



Groomer Pete tells all, 6



See Ottawa's new art acquisitions, 11

THE CENTRETOWN BUZZ



After Ottawa's first big snowstorm in December, an anonymous artist used the plentiful snow to create art on the trees in Minto Park, echoing the city sculpture by Francis Montillaud (see inset) in the park. Let's hope the artist returns to lighten our spirits!

HEATHER WILCOX/THE BUZZ



Only three of the four dancers in the sculpture *Joy* on Sparks Street remain after it was damaged. ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

Longtime Sparks Street sculpture damaged

Alayne McGregor

A bronze sculpture which has stood on Sparks Street since 1970 was seriously damaged on the evening of January 9, and will likely take months to repair.

Joy, by Canadian sculp-

tor Bruce Garner, shows four children dancing together in a circle. Kevin McHale, the executive director of the Sparks Street BIA, said many people over the years have walked by and smiled at the piece, or taken a photo with it.

continued on page 4 "Joy"

Parliamentary committee recommends feds take over Sparks and Wellington

Alayne McGregor

A House of Commons committee has recommended that the Parliament Hill precinct be expanded to include Wellington and Sparks Streets, and that Wellington and Sparks remain closed to car and truck traffic.

If accepted, this change could affect transit, transportation, businesses, and residents near the Hill.

On December 14, the house Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs released a 78-page report, *Protecting the Parliamentary Precinct: Responding to Evolving Risks*. The report's eight recommendations were clearly in response to the convoy occupation of Ottawa last winter.

They include:

- continuing consultation and discussions "with relevant stakeholders" regarding the potential expansion

of Parliament Hill onto Wellington and Sparks Streets, along with the potential redevelopment of these streets;

- expanding the federal jurisdiction for the operational security of Parliament Hill to include sections of Wellington and Sparks and, if necessary, that the city transfer land to the federal government to allow for Wellington and Sparks to become part of Parliament Hill;
- closing off Wellington Street to vehicular traffic from the War Memorial to Kent Street. The street would remain open to "traffic related to parliamentary business, public tramways, pedestrian and other forms of active transportation." The street has been closed to vehicular traffic since the convoy occupation was removed last February;
- increasing the sophistication of how the parliamentary precinct is protected;
- increasing the collaboration between the Parliamentary

Protective Service (PPS) and the Ottawa Police, OPP, and RCMP in order to streamline response to incidents and to establish an "effective and consistent plan in the event of incidents on Parliament Hill", as well as clarifying the mandate of each force according to type of incident.

The report emphasized that "the Parliament of Canada must be a safe and secure institution which remains open and accessible to the public, including those seeking to express peaceful disagreement and discontent with decision makers. An important objective is to highlight and promote Parliament Hill and the entire parliamentary precinct as the seat of Canadian democracy which is open to all."

Security and policing professionals should be responsible for striking the balance between those interests, it said, subject to parliamentary continued on page 9 "Wellington"

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



Comment

Another year, another LRT breakdown



Riders load onto an R1 bus at Rideau Station on January 10. ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

Alayne McGregor

Another year, another LRT breakdown.

Ottawa saw another Keystone Kops scenario this month as a fairly normal freezing rain event first caused two LRT trains to stall late at night on January 4, completely blocking both tracks of the LRT. This meant that ice started accumulating on the overhead power system wires because the trains weren't running.

Then, an attempt to move the trains and to remove the ice made the situation

much worse by damaging the wires. And then another attempt did more damage. It ended up taking six days to repair everything and get the trains running throughout the system again.

In the meantime, transit users traveling east of uOttawa were forced onto inadequate R1 buses, which left people standing at rush hour and reportedly doubled trip times for some. And those R1 buses had to come from somewhere: we don't know how many buses were reallocated from local routes to R1, making service worse even for those who only use buses. I saw notices for at least two runs of route 11 being cancelled on one morning, directly affecting Centretowners.

This latest foulup exposes endemic problems with OC Transpo: lack of communication to users, incompetence of maintenance staff, and lack of the ability to handle what should have been an expected weather situation in Ottawa. There are also continuing concerns that the design of the LRT line between Hurdman and Tremblay is deficient. The fact that any fixes and communication must work through extra layers

of management because the LRT is run through a public-private partnership (P3) just makes it worse.

It also exposes a more general problem with how our transit system is planned. Too many routes were re-jigged in 2019 to begin or end at the LRT. Obviously, this would apply to former Transitway routes. But why to local routes like the 14?

Ottawa needs a more resilient transit system that doesn't pack up every time the LRT has problems, and an important step to doing that is to provide alternate E-W routes covering arterials south of the LRT: improving service on the 85 (Carling) and the 88 (Baseline), restoring the 14 to serve the Civic Hospital, and bringing back the crosstown 101 (Queensway/Carling), for example.

We might hope to be able to learn more and discuss these issues with city councillors at the city Transit Commission and the new LRT oversight committee. But the Transit Commission's first meeting is still scheduled for February 8, and the LRT oversight committee has no meetings scheduled. Surely a six-day partial shutdown would justify an emergency meeting, but not in this city.

With a looming climate crisis, with federal civil servants returning to the office part-time, with everyone's budgets stretched and gas prices still high, transit should be a solution. But the reliability of Ottawa's transit system has become a joke.

And fares are another frustration

For that unreliable service, we're paying substantially more than Toronto, even after its fare increase this month: \$3.75 versus \$3.35. And Ottawa can expect another two percent fare increase this year.

With civil servants only working two to three days a week in the office, is it also time for OC Transpo to look at new fare structures in order to stay competitive? That monthly pass doesn't look nearly as useful for only part-time travel to work.

Perhaps Transpo should look at an option used in other cities where one is charged per ride up to a maximum per month, and then further rides after that are free. At least that would encourage people to ride transit.

Did you resolve to get more exercise and fresh air?

Why not deliver The BUZZ each month?

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Skyline: Can a compatible new housing development outweigh “heritage” preservation?

Robert Smythe

When was the last time a proposed Centretown project left at least 12 additional storeys of development potential on the table, and submitted designs for a new building that is actually less than half the maximum height permitted by the Official Plan?

There are some trade-offs for this seeming gift to community liveability, however.

This development, a nine-storey apartment on a property that could have seen a tower of 21 skinny floors or more, requires the demolition of two protected houses that currently offer affordable accommodation. Unfortunately, from the city’s point of view, residential intensification always trumps the preservation of existing affordable housing.

The sacrificial structures at 230 and 232 Lisgar Street, listed as having contributory heritage significance, are located in a mid-block bump-out on the northern boundary of the Centretown Heritage Conservation District, between Metcalfe and O’Connor Streets.

Both date from the 1880s. The historic integrity of one of the houses has been obliterated by a modern addition, while the other retains some of its heritage features, albeit in a slightly degraded condition.

The new development’s design by architects Project1 Studio Incorporated goes some distance to overcome this obstacle by assuring that “the proposed nine-storey massing of the apartment building has been carefully selected and refined to reduce its presence on Lisgar Street to ensure visual emphasis on neighbouring heritage buildings.” This is achieved

through generous expanses of brick, a setback at the third level to reflect the area’s traditional scale, an animated facade that breaks up the tower’s mass, and rhythmic rooftop articulation.

Currently, the existing character of this block of Lisgar is established by six scattered historic red-brick houses, three typical 1960s-era white-brick apartment buildings, and a number of small parking lots. The Centretown Community Design Plan (2013) classifies it as a high-rise “Apartment Neighbourhood”, an intensification area “identified for residential uses at greater building heights.”

The project’s specs list 36 one-bedroom residential units, 13 two-bedroom units, 249 square metres of indoor amenity space, 26 underground car-parking spaces, and a 43-stall bicycle-parking vault on the ground floor. Small reductions in the maximum lot width and front yard depth, and a significant reduction in one of the side yard setbacks would need to be secured via a re-zoning.

Not the best place for underground parking?

