



Convoy class action targets truckers, 4



Skyline: Glitzy Towers and new life for old, 5

THE CENTRETOWN BUZZ



A cyclist tries out the just-opened boardwalk connection from the Ottawa River Pathway to the Zibi development along the Chaudière Bridge. The boardwalk begins immediately north of the Canadian War Museum, allowing cyclists and pedestrians to avoid much of the heavy truck traffic on Booth Street. It also links to the beautiful scenic views of the Chaudière Falls and the hydro station, all part of the redevelopment of the area.

BRETT DELMAGE/THE BUZZ

Wellington, Sparks block to be remade

Alayne McGregor

Six competing designs for the downtown block opposite Parliament Hill were unveiled April 11. Whichever is chosen, it will mean a radical change in the streetscape of Wellington and Sparks Street.

Known as “Block 2,” the block extends from Metcalfe to O’Connor Street and includes the frontages on both Wellington and Sparks. Currently, it contains numerous heritage buildings, including the former American Embassy on Wellington and the Birks Building on Sparks. An open plaza at the corner of Metcalfe and Wellington was the former site of the Rideau Club, which burned down in 1979.

The 11 buildings in the block – nine of which have heritage status – are in widely-varying condition; some are decrepit and need to be refurbished. The new block will include 150 offices, two committee rooms, a cafeteria, and public spaces accessible from Wellington, and public, cultural, and retail spaces on Sparks. Once it is completed, parliamentarians will move there while the East Block and the Confederation Building are being renovated.

The architects were told the planned Indigenous Peoples Space in the former embassy and another building must not be touched, and the entire complex had a height limit in order to not block views of the Peace Tower and Parliament Hill. The designs had to integrate the heritage buildings into a functional complex, and must be sustainable, carbon-neutral, environmentally responsible, and climate-resilient.

Writer John Ralston Saul, the honorary advisor to the competition, spoke before the presentations. He described the project as building the fourth side of the Parliamentary square, and highlighted the relationship between architecture and the voice of the citizen.

“It must be a contemporary expression of the People’s Parliament.... We are about to make another architectural statement about our democracy and our country.”

continued on page 6 Block 2



The gardeners are planting native plants to support pollinators like bees and butterflies.

STEPHEN THIRLWALL/THE BUZZ

Bee and butterfly garden expanding

Jack Hanna

Volunteers plan to expand a bee and butterfly garden that was started last summer at Bank and Frank Streets. The garden is a project of the Centretown Community Association.

“We want to help these species right here locally,” says lead gardener Carlos Murray. “We want to provide opportunities for folks to take action. And we want to create something beautiful.”

The gardeners are planting native plant species on City of Ottawa lands on the verges of Frank Street, next to the Staples parking lot. The plan is to increase the presence of native plants and gradually edge out the non-

native flowers such as hawk weed.

“The bees and butterflies do not have their native foods,” says Murray. The volunteers aim to remedy that by putting in native plant species such as phlox, golden rod, asters, sneeze weed and mountain mint. It’s like opening a boutique restaurant for bees and butterflies. The plants have been donated by the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, Clyde Bee & Butterfly Patch and the Ottawa Wildflower Seed Library.

**Harmonious existence**

Bees and butterflies do best with native plants. That’s because native insects and

continued on page 11 Bee and butterfly garden



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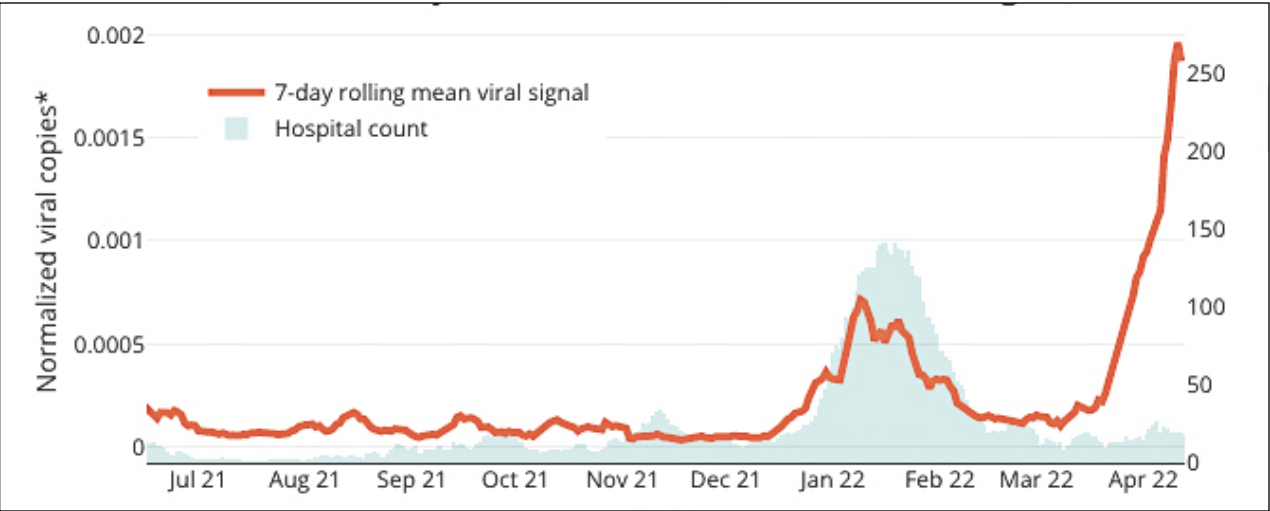
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The Lighter Side of the Pandemic, by Karen Munro-Caple



The Good, the Bad, and the Bumpy:  
Doug Ford, rethink the mask mandate



The Ottawa wastewater COVID-19 viral signal shot up in April. This is the report as of April 14, just before the Easter long weekend. See [613covid.ca/wastewater/](https://613covid.ca/wastewater/) for the latest results.

Ryan Lythall

Since my last article, at least 10 people I know have either tested positive for COVID-19 or had contact with others who have tested positive. By itself, that's pretty scary!

Most of those people were fine during the earlier stages of the pandemic. But, ever since the mask mandate has been lifted, the number of COVID-19 cases has skyrocketed everywhere.

Yet when it came to wearing a mask, many refused and continued to ignore physical distancing as well. What boggles my mind is wearing a mask is such a simple gesture. For most able-bodied people, putting on a mask only takes a few seconds and it shows that you care about your own health and those around you.

Recently, I was out and about in

Centretown doing errands and seeing people again. One afternoon, I stopped by two stores on Elgin Street. Both stores had several customers inside but I only saw maybe five people wearing masks between those two stores, aside from my personal support worker (PSW) and me.

As I was rolling down various aisles, I could actually feel my anxiety building due to the number of people not wearing masks. This is not a healthy way for anyone to live. I shouldn't need to feel anxious or afraid to go shopping, or anywhere else indoors for that matter.

If I feel this way, I can't imagine how another person with disabilities (PWD), or an immuno-compromised person feels. Or are they just staying home more often now?

People with disabilities shouldn't feel like prisoners in their own homes. But, on March 21, the day the mask

mandate was dropped, that's precisely how many PWDs felt. And they continue to feel that way now.

Yet here we are, two years later in the sixth wave of the COVID pandemic. Restaurants, bars and many other venues are all at full capacity, seemingly pretending that COVID-19 is long gone.

Who cares if people continue to get sick and die due to COVID-19? Who cares if some people are anxious or afraid to be in indoor spaces?

As I've stated before, I don't think Doug Ford cares about people with disabilities or others who are vulnerable.

After all, a provincial election's fast approaching and he needs to get those votes.

Right, Doug?

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# Stuart MacKay to run in Somerset Ward



Stuart MacKay is a founding member of the Ottawa Transit Riders advocacy group, and served for three years on the board of the Centretown Community Assn. *BRETT DELMAGE/THE BUZZ*

Stuart MacKay has announced he plans to run for Somerset Ward city councillor in the city election in October.

MacKay said he'd been thinking about running for the past year, based on his volunteer work with the Centretown Community Association (CCA) and Ottawa Transit Riders (OTR), which gave him insight into what was not working at City Hall.

"That spurred me into taking the next step. Advocacy was fun, but at the end of the day you want to have a larger voice."

Then the convoy occupation – and the city's paralysis in dealing with it – further convinced him that Ottawa needed new leadership and "new voices around the council table."

MacKay spent three years on the CCA board, until its recent AGM. He said he worked to increase the CCA's membership and its engagement with the community, including with the Centretown Support Network. He also reached out to local businesses on behalf of the CCA to support them during the pandemic, and helped publicize the new Farmers Market at Boushey Square, including regularly staffing the CCA table there.

At the table he talked to people visiting the market, about their experiences during COVID-19 and about issues and their hopes for the community, he said.

"I was quite blown away by just the passion that people feel for the community here. We saw that during the pandemic – people coming together to make this community better – and I think that my work in bringing together different groups on all

sides of the ledger is one of the skills that I brought to the CCA, and what I would hope to bring to the council table."

As a transit advocate with OTR, he said he learned that "this city doesn't take transit seriously. There's always been a sense that transit is just something that City Council has to deal with, rather than something that should be a key priority."

OTR advocated for greater transit reliability and frequency, as well as for fare freezes and for a more useable Para Transpo system, but many councillors were not receptive to these messages, he said.

He said Transpo needs to move away from a commuter model to one servicing neighbourhoods, that's more locally-based. As a councillor he said he would fight for it to become more transparent in order to restore trust in the system.

MacKay holds a Ph.D. in history, studying the American Civil War, and lives near the Museum of Nature. He's a longstanding renter in Centretown, and noted that the voice of renters hasn't been heard enough at City Council. He said he wanted to be their champion on issues like bylaw infractions and rental properties that aren't properly maintained.

He currently works for an IT recruitment staffing company, which has helped him understand the procurement process and RFPs. He wants to use that to improve the city's computer systems, he said.

