

Georgina THE POST

April 10, 2019
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Serving all Georgina Communities and the Greater Pefferlaw Area

Autism Learning Centre in Keswick lobbies council for letter of support

Robin Konstantopoulos, the owner/operator of the Autism Unplugged Learning Centre in Keswick, asked Georgina council to help her lobby the provincial government to suspend recently announced changes to autism programming until meaningful consultation with stakeholders is completed.

On April 3, Ms. Konstantopoulos told council the changes, which will affect more than 600 children in Georgina, will put a life-time funding cap on support based on the age of the child. She says this cap ignores the previous autism program which offered funding to autistic children based on their "needs" and not their age. And, there was no cap on the funding, she said.

"Funding caps at \$140,000 (for children under 6) and \$55,000 (for children over 6) will not meet the needs of any child with autism requiring ABA (applied behavior analysis) therapy," she says.

The original changes to the plan were announced in February but recent protests and push back from families have given the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services a reason to rethink the plan and listen to those being affected by the changes.

And Ms. Konstantopoulos wants to keep up the pressure.

In an interview with the Georgina Post she explained that the cost to provide

"meaningful evidence-based" therapy for a child on the autism spectrum is between \$65,000 and \$100,000 a year.

And if, under the new plan, families are only able to spend \$20,000 a year for therapies, it could mean children will be forced back into a school system that is ill-prepared to support their special needs.

Province hands out one-time funding to improve service delivery

Georgina was one of four York Simcoe beneficiaries who will divide \$2 million in provincial funding designed to help small and rural communities upgrade modes of service delivery.

Georgina's share is \$283,088, Bradford West Gwillimbury will receive \$535,004 and East Gwillimbury and Simcoe County will each receive \$725,000.00.

Not eager to look a gift horse in the mouth, Mayor Margaret Quirk said she was very thankful for the money and said council will decide on how to spend it when they review the 2020 budget later this year.

"It is always good to receive additional funds to assist local and small municipalities in delivering services in a more efficient way," Mayor Quirk told MPP Caroline Mulroney when she officially announced the funding at her constituency office in Holland Landing on April 5.

Mayor Quirk did question the formula used by the province to determine the amount each municipality received when she

"What we have in Georgina is already a crisis and that is, in my opinion, because we have nine out of 20 performance plus schools in all of York Region."

A performance plus school is recognized as a school located in neighbourhoods where a greater number of children and families are living in poverty.



learned the one-time funding cheque for Whitchurch Stouffville would be \$427,218.00. "Our populations are very, very similar," she said.

However, according to Ms. Mulroney, population was not the criteria that was used to determine the level of funding each municipality would receive.

"It was based on the number of households," she said, adding the funding was for small, rural communities and a sliding scale was used to increase funding for communities with fewer households.



Sandy Young



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The rubber is going to hit the road

I guess it was bound to happen eventually.

Georgina is going to have to come out of the shadows and publicly declare who and what she is—a tourist destination or not.

A couple of issues have been bubbling at the surface recently and no one seems quite sure how to handle them—all because of Georgina's split personality disorder.

Without digging too deeply into statistics, we know that we are not a manufacturing hub. We know this because 96 per cent of businesses here are in the "services" sector. We also know that most of our working class residents are commuters which probably brings Georgina into the realm of a being a "bedroom community". And let's not forget our agricultural interests either.

So, with Lake Simcoe at our front door and Canada's largest city at our back door, it only stands to reason that Georgina could also be a huge tourist destination—if we want to be, that is.

Because almost without trying, the stresses of living on 52 kilometres of Lake Simcoe waterfront have come here to roost.

Our beaches are crammed in the summer leading to parking issues, garbage and litter. Lakefront cottages and homes have been converted into Air BnB-type venues offering short term rental accommodations (STRA) for vacationers that bring a bucket load of issues on their own.

In an effort to get a handle on the lifestyle impacts and potential solutions, town council has spent \$80,000 on a consultant to come up with a plan to address the STRA issue and another \$125,000 to figure out what to do with our waterfront holdings.

But I think there is a missing piece to this puzzle. Everyone keeps saying that Lake Simcoe is our biggest

asset...and I don't disagree.

But, I haven't seen a study that categorically tells me what the economic value of that asset is, or what the potential value of the asset could be if we took full advantage of it.

