



Photo: IPT Investments

April 2025



Island Park Towers Residents' Association

Building friendships within the Island Park Towers community

Have comments or suggestions?

If you have suggestions for future newsletters or comments on anything to do with the Island Park Towers Residents' Association, email newsletter@iptra.org.

Leona Gray

April is Earth Month

To observe Earth Month, this newsletter includes some articles related to environmental conservation with an emphasis of how high-rise residents can start or improve their conservation efforts.

Tuesday, April 22 is Earth Day

One of the organizations at the forefront of conservation in Canada is [Earth Day Canada](http://EarthDayCanada.ca). See their website for information on waste management, training and awareness, reducing food waste, and other related topics.



Wondering how to dispose of something without it ending up in the landfill? Check out the city of Ottawa's [Waste Explorer](http://WasteExplorer.ca).

Meet the Green Team

To celebrate Earth Day, the IPTRA Green Team will have tables set up in each of our lobbies on Tuesday, April 22 at these times:

10:00 AM to 1:00 PM

4:00 PM to 7:00 PM

Drop by to meet the team. Discuss what you'd like to see done at Island Park Towers, actions you're taking in the absence of building-wide organic-waste recycling, general recycling you're doing, or anything related to conservation.

April events

Unless specified, events are in the Social Room. For details, see the sidebar on page 2.



Brown Bag Lunch: Wed., Apr. 2, noon to 1:30 PM.

Scrabble: Wed., Apr. 9, 7:00 to 10:00 PM. (2nd Wed. of a month games are cancelled.)

Stuff Exchange: Thur., Apr. 17, 2:30 to 7:30 PM.

Pub Night: Thur., Apr. 17, 4:30 PM at Churchill's, [356 Richmond Rd.](http://356RichmondRd.ca)

Scrabble: Wed., Apr. 23, 7:00 to 10:00 PM.



Mindful Meditation: Mon., 10:00 to 10:45 AM.

Knitting 101: Mon., 6:30 to 8:00 PM.

Euchre: Tue., 1:30 to 4:00 PM.

Workout Wednesdays: Wed., 2:30 to 3:30 PM.

Cards/Canasta & Games: Fri., 1:30 to 4:00 PM.

Vegetable gardening on a balcony

A talented and resourceful IPTRA member offers her experience vegetable gardening on her balcony:

April is Earth Month — time to think about planting a vegetable garden, which *is* possible even if you live in an apartment building.

Not only can you reduce your grocery bill, you'll get the benefit of super-fresh produce. And there are many ways to practice conservation when you balcony garden.



Rather than put plastic clamshell containers in the recycle bin, I keep a few to use as mini greenhouses. In them, I start seeds that I transplant to pots in early to mid May.

I don't recommend veggies that need a lot of root depth (root crops), but rather salad greens: Swiss chard, kale, lots of herbs, and a few tomatoes — usually cherry tomatoes, which trail along the inside of the balcony railing out of the wind.

One advantage of having a garden in pots is that if there's a frost warning, I can bring them inside for the night. Because of that, I don't have to wait until the May 24th weekend to plant.

I collect and dry coffee grounds and egg shells to add to the soil, lessening the need for commercial fertilizers.

Many of my pots I use I've found outside our building or on neighbouring streets on Friday mornings (garbage day). It's been years since I bought a pot. I also collect chunks of packing foam from the recycle room to fill the bottom of the largest pots. This decreases the need to fill big pots with soil that little roots don't access and makes the pots lighter to pick up and move.

Last fall when I was putting my garden to bed for the winter, I retained some of the soil, but took all the leftover vegetation, roots and so on, and some of the spent soil and spread it in the woods west of the 195 Clearview parking lot. This allows the garden remains to decompose in nature, rather than go to landfill. While in the woods, I often find fallen branches that I later use to prop up tomatoes or other plants.

Perhaps you'll be inspired to plant some edibles on your balcony this spring. Nothing outdoes popping outside to snip fresh herbs when cooking or getting lettuce leaves for a salad as well as a tomato — so fresh and warmed by the sun!

