

# Rat Creek Press

Alberta Avenue • Delton • Eastwood • Elmwood Park • Parkdale-Cromdale • Spruce Avenue • Westwood



Safeway closed May 29. | Karen Mykietka

**- CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN -**

FreshCo Coliseum, a new grocery store, will rise by September where Safeway now stands at 82 Street and 118 Avenue. The current Safeway closed on May 29 at 6 p.m. for renovations, although the pharmacy inside the store and the gas bar on the corner will remain open.

Both stores are owned by Sobeys, which started as a small meat store in Nova Scotia in 1907. In addition to Safeway, IGA, Foodland, and others, Sobeys has expanded to include more than 100 FreshCo stores since 2010.

As a deep discount supermarket, FreshCo is likely to be welcomed in our community. It is one of several FreshCo stores opening in Alberta this year. Sobeys has been rebranding

certain Safeways slowly but surely, planning for up to 64 stores in Western Canada.

A visit to the new FreshCo Heritage store at 2011 111 St showcases what the brand has to offer. All FreshCo stores are franchises, explains franchisee Keith Manasterski, who opened his store on March 18. At 35 years of age, Manasterski has been in the grocery business for 12 years.

“Our motto on the outside of the store says it all,” says Manasterski. The bold sign in green and blue reads, “Lowest Price Guaranteed. We price match.”

Manasterski is working to source local Alberta offerings at competitive prices for Edmontonians. Shoppers can expect to find Edmonton products in the store, such as baked goods from Italian Bakery.

The store offers frozen and refrigerated

products that reflect their communities. Each store has Fresh Hall product aisles, featuring fresh food items, baked goods, cheeses, and meats. A feature aisle offers further savings for shoppers.

Southside resident Jill Langevin has shopped at FreshCo Heritage since it opened. “The prices are good. There is a nice variety of international foods,” she says. Her preferred items are staples, produce such as fruit and vegetables, and condiments. With no butcher or bakery onsite, Langevin goes elsewhere for these items.

The new store on 118 Avenue is likely to be well received, observes Manasterski, if his store is any indication. “The 118 Avenue area is a mixed demographic. FreshCo products, from lower to mid-range in price, will be a benefit,” he says. “It’s likely to be a really good

store. In fact, it may be the best one.”

Joanita Nakimbugwe is a cash register cashier at Shoppers Drug Mart on 118 Avenue at 82 Street. Looking across the road to the current Safeway site, she says she looks forward to the change to FreshCo. “It will be something new, something different, and we’ll go from there. Safeway is a little expensive, but the location is convenient. I think the new grocery store will be good for our neighbourhood.”

One thing is for sure: the new storefront will be bright and welcoming and will hopefully revive the grocery-shopping experience in our area.

*Constance’s writing and editing career spans more than 40 years. She lives in Parkdale-Cromdale.*

# Transit change leaves residents behind

## Residents left trying to adapt in wake of transit revamp

- THEODORA MACLEOD -

With Edmonton Transit Service's new bus network in effect, some residents of Alberta Avenue and the surrounding areas are feeling left behind.

Lynett McKell has lived near 115 Avenue and 92 Street for 13 years. A single mother to three children, she says she learned of the transit revamp in December 2020 when she noticed a sign at a bus stop along 115 Avenue announcing the closure. Prior to seeing the signs, she says she was given no notice of the changes. Upon contacting the City transit office, she was told that as of April 2021, her daughter would have to catch her bus to school from 111 Avenue and 92 Street, a 10-minute walk from their home.

In 2018, Edmonton Transit Service (ETS) began the redesign of the city's bus routes, and they had public consultation and feedback through drop-in workshops held from April 12 to June 14, 2018.

May Stirling\* also lives in the area and has major concerns about safety when taking transit to work, concerns that have been heightened by the new bus system. As a woman, she feels her safety is at risk on her route to work on dark mornings and has been propositioned by johns while waiting for her bus in the area of 112 Avenue and 94 Street.

While McKell was unaware of the City's consultation efforts, Stirling did participate in the surveys, though she sought out the opportunity herself. Despite voicing her concerns, she too did not learn about the changes until the decision had been made and notices were posted at bus stops.

Both Stirling and McKell cite safety as their top concern with the new system. The area of 111 Avenue, where McKell's children will now meet their bus, has already had 177 reported crimes in 2021, including one homicide on April 25, according to the Edmonton Police Service's Neighbourhood

Crime Map. North of 111 Avenue, the Alberta Avenue neighbourhood has 174 reported crimes listed so far for 2021. In addition to safety concerns, both residents worry about access to transit for the community. With a lower average income in the area, both say access to reliable and convenient transit should be a priority.

"We need to take care of our city's most vulnerable populations first and not leave them behind... literally," says McKell. When speaking to an ETS representative, she was told the changes were a result of low ridership. Upon reaching out to Counc. Tony Caterina, she received no reply. Despite her best efforts to find answers, she has been left frustrated and concerned for the safety and well-being of her children and bus riders in the area.

