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LOCAL

the bridge

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

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'Every extra table counts' – CaféTO brings hope to local restaurants



Patrons fill patio tables at Hot House Cafe.

Photo: Andre Berman

Julia Simioni, Senior Reporter

After a tough year for restaurants, the City of Toronto entered the first stage of its reopening from Covid-19 restrictions in mid-June, allowing patios in Toronto (and across Ontario), to start serving outdoor diners.

At over 1,000 Toronto restaurants, city workers have set up pylons, barrels and barriers to expand outdoor dining space in the popular CaféTO program. The program, which began last summer, enables restaurants to serve patrons on sidewalks and curb lanes if they maintain a physical distance.

Restaurant owners have approached this as an opportunity to recover from the last year of financial hardship. However, many now face additional challenges.

Arif Ahmed, a general manager at the Hot House Cafe on Church Street, said CaféTO will add up to 40 seats to the restaurant's 120-seat patio. Still, after such a financially challenging year, Ahmed hopes to be able to seat guests inside soon.

"We need the inside to open. We have over 450 seats inside so we have the space, but we don't have any guests."

Opening inside would also help the restaurant deal with issues that have intensified during the pandemic, such as increasing vandalism and homelessness in the St. Lawrence area. This year, substantially more people have chosen to

live outside rather than subject themselves to outbreaks and what they say are sub-par conditions in the shelter system.

"It's getting out of control," said Ahmed. "Every day homeless people are interacting with guests, knocking over plants... The question is how many times a day that staff have to go interfere."

This is "uncharted territory" that staff are still trying to figure out how to handle, Ahmed said.

Just down the street on The Esplanade is the Novotel Toronto Centre hotel, which the City of Toronto is leasing as a temporary homeless shelter. While the city says this is to allow for physical distancing during the pandemic, it's also a part of controversial years-long efforts to remove encampments from public spaces.

Nearby on The Esplanade, The Old Spaghetti Factory added a small extension to the patio through CaféTO. However, manager Jessica Ruttan says the area is a "last resort" for seating guests.

"The way that it's set up isn't so nice," said Ruttan. "It was

just kind of put there." City workers "could've done a better job at blocking off the space and making it look nicer so that people don't feel like they're on the street."

Regardless, Ruttan added, "every extra table counts" after such a financially challenging year. "Even if it's just three tables, it helps because that can give us that little bit more business that we normally wouldn't be able to get. It's also a whole other section for one of our servers who normally wouldn't have had a shift."

Ruttan says a positive aspect of the patio reopening is that it allows new staff to ease into work before the entire restaurant reopens. This is especially important because nearly an entirely new team has been hired. "Almost all of our kitchen staff is new."

Many of the old front-of-house staff have left the restaurant industry or found other part-time jobs, which makes scheduling challenging. "It's like we all have to learn everything all over again," said Ruttan.

Moss Park plans revealed in downtown segment of Ontario Line

Emma Johnston-Wheeler

Though the Moss Park Station is expected to be the Ontario Line's sixth busiest, it has been brought to the community's attention that Infrastructure Ontario has no plans to designate Moss Park a transit-oriented community, as stated in a recent Metrolinx info session hosted by Online Line coordinators. Consequently, the area will be excluded from benefits that other Ontario Line stations will spur, including an increase in jobs and housing.

At a June 17 presentation regarding the downtown segment of the Ontario Line development, with more than 80 community members attending, Metrolinx discussed its plans for Moss Park. Panelists included project director Richard Tucker and other prominent Ontario Line staff.

More than 23,000 residents

live within a 10-minute walk of the Moss Park station, and 7,300 people are expected to use it during the busiest travel hour. However, unlike Corktown and East Harbour, Infrastructure Ontario has not designated Moss Park a transit-oriented community, which would fast-track vertical housing development around the station. Metrolinx has not offered any reasons for this decision at this time.

Metrolinx intends to tunnel north of Queen Street under the parkland to minimize road closure and interference with the Queen streetcar. The station location will be at the northwest corner of Queen and Sherbourne Street, beside the Moss Park Arena.

Moss Park continued p8

Resident associations across south Toronto banding together

Kayla Higgins

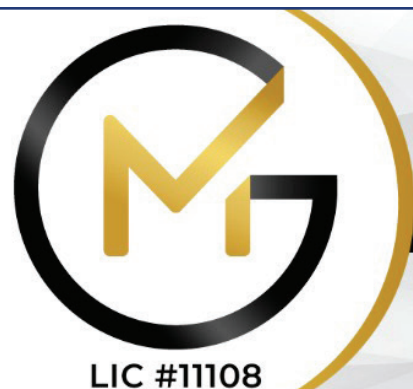
Several south Toronto resident associations have joined together to have a stronger community voice on planning and policy. The Federation of South Toronto Resident Associations (FoSTRA), founded in February, encompasses more than 400,000 residents.

Its boundaries are five downtown Wards — Wards 4, 9, 10 and 13, — and the Ridings and Electoral Districts of Parkdale-High Park, Davenport, Spadina-Fort York, Toronto Centre plus Ward 11, University-Rosedale, south of Bloor Street.

According to a letter presented at their first general meeting in May, the non-partisan organization collaborates to "help shape the creation of good public health policies at all levels of government, preserve and enhance the quality of life for Torontonians, promote neighbourhood identity and vitality, and ensure responsible and respectful development within its boundaries."

