

U.S. Supreme Court backs consortium of pipeline companies including Enbridge in N.J. land dispute

JUNE 29 UPDATED



Australia tightens COVID-19 lockdown amid Delta virus outbreak

JUNE 29 UPDATED

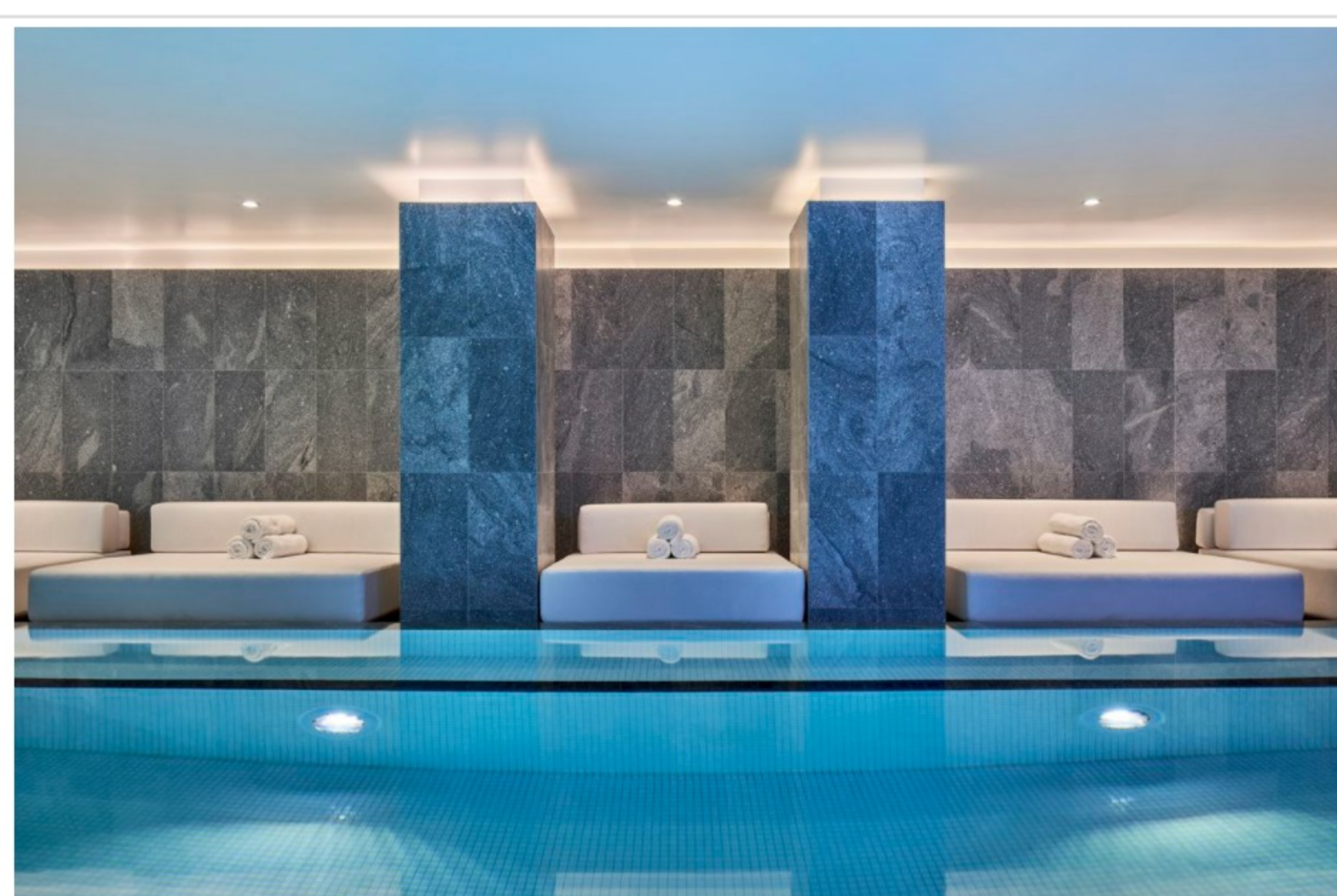


Tesla's autopilot, driver-assist systems come under new scrutiny

JUNE 29



Halifax's Muir Hotel is more than just something new on the harbour



The three wharf buildings of Queen's Marque jut out into the harbour like majestic, seaworthy vessels, and are the work of acclaimed Nova Scotia architect Brian MacKay-Lyons – the natural choice for the job.

HANDOUT

When is a hotel more than just a place to sleep? Touring the site of Halifax's Muir, which opens in late fall, a few answers are as clear as the view of the iconic Angus L. Macdonald suspension bridge: When it occupies part of a historic, two-hectare waterfront address; when it's the first luxury hotel in a city not known for refined lodging; and when it launches in the midst of a global pandemic.

If that weren't pressure enough, Scott Armour McCrea, president of the Armour Group, the real estate development and construction company transforming the site, cites no less than "Fogo Island meets Ritz-Carlton" as his goal for the \$200-million mixed-use development, known as Queen's Marque. "I'm trying to create a Canadian landmark, to be honest with you," he says.

East Coast tourism operators brace for slow season, again

As Canadian destinations reopen, many are looking to LGBTQ travellers as the first group they welcome

Although humility runs in the blood of born-and-bred Maritimers, McCrea's bold aspirations capture a new confidence rising up from the east. You can see it in Muir's proud tagline, "Born of this Place," and recent national news headlines about Halifax's desirability, both as a refuge from COVID and an affordable place to live, with nearly deserted beaches a mere 20 minutes from downtown. With all the buzz, it's no wonder both Condé Nast Traveler and CNN Travel included Nova Scotia as one of the top 21 places to go in 2021, name-checking Muir as one of the main draws.

