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FREE ISSUE

Town of Georgina threatens LSRCA with legal action

By MIKE ANDERSON

The DG Group surrendered its section 28 permit to the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) on August 19, just hours before Georgina Town Council unanimously passed a motion calling on LSRCA to accept the surrender and threatening legal action should the conservation authority reissue the permit.

The motion, introduced by Ward 3 Councillor Dave Neeson, during an evening virtual council session, follows on the heels of the LSRCA's controversial decision to reissue the section 28 permit on June 18, granted originally to the DG Group on March 23, 2018.

The section 28 permit allows the developer to bulldoze a 500 acre section of the North Gwillimbury Forest, comprised of provincially significant wetlands and woodlands, to build Maple Lake Estates (MLE), a 1,073-unit subdivision to be located north of Deer Park Rd, in North Keswick.

The permit was reissued by LSRCA even though an LPAT ruling on December 19, 2019, designated the MLE lands as an Environmental Protection Area (EPA), and ordered the Town to rezone the lands.

That ruling was unsuccessfully challenged this spring by the DG Group, after LPAT



DEMONSTRATION HELD AT RIVER GLEN HAVEN

Southlake takeover extended at RGH

By MIKE ANDERSON

With Southlake's 90-day takeover of River Glen Haven expiring on August 24, the Ministry of Long-Term Care stepped-in at the last minute and extended it by another 30 days.

"All parties have agreed that more time is needed, so the licensee and hospital are

entering into a voluntary management contract that will extend Southlake Regional Health Centre's temporary management of River Glen Haven by 30 days," said Gillian Sloggett, a spokesperson for Long-Term Care Minister Merrilee Fullerton in an email to The Post.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

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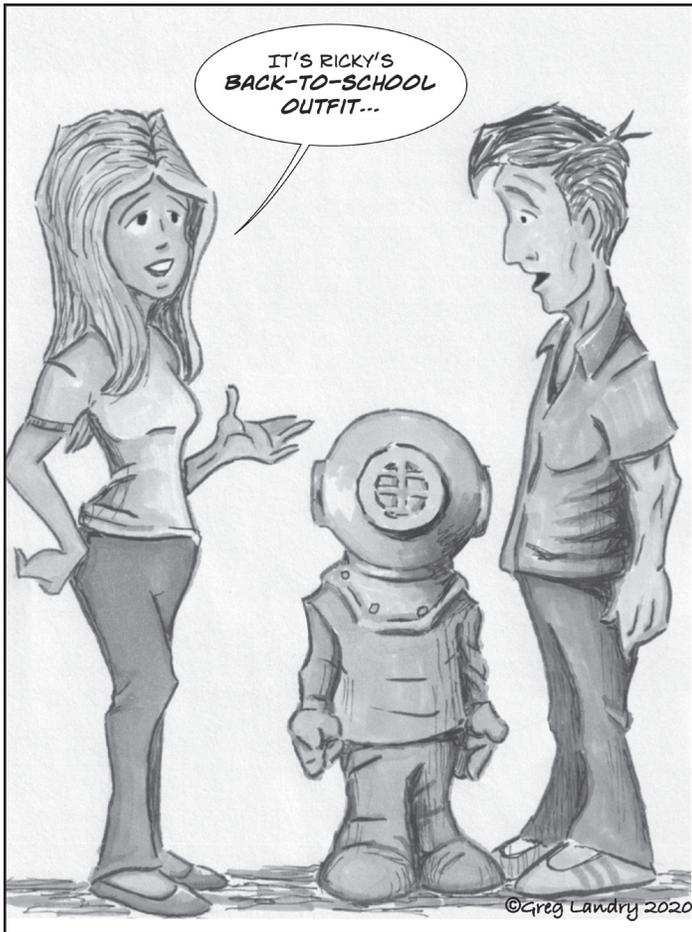
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SOUTHLAKE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“The voluntary management contract provides additional time in order to ensure a safe transition of River Glen Haven back to management by the licensee. As always, the safety and well being of residents and staff remains our shared priority, and the Ministry of Long-Term Care will continue our close monitoring of conditions at the home.”

The 30-day extension comes after the Ford government, in part responding to calls from the official Opposition, indicated on August 21 that it was prepared to extend the takeover of some homes as their contracts were set to expire.