Events in more detail

For times, see the sidebar on page 1.

Mindful Meditation: [Mindful Meditation](#) (a 10-min. video) can reduce stress, depression, and pain and can boost emotional well-being.

Knitting 101: If you don't know how to knit, someone will teach you. Bring any needlework or come just to chat.

Euchre: For all levels. If you don't know how to play [euchre](#) someone will teach you. If you want to play another game, you're welcome to as well.

Brown Bag Lunches: Bring your lunch to these casual get-togethers and catch up on news with your neighbours.

Workout Wednesdays: Everyone's welcome to these mainly chair-based sessions that focus on stretching to maintain or regain mobility.

Scrabble: For all levels. Tables have two to four players. If you own a set, bring it along.

Pub Nights: Join folks at Churchill's at 365 Richmond Rd.

Stuff Exchanges: Bring items you don't want or come for something (free) you need.

Cards/Canasta & Games: For all levels. Play [canasta](#), other card games, or bring a board game. If you don't know the games being played, someone will teach you.

High-rise composting

A novel way to compost kitchen scraps in your apartment is with a worm farm. Wikipedia has lots of good information about [worm composting](#), which it fancily calls vermicomposting.

IPTRA co-president Bernetta Starkey writes about her experience starting a worm farm in her apartment:

Bill and I bought a worm farm. We'd been to a meeting of the Green Team, and I was intrigued with the idea.

Our son had a worm farm, but he was using it to breed worms, not for composting, although he was doing that too. At the moment, this is all theoretical because we don't have the worms yet. We need red wigglers. We could order them through Amazon (\$45 for 50 worms) or wait for Canadian Tire garden centres to open in the spring and pay less than half that. We're waiting.

We bought the worm farm through Amazon — one from [Worm Nerd](#) that cost \$100 and sits nicely on our counter. There's a great variety of products, so this product isn't your only choice.



Prepare the bin

We're to line the bottom tray with sheets of newspaper. There are coconut fibre pucks that came with it. We're to soak a puck in warm water and spread it on top of the newspaper. If that brings the level up to 75%, that's all that's needed. If it doesn't, soak the other puck and repeat. We are working with just the bottom tray for the moment. When it's full of worm castings, we'll add another tray, all the while keeping the lid on the top. Worms don't like light, so they stay under the layers. When it's time to add another tray (yay!), we'll line it with shredded paper. Sheets of newspaper are used to line only the bottom tray.

Feed the worms

The first day you have the worms, don't feed them. They need time to acclimate to their new environment.

On the second day, give the worms a cup of food: potato scrapings or over-ripe fruit. Never add greasy food (so no french fries), meat, bones, dairy, or feces.

The amount of food to put in the bin depends on the number of worms. For 250 worms, add slightly less than a pound of fruit and vegetable scraps and half a tablespoon of grit per week.

Getting event info



In addition to info in newsletters, there's more here:

- Coloured graphics on the IPTRA locked bulletin board in each mailroom.
- Coloured posters on the community bulletin board in each mailroom with a calendar-format summary of the current month and the following month.
- Calendar at iptra.org. (On a phone? Turn it sideways to better read the calendar.)
- Events tab in the [Island Park Towers R.A. Facebook group](#).

Creating a Homestead online account

1. Go to homestead.ca.
2. Click **Resident Login** at the top-right.
3. Below the **Sign In** button, click **Click here to register**.
4. Enter your postal code to locate your building.
5. Select which IPT address is yours.
6. Complete the user registration and click **Register**.

If I remember correctly, you'll receive email with the remaining instructions to create an account.

You can now use the website or myHomestead app as described in the sidebar on page 4.

Sprinkle the grit over the food scraps, cover with shredded and moistened paper, and replace the lid. Because worms don't have teeth they, like birds, need grit to help them eat.

Don't overfeed as this might make the worms sick or cause them to die. If there's food left from the previous feeding, don't add more. Always add moist, shredded paper and grit on top of the food. The worms also eat the shredded paper and coconut fibre. Keep a three-pronged garden cultivator near the bin and use it to lift the layer of paper to check on your worms.

