

# We are seeing the end of several eras; some we mourn; others we thank heavens they're over

*More to the Story*

By Ben Bennett

Things just won't be the same after the changes of the past few weeks. All we have left are mostly memories; but some leave a legacy.

Rob Ford may have been re-elected as a Toronto councillor but the former mayor's relevance to the big picture is almost completely diminished. As a larger-than-life character he certainly kept all facets of the news media on their toes, be they photographers, news writers, gossip columnists, editorial writers or front page designers. But it's over.

Clearly not a well man, his struggles to manage his illness will dictate his lifestyle now and there will be little material left for the tabloids.

In the meantime, his brother Doug happily took over the spotlight and his place on the front page. After a whirlwind but unsuccessful campaign for mayor he kept the interest alive for a few weeks with his supposed desire to lead Ontario's Tories. With that bully pulpit opportunity now off the radar, we can perhaps anticipate a few moments of media silence while he ponders his next move.

The hard reality is that his options are limited and his news value will diminish like his brother's did. He might look at running for a seat at Queen's Park but given his previous high profile, I doubt a mere MPP's position would give him the attention he clearly relishes.

So the tabloids will have to look elsewhere for their front page headlines. As for legacy, newspaper archives will gather dust but the video clips on YouTube will be there. Frankly, there is not much else.

Locally, you would be hard-pressed to find anyone who doesn't acknowledge what a stellar job Frank Valeriote has done as our MP and how much of a shoo-in he would have been next fall. With the announcement that he is not running again, the door is now wide open for anyone with political aspirations. But unless you are carrying a red flag into October's federal election, don't hold your breath.

The common wisdom is that the vast majority of voters choose the party or the party leader rather than the local candidate. I am convinced that in this town, it was the quality of the man that got him his seat in Ottawa.

When he was elected back in 2008, he had Stephane Dion as a leader; last time out Michael Ignatief was in charge. Neither was seen as particularly helpful to a candidate. The new face carrying the Liberal banner will at least have Justin Trudeau's coat-tails to pull him or her ahead. Love him or hate him, he is politically sexy right now, and the real possibility of him forming a government – alone or as part of a coalition - should keep the Liberal vote strong in this part of the world.

Not being part of a government, Frank Valeriote's seven years on Parliament Hill will leave few legislative markers, but in a larger sense he gave us much more.

His legacy is this. In a time when the politician's standing in society has been tarnished by the excesses of so many, his steady and earnest performance as our man in Ottawa reminds us all how important that job is, and what a blessing it is to have a representative we can be proud of.

I say all this as a dyed-in-the-wool Green. I have never voted for him and likely never would. He knew that but it did not stop us having good conversations whenever we met.

Finally, there are those in Guelph who support us moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with all the challenges and accommodations it will need, and those who are still fighting against it. The latter just had a big win.

But drive by the new museum, the rescued Gummer building facade, the new Market Commons across from the market or the new urban style plaza at Wellington and Gordon and it is clear we are already living in a better Guelph. Only one is a civic project but all are modern examples of improving, not insulting the landscape. As a new council starts the next four years without her leadership and influence, to my mind, these are all part of Karen Farbridge's legacy.

And we don't need YouTube to find them.

(Ben Bennett's past columns can be found at [www.bbc.guelph.org](http://www.bbc.guelph.org).)