



Should e-scooters return to Ottawa in '21, 8



Virtual walkathon increases donations, 5

# THE CENTRETOWN BUZZ



After 12 years at Bronson and Gladstone giving old bikes a new life, re-Cycles needs to find a new location. Seen here: coordinator Mark Rehder and the tools volunteers use to refurbish 100s of donated bikes each year. Read about the shop on page 3. ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

## Ottawa's housing emergency: bad before, worse now

Jack Hanna

Ottawa's housing and homeless emergency was worsening even before the pandemic. COVID-19 has just cranked up the pain.

Councillor Catherine McKenney says, "More people are falling into homelessness. More people can't pay their rent. Last night, at least 1,900 people (in Ottawa) slept in shelters," she said in an interview late last month. "That includes families with children."

Those numbers are headed up with job and income losses due to COVID-19. Since the start of the pandemic, the number of local people to default on their rent has risen by about 3,200, the councillor said, citing data from a landlords' association which stated, "That's going to happen more and more."

Renters can now be evicted for non-payment of rent. Ontario had a temporary pandemic-inspired ban on evictions but that ended in August. Last month, Ottawa City Council appealed to the province to provide rent support for those struggling, or to bring back the moratorium on evictions.

If someone can't pay their rent and gets kicked out of their home, they may

end up in a shelter. And during a pandemic this is riskier. "People are afraid to go to shelters, or to live in a rooming house where they might bunk three or four to a room," McKenney said, "so they sleep outside." She noted that some 200 people in Ottawa sleep outdoors every night.

The city is increasing beds in shelters and overflow shelters. As well, Tom Brown Arena opened this month as a downtown respite centre, replacing the centre at McNabb Arena. However, these are band-aid measures. The city desperately needs to increase affordable housing of all types, local experts say.

In a recent panel discussion, Katie Burkholder Harris of the Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa, said, "There's a spectrum of needs." Those facing heavy challenges, for example, transitioning off the streets or with mental-health concerns, may require supportive housing with on-site support workers.

The city is short of co-ops and rent-geared-to-income units, and there's a big need for apartments with moderate rents. "More and more, people are feeling the impact of living in an unaffordable city," said Burkholder Harris. While the federal gov-

ernment's recent injection of housing funds to cities helps—Ottawa will get \$31.9 million—McKenney calls it a drop in the bucket. "With the status quo, there is no way out. I'm afraid it is going to get worse."

She says the failure to tackle the housing and homelessness crisis can be chalked up to discrimination. "We discriminate against the poor, indigenous and racialized communities. We would not allow any other demographic to fall into this kind of emergency."

COVID-19 has made the housing emergency worse. But the pandemic has shaken the world and this gives McKenney a glimmer of hope. She says, "COVID has forced us to think and act outside our comfort zones. We are starting to look at vacant city land and vacant parking lots, and ask, What can we do with them?"

In a pandemic, attitudes are shifting said McKenney. "We cannot make decisions based on fear. Everybody has to accept accessible, affordable housing in their neighbourhood. The conversation today has to be about public health. This is a health emergency. People will die. We certainly don't need thoughts and prayers. We need bold thinking and action."

## Coalition reimagines Ottawa's budget

Alayne McGregor

A coalition of 18 community groups has rethought the City of Ottawa budget from an environmental and social justice viewpoint.

The 2020 *Alternative Municipal Budget*, released November 2, aims to transform the city's spending and taxing priorities. The 48-page document proposes reallocating money from the police and the use of fossil fuels, spending more on social services, affordable housing and transit, and adding new sources of revenue.

The Ottawa Coalition for a People's Budget includes groups like the Healthy Transportation Coalition, ACORN Ottawa, the Ottawa Transit Riders Association, Child Care Now Ottawa, Harmony House, and City for All Women Initiative (CAWI). The coalition said this was the first-ever full, costed-out alternative budget for the city.

The budget responds to

the housing and homelessness emergency declared by the city in January, and the climate emergency it declared in 2019, the coalition said. It describes its budget as a "bold step to reimagine Ottawa where an ethics of care for people and our environment is at the fore," and says it puts priority on services "that keep our communities healthy, such as childcare, food security initiatives, and addiction and mental health services."

About 20 volunteers worked substantively on the budget proposal since the summer, said spokesperson Angela Keller-Herzog, and an economist worked to bring some of the numbers together. They divided the work up by chapters, but also looked at the cross-implications, and met via Zoom. They thought it would be an interesting challenge, but it ended up being "way more work than we had envisaged."

Members of the coalition had been following and **continued on page 5**

## Transit loop: an idea whose time has finally come?

Alayne McGregor

A citizens group has stepped forward with a vision to turn Wellington Street into a pedestrian mall and to link Ottawa and Gatineau's downtowns with a bidirectional tram loop.

The Supporters of the Loop, who include several former mayors of Ottawa and Gatineau and prominent businesspeople from both sides of the Ottawa River, were inspired by the recent proposals from Gatineau's transit corporation (STO) to build an electric tramway link from Aylmer ending in Ottawa's downtown (see [the October BUZZ](#)). These options will be discussed at Transportation Committee Nov. 16 and then at Ottawa City Council.

But, according to group spokesperson Bob Plamondon, the STO proposals don't go far enough in terms of addressing the need for better transit links across the river, a better tourist experience, and better security around

Parliament Hill.

Plamondon, a former National Capital Commission (NCC) board member, told *The BUZZ* that the loop idea had been around for a long time—but this time is different.

"Every 10 years it seems to come up as an obvious way to connect both cities, both from a public transit point of view and just from a functional point of view, to shrink the downtown core and to make our national institutions and sites more accessible. It was a good idea every time it's been raised, but it never had enough champions. The timing wasn't quite right."

But now Ottawa has a light rail system and Gatineau is planning one. For its Ottawa link, Gatineau is considering either a tunnel, which Plamondon says would be "prohibitively expensive," or a surface tramway on Wellington ending before Confederation Square.

**continued on page 10**



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# The Good, the Bad, and the Bumpy: Winter is coming

Ryan Lythall

It's coming. We've already had a little sample of it.

I'm talking about that dreaded word... snow!

Most, if not all, people with disabilities hate snow. It wreaks havoc on our wheelchairs and other mobility devices. We often have problems using public transportation due to a lack of snow clearing.

I've lived in Ottawa my whole life and I can't remember a single winter when snow clearing hasn't been an issue.

The City Of Ottawa appears to be in deep denial that we're in Canada. Winter happens every year and when it hits, especially at the start of the season, people seem shocked by the white stuff falling from the sky.

A example of this is light-rail transit or LRT. I'm sure we all remember the LRT's many issues last year: frozen switches, snow on the tracks and other problems related to winter. Many of the stations are fully or partially open-air, so there's not much room for riders to take shelter or stay warm while waiting for the train to show up.

It truly boggles my mind why Ottawa almost always seems to forget about winter.

I sincerely hope that the City of Ottawa doesn't think there's less need for proper snow clearing this winter. People still need to be able to get around town. Although we've all been impacted by COVID-19, and for many of us our home has now become our office, we still need to go out.

Many people still need to travel to work, including personal support

workers, nurses, doctors and paramedics. Others require much-needed medical appointments, for example, cancer treatment, dialysis and trips to the ER. When it comes to people with disabilities, going out, even grocery shopping or seeing friends, can seem like a monumental event during the long, cold winter months.

Nevertheless, we need to try to make the best of winter. To do so, the city needs to make snow clearing a much bigger priority.

Now's your chance, Ottawa. If you want people to shop locally and rely on curbside deliveries, we need cleared roads and sidewalks to ensure businesses' and customers' safety.

The plow's in your corner, Ottawa.

Find Ryan on Twitter:  
[@rolling\\_enigma](https://twitter.com/rolling_enigma)

## Letter: don't block sidewalks with scooters

I live in Centretown and for many, many years have enjoyed my daily walk on Bank Street.

Sadly, as time has gone by, bikes have crowded pedestrians on the sidewalk, moving us over to let them pass. Then it was roller bladers and skateboarders and now e-scooters are being allowed to take over our sidewalks, making it unsafe for pedestrians walking, or using wheelchairs, canes and crutches.

The other day, while walking south on the east side of Bank Street from Gloucester, there were two scooters, side by side, coming toward me on the sidewalk and not paying attention, as they were having some kind of discussion. I was reluctant to stop them, not knowing their reaction if I had stopped and asked them to get off the sidewalk.

I would venture to say there are many other instances, not only mine.

I am asking people who live in Cen-

tretown to email Mayor Jim Watson and Councillor Catherine McKenney to ask them to do something about this problem.

O'Connor Street has both north and south paths on the road to keep bikes, etc., from interfering with pedestrian safety on the sidewalks. It would help if Bank Street had the same.

Addie Crawford  
A Centretown Resident

## Letter: Ottawa-Gatineau needs a joint transit authority

Thank you for your article on the proposed light-rail transit (LRT) project that will bring trains from Quebec into downtown Ottawa. This is an important and exciting project for the city of Ottawa-Gatineau. And, yes, it is one city, despite the best efforts of the various levels of government over its history.

Transit is an important example of the disconnect between the two sides of the city. How can so many live on one side of the river and work on the other without an interconnected transit system? Public perseverance and suffering are how.

