

## MPP shares his work plan for 2008

Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke MP John Yakabuski expects a number of issues that saw some progress last year will continue to be priorities in 2008.

One that he feels should be on top of everyone's priority list is solving the doctor and medical professional shortage that is plaguing the entire province.

He is pleased to see the efforts of various recruitment groups throughout Renfrew County that are working to address the shortage, but he feels the province also has a responsibility to do its part. He noted Hospice Renfrew and the Petawawa Centennial Family Health Centre are examples of people working to deal with the issue in their own communities.

Another priority in 2008 for Mr. Yakabuski is addressing the problems facing the farmers and those in the forestry sector.

One success in 2007 was the tabling of the Ontario Parks board report which recommended changes to logging practices in Algonquin Park meant to reduce the lasting impact of logging. The report called for the protected area of Algonquin Park to be increased to 54 per cent.

Mr. Yakabuski believes the Ministry of Natural Resources will undertake a proper consultative process this year before changes are made to the way logging is conducted in the park.

"A consultative process is a step in the right direction, but we have to make sure the decisions at the end of the day are the right ones," he said. "We can't have an industry as vital as forestry so negatively impacted."

Over the years, he has met with many farmers in Renfrew County, and heard stories of the hardship they've been facing since they BSE crisis, although many report times are actually tougher right now. Pork farmers are also going through difficult times and he hopes sometime can be done to aid farmers in 2008.

Although the government recently made a funding announcement aimed at assisting farmers, he believes it will take some time for the money to filter down to individual farmers.

Continued pressure about the four-laning of Highway 417 throughout Renfrew County is also high on Mr. Yakabuski's to do list for 2008. He has a sense that the federal government is interested in working together on the project so he is hopeful something will happen to move it forward in the new year.

He is also keen on seeing smaller municipalities receive their fair share of the provincial gas tax to assist with the challenges and costs of maintaining kilometres of roads. If the equity issue is not addressed through the province's fiscal review which is currently underway, Mr. Yakabuski is prepared to introduce a private members' gas tax bill in the legislature outlining the need for ongoing sustainable infrastructure funding for municipalities.

"We pay more than our fair share of the gas tax and our public transit is our roads," he said.

While working on behalf of the constituents of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke to see these issues resolved, he will also endeavour to meet the individual needs of the constituents who visit his office seeking assistance with various challenges facing them in their daily lives.