

EDITOR

For this issue I was all set to tell you why February is one of my favourite months, rich with celebrations and affirmations, like Black History Month and Chinese New Year's.

But there are also a number of purely fun events. Like Groundhog Day – a great way to kick off the month. Who doesn't love pitting Wiarton Willie against Punxsutawney Phil and Shubenacadie Sam to see whether we'll have six more weeks of winter?

Then there's Valentine's Day – how sweet it is having a perfect excuse to eat chocolate – followed closely by Family Day. And, bonus: February is the shortest month of the year, taking us that much closer to spring.

But, as often happens, events conspired against my upbeat message for the February issue. In short succession, three notable figures from Don Valley West died: John Godfrey, Alan Redway, and Peter Russell.

Lorna Krawchuk and Carol Burtin Fripp knew John Godfrey personally and share their memories with us. Lorna also writes about Alan Redway, well-known in East York – and a prolific *Leaside Life* columnist and letter writer. If you visit our site at leasidelife.com, you can read some of his many articles for us. Long-time Leasider Peter Russell was profiled by columnist Allan Williams after the publication of Professor Russell's book *Canada's Odyssey: A Country Based on Incomplete Conquests*, in time for the 150th anniversary of Confederation, in 2018.

It's not often we lose so many notable (local) figures in such a short time. I was sorry to have to pivot from my earlier "sweet" message for February.

RIP John Godfrey, Alan Redway and Peter Russell.

Bessborough student became top fashion model

Ted DeWelles

Leaside Heritage Preservation Society

Most Leasiders know that 2024 marks the 100th anniversary of Bessborough public school. What they may not know is that the school counts among its alumnae one of the world's most celebrated fashion models of the 1950s. Her name was Isobel Benn (1929-2012) and her story is one of remarkable success and accomplishment.

Leaside achiever

Young Isobel lived in Leaside with her family at 22 Cameron Cresc. from 1933 to 1936 and again from 1940 to 1944. (The family resided briefly in East York in the late 1930s.)

In the early 1940s, Isobel attended Bessborough school where she proved herself a high achiever. In November 1941, at age 12, she was selected over 11 other contestants as the primary-school champion orator of York County for her speech "V for Victory" – receiving a \$25 war bond for her effort. A month later came an invitation to speak at the Leaside Lions Club. The next year, she placed second in another public speaking contest – this time at the Bessborough school commencement exercises, sponsored by the Leaside Lions Club.

Isobel was just getting started. In February 1943, the motion picture studio MGM came to Toronto as part of a North American-wide search for a young girl to star in its upcoming film *National Velvet*. Of the more than 500 candidates auditioned, Isobel was among the half dozen who made the short list. *The London Daily Telegraph* and other sources later reported that she was offered the lead role but turned it down to pursue a modelling career – opening the way for another aspiring young celebrity, named Elizabeth Taylor, to get the part.

Making it big in the Big Apple

By 1946, Isobel had left Bessborough P.S. (and Leaside) and was attending Northern Vocational School (now Northern Secondary School). Her modelling career was taking off, and her photo had already appeared in several Canadian newspapers – most notably the *Toronto Star*. Seeking wider horizons, she went to New York City in 1947, where she was hired by the Ford Modelling Agency. She quickly established herself as a top fashion model and cover girl, appearing in such prestigious publications as *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*, and working with photographer Richard Avedon, who became a life-long friend.

Isobel now went by the name "Liz" Benn, and it was as Liz Benn that in 1948 she was assigned to do a photo shoot in Jamaica that would change her life. There she met John Pringle, a former aide to the Duke of Windsor (England's King Edward VIII) and member of one of Jamaica's oldest and most established families. They married

within a month and settled in New York City where John, with Liz's encouragement, opened a men's clothing store. Liz (now Pringle) continued her successful modelling career while John built the store into a thriving haberdashery catering to the rich and famous (his first customer was his old boss, the Duke of Windsor).

Jamaican success

In 1953, Liz persuaded her husband to return to Jamaica and invest in a former sugar plantation which they built into a high-end, multi-million-dollar resort complex called Round Hill, near Montego Bay. Aided by Liz's reputation and presence as a world-class model, the resort attracted throughout the 1950s a glittering range of guests and celebrities including John and Jackie Kennedy, Princess Margaret, Grace Kelly, Groucho Marx, Leonard Bernstein, Clark Gable, Truman Capote, Fred and Adele Astaire, Alfred Hitchcock, Errol Flynn, Paul Newman, and playwright Noel Coward. It grew so famous that in 1957, the resort was the cover story for the February 11 issue of *Life* magazine – with Liz on the cover. By the end of the decade, Jamaica was becoming a major post-war tourist destination – thanks largely to the efforts of Liz and John.

Running the resort, however, took its toll. While in Jamaica, Liz stopped modelling (she was earning \$40,000 a year – about \$450,000 today) so she could devote more time to raising their daughter, Shawn. But the pressures continued to mount, prompting Liz and her husband to sell Round Hill in 1961. They briefly moved to Switzerland and then back to Jamaica for a few years in the mid-1960s before finally relocating to London in 1967. They divorced in the early 1970s but remained friends until John's death in 2006. Liz died six years later, on November 12, 2012. She was 83. Her obituary in the *London Daily Telegraph* exceeded 1,000 words.

Over the course of her life, she progressed from a Leaside schoolgirl to a global supermodel, numbering among her friends and acquaintances some of the most accomplished and famous people in the world. Bessborough School and Leaside can take pride in calling Liz Benn Pringle one of their own.

Brenda Gladman channels diversity in new book

by JANIS FERTUCK

Leaside is home to a new children's author who recently published the French book *Li et le Nouvel An spectralunaire!* (*Li and the Spectacular New Year!*) in time for the Lunar New Year on February 10.

Brenda Lee Gladman has been a French Immersion elementary teacher and a teacher-librarian at Adrienne Clarkson Public School in York Region since 2004. She and her husband, Randy Gladman, moved to Leaside in 2011 shortly after marrying because they saw it as a family-oriented area perfect for their plans to start a family. They were especially attracted to the Bayview strip and its easy access to a variety of services and amenities.

Through her years in French Immersion, Brenda often found that materials from Quebec and France were too difficult for Ontario beginners. She sometimes developed her own materials and collaborated with a colleague to create books about celebrations from their own cultures to complement the social studies curriculum. But since that work is very time-consuming, she decided to take this year off to pursue her "passion project" about Li and the Lunar New Year. She created her small business, Joy Ink Press, with the help of her family to realize the project.