To make people's lives easier and

start the critical transition from personal vehicle trips to rail, bus, cycling and pedestrian trips, Ottawa-Gatineau needs a joint transit authority that unifies the current systems. The public needs seamless connections that increase the efficiency of the city to reduce costs for business and save time for people. A joint authority could achieve this goal.

Gatineau's LRT proposal is exactly the type of project that would benefit from joint governance which has a larger vision for the city as a whole. Others include a streetcar loop around Confederation Boulevard or the rehabilitation of the Prince of Wales rail bridge.

A joint authority could have an

equal number of representatives from each side of the river and govern by consensus. Given the interprovincial nature of the system, it would also merit federal funding.

Importantly, such investment would only benefit the city. After all, transit is much cheaper both societally and individually. All that needs to happen to reap the benefits of this efficiency is for the system to reach a tipping point in service levels that pushes ridership higher. As long as the two systems remain separate, this tipping point remains a ways away.

Desmond Fisher

## You might be able to lower your Hydro bills

Alayne McGregor

Hydro Ottawa has switched all its customers back to time-of-use payments this month, meaning that you pay less for electricity on evenings and weekends, and more at peak hours.

For most of 2020, everyone had been charged a tiered rate, which only varied depending on the total amount of electricity you used each month. You now have the option of returning to that rate, which might be in your interest if you're not a heavy electricity user.

I did the calculations from my 2020 electricity bills and found that I saved several dollars a month with tiered rates. In only one month in which I used

577kWh, the most electricity that year, were the time-of-use rates cheaper. Other friends who have done the calculations have had similar results. You may also want to choose tiered if you're working at home, or for convenience.

For the first 1,000kWh per month in winter and the first 600kWh in summer, the tiered rates are 12.6 cents per kWh. After that, it increases to 14.6 cents/kWh. The time-of-day rates are 10.5 cents/kWh off-peak, 15.0 mid-peak and 21.7 on-peak.

The Ontario Energy Board has an online calculator at <https://www.oeb.ca/rates-and-your-bill/bill-calculator> to simplify the process.

You sit down with your previous hydro bills and enter your actual electricity

consumption to see which rate structure would give you the lowest bills.

Hydro Ottawa will switch you from time-of-use to tiered (or vice-versa) on request. The change will come into effect with your next billing cycle, not immediately. You can request the change by phone, email, postal mail, or on the [Hydro Ottawa website](https://www.hydroottawa.com) (search for rate selection).

Worried that this will increase the demand for electricity? The Independent Electricity System Operators ([ieso.ca](https://ieso.ca)) have calculated that the initial COVID-19 lockdown this spring reduced Ontario electricity demand by 10 to 12 percent because of lower business demand. On the other hand, residences were using 14 percent more electricity between 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

### Centretown Ottawa Counselling Practice Dr. Andrew C. Watson, BA (psych), M.D., CCFP

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# re-Cycles needs a new home to make old bikes new

Alayne McGregor

re-Cycles, Ottawa's not-for-profit volunteer-run bike recycling shop, needs a new home.

The building in which the shop operates, at 473 Bronson at Gladstone, has been sold, said re-Cycles President John Gibson. The shop's lease expires December 31, although it may get an extension, and it plans to move before spring.

It's been actively looking for the past few weeks, but hasn't yet found a large, central, affordable, and easily accessible new location.

If you need a used bike, bike parts, tires, tubes, or even used bike shoes, re-Cycles is the place to go in Ottawa. The shop accepts any and all donated bikes for adults and children. The ones in good shape it cleans up and sells; the ones that need a bit of work, it refurbishes and sells; the others not in usable shape (about one-third of the donations) it strips for any useful parts and sells the metal to a scrap metal dealer.

"There is a wonderful sense of satisfaction when we take an old or neglected bike, breathe new life into it, and save it from a possible landfill fate. And that satisfaction is complete when someone buys one of our bikes and gets it back on the street!" the re-Cycles website says.



Fendi the Flying Turtle

ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

This month is your last chance to see the current location; the shop will close for its regular winter break after November 26. Until then, it's open on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6 to 8 p.m. Bike sales are by cash or e-transfer; parts are by cash only.

## The best month to find bikes

It's also an ideal time to buy from the store, Gibson said, because its inventory of bikes and parts is higher from donations over the summer and fall and there's more selection. In peak periods in the spring, a refurbished bike is sold almost as soon as it reaches the shop floor. The other good time to buy from re-Cycles is just after it reopens in late winter, when the snow and slush on

the streets still deter casual cyclists, he said.

Each bike has a piece of paper indicating how it's been checked, the condition of its parts, and what work has been done on it. At a minimum, the brakes, headset, gears/shifters, chain, bottom bracket, and wheels and tires are checked and the bike's serial number (important if a bike is stolen) is determined. Refurbished bikes are accompanied by a two-page checklist of everything checked, fixed, and replaced on the bike, and have a 30-day warranty.

Bike prices are mostly between \$80 and \$200, but may be a bit more for some bikes.

Gibson also noted that, because of the wide range of bikes it receives, re-Cycles carries parts for rarer and older bikes as well as standard city bikes. For example, there's a large metal jar in the parts bin area that contains vintage Sturmey-Archer and Raleigh parts.

## DIY bike repair closed

Before the pandemic, an equally important part of the store was its fully equipped bicycle repair shop, where cyclists could use the store's space and tools for a small hourly charge, and learn how to do their own repairs under the guidance of experienced volunteer mechanics. Four or five cyclists—and sometimes a few more during the peak spring period—could share the workbenches and truing stands.

That had to close "because we need to be close to people when we're coaching them on how to repair their bikes. It just wasn't the right thing to do to respect our own volunteers' safety and the safety of our customers."

Because of the pandemic, bike shoppers had to stay outside the shop until recently, when a small area was set up just inside the door for one shopper at a time. Parts sales are done through a separate service window. For both bikes and parts, lineups are outside, and people are asked to wear masks and keep their distance from each other. Bikes are sold on a time ticket system, with eight tickets given out at 6 p.m. each evening.

That didn't hurt sales. In fact, Gibson said, up to the end of September "we actually sold a few more bikes than we typically do in a year. Demand has been constant."

He said re-Cycles customers for the most part have been very understanding of the restrictions, greeting them with "patience and regret" and with "good cheer in a difficult environment." Many also missed the DIY repair shop.

Donations were also up this year: 575 bikes as of the end of September, an increase of over 140 bikes from 2019.

## Volunteers learn by doing

Except for part-time coordinator Mark Rehder, who will shortly celebrate his 20th anniversary with the store, all the work is done by volunteers. Volunteers receive credit for each hour worked and can then use the shop to work on their own bikes.

The shop is run by a 10-person volunteer board. It has about 40 experienced volunteers — mechanics or sales staff — who schedule themselves for regular shifts. Beyond that, Gibson said, there's as many as 300 casual volunteers who drop in when their schedule allows. "And we do our very best to let them grow their skills in bike mechanics. Many of our current head mechanics started as volunteers just walking in and saying, 'Gee, do you think I could work on bikes here?'"

## "Bikes are an accessible technology"

The chance to work on bikes is a draw, he said. "Bicycles are an accessible technology. There's a sense of satisfaction and problem-solving in working on a bike and getting it going again. And there's definitely a social aspect to our volunteers working together in the shop."

"And there's also satisfaction when we're able to provide a good-quality bicycle to somebody who's going to have solid transport for the price of a one-month bus pass!"

Currently sharing the re-Cycles location is the social enterprise Cycle Salvation, which also refurbishes and sells donated bikes while also training people for jobs as bike mechanics. By mutual agreement, the two groups will separate after 2020.

The shop was estab-



Pre-pandemic, these tools were also available for cyclists for DIY bike repair.

ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

lished in Ottawa in 1996 by Lloyd Deane, who had volunteered at a similar shop in Kitchener. It operated out of donated space, first in Gloucester Centre and then in Lowertown. With a Trillium grant, it was able to rent a space on Nelson Street in 2000.



re-Cycles President John Gibson shows the bins of donated bikes at the back of the shop, waiting to be sorted, and on top, reusable wheels.

ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

In 2008, it moved to Bronson Avenue and in 2010 it moved next door to its current location. Since then, volunteers have brightened the place with wall murals, a ceiling light made from front derailleurs, and a sculpture of Fendi the Flying Turtle made from bike parts. In 2018, they removed part of a concrete block wall, upgraded the staffroom, and relocated the bathroom to improve service.

Within the shop, everything is well-organized: tires and wheels hang from the ceiling and are brought down by long hooked sticks; tools hang from pegboards in front of workbenches; small parts are sorted into a series of bins and drawers, and larger parts like forks are stored in floor bins. In the back, bikes are disassembled for parts and old tires and scrap metal are stored. Bicycle tubes, sorted by size, are conveniently right by the sales window.

Gibson emphasized that re-Cycles did not compete with local bike shops: "The bulk of our bicycles are a little older, tend more toward the basic model end of things." It does sell a few new parts like cables or chains, either for safety reasons, or because they are



Pre-pandemic, these tools were also available for cyclists for DIY bike repair.

ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

awkward to find at odd hours but necessary to ride your bike. Sometimes bike shops also give parts that are worn but still serviceable to re-Cycles, he said.

