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Your community newspaper

THE CENTRETOWN BUZZ

Keeping a rink frozen when the temperature won't cooperate

Jack Hanna

This past winter, master ice-maker Sean Oderkirk had to be even more devoted.

The temperature was so up and down. Whenever there was nose-tingling cold, Oderkirk laboured relentlessly at Jack Purcell Park, flooding the outdoor hockey rink – up to five times a day.

“You jump the first chance you get,” he says. “If it gets to minus three at one in the morning, I’ll run out and get something done.”

It can be exhausting. “There are days I’m at my physical limit.”

Oderkirk, 37, has been building ice since he was a teenager, when he and a friend maintained the outdoor rink near his childhood home in the west of Ottawa.

This past winter was the worst ice-making season in memory. It began with false starts.

Oderkirk first tried to make base ice on the Jack Purcell rink, between Elgin and Metcalfe Streets, on December 7. There had been a snowfall. Snow is essential



Master ice-maker Sean Oderkirk needed to be even more devoted this year to keep the Jack Purcell Park rink available for skaters.

JACK HANNA/THE BUZZ

to make the rink’s base.

The first step is to pack the snow, which Oderkirk does by driving his car around and around the rink. But the

car’s tires cannot reach the very edges beside the boards. There Oderkirk tamps the snow with his boots.

Then he uses a shovel to

carefully smooth the entire surface of the rink’s base, taking off any knobs or high bits. “Time spent smoothing the base will pay you back in

time saved later five-fold.”

Next comes a light misting of water to firm the base. Once that is frozen, there will be a dozen floodings, using a

fire hose that shoots out a big but gentle cone of spray.

If all goes well, the ice opens for skaters.

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City urged to support unfairly renovicted tenants

Alayne McGregor

According to a [recent report by ACORN Canada](#), Ottawa landlords are increasingly using N12 and N13 notices to push tenants out of their homes.

The community and tenant union analyzed N12 and N13 eviction data from 2017 to August 2023, which it obtained from the Ontario Landlord Tenant Board (LTB) through freedom of information requests. These notices are becoming increasingly “common tactics employed by corporate landlords to evict long term tenants,” the report said.

The number of N12s filed in Ottawa between 2017 and 2021 increased by 160 percent to 173. N13s increased even more dramatically: they tripled in 2022 compared to 2021, from 23 to 71.

A landlord can issue an N12 notice if they or their family or caregiver wants to move back into the rental

unit for at least one year or there is an agreement of purchase and sale of the rental unit and the purchaser’s family or their caregiver wants to move in. An N13 notice allows a tenant to be evicted when the landlord wants to do massive renovations that require vacant possession of the rental unit, demolish the rental unit or convert it for non-residential use.

ACORN noted that the LTB data is “a gross underestimate of the scale of the renoviction crisis. Most renovictions never reach the tribunal as landlords harass and intimidate tenants to get a ‘voluntary’ termination of tenancy. This includes but is not limited to: neglecting repairs and making conditions for tenants unlivable, offering ‘cash for keys’ or ‘buy-outs’ and purposely misleading tenants about their rights.”

Once a tenant leaves a unit, rent control no longer applies and
continued on page 3 “Landlords”



On February 28, ACORN members demonstrated outside Ottawa City Hall to urge the city to adopt an anti-renoviction bylaw similar to the one recently introduced in Hamilton.

ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

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Adventures from Karen's Clinic, by Karen Munro-Caple



Comment: Fossil fuel disinformation must stop

Darlene Pearson

Sometimes I feel so bombarded by advertising that I just dismiss it as an annoyance or “normal business.”

However, one outdoor ad at the corner of Queen and Sparks caught my eye. Bold lettering on a green (environmentally-friendly looking) background states that “Canadian LNG exports will reduce global emissions.”

To call this ad “misleading” is an understatement.

Let’s unpack the ad. LNG stands for liquefied natural gas, which is natural gas cooled to -259 Fahrenheit, a highly energy-intensive process, to condense it for transport in specialized ocean vessels. Natural gas is a fossil fuel primarily made up of methane.

The term natural gas is clever branding to make this fossil fuel, used in a large percentage of Ottawa homes, sound clean and safe. The acronym “LNG” takes this branding even further by eliminating the reference to gas.

If I examine the claim that exporting a fossil gas reduces global emissions, I come up against some hard facts. First, burning natural gas produces carbon dioxide, a known greenhouse gas (GHG) contributor to climate change.

Second, the production and distribution of natural gas involves serious environmental concerns. Most extraction of this gas is through fracking which results in large amounts of toxic wastewater. The gas plants themselves emit nitrogen oxides contributing to air pollution. Moreover, at all steps from extraction and processing to storage and transportation, LNG emits methane, a GHG which is over 80 times more po-

tent than carbon dioxide in the first 20 years after it is emitted.

The ad is sponsored by Canada Action which claims to be a grassroots network. Investigative journalism reveals that it has deep ties to and has received funding from the oil and gas industry. That goes a long way to explaining how the significant costs of this ad and others like it are met.

I am not the only one to be dismayed by this type of blatant disinformation. Two years ago, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment filed a 10 million dollar false advertising complaint against the Canadian Gas Association for an ad campaign describing natural gas as a smart, “clean-burning” choice for home heating.

In January 2024, Environmental Defence, a Canadian environmental advocacy organization, filed a complaint with the Competition Bureau over Enbridge Gas’ deceptive marketing that gas is the cheapest way to heat homes.

In February 2024, MP Charlie Angus (NDP, Timmins-James Bay) introduced Bill C-372, The Fossil Fuel Advertising Act. The bill prohibits promotion of fossil fuels in a way “that is likely to influence and shape attitudes, beliefs and behaviours about the product or service.” I note that France has already banned advertising of oil and coal and will soon add gas to the list.

In Ottawa, over a dozen local organizations have submitted a letter to City Council asking for a ban on the promotion of fossil fuels – both advertising and sponsorship – in city facilities. This will be considered by council when it reviews the city’s Corporate Sponsorship and Advertising Policy. The letter points out that such promotion contra-



The outdoor ad (with a green background) at the corner of Queen and Sparks Streets.

DARLENE PEARSON/THE BUZZ

dicts the city’s own policies on climate change, let alone its declaration of a climate emergency.

So what can we do to protect ourselves from being misled? Among other things, we can do fact-checking with credible resources that are based on findings from reputable scientists and journalists.

Many websites have useful information debunking climate misinformation. CAFES (Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability) has recently updated its website with the first products of its Disinformation Project (at cafesottawa.ca/projects/), with more under development. This project aims to counter the intentional spread of falsehoods that undermine scientific consensus, stall public action and leave all of us more vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

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Reusing the old for a new bike store



The huge floor-length mirrors at 437 Cooper St. now reflect bikes rather than fur coats. *BRETT DELMAGE/THE BUZZ*

Alayne McGregor

Converting a fur store into Centretown's newest bike store involved more than moving the bikes in.

QuickCranks had to dispose of 17 tons of steel when it took over the former premises of Pat Flesher Furs at 437 Cooper Street, said QuickCranks director Mustafa Ismail.

Flesher Furs (now in the ByWard Market) had a climate-controlled, 24-foot high vault for storing furs at the back of its showroom. The vault was filled with coat racks made from two-inch steel pipes. Coats were

stored three storeys high and accessed via scaffolding.

Ismail said his staff cut out the piping by hand and replaced it with three storeys of bicycle racks, but they did retain the foot-thick cinder block walls and the massive steel door – making it likely the most secure bike storage in Ottawa.

The showroom was easier to convert – it just needed some racks and display grids – but it still shows the style of its previous owner, with bright lighting and huge mirrors that allow you to see you and your bike from every angle.

The store, which officially opens March 15 but which is

already operating, will be the second location for QuickCranks, which also has a store on the eastern edge of Hintonburg. It also replaces the long-time Foster's Sports Centre on Bank Street. Ismail said that he had been in talks with the owner of Foster's, who wanted to retire, for the past year.

QuickCranks bought Foster's and its inventory and assets – but not the Bank Street location, which will now be occupied by Wallack's Art Supplies, which was forced to move out of its long-time location.

Besides saleable inventory, Ismail said, his staff also found a cache of bikes dating back 50+ years in Foster's basement.

"Some crazy tools that we haven't seen since the 70s. We got a lot of really vintage bikes from the 70s or 60s – really cool stuff. A lot of them were not in rideable condition; he's probably had some bikes leftover from service [calls] that maybe weren't picked up, collecting cobwebs there in this huge basement. Definitely some oddities there."

Ismail said the QuickCranks store will have a range of bikes, but "our bread and butter always will be commuters and people who are just trying to get into entry-level gravel biking and entry-level cycling." From the beginning, he said, the store's mission was to improve the acceptability of cycling. It also has a service department doing everything from flats to full overhauls.

See more photos of the store at centretownbuzz.ca

"There's something special about an outdoor rink"

continued from page 1

But this winter, the first attempt stalled. "It melted down to the grass before Christmas."

In early January, Oderkirk even tried an unorthodox technique, flooding directly onto grass. But that, too, ended in disappointment. "There was another melt."

He finally opened the rink for skaters January 12, "the latest opening I can remember."

Opening early is a point of pride. Every ice-maker wants their rink to be the first to open in the city.

"It is a contest," Oderkirk chuckles. "I'm one of the earliest most of the time."

When the rink is open, it needs daily care. The ice is scraped and flooded each evening starting around 10 p.m. – or later if there is late-night shinny under the rink lights.

If snow comes down, it has to be removed.

If the snowfall is light, Oderkirk laces up his skates. He pushes a scraper shovel to

shove the snow into piles beside the boards. Then he uses a snowblower (which he purchased out of his own pocket) to blow the mounded snow over the boards.

When the snowfall is heavy, he uses the snowblower over the entire rink.

That can get exciting; the snow might conceal a puck left on the ice.

"If the snowblower inhales a puck, everything explodes," Oderkirk says. That means all three belts on the snowblower snap and must be replaced. "You need to be comfortable changing belts."

Save for a small honorarium, ice-making is volunteer work.

Oderkirk plays beer-league hockey several nights a week. Between that and ice maintenance, he has little time to join the shinny on the outdoor ice. But that's okay.

"I just want to see ice being used," he says. "There is something special about an outdoor rink."

Landlords increasingly using N13s in Ottawa

continued from page 1

landlord can raise the rent substantially.

The report shows similar data for all of Ontario, with 4931 N12s filed in 2021 compared to 2906 in 2017. In 2022, 1060 N13s were filed in the province, compared to 277 in 2017 and 715 in 2021.

Ottawa ACORN held a rally February 28 to mark the report release. At that rally, members called on City Council to pass an anti-renoviction bylaw similar to that in Hamilton, and pass a rental replacement bylaw to protect existing affordable housing and stop tenant displacement as a result of demolition. The Hamilton bylaw requires the landlord to prove that the work requires the tenant to leave, and allows the tenant to return at the same rate once the work is complete.

At the rally, ACORN representative Evan Bury said that Ottawa landlords who have issued many N13s included OPG Holdings, Smart Living, and Timbercreek.

At the city's Audit Committee on March 8, Councillor Theresa Kavanagh inquired if a renoviction bylaw could be introduced in Ottawa. Derrick Moodie, the city's manager of development review, said the city is currently waiting for the province as it investigates this issue right now.

A policy regarding rental housing protection was recently reinstated in the city's Official Plan by Bill 150, which would enable the city to pass such a bylaw.

Recent city statistics show that 31 units of affordable housing are now being lost for one being built.

Somerset Ward: Meet the helpers in Centretown on March 27

Ariel Troster

"When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'"

That quote is from the irreplaceable Fred Rogers, and I think of it often when I meet new people and organizations in Centretown. The very best part of my job is meeting the volunteers and staff who do the hard work to support the most vulnerable in our community, beautify our neighbourhoods, and make downtown Ottawa a great place to live.

A few examples:

- At **HighJinx at 290 Kent Street**, Leigh and Karen serve meals to neighbours and help them find housing. All of the vintage goods in their thrift store are sold, with the proceeds going to helping people in the neighbourhood.

- Volunteers from **Ottawa Inner City Ministries** distribute sandwiches, winter clothing, and hygiene supplies to people experiencing homelessness in downtown Ottawa.

- The **Centretown Community Food Centre, the Dalhousie Food Cupboard, and the Parkdale Food Centre** fight food insecurity and provide groceries and community meals, so our neighbours don't go hungry.

- **Belong Ottawa** runs programs in three downtown locations for people in need, including shower facilities, hot meals, laundry,

and referrals to community supports.

- At the **Catherine Street Community Service Hub** (370 Catherine Street), staff from the city and the provincial government can help residents and newcomers access key government benefits and community services. The Centretown Community Food Centre is also on site, as well as outreach workers from community organizations.