Wait patiently

The layer of bedding, food scraps, and shredded paper may reach the top of the tray right away, but don't put on the next tray. Wait a couple of months. The bedding will settle and become compacted. Worms will reduce the volume of the organic material by two thirds to three quarters of the original. Use the cultivator periodically to gently aerate the tray.



Maintain the bin

As the worms increase in number, gradually increase the amount of food per week. If there's no food left from the previous feeding, increase the amount.

Clean out the bottom tray every month or so and add to the top tray. Harvest the balance of the tray to use on potted plants. Worms often go down to the base tray, and too much liquid could drown them. Use the spigot to extract any moisture (called worm tea) that collects at the bottom. Worm tea is supposed to be a wonderful treat for house or balcony plants.

If the bin smells sour, it's too wet, so drain any liquid and add more shredded newspaper.

The ideal temperature is 13° to 26° C.

If conditions are satisfactory, the worm population will double in three to four months.

Odds and ends

To protect the bin from ants, mix baby powder and corn starch together and lightly sprinkle it on the trays.

Our son told us that in a thunderstorm the worms may want to leave the bin. I tell you this right now — if that happens, this experiment is done!

(Some text in the above article is from Worm Nerd's manual for their worm composting bin.)

Contacting Homestead



To create an online account, see the sidebar on page 3.

Rental office — 195 Clearview

Mon. — Fri. (except holidays)
8:00 AM — 5:00 PM

Phone

613-729-4347 (24 hours a day)

Email

Islandparktowers@homestead.ca

Rachelle handles this email address.

IPT community manager

Sheri is our new community manager. She's not on site yet, so contact info isn't currently available.



IPT property manager

Our property manager is [Varun Ravi](#), who's located off site.

Financial inquiries

Do you have questions about your account or want a copy of rent payments for tax purposes? Email

ottawaaccounting@homestead.ca.

homestead.ca

If you have an online account, go to the [website](#) and click Resident Login. After you log in, you can see your balance, make a payment, and request routine maintenance.

myHomestead app

In addition to what the Homestead website lets you do, this mobile app lets you view Homestead announcements. Unfortunately, notification options aren't included.

Stuff Exchanges continue to collect for reuse

Stuff Exchanges (the second-last Thursday of every month) continue to collect specific donations.

The collection at the March Stuff Exchange included three suitcases, five pairs of shoes, 33 egg cartons, 55 pill bottles, plus bottle caps, tabs, and batteries. Our tally for January, February, and March is eight suitcases, 21 pairs of shoes, 75 egg cartons, 214 pill bottles, plus numerous other items.



These items will be reused, so thank you IPT folks! See you at the next event: Thursday, April 17, 2:30 to 7:30 in the Social Room.

Speakers from the Towers

Speakers from the Towers — the brand-new informal IPTRA speaker series — has begun.



For the inaugural talk on March 18, IPTRA member Angela Mackay gave an entertaining talk related to her recently published book *Worldly Views* — a collection of true stories that spans the 55 years she spent working, visiting, and travelling in some 80 countries. Stay tuned for future talks.

Are you interested in giving an informal talk? Something you're passionate about? Something you have expertise in? Somewhere you've been? Know someone you think would give an interesting talk? If so, email newsletter@iptra.org.

Dealing with pigeons

Since most of us have balconies, many of us have had issues with pigeons perching or — worse — nesting on them.

Why care?

The main reason not to want pigeons on your balcony is because their droppings are a health hazard. Droppings are associated with a variety of diseases, including histoplasmosis (from a fungus that causes fatigue, fever, and chest pains) and cryptococcosis (from a fungus that causes a compromised immune system).



The other reason is to make sure they don't nest and take over your balcony for most of the summer.

Assistance list

If you think you would need assistance if your building is evacuated in an emergency, register to be on Homestead's residents assistance list for Island Park Towers. To register, visit, call (613-729-4347), or [email](#) the office.

