

FRANKLY SPEAKING: Social Media

Social Media: The Good, the Bad and the Cowardly

By Frank Klees, MPP

Longtime residents of York Region will recall the days when their MPP Bill Hodgson could be seen strolling the main streets of town and chatting it up with shop owners and customers.

This was his way of communicating with his constituents. His personal touch was obviously effective. He was the MPP for York North from 1967 to 1985.

Bill would never know the challenge of communicating with constituents in today's hectic world.

In a very noisy media environment, where minds are bombarded with 10-second sound bites, a steady stream of Twitter messages, never-ending Facebook posts, and newscasts and print media reports that are more about shaping news than reporting it, the ability to communicate directly with constituents is more challenging than ever.

This column, my website, Facebook page, Twitter account and You-Tube postings are a work-in-progress. The objective is to give you direct and easy access to me and my staff and to keep the lines of communication open.

Our new website at www.frankklees.com

Based on feedback from a number of regular users of our website, we have made a number of improvements to the site and I welcome your comments and any further advice you may have.

Our objective is to make it easier to contact me, give you access to information about the most current issues, both provincial and local, and keep you up to date on my activities in the riding and at Queen's Park.

The following menu links have been strategically placed on the Home Page of the site to provide direct access to the most current and relevant information relating to my work as your MPP:

Contact Frank: This is a direct email link to our office.

Newsroom: This link has 5 drop-down menus that contain Current Press Releases, In the News (files recent media reports in which I was quoted), Frankly Speaking (archive of all Frankly Speaking columns), Media Kit, Archived Press Releases.

Current Issues: A comprehensive listing of current issues of relevance to Newmarket-Aurora residents and businesses appears here, categorized into 15 drop-down links. Issues such as Ornge, the Preserving Existing Communities Act, Health & LTC, and Seniors and Veterans are listed here for both current and historic record of my involvement and advocacy on these issues.

Events: Upcoming events throughout the riding are posted here in support of the many community organizations who deserve support for their efforts on behalf of the many worthwhile causes. We welcome any requests to post events that are community focused.

Gallery: interested in tuning into the action at Queen's Park? This is where you will find the archived videos of my questions to the Premier and Ministers during Question Period and Member's Statements. This section also contains the video records of the Ornge Committee hearings. Also archived under the Photo Gallery menu are photos of events in the riding.

And now on to blessings and curses of Social Media...

Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and more - a great way to communicate with constituents and hear your views directly, often at warp

speed. While you won't find out on Twitter what I'm having for breakfast, or see play by play commentary on my daily activities, I find it's an effective way of marking important community events or significant developments at Queen's Park. That's the good part. The curse? I call them Social Media Snipers. Under cover of anonymous Twitter handles, these cowardly critics don't hesitate to take their shots but refuse to disclose their identity.

Anyone who knows me knows I welcome advice, enjoy a good debate and over the years have developed the ability to absorb the barbs that are often hurled in the arena of politics. But whether it's in heated debate in the legislature or in passionate disagreements across a boardroom table, it's impossible to have a meaningful dialogue without knowing who the person is on the other side of the issue. Often it's that human factor that can lead to a resolution or at the very least civility in disagreement.

The Weekly Poll

This brings me to another addition to our website, the Weekly Poll. This is a real time poll of current issues that affect our community and I invite you to register your opinion. Here is this week's question: Do you agree that all social media postings should be required to identify the author?

To register your opinion, go to www.franklees.com . I look forward to hearing from you.