Stirling's bus stop remains the same, but will now be serviced by only one route, limiting her and her family's options. The changes will likely impact where her son attends

school next year. "This area should have some of the best transit in the city, and it feels like it's being picked away," Stirling says.

Though some areas of the city will be serviced by new on-demand buses, the service is not offered to residents of most communities north of downtown. Despite the proximity to downtown, this is not the only recent transportation barrier residents face as the area is also excluded from City-approved e-scooter use.

Though the new system will be evaluated within three months, McKell was told the closures along 115 Avenue are permanent.

\*Name changed for privacy

*Theodora is a writer and journalism student who has lived in Edmonton for the last 17 years. She has been a resident of central Edmonton for 16 years and is passionate about the community.*



Bus stops along 115 Avenue permanently closed as of April 2021. | Theodora MacLeod

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#### ABOUT US

We are a non-profit community newspaper serving Alberta Avenue, Delton, Eastwood, Elmwood Park, Parkdale-Cromdale, Spruce Avenue, and Westwood. Published on Treaty 6 Territory. The opinions expressed in the paper are those of the people named as authors of the articles and do not necessarily reflect those of the board or staff.

#### GOALS

Build Community, Encourage Communication, Increase Capacity.

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Our writers vary from trained journalists to community residents with varying backgrounds. We strive to be a place where individuals can learn new skills and acquire experience—whether in writing, editing, photography, or illustration. We welcome letters, unsolicited submissions, and story ideas.

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Serving 12,500 community members.

#### DELIVERY

The paper is delivered by Canada Post to all houses, apartments, and businesses in the seven neighbourhoods listed above including those with no unaddressed mail notices. For the most part, delivery begins on the last Wednesday of the month.

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**Rat Creek Press**

For the community,  
By the community  
[ratcreek.org](http://ratcreek.org)



# Bridging the grocery gap this summer

Take time to explore the variety of products available at local stores

- THEODORA MACLEOD -

On May 29, the Safeway on 118 Avenue and 81 Street closed. Though a FreshCo will open there in September, the months between might leave residents with limited mobility struggling to find a place to shop.

The Alberta Avenue Business Association directory lists local shops that may fill the void. With basic items in mind, I selected four shops to see how accessible the new grocery market will be. Each store proved to be unique, but illuminated the challenges shoppers may encounter come the end of May.

Paraiso Tropical Market on 118 Avenue and 91 Street boasts an impressive selection of Latin American goods. Mainly imported, the foods range from tempting snacks to ingredients needed to cook authentic cuisine. The small, well stocked storefront has a selection of hot, ready-to-eat foods. Much of the customer base seems to shop for specialty items. While those who are more familiar with Latin American food might find it a one-stop shop to fill their fridge, other shoppers may need to venture elsewhere for the common staples such as cow's milk and sliced bread. At Paraiso, a dozen large eggs retails for \$5.25 and a very limited produce section is available.

A few blocks east on 118 Avenue and 85 Street sits Village Foods. Much like a typical convenience store, Village Foods sells an assortment of products and is certainly not

limited to food. While the snack and candy selections seem to be the biggest draw, other non-perishables are available. Buy 12 eggs for \$4.50, four litres of two per cent milk for \$5.75, a block of butter for \$6.46, and sliced bread for \$1.99. Beyond the basics and snacks, it might be a challenge to find everything needed for a big shop there.

Kasoa Tropical Food on 118 Avenue and 93 Street brings the tastes of African and Caribbean cuisine to Alberta Avenue. Like Paraiso, these products are great for shoppers seeking specialty items. There's also a vast array of spices, beans and legumes, different types of flour, and vegetables not commonly found in big chain stores. Seafood fans will find dried, unprocessed, and stock varieties. Poultry and goat meats can also be found. They don't sell cow's milk, but they do offer a small selection of cheeses. The price point for products seemed comparable to larger stores, though, depending on needs, it may not be possible for shoppers used to bigger stores to fulfill their lists.

In Little Italy on 95 Street and 108 Avenue, the Italian Centre Shop had the biggest selection, with their goods most similar to what is sold in a chain supermarket. Boasting the largest produce section out of the four stores visited, meats, cheeses, non-perishables, and spices are available. Four litre jugs of two per cent milk are \$6.49, the most affordable pound of butter is \$5.49, and 12 extra-large white eggs are \$4.29. Sliced

bread varies in cost, but averages around \$4. In terms of convenience, the Italian Centre Shop has the products many consider to be staples under one roof and a wider variety of goods.

The two closest supermarkets are Stadium Save-on-Foods at 112 Avenue and 82 Street, and Superstore on Kingsway. For those with limited mobility or looking to stay home, services such as InstaCart provide grocery delivery, as do Save-on-Foods and Superstore (depending on your location), but delivery fees apply and some stores require a minimum purchase. For shoppers seeking organic products, Spud.ca offers free delivery over a \$99 order.

