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Music, art, nature ... and popcorn, 8

THE CENTRETOWN BUZZ



On September 23, Fridays for the Future Ottawa and Climat Go Gatineau joined in a global climate strike, attracting nearly a thousand participants to Parliament Hill. The Ottawa contingent, ranging from babes in slings to seniors, met up in Confederation Park for speeches and rousing songs from the Raging Grannies, and then paraded through downtown. One of the strike's main messages – exemplified by these protesters – was #VoteForClimate. In Ottawa's current city election, candidates' climate change platforms vary substantially, with Catherine McKenney's, Bob Chiarelli's, and Nour Kadri's concentrating on actions the city-can do on its own, while Mark Sutcliffe's looks more at joint actions with other governments and agencies. *ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ*

McKenney calls for more transparency at City Hall



Catherine McKenney by City Hall. *ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ*

Alayne McGregor
Regardless of who wins on October 24, Ottawa City Hall will change, with a new mayor and more than half of city council new to City Hall.

How well that council operates, how transparent it is, and how much citizens' voices are heard – a lot of that will depend on who is elected as mayor. In fact, how they promise to make decisions may be as important than what's in their platform.

Of all the candidates, Catherine McKenney has addressed this most directly. Last month, they released a series of proposals to make City Hall more transparent and to give more voice to citizens.

"I will ensure that local voices are heard on the issues they care about. When I'm mayor, decisions at City Hall will be made out in the open."

They said they will ensure that the public has "meaningful input throughout major City projects, including through equitable consultation processes."

The current multi-billion-dollar city budget is only ful-

ly understood by about four or five people, they said. "A budget under my mayoralty would be clearer."

Based on their experience working on the budget as both a councillor and as city staff, McKenney said "the city budget is intentionally kept opaque and difficult, so

we all have a hard time understanding it. When city finances are made impossible to navigate, it's easier to give \$3M in tax breaks to Porsche dealers."

As mayor, they said citizens would have a chance to have the budget reflect their budget priorities, without be-

ing experts in municipal affairs. Citizens should have plenty of time to tell the city what to focus on before the budget is finalized.

Currently, the city budget is written in the summer, months before it is shown to the public. Instead, they **continued on page 7 McKenney**

Make a difference: vote on Oct. 24

Did you know that the turnout in Somerset Ward in 2018 was only 39.1 percent? Across Ottawa, it was only 42.55 percent.

Did you know that in the 1988 city election, the candidates in Dalhousie Ward (now the western half of Somerset Ward) were only *two votes apart*?

If you vote, you make a difference.

How to vote: polls are open from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Friday, October 14 (advance poll) and on Monday, October 24 (election day). If you're on the voters' list, you should have received a letter in the mail with your voting locations. If not, you can

check by entering your address at ottawa.ca/vote. Remember to bring ID showing your name and address with you to the poll.

If you're not on the list, bring ID with you to your poll on a voting day and ask to be added. You can also nominate a proxy to vote on your behalf.

Learn more about election issues in stories in this issue of *The BUZZ*. Check centretownbuzz.com/ottvote2022 for more coverage. There you can read our interviews with candidates in this ward and for mayor, and stories about election issues and debates. You can also find links to online debates and candidate websites.

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The Lighter Side of the Pandemic, by Karen Munro-Caple



Comment: it's important whom you choose as mayor

Alayne McGregor

We haven't had a city election like this in over a decade. In 2022, there is a real race for mayor, and real choices to be made as to the direction of our city.

There's no doubt that we need a new hand on the tiller. Ottawa's outgoing mayor and city council have left us with • a completely dysfunctional transit system, • a Lansdowne money pit, • an unsustainable suburb in Tewin, • a new hospital with an airport-level parking garage that's likely to cause gridlock all around it, and • a city where the right to a parking space outweighs the right to a home.

The new mayor will take office in a time of existential dread caused by the never-ending waves of COVID-19 variants, a failing healthcare system, and spiking inflation. Residents were traumatized by the convoy occupation, and the continuing presence of its remnants.

And with the derecho this spring, the tornadoes in 2018, and increasingly-frequent heat events in the summer, we cannot pretend that the climate emergency is something that happens elsewhere.

On top of that, the city itself faces major problems next term:

- serious budget pressures caused by inflation,
- less money coming in this year from Ottawa Hydro because of the derecho,
- the need to rethink and revive public transit,
- continued lawsuits over the LRT P3 contract, and
- a police service that's overpriced, can't handle the homeless or mentally distressed, and is tainted by violent deaths and its response

to the convoy occupation.

The new mayor will be required to respond both to the provincial LRT inquiry, and to the investigations by the Public Order Emergency Commission and the city's auditor-general into the convoy occupation.

Running this city is going to be a tough job. Perhaps we need a new approach.

In the last term we had effectively a strong mayor regime, as Jim Watson strong-armed the city with his Watson Club supporters on council, winning most votes 15-9. Urban wards were shut out of decision-making.

Too much city business was conducted in secret. The LRT inquiry has shown that the mayor and city staff hid information about LRT failures from council and the public. And when bus routes were changed for the LRT opening, there was no opportunity for citizens to affect the decision.

There are several questions Centretowners need to ask of candidates for mayor.

Do they have enough experience?

Bob Chiarelli served nine years as regional chair and mayor. Catherine McKenney has served eight years as city councillor and had previous experience as city staff. Other candidates do not have this experience. As former mayor Larry O'Brien demonstrated, getting up to speed is not easy.

Is their financial plan practical?

I suspect none of the candidates' budget proposals will survive contact with next year's reality, but McKenney, with a 3 percent tax increase has given themselves more room to manoeuvre, compared to Chiarelli's 0 percent or Sutcliffe's 2 to 2.5

percent. McKenney has also released a far more detailed fiscal plan, with proposals for finding funding for projects like improving transit. Chiarelli has called for a halt to all new road construction and the Tewin project.

How would they increase affordable housing?

Chiarelli opposes inclusionary zoning (requiring affordable units in new developments). Sutcliffe has called for reducing development charges for residential housing projects where at least 20 percent of units are affordable. McKenney has proposed building 1,000 moderately and deeply-affordable homes per year, and using housing allowances to move homeless families out of motels into stable housing.

How would they operate as mayor?

Chiarelli had a track record of working well with and listening to councillors from all parts of the city. He was defeated in 2006 when he didn't listen to criticisms of his LRT plan. McKenney has worked hard for and respectfully with the Centretown community and on city council. Sutcliffe has a strong volunteer record, but has been endorsed by several members of the Watson Club.

It's up to you. Look over the candidates' platforms on their websites. Do they understand the issues? Or are they hand-waving the details and depending on other levels of government?

Pick a mayor who might solve Ottawa's problems.

Letter: safety & security remain acute issues in Dundonald Park

It was fascinating to read the "Heritage Skyline: Secrets of Dundonald Park" article in the September BUZZ, especially about the petition in 1901 to turn the then-dump into a park. 120 years later, I and other local residents also started a petition about the condition of Dundonald Park. I can't help but compare them.

In the first petition, the concern was about the then-empty lots being used as repositories for animal waste. Turning the empty lots into a public park administered by the NCC was expected to fix the problem.

In the second petition, the concern was about security and safety in the park, with over 250 signatories making a series of specific recommendations to all levels of responsible officials. The city responded in writing, and has begun to issue trespass orders when city staff are present, and support free yoga in the park on Mondays.

But unfortunately, over a year later, safety and security remain acute issues in Dundonald Park with the number of calls to the police increasing. If the city is unable to devote adequate resources to address these issues, perhaps a third-party entity could be employed to ensure basic public safety and security in the park. Additional security services are required to ensure that criminal activity is dealt with, to be there to refer those in crisis to the appropriate resources, and to support Dundonald as a safe and welcoming place for all community members.

Stefanie Bowles

People's Commission hears tales of convoy trauma

Alayne McGregor

The opening session of the Ottawa People's Commission hearings heard from four residents traumatized by the convoy occupation, and from one person who felt freed by the experience.

Noise, feces, garbage, and harassment were prominent in their testimony.

Three of the four commissioners were present at

the September 21 session at McNabb Community Centre: Alex Neve, Leilani Farha, and Monia Mazigh. They listened carefully and asked follow-up questions. The speakers had to register with their full names but did not have to give them in public.

The session was opened by Algonquin activist Sheldon Brown, who said that most importantly the commission should set bound-

aries – to say what is unacceptable if an event like this happened again.

Pat Kiperchuk said the occupation was not a peaceful protest. She was unable to sleep for more than a week because of the constant noise near her apartment from tailgate parties. She had to order in groceries and couldn't walk her dog, because she felt intimidated by the protesters, who con-

stantly "egged on" residents and threatened violence. Her neighbourhood was filthy with human feces and people urinating on private property.

Her son and daughter-in-law lost at least \$575 in employment income because they couldn't get to work.

Protesters were using the F-word in front of children, carrying Nazi and F- Trudeau flags, and spreading hate, she said. She said it was the first time she was ashamed of fellow Canadians.

"Matt" made his own counter-protest by Parliament Hill for 10 hours in three days in early February, and showed video of his experience. He described being harassed while the police stood by and told him they couldn't guarantee his safety. Large men surrounded him, blocked his sign with flags, and yelled in his face, he said, ending in him being pushed against a truck. He tried not to engage with them, but he could see he made some truckers angry.

He said he saw children in this noisy area without ear protection, some of whom looked "pretty distraught."

A third witness, who had worked in emergency planning for the city, said the city should have been able to mitigate this situation and put plans into place. It's "unthinkable" that city senior staff were not aware of the serious harm happening



OPC commissioners Alex Neve, Leilani Farha, and Monia Mazigh listened intently to each witness. ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

downtown by February 6, she said, and decisive leadership was missing. She could not understand the "deference" to the occupiers.