- **Centre 507** on Bank Street is a drop-in respite centre that is open overnight and also offers meals and social supports during the day (check [their website](#) as they are in the process of expanding their hours).

- The **Centretown and Somerset West Community Health Centres** run a wide variety of community and outreach programs, ranging from breastfeeding support, to drop-in play groups, to seniors' activities, to homeless outreach and harm reduction.

There are so many organizations in Centretown that are here to help. I hope you will join us at our **Meet the Helpers virtual community forum** on Wednesday, March 27 at 6:30 p.m.

You can register at: www.arieltroster.com/meet_the_helpers

It takes a village to tackle the issues we are facing in Centretown, but fortunately, we have a great one.

Ariel Troster is the city councillor for Somerset Ward.



EARTH DAY FESTIVAL

April 20, 2024, 10-2 pm, Dundonald Park

Schedule:

10 am: Opening ceremony with Indigenous elder
10:15 am: Ottawa Public Library librarians reading books

10:45 am: Book reading by local author

12:30 pm: Magic show

1 pm: Earth ball group activity

Visit tables for:

Nature Canada, Wild Bird Care Centre, Safe Wings, VegOttawa, Plant-Based Cities,

Climate Save, ACORN, GentleWays for OurPlanet, Cycling Canada, Bike Ottawa, and Master Gardeners.



The day the minister came to visit

Rachel Carmichael Campbell,
Centretown Community Health Centre

Thursday, February 29 was different than usual at the Centretown Community Health Centre (CCHC) as a national announcement affecting CCHC clients was made here.

Federal Minister of Health Mark Holland and our local MP Yasir Naqvi, in his position as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, toured our space. Then, in the lobby, Holland announced the start of a national universal pharmacare plan.

The plan will first target diabetes medicine and women's reproductive health, so we took them on a brief tour of our primary care and diabetes spaces.

Primary Care

To talk about the pressure on our primary care team, they discussed "panel size," a percentage that we use to measure how many clients our doctor and nurse practitioners have

seen. It also takes into account the complexity of each client. Complexity here means the medical and social dynamics at play for an individual, weighing factors like social isolation, diabetes, substance use, socioeconomic or refugee status, and others.

The panel size at CCHC recently reached 110 percent capacity. It was at 85 percent in fall 2020. Every week, CCHC turns away five to 10 individuals looking for a primary care provider.

To talk about the benefits of team-based care, some of our providers used the example of one client. One nurse does outreach at a YMCA shelter, which is primarily used by newcomers and refugee claimants. At the shelter was a young woman in her 20s, who was discharged from hospital following a tuberculosis infection, which she picked up as a trafficking victim.

Through the outreach nurse, the client connected with our Newcomers Clinic, where they took care of her physical health. They also connected her to legal aid and she even-



Minister Mark Holland (in grey) and MP Yasir Naqvi (to his right) tour through the centre. (CCHC)

ually become a successful refugee claimant. In the words of the nurses, "She ended up meeting a boy..." and became pregnant. The wraparound care meant that they could care for her and the baby during and after the pregnancy for up to 18 months. This period included wellness developmental checks for the baby, as well as monitoring the mother for post-partum depression.

Diabetes

The minister and Naqvi then went to see our Community Diabetes Education Ottawa (CDEPO) team. Our diabetes services includes a wide range of programs; CDEPO is the oldest and has over 30 diabetes educators, kinesiologists, and chiropodists who go to clients in rural and central areas of our region. The team works out of 10 to 12 locations to provide care, helping people keep their blood glucose levels stable and avoid diabetes complications like limb loss.

Their conversations with the minister highlighted the need for essential medicine costs to be covered, as well as equipment like

needles. One of our social support workers said part of her main activities is navigating the Interim Federal Health funding system to try to get medications covered for clients. Some clients have to choose between groceries, or medication and supplies, leading them to have to reuse needles, which results in worse health outcomes.

We are lucky to be in a time where we have medications and treatments that make diabetes management and life quality much better. However, because there are barriers to accessing them, clients and the system do not feel the benefit.

After meeting with our teams, the minister went on to announce an agreement with the NDP "in principle" to cover birth control medications and diabetes medications, and the necessary diabetes equipment. There were some tears from staff as they thought about the benefits this could have for clients. The start date for this program has not yet been announced. Until then our teams will be here to support the community, doing what we can with limited resources.

Justine Bell

School Trustee
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Curbing Traffic: a quiet city where cars are controlled is possible

Curbing Traffic

by Melissa Bruntlett and Chris Bruntlett
Island Press, 2021
reviewed by Alayne McGregor

If one thing would make me want to live in the Netherlands, it's the quiet its cities achieve by limiting car access.

As Melissa and Chris Bruntlett describe it in their book *Curbing Traffic*, exiting the train station in their adopted city of Delft is like "walking into a wall of silence. Not the deafening kind, but the kind for which many seek to escape the city. He could hear blackbirds singing their night song, the stream of bicycles slowly pedaling by, and the soft chatter of people at a nearby patio."

They had the same experience visiting other European countries: "when rolling our suitcases out of St. Pancras, Gare du Nord, and Zurich Central, we were immediately greeted by a wall of noise: engines bellowing in their race to the next traffic light, horns honking in frustration at the abundance of (other) cars, and sirens wailing in pursuit to clean up after the latest crash. This relentless, seemingly unavoidable din had served as a background noise to our lives in Vancouver." After the quiet of Dutch cities, the noise left them feeling "anxious and distressed."

While Delft still has noise from garbage trucks, construction, motorized scooters, and leaf blowers, they say, its relative lack of car noise leaves them with "an immense feeling of calm and relaxation."

Traffic noise is generated from both rolling noise (tire friction on roads or vehicles banging over potholes or ironworks), and propulsion noise (from a vehicle's engine, exhaust, transmission, and brakes). Rolling noise becomes the greatest source of noise at speeds of 55 km/hour or greater (or 45 km/h for heavy trucks) – which means that e-vehicles are not silent. On top of that are car horns and car alarms.

MP report: helping to build more homes, faster

Yasir Naqvi

Last month, I joined my Ottawa caucus colleagues, Mayor Sutcliffe, and Ottawa city councillors to announce an investment of 176.3 million dollars under the federal Housing Accelerator Fund. This funding will allow for the construction of over 4400 new affordable homes to be built across our city.

This funding incentivizes local initiatives that remove barriers to housing supply, accelerate the growth of supply, and support the development of complete, low-carbon, and climate-resilient communities, which are affordable, inclusive, equitable, and diverse.

By building more affordable homes quickly, our government is unlocking new opportunities for growth in Ottawa. Working together, we are creating more density around transit hubs, driving down the cost of new builds, and fighting NIMBYism that exists throughout municipal zoning policies.

This investment builds on the work we have done to increase affordable and social housing in our community. Through programs like Reaching Home, Rapid Housing Strategy, Apartment Construction Loan Strategy, Federal Lands Initiative, and more, we are making significant progress on combating chronic homelessness and ensuring more Canadians have a place to call home.

Shorter wait times, better health care in Ontario

Canadians deserve a health care system that gets them access to health services when and where they need them. That's why we're investing nearly \$200 billion over 10 years for provinces and territories to deliver better health care across the country. Within this funding, \$25 billion is for agreements with provinces and territories to respond to the unique needs of their populations and geography.

On February 9, we announced an agree-

Laws restricting noise and car access

In 1979, the book recounts, the Netherlands passed legislation restricting traffic noise along most streets, prescribing maximum decibel levels within nearby buildings, depending on their usage and time of day. Towns like Delft had two choices: either push buildings back from the street, which was a non-starter given the city's dense urban form, or reduce the volume and speed of car traffic and stop widening roads within built-up areas.

Delft already had traffic and cycling plans that pushed cars out of neighbourhoods except for immediate access to homes or businesses, and made cycling, walking, and transit trips much more direct than car trips. Roads were designed so that car trips were immediately pushed to an outer ring road.

Using those plans, the city worked to reduce car trips as a first priority, with noise barriers as a last resort.

It also redeveloped its central viaduct leading to the rail station into a tunnel, and replaced that with a two-lane, traffic calmed road with a tramway, canal, landscaping, space for walking, cycling, and seating and dining – and new housing. The book says traffic on that road seldom exceeds 20 km/h, making it much quieter.

The result, the book says, is that you can hear children singing, church bells, and bike squeaks instead of cars as you leave the station. The same happens in the Bruntletts' own neighbourhood, where they can open the French doors on their terrace and welcome pleasant city noises in, such as church bells and even outdoor chamber music concerts.

The Bruntletts moved with their 10-year-old son and 12-year-old daughter from Vancouver to Delft in February 2019. They had been living a car-light lifestyle in the dense neighbourhood of East Vancouver, but found living without a car altogether easier in their new city. In this book, they describe how

ment with the government of Ontario of more than \$3.1 billion in federal funding for health care over the next three years, marking a crucial step in a 10-year plan for collaboration.

This agreement will deliver:

- Better access to family health services;
- More doctors, nurse practitioners and nurses;
- More access to mental health and substance use services for Ontarians, especially youth and in rural areas;
- Better access to electronic health records and improved health data systems.

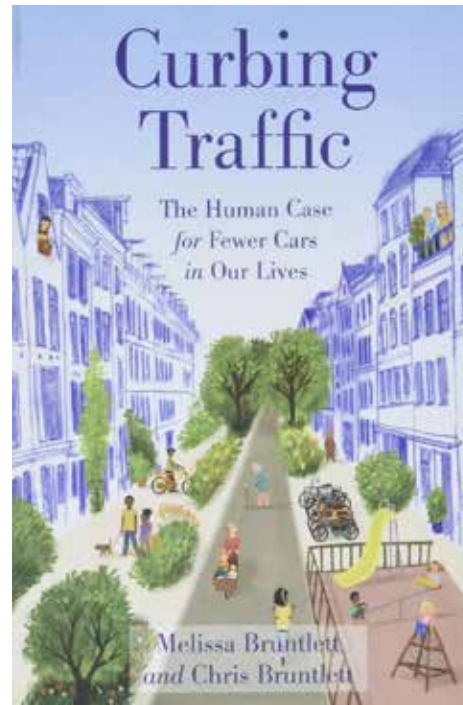
As part of this deal, there are reporting and accountability measures so the province of Ontario shows Ontarians how improvements will happen in their health care system. By working together with the province, this deal will support our health care workers and deliver better health care for all Ontarians.

In addition to improving health care delivery, we are also expanding our support within the Canadian Dental Care Plan to seniors aged 72 and up.

Canadians deserve access to quality, affordable dental care. That's why we announced the Canadian Dental Care Plan – helping families across the country get the care they need. So far, more than 400,000 Canadian seniors have been approved for dental care under the Canadian Dental Care Plan! The plan will cover a wide range of health services including cleaning, X-rays, and preventative care – so that seniors don't have to choose between paying their bills and getting quality care.

Dental health is health. With this plan, we're investing in a healthier, better future for Canadians.

If you have any questions about these programs, or would like additional information, please contact my community office, located in Hintonburg. My hard working team and I are here to help!



Dutch cities control and channel car usage, and the benefits of that control – and what they experienced because of that.

What the Bruntletts found in Delft

- With Delft having true 15-minute neighbourhoods, they could easily buy food more frequently in smaller amounts, often choosing their dinner menu as they walked to the shops after arriving home;

- Their children could – and were expected to – be much more independent on their bikes, freeing their parents from constant chauffeur duty and oversight and allowing them more time as a couple. This also reduced Melissa's workload as a mother;

- Everything was set up so they could easily combine cycling and public transport to get around, and only needed a car to return a piece of furniture to IKEA;

- The reduction in traffic volume and speed in residential neighbourhoods encouraged more

neighbourliness and social trust, which Melissa particularly appreciated when she locked herself out of their apartment and neighbours stepped in to help her find a locksmith;

- Seniors have a better chance to age in place and keep active on quiet streets;

- Low-income workers can more easily access a greater variety of workplaces, instead of being forced to own a car to get to work;

- Disabled people have more options, including human-operated, to get around;

- Greenspace replaced road space, increasing resilience to climate change

The book is the Bruntletts' paean to their adopted country and city. It's not so much a pro-bike book – although cycling is repeatedly referenced as one solution – but rather an examination of what society loses if we rely too much on the car. I found particularly interesting that it talks about many other solutions beyond bike lanes, including shared roads and woonerfs, and emphasizes speed reduction and car access reductions over cycle tracks. Their definition of a protected intersection is different from Ottawa's, too.

In some places, I thought it praised the Netherlands over-much, particularly when it talked about how cycling allows one to experience a more diverse racial society. Given the recent success of a far-right, anti-immigrant party in that country, I suspect the book is being too sanguine.

Nevertheless, this book offers a new way of thinking about traffic and a vision of a city that can work without constant traffic. Now, if we could just fix OC Transpo...

