

The Land Economist

2 Association News

3 News Briefs

4 Gilgan: "War Footing"

6 Brightwater Community

8 Hamilton Facelift

10 Canada "Littlized"

11 1890 School Reborn

12 COVID Calamity

13 Tall Cranes

14 Mall Conversions
News Briefs

15 Canada Co

16 White River Lumber

17 The Final Word

PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL



ASSOCIATION OF
ONTARIO LAND
ECONOMISTS

30 St. Patrick St., Suite 1000
Toronto, ON M5T 3A3
Email: admin@aole.org
Website: www.aole.org

Journal Chair: John Blackburn
Freelance writer: [Pat Brennan](#)



The Brightwater project was named 2020's Best New Community (Planned or Under Development) by BILD, the greater Toronto home builders and land development association. For more information, see article, pages 6-7, and check out this [flythrough](#).

Kari Norman: AOLE Administrator

Kari Norman has been appointed as the new part time administrator of The Association of Ontario Land Economists.

Kari is well aware of what the association is all about. As a professional economist, Kari worked for Royal Bank Economics, the C D Howe Institute and Clayton Research Associates until the work load in her family home became too demanding. That'll happen when you are home-schooling your four kids. Two of those kids have now moved on to university, one is in high school and the youngest is in elementary, so Mom feels it's time to broaden her horizons.



She's the part-time administrator for both the Canadian Association for Business Economics and the Toronto Association for Business and Economics.

Kari, her husband Peter, and their children live in Toronto. Peter is vice-president and chief economist with Altus Group, a firm providing real estate data, analytics, and professional advisory services.

Kari is looking forward to getting to know AOLE members. You can reach her at admin@aole.org or by phone at (416) 743-1610.

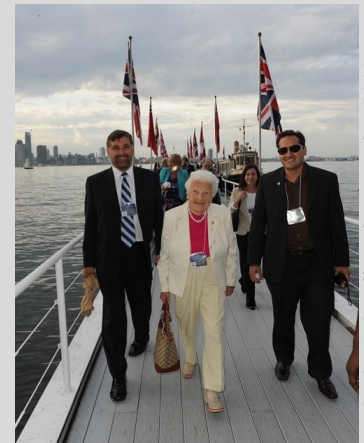


PHOTO: T. Sandler Photography, 2013

Honorary AOLE Member **Hazel McCallion** turns 100 on Feb 14!

Nicknamed "Hurricane Hazel", Mississauga's 12-term Mayor (1978-2014) oversaw that municipality's transformation to Canada's 6th largest city. She was also a good friend to this Association. At 92, the year before she retired, she wowed members with her speech at its 50th Anniversary celebration. (Photo above shows her arriving at the Royal Canadian Yacht Club for the occasion.) See links to [celebrations](#) and a [fundraiser](#).

Pat Brennan, freelance writer

It was 5 p.m. on Christmas Eve when the phone rang in the empty office of Marel Contractors. Marco Muzzo was still there finishing up the day's paperwork and was going to let the phone ring off the hook.

However, that's not Marco Muzzo, so he picked it up.

The crying lady at the other end of the line had a tragic story to tell.

Somebody had left the water running into a bathtub upstairs, it overflowed and eventually the dining room ceiling came crashing down onto her festive table set to host 20 family members for Christmas dinner the next day.

What could she do?

Muzzo was one tough hombre in the construction business, but a crying woman on Christmas Eve left him no choice. He picked up his trowel and headed for her house.

Muzzo, now deceased, was telling me this story 50 years after it happened and



his eyes sparkled again with delight. Marel was one of the biggest plastering firms in the city. Drywall was yet to be introduced to home building.

By 4 a.m. on Christmas morning the lady's dining room table again looked

like a Christmas card. Above it was the most beautiful plaster ceiling she had ever seen. Muzzo had given it specialty finishes – a large hand-carved medallion, elaborate mouldings, even the light had been cleaned and repaired.

That's why I so much enjoyed my years as the real estate editor at The Toronto Star, Canada's largest newspaper. For nearly 40 years as staff writer and photographer, I got to hear and tell interesting stories like that about interesting people.

The construction and land development industry is full of them and I am happy to be seeking out those stories again for The Land Economist Journal.

Many of those interesting entrepreneurs with their interesting stories are now gone or retired and I am hoping the next generations have interesting stories to tell too - although I doubt many of them were in the company office at 5 p.m. on Christmas Eve, 2020!

You can reach me by phone at 647-898-9717 or at travelswithlefty@gmail.com.

NEWS BRIEFS

ALTUS 2021 CDN COST GUIDE



The construction industry showed its resilience and performed well in 2020 (all things considered), says Altus Group in its 2021 Canadian Cost Guide. However, “even with the vaccination rollout, we aren’t out of the woods yet.” Several factors “will undoubtedly have long-term impacts on construction costs throughout 2021 and beyond,” including:

- construction sites being locked down or not at full capacity,
- the global supply chain being somewhat broken, and
- a recession

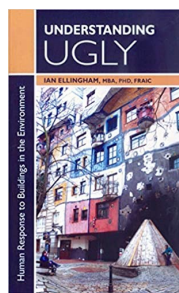
The firm’s annual Cost Guides are intended for companies preparing a high level estimate in pre-planning stages (square footage only), and as a benchmark further on, to compare more detailed estimates with the industry.

The report gives hard cost price ranges per square foot in nine large urban centres, for different types of private sector (residential, commercial and industrial) buildings, and public sector (institutional, civic, servicing and infrastructure) projects.

For example, in January 2021, Class A Office buildings between 5-30 storeys in height cost between \$ 270-340 in Vancouver, \$250-365 in the GTA and \$230-310 in Ottawa. To see more, click [here](#).

IAN ELLINGHAM

In July, long-time AOLE member Ian Ellingham published “Understanding Ugly”. The book explores people’s relationship with buildings and factors creating positive responses. Click [here](#) for Amazon listing.



WORTH BOOKMARKING

In January 2021, the Toronto Star featured The Atkinson Series – five articles by Toronto writer and editor John Lorinc on all things “Smart City”.

It began on Jan 4, with [Smart cities will be cleaner, accessible, even more democratic, proponents say. But governments adopting new tech must contend with risks, too.](#)

Subsequent articles have addressed:

- essential technological components
- security, privacy and digital governance
- the Dutch model
- using data, but the tech is not in charge
- digital tech procurement
- improving mobility, avoiding quagmire
- technical, ethical and political landmines
- why expensive disappointments?

Click [here](#) for the series’ page at the Star.

