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# the bridge

Connecting people, places and ideas across our city from the downtown east

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Market tent feeds the elderly **2** Kayla Higgins TO streets: too close for comfort **4** Ben Bull the bridge: Book Review **6** Glenda MacFarlane

## New investor sought for island airport



Request for interest issued by PortsToronto has prompted calls by citizen group, Waterfront For All, to look into new uses, including converting the entire island airport into parkspace. Full coverage page 8. Photo: Ron Jenkins

## Ford government plans to take over First Parliament site for highrise development on Ontario Line

Donald Higney

Deep in the details of the province's plan for two new transit communities east of Yonge Street was a proposal to build five new highrise towers, three of them on the First Parliament site at Front and Parliament Streets.

The Ontario government has published initial plans to build two transit-oriented communities along the new Ontario Line, one near the planned East Harbour Transit Hub and the other by Corktown station.

Also in the plans are four residential and one commercial highrise towers on the Corktown subway site and the First Parliament site bounded by Front, Parliament and Berkeley Streets and Parliament Square Park, a wrinkle that municipal officials were not expecting.

The proposed Corktown station is on privately owned land of the Staples/Porsche dealership site. The two other high-rises would be built on that parcel.

Most of the First Parliament site is owned by the City of Toronto. In January the provincial agency Metrolinx sent a notice of intention to expro-

priate the Budget Car rental property at 271 Front Street East and the parking lot at 25 Berkeley Street from the city.

Metrolinx's deadline to acquire the properties is August 1 this year. The properties are needed for construction of the Ontario Line tunnels and the Corktown subway station, according to the provincial Ministry of Transportation.

Metrolinx plans to hold onto the site for transit facilities but is "open to strategic partnerships while ensuring that service, infrastructure and safety are paramount," the ministry said in an emailed statement.

The land was the site of Canada's first and second parliament buildings (1797–1824), as well as a rich Indigenous history before Europeans arrived.

"It's a nationally important historic site that watched the evolution of a modern Toronto from its early days as an industrial town," City Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam (Ward 13 Toronto Centre) said in a statement to *the bridge*. "The lands and what they represent deserve much more respect than the condos that the province is proposing."

Subway continued p4

## Condo proposed on Corktown arson site

Emma Johnston-Wheeler

On March 24, Toronto Police Service's 51 division published an appeal for witnesses to a Corktown fire now suspected as arson. This site of the fire was an empty lot being considered for a 15-story condominium that local residents strongly oppose.

Nearly a year ago, a four-alarm blaze engulfed a section of historical rowhouses at 471-475 Queen Street East near Sumach Street. Firefighters were called to the fire on June 2, 2020, two years after a separate fire threatened the same buildings. This time the damage was too severe for restoration and the buildings were consequently torn down.

Toronto real estate tycoon Brad J. Lamb had recently bought the property. According to documents obtained from the Ontario Land Registry Office, BJJ Sumach Corp., a subsidiary of Brad J. Lamb Realty Inc., purchased five properties on Queen East (471-479) as of February 20, 2020, less than five months before the June fire.

In March 2020, another set of historical buildings associated with Lamb realty caught fire. Two late 19th-century semi-detached

houses at 422 and 424 Wellington Street West, which Lamb Realty has been eyeing for a "world class" condo development since 2018, caught fire twice, just two days apart. Unlike the Corktown rowhouses, the Wellington buildings were protected under the Ontario Heritage Act.

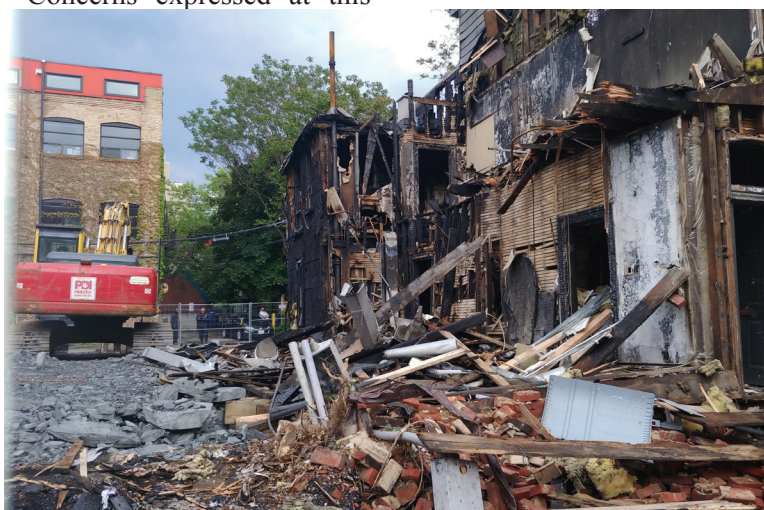
Local resident Bill Eadie says vacant properties are supposed to be secured to prevent squatters, making a second fire in the same vacant property unusual. Eadie was one of several residents who spoke out against the condo proposal at 471-479 Queen St. E. at a March 29 online public consultation facilitated by senior city planner Kevin Friedrich.

Concerns expressed at this

consultation included the expansive height and density of the proposed building in comparison to neighbouring structures, an increase in local traffic, and whether the building would complement the rich historical context of the Corktown neighbourhood.

Local resident Janet Mawhinney says that local zoning should ensure development is both innovative and adaptive to its neighbourhood – and this proposal is neither. She is adamant that many neighbours are not anti-development but oppose this project which doesn't align with community needs.

Corktown continued p7



Demolition team begins teardown days after fire, June 5 2020. Photo: Andre Bermon

## Rich get richer as health crisis consolidates global wealth

André Bermon, Publisher

Behind the hysteria of Covid-19 cases and deaths, the wealth of the top percenters continues to grow. While the pandemic has upended the lives of millions of people around the world, large corporations are quietly amassing one of the largest consolidations of wealth in human history.

