



Message from Queen's Park



Monthly Column by MPP John Yakabuski

August 30/2010

Calendars show autumn arriving in another few weeks, but the signs of a summer coming to an end are all around us, whether it's the kids heading back to school next week, or the leaves beginning the transition to their annual splendour of colour.

What a summer we had. Honestly, I don't think anyone could ask for better weather, and from what I understand, that's likely to continue, just please don't hold me to it. As for me, it was a busy, and productive, summer. Certainly, there was a fair amount of travel, both within the riding and outside, shuttling back and forth to Toronto, or other places, as required by my positions of Energy Critic and PC House Leader. But still, most of my travel was right here in Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, and how wonderful it was for Vicky and me to get around and visit so many people around the riding. We were able to take part in so many different types of events or gatherings, and came away from each and every one of them with the feeling that we were among friends, people who cared about us, and who believe that we care about them. And the variety of events, of course, is the spice of life. Birthdays, anniversaries, openings, speaking with summer students, farmers, people on the street, and the county fairs, all of it the stuff of cherished memories. The summer of 2010 was certainly a good one.

The summer brings with it an atmosphere that is so much more relaxed, where people are comfortable in speaking to me in casual surroundings, and I learn so much from folks when I get the opportunity to get out there and meet with them in shirtsleeves. And of course, being a politician, I'm going to hear what's on their minds, the good and the bad, and the way they feel about things.

I know that different issues can affect different areas in different ways, so that something that might be huge in one area is perhaps less so in another, something I see to some extent right here in Renfrew County, one of the largest electoral districts in the province. But this summer, no matter where I went, either right here at home, or outside the riding, there was one issue that rang clearly as the major cause of discontent.

Taxes.

Whether the McGuinty government calls them taxes, fees, or rate increases, or all of the above, the effect is the same for everyone, and it's simply this: It sure costs a lot more money to get by these days.

This all-out assault on the wallets of this province's taxpayers is nothing short of breathtaking, and I don't mean that in a flattering sense. The tax burden is such in this province, that ordinary working people find themselves making what can only be classified as quality of life decisions with their ever-dwindling financial resources, and these decisions usually result in them having to do with less, rather than more.

The summer began with the HST, something that even supporters now admit will cost us more than advertised. Mr. McGuinty told us how it would make "business better in Ontario," or something to that effect. But I was speaking to a young couple in Chatham, Ontario, a couple of weeks back, and it broke my heart to hear that they've been forced to organize their shopping more tightly, to go less often, and when they do, to go shopping in the United States. Their sentiments were echoed by a senior couple I spoke with in Ottawa, who also said they intend to shop more across the border. This, of course, is wonderful news for merchants in New York and Michigan, but pretty thin soup for businesses up here in Ontario. It was a tax they said would benefit business here. It's turning out to be a detriment to both consumers and businesses alike. So much so that, in speaking with a long-time Liberal supporter at the Cobden Fair, I was assured that, as a result of the escalating tax burden, he would not be voting Liberal again. While that might benefit me politically, I'm saddened by the fact that the gentleman had to say it at all.

In closing, I'd like to take the opportunity to offer best wishes to all the children and educators who will be returning to school next week, and to remind drivers that September 7th will bring school buses and crossing guards back into the traffic mix. So please, all of us, be careful as we make our way about our business, and watch out for the little ones and those entrusted with their care.

While the summer may not have been much for Dalton McGuinty, I truly hope that you and those important to you enjoyed yours, and that we can all look forward to good health and good prospects as we head into the fall season.

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