



Message from Queen's Park



Monthly Column by MPP John Yakabuski

October 2005

The second session of the 38th Parliament convened on Tuesday October 11th with the first order of business being the election of a new Speaker. Alvin Curling, the former Speaker, has been appointed Ambassador to the Dominican Republic. After Mike Brown, MPP Algoma Manitoulin was elected (as expected), a relatively routine day was made much more exciting with the resignation of finance Minister Greg Sorbara. His resignation came on the heels of the revelation that he had been named as part of an RCMP investigation into allegations of fraudulent acts taking place in companies which Mr. Sorbara was not only a director, but chair of the audit committee as well. While the Premier lauds Mr. Sorbara for, as he said, "doing the right thing," it is my position that he should have asked for Sorbara's resignation as soon as it became known that his companies were under investigation some 19 months ago.

Let's talk about the Throne Speech itself. It would appear that Dalton McGuinty was in need of a big event or a photo-op because other than creating the news that a Throne Speech would normally create, there was precious little in this document which was long on fluff but absent of any substance.

There was nothing for the hard working families dealing with an average of \$2000 more in government taxes and fees since the Liberals were elected. There was nothing for school bus operators who are literally questioning whether or not they can afford to continue to transport our children to and from school, as this government continues to ignore the reality of rural transportation and its associated costs. This lack of recognition of what rural life is all about is what prompted my decision to reintroduce my private members bill first introduced in the spring. It is a bill which would compel the liberal government to share a portion of the gas tax with all municipalities, not just those that have a public transit system. When the government prorogued the legislature my bill died on the order paper. Because I feel that this is a fundamental issue of fairness I reintroduced my bill on the first day of this new legislative session. If I am successful in convincing members to support this bill, it will be of great benefit to rural Ontarians, especially those who live in Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

A few thoughts on MPAC, a subject which can raise the temperature of a conversation faster than the speed of light. People have received their assessment notices and those whose property fits into the category of high demand are livid about the increases in the tax they may face. The McGuinty government, after promising to fix what they said was broken, have

decided to bury their collective heads in the sand and do nothing. Andre Marin, the Ombudsman has decided that the issue is serious enough that it warrants an investigation on his part. I have received much advice on this topic and agree that it must be looked at to determine if a better system could be implemented. One thing that the Liberals could do right away is to freeze the education rate on property tax bills so they don't recoup a tax windfall at the provincial level. They should not do what their federal cousins did taking more out of the pockets of hard working Ontarians with their escalating GST on gasoline. I don't pretend to have all the answers but I would certainly accept that a government must be willing to hear the views of those who are most affected, so that whatever solution they arrive at, it is as fair as possible. I would not do what the government has done and freeze assessments to take the heat off, promising to fix them, then un-freeze them after having done nothing and tell the people everything is fine and then turn their back on the file – SHAME.

Finally, another one of the little things that reminds me of what an honour and privilege it is to serve the people. At the 25th anniversary for the Arnprior-McNab-Braeside seniors home support program on September 17, th I was presented a handsome straw Gatsby cap by Henry and Isabell Murdoch, he being a former Reeve of Arnprior. The cap had been left in his office some eighteen years ago. Why did he feel I should have it? The man who forgot it on his last visit to Arnprior was none other than my dad, Paul Yakabuski. My heartfelt thanks to Henry and Isabell for their wonderful gesture and for safe guarding it all these years.

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