"I hear from everybody about how bad the IT systems at City Hall and City Council are, how hard it is to register your kid for swimming lessons. We now know because of the pandemic how important it is to have that kind of re-

liable IT system for people to engage with the city, and right now the ability to contact and communicate with the city for basic things is abysmal for a city of our size."

He said he supports continuing the current hybrid model that allows citizens to present to city committees and boards online.

"As somebody who sat through many city council meetings and some very long budget meetings at the Transit Commission – spending eight hours in the council chambers and not knowing when you're going to be able to present – that is frustrating. But it also means that there's only a certain type of person who could do that: people who can afford to take a day off work, who don't need to worry about child care. So you're not getting the depth of community input that you should. And that's one thing

that hybrid meetings are really helpful with. You can hear from somebody and it doesn't mean that they need to take a day off work or travel downtown. I think it really helped to get new points of view coming into City Council."

One priority issue he's heard from residents is to fix the city's physical infrastructure, like sidewalks with heaving cracks that become barriers for those less mobile. "We need to do a better job of making sure streets are clean, that we have better garbage collection – the nuts and bolts of our community that we haven't kept up as well as it should."

He also wants to get Somerset House fixed. "We've had a decade of inaction on it. This is one of the key intersections in Somerset Ward, and we've essentially given a quarter of it away to a building which is derelict and might have some safety issues. We need to get on that because it's quite frankly a blight on this neighbourhood, on this city."

Also on his wishlist would be another park/parkette in Centretown north of Somerset, to serve the many buildings going up in that area.

He did not yet have a policy on accepting donations from developers or their families.

MacKay is the second declared candidate for Somerset Ward. [Read the January BUZZ at centretownbuzz.com for an interview with Ariel Troster.](#) The current ward councillor, Catherine McKenney, [has said they plan to run for mayor.](#)

Nominations officially open May 2. After that, candidates can register with the city, and then begin to raise funds and spend money on their campaigns.

City and school board elections will be held on Monday, October 24.

# Removing affordable housing violates human rights?

Alayne McGregor  
An appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal is arguing that affordable housing is a human right, and that the City of Ottawa's recent approval of a major redevelopment discriminated against racialized and disabled residents.

The appeal, by the low-income advocacy group ACORN, had its first case management conference on April 8, at which both the city and the developer asked that it be dismissed. A ruling is expected in a few weeks.

The case is specifically about the redevelopment of the Herongate area in south Ottawa by Hazelview Investments, and the effect this has and will have on tenants there and on the affordability of the rental units. City Council approved the redevelopment last September.

But lawyer Daniel Tucker-Simmons, who is acting for ACORN, said the arguments equally apply to redevelopment across Ottawa.

"It applies to the whole city. The whole city has to be planned in a way that has adequate regard to human rights."

Many studies have shown that urban planning has a very serious differential effect on people according to their racial and ethnic identity, or disability, he said. "To suggest that you can do planning that's not discriminatory without even considering the impacts on protected groups is absurd."

The appeal argues that the approval of the redevelopment violates policies 1.4 and 4.4 of the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), the primary Ontario policy on city planning. Section 1.4 requires cities to plan to meet affordable housing needs and

to create "minimum targets for the provision of housing which is affordable to low and moderate income households." Section 4.5 says that the PPS "shall be implemented in a manner that is consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code."

The primary issue is about the availability of affordable housing in the new development given that the average income of current Herongate tenants is \$45,000.

Tucker-Simmons said the number of affordable units in the development will decrease from the original 2,823 to 1,020 units post-redevelopment. And the rents for those units will only be considered "affordable" by the official definition of 30 percent of the median income for Ottawa (\$109,500).

The appeal says the decision ought to have considered the overall impact of the redevelopment on the supply of affordable housing in that area, and it notes that many of the current residents are "identifiable by reference to a range of identity attributes that overlap with prohibited grounds of discrimination, such as disability, source of income, family status, ethnic origin, and race."

The appeal also says the approval is inconsistent with sections 2 and 11 of the Ontario Human Rights Code, and fails to conform with city's Official Plan policies on affordable housing.

It contends that the city's current (2003) Official Plan has failed to establish or implement a minimum target for providing housing which is affordable to low and moderate income households – but instead only had "an aspirational goal" inconsistent with the PPS' requirement for a specific target.



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# Convoy class action lawsuit now targeting truckers

Alayne McGregor

Watch out truckers! Paul Champ is filling in the “John Doe’s” in the class action lawsuit against the convoy occupation of Centretown.

The lawsuit, filed on behalf of Zexi Li plus Happy Goat Coffee, the Union Local 613 restaurant, and waiter Geoffrey Devaney, seeks damages for those residents and businesses most affected by the incessant honking and engine noise, air pollution, and other effects of the trucks which blocked downtown streets for more than three weeks this winter.

When initially filed by Champ’s law firm, the lawsuit was directed at the four primary organizers of the occupation, plus a series of 60 “John Doe’s” – the actual operators of the trucks. Champ told *The BUZZ* last week that his firm is now working to track down the identities of

all the truckers to hold them responsible for what they did. “Once we’ve completed that exercise, which we anticipate will be over the next few weeks, we will be doing another amendment to the claim to add a large number of individuals.”

These individuals have “significant assets obviously sitting in trucks, and they’re the ones that were the main perpetrators of the tortious activity that we’re suing about.” He said they weren’t going after every single car or regular truck, but rather the big semi-trailer trucks.

The claim is targeting three types of behaviour by the truckers which caused significant harm to the residents and workers and businesses of downtown Ottawa: blocking the roads, idling 24 hours a day for weeks at a time, and the honking. It’s not addressing the on-street or in-store harassment, despite how troubling it was to residents,

“primarily because we know we can’t demonstrate that that conduct was planned or organized,” he said.

Champ had little sympathy for those truckers who stayed beyond the first weekend. “They had many opportunities during the course of that protest to understand and recognize that they were causing harm to the people of downtown Ottawa. It should have been obvious that when you’re blasting those ear-splitting horns for prolonged periods from early in the morning until late at night that you’re causing serious harm to people. [As professional drivers] they get training on those air horns and those train horns, knowing how loud they are. But they did that anyway.”

They also should have noted other signals, he said: when GoFundMe shut down its the convoy campaign because it believed the conduct was illegal; when Li and Champ commenced the class action lawsuit; when they obtained the injunction against the truck noise; when the city and the province declared states of emergency.

Each of those events should have been a flag to those truckers, he said, “that what they were doing was illegal and causing harm.”

The suit has succeeded in

freezing much of the money donated to the convoy or being held by its organizers. Champ said that \$1.6 million in cash and another \$400,000 in bitcoin was currently being held in escrow pending the result of the case. Further amounts are currently frozen but haven’t yet been transferred to the escrow account.

Champ will be back in court in early May to extend the current freezing and preservation orders. No date has yet been set for the convoy organizers to file a defence, he said.

The class action case will take far longer than the occupation – Champ didn’t expect a decision to be made on whether it would be certified until the end of 2022.

In meantime, his firm is finding experts on acoustics, and on respiratory illnesses (for the effect of the diesel fumes) and other medical issues. They hired a private investigator to “scoop up all the [convoy’s] online activity and save it in a way that it’s admissible to court”, and a bitcoin expert to track all the bitcoin wallets. He said there’s another \$600,000 in bitcoin donations still outstanding which have to be monitored.

About \$75,000 has been raised at [ottawafund.ca](https://ottawafund.ca) to support the class action. Champ said they are currently finalizing an agreement with the site



Zexi Li speaks to Ottawa City Council on March 23, after receiving the Mayor’s City Builder Award “in recognition of her exemplary action and her inspiring contributions to the community during the occupation of Ottawa by protesters.”

CITY OF OTTAWA

on how the funds will be used, and after that will be publicizing the campaign and letting people know why donations are still needed. “The out-of-pocket [expenses] are going to be fairly significant. We’ve spent almost that much already out of my own pocket.”

“It’s complex litigation – there’s a lot of parties and there are a lot of people who were harmed – we estimate around 12,000 people in downtown

Ottawa. There’s a lot of money involved so it will probably take a little while.”

Champ said he wasn’t worried about the occasional continuing pro-convoy demonstrations downtown or in LeBreton Flats. “Provided they’re not bringing in the big semi trucks and significantly disrupting the lives of downtown Ottawa residents, they’re exercising their democratic rights.”



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At-grade sinuous curves are meant to enhance the pedestrian realm in the new Albert+Main project. From City of Ottawa Development Information files.



Two of the new Albert-Slater slinky towers wrapped in their distinctive grid. City of Ottawa Development Information files.

## Skyline: Glitzy towers and new life poured into an old (concrete) bottle

Robert Smythe

### The Albert+Main project

Excavation has finally started for what will be the Central Area West's largest residential complex. The site fills about 80 percent of the Uppertown block lying between Albert and Slater Streets from Bay to Lyon.

In recent years, before being cleared of its buildings, the site was home to the Alterna Bank, the former Unemployment Insurance Commission offices, a parking lot and some random houses that had been converted to commercial uses.

Before the current proposal – for those who may not remember – this block was the number one, most preferred location recommended by the panel of professional consultants hired to find some downtown land for the Ottawa Public Library's new Main Branch.

Despite overwhelming public support for a convenient and transit-friendly property such as this, their advice was, of course, quickly rejected in favour of a more remote, much cheaper and less accessible tract on the edge of LeBreton Flats because it was city-owned and therefore free.

The Albert-Slater site was previously owned by Broccolini Construction of Montreal. It's unclear if

they are still involved. This project is being developed by a numbered company also known as Albert+Main and is designed by Montreal-based architects Geiger and Huot. It was originally to comprise a total of 930 dwelling units in three towers respectively 23, 29 and 35 storeys with underground parking for 430 cars. It was approved but changes are now afoot.

A recently approved amendment alters those plans by substituting many of the apartments in the tallest of the towers with 230 hotel rooms. This thereby reduces the project's total number of residential units and shaves two spaces from the parking to be provided to 428, with some car-sharing to be permitted.

