

Bossio forming rural caucus



Mike Bossio, the newly elected representative for Hastings ? Lennox and Addington federal riding, left, with Wollaston Township council and staff Nov. 17 during council regular meeting. JIM EADIE Special to This Week

By Jim Eadie

Mike Bossio, the newly elected representative for Hastings ? Lennox and Addington federal riding didn't waste any time calling on Wollaston Township council at their Nov 17 regular meeting.

?'I am glad to meet everyone,?' he said. ?'I want to get together with all of the municipalities to find out what you really need.?'
?'We feel that we are left out of small communities funding grants,?' said Reeve Graham Blair. ?'The definition of a small community is under 100,000 population.?'

?'In the grant application process we feel that our needs are not noticed,?' said Councillor Bob Ireland.
?'It is a difficult task when most of the MPs come from big cities, and have a big loud voice,?' said Bossio. ?'In my first visit to caucus, I tried to connect with as many rural MPs as I could. I would like to see us set up a rural caucus to counter that large voice. I am hopeful that will be a big help.?'

Bossio also described his ?'Rebuilding Main Street in Rural Ontario?' concept that he campaigned on during the election. His plan would focus on small rural entrepreneurial activity and marketing. ?'There should be smaller resources that will help smaller communities grow,?' he said.

Blair raised the imminent demise of Warriors' Day, one of the largest tourist attractions in the area. Grants supporting this event have slowly dwindled over the past few years, and small committees in small towns do not have the expertise to prepare now increasingly complex grant applications or raise sufficient money to make up the shortfall.

?'There seems to be money for police and ambulances,?' said township clerk Jennifer Cohen. ?'But not fire. We have a \$40,000 fire truck, and a building that is falling down. But a municipality is not required to have a fire department ? so there is no funding available to support what we believe is a very important life saving service.?'

?'I understand ? I get the frustration ? that is what I am taking to Ottawa,?' said Bossio. ?'We need opportunities if we are to survive as rural communities. Most of the people who seem to know anything about anything are from the city. Kingston and Belleville .. that

is rural to Toronto. We are not a bunch of little Torontos here.?

?Oh, we know,? said Deputy Reeve Marilyn Brickles. ?They call here and ask me what floor my office is on.?

?We are the heart of Canada's playground, and we don't brand ourselves that way,? said Bossio. ?Attracting retirees selling a city home for less expensive country living brings dynamic and engaged people who will participate in their new communities. Health care money, new businesses, and work for local contractors and retailers will follow them. It needs the investment of all three levels of government.?

Bossio promised to keep in touch with the municipality, and asked for patience while he gets his feet under him.

On a sad note, council learned of the death of local farmer, former Wollaston Township reeve and warden of the County of Hastings Albert Vader on Nov. 15.