How much does the tourism dollar in Georgina amount to in a calendar year? And, if we expanded our waterfront assets (boat launches, more parking, beach investments etc.) with an eye on attracting more tourism, what could that mean to the future health of our economy? Alternatively, if we turn some of our beach parking spaces into resident-only parking, shut down STRAs and don't invest in additional waterfront amenities, what would the economic impact be throughout the Town?

I think we are going to have to come to grips with who we are and who we want to be sooner than later. That is the only way we are going to get it right.

Karen Wolfe, Editor

Georgina
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Serving all Georgina Communities and the Greater Pefferlaw Area

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Group organizes to lobby for fair property taxes in Georgina

A group of concerned and engaged residents is not going to sit back and accept annual increases in property taxes well above the rate of inflation and they are looking for like-minded individuals to join them.

According to the organizers of the Georgina Fair Tax Association (GFTA), the group is preparing to lobby local government against escalating and unfair tax increases and looking for accountability at the Civic Centre.

"Georgina Council wants to embark on our largest ever capital spending spree that is of great concern to us," said Peter Waring, a spokesperson for the GFTA. "We will be asking Council to explain in great detail how and why they are spending taxpayer dollars." The group has created a website and is asking residents to sign up if they are interested in lobbying for fair property taxes. "Right now we want to go out to the community and gauge the interest in joining the Georgina Fair Tax Association," Mr. Waring said.

He went on to say there is no cost to membership in the association and interested parties are encouraged to visit: Georginafairtaxassociation.ca The Town of Georgina's 3.6 per cent property tax increase in

2019 is expected to top four per cent over the next three years.

"There is growing sense of discontent with Council's fiscal management," said Mr. Waring.

"In seven years our population has grown by nine per cent while our Town staff has grown by 35 per cent. Who is looking

out for the average taxpayer?" While fair taxation is the primary goal of the group, they will focus a critical eye on capital projects and operating expenditures that impact tax increases.

Mr. Waring said the organizers believe many communities have benefitted from organized ratepayer associations. "There is power in numbers and the more people we can sign up, the greater our influence will be."

It has been suggested the timing for the formation of the group is ideal since the Town is currently focussed on a number of new capital projects totalling \$82 million and staff will begin planning for the 2020 budget program in May of this year.



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They Shall Not Grow Old by Mike Anderson

Oscar-winning director Peter Jackson's groundbreaking WW1 documentary "They Shall Not Grow Old," was screened to packed houses at the GEM Theatre in Keswick on March 30th and March 31st, with proceeds going to support the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 356, in Sutton, and the Georgina Military Museum.

Best known for directing "The Lord of The Rings" film trilogy, Jackson's documentary is a technical tour de force, transforming archival black-and-white WW1 footage into full-motion colour, and combining it with original audio recordings of WW1 veterans telling their stories.

"It's fabulous, a really well-done movie," said Mayor Margaret Quirk, who approached R.J. Gorman, 58, owner of the GEM, with the idea of screening the film as a fundraiser. "When you think of WW1 you think of life in the trenches and this movie really brings it to life. "

Colourizing old film is nothing

new, but Jackson's production team took it a step further, adding realistic sound effects and actual dialogue to the previously silent footage.

Various WW1 weapons were carefully recorded, and forensic lip readers were used to find out what the soldiers were really saying, allowing actors voices to be dubbed into the film.

The result is captivating. History comes to life before our eyes. It is hard not to feel an emotional connection with these young men, some just 15, 16 and 17-years old, having lied about their age, as we follow them from enlistment, through basic training and on to the front lines.

But there is also a terrible foreboding, as we know the fate that befalls many of them. As Jackson points out in the film's trailer, many of the soldiers filmed before the start of an attack would die only minutes later. "We are witnesses to their last moments," he said. That sacrifice resonated

Continued on page 5...

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Continued from page 4.

with many who watched the film. "We need to remember them for what they did," said Peter Leach, 60, who serves on the executive council for the Sutton Legion. "A lot of people couldn't do that now. That's why I went over to Vimy. I went there to see what they went through."

"You and I live the life we live because of the sacrifices these people made," said Sid Giddings, 79, president of the Georgina Military Museum. "They gave their lives, they gave their limbs, they gave their minds. We still owe them so much."

"We don't have to wait for Remembrance Day to remember," added Mayor Quirk. "This film is a great opportunity to see what happened over a hundred years ago in France that really, from a historical perspective, was a defining moment in Canadian History." While British troops are front and centre in the film, there are some brief shots of Canadian railway troops, who operated the light railways behind the British trenches.