The shop also helps community organizations; for example, it recently donated 15 children's bikes to the

Strathcona location of Ottawa Community Housing (OCH), "which were very well-received, and we have 30 more children's bikes earmarked for their future clients." It also donated 14 children's bikes to the Carlington Community Centre, and has previously donated to the east-end group Helping with Bikes.

are a few places that are pretty good candidates right now but are slightly above our snack bracket. Some are not in an ideal location. Some would be awkward for our customers; there's a couple of basements that are plenty big but I don't know how much you relish taking your bike up and down the stairs.

"We're really very hope-



A customer leaves the shop with a tire. The shop sells used parts as well as bikes.

ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

Gibson said he'd appreciate any leads for a new re-Cycles location by email at [president@re-cycles.ca](mailto:president@re-cycles.ca). The shop's wishlist is: a central location, with safe access by bike, transit, car, or foot; affordable for a self-sustaining non-profit organization; and about 2000 sq. ft. A cycle-friendly street nearby for people to do test rides would be ideal. "We're not looking for high-end retail space because every dollar we spend on rent is a dollar that does not go into providing bicycles at low cost to our customers."

## Still looking for the right spot

The current intense redevelopment in Centretown does pose some problems. "It's a great story that Centretown is developing — we're happy about that — but it does leave us with a smaller selection for places that are good enough and big enough, and where we would not be getting in the way of an upscale designer clothing store."

He said the search has been "both encouraging and a little bit challenging. There

ful and optimistic because there are some pretty good candidates out there. But this is still a very new development for us."

In the new location, he said, re-Cycles would like to increase its capacity during peak season "because we hate to turn people away when they came to work on their bicycles and the lineup was just too long and there were too many people working ahead of them. We need to do that in steps to make sure we can manage each step."

It also wants to increase its connections with the community, "as part of our support to diverse communities and in recognition that our location is one where we don't get a lot of children coming in but there are a lot of children in town who could use a bike."

re-Cycles has every intention of continuing, he said. "We'll carry on doing our very best providing folks with good quality used bicycles as low as we can manage to sell them, with used parts, and help for DIY."



# Pressed couldn't survive the pandemic

Alayne McGregor

COVID-19 has killed a Centretown coffeehouse which had showcased many local musicians, poets, comics, and visual artists, as well as helping local community groups.

Pressed, at 750 Gladstone Avenue at Arthur, closed at the end of October. Its owner, Karie Ford, had put the venue up for sale a month before but had not found any buyers.

For almost a decade, the coffeehouse featured local and touring artists up to six nights a week. Bluegrass played every Monday; indie, folk, blues, new music, and jazz artists performed later in the week. There were regular improv, comedy, poetry, and trivia nights, and local painters displayed their art on the walls.

Jazz vocalist Betty Ann Bryanton, who organized several sold-out concerts at Pressed, described it as “such a hip little place” that was “so incredibly supportive of ALL local talent!”

“They had managed to set up this respectful, concert-type venue. That is, customers came to listen to the music—another real treat! They could grab a home-made yummy deli sandwich,

a glass of wine, and sit back and enjoy the show. For a listening venue with a cozy space that offered a stage, sound guy, food and licensed beverages, Pressed could not be beat! There really was no other place like it in Ottawa.

“I will miss their big stage that they decorated with area rugs, an antique couch and nice soft-glowing lamps. A lovely ambiance!”

The jazz vocal group Cuppa Joe performed at Pressed over many years, and appreciated the venue's trained sound tech and minimal overhead costs. Its tenor, John Wilson, said he was shocked at the news.

“It provided a cozy, comfortable atmosphere for performers and audience members alike. It was always a full house for our performances, and a great space to grab a beverage between sets and hang out with our friends.”

The venue also supported local organizations and non-profits such as women's and LGBTQ groups, offering them free space for grassroots events like political rallies, sign-making events, or environmental strikes, Ford said.

Ford, who bought the venue in February 2017, said that business had been



The vocal jazz quartet Cuppa Joe (John Wilson centre) played a sold-out show at Pressed in April 2017.

BRETT DELMAGE/THE BUZZ

good until the pandemic hit in March, although margins were never huge.

“It was humming along. We were doing fine.”

## A quick switch to groceries

The pandemic affected the store “overnight,” closing its doors on March 15 in the first wave. But by April 3, Ford had reopened with a “walk, bike or drive thru no-touch grocery store” called Goods in the Hood. It operated two days a week for a few months and then just on Fridays. Many of her customers were there from day one to the last day, she said,

and they developed a close relationship.

“It was hugely successful, especially the first three months. It was insanely busy. We could hardly keep up with it. I was able to hire someone back just to do that.”

Pressed also accepted takeout food orders and got a decent but not huge response, since they didn't use the commercial delivery services. “It was of course super-appreciated but it wasn't like serving someone and checking in how their meal is. It was not a very personal experience.”

For several months the store also prepared meals as part of the Parkdale Food Centre's *Cooking for a Cause* program, and donated meals to the Dalhousie Food Cupboard and the Centretown Emergency Food Centre.

In the summer until the end of September, its patio was also open for food service “which carried us through. It was great seeing customers coming back to our patio.” Brunches were popular, she said.

But that gave the restaurant a “false sense of security. It was just enough to get cash flow going to keep on top of the bills. And then that slipped away.”

The constant crises and changes were exhausting. “You adapt to a scenario and then overnight everything

switches, and then you pick yourself up again and OK, this is how you'll do it. You try to be creative, and try to be super-energized, and come up with a new plan. And then it seems like that lasts for a week and then that one's gone.”

## “I can't do this anymore”

Her biggest problems were certainly financial, she said, but “I'm also totally burnt out. At the end, I didn't really want to pick myself up anymore. I was like, I can't do this anymore. I don't have the energy.”

By the end of September, “it was just not sustainable.” She wasn't sure when the restaurant could be open for indoor dining, whether the important Christmas season would happen, “and for me looking forward it just looked like up and down, up and down constantly. It was that sense of no control.”

Ford advertised the business was for sale. She said she received lots of “wishful thinking” support and some interest, but no serious buyer. Because she was on a month-to-month lease, she could close easily.

For the next few months, Ford will help out at other businesses: shelving, packing boxes, and other simple tasks. “I don't want any responsibility. I'm just going to take time and process this whole thing, and then pick

myself up and get out there.”

She said she still owned the Pressed corporate identity and recipes and protocols, but had no idea whether she would ever reopen it elsewhere.

“Pressed pre-COVID was all about community events and music and brunches and just all that amazing stuff. But that seems a lifetime ago.

“I think any time a business closes in a community, that hurts. They've lost a place to gather, they've lost a good neighbour, a place to have fun and a good meal and a good chat. I think there's going to be a huge hole and the worst part is that this will be vacant for a long time. With COVID going on, how fast are places like Pressed and the hundreds of others that have closed going to be replaced?”

She said she appreciated the community support, even hearing from one customer who had met his girlfriend at Pressed and had been hoping to propose to her at the restaurant when it reopened.

“Every day I'm getting dozens of emails, dozens of messages on Facebook and Instagram expressing their memories and their sadness. It did not go the way anybody wanted it to go, but I'm just so grateful for this community. Pressed gave out a lot of love but we definitely got a lot back.”

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# Virtual walkathon increases donations for emergency food centre



Walkers contributed photos taken on their trips into a contest. Above: "By the shoreline", contributed by Rob Sheffield Right: "Sunday School Wagon Team" from the team Knox Walks

Patricia Marsden-Dole

The Sunday, October 4, walkathon for the Centretown Emergency Food Centre (CEFC) raised 40 percent more donations this fall than in 2019, the organizing committee of the Centretown Churches Social Action Committee (CCSAC) said.

The generous support from volunteers and donors will enable the CEFC clients, staff and its volunteers to continue to function through the pandemic this coming winter.

This year the walkathon was virtual. Walkers stayed within their own bubbles rather than congregating in large groups and they picked

their own routes. They took their spouses, partners, friends, kids, dogs, or just themselves for a walk.

The organizing committee said it received great promotional support again this year from Councillor Catherine McKenney, the Centretown Community Association, sponsors and member churches, as well as from first-time supporter Councillor Shawn Menard.

McKenney said, "We are all grateful for the kindness of our community in these troubled times."

There were prizes given for photos taken on the various individual walks such as the cutest photo with kids or dogs, or the most scenic route.



There was also a special one-time Kerry Kaiser Prize, dedicated to the coordinator of the Food Centre, who is retiring after 26 years of dedicated service. The winner was St. Andrew's Church on Kent Street, whose team had the most donors.

The walkathon was a big vote of confidence and thanks from our community.

Patricia Marsden-Dole is a member of the Centretown Churches Social Action Committee.

# How the Legion and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier are linked

Deborah Rosenlund

As we mark Remembrance Day this year, we should remember the link between the Royal Canadian Legion and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. This tomb is one of the landmarks in Centretown and is located beneath the National War Memorial in Confederation Square.

In the months preceding the end of World War One in 1918, plans were being

made for the proper care of service personnel returning to Canada in a world also being swept by the Spanish Flu pandemic. By 1919, the federal government had created a much-needed Department of Health. The Great War Veterans Association was also formed.