The purpose of her book is to fill a "gap in the Canadian educational landscape by creating inclusive French resources that cater to students of all backgrounds." She explains that the vision behind her company is "rooted in inclusivity and accessibility," ensuring that learners in various French programs can access materials that resonate with their identity, support their language development needs and expose them to different cultures.

Brenda also points out that when she was growing up in Quebec in the 1980s, she never saw herself represented in the media. She wants to change that for her daughter, Nyomi, who has a Chinese mother and a Jewish father, and for others from mixed-race families like her. The main character, Li, is based on Nyomi, who is now in Grade 5 in French Immersion at Northlea. She helped Brenda with many enthusiastic suggestions as well as with creating the company logo.

Li et le Nouvel An spectralunaire! tells the story of a seven-year-old girl who loves celebrating everything, especially the Lunar New Year. But when she receives less "lucky money" than she expected, she is disappointed.

Over the course of the story, however, Li “learns to reflect on the real joy of celebration and finds renewed appreciation for her diverse customs.”

The vivid and eye-catching illustrations in the book were created by Nhi Luong, a digital illustrator based in Hanoi, Vietnam. She and Brenda collaborated completely virtually despite the 12-hour time difference. The book is aimed at four- to eight-year-olds and works well with the French Language curriculum. In addition to the story, the book comes with extras such as a map of countries that celebrate the Lunar New Year, a keyword list in Mandarin and French with images, extension activities in English and free printables, like worksheets and colouring pages, to facilitate discussion and further study.

The book is currently available online at <http://joyinkpress.square.site> and will soon be for sale at selected book stores. Brenda will also be doing author visits to schools in Toronto and York Region. In addition, she says that *Li et le Nouvel An spectralunaire* is the first in their heritage collection, and she would “love to create more books that feature other celebrations” to reflect our society as well as the “very inclusive,” “amazing” and supportive neighbourhood of Leaside.

Chocolatepreneur tickles taste buds in Leaside

by SUZANNE PARK

Karalee LaRochelle, pastry chef and chocolatier, has a favourite saying: “The best things in life are shared.” Having been gifted with one of her chocolate creations by a friend over the holidays, I wholeheartedly agree.

Karalee is the chocolatepreneur behind LaRochelle Confections. Confectionery wasn’t always her occupation, however. “After a successful career as a corporate consultant, I devoted a decade to raising my two girls,” she told me. “Then, with my husband’s encouragement I enrolled and graduated from New York’s French Culinary Institute, now the International Culinary Institute. Next, I enjoyed internships and working in the elite pastry kitchens of Fauchon and New York’s Eleven Madison Park restaurant.”

Realizing early on that the hours and weekends required of owners and staff in high-end kitchens and retail operations were daunting, Karalee decided to design her own company with an emphasis on the wholesale market. She has built a successful chocolate business where she sets the hours permitting her a healthy work-life balance.

“My chocolate lab and I are thriving with the relationships built with business suppliers and clients who share my commitment to artisanal craftsmanship,” she said.

She secured her Leaside business location on Wicksteed in September 2019, with some help from her family. “My dad assisted me with the design, construction, and equipment installation. LaRochelle Confections opened November 2019; shockingly, lockdown descended March 2020, which created unexpected challenges. Yet with steady growth on the wholesale side from my network of retail partners and supplemented by growing online retail sales, the setbacks were thankfully minimal.”

Karalee regularly gives back to the community that has embraced her business. She highly values the work of the Daily Bread Food Bank in addressing two issues dear to her: food insecurity and food waste. To support the food bank, she annually donates 10 per cent of her online retail sales revenue. The 2023 donation was \$1,900.

“An organization that my business donates products to is *Too Good To Go*. It is an app from Europe now available across Canada that rescues unsold food, like any of my remaining seasonal products. The organization is committed to reducing business food waste and helping the environment by repackaging the products into mystery bags that can be purchased via the app for a third of retail price.”

Getting back to that delicious LaRochelle treat my family enjoyed. It was surprising in its simple elegance, depth of flavour, and a surprising crunch finish. That’s likely because, as Karalee mentioned, “I’m dedicated to sourcing top quality ingredients that are organic, local, and sustainable whenever possible.”

With Valentine’s Day fast approaching, why not treat yourself to sharing an Artisan Salted Caramel Crunch Bar or some Peppermint Meltaway Hearts with that special someone in your life – or yourself. Enjoy!

Reach Karalee at: <https://larochelleconfections.square.site> and *Too Good To Go* at: <https://www.toogoodtogo.com/en-ca>.

Scout’s honour. Laura Jarvis is a real Silver Wolf

by LORNA KRAWCHUK

February is a special time for those of you with memories of Scouting or Guiding. February 22 marks the joint birthday of founders Lord Robert Baden-Powell and his wife Olave St Clair.

One person who is bound to remember and celebrate is Laura Jarvis. "The best parenting course I ever took was being a Scouter." So says Laura Jarvis, aka "Scouter Laura," of her volunteer involvement with Scouts Canada, but also with the 132nd Toronto Troop, which meets at Leaside Presbyterian Church. The Scout Promise starts with: "I promise to do my best. ..." That certainly applies to Laura.

When her two now-adult sons were little, they first became involved as Beavers in a "Colony" at Northlea United Church. Her husband, Stephen, soon joined up as a Beaver leader. Years later, the church where the Beavers meet is now Leaside Presbyterian, but Stephen is still a Beaver leader.

Initially, Laura signed on to volunteer administratively with a group committee, but when she learned that Thunder Bay was to host an International Scouting Jamboree with 15,000 people on site, she saw that her job in the Ontario Public Service meshed in a way she found helpful. As she told them, "I speak three languages – English, Scouting and government, please can I help."

After that experience, she decided she wanted a more active involvement with Scouting, and ended up at her preferred level, with youth in Grades 6, 7 and 8 and spent every Monday evening until 2017, along with John Masterson and the other Scouters of the 132nd. In addition to those weekly meetings, there were camping weekends every six weeks throughout the year. At one time, there were 36 youth and nine Scouters with the 132nd. It is heartening to see that former Scouts are now back as leaders, along with their own kids, but there is a waiting list for youth to join the 132nd, as there aren't enough volunteer leaders to accept more.

