



## *Message from Queen's Park*



*Monthly Column by MPP John Yakabuski*

**May 18, 2006**

Last week at the Pembroke Mall I had the pleasure of joining my brother Mark Yakabuski at the kick-off of a national campaign to draw attention to the problem of driver fatigue.

Mark in his capacity as Vice President of the Insurance Bureau of Canada joined with the Highway safety Roundtable in this country wide effort. Also attending to support this launch were Pembroke Deputy Police Chief Dave Brumm, OPP Constable Beth Ethier, Pembroke Deputy Mayor Les Scott, Petawawa Councillor Cy Steele, Laurentian Valley Councillor George Hodgkinson and Bruce McIntyre representing the County of Renfrew.

Some of the statistics released at the launch were alarming. They show that fatigue is a factor in about fifteen percent of the motor vehicle collisions resulting in 400 deaths and 2100 serious injuries every year. Research further shows that at least twenty percent of Canadians admit to nodding off behind the wheel within the past year. We know that if twenty percent admit to it that the actual number is very likely higher. As Mark stated, "just like alcohol, fatigue affects our ability to drive by slowing down our reaction time, decreasing awareness and impairing judgement." He added, "too many Canadians think that just because they haven't been drinking it is ok to drive, but, if you are overtired it can be just like being drunk behind the wheel." Tell tale signs of fatigue include loss of concentration, drowsiness, yawning, slow reactions, sore and tired eyes, boredom, feeling irritable and restless, missing road signs, difficulty staying in the right lane and eventually, falling asleep.

From my own perspective I must say that this issue is one that I have become more and more aware of given the number of kilometers I accumulate serving as your Provincial Member of Parliament. I have taken steps to ensure that I can handle the schedule I set on weekends. I am confident that if all drivers treat fatigue as an issue of impairment our roads will be safer for everyone.

Last Thursday (May 18<sup>th</sup>) the McGuinty liberals passed second reading of Bill 43, what they title the Clean Water Act. We have succeeded in delaying passage of third reading until after committee hearings this summer. This bill while short on details will create through regulation a situation that could have a massive impact on rural Ontarians and what they can and cannot do on their property. Whatever decisions rendered by the bureaucrats would see

the costs absorbed by the land owner, not the government. Hopefully public hearings will deliver a message of common sense to this government.

When we direct our efforts together we have seen this week that we can force the government to back down when it is clear that the bureaucratic hand of Big Brother is interfering to the point of insanity. Health Minister George Smitherman was determined to bring in regulations that would have meant the end of farmers markets and church suppers in Ontario. Can you imagine what it would be like this summer without the church suppers in Mount St. Patrick and Calabogie, in Killaloe and Pembroke and all other communities and parishes that rely on these events. We'd miss out on the scrumptious food and the socializing that has become such an important part of our rural life. Can you imagine the labour day weekend without the Wilno Chicken Supper. Picture us without the various farmers markets throughout the Valley that offer so much. That is infact what would have happened if the Minister would have had his way.

The government was again taking the position that they and they alone knew what is best for the people. This has been a definite pattern for them. After intense pressure from those who would be affected and pointed questions raised by us, the opposition, the Minister finally relented and announced that farmers markets would not be subject to this new Orwellian measure. We thank the people for helping us get this stopped but we cannot let our guard down. Until we have this absolute and in writing I'm reluctant to take the word of the Minister. It's not like he hasn't pulled a fast one on us in the past.

John Yakabuski, MPP  
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke

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Office Contact Information:

Constituency Office  
84 Isabella St.  
Pembroke, ON  
K8A 5S5

Queen's Park Office  
Room 202 N.W., Legislative Building  
Toronto, ON  
M7A 1A8

[john\\_yakabuski@ontla.ola.org](mailto:john_yakabuski@ontla.ola.org)