While family members welcomed the extension, some, like Maureen McDermott, said it doesn’t go far enough.

She would like Southlake’s takeover to continue until a public inquiry can be held.

“It’s a bit of a band-aid solution. But I feel that we have some time to breathe and get a full public inquiry going with full transparency and accountability. And that should happen before there’s even a discussion about ATK Care getting its license back,” she said.

Gayle Seddon, Southlake’s Executive Lead for River Glen Haven, also issued a joint statement with ATK Care Chief Operation Officer Jordan Kannampuzha on August 24.

Ms. Seddon said that Southlake, which has been managing the day-to-day operations of the home, would be transitioning these responsibilities back to ATK Care and “look forward to continuing our work with staff, physicians and ATK Care to improve the quality of care for residents and prepare the home for a potential second wave of COVID-19”.

However, according to a source, those working relationships have become strained.

There has been friction



MPP LISA GRETZKY

between Dr. Craig Donaldson, River Glen’s Chief Medical Officer, and Mr. Kannampuzha, the home’s owner, during transition meetings, mainly over the cost of the critical care plan submitted by Southlake and Dr. Donaldson to ATK Care.

Dr. Donaldson has since resigned his position in protest but will continue to work at the home during the transition period.

The 30-day extension also follows sustained pressure by family members, some of whom took to Sutton’s streets on August 14.

They rallied in front of River Glen Haven, holding up signs and receiving honks of support from passing motorists.

Most demanded the province extend Southlake’s takeover of River Glen Haven, one of only three LTC homes to be subjected to a mandatory management order during the pandemic.

The other eight homes taken over were under voluntary management orders, having asked the province for help.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

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Editorial: LSRCA goes rogue

The Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority's (LSRCA) controversial renewal of a section 28 permit, which grants the DG Group permission to bulldoze a large section of the North Gwillimbury Forest, should signal there is something wrong with our local conservation authority.

After all, the LSRCA's decision to renew the permit on June 18 occurred after an LPAT ruling declaring DG Group's Maple Lake Estates (MLE) lands to be an Environmental Protection Area (EPA) was upheld on May 14, effectively halting any development on the MLE lands pending rezoning by the Town.

LSRCA's actions regarding the section 28 permits - granting the original permit to DG Group in 2018 and again renewing the permit this spring - have forced the Town to threaten legal action twice.

LSRCA has also nurtured a cozy relationship with major developers through its Lake Simcoe Conservation Foundation (LSCF), despite its pledge to

protect the watershed from their shovels.

According to DG Group's website, the developer is a significant contributor to LSRCA's new \$6.5 million Scanlon Creek Nature Centre in Bradford — donating \$250,000 in 2019 — and regularly gives generously to its annual conservation dinner, which raises more than \$200,000 each year. The LSCF's 2018 Gratitude Report lists DG Group as a "Lake Simcoe Steward Sponsor" for the 30th annual conservation dinner, which means DG Group forked out \$20,000 for that honour.

Why didn't LSRCA decline DG Group's request to renew the section 28 permit? Was it a fear of biting the hand that feeds it? We may never know because LSRCA's permit approvals are not subject to public review.

LSRCA needs to be brought into the 21st century. Its decisions, especially those regarding development in the Lake Simcoe watershed, need to be more accountable and transparent.



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LSRCA CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

denied its request for review on May 14, which promoted the Town to begin the process of rezoning the MLE lands as an EPA, which is due to completed this fall.

Despite LPAT rejecting its final appeal, the DG Group asked LSRCA to reissue its section 28 permit, which was set to expire on July 3.

The new permit was approved on June 18 by Robert Baldwin, LSRCA's General Manager of Planning and Development, and covers two years, from June 18, 2020, to June 18, 2022.

While subject to a series of conditions, including Town regulations and bylaws, the permit grants the developer permission to clear the now environmentally protected wetlands and woodlands.

Jack Gibbons, Chair, North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance (NGFA), the local environmental group that opposes the MLE development and forced the LPAT ruling, has accused Mr. Baldwin and LSRCA of acting illegally by reissuing the permit.

"It was unbelievable that LSRCA reissued this wetland destruction permit," said Mr. Gibbons, who believes the news of Mr. Neeson's upcoming motion scared the developer into surrendering the permit.