Laura stressed that for these potential volunteer leaders, there is a lot of mentoring and training provided for anyone thinking of getting involved and "if you give a little, you get a lot back." Being a leader within Scouts Canada at any age level – Beavers, Cubs, Scouts or Venturers – is open to men and women.

Laura has certainly given more than a little to scouting. In recent years, she was Base Camp Chief for World Jamboree 2019 in West Virginia for 10,000 participants, the admin and registrar for Canadian Scouts and Venturers attending the Kandersteg International Scout Centre in Switzerland in 2022, and was the Canadian contingent admin team lead for the memorable World Jamboree 2023 in South Korea, where extreme heat and an approaching typhoon caused many international guests to abandon camp. The 270 Canadians insisted on staying – sending messages home to parents: "Please don't make us leave, this is so amazing." Laura describes them as "an ad for Canadian youth with their positive attitude."

As well, Laura, as part of the Scouts Canada National Leadership Team, was Deputy National Commissioner – Volunteer Services, working with four Chief/National Commissioners. Currently, she is the treasurer of the Ontario Incorporate Body and a Director of the Greater Toronto Scout Foundation. She is one organized woman, and as she says, "pretty well known for my binders."

Justifiably, Laura has been recognized for her service – the Queen's Diamond Jubilee medal in 2012 and the highest level of volunteer recognition in Scouts Canada, the Silver Wolf, in 2022.

Winter weekends were all hockey, all the time

Terry Fallis Columnist

The month of February always takes me back to my childhood when my twin brother Tim and I would spend nearly every waking non-school hour on the outdoor hockey rink in the middle of Talbot Park, just down the street from our family home. I know I've written on more than one occasion about hockey, but it was an important part of our lives growing up in Leaside. And living just a stone's throw from Talbot Park made playing hockey very convenient. I also think my mother enjoyed having Tim and me out of the house – and out of her hair – for hours on end, particularly on weekends.

Let me set the scene for you. Back when we used to have real winters, when there was lots of snow from November to March, and subzero temperatures for much of the season, the outdoor hockey and pleasure rinks in Talbot Park were a big deal. In the late 60s and early 70s, it was quite a facility. The hockey boards back then were blue, with three-panel rounded corners, and lines of overhead lights strung across the ice every 10 feet or so. In later years, light was provided by the big bright lights high up on poles used to illuminate night games on the big baseball diamond. Simple iron goals were embedded in the ice at either end. Chain-link fencing above the boards

ensured that kids and families skating on the circular pleasure rink next door were not beamed by errant pucks shot over the boards. The lights usually were extinguished at 10:00 p.m., likely so the families living nearby could sleep free from the cacophony of hundreds of slapshots hitting the boards all day long and well into the evening. If you happened to be wandering through the park after the lights turned off, you might see the lonely Parks and Rec employee dutifully flooding both rinks.

For Tim and me, a typical Saturday went something like this, provided we didn't have a house league game at Leaside Gardens. We'd get up at first light, tie up our skates in the basement, don our winter coats, hats, and mitts, and then clomp up the stairs and out the back door. Then, our sticks in hand and a few pucks in our pockets, we'd tiptoe down Donegall Drive to Talbot Park. We'd then literally skate down the big hill and glide as far as we could on the iced-over grass until we reached the pleasure rink, and then, our final destination – our happy place – the hockey rink. We were often the first skaters on the ice. We'd wheel around the rink taking shots and working on our passing and stickhandling. We'd also make countless unscheduled excursions outside the rink to retrieve pucks we'd shot over the boards and into the deep snow beyond. I cannot tell you how many pucks we lost in the snow. At that age, I could not count that high.

Eventually, the rink would fill up with other younger and older kids until we had enough to choose sides, and then it was game on.

We'd grow hungry around noon – though I remember always being hungry in those days – so we'd reluctantly clomp home, still in our skates, have lunch, and go straight back down to the park. We'd repeat the procedure for dinner and play hockey in the park until 8:00 p.m. before dragging our weary carcasses, frozen and frostbitten, back home again. Why did we quit at 8:00 and not 10:00 when the lights turned off? Well, the Leafs played most Saturday nights (still do), so we'd rush home early to watch the game. Yes, it was all hockey, all the time. Friends who lived near Trace Manes Park would repeat the same ritual and play hockey all day on the outdoor rink there.

I truly believe the hours spent playing shinny on the Talbot Park rink forged and entrenched whatever modest hockey skills I like to think I still have and use today 50 years later. Leaside has produced quite a few NHL hockey players over the years, Paul and Steve Gardner, Greg Theberge, Tom Edur, and Terry Caffery among them. I suspect that they all spent hours and hours on Leaside's outdoor rinks, too. Those were the days.

LHS visual artists picture Leaside

by MITCH BUBULJ

“Draw a place in your neighbourhood” was the pitch to students at Leaside High. The young artists did not disappoint. In a creative way to teach water colour skills, perspective and an appreciation for place, Stephanie Marshall, Leaside High's visual arts teacher, tasked her Grade 9s with painting a beloved locale. The bright and original pictures are mostly of shops familiar to us all, such as Sweetie Pie, Longo's, The Flower Patch and Ramona's Kitchen, prominently displayed in the main office at LHS. The finished pieces are a testament to the students' creativity and developing skills as well as Marshall's positive energy, enthusiasm and encouragement.

Marshall lends the same spirit to her senior students' projects. A fine example is her recent repurposing of the telephone booth in the school's main foyer. I recall spending a quarter to call home from the same box back in the '70s. There was always a line of students at lunchtime waiting to make a call. But for years the booth has sat empty, forlorn, ignored, neglected – sad.

That is, until Marshall decided to use it as a venue for senior students' art installations. Marshall explains it is key to “look at spaces and see them differently.” As a result, there are groups of students congregating at the phone booth but now it is the art class setting up their installations (each student takes a turn) or their peers stopping to have a look as they navigate the main hall.

Grade 11 student Raif Morton enthuses that the assignment “linked” him with students he had not known well. “The assignment added a social aspect to art,” he explains, since students were commenting to him that they liked his installation, initiating conversations. This was Marshall's hope all along. She knows that these links create community and encourage a sense of belonging among all involved in the process, both artists and audience. She is a firm believer that “it doesn't have to be in a formally established institution for a work to be celebrated and appreciated as a piece of art.” With her ethos that “everyone has the ability to create, students just need to tap into it,” Leaside High artists are in good hands.

