

# City Editorial

## OUR VIEWS

# Split fix just gambit for votes

You can't pour two jammed east-end freeways into one expecting traffic to flow in a uninterrupted fashion.

There are physics involved so efforts to "fix" the Highway 417-174 Split for \$45 million are likely to fail. That's not to say that the money won't be spent, but its effectiveness in moving traffic is likely to be marginal at first when extra capacity is created. And as time passes, those new lanes will fill quickly as the east end grows.

In fact, that short extra-capacity window is likely to steal riders from the Transitway which in the east end is used by a higher percentage of riders than any other place in the city.

Where the so-called fix of the Split will be effective is in garnering votes for an Ontario Liberal government as it approaches election day on Oct. 10. The Liberals, for all their attempts to finance green light rail in this community, aren't so idealistic on transit as to rise above the muck of building bigger freeways. Voters will fall for wider roads to commute faster any time. More lanes, faster traffic, right? Wrong.

The fact of the matter is that wider roads just don't work. If they did, there wouldn't be traffic jams today. Patrons of Scotia-bank Place in the west end know this only too well. Traffic creeps and crawls on the westbound lanes of the Queensway east of Moodie Drive as the freeway narrows from six to four lanes. The crush of regular Kanata-bound drivers combined with arena patrons can't cram into fewer lanes without delays. Once past the Moodie interchange, traffic speed increases.

The same principle applies each morning at the Split. No minor tinkering with two freeways joining into one is going to change west-bound congestion much.

Furthermore, \$45 million is just wasted money from a health and environment viewpoint. Long-distance car commutes in this city contribute mightily to the No. 1 source of pollution here — auto exhaust. If we are to build a green community and set an example for the rest of the country in the nation's capital, Ottawa won't do it by building better interchanges. Wider roads aren't cleaner roads. They are just more cars packed into a small space.

Building or widening freeways just doesn't work. Look at the 12-lane Highway 401 across the top of Toronto. It was conceived as a route so big it would never be congested. Now it even sees midday traffic jams.

The east end deserves the same kind of good transportation as the west and south parts of the community. It should be safe, fast, economical and green. But that isn't car travel.

Instead, the McGuinty government should be encouraging city hall to move ahead quickly and efficiently on a light-rail system that serves all parts of the city. That \$45 million should be put in the kitty for rail, not to facilitate more car travel.

Wider freeways are just wasted money.

OTTAWA CITIZEN



CHRIS MIKULA, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Dr. James Lacey converted an old Kanata school house into Kanata Plastic and Cosmetic Surgery. Dr. Lacey found a modern use for an old building that's a window on the area's history.

## PRESERVING KANATA'S PAST



LINDA MONDOUX  
THE SUBURBS

The moving of the historic March House this week presents the perfect opportunity for Kanata residents to visit the city's unofficial heritage district before modern development obliterates the past.

It's here along March Road, on the fringes of the Morgan's Grant subdivision on one side and Shirley's Brook on the other, that history stands still, even as developers draw up plans for more housing and the retail services that will support it.

It's to widen March Road to accommodate new development between Klondike Road and Old Carp Road that the March House, a fixture in the area since the 1850s, will be plucked from its moorings tomorrow, if all goes as scheduled.

The good news is that the stone building — which began life as a private residence and has been used as a general store, a post office and a restaurant before it was purchased by the city in 2002 — will live on at its current corner location, just set back farther on the property.

Once moved, the city plans to sell the building, officially designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, which will force the new owner to preserve the exterior. As well, the city aims to limit the height of development around the March House — to the top of its roofline — to "conserve its heritage presence on the site."

As a Kanata resident whose mid-1970s home is jokingly referred to as a heritage building, I do not begrudge the money spent to buy the property, nor the \$300,000 cost of moving the March House. Kanata has too little history still standing.

The city deserves a pat on the back for

designating the property under the heritage act before selling it. Let's hope it holds firm when developers beg to build four-storey apartment buildings around the old house. Across the road, the equally historic, though smaller, old town hall is dwarfed by new homes that have sprung up beside and behind it.

What impresses me most about what city heritage planner Carol Ruddy refers to as Kanata's "heritage central" are the district's privately owned properties that have been lovingly preserved — without the heritage act forcing them to do so.

