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

Legislative Debate

November 19, 2009

Ontario Labour Mobility Act, 2009 Bill 175

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to join the debate on Bill 175 today. I couldn't believe the minister describing the members on the opposite side of the House as arrogant. We've done everything we can to try to co-operate on bills that are of mutual interest.

What amazes me is that this bill was tabled on May 5 and we're only dealing with it at this point here in November. So you have to ask yourself what kind of priority it was. Or maybe the Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities just doesn't have the clout in cabinet that some of those other members might-but now with George Smitherman gone, perhaps his star is going to rise. I know he was quite influential back in the days of the Chrétien government in Ottawa; you know, Chrétien and Gomery and all that kind of stuff. He was quite active with that government. He probably saw fit to decide to change his place of employment and move to the Ontario Legislature, and that's what we're seeing today with, of course, the former Minister of Health, who wants to be the mayor of Toronto.

I know I'm getting the evil eye from the Speaker here, because he's wondering what this has to do with labour mobility. But that's exactly what I'm talking about, Speaker: the freedom to be mobile within the province of Ontario, which the members of the Liberal Party have practised quite a bit lately-and we're seeing another example of it here in the city of Toronto. I do hope that the former Minister of Health and Minister of Energy and the current member for Toronto Centre is not going to forget that he still has constituents he has to represent. You don't just drop those people, start running for mayor of Toronto and forget about the people who elected you here. We certainly hope that he doesn't forget about his responsibility to those people as well, because that is important.

1650

On the bill, I want to thank our labour critic, Mr. Randy Hillier, but particularly our former labour critic, my good friend Bob Bailey from Sarnia-Lambton, who did such a wonderful job in putting forth the position of the PC Party during earlier debate on this bill. Lucky for me, I have a copy of that speech. I had a chance to peruse it, and I just wanted to thank Bob again for the tremendous job he did and for all his work in making sure he understands the legislation when he's commenting on it in the House.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: John, his constituents are here and they'd like to hear what he said.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I am aware that two of Bob's constituents are here; I thank the member for Trinity-Spadina for pointing that out. I was able to meet the constituents earlier, and I know that you introduced them to the House, didn't you, Bob? That's a great thing to do. Obviously, you have wonderful support in your riding when they'll travel all the way to Toronto to see you in action here in the House.

Bill 175, An Act to enhance labour mobility between Ontario and other Canadian provinces and territories: In principle, if you only listen to the minister-he's very good at getting his points across-you'd think, "My goodness gracious, this is the best thing, the best bill that maybe was ever introduced."

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, no. I said you'd think that. But we on other side of the House don't just listen to what the minister has to say; we actually listen to what the people out there have to say, and there are some issues with this bill. I will give them credit that we substantially agree with the principle of trying to allow people to have more mobility. This is one country-it's Canada-and we don't think we should have unwieldy barriers preventing people from having the choice to move from one province to another to seek employment.

In fact, over the last few years since 2003, when this government was elected, thank goodness that people have been able to look for jobs in other provinces than the one they currently reside in. If that wasn't the case, we would have had a real problem in Ontario, because we wouldn't have been able to accommodate all those people who were leaving, under the strangulating taxation policies of the Liberal government, to go to Saskatchewan and Alberta to get work.

But you'll notice that after being hammered incessantly about their policies by the Progressive Conservative Party and our new leader, Tim Hudak, they have changed their policy somewhat. They're now talking about reducing taxes to corporations, so that businesses can actually function.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, no, no, no; we're not against reducing taxes. The member for Algoma-Manitoulin says we're against reducing taxes-

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: -and the Speaker knows better than that. Our party has always been the party of lower taxation, so that we can create a vibrant, powerful economy that raises the standard of living for all those who live here and allows us to pay for and

provide those essential services that are so important to each and every citizen of the province of Ontario.

Speaking of taxation and the citizens of the province of Ontario-

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): As long as you relate it to the bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, yes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Okay. I'll be listening very carefully.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Of course, Mr. Speaker.

