

Statement by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees

Aurora: January 21, 2014

Earlier today, I met with the Leader of our Party, Tim Hudak to advise him that I would not be seeking re-election in the next provincial election.

I confirmed that I would continue to serve as MPP for Newmarket-Aurora until the next general election is called, and that I would continue to fulfill my Critic responsibilities and any other responsibilities I may be asked to assume as a member of the PC Caucus between now and the next election.

I will work with our Leader, our Caucus and our riding association to ensure that Newmarket-Aurora does its part to elect a PC Government and Tim Hudak as Premier.

This was a very difficult decision for me, but I am convinced that after almost two decades of public service, the time is right for me to move on to the next chapter of my life.

I want to thank my constituents for the trust they have placed in me to represent them at Queen's Park over the past 18 years. I have had the privilege of being elected in three different ridings in York Region through five elections, starting with the riding of York Mackenzie in 1995, Oak Ridges in 1999 and 2003 and Newmarket-Aurora in 2007 and 2011.

I also want to thank the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario - its members with whom I have had the honour to work in the trenches to advance the conservative principles that have made our province great, and its Leaders under whom I have had the privilege to serve.

As a young candidate in 1975 and 1977, I learned the political ropes in the riding of Essex South under then Premier Bill Davis. I didn't win, but had the honour of carrying our Party's banner and developed a deep respect for the political process and for our conservative values.

As the Third Vice President and Policy Chair of our Party's Provincial Executive from 1992 to 1994, I had the opportunity to advance the formation of our Party's Policy Advisory Councils and to have that process entrenched in our Party's Constitution.

And since 1995, as MPP I have had the privilege of serving in a number of capacities in government and in opposition. I am indebted to Premiers Mike Harris and Ernie Eves for the opportunity to serve in their cabinets as Chief Government Whip, Minister of Tourism and Minister of Transportation.

As a member of the Official Opposition, I have been honoured to serve as Critic in Education, Transportation and Infrastructure under Leaders John Tory and Tim Hudak.

When I was asked in 1995 why I wanted to be an MPP, my response was that I wanted to make a difference. I wanted to help make our community and our province a better place. I believe I have accomplished what I set out to do.

One of my most memorable days was November 1, 2001 when Municipal Affairs Minister, Chris Hodson publicly acknowledged me as the first member of our government to advocate for a definitive provincial policy for the Oak Ridges Moraine. That advocacy resulted in the passing of the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act and because of that legislation, today thousands of acres of environmentally sensitive lands are permanently protected from development.

I am also proud of my work to help secure ministry of health approval for the world-class Cardiac and Cancer Care centres at Southlake Regional Health Centre. Having my work acknowledged by the hospital's CEO will always be a reminder to me of the positive side of politics.

The most gratifying part of my work as MPP however, was being able to advocate for my constituents - people here in our community - who often had no where else to turn. Whether it was assisting with access to health care or social services, breaking down the barriers to government services or cutting through bureaucratic red tape, making a difference in people's lives is what public service has been all about for me.

I thank my colleagues in the legislature for their support of my legislative initiatives, my staff for their tireless efforts on behalf of my constituents, and the many dedicated volunteers and supporters who were responsible for my success in five elections.

Most important, the sacrifices that families make often go unrecognized in political life. I want to acknowledge and thank my wife Jaine, my daughter Alissa and my son Robert for their support and encouragement over the years.