This book will be discussed at the March 26 meeting of the Ottawa Urbanism Book Club at McNabb Recreation Centre, 180 Percy St., from 6:15 to 7:45 p.m.

There will also be an online author Q&A with the Bruntletts on March 25 at 12 noon. More info: derricksimpson15@gmail.com



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Clayton Fisher
Audiologist




Treatyourhearing.ca

Downtown office building to be converted into transitional housing

Alayne McGregor

The City of Ottawa will rent an empty office building at 230 Queen Street (at Bank) to convert into transitional housing – a space for people to sleep while they find permanent housing.

Last week, Ottawa City Council approved a 10-year lease for the space, renewable for two more five-year periods. Somerset Ward Councillor Ariel Troster said this would allow an arena in Vanier, now used as a homeless shelter, to be returned to its community use.

“This is a great additional resource that I look forward to welcoming to my neighbourhood,” she said, and noted that it will be an interesting example of a conversion from office to residential downtown.

The 29,634 square feet of office space in the building is expected to house up to 130 individuals. The city expects renovations to be finished and the centre opened by November 1.

The rent will be \$4.38M for the first five years, with \$1.48M for fit-up. The fit-up will include showers, walls, and other basic facilities, according to Clara Freire, the city’s general manager of community and social services. She said the city is continuing to negotiate with other levels of government to cover the cost after an initial period.

The motion, moved by Troster and seconded by Councillor Laura Dudas, came out of an emergency shelter crisis task force

launched by Dudas and Mayor Mark Sutcliffe last October “to address the unprecedented demand and shortage of shelter beds in Ottawa.” Troster also served on the task force.

Last July, the motion noted, the city had projected to need up to 293 new shelter beds for single adults. Instead, demand is now at an all-time high with 450 clients being served at temporary locations. Three city recreation facilities – the Dempsey Community Centre, the Heron Road Community Centre, and Bernard Grandmaître Arena – have been temporarily repurposed as shelters.

“The scale of the need is unprecedented – even with all the overflow beds we’ve provided, there’s still people sleeping in plastic chairs and in the stands at stadiums overnight, which is completely unacceptable,” Troster said.

She said that the increased demand came from an influx of refugee claimants to Ottawa. “All of our overflow shelters and the majority of our permanent homeless shelters are filled with refugees and asylum-seekers – people fleeing oppression and seeking a new life in Canada. We are appealing to the federal government to support us, so we can ensure that newcomers have the support they need when they arrive in our city.”

Mayor Mark Sutcliffe said that the city’s shelter system was not designed to welcome asylum seekers and the city has been talking to the federal government to find solutions.

The city recently opened a former retirement home on Corkstown Road to provide transitional housing for families and has bought a large property on Kilborn Place to provide supportive housing. Dudas said the task force will continue to look for housing opportunities.



A Trees in Trust tree in Centretown after its first three years.

JOE AGUECI/THE BUZZ

Help increase the tree canopy in Centretown

Joe Agueci

Ottawa needs more trees. And Trees613/Arbres613 is working to get more.

The urban heat island effect, the increase in extreme summer temperatures caused by pavement, buildings, and other features of the urban landscape, particularly affects Somerset Ward. But research shows that a tree canopy of 40 percent or more helps to offset this effect. Large, mature trees also reduce energy use (i.e., increased air conditioning) and promote and improve public health and well-being.

Currently, Somerset Ward’s total tree canopy is approximately 22 percent – worse than the city average of about 25 percent. Tree canopy is defined as the layer of tree leaves, branches and stems that cover the ground when viewed from above. The recommended coverage for a city like Ottawa is 40 percent or higher.

So what can you do about this?

The City of Ottawa has a target of increasing the city’s tree canopy to 40 percent. One city program to do this is “Trees in Trust,” which provides street trees by request on a first come, first served basis at no cost to you.

If your city-owned street frontage lacks a tree, you can contact the city to determine if you qualify. Just search for “Trees in Trust” on ottawa.ca or call 3-1-1.

If you need help with this process or are not eligible to receive a tree from Trees in Trust, contact us. We can help support the application

process and we also have a number of free trees available for those who do not qualify which can be planted on non-city property.

If you are a tenant, you will need to have your landlord apply. Trees613 has a letter that you can use to reach out to and explain to your landlord the Trees in Trust process.

What else can you do to increase the tree canopy? Perhaps you walk by a building or an empty lot with few or no trees.

If the lot is city-owned, the city might plant trees there. We can help sort out the ownership and what can be done. The same goes for buildings. Sometimes the owner is unaware that there is a program that would help them beautify their property, increase its property value, and make the neighbourhood a better place for all. Send us the location and we’ll look into it.

Trees613 is a small group of local residents motivated to increase the tree canopy in our area for the benefit of all residents. We are actively talking to residents, building owners, and organizations to identify and place trees in our neighbourhood. We have approached various landlords (including the city, Ontario, and federal governments) to work with them to use land adjacent to their properties to increase the tree canopy.

If you would like to know more about our group or would like to join us please email us. If you are aware of an area that could be improved by planting trees, let us know. Reach us at plantingtreesottawa@gmail.ca

It’s not too early to start thinking about tree planting. Spring is just around the corner.

Conspiracy still in play at Lich/Barber trial

Alayne McGregor

The question of whether Tamara Lich and Chris Barber were co-conspirators in organizing the convoy occupation of Ottawa has been left open, as the judge in their trial rejected a motion from their defense teams to dismiss the conspiracy application out of hand.

On March 7, Judge Heather Perkins-McVey ruled that the Crown’s “Carter” application that Lich and Barber acted together in a “conspiracy or common design” would go ahead and be heard at the end of their trial, the normal time for such an application.

The two are both charged with mischief, obstructing police, and counselling others to commit mischief and intimidation for their roles in the protest. Barber is also charged with counselling others to disobey a court order. If the Carter application is upheld, actions by either would be applied to both in determining a verdict.

The defense had argued that the Crown had not provided sufficient evidence to meet the three tests for a Carter application.

In her ruling, the judge said that she did not need to have proof at this stage, merely a reasonable inference that there might be a conspiracy in order to allow the application to continue. She also said that, in this case, she must only consider inferences “more favourable to the Crown” just as judges would do when considering whether to commit an accused to trial.

The entire lengthy debate was not merely procedural but a preview of defense arguments, including Charter rights of free speech and free assembly. The defense argued there was only circumstantial evidence of a conspiracy.

The Crown, on the other hand, said the evidence needed to be taken in context of what was happening on the streets of Ottawa at the time, and the defendants’ own statements. The judge noted that statements from Lich and Barber used “we” and “our”, implying these were not just their own ideas but a group’s.

The trial resumes this week, with possibly a further motion from the defense and/or the start of their witnesses and arguments.

People smile when you deliver *The BUZZ*

To sign up: circulation@centretownbuzz.com

Coffee Houses on Sustainability

Join your neighbours from across Ottawa for a coffee and cookie to learn from their experiences when transitioning to a more sustainable lifestyle!

Do solar panels work for a multiplex? Why not try an e-bike? Keeping stormwater out of your basement? Rebates for sustainable upgrades, like heat pumps? A zero-waste pantry?

Glebe Community Centre, 175 Third Ave, Ottawa
9:30 – 11:30 am

Saturday January 27	Homes and Energy
Saturday February 24	Reducing Your Carbon Footprint
Sunday March 24	Greenspace and Water
Saturday April 27	Transportation
Sunday May 5	Zero-Waste Living

Jim Durrell Rec Centre, 1265 Walkley Rd, Ottawa
9:30 – 11:30 am

Saturday June 8 **Climate Risk – Basement Flooding**

Sign up on Eventbrite:
www.bit.ly/GreenCoffeeHouses

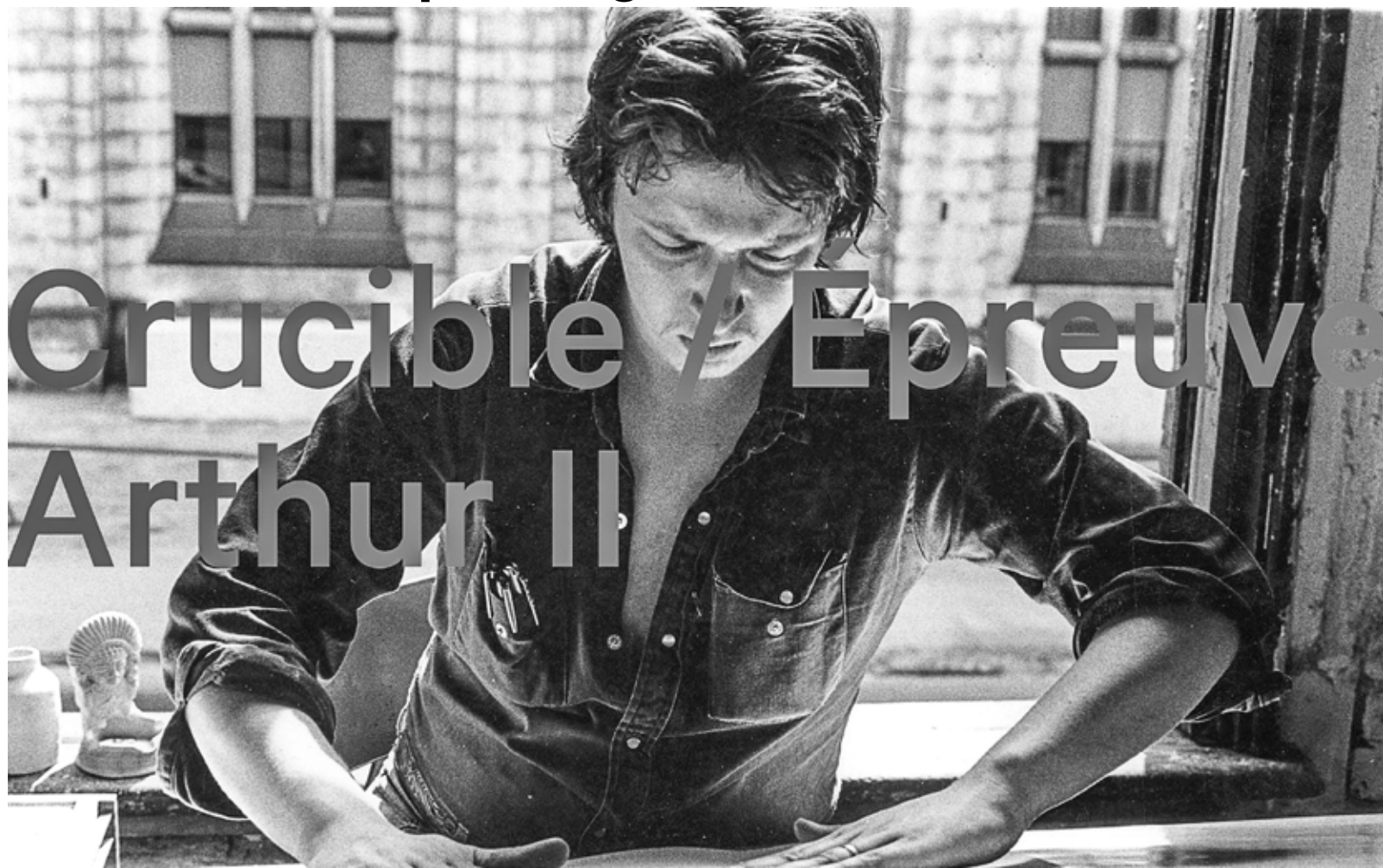
GLEBE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
Bring your own cup!

CAFES Ottawa
Ottawa Community Environment Project Grant Program (CEP-GP)

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BRIDGEHEAD
Wild Out

SAW gallery rises from the flames

Arthur II's new paintings tell the tale



Crucible / Epreuve
Arthur II

Robert Smythe
On February 23, veteran artist and Centretown resident Arthur II inaugurated SAW Gallery's new project display space at Arts Court with a solo exhibition entitled *Crucible*.

This show explains the source of SAW's curious name, which is an acronym for a longer title that is revealed as the installation's narrative unfolds.