One thing I have learned in the six years I've been here is the rules, and I certainly-

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, I know that I'm compelled to speak to the matter at hand.

Anyway, getting back to the matter of taxation-and I'm going to get to how it relates to Bill 175 with respect to apprentices and all this kind of stuff-we have a real problem with the government's new bill to impose the biggest tax grab-

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): No, you're not going to go there. You're not speaking about any new bills. You're speaking about the bill that's on the floor today.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's correct. Now, as a result of the government's failure to call for public consultation on the HST, we have no-

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): No, no. I'll perhaps warn one or two more times, and then I'm going to move on to other speakers who are willing to speak on this bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You leave me no option, Speaker, but to either speak to the bill or move adjournment of the debate, and I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Yakabuski has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1656 to 1726.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those in favour, please stand and be counted by the clerks.

All those opposed, please stand and be counted by the clerks.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 10; the nays are 40.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare the motion lost.

Further debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm rather surprised at the outcome of that vote, Mr. Speaker, I can certainly tell you that. In fairness, Speaker-

Hon. Jim Watson: John, don't take it personally.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm not taking it personally, but I am a little bit concerned about the stringent nature of your call today on the bill. As you know, there are times that I am as direct as possible, and there are times that it takes me a little longer to get to the point because I have to paint the picture. I think it is important sometimes that you frame the circumstances and the situation so that you can make it easier for the people who are listening out there in TV land to understand some of the challenges we have, not only with this bill but with the general nature of the agenda of the government of the day.

I'm sure, quite frankly, when our party was in government, that from time to time, members of the opposition would have had issues with the agenda of the day of that government. I was not a member of that government, as you would know, Mr. Speaker; I was only elected here in 2003-a lovely October evening. I remember it well.

Anyhow, on the bill, as I said earlier, our labour critic of the day who spoke to this bill some time ago, Mr. Bailey, my good friend from Sarnia-Lambton-and I know our critic today, the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, Randy Hillier, has also indicated where we have agreement in principle on many of the issues in the bill, but there are still some issues that have yet to be resolved.

I know that the minister spoke about 300 different trades or whatever and only six that he said they couldn't seem to bring under the umbrella. We want to talk about one of those trades, the certified general accountants that have some problems with this legislation. So it's certainly not unanimous, but there are problems.

We've got other issues with regard to labour mobility. What about the apprenticeship ratios in this province, which we think are way out of whack with respect to the employment needs and service needs of the people? When you demand that you can only have one apprentice for a journeyman in certain fields, it's very hard to train the skilled

workers of tomorrow if you have that kind of stringent legislation. And we know that that is nothing but a concession to the unions, because many of those young apprentices would like to train in non-union shops so that they can get their ticket under what some would feel are better circumstances; even under better training.

Again, getting back to the matter at hand, I don't want to delay it, because I have limited time here. But I want to remind the House that we have a great deal of problems, and I know the government House leader, who's here now too, has problems with some of the tools that we're using to ensure that our voices are heard.

We have a responsibility as Her Majesty's loyal opposition to be heard. Government is not about dictatorship, where you win the most seats and then you just do whatever the heck you want to do and forget about what the people are saying back to you.

The people have some real concerns out there, and you're not allowing those concerns to be heard-those concerns need to be heard on your HST legislation-because you refuse to go to public hearings across this province in every town that demands them. The people have a right to put forth their views and their opposition to what you're doing, and maybe even understand better what the legislation is all about, because yes, there will be some who support it. But because you refuse to shed the light of day on it and face the people-that's what governing and democracy is all about, facing the people-I have no option but to move for adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Yakabuski has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the "nays" have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1732 to 1802.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All of those in favour, please stand and be counted by the clerks.

All those opposed, please stand and be counted by the clerks.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 9; the nays are 39.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare the motion lost.

I beg the indulgence of the House so that I can wish my bride of 48 years a happy anniversary.

Even though we're 360 kilometres apart, I want to tell her I love her.

Applause.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, if she has put up with you for 48 years, I feel like I love her too.

Laughter.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Okay. Thank you.