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Thrift stores the new dump

By Simon Hopkins
simon@lowdownonline.com

Volunteers at the Chelsea Nearly New spends hours every day sorting through hundreds of pounds of donated goods, most of which gets thrown out. Nearly New President Dawn Bell-Jack said people donate everything from broken dishes to dirty clothes.

The second-hand store operates out of a small space next to St. Stephen's Parish on Old Chelsea road. Donations of used goods are dropped off outside the store and volunteers sort them. Every three weeks, the store has a three-day sale and the money supports local food banks and charities like the Maison Libère-Elles. Bell-Jack also said that the Nearly New provides used clothes and home goods to refugees, victims of fires and those recently released from incarceration. At their sales open to the public, Bell-Jack said they mostly sell clothing, dishes, kitchenware and other small items like books.

But in the last 18 months, she said they have seen a sud-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



Charred studs and a couple of twisted shelves are all that remains of a garage after a fire broke out on Nov. 16.

Photo: Simon Hopkins

Outaouais firefighters collaborate to put out Cantley blaze

By Simon Hopkins
simon@lowdownonline.com

Firefighters in Cantley battled a midday blaze on Nov. 16 in a residential neighbourhood east of the community centre. The fire burned the detached garage to the ground and tore through the house. Charred studs and a couple of twisted shelves were all that remained of the garage when the fire was eventually extinguished.

A convoy of trucks from the Cantley, Val-des-Monts, Chelsea, La Pêche and L'Ange Gardien fire departments carried water up the long hill to the home on Rue Degas, where firefighters sprayed it on the blaze. According to MRC des Collines Police, everyone present at the home was evacuated. There was an ambulance on scene throughout the afternoon.

The column of dark smoke rising from the home could be seen from Gatineau. It was the second residential fire in Cantley in as many days. A fire on Nov. 14 burned a home on Rue Clermont in the south part of the municipality.

Police directed the Low Down to ask questions about the fire to the Cantley fire department. Spokespersons for the fire department and the Municipality of Cantley did not respond to the Low Down's request for comment.

National Bank in Farm Point to close in May

BY KENDALL KNOWLTON
kendall@lowdownonline.com

Clients of the National Bank in Farm Point will have to travel to Hull in 2027, as the branch will be closing next spring – the second time this particular branch will have moved locations.

In a letter dated Nov. 2, clients received news that their branch in Farm Point will be closing on May 7, 2027.

This is the second time the branch will be moved. The first time was in March 2023, when it moved from Wakefield village after more than 100 years to its location at the then-new commercial development at 9 Ch. Cross Loop in Farm Point.

Cheryl Pritchard-Layer, owner of Alcovia Angus & Simmental, a beef farm up the line, and National

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

WORST JOKE OF THE WEEK: **If the former CEO of Nvidia ever goes on trial he will likely end up with a Huang jury.**
Thanks to Nick Appleby for sending this in. Send yours to general@lowdownonline.com



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NCC considers gondola to Gatineau Park

CABLE CAR WOULD RUN 17 KMS FROM OTTAWA TO CAMP FORTUNE

BY SIMON HOPKINS
simon@lowdownonline.com

The National Capital Commission (NCC) is seeking a feasibility study for their idea to connect Ottawa to Gatineau Park via the air. It is a long-term concept the NCC is considering to support tourism and transportation.

The idea would see a gondola ride on cables in the sky from Ottawa, near LeBreton Flats, to Gatineau Park, making stops along the way at places like the Université Quebec de l'Outaouais, Gatineau Park's south entrance, the future CHAU Hospital, Heritage College, Hautes-Plaines, the Gatineau Park Visitor Centre in Old Chelsea and Camp Fortune. According to documents, it could open in 2050 and carry up to 3 million passengers a year.

The request for proposals was issued on Aug. 21 and required submissions by Sept. 3. According to the document, a report should be completed by Dec. 4.

"The request for proposals invited companies to offer consulting services to help determine the feasibility of a gondola," the request stated. "The consultant will review the proposed route, estimate the costs and revenues, compare similar projects around the world, assess risks and recommend the route and business model," the document stated.

The system would include gondola cabs with space for 30 passengers and take 35 minutes to travel from Camp Fortune to Bayview Station on Ottawa's O-Train line.

The NCC also stated that other stops may be considered to help improve access to Gatineau Park sites like the Mackenzie King Estate or Meech Lake.

The idea proposed a privately operated gondola system along or above NCC land, to reduce costs and delays associated with acquiring rights to land not already owned. The Gondola could include stops near land the NCC is considering for development.

According to the NCC document, the system would include gondola cabs with space for 30 passengers and take 35 minutes to travel from Camp Fortune to Bayview Station on Ottawa's O-Train line.

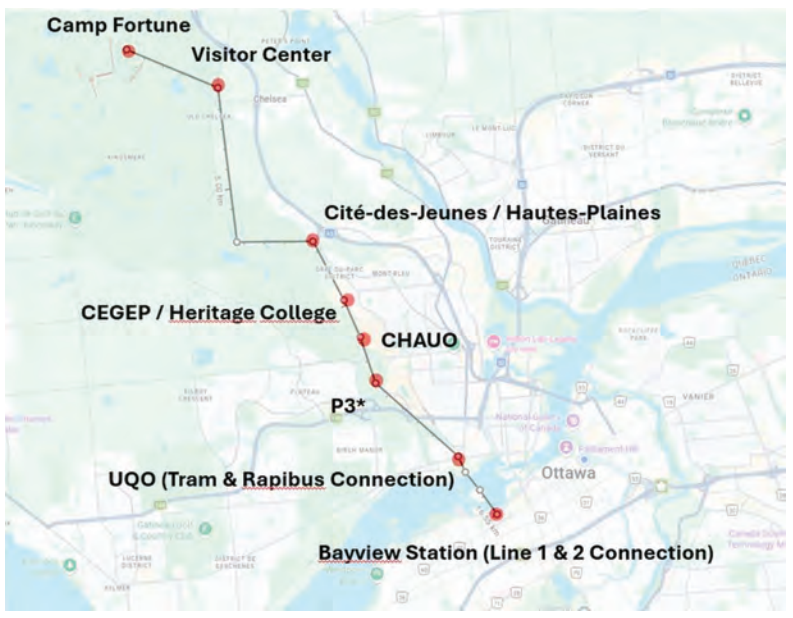
The NCC also stated that other stops may be considered to help improve access to Gatineau Park sites like the Mackenzie King Estate or Meech Lake.

NCC spokesperson Maryam El-Akhrass told the Low Down that: "The idea of a potential gondola connecting the downtowns of Ottawa and Gatineau with Gatineau Park is one of several long-term concepts to explore what kinds of high-quality tourism and mobility experiences the NCC could facilitate in the future. No decisions have been made, and any potential project would be subject to further analysis, due diligence and approvals."

According to centre village Coun. Dominic Labrie, the Municipality of Chelsea was not informed of the gondola project.



The NCC is considering the feasibility of a gondola connecting Ottawa to Hull and north to Chelsea and Gatineau Park, as seen in a rendering found in NCC documents. Photo: NCC rendering



Stops along the NCC's proposed gondola route include Camp Fortune, the NCC Visitors Centre, and Heritage College among others on the way to and from Ottawa. Map: NCC rendering

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Valley Voices BY GARY MARTIN

Hey local business, W'field housing co-op needs your help

Cohabitat Wakefield is planning 40 permanently affordable rental apartments in the village. I'm on the board, and I've been asked, "Is this going to happen? Because you guys have been talking about it for years!" It's actually 10 years, but it's taking us so long because real estate development is a complicated, heavily regulated, time-consuming and expensive endeavor involving multiple partners and multiple hurdles. Regardless, in the past two years we created a comprehensive pro forma (long-range business plan), attracted competent financial and project management, secured commitments from reputable architecture and construction firms, got the MRC on our side and acquired promises of land and tax credits from the Municipality of La Pêche valued at around $2 million.

We also raised more than $50,000 of the $150,000 we need for predevelopment studies and plans required by the feds before we can apply for construction grants. We just got our survey and started our engineering studies. We're (quietly) working very hard and making progress! However, we need more funding to keep the project moving forward.

We welcome any and all contributions, but I want to point out that there's a very solid business case for joining our efforts. Supporting affordable housing in our region will:

- attract and retain talent in the region;
- cut commutes and car expenses, which is especially important for low-wage workers;
- buy loyalty and social licence by demonstrating to employees and the community that your company cares about the housing crisis;
- add new consumers for local businesses, grow the tax base, stabilize the local economy;
- reduce the negative impacts of precarious housing on policing, health and social services (secure housing is far less expensive to taxpayers than homelessness);
- reduce the disruptions of employees being forced to move repeatedly;
- keep young people in our community who want to work and start families here;
- keep seniors close to their adult children to provide grand-childcare;
- provide housing for local artists and musicians, who help attract workers and businesses to Wakefield;
- build a stronger, more resilient La Pêche.

We're going to do all the development work, and as a cooperative, we will manage ourselves rather than waiting for an expensive government agency to decide who to include and what to fix and when. If this isn't enough, there are also tax benefits if you donate through our website www.cohabitat-wakefield.ca or the Cohabitat Wakefield page on the Philanthropie Outaouais website (www.philanthropieoutaouais.com).

Cohabitat Wakefield is an established, well-respected, highly skilled organization working to promote affordable housing in La Pêche. I'm proud to talk about the organization if you want more information 613-222-5432. Please recognize the business case and support the local economy by contributing to our efforts. Is your business doing well? Put on your Santa hat. Give the gift of secure homes for Christmas.

Gary Martin is the board secretary of Cohabitat Wakefield board of directors.

