



Legislative Assembly

JOHN YAKABUSKI, MPP
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

June 3, 2005

Yakabuski Demands Fair Share of Gas Tax Rebates for Rural Ontario

Queen's Park, Toronto - John Yakabuski, MPP for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, introduced a Private Member's Bill in the Ontario Legislature today that will, if passed by the provincial parliament, provide a share of the gasoline tax rebates to all municipalities on a per capita basis.

Presently, *The Gasoline Tax Act* only provides a gas tax rebate to municipalities that have a rapid transit system or public transportation system. In his remarks today, Yakabuski reminded the Legislature that the local roads, highways and bridges are the public transportation system of rural Ontario. "The present system is very unfair to rural residents whose tax dollars go to support the public transportation systems in the big cities, while rural municipalities struggle to keep their local roads and bridges safe for travel," Yakabuski said. "Furthermore, rural Ontarians contribute a larger percentage of the gas taxes because you quite simply cannot go anywhere in rural Ontario without getting into a private vehicle."

The Private Members' Bill, known as *The Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Amendment Act (Assistant to Municipalities), 2005* says that if a Minister enters into an agreement with a municipality to provide a rebate of tax under *The Gasoline Tax Act* to the municipality for the purpose of constructing, maintaining or operating a rapid transit or public transportation system, the Minister shall not refuse to enter into an agreement to provide a rebate of tax under that Act, on the same per capita basis, to any other municipality for the purpose of constructing, maintaining or operating public highways in that municipality.

"The McGuinty Government continues to break promises and to ignore rural Ontario," said Yakabuski. "They promised up to 2 cents per litre gasoline tax rebate to all municipalities, then announced a plan to have a one cent per litre of gas tax go to municipal governments, increasing to 1.5 cents in 2005 and 2 cents in 2006; however, the government then stated that this rebate has been earmarked solely for those municipalities with public transportation. This is wrong: it is unfair; it is discriminatory; it is a deliberate insult to rural Ontario."

Yakabuski further commented that his colleague Norm Sterling, MPP for Lanark-Carleton has recently introduced a Private Members' Bill creating an Eastern Ontario Economic Development Corporation that will provide special funds for economic development in eastern rural Ontario communities. It passed Second Reading on April 28, 2005. "If we can see both of these Bills through the House and into law, Eastern Ontario will begin to see renewed economic development that would return vibrance to our rural communities," said Yakabuski.