

# THE PORT HENRY FACT FINDER

Reporting the News and Needs of Port Henry and Surrounding Area  
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**Important Notice:** Today, December 5<sup>th</sup>, from 10 am – 6PM, Ken and Paula LaDeau are celebrating the opening of a new Laundry Service at their Champlain's Best Wash. Karen Scharpf will be in charge of this service. To learn about the service, drop in, check it out and enjoy a bit of food and drink before you leave.

## THE HOLIDAY TRAIN

CP's Holiday Train is always a welcome event! Maybe it has always been as long and as decorated as it was this year, but memory says it was shorter and less brightly decorated, seeming to grow a bit longer and more decorated each year. Fact Finder just knows it was very impressive this year, lights and more lights, each car changing color over and over again. The performers were lively and the audience enjoyed the show. There was a large crowd so, happily, the Moriah Food Bank will have received a large donation of food and money.

This editor wanted to know more about the Holiday Train and went online to find out. The Holiday Train began in 1999 and runs along CP's main line during November and December. It is a freight train, but also pulls vintage passenger cars which are used as lodging/transportation for the crew and performers. "Since its launch in 1999, the Holiday Train program has raised close to \$9.5 million [CAD](#) and 3.3 million pounds of food for North American food banks. All donations collected in a community remain in that community for distribution. There are two Holiday Trains that cover 150 stops in Canada and the United States Northeast and Midwest. Each train is roughly 1,000 feet in length with brightly decorated railway cars, including a modified box car that has been turned into a travelling stage for performers. They are each decorated with hundreds of thousands of LED Christmas lights."

## CONSTRUCTION IN PORT HENRY

Who in Port Henry is not aware of the major construction and renovation happening on Starway and down at the old Wheelock garage building? This editor/reporter just had to visit both sites to see their progress and hopefully find out a possible time of completion.

Tim Bryant met me at his Starway project address. It is even more impressive when you have parked in the large parking area and walked up to a door which is now level with the newly created ground in front of it, formed when about 30 truck-loads of stone, dirt and sand were dumped into the empty space to create the patio and large parking lot..

It is a beautiful old building, red brick with a front of huge show windows, which many people remember as being, at one time, a photographer's shop. Its 1,000' inside space is also wonderful even in its unfinishedness. To the right is a staircase up to another 1,000 feet of space which will accommodate four hotel rooms (each with at least two windows, its own bath and all other amenities such as TV and WiFi) and totaling a capacity for 10 people.

Plans for the ground level space are still very fluid but basically it will be a coffee shop for serving simple, light foods, sandwiches, deserts, drinks (coffee/tea). There might be a gift area, just one of the "fluid" possibilities.

I looked at the very back wall, which I remembered had been caving in when Tim began his saving of this lovely building, and I commented on it and was told it was Styrofoam-lego-blocks! Tim

told me they are very large Styrofoam-lego-blocks called Amvic Forms, which are empty inside! The builder builds his wall exactly as you would a Lego wall and when the wall is completed cement is poured into the empty spaces of the Styrofoam blocks and, voila! a sturdy concrete wall that is also insulated at the same time! I do not like to appear uninformed on something so (to me) revolutionary; so I hope I am not the only person to be surprised. To save my self-esteem, I will assume that there are many out there reading this article who don't know about this amazing building and insulation material. I just removed the word "new" from the above sentence, as I discovered from Wikipedia that it has been around many, many years. However, there is a bit of face-saving in that concepts and products have to have time to jump through all the hoops they must jump through to become universally accepted and, besides, I am not a builder.

When should it be open for business? A "soft" opening, the first week in March. A full opening, the start of summer. This resident can hardly wait.

Richard (Rick) Sleeper knew what he needed to accommodate his word-of-mouth business which had out-grown its housing on Dugway Road. He needed space and he found just that when the old Wheelock Garage, at around 6000 square feet, became available. He also knew that there would be much work involved in turning this exceptionally strongly constructed but TLC-lacking building into what he envisioned it could be – a proper housing for the business he was planning, a one-stop-for-everything-automotive store.

There will be the usual service for cars and trucks and motor cycles, a well-stocked generic parts shop and tires for Suvs, cars, trucks and motor cycles. They will continue doing restorations and detailing and, there will be a sand-blasting booth for home and auto needs. And of course, those wonderful show windows will be doing their job: showing off cars, restored, vintage, anything of eye-catching interest.

Although Rick did receive a very good grant to help with equipment, inventory, wages and advertizing, almost all the work has been done by Rick and his son while continuing to keep the shop on Dugway in operation. One of the requirements of the grant was that Rick has to hire at least one person the first year and another person the second year. He doesn't see this as a problem and thinks in a short time he will need to hire more two people.

Rick had hoped to open for business this past Fall, but ran into a big problem due in part to the fact that the building *is* so well-built. The plumbing sorely needed attention, but the line was under the thick cement floor. That is why you saw so much digging down there, they had to bring in a new line from the village hook-up at the road. Rick had originally planned to remove that rounded portion at the front of the building as he thought it was falling apart. Surprise! when they began removing the inside walls they discovered it, like the rest of the building was of metal and its roof was the upstairs' concrete floor extended to cover it. The building and its location are becoming worthy of each other.

## DISCOVERY

This editor usually receives a bill, notes the charge and tries to pay it immediately. Once in a long while I read every item for which I am being charged. My last gas bill finally came under my scrutiny and I found this \$9.62 charge for "Propane Hazmat Fee." I went on the internet and discovered the following:

**"HazMat & Safety Compliance Fee - This fee, which is assessed for propane deliveries and service calls, helps to offset a portion of the costs the Company incurs to comply with federal, state and local government regulations, including, but not limited to, hazardous materials, homeland security, emergency preparedness and workplace safety. It is also used to fund, among other things, employee safety training and inspections, cylinder re-qualification, and environmental compliance. THE FEE IS NOT GOVERNMENT IMPOSED, NOR IS ANY PORTION OF IT PAID TO ANY GOVERNMENT AGENCY."**

At first, I was very surprised it did not come from either a US or State government mandate. Secondly, I did not find any reason why I, a customer, should pay for any of the above mentioned uses,

all of which seemed to come under the category of normal business operating expenses. I checked with my gas company and the fee has been removed from my bill. I suggest everyone check their gas bills and, even if you do not see such a charge, call your company and ask if this fee is simply included in some other listed cost(s) on your total bill. I believe a few companies do not charge this fee. I find two observations very interesting: the sum is small and the amount not an even number. A larger sum would be more readily noticed and the uneven amount lends verity to the charge. You may ask, is such a small sum added to customer bills even worth the trouble? Then answer yourself by asking how many customers might a company have to have to create a viable business? Then pick a number, say 500, multiply it by \$9.62, voila, \$4,810.00 each and every month and a year? \$57,720.00! This for a small company, just think, the larger the company, the larger the help with paying their bills! Also, a bit ironic is being a Port Henry resident and paying such a charge, which already costs us extra because of the expenses our fire department must expend to be prepared in the event of a train derailment in our area of such hazardous materials!

Look for the Fact Finder's next issue December 19<sup>th</sup> at its usual places of distribution.