



## *Message from Queen's Park*



**Monthly Column by MPP John Yakabuski**

August 2005

Here we go again. While I'm reluctant to write a column on the same subject in consecutive months, given the current situation in Ontario, I feel I must. As I speak to constituents all around my riding, the subject of electricity as well as gas prices seem to be coming up in every conversation. It was also a hot topic (no pun intended) at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario annual conference this week (August 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>) in Toronto. People are asking me what has happened here in Ontario, the economic powerhouse of Canada. How are we now at a point where we are unable to produce enough power to satisfy the needs of our residents and industries. Back in 1948 the Boston Braves were facing the Cleveland Indians in the World Series. The hopes of the Braves rested squarely on the arms and pitches of Johnny Sain and Warren Spahn. In fact, the saying went "Spahn and Sain and a prayer for rain." With the Premier asking people to turn off their air conditioning and stating publicly that he was hoping for cooler weather and rain, it would appear that his energy policy is as desperate as the strategy of the 1948 Braves.

Many times this summer he has called on industry to cut power usage while they were producing the goods that Ontarians demand. Because of the McGuinty government's failure to address the energy situation we are being told that here in Canada's most prosperous province, we must accept a shortage of power as a fact of life. Yet McGuinty insists on pursuing his crazier by the day idea of shutting down all coal fired generating stations. He says we must do this to improve air quality in Ontario. Ironically as we came close to a blackout on several occasions this summer, our only saving grace was the purchase of huge amounts of power from the United States at sky-high prices, produced in, you guessed it, coal fired generating plants. Everyday it is clear that the liberal coal plan is putting us in a deep hole. The Premier's answer, keep digging. It's time for Dalton to admit that this is one election promise that the people don't want him to keep and let's face it, breaking a promise should be pretty easy for him. The Premier must concede that it is a bad idea and move on. Make the investment in cleaner technology and keep these plants operating at least until new generation is online, that's right online, not just a flowery idea in Dwight Duncan's mind. Would anyone vacate their home before they had found a new one? Of course not. The same logic must apply to the energy portfolio – don't shut down any generating facility unless an equal source of power is ready to be put into service.

Our party's proposal put forth in the 2003 election campaign was to phase out coal fired generation by 2015. This is a much more realistic timetable than the liberals policy. Having said that, I reiterate, that any plan to shut down coal or any other form of generation, must be contingent on having replacements up and running.

In order to be satisfied, that we can supply our energy needs we must have in this province enough capacity to meet peak demand plus a reasonable amount of reserve. In a system as large as the Ontario power network there will always be facilities or units out of service at any given time for routine maintenance or other reasons. As it is right now, we are severely under capacitated, so much so, that at times of high demand we must go to outside sources to fill our needs and pay through the teeth to do so. We need to hear some encouraging words from the Premier, not statements like “Go ahead, buy that air conditioner; that purchase helps the economy but please don’t run it when the weather gets hot!”

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