



In Memoriam:  
*Donald Cousens*

Counsel lost a great friend and partner with the death of **Don Cousens** on Thursday, February 23, 2017 at the age of 78.

Don had been a Principal with Counsel Public Affairs since January 2005, following a distinguished career in politics and business. Our clients benefitted enormously from the political insights he developed during his long public service. They, and all of us who worked with him at Counsel, also delighted in his unflagging enthusiasm, integrity, energy, and broad ranging interests and knowledge.

Despite numerous health challenges over the past decade, Don's zest for life and work never wavered. He and his splendid wife, Aline, made the most of every minute, whether travelling the world, helping those in need, spoiling their three grandchildren or walking their beloved golden retrievers.

The fact that Aline, who helped Don through so many medical challenges, suddenly fell ill herself and passed away in July 2016 was a great blow to him.

While all of us at Counsel will miss Don's charm and enthusiasm, his death is a particular loss to two Principals who served in the Ontario Legislature at the same time as Don, Charles Beer and Charles Harnick.

"Don was a great friend and colleague. Even though we sat on opposite sides of the aisle we were able to work together on many issues because of Don's collegial style. He was a politician who got into public service for all the right reasons," said Charles Beer. "We want to offer our condolences to his children, Mary and Paul, his beloved grand-children and all of the extended family."

Charles Harnick remembered Don as a politician who stuck up for the people he represented, and for his own principles.

"He was a conservative and a progressive, in the best senses of both," said Charlie. "We had a lot of fun in caucus and the House, but he also took his job very seriously and would go to the wall for his constituents."

Few people had as varied and successful careers as Don. He served as an ordained Presbyterian minister, an officer in the Canadian Forces, an IT executive, a champion of education and a political leader, both municipally and provincially.

Don served as Mayor of the Town of Markham from 1994 to 2006, during a period of unprecedented growth. For his extraordinary leadership, he was honoured as one of the very few Ontarians with a highway and a school named after him while he was alive.

Prior to entering Municipal Politics, Don served as MPP for York Centre (1981-87) and Markham (1987-94). Among his roles in government he was Minister of Correctional Services, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Culture and Deputy Speaker of the Legislature.

Don started in public service as a York Region School trustee and later Chair. Education remained close to his heart, and he later spearheaded the Character Movement in York Region which is centered on reviving the fundamental values that society is based upon, such as integrity and honesty.

In addition to his extensive public service, Don worked in the private sector for close to three decades and served on many industry Boards, including the Centre for Advanced Manufacturing and the Toronto Research Institute.

Throughout his life, Don had great concern for those in our society and abroad who face particular challenges. He founded the Don Cousens Charitable Foundation and was a long-time Director and Chair of World Vision Canada. Don gave his time as Director and Chair of the Markham YMCA Fundraising Committee, Founding Director of York Region Children's Services, Director of the York Region Mental Health Association and National Chair of the Canadian Mental Health Initiative.

Don's passing is a loss not only to his family but also to all of us at Counsel, to the City of Markham, the Region of York, the Province of Ontario, and beyond. He will be greatly missed.