While she lived in a high rise on Gloucester during the occupation, she moved this summer. She argued those affected should also have been offered targeted support

for their wellbeing after the occupation.

Stephanie Strudwick, who has lived downtown for 30 years, described the occupation as extreme, threatening, lawless, and dangerous: three weeks of physical and psychological violence. She said she saw young teenagers

continued on page 10 "Tales"

The BUZZ asks and Somerset Ward candidates respond: making it easier and safer to walk in Centretown

On October 24, voters in Somerset Ward will elect a new city councillor for 2022-26.

In each issue up to the election, *The BUZZ* has asked the candidates running in this ward one question about city issues important to this ward.

This month, we ask:

The City of Ottawa's origin-destination surveys consistently show that walking is a more important mode of transportation in Somerset Ward than anywhere else in the city. What are the worst places to walk in Centretown? What three things would you do to make it easier and safer to travel on foot around Centretown?

Stuart MacKay

Over the past few months, I've been talking about the poor condition of our sidewalks here in Somerset Ward. I've heard from many residents, especially those who use mobility devices like wheelchairs or walkers, that it has become increasingly hazardous to walk down some of our streets. The city is currently doing a comprehensive sidewalk survey, and if elected, I would prioritize the repair of the worst sidewalks in Somerset Ward so we can have a real livable and walkable neighbourhood.

In addition, we need to think about building more resilient, all-season infrastructure here in Somerset Ward. Consider the red paving stones used in street design over the past decade. While these stones look nice at first, they simply are not durable enough for the daily wear and tear and extreme weather conditions that we face in Ottawa.

The result is paving stones which become loose, cracked, or dislodged, leaving dangerous tripping hazards on sidewalks and at intersections. Because of the amount of labour involved in repairing these paving stones, the end result is a quick but ugly asphalt patch job. When we rebuild streets and intersections, we need to use high-quality materials with a lifespan longer than 2-3 years.

We also need to ensure that our sidewalks are properly plowed during the winter. With so many of our residents walking their kids to school or commuting to work on foot during the winter, we need to prioritize snow clearing on sidewalks here in the downtown area. I've seen firsthand residents walking along busy streets like Kent Street or O'Connor Street alongside traffic because the sidewalk isn't plowed.

In addition, we also must do a better job of snow removal from bus stops, so those who are using public transit don't need to clamber over snow banks to board their bus.

Finally, if I had to choose the worst place to walk in Somerset Ward, I'd probably have to choose the stretch of Somerset Street West from Kent Street to Lyon Street North. That section has a bit of everything: cracked and broken sidewalks, asphalt patching, and

brickwork that makes the entire sidewalk uneven. It's a challenge to navigate!

Ariel Troster

The true joy of downtown living is being able to walk to restaurants, corner stores and many other destinations. But the sorry state of Ottawa's sidewalks and pedestrian infrastructure leaves a lot to be desired. Many of our sidewalks are too narrow and full of cracks and patches that serve as tripping hazards. And in the winter, a poor plowing job can leave curb cuts completely inaccessible, making it impossible for people in wheelchairs or using other mobility devices to get around.

The worst places to walk in Centretown? Definitely Kent Street, which is like a four lane highway through our downtown without any protected crossings. The intersection of Gladstone and Bronson is also particularly terrifying. And wherever there is construction is usually a mess, without clear pathways for people to walk in, coupled with unclear signage. We have a lot of work to do.

We need to make our streets more people friendly by slowing car speeds to 30km/hr in all residential zones, adding protected bike lanes that are sufficiently separated from sidewalks, and also prioritize snow clearing on sidewalks in the winter. When we redesign streets, they need to be true complete streets, with room for cyclists and pedestrians. We also need to explore more seasonal pedestrian-only streets and car-free streets near schools. A walkable city is a better city for everyone.

Brandon Russell

As a Somerset ward resident who doesn't own a car, I understand the struggle that walkers have to take. A grocery store can be well over a kilometre walk within the ward, transit isn't on an accessible line, it is faster to walk than find the bus schedule. Yet at the same time our sidewalks are falling apart, our seniors can't walk along Gladstone or most of the residential streets in our community. They end up stuck with the choice of using our crumbling infrastructure or spending exorbitant amounts of time trying to figure out our transit system that is an inescapable maze. What Somerset needs is new infrastructure that is built to last, this includes new sidewalks built above standard, more cycling lines and cycling safety. Somerset Ward also has the lowest tree coverage in Ottawa at only 22 percent, in the 40+ degree heat it isn't only uncomfortable to walk, it is downright dangerous if you are in an at-risk population. On top of all of this we need a truly walkable city - one where you can shop, eat and play. When we have that done we can achieve a city where it is safe, comfortable and sensible to walk downtown!

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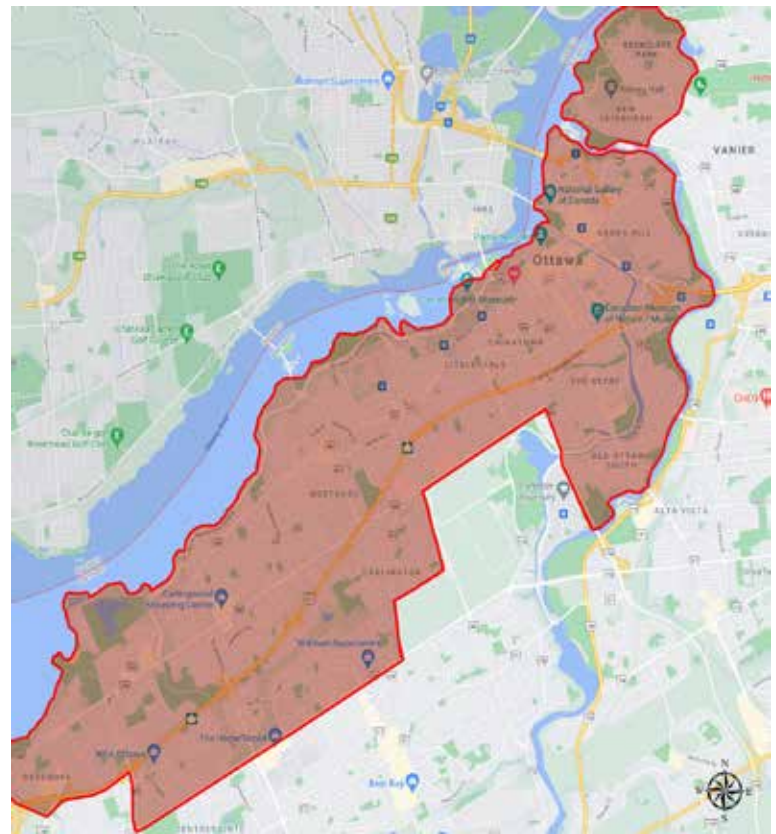
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The many reasons why the former school board admin building deserves heritage protection

Robert Smythe and Erwin Dreessen

Later this month, we will be presenting an application to the city for heritage protection of the former administrative buildings of the Ottawa Public School Board at Gilmour and O'Connor Streets.

The request is for protection under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, which gives municipalities the authority to designate specific buildings as having cultural heritage value.

Consisting of the original building that dates from 1922 and additions built in 1956 and 1963, the complex has sat empty and boarded up for the past 20 years after Ashcroft Homes bought the property for \$1.7 million from the school board.

Various attempts to develop the site, which would have involved demolishing the additions, have gone nowhere so far.

Significant, but does it meet the criteria?

In the recently approved Centretown Heritage Conservation District Plan, which classifies every structure in the area, the complex has the highest possible rating: *Significant Resource*.

But to qualify for specific heritage designation under the act, a building must satisfy a number of specific criteria.

City staff use a template consisting of a number of yes/no questions which cover the required criteria. In our application, we have used that template to make the case. Some of the points in our submission are summarized as follows:

Architecture: Is the property a rare, unique, representative, or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method? YES!

The original building was designed by renowned architect William Caven Beattie, then superintendent of buildings for the school board. It has been variously described as in Beaux-Arts or neo-Georgian style.

Its proportions are carefully considered and its limestone trim contrasts with the



The front entrance of the 1922 School Administration building as it looked in 2009. It looks much more neglected now. It is hoped that heritage protection will help to bring it back to its former splendour. Over the door is written "Administration", above that "Public School Board", and below the pediment "AD 1922".

ROBERT SMYTHE/THE BUZZ

darker brick of the building. A pair of wrought iron light standards flank the main entrance.

For decades, a picture of the entrance, with the light standards and adjacent blue spruces, graced the report card of every public elementary school student in Ottawa.

Both additions have achieved a remarkable compatibility with the original building, displaying the same limestone and dark brick combination.

The central 1956 addition features a two-storey section in limestone that appears to hang on the building like a framed picture. The 1963 addition completes the symmetry of the whole complex.

Craftmanship / Artistic Merit: Does the property display a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit? YES!

Of special note is the grand trustees' meeting room (45 x 36 feet) which has handsome oak paneling and can accommodate public observers.

Contemporary newspaper descriptions also mention the use of Caen stone in the rotunda, marble treads and risers in the main staircase, and terrazzo floors in the corridors.

Historical Associations: Does the property have direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community? YES!

The complex reflects the growth of public education in Ottawa, a city that evolved from the "rough and wicked place", as it was described in 1838, to one that supports a dense network of publicly supported schools that have frequently pioneered new ideas.

For example, in 1951 Ottawa became the first school system in the province to offer instruction for what were then called "severely mentally retarded" children.

Another association with the life of the city is the largely forgotten fact that, after City Hall, which was then at Elgin and Queen Streets, burned down on March 31, 1931, City Council began to meet in the trustees' meeting room. This arrangement lasted for 27 years until August 1958 when the new City Hall on Green Island was inaugurated.