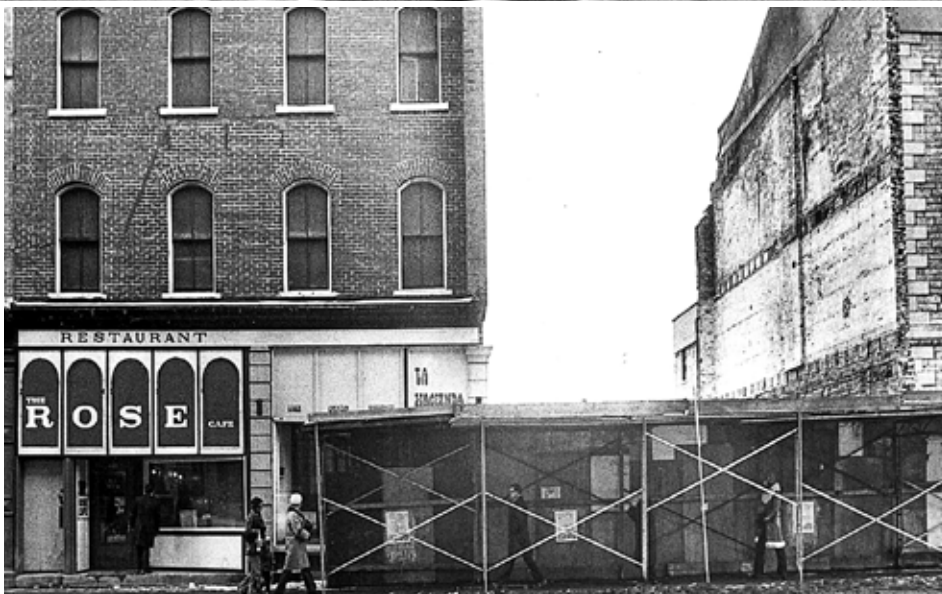
In March 1973, Arthur II was awoken by a raging fire in his shared studio space on the third floor of 537 Sussex Drive, and barely escaped the blaze by running through a burning door. The fire had

been started by a lit cigarette falling on a mattress.

The historic building, which the Ottawa dailies termed the Bytown Barracks, was part of the NCC's burgeoning Mile of History project. Arthur's studio was being rented from them for \$45 a week.

Interestingly enough, some months later the same building burned to the ground in a subsequent fire while the NCC was proceeding with restoration. What you see at this address today is a facsimile of the original structure.

Arthur II's *Crucible* is a new series of 12 large paintings looking back at a haunting and surreal moment that catalyzed the creation of



SAW, one of Canada's first artist-run centres.

Buck-naked, the artist was able to rip off the cushion of a lobby chair, turning it into a big diaper to greet the firefighters who quickly arrived to extinguish the flames.

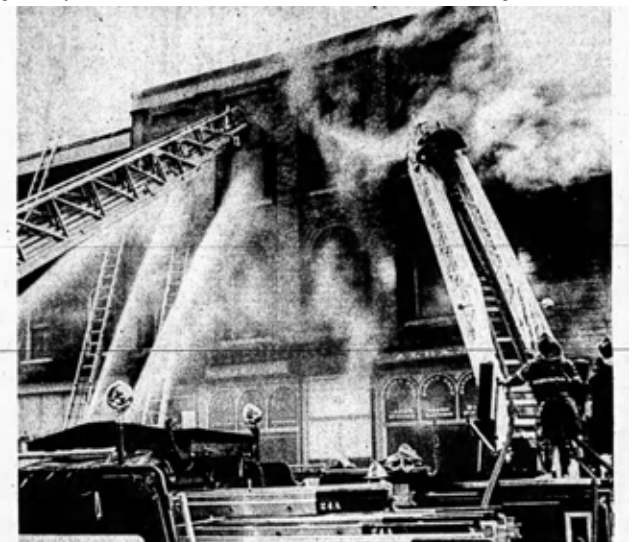
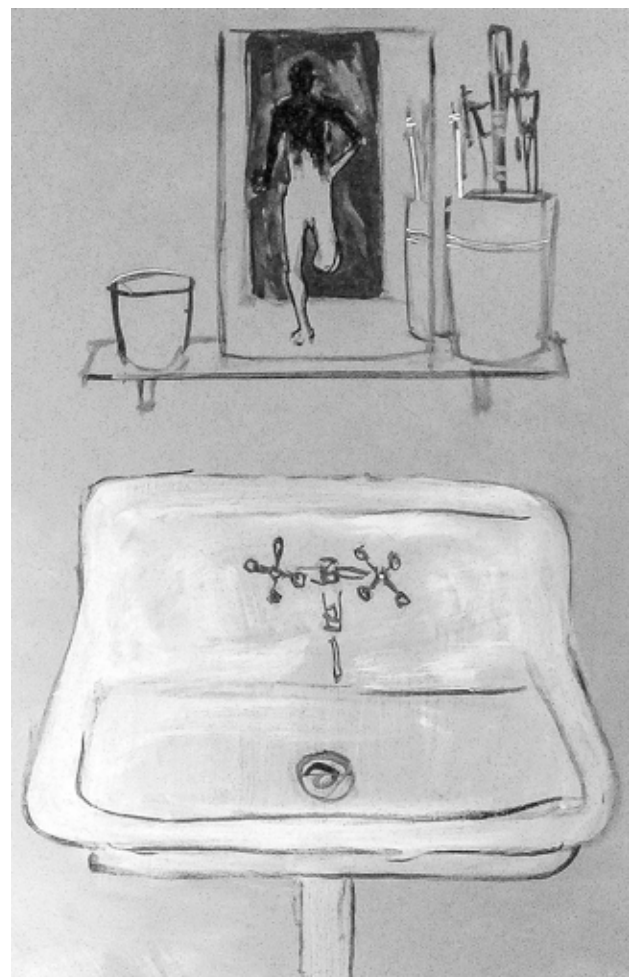
The events of that terrifying, chaotic evening included

some time in police custody while the authorities ascertained that he wasn't the arsonist, being given a police uniform jacket to cover him up as he told his story, and being handed a two dollar bill by a sympathetic cop who told him to go buy a pack of cigarettes.

So was launched SAW's

origin story, as Arthur II and his studio mates Alyx Jones, John Garner, Brenda Lamb, and Peter Lamb scrambled to

find a new space to work. Soon after, Le Hibou Coffee House owner Pierre-Paul Lafrenière came to the rescue by offering the artists the second floor of his legendary establishment (which was just two doors down the street) to run a gallery, print-making shop, and painting studio. It was named Sussex Annex Works, S... A... W... get it? The space became the organization we know today. To celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2023, SAW Gallery commissioned Arthur II to produce fresh work for this exhibition. The paintings' large-scale format is unusual for this artist, although he has worked as a scene painter for the National Arts Centre and the Stratford Festival. His dozen chapters are explained in softly focused grisaille (all grey tones), occasionally highlighted with some vivid red as the more exciting details of his tale demand. They recount all of the stages of his big adventure – some in a swirling dream state, others in a more matter-of-fact documentary style. SAW's new exhibition space, rather like an annex itself to their principal gallery, has been painted deep charcoal black – a setting to heighten the drama of this story. It's a homecoming for Arthur because he had many shows at SAW in its earliest decades. He's also known for work at folk festivals, numerous posters for the likes of John Prine, Bruce Cockburn, and Valdy, and album covers for Willie P. Bennett, David Wiffen, and Sneezzy Waters. Being chosen to celebrate SAW Gallery's half-century is a capstone to a long and varied career. The show runs until April 6. Gallery hours: Tuesday to Saturday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.



A LANDMARK BURNS
Men and equipment fail to put a halt to flames early today before they gutted the inside of the historic Bytown building on Sussex Drive. (Journal Photo by The Canadian Press)

Cigarette dropped on bed
Bytown barracks gutted

330 Gilmour: Housing potential meets political will



The 1922 section of 330 Gilmour (seen here from O'Connor Street). Many windows are boarded up.

ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

Toon Dreessen

In the heart of Centretown sits a parcel of land going to waste.

Close to amenities like walkable shopping streets, parks, and the Rideau Canal, and plentiful nearby transit options, 330 Gilmour Street is an example of wasted potential in the midst of a housing crisis.

This site is bordered on three sides by Gilmour and Lewis Streets to the north and south, and O'Connor Street to the west. An original structure built in 1922 served as the administrative offices for the Ottawa Board of Education; it was designed by William Caven Beattie, who also designed the Crichton, Mutchmor, and York Public Schools, as well as many other notable structures in and around Ottawa.

Additions to the building were made in 1956 and 1963, respecting the character of the building and adding much needed functional space. For 27 years, Ottawa City Council met in the trustees meeting room of the building after City Hall (then at Elgin and Queen) burned to the ground.

Nothing done since 2001

But, since 2001, when the land was purchased by Ashcroft Homes, the site has been derelict.

The windows are boarded up and the site overgrown. Bits of the building have blown off in windstorms and some of the boards have come loose. The building is an eyesore and a poster child for demolition by neglect.

In 2020, a Carleton architecture student, Emily Essex, used the building as the basis for her thesis on community space. However, no real, practical solution has presented itself in the more than 20 years that the site has been in private hands.

This makes a strong argument for keeping public land and buildings in public hands: had public ownership been retained, it might not today be an eyesore. The case for continued public ownership, rather than selling public assets, has

been made by many, including Carolyn Whitzman and the team with the [UBC Housing Assessment Resource Tools](#).

A 2007 zoning approval is in place for an eight-storey building but no steps have been taken to advance a creative use for the site.

An enormous potential

Reviewing the detailed zoning permission for the site shows the enormity of the potential.

There is some argument to maintain the existing buildings. They form part of the heritage character of the area and contribute to the overall scale and community and are specifically called out in the City of Ottawa Centretown and Minto Park Heritage Conservation District Plan.

These additions may be in reasonable condition and retention would reduce landfill impact as well as maintain embedded carbon (more info: lloydalter.substack.com/p/preservation-is-climate-action). This would also provide for about two-thirds of the existing built form on the lot to remain, largely as-is.

The 1956 and 1963 additions could be adapted, including adding a few floors above the existing building to provide some additional built form. However, the buildings are likely contaminated and may need extensive seismic and other structural upgrades that may not make for affordable homes.

Just keep the 1922 section?

Alternatively, we could look at only preserving the original 1922 structure. This would maintain the character of other similar heritage buildings on O'Connor and is a fine example of architecture of its era. While the later additions are interesting, the original 1922 structure is, by far, the nicest part of the building.

Removing the 1956 and 1963 additions would create a potential site for development of a larger, more efficient, sustainable infill building. The original 1922 structure could provide approximately 1,500 square meters (16,000 square feet)

of community and amenity space for the building.

Keeping only the 1922 wing would allow the rest of the site, as of right, to be developed with an eight-storey structure within existing zoning provisions. This would allow for a sustainable, carbon sequestered, rapidly constructed, mass timber, infill building with a minimum of impact on the community. This would also support Canadian technology and businesses, growing a demand for high quality, durable buildings. The narrow site, regular floor plate, and established zoning permissions make 330 Gilmour Street an ideal candidate for this type of project.

The resulting building could create approximately 14,800 square meters of new space (about 160,000 square feet). Taking 20 percent of this gross floor area for corridors, elevators, stairs and other unusable space suggests that approximately 11,800 square meters would be available for rent (about 127,000 square feet). That translates to approximately 170 homes, based on an average size of 750 square feet per home.

Obviously, this is a very high-level assumption. More, smaller, homes could be created, as could fewer, larger, family-sized, apartments. A more detailed design approach might land on just the right mix of unit sizes and configurations.

As well, a more detailed examination of the existing 1956 and 1963 structures might reveal that keeping them is feasible and cost effective. The current owner would have to provide a mandate to investigate and study this option.

What incentives could be provided to fund this reconstruction?

This is a big ask: the developer is going to have to invest tens of millions of dollars of capital to construct this building and undertake this restoration. Not only is this project an \$80-100 million project, but millions of dollars also have to be spent up front.

The city may need to offer some incentives for a shovel to hit the ground: the cost of construction, unknown and expensive planning approvals, and an uncertain financial market could be a big risk for the developer.

But letting the site sit derelict devalues our community and undermines our goals for sustainable intensification. The continued deterioration of a heritage structure also undercuts our goals to conserve and respect our cultural heritage.

These incentives could include:

- **Granting planning approval in a timely manner:** since the site complies with zoning and, other than a formal site plan application, there is little that the city can or should do to prevent the project from being approved within two to three months. Since zoning, setbacks, use, and land use permissions are in place, granting site plan approval should be seen as a priority. Delays are expensive; a 2018 report from the [Ontario Association of Architects](#) suggests that unnecessary planning delays adds \$20,000 total economic impact per home per month of delay.

