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New pharmacy approved

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But getting better each game

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Wakefield mom has 'no options'

Lack of affordable housing pushes young family out of La Pêche

By Trevor Greenway

Sam Maloney can no longer afford to live in her own community — the community she's called home for 15 years; the community where her kids go to school and play with friends; the community she's been woven into as part of the fabric of the Gatineau Hills.

"I feel like I have no options," she said.

It's a busy Friday at the single mother of three's Wakefield home and she's got her hands full. She's trying to occupy her toddler — her oldest is a big help and half of her house is packed up in boxes. They can't find the remote control to the TV, so her oldest pulls out a book and starts reading to her younger sister so we can continue our chat.

"There is no option for me. What am I going to do? We have to leave because there is nothing for us here," she continued.

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WORST JOKE OF THE WEEK

I remember this one time, someone asked me for some puns.

So I read them 10 puns that would make them laugh. But alas, no pun in ten did.



Sam Maloney spends some final moments on her Wakefield porch Oct. 20. The Wakefield mother of three can't find any affordable rental options in La Pêche and is being forced to move to Danford Lake temporarily until she can find something in her price range. Trevor Greenway photo

No 'real choice' in taking soccer field: Chelsea

By Madeline Kerr

Chelsea council has voted to move ahead with plans to expropriate land belonging to the Chelsea Foundation, a move that some residents fear could set a precedent for the province and possibly the country.

At an extraordinary meeting on Oct. 30, Chelsea council met to vote on two resolutions: the first, to adopt an agreement on the management of operations at the Meredith Centre, and the

second, to hire the services of the Gatineau-based law firm RPGL Lawyers in order to begin the process of acquiring a plot of land located in the centre-village, which has been chosen as the site of a new French-language school.

The land is partially owned by the municipality but also includes a soccer field belonging to the Chelsea Foundation, a non-profit charitable organization, which aims to support

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Teachers to strike Nov. 6

By Trevor Greenway

All schools, transportation and daycares across the Western Quebec School Board will be closed Nov. 6, as teachers and professionals walk out on the job for a one-day strike action.

The strike is taking place across many school boards across the province, as public sector workers throughout Quebec — all unions that fall under

the Common Front, which represents some 420,000 public sector workers — will be on the picket lines.

Teachers are asking for a below-inflation increase of nine per cent over three years. The government has offered a nine per cent increase, but over five years, and teachers say they are "frustrated" over being undervalued, overworked and

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From page 1

Single mom forced to move 50 kilometres away

Soaring rents and a lack of affordable housing in the region have forced Maloney and her three kids to leave the village of Wakefield and move north up to Danford Lake, where she said she hopes she can afford to make ends meet every week.

She's been forced out of her current three-bedroom home on Riverside Drive, where she has paid a "reasonable" \$1,375 per month for the last four years with no increases. Owners now

need to house family members in the space. And with nothing in her price range, Maloney said she has no choice but to move to Danford Lake with friends temporarily until a more suitable solution is found. The rent up the line will be comparable, she said.

A quick search on Realtor.ca shows just eight available rentals between Chelsea, Wakefield and Cantley, with the average monthly price sitting at \$3,349

— far beyond Maloney's price range. This newspaper rarely gets rental classifieds anymore; the most recent being a four bedroom house in Wakefield at \$2,500 per month for a seven month lease.

Maloney said leaving the village behind is heartbreaking for her and her family.

"They are really sad," said Maloney. "They're leaving all of their friends. My son can walk to school, he can jump in the

river on the way to the Wakefield Activities for Youth [WAY]. That's all gone now."

"It's absolutely galling. I just...I cringe. It's just really tough right now."

- Sam Maloney

Moving her family more than 50 kilometres away will

Nuit in Wakefield. Speaking of the new development near Vorlage ski hill, Maloney said she is disappointed to see condos being rented for over \$2,000 in a place that used to be the site of a trailer park for low-income residents.

While it would be nice to ski in and ski out of her home, she said she knows she may never be able to afford the homes that are being built today.

"It's absolutely galling," she

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Sam Maloney and her daughter take one of the last looks out of their window in Wakefield, as soaring rent prices have pushed her and her family to Danford Lake. Trevor Greenway photo

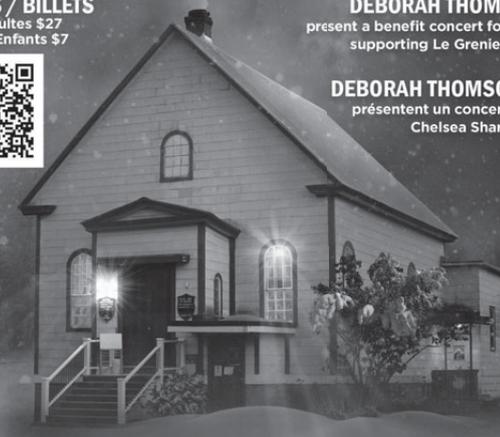
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add to the burden of daily life for the working single mom, as she will have to drive everywhere they need to go and spend extra money on gas. School is further for her youngest; it's closer for her oldest, who goes to St. Mike's, but all of her friends hang out in Wakefield, usually on Maloney's covered porch.

said. "I just...I cringe. It's just really tough right now."

"They are really sad. They're leaving all of their friends. My son can walk to school, he can jump in the river on the way to the Wakefield Activities for Youth [WAY]. That's all gone now."