WECAN Food Basket Society is a budget-friendly option. With a \$5 annual membership, order a monthly produce basket (\$10) or a meat or pork-free meat basket (\$15). These groceries are meant to bridge the food gap during the last week of the month. Call 780.413.4525 or visit wecanfood.com for details. Alberta Avenue Community League is seeking enough orders to establish a WECAN depot at their community centre starting in June. Sign up at <http://bit.ly/AACLwecan> or call 780.479.6237.

For non-drivers who rely on Safeway for their groceries and are awaiting the opening of FreshCo, it may be a summer with limited accessibility, but it may also be a good time to explore the locally owned businesses listed here and on the

Alberta Avenue Business Association directory: [alberta-avenue.com/directory](http://alberta-avenue.com/directory).

*Theodora is a writer and journalism student who has lived in Edmonton for the last 17 years. She has been a resident of central Edmonton for 16 years and is passionate about the community.*

## OTHER STORES

### BAKERIES

**Popular Bakery**  
(118 Avenue and 93 Street)  
**Handy Bakery**  
(118 Avenue and 86 Street)

### MEAT

**YEG Smoked Meats**  
(118 Avenue and 82 Street)  
**Victoria Fancy Sausage**  
(some fresh meat)  
(118 Avenue and 65 Street)  
**Marchyshyn's Home Meat Market**  
(111 Avenue and 96 Street)  
**Budapest Delicatessen**  
(111 Avenue and 93 Street)

# Building homes the Green Violin way

Area to become home to sustainable projects

- NAZREENA ANWAR-TRAVAS -

Shelter is a basic human right, but the environmental impacts of building a home also matter. How can we keep both factors in mind? The answer is sustainable housing, and this is precisely what Yasushi Ohki had in mind when he founded Green Violin in January 2020. The non-profit organization has a mission to build vibrant spaces to connect communities and foster a better quality of life.

Ohki is a McCauley resident with degrees in civil engineering and architecture. He worked at Homeward Trust and the City of Edmonton in areas of housing and homelessness before starting Green Violin.

Sustainable homes minimize environmental impacts through efficient use of resources and energy, and less maintenance means positive physical and psychological impacts on inhabitants. Ohki plans to bring this housing concept to Alberta Avenue, starting

with McCauley and Parkdale-Cromdale.

In McCauley, there will be a multi-generational housing project located at 10718 92 St. This is a home design where two or three generations of a family live under the same roof in different sections of the home. Separate entrances, bedrooms, and kitchenettes allow privacy. This concept that helps build relationships and reduce financial burdens is gaining popularity. Between 2001 to 2016, Statistics Canada recorded an increase of such households by 37.5 per cent. Construction in McCauley will start in spring 2022.

Parkdale-Cromdale will be home to another inter-generational housing design. Located on 11640 80 St, it will be a 26-bachelor unit apartment complex for youth and seniors. Each unit will have its own kitchenette. There will also be a common kitchen and recreation room where building residents can interact and learn from each other.

"By matching seniors' experience to youth

vitality, we envision that this synergy will transform the development into a venue for community events hosted by building residents," Ohki says. "You can expect to see some activity on the vacant apartment site starting next month. There will be benches to sit [on], garden boxes for the community garden, and [a] visual presentation of how a unit will look and the lifestyle offered. We will continue having a community-accessed garden after the apartment is built as part of the Green Violin way of promoting neighbourhood connections."

Currently, designs for the McCauley and Parkdale-Cromdale projects are with the architects. Both developments are vacant city lots bought through co-operative investments. Once built, they will be available to rent. Green Violin has future plans to develop affordable small dwellings for those who are homeless and offer them an opportunity to build equity in a co-operative manner.

Sustainable housing is built using non-

toxic building materials such as mass timber and energy-efficient windows. It harnesses natural energy and reduces dependencies on gas heating systems.

"We must reduce environmental footprints," stresses Ohki. "It is time to bend the trend and change the general mindsets on how dwellings are designed."

*Writing has always been Nazreena's biggest passion besides crocheting and breeding birds. Having changed nine schools as a child in different countries, cultural tolerance and flexibility to adapt to diverse environments come naturally to her.*

## GREEN VIOLIN

[greenviolin.ca/](http://greenviolin.ca/)  
**Sustainable living tips:**  
[theecohub.ca/sustainable-living-tips/](http://theecohub.ca/sustainable-living-tips/)



From left to right: Yasushi Ohki, Ruth Sorochan, and Lilly Mounma on the South McCauley plot. Sorochan and Mounma run the Children's Garden on the lot. | Yasushi Ohki

# Community seating to be on the Ave

Residents can enjoy the musical-themed seating area next April

- TALEA MEDYNSKI -

Alberta Avenue Community League is partnering with Engineering Connects to build a new community seating area with tubular pipes and playable drums to be installed next April.