View from the Newsroom



BY MADELINE KERR
Reporter

Lessons from women farmers

Like most good ideas, someone else had it first.

Back in May, Anne Winship, owner of Bean Fair and a founding member of Wakefield Fairtrade Village, approached me with a good idea. The United Nations had declared 2026 the International Year of the Woman Farmer, she pointed out, and suggested that the Low Down interview local women farmers to highlight their contributions. There's certainly no shortage of women who farm here in the Hills, so I figured it wouldn't be difficult to put something together.

I quickly realized, however, that a single article wouldn't do justice to these women's experiences or the magnitude of their work. Instead, I've had the opportunity to profile nine local women farmers. The Low Down has been publishing the profiles monthly since July.

Here's some of what I learned from speaking to these (formidable, tireless) women.

Women have always farmed, but their contributions to agriculture remain underrecognized and undervalued.

According to the advocacy group Agricultrices du Québec, women are strikingly underrepresented in agricultural decision-making bodies, making up just 16 per cent of elected leaders of the Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA), Quebec's agricultural trade union. But a lack of visibility goes beyond leadership roles. Jess Weatherhead, co-owner of Roots & Shoots Farm in Masham, told me about taking a read through what she called an "ag magazine" – a trade publication for farmers – and seeing almost all men.

"It's funny because women have always been farming," Weatherhead said. "And we make up a huge part of the workforce in agriculture."

She's right. In Quebec, close to 30 per cent of farm operators are women, and their contributions have always extended well beyond farm work. Nearly all the women I spoke to pointed out that, alongside the manual labour everyone associates with farming, they also perform the kind of behind-the scenes labour that has quietly kept farms running for centuries: raising children, managing households and finances, training staff and building community connections.

This isn't just anecdotal. A 2023 Quebec government study found that about 95 per cent of women in farming families took the lead on child care, while about 90 per cent did most of their families' cleaning and meal preparation.

Quebec's child-care tax credit helps. Catherine Wallenburg, owner of Northern Seeds near Low, shared her experience of farming while caring for her still-breastfeeding infant – an impressive feat but probably not an uncommon one among women farmers.

Most of the women I spoke to also had ideas for policy changes that could ease their burdens: the need for livable incomes for farmers, fewer barriers to co-operative farming and streamlining administrative requirements to reduce the burden of paperwork were just some suggestions.

Every woman I spoke to told me, in one way or another, that farming is not for the faint of heart. After hearing their stories, I wholeheartedly agree. But I also heard them describe farming as occasionally joyful, often rewarding and deeply meaningful.

Another truism: Women farmers support one another. Almost every woman I spoke to encouraged me to contact another local farmer they felt deserved recognition.

Finally, despite their shared experiences, women farmers have diverse perspectives and realities. I'm grateful to these busy farmers for taking the time to share their stories. This series has shown me we really do need to highlight the individual contributions of women farmers to truly understand their collective impact.

THE LOW DOWN TO HULL & BACK NEWS
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Do senators understand they're pulling apart Park?

The Editor,

Madeline Kerr deserves praise for drawing attention to the Senate's alarming amendments to Bill S-229, which would exclude private properties from Gatineau Park ("Gatineau Park bill debate centres on private property", Nov. 11 edition). Her article cites a Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) estimate of 200 such properties. But how many are really at stake? The National Capital Commission's (NCC) own records suggest considerably more – and expose a deeper contradiction between decades of conservation policy and what Parliament now proposes.

In 1989, an NCC task force identified 289 privately owned parcels covering approximately 1,200 hectares. Warning that residential subdivision threatened the park's ecological integrity, it recommended acquiring private lands to prevent further development. A 2008 NCC study counted 405 private lots, including 298 in Chelsea. It also referred to approximately 300 properties in 2005, cautioning that cadastral lots and individual properties are not necessarily interchangeable.

The NCC's April 18, 2024, submission to its board of directors (No. 2024-i166, p.6) identifies nearly 350 private properties remaining in the park, including 43 exceeding one hectare. Different counting methods complicate comparisons, but the discrepancy with CPAWS's figure deserves clarification.

And the development potential is staggering. An examination of eight Kingsmere properties covering 134.5 acres suggests room for approximately 125 new houses. Assuming those eight are among the NCC's 43 larger properties, that leaves 35, which – at just two additional houses each – could accommodate another 70. That's nearly 200 potential new houses in a park Parliament claims to be protecting.

The historical context makes this prospect particularly disturbing. Between 2008 and 2024, the NCC acquired 63 properties covering 269 hectares, reducing privately owned land by more than 40 per cent. For decades, the objective has been clear: acquire private properties, prevent residential subdivision and consolidate public ownership to protect the park's ecological integrity.

Yet, the Senate Environment Committee unanimously approved amendments excluding private properties from S-229's legal definition. Rather than reinforce the NCC's longstanding policy, senators propose to entrench the very fragmentation it was designed to eliminate. These changes have been portrayed as technical adjustments. They are nothing of the sort. They undermine decades of federal conservation policy while professing to strengthen environmental protection.

Ms. Kerr has done readers a service by exposing this controversy. The question now is whether senators understand what they have approved. After nearly four decades of trying to put Gatineau Park back together, Parliament is preparing to pull it apart.

Trevor Myles
Gatineau, QC

Walking the path of Earth's guardians together

The Editor,

"We can walk this path together" – 'Earth for Sale', by Maude Barlow.

I read Dave McGruer's Valley Voices (Nov. 11 edition) with interest. I spent a lyrical summer on Blue Sea Lake and still feel a connection. Blue Sea is one of the deep lakes left behind by retreating glaciers in the Canadian Shield over two million years ago and is surrounded by a halo of a dozen smaller lakes, which feed into it. Together these lakes create a filtering system in which the waters are constantly refreshed and replenished. Blue Sea waters are clean. The Lake Association's monitoring of septic systems plays a role but so does understanding and protecting natural systems.

I agree with McGruer's contention that amid climate chaos and ecological crisis, the notion of carbon offsets is dangerously misleading. Place-based understanding and protection of watersheds and habitats cannot be entrusted to private interests committed to profit.

For years I felt safe dipping my hand into crystal-clean mountain streams and immediately quenching my thirst. I would no longer do so and agree that water filtration is a necessity. Protecting nature includes the need for humans to design systems that honour life but rethink and stop extractive resource practices which contaminate water and habitats. We are in big trouble and have been operating within a distorted story about our relationship to the Earth. We are not the masters of the Earth. Ecological laws that constrain growth and consumption apply to us and are ignored at great risk.

The Global Rights of Nature Movement provides a context in which environmental protection and our role as guardians becomes a priority, [stating], "Mother Earth is not a property to be exploited for our convenience or profit, but the source of all life."

As McGruer astutely points out, our river does not have a voice, so it is up to us to be the voice that insists on the inviolability of its ecological integrity. This is Barlow's warning. It is time to change the way we think about our relationship to the earth.

I would relish the opportunity to explore how to fulfill our role as guardians with McGruer and others [who are] committed to protecting our precious land and waters, and learning how to walk this path together. Watch for a follow-up session with Maude Barlow coming soon.

Ilse Turnsen
Wakefield, QC

Wakefield Plumbing
RYAN DUNCAN
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Continued from Page 1

Local used goods store drowning in junk

donations but a decrease in the quality of the items. People are giving them their garbage instead of taking it to the dump. She estimated that about 20 garbage bags' worth of items are dropped off every day. “We have up to four or five people sorting for at least four hours every day,” she said.

Some of the items they received and had to throw away are cheap plastic toys that can’t be reused or recycled, mouldy clothing, bulky sports equipment, expired child car seats, and broken glassware.

Bell-Jack said that recently, a crew from a junk removal job brought a truck to the nearly new and left bags of random stuff they had removed from someone’s home. She said the crew told volunteers their boss had told them to dump the stuff at the Nearly New. “They were making money off of this [job],” Bell-Jack said. "He instructed them to take all the stuff to the Nearly New, and to just get rid of it.”

In the winter, garbage is only collected by the municipality once a month and at that time, they fill five garbage bins and four recycling bins and it still doesn’t get rid of everything. She said volunteers take garbage home with them to put out with their household waste so it isn’t just piling up behind the Nearly New. “We're taking garbage home,” she said. “We're sneaking around looking for places to put garbage.”

Bell-Jack said other used-goods stores and charities used to take many of the items the Nearly New didn’t have space for if they were in good condition. But she said every second-hand store is now facing a similar problem, and she spends a lot of time looking for organizations that can take some of their items. But the unusable stuff left on their doorstep all goes in the trash.

Bell-Jack said Chelsea hasn’t been quick to find solutions in the past but after bringing the issue up at the council meeting on Nov. 3, municipal officials have scheduled a meeting.

She hopes Chelsea can help support them by removing some of the excess garbage, but ultimately, people need to stop donating unsellable goods. She said if you wouldn’t give it to a friend, you shouldn’t donate it.

“We all just need to stop buying,” she said.



Nearly New Chelsea president Dawn Bell-Jack said that people will leave anything from broken toys to tattered clothes on the front step of their store. Photo: Simon Hopkins

Hydro-Québec power outages affect 116 addresses

Series of planned power outages for work safety: Hydro-Québec

By Kendall Knowlton
kendall@lowdownonline.com

A series of planned power outages by Hydro-Québec impacted more than a hundred residents in La Pêche late in October and throughout early November – often a chilly time to be without power for hours at a time.

Between early October and Nov. 12, 116 addresses were affected through six outages, according to Benoit Hudon, the La Pêche District 6 councillor.

“They [Hydro-Québec] told me that it's a project to connect a new development in our area that has been subcontracted to a private company,” said Hudon.