Using data compiled by Forbes magazine, Americans for Tax Fairness and the Institute for Policy Studies reported that the 661 U.S. billionaires had collectively accumulated \$1.3 Trillion (USD) between 18 March 2020 and 19 February 2021. A 44% increase – from \$2.95trn to \$4.25trn – in just 48 weeks.

The biggest winners of the pandemic power grab were in

the vaunted tech sector.

Elon Musk, celebrity CEO and founder of Tesla Inc. and SpaceX, grew his wealth from \$24.6 billion to an astonishing \$182bn. Amazon Inc. founder Jeff Bezos gained \$73bn and Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg cashed in \$41bn, while Microsoft's Bill Gates got \$26bn more.

Earnings from these four men alone account for 24% of the \$1.3trn extra collected by U.S. billionaires during the first 12 months of Covid-19 lockdowns. Meanwhile, the bottom 50% of Americans, according to the U.S. Federal Reserve, have a combined wealth of \$2.4trn.

Consolidation continued p6



# Market food tent feeding older Torontonians

Kayla Higgins

Three Toronto organizations have come together to help feed the elderly population, as food insecurity increased in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Every Saturday from 4 to 6 p.m., the Spadina-Fort York Community Care Program runs a mobile food bank in the St. Lawrence Market tent. The program provides groceries for vulnerable seniors and residents in the Older Women's Network Co-op and the Performing Arts Lodge.

Founded in March 2020 by Spadina-Fort York MPP Chris Glover and Director Shauna Harris, the Community Care Program seeks donations to "bring hope, dignity, humanity, care, meals, groceries, hygiene and supply kits" to Toronto's senior community, according to its Facebook page.

The program offers a variety of non-perishables such as canned or dried soups, meats, tuna and salmon, coffee, tea, and more. Also supplied are breads, fresh fruit and vegetables.

Volunteers work in three streams: the Friday Food Bank, the Sunday delivery program and a Mandarin- and Cantonese-speaking program.

"Food insecurity for seniors was a major problem prior to



Volunteers prepare produce for community pickup.

Photo: Kayla Higgins

the pandemic," said Harris. "Long lineups at grocery stores have [reduced] seniors' ability to purchase affordable food."

Feeding more than 1500 people per week, the program delivers food to area residents on Sundays, plus 500 prepared meals and supply kits that go to encampments across the city.

The two buildings supplying the food see between 150 and 200 seniors per day, with volunteer runners delivering food to those who are isolating or feel uncomfortable leaving their homes.

"I've been doing this for eight months," said volunteer Dini Petty from the Older Women's Network. "We started at the performing arts lodges and then we moved here."

"It's amazing. I describe it as being Santa Claus: here, have some free food!"

"Everywhere we go, seniors have signed up because they didn't know how to get involved," Harris said. "We've knocked on doors and talked to people who haven't eaten in two or three days because they don't have family here."

Seniors, 15 percent of Toronto's population, are among those most vulnerable to food insecurity. People of colour and low-wage workers top the list.

Last June the city announced almost \$5 million to fund community organizations that support those hit hardest by the pandemic, including Toronto's most vulnerable people. An additional \$1.9 million was announced in October to support non-profit social service agencies.

But Harris says more policies and legislation to protect the



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older population and navigate confusing systems are needed. The Community Care Program has recently begun offering vaccination registration for Toronto's 50+ community members, with appointments being available all day.

"Trying to get an appointment, even if you are eligible, is complex and difficult," said

Harris. "On a good day, many folks can't navigate the complex system. We're here to alleviate that fear in the best way that we can, because it's confusing for all of us. Especially our seniors."

"We are here to serve as the community needs us, and we'll be here for years to come."



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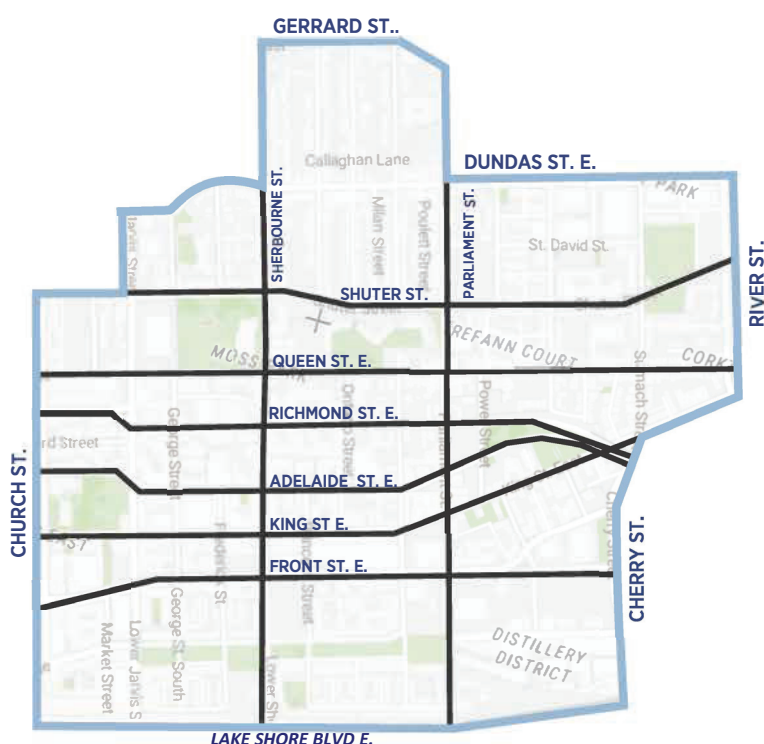
is an independent, nonpartisan newspaper published monthly and distributed by a mix of delivery services to varying readership. 6,000 copies are circulated throughout the Downtown East - Moss Park, Corktown, Garden District, Cabbagetown South, St. Lawrence Neighbourhood, Distillery District - and to community hubs that extend across Toronto.

the bridge strives to source up-to-date activity and diverse interests from heritage, planning, and development, to culture, arts and opinions.