Representative Work: Does the property demonstrate or reflect the work or ideas of an architect, artist, building, designer or theo-

rist who is significant to a community? YES!

As superintendent of buildings, W. C. Beattie (1886-1945) also designed York Street Public School (for which just last August

31 Ottawa City Council approved the issuance of a Notice of Intent to designate).

After he left that position, Beattie went on to design what is now Immaculata High School on Echo Drive,

the then headquarters of Ottawa Hydro on Albert and Bank Streets and several of its substations, and more.

But the Administration Building at Gilmour and O'Connor is arguably the finest example of his work.

A Centretown landmark

We conclude that this administrative complex is indeed a landmark in Centretown, anchoring the western end of the Metcalfe to O'Connor block of Gilmour Street. The First Church of Christ, Scientist (built in 1913-14), anchors the eastern end.

We listed 14 sources and add 15 illustrations. By adopting the format of heritage staff's customary reports, we hope to have lightened the burden of turning this application into a report to be considered by the city's Built Heritage Subcommittee.

Let's hope this happens soon! Once council accepts the subcommittee's recommendation for protection, the owner is notified and may lodge objections. It is then up to council to withdraw the designation or proceed with certifying the designation through a bylaw.

Ariel Troster

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Many challenges must be faced in revitalizing downtown

Stephen Thirlwall

This summer, a task force was formed to address issues confronting Ottawa's downtown. Its goal is to create a plan for the economic, environment-friendly and social revitalization of Ottawa's core.

In the August *BUZZ*, Robert Smythe presented the challenges to this process and wished it well.

I want to take the conversation much further and in another direction.

The make-up of the task force is very encouraging. It includes representation from government, major developers, and the Indigenous community, alongside local social services, a community association and BIAs. If these groups can achieve success, this might help bring back some trust in our political and social systems.

While there is potential in the task force, it has huge challenges in terms of how it will function. These include acting as a unified team and not as feuding factions, addressing the true realities in the downtown core and not abstract models, looking beyond putting a dollar value on everything and providing ideas and plans that can and will be implemented.

It may seem a little "late in the game" to raise these points. However, these comments are not just valuable to this task force but are also applicable to how our new city council might function.

Non-combatant consultations and planning

The biggest challenge facing the new task force is whether they can work as a unified force to bring together many new ideas and strategies towards achieving various goals. The participants need to function in a cooperative and collaborative fashion. Yes, there can be a clash of ideas but this needs to be minimized between the various members.

If all participants have equal status, if they each clearly present their thoughts but don't hold rigidly to them, and if they listen carefully and openly to what others present, the process might succeed. If contention, competition, hidden agendas, behind-the-scenes deals and so on are the mode of operation, the process will be undermined and likely dead from the start. It won't benefit anyone.

Some barriers to success include presenting past ideas and practices that have not worked well but continue to be used, and basing all decisions solely on money and abstract models that don't represent the reality



This summer's Pride Parade was as much a family fun-time and an advertisement for corporations as a recognition of Pride.

STEPHEN THIRLWALL/THE BUZZ

of downtown and its population. Overly hierarchical modes have greatly stifled creativity and flexibility.

More humanity is essential to the process. Success will require treating all of the downtown population equally regardless of their condition and background; listening to the public even though its inputs are very diverse; and giving downtown equal support within the full-city development instead of ignoring its needs.

Reading community reality

The current problems of downtown were not all caused by the COVID-19 lockdowns and convoy occupation. For at least a couple of decades, there has been gradual but steady reduction in downtown office workers, a neglect of support and a redirection of support elsewhere that has resulted in various shops and activities closing up or moving further out in the city.

For example, City Council had already decided that the new central library would be built in LeBreton Flats with no plan for even a small community library branch to remain in Centretown. The lack of adequately built and affordable housing in the core remains unachievable after being talked about for decades.

For downtown community planning to be successful, it needs accurate information on the people and activities and the forces that are affecting it, positively and negatively. Each place has its own distinct set of realities.

Ottawa has always had

two main downtown districts with existing or planned extensions down Bank, Somerset West, Wellington, and Rideau streets into the nearby inner-city neighbourhoods (Glebe, Chinatown, Little Italy, Hintonburg, and Montreal Road). As a resident of Centretown, I functionally use this full larger area as my downtown. Efforts to forcibly create a new third downtown in LeBreton Flats have so far failed, but could eventually occur more organically over the next 20 years.

On a broad, urban scale, new suburban development involves primarily developing previously unbuilt spaces. Not so in the downtown. Here it is a continual process of building between existing buildings, subdividing existing buildings, replacing old buildings with new ones, and melding historical features with new construction, with the hope of saving some historical buildings and neighbourhoods.

Downtown has been ignored

Downtown Ottawa is a finite, relatively small space with the highest and densest population in the city. This population is rapidly increasing. But at City Council, downtown and the immediate surrounding inner-city districts are far outnumbered by suburban communities and concerns, and thus face certain inequalities in the system. The downtown has been relatively ignored, unsupported, and undermined in terms of Ottawa's management and development.

At the community level, parts of downtown have

maintained much of their own vitality. In some Centretown neighbourhoods, through community-based groups, reinvigoration is already happening. These groups approach revitalization as an internal organic process and not one forced from outside. Advances are happening at the ground level through significant volunteer efforts operating on limited support funding.

Other parts of downtown are increasingly fractionated by new developments. The call for intensification is adding pressure to previously stable neighbourhoods. It is hard to tell whether the call for urgent rapid development is a true concern.

Diverse residents

The make-up of the downtown population and the immediate inner city has four main components. These are: 1) long-term and transient residents, 2) the weekday workforce, 3) tourists and 4) individuals from across the city and region who come downtown for social activities and entertainment. Equal attention has to be given to each group since they all "feed off" one another.

Music, literary, theatre, dance, and other artistic festivals are essential to the vitality of downtown Ottawa, as are BIA-sponsored street festivals such as Glow Fair. These require support from all levels of government and businesses, and they involve a large community volunteer force. The recent Pride Parade was as much a family fun-time and an advertise-

ment for numerous corporations, small businesses, community and government services as it was a recognition of Pride.

In terms of residents downtown, there is an increasingly complex diversity. The percentage of seniors, many of whom are single, is growing. There are transient residents, including a large student population and young professionals, who are here for only a few months or years. There are immigrants/refugees and Indigenous peoples, many of whom use downtown as an entry point and, in time, move elsewhere. The core has a significant body of low-income people, including the physically and mentally disabled, those struggling with addictions, and those living on the street.

Across this lies a range of cultural and gender diversities.

Families with children require schools, safe parks, affordable community activities and services, which can be perceived to be better in the suburbs. I am aware of several families who moved out of Centretown for that reason, which is a significant problem.

Rethinking "development"

"Development" is an interesting word. In Centretown, it currently stands for the extensive building of high rises and tall mid rises, and the full-throttle upgrading of public utilities such as roads and sewers. This has led to considerable noise and traffic disruption on roads and sidewalks. Current projects such as the Queensway

expansion, and the renewal and installation of new gas lines are making access to and within downtown extremely difficult. They also imply an unwitting commitment to another 30 to 50 years of significant fossil fuel consumption.

Development can also mean a much deeper commitment to support activities that draw many people to the downtown, thus creating a special economy that supports many large and small businesses, and provides adequate social services. It can also mean greater encouragement and support of local community associations and BIAs to naturally develop the community from within rather than being strictly re-designed and rebuilt by outsiders who seem to have no, or limited, relationships with our downtown neighbourhoods.

Implementation and coordination

Whatever ideas and plans come out of the task force, there also has to be a means of implementing them at the municipal level, which is very much dominated by provincial government regulations, decisions, and funding. How flexible are our local and provincial systems and civil servants in accepting and making changes?

Yet despite these challenges, this task force is a good proposition and shows possibility. It needs our public support, input, and encouragement, not our distrust.

The crucial role of rooming houses is an election issue



Marie-Elise Blais and
Joanna Binch

Health rarely seems to enter the discussion when we talk about housing. But with the news filled with stories of closing emergency departments and overwhelmed nurses, physicians and allied health providers, we need to look closely at the issue of housing in the upcoming election.

Housing is healthcare. When we don't have enough adequate and affordable housing, individuals struggle. Amongst other things, the healthcare system is directly affected.

One type of housing that highlights the relationship between housing and health is rooming houses. Rooming houses are single-room accommodations, regulated by the city, that share a kitchen, and/or bathroom.

This type of housing helps to give our community a lower-cost housing option for single people, keeping them off the streets. Yet, this housing often goes unnoticed, situated as it is above stores, in older homes, or fit in amongst some of our qui-

eter streets of Centretown. Rooming houses play a critical role in preventing the loss of housing.

No one knows this more than Elizabeth, who lived with and cared for her aging mother, until she found herself needing to find accommodation for the first time in over 20 years, but could not afford an apartment on her limited income. She described a Centretown rooming house an answer to her prayers, but worried about how long she could remain because of the mould that was forming around some water damage in the ceiling.

On the one hand rooming houses help provide affordable housing, but on the other hand, when they are poorly maintained, they can add to the poor health of

residents – leading to greater use of our emergency departments and ambulance calls.

A number of rooming house residents have identified stairs as a concern for their health as they aged; worried with advanced age if they would still be able to carry their groceries up the many stairs that are often part of rooming houses.

In the last several years, while the city has declared a housing emergency, we have continued to see a decline in the rooming house stock, and a loss of buildings that used to give an option to individuals who could rent these rooms within the income provided by social services.

We are planning an upcoming exhibition at City Hall of photos that rooming house residents have

taken about how they see their health as residents in these facilities. We hope to raise awareness of rooming houses, and how we can support landlords who want to own and rent this important source of affordable housing, and how we can hold the City accountable to maintain the building standards of this housing to optimize the health of residents.

