

MPP REPORT

By: Ted Arnott ~ MPP Wellington - Halton Hills



July 1, 1867 witnessed the birth of the most just, most tolerant, most diverse, most compassionate, and most picturesque country in the world (but to be fair, I won't make the claim that we have the best year-round weather).

In 2017, just two years away, Canadians will celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

I was glad to attend a special meeting of the Halton Hills Cultural Roundtable group at the Red Door Gallery in Georgetown on May 21.

The Cultural Roundtable members are already beginning to make plans for a memorable community birthday bash for our country's sesquicentennial.

Wellington-Halton Hills MP Michael Chong had also been invited. He gave an interesting presentation about the federal programs which have been launched to support community celebration projects in 2017.

He reminded all of us that not only will Canada be celebrating 150 years in 2017, but the founding provinces will

be celebrating 150 years as well, as part of a united Canada.

Listening to this, in my mind I asked myself: "What is the Province of Ontario planning to do, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of its' existence?"

What could the Province do?

I immediately remembered the County of Wellington's Green Legacy programme, which was launched in 2004 to coincide with the County's 150th anniversary. Through Green Legacy, the County promoted and organized volunteer community activities that planted 150,000 trees that same year.

Growing into an annual effort, Green Legacy has become the largest municipal tree planting programme in North America. It has led to the planting of over 1.8 million trees in just over ten years.

Why couldn't Ontario follow the lead of the County of Wellington, take Green Legacy province-wide, with the goal of planting 150 million trees?

I did some research, and

discovered that the Ministry of Natural Resources doesn't seem to track or publicly report cumulative tree planting activities in Ontario. They should.

But as recently as seven years ago, apparently 92 million trees were planted in one year as part of the reforestation renewal process. Unfortunately, that number has diminished to nearly 50 million trees as of 2011/12, the most recent year for which numbers are available.

In addition, a group called Forests Ontario currently has planted 22 million trees since 2003, and has goal of reaching 50 million trees by 2025.

My suggestion would represent a dramatic increase in these efforts. I believe it can be done, but we would need leadership of the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

On June 25, I spoke to Wellington County Council to thank them for their vision and leadership, and offer to work with them to urge the Government to take Green Legacy province-wide.

That would be a 150th anniversary celebration for the ages, as well as a lasting gift to future generations of Ontarians.

Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott welcomes your comments. He can be reached at 1-800-265-2366. His website address is www.tedarnotmmp.com

Local Cadet off to Belgium



INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE: Acton resident and cadet Ellen Dobbs (right), with 197 Typhoon Squadron Captain Scott Legge, reflect on Ellen's time as a cadet and her upcoming trip to Belgium. - Vivien Fleisher photo

By: Vivien Fleisher

Acton resident Ellen Dobbs has earned a lot of things in her six years as a cadet with Squadron 197 in Acton: she has earned her gliders pilot license and participated in four National Courses, all the while honing numerous life skills. But she has also earned tremendous respect and admiration from Squadron Captain Scott Legge for earning a spot in the International Cadet Exchange Program. Dobbs leaves on July 17 for Belgium for 2 1/2 weeks, and Legge, who in his 11 years as captain has never had a cadet selected,

or is aware of any prior records of anyone from that Squadron being selected acknowledges "It's a big deal."

At the same time though, he is not surprised. Chief Dobbs, who is off to Carleton University this fall to study humanities, has come a long way since she first signed up at age 13. Encouraged by her stepmother who was involved with the cadets, she quickly began to rack up achievement after achievement, and the fact that this is her fourth national course is nothing less than "a phenomenal achievement" according to Legge. Ellen's father second Lieutenant Richard Dobbs is a pilot as well.

The trip to Belgium marks the end of Dobbs' time as a cadet, and in those six years, she has experienced major personal growth and is much more confident speaking in public via the travel and opportunity that cadets affords. She has a greater sense of community, and can't say enough good things about the program, which she says prepares youth for the future by

giving them confidence and skills, at virtually no cost. Cadets are paid to go to summer training, and apart from costs associated with licensing fees, the program is free: it is a federally-sponsored program for youths aged 12 - 18, and although members learn a lot about the Canadian Forces, there is no obligation upon leaving to join the military. Rather, the goal is to teach life skills to help members in their future endeavours. The website says it best: the program is "Possibly the best kept secret in Canada".

Of the three countries she chose out of an available 18 in the IACEA program, Dobbs was lucky enough to get her first pick of Belgium, a country she has wanted to visit since researching it as a French Immersion student. Highlights include historical tours of Ypres and Brussels, with cadets staying in hotels during the week, and with local families on the weekend. This trip marks her first time being away on her own, and some day, she hopes to become an Officer.

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