Frustrations with the Ford government and its usage of heritage properties, such as the First Parliament site, prompted discussion

FoSTRA continued p7



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Princess Street: A new ‘back-out house’ for developers?

Megan Camlasaran

In a recent community consultation hosted by Toronto City Planning about two proposed high-rises on Front and Princess Streets, the most recurring concern was the visual impact of a parking garage and loading activity. On June 10, some locals said they want the community atmosphere to remain intact so it doesn't seem like a “back-out house.”

First Gulf has proposed a 27-storey office tower and a 39-storey residential tower on the block bordered by King, Berkeley, Front and Princess Streets.

After the city first told the developer to move the loading access and parking garage off Front Street, First Gulf proposed moving it to Princess. This would allow more retail frontage along the public realm and minimize traffic impacts on Front, it said.

The move, and maintaining Front Street East as an entirely pedestrian space “is the correct decision,” according to senior city planner Kevin Friedrich.

“The Downtown Plan states that Front Street East is a ‘great street,’ and the proposal contributes to that vision by providing wider sidewalks, a large privately owned public space, street trees and ground floor.” First Gulf has now designed a



Looking east to the proposed development from Front Street and Princess Street.

loading door that is “built right into the wall” and improved parking access. The door “has to be somewhere,” said Melanie Hare, partner at Urban Strategies Inc. “We were given clear instructions to take it off Front Street.”

David Moore of WZMH Architects said the loading space will let trucks drive in onto a turntable, and drive straight out. Essentially, “oper-

ations will occur behind closed doors,” he said.

Neighbouring the 17-storey Globe and Mail Centre, the site is currently occupied by single-storey retail, Dollarama and LCBO stores, a bank, surface parking for a No Frills store and a six-storey non-residential building. First Gulf is considering phased construction to minimize disruption to No Frills, one of the few major

grocery stores in the area, according to Friedrich.

Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam (Toronto-Centre) wants this proposed development to serve the community, even if it's on a smaller street like Princess.

“It's critically important that we have high-quality office space downtown. We want to be an employer and destination of choice. It brings economic vitality, animation to the streets and essential services to the area,” she said.

The city considers the location as a regeneration area, where it wants to revitalize vacant or under-used buildings, add employment opportunities and retain heritage buildings. Developers say the project can reduce automobile dependency for office workers and residents, because it is close to em-

ployment hubs and transit like the future Ontario Line.

First Gulf's 2020 resubmission of the planning rationale had the residential tower elevated on structural stilts, with a designated privately owned public space (POPS) between it and the office tower. The intention was to retain existing retail and create a family-friendly environment, according to Hare.

The 2021 version adds a podium at the base of the residential tower, a three-storey pedestrian-scaled streetwall, and more office space beneath the tower. The public access space extends along Front Street to Princess Street.

City Planning is still reviewing the May resubmission. After it comments, the proposal will go before the Toronto and East York Community Council, and then City Council.

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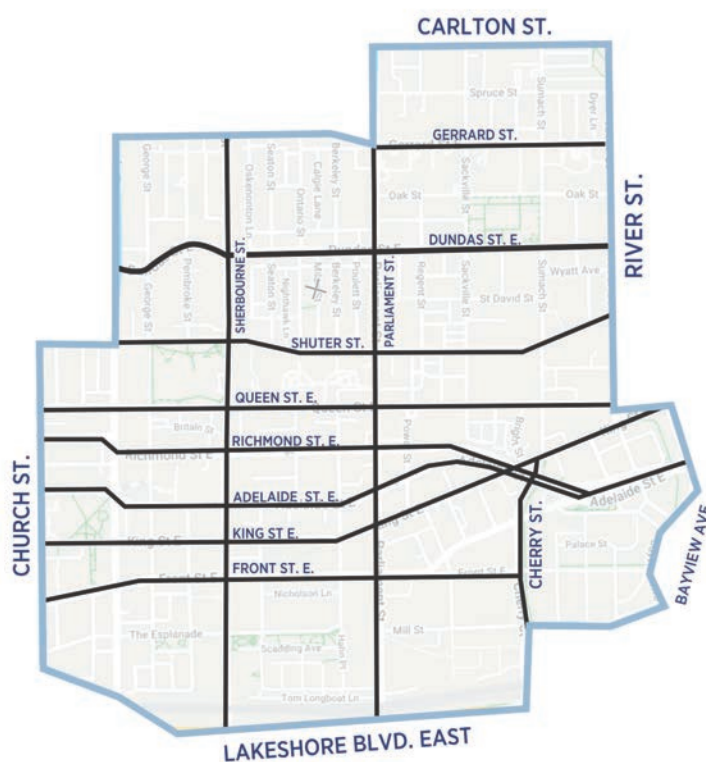
is an independent, nonpartisan newspaper published monthly and distributed by a mix of delivery services to varying readership. +6,500 copies are circulated throughout the Downtown East - Moss Park, Corktown, Garden District, Cabbagetown South, St. Lawrence Neighbourhood, Distillery District - and to 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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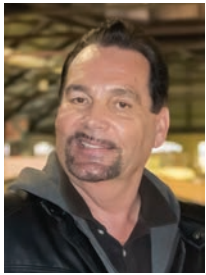
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Bank of British North America, architectural gem



Bruce Bell, Senior Columnist

Wellington Street East has been undergoing a massive transformation for what seems to be forever. New streetcar lines, trees, benches, bike lanes and wider sidewalks are being installed.

Soon this street, which has seen remarkable transformations over the past two centuries, will once again be a beautiful tree-lined boulevard.

