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Sutherland: Pickleball decision could be costly

Not everyone sees what is happening at Bonnerworth as 'fantastic'.

By **Sylvia Sutherland**
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Columnist Sylvia Sutherland. Torstar File Photo

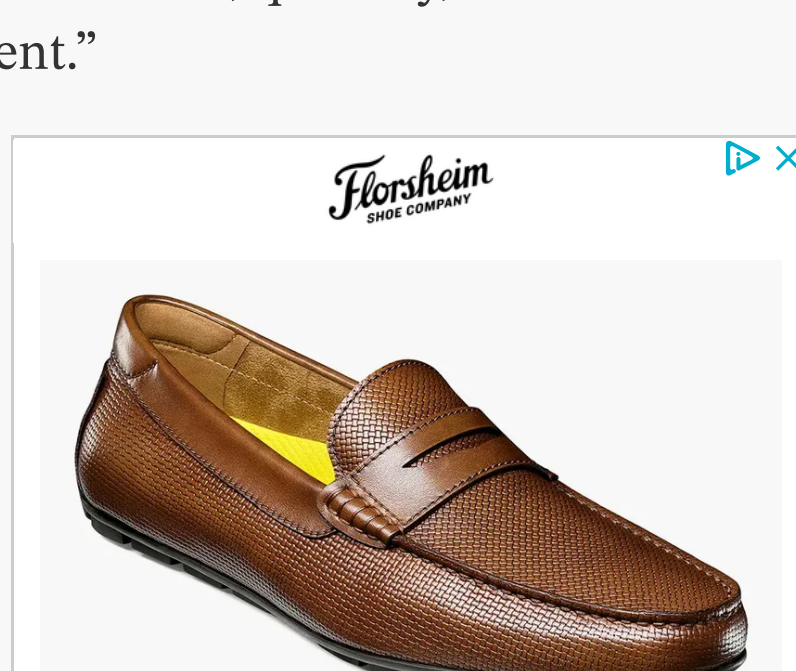
You have to wonder what's behind council's determination to push ahead immediately with 16 pickleball courts at Bonnerworth Park.

"Delay will increase the cost" is the repeated mantra. But will it? Moving ahead without any of the necessary studies and cost estimates is likely the more dangerous path.

Council has approved \$4.4 million for the entire project, including the pickleball courts, a cycling track, and an expanded skateboard facility.

"However," as experienced local project management professional Sam Diamond observes, "it would appear that there is no strong basis to support the construction budget. There does not appear to have been any level of engineered design or assessment completed to establish the specific project requirements that will ultimately feed a sound budgetary estimate."

He adds: "Material characteristics, quantity, and labour cannot be determined at this stage of development."



He says it is critical that design and specifications are completed before the pickleball project goes out to tender. Otherwise, "the overall budget will likely increase rapidly through change orders."

Anyone who has ever been involved in a construction project knows the danger of the escalating cost of those dreaded change orders.

Another project management professional, Paul Sobanski, gave council a way out of its pickle over pickleball: proceed with the relatively non-contentious skateboard park and cycling facility this year and deal with the pickleball courts next year when the required studies are available. But the majority of council really didn't want to hear that.

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Nor did they want retired professional planner, Richard Scott, to point out that, "the way the city has planned this project has already significantly increased project risk by leaving many unanswered questions."

There is a budget, but no final design or idea of the costs of noise mitigation, parking, roadway changes and stormwater management.

Scott maintains that "all these studies are being undertaken at the end of the process when they should have front-ended a feasibility study to determine if Bonnerworth was a feasible, cost-effective, and suitable location."

Councillors Joy Lachica, Alex Bierk, and Keith Riel seem the only ones to appreciate the warnings and advice of these experienced professionals to slow down.

Who knows if the assigned budget is adequate for what has to be done? Who knows if it is even possible at that location? Proceeding without answers to these questions could cost Peterborough taxpayers a lot more than \$4.4 million. It could ultimately entirely sink (appropriately) locating the pickleball project in any residential area of the city.

No one on council has said one word against pickleball as a sport. In fact, to the contrary.

What obviously concerns Lachica, Bierk, and Riel is pushing ahead with a pile of unanswered questions — especially the effects on the local residents who may have to live with the results of this decision.

That includes the senior citizens who live directly across Monaghan Road in Marycrest at Inglewood. The seniors who like to sit out on the patio at the building's entrance on a summer's day and chat, or watch a baseball game on a diamond that is scheduled to disappear.

How will the endless ping, ping, ping of a hard plastic ball hitting a hard plastic surface allow them to go to sleep with their windows open?

Perhaps they should have been invited to the "consultation" meeting last month? They weren't.

Coun. Lesley Parnell protested at council: "Every time we want to do something fantastic, people complain."

Not everyone sees what is happening at Bonnerworth as "fantastic."

