

The South Etobicoke News

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Another new year and more City tax increases

Happy New Year to Toronto residents means we will be digging deeper in our pockets as fees and rates increase to fund some City services.

An interim fee increase started on January 1 for Toronto Water and Solid Waste Management Services (SWMS), according to the City.

City Council will decide during its budget process on January 13 what the final rates and fees will be.

Staff have recommended a 3.75 per cent increase to Toronto Water and SWMS, which means we will have to pay hundreds of dollars more. The fee increase will see a jump from \$295 to \$306 for a small single-family



OTHER THAN BIKE LANE REMOVALS (left) CITY officials are raising taxes this year to reduce a \$1 billion plus deficit that includes a rise in garbage pick-up, (right) water and other fees.

bin; a \$14 rise for a medium garbage bin and about \$20 for large and extra large bins.

The average household using 230 cubic metres of water yearly will see a rise of \$1,078 in 2025. Just remember

and maintain the required infrastructure. The SWMS fees are used for residential garbage collection, organics, oversized and metal items, litter collection, environment days and parks bin collection.

Mayor Olivia Chow included a 9.5 per cent property tax hike in her first budget — a rate not seen in decades aimed at addressing an opening deficit of \$1.8 billion.

Chow said she expects there will be fee increases to fund some of the other essential services. The City said the proposed increases will support the delivery of services as waste management and water treatment while funding ongoing projects to build

Some New Toronto residents fume over shelter

Some New Toronto residents are upset that an 80-bed municipal shelter to provide services for the homeless is being built on Third Street without public consultations.

This is the second attempt by City officials to build a mega shelter in New Toronto. A 2020 attempt to install a 95-bed shelter at 2950 and 2970 Lake Shore Blvd. W. failed due to community backlash against the plan.

Crews have begun work at a former City parking lot at 66 Third Street, which will be site of the shelter; one of about 19 planned Citywide, to help those living on the streets as they move toward permanent housing.

The long-awaited shelter is slated to open between 2028 and 2030. “Enough is enough,” said Chris Korwin-Kuczynski, an area resident and former City councillor. “The community has enough social agencies already.”



CITY CREWS (centre) BEGIN WORK ON an 80-bed municipal shelter for the homeless (right) being constructed on Third Street (left). Some residents claim ‘enough is enough,’ and call for community consultations..

He said New Toronto residents are seeking a public meeting on the shelter being constructed on Third Street. The community is also supporting the upcoming Helen Keller Centre for the deafblind on Eighth Street.

“These sites will help respond to demand and stabilize the shelter system,” according to City staff. “The City is committed to working with the local community to support the success of the site and has hired Community

Engagement Facilitator Public Progress to lead engagement.”

The new facilities will be less institutional and ‘more home-like,’ according to the City, and will feature natural materials and amenity spaces.

The suites will be smaller containing each a single bed, will be better designed, help offset capacity as temporary shelter sites close and provide shelter in areas of significant of Black and Indigenous focused spaces.

The shelters will be decorated with art and symbols so different people can feel welcome. Pets will be allowed in the shelters, which will have spaces for counselling, harm reduction and other health care services.

Similar shelters are planned for 1615 Dufferin Street, 2535 Gerrard Street E., 2024-2212 Eglinton Ave. W., 68 Sheppard Ave. and 1220 Wilson Avenue.

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Police officers mourn the on-duty passing of a colleague who died from a medical issue

A Go Fund Me page has been created to help the family of former Toronto Police Det. John Park who died on duty last month of a medical issue. Almost \$200,000 has been raised to help the officer's family. A funeral service attended by dozens of colleagues was held for him on December 30.

Park started his 14-year career at 22 Division in South Etobicoke before moving to the force's Hold Up Squad.

He passed away on December 19 while executing a search warrant at a North York high rise, according to police.

Park, 40, leaves behind a wife Tina, and two children, aged 5 and 9. Three books of tributes from friends and the public to the officer were left at 22 Division and Police Headquarters. They have been given to his family. "There are no words to express the sorrow we feel right now,"



TORONTO POLICE DET. JOHN PARK leaves a wife and two young kids behind. He served the citizens of this City for 14-years..

Deputy Chief Lauren Pogue said. "This is every family's worst fear, when a loved one works as a police officer and does not come home safely after their shift."

She said the grieving family did not have a husband or dad this Christmas season.

"He served our city with courage and a great sense of duty," Pogue said. "Losing a friend and colleague has a profound impact on our officers." Dozens of officers lined the streets outside the hospital where Park was pronounced dead to show respect for their colleague.

Clayton Campbell, president of the Toronto Police Association, said members are coming together to support Park's family.

"It's devastating. It's just such a sad situation in the hospital right now." Mayor Olivia Chow said she was "heartbroken" by the officer's death, and has been in touch with Chief Myron Demkiw.



DET. JOHN PARK with his wife Tina and their children in better days.

Cold-blooded killers sought by police in area

One of Canada's most wanted man has been on the run from police for two years for a horrific high-profile double murder that occurred in Long Branch.

Philip Grant, 34, is one of the Top 25 criminals being sought by police nationwide for blood-curdling offences.



FUGITIVE Philip Grant

Grant's police mug shot featured on a Be On The Lookout (BOLO) poster state there is a \$50,000 reward issued by Toronto Police for anyone who has information that can lead to his arrest.

The fugitive was allegedly behind the January 3, 2022 killings of Minyali Wur, 24, and Chudier Reat, 20, of Mississauga, in a high-profile gun battle at an office building on Thirtieth Street.

The men were gunned down in cold blood in a facility used by many people.

He is described as six-foot-one tall and weighing around 200 pounds, with a muscular build, brown eyes, and black hair which is usually worn braided. He has scars on his left wrist, right hand, left hand, and the shin of his right leg.

"If anyone sees him they should immediately call 9-1-1,"

police said. "Anyone offering him assistance in evading arrest may be considered an accessory after the fact and face charges."



WANTED Joseph Ayala

Officers are also on the trail of an Alderwood killer who has completely disappeared for five months since killing two well-liked women. The

families are seeking answers.

Police are searching for Joseph Ayala, 33, of Toronto, who has been on the run since August 23 for the alleged slaying of the women in Alderwood.

Ayala is wanted for second-degree murder after an 82-year-old woman and a 60-year-old woman were found dead in a home. There has been no sightings of the suspect.

