



2021 Ottawa Women's March is distanced, 8



Downtown mural will return, 10

THE CENTRETOWN BUZZ



Chef Tim Stock and assistant Thaden Coltes preparing meals in the FoodWorks kitchen.

PHOTO COURTESY FOODWORKS

FoodWorks gives chef new direction

Jack Hanna

You would expect FoodWorks, a non-profit business teaching job skills to youth, to change the lives of street kids. After all, that's the whole point.

But the Centretown social enterprise has also given a senior Ottawa chef a new direction in life.

Before COVID-19, Tim Stock had a good – and conventional – career as executive chef at Thyme and Again, a top-flight takeout and catering service in Ottawa. Then the pandemic hit and he was laid off.

Within months, he landed at Operation Come Home, which provides a variety of services in Centretown for at-risk youth. Initially, Stock prepared breakfasts at the youth drop-in centre on Gloucester Street between Bank and O'Connor. However, last month his role expanded and he relaunched FoodWorks, a takeout and catering service providing

training for youth.

And now, Stock says he won't be looking back. "I absolutely love it. I don't think I will ever go back to restaurants."

FoodWorks, an offshoot of Operation Come Home, has been imparting job skills to at-risk teenagers for half a decade, operating as a catering service for corporate lunches and conferences. A year ago, FoodWorks shut down because of COVID-19.

When it reopened last month, there was no demand for catering, so FoodWorks pivoted to providing frozen takeout meals.

Customers order online at the FoodWorks website and pick up frozen meals at the takeout window of the FoodWorks kitchen at 571 Gladstone Avenue, just east of the McNabb Arena. The most popular items are lasagna, turkey and vegetarian pot pies and biryana, a chicken curry.

cont on p 7 "FoodWorks"

Centretowner on the wrong side of the Ottawa Public Library's digital divide

Alayne McGregor

The pandemic has exposed a "digital divide" among Ottawa Public Library (OPL) patrons. Those who regularly use library computers have been locked out, making it difficult for them to do many everyday tasks including making appointments or learning about government programs.

As of April 8, library patrons are again no longer allowed in branches, with only curbside returns and hold pickups available. The OPL said this decision was to keep customers and staff safe, and was in response to the recent provincial emergency and stay-at-home order.

However, [that order](#) does not require libraries to keep patrons out of branches. Although the province forbids browsing the shelves, it does allow entering branches to "facilitate the contactless drop-off and pick-up or access computers, photocopiers or similar services."

The OPL decision has left Centretown resident and passionate library user Diane Bassett furious and frustrated at "yet another demoralizing lockdown." Access to library computers, printers, scanners, and photocopiers is, to her, "essential."

In her high-rise build-

ing, Bassett has limited WiFi access, she said, but it's unstable and insecure. Library computers also have more diverse software available than she has on her 12-year-old refurbished laptop, which is on its last legs. And most of all, she needs to use the library printers, scanners, and photocopiers – services she doesn't have at home. Commercial services are simply outside her budget: she estimated that it would cost her \$18/hour to use a computer at Staples, for example.

The 61-year-old consultant researcher primarily uses the Main branch in Centretown and occasionally the Rideau and Sunnyside branches. She does research for seniors without Internet access. "The library is my lifeline."

Especially in the last year, she said, she has met many other people who also depend on library computer services, who either have no computer or no printer. "It's not just older people. It's a wide range."

When *The BUZZ* asked the OPL about this policy, staff responded that they are "aware that many people in our community depend on the public library for access to computers and WiFi for very important needs, and that not being able to

enter branches to use public computers is a hardship for them."

cont on p 11 "Library"

Cambridge Street Public School needs to find more students



The Centretown school only has 55 in-person students, and 18 online.

BRETT DELMAGE/THE BUZZ

Alayne McGregor

With the increased preference of parents for French immersion, a Centretown elementary school is losing students and could be in danger of closing – despite the fact more students are likely to move nearby in the next few years.

Cambridge Street Public School currently only has 55 students studying in-person and another 18 online, out of a capacity of 323. It has several split grade classes, including one with three

grades. In its catchment area, 166 students are going to other schools.

Two other public elementary schools serving Centretown – Elgin Street and Devonshire – are at or over capacity. Centennial is at 75 percent capacity, and is a hub for special education. All three offer French immersion.

The difference: Cambridge only provides a single track English (with core French) program for Grades JK-6. In the Ottawa public school board (OCDSB), 72 percent of students are in French immersion,

up from 40 percent in 1998.

The solution, says local OCDSB school trustee Justine Bell, is a dual track school, with both an English and a French immersion program. She points out that other Ottawa public schools offer both programs. Either early or middle French immersion are possibilities, she said, depending on what's best for the community.

On March 22, Bell held an online community meeting about the future of the school, which attracted 51 participants.

cont on p 5 "Cambridge"

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THE CENTRETOWN BUZZ

AT THE HEART OF OTTAWA SINCE 1995.

101-210 Gloucester St.
Ottawa, ON
K2P 2K4
Phone: 613-565-6012

centretownbuzz.com
twitter.com/centretownbuzz
facebook.com/centretownbuzz

BUZZ Staff

Managing editor: Alayne McGregor
editor@centretownbuzz.com

Associate editor: Eleanor Sawyer

City Editor: Robert Smythe
cityskyline@centretownbuzz.com

Distribution manager: Archie Campbell
circulation@centretownbuzz.com

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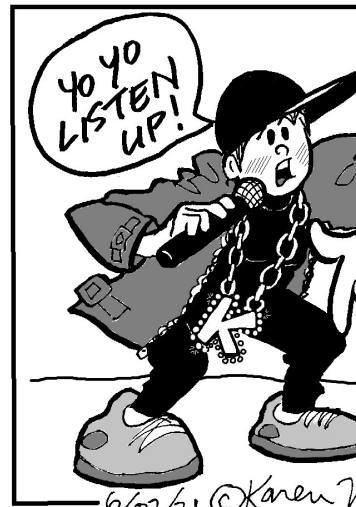
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The Lighter Side of the Pandemic, by Karen Munro-Caple



COVID SYMPTOMS MADE EASY

DO YOU HAVE A FEVER?
DO YOU HAVE THE CHILLS?
ARE YOU BURNING UP INSIDE?
ARE YOU POPPING ALL THOSE PILLS?
ARE YOU COUGHING WITH A WHEEZE?
ARE YOU ROCKING WITH A SNEEZE?
IS YOUR BREATHING KINDA SHALLOW?
IS THAT PINK EYE JUST A TEASE?
IS YOUR SWALLOWING A PAIN?
IS YOUR RUNNY NOSE A SHAME?
ARE YOU STUFFY & CONGESTED,
OR ARE YOUR ALLERGIES TO BLAME?
YOUR TASTE & SMELL ALL GONE?
YOUR DIGESTIVE TRACT A MESS?
ARE ALL YOUR MUSCLES ACHING?
IS FATIGUE ANOTHER TEST?
IF ALL SYMPTOMS ARE NEGATIVE,
WITH ALL QUESTIONS ASKED,
CLIMB ABOARD THE TABLE,
BUT KEEP ON YOUR COVID MASK!
YO!

6/02/21 ©Karen Munro-Caple

The Good, the Bad, and the Bumpy: shouldn't disabled people get priority?

Ryan Lythall

By now, most of us have heard about the ongoing issues in trying to book an appointment to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Although I've tried, I haven't yet been able to book an appointment.

As a person who uses a ventilator and has round-the-clock care, I often worry about getting COVID-19. I take every precaution that I can, including wearing a mask and limiting my physical and social interactions.

I understand about the priority to vaccinate the elderly no matter where they live and their caregivers, as well as front-line health care staff. But what about people with disabilities? Where are we on the list, if not even as a prioritized group?

Fortunately, for those living in Centretown, we have at least one person on our side. Recently, our MPP, Joel Harden, raised concerns about people with disabilities being left off the list of priority groups. His request to the premier is to include persons with disabilities during phase two of the vaccine rollout.

Harden said that "The government should have placed people with disabilities on their priority list for vacci-

nations from the start. Their failure to do so is putting lives at risk, and their lack of investment in a plan to remove any and all obstacles for people with disabilities trying to access their vaccination is a serious problem."

This statement has also been supported by Ottawa Dr. Melanie Bechard. Dr Bechard produced a new research report on behalf of Harden's office titled, "Prioritizing People with Disabilities for COVID-19 Vaccination in Ontario."

In it, she notes the following:

1. Disability must be recognized as a factor that significantly increases a person's risk of COVID-19 infection, complications, and death. Disability should be taken into account when decisions about COVID-19 vaccine prioritization are being made.

2. People with disabilities should be explicitly mentioned within Phase 2 of the vaccination rollout to ensure consistent practices across the province.

