

VIEW FROM QUEEN'S PARK: Leading Women/Leading Girls Recognition Awards

By Chris Ballard, MPP

Newmarket-Aurora

March 8 was International Women's Day and I was honoured to recognize 23 outstanding women and girls from Newmarket and Aurora at my third annual Leading Women, Leading Girls Building Communities Awards.

This provincial honour acknowledges and celebrates women and girls who demonstrate exceptional leadership in working to improve the lives of others in their communities. This year's recipients have encouraged women and girls to get involved in non-traditional careers.

They are championing and promoting issues such as equality, diversity and healthy, and equal relationships. They raise awareness in the prevention of violence against women and girls and help in reducing racism and discrimination.

These women and girls encourage other to participate in public service and act as positive role models through mentoring, coaching and volunteering. This year we recognized teachers, volunteers, business owners, students and York Regional Police Officers.

Congratulations to Angel Freedman, Phyllis Morris, Suzanne Whitehurst, Juliana Playter, Laurie Mueller, Marsha Fox, Elaine Adam, Edna Bozhor, Jan Freedman, Alex Karolyi, Laura Bradford, Shaylyn Benaissa, Nadia Gaurino, Taylor Piotrowski, Lisa Walters, Catherine Capek, Maimoona Ashraf, Gloria Reszler, Tanin Monzavi, Robyn Kassam, Rebecca Boyd, Karian Guimond and Rola Issa. Thank you to local business leader Vivian Risi for emceeding the event. Watch for our nomination call next October.

Mars Canada

Chocolate lovers celebrate! Mars Canada is now manufacturing the iconic Maltesers at its plant in Newmarket. Mars Canada invested \$70 million in a 60,000 square foot expansion to produce and package Maltesers. This expansion is fantastic news for Newmarket-Aurora. The expansion of the Newmarket facility has created 30 new, full-time, highly skilled jobs. Currently, the facility is home to 140 full-time Associates and once the plant is in full production this will increase to 150 full-time Associates. The plant will produce about 7.5 million Maltesers per day, or over 2.5 billion per year. At the launch, we were told Mars Canada makes enough Maltesers to fill an average-sized pool each day. That's a lot of yummy. Maltesers were created in the United Kingdom back in 1937 and will soon be introduced to the United States. About 80 per cent of the Newmarket production is expected to head south.

Shoshinkan Martial Arts

This past week I had the honour of attending a martial arts demonstration to celebrate Hokama Sensei. Hokama, is a tenth Dan Gojuryu Karatedo Hanshi, it is not very often, if ever, that the Town of Aurora is graced with the presence of one of the highest ranking karate masters. Sensei is a researcher, a historian, an author, and a master of karate and koudo. He has a resume that few in the world will hold and he exemplifies what it means to be leader. Congratulations to Steve Armes of Shoshinkan Martial Arts on your well attended event.

Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan

Recently the government of Ontario announced its plan to lower residential hydro bills by an average of 25 per cent starting this summer. This is good news for residents in Aurora and Newmarket. You will see a significant reduction in hydro rates and, in addition, your bill won't increase beyond inflation for at least four years.

For too long our energy system was plagued with issues: brownouts, blackouts and dirty coal plants that were a danger to our health, our environment and our economy. The province fixed these issues by closing all of Ontario's coal plants, building thousands of kilometers of new transmission lines and investing in renewable energy. Ontario now has a clean, reliable system that is going to benefit many generations to come. In many ways, financing our improved electrical system is similar to how municipalities finance large projects like hockey rinks and community centres ? we don't expect local folk to pay all the costs of a new centre when it will be enjoyed for 30 or 40 years. Indeed, municipalities ask that all residents ? current and future ? pay their fair share by financing the capital costs over many years. This change to how we are financing the provinces electrical upgrade is the right thing to do for the province and the fair thing to do for our families ? today and tomorrow.

Strong economy

Statistics Canada just reported on Ontario's latest numbers ? and they are good! In February, Ontario added 4,600 jobs, which brings the number of new jobs created in Ontario to almost 700,000 since the devastating recession of 2008. This is the 23rd straight month Ontario has beat the Canadian average. While the economy in the rest of Canada continues to struggle, Ontario's economy has been strengthening, as new companies choose to locate here and existing ones expand (the Mars Canada expansion is an example). Once again, Ontario is this country's economic powerhouse. In fact we're leading all G7 countries, which includes France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom and the United States of America.

As always, I invite you to contact me on any issue. Please call my community office at 905-750-0019, or visit my website at www.ChrisBallardMPP.ca. My email is: cballard.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org. I look forward to hearing from you.