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Busy Santa Claus is still the Big Man in town



IT WAS A TIME FOR FAMILY FUN AND MEMORIES for thousands of families attending the 33rd annual Lakeshore Santa Claus Parade on December 7 that ran from Dwight to Long Branch Avenues. Those attending were treated to dozens of marching costumed children, adults, bands and beautiful Christmas floats. The soothing Christmas music and carols were also a hit with fans. The parade is always popular with children and as usual there was a frenzy and cheers with the appearance of Santa Claus and his reindeer. Merchants on the parade route say business was brisk on a cold day. The parade was in threat of being shut due to financial issue, which was later straightened out. The Etobicoke Lakeshore Santa Claus Parade started in 1990 as an effort between the Lakeshore Village BIA and Long Branch BIA, to bring back a Christmas Parade after a 25 year hiatus. It is one of the longer-running continual Santa Claus Parade in the City, attracting about 60,000 people yearly. **Staff and Courtesy photos.**

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Delivering Results: Reflecting on 2024, Shaping 2025

Happy New Year, Etobicoke-Lakeshore!

As we welcome 2025, I am filled with hope and gratitude for the incredible strength and spirit of our community.

2024 was a remarkable year. We broke new ground in healthcare delivery, advanced community safety, and laid the foundation for transformative projects that will serve generations to come.

Let us look back at what we delivered for Etobicoke-Lakeshore:

Better Healthcare

- Reopening the Urgent Care Centre at Queensway Health Centre
- New patient tower at Gilgan Family Queensway Health Centre to add 350 new beds
- Two new hospice beds added to Dorothy Ley Hospice
- New MRI to be located at Queensway Health Centre

Tackling Gridlock

- \$73M investment to speed up Gardiner Expressway construction
- \$180M investment to increase transit ridership in Toronto
- Removing bike lanes on Bloor St. West and pausing new bike lanes where they take away a lane of traffic

A Safer Etobicoke

- Over \$39M for Toronto Police Service to fight guns and gangs
- \$900,000 for TPS to prevent auto theft, \$70M for community safety

Building Our Economy

- \$6M investment to train workers in Etobicoke-Lakeshore
- \$114M investment to get homes built faster in Toronto
- One Fare to save transit riders \$1,600 annually
- 10-cent/litre gas tax cut saving drivers hundreds of dollars

Building More Schools

- Completion of two catholic schools – Holy Angels and St. Leo – with total 1100 student and 137 childcare spaces
- Securing \$33.4M investment for a new public school – Etobicoke City Centre Elementary – with 823 student and 88 childcare spaces

We accomplished a lot together – neighbours, businesses, and government working side by side to build a better community.

Now, as we turn to 2025, we carry this momentum forward with renewed focus and ambition.

Training more doctors and nurses, investing in education, creating more good-paying jobs, tackling gridlock by building better transit and highways, and creating a safer community is my 2025 vision to keep delivering results for Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Thank you for your trust and collaboration.



STAY CONNECTED
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You can reach my office at
416-259-2249 or christine.hogarth@pc.ola.org
christinehogarthmpp.ca

Happy 100 birthday Millie Celebrating 60 years in business



The party, attended by many well-wishers who enjoyed birthday cake, was held at Horner Avenue Senior's Centre, where she has been a long-time volunteer.


Friends and family members helped Mildred Gooddayle (centre) celebrate her 100 birthday last December 14. Millie, as she is affectionately called, says her secret to a long life is to keep active and busy. "Millie says that she keeps herself as active as possible and likes to keep moving," said grandson, Adam.

She is well-known in the area and still helps others in the community. Millie has lived in Long Branch for her entire life and has seen a lot of changes in the community over the years. We wish Millie many more happy years. She loves the community and the people who live here. **Staff photos.**


CONGRATULATIONS TO MIMICO SHOE MASTER JOE (second from left) and his hard-working family on the 60th anniversary of Giovenco Shoes, at 382 Royal York Road. The multi-generational Mimico company was founded in 1964 and has stood the test of time through hard work, determination and a deep commitment to excellence. Above he is presented with a plaque for his business acumen and longevity by Ward 3 Councillor Amber Morley and the Mimico BIA. **Instagram photo.**

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The South Etobicoke News is a free, independent monthly newspaper that serves Humber Bay Shores, Mimico, Lake Shore Village, Long Branch and Alderwood areas. Established in 1999.

We live in the community and cover local news, amateur sports, business and civic life while honouring those who gave so much of themselves so we can have the lives we enjoy today.

Please feel free to drop us a line if you would like to advertise your business or leave any comments, tips or news of upcoming events.

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thesouthetobicokenews@gmail.com
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Near 100-year-old global firm razed for condos

One of the older global manufacturing companies in South Etobicoke that was in business for almost 100 years is being flattened for what else but more condos. National Silicates has been a fixture at 429 Kipling Avenue, at Horner Avenue, since 1815. It shut down after 92 years of conducting business in 19 countries in all five continents. The Kipling Avenue plant in its prime employed 100 employees, who retired or were laid off. The firm at one time had 1,500 employees and generated over \$800 million in revenue. The company goes back to 1815, with Joseph Crosfield and Sons in Warrington, England; and 1831, with Joseph Elkinton and Sons in Philadelphia, started with the manufacture of candles and soaps, beginning a two-century story of innovation.



FORMER GLOBAL COMPANY National Silicates (right) is being demolished after almost 100 years of business in the Kipling and Horner Avenues area. Below the large steel tanks spewed out product that was shipped all over the world. Above photo by Susie Basheir.



Heavy machinery are now demolishing the plant in preparation for the construction of a new industrial condo building that will be divided into 13 units. The proposal calls for more than 100 parking spots, 15 electric vehicle parking spaces and 10 for bicycles.

“The proposal will replace an existing industrial building and provide for a new modern development that will align with the goals and demands in the City of Toronto,” according to the developers.

National Silicates won awards for business excellence, encouraged employees to volunteer in their

communities, and was a supporter of the Santa Claus Parade, Tree Planting in Marie Curtis Park, LAMP, Dorothy Ley Hospice, Women’s Habitat and the Jean Tweed Centre.



NATIONAL SILICATES IN its heyday employed about 100 employees at this South Etobicoke plant and about 1,500 workers in total across five continents.

“As we close our doors for the last time, we leave behind an amazing community,” a former employee said. “We are friends and most of us are, in reality family.”

The firm was headquartered in Toronto and had production and distribution facilities in Valleyfield, Quebec; Toronto, Fort Frances, Whitecourt, Alberta; Surrey and Parksville, B.C.

The company’s Global Centre for Pulp and Paper Excellence was in Etobicoke and staffed by highly trained scientists who conducted research and development, as well as technical service.

Its principal product is sodium silicate used in the bleaching of wood pulp for paper manufacture and water treatment, among its many uses.

The company and its affiliates was the world’s largest producer of sodium and potassium silicates, according to its website.



Have a Happy & Prosperous New Year

LAKESHORE VILLAGE BIA



WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL FOR THEIR SUPPORT DURING CHRISTMAS AND THE SUCCESSFUL PARADE. MANY THANKS TO THE TORONTO POLICE SERVICE, TORONTO FIRE SERVICES, TORONTO SCOTTISH REGIMENT AND EXCALIBUR TROPHY & AWARDS.



