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

Oral Question

November 17, 2009

Government Services

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. Minister, with the introduction of the "support our troops" licence plate, which was initiated by my colleague from Simcoe North, Garfield Dunlop, you waxed on about your support for our troops and the men and women of our Canadian Armed Forces and your gratitude for the great work that they do. If the minister truly means what he says, then he will surely not continue to ignore the request of Lieutenant-Colonel Keith Rudderham, the commanding officer of CFB Petawawa-Ontario's largest military base. Lieutenant-Colonel Rudderham wrote you on August 31 on the issue of access to licensing services for the people on base Petawawa. To date, you haven't even shown him the courtesy of a reply. Why won't you respond to the base commander? Or are your words simply empty rhetoric?

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Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me tell you, I think the yellow licence plates that we're issuing are in support of our troops. I'm very proud of the work that our troops do outside the country and inside the country, and anything that we can do to acknowledge their contributions—that's exactly what we are doing by issuing these yellow plates.

We have worked very closely with the Canadian Armed Forces, and they're very pleased with the arrangement that we have come up with. This is not a political issue; this is an issue that is right for the forces. It will help them to move forward with some of the assistance they can provide to the armed forces personnel.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I wrote to you and had it hand-delivered to you on October 13, supporting the lieutenant-colonel in their request for an urgent meeting so that they could make their point to you about the importance of licence services to the over 11,000 personnel and family members who live and work on base Petawawa. You have not even shown me the courtesy of a reply in a month—no reply.

Talk is cheap, Minister. Talk is cheap. You stand up in this House and talk about how you support our troops and their families and the great work they do, but you don't even

acknowledge the fact that they've written you. That is shameful. That is, I dare say, nothing but hypocrisy.

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

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Stand up for our troops.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: We are standing up for our troops; you are not.

The changes we are making actually are going to improve the public service in this province, and I'm very proud of those changes. In fact, right now, we're offering only the driver licences and the car licences in certain locations, but going forward, we will offer to the public a package of services which will include the health care card services as well. There will be 300 locations. It will consist of both the private offices and the government offices. It strikes a good combination to provide the services that we need in this province, and they are very well being accepted by the public as we move forward.