

# THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

THE VOICE OF OUR COMMUNITY SINCE 1846

## FUTURE PLANNING



RON ALBERTSON, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

### Sustainable urban design

All great cities have them and now architect David Premi, pictured here at the top of James Street South, is calling on Hamilton to establish a committee of design professionals. The goal of the group would be to ensure that all buildings in the city work together organically as a strong foundation for a sustainable future. It's about promoting bicycle and pedestrian friendly developments.

**FIVE QUESTIONS:** DAVID PREMI EXPLAINS HOW A DESIGN COMMITTEE WILL HELP OUR CITY. **A6**

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING

### Case shines spotlight on refugee system

#### Alleged criminal ring linked to visa policy

NICOLE O'REILLY  
The Hamilton Spectator

An ongoing human trafficking case in Hamilton has sparked sharp criticism of Canada's immigration and refugee system.

In a court document, the case prosecutor blames the removal of Hungarian visitors' visa requirements for providing "the opportunity for the expansion of the ... criminal organization into Canada." Assistant Crown attorney Toni Skarica denounced the alleged criminal organization as "an invasion of evil" from Hungary.

"They came into Canada virtually unmolested and set up shop ... something has to be done to prevent that in the future," Skarica said in court.

It's the largest human trafficking case in Canadian history.

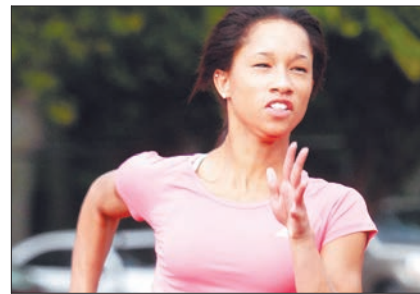
Since the RCMP issued warrants more than 13 months ago, 13 members of an alleged Hungarian Roma criminal organization have been arrested.

A youth pleaded guilty and was deported in September. Lajos Domotor pleaded guilty to human trafficking and criminal organization charges Tuesday.

Refugee claims continues // **A6**

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Athlete of the year nods **S1**

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Historic house has spirit **G1**

### CANADA



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Gifts for the Cambridges **A9**

## STOP-MOTION

### Mohawk students Type cast

Team helps create The Joy of Books, a charming video that's gone viral

TERI PECOSKIE  
The Hamilton Spectator

Close to a million eyes were glued to the work of Mohawk College students Wednesday.

A group of the school's creative advertising students had a hand in producing a unique stop-motion video that's gone viral online. Since it was uploaded to YouTube Monday, The Joy of Books has been viewed more than 430,000 times.

"It turned out to be a great opportunity," said Steffi Raika. "To see all of the planning that has to go into a stop-mo-

tion was a really good experience."

Raika, 25, was one of a dozen Mohawk students invited to take part in the project by Sean Ohlenkamp, an associate creative director at Toronto-based advertising agency Lowe Roche. The video, a clever and artfully shot piece, was filmed over four nights at Toronto's Type Books in November.

The Joy of Books evolved out of a short stop-motion film Ohlenkamp created last year by organizing a bookcase in his house. The project, inspired by his love for books and the Queen Street West bookstore, builds considerably on his initial undertaking.

"After doing a single bookcase, I had a pretty good idea what I was getting into," Ohlenkamp said.

Dancing continues // **A4**



SCOTT GARDNER, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

The team included, back row, from left, Steffi Raika, Justin Turco, Shannon Farrell and Mikhail Ferrarra, and front row, from left, Ruth Cachero, Curtis Denomme, Adam Tuck and Clayton Vrenjak.

## SECRET MEETINGS

### Councillors contradict counsellor

#### At odds over report from ombudsman

MATTHEW VAN DONGEN  
The Hamilton Spectator

Councillors are at odds with their own top lawyer over the Ontario ombudsman's call for more transparency at City Hall.

In two letters, an ombudsman investigator recently scolded city politicians for wrongly discussing public business behind closed doors during a general issues committee meeting last June.

Councillors received the letters publicly Wednesday, admitted mistakes were made and vowed to do better — even though city solicitor Peter Barkwell told them the ombudsman's review was flawed.

