



May 3, 2019

The Honourable John Yakabuski  
(Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke)  
Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry

Morning John,

As you know, Ontario is consistently ranked among the best education systems in the world. May 6 -10, is Education Week in Ontario, and May 8<sup>th</sup> is Support Staff Appreciation Day. This year, education workers across the province are supposed to be celebrating Education Week using the theme “Public Education is for Everyone”. Unfortunately, no one is in a mood to celebrate.

Back in January I wrote to you on behalf of over 400 members of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) in Renfrew County, demanding that you oppose any cuts to publicly funded education in Ontario. I warned you that any reduction in funding would be deeply felt in our local area, and have a negative impact on the students that my members serve. I honestly did not believe then, that the cuts would be as devastating as the ones that were announced by the Education Minister on the Friday of the March Break. Over the next 4 years, 25% of the teachers will be cut from our local schools. (We still have no idea how many Support Staff workers will be lost.) Renfrew County students will lose access to over 300 course options, and limit their educational and career paths. Not only will Renfrew County schools lose courses, they will also lose many caring adults who offered them supports in and outside of the classroom. Attrition does not coach basketball, supervise clubs, direct plays, chaperone dances, or organize charity events. Attrition does not provide the supports our students need to be successful. Our schools will have fewer caring adults in them, and our communities will have fewer people in them.

I recently spoke to a small business owner in Cobden who employees several people. He is seriously considering moving to British Columbia with his family. He is worried about the educational opportunities that will be available for his children here in Ontario. I spoke to a bright young teacher who is planning on moving to another province, because there will be no prospect of permanent employment here for 4 years! Our communities will be losing hundreds of quality jobs as a result of the cuts to education. Your PC party wants to make Ontario “Open for Business”, but what business wants to locate to an area where we are sabotaging our students' education, and cutting quality employment opportunities?

Education is vital to the economic growth of our province, and disrupting our world-recognized system through deep funding cuts will not benefit the students of Ontario. Education is an investment that pays dividends long into the future. Unfortunately, the cuts announced by your government will hurt our province long into the future, and the impact will be magnified in rural areas like Renfrew County. The constituents of your riding look to you to protect their families and communities. They did not expect you to slash their children's schools. I call on you as our MPP to fight for quality public education in our communities, and to truly make Renfrew County “Open for Business”.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Barber  
District, Teacher, and Occasional Teacher President  
*Renfrew, Ontario*