Mr. Giddings says the funds will be put towards the purchase of a new HVAC system, needed to protect hundreds of artifacts. There are also plans to open a walk-through re-creation of a WW1 trench by April 19th, complete with firing bays, a communication post, officer's latrine and the occasional dead rat, fake of course.

The Sutton Legion's share of the funds will be used to maintain the Sutton Cenotaph, located on High Street.

The film was also screened to grade 10 history students from several local high schools, including Keswick and Sutton District High Schools. "We do a lot with the schools," Mr. Gorman said. "If there's a movie that has some curriculum bite to it, I pitch it to all the schools. If we learn in a fun environment, it sticks with us." Indeed, if you get a chance to see this film, it will stick with you. The GEM will screen the film again on Saturday, April 20 at 4:00 p.m. Tickets are \$10 at the door or \$7.50 in advance.

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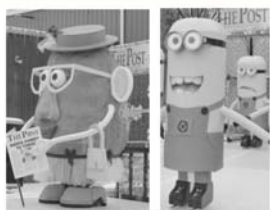
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Council to discuss resident-only beach parking on April 17

On Wednesday, April 17 Georgina councillors will discuss the possibility of creating a resident-only parking area at De La Salle park as a pilot project this summer.

A Notice of Motion to prepare an implementation strategy for a resident-only parking lot was tabled by Regional Councillor Rob Grossi on March 27.

But Mayor Margaret Quirk made it clear at that meeting that she did not want the subject of a resident-only parking lot discussed without a staff report which would not be ready until April 17.

"I don't disagree with looking at the idea of a residents-only parking lot, but to me it makes sense to look at it with the report that staff have been working on," Mayor Quirk said.

Mr. Grossi said he wanted the motion dealt with before the report so it could provide direc-

tion to staff while they were preparing the report on parking and other issues associated with overcrowding at Georgina beaches.

"I think it gives direction to staff to include a resident-only parking lot as part of the report. We haven't given direction so I'm saying this motion will give direction," Mr. Grossi said.

However, when his motion came back to council on April 4 for discussion, Mayor Quirk's preference to have the resident-only motion dealt with when the report was ready, was realized when Councillor Harding moved to defer Mr. Grossi's motion until April 17.

Mayor Quirk quickly told council members that because the motion to defer takes precedence over Mr. Grossi's motion, it effectively eliminated any opportunity to discuss Mr. Grossi's motion until April 17.



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Intergenerational cooking program builds friendships between seniors and youth

There's nothing better than creating a nice, wholesome meal in the kitchen with friends. Cooking together is something that has brought people together for centuries, and eating together bonds friends, families, and strangers alike. Starting in April, Georgina senior residents (ages 55+) and youth (ages 12 – 15) can sign up for Intergenerational Cooking classes. This initiative aims to teach teens and adults to cook and shop for healthy, affordable and accessible food, while learning from one another and making new friends and connections.

The program, coordinated by Routes Connecting Communities, is funded by The Government of Canada through the New Horizons for Seniors program and is a collaboration between Routes and Cori's Catering.

By facilitating the transportation to the classes, Routes connects people to their community, enhances community engagement and helps create new social connections.

Stressing the importance of the intergenerational aspect, "the whole premise is about having seniors and youth work together to bridge the gap between them," says Cori, the Executive Chef of Cori's Catering. "For example, there might be a senior who has skills to teach a student, and vice versa. We are going to pair them up that way so that maybe a senior that has only seasoned with salt will be paired with a student that has some ethnic cooking experience." The young people offer vitality and our older participants offer the wisdom and experience that comes with having a few more years on this earth than our younger ones. On top of that, Cori and her team member Jen are also teaching the group about using local ingredients and cooking with non-processed foods.

"We want to make things available to people who may not have that opportunity," says Cori. "We want people to be aware of how wonderful our area is. We are surrounded by farms, so what

we bring to these classes is knowing where your food is coming from. We want to educate both seniors and students that you can support local farms first. Wouldn't a tomato taste so much better if it came from half a kilometre from here?"

"We are educating that there is food outside of processed," says Jen. "We show them that this is a real carrot, not a bag of pre-peeled. We encourage them with their knife skills, and then any food that we work with we have them try it to see that they like things they may not realize."

