



Message from Queen's Park



Monthly Column by MPP John Yakabuski

November 2006

These past couple of weeks have been interesting ones in the Ontario Legislature. The McGuinty Government has now said it will not be able to shut down our coal-fired power generating plants before 2014 and maybe not even then.

This takes us back to where we were a few years ago when an all-party task force recommended that Ontario phase out coal-fired generation by 2015. I repeat: an all-party task force. Then along came Dalton McGuinty looking for a way to wedge voters in the 2003 election. He promised unequivocally that, if elected, he would shut down all coal-fired plants by 2007—no ifs, ands or buts about it.

He claimed he based this on the best expert advice available to him; insisting that it could be done. He further stated that to leave three plants operating would constitute a death sentence to thousands of Ontarians. Yes, it could and it would be done come hell or high water!

Fast forward to last week and we see that McGuinty is forced to admit that his promise was doomed to fail from the start. So what does he do? He blames the so-called experts who gave him the advice in the first place. Dalton McGuinty should know the old saying, “an expert can be anyone with a briefcase 20 miles from home.” He said this should be a lesson to be careful where you get your advice from. He sluffs it off as if it didn’t really matter much. Well I would submit that for someone to be that wrong on an issue as important as our future energy supply is an issue that should lead voters to question the competence of one who would choose such unqualified advisors.

There are only two possibilities here. One, Dalton McGuinty had no idea what he was doing when he made the promise to shut down the coal plants by 2007 or, he knew all along that it was impossible, but he promised to do it anyway because he felt it would translate into liberal votes. I would choose the latter. McGuinty claims he relied on the advice of experts when he made the coal-shut-down promise. If so, he should be anxious to let the people know who these experts were. I have repeatedly asked him and the Minister of Energy to reveal the names, but both of them have refused to do so. I firmly believe that the names have not been released because no such people exist.

In my time here at Queen's Park, I have not spoken to a single credible member of the energy sector who does not agree that the promise was an impossible one to keep. It should be noted that my predecessor, Sean Conway, has also said it was never an achievable goal. Where does that leave the credibility of Premier McGuinty? Hopefully we will have that answered next October.

On November 13, municipal elections were held across the riding. I want to congratulate all of the successful candidates. I look forward to working with them. Since my election in 2003, I have maintained a good working relationship with all of our municipal governments as I believe that by working together we can achieve the most for our part of Ontario. I also want to commend all those who ran for municipal office, but were not elected. Your willingness to let your name stand, to offer your service is what makes our democratic system work.

During Remembrance week this year, I was honoured to be able to attend and participate in a number of ceremonies and events. I joined several hundred in Petawawa for their commemorative ceremony on November 11th. I also laid wreaths in Barry's Bay, Killaloe, and attended the unveiling of Horton Township's new cenotaph. These ceremonies are very meaningful as we honour those who have given so much so that we can live in freedom and enjoy life in the greatest democracy in the world.

John Yakabuski, MPP
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke

Office Contact Information:

Constituency Office
84 Isabella St.
Pembroke, ON
K8A 5S5

Queen's Park Office
Room 202 N.W., Legislative Building
Toronto, ON
M7A 1A8

john.yakabuski@pc.ola.org