When you vote in this municipal election, keep in mind which candidates want to support rooming houses and their residents!

*Marie-Elise Blais, RN is a Centretown resident.
Joanna Binch, RN (EC) provides outreach services in Centretown.*

A resident in this building was concerned that the steps up to their door were not being maintained, and potentially increasing the risk of falls. (SWCHC)

DCA report: making a difference

Ed McKenna

The Dalhousie Community Association: Does It Make A Difference?

Perhaps it was the presence of community engagement students from Carleton University, and the participation of new community members with good questions, but the regular DCA meeting October 5 became a little reflective.

Using the language of marketing, someone asked: "What's the value proposition for a community association?"

The response?

Well, we're usually the first to hear about new municipal projects proposed for our community, whether it's for development, recreation, traffic and transit or even public art. The city still seeks feedback and advice from community associations. And city planners want to know what we think about development proposed for our neighbourhood. Sometimes the changes we recommend result in significant improvements.

The Korean Community Church

Here's an example.

The Korean Community Church, formerly Bell Street Methodist, then United, Church, has been a community anchor at the corner of Bell and Arlington since 1910. Windmill Developments proposes to redevelop the property, and build 274 residences on the site.

A principal selling point for this proposal is that the church façade will be retained along Bell and Arlington. A year ago this wasn't in the plans – the church was to be demolished. Since January, DCA's planning committee has had the opportunity to respond to this plan, and our comments and suggestions have contributed to the developer's change of approach, and [a major improvement in the design](#).

There are still opportunities to improve the development, in particular to ensure measures are taken to increase green space at street level.

The DCA's planning committee will be writing to the city this week with more comments and suggestions.

Community Gardens

Remember the Sweet Willow Community Garden? It was established by the Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation at its district heating facility at 31 Rochester.

The heating facility was decommissioned in 2018, and the site is property of Canada

Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The innovative garden, after about twenty years, is no more. Debris is scattered over what is now a small vacant lot.

The DCA's Public Realm committee is exploring how the garden might be brought back to life.

The revival of the garden will be pursued by the committee's Broadening Community Engagement Project, with its partners at the Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability Ottawa (CAFES), and Carleton University. Carleton students are now welcome participants in our monthly meetings.

The project will look at engaging groups in our neighbourhood who are not usually sitting at the DCA table. These are youth, Asian seniors, and people who are precariously housed and need supports.

They will be learning and teaching about climate change, its impact on Dalhousie, and how we can improve our public realm. The project aims to provide pollinator gardens and to use the crops to improve local food security.

Opportunities to participate

The DCA encourages its members to attend the monthly board meetings – a good way to keep up to date about what's going on in the neighbourhood.

We have opportunities to participate in our committees. Three are seeking new volunteers: the Messaging Out committee (communications), Mobility committee (transportation) and Peaceable Neighbourhoods committee (community safety and well-being).

Consider getting involved!

Check out our website: ottawadalhousie.ca. Follow us on Twitter: @DalhousieCA; Instagram: @dalhousiecommunity; and, Facebook: Dalhousie Community Association (Ottawa).

Please get in touch! Contact: president@ottawadalhousie.ca

McKenney calls for more transparency

continued from page 1
promised to start budget consultations earlier to allow for meaningful consultation and changes.

They also proposed more transparency in city finances, including using fiscal anchors – financial constraints to ensure fiscal sustainability – for managing property tax increases and city debt.

McKenney also promised to balance representation (in terms of geography and gender) on council committees and boards, so that they are representative of all of Ottawa and make better decisions.

"When you have a Planning Committee that doesn't include councillors that represent your entire city, decisions are made that are not in the best interest of the city as a whole."

They also said they would look at increasing the number of citizen advisory committees, which were severely cut back in 2012. "It's a way of making City Hall more transparent, and

of tapping into the expertise we know is in our communities."

And Ottawa City Hall itself would change – McKenney undertook to remove the security barriers introduced a few years ago that required everyone wanting to watch city council in person to go through invasive security checks.

"I've never been in favour of them. City Hall has got to be accessible to people. We shouldn't have to go through locked gates to get into our city council chambers."

They also proposed a "fair wage" policy for the city, that would ensure that city contracts went to firms which offered fair wages and safe working conditions.

"Bidders for City contracts will have to compete on the quality of work they can do, rather than how low they can push down costs at the expense of workers."

More immediately, McKenney released their first list of those donating more than \$100 to their campaign

this week, with another list expected before the election "because you deserve to know who is funding my campaign before you head to the polls." They had already promised not accept donations from developers (as did Mark Sutcliffe).

"Over the course of my career, I have seen the influence of money creep into City Hall, and affect long-lasting decisions like the LRT," they said.

Brandon Bay is the only other mayoral candidate to release their list of donors that *The BUZZ* is aware of. Campaigns do have to release lists of donations over \$100 months after the election.

Bob Chiarelli called for a governance review of the NCC on his website, but did not address city governance.

Nour Kadri called for an "open, citizen-centered approach to good governance ... and equity for underserved communities."

Other candidates have not addressed governance issues on their websites.

Catch up on *BUZZ* city election coverage at
centretownbuzz.com/ottvote2022

Enjoy the fall foliage while you deliver *The BUZZ!*

Email circulation@centretownbuzz.com to volunteer

Dundonald Park: alive with people and music this fall

Stephen Thirlwall

With more new buildings and more people living in Centretown, the need for more parks and public spaces in which to gather is becoming urgent.

Dundonald Park, one of the few large parks in this area, has recently seen two activities drawing more people there: a series of concerts held from the late summer into October, and the annual Fall Fair.

DIG's music in the park

The Dundonald Improvement Group (DIG) started informally before the COVID-19 lockdown, when concerned residents and social agencies came together to create a safe and healthy park environment.

DIG has recently returned in a more formal fashion with a board of directors and has quickly moved into action.

In collaboration with local businesses, such as the Art House Cafe, and the Music and Beyond festival, it has presented afternoon and evening concerts: jazz, classical, and folk.

One concert I attended was Finely Tuned Elephant, an excellent local jazz-rock band, whose music encouraged audience members to get up and dance. Others watched comfortably from lawn chairs or just sat in the grass.

Another show featured Kayano, a longtime hip-pie, who had survived the 60s while keeping it alive through folk and country tinged songs, accompanied by guitar and harmonica.

Fall Fair had perfect weather

The Fall Fair is the result of months of planning by the Centretown Community Association's (CCA) Trees, Greenspace and Sustainability Committee and the Centretown Community Health Centre (CCHC), and the dedication of a growing cadre of volunteers.

The weather on September 24 was perfect. Volunteers worked together seamlessly. We helped one other, shared with each other, and learned many new things.

New activities were plentiful and the overall plan was to engage with those who



Dancers from the Yet Keen Seniors' Day Centre performed at the fair.

STEPHEN THIRLWALL/THE BUZZ

came to the fair so as to make them full participants. The Dundonald Garden group had children planting hundreds of flower bulbs to decorate the garden next spring.

The children also decoratively painted small bird feeders and rocks.

Several troupes of Chinese elders from Yet Keen Seniors' Day Centre performed dances for over an hour. Some dressed in fancy costumes and held red fans. Other groups appeared in just sweat tops and pants. They danced to Michael Jackson's "Beat It," "Are you going to Scarborough Fair," and Chinese themes.

The Chinese dancers also visited the various park displays. Although many only spoke Chinese, through hand gestures, expressions and a few words, they held many interesting conversations with the exhibitors.

and Butterfly garden also had a table.

Adults, youth, and children could draw or paint their own picture of a tree, whether realistic or imaginative. Some chose to draw one using black ink and a twig pen.

Magically, a DIG concert dovetailed with the fall fair when Music and Beyond's Julian Armour introduced a saxophone quartet, which performed during the fair's last hour.

At the CCA information table, residents could ask about the community, and speak with two of the candidates for Somerset Ward councillor.

The Ottawa Art Gallery returned with drawings by Annie Pootoogook. The Ottawa Public Library Bibliobike and story hour brought new books and stories. CCHC also offered kite building.

All this and more – fueled by free popcorn.



Dancers from the Yet Keen Seniors' Day Centre performed at the fair.

JACK HANNA/THE BUZZ



Music & Beyond brought the Trillium Saxophone Quartet to perform as part of the DIG series.

STEPHEN THIRLWALL/THE BUZZ

Capturing the park on canvas

Prominent Ottawa visual artist and Centretown resident Christopher Griffin joined the celebration to paint a beautiful scene much like the park with trees, people and dogs. Having sketched out a rough plan ahead, he was able to complete this large canvas portrait in an hour to the amazement of the crowd watching.

The NeighbourWoods Tree Survey group, having completed two seasons of mapping and assessing trees in Centretown, finally had extensive data to produce an informative display about our urban forest and how our community can learn to appreciate and care for it, and extend it into the future.

The Pollinator exhibit keeps growing with several tables of information, museum-like sample pollinators and photographs of many kinds of pollinators at work. The Frank Street Bee



Ottawa artist Christopher Griffin completed this canvas in the park in an hour, to the amazement of the crowd watching.

STEPHEN THIRLWALL/THE BUZZ

Children learn the Orange Shirt story



Rosy Tlem and Ariana Abdul display some of the material at their booth on the walk.



Andrea Monaghan and her children Natan and Auyu and a friend explore the story walk.

Alayne McGregor

Orange signs, T-shirts, and banners filled Plouffe Park on September 30 as the Plant Pool Recreation Association (PPRA) again commemorated the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

The PPRA hosted a story walk for all ages to learn about the Orange Shirt Story – how a six-year-old Indigenous girl had her brand-new orange shirt, a rare memory of home, taken away from

her on her first day at a residential school. It was the first of many traumas she faced at the school. (More info: www.orangeshirtday.org/phyllis-story.html.)