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# History of George Street



Bruce Bell, Senior Columnist

One block east of Jarvis Street, George Street between Front and Adelaide is arguably the oldest street in Toronto.

Footpaths laid down by First Nations people that became streets like Popular Plains Road and Davenport Avenue are older, but George was the first street constructed after the British arrived in the second half of the 18th century.

The British laid out a 10-block area, felling trees west to east from George to Berkeley, to create the Town of York (now Toronto).

One of the first buildings erected on George Street was the home of Rev. George Okill Stuart on the southeast corner of King and George. Arriving about 1800, he was York's second Anglican minister, the first being a Lt. Smith at Fort York.

Rev. Stuart went on to build the first St. James' Church at King and Church Streets. But that first church was known as the Episcopal Church in York; the St. James' name began to appear only in 1827.

From his house, Rev. Stuart set up the first school in York, known as the Home District Grammar School, starting in 1807.

Part log cabin and part clapboard, the house became a general store by 1833, operated by the jovial and much-loved George Duggan. Duggan was also the town's coroner, while upstairs was the practice of Dr. Thomas Duggan, his brother.

The house later became an Inn and stood until 1879 when

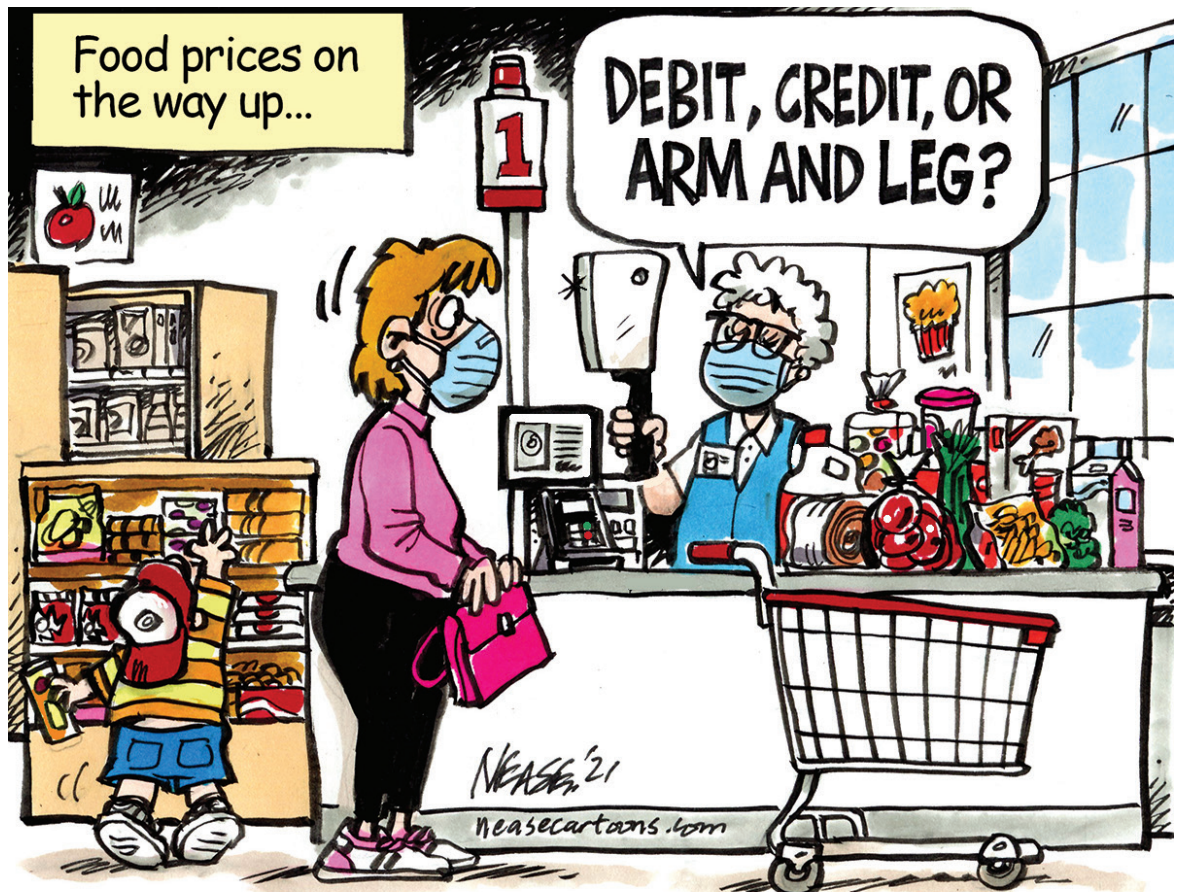
the present building went up as the Little York Hotel.

In the early 1800s the four corners of King and George were considered the heart of York and its business district. A March 18, 1822, advertisement in the Gazette newspaper to sell the property next to George Duggan's famous house termed it, "One of the most eligible lots in the Town of York, and situated on King Street, in the centre of the Town".

Next to it was Wragg and Co., a procurer of nails and chains, two important industries in the time of log buildings. On the northwest corner of King and George was the store of a Mr. Harris, and on the northeast the merchant E. Lesslie and Sons.

