



Issue No. 9 — Spring 2018

# Mike Bossio

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## A Message from Mike

It has been a busy few months since my winter newsletter! In Environment Committee, we are right in the middle of studying some very important legislation on environmental assessment, Bill C-69, which is right up my alley after many years successfully fighting against the megadump expansion in Napane, and the risk it posed to our community's water. I would love to have your thoughts on this issue.

We also had some great news for the environment in Budget 2018: \$1.3 billion to protect more of Canada's land and water. Locally, we already had some good news on the environment and climate change front: \$285,000 for a constructed wetland project at the Amherstview Wastewater Pollution Plant; over \$300,000 for a climate change impact study and water protection plan for the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, and over \$163,000 to Bancroft to improve the resiliency of wastewater infrastructure to the impacts of climate change.

In Indigenous Committee, we are working on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Indigenous Services Ministry has also been giving regular updates on long-term drinking water advisories on reserves, which is available on their website. 57 long-term advisories have been lifted since November 2015, and there are still 78 listed, which we are committed to lifting by 2021.

As always, I am crisscrossing our rural riding to meet with constituents and get feedback and ideas from them. Please never hesitate to reach out! I am always happy to hear from you!

Yours in service, Mike

Our increase to the Guaranteed Income Supplement puts

# \$1.7 million

more each year into the pockets of over 2,400 low-income single seniors in Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

## INVESTING IN SKILLS TRAINING



### #CanCode for Kids

Mike had a blast learning to code with Ms. DuChene's Grade 3 class in Napane! When kids learn to code at a young age, they learn how to problem-solve and think critically. They also get the skills they need to work in an increasingly digital global marketplace. This is one of the reasons our government is providing \$50 million to launch #CanCode, which provides teachers across the country the tools and training to teach almost one million students how to code!

### Skills Boost for Adults

*Skills Boost* is a new plan to give adult learners the support they need to succeed in the workforce. Through a new Canada Student Grant and new flexibilities for EI, going back to school will be within reach for more Canadians. Students eligible for the Canada Student Grant for Full-Time Students and who have been out of high school for at least 10 years will receive an additional \$1,600 per school year (\$200 per month) in top-up funding. For the first time, a person who experiences a drop in income won't be unfairly automatically disqualified for assistance based on their previous year's earnings. Starting in Fall 2018, an unemployed person can go back to school to get the training they need to find a new job—without fear of losing the EI benefits they need to pay rent and buy groceries. More info: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/education/skillsboost.html>

# Equality + Growth = Budget 2018



Mike held a "Women in Leadership" roundtable in Napanee to gain insight into how we can empower more women to get into leadership positions. Thanks to all who attended!

Gender equality is not only the right thing to do, but the smart thing to do for the economy. Yet women and girls still face barriers to reaching their full potential. We can't move forward if half of us are held back. Having more women in the workforce has driven economic growth, boosted family incomes, and helped families join the middle class. Through Budget 2018, we're working towards closing the persistent gender gaps that get in the way of women and girls' access to education, careers, and leadership opportunities.

We need to ensure that women have an equal chance to fully pursue

their career goals. In addition to our Budget 2017 investments in early learning and child care, as well as a flexible option for an 18-month parental leave, Budget 2018 will give families up to five weeks more in parental benefits through the new EI Parental Sharing Benefit. This will encourage equality when it comes to child care, giving new parents—particularly mothers—the flexibility to return to work sooner if they so choose.

We're supporting women and girls' right to choose from more diverse education and career paths. Budget 2018 will support more women to enter and succeed in the

skilled trades through a new Apprenticeship Incentive Grant for Women and helping women entrepreneurs grow their business through a new Women Entrepreneurship Strategy.

Women earn about 69 cents for every dollar that men make in Canada. We're ensuring that employees in federally regulated workplaces receive equal pay for work of equal value by moving forward with historic pay equity legislation. Our investments will also address issues faced by women in the workplace, from wage gaps to harassment. This includes boosting legal aid funding across Canada to support victims of sexual harassment in the workplace.

More info: [www.budget.gc.ca](http://www.budget.gc.ca)



Equal access to career opportunities



Equal access to education and training



Equal pay for equal work

## Tips from Team Bossio: Working Hard for You

My staff and I are helping out constituents every day on a wide range of cases and issues. There are often things that come up that would make useful tips, so I wanted to take this opportunity to share them with you:

- Passports can be reviewed by my staff. They are sent to Passport Canada directly each Wednesday
- Old Age Security requests can often take time to process, so it's helpful to apply soon after your 64th birthday.
- Consider signing up for an online CRA My Account, or downloading the CRA app MyBenefits for your phone. These allow you to do many

things easily, like address changes, banking updates, and statement requests. Questions? Call CRA's Benefit Enquiries line at 1-800-387-1193.

