

VIEW FROM QUEEN'S PARK: In the community

By Chris Ballard, MPP

Newmarket-Aurora

I've had the pleasure of attending some wonderful events in Newmarket-Aurora over the past two weeks.

Last Saturday, the Aurora Legion put on its annual Remembrance Day dinner.

I was at a niece's wedding and couldn't make it (congratulations, again, Jennifer and Jameson!), and by all accounts it was another success. My Constituency Manager, Cathy Gapp, attended on my behalf and in her remarks she spoke about the importance of tradition and how she respected the care with which the Legion demonstrated how it preserves the traditions of those who have served.

The Newmarket Historical Society (NHS) put on a fantastic Great War Patriotic Fundraising Dinner at the Newmarket Old Town Hall. It was great to enjoy the launch of the interactive Trench Exhibit, a life-sized replica of a WWI trench, a delicious meal and entertainment. The NHS always puts on amazing events that bring the community together and reminds us of the rich history we should never forget.

The Margaret Bahen Hospice for York Region opened in early November, right beside the Southlake Health Centre.

The 10-bed residential hospice serves all of York Region. This facility is designed to assist individuals and families needing end of life care.

It will feature nursing and assistance staff 24 hours per day along with social work services, spiritual support, medical care, pharmacy, complimentary therapies and referrals to other programs and services.

The Margaret Bahen Hospice and its programs will be supported by more than 150 dedicated volunteers. King City residents, Margaret Bahen and her husband John, were well-known supporters of the hospital, among other causes.

Congratulations to Newmarket's Roadhouse and Rose Funeral home on its 175th anniversary.

I was amazed to learn that this celebration makes the firm the third oldest funeral home in Ontario and Newmarket's oldest business. Roadhouse and Rose is still a family-owned organization and still very active in the community.

As with many funeral homes, Roadhouse and Rose began when a cabinet maker saw a business opportunity and expanded from building coffins to providing funeral services. I was pleased to bring greetings from the province to owners Wes Playter and Greg Davey, their families and friends who packed the home Sunday night. Also at the event were Wes' wife Juli and his parents Glenn and Jackie - all big supporters of important causes, both in Newmarket and Aurora.

As we celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the confederation of our country, we are reminded of the many contributions so many small businesses have had in helping build our communities.

Nominations are now open for the annual Leading Women/Leading Girls Building Communities Recognition Program.

The program acknowledges and celebrates women and girls who demonstrate exceptional leadership in working to improve the lives of others in their communities through volunteer work. Last year 23 women and girls from Newmarket-Aurora were recognized. If you have any questions or if know someone that you believe should be nominated please reach out to my community office for a nomination package.

Ontario Creating More Opportunities for Youth to Shape Policy

The province understands the importance of engaging with youth and getting them interested and involved with decision-making, especially those decisions that will affect their lives. A new social media and web platform has been introduced to do just that through #YouthVoiceON.

Youth aged 14-29 will have an opportunity to give input every month on different topics to ultimately help shape government policies, programs and decision-making. The current conversation is focusing on the barriers youth face as they consider pursuing post-secondary education and training using the Youth Voice ON platform and hashtags #OnPSEaccess #AccèsEPSOnt #EPSONT. The feedback from this initiative will help inform the government about programming and policies. This is part of the province's commitment to making it easier for people to interact with government through the power of digital technology.

Ontario Passes Legislation to Help Businesses Save Time and Money

Ontario has always supported small business and with new legislation it will be easier for businesses to grow and create more jobs. The Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, 2017 will reduce regulatory burdens and practices that cost businesses time and money,

while protecting environmental and health standards and ensuring worker safety. The changes to cut red tape and help small businesses grow include, reducing regulatory costs, streamlining compliance for small business, international or national standards alignment, electronic transmission guarantee and reducing fees and other costs. Cutting unnecessary red tape is part of our plan to help people in their everyday lives.

Job Numbers

Ontario's growth continues to be strong and sustainable.

Our unemployment rate has been lower than the national average for 31 months straight. Over the past year, Ontario has created 149,200 jobs, with most of the increase in full-time work. Our province has enjoyed consistently solid growth since the terrible recession, having added almost 800,000 net new jobs.

Our economy continues to be strong because of our competitive business environment, our highly skilled workforce, our low corporate tax rate, and significant investments in infrastructure. Ontario is a leader in economic growth and will continue to lead the country in Foreign Direct Investment.

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.