The drop-in event was held in the late afternoon to allow families to take part in the creative activities dotted around the park.

It also included a display of books on reconciliation and the four sacred medicines (tobacco, cedar, sage, and sweetgrass), videos of speeches by Murray Sinclair, free maple water, and regular

PHOTOS BY ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

draws for books and T-shirts.

PPRA board member Suzanne Nash said it was important for everyone to step up to commemorate the day, and they wanted to have a community-based event to complement the bigger events elsewhere in the city.

Also on Sept. 30, hundreds of demonstrators walked on the Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway to demand the federal government rename that road because of Macdonald's central role in creating Indian Residential Schools and the Indian Act.

Justine Bell

School Trustee
Zone 10 Somerset/Kitchissippi

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CCA report

Jack Hanna

Check out the candidates for mayor

You can still catch a live debate among candidates for mayor in the October 24 election.

The CCA, along with several other community associations, is hosting a debate Monday, October 17, at 7 p.m. in the Horticultural Building at Lansdowne Park.

The debate is limited to candidates showing strength in the polls, garnering more than five percent support from respondents. That's Bob Chiarelli, Nour Kadri, Catherine McKenney, and Mark Sutcliffe.

You can attend in person, or watch the live-stream; check CCA social media and [The BUZZ website](#) for details.

Check out candidates for councillor

Here are a couple of ways to check out the three candidates for councillor in Somerset Ward, which includes Centretown.

The BUZZ has run articles in its past three editions that ask Stuart MacKay, Brandon Russell, and Ariel Troster about fixing the LRT, Lansdowne 2.0, and what truly fresh ideas they have this area. The articles are available on [The BUZZ website](#). There's a fourth article in this issue, with candidates' proposals for improving walking in Centretown.

Rogers TV also has [an hour-long debate among the three candidates](#) on its website.

Vote for homes

Two of the CCA's committees – the Housing Affordability and Anti-racism Working Groups – ask voters to look closely at candidates' plans for tackling Ottawa's housing emergency.

According to the most recent statistics available (from 2019) 12,000 people were on the waiting list for affordable housing.

About 8,000 needed spaces in shelters.

Indigenous folks disproportionately experience homelessness in Ottawa. They make up about three percent of the city's residents, but 30 percent of its homeless population.

How to face climate change

A CCA workshop will address what the

City of Ottawa and individual residents can do to mitigate the climate-change impacts forecast for Ottawa.

The workshop is planned for the first half of November. See the [CCA's website](#) or Facebook page for the date, time, and Zoom link.

Climate change is expected to inflict increased heat and rainfall on Ottawa.

The workshop's speakers will discuss climate-mitigation practices tried in other cities: for example, innovations in architecture or urban forestry practices.

As well, they will discuss practical measures individuals can take.

The workshop is sponsored by the CCA's Climate Change Working Group and the Glebe Community Association.

CCA shapes new heritage regulations

The CCA helped shape the new regulations just coming into force for Centretown's Heritage Conservation Districts (HCDs).

Several ideas advocated by the CCA are in the new regulations, including multiple levels of heritage designation, a special heritage zone around the Museum of Nature, strong protection of the tree canopy, and more human-friendly architecture on Bank Street.

The new regulations for the Centretown HCD (from Elgin to Kent) and the Minto Park HCD (houses surrounding the park) were scheduled to take effect this month.

Energizing downtown

CCA President Mary Huang was invited to join MP Yasir Naqvi's task force to revitalize downtown Ottawa.

The task force has talked with local businesses impacted by the COVID-19 lockdown and the convoy occupation, and heard from the Centretown Community Health Centre about homelessness in Centretown and what to do about it.

Elgin market moves online for the winter

Those who enjoyed the Elgin Street Market over the summer can continue to support local vendors online this winter.

Folks can order from some 40 local vendors at [www.elginstreetmarket.ca](#)

Place an order by Thursday and pick it up at Lemongrass Thai Cuisine, 331 Elgin, on Saturday afternoon.

Tales of convoy trauma at hearing

continued from page 3
being harassed by truckers. A corner store owner was bullied when he asked them to put on masks, and closed his store.

On the other hand, "Christine", who said she lived two blocks from McNabb, described the occupation as "patriots holding the line." She said it allowed her to escape the "tyranny" of public health regulations that prevented her children from playing sports.

"The truckers came to set me free after I was kept in

my house for two years."

She spent about 50 hours at the occupation, and noted that free ear plugs were given to children.

Sessions continue

The People's Commission has held three further sessions, one of which focused on people with disabilities, and another for those who supported the convoy.

It will hold a fifth session online on October 20 from 2 to 4:15 p.m. Pre-registration is required to speak at a session.

The commission's final re-

port is expected next February.

Federal and city inquiries

The city's auditor-general is conducting two investigations into the response to the convoy occupation, one into the city's actions, and one into the police and the police services board.

At the federal level, the Public Order Emergency Commission began hearings this week, and a joint Parliamentary committee studying the decision to invoke the Emergencies Act continues to hold sessions.

Comment

The city's goals for LeBreton Flats: can they be achieved?

Ed McKenna

At the September 22 Planning Committee meeting, city staff tabled a memo: "City Priorities for Community Benefits at LeBreton Flats and Funding Approaches for City-Owned Facilities – Status Update."

This occurred at the end of a three-hour meeting. It was an "IPD" item (Information Previously Distributed), so there were no questions, and there was no discussion.

It was a tiny moment – which belies its importance in the city's development.

Priorities for the redevelopment of LeBreton Flats were first outlined in a staff report approved in 2017. Staff updated the report in June 2020 to respond to the National Capital Commission's new strategy, "Building LeBreton."

By this time the LeBreton Flats Community Benefits Coalition had emerged. Comprised of a wide range of community-based organizations, the coalition proposed a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) for the redevelopment of LeBreton Flats.

A CBA brings the community into the decision-making process with public agencies and private developers for major infrastructure development projects. It has been used successfully in Toronto and Vancouver.

The coalition's advocacy led to city staff producing another report for planning committee. Last October, "City Priorities for Community Benefits at LeBreton Flats and Funding Approaches for City-Owned Facilities" was approved.

BUZZ shorts: mayor's powers, library hours and locations, Chief Wm Commanda bridge delayed

More powers for the mayor
The province released its draft regulations for the *Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act* this month.

While similar to what had been revealed, they also allow the mayor to veto changes to development charges. They also set a schedule for city budgets: city council has 30 days to amend a mayor's proposed budget.

The provincial priorities under which the mayor has more powers will be "Building 1.5 million new residential units by 2031" and "The construction and maintenance of infrastructure to support accelerated supply and availability of housing including, but not limited to, transit, roads, utilities, and

The report explains what's important to the city in the redevelopment of LeBreton Flats, and how each priority might be paid for. Now we have the a status update.

The report identifies 17 priorities within six thematic areas. For example, under "Equity and Inclusion," the city's priorities for LeBreton Flats include "affordable housing, dwelling units for large households, space for non-profits, childcare facility, and Indigenous recognition and presence."

Other priorities are more specific, like "accessible public washrooms" and "wayfinding signage." And a major city commitment will be the development of a 2.5-hectare municipal park, including a municipal community building.

However, as the update explains, there has been little progress. The city has dared to dream about what might be at LeBreton Flats, but has limited its priorities to "such matters that fall under the City's purview under the Planning Act."

Accordingly, the funding approach to achieving these priorities is also limited to the tools at hand, such as development charges.

"Normal development practice" points the way ahead for what is described in a motion by council as "a highly strategic city building project that will occur over the next three decades." Will normal development practice produce the results?

Both the NCC and the city have to date resisted the Coalition's proposal that a CBA be used to help ensure that community priorities for redevelopment of LeBreton Flats are

met. Both public bodies have heard what the community has to say, and listened to their recommendations.

That's "consultation," and that's "normal." But so far neither public body will engage citizens as partners in the decision-making processes that will determine the future of LeBreton Flats.

To its credit, the NCC has changed the model, and adopted a "social procurement" approach for the redevelopment of its property at 665 Albert. The result is a plan that responds in important ways to community priorities, including affordable housing, a childcare facility, equitable employment and benefits for Indigenous people.

After reading the staff status update, one wonders if Ottawa isn't at risk of leaving a lot on the table at LeBreton Flats.

Has the NCC shown that a new development model is needed to achieve community priorities on LeBreton Flats? Does the city have a role to play in encouraging a new approach – like a CBA – to planning and development, one that engages citizens in decision-making?

An economic impact study undertaken for the NCC in 2020 projected that construction spending alone at LeBreton Flats will total \$13.2 billion in "future value dollars" over the next 30 years. There will 38,000 construction jobs. Development charge payments will reach \$95 million.

Billions will be invested at Le Breton Flats over the next thirty years. How do we ensure it produces wealth for everyone's benefit?

servicing."

Only 10 days were allowed for consultation on the regulations.

Library hours increase

Starting this week, the Ottawa Public Library is restoring open hours on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. It will now open at 10 a.m.

However, evening hours remain reduced, meaning that the main branch's hours are still 12 percent less than pre-pandemic. A planned increase in Sunday hours has not yet been announced.

Library board to discuss branch locations in November

The Ottawa Public Library board will debate a proposed Facilities Frame-

work on November 8.

The framework specifies the distance among branches, which could remove the possibility of a small downtown branch when the main branch moves to LeBreton Flats.

Residents can speak at the online meeting if they pre-register. Info: [biblioot-tawalibrary.ca/en/opl_board](#)

Chief William Commanda Bridge delayed

The multi-use pathway over the Ottawa River on the Chief William Commanda Bridge has been delayed. The city said last week that the pathway will now open next spring to pedestrians, cyclists, and cross-country skiers. It attributed the delay to a strike, labour shortages, and supply chain issues.

