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(PHOTO COURTESY OF SHOW US YOUR WILMOT)

Anne Loeffler recently shared this photo of a beautiful, clear evening at the floodplain south of Haysville to the Show Us Your Wilmot Facebook page.

Ontario government proposes expansion of strong mayor powers to 169 more municipalities, including EZT, Perth East and Wilmot

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Government of Ontario is continuing to bolster the unilateral decision-making powers of mayors across the province with a proposal to expand strong mayor powers to 169 additional municipalities effective May 1, including East Zorra-Tavistock (EZT), Perth East and Wilmot Township.

In 2022, through changes to the Municipal Act, strong mayor powers were first granted to the heads of councils in Toronto and Ottawa, and then to mayors in 48 additional municipalities in 2023. Though several municipalities declined the enhanced mayoral powers, a total of 47 mayors in Ontario now have these strong mayor powers.

"Heads of council are key partners in our

efforts to build homes and infrastructure across the province," said Ontario Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Rob Flack in a press release announcing the latest proposed expansion. "By extending strong mayor powers to these additional municipalities, we are providing mayors every tool at our disposal to empower them to get homes and infrastructure built

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New Hamburg auction house at the centre of new tv show on Rogers

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Miller & Miller Auctions, a New Hamburg-based auction house renowned for selling some of Canada's most valuable and intriguing collectibles worldwide, made its television debut on Rogers TV earlier this month in a new series, Auction Studio: The Best of Miller & Miller Auctions.

The series, which premiered on Rogers TV April 5 and is available to viewers across the country and around the world via Rogers' website and YouTube channel, captures the excitement, drama and storytelling behind Canada's most remarkable collections. This television show is the direct result of a partnership between the New Hamburg auction house and Stratford production company Ballinran Entertainment forged at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

"Before we met Craig (Thompson, executive producer at Ballinran Entertainment), we were doing online sales; they were always in tandem with a live event at that time," said Justin Miller, who co-owns Miller & Miller Auctions with his brother Ethan Miller. "Before COVID, we had a live audience here and we also broadcast the auction online, but at that time, we were just using a webcam, basically, that just showed the auctioneer, no additional footage or anything.

"When COVID hit, our sales obviously went online only, to the point where we

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DOUG TRELEAVEN

CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE FOR KITCHENER—CONESTOGA

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Ontario eyes strong mayor powers for 169 more municipalities, including EZT, Perth East, Wilmot

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faster. Mayors know their municipalities best, and we support them in taking bold actions for their communities.”

Strong mayor powers include the ability to appoint a municipality’s chief administrative officer (CAO), hire certain municipal department heads and reorganize departments, create committees of council, propose the municipal budget, propose certain bylaws the mayor says advances a provincial priority, veto certain bylaws the mayor says could interfere with a provincial priority, and bring forward matters for discussion by council if the mayor says they could advance a provincial priority.

“I am looking forward to a fulsome discussion with all members of council at our April 16 meeting regarding these new strong mayor powers,” said EZT Mayor Phil Schaefer. “I can easily understand the concerns with these changes. The main concerns centre around the ability for the mayor to hire the CAO, department heads and reorganize departments, and also the ability to pass bylaws with only one-third council support,” he added.

The one-third rule only applies to matters of provincial priorities around housing and the issues infrastructure.

“If something is a good idea, I would think that the majority of councillors would also be in agreement,” Schaefer

said.

Schaefer, a former banker, spent over 30 years of his career managing staff across the province. He said he has learned it is not a good idea to mess with success, and he sees no reason to interfere with the high-functioning staff at EZT.

“I look at these new powers as another tool for the mayor to use if they choose to do so. A tool in the right hands can create a masterpiece. In the wrong hands, it can create a huge mess. I don’t like messes.”

Perth East Mayor Rhonda Ehgoetz said it will be business as usual despite her newfound powers.

“The government is doing this to increase housing, so I don’t see any changes in Perth East. I may (use them) some day, but not at this point. I haven’t even talked to my council. I’m not even sure if everyone is aware of what’s going on.”

Ehgoetz added she was taken off guard by the news, though there were some rumblings at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) conference in January.

Some mayors have hinted they may decide to propose the municipal budget, which would be subject to council amendments and a separate head of council veto and council override process, much like what Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow has done. Ehgoetz said that doesn’t interest her in the least.

“That’s not on the radar. We have a great budget process in Perth East and it works very well. I don’t see any problems with (the budget) or anything else right now. If we get the powers, fine, they are always there if we need them, but I don’t think I’m going to jump on them and use them right away.”

Over in Wilmot Township, Mayor Natasha Salonen said she hasn’t heard any feedback from constituents and added her focus is on the work at hand.

“There is plenty of day-to-day stuff we are digging through. I think it’s really important to continue to understand what exactly this means and what this new set of tools can help us utilize and achieve in our communities and better understand how they will apply.”

She added the province has clearly outlined the provincial priorities it is looking to advance, including housing and affordability.

“They are key issues in my community as well, and I think every community in Ontario. I think if an opportunity arises and it is appropriate to use them, that’s certainly something to consider. In Wilmot, residents have made it clear they want a functioning and effective municipal government that delivers results.”

Salonen explained the Ford government has completely changed the way it originally handed out the controls, but she

understands where it’s coming from.