Renomark



after 20 years

Many people now “Working from Home” in their pajamas are enjoying the experience and not missing their long commutes one bit. They see this as their future employment and want changes in their homes to accommodate it.

That is creating a surge in jobs for renovators, says David Wilkes, president and CEO of BILD, the organization that represents home builders, renovators and land developers.

BILD’s renovator members started the RenoMark certification program 20 years ago, to identify professionals with a renovation-specific Code of Conduct. Since then, it has grown into a 2,000-member, Canada-wide program delivered by local home builders’ associations. BILD now has 300 RenoMark members.

“Much has changed in the renovation industry since 2001. We have seen updates to building codes, advances in building science and construction materials and new design trends. And of course with the advent of the internet customers are more engaged and better informed,” Wilkes said in an interview with the Land Economist Journal.

“With all these changes, RenoMark renovators need to adapt and continue to keep learning. Our members must stay up-to-date on changing practices and also stay educated if they want to remain relevant. That’s why continuing education and lifelong learning is important for everyone in the industry. And it should be important to you as a consumer when choosing a renovator.”

The certification includes a (mandatory in 2021) Professional Renovator Education Program (PREP), with sessions on customer service, dispute resolution, finance, documentation, insurance, risk and contracts. Participants get updates, explore potential problems, discuss ways to fix them, and role-play customers’ viewpoints, goals and stresses.

All RenoMark renovators must provide their clients with a written contract and a minimum one-year warranty, carry \$2 million in liability insurance, all licenses and permits, and workplace liability insurance (WSIB), and return client phone calls within two business days.

Not only does RenoMark turn 20 in 2021, BILD turns 100! Look for lots of celebrations starting this April.

Welcome New Members!

Brad Anderson
RPP, MCIP, PLE
Durham Region
Brad.Anderson@durham.ca

Spencer Bridgwater
M.Sc., PLE
Metrolinx
spencer.bridgwater@gmail.com
416-720-6830

Tom Curtis
M.Sc., PLE
tom.curtis27@gmail.com
416-735-1680

Neil Garbe
RPP, PLE
neilgarbel@rogers.com
416-347-1117

Trajce Nikolov
M.Eng, P.Eng, PLE
Hemson Consulting Ltd.
tnikolov@hemson.ca
416-700-8964

Maggie R. Wang
MBA, CPA, CGA, AIMA, PLE
Region of Peel
maggie.wang@peelregion.ca
647-289-5576



Solar panels on Mattamy homes in Calgary. Part of a national R2000 Net-Zero Energy (NZE) pilot, the first one [opened in 2015](#).

Put land approvals on a ‘war footing’

by Pat Brennan

Peter Gilgan wants to see a much faster system in Ontario for issuing planning approvals and permits, even though that might affect the value of his land holdings.

Gilgan is the billionaire founder of Mattamy Homes, the largest home builder in Canada and the largest privately-held homebuilder in North America.

In an interview with *The Land Economist*, Gilgan said the lengthy period for land approvals in Ontario – an average of 6 years – is a major contributor to the high price of buying a home.

“The long delays for building approvals at the municipal level keep land prices very high. I own a lot of land, which wouldn’t be as valuable if it flowed through the system faster. But addressing these systemic delays would lead to much more balance in the industry – better for both home buyers and developers” said Gilgan.

“Municipalities, in particular regional governments, are the delegated authority for the province. So a provincial government that encourages a less red-tape approach to processing proper applications for development can greatly decrease the cost of housing.

“We respect due process and the requirement for all the reviews that have to take place. What we don’t understand is the

timing and sequencing for each of these processes. If we were to put housing priority on a war footing and really attack availability, this would in time see housing become more affordable as supply increased.

“In my father’s time any man with a steady job could afford to buy a home whether he drove a milk truck or was a carpenter. It might have been a 1,000 square foot bungalow, but it was a family home and that was a good thing for society. It made for a more peaceful and contented society,” said Gilgan.

“There is also the issue of land availability in both urban and suburban locations. The province needs to make an honest assessment of land that is truly available, not theoretically available, for development. Then it should do what it can with due regard to the science underlying environmental protection to release more land for development. As it is, this supply is so constrained, that all the smart farmers out there know if they just sit and hold their land the price goes up each month because the supply can’t keep up to the demand.”

He would like to see significant changes to the Provincial Planning Act. “When I buy a 100-acre parcel of land for residential development I know I’ll have to surrender about 40 per cent of that land to satisfy the arbitrary demands of the municipality, such as the width of subdivision streets. The layout designs of our

neighbourhoods are being dictated by the turning radius of a garbage truck. There’s got to be more creative thinking to planning than simple matters like that,” said Gilgan.

“And heaven forbid if there is a drainage ditch cutting through that 100 acres you just bought. It’s a foot wide to accommodate spring run off, but the conservation authority or other approval agencies are going to turn it into a 75-metre-wide swath of land referred to as a natural heritage system, where no structures can be built.

“While conservationists and those interested in green developments see this as a good thing, they are failing to realize that these kinds of rules and regulation actually contribute to urban sprawl – because a drainage ditch needs such width, it means more asphalt, more roadways and more cars.

“Our federal government encourages greater housing stock with a generous immigration program, but the lower level governments have too many roadblocks to providing housing for those who want it,” said Gilgan.

And once a building permit is issued Gilgan says he has a large staff working in what he calls “the skunk works,” on ways to reduce the energy consumption of the average home. Some of the inventions and designs created by his energy

Continued on page 5

Gilgan (continued from page 4)

researchers have ended up in his home in Florida. Gilgan said the architectural design of his Florida home, plus the materials used in construction and interior finishes has reduced energy use by 72 percent vs. a similar house built to the municipal building code.

Some of those design and construction features generated by “the skunk works” are being applied today to a low-rise Mattamy Homes project in Markham.

Low- to mid-rise housing currently accounts for about 85% of the projects Mattamy has underway today across Canada and the US.

“At both my personal residence and in the business, I am starting to use energy generation, various energy storage systems, and energy management systems for heating, cooling and other electrical usages. These can include solar panels, geothermal or battery storage, ultra high efficiency appliances and building materials.”

When Gilgan was first interviewed by this reporter more than 40 years ago he had two employees, a pick-up truck and was building three custom homes on Lakeshore Road in Burlington.

He told me at that time his accounting firm had several home builders as clients. He was impressed with the profit they made per new home, so he decided to venture into the home building business.

He named his new firm after his two chil-

dren Matt and Amy. Today Gilgan is a billionaire, the father of eight children, and employs about 2,000 people (who are eligible for a 4.5 percent price reduction if they buy a Mattamy home).