During the late 19th century, Wellington Street between Church and Yonge, was a desirable Toronto business address. Elegant banks, a stunning stock exchange, elaborate warehouses, a grand telegraph office and imposing insurance companies that each tried to outdo the others with impressive edifices.

But between 1955 and 1975, some 20,000 of Toronto's oldest buildings were demolished to 'modernize' the downtown core. Sadly, Wellington's splendour was virtually wiped

out, as up to 60 buildings were demolished. However, we did eventually get the lush Berczy Park at Church Street.

One of the few architectural treasures saved on Wellington, despite being in the heart of this mass destruction, is the Bank of British North America (BNA) at 49 Yonge Street on the northeast corner of Wellington. Opened in 1874, it is now home to the Irish Embassy Pub.

Not only a reminder of what was lost during Toronto's urban renewal frenzy, it stands today as a testament to the brilliant architect who designed it: Henry Langley.

The son of a Toronto shoemaker, Langley came on the scene just as the Paris we know today, with its grand boulevards and stunning buildings, was being constructed in a style known as the Second Empire (1852-1870). It was the brainchild of Georges-Eugène Haussmann, a city planner hired by Napoleon III to modernize the French capital.

Haussmann had large parts of the old medieval city knocked down to create a whole new Paris, including a spectacular opera house and the majestic avenue that leads to it, void of trees so as to not block the



view .

Henry Langley, a superstar in the Canadian architectural world, caused a sensation when his Government House opened in 1870 on the site of present-day Roy Thomson Hall.

This immense home, the official residence of Ontario's lieutenant governor, ranked supreme amongst the city's great estates. However, as most of the west end of the downtown core was given over to railway companies, it was demolished in 1912 and replaced with a CPR freight warehouse.

Another of Langley's masterpieces was his General Post Office, which once stood on Adelaide at the head of Toronto Street. Built in 1870-73 and resembling a smaller version of Paris's opera house, its destruction in 1958 marked the beginning of the International Style of glass and steel high-rise construction in Toronto.

Langley's Bank of BNA project at Wellington and Yonge, while not as commanding a presence as his post office, competed with its neighbours in the city's financial core: between Wellington and Front, Scott and Church streets.

To make his new venture stand out, Langley used gold-coloured Ohio stone for the exterior, giving it a luminous

effect and the look and feel of the opulent homes he admired on the Champs de Élysées in Paris.

The new Bank of British North America building opened in 1874 with its main entrance on Wellington Street, then the most prestigious banking address.

But by 1903, Wellington was losing its fashionable status. The bank's massive stone entrance with its carved floral designs was moved to Yonge Street, which by the turn of the century was becoming much more trendy.

In 1907 Henry Langley died and with him the end of the romantic French style of architecture in Toronto as skyscrapers began arriving.

In 1918 the Bank of British North America, founded in 1836, merged with the Bank of Montreal. Langley's beautiful building with its mosaic floors and arching interior columns

became a branch of the Bank of Montreal, and later a Bank of Commerce.

In 1982 the building was restored by Greymac Trust, which sold it to Household Finance and then to Calloway REIT, continuing the history of financial ventures on that corner dating back to 1844. Its banking hall is now home to the Irish Embassy Pub, which opened on St Patrick's Day 2001.

Unfortunately, the City has halted reconstruction of Wellington Street between Church and Yonge Streets until April 2022. It seems that approvals have not kept pace with the progress of construction.

So, we await Wellington Street's rebirth as a brilliant thoroughfare, with a nod to our past with the Bank of British North America as its cornerstone.

If you would like a tour of Old Town Toronto this summer, visit www.brucebelltours.ca.



The old Bank of British North America building at 49 Yonge Street.

Photo: Bruce Bell

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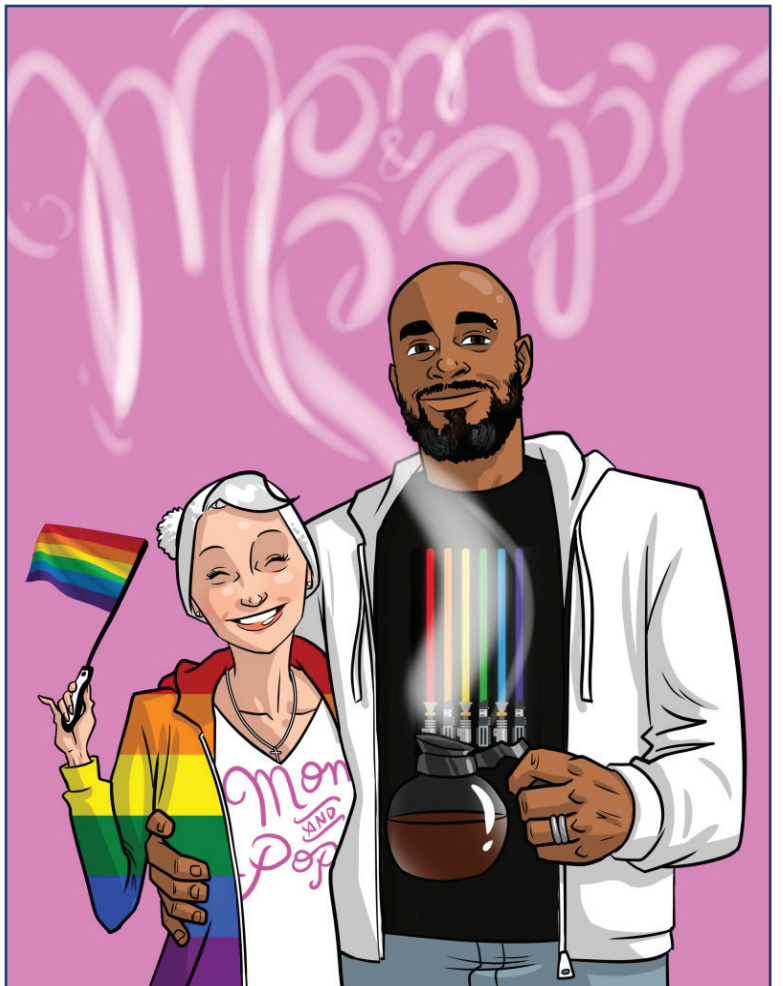
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Going 'back to normal'