At the same time, various service groups were springing up across the country. They took on the challenge of connecting with and providing help for soldiers who had for years relied on each

other for survival. By 1925, these groups joined together to form the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Services League.

This year marks 60 years since this organization was granted royal patronage by Queen Elizabeth II and, in 1960, renamed the Royal Canadian Legion. (In Centretown, the Montgomery Legion on Kent Street at MacLaren provides veterans services.)

This year also marks 20 years since the repatriation

of Canada's unknown soldier, a member of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), who died in battle in 1917 near Vimy Ridge. Unidentified, he was buried alongside 1,603 other unknown Canadian soldiers in one of France's nearby war cemeteries.

Twenty years ago, in the Cabaret-Rouge Cemetery, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission chose a specific site: Grave 7 in Row E of Plot 8. After a ceremony at the Vimy War

Memorial, the soldier was escorted home to a grateful nation aboard a Canadian Forces aircraft. This historic undertaking was a millennium project of the Royal Canadian Legion to produce a lasting memorial and a monument to forever honour those Canadian soldiers who sacrificed their identities, as well as their lives, for their country during wartime.

On May 28, 2000, this unknown soldier, who gave everything, was now respectfully acknowledged by the



crowds in Ottawa who lined his final route, as he was carried on a horse-drawn gun carriage to the National War Memorial in Confederation Square and laid to rest in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, surely the most visited memorial in Canada today.

Lest we forget!

# Alternative budget puts priority on people and the environment

continued from page 1 analyzing city budgets for years, but "it's tough slogging work. [The city budget] seems designed to be somewhat impenetrable."

They worked from the city's 2019 budget, but were also able to use the city's detailed Q2 financial reports, released in September, to get more information on capital projects.

Not all the proposals in the alternative budget could currently be implemented, because some require changes to provincial legislation. Keller-Herzog said it would be extremely difficult to change the official 2021 budget – already released in draft form on November 4 – but she hoped some of its ideas could be incorporated in the 2022 budget.

One of its most drastic changes would be a 63 percent drop (\$235M) in the police budget. It proposes that the Ottawa Police Services retain control of investigative services, but all front-line and community relation work, and its respective funding, would be moved to community programs and services. All spending on ammunition and explosives was eliminated in this budget.

It also suggests removal of all transit fares, a more accessible and sustainable transit system with extended routes in underserved, priority areas, "solid ParaTranspo infrastructure," and replacement of diesel buses with electric.

The budget projects \$390M in savings from deferring all capital projects

"which invest in fossil fuel infrastructure (new, renewal, maintenance) and have not started or tendered. Priority candidates are transportation and building projects (e.g. fleet renewal, building commissioning)." Keller-Herzog said this means that, for example, furnaces or vehicles at their end of life should be replaced, not by devices that burn fossil fuel, but by those which don't create emissions, like electric vehicles. As well, buildings being refurbished should be energy-retrofitted.

City investments would be removed from the stock market and "re-invested locally to capitalize Ottawa Climate Finance and Economic Development Corporation to create local jobs and fund transition to a low-

carbon economy."

On the revenue side, the alternate budget proposes increasing parking fees from \$3.50 to \$4.50 per hour (\$8M), increasing the use of red light and traffic cameras (\$10M), and implementing a land transfer tax similar to that in Toronto (\$65M).

It also recommends a new tax on vacant housing to create incentives for "home-owners to rent their homes to residents that live and work in the City." When asked how that could be implemented, Keller-Herzog said one way could be to check utility bills for evidence of low use.

Another new tax would be to make property taxes progressive (\$66M), charging higher tax rates for those whose homes have higher tax

assessments. The proposed brackets would be \$250K and under, up to \$400K, up to \$700K, and over \$700K, with the highest bracket having an 85 percent higher rate than the lowest.

This tax might not be popular with Centretowners, who already pay higher taxes on small homes than those in far suburbs, because of market value assessment. It might even be considered to promote sprawl. Keller-Herzog said this did need further study to see how it would shake out for different parts of the city and different types of building owners, "but I definitely think it merits a very good look" and might involve rethinking how assessments are made.

She said one of the reasons for this alternative budget was



to break boundaries between budget silos at the city, and have a fresh think about how things are structured.

To see the full alternate budget: [ottaltbudget.mailchimpsites.com](http://ottaltbudget.mailchimpsites.com) To see the official proposed City of Ottawa budget: <https://ottawa.ca/en/city-hall/budget/detailed-information-2021-budget>

Read more about the 2020 city budget at [centretownbuzz.com](http://centretownbuzz.com)

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# Skyline review: Elgin Street's new public art



Some of the new Elgin St. public art's mirth, strung together like a mini-Mount Rushmore.

ROBERT SMYTHE/THE BUZZ

Robert Smythe

A gathering of free-floating heads and hands has recently appeared on Elgin Street.

For over 30 years, the City of Ottawa has set aside a small percentage of the budget for major public works projects to pay for the commissioning, fabrication and installation of public art. The total public art budget for the renewal of Elgin Street was \$150,000.

Artists are selected through a peer review assessment process. Once complete, these art works enter the city's permanent art collection.

For Elgin Street's new public art, Ottawa opted for a five-month artist-in-residency by Montreal artist

Francis Montillaud. It was an exercise in collaboration intended to engage diverse members of the local community. The resulting work is supposed to provide a visual identity that responds to the street's distinctive character.

Montillaud told [artsfile.ca](http://artsfile.ca) that the project involves "themes of body language and social interactions through a series of video production workshops. ... I am trying to democratize the portrait."

People on Elgin Street were selected for recording sessions at SAW Video. Molded impressions of their faces and bodies were also taken for later castings.

Ottawa's public art program said that the project's intention was "to capture snapshots of a laugh, a grimace or any of the many

expressions of people who live, work or play around the Elgin Street community." However, it's doubtful that you will recognize denizens of Elgin.

Some of the patinated bronze castings of various body parts (hands) have been miniaturized to half-scale, isolated on stainless steel mini-plinths, and situated in secluded settings—at Gilmour, Waverley and McLeod Streets—well back from the sidewalk's edge. In order to discover a discernible expression, they require the viewer's careful study, after a short detour from the travelled portion of the street.

The collected bronze visages in Boushey Square, caught mid-grimace, are definitely expressive if not pained, possibly verging on the grotesque.

The less than playful, not immediately arresting and unexpectedly sombre impact of the street's three west side pieces doesn't spell Elgin Street for me as a denizen of the street. They demand a deliberate standing stop for contemplation and are more to be admired than enjoyed.

The art in the western end of Minto Park—stacked and strung-out linked heads fashioned from laminated laser-cut aluminum plates—is another matter. Riotous might be the right description. These should make you pause and smile.

That all of these pieces have been fabricated with meticulous care, display obvious effort, are representational, and ostensibly have a back story, should protect them from the public scorn that's accompanied many of Ottawa's previous more obscure installations. It's best to remember that public art can't always be straight from the carnival.

Judging from his online portfolio ([www.francismontillaud.com](http://www.francismontillaud.com)), Montillaud's work has frequently taken the form of big, bold and bright humanoid figures suitable for animating public outdoor spaces.

One can slightly regret that Elgin Street did not benefit from such joy, but Centretown's fun strip can always use a serious corrective.



This stack of frozen bronze faces was caught grimacing in Boushey Square.

ROBERT SMYTHE/THE BUZZ



A collection of hands gestures at Elgin and MacLaren. The castings are based on real people found on the street.

ROBERT SMYTHE/THE BUZZ



Laughing heads of laser-cut aluminum form a human totem pole in Minto Park.

ROBERT SMYTHE/THE BUZZ

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## Planet of the Scapes: savour

Pearl Pirie

Finally made the connection: eat refined sugar and get sore throat or laryngitis. That's unfortunate, since sugar is a go-to in stress. But gradually I'm training the recalcitrant body to appreciate water, less fat, less sugar and get powerful cravings for greens. This time, two new ways to get nutrients into the body.



PEARL PIRIE/THE BUZZ

### Side Dish: Falafels

1 cup garbanzo and fava flour  
4 Tbsp buckwheat (or whole-wheat) flour  
1 medium onion, minced  
1 clove garlic, minced  
1/4 cup fresh parsley, minced  
1 tsp ground cumin  
1 tsp ground coriander  
1/2 tsp salt (or less to taste)

Stir together and add 1/2 cup of water to make a paste. Add a little more water and let sit to absorb. Meanwhile heat a cast iron pan to medium heat and add a touch of oil.

Form the dough into balls and cook until browned, turning once. Eat as a snack, a side dish, or a sandwich. It's hard to see where they all go; they get eaten fast.

### Side Dish: Breaded Squash

It is a basic thing to bread food. You need food, and a wet (egg white, soaked flax seeds, mayonnaise, or water), and a dry (store-bought Panko, flour, crushed corn flakes, dry sliced bread, or pitas put in a blender then baked dry, some almonds, broken crackers in a pinch), and heat.

Wet a thing, dredge it in the dry, and bake, fry or deep fry.

In this case I used,

- 1/2 kabocha squash, baked
- 1/2 block of firm tofu

By scoring the tofu and breaking it apart, it gives a more irregular surface for the crumb to stick to vegan mayonnaise.

