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## Restructure of ambulance services shakes MV

DANIELLE PAUL  
MADAWASKA VALLEY

Mayor Kim Love asked Council at the April 16 meeting to support the County of Renfrew in questioning the province's surprise decision to merge Ontario's 59 ambulance services into 10.

She said the sudden announcement came on the heels of similar centralization of local public health units from 35 to 10 (announced April 12) and Local Health Integration Networks (LHIN) from 15 to 5 (announced January 18). Love said, "The land ambulance issue ... literally was not mentioned in the provincial budget beyond talking about "streamlining the way land ambulance dispatch services are delivered" and "better integrating Ontario's 59 emergency health services operators and 22 dispatch centres." ... There was nothing in the budget to indicate Paramedicine would also be affected."

Although the promised statement from County of Renfrew was not available at the April 16 meeting (see below), Council voted to give Love a general authority "that Council supports the position of the County of Renfrew as it pertains to consultation and clarification of the government position for ambulance restructuring." MV councillors discussed the specialist needs and training provided for paramedicine in rural Renfrew County.

The Mayor subsequently confirmed to The Current that a special meeting of the Health Committee was held on April 24 and a committee report was presented to County Council afterwards.

She said, "The resolution in the report received the full support of County Council, and Renfrew County is committed to continuing to fund and deliver paramedic services as planned for in the 2019 Budget. A position letter based on the information in this report will



PHOTO: RENFREWPARAMEDICS.CA

be sent to the province and provided to all municipalities in the County for their consideration and support. It was decided to delay the correspondence I was told we would receive last Tuesday in order to get the full support of County Council [on April 24]. I look forward to working on behalf of our communities and participating in the future consultations proposed by the province in relation to the People's Health Care Act."

In response to the Province's announcement, in a statement dated April 16 2019, Pat Vanini, Executive Director

and Chair of Health Committee for the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), said, "AMO is shocked with today's news and deeply concerned. There is no ready information on the government's plan to do this restructuring, how it was determined, let alone what happens to cost sharing and, say, for pay among other governance and funding matters. Municipal governments contribute about \$720 million and the province about \$580 million to what has been a cost-shared service, although not at a true 50-50 one."

## MV District High School students protest education cuts



MVDHS participated in the province-wide Students Say No walkout on Thursday April 4. More than fifty students marched from MVDHS up John Street and along Stafford Street into the centre of Barry's Bay where they assembled at Zurakowski Park.



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## OPINION

# Libraries remain the crown jewel of local culture in Ontario



JAMES DI FIORE  
MADAWASKA VALLEY

I've been an obscure writer for a pretty long time. With some modest success I've managed to consistently get published writing about things that infuriate me, especially political and social issues.

Part of the deal obscure writers make with themselves is the willingness to take day jobs that can pay the bills while we toil away on our laptops. I've done everything from landscaping to kitchen work, all so that I can keep doing what I love.

Two years ago I saw a job listing for an assistant librarian position at the Madawaska Valley Public Library in Barry's Bay. My wife told me to apply. Listening to your wife is a staple if you are an obscure writer, so I put together my resume, sent it off and within a week was called in for an interview.

I had imposter syndrome before I even walked through those library doors, but the interview seemed to go well, and a week or so later I was informed that the position was mine.

I started to think about the symbolic aspects of working at a library as a writer. It felt like I was getting a job on

the mother ship of the written word, surrounded by the great literary works of the most brilliant writers in history, many of which were penniless while still alive, which to me seemed like the ground zero of inspiration.

Then something unexpected happened. Chalk it up to me being woefully uninformed about library culture, but my inspiration to write on my own time was heightened not by being so close to the great works of history, but by the people who regularly traversed our little library.

These days it is far too easy to be cynical about things we know very little about. The hyper-tribalism we cling to shields us from really knowing what our political opposites tend to value.

When Rob Ford was mayor of Toronto, he tried to axe library budgets and was met with a massive outpouring from famous authors and regular people alike, allies in the fight to preserve public funding. I remember listening to detractors talk about how libraries are a relic from the past, archaic symbols of tradition where physical books are desperately trying to remain relevant.

What I soon discovered was twofold; first, many people rely on libraries for more than just reading old books. They



are often the underprivileged. These patrons do not have computers or a home internet connection. Of these particular patrons, I would estimate that 90 percent are seniors, special needs folks, and children.

