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by Cristina Kumka – Staff Writer

Shumlin, Scott split on energy issues

Vermont Gov. Peter Shumlin and Lt. Gov. Phil Scott publicly diverged on Vermont Yankee and other issues Tuesday in front of a crowd of Rutland business leaders.

“He may be taking on too much, too quick,” Scott said of Shumlin.

Scott’s remarks came minutes after Shumlin left the governor’s ballroom at Montpelier’s Capitol Plaza after a talk hosted by the Rutland Regional Chamber of Commerce and Rutland Economic Development Corporation.

The talk was part of the chamber’s annual bus tour from Rutland to Montpelier and was sponsored, in part, by the Rutland Herald and Times Argus.

Scott, a former long-serving Republican senator from Barre, said Shumlin’s proposed single-payer health care plan was moving too quick, but acknowledged something different, and more efficient, needed to be done.

Scott said he supported keeping energy production in state, days after a Canadian trip with Shumlin that revealed alternate options.

“After the way we’ve treated them (Vermont Yankee), I can’t think of how another company would come to Vermont and set up a new plant,” Scott said, in response to an audience member’s question on possibly finding another company to build a new nuclear plant. “It’s extremely dangerous, but it’s a steam plant that creates electricity,” Scott said.

Minutes earlier, Shumlin told the business caucus that plant leaders recently gave the state a “terrible deal” prior to its contract expiring in 2012.

Shumlin said Vermont Yankee offered his administration a contract worth 6.2 cents a kilowatt hour of energy for a guaranteed supply of 11 percent of the state’s power.

Shumlin advocated for creation of a natural gas pipeline from Burlington to Florence and Bennington to help supply energy to some of the state’s largest businesses and vowed to have a “comprehensive” energy plan ready by October.

Scott said Vermont Yankee, a supplier of a third of the state’s power, needs an opportunity to put a second offer on the table.

“Things change and I think we need to take a second look,” he said.

Scott said he wasn't so sure good-priced energy prices contained in proposed contracts — for natural gas, for example — would last.

“The first price isn't always the lowest price,” Scott said.

Scott stressed, repeatedly, that the administration needed more public input.

“We need to hear voices, we need to hear regular voices, not just lobbyists,” he said.

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