



Photo by James Wood

A brisk walk

Heavy winds and blowing snow this past Sunday did nothing to stop Dan Collins for going on his daily walk through Zwick’s Park in Belleville. A superintendent for water distribution in the area, Collins completes a full circuit every day.

Ice storm impacts on budget for Prince Edward County council

By Hannah Yoon

It looks like it’s going to be a long winter for the people of Prince Edward County. The disastrous ice storm last month has taken its toll on the county council’s budget. The bill totalled \$499,279 and will most likely increase as there are still areas in the county that need to be checked. Council currently has had to use its own funds to cover the costs, but realized it is more than they budgeted for this winter. They were not anticipating the cost of the damages of the ice storm, said Mayor Peter Mertens. On Jan. 14, the council put in a request to the minister of municipal affairs and housing for the county to be officially declared a “disaster area.” This is needed to apply for funding from the Ontario Disaster Relief Association Program (ODRAP). If the county is approved by ODRAP, two-thirds of the costs will be covered while the council covers the remaining one-third. Mertens said it could take up to six weeks to hear back from them but is quite

confident that they will be approved. “The largest component was the actual ice storm itself. And that’s all of our works crews and our contract crews having to work pretty much around the clock. So a lot of overtime, a lot of material and we used up pretty much most of our winter salt and sand in that three to four-day period. And keeping the roads open for hydro crews, that all was part and parcel of that,” said Mertens of the immediate damage the ice storm done to the county. The second major component that is costing the county is the clean up. It does not have cleanup crews on standby for every tree or wire that is damaged. They have their day-to-day regular work to do so the cleanup is all overtime or contract work. “It will take at least two months, if not longer,” said Mertens regarding the clean up of the whole county. It could go into the early spring months, depending on the weather. With the temperatures dropping to almost -20 C this week, this slows down the cleanup process for people in the county.

Bill and Henny Huiskamp of Hallowell Township will have to wait until all the snow melts to start cleaning up the mess of trees on their property. “We can’t get at it now. It’s quite frozen and the snow keeps on coming,” said Huiskamp about the branches all over her lawn. The county isn’t alone in waiting for disaster relief from ODRAP. Approximately 36 other municipalities across the province applied for financial aid because of the damage of the ice storm. All Prince Edward County can do for now is wait, do their best in cleaning up and hope for the help they need to come in. “I’ve learned never to be over confident when it comes to getting funds from the any municipal or any level of government because they have their own priorities and sometimes our needs don’t always fit into their priorities. But I believe that, in this case, because of the severity of it that they will come forward with money. Will it be the total amount? That remains to be seen, but I think there will be some funds coming forward,” said Mertens.

Meyers...

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This raised the ire of a woman named Lisa Gibson, who started a Facebook page last October to bring his issue to light and to gather supporters. Since that time, there have been multiple protests on the property and a tense day on Jan. 13 when Meyers confronted construction workers who had driven heavy construction equipment onto the property. It was after that particular standoff that a supporter raised the idea of starting a night watch to make sure the farm wasn’t destroyed unnoticed. Michael Clark was the man who first suggested it and has been coming by the farm every night since last Monday with a handful of others. “It was Monday that we stopped them at the barn, and I said if anything, they’re going to do it at nighttime. So we need people staying the night, and I said I’ll do it, so I’ve stayed Monday night, Tuesday night, Wednesday night, Thursday night, and tonight, and I will continue doing nights.” Meyers showed his appreciation for their efforts by running extension cords to a rundown but sturdy trailer to give the people a warm place to get away from the wind and to store food and water. Firewood was piled up for the fires, and

people have been placing straw around the outdoor common area to keep the mud down. Canadian flags were placed on fence posts and flown from the barns, and a Mohawk warrior flag was draped on the steel wires of the fence along the train tracks. Meyers drove up to the camp in his truck to see them before heading to his house directly across the road. “I appreciate everything they’re doing for me, from the bottom of my heart. I don’t think myself better than any of them.” The online support network has ballooned to over 40,000 supporters and the number of supporting participants has grown with every action and protest. Individuals have been coming in from farther away. Virginia Elliott drove from Montreal, stopping in Kingston to pick up another supporter and arriving at the farm in her station wagon with masking tape on the windows spelling out ‘From Montreal to Trenton, in support of Frank Meyers.’ “I’ve lived through expropriation experiences, and it’s appalling how farmland is a resource in this country that is so unprotected,” said Elliott. “This is actually my birthday present to myself. I had four days off and I said ‘you know what, I’ve got four days off and I’m going to stand with the supporters because I support Frank Meyers.’”

