

Stouffville Tribune

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EDITORIAL

Klees looks good but party given black eye

Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees has left a few indelible marks on the nation's fabric.

He has, most assuredly, established his own reputation as a person of honour, someone whose principles are firm and forthright, who believes the high road is the only road in life, even if others don't want to walk alongside.

He comes out of this experience, as one of his Tory colleagues says, looking good.

Let's review what actually happened.

Klees and some friends were testing the waters for his leadership candidacy from the most important perspective — could the leadership run be financed.

The dollars, particularly the all-critical southern Ontario dollars, were being pledged in the millions, but Klees was still uneasy.

Then the sure thing came, the dollars that would allow Klees to have made a completely different statement to the media Tuesday morning, and Klees declined them.

They came with a catch — that on a second ballot, if he lost in the first one, he would walk to one of the other candidates and offer support.

After some serious soul-searching, Klees' conscience would not allow him to go into the leadership race with such conditions in place.

And you have to believe him. This is a man who has never shown fear in stating his opinions and his party's policies, regardless of the popularity, someone who has been firm in his commitment to the Common Sense Revolution and even firmer in his belief that it's the only way to make Ontario the best place in which to live and work and play.

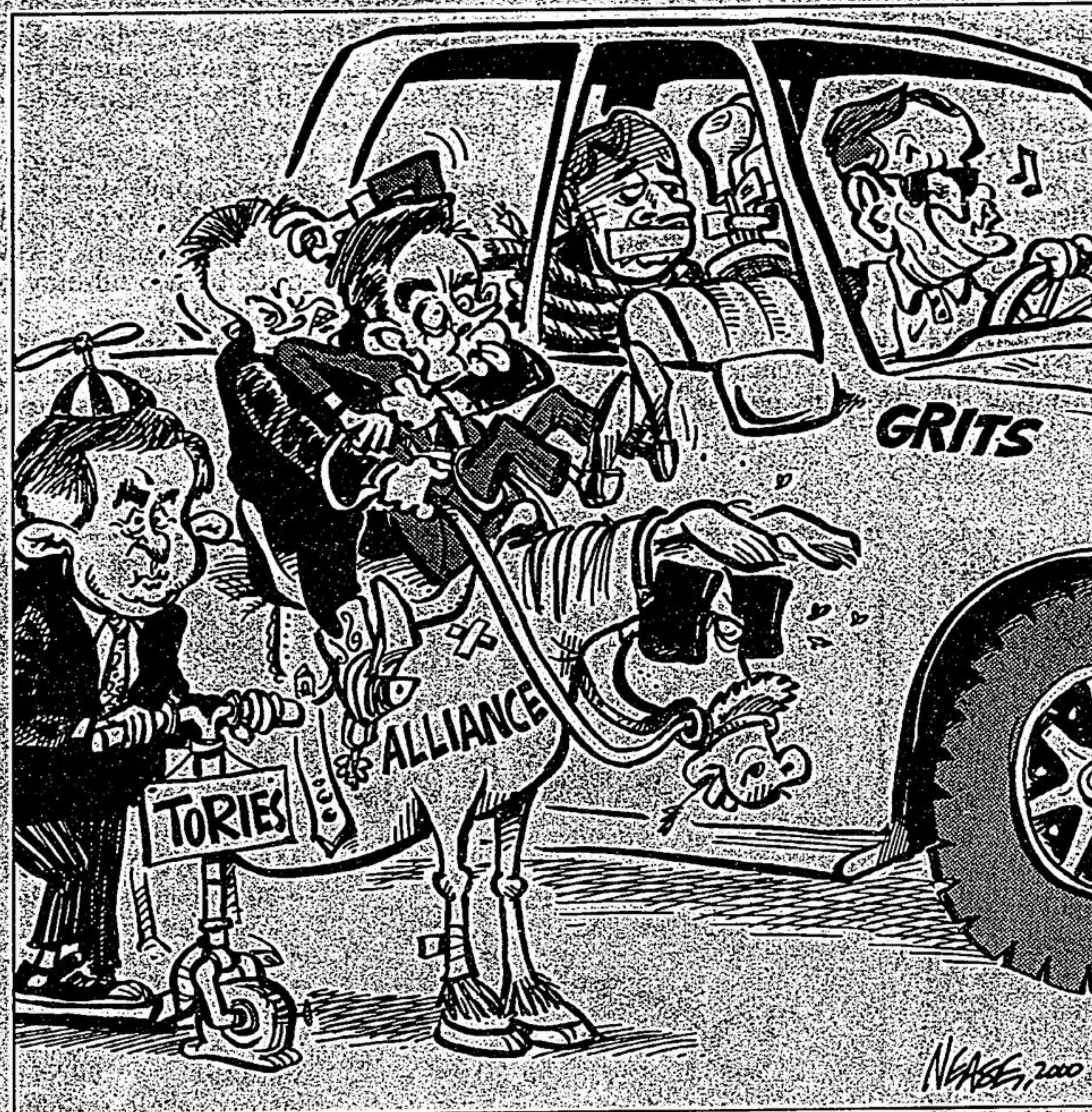
He is, for all intents and purposes, an honourable man who has every right to hold his head high. There are a few other marks, however, he may regret, days or weeks from now.