The ground floor will be for commercial uses offering access to at-grade plazas and open passageways between the buildings. The proponents maintain that the proposed development "enhances the pedestrian realm on all frontages" and will provide some lively animation with useful mid-block connections. It will take many years until the project's completion date, however, to determine whether this proves to be the case and to find out how much outdoor fun can actually be had in this windy part of town at the shadowy base of three tall towers.

For this city, the urban design is relatively innovative. Sinuous glass towers are to be sheathed in a white grid that roams over their surface. The two shortest towers are set on a wavy podium.

But the proponents' claim that "the proposed development strongly responds to the Transit-Oriented Development Guidelines" is undercut by the vast amount of car parking that is to be provided. The buildings will be almost on top of the Lyon LRT station; if it were to be an authentic TOD project the private parking would have been virtually eliminated.

Taken together, with the immediately adjacent Claridge Homes' now topped-off twin-towered Moon development, on a site between Albert and Queen Streets that had languished as a parking lot for over 60 years, the Albert+Main project certainly adds a lot of residential heft and density to a part of the downtown district that's been an underused wasteland for too long.

### 473 Albert Street

Meanwhile, a block away at 473 Albert Street, there's a gut rehab conversion of the 50-year old, 11-storey office block formerly known as the Trebla Building – you guess the source of the name – into a residential building of 158 small suites, with various

amenity facilities sprinkled throughout the building and abutting the Albert Street sidewalk. A total of 52 residents' and visitor car-parking stalls are to be provided in the existing underground garage, with an additional 88 bike-parking spaces, most on vertical racks. There will also be a work-share business centre for the building's occupants.

The venture is being funded by the InterRent REIT, a real estate investment trust, and has been in the works since 2019 when they purchased the building. Their original concept has undergone some revision and refinements since then. The design is by Linebox Studio of Ottawa. For a striped effect, it strips off alternating stacks of the Trebla's old



A cutaway view of the Trebla Building's rebirth as a residential development. Linebox Studio.

pre-cast concrete exterior panels and replaces them with full-height windows having French balconies.

This makes sense because there really is not much outside amenity space, apart from a roof deck and seating and fitness areas on a narrow strip at the rear. To further animate the front, a ground floor gym facing Albert "will help activate the street presence and pedestrian experience." Its win-

dows "will allow residents to engage with the space when walking into the building, as well as the public walking or driving by."

The Trebla project furthers the drive to retrofit the glut of Ottawa's Class B and C offices with adaptive re-uses that bring new life to these aging hulks, while, at the same time, not wasting the "embodied energy" that is bound up in their concrete frames.

Sign up for our weekly MPP email updates at [joelhardenmpp.ca](mailto:joelhardenmpp.ca)!

**Joel Harden**

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# Community Calendar

**Ottawa Grassroots Festival**  
April 21 to 24  
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 82 Kent St.  
Free daytime, ticketed evening concerts.  
[www.ottawagrassrootsfestival.com](http://www.ottawagrassrootsfestival.com)

**SPAO Gallery**  
77 Pamilla Street  
April 22 to May 15  
Exhibition: *No. 17*  
Diploma students' work, free.  
[spao.ca/gallery](http://spao.ca/gallery)

**Fibre Fling Virtual Art Show and Sale**  
April 23 to May 8  
More than 150 works of art created by local textile and mixed media artists.  
[www.fibre-fling.ca](http://www.fibre-fling.ca)

**Centretown Community Association**  
Monday, April 25, 6:30-8 p.m.  
Workshop: Rethinking Community Safety with Michelle Hurtubise, CCHC. Virtual, free. [Register on Eventbrite.](https://www.centretowncitizens.ca/events/planning-committee-meeting-6m6x6-87fzb)  
[www.centretowncitizens.ca/events/planning-committee-meeting-6m6x6-87fzb](https://www.centretowncitizens.ca/events/planning-committee-meeting-6m6x6-87fzb)

**Arts Network Ottawa**  
Call for Board Members  
Application deadline: Wednesday, April 27.  
[artsnetottawa.ca](http://artsnetottawa.ca)

**Beaver Boxing Club, Boxing without Barriers**  
Mixed Ability Sport Drop-in Classes  
Wednesday, April 27, 4 to 5 p.m.  
Saturday, April 30, 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.  
145 Spruce Street  
Free try-out classes for people of all ages, abilities, needs.  
[boxingwithoutbarriers@gmail.com](mailto:boxingwithoutbarriers@gmail.com)

**Play for Ukraine**  
Thursday, April 28, 7 p.m.  
Carleton Dominion-Chalmers Centre  
With the Gryphon Trio, Carissa Klopoushak, Moriana Kachmarsky. For the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal. In person or livestream. By donation.  
[chamberfest.com/event/2022/play-for-ukraine/](http://chamberfest.com/event/2022/play-for-ukraine/)

**Cantata Singers of Ottawa: Chansons françaises**  
Saturday, April 30, 7:30 p.m.  
St. Joseph's Church, 174 Wilbrod Street.  
[cantatasingersottawa.ca](http://cantatasingersottawa.ca)

**NCC Urbanism Lab**  
Thursday, May 5  
Cultural Landscapes: Uncovering the Stories of Our Cities. Virtual via YouTube, free.  
[ncc-ccn.gc.ca/the-urbanism-lab](http://ncc-ccn.gc.ca/the-urbanism-lab)

**Thirteen Strings Chamber Orchestra**  
Tuesday, May 10, 7:30 p.m.  
Carleton Dominion-Chalmers Centre  
With conductor Kevin Mallon. In person or livestream.  
[www.thirteenstrings.ca](http://www.thirteenstrings.ca)

**Helping with Furniture Annual Gala**  
Friday, May 13, 6:30 to 8 p.m.  
Virtual, with optional take-home meal. Keynote speaker: Coun. Catherine McKenney  
[trellis.org/hwf-annual-gala](http://trellis.org/hwf-annual-gala)

**Ottawa Riverkeeper Gala**  
Wednesday, June 1, 6 to 11 p.m.  
50 Sussex Drive  
Fine cuisine, music, dancing, and more.  
[www.riverkeepergala.ca](http://www.riverkeepergala.ca)

## Block 2 proposals

continued from page 1

Architectural firms from Canada and the United States and as far away as London and Paris showed their designs in a series of virtual presentations lasting almost three hours.

Each of the presentations wove the heritage structures into larger modern blocks, many using timber as a major building material with outside facades of glass combined with natural materials like stone and patinated copper. Efficient building systems and photovoltaic panels were common.

The most memorable proposal came from Provencher Roy, which proposed a Truth and Reconciliation Tower at the corner of Metcalfe and Wellington. It would be clad in cedarwood, with wampum and Gothic facade designs, and large glass doors that could be left open or closed. Their design also called for restoring forgotten architectural features of the heritage buildings and an urban forest on the building roofs, as well as an outside plaza for public events.

The Zeidler Architecture/ David Chipperfield design was notable for its "People's Square" which extended the walk from Parliament Hill safely across Wellington into a public square in Block 2.

The Diamond Schmitt/Bjarke Ingels proposal reinforced the historic character of the buildings, in particular rehabilitating the facade and ground floor of the Birks Building to make it a place for dining and socializing. It emphasized a dignified historic form on Wellington and enhanced liveliness on Sparks.

The Watson MacEwen Teramura/ Behnisch Architekten design included winter gardens for smaller intimate public spaces and extended the Four Corners facade on Metcalfe across that entire block. Its facade was angled to create the best angle for photovoltaics. The design was optimized for pas-



The Provencher Roy Truth and Reconciliation Tower design (from their presentation).

sive heating and cooling, but incorporated systems to handle climate extremes.

Wilkinson Eyre incorporated trees as a major design element throughout, with tracery at the roof line, and reflective, crystalline-appearing windows. It had a zero-carbon approach.

The NEUF design also incorporated a forested roof with native tree species, as well as photovoltaics. It included a large atrium which also was important for tempering the air for the net-zero energy systems. It restored the facade of the Birks Building as part of a human facade on Sparks.

A 25-person independent jury will evaluate the designs. Its members include national and international design professionals, academics, members of Parliament, and prominent members of the public, including former NAC CEO Peter Herrndorf. They will be advised by experts in urban planning, built heritage, structural design, sustainability, and accessibility.

The jury will recommend the first, second, and third place teams, and the government will award prizes for the three best designs. The jury is scheduled to meet this week.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

DALHOUSIE

Community Association

Saturday, May 14th, 2022

3:00PM - 5:00PM

Plant Recreation Centre - 930 Somerset St W

Or join online: <https://tinyurl.com/2p8vd3h3>

How Tall is Tall, How Green is Green,

How Affordable is Affordable?

Moderator: Catherine McKenney

Councillor, Somerset Ward

Toon Dreessen

President,

Architects DCA

Angela Keller-Herzog

Executive Director,

Community Associations

for Environmental

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Sarah Button

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OC Transpo, including LRT Line 1, was free to use in December as a mea culpa for the LRT and bus service problems over the last two years.

ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

Catherine McKenney

Cities all over the world, including Ottawa, are beginning to take a fresh look at how we pay for public transit. Currently, we follow a model that charges transit users for every ride. Ottawa expects transit users to pay 55 percent of the cost to run the system.

The problem with that, especially when so many people are working from home, is

that fares have to increase to meet that 55 percent margin. For instance, this year City Council has budgeted for fares to increase by 2.5 percent.

What's missing from this model is that public transit provides a public good and is an essential service. We want more people to use transit because it reduces greenhouse gas emissions, congestion and accidents. It's also more efficient given that one vehicle can carry 80 to 100 passengers depending on the

# Somerset Ward: The case for fare-free transit

bus. The LRT can carry 600 passengers in each two-car vehicle.

In a nutshell, you cannot have a healthy, connected and equitable city without transit that everyone can afford to take and that meets them where they are and takes them where they want to go.

### Fare-free transit

One way of encouraging transit use is to reduce significantly and eventually remove user fees, that is, transit fares which we currently demand of riders. Fare-free transit is being tried in many cities around the world.

