

VIEW FROM QUEEN'S PARK: Why Code Aurora

By Chris Ballard, MPP

Newmarket-Aurora

With all the challenges facing our world, we can't afford to leave anyone on the sidelines.

It's ?all hands on deck,? as we educate young Ontarians to solve the challenges of tomorrow. Besides, it's simply not fair to sideline anyone because of who they are just because of their demographic niche.

That's why I'm delighted Aurora sisters Maya and Amanda Bishop, both students at Aurora High School, are aiming to challenge misconceptions about girls choosing a career in technology. As The Auroran reported last week, the young women want to narrow the technology gender gap by hosting female technology leaders for a night of conversation.

Why Code Aurora: A Night of Empowering Girls Through Code takes place October 24 from 6:30 ? 8:30 p.m. at Aurora High School and is open to young women from the community ? and guys, too.

The night brings together a group of six women who have forged careers in technology. It will encourage up-and-coming talent to see the possibilities of a career in technology. The speakers are Modana Ebrahimi, Product Manager for OntarioMD; Wendy Foster, Director of Data Properties at Wattpad; Kate Kurtz, IBM Bluemix Development Manager; Maryam Shoeybi, Software Engineer Achievers; Kaitlin Smith, Producer, Uken Games; and I-Yana Tucker, Talent Manager at Wattpad. Register at tinyurl.com/WhyCodeAurora.

Ontario Supporting Specialized Services for Human Trafficking Survivors

It's difficult to think that York Region, let-alone a wonderful town like Aurora, might have anything to do with human trafficking. And yet the experts tell us that no area is safe and women from our communities have been entrapped in the sex trade.

We've heard this concern, from across Ontario ? big cities and small towns. Ontario is helping survivors of human trafficking to heal and re-build their lives. Our government has introduced new programs and services designed to meet the unique and often complex needs of each individual. The program also includes initiatives that aim to prevent human trafficking.

Funding to help end human trafficking and support survivors was given through the Anti-Human Trafficking Community Supports Fund in Newmarket. The recipient in Newmarket was the York Women's Support Network, which will help support prevention and awareness through outreach and education, with trauma counselling leading into an intensive healing program.

Human trafficking is a horrible crime that robs the dignity of those who are exploited and abused. Survivors are controlled mentally, physically and emotionally by traffickers.

It is difficult for them to leave and find help. Those who do find a way out often need support in a range of areas, such as trauma counselling, addictions recovery, job training and more. The province is committed to addressing human trafficking so that everyone in the province can live in safety and free from the threat, fear or experience of exploitation.

Invictus Games

Ontario is celebrating and supporting the outstanding performances of the Team Canada competitors at the 2017 Invictus Games in Toronto, and the lasting legacy that the games will leave for people across the province.

75,000 people attended the many events during the eight days of competition while many more watched all across the world. The games saw many of the sport events sold out including wheelchair rugby, wheelchair basketball and swimming.

Team Canada competed in all 12 sports at venues across the Greater Toronto Area, with strong performances by its competitors.

Building on the success of the Games, Ontario is making a legacy investment in paraspot in Ontario.

This funding will encourage long-term athlete development, enhance coaches' training and provide better opportunities to those living with disabilities to participate in sport. The sports equipment that was used during the Games will be distributed to Indigenous Communities, ParaSport Ontario and other sport organizations.

Opioid Emergency Task Force

Ontario is helping to fight the opioid crisis by establishing an Opioid Emergency Task Force. The task force will include front-line workers and people with lived experience to strengthen the province's coordinated response to the opioid crisis.

The Task Force will help ensure that those closest to the crisis are providing critical insight about what is happening on the ground,

they will support the province's coordinated response to the crisis and address new challenges as they emerge. The task force will bring together representatives from province-wide system partners working to combat this emergency, including front-line workers in harm reduction, addiction medicine, and community-based mental health and addiction services, among others.

The Task Force will advise the government on a robust and targeted public education campaign to raise awareness about the risks associated with opioid use and how people can protect themselves and their loved ones against the harms associated with addiction and overdose.

All public health units in the province will have consistent and up-to-date education materials to support their efforts in local communities. The province is also working with pharmacists on an insert about the possible health risks of opioids, which will be provided to patients when they pick up an opioid prescription.

As always, I invite you to contact me on any issue. Please call my community office at 905-750-0019, or visit my website at www.ChrisBallardMPP.ca. My email is: cballard.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org. I look forward to hearing from you.