On the present-day northwest corner of George and Adelaide – now The Vu condominium – was the house of Simon Washburn, who was married to the sister of Colonel James Fitz-Gibbon. As a lieutenant, James was the officer that legendary Laura Secord told what she had overheard from American soldiers during the War of 1812.

The colonel, who lived near Queen and Spadina, was a hero not only to the people of



York but also to the powers that be back in England. As a reward for outstanding service, in 1850 he was given his own set of rooms in Windsor Castle outside London, then the centre of world authority, where he lived until his death in 1863.

One of four sons of James' sister was killed when the balcony of the then Town Hall (now the site of St Lawrence Hall on King Street) collapsed; he was one of several people impaled on butcher's

hooks below.

The Washburn house at George and Adelaide, built in 1808 by Henry Hale, had previously been the site of his brickyard, which made some of the bricks that built part of Yonge Street in the late 1700s.

All this history on one corner I think calls for a historic plaque or two.

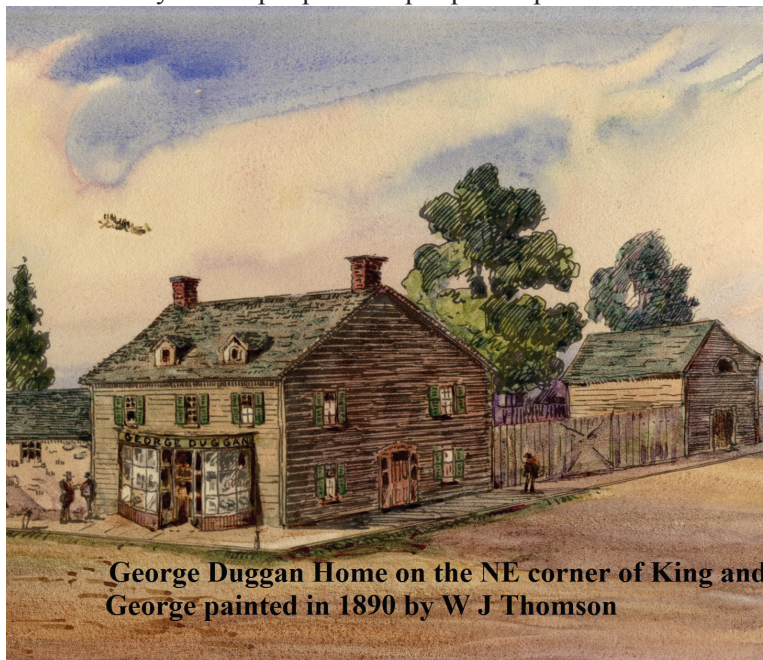
Elegant George Street north of King was the Rosedale of its day. In 1829 Robert Manners, a cousin of the Duke of Rutland, owned one of the fine Georgian town homes that lined its east side. The townhouse later became a private girl's school owned by a Mrs. Crombie.

But George Street's great town homes never got old, as factory cafeterias replaced high tea in front rooms. The once grand east side of the street

was torn down in 1874 to build the factory and warehouses of biscuit maker Christie and Brown (later Mr. Christie's Cookies), and in 1977 the entire block was remodeled into George Brown College.

By the 1950s, the original Town of York – bounded by George, Front, Berkeley and Adelaide – was a forgotten relic of the past. Hardly anybody lived there, and George Street, once a genteel part of town where you'd wear your Sunday best to visit a favorite aunt, became a heavily polluted and highly toxic factory town unto itself.

But George Street survived, and like the former Town of York is coming back to life thanks to people returning to live where it all started.



George Duggan Home on the NE corner of King and George painted in 1890 by W J Thomson

Photo: Courtesy of the Toronto Public Library

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# Toronto's streets: too close for comfort

Ben Bull, Columnist

I stumble off the path:

Whoosh! That was close.

This stretch of the Martin Goodman trail is a tight squeeze. Cyclists weave around pedestrians, rollerbladers zig and zag down the middle, and the rest of us scurry to the side and tuck our elbows in tight.

It's not a pretty spot. To my right is a Mad Max wasteland of mud and rocks and a crumbling silo. Overhead is the pock marked undercarriage of the Gardiner Expressway. Lining the path to the left is the detritus of yet another half-finished Toronto construction project: tattered bags of sand, piles of rotting lumber, a tarpaulin flapping in the breeze, a bedraggled-looking excavator.

Where am I?

I pause to let another knot of cyclists whip by, and peer into the distance. There's a lake there somewhere.

It's not easy walking in Toronto. After 15 years of hiking, biking and driving downtown three things are clear:

- The car is (still) king.
- Different modes of transit do not mix.
- There's not enough room.

Two-footed transit in Toronto is bedeviled by skinny sidewalks, pedestrian crossings that don't blink when you press the button, and the dreaded multi-use paths.

Whose idea was it to stick us on the same stretch of asphalt? What mad experiment is happening at Queen's Quay and York? Does anyone remember going for a pleasant stroll along the Don Valley trail?

When we're on the move we're not meant to move together. If I'm walking, I want to stride side by side with my partner unencumbered by speeding vehicles. If I'm cycling, I want to go fast – I don't want to ring my bell. And when I'm driving, I don't want to be in close proximity to other road users, especially those unprotected by walls of steel.

Transit upgrades are coming. The city is giddy over a couple of recent signature accomplishments. The rollout of the 25-kilometer bike lane expansion is nearing completion. An August 2020 bike count noted a 40% uptick in two-wheeled traffic along the new lanes on the Danforth. Couple this with the ever-popular ActiveTO Covid bike lane plan and you might start to think that the car is finally getting squeezed to the side.

But – not so quick.

Phase one of the Gardiner rehab has just wrapped up. The road has been re-decked, with 400 shiny new slabs slotted into place between Lower Jarvis and Cherry Streets.

