

CAFFI pilot project provides unique approach to affordable housing crisis

Written By MARK PAVILONS

A cooperative and engaged partnership has led to an innovative pilot project in Caledon.

Caledon Area Families for Inclusion (CAFFI) is a unique approach to meeting the affordable housing need for some select individuals.

Back in 2017, CAFFI, through its Caledon Housing Initiative, entered into a partnership with Raising The Roof (RTR) to create an affordable rental living place to pilot a housing project. This project aimed to give a few adults with developmental disabilities the opportunity for supported independent living in their home community. This partnership also grew to include the Toronto Regional Conservation Authority (TRCA), the Town of Caledon, Region of Peel (ROP), the Heritage Board, Building Up, Home Depot, SHS Consulting and Ryerson University.

CAFFI chair Patricia Franks explained the TRCA had a heritage building on a piece of property, unused for the past 13 years. They leased the land and building to RTR for \$12 per year for 20 years. RTR, with lots of community help and support, is raising all the funds to repurpose the building into a three-person home.

The organization held a fundraiser recently, raising some much-needed funds.

"CAFFI is an outstanding grassroots community organization," said Mayor Allan Thompson. "Through determination, collaboration and hard work they will realize their goal of affordable housing for adults with developmental disabilities with the completion of the one Cedar Mains property. This project will serve as a model for other projects that will help create an inclusive Caledon. I am proud to attend their fundraiser to support them and I can't wait to see what they do next!"

The Town heritage board is giving direction for the restoration of the outside of this building. The inside has been totally gutted and will be brand new. The main floor is totally wheelchair accessible.

Home Depot one of the major sponsors, and staff completed a volunteer day in August, cleaning up the property, building a fence, a bus shelter and a Peace Garden.

The Town and the Region have cooperated with funding, permits and support to get things moving.

The Town of Caledon Community Golf Tournament dedicated 75% of funds raised this year to this project.

Franks stressed this project is a home not a group home and is piloting the Home-Share concept. The plan is to have it ready for three residents to move in March 1, 2020.

"There is still work to do but this collaboration and proving the possible will have many positive ripples in Caledon for years to come," Franks said.

Franks explained it is outside of current government models and is not receiving any special government funding. Supports as needed will come to the home and be paid for through the family/individual's resources presently existing.

Housing options for adults with intellectual disabilities don't currently exist in Caledon and the changes in funding models at the provincial level does not allow for present or future group home development, she said.

This project is benefiting two young women with intellectual disabilities and a third person (home-share) with affordable living.

There was a general call to families in Caledon with young adults with intellectual disabilities to participate in the pilot. The families participating are the ones that agreed to be part of this pilot. There is interest by other families who want to see how this all works out before committing to a project.

?We wanted a model where families could transition with their young adult to a more integrated and supported independent housing model, be more included in the community and have the family support (especially from parents) while that was still possible. These young adults grew up in Caledon. This is where they are known, have friends, know their way around. This is where they have the right to live.?

This is a new model and Franks pointed out that many Ontario communities are struggling with the same issue of a lack of housing.

If the pilot is successful, Franks sees this concept becoming more popular.

?This addresses many issues and does so through community building partnerships. With all the growth Caledon is expected to undergo in the next 10-20 years, this must be one of the housing considerations by the Town, the Region and the builders. There are at least 75 families in Caledon with children/ adults with these challenges. Where are we the community expecting them to live?

?CAFFI Housing and the place it all started, the Caledon Housing Initiative, aims to be proactive, not just reactive to crisis in housing for persons with disabilities. It is an important part of community building and inclusion for all Caledon citizens.?