The other discovery was more culturally eye-opening. I became familiar with that look in a child's eye when they were flipping through a book they had never seen before. I conversed with various seniors who had made the library a centrepiece of their retirement, utilizing our province's wide pool of books so they could read material that we did not have the space to carry.

Make no mistake, the inter-library loan program is a testament not just to a love of literature, but to the environmentally friendly concept of reusing and recycling.

The most pronounced example of inspiration comes from our patrons with special needs. I often tell my boss, head librarian and CEO Karen Filipkowski, that these particular patrons are easily my favourite people. They like to say hello enthusiastically, shake hands purposefully, smile wide and ask if it is OK to use our computer lab. "Of course," I tell them. It's there for them, after all.

I've been a lifelong cynic, the unfortunate by-product of specializing in political writing. I may have even rolled my eyes in the past if I ever heard a passionate plea for supporting libraries who were being threatened with budgets cuts. But I've been with my library

for two years, and it has given me far more than just a modest paycheck. I feel like I am accomplishing something when I go to work. Those smiling kids, those lovely seniors, and the salt-of-the-earth folks with special needs carry me from one shift to the next.

It's the kind of job that lingers long after your day has ended.

By now we have all heard of Doug Ford's drastic cuts to provincial library services. Many people who are unfamiliar with the importance of libraries dismissed the backlash out of hand, believing that society has advanced far beyond the resources a good library provides.

When you are on the front lines witnessing all the benefits of a real community hub, you can see more than a provincial desire to tighten belts. You get to see how a library fosters culture for people who see it as a part of their identity.

In politics, many battles can seem unimportant to everyday people. We get caught up in overarching issues like deficits and cost-saving measures. But sometimes the impact of an institution is measured not in dollars, but through the smiles and integrity of the people those institutions support.

Because at the end of the day it isn't just what the library does for its patrons, it's what the patron gives back to the community those libraries serve.

So sign a petition, read about all the important services libraries deliver, and fight to keep them alive for another generation.

## Bay Day options for families

**The annual Bay Day event takes place on SATURDAY, MAY 18 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

Bay Day will feature family-friendly options such as a Bouncy Castle, Happy Valley face painting, Balloons Beyond Belief. Northern Credit Union (NCU) delegate Travis Richards will help youth entrepreneurs participate in a Kidz Biz event at Bay Day. The Madawaska Valley Fire Department will be on hand with fire safety information and lots of giveaways for children.

As in the past, Bay Day will be the first day of the Barry's Bay Farmers' Market season so shoppers can buy local fresh produce and handmade goods. They can browse artisan booths, sidewalk sales from BIA merchants and enjoy any in-store special offers. Visitors can sample kettle corn and take in an expanded Vintage Car Show, while being entertained by the Fran Band. *For more information about Bay Day follow the Barry's Bay BIA Facebook page.*



**DIY Colour and Decorating Workshop:** Sat. May 4, 2 pm.  
\$10, pre-register with library.  
Choosing paint colours and types.  
**Understanding Dementia:**  
Wed May 15, 6:30-8:30 pm.  
Signs, symptoms, conditions.  
Speaker Dr. Suzanne McKay.  
mpvl.programs@gmail.com  
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**BARRY'S BAY  
Legion**

**Bingo:** Alternate Thursdays.  
Doors open 6 pm, play at 7 pm.

**Cribbage:** Alternate Sundays.  
Registration 12:30 pm, games at 1 pm, \$5.

**Pancake Breakfast:** Third Sunday of the month 8 am-1 pm.

**Legion Club Room:** Open Monday to Saturday, 2 to 6 pm, and Friday to 8 pm. Fresh-cut fries on Fridays. Hours may be extended during scheduled events. Open Sundays for major sporting/world events. Open to all, membership in the Legion not required.

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## PORCH VIEWS

# The unassuming excellence of a high school teacher



MARK WOERMKE  
BARRY'S BAY

My English students have heard a lot of stories about Barry's Bay and the Mada-waska Valley. Many are humorous, a number are inspiring, some are poignant, others are not altogether flattering and a few are downright disturbing. All of them are true, but don't worry, I never use names.

On the first day back after the March Break, I delayed the scheduled *Pride and Prejudice* seminars to start English class with another story from my Barry's Bay archive. This one was about a remarkable teacher who spent her entire career teaching English at Mada-waska Valley District High School in Barry's Bay—Mary Jane Elmslie who died on March 13.

Miss Elmslie was the only teacher who called me a bastard. Some may have thought it; others may have said it in the staffroom. God knows my grade seven teacher, my elementary French teacher, and one of my high school math teachers certainly had cause to do so. Miss Elmslie was the only one to say it to my face.