Perhaps what makes all the difference are Marshall's professional and life experiences. Doing her MFA at Leeds University, she was a professional artist for the decade before getting her Bachelor of Education at OISE. She cofounded the 7A*11D International Festival of Performance Art, a not-for-profit artist-driven collective and taught at remote Indigenous communities such as Attawapiskat and the sub-Arctic Kitchenuhmaykoosib. It was while teaching at the former that she raised \$18,000, which allowed the community to fly 10 youth to Vancouver, a place they had always wanted to explore. She is a firm believer in leaving a positive mark wherever she goes. While teaching the Claude Watson students at Earl Haig Secondary School she used her performance art talent to model innovative multi-media presentations. Most of her concepts involve interdisciplinary skills which can bring together painting, poetry, music and textiles, to name a few. In fact, Marshall's next objective is to bring silk screening to LHS, something not done in a long time. She would even like to explore teaching students to make batik, a traditional cloth-decorating process – using wax and dye – from Southeast Asia and Africa. "The processes are very hands-on and the product is tangible, even wearable," she explains. In the spring she hopes to display some of the student art at the Leaside Public Library. The signs are everywhere around the school that the creative energy at Leaside High is strong. To know for sure, just ask your children or neighbours' teens; they will tell you that the visual arts are thriving.

Remembering Alan Redway

by LORNA KRAWCHUK

When Alan Redway died in early January, his family said that he did not wish a public announcement and "hoped that those close to him would understand and respect his wishes." While respecting his wishes, at the same time we do want to acknowledge Alan's large presence, especially in the Leaside he loved.

Alan grew up in Leaside, starting with attending the new Rolph Road Public School. Then, armed with a degree in commerce and finance from the University of Toronto and a law degree from Osgoode, he set up shop as a lawyer. Upon marrying Louise, the couple first lived in Thorncliffe and then bought a house in Leaside where they raised their daughters, Kim and Andrea.

He spent a decade, from 1972 to 1982, on the Borough of East York Council, six of those as Mayor and a member of the Metropolitan Toronto Council. Memorable from that time was his establishment of East York Day – a celebration in food, dance and story of the people from many countries moving into the community – which then became the East York Mayor's Committee on Race Relations. He also spearheaded the creation of an East York flag, which you can still see in its logo form on selected street signs in the neighbourhood, and even an occasional flag.

Alan was elected as the Progressive Conservative member of parliament for York East in 1984 and from 1989 to 1991 served as Minister of State (Housing) to become the Hon. Alan Redway.

After leaving Ottawa, he continued to work for those in need of assistance, serving on a number of social justice boards and committees, including the Daily Bread Food Bank, Flemingdon Legal Services, All Saints Church Community Centre, to name a few. He championed public investment in housing, and was co-chair for the community group "Putting Housing Back on the Public Agenda," calling for provincial government investment in supportive housing, in 2000.

Alan was a long-time member of the Leaside Lions Club, and in recent years, an active member of the executive of the East York Historical Society.

In practical terms, he spent many years volunteering regularly with the *Out of the Cold* program at Eastminster United Church. Alan was a man who strongly believed that assistance to those in need was something to support. These volunteer efforts led to his being the recipient of the East York Agnes Macphail Award in 2013.

In 1989, when the provincial government broached the amalgamation of the six metropolitan Toronto separate municipalities into the City of Toronto, Alan was named the honorary chair of Team East York, fighting valiantly against this plan. When amalgamation did happen in spite of massive municipal protests, Alan was spurred to write his first book, *Governing Toronto: Bringing Back the City That Worked*, published in 2014. He continued to advocate for amalgamation's reversal.

There already were several books about the history of Leaside, most recently Jane Pitfield's *Leaside*, in 1999, but there was nothing comparable for what was originally the Township of East York and then the borough. Alan called on his prodigious memory and great files to right this wrong, with *East York 1924-1997: Toronto's Garden of Eden*, published in 2018.

If you've been a faithful reader of *Leaside Life*, you will have seen Alan's name as author of 30 articles. You might want to check the archives on our website, www.leaselidelife.com, to marvel at the range of topics he covered. This past June, Alan was named to the East York Hall of Fame. He is missed.

2024 welcome from Rob Oliphant

Rob Oliphant MP, Don Valley West

As we begin 2024, I want to take this opportunity to offer my very best wishes for a safe, healthy and prosperous new year to all Leasiders and other residents of Don Valley West.

The closing months of 2023 were difficult for millions around the world. Over the holidays, I heard continuing concerns about the plight of Ukrainians, bravely fighting Russia's illegal aggression on their soil, about civil war in Sudan which has displaced millions of people and, of course, about the on-going war in the Middle East after the horrendous attack by Hamas on Israel and Israelis. Those latest concerns are strongly expressed on all sides and, as we appeal for a humanitarian ceasefire in the region, we also call for calm and civility in Canada in the face of mounting antisemitism and Islamophobia.

While Canada remains a safe and peaceful country, many are facing hardships here as well. Ranking perhaps highest among the concerns I heard as I met with friends and neighbours in the riding was the issue of affordability. High grocery costs, the high cost of housing, high telecommunications costs, high interest rates and other factors are causing financial stress among families, young people and seniors in our community.

While there are many opinions about what is causing these higher costs, Canada and Canadians are not alone in facing these challenges. Most analysts agree the current economic picture in Canada, one which is shared by all Western economies, has been shaped by three significant factors which have never occurred simultaneously: a global pandemic in 2020 which impacted all of Canada's major trading partners; Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine in 2022; and the increasingly deleterious effects of climate change. Although climate change has been a factor for many years and has caused severe and extreme weather, the other two factors were not foreseen.

Our federal government is attempting to address the issue of affordability on several fronts. It needs to be recognized that over one million more Canadians are employed today than before the pandemic. Our economy continues to be very strong.

To address those who are benefiting less from this economic strength, we have enacted effective policies to reduce poverty across Canada, including continuing to increase the Canada Child Benefit, raising Old Age Security payments to those seniors who need it most, introducing enhancements to the Canada Pension Plan, and the Climate Change Rebate. All these measures have lifted hundreds of thousands of Canadians, including children, out of poverty.