“I think it’s interesting because there was a period when the province was allowing municipalities to sign on to strong mayor powers if they made certain growth commitments. I think it’s interesting to see a change in tactic because this isn’t a sign-up-as-you-pledge to something, it’s now you have them. I think it’s this government wanting to take a strong stance on making sure we improve life for Ontarians.”

Wilmot Councillor Lillianne Dunstall said that as a member of council, she recognizes the announcement brings both opportunities and challenges.

“These new powers ... are designed to accelerate decision-making and help municipalities advance key priorities, particularly in areas like housing and infrastructure. If used thoughtfully, they may help streamline processes and deliver results that benefit our community.”

At the same time, she added, it’s important to ensure the changes do not come at the expense of democratic accountability or meaningful collaboration around the council table.

Instances like the use of strong mayor powers granted in the wake of the recent ice storm to reverse the hiring of a new CAO in favour of hiring from within by Orillia Mayor Don McIsaac, as well as public backlash to the proposed use of strong mayor powers in municipalities



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(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

One-hundred and sixty-nine mayors across Ontario will have Strong Mayor Powers as of May 1, including, from left to right, Mayor Phil Schaefer from East Zorra-Tavistock, Mayor Rhonda Ehgoetz in Perth East and Wilmot Mayor Natasha Salonen.

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like Burlington and Caledon, have some worrying these powers have not yet been adequately tested and they may be a step too far.

In response to the recent announcement of the expansion from the province, the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO), which has been tracking the use of strong mayor powers since they were first introduced in Toronto and Ottawa in 2022, said there is no evidence to suggest this legislation has any impact on the number of housing starts in municipalities that have been granted the powers.

Instead, AMCTO says its research suggests strong mayor powers have blurred the political-administrative authority between the roles of heads of council and chief administrative officers (CAOs), threatening the neutrality of the public service and politicizing local government leadership.

“Looking at Ontario’s Housing Supply Tracker, there is no evidence to suggest that the use of strong mayor powers is helping to build housing,” said AMCTO spokesperson Jacquelyn Folville. “For example, of the 11 municipalities where mayors used powers in relation to staff and organizational structure, only three were on track to meet or exceed their 10-year target. We have more so been hearing about instances where the powers have created confusion by blurring the distinction of mayor and CAO roles or responsibilities, and where there’s been operational issues – for example, affecting a recent council decision at the Town of Orillia.”

Zack Taylor, an associate professor of political science at Western University and a fellow at the Institute of Municipal Finance and Governance, has been among those sounding alarm bells about strong mayor powers since their introduction.

“If we buy the argument that these powers can be used to expand housing in rapidly growing areas, it’s the larger municipalities in rapidly growing areas that already have these powers,” Taylor said. “So, bringing this to much smaller places, many of them slower-growth places, I’m not sure if it’s something that would move the needle.

“... I think a cynical perspective on it

is this is a way for the province to transfer blame for the housing crisis onto mayors.”

Among the myriad issues he sees with strong mayor powers and this proposed expansion is the decision by the province to expand these powers to smaller municipalities with fewer staff.

“If we think this entire policy basically emerged out of Doug Ford’s special interest in Toronto, the City of Toronto’s administrative structure with 30,000-plus employees is enormous and multi-layered, so the idea of having the mayor being able to play a role in hiring and firing senior staff means that you’re only really looking at that top layer. When you go to smaller places, we know you can fit the entire staff of a municipality in one room. ... So, what does it mean to give the mayor hiring and firing power over that kind of thing? I think what it really risks is arbitrary decisions getting made, people playing favourites – you hire uncle Joe or whatever,” Taylor said.

Another red flag for Taylor, specifically among smaller councils with as little as six members, is the notion a strong mayor can introduce a bylaw that supposedly advances a provincial priority and see it passed with just one-third of council’s support. For a council with six members, one of whom is the mayor, that means it would require just one other councillor’s support to pass.

While Taylor said these powers could see some benefits when it comes to limiting council debate during budget deliberations to ensure annual budgets are passed in a timely manner, he sees this expansion of power as opening the door to mayoral candidates in future municipal elections running with the intention of using strong mayor powers to advance their own agendas instead of what’s best for their communities. And, in many smaller and rural communities, Taylor said mayoral candidates often run unopposed.

“Next time around, they’ll run with the knowledge of having these powers,” Taylor said. “... You could imagine in small places that don’t really have any local media – there isn’t a lot of scrutiny – that things could go off the rails pretty fast.”

With files from Galen Simmons

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New Rogers show puts spotlight on New Hamburg auction house

Continued from page 1

didn't have a live audience at all. So, we felt the need to up our online media game in the sense of having better footage, better video – we started using switchers so we could switch over to live footage of the item rotating on a platform with somebody nearby. That's where Ballinran came in ... and we've seen, since then, our clients demand that level of detail and people sort of treating the auction as a live event they can tune into (from wherever they are) without losing interest."

The Miller brothers and the team at Ballinran quickly discovered a large portion of their audience was tuning in to these live, online auctions for the full, six-hour broadcast from start to finish. With all that footage from each broadcast and a very clear appetite from online audiences for content focused on the unique and rare items that go up for auction at Miller & Miller, as well as the drama of the auction, the Miller brothers and Thompson saw potential for an hour-long television show.