- **Relieve the site from most vehicle parking requirements;** the zoning bylaw requires 0.5 parking spaces per home, or at least 85 parking spots. The building is close to transit and amenities and is in a very walkable community. Both Gilmour and Lewis Streets have plentiful on-street parking for visitors and the streets are likely wide enough to accommodate temporary stopping zones for drop-off or delivery as well as protected bike lanes. A limited basement for accessible parking and services (such as loading or garbage pick up) would save costs, allowing for a more sustainable and affordable building. Below-grade parking can cost in the range of \$100,000 per space; requiring below-grade parking, even at minimum rates, could add tens of millions of dollars in construction cost. Providing relief would set a precedent for Ottawa's climate change objectives.

continued on page 9

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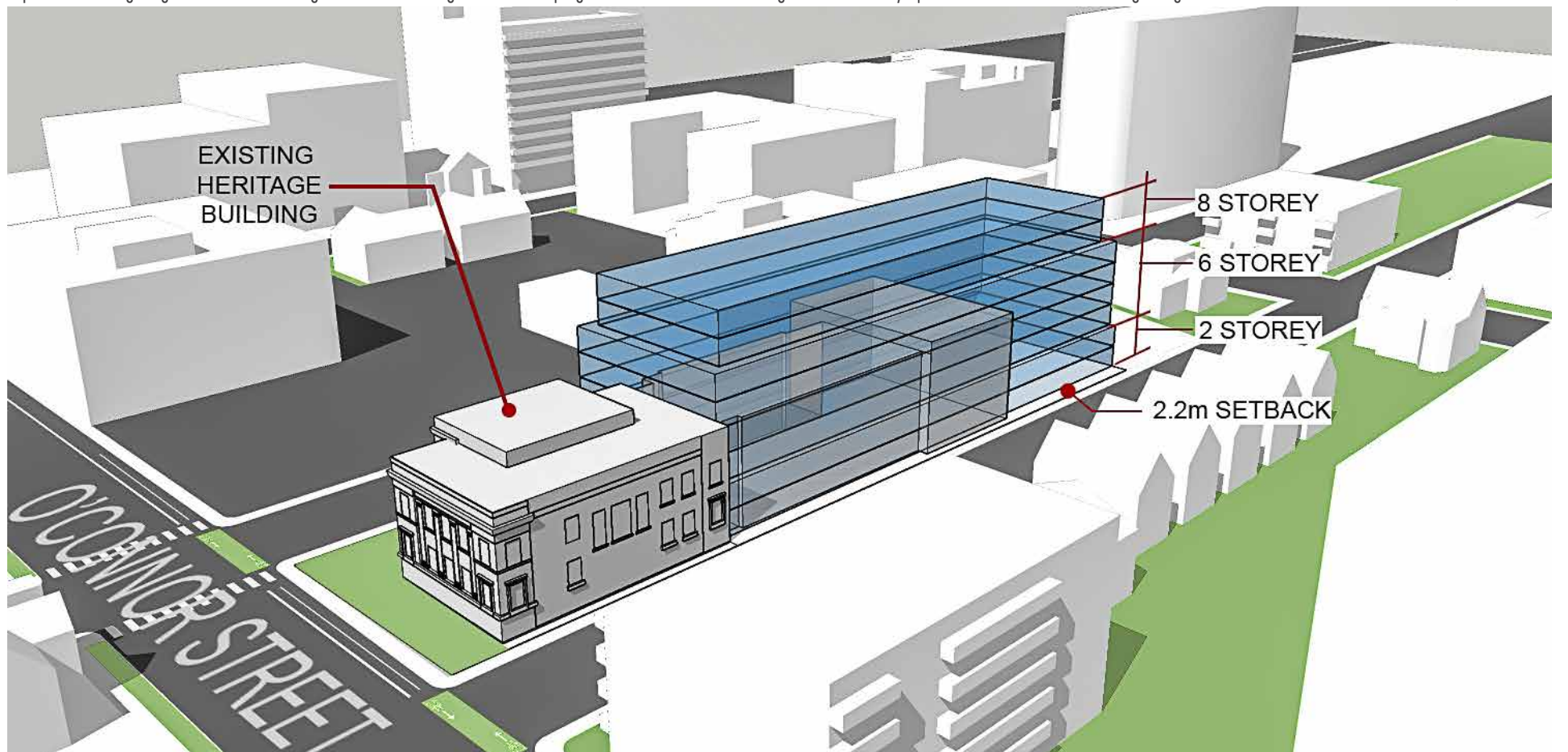
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A possible reimagining of the site retaining the 1922 building and redeveloping the remainder into housing and community space. Above: the front massing image. Below: The rear. TOON DREESSEN/ARCHITECTS DCA



continued from page 8

- **Relieve the site from Parkland Dedication under a shared agreement to use the restored 1922 wing of the building as shared community space.** A creative approach to the city's Parkland Dedication bylaw would allow for this structure to be restored and redeveloped for public use and serve as a needed shared amenity space for new residents. This would enhance existing community spaces in the area, including the nearby Jack Purcell and McNabb Community Centres as well as Minto Park and other greenspaces in the area.

- **Relieve the site from some of the required shared amenity space requirements.** Developers are required to build amenity space for apartment buildings at a fixed rate of 6m² per apartment; this creates games rooms, pools, party rooms, and other spaces for the exclusive use of residents. For 170 apartments, the developer would be required to construct over 7,000 square feet of amenity space that must be maintained and operated. This adds costs that are transferred to residents in the form of higher rent or sale prices. That could be as much as \$4 million, plus ongoing operating expenses, none of which is accessible to the community and may never get used by residents. The restored 1922 building could be used as amenity space, shared with the community, helping to forge strong social bonds between new buildings and existing communities.

- **Defer development charges for the project until after occupancy.** Development charges for 170 homes could be \$3 to \$4 million. Deferral would allow an immediate capital investment in the project without needing the owner to pay cash out of pocket until the building starts to be occupied (and generate revenue) and provides working capital to the owner to invest in the community at no cost to the city. Further deferral until several years post-occupancy could create an additional incentive to aspire to a higher sustainable target like net zero or zero operational carbon, which requires greater up front capital investment. The debt could be registered on title to ensure payment is made before the property is sold or refinanced, ensuring the city is paid.

As part of the incentivization, **the city could explore ways to contribute to the project and see value in trading off redevelopment of the site for benefits to the city:** this could include securing some affordable housing in perpetuity or contributing towards heritage restoration.

Expanding vacant building laws

The challenge, of course, is that this is a privately owned site, and the owner is fully within their rights to allow the site to decay or sit vacant. This is a glaring gap in municipal governance that other cities have tackled

with aggressive vacant building bylaws.

Winnipeg requires a permit for boarded windows with increasing costs for renewal; Winnipeg also charges an annual fee of one percent of the assessed value of the property. Based on publicly available data, if applied in Ottawa, that would generate over \$40,000/year for the city and create a financial incentive to develop the site.

If the owner will not be incentivized with a carrot, the city should be prepared to use a stick.

Or expropriation?

That could include, in the extreme, expropriation of the property for its current declared value (\$4.1M according to city info). At that point, the city could hold a design competition and award the winning team the right to develop the site, continuing to holding it as a public asset for public benefit or to be privately developed and owned.

Similar design competitions in Edmonton resulted in dozens of creative design ideas from around the world, highlighting Edmonton as a good place to invest in design quality. That kind of creative thinking about architecture and city-building as both an economic tool and an act of physical placemaking is crucial design leadership we need to see in Ottawa if we are going to achieve our design aspirations.

We need bold action to tackle the urgency of the challenges we face.

We need to see value in engaging with the development community to take advantage of the numerous vacant parcels of land and derelict sites in our communities. We could meet many of our housing needs by thinking creatively about vacant, abandoned, and underbuilt properties. We have the potential to create sustainable healthy communities that make better use of transit, infrastructure, and community networks to achieve our municipal ambitions.

We need our political leaders to see the potential within our communities and engage developers, architects, engineers, and planners in finding solutions to our housing crisis.

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What's on this month, in Ottawa and beyond



Martin Scorsese received a lifetime award at the 74th Berlinale Film Festival. *Tony Wohlfarth/The BUZZ*
Tony Wohlfarth

The 74th Berlinale (Feb. 15-25, 2024)

A highlight was hearing from Martin Scorsese, who received a Golden Bear for his lifetime of work as a film director. Two Canadian films were screened in Berlin and featured at a Canadian Embassy reception.

Intercepted

This film is based on telephone calls between Russian soldiers, who were assigned to the war front in the Kharkiv region in 2022, and their mothers. They share their antipathy toward Ukrainians and their desire to return home. The film is not narrated, so the audience hears their conversations against a backdrop of utter devastation in the villages they are seeking to liberate. At one point, we hear one soldier admit to assassinating a family whom he deems to be sympathetic to the Ukrainian cause.

The film was produced with financial support from Telefilm Canada and directed by Oksana Karpovych. It won a special men-

tion from the jury award in Berlin. Running time: 1h35m.

Matt & Mara

Blackberry director Matt Johnson plays himself in this film about his chance encounter with Mara (Derragh Campbell), an old friend and aspiring author. They go to a writer's conference and she helps Matt prepare for his father's funeral. They banter and argue (a lot).

Critics have said this film is all about Mara's failing marriage. But I saw a fascinating reflection on modern day relationships with a witty script. Directed by Kazik Radwanski. I will keep an eye on whether this film gets distributed commercially. Running time: 1h18m.

Folk Alliance International (FAI)

The 36th annual gathering of folk musicians kicked off on February 21 with the International Folk Music Awards (IFMAs) in Kansas. Canada's own William Prince was nominated for best album of the year.

There were 75 dedicated music fans-vol-

unteers-who delivered an astounding festival in Kansas City. The crew helped deliver four days of workshops, showcases and panels to over 2,300 participants.

In 2025, FAI shifts to Montreal from February 19-23. Consider volunteering for this event later this year. See: www.folk.org

National Gallery of Canada (380 Sussex Dr.)

A new photo exhibition, "A Matter of Place" by Japanese photographer Kan Azuma, has opened until June 24. The more than 160 photographs by Azuma include poetic and contemplative interpretations of the Canadian landscape. See: www.gallery.ca

International Film Festival of Ottawa

The IFFO runs until March 24 at the By-Towne, the Mayfair, and Arts Court. Besides films from Canada and around the globe, it also includes a Screen Summit industry event. See: www.iffo.ca

Redbird Live (1165 Bank Street)

- Mar. 15: singer-songwriter Rachael Kilgour;
- Mar. 17: Kelly Sloan and JIG for St. Patrick's Day;
- Mar. 30: Colin Linden matinee performance;
- Apr. 11: Christine Graves;
- Apr. 13: Benj Rowland with Ali McCormick;
- Apr. 14: Lloyd Spiegel.

Tickets: <https://redbirdlive.ca/>

National Arts Centre (1 Elgin Street)

- Mar. 16: The Pairs trio;
- Mar. 16: Jazz at Lincoln Center Presents *Sing and Swing: Our American Songbook* with Bria Skonberg and Benny Benack III;
- Mar. 20: traditional Quebec music from Le Diable à Cinq;
- Mar. 21: The Once from Newfoundland;
- Mar. 30: The Official Canada Drag Race Tour;
- Apr. 4: Land of Talk with Chinese singer Hua Li;
- Apr. 5: music of Creedence Clearwater Revival;
- Apr. 6: Haley Blais with Gabrielle Shonk;
- Apr. 11: South African born Toronto singer Zaki Ibrahim;

- Apr. 11-13, Royal Winnipeg Ballet performing "Snow White"; and
- Apr. 14-15: Shen Yun ballet from China. Tickets and show-times: www.nac-cna.ca

Salle Odysée (Gatineau)

On April 1, set your sights on Gatineau (La Maison de la Culture at 855, boul. de la Gappe) to see Canada's consummate jazz singer, Emily-Claire Barlow. Tickets at: www.reseau.ovation.ca

Montgomery Scotch Lounge (750 Gladstone)

- Mar. 15: jazz trombonist Peter Turner with Peter Brown: Notes from the Dirty Thirties;
- Mar. 16: Mike Essoudry's Future Pasts;
- Mar. 21: The Low Keys;
- Mar. 22: the Wade-Laroche Duo;
- Mar. 23: the Liftoff Trio;
- Mar. 29: Finely Tuned Elephant;
- Mar. 30: Ottawa Guitar Trio;
- Apr. 3: Courage4;
- Apr. 4: RedFox from Montreal;
- Apr. 5: 3 of Hearts;
- Apr. 6: Miguel de Armas Trio;
- Apr. 11: Boshko Maric;
- Apr. 12: Mikhail Laxton; and
- Apr. 13: Kaeley Jade.

See montgomeryscotchlounge.com

Next Month

The Empowering Women in the Music Industry (EWIMI) Conference takes centre stage at the NAC on April 25-27: www.axeworldfest.com/. EWIMI is on the same weekend as the annual Grassroots Festival: ottawagrassrootsfestival.com/

Out of Town

Irish Mythen is one of the most accomplished and energetic folk musicians in Canada. See her perform live in Deep River on March 21. For tickets and more information, check out: www.irishmythen.com/shows

Tony Wohlfarth is an Ottawa-based freelance film and entertainment writer. He covered the 54th Berlinale and FAI in February.

Pro Organo Recital featuring Anne Laver, Syracuse, NY

playing music inspired by the stories of heroes and saints, both ancient and modern. This eclectic program includes music by Franck, Bach, Judith Bingham, Natalie Draper, and Rachel Laurin, among others.