The Good, the Bad, and the Bumpy: farewell for now



Ryan Lythall on his 2022 birthday (photo provided by Ryan)

Ryan Lythall

One thing that has always frustrated me about politics is the lack of concern given to persons with disabilities (PWD). Back in 2018, I took a shot at changing that in the municipal election.

A big reason was to bring awareness to issues affecting PWD. I wanted to improve Para Transpo and make public transit accessible to everyone. While I didn't win the election, I did manage to bring awareness to PWD.

After that election, a friend reached out to me on

Facebook, informing me that *The Centretown BUZZ* was looking for someone to write about PWD and some of the challenges we face, particularly in Centretown.

At first, I was flattered and genuinely surprised that I'd even be recommended for the job. I was nervous, but I gave them my permission to give my name. To be honest, I didn't think I'd hear back.

I met (then-editor) Marna at a coffee shop. While it was challenging to communicate because it was loud, we still managed to have a good chat, and I could ask additional questions through email and social media.

The rest, as they say, is history. I have been writing a column for *The BUZZ* since 2019.

Over these three years, I've met countless readers in Centretown and in other areas of the city. I have truly enjoyed hearing how my words have had an impact, which has made my decision to pause my monthly column for the paper a lot tougher.

I have decided to roll away, at least for the time be-

ing. Between ongoing staffing shortages with my PSW and nurses and taking care of my mental health, I have very little energy.

Since 2020, I've also been writing weekly for *Ottawa Life Magazine* and I will continue with this weekly column. I encourage you to check it out.

Until next time, thank you, *Centretown BUZZ*, for giving me the space to talk about people with disabilities, share our stories and show that PWD are people too and not any different than you.

PWD have families, jobs, partners, friends, hobbies/interests, concerns, thoughts/ideas, struggles, good days

and bad days. Whatever YOU deal with, WE do also and THEN some. The only difference is how others perceive PWD.

We are all on the same journey. It shouldn't matter whether we're in a wheelchair or a scooter, or how we look, act, or think.

I hope that by the time I return, Ottawa will have a mayor who truly understands and listens to everyone.

While we haven't personally met, Catherine McKenney and I have had several discussions through social media regarding wheelchair accessibility and Para Transpo.

That's what a mayor is to me.

A mayor should listen

to all, no matter how much money they have or their status.

Together with others in our community, we can make Ottawa a great city. A city accessible to everyone.

This isn't a goodbye. I hope that, once things settle down, I can return to *The BUZZ* at least periodically. I will say that the door is being left wide open, and as you all know, I love open doors. They tend to make the journey a lot easier.

Feel free to reach out. I'm never too far away.

Follow Ryan on Twitter:
@rolling_enigma

MPP report: "Where do you steal your toilet paper?" (reflections on life on social assistance)

Joel Harden

Lately, I've been talking a lot about an appeal to double social assistance rates. The appeal came from five MPPs (myself included) who pledged to live on a \$47 weekly food budget for two weeks.

Why did we do this?

We need a basic income that treats people with respect, and doesn't waste money on legislated poverty for 900,000 folks on Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).

(To recap: doubling social assistance in Ontario would cost about \$8 billion, but the societal costs of poverty are at least triple that amount).

Coffee and conversation

While living on my \$47 a week food budget, I visited the Parkdale Food Centre's "Coffee and Conversation" breakfast that runs on Wednesdays from 9-10 a.m. at 30 Rosemount Avenue. This program is a lifeline for folks on social assistance seeking a decent meal and companionship.

While talking to the neighbours attending the breakfast, I met Pat, who

had heard about our appeal to double social assistance rates.

So I asked Pat how he survives on such a limited food budget. As he formulated a response, a man down the table shouted this:

"\$47 a week eh? Where do you steal your toilet paper?" He got the table's attention.

The point was effectively made. Some have questioned if a \$47 weekly food budget reflects the experience and cost of legislated poverty. So I listened further to understand.

"Know where to find free food"

That's when Chantal, an OW recipient, added this: "The only way to survive is to know where to find free food. I look at Loblaws for food they give away. I come here. You make the rounds."

Natalie, an ODSP recipient, said she came to the Parkdale Food Centre from Lowertown, a significant commute.

"But it's worth it," she said, "and not only for the food. I started coming here six months ago. And when I don't come, someone calls to see how I'm doing."

As we discussed the value of companionship, we

also talked about screen time for kids, and diminishing eyesight with age (I've just started with reading glasses). It didn't feel like a soup kitchen, it felt like being at a breakfast table with friends.

"And that's the point", said Simon, Parkdale's Community Kitchen Manager. "Everyone deserves good food. This is a space that treats everyone like neighbours, and always with respect."

More than charity

Parkdale also has shopping for free produce, and opportunities to learn culinary skills. They aren't keen about the charity approach used for folks living in poverty.

"Joel, think of what we could do across the city," Simon said.

"Many city buildings have industrial grade kitchens that are empty most of the time. What if we found public money to staff these kitchens, train volunteers, and produce delicious food?"

That sounds like a project worth embracing: a community kitchen movement to ensure everyone gets a tasty meal.

If you have a moment, write me a note at joel@joelharden.ca, and let me know what you think.

CALL FOR DONATIONS!

As winter approaches, we are collecting donations for our community. We need:

- new socks, all adult sizes
- new underwear, all adult sizes
- small packaged-non perishable foods (for example, granola bars, juice boxes)

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- Pour la Bienheureuse Vierge Marie, Notre Mère et Notre-Dame, son chapelet quotidien et son rosaire, leurs bienfaits, leurs guérisons et leurs miracles.
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Vote for Mark Sutcliffe.**

Voting Open: 10am- 8pm

marksutcliffe.ca

**Mark
Sutcliffe** A MAYOR FOR
ALL OF OTTAWA

What's on in Ottawa

Tony Wohlfarth

Municipal Election 2022

Monday, October 24 is the day Ottawa elects a new mayor, city council, and school trustees. Please vote! You can learn more about Mayoral candidates' positions on the arts from a town hall held October 3 by the Ottawa Arts Initiative. [Find the recording on YouTube.](#)

New Films from the NFB

During the Ottawa International Animation Festival (OIAF), I had a chance to interview a producer from the National Film Board and preview several of its new films.

NFB Producer Marc Bertrand has produced more than 100 films for the NFB's French Animation Studio. The latest screened in Ottawa for the OIAF. Animation is Bertrand's forte, and he was chosen to be a member of the animated feature film jury at this year's festival. A graduate of New York University (NYU), Bertrand began his professional career in Ottawa and currently lives in Montreal.

Theodore Ushev: Unseen Connections

Theodore Ushev is a Bulgarian-born animator, who first visited Ottawa in 1984 when he won the Corel Design Award Competition. He emigrated to Canada in 1999 and has made more than 10 films with the NFB. Ushev's short *Blind Vaysha* (2016) was nominated for an Oscar for best animated shorts. His 2019 film, *The Physics of Sorrow*, won many film festival awards.

He is now the subject of a feature length film, *Theodore Ushev: Unseen Connections*, which premiered at the 2022 OIAF. Directed by Borislav Kolev, the film captures Ushev as he returns to Plovdiv and is warmly greeted by his mother, his high school teacher and circle of friends.



Martin Duckworth and Audrey Schirmer (NFB)

Dear Audrey

Dear Audrey is a film about the personal life of Martin Duckworth, another renowned

NFB producer. Duckworth directed 20 films with the NFB and his personal journey is lovingly told in this documentary directed by Jeremiah Hayes.

The story is narrated by Duckworth as he cares for his ailing spouse, photographer Audrey Schirmer. Martin is a loving and doting companion, and the film does a superb job of telling his life story. Audrey died from Alzheimer's in 2019. Martin talks about his joint adventures with Audrey, traveling the world making NFB documentaries, and caring for Audrey in a Montreal-based care home. Hayes tells the story through Martin's relationship with his children.

Dear Audrey was completed in 2019, prior to the pandemic, and played earlier this month at the Mayfair Theatre.

Honour to Senator Murray Sinclair

Alanis Obomsawin is Canada's most celebrated filmmaker. Her 2021 film is a tribute to Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Filmed in 2016, it features Sinclair's speech to the World Federalist Movement for their peace award. I found the most moving parts of the film are the first-hand accounts in testimony before the Commission. The stories are painful and the harm very real. The film is 29 minutes, and is now streaming via the NFB website: www.nfb.ca/film/honour-to-senator-murray-sinclair/

Sinclair was in Ottawa on September 30, for the events held in conjunction with the second National Day of Truth and Reconciliation.

Starwalker – The Music of Buffy Saint Marie

On September 16, the National Arts Centre (NAC) paid tribute to Buffy St. Marie. The performances, by the likes of William Prince, Leela Gilday, Jeremy Dutcher, and (of course) Buffy, are available for live streaming: gem.cbc.ca/media/buffy-sainte-marie-starwalker/s01e01.

NAC (1 Elgin)

This month, the National Arts Centre features a diversity of live performances.

- Oct. 14: soul singer Tanika Charles
- Oct. 15: Florian Hoefner Trio plays piano jazz
- Oct. 18-23: Broadway musical *Mean Girls*
- Oct. 20: pianist Jean-Michel Blais
- Oct. 21: Basia Bulat
- Oct. 27: genre-crossing clarinetist Kinan Azmeh
- Oct. 28: Royal Woods
- Oct. 27-29: Royal Winnipeg Ballet presents *The Handmaid's Tale*
- Oct. 29: Ariane Moffatt
- Nov. 2: Fortunate Ones, The Once, and Old Man Luedecke

Nov. 4: jazz drummer Ernesto Cervini plays music inspired by mysteries written by Louise Penny

- Nov. 5: NAC Gala with Jann Arden
- Nov. 5: blues guitarist Suzie Vinnick



The Broadway musical *Mean Girls* will run at the NAC from October 18-23. (BAC)

Nov. 10: English protest singer Grace Petrie
Tickets and info: nac-cna.ca

What to Do for Hallowe'en?

