



Message from Queen's Park



Monthly Column by MPP John Yakabuski

July 2006

I've had the privilege of spending part of each of the last two weeks traveling through Ontario with our Leader John Tory. We held roundtable discussions, met with focus and stakeholder groups, and did some mainstreeting in places such as Strathroy, Glencoe, Exeter, Luchnow, Listowel, Belleville, Napanee, Smiths Falls, Ottawa, Orleans and Cornwall. We had the opportunity to speak to municipal councils, business representatives and farming groups, as well as citizens with their own views. These community tours and discussions will be of great use as we continue to hold the McGuinty government to account upon our return to the legislature in September. They will also serve us well as we develop our policy platform for the next provincial election.

The topics raised at these meetings ranged from the liberals decision to change the trillium, to their ignoring our rural Ontario, to the total lack of leadership shown by Dalton McGuinty on the property assessment issue, as well as the native stand-off in Caledonia.

The Premier has decided that the trillium logo which has survived 10 governments of all parties must be changed. Funny that in all my travels not a single person has said that this is something that should even be on the table for the government. To add insult to injury, Premier McGuinty awarded the contract to Bensimon Byrne, the same liberal advertising firm that produced his election ads where he looked Ontarian's in the eye and solemnly promised, "I will not raise your taxes." On top of all this they were also awarded the contract to redesign the logo for the Ontario lottery and gaming commission. They took the "C" out of the logo so that it now reads "OLG" instead of "OLGC." This firm has been awarded over fourteen million in needless contracts since the liberals were elected in 2003. Sounds an awful lot like the kind of stuff that finally got them kicked out of the federal government earlier this year; making sure your friends profit from your being in power while the taxpayer gets the bill. Certainly the money that has found its way into the pockets of the friends of the liberal government could be put to much better use in dealing with some of the problems facing rural Ontario.

On the issue of property assessments the McGuinty liberals have simply buried their heads in the sand again. After promising to deal with the issue they have now put it on the back burner until after the next election which will mean they have left this issue to fester for the entire length of their mandate. For the second time in the last two years they have frozen property assessments. After their first freeze they simply indicated that it was not an issue on which

they ran on and therefore, it was not their job to fix the system. After the Ombudsman issued a scathing report they again said they would fix the problem. When the Premier realized it would take leadership to tackle the situation he decided it would be a good time to run and hide once again.

Down in Caledonia it has become apparent that the Premier will ignore the breaking of the law of the land if enforcing these laws would require strong leadership. Court orders have not been enforced and citizens have been assaulted while police are under orders not to get involved. Native occupiers are wanted on criminal charges ranging from assault to attempted murder. The Premier's response; suspend the rule of law, buy the property in question with your money and hope the issue just goes away. Tens of millions of dollars have been spent with no end in sight. This is leadership, McGuinty style. As Judge David Marshall said in a court hearing dealing with the occupation, "the results of not following the rule of law are evident in Caledonia. I fear we have not yet realized the damage that has resulted."

To close on a positive note we've been pleased with the success of our work and the cooperation of the government in proceeding with significant highway upgrading throughout the county particularly on highway 60. That work will continue throughout this year and next. However, we remain disappointed with their response to our continued efforts to follow through with the extension of highway 417 beyond Arnprior. Along with county council and municipal governments we assure you that our efforts in this regard will continue.

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