

Footbridge to college being proposed

By Andrew Meade

If you build it will they come is the question Loyalist College sustainability coordinator Becky MacWhirter has about the proposed pathway and footbridge across Potter's Creek.

Retired journalism professor and part-time instructor Joe Callahan, along with a number of volunteers around campus, have been working on a proposal to construct a footbridge and pathway over Potter's Creek, connecting the campus to Avonlough Road and the Bridge Street extension.

"It was quite a few years ago that I pitched the idea to Maureen Piercy but I'd had the idea for a while before that," Callahan explains. "I have ridden a bike to the college from the city of Belleville a few times and it was not a safe experience. It was a bit too risky riding up the Moira Street West extension so I thought it doesn't make sense for people to ride their bikes out here."

Callahan proposed that a pathway connecting the college to less heavily trafficked residential streets east of the Loyalist campus would allow a safer and more accessible pedestrian and bicycle route to the school. He and a group of volunteers pitched the idea to college president Maureen Piercy approximately five years ago.

After meetings with the city planning department, Quinte Conservation and the college, an agreement in principle was reached to construct a bridge and pathway connecting the campus with Avonlough Road and the Bridge Street West extension.

The project is now on the brink of moving forward but is held up with funding and student support. The estimate from Whitby, Ont. firm AECOM to engineer and construct the project is \$110,000 to \$120,000.

Although the pathway and bridge directly affects the school, MacWhirter points out that the initiative is not necessarily just a Loyalist College one.



Photo by Andrew Meade

A bridge over Potter's Creek and pathway connecting the east end of Loyalist College with Avonlough Road and proposed bicycle lanes along Bridge Street is planned to cross the creek here.

"This is more of a grassroots effort and I think that is still going to be the strategy going forward. It's not necessarily a Loyalist College fundraising initiative but more of a grassroots and volunteer one."

The college is not completely removed from the initiative, though. It is reaching out to identify what student support exists.

"There is a subcommittee that is meeting regularly but the project is in limbo until we get a better understanding of student support. I think the time of year

doesn't have walking and biking on people's minds but I think you will see interest and efforts ramp up around spring," says MacWhirter.

"In terms of the sustainability committee, this is something that they're really interested in, but it's not a sustainability committee initiative."

The next step in the process of starting the project is to see what footing it has with the student population and if an agreement on fundraising contributions could be reached.

"We're really just starting. The first thing we're doing is to contract student government. Our first meeting is tentatively scheduled for Jan. 26," says Callahan.

"It might be a little preliminary to say what part the student government will have in this project. I think it's exploratory right now. I guess the first meeting would be to see if there is support for this and what they have heard from students about demand for this," MacWhirter ex-

plains.

"The bridge and path are only the first part," Callahan adds.

"For me, the path is a safety issue. It came from finding a safe route to the college and it is much safer than riding along the roads here."

Callahan says he is hoping for contributions from the student government, as there are other elements necessary to complete it. He notes that a lighted trail to and from campus is needed to make sure it is safe for users.

Battle continues between naturalists and power company

By Amanda Paulhus

It's been an ongoing tug of war over Ostrander Point between Prince Edward County Field Naturalists and Gilead Power Corporation.

After the Ministry of Natural Resources made Crown land available for supporting renewable energy projects, Gilead Power responded with the proposal for a wind farm located on Ostrander Point. As it stands this wind farm would include nine turbines, five and a half kilometres of road and a transformer station. In December 2012, Gilead Power was issued the Renewable Energy Approval (REA) by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change.

The Prince Edward County Field Naturalists (PECFN) were quick to act and, teamed with The Alliance to Protect Prince Edward County (APECC), appealed to the Environmental Review Tribunal during January 2013. They argued that the construction of the proposed wind farm would cause serious and irreversible harm to species in the area, including the Blanding's turtle which is considered a threatened species under the *Endangered Species Act, 2007*. It wasn't until July that they would receive a response but their patience paid off as the Tribunal decided to revoke the REA for Gilead Power's project.

Gilead Power responded with their own appeal to the Divisional Court of Ontario, and in January 2014 the Tribunal's decision was overturned. This meant that the Ostrander Point wind project was once again approved.