His firm has built well over 100,000 homes in Calgary, Edmonton, and throughout the GTA, particularly single-family homes in Oakville, Brampton and Milton, plus homes in Florida, North Carolina, Arizona and now Texas.

You can see the Peter Gilgan or Mattamy name on a variety of buildings in the GTA, such as old Maple Leaf Gardens on Carlton St. which is now Ryerson University's athletic centre (known as the Mattamy Athletic Centre). Four of Gilgan's children graduated from Ryerson.

The Peter Gilgan Foundation is one of Canada's biggest contributors to charity organizations. The foundation gave \$100 million to the Hospital for Sick Children last June and is Canada's largest private donor to health care.

In recognition of his many charitable contributions Gilgan was named a mem-



Many of Gilgan's best ideas arrive when he's cycling.

ber of the Order of Canada in November 2014, and was elevated to an Officer of the Order of Canada on Dec. 1, 2020.

The foundation garners some of its donation funds from the Tour De Bleu, an annual bicycle ride organized by the foundation, where dozens of cyclists each year are sponsored on 100- or 50-kilometre bike rides. The tour has raised more than \$25 million since 2005 for a variety of health care institutions.

He contributed \$15 million towards the construction of the bicycle velodrome in Milton for the Pan American Games.

Gilgan, 70, spends a lot of time pumping a bicycle. He says many of his business ideas and decisions arrive in his head when he is riding his bicycle on a trail mostly near his home in Florida and also at his cottage in Muskoka. “It's all trails there and less traffic, so more relaxing for me,” said Gilgan.

After our interview in downtown Toronto he jumped on his bicycle for a ride along the Martin Goodman Trail out to Oakville “because today is supposed to be the last day over 20°C this year.”



In October 2020, Mattamy [announced](#) it had reached agreement to acquire the home building operations and 3,400 homesites of New Synergy Homes in Dallas, Texas, the 2nd largest housing market in the US. PHOTO: Mattamy home in Arizona. (CNW/Mattamy)

Brightwater community is filling a huge gap on the Mississauga lakefront

Spreading the charm and cachet of Port Credit west along Lakeshore Rd. is the vision behind Brightwater, a mixed-use development promising a world-class impact.

The 72-acre site on Lake Ontario's shoreline opened as a brick kiln in 1887 and in 1933 became an oil refinery until Imperial Oil shut its doors in 1996. Four prominent building and development firms have joined forces to create a world-class community, according to Bob Blazeovski, president and COO at DiamondCorp, one of the four developers.

He said it took more than two years to remediate the site which had sat vacant for nearly 30 years after Imperial Oil

shuttered its refinery. Kilmer Group, which specializes in sanitizing brown-field sites, remediated 1.4 million tons of soil that was heavily contaminated from years of industrial work. Now, the land is home to large excavators, construction trucks and survey drones.

Blazeovski said the first phase of 311 residences quickly sold out when they went on the market in mid September. Eventually there'll be more than 2,600 condominium residences and 400 townhomes at Brightwater, and an additional 150 affordable homes created by Peel Region, plus 300,000 square feet of retail, restaurant and commercial space.

Picturesque Port Credit is one of Mississauga's top cultural, entertainment and culinary districts, boasting world-class restaurants and award-winning festivals and events. It has one of North America's most respected main streets.

Brightwater sits just west of the Credit River and Port Credit Harbour where Mississauga Rd. connects with Lakeshore Rd.

Fram + Slokker, the partnership that built the award-winning Port Credit Village occupying the former St. Lawrence Starch Company lands, is another of the four developers spearheading Brightwater.

Hidden behind fences for more than 100 years, these lands are finally taking their place between the bustling Port Credit village to the east and developments to the west.

Kilmer Group, owned by Larry Tanenbaum, chairman of Maple Leafs Sports & Entertainment, is also a partner in Brightwater, as is Dream Assets Management, a publicly-traded land development firm. Together the four are known as Port Credit West Village Partners Inc.

Gianonne Petricone Associates Inc. Architects are the concept architects for the community's master plan, but there are a variety of other architectural firms involved in different structures and aspects of Brightwater. Architect Ralph Gianonne is the brother of Frank Gianonne, president of Fram Building Design Group. Ralph's architectural partner Pina Petricone is also his wife.

The Copenhagen architectural firm COBE Architects designed a campus

Continued on page 7



PHOTOS (above top) View of the oil refinery and tank farm back in 1956; (above bottom) Massive remediation project completed in the fall of 2019. RENDERING (above right) Proposed Village Square retail hub located just south of Lakeshore Road West.



area in Brightwater. Their design is inspired by the shale formation below the site, Blazevski said.

The City of Mississauga played a major role in designing the overall concept for the waterfront community, he noted, and wanted to extend the Port Credit cachet west along Lakeshore Rd. Mississauga councillor Jim Tovey, a strong advocate of the project on council, tragically died in January 2018 while driving home from a planning committee meeting. He was 68. His successor Stephen Dasko has continued the support.

More than 1,000 mature trees will be planted in the new community and there'll be 18 acres of parkland and open spaces.

Toronto-based Diamond Schmitt Architects and Turner Fleischer Architects will design the commercial segment of Brightwater stretching along Lakeshore Rd.

There will be a range of mid- to high-rise condominium buildings between 5-29 storeys high in the centre of the site, with mostly low rise townhomes along the periphery blending in with adjacent neighbourhoods. A public walking trail runs across much of the Port Credit waterfront and will include Brightwater.

PB

RENDERINGS (clockwise from top)

- 14-storey Brightwater 11 from Phase 1, by Diamond Schmitt Arch.
- Another view of the Village Square in winter time
- Proposed waterfront park with campus buildings by COBE Arch.
- 5-storey Brightwater 1 from Phase 1, also by Diamond Schmitt Arch..





RENDERINGS in this article are courtesy The Precinct Group

Hamilton gets a \$200 Million Facelift

Downtown Hamilton is getting a face lift to go with its vital new role in the life of the city.

Hamilton City Council has signed an agreement with a consortium of entrepreneurs and a major construction union to take over the operation of the city's principal entertainment and culture buildings.

The consortium plans to spend \$200 million giving the three cultural buildings a new look. And it will absorb their maintenance costs, saving Hamilton about \$155 million over the next 30 years, according to a study by Ernst & Young.

The consortium is composed of Fengage Capital, Meridian Credit Union, Paletta Group, Carmen's Group and LiUNA, the International Labourer's Union of North America. The consortium is called The Precinct Group, said P.J. Mercanti in an interview with the Land Economist Journal.