Ben Bull, Columnist

Now that Canada's vaccination rates are climbing, many of us are clamouring to get back to 'normal'. But do we really want to go there?

I could use a drink, for sure. The resurrection of patio dining along our once-deserted streets is a wonderful sight. And I'm looking forward to having friends over for dinner. But do I really want to trudge into the office every day again?

If we've learned anything during our 18-month incubation, it's that the world has changed.

Many workplaces now offer employees the ability to work from home full-time, or a few days a week. Metrolinx recently predicted it would take "a year or two" to get its transit ridership back to pre-pandemic levels. What will commuters do with all their extra time?

Some of us have lots of extra time, having lost our jobs during the economic crash. The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) is no longer subsidizing lost wages, so what will the government do to get us back to work?

Those who have kept working are wondering if it's time for a change. 18 months locked out of the office is a lot of time to reflect: Is this really what I want to do with my life?

Our communities have come into closer focus during our in-

carceration. Homelessness has been on stark display, courtesy of the many encampments dotted around the city. Once again we ask: Why can't we give our most vulnerable citizens what they need?

Many of us have walked around our neighbourhoods and realized just how important public spaces are to our collective health. And for many of us these public spaces have been found to be sorely lacking.

High streets have been transformed. While we were busy Uber-eating and ordering everything online, many local businesses went belly up.

Not all the pandemic impacts have been so overt. Prison populations have thinned out. Workers in warehouses and manufacturing facilities – the forgotten victims of the pandemic – have been ravaged.

Frail elderly nursing home residents were the face of the disease during the outbreak's early stages.

How many lives have been lost unnecessarily? And how will those left behind pick up the pieces?

The failings of public health officials and politicians have been laid bare. The Ontario government cut the number of nursing home inspectors a few months before the pandemic arrived. Doug Ford closed the playgrounds. Canada's chief public health officer, Theresa Tam, initially downplayed the pandemic then later refused to

recommend wearing masks or closing borders.

Will anybody hold these people to account?

Kids should be going back to school soon. But how much will the lack of socialization during these critical months of development affect their state of mind?

Relationships have faced a test. Many marriages have failed. My wife kicked me out of the front room after one too many arguments about what to watch on Netflix, so I skulked downstairs, bought a hammock and joined a book club.

Beyond our borders we are finding it harder to ignore the inaction and incompetence of world leaders. Climate change continues unabated. Billionaires don't pay their fair share of taxes. And poorer nations can't even get enough oxygen, let alone find the money to fund the high price of vaccines.

Our world has lost a little glamour during the shut-in. This year's Oscars was a dud. It wasn't just the stay-at-home ceremony that had us twiddling the dial. Inane social media posts by millionaire actors, like Wonder Woman's Gal Gadot who tried to save the planet by singing Imagine with her showbiz buddies, made us wonder if these folks have any idea what it's like to be, well – normal.

It's clear the world is not going back to normal anytime soon, but more importantly – neither should we.

Housing initiative for homeless placed on Parliament Street

Kayla Higgins

The City of Toronto has purchased a building for the homeless at 292-296 Parliament Street, just south of Dundas.

The building will house approximately 24 residents in one and two bedroom apartments, each with a bathroom and kitchen. Shared facilities include laundry, dining and communal areas, and programming space.

According to the city's website, units will be allocated to women, Indigenous people, seniors, people with disabilities and others experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The new acquisition, backed by the federal government's Rapid Housing Initiative, is part of the city's newly approved 10-year HousingTo Action Plan to build 40,000 new affordable units by 2030. The building was previously a private international student residence named Manson Tower.

Abigail Bond, executive director of the city's housing secretariat, says close to 8,000 people are homeless each night in Toronto, sleeping in shelters, parks or encampments.



Former student residence, 292-296 Parliament will house around 24 people.

Photo: AB

"What is really successful in bringing people out of homelessness is supportive housing," she said during an online information session. "All of the services that will be provided are tailored to the individual: mental health care, medical care, help accessing income, life-skills training, even connection to family and friends."

A non-profit housing provider will manage the building, with staff on site 24 hours a day, and as well help residents budget their expenses.

During the session, community members expressed concerns that concentrating

more vulnerable people in the downtown east will exacerbate ongoing social ills. Other questions were about regular maintenance and upkeep of the building.

"It's really important to us that we build a safe community inside and outside the building that has positive interactions," says Bond. "Having an operator who is supporting the residents and keeping them safe is a critical issue for us as we open this building."

The city expects the homes to be ready for new residents by December.