In a report debated in secret Monday, Barkwell told councillors the ombudsman's review didn't comply with provincial law and contained "serious factual errors."

He also wrote council "would be within its rights" not to follow the ombudsman's recommendations.

Mistakes continues // **A4**

## INSIDE TODAY

PER ISSUE: \$1.50 INCL. GST  
VENDING BOXES: \$2 INCL. GST  
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## WEATHER

HIGH: 1  
LOW: -5  
Daytime showers bring nighttime flurries as winter returns. **G2**



## PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARDS

Showbiz's brightest lights honoured. Find out who the people chose at THESPEC.COM

# Chocolate

THE EXHIBITION  
presented by CHCH

**ROYAL BOTANICAL GARDENS**  
www.rbg.ca

The Field Museum  
Chocolate and its national tour have been developed by The Field Museum, Chicago.

This project was supported, in part, by the National Science Foundation.

January 28 to April 15  
www.rbg.ca/chocolate

LOCAL

FIVE QUESTIONS

# Award-winning architect David Premi

JON WELLS  
The Hamilton Spectator

Why is the time right for a design review committee (DRC)?

The time was right in 2001 when city staff recommended it in the downtown secondary plan. The awareness was there then, that it was a positive thing to do for the city. And when the plan was amended and approved in 2005, that recommendation was reaffirmed. But it just hasn't come up again. At a time when there is a lot of local development going on, it is a great opportunity to build things that will help establish our urban fabric in a sustainable way.

Would a DRC critique the aesthetics of building designs?

The DRC has to deliberately avoid commenting on style or taste. It's not about the visual appearance of a building. A building is a piece of a living organism that is an urban centre. The DRC makes sure that these pieces of the

David Premi has a passion for buildings, whether it's the eye-catching modernist home he built after his family's house burned to the ground, or the work his local firm did redesigning the Hamilton Farmers' Market and Central Public Library. Honoured in May with an Ontario Association of Architects Design Excellence Award, Premi is calling on the city to establish a committee of volunteer design professionals to review selected proposed building projects, and comment on whether the design should be supported by the city. The idea is to solicit input from specialist in the fields, rather than rely solely on bylaws and city staffers.

organism work with the other pieces from an urban design standpoint; that our urban design guidelines are being met, and the principles of the Official Plan; and that we are promoting things like cycling in our new developments, making accommodations for bicycles, and making pedestrian friendly environments. A DRC would help to promote that, to make sure the decisions we make now are ones that will help us build the future we want. Builders may oppose a DRC, arguing it could hold up projects once a bunch of architects start messing with their designs. What

do you say to their concern?

Some developers like (DRCs) and some don't. They are embraced by the development community in Vancouver; they have lived with them for 30 years out there. It might cause anxiety for some developers; on the other hand, it might give a vote of confidence to others who might have hesitated to build here. The establishment of a DRC is a declaration of leadership that we will start to control what happens here. It's not intended to be an additional step, it really replaces some of the existing steps ... it will help to streamline the process.

Would a DRC have made a difference in building design in Hamilton we've seen in the past 20 years? What buildings might have been positively affected?

I believe it would have made a difference. There have been a lot of opportunities missed. For example, Jackson Square. I can't help but think that at the time it was built, if there had been a DRC, we could have considered the impact such an intervention in the city would have, and probably could have come up with something better. I think it's universally accepted that it may not have been the soundest piece of urban construction in our city. And as nice as the

art gallery and Hamilton Place and convention centre are, there are weaknesses in how they respond to the urban context. Perhaps they could have been improved if a DRC had existed. So, politically, what will it take for a DRC to become a reality?

Since I wrote an article about it (in Urbanicity), I've had a lot of positive feedback from staff, citizens and politicians. To get the ball rolling, it has to be proposed at council at the planning committee level. It would need to be established first as a pilot project and the first stage is talking about which parts of the city should be subject to a DRC. It's a process of trial and error. I wouldn't even suggest it if it hadn't worked so well in other areas. All the great cities of the world have them, or the equivalent. They are a very common thing. We're not reinventing the wheel here.

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## REFUGEE CLAIMS

CONTINUED FROM // A1

The "latecomer" to the organization is dying of stomach cancer and will spend up to 10½ months in custody before being deported back to Hungary.