University of Alberta Engineering students worked with the league on the project, which will be located in front of the league facing 118 Avenue. The project involved students communicating and consulting with league members to bring an idea to completion.

League board members chose community seating because it's a positive way to have an increased community member presence. Maggie Glasgow is part of the league committee working with Engineering Connects on the project.

Glasgow explains she attended one of the Coffee with Cops meetings at The Carrot Coffeehouse and learned there is a decrease in crime during festivals because there are more people and less of an opportunity for a crime to go unnoticed.

"I said, 'let's make a town seating area, where you don't have to have money but

where it's a community space,'" she shares, explaining there is a desire for a community gathering space to meet, play, and get to know one another. The seating would have the added benefit of more people around.

Steve Ellis, a local resident, joined the committee because Glasgow, his neighbour, asked if he wanted to participate.

"My background is architectural technology," says Ellis. "The committee has a number of members that come from different backgrounds." He adds, "The students have been quite engaged in the project. They [have been] accommodating and seem to take our suggestions to heart."

Three circular cedar benches, which can hold about 20 people, will surround a centrepiece. Tubular bells, similar to a pipe organ, will be fixed to the back of the long bench. Cajon drums are on the side of the benches. People can play the instruments. The centrepiece can be used as a stage, firepit, planter or extra seating. Enough space is available for wheelchairs to join. There is no hostile seating, meaning it's accessible to everyone. Sometimes seating is deliberately designed to discourage those who are homeless from sleeping there; that is not the case

here.

Different students have been involved at different stages of the project due to semester length. The project spans from the conception of the design to the installation. Jessica Vandenberghe, assistant dean of outreach for the Faculty of Engineering, says, "All the students we have brought in have been so excited."

Johanna Liu (third year of civil engineering) and Mofetoluwa Akindelen (third year of environmental engineering) were the first co-op students.

Akindelen says she enjoyed working with community members. "The meetings were probably the highlight of my work term. A big thing I learned working with the community was how to manage differing opinions. It's interesting how many different perspectives you can get on a project and it's always helpful to hear new ones. The hard part is picking and choosing which to actually implement."

Most recently, a team of six fourth year mechanical engineering students called ADEPTI worked with the league on the final design for their engineering capstone project: Evans Frandsen, Isaiah Ling, Dalin

Van Hecke, Preshal Valla, Taher Joshani, and Ahmed Jarif Ul Kabir.

"When we first started the project, it was very open-based," explains Evans. "We went through a lot of iterations."

Kabir says, "We wanted to make it practical and easily manufacturable."

Joshani adds, "We wanted to create a positive community gathering spot that reflected the artistic community."

There was a lot of consideration going into what we wanted," says Glasgow. "The music theme evolved organically." Isaiah Ling, one of the engineering students, has a musical background and Glasgow does as well.

Ling adds, "It was really fun and creative. It was great to work with the community."

The only step the engineering students won't do themselves is fabricate the benches. Instead, industrial design students from St. Joseph's High School will complete that portion of the project. The league has applied for funding to cover the cost of materials.

*Talea is the Rat Creek Press editor. She loves sharing the stories of our diverse neighbourhoods.*



Residents of the area can look forward to community seating next spring. | Supplied

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# Organizations feel the virus's impact

## How the pandemic has brought challenges and changes

**- STEPHEN STRAND -**

The pandemic continues to impact our society, with non-profit organizations affected financially and facing challenges and changes.

Rona Fraser, CEO of Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts, says, "We have had to [make] all of our programming virtual for our collective of over 230 artists with developmental disabilities." But artists are still able to create. "Our staff delivers art supplies safely to our artists' homes every couple of weeks to keep them creating."

Their community programs and exhibits have also gone online. More people are now able to see their exhibits virtually as well as host virtual workshops with artists from around Canada. "We have even had some incredible virtual field trips of galleries and museums from around the world."

While the Nina receives government funding, they still must raise about 40 per cent of their annual operating budget. "The Nina has been very fortunate that we had so much support last year. The upcoming year may be more challenging with the lack of casino funds and foreseeable in-person fundraisers."

Fraser adds, "The big challenge is when we return to in-person [attendance]. With social distancing, we can only accommodate half of our capacity at a time. This means doubling our sessions and also maintaining a virtual program for those who need to stay at home. It is a big staff cost, but we will make sure that no artist gets left without an opportunity to keep creating."

Fundraising events have been affected because people can't gather for their usual fundraisers.

"We have been creative and did a drive-in event and are planning a virtual luncheon with lunches and gifts to be delivered to our patrons who are supporters of the Nina who give \$500 a year," Fraser says. "We have also had our casino funding postponed, which is a big impact for us financially. The Nina

is so grateful for the support we have had, including wage subsidy, corporate sponsorship, personal donations, and community foundation funding."

People can buy the Nina's merchandise and artwork, donate, or become a patron and get matched with an artist. The Nina also started a fundraiser called Create Box, which is an art kit people can buy to create art at home.

Community Leagues have also been affected.