Isn't it great? The city certainly thinks so. Its reopening announcement hailed the rehab

as, "the largest project of its scale in North America." It's enough to make you proud.

But our road rapture comes at a hefty cost.

This 1.7-kilometre stretch of the Gardiner, which carries up to 5,000 vehicles an hour at peak times, will drain up to \$3 billion from Toronto's budget by the time the concrete is dry. That's 44% of the transportation department's 10-year capital spend.

No wonder every other road user is scrambling for change.

Bike lane construction is more cost-effective. The price tag for carving out 25 clicks of asphalt for two-wheelers is a paltry \$6.5 million. When the lane expansion was approved last spring, Councilor Joe Cressy declared that, "the days of cars vs bikes are over."

If only.

The days of cars verses pedestrians are definitely not over. Last year 56 people died on our streets after being mowed down by cars. The city is poised to install 250 new 'head start' signals at busy intersections in an effort to curb the carnage – but it's not enough.

In a few months we'll start pouring back into the streets again, and we won't want to be too tightly packed. Whether we're on two feet, two wheels or four, it's time to stop making us share the road and give us all some space.

## Esplanade photo exhibit curated by local youths

Jasmin Linton, Program manager at Jamii

For years, the award-winning community arts organization Jamii has hosted photo exhibits along The Esplanade. The latest, titled "Looks Like Us", is also the name of Jamii's 2021 season.

The project brings together local young girls and women (from 8 to 22 years old) to create a powerful arts display for the community.

Under the artistic leadership of Gillian Mapp and executive and artistic director Isorine Marc, Jamii partnered with The Journal Collective, a global collaboration of more than 400 women photographers documenting their lives during the coronavirus pandemic. The Journal Collective proposed the exhibit and supplied 90 images, pared down to 27 by the young curators.

One of the youth commented, "Being part of this project made us feel like our opinions were heard and validated. It was an opportunity for us to discover photographers we didn't know about, and we are proud to be sharing their art with you."

"With this exhibition, we welcome you to our communi-



Photo: Isorine Marc

ty and to share the magic of the stories in these photos, which express joy, passion, positivity and hope."

The photos at Jamii's three chosen sites, on The Esplanade between Parliament and Jarvis Streets, compensate for people not being able to visit art galleries during the pandemic. While the latest lockdown has people feeling defeated, isolated and ready for change, Jamii says, "Looks Like Us" reflects some of those feelings and emotions. Jamii hopes community members can see themselves in these photos.

This exhibit, part of Toron-

to's annual month-long Contact Festival of Photography, is funded by the Ontario government. Exhibit details including credits are at [www.jamii.ca/exhibit](http://www.jamii.ca/exhibit)

Locations:

- Parliament Street at Mill Street (Parliament Square Park)

- David Crombie Park playground, across from the St. Lawrence Recreation Centre (230 The Esplanade)

- South of The Esplanade on Lower Jarvis

Follow Jamii on Instagram @JamiiEsplanade and facebook.com/Jamii.Esplanade

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## More meaningful discourse with community groups needed

### Subway from p1

She also said the province needs to engage in meaningful conversations with local residents and respect the work that community residents have put into the city's First Parliament Master Plan since 2013.

The City of Toronto's plan includes a new library, food services, cultural hubs, affordable housing and other community-oriented uses while the provincial plan focuses on building condos.

According to the Toronto Star, the application the province submitted to the city provides for three 46-storey and one 25-storey residential towers and one 24-storey office building. Just under 1,600 new units would be built, with about five to 10 percent reserved for affordable housing.

Wong-Tam says at least 30 percent of the available space

should be designated for affordable housing.

Metrolinx's proposed Corktown Station on the Ontario Line would include a library and connections to TTC bus and streetcar services. Across the Don River, the 38-acre East Harbour location would be transformed into a transit-orientated community with a major employment centre that the province says could add 50,000 jobs to the area.

The East Harbour Transit Hub would also link the Ontario Line rapid transit with a GO Transit rail line, a SmartTrack station, and a future TTC streetcar extension.

The city is reviewing the provincial plan while the provincial government says it will consult local stakeholders, including Indigenous and neighbourhood groups this summer and fall.



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## Tower proposal pushed at Church and Dundas

Jayne Kitchen

A 53-story condominium has been proposed for the northeast corner of Church and Dundas Streets, currently home to a single-storey gas station surrounded by pavement.

Atop eight storeys of a mixed commercial and residential podium, 241 Church Street would have 45 stories of residences. Most units will be one- or two-bedroom suites, 200 and 171 units respectively. Studio units will number 96, and only 54 will have three bedrooms; a building designed mainly for younger professionals rather than families.

The site is only 300 metres from the Dundas subway station, making it a prime spot for subway commuters. Included in the podium's commercial ground level is space to replace the existing Esso/Circle K convenience store beside the gas station, Graywood Developments announced during a public presentation on April 15.

In the development planning rationale presented by Bousfields Inc., 23 surrounding recent developments are cited as its equal. But only seven of these 23 have 50 stories or more. Presenters at the public forum said the height is capped at 53 stories only because any



Looking northeast at 241 Church Street

Photo: Designed by Turner Fleischer Architects

more could obstruct helicopters flying to SickKids Hospital.

Inspired by nearby iconic architecture including the Sears building at 222 Jarvis, the podium cantilevers over the street, its highest floors leaning out over the ground floors. According to the planning rationale, this design provides a bigger sense of space and more natural light flow on surrounding sidewalks.