For the crumb, mix:

- 2 pitas, dried and food processed or blended into crumbs
- 1/4 cup sliced almonds
- 1/4 cup wheat bran

Dip the squash and tofu pieces into mayonnaise and then into the crumb mixture. Bake for 30 minutes at 400 F (200 C), flipping over after 20 minutes. Serve with plum sauce, hot sauce, BBQ sauce, chutney, or zucchini relish.

*Pearl Pirie's fourth poetry collection, footlights, is out! Buy now: <https://www.radiantpress.ca/shop/footlights>. Author site: [www.pearlpirie.com](http://www.pearlpirie.com). Keep washing your hands and wearing your masks. This could take many months more.*

## COVID-19 testing comes to Centretown

Alayne McGregor

Centretowners can finally get tested for COVID-19 in their own neighbourhood.

As of this month, the Centretown Community Health Centre and the Somerset West Community Health Centre are offering tests by appointment. Each person must have their own appointment time.

The Centretown centre (at 420 Cooper Street) will accept adults and children six months and older. The Somerset West centre (at 55 Eccles Street) will accept adults and children 13 years and older. Patients will be

assessed by a health care professional and tested if required.

Appointments can be booked at <https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/resources/Corona/testingupdates/factsheets/COVID-19-Testing-at-three-of-the-Ottawa-Community-Health-Centres-Factsheet-EN.pdf> or by calling 613-789-1500.

Bring your health card if you can.

The Sandy Hill Community Health Centre at Rideau Street and Nelson is also offering tests by appointment.

The COVID-19 assessment centre at Brewer Park Arena in Ottawa South and the centre at 1485 Heron Road are also open for tests. You will again need to make an appointment.



**Please wear your mask!**



**SVP portez votre masque!**

**Catherine McKenna**

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## Catherine McKenney • City Councillor for Somerset Ward



## Budget 2021: Have your say!

Members of the public are welcome to speak at the following public budget meetings. For information about the budget and meetings, please visit: <https://engage.ottawa.ca/draft-budget-2021>

November 17	Environmental Protection, Water and Waste Management Committee
November 18	Transit Commission
November 19	Community and Protective Services Committee
November 23	Police Services Board
November 26	Planning Committee
November 30	Ottawa Board of Health
December 1	Finance and Economic Development Committee
December 1	Ottawa Public Library Board
December 2	Transportation Committee
December 9	Budget adoption at Ottawa City Council

### Questions? We can help!

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### Keep in touch!

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# Should e-scooters return to Ottawa in 2021?



This e-scooter was left improperly parked and blocking the sidewalk on Lisgar Street just west of Bank Street on October 21.

BRIAN GOLDSTEIN/THE BUZZ

Alayne McGregor

The three companies which rented e-scooters in Ottawa this summer, all want to return next year after what they describe as a highly successful first season. But their riders have left a bad impression with some Centretown residents.

The e-scooter pilot, which ran from July 16 to October 31, attracted more than 60,700 unique riders making more than 221,600 trips, according to the city. Riders could choose among three companies – Bird, Lime, and Roll – and book and pay for the scooters using their smartphones.

The pilot ended up covering the Ottawa's central neighbourhoods, from Island Park Drive/Westboro to the Rideau River, and from the Ottawa River to Lansdowne Park. The area was slightly expanded during the pilot. The scooters were electronically prevented from being ridden on NCC paths or roads.

The most popular area for e-scooters was Centretown.

“Centretown was the hub of all [e-scooter] traffic,” said Austin Spademan, Bird’s assistant general manager for Ottawa. “It was the central meeting point and the glue between all the different communities.”

The most common complaints about the scooters were their risk to pedestri-

ans: would users ride them on sidewalks or leave them blocking sidewalks?

## High-speed weaving and buzzing

*The BUZZ* asked its readers what they’d seen, and we received only critical emails.

For example, Diane Bassett recounted how in mid-October she was buzzed by an e-scooter rider on the Metcalfe Street sidewalk, who passed her very closely without slowing.

“Then just as quickly, the young man crossed in front of me, and went onto the road, obviously, going against the traffic. He continued for a short distance, and then repeated exactly as he had done with me, with another person, going onto the sidewalk, behind the individual, buzzing them from the right, crossing in front of them, back onto the road, and then continued south for a short distance. Only to repeat the sequence of ‘zig-zag’ events, two or three more times.”

Daniel Coates said he had similar experiences of e-scooter riders aggressively travelling at high speeds “weaving into and out of pedestrian traffic, with absolutely no notice or warning,” adding to the problems he already faced with cyclists on sidewalks. He was also concerned at a lack of police enforcement.

Lisa Freeman said she supported e-scooters in theory as another semi-active

transport option. “In practice, though, I was mostly impeded and endangered by them. I was optimistic and excited about the idea, but I don’t think it worked, and don’t want to see it for another season.

“I mostly cycle and walk, and in the cycle lanes the people on scooters are less predictable than people on bikes. This makes them dangerous to pass, and also makes intersections more challenging as people using them would often stop and hop off, or enter on one from a crosswalk, without warning. When walking, many times the scooters were left blocking my path, which is a challenge as I use walking aids. ... This would make it impossible to pass for those with carts, strollers, or wheelchairs!”

Addie Crawford said she recently saw two scooter riders coming straight at her on the sidewalk on Bank Street (see her letter on page 2).

And Brian Goldstein sent *The BUZZ* a photo of a scooter parked in the middle of a sidewalk on Lisgar Street on October 21. Goldstein said this was a very common sight in Centretown and was a hazard for those with poor eyesight. He said he also saw a large percentage of e-scooter riders using sidewalks.

## A great year for the e-scooters

*The BUZZ* interviewed representatives from all three

companies. All said they were very happy with their 2020 results.

“In a word – it was stellar!” said Austin Spademan, Bird’s assistant general manager for Ottawa. “We were floored at the demand from the residents of Ottawa. The usage, even in a time when there wasn’t much in-office work, was outstanding. It felt like overnight it became part of the city’s cultural fabric.” Bird Canada had the highest e-scooter usage in Ottawa, with about 40,000 users making 160,000 trips.

Jonathan Hopkins, the director of Strategic Development, Canada & NW US for Lime, said the scooters had been “fabulously popular” in Ottawa, and above the usage in other cities.

Roll didn’t launch until the end of August, but co-founder Arda Ertürk said overall the response exceeded their expectations.

Spademan said the scooters attracted three types of riders: commuters into downtown; people shopping at restaurants and stores in local business districts; and recreational riders and tourists. Each group comprised about one-third of Bird riders. Roll and Lime reported similar usage.

All three companies touted their scooters as a green alternative to private car use. But Ertürk was blunter: “People are afraid of getting on the bus or train, but this provides a really great opportunity to commute while practicing social distancing.”

The scooters were still being used by commuters during the cold snap in October when overnight temperatures dipped to -10C, Spademan noted.

## Alternative parking places?

Many riders used the e-scooters to get to LRT stations, Pimisi being particularly popular. Next year, Spademan said, Bird would like demarcated areas near LRT stations for scooter parking because of problems with scooters blocking bus stops.

Currently, scooters are parked in the utility area between the sidewalk and the road. As an alternative, “Edmonton and Calgary have rolled out a couple dozen [on-road scooter corrals]. That’s an approach that works in the densest areas. It wouldn’t be an efficient use of resources in a residential area 5km outside of downtown,” Hopkins said.

Ertürk said that Calgary had some designated parking areas and, if Roll riders parked in those areas, they received an incentive. But “the whole point of these scooters is convenience. So

requiring designated areas would be a barrier to that convenient use, but having them as an option as we did in Calgary would be a help.”

## Handling complaints

Complaints came in to the operators via the city’s 3-1-1 service and social media, plus phone calls and emails. They were primarily about parking and riding on sidewalks.

By October, the majority of riders were experienced users, Spademan said, and there was a “huge reduction in instances of bad parking and complaints as a result because the users get it.”

Bird received 50 complaints during the trial, he said, mostly about parking. Most occurred in the first six weeks of the trial; they received fewer than five in October. “Our average response time [to move a scooter] once we got a tweet, was eight minutes.”

Spademan said he talked to Centretowners and heard there was a problem with sidewalk riding on Elgin. He started talking with riders, “and it was because they didn’t know, and they felt nervous driving on the road. That’s a learning thing – and so I created the Safe Streets Team.”

From Thursday to Sunday each week this summer, he said, that team walked key streets like Bank, Elgin, Wellington Street West, Preston, and ByWard. They’d talk to riders about the rules. Those who rode on the sidewalk or parked improperly would get one warning – and then they were permanently suspended from the Bird app. Thirteen businesses on Elgin wrote a letter to the city saying they’d noticed a huge improvement in behaviour after the team was deployed.

During periods of high use and in popular areas, Hopkins said, Lime had a team out on patrol, sometimes on scooters. They helped people having trouble and looked for misparked scooters. “If we get a complaint of a scooter blocking a sidewalk, we can dispatch them or someone from the warehouse.”

Ertürk said that Roll required users to make a photo of their parked scooter in order to end their trips. “We analyzed these pictures [either manually or] based on machine learning and artificial intelligence models. If we detect that it’s blocking the sidewalk, we fine the rider. And if you keep not parking properly, we ban you.”