One day in the fall of 1983, I made a visit to the costume and prop room to select items for a Fall Festival play. A lady's mink collar from the 1920s caught my eye. It was anatomically complete with tail, paws, head and red glass eyes in its little taxidermied head. It had a clasp inside its mouth which allowed it to encircle the wearer's neck. Of course, I tried it on. I also recognized its possibilities.

I stuffed the creature under my sweater and headed to the classroom where Miss Elmslie was preparing to teach my grade 13 English class. Leaning on a student desk and clutching my books in front of me, I chatted innocently. After a few moments I assumed a puzzled expression and began to scratch my chest and abdomen. Within seconds the scratching escalated from casual to frenzied and I dropped the books, reached under my sweater, and



Director Mary Jane Elmslie at a Sound of Music rehearsal in 1980. PHOTO: JIM HASKINS COLLECTION.

flung the pelt at Miss Elmslie.

As is often the case with practical jokes, the reaction was beyond what I imagined. She screamed and fell off her chair onto the floor shouting, "You bastard, you bastard!" and then, "My contact! My contact!" Thinking one of her contact lenses had popped out, I stopped laughing for a moment and offered to help find it. "It's under my eyelid you idiot!" was her response and I began to understand how painful a stray hard contact might be. It also dawned on me that I might have gone too far with the joke and would have to face consequences, but I was relieved when Miss Elmslie got up, grabbed the mink, shook it in my face, growled "Woermke, I'll get you for this," and broke into her characteristic hearty laughter.

Over the course of that year she did get me back with a few harmless practical jokes (I still don't know if she was responsible for stuffing my locker with

crumpled newspaper), but she certainly did not hold a grudge. Just the opposite actually.

One morning in late June, I was at school working on the décor for prom. On her way through the cafetorium, Miss Elmslie stopped to chat and she asked me how my exams had gone. I told her I got all my exam marks and had worked out my overall average. I thought it was high enough to get a few school awards, but I was just one percent shy of a scholarship. "Oh well, that's life," I laughed and continued to paint. A few hours later, I was called to the guidance office and informed that a few teachers had made minor adjustments to my marks so that my overall average met the scholarship threshold. I learned afterwards that Miss Elmslie had gone to each of them to see if they each could "find another mark for Mark." I was dumbfounded. I had no idea that teachers would do that, and I

was forever grateful to her and my other teachers for their kindness.

When I teach Grade 12s I try to pay forward the interest she showed in me and my future. I get to know my grade 12 students and the post-secondary programs, institutions and scholarships to which they are applying, so if they need some extra help along the way, or even a tiny boost at the end of the course, I can help them. Don't get me wrong, I am not in the business of giving away marks—I even have a reputation for being a hard marker. However, given the nature of marking in an English, arts or humanities course, if a promising, hard-working student has an 89, a teacher can usually reassess an essay, reconsider oral communication skills on a seminar or review contributions to class discussions to find another mark—especially if that mark is needed for access to a program or a much-needed scholarship.

I didn't intend to be a teacher. As a matter of fact, the only reason I went to teachers' college was that after achieving a B.A. in philosophy at a Catholic seminary and deciding against that career, I wanted to get working as soon as possible. Teachers' college with a focus on the primary-junior grades was the one-year solution to my problem. After several years teaching just about everything from kindergarten to grade 8 and qualifying for intermediate and senior education by taking English and education courses at both Carleton and Ottawa universities, I taught my first high school English course at summer school in 1995. When I planned those first lessons on *King Lear* and *Fifth Business*, I asked myself, "How would Miss Elmslie do this?"

I have asked that question many times over the last twenty-four years. I have taken what I learned about literature and life in Miss Elmslie's English class at Madawaska Valley District High School and adapted those lessons to my own high school English teaching. So—when I take the time to have a lunch-time or after-school chat; get choked-up discussing a poignant passage; highlight the connections between literature, history, art, philosophy and religion; explain Shakespeare's bawdy jokes; shut-down bad behaviour with a sarcastic quip; teach research

or essay writing skills; relate personal stories to emphasize a point; assist a struggling student prepare for a test; encourage a gifted student to pursue an academic career; or forgive and forget a practical joke—I am trying to do things the way Miss Elmslie would.

