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MPP Sylvia Jones reviews challenges and accomplishments through 2025

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Dufferin?Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones, who serves as Ontario's deputy premier and minister of health under Premier Doug Ford, recently shared her thoughts on what was achieved in 2025 during an interview with the Shelburne Free Press.

Locally, Jones said the opening of the MRI suite at Headwaters Health Care Centre (HHCC) last fall was an incredible improvement to the community.

?I've been part of the Headwaters community for decades, and I can tell you that there's been many people over the years who have stepped up and wanted to see an MRI in our own hospital,? she said.

Jones said it was incredible to see so many people step up to quickly fundraise for the MRI and get it operational last year, and it felt great to give it the stamp of approval as the minister of health.

She also gave kudos to HHCC for using a prefabricated building to get the MRI up and running more quickly, allowing residents to access diagnostic imaging sooner.

?It truly is game changing not to have to spend time trying to find an open MRI, then working through paramedics to get them to the appropriate facility. It's all happening at Headwaters, and I am absolutely thrilled,? Jones enthused. ?It's got to be the highlight for me of 2025.?

She also noted, as minister of health, 49 new MRIs were approved across Ontario last year, bringing care closer to home.

The Town of Shelburne securing financial assistance from the province to expand its water sewage treatment plant is another key investment made in 2025 that Jones lauded. She said expanding sewage and water capacity means the municipality will be able to move forward with developing more houses and a long-term care home.

Meanwhile, Orangeville received $8.1 million for improvements to its water infrastructure capacity through the province's Municipal Housing-Enabling Water System Fund stream of the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program (MHIP). This funding will support the development of approximately 3,055 new housing units in Orangeville.

One of the greatest challenges facing Dufferin?Caledon residents, according to Jones, is the growing unaffordability of day-to-day living.

?There's no doubt that people are being stretched, whether it's through just the general cost of living, whether it's the ability to find and secure accommodation, rental homes, etc.,? she noted.

One initiative aimed at addressing this issue and benefiting commuters, Jones said, was the Ford government's permanent tax cut on gas.

Ontario's fuel tax was reduced from 14.7 cents per litre for gas down to 9 cents per litre in 2022, and made permanent in May 2025.

?Dufferin?Caledon has a very high percentage of commuters who travel southwest-northeast, so anything that we can do to make that a little more manageable. I think it was an important signal to take something that was year to year and make it permanent,? Jones noted.

On affordability, she also lauded the Ontario government for avoiding increases to the provincial sales tax rate or provincial income tax rates.

?That's certainly sending a very clear message that we intend to do everything we can to operate within our fiscal responsibility,? Jones said.

However, municipal leaders and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) have raised concerns about the province downloading costs onto municipalities by cutting services and shifting provincial responsibilities onto them. AMO argues this has resulted in higher property taxes for ratepayers or cuts to services.

Looking ahead to 2026, from the Ministry of Health's standpoint, Jones said her focus will be on continuing to improve Ontarians' access to doctors.

?We're making good progress on primary care expansions, making sure that everyone who wants to has an opportunity to sign up with a primary care practitioner, so that work will continue,? she said. ?For individuals who are looking, I hope that they will explore the Health Care Connect and sign up through that program.?

Ontario residents can register with Health Care Connect, and once available, the Ministry of Health will connect them with a primary care provider in their community.

About 2.5 million people in the province currently lack a doctor, according to the Ontario Medical Association.

Another focus for Jones in 2026 is to continue taking a collaborative approach to governance.

?Locally, I think it is important for politicians, regardless of our political stripe or background, to be able to work together. So obviously, (Orangeville) Mayor Lisa Post, now (Dufferin County) Warden Post ? there will be many issues that we will work together through,? said Jones.

?At the end of the day, we both serve the same community and the same people.?

A municipal election will be held across all of Ontario's 444 municipalities in October, and Jones noted a federal election may be triggered. Before concluding her interview with the Shelburne Free Press, Jones said she would encourage residents to get involved and share their thoughts with all levels of government.

?If I can leave one thing with people, it's get engaged, get involved and ask questions, because we all become better representatives when we get that feedback from our constituents,? Jones remarked.