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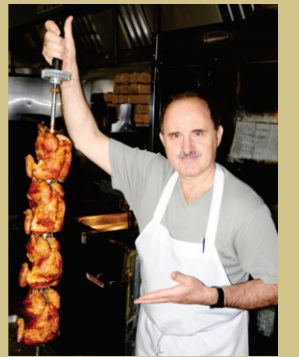
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William Henry Orr, history's futurist of communication theory

Adam G. Wynne

Two historic 1878/1879 Second Empire houses at the northeast corner of Dundas Street East and Mutual Street are now surrounded by ongoing redevelopments. A 42-storey condominium tower was just built across the street and Ryerson University has recently proposed a 40-storey mixed-use building immediately next door.

The house at 154 Dundas Street East was first occupied by William Henry Orr (1836-1927) – a fascinating, yet little-known figure in Canadian history. Residing there for a decade, until 1889, Orr was interested in communication theories and wanted to improve written communication, including through language reform, phonetics, and shorthand.

In their research paper, *Steam Writing in the Urli Daiz* (2017), University of Toronto professors Heather Murray and Yannick Portebois describe Orr as a futurist and utopist of communication theory who “believed language was open to innovation as was any other technology” and “dreamt of a day when written communications could be near-instantaneous, approaching the speed of speech” in a pre-digital era.

Born in Oshawa in 1836, William Henry Orr ap-

prenticed with regional newspapers as a teenager. In 1860, he married Ann Marie Pedlar (1835-1918) of Oshawa's prominent Pedlar family.

By the early 1860s, Orr was working in Toronto under George Brown as a journalist at The Globe. A few years later, he was sent to report on the Confederation Debates, which resulted in the Confederation of Canada in 1867. Interviews from the 1920s identify Orr as the last living participant and witness of the debates.

Orr's expertise in shorthand was one reason he covered debates, as he could transcribe large volumes of information verbatim at high speeds. (Orr's first-born son – Cyrus Pitman Orr (1858-1937) – was named after Sir Isaac Pitman (1813-1897), inventor of Pitman Shorthand, to whom Orr corresponded regularly.)

Orr often held public lectures open to all on communications theories and published articles, journals, and letters from the 1850s through the 1920s. He observed that students spent significant time slowly transcribing materials, limiting capacity in both individual and group educational pursuits.

Interestingly, Ryerson University's Faculty of Communication and Design and School of Journalism are now located only a block north of Orr's former residence.

By the late 1860s, Orr had taken a job with the Aetna Life Insurance Company in Montreal. He was reportedly the first Canadian businessman to teach women how to type in an office setting, which was controversial in the 19th century. In 1878/1879, he transferred to Aetna's Toronto office and took up residence at 154 Dundas Street East. At the time of his death in 1927, Orr was still associated with Aetna.

Murray and Portebois's article notes that Orr had what appears to be the first residential telephone number in Toronto. His phone number was “3” at the Toronto Main Exchange – with only the operator, telephone company, and police ahead of him.

Orr was also one of the first Torontonians to engage in the sport of bicycling. He abstained from alcohol and smoking, and was a vegetarian for most of his life. Orr was also active in Toronto's coffee house movement, which sought to provide alternatives to bars.

Although they do not presently have heritage status, 152-154 Dundas Street East are excellent candidates for inclusion on the City of Toronto Heritage Register. The Toronto Branch of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario (ACO) says the buildings are “at risk” of demolition because of the intensity and proximity of adjacent redevelopments.

152 Dundas Street East, on the corner, was reportedly for sale recently, according to the ACO. It hosted a medical practice for half a century before World War II and was later home to the Mutual Street Deli for 60 years.

Orr's legacy could also be commemorated, through the installation of a historical marker or plaque near 154 Dundas Street East.

the bridge: Book Review

Glenda MacFarlane, Columnist

All the Rage: A Partial Memoir in Two Acts and a Prologue
Brad Fraser
Penguin Random House, 2021

Brad Fraser's new memoir pulls no punches — but that's not surprising if you're familiar with his plays (or his social media presence). Fraser has always been a fearless and uncompromisingly honest writer, and *All the Rage* is both of those. Fraser's life story, which takes us on a journey through several decades of queer culture and Canadian theatre history, is compelling.

Born in rural Alberta in 1959 to impoverished and abusive parents who moved from town to town, the young Brad sought refuge in reading comic books and cheap paperbacks. As a teenager, Fraser managed to enrol in a drama program at an Edmonton performing arts school, and his path became clear: he threw himself into writing, performing and directing at school, and later at Edmonton's venerable Waltherdale Theatre.

He won the student prize in the Alberta Culture Playwriting Competition, which came with a four-week stay at the Banff Centre for the Arts, where he had his “first truly gay encounter.” Fraser had known from an early age that he was different from heterosexual family members, and credits his queerness for giving him the impetus and strength to get away from the life he was born into.

At 22, his play *Wolfboy* put Fraser in the spotlight, its combination of homoeroticism and lycanthropy a magnet for younger audiences in Toronto,

Saskatoon and Edmonton. But 1989's *Unidentified Human Remains* and the *True Nature of Love*, with its unique fusion of humour, pop culture, sex and violence, cemented Fraser's reputation. The play has been performed across Canada and internationally, and was made into a film.

Fraser traces the trajectory of his first ten plays, cataloguing successes and non-successes, and outlining his often-fraught relationship with the media. Near the end of the narrative he focuses on his play *Poor Super Man*, a frank portrayal of friendships and sexual relationships in the AIDS era.

