

A New Year message

As The Queen's representative in Ontario, I am most pleased to send my best wishes for a happy and healthy New Year.

As I near the end of my term in office, it is natural to reflect over the past six years. Serving you as Lieutenant Governor of Ontario has been transformative, for me and for my wife Ruth Ann.

The most common question I'm asked is "what will you remember most about Ontario and its people?" The answer is easy -- the extraordinary role of volunteers. They are the unsung heroes of our society, the foundation for our quality of life as a province.

Every year, millions of Ontarians, young and old, donate their energy, experience and passion to their communities. Voluntarism and the spirit it generates are values we hold dear.

I have been welcomed by Ontarians in their communities, on occasions both joyful and somber. Together we have commemorated anniversaries, honoured local heroes, launched exhibitions and commemorations, awarded organizational and individual excellence, celebrated our diversity, and participated in a host of community and civic events.

Ruth Ann has enjoyed tremendously her visits on my behalf to the Lieutenant Governor's Aboriginal Summer Reading Camps in Northern Ontario, places inaccessible to my scooter. She has been proud to honour the Crown's connections with Canada's First Nations and to bear witness to the people, their history and their cultures.

As the first Lieutenant Governor of Ontario with a physical disability, I made accessibility the overarching theme of my term in office -- focusing on what people can do, rather than what they cannot do.

Throughout my six years in office, I've spoken to employer groups, service clubs and community organizations around the province about the strong economic case for employing people with disabilities. I'm pleased to say that I've witnessed some great progress, but there is still more work to do. I have faith that this work will continue, long after I leave office.

Serving the people of Ontario has been the most extraordinary and humbling experience of my life. I thank you so very much for welcoming Ruth Ann and me into your communities. We shall never forget your hospitality, your warmth, and your many kindnesses.

If you are in the Toronto area Wednesday, the first of January, please join us at the Lieutenant Governor's Suite for the 2014 New Year's Levee from noon to two o'clock at Queen's Park. All are welcome!

As The Queen's representative in Ontario, I wish each and every one of you a healthy, prosperous and happy New Year.

By the Hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont., Lieutenant Governor of Ontario