What would make this development more responsive to the city’s green transportation and environmental policy objectives? I’d suggest rethinking the multiple levels of costly and difficult-to-build below-grade parking. With its proximity to public transit and bike lanes, this proposal encompasses very small units that might likely be purchased/rented by car-free residents.

And a warning to those who want to build below-grade: the area’s subsoil is highly unstable Leda clay, which has caused numerous problems for adjacent buildings.

Demolitions of listed buildings located in conser-

vation districts designated by the Ontario Heritage Act are strongly discouraged. So it is not surprising that the heftiest of all the applicant’s many statutory studies, technical analyses, and submissions is their “Cultural Heritage Impact Study” (known as a CHIS) prepared by MTBA Associates Inc.

The CHIS contends that 230 and 232 Lisgar Street are of middling historic and architectural importance, stranded on one side of a street that is isolated at the fringe of the Centretown HCD. Because of that, it concludes that: “On balance, the potential positive impacts outweigh the potential adverse impacts of the proposed development, especially with the enhancements made, relative to the defined heritage value of [other] heritage properties and the larger Centretown Heritage Conservation District.”

Incorporation of some of the old buildings’ fabric (i.e., a facadectomy) was not a possibility. Therefore, as mitigation for their loss, a digital recording of the houses is recommended prior to their demolition.

The city’s policies state that for any development in an HCD “new buildings shall contribute to, and not detract from the heritage character of the area.” A private consultant’s contention that, for a very mixed block of Lisgar Street, this proposal scores high on compatibility of materials, height, massing, and urban design in relation to its surroundings would be self-serving but par for the course.

As far as heritage goes, in this case their argument seems to be convincing.

A City Council decision on this planning application is expected in the second quarter of 2023.



A new heritage-compatible building to replace 230-232 Lisgar Street? (City of Ottawa Development Information files.)

Get your (first) say on the city budget

Last month, Ottawa City Council set a 2023 tax increase limit of 2 to 2.5 percent. At the same time, [inflation is running at 6.8 percent](#). OC Transpo continues to run substantial deficits, and city staff have estimated recent provincial changes to development charges could [cost the city \\$60 million/year](#).

The 2023 draft city budget will be tabled February 1, and will be debated at committees and City Council until March 1.

With this crunch bearing down, you might want to look more carefully at the budget to check that services important to you are being preserved and your priorities are reflected: for example, in police, transit,

housing, snow-clearing, and maintenance. Check [Engage.Ottawa.ca](#) for more info.

You can tell councillors your views directly on February 15 at a budget session for Somerset, Kitchissippi, and Capital wards.

The session will be online; we will post the link in this story on [centretownbuzz.com](#) when it’s available.



The westerly side yard of this lot would be reduced from 7.5 to 1.5 metres. (City of Ottawa Development Information files.)

ASSOCIATION COMMUNAUTAIRE
CENTRETOWN
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Annual General Meeting

TUESDAY, JAN. 31, 2023 | 7 - 9 PM

Do you live, work, or own a property or a business in centretown? Join us at CCA's 2023 AGM!
Get an overview of CCA's goals and projects for the year. Members will vote for new Board members and President.

INTRODUCTION BY:
MPP JOEL HARDEN

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:
COUNCILOR ARIEL TROSTER

CLOSING REMARKS:
MP YASIR NAQVI

BECOME A MEMBER BY JAN. 28
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The Chinatown Scotiabank has finally reopened after a fire closed it for months.

CHARLES AXBEN-MARCHAND/THE BUZZ

Chinatown Scotiabank reopens after scorching

Ali Adwan

The Scotiabank in the heart of Ottawa's Chinatown recently reopened after months of recovering from a fire.

The fire, which happened in October, 2021, was considered so bad that a full closure was required and extensive renovations were needed. No injuries were reported.

The fire was reported to have occurred about 5 a.m. when there were no people inside. Firefighters were

quickly able to put out the flames before they spread. The fire was reported by a monitoring company that was notified by an alarm inside the bank. When the company checked, flames had already started.

The Somerset West-Chinatown Business Improvement Area (BIA) assisted with the bank's reopening. The bank's location at Somerset West and Bronson is in the middle of the BIA's jurisdiction.

"Our branch exists to promote Chinatown not

only for tourists, but also for residents who might not be familiar with everything the area has to offer. On one hand we assist in promoting by making advertisements to promote businesses, and we are also responsible for the unification of the neighbourhood," said BIA Executive Director Yukang Li.

Li said the BIA worked alongside the branch manager of the bank (a BIA member) to follow along with the progress of renovations and keep businesses and individuals up to date.

"That bank is the only one in Chinatown so the closure creates an inconvenience that we want to try and mitigate as much as possible," he added.

A BIA allows local businesses and property owners within a district to come together to organize, finance, improve and promote the area as a business and shopping district with the support of the city.

The Chinatown BIA also promotes local events such as the Ottawa Chinatown night market, Li said.

Joy to be repaired with care

continued from page 1

He said he was very upset the next morning when he discovered one of the four figures in the sculpture dangling, its hand broken away from another figure's hand. The broken figure has been removed temporarily until the sculpture is fixed.

Several freestanding Christmas decorations on the mall were also destroyed, McHale said. "This was obviously done wilfully; it's likely vandalism." He said the damage has been reported to the police.

However, he was heartened by the outpouring of support the BIA has received from the public about the incident. "It has been humbling. It proves what we've always known that this is a love piece but it's always one of those things that's hard to measure."

The sculpture was commissioned and donated to the mall authority by prominent men's clothing store owner E.R. (Bud) Fisher. McHale said he has been talking to both Fisher's family and Garner's widow about repairing the sculpture.

Fixing the sculpture won't be quick, McHale said, and it's likely to be expensive. With assistance from the city's Arts and Heritage Development Branch, he's currently bringing in expert firms to inspect the damage and assess how to fix it properly. He didn't yet know how long this would take.

"The key for us will be to make sure that we get it done as quickly as possible but get it done right."

Besides repairing the broken sections, he said he also hoped to use this opportunity to refurbish the sculpture after five decades, giving it "a bit of a polish."

McHale said that *Joy* stood out because, in the middle of the federal government precinct, "there's nothing political about it. It's just such a fun piece. It's whimsical. It's amusing.

"I think public art like that is important, not just on Sparks Street but in the whole core. That's something organizations like ours can assist with. I'd really love to see more of that throughout our downtown spaces to set them apart."

Winter reading: Concrete Concept examines the good side of brutalism

Concrete Concept: Brutalist Buildings around the World by Christopher Beanland
London: Frances Lincoln, second edition, 2021

reviewed by Alayne McGregor

The word "brutalist" is used for a style that is defined as modernist buildings, which are primarily built of concrete often with visible concrete as a major textural and design aesthetic throughout.

As this book's introduction says, "Brutalism is about severity, abstraction, ambition; angles that promote nausea, shapes that promote dizziness, spaces that occasionally evoke terror. . . . These buildings . . . were meant to stand up to the city, to answer back to it, to challenge it: not to hammer the human."

But "brutalist" has also

become an insult that is applied to badly designed buildings from the last century. Many buildings justify that opprobrium—think of Ottawa's current Main Library.

However, I was surprised to realize from this book is that there are many that do not.

Concrete Concept profiles 100 brutalist buildings and structures built from the 1950s to the 1980s. Most are in the UK and Europe but some are located in North and South America, Africa and Asia.

The very first is L'Unité d'Habitation (1952) in Marseille, France, designed by Le Corbusier, who originated many of the ideas of this movement. I'd call L'Unité a box with decoration, though I can certainly see some of its tropes reused many times in other buildings.

Similarly underwhelming are about half the struc-

tures shown. As an example, the Spaghetti Junction freeway interchange in Tame Valley in the West Midlands in England, the Gravelly Hill Interchange, is downright ugly.

An art museum in Sao Paulo resembles—for no particular reason—grain silos. The CCSS building in Costa Rica looks like a dirty jumble of incompatible styles, while a bank in Buenos Aires has holes in its facade and odd-looking, leaning lines. The Soviet Embassy in Havana, Cuba, looks like a cell tower writ in concrete and is downright bizarre.