One of these historically significant, but undesignated, properties is a former schoolhouse at 895 March Rd., the 2006 winner of an Ottawa Architectural Conservation Award. Dr. James Lacey poured his heart and soul into the building, which he transformed into a modern business — Kanata Plastic and Cosmetic Surgery — while restoring and showcasing a heritage treasure that began life as School House No. 2 in 1892.

**The doctor's eyes light up when he shows off a circa 1900 pine chalkboard that was discovered in the old classroom.**

Dr. Lacey, whose hands-on design included a board-and-batten addition at the rear of the stone building and the creation of a second-floor private operating room, is proud of his "piece of our past." His vision was brought to life by architect Ralph Vandenberg, whose own office around the corner on Flamborough Way, in the former 1880s Loyal Orange Lodge building, won him an earlier conservation award.

"When I drove by, I fell in love with the building," Dr. Lacey says, recalling his first look at the old schoolhouse, where some of his patients learned their arithmetic before it closed in 1963.

When Dr. Lacey purchased the property in 2005, the building was in sad shape — it had been sitting vacant after a stint as a private art gallery. Outside, the area which now features a stone fountain and

landscaped parking area was an overgrown field.

"A lot of what I do in my practice is fix problems — burns, car crashes. What I saw here was something that was run-down. I knew I could make it better," he says.

Dr. Lacey quickly set to work on his new patient.

The doctor's eyes light up when he shows off a circa 1900 pine chalkboard that was discovered in the old classroom. On it, in a teacher's neat handwriting, is the day's physiology lesson that asks pupils to "describe the circulation of the blood ...". Dr. Lacey, who has preserved the chalkboard, along with the room's original wainscoting, describes the find as "one of the joys of restoration."

It's on the second floor, where Dr. Lacey has his office, that his attention to detail is brought into focus. "Sit here," he says, guiding me to a chair across from his desk. What I see immediately out the large window is a beautiful old tree sitting in a field. Patients, he says, find the pastoral view calming.

And for now it is. But Dr. Lacey fears that the large field behind his property will be purchased by a developer and turned into more modern housing. Even now, you can hear the construction hammers. While the doctor's building restoration has proven that old can live quite nicely beside new, he is all too aware that not everyone is sympathetic to things historical.

"It's a good feeling," he says of the schoolhouse restoration.

Tour Kanata's "heritage central" and you can catch that good feeling. The city will do its bit to enrich the experience when it installs heritage information plaques in the next little while on eight properties, including St. John's Anglican Church, circa 1839, and part of the March Road area heritage district.

Don't forget to check out the Sandhill Drive church's ancient cemetery before you head down the road to sign up for a new building lot in the Brookside subdivision now under construction. New might be in, but history never goes out of style.

LINDA MONDOUX is a Citizen copy editor.

## Deadly journalism

In a peaceful world, Ottawa's Mohamed Elmi might be an ordinary man, facing ordinary choices. Instead, he's trying to decide whether to risk his life to save his country.

Mr. Elmi isn't a soldier. He's a co-founder of a radio and television network, Somalia's Horn-Afrik. On the weekend, his friend and business partner, Ali Iman Sharmarke, was assassinated. Mr. Sharmarke was travelling from the funeral of one of his most popular reporters, who was also murdered.

Mr. Sharmarke's wife and children had been living in Ottawa until a month ago, when they moved to Kenya to be closer to him.

Mr. Elmi is now in Ottawa, as is the other surviving co-founder of Horn-Afrik, Ahmed Adan. The three men fled Somalia as refugees, but they didn't turn their back on their country and, since 1999, have been working to rebuild it through Horn-Afrik. A free

press is the foundation of any democracy. Horn-Afrik has made a point of hiring its reporters from all clans and remaining independent.

The two surviving men must now decide whether to travel to Somalia to carry on the work of their colleague, or to stay and do what they can from Canada for now.

Journalists in Somalia face enemies on all sides: From the jittery government to the Islamists who were running the place not long ago. Might is right in Mogadishu, and anyone who dares criticize is taking a serious risk. Canadian Journalists for Free Expression has praised the Horn-Afrik network for upholding freedom of the press under dangerous conditions.