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Lakeshore Village BIA Treasurer Rattan Gandhi (in blue jacket) on right presents a first-place award for Best Christmas Tree to Valentina of Valentina’s Boutique, at 2862 Lake Shore Blvd. W., and a third place trophy to Shoppers Drug Mart’s Bonnie and Matt, at 2850 Lake Shore Blvd. W. Hearing Life came in second but were not available. The accolade has been presented to businesses yearly by the BIA.

Starlight kids get toys & fun

Some 148 families of critically or chronically ill children were treated with fun and tons of toys during the 26th annual Toys"R"Us celebration on Evans Avenue.

The fun-filled day on December 15 was hosted by the Starlight Children's Foundation Canada to brighten the lives of seriously ill children and their families. Starlight children and their siblings each received gift cards to shop for their dream toys in a magical atmosphere, said Starlight spokesman Kristina Hopp.

She said Santa Claus, superheroes, princesses, and other beloved characters were there to spread holiday cheer.

Toys"R"Us and Starlight have been hosting the event for more than a quarter-century and has helped thousands of ill children through the power of play. Toys"R"Us employees and customers have raised over \$30 million to help tens of thousands of hospitalized children nationwide.

"Hosting Starlight events in our store this time of year is very special for our team," said Casey



STARLIGHT CHILDREN'S Foundation for chronically ill kids (top, below) having fun at Toys "R" Us. **Starlight Children's Foundation photos.**

Torres, of Toys"R"Us. "It gives us an opportunity to see first-hand the impact we can help make to Starlight families."

This event was held at 11 stores and will create memories to more than 750 families during a season when they need it most.

The company focuses on giving back to its communities through charity that support children in need and their families.

Since the partnership began in 1998, Toys"R"Us Canada employees and customers have raised



SOME ILL CHILDREN (top, bottom) having a good time at party hosted by the Starlight Foundation Canada and Toys "R" Us. **Courtesy photos.**

millions to brighten the lives of thousands of hospitalized children across the country.



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Police are warning online users of a timely and fairly new scam that claims to be offering Canadians a \$250 federal government tax credit.

The e-mail claims to be from the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and requests that users press a link in which the Working Canadians Rebate tax credit will be automatically e-transferred to their account.

Police warn the CRA does not send text messages about tax refunds, rebates, or benefits including the Working Canadians Rebate.

"If you receive a text message about the Working Canadians Rebate, it is a scam," the CRA warns. "You should not respond to the text message or click any links in it."

The legitimate rebate benefit will be automatically deposited to those eligible starting in January.

You are warned not to share information with others who call or e-mail; to get the caller's information and verify it or just hang up.

Police note that scammers use threatening language, demand immediate payment, or ask for personal or financial information.

Be aware of scams that request payment by cryptocurrency or gift cards.

The federal government announced plans for the rebate in November to alleviate higher costs-of-living by providing a \$250 rebate to all working Canadians with net incomes below \$150,000, to be delivered in the Spring 2025. The credit has not had the support in Parliament to be approved.



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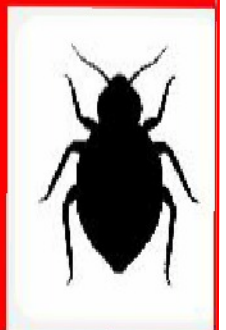
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Huge tower planned across from Long Branch GO Station



THIS 43-STOREY condo is planned for 3807-3829 Lake Shore Blvd. W., across from the Long Branch GO Station.

A large-scale development project is underway to densify the area across from the Long Branch Go Station with a 43 and 11-storey high-rise condos.

The mixed-use buildings will contain more than 600 housing units and mostly underground parking for about 500 vehicles.

A 43-storey tower is proposed to be constructed at 3807-3829 Lake Shore Blvd. W., where a commercial strip exists with a vacuum cleaner shop, porn and convenience stores.

The so-called Long Branch Tower will have a six-storey podium, on top of which is a 37-storey tower. It will house 549 multi-size units.

Both applications are before the hearing stages and will have to be considered by City Council. The taller tower will contain 165.1 square metres of retail gross floor area (GFA), and 35,945.6

square metres of residential GFA.

The high-rise will be located at the foot of Brown's Line and Lake Shore Blvd. W., just steps east of Long Branch GO Station and the Long Branch Loop at the west end of the TTC's route 501 Queen streetcar.

The developers claim the proposal would have little impact on local traffic and congestion.

The building will have underground parking for just 72 vehicles, compared to the over 430 bicycle parking spots proposed.

Developer Lake Shore West Co-Ownership, a partnership of Harlo Capital, Toronto Standard, and Major Street Group, have assembled six properties for development from 3807 to 3829 Lake Shore Blvd. W., just where it meets Brown's Line.

The site proposed for an 11-storey building is 3807-3815 Lake Shore Blvd. W., just west of Fortieth Street and is now home of a retail plaza and a group of commercial buildings that at one time included a 2-4-1 Pizzas.

The developments have been placed within the Long Branch Major Transit Station Area, one of many such zones around transit where the province is promoting higher-density development.

The 11-storey development will have 106 residential parking spots, and will contain one to three-bedroom units.

Some residents have taken to social media to express their views of the development, with about half claiming it is badly needed as the area has been neglected for a long time.



THIS 11-STOREY building is planned beside the tower at 3807-3815 Lake Shore Blvd. W., where a pizza shop now stands.

JANUARY 28 VIDEOCONFERENCE Ontario Land Tribunal appeal at 10 a.m. of an application to build a 26-storey mixed-use tower with 352 dwelling units, retail space and 147 parking spots at 210 Islington Avenue and 99 Birmingham Street, site of a Sikh temple. Those interested have until January 13 to declare their views. E-mail mcara@overlandllp.ca

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Brad Jones (right) and his team pour hot chocolate and hand out timbits to many cold families having fun along the route of the December 7 Lakeshore Santa Claus parade.

LIFE'S

UNDERTAKING

a podcast

Brad Jones, the funeral director believes this spring we're all travelling toward new beginnings and positive potentials. You can listen to Life's Undertaking Podcast wherever you listen. You may even hear a story or two about his Purple and Yellow VW Camper.

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St. Margaret's New Toronto feeding those in need



A VOLUNTEER HELP prepare food for some for the needy in the community during the holidays.

About 225 needy people in our community were feted with delicious Christmas turkey take-out meals in an annual meal give-away provided by a New Toronto church.

St. Margaret's New Toronto Church, on Sixth Street, was busy with volunteers and goodwill at Christmas as those hungry had registered to pick up their meals, with potatoes, cranberry sauce with all the fixings.

The free meals for the homeless, less fortunate and needy has been taking place

yearly for about 30 years, according to church officials.

This year there were 200 adults and 25 children provided meals. Most of the families would have not Christmas meals if it wasn't for the kind donors and the many volunteers.

It took weeks for the helpers to prepare the meals. A kind resident had endowed a number of turkeys to help with the meals.

