



# Hansard Official Report of Debates

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

38th Parliament

## JOHN YAKABUSKI, M.P.P. - RENFREW-NIPISSING-PEMBROKE

Private Members' Hour

May 18, 2006

### Health Premiums

**Mr. Yakabuski:** I'm glad to join the debate. I hope the member for Nipissing will stay to hear what I have to say, but it's highly unlikely.

This resolution on the part of my recently elected colleague from Nepean-Carleton speaks to an issue which I raised in this House shortly after the disastrous budget this government brought forth, bringing forward the largest tax increase foisted on the people of Ontario in the history of this great province. I remember sending a letter to the Minister of Health, to which I got no good response. I did get a response, thank you very much, but I did not get a good response.

It is an issue that we have raised repeatedly in this House, not only in the context of debate but in the context of questions as well, and not only myself but the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, John Tory, has also raised it in the context of questions. So I commend the member for Nepean-Carleton for bringing this forward in the form of a resolution to this House so that perhaps -- unlikely, but perhaps -- the members opposite will have the freedom to make a decision on this without being whipped or without being told by the Premier's office that this is the way it's going to be, that they might actually be able to make a decision based on what is right and fair.

When we talk about our military personnel, they don't get their health care from the provincial government. This government can call it a health care tax, they can call it whatever they want, but it is just another hand in the pockets of the hard-working people of the province of Ontario. Over 25,000 military personnel from Ontario have that dip into their pockets on the part of the McGuinty government.

They don't get their health care from the province of Ontario. The federal government is solely responsible for providing health care to our military personnel. In fact, they don't get an OHIP card. They have a DND card that provides them with health care. This

shouldn't surprise people when it comes to this government, but what it amounts to is the old double-dip. They want to get them on the tax, like they're getting everybody in this province, and how much longer they can take that, I don't know. But they want to get them on the tax and then, when the military personnel go and procure medical treatment of any nature, they send the bill to the federal government as well. It's the old double-dipping routine on the part of this government.

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Mind you, when you see some of the appointments they've been making, we can understand how they feel so in tune with the phrase "double-dipping." I think we're going to see a few more in the next couple of weeks, some nice, plum appointments made by this government before we recess for the summer, which is their habit: hoping that as the press sort of takes the focus off the Legislature -- you who sit on the government agencies committee will see that there will be a number of plum appointments to the friends of the McGuinty Liberals coming in the next few weeks.

This is an issue of fairness, and the Premier has had it placed straight in front of him. His responses have been absolutely brutal, and then he has passed it on to the Minister of Finance, whose responses have been brutaler yet -- or more brutal, in case there's an English teacher in the crowd. I want to make sure I got that correct.

What they said was how much they respect and care about our military personnel. I want to take a moment to say that I'm sure all members of this assembly, indeed all Ontarians -- our hearts go out to the family of Captain Goddard, who was our first-ever female casualty of war of our country ever in history, in Afghanistan yesterday, defending democracy in that torn country. Our thoughts and prayers go out to her family and also to our serving military personnel who have lost one of their own.

Again I say, this is a fundamental issue of fairness. The member for Nipissing, babbling on over there about what she says this government is doing or not doing, talking about this party talking about taking money out of health care -- that, I categorically state here right now for the people watching on television and for our friends in the gallery, has never been said by this party. What we are going to do through the course of our first term in office is eliminate this regressive, punitive health tax because we will manage the affairs of this province in a prudent fiscal manner that will make that unnecessary. In fact, if this government had any fiscal bones in its body, they could have balanced this budget without instituting this health tax, but they chose not to for purely political reasons. That is what is truly unfortunate about this government. Everything they're doing has a partisan, political reason behind it. It is not about serving Ontarians; it is not about serving citizens; it is not about being fair to those men and women who are

defending our interests and the interests of democracy around the world; it is about the Liberal Party's partisan plan and will to be re-elected at any cost to anybody in this province.

I'll say again that I'm pleased and most thankful that my colleague from Nepean-Carleton has brought forth this motion to ensure that fairness will be on the table for military personnel in our armed forces across this province. The McGuinty government has to show some interest in fiscal responsibility because they can balance the budget in this province without that punitive tax. That is only one, and I'm sure that my good friend from Erie-Lincoln, our finance critic, is going to probably touch on some of the other disgraceful moves this government has made to take more money out of the pockets of working families and seniors across this province.

My time is just about up, but I do want to thank you for this opportunity and assure you that for the rest of the day I'll be on my best behaviour, because the last thing I'd want is to be sent home early on a Thursday.