The company also had a Roll Squad on the streets “helping people, distributing helmets, giving the proper education on how to ride and how to park.”

Roll received seven reparking requests “The reason it’s low is that our Roll squad also patrolled. They relocated many more than seven.”

Ertürk said Roll addressed sidewalk riding by educating riders through in-app messages, social media, and the Roll Squad, and working with accessibility advocacy groups like the CNIB. “The city saw sidewalk riding in some zones like Bank Street so they asked us to focus on that area in terms of our patrol team to educate riders. After a week, they received a lot of feedback from BIAs and local businesses thanking the city and the operators.”

He said they’re also working on technological solutions like alarms that would warn pedestrians if a scooter was approaching, and hoped to have these in Ottawa next year.

## More scooters, wider area

All three companies were enthusiastic about returning to Ottawa in 2021, but would like to field more scooters and serve a wider area, particularly for commuters.

“In any city there will be more trips downtown but sometimes there’s even greater utility outside downtown where it’s further in between bus lines or people trying to take scooters to the O-Train [LRT stations],” Hopkins said.

“We would like to take what we learned from the pilot and use that next year,” Spademan said. He would deploy his Safe Streets team early in the spring, and inform residents of how to reach scooter providers.

Ertürk and Spademan wanted access to NCC pathways in 2021, both for recreational riding and commuting. Spademan said, “With e-scooter riders I’m finding that a big barrier is that they’re afraid to be in mixed traffic on streets. Providing a trail like the NCC Ottawa River trail is big on building up their confidence to then get into mixed traffic.”

The city says that staff will be reviewing the pilot and the feedback from all stakeholders. Spademan said the city will also be conducting a survey of both riders and general residents about the pilot, including discovering how many car trips were replaced by scooter trips.

City staff will bring forward a report on year one of the pilot to Transportation Committee in early 2021.

Want to have your feedback included? Email city e-scooter coordinator Kathleen Wilker at

[kathleen.wilker@ottawa.ca](mailto:kathleen.wilker@ottawa.ca).



## Gotta Go! says accessible toilets belong in the city budget

Mariam El-Behiry

Who has not been caught short by a need for a toilet at a time where none seem to be around? What parent has not had to resort to a tree in a park when their child needed to use a toilet? Which tourist, public transit user, pregnant woman or cyclist has not had doubts about leaving their home because of worries of not finding a facility in time if needed?

As a capital city, Ottawa's lack of safe, clean, accessible and environmentally responsible public toilets is unacceptable, says the Ottawa-based GottaGo! Campaign. It's making this lack an issue in the current city budget.

Tourists visiting the city are shocked by the lack of public toilets, it says. Public toilet systems are safely and fully implemented in other cities in Canada, including Edmonton, Vancouver, London, and Montreal, and in Nova Scotia.

Founded in 2014 by Joan Kuyek, Gotta Go! believes that this is not only a problem of accessibility but also a public health issue, a disability issue, a tourism issue, and a key to sustainable cities and complete streets.

In a letter sent to Mayor Jim Watson and city councillors on October 5, GottaGo! asked for the inclusion of public toilets as essential

public health infrastructure in the current budget considerations.

Twenty-seven organizations supported the initiative, including downtown BIAs, the Council on Aging, the Federation of Citizens' Associations of Ottawa and individual community associations, the Ottawa Disability Coalition, the Shepherds of Good Hope, the Social Planning Council of Ottawa, and the Somerset West Community Health Centre. Both Councillor Catherine McKenney and MPP Joel Harden signed on.

The initiative proposes the following models for accessible toilets: signage for existing public toilets, subsidies to existing businesses, and permanent public toilets.

Bessa Whitmore, a core team member of GottaGo!, spoke on the obstacles the campaign faces from public officials. Cost and safety are the most common concerns: "The cost is weighed up against all the other needs of the city: Is it more important to build another kilometre of road in Barrhaven than a set of public toilets with adequate staffing or even some signage? Another issue is safety. Many people will say that [public toilets] are unsafe, or unclear. All we have to do is look at successful models around the world and Canada."

Another issue the campaign seeks to resolve is the lack of signage around the

city. "The issue of cost is understandable but putting up signs around the city showing where toilets are and how far they are is feasible. We have urged the city over the years to put up signage and have gotten nowhere."

Because of COVID-19, the availability and accessibility of public restrooms has only worsened. Many businesses have closed their restrooms to the public and public toilets around the city are closed or under restricted hours of operation.

"During these times, we are encouraged to exercise and breathe fresh air," Whitmore said. "It's difficult to do so with restroom restrictions. Dundonald Park has a playground for kids and senior activities are ongoing but there are no toilets. Needles and feces are being found in the area. What is even more dangerous is that the science is telling us that human waste can contain COVID-19."

How can citizens support this initiative? Whitmore advises: "Getting involved means contacting your city councillors and the mayor on this issue. Talk about the issue enough so there won't be a chance for it to be dismissed. The more the public pressures their councillors to make a commitment, the more we will be heard."

To become involved with GottaGo! and keep up with their ongoing progress, visit [www.ottawapublictoilets.ca/](http://www.ottawapublictoilets.ca/)



## Centretown Community Association report

Jack Hanna

### Financial assistance to clear snow

The city's Snow Go Program helps seniors, or those with disabilities, to clear snow from private driveways and walkways. The program may pay half the cost of snow removal per snowfall to a season maximum of \$250. The service will also match a resident with an individual or contractor who clears snow.

Information at: <https://ottawa.ca/en/family-and-social-services/older-adults/help-around-home>

### Keep automobiles off the Queen Elizabeth Driveway

The CCA is considering asking the National Capital Commission (NCC) to permanently close the Queen Elizabeth Driveway to motor vehicles. The west side of the Rideau Canal would become a grand promenade with walkways, bicycle paths, flower beds, trees and greenery and, perhaps, pubs, playing fields and performance stages.

After COVID-19 hit, the Driveway was closed to

vehicles through the spring and summer to enable folks to stretch their legs while maintaining social distancing. The closure was a huge success as walkers, joggers and cyclists flocked to the Driveway.

*The Globe and Mail* reported that, when roadways in cities across Canada were closed to vehicles during the pandemic, the volume of people using the roadways multiplied. There were far more walkers and cyclists than there had been motorists. This was also true for the Queen Elizabeth Driveway.

The NCC should recognize a winning experiment and make it a permanent success. More information at: [jack.2014@icloud.com](mailto:jack.2014@icloud.com)

### Ban bad plastics

The federal government has issued a discussion paper proposing a ban on some types of single-use plastics, including plastic bags. The CCA's Single-use Plastics Group, which has worked with Centretown stores to cut back on single-use bags, plans to submit a formal response to the discussion paper.

More information at: [stuartkinmond@gmail.com](mailto:stuartkinmond@gmail.com)

### Neighbours helping neighbours

The CCA's Centretown Support Network (CSN), which links folks facing extra challenges during COVID-19 with volunteers willing to help, will continue through the winter. Volunteers have fetched groceries, delivered meals and checked in with shut-ins occasionally to make sure all is well or just to chat.

Calls to the CSN tapered off during the summer. However, Coordinator Kyle Hanna says, "Winter is here and a second COVID wave is hitting us. That's going to create challenges for people trying to stay safe."

If you could use a hand, contact the CSN at [support@centretowncitizens.ca](mailto:support@centretowncitizens.ca) or 613-518-3908.

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# Pedestrian/transit mall: a safe place in front of Parliament Hill

continued from page 1

The Gatineau surface option is “already covering almost half of what would be the loop that we propose.”

The loop would also help complete Ottawa’s light rail system and give people more reasons to use it, he said. It would increase ridership and be simpler to use than trying to find a parking spot in Gatineau, he said.

Secondly, the Alexandra Bridge is proposed to be replaced in the next 10 years, making this “an ideal time” to make the replacement bridge compatible for light rail.

And, thirdly, increased concerns about public security mean that “Wellington Street needs to be closed off to traffic [in front of Parliament Hill]. Right now it’s littered with trucks and buses and cars. You’ve got a massive amount of noise and pollution within feet of the East Block and West Block. A five-ton truck could pull up right beside the prime minister’s office and that’s an issue that has to be managed.”

The loop would also be a tourism draw, he said, bringing tourists to major attractions like museums or Winterlude, and making the capital that much more appealing. It would also make it easier for public servants to get to meetings on the other side of the Ottawa River.

For Centretown residents, the loop would make it “a lot more convenient” to get to museums, parks, and restaurants in Gatineau, he said. It would also make it easier for Gatineau residents to patronize businesses

in Centretown, and it would remove car and truck traffic from Centretown streets.

“This makes the loop idea that was a good idea 30 years ago that much more attractive today.”

The tram loop would be an at-grade, continuous bi-directional loop, Plamondon said. It could either be a 5km loop covering the Ottawa and Gatineau’s downtowns, or it could include Gatineau’s rail link out to Aylmer. In either case, it would likely cross the river at the Portage Bridge, travel down Wellington Street and then back (via a so-far-undetermined street in Lowertown) to the Alexandra Bridge, and then to Laurier Street in Gatineau.

Plamondon envisioned the tram having frequent, all-day service: “a convenient, predictable, accessible public transit option.”