3. COVID-19 vaccination must be accessible to people of all abilities. People with disabilities should not face barriers in scheduling or receiving vaccination.

4. The Ontario Ministry of Health should collect data on the number of COVID-19 infections, complications,

and deaths among people with disabilities in the province. (See joelharden.ca)

While phase two doesn't specifically state that people with disabilities are eligible for the vaccine, the list does include those with specific health conditions. Personally, the following stands out for me: "People with neurological diseases in which respiratory function may be compromised (e.g., motor neuron disease, myasthenia gravis, multiple sclerosis)."

Based on this description, it appears that I do qualify. I tried to book an appointment last week, but I was told by Ottawa Public Health that even though I qualify, they're not taking bookings for those groups yet. I hope to provide an update in the next edition of *The BUZZ*.

I agree that 100 percent of people with disabilities should be a priority when it comes to the vaccine. For many persons, their disabilities affect their health or cause them to be susceptible to various illnesses.

As with everyone, getting vaccinated would put my mind at ease and I will have less anxiety.

Follow Ryan on Twitter:
[@rolling_enigma](https://twitter.com/rolling_enigma)

Editorial: Remembering that there's a world out there

Alayne McGregor

This is my 12th edition of *The BUZZ* as managing editor. The day after my first issue was dropped off across Centretown last March, everything shut down because of the pandemic.

It's been a strange ride ever since.

Last spring and again in January, we pivoted to an online-only edition. *The BUZZ* had never done that before, but I had experience publishing online - and it worked. Our longtime advertisers stayed with us, as did loyal readers, and we covered a lot of important news and issues.

We adapted. And adapted again. The *BUZZ* board switched to phone conferences instead of discussing the paper in person. I watched City Council on YouTube, attended way too many meetings on Zoom, and mostly talked to writers and interview subjects over the phone.

It was challenging and sometimes frustrating, but I still figured I had it easy compared to my neighbour working at the Ottawa Hospital, the clerks at grocery stores, and other front-line workers.

I've also had the pleasure of interviewing and profiling many people who have kept our community together in these horrendously difficult times, and stepped up to help those in need.

It's been a hard slog for many of our neighbours: those without reliable Internet to access all the services and interaction that's moved online, those who were laid off from their service jobs, those who have to bear the brunt of frustrated customers as front-line workers, those who find the bureaucratic maze twice as difficult to negotiate when they can't meet face to face.

Too many (including me) have lost beloved friends and relatives, if not

to COVID-19 to other health conditions that were let to sit untreated too long because of diversion of medical and hospital resources. And knocking on our shoulders every day is a feeling of doom from the statistics, only made worse by the inefficient vaccine rollout.

So not everything in this issue is about COVID-19. We figured you might want to read about everything else going on. We were able to publish 12 pages this month and we still couldn't print everything that had been submitted or planned.

Most importantly, we'd like the experience of reading *The BUZZ* to be interesting and even a bit upbeat. We would prefer to tell you about issues you can actually do something about, and the hyperlocal that doesn't generally get covered by larger media outlets. Enjoy!

Heritage Skyline: What's behind St-Marc's teetering tower?



The Unitarian Church in the 1940s. (City of Ottawa Archives)

Robert Smythe

A catastrophic structural failure is threatening the Eglise Unie St-Marc's stone tower. After cracks began to appear last year, an investigation revealed that it was in imminent danger of collapse.

Heritage work orders were issued by the city and a building permit to carry out the work was recently granted. Meanwhile, this modest landmark at the corner of Elgin and Lewis Streets has been shored up with heavy timber bracing.

This calls for another investigation into the church's spiritual foundations. Today, it anchors the southwest corner of the Minto Park Heritage Conservation District. But when it was constructed in 1900, the church was just part of the building fabric of Centretown's emerging residential community on lower Elgin Street.

First, the Unitarians

The building, first known as the Church of our Father, was erected by the American Unitarian Association. The Unitarians had established

an Ottawa outpost operating out of rented halls during the late 1890s. As their membership grew, the search was on for a permanent home and this lot was purchased in 1899. The total cost of the property and the new church building was \$8,000, with the funds loaned by American supporters.

It was described as being cozy and constructed in the cottage style similar to other Unitarian churches in New England. The sanctuary's vaulted interior was deliberately kept free of ornament save for two memorial stained glass windows dedicated to the pastor's father and a Mr. Holland who had drowned in Britannia Bay.

At the rear, with a separate entrance on Lewis Street, was de Normandie Hall, named for a Unitarian church leader from Boston and used for Sunday school and prayer meetings. As the Ottawa Citizen put it: "This bright and airy room will be rendered doubly cheerful in winter time by a large grate fire that will be kept burning during services." For a time, the congregation met here while the church proper, which seated some 250-

300 worshippers, was being completed. The high well-lit basement contained a public reading room, a dining room, the kitchen and several lavatories.

The Church of our Father was dedicated during a special service on October 28, 1900, with the assistance of "eminent divines" from the American Unitarian Association.

ciation.

The church flourished in the following decades and, by 1965, the local Unitarians were prepared to make the move into their architecturally stunning new building on Cleary Avenue by the Ottawa River Parkway

Eglise Unie St-Marc pushed out of LeBreton Flats

Luckily, this coincided with the Eglise Unie St-Marc's need for new quarters once their 656 Wellington Street building had been expropriated for the redevelopment of LeBreton Flats.

This French-speaking institution, descended from the Huguenot sect, bought the property for \$147,500 with the settlement they received from the NCC. They planned to spend a further \$15,000 on renovations after taking possession on July 1, 1965.

Thereafter, the Unitarian congregation held its services in the Elgin Street Public School gym until their new west end church was finished.

In the early 1970s, St-Marc's Church hall was leased to Counterpoint, an alternative school run by parents dissatisfied with public education. The lower level was used by a variety of coffee houses, musical performance and gathering venues favoured by the counterculture generation. St-Marc's is now home to a diverse congregation from many parts of the world.

Tower repairs typical

The church's current structural problems are typical for historic churches. Towers are the heaviest part of the building, and construction material flaws or sinking foundations frequently call for their repairs or removal. Many of Ottawa's old churches have been shorn of their towers and belfries.

Thankfully, St-Marc's is being spared from that amputation and, with some new underpinning, its small but mighty square tower will continue to be a monument to our neighbourhood history.



The tower of Eglise Unie St-Marc is now shored up pending repairs.

ROBERT SMYTHE/THE BUZZ

New ideas for Rideau Canal?

Alayne McGregor

How can the Rideau Canal reach its full potential as an "outdoor paradise"? That's the question Parks Canada is asking Canadians.

It's released a draft management plan for the UNESCO World Heritage Site, including the section in Centretown, outlining how it will protect and present the canal as a recreational and cultural destination.

It envisions paddlers going through the canal locks, and offering trip planning tools and facilities such as docks, showers, and camping sites. It also proposes improving five lock stations and commemorating their history.

Until April 30, you can read the plan and submit comments at www.rideauplan.ca/home.

In its comments, Heritage Ottawa said it is concerned that this plan does not reach beyond a 30m buffer zone along the canal, resulting in "development that has had a negative impact on the Canal's Outstanding Universal Values."



The church after cracks were discovered in the tower.

ROBERT SMYTHE/THE BUZZ

HighJinx helps their neighbours practically and directly, skipping the bureaucracy



Karen Nielsen (l) and Leigh Reid (r) in front of HighJinx, their Centretown social enterprise which celebrated its 10th birthday on March 15.
BRETT DELMAGE/THE BUZZ

Alayne McGregor

HighJinx celebrated its 10th anniversary this March, providing non-bureaucratic, practical help to people in need, supported in part by selling vintage collectibles to those who can afford them.

The [Centretown social enterprise](#) is located at 290 Kent Street, just north of Somerset Street West. HighJinx gives out free food, clothing, and furniture, with no questions asked. Two former social workers, Karen Nielsen and Leigh Reid, founded the store after deciding they wanted to take a different approach to social services.

“We were just tired of the traditional system, working in that field and trying to help people with our hands tied, basically. So we found an easier way to do it, and that was HighJinx, with no government involvement. Just simply neighbours helping neighbours.”

Nielsen told *The BUZZ* they never expected to still be running HighJinx 10 years later. “Honestly, no. We didn’t know when we started where this would go. It’s gone to the greatest place. But 10 years – that’s quite something.”

Donations fuel the store

They accept donated items and either sell them or give them away, she said. “We use that money – the profits from the sales – to pay our bills. We don’t take any government funding and the help that we give comes from those sales and the generosity of the community providing food and goods that we can give to neighbours.”

She emphasized that

HighJinx’s work is heavily supported by volunteers, including those who bake muffins, make home-cooked meals, or provide fruits, vegetables, and canned goods. It regularly receives food from restaurants and farms, she said, but not from the Ottawa Food Bank because it doesn’t meet the Food Bank’s criteria.

