

FRANKLY SPEAKING: The Next Candidate

By Frank Klees, MPP
Newmarket-Aurora

Since announcing that I would not be seeking re-election in the next provincial election, I have received a number of inquiries about the process through which the next PC candidate for Newmarket-Aurora will be chosen. Here is how it works:

A Fair and Open Nomination Process

While some political parties have endowed their leaders with the power to appoint candidates, the Ontario PC Party conducts candidate nominations within a framework of clearly defined rules that respect the democratic rights and responsibilities of local riding associations and the provincial party.

The rules are published and available for anyone to see. There is no special treatment for so-called high profile 'star candidates' and there are no barriers for anyone wanting to put themselves forward as a candidate, regardless of how low their profile may be. My own candidacy in 1995 was proof of that, when after declaring my intention to seek the nomination in what was then the York Mackenzie riding, a column written by the now infamous Ron Wallace was headlined 'Frank Who.'

An Open Process, but there are Rigorous Standards

Each potential candidate is required to complete a comprehensive Candidate Questionnaire and Application that assists the Party to assess the applicant's suitability as a candidate. It includes an Authorization and Consent for the Party to conduct a criminal background check, credit check, and a review of employment history and professional and educational accreditations.

There are two Nomination Committees tasked with the responsibility to vet candidates and oversee the nomination process. The local riding Nomination Committee, which was struck on January 29 is chaired by Aurora resident Bob Callow. In addition to interviewing potential candidates, this committee is also responsible for setting the date of the nomination meeting, arranging the venue and ensuring adherence to the nomination rules.

The Provincial Nomination Committee is chaired by the Party President and includes the Past President, the 1st Vice-President, the 5th Vice President and the Regional Vice-President of the Party.

This committee oversees the nomination process in cooperation with the local riding Nomination Committee and pursuant to Article 9.9 of the Party's Constitution, has the final say on whether an applicant meets the Party's standards to stand as a candidate for nomination.

Disqualification of a Candidate

Article 2.4 (vi) of the Party's 'Rules Governing Nominations' states that the authority of the Provincial Nomination Committee includes, 'on appropriate grounds imposing sanctions on candidates, up to and including disqualification'.

Although rejecting an applicant is not a common occurrence, it is only prudent that the Party reserves the right to do so. We have seen examples in the past when midway through an election campaign, a candidate's affiliation with an interest group that opposes a Party's policy position or previous public comments that caused embarrassment to the Party, resulted in unhelpful distraction. This is why one of the questions in the Candidate Questionnaire asks if either the candidate or anyone in a close relationship has ever 'done or said anything that could reasonably be expected to cause embarrassment to the Ontario PC Party or its Leader during the course of an election campaign'.

The Party has a responsibility to ensure that candidates carrying its banner are beyond reproach and that their past conduct does not detract from the message.

Candidate Eligibility and Timelines

In addition to meeting the provisions of the Ontario Elections Act to qualify to sit as a member of the Legislative Assembly, an applicant must have been a member of the Party for no less than one year from the date of their membership application and pledge to uphold the Party's Constitution.

At the time of filing this column, two candidates had submitted their applications and were approved by both the local riding Nomination Committee and the Provincial Nomination Committee. They are Newmarket resident and Councillor, Jane Twinney and Aurora resident and businessman, Stephen Somerville.

I am aware that other applications are under review and I will look forward to observing what should prove to be an interesting race.

Nomination Date and Location

The Nomination Meeting has been set for Thursday, March 20, 2014. It will be held at The Mansion at 400 Industrial Parkway South in Aurora. All paid-up members of the Newmarket-Aurora Provincial PC Association will be eligible to vote. It should be noted that the cut-off date to purchase memberships is 15 days in advance of the Nomination Meeting.

Inquiries can be directed to Derek Murray, Riding Association President at 416 230 8652. As always, I welcome your comments at www.frankklees.com