Mercanti is CEO at Carmen's Group, a long established hospitality firm in the Hamilton City Centre. He said the Precinct Group's mission is to honour and enrich the communities they build in with thoughtfully designed arts, entertainment, sports, residential, commercial and mixed-use properties.

The Precinct Group's proposed \$50M renovation of FirstOntario Centre – home of the Hamilton Bulldogs of the Ontario Hockey League - includes a new building exterior, comprehensive trans-

formation of the lower bowl, expanded concourse level, and a new flexible and attractive curtaining system for the upper bowl balcony. Fans will have access to

Continued on page 9



"The Hammer" plans to transform arts and entertainment and add mixed use towers.



Existing FirstOntario Concert Hall.

premium amenities like a microbrewery, suites, and hospitality clubs, plus year-round access to the experience through street-level hospitality activations on York Boulevard and Bay Street.

The management of the transformed arena will pursue global partnerships to supply top touring artists and live events in the facility.

The group plans more than \$16M in capital upgrades to the existing Hamilton Convention Centre, FirstOntario Concert Hall, and Art Gallery of Hamilton, which share a block in downtown Hamilton.

It also proposes an estimated \$340.5M in auxiliary mixed-use development including affordable housing to share the downtown neighbourhood with the entertainment venues.

LiUNA has 100,000 members in construction, waste management, show service workers and health care.

In 2000 LiUNA bought the 70-year-old CN Rail Station on James Street and converted it into one of Hamilton's most elaborate banquet halls. The Station is a national historic site.

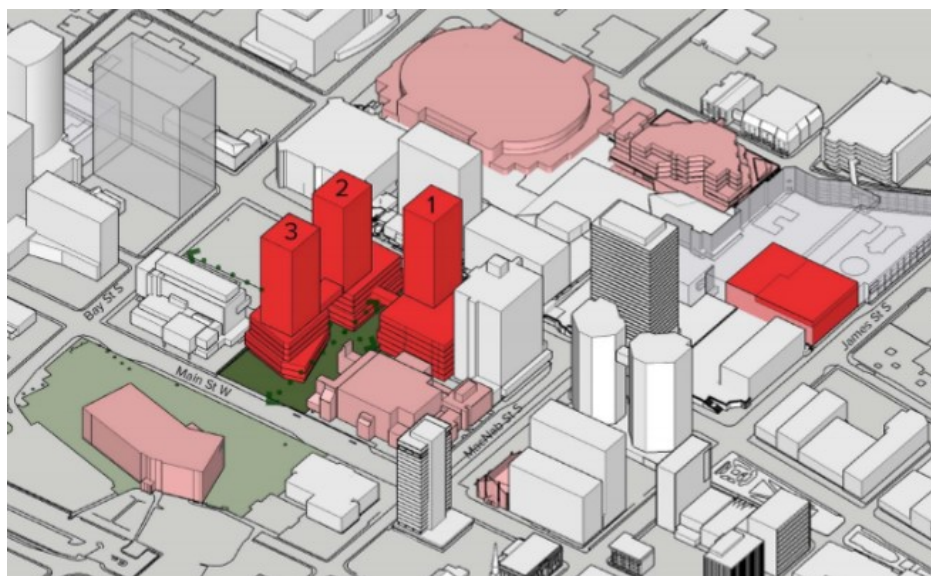
Outside the building, there's a life-size bronze statue of the late Italian novelist and politician Leonardo Sciascia walking down a sidewalk smoking a cigarette.

There's a similar statue of Sciascia walking along a downtown street in Hamilton's twin city – Racalmuto, in Italy.

P.B.



New look for the home of the Hamilton Bulldogs, of the OHA Junior A League.



The Proposal book sets out 6 phases for new construction. Phase 1 relocates the Convention Centre (currently where Tower 1 is shown above) to Hamilton City Centre (shown on the right in red). Phase 2 demolishes the existing Centre. Phase 3 is the construction of the new Art Gallery and Tower 1. Phase 4 relocates the Art Gallery from its current location (where Tower 2 is shown above) to the podium of Tower 1. Phase 5 constructs Towers 2 and 3 on continued podium. Phase 6 landscapes the pedestrian thoroughfare.

(Right) Statue of Leonardo Sciascia, cigarette in hand, in front of the LiUNA building.

(Below) Concept for design of the relocated Convention Centre.



Canada, “Littlized”

You don't often find “little” and “Canada” in the same sentence.

That's because we live in the world's second largest nation with nearly 10 million square kilometres of land from coast to coast to coast.

Canada also has the world's longest coastline with waves washing up on 243,772 kilometres (151,473 miles) of rugged Canadian rock, sand and soil.

So you can imagine the challenges facing Jean-Louis Brenninkmeijer and Dave MacLean who are rebuilding all of Canada on an acre of land where Yonge Street crosses Dundas in the heart of Toronto.

Little Canada will be like looking at all of Canada from a giant helicopter very, very high in the sky. And yet you'll be able to see yourself skiing down a mountain slope in Banff or swimming nude at Wreck Beach in Vancouver.

Brenninkmeijer and MacLean are building Canada in miniature and it'll cover 45,000 square feet on two floors in an entertainment building at 10 Dundas St. E.

The two entrepreneurs are using a “littlization” machine to turn real people – like Toronto Mayor John Tory – into petite, identical plastic statues of themselves to occupy the streets, parks, buildings, ski slopes, railway platforms, etc. all across Little Canada.

You too can contribute your body to this unique mini world after it opens to the public on July 1 next year. You step into a 3D “littlization” booth that photographs you simultaneously with 126 different lenses. The resulting data is then 3D printed into an exact “mini me”. You can pick where mini you goes on display.

MacLean is an engineering graduate from University of Toronto who has extensive experience in Ontario's construction industry. He also has a passion for model trains and was involved in creating a large and very popular model train layout at Exhibition Place – until the lease expired.

Brenninkmeijer, a native of Holland, is a member of one of Europe's most wealthy families. He has lived all over the world representing his family's investments in clothing manufacturing, energy recreation and storage and other adventures.



Jean-Louis Brenninkmeijer peers over a miniature model of Union Station to the tracks.

When he was posted to Canada by the family business he was amazed at the vast size of the country and its incredible diversity. “I arrived in Canada in 1999 without any knowledge of the country. I learned to appreciate the physical and cultural diversity of our vast country - so much so that I developed a vision to bring all of Canada a little bit closer, to build a place where people could see and experience our country in one afternoon, a miniature adventure from coast to coast to coast,” said Brenninkmeijer.

A passion for creating mobile miniatures brought him and MacLean together. Brenninkmeijer invested \$5 million in the idea and found another 120 investors for the \$17 million project.