“People can ask for whatever they need”

In order to keep social distancing, food and other necessities are currently handed out without people entering the store. The store is open four days a week – Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday – from 1 to 4 p.m. Unlike the Food Bank, there’s no limit on how often people can request food, she said. “It’s not just once a month. They can come every day.”

“We just have a sharing model. We share what we have everyday. Some days it’s plentiful and other days it’s not. That’s how we get through.”

“People can ask for whatever they need – diapers, socks, a kettle. If we have it, we give it.”

Nielsen said she and Reid also separately help people who need assistance with government agencies. The pandemic has allowed more time for those one-on-one meetings.

The need for HighJinx’s services has increased over the last decade, she said. “Especially in this last year, but we’ve only seen the need increasing. We see new faces every day. Things are just more expensive, housing stability is difficult to maintain, and the dollar doesn’t

stretch further. There’s a lot of families that just don’t get enough.”

In their previous jobs with the city, Nielsen and Reid had proposed it create a furniture bank, so they knew that was a need. When they started HighJinx, it was to provide furniture and food.

In order to fund this, they “begged and borrowed from our friends and family for all their unused things, and started the store. People thought we were crazy, but it seems to be working.”

The store’s eclectic stock was inspired and informed by Nielsen and Reid’s personal “real joy for garage-saling.” The store’s twitter feed (@HighJinxOttawa) regularly features interesting pieces for sale. Recent items have included Denby pottery, a blanket box, Easter Bunny figurines, an antique pine pedestal table, dimmable grow lights, plastic accessories for Potato Head toys, and a barrister’s bookcase.

“Right now I’m sitting in front of a Tiffany lamp that was brought in today. It’s huge and gorgeous! We’ve had dishes that are really worth something. But, if someone drops something off and we find it’s quite valuable, we contact that person just to make sure they know what they were gifting. Most times they know and that’s their generosity.”

Some items stick around while other things quickly go out the door, Nielsen said. “I don’t know how to explain that. We never know.” If an item hasn’t sold after a while it will be given away in the store’s furniture bank or on the free shelf outside the front door. “We clean out the store a lot by just giving



BRETT DELMAGE/THE BUZZ

[things] away. We can only keep so much.”

Sometimes clothing, such as winter outerwear, will also be left hanging alongside the free shelf to be picked up. “We put coats up there, clothes, food – and little surprises in the pockets.”

The pandemic “changed everything” for HighJinx. “We had to make room in the store, and we haven’t had the store open very much because of the lockdown. We

try to keep space for the vulnerable because that is our priority – that we can help people and feed them and do our outreach work.

“We’ve had to do some online sales and be more creative selling things out of the store window. We do more work in the community: visiting, dropping things off, checking on people. We spend a lot of time on the phone with people who are isolated or can’t get out to make sure they have what they need.”

They’ve also spent time referring people to city services and educating people about COVID-19.

“There’s been a lot of learning this year. We’ve had to learn new safety protocols to do home visits, for example. We try to conduct most things outside if we can.”

During the lockdown, Nielsen and Reid completely renovated HighJinx’s kitchen “to keep ourselves busy” and to get more room. They use the kitchen for making some meals, as well as distributing premade food, she said.

The store relies heavily on volunteers. Pre-pandemic they had a roster of 25 people who would rotate through, doing different tasks, but since the pandemic they can only have one volunteer to help in the store. Right now, people are volunteering to help with outreach or donating groceries.

The people HighJinx serves come from across the Ottawa, especially if they need housewares or furniture to set up a new home, Nielsen said. “We don’t have any boundaries. Anyone can come here.”

But HighJinx does serve many street-involved people from Centretown, and the people in the general area of the store are the biggest percentage of their clients.

What’s next for HighJinx? “We don’t really plan that. We’ve been winging it for 10 years. When we opened we didn’t know it would evolve into this. We had no idea.”

Their latest experiment, which they will unveil in late spring or summer, is a podcast series telling behind-the-scenes stories, and including interviews with neighbours and community members.

“We find that Centretown is a very generous and compassionate community. What we hear from people is that they’re learning that there’s vulnerability in this community that they weren’t aware of, that they are more inspired to get involved and help their neighbours directly, one on one,” Nielsen said.

Somerset Ward: Vaccines, town hall on long-term care & more space to walk

Catherine McKenney

It has now been just over one year since we have been apart from our loved ones and from each other. We need to keep this up a while longer until we are vaccinated.

But the warm weather has given us a wonderful opportunity to enjoy fresh air and sunshine, some hope for an end to this pandemic and the isolation it has brought to so many.

On the subject of fresh air and sunshine, I am working with city staff, local businesses and the National Capital Commission to open up space on our streets to pedestrians and other active transportation users this summer.

This will give us more room to walk, shop, and exercise, while physically distancing. I look forward to seeing you out and about!

Province-wide lockdown

Ontario is under another lockdown order for four weeks in an effort to reduce COVID-19 infections, in particular, those caused by the more harmful strains. This will continue to be a necessary hardship for many people, including those who are already isolated and those businesses that depend on in-person customers.

I am working with businesses and community members toward our post-pandemic city and how we can help small businesses rebuild.

Vaccination updates

Vaccinations continue to increase across the city with anyone age 60 and over now eligible.

As the federal and provincial governments provide more and more vaccines to Ottawa, we hope to see these numbers go up quickly. We are aware that provincial booking has reached capacity but have been told that bookings will reopen to new registrations in the near future.

The province has chosen certain pharmacies to administer the AstraZeneca vaccine to persons 55 plus. I’m disappointed that there are no Centretown/West Centretown pharmacies chosen, with the closest one on Rideau Street at King Edward.

I will continue to push the province for more equitable distribution of pharmacies and vaccines.

In Somerset Ward, there is a permanent vaccination clinic at Ottawa City Hall and pop-up clinics at Plant Community Centre.

Please remember: you must find out if you’re eligible for the vaccine before making an appointment by visiting: secureforms.ottawa-publichealth.ca/vaccines/COVID-19-Vaccine-Screening-Tool

To make your appointment through the province of Ontario booking system, call 1-833-943-3900 or visit <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine/>

You can keep up to date on the vaccination program with the Ottawa Public Health vaccine newsletter. Register for it at: <https://app06.ottawa.ca/esubscriptions/signup-form-en.html>

Or keep up to date by visiting: www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/public-health-topics/covid-19-vaccine.aspx

Town hall on long-term care

I will be holding a virtual Town Hall on long-term care on May 6, 2021, at 6 p.m. in coordination with Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP) Ottawa.

Our keynote speaker is André Picard, the health columnist at *The Globe and Mail* and the author of six books, including the current bestseller *Neglected No More: The Urgent Need to Improve the Lives of Canada’s Elders*.

The event will also feature a panel discussion focused on transformative culture change in long-term care homes and increasing awareness about the existing innovative models. ([I wrote about in this in the March BUZZ.](#))

I will share further details soon on my website at catherinemckenney.ca, through my newsletter, in *The BUZZ*, and on social media channels.