On the other hand, the two Canadian entries—Toronto City Hall/ Nathan Phillips

SoPa launch February 8

Local restaurateurs and music promoters are trying to brand Centretown, from Gloucester to Wellington, as the South of Parliament (SoPa) entertainment district.

Their aim is to attract tourists and residents, who had been deterred by COVID-19 and last year's convoy, back to eat, watch, and listen downtown.

The [official launch, and fundraising party, for SoPa](#) will be held February 8 at Queen Street Fare. More details on SoPa in the February *BUZZ*.

Square and Habitat 67 in Montreal—are buildings I've always loved for their imaginative use of space.

The Wortuba Church in Vienna is composed of vertical blocks that fit together in a structure both calm and dynamic. The rounded balconies that define the exterior

of Marina City in Chicago create a unique and attractive feel to the building.

And I adored the Geisel Library at the University of California San Diego, which is built like a slightly squat tree with a rippling roofline.

So brutalist architecture, like most other styles, can be

done well. It does have the advantage of allowing more experiments with shape and form. It's reassuring to know that the result can sometimes be imaginative and very cool.

Concrete Concept is available at the Ottawa Public Library.

Ottawa People's Commission to release first report January 30

Ottawa People's Commission (OPC)

The OPC has heard from over 200 residents who have bravely shared the impact of huge trucks blocking streets, spewing exhaust fumes, unrelenting honking, and harassment and intimidation during the three-and-a-half week convoy occupation last winter.

Through 13 public hearings, six community consultations, and over 75 written submissions, Ottawa-Gatineau residents sounded the alarm at the violence they endured, the gaslighting and abandonment by the city and police, and the ways in which the community stepped up to keep each other safe.

Working closely with the Centretown Community Health Centre, OPC is proud to have partnered with Wisdom2Action, Kind Space, the Good Companion's Se-

niors Centre, The Well, and others to host community consultations with residents who were disproportionately affected by the disruption. These included precariously housed and unhoused folks, the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, seniors, people with disabilities, and racialized residents.

Alex Neve, one of the four OPC commissioners and the former secretary-general of Amnesty International Canada, said, "We've heard loud and clear from those most affected that, for them, the convoy's impact isn't over. There is trauma that people were still carrying, there are answers people still need, and there was a strong desire and need for justice and accountability that has not been met."

The OPC will release the first part of its report on January 30, marking the occupation's one-year anniversary. This installment will

focus on "what we heard," reflecting and amplifying the community's experience of violence and abandonment, which has been largely overlooked in the federal inquiry into the use of the Emergencies Act.

Part two of the report, with further analysis and recommendations, is set to come out in the spring.

On the OPC's approach to consultations, Neve said, "Human rights [are] at the heart of everything we're hearing and we've been thinking as we process our findings and frame our recommendations, because at its core everything that happened in Ottawa in February is about human rights."

Interested in hearing what your neighbours had to say? Visit our website at [opc-cpo.ca](#) to sign up for our newsletter and check out OPC's crowdsourced timeline of the convoy occupation.

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Comment

A complicit and dismissive federal government contributed to the convoy occupation in Centretown

Ken Rubin

When the Public Order Emergency Commission (POEC) reports next month, it should attribute a large part of the blame for the convoy occupation of downtown Ottawa to federal authorities.

The Ottawa Police and former mayor Jim Watson have so far garnered much of the blame and, undoubtedly, they played a significant part.

But the convoy groups came looking for the federal leaders – not Watson and crew – and wanted to change the federal government, not City Hall.

And, as leaders in national security, it was their federal intelligence officials’ failings that led to not attaching enough importance to the convoy occupation’s goals and the racism displayed by participants. That doomed Ottawa’s capital to over three weeks of misery and anguish.

CSIS and security officials stepped back, seeing convoy protesters as not being within their scope of a national security threat. They seemed to be soft on domestic terrorist racism, seeing it as not requiring their urgent attention.

Repeatedly in their testimony at POEC, they presented a narrow vision of their mandate as being “threats to the security of Canada,” and particularly espionage, foreign interference, or potential threats to cybersecurity. According to that interpretation, the occupation didn’t qualify. The federal cabinet ended up disagreeing with that narrow interpretation when it invoked the Emergencies Act – but that was too late.

CSIS itself has also been hit with racist charges from its own, or former, ranks, including from Sameer Ebadi and Huda Mukbil, where minority members saw themselves as being discriminated against and passed over for advancement.

Now, the prime minister’s own national security advisor, Jody Thomas, is saying a second convoy wave may be coming to Ottawa and that the feds will be better prepared to lead.

So far, though, few have been dismissed for faulty intelligence. Few former or serving federal employees, including in the RCMP and Armed Forces, who supported the convoy’s mixed anti-vaccination and hateful messages here in Ottawa and elsewhere, have been prosecuted.

One revelation of the inquiry, which received little attention, was that the convoy occupation of Ottawa was only made physically possible because of the cooperation and go-ahead federal and National Capital Commission (NCC) authorities. They allowed trucker rigs to use their parkways to come and take over downtown Ottawa. This included even getting to park on a downtown parkway!

Federal authorities also did nothing to barricade and close Wellington Street outside Parliament Hill. Nor did they bother to put secure, not flimsy, barriers around the War Memorial or Confederation Park, which allowed both sites to be occupied.

The underlying federal inaction during the occupation of downtown Ottawa is a troublesome and dismissive attitude to the well-being of downtown Ottawa residents. Tension between Crown and Town means that Ottawa residents living downtown are largely on the losing side in this company town.

This is not the first time the Crown has made residents the losers. In the 1960s, it tore down LeBreton Flats, and, a few years later, much of downtown Gatineau for federal offices. Much of LeBreton has now been sold off for expensive condos, including now promoting a privately held sports arena. These de-



“Freedom” convoyers occupying downtown Ottawa on February 12, 2022

BRETT DELMAGE/THE BUZZ

“green” Parliament Hill space could celebrate and be protected, while bringing greater traffic congestion to downtown.

The new federal security apparatus already includes MPs getting panic buttons for their protection at the cost of millions of dollars – while the 40,000 or so downtown Ottawa residents under increasing threat get no special protection except being treated as occasional hostages.

It will be interesting to see if Ottawa’s new police chief, Eric Stubbs, after a long RCMP career, will have the local community’s protection as his main priority.

The POEC, the federal parliamentary committee hearings, and Ottawa’s new City Council should not ignore the effect federal inaction and indifference played in the occupation of Ottawa. And Premier Ford should note that Eastern Ontario is part of the province and not just the place where friendly developers hold sway.

For over three weeks, it was downtown Ottawa residents that had to live in a

state of emergency. And the feds need to own up to being a large part of that problem.

Ken Rubin has lived in inner-city Ottawa for over 50 years. He contributed to the Centretown News, served on the Centretown Community Association board and planning committee, and was involved in tenant rights and a Dalhousie community self-study. Last February, he founded the Ottawa People’s Commission on the Convoy Occupation. He is reachable via kenrubin.ca

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It takes a community!



Groomer Pete tells all: chopping & rolling the Rideau Winter Trail

Martha Jeacle

The Rideau Winter Trail is a free recreational trail groomed from Donald Street to Bank Street for cross country skiing (skate and classic), walking, snow shoeing and fat biking.

It is run entirely by volunteers, with support from the City of Ottawa, the NCC, some government grants, amazing sponsors and donations from community members. Visit www.rideauwintertrail.ca to learn more.

Q&A with Peter Nor (aka Groomer Pete)

Trail prep starts well in advance of the snow falling, right? What does that involve?

Prep for next season starts during the current season. We are always looking for input on how to improve the trail by listening to users, skiing, grooming, and observing

where wind is blowing the snow. Then we take a break and go do non-trail stuff!