Along with accounts of his life in the theatre, Fraser writes about the 1980s gay scene with all its excitement and excess. He names names and provides details, candidly revisiting past relationships, (venereal) warts and all. Fraser's coming of age dovetailed with the rise of the AIDS epidemic and the attendant fear and sorrow that ravaged the gay community during the 80s and 90s. So many of the bright and talented men we meet in the early pages of Fraser's memoir fall victim to the disease that the scope of the devastation becomes increasingly clear.

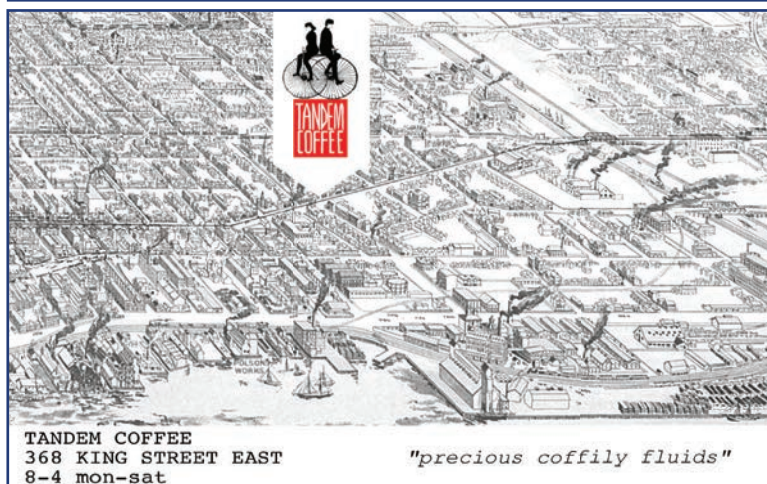
In one of the most moving sections of *All the Rage*, Fraser sits in a nondescript restaurant, and as Cyndi Lauper's “Time After Time” plays in the background, he opens a newspaper to find an obituary for a former lover, friend and theatre colleague, dead of AIDS.

All the Rage ends on New Year's Eve in 1999. I hope that Brad Fraser is hard at work on a sequel, and that it will arrive in bookstores soon.

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Crossing the threshold – writing a new story

Catherine Campbell, Toronto Writers Collective

We're crossing a threshold. Covid-19 will be with us for a while yet. Masks, yes. Distancing, yes. Grieving, yes. Time and space to recover, yes.

But I do think we can begin telling a new story.

The last 16 months have been disruptive on so many levels. It's not a story we could've imagined. It jolted me out of complacency, to see what I've taken for granted for so long.

Like many, I've looked at how I want to be in the world moving forward and what I truly value. Have I found a map? Sadly, no. But definitely the courage to explore what my new normal could be: relationships with family, friends and community; attachment to things; commitment to living creatively.

Four ah-ha moments got the ball rolling. The first three weren't a huge surprise. The fourth was – but shouldn't have been.

1. My family and friends are my rock. Our love and support of one another is the most

important thing in my world. Too bad it took the Covid jolt to bring this home.

2. There are so many people I rely on that I've never really seen. People who help me in stores, at the doctor's office, in my apartment building, at my front door delivering what I'm privileged to purchase.

3. Nature is one of the best teachers I've ever had. It helps me keep how I move, communicate, consume and accumulate in perspective. Lucky me that Toronto offers so many ways to be nature's student. I've had some fascinating conversations with a few trees lately – at least I think I have. A story for another time...

4. The surprise? A highlight over the past year has been spending an hour-and-a-half every week on Zoom with a group of people I haven't met in person. The Toronto Writers Collective provides writing workshops free of charge to people deprived of voice. As a volunteer, I facilitate a group with members of Progress Place, a mental health community centre in downtown To-

ronto.

On Saturday mornings, we write together where it's safe to explore, uncover and share our stories. Every week I get to see what a profound impact this has on the writers – individually and as a group. Me included!

Going in, I was sure facilitating remotely would make it hard to relate. But I was wrong. How powerful to witness the power of writing and the joy on a participant's face. To hear finger snaps. To see thumbs up. It's truly a community brought together with stories.

When I look at my Covid ah-ha list there's a common thread: connection, relationship. Not hugely surprising, but affirming to see in black and white.

So as we start to cross the threshold – whether jumping through or tiptoeing in – I hope we all keep connection and relationship front and centre. I hope we all stay open to all our stories.

Because our stories – and how we create them – matter.

Catherine Campbell is a facilitator with the Toronto Writers Collective.