The first phase of Little Canada was built and assembled at a Mississauga warehouse. The plan was to open in July, 2020, but Covid-19 has disrupted that schedule, so now its July 1, 2021.

Brenninkmeijer and MacLean expect their mobile mini world will attract 500,000 visitors annually.

Little Canada involves such fine detail, like a flowing Niagara Falls, a rising and falling tide in the Bay of Fundy, street cars, GO trains and helicopters coming-and-going in Toronto, plus lights galore.

Toronto alone took more than 35,000 hours of design and construction work with 30,000 LEDs to light up its spectacular skyline at night. The city goes through a 20-minute day from sunrise to sunset.

You'll hear the city coming alive in the morning with garbage trucks banging

cans and backing up, birds chirping and dogs barking.

Those kind of details for each region is why the entire country couldn't open at the same time. Little Canada is broken into 12 regions and six of them - Niagara, the Golden Horseshoe, Toronto, Ottawa, Quebec City and the North will open on July 1. Canada's North destination will be kept cool so that your breath shows when you're watching Polar Bears hunt.

Most of the structures are built to a ratio of 1/87, as are most model railway structures. However the 1/87 ratio would have the CN Tower poking through the roof, so it is limited to 14 feet.

The roof opens and closes on the Rogers Centre (Skydome), but much faster than the real thing. The large scoreboard screen at centre field will show on-field action and Brenninkmeijer hopes to display Blue Jay action from their game the day before.

The back wall of Ottawa's renowned Chateau Laurier Hotel is missing so you can peer into the hotel's decorated and furnished rooms.

“We have people in wheelchairs” said Brenninkmeijer. “You can't buy models of people in wheelchairs so we make them ourselves. We want to reflect Canada's attitude to an open and free society, its diverse culture, people and origins.

“Buildings are mostly made of medium-density fibreboard and acrylic. CAD (computer-assisted design) and laser engravers give us the fine detail and structure pieces are made by a 3D printer.”

PB

1891 School Could Be Reborn for 21st century

The conical roof on the historic Chester Public School on Broadview Ave. just a few blocks north of Danforth Ave. is coming back.

The rounded peak roof at the top of the school's bell tower was eliminated decades ago, but in a current proposal for a 16-storey residential building, that roof would be coming back.

Neighbours might be surprised to see a 'new' old building on Broadview Avenue, just north of Chester Hill Rd. For almost five decades, it has been hidden behind the face of the Estonian House.

Chester Public School opened its doors in September 1891. It operated for 58 years before being closed due to overcrowding in 1959. The following year, the property was sold to Estonian House. Additions made in the 1960s, 70s and 90s ended up covering the majority of the original structure.

In September, DiamondCorp and Kilmer Brownfield Management Ltd. acquired the property at 954-958 Broadview Ave. and 72 Chester Hill Rd.

It was going through the approvals process by Revera Inc for an 18-storey seniors' housing facility when the sale was completed. Diamond Kilmer is continuing with the process, recently having resubmitted an application to demolish

the additions, restore the old school and integrate it with a new 16-storey residential building with underground parking.

The company has hired ERA Architects to restore the heritage structure. It will incorporate grade-related retail space.

Demolishing the additions will create a deep landscaped forecourt looking out to Broadview Ave. Landscape Architects Ferris + Associates will also open green space on the Chestnut Hill Rd. side of the 19th century school.

Graziani + Corazza Architects are designing the 16-storey masonry and glass mid-rise building integrated into the rear of the historic school structure. DiamondCorp president and COO Bob Blazeovski says the masonry elements will reflect those found in the school and the surrounding neighbourhood. Its four-storey podium attaches to the historic structure and extends westward onto part of the former surface parking lot (see rendering below left). There is also an opportunity



RENDERINGS courtesy DiamondKilmer



EXISTING

to re-naturalize lands at the rear of the property and dedicate them back to the city and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

Along with an eye-catching historic restoration, the proposal would create 148 studio/1-bedroom, 51 2-bedroom and 24 3-bedroom units, as well as 175 m² of non-residential space. There would be 91 parking spaces plus 229 spaces for bikes.

The site overlooks the Don Valley from its east-side ridge. It was originally part of Lot 12, one of the parcels of land granted by Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe to individuals, military and clergy after the founding of the town of York in 1793.

The 200-acre Lot 12 parcel was granted to Ely Playter, one of three sons of George Playter, an American British loyalist whose dedication to the British cause resulted in approximately 900 acres in grants to the family. The lots were located north of, and ran parallel to, the second concession (now Bloor St./Danforth Ave.) Mill Road, named after the Skinner brothers' sawmill on the Don, would become today's Broadview Avenue. To the south, Lot 11 remained in the family and the surrounding neighbourhood is today known as Playter Estates.



DiamondKilmer Proposes a New Jewel in Playter Estates

With its excellent transportation access, tree-lined streets, schools, stores, restaurants and street life, Playter Estates is known as one of Toronto's most liveable neighbourhoods.



The Covid Calamity: Is Housing Immune?!!!

by Andrew Brethour

As I write this we are in the midst of a surging second wave of the Covid Crud!!!

The media has done their collective job well and scared the 'pants' off the average consumer. Market place fear usually creates caution and causes inaction. The consumer in the face of calamity and recession normally pulls backs, retreats and awaits signals of recovery. But the total opposite reaction occurred in GTA housing markets as we came out of the first lockdown.

"I'm outa here !!"

After several months of lockdown, initiated March through May of this year, the real estate market receded ... but didn't stop.

Resale housing dropped in April to 2,934 sales from a market norm of around 8,500 per month. What was remarkable was that there were 2,900 sales at all in April!!!

The psychological impact of lockdown was equally remarkable. The consumer took a collective look around their existing accommodation, locked in place for 90 days, and screamed together "I'm outa here".

There was a dramatic motivation to change ... whether that was to larger, smaller, different type of product or completely different locations. The consumer

carefully reviewed their current situation and decided to MOVE!!!

Sales doubled in May, doubled again in June and set record volumes in August September and October ... Covid didn't inhibit housing sales it actually pushed the consumer's BUY NOW button and they took action !!!

WFH !!!

Another new phenomenon was also taking hold ... WFH ... 'working from home'. Thousands of consumers found themselves isolated in the lockdown and forced to work from home ... and they discovered "I can do this!!! And my company wants me to do this !!! If I can adapt my worklife to my personal life ... then I'm ready to take action!"

And they did!!! The move wasn't just around the corner, but to the far reaches of the GTA and beyond. "If I can work from home and go into the office one or two days a week, then I can live where I really want to ..." Look out small town Ontario, here they come!!! And helping to facilitate this move, we all became Zoomers!!