In addition, the church also provides a meal on Sundays, where people can do their laundry, take a shower, charge their phones and access services.

Up the street at the Daily Bread Food Bank workers said it has been a record year for those seeking food items. Nearly one in three of their clients, or about 29 per cent, went a whole day without eating and half missed a meal to pay for something else. "When you're living on \$300 a month, you need to rely on food banks," according to a Food Bank *Who's Hungry* survey. One unhoused client said: "I sacrifice with food. I've got children, too, so anything extra I give to them."

The survey said one in four food bank clients have a disability, 52% rely on social assistance as their primary source of income, leaving them at least \$1,000 below the poverty line each month.

Almost nine in 10 clients live in unaffordable housing, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on rent and utilities. Three in four clients spend over half of their income on housing, and one in five spend all their income on housing, leaving no money for other necessities

After paying rent and utilities, food bank clients have a median of \$7.78 left per person, per day to pay for food and all other essentials. At one time there were many places that people could go to obtain food items, or shelter. The number of such venues have been reduced due to a lack of

funds. Residents are urged to volunteer or donate locally to help St. Margaret's, Daily Bread Food Bank or Haven on the Queensway.



VOLUNTEERS OF THE DAILY BREAD FOOD BANK hustle to feed a record amount of people in need over the holidays. Many are holding multiple jobs to make ends meet. **Courtesy photos.**

Beloved bakery oven now shut



FOND TATSU GOODBYE to master baker Tatsu Sato and wife, Junko.

a top quality blend of Western and Japanese cultures for the local community at affordable prices.

All the products were fresh, natural and baked daily by Sato at 4 a.m. The tradition ended on December 25.

"We are truly grateful to have had our business and our life in this great community of South Etobicoke," the couple wrote on social media. The bakery was loved by residents for its fresh bread, including Japanese loaves, sandwiches, sweets, cakes and other delicious products. Tatsu's Bread over the years supported local artists by providing a showcase for paintings and other art works.

"We started this bakery in 2006 and over these eighteen years, we have had so much wonderful support," the owners wrote. "We are truly grateful to have had our business and our life in this great community of South Etobicoke." The humble couple said they have learned much from the community. They are likely to be involved in other endeavours.

A beloved bakery that has served area residents for 18-years has closed its doors for the final time.

Tatsu's Bread, at 3180 Lake Shore Blvd. W., was owned and operated by master baker Tatsu Sato and his wife, Junko, and was located across from Humber College. Sato was trained in Tokyo and his quest was to provide



NEW TORONTO GROCER John Ibrahim is the new owner of Star Lake Fine Foods, at 2863 Lake Shore Blvd. W., near Islington Ave. He invites the community to stop, take a look and maybe purchase something at the renovated and modernized store. It has been fully restocked with fresh meats, vegetables and fine foods. John and his staff are eager to serve you. He has introduced a hot table with \$4.99 hot dogs, sandwiches and other steaming foods. The store is clean, bright and packed with food items. They are also active in working with local charities. The store can be reached at 416-672-0770.

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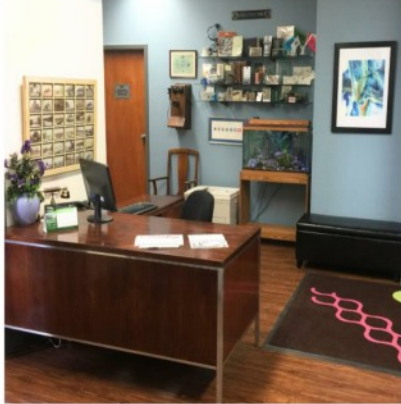
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Heritage plaque for Queensway



MANY CHILDREN WERE USED back then to cultivate food in the rich farmlands at the Queensway Market Gardens, located where the Ontario Food Terminal (below) is today. A Heritage plaque is planned to mark the spot for future generations.

The City is planning to erect a heritage plaque to commemorate the Queensway Market Gardens, a once booming area of farmland that is now the Ontario Food Terminal.

Funds are being sought by Ward 3 Councillor Amber Morley for the plaque, which will be installed in the terminal area.

“The production and installation of a heritage plaque to recognize the history of the Queensway Market Gardens,” according to a motion seeking funds.

The Queensway Market Gardens ran on both sides of the Queensway from the Humber River to the west of Kipling Avenue, according to the City.

“The soil of South Etobicoke attracted farmers who specialized in growing food and flowers to supply the City,” according to staff. “The main produce was vegetables with a few farms having apple and pear trees as well as strawberry and raspberry bushes.”

The market gardens were family-centred operations that

were passed down through multiple generations.

It said the Gardens were a source of full-time and part-time work for children, who would work after school and on Saturdays.

“During the summer break from school, they could be seen often weeding rows of vegetables six days a week for five cents a row, which is about \$1 today,” the motion said.

Children also worked at the Park Lawn Road farmers market, stocking carts and loading horses.

An informal market existed on the site from 1915 to 1918. The road was only paved in 1925, so farmers would use horses and wagons to transport crops, but they would often get caught or bogged down due to the mix of rain and loose soil on their way to market.

The market was eventually closed and the area was used for the 56-acre Ontario Food Terminal which was opened on July 21, 1954. The proposed site of the plaque - Queensway Park - was a former 100-acre farm of one of the earliest Queensway market gardeners, Herod Noble.



THE ONTARIO FOOD TERMINAL (above) sits on a former 100-acres of rich Etobicoke farm land.

One man injured, another arrested in Mimico fire



A man has been charged with arson after a two-alarm fire at a Mimico apartment complex that left one person with injuries.

Complex residents were forced to evacuate as fire crews took over the scene.

Firefighters were called to a building at Lake Shore Blvd. W., and Burlington Street just after 1 a.m. on December 28.

Toronto Fire Services said police were already at the scene responding to a domestic incident when the fire broke out.

Crews arrived at the fourth-floor unit to find heavy smoke in the hallway and residence. The fire itself was extinguished and one person was left with minor injuries.

Police said a man in his 30s was arrested at the scene and charged with assault and arson charges.

The incident is under investigation.

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In the Community

By TOM GODFREY

The year 2024 was a tough one for many of us and we hope this new year will only get brighter.

It cost more than ever to live in congested Toronto and it is no wonder many people are moving to more affordable communities.

We are at an era where it cost in the ballpark of \$3,000 plus to rent a two-bedroom apartment and hundreds more for groceries to feed a family.

People with jobs are now lining up at the Daily Bread Food Bank and other places in record amounts to make ends meet. They say one of 10 Torontonians are using the food bank. Last Christmas some 225 adults and children were fed in our community by volunteers and sponsors at St. Margaret's New Toronto church, on Sixth Street.

The free meal has been taking place for decades to help the needy in our community. The demand for meals by some is at a record high these days.

