

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Celebrate Ontario Agriculture Week by eating local and buying local

This week (Oct. 2 to 8) marks Ontario Agriculture Week.

It is an opportunity to celebrate the many contributions agriculture makes to Dufferin-Caledon and across Ontario.

The agricultural industry provides more than just high-quality local food to our tables. Agriculture is a key part of what makes Dufferin-Caledon such a special place to live. Over the month of September, I attended the many fall fairs organized by local agricultural societies, from Shelburne to Grand Valley, Bolton to Brampton to Orangeville. Fall fairs are a great example of the historic role the agricultural industry plays and continues to be a key part of our communities. In fact, many of the fall fairs were celebrating anniversaries older than Confederation, proving their historical and essential connection to our community and traditions.

Beyond celebrating agriculture at fall fairs or tractor pulls, a great way we can all support local agriculture is buying products at one of our local farmers market. Eating local and buying local puts money into the pockets of our neighbours and it encourages food production around the corner, reducing the impact on the environment. The Bolton Farmers Market is holding its last market of the season this Saturday (Oct. 7), and the Orangeville Farmers Market is holding its last outdoor market Oct. 21. Meanwhile, the Shelburne and Inglewood Farmer's Markets ended before Thanksgiving. I encourage you to visit your local farmers market and support local business before the end of the year.

In my role as Member of Provincial Parliament for Dufferin-Caledon, I have also been working to promote our agriculture industries. I introduced legislation to support the growing craft cider industry in Ontario. In addition to supporting local cideries, my bill, the Growing Ontario's Craft Cider Industry Act Bill 53, sought to help the apple orchards across our province. As a result of the interest in Bill 53, the government recently introduced a support program for local craft cideries.

I am also keenly aware of the burdens on agricultural and rural business from the lack of affordable energy. Whether it is skyrocketing hydro rates or the lack of access to natural gas, I have been advocating at Queen's Park for the government to address the need for agricultural and rural business to have cheap and accessible energy. Finally, I have also been hearing from farmers about the impacts of the massive rainfall and flooding experienced this summer. Even in mid-August, some fields were too wet to plant or were unable to germinate because of the wet conditions. That is why I have been lobbying the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to provide support for farmers impacted by this summer's unique weather conditions.

This Agriculture Week, I encourage you to find ways to support local agriculture, by incorporating in-season local food into your Thanksgiving meal or visiting a farmers market.