Encore screenings of The Rocky Horror Picture Show are back at the Mayfair (1074 Bank Street) from October 28 to 31.

Tickets and show times: mayfairtheatre.ca/movie/rocky-horror-picture-show-the/.

Art House Café (555 Somerset)

On October 21, the Ottawa jazz musicians in Fever Pitch will take the audience back to the hot jazz of 1920s speakeasy joints, blending ragtime, blues, and brass band marches. More info: www.theartousecafe.ca/events.

Queen Street Fare (170 Queen)

On October 15, you can catch a tribute to the music of Bruce Springsteen with the Jeff de Valk Band. Tickets: queenstfare.ca/event/bruce-springsteen-nite-jeff-de-valk-band

Live on Elgin (220 Elgin)

On October 19, Newfoundland's own Sherry Ryan releases her fifth album, *Shout for More*. Ottawa singer-songwriter Emma Lamontagne opens. www.liveonelgin.com

Tony Wohlfarth is an Ottawa-based freelance film and entertainment writer. He is accredited to cover the International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam next month.

Sign up for our weekly MPP email updates at joelhardenmpp.ca!

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Fall reading: Two wheels perhaps

Alayne McGregor

Two Wheels Good: The History and Mystery of the Bicycle
by Jody Rosen
Crown, 2022

As a long-time cyclist and cycling advocate, I'm always drawn to books about urban cycling. I like reading how others experience the joys and benefits and frustrations of riding in the city.

The latest in this genre is *Two Wheels Good*, by New York cyclist Jody Rosen – but I have to conclude it's much more of a descriptive, rather than a convincing, book. As a piece of journalism, it works well; as bike advocacy, not so much.

On the good side: Rosen has produced a fine history of cycling, linked in with everything from mobility to feminism to the Klondike gold rush to sex to socio-economic class. He even has the chutzpah to rightly point out that while bike operation is unquestionably green, its components and materials (especially rubber) have been associated with environmental damage and exploitation. And the good roads that cyclists were first to campaign for have now enabled North America's car culture.

Much of the book is devoted to showing the bicycle's versatility. On the sports side, he profiles trick cycling master Danny MacAskill, whose extraordinary skill in acrobatics and stunt riding astounds. I loved the title of the chapter on stationary exercise bikes – “Nowhere Fast” – but also its history of these bikes dating back to the 19th century and how they can be used for electricity generation as well as burning off calories. And the story of how bicycles were used in Vietnam – for transportation, recreation, and as bombs by the Viet Cong – was a cautionary tale.

There's a chapter on joys and challenges of winter cycling, though I found it odd he mentioned heavy snow as the main obstacle instead of salt and black ice in places like Ottawa, or corrugated icy roads in colder cities. I particularly enjoyed the chapter about the BikeCentennial cross-USA bike ride in 1976 and how two people met on that ride and fell in love and, 40 years later, rode as a couple across the USA again.

The chapter on cycling in China was enlightening: both the important role bicycling played in the Tiananmen uprising, and how much less the Chinese are cycling today.

Once a bicycle was the ultimate status marker, now a car is, as a result of that government promoting greater access to cars and increasing wealth of individual Chinese. The streets packed with streams of bikes are no more.

Rosen avoids the typical profiles of Dutch or Danish cyclists, and instead explains why cycling is so popular in the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, despite the extreme steepness of the roads.

One of Rosen's most memorable interviews is of Mohammed Abul Badshah, a rickshawallah in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Badshah's heavy labour pulling people through traffic has pushed his family above bare subsistence through his owning his bicycle rickshaw, but he must always be on his guard to avoid theft or confiscation.

Rosen is a regular cyclist – there's a picture of him on his bike with his young son in a carrier in their Brooklyn neighbourhood. He writes about issues like bike theft, and how motorists who injure or kill cyclists in NYC rarely face any consequences. He also talks about bike activism, including groups like *Le Monde à Bicyclette* in Montreal, #bikelife and the role of bikes in Black

Lives Matters, and Critical Mass and Naked Bike rides in cities around the world.

The book ends with Rosen's trying – and not completely succeeding – to learn to ride a fixed gear bike (a “fixie”) without brakes. It's a funny but not really encouraging narrative.

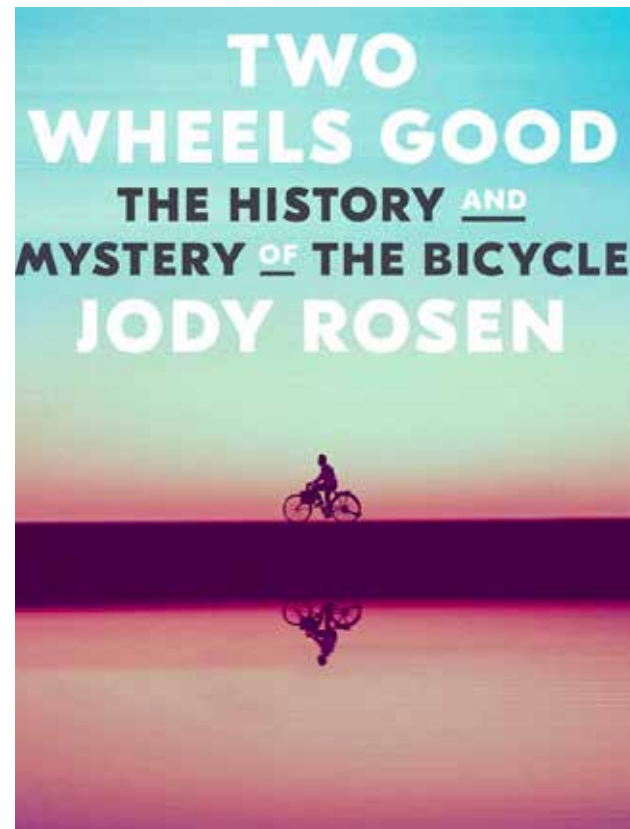
And that's my issue with this whole book. Rosen explicitly calls cycling “dangerous.” The very first chapter recounts how cyclists are dehumanized and subject to prejudice in many countries, up to and including physical assault.

He highlights bike activities that require more athleticism than most of us would

want to undertake. There's a reason why we say “as easy as riding a bike” – bikes are inherently stable, almost anyone can learn to ride, and cycling is an activity that's even more useful for short commutes and shopping trips you can make in normal clothes than multi-day cross-country treks.

But after reading this book, you'd think cycling really was primarily for the fit and the brave, rather than for almost everyone. There's lots of interesting stories here, but not much incentive to get out on your bike and ride.

This book is available at the Ottawa Public Library.



A blood-sucking opera premieres at Hallowe'en

Nadine Dawson

Enter into the spooky spirit of Hallowe'en by attending the premiere of Andrew Ager's operatic adaptation of the classic novel *Dracula*.

Presented October 28 and 29, *Dracula - The Opera* is sure to thrill modern audiences.

Irish author Bram Stoker published this popular tale in 1897, creating it from legends of vampires, those blood-sipping creatures that generate delicious fear and hysteria. Add monster hunting, and is it any wonder his tale spawned a horror genre beloved to this day? Those braver than I enjoy the titillation of a good protagonist-villain who personifies evil, preys on innocent victims, and upsets the sometimes uneasy optimism that allows us to believe in the triumph of good.

Ager is a prolific and accomplished composer. Born in Ottawa, he recently returned here and has been involved with the local music scene ever since. As a composer, he is known for blending classical and modern sensibilities. His pieces range from chamber arrangements of larger works to full-scale symphonies.

He has completed six operas, all of which have been produced. *Frankenstein - The Opera*, the first in his Gothic Trilogy, received a warm reception when it premiered in Ottawa in the fall of 2019.

I was a non-speaking, non-singing extra in the production, and found it exciting. *Dracula - The Opera*, the second in the series, promises to be just as much fun. The last in the trio features *The Mummy*.

When I asked Ager what drew him to horror, he said “There is always a strangely attractive side to supernatural villains or monsters.



That's why we like them. Dracula is a case-in-point. A cursed aristocrat out of his era. We secretly like him.” In fact, the titular character in all three tales is both frightening and sympathetic, a dichotomy which presents intriguing opportunities for musical storytelling.

Bringing a complicated novel like *Dracula* to stage is no simple feat. Suzanne Bassett, who directed the first opera in the trilogy, co-wrote the libretto with Ager by combining original text and adapted lyrics to “carefully maintain the core of the story: the personality of Dracula, what he does, and

what to do with him.”

Even once the libretto was set to music, much work remained to mount a full-scale production. Enter New Opera Lyra, a not-for-profit enterprise founded by Bassett and Ager with the dual purpose of creating opportunities for local artists and bringing opera to Ottawa audiences. These co-artistic directors are joined by Matthew Larkin as resident conductor.

Dracula - The Opera opens New Opera Lyra's inaugural season. Baritone Bradley Christensen, who first performed as Frankenstein in 2019, will sing the role of Dracula. Joining him

is Carmen Harris as Mina, Gary Dahl as Renfield, and Iain Macpherson as Jonathan. Bronx Opera's Benjamin Spierman will direct.

Ager said the rehearsals have been thrilling and promises a wonderful show. “Who doesn't want to see an opera called *Dracula*”? he asks.

Dracula - The Opera will be presented at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 82 Kent Street, at 7:30 p.m. on October 28-29. General admission tickets are \$56.71 including fees; premium \$83.23; students \$27.54. Tickets: newoperalyra.ca.

Seventeen Voyces returns with Peter Pan

Karen Junke

After a two-year absence, Ottawa chamber choir Seventeen Voyces is returning – with a film classic.

