

Community out Saturday to celebrate Trans-Canada Trail

By Bill Rea

Saturday was a time for celebrating, both on a local and national scale.

It was a celebration of The Great Trail at the Trans-Canada Trail Pavilion Park in Caledon East. The event recognized several accomplishments, including Canada's 150th anniversary, the 25th anniversary of the Trans-Canada Trail (TCT) and the Caledon connection with the national trail.

There were some 200 similar events going on all over the country that day. At more than 25,000 kilometres across Canada, it is recognized as the largest recreational trail in the world.

'This is awesome,' declared Emcee Jan Smith-Bull of the Town's Parks and Recreation Department.

She also pointed out the pavilion in Caledon is one of 25 that has been refurbished this year, also observing Caledon's was the first.

'It truly started here,' she observed.

Michael Goodyear, trail development manager for Eastern Canada for TCT, acknowledged that Caledon played a key role in the development of the trail by having the first section that was registered.

'It's going to be a full day of celebrating,' he remarked. 'It's really celebrating beautiful, natural trails.'

Goodyear also said it's been estimated that it would take about two years and two months to walk the whole trail.

'The asset that you guys have here is incredible,' he declared.

Local artist and National Champion of TCT Cory Trepanier recalled in 1996 how CTV anchor Lloyd Robertson was in the area reporting on the first pavilion, and how he and his family were positioned in the background. He was painting during the filming. Trepanier said he's painted all over the country, including expeditions into the Arctic. But he also recalled how his heart started racing when he returned home from his first trip north to the fall colours.

'It's an incredibly beautiful world that we live in,' he said, adding it's a gift that people have to get out and experience.

Joel Dembe, an ambassador with the Rick Hansen Foundation, praised the accessibility of the trail.

There were also some former Caledon mayors on hand to offer their recollections of the development of the trail.

Emil Kolb said he recalled his father talking about walkways in Europe, and he wondered if such a thing would be possible here, considering there was the CN Rail right-of-way snaking through Caledon. Kolb said he tried to get Town staff on side with buying the lands in 1986, but they were not really supportive. He also remembered getting then Town solicitor David Osler to approach CN. There wasn't much reaction to the proposal, until the company started realizing what the Town wanted the land for, and the idea grew on them. They eventually settled on a price of \$1,000 per mile.

He also made sure he had the necessary votes on council, eventually having to break the tie, 'and it worked out.'

'It hasn't all been sunny,' former mayor Carol Seglins observed, recalling there were people with properties backing onto the line who wanted to buy the land themselves, while there were others who were anxious for a trail they could walk on.

Seglins said they made sure there was a community group formed to help establish the trail, and there was plenty of discussion on what uses would be permitted, including whether motorized vehicles, bikes and horses would be allowed.

'It's taken a lot of cooperation in the community,' she remarked, adding it was great when TCT encouraged the Town's participation.

'We are very proud to be part of the movement,' she remarked.

'It's such an important part of Caledon,' former mayor Marolyn Morrison declared. 'It's a gift that has been given to the people of Caledon and people outside of Caledon . . . for ever and ever and ever.'

Mayor Allan Thompson pointed out Caledon is regarded as a community of communities, and the trail helps link those communities.

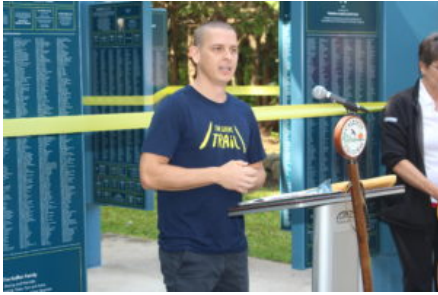
He also said it's good the trail is so close to Town Hall, as he sometimes goes out for a quick walk to clear his head.

'I do have a set of running shoes under my desk in my office,' he said.

'This is an absolute gem,' Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones declared.



Mayor Allan Thompson was joined by former mayors Marolyn Morrison, Emil Kolb and Carol Seglins in officially opening the refurbished pavilion on the Great Trail.



Michael Goodyear, trail development manager for Eastern Canada for the Trans-Canada Trail, commented on Caledon's contribution to the development of the Trail.