

Historic church under the weather

Melting snow creates damage at St. Andrew's Church

By Hannah Eden

Heritage and historic sites around Belleville are shaking off the icicles in what seems to be one of the fastest thawing cycles in years.

However, warm days and melting snow have put Belleville's most historic sites in harm's way. After experiencing one of the worst winter's on record, Ontario is now finally starting to breathe that much missed fresh air, but with spring fast approaching, historic buildings cannot cope with the sudden thaw.

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church on Victoria Avenue, famous for its historic stained glass and cross-shape formation, is yet again facing more financial struggles because of water damage from the freezing winter and rapid thaw.

"The problem is, it's an aging building," said Judy Ducommun, member of the finance and maintenance committee at St. Andrew's.

"It was built in 1895. So it's an old building and it's a crippling building. We just spent a little over \$200,000 to repair the spire."

Walking into St. Andrew's sanctuary is a quiet ascent into the light-soaked rows of pews refracting the colours of the original stained glass. However the, soon to be, 185-year-old building has revealed its grey hair and wrinkles in the form of splitting paint and stone in the corners of the church.

Over the last week, members of the congregation have started to notice the stained, streaked walls, which now sit above buckets to hold the water descending from the ancient walls.

Despite the clear historic presence of St. Andrew's in Belleville, the church does not qualify for heritage funding from the municipal government.

"Heritage Belleville is the municipal heritage committee, so they advise council on matters of heritage interest," said Greg Pinchin, special project planner for the City of Belleville.

"Mostly, they identify buildings that are worthy of designation or listing – any sort of preservation."

Although Heritage Belleville scouts the local historic talent, it does not provide assistance in financing the repair needs for buildings during the spring or summer.

Resorting or repairing a historic building falls into the hands of the property owners themselves, meaning that a rapid freeze-thaw cycle could see owners scrambling for funds to repair leaks and other such damages.

"Worse case scenario... say a building was out of shape and the owner was really refusing to comply, the City of Belleville could bring in someone to handle the repairs and add the cost onto their tax rolls," shared Pinchin.



Judy Ducommun, member of the finance and maintenance committee for St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, looks over the damage after freezing rain and a thaw caused water damage to the wall and roof of the church storage room.

Photo by Hannah Eden

Midwives...

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Women learn to trust that their bodies know what to do during birth. Midwives are there to guide and support.

Apart from a small number of Indigenous midwives working at Six Nations, there are four other Indigenous midwives known to the National Aboriginal Council of Midwives wanting to work under the exemption in the Midwifery Act.

With the new decision to fund, Indigenous midwives will have access to the same funding mechanism as registered Ontario midwives.

For Green, it's a choice not to register.

"The hospital is not our jurisdiction... So, we continue to maintain Rotinonhsónih Culture, the way the Creator intended. We chose not to put our beliefs down and pick up the other," Green explained.

The training program model at Six Nations incorporates both the traditional and western ways. It's a concurrent program where students get hands-on practice with clients from day one, with one month off a year.

"As an Onkwehonwe midwife, I am trained by my own people and learn both western and traditional ways in providing care to Indigenous women, families and communities in low risk pregnancies; and provide supportive care for high-risk pregnancies working in peace and friendship with the specialists and hospital staff," Green added.

The decision to fund Indigenous midwives and Six Nations midwifery program graduates by the provincial government comes at a critical point in Green's career. She is and has been ready to establish a birthing centre in Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory for years. She has done numerous proposals based on research and feasibility studies with the help of a business consultant funded by the Tyendinaga Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte band office.

"Being funded is a huge milestone for us, for all the time that we've been advocating and speaking out about bringing birth back into our communities," Green said.

"It gives us hope, so will just see what the expectations are, what is it that they are outlining and what are they willing to do," Green explained.

For indigenous midwives, bringing birth back is a healing process for them and their community.

"We were stolen from knowing who we are. Knowing our culture. Knowing our tradition. Knowing our ceremonies. That was supposed to be wiped out of our memory, but it's not," Blais said.

"Through the care of Traditional midwives, we are going to have generations of people who are growing up stronger, and supported knowing who they are. They are going to know their culture. They are going to be able to carry their traditional bundles. Poorer health outcomes, and the tendency to rely on mind changing substances to numb the pain of intergenerational trauma created by colonization will not exist. Midwives have the capacity to heal our future generations and defend our communities from harm by providing safe maternal and newborn care that has culture at the heart. Blais said.

"To me, it's connected directly with reclaiming our identity and strength and resiliency," Blais concluded.

Trenton's ABC taxi like a step into the past

By Thomas Surian

On a quiet side street just north of Dundas Street in Trenton sits ABC taxi, a small white building in the middle of a parking lot.

If not for the herd of taxies parked out front, you would most likely pass by it without a glance.

