

FRANKLY SPEAKING: Truth to Power (Pt.2)

Telling Truth to Power -- Part 2

By Frank Klees, MPP

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In my last column, I took the risk of expressing what I believe every member of the PC Party was thinking. How was it possible that given the scandal-ridden record of the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals, the PCs could only manage to win one of the five recent by-elections?

I asked you to send me your advice on what the PC Party needs to do to win the next election. Your response was overwhelming and the emails continue to come. For that I thank you and, as promised, I will be compiling that advice for the benefit of my Caucus colleagues and Party Leader, Tim Hudak.

Recall the following paragraph from my last column:

?...the term 'shooting the messenger' comes from the fourth-century B.C. play *Antigone* by Sophocles, in which the perils of speaking truth to power is the major theme. Nothing has changed over the centuries. It is difficult for any organization - political or otherwise - to deliver the hard news to their leadership. Those who risk doing so will inevitably be labeled as disloyal and will suffer the consequences.?

Indeed, nothing has changed. Following my defence of the right of party members to bring forward an amendment to the party's constitution at its September convention, have it debated and put to a vote, I became the target of that timeless sport: shoot the messenger.

After more than a week of misleading headlines and media reports, less than honourable accusations by friends and foes alike, I felt compelled to issue the following statement. I welcome your thoughts.

KLEES STATEMENT REGARDING GRASSROOTS MOTION FOR LEADERSHIP REVIEW

For the past few days much has been made of a resolution filed by a group of Ontario PC members that proposes an amendment to the party's constitution that would allow for a leadership review vote to be held at times other than following a general election. What would normally have been a matter-of-fact agenda item at the party's September convention, has now become contentious, to the extent that signatories to that resolution have received intimidating phone calls from senior members of the party demanding that they withdraw the resolution.

This is completely unacceptable and is contrary to everything I believe our Party stands for.

When asked by Sue-Ann Levy of the *Toronto Sun* what I thought of those intimidating tactics, I told her that I find it offensive. I went on to say that 'one option available to the leader is to pre-empt the petition, and to voluntarily direct and welcome a confidence vote at the convention. If he does that, it would be a very powerful signal to the party...and would silence a lot of naysayers?.'

(Sunday, August 6, 2013).

I went on to say that party members have a right to express their views and that I would always defend that right. Unfortunately, in recent days my defence of that right has been characterized as treasonous and has been misrepresented as self-serving and disloyal - not only by the headline writers but by some of my honourable colleagues as well.

Here are the facts:

I have not called for a leadership review and would never do so. I first became aware of the proposed resolution when Sue-Ann Levy called me for my comments.

I did, and continue to defend the right of party members to have their concerns heard in accordance with the provisions of our constitution that allows for amendments to be filed, debated and voted on.

I have stated to media that rather than allow this issue to fester, one option available to the leader is to voluntarily have a confidence vote added to the September convention agenda so as to put an end to the petition controversy.

I have been clear that I will not be running for party leader again. My defence of the rights of party members to bring matters forward for debate is not about me, it is about defending the long-standing democratic principles of our party, of which I have been a

member for almost 40 years. To suppress that right, only adds to the cynicism towards the political process, party politics and politicians.

For a balanced report on this issue, I encourage you to visit my website to review the following media reports:

1. Sue-Ann Levy's article in the Toronto Sun dated August 6
2. Brock Weir's article in The Auroran of August 7
3. Sean Pearce's Era Banner article of August 9
4. Christina Blizzard's Toronto Sun article of August 15
5. Listen to my radio interview with Bryan Allen on AM920
6. Watch my interview with Lawrence Diskin on the CHCH TV Show ?Square Off?
7. Sue-Ann Levy's Toronto Sun article dated August 16

As always, I welcome your comments.

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