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

Oral Question

April 8, 2009

Provincial Purchasing Policy

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Ontario's nuclear industry employs over 30,000 women and men. Most of these jobs are dependant upon the success of one company headquartered in Mississauga. Over 100 other businesses supply this company with parts and services, and they are spread throughout the province of Ontario. Recently, you said that it was a crappy decision on the part of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. to purchase 22 Mercedes-Benz for a prize giveaway and you realized that was not supporting a domestic industry that provided thousands and thousands of jobs.

Do you think that buying French nuclear reactors at a cost of \$26 billion of Ontario's money-s ending that overseas and killing an Ontario industry during a recession-would amount to a crappy decision as well, Minister?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think that there's quite a bit in the honourable member's question that might live up to his regularized use of that word. The point is that when go to purchase two new nuclear reactors, we do see the stakes as somewhat different than when we're purchasing some automobiles. I think that at hand here is the sheer necessity of making sure that associated with the purchase of any nuclear-

Interjections.

Hon. George Smitherman: We think it's very important, as we seek to acquire two new nuclear power plants in the province of Ontario-two new reactors-that we do so with a view towards their long-term reliability, to the costs associated with them and to the economic impacts that will accrue to the province of Ontario. That's exactly what our process is leaning toward. I don't know why the honourable member -

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yesterday, the Premier compared nuclear reactors to bottles of wine. I'm sure that you have had time to review the report by McKinsey and Co. commissioned by your own government. It is very clear on three points, the most important being that the only difference between the three technologies and that of Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. was that their bid had a greater economic benefit to the province. Again, given the thousands of high-tech jobs at stake and the billions in Ontario GDP that will be gone because of a loss of export sales, are you going to stand up and

support Ontario or send \$26 billion to France and the United States, thereby sending 30,000 jobs, 100 companies and a vital Canadian industry down your crapper?

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: It is a crappy decision. I withdraw.

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

Hon. George Smitherman: There is nothing that the honourable member presents as fact in the form of his question that I wish to corroborate. It is mischief-making, it is misinformed and it is irresponsible. We have a very fair process ongoing by which three companies were given the opportunity to tell us why we should build their product here, why we should take advantage of it. Those include reliability and price, and they most certainly give opportunity, with 20% of the rating focused on the economic opportunities associated with it. Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. certainly has an opportunity to make a strong case as to the economic impacts associated with their technology, but there is more to the purchase than that. We will continue to review this most important purchase on the basis of a wide variety of things, including price and reliability.