Friday, April 5th at 7:30 p.m.
St. Andrew's Church
(82 Kent Street)

Tickets available on Eventbrite or at the door.

Further information at:
http://rcco-ottawa.ca/pro_organo.html



Ottawa hasn't met targets for affordable housing - or defined what that is

Alayne McGregor

A just-released report from the city's auditor-general has confirmed that the city has not come close to meeting its targets for creating affordable housing – although it's getting better. And it needs to figure out what it means by "affordable."

Auditor-General Natalie Gougeon attributed the shortfall to lack of funding from all levels of government and capacity challenges in the housing development sector.

The city's goal, approved in 2021, is to build 500 new affordable units annually until 2030. The actual numbers: nine in 2020, 222 in 2021, 30 in 2022, and 214 in 2023.

The report also notes the city needs to improve its reporting – not just the numbers of units, but also the levels of affordability, and city land transfers or disposals for affordable housing.

However, Clara Freire, the city's general manager of community and social services, said the city is slated to complete 475 units this year. "Another 425 should be completed shortly thereafter, so things are really starting to pick up and move. We have 500-odd that have some funding put toward them and we just need to top them up to get rolling, and we have thousands more in a pipeline again requiring funding."

The federal government recently announced it would give the city \$176.3 million from its Housing Accelerator Fund, in order to deliver 4,450 units over the next

three years.

In order to encourage affordable housing, Gougeon recommended the city examine more flexible zoning requirements for these projects such as removing parking minimums, height maximums, setbacks, design, and other requirements while maintaining key controls. City staff agreed to do this.

One issue Gougeon emphasized was that the city has multiple definitions of "affordable" housing – sometimes even in the same document. It can be defined as:

- the occupant does not pay more than 30 percent of their gross income;
- 80 percent of CMHC Average Market Rent, as reported in their annual market report; or
- CMHC Average Market Rent.

The city's Housing and Homelessness Plan uses the 30 percent rule in its glossary, but also includes more specific definitions including market-affordable, below-market, and core-affordable based on income percentiles. But later on, it says that "Rents are not geared to income, rather they are typically set at 80 percent of the average market rents."

In the agreements the city signs with developers, the report notes, there are different definitions for affordable housing, ranging from 30 percent of gross income to 80 percent of average market rent.

Gougeon recommended adopting a clear and consistent definition of affordable housing for use across the city, which staff agreed to do by the end of 2024.

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Nick Sikkuark: reacting to opposing emotions



Jack Hanna

Canada's Picasso spent his life in the Arctic and never had an art lesson.

Nick Sikkuark, entirely self-taught, worked in many mediums: sculpture, painting, drawing, caricature, and illustrated children's books. Like Picasso, he was a ge-

nius in all of them. He died in 2013 at the age 70.

The first major exhibition of his work is a short walking distance from Centretown at the National Gallery of Canada. It is entitled *Humour and Horror*. It lives up to the title.

"I carve from my imagination – shamans and devil spirits, things no one would



imagine," Sikkuark once told an interviewer. "When I carve them, I make them live."

His art is fantastic, but exudes humanity. Look at a Sikkuark carving and there is curiosity – what is this? – but that quickly morphs into empathy for the engaging face.

"I like to make faces funny or ugly," Sikkuark said, "so people will look into the details and wonder what I have carved, to see and be puzzled... The scarier the better."

Sikkuark's work clearly is Inuit art. He worked in

soapstone, bone, antler, tusk, and fur, as well as with paints and pencils.

But this is not like any art you've seen before.

Sikkuark's works captivate because the viewer experiences a combination of emotions. A face is fanciful, even macabre, but there is realism that grabs a viewer's sensibilities.

"You see gnashing teeth, or eyes bulging or closed in pain, and you instinctively want to step back," says Christine Lalonde, curator



Nick Sikkuark sculptures: (left) *Untitled (Shaman?)*, 1987 (middle) *Man Sitting*, 1997 (right) *Shaman*, 1990

PHOTOS BY JACK HANNA/THE BUZZ

and then a priest.

As a child and teenager, he dabbled with drawing and carving but never thought it would be his calling.

He wanted to be a priest. At 18 he left the north to study at a seminary in Winnipeg and in Ottawa.

But Sikkuark found the priesthood was not for him and returned to the north. He married and had a family. He worked in construction and as a hunter and carver. His family lived in several communities, eventually settling in Kugaaruk, on the Arctic coast opposite Baffin Island.

His break came in 1973 when he was commissioned to produce illustrated books for the Northwest Territories Department of Education. He wrote five such books, including *Nick Sikkuark's Book of Things You Will Never See* and *What Animals Think*.

He won a prestigious commission to create the Queen's Baton for the 1978 Commonwealth Games of carved narwhal tusk and gold.

He became known among aficionados of Inuit art and in the North.

"I want to make people think," Sikkuark said. "What is that? What does it mean?"

Sikkuark's works draw forth a mix of emotions. Opposites combine, for instance horror and humour, as the exhibition's title suggests.

"We find that they are not separate; they are one and the same," says Lalonde. "Even in sorrow, we feel joy."

"That is his humanity. That is what grabs and holds."

See *Humour and Horror* soon. The exhibition ends March 24. Admission is free on Thursdays from 5 to 8 p.m.

Preserving trees and creating garden networks

Stephen Thirlwall

When we work together in our local community, we can attack problems that might otherwise appear insurmountable.

This contributes to a community vision, in which we can work collectively on bigger actions or take small actions alone. This makes our community more beautiful, healthier, friendlier, safer, integrated, and well functioning – and helps us learn new skills.

Each person can choose what they can contribute; everyone participates in the community dialogue. Together, we form a strong and capable force and develop strong friendships, trust, and respect for each other.

Starting a new season

Centretown has many opportunities to become engaged in activities that benefit community life.

You can serve on a community association committee; assist social agencies like food banks or health centres; participate in public meetings on city issues; volunteer for neighbourhood projects; or beautify the neighbourhood through your lovely garden.

Specifically, there are many opportunities with the Centretown Community Association (CCA) and its Trees, Greenspace and Sustainability Committee (T&G).

Dundonald Park

T&G's Dundonald Gardening Group develops and maintains the flower, shrub, and tree gardens within the park. A lead gardener guides volunteers in cleaning the gardens and surroundings, planting, trimming, mulching, watering, and advancing garden designs. Teams usually go out once a week, but some members may go on their own to do small jobs. In December, there is a tree decorating program and party.

Together with the Centretown Community Health Centre, T&G also holds large spring (Earth Day) and fall fairs in Dundonald Park. Extensive planning goes into these. Volunteers prepare displays, manage information tables, and provide activities for children, youth and adults, as well as refreshments. There are book readings and arts and crafts for children, and often music, dancing, theatre, magic shows, or even meditation. Presenters engage with the public on environmental, arts, and community topics. Volunteers are needed to set up and take down displays and tables, assist with presentations, or just attend as individuals and families who come to enjoy the fair. Much fun, learning, and socializing happens.

NeighbourWoods

NeighbourWoods is a major project to map and assess all trees of a certain size within the boundaries of Centretown. This involves a project leader, various assistant planners, several tree survey teams (usually three to five people each), and data managers, who check and compile the information from the field teams. So far, work has been in the Golden Triangle and West Centretown, where about 2,400 trees have been assessed over three years. Each team determines its own schedule based on the weather and availability of participants – typically, about two hours once a week.

The field teams have also identified locations for possible tree planting.

Each season, NeighbourWoods volunteers prepare a final report for the public and the City of Ottawa, to promote further tree planting and the city's Trees in Trust program that offers free trees to residents.

Last fall, several individuals made a quick "street tree" survey of all of

Centretown north of Laurier Avenue. A number value was given to each block (both sides of the street) to show how many properties had trees.

These teams are encouraged by the welcome they receive while surveying from residents, who frequently start conversations about their trees and the community.

Envisioning Green Networks

A proposal is being informally discussed to further "green" and beautify the community by encouraging more gardens in Centretown, envisioning networks of garden-lined streets across downtown. Hopefully, a more formal group will emerge to begin concrete steps to evolve this process.

This involves establishing community-based flower and/or vegetable gardens, increasing the number of front-yard flower and shrub gardens, and planting varied tree species. Some individuals are researching small "urban forests."

Associated with this idea are the existing Frank Street Bee and Butterfly Garden, a small Lisgar Parkette garden, development of public and greenspaces along Elgin Street, the Elgin Street summer market, the gardeners who care for St. Luke's Garden, the temporary Off-Bank Community Garden, and the community gardens at McNabb Park.

We have many wonderful gardens in Centretown but many more are still needed. Start small. Get cuttings, seeds, or full plants from neighbours – or just put in a few lovely annuals. From my own experience, passers-by greatly appreciate these gardens and say how much they love them.

Interested in joining any of these projects? Contact the CCA at cca@centretowncitizens.ca, and attend Dundonald Park Earth Day on April 20 and speak directly with some of the current volunteers.

of the exhibition. "But the closer you get, the longer you look, whatever emotion enticed you to get close, the opposite emotion seeps in.

"You are just about to laugh at the precariousness of a figure and its circumstances, and then you become empathetic and appreciate how difficult it is to transform from a human into an animal."

Sikkuark explored many themes: relationships between humans and nature; shamans; Inuit myths and customs; and human transformations into animals or spirits.

But at its heart, his art is about being human. Sculpted faces show pain or struggle, or open-mouthed awe or horror. Although fantastic, they elicit sympathy.

The exhibition includes dozens of monochrome caricatures of people, all of them beguiling because the subject's humanity leaps off the paper.

Sikkuark was born into an Inuit family that wintered on the land. When he was seven, a German measles epidemic took both his parents. He was raised by relatives

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Dress for Success rebounds after break-in

Alayne McGregor

Thieves ransacked a Centretown-based charity on March 3, taking computers, tablets, and merchandise from its boutique.

The Sunday-evening break-in occurred just after Dress for Success Ottawa had held its spring sale. Luckily, said Executive Director Jen Crawford, thieves were not able to get into the locked office containing the close to \$18,000 raised that weekend. They tried very hard to break in, though: “there were knives broken off in the door.”

The thieves entered the offices in the basement of 200 Catherine Street by breaking a window with a large metal ashtray, she said. She said the organization is considering putting bars on that window and is talking with its landlord about moving to a more secure space higher up in the building.

Within 10 hours of putting out the notice, she said,



Thieves broke this window with a metal ashtray to get in and ransack Dress for Success' boutique. DRESS FOR SUCCESS OTTAWA

“the community had rallied like I’ve never seen. We had 10 volunteers waiting at the door to help us clean up.”

She said it was particularly ironic the break-in occurred on the same week as International Women’s Day, when they advocate and educate the public on the needs of working women.

Dress for Success Ottawa empowers women and gender nonconforming individuals to achieve economic

independence by providing a network of support, professional attire, and development tools to help them thrive. The 13-year-old charity is best known for providing clothing to those who need it for job interviews and the first weeks of a new job.

Crawford said it has about 150 volunteers. About 60 act as wardrobe consultants working one on one with clients. In 2023, it helped 998 clients with clothes and coaching on interview skills, resumes, career and life coaching. Supporters donate both money and professional attire in good condition.

It was in the middle of its “Your Hour, Her Power” fundraising campaign when the break-in occurred. As of March 10, it had raised \$14,398 of the goal of \$15,000.

First person

Good change, bad change, spare change

Marit Quist-Corbett

“Spare change, you guys, spare change.” The woman outside the grocery store says it over and over, like a long-practiced mantra. Her eyes, unfocused, roam the street. She seems to have stopped expecting anything.

Most people walk by her without a second look. Others nod, mumble an acknowledgement and look away, hesitant to engage. A young man stops, digs into his wallet, and hands her some money.

“Spare change? Can you spare some change?”

The words follow me like ragged threads of a spider’s web clinging to your hair. They’re the well-practiced refrain to my grocery runs.

“Can you spare some change? Any change, ma’am?”

The words so familiar, I hardly hear them anymore. Yet they reverberate. They continue to rattle around in my brain as I make my way back home. Today, I’ve taken my bike because, guess what, it’s 14°C.

The day before, I skated.

It’s 14 degrees and I’m in my spring coat. I have to hurry, though, because the weather forecasters warn of a flash freeze and I don’t want to be caught in that.

Now there’s some change for you.

Our lives always change

I know that change is what defines our world, what defines life. It always has. We live our existence. We get used to the way things are and expect them to continue that way. They were for my mother, who, born as she was in 1922, lived through the miracle of electric lights being installed in their house. Lived through the advent of the automobile, her daughters adopting the sexual revolution, and finally the beginning of the digital age.

For me, those last two things, the so-called sexual liberation and the digital age, with all that it entails – social media, passwords for everything, identity theft – stand out.

I let my mind wander over the changes we, as a society, have lately been asked to adapt to.

