

Ontario's Government for the People making positive change

by Sylvia Jones

Giving Thanks and celebrating Ontario's Agricultural Community By Sylvia Jones, MPP Dufferin-Caledon Thanksgiving has long been a tradition for many families to gather and celebrate with food and friendship.

In Canada, there is much to be thankful for beyond the customary giving thanks for a bountiful harvest. The customs most often observed by many in North America include recognizing that the traditional growing season has ended.

Your thanksgiving meal will likely include goods that are produced by Ontario farmers and producers. Ontario is home to more than 49,000 farms that includes over 200 products that we enjoy each and every day.

Thanksgiving is a great opportunity to understand the field to fork connection and it is why October 1st through October 7th is observed as Ontario Agricultural Week.

Our agri-food sector contributes \$39.5 billion to the provincial GDP and supports more than 822,000 jobs.

Our government understand the important role agriculture plays in our economy and in our communities. We have been working with our agricultural community to help us identify where they need help the most, in provincial red-tape and in regulatory burden. We are working to ensure that Ontario is open for business.

Changes have been made to the Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program (OWDCP). These changes were made after consultation with livestock farmers who identified problems with the application and my colleague Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Ernie Hardeman made the revisions needed.

Bill 32, Access to Natural Gas Act, introduced on September 19th, by my colleague Minister of Infrastructure, Monte McNaughton, when passed, will ensure communities that want access to natural gas will have that opportunity.

Natural gas expansion previously has been limited and consumers want choice on which energy they use.

There are many areas in Dufferin-Caledon where natural gas is supplied up to a certain point on a road or street, and yet neighbours close by have not been able to access that natural gas supply line. I've been pushing for the expansion of natural gas access for rural residents in Dufferin-Caledon for many years and I am pleased that Bill 32 directly addresses the concerns of my community.

These two measures are clear indications that Ontario's Government for the People is committed to rural communities and to farmers.

I am pleased to share this news and look forward to reporting on other initiatives that we are working on that will make a difference to farmers, producers and the supporting businesses for the agricultural sector.

As we mark Ontario Agriculture Week and celebrate Thanksgiving, give thanks to our farmers and producers for providing our safe and abundant food supply.