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

Members Statement - EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. John Yakabuski

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Not long ago, the Minister of Children and Youth Services announced what was called the Best Start plan for preschool students in Ontario. The problem I've got with that is that it's a laudable goal but, like so many Liberal announcements, it's not backed up with the money.

The other question I have is, do these people over there ever talk? If the minister had been speaking to the Minister of Education, she might have known that in my riding we haven't had half-day busing for 15 years because the funding hasn't been there. We need the announcements to be backed up with the money.

The Minister of Education has promised a new funding formula for school busing. In my riding, we have the oldest fleet and the lowest-paid drivers and operators in the province. We are closing bus routes every year, with more to be scheduled for 2005. I say to the minister, I implore you to get together with your advisers and come up with a funding formula that addresses the needs in rural Ontario.

The minister must know that our students are just as important as the students everywhere else in the province. We are not second-class citizens; we should no longer be treated like them.