Paule Veilleux-Turcotte, Hydro-Québec strategic advisor and spokesperson, confirmed in an email to the Low Down that the outages were necessary in order to meet the request to extend electrical service to a neighbouring residential development project.

“These outages were therefore directly related to the safe completion of this system upgrade and were not part of general winter preparation work,” added Veilleux-Turcotte.

Coun. Hudon said that residents were given short notice, sometimes only a few hours in advance, to prepare for the outages.

The outages specifically scheduled on Nov. 10 and 11, for example, were each scheduled from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., according to Veilleux-Turcotte. The planned outage on Nov. 12 ended about an hour early.

Claude Lachaine, a resident who lives on Clark Road, told the Low Down that the outages did not have a huge impact on his routine, but he said he believes the power cuts impacted families because it’s getting colder.

“There’s a family right next door to me – brand new little baby, three months old and a little girl who is two years old,” he said.

The work covers about 700 metres of the system, including 232 metres that cross the Gatineau River; two 90-foot fibreglass poles were installed as well. The planned outages were to ensure the work was carried out safely.

There are no other planned outages at this time.





Grannies 2.0 continues legacy of 'granpower'

BY MADELINE KERR
madeline@lowdownonline.com

A mainstay Wakefield organization is back, continuing a decades-long legacy of solidarity and support for grandmothers in Africa.

"Like a phoenix, the Grannies are rising from – well, not exactly the ashes," Ruth Salmon, a longtime member of the Wakefield Grannies, recently told the Low Down.

"No, but this is certainly a new iteration," her friend, Ilse Turnsen, also a veteran Granny, added.

The grassroots organization was founded in 2004 by the late community organizer Norma Geggie, who died in 2025. Dozens of women joined the ranks over the years, including Salmon and Turnsen, who were previously core members.

For more than 20 years, the Wakefield Grannies maintained close ties with the Gogos, a group of South African grandmothers raising their AIDS-orphaned grandchildren in Alexandra Township. What began with letters and personal connections between women in Wakefield and South Africa evolved into a fundraising effort for the Alex AIDS Orphans Project. In recent years, the Grannies have sent about $20,000 annually to provide food for 50 families in need, according to Salmon.

But earlier this year, the charity was forced to close – an indirect result of cuts, which began last year, to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) program, leaving the Grannies' future uncertain.

After months of discussion, a new iteration has emerged: Grannies 2.0. Salmon and Turnsen are no longer central to the organization but continue to offer support, both saying they hope to provide continuity.

They also said they're adamant that the group should maintain its focus on mutual aid across borders.

"We are a part of the world. Our connection with those women in South Africa kept us in touch with really important global issues," Turnsen explained.

Both women believe in "thinking locally, acting globally," they said.

The Grannies have committed to supporting two new African charities: Help Lesotho, based in the southern African country of Lesotho, and Refuge Enfants Pour Tous, in Benin, West Africa. Both were founded by women and support grandmothers raising orphaned grandchildren.

"The Wakefield Grannies 2.0 is a combination of existing Grannies mixed with new recruits," Laura Landry, one of the women spearheading the group's return, recently told the Low Down. "The new group has big shoes to fill but are willing to give it a good try," she added.

In classic Granny fashion, the group will host a Christmas Fine and Casual Jewellery Sale on Nov. 28 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Centre Wakefield La Pêche.

The Grannies' ever-popular food auction will return in the new year. The auction begins on Feb. 7, starting at 7 p.m., and runs until Feb. 14, closing at 7 p.m.

Landry said Grannies 2.0 is seeking food donations for the auction, as well as jewellery, scarves and other small bazaar items for its annual International Women's Day sale.

Anyone interested in joining the group or making a donation can email wakefieldgrannies@gmail.com



The community links arms in a show of solidarity during the Wakefield Grannies annual International Women's Day gathering on March 8, 2022. Photo: courtesy Laura Fowler Massey

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Celebrating Dolly, the solstice and Tom Waits

BY PHIL JENKINS
Contributing Writer

Before I begin my review of the outstanding new exhibition at the 100 Mile Arts Network Gallery in Wakefield, a few words of praise for the six local women singers who, on Friday night, Nov. 13, blew the renovated roof off the Brennan's Hill Bar and Restaurant.

For a tribute to that number-one human being Dolly Parton, the room was packed to the back wall and beyond. Sue Johnson, Chris MacLean, Alise Marlane, Eva Danielson, Claire Bestland and Kate Greenland, with host Tina Therrien and a crack band, made the musical community proud. And Dolly.

Life in the Hills revolves around the seasons, and one of the highlights (literally) is the solstice in December, when the days henceforth become longer and we get lit up. Now a group show entitled 'Winter Solstice: The Return of the Light' adorns the walls of the 100 Mile Arts Network Gallery on Riverside Road in Wakefield. The exhibition showcases 14 eclectic works of art that explore the solstice as "a point of transition across cultures marking the return of light, the passage of seasons and the enduring cycles of nature."

Aspects of the solstice are portrayed in a variety of mediums: glass, acrylic, fused copper and glass, photography, ceramic and modelling. It means that a visit to the show provides a fine workout for subjective consideration of the solstice. As might be expected from a group of Hills artists, trees feature in well over half the works. One intriguing exception is a large disc featuring moonflowers; a night-blooming tropical vine with large, fragrant white flowers that open at dusk and close at dawn.



'Reflection of Light' by artist Beth McCubbin. Her work is part of the new 100 Mile Arts Network Gallery exhibition. Photo: Phil Jenkins

As part of the 'Winter Solstice' show, the gallery is hosting a series of artist talks in the weeks leading up to the solstice itself. The first is with Mónica Márquez on Nov. 20. Then, a week later, there is Katharine Fletcher on Nov. 27, followed by BD Braunek on Dec. 4. The series ends with Kate Weekes on Dec. 11. In addition, there are family-friendly activities that will include a lantern-making workshop at the Gallery. Those lanterns will then feature in a Lantern Walk in Wakefield on the solstice itself, Dec. 21.

A tradition in many countries, lantern walks are celebrated in schools, communities and festivals, and are typically held at dusk or nigh; they include singing traditional lantern songs, in a quiet, reflective procession.

HALF-A-CENTURY OF TOM WAITS, COVERED

One of the many pleasures of my reporting job is watching a musical show evolve. The inimitable Palmr. will continue doing his Tom Waits thing with his sideman, Barry Hodgson, on piano and guitar at the Kaffé 1870 on Friday, Nov. 20. Filling out the line-up is Rob Clarke on stand-up bass and Carsten Podehl on saxophones. The show, a theatrical and musical presentation encompassing Tom Waits music over the last half-century, starts at 9 p.m. Pay what you can.



HILLIDAY SHOPPING

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:
Galerie Old Chelsea

Embellishing everyday life

Local artists create gifts inspired by the natural world

BY MADELINE KERR
madeline@lowdownonline.com

StellaMode jewellery

Like a lot of us, Marielle Picher picked up a new skill during the COVID pandemic: With spare time on her hands, the communications specialist taught herself to make intricate beaded jewellery. But unlike many of us, Picher stuck with it, even after the lockdowns were lifted. Now she's the proud owner of StellaMode, selling handmade earrings, rings and necklaces that she calls "wearable art."

"Each piece of jewellery I make has a story. It stems from the materials (often upcycled, often local) and from the design, which is often inspired by the natural world or my own experiences," Picher explains on StellaMode's website.

Working from her studio in Wakefield, Picher says that she can spend up to 12 hours on a large or particularly intricate piece of jewellery. This gives her lots of time to consider the person who will eventually be wearing the art, she adds.

"What are they like? What conversations will their jewellery start? What precious moments will their jewellery witness?" says Picher about what she often ponders as she works.

You can almost see that level of thoughtfulness when you look at her delicate, beaded creations.

Most of the metals used in Picher's designs are stainless steel or gold-plated stainless steel. The beads she uses are precision-cut tubular glass cylinder beads, known as 11/0 Japanese delicas. According to her website, the price for a pair of earrings varies from around $30 to $130, depending on the size and complexity of the design.

The name StellaMode is a nod to her childhood best friend, who, she says, called her "Maristella" – and the nickname stuck. When she was thinking of a name for her business, Stella was the first thing that popped into her head, Picher explains.

Check out Picher's ready-to-wear jewellery online at stellamode.ca or get in touch by emailing stellamodebijoux@gmail.com



Visitors to the Des Collines Health Foundation's Christmas Craft Fair at Vorlage ski hill earlier this month would have seen Marielle Picher's smiling face poking out from behind racks of her handmade, beaded jewellery. Photo: Madeline Kerr

Mary Ann McGee Art

Giving a loved one a framed photograph for Christmas is a safe and predictable gift. This year, why not give something more unexpected and meaningful: A photo of a special moment that's been hand-embroidered by a local artist.

Mary Ann McGee is a Hills-based painter, embroiderer and collage artist, who says that nature is her greatest muse. Her realistic landscapes and intricate, pressed-flower art make for wonderful gifts for nature lovers. But her hand-stitched, embellished photographs might be her most unique offering.

McGee explains on her website that she accepts commissions to enhance photographs with colourful, nature-inspired, embroidered designs. The process is straightforward: Send McGee a high-resolution digital image that you want enhanced, and she will convert the image into black and white, print it on specialty paper and embroider it with a suitable design.

"We will work together in deciding what to embroider onto the print along with colour selection," McGee writes on her website.

"What better way to showcase your special memories than by adding that extra layer of beauty," she adds.