As I put the finishing touches on this column, I am getting ready to teach a lesson on a novel I first read in Miss Elmslie's English class and which I have reread and taught many times over the years—Robertson Davies' *Fifth Business*. Davies attributed his title to a the-

atre term for the role which is not the hero, heroine, confidante or villain, but the unassuming character who is essential to the plot and whose influence exceeds that of the central characters.

Insofar as she was a mentor, inspiration and friend, Mary Jane Elmslie could be considered "fifth business" in the lives of her many students. To those of us who became teachers, she demonstrated how important the unassuming excellence of a high school teacher can be in the lives of individuals, communities and society.

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**The Madawaska Valley Current**  
PO Box 1097, Barry's Bay ON, K0J 1B0  
T: 613.639.1524  
E: [madvalleycurrent@gmail.com](mailto:madvalleycurrent@gmail.com)  
W: [www.madvalleycurrent.com](http://www.madvalleycurrent.com)



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## OPINION

# Use of non-disclosure agreements leaves public in the dark

JAMES DI FIORE  
MADAWASKA VALLEY

Taxpayer money.

Those two words have become the credo for civilians and politicians alike. The sacred responsibility of government to spend taxpayer money wisely is a pillar of living in a free, just society. The phrase goes from the lips of political candidates to the ears of the people who understandably want revenue to be spent on important community endeavours.

Whether you hail from the left or right, taxpayer money is an overarching issue, important to everyone.

Here in the Madawaska Valley, *The Current* has been working to uncover the scope of hidden spending of taxpayer money. Recently, however, we have come across a roadblock. This roadblock is common at all levels of government, a natural by-product of it being systemically used inside the corporate world. It is called a non-disclosure agreement.

On its face, a non-disclosure agreement, or NDA, can make a lot of sense. It provides participants engaged in private discussions the peace of mind that details from said discussions will be held in the strictest confidence. Both parties have a mutual understanding that they will be protected from unwanted attention, or else legal action will be imposed.

Governments, though, have the legal and ethical requirement to demonstrate they are observing standards of transparency and accountability, especially when it comes to how it uses taxpayer money. The use of NDAs to deprive taxpayers of disclosure of how much of their money has been used to settle legal claims offends both the letter and spirit of these requirements. Moreover, if secret settlements are made in cases where misconduct is alleged against elected officials or township employees, it results in suspicion that public funds are being used in aid of coverups.

Take the case of the questionable events surrounding the firing of, and subsequent legal claim by, former Integrity Commissioner Jack Rosien. The



**“The routine use of non-disclosure agreements without any consideration of the public’s best interests has become a legal epidemic that undermines the very idea of an open and accountable society.” —Andrew Nikiforuk, *How Non-Disclosure Agreements have become a cancer on democracy*, published on October 18, 2018 in *The Tyee*. PHOTO: KAHANELAW.COM**

facts uncovered by *The Current*’s investigations about Rosien’s allegations imply conduct that may have amounted to abuse of power on the part of members of Council. Remember, Rosien was fired before he could complete three investigations of members of the same Council that eventually fired him. Rosien also revealed that prior to his dismissal, he had advised one of those members that he was going to uphold the complaint against her. Council’s subsequent refusal to accept his offer, in the interests of saving taxpayer money, to complete his investigations adds to the unpleasant aroma surrounding these events. The additional financial burden placed on taxpayers because of this was the subject of an article in *The Current* (February 2019).

Rosien told *The Current* that his claim was settled just before a Court hearing, but he was not able to disclose any of the details, or indeed talk about his claim at all, because the Township had made the settlement subject to a confidentiality term.

Recently, *The Current* invited the

Township to follow the example set by Whitewater Region by disclosing, despite the existence of NDAs, the amounts of taxpayer money, if any, paid not only to Rosien but also to fired Recreation & Community Development Coordinator Paul Nopper. A source has told *The Current* that a settlement was reached with Nopper after he had given notice of bringing a claim and that his settlement was also subject to an NDA. The Township has declined to comply with *The Current*’s requests.

As it stands, NDAs protect public officials from having to disclose how much of your money they spend even in situations where their own conduct has been questioned. This doesn’t sound like what the legislature had in mind when, in 2006, it amended the Municipal Act to impose obligations of accountability and transparency on municipalities.

It’s your money they are spending. At the very least, a full accounting as to where it is going seems not just applicable, but the main requirement of a competent, transparent government.

