

FRANKLY SPEAKING: First Responders

Inaugural First Responders Day is May 1st

By Frank Klees, MPP

Newmarket-Aurora

Mark April 30 and May 1 on your calendar and plan to participate in one or all of the events that have been scheduled in support of the inaugural First Responders Day.

Why? Because if you believe as I do, that first responders deserve to be honoured, recognized and supported for their service to our community, then you will want to be part of these inaugural events.

You may recall that I proposed a Private Member's Bill in the last session of Parliament to proclaim May 1st of each year as First Responders Day. The purpose of that Bill was to raise awareness of the daily sacrifices these men and women and their families make, to ensure that our communities, our province and our country is the safest place in the world to live and to raise a family.

I'm pleased to report that the bill, "An Act to Proclaim First Responders Day" received Royal Assent on December 12th, 2013. Bill 15 designates May 1st of each year as "First Responders Day" in the Province of Ontario.

Queen's Park Tributes

A number of events have been planned for the inaugural First Responders Day. At Queen's Park, time will be set aside immediately following Question Period when a representative of each of the three political parties will pay tribute to first responders. I will have the honour of presenting the tribute on behalf of the PC Caucus.

Invitations have been extended to all first responder services in the province to send representatives to be present in the legislature when the tribute statements are presented. We have already received many responses from across the province confirming attendance and we expect that the galleries will be at capacity for this special parliamentary tribute.

Jazz Bistro Event in Support of First Responders

On April 30, the Eve of First Responders Day, a special celebration of first responders will take place at the popular Jazz Bistro in downtown Toronto. The event has been organized by "United by Trauma", an amazing group of volunteers who are raising funds to sponsor trauma therapy dogs for First Responders who have been affected by Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Pace Credit Union is sponsoring this event that will not only kick off the inaugural First Responders Day celebrations, but will also raise funds for a most worthy cause.

York Region First Responders Day Celebrations

On May 1, Boston Pizza in Newmarket will be hosting a First Responders Evening, also in cooperation with "United by Trauma". This event will begin at 6 pm and will feature live entertainment, a special menu and the opportunity to meet many of the men and women who serve as first responders in our community.

Among the special guests will be the winners of the student essay contest that I announced a number of weeks ago. Students in the three categories - elementary, secondary and college/university were asked to submit their thoughts on why first responders are important to our communities. The contest rules were distributed through the York Region school boards and essays will be judged by a panel of first responders. The winners will be awarded their prizes at the event.

I want to thank Brock Weir, Editor of The Auroran for offering to print the winning essays in a future edition of this newspaper. Watch for them.

Many community leaders have already confirmed that they will be attending this event, and I encourage you to join with them to express your personal support to the men and women whose dedication to our safety and security is too often taken for granted.

Second Annual iRunAndRock Event - Saturday May 31st

The second annual 2014 I Run and Rock fundraiser, is set to take place on Saturday May 31, 2014 at the Ray Twinney Arena in Newmarket.

The event is being organized by "United By Trauma" and PACE Savings and Credit Union will once again provide the title sponsor support.

The goal is to build outreach programs and awareness about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and the impact it has on first

responders, medical services, military members and their families. The 2014 I Run and Rock event will consist of a 1, 5 and 10km run, live entertainment and fun activities for the whole family. Registration forms are now available at www.irunandrock.ca. I look forward to seeing you at these events in support of our first responders.

More details can be found on my website at www.frankklees.com or directly at www.irunandrock.ca I look forward to seeing you at these celebrations.