Measured in the increase in transit users, this has been tremendously successful. The mayor of Tallinn, Estonia, said, "The universal feature of free public transport is the fact that. . . Everywhere that it has been implemented, people like it."

We saw a similar result here in Ottawa during the month-long, fare-free trial in December 2021. An informal survey by Councillor Jeff Leiper found that almost 40 percent of respondents said they would take transit more often because it was free. Even more encouraging, many young people who have access to a car said they would take free transit instead.

## What's the cost?

Before the pandemic, riders were paying about \$200 million per year in transit fares. If we moved to a fare-free model, some of those revenues would have to be made up from other sources. While this may seem like a lot of money as part of Ottawa's \$4 billion budget, we have to keep in mind that our 2022 capital budget includes \$64 million for

road projects, such as widening and expansion of existing roads. Not all these projects would be required if more people took public transit.

Of course, costs to run the system would also be lower. Collecting fares is a complicated and expensive part of OC Transpo's administration.

We pay for the Presto system, for the card readers at transit stations and on buses, for ticket machines and fare gates and rent for the kiosks at several shopping malls. There are also staffing costs, including for fare inspectors.

There's another cost to fare collection, as well. According to the bus operators' union, ATU, disputes over fares are the main reason why operators face assault. As well as driving the bus, operators are expected to watch for people who skip payment. This causes dozens of physical assaults on operators each year.

Increasingly, we are looking to our federal and provincial government partners to help fund transit operations through gas tax and other measures. Last year, I convinced council to ask the federal government to support public transit in Ottawa.

Transit fares aren't the only factor that keeps some potential riders away. We know that our bus and train systems have not been reliable and this needs to be fixed. Ottawa residents deserve and expect a public transit system that is affordable, dependable and predictable. We need to consider all of those elements as we move forward.

It's time to have a serious talk about how transit is funded and by whom. I hope you'll be part of the conversation.

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# DCA: Retaining local character

Ed McKenna

## The Corso Italia District Secondary Plan and the "Preston Side Streets"

Late in March, the Dalhousie Community Association's "Plan Our Neighbourhood" Committee met to discuss new building projects on the side streets near Preston Street.

On March 24, Preston Hardware presented their plans for the redevelopment of the city block between Balsam and Larch Streets west of Preston. Early the following week (March 29) the Committee met again, this time to review a development proposal for proper-

ties at 15, 17, and 19 Larch.

The Corso Italia Station District Secondary Plan provides the detailed policy framework for the assessment of development applications in this area. The City of Ottawa's Planning Committee approved the plan on February 21, 2021, after three public consultations in the previous year, in which members of the DCA played significant roles.

The development of the secondary plan goes back much further, of course. In 2006, the city initiated the Carling-Bayview Rapid Transit Corridor Community Design Plan. Over time, it was divided into three separate studies, and in the fall of

2013, city planners launched the Gladstone Station District Secondary Plan and Community Development Plan consultation.

In response, residents on the stub streets west of Preston between Somerset and the Queensway got organized, forming BLISS (Believe in Liveable Side-streets) to advocate for the preservation of the low-rise residential character of their neighborhood.

The efforts of the DCA and BLISS, with other community groups, including the Plant Pool Recreation Association, are reflected broadly in the approved secondary plan, now called the Corso Italia Station District Secondary Plan.



The existing streetscape of low-rise houses on the south side of Laurel Street. Ed McKenna/The BUZZ

The secondary plan identifies several distinct "character areas," including the "Preston Side Streets," described as the "low-rise street blocks to the west of Preston Street, between Oak Street and Balsam Street, and St. Anthony Street and Louisa Street... a mixed-use

Streets, it was a surprise to learn that the first proposal for the area, by Roca Homes, designed by Hobin Architecture, was "to construct a four-storey low-rise apartment building, with a total of 26 dwelling units."

With this out-sized aspiration, an application has

from the proposed Larch apartment building is the property Preston Hardware will redevelop over the next three to five years.

The secondary plan permits the development of buildings up to six storeys in the block between Balsam and Larch, and, indeed,



The proposed 26-unit apartment building at 15-19 Larch Street. Source: "15 Larch Street Planning Rationale and Design Brief," Novatech Engineers, Planners and Landscape Architects.

neighbourhood that supports families and a wide range of demographics."

The secondary plan signals that change is coming to the area, and an increase in population density, but on the Preston Side Streets, developers are "encouraged to ensure the unique quality and characteristics of the area remain..." The secondary plan states that the "City shall protect and enhance the built form character of Little Italy..." in this area.

The language of BLISS is reflected in the secondary plan in the encouragement of the development of "affordable and liveable housing units that are suitable for families with children."

Significantly, the secondary plan states that development in the Preston Side Streets is "not subject to the minimum density targets" that apply to areas near LRT stations. Instead, future development is envisioned as "infill," with buildings up to four storeys, each with four units, and each unit with a front door facing the street.

## An Apartment Building on Larch Street?

For many familiar with the plan for the Preston Side

Streets, it was a surprise to learn that the first proposal for the area, by Roca Homes, designed by Hobin Architecture, was "to construct a four-storey low-rise apartment building, with a total of 26 dwelling units."

The apartment building – which straddles three lots and is wider, deeper and taller than permitted – proposes more than double the residences allowed. Access to the street is provided through a single front entrance.

For George Brook, one of the original members of BLISS, the proposal may be a step too far from the hard-fought requirements of the Corso Italia Station District Secondary Plan.

"We recognize the need for densification in our neighbourhood," he says, "but there has to be a balance." That balance is found when established residential areas like the Preston Side Streets are maintained, while the towers of Gladstone Village rise up on the vacant land immediately to the west.

The DCA and BLISS will be writing to the city about their concerns, which also include building design, the maintenance of Larch as a stub street, and bicycle and vehicle parking.

## A Plan for the Expansion of Preston Hardware

Directly across the street

Hobin Architecture, which has produced the early designs for Preston Hardware, has drawn up plans for a six-storey apartment building, facing Balsam, with a ground floor "urban warehouse space with residences above."

The secondary plan states that a six-storey development in this location "provide[s] transition to the low-rise residential buildings on the north side of Larch Street." The design responds to this requirement by proposing townhouses along the south side of Larch.

The DCA has written to thank Preston Hardware for informing the community of their plans, and to point to some concerns with the early designs, including off-street parking on the property, the need for more soft landscaping along Balsam, and the role of the street as a principal access route for vehicles to the future Gladstone Village.

The next regular meeting of the DCA will take place on Wednesday, May 4 at 7 p.m. And plan to attend our AGM on Saturday, May 14! For more information: [president@ottawadalhousie.ca](mailto:president@ottawadalhousie.ca)

## Justine Bell

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## CCA report

Jack Hanna

### Gardeners salute Ukraine

CCA’s volunteer gardeners will plant sunflowers, Ukraine’s national flower, prominently in Dundonald Park’s flower beds this spring.

Lead gardener Barbara Sibbald is looking for sunflower plants and urges folks to start seeds indoors. Contact her when the seedlings are ready to plant at: [ccca@centretowncitizens.ca](mailto:ccca@centretowncitizens.ca) and write “Dundonald” in the subject line.

### Big Earth Day celebration

On Saturday, April 23, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., there will be a celebration for Earth Day in Dundonald Park. Festival sponsors include CCA, Centretown Community Health Centre and Councillor Catherine McKenney. If it rains, the festival will take place on Sunday.

The event will open with an Indigenous strawberry

ceremony. There’ll be a story time session for children at 11 a.m., with readings in English and French by the Ottawa Public Library. There’s also a toy and book exchange. A youngster can bring an item and swap it for something novel. Kids can also try arts activities, or plant flowers with CCA’s volunteer gardeners.

There’ll also be knowledgeable people to advise on such things as gardening and plant care, growing your own food, how to move toward a plant-based diet and a local tool library. There’ll be exhibits on trees, bees and more.

### Best policing

Michelle Hurtubise, executive director of the Centretown Community Health Centre, will address a community forum on Monday, April 25, at 6:30 p.m. The event is titled *Rethinking Community Safety in Ottawa*, and is sponsored by CCA’s Anti-Racism and Affordable Housing Working Groups.

Hurtubise will discuss Ottawa policing, how it can

do a better job in meeting community needs and keeping Ottawans safe, and how some funding needs to be diverted to better solutions.

For the Zoom link, email: [anti-racism@centretowncitizens.ca](mailto:anti-racism@centretowncitizens.ca)

### Go gardeners go

CCA’s volunteer gardeners are springing into spring with the clean-up of Dundonald Park’s lawns and gardens on Thursday, April 21, over two shifts, from 3:30 to 5 p.m. and 5 to 6:30 p.m.

Garden prep starts in late April with pruning and weeding. Planting takes place later in the spring. For that to happen, plants are needed.

Lead gardener Barbara Sibbald asks Centretown’s gardeners to keep her in mind as they tidy and trim their gardens. If they’re removing a shrub or tree or splitting a perennial, contact her at: [ccca@centretowncitizens.ca](mailto:ccca@centretowncitizens.ca) and write “Dundonald” in the subject line.

### Volunteer with the farmers market

The Elgin Street Market, a CCA initiative, needs volunteers as it prepares to launch its second season on June 19. The CCA’s farmers market working group meets every Wednesday evening.

Volunteers are needed for



Flowers left on the gate of the Ukraine’s offices on Metcalfe Street. BRETT DELMAGE/THE BUZZ  
planning the event, on opening day and throughout the season. email: [elginstreetmarket@gmail.com](mailto:elginstreetmarket@gmail.com)  
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# Dining safely and socially in the street in the pandemic city

Alayne McGregor

With warmer weather this month, many people are migrating outside to patios to dine and meet friends in a safer environment.

The City of Ottawa recognized this last month by temporarily extending its patio program. Now any road segment in Ottawa may be closed for patios, with no fees being charged, as long as this is requested by a Business Improvement area or two-thirds of the business owners on each block being closed.