Even a brief federal tax free holiday, or \$200 cheque from the Ontario government, doesn't go far these days. In one fill up at the gas station or a trip grocery shopping and the free money is gone. We have to be thankful though.

All it takes is a walk through the business areas in South Etobicoke and you will notice the many stores which have closed down, being leased or not open.

The main complaint is the high rent being charged by landowners, that are forcing industrious merchants out due to the high costs. There are a far fewer number of new restaurants that have opened to replace the ones being closed.

The new businesses are required to have their places filled at all times to turn a profit and pay their bills.

We also hear from seniors and young people that it's getting harder for them to survive and flourish in our City and many have two or three jobs just to get by, or are moving back in with their parents to survive.

Sure, there are many housing developments being constructed to help those in need of shelter, or living in precarious situations. But these units take years to complete and have long waiting lists.

At least Mayor Olivia Chow, the Ontario government and Ottawa have made it their priority to get the wheels turning to build more housing units across the country, where the demands are high.

A bold move to build 19 municipal 80-bed shelters to house the homeless, including one on Third Street, is underway but these take time. Some residents in the New Toronto area are complaining the community was not contacted about the shelter, and there are already many agencies here helping the needy.

Many are asking about the leadership and direction of the upcoming controversial shelter from our Ward 3 Councillor Amber Morley, who has been noticeably silent on the issue.

There were weekly protests the last time the City tried to unsuccessfully install a shelter. Here in South Etobicoke, the redevelopment is everywhere as our industrial base is demolished.

All you have to do is look at the condo projects currently underway at the Cineplex on the Queensway Theatre, Cloverdale Mall, Sherway Gardens Mall, The Queensway and Six Points and other areas.

At the same time there are many large 24-hour distribution centres that are opening up due to our location bringing good high-paying jobs to the community in exchange for high truck traffic, dust and pollution.

We are the fourth largest City in North America and the urban sprawl runs from the depths of Scarborough to Etobicoke and beyond.

The City, and our community has changed, and we should be prepared for more to come, as that horse of yesterday has bolted from the barn. Many of us can only hold on, appreciate and love what we have.

Tom Godfrey is Publisher of the *South Etobicoke News*, who lives in the community. He was a reporter at the *Toronto Sun* for many years before deciding to use his skills to work in community journalism.

It's time to put an end to gender-based violence. With measures aimed at education, prevention, and victim support, the Ontario government continues to combat the unacceptable acts of violence against women and girls in our province.

As we reflect on the progress we've made, it's also important to acknowledge other important steps in our broader fight against gender-based violence.

On June 6, 2023, I led the passage of a Motion to create a new way of battling Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in our province. It was unanimously supported by the Legislature to start work on a *Clare's Law* for Ontario. *Clare's Law* would make information relating to IPV available to those at risk on a confidential basis.

Around the same time that year, Bill 102 was granted Royal Assent making *Keira's Law* a law in Ontario mandating training on gender-based IPV for our provincial court judges and Justices of the Peace. A Private Member's Bill on declaring Intimate Partner Violence as an "epidemic" is with the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, with the Premier asking that we seek the committee's in-depth analysis and advice on intimate partner violence, including causes, current programs and future measures.

On December 11, Bill 123, also known as Erin's Law, passed in our legislature, marking a significant step toward protecting children from sexual abuse. Erin's Law amends the Education Act, requiring school boards to adopt policies that teach students how to recognize and report sexual abuse.

Currently, the Ontario government is investing \$1.4 billion in a range of initiatives to support victims and survivors of IPV such as emergency shelters, counselling, 24-hour crisis lines, safety planning, and transitional housing. This also includes helping more women build skills and get jobs to gain financial security and independence.

Our government also supports approximately 400 gender-based violence service providers across the province as part of an \$18.7 million investment.

Another important investment was \$2 million through the Partner Assault Response (PAR) program to support specialized group education and counselling for people who are mandated by the courts to receive it. Each year, the PAR Program receives more than 11,000 referrals, and is delivered by 51 service providers across Ontario.

With a special focus on those in rural and remote communities, we have invested \$4.5 million over three years in additional funding for the Victim Quick Response Program+ to increase access to basic necessities for victims of human trafficking and gender-based violence.

In Budget 2024, the government provided an additional \$13.5M over three years, on top of existing investments of \$1.4B over four years, to enhance initiatives that support women, children, and youth at increased risk of violence or exploitation.

These investments are a testimony to our commitment to stand firmly with survivors of gender-based violence, and to create communities where every woman and girl can live without fear.

If you or someone you know has experienced gender-based violence or is at risk, please visit Ontario.ca/safe to find resources and supports. For 24/7 crisis support in Toronto, call 416-863-0511.

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Your Health

By MONIKA MEULMAN



Retired Judge Speaks

By Retired JUDGE LLOYD BUDZINSKI

Pebble in my Shoe or don't sweat the small stuff.

Don't sweat the small stuff on this frigid day. Partly, because it is so cold and sweating is highly unlikely, but mostly because that's the best new year resolution ever. It is such a simple

phrase that was popularized as a household saying in the late 1990s, by Dr. Richard Carlson.

He wrote the book 'Don't Sweat the Small Stuff' in 1997 and pioneered the writing of 'how-to' instructions in short chapters. He understood the importance of perspective, focusing on what's important and how to move through stressors with ease. I can't think of a better way to start off 2025.

What do you think of when you hear 'don't sweat the small stuff'? Most people may say it refers to letting small things slide or not be as important as the big things. However, Dr. Carlson added 'and it's all small stuff' to the second half of his book title. That's a relief isn't it? All our troubles, challenges and road blocks are small stuff.

Wait just a minute, you say. That's not right. Some of our life situations are quite large, even looming, spanning decades, from the distant past, way out into our foreseeable future. How do we 'not sweat' losing a job due to downsizing, or our home budget running on empty with a large mortgage on a house?

What about a chronic back pain or grieving the loss of a loved one? Well, the best way to see all the 'stuff' in our lives, is to see our role in it. How much we can do is directly proportional to how many decisions we can make.

Each decision is usually quite small. Every step is a decision. Each item in your kitchen is too. Stretch for an extra two to three minutes today, for example, and reduce some back pain tomorrow.

Save money on a simple bagged lunch and give yourself some breathing room with your finances this week.

Walk around the block an extra five times and you allow your mind and heart to wander together hand-in-hand; maybe they will even reach an understanding in grief. It's possible.

Most of our life situations are not 'small stuff', but surely, each day offers us an opportunity to take a few small steps that result in large accomplishments. Small, consistent decisions matter. After all, just a few extra steps each day directly build a



stronger, healthier heart. Our awareness is like a light illuminating the darkness of habit. Also, we tend to struggle not because our actions are too small and consistent, but typically because our actions are too big and unpredictable. Overreaction. Drama.