"The items that we sell all have stories behind them and they're interesting pieces," Justin Miller said. "If I have a conversation with people who aren't familiar with our business, it's not hard to talk about any of them at length. That's the reason why people spend good money on these items because they are historically significant and worth talking about. Craig certainly noticed these items are interesting and people are going to want



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

Miller & Miller Auctions co-owner Justin Miller and Ballinran Entertainment executive producer Craig Thompson are pictured recently at the New Hamburg auction house as a crew from Ballinran sets up for a live-auction broadcast.

to hear about them, so why not make this into a production where even people who aren't participating in the sale can watch it and enjoy, in this case, learning about Canadian history?"

Justin Miller said the show should interest those who tune in to other shows like Canadian Pickers, Pawn Stars and even Antiques Roadshow, with the added

drama and suspense of a live auction and the bonus that many of the items featured are connected in some way to Canadian history and culture.

Items sold at auction by Miller & Miller come from high-value collections within niche collector market segments such as Canadiana, folk art, Petroliana, breweriana, pop culture, sports memorabilia, luxury

watches and rare antiques. The local auction house holds the world record for a Maud Lewis painting after selling "Black Truck" by the famous Canadian folk artist for \$350,000 – a painting that had once been traded for a few grilled-cheese lunches. The story generated international media attention.

"Unlike a lot of other auction companies, Miller & Miller specializes in high-value collectibles and everything they sell is art to somebody," Thompson said. "It has value; it's not like grandma's teacups. It's something that means something to our history."

"... The show is kind of a pilot right now and we're calling it 'The Best of Miller & Miller Auctions' because we're taking the most amazing parts of each sale, the most drama, the highest value, the greatest stories, and packaging them into a one-hour episode. So, we're taking six hours of footage and finding the best moments that capture a general audience's attention. ... Our goal is to whet the public's appetite because we really believe there's a lot of stories that aren't told that could have value for expanding the series."

Auction Studio: The Best of Miller & Miller Auctions airs Saturdays at 3 p.m. with repeat broadcasts on Sundays at 8 p.m., Tuesdays at 4 p.m. and Thursdays at 7 a.m., reaching over a quarter of a million viewers in the Waterloo Region alone and many more on YouTube.

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Zorra Township resident running as an independent on April 28

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Akshay Vardhan is looking to shake up the federal political landscape in Oxford County by running without a party affiliation.

Vardhan lives in Embro with his wife Geetika and, over the past few years, had the pleasure of volunteering at community events like the Embro Highland Games and the Embro Tractor Pull, experiences he said have deepened his connection to the community.

“With over a decade of experience across law, finance and real estate, I’ve developed a strong understanding of the challenges everyday people and businesses face, and I’m passionate about finding practical, cost-effective solutions,” he said. “As a licensed lawyer in Ontario, I’ve worked hard to make legal services more accessible and efficient for Canadians.”

He explained he is enthusiastic about using technology to modernize how those services could be delivered, and he has a particular interest in the opportunities presented by blockchain and digital innovation.

“My goal is to help individuals, families, entrepreneurs and small businesses in Oxford County and across Canada navigate legal and regulatory systems with confidence, while supporting the kind of sustainable economic growth that benefits us all.”

Vardhan said he decided to run because he wanted to challenge the status quo and bring fresh, forward-thinking ideas into Canadian political discourse.

“There is a real need for alternative perspectives, ones that aren’t bound by rigid party lines. As an independent candidate, I have the freedom to prioritize the needs of my constituents over party agendas and to advocate for practical, commonsense solutions without political compromise. With a background in law, finance and technology, I bring a unique blend of skills and real-world experience to the table.”

Vardhan’s top election issue is promoting economic development, diversification

and employment.

“While sectors like agriculture and manufacturing are prominent, there’s a need to attract diverse industries to ensure economic resilience. Economic disparities persist within the community, with a significant portion of the population considered working poor. Women and children are particularly vulnerable to low-income levels.”

He added he will champion sustainable agriculture, marketing of local foods and fair prices for farmers. Vardhan said he also wants to give small businesses a boost by providing skilled-trades training, youth employment and entrepreneurial programs.

Also on the radar for Vardhan is traffic congestion and road safety, which remain significant concerns, particularly in areas like Embro. He is also looking to improve transportation options.

“Traffic calming measures must be extensively implemented to address high vehicle speeds. Limited public transportation options in rural areas, especially inter-community bus services, hinder mobility for senior citizens and residents without personal vehicles who need to travel between municipalities. I will support transportation initiatives by actively collaborating with provincial and municipal governments to enhance public-transit options and implement traffic-mitigation strategies.”

Vardhan added Oxford County is experiencing a significant housing shortage with many residents struggling to find affordable options.

“Communities like Woodstock and Tillsonburg are experiencing low vacancy rates leading to increased housing costs and affordability challenges. I will advocate and lobby for increased federal investments in affordable-housing projects and infrastructure improvements tailored to the county’s needs, focusing on increasing affordable-housing options and reducing homelessness.”

Health care is another issue residents are concerned about as Oxford County residents face challenges related to accessing

timely and comprehensive health-care services because of shortages of family physicians and mental-health support.

