



## *Message from Queen's Park*



**Monthly Column by MPP John Yakabuski**

**November 16, 2009**

Now that George Smitherman has made his intentions known about running for the mayor's job in Toronto, those of us responsible for energy issues, both provincially and in the riding, are entertaining some hope that there might be a greater degree of attention paid to opinions other than Mr. Smitherman's.

Furious George, as he's known in the provincial media, is a pit-bull of a man, who, once latched on to a position, doesn't want to let it go, meaning that a lot of well-informed and well-meaning people with differing views get shut out of the consultation process. As a legislative colleague, I certainly wish George the best in his future endeavours, but as the opposition energy critic, I have to admit to a certain degree of relief, as I'm hoping the change in ministers, to Gerry Phillips, results in a more open ear when it comes to viewpoints of those who may take issue with government energy policy in this province, and especially as it pertains to our own riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Minister Smitherman was fixated upon what he thought was the way to go, particularly with regard to solar and wind energy, and seemed intent on mortgaging a chunk of Ontario into the hands of Korea's Samsung Corporation. Now, perhaps, with the change, some real dialogue can take place with regard to responsible and legitimate energy sources that can be sourced from our own neck of the woods, so to speak, and especially in the very relevant area of bio-mass, an item of importance to a great many people in our area.

It only makes sense.

Solar and wind, while all the rage in the so-called "green" movement, are still very fickle friends as viable sources of predictable and sustained energy. As we all know, "the sun's gotta shine and the wind's gotta blow," and no matter what side of the debate you might be on, all of us understand that both of these energy alternatives represent a needed investment of billions of dollars. Some of us may legitimately argue that the payback, at this point anyway, is not up to the investment, and perhaps never will be.

Bio-mass is different. It's here and now, the technology underpinning it already exists and is proven. It's reliable, in that the output of energy can be called upon when needed up to the capacity of the unit converting it. It exists in abundance, especially right here at home, a natural by-product of so many of the industries connected to the forestry sector that is

such a vital part of our local economy. And while fossil fuels release carbon that alters the carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere, bio-mass does not.

So maybe, with a new minister, we might finally find someone who understands the strangulating nature of this government's regulations, and their effect upon us here in Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. And maybe, just maybe, that fresh face might take a look at the bio-mass file with an open mind. I can assure you that I'll put that discussion in front of Mr. Phillips, with reason, logic, and supported by science, in an effort to correct a serious flaw in the way this government approaches this valid source of energy. Especially with the economy in its current state, revenue created through a robust bio-mass industry would be a welcome shot in the arm.

On a different note, as always, it continues to be my great honour to be in the riding during the course of Remembrance Week, visiting the communities that make up this wonderful constituency, and speaking with the people who have done, and still do, so much to help make our democracy and freedom the envy of the world.

I've been blessed with the full spectrum of Remembrance Day over the years, experiencing it as a child growing up, and today as an elected official of the Ontario Legislature. And over the years, while the faces have certainly changed to a significant degree, the reality of the sacrifice made on our behalf, past and present, is still very real and heart-felt. As a young boy, I'd watch with pride as my parent's generation paraded down the main street of my home town, as their fellow veterans did in home towns all over the country. And today, as we continue to recognize these veterans, in their increasingly dwindling numbers, we have the further duty to pay all due respect and honour to the many courageous men and women who serve their nation and it's interests today, in Afghanistan and elsewhere, often at the risk of that most precious of gifts, their very lives.

My heart goes out to all who serve, or who have served, and to all who stand behind them in loyalty and love. And of course, on behalf of the people of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, my most profound thanks.

We shall never forget.

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