Savings rates triple, unemployment soars and money is free !!

How can real estate survive amidst these confusing signals? By May, Recession

was quickly upon us, GDP collapsed as unemployment topped 14%, immigration dropped from 350,000 to near zero.

BUT the 86% employed sector was saving like never before. With no expenditures on travel, vacations, dining and entertainment, savings rates tripled. And combined with the stock market's buoyancy and confidence (my RRSP and TFSA remained intact) there was a sudden recognition that this is a good time to buy real estate!!

Interest rates hit an all time low with 5 year mortgage rates under 3 %. Yes there are tougher rules to qualify but if I make that major 'lifestyle' move from Urban to Suburban and work from home, I can afford a whole lot more house ... and that's exactly what happened !!!

What about the Doomsday Predictions?

As you know there have been many naysayers in the market predicting a housing collapse and price declines ... some like CMHC have significant Cred ... So far they have been wrong!!!!

What they are focusing on is the Condo market, and what I called the impact of the 'elevator virus' on high rise apart-

Continued on page 13

COVID (continued from page 12)

ment sales. Combined with the dramatic decline in immigration, the retreat of the renter, and the limitations on Airbnb rentals, the resale condo market has softened...but NOT collapsed.

Much of the GTA condo product has been designed and bought by investors for rental. This renter was hit hardest by Covid ... those who worked in the service industries that were shut down were renters of these condos. As concerned investors reacted to the rental pull back, listing supply has soared. But it is coming from such a tight supply level that it is not nearly yet in balance.

This will be a short-lived, 6 month and modest condo correction ... it will impact the Resale market only and NOT New Condo project launches. These projects are delivered 3 to 4 years from now ... into a completely different market ... as a vaccine relieves the FEAR factor and Immigration returns.

New targets have been announced at more than 1.2 million over the next three years, foreign students will get immediate access to permanent residency (40,000 in the GTA alone) and the 400,000 Hong Kong Canadians will be given special attention. This will soften the blow of the renter retreat.

There will be no Condo Doomsday in the GTA. In fact, the next 6 months will be the best time to buy into a very stable market. By fall of 2021 condo resale prices will be back on pace with low rise product ... up 15% in value since April!!!

What does 2021-22 look like?

This commitment to real estate in the GTA and beyond will continue unabated. The strong absorption numbers of the fall of 2020 will stabilize somewhat and, given the upward pressure on price, may push back a little by Q2 2021 ... but a great year is ahead for all sectors in 2021 and as Immigration returns, employment improves (now at 8% heading

for 6.5% by summer), mortgage rates will remain at historic lows ... and as Covid Fear subsidies, GTA Real Estate will flourish ... right into 2022!!! Issues to watch are new housing supply, currently very tight, resale condo supply moving to balance ... and make sure you design a 'home office' into your product offerings!! Ride this wave, it will be a strong one for the next 18 months.

Andrew Brethour is President and CEO of PMA Brethour Realty Group, one of the largest residential real estate research firms in North America
www.pmabrethour.com

Andy Brethour recently told The Land Economist that after the first lock down was eased off and they started selling new homes again "the digital method of showing and buying homes accounted for 30% of the market. Today nearly 100% of new home sales in Canada and in many states are done digitally."

Canada's Tall Cranes

Canada is home to the world's only flock of wild, migrating whooping cranes, North America's tallest bird. But these days most of them are relaxing on the grassy shores of the Gulf of Mexico in Texas.

If you want to see tall cranes in the winter, just come to Toronto, home to North America's largest flock of construction cranes.

Nearly a third of all the construction cranes operating in North America today can be found in the Greater Toronto Area, according to Riden Levett Bucknall's crane index. RLB has been measuring construction spending and equipment quantities world wide for nearly 200 years.

Its September survey of construction cranes found the Toronto market had 124 high-rise cranes swinging in its skyline. That's 29 per cent of all the construction cranes in North America.

Toronto has held its position at the top of the bi-annual RLB crane survey for several years. A previous survey found Toronto had more high-rise cranes than New York City, Los Angeles, Seattle and Boston combined.

The most recent survey had LA in second place with 41 cranes in operation.

Covid-19 has apparently had little effect on the sale of high-rise condo residences

in the GTA, although David Wilkes, president and CEO of BILD, the Building Industry and Land Development Association told The Land Economist in an interview that sales and construction of single family homes in the suburbs have soared during the corona pandemic.

The whooping crane, that calls the Alberta Wood Buffalo National Park its Canadian home, was in the running to be named Canada's National Bird, but lost out to the Gray Jay, also known as the Whisky Jack and the Canada Jay.

The Common Loon and the Snowy Owl were also in the running, but apparently the Toronto construction crane didn't qualify.

PB



PHOTOS: Whooping crane, Sasata, [Wikimedia commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Whooping_crane.jpg), Cranes, Brennan

More mall conversions coming

Corridors are eerily empty in most Ontario shopping malls, but there's a line up at Drummond Hassan's office door.

Shopping mall owners are turning to Hassan, an award-winning architect with IBI Group, looking for alternatives for their properties.

Drummond, who works out of the Toronto office of the international architecture firm with offices in 60 cities around the world, says some shopping mall owners were seeking his advice about alternative uses of their land before the coronavirus raised its ugly head.

"In most cases we're looking at conversion to mixed use for these sites," said Drummond who has fielded inquiries from mall owners in Windsor, Guelph, Kanata and Scarborough.

"So far we're talking with city planning staffs only. We haven't taken any proposals before municipal councils yet ... and in some cases provincial officials decide on employment zone changes.

Hassan said he is getting some push back from municipal leaders about zoning changes to mixed use because they see the malls as an employment zone where jobs are created.

"We try to show the local politicians and planning officials that conversion to mixed use can maintain the jobs, within a more densely populated site use.

"Certainly building high rise condominium residences with retail at the base will produce more foot traffic and potentially additional jobs from the land currently used for mall parking lots. Most of that parking space is being under-utilized."

Hassan earned his architectural degree at Strathclyde University in Glasgow. The first architectural project he tackled after immigrating to Canada won a Governor General's Architectural Award. He designed The Summit, a mixed use residential development at King St. and Bathurst St. with a mix of townhouses

and network of towers.

"I can barely look at it when I drive past the site today," he says. "I designed it with fixed windows that didn't open, as was mandated by the site-specific bylaw because there was a lead smelting operation nearby that gave off very toxic smoke. Eventually the condominium board put in cheap sliding glass windows and ruined its look."

Hassan won a Mississauga Urban Design Award for Glen Erin Apartments in the early days of Erin Mills.