But we know that more needs to be done. That is why, as a government, we decided to tackle the affordability issue immediately upon returning to Ottawa. On December 15, 2023 our government passed Bill C-56, the Affordable Housing and Grocery Act, to reduce the costs of construction of new purpose-built affordable rental housing. The removal of the GST on new construction of rental complexes is a significant move to lower the costs of construction specifically for rental units. Additionally, the legislation will provide new funding to the Competition Bureau as well as additional powers. A stronger Competition Bureau will ensure that sectors of our economy, including the grocery sector, are more competitive, fairer and more responsive to the price challenges faced by so many Canadians.

There are many other measures being taken to provide more housing options for Canadians while ensuring that Canada continues to grow, be competitive and remain the best place in the world to live. For more information about our National Housing Strategy, our programs to reduce poverty and our promotion of economic well-being in Canada I invite to visit my website www.roboliphant.ca.

I wish you all a happy 2024.

—The Hon. Rob Oliphant, P.C., M.P. Don Valley West.

Grand theft auto in Leaside

by STEPHANIE BOWMAN, MPP Don Valley West

Our community is grappling with an epidemic in auto thefts. My goal in writing this article is to shed light on the current situation, its impact on our neighbourhoods, and the collective steps we can take to mitigate this crisis.

Auto theft has become a disturbing trend across Canada, and with over 100,000 car thefts in 2022 alone, the issue only seems to be worsening. In Ontario, car thefts rose dramatically, from 27,527 in 2021 to 37,041 in 2022, reaching an all-time high (statistics for 2023 are pending). Preliminary figures for 2023 project an even higher number of vehicles stolen. Toronto mirrored this surge, with the number of thefts nearly doubling between 2021 and 2023. In Leaside alone, there were 112 cars stolen in 2023, up from 79 in 2022.

Hotspots for vehicle theft are widespread throughout the city, and there are problem spots in Don Valley West. The past year has seen a rapid rise in vehicle theft in areas like Leaside, Moore Park, and Lawrence Park. Thieves often target cars parked on side streets, with models like the Honda CR-V, Lexus RX Series, and Dodge RAM 1500 series being most at risk.

In response to this epidemic, the federal government has taken notable steps, including reforming the bail system to prevent repeat violent offenders from receiving bail. These new bail rules took effect on January 4, 2024. The federal government has also intensified efforts to intercept stolen cars at the point of export; in November 2023, CBSA officers successfully recovered 72 stolen vehicles through a joint export control operation at the Port of Montreal.

The Ontario government has also introduced measures such as the establishment of an OPP task force and the 'Preventing Auto Thefts' grant, which will provide \$18M over three years to initiatives aimed at strengthening police response to auto theft. This includes \$900,000 in additional funding for Toronto Police Services – a nominal amount that will help, but which will need to be increased to have the desired impact. Insurance companies have likewise taken actions to incentivize the installation of anti-theft devices. However, as our cars continue to vanish from our driveways only to resurface in remote parts of the world, it is clear more work needs to be done.

To further bolster government efforts, my Ontario Liberal caucus colleagues and I support the following proposals: increasing police presence in areas prone to car thefts; implementing stricter penalization to deter potential criminals; and increasing security with better lighting and CCTV cameras in public parking spaces to minimize theft opportunities. Finally, I am looking at what legislative options might be available. One interesting issue is related to the "right to repair." This legislation could empower car owners to install third-party anti-theft software and devices without the risk of voiding their warranties. Similar legislation has already been adopted in Quebec, and the Ontario Liberal caucus is currently exploring options to bring "right-to-repair" to Ontario. I would welcome public feedback as we continue to develop this approach.

While police, government, and insurance industry efforts are essential, community action plays an important role, too. To enhance your vehicle security, please consider the following measures: as discussed recently by Toronto Police Services at a Lawrence Park ratepayers association meeting, installing anti-theft devices like wheel locks (clubs), ignition kill switches, or tracking systems can be highly effective. If you have access to a garage, park your car there instead of in the driveway. Using RF-blocking containers or pouches for car keys can also safeguard against signal hijacking. Beyond these measures, fostering a sense of community vigilance is vital. Communicating with neighbours, being observant, and looking out for each other's vehicles can significantly contribute to the safety of our community.

For more information on auto theft prevention and government initiatives, visit <https://www.tps.ca/my-neighbourhood/crime-prevention/auto-crimes-1>. To provide comments on this or any other local issues, my office can be reached by email at sbowman.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org or by phone at 416-425-6777.

Your feedback and involvement are invaluable in shaping our collective response to this crisis.

Memories of John Godfrey, a politician ahead of his time

Lorna Krawchuk

I have two memories specifically of working with John Godfrey when he was the MP for Don Valley West.

John and his staff put a lot of time and effort into working with his provincial and municipal counterparts at the time (John Parker – Conservative MPP for York East and Lorna Krawchuk and Jenner Jean-Marie for Ward 4 at the Borough of East York). The aim especially was to lure businesses to what was then the Leaside Industrial Area who reflected the upcoming digital age. Sadly, it did not come to pass, but not for lack of John's and the others' efforts.

Another fond memory was of a commencement ceremony at Leaside High. Politicians at all levels were invited to participate in the stage party, and invited to wear academic gowns if they so chose. John chose. I'm not sure which degree he was honouring – he had earned a Bachelor of Arts from Trinity College, University of Toronto, a Master of Philosophy from Balliol College, Oxford, and a Doctor of Philosophy from St. Antony's College, Oxford. He also served as president of the University of King's College in Halifax. Whichever institution, John's outfit involved a flowing, colourful gown and a very floppy hat. Not something seen regularly at a Leaside commencement.

Carol Burtin Fripp

Other people have big ideas. John Godfrey had epiphanies.

I met John Godfrey shortly after his election in 1993 as Don Valley West's new MP. While acquainting himself with his new position he had come across a copy of my just-completed report "Revitalizing the Leaside Industrial Area," a study I had chaired for the Borough of East York, of which Leaside was a part. The LIA had long been a major source of revenue for our area, but heavy industries were beginning to move away from the LIA and out to the suburbs and beyond, shrinking our tax base. The study contemplated new and alternative future uses which might cause the LIA (and East York) to prosper once again.