In late summer we finalize our plans for the coming season and coordinate with our partners. Important preseason activities include grass cutting, tree and brush clearing, coordination with waste removal and snow clearing. Our partners at the National Capital Commission and City of Ottawa are great to work with!

How do you determine when you can do the first grooming of the season?

There are a couple factors mostly to avoid damage to the land around the trail. We look for at least 10cm of snow on the ground. In the early season we try to pack the snow as much as possible so that we have a good base that will last. This means that until we get enough snow we cannot set tracks for classic skiing without damaging the ground underneath the snow and our equipment.

When the snow is falling during the season, how do you decide when to groom?

That's a tricky one and one that can often result in much discussion in the grooming shed. Generally, the snow needs a couple of hours to set after being groomed and before being used. Ideally, we look for temperatures to be in -1 to -10C range.

What kind of equipment does it take to groom an urban winter trail?

We have been improving our stable of equipment every year. Equipment we use for the RWT is considered light equipment and includes a variety of implements that are dragged behind an ATV or snowmobile.

For packing deep and fluffy snow we use a roller that is basically a very large rolling pin, two feet in diameter and eight feet long.

When snow is icy or compacted from being walked and skied on, the snow requires renovation by chopping up the hard snow and breaking it down to a nice power. This is where our light equipment has limitations compared to a snow-cat that you would see at a ski resort. But we are able to get really good results; sometimes it just takes more passes.

Once that snow is "just



Volunteer Peter Nor on one of the machines he uses to maintain the Rideau Winter Trail.

MARTHA JEACLE/THE BUZZ

right" we form it into the nice corduroy pattern and, if we have enough snow depth, we set tracks for classic skiing.

How long does it take to groom the RWT from end to end?

This depends on which equipment we are using and the conditions. Heavy snowfalls and ice slow down operations significantly and a full groom can easily take six to eight hours.

How do you determine how to set the trail around the Hurdman Hills?

We have been refining the trail in this area annually and have some great improvements for this season. It is a balancing act that includes identifying where the snow accumulates, finding a

good fall line and avoiding places where water flows and erodes the snow or the wind blows drifts.

For this season, we have a new trail added in this area which means a better loop and no need to cross pavement.

How do you deal with freezing rain that mother nature delivers on occasion?

Another factor that impacts when we start grooming. If we have snow turning to ice rain or vice versa, we wait until everything has fallen and mix it all together.

We are trying our best to avoid making "cement," which could happen if we groom and then receive freezing rain. Even the heavy equipment at resorts has a hard time with this and our only option is to wait un-

til it warms up if we end up with this situation.

Do you have a favourite part of the trail (although we know you love it all!)?

I have to say that grooming at night in the Hurdman Hills area is spectacular and I often see wildlife that I cannot believe lives in the city. That being said, meeting folks that are enjoying the trail anywhere makes me happy.

Anything interesting about the grooming process that Groomer Pete would like to share?

Don't get me started. The engineer in me gets excited about the physics of snow and realizing that I have lots to learn. I love being outside and the snow is like a huge zen garden that I get to play with.



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CCA to hold AGM Jan. 31, discuss rooming houses Jan. 23



The Dickens Carolers sang at the Centretown Community Association (CCA) winter party in Dundonald Park in December, and got people to sing along.

JACK HANNA/THE BUZZ

Jack Hanna

New councillor at CCA's AGM

Newly elected City Councillor Ariel Troster will be the keynote speaker at the CCA's AGM. She will speak about the opportunities and challenges facing Centretown in the com-

ing year, including issues such as housing and community services.

The AGM will be held online at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, January 31. All are welcome.

At the meeting, you can also hear about your community association's plans for 2023, and perhaps find an activity to get involved with.

CCA volunteers organize festivals and

a farmers' market, garden in public parks, and provide input to proposals for new skyscrapers. We advocate regarding cycling, greenspace, good architecture, urban trees, affordable housing, equity, climate change, and much more.

To obtain the Zoom link for the AGM, email ccca@centretowncitizens.ca

Pay membership, vote at AGM

Anyone can attend the CCA's AGM, but to vote you need to be a member.

Please renew your membership or join before the end of day on Saturday, January 28.

Memberships are a bargain at \$5 and can be renewed or purchased at the CCA's website.

To be a member you must reside, work, or own a property or business in Centretown.

Join the Board

The CCA elects its board of directors and president at the AGM.

To stand for election to the board, or for president, you must be a CCA member and email ccca@centretowncitizens.ca by 10 p.m. Friday, January 27. Be sure to say why you wish to serve on the CCA's Board, and what skills and experience you offer. Include a resume.

Winter party in the park

The CCA in mid-December celebrated the holidays – and helped birds make it through winter.

The CCA's Trees and Greenspace Committee held its annual holiday fest in Dundonald Park. People brought homemade decorations for the trees, especially things birds can eat, such as suet balls, and pine cones caked in peanut butter and bird seed.

"People liked the idea of providing treats for the birds," said Barbara Sibbald, who



heads the volunteers gardening Dundonald Park. "We might be helping the birds make it through to spring."

There were carolers: the Girls' Choir of Christ Church Cathedral and the Dickens Carolers (sponsored by Donna Holtom).

"The carolers brought a freshness to the old, traditional songs," said Sibbald. "People were smiling and singing along."

Skyscraper across from Museum of Nature

A skyscraper is being tentatively proposed on Gladstone east of Metcalfe, less than 100 metres from the front doors of the Canadian Museum of Nature.

Developer Claridge is proposing a soaring tower under the city's Landmark Building Policy. This policy allows developers to vastly exceed height restrictions and go up to 27 storeys in return for putting up a building with "iconic" architecture and leadership in energy efficiency.

As yet there is no specific design, but Claridge's team has told the CCA it wants a soaring tower. As well, the development would include a park or community-service building on 40 percent of the site.

The CCA will examine this proposal, as it evolves, and provide comment and advocacy.

The challenges of rooming houses

The CCA is holding a public meeting to begin understanding issues surrounding rooming houses, such as renovation, soaring rents, and inadequate facilities for tenants.

The meeting will be held Monday, January 23, at 6:30 p.m. For the Zoom link, email: affordable-housing-champions@centretowncitizens.ca

The Climatarian: Replacing meat with affordable foods for a good meal

Cathy Woodgold

In December, while many of us were celebrating holidays, delegates from around the world met in Montreal and hammered out a set of agreements to protect biodiversity.

The Kuming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework sets out a goal of having 30 percent of the planet protected by 2030, and includes goals to promote fair and equitable use of biodiversity resources and respect indigenous knowledge.

Luckily, we Canadians have been reducing our red meat consumption, with beef going from 40 kg per person in 1980 to just 25 in 2021. The trend is continuing, perhaps for health reasons as well as the environment. Meanwhile, poultry consumption increased.

It's not a problem when

cattle graze on land that isn't fit for growing grain. A mix in which some people continue to eat meat as they have been, while others eat reduced amounts, and those so inclined switch entirely to other foods can bring our collective consumption down to sustainable levels that leave grain to feed hungry people around the world and land for forests and other ecosystems, the lungs of the planet.

I went to the Massine's YIG at Bank and Somerset and checked a few prices. I did some calculations.

Prices of meat and poultry ranged from about two cents to 10 cents per gram of protein. A large package of whole wheat flour tied with the best meat price I saw at about two cents per gram of protein. Rice and oatmeal also came in under three cents, with corn flour lagging behind at five cents, still bet-

ter than many of the meats.

The champions were the dried peas, beans, and lentils: the prices I saw ranging from one cent to 1.4 cents per gram of protein, a good way to compensate for the rising prices of food these days as well as helping the environment.

What about the kind of protein? A combination of foods with different amino acid ratios can be as good as, or better than, meat.

A simple way to get good-quality protein from plants is to include in a meal a serving of grains, nuts, or seeds, and also a serving of peas, beans, or lentils. Traditional foods such as hummus, which contains chickpeas and sesame, or corn tacos with beans, already contain complementary proteins.