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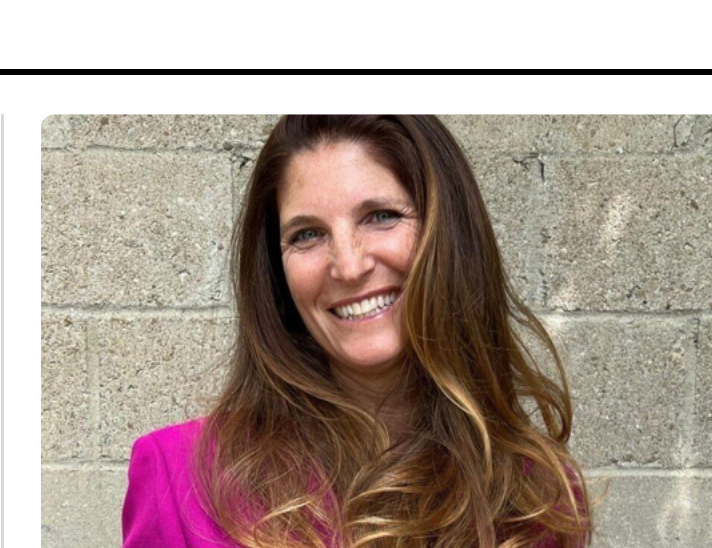

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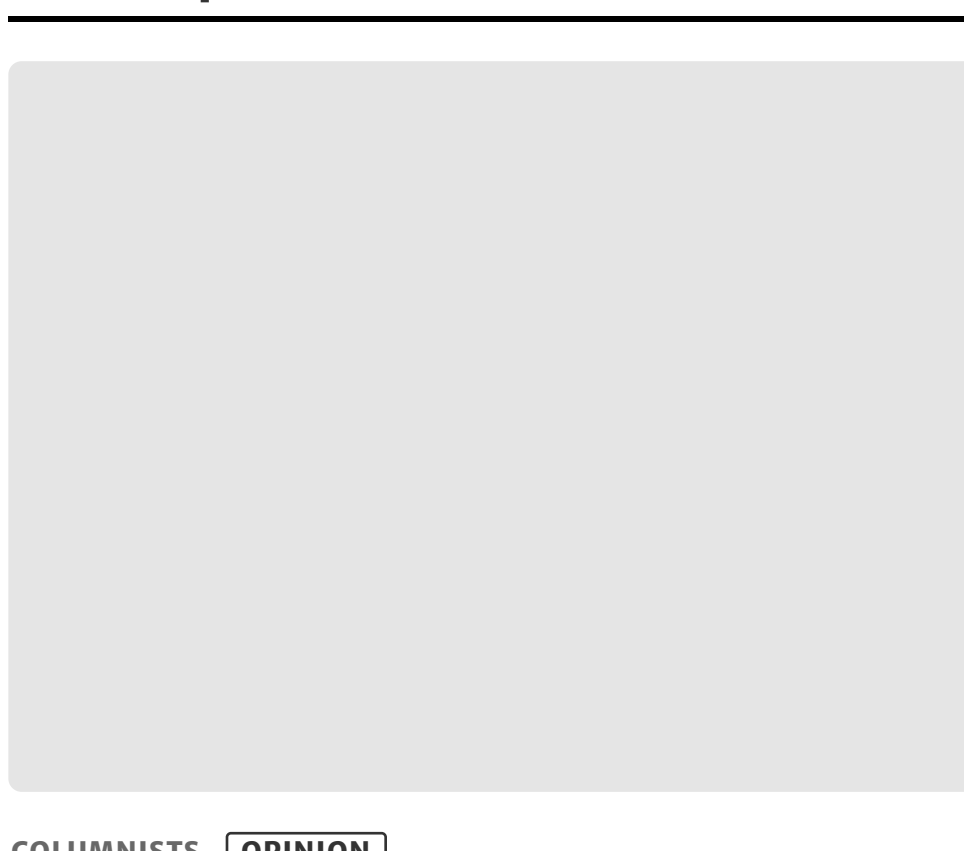