John was enthused. More than that, he was energized as he read the report, and it occurred to him that the old LIA could (should!) become a "new media village." "I've had an epiphany!" he exclaimed, and put a lot of effort into trying to make it a reality. We set up a meeting, one of several over the following months.

The new media village never fulfilled its promise. A great idea, and, sadly, also a few years before its time. But I will never forget John Godfrey's happy pursuit of the idea, and the pleasure he took in that pursuit.

John Godfrey had a vision for the Business Park

by GEOFF KETTEL

John Godfrey, Member of Parliament for Don Valley West from 1993 to 2008, died on December 18, 2023. He was an academic, politician, and headmaster in his multi-varied career, but he was always an innovator, organizer, and thought leader – and often ahead of his time. (According to Andrew Bevan, Chief of Staff Office of Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Godfrey set up a website in 1994, only the second MP to do so.)

But beyond these achievements, he was also deeply supportive of Leaside. Full disclosure – I have admired John Godfrey, and have paid attention to his life and his contribution to society, since attending a conference that he was part of organizing, back in the early '90s.

At that time the Leaside industrial district was suffering the loss of several major employers (Alcatel, Canada Wire, and Schlumberger, among them), and the Borough of East York experienced the associated loss of the commercial tax base.

As Leaside's elected representative in Parliament, John Godfrey championed the idea of transforming the Leaside Business Park into a "new media village." The basic idea was to promote the area as a home location for firms involved in the "new media," such as video production, software, graphic arts, and digital imaging. These types of firms were experiencing rapid growth and were part of the "new economy."

The Economic Development Department of the Borough of East York conducted studies, which showed that the district already had a significant base of new media businesses to build on. The concept of developing a "new media village" received broad support from the local community, as well as key stakeholders representing local business, politicians, and bankers. The Borough of East York established a Community Development Corporation in 1995 with representatives from all three orders of government, the private sector, new media firms, banking, and land developers.

However, the Borough of East York's amalgamation into the City of Toronto, effective January 1998, effectively meant the end of the Leaside Business Park's tax revenue as the local economic driver. Tax bases of the individual former municipalities no longer mattered as much – instead, the global tax base across the new Toronto did. As a result, the new media village concept eventually moved to Liberty Village, which helped incubate the concentration of new media there, instead of Leaside.

So, what are the tangible outcomes of this effort for Leaside? I believe the coming of TELUS at 73 Laird Drive in 2000 was related to the installation of co-axial cable on Laird, but I have not been able to confirm this. As we all know, Laird East was allowed to be taken over by big box stores, and there have not been any other examples of data centres or significant new media firms in the park (there is a lot of storage, just not of data!). And apart from the pending construction of the innovation centre planned for Wicksteed at Clarke Street, there has been little to show.

But let's hear from John Godfrey himself, reflecting on the Leaside new media village experience, from a conversation I had with him and Andrew Bevan, his former Chief of Staff, in December 2020.

"I'm not sure how fully we understood the definition of 'new media' in those days, since Google, Facebook, Netflix, and the rest were in their infancy, or not yet born, but we correctly understood this to be the direction of the future, and this, rather than old-style manufacturing, warehousing, or big box retail, was where the high-quality jobs of the future would be created.

"If there was a lesson in all this, it is that with all the vision in the world, and even with some coordination, as we tried, with the three levels of government involved, it is hard to beat the money and market forces which ultimately prevailed. Twenty-five years later, it is interesting to speculate how an alternative scenario might have played out. Clearly something needed to happen in that area, but could we have done better, and how?"
John Godfrey – a good and faithful servant-leader! May he rest in peace.

Remembering Peter Russell

By LEASIDE LIFE

As *Leaside Life* was heading into production we learned of another significant death of a distinguished Leasider – Professor Peter Russell, CC, FRSC, OC.

Leaside Life columnist Allan Williams interviewed Professor Russell following the publication of *Canada's Odyssey: A Country Based on Incomplete Conquests* in time for the 150th anniversary of Confederation, in 2018.

"Russell is not only the dean of Canada's constitutional scholars and a leading authority on the civil and political rights of Indigenous Peoples around the world, but also someone who grew up in Leaside," wrote Allan.

"Professor Russell was born in 1932, the middle child between older brother Campbell (an Anglican clergyman who died in August, 2017) and younger sister Joan (Knowles). When he was two years old his family moved from Millwood just west of Bayview into Leaside, living successively on Donegall, Parkhurst and Cameron."

After studying at the University of Toronto and as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, he joined U of T's (then) Department of Political Economy.

"Russell went on to a brilliant 40-year career teaching and writing and, during the prolonged constitutional wrangling of the 1980s and '90s, was frequently consulted by governments and called upon by media as Canada's foremost authority on the issues," Allan wrote. "Once he was invited by CBC to tape a conversation for broadcast on *The National* with Stephen Harper, who was in Calgary, moderated by Wendy Mesley, who was in Ottawa. Russell was in Toronto. 'Suddenly there was a glitch and the three of us got talking while the technicians sorted it out. Soon enough we discovered that all three of us had gone to Bessborough!'"

Professor Russell remained active and engaged just into his 90s. As his friend Leasider Elizabeth Trott wrote to us: "...Peter's final speaking event, which he could not attend, was with a panel presentation at Massey College on January 9, 2024, on the distortion of truth being promoted about Egerton Ryerson and Henry Dundas. ...Peter was active until a couple of weeks before he died and had plans to keep fighting for Ryerson's reputation."

Professor Peter Russell certainly left his mark.

My year-end review and 2024 look-forward

Geoff Kettel

Saving old Leaside

It's time for an update on planning and development issues to cap last year and look forward to 2024.

Those of us who love Leaside know already that this is a unique community that deserves to be cared for and to evolve in a manner that is open to the future, yet builds on and embraces its roots.

It's clear that Leaside, once known as a "stable community," is in major physical upheaval with tall towers coming to the Focus Areas around the Leaside and Laird LRT stations, mid-rise on the avenues, and renovation/rebuilding in the neighbourhood. While the coming of the Eglinton LRT has been the underlying driver of change, we need to examine provincial and municipal government decision-making to really understand the dynamics of change. And while in previous updates we have noted Leaside's "centre of gravity" moving north and east (Eglinton, east of Laird), more recent events will (eventually) also lead to major density on Leaside's west side (Bayview and Eglinton).

