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TO HULL & BACK NEWS

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What's Wakefield without the woods?

By Hunter Cresswell

The race is on to preserve a 100-acre forest near Wakefield.

Hundred Acre Wood also known as the Minnes Lands east of Chemin Rockhurst in Wakefield is home to several at-risk species, including western chorus frogs, monarch butterflies, and bobolink blackbirds, as well as eastern white cedars — rare in this area because of logging over the past few centuries. The land is also identified by the National Capital Commission as an important ecological corridor for wildlife moving to and from Gatineau Park.

These aren't the only reasons why there's an effort by Wakefield residents to protect the land — people say they love it for what it is now and don't want

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WORST JOKE OF THE WEEK

I tried to make a joke about a rocket powered snowboard...

It went downhill fast.



Fridays for Future

"Climate justice is social justice!" chanted about 50 members of the La Pêche Coalition for a Green New Deal, including Miriam Ponette, Hilary Jocelyn, Renny Lambton, Ellie Wilkinson, Noelle Walsh, Adrian Kiva and Ilse Turnsen, shown here, carrying a sign painted by Marc Walter, as they marched from Jacques-Cartier Park in Gatineau to Parliament Hill in Ottawa as part of the global #FridaysForFuture climate strike on March 19. Joined by activists from other organizations, including TROVEPO, the Public Service Alliance of Canada, Climate Action Carleton, and Action Climat Outaouais, the march, involving less than a hundred people, was intended to "send a strong message to elected officials: enough with the empty promises," according to the coalition's Facebook page. *Stuart Benson photo*

'Just the beginning' for snowboarder

By Stuart Benson

Wakefield snowboard cross star Griffin Mason, 16, is 19th in the world after placing third in

his heat at the FIS World Junior Championship in Krasnoyarsk, Russia on March 23 — Russian time.

After a difficult start that left

Mason falling into last place, he was able to race his way back, overtaking Czech racer Vojtech Trojan. Unfortunately, Italian racer Devin Castello and French

racer Guillaume Herpin, both national team snowboarders for their respective countries, were just too far ahead by the time

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Vax pace 'rapidly increasing'

By Stuart Benson

Mass vaccinations in the Outaouais began almost two weeks ago on March 11 at sites

like the Centre Wakefield La Pêche, and, while the region has already begun vaccinations for those over the age of 65, the region currently ranks seventh

in the province in average vaccinations, according to Camille Brochu-Lafrance, a media relations agent for Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de

l'Outaouais (CISSSO).

At a press conference on March 17, CISSSO announced that 8,000 doses of the vaccine

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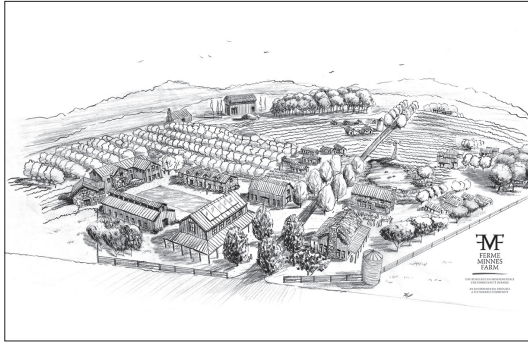
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\$275K pledged in fundraiser to buy Minnes Lands



What could have been. This was land owner Christopher Minnes' 120-unit residential development idea in 2014 for his Wakefield property that is east of the Rockhurst neighbourhood. Low Down file photo

To that goal, they've teamed up with Action Chelsea for the Respect of the Environment [ACRE] to serve as a land trust. The environmental group has been working on conservation projects outside of Chelsea for about five years.

"This is an exciting opportunity to conserve an ecologically significant piece of land in our community's back yard. Moreover, in these challenging times, the grassroots effort to organize and preserve this land in perpetuity has served to strengthen community bonds over a shared love of nature," Wakefield resident, fundraiser organizer, and Hundred Acre

Woods frequenter Joel Jahrsdorfer said.

The effort to raise the \$1.5 million needed to buy the land – independently appraised at \$15,000 per acre – from Christopher Minnes kicked off in January, according to ACRE board member and land trust operations director Olaf Jensen.

So far, almost \$275,000 has been either pledged or donated. ACRE has also applied for a federal grant and for funding from the municipality of La Pêche Green Fund. Minnes has agreed to donate 20 per cent of the land's value through a federal ecological gift program. If both those grants come through, Jensen said, there's less than

\$400,000 left to raise.

"We've been working with the land owner Christopher Minnes for over 10 years," Jensen said, adding that ACRE signed a promise to purchase in December 2020 with a deadline of Dec. 15, 2021 to close the sale.

"... the grassroots effort to organize and preserve this land in perpetuity has served to strengthen community bonds over a shared love of nature."

– Fundraiser organizer Joel Jahrsdorfer

"I'm glad to know we're doing the right thing to preserve it for nature," Minnes said.

The land has been in his family since they purchased it in 1973 from the Trowsse family. In the past, Minnes has sought to develop the land in a way that was "ecologically sensitive," but couldn't find a residential development partner that shared his values. In total his property is 160 acres, so the 60



What could remain. Land owner Christopher Minnes standing on his 160 acre property in Wakefield that is at the centre of a community fundraising effort to purchase the land. If successful, Action Chelsea for the Respect of the Environment will serve as the land trust for the property but a community stewardship board will be established to regulate use of the land, the idea being to allow light recreational use only. Low Down file photo

remaining acres will continue to be used by his business, Eco Echo, which provides environmental education programs.

In 2013, then-La Pêche mayor, now-Gatineau MNA Robert Bussière, wanted to expropriate 20 to 45 acres of Minnes' land for development, which is what happened to the land across Hwy 105 where there's now a styrofoam factory.

Minnes said that he hopes to expand Eco Echo programs in harmony with the Hundred Acre Wood land trust.

This fundraiser comes on

the heels of a successful \$850,000 community fundraiser in February, which purchased 57 acres of undeveloped forest in Chelsea near the Musie Loop neighbourhood for conservation purposes, with ACRE also acting as the land trust. During an interview for a previous story, one of the organizers of the Chelsea fundraiser stated that they hoped their success inspires others to do the same.

Obviously it has.

To pledge a donation visit acrechelsea.qc.ca or email acre@videotron.ca.

Farm Point group opposes public docks

By Hunter Cresswell

A group of over 50 Farm Point residents signed a petition sent to the Chelsea council in opposition to the idea of a public dock on Gatineau River in their neighbourhood.

"There is no room to arrange additional parking along those roads or the adjoining section of Chemin de la Rivière, so public docks cannot be installed in those locations," the petition,

emailed on March 22 to Mayor Caryl Green, Farm Point councillor Jean-Paul Leduc, director general John-David McFaul, and The Low Down, states.

The petition instead asks for a longtime practice in Chelsea – the use of docks that are built and maintained by property owners or groups of residents – be recognized and regulated as a way to provide access to the river.

The email, sent by Farm

Point resident and signee Tineke Kuijper, asked for confirmation that the proposal will be factored into the dock bylaw that Chelsea is finalizing.

In a municipal survey earlier this year about building a public dock along the river, three of the five proposed sites were in Farm Point.

A large number of Farm Point residents have brought their concerns about privacy, parking, and parties, as well as their overall opposition to a public dock in Farm Point to both the Chelsea council and The Low Down.



A dock across River Road from the Farm Point Park in Chelsea. A group of Farm Point residents sent a petition to the Chelsea council this week in opposition to the construction of a public dock in their village. Low Down file photo



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