



Legislative Assembly

JOHN YAKABUSKI, MPP Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke NEWS RELEASE

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Yakabuski demands answers and action on rural school bus funding issue

(Queens Park) Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke MPP John Yakabuski today demanded answers from Education Minister Kathleen Wynne regarding the funding crisis Renfrew County school bus operators continue to experience. After having raised this issue repeatedly, the Minister's response once again failed to address the critical need that MPP Yakabuski emphasized, ignoring any commitment to long term sustainable funding.

"My question is for the Minister of Education. I recently warned her by letter that the day was fast approaching when her inaction and broken promises could lead to a loss of school busing in my riding entirely. Yesterday, school bus operators in Renfrew County said in a press release that school busing in Renfrew County may be a thing of the past. When will the Minister abandon her plan to sit and wait while school bus operators have to decide whether they can afford to stay in business or not and bring forth a fair funding formula now," Yakabuski pushed.

Citing his letter to the Minister dated February 8th, 08, Yakabuski noted that the Renfrew County fleet of buses are among the oldest in the province and their drivers are some of the lowest paid. He noted additional expenses that have skyrocketed including licensing fee's and insurance and fuel costs which have increased by 57% since last September. Yakabuski reminded the Minister that the funding formula in its current form continues to favor urban operators while it penalize's rural ones, with no regard to their painfully desperate situation.

"You continue to support a formula that treats urban school operators much more fairly than rural school bus operators. You are jeopardizing all school bus operators in this province, particularly those in Renfrew County and, ultimately, you are jeopardizing the safety of children. Do something about this formula now or suffer the consequences. Take responsibility for what happens on your watch," Yakabuski argued.

In his remarks Yakabuski promised to follow this matter up and to continue to push the government for as long as necessary. "I have been fighting for a fair formula for our operators since I was elected in 2003 and I have no intention of giving up," Yakabuski said. "The McGuinty government must do something to fix this inequity and I will everything I can to ensure that that happens."