Anxiety. Fear. These are very powerful emotions and states. They can stop us from seeing solutions. They limit our vision. Remembering that 'it's all small stuff' directly alters our experience of these stressors. This shift in perspective, gives us real choices. It offers us the freedom to choose.

Freedom is the hidden treasure of wisdom. When we are wise, we are naturally led to freedom. Dr. Carlson beautifully wrote an entire series of books on what choosing wisdom may look like to you and me. Setting out into a brand new year, let's adopt 'don't sweat the small stuff' as our modus operandi. Whether you find a digital copy on kindle, or dog-eared, worn, soft-cover version, in a little, free library doesn't matter. Choose a page, any page. Read a few paragraphs. Then, choose to practice the behaviour described in this classic 'how-to' guide to living and watch your life change for the better.

Just in case you are not convinced, here are a few quotes from Dr. Richard Carlson, that you surely read in memes in the internet ethers:

"If we would slow down, happiness would catch up to us"

"Ask yourself the question. 'Will this matter a year from now'"

"Choose to be kind over being right and you'll be right every time"

Now, choose to begin. Now.

Remember then: there is only one time that is important—now! It is the most important time because it is the only time when we have any power.

Leo Tolstoy

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Dear [Local MP],

I am writing to express my concerns about the use of Section 33 (S.33) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to address issues like homelessness and bail in Ontario. I believe there are better ways to handle these problems without undermining our fundamental rights and freedoms.

Section 33, or the notwithstanding clause, allows federal, provincial, or territorial governments to override certain sections of the Charter temporarily. This means they can pass laws that operate even if they infringe on fundamental rights and freedoms, such as freedom of expression or the right to a fair trial. The use of S.33 is controversial because it allows governments to bypass important protections that are meant to safeguard individual rights and freedoms.

The main danger of S.33 is that it can be used to undermine the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Charter. When governments use this clause, they can sidestep accountability and avoid addressing the root causes of issues. This can lead to policies that are more about political expediency than about solving problems effectively and fairly. The use of S.33 can create a precedent where governments regularly bypass critical rights protections, which weakens the overall integrity of the Charter.

Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau initially opposed the inclusion of S.33 in the Charter. He feared that it would undermine the Charter's purpose of protecting individual rights and freedoms. Trudeau believed that allowing governments to override these protections would weaken the Charter and make it easier for governments to infringe on fundamental rights. However, he eventually agreed to its inclusion under pressure from provincial premiers who wanted more leverage to pass laws without judicial interference.

Courts have ruled cities can move encampments with S33. One notable case is the City of Toronto et al v. Ontario (Attorney General), where the Ontario Superior Court of Justice ruled that the city must provide alternative housing options before dismantling encampments. The court emphasized that simply invoking S.33 is not sufficient to address the underlying issues of homelessness. This decision underscores the importance of offering support and housing solutions to those living in encampments.

The court's ruling highlights the need for cities to develop comprehensive housing strategies that prioritize the well-being of vulnerable populations. Providing alternative housing options, such as temporary shelters, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing, is crucial to ensuring that individuals have a safe place to go when encampments are cleared. Additionally, alternative housing has the added benefits of reducing policing and healthcare costs. The Saskatoon Housing Action Plan, supported by the Housing Accelerator Fund, has shown that providing alternative housing can lead to significant savings in policing and healthcare costs. The savings from these reduced costs have been used to fund the housing initiatives.

The court's decision has significant implications for housing policy in Ontario. It calls for a shift away from punitive measures and towards a more compassionate approach that addresses the root causes of homelessness. By focusing on providing alternative housing options, cities can better support those in need and work towards long-term solutions to homelessness.

It is essential for policymakers to prioritize the development of alternative housing solutions. This approach not only aligns with the court's rulings but fosters a more inclusive and supportive community for all residents.

Another area where politicians often try to fool us to misuse S.33 is in addressing bail issues. Courts have ruled that the real issue with bail lies in the delays within the justice system, which are often due to inadequate provincial resources. Instead of using S.33, the focus should be on providing the resources needed to reduce trial delays and uphold the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This would ensure that individuals receive timely and fair trials, maintaining the integrity of the justice system. They point to Ottawa when the responsibility for enforcement falls to the province. Politicians confuse the public by not explaining the law and creating fear to justify using S.33. By not providing clear information, they develop a sense of urgency and fear that can mislead the public into believing that extraordinary measures are necessary. This tactic is a way to avoid addressing the underlying issues and responsibilities that fall under provincial jurisdiction.

The real solutions to issues like housing and bail do not lie in bypassing rights and using S.33. Instead, they require a commitment to providing the necessary resources and support to address the root causes. For housing, this means investing in alternative housing options and support services. For bail issues, this involves ensuring the justice system is adequately resourced to handle cases promptly.

In Conclusion

The courts have made it clear that cities in Ontario do not need to rely on S.33 to remove encampments. Instead, they must provide alternative housing options to ensure that individuals have a safe place to go. The Courts are insisting governments do their jobs and not void the Charter as an option to flee responsibility address the root causes of homelessness and create a more compassionate society. Similarly, addressing bail issues requires a focus on resourcing the provincial justice system to reduce trial delays rather than resorting to S.33. By understanding these dynamics and supporting dedicated public servants, we can work towards a more trusting and cooperative society. It's time to break the cycle of mistrust and rebuild the confidence that is essential for our democratic institutions to thrive. Sincerely,

Judge Lloyd Budzinski retired after 28 years and was a former Crown Attorney, Defence Counsel and Ontario's Assistant Deputy Minister of Criminal Law. He was Chief Prosecutor in the trial of ex-RCMP officer Patrick Michael Kelly, found guilty of murder for throwing his wife from a 17th floor balcony in March 1981. He can be reached at lbudzinski@talkjustice.info

The South Etobicoke News

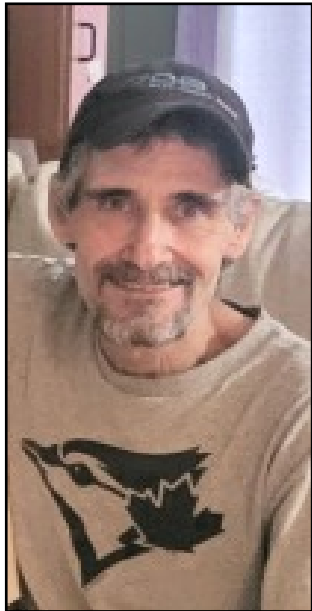
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Friends mourn passing of Tony Gear



TONY GEAR RIP

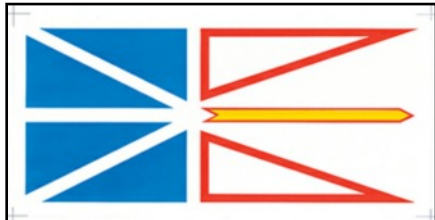
Local New Toronto resident Tony James Gear may have left his beloved Newfoundland years ago, but his hometown and people never left him. Many of us knew and loved Tony who passed away on December 1 at the age of 55. Tony was a beloved brother, uncle, son, father, poppy and friend to many. He leaves behind his parents Betty and James Gear; his two children who he loved beyond life, daughter Kailey Gear and son Daniel Gear and his beautiful grand-daughter Avery whom he adored. Sisters Lisa (Dave), Debbie (Alan), and Darlene; brothers James (Annette), and Danny (Roxanne); his many nieces and nephews all have special memories of their beautiful uncle; and also a large group of cousins and friends whose lives he touched along the way. Tony had a larger than life personality who could light up any room he walked in. He always had the ability to make you laugh and listen by telling one of his many stories or jokes or using one of his many talents of playing music though guitar, accordion, spoons or simply breaking out in

song or a whistle.