Focus areas

The City initiated planning studies including *Eglinton Connects* and the *Bayview and Laird Focus Areas Studies* to address the expected land use impacts of the Eglinton LRT over 10 years ago. As such, up until fairly recently (2019) we can say that, despite several appeals to the provincial tribunal, in the main, development applications reflected City Council's direction, following development and adoption of Focus Area plans, with extensive public consultation. The development applications and approvals we have seen on both Bayview and Laird south of Eglinton, and in Leaside East (Eglinton, Laird to Brentcliffe) have basically followed the massing, height and density limits proposed in plans approved by the City.

But things changed, at least for Bayview Avenue, after the City submitted the City Council-adopted Yonge Eglinton Secondary Plan (Official Plan Amendment OPA 405) to the province for approval, in 2018. When the province "returned" OPA 405, in June, 2019, it contained 194 changes, mostly increasing the permitted height limits, without any public (or even City) consultation. At Bayview and Broadway, for instance, the permitted height rose from eight to a mandated 20 to 35 storeys. Three months later, a developer submitted an application for a 25-storey tower on five properties they had assembled on the east side of Bayview south of Broadway. This was followed by eight other applications in the Bayview and Eglinton area for towers in the 25- to 46-storey range, one for the (expected) overbuild of the Leaside LRT station, three on the west side of Bayview, and four on Eglinton west of Bayview. Most of the developments have been appealed to the Ontario Land Tribunal, taking them out of the hands of the City to decide. We (the Leaside Residents Association) are now having to deal with these applications, along with the Broadway Area Residents Association (BARA), a newly emergent residents' association on the west side of Bayview (north of Eglinton), and the South Eglinton Davisville Residents' Association (SEDRA) (south of Eglinton).

To date, 1837-45 Bayview (at Broadway) is the only one of the nine OPA 405-related applications at Bayview and Eglinton the Ontario Land Tribunal has decided. Despite enormous effort and funds raised by the community, the Bayview Broadway Better Planning Group secured a three-storey reduction (from 25 to 22 storeys) – a far cry from what the City-adopted plan for the area would have yielded (max eight storeys). It appears that City Planning was unwilling to devote the time and effort required to fight the 1837-45 Bayview proposal, suggesting their acquiescence to the provincial override of the City's adopted plan.

Neighbourhoods

The second area of change is in the Neighbourhoods-designated lands, with a City Planning program called *Enhancing Housing Opportunities in Neighbourhoods* (EHON). The planning framework is changing, with the elimination of restrictions allowing only single-family homes, and permitting denser housing typologies (the so-called "missing middle"), including laneway suites, garden suites and multiplexes with four units, and up to six storeys on "Major Streets."

The Leaside residential neighbourhood is entirely built up and so far, we are not seeing much of this type of change. We know of one laneway house and one garden suite constructed in the area to date. We continue to see more applications for what amount to monster home rebuilds, rather than additional units (like multiplexes). More extensive change is possible if the Major Streets initiative is approved.

Minor variances and severances

The Committee of Adjustment continues to be as busy as ever with hearings every couple of weeks. The big change here is the provincial decision to eliminate residents' right of appeal, while retaining that of the

applicant (and the City). This makes participation of residents at the Committee of Adjustment that much more critical.

Heritage

The Province passed legislation (Bill 23) that will effectively eliminate listed properties from the Heritage Register on January 1, 2025 that are not designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act* in the meantime. Leaside has 11 designated properties, eight individually listed properties, including the Lea homes on Sutherland Drive and Heather Road, and 31 multiple listed properties on Bayview. The City is considering the listed properties on the Heritage Register (4,000+ properties) and will prioritize those most threatened with development. Designation reports involve extensive research, and lengthy approval processes. This makes it likely that many listed properties will lose their protection, and (reflecting a particularly vindictive streak in the provincial government) will not be eligible for listing again for five years.

It's clear we are seeing unprecedented interventions by the Province that overrule the City's plans, without further consideration for infrastructure requirements and both hard and soft services. Even changes proposed by the City have little real public engagement. (To be fair to Mayor Chow, she changed the 2024 City budget process and opened public consultation before, rather than only after the budget goes to committee!) There continue to be two alternatives for Leaside: We can sleep-walk and leave the future of the community to the Province, the City, and the development industry; or we can inform ourselves and play a central role in planning the type of community we want and expect the City to foster. I know which one I choose.

Spotlight on Leaside heritage – impacts of Bill 23

Jaye Robinson Councillor, Ward 15, Don Valley West

Across Toronto, our city's history is told through the unique buildings that line our streets. This is certainly the case in Leaside, where buildings including the Art Deco Garden Court Apartments, Talbot Apartments and the historically significant Agnes Macphail House showcase our neighbourhood's storied past. Community organizations such as the Leaside Heritage Preservation Society and the Leaside Residents Association continue to do their part to recognize and preserve the character of this historic neighbourhood.

Many Leasiders will have heard me speak about the impacts of recent provincial planning legislation such as Bill 23, *More Homes Built Faster Act*, which has undermined local decision-making in the development process. One of the lesser known impacts of Bill 23 is that it weakens the Ontario Heritage Act by limiting the City's ability to protect heritage properties from redevelopment. Namely, Bill 23 has eliminated the protection of "listed" properties – a heritage status that requires the owner to provide advance notice if demolition is planned. This notice offers City staff an opportunity to evaluate the property and recommend formal designation when appropriate. Unfortunately, Bill 23 introduced a two-year deadline for all listed properties to be designated, after which time they would be removed from the provincial register.

In a sobering report to City Council on the impacts of Bill 23, Heritage Planning staff advised that there are currently 3,981 properties listed on the City's heritage register that have not yet been designated and which will lose their status at the end of 2024. Delisted properties will be subject to a five-year waiting period before they can be added back onto the register, during which time they would be left vulnerable to demolition and redevelopment. A follow-up report from Heritage Planning staff with recommended strategies is expected at City Council before the end of this year.

At City Hall, I have pushed for stronger protections to preserve heritage in Don Valley West, including the impressive architectural history of Leaside. Back in June 2021, following the unpermitted demolition of a listed heritage home in Hogg's Hollow, I moved a motion directing staff to strengthen and enhance protections for properties that have cultural heritage value or interest. Last year, I supported the community-led nomination to designate the Crestview Apartments, which are a fine example of low-rise, mid-century architecture – representing the quintessential charm of Leaside. When the OLT Appeal Report for the 1779-1787 Bayview Avenue development application came forward to City Council in October, I directed City Planning and Heritage Planning staff to explore all options to preserve the heritage value of the Talbot Quads.