- Veterans can sign up for a "My VAC Account" for easy and secure service. Visit [www.veterans.gc.ca](http://www.veterans.gc.ca)
- Changes to Employment Insurance took effect in December, including:
- A new Family Caregiver benefit for adults of up to 15 weeks for eligible caregivers to provide care to a critically ill or injured adult family member;
- The Parents of Critically Ill Children benefit will continue to

provide up to 35 weeks of benefits and will be renamed the EI Family Caregiver benefit for children.

- Access to EI caregiving benefits will be improved by allowing medical doctors and nurse practitioners to sign medical certificates; and
- Eligible pregnant workers will be able to receive EI maternity benefits earlier, up to 12 weeks before their due date.

### You can mail me postage-free:

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# CONNECTING WITH CONSTITUENTS



Mike holds satellite office hours across the riding, and was joined in his hometown of Madoc by his intern Nicole Flynn, on placement with his office through Loyalist College. Thanks for your great work, Nicole!



Mike announced a federal investment of \$325,000 for FireRein, a Napanee-based company with an innovative and environmentally-friendly plant-based fire suppressant that was used to combat the wild fire in British Columbia. The Enterprise station in Stone Mills was the first department to bring the product on board. The funding will help the rural-based company commercialize the product for domestic and international markets.



Mike continues to meet with his Constituency Youth Council to get a youth perspective on issues important to them. They recently met with Ret'd Ambassador John Schram, of Amherst Island, to discuss foreign affairs. Schram was impressed by the group's insight.



Mike represented the Government of Canada at the Growing Forward 2 agriculture funding announcement held at the Wilton Cheese Factory, which received almost \$18,000.



Mike delivered a Canada 150 award to Margaret Walsh, who missed the ceremony in September.



Mike celebrated Black History Month by sharing Cortwright Christian's story of Napanee's Martin Millin on Facebook. They later paid Martin a visit. Thank you Martin for your dedication to Napanee!



Mike represented the Government of Canada at the Ontario Beef Farmers AGM in Toronto, where he met with many beef farmers from the riding.



Mike met with a Syrian refugee family who have settled in Stirling thanks to Refugee Response Stirling.



Mike joined the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte in welcoming Minister Jane Philpott for consultations.



Mike announced over \$53,000 in federal funds for New Horizons for Seniors projects in North Hastings.



Mike helped the Bath Lions Club at the appreciation breakfast for 1st responders, police, and military.



Mike announced over \$63,000 in federal funds for renovation work at Marmora Town Hall.



Mike announced the federal portion of long-term, stable public transit funding for our riding's four public transit systems. Loyalist Township (through Kingston Transit) will receive over \$898,000; Deseronto will receive over \$154,000; Bancroft will receive over \$84,000; and Marmora will receive over \$41,000. Canadians rely on public transit every day to get to work, school, appointments, and to connect with one another. That includes large rural ridings like ours, where there is a need for reliable, environmentally-friendly transit. Through this funding, Canadians will be able to enjoy increased opportunities and a more sustainable economic future.

# Firearms Legislation, Bill C-71

The firearms bill, C-71, is an important bill that has to strike the right balance for Canadians. I myself am a hunter and firearms owner, so I know how careful and conscientious legal firearms owners are. They recognize the importance of ensuring that legal firearms are not used for illegal purposes.

Our government has been consulting with firearms experts and law enforcement from the beginning. As a result, we are investing \$327.6 million over five years, and \$100 million annually thereafter, in new funding for initiatives to reduce gun crime and criminal gang activities, and the expansion of border control to stop the flow of illegal firearms across the border. It is important to point out that while it used to be true that most firearms used in crime were ones that were smuggled across the border, nowadays police across Canada are reporting that more than half of firearms used in crimes are domestically sourced.

Our government is proposing practical and targeted steps that will make communities safer from illegal firearms. Here is what the bill will do:

- Enhance background checks on those seeking to acquire firearms – looking at the full life history of a person, including any untreated mental illness associated with violence, not just over the last five years. I personally asked department officials how this would work for young guys (for example) who might have gotten themselves into fights as kids, but who have matured and turned their lives around. Not only would acts committed as a youth be protected under the way the youth justice system works, but the check is a “consideration” by the authorities of the person’s background and is looking for patterns and series of behaviour. It’s not a hard and fast red flag that would automatically reject an application. I’ve also discussed veterans suffering from

PTSD who have undergone treatment and recovered, who would *not* be excluded from holding a firearms license. I know that no responsible firearms owner wants to see a firearm in the hands of a violent person or someone suffering from an untreated mental illness.