"The LPAT decision, which designated more than 99% of the Maple Lake Estates lands to be an Environmental Protection Area,

clearly stated that it's off-limits to development. So, it's absolutely outrageous that a conservation authority would give a developer permission to destroy a 500 acre provincially significant wetland."

"It's also unbelievable that a municipality would have to ask a conservation authority to protect a wetland when that's the mandate of the conversation authority."

Despite DG Group surrendering the permit, Mr. Neeson, who has opposed the MLE development for years, believes that his motion will act as an insurance policy, ensuring that LSRCA complies with the Town's demands not to reissue another section 28 permit.

"Quite frankly I don't trust them. If the DG group doesn't literally go in to hand in the permit and it gets torn up, they could turnaround a month from now, because they got frustrated in terms of assigning a settlement, and say, okay, well, I'm reactivating the permit."

Mr Neeson is also highly critical of LSRCA's role in reissuing the permit.

"The way they went about doing this was completely inappropriate for a partner agency. So, I'm not willing to allow them an opportunity to do it again," he said.

"The Town's clearly stated their intention to rezone and take away those development approvals. So, there needs to be accountability from the conservation authority, for a partner to act in that manner

is completely unreasonable.”

While The POST asked LSRCA CAO Mike Walters to comment on the permit reissue, he declined as the permit was withdrawn, which he said makes the whole issue moot.

However, Mr. Baldwin, who issued the actual permit, did consent to an interview on August 17, prior to the motion being passed.

According to Mr. Baldwin, the LSRCA had no choice but to reissue the permit as MLE is an approved registered subdivision, and declining it would have triggered another LPAT review and possibly legal action against LSRCA by the developer.

He also said the permit was only valid if DG Group has all the appropriate municipal permissions, which, according to Mr. Baldwin, it didn't.

“Our goal is still the same as the Town and the NGFA; it's to find a solution that saves the forest. And that seems at odds with the permit. But we are following a process that's legislated and tied to agreements,” he said.

Mr. Baldwin believes that the dispute will probably end in litigation, but hopes the province gets involved in sorting things out.

“The problem requires provincial assistance. The Town nor the LSRCA has the power to make a broader land-use decision. I hope this permit will help provoke that discussion and

put it back on the front burner,” he said.

“LPAT does not have the right to remove the registered subdivision plan that was approved by an Order-in-Council of Cabinet. So you need the Cabinet to go back in to look at that.”

But Mr. Gibbons is not buying this argument.

“The fact that they were given permission for a subdivision more than 30 years ago is totally irrelevant. Laws change. Yes, they could have done it 30 years ago, but they can't do it now,” he said.

“We now have strict laws to protect provincially significant wetlands, and the courts have made it completely clear that the conservation authority is not allowed to permit the destruction of provincially significant wetlands for a residential subdivision.”

The Town will have to wait for the LSRCA's next Board of Directors meeting on September 25 to confirm that the Board has accepted the permit surrender.

In the meantime, Council has instructed Town staff to follow up with the LSRCA to determine if Mr. Walters or the LSRCA Board approved the permit reissue, or if Mr. Baldwin was acting alone in his capacity as General Manager of Planning and Development.

However, in his interview with The Post, Mr. Baldwin confirmed that the permit reissue was indeed a corporate decision.

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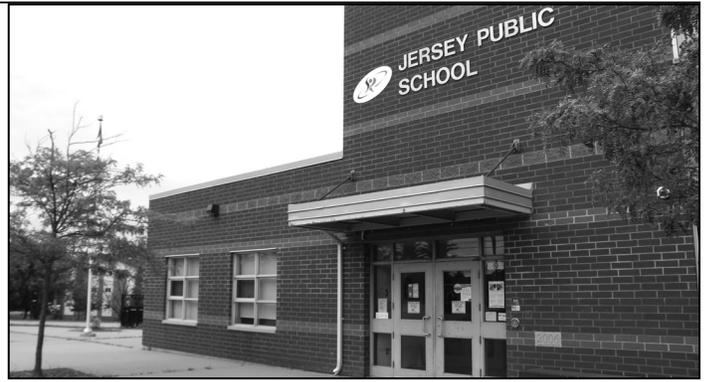
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JERSEY PS IN KESWICK

Local schools get new childcare partners

By MICHELLE POIRIER

Kinark Child and Family Services announced in June that after 25 years, it would not be returning to provide childcare in Georgina.