While they get paired randomly as strangers, Cori and Jen say many students and seniors look forward to catching up each session. Connection is so important for seniors, and the students provide a lively breath of fresh air for many participants. If you'd like to participate in one of the six four-week sessions, free of charge, contact Shelley at (905) 722-4616.

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Fan Fest 4 at Keswick Library

Hundreds of kids, many dressed as their favourite super hero or storybook character, descended on the Keswick Library on Saturday, April 6 to meet and greet their comic book legends and take part in the dozens of activities. The kids had a chance to meet Spider-Man, Princess Jasmine, Captain and Ms. Marvel, Black Panther and Mary Poppins among others. They went on to dance with the PAW Patrol gang, attend a class at Hogwarts and discover insider tips and tricks when building with Lego. The event just seems to get bigger and better every year. According to promotional materials, Georgina's FanFest is dedicated to film, graphic novels, comics, gaming, fan culture, and other related pop art forms. Its goal is to honour and celebrate the historic and ongoing contribution of fandom to literacy, art and culture.



These Star Wars characters were a huge hit at Fan Fest 4 at the Keswick Library on Sat. April 6.



Future heavy equipment operators Finn Kosuna (left) and Eric Liu (right) spend sometime driving trucks and building bridges.



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Staffing changes costly in 2018

Last year was an expensive year for the Town of Georgina when it came to paying salaries for two of its top wage earning positions.

Combined, it cost taxpayers approximately \$750,000.00 in 2018 to keep the positions of Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and Director of Operations and Infrastructure filled. According to Ontario's Sunshine List which identifies public servants earning more than \$100,000, the Town of Georgina paid former CAO Winanne Grant \$236,165 in 2018. Ms. Grant was off work on medical leave from May 4 until December, during which time Dave Reddon was installed as Acting CAO with a salary of \$192,397.00.

On February 16, 2018 the then Director of Operations and Infrastructure Dan Pisani, left the Town's employ but was

paid a salary of \$174,670.00 for the entire year. Mr. Robert Armstrong, with a salary of \$166,716 was then brought in to fill the position for the remainder of the year.

In 2018, 66 town employees hit the Sunshine List with salaries over \$100,000—31 of which were employed with the Georgina Fire Department. The 2017 Sunshine List recorded 57 Georgina employees making over \$100,000.00. The Town's total salary expense in 2018 was \$32.4 million and represented 47 per cent of all operating expenses. In 2019, that number will increase to \$33.9 million and represent 48 per cent of all operating expenditures. This \$1.5 million increase in 2019 pertains to new staffing requests, increased payroll costs (CPP, EI etc.) and annualized salary approvals.

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In and Around TOWN



A vigil at the Link on Sunday, March 24 provided an opportunity for a standing-room only crowd to come together in solidarity to mourn the loss of victims who died and those who were injured in a Christchurch mosque attack in New Zealand on March 15. The vigil was officiated by Mohammed Bemet, Rabbi Yossi Vorovitch and Pastor Grant Verdood. Following the service Mayor Margaret Quirk asked those attending to form a circle of love and stand together against hate and violence.



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Lobby group launches campaign in Georgina to protect Lake Simcoe



Isaac Murdoch puts the finishing touches on a poster carrying an image he created for the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition's Protect our Plan (POP) campaign.

The campaign launch of a Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition initiative to improve the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan attracted close to 100 participants at the Link on Saturday, March 23.

According to Claire Malcolmson, Executive Director of the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition, the campaign, "Protect our Plan" will raise awareness about what the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan does and how it would be improved during its legislated statutory review this year on its tenth anniversary.

"Along with our member groups and supporters, the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition looks forward to working with the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks on setting a course for Lake Simcoe that recognizes and addresses the threats to the lake's health," Ms. Malcolmson said.

The launch event featured a blessing of water by Georgina Island First Nation member Becky Big Canoe who said, "My Elders' directive is to do everything I can to protect the water and that's what I am doing. For us at Georgina Island, Lake Simcoe's health is a daily concern."



Elio Riccelli and his family were hosts to dozens of local well wishers and dignitaries who dropped by the Italian eatery on March 23 to help celebrate the official opening of the restaurant. Located on High Street in Sutton, guests were challenged to try and sample the many delicious culinary delights served up at the event.