“I intend to provide sufficient health-care centres in the county. We also need to work towards increasing federal support for health-care resources, aiming to improve accessibility and reduce wait times in hospitals.”

Vardhan explained he is committed to promoting economic growth and employment across Oxford County.

“In Woodstock, I will focus on attracting diverse industries and supporting small-business innovation to create sustainable jobs. In Ingersoll, expanding skilled trades and light manufacturing through workforce training and upskilling programs will be a priority. For Tillsonburg, I aim to address economic disparities by encouraging investment in sectors like health services and green energy, while supporting fair wages. In East Zorra-Tavistock, I will champion sustainable agriculture, rural entrepreneurship and improved digital infrastructure to boost local businesses and remote-work opportunities.”

He added environmental sustainability and sustainable development are also top of mind.

“Balancing growth with environmental stewardship is crucial, particularly in preserving our agricultural lands, supporting clean energy and green spaces amid expanding urbanization.”



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Embro resident Akshay Vardhan is running in Oxford as an independent candidate.

He said he will also support initiatives that promote sustainable development and environmental conservation within the region. The implementation of responsible waste and sewage management will be a priority.

The Ingersoll, Norwich, Tillsonburg, and Woodstock Chambers of Commerce, along with the Tillsonburg Post and Woodstock Ingersoll Echo present:

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All Aboard: Tavistock historical society and Hickson 4-H partner on railroad heritage display

MARILYN PEARSON

Tavistock and District Historical Society

The Tavistock and District Historical Society (TDHS) has partnered with the Hickson 4-H Club to produce the All Aboard: Hickson Railroad Heritage Display that has been set up in the lobby of the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock office at 89 Loveys St., Hickson.

TDHS has filled the travelling museum display with mint-condition railroad artifacts loaned from a former councillor to complement the 4-H railroad display board.

In 2016, the Hickson 4-H Club under the leadership of Shonna Ward completed their 4-H project on the heritage of Hickson. During the six-meeting project, members enthusiastically conducted research using TDHS records, Women's

Institute Tweedsmuir scrapbooks and interviews with the most knowledgeable people they could find in Hickson and area about the various topics.

The hardworking members meticulously captured the heritage of Hickson by creating 14 display boards with written material on the Hickson railroad, school, church, park (1921), fire department, businesses, service clubs, sports teams and people.

TDHS plans to rotate the display boards and artifacts every four to six weeks to provide the community with an excellent opportunity to learn and reminisce about the great heritage of Hickson. Please bring your family (young and old), neighbours and friends, and drop in at the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock office Monday to Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

All aboard!



(PHOTO COURTESY OF TDHS)

The Tavistock and District Historical Society (TDHS) has partnered with the Hickson 4-H Club on a Hickson railroad heritage display at the East Zorra-Tavistock office in Hickson.

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GM laying off hundreds of CAMI employees

Union boss still positive about the plant's electric delivery van

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

General Motors is temporarily halting and then reducing production of the BrightDrop electric delivery van at Ingersoll's CAMI Assembly Plant.

The union representing the workers said it is devastating for Unifor members, their families and the entire Ingersoll community. Employees were told of their fate last Friday and sent home.

"This is a crushing blow to hundreds of working families in Ingersoll and the surrounding region who depend on this plant," said Unifor National President Lana Payne. "General Motors must do everything in its power to mitigate job loss during this downturn and all levels of government must step up to support Canadian auto workers and Canadian-made products."

Mike Van Boekel is the chair of Unifor Local 88 and a resident of East Zorra-Tavistock. He said the news didn't come as a surprise.

"Our sales have been slow and we've been doing rotating layoffs, so every two weeks a shift would work then another shift would work, but we just got back to two shifts in February where everyone was back. Every month has been better, but not where we want or need."

He said GM thought they would hit a home run with the electric-powered vans, but despite a significant increase in sales year over year, Van Boekel said the product just hasn't caught on yet.

Unifor and GM ratified a new contract in September of last year, meaning any employee laid off receives 70 per cent of their full wage.

"It's enough to keep food on their table, but it's tough to lose about a third of your wages and that lasts up to two full years depending on seniority," said Van Boekel. "With young families, you take a third off and that hits pretty hard."

Unifor has started what Van Boekel called an action centre in the union hall when 80 members were laid off about five weeks ago. He added employees have options.

"That will get a lot bigger because we are going to add 450 people to it. We have already met a few times and will try to mitigate the layoffs and have packages



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

General Motors has announced it is temporarily halting and then reducing production of the BrightDrop electric delivery van at Ingersoll's CAMI Assembly Plant, resulting in hundreds of layoffs.

available to entice people to retire or if people are on the fence and not sure they want to stay with GM, maybe give them some seed money to take a different direction if they want."

Van Boekel is hoping up to 100 employees will take retirement packages and added there are three distinct demographics at the plant.

"We have 165 of our most senior people left who can retire, and then there is a big drop down to 20-year people with hundreds of employees. The bottom group is between eight and 10 years. The bottom two are the largest numbers. The goal is to keep hiring."

One thousand truck sales per month would mean one shift can work full-time.

"Walmart in the U.S. took 700 as a test fleet. They are telling us they want to make millions of home deliveries. It could lead to tens of thousands of orders, and those are the ones we need."

