

OPINION

LACK OF EXPERIENCE MAY BE HIS BEST ASSET

HIS STORY MIMICS THAT OF MANY OTHER MILLENNIALS, SAYS JOHN STEWART

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JOHN
STEWART
Column

When he ran for student council president at Father Michael Goetz Secondary School, Alvin Tedjo understood his electors.

He recognized that "diversity is our strength" back in high school, creating campaign posters in nine languages. He headed the council for two years.

Tedjo's family moved to Mississauga from East York when he was four, living first near Dixie and Rathburn Roads, where he attended St. Vincent de Paul. After the family moved to the city centre, he attended Corpus Christi and Metropolitan Andrei.

"I always considered myself a Mississauga guy," says the son of Indonesian immigrants.

He served on the Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee and was named the young citizen of the year 1998 Mississauga. Tedjo worked at city pools for 15 years as a lifeguard and headed the Mississauga Lifesaving Club, winning numerous lifeguard competitions. He studied political science at Queen's University.

It was at one of those university competitions where he met future wife Rebecca.

Tedjo and his wife Rebecca lived in Sheridan Homelands for five years raising their children, ages four, six and eight, while Tedjo worked as the director of government relations for Sheridan College.

Now he hopes to lead Ontario's Liberals and become the next premier.

Where others see a 35-year-old who's never held political office, Tedjo sees a clean slate "For The Future" - as his campaign slogan states.

Former cabinet ministers Michael Coteau and Steven Del Duca, who are also running for party leadership, are vestiges of the Wynne regime Ontario overwhelmingly rejected last year.

"People want a fresh start," he says. "They want youth, energy and new ideas. It's about what kind of Ontario we want 20 years from now."

His campaign rests on three pillars: creatively tackling climate change, establishing an innovative economy buoyed by artificial intelligence and automation entrepreneurship, and reinforcing an education system that's "our competitive advantage."

What angers him about the first year of the Ontario Conservative government are the "nonsensical cuts, stopping things in midstream," wasting previous investments. He laments cancellation of university expansions in Brampton, Markham and Milton.

Sheridan spent years developing the Entrepreneurship Discover and

Growth Engine (EDGE) entrepreneurship startup incubator at Mississauga's McCallion campus, winning funding from the provincial and federal governments.

Doug Ford's government summarily pulled it.

"If you're open for business, how does it help to cut funding to local kids starting local businesses?" asked Tedjo.

Ottawa added grants to keep it going.

Tedjo has previously run for office. He lost to former Mississauga South Tory candidate Effie Triantafilopoulos in the Oakville North-Burlington provincial riding last year. In 2014, he ran for Ward 2 councillor in Mississauga, coming third to Karen Ras.

He plans to run in 2022, ideally in his home riding of Mississauga-Lakeshore.

To win the leadership, Tedjo must engage the under-40 demographic, those considered unlikely to vote because of preoccupations with career, affording a home and pondering a future without a pension.

"I want to give them a home," he says. "I share their concerns. I have the same ones."

John Stewart is a retired longtime journalist with the Mississauga News. His column, My Back Pages, appears each week.

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