Some are positive. Some not so much.

Weather fluctuations

The early spring, the weird temperature fluctuations, have meant that people in Centretown haven’t had to shovel a lot of snow. Remember when that was a regular event? A monster snowfall would be followed by a near-joyful gathering of the snow shovelers the next morning. Greetings, offers of help would fly across the street, mixed with with grumbling about the passing snow plough.

“Hey, you got a shovel I can borrow? Damn plough came by again.”

“It’s heavy – watch your back!”

It hasn’t happened this year. The streets have been too clean and devoid of mess.

Nor have we had to push cars out of snowbanks or put door mats under helplessly spinning wheels to give them a grip.

On the other hand, had these erratic weather fluctuations not happened, I wouldn’t have run off to the Rideau Canal for a last skate and noticed a group of young people gleefully eating Beaver Tails and taking pictures of their pal dressed in a Hawaiian shirt and shorts. They look so happy, so easy-going! I’m eager to engage.

“Does he know where he is?” I ask.

“What do you mean, what’s wrong with shorts?” the young man answers.

We joke back and forth for a couple of minutes about the Caribbean coming to Ottawa, about swimming in the canal, before I keep going and strap on my skates.

Without these erratic weather patterns, I wouldn’t have met Alonzo, a young man directing a drone into the clear blue sky one February morning. Again, it’s such an unusual sight, I’m compelled to act.

“Are you having fun? Just playing around, or is this work?”

He explains that he works for a rental company and has been asked to take aerial videos of buildings for advertising. We chat for a while, exchanging information. I’m on my way to a volunteer job, he’s been in this job for a few years, having moved here from California.

“Quite a change,” I say.

“Yeah, at first it was, but I’m used to it now”, he answers.

We say goodbye, vaguely expressing the hope that we may meet again.

Enjoying random encounters

These random encounters and random exchanges still happen, despite or maybe because of the weird climate these days.

Here, to me, is a positive change.

It would have been inconceivable for my parents, brought up in the first half of the 20th century, to speak with such familiarity to people half or a third of their age. Relationships were formal. Rules prevailed. You shook hands with someone older and addressed them with their title and last name.

As a child, I was wary of grown-ups. You never knew how they would judge you. We talked about the generation gap as an inevitable fact. The older generation would always mistrust the younger one. We said to “not trust anyone over 30.” It was a climate of marked differences and unmovable standards.

I know discrimination still exists. “Young people,” Gen-Xers and Millennials alike, are judged as if they all came from a same mold. So are Baby Boomers. I’ve been addressed as “dear” often enough. Mostly by people in their 50s, though. Younger people, people in their 20s and 30s generally don’t seem to judge. I have noticed a remarkable shift in the way I can communicate with these groups.

Positive change in society

I feel it’s all part of a positive change in society. Today’s younger generation is – as a rule – much less judgmental than we used to be. In spite of the fact that they are growing up in an age of doom and gloom, and might be forgiven for being suspicious of anyone outside their age group, they have the capacity of looking beyond your appearance, of looking you in the eye and listening to you.

They treat each other and strangers with uncommon kindness. They accept differences. They have empathy for traits we would have judged as “weird.” Anxiety, panic attacks, depression, gender questioning – these are all taken in stride. They are part of the mosaic, the symphony, of their and our society.

The older generation has, as a rule, warned of impending disaster.

“Kids these days. They take the day off when they’re feeling anxious. Soon, no one will be wanting to work anymore.”

“Can you believe it? They’re teaching sex to five-year-olds! Horrors!”

And yet, as a society, we always seem to have survived. Some decades were marked by hardship, others by euphoria. Eras come and go, like the tides of the ocean, like the change of the seasons.

So here we are in March. March 19 will be the equinox, when we move from winter into spring. Another inevitable change.

Maybe, at that point, the icy patches on the street will have turned into puddles for the kids to splash in. Maybe we’ll all be wearing shorts. And maybe, hopefully, the woman panhandling for change at the grocery store will have some light in her eyes.

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Where, oh where, can the monarchs be?

Dinah Robinson

The numbers are in and the news is not good for monarch butterflies. A shocking decrease of 59 percent in the eastern monarch population was reported by the annual WWF survey for the 2023-2024 winter season.

The forest area occupied by the overwintering monarchs was down to 2.2 acres from the previous 5.5 acres. This is the second smallest overwintering population since monitoring began in 1993.

The migratory monarchs are split into two populations which are separated by the Rocky Mountains. Eastern monarchs overwinter in Mexico and the western population migrates to Southern California. The number of western monarchs overwintering in California dropped by 30 percent this past winter, according to a statement from the Xerces Society.

There is little meaningful protection for migratory monarch butterflies and what does exist is inconsistent. In Canada, the federal government lists them as a species of “special concern” under the federal Species at Risk Act. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service lists monarchs as a “candidate species” for inclusion on the list of endangered or threatened wildlife. Their overwintering habitat in Mexico is also under threat of logging.

What is causing the collapse?

The main driver of the steep decline is the scarcity of milkweed, the exclusive source of food for the monarch caterpillars. There are several root causes of this habitat loss.

Extreme weather, farming practices, use of GMOs and pesticides (e.g., glyphosate), and development in urban areas that eliminates greenspace are the main reasons. Habitat fragmentation is another key component. Butterflies need connected corridors to support frequent stops to feed and lay eggs.

What’s at stake?

CBC Radio recently interviewed Greg Mitchell, research scientist with Environment and Climate Change Canada, based at Carleton University’s Wildlife Research Centre, and the Canadian lead for the Tri-National Monarch Science Partnership.

He had just returned from his third visit to the same site in the central Mexican forest where a colony of monarchs roost in winter. On his first visit, in 2019, he said, there were “millions of butterflies hanging off the fir trees. The branches are bending, they’re drooping, there’s so many butterflies hanging off them.” This year, his impression was very different. His colleague described it as an “empty cathedral,” and Mitchell said, “the forest was beautiful but there weren’t any butterflies.”

According to population viability analysis, the probability is growing that migratory monarchs will go extinct unless there is a dramatic population turnaround.

“If we don’t start acting now, based on the research, we’re at risk of not seeing very many monarchs in Canada, going forward,” Mitchell stated. He’s still optimistic and encourages everyone to plant lots of milkweed and native nectar flowers to aid in the recovery.

Planting for butterflies

Monarchs migrate up to 4,000 km. They therefore rely on thousands of communities across Canada, the U.S., and Mexico on their trips each year. The monarch lays eggs as she travels north to Canada in the spring. The caterpillars voraciously munch on milkweed before they metamorphose into butterflies. Once born, the trip north continues. There are 4-5 generations born every year and most survive just 2-6 weeks. The last generation born in the late summer must complete the entire flight back to Mexico and survive 6-9 months until spring.

Milkweed is the monarch’s host plant. It is the only food that the caterpillars can consume. Several species of milkweed are native to Ontario; swamp milkweed, butterfly weed, common milkweed, and the less common poke milkweed that’s good in shade gardens. Having a variety of species can support pollinators for longer, as they flower at slightly different times from June to September.

Host plants are critical on the flight north and during the summer months when caterpillars are growing. Nectar plants are important throughout the year to supply fuel for the adult butterflies and they are critical in the fall, when the last generation heads south.

Butterflies prefer flowers with flat surfaces or tight clusters of flowers because they need to rest while they drink nectar. Some good options are coneflowers, goldenrods, black-eyed susans, and asters (host plant for the Pearly Crescent and the Silvery Checkerspot Butterfly caterpillars).

Seeds of hope

In Centretown, gardening group representatives and individuals are collaborating to create a pollinator pathway connecting parks and neighbourhood gardens in a way that best supports native pollinators. Small bees, butterflies and moths can only travel short distances before they need to refuel. It’s important to have a series of pollinator gardens that create a connected corridor, from one buffet of flowers to the next – little islands of beautiful plants for humans and food for pollinators.

We’ve already been busy locating plantable spaces, collecting seeds, and identifying community partners and volunteers. We want to create a Pollinator Pathway connecting Dundonald Park gardens via the Frank Street Bee Butterfly Garden to the St. Luke’s Pollinator Garden.

Many communities across Canada are participating in the Butterflyway project, initiated by the David Suzuki Foundation in 2017. The foundation has trained over 1,400 Butterflyway Rangers in hundreds of communities across Canada. The Rangers act as team leaders who connect with neighbours to create pollinator gardens.

Ecology Ottawa is also running the Rewilding Ottawa! Project as part of its biodiversity campaign. They’ve helped create pollinator gardens in three locations across the city. They are trying to educate and inspire Ottawa residents to plant gardens for native pollinators everywhere they can. They have also created a map to track the progress.

Even Canada Post has got the buzz, with its annual stamp release featuring environmentally important native wildflowers including Butterfly Milkweed.



A monarch butterfly on a Blazing Star flower.

DINAH ROBINSON/THE BUZZ

Helping the Pollinator Pathway project

If you want to participate in the Centretown Pollinator Pathway project, there are many ways you can help. We’re looking for volunteers to assist with

- identifying plantable spaces,
- planting seeds and flowers,
- maintaining the new plants by watering and weeding,
- adding pollinator gardens and plant-

able spaces to a mapping tool, encouraging residents to plant pollinator gardens in front, side, and backyards, and on balconies, porches and rooftops.

Contact fbgardener@prontonmail.com or dinah.robinson.bee@gmail.com to express your interest.

Let’s continue to make Centretown a beautiful place for pollinators and people.



Canada Post is featuring Butterfly Milkweed and Spotted Beebalm in its March stamp issue.

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DCA report: Plouffe Park, Booth complex, community gardens, new tower

Ed McKenna

Save The Date!

The Dalhousie Community Association will hold its 40th Annual General Meeting on Saturday, May 25 at 3 p.m. at the Plant Recreation Centre, 930 Somerset Street West.

The date was decided at the regular monthly meeting of the DCA Board, February 22. Some members were almost incredulous to learn that we've been around that long!

To celebrate the anniversary, we're inviting the eight persons who have served as president since 1984, and we'll hear from some of them about the achievements of the DCA over these many years.

In addition, we will again this year have a featured speaker for the AGM. Watch for an announcement closer to the meeting date.

Development Principles for Plouffe Park

These were outlined in a joint letter prepared by the Plant Pool Plouffe Park Expansion Coalition and parents of École élémentaire publique Louise-Arbour, which was tabled at the February DCA regular board meeting. The letter was delivered to the "1010 Somerset Team" at the city, and copied to the Somerset and Kitchissippi ward councillors, the mayor, and the Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario.

The principles provide guidance to the city about how the new school, expanded greenspace, and local recreational facilities can complement each other at the 1010 Somerset site adjacent Plouffe Park.

The meeting was told that the city has yet to respond to the letter, nor has a date been provided for a community review of the revised site plan.

Public Realm Priorities

The DCA's Public Realm committee reported that, during its February meeting, it agreed on five priority activities for 2024.

Top of the list are community gardens. And already there's been some good news! First, Can Le, owner of the property at Somerset and Preston, has agreed to the use of the site by the community garden for another year.

Then there's the plan to revive the Sweet Willow Community Garden on Rochester. The committee reported that Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation, who are responsible for the Rochester property, are willing to work with the DCA on the project. This will help ensure that Dalhousie will continue to have space for members of the community to produce some of their own food.

Canada Lands Company and the Booth Street Project

It's been four years since the city approved the plan to redevelop the "Booth Complex," a 6.5 acre site located in the heart of Dalhousie, which includes six heritage buildings and city-owned parkland. Expect at least two more years to pass before we'll see any activity on the site, the DCA was told during its February meeting. The recent plan to sell the property to a private sector developer was promising, but has fallen through.

Will this slowdown affect the city's plan to build a small but much-needed park at the northeast corner of Norman and Rochester? We hope not! However, Public Realm committee reported that the city remains silent about when the plan for the park will be finalized and then implemented.

Front-yard parking at 207, 209 and 211 Queen Street

After receiving letters from the DCA opposing an application for six parking spaces in the front yards of the historic properties at 207, 209 and 211 Queen, the city's Committee of Adjustment has reserved its decision.

The committee planned to consider the application in February, but with opposition from the DCA, and several concerns raised by the city's Planning, Real Estate, and Economic Development department, including the Heritage Conservation branch, the application was withdrawn.

A revised proposal was presented to the Committee of Adjustment March 6. In the amended application, front-yard parking is reduced to three spaces, and the landscaping improved. In response, city planning changed its position: They now have "no concerns."

The Public Realm committee attended the



Inter-city public transport returns to LeBreton Flats! Since January, FlixBus has been offering regular service to Kingston, Toronto, and Windsor from its new "terminus" at 200 Commissioner, across from the Adisoke construction site. Buses arrive at 5:15 a.m., with the last departure at 11:59 p.m. It's a busy spot!

