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

Legislative Debate

November 16, 2009

Government Contracts

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, Jason Grier has been very successful as George Smitherman's top fundraiser. Over the past two years, Grier helped raise almost a million dollars for George Smitherman. That's three times more than the next-best fundraiser among the Liberals and 10 times more than the fundraiser for the Premier himself.

How much did Grier raise from clients who got government contracts from former minister George Smitherman?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There's always a lot of fun to be had in opposition when you go on these speculation missions. I just don't believe they add much to the public interest.

What I do think adds to the public interest is that any Ontarian who chooses to get involved in the political process helps strengthen our democracy. Obviously that's something that Mr. Grier has done in the past. The accusation they made a moment ago was that he was involved in getting the government to spend money.

In fact, it was the federal government who spent the money; they spent it on Gardasil, which is an important medication that is aimed at vaccinating grade 8 girls against HPV. We think that was an important and well-justified use of federal taxpayer dollars.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: This is not speculation. While Smitherman awarded more than \$106 million in taxpayers' money to Grier's clients, the clients donated large sums to Smitherman's and the Liberal Party's coffers. For example, Emergis contributed over \$9,000, while Abbott-

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member-

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I don't need any help from the government House leader, thank you very much. For that, stop the clock, please.

I just ask the honourable member to be cautious in his words of impugning motive. As well, I've let this go to a degree, but I think we need to be cautious that we do refer to members by their riding names.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Abbott Laboratories contributed over \$10,000. Merck Frosst gave over \$17,000. Premier, you promoted former minister George Smitherman, member from Rosedale, to your elite budget committee on Saturday, then you accepted his resignation the very next day. Is it because you discovered former minister Smitherman was for sale?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Sorry, Speaker. Is it because you-

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague tells us something about what he claims are contributions to a particular riding association. I don't have the facts and figures with me here to tell me how much those same companies contributed to the Conservative Party. If they did, that would not be a bad thing; that's how the democratic system works.

But again, I'm not clear as to why my colleague opposes a three-year program funded by the federal government aimed at vaccinating grade 8 girls against HPV. We think that was a good use of taxpayer dollars, even if those were federal taxpayer dollars.