He also won an architecture award from the Financial Post for his design of a new headquarters for IBM's subsidiary Celestica on the IBM campus on Don Mills north of Eglinton Ave. E. across from the Ontario Science Centre.

Like everything else on that site, the Celestica headquarters has now been demolished. ConDrain Company Ltd. heads up a consortium of developers who bought the 60-acre site for \$173 million and

plans to create a large mixed-use community called Crosstown Square with housing for 10,000 people. Aspen Ridge, the housing wing of ConDrain, will be one of the principal home builders.

Mike Czystochowski, vice-president of CBRE Canada Land Sales that arranged the sale, said the development "is a once-in-a-decade type of deal" due to the size, location and proximity to current and future transit.

The Eglinton Crosstown is a 19-km-long light-rail transit line that will run along Eglinton Avenue between Mount Dennis (Weston Road) and Kennedy station. The corridor includes a 10-km underground portion between Keele Street and Laird Drive and will have 25 stations and stops, including one at Crosstown Square.

Hassan says Crosstown Square is "an excellent example of rezoning employment lands to create much-needed affordable housing as well as jobs in the retail and commercial sectors."



NEWS BRIEFS



Q4 2020 GTA OFFICE DECLINE

A new report from Avison Young charts the debacle in the GTA Office Market over 2020. "Occupancy levels declined in virtually every node and building class as the downtown market contracted for the first time since 2013," it states. By year end, the office vacancy rate stood at 5.2 % downtown and 10.29% in the suburbs. And the development pipeline is set to add 10% to the existing downtown stock. Pace of vaccinations will be a bellwether for a welcome rebound likely to take hold Q3/4 2021. Bill Argeropoulos, Avison Young Principal and practice leader, research, in Canada, invites AOLE members to see details [here](#). As well, he recommends the firm's recent [Canada 2021 Forecast](#), and [Q4 GTA Commercial Real Estate Investment Review](#). The Q4 GTA Industrial Market Report is due in February.

INTERVIEWS TO CHECK OUT



Steve Cameron of Cameron Stephens (l) and Ben Myers of Bullpen Consulting (r) have put out a lot of really interesting podcasts since fall 2019. Roughly an hour long, each one features a conversation with real estate industry experts.

There have been 17 to date. The most recent guests have been Bill Gairdner (Gairloch Developments), Bob Blazeovski (DiamondCorp) and Brian Brown (Lifetime Developments), Alex Sharpe (iQ Offices and Lanescape.ca), John English (Tricon Residential), and Jeff Hull (Hullmark). Next one will be available in February. You can find them [here](#)

PB

Canada Co: Ontario's 1st land developer

Ontario's first land developer introduced itself to the market by giving away free land.

Canada Company bought nearly 1.4 million acres of bush land west of the Niagara Escarpment in 1826 from the government of Upper Canada for nearly \$400,000.

John Galt, executive director of the British-based company created by an Act of Parliament, decided the best way to get his new company on the map was to give away land.

So any soldier who had served in the British Army was granted 200 acres – if he agreed to sail away from his beloved Great Britain to live in the wild wilderness deep inside the new world of North America claimed for Britain only 329 years earlier by John Cabot.

To make his land offer even more attractive Galt decided he needed a clear path 132 kilometres long through the dense forests to connect his company headquarters on the banks of the Speed River in Guelph west to the shores of Lake Huron.

To tackle such an ominous task Galt chose his right hand man, Tiger Dunlop, a big red-headed medical doctor who came to Canada from Glasgow to treat British soldiers wounded during the war of 1812.

Accompanied by two hardy axe men and two Ojibwa native guides Dunlop in a little over two weeks carved out a rugged oxcart path tracing what had been an Indian foot path.

At the far west end of the trail Dunlop founded the town of Goderich at the mouth of a wide river emptying into Lake Huron. He named the river Maitland after his friend General Peregrine Maitland, a British Army officer and the current Governor General of Upper Canada.

Dunlop's path was key in attracting settlers into the wilderness.

In 1907 Canadian Pacific recognized the potential of the trail and converted it to

a railway line. Freight and passenger trains ran between Guelph and Goderich for 81 years.

When the last train pulled out of Goderich in 1988 the Ontario Government bought the line, pulled up the rails and ties and proposed to run a large pipe under the trail to carry Lake Huron water east to Guelph.

But then the government learned there is an international treaty between Canada and the U.S. that water from the Great Lakes can't be diverted from its natural course. That's what keeps Great Lakes waters from being siphoned off to feed the semi-arid U.S. western states.

Guelph's Speed River flows into the Grand River and from there into Lake Erie. That left Dunlop's trail in limbo as to its purpose.

Regional hiking clubs adopted portions to care for, but the quality of the trail was haphazard and inconsistent.

They also [helped to save](#) the spectacular Menesetung high trestle bridge which had been built in 1906 to carry CP trains over the Maitland River and into the port. Menesetung is the Ojibwa word for the Maitland River. In 1989, the town of

Goderich was seeking demolition firms to pull it down. However local hiking enthusiasts like high school teacher John Smallwood and doctor Michael Dawson organized a campaign for local citizens to buy the railway trestle and save it from demolition.

Since 1992, the high trestle – bearing thousands of names of contributors – has carried the hiking trail over the river. It is also one of the most popular attractions in a town that relies heavily on tourism.

The various hiking clubs eventually recognized the potential of the broken trail and started a campaign to give it a consistent quality of care from end to end.

This past summer the Ontario Government spent \$350,000 to give the trail a fresh new base finish of washed gravel dust, new signage and promotion for public use. And John Galt's scheme is still drawing new adventurers into western Ontario.

It is now one of Ontario's most popular hiking/biking trails, cutting its way through some of Ontario's most productive farm country. Connecting Guelph and Goderich, it's now called the G2G Trail.

PB



G2G Trail Shortcut Goes Through Ontario's Last Covered Bridge in Ontario

A short but popular shortcut near Elmira takes bike riders across the Grand River on the 62-m-long West Montrose Bridge - also known as the Kissing Bridge - which was built in 1881.

If only lumber could hitch hike!

WHITE RIVER – Civic and business leaders in this isolated town in Northern Ontario are trying to find ways to flag down one of the 200-car (3 km long) freight trains that go rumbling through the community each day.

If they can stop one, they plan to attach another five freight cars loaded with construction lumber to its length before letting it continue along the tracks to Southern Ontario.

Frank Dottori says halting the train for a few minutes would open hundreds of new jobs in this town which he says sits in the midst of Canada's finest swath of forest.

There is great demand in southern Ontario for the town's lumber products - if they can get them out of the dense woods.