# Ben Hokum expansion a big boost for local economy

ROGER PAUL  
KILLALOE

The mill expansion at Ben Hokum & Son Limited (Hokums) was officially opened on April 25 2019. John Yakabuski, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, participated in the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the new state-of-the-art 3D sawmill line at Hokums in Killaloe. Fourth-generation mill owner Dean Felhaber said the technology “bodes well for a bright future for all those communities who rely directly or indirectly on forestry for their livelihood.”

The upgrade to 3D log scanning makes Hokums, the province’s largest mill operator for red and white pine, the most technologically-advanced sawmill in the region. Felhaber described the improvements. “Overall, production between the two mills has increased by 20 percent. With the old mill [a 2D line] with one shift, we cut 19 million feet a year, all small logs. The other mill [larger logs] with two shifts was cutting 14 million feet a year. Now this [3D] mill with one shift is cutting 33 million feet.” The 3D line is just the first phase of a five-year expansion program undertaken by Hokums and work is already under way to replace the grading shed with an automated sorter. This will be in an enclosed facility so that staff can work protected from the elements.

Felhaber’s vision is growth and sustainability for a wide-ranging community of staff, contractors and allied businesses. Far from the 3D technology putting people out of work, the mill has been able to maintain the same labour force. Felhaber said, “We have the same staff as we had before because we have more volume.” With an eye to the future, Hokums has also invested in training and upgrading existing employees’ skills.

Felhaber said that when the line was closed from Labour Day to early November 2018 to build the mill, more than 70 tradespeople worked on site, day and night, seven days a week to install the 3D tech and related equipment. Luloff Contracting of Eganville did all the building additions to the small log mill and now is working together



From left: Mike Bozak, Tanya Felhaber, Dean Felhaber, John Yakabuski, Marcel Belair.

with Zuracon Inc. from Barry’s Bay who are taking the lead on the sorting shed. Other local contractors who were heavily involved in the project include Tru-Way Machinery Manufacturing of Combermere and Welk Electric Limited of Killaloe. The electrical needs for the new sawmill line were more than doubled. The significant economic spin-off in the Valley from just this two-month period impacted a wide range of local businesses which included not just contractors but also motel accommodation, gas, restaurants, groceries, etc.

To finance the five-year expansion program, Hokums has invested heavily

and used \$5.5 million support from the province under the Jobs and Prosperity Fund to leverage bank financing on the project.

Yakabuski said he was proud to attend the ceremony both as Nipissing-Renfrew-Pembroke MPP and as MNRF Minister. He and his family had known the Hokum family for decades. He said, “When an independent sawmill is succeeding, so do the harvesters it buys from and the manufacturers it sells by-products to. This was not just an investment in Ben Hokum & Son Ltd., but an investment in this community and the forestry sector as a whole.”

## Barry’s Bay Triathlon

Race directors Dave and Elser Lee Archer advise that the 26th **Barry’s Bay Triathlon will take place on Sunday June 30**. You can work as a volunteer or you can start training now to compete. Both individual and team triathletes are eligible to enter. Early Bird Registration by May 1 2019. Regular registration closes June 26. Visit [barrysbaytriathlon.com](http://barrysbaytriathlon.com) to register or join the amazing Triathlon Team of volunteers and sponsors.

## For Valley trivia lovers

Here’s your chance to show off your trivia knowledge—all for a good cause. It’s time to sign up for **MVDHS Student Activity Council Trivia Night fundraiser on Thursday May 9 at 6:30 p.m.** The cost is \$60 for a team of three to six persons. The winning team gets back their admission fee. All admission proceeds go to St. Francis Memorial Hospital.



# Our Lady Seat of Wisdom College graduation



**DANIELLE PAUL  
BARRY'S BAY**

The 2019 graduating class of Our Lady Seat of Wisdom College (SWC) in Barry's Bay braved icy weather, gusty winds and a few snow flurries to celebrate the

end of their SWC careers. Thirty-six students received a Bachelor of Catholic Studies (three-year) degree on April 27 at St. Hedwig's Church. Thirty students were awarded the Associate Certificate of Christian Humanities (a two-year program), while fourteen students re-

ceived the Basic Certificate of Christian Humanities.

The Most Reverend Michael Mulhall, Archbishop-Elect of the Archdiocese of Kingston, was the main celebrant at a Mass offered for the Graduates. In his homily, Archbishop-Elect Mulhall advised the graduates to be prepared to defend their beliefs in the wider world, but always with gentleness and reverence. SWC students from the Ecclesiastical Schola choir under the direction of SWC music professor Dr. Richard Heinzle sang during the Mass. The congregation included families from as far away as Alaska and Nebraska.

