



Photo By Marta Iwanek

Emergency crews watch as owner James Browne's van floats down the Moira River in Belleville on Friday. Browne was working on his car when the transmission failed and his Pontiac Trans Sport rolled backwards into the river. For story, see page 2.

Council looks at downtown facelift

Build Belleville initiative looks at spending \$15 million for downtown initiative

By Patrick Callbeck

Mayor Neil Ellis is aiming to revamp the downtown core with the city's Build Belleville initiative.

As part of the citywide infrastructure improvement initiative, the mayor has earmarked \$15 million to be spent improving Belleville's downtown infrastructure.

The Build Belleville initiative was developed to ensure Belleville continues to

grow. To do so, said the mayor, citizens need to invest in the most basic needs of the city – infrastructure.

In his presentation at the Quinte Sports & Wellness Centre on Jan. 31, Ellis laid out a plan for the city to borrow \$80 million to spend on infrastructure and repairs across the city. This includes a new police station to replace the one currently on Dundas Street East, repairs to the aging sewer and water systems, and repairs to various roads throughout the city.

The \$15 million set aside for downtown will be used to stimulate both commercial and residential growth and to promote downtown as a true city centre.

City Councillor Jack Miller, member of the Mayor's Taskforce for Downtown Belleville and the Board of Management Belleville Downtown Improvement Area

(BDIA), said that in order to encourage growth downtown, the city needs to get people to live there first, through a process called intensification. But before that can happen the city needs to improve the current state of infrastructure.

"The more people that live downtown, the more people will be walking downtown and creating business for stores. But in order to create more living spaces downtown and in the surrounding areas, the sewer, water, and electrical systems all need to be replaced. That means digging up roads and digging up the sidewalks," said Miller.

Fellow city councillor Jodie Jenkins, who sits on the audit committee and the City Council Planning Committee among others, isn't as eager to go ahead with the mayor's Build Belleville initiative. Jenkins

said he is trepidatious because this isn't the first time he has seen a downtown revitalization initiative.

"In 1981, we went to great public expense. The city rebuilt Front Street and there were tons of promises of private sector investment and rejuvenated business that for the most part went unfulfilled," said Jenkins. "I just don't want to see the city make the same mistake again, so we need to find out what went wrong and figure out how we can do it differently," he adds.

Belleville has estimated that it is \$400 million behind in its infrastructure repairs and that if it doesn't go through with this initiative, the problem will only continue to grow before it becomes too large to face.

Bill Glisky, member of the Mayor's

Taskforce on Downtown Belleville and managing editor of The Intelligencer, said he agrees that the city needs to be proactive about taking on this issue.

"It's got to be done if you want to see this downtown grow. Every year you wait, it gets harder to get going on it and it gets more expensive. Now is just as good of time as any," said Glisky.

"There are people trying to invest in condominiums in various locations downtown, but the current infrastructure won't allow it. They need to be able to take away sewage and bring people water before they can move into them," he added.

The Build Belleville initiative will be up for debate when city council meets between 5-11p.m. on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week.

Pond hockey brings community together

Fundraising event raises about \$2,000 for minor hockey

By Marta Iwanek

Bumpy ice, a few scuffles and the tapping of hockey sticks against the frozen pond were the familiar sights and sounds at the third Annual Stirling Mill Pond Hockey Tournament on Saturday.

The tournament was part of the activities in the Lions Club Groundhog Fest. Proceeds went to Stirling and District Minor Hockey Association and the Business Improvement Area of the Township of Stirling-Rawdon.

With the weather co-operating, the pond was frozen over enough to let the 16 teams play from the morning to evening in the town that was crowned Kraft Hockeyville 2012.

David Brandt, member of the Stirling Hockeyville Committee, said the community is very close-knit around hockey.

About \$2,000 was raised. The winning team of the tournament, returning champions Farnsworth Construction, also donated their winnings back to local minor league hockey.

"It is a good cause," said player Bob Bronson. "It's for minor hockey, for kids. It gets the young kids going."

He and his team play every Sunday night together, but as far as preparing for the tournament, he said he just set his alarm for 7 a.m.

"Old-time hockey," he said. "It's just fun."

Emily Desrosiers, 13, who was at the event and played house-league hockey, said it was a great way for her to make new friends from out of town and it gave her a sense of community.



Photo by Richard Barclay

Local hockey fans from the Stirling area gather at the Mill Pond to play one of Canada's oldest pastimes pond hockey. The event was organized through Groundhog Fest. For more pond hockey photos, see page 4.

"It's just a good way for everybody to be a part together. Like when we won Hockeyville, it was a great way for our town to come together and be like a whole," she said.

From local fundraising efforts, the Stirling Hockeyville Committee also presented a cheque to the Stirling and District Arena Board for \$57,000. The money will go towards renovations, which will start in the summer. Kraft Canada donated a total of \$100,000 to

the arena upgrade and \$10,000 to the local food bank.

A request for proposals is out right now and the arena is waiting on contractors to respond, said arena manager Richard Dean. Renovations will include extending dressing rooms, making bigger showers, making the bathrooms unisex as well as larger, creating water bottle filling stations and making the interior as well as the new entrance way accessible. He says

this will take the 1976 "old-style" building and polish it up to bring it to today's arenas' standards. He says the arena also won \$15,000 worth of rubber matting from Woodbeck Auto Parts.

"That kind of wraps up our Hockeyville experience," said Cindy Brandt, chair of the Stirling Hockeyville Committee, who presented the cheque. "We were just a bunch of volunteers that had a good time and brought the community with us."

Stirling festival offers something for everyone

All ages attracted to weekend event featuring many activities

By Sandra Kielback

It's going to be an early spring, or at least that's what Warton Willie predicted on Saturday, but the hope was for the opposite in Stirling at the annual Groundhog Fest.

There were many activities for young and old to participate in around town during the weekend festival.

Between the pond hockey tournament on the Mill Pond, to storytime for children at the library, there was something for everyone to do.

The people of Stirling did not go hungry with the festival starting off Friday night with a chicken dinner at Royal Canadian Legion Branch 228.

Saturday kicked off with a pancake breakfast at St. Paul's United Church, put on by the As One That Serves (AOTS) club. Doug Gray, president of the club, said that about 150 people showed up for the breakfast.

"There's a lot of competition around this weekend. Foxboro has their pancake breakfast and then there is the SnoFest up in Marmora, too, so there is lots going on this weekend," said Gray.

The club always has many volunteers to help them out with their annual breakfast that has been going on for about 30 years.

"We always have a good time. We even have some volunteers from St. James the Minor Catholic Church here in town."

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