The three wharf buildings of Queen's Marque jut out into the harbour like majestic, seaworthy vessels, and are the work of acclaimed Nova Scotia architect Brian MacKay-Lyons – the natural choice for the job. "We have one of the most important architects in the country living here, and yet he'd never had a commission of this scale in the province," McCrea says. "It would have seemed almost wrong not to use him."

The development, which includes stores, restaurants and a residence, was designed to be noticed and be used, much like the central piazzas of European cities. Muir, which means "sea" in Gaelic, is the jewel in Queen's Marque's glittering, salt-kissed crown.



Instead of a traditional desk, there's a walnut table with exposed joinery tucked alongside a modular sectional.

HANDOUT

Affiliated with Marriott's Autograph Collection, Muir is independent in style and spirit. From the time you walk past the hotel's Range Rover parked out front and enter the lobby, which at the time of writing is still a construction zone, it's easy to grasp that while the materials speak to a local vernacular – from salt-and-pepper granite to Tatamagouche sandstone and Muntz, a marine metal – their elevated application is part of a new design language. "People's perceptions of the Maritimes are hackneyed, but there's a modern aesthetic emerging and we can put an exclamation point on that here," McCrea says.



The development, which includes stores, restaurants and a residence, was designed to be noticed and be used, much like the central piazzas of European cities.

HANDOUT

Enter Alessandro Munge of Toronto's award-winning Studio Munge. With projects such as Nobu Toronto and Brooklyn's the William Vale hotel to his name, Munge knows luxury hospitality like few others. That said, Halifax is different, less studied and sleek. Did Munge feel the pressure of being hired as a "from away" firm? "I don't usually chase clients, but I really, really wanted this," he says. "With bigger city projects, you're one of many, and you risk blending in. Muir offered the chance to push the envelope and affect the region in a positive way. For us, the key was not coming in with a humble approach that's on point with those who live there."

Muir's 109 rooms, all but four of which have water views, call to mind staterooms on a private yacht. Walls are curved and wrapped in weathered V-groove white oak. Both the bar and bathroom mirror feature a backlit, porthole-shaped mirror. Although the shipbuilding narrative can't be avoided, its references are whisper-discreet. "Yes, we're on the ocean, but we stayed away from the thematic," Munge says with a laugh. "There are no light fixtures made of rope, no big anchor in the lobby – this isn't Vegas!"

Like beach glass or driftwood softened by waves, everything in the room begs to be touched, from the gleaming walnut arm of a Stickley-inspired chair to the leather-clad bedside tables. "If your hands wander over every surface, that's a sign of success for me," Munge says. "I want people to relax and rub the arm of the chaise or feel the raked texture of the oak floors underfoot."



Both the bar and bathroom mirror feature a backlit, porthole-shaped mirror.

HANDOUT

Instead of a traditional desk, there's a walnut table with exposed joinery tucked alongside a modular sectional. "It's more of a kitchen table than a desk," McCrea tells me, unable to resist an East Coast kitchen party joke. Overhead, a ceiling fixture mimics the silhouette of a traditional gas lantern with a leather-handled twist. On the wall of each room is a painting of Nova Scotia, and no two are alike. On the bed, a considered decision was made to avoid the usual white top sheet and go with fog grey.



Muir's 109 rooms, all but four of which have water views, call to mind staterooms on a private yacht.

HANDOUT

Studio Munge even designed a Muir Tartan throw for the foot of the bed. "We deconstructed a Scottish tartan and there's a softness and almost tenderness to the palette – no punches of colour. It's our way of representing Nova Scotia's landscape." If that all sounds appealing, you can bring it home for a price; some of the furniture pieces and textiles are for sale, allowing visitors to extend their coastal experience.

Step out of the private space and back into the public and you'll find an art gallery (part of Queen's Marque's \$7-million collection), wellness centre with halotherapy salt hot tubs and even a members-only speakeasy serving premium historic cocktails. McCrea says the speakeasy might be called BKS, but declines to spell out the acronym. "I'll never tell," he says, raising an eyebrow. "It's a secret."

As for Muir, the word's out. Come fall, this new waterfront retreat will be a welcoming post-COVID home away from home – and much more than just a place to sleep.

Keep up to date with the weekly Sightseer newsletter. [Sign up today.](#)

Starting the conversation

ROB CARRICK

2

OPINION

Catherine McKenna, and half of Trudeau's first cabinet, are now going or gone

CAMPBELL CLARK

3

These 10 TSX stocks offer stability and reliability as economy begins to reopen

4

'Dear Homeowner, I want to buy your house'

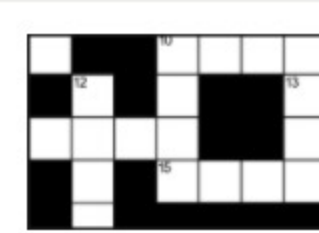
5

Rob Carrick: ETFs for investors who want out of holding individual bank stocks



TAKE A BREAK

Switch gears. Give your brain a workout and do today's Daily Cryptic Crossword.



Scoop a new vibe in the numbers and do today's Daily Sudoku.



Kick back with the Daily Universal Crossword.