During a challenging time for heritage preservation, I encourage Leasiders to learn more about the historic buildings that tell the story of your neighbourhood. For example, this Walking Tour of South Leaside includes

many local highlights. Residents looking for opportunities to get involved in preserving Leaside's history are encouraged to contact the Leaside Heritage Preservation Society.

EVENTS

LEASIDE GARDEN SOCIETY

Speaker Series. February 8th, 7p.m. via Zoom. Guest speaker: Joyce Hostyn. Topic: *Perfectly Imperfect Lawns.*

The Garden Society welcomes guests and new members to join. Visit: www.leasidegardensociety.org or email: leaside@gardenontario.org for info.

ST. CUTHBERT'S CHURCH

1399 Bayview Ave. 416 485 0329 www.stcuthbertsleaside.com

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

Tues., Feb. 13 – 5:30 p.m. to 7:15 p.m. – free-will offering. Reserving beforehand would be appreciated.

Ash Wednesday. February 14. 10 a.m. Said Service and 7:30 p.m. Sung Service

Tai chi. Tuesdays 1:30 – 2:30 p.m. in Lamb Hall. Suggested donation \$4

ST. AUGUSTINE'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

1847 Bayview Ave.

Friday, Feb 9th, 7:00-9:30 p.m.

Groove Room Coffee House. Listen to great live music by local artists and have a coffee and dessert with friends. \$5 with all proceeds to the Flemingdon Food Bank. We are looking for performers. Contact info@saintaugustine.ca

LEASIDE CURLING CLUB

Sat., March 2 An opportunity to learn about curling with some ice time and refreshments. For more info: see ad on page 22.

REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP FUNDRAISER

Wed., Jan. 31, 6:30 p.m. Royal Canadian Legion, 243 Coxwell Ave.

An evening with Michelle Shephard and Anna Maria Tremonte showing

Michelle's documentary *The Perfect Storm*. Discussion to follow. Tickets are \$22.63 from: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/fundraiser-enjoy-a-documentary-interview-with-the-filmmaker-tickets-763581812757?aff=oddtcreator>.

If you can't make it, help us with a donation at <https://gofund.me/b3e64407>.

CFUW

Thurs., Feb. 15, 7:30 p.m. via Zoom

Emerging technologies and how AI can be used responsibly. Speaker: Ori Freiman, Post Doc Fellow McMaster U Digital Society Lab. For Zoom link: joincfuwley@gmail.com.

LEASIDE LIBRARY

165 McRae Drive 416 396 3835

Needlework Thurs., February 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29 - 10:00-11:30 a.m.

Bring your own knitting or crocheting, or start something new while learning about different library programs and resources.

- *Draw Joy from a Pencil*

Wed., Feb. 14 - 10:00-11:30 a.m. Find the joy in using a simple pencil to create a beautiful piece of art. A laidback session of drawing for everyone from beginners to advanced. Drop-in.

- *Baby Time and Stay-and-Play*

Tues, Feb. 6 and 13 - 10:30-11:30 a.m. Songs and stories for babies to 18 months with parents or caregivers. Storytime followed by *Stay-and-Play*, a fun opportunity for children and parents to socialize. Drop-in.

- *Toddler Time and Stay-and-Play*

Fri., Feb. 2 and 9 - 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Stories, songs and rhymes for children ages 19 months to 3 years with their parents or caregivers. Story time followed by *Stay-and-Play*. Drop-in.

- *After School Club*

Mon., Feb. 5, 12 and 26 - 3:30-4:30 p.m. Join us for afternoons of fun with games, projects and activities. Ages 6-12.

- *Adult Board Games Night*

Tues, Feb. 6, 13, 20 & 27 - 6:00-7:30 p.m. Join us for a night of fun. Bring friends or make new ones. No registration required.

- *Repair Cafe*

Sat., Feb. 17 - 12-3:00 p.m. Bring your broken household items and Repair Café will fix for free and teach you how to DIY! Drop in. ⁿ

We held our first post-pandemic AGM!

Carol Burtin Fripp

Co-president, LRA

Toward the end of 2023 the Leaside Residents Association held our first in-person Annual General Meeting since the pandemic. We were pleased to see a good turnout of attendees, many armed with questions on a variety of local issues.

Much can be said for the convenience of virtual meetings, but they lack the directness and sense of access that getting together in the same room offers. The LRA looks forward to being able to hold more in-person neighbourhood meetings as issues arise and as public health regulations permit.

Many of the municipal issues dealt with by the LRA also involve the provincial and federal levels of government, and vice versa. This was reflected in our AGM's guest list: all three levels of government were well represented. Don Valley West MPP Stephanie Bowman reported from Queen's Park. MP Rob Oliphant's constituency office manager, Patricia LeFebour, updated the audience on federal issues affecting Don Valley West. Councillor Jaye Robinson's Chief of Staff Rachel Van Fraassen and Manager of Stakeholder Relations and Communications Rachael Hillier also took questions from attendees. My LRA co-president Geoff Kettel updated the meeting on planning and development issues, and I gave a report on recent traffic events.

Guest speaker was David Sit, North York's director of community planning. His replies to comments about the current planning process, and about its changes to the process which directly affect our neighbourhood, underlined that these days the province is effectively in charge. The province has rewritten the city's zoning laws ("everything is on the table").

How does this planning environment affect ratepayer associations like the LRA? Although it adds to the challenge of protecting local priorities, our role in preserving Leaside's character and heritage continues.

But we can only make progress by showing that we represent your support. Your membership in itself strengthens Leaside's voice. It also raises the odds that we will be effective.

That is why it's so important to increase our membership numbers. If you're already an LRA member, thank you. If you are not, please join us. It only costs \$30 annually per household. And if you would be interested in sharing your professional experience, or offering your expertise, please get in touch with us!

Next meeting

The LRA board of directors meets at 7:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday of every month, at the Trace Manes building on Rumsey, just south of Leaside Library. You are welcome to join us – to depute on issues important to you, ask questions, have your say, or just listen.

Our next monthly meeting is on February 7th. For more details and updates between now and then, or to become an LRA member, visit leasideresidents.ca and press the Contact Us button, or leasideresidents.ca/contact-us.