

## MPP Jones attends Dufferin KAIROS session

Written By: Marni Walsh

KAIROS Dufferin expressed gratitude to Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones for attending an early morning meeting last Thursday, March 15, at Trinity United Church in Shelburne.

The MPP, Deputy Leader of the Progressive Conservative Caucus and the party's Infrastructure Critic, has come through several busy weeks as the party held elections and voted in a new leader.

Ms. Jones visited the KAIROS group to respond to questions on issues of concern to the organization.

KAIROS is an ecumenical social and environmental justice organization with partners across the country and around the world. Monthly meetings for the Dufferin Chapter involve education and discussion sessions on a variety of topics of concern such as water as a human right, the plight of refugees, and equity for indigenous peoples. All Dufferin KAIROS meetings acknowledge area lands as the traditional territory of the Kanionkihakain Kanekota.

Questions to MPP Jones in the hour-long session were responded to with concern ? though somewhat redirected, often leaving the heart of the question unanswered. Ms. Jones' response on the issue of helping immigrants, students, and others living in inadequate, over-crowded and precarious living conditions not conducive to success, became more of a discussion about why small housing units were good for seniors who were downsizing. She commented that larger living units were counter to the government's intensification plans. However, Ms. Jones did say Progressive Conservatives were ?discussing the possible idea of no (provincial) taxes for those who made under \$30,000 a year.?

A question regarding the PC stand on protecting fresh water in Ontario, as a non-renewable resource rather than allowing it to be sold in bottles, became a discussion about Ms. Jones' private member's bill to allow public access to monitoring information when sewage overflows occur. Her bill would provide valuable public insight into water quality safety ?to residents downstream? of a sewage overflow. However, the MPP told KAIROS ?the bill has not passed,? and ?the new Environment Minister (Chris Ballard) seems to believe Municipalities can do that.?

As the former critic for Children and Youth Services, Ms. Jones said she often dealt with the Children's Aid Society and found there to be ?a strong focus on keeping families together.? Despite this, national figures show there are currently more indigenous children in foster care than during the 1960's ?Scoop.?

It was announced early in 2018 that more than half of all foster children in Canada, under 14 years old, are indigenous. She noted that the ?over lying indigenous issues? were vast and challenging. ?Do I have a solution?? she asked, ?No, but I'm thinking about it.? Doug Fisher a member of the Mohawk Nation of the Haudenosaunee Six Nations (Iroquois) Confederacy brought further issues to light when he asked Ms. Jones what the Provincial government would do about the Indian Land Act of 1924. The act enforced fenced reservations where indigenous people were required to show passes to enter or exit much like ?a prison.? Mr. Fisher considers the act, which took control of indigenous lands, an illegal act of colonialism.

Ms. Jones was honest with Mr. Fisher and asked him to educate her on the issue - bringing to light, what Mr. Fisher says is at the heart of the problem - our education system's deliberate failure to teach the truth about the colonization of this land.

The truth is dark and dripping with deception, as it has since the beginning of colonialism hundreds of years ago. In 1921, Duncan Campbell Scott of the Department of Indian Affairs stated the goal was assimilation. ?I want to get rid of the Indian problem,? said Scott, who spent 52 years in Canada's Department of Indian Affairs, overseeing systematic, cultural genocide in Indian Residential Schools.

As the KAIROS meeting came to a close, the members thanked Ms. Jones for her time, and Mr. Fisher taught her a word in Mohawk: Skén:nen ? peace. This, says Mr. Fisher, is what the Iroquois offered the English in 1701.