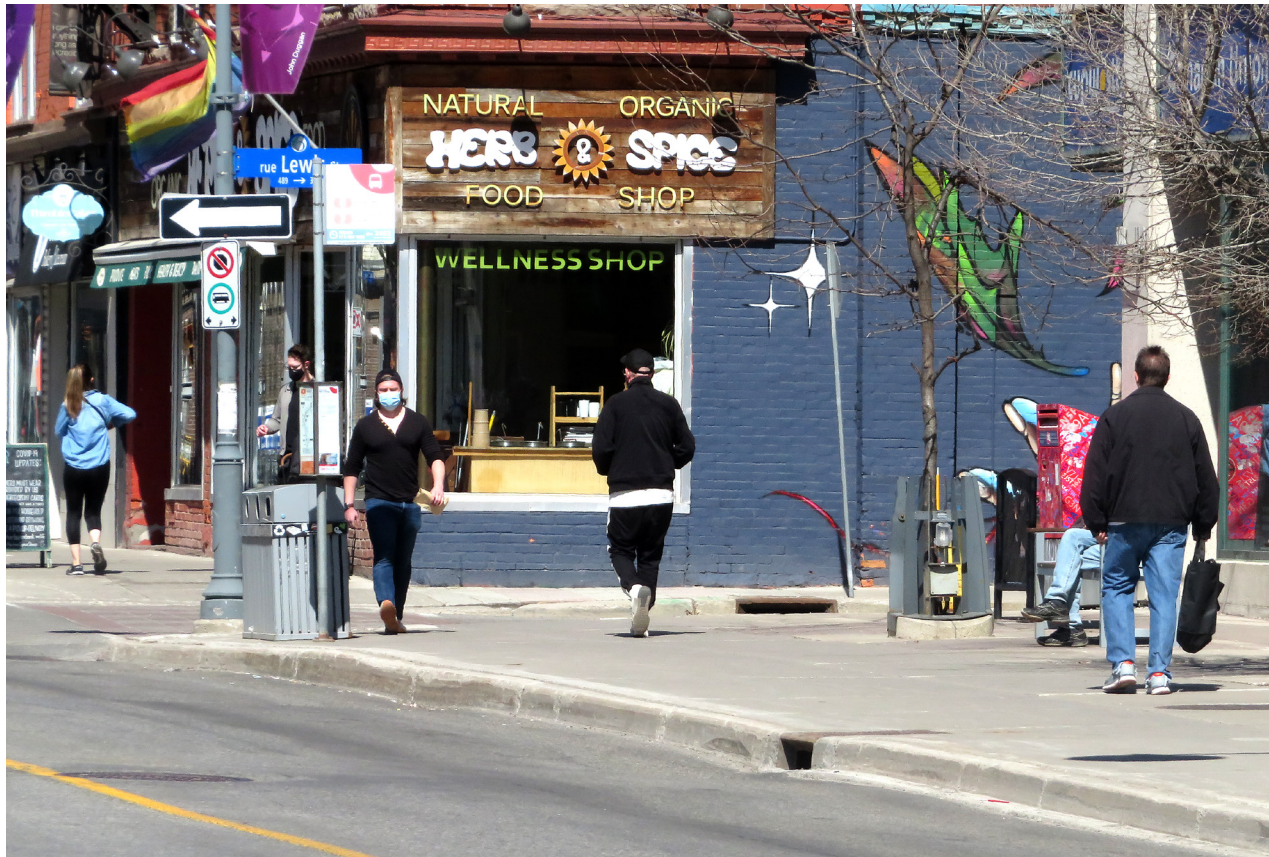
406-408 Bank Street

The City of Ottawa has received Zoning Bylaw Amendment and Site Plan Control applications for 406-408 Bank Street, a vacant property at the corner of Bank and Florence Streets.

The applicant proposes a six-storey mixed-use building with commercial units on the ground floor and 30 residential units above. The development will feature 15 underground bicycle parking spaces and one vehicle parking space at-grade.

Questions or comments? Visit the Planning Applications and Studies page on my website at catherinemckenney.ca.

Living within your 15-minute neighbourhood



Being able to shop for food and other necessities close to your home saves time and energy.

STEPHEN THIRLWALL/THE BUZZ

Stephen Thirlwall

Making a conscious effort to get to know your community better is always good. In the future, it may become a necessity. The current pandemic has shown us that sometimes we may have to rely heavily on nearby services.

To understand your immediate community, the best way is to walk through it, participate in it, and experience what it has to offer.

Take a walk southward from your home walking at a moderate pace. How far can you go in just 15 minutes? That marks the southern extent of your 15-minute community. Do the same walking north, east and west. You might also go southeast, southwest, northeast and northwest in zigzags along the blocks. These trips map out the full circle of your readily accessible neighbourhood. Each individual or family circle will be some-

what different from others but many will overlap to a high degree.

The concept of a 15-minute neighbourhood is an interesting and appealing proposition. We will be hearing a lot about it during the next year as the city determines its long-term direction for its Official Plan.

The concept suggests that almost everything you need could be available to you within a 15-minute walk, and that you know many of your neighbours well enough that you can rely on them for some assistance and they can rely on you. Your neighbourhood would function like a small village. You would save a great amount of time and energy, and decrease pollution by avoiding lots of daily driving. Everyone would also get regular exercise walking to all their important destinations.

What to look for on a walk

To truly understand how well this concept applies to

you, you have to get out and do the walk and your own survey of the environment. What do you see within this circle? How much of the area is residential? What are the different types of homes: single family houses, multi-unit houses, older apartments, and newer mid-rises and high rises? How are they distributed? How much of the area contains businesses, organizations, and government offices?

Are all these types of buildings in separate districts or more mixed together? What groceries, pharmacies, banks, hardware stores, clothing and other shops are present? Can you see doctor and dentist offices, health clinics, community and cultural centres, hairdressers, restaurants and pubs, cafés, bakeries, gyms, post offices, libraries, museums, cinemas? How many parks serve the area and are they large or small? Do street festivals, parades, or other events ever happen here?

Most importantly, how many of these services do you currently use and how many people do you know close to where you live? Are they friends or just acquaintances? Can this area and these people be your social and safety network?

If you are not a walker, you will have difficulty knowing your neighbourhood or making others living there aware of you. Assistance must be provided for those unable to walk even moderate distances so that they can keep in touch.

My own neighbourhood crosses boundaries

As a specific example, my 15-minute neighbourhood extends from Queen Street in the north, the Queensway in the south, O'Connor Street to the east, and the intersection of Chinatown and Little Italy at Preston Street to the west. This neighbourhood includes much of western Centretown, a long stretch of Bank Street and the heart of Chinatown. So you see, one's personal neighbourhood does not strictly reflect the named and defined districts throughout the city.

How does the 15-minute idea match with the current form of Ottawa—an increasingly complex metropolitan city—and with our current lifestyles and patterns of daily activity? Is it practical?

Everywhere in Ottawa?

Different parts of the city support this concept to varying extents. There are many fairly distinct community areas in Ottawa. However, in both the inner city and the suburbs, amenities such as grocery stores and shops are in shopping plazas or small malls that are well outside the 15-minute circle for the majority of residents. In the

inner city, there are strips of stores, restaurants and some clusters of amenities (doctors' offices, pharmacies, etc.) along a few main streets. These may or may not be inside one's circle.

Downtown, if you live in a high rise where people are warm and friendly, you are lucky. If you are in a high rise where people stay private, you can be very cut off from community.

Older parts of Ottawa were designed to be walkable. As you go outward in the city, residences become further separated from amenities, with driving to work and shopping the expected mode of transportation. In the last 40 to 45 years, the urban metropolitan area has exploded in size as it rapidly expanded into huge suburban areas. These areas are highly focused around cars, trucks and buses, and the movement of large numbers of people across long distances.

For me, a 30 to 45-minute walking circle works best. This allows me to travel to all parts of Centretown, the ByWard Market area, part way down Rideau Street, to the University of Ottawa, Ottawa East along Main Street, the Glebe, Chinatown, Little Italy, Dow's Lake, and Hin-

personal examples. When I was working, I was always a half hour to one hour travel distance from home to the office. The work location changed a few times from one side of the city to the other, while home has always been near the centre. My doctor is a half hour drive to the southeast and my dentist a 20-minute drive southwest. Most of my grocery shopping is a 20 to 30-minute drive south, as are the shops where I buy hardware, household items and clothing. To get to the library and several festivals that I regularly attend, I have to walk five to 15 minutes further than the 15-minute limit.

For me, a 30 to 45-minute walking circle works best. This allows me to travel to all parts of Centretown, the ByWard Market area, part way down Rideau Street, to the University of Ottawa, Ottawa East along Main Street, the Glebe, Chinatown, Little Italy, Dow's Lake, and Hin-



How far would you need to walk to get to the stores where you regularly shop? The library? The pharmacy? Your local pub? Your doctor? Your hairdresser? *STEPHEN THIRLWALL/THE BUZZ*

Older shopping centres along Carling Avenue are disappearing as more residential high-rise developments are rolled out there. Does this make sense? Or do we need to start redeveloping other areas to provide amenities to those new high-rise dwellers?

Restructuring and lives

There are many barriers to us adopting a 15-minute neighbourhood. We would have to restructure many things in our lives, especially our daily habits and our patterns of thinking. And society would have to restructure itself as well, for example, with more people working regularly from home and/or with more offices closer to our residences.

Again, I will give some

tonburg. Add another 10-20 minutes and I can also reach Old Ottawa South and Billings Bridge Plaza. For individuals who prefer cycling, their circle is automatically doubled for short and moderate trips.

Take a walk through the 15- (or 30-)minute neighbourhood around your home. Does what's there meet most of your needs? Are there gaps? Could they be filled?

Then think about other parts of Ottawa where you work or where your friends or family live. Do people living there have to travel long distances for their basics?

And let your city councillor and community associations know about your conclusions, and your suggestions for remaking Ottawa on a more intimate scale.

New vision for Cambridge Street Public School

cont from p 1

Those 51 participants included local politicians, the school principal, and school board representatives. At the meeting, many parents said they lived close to the school and would move their children back there if it offered French immersion. They also asked for more opportunities at the school, including music, sports, and clubs.

Bell said she thought the voices of the community were heard at the meeting and noted that one parent, a new immigrant, wanted French immersion for his son: "I want the best for my child and I know here he must have French in order to have the best."

