

Ward 1 candidates address opportunities for youth

By Bill Rea

Social issues were the main items on the agenda last Monday night as the two candidates for the Ward 1 area seat on Caledon council were taking part in the Caledon Health and Social Services Community forum.

Incumbent Doug Beffort and challenger Gino Petricca were facing each other in the event, which was jointly run by Caledon Community Services (CCS), Volunteer MBC, Family Transition Place, Caledon Parent-Child Centre and Caledon Meals

on Wheels.

Candidates picked one of seven prepared questions to address, and both Beffort and Petricca chose to deal with what council could do to promote opportunities for youth in the community, apart from recreation and leisure activities.

"I truly believe that youth are our only legacy," Beffort declared, adding recreation and leisure can't be separated from other activities.

"It has to be a package," he said, involving positive home and school environments and safe communities too.

He sits on Caledon Youth Services, and he cited the work of the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program.

He said what's lacking is a coordinated approach to determine the needs and address them.

Beffort also questioned whether all the needs are being addressed, pointing out there is vandalism taking place, and young people hanging around on the streets with apparently nothing to do.

Caledon Youth Services can help in this regard, and he said it's important to employ all groups, including the young people; "sort of like a youth-focused United Nations," he said.

Petricca said he has lived in Caledon about 24 years, having raised four sons here, and he said there wasn't a lot of opportunity for them. They had to go outside the community for jobs.

He commented on the need to attract more businesses to the area, including facilitating home-based businesses to provide opportunities for bread-winners close

to home.

He also said the Town needs more services that students can provide. For example, he said there are lots of public areas in Town during the summer where the grass is very high or there are weeds that need to be addressed. "The Town should lead by example," he said.

Petricca also suggested going into the schools and attending gatherings of young people to get ideas from them.

"Just because they're young doesn't mean they don't have ideas," he commented, adding they need to feel they're part of the solution.

Legislature votes in favour of mental health report recommendations

Dufferin — Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones as pleased last month when MPPs voted unanimously to adopt the final report from the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions and its 23 recommendations.

She said the vote in the legislature acknowledged the hard work and recommendations the committee put forth in Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians.

"This is one more step to move the province forward to improving mental health and addictions services for all Ontarians," said Jones. "Mental health and addictions organizations have lent their support to the recommendations, and I am happy that my colleagues in the legislature see the value in the work the committee has done."

One recommendation

from the committee Jones cited is to create a new umbrella organization called Mental Health and Addictions Ontario.

She said this would ensure that a single body is responsible to design, manage and coordinate the mental health and addictions system, and be run by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

"Having a central body to ensure that mental health and addictions services are equally available to individuals throughout the province is a step in the right direction," she said.

"An organization similar to Cancer Care Ontario, which ensures that programs and services are delivered consistently and comprehensively no matter where in Ontario you live, is crucial to ensuring proper care for individuals suffering from mental health issues."

The committee's 23 rec-

ommendations were compiled after almost two years of meetings with hundreds of mental health and addictions organizations, clients, and families from across the province. Other recommendations include a "peer support" component be put in place to connect individuals with those who have experienced a similar mental health or addictions crisis, and can assist them on their path to recovery.

"Although the official mandate of the committee is complete, I look forward to continuing the dialogue about mental health and addictions services, and ensuring that these 23 recommendations do not get ignored," Jones commented.

She added she will be speaking about the committee's report and recommendations at the annual general meeting of Peace Ranch Oct. 5.

Ward 1 debate will be Oct. 22

Caledon Village Association will be hosting a Ward 1 mayoralty and council all-candidates' debate Oct. 22.

It will be from 7 to 9 p.m. at Caledon Village Place on Hurontario Street. The format will open with each candidate addressing several pre-distributed questions, followed by questions from the audience.

Caledon Village Place holds only 90 people, so admittance to the debate will be on a first-come basis.

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