

Former Ontario infrastructure minister David Caplan has died

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TORONTO — David Caplan, a familiar face to Ontario construction stakeholders, long considered an infrastructure champion, has died.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford reported Caplan's passing in a tweet the morning of July 25.

In the tweet Ford offered condolences to the Liberal politician's family and friends, and thanked him for his service to the province.



David Caplan

Caplan, 54, represented the Toronto riding of Don Valley East. Ontario construction stakeholders were quite familiar with Caplan thanks to his previous roles as Ontario's first infrastructure minister and most recently as chief operating officer (COO) of the Ontario Road Builders' Association. He once led the development of Renew Ontario, a \$30 billion provincial investment plan and helped introduce new finance delivery models such as AFP (Alternative Financing and Procurement).

When Caplan was appointed ORBA's COO construction stakeholders had this to say about him:

- “David has always understood the need for infrastructure,” stated Giovanni Cautillo, executive director of the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association (OSWCA). “When he was in government, he was a staunch advocate for the full-cost pricing of infrastructure to ensure sustainability. The OSWCA tapped into his passion during his time at Global Public Affairs, where David was instrumental to the successful launch of our 2016 OSWCA water study, Bringing Sustainability to Ontario's Water Systems: A Quarter-Century of Progress, with much left to do.”
- “He has always been a champion for infrastructure,” said Andy Manahan, Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario executive director.
- “He knows his way around Queen's Park as well as anyone, he has a track record of working collaboratively with others, he has friends in all parties, he is highly respected by construction industry stakeholders and he knows ORBA's files well,” said Ian Cunningham, Council of Ontario Construction Associations president.
- “When we worked with him back in those very early days of setting up Infrastructure Ontario, it was a real pleasure,” said Ontario General Contractors Association president Clive Thurston. “He has a great understanding of working together, breaking down silos. I absolutely couldn't think of a greater person to get to work with again.”

Caplan received numerous awards over the years including the Daniel Burnham Award for a Comprehensive Plan from the American Planning Association, an Excellence in Planning Award from the Ontario Professional Planners Institute and the Award for Planning Excellence from the Canadian Institute of Planners.

He was first elected in 1997 and served until 2011, when he and several other prominent Liberals chose not to run for re-election. He was forced out as health minister in 2009 over the eHealth scandal in which millions of dollars went to consultants with government ties, and over expense account abuses.

Many felt Caplan had been treated unfairly, particularly since most of the abuses at the agency took place under his predecessor.

His mother, Elinor Caplan, was also a veteran politician, both federally and provincially where she, too, served as health minister.