

Wynne delivers positive message to party faithful in Holland Marsh

By Mark Pavilons

Despite some major mistakes by the provincial Liberal government, its leader is adamant that they're on track and making inroads. Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne delivered a strong and uplifting speech to more than 100 party faithful and members of the public recently at a fundraiser held at Holland Marsh Wineries in northern King Township. Wynne and members of the host York-Simcoe Liberal Association, worked the room and met with people one-on-one.

The premier readily admitted the costly relocation of gas plants was a bad move, and the estimated \$1 billion price (numbers are debatable) was due largely to avoid litigation.

"I am part of the government that made those decisions," she said. "We didn't pay close enough attention to the siting. We have to put a better process in place."

She did note the government has successfully built 21 other gas plants.

King resident Susan Beharriell asked the premier about measures to help sustain the horse industry, something vitally important to the area.

The previous decisions, Wynne said, "were not well thought out."

The province has pledged some \$400 million over the next few years to support the horse industry, she said, and they're working with race tracks. The premier is optimistic "we'll have a sustainable industry." The new chair of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG) supports an integrated racing industry.

The province is also leading the charge to revamp the Canadian Pension Plan. Finance Minister Charles Sousa has met with his provincial counterparts to discuss enhancing the CPP. The major concerns are the retirement system in this country is not adequate and it's important to address it now. They are hoping the federal government "comes around," but if not, Ontario is prepared to move ahead with a provincial plan.

These are long-term discussions, but they need to start now. "If we don't talk now, we lose a group of people who deserve these things," she said.

The province is also investing in infrastructure improvements, particularly waste water systems, which will ensure the economic viability of many small towns. Ontario is also pushing for a nation-wide infrastructure plan to address the aging infrastructure.

The Liberals are also strong supporters of Ontario's agri-food manufacturing industry, which "has huge potential to grow." Wynne is also agriculture minister and she's working with that sector to promote local food options.

"I'm a huge optimist when it comes to Ontario's potential," Wynne stressed.

Many investments will be outlined in the Nov. 7 economic statement, but the premier said constraining and cutting back is not the way to go. The government is on track to eliminating the deficit by 2017.

Referring to the informal gathering Friday night, Wynne said she loves to get in a room and engage in conversation

Wynne stressed the importance of the need to link urban and rural needs and communities. In rural areas like King, residents want the land looked after. The roads and bridges need to be maintained and the province recognizes that all regions of the province are equally important.

"We're all interconnected," she said.

The premier said she was thrilled to open the Royal Winter Fair earlier that day "the stage where city and country meet. She said it's important to recognize the kids showing cattle, for instance, and offer them the same opportunities as those in urban centres.

Wynne intends to "play the long game" and make investments for the future. It's tempting for politicians to look at the four-year cycle, but "it's not how I'm going to govern or why I'm in politics."



Caledon resident Kim Seipt was among those on hand to meet Premier Kathleen Wynne when she appeared recently in nearby King Township.