Smiles all around for MPP Caroline Mulroney (left), John Anderson (centre) and Tom Jones, President of the Sutton Curling Club. Ms. Mulroney officially announced a \$139,500 Ontario Trillium Foundation grant for renovations at the club. Mr. Smith said the money will help reinforce the roof and resurface the ice



Georgina council and staff reached out to the community on Tuesday, March 26 by inviting them to drop by the Civic Centre and provide feedback on two separate park designs. Consultants provided full colour artistic concepts for the redevelopment of West Park in Keswick and a new community park in Sutton located behind the new housing development on the north side of Baseline Road.



WOW!! Violet and Bill Kirton each celebrated 100 years young at Egypt Hall on Sunday, April 6. Violet turned 100 on Feb. 17 and her husband Bill followed suit on April 3. The couple celebrated their 79th wedding anniversary in January. The couple resides at River Glen Nursing Home in Sutton and received dozens of friends, family and well wishers during the celebrations. Congratulations to you both!!

Easter Bunny makes early visit to Port Bolster

With help from the Keswick Optimist Club, members of the Port Bolster Hall Board played host to the Easter Bunny and dozens of youngsters eager to fill a basket full of eggs. Prizes, refreshments and crafts meant a good time was had by all.



Families lined up for their visit and photo op with the Easter Bunny.



Sisters Miranda, 11, and Thea Mulroney, 13, have some fun with the eggs after filling their baskets.

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Coming Events & Announcements

Orientation for the Customer Service and Retail Training program by Yorkworks in Sutton is on Thurs. April 11 with training beginning on April 15. Call (905) 722-1480 for more details.

On Saturday, April 13, be at the Zehrs Food Market in Keswick between 9:00 am and 3:00 pm to support the York Regional Police volunteers in their Annual Easter Food Drive for the Georgina Food Pantry.

Don't forget the Sutton Fair Annual Silent Auction at 7:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 13 at the Kin Hall on Fairpark Lane in Sutton.

The Georgina Trades and Training Centre is hosting its 3rd Annual Spring Holiday Shop on Sunday, April 14 at the Link between 11:00 am and 3:00 pm. Entry is \$1 or a non perishable food item.

Check out the new art display at the Georgina Art Centre on Sun. Apr. 14 from 1:00 to 3:00 pm. Local artist Show and Tell.

On Saturday, April 20, RJ Gorman at the GEM Theatre will be having another screening of the celebrated WWI film "They Shall Not Grow Old." Receipts from the film will support the Georgina Military Museum and the Sutton Legion. Show starts at 4:00 p.m.

If you would like to do some reminiscing about the Red Barn, come on out to the Lake Simcoe Arms on Sat. Apr. 20 at 7:00 p.m. for a Red Barn Commemorative Reunion and Open House. \$15.00. Email mkoning@rogers.com for more details.

The Optimist Club of Keswick Annual Easter Egg Hunt will be held on Sat. Apr. 20 from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm at 153 Kerrick Ave. in Keswick.

There will be an Easter Sunday Service at St. James Church on River St. in Sutton on Sun. April 21 at 10:30 a.m.

The Lake Simcoe Gardeners will be hosting their April meeting on April 22 at 7:30 p.m. at the Keswick United Church. Speaker is Jeff Mason and the subject is "Drought Gardening" plus the members houseplant show.

Club 55 in Keswick proudly presents a Dinner Tribute show on April 26 featuring James Begley as Buddy Holly and Jackson Begley as Ritchie Valens. Fun starts at 6:00, dinner at 7:00, show at 8:00. Tickets \$20.

A Tribute to Bruce Springsteen will rock the Stephen Leacock Theatre on Sat. April 27. Doors open at 6:30 pm. This is a fundraising event for the Military Museum and

the Feral Cat Committee.

Jericho Youth Services is sponsoring a fundraising Trivia Night on Sat. April 27 at 7:00 p.m. at the Link. Dinner, prizes and cash bar. Tickets \$40.00.

CELEBRATIONS

Helen Glover is turning 100 years young and celebrations will be held during an Open House at the Keswick United Church on Sunday, April 14 from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. All welcome.

Drop into the ROC on Saturday, April 13 and deliver your best wishes to **Keith Smith** of Ravenshoe who will be celebrating his 90th Birthday.

On Sunday, April 20 **Vern Lavender** will celebrate his 90th birthday at Dar's Café in Pefferlaw. Drop in and say Hello!

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SUTTON BIA



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