Ed McKenna/THE BUZZ

meeting on behalf of the DCA, and provided the Committee of Adjustment with a second letter specifying the community's concerns, while pressing for the removal of parking and the re-greening of the front yards.

The committee will make its decision publicly available March 15.

989 Somerset – "Blindsided"

The DCA's planning and development committee was informed last month that the city has approved the proposal by Taggart Realty Management to build a 15-storey, 248-unit residential tower at 989 Somerset West (by the north side of the Somerset Bridge). There has been no community consultation.

Ah, but there will be a public meeting! Taggart will meet with interested community members, via Zoom, on March 20. But isn't consultation supposed to take place before a decision is made on a development application?

There was consultation, claim city staff, who approved the application themselves without input from City Council.

We looked it up. Nearly 10 years ago, on May 29, 2014, a different developer, with a much different application but for the same site, held a public meeting to consult with the community. In June 2014, the DCA followed

up with a written submission to the city.

The project languished for many years. When Taggart took over the development, it changed the plan for a mixed-use development to one that calls for a much larger residential tower, nearly twice the size. Nevertheless, the city appears to have granted the realty company a credit for the consultation undertaken in 2014.

Councillor Troster has stated that "it's frustrating to see that such a significant project to the community can be undertaken without significant consultation and notification." Measures need to be taken "to ensure that the community isn't blindsided."

We're told that city staff approved the application without consultation using authority they now possess under Ontario's "More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022." Should we be worried about the future of community consultation?

Become a DCA member!

Be prepared for the DCA AGM on May 25! Now's the time to become a member, or renew your current membership!

Join us at our next regular meeting, on Thursday, March 28, at 7:30 p.m.

Contact: president@ottawadalhousie.ca, and visit our website: ottawadalhousie.ca

Rideau River bridge also won't be year-round

Commanda bridge still closed for winter

Alayne McGregor

No official reopening date had been set for the Chief William Commanda Bridge as of March 8, even though it is seeing informal use.

The opening is "weather-dependent, and staff are closely monitoring forecasts to determine an approximate opening date," city Roads Services Director Quentin Levesque told *The BUZZ*.

With temperatures fluctuating around freezing, "frost and ice buildup on the wooden bridge deck, making it unsafe to traverse" and there may also be further snow accumulation. "The city will only open the bridge once it is determined to be safe," he said.

The BUZZ has seen city locks on the bridge fencing repeatedly broken and footsteps and bike tracks leading onto the bridge, indicating a demand for winter use of the bridge.

Levesque said the city will "continue to explore potential uses for the bridge during the winter months." Because of the atypical weather this winter, staff could not "accurately assess the feasibility of alternate winter maintenance activities" or how the bridge could be used as a snow-packed winter trail.

Further south, the long-delayed Rideau

River ped/cycling bridge between Carleton University and Vincent Massey Park will also be closed in the winter. At the city Light Rail Subcommittee on Feb. 29, Michael Morgan, the city's director of its Rail Construction Program, told Councillor Theresa Kavanagh that the bridge would not be open year-round because the multi-use pathway it connects to is not winter-maintained.

However, the bridge is being built so that it could be winter-maintained, he said, so that decision could be revisited as part of a review of pathway connections.

The Rideau River Bridge is almost completed but no specific date has been given for opening. Morgan reported that it is still waiting for electrical connections for lighting and a final surface treatment/waterproofing of the bridge deck. The deck work cannot be done until temperatures are above freezing.

The bridge opening was first promised in December 2022, and then August 2023, but neither date was met. Morgan told the subcommittee that the bridge opening date was tied to "substantial completion" of the entire LRT Line 2 south extension and "we've given the authority to the contractor to prioritize their works ... to other areas. ... We did not impose a specific timeline for them."

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CCA report: Earth Day festival, bike sharing, downtown library, ending homelessness



Jack Hanna

Earth Day Festival – bigger and better than ever

This year's Earth Day Festival is Saturday, April 20, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Dundonald Park, at Somerset and Lyon. There will be a feast of things to do and see.

For kids, there will be hands-on arts and crafts, for instance, making animal figurines from toilet paper rolls. Artist Velvet LeClair is bringing a two-metre "Earth" ball for games.

There will be live performances for children. Magician Mark Montreuil is back. Children's author Maria Habanikova will read aloud from her book *The Flying Whale!*

And, as ever at CCA festivals, there will be fresh, free popcorn.

For all ages, there will street theatre and musicians doing pop-up performances.

Of course there will be information booths aplenty, with displays and folks to answer questions. Find out about bird-friendly cities, the urban forest, safe cycling, plant-based eating, fighting for climate action, and much more.

Several booths will dispense gardening advice on everything from native species and bee-friendly gardens, to general advice from Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton.

The event is sponsored by the CCA and the Centretown Community Health Centre.

MPP report: Follow the evidence to prevent further overdose tragedies

Joel Harden

Last month, Neil Ellis, the mayor of Belleville, appealed for assistance from other levels of government. After 23 overdoses in less than three days, Belleville declared an addictions, mental health, and homelessness emergency.

On December 8, 2023, Chief Greg Sarazin from the Pikwakanigan First Nation – an Algonquin community about 140 kilometres from Ottawa – declared a state of emergency over opioids as well. Five community members had died within the last year. Chief Sarazin's own brother was among those who died.

In July 2023, Ottawa had the highest number of overdose-related emergency room department visits in three years. Experts note the supply of street drugs is now far more toxic.

"Right now," says Derrick St. John of the Sandy Hill Community Centre, "we are seeing tranquilizers that are used for elephants, called Xylazine, in the drugs and that is making the overdoses more dangerous."

Naloxone won't resuscitate someone deeply tranquilized by Xylazine, so it has left first responders and street health workers with limited options. There were 22 suspected overdose deaths in January 2024, and 258 suspected drug overdoses.

So what can be done? To begin, we must humanize this tragedy and see the people behind these staggering numbers.

People like Zachary Wickens, who told Arthur White Crummey from CBC Ottawa that "the whole opiate epidemic is out of control."

Zachary lost his partner Bella three years ago after she was using alone. He has overdosed several times, once to the extent that his heart stopped beating for 10 minutes.

Now Ottawa Inner City Health prescribes him 24 Dilaudid pills per day, but the potency is nowhere near fentanyl, so some users relapse. Zachary wants to live.

Sean Cox wants to live too. As Dan

Joining forces to end homelessness

The CCA and six other community associations have created the Inner City Working Group to be a voice for non-profit and supportive housing.

The group's next meeting is Monday, March 25 at 6:30 p.m. All are welcome. For the Zoom link, email: affordable-housing-champions@centretowncitizens.ca

The meeting will draft letters to Ottawa's mayor and council, and other levels of government. The time is right to push for the sorts of housing that truly alleviate homelessness. Governments are increasing funding. The federal government has the Housing Acceleration Fund. The City of Ottawa is doubling this year's affordable housing budget.

Keep library services in Centretown

Centretown is by far the most densely populated community in Ottawa, so shouldn't there be a library branch to serve all those people?

Once the new main library branch, Ādisōke, opens at LeBreton Flats, the Ottawa Public Library (OPL) plans to close the branch on Metcalfe. There will be no library services in Centretown.

"Ceasing to provide any library services in Centretown is nonsensical," the CCA states in a letter to OPL.

Centretown has twice the population density of any other Ottawa community, according to Statistics Canada. As well, it is the place where population is increasing most dramatically.

OPL expects Centretowners to travel the 1.5 km to the new main branch. "Unfortunately," says the CCA, "OPL's current plan will subvert the idea of a 15-minute commu-

Taekema notes in a remarkable story this week, Sean thinks he's been given a second chance after being misidentified as a patient who died at the Montfort Hospital.

Heather Insley, Sean's mom, had spent three days at the Montfort at the bedside of a young man she thought was her son. Hospital staff had called her from her home in Picton, Ontario.

But after the patient died, she received a text from Sean who was asking for money. She thought it was a "sick joke."

But it wasn't. For years, Heather worried about when she would be called to a scene like this. The patient had the same hair and eyelashes as Sean, even his feet and toes were similar.

"We stayed right with him," Heather said, "just as though he was our own son ... we cried so much. I never knew what it would feel like to lose a child, and it was awful."

There are moments when humanity shines through, and our politics must celebrate those moments. The support Heather gave a young man she didn't know is the same approach we should offer for all.

Some are calling for stronger criminal justice measures, notably in Somerset Ward and the ByWard Market where drug use is most conspicuous. But this, evidence suggests, won't work.

As Somerset Ward Councillor Ariel Troster explains, there is no criminal justice solution here. At issue is a tainted illicit drug supply, and a mental health and housing crisis. The evidence points to harm reduction strategies as the best way forward.

This summer, a non-police response unit will be available to help people in a mental health or substance abuse crisis. Harm reduction programs will continue in Ottawa's community health centres.

Let's use the resources we have to humanize our approach to the opioid crisis and follow the evidence to prevent future tragedies.

nity by forcing people into cars, or to forego library services altogether."

Retain the heritage streetscape

A developer has proposed demolishing a small heritage house at 145 Waverley, just east of Cartier, to make way for an eight-unit apartment building.

In a letter to the developer, the CCA applauds the creation of additional housing units. However, it urges the developer to keep the facade of the brick heritage house, likely built in the late 1800s. A modern structure could be constructed behind the facade. This would retain the heritage streetscape.

Could buses run on time, please?

The most densely populated community in all Ottawa – Centretown – has the most unreliable buses.

"Bank Street in Centretown is surrounded by high-density apartments, non-profit affordable housing, and small businesses. Yet the route 6 and 7 buses are two of the most unreliable routes in the city," the CCA's Transportation Committee states in a letter. "Downtown needs more reliable and frequent buses to move workers, shoppers and residents efficiently."

Let's share bikes

Ottawa needs bike-sharing.

Look at Montreal, the CCA's Transportation Committee says in a letter to Councillor Ariel Troster.

"Montreal has become a draw for tourists all across North America with its people-friendly streets, cycling lanes, and Bixi bike-share system featuring over 10,000 bikes."

Many downtown families are on limited incomes, so "Centretown's residents need affordable transportation options."

Vacant Unit Tax deadline is March 21

Still need to file the declaration that affirms your house is not vacant and thus avoid the tax penalty?

The Vacant Unit Tax form can be filled in online at: ottawa.ca/vut. Or you can call 613-580-2444 to have a city staffer help.

Free dental screening

There are free dental screenings at the Hub, 370 Catherine Street, on two Wednesdays, March 13 and 27, from 1 to 4 p.m.

No actual dental work is performed, but an assessment is made and folks can get advice on accessing free dental services.

The screenings are performed by a registered dental hygienist provided by Ottawa Public Health.

News shorts

Explore the capital with Jane's Walk

On May 4 to 5, you can join the 2024 Jane's Walk Ottawa-Gatineau to stroll and learn about history, celebrate culture, and connect with community.

Jane's Walk is an annual festival of free, community-led walking conversations inspired by the late urbanist Jane Jacobs. The tours encourage people to share stories about their communities, discover unseen aspects of their city, and connect with neighbours.

To express interest in leading a walk, volunteer at the festival, or sign up for the newsletter: www.janeswalkottawa.ca

Snow Plow Licensing Review

Have you seen a snow plow operator illegally dumping snow on the road or sidewalk or your property? Or have you been woken up by the backup beeps of a noisy plow?

The city is looking for your input at engage.ottawa.ca/snow-plow-contractor-licensing-review. Deadline: March 31.

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SPRING BLOOMS IN BYWARD MARKET!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Join us for the grand opening of our 2024 outdoor market in May, coinciding with a special Mother's Day celebration featuring handcrafted gifts and delightful treats!

Savour the flavors of Mexico on Cinco de Mayo (May 5) and dive into a burst of colours during the Canadian Tulip Festival partnership, which runs from May 10th to 20th. Don't forget to save the date for the Neon Night Market on May 18th. It promises a vibrant evening of electrifying energy and unique vendors.

BECOME A VENDOR

As Ottawa's oldest public market and a recognized heritage conservation district, the ByWard Public Market offers a mix of the best local, provincial, and national products.

Join as a vendor and connect with a diverse community of small businesses, including farmers, artisans, and retailers. Vend alongside our fan-favorite events, including ByWard Barket, a pet-friendly extravaganza, and the captivating Day of the Dead Festival.

There is a space for everyone at the ByWard Public Market!

HOW TO APPLY

Go to byward-market.com and select the "APPLY" tab. License fees are waived for all farmers. Sign-up today and be part of tradition!

OPEN YEAR-ROUND

The ByWard Market historic's neighbourhood is home to over 350 culinary, retail, and service businesses and over 300 seasonal small businesses. The area is a unique pedestrian community that attracts over 18 million visitors annually!

COME AND ENJOY OTTAWA'S HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT



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