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Toronto

URBAN CAMPSIES

Schools, city gird for a street fight

CARTY MILLERS

Buying veggies at a farmer’s market, setting up a tennis racket, or even walking to class without waiting for traffic isn’t unusual at Toronto’s downtown universities. Many students have spent their entire college experience with shutting down parts of streets near the University of Toronto and the University of Toronto — as it has for the past year — so things are possible. The city council has already replaced traffic lights with walk signs at both campuses.

With little more than a month left for the one-year-old street closure, the city council is holding on to the rare pedestrian space it has created.

“It’s the main artery for the campus,” Ryerson’s vice-president of administration and finance Janine Haniberg said of the Gould Street closing. The U of T’s campus encompasses Wellesley Street between Huron and Bloor Sts. and Macdonald Crescent.

“In an urban campus like ours, there are very few streets where you can cut corner around and have that feeling of being in the middle of a university,” said Ms. Haniberg. For at least a decade, the city said, Ryerson has been working toward creating a viable space for its students, something that can bring a greater sense of community often missing from urban universities. None of the two schools have gained as much pedestrian space they want.

City staff will be recommending both streets remain closed permanently when the decision goes to community council next month.

But it means the city will need to reconfigure traffic flow around the universities, diverting vehicle drivers whose drivers have been accustomed to driving through the campuses.

“The city, universities and businesses are now trying to balance their needs before a decision is made.”

If continuation of the experiment is not approved, both closings will end Sept. 20.

“Traffic tickets need to be managed carefully,” said James Robinson, executive director of the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area.

Mr. Robinson said he and many of the businesses near Ryerson are mainly supportive of the closing of Gould Street, between O’Keefe Lane and Bloor St., as long as alternative traffic plans are made.

For the businesses just west of Yonge Street, the closing is coupled with nearby construction, making delivery, loading and unloading more difficult than usual.

A temporary solution has been proposed, allowing vehicles to turn right on a one-way street, using Yonge Street, but it meant more than a month.

Once nearly completed, he said, the city will look to see if the traffic diversion is doing what it is supposed to.

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If approved, Ms. Haniberg said Ryerson would take over the responsibility and cost of maintenance, which would be negotiated in 20-year terms.

“The street closing would be reviewed by the city for seven years.”

Because the university of Toronto’s closing is somewhat contained within the campus it hasn’t been disruptive to the community, said Elizabeth Slom, assistant vice-president of campus facilities and planning.

Earlier last week, a farmer’s market — a weekly occurrence — took over the closed part of the street, which is marked by green turf plants, street furniture and blue leaves painted on the road.

While some checked at the market stalls, some set up street furniture, Joseph Dong said he almost turned onto the closed section of the street because he didn’t see a crosswalk sign.

“It’s really easily confusing, it’s already tight,” he said referring to the one-way parking spots. He parked his car in a no-parking zone to get to the street closing while he waited for a friend.

“I think of it like unmarked cars, isn’t there already enough space?” he said, adding there are too many people of turning drivers.

Originally there were two closings at U of T, but one on Devondale Rd. was discontinued after a few months because of a lack of pedestrian traffic, according to the city. Ms. Slom says it just wasn’t attracting students as well as other spaces have.

WEATHER

One dead as tornado slams Southern Ontario

KATE HAMMES

A severe storm swept over Southern Ontario Sunday, including a tornado that touched down in Guelph, Ont., causing one fatality, numerous injuries and extensive damage to a community located on the shores of Lake Huron, 200 kilometers west of Toronto.

As Environment Canada confirmed that the twisters reached speeds of up to 300 kilometers per hour, images of the hard-hit downtown core flooded the internet. The shelter of a large brick building without a roof was torn from its building, trees, hedges and building roofs and homes crushed by intense winds.

London OPP Sergeant Dave Baker said the damage was widespread.

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Local news outlets reported that the town had declared a state of emergency.

Many students have spent their entire college experience with shutting down parts of streets near the University of Toronto and the University of Toronto — as it has for the past year — so things are possible.

“We’re going to be giving the university lots and lots of training and look after the people who just need to make sure everybody’s accounted for.”