Kinark's announcement left some parents worried that their children would be without before and after school programming, but two agencies, both with over 30 years of experience, have stepped in to fill the gap.

Jericho Youth Services, a non-profit based in Georgina, will be providing before and after school care at Jersey Public School and Fairwood Public School.

And York Professional Care & Education (YPCE), a non-profit childcare agency based in Aurora, will provide the same programming at Lakeside Public School and R.L. Graham Public School.

Cathy Paul, CEO of Kinark, said they made the difficult decision to permanently close their childcare so they could dedicate their focus on their primary programs of child and youth mental health, autism, forensic mental health, youth justice and therapeutic respite.

"We thank families for allowing us to be part of their family's journey and thank our staff for their dedicated service and caring," she said in an email.

Some of the Kinark staff, who were working at Jersey PS and

Fairwood PS, have been hired back by Jericho.

"We received resumes from Kinark staff, but due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty with school registration, we have hired only five staff in total," Susan Gorman, Executive Director of Jericho, said in an email.

Currently, Jericho provides free after school programs at Morning Glory PS, Keswick PS, Deer Park PS, Black River PS and Our Lady of the Lake Catholic College School.

Jericho's Jersey PS and Fairwood PS programs are licensed childcare and will have comparable rates to other childcare centres, Ms. Gorman said.

"All children who were enrolled with Kinark were given priority, and all children on waitlists were contacted and were able to enroll," she said.

Orsi, a parent of a child who was enrolled with Kinark, said her daughter is starting Senior Kindergarten at R.L. Graham in September.

"I'm very nervous about my kids going back to school and daycare, to be honest, but unfortunately, I don't have a choice as I need to work," she said. "So, I'm glad they found another provider."

She said, signing her daughter

up with YPCE was easy and fast, she just had to email the registration form and was approved within two days.

But she is worried about how teachers and childcare providers will deal with COVID-19, especially explaining to the younger children why they have to follow safety procedures, including keeping their masks on.

Students in grades 4 to 12 will be required to wear a mask, and children in Kindergarten to grade 3 are strongly encouraged to wear a mask, according to the York Region District School Board's (YRDSB) Return to School Plan Fall 2020.

Ms. Gorman said Jerico would follow YRDSB's COVID-19 safety protocols, including daily health screenings for staff, disinfecting, washing hands, physical distancing, contact tracing and being vigilant for signs and symptoms of

COVID-19.

"We are currently running a small camp on Georgina Island, and we have pride in the fact that we can keep campers safe and provide a fun and memorable summer experience. We will be bringing this same outlook to our new before and after school childcare," she said.

At home childcare providers are also preparing for the new safety requirements. Tracy Magee has been providing childcare in Georgina for approximately 25 years and expects to get all her kids back after closing in March.

"With the kids coming back to the house after school, there will be steps to make sure they're washing their hands, sanitizing and being aware of one another," she said.

Schools will reopen on September 8, and YRDSB has announced that the start date for each grade will be staggered.

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SOUTHLAKE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

But the RGH management team, unable to contain the COVID-19 outbreak that claimed the lives of 37 residents, was forced to step aside — an important distinction for the demonstrators.

Alexandria Batten, who's grandmother is a resident of RGH, doesn't want to see ATK Care back in charge.

"I don't want ATK Care to get their license back. I don't think they're ready. I think they need more planning and adequate staffing on the floors."

Despite improvements made under Southlake's management, she said there are still issues at the nursing home that need addressing.

On a recent visit to see her grandmother, she saw PPE not being correctly used, and empty sanitization stations.

She also said her grandmother, who's blind and has dementia,

isn't getting the extra liquids she needs to avoid dehydration.

"They just leave them in a clear cup on her desk. She's blind and can't see that. She also has dementia, so she doesn't know what it's for," she said.

The demonstrators were joined by two Ontario NDP MPPs, Windsor West MPP Lisa Gretzky and Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates, outspoken critics of the Ford government's handling of LTC homes during the pandemic.

