

VIEW FROM QUEEN'S PARK: Girl Guides, Rapid Ways, Funding and more

By Chris Ballard, MPP
Newmarket-Aurora

As we move through October, the signs of fall are everywhere. Trees are at their peak of colour as I write this column, and the fresh, crisp mornings tell me the muggy heat of summer is over. I hope you had time for family and friends this past Thanksgiving. Despite our challenges, we live in the best country in the world, and for that alone, I am thankful.

Girl Guides

I had the pleasure of meeting with some very special girls from Aurora, who are members of Girl Guides. I always enjoy meeting the young people in our community and hearing their opinions on different topics. During my visit with the Girl Guides, we spoke about leadership, volunteering and the importance of helping others. I was also able to speak to them about public service, different levels of Government and answer their many questions. My visit ended with a renewed appreciation for organizations like Girl Guides that teach these young people about being honest and trustworthy, respecting themselves and others, and to live with courage and strength in all they do.

Davis Drive Rapid Way

This past week, the Minister of Transportation, Steven Del Duca, was in Newmarket to officially mark the completion of the Davis Drive Rapid Way system. This is an important milestone for transit users in York Region. This new stretch of bus rapid transit (BRT) along Davis Drive from Yonge Street to the new the park and ride facility at Highway 404 makes travel across that part of Newmarket easier and more convenient.

The Davis Drive Rapid Way is part of a bigger project from York Viva BRT. Once complete, the York Viva BRT project will provide about 34 kilometres of Rapid Way and 38 new Viva stations. These rapid transit routes make it easier to travel in and around York Region by improving travel times and service reliability, and integrating with local and regional transit systems for better connectivity to neighbouring communities across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

The Davis Drive BRT will also be the catalyst for rejuvenation of Davis Drive, with new housing and commercial development that makes use of the rapid transit to efficiently and comfortably move customers and residents. Travel by car across Davis Drive is now much easier, thanks to the massive redevelopment.

Job Skills Funding

It was a moving celebration at Job Skills in Newmarket last week as clients, staff and Board members gathered to acknowledge the success of the a new service.

We are very fortunate to have such an extraordinary organization like Job Skills in our riding of Newmarket-Aurora. The group has been part of our community for many years and provides employment programs and supports for those seeking employment in business. Job Skills are the recent recipients of a grow grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, an agency of the Ontario government.

They will receive \$748,700 over 36 months to assist newcomers to our community. This grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation will allow newcomers to not only launch careers here in Newmarket-Aurora, but will also help them acquire new skills and knowledge that will result in greater financial independence. It was touching to hear the stories of new Canadians as they struggled to find employment. Those I met had skills highly valued by local firms, such as Human Resource management and accounting. What they lacked was how to put that knowledge and experience into a Canadian context ? and that's what Job Skills helped them do. The program has a 100 per cent placement rate.

Inn From the Cold

Inn From the Cold recently held its supporter appreciation night to celebrate and acknowledge support from the community. The organization, begun in 2004, has greatly improved the lives of those who use its services. I met a woman whose father had used the Inn and witnessed the positive outcome program. Although her father has since passed on, she remains grateful for how the shelter helped turn his life around in his final years. Inn From the Cold runs critical programs including Winter Shelter, employment and health services. The winter shelter opens November 14. It is organizations like Inn From the Cold, and its dedicated band of workers

and volunteers, that makes the world of difference to our homeless.

Hillary House

As part of Cultural Days in Ontario, the Aurora Historical Society curated Aurora and WWI at Hillary House on Saturday, It was a moving presentation, with its focus on the sacrifices made by local men, women and their families. The AHS also worked with the Aurora Cultural Centre to feature highlights of For King and Country this was a sneak peek of what you can expect to see in the World War One exhibition, WWI: The Middle Years and Road to Vimy, opening April 2017. It's good to be reminded the affect war has on our families, town and country. Lest we forget.

As always, I invite you to contact me on any issue. Please call my community office at 905-750-0019, or visit my website at www.ChrisBallardMPP.ca. My email is: cballard.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org. I look forward to hearing from you.