Following this decision, the PECFN once again appealed this time requesting a stay of construction, which

would put a temporary halt to wind farm construction. Because of the turtle and many species of bird's breeding and migratory habits, construction is not permitted in the area from May 1 to Oct. 16, no matter what the ruling of this new appeal is. In the end, they were successful as the Ontario Court of Appeal granted their request in April, so no construction could be commenced.

Most recently both sides have met again in court on Dec. 8 and 9. A ruling has not yet been released.

Cheryl Anderson, past president of the PECFN, has been an adamant voice in defense for the Blanding's turtle and Ostrander Point's other various wildlife.

"Everything we do impacts all the other creatures we live with and on whose contributions we depend on," she said. She believes strongly that Ostrander Point should be left undveloped because of the importance of the plants, animals and natural environment that exists there.

"Ostrander Point is also the home and breeding ground of 11 other species at risk. It is the take off and landing place for thousand of migratory birds, bats and butterflies," Anderson stated. These 11 species are mainly birds and were part of the PECFN's original appeal, along with the other migratory species. Anderson and the other PECFN have gained support from a variety of organizations including Ontario Nature, Nature Canada, Suzuki Foundation and some international support, such as BirdLife International.

"It's hard for us to understand how we can get all of this support, all of these people. Maybe the PECFN are just a bunch of little old ladies but all these big organizations that have also agreed with us and yet the government continues to insist that we should go through," Anderson said. "The importance to all of the creatures of the natural world to maintaining biodiversity seems

to have not been recognized by our governing bodies."

"I do think that their [PECFN] concerns are warranted but the compensation put in place will create an overall benefit for the turtles," Mike Lord, president of Gilead Power Corporation said. He added that Gilead Power conducted four years of various studies about the environmental features of the area. They found two endangered species, the Blanding's turtle and the whip-poor-will, a species of birds.

Following policy that requires for every one acre purchased for construction five acres must be purchased for conservation, Gilead Power has acquired approximately 100-acres of land that they will preserve for birds and species such as the Blanding's turtle and the Whip-poor-will. This area is directly north from the potential wind farm site.

Lord is also confident that the turtles will make a quick and full recovery following the construction of the wind farm. He referred to the site's history when Ostrander Point was a frequently utilized bombing range for the Royal Canadian Air Force through the years 1952 to 1957. "The site was bombed to oblivion and the turtles still came back."

Lord also addressed the PECFN's main concern about the five and a half kilometre stretch of road being a hazard to the turtles by stating that gates will be constructed to lower the amount of traffic through the area and therefore lower the risk of impacting the turtles.

If the project is approved, Lord hopes to see the Ostrander Point wind farm up and running by spring 2016.

Currently, both sides wait for the final ruling from the Ontario Court of Appeal that will decide the fate of Ostrander Point.

Hospice Quinte challenges dieters

Dump the Plump includes weigh-ins and financial motivation

By Thomas Surian

As the holiday season comes to close, many people vow to fulfill their New Year's resolution to lose weight.

Hospice Quinte's Dump the Plump is here once again to help. This marks the 18th year for the event, which focuses on helping people lose weight and live a healthier lifestyle.

Participants pay \$25 to enter, with proceeds going to help support Hospice Quinte. A small portion will be set aside to be awarded to the biggest loser at the final weigh-in.

"It goes from January to June, once a month every second Tuesday; five weigh-ins total," says Rachel Pearsall, public relations and fund development manager at Hospice Quinte.

The first weigh-in took place at the Hospice Quinte on Dundas Street East on Tuesday. Participants arrived throughout the day to sign up and weigh-in. They received some words of encouragement from the volunteers.

"This year, we have a little something different. If you don't lose weight one weigh-in or if you plateau, you have to give another donation back to hospice. So a little bit of incentive keeps (you) going and being successful," says Pearsall.

This is Pearsall's first year working with Hospice Quinte.

"This is the first time that I've worked for Dump the Plump. It's very popular and people love it. People tend to come back every January to do it again and then again, which is really nice."

"I just need to lose weight," says Conny Yrjola, who has participated in the event for the last few years.

