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

Oral Question

September 28, 2009

Driver Licences

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, there's more fallout from your DriveTest centre strike. A constituent of mine inadvertently allowed his licence to expire and was told that the one requirement to have it reinstated is a vision test. So far, so good. Unfortunately, he can't get that vision test-

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister of Municipal Affairs, I would ask you to just withdraw the comment and watch what you're saying.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Unfortunately, the ministry only recognizes their own vision test. It's no good to get a vision test from an optometrist, which he's prepared to do so he can have his licence reinstated. They're telling him, "No, you've got to have it done here at the DriveTest centre." Well, the DriveTest centres are closed. This person now has had to hire a driver at great expense to get around because your ministry will not reissue his licence. Will you remedy this now, Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I wish it were that simple, I must say. I must say to my good friend who has brought this to my attention-I want to say to members of the House, first of all, he was kind enough to bring it to my attention earlier and we had a discussion about it. He's very good at doing those kinds of things and is genuinely concerned about it.

The problem that you encounter is consistency: consistency of vision tests that are administered in the province of Ontario. The second is, even if you were able to get that information from an optometrist or ophthalmologist, it still has to be processed by the people who work for Serco itself. It has to be entered into the system. They are on strike at this point in time. I would hope that both sides would work together to end the strike-

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, you're on the record as saying that someone would not be denied a renewal of their licence because of this DriveTest centre strike. This is precisely what is happening because of a technical thing. If you're going to get your eyes tested, are you telling the people of Ontario, "Don't go to the optometrist anymore, don't go to the ophthalmologist. Come to one of our DriveTest centres. We're better"? This is no reason to be holding a man up from getting the licence that he requires to make a living. He is a dance instructor who drives from community to community and has now had to hire a driver in order to make a living.

This is a technical thing that you can, I believe, remedy. Anybody who can get a test from a qualified ophthalmologist or optometrist should be able to get their licence reinstated while this DriveTest centre strike is going on. Will you rule in their favour, please?

Hon. James J. Bradley: In this specific case, and the member was kind enough to point this out to me when we had our discussion, the individual had allowed his licence to lapse. In other words, he did not renew that licence, unfortunately. Where there are people who want to renew a licence and want to make an appointment to do so, we said that we would extend it. In this particular case, the individual had allowed his licence to lapse. There are not exceptions made for people who allow that to happen. It's unfortunate. They don't do it deliberately. You and I know that they don't do it deliberately, but it does happen that way.

Your government set up Serco, my friend, and you will recall that there were some very difficult challenges that arose when you privatized Serco in the province of Ontario.

I know the member and I will continue to work together on this. I wish it were as easy as the member thinks. Unfortunately, it is not in this case and we will work hard with the Minister of Labour to get-

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.