

NEWHOMES



The record for the world's largest human maple leaf was set Canada Day weekend in Trenton, Ont. It now stands at 3,492 people. Photo courtesy of One Ram Media.

Local Trenton store sets a world record



MARTIN SLOFSTRA
EDITOR'S
NOTE

From time to time, we like to run “giving back” stories. In this case, we thought special mention should go to Mike Eden, owner/operator of a Leon’s store in Trenton.

Last weekend, Eden and members of the Quinte West community set a new Guinness World Record title for the largest “human maple leaf” — ever.

A total of 3,942 people participated in “Operation: Stand Proud” at Centennial Park in Trenton, in support of The Canadian Armed Forces charity called *Soldier On*,

Since 2007, the program has been committed to supporting veterans and serving its members to overcome physical or mental health injury or illness. (For more information, visit www.soldieron.ca.)

“We are extremely proud of our deep military roots here in Quinte West,” says

Eden, owner/operator of a third generation, family-owned Leon’s store in Trenton, part of the Leon’s chain of 85 retail stores across Canada.

“We saw this patriotic opportunity to set the Guinness World Record for the largest human maple leaf on the Canada Day long weekend as a visual representation of our deep respect and sincere gratitude for those who selflessly serve, as well as their supportive families.”

In an interview, Eden tells me the idea for the record-breaking event came to him last August while driving around town and doing a delivery for his wife. It hit him then: “How about breaking some kind of world record?”

Soon after getting home, he did a Google search on Guinness world records and the “maple leaf” idea came up — the perfect choice — given the area’s close connection to the military and to Canadian history.

“We (the local Leon’s store) had wanted to do something for a long, long

time. But it had to be big, really big.”

“And so, we did not just want to break the record (which stood at 1550), we wanted to smash it,” and a massive community effort began, involving more than 250 volunteers and numerous corporate partners.

As expected, the event was at times chaotic, but all in good fun.

Organizers were in place at 5 a.m., people started arriving at 6:30, and by 10:30, what Eden describes “as a tidal wave of people all dressed in red ponchos” had assembled in perfect Maple Leaf formation.

Photos were taken, and an official Guinness World Record representative was on hand to verify the number of participants. By noon, the Guinness representative made it official — a new world’s record had been set.

For all the work, planning, and donations received, Eden says, “The biggest ROI is hearing all the stories, and all these like-minded people getting together for a great cause.”

Sidewalk Labs could propel Toronto’s reputation as urban leader



RICHARD LYALL
RESCON

The Sidewalk Labs proposal has laid a gauntlet down for Toronto. Does the city want to reach its potential as a world leader and walk the smart-city talk or eventually wither in relative mediocrity?

Let’s start by explaining what Sidewalk Labs is: it’s a developer and sister company of Google that was chosen in 2017 by Waterfront Toronto to develop a 12-acre, smart-city site at downtown Toronto’s eastern waterfront called Quayside.

The new community would include a mix of housing types (including tall wood construction), financing for light-rail transit, and walkable, bicycle-friendly streets.

More recently, Sidewalk Labs expressed interest in designing a 190-acre “IDEA district” — Innovative Development and Economic Acceleration district — which could include a new Canadian headquarters for Google and an \$80-million pre-fabricated construction manufacturing hub to build its mass-timber neighbourhood.

Funny how some folks in the media have said “traditional developers” have no reason to like this plan — representing more than 200 “traditional” builder/developers in the GTA, let me say

that this is rubbish.

We’re all looking to the City of Toronto to lead the way in allowing innovation in construction: the IDEA district could be the beacon of light that shines a path for future residential development.

After all, Sidewalk is led by CEO Dan Doctoroff, the mind behind New York City’s acclaimed Hudson Yard redevelopment.

Action on Toronto’s eastern waterfront — potentially the largest redevelopment project in North America, if it gets going — hasn’t been promising in terms of the pace at which things get done in Toronto.

Sadly, fear of change has been the order of the day. A manageable concern over data collection of people carrying smartphones who walk in the future developed area has become a bogeyman for the Sidewalk proposal.

Ironically, that same data is already being harvested in massive quantities by each and every person with a smartphone (which is now just about everybody).

The scope of the plan is enormous — an estimated 93,000 jobs and \$4 billion in annual tax revenue by 2040. The creativity is stunning. The capacity to actually do it is real. And no one else has an idea that comes close to it.

Yet the handwringing started again with concerns that it is premature and overreaching. Given the years little has happened and the urgent need for housing, it is hardly

a premature proposal. And with Toronto’s population growing by at least 77,000 people last year, according to Mayor John Tory, we need to plan now about housing our future residents.

If Toronto fails to pull the trigger on this deal, it will be said that Canada’s economic engine can’t play in the big leagues. (Given our lack of a functioning regional transit system and working presto card service, hallmarks of other leading cities, some would already say Toronto is not a world-class city.)

My question is this: will this new political football be fumbled, leading the star player to leave town, as our housing situation worsens?

Toronto will survive because it occupies one of the best pieces of real estate on the planet. We’re lucky.

But if we don’t take any risks, the city won’t rise to represent the future of urbanism, or become a leading municipality nurtured by innovative, motivated city builders with knowledge, skills and experience that are the envy of the world.

We need to have the courage to take the first steps to get there. The Sidewalk proposal deserves a hard look. Even many “traditional” builder/developers think so.

— **Richard Lyall, president of RESCON, has represented the building industry in Ontario since 1991. Reach him at media@rescon.com or @RESCONprez.**