So even if we weren't there in Montreal, we have opportunities to contribute to the biodiversity goals while enjoying a good meal.

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

Joel Harden

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What's on in Ottawa and beyond this month



A scene from the new NFB documentary *Ever Deadly*, starring Inuit cutting-edge vocalist Tanya Tagaq. (NFB)

Tony Wohlfarth

The Fabelmans

Steven Spielberg is one of Hollywood's most iconic film directors. His latest film, *The Fabelmans* is a loosely biographical biopic about growing up in Ohio, Phoenix, and California.

Sammy (Sam) Fabelman is the oldest son of Burt (Paul Dano) and Mitzi (Michelle Williams). His extended family, including Uncle Bennie (Seth Rogen), move from the east coast when Burt's career as an engineer takes flight. Much of the film is about Sammy's young life as a budding filmmaker, recording precious moments in the life of his family.

I found the viral antisemitism he experienced overwhelming. The worst of it was in Northern California. I also found the storyline focused almost exclusively on Sam's relationship with his parents, as his sisters played more of a background role. The scene of the young Sam dancing through the CBS lot in Hollywood after he was hired was also illuminating.

The Fabelmans won two Golden Globe Awards – for best picture and best director – and was nominated for best actress (Williams), best screenplay, and best score. At the 95th Academy Awards in March, the film will no doubt be in the mix.

Guillermo del Toro's *Pinocchio*

Fans of stop-motion animated films will be thrilled to know a new version of *Pinocchio* is currently streaming on Netflix. Based on the 1883 novel by Carlo Collodi, this film is closer to the original serial publication than the Disney version.

Pinocchio takes its audience on a perilous journey. Geppetto is a woodcarver who loses his only son in a tragic accident. He carves Pinocchio after a night of drowning his sorrows. Set in Tuscany during World War II, the duo survives a difficult sea journey, being swallowed by a whale, and an encounter with Mussolini.

Guillermo del Toro's *Pinocchio* delivers with an impressive list of voice-over talent, including Ewan McGregor, Tilda Swinton

and Cate Blanchett.

The film (1h56m) is currently streaming via Netflix. The film is rated PG: adults can show it to children with accompaniment. While the subject matter is largely whimsical, the slow creep of fascism hovers in the background, adding an extra layer of context for those who are interested in that era.

It was awarded best animated film at the 2023 Golden Globe Awards, as well as being nominated for best original score by Alexandre Desplat, and best song.

Del Toro's career as a filmmaker is as celebrated as Spielberg's. He directed *Pan's Labyrinth* in 1996, *The Devil's Backbone* in 2001 and *The Shape of Water* in 2017.

To learn more about how the film was made and how it relates to his own life growing up in Mexico, I recommend watching this CBC interview (seven minutes): www.cbc.ca/player/play/2150755907733

What's new from the NFB?

Tanya Tagaq is a 47-year-old Inuit throat singer from Cambridge Bay in Nunavut. *Ever Deadly* is an illuminating portrait of the artist co-directed by Chelsea McMullan.

Ever Deadly opens with a stunning seven-minute performance with Tagaq and Laakuluk Williams Bathory throat singing. The scene is filmed near Cambridge Bay. Much of the film features a live performance by Tagaq, accompanied by The Element Choir. Tagaq's artistry is on display, as is her passion for the North. She talks about living off the land, the legacy of residential schools, and her community being relocated.

The running time is 1h30m. *Ever Deadly* is screening at the ByTowne Cinema (325 Rideau) on January 22 and 23. See bytowne.ca/schedule/

National Arts Centre (1 Elgin)

In January and early February, the NAC is alive with an abundance of live music:

- Jan. 20: Nick Schofield (ambient music);
- Jan. 21: Polky (Eastern European music);
- Jan. 24: Silent Tears: The Last Yiddish Tango;
- Jan. 28: The Sheepdogs;
- Jan. 28: Ariane Racicot (jazz);
- Jan. 29: The Beatles: Abbey Road;
- Jan. 31: The Iris Trio (classical/jazz response to the climate crisis);
- Feb. 4: Alex Cuba (Latin);
- Feb. 9: Great Gatsby!;
- Feb. 10: Carine au Micro;
- Feb. 18 (afternoon): Ottawa bassist/vocalist Angelique Francis.

More info and tickets: nac-cna.ca

Freedom! The Spirit and Legacy of Black Music

This tribute to Black culture was presented at the Stratford Festival last summer. The cast of 10 Black performers and musicians, including creator and director Beau Dixon, are restaging it at the Centrepointhe Theatre on February 9 as part of an Ontario tour. The cabaret of 23 songs and readings showcases the spirit and legacy of Black music. More info: meridiantrepointe.com/en/freedom

ABBAMANIA

ABBAMANIA recreates the Swedish group live in concert. The first performance is at Centrepointhe Theatre on February 17 (meridiantrepointe.com/en), followed by an evening and a matinee performance on the 18th and 19th at the Shenkman Arts Centre (www.shenkmanarts.ca).

Introducing the Undercurrents Festival

From February 8 to 18, the Ottawa Fringe Festival is holding its Undercurrents Festival which brings new theatre productions to Ottawa. For a complete listing of venues and times, check out: undercurrentsfestival.ca

Arts Court Theatre (2 Daly)

The Digital Arts Resource Centre will present a free screening of works created by its members in the last year on January 26 at 7 p.m. in the Arts Court Theatre and online. Artists will be in attendance to participate in a brief Q&A with the audience following the in-person screening. To register: www.eventbrite.ca/e/resolution-2023-tickets-489921708017

Queen Street Fare (170 Queen)

On January 21, you can catch a tribute to the music of the Spice Girls.

In jazz nights, Suzie Q performs with Sean Duhaime on February 15, and Ottawa's Peter Woods is back on February 22 with live Mardi Gras music. Info: queenstfare.ca/happening

Live on Elgin (220 Elgin)

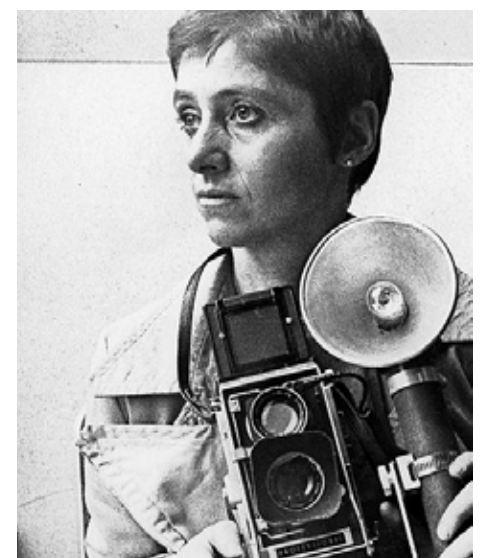
On Jan. 29, jazz fans are invited to the CD launch party for Ottawa jazz guitarist Garrett Warner. Tickets: www.liveonelgin.com/collections/shows/products/garrett-warner

Out of Town

The Art Gallery of Ontario (317 Dundas Street West in Toronto) has an intriguing exhibition underway from the private collection of the late Leonard Cohen. Cohen died in 2016 and now his instruments, notebooks, photos, and letters are on display through April 10. See www.ago.ca for more information.

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

(1380 Sherbrooke Street in Montreal) has two outstanding art exhibitions currently on display. Jean-Michel Basquiat was an important painter influenced by early hip-hop music culture. A multimedia exhibit examining the role of music in his work is on display until February 19. To understand his brilliance, I recommend viewing: www.youtube.com/watch?v=JX02QQXfb_o



Diane Arbus, from the MMFA exhibit. ROZ KELLY/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

The MMFA also has a retrospective of the black and white photography of Diane Arbus until January 29. The 90+ photos in the exhibit (in cooperation with the AGO) are from 1956 to 1971, and include many from her less-known early career.

Tony Wohlfarth is an Ottawa-based freelance film and entertainment writer. He visited the MMFA as a guest and is currently covering the Sundance Film Festival.