The group’s website ([transitloop.ca](http://transitloop.ca)) includes illustrations by local architect David McRobie of what the pedestrian mall and tramway might look like in front of Parliament Hill.

Plamondon emphasized that their proposal is only a vision so far, and would need to have the details fleshed out by a study, preferably conducted by the NCC. This would include the exact route, how the tram would be powered, the number of stops, the links to Ottawa’s LRT, and the hours of operation, and whether it would be free or charge fares.

Plamondon said that the pedestrian mall was integral to the proposal but might only cover the portion of the street from Bank to Elgin. He envisioned the mall as “a

gathering place,” a safe place which could include art, monuments, and benches.

He said the mall would also allow cycling and would be a “slow zone” for both the trains and cyclists. This works very well all across Europe, he said: “a somewhat seamless integration and harmony between pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit. It is effectively managed and respected. It’s just a matter of getting used to it.”

When asked about concerns that the tram operations might be blocked by demonstrators going to the Hill, Plamondon pointed out this could happen today with protests blocking buses.

He said the group wants this to remain a citizens’ initiative and so has been trying to avoid making it partisan by getting endorsements from current politicians. He did note that Ottawa Centre MPP Catherine McKenna, who is federal minister of Infrastructure and Communities, mentioned the proposal in a speech the morning after its release.

Plamondon said his inbox has been flooded with support. People say “it ticks virtually every single box that we need ticked. So how do we make it happen?”

The group is now sending letters presenting the case for the loop to local decision-makers in the two cities, the federal government, and the NCC. It’s also looking for broad community support.

“We think this is a project that gives us the foundation for public transit and how this national capital should work for a hundred years.”



A concept drawing of Wellington Street converted into a pedestrian mall with the transit loop, prepared by McRobie Architects for the Supporters of the Loop. See more at [transitloop.ca](http://transitloop.ca)

## Somerset Ward: What are your budget priorities?

Catherine McKenney

**O**n December 9, Ottawa City Council will determine its 2021 budget.

This decision will reflect our priorities moving into 2021. Will transit fares increase? Will we spend more on police or less as many residents have been asking? Will we ensure that there is money in the budget to address our housing and homeless emergency? Will we consider the needs of seniors and youth in determining how much we spend on recreation and other activities? Will we commit funding to tackle climate change?

Like you I will be focusing on many aspects of the budget.

The direction from council to staff was to allow a three percent increase to property taxes in 2021. Additionally, transit fares would increase by 2.5 percent and the Ottawa Police Services budget will increase by three percent. I did not support this direction because I felt that it did not leave us with the flexibility we need to address the growing needs in the city.

I also oppose transit fare increases. I believe that transit should be used by everyone and, therefore, it should be paid for by everyone. If we want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in our city, we must reduce the number of cars on the road. If we want to make our streets safer for everyone and reduce congestion, commute times and have a healthier population, we need to get as many people as possible out of their cars and onto buses, trains and bikes. We can’t achieve this if it’s cheaper to drive and park than it is to use public transit.

I also oppose the three percent increase to the police budget. We need to examine why the cost is so high and whether there are tasks the police do that would be better handled by civilian-led mental health and social workers.

I will also be looking for a critically needed commitment to social infrastructure and affordable housing funding. I have heard from many of you about the need for additional community housing. The wait list for affordable housing is over 12,000 households and most will wait six to eight years for a housing offer.

According to the city’s auditor general 2019 report, we spent \$24.5 million to shelter families in hotels and motels between 2015 and 2018. One family, one hotel

room, \$3000 per month.

This is almost double what it would cost to place these same families in a for-profit apartment and far more than it would cost to house families in safe and affordable community housing.

At the same time, we need more funding for social services. Every community in Ottawa deserves a range of social services such as accessible mental health counselling, playgroups that nurture child development, or Meals on Wheels to help seniors stay independent longer. Ottawa’s most vulnerable citizens are being placed at risk because these and many other essential social services are being eroded. Funding for them has simply not kept pace with the city’s growth, rising levels of demand and the complexity in our population. People are at risk of falling through the cracks. Critical social services need to be a priority in our city. We all benefit when we have a strong safety net that includes comprehensive, accessible and sustainable social services.

Between November 17 and December 2, the city’s standing committees will be holding hearings on the budget. The meetings are public and citizens can register to speak at the meeting (they’re currently held via Zoom). You can also submit a written statement via email and the clerk will ensure it goes to every member of the committee. You can see details about the budget and committee meetings at <https://engage.ottawa.ca/draft-budget-2021>

The final budget will be decided at the City Council meeting on December 9.

I hope by then you will have had an opportunity to read, discuss and comment on your budget priorities.

## MPP report: Renouncing hate and embracing our neighbours

Joel Harden

**O**nce again, Premier Ford has shown Ontarians that his friends and political allies get to live a different reality than the rest of us.

Last week, we found out that he has, under the cover of the pandemic, quietly introduced legislation before the legislature that would grant his friend Charles McVety’s Canada Christian College the right to award university degrees. McVety has a long history of racist, homophobic and transphobic comments. But this doesn’t seem to be a problem for Premier Ford.

This week, my colleague Laura Mae Lindo (MPP for Kitchener Centre) asked Premier Ford to reconsider bestowing degree-granting status on Canada Christian College. She did so after quoting what he has said about sexual orientation, “. . .

what is sexual orientation? You could have an orientation to pedophilia, you could have a sexual orientation to commit all kinds of things. It doesn’t mean that we have to accept it.” McVety has also claimed that “Islam is not just a religion, it’s a political and cultural system as well and we know that Christians and Jews and Hindus don’t have the same mandate for a hostile takeover.”

This is a man who misguidedly thinks his hateful views represent Christianity. They don’t. These ideas don’t represent Christians like me, who will challenge intolerance whenever it rears its ugly head. And it won’t stop queer and trans people, Muslims or anyone else, from getting the respect they deserve.

For example, Lyra Evans is the first transgender candidate to be elected to a public school board in Ontario’s history, winning with over 55

percent of the vote in Ottawa’s Zone 9 (Rideau-Vanier/Capital). Since being elected, Lyra has been an outspoken voice, notably for marginalized students.

And consider the Ottawa Muslim Association. On September 21, 2018, when three tornadoes struck our city, the Ottawa Mosque delivered over \$5,000 in food, walking up the stairs of countless apartment buildings to offer this support. They did the same during floods in 2019.

Hate won’t stop these remarkable folks. But it will poison your mind. I am reminded of Imam Hassan Guillet who said the following about Alexandre Bissonette, the shooter who gunned down six men at a Quebec City mosque on January 29, 2017, “Alexandre, before being a killer, he was a victim himself. Before planting his bullets in the heads of his victims, someone planted ideas more dangerous than

the bullets in his head.”

Imam Guillet is right; hate is sown. It festers and it can manifest in terrible consequences. It’s time McVety and his supporters embraced a more inclusive Christianity and acknowledged the beauty that is present in everyone.

A famous carpenter told us to “love your neighbour as yourself.” And in Amos 5:24, we are asked to “let justice roll on like a river, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” This is welcome advice in a world filled with so much bigotry.

Along with my colleagues in the official opposition caucus, we will keep up the pressure on Premier Ford for him to do the right thing and withdraw proposed changes to the status of Canada Christian College that would give hate an even bigger platform.



# What's on this month, in Ottawa and beyond

Tony Wohlfarth

In November, a new database at [naturalist.ca](http://naturalist.ca) will allow you to report flora and fauna sightings and, on November 19, at 7 p.m., you can participate via Zoom in a presentation by James Pagé of the Canadian Wildlife Federation.

Arts and culture events over this month can be accessed online and in person.



Mike McKay, OAFF founder and director

## 4th Annual Ottawa Adventure Film Festival (OAFF)

Beginning on November 13, the OAFF returns bigger and better with 50 films to enjoy in person and virtually. The event kicks off at 7 p.m. with an action-packed program of 12 of the best films from earlier fests. Full Friday tickets are available at <https://events.com/r/enUS/tickets/oaff---full-send-friday-795414>.

Screenings continue until November 22, when the festival closes with screenings of the best films of the OAFF, set for the Mayfair Cinema (1074 Bank Street). The films were selected by a jury from among 200 films submitted for consideration.

The program on November 22 includes live music by The Obsidians. Mike McKay, festival director, is a Chelsea-based kayaker and the OAFF founder.

Admission is based on membership or by pay what you can (PWYC). Membership is \$100 and includes discounts and offers from OAFF sponsors. Further information is available at [www.oaff.ca](http://www.oaff.ca)

## European Union Film Festival (EUFF)

The virtual EUFF launches with a German film, *All About Me*, on November 13. Online screenings continue until November 29.

Tickets and more information on the films are available at [www.cfi-icf.ca/euff](http://www.cfi-icf.ca/euff). Ticketholders have 48 hours to watch each film.

## National Film Board (NFB)

The NFB makes its extensive collection of documentary films available online at [nfb.ca](http://nfb.ca)

On the 50th anniversary of the imposition of the War Measures Act, the NFB released *The Rose Family*.

Directed by Felix Rose, the film is a personal reflection of the imprisonment of his father, Paul, who died in 2013. Felix described the film as the culmination of a personal journey.

