

Klees won't seek re-election



Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees announces his decision not to run in the next Provincial election to supporters at St. Andrew's Golf Course on Tuesday night. Auroran photo by David Falconer.

By Brock Weir

Long-time Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees will not seek another term in the upcoming Provincial election.

Mr. Klees, who has served in the Ontario legislature since 1995, announced his decision Tuesday evening at a meeting of the local Progressive Conservative Riding Association following talks earlier in the day with PC leader Tim Hudak. He told The Auroran that after almost two decades in public service, moving on was not an easy decision to make.

?I thought long and hard about this over the course of the holidays and I just feel the time is right for me to move on,? he said. ?It has been a very gratifying career to have served that length of time and I just feel it is time for me to pass the baton onto someone else.?

As to what he might move on to, Mr. Klees said he had no idea, but said he had no further political aspirations should any opportunities arise.

Since his first election, Mr. Klees has sought leadership in his party, placing second to Hudak in 2009, and has served in a variety of posts, including Minister of Transportation. It is a file which he has continued to follow from the opposition benches.

In recent years, he has served as the Party's foremost critic on the ORNGE Air Ambulance portfolio, as well as on a variety of healthcare issues. These are files he plans to continue following throughout the remainder of his term.

?I believe the work we have done on [ORNGE] is going to have a significant impact not just on the Ministry of Health, but right across all ministries of government in terms of putting the focus on transparency and accountability of the agencies funded by taxpayers,? he says, noting he will also focus his energies on transportation matters such as his concerns over the ?multimillions? being invested by Ontario into Presto cards and other transit issues.

Looking back over nearly 20 years as a member of the Ontario Legislature, Mr. Klees said one of his most rewarding days in public life was the passage of the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act, which secured ?thousands of acres of environmentally sensitive lands? from development for generations to come.

He is also proud of his work with the Ministry of Health to secure the approval of the cardiac and cancer centres at Southlake Regional Health Centre.

?Quite frankly, the most gratifying part of my work as MPP is being able to advocate for my constituents, the people right here in the community who often have nowhere else to turn. Whether it has been assisting with access to healthcare or social services, or just helping break down barriers and cutting through red tape, just making a difference in people's lives is really what public service has been about for me.?

While Mr. Klees intends to serve out the remainder of his term, that end could come as early as this spring if an election is called. This immediacy, he said, factored in his decision to announce his intentions on Tuesday so local candidates can put themselves forward and be prepared for the writ to drop.

?My advice [for anyone who might seek the candidacy] would be if they feel a calling to public service not to hesitate, but at the end of the day the calling has to be to public service and not just a title,? he said. ?This is a very, very rewarding profession. In my opinion, it is one of the highest callings a person can have in life. Along with that calling has to come the commitment to serve the people who elected you and to ensure you never forget who has elected you.

?I really hope I will be remembered as someone who was there in the community for the constituents when they needed me. To that end, I am extremely proud of my reputation, that my office has been accessible, and I have been there for the people doing what an MPP is supposed to do ? represent the people who elected me.?