Van Boekel added Verizon ordered 100 as a test fleet. IKEA is also looking at making more deliveries and is trying out some of the vehicles.

"Some of the bigger North American companies are trying them and we are in heavy talks with Canada Post, and they are looking at potentially 12,000 vehicles over

a couple of years."

Van Boekel said there have been ongoing conversations with GM, government officials and Unifor because the plant is large and has enormous capacity.

"They could get a little creative and try to figure out another product we could take that would fit into our plant. I know those talks are going on."

He added he is confident there is a market for the electric delivery van, and it can be built to order as an American company is looking to do just that.

"The truck is new, but we are getting good feedback from customers on markets we never thought of. We are going to bring the 2026 model ahead into May, that's why we are going back for two weeks. We have a huge customer who has our biggest order yet, and that is Kroger."

Kroger is the largest grocery store chain in the United States and Van Boekel said the plant can add refrigeration units to the trucks. He said Kroger ordered 1,000 of them.

"That's going to be our biggest order and it will be a test fleet for them. They are across every state and they are huge. We have other companies asking for a hard roof on them to attach ladders, piping and all that for tradespeople."

He added a company in New York is turning the product into motorhomes. A local business owner also reached out to Van Boekel.

"(Former EZT Mayor) Don McKay called me from Your Food Market in Woodstock and said they were looking for a delivery van. It would look pretty cool to have one driving around in Oxford County. We need more exposure."

East Zorra-Tavistock Mayor Phil Schaefer said he was saddened when he heard word of the layoffs at CAMI, a major Oxford County employer.

"CAMI workers have a long history of building quality vehicles, and it is indeed a shame that they have been caught up in the needless turmoil currently affecting this industry," he said. "My thoughts are with the workers and their families who will be directly and indirectly affected by this news."

Unifor is calling on all levels of government to back Canadian workers, strengthen Canada's industrial strategy and support Canadian-made products with procurement dollars.

"The BrightDrop electric delivery van is built in Canada by Canadian workers — it's the smart choice for Canadian business, government agencies and for our economy," said Payne. "Procurement and industrial policy go hand in hand. Now is the time for Canada to show leadership by investing in Canadian manufacturing."

Unifor said actions by U.S. President Donald Trump to impose tariffs on Canadian-made vehicles and auto parts have sent shockwaves through the industry, creating uncertainty across the North American auto sector.

"The reality is the U.S. is creating industry turmoil. Trump's short-sighted tariffs and rejection of EV technology are disrupting investment and freezing future order projections," said Payne. "This is creating an opening for China and other foreign automakers to dominate the global EV market while the North American industry risks falling behind."

She added the world is moving rapidly towards electrification, and if Canada and the U.S. hit pause, the ability to catch up could be lost.

Unifor is Canada's largest union in the private sector, representing 320,000 workers in major economic sectors.

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LEGEND BOATS **MERCURY** GO BOLDLY.

Tavistock Community Health Inc. celebrates strong year and launches \$500K fundraising campaign

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

Tavistock Community Health Inc. (TCHI) celebrated a year of positive progress and sound financial performance at its annual general meeting held last week at the Tavistock Men's Club Hall.

Board chair Frank Meconi and the TCHI board of directors welcomed a large turnout of members to hear the auditor's report presented by Katie Lawry of Famme and Company in Stratford. Lawry confirmed a strong financial position, allowing the organization to continue improving its medical facilities and services for the community.

Facility improvements underway

"Many improvements have already been made to the medical centre, and more are underway," said Meconi, noting the refresh of offices and examination rooms is ongoing.

Recent upgrades include a new standby generator and a rooftop HVAC heating and cooling unit, ensuring the building remains modern and functional year-round.

While TCHI maintains financial reserves, Meconi emphasized that completely depleting those reserves would not be fiscally responsible. As such, the board is launching a major fundraising effort to support future improvements and long-term stability.

Fundraising goal: \$500,000

The board has set an ambitious fundraising goal of \$500,000, echoing a successful campaign from 2002 when the community helped purchase the clinic building from local doctors.

"We're calling on the community to step up once again," said Meconi. "If 500 donors each contribute \$1,000, we'll meet our target."

To help kickstart this effort, TCHI will host a charity golf tournament on June 19 in St. Marys. Board members report early commitments from sponsors and local residents, and are hoping for 120 golfers to make the day a success.

Doctor recruitment and clinic demand

While Tavistock Family Health, operating under the Star Family Health Team, was serving 5,700 patients as of January 2025, the need for more doctors remains pressing.

Meconi acknowledged that new families moving into the area are still being placed on a waiting list for family doctor access.

"We've shortened the wait, but our doctors and general manager Martha Murray continue to work hard to recruit another physician to meet growing demand," Meconi said. "We know it's frustrating, but we're committed to expanding services."

Board changes and community leadership

At the meeting, four new board members were elected for a three-year term:

- Amanda Pavey
- Deborah Wagler
- Marlene Wivell
- Greta Riedel

Meconi welcomed the new board members and extended thanks to retiring board members Bob Galloway (chair in 2021) and Doug Green (chair in 2023) for their years of dedication to the organization and the community.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

The Tavistock Community Health Inc. board of directors. Pictured in the front row, from left, are Carolyn Kropf, Deborah Wagler, Marlene Wivell, Amanda Pavey and Bev Neeb. In the back row, from left, are Frank Meconi, Keith Wagler, Dennis Kuepfer, Russ Huber and Bruce Swartzentruber. Missing from the photo is Greta Riedel.

