

Sylvia Jones MPP ? MPP Jones reflects on the conclusion of a busy year

I have been very busy since the beginning of the holiday season (which seems to start earlier and earlier every year) attending all of our fabulous community holiday celebrations.

At each event, parade or tree lighting that I have attended, I have had a chance to speak with many families in Dufferin-Caledon who are looking forward to spending time with their family and friends. With the preparations in full swing, I am sure many of us are completely engrossed in our baking, shopping, decorating and holiday parties.

While Christmas is a time for cheer and celebration, it is also a time for reflection. As the New Year approaches and 2013 draws to a close, I find myself surveying the situation we are currently facing in Ontario. Unfortunately, I feel as though we are in the midst of uncertain times in our province. Week after week it seems we hear of more closures and more job losses. First we heard about the 100-year-old Heinz plant in Leamington closing, and then we learned that Kelloggs was leaving London, and causing further job losses in that city as well. We have also learned that the long-touted Ring of Fire mining development in Northern Ontario may now be in serious jeopardy after Cliffs Natural Resources abandoned their investment commitment of more than \$3 billion. We've seen 300,000 manufacturing jobs leave Ontario under the Liberal government, and yet the closures continue.

Throughout this year, I have spent time with many local manufacturers, small businesses and residents who can ill-afford an increase in hydro. Manufacturing is eroding in Ontario, and that's something we cannot afford to let happen. The blame has been squarely placed on high taxes, rigid labour laws and sky-high, unaffordable energy costs. The Liberals are choosing to ignore our job creators and families by launching hydro rates into the stratosphere.

The tabling of the Fall Economic Statement in November proved that the Liberals do not know how to deal with the province's economic instability. As Ontario slips further into decline under a crippling debt, the largest in our province's history, it appears the Liberals plan is to strike a panel and engage in more conversation. In all, 36 government panels have been set up and still we have seen no jobs plan from this premier. Thirty-six panels could not save our horse-racing industry, for example, or our manufacturing sector. It's one thing to talk about change and jobs, it's quite another to initiate an action plan that will begin to turn things around. This past year has had many trials and tribulations. As I take a moment to pause and reflect on a very eventful 2013, I wanted to take an opportunity to thank you for your continued support. It is truly a privilege to represent Dufferin-Caledon at Queen's Park. I look forward to the New Year and the return of the Legislature so that we can get back to work on the difficult issues facing our province. I can assure you that the number one priority for me and my PC colleagues at Queen's Park is: jobs; how to create them, how to retain them, and how to improve them. We are focused centrally on the issue of job creation and economic growth in Ontario. No matter what you are celebrating this holiday season, I want to wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a safe and happy holiday season.