More students are expected to move into the Cambridge PS area in the next seven years, with two major Ottawa Community Housing developments – Mosaïq and Gladstone Village – creating more than 1000 new homes, many specifically for families.

Currently, she said, Cambridge PS has primarily lower-income students because

better-off families – including her own – are sending their children to other schools for French immersion. This means there's no parent fundraising for school extras and less opportunities for clubs and sports. "In so many different ways we are further disadvantaging a disadvantaged population."

Bell said board staff have told her that, because of other pressures, it would be nearly impossible to start French immersion at Cambridge next fall.

Normally a change like this requires a Pupil Accommodation Review examining multiple schools which might take years, she said. As well, the province has imposed a moratorium on these reviews. A review could be done on a one-off basis, she said, but that's not as effective.

Bell said she was currently leaning towards requesting the public board conduct an emergency review of elementary schools serving Centretown, with any new programs to come into effect in September 2022.

Planet of the Scapes: Almost instant

Pearl Pirie

Every cookbook and cook has pet flavours: favourite spices that give a uniformity to what is cooked. My weak spot is cumin, but now I'm on a tarragon kick. It shakes up the normal in a manageable way. (Who wants too much shake-up during COVID-19?)

Prepared frozen meals are like paying extra for old leftovers. I can make my own leftovers. Meals don't have to take three hours; they can be not so intensive and yet have new flavours.

Main Dish: Venezuelan Arepas (no gluten)

These South American patties came about by accident when I bought PAN precooked white cornmeal figuring it was the same as regular cornmeal. (Not exactly, folks.)

It did, however, have a recipe on the package, which wasn't very good. Online I found better procedures.

- 2 cups precooked white cornmeal (Harina P.A.N.)
- 2 1/2 cups warm water
- 1 tsp salt

- 1/4 cup cheddar cheese, grated (optional)

Add the salt to the cornmeal in a bowl. Add water slowly, stirring until it is smooth and thick. Preheat a cast iron pan with a thin coating of olive oil.

Add the cheese to the cornmeal mixture. Knead the very solid dough for a few minutes, then let sit five minutes. Split into 10 to 12 balls and flatten into patties.

Cook the patties for seven minutes on each side until smooth and brown. Put the patties in a 350F oven for six to seven minutes until each



Venezuelan arepas with chopped salad (above), orzo peas (below)

PEARL PIRIE/THE BUZZ

slightly puffs and, when you tap the patty, it sounds hollow. Split open and enjoy as you would an English muffin.

Shown with a mixture of chopped salad: 1 cucumber, 2 avocados, 1 tomato, 1 clove garlic, and 1/2 cup cooked lentils, with sprinkles of pepper, cumin, paprika, 1 Tbsp lemon juice, 2 Tbsp tahini, and a handful of chopped parsley.

Side Dish: Orzo Peas (4 servings)

Toast:

- 1/4 cup sliced almonds

Mix:

- 2 Tbsp olives, minced
- 1 Tbsp dried tarragon



- fresh black pepper
 - 1/2 tsp orange peel, dry
 - 1 Tbsp olive oil
- Boil for 7-8 minutes:
- 2 cups/500ml orzo pasta
 - pinch of salt

Add:

- 1/2 red pepper, chopped
- 2 cups frozen peas

Bring back to a boil for two minutes. Drain. Stir the olive spice mixture into the

pasta and vegetables. Top with almonds.

Pearl Pirie's fourth poetry collection, footlights, is getting good reviews! Get your copy at Perfect Books.

Coming in April: online classes. See www.pearlpirie.com

Keep staying home, washing your hands, phones and masks to protect your neighbours.

Please wear a mask and stay safe!

Joel Harden

MPP, Ottawa Centre
joelharden.ca

109 Catherine St.
Ottawa, ON. K2P 2M8

✉ JHarden-CO@ndp.on.ca

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Keep up to date on Ottawa's COVID-19 vaccination plan

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FoodWorks gives chef more purpose in life



Tim Stock serves a customer through the FoodWorks window. PHOTO COURTESY FOODWORKS

cont from p 1
 Stock divides his time between running FoodWorks and preparing breakfasts at the youth drop-in centre. "This is a big change for me, a career change," he says. "When you are a chef, you are passionate about preparing fine food and being creative, but you really are doing it for yourself."
 There are compliments from patrons and online reviews. His central concern tends to be, "What do people think of me as a chef?" Now Stock says, those preoccupa-

tions seem "superficial and meaningless." Cooking for and working with at-risk youth bring a more profound reward. "Everything we do here is for at-risk youth. There is a lot more purpose. Here, if I didn't cook for them, someone might not eat. My work is appreciated in a whole different way."
 At least once a week, the master chef prepares individual omelets at the youth drop-in centre. It is a new experience for the youth and for the chef. "No one has ever taken the time to care

for them enough to make them a meal that is very well prepared." And as a result, Stock says, "my work has a lot more meaning."
 FoodWorks aims to give youth "skills that will help them find stable work," Stock says, "and a passion and enjoyment in what they are doing."

Training youth

Thaden Coltess currently is training with Stock. "It is really fun," the 17-year-old says. "I like cooking. I finally have something to do and it feels good doing it."
 For Coltess, growing up did not go smoothly. "I had a rough childhood and CAS was in my life pretty much all of my life."

He has lived in shelters and a group home. For a couple of years, he bounced in and out of his mother's house, crashed with friends and spent a lot of time playing computer games. Now he is mastering cooking skills and earning a wage. His training has included first-aid and food safety courses and Smart Serve training for bar staff.

Beside working at FoodWorks, Coltess attends high school and has an apartment, and a savings account. As for the future, he hopes to do a bit of travelling, perhaps to Hawaii, and to get additional training as a cook "so I can

do more things."

And, just like his mentor chef Stock, he takes satisfaction in working in a helping vocation. "It's nice to cook for people who really need it."

To place a takeout order go to: www.foodworksottawa.ca/



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Ottawa Women's March goes virtual - and local

Alayne McGregor

The Ottawa Women's March moved the 2021 march up by two months to try to beat the pandemic. But it wasn't enough. The group's event, May 1 to 8, will be online, highlighting a diverse range of issues affecting women in this city.

Participants are still urged to parade outside on May 8, bringing a feminist message and the spirit of the march to their own neighbourhoods with people in their own social bubbles, rather than in a large crowd on Parliament Hill.

"Bring signs if you want to. Bring noisemakers if you want to," said Emily Sams, the group's interim co-chair. "Even if it's just going on a walk reflecting what are your feminist values, what does gender equality mean to you, and how can you make society a safer, more inclusive place for women and gender-diverse people?"

Sams was in the crowd at the first Ottawa Women's March in January 2017, held in solidarity with the women's march in Washington, DC, against the inauguration of then-President Donald Trump. That Ottawa march, and its successor a year later, were reported to have attracted six to seven thousand

people to the Hill and along Elgin Street. Sams was also involved in organizing the 2020 event, held downtown March 7 just before the pandemic struck.

Even now, after Trump's defeat, Sams said, there are many other important feminist issues to march about. "Feminist spaces are always important. Regardless of who is being elected, we always need to work for more equitable societies and societies that will support women and all people."

For example, she noted that the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability recently reported that 160 women and girls were killed in 2020 in Canada.

The current pandemic has also had an ongoing gender impact, she said. It put more women than men out of work, it has forced many women to take on extra unpaid child care because of school closures, and many women are working in essential jobs.

"I think it's still really important for women and folks of all genders to continue to march for gender equality and to continue the march for social justice and activism. There's so many reasons we need to continue marching."

Although earlier marches had been coordinated across Canada, Sams said that Women's March Ottawa now works independently and is focused on the Ottawa community. She said the group strives to create partnerships with other women's groups, which is reflected in the diversity of its 2021 event. Panels will discuss black feminist organizing in Ottawa (May 1), trans-inclusive feminism (May 4), sex worker advocacy and sex-worker-inclusive feminism (May 5), and indigenous women and Two-Spirit people (May 6).

"We're really excited to get other feminist and social justice groups working with us. We're trying to be intersectional with our panels. We're trying to cover a lot of topics, but we also recognize we aren't able to cover every single feminist issue, and so we're hoping this year to create broad opportunities for advocacy and for learning."

The topics also reflect current advocacy supporting BI-POC (black, indigenous, people of colour) communities, "to make sure when we talk about feminism we're also talking about racism and we're talking about racial justice."

For the sex worker panel, she said, they've invited Maggie's, a sex work advocacy organization from To-



In 2021, women can't gather on the Hill as they did in 2020. CYNTHIA MUNSTER/OTTAWA WOMEN'S MARCH

ronto which combats whorephobia and argues that sex work is real, legitimate and valuable work.