Both were adamant that ATK Care should not be allowed back into River Glen Haven.

"It shouldn't happen because the private owner of this facility, and the government, have not addressed systemic issues, like staffing levels," said Ms. Gretzky, who is also the Ontario NDP critic for community and social services.

"The situation here is still very precarious. And to bring

that private owner back in and hand the keys over when those systemic issues haven't been addressed, I think is putting the residents at great risk. Thirty-seven people died here because profits were being put before care."

Mr. Gates also believes chronic staffing shortages, like those experienced at River Glen Haven, contributed to the spread of COVID-19 in privately-run LTC homes and wants the province to take them over.

"The company that owned this home caused the problem in this community. Thirty-seven people lost their lives unnecessarily," he said.

"In private-run homes, there are shareholders and CEOs; only 49 cents of every dollar goes into the care of residents. In a publicly funded long-term care facility, it's 79 cents. The reality is that the profit that is being driven into

the shareholder's and the CEO's hands should be going back into care."

While Ms. McDermott concedes that not all private owners are at fault, she would like those who fail to invest in care stripped of their licenses.

"They're not all horrible. We know that some have put the money into care and weren't affected by COVID. It's these profits over care owners that need to be stopped. They need to be exposed for who they are."



MAUREEN MCDERMOTT (LEFT)

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LEGION BOTTLE DRIVE

Legion raises \$12K to pay bills

By MICHELLE POIRIER

Volunteers and members of the Sutton Legion Branch 356 held a major bottle drive on August 15. But this time it wasn't to help a local charity. The money raised is needed to keep the branch operating.

Peter Leach, First Vice-President of the Sutton Legion, organized the drive, the first-ever held for the Legion.

"Without the Legion being open, we're unable to make any money to pay our bills; without that, we'll be closed. So we needed to do something," Mr. Leach said.

As well as the bottle donations, Mr. Leach said he has been receiving e-transfers from friends from around the country that used to live in Georgina and want to help support the Legion.

"Everybody has a connection to this Legion somehow, between baseball sponsorships, hockey sponsorships, weddings, birthdays, everything," he said.

According to Mr. Leach, the bottle drive raised \$4K, with cash donations adding \$8K, for a total of \$12K raised.

Russ and Nancy Goheen, from Pefferlaw, have been accumulating beer bottles in their garage for the past year and ended up donating 32 cases to the bottle drive. "The club's on hard times right now and since the Pefferlaw beer return is not open the bottles have been accumulating in my garage, and I thought a good way to get rid

of them was to take them to the Legion," Mr. Goheen said.

He said he and his wife attend the Legion Remembrance Day service every year, and they wanted to support the Legion any way they could.

Steven Wiebe, President of Branch 356, said the best thing the community can do is to continue to show their support by showing up when then Legion has fundraisers and to attend their annual Remembrance Day Parades in Keswick and Sutton.

Since March, the branch has been closed but has still had to pay the heat, hydro, telephone and insurance.

"You must become creative in the way you do things. We've been fortunate so far, to be able to continue to pay our bills, so that's been good, it's very tough for some other Legions," Mr. Wiebe said.

He said now that some COVID-19 restrictions are lifting they have been getting inquiries about hosting events, but that is it something they are still working out.

Mr. Leach said the Sutton Legion plans an outdoor barbeque to raise more money in a few weeks and that they may schedule another bottle drive in the fall. "It makes me feel good because they know that when we're back on our feet, we'll be helping the community again. And that's what it's all about. They help us; we help them."



SUTTON TD BRANCH

Sutton TD reopens on Sept 8

By MIKE ANDERSON

After being closed for nearly five months, the Sutton TD branch at 20865 Dalton Rd is set to reopen on September 8.

“Our branch in Sutton, Ontario, was temporarily closed in March as part of our measures to help curb the spread of COVID-19,” Carla Hindman, Manager, TD Corporate and Public Affairs, said. “In the past months, we have been thoughtfully reopening branches across the country with our colleagues and customers’ health and safety as our guiding principle. I can now confirm the Sutton branch will reopen on September 8.”

“While the branch in Sutton is closed, please note that the ATM continues to be available for customers to use. There have been no job losses among our Sutton colleagues related to the temporary branch closure,” she added.