"I want to feel flexible and healthy about myself and my body and to have more energy. I have a business and my business name is Glamour Junky. I don't feel glamorous like this."

Hospice Quinte relies on events like this to generate the majority their funding. Thirty per cent of the funds comes from the government, with the rest being raised at community events like Dump The Plump and their upcoming Mardi Gras Ball in April. They have team of around 100 volunteers that assist with these other events.

Pat Lytle has been helping with Dump the Plump for 11 years. She started volunteering after she retired from a career in nursing.

"I missed working and one of the other volunteers caught up with me and said you'd be really good at this... so I took the volunteer course and once I did that, there was no turning back. I really enjoyed it."

Uncertain economy as oil prices continue to dip

By Moush Sara John

The energy story that has dominated global headlines for the past few months has been the steady decline in the price of oil, and the speculation around it.

Although the oil industry has always been subject to vacillation with its history of crests and troughs, the price of oil has mostly been steady over the past five years and has not seen such a drastic dip since 2009. The price has fallen by more than 40 percent since June 2014, when it was \$115 a barrel, and now it is below \$70.

"I'm watching the screen. Every dollar knocked off a barrel of oil shakes the market like a mortar shell," says Peter Tertzakian, chief energy economist and managing director at ARC Financial Corporation, an energy-focused private equity firm.

"This is war. World war. It's a price war between the corporate foot soldiers of major oil producing nations."

According to *The Economist*, as energy experts and financial analysts try to figure out a satisfying answer as to why the price of oil is dropping so fast, they all agree at one level that it is pegged to the demand and supply. However, it has also been attributed to a failed agreement at the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) meeting in Vienna in November 2014, when the members were unable to agree on production curbs. This has hugely impacted oil-exporting countries such as Russia, Nigeria, Iran, and Venezuela.

"Oil prices have halved in three short months and the early casualties are starting to come in. Severe budget cuts, wounded bank accounts, bankruptcies, shell-shocked bankers," says Tertzakian.

"At a national level, some producing nations like Venezuela are already limping. The fog of this price war has just set in and it's hard for stakeholders in this business to see much beyond a lot of pain."

According to *The New York Times*, with the U.S. increasing its domestic production over the past few years, the need for imports is much less, which directly creates surplus oil in the market. This results in its primary suppliers -- Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Algeria -- looking elsewhere and targeting the Asian markets, and lowering prices to stay ahead of the competition.

In another study by *The Economist*, the decline in oil prices is a combination of various factors. There are two major oil-producing nations, Iraq and Libya, both in a tumultuous political situation, yet showing no signs of slowing down their output, producing nearly four million barrels per day combined. In spite of this abnormally high supply, the demand is as low because of weakening economies of Europe and developing nations, and the paradigm shift from oil to high-efficiency fuels.

According to *Business Insider*, in an interview conducted by the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) with Saudi Arabian oil minister Ali al-Naimi talked about how he had convinced OPEC members that curbing production was not in their best interests.

"As a policy for OPEC, and I convinced OPEC of this, even Mr al-Badri (the OPEC secretary general) is now convinced, it is not in the interest of OPEC producers to cut their production, whatever the price is. Whether it goes down to \$20, \$40, \$50, \$60, it is irrelevant."



Photo by Moush Sara John

As the fuel prices are in sharp decline, commuters are having a field day refuelling. The price of oil is the lowest it has been in five years.

Ali al-Naimi goes on to state in the interview that if OPEC members curbed production even slightly, their competitors would mainly benefit.

"Is it reasonable for a highly efficient producer to reduce output, while the producer of poor efficiency continues to produce? If I reduce, what happens to my market share? The price will go up and the Russians, the Brazilians, U.S. shale oil producers will take my share."

According to Peter Tertzakian, even though it is impossible to say how low the oil price will dip, as of now there is

no respite.

"Producers have a tendency to produce even more when price first falls, because they try to offset revenue loss by boosting output. Data from October and November of last year shows this pattern of behavior in Russia, Iraq, Libya, the U.S. and even Canada to name a few competitors."

"All of which means we should expect more production and potentially lower prices for a few months yet -- at least until market death begins to cull the fray."