Mary Ann McGee's art is inspired by nature. She's pictured here at the Des Collines Health Foundation's Christmas Craft Sale, held at Vorlage ski hill earlier this month, surrounded by her intricate, pressed-flower art. Photo: Madeline Kerr

Picture your wedding photo or a photo of your baby. Now imagine it brimming with tiny, vibrant roses or cascades of colourful wildflowers. The result of McGee's work is often whimsical, charming and certainly one-of-a-kind.

Prices for an embroidered photograph vary based on the size and level of embellishment. For 5x7-inch photographs, McGee charges between $140 and $190, and 8x10-inch photographs can cost between $200 and $260.

The process takes about three weeks to complete, according to McGee.

Along with the embroidered photo, McGee says she will send a digital image of the completed work that can be used on thank-you cards, invitations, announcements and holiday greetings.

Check out examples of McGee's designs, including her paintings and pressed-flower art, by visiting her website: maryannmcgee.ca



HELPING THOSE IN NEED

BROUGHT TO YOU BY: Centraide Outaouais

Young Chelsea woman collects prom essentials for low-income youth

BY KENDALL KNOWLTON
kendall@lowdownonline.com

The time for prom shopping is around the corner for teens, and one 18-year-old from Chelsea is helping low-income youth find the perfect dress.

Audrey Yuill put together a drive for prom dresses and formal wear from Oct. 1 to 31, which was followed by an event on Nov. 6 at Mont Bleu High School, during which students from area high schools selected outfits for prom.

During the month-long drive, people were able to drop off items at locations at Kiosk 105, a vintage and lifestyle store in Chelsea, and Depanneur M&R in Chelsea, Carrefour Emploi des Collines in Cantley, École Secondaire Mont-Bleu in Hull and Le Mashado in La Pêche.

For the drive, Yuill says she received about 300 dresses, among other items like heels, ties and purses. She got the word out by posting on social media.

"We had less men's stuff, but there was less interest too," says Yuill.

The drive received about 18 brand-new dresses, aside from used dresses, which she says were in good condition.

She says the drive was to help students who aren't able to afford a dress, suit or other prom essentials.

She explains that she started the project after she graduated from Mont Bleu in Hull. She says prom is important to her because it's a big event for the graduating class. Yuill was also joined by Renée Leduc, who helped her organize the drive.

The collected items were then made available to students from schools like Mont Bleu, Philemon Wright, and others in the region at Mont Bleu High School on Nov. 6. This is the second time Yuill has put this event together.

"And it's getting bigger every year, so it's helping more and more students," she says.

Yuill has also helped with a donation drive for useful items for unhoused people through La Caravane Réhab, which is a year-round, mobile outreach program that supports unhoused people.

Items like food, camping and outdoor gear, hygiene items, clothing and pet supplies are appreciated. She adds that she's happy to pick up items directly from people's homes, if that is easier for them.

You can find more information about the donation drive on Yuill's Facebook page.



Above: Chelsea's Audrey Yuill, 18, wants to help students who aren't able to afford a dress, suit or other prom essentials. Photo: Low Down file



Right: Rows of dresses and formal wear were set up at an event on Nov. 6 for students to choose donated items for prom at Mont Bleu High School. Photo: courtesy Audrey Yuill

Dinner raises $18K for palliative care centre



On Nov. 11, a special evening was held at Les Fougères restaurant in Chelsea to support La Maison des Collines, a palliative care centre in Wakefield. The event raised over $18K for the organization, which was a record-breaking total, according to a press release from La Maison des Collines. The money raised was brought in by attendees, donations and bids in a silent auction. Pictured here, members of La Maison des Collines' board: Céline Lefebvre, Mylène Cloutier, Marie Joannisse, Caryl Green, Roger Smith and Randy McCoy, co-owner of Les Fougères, happily holding a giant cheque with the total amount raised. The funds help La Maison des Collines provide end-of-life palliative care to residents in the Outaouais region. Photo: Mélanie Provencher Photographe



Local needs, local giving.

Our community is known for its generosity. Our non-profit organizations struggle daily to provide necessities to the most vulnerable among us. Seniors who want to remain at home. Youth with dependencies. Families who depend on food banks. Those with physical and mental health issues. Groups that encourage fitness, promote local culture and community engagement.

This year, in the spirit of giving, let's support our community groups.
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Cette année, dans un esprit de partage, appuyons nos groupes communautaires.
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With gratitude, we thank the anonymous donor who generously funded this advertising space in support of community organizations.

Animal hug binds Chelsea students, teachers, volunteers

BY KENDALL KNOWLTON
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Children at Chelsea Elementary and volunteers worked all through October to create 'One Together', an installation of five animal sculptures located behind the school.

Marc Walter, the Wakefield land artist who led the project, helped the school create the five, large sculptures, which includes a puffin, a rabbit, and more.

The animal sculptures are made out of knots and sticks, woven by hand from branches by the students from kindergarten to Grade 6, alongside teachers and adult volunteers. Two area Forest School groups also participated.

"There are different types of animals that are holding hands in some kind of circular way, and they hug each other, and so there is the idea that it is to support each other," he explained about the sculpture's significance. It was also a multi-generational effort, which adds to the sculpture's symbolism, according to Walter.

About the process, Walter said the types of animals were not significant, rather the idea was for students to create whatever creature emerged in their minds as they worked on the sculpture.

They began the project Oct. 1 and finished Oct. 27, according to Sandy Foote, the president of La Fab, which organized the project with support from Canadian Heritage.

It's one of three "cycle" of the project Dialogue with the Land (DIAL), which is meant to "approach different aspects of how the land was approached in Chelsea over time," said Walter.

You can find one of them along the Voie Verte Chelsea recreational trail by the Cascades Train Station. The other will be a mural inside the Chelsea school done in early 2027, led by artist Claudia Salguero, according to Walter.

The sculptures will last about three years and then disintegrate, according to Foote.

They held a celebration with students, volunteers and teachers on Nov. 13 for the land art.



The sculptures of animals were made by Chelsea Elementary students and staff as well as volunteers. Photo: Sandy Foote



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For information or to register to donate: Betsy Murphy 819-431-3003 | Janice Moore 819-459-3615

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Low Down on Sports

For the Love of the Game

BROUGHT TO YOU BY: Brunet plus

Rookies take on international competition

HILLS TEAM HEADED TO CURLING CONTEST

BY SIMON HOPKINS
simon@lowdownonline.com

How many years of training does it take to become an athlete on the world stage? These local athletes have swept their way to the world stage of curling in just a few short years.

Skipper Gabrielle Takaoka and her team will compete at an international tournament in Montreal this December for curlers with less than five years of experience.

The competition level is called Colt Curling, and Takaoka and her team are one of the top teams in Quebec.

Takaoka started curling four years ago because she said she thought it was an activity she and her father could do together.

"I was looking for a sport that was accessible for him and myself," she told the Low Down. "He always enjoyed watching curling, but he'd never curled.

"I, on the other hand, did not previously enjoy watching curling. I thought it was just grown men yelling at rocks," she explained.

As it turned out, curling is a lot more than just grown men yelling, and she said she really did enjoy it.

She and her dad took Curling 101, the introductory course offered at Curling des Collines in Chelsea.

Takaoka said she loved the physical and tactical aspects of the sport and started playing frequently, joining other recreational teams and meeting new players. She practised frequently and was approached by a fellow curler to join a Colt team, competing regionally against other teams of curlers with less than five years of experience. They played in a few bonspiels and then played well enough at a regional tournament to qualify for the provincial Colt tournament, where the team finished fifth in 2024.

"That kind of lit a fire under us," she said.

One of the players hit his fifth year after that season two years ago, so Takaoka and her teammates, Keith Dort and Stephen Goudie, had to find a new fourth player. Marc-André Rouleau was hesitant to join at first, according to Takaoka, because the time commitment would be big given the team's ambition. But he agreed, and last year they finished third in the provincial tournament, which qualified the team for the Five-and-Under World Championship happening this year.

Takaoka is clearly excited to be taking her team to the next level of competition. She spoke rapidly about strategy, ice conditions and the types of players she could face.

"I've never curled against an international team," she said enthusiastically. "I've never even curled against a team that doesn't speak a language that I speak."

The tournament includes teams from Australia, the Philippines, Ireland and the United States.

Takaoka played competitive soccer and rowed in university. She said she plays to compete and be the best version of herself.

"I love it when I can beat others if that works out. But, really, I want to know that I've done the best that I could do, and that I really pushed myself," she said.

The tournament in Montreal begins Dec. 2. The semifinals and finals are on Dec. 6.



Team Takaoka is made up (from left to right) of Gabrielle Takaoka, Stephen Goudie, Marc-André Rouleau and Keith Dort. Photo: Courtesy Curling Quebec

Chelsea allocates $2M for sports and recreation

BY SIMON HOPKINS
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Chelsea will spend over $2 million on recreation over the next three years.

That amount was shared in its three-year infrastructure spending plan shared Nov. 9.

Much of that spending is expected to come in 2027, with the bulk of the money going to the southern extension of the Voie Verte trail to Gatineau. Stabilization work to support the extension of the trail will cost $1,505,115, according to municipal documents, but is conditional on the municipality receiving $700,000 in grants for the project.

Chelsea will also spend $115,500 to replace the irrigation system for the soccer field near the Meredith Centre, with support from a $70,000 donation. Parc du Ruisseau in Chelsea Creek will get pickleball courts, but Chelsea will only pay $34,000 if a grant covers the other $66,000.

The multi-sport court in Farm Point is set to receive a $100,000 improvement, and playground equipment will be improved at Hollow Glen Park for $100,000 – half of which will be covered by a grant.



