



Message from Queen's Park



Monthly Column by MPP John Yakabuski

October 4th, 2010

Thanksgiving Message

As a member of the provincial legislature, I am, of course, a political person. And as a member of the opposition, it shouldn't really come to many as a great surprise that partisanship can be a part of my professional makeup as well. Be that as it may, I still like to think of myself as being inherently positive in my approach to issues as they arise, and respectful to those who may or may not share the same opinions.

As we moved closer to Thanksgiving, I promised myself that every effort would be made to keep the content of this column positive, and non-partisan. And I will, for the most part, as I wish to strike a chord consistent with what Thanksgiving means to me, and to all of you as well. To that end, my political topics in this column will be discussed with that in mind. Premier McGuinty has been musing recently that it might be a great idea if Ontario's school children were outfitted with cell phones for use in the classrooms of the province. Mind you, the premier muses often, and on a wide variety of topics, so I suppose we shouldn't become unduly alarmed by his latest flight of fancy, prone as he is to backing down if enough opposition comes pushing back on his ideas. To me, though, it suggests leadership that's become disconnected with the voters of the province, voters that include parents, teachers, and educational administrators. Tim Hudak and the PC caucus are quite certain that this particular idea will float about as nicely as a bowling ball, but our chief worry is that Mr. McGuinty, in a province where people are grappling with the effects of recession and a higher tax and fee load, finds the time to be a philosopher king. I'm not suggesting that he's Nero playing the fiddle while Rome burns, but still, cell phones in classrooms? Come on. Last time I heard anything on this, it was generally regarded that such a thing was something we were trying to prevent, given the distractions and other potential negatives they represent in the learning environment. Why he would be weighing in on this while people are struggling to make ends meet is a bit beyond me.

I guess you all know by now that the cost of electricity has gone up, and that under McGuinty it will continue to do so. The McGuinty Liberals have pinned their hydro strategy to the installation of "smart" meters that track the amount of electricity used by a household or business. They're also implementing a "time of use" policy, where people pay different rates dependent upon the time of day they use power. The idea, of course, is to get you to use electricity at times that are considered to be outside the area of peak demand. But it's flawed. The installation of the meters themselves is rolled into your hydro bill, making your

bill higher than it was, on top of the increases brought about by the HST and green fees. As for senior citizens on fixed incomes doing their laundry at 2:00 AM to save on their hydro bills, well that's not something I want to be a part of.

Thanksgiving has always been, and remains today, a time of family. It represents one of the great homecomings that take place throughout the year, and it's one that Vicky and I look very much forward to. Of the holidays where family members come together, Thanksgiving is unique in that it's rooted in the notion that we are truly blessed in many ways. We have our family, we hopefully have our health, and if or when we don't, we're blessed by being surrounded by those who love and care for us. And, as always, we have the bounty of the harvest to be thankful for, whether that's the fruit of our labour as we work the land, or the human harvest of goodwill that makes our lives so much more rewarding. For some with children in college or university, Thanksgiving is often the first homecoming for children who are making their way in the world on their own for the first time, and as parents, we, too, understand what a wonderful feeling it is to have the kids back home, if only for a short while.

Vicky and I would like to take this opportunity to wish each and every one of you the blessings that come from a bountiful harvest, in both economic and human terms. And it is our most profound hope that you have a very happy and joyous Thanksgiving, and that those whom you love travel safely as they make their way back home to you. There is nothing more important than family. And we wish yours the very best.

Consistent with that spirit, we wish the very same for Dalton McGuinty and his family as they gather together. Mr. McGuinty may be the premier, but he's a father and a husband, as well, and he has family that will come together, as we all hope to come together, for Thanksgiving. We wish them the best.

I just hope that, for this weekend at least, he has little time for musing.

Happy Thanksgiving.

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