There was concern raised whether a traffic study had been done of the surrounding area, which was confirmed to be currently under review. There were also points raised about the potential increase in

noise pollution caused by the waste trucks that would service the building. The response was that anywhere in a downtown area will experience a certain level of guaranteed noise pollution, however, there wouldn't be any reason for the site at 241 Church Street to have more than the typical amount.

Asked about lingering effects from the current 'flight to the suburbs', planners said they believed this is a temporary trend, and that eventually downtown density would return to pre-Covid-19 levels. To sell 53 stories of empty units, they're placing a heavy bet.

## the bridge: Book Review

Glenda MacFarlane, Columnist

**The Devil's Trick: How Canada Fought the Vietnam War**  
By John Boyko  
Knopf Canada, April 2021

In John Boyko's new book, the political historian reveals the many ways in which Canada was complicit in and affected by the Vietnam War. Astutely, *The Devil's Trick: How Canada Fought the Vietnam War* illustrates the book's ideas with stories of people who experienced the effects of that controversial conflict firsthand.

In the mid-60s, respected Canadian diplomat Blair Seaborn acted as an emissary between the US State Department and Ho Chi Minh, hoping to prevent the expansion of US military action. Of course, despite all efforts the war escalated, and, in that turbulent decade the conflict became a flashpoint for those who wanted to change the system and those who wanted to maintain the status quo.

Claire Culhane, a politically-engaged nurse from Montreal, volunteered to work at a Canadian hospital facility near the coastal city of Quang Ngai in 1967. She was appalled to find that the Canadian medical team there was violating the Geneva Convention and sharing patient information with the CIA. After the Tet Offensive, Culhane came home and became an activist for ending Canada's complicity in the war, at one point even chaining herself to a seat in the visitors' gallery at the House of Commons.

Ontario's Doug Carey chose to join the US Marines, along with thousands of other Canadians who enlisted in the US armed forces. Carey was stationed first in Da Nang, where

he feared jungle snakes almost as much as the Viet Cong. Returning home in 1967, Carey found ordinary life disorienting and signed up for a second tour. Carey experienced classic symptoms of PTSD, but it wasn't until many years later that the disorder was recognized and treated.

Boyko also assesses the impact of US men of draft age who fled to Canada. Joe Erickson, from a Minnesota farm, came to believe that the war in Vietnam was morally wrong, yet saw "no right choices." In 1968, he and his wife crossed the border, and Joe established a group for draft resisters in Winnipeg. The RCMP infiltrated his group and shared information about its members with the FBI, who in turn used the information to terrorize Erickson's family in the US.

The most moving narrative centres on Rebecca Trinh. She and her husband Sam were raising two young daughters in Saigon in the 70s when they became fearful that they, like other Vietnamese of Chinese descent, would be sent to a labour camp. In 1979, the family endured a sea voyage on a rickety boat, surviving illness, hunger, thirst, and even pirate raids. From a refugee camp in Malaysia, they were transported to Lethbridge, Alberta where the family members thrived. Decades later, their story became the foundation for a "Heritage Minute."

The effects of the Vietnam War can still be felt in Canadian society today, and Boyko's careful analysis helps us to understand how and why -- along with personal stories that give *The Devil's Trick* an undeniable emotional punch.

## Levels of inequality worsened by health restrictions

### Consolidation from p1

Such a massive increase in the global elite's wealth comes during record unemployment and small business closures, and unprecedented levels of government debt.

In Canada, where many middle- to low-income earners have suffered, individuals running large companies also saw big-time gains.

According to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the 47 listed billionaires in Canada added \$78 billion (CAD) to their overall fortunes since March 18, 2020. The total combined wealth of Canada's billionaires is now \$270bn.

David Thompson, chairman of Thompson Reuters, one of the largest media conglomerates in the world, benefited the most with \$14.4bn extra.

Though wealth disparity in Canada is less severe than in the United States, numbers show a staggering amount of concentrated prosperity in the hands of the few.

In a 2018 CCPA document entitled "Born to Win," by David MacDonald, data compiled from Canadian Business magazine revealed that Canada's wealthiest 87 families were on average 4,448 times richer than the average family. These top 87 families had a combined wealth equal to the bottom 12 million Canadians.

Worsened levels of inequality

caused by prolonged health restrictions have renewed calls for a tax on the rich.

Legacy media articles suggest that a levy on wealth (the NDP proposes a 1% tax on those with \$20 million in assets) could help pay for the billions of dollars going out via the federal stimulus program.

But even if a wealth tax is imposed, industry-leading companies will continue to solidify their market share dominance. Since the beginning of 2020, the global economy has seen huge mergers and acquisitions in tech and telecommunication sectors.

Trail-blazing to new heights was Nvidia Corp.'s move to buy Arm Ltd. from the Japanese holding company Softbank Group. The \$40bn (USD) deal would make Nvidia one of the premier semiconductor companies at a time when demand for electronic chips is soaring. (Pandemic splurges for new laptops, screens and phones have led to a worldwide chip shortage).

In Canada, two of the largest telecom and cable providers, Rogers Communications and Shaw Communications, proposed a \$20bn (CAD) buyout in April.

This deal, and Sobeys parent company Empire acquiring a majority stake in Longo's grocery store chain for \$357 million, are examples of consumer-driven industries amal-

gamating to further monopolize and control society's most essential services.

These coalescing forces of wealth and power are manifesting before regions like Ontario have found a clear and concise way to emerge from the pandemic. For all the stringent social distancing requirements, intermittent lockdown measures and now the vaccine rollout, a timeline for a general reopening is still anyone's guess.

What is evident amidst the global health crisis is that the curtailing of people's livelihoods has proven a boon to the super rich.



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# The transformational power of being heard

Samantha Peck, TWC

"A welcome reprieve from the harsh realities of life."  
"A transformative experience."  
"Life changing."