Local news outlets reported that the town had declared a state of emergency.

Area radio station CKEX responded that downtown businesses, century-old buildings and several churches lost their roofs and upper floors. Andrea Boss, who works at the Cedar Lodge Hotel in Guelph, said the storm was the worst it has ever experienced, as the windowless hotel was in the middle of a severe thunderstorm.

“People said it was pretty big downtown.”

Police have blocked traffic from entering the downtown core.

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“In downtown there’s three,” she said. “I think it’s not so likely to become a political hot potato and certainly we don’t want it.”

If approved, Ms. Haniberg said Ryerson would take over the responsibility and cost of maintenance, which would be negotiated in 20-year terms.

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Storm a new blow to struggling town

It leaves one dead, 40 injured and businesses destroyed as historic Goderich has been struggling toward economic renewal

CARYS MULLA GODERICH, ONT.

A site is the site of the 8 per cent salt mine, one of the largest employers in Goderich, Ont., a large pile of salt lay exposed to the elements, and the walls of a warehouse appear to have been blown out.

The aboveground portions of the site were hard hit when a tornado ripped through the small community on Lake Huron. Hundreds of employees have been told not to show up for work, the mine, which employs 400 people, is closed, and further notice, said mine Joe Carrick, who has worked there for a decade.

"We probably won't be working for a while," Mr. Carrick said on Monday. "I just stayed away because I've seen pictures, and it looks pretty bad."

Company spokeswoman Kelly Kowal said damage is still being assessed and it's unknown when employees will be called back. The mine employs 400 people and its evaporation plant employs 80.

The town of about 8,000 was already picking up the pieces of natural and economic disaster. In mid-summer, another devastating storm swept through town. Last year, Voisey's Duffield Copper Co. closed its Goderich plant, putting 300 people out of work.

McCauley said on Monday that the province has set aside $50 million to help Goderich. Sunday's storm injured nearly 20 people and killed 67-year-old Norman Labeque, who was on the job of the mine. His family said he had worked there for 10 years and was likely putting goods on a boat when the storm hit.

"It's kind of ironic that he passed there, because that's what he did. He worked all the time," said his daughter, Jocelyn Labeque, who came to Goderich on Monday after hearing of her father's death.

Mr. Carrick said he knew Mr. Labeque as a hard worker who paid his dues as an underground miner and was promoted to above-ground work. He was friendly, too, Mr. Carrick said.

The deadly tornado also ripped apart historic buildings and countless homes, striking a blow to the town's renewal efforts.

"I felt that we were really recovering," Goderich Mayor Deb Beversfeld said. "We've got to do it over again."

The tornado, which Environment Canada meteorologists said was a three on the Fujita scale, with winds gusting to 90 km/h, caused particular damage to historic downtown areas. A Victora Street church near the downtown was destroyed. Cyclists crouching around town to survey the damage stopped their bikes to take photos around the crumbling building missing much of its roof.

Others took to the town square from behind yellow police tape. At the center is the country court. The windows were blown out of a nearby house. Local officials wonder whether the historic character of the town, which they say was incorporated in 1819 as a judge's district, can ever be restored.

"I think it's going to be the trick, how do we reinvent our self and yet keep heritage?" Mr. McCauley said.

On Monday afternoon, Mr. McCauley toured the damage by car and stopped at a community center where they were acting as an information and food hub for those without power.

"I have never seen such devastation," he said.

The effects of the disaster were visible all over town.

"We're all out of work now," said Jeff Brown, who said his workplace, Blue Water Body and Panel, is heavily damaged.

After last year's storm, he said he's not sure how the town will do this time around.

"The town seemed to bounce back over time...now this is really, really going to hurt," he said. Mr. Carrick, the 8 per cent miner, said he will focus on repairing his home, which has a tree through the roof, before he worries about getting back to work.

WHERE DISASTER STRUCK

Residents survey and clean up the damage produced by the tornado. PHOTO: THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Normand Labeque, Marie-Louise Labeque, and Josephine Labeque. Normand was killed while at work.

Severe damage is seen at the 8 per cent salt mine on Monday, killing one worker. PHOTO: THE GLOBE AND MAIL