There are 10 accused who remain in jail awaiting trial later this year. None can be named because of a publication ban.

The RCMP have statements from 19 alleged victims, who describe being forced to hand over their documentation, live in their captors' basements and work for little or no pay.

Skarica and RCMP say the alleged criminal organization would recruit people from Hungary, pay for their airfare to Canada, have them claim refugee status, sign up for welfare, and then work like slaves.

During Lajos Domotor's sentencing, Justice Stephen Glithero expressed shock that this criminal organization "came over here without any apparent challenge and set up shop."

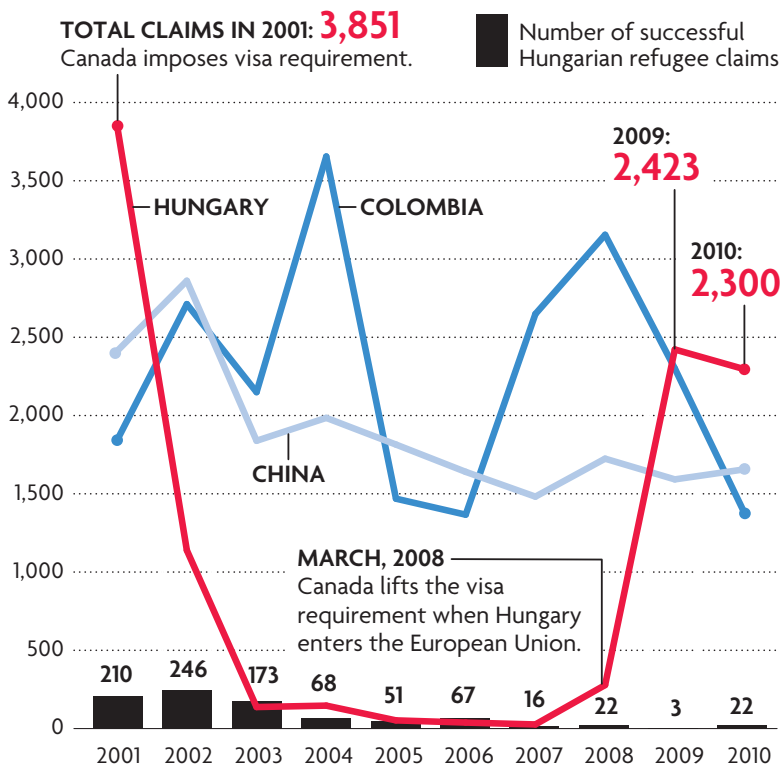
In 2001, Canada required Hungarians to apply for a visa before entering the country. This was in response to the large number of Hungarian refugee claims, explains Skarica in the court document obtained by The Hamilton Spectator.

But after Hungary entered the European Union, Canada lifted that visa requirement in March 2008. Since then, Hungarians have been flocking to Canada to claim refugee status, according to statistics released from Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board.

In 2007, 34 Hungarians claimed refugee status, and of the cases fi-

### Hungary's human tide

The number of Hungarian refugee claims Canadian immigration officials receive annually has risen and fallen as visa requirements have changed. While Colombia and China consistently rank among the top 10 sources, Hungary has gone from a handful of refugee claims in 2007 to accounting for more than any other country in the last two years.



SOURCE: IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE BOARD OF CANADA  
Nicole O'Reilly, Dean Tweed // THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

nalized, 43 per cent were accepted as refugees. But in 2009, 2,423 Hungarians claimed refugee status. The refugee board was only able to get through 268, of which only 1 per cent were accepted.

Most cases are withdrawn or simply abandoned without notice or explanation.

Hungary went from not making the list of top 10 countries that refugee claimants come from to ranking second highest in 2009 and topping all countries in 2010.

In the first half of 2011, Hungary continued to dominate, with 1,600 refugee claimants referred to the board.

While the government doesn't further break down the reasons people claim refugee status, anecdotally, it's understood many of the claimants coming from Hungary say they are persecuted because they are Roma, said Imre Helyes, head of the consular section of the Hungarian embassy in Ottawa.

Most of the victims and all of the accused in the ongoing human trafficking case are Roma.

