



Message from Queen's Park



Monthly Column by MPP John Yakabuski

February 23, 2009

The by-election in the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock will be held on March 5th. I am looking forward to having John Tory back in the Ontario Legislature so that we can properly hold the McGuinty government to account. I will spend some time this weekend in that riding to help with his bid to return to the legislature.

Last weekend we held our annual conference in Niagara Falls where we took the next step in developing policy that will form the basis of our election platform for 2011. The conference was the best attended in a non-election year since 1994. This gave us a very strong sense that the Progressive Conservative Party is positioning itself very well in offering Ontario a credible alternative to the current government.

Today (Monday, February 23) Energy Minister George introduced The Green Energy Act. The Minister, in talking in the legislature, spoke about how the new act will bring benefits to Ontarians, but he gave no details of how it would be accomplished. He and the Premier earlier stated that it will lead to the creation of 50,000 new jobs over the next three years, but could not say where they would be created or whether or not they were sustainable. Smitherman insists that he wants to continue to dialogue with municipalities with respect to their by-laws governing renewables, particularly wind, but this is one part where the act is clear. It will take away the right of duly-elected municipal governments to make decisions with respect to setting rules for the establishment of wind projects in their communities.

The big question of course as always, what will this act do to the price of power?

Smitherman said, and I paraphrase, that this bill would only add about one percent per year to the cost of power. How he can say that with a straight face is beyond me. On one hand he proudly states that we will invest billions of dollars in new energy projects offering premium prices to developers; on the other hand, he claims that it basically won't cost you anything.

Is there anyone who really believes you get something for nothing? Minister Smitherman would like us to. We need a fulsome debate on this bill including real consultation with stakeholders and ordinary citizens to ensure that all the facts are known. Stay tuned.

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