Dottori is chairman of [White River Forest Products](#) and is famous for resurrecting a closed lumber mill in Temiskaming, Quebec in 1973 that eventually lead to creating a chain of lumber mills throughout North America and Europe.

And in 2003 he organized a group of investors to give new life to a lumber mill in White River abandoned by Domtar Inc. with the loss of 200 jobs. That mill now has 200 employees processing 120 million board feet of lumber annually, but the mill could be handling 160 million board feet, says Dottori.

"CP and CN get these long national freight trains rolling across the country

and don't want them to stop at small communities, even though there are rail customers there," said Dottori.

"They pay their crews to move the train from point A to point B in a certain amount of time and they would have to pay extra if they had to stop anywhere between A and B.

"However we argue that the federal government pays our railway companies big money to move national products across the nation and they should tell the railways to stop and take on more freight when it brings more jobs and prosperity to small, isolated communities," he said.

White River Forest Products will be shipping 30 per cent of its lumber in the near future to a new \$32 million lumber mill in St. Thomas to make CLT (Cross Laminated Timber) to replace steel and concrete in building multi-storey buildings.

In 2017, a hybrid CLT/traditional construction, 18-storey student residence at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver became the highest Tall Wood building in the world. (See pages 4-5 in the [Summer 2017 Journal](#).)

Dottori says he is currently negotiating with University of Toronto officials to build a tall building on campus using CLT from the St. Thomas mill which goes into production this spring with 60 employees.

"This is a significant investment in the Ontario forestry industry, job creation, housing, innovation and technology, and the environment in the form of green building practices," said Dottori whose company Element5 will operate the St. Thomas manufacturing plant.

Now 81, Dottori was a 34-year-old engineer at a large pulp and paper mill in Temiskaming, Quebec, when it decided to close its doors. He organized the mill's employees, the mill's unions, local businesses and citizens, plus three levels of government to create a company called Tembec to save the

mill, save their jobs and the town's biggest employer. Tembec eventually grew into a forest product conglomerate with 3,000 employees and 55 mills in Canada, United States and Europe.

To preserve the closed mill in White River Dottori brought together the town council, local and distant investors and the local Indian band Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg (Pic Mobert First Nation). The mill previously had no indigenous employees.

PB

Winnie's Home Town



One of the world's most beloved characters also came from White River by train. Back in August 1914, Lt. Harry Coleburn saw a cute little black bear cub on the White River platform as his regiment was being sent to training in Quebec. The trapper who had her said she wouldn't survive on her own. So Coleburn paid \$20 and off she went too -- renamed after Winnipeg's 34th Fort Garry Horse Regiment.

She was with him through exercises there and in Britain until, knowing he couldn't keep her on the battlefield, Coleburn asked the London Zoo to adopt his little friend. That is where she caught the eye of a young Christopher Robin and his father, writer A.A. Milne. Now, White Rock has an annual festival honouring its own home town star and major tourist magnet, Winnie the Pooh.



White River sawmill's automated line.

The Final Word



by Stephen W Green LLB, CS

From the earliest days of Confederation, immigration has been essential to Canada's evolution and identity as a country. The labour – and tax dollars – of successive waves of people from around the world have supported universal health care, pension plans, education, national infrastructure, and the creation of small businesses and employment.

The economic stress caused by a global pandemic, on top of the dual realities of an aging population and a slow-growing population, make immigration more important than ever. It is also an opportune time for Canada to revive the investor immigrant program that was terminated in 2014, with a view to integrating it into our long-term economic strategy.

The federal government has clearly flagged that expediting immigration to Canada is a priority over the next several years.

In addition to setting a target to welcome 401,000 permanent residents in 2021, Ottawa recently made it easier for Hong Kong students and youth to quickly come to Canada on work and study permits, as well as offering new ways to stay permanently. The new permanent residence rules will also benefit people from Hong Kong already in Canada under existing work and study permits.

Then there's the 300,000 Canadian citizens living in Hong Kong, many of whom, in light of recent political developments there, may be contemplating a return.

Also consider that although many applications were delayed by COVID-19, most are already well down the approval pipe and will proceed quickly once embassies and visa agencies fully reopen.

Ottawa has already flagged that it will work to fast-track increased admission to Canada in 2021.

For all of that, there is much more that can be done for both prospective immigrants and Canada. At the top of that list is a practical reassessment of the investor immigrant class.

Canada should revive the investor immigrant program and fix its past failures

In 2020, the practical benefits of reviving the program far outweigh any misplaced concern about those "buying" Canadian citizenship.

Let's not be hypocritical: Those of us already fortunate enough to live here stand to benefit as much as anyone who is new to the country.

The key to making it work this time around is to be clear-eyed about past failures, to refine the tax structure and better manage the five-year deposits required by these immigrant investors. It does not seem excessive to increase the \$800,000 fee that was required before the Harper government cancelled the program. But in the past, those deposits were directed to provinces to foster the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises – a well-intentioned initiative that never took shape.

By learning from that disappointing experience, Canada can win on several counts.

It can seize opportunity to create a COVID-19 fund to help offset the economic cost of the coronavirus and attract immigrants who have the means to make a big difference in short order.

It can also attract a group of educated and financially secure immigrants who,

along with their families, will make a lasting contribution to our economy. It is also an opportunity to bring regional and local governments into the process to ensure the funds are put to the best use.

Nowhere would that difference be felt more immediately than in the stabilization of the domestic residential real estate market, small business and employment, something of great importance to all Canadians and their families.

For some time now, there have been claims that housing markets, especially condominiums in urban centres, are threatened by an imbalance of supply and demand.

That's a tough prospect for municipalities and provinces that have already been economically ravaged by the effect of the coronavirus.

Higher immigration levels – especially in the economic class – address this on a number of levels.

Furthermore, while much has been made of the pandemic-driven urban exodus, new Canadians tend to gravitate to and revitalize our cities.

Immigration is an important way for Canada to build long-term economic, social and cultural bridges around the world. Does anyone think it will be anything but beneficial to our relations with Washington that vice-president-elect Kamala Harris had such a positive experience as a student in Montreal?

We have always been justifiably proud of being a country of immigrants. Clearing the 2020 backlog, expediting new permanent residency applications and reinstating the investor immigrant class is both timely and strategic at a time when we need to reinforce our country as seldom before, and to ensure the long-term prosperity of all Canadians.

Stephen Green is a Managing Partner at Green and Spiegel LLP and past chair of the Canadian Bar Association, National Section, Citizenship and Immigration

This article [first appeared](#) in the Nov 25, 2020 edition of The Globe and Mail. It is reprinted here with the permission of the author.