In his welcome address, SWC President Dr. Keith Cassidy formally announced his retirement. Later during the commencement, Dr. Christine Schintgen expressed the gratitude of the SWC community for Dr. Cassidy's many years of work and conferred upon him the honour of Professor Emeritus with effect from July 1, 2019. She said there would be a Gala in July to mark Dr. Cassidy's retirement. The Commencement Address was given by Dr. John Gay who, after a career in medicine, is now CEO for Justin Press, a Canadian Catholic publishing house, and Chairman of the Board for the Ottawa Chesterton Academy.

Dr. Cassidy presented nearly twenty Scholarships and Awards, congratulating the students for their hard work and thanking sponsors for their generosity. Thirteen additional bursary awards were provided privately to students in need of financial assistance to further their studies. The St. John Paul II Award for highest cumulative average among students was given to Ruth Savidge whose brief address discussed whether liberal arts studies were impractical. This year's valedictorian was Lincoln Tesluk who spoke about the student experience at SWC.

Tesluk advised undergraduates to take full advantage of what the College offers. Tesluk said that the true measure of success is not exam marks the students received at SWC, but rather the way they live their lives. He recalled instances from the past three years that evoked laughter and applause from the graduates. The commencement event ended with formal photos and a reception in St. Hedwig's Hall.

## VALLEY HERITAGE

BOB CORRIGAN | BARRY'S BAY



### 1952-53 • St. Joseph's Grade 6

This Grade 6 school picture was taken in 1952-53. If you see a mistake and you can make a correction, please let us know.

FRONT ROW: Kenneth LaHaie, Raymond Coulas, Michael Kulas, Gerald Luckasavitch, Kenneth Recoski, Raymond Stamplecoski, Edward Yantha, Harold Skuce, Larry Proulx, Sheldon Mackin, Zigmund Biernaski, Tony Palubeskie.

SECOND ROW: Lawrence Cybulski, Shirley Burchat, Beverlee Bourne, Marie Trebinski, Mary Matacheskie, Madeline Coulas, Nancy Chippior, Shirley Plebon, Darlene Yantha, Barbara Conway, Donald Lapenski, Robert Prince.

THIRD ROW: Marilyn Kulas, Frances Cybulski, Clarice Glofcheski, Maxine Dwyer, Doreen Trebinski, Dolores Coulas, Joan Hildebrandt, Shirley Trebinski, Monica Matacheskie, Rosie Stoppa, Theresa Blaskavitch, Georgina Cybulski, Evelyn Cybulski, Denise Conway.



# Valley folk pull together during floods

THE CURRENT  
MADAWASKA VALLEY

The combination of significant winter snow accumulation and torrential April showers brought high water levels throughout the region. At time of writing Madawaska Valley did not suffer as much as other parts of Renfrew County but the impact was still significant. Valley volunteers came out in force to help neighbours.

Having had the experience of the 2017 flood, municipal staff, first responders and MV Council prepared for this year's freshet by setting up lines of communication for 24/7 monitoring and reporting that enabled staff to take pre-emptive action whenever possible. Washouts and other trouble spots were promptly notified to local media, municipal511.ca and social media. Emergency Special Council meetings took place on Easter Sunday and April 26 so staff could brief Council.

Renfrew County District Health Unit (RCDHU) advises you should have your well water tested for bacteria when flood waters recede. Water sample bottles can be picked up and dropped off at the Renfrew County and District Health Unit. If your septic system has been affected reduce the amount of water used



Madawaska Valley District High School students fill sandbags at Round Lake Fire Hall.

by limiting toilet flushing, dishwashing, washing clothes, and showering. Do not pump your system when the ground is saturated.

Ontario Hydro said they would waive the delivery charges/connection fees for customers affected by flooding. Residents should check water levels to ensure the main electrical panel is dry and call 1-800-434-1235 to have the power safely disconnected if there are any concerns.

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## Catch The Ace lottery jackpot growing

Valley residents are buying tickets for the St. Francis Valley Healthcare Foundation Catch The Ace (CTA) lottery. Left: Michele Najbor buys CTA ticket from Erin Gienow. The CTA lottery jackpot grows progressively and so far two lucky winners have each taken home over \$1,200. Tickets cost \$5 (cash) and the weekly draws are held at 4 p.m. Thursday at the Ash Grove Inn. As of May 1 when *The Current* went to print, the Ace of Spades had escaped capture. Fifty percent of the proceeds from sale of CTA lottery tickets goes to support Valley Manor Redevelopment.

