

## Trail nearly finished, FOIL's Shirley stepping down

At Dufferin County Council last Thursday night, Bob Shirley and Wayne White of Friends of Island Lake (FOIL) provided Council with an update on the Close the Gap Campaign. After successfully reaching their fundraising goal to finish the last stretch of the Island Lake loop, the trail is almost ready to open.

"The major reason I'm here is I want to thank County Council for all their past help and support over the years," said Mr. Shirley. "We have finally reached our financial goal and we're happy about it. If everything goes right, the trail will be open within a week to 10 days."

While the trail may be open shortly, the official grand opening for the completed portion of the project will be held on August 28, near the Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) sign on Highway 10.

"Everyone is invited to help us officially close the gap," added Mr. Shirley. "For 20 years this has been happening; it was always in my mind to bring this project forward. Thank you to everyone for helping."

The bridges were the design of Mr. Shirley, who helped spearhead the project, which aimed to provide more opportunities for the public to enjoy the area. The idea came to him after witnessing some bridges on Manitoulin Island, and from there the Island Lake loop trail began to move forward.

For 40 years, Mr. Shirley has been working with the CVC and the Friends of Island Lake, contributing countless hours to the community over the years. Part of the presentation at Council on Thursday was to recognize Mr. Shirley's retirement from FOIL.

"We're calling this the Bob Shirley goodbye tour," said Mr. White, referencing the presentations being made to each of the councils. "He is always thinking about the trails, and I think that is going to stop. He's already planted the seed that our job isn't done yet, and we know he'll be letting me know what we can do going forward. On behalf of FOIL, thanks Bob, you've done a great job."

But it wasn't just Mr. White and FOIL who wanted to express their gratitude to Mr. Shirley, as County Warden Warren Maycock thanked him for his work and dedication over the years.

"Bob Shirley is a name well-known throughout the Town of Mono, the County of Dufferin and the Credit Valley Conservation authority," said Warden Maycock. "In fact, his name is synonymous with Island Lake. For nearly four decades, Bob has given his time to his community. I consider Bob to be a 'doer'."

Along with sitting on the CVC's Board of Directors, The CVC Foundation and being FOIL's founder, his relentless dedication to local projects has resulted in residents of the area being able to enjoy places like the Dufferin County Museum, the Vicki Barron Lakeside Trail, and the Credit River.

"Under Bob's guidance, the Friends have raised more than \$1 million in donations, completed more than 10 kilometres of fully accessible trail [and] contributed more than 12,000 volunteer hours," added Warden Maycock. "Well done, Bob, and again thank you."