The Roma population of Hungary has long claimed persecution and there is clearly racial tension between Hungarian nationals and the ethnic group.

However, Helyes said he believes most claimants are simply trying to abuse Canada's immigration and refugee system.

If lives were truly in danger, he said, why would so many people abandon or withdraw their refugee claims and choose to go back to Hungary?

There have been whispers about Canada considering imposing visa requirements on Hungary for the past few years. Immigration Minister Jason Kenney visited Budapest in June 2009, where he urged Hungarian authorities to take steps to stem the flood of refugee claimants.

Kenney's office declined an interview request by The Spectator for this article, deferring to a Citizenship and Immigration Canada spokesperson who would not say whether the government is considering changing the visa requirement.

"We are concerned about the number of asylum claims coming from the EU, and in particular Hungary, as there has been a significant increase," CIC spokesperson Nancy Caron said in an email.

The government passed the Balanced Refugee Reform Act last June, which makes a number of changes to the refugee claim system. Caron said when the act comes into effect this June, the government expects claimants to have their cases heard in a matter of weeks — right now, it takes months.

Helyes said he believes these changes — particularly if cases are heard much faster — will be a deterrent to false asylum seekers.

Human trafficking is in no way only a Hungarian or Canadian issue. But it's one that Hungary is focusing on, he said.

In Hungary, this starts with stricter law enforcement to "suppress" this activity, Helyes said, adding the country is also working

on intelligence-gathering that it shares with allies.

But there are key differences in the justice systems of Canada and Hungary.

Prosecutors of the Hamilton case found that several of the accused human traffickers skipped out on criminal charges in Hungary when they came to Canada.

When the Hungarian court can't find or access a suspect, in many cases after a handful of years pass, the charges are dissolved. This happened with two alleged key members of the Roma criminal organization, who had criminal charges against them dropped in Hungary in 2006.

"This meant that (they) had status in Canada and were also free from any threat of deportation back to Hungary," Skarica said in the court document.

It was shortly after these developments that the pair began to expand their alleged organization in Canada.



Helyes confirmed there is a statute of limitations on some crimes, but he added that criminals who have fled Hungary are often extradited back for trial.

Hungary is aware of the human trafficking issue and authorities are committed to working with Canada, he said. Hungarian authorities have been working with the RCMP on the ongoing Hamilton case.

But to change the visa requirements would have much larger political implications. A visa-free regime is a way of deepening the relationship between countries, Helyes said. But he also recognizes it comes with responsibility.

"Hungary has been very clear ... firmly stating that Hungary is ready and committed to co-operate with the Canadian side and/or take other measures if necessary."

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**Secondary Accommodation Review Committee - West ARC PUBLIC MEETING**

**Highland Secondary School** - 310 Governor's Road, Dundas  
 Tuesday, January 17, 2012  
 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board is holding secondary accommodation reviews across the community. The role of an Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) is to make recommendations to the Board of Trustees by producing a report that takes into account school space, programming and possible school closures.

The Public Meeting provides an opportunity for the public to ask questions and provide comments on the ARC's work to date. The meeting will include a review of the current recommendations.



Bus tickets and childcare are available upon request. Please contact HWDSB Switchboard at 905-527-5092 ext.2291 or info@hwdsb.on.ca

**West ARC Review Area** - Ancaster, Highland, Parkside, Westdale

*Please note: future ARC dates and locations may be subject to change. Please check the website for the most up-to-date meeting information*

[www.hwdsb.on.ca/arc](http://www.hwdsb.on.ca/arc)

ALL STUDENTS ACHIEVING THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

**Secondary Accommodation Review Committee - South ARC PUBLIC MEETING**

**Barton Secondary School** - 75 Palmer Rd., Hamilton  
 Thursday, January 19, 2012  
 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board is holding secondary accommodation reviews across the community. The role of an Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) is to make recommendations to the Board of Trustees by producing a report that takes into account school space, programming and possible school closures.

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**South ARC Review Area** - Barton, Hill Park, Mountain, Sherwood, Sir Allan MacNab

*Please note: future ARC dates and locations may be subject to change. Please check the website for the most up-to-date meeting information*

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ALL STUDENTS ACHIEVING THEIR FULL POTENTIAL