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**MADAWASKA KANU CENTRE**

# Station Keepers hope to live up to their name

DANIELLE PAUL  
MADAWASKA VALLEY

Just when the likelihood of any kind of revival of the Barry's Bay Railway Station looked dim, along came a new volunteer group called The Station Keepers. Barry Conway, a Barry's Bay native who retired to Mask Island after a career as a journalist and professor, appeared as a delegation at the April 2 Council in Committee meeting. The Station Keepers has negotiated with MV Township to run programming at the Station from May through October. The Township will, as before, hire summer students to staff a Visitor Information Centre during July and August. Conway explained The Station Keepers' programming proposal and answered questions from members of Council before they passed a By-Law authorizing the agreement.

Conway defined the Station Keepers as a "broadly-based coalition of like-minded people who are sensitive to the Station's position within the local community as an icon of [the Valley's] unique cultural and historical identity." He said they are a "baker's dozen" of committed individuals who are passionate about the whole community not just Barry's Bay.

Conway told The Current that The Station Keepers aim to fundraise and support the Railway Station so that eventually it functions year-round as a culture and heritage centre for the local community, with a seasonal tourist centre. Until then, they will provide cultural and heritage programming throughout the year and their volunteers will provide support to keep the Station open on weekends from May to October. All Station Keepers programs and events will be free to the general public but will use various means to raise funds for the programming and to support the Station, Water Tower, Caboose and Water Tower Park. The Station Keepers hope to develop special interest clubs for walking, bicycling, photography, art, etc. Plans include a new revitalized museum at the Station.

He said, "With your permission and the By-Law we will launch a membership drive and tie it closely to access to the station which we hope would open

the first weekend in May. Our first major celebration [will be] on the Long Weekend with a salute to teachers from 1894 to 2019 and [celebrate the 125th] anniversary of the First Schoolhouse."

Conway, an avid historian, referred to local historical figures and prompted frequent laughter as he told stories with genuine Valley wit. He said, "We want to tell the history and deal with all the wonderful, chaotic, interesting stories.... to talk to people about how they got here, whether it was 150 years ago or last month." He said, "We simply would like to use one of the [iconic buildings] in town [as our operations base] to produce the one thousand and one stories that are out there."

Councillor David Shulist assembled a group of stakeholders last December. In early 2019 they organized themselves into an independent volunteer and fundraising group. Members include former or current members of the original preservation group who had saved the Station in the 1990s, as well as the Barry's Bay Heritage Society Genealogy Group, the Madawaska Valley Culture & Heritage Society, Wilno Heritage Society/Polish Kashub Heritage Museum, Mission House Museum & Gallery. Conway told Council there was depth in their small group as evidenced by archaeologist Don Webb, historian / genealogist Theresa Prince, Carmel Rumleskie of the Combermere museum, Bill Houle who combines good business sense with knowledge of history. Conway himself last year originated the Opeongo Readers' Theatre podcasting group which filled the Legion on Remembrance Day when they read 28 letters from local men serving in WWII.

CAO Suzanne Klatt and Conway have been in discussion for several weeks. A main premise of their talks was that Station Keepers is an independent organization at arms-length from the Council. Klatt provided Council with a By-Law setting out in detail the respective responsibilities and expectations of both Station Keepers and the municipality in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Conway complimented Klatt: "One of the great delights of the last six weeks

has been dealing with CAO Sue Klatt. Sue doesn't know this but she reminds me of one of the great heroes of this community, Horace Landon. Horace came up in the 1920s as a clerk for Conways Mill and he became what in modern terminology was the CAO in the 1930s." Conway said Landon brought both telephone and hydro to Barry's Bay. He said Klatt with her "great sense of humour and creative problem solving has resolved a lot of the issue that were confronting us to move forward on this. So I want to tip my hat to Sue for being the new Horace Landon."

After hearing Conway, each member of Council expressed support for the partnership. Acting Mayor Shulist said of The Station Keepers, "Everybody there has that same passionate vision of promoting culture and heritage." Mayor Love was absent due to a family bereavement, but Shulist said, "She is 100 percent in favour of this proposal." He said, "It's a good partnership between public and council. The one thing we want to ensure is that we are as a council definitely arms-length here. This is going to be your show but if there is any help that you want, we need to be there for you.... This is an opportunity of a lifetime and we need to bring that Railway Station to life as it should be."

