

Dufferin-Caledon candidates look at the importance of prioritizing inclusivity and diversity in the community

By Rob Paul

In Dufferin-Caledon, MP Candidates have been going door to door in preparation for the federal election on September 20, to make themselves and their priorities known to those in the community.

The Citizen spoke with Dufferin-Caledon MP candidates Kyle Seeback (Conservative), Lisa Post (Liberal), and Jenni Le Forestier (Green) about fostering an inclusive community and advancing diversity.

With the need to help promote diversity and spread inclusion, Seeback says he wants to continue to show that leaders like him care and he believes that action speaks as loudly as words and will continue to get out in the community to show support.

"Diversity and inclusion are something we always want to strive for, and I think we've got a great track record as the Conservative Party on that, and I've got a great track record of that here in the community," he said. "We certainly got out and celebrated Pride right here in Dufferin-Caledon. I helped give out maple leaf Pride pins to the LGBTQ+ community. We have to do things like that and show we're all striving towards a very inclusive and tolerant society."

As a town councillor in Orangeville, Post has made it her mission to implement inclusivity initiatives and she's passionate about continuing her work in that realm at the federal level.

"As a municipal town councillor, one of the things that I've done and I'm really proud of from my time on municipal Council is that I put forward a motion in Orangeville to have our very first equity, diversity, and inclusion committee," she said. "It was the first time in Orangeville we've seen that happen and it was supported unanimously by my Council colleagues, and we've just had it taken off. What the aim of a programs like that is, is to make sure that every community member has the opportunity and the right to live in a community where they feel safe, and they feel welcome and they feel included."

Although Post is pleased with the direction the federal government has gone with promoting diversity, she still thinks more must be done to ensure every Canadian feels they are being given equal opportunity.

"At the federal level, we have an opportunity to make big bold policy decisions and implementations that can move forward inclusion and equity specifically. What we're starting to already see is that, well, the work has already started at the federal level over the last number of years, there's still a lot of work to be done, particularly in Indigenous relations. The work has been started, but there's still a lot more to do. There's a lot more calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation report that have to be moved forward and that have to be prioritized. We're starting to see rollouts of programs like the Black Entrepreneur Program and other programs like that, that do help marginalized or racialized communities have an opportunity to be included in the conversation and have a seat at the table. That's really powerful because it makes for a much better and more robust community."

With Annamie Paul as the Green Party leader, Forestier says she's set the tone for the Party on the importance of inclusivity and diversity.

"It's absolutely key to be promoting inclusivity and diversity," she said. "I think we have a very strong leader in the Green Party and she's leading the way on how to have an inclusive campaign and how to reach out to those community members who may feel disenfranchised and feel they're not being represented, and we're very much aware of that and striving to address that. Within the office and also on the doorstep."

When it comes to inclusivity and diversity, Le Forestier thinks they need to be prioritized early on in school to help set the stage for a better future.

?I'm so happy to see the Peel District School Board start to address some of these things last year, and I think they still have a lot of work to do,? she said. ?I think kids are really resilient and they learn from us, from their parents. Setting the example right from kindergarten is so important and they need to see themselves reflected and there needs to be that tone of respect because kids will pick up on that. That's how you build strong and positive communities.?