

CPL seeking public feedback for development of community makerspaces

By Rob Paul

Caledon Public Library (CPL) is taking on a new task to bring the community together and provide residents with the spaces, technology, and creative opportunity through makerspaces.

With federal and provincial support through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP), along with the Town of Caledon, Caledon Public Library will soon be able to introduce innovative new services and technologies in the reimagined Margaret Dunn Valleywood Branch.

An additional maker space is being developed in tandem with the relocation of the Caledon East Branch to the expanded Caledon East Community Complex.

As a result, CPL is seeking community input on potential makerspace tools, resources, and services that can be implemented into these branches through an online survey.

"Caledon Public Library wants to help people achieve their full potential by providing places where people create, invent, learn together, and build skills for life," explains Colleen Lipp, CEO/Chief Librarian. "We want to hear from our residents. Whether you're interested in learning new skills for fun, to start a new business venture, or to inspire your next big idea, let us know how we could help."

Makerspaces have been a new initiative for libraries across the country as a way to connect communities and support residents through learning with an emphasis on technology, making and creativity.

With the opportunity to shape a makerspace to the makers in the community and other residents' interests, there are many options that these branches have the potential to provide. That's why the library wants to hear from the people of Caledon to see the best way they can serve them.

CPL hired Kelly Doig to be its Coordinator of Community and Creation. Her role, in part, is to help CPL reach more people with its resources through things like makerspaces.

"Libraries used to be passive, now not only do we help in the community, but we give people the tools to create," said Mary Maw, Communications and Community Development for CPL. "We recognized the library needed to get somebody in that position and a lot of Kelly's responsibility will be these makerspaces and developing library services that you'd never expect to see in places like the coffee shop or grocery stores. We're really excited about her position and one of her first tasks are these makerspaces."

"Over the next couple years, we're going to have two makerspaces coming to Caledon," said Doig. "The reimagined Margaret Dunn Valleywood Branch will have a recording studio as well as spaces for working, learning, and meeting and resources for small businesses. That's going to be an exciting place for everyone in Caledon. The next makerspace is being developed along with the relocation of our Caledon East branch to what will be the expanded Caledon East Community Complex—that's a joint effort with the Town."

Makerspaces can include a range of resources such as computers, 3-D printers, audio and video capture and editing tools, musical instruments, sewing machines and traditional arts and crafts supplies.

"The one question we get is what is a makerspace? Some people know the word and others have never heard it," Doig said. "A makerspace is a space that encourages people to explore. It can be technology, making, creating, and the tools can be anything from high-tech audio/video equipment to laser cutters to traditional arts and craft supplies. There's an endless possibility of tools and

resources we can put in makerspaces.

One thing that really struck me when researching them is that it's not about the tools, it's about the people who use the space. That's why we're having to survey, to really see what the residents of Caledon's interests are and what they'd like to see in the space. One of my first tasks in this role was to visit other libraries makerspaces and not one of them is the same as the other. It's really just a space to invent, learn, and work together. Libraries all around the world have been taking them on and we're happy we can finally bring them to Caledon.

With the vast opportunities that makerspaces offer, CPL is aiming to have each of them focus on different needs in Caledon. Though the Margaret Dunn makerspaces will provide creative artists with a recording studio, it's ultimately aimed at helping small business while Caledon East will provide a creative and technologically advanced space for makers.

We do know in advance that Margaret Dunn will be more of a small business centre; that's lacking and so that's what we're implementing there, said Maw. We've asked the community things like, 'Do you have a home-based business and you'd like to have a place to work quietly?' That's why we're shaping it that way, but both makerspaces are going to be different. Caledon East is more on the maker end with the technology.

They'll be different so that we can serve different interests in the community, said Doig.

Libraries have become so much more than a place to borrow a book, especially throughout the pandemic, and CPL is embracing its role in Caledon and working to advance what it can do for creators in the community.

We re-launched our 'Artful Caledon' platform in the fall, which is platform to highlight artists, authors, and we're adding musicians this year, said Maw. We're also adding a whole component for creators, so music studios and art studios will be necessary. We're trying to say to the community that if they want to create music, well then they can borrow a guitar at the library and go to our music studio. It all works together. Even if we don't necessarily have designated space in our littler branches, part of Kelly's role is to bring the Cricut with them and do workshops in the branches and we have mobile 3D printers. Even when we don't have the space, we want to offer all the opportunities we can in smaller branches.

Everyone that completes the survey will be entered in a draw to win a Cricut Joy (to win the Cricut Joy you must be a resident of Caledon) from Creativebug, an online platform that offers online video arts and crafts workshops and techniques and is available through CPL's Digital Library. Cricut Joy is a computer-controlled cutting machines that is designed for home crafters.

Our makerspaces are just so big, and we really need to narrow our options down, said Maw. The survey even looks at things like what hours work best. If we're trying to offer a space for home-based businesses to go, then maybe they need nights and weekends. We want to gather all the information we can to really make sure we have the right tools and hours. It's even questions about how much support they'll need in the makerspace. Will they need workshops or staff one-on-ones? Even looking at the responses so far you can see the excitement in the community. We're really finding that we've identified a need in the community and it's something we're able to step up and address.

We've had 85 responses so far (since March 4), I set this goal of 100 but it sounds like we'll easily get there, said Doig. The survey was something we knew we wanted to do from the beginning, and we were lucky to have a prize to help get more people to answer the survey. We're also getting answers from across Caledon with one of the questions being, 'what's your main branch?' to get an idea where people in Caledon are answering and it's been from across the Town. It's good to see there's widespread support for this from all corners of Caledon.

As part of the Margaret Dunn Valleywood branch, CPL will also be seeking sponsorship to help cover the resources needed for the recording studio that the grant will not cover. Maw said it's one of the first times CPL will actively be seeking sponsorship.

If you have questions, or want to learn more about makerspaces, CPL is having drop-in makerspace sessions next week between

March 15 and March 18 at some of our branches. Staff will be present to demonstrate select maker tools and be available to answer questions about the future CPL makerspaces.

The sessions will take place at these branches: Margaret Dunn Valleywood (March 15 and March 17 from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.), Caledon Village (March 16 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.), Southfields Village (March 16 from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. and March 18 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.), and Caledon East (March 18 from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.).

Residents can provide feedback via the online survey at www.caledon.library.on.ca/survey.