

greaterSaintJohn

MAYOR COMMITTED TO GETTING IRVING OIL HQ BACK ON TRACK

SARAH PETZ
TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

SAINT JOHN • Mayor Mel Norton says he's committed to doing "everything he can" to ensure Irving Oil's plans for a new headquarters are not jeopardized by a formal appeal of the city's heritage board decision.

In an interview with the Telegraph-Journal Sunday, Norton said it was "extremely disappointing" that

construction has been put on hold pending the outcome of the appeal.

"There's a right to follow that process, but there's also an obligation to get this back on track," he said.

"This is the largest development in decades in Saint John. It's entirely privately funded. It's an immense show of confidence by Irving Oil, and we're going to honour that confidence by everything we can to support doing whatever is possible to be sure that they can

start that project just as soon as it possibly can."

The project is the subject of an appeal before the province's Assessment and Planning Appeal Board from Jim Bezanson, Saint John's former heritage planner. Bezanson says he disagrees with the city's heritage board decision because plans for the 11-storey building violate the Saint John Heritage Conservation Areas By-law, as the building is over height restrictions by four storeys

and is too far set back from the sidewalk, by 10 feet.

Bezanson left his job with the city in April 2014 after dropping an unspecified human rights complaint after he accepted a \$200,000 settlement.

Irving Oil spokesman Andrew Carson said Friday that construction activity at the site was set to begin on Monday. The new building was to be erected over

PLEASE SEE → PLANS, B2

Ashburn Road project won't hurt existing retail: report

Project scheduled for public hearing at Monday's common council meeting

SARAH PETZ
TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

SAINT JOHN • A report from a prominent retail consulting firm says the proposed retail development on Ashburn Road would not pose a threat to existing retail centres in Saint John.

The report from J.C. Williams Group Ltd. was commissioned by Horizon Management, a company formed by East Point developer Troy Northrup, as part of the company's application for a rezoning and municipal plan amendment for two large parcels of land located along Ashburn Road and north east of the One Mile Interchange.

The development is envisioned as a mixed-use site of retail spaces and services for travellers designed to attract residents as well as tourists off the highway. Residential use is also proposed.

The report is set to be considered by Common Council on Monday night, as part of a public hearing on the project.

The report says that Horizon Management's proposed development, The Crossing, would fill a gap in the local market and add a new retail experience in the city, while also supporting existing retail centres in Saint John's east side.

"There does not appear to be any negative effect to current businesses," the report says.

"And, as envisioned, this development should increase traffic and shoppers to eastern and central Saint John."

Property owners of three of the city's largest retail centres have argued that the development could have a negative effect on retail in the city due to its competing nature. Letters of opposition to the requested zoning amendment were submitted on behalf of SmartREIT, which owns the Walmart-anchored shopping centre at 450 Westmorland Rd.; Primaris,

PLEASE SEE → RETAIL, B6

Financial help needed



Lily Lake Pavilion sits on the edge of the lake of the same name in Rockwood Park. PHOTO: SARAH PETZ/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

Lily Lake Pavilion could face 'difficult road ahead'

SARAH PETZ
TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

SAINT JOHN • Common councillors will vote on a motion to provide financial relief for the Hatheway Pavilion at Lily Lake Monday night, that the pavilion's board says it needs in order to survive.

The motion, written by commissioner of finance and administrative services Kevin Fudge, asks that the city provide the pavilion with a \$100,000 one-time

operating grant to offset losses incurred in community programming for the years 2011-2015. The motion also asks that the city's capital funding commitment of \$450,000 over three years to the pavilion be reduced by the same amount, so that the city's financial commitment in this matter is cash-neutral.

In a letter to city manager Jeff Trail sent Dec. 3, 2015, Jim Stanley, the chairman of the board of directors for Lily Lake Pavilion Inc., indicates that the

revenues at the pavilion, restaurant and banquet facilities cannot currently sustain the pavilion's operations.

"We are at a very serious point in the Pavilion's history. Without financial assistance from the city, it is likely that the Pavilion will have to cease its operations and close down," he wrote.

Stanley said the pavilion's financial challenges stem from the costs of renovating the building's basement in 2012, which went about \$100,000 over

budget. The board at the time decided to fund this cost out of its general fund, under the assumption that the pavilion's restaurant would recoup the losses, he said.

That did not happen, and thus put significant financial strain on the entire organization, he said.

Over the past year, the organization has undergone significant financial

PLEASE SEE → PAVILION, B2

The whisky world of longtime enthusiast Johanne McInnis



Julia Wright
Real Saint John

"I've been told have a very good sense of smell," says Johanne McInnis. She's trying the sticky oat groat pudding, a Port City Royal dessert concoction involving risotto-like grains, re-hydrated blackcurrants, and a blow-torched brûlée topping. She dips her face prayerfully into the bowl and inhales deeply, filling the scent from the dish to her nose.

"It's an interesting contrast of flavours," she says after a few moments. "It's sweet, sour, starchy. It gets you at the back of the throat, tart, very hot."

This is a typically attentive tasting from McInnis, a whisky enthusiast, writer and Saint Johner for 31 years. She's built a reputation in the international whisky community for her seminars, guided tastings and writing for Taps Magazine, Cask and Still, Culinaire and Saltscapes. Since 2011, her blog, Whisky Lassie, has traced McInnis's "whisky journey," with tasting notes for countless drams, accounts



Johanne McInnis pulls out a few of her favourite drams at Port City Royal. PHOTO: JULIA WRIGHT

of travels to European and Canadian distilleries, and lively musings on all things related to the spirit world.

Although she's enjoyed whisky for decades, she only started "really

geeking out on it" 12 years ago, when she met her partner, Graham MacKenney. They have at least 200 bottles in the house at any time, "not counting the samples," says McInnis.

"His father is a whisky collector, and so he probably gets most of the credit for the fact that Graham and I both became almost obsessed. I love it because it's so different than any other spirit

- so many parameters, and so many factors."

Although whisky has a reputation as a "man's drink," McInnis says, "in North America, the statistic is that 40% of whisky drinkers are women. There's no gender divide in the majority of whisky festivals, classes and events. It happens very rarely that you're judged because you're a girl."

As for her favourite drinks, "I'm a Canadian whisky person - really about supporting local and supporting new distilleries," says McInnis. In 2011, she received the distinction of becoming the first (and so far, only) female judge of the Canadian Whisky Awards.

Canadian whisky has come a long way since the bottom-shelf Crown Royal some might recall drinking in college, says McInnis. "Canadian whisky is the most misunderstood category, even among Canadians. I think for many years, it got a really bad rep as a mixer. But it's really one of the fastest-growing and most innovative categories in the world." In Saint John, in the under \$50 range, she recommends the Alberta Premium Dark Horse: "a luscious, warming dram. A real Canadian winter warmer."

McInnis was born for this work, in one sense. "I don't have a dainty nose," she says, a trait she inherited from her father. She used to hate it. "When I was 16, this guy said, 'you have the perfect body - too bad you don't have the face to match. I never forgot that. By the

PLEASE SEE → WHISKY, B2