In truth, deals like these in the world of politics are commonplace and perhaps Klees has shown us not only his firm personal fortitude, but also his naivete. Is Canada ready for a principled, naive leader? Jury's out on that one.

The biggest mark, unfortunately, is on the Canadian Alliance.

For the party to offer Canadians a truly national image, it needs to see a focused, strong commitment from Ontario Reformers, many of whom elected Mike Harris' Tories.

OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tories not even paying lip service to health-care promises

I agree wholeheartedly with letter writer Larry Israelson. The Tory government is not even paying lip service to promises made prior to each of the last two elections as far as health care is concerned. "More nurses and better patient care services"? I think not.

They made a big mistake when they let so many nurses go. Now they are scattered and the hospitals can't lure back enough of them. Nursing and other hospital staff are in short supply.

Let me give you an example of a situation that must be addressed. A disabled patient requiring an MRI must travel to York County Hospital in Newmarket, North York General or St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto because York Central has machines but no appropriate technician. Markham-Stouffville hasn't an MRI at all. One must prebook a non-emergency ambulance no sooner than one week prior to the test.

There is still no guarantee you can be on time for your appointment, as the ambulance must still take a heart attack or accident case first. When I asked if a test missed in this way could be postponed, or a later return arranged if your test has to be re-done if you happen to twitch, I was told you would have to wait two more months for an opening.

In the meantime, you have to get off the MRI table. With only one technician and no

clothes or wheelchair, what on earth do you do? It's highly unlikely you can be admitted until a way is found to get you home.

Surely a lift of some sort and a porter to help should be available. This is better patient care?

MARTY SHULTZ
THORNHILL

Nobody's banning alcohol, but booze kills, too

Re: the proposed smoking laws in York Region.

I am almost 83 years old and I have smoked for almost 63 years. Everyone I associated with, male and female, smoked.

We did not pay any attention to advertising but I don't think there was that much.

What makes me furious is the fact you can go into a bar, drink too much, leave and hit and kill or injure someone or return to your children, yet you can't smoke.

I have lost four or five very close friends as a result of too much alcohol and I resent the fact that beer and other alcoholic products are advertised everywhere.

Banning the sponsorship of sporting and cultural events by tobacco companies is going to have a serious effect and is utterly ludicrous.

MARIAN GREENE
UNIONVILLE

LETTERS POLICY

Stouffville Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The newspaper reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

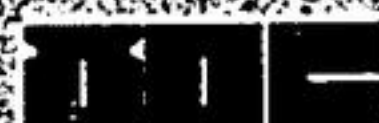
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David Teetzel

New Canadians are eager to share their many skills

Way back in the dark recesses of history, I worked my way through school at an auto parts plant in Richmond Hill. It was a lousy job, loading metal parts on and off a rack all day so they could be dipped in foul-smelling chemicals, but it taught me some valuable lessons — especially why it was important to stay in school.

Many of my co-workers were recent immigrants from China and Vietnam and we would frequently chat (thereby incurring the wrath of the foreman, who didn't pay people to talk). I helped them brush up their English and they taught me enough of their language to get my face slapped.

During one of these conversations, I learned why it was so important for them to perfect their English. One of my co-workers told me that, back in China, he was a professional electrician, but his qualifications were no good here. He was toiling away in the factory to support his family while he tried to take all the tests and line up the paperwork he needed to practise his real trade.

The experience left a lasting impression, one I would recall every time I heard someone talking about "foreigners who come to this country and take our jobs". The reality is, then as now, that many immigrants come to Canada with excellent qualifications, then spend years doing minimum-wage jobs because those qualifications haven't been accepted here.

According to a recent survey, 2,800 recent immigrants to York Region and Bradford West Gwillimbury were working as entry-level sales and service clerks, although only 350 people identified those jobs as consistent with their experience and training. Of those with training in skilled trades, only half were employed in their chosen field.

Of course, nobody's suggesting because a person was employed in a profession in one country, he or she is automatically qualified everywhere. There are varied standards of training, different construction standards and all kinds of technical differences within each profession or trade that I couldn't begin to understand or explain.

But we should be making it as easy as possible for skilled immigrants to enter their chosen fields.

In many cases, there are shortages of people with these skills in Canada. Canadian-born people aren't studying these trades in significant numbers and businesses are demanding skilled electricians and contractors.

Corporations will pack up their tax assessment and go elsewhere if York Region can't supply these skilled employees.