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Snow Moles found walking on sidewalks less safe than roads



This Centretown sidewalk was still blocked last Sunday after the storm two days before, while the road was mostly clear. The thick lines show where the sidewalk is. *JENN DUMOULIN/THE BUZZ*

Alayne McGregor

A report on Ottawa's winter walking conditions in 2022 concluded that it was often safer for pedestrians to walk on the road than on sidewalks.

In the 270 volunteer audits on which the report was based, streets were cleared more often (70 percent) and safer to walk on than sidewalks (56 percent), stairs/steps (56 percent), and ramps (51 percent).

The report was published by the Council on Aging of Ottawa as part of its Snow Moles program, which will begin its sixth year this month. Snow Moles organizes pedestrian volunteers – three-quarters of them seniors – to determine the safety and walkability of the streets they use between January and March of each year.

It's a "winter-boots-on-the-ground kind of advocacy recommending a Pedestrians First approach to the city's policies and practices as well as practical and doable solutions to common winter barriers," the report said.

The 2022 audits came from across the city, including 57 from central wards. They also reported inaccessible bus stops and shelters, not being able to reach pedestrian walk buttons (32 percent), and sidewalks in bad condition with potholes and poor drainage. One reported that, "Some sidewalks in Centretown are not even, sloping and so dangerous for falls when covered in snow and ice."

Ice was a big concern. "There were patches of dry sidewalk, but because of the ice on the sidewalk and the thick section of ice at the curb, it was safer to walk on

the road instead of weaving on and off the sidewalk to the road. The ice at the curb was wide and that is why I stayed on the road," said one auditor.

For those who had to walk on streets during an audit, "they consistently reported having no sidewalks or path (73 percent), too much snow and/or ice (71 percent), or the streets were plowed and safer (72 percent)."

Benches are important for seniors and those carrying heavy shopping, but the report noted that many are not cleared of snow. Only 48 percent of benches seen on audit routes were cleared.

"Right now, there are too many Ottawa residents who feel that if they have been fortunate enough to be able to go outside and safely complete a winter walk, they have won a major victory against snow, ice, and infrastructure. Accessible winter walking and safe pedestrian pathways should be widely and easily available for everyone, including

older adults and people using mobility aids," the report concluded.

"We look forward to the day when completing a safe winter walk is an ordinary and mundane task for all Ottawa pedestrians!"

The report made 10 recommendations, including:

- clearing snow to bare pavement on sidewalks in high density residential areas;
- better training for sidewalk plow operators;
- planning for complete pedestrian trips; connect sidewalks to transit stops, connect corners and curbs to pedestrian crossings, and connect residential streets and roads to pathways and parks;
- removing high snowbanks on residential streets before they become hazardous to pedestrians and before they freeze into unremovable ice blocks;
- increasing the frequency of applying salt, grit and sand to roads and sidewalks, especially during freeze-thaw cycles;

• solving ice buildup problems caused by blocked drains;

• safe access to parks and community amenities (schools, seniors' residences, medical facilities) in winter months;

• improving city collection of data on outdoor winter falls and injuries;

• clearing snow and ice from benches;

• improving sidewalk designs to a new wider and flat "Ottawa model," without curb cuts for cars, to encourage safe age-friendly walking in all seasons.

The current city winter maintenance quality standards, which control which roads get cleared first and how often sidewalk and paths are cleared, date from 2003.

The report noted that the city's Public Works-Environmental Services Department has completed reviewing those standards and will present proposed revisions and budget changes to City Council before next winter.

Wellington to stay closed to traffic?

continued from page 1 oversight and accountability.

The committee began work on the report this spring in response to a letter from Ottawa Centre MP Yasir Naqvi and Hull-Aylmer MP Greg Fergus, asking the committee to re-evaluate the boundaries of the parliamentary precinct to "allow for more robust safety protocols to be put in place," including expanding to include Wellington and Sparks.

The report noted that the parliamentary precinct includes wherever the House of Commons and its committees meet or where MPs have offices – not just on Parliament Hill. When the Block 2 development is complete (expected by 2030), this will include the city blocks south of Wellington.

The committee held hearings last year to discuss the possible expansion. They heard from retired Senator Vern White, a former Ottawa police chief, who strongly urged that Wellington stay closed to traffic.

He warned that, as long as direct vehicular access was permitted to the section of the street by Parliament Hill or the Prime Minister's Office, the risk existed for a car bombing like the one in Oklahoma City in 1995. In that attack, 168 people were killed with a single truck bomb.

PPS Acting Director Larry Brookson said he was "extremely comfortable"

with the fact that Wellington Street was still shut down to traffic, but he was not satisfied with the current barriers on the street. Some did not meet his "standards of protection". He was also concerned about sidewalks and the prospect of a truck finding its way through.

He argued that the current setup of Wellington Street will only prevent entry to law-abiding citizens; it is "wide open to anybody with a nefarious intent."

Brookson favoured an expanded precinct to better optimize parliamentarians' security, noting that it was hard to imagine "somebody being responsible for a protective mandate when the largest artery that runs through their precinct is outside their control."

Then-Somerset Ward councillor Catherine McKenney also supported the expansion of the parliamentary precinct, saying that city police do not have the capacity to protect federal property and patrol residential areas simultaneously during major events. They noted that Ottawa City Council supported transferring responsibility for security in the precinct to federal forces, including part of Wellington.

They argued that the downtown area has ample capacity to absorb vehicular traffic routed away from Wellington Street, and supported converting it into a pedestrian

zone with a tramway.

The City of Ottawa and the federal government are currently discussing the future of Wellington and whether to transfer its ownership.

Then-city manager Steve Kanellakos told the committee that issues needing to be resolved include "the impact on traffic circulation through the downtown; access to the city's existing underground infrastructure for maintenance; securing Wellington Street as a key corridor in the city's wider cycling network; and the assessment of the real estate value of Wellington Street."

The Sparks Street BIA is opposed to closing Wellington. BIA Executive Director Kevin McHale said it was "definitely overkill" and wasn't being currently fully enforced: "My office is at the corner of Sparks and Metcalfe, and I've seen three or four cars just drive up through and turn on to Wellington. So they're not supposed to but they're still doing it."

He said the closure was diverting traffic onto other streets, with 53-foot semitrailer trucks now regularly seen on Bank and Elgin Streets.

The BIA would be glad to work with the government on a plan, he said, but "putting up a giant wall around downtown Ottawa, making it only useful for the federal government and what it perceives its security needs are, does not make downtown Ottawa liveable."



Antonino Ermolenko will sing Mussorgsky's Songs and Dances of Death in the latest New Opera Lyra production on January 28 at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. *ROBERT MCGEE*

Who can resist Mussorgsky? Or a good story ...

Nadine Dawson for New Opera Lyra

Picture this: a pandemic strikes. Ordinary citizens are told not to leave their houses.

The Question: what do you do?

The Answer: if you are an artist, you do what you love more than anything: you create. With your schedule suddenly and unexpectedly cleared, you become an urban hermit and lose yourself in your passion!

Zoom in closer: if you are Andrew Ager, and a composer, naturally you write an opera, *Dracula*. You amuse yourself by playing with Mussorgsky's music.

Zoom out again: you find yourself creating and posting on Facebook a chamber arrangement of *Pictures at an Exhibition*, a Mussorgsky composition you have known for as long as you can

remember. You played it over and over again as a child. Lo and behold, a cellist from the Regina Symphony Orchestra is interested in the piece, and you find yourself assembling a group of musicians from the National Arts Centre Orchestra to workshop it before sending it off to its premiere.

Meanwhile, the NACO musicians express interest in performing it in Ottawa, so intrigued are they by this new adaptation of a familiar piece.

Serendipitously, Ukrainian-Canadian soprano Antonino Ermolenko introduces herself, and now the idea hits you: why not combine *Pictures at an Exhibition* with other Mussorgsky: the song cycle *Songs and Dances of Death*, and "Merina's Aria" from *Boris Godunov*? When you rehearse Ermolenko, you are astounded by her ability to express the drama and sentiment of the songs.

