

VIEW FROM QUEEN'S PARK: That Wonderful Time of Year

By Chris Ballard, MPP
Newmarket-Aurora

It's that wonderful time of year again ? back to school and the Aurora Ribfest. And this year Aurora celebrates the 400th anniversary of Étienne Brûlé's expedition from Orillia to Lake Ontario. The Town also celebrates Queen Elizabeth exceeding the reign of Queen Victoria.

It has been a busy few months at Queen's Park. We resume our sitting September 14 and I look forward to listening to your concerns and aspirations as the government continues to move Ontario forward. Here is some recent news I'd like to share.

Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act

Ontario is making important changes to the rules of the road to make sure drivers and cyclists are safer. Some of the changes include new fines for distracted drivers and new rules passing cyclists. I would appreciate it if you could share this information with friends and family so they are also aware of the changes.

Ontario Signs Political Accord

I'm proud to tell you that our government is working hard to build a renewed relationship between the First Nations and Ontario. An important outcome is the Chiefs of Ontario and our government have signed a historic Political Accord that will help navigate our future relationship. This is a positive step in building a stronger relationship and it will be better for everyone.

2015 Minister's Award for Environmental Excellence

Our government is leading the way on climate change policy and we want to recognize people that are equally passionate about fighting climate change. Glen Murray, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, is currently accepting applications for the 2015 Minister's Award for Environmental Excellence. Are you or someone you know working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve air quality and/or fighting climate change? If you decide to apply or nominate someone, I'd love to hear about it.

It's Never Okay

I also want to talk to you about our government's plan, It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment. Our government put this plan forward and is taking serious steps to make sure we accomplish our goals. If you or someone you know is a victim of this kind of abuse I would encourage you to reach out for assistance.

Maintaining Positive Landlord-Tenant Relationships

If you're a tenant or a landlord it's important to remember what your responsibilities are when entering into a rental agreement. Some of the things you should know are: how to terminate a lease, when rent can be increased and issues regarding repairs to rental units. If you're not sure what your rights and responsibilities are I encourage you to read the Residential Tenancies Act. A link is on my MPP website. If you need further help you can contact the Landlord and Tenant Board via the link on my website. Knowing your rights and responsibilities will have a positive impact on your renting experience.

Response to the Syrian refugee crisis

It's been called the worst refugee crisis since World War II. I'm sure you were as moved as I at the photo of three-year-old Alan Kurdi's lifeless body on a Turkish beach. He drowned, along with his five-year-old brother and mother, when their boat capsized off the coast. More than four million Syrians have fled their country in the past few years, seeking protection for their children and themselves.

I have heard from Aurora and Newmarket residents that Canada is not doing enough for refugees. The common comment is ?if we did it before, we can do it again.? I agree. Canada has a proud history of accepting refugees and this country has benefitted by providing a new place to start over and a hand-up. The common story of refugees isn't one of continued government assistance, but of a new Canadian family who are exceptionally proud of their adoptive home. It is a story of children who work hard at school and succeed in life. It is a story of people who, at the end of the day, give a lot back to Canada.

Premier Kathleen Wynne would like Ottawa to bring 5,000 Syrian refugees to Canada by the end of the year. The government

believes the federal government should not wait for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees or host governments to certify refugee status, a process we are told that could take months, and even years.

The Premier just announced \$300,000 in government funding for Lifeline Syria ? an organization trying to bring 1,000 Syrian refugees to Toronto. That's the same organization Toronto Mayor John Tory is going through to sponsor a Syrian refugee family. An admirable show of leadership, I think. Tell me what you think. How should Canada, Ontario and our town respond?

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. I look forward to hearing from you.