- Sam Maloney

She'll also have to drive more than 100 kilometres round trip if she wants to keep her full-time job at Auberge Belle de

Regional stats show a 'crisis'

Maloney isn't alone in her situation and the region's housing crisis is not improving according to data from La Table de développement social des Collines-de-l'Outaouais (TDSCO). Its 2021 housing report revealed that close to 3,000 residents in the MRC des Collines are living in homes they can't afford. The data shows that 15 per cent of MRC households spend more than 30 per cent of their income on housing. The 30 per cent income-to-housing ratio is the threshold used by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to consider a home "affordable."

MRC housing strategy targets NIMBYers

By Trevor Greenway

To combat rising rents and a lack of affordable housing in the region, the MRC des Collines unveiled a new affordable-housing strategy in June with 32 measures that will help municipalities in the region build more houses faster, entice developers to include affordable options and allow density exceptions when building “social or affordable housing.”

MRC des Collines Prefect Marc Carrière said one of the main initiatives in the strategy is implementing a bylaw that would reserve a proportion of units for low and moderate-income households in “privately initiated multi-unit residential developments” that are four units or more. The strategy lists possible financial compensation or land transfers to encourage developers to do this.

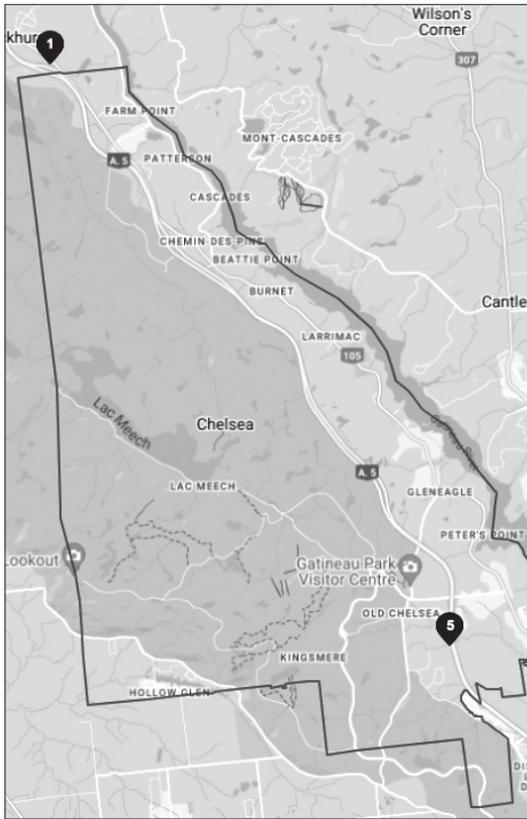
The strategy also allows for secondary buildings – or granny suites – to create more multi-generational homes so that seniors can grow old in their communities.

Carrière added that, while there are some affordable housing projects on the go in the Pontiac, the real frustration is provincial government red tape that delays projects for years. It took 15 years for the Chelsea Housing Corporation to get approval on a 15-unit seniors home in Farm Point.

“But one thing that everyone is frustrated by is the time that it takes to build a project,” he said. “From the minute you have the idea for a project, to the time you have someone build it, it takes about 10 years, so it’s way too long.”

No more NIMBYers

The MRC affordable-housing strategy tackles this in a big way by relaxing and simplifying administrative procedures around housing projects within each of its municipalities and reducing NIMBY hurdles that



There are fewer than 10 rentals in Chelsea, Cantley and Wakefield on Realtor.ca with the average monthly rent at \$3,349. Realtor.ca photo

sometimes dog social housing projects from getting off the ground. The strategy states that it will “ease or exempt the referendum approval process for affordable, social or community social or community housing projects to counteract the ‘not in my backyard’ sentiment.”

“Municipalities already have implemented some of [the measures],” added Carrière. “It’s a work in progress. So that’s good news.”

La Pêche Mayor Guillaume Lamoureux told the Low Down that the municipality has been working closely with Cohabitat Wakefield, a local non-profit

you need density, you need water, sewer.”

La Pêche passed two bylaws in 2021 that allow council to authorize innovative projects by changing the zoning of a specific plot of land rather than an entire area. This bylaw was created to allow the creation of tiny homes and granny suites in La Pêche to create more housing diversity and to increase multi-generational homes.

Lamoureux added that with a total of four, La Pêche has the most affordable housing residences in the MRC.

The regional housing office, Office d’habitation de l’Outaouais (OH de l’Outaouais), manages and owns two 12-unit residences for seniors: one in Ste-Cecile-de-Masham beside the Masham arena (la Villa des Collines) and one in Wakefield on Chemin Sully (Sully Gardens).

The OH de l’Outaouais also has a 20-unit building in Masham on Chemin des Fondateurs, as well as a six-unit building in Lac-des-Loups on Montée Beausoleil.

The municipality funded part of the construction of the

two, 12-unit seniors homes and also contributes yearly to their operations, including covering 10 per cent of their deficits when they occur.

Cohabitat Wakefield AGM Nov. 7

Cohabitat Wakefield’s 61 members will be hosting its AGM Nov. 7 at the Wakefield community centre, where it will talk about some of the initiatives it has been working on in the past 12 months. Fédération intercoopérative en habitation de l’Outaouais director-general Raphaël Déry will present a recent trip he made to a successful coop housing project in Vienna. The AGM is open to everyone who’s interested in learning more about the non-profit organization. More information can be found on their website.

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