



## *Message from Queen's Park*



*Monthly Column by MPP John Yakabuski*

**April, 2008**

Well, spring finally came last week as temperatures reached the upper 20's on the weekend. It certainly has been a long winter as it came earlier than we've been used to and hung around later.

Expect Maple Syrup to cost more this year as conditions have not been right for a good run. In fact, they have been described as brutal by most of the county's producers that I was able to talk to. One producer paraphrased Sir Winston Churchill – "never have so many owed so much to so few," by putting it like this "never have we worked so hard to get so little." He went on to explain that the early deep snow meant little frost in the ground which means a lower sugar content in the sap. This of course means you need to gather and boil more sap to get the same amount of syrup. This while all the other input costs have risen significantly. Bottom line is if you can get it at all, it will cost more.

As most of you have heard, the extension of Highway 417 through Arnprior will begin in the spring of 2009. This is wonderful news! From an infrastructure perspective, this is the single most important project on the agenda here in Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. While the construction to Scheel Drive will now be in two stages; getting through Arnprior is the biggest hurdle that we face in moving this forward. By getting approval for the first phase to Division Street, we make further expansion much more likely. After all, what is the point of spending all of this money to bring the four lanes through Arnprior if you're not going to continue onto Renfrew, Cobden, etc. This is something I have been pushing for since I first ran for office in 2003. It is a huge victory for all of us. I say thank you to all those who have been there pushing with me, especially the Municipal Leaders who would not give up. Congratulations!! I recently met with senior officials from the MTO to discuss not only the extension of 417 which will begin next year, but to get an update on which projects we can expect to see work on this year. I meet with these officials on a regular basis so that we have a clear picture of the work being done in the riding as well as making sure that every consideration is given to ensure that the work will be done in such a way as to cause as little disruption as possible. I will provide details of what we can expect this year in my next column, as there are a couple of other items I want to touch on in this one.

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, my Private Members Bill dealing with gas tax revenue will once again be debated in the Legislative. This bill has twice received second reading support only to die on the order paper. It would compel the government to share gas tax revenues with all municipalities not just those with a public transportation system. I will be looking for the

support of all members of the house especially those, who like me, represent a rural constituency. Hopefully, we can force the government to treat us in rural Ontario fairly when it comes to gas tax.

The other item is the legislative page program. Recently, I was honoured to have Daniel Muzzi of Killaloe Public School serve as a page in the Legislature. Daniel was the sixth person from my riding to be chosen for this honour, in my time as MPP. I would strongly encourage grade seven or eight students who feel they may be interested, to have your school contact my office and we will forward the information you need to apply. It's a great opportunity and I would love to see more students from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke at Queen's Park. It's always gratifying to me to see our young people having interest in how government works. After all those same young people will be tomorrow's leaders.

Enjoy spring...it's God's way of letting us know that he hasn't given up.

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