Continued from Page 1

Clients to be transferred to Hull

Bank client, wrote to the Low Down on Nov. 9, calling the closure "unacceptable." As an Alcove resident, she still needs the in-person services.

While Pritchard-Layer says she still does quite a bit of her banking online, she uses in-person services for personal banking and cash floats to stock her business's cash register. She faces a 25-minute drive every time she has to go starting in May.

But Pritchard-Layer says she wasn't shocked when the announcement came.

"I was talking with the ladies that work there that I've known for years, and they kept saying, 'You know, they're taking services away,'" says Pritchard-Layer.

Pritchard-Layer says she worries about older community members. For them, she says, losing their local bank "sucks."

"Taking services away from a small community is not the smartest thing in the world to do," she adds.

The six employees that work at the Farm Point branch will be reassigned to new locations, according to Alexandre Guay, the chief advisor, public affairs of the National Bank.

As of May 2027, the closest National Bank location for Hills residents will be 920 Saint-Joseph Blvd. (Suite 100) in Gatineau, according to Guay. That's a distance of approximately 22 kilometres from the Farm Point location to the branch on Saint-Joseph. For people like Pritchard-Layer, however, that will mean a 47-kilometre drive.

The letter sent on Nov. 2 assured clients that they don't need to take action, "as you'll be able to continue carrying out your banking transactions as usual at the new branch."

When asked why the Chelsea branch is being shut down, Guay wrote that the "decision reflects changing customer preferences and our commitment to tailoring our services to their needs," in an email translated from French.

He wrote that the use of online and mobile banking has increased over the last five years, and that the bank has enhanced digital-device offerings and call centres.

There has been a decline in in-person visits, and less than two per cent of transactions are done at the teller window, according to Guay.

He also wrote that they have had an increase in video-conference appointments.

"This has made our services more accessible, as our clients can connect with an advisor located anywhere in Canada much more quickly, in French, English or several other languages," wrote Guay.

Clients wishing to switch to a branch other than the one in Hull can find locations and ATMs at www.bnc.ca/localisateur

The branch manager and regional vice-president will be available on Nov. 26 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. to answer any questions, according to the letter sent to clients.

The bank can be reached at 819-459-2323 or, until May 2027, at 9 Ch. Cross Loop.



The National Bank branch in Farm Point will close in May 2027.
Photo: Kendall Knowlton

CORRECTION

Incorrect information appeared in the article, "Check your nuts: Police warn drivers to look for loose lug nuts," Nov. 11 edition. MRC des Collines Police did not specify that individuals potentially participating in a social media trend to remove lug nuts from cars were teens.

Incorrect information appeared in the Nov. 11 edition's op-ed space, Valley Voices: "Maude Barlow's real problem is people using nature". Dave McGruer is president of the Lac Des Iles Association for the Environment. The Low Down regrets the errors.

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OUTSTANDING IN HER FIELD

Portraits of Hills women who farm

BY MADELINE KERR
madeline@lowdownonline.com



Cheryl Pritchard-Layer is the fourth generation of her family to farm a 300-acre property in Lascelles. She raises grass-fed beef cattle, and she can name most of her 50-animal herd. Photo: Madeline Kerr

The United Nations has designated 2026 "The International Year of the Woman Farmer." Here in the Hills we have no shortage of women who farm, and so we thought we would take this opportunity to check in with some local women farmers to better understand their experiences and perspectives.

Over the past few months, the Low Down has been regularly publishing profiles of these intrepid and thoughtful farm owners who help nourish their community.

What we've learned is that there is no singular experience of being a woman who farms. Every farmer we spoke to offered a unique perspective on the joys and challenges of owning and managing a farm. Their reflections prove that we need to highlight the individual contributions of women farmers to truly understand their collective impact.

CHERYL PRITCHARD-LAYER, ALCOVIA ANGUS

The rocky hill at Alcovia Angus farm doesn't just overlook the idyllic, rolling farmland surrounding Lascelles – it's also a view back through time.

Cheryl Pritchard-Layer knows that history well: It's her identity, and it's part of her mission to continue it. She's the fourth generation of Pritchards to farm the land, having taken over the family farm in 2005 following her mother's death.

"My parents were dairy and pork farmers ... my father used to have over 200 pigs," Pritchard-Layer recently told the Low Down during a visit to her 300-acre property northwest of Wakefield. "My grandfathers and great-grandfathers did mixed farming, you know, they had a little bit of everything."

For the last 20 years, Pritchard-Layer has been farming grass-fed beef cattle. Right now, she has a herd of around 50 cattle, most of whom she can name by sight.

"That's Harlina right there," she said, pointing to a gentle-eyed brown cow. "And that's Candy. Hey, Candy!" she called.

Pritchard-Layer, who has five grown-up children, told the story of a bull born several years ago on Christmas Day named Xbox.

"The kids had been asking for an Xbox for Christmas. And this bull was born on Christmas, so we said to the kids, 'Hey, look, we got you an Xbox after all,'" she recalled, laughing.

It probably helps to have a sense of humour if you're raising five kids while also managing a farm. Pritchard-Layer has done both with the support of her husband, Mike Layer, whom she started dating back when they were in Grade 11 at Philemon Wright High School in Hull.

But even with a supportive spouse, the challenges of farming are vast and never-ending, Pritchard-Layer explained.

"People really glorify farming. They might think, 'How hard can it be?' But, hey, excuse me, do you know plumbing? Do you know electrical? Do you know mechanical? Do you know about animal health? Do you know how to handle an animal? Do you know about fertilizing? Do you know about the financial stuff, the marketing? It's every profession you can think of put into one," she said.

On top of that, she pointed out there's also the bureaucracy that's involved in farming.

"The government has implemented so much paperwork over the last 10 years," she continued. "You have environmental assessments you have to fill out. You have inventories that you have to fill out. And the different [government] departments don't talk to each other, so you have to basically do everything in quadruple. The paperwork now is unbelievable."

If that weren't enough, Pritchard-Layer added that women farmers often face unique hurdles.

"I think as a woman [in this industry], you have to fight a little bit harder to get recognized.... You know, you go to a dealership and you want to buy a piece of equipment. And your husband is with you, so they talk to your husband instead of talking to you," she described.

"I'm not really offended because my husband knows more about machinery than I do," she added with a laugh. "But the feeling is still there. It's like, 'Excuse me, I'm the owner!'"

Prichard-Layer has an especially valuable perspective on the challenges facing all farmers: For the last six years she's been the president of the local syndicate of Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA) – a trade union that represents farmers and forestry producers in Quebec.

She said that one of her concerns, as someone with deep knowledge of farming in the region, is the encroachment of development on agricultural land.

"I guess growing up as a producer, I'm very protective of agricultural land," she explained.

She added that her love of the land was one of the motivating factors in taking over her family's farm. Another was her love of animals.

"One of the rewards of this job is when you're out in the field and you have like 20 calves all snuggling up, trying to get a pet," she described.

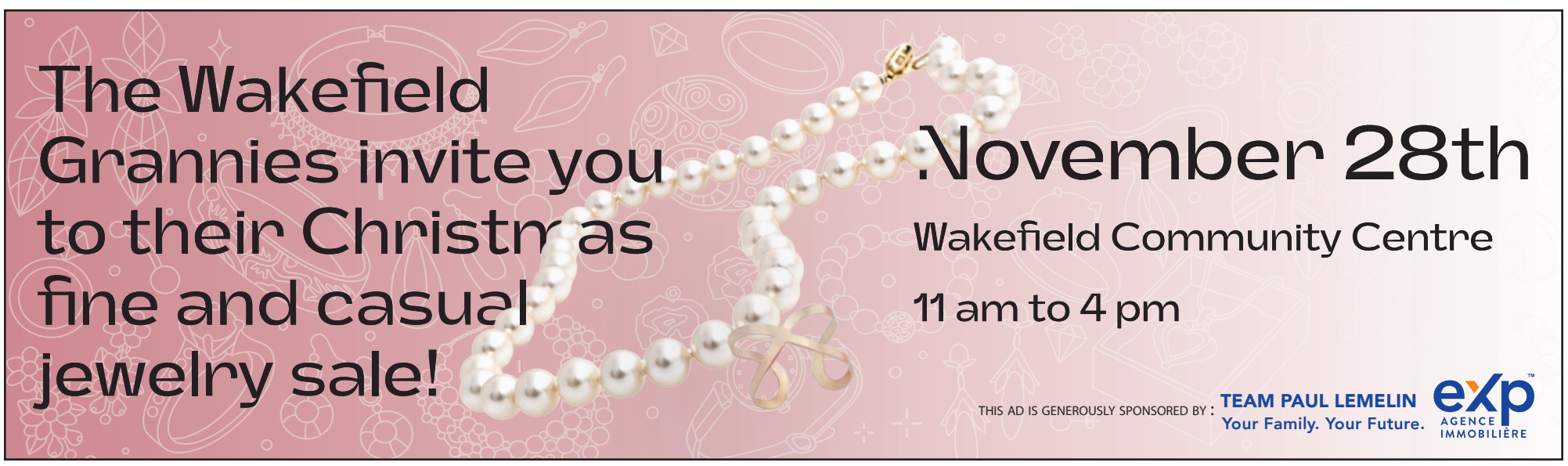
Yet another motivation, she said, is her family history.

"It's part of my heritage. And I would say, you know, it's really in my blood."

Taking a big breath and scanning her eyes over the fields that her great-grandfather first cleared more than a century ago, she added: "If I had to do it all over again, I'd still choose to farm.... It's part of who I am."

Alcovia Angus beef is sold at the Wakefield Farmers Market, which will start back up in the spring, and through direct orders. Visit www.trioviandes.ca/home/alcovia-angus for more information. Contact alcoviaangus@gmail.com to order cuts of meat directly.