Escaping from the cold in record numbers

Canadians among the busiest travellers around the world

By Guillaume Nolet

Canadians can’t get enough of travelling. At Toronto Pearson International Airport, the busiest in the country, travellers like the Couch family are just passing by before reaching their final destination in South America. “It makes for a long day, but the end result is well worth it,” said Andrew Couch, who left with his wife and two kids from Alberta early Saturday morning. After a four-hour flight to Toronto, the family will be staying overnight in Toronto before continuing south on a six-hour flight to Bogota, the capital of Colombia. Canadians are among the busiest travellers in the world. Statistics Canada numbers reveal that the number of overnight trips overseas by Canadians has risen by 93 per cent between 2000 to 2010 and the recent numbers suggest no slowing down. In fact, the Canadian Tourism Commission reports that in 2012, Canadians took 32 million trips to international destinations, a six per cent increase from 2011. While the number-one reason for Canadians to travel abroad is leisure, business trip travellers are the highest spenders. Statistics Canada found that in 2010, Canadian business visitors spent an average of \$181 per night, twice as much as people on pleasure trips, and three times as much as those visiting friends and relatives. When asked if one of his family travelled overseas last year for business rea-

sons, Andrew Couch, a geologist working in the oil industry in Calgary, said he definitely did. Johanne St-Amand, a senior travel agent at McCarten Travel Group in Belleville, agreed this time of year is one of the company’s busiest. “From December to March, many people tend to travel south to the Caribbean and Mexico, because of the weather that we have in Canada, while June through September is a period where travels to Europe is more important,” said St-Amand. Last December, the ITB World Travel Trends Report for 2013 and 2014 suggested that the overall North American outbound travel market is gaining momentum after a slow last few years, due to good travel from Canada. However, Canadians still travel less than Germans, Americans and English, also known as the “Big Three.” China and Russia are strongly competing to be on the list of the world travel leaders, with leading growth of outbound trips for 2013 of 26 per cent and 12 per cent respectively. In 2012, U.S. destinations accounted for 70 per cent of overnight trips by Canadians, while sun destinations such as Mexico and Cuba dominated the overseas travel with a total of 2.7 million visits by Canadian travellers. St-Amand said most of her clientele prefers the Caribbean countries. However, like the Couch family, more and more Canadians are choosing other exotic, less-travelled countries. “We already travelled to Mexico last year, so we were looking for a new destination and a place with less tourists,” said Alina Couch. The Couch family manage to pay 30 per cent less on their airfare compared to flights to any country in Central America, like Costa Rica, Belize or Guatemala.



Photo by Guillaume Nolet

Andrew and Alina Couch, with their two daughters, in transit at Toronto Pearson International Airport, before leaving on vacation in Columbia. According to a new study, in 2012 alone, Canadians made well over 32 million trips to other countries, up six per cent compared with 2011.

St-Amand said that last-minute reservations are still a good idea, but you need some flexibility in your dates in order to get good rates. The senior travel advisor also suggests looking at mid-week departure dates, which are often less expensive, and to always double check the country’s requirements on visas and passports. “In some countries, passports needs to be valid up to six months beyond the departure date,” said St-Amand. According to the ITB report, 2014 looks promising with an estimate four percent growth on total outbound travel as the world economy gradually improves. St-Amand said one thing to look for in 2014 is a continuous rise in young adults travelling. According to the World Tourism Organization, the number of international trips made by young adults could rise from 200 million trips a year now to 300 million by 2020.