Wanted:blank walls

Carol Mark, Columnist

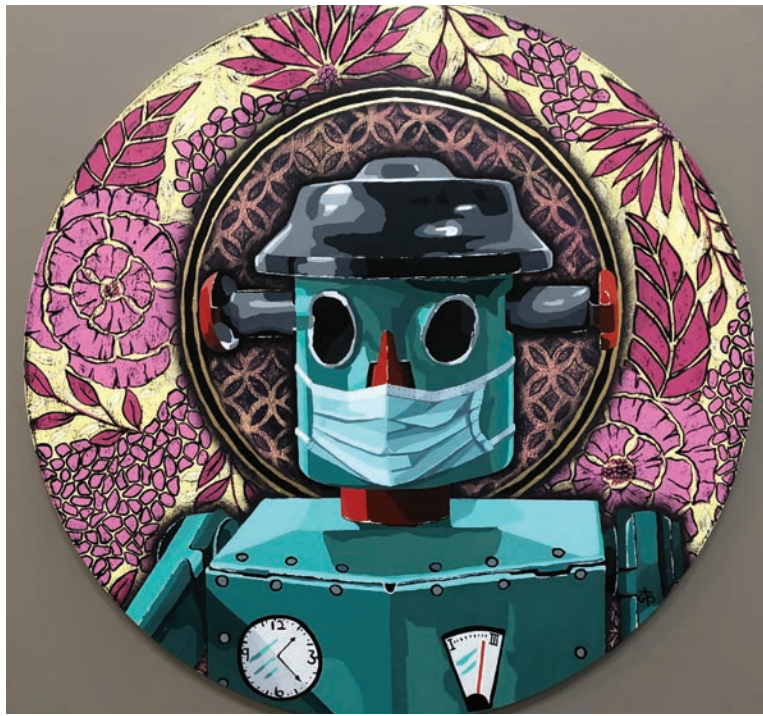
Wall painting goes back to pre-history. We see handprints of vegetable dye on cave walls, and animals drawn with burnt sticks. Fast forward to the 21st century, and we see works by the anonymous celebrity Banksy.

When I was in Paris on a French culinary course, I explored the city on foot, including a three-hour guided tour of feminist street art in the oldest part of Paris, Butte-aux-Cailles. Julie, Cécile and Salomé led me through the winding passages and paved lanes to learn about art and activism.

In the village-like neighbourhood of Butte-aux-Cailles, small shopkeepers and independent bars cohabit with a diversity of people who believe in art and living life to the fullest. "Vivez la vie pleine ment!"

This is also where the French Communist Party is headquartered, as well as the site of a major battle during the 1871 Paris Commune. The walls depict and honour 19th-century heroines along with themes of modern women. A spirit of community and solidarity remains in the neighbourhood. Its vivacious artistic and political scene brings locals into cafes and tourists to the street admiring the art.

As a believer that art can change the world, I was excited that beyond galleries, where engagement is limited, artists can



Robot Art by Giselle Silvestri

Courtesy of Amazing Moss Park Art Collective

and do effect change. That's why The Amazing Moss Park Art Collective announces:

WANTED: BLANK WALLS. This is an opportunity to offer your doorway, a wall, a garage door, anywhere on your property that you would be interested in having our artists create a work of art for free. Contact: amazingmossspark@gmail.com

Giselle Silvestri, an international artist, is our lead. "I continuously investigate the age-old struggle of good versus evil, rich versus poor, and east versus west." She finds inspiration in mass media icons new and old to address serious topics, sometimes with humour.

Giselle has contributed towards building the first library for girls in Afghanistan through ACA Gallery on Queen Street East. In 1989 Giselle established M.T. Wall Inc, a mural and special effects painting company that completed hundreds of murals. Afterwards, she focused on her personal art, until I asked her to help with our community project.

With Giselle, our team will be creating art in the community that, as Giselle states, has a "bit of meat on the bone." Art that looks great, and on a second look has meaning to make positive change.

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Focus of group is to oppose province's takeover of First Parliament site

FoSTRA from p1

among resident associations last December, reaching more than 30 participants in an on-line meeting.

The intent is "to band together and amplify our voices even though there are individual concerns in the neighbourhood," said acting chair Rick Green. "We're trying to get community representation in key areas where we feel as though the government is overreaching [its] authority."

In May, FoSTRA opposed the province's takeover of the First Parliament site in a letter to City Hall. It said the Ford government's plan "will not provide the necessary consideration of the years of planning that have taken place in the community," and that the land must be repurposed for more pressing community needs.

FoSTRA has proposed open dialogue and consultation to gather community input on further development plans about the site in collaboration

with Infrastructure Ontario, as well as "a provision for a heritage interpretation, a regional library space, affordable rental housing and open green spaces."

"People are eager to participate," said Green. "I think the general consensus is that public land should remain public land, something that Toronto is sorely in need of."

Non-voting memberships in FoSTRA are available to individuals on their website from areas not covered by a resident organization or outside the catchment area, as well as to businesses or business improvement areas.

As of June, 20 member associations are working towards creating a permanent board structure and planning an annual general meeting for October. "With existing organizations and the resident association within our boundaries, we'll continue to grow, and the bigger the voice, the more effective we'll be."

How blockchain is transforming the mortgage world, and what you should know about it

Shawn Allen, Owner of Matrix Mortgage Global

As the world of technology evolves, no industry stands to benefit more than the banking and financial sector. The future of global banking will be shaped by blockchain technology.

Blockchains, pegged as the biggest thing since the Internet, are decentralized distributed ledgers of records called blocks; stored across a network of independent computers. The data in these blocks provide a record of consensus, validated and maintained by multiple individual users in a cryptographic audit trail. Once written, the data cannot be changed or altered without retroactively altering subsequent blocks. This makes each transaction secure and immutable, as each block

is stamped with a unique digital signature called a hash.

The technology – still in its infancy – has many uses. It could benefit the banking sector by eliminating reliance on intermediaries in mortgage transactions. A consortium of financial institutions, solicitors, insurers and mortgage professionals could collaborate via a standardized peer. KYC (on the blockchain) would enable financial institutions to eliminate several processes in the sales cycle such as: personal identification, title, income and credit verification. This will offer better data security by controlling access to data, eliminating unauthorized users.

Automated smart contracts consist of programmable self-executing parameters executed on blockchains when prescribed conditions are met.