These are a few of the things I was told by the family caregivers who participated in expressive writing workshop sessions run by the Toronto Writers Collective. For 13 years, I have worked with long-term care residents' caregivers, to help them form family councils, learn about the sector, connect with their peers, and navigate the complex long-term care sector.

In March 2020, their and my world was rocked by the global Covid-19 pandemic, with devastating impact on Ontario's long-term care homes. These homes were closed to all visitors — even essential family caregivers. At first, this move was necessary to try to keep residents safe, but the separation was devastating and traumatic for residents and caregivers.

As the executive director of Family Councils Ontario, I knew that we needed to do something new or different to help caregivers through the crisis, but exactly what? Then the Toronto Writers Collective reached out to me about their work. I thought, let's try it!

The expressive writing program is based on evidence, so I didn't doubt that it would have an impact on the caregivers I work with. What I didn't expect

was the degree: "I found myself reaching into the caverns of my soul to unearth emotions I had suppressed because they didn't seem appropriate," said one. Each of the 13 participants reported that they not only enjoyed the experience but grew as people. They've become friends and continue to meet and support one another months after the workshops ended.

Caregivers have a great capacity to give and receive support from their peers, but the depth of their connection has blown me away. Participating in the workshops has changed their lives and improved their ability to be effective caregivers as well as care for themselves. More than ever I am convinced that expressive writing workshops are the best way to process and begin to heal from the trauma of Covid-19.

I've come to call some of the participants my friends and allies. I can call on any of them for input as caregivers with lived and living experience. All have strengthened their voices for advocacy and capacity to engage in meaningful and honest conversations.

Individually, I know that they will have an incredible impact on their loved ones' long-term care homes and their broader community. What seemed like an interesting opportunity to try something new has blossomed into new friendships, a renewed sense of confidence, increased self-esteem, and im-

proved well-being.

All because a group of strangers took a leap of faith and were brought together for a couple of hours per week to write. "There is a transformational power in being heard." And now more than ever, caregivers need to be heard. And heard they will be! Together, I trust that they can change the world.

Many of those workshop participants have taken the next step to become Toronto Writers Collective facilitators and bring the life-changing experience to other caregivers. Together with the TWC, Family Councils Ontario (FCO) is launching workshop series and facilitator trainings tailored to the unique needs of long-term care residents' caregivers, to help them improve their well-being, sense of community, confidence and writing skills.

If you live in downtown Toronto and want to join these caregivers as expressive writing workshop participants and facilitators, FCO and TWC are hosting a facilitator training June 4-6. The training is co-funded by the Rotary Club of Toronto, FCO and the TWC. To learn more and apply, visit: [www.torontowriterscollective.ca](http://www.torontowriterscollective.ca).

*Samantha (Sam) Peck is executive director of Family Councils Ontario (formerly Family Councils' Program), supporting thousands of family members and long-term care home staff.*

## Amazing Moss Park Art presents: Lifeline

Alan McKee

Believe it or not, this is a map. It's a map of how humanity, or at least the Canadian government (and a few others), reacted to the virus designated as Covid-19 last year. It's kind of pretty, unless you know how to read it and what it shows. Then it's not so pretty.

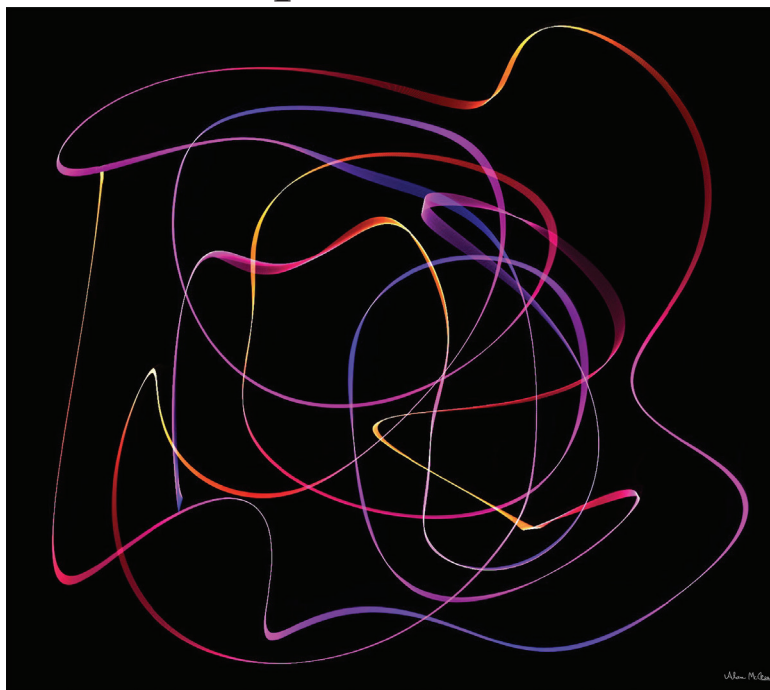
The straight part on the left charts the actions of the Chinese government. Wham! Do not pass Go. Do not say or do anything we don't like or ... Bam! ... the straight line to ... well, we don't know exactly where.

Some of the tighter curves that seem to double back on themselves represent Donald Trump's U.S. presidency: they meander, double back, change colour. In some places lines resemble that hat he kept trying to sell.

The looser, more meandering curves are the Canadian government. At first they look nice, well formed and thought out. But if you follow them, they start to unravel. You realize they don't go anywhere.

The upshot is that maybe in a future catastrophe, Canada might do something about it.