2025 Large Item Collection



UPCOMING DATES

APRIL 21 TOWNSHIP OF ZORRA

MAY 5 EAST ZORRA-TAVISTOCK

MAY 12 TOWNSHIP OF NORWICH

MAY 26 BLANDFORD-BLENHEIM

JUNE 2 SOUTH-WEST OXFORD

THIS PROGRAM IS FOR LARGE ITEMS ONLY

It is NOT a spring clean-up

Non-program material will be left behind, and the homeowner will be responsible for removing it.

Note: automotive parts, glass, mirrors and items piled on trailers/wagons or loose in boxes will not be collected.

If you miss large item collection

Visit the Waste Management Facility
384060 Salford Rd., Salford, ON

M-F: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Sat: 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

ALTERNATE RECYCLING PROGRAMS

*User fees apply for materials noted

	Agricultural plastics*	Blue Box items	Bulky Styrofoam	Cardboard	Construction & demolition*	Electronics	Film plastic	Freon-containing*	Household hazardous waste	Leaf & yard	Scrap metal	Tires
Oxford County Waste Management Facility	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Town of Tillsonburg Transfer Station		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City of Woodstock EnviroDepot		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Beachville Firehall						✓						
South-West Oxford Township Office (Dereham Centre)						✓						

Note: The City of Woodstock provides large item disposal/collection services on behalf of Oxford County. Please check the City of Woodstock *City Services Calendar* for large item program information.

519-539-9800 | 1-800-755-0394 | info@wasteline.ca

wasteline.ca

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

- Set out by 7 a.m. the Monday of your collection week. **Late set outs will not be collected.**
- Max weight for any item is 45 kg or 100 lbs.
- Bag tags are not required for large items.
- Place items no more than one metre from the curb.
- Items must be on your property, not across roads/ ditches, and easily visible (clear of tall grass).
- Do not place small items on top of larger items. **Inaccessible material will be left behind.**

DOES YOUR ITEM QUALIFY?

- Does it weigh more than 45 kg (100 lbs)?
 - Can it be broken down into a garbage bag?
 - Is it eligible for a recycling program?
 - Is it small but you have a large quantity?
- If you checked "yes" for any question, your item **does NOT** qualify.



Summer camps gearing up in Shakespeare and Milverton areas

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

The arrival of summer-camp registration is one of the surest signs that warm weather is just around the corner, and parents in the Shakespeare and Milverton areas have several excellent options to consider for their children.

In Shakespeare, Perth East is sponsoring weekly day camps from July 7 to Aug. 22 based out of the Shakespeare Optimist Hall and the Ball Park Pavilion located next to each other. Camps run weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., excluding long weekends.

The weekly cost is \$195 and registration is expected to fill up fast.

Becky Westman, recreation and community services manager for Perth East, will be coordinating the camps and encourages parents to register early.

For more details, contact Westman at bwestman@pertheast.ca.

Just east of Shakespeare, the historic Fryfogel Tavern is once again offering a week-long day camp from July 7-11 for kids aged six to 12. Running daily from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the camp is \$175 for the week and offers a fun blend of local heritage, learning and summer fun.

For Fryfogel camp details, email fryfogeltavern@gmail.com.

In Milverton, weekly summer camps will also run from July 7 to Aug. 22. These camps include subsidy options through Stratford Social Services, making them more accessible for families across the region.

Call 519-595-8375 or email recreationcoordinator@pertheast.ca for more information.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Campers aged six to 12 enjoy outdoor activities at Fryfogel Tavern during last July's week-long summer camp with volunteer coordinator Rachel Bedic leading the fun.

Notice of Statutory Public Meeting: Township of Wellesley Community Improvement Plan Update

Posted on APRIL 3, 2025

TAKE NOTICE THAT the Township of Wellesley is proposing updates to its Community Improvement Plan, which will expand opportunities across the Township and provide new incentive programs.

This project is funded in part by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. For further project information, please visit: <https://www.engagewr.ca/community-improvement-plan>

A PUBLIC MEETING will be held on **APRIL 22, 2025 at 5:45PM** at the **Township of Wellesley Council Chambers located at 4805 William Hastings Line, Crosshill ON.** You are invited to attend and provide your feedback on the proposed Plan. Any comments received will be used to inform the final draft of the Plan, which will be presented for Council consideration at a future date.

If you have questions or to submit feedback, please contact Tim Van Hinte, Director of Development Services at (519) 699-3952 or tvanhinte@wellesley.ca prior to **APRIL 22, 2025.** Please be advised that any comments received will be on public record.



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Pride Seeds honours Trouw Nutrition for top sales and customer service

Corn farmers visit Tavistock site during two-day spring pickup event

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

For most farmers, “pride” might mean different things. But at Trouw Nutrition in Tavistock, it’s all about seed corn.

Over two days last week, corn producers from Oxford, Perth and Waterloo counties rolled into Trouw Nutrition to pick up their Pride Seed Corn orders ahead of spring planting. By ordering early, farmers took advantage of discounts while getting ready for another growing season.