The choir will accompany the 1924 silent film *Peter Pan* in shows on October 21 and 22. The singers, directed by Kevin Reeves, will perform with organ virtuoso Matthew Larkin and “faerie harpist” Lucile Hildesheim.

The choir, now in its 25th season, has previously accompanied films such as *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Phantom of the Opera*.

The program features musical excerpts from Felix Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Hear My*



Betty Bronson as Peter Pan holding his shadow

Prayer. Also featured are excerpts from Henry Purcell's *Indian Queen*, Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Three Shakespeare Songs* and *Ward the Pirate*, as well as works

by Frederick Delius and John Rutter.

The film adapts J.M. Barrie's classic children's tale about a mischievous boy who spends his eternal childhood on an island called Neverland, and includes pirates, the fairy Tinkerbell, and the Lost Boys. It stars a whimsical Betty Bronson, who was chosen for the role by Barrie himself.

Seventeen Voyces presents *Peter Pan* on October 21 and 22 at 7:30 p.m. at Southminster United Church (16 Aylmer Avenue at Bank Street). Tickets are available at the door and www.seventeenvoyces.ca for \$30, students \$20.

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MP report: A month of reflection and remembrance

Yasir Naqvi

As a community and as a nation, we are mourning the loss of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

She was a constant presence through most of Canada's history. We reflect on the legacy she has left behind, and the many lives she has touched. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II will be remembered for a lifetime of public service, which she led with grace and dignity. I wish to express my deepest condolences to the entire Royal Family. May she rest in peace.

Canadians are invited to visit the Government of Canada's Commemorative website and sign the online book of condolences, as well as learn more about the Transition of the Crown and what it means for Canadians at [www.canada.ca/en/canadian-](http://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/commemoration-her-majesty-the-queen.html)

[heritage/commemoration-her-majesty-the-queen.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/commemoration-her-majesty-the-queen.html).

We also reflect on our country's history and relationship with Indigenous Peoples as September 30 marks the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

Recently, I was honoured to announce on behalf of the Government of Canada, investments totalling more than \$4 million to support 278 community projects all across the country and two major national projects - a national commemorative gathering on September 30 in Ottawa, and an educational program week for students. This funding was awarded to support commemoration activities for the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. The selected projects will help raise awareness of the history and impact of residential schools and promote healing and reconciliation.

I often speak with my

children about the honour we have, to live on the unceded and un-surrendered territory of the Algonquin people. It is our collective responsibility to work closely with Indigenous Peoples to learn the truth about colonization. Whether your family came to this country generations ago, or you are a recent immigrant, this is everyone's responsibility as a citizen. I recognize my duty every day to seek out the truth, and as a settler, learn from elders and work with Indigenous leaders and communities towards reconciliation.

Former residential school students can call 1-866-925-4419 for emotional crisis referral services and information on other health supports from the Government of Canada. Indigenous peoples across Canada can also go to The Hope for Wellness Help Line 24 hours a day, seven days a week for counselling



The book of remembrances for Queen Elizabeth II on the main floor of Ottawa City Hall attracted signatures from the public.

BRETT DELMAGE/THE BUZZ

and crisis intervention at 1-855-242-3310.

Commemorating the tragic history and impact of residential schools is essential to the healing and rec-

conciliation process. Canada is committed to continuing its efforts to pursue truth and reconciliation, to right historical wrongs, and to support communities in their

efforts to foster healing for the Survivors of residential schools, their families, and communities.

Comment

To build better neighbourhoods, Ottawa needs a streetcar system in its urban core

A Better Ottawa

Ottawa is set to grow by half a million people over the next 25 years. Streetcars could be the answer to a better public transportation system.

Ottawa's LRT system provides fast long-distance transportation. But we also need to serve existing neighbourhoods as they become increasingly dense to accommodate projected population increases. We need a complementary streetcar system in the city's core that will boost mobility for commuters, tourists, and those who live there.

A key part of the city's new official plan, approved in 2021, is 15-minute neighbourhoods. These are compact, well-connected places with a clustering of a diverse mix of land-uses. This includes a range of housing types, shops, services, retail, schools, daycare facilities, employment, greenspaces, and parks. They are complete communities that support active transportation and transit and enable people to live car-light or car free.

In fact, urban high-density infill developments pay for themselves and provide the city with an additional \$606 per person a year, compared to the additional cost of \$465 per person a year to serve new low-density homes. Thus it would be an economic policy failure to force Ottawans to mainly have to rely on personal vehicles instead of giving them choice.

A city needs a well-functioning public transportation system to move people

around. The expanded LRT will (hopefully) run smoothly and reduce traffic congestion by moving people in and out of the city's urban core. The urban core will then require a complementary system in moving people within it.

Buses have not been able to do this properly. Streetcars could.

Ottawa used to have such a system. From 1891 to 1959 Ottawa had a sprawling streetcar network, which at its peak boasted 90.5 kilometres of track compared to the 55 kilometres that the O-Train will soon extend to.

The streetcar routes served much of the then-built-up centre of the city, including streets like Elgin, Bank, Sparks, Somerset, Laurier, Preston, Rockliffe, Rideau, Bronson, and even into Hull.

You could take the streetcar to work, to shopping, even to the beach.

By the 1960s Ottawa made the short-minded decision to prioritize cars over public transportation. The city believed that mobility would be increased by simply paving over homes and businesses for parking lots and wider roads.

Instead, this perpetuated induced demand; that can only be solved by reliable alternatives like active and public transportation.

While Ottawa ripped up its streetcar system, other cities around the world maintained and expanded their systems. For example, The Hague, Vienna, and Toronto started their streetcar systems in the 19th century and kept expanding them to hundreds of kilometres of tracks, moving hundreds of millions

of users a year, and ultimately reducing congestion, pollution, and noise stemming from cars.

Ottawa now needs to catch up on lost years.

Streetcars have many advantages over buses. They are more affordable, even though streetcars require larger initial capital investments than buses; the capital cost is offset by significant operational savings year to year.

They offer a more comfortable ride than buses, incentivizing ridership.

Streetcars provide certainty for residents and thus are a catalyst for economic

development.

Electrical streetcars are less polluting and noisy than diesel-engine buses.

Importantly, to ensure the full potential of streetcars, they should not mix in with general traffic. Instead separated designated lanes for streetcars would allow them to go faster and avoid car congestion. That congestion is among the biggest problems with using the bus in downtown Ottawa.

So in order to prepare for population growth and to build better neighbourhoods, Ottawa needs a complementary streetcar system for its urban core.



An Ottawa streetcar circa 1900 (Library and Archives Canada)

A Better Ottawa is an Ottawa resident advocating for a city that is more affordable, green, and

accessible, and who shares insights and tidbits on Ottawa from an urbanism lens.



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The leaves on your lawn protect pollinators in winter



Drones being pushed out of a hive by worker bees. Although they're larger bees, it's difficult for them to fight back against a gang of worker bees getting ready for winter.

DINAH ROBINSON/THE BUZZ



Honeybees getting fall sustenance from an aster flower.

DINAH ROBINSON/THE BUZZ

Dinah Robinson

There's an autumn blaze of colour in the trees these days. As the leaves begin to fall, you might feel inclined to grab a rake and clear away the leaf litter.

But raking up the blanket of leaves that accumulates on your lawns and in your gardens is actually sweeping away an entire ecosystem.

Many pollinators and other insects find a place to overwinter in the ground using the leaves or surrounded by layers of leaves in the tiny holes they dig for a nest. The leaves also act as a layer of mulch that keeps the ground around the tree moist when it's trying to store lots of water in the fall.

What's most beneficial for the land is to simply leave the leaves alone. Nature doesn't need us to tidy things up. Nature is messy.

Sit back and enjoy the colours whether they're on the tree or on your lawn. You will be facilitating the life cycles of other living creatures by not raking your leaves. Just let them be.

Trees also feed pollinators

Trees are important pollinator plants. The ones that flower in the early spring are especially important for bumblebees. Climate change is causing bumblebees to emerge from hibernation up to two weeks sooner, when there are fewer food sources available.

Red maple, Pussy willow and Crabapple trees all have good early spring flowers for hungry bees.

Many ways to survive the winter

At this time of year, pollinators are getting ready for winter. The migratory ones – like the monarch butterfly and the hummingbird – have already left for warmer locations in the south. Many butterflies, moths, bees, wasps, and other pollinators will remain here, where they'll hibernate in order to survive the long winter.

Moths and butterflies build cocoons and hibernates in either an adult or a pupal state. Many attach their cocoons to fallen leaves. Solitary bees and wasps also overwinter in a cocoon as an adult or a pupa.

With native pollinators that live in colonies, like bumblebees and wasps, only the queen goes into hibernation. The rest of the colony dies off before the winter. In the late summer a new queen will be born in every

colony. After the queen has mated, she will dig a small hole to create a nest for herself to hibernate in through the winter. Drones (males) die after mating.

This is similar to the way worker bees (females) die after stinging. They have a barbed stinger, which gets ripped out when they sting something and then die. Wasps don't have a barbed stinger. They can therefore sting you multiple times without dying.

For honeybees, preparing for winter includes kicking out the drones. The drones don't help to collect nectar or make honey so they're the first to go.

The queen also stops laying eggs and the size of the colony shrinks from a summer high of around 50,000 to about 10,000 winter bees. These bees need to survive for up to six months or more. When it starts to get cold the worker bees form a football-sized winter cluster, to keep the queen and each other warm. They're not hibernating but they're in a state of extremely reduced activity, called a torpor. This allows them to survive at much lower temperatures with a reduced metabolism, while consuming much less honey than usual.

Special bees act as heater bees. They work to generate heat for the colony by contracting their abdominal muscles and fanning their wings. The bees at the outer edges of the cluster move inward to warm up and other bees cycle out for a shift on the edge of the cluster.

It's all in an effort to survive the cold winter and live to greet the spring flowers.



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