"AHS guidelines and Alberta government phase restrictions limited the access to the hall, [so] no indoor events could be hosted, [and] cleaning protocols for volunteers was too much to expect," explains Roisin Hawkswell, Westwood Community League president.

The league typically earned its revenue from hall rentals. "This past year has been the complete opposite of the last few years with no revenue coming in," says Hawkswell. "We are solely relying on the [Community League Operating Grant] from the City of Edmonton and the savings in the league bank account." They've also done fundraising to help with finances.

She adds, "We are definitely worse off than we were a year ago. Paying the bills to operate the league is still required and with no revenue coming in, the league's bank account is depleting slowly every month."

They are looking at other options to bring in income, like a regular 50/50 draw, a physically distanced summer sidewalk sale, block parties (if allowed), and a membership drive.

Like other non-profits, community newspapers like *Boyle McCauley News* have been hit hard.

"First of all, a lack of events happening due to the pandemic made us reduce our page count from 16 to 12 pages. The second way the pandemic has impacted us, and by far the most serious way, is financial," says Paula Kirman, editor and volunteer coordinator. "We're in a very precarious situation,

far worse than pre-COVID. Without our casino, we don't have a stable source of funding and it makes planning for the future difficult."

A significant revenue source is from advertising and casinos, with casinos being their primary source. "Because of the pandemic and the resulting health regulations, we don't know when our next casino is coming up."

Due to the loss of revenue, *Boyle McCauley News* will not be publishing their remaining two print issues for the current fiscal year, and it's unclear what the publishing schedule will be like after that. But they've been focusing on their online presence and continue to publish articles.

*The Rat Creek Press* has faced similar problems as *Boyle McCauley News*, and also had to reduce the number of issues while focusing on building a larger online presence.

The publication saved money by moving into the Edmonton Community Development Company offices. "We moved there in October, so not having to pay rent has helped. We also received a grant from the federal government that helped cover some expenses for a while." Kirman adds, "We are looking at doing some 50/50s. We're also planning a socially-distanced fundraiser where people can contribute funds."

While they were able to save money on rent, balancing the budget was still difficult. As a result, they stopped delivering to the Boyle Street area through Canada Post. "In McCauley we have block carriers who deliver door-to-door, but Boyle Street is mostly apartments," says Kirman. "We now have more newspaper boxes in the Boyle Street area, and are actively recruiting apartment ambassadors and condo connectors to accept delivery of papers at their buildings."

The publication is currently running a Toss Us Your Toonies campaign. To participate, donate as little as \$2 to the paper through PayPal, either on a one-time or ongoing basis.

Mark Henderson, artistic director of

Theatre Prospero and Thousand Faces Festival, says they got lucky.

"[We got lucky] with a bunch of things. With generosity of artists, generosity of funders, generosity of partners." Theatre Prospero, Thousand Faces Festival, and National Stiltwalkers of Canada forged partnerships. They were able to use National Stiltwalkers' space "as a sort-of a green screen streaming studio." The streamed shows were available to watch by donation.

In previous years, their revenue changed from year to year, and came in different forms.

"A huge amount of our revenue was from touring shows to schools and from artists-in-residence programs in schools. Obviously, we aren't doing that right now," Henderson says. "We did do a virtual residency and it was worthwhile."

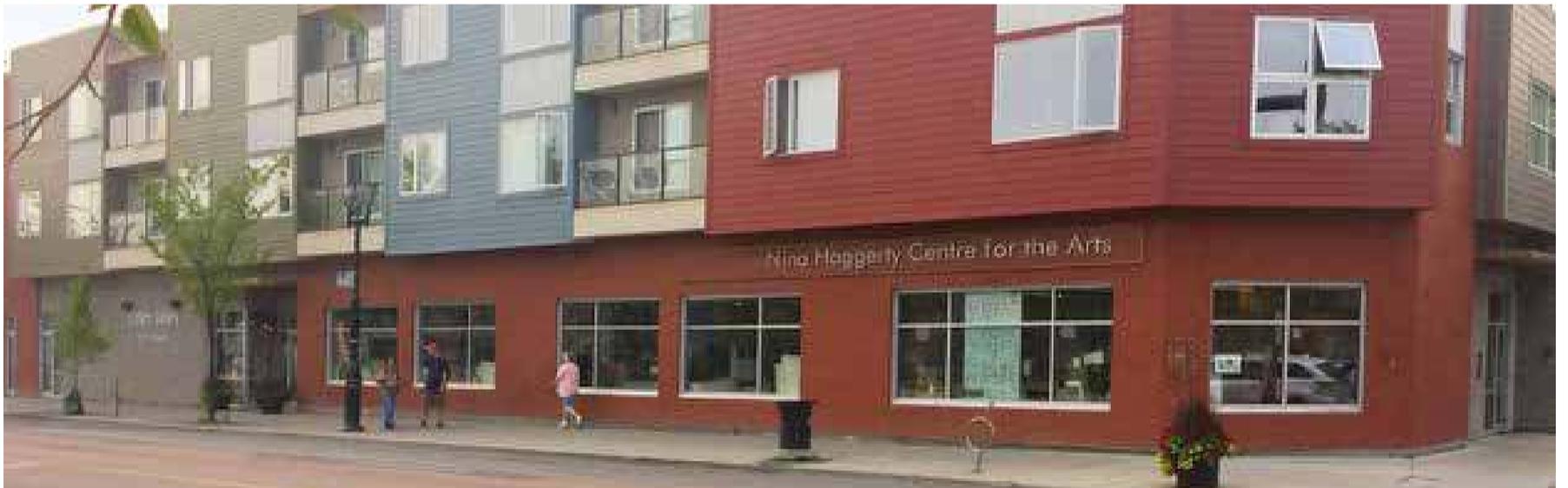
Their revenue this last year has been almost entirely grants, with some donations. They received emergency funding, a wage and rent subsidy, and provincial and federal government funding. Compared to before the pandemic, their current financial situation isn't too far off of what it was.

