

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing Douglas McDonald

BY PAULA BOON

Douglas McDonald is all about connecting with others, especially his family.

For example, a year ago the Canada Post worker signed up for karate alongside his kids, then ages 9 and 7.

"I had to be there anyway," he explains. "And it helped them feel less nervous."

McDonald says it's also fun to practise with them between sessions.

"My daughter's a really smart girl, and back at home she remembers the moves. She'll tell me, 'No, Dad, it's like this,'" he says.

McDonald is glad that his daughter is learning self-defence, and he hopes knowing karate will give his son confidence in the future.

"I want him to be able to walk away from a problem without feeling inferior," he says. "That's something that's difficult for many men to do."

When they're not ferrying the kids to their swimming lessons, soccer and other extra-curricular activities, McDonald and his wife of 13 years prefer to spend time at home rather than going out on the town.

"And most weekends, we either visit extended family in Barrie and London, or have someone visiting us," he says. "Family is very important. This was instilled in me by my parents."

After his family moved to Canada from Scotland when he was

five years old, McDonald's parents sent him back every four years to spend time with his grandparents, aunts and uncles.

"We would stay six weeks at a time," he says. "It was wonderful."

Between visits, the family continued to keep in touch.

"I still have letters from my grandparents and aunts and uncles who are no longer here. They're a great keepsake for me to have," he says.

It makes sense that someone so focused on maintaining connections with others works for Canada Post.

McDonald was first hired by the corporation in London, Ontario in 1986 and has been at the Huntsville post office since June, 1995.

At first he was in the back of the building processing mail, but since May he has been serving customers at the front counter.

"I enjoy dealing with the public," he says. "It's been mentioned to me often that I should be in sales."

Part of McDonald's job involves giving the kindergarten tours.

"I run the cancelling machine so they can see the letters being pulled in fast, and if they have a letter they can sort it to where it's supposed to go. They also get to honk the horn on the forklift," he says with a smile. "It took a few tours to fine-tune it and make it really kid-friendly, but now when I'm at the grocery store

I'll hear, 'Mommy, that man's from the post office.' It's great."

Between 1995 and 2005 McDonald was also the president of the Huntsville postal workers' CUPW local.

"That's important to me: workers' rights, that people are looked after," he says, adding, "Currently I'm on the local health and safety committee."

In the wider community, McDonald is probably best known as a member of the Cameron of Lochiel Pipes and Drums band.

"Playing the bagpipes had always been in the back of my mind," he says. "I got my start 10 years ago with Malcolm McLean and the legion pipe band."

Although he had no musical training at all, he began practising with a chanter and kept with it.

"It's a wonderful instrument to play," he says. "It can be very stirring, and I can play at family functions, like my younger sister's wedding."

The first time McDonald played for others was at a Baysville Remembrance Day ceremony. "I got goosebumps when people stood up and applauded," he recalls.

The Huntsville Santa Claus parade is one of his favourite events of the year.

"It's our hometown parade, and it's always well-attended," he explains. "Plus, there's something about having it at night with all the lights. I can't wait for Friday night."

Is there someone you'd like to see profiled in this space? Please call Paula at 789-5541 or e-mail pboon@metroland-northmedia.com.



DOUGLAS MCDONALD

Greening Muskoka's 'urban ecosystems'

BY JOHN-WILLIAM BRUNNER

In our scenic home that is Muskoka, we all appreciate how lucky we are to be a part of the land. But in 'urban ecosystems' (core areas of most towns) especially, not all the connections are easily made between our activities and the environment.

Urban ecosystems are just that, functioning ecosystems found in urban centres. The term is derived from urban ecology: the study of the relationships between plants and animals (humans) and their urban environment. The main

focus of urban ecology is creating positive relationships between people and the environment and striving for more sustainable communities.

One connection that is hard to identify is how urban ecosystems influence water quality of lakes and rivers through stormwater.

Stormwater is the unnatural diversion of surface water into sewers instead of water naturally filtering through soil and being absorbed by plants. As stated in this summer's Muskoka Watersheds Report Card, stormwater is known to

pollute receiving waterways because of the chemicals and other substances it carries as well creating erosion problems when water levels are excessively high.

Some harmful substances carried by stormwater include hydrocarbons from vehicle emissions and spills, nutrients from household chemicals like pesticides and fertilizers, and sand and clay sediments. Sometimes during a storm when large amounts of rainwater run through storm sewers, sewage is backed up and sent straight into the local water body instead of

going to a treatment facility.

The above substances all have the potential to negatively impact water quality and place stress on the uses we have for water. Nutrient enrichment (eutrophication) can cause algal blooms, other toxic chemicals can kill fish and other organisms and sediment pollution disrupts habitat for benthic macro-invertebrates (the base of the aquatic food chain).

So what can you, an eco-minded resident of Muskoka, do about it? Controlling runoff and pollution at the source (homes and businesses) is an

effective way to lessen your impact. Rain barrels can be used to collect rainwater and decrease runoff. Directing the flow of water away from hard surfaces like pavement to vegetated areas ensures water can filter naturally.

Controlling pollutant runoff into storm sewers is another good method in being more sustainable and improving the urban ecosystem.

Lessening the need for harsh chemicals is great, but if they are needed, ensure they are in a controlled space and not filtering into the ground. Also, new

sustainable technologies that are being used to better the urban ecosystem include green roofs and constructed wetlands.

If you value and respect nature and want the same environment to exist for future generations, consider some of these sustainable solutions to improving Muskoka's urban ecosystems.