Planting typically begins between the first and third weeks of May, depending on soil temperatures.

As trucks and trailers lined up behind the store to collect seed, visitors also enjoyed a free barbecued lunch. During the event, Pride Seeds recognized Trouw Nutrition with its Pride of the Zone award celebrating the company’s top sales, volume and customer service over the past year.

Zenon Bender and Jim Witzel of Tavistock have seen sales steadily increase in recent years. Brad Hallock, district sales manager with Pride Seeds, presented the award to the duo in recognition of both their sales growth and customer satisfaction.

Hallock said the award reflects the team’s deep understanding of their seed customers and the continued quality of their after-sales service.

His zone includes 20 seed dealers spanning from London to Niagara.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

From left, Brad Hallock, district sales manager for Pride Seeds, presents Trouw Nutrition’s Zenon Bender and Jim Witzel with the Pride of the Zone award, recognizing their exceptional customer service and management of local Pride Corn Test Plots planted annually in the Tavistock area.

Oxford Studio Tour planned for May 3 and 4

JEFF HELSDON

Gazette Correspondent

The Oxford Studio Tour allows residents and visitors to tour the county, view some great art and converse with the artists.

Planned for May 3 and 4, the event includes stops in 13 locations across the county. While some of the stops are studios, others, like the Station Arts Centre, are hubs where several artists will be displaying. The event runs from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. both days.

While the name studio tour may conjure images of painters at an easel, it is much more than that. Pottery, stained-glass creations, jewellery and decorative and functional pieces are all part of the tour.

The tour spans the county from north of Woodstock to Ingersoll and south to Tillsonburg.

“You get to see it, experience it, have a great weekend meeting all these great individuals,” said Tabitha Verbuyst, Station Arts Centre executive director and coordinator of the event. “It’s a way to meet and understand the cultural portion of Oxford County.”

She said the tour presents a unique opportunity to visit the artists’ studios.

“You have the experience of walking into some of the artist’s actual studios and talking to them.”

The hubs like the Station Arts Centre were added to the tour because some artists don’t have the ability to have multiple

people in their space at the same time.

The Oxford Studio Tour is the continuation of an event that started many years ago. Otterville-area artist Sue Goossens came up with the concept and is the co-organizer with Verbuyst. She said the event traces its roots back to Welcome Back Otterville, a program that was centred in that village. It grew to cover all of Oxford County.

“A group of artists wanted to do something as a community and studio tours were things back then,” Goossens said. “It still works for us.”

This year will be the first time Goossens doesn’t have her home watercolour-painting studio on the tour. Her home is not on a main road, and she wanted to try

something different, opting to be at one of the hubs in Woodstock.

An ever-changing lineup of artists are part of the tour.

“Every year, we have new people that join, new artists, new emerging artists that bring something to the tour,” Verbuyst said.

The art that is part of the tour is for sale, a way to support Canadian art and local artists.

“It’s a nice way if you are looking for new home décor instead of going to Winner’s or Home Sense, you get to support someone local,” Verbuyst said.

More information on the tour is available at oxfordstudiotour.ca.

Experience the locally owned difference, book your appointment today



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OBITUARY

THROWER-KELLY, Cindy Kathleen

Passed away peacefully with her loving family by her side on Friday, April 11, 2025, at her residence in Cambridge, Ontario, at the age of 54 years.

Cherished and loving wife of Paul Kelly whom she cherished 19 years of marriage with. Devoted mother of Jacqueline and husband Nathan Babcock, Eric and wife Stephanie Thrower, David Kelly, Daniel Kelly and caring stepmom of Nickolas Kelly. Cindy was a proud grandmother of Hannah Thrower. She will be deeply missed by her father and mother Larry and Helen (Arbuckle) Thrower, by her sisters Lynne and husband Perry Wilker, Anne and husband Rod Zehr and by her many nieces, nephews and extended family.

Cindy enjoyed baseball, watching and cheering on the Toronto Blue Jays. A good game of cards with family and friends was always an enjoyable time. She adored her 4 loving dogs whom she cherished. Cindy loved spending her time with her beloved family, hosting get togethers and lending a listening ear for them all to confide in. She will be deeply missed by all who knew her.

Relatives and friends are invited to the Mark Jutzi Funeral Home, on Monday April 21, 2025, from 11 – 12:45 for a time of visitation. Catholic prayer service will follow in the chapel of the funeral home at 1:00 with interment in Riverside Cemetery, New Hamburg. A time of fellowship and refreshments will be held at the funeral home following the interment.

As expressions of sympathy and in lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to the Grand River Regional Cancer Center and can be done through the funeral home website.

Personal condolences and donation information can be found on the funeral home website at www.mark-jutzifuneralhomes.ca

Optimist Club of Downie Inc.

