

Giving thanks, this Thanksgiving

The Fall season in Dufferin-Caledon is a busy time of year culminating in many events that focus on our agricultural community; fairs, farmers' market wrap-up, farm tours, plowing matches, Headwaters Horse Country stable tours ? not to mention the end of season harvest that allow us to enjoy plenty of locally grown fresh vegetables and seasonal fruit.

In Dufferin-Caledon we are blessed with an abundance of farmland and agribusiness surrounding our towns, villages and hamlets. One advantage to living within an agricultural community is appreciating the wide assortment of local farm to table offerings. Across the province, the agrifood industry contributes more than \$33 billion to the Ontario economy and agriculture in Dufferin-Caledon is an important contributor.

Local events that celebrate the harvest are a significant part of our Thanksgiving gatherings which traditionally marks the end of the harvest season. During this time of year, we are reminded of all that we, in our families and as a community, have and should be thankful for.

There are still families and individuals in our community who struggle every day to have enough food to eat.

This year, I am happy to finally see an amendment of the Local Food Act that will benefit farmers, food banks and those most in need. I supported my colleague MPP Bob Bailey on making a change to the Local Food Act that will now include a tax credit for farmers who donate their products to local food banks. This ensures that donated produce by farmers and producers will be used to help stock the shelves of our local food bank and return a tax credit worth 25 percent of the wholesale value to farmers.

Throughout Dufferin-Caledon, I see first-hand the progress of our own eat local buy local campaigns. I would encourage you, before the cold winds of winter are upon us, to get out with your family to support our agricultural community by shopping at the farmers market before the end of the season, or visiting a farm that has a corn maze or apple picking orchard, or support our local 4-H members as they participate in the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair Nov. 7-16th in Toronto.

I'd like to wish you all a very safe and happy Thanksgiving.

By Sylvia Jones, MPP