Patios may stay open until 2 a.m., with no limit on the number of seats. Retail businesses may also operate pop-up stores outside on the frontages of their businesses.

These changes are only for 2022, but the city is also considering whether to make them permanent.

Last year, two recent Carleton University master

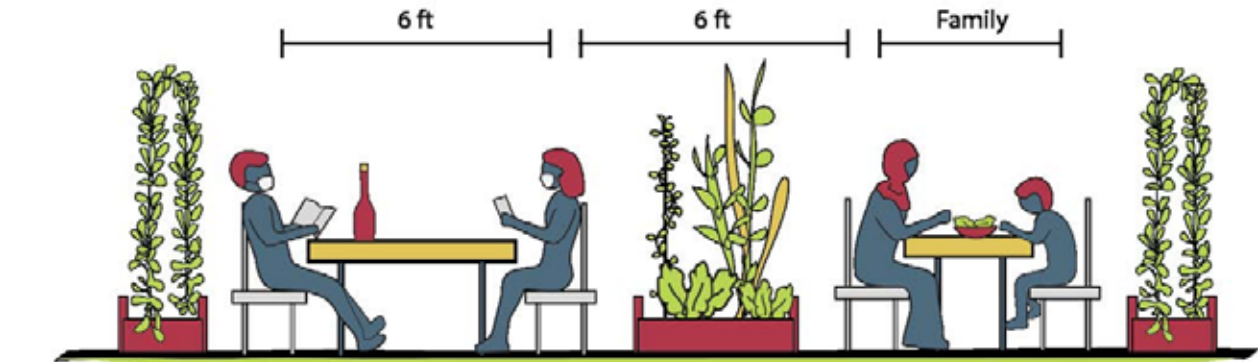
of architecture graduates, Shelby Hagerman and Rehab Salama, released a design handbook called *Dinner in the Street*. It explored innovative ways of rethinking streets in order to safely dine and socialize.

Hagerman told *The BUZZ* that the handbook was inspired by a tradition in the School of Architecture.

“Every year they’d line up tables and we’d all have a lovely dinner in the street with all of the graduating students of the year. So part of the inspiration came from some of the traditions that we had enjoyed in our school culture and that we were missing.”

They were “particularly interested in trying to figure out how design might be able to aid the really devastating impact that the pandemic had on the restaurant industry in particular,” she said.

She interviewed local restaurant managers, developers,



Examples of distancing while dining from the *Dinner in the Street* report.

and BIA representatives to see what would actually work in their areas, and met City of Ottawa staff to discuss the effect of the pandemic and the restrictions on dining.

The result was influenced by the dining streets in cities like Montreal, but “respectful to Ottawa’s character and of course Ottawa has its own sort of spirit.” Hagerman said she dines out weekly, and preferably outdoors in the summer.

Using streets in central Ottawa as examples, the two showed how space could be reallocated to allow outdoor dining using the specific characteristics of each area.

On Argyle Avenue, they envisioned social service agencies offering weekly lunches and dinners to the low-income/under-served, on a long outdoor

table covered with umbrellas.

On Preston Street, they proposed a “Farm to Table” project on the small cul-de-sacs to the west of Preston. The design would narrow the streets to create a set of outdoor dining rooms, framed by vegetable beds, and sized for either family dining or physically distanced dining among strangers.

“Neighbours establish vegetable beds at the end of the cul-de-sac and in their front yards, to augment food production. Meals can be delivered from Preston Street restaurants to tables by flocks of [autonomous] server-birds.”

On George and York Streets, the handbook experimented with circles on the street that defined separated dining bubbles. These could be as simple as chalk lines, she said, or eventually paving patterns in the street. They could also be used for other activities such as group yoga or concert seating.

Hagerman emphasized

that the ideas weren’t just for the pandemic, although creating “engaging dining experiences” that fit into COVID-19 guidelines was the initial goal.

“But we also hope that our handbook is expansive in the sense that maybe it engages the public to imagine how might our public spaces transform in a post-COVID scenario, in ways that these designs might live and thrive. They are not necessarily simply just a reaction to COVID guidelines but are something that become hopefully desirable to the public.”

She also emphasized that they could be applied on many Ottawa streets. “Narrowing down our selections of the streets became really difficult because in a lot of ways these moves could be repeated or echoed on a lot of other streets in Ottawa.”

“That’s particularly true with a lot of the winter interventions we envisioned. We had these winter cabins that we imagined were mobile.

We actually placed them on Sparks Street and in the Market, but we could see them really going anywhere in the city.”

Hagerman said she was inspired by what’s already happening, for example how Somerset Street West between Bank and O’Connor has been closed each weekend for dining for the last two summers.

Similarly in downtown Gatineau, Laval Street has recently they paved their sidewalks to align with the road “so that it can create more accessible, pedestrian-friendly restaurant-scape. Many people from what I can tell have been enjoying that.”

“The message we want to bring is, ‘How can we rethink our public spaces?’ Certainly we could expand beyond simply roads to parking lots and even parks. The Beechwood Cemetery early dinners also come to mind. We hope people can consider all of these spaces in a different way.”



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## Jane’s Walk returns in person in 2022



A previous Jane’s Walk tour of Confectionaries reaches Preston Street.

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Let’s keep walking!

Reconnect with your community as Jane’s Walk Ottawa-Gatineau returns to local streets in 2022

Join Jane’s Walk Ottawa-Gatineau May 7 and 8 to learn about local history, celebrate culture, and reconnect with your community following a two-year pandemic hiatus.

Jane’s Walk is an annual

festival of free, community-led walking conversations inspired by the late urbanist, activist, and journalist Jane Jacobs. Jane’s Walk festivals take place in hundreds of cities around the world on the first weekend of May.

Jane’s Walks encourage people to share stories about their neighbourhoods, discover unseen aspects of their communities, and use walking as a way to connect with

their neighbours.

To prioritize the health and wellbeing of our community, pre-registration will be required for walks during the 2022 festival and capacity will be capped to enable physical distancing. Wearing a mask is encouraged.

Visit [janeswalkottawa.ca](http://janeswalkottawa.ca) for the 2022 festival schedule and to register as a participant for specific walking tours (coming soon!).





The bee and butterfly pollinator garden along Frank Street by Staples is currently dormant, with the remains of last year's plants protecting the soil. *BRETT DELMAGE/THE BUZZ*

## Bee and butterfly garden expanding

**continued from page 1**

native plants have evolved together and enjoy a harmonious existence. Bees pollinate the plants by moving pollen between plants.

In return, the plants have evolved to provide abundant food as nectar for the bees.

As well, native insects and native plant populations can thrive together over the years. Native plants are adapted to the local ecosystem and thus likely to do well; they offer a reliable long-term insect food source.

Many of the plants put in last spring at the Frank Street garden were new and did not bloom in their first year. However, the anise hyssop came to flower. "They were very attractive to the bees and butterflies we have here in the city," Murray said.

Scientists say both bee and butterfly populations are declining. One researcher recently estimated the number of wild bees worldwide has fallen by 25 percent since 1990.

The main culprit is widespread pesticide use. No pesticides will be applied on the Frank Street bee and butterfly gardens.

The group is looking for more volunteers. If you are interested, email: [fbgardener@protonmail.com](mailto:fbgardener@protonmail.com)

## Comment: Gun violence prevention as public health policy

Rob MacDonald

When we think of gun violence, most of us think about the street shootings in our community that are reported in the media. Sadly, they tell only a small part of the extent of gun prevalence in our city. Guns are often the cause of suicide or shooting accidents in the home, and they are used in domestic violence to control and kill intimate partners.

Guns are an epidemic in our society and should be treated through the lens of public health policy.

In 2021, 80 shootings were reported in the City of Ottawa. The majority of these shootings were targeted, and half of them did not result in anybody being hit. Most shootings in Ottawa are related to the illegal drug trade, and an estimated 77 percent of illegal firearms were traced back to the U.S.

Illegal handguns are a problem in Ottawa's urban core. However, most firearm deaths are found in the rural and suburban areas, where rifles and shotguns are used in suicides and domestic violence. Seventy-five percent of firearm deaths in Canada are self-inflicted suicides that occur in the home. A gun, more than anything else, has the capacity to turn a moment of despair into a lethal moment. Its very presence in the home can rapidly escalate that risk. Two percent of firearm deaths are caused by gun accidents in

the home, while another two percent are related to domestic violence. In short, most gun deaths occur in the home, with legally owned firearms.

Gun violence is often connected to symptoms of structural inequalities and health deficiencies which have been left untreated. It takes on different forms depending on region, gender, and culture. Reducing gun violence requires a comprehensive preventative approach, one that includes not only strong gun control, but also resources for vulnerable populations including mental health, addictions, at-risk youth, affordable housing, and reducing poverty.

The federal government recently passed legislation that would allow cities to ban handguns. This is problematic since municipalities would still require the permission of provincial governments. The Ontario government has indicated its opposition to gun bans, favouring more funding to law enforcement.

Secondly, it creates a "patchwork" system of gun control, meaning guns flow from areas with weaker laws to areas that have stronger controls. Public safety requires consistent federal standards to be effective and should not be dependant on the decisions of individual municipalities or provinces.

Here in Ottawa, our City Council tends to defer to Ottawa Police Services as the de facto "experts" in gun violence. Unfortunately, this excludes the multitude

of professionals who work with at-risk groups and have advocated for preventative measures and law reform.

A comprehensive community response must involve the input of mental health and addictions counselors; frontline workers who work with BIPOC people and at-risk youth; and domestic violence and poverty reduction advocates. Most importantly, we need to hear the voices of the families and friends who have lost loved ones to gun violence.

When we fall into the narrative that all gun violence is related to "street crime," we focus our resources on more police, tougher sentences which are costly and fail to address the root causes. The "tough-on-crime" approach does not reduce crime or violence and it continues to starve community resources that reduce gun violence.

