

MPP Sylvia Jones reflects on year with COVID-19

Written By PAULA BROWN

As 2020 came to a close, Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones looked back at the year and her role in parliament through 2020.

"It's been an incredibly busy, and incredibly focused year ? unlike any other I have experienced," said Jones.

"While it's been very challenging, it's also very exciting to be part of the decision-making and the discussion, the ongoing pivots and changes that have occurred as we see numbers rise and lower," said Jones. "And seeing how Dufferin-Caledon businesses and individuals have adapted, pivoting their model, their business models to continue to operate."

In speaking with the Citizen, Jones said that one of the biggest challenges through 2020 has been connecting with constituents following the declared emergency in March.

"How I was connecting as an MPP had to change; we had to come up with different [ways] to make sure that people were getting timely and accurate information," said Jones. "You couldn't have people waiting for answers, they needed to know."

While COVID-19 has impacted a number of different sectors, Jones notes that providing support through grants became a large project for the year.

"As support started to roll out in the various sectors we tried to pivot and make sure that the agricultural producers in Dufferin-Caledon knew what supports were out there and how to apply," said Jones. "When the small business supports came in for additional \$1,000 for PPE, relief on hydro and municipal taxes, we had to make sure we could push that out so those small business owners and operators knew what the provincial government was providing."

Following the initial impact of COVID-19, Jones said they were able to focus on other projects for 2020, including transportation in Dufferin and a safety zone in Caledon Village.

"There was an understanding that COVID is going to be with us for a while, but we couldn't continue to pretend that the other projects that we're working on, aren't happening."

As Solicitor General, Jones has since been working with Minister of Health with the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine.

"We're at a stage where we can give people some hope that as the vaccine becomes available and provided by the federal government, we'll get it into people's hands as soon as we possibly can."

In the two locations, Toronto and Ottawa, where the Pfizer vaccine is being piloted, there have been 3,200 people vaccinated for the virus.

Looking ahead to 2021 Jones said she is focused on the reopening of the economy and the continual rollout of the vaccine.

"My priorities for 2021 circulate around as we get more and more access to vaccines, reopening businesses and ultimately reopening our ability to meet in person to connect with people," Jones noted.