Other issues are also being covered. On Sunday, May 2, the virtual brunch event will discuss food security as a feminist issue, with representatives from the Parkdale Food Centre and other groups. The May 7 panel will discuss the impact of climate change through a feminist lens, including the added impacts of barriers caused by poverty and gender. The week will close on May 8 with keynote speaker Gina Wilson, the Deputy Minister for Diversity, Inclusion and Youth and Senior

Associate Deputy Minister for Canadian Heritage.

However, the week also includes less serious and more supportive gatherings. May 3 has a Maker Monday workshop on art, self-love and community care, led by Ottawa artist K.J. Forman (www.luckylittlequeer.com/). On May 4, the group hosts a feminist trivia night. And, on May 7, you can dance in your bubble in a virtual dance party with Ottawa DJ Roxysunset (<https://soundcloud.com/roxanne-akhtar>).

While the group is all-volunteer, it is asking for donations to help pay for expenses for the week: pro-

motion, Zoom costs, and honoraria for speakers and workshop leaders. Any leftover amount will go to microgrants to support the work of feminist organizers in Ottawa, Sams said.

All events are free and open to all. They will take place over Zoom, mostly in the evening, and last 60 to 90 minutes. Sams said they planned to record the sessions and publish them on YouTube so those with conflicting work or childcare responsibilities could still watch them.

Learn more about the week's events at <http://www.womensmarchottawa.ca/2021-program.html>

Comment

Child care is not a labour of love

Amanda Quance

I have a dirty secret to tell you. It's a lie that has been told over and over and so often that I sometimes thought it was true. Child care is not a labour of love. It is work. It is paid labour and really quite terrible pay at that!

I learned recently that the lowest return on a post-secondary education in Canada is to invest in training as an early childhood educator. When you train as a social worker, an animator, a lawyer or a pastry chef, you will earn much more. In the field of early childhood education (ECE), your investment is not worth it.

The irony, of course, is that when governments invest in child care the return is remarkably high, and a universal, publicly funded system would "pay for itself" (Stan-

ford, 2020). The Conference Board of Canada published findings in 2017 that showed every dollar spent on early childhood education pays back six dollars.

Training as an ECE requires that you learn about child development, program planning, health and safety, working with families and building relationships with children. Over and over again, research shows that high-quality child care is linked to the training and qualifications of staff. So, it is worthwhile for children, families, and society, in general, that there be investment in post-secondary education for early childhood education.

Not long ago the federal government announced \$420 million in grants and bursaries to help provinces and territories train and retain qualified early childhood educators. Yet there is a tug of war going on with parents paying unaffordable high fees and the EC educators taking home wages so low that the profession is unattractive. The only way to end this is to publicly fund child

care directly and make early childhood education a desirable profession by funding educators' wages so we can make a decent living.

There are several reasons why EC educators have such low wages. There's the undervaluing of women's work which has traditionally been unpaid when done in the home by mothers. There's the fragmented approach to what little government funding exists, and this results in a divided sector. And there's the low rate of unionization. We have seen child care as a market product and not as a public service. We have relied on child care workers to provide the public service for next to nothing in wages.

There's an obvious and easy solution: provide public funding for a universal, regulated and high-quality system. There are lots of people who love working with children and we are ready to invest in giving this care.

Is the federal government ready?

Amanda Quance is a member of Child Care Now-Ottawa: ottawa.ccnw.ca/

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CCA report

Jack Hanna

Help a local business

Here are some concrete things you can do right now to help a shop or restaurant make it through the pandemic and give them a boost.

First, write a Google review. “Google reviews are big,” said Christa Blaszczyk, the owner of *boogie + birdie* on Elgin Street.

Here’s how to do this: First, Google the business. A column for that business pops up on the right side of your screen. Scroll down to the Reviews section. Hit the button. Write a review. You will be asked to log in with your Google (gmail) account. Keep the review short—just a handful of words. Award five stars.

While online reviews help, the oldest form of advertising – folks talking to their neighbours – matters even more to a neighbourhood business. “Word of mouth is our number-one most effective advertising,” Blaszczyk said. “Be sure

to speak about a favourite shop or restaurant to a neighbour.” Blaszczyk spoke at the CCA’s recent forum on supporting Centretown businesses through the pandemic.

Centretown farmers’ market

Centretown could use a farmers’ market. The CCA is working with the organizer of other farmers markets in the city to launch one. What is envisioned is a weekly market in Boushey’s Square off Elgin Street on Sunday mornings. To help, contact jack.2014@icloud.com

New Official Plan input

The CCA likes the central thrust of the draft new Official Plan (OP) for Ottawa: greater population density in existing neighbourhoods. However, in its submission to the city, the CCA had concerns.

New buildings and infills must “preserve and enhance” the existing neighbourhood character. For that to happen, the CCA says, residents must be involved in setting density targets for their neighbourhoods.

The CCA also called for the safeguarding of big, ma-

ture trees that comprise the urban canopy, and the preservation and creation of parks and greenspaces, so that denser cities are liveable.

Oppose nuclear-waste site

The CCA asked City Council to oppose a proposed nuclear-waste disposal site at Chalk River, upstream from Ottawa on the Ottawa River. The proposed site would hold low-level radioactive wastes from nuclear facilities in a giant, above-ground mound.

The CCA said the site is only one kilometre from the Ottawa River, on porous and fractured bedrock, and in an earthquake zone. There are also questions about whether the design accords with international best practices.

In late March, a City Council committee declined to oppose the proposed nuclear-waste facility. However, councillors raised concerns and called for the federal government to conduct a review of all nuclear-waste disposal projects in the Ottawa Valley.

MPP report: Community solidarity and evidence-based decisions are needed to stop the spread of COVID-19

Joel Harden

Like many of you, I was shaken by CBC’s interview with Dr. Michael Warner, head of the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at Michael Garron Hospital during the Easter long weekend. “Four floors below me,” he said, “Patients in their 20s, 30s and 40s are fighting for their lives.”

Who were they? As Dr. Warner explained, “partner of a child care worker, wife of a factory worker, ride share app driver, checkout clerk at a dollar store.” These were essential workers and their family members. The same people we hailed as heroes were fighting to survive the COVID-19 variants filling our ICUs.

Why does an ICU doctor do media interviews? To shock us into action. To impress on us that we must, MUST follow public health rules. There is currently a stay-at-home order with a maximum of five for outdoor

gatherings. This means wearing a mask when outdoors.

It is frustrating to see non-compliance in our city. There were Easter dinners with extended family and friends; many joggers in tight formation, or on crammed basketball courts, and soccer games; picnics with multiple people, or backyard parties with neighbours.

I know the weather is terrific. I know people are sick and tired of being sick and tired. But this is the worst possible moment to let our collective guard down. We are reaping the cost of more than a year of half-hearted pandemic measures but the end is in sight.

Our opposition caucus will keep pushing for systemic fixes from the Ford government such as a real paid sick days plan, or an immunization strategy that prioritizes essential workers.

But we need your help. If someone you love isn’t doing their part, give them a gentle reminder to do the right thing. Lives are at risk.

On April 8, I wrote to Ontario Minister Steve Clark and Solicitor General Sylvia Jones. I urged them to speak out against Randy Hillier, MPP for Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston, who’s been telling people to defy pandemic regulations and making absurd, offensive parallels between the Nazi regime and public health rules.

Hillier held a mask burning party on April 8 in Kemptville and brought a crowd to the front doors of a gym, a 20-minute walk from my own home in Ottawa. As he did so, COVID-19 case counts in Ottawa reached record levels.

To his credit, Minister Clark spoke out, as did Mayor Nancy Peckford, whose electoral district includes Kemptville. None of us should be silent at a time when vigilance is necessary.

So please, stay safe, and encourage those you love to do likewise. Community solidarity and evidence-based decisions are the only way forward.

Dalhousie Community Association elects new board, learns of new potential neighbours

Archie Campbell

The Dalhousie Community Association (DCA) held its first Annual General Meeting in nearly two years on April 7 by Zoom call. More than 70 people joined the meeting.

The highlight of the evening was two presentations about the Dalhousie community, one by the Somerset West Community Health Centre (SWCHC) and the other by Ottawa Community Housing.

The meeting concluded with the election of a new Board of Directors, over half of whom were new recruits.

Under the DCA bylaws, the board elects its president and other executive members at a subsequent meeting. However, Michael Powell, the current president, announced that he was stepping down after being at the helm for the last eight years, although he will continue to sit on the board.

Report shows less affordable housing

Emilie Hayes, SWCHC’s manager of Community Engagement, told the meeting about the centre’s recent “Building Community Together” report, which she edited. The report was produced with the aid of urban planning students from McGill University who analysed census data from 2006 and 2016.