MUSIC TEACHING IS THEIR FORTE

Use this helpful list of local music teachers to find your own maestro

BY MADELINE KERR
madeline@lowdownonline.com

These Hills are alive with the sound of music. No, really, there seems to always be live music happening somewhere around here.

Given the abundance of music-making, it's unsurprising that there's no shortage of talented musicians in the community who want to impart their knowledge to others. Below is a sampling of some of the Hills' music teachers, who offer lessons to kids, teens and adults on a range of instruments. Whether your kid has dreams of rocking lead guitar in a heavy-metal band, or you're a retiree with time to dedicate to mastering the flute – one of these teachers should hit the right note.



KATI AUCHINLECK

Want to learn an instrument from the comfort of your own home? Kati Auchinleck, the owner of Learning In Harmony, can help.

Auchinleck holds a bachelor's degree in musical education and has been teaching music since 2013. She offers lessons for an impressive range of instruments, including: piano, trumpet, French horn, trombone, recorder, clarinet and flute, as well as voice.

Auchinleck lives in Duclos and will travel anywhere within the Cantley, Chelsea, Masham and Wakefield regions to offer lessons at students' homes.

She typically offers three, 40-minute lessons a month for $267, and she said she can be flexible with her scheduling as needed. She teaches all ages and abilities, although she said she works best with students aged eight and up.

Auchinleck said that her approach to music teaching is "holistic." She said she believes finding the right teacher is key to experiencing "inspiration and passion" when learning an instrument.

"There are so many benefits that come from studying music, for children, for adults … and it's rooted in neuroscience," Auchinleck explained. "As a teacher, getting to see people experience those benefits – it's so fulfilling."



Find out more about Learning In Harmony, Auchinleck's music school, by visiting: www.learninginharmony.ca. Get in touch with her by emailing: lihottawa@gmail.com



ROBBY MILLER

Masham-based musician Robby Miller has had an international career: The U.K.-born guitarist worked in England and the U.S. before moving to Canada in 2019. Long before the COVID pandemic forced everything online, Miller was already an advocate for online music teaching. Now he teaches his guitar lessons entirely online using Zoom.

Miller teaches both acoustic and electric guitar to students at any level. And he can jam in just about any style: jazz, rock, acoustic, folk and blues.

He estimated that in the 25 years that he's been working as a musical instructor he's taught close to 20,000 lessons. For him, he said it's truly a labour of love.

"I enjoy watching people get better at things," he told the Low Down. "I just know how much magic and joy playing the guitar has given me."

"It's not to say everyone who learns to play wants to have a career in music. Maybe it's about being able to sing your toddler down to sleep. Or for someone else, it could be about wanting to play a song around a campfire or playing a set at a cafe, you know…. It's all a good reason to learn guitar, and I'm very happy to help with all of it."



Before getting started with a new student, Miller offers 15-minute, free consultations online. After that, he offers regular half-hour or hour-long lessons. A 30-minute lesson with Miller costs $30; a 60-minute lesson costs $60.

Find out more by visiting his website: robbymillerguitarist.com, or reach him via email: robbymillerguitarist@gmail.com

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LINDA VANDERLEE

As many locals already know, Linda Vanderlee is all about community. A dedicated volunteer and organizer, she loves to bring people together. It's one of the reasons she offers friendly, easy-going ways to learn the ukulele in a group setting.

"The ukulele is a great gateway instrument," Vanderlee told the Low Down. "A lot of people are able to master it more quickly than other instruments."

"I'm not a virtuoso," she admitted, calling herself an amateur singer-songwriter with a love of music, "but I'd say I have a knack for making people comfortable."

She hosts Ukulele For Beginners, a music program for teens and adults who want to learn the basics. Time slots are available on Monday evenings and Friday afternoons at her home in Rupert. The price for four, one-and-a-half-hour sessions is $150.

For slightly more experienced players, she's also hosting what she calls "Ukulele Love Club" once a month, also from her home in Rupert. The next session will take place from 2 to 4 p.m on Dec. 20. The suggested donation for these sessions is $10-$15. RSVP in advance.

Get in touch with Vanderlee by phone: 819-459-3580 or by email: linda@lindavanderlee.com





MARC FLEURY

There's something rock n' roll about being able to change with the times. Seasoned instructor Marc Fleury has been teaching fretted instruments including guitar, bass and ukulele in the Hills since 1994, but when the COVID pandemic shut down all in-person interactions, he made a quick pivot to online teaching and said he never looked back.

Fleury, who lives in Edelweiss, now teaches his lessons entirely online using technology that would have been considered cutting-edge less than a decade ago. Although he spent many years teaching group lessons, including in school settings, he's now offering one-on-one lessons only. And there's still an opportunity to jam with him in person on occasion: Fleury said he opens up his porch to students during the summer. He charges $30 per 30 minutes of lesson time.

Fleury, who told the Low Down he's been playing the guitar for more or less his whole life, has been teaching long enough to have had an impact on multiple generations of students.

"Some of my former students have brought their kids to me, and it's cool because a lot of them are still playing guitar. It's nice to know that my teaching has had that [effect]," he said.

Fleury added that he remembers teaching an aspiring young rockstar about 30 years ago by the name of Nikki Mantell (who may not be rocking out on the guitar much these days but is still rocking it as the publisher of this newspaper).

To get in touch with Fleury, email: marcfleury15@gmail.com or call: 819-210-7637.





KATE WEEKES

Kate Weekes has been banjo-picking and guitar-strumming all over the Hills – and beyond – for years. Local audiences will recognize her brand of cerebral-folk. Weekes has played the stage at Le Hibou, La Fab, Motel Chelsea and Musical Mondays at Fairbairn. Her next appearance is at the 100 Mile Art Network Gallery in Wakefield on Dec. 11 where she will be speaking about her process and artistic practice.

Beyond songwriting and performing, Weekes is also regarded for her teaching. Since 2019, she's been offering individual and group lessons for anyone wanting to learn or advance their skills on the banjo, ukulele or guitar. She also offers songwriting lessons.

"Helping people along their musical path is a huge honour," Weekes told the Low Down.

In particular, group lessons are for her "all about community building and empowering people." She said these lessons almost always include "just so much laughter."

A 45 minute, one-to-one lesson with Weekes costs $50. Anyone interested in group lessons can inquire for pricing. She offers online or in-person lessons in Chelsea.

Visit her website for more info: kateweekes.com, or reach out to her by email: kate@kateweekes.com



CHECK OUT EVEN MORE MUSICAL INSTRUCTORS TEACHING SOMEWHERE NEAR YOU:

MEGHAN RACINE, HOLLOW GLEN COMMUNITY CENTRE (CHELSEA):

Experienced music teacher Meghan Racine offers a variety of group lessons at the Hollow Glen Community Centre (12 Ch. du Parc). For anyone looking for a low-key, cozy way to start an instrument, consider her Sip and Strum beginner ukulele lessons for adults on Wednesday evenings – bring a drink and get ready to play. Five weeks of lessons costs $80. Her Mini Maestro music classes for children ages three to six also take place on Wednesday evenings. Four weeks of lessons are $80. Lessons are offered in English only. For more information and to register, email: mquinn85@gmail.com

MUSIC TEACHERS AT THE MEREDITH CENTRE (CHELSEA):

Choose from three teachers available for a range of ages at the Meredith Centre (23 Ch. Cecil). Petya Karakoleva, who speaks French, English and Russian, teaches classical piano on Tuesdays from 4 to 8 p.m. at a cost of $45 per 30-minute lesson. Eric Ross, who speaks English, teaches guitar on Mondays from 5 to 6 p.m at a cost of $45 per 30-minute session. Jesse Kahat, who speaks English, offers singing and youth piano lessons on Thursdays from 3 until 7 p.m at a cost of $35 per 30 minutes. These teachers require students to sign up for multi-lesson sessions; no drop-ins are available. For more information and to sign up visit: https://www.centremeredith.ca/music

LA PETITE FANFARE (CHELSEA):

Located at 513 Hwy 105 in Chelsea, La Petite Fanfare offers piano, violin, guitar and singing lessons in both French and English. Lessons are offered in person and online, according to their website. The cost is $30 for a 30-minute lesson or $50 for a 60-minute lesson. For more information and to register email: info@lapetitefanfare.com or call: 819-827-4007

MASH MUSIQUE (MASHAM):

Seasoned music educator and performer Greg Paul Stone runs the successful Mash Musique music school in Masham, well known for giving young rockers the chance to perform for major audiences (at Ottawa Bluesfest, no less) as part of the Be in the Band program. Mash Musique offers a huge array of musical teaching, including for guitar, bass, ukulele, drums and piano. It also offers instruction for singing, music theory, improvisation, music technology, band coaching and more. To see a full list of offerings and pricing, visit: mashmusique.com

FIDDLEHEADS MUSICAL THEATRE (WAKEFIELD):

Whether you have dreams of turning your family into a travelling band à la The Leahys, or you just have a kid who wants to learn to fiddle, the popular Fiddleheads Musical Theatre in Chelsea offers lessons and performance opportunities for children ages five to 18. Teachers and accompanists include seasoned folk musicians James Stephens, Brian Sanderson and Kyle Burghout. Lessons take place weekly at Earle Hall on Chemin Riverside in Wakefield at a cost of $250 per season, according to the Fiddlehead website. Visit: fiddleheadsmusicaltheatre.ca for more information or reach out to: fiddleheadsmusicaltheatre@gmail.com