Smart contracts permit agreements among anonymous parties without the need for a central authority. While the blockchain is the ledger storing the data, the smart contract is the agreement between anonymous parties transacting on it. Imagine: Mark wants to buy Alice's home. In simplified form, Mark and Alice agree to use a smart contract that says, "Mark to pay 'X' amount to Alice. Then Mark will receive ownership of Alice's house." Once this smart contract is set up, Mark can feel confident to pay Alice. Alice would have put her deed on the blockchain and Mark could verify that the deed was present before paying. This transaction eliminates use of a lawyer, as the parties transact directly.

Cryptocurrency is the medium of exchange that parties

use to barter on the blockchain. Bitcoin, the most popular cryptocurrency, is a decentralized digital currency whose transactions are stored on the blockchain. It's used as a medium of exchange to purchase real-world items such as vehicles (accepted by Tesla), event tickets (accepted by the Dallas Mavericks basketball team), art and in this example, a home. Does adopting a cryptocurrency for payments require a major revamping of payment systems? What about the volatility of the digital asset and the legality of using it? These are valid concerns, but transacting with cryptocurrency is similar to accepting Visa or MasterCard.

Volatility concerns are similar to those when transacting in dollars. With the extensive currency expansion during

the Covid-19 pandemic, the dollar's purchasing power is diminishing. Bitcoin in the past year has increased in value by 250%, while the cost of lumber has increased over 300%. This illustrates huge volatility in the dollar's purchasing power.

The Canada Revenue Agency regards cryptocurrency as a commodity; thus treating cryptocurrency payments for goods or services as barter transactions and Canadian tax laws and rules apply to its use.

We must embrace blockchain technology. Its major benefit is to provide untrusting parties a medium to exchange without an intermediary – a safe, secure environment for transactions. Whether you're directly involved in the digital space or not, blockchains will transform your life.

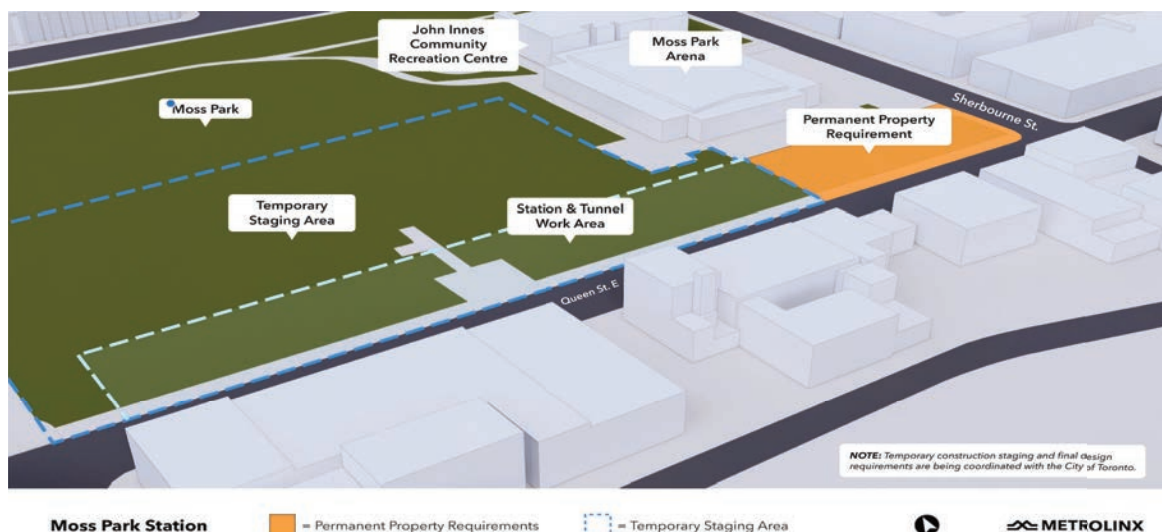
Nearly half of useable parkland is needed to facilitate subway construction

Moss Park from p1

A temporary staging area to facilitate construction will take nearly half the useable parkland. Metrolinx says a significant staging area is required because of the quantity of material coming in and out of the excavation site, including concrete and reinforced steel.

Project director Tucker says the park landscape will return in a "better condition" than it is now.

Historically the Moss Park neighbourhood has lacked an active community association. An obstacle for governments to consistently engage with residents and businesses, says Darcy Higgins of Building Roots, a grassroots social venture. The subway station proposal "is really an opportunity for the community to share



Metrolinx slide shows proposed station location (in orange) as well as parkland needed to host work and staging areas for subway construction.

their voice and help shape the future of Moss Park," he says.

Building Roots wants more community consultation on the Moss Park Station by different levels of government and Metrolinx. Building Roots has

proposed a July 24 community meeting to include residents, business owners and unhoused neighbours.

Coincidentally, the long-proposed Moss Park Revitalization Project is re-emerging in

the public eye, though the city postponed a public information session set for June 30. The project team for Moss Park says this delay will allow for time to address problems and gather more input in order to deliver a

more informative presentation.

City of Toronto media representative Marcela Mayo told *the bridge* that this project, with a similar timeline to the Ontario Line's construction, includes building a new John Innes Community Recreation Centre, improving the existing arena and revitalizing the park.

Mayo says the city is "working with Metrolinx to advance the project through the Ontario Line commenting process, coordinated through the city's Transit Expansion Office".

Metrolinx's final Early Works report for Corktown is anticipated in July in advance of the province's expropriation announced for August 30. Major construction on the Ontario Line is slated for the beginning of 2023.

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