The loss of Mr. Sharmarke will be deeply felt in Ottawa's Somali community, and the whole city sends its condolences to his family.

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## LETTERS

# Funds crucial to improving canal museums

**Re: Museum fails to honour canal, Aug. 13.**

After reading your editorial on the Rideau Canal Museum in Smith Falls, I believe that a few funding issues should be brought to light.

It is true that the Bytown Museum undertook a major museum renewal project, launched in May of this year, including new exhibitions, lighting and a play space for families. The renewal project was intended to celebrate the Bytown Museum's 90th anniversary and happened to coincide with the Rideau Canal's 175th anniversary.

Because of the Canal's anniversary, Parks Canada also renewed its exhibition on the main floor of the Commissariat where the Bytown Museum is

located. The timing was fortunate as the entire building received an overhaul at the same time.

However, it is important to note that the Bytown Museum's renewal project could not have happened without the City of Ottawa's recent investment in the museums sustainability plan. The plan provided the museum's first real exhibition budget in 2007 for \$20,000. The museum leveraged that funding and secured an additional \$115,000 in grant funding and over \$20,000 in donations. Without the city's initial investment, we would not have been able to undertake the renewal project and the museum's exhibits would have languished for another year.

Like the Bytown Museum,

the Rideau Canal Museum is a non-profit institution that relies on municipal funding for its core operations. It sounds like the Rideau Canal Museum needs an investment similar to the one the Bytown Museum received through the museums sustainability plan. The challenge, of course, is that the town of Smith Falls has faced a number of challenges recently and museum funding is likely not the first thing on the town council's mind.

However, as your editorial states, an investment in tourism is needed now to take advantage of the UNESCO designation and the spotlight it is shining on all the cities and towns along the Rideau corridor.

CHRISTINA TESSIER, Ottawa  
Director, Bytown Museum

## Self-serving agendas

**Re: A city without transit swagger, Aug. 10.**

Many residents share the same level of frustration, evident in the *Citizen* editorial regarding the direction of mass transit development.

We have watched, ad nauseam, as some area politicians pushed their own self-serving agendas without regard for the bigger picture. Attempts to incorporate the vote-getting factor into the decision-making process have thus far failed. How long will this go on? If councillors cannot arrive at a plan in the best interests of the greater Ottawa area, they should excuse themselves from the process and let others get the job done.

DALE BOIRE, Ottawa

## Saving a cyclist

Recently I misjudged the slope and my speed on the bike path between Merivale Road and Maitland Avenue. Braking too aggressively, I launched myself from the bike to the pavement, crashing down on my left leg. Two young cyclists got me to my feet, offering to get help. Thinking I could walk it off and resume my ride home, I hobbled a long way to Maitland before realizing I could go no further.

That's when motorist Doug Nielsen saved me from causing permanent injuries. He stopped and loaded my bike into his station wagon and helped me in, checking to see if I was in shock. He drove me home to deposit the bike in my back yard, and then took me the Queensway Carleton Hospital where he practically carried me through the doors and found a wheelchair. He refused any suggestion of a reward.

Thanks to the cyclists who helped me up and the hospital

staff, who provided such excellent care. But mostly, to Doug Nielsen, who recognized someone who seriously needed help and following his better instincts. He saved me from permanently damaging what turned out to be a fractured hip.

JOE SORNBERGER, Ottawa

## Telling the story

**Re: Island Park bridges: Out with the old, Aug. 12.**

On behalf of McCormick Rankin Corporation, we congratulate the *Citizen* on its outstanding coverage of this world-class engineering and construction project. The photographs, graphics and informative stories helped to make the coverage the success it was. The in-depth three-day front page coverage really placed this project in the limelight in Canada and the United States. Thank you for the outstanding journalism!

PAUL TURNER, Ottawa  
McCormick Rankin Corporation

## SUBMISSIONS

We welcome opinion articles on local matters or personal experiences of interest to other readers. Contact: Ken Gray, City Editorial Page Editor, at 613-596-3758. E-mail: [kgray@thecitizen.canwest.com](mailto:kgray@thecitizen.canwest.com). Fax: 613-726-5858. Mail: Ottawa Citizen, City editorial page, 1101 Baxter Rd., Ottawa, K2C 3M4.

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