You are hit with the familiar smell of coffee and cigarettes as you step through the front door. The walls are covered with maps, dusty stuffed animals and soccer team sponsorship plaques from the late 1990s. The phone rings.

"Hello, ABC," says Julie Vandusen, the daytime dispatcher and office manager. She has been working at ABC on and off since she was 16 (unless you say her age, better to say how many years it's been).

The business, originally named Athena Bus and Cab, was opened by her brother, John Rittwage more than 30 years ago. The company has stood the test of time, now employing over 35

full- and part-time employees.

The current owner, Bill Mills, continues to use an outdated analog method of dispatching, which they insist is just as good as the computerized systems used by the majority of the taxi industry.

For a video look at this story, go to: <http://www.qnetnews.ca/?p=51773>

Plumbers not appreciated until we need them

By Joel Watson

Yesterday marked a day of appreciation to the trade workers that help make everyday life safe and sustainable. March 11 was the fifth annual World Plumbing Day.

Plumbing day was first established in 2010 by the World Plumbing Council. The day is devoted to help spread awareness and help the public better understand the importance of the plumbing industry in today's society and how it is often taken for granted.

Plumbing is not just about comfortable or easy living, it is an essential part of the public's everyday health by safely disposing the pollutants that spread water born diseases.

"By taking it away in a clean manner, it goes down to a city water treatment station or a septic tank if you are out in the country, and it saves all those pollutants from getting into the water," said Stephen Glover a commercial plumber at Loyalist College. "That's what plumbing is all about."

The WPC said in a press release, "World Plumbing Day is dedicated to helping the general public better understand the vital role the plumbing industry plays in protecting health and safety, the extent which it helps limit mankind's environmental footprint."

Over the years, the plumbing industry has changed drastically for residential homes by making it easier for non-professionals to repair and maintain their plumbing fixtures.

"The industry has changed completely from the old days where you really had to be good at soldering. Now, it's all pex pipe, plastic, and snap-fittings," said Keith Riley, resident supervisor at Loyalist. "It's getting to be more of a do-it-yourself role."

The WPC and other working plumbers



Stephen Glover has been a plumber since 1974, and is currently a commercial plumber at Loyalist College. March 11 marks the fifth annual World Plumbing Day, a day of awareness for the public to better understand what these tradesmen do for their community.

Photo by Joel Watson

believe that this is a trade that most of the public takes for granted. "You don't miss something until you don't have it," said Glover. "In the middle of February, water can freeze up going into your house. If you have a family, you have kids that you need to bath, you need to do laundry, and you need to cook. If you're without water for two or three weeks before the city can

come thaw your pipes out, you can't do

any of that. You would miss it a lot, and it tells you what your life would be without it."

Glover and Riley said they both believe that public should be more educated on the importance of this trade, and that people should be more mindful about what they should pour down the sink.

Riley added he believes that the public should look at a plumber a different way

than how they are sometimes perceived.

"There are all kinds of jokes like plumber's butt cracks and that's the image that we have. You never hear about an electrician's butt cracks or anything. It's always about the plumber," said Riley.

"Plumbing is not important until you don't have water, or your toilet backs up. Then plumbers are really valuable, but for most of the time they are unsung heroes."

Cutbacks...

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"They're underestimating, perhaps, the level of care that these patients require," said Beverly Shepherd, a registered nurse in the emergency department of the Belleville General Hospital.

"The emergency department is a critical care area. Patients are not stable. They change in a heartbeat."

She said having fewer registered nurses reduces the hospital's ability to deal with spikes in critical patients when there is a sudden high demand for care that only registered nurses can provide.

"Already, we're stretched so thin that we're very concerned if they just take even one registered nurse away it's going to sometimes make it dangerous and unsafe. That's our fear," said Shepherd.

Rowe said, "This model of care is not unique to QHC. Were not trailblazers in doing this. It has been implemented by a number of hospitals across Ontario and Canada."

She said that the move is being caused by funding cuts from the government.

"In an area like the Quinte region, where our population is not growing, our funding from the government is actually decreasing every year."

"In addition to the decrease in provincial funding, we also have to cover all our inflationary increases." She said this includes drug costs, supplies, utilities and staff salaries.

"We have to find savings to pay for those."

She said operating out of facilities in Belleville and Trenton as well as Prince Edward and North Hastings Counties raises operation costs. "We cannot be as efficient with four emergency rooms as a hospital with one emergency room can be."

She said that the hospital is facing a \$10-\$12 million gap between projected spending if nothing changes and the current amount of funding coming from the government.

Rowe said the hospital management has been meeting with the Ministry of Health and local MPPs to ensure they understand how the decreasing provincial funding is affecting Quinte Health Care.

"They understand and they appreciate that this funding formula is hitting QHC harder than almost any other hospital in the province," she said.

She added that an extra \$3 million in provincial funding for the hospital was announced last week.