

Local Perspective is Essential for Trillium Foundation

By Sylvia Jones, MPP

Dufferin-Caledon

Dufferin-Caledon is home to many active not-for-profit organizations that provide unique cultural and social services in our community.

Many of these organizations have accessed Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) funds to offer unique programs and infrastructure.

For example: Theatre Orangeville recently received a \$100,000 grant from Trillium to modernize their lighting system at the Orangeville Opera House. Other local organizations like Caledon Meals on Wheels, the Orangeville Blues and Jazz Fest, the Caledon Cycling Club, Caledon Community Services and the Island Lake Community Trails Project, have received funding from the OTF.

Needless to say, the funding from the OTF has provided great benefit to people in Dufferin-Caledon and across Ontario.

The OTF relies on Grant Review Teams that are comprised of local volunteers who provide local knowledge and insight in order to ensure that grants meet a community's needs. Unfortunately, the Government has allowed increasing number of vacancies to accumulate in Dufferin and Caledon's Grant Review Teams.

Only thirteen of nineteen review team positions are filled in Waterloo-Wellington-Dufferin, while seventeen of twenty positions are filled in Halton-Peel. Despite these vacancies there is only one member in the regional review teams for the Town of Caledon.

To make matters worse, I am aware of numerous well qualified individuals who are willing to volunteer and fill these vacancies, but have been waiting for over a year to hear back about their application.

This lack of action to fill the vacancies is even more concerning given that representation will be further minimized if the proposed changes to the number of Grant Review Teams occur.

Currently there are 16 review teams across the province. Under the proposed changes, that number would be reduced to 5. By reducing the number of regions, there will be fewer local voices and less local knowledge provided when approving a grant for a local community initiative. This is precisely the opposite of what communities like Dufferin and Caledon need.

I have written to the CEO of the Ontario Trillium Foundation calling on her to stop pursuing the 'regionally based model' and improve the process for filling vacancies to ensure local representation is maintained.

If you agree, I encourage you to email or write to the Ontario Trillium Foundation. If you have any questions or want help contacting the OTF do not hesitate to contact my office at sylvia.jonesco@pc.ola.org or 1-800-265-1603.