



## *Message from Queen's Park*



*Monthly Column by MPP John Yakabuski*

**March, 2008**

The legislature resumed sitting on March 17<sup>th</sup> for the first time since before Christmas. There were no government bills tabled on day one as it appears the government is waiting to present its budget on March 25<sup>th</sup> which may have already been tabled when many of you read this column. One item I hope the liberal government addresses in its budget is the looming crisis in long-term care. This is a critical area that we simply can't continue to fall behind on with respect to what needs to be done to ensure some of our most vulnerable residents a life of dignity when they can no longer care for themselves. Back in 2003 the liberals promised an additional \$6,000 per resident in LTC homes across Ontario as part of their election platform. Through their first term in office they have provided just half of that amount. As a result, LTC homes have been unable to keep pace with their rising costs let alone improve and expand upon the care extended to residents. The longer it takes for the government to honour it's commitment, the further homes fall behind as much of this money is being eaten up by inflation. They are asking for an additional \$513 million in this year's budget and if it doesn't happen the number will only get bigger. As I have said many times, if we don't fix LTC we won't be able to fix the many problems facing hospitals. Too many of our hospital beds continue to be occupied by people who should be in an LTC facility but no bed is available and the waiting list grows everyday.

On the energy front, the government finally announced on March 7<sup>th</sup> that they would be asking for proposals from four vendors in order to select one to build two new nuclear reactors in Ontario. The four companies being invited to submit bids are Areva, Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, GE Hitachi, and Westinghouse Electric Company.

I met with senior ministry officials last week to discuss the terms of the RFP process. The options being considered vary in both the technology being used and the capacities of the reactors themselves. On the capacity side the AECL reactor, an advanced Candu reactor (ACR) 1000, and the Westinghouse AP 1000 will both provide 1100 MW of electricity. The GE Hitachi, a boiling water reactor is expected to provide up to 1400 MW. The Areva pressurized reactor has a capacity of 1600 MW. I should point out that Areva is currently building one in Finland. It is behind schedule and over budget. By comparison, every Candu reactor built by AECL in the last ten years worldwide has come in on time and at or under budget. While I recognize that the government would want to have options, for my part the choice would be easy. We have 18 in service reactors in Ontario and each and every one of them is a Candu reactor. No one else, not Areva, GE Hitachi or Westinghouse has ever built a reactor here. Why would we want to add two new reactors to the fleet using completely

different technology and design. Why would we want two odd ducks in a flock of twenty. We have everything in place already to operate, maintain, and refurbish when necessary all of the existing reactors. Even if another reactor was chosen for new build we would still have to maintain all of the reactors currently in service until they're decommissioned. With all reactors sharing the same technology we enjoy the advantages of economies of scale. I am completely confident that AECL's Candu technology should win this bid on its own merits because it's the best system out there. An additional and very important consideration, and one that should not be overlooked is the economic benefits provided to Canadians including thousands right here in Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke by choosing Canadian technology. I very much appreciate the support for Candu shown by our Renfrew County Council and municipal councils throughout Renfrew County. The federal government and our MP Cheryl Gallant have also been tremendous supporters of AECL and we appreciate their ongoing commitment. I will continue to press the government as I always have that we have to get more nuclear power online as soon as possible and that that power should come from our own made in Canada Candu reactors.

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