If the fire alarm sounds

If the fire alarm sounds and continues to sound and you're on the IPT residents assistance list, wait in your apartment until a representative of the Ottawa Fire Services comes to assist you.



Stock image

If you're not on the assistance list, always exit your apartment, lock the door behind you, and leave the building by the nearest stairwell, *not* by an elevator. Wait outside at a safe distance until you're told it's safe to return to the building.

(With info from the office.)

Paid visitor parking

This is a reminder that visitor parking now costs: \$1 per hour or \$7 per day.

The location ID for all our visitor parking lots is 8262.

If you want to pay for your guests, first create an account at iStall.ca and include credit card info. Then, when a guest arrives, you can register their plate number and pay on their behalf.



Deterring pigeons

Never feed pigeons. If you see anyone doing so on their balcony or on the grounds around Island Park Towers, report it to the office.

There's no sure way to deter these birds. Bird-scaring devices (such as plastic owls, windmills, streamers, or strips



of plastic spikes) on the railing may work initially but not in the long term because the birds quickly learn they're not a danger.

Pigeons aren't true perching birds; they perch only to watch for predators. Because they have trouble perching on thin wires, stringing such a wire above the railing is the best physical deterrent. That's easier said than done above our railings.

Given the problem of installing a wire, effective tactics are some or all of these:

- be on your balcony on a regular basis
- never leave food on your balcony
- grow marigolds, peppermint, or lavender (pigeons don't like the smell)
- remove water features (such as fountains or pools) that pigeons might drink from
- remove or block off niches that could be used for nesting
- if you have to be away for several days, have someone check for the start of a nest and remove it right away
- if you have to be away for an extended period, in addition to having someone check for nesting material, bring inside items (such as chairs and tables) pigeons might nest under

What if they nest?

The main (spring) breeding season is March to June, the secondary (fall) breeding season is August to November. Pigeons can produce from five to six broods a year. They incubate their eggs for about three weeks. The hatchlings take about four weeks to fledge (grow up and fly away). Mates often return to the nesting area they previously used.

If you discover a nest or the start of one, use gloves to remove it immediately.

Shop Canadian



The Wellington West BIA has partnered with over 600 local businesses and launched "Your

Neighbourhood to Shop Canadian: Wellington West."

For more info, see wellingtonwest.ca.



Here are a few businesses that are Canadian alternatives to ones you might be used to patronizing:

- Dollarama
- GT Express
- Home Hardware, Canadian Tire, Princess Auto

Here are a few "product of Canada" alternatives to the usuals:

- Unico canned tomato products
- Primo canned beans and legumes
- Catelli and Primo dry pasta
- Tru Earth laundry and dishwasher detergents
- Alymer soup
- Cashmere or Royale bathroom tissue
- Scotties facial tissue
- Hawkins Cheezies

Bridge ♠ ♥ ♣ ♦

[Kate Hughes](#) invites folks to join her bridge group. Email her or call her at 613-422-4566.

What if they lay eggs?

If you discover eggs, provided you know they were laid less than two weeks earlier, dispose of them under a bush in a park, thereby returning them to nature. Dispose of the nest.

If you're not sure when the eggs were laid or you know they're over two weeks old (that is, close to hatching), leave them be and let the parents hatch them.

If the eggs have hatched, you have to wait until the squabs have matured and fledged. In the meantime, don't move the nest, or the parents will abandon it and the squabs will die. Remove feces or nesting material that's around the nest but not right next to it.

Pigeons may build another nest to lay a second set of eggs, so check daily and remove new nesting material. Eventually, the pigeons will understand your balcony isn't hospitable and go elsewhere, hopefully, not just to your neighbour's balcony.

(With info from [Safe Wings Ottawa](#), [Ottawa Valley Wild Bird Care Centre](#), [GO! Pest Control](#), [Cornell Lab: All About Birds](#), [Health Canada](#), and [Toronto Wildlife Centre](#).)

Car-sharing services

There are now two car-sharing services available at IPT.