COMMISSION SCOLAIRE WESTERN QUÉBEC SCHOOL BOARD

Commission scolaire Western Québec
Western Québec School Board

AVIS PUBLIC	PUBLIC NOTICE
AVIS est par la présente donné que l'état financier et le rapport du vérificateur externe au 30 juin 2026 seront soumis au conseil des commissaires de la Commission scolaire Western Québec lors de sa séance ordinaire, tenue le 24 novembre 2026 à 18 h 30, au centre administratif de la Commission scolaire Western Québec, 15 rue Katimavik, Gatineau.	NOTICE is hereby given that the financial statements and the external auditor's report for the year ended June 30, 2026, will be submitted to the Council of Commissioners of the Western Québec School Board at its regular meeting to be held on November 24, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. at the offices of the Western Québec School Board, 15 Katimavik Street, Gatineau.
Donné à Gatineau, Québec, le 12 novembre 2026 Berthine Jean Glouzon, secrétaire générale	Given at Gatineau, Québec, November 12, 2026 Berthine Jean Glouzon, Secretary General

Legion 100 1926 · 2026

Filiale n° 214 Wakefield — Branch 214 Wakefield

Ceilidh de la Légion 214 pour le jour de Saint-André
Legion 214 St. Andrew's Day Ceilidh

28 novembre 2026

17 h 30 5:30pm

Venez célébrer la Saint-André avec la filiale 214 de la Légion royale canadienne de Wakefield lors d'un gala le 28 novembre.
Tenue : Élegante mais décontractee – port du kilt encouragé pour les hommes (vestes <Prince Charlie> bienvenues !)
Repas : Soupe écossaise au poulet et aux poireaux, Rôti de bœuf, navets et pommes de terre. Haggis en entrée et Diplomate en dessert

17 h 30 Ouverture des portes
18 h 00 Cocktails
18 h 30 Souper
20 h 00 Danse

Au programme: Dougal Rattray (cornemuse), Sherry Sharpe (danseurs écossaise), Ruckustodian (musique et danse), Chris Maclean (animation musicale/chant), Doug McArthur (contes)

En preparation de l'événement, des cours de danse "ceilidh" auront lieu les 15 et 22 novembre à la salle de la Légion de Wakefield, de 14 h à 16 h. Au programme : révision des danses "Gay Gordons." "Dashing White Sergeants," "Strip the Willow," "The Canadian Barn Dance" et plus encore.

Une soirée de gala memorable en perspective !
Adultes : 50 $ le billet
Entrée gratuite pour les anciens combattants

Come join the Royal Canadian Legion Wakefield Branch 214 in celebrating St. Andrew's Day with a Gala Event on November 28.
Dress: Smart but casual – men in kilts. Prince Charlie jackets welcome!
Meal: Cock-a-leekie soup, Roast beef, neeps and tatties. Haggis appetizer with sherry trifle for dessert

5:30 pm Doors Open
6:00 pm Cocktails
6:30 pm Supper
8:00 pm Dancing

Performances by Dougal Rattray, Piper, Sherry Sharpe, Highland Dancers, Ruckustodian, Music and Dance. Chris MacLean leading singing, Doug McArthur, storytelling.

In preparation, Ceilidh dance classes will be held November 15 and 22 at the Legion Hall, Wakefield, 2:00 - 4:00 pm. Reviewing Gay Gordons, Dashing White Sergeant, Strip the Willow, The Canadian Barn Dance, and more.

A Gala evening to remember!
Adults - $50 per ticket
Veterans free of charge

Contact :
Sherry Sharpe treasurer@legionwakefield214.org ou
Lise Lacombe secrétaire@legionwakefield214.org

27 , ch. de la Légion
Wakefield, Qc

This Province This Week



Two-year-old bitten by rabid skunk in Granby

A two-year-old girl was bitten by a rabid skunk at her home-based daycare in Granby on Nov. 3, according to The Montreal Gazette. She received rabies vaccinations, as did daycare educators, after the skunk tested positive for rabies. More than 300 rabies cases have been reported in Quebec since the start of 2026. Infections spread across Estrie, Montérégie and Mauricie. Public health officials warn that rabies could eventually reach Montreal. Residents are advised to avoid contact with wild animals; get medical advice after a bite, scratch or saliva exposure; and vaccinate house pets. Rabies is fatal once symptoms develop.

Health minister says PQ will transform Santé Québec

During the election campaign, the Parti Québécois government promised they would abolish Santé Québec. Recently, however, Health Minister Marie-Karlynn Laflamme flip-flopped, saying their minority government would now transform Santé Québec rather than abolish it, which prompted confusion about the election promise, according to The Montreal Gazette. Laflamme then clarified that the government remains committed to getting rid of the centralized health agency while retaining its effective programs and services. As reported by the Gazette, the PQ intends to cut about 900 civil service positions. It also wants to reduce bureaucracy and save up to $100 million. The savings are expected to support CLSC services. Opposition parties criticized the unclear messaging and questioned how the proposed changes would affect healthcare funding, patients and workers.

BMO president urges Quebec to increase immigration

The Bank of Montreal (BMO) Quebec president, Grégoire Baillargeon, urged the province to increase immigration and embrace bilingualism, according to The Montreal Gazette. He says it is necessary to support economic growth. He argues the province needs about 70,000 permanent immigrants annually to maintain its workforce, which is double the PQ government's proposed target of 35,000. He also warns against treating French as a source of division because bilingualism strengthens Montreal's global competitiveness. A study by the Institut du Québec projects Montreal's working-age population could fall to nearly its 2011 level by 2030, as reported by the Gazette. Baillargeon also called for faster immigration permits, quicker construction approvals and improved productivity. He says that Montreal's economic performance directly affects the province's overall prosperity.

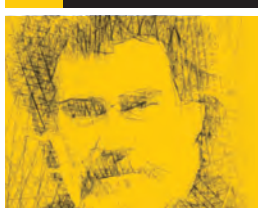
McGill report finds AI deepfakes

A McGill University report has uncovered a network of nearly 300 TikTok and Instagram accounts using AI-generated deepfakes to spread misinformation about the U.S.-Canada trade war, according to The Canadian Press (CP). The accounts have posted more than 3,200 videos and have attracted 22.1 million views in the past three months. False claims include an alleged 48-hour ultimatum from the U.S. President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Mark Carney cancelling $8 billion in U.S. defence contracts. Researchers say they believe the network operates outside North America but have not identified those responsible or their motives, as reported by CP. Only 6.3 per cent of commenters recognized the videos as fake.

Quebec students call for change to provincial financial aid program

Quebec students are calling for reforms to the provincial financial aid program, according to CBC News. They argue that its rules leave many struggling to afford post-secondary education. The program factors in expected parental contributions even when families cannot provide financial support. Students say working more hours reduces their eligibility for assistance, which creates more financial challenges, and some say they rely on food banks or family help to cover basic expenses, as reported by CBC. Student groups say they want parental contribution requirements abolished and more grants instead of loans. A public advisory committee has also recommended increasing living allowances, updating income limits and adjusting financial aid annually for inflation.

Opinion: Bylaw and Disorder



BY JACQUES LEGAULT
Contributing Writer

Jacques Legault is a long-time Chelsea resident, semi-retired professional listener tuned into municipal Freudian slips. He's a tempo-impaired drummer who's missed more down-beats than elections.

Nordik Spa Chelsea doesn't pass the smell test

Disclaimer: Authorization of the class action is not a verdict, and none of the allegations have been proven in court. Nordik Spa Village Chelsea denies systemic negligence. The ruling means only that the case may proceed collectively. This column comments on the public questions raised by the lawsuit and the reporting around it. An email was sent to Nordik Spa for comment; no response was received by deadline.

Hmm, to borrow from the late, great Gord Downie, there's something "sticky down here." That was my reaction when the first whiff of a slippery massage therapist drifted down from the wooded sanctuary of the Nordik Spa Village Chelsea.

It may be proven in the courts that the boys manning the ship were suffering from specific anosmia. That's the clinical inability to detect foul, putrid or noxious smells while your nose remains fully operational for the things that may really matter to you, like the sweet, intoxicating aroma of multi-million-dollar revenues.

Men of commerce, as the French post-Freudian high priests like Jacques Lacan would point out, suffer from this olfactory deficiency more than most. It starts with what Lacan calls disavowal – that cozy, high-end, cognitive gymnastics routine, where the corporate ego is blind to the possibility that isolated treatment rooms, revenue-driven throughput and unregulated contractors can potentially create an open-air playground for predatory behaviour in order to preserve the fantasy that the massage room is morally cleaner than the balance sheet.

And what an illusion it is! The Nordik's cash register depends entirely on the immaculate fantasy of a pristine, therapeutic Eden – an uninterrupted, postcard-perfect sanctuary of nature, hydrotherapy, wellness and personal safety. To admit that a sordid underside may exist would shatter the brand fantasy into a thousand jagged, non-deductible pieces. So it's possible that management may have opted for state-of-the-art, hyper-calibrated operational myopia. They didn't need to actively plot villainy; the question is whether management failed to recognize, or adequately respond to, warning signs that should have prompted further action.

Is this patriarchy massaging neoliberal capitalism; the human body reduced to a mere unit of throughput? Patriarchy supplying the hierarchy; capitalism providing the accounting system? (I.e., you are nothing more than a predominantly female body occupying a time slot for a $200 thermal-and-massage package, cycling smoothly through the turnstiles?)

Real and potential traumatic suffering – is that just an external disruption, an "anomaly" threatening the sacred flow of capital? Could it be that, as long as complaints remained atomized, allegedly dealt with behind frosted glass with a gift card, that the corporate machine could keep selling serenity by the hour? Could this corporate fantasy have survived had it not collided with the noxious overflow of this class-action suit?