Hayes highlighted trends in the West Centretown (Lyon to the O-Train) area, which would be familiar to observers of most urban areas – growing gentrification, a small population decline due to the conversion of multiple unit dwellings into single-family ones, and less affordable housing available for single renters and even less for families.

The report is available on the centre’s website (swchc.on.ca).

550 new housing units

This provided a perfect segue into the next presentation by Robert MacNeil and Cliff Youdale for Ottawa Community Housing showing plans for the construction of over 550 new housing units approved for the city-owned lands on the Rochester Heights and Gladstone Village areas. (See the March *Centretown BUZZ*: “[A new diverse community takes shape in Dalhousie](#)”.)

These units will be built on the site of recently torn down public housing and new areas recently acquired by the city, notably the Canada Lands area south and west of the Plant Pool Recreation area.

While housing density will be greatly increased, city developers and planners have taken great care to design townhouse housing for families that would normally be deemed too large and suburban for a downtown area, as well as larger high-rise buildings along Raymond Street.

Though some worried about increased traffic these developments would bring, especially along Booth Street, others welcomed

these proposals as an initiative to reverse the decline in affordable housing.

With more families moving into the area if the intentions of these plans were realized, many expressed optimism that such an influx might even keep Cambridge Street Public School open.

DCA influence significant?

Just before the board elections, Michael Powell delivered his final President’s Report. For Michael, the main insight of his tenure was that, although the DCA suffered many setbacks in disputes with developers and city officials, the DCA’s influence as a local residential association was significant.

He then assigned to the DCA an influence value of 10 percent. Ten percent may not seem like much, but it is better than nothing.

Moreover, by being persistent and putting ideas out there, the DCA had proposed a plan of action for others in the community to follow, such as the hoped-for lane reductions on Albert Street.

Small victories over time can lead to bigger changes down the road (to coin a phrase.)

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Part of the “We gon’ be alright” street mural at Bank and Lisgar blew down March 12. The Downtown Bank BIA, which had commissioned the mural, said the base of the hoarding was rotten in several areas and the high winds blew a portion of it down onto Bank Street. The cut-up pieces can be seen behind the fence. The BIA tweeted that it plans to replace the mural as soon as possible, and is working with the property owner to get a quote for the new hoarding, to be installed in late spring. The work has been delayed by the lockdown, but the BIA said they will reinstall it as soon as they can. *BRETT DELMAGE/THE BUZZ*

Bank Street closure helped hard-hit local restaurants

Alayne McGregor

Closing Bank Street on Saturdays last summer was a success, says Downtown Bank BIA executive director Christine Leadman. “It supported those businesses that were the hardest-hit, and it gave an opportunity for residents to walk and feel comfortable and safe.”

The BIA recently conducted a public survey, which received more than 600 responses, to get feedback on the street closure. “It was very positive. We didn’t get any negative responses from the public.”

Leadman was speaking at a community conversation on supporting small businesses in Centretown. The online meeting on March 30 was an initiative of the Centretown Community Association. It also featured Kevin McHale, the executive director of the Sparks Street BIA, and Christa Blaszczyk, the owner of the Elgin Street business *boogie + birdie*.

The BIA arranged for Bank Street to be reserved for pedestrians, cyclists, and scooters from 9 a.m. to midnight every Saturday from July 11 to September 5. While motor vehicles weren’t allowed on the street, they could still be parked on intersecting streets. Leadman said that some BIA members had concerns about deliveries, and “we worked around those.”

The cost was \$12 to \$15 thousand a day, she said, for security, medical assistance, signage, and other costs.

An analysis of visits before, during, and after the closure didn’t see a significant change in numbers, but “it was a different kind of visit.” When the street was closed, visitors were more from the

local area; when it was open, they tended to come from further afar. She said that might have been because people thought that Bank Street being closed meant that they couldn’t go there.

The closure allowed restaurants, which had been particularly hard-hit by the pandemic, to open patio space right on the street – adding more tables for distanced dining – and other businesses to place tables and signs outside.

The BIA also worked with local service agencies and the city to place porta-potties on Bank Street to provide access to washroom facilities for all.

Leadman said the closure was part of an effort to rebuild consumer confidence. People hadn’t felt comfortable going into stores and walking down the street, so the BIA put decals on the ground to tell people about keeping your distance.

“People are afraid to go beyond and of course with the numbers moving up and down, it makes it very challenging to make decisions: ‘Should I go out or shouldn’t I go out? Am I safer in this store or in that store?’”

She argued the small stores were safer than big-box stores, because they contained fewer people and it was easier to monitor the number of people in them.

Will the Bank closure happen again this summer? “We’re working on it. We’ll most likely look at doing a street closure again – in what format, we’re not sure yet.” The BIA’s board will review the results of the public feedback and an Environics study, as well as polling its members, before making a decision.

The closure could be extended to Friday nights as well as Saturdays, she said, and Flora Hall Brewing is also looking at closing Flora and possibly Frank Street this summer.

The BIA will also enliven Bank Street with public art and visuals: “just to make the street a little more fun, entertaining but also safe.”

What you won’t see there this summer is the large-scale events like Glowfair that ran pre-pandemic. “Events are not going to be a mainstay on downtown Bank Street. We are looking at redirecting our efforts focusing more on the local and our residents in the area. And not engaging people to drive in.”

McHale said the Sparks Street BIA was also doubling down on placemaking in order to “create a comfort-

able and safe warm inviting spaces. I spent three hours on the street with my site operations guy to figure out where we will put benches on the street this year, to set them up so people feel safer.”

He said that his BIA realized that “we weren’t forging a proper relationship with the people who live around us.” He urged residents to “take a chance” by checking out local businesses they hadn’t tried before.

“No one defines Ottawa by Kanata or Orleans or Barrhaven. It’s the personality that we create down here.”

Ultimately, Leadman said, it’s important to support main street businesses, in whatever way is comfortable for you. “The main streets that you have are important to the vitality of your community.”

Letter to the editor

Watson doesn’t like detractors

Mayor Jim Watson has long been called out for not handling criticism well. Now, as the longest-serving mayor, responsible for listening to residents’ voices, it seems counterintuitive to the job.

In 2018, Watson’s actions caught up to him when he was told he couldn’t keep blocking people on Twitter. While Watson often believes those criticizing him online are personally attacking him, they’re often just residents asking for change.

For example, on Feb. 26, in promoting an International Women’s Day event in Ottawa, Watson was largely criticized because the graphic displayed a picture of him—the largest image—and only featured white women as speakers. The optics weren’t great. Online users rightfully criticized the mayor’s prominence in the graphic and the lack of melanin present. Three days later, the promotion had changed. Watson’s photo was smaller and moved to the background, while a young Black woman was added to the line-up.

It could have been a learning moment. But Watson and the city never addressed the issue publicly or admitted their mea culpa. Nor did featured speakers Chief Medical Officer Dr. Vera Etches or Councillors Theresa Kavanagh and Catherine Kitts comment about it. It seemed as if a Black woman was added as a mere token and they called it a day.

Yes, the people had spoken but City Hall was just changing things to placate them without actually having to explain any growth or acknowledging the public’s call-out that allowed them to amend things. On International Women’s Day, those in power should be trying to raise voices that have long been ignored and marginalized in society, not silence them further.

It also sounds like that’s what Mayor Watson was doing again on March 2 at a joint Community and Protective Services Committee. In a clip posted online from a consultation for the city’s 10-year housing and homelessness plan, a delegate spoke about her experiences and concerns. In the meeting, Watson interrupted, spoke over the woman countless times, questioned her qualifications and belittled her statements. It was unfair and unprofessional behaviour. But, for those who follow Watson’s history when disagreed with, it wasn’t surprising; it showed what we already knew. Watson’s recent support for International Women’s Day was just for show.

On March 6, users also criticized Watson for publicly acknowledging he was out dining with Councillor Eli El-Chantiry, while Dr. Etches was warning residents to stay within their household bubbles as cases of COVID-19 went up.

Watson has said the pandemic has been difficult for him because he lives alone. But, even if he wanted to have company for breakfast, he didn’t need to post it online sending further mixed messages. Nonetheless, he thanked someone who called people who criticized his choices idiots, showing dialogue and criticism are again unwelcome in Watson’s Ottawa.

Over less than 10 days, the mayor made it clear he’ll continue to help those who side with him and alienate those who don’t.

Watson has long been known for his retail politics and has always been affable with constituents when attending local events. And it can be difficult to hear criticism and negative feedback about work you’ve done. But listening is a skill that needs to be nurtured, especially in public service.

Maybe, it’s time we got a new mayor next year.