"While we are doing OK, I don't really want the world to think that artists are doing OK," Henderson adds. "Maybe I should say that we are no less tenuous than we were." If people want to help, they can either donate to Theatre Prospero or support local artists.

*Stephen works in broadcasting and writes for fun.*

**MORE INFO**

- [www.thenina.ca](http://www.thenina.ca)
- [bmcnews.org/donate](http://bmcnews.org/donate)
- [www.westwoodcl.ca](http://www.westwoodcl.ca)
- [www.theatreprospero.ca](http://www.theatreprospero.ca)
- [www.ratcreek.org/support-us/](http://www.ratcreek.org/support-us/)



The Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts has been affected financially by the pandemic. | Supplied

Eastwood Community League

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## OPINION

# Vaccinating yourself is essential

## Balancing the risks of infection versus vaccination

- REBECCA LIPPIATT -

Vaccine hesitancy is at an all-time high in Alberta. Our COVID-19 cases are also the highest per capita in the world, above India and Brazil and only under Argentina. I put this down to a failure of public health to accurately convey the risks and benefits of the vaccines.

I delay-vaccinated my children with their early childhood immunizations for a number of reasons (primarily because their dad has a severe egg allergy and many vaccines are cultivated in eggs). They were in Grade 5 by the time they had all their early childhood shots, when an allergy was no longer a risk. I made my decision after consulting with their pediatrician.

This choice had consequences. Once, I thought they might have measles. When I took them to the doctor, I called ahead to let the staff know we were coming in and needed to go directly to an exam room—I did not want to take the chance of infecting someone else in the waiting room. We wore masks and were escorted directly into an exam room. Their pediatrician pronounced them healthy and fine (albeit with some unusual rash). I took these precautions despite the fact that I had measles as a child and was just fine.

I also knew that if there were a measles outbreak, my children would not be allowed to attend school. To me, that was a reasonable request. For those who choose not to vaccinate for COVID-19, this may be their reality. Travel restrictions may be likely, especially in countries with inadequate health infrastructure. There may also be school, university, or employment restrictions to protect the health of employees and students.

When I decided not to vaccinate my children, I made a calculation. They had a 1 in a million chance of getting measles. They had a 1 in a million chance of being hurt

by the vaccine. Yes, there are always risks with all medications. Tylenol, which many people take themselves or give their children, accounts for 56,000 emergency department visits, 26,000 hospitalizations, and more than 450 deaths each year in the U.S.

I was also relying on the fact that early childhood vaccine uptake in Canada is around 90 per cent. It's not that I don't believe in vaccines, because I do. I was relying

to the U.K.'s Office for National Statistics, which has a 7 to 11.5 per cent chance of having long COVID, even from a mild or asymptomatic infection. That means your children have a 1 in 200 chance of having permanent lung, heart, brain, or kidney issues because of a COVID-19 infection.

While being unhealthy means you are more likely to end up hospitalized, there is really no rhyme or reason as to who ends up

and Moderna vaccines use mRNA. While some misinformation sites have called this "gene therapy", mRNA never enters the DNA. Instead, it makes proteins that look like the virus, prompting your body to create antibodies to the virus that are activated when you are exposed.

Conversely, the dangers of vaccination have been mostly overblown on social media.

According to Public Health Ontario's report dated Dec. 13, 2020 to May 15, 2021, the average rate of adverse effects of all the COVID vaccines is 1.6 per 100,000. AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD has the highest rate at 4.2 per 100,000 and is now being recommended only for jurisdictions with greater than 7.5 cases for 100,000 people (Alberta has 500+ cases per 100,000 people). Pfizer has the lowest rate of adverse effects at 1.2 per 100,000. The serious reactions are allergic reactions (treated on site by pharmacists and clinics) or blood clots (treatable, because doctors now know what to look for).