Real, and potential traumatic suffering – Is that just an external disruption, an "anomaly" threatening the sacred flow of capital? Could it be that, as long as complaints remained atomized, allegedly dealt with behind frosted glass with a gift card, that the corporate machine could keep selling serenity by the hour?

A company coasts along quite happily on a symbolic, social contract with a gullible public, but a class-action lawsuit is an explosive, un-ignorable puncture of reality. It disarms the tired "she-said/he-said" frame and takes previously isolated voices, stitches them into a collective legal proceeding and drags the whole messy, agonizing affair into the brutal daylight, where the questions can no longer be swept under the cedar shavings.

Could the rollout of electronic consent forms, a dedicated massage-therapy floor with security personnel and audio-recording equipment, etc., be a textbook defensive posture? By erecting these hyper-visible, aggressively bureaucratic barricades, is the institution desperately trying to re-establish its sovereign mastery: Look at us, we're compliant! The law is appeased! The cash-generating fantasy can resume its happy loop!

More than 140 people have reportedly come forward. At least 36 massage therapists accused. All of it over nearly two decades. Going forward, boys, give your frontal lobes a tug and see a specialist about your noses – it's just the right thing to do (and cheaper than a class-action lawsuit).

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MRC DES COLLINES-DE-L'OUTAOUAIS

CANADA
PROVINCE OF QUEBEC
DISTRICT OF GATINEAU

MUNICIPALITY OF CHELSEA

MRC DES COLLINES-DE-L'OUTAOUAIS

AVIS PUBLIC

AVIS PUBLIC EST DONNÉ DE CE QUI SUIT

1. Lors d'une séance tenue le 3 novembre 2026, le conseil a adopté ce qui suit :

Avis d'intention de modifier le plan d'urbanisme et résolution de contrôle intérimaire – Protection des ressources en eau et encadrement des constructions neuves dans le périmètre urbain du Centre-Village

2. **Objet de la résolution de contrôle intérimaire :**

Cette résolution vise à protéger les ressources en eau et de permettre la poursuite d'études sur la capacité de l'aquifère, les milieux naturels et les infrastructures municipales dans le secteur du centre-village de la municipalité de Chelsea.

En vertu de l'article 112 de la Loi sur l'aménagement et l'urbanisme, toute nouvelle construction de bâtiment principal ou accessoire est temporairement interdite dans le secteur visé. Cette mesure vise à éviter que de nouveaux projets compromettent les orientations d'aménagement actuellement à l'étude concernant la protection des eaux souterraines, les densités de développement et les modes de desserte en eau potable et en traitement des eaux usées.

Cette mesure est temporaire et ne constitue ni une interdiction permanente de développement ni un engagement de la Municipalité à réaliser de nouvelles infrastructures. La Municipalité poursuivra les études nécessaires et préparera les modifications éventuelles à son plan d'urbanisme.

3. Cette résolution ne contient pas de dispositions susceptible d'approbation référendaire.

4. La résolution afférente peut être consultée en ligne ou à l'Hôtel de Ville, durant les heures normales de bureau.

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT

1. During a meeting held on 3 November 2026, Council adopted the following Interim Control Resolution :

Notice of Intent to Amend the Urban Plan and Interim Control Resolution – Protection of Water Resources and Regulation of New Construction Within the Centre-Village Urban Perimeter

2. **Purpose of the Interim Control Resolution :**

This resolution aims This resolution is intended to protect water resources and allow further studies on the capacity of the aquifer, natural environments, and municipal infrastructure within the Municipality of Chelsea's Village Centre sector.

Pursuant to Section 112 of the Act respecting land use planning and development, the construction of any new principal or accessory building is temporarily prohibited within the affected area. This measure is intended to prevent new projects from compromising planning directions currently under review regarding groundwater protection, development densities, and water supply and wastewater servicing.

This is a temporary measure and does not constitute a permanent prohibition on development or a commitment by the Municipality to construct new infrastructure. The Municipality will continue the necessary studies and prepare any required amendments to its Urban Plan.

3. This resolution does not contain any provisions subject to referendum approval.

4. Resolutions can be consulted online or at Town Hall, located at 100 chemin d 'Old Chelsea, during regular office hours.

DONNÉ À CHELSEA, QUÉBEC
ce 10e jour du mois de novembre 2026.

GIVEN IN CHELSEA, QUEBEC
on this 10th day of November 2026.

Claudine Lacasse
Directrice générale / General director

CERTIFICAT DE PUBLICATION

Je, soussigné, Claudine Lacasse, Directrice générale de la Municipalité de Chelsea, certifie sous mon serment d'office avoir publié l'avis public ci-haut sur le site internet de la Municipalité de Chelsea (www.chelsea.ca) et l'avoir affiché sur le babillard de l'Hôtel-de-Ville, en date du 10 novembre 2026.

En foi de quoi, je donne ce certificat
ce 10e jour du mois de novembre 2026

CERTIFICATE OF PUBLICATION

I the undersigned, Claudine Lacasse, General director of the Municipality of Chelsea, certify under my oath of office, that I have published the above Public Notice on the website of the Municipality of Chelsea (www.chelsea.ca) and posted a copy on the Town Hall bulletin board, in date of November 10th, 2026.

In witness thereof, I issue this certificate
on this 10th day of November, 2026

Claudine Lacasse
Directrice générale / General Director

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NOTICES

BAD SANTA – Kid crying on a visit to see Santa? We want your photos! We're looking for hilarious photos of unhappy or cute kiddos with Santa. Anything that'll make our readers chuckle and smile! Feel free to embarrass your older kids with photos from when they completely believed in the magic of Christmas. Your child could be featured in a December edition of the Low Down. Please include your child's name, the municipality you reside in, when the photos were taken and where. Send your photos to general@lowdownonline.com!

COMMUNITY FOOD Pantry – Located at Wakefield Anglican Church. Call or text Eva at 613-795-8221 or Jeannie at 819-664-5058, or email foodpantry-wakefield@gmail.com

NOTICES

AA MEETING – Tuesdays and Thursdays, 7 p.m. at Eglise La Pêche, 889 Ch. Riverside. All Welcome. "The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking." wakefieldaa@gmail.com

COMING EVENTS

LA FAB HOLIDAY CONCERTS – Dec 6, 4 p.m. **Starburst: Emerging Artists**, experience the thrill of young classical musicians from Ottawa Chamberfest's Rising Stars program. Dec 13 4 p.m. The one and only, original **Jazzy Little Christmas** with the John Dapaah Trio featuring Michael Curtis Hanna and Roxanne Goodman. Dec 19 7:30 p.m. and Dec 20 4 p.m. Lynn Miles "**Another Frigging Christmas Show**" Tickets and info lafabsurmill.ca

COMING EVENTS

H2O WAKEFIELD – Public Meeting to share the results of our last two well water survey projects and answer residents' questions. Nov 24th, 7 p.m. at Centre Wakefield La Peche. Exploring a window of opportunity provided by the recent moratorium on development in Wakefield to investigate our groundwater capacity, an essential requirement for the long-term sustainable development of our village.

CHRISTMAS SINGALONG – Gail Gavin and friends present "Christmas from the Pontiac" at the Black Sheep, Thursday, Dec. 10, 7 p.m. Tickets: gailgavin.com

GRACE UNITED CHURCH invites you to Sunday worship. A warm welcome to all! 11 a.m. each Sunday at 537 Quebec Rte. 105, Chelsea.



COMING EVENTS

STORYTELLING WORKSHOP Tim Greenwood returns on Sunday, Nov. 22 from 1 p.m to 4 p.m in Rupert. An interactive experience: discover the stories inside of you. Proceeds to the Rupert Renos. Register by Nov. 20 or earlier. linda@lindavanderlee.com 819-459-3580

ANGLICAN SUNDAY WORSHIP 9 a.m. St. Mary Magdalene (537 Route 105, Chelsea, accessible venue); 11:15 a.m. Good Shepherd (693 Riverside, Wakefield). Everyone is welcome.

BUY & SELL

WINTER TIRES – 4 tires on Mopar (Dodge) rims, P 275/65/R18. $450. Remi 819-743-7579.

BIRD LOVERS – Wild bird seed delivered FREE to your door in Chelsea. No heavy bags. 873-671-2182. birdfeedercanada.ca

WINTER TIRES – 4 tires on steel rims. 185/65/R15. Continental Winter Contact. In Masham. $175. 613-220-6863. Can text.

RENTALS

CHARMING A-FRAME – Mont Cascades, Cantley. Peaceful nature retreat. Long term rental $2,400/month. 819-664-8886. chaletcantley@gmail.com

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SERVICES

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Santa Needs Your Help This Year

AND THE KIDS OF THE OUTAOUAIS ARE INVITED TO WRITE TO HIM

Every December, thousands of little hands write the same thing: a list, a wish, a hope. This winter, we're putting up Christmas trees with a very special mailbox beside each one, in 1 to 3 locations around town. Kids can drop in their letter to Santa, and we will read every single one. Then the real magic begins. Thanks to our generous sponsors, some of those wishes will find their way under the tree of local families who could use a little extra light this season. Our focus is on children in need, and we grant a value of $100 per child to help make their wishes come true.

Spread the Magic. Your support does more than give children a moment of wonder. It also connects your business with a warm, local initiative that brings the community together, seen by hundreds of families throughout the holiday season. Join us and light up the holidays!

Équipe Jessika Simpson
COURTIER IMMOBILIER





✂ Dear Santa… (cut-out letter for kids)

Dear Santa,

My name is _____ and I am _____ years old.

This year, I would love _____.

Something I'm thankful for: _____.

Parent/guardian name and signature: _____.

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