Amy Yee



The new Corso Italia LRT station is currently under construction in the LRT Line 2 trench just north of Gladstone Avenue. Here, a worker applies anti-erosion spray. *BRETT DELMAGE/THE BUZZ*

What's on(line) this month in Ottawa and beyond

Tony Wohlfarth

The Irish Film Festival of Ottawa

Last year, the Irish Film Festival was postponed due to the pandemic. This year's version is online from mid-April, with feature films, documentaries, shorts, and question and answer sessions.

For tickets and film information, check out: <https://www.irishfilmfestivalottawa.ca/>

South-by-Southwest (SXSW) Film Festival

SXSW is an annual celebration of music, film and the arts in Austin, Texas. For 2021, SXSW was held virtually in March and *The BUZZ* was there.

Joe Buffalo

Joe Buffalo is a 16-minute Canadian film about a 43-year-old Indian residential school survivor who became a championship skateboarder. Joe attended a residential school in Lebert, Saskatchewan, until 1992. Set in Calgary, the film uses archival footage to tell his life story and link it to the demise of the buffalo, which once roamed the Canadian prairie.

Joe Buffalo overcomes his inner demons and years of addiction to succeed in a sport which I found fascinating to watch. The film is directed by Syrian-born filmmaker Amar Chebib (www.amarchebib.com/), who currently lives in Vancouver.

Joe Buffalo will have its Canadian premiere at the Ca-



A still from the film *Joe Buffalo* (courtesy the director)

nadian Underground Film Festival in Calgary. It will then be available for screening via the DOXA Documentary Film Festival site in mid-May: www.doxafestival.ca/

Canadian Film Day 2021

April 21 is Canadian Film Day—a celebration of films made by Canadians. On its website (canadianfilmday.ca/), you can learn about and view the films there. All the National Film Board (NFB) selections are available for free at <https://nfb.ca>. Other films are available via Netflix, Crave and CBC Gem.

On that day, you can also see a free screening of Atom Egoyan's 2015 thriller, *Remember*, starring the late Christopher Plummer, plus an interview with Egoyan discussing his experiences of working with Plummer on two films. Register for tickets at canadianfilmday.ca/remember-2021/

National Arts Centre (NAC)

The NAC is live-streaming performances by renowned jazz pianist Kris Davis (April 30), and Senegalese-born master percussionist and singer-songwriter Élage Diouf (May 1). For tickets and event information, visit: <https://nac-cna.ca/en/calendar/list/2021/04>

And check out the NAC's free live-stream performances on Friday evenings, free conducting classes with Music Director Alexander Shelley, and musical creation workshops for children.

Great Canadian Theatre Company (GCTC)

You can get your virtual Canadian theatre fix at the GCTC this month. Until April 22, you can hear a pre-recorded audio version of John Mighton's award-winning play, *Half Life*, presented in conjunction with the Tarragon Theatre.

On April 29, actor and playwright Mark Crawford will present a new script about an urban transplant who finds himself unexpectedly owning a small-town radio station. *Chase the Ace* will be live-streamed from Crawford's home in Stratford, with a Q&A afterward.

More information at www.gctc.ca

Museums

Local museums and galleries are closed this month because of the current provincial emergency order.

Anne Frank: A History for Today

The Centretown BUZZ had an opportunity to visit the Anne Frank exhibition at the Canadian War Museum last month. The exhibition is on loan from the Anne Frank Foun-



The Frank family on the Merwedeplein, May 1941. From the photo collection of the Anne Frank Stichting (Amsterdam).

ation in Amsterdam. It chronicles the incredible story of the Frank family, who spent two years in hiding from the Nazis.

The museum is currently closed. It has said it will extend the exhibit, and new dates will be announced on its website.

You can see the opening video for the exhibit at www.warmuseum.ca/annefrank/. To know more about Anne's short life (she died at age 15), readers can watch this short video at: www.annefrank.org/en/anne-frank/who-was-anne-frank/

Her book was published posthumously by her father Otto and has been translated into more than 70 languages.

I sincerely regret any harm done by suggesting that Anne herself survived the Holocaust. Anne died (probably of typhus) in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in 1945. The only member of her family to survive the war was her father Otto.

Tony Wohlfarth is an Ottawa-based freelance film, arts and entertainment writer. He participated in the virtual SXSW Film Festival last month and was a guest of the CWM to witness the Anne Frank Exhibition.

Library removes access to "essential" services

cont from p 1

"This is something that is top-of-mind for OPL and we are actively exploring ways in which to assist with technology needs such as outdoor WiFi access, access to Chromebooks, printing, photocopying, etc."

So far, they said, the library has "loaned out more than 200 Chromebooks and 20 WiFi hotspots via 30 community partners." Bassett said these resources did not address the needs of people who use computers and other facilities in the branches.

"I don't believe they're really aware of how great the need is," Bassett said. She has become steadily more frustrated with library computer access during the pandemic.

When the Main branch first reopened last August, she said, the number of computers available was reduced to five, with all the computers on the locked third floor inaccessible. Users were only allowed to book one hour of computer time per day, which Bassett said is hardly sufficient.

"If all the of OPL management and staff ... had access to the above resources for (barely) one hour a day, excluding Sundays, and furthermore had to travel to access those resources, very little would be accomplished. Yet, that is what is imposed on those without access to one or more of the applicable equipment, devices, or services in their own home, 24/7."

In addition, the number of hours the Main branch is open were reduced from 59 to 42 per week. The library is now closed Monday and Wednesday evenings; Bassett's preferred work time is in the evening.

More recently, on April 3, the library decided that only one public computer would be available per branch, even in large branches like Main – a decision she describes as unreasonable and excessively restrictive compared to what's required for stores.

Bassett said she went to the Main branch on April 6 for

her prebooked one-hour slot, and discovered that there were three people who had reserved that very same time on different library computers. With only one computer now available, she said, the staff offered each of them 10 minutes.

The library then cancelled all her computer bookings later in the week, she said, forcing her to rebook them. And then all access to computers was removed on April 8.

Bassett has complained several times to the OPL administration and board members about limited computer access during the pandemic, but has not seen any improvement. She said she had one response last fall from Anna Basile, the library's division manager for Corporate Services, saying her concerns would be brought to the attention of the library board. Bassett said she didn't remember any follow-up.

The library has also imposed other pandemic restrictions which Bassett considers "bordering on asinine" and without reason:

- not allowing access to washrooms (as of April 3), which she says shows a lack of compassionate understanding and respect for dignity, especially for the vulnerable.
- refusing to accept cash to pay fines or photocopy bills. Bassett has had to make complicated arrangements to pay for photocopying because of this policy and because the change kiosks to load photocopy cards is on the closed third floor of the Main branch.
- removing access to print newspapers. "Digital [news-papers] don't do you any good if you don't have [Internet] access." She said she would regularly see four or five people in a branch reading the newspapers every day.
- waiting to check books in until after they've quarantined for up to a week, possibly putting user accounts into default for books that have already been returned.

"Governments need to recognize that libraries are essential services," Bassett said, and the computer and related services in particular. She said she truly appreciates the library and recommends it to everyone but, in the last year, her exasperation levels with the library have risen.

In March, the OPL reported that it had an operating surplus of \$6,277,755 (or 12.6 per cent of its budget) in 2020. That was 24 times as large as the 2019 surplus of \$256,724. It attributed the surplus to branch closures and operational changes (such as fewer hours) due to the pandemic. The library board decided to transfer \$5 million of the surplus to the new central library project and the remainder to library reserves.

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PURSUE YOUR PASSIONS

VIRTUAL SEMINARS HOSTED BY AMICA THE GLEBE

Amica The Glebe, an upcoming senior lifestyles residence, is pleased to invite you to pursue your passions, old or new, at our upcoming virtual events.

ART AT HOME

Join us as we watch a video from the Vancouver Art Gallery, curated exclusively for Amica: The Curious World of Emily Carr. Learn about the B.C.-born painter on her journey towards bold and expressive abstractionism. Registration includes a package of art supplies, so you can apply what you learned to create your own art.

Wednesday, April 23 | 2:00 - 3:00pm

RSVP by April 20

MUSIC AT THE MOVIES

Join renowned musicologist, Jordan Klapman for an engaging discussion celebrating award winning songs featured in major motion pictures. The presentation will include original recordings, video clips and pictures

Wednesday, May 19 | 2:00 - 3:00pm

RSVP by May 17

HIDDEN GEMS: HOW TO GIVE YOUR VALUABLES NEW LIFE

Join Alex Moshtagh of Treasure Antiques & Estate Appraisers as he explains the appraisal process and what impacts the value of our antiques and family heirlooms. Jake Devine of Devine Fine Jewellery will also explain how traditional jewellery can be reset and uniquely customized to compliment personal taste and current fashion trends.

Wednesday, June 9 | 2:00 - 3:00pm

RSVP by June 7

RSVP TO SARAH OR LA AT 613-233-6363

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