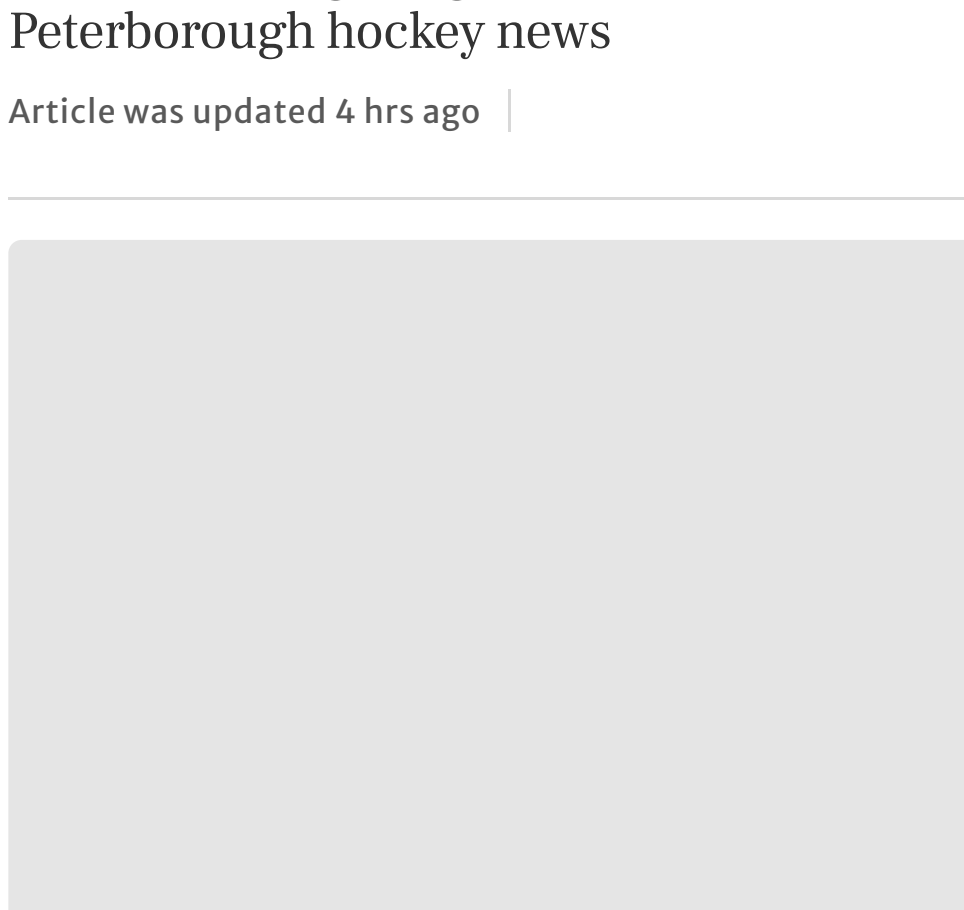
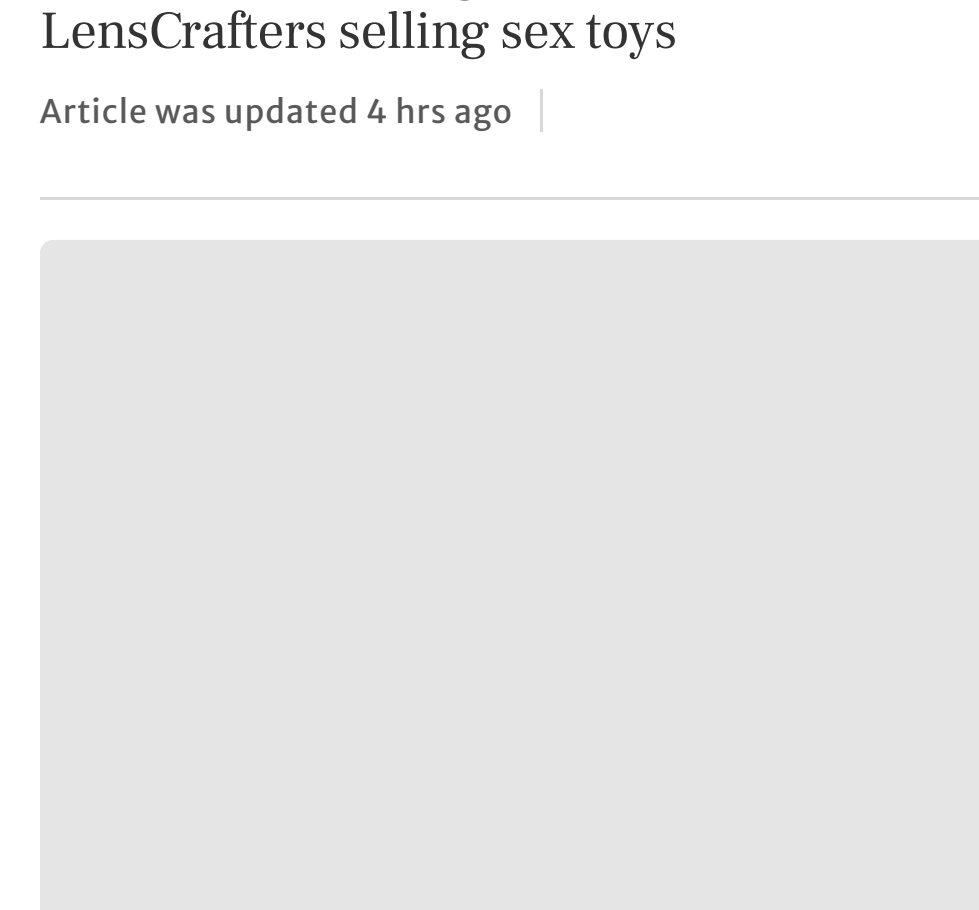
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