

"Canadians held us accountable in the last election," he said. "They sent a clear message that it was time for a change, a time for a different party to assume power. And in doing so they also sent us a clear message that they wanted us to do things differently."

The Conservative Party will now have a period of introspection and discussion to determine how it will change.

"That's exactly what the leadership race is for," he said. "It's an opportunity for the party and the candidate to have those discussions, to come forward with new ideas, new policies, and a new direction for the party."

Chong said the Conservative Party of Canada leadership vote will happen in 2017, giving more time to involve a broader range of candidates, generate a more vigorous debate, and more meaningfully and thoroughly engage the grassroots of the party in the process.

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