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# a SCHOOL is lost, we all feel hurt

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It seems sad to think of history being unmade. Yet we have had a front-row seat, covering the education beat, at the dismantling of 16 close-knit communities these last few weeks as we toured each of the Toronto schools being closed this year to save money.

It's true that these schools were half-empty, and too costly to keep open under Ontario's new funding formula.

And for schools, size can matter.

At St. Leonard's Catholic School, with only 109 students, the school had to forfeit a game when two members of the boys' soccer team fell sick.

At Grace Public School, its 16 Grade 6 students were too few to warrant a graduation dance of their own — so they let in the Grade 4s and 5s to fill up the dance floor.

At Hughes Junior Public School, the 147 students seemed lost in the three storeys of classrooms, some of them locked up for lack of students.

But square footage aside, a school is still the heart of a neighbourhood — and when it closes, the pain is sharp.

Parent Dan Reginelli appeared lost in time as he paced the hallways of Hughes Junior Public School, as if committing to memory the feel of the original 1912 hardwood floors that still shine throughout the building which looms like a castle over Caledonia Rd. south of Eglinton Ave. W.

At Midland Collegiate, principal Nadine Segal re-opened the time capsule buried when the school was built in 1959 — with ads for new teachers that promised salaries of \$4,500 per year.

Beyond the nostalgia, a closer look suggests some decisions may have been made too quickly.

One school closing will shove two rival neighbourhood gangs into the same school, warned one teacher, who criticized what she called the board's dangerous lack of awareness of neighbourhood issues.

A more common complaint was the fact a number of these schools already were dealing with their dropping enrolments by sharing their space with a lively range of programs.

Yet these other programs no longer count under Queen's Park's new rules for calculating a school space.

Both Midland Collegiate and D.B. Hood Community School, for example, had welcomed adult day schools in their empty classrooms for years, which kept their halls bustling with learners — until the province scrapped funding for such programs last year.

Had these adult education programs stayed — as you might expect in a society that



GROWING SKY-HIGH: John Cordeaux, executive chef at the Royal York hotel, tends fine herbs above for hotel dining below.

# Gardens in the sky yield earthly delights

## Roofs across the city offer growing space for urban farmers

BY GRAEME SMITH  
STAFF REPORTER

The warehouse roof grows quieter around this time of year.

As the sun gets hotter each day, Lauren Baker tends her rooftop farm

## A SUMMER PLACE

A sampling of the people, places and pleasures of our most fleeting season. First in a series.

only in the early mornings and late evenings.

"It can get unbearably hot up here," Baker said.

The lazy heat comes at the right time, now that the bulk of this sea-

son's work is over. Baker and her team of helpers were busy last week, transplanting tomato seedlings high above the cracked asphalt of Eastern Ave., where the road ends among industrial buildings beside the Don Valley Parkway.

They had nurtured the plants since February in a greenhouse above FoodShare Metro Toronto's warehouse, then carried the seedlings up a ladder to another section of roof and set them in plastic-lined troughs.

Transplanting finished last week, marking the end of Baker's busy spring season and the start of a summer.

"I like being part of the whole cycle," says the tanned 28-year-old woman with dirt under her fingernails. "Going through the seed catalogue and choosing plants and seeing them grow."

Baker has farmed this roof for three years with help from FoodShare, a non-profit organization that promotes healthy eating. The roof's harvest is distributed as part of a nutrition program.

Baker's project on the FoodShare warehouse is probably Toronto's only large-scale rooftop farm, but she's just one of many city dwellers for whom summer means growing food high above the streets.

Her warehouse garden is almost visible from the roof of the Royal York hotel, where executive chef John Cordeaux grows *finest herbes*.

Dozens of floors below, Cordeaux runs Canada's largest hotel kitchen, serving 4,000 to 6,000 meals daily. The job is demanding and fast-paced. "It's like a high every day," said the energetic, English-born chef.

But after Cordeaux steps out of the elevator and charges up the last few flights of stairs, and after pausing to place his chef's hat gingerly beside the door ("it gets windy up here") he steps on to the roof and his pace slows.

"We're trying to create a little oasis," he says, gesturing at white-uniformed apprentices installing a patio table and chairs beside a row of potted plum trees just beginning to show their first fruit.

Seizing an opportunity, a younger



GARDENERS ON THE ROOF: Lauren Baker, foreground, Ireen Stender and Jane Taylor tend to the rooftop farm above the FoodShare Metro Toronto warehouse.

Please see Growing, B7