

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Have yourself a merry little Christmas

Christmas is a time filled with many traditions, both family and professional.

In the weeks leading up to Dec. 25, Queen's Park is absolutely beautiful with many Christmas trees (43 in total) all lit and decorated with the help of legislative pages, children's groups, volunteers and staff. Children's choirs also make regular visits to Queen's Park and hold recitals on the grand staircase. If you are thinking about visiting the Ontario Legislature, consider going during the holiday festivities to enjoy the celebratory ambiance.

In Dufferin-Caledon, all throughout November and December, it appears that in every corner of our riding, there are Christmas events, parades, tree lighting ceremonies, concerts, holiday markets, craft shows, toy collections, stocking stuffing and plenty of Santa sightings ? something for everyone. I hope you and your family have a chance to get out and enjoy some of these activities. While you are enjoying the holiday festivities, please remember to travel safe and do not drink and drive. There are a variety of ways you can ensure that our roads are safe this holiday season. You can take a cab, carpool, or use a free service like HomeJames (905-951-9000), which uses volunteer drivers in your own vehicle.

Everyone deserves to have a memorable holiday and I would like to acknowledge the numerous organizations that extend a helping hand to many families and individuals in our community during this festive season. From food banks to women's and youth shelters, there are various ways for you to share your time or donate your money or items to help those who are struggling during the holidays.

One unique program I have participated in is delivering packages through the Shoebox Project for Shelters to organizations in our community. This year Hope 24/7 (905-792-0821), the provincially designated sexual assault centre in the Region of Peel, is receiving packages that were prepared by my colleagues in the Ontario Legislature. The shoeboxes are filled with items that any woman will likely enjoy, but may not splurge on. When money is tight mothers will focus on their children and their families; so the shoeboxes offer women the chance to have something special for themselves.

It is clear that there are many worthwhile organizations who work hard to ensure that those who need help are not forgotten during the holiday season. The holiday events and donation collections would not be possible without numerous volunteers who take time from their busy schedule to help give back to our community. Thank you to all who have supported our community's Christmas cheer and giving spirit.

No matter what you are celebrating this holiday season, I hope it is safe and healthy for you and your loved ones.

From my family to yours have a very Merry Christmas.