He was a beautiful soul with the kindest heart. We are all lucky to have known him and loved him.

Friends said you can take the man out of Newfoundland, but Tony was a testament that you couldn't take the Newfoundland out of a man.

Cremation will take place and a celebration of life will take place on January 18, at 156 Sixth Street from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. All are welcomed to come and remember Tony.



Barber gives back



LONG-TIME POPULAR MIMICO Barber Jonathon Compton, owner of the Elevate Barber Shop, at 2383 Lake Shore Blvd. W., near Superior Avenue, is well-known for his good deeds in the community. On Christmas Day he opened his salon on his own dime and provided free haircuts for men in the community. The well-groomed men left happier and in a good mood for the New Years. Compton is dubbed the 'Mayor of Mimico,' because many residents stop by his busy salon to say hello and catch up with the latest news. Here Colin receives a grooming. **Staff photo.**

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JANUARY 6 TO FEBRUARY 28 Homework Club for girls seven to nine years old at the Jean Augustine Centre, at 101 Portland Road. The classes with certified tutors are in person from Monday to Friday from 4:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. A range of activities are offered. E-mail info@jeanaugustinecentre.ca or call 416-253-9797.

JANUARY 6, 13, 20, 27, STONEGATE CHC afternoon drop-in on Mondays and Tuesdays from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. for children up to six years of age and their caregivers at 10 Neighbourhood Lane, Unit 201. For more e-mail early.years@stonegatechc.org. Indoor running shoes required.

STARTING JANUARY 8 USE mindfulness to improve sleep or anxiety at 3:00 p.m. online with **Corin De Sousa**. The class develops strategies to build your coping skills and resilience. You will gain tools to manage everyday stress or worry. The meditations can also help with anxiety or pain management. E-mail JasminD@lampchc.org or ericao@lampchc.org or phone 416-252-6471 ext. 308.

JANUARY 8 AND 15 WELLNESS SELF-MANAGEMENT series at 6 p.m. at LAMP CHC, 185 Fifth Street, if you are feeling stressed out or overwhelmed join us for a free workshop series to learn simple strategies to embrace your wellness with coach **Mary Craig**. Class will focus on breathing, muscle relaxation. E-mail jasminD@lampchc.org or anthonya@lampchc.org phone 416-252-6471 ext. 308.

STARTING JANUARY 13 Chair Yoga with Meaux on Mondays at 10 a.m. and Wednesday at 1:15 p.m. for a gentle seated workout to strengthen muscles and mobility and improve balance using bands or light weights. For more contact jasmind@lampchc.org or anthonya@lampchc.org call 416-252-6471 ext. 308.

JANUARY 13 QIGONG WITH KATY on Mondays January 13, 20, 27 at 11 a.m. at LAMP CHC. Qigong is an ancient Chinese practice combining gentle movements, breathing technique, and meditation to balance energy in the body. QiGong reduces stress

and anxiety, enhances balance and flexibility, boosts energy, and improves mental clarity. To register, email JasminD@lampchc.org or ericao@lampchc.org phone 416-252-6471 ext. 308.

JANUARY 14, 21, 28 FREE DRUMMING WORKSHOPS AT LAMP CHC, at 1 p.m. for workshops with Chris and let the rhythm take control. No experience required and come unleash your inner groove. Great activity for brain health. E-mail rosema@lampchc.org or JasminD@lampchc.org or call 416-252-6471 ext. 308.

JANUARY 14 SOUTH ETOBICOKE COMMUNITY Land Trust 2025 planning session at 6 p.m. at LAMP CHC and become part of a transformative movement. As a member, you'll have a say in preserving affordable housing, green spaces, and community amenities for generations to come. For more contact info@SECLT.ca

STARTING JANUARY 16 on Thursdays at 10:30 a.m. Chair Yoga with **Briar** at LAMP-CHC for a gentle-seated workout. Stretch and enjoy some music and movement with Certified Hatha Yoga instructor **Briar Boake**. Build your core strength and improve your flexibility. Contact jasminD@lampchc.org call 416-252-6471 ext. 308.

JANUARY 18 CELEBRATION OF LIFE memorial for long-time New Toronto resident and good guy Tony James Gear from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. at St. Margaret's Anglican New Toronto church, at 156 Sixth Street. All are welcomed to remember Tony.

JANUARY 19 MP JAMES MALONEY New Year's Levee from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 643, 110 Jutland Road. For more information call 416-251-5510.

MONDAY WALKING GROUP & Qigong from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. meet at LAMP CHC and join as we experience nature and take in the Fall beauty. Walking with or without poles, move at two speeds and enjoy gentle Tai Chi-like practice called Qigong. To register e-mail jasminD@lampchc.org or phone 416-252-6471 ext. 257, 308.

JANUARY 24 FREE HEARING SCREENINGS at LAMP CHC, 185 Fifth Street, if you experience trouble hearing? Canadian Hearing Services will be at LAMP to screen for hearing loss in order to book an appointment, contact jasmind@lampchc.org at 416-252-6471.

JANUARY 29 LAHAAG AFFORDABLE HOUSING Meeting at LAMP CHC, 185 Fifth Street, 6 p.m. for a continuing conversation of the development of co-op housing in South Etobicoke. Also an invitation to participate in the leadership renewal team planning session. For more and to register email info@lahaag.ca

JANUARY 30 COOKING CLASS at Among Friends at 10 a.m. with LAMP dietician **Eileen Chan** for a fun, hands-on session as you whip up Taco, lentil soup, pineapple salsa, or guacamole. To register, e-mail ericao@lampchc.org or phone 416-252-6471 ext. 257 Hosted at Among Friends location, at 2788 Lakeshore Blvd West Unit #1.

JANUARY 31 MARKLAND WOOD GOLF CLUB at 1:30 p.m. to hear **Mark Goulart**, a FIFA Senior Project Manager, reveal the extensive renovations being made to Centennial Park for the 2026 soccer tournament. The park was to have been a FIFA team training ground. All are welcome. \$20. RSVP by January 24 to website kingswaywomensclub.wordpress.com

FEBRUARY 5 THE FUTURE OF CO-OP Housing Part 2 at 6 p.m. at LAMP CHC, part of a Building Affordable Housing Series. Guest speaker is **Tom Clement**, Executive Director of the Co-Op Housing Federation of Toronto. To register e-mail JasminD@lampchc.org or phone 416-252-6471 ext. 308.

