

Orchard to run for Tory leadership

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Saskatchewan farmer and long-time Tory David Orchard Friday announced his intention to join the upcoming Progressive Conservative leadership race.

Mr. Orchard, who had been expected to enter the race for some time, will officially announce his candidacy on Tuesday at a press conferences in Ottawa and Montreal.

His bid raises the number of candidates to three.

Of those, Tory MP Peter MacKay is the most well-known and is considered the front-runner. Mr. MacKay announced Thursday that he would run. Calgary lawyer Jim Prentice also launched his bid Thursday.

A statement from Mr. Orchard's office says Mr. Orchard's campaign will focus on his commitment to the "historic principles of the Progressive Conservative Party and about how the renewal of national government based on those principles is essential to the preservation of our country and the values upon which it is based."

Mr. Orchard, a free-trade opponent, came second to outgoing Progressive Conservative Leader Joe Clark at the 1998 leadership convention.

At his early morning news conference in Nova Scotia Thursday, Mr. MacKay promised tax cuts and a political comeback to Tory party faithful.

Both he and Mr. Prentice spoke of the need to bring more co-operation to Canada's right-wing parties, but Mr. Prentice said his intention is to first build the Tories and then do what he can to push forward notions of co-operation.

The Progressive Conservatives had hoped to snag several high-profile candidates early on, including New Brunswick Premier Bernard Lord and Ontario businessman John Tory. But both decided against running.

Nova Scotia MP Scott Brison, and possibly Hugh Segal, a well-known Tory who once was chief of staff in the office of former prime minister Brian Mulroney, have also been named as likely candidates

Heward Grafftey, a former cabinet minister, has also said he will run.

The winner will lead a party that is tied for fourth place in terms of seats in the Commons and only two away from losing official party status.

The leadership convention is slated for June in Toronto.