

Theft of generator stalled Island Lake trail project

By Tabitha Wells

The project that will complete the perimeter trail around Island Lake in Orangeville was stalled this week by the theft of a generator loaned for the job by Bob Shirley.

The generator, which was being used to help secure and complete the final bridges of the Friends of Island Lake (FOIL) project, was stolen sometime Friday night.

Mike Walker, chair of the Friends of Island Lake Fund Development Committee, took to Facebook Saturday afternoon to ask if anyone might have any information about the theft, and the official FOIL Facebook Page made an announcement regarding the theft Sunday.

“Does anyone know who may have stolen the generator from the Friends of Island Lake bridge building work site behind the cemetery over the last few days?” Walker posted on the Orangeville and Area Q and A Facebook page. “The community volunteers that are building the bridges were unable to work on this beautiful day since there was no power for the equipment. Shame on whoever did this.”

The generator was stored in a secluded area near the south bridge, covered by a tarp and logs, so the item was not clearly visible. In an email Monday morning, FOIL Co-Chair Wayne White explained that the generator was being used to help volunteers screw in the deck boards for all three bridges, as well as the wickets for the railings.

“Because of volunteers doing this labour-intensive task, FOIL is saving thousands of dollars to help reduce the cost of construction and make the loop around Island Lake Conservation Area a reality,” White explained in the email. “Without a generator the task becomes much more difficult.”

Tuesday morning, White announced that local residents Bill and Shelley Herron have donated a generator to FOIL so that they could complete the work on the bridge, but thus far the stolen generator has not been recovered.

Although the theft did not bring work to a complete halt, it slowed progress, as volunteers had to move forward using hand drills, which are far more time-consuming on such a project.

“With the generator, we are able to use powered stand-up drills that are loaded with screw strips, which is much faster and more efficient,” White said.

Support has flooded in on both Facebook posts, with members of the community expressing their concern and sadness at the situation.

“Sad to think that anyone would do that when the volunteers have done so much to build this treasure for our community,” wrote one poster. “That person should be ashamed and will hopefully return it ASAP.”

Walker confirmed that OPP have the details, and asks that if anyone knows of someone with an older generator that is not theirs to please report it.

Local residents Terri and Gerry Holden quickly donated \$100 toward a new generator, which White agreed to match.

“The thieves have stolen our generator, but they have not robbed us of our will and our determination to complete the west link,” he declared.

The theft came two days after FOIL got some good news, in the form of an announcement that they had been awarded a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) to help with the completion of the trail.

Last Wednesday, Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones made the announcement that the OTF would be providing \$136,000 to the Credit Valley Conservation Foundation to assist with the final two kilometres of the trail.

“MPP Jones and the Friends of Island Lake have worked incredibly hard to build the Island Lake Community Trail, and we are thrilled to receive this support from the Province,” said Foundation Executive Director Terri LeRoux. “The 10-kilometre, fully wheelchair accessible, walking and cycling trail is a project which will benefit residents of our watershed for generations to come, and will encourage healthy active living within a beautiful setting.”

The grant will help the Friends of Island Lake reach the \$800,000 fundraising goal set out as part of their Close the Gap Campaign, which would cover the costs of the final bridges and portions of the trail needed to finish the loop around the lake.

The trail system currently allows users to enter from either Hockley Road or across from the Home Hardware parking lot, and a third Point of entry will be from Hurontario Street near the Island Lake Rowing Club property.

Hikers now can use a large horseshoe that takes them around Island Lake and across multiple bridges.

According to those involved in the project, the full loop trail is expected to be completed by the end of this year, and will link with existing or planned trail networks in Orangeville, Mono and Caledon.

?I am pleased to see the Credit Valley Conservation Foundation receive an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant to help complete the trail at the Island Lake Conservation Area.? Jones said. ?The CVC Foundation (and) the volunteer members of Friends of Island Lake have created an incredible trail system that is enjoyed by our entire community and visitors to the area.? Any individuals or companies interested in supporting development of the trail are encouraged to contact Terri LeRoux of the CVC at 905-542-9159. For more information on the trail and the work of Friends of Island Lake, visit www.cvcfoundation.ca