Colours tending toward blue are relatively good, in the sense



Lifeline by Alan McKee

Courtesy of Amazingmossspark.ca

that the number of deaths are comparatively low. Reddish and yellow tints are at the opposite end of the spectrum and show catastrophic stupidity. The U.S., Italy, France and Britain account for a lot of yellows and reds. Russia is green. Not too cool, not too hot. Pretty good, actually, unless you're a billionaire who made deals more profitable than those made by Mr. Putin.

Most of the so-called Third World, the poorest and least powerful, didn't even make it

onto the Virus Map. They simply drowned and sank.

What's hard to see is how those in a lot of governments tried to plot courses whose primary benefit was to permit politicians' vacations without really doing anything for their country.

Indeed, the Lifeline or Virus Map looks pretty unless you know what it means. Then it's not so pretty. Let's hope humanity can chart a more positive course in the future.

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## Site cleared for development after fire destroyed existing buildings

Corktown from p1

At the public consultation *the bridge's* publisher, Andre Berman, asked if the city had any comments about the Fire Marshall's latest revelation, that the June 2020 blaze was intentionally set. Ward 13 Councillor Wong-Tam acknowledged that she shares this question, saying it raises alarm bells.

"That the officials are looking at this situation with suspicion and [concluded that] the fire was deliberately set — an intentional fire in our neighbourhood [that] could have harmed people — this is causing a lot of distress."

Stephanie Nitsos commented, "I understand as a resident, that all of Corktown right now is under consideration as part of inclusion on the city of Toronto's heritage registrar .... Had this building and had this site not burned down, it would have been included on the her-

itage registrar and therefore exempt from any development in that area."

The city planner agreed that "given the age of the buildings and some of the other buildings on the list," he assumed it would have been included, but said it was not guaranteed precluded from development.

In a follow-up email to Friedrich and Wong-Tam, Mawhinney wrote, "It is very concerning that the site was cleared for development only after intentionally set fires destroyed the older structures. It is vital that the city not inadvertently create a situation where arson is a tool for development clearing."

Police investigators continue to urge witnesses to contact 51 Division, directly at 416-808-5100 or by an anonymous tip to Crime Stoppers.

At the time of writing, the office of Brad. J Lamb had not responded to request for comment.





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# Waterfront For All calls for city-wide discussion of the island airport

Julia Simioni, Senior Reporter

PortsToronto, the government agency that operates the Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport, on March 30 issued a request for interest (RFI) to identify a financial investor for the airport.

PortsToronto says the purpose of this move is to reduce the airport's overall debt, enhance liquidity, enable infrastructure investment, and ensure the airport's long-term viability.

In response, Waterfront For All, a group of neighbourhood associations and residents, called for full and open consultations, including looking at alternatives for the site.

“There needs to be a very careful evaluation of all of the options,” said Ed Hore, chair of Waterfront For All. “Should the airport site become a 215-acre park?” a news release asked.

“Everyone knows the downtown area of Toronto needs parks.”

“Developing the island airport lands as a park, now connected to the mainland by a tunnel, would likely be a lot cheaper than building proposed Rail Deck Park, whose cost is estimated by the City at \$1.7 billion (the Canadian Taxpayers Federation says the cost will be \$3.8 billion).”

For now, the group's main focus is on the renewal of the Tripartite Agreement that governs the airport's



Aerial photograph of the island airport, 2019.

Photo: Ron Jenkins

operations. The agreement was signed in 1983 by the Toronto Harbour Commission (later the Toronto Port Authority and now PortsToronto, with directors appointed by three government levels) the federal Department of Transport, the Government of Ontario and the City of Toronto.

The 50-year agreement has five major conditions, including that flights can only leave between 6:45 a.m. and 11 p.m., barring emergencies, and that no additional runways or runway extensions shall be constructed. According to Community Air, a group that promotes a green waterfront and advocates closure of the island airport, all five major conditions have been violated.

“The Billy Bishop City Centre Airport must close,” says Community Air's website. “A large industrial use such as this

has no place threatening our waterfront and the greatest recreational resource of our city.”

Any investor who plans to continue operating the airport will ask for a longer time frame than the agreement's current expiry date of 2033, and the financial investor will only be interested in buying the site to run as an airport unless it's clear the airport will be there for many years to come, Hore says.

“Should there be a lease renewal? That issue is now squarely before us. We have to discuss it as a City.”

In a statement, PortsToronto said it is seeking a financial investor that would “maintain the organization's commitment to a managed-growth approach to the airport that ensures balance within the community, and executes upon the airport's recent Master Plan that en-

deavours to make investments to make Billy Bishop Airport among the cleanest, greenest and quietest airports in the world.”

“It is incumbent upon PortsToronto – as owner and operator of Billy Bishop Airport – to explore options to manage risk and enhance liquidity in a manner that allows PortsToronto to fulfil its mandate, support Toronto's economy, and ensure that the airport continues to serve as an asset,” said Robert Poirier, chair of PortsToronto.

“This RFI will inform a strategic evaluation of opportunities regarding the airport by effectively extending the existing and successful P3 structure we already have in place with several key concessions at the airport. Importantly, PortsToronto will remain

the signatory to the Tripartite Agreement, with the City of Toronto and the federal government, and as such will retain oversight of the airport and maintain control over such areas as slots, safety and environmental sustainability.”

Completed in 1939, the airport is named after a First World War flying ace, and in 2019 was Canada's ninth-busiest airport and the sixth-busiest serving the U.S.

According to the operator of Toronto Pearson International Airport, The Greater Toronto Airports Authority, passenger volumes for 2020 fell by 74 per cent from a year earlier.

Like most Canadian airports, Billy Bishop's runways have been relatively silent since March 2020. The airport's major operator, Porter Airlines, ceased operations due to the pandemic until May 19.

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