

Rural affairs minister announces grants for local infrastructure



MPP Todd Smith, left, and Hastings County Warden Rick Phillips flank Rural Affairs Minister Jeff Leal and Bancroft Mayor Bernice Jenkins, who are joined by representatives of other area towns receiving new grants. TONY PEARSON Special to This Week

By Tony Pearson

Jeff Leal, Ontario's Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs, came to Bancroft on Monday to announce provincial funding of nearly eight million dollars for local town water and roads projects.

Some of these had previously been announced by town councils and reported in Bancroft This Week ? for example, Bancroft's \$2 million for the new Snow Road water main, and Wollaston's \$1.1 million to rehabilitate Ridge Road and North Steenburg Road. Others have been planned for in the town budget, but not officially announced, like Limerick's \$1.5 million for its section of North Steenburg. Still others are genuine news, like Centre Hastings' \$900,000 to help improve its water quality.

All told, the Minister said, \$23 million will be invested in Eastern Ontario this year. This is part of an overhaul of the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, which has tripled in size from \$100 to \$300 million. Two-thirds of the new fund will be stable funding for municipalities, while one-third will be given based on grant applications.

Leal, a former long-time Peterborough city councillor, noted that with much of area infrastructure dating back to the 1940s and 1960s, renewal is much needed. Prince Edward Hastings MPP Todd Smith offered congratulations to the municipal representatives who had advocated so strongly for such spending. Hastings County Warden Rick Phillips offered his thanks for the new funding. Tweed Mayor Jo-Anne Albert stated that she was especially pleased, since the town had been trying for upgrades to Crookston Road for over a decade.

Bancroft Mayor Bernice Jenkins expressed her belief that all levels of government should work together like this on long-standing township needs.