

Former PM Brian Mulroney passes away, local leaders remember his legacy



Written By **Sam Odrowski**

Brian Mulroney, who served as Canada's 18th Prime Minister for nine years under the Conservative Party of Canada, passed away late last month.

In recognition of his passing, the Town of Orangeville's flags have been flying at half-mast, since Thursday, Feb. 29, when he died at the age of 84.

The flags will remain at half-mast until sunset on the day of Mulroney's funeral, March 23, in accordance with national protocol.

Mulroney passed away peacefully and surrounded by his family, according to a social media post made by his daughter Caroline Mulroney.

From 1984 to 1993, Mulroney served as Prime Minister of Canada. He resigned as the Conservative Party leader ahead of the 1993 federal election.

"He loved Canada and devoted his life to making our country a better place," said Orangeville Mayor Lisa Post of Mulroney, following his death. "His contributions to Canada will always be remembered, and many of his decisions brought Canada to the world stage in the fight for the environment and trade. On behalf of council and staff, I offer our sincere condolences."

Dufferin-Caledon MP Kyle Seeback, a member of the Conservative Party of Canada, said Mulroney was one of Canada's greatest Prime Ministers when reflecting on his time in office.

"When you look at all the things that he did to lay the groundwork for the modern Canadian economy – free trade with the United States, bringing in the GST – all of these things that were difficult and controversial have turned out to be an incredible benefit to the Canadian economy."

He added, "But he was big on so many other issues as well. He got the Acid Rain Treaty signed with the United States, he brought in the first environmental protection legislation in Canada, and he was a leading voice to end the apartheid regime in South Africa."

At a time when fellow conservative leaders around the world failed to take a stand against apartheid, such as U.S. President Ronald Reagan and U.K. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Mulroney spoke out against it vehemently.

"When you think about it, he was the guy that had Canada really punching above our weight internationally," said Seeback.

After Mulroney was elected in 1984, he worked to encourage sanctions on the South African government that would apply pressure

for the country to eliminate its caste system and release Nelson Mandela from prison. Mandela was an anti-apartheid activist at the forefront of advocating for an end to the discriminatory policy.

To tackle the manufacturers' sales tax, which Mulroney felt put Canadian exporters at a disadvantage, he negotiated the first free-trade agreement with the United States. This agreement would eventually expand into the creation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

?I remember the free trade debates, those happened when I was in high school,? Seeback recalled. ?I remember those things being fiercely contested with the Liberal Party on whether or not we should have free trade with the United States, which we know has been an incredible boon to our to our economy.?

He added, ?But he was more than that? he tried to bring Quebec into the Constitution, both with the Meech Lake Accord and Charlottetown Accord. Now, both of them failed, but he was always willing to take on massive political projects, despite the risk and opposition. To me, that's his true greatness.?

Seeback said he admires the fact that Mulroney would work hard at things that may have been difficult for him politically but laid the groundwork for a better Canada in the future.

?That's a true politician, that is a true leader,? he remarked.

In 2006, Mulroney was said to be the greenest prime minister in Canadian history and is remembered for his work on the Canada-U.S. acid rain treaty, and the introduction of the Environmental Protection Act. He also created eight new national parks.

?I don't think we're going to see another [Brian Mulroney], he's a tough act to follow,? Seeback said

He offered his sympathies to those impacted by Mulroney's passing.

?I just want to express my deep condolences to of course his family and his friends, and so many people who knew him and loved him,? Seeback said. ?We've lost a really good one.?