



Statement on Innisfil's Bicentennial

"It is my privilege to represent people of Innisfil in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, serving as the Member of Provincial Parliament for riding of Barrie—Innisfil. Even amidst a time of challenge, it is with great pleasure and a sense of optimism for the future, that I reflect on Innisfil's Bicentennial.

Today marks the 200th anniversary, according to later records, of the arrival of the Hewson Family on Big Bay Point. The Hewson's were the first Europeans to settle on land that now makes up the Town of Innisfil. 1820 also marks the completion of the first survey of this land by the government of Upper Canada.

The pioneering spirit demonstrated by the Hewson's, and others who arrived in the subsequent decades is awe-inspiring. While the land was fertile, these families were living on the frontier, facing unforgiving challenges just to survive day-to-day. When I think of everything these settlers lived through and the everyday conveniences which we enjoy today that they lived without, I am inspired by their tenacity and versatility and the odds they overcame.

Our history has not been untainted or painless. The presence of Indigenous peoples in Innisfil, from the Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Anishinabek Nations, dates back thousands of years. The forced removal and attempted assimilation of Indigenous peoples is something that we as Canadians must acknowledge and continue to strive towards true reconciliation. On this day, as we recognize the anniversary of the arrival of the first European settlers in Innisfil, we do not forget the great wrongs committed and the lasting damages done by European settlement to Indigenous people.

As we honour and remember all those who came before us, Innisfil, like the rest of the world, is confronting the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

While we recognize wrongs that have been committed in the past, I also draw hope from the lessons of history. History is replete with examples of people working together, in common cause, to overcome challenges. War, famine, disease and pestilence have existed since time immemorial. However, thanks to the achievements and accomplishments of our predecessors, at no time have we ever been better equipped to stop a virus such as COVID-19."

Andrea Khanjin, MPP

Issued at Innisfil, Ontario
March 30, 2020