When I look at these numbers, the decision is easy for me. A 1 in 200 chance of my child being permanently disabled from a disease that is affecting so many or a 1.4 in 100,000 chance they might have an adverse reaction to the vaccine. That decision is quite simple.

Even if you feel you are not at risk for the virus, vaccination will help protect those around you.

*Rebecca has attended free concerts as a bouncer, juggled plates as a waitress, completed a degree in microbiology, laboured in the oilfield cleaning storage tanks, and worked as an editor. In her current incarnation, she has been a photographer for the last 13 years and is a mother to four children.*



Vaccinations help protect you and those around you. | Rebecca Lippiatt

on herd immunity. With the coronavirus, we cannot rely on herd immunity until most of us are vaccinated. I have been vaccinated and my children have too.

When the pandemic hit, I made more calculations. When I wrote this piece, 200,000 Albertans had been infected with COVID-19. We have a 1 in 20 chance of getting COVID-19. Adults have a 1 in 3 chance of developing long COVID, which is when you continue to have symptoms more than four weeks after infection. That means adult Albertans have a 1 in 60 chance of becoming disabled from the virus. Children, according

to the U.K.'s Office for National Statistics, have a 7 to 11.5 per cent chance of having long COVID, even from a mild or asymptomatic infection. That means your children have a 1 in 200 chance of having permanent lung, heart, brain, or kidney issues because of a COVID-19 infection.

Many people are uncomfortable with the technology used in the vaccines. AstraZeneca is similar to most childhood vaccines. But instead of a killed virus, it uses a non-replicating virus, infecting you just long enough for your body to marshal a defence against the real thing. It contains no metal adjuvant (ingredient increasing the effectiveness of a vaccine), such as aluminum or mercury, which concerns some parents. The Pfizer

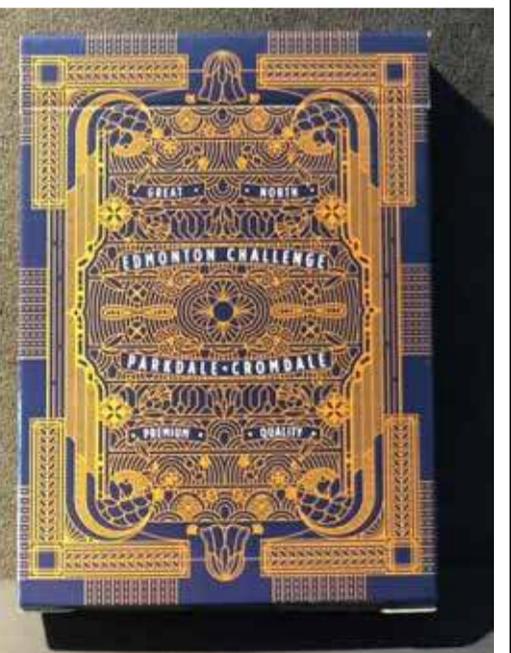


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# Delton School copes through COVID-19

What we did to overcome the many challenges we faced

- **CARISSA HALTON** -

During the last week of in-person learning in mid-March of 2020, our Delton School Council was planning a parent meet-and-greet with trustee Trisha Estabrooks. There would be doughnuts and a discussion about education budget cuts. Then everything changed. Not only were meetings cancelled in that first pandemic wave, we were also face-to-face with our kids 24/7. Parents and guardians doubled as teacher-assistants, technology experts, and screen-time managers. Many of us no longer had the usual critical support of grandparents and family friends.

Delton School Council consists of parents and guardians, school neighbours, our principal and vice principals, and teacher reps. We advocate for our kids and school as well as plan fundraisers to support 'extras' (though we debate how 'extras' like Chromebooks (a laptop using Google Chrome's operating system) are not defined as 'essentials'). The

pandemic has reinforced one thing for our council members: Schools are not just critical for our children's learning, but also to our community's health and well-being.

The pandemic required the staff, students, and council to pivot. School assemblies, council meetings, teacher-parent conferences, written notices—all moved online. At Delton, and many other schools, Chromebooks were lent to families and affordable Internet was made available. So, while students were disappointed that their 2020 field trips were cancelled, our school council was able to fund purchasing 60 new Chromebooks to ensure no students were left behind because of lack of technology.

Another challenge for teachers as they moved into smaller, tighter cohorts, was that learning materials could no longer be easily shared. The school council was able to fund buying new math kits so that every classroom has a manipulatives (learning tool) allowing kids to learn numeracy by feel, touch, and

fun. Outdoor field equipment specific to each classroom was also purchased for the kids' more restrained recesses.