We are an integral component of urban ecology, and if we use sustainable practices in and around our homes, the impact we have on the rest of the environment will be greatly decreased.

LETTERS

Don't let government put public mail at risk

Re: Postal Workers' Union says proposed charges could hurt rural service, Huntsville Forester, Nov. 7.

International mailers want a slice of the public postal pie. Who wins? Who loses? And who the heck are they?

Large international corporations have been salivating at the thought of carving up the public postal pie for years. An obscure bill called C-14 may give them their first slice. If passed, this bill will hand international mailers a carving knife called deregulation.

Bill C-14 aims to partially deregulate Canada Post by removing international letters from the corporation's exclusive privilege to collect, transmit and deliver letters.

Canada Post has the right, under law, to handle letters — including international letters — in order to finance the post office's universal service obligation. While no one would call the corporation Perfect Post, it does do a pretty remarkable job.

At the moment, our country has one of the lowest standard letter rates in the industrialized world. Our postal services are universal and affordable, no small feat in the second-largest country in the world.

But it would become increasingly difficult for our public postal office to provide affordable service to everyone, no matter where they live, if the government erodes the very mechanism that funds universal postal service — the exclusive privilege.

So why is the government considering deregulation and what on earth is an international mailer anyway? International mailers or remailers, as they are also known, collect and ship letters to other countries where this mail is processed and remailed at a lower cost. They do so illegally.

After a number of years of trying to find a solution to the international mail problem, Canada Post took legal action against remailers and won — all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. Some remailers were given six months to get out of the business. That's when the Canadian International Mail Association (CIMA), a coalition of private Canadian and international mail companies, started lobbying members of parliament (MPs). This lobby coincided nicely with the last election period, which CIMA used to demand a parliamentary review of the exclusive privilege provisions

of the Canada Post Corporation Act.

Flash forward to the present. The international mailers who are violating the law have actually convinced the government that the law must be changed. Otherwise, they argue, small businesses that work with international mail will go under. Truth be told, many remailers are actually very big businesses and some are working with large postal administrations — Royal Mail from the United Kingdom, Singapore Post and TNT, which operates the Dutch postal service.

Canada Post says international mailers already siphon off \$60 to \$80 million per year in business. The big problem is that the remail business is increasing. If the large remailers continue to grow, Canada Post's letter revenue will plummet as will its ability to provide service at affordable rates, especially in rural and remote areas.

There's another big problem. Once you give a piece of the post office to one sector, other sectors are going to want a slice of the action. Bill C-14 could very well set the stage for further deregulation.

The international experience with deregulation has not been good. Sweden abolished its letter

monopoly in 1993. Between 1993 and 2005, Sweden Post eliminated more than 16,000 jobs, while the competition created only 2,000 jobs. Interestingly, the postage rate for large volume business mailers declined considerably. But the rate for small businesses and the public increased by 90 per cent, far outstripping the accumulated inflation rate of 14 per cent.

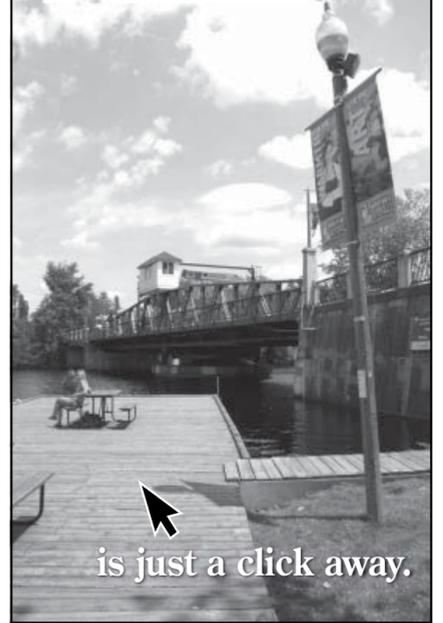
The United Kingdom, which only deregulated its post office in 2006, is already in the midst of massive upheaval. Operating profits are plummeting. The government is in the process of implementing a restructuring plan that includes closing 2,500 post offices. Additional service cuts are expected.

Royal Mail has warned that intensifying competition and falling mail volumes are putting pressure on its ability to continue to provide a one-price-goes-anywhere service for every customer. It says higher prices for stamped letters are inevitable and universal service is at risk.

Don't let the federal government put your public post office at risk. Don't let them even start.

Deborah Bourque, national president, Canadian Union of Postal Workers

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auto, 22,072 km,
stk#CP5225-A

\$17,995

**2006
CHRYSLER 300**



3.5 L 6 cyl. eng.,
auto, 49,368 km,
stk#C8212-B

\$18,995

**2007
CHEV IMPALA**



3.5 L 6 cyl. eng.,
auto, 48,111 km,
stk#CP8233-A

\$16,900

**2004
CHEV SILVERADO**



4.3 L 8 cyl. eng.,
auto, 57,056 km,
stk#327972

\$16,995

**2007
PONTIAC G5**



2.2 L 4 cyl., auto,
15,634 km,
stk#CP8137-A

\$13,995

**2007
CHEV COBALT**



2.2 L 4 cyl. eng.,
auto, 27,388 km,
stk#CP7595-A

\$13,995

**2004
CADILLAC SRX**



3.6 L, 6 cyl. eng.,
auto, 74,099 km,
stk#TP8149-A

\$23,995

**2007
BUICK ALLURE**



3.6 L 6 cyl. eng.,
auto, 40,107 km,
stk#CP8138-A

\$22,995

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4.8 L 8 cyl. eng.,
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