And voila! *Pictures and Dances - an Evening of Mussorgsky* is born!

Lend me your ear: can you hear the seductive and compelling poetry of Arseny Golenishchev-Kutuzov in *Songs and Dances of Death*? How *Death Personified* lulls young and old alike under his spell? What about *Pictures at an Exhibition*? Can you feel the depth of Mussorgsky's fiery sadness at the death of his friend, artist, Viktor Hartmann? Do you feel the stirring of your soul at the power and drama of his tribute to his lost friend's visual art?

Well, if you find yourself at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church on January 28, you will certainly fall under Mussorgsky's spell – and when you do, you'll be in good company.

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit newoperalyra.ca

DCA report: Peaceable neighbourhoods, redevelopment, street repair, and a movie

Ed McKenna

Gathering at the Vietnam Palace

In December, members of the board of the Dalhousie Community Association gathered for our annual holiday meeting, held this year at the Vietnam Palace on Somerset West.

There was no agenda, but a tasty menu to explore. The review of development applications was set aside in favour of conversations about holiday plans. Spouses and children joined in. And instead of Zoom, it was an in-person, spontaneous chat. (We should do this more often!)

We Are the DCA – It's A Movie!

The DCA returned to its regular meeting schedule on January 4. Top of the agenda was a report from the Public Realm committee about the completion of their collaborative project with Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability (CAFES) and eight sociology and anthropology students from Carleton University.

The students have produced a terrific short film, *We Are the DCA*, featuring Catherine Boucher, Sally Rutherford, Diane Holmes, and Can Le. You have to see it! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-7yJhL4cf0>

357, 361, 363 Preston

Here's a rendering for a proposed six-storey mixed-use residential and commercial development at the southeast corner of Preston and Aberdeen across from the Heart and Crown. It will include 37 apartments, with commercial space at ground level on Preston. The developer has submitted a Zoning By-law Amendment (fairly described as "minor") and Site Plan Control application to the city.

DCA's Planning our Neighbourhood committee supports the application.

Yes, it's more usual, regrettably, for the DCA to find itself opposing key elements of large-scale development proposals in this neighbour-

hood. So what's different about this one?

First, the application is not seeking to add multiple storeys to what is currently permitted on this section of Preston. The building scale is appropriate and it fits in with its neighbours. The architecture is interesting, combining modern materials (metal panels, stone veneer) with traditional (brick). Windows are oriented vertically. Vehicles will come and go from Aberdeen, and the parking provided favours bicycles.

The application provides much more detail, of course, and is published on the city's website. Comments may be submitted to the city until January 23.

Street Reconstruction on Elm and City Centre

The Mobility committee reported that residents on Elm west of Preston were invited to a "virtual public information session" December 13 to hear about the city's "City Centre Avenue and Elm Street West Water, Sewer and Road Renewal."

In addition to replacing the water main, sewers, and road surface, the city will construct new concrete sidewalks, plant some trees, improve the vehicular barrier at the west end of Elm, and add a speed hump.

Similar improvements will be made on City Centre between Elm and Albert, including the addition of a 1.5 metre-wide cycle track between Albert and Somerset West.

Pending approval of the \$7.8 million budget, construction will begin this spring.

Peaceable Neighbourhoods

The DCA's Peaceable Neighbourhoods committee reported that it has written a letter to Crime Prevention Ottawa to support the proposal by the Somerset West Community Health Centre (SWCHC) to undertake a consultation on community safety and peer outreach programs.

The DCA is a member of SWCHC's Community Liaison Committee, and has pledged to actively support the consultation process.

The Peaceable Neighbourhoods commit-



The proposed new building at 357-363 Preston will include 37 apartments and commercial space at ground level. (Woodman Architect, City of Ottawa Development Applications)

tee also reported on a successful community event it helped organize at the SWCHC Consumption and Treatment site, which took place November 24. Staff members gave a short presentation and answered questions from local residents, then provided a tour of the site itself.

The DCA will hold its next regular meet-

ing on Wednesday, February 1, 2023. Join us! As Sally Rutherford says in *We Are the DCA*: "You'll be making friends, you'll become a more central part of the community, and you'll feel really good about it!"

Contact: president@ottawadalhousie.ca, and check out our website: ottawadalhousie.ca

MP report: Bronson Centre, Sparks Street, Dalhousie CC benefit from federal community revitalization fund

Yasir Naqvi

Happy New Year, Ottawa Centre residents! I hope you had a wonderful holiday season with family, friends and loved ones.

As we kick off the new year, I'll take this opportunity to share a few highlights from 2022, including our federal government's Canada Dental Care Benefit, a few investments in our community, and updates on affordable housing.

Canada Dental Benefit

We now have a Canada Dental Benefit, a first for Canada. Families earning less than \$90,000 will be able to apply for the Canada Dental Benefit which will provide up to \$1,300 over two years for children under 12 to get the dental care they need. This is the first step in our plan to build a Canada-wide dental care program to make sure everyone who needs dental care can access it.

It's important to note that this is not an automatic benefit. Eligible families can quickly, easily, and securely apply for the Canada Dental Benefit in CRA My Account, or by calling the dedicated phone line at 1-800-715-8836. More information on this benefit and how to apply is available on Canada.ca/dental

Community Updates

As Ottawa Centre MP and as a resident, it always brings me so much joy to see how our community is evolving and improving, whether that is through new infrastructure in our city, enhanced active transportation, retrofitted community centres, or new programming for residents in our community. This is even more exciting when federal funding has helped our hard-working community organizations meet their goals.

I'm pleased to share news about the Community Revitalization Fund, a program created during the pandemic through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario. Through this program, Bronson Centre was able to retrofit its performance venue and enhance their heritage stone façade.

Somerset West Community Health Centre was able to renovate the Dalhousie Community Centre, with improvements to create a fully accessible kitchen and spaces for programming.

The Sparks Street Business Improvement Area was able to fund a project to create a community space with planters, trees and seating, enhancing the pedestrian experience in downtown Ottawa.

What all these projects have in common is that they aim to offer an inclusive

space for residents – a core objective of the Community Revitalization Fund. It's great to see the outcome of these investments.

Affordable Housing

Affordability is top of mind for residents, and our federal government is committed to making life more affordable for Canadians through several measures including a \$500 top up for eligible renters, and a doubled GST credit for six months.

Affordable housing continues to be a priority of mine and of our government. I was honoured to announce funding for 240 new affordable units in Ottawa Centre alongside my colleague, Minister Ahmed Hussen. This includes projects led by CCOC and Ottawa Community Housing, two non-profit housing agencies in Ottawa.

Another project announced was an investment in the John Howard Society, which will offer supportive housing for Indigenous women experiencing homelessness.

This is all in addition to previous investments by our government since 2015 that add up to almost 2,000 new affordable units in Ottawa Centre and over 11,000 retrofitted units across our city.

I am proud of what we have accomplished and motivated to keep going. I believe that we can put an end to chronic homelessness and ensure an affordable home is available to those who need it most.

As always, my team and I are here to help, and I look forward to connecting with you this year.

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Honouring the scope of Ottawa's artists



The ceramic sculpture *Calm* by Mária Moldovan was a highlight of the City Hall Art Gallery exhibit of new artworks in the city collection. STEPHEN THIRLWALL/THE BUZZ

Stephen Thirlwall

Each year the City of Ottawa acknowledges artists in the community through purchasing a piece of their work that becomes part of the city's growing collection. On rotation, these works are placed at about 170 locations across the city.

You can see the 2022 inductees into the collection until February 3 at the City Hall Art Gallery.

The theme of the exhibit is **Metamorphosis: change and transformation**. It comprises works from each of the honoured artists thus presenting a wide variety of vi-

sual perspectives and ideas. Physically, there were paintings, drawings, photos, multimedia works, fabric art, pottery and other constructive art, such as the hobby horse. Emotionally and intellectually, there is a great range of feelings and concepts. The gallery space is quite large but sectioned off by partial internal walls that add more display space.

