

FRANKLY SPEAKING: Truth to Power

Telling Truth to Power

By Frank Klees, MPP

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Former U.S. Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neil made it a habit to speak truth to power and ultimately was fired by the Administration because he was not seen as a 'team player.'

Indeed, the moral challenge O'Neil faced almost daily during his tenure in Washington was to weigh the balance between two competing goods: the frequently opposed organizational virtues of loyalty and truth telling. The character trait needed to appropriately adjust that balance has been described as integrity.

After 39 years as a member of the Ontario PC Party, a candidate in seven provincial elections, elected in the last 5, resulting in 18 years as a member of the PC Caucus, I think I have a fairly good sense of the political landscape.

Over the years, I have often felt the tension between those so-called organizational virtues of loyalty and truth telling and have wondered why there should ever be a tension at all. Shouldn't everyone want to know the truth and be willing to tell it?

But 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.

The conditions for PC gains
could never get better

Winning only one of five byelections this past week left many PC party members disillusioned and wondering what it will take to throw the scandal-ridden Liberals out of office.

Criminal investigations are underway in the wake of the Orange Air Ambulance and Gas Plant scandals, the public knows that millions of their tax dollars were wasted through mismanagement, incompetence and partisan self-interest.

Both the former and current Liberal Premier have admitted that they repeatedly put the Liberal Party's interests ahead of the public interest and under their watch, Ontario has become a have-not province with the highest unemployment rates in the country. The interest payments on the provincial debt are higher than the entire budget of some provinces with promises of even higher taxes and more debt.

Against this backdrop, the conditions for PC electoral gains could never get better. So, not surprisingly, the question on the minds of many Party members is this: Why were we not able to break through in more than one out of five ridings?

What will it take to win
a Majority PC Government?

Here are some facts about the recent byelections:

For the first time since 1995, the PCs took a seat in the Liberal stronghold of Toronto. We are proud of that and welcome Doug Holyday to our Caucus.

The Liberals lost three of five ridings previously held by senior cabinet ministers.

The PC share of the popular vote increased in four of five ridings.

We had more votes in Toronto than any other party, and across Ontario more people voted for the Ontario PCs than any other party

I want to hear from you. Tell me the top two things the PC Party must do to regain the confidence of Ontario voters to form the next government. For these submissions to be credible, please include your name and contact information.

I will compile your responses and share them with my Caucus colleagues and Tim Hudak at our next Caucus meeting. I assure that your voice will be heard. I also ask that you register your vote on my website's Weekly Poll. This week's question is:

If the PCs want to win a majority gov't they must (a) present a clear alternative to the present Liberal government; (b) Be more specific about their policy; (c) communicate more effectively.

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