

## FRANKLY SPEAKING: The Final Word

If you don't get involved in the political process, you are destined to be governed by those who do

By MPP Frank Klees

Newmarket-Aurora

I am writing this column on the evening of June 8. Nineteen years ago on this day, I was gathered with my family, friends and supporters at what was then known as the Aurora Highlands Golf and Country Club. We were anxiously awaiting the returns of the election.

In the room that evening to share in whatever the results would be were my parents Frank and Elizabeth. When my parents made the decision to immigrate to Ontario in 1956 from Germany, they could never have conceived that they would be in that room, awaiting election results that would declare their son elected to the Parliament of Ontario.

George Nelms, Jaine's father, made the trip from Ottawa that day with her brother Larry and sister-in-law Bonnie. George had served as Mayor of Ottawa and welcomed Queen Elizabeth and her husband Prince Philip to the city in 1957. Photos of that occasion are prevalent in our home today, and it gave us all great pleasure to have George share that evening with us.

Bob Callow and his wife Olga, were as always, ever-present. As my business partner, loyal friend and most ardent supporter, Bob had pulled all the stops to ensure that whatever resources were necessary to ensure a successful campaign were made available to our team.

Eventually, the 'Sign Guy' would show up, having painted the riding blue from the minute the election writ was dropped. Bob Yaciuk had made it his personal mission to answer Ron Wallace's headline leading into that campaign - Frank Who?

### **I credit Ron Wallace, the Founder of The Auroran**

I credit Ron Wallace, the founder of The Auroran, with giving me one of the most unintentional endorsements ever afforded a political candidate. His headline 'Frank Who?' intended, no doubt, to place the subtle question that someone who is unknown and without political experience at any level of government would even dare to take on a popular incumbent, not only motivated me, but inspired a dedicated team.

The clubhouse that we were gathered in at the corner of Golf Links Drive and Yonge Street in Aurora no longer exists, but the memories will never be extinguished. It was there that I was first introduced to Dorie MacDonald by the owner of the Aurora Highlands, the late Joe Shaw. Dorie and her family would become not only my strongest supporters, but closest personal friends. So it came to be that on June 8, 1995, we were gathered there to await the results of an election that would begin a 19 year journey of public service.

It was a day that would change the course of many lives for years to come. Little did I know that regardless of what may lie ahead for me as MPP, it would be my family who would bear the brunt of all that public office brings with it.

To my wife Jaine, my daughter Alissa and son Robert, I dedicate my 19 years of public service and thank them for their patience, perseverance and support through what were for us, as Charles Dickens described in his Tales of Two Cities, 'the best and the worst of times'.

### **Let me save the best for last**

The worst of times was when my family was exposed to the growing deficit of civility in our society.

I recall the pain I felt when my son told me of his humiliating experience at school when a teacher pointed him out as the son of an MPP who was part of the Mike Harris Government intent on destroying education.

I recall during the teachers' strike being seated for dinner with my wife at a restaurant in Newmarket, when what was to be a quiet time together, was interrupted with a bark from a table from across the room. 'So, how does it feel to be part of government that's destroying our education system?'

Needless to say, we left without ordering and I realized that I had drawn my family into a life that would expose them to the worst of what society can offer up.

### **But then there were the best of times**

When the results were in on June 8, 1995, I was declared elected as the MPP for York Mackenzie. It was the beginning of a 19 year journey that would honour me with the privilege of serving as the MPP for the ridings of York Mackenzie, Oak Ridges and

Newmarket-Aurora.

The best of times were when I could make a difference in the lives of people who were desperate for help in their personal circumstances. Whether a family who was desperate to repatriate their daughter who had sustained a brain injury in BC to a local hospital, a cancer patient who needed access to a life-saving drug, parents who were agonizing for care for their autistic child or families needing help to find long-term care accommodation for an aging parent.

While I take great pride in my role in bringing about provincial legislation such as the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act and the world class Cardiac and Cancer Care that is now available to residents of York Region, those accomplishments at the law-making and advocacy dimension of my role as MPP are overshadowed by the life-changing differences I have had the privilege of making in the day-to-day lives of my constituents.

I thank you for the honour of serving you.

Frank Klees