



Hansard Official Report of Debates

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

38th Parliament

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

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

May 9, 2005

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):

On Friday, my office in Pembroke was visited by a group of school bus operators in Renfrew County. They are very upset with this Minister of Education, who has committed on a number of occasions to looking at, reviewing, adjusting and changing this funding formula that would respect what is happening in rural Ontario with regard to school transportation.

With gasoline and insurance costs escalating far faster than any of their incomes are going up, they simply have their backs to the wall. As a matter of fact, transportation committee chairman Norm Hazelwood has as much as said that this is a crisis situation that must be addressed by the Minister of Education. They are among the lowest-paid and oldest fleets in the province.

Mr. Speaker, I wrote a letter to the Minister of Education on December 10, imploring him to get involved in this because it was reaching a crisis situation. Do you know what the response was? Nothing. Absolutely nothing; no reply. I wrote again on April 20; no reply. But I'm not surprised, because each of these operators has also told me that the minister has not responded to their letters at all.

The minister has been bragging about achieving peace in the classroom, and I commend him for doing so. However, if you have no children in the classroom, it's not too hard to have peace. If we don't do something about school transportation in rural Ontario, that is exactly what we will have: no one to get our children to and from school safely.