



STREET SAFETY SURVEY: Participants at a walkability workshop last Thursday in Acton, including, from left: Carol Smith, Shirley Broostad, Kevin Okimi and Arlene Bruce checked conditions for those who walk on Elizabeth Drive. – Frances Niblock photo



ACTON ACCESSIBILITY: Acton's Lorna Brooks (in wheelchair) and Anne Holliday with Links2Care took part in a walkability workshop last Thursday to study how to make Acton friendlier for people with disabilities, seniors and moms with strollers. – Frances Niblock photo

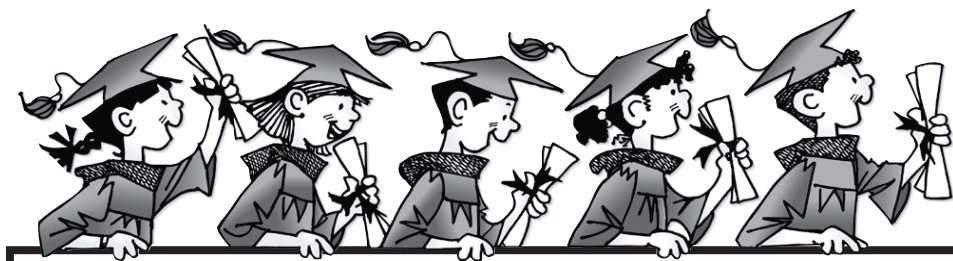
Greening Acton High

Acton High School staff and students continue to "green" the school inside and out with a generous grant from the Halton Learning Foundation and the support of Sheridan Nurseries. Recently they were able to integrate their long term Millenium Garden development plan that includes naturalizing the school yard property with their "Ontario Eco Schools" initiatives. The ECOschools initiative is

spearheaded by teacher Joanne Pattison-Meek and is an environmental education program for Grades one to 12 that helps students develop ecological literacy while engaged in practices to become environmentally responsible citizens. Developed and run by school boards, Ontario EcoSchools also helps improve school building operations to reduce environmental impacts.

The school hopes their

hard work inside and outside the school will help move them towards attaining a much coveted "Gold" level certification with Ontario EcoSchools. Over 100 students and staff participated in the tree planting including the Grade 8.5 Access Program students from McKenzie-Smith Bennett School who planted a maple tree to provide shade for the school and thereby reduce the cooling needs of the school.



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Some streets 'unsafe' wheelchair user says

Wheelchair-bound Lorna Brooks wants the mayor and councillors to roll a few blocks in her wheels to see how "dangerous" some Acton streets are for older adults, people with wheelchairs, walkers or scooters and mothers pushing strollers.

Brooks decided to issue the challenge following a walkability workshop last Thursday that with participants who catalogued safety and mobility issues on Acton's downtown area streets.

While a final report has not been compiled, Brooks said problems with the design, location and lack of curb cuts was second on the list of concerns, followed by the lack of sidewalks, and then the narrowness of some walkways because of shrubs and flower boxes.

Brooks wants politicians to experience the challenge people with mobility issues face along the entire length of Mill Street/Young Street/

Guelph Street, a route she avoids because it is "brutal" to travel in some areas.

"They need to know how dangerous the sidewalks are. Come in a wheel chair. Come in a walker or with a mobility device – I'll even take them to some places. The sidewalks are horrible," Brooks said, adding there are also several safety issues at the Mill and Main Streets.

Workshop presenter Shirley Broostad said it is too soon to assess all of the information generated, but she's confident improvements will be made following recommendations from participants including Town recreation and transportation staff, members of the accessibility committee, local seniors and police.

"Results from a walking checklist are being summarized and these results will be added and the next phase is to hold

a walkability workshop in Georgetown," Broostad said on Friday, adding they are pleased that the Town and Region are continuing to make communities that support walking and biking.

Combined with results of a similar survey of Georgetown streets, and results of a walkability questionnaire, Town staff will report on how to create an environment that is safer and easier for walking. Brooks said she understands that there is a process, but is anxious for action.

At press time, Mayor Rick Bonnette and Acton Councillors Somerville and O'Leary had not been contacted by Brooks about her challenge.

Bonnette said in the past he has used a wheelchair at the civic centre, ridden the ActiVan and spent time wearing restrictive glasses, four layers of gloves to hinder mobility and a cane to better experience living with disabilities.

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