The Ottawa Police Service has stated that drug trafficking is responsible for most gun crime in our community. The War on Drugs has been a massive failure in our community, as it has been throughout the world. We spend an exorbitant amount of tax dollars on police and the criminal justice system to reduce drug crime, while we invest only minuscule amounts on treatment and prevention.

The illegal drug trade is a lucrative market. Many of the firearms smuggled in from the U.S. are brought in to facilitate the illegal drug crime. Locally, police hold

## MPP report: A lot can happen when we demand more from politics

Joel Harden

The last four years have been tough on our city and province. But I'm proud of what we've accomplished because you demanded more from us.

As we approach another election in Ontario, I want to reflect on the past four years and highlight how much can be accomplished when we organize and demand more from politics.

We've achieved much for seniors, family caregivers and people with disabilities by telling their stories in the legislature and demanding that the Ford government accommodate our neighbours during and out of the pandemic.

When Melanie Coughlin, an instructor at Carleton University, came to us for help getting public swimming pools opened during the lockdown, so she and others living with disabilities could access them for medically necessary aquatherapy,

we worked with the government to get this done.

We assisted those impacted by the greedy for-profit companies in long-term care and home care by passing Voula's Law unanimously in the Ontario Legislature, so that private long-term care and retirement home operators can no longer prevent families from visiting their loved ones.

We were also there for our schools and for kids hurt by cuts to the Ontario Autism Program.

We've supported education and health care staff, and community groups targeted by Bill 124's caps on their wages.

We supported Cooking for a Cause, a local initiative that brings together 20 food businesses and 23 social service agencies to help neighbours in need.

Nous nous sommes battus pour des services en français et pour une nouvelle école publique française dans la circonscription alors

que le gouvernement Ford continue de retarder ce projet dont le centre d'Ottawa a désespérément besoin.

We stood up for workers and small businesses left behind during COVID-19. We've helped tenants hurt by evictions, massive rent increases, or by the impact of constant construction noise from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

We've also been there for our neighbours at risk. When the Kowloon Market was targeted by hate, we were there. When Muslim or Jewish neighbours felt unsafe to go outside, we were there.

When the freedom convoy threatened the safety of our neighbours, small businesses and workers, we supported neighbour-to-neighbour efforts to keep each other safe.

We've also demanded accountability. When our LRT derailed for the fifth time, we fought for and won a provincial inquiry. When Algonquin friends demanded justice, we were there. When an environmental assessment was demanded for the new Civic Hospital, we led the charge.

Let's keep demanding more from politics and let's keep organizing for justice. If you need help getting support or services from the provincial government, please reach out and, if you're organizing for a more just Ottawa, you have an ally in us.

We've shown up, spoken out and earned victories during these challenging times. We know that our city and our province deserve so much better, and run on your passion, your ideas and your support.

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# What's on in Ottawa and beyond

Tony Wohlfarth

Spring in Ottawa offers renewal and prospects for a better year.

## Ottawa Grassroots Festival

From April 21 to 24, folkies from across the National Capital Region are invited to enjoy live music at the 10th annual Ottawa Grassroots Festival. Events get underway on Thursday evening with a brief opening set by Alison Bowie and Ian Tamblyn, then longer sets by The Blind and the Beautiful, and Angélique Francis. On Friday, Bowie and Tamblyn will be followed by Moonfruits and Twin Flames. On Saturday, they will be followed by Peterborough's own Rick Fines (pictured here) and The Mavens – Lynn Miles, Susan Crowe and Shari Ulrich.



Rick Fines (courtesy the artist)

Daytime events – not just music but also gardening hints and guitar building – are free. Tickets for the evening performances (\$35 per night or \$90 for all three shows, plus fees) are available at: [ottawagrassrootsfestival.com](https://ottawagrassrootsfestival.com). All events will be held at St. Andrew's Church, 82 Kent Street.

Daytime events get underway at 11 a.m.

on Saturday and noon on Sunday. Evening shows start at 7:30 p.m.

## Canadian Museum of Nature (240 McLeod)

Last month, we previewed a new installation – the Pacific Discovery Tank – at the museum (240 McLeod) along with the Platinum Jubilee Display marking the 70th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

This month, the CMN added leafcutter ants – which have the most complex non-human society on earth – to its Bugs Alive exhibit. These insects use leaves to grow fungus which serves as food for their larvae, and can clear entire trees in under a day.

On April 22, museum admission is free in honour of Earth Day.

## Ottawa Art Gallery (50 Mackenzie King Bridge)

The OAG is open from Wednesday to Sunday from 10 to 6. Entrance is free and walk-ins welcome. Current exhibits include "Landscape, Loss, and Legacy" by Centretown's own Don Kwan, in which Kwan engages with the City of Ottawa's Firestone Collection of Canadian Art.

## Gladstone Theatre (910 Gladstone)

The Gladstone presents *Shakespeare's Will* from April 20 to May 7. It explores one of the most silent characters in history: Anne Hathaway, Shakespeare's wife. Tickets at [www.thegladstone.ca/shakespeares-will/](https://www.thegladstone.ca/shakespeares-will/)

## The Outfit

*The Outfit* is a superb feature length film set in the world of the mob in Chicago circa 1956. The star of the film is Mark Rylance, who plays the role of Leonard Burling, a tailor by trade who learned his craft in England. Leonard's assistant is Mable (Zoey Deutch). The dotting Mable disguises her personal ambitions and ties to the mob in a highly enter-



A scene from *The Outfit*, with Zoey Deutch (left) and Mark Rylance (right).

taining story, full of surprises.

I enjoyed the "whodunnit" plot, which is full of twists and turns about characters' knowledge and secrets. The costuming and set design are fantastic – as befits a film which is set in a tailor's shop.

*The Outfit* had its world premiere at the 2022 Berlinale. The running time is 1h45m. It will be at [The Mayfair](https://www.themayfair.ca) (1074 Bank Street) for four showings starting April 23.

## More live music

The **National Arts Centre** (1 Elgin) has many live performances this month. Highlights include:

- Bruce Cockburn 50th Anniversary concert (April 23);
- The musical *Anastasia* (April 26-May 1);
- Yao (May 12);
- Martyn Joseph (May 14);
- Donovan Woods (May 17 & 18);
- Rufus Wainwright (May 19);
- Amanda Rheame (May 25).

See [nac-cna.ca](https://nac-cna.ca) for a full list.

**Queen Street Fare** (170 Queen) has jazz music every Wednesday, with master guitarist Roddy Ellias (April 20), the Suzie Q Trio (April 27), saxophonist Pete Woods (May 4), and Petr Cancura accompanying the Buster Keaton movie *The General* (May 11). See [queenstare.ca/happening](https://queenstare.ca/happening) for more info.

**Live on Elgin** (220 Elgin) also has live shows, include Sean Duhaime's Opportunity Project playing jazz fusion on May 15. See the list at [www.liveonelgin.com/collections/shows](https://www.liveonelgin.com/collections/shows)

## May Day music

On May 1 at 3 p.m., the Ottawa Choral Society (under the direction of Artistic Director Jean-Sébastien Vallée) performs Brahms' German Requiem. Tickets are available at: <https://ottawachoralsociety.com/event/johannes-brahms-ein-deutsches-requiem/>

Also, on May 1 (International Workers Day) at 2 p.m., Gil's Hootenanny returns to the RA Centre (2451 Riverside Drive) for its 13th year, with headliner James Keelaghan.

continued on page 15 What's On

## Catherine McKenney

City Councillor  
for Somerset Ward

### Keep in touch!

For the latest news on Somerset Ward, sign up for my newsletter on my website and follow me on social media:

[catherinemckenney.ca](https://catherinemckenney.ca)

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[cmckenney14](https://instagram.com/cmckenney14)

### Questions? We can help!

613-580-2484

[catherine.mckenney@ottawa.ca](mailto:catherine.mckenney@ottawa.ca)





# Our NeighbourWoods



A majestic tree towering over houses on Bronson Avenue. Both photos were taken this month, before the trees started to leaf.

Darlene Pearson

It all started when I fell in love with the enormous silver maple in my neighbour’s backyard. For years, I have admired its majestic presence from my window and enjoyed its four seasons of beauty.

Two years of COVID-19 restrictions have given me a lot of time to walk and pay more attention to my neighbourhood. I have noticed that many trees have alarming shapes and conditions: huge V-shaped cuts for hydro wires, untrimmed dead branches, lost leaves in the tree crown and other signs of neglect. In many cases, trees are simply gone—cut down and not replaced.

My concerns have found an outlet with the Centretown NeighbourWoods Team. During the 2021 summer season, this team of 30 volunteers surveyed over 700 trees in the western part of Centretown and a section in the Golden Triangle. We measured tree height and diameter, figured out tree species and noted over 30 conditions for each tree. This data will provide a picture of what our tree canopy looks like now and what we need to do to improve it.

All 30 volunteers share an appreciation of the benefits trees have to offer and a desire to see Centretown enriched and protected by a better tree canopy. For Stephen Thirlwall, the links between healthy trees and climate change mitigation are important.

“I became concerned that the City of Ottawa was not doing enough to care for our trees or to replace those that have been cut down. We need

a good tree canopy more than ever to counter the increased heat that is predicted for Ottawa and that we are already experiencing,” he said.

For Douglas Cariou, it has been a chance to learn more about trees and also to discover more about the neighbourhood. He notes that residents have been very supportive of the team’s efforts.

Elizabeth Powles has enjoyed working with others as part of a community undertaking and stresses the importance of this “taking stock” exercise for our trees. And Kim Symes echoes this view. She found that residents are concerned about tree health and asked many questions, and she sees this project as a way to bring the community together and give people a voice in the care of their neighbourhood.

Sue Thompson laughs when she says: “People know who we are when they see us. We’re all looking up—at the trees. And they all give us positive encouragement. Residents have all received the Centretown NeighbourWoods flyers ahead of time, so they know to expect us.”

Emma Bider was amazed at how open people were about allowing access to their backyards so that trees on private land were surveyed as well. “It is heartening to see how so many yards have been transformed into urban oases and that many of these ‘hidden’ trees are being well cared for.” In fact, over 60 percent of Centretown’s trees are on private land.