Responding to Conway's request for help to recreate a "lost" Valley fiddle tune from the Shanty days of the 1860s, Councillor Ernie Peplinski said, "This is a real breath of fresh air and thank you for what you're doing.... I've enjoyed meeting with you the last couple of weeks and talking about your dreams. It's exactly what I was thinking all along.... so I've no doubt at all that this is going to be very successful."

Councillor Mark Willmer said he agreed. "What you people have done is fantastic and it's what I had hoped would happen to the train station.... We need positive partnerships right now.... I'm looking forward to it. Congratulations."

Councillor Carl Bromwich kept his comments brief: "This is very exciting. Thank you."

Council passed a Resolution to hold first, second and third readings of the By-Law so that it could take immediate effect.



## MV COUNCIL CLIPS

THE CURRENT  
MADAWASKA VALLEY

### HELP WITH COST OF WATER METER REPLACEMENT

At a Special Council Meeting on April 11 MV approved the allocation of \$150,000 towards the cost of replacing the municipality's water meters. The total cost for water meter replacement is estimated at \$280,000. The \$150,000 will come from a recently-announced \$620,000 efficiency and cost-saving payment to the municipality. Acting Treasurer Amanda Hudder told Council that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing had confirmed that using some of the \$620,000 for this purpose would fit the funding criteria.

At the same meeting, Council approved an increase in water and wastewater rates so that staff could proceed to prepare the 2019 bills. The new rates (per cubic meter) are \$4.59 for water and \$4.82 for wastewater. The volume for minimum consumption remains the same at 15 cubic meters per quarter.

Council in Committee will discuss other department's proposals for the 2019 budget on Monday May 6. This means that the financial year will be almost half over before a budget is approved.

### COUNCIL TOLD TINY HOMES ARE GOOD FOR MV

At the April 2 Council in Committee meeting, members listened to a delegation aimed at changing zoning by-laws to facilitate the construction of Tiny Homes. The delegation was made by Pat Scott, owner and Broker of Record at Queenswood National Real Estate Ltd. She said that the Tiny Homes movement is a reality, noting that she encounters clients weekly that would like to build such a home in the municipality. Currently, this is impossible without re-zoning.

Scott said that MV is "... surrounded by municipalities that have already adopted Tiny Homes: South Algonquin and Hasting Highlands. So I think we're getting left behind. The last thing I want to do is take my clients to some other municipality to

sell them property."

She emphasized that she referred to Tiny Homes as a permanent structure, not a mobile home, and the minimalist and affordability aspect of the smaller footprint appealed to young families without hundreds of thousands of dollars and also to retirees living on fixed incomes. Her presentation concluded with a reminder that the last election let people know that "Madawaska Valley is open for business."

Silas Lorbetski, Manager of Planning, Development & Licensing, said MV's current restriction on the size of homes is 592 sqft. He said that the three other municipalities mentioned are different from MV and reminded Council that the Renfrew County Official Plan is not yet fully approved. CAO/Clerk Sue Klatt said Mayor Love, who was not present, thought Tiny Homes could be dealt with when Council looked at the topic of secondary dwellings.

After Council's discussion, Acting Mayor David Shulist invited comment from Joe Wills, owner of Barry's Bay Tiny Homes and Trailers. Wills said, "I actually build tiny homes. There's a huge economic opportunity for the county for this as well because of the local business impact, job creation..... There's a huge amount of people interest in that. I think we are missing the boat on that."

### LONGER HOURS AT WILNO TRANSFER SITE

MV has extended the Wilno transfer site hours by two hours on a trial basis until the fall. The facility will be open Saturdays from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

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### Easter story time at MV Public Library



### Scavenger hunt ended with pizza at the Railway Station



### Family-friendly Easter Eggstravaganza

At Palubiski's General Store checkpoint volunteers Madeleine Nicholson (front) Emily Swick (standing) greeted the scavenger team that went on to finish the hunt fastest: Jackson and Lincoln Manning (in wagon), Nicky Bartraw and Donald Peters.



### Combermere Craft Cabin re-opens May 18

Combermere Craft Cabin to open May 18. Committee members Suzanne Leclerc, Sue Wade, Nicole Aubé prepare.



### Travis Richards speaks about entrepreneurship for people with disabilities at Activities Plus.



### Access Work Services clients celebrate completion of MNRF fishing kit project

From left: Colleen Yantha, Maxine Stoppa, Anita Kennedy (AWS Job coach), Rhys Geddes-Denning, Amanda Klett.