- Standardize record-keeping of sales by firearms retailers, already a common “best-practice” in the industry since first legislated in 1892. As is common practice, the records will have to be kept for 20 years. This info would be accessible to police (not governments) on reasonable grounds and with a warrant. *There will be NO new gun registry.* Firearms retailers already keep these records, and it won’t be government accessing them, but police for specific cases that have a warrant when a firearm has been used in an illegal act. Only businesses will hold these records, not the government.

- Require that whenever a non-restricted firearm is transferred, the buyer must produce his/her license, and the vendor must verify that it is valid. As a firearm owner myself, I would always want to know that the person I am selling a firearm to has a valid license. Currently, within section 23.2 of the Code this is a voluntary thing to do. To be clear, *no info on the firearm will be requested, and no records of the firearm kept.* The

individual only validates the license either online or over the phone, which is built on the same platform now used by retailers for verification.

- Ensure the impartial and consistent classification of firearms by restoring a system in which Parliament defines the classes and then experts in the RCMP make the technical determination about the class into which a particular firearm falls. The RCMP does not decide on the classification arbitrarily, but bases it on the descriptions of classification in the Criminal Code, which is legislated by elected parliamentarians.

- Except between a residence and an approved shooting range, require specific transportation authorizations be obtained whenever restricted and prohibited firearms are moved through the community. The vast majority of transportation is between home and the shooting range (over 90%). The authorization to transport (ATT) can be done online or on the phone. This enables police to be better able to challenge people unlawfully transporting a firearm, such as if they are not taking a reasonable route from point A to point B. ATTs are NOT required for non-restricted firearms.

As always, I am happy to hear from you about any unintended consequences that these changes might have, or constructive amendments that could be made.



Mike met with the Bancroft Fish and Game Club in April to get their feedback on the firearms bill, which he will send to the Public Safety ministry. Mike is meeting with clubs, retailers, and other constituents to get their feedback on the bill.

# Supporting Veterans and Their Families



*Mike joined constituents at Veterans Town Halls in Kingston and Belleville in April with Veterans Affairs Minister Seamus O'Regan and Deputy Minister General Walt Natynczyk.*

Supporting our Veterans is a top priority. Since 2016, the Government of Canada's investments in Veterans total over \$10 billion. Our government is delivering on what we committed to do, which is offering better support for Veterans and their families. Here are some of the details on programs that are available for Canada's Veterans.

The Pension for Life plan includes:

- tax-free financial compensation, with the choice of monthly payments for life, to recognize pain and suffering caused by a service-related disability. This will provide a maximum monthly amount of \$2,650 for those most severely disabled;
- income replacement for Veterans who are experiencing barriers returning to work after military service at 90% of their pre-release salary (with a guaranteed base salary of \$48,600). In some circumstances Veterans may be eligible for an additional 1% career progression factor each year; and
- services and benefits to help Veterans in a wide-range of areas, including education,

employment, and physical and mental health.

This means that a 25-year-old Veteran who is 100% disabled would see her/his monthly support increase by over \$1,700 from 2015. For a 50-year-old Veteran who is 100% disabled, her/his monthly support would now be almost \$9,000. More information on the Pension for Life plan is available here: <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/services/pension-for-life>

In many cases, some Veterans can experience difficulty when transitioning out of active service. The Joint Suicide and Prevention Strategy that was introduced by Veterans Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence can help with that transition. The Strategy includes:

- \$17.5 million, over the next four years, starting April 1, 2018, to the creation of a VAC Centre of Excellence on PTSD and related Mental Health conditions to increase knowledge of CAF members and Veterans' mental health issues;
- \$4 Million over four years for the Veteran Emergency Fund, that will provide the department resources and flexibility to

respond to unique and urgent veteran specific needs;

- \$13.9 Million over four years for a Veteran and Family Well Being Fund; and
- \$147 million over the next six years to expand access to the Veteran Family Program for families of medically released Veterans.

In addition, our Education and Training Benefit programs provide financial support up to \$80,000 for University, College, or Technical education for Veterans, and up to \$5,000 for career and personal development courses.

We have also increased the survivor's estate cash exemption amount of the Funeral and Burial Program to ensure more Veterans receive a dignified funeral and burial, and we are also expanding access to the Permanent Impairment Allowance by introducing an individualized assessment. This will ensure Veterans are more appropriately compensated for the impact of a service-related impairment on their career.

We have also renamed the benefit the Career Impact Allowance to better reflect its intent, and we are increasing the Disability Award to a maximum of \$360,000. This means more money in the pockets of ill and injured Veterans.

The nine veterans' support offices closed by the previous government have been reopened and a tenth has been added, with 460 new employees hired to improve services to veterans.

More info: [www.veterans.gc.ca](http://www.veterans.gc.ca)

## Did you know?

VAC has a Commemorative Partnership Program to provide funding to organizations undertaking remembrance initiatives. For more information, please contact VAC, or my office.