*The Rose Family* makes extensive use of archival footage including private family collections to document key developments from the October Crisis in 1970. Paul Rose was a major figure in the establishment of the Parti Québécois. I found the two-hour film informative and relevant to understanding contemporary Quebec politics.

The NFB also produced a series of seven short films about the impact of the pandemic for vulnerable Canadians. I screened the first three at <https://www.nfb.ca/the-curve/wide-shots-and-close-ups/>

*Jia* is the story of a couple from Saskatchewan, who were stranded in Wuhan, China, and repatriated along with their newborn.

*Pandemic – At the End of the World* is a personal story about the impact on the Inuvialuit going back to smallpox.

*Very Present* is the story of a prisoner under house arrest during the lockdown.

## Outside Canada

The International Documentary Film Festival (IDFA) in Amsterdam is set



Felix Rose directed the new NFB film, *The Rose Family*, a personal reflection of the imprisonment of his father, Paul Rose of the FLQ, and about the 1970 October Crisis.

for November 18 to December 6 and IDFA is screening its festival online.

Centretown BUZZ readers can access all the films at [www.idfa.nl](http://www.idfa.nl)

## Ottawa Art Gallery (OAG)

The OAG (50 Mackenzie King Bridge) is open from Wednesday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Visits must be booked in advance at <https://oaggao.ca/>

## Canadian War Museum

The war museum (at 1 Vimy Place in LeBreton Flats) is open from Wednesday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Current special exhibits include photos on the lib-

eration of Holland on display through March 31, and from the Canadian Armed Forces photographers until January 3.

## Canadian Museum of Nature

Each fall, the CMN opens its storage facility in Gatineau for limited public viewing. The museum has now taken its collections online with a series of videos via its YouTube channel. This growing collection can now be accessed anytime from across Canada. Search for [Virtual Open House: Canadian Museum of Nature Collections](https://www.museum-nature.gc.ca/virtual-open-house).

The museum (240 McLeod Street) remains

open this fall with its current exhibit, *Planet Ice*, on display through January 3.

## For the Younger Set

Just in time for the second lockdown, a series of children's books are available for download at <https://www.irishtedragon.com/bookstore.html> and the collection is free.

Tony Wohlfarth is an Ottawa-based freelance film, arts and entertainment writer. He is covering the IDFA Festival virtually and reviewed the four NFB films via their website.

# Your street may get blocked by Queensway bridge replacements

Alayne McGregor

The replacement of five downtown bridges over the Queensway will noticeably disrupt walking, cycling, and driving in west Centretown.

Starting this week, you will have one last chance to influence how the construction will be implemented.

On November 2, Ontario Ministry of Transportation consultant Lincoln MacDonald told the city Transportation Committee how MTO plans to replace **five bridges over Preston Street, Rochester Street, Booth Street, Bronson Avenue, and Percy Street in stages over the next five years.**

MTO says the schedule is now being coordinated with other ongoing and adjacent Highway 417 projects and is expected to start in 2021, subject to environmental approvals.

At Bronson Avenue, the project will widen and extend the eastbound 417 on-ramp and extend the westbound off-ramp, and widen the overpasses at Booth and

Rochester to add speed change lanes. Chamberlain Avenue will be realigned to be opposite the Bronson eastbound off-ramp.

Queensway noise barriers will be added along the Queensway from LRT Line 2 to Rochester, and from Bronson to Lyon Street. Noise barriers from Rochester to Bronson will be replaced. The former A-1 Mini Storage at 458 Catherine will be demolished.

## Streets closed weeks before

Each bridge will be demolished in place and MTO will use rapid replacement technology to put in the new bridge over a weekend, as was done this summer with the bridge over the LRT Line 2 tracks. MacDonald said this would require partially or fully closing the streets under these bridges in the year before and, in particular, the weeks leading up to the replacement.

The bridges will be replaced in this order: Rochester and Booth (year 2), Percy and Bronson (year 3), and Preston (year 4).

## For the Rochester Bridge replacement:

Rochester will be closed for up to three weeks from Gladstone to Orangeville. Raymond Street will be closed for two years from Rochester to Booth, and Orangeville from Rochester to Lebreton Street South for up to five years. Pedestrians and cyclists will be detoured to Preston and motor vehicles to Booth.

**For the Booth Bridge replacement:** Booth will be closed for up to three weeks from Arlington to Orangeville. Pedestrians will be redirected to Rochester and vehicles to Preston.

**The Bronson Bridge replacement** will require fully closing Bronson to pedestrians and vehicles for up to three weeks from Catherine to Imperial Avenue/Plymouth Street. Pedestrians and cyclists will be detoured to Percy. Motor vehicles will be detoured to Booth Street southbound and Chamberlain/Bank/Catherine northbound.

**For the Percy bridge replacement,** Chamberlain will be closed to all traffic for

up to three weeks between Imperial and Glendale. Percy will be closed to motor vehicles from Catherine to Chamberlain for two years (and possibly for all traffic for shorter periods), and to bicycle and pedestrian traffic as well for up to five weeks before the replacement.

Percy is a heavily used bike route: cyclists will be diverted along Chamberlain to Kent Street and then back to Percy. At the meeting, Councillor Shawn Menard asked for a bike lane to be installed along the detour. MacDonald said he had met with city staff about the detours, but the idea of a specific "protected" bike lane had not been discussed.

**For the Preston Street Bridge replacement:** Preston will be fully closed between St. Anthony and Young for up to three weeks prior to the replacement, and from Louisa and Young on the replacement weekend. Pedestrians and cyclists will be detoured to the Trillium Pathway, while motor vehicles are supposed to use Gladstone/Bronson/Carling.

## Soccer field taken over for new bridge construction

The replacement bridges will be constructed in three locations: taking over the soccer field beside Ottawa Technical High School off Preston Street; in the Ottawa Community Housing lands between Booth and Rochester north of the Queensway which are slated for redevelopment; and in the former Ottawa Board of Education site at Bronson and Chamberlain.

Councillor Mathieu Fleury noted that Ottawa Community Housing planned to redevelop the Rochester staging site for badly needed housing and asked how quickly MTO would be releasing it. MacDonald said they would vacate the site as quickly as possible and expected to be out by year 3.

## Walkability audit suggested

MacDonald said that pedestrian and cycling detours would be provided for any closures. At committee, pedestrian advocate Miranda Gray said she was concerned about the length of those detours and whether anyone

had walked the routes to confirm that they feel safe. She suggested a walkability audit of the detours with pedestrians to check that the routes were well-lit and, in particular, that construction hoardings under the spans didn't block light and make it impossible at night to see oncoming traffic or pedestrians.

Gray was also concerned that the Bronson construction plan was dangerous for cyclists: "This looks like a plan that creates a funnel where we will have cyclists weaving into traffic on both sides of that bridge."

If you have any concerns about the proposed road closures, detours, or timing, you have one last chance to comment. The project's Design and Construction Report has been posted as of November 12 to the project website at [www.highway417-midtown-bridgesandimprovements.com](http://www.highway417-midtown-bridgesandimprovements.com)

The public will have until December 14 to comment on or suggest changes to the bridges' design or the construction schedule and implementation.





**COVID-19 RESPONSE**

- Working collaboratively with Dr. Etches and her team at Ottawa Public Health, local hospitals, and our federal and provincial partners
- Working to improve access to COVID-19 testing
- Creation of an Economic Partners Task Force to provide the City with “on the ground” feedback from the business community as the pandemic evolves
- Implementation of a Property Tax Hardship Deferral Program and creation of a Business Reopening Toolkit
- Opening self-isolation centres for our most vulnerable residents



**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

- Keep life in Ottawa affordable while investing in essential services with a cap on taxes
- Continuing to attract major events, sporting championships and film productions to Ottawa
- Breaking ground on the new Central Library
- Supporting job-creating projects like the Advanced Building Innovation Centre



**TRANSPORTATION**

- Progress on construction of Stage 2 LRT
- Extending no-charge OC Transpo service for seniors to include Sundays in addition to Wednesdays
- \$80-million investment to improve the state of roads across the city
- Increasing cycling tourism opportunities in rural villages



**PUBLIC SAFETY**

- Hiring new paramedics to improve response times in all areas
- Hiring additional community-based police officers
- Launching the Automated Speed Enforcement (ASE) pilot project, seeing 8 cameras installed in Community Safety Zones to encourage safer driving behaviours near schools



**AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND INCLUSIVITY**

- Partnering with Ottawa Community Housing and the federal government to build 700 housing units across three sites on Gladstone Avenue
- Partnering with Multifaith Housing to build 40 housing units for veterans at the new Wateridge Village
- Increasing the amount of City land available for affordable housing along transit corridors
- Appointing Liaisons for Veterans’ Affairs, Gender Equity and Anti-Racism
- Achieving gender parity on advisory committees



Ottawa Tourism

**ENVIRONMENT**

- Investing \$3 million per year in energy retrofits to City facilities, with a seven to ten-year payback through energy savings, for a total investment of \$12 million this term of Council
- Growing the city’s urban tree canopy through partnership opportunities that will see an additional 500,000 trees planted over the term, with an initial focus on areas impacted by the recent tornadoes
- Protecting Ottawa’s water environment for future generations through the Ottawa River Action Plan (ORAP) and the Combined Sewage and Storage Tunnel (CSST), now fully operational