

Happy Earth Day!

By Sylvia Jones, MPP

Dufferin-Caledon

Ontario's Green Leaf Challenge has a goal of planting millions of trees across Ontario.

With Earth Day coming up on Saturday, April 22, the Green Leaf Challenge is a great opportunity to celebrate nature and do something good for your local environment ? as well as a great excuse to get outside for a few hours!

Each year, Ontario plants approximately three million trees under its 50 Million Tree Program (50MTP). The hope is that with the public's help, three million more trees will be planted this year; raising the total to six million trees planted in 2017.

The Green Leaf Challenge builds on the great work by my Progressive Conservative colleague, MPP Ted Arnott who, along with the County of Wellington, has been advocating for this program to be expanded across Ontario.

The County of Wellington's Green Legacy Program is the largest municipal tree planting program in North America and was recognized by the United Nations in 2010.

In 2015, Ted Arnott brought a resolution to the Ontario Legislature calling on the province to take the County of Wellington's model province-wide.

I am pleased to see that MPP Arnott's advocacy has paid off on this issue.

Individuals, organizations and business can participate in the Green Leaf Challenge by planting a tree, participating in a community tree planting event or making a donation to have a tree planted on their behalf.

To find out information on the challenge, you can visit greenleafchallenge.ca. The website also allows you to ?add your trees? to an interactive map of Ontario, where it shows where fellow Ontarians are planting trees.

Earth Day is a great opportunity to celebrate Spring and encourage good environmental practices.

If you are looking for ways to become involved, there are a number of events happening across Dufferin-Caledon.

For example, The Caledon Hills section of the Bruce Trail Club is celebrating Earth Day starting at 10 am at the Gosling Volunteer Forest Parking Lot, on 5 Sideroad north of Highway 9 in Mono.

Also, Let's Make Orangeville Shine is looking for volunteers to assist at their Earth Day Tree Planting and Cleanup. Volunteers are asked to meet at Broadway Pentecostal Church in Orangeville starting at 9 am.

Also, Tree Canada is hosting a tree planting at the Alder Parklands (275 Alder Street) at 9 am, and the Orangeville Sustainability Action Team and Dufferin County Cultural Resource Circle are hosting a tree planting at Island Court Parkette (150 Amelia Street) at 1 pm.

Whether you are celebrating Earth Day by planting a tree or cleaning up our local roadways and open spaces, Earth Day is an important reminder to value and protect the beautiful natural spaces around us in Dufferin-Caledon.

I encourage you and your family and friends to spend time in the great outdoors this spring and help Ontario reach its goal of six million trees planted.