FEBRUARY 12, 19, COPING WITH ANXIETY WORKSHOP at 6 p.m. at LAMP CHC for free workshop with wellness coach **Mary Craig** to learn coping mechanisms, mindfulness and wellness toolbox strategies. To register e-mail jasminD@lampchc.org or phone 416-252-6471 ext. 308.

JANUARY 6 KARAOKE FUNDRAISER by the Long Branch Neighbourhood Association to raise money for a legal defense fund to 'fight the height,' a major development at 220, 230 and 240 Lake Promenade and 21 and 31 Park Boulevard. The fundraising singalong takes place from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. at the Long Branch Social House, 3595 Lakeshore Blvd. W. The application, which is under appeal, will see five apartment buildings demolished, many people relocated and five towers up to 30-stories built.

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Olympic medallist Summer McIntosh returns to home pool



AWARD WINNING SWIMMER Summer McIntosh has been selected Canada's top athlete for the second year in a row. **Courtesy photos.**

Two time Canadian Press Female Athlete of the Year South Etobicoke's swimming sensation Summer McIntosh made a trek home for the holidays and visited the pool where it all began for her to meet with friends and up-and-coming athletes. McIntosh, who was named Canada's top athlete, returned from Budapest last month where she won three world records and other medals at the World Aquatics Swimming Championships.

The three time gold and a silver Paris Olympics medallist, began swimming at the age of 10 at The Etobicoke Swim Club, where she honed her skills.

She held a meet and greet to celebrate her success and the impact she has had on sport in Toronto.

McIntosh, 18, signed autographs and posed for photos at the event. Fans and friends were able to touch the four Olympic medals that she won at the Paris Olympic Games. "... to be back at the Olympium is so nice because this is really where I started off my swimming career... It really made me the swimmer I am today," she told the CBC.

"It means the world when the kids come up to me and say that I've inspired them and I just see the look in their eyes. It's so sweet," McIntosh said. "And that's really what

keeps me going. It's one of the best feelings in the world and why I enjoy what I do so much."

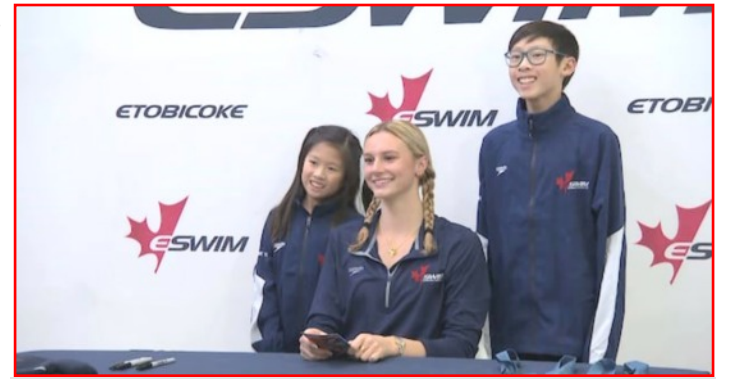
McIntosh returned home after competing in the World Short Course Swimming Championships, where she finished with five medals and three world records, taking

gold in the 400-metre freestyle, the 200 butterfly and the 400-metre individual medley. In addition to winning silver in the women's 200-metre backstroke, she helped Canada's women's 4 by 100-metre freestyle relay team to bronze.

She was selected as World Aquatics female athlete of the year in Budapest and the 2024 Northern Star Award, Canada's top athlete, professional or amateur, after a dominant performance at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

McIntosh is the daughter of Greg McIntosh and former Canadian Olympic team swimmer Jill Horstead. Her older sister Brooke is a competitive pair skater.

The former student of the Exceptional Athlete Program at Silverthorn Collegiate swam for the Etobicoke Swim Club and trained at the Etobicoke Olympium before moving to Florida more than a year ago to train.



SUCCESSFUL OLYMPIAN SUMMER McINTOSH with some of her swim fans at the Etobicoke pool where she began her stellar career, and some of her medals below.



Etobicoke Collegiate basketball team move on up

Unfinished business. That is what the 2024/25 Etobicoke Collegiate Institute's senior boys basketball team would like to take care of after last season where they failed to reach their goal of winning a city championship and advancing to the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations (OFSAA) championship.

For the past two months they've been putting in the work off the court by taking part in preseason conditioning, attending team meetings with coaches, and practicing five days a week, some as early as 7 A.M.

"My expectations are simple," said Rob Mikalachki, a volunteer coach who has been around ECI's basketball program for years. "I want the players to bring energy and effort to every practice and game, and to treat their teammates with respect. Winning is always the goal but I want players to grow, develop and create unforgettable memories along the way."

This season's team is a mix of older, experienced players along with an infusion of younger talent. The undisputed team leader is point guard Oliver Groh, a Grade 12 student who would like to play basketball at the post-secondary level. "In my opinion, he's the best player in the West (Toronto) Division," said Mikalachki. "Oliver has great leadership skills on and off the court which will be key to guiding us through the season."

A Rep level player for Polaris Prep in Burlington, Groh began playing at a young age because of his cousin and current teammate, Ben. "I didn't really like sports, but he introduced me to basketball and I've loved it ever since."

In the early part of the season the team will rely on its guard play and outside shooting which is where players like Besmir Hakaj and Noah Gomes will be called upon to contribute. However, Mikalachki believes that as they continue to build chemistry, interior players like Will McDonald and Fabio Guxo will strengthen their ability to attack and score. "We play with more structure than many of our opponents and have spent time working on our defensive scheme and offensive flow. If we compete hard and play for each other, we'll get the results we deserve."

The team has had the chance to play a few exhibition games and if they are an indication of future success ECI is in store for a memorable season. They defeated Silverthorn Collegiate 62-57, held off the Martingrove Bears 78-66 and won a preseason game against Woodbridge College 68-30 with balanced scoring (Oliver Groh with 13 points, Hakaj scored 12 and hit three 3-pointers and Will MacDonald contributed with 8 points and 7 rebounds, three on the offensive glass).

One of the most anticipated events of the season will be the team's trip to the New Waterford Coal Bowl Classic tournament in Nova Scotia. From February 2 to 9, ECI will compete in the annual event against teams from Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Alberta, just to name a few, along with local high schools. Outside of basketball they will participate in exploration tours and community service events. "It's a great tournament to be a part of, the type of experience that stays with you,"

So does the team have what it takes to achieve their goal of a city championship and making a run at OFSAA? They have a deep roster of talented, athletic players at all positions; leadership and experience from the returning players. If you would like to follow sports at ECI you can do so at @eciathletics on Instagram.



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