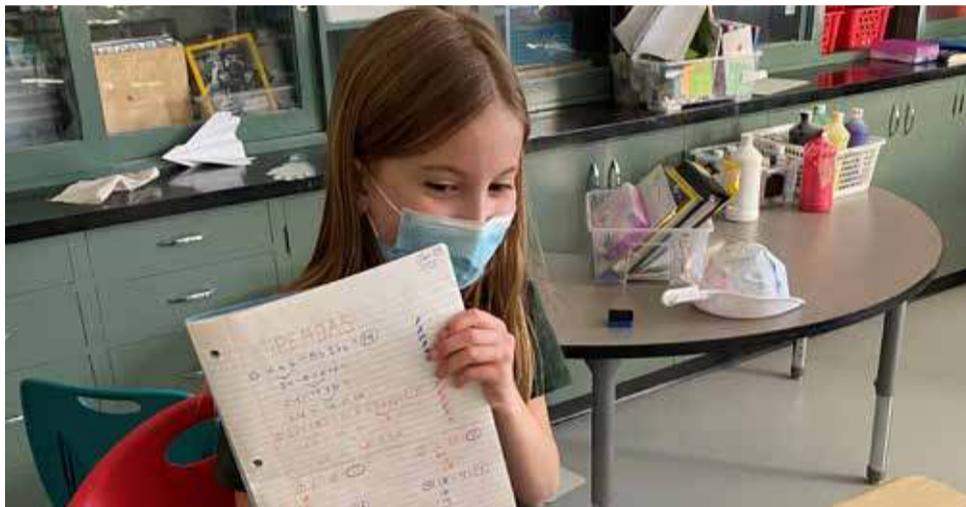
Over the year, many Delton students faced economic impacts of the pandemic. Many households had little to no cell service (because they couldn't always afford their bill), making them impossible to reach when students stopped attending school (sometimes to care for relatives). Many families were faced with choices between rent and food. When the principal mentioned this at our school council meeting, members voted to create a \$5,000 emergency fund. This enabled the school to purchase gift cards for families in need. The school's family resources staff deliver the cards, and make sure families know about the school's wrap-around services teams who can help in the longer term (from the Family Centre, Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and E4C). Due to this small fund's support, school staff have seen an increase in student

attendance among those financially impacted by this pandemic.

Anyone in the community can join our school council and be part of this work! At Delton, we are excited to return to school when it is safe to do so. We have big plans for next year—a garden, a community cleanup, a family dance—and we'd love for you to be part of it. We invite you to come to our September 21 kickoff meeting. Find more details on our Delton Elementary School Council Facebook page: [facebook.com/deltonschoolcouncil](https://facebook.com/deltonschoolcouncil).

And a giant thank you to all of the staff in our amazing public school system. May you rest well this summer!

*Carissa is the chair of Delton School Council. She wrote Little Yellow House about her family's life in Alberta Avenue.*



Lily Halton, in Grade 6, with one of the new Chromebooks. | Supplied by Carissa Halton



Ali Halton, in Grade 3, plays with some of the math manipulatives Delton School Council purchased for his class. The manipulatives included items such as Base 10 Blocks, Snap Cubes, Cuisenaire Rods, and 10-20 sided dice for each student per cohort. | Supplied by Carissa Halton

## Some reflections on this school year

The year that was and hope for what is to come

- **TRISHA ESTABROOKS** -

Resiliency. Creativity. Flexibility. Kindness. Compassion. Sacrifice. These are the words that come to mind when I reflect on the past year and the way in which students, families, and staff within Edmonton Public Schools have navigated the school year during a global pandemic.

It has not been easy. For many, many families it has been a difficult year of challenges, frustrations, and uncertainty. We have all experienced this pandemic in different ways. In my work serving as your trustee for Ward D, I have seen, for example, how the pandemic has exposed deep inequities

for families and children who live in poverty in our city. A common refrain I've heard is: "We may all be in the same storm, but we are not all in the same boat. If your boat is still afloat, it only makes sense to lend a helping hand to those whose boats are taking on water." This is an important point to remember as we continue to navigate this pandemic and prepare for the clean up after the proverbial storm passes.

One of the greatest challenges has been planning for the future. Looking ahead to September, EPSB is expecting that health protocols, such as masking and social distancing, will still need to be in place in our schools. This also means that families,

from June 21 until August 12, will be able to choose whether their children will learn online or in-person for the first half of the 2021-22 school year. Hopefully by the second half of the year, students will be able to fully return to in-person learning. If that can't happen, parents will have an opportunity to choose in-person or online again.

There are other reasons to be hopeful, too. We need to remember that although this is a health crisis, it is not an education crisis. Staff in our schools have done a phenomenal job in supporting kids and families and, as frontline workers in this pandemic, they deserve our gratitude. The growing numbers of people—including children over the age

of 12—who are being vaccinated fills me with hope, as does knowing that the lessons learned through the pandemic will serve our education system and our children well in the future. COVID-19 and the response to it has forced us all to think about new ways to see the world, to see others, and to continue to use the skills of resiliency, creativity, flexibility, kindness, and compassion as we look ahead to a new school year this fall.

*Trisha is the trustee for Ward D. She is currently serving as board chair. She was elected in 2017.*



Inspiring words outside an EPSB school. | Supplied by Trisha Estabrooks



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