One thing all the volunteers agreed on is that this experience has changed how we walk around Centretown. Sue Thompson confirms this: “I’m no longer just going from one place to another.

I pay attention to the trees along the way and now take pleasure in knowing what I am seeing.”

Volunteers not only learned a lot but many did additional research to find out more about the conditions they were seeing. For example, Kerri Schleppe’s favourite tree is an ancient sycamore that she has nicknamed Groot after the Marvel Comics tree-like creature. Like the fictional creature, Ottawa’s Groot shows resilience and provides habitat for wildlife.

As volunteers, we wonder at the ability of the trees to survive in small cramped spaces, growing through fences, chains, concrete and asphalt, and embedding into their bark various unusual items from laundry lines to guitars!

We’re gearing up for our second season and will not only continue our survey work in selected areas, but will also add an additional focus to identify where new trees can be planted. This will help us eventually prepare a stewardship plan for all Centretown trees.

We are actively recruiting new volunteers to bring your new ideas and energy, and to help with everything from tree survey work, to writing articles, to social media tasks, to creating new graphic material. We offer a training session for new volunteers, as well as a refresher course for returning volunteers at the end of May.

For more information, contact Darlene at: [neighbourwoods@centretowncitizens.ca](mailto:neighbourwoods@centretowncitizens.ca)

*Darlene is the coordinator of the Centretown NeighbourWoods Team.*



This tree is almost as tall as the apartment buildings around it on Metcalfe Street.

BRETT DELMAGE/THE BUZZ

MP | député

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# Ontario issues: A food-secure future

Jeff Mason

In November, to much fanfare, a new full-service grocery store opened in Little Italy. Living in the area for seven years, I'm used to getting in my car and driving out of the neighbourhood to a large grocery store every week for my food essentials. This is a privilege that's not an option for many of my neighbours.

While the new store adds to the wealth of small businesses addressing the needs of accessible and culturally appropriate food in the Dalhousie area, I still worry about rising levels of food insecurity in my neighbourhood.

## What is food insecurity?

For lots of us, hearing stories of empty shelves at grocery stores earlier this year was the first time we've had to think about not having food on the table for dinner. Unfortunately, for many in our community "inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints" – food insecurity – is a regular occurrence.

Food insecurity has many appearances, some of which many of us may have experienced at different point in our lives. On one end of the scale, it can mean worrying

about running out of food or having limited food options. At the other end, it means missing meals, reducing how much food you eat, or even going days without food.

Food insecurity isn't just about being hungry. It has a terrible impact on people's wellbeing, including childhood growth and development. People living in food-insecure households are at increased risk of chronic conditions, like diabetes. There's also a strong link between food insecurity and poor mental health. Depression, anxiety, mood disorders, and suicidal thoughts all increase as people become increasingly food-insecure. This leads to increased demand for health care services, unnecessarily burdening an already buckling health care system.

## Food insecurity in Ottawa and Centretown?

According to a 2019 report by Ottawa Public Health, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, one in seven households (13.9 percent) were food insecure. If we've followed the national trend in Ottawa, we'd expect the number of food-insecure households to have grown. A 2022 federal government study of food insecurity in Canada found 14 to 17 per-

cent of all households reported some degree of insecurity during the first year of the pandemic.

In their 2020 report, researchers at PROOF (a pan-Canadian team investigating food insecurity) have helped paint a picture of who experiences food insecurity. While food insecurity can affect anyone, it's most frequent in households that identify as Black or Indigenous. Folks who rent their home are also more frequently food insecure than those who own.

People experiencing food insecurity may also not be who you think. While over 60 percent of households whose main source of income is social assistance, households whose main source of income comes from wages earned by working make up most of all food insecure homes.

## What causes food insecurity?

Being food insecure means not having enough money at the end of the day to buy nutritious food. Some reasons for food insecurity are straightforward to understand, like the rising cost of food (a 2019 report by Ottawa Public Health estimated it cost at least \$901 a month to feed an Ottawa family of four, up 22 percent since 2009) or the high cost of

housing in the city.

Others are more complex, like the policy and program choices made or not made at all levels of government (think social assistance programs not adjusted to inflation, employment standards that results in precarious employment, or a basic income guarantee).

## A food-secure future for everyone

On June 2, we will elect a new provincial government. If we want a community where everyone has access to the nutritious food they need, our leaders can make this happen.

Ask your local candidates whether their party will:

- **Ensure households receiving social support have the money they need to put food on the table.** For example, does their platform commit to raising rates to \$1087 for Ontario Works and \$1525 for Ontario Disability Support program (1995 levels adjusted for inflation)? Does their platform broaden access to everyone in Ontario regardless of immigration status? Does it include the wraparound services (like childcare, transportation, or housing) necessary for success? The Income Security Advocacy Centre's 2022 provincial budget submission



Fresh fruits and vegetables are not affordable by all.

STEPHEN THIRLWALL/THE BUZZ

has many more ideas too.

- **Eliminate the need for food charities like food banks.** Does their party platform include the immediate addition of a food supplement for all social support recipients, including seniors, as recommended by the Parkdale Food Centre to help offset the rising cost of food and housing?
- **In the interim, support the work of local organizations like the Parkdale Food Centre, St. Luke's Table, the Dalhousie Food Cupboard, and the Centretown Emergency Food**

**Centre.** For example, will they commit to supporting programs that provide fresh, nutritious food locally and outside the traditional food banking model? Will they commit to supporting food recovery programs? (Parkdale Food Centre's 2022 Knowing Our Neighbours report contains many more examples of how our local organizations could be better supported.)

Food is a human right. On June 2, let's build a community where no one goes hungry.

# O-C District School Board trustee: "It is what it is"

Justine Bell

"It is what it is" – and leadership is about how you come to terms with it. Knowing when to listen, speak out, organize, and concede.

When it comes to safety, to ensuring a sense of security in our community, I believe that it's about taking every opportunity to intentionally act.

Over the past few months, it has been a challenging honour to serve as the OCDSB Trustee for Somerset/Kitchissippi. The safety of our community has been compromised repeatedly.

It has been hard. I don't want to rehash what our community has gone through, but I would like to share with you what I have done with the trust that has been placed in me.

With the convoy occupying our neighbourhood, I heard from so many parents about sleepless nights, about fear, about aggression and symbols of hate showing up in front of our schools.

For weeks, I worked behind the scenes to ensure

that our schools were safe, to have the OCDSB proactively communicate with our community, and to rally support for prioritizing protecting our kids.

Reaching out to union leaders, educators, fellow trustees, councillors, our MPP, media, and our local health organizations, I was comforted to know that so many were using their power intentionally.

Did we succeed in our endeavours? I'm sure everyone has their own perspective and my hope is that we will learn from it, be held accountable for our actions, and do better.

One concrete outcome on my side was a revision to our safe schools' policies: the inclusion of a commitment to undertake an after-action review with community stakeholders after a crisis.

And then masks were up for debate in schools. In an ideal world, yes, we should have confidence that the province will prioritize the safety and security of children, and that their decisions will be evidence-based.

I listened to the Children's Health Coalition

(a collective of children's health organizations including Ontario children's hospitals, Children's Mental Health Ontario, Empowered Kids Ontario, and Kids Health Alliance), to CHEO, to the doctors in our community, and to parents of medically fragile children.

I brought forth an emergency motion to continue mandating masks in schools until at least two weeks after the March break, aligned with the Coalition's recommendation.

I worked behind the scenes again to garner support, to get others to intentionally act... The motion failed on a tie. Some of my fellow trustees wanted to place their trust in the province, and like all of us, want things to get back to normal.

As I write this on Easter weekend, COVID-19 cases are soaring, classes are closing in Ottawa, and the motion to mandate masks was reintroduced and passed!

We aren't back to normal yet, it is what it is – your OCDSB leadership has listened, learned and acted!

Justine Bell is the OCDSB trustee for Zone 10.



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# Reflections on being there: from protest to pushback, takedown to aftermath

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Clear knowledge of what was happening dropped off exponentially with distance from the epicentre.

I, on the other hand, had to walk through or near to the main demonstration several times to get to specific destinations. The air was full of tension. It wasn't jovial, although many of the truckers hugged or high-fived one another. That was to hype themselves up. Towards Ottawa residents, they primarily projected aggression and meanness.

The core members appeared like thugs, while "part-timers" acted like this was an excuse to party. The latter group did not stay overnight. Most came just for weekends and stayed around the fringe yelling and waving flags.

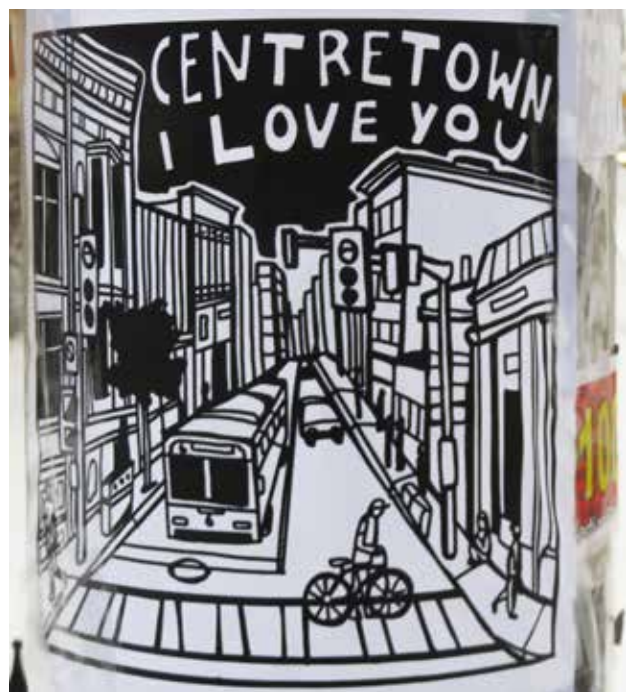
Close to home, a woman with a microphone screamed at the top of her voice that we were dogs, brain-damaging our children. Within this atmosphere, I was enraged by the protesters.