Communauto

For several years, Communauto has had two of their cars available at the east side of the 185/195 outdoor parking lot (spots 64 and 65). There are many other [locations in the city](#), including Westboro and West Wellington Village.



Automondial Shared Mobility

With recent posters and pamphlets around our buildings, Homestead is promoting a car-sharing service called



Automondial Shared Mobility that's now available at IPT. Rental seems to be for premium SUVs.

Their two spots are at the south-west side of the 185/195 outdoor parking lot.

According to the Automondial website, the service "partners with ... property management companies to provide exclusive access to carsharing vehicles to residents."

Homestead is one of three partners. Rental isn't available to the general public.

Membership drive

IPTRA is hosting a membership drive. If you haven't paid the optional annual dues in over a year or if you've never paid but want to, come by a lobby with \$10 cash or cheque. Payment makes you a sustaining member.

185 lobby

Mon., Mar. 31, 4:00 to 7:00

195 lobby

Fri., Apr. 4, 4:00 to 5:00 and 7:00 to 8:30

200 lobby

Fri., Apr. 4, 4:00 to 7:00

You can also pay by sending \$10 by e-Transfer to

finance@iptra.org and then emailing info@iptra.org with your first name, last name, and apartment number. Another way is to email info@iptra.org saying you want to pay by cash or cheque. The membership director will then follow up with you.

As a sustaining member, you contribute to IPTRA expenses, can vote at the annual general meeting, and can run for a board position. All this strengthens the social fabric of the Island Park Towers community.

BBQ season is coming

When weather cooperates, IPTRA



will host its popular barnyard races followed by a potluck BBQ on the patio on the east side of 195 Clearview.

Stay tuned for details.

The following table gives a very general comparison of the two services. For more info — especially for pricing — go to the company websites.

	Communauto (Hatchback or sedan)	Automondial (Compact SUV)
Membership needed?	No	Yes
Gas included?	Yes	Yes
Minimum age	19	25
Licence class	G2 or G	G
Price	\$13/hr (\$13.35 Sa, Su) \$55/day (\$58.50 Sa, Su) First 75 km free \$0.30/km thereafter Hourly/monthly rates lower with monthly plan.	\$17/hr \$62/day First 75 km free \$0.30/km thereafter
Cars at IPT	2	2
Reserve by	Website	App

(With info from Kathryn Holman, [Communauto Ontario](#), and [Automondial Shared Mobility](#).)

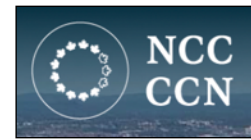
Bus route changes

OC Transpo will be revamping its citywide transit system starting on Sunday, April 27. The bus routes that go (or will go) closest to Island Park Towers — Route 16, Route 81, Route 153 — change. For details, maps, and schedules, see [OC Transpo](#).



For example, these are the particulars for Route 16, which will be removed entirely and replaced by:

- Route 10 between Lyon Station and St. Paul's University
- Route 12 between Lyon and Tunney's Pasture stations
- Route 81 between Tunney's Pasture and Westboro stations



Weekend Bikedays

[NCC Weekend Bikedays](#) begin May 10 and run until October 13 as follows:

- Kichi Zībī Parkway
Carling Ave. to Booth St.
8:00 AM to **noon**
- Sir George-Étienne Cartier Parkway
8:00 AM to 4:00 PM
- Queen Elizabeth Driveway (Somerset St. to Fifth Ave.)
8:00 AM to 8:00 PM

This is good news for our neighbourhood, where cut-through traffic often totally clogged the streets for hours on weekend afternoons, in part because, previously, the Kichi Zībī Parkway had been closed to motorized traffic until 4:00 PM.

Call for photos

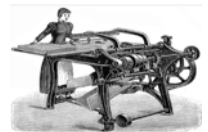


Want to share a couple of your photos that showcase our buildings or surroundings? Send them to newsletter@iptra.org.

May deadline



I'll be on vacation until May 6, so the May newsletter will be going out later than usual — around May 10.



Please [submit input](#) by May 6.