

FRONT PORCH PERSPECTIVE: Frank Klees

By Stephen Somerville

As you all know by now, long time Member of Provincial Parliament for Newmarket-Aurora Frank Klees announced last week he won't seek re-election.

He will continue to serve until the end of his term.

This could come as early as this May when a spring election could occur or as late as October 2015 when the five-year mandate of the governing Liberals comes to an end.

I was somewhat surprised by Mr. Klees' announcement, as I thought he would run at least one more time. He is a young 61-years-old and he is still on top of his game; leading the Tory charge on the ORNGE files and showing up at a lot of community events and working as hard as he usually does.

I believe that Mr. Klees has exhibited exceptional representation for this riding. I feel privileged to have worked on multiple campaigns for him over the years.

Looking back, it is hard to believe that it has been twenty years since I first met Mr. Klees when he was Vice President of the PC Party of Ontario responsible for policy. I was immediately impressed by him and I supported his attempts to fully include the grassroots in the Parties' policy making process.

Having moved to Aurora in 1999, I enjoyed getting a chance to work closer with Mr. Klees over the years.

I was ? along with Bob Callow ? the Co-Chair of Mr. Klees successful 2007 election campaign, and I also served two terms as his local riding president. I also enjoyed working on the Klees 2009 Provincial PC Leadership Campaign as Policy Chair.

In Mr. Klees' retirement speech, he mentioned two things that he was most proud of.

?One of my most memorable days was November 1, 2001 when Municipal Affairs Minister Chris Hodgson publicly acknowledged me as the first member of our government to advocate for a definitive provincial policy for the Oak Ridges Moraine.

?That advocacy resulted in the passing of the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act and because of that legislation, today thousands of acres of environmentally sensitive lands are permanently protected from development.

?I am also proud of my work to help secure ministry of health approval for the world-class Cardiac and Cancer Care centres at Southlake Regional Health Centre. Having my work acknowledged by the hospital's CEO will always be a reminder to me of the positive side of politics.?

These are both tangible evidence of the exemplary work that Mr. Klees has done for our community.

Mr. Klees has also done a number of other things. He did an outstanding job in exposing the debacle at ORNGE. His thorough research and tireless questioning of the Minister of Health was the reason that this issue even hit the public consciousness.

I also think the work he did in safely steering his various Private Members Bills through Queen's Park ? which is very hard to do ? was important and are another part of Mr. Klees public service legacy.

His Street Racing Bill directly led to saving lives while his Organ Donation Bill offered new life to others.

The passage of Mr. Klees' First Responder Day Act is further evidence that he truly has the pulse of our community.

We all know that Mr. Klees works extremely hard, is intelligent and is an exceptional communicator. I imagine that the Premier and a few of her cabinet colleagues are happy now that Mr. Klees has called it quits as he had to be one of the most effective Question Period performers that I have ever seen.

Having been in the Queen's Park galleries a number of times I was amazed by how articulate and smooth he was. Mr. Klees did not showboat or heckle; he simply asked his questions in a straightforward and demanding style. And his supplementary questions were always bang on.

If asked to describe Mr. Klees in one word for me it would be this: Class. He has comported himself with dignity over the years.

Our community has been very fortunate to have a man of his stature representing us. His intelligence, hard work and championing of causes important to this riding will certainly be missed.

I wish Mr. Klees well in whatever he chooses to do next.

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