As soon as I was beyond the toxic zone, I felt huge

were vaccinated and continued working. Probably many unvaccinated drivers also continued working inside Canada. While the number of trucks coming to Centretown felt very large, it represented a tiny portion of Canadian truckers.

Secondly, the financial backers paid only towards the demonstration, not towards support of truckers in need; and thirdly, the demonstration was underlain by hidden agendas that started surfacing each day, showing up as slander against the Prime Minister, denunciations of all governments, and hate speech and harassment towards the public.

Furthermore, the anti-vax movement and other extremist groups were involved. They called for removal of all government mandates; yet some demonstrators put forward their own mandate to bring down the government. Many protesters had strange slogans and Canadian flags on the sides of vehicles, the flags defaced by foul language. On the first weekend, U.S. Confederate flags were visible.



A resident's counter-poster.

STEPHEN THIRLWALL/THE BUZZ

relief. I could breathe fresh air again and calmed down. Each experience reconfirmed the earlier ones.

## Misinformation, smoke and mirrors

From the very start, many misconceptions were being propagated by the protesters and repeated by the media. The demonstration was based entirely on misinformation.

The notion that unvaccinated truckers, not allowed to cross the U.S. border, were demonstrating because they were losing their livelihoods seems to have been primarily a cover story intended to draw public sympathy. I say this because, firstly, the convoy organizers implied that thousands of truckers from across the nation would be descending on Ottawa. In reality, most Canadian truckers

In contrast, the weekend protesters walked or drove around proudly waving or wearing Canadian flags, supposedly as symbols of liberty.

The call for "Freedom" was false because the protesters had already acted on their right to not vaccinate. They just did not want to accept the responsibility and repercussions that go with their choice. Then they blatantly trampled on the rights and freedom of others. They expected a freedom where they could do whatever they want without consequences.

It was said that a majority of truckers were from the west, particularly Alberta. However, as I walked around downtown, most licence plates I saw were from Ontario and Quebec.

The claim was constantly made that the demonstration was peaceful and



Trucks jamming Metcalfe Street and all honking at once.

STEPHEN THIRLWALL/THE BUZZ

legal. Clearly this was not the case. By loudly honking horns, demonstrators generated noise levels well beyond safety standards to both others and themselves. The din continued on for hours, keeping residents awake much of the night. During the daytime, it distracted residents and downtown workers.

Physical violence is not the only form of abuse. There were threats and intimidation, name-calling, hate messages, and other bullying. Demonstrators entered shops in a belligerent fashion, upsetting customers and harassing staff. If local citizens had carried out similar acts, they would automatically have been fined or imprisoned.

## An attempt to hijack the government

The demonstration was never what it seemed. This was a protest against the rule of law and government in general. It displayed deep distrust in government. Its thrust was to cause social disruption and destabilization, and hijack the attention of government, at least for a while.

The plight of unvaccinated truckers losing their livelihoods was just a surface rallying point. In the background were individuals and groups (including foreign interests) financially supporting the demonstration.

These actions were antithetical to a healthy community, society, and civilization. These require basic order, participation, and collaboration – not lawlessness.

Fringe protesters may

have been just letting off steam because they felt overcome with frustration caused by the pandemic and the consequent loss of services, supports, and income. But we all faced these same frustrations, and the majority of people have united to vaccinate, pay attention to the science, follow the guidelines as best as possible, and find useful things to do.

## Why this discontent?

Why is there increasing discontent? One possibility is because Canadian society is undergoing increasing challenges, upheavals, and change. We are confronted by serious global and local issues concerning the

environment, identity, civil rights, racism, poverty, rampant materialism and consumerism, increasing diversity through immigration and refugees, jobs going overseas to the cheapest labour, and more.

This is forcing us to re-evaluate and change aspects of ourselves, our community, society, industries, and governments. Change is difficult. Many individuals feel inadequate. Some people find it easiest to give up and protest, pointing blame at the "government." However, no government is currently capable of managing these problems on their own. They are too complex and cross many borders.

Fortunately, there are many options we can explore to manage change that are cooperative, peaceful and constructive, especially when we work together. We don't have to always reduce our choice to conflict and contention. Inaction also proved itself a poor choice.

To resolve this particular demonstration, forces of aggression, obstruction, anger, hate, misinformation and narrow thinking were overcome by united forces applying justice and the rule of law, flexible thinking, concern for everyone and a stable economy, and very importantly, peaceful action.

# What's on in Ottawa and beyond

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Gil Levine, the longstanding Research Director of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, was passionate about folk music. The sing-along gets underway at 2 p.m. Get tickets and catch past videos at: [gilshootenanny.ca/](http://gilshootenanny.ca/)

## Undercurrents

Ottawa Fringe's undercurrents theatre festival returns April 20 to 30, with six mainstage shows and two Discovery Series shows.

In *Me, Vivien Leigh and the Roller Rink*, Lucy van Oldenbarneveld recounts how she tried to escape gritty, working class Steeltown through the perceived glamour and romance of the novel and film of *Gone with the Wind*.

See [www.undercurrents-festival.ca](http://www.undercurrents-festival.ca) for ticket info.

## Out of Town

The best of documentary films from around the world can be seen at the 2022 Hot Docs Film Festival in Toronto from April 28 – May 8. This year's festival is available in hybrid format: the films can also be seen online. The complete program can be accessed at [hotdocs.ca/whats-on/hot-docs-festival](http://hotdocs.ca/whats-on/hot-docs-festival)

In Montreal, *The BUZZ* previewed a multi-dimensional exhibition about surveillance technology at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (MAC).

It opens with *Terror Contagion*, a film by Laura Poitras which was nominated for an Academy Award in the short documentary category. The exhibition includes an audio guide which leads you to witness firsthand the stories of journalists and human

rights defenders in several countries. The exhibition documents how governments use Pegasus software to surveil citizens. You can see more information at [macm.org/en/exhibitions/terror-contagion/#interactive-tour](http://macm.org/en/exhibitions/terror-contagion/#interactive-tour)

The MAC also has an online guide to its collection, *A Crack in Everything*, dedicated to the memory of Leonard Cohen. The virtual guide is accessible for free at: [expocohen.macm.org/en/explore](http://expocohen.macm.org/en/explore)

*Tony Wohlforth is an Ottawa-based freelance film and entertainment writer. He is currently covering the 2022 Hot Docs Film Festival in Toronto and previewed Terror Contagion Forensic Architecture as a guest of the MAC.*



## Comment

# Reflections on being there: from protest to pushback, takedown to aftermath

Stephen Thirlwall

Some have compared living under the pandemic to living under conditions of war. While there are similarities, the analogy never quite worked for me.

However, it works very well with the experience of living beside the trucker demonstration that tied up downtown Ottawa for almost a month. There were not a lot of deaths, but there were many casualties.

A core group of protesters planned a deliberate military-style invasion and occupation of Centretown and some adjacent areas. Demonstrators filled the airwaves with propaganda. Convoys of vehicles entered the city, quickly blockading strategic transportation routes and centres. City authorities were caught off-guard, probably expecting just another regular demonstration.

Only federal land on Parliament Hill was guarded. Businesses (including banks, library branches, pharmacies) either closed their doors or operated on much shorter hours. Those open were hard to access by the public.

Some park areas were occupied. Operation centres and camps were set up in public spaces, and supply chains arranged to support prolonged occupation.

Throughout, members of the public were constantly harassed by aggressive and intimidating behaviour, intense noise, high pollution, and overall disruption of normal life.

## Residents fought back

As in war, the public eventually began to organize and take action to oppose the occupation, especially with the relative inaction of city authorities. Public pushback caused the voice of local citizens to be heard more widely. Previous to this, the demonstrators got more media coverage, giving them a certain credibility. One of the first counter-demonstrations, started by a group of concerned mothers, became a huge gathering blocking protest trucks from entering Centretown. The truckers were held up for hours, then one by one sent home after taking down their signs and promising to leave. This was a major turning point, enacted peacefully.

## And then governments...

With emergency legislation coming into play, government action at all levels was finally and belatedly released. Clear warnings were given, funding was cut off, supply chains were begun to be disrupted.

Then the united police force (including RCMP, Ontario, and Quebec officers, plus others from further afield) acted in a well-planned, high-level military action. The demonstration was cleared away within three days. Police operated with patience and restraint, minimizing any heavy-handed tactics in the face of obstinate and aggressive protesters.

Checkpoints were set up throughout Centretown neighbourhoods to keep "weekend" protesters away and gradually shrink the containment area of the demonstration. Trucks were systematically removed and noncooperative protesters arrested. Some demonstrators left quietly. The peaceful shutdown was completed and violence avoided.

In the aftermath, certain checkpoints and barriers remained in place for more than a week. While these

caused some inconvenience, particularly with bus routes, residents generally accepted them. The police are prepared to bring them back quickly if needed.

## The impact remains

Post-demonstration, residents most directly affected began to realize that serious impacts have not ended. People felt battered. Damage and disturbance were done to both residents and the functioning of the city.

Centretown offices, small businesses, services, restaurants and cafés are only gradually reopening; some are permanently closed. After a week, some people still felt uncomfortable to come outside, even with easing of pandemic restrictions.

As the aftermath continues, groups of residents have gathered to take back their parks and streets. Posters have appeared calling for safe neighbourhoods and an end to hate.

A trickle of demonstrators, on foot and following protest rules, remain; their cries insignificant. They have not been able access their central camp area on Wellington Street in front



A poster for the March 5 post-occupation rally.

of Parliament Hill, which remains closed to car and truck traffic. An aftermath of ripples will continue for some time.

## Like Woodstock, "You had to be there"

People across the city, country, and the world heard about the demonstration and thought they knew all about

it. But they were not here. They did not directly experience it. The inner-city population was inescapably present and directly felt the serious impacts.

On speaking with friends living in other parts of Ottawa, I realized they had a range of differing misunderstandings about the demonstration.

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