The pieces were created by 56 local, regional, and national visual fine artists who have some connection to Ottawa. A special vernissage on December 15 opened the show, providing a chance for artists and art enthusiasts to gather together, socialize, and appreciate the arts as they viewed the works and discussed creative ideas.



Catherine Willis-O'Connor's acrylic painting *Lunchtime*.

STEPHEN THIRLWALL/THE BUZZ

The vernissage was packed. Unless you were near the host presenters, it was almost impossible to hear the introductory speeches. One had to weave their way through the crowd to see each of the works. A few days later, I returned to have a more contemplative viewing of each piece.

Commentaries on our self-identities

Although very diverse in expression, the pieces had some things in common. Art has a tendency to be a mirror of ourselves and reflect and give commentary on the reality of our physical, social and spiritual environment and relationships.

These days, everyone is questioning the essence of their self-identity (or rather collectiveness and multiple levels of identity) and/or reflecting the relationship between nature's landscape and creatures and human impacts. Of immediate concern are the growing number of global calamities for which we are increasingly responsible.

Highlights of the exhibit

Following are brief comments on a few selected pieces.

Mária Moldovan and **Lisa Creskey** are personal favourites, whose works I have followed and enjoyed over time. Both are ceramic artists rather than just potters. Mária creates small fantastical people and creatures that radiate a strong spirit, allowing the viewer to envision unusual landscapes where these creatures might dwell. As someone from Hungarian-Romanian background, and a relative newcomer to Canada, she seeks a way to anchor herself in her new home. Her works represent treasured memories, feelings of belonging and dreams.

Lisa Creskey presents a [human-sized painted ceramic, *Baromètre*](#). Her construct expresses her love of nature and concern for endangered wildlife habitats. It tells the story of the region's heron colony in the face of human influences, such as pulp and paper and cement industries. The pair of herons are both entangled yet united. Many of her past works embody wildlife, particularly birds.

Eric Tardif shows the beauty, grace and poetry of birds through his wooden sculpture *The Lovers*. Two other artists also provide indigenous views. **Elisapee Birmingham** uses fabric handicraft skills to create a finely decorated blue winter Inuit cloak that identifies with Inuit family and community-centred culture. A baby would be placed in the amaut (or pocket). **Koomuatuk (Kuzy) Curley's** serpentine sculpture *Unity* represents the continuity of Inuit life across many generations. In his various works, he shares his heritage through indigenous folktales and ways of life.

Laurena Finéus, of Haitian heritage, uses bold and colourful narratives of her homeland while experiencing life as part of the cultural diaspora.

Catherine Willis-O'Connor's acrylic painting *Lunchtime* depicts a busy "German Town" deli – an active community hub offering meats, cheeses and sweets. She immortalizes such landmarks now gone or disappearing from our communities.

Orange Bathroom by **Simon Petepiece** is a 2-D sculpture assembled from nylon fibre and debris netting. It appears like an orange sanctuary. He uses overlooked and waste materials to explore architectural space.

A large photo portrait of MP Catherine McKenna by **Joyce Crago** captures the strain of discrimination and pressures she has undergone, and yet shows a great strength of character and determination to rise above. Joyce has created a photo series on political women highlighting the private-public struggle in their lives.

Whitney Lewis-Smith, in her bonsai photograph, shows how she seeks out objects that display the effects of commodification and globalization on our environment.

Jim Lamont's digital aerial photograph of the Yukon's Donjek Glacier exposes the natural and human effects on the landscape. I relate strongly to his photo because I used to work with such images.

Mélanie Myers, using coloured pencil and paper maché, examines how our landscapes become ever more standardized by our society's blocky structures, especially on the grid-based computer.

Sharon VanStarkenburgh examines the traumas and joys of women and girls. Her oil painting *Divining Rod* represents a woman using a divining rod to find her way, while being seen by society as being sinful.

As a viewer, this painting with a central character with vacant eyes represents to me an "off-balance," a "distortedness" that I have seen in many works of art over at least a couple of decades. I do not say this as a negative criticism. It reflects an "offness" within society. Our society is supposed to be progressive, intelligent, well-off, and advancing. However, we still encounter so much inequality, prejudice, poverty, abuse, addiction, and violence locally, nationally and in the world, thus making important transformations hard.

It is a very healthy sign for communities when government agencies pay attention to the arts. Artistic endeavours release creativity, new insights and perspectives, critical thinking, inspiration, understanding, and hope that advance our culture.

Acknowledgement of art helps to put art in its rightful place as an equal and important partner to the sciences and technologies – a sign of positive metamorphosis happening.

The City Hall Art Gallery is located on the main floor of City Hall, near the central rotunda. It is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday, but closed Saturday and Sunday.



Divining Rod by Sharon VanStarkenburgh reflects on "offness" in society. STEPHEN THIRLWALL/THE BUZZ

MPP report: remembering a tireless troublemaker for justice

Joel Harden

Weeks before the recent holidays, we lost Christine Collins: a leader in the federal public service, and a tireless troublemaker for justice.

Christine was proud to call Centretown home (she lived on Arlington Avenue), and I was honoured to call her my friend.

A celebration of life for Christine was hosted on January 6 by the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), a union whose members benefited from decades of Christine's contributions.

We first met when I worked as research staff for the Canadian Labour Congress. It was 2007, and I was assigned to build a national pension campaign. That meant talking to union leaders across all sectors in all regions of Canada.

When I met with the PSAC, Christine pulled me aside. "Listen," she said, "you're going to get lots of people telling you we need a plan to protect union pensions. As a union leader, I'm telling you that's a losing strategy." It was a line that resonated with me.

"Most Canadian workers," she continued, "don't have decent pensions. If unions focus primarily on 'protecting our plans' we are walking into a trap. Our primary focus must be on improving public pensions and the Canada Pension Plan. Not protecting ourselves."

This vision was adopted by Canadian unions, and we won major public pension and CPP improvements in years that followed. Christine and others were proven right.

Our next work together was more recent (2020) and personal. Christine had retired and was acting as a primary caregiver for her brother Peter. Peter lived with dementia, and had moved to Carlingview Manor, a private long-term care home.

Carlingview was one of the epicentres for the COVID-19 pandemic in Ottawa. 61 residents died in this home.

Peter was discharged to Carlingview from the Civic Hospital in April 2020. Christine, under pandemic restrictions, had limited means to see him or help him.

She managed to get Peter a phone so he could be reached directly. When they spoke, what she heard was

stunning. Staff run off their feet, exhausted, and scared. Unmasked residents wandered into Peter's room, randomly stealing or breaking items. Peter caught COVID-19 but survived with lingering illnesses. It was a nightmare.

Christine spoke out. She was helped by the Ottawa Health Coalition, a local advocacy group in which she was active. We also did referrals to reporters who covered Peter's story, and that shone a light on a problem that was ultimately solved by hospital and community nursing staff taking over Carlingview and other private long-term care homes. It infuriated Christine that the federal government, through her own pension plan, was the sole owner of Revera, the private company that ran Carlingview. She saw that as a betrayal.

The last time I saw Christine, she had brought along a delicious coleslaw for a BBQ we hosted at The Lexington, a community housing building in Old Ottawa South. This was a building hard-hit by the May 2022 derecho windstorm, and residents were appreciative of those who supported them. I put out a call for folks to help,



Centretowner Christine Collins worked to improve pensions for all, and conditions for patients stuck in for-profit long-term care homes in the early stage of the COVID-19 pandemic. (photo provided by Joel Harden)

and Christine came.

In my quieter moments, when I think about what matters in life, my mind turns to people like Christine Collins. Folks who don't hog

the limelight but who show up when help is needed. We need less talk and more action in this world – more leading by doing.

I'm still shocked that

Christine is gone. I will miss her dearly. But above all, I will treat every day as an opportunity to be more like her, causing lots of good trouble.

Rest in power my friend.

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