The branch closed its doors on March 19, as a part of a series of nationwide TD bank closures due to COVID-19.

At that time, TD announced the closures were temporary, and it would try to keep its rural branches open.

However, the Sutton branch remained closed, despite the local BMO and Scotiabank branches on High St. staying open during the pandemic.

The extended closure fuelled speculation that the branch

might close permanently, leading residents to start an email and phone campaign to demand that the branch reopen.

They were particularly concerned that a permanent closure would impact seniors who would have to take public transit to the TD branch in Keswick.

“I think it’s very good news for people,” said Steve Jacobson, Chair of the Jackson’s Point BIA, who, along with his wife Cathy, started a Facebook campaign on July 21 to pressure TD management to reopen the branch.

Residents were encouraged to voice their concerns to several TD executives, including TD Bank Group President Bharat Masrani.

“We put up a campaign. I don’t know if that’s the reason it’s reopening. But let’s give credit to everybody who called or wrote in,” Mr. Jacobson said.

“It’s a meeting point for a lot of our seniors. And there’s no easy transportation to the Keswick branch. So, it’s important for the community.”

Chris, a TD customer and long time resident of Sutton, is also happy about the news.

“I like to have a branch. If I have a question, I’ll pop in, rather than doing an email back and forth, that’s extremely impersonal,” he said.

Ask The Expert

with Rose Sharifi

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Q: I have been laid off due to COVID-19 and have not been recalled to work while some of my colleagues have. What are my rights?

It is important to note that normally, employers cannot unilaterally lay off employees, unless this is stipulated in the employment contract (if any). However, the COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented event that has changed things for employers and employees alike.

The Employment Standards Act, 2000 is the legislation that governs most employee/employer relationships in Ontario under provincial jurisdiction. Prior to some legislative changes due to COVID-19, if an employee was laid off for a period of 13 weeks or more, they would be deemed terminated under the Act and this would trigger and severance pay obligations. However, the government has made a new regulation under the Act.

Under this new regulation, a non-unionized employee whose employer has temporarily reduced or eliminated their hours of work because of COVID-19 is deemed to be on a job-protected Infectious Disease Emergency Leave. The layoff period is extended until the Emergency Order that has been placed by the government is lifted.

Unfortunately, this means that if you are not being re-called to work due to a genuine issue, like COVID-19 negatively impacting your employer’s business, you may have to wait until the government lifts the Emergency Order or there are additional changes to the legislation in order to have some recourse. However, depending on the circumstances, if your employer is not recalling you to work due to a protected ground under the Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990 or due to another illegal reason, you may have a claim against them.

To discuss the specific circumstances of your case, please contact our office.

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Local Habitat for Humanity project needs volunteers

By MICHELLE POIRIER

The Dalton Road 6-home affordable housing development site, run by Habitat for Humanity GTA, is back up and running and looking for volunteers after shutting down due to COVID-19.

“After temporarily closing our site, we reopened it with new health and safety protocols. However, we need volunteers to help finish the project on time for families to move in,” Noah Kravitz, Senior Manager, Communications for Habitat for Humanity GTA, said in an email.

There will be a maximum of 10 volunteers at a time, and masks or face coverings are mandatory. They will also require staff and volunteers to sign a health screening intake form, according to Habitat for Humanity GTA’s August 19 media release.

“We are cleaning and sanitizing our construction tools and PPE after every use. We also encourage volunteers to come with their own steel toe boots, safety glasses, gloves and a mask if they can,” Wayne Dempsey, Vice President of Construction, said in the media release.

The build began in the summer of 2019, and, when finished, the development will be home to six lower-income families who need a place to live.

“Becoming a Habitat homeowner will open up a whole new world for my daughters and me. It will do so much for my girls’ sense of personal efficacy and service to others. Most importantly, it will improve our family’s overall well-being,” Greer Atkinson, a future resident



HABITAT FOR HUMANITY SITE

of the development, said in the press release.

They are looking for residents of Georgina, or cottage goers in the area, to spend some time volunteering on the building site. No construction experience is required as volunteers will work under the guidance of the crew leaders.

They need volunteers throughout the remainder of August and into September and are hoping to have the families moved in by the end of the year. To get more information or to sign up as a volunteer, visit their website www.habitatgta.volunteerhub.com.

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