



Message from Queen's Park



Monthly Column by MPP John Yakabuski

February 22nd, 2010

Many of you are aware that, from time to time, I can be somewhat critical of the various policies put forward by our provincial government. Lord knows, it's not like there's any difficulty finding things to be critical of, and my use of the word policy to describe these things is perhaps overly generous.

But what, perhaps, baffles me most about the McGuinty Liberals is the way they go about treating small and medium businesses in this province, while at the same time airing television ads trumpeting Ontario as a great place to "do business." Because, from what I've seen, the Liberals do more to discourage business in this province than any other government in Canada. They do this through their preferred method of over-regulation and punitive taxes, a potent one-two punch that drops many Ontario businesses to the canvas.

This red tape burden is a major concern for small business owners in Ontario, second only to the high cost of taxes. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimates complying with regulations costs the Ontario economy \$13 billion per year. That's equal to the cost of public education in this province.

When this province had a PC government, we worked tirelessly to identify ways in which business growth could be encouraged, knowing as we did, and still do, that small and medium-sized businesses form the backbone of Ontario's economy, and represent, as they always have, the catalyst in this province's economic engine. These businesses create the jobs that keep men and women in this province working, providing a quality of life that all Ontarians aspire to and deserve.

We created a Red Tape Commission to find out where over-regulation was strangling business initiative, and once identified, we moved to get those unnecessary barriers out of the way, so that people wishing to start or keep their small businesses had a fighting chance to be successful, and in their turn, share that success through the hiring of greater numbers of employees. We did this because it was right. We did this because it worked. And quite honestly, we did this because it just simply made sense to do so.

Mr. McGuinty, having never been the owner or operator of a small business himself, doesn't have the first-person perspective that someone like myself might have, but still, one would think that he would be familiar with the old "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" thing that's been around forever. But, in his infinite wisdom, which for the most part escapes me, he put an end to the

Red Tape Commission, which I suppose makes sense, if you're planning to preside over the most regulatory-prone government in history.

And so, what we have in Ontario today is a business climate that brings to mind a walk through quicksand. Existing business face regulations at every turn that stifle their efficiencies, handcuff their initiatives, and cut off their opportunities to grow. And while grappling with the debilitating effects of all that, they further face a battery of punitive and counter-productive taxes that make many business owners throw up their hands in resignation, and often despair.

Unless, of course, you're Samsung. It's ironic that the McGuinty government open the chequebook and knocks down barriers to lure foreign corporations here, but stands in the way of our own entrepreneurs. Odd how the Liberals understand that de-regulation and tax reduction work great as incentives to economic growth when it comes to large foreign conglomerates, but fail to factor this logic into the way they treat their own home-grown businesses.

It's important for us in Ontario's PC Party to let you know, as either the owner of a small or medium-sized business in Ontario, or an employee of one, that we will continue to fight on your behalf to allow you the opportunity to carry on your undertakings in an environment in which you may flourish, and one in which you'll be rewarded for your hard work, and not punished as you currently are.

We're not going to wait for an election campaign to let the people of Ontario know what we stand for. Instead, we'll be introducing positive measures that will make a real difference for Ontario workers, families, and small businesses today. There are practical, affordable ideas that would help small businesses, stimulate our economy, and create jobs. Ontario needs a small business jobs plan. It's not getting one from the McGuinty government. We are filling that void.

Further, we wish to hear from you on this issue, and invite you to share with us your own examples of how government red tape, along with an unfair tax burden, hampers your attempts to be positive and productive contributors to the economic health of Ontario. Please contact me at john.yakabuski@pc.ola.org.

We want to make Ontario a great place to do business too. For everyone.

Warmest regards,
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