OPTI-CASH CALENDAR DRAW

April 06 Scott Abercrombie, St. Marys	\$50.00
April 07 Diane Elston, St. Marys	\$50.00
April 08 Shyla DeJesus, Stratford	\$50.00
April 09 Sergio Boscato, St. Marys	\$50.00
April 10 Lily Camden, St. Marys	\$50.00
April 11 Roseann & Alen Chute, Stratford . . .	\$50.00
April 12 Ryan Smith, St. Paul's	\$200.00
April 13 Robin & Charlie Rossi, Stratford . . .	\$50.00
April 14 Linda Murray, Stratford	\$50.00
April 15 Robert Davidson, Mitchell	\$50.00
April 16 Kevin Miller, St. Marys	\$50.00
April 17 George DeWys, St. Marys	\$50.00
April 18 Brittany Myers, Stratford	\$50.00
April 19 Natalie Baker, Stratford	\$200.00

**2025 CALENDARS ARE
GOING QUICKLY**

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OBITUARY

McFARLANE, Mark Douglas

A recent study found that friends who playfully insult each other are 300% more honest and loyal. If that is true, Mark Douglas McFarlane aka Lips, was unwaveringly honest and loyal right till the end.

He was the kind of guy who could turn any situation into a comedy show. You'd be minding your own business, and suddenly, you'd find yourself the star of his latest joke. No one was safe from his quick wit. But when he was in good health, he was also the guy who'd help you shingle a roof, lend you money, put up drywall, or even help you move that ridiculously heavy piano.

Sure, sometimes his teasing went a bit too far, but the twinkle in his blue eyes when he thought he was being absolutely hilarious made it impossible to stay mad at him. You'd could be fuming one moment, and the next, you'd be laughing so hard you couldn't breathe.

The incredible group of friends who stuck by Mark and Mary over the last 10 years of his life as he struggled immensely with health issues is a testament to the true and loyal person that he was. Even though he might not have been the best at expressing his gratitude, it's clear that he appreciated every bit of help and companionship. Those friends who lent a listening ear to Mary or gave her a much-needed break were invaluable, and their kindness didn't go unnoticed.

It pained him to be forced to quit working after suffering kidney failure and ultimately starting dialysis. It was clear that he found joy and fulfillment in every aspect of his job, even the long, dirty days. His transition into a second career as a picker allowed him to channel his antique hoarding hobby into a business that gave him purpose again and helped fill his days. You could often find him puttering around in his old truck hunting treasures at garage sales, on the side of the road or at strangers' houses should he see something that would prompt him to stop and see if they had anything interesting to sell. As a result, he leaves behind a house full of treasures to keep Mary busy for the foreseeable future.

He was frequent to repeat the quote; "you can choose your friends, but you can't choose your family" and to him, his family consisted of those family members who were true, kind and loyal and the family of friends he created along the way. He will be missed by his wife Mary and their lively group of pups. Their life together was far shorter than anticipated and often did not go as planned, but they faced each setback head on with a lot of laughter and healthy dose of bickering. Mark was often quite a challenge, thankfully Mary has never been one to back down from a challenge.

Also survived by big brother Brian who he frequently teased with his antics in his younger years and his wife Penny who learned very quickly that Mark was going to be a handful. He leaves behind his nephew Kyle and wife Andrea as well as niece Krystal and her husband Ryan and six great-nieces: Charlotte, Ruby, Violet, April, Amira and Aurora with one more great-niece/nephew on the way.

While he stated that he did not believe in any form of afterlife, if there was one, he hoped to be reunited with his parents, Harold and Florence (Leis) along with the many friends that left this world far too soon.

A heartfelt thank you to Dr. Gangji and Nurse Cindy at St. Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton for their exceptional care of Mark and their patience with his humor over the last decade. Your dedication and kindness made a significant difference in his life, and we are deeply grateful for your support.

At Mark's request there will be no funeral, and he opted to be donated in hopes that someone may benefit in the future from what they learn from studying him.

Should you choose, donations can be made to The Kidney Foundation of Canada or St. Joseph's Hospital Renal Transplant Unit.

Mark McFarlane may have left this world, but his laughter and spirit will forever echo in our hearts. Rest easy and finally free from pain and suffering.

Personal condolences and donation information can be placed on the funeral home website at www.markjutzi-funeralhomes.ca

Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to the Mark Jutzi Funeral Home, New Hamburg.

CELEBRATION OF LIFE



Celebration of life for
**ANDREW
MEYER**

Sunday, April 27th
from 1-4 p.m.
at the
New Hamburg Legion.
Everyone welcome

May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face; the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

OBITUARY

In Loving Memory of Jean Elizabeth Harness



Who passed away peacefully at Freeport Hospital in Kitchener on April 03 2025 at the age of 88. Predeceased by loving husband Everett Harness. Beloved Mother of Robert(predeceased), Philip, Diana, and John(Marlene predeceased). Grandmother of 6 and Great Grandmother of 8. Surviving brothers

Sandy and Fraser Ritchie and sister June Brown. Predeceased by twin sister Ruth Sprinks. Burial was at Bowmanville Cemetery.

Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to the Mark Jutzi Funeral Home, New Hamburg.

The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette
Weekly Quiz
By Jake Grant

1. What is the name of the North Star?
2. What do you call the yellow part of an egg?
3. What is the name of the ancient city carved into rock in Jordan?
4. Minecraft was released in what year?
5. What mammal has the longest gestation period.
6. How many theme parks does Disney have worldwide?
7. What card game inspired the creation of the Joker?
8. What is the name of the villain in the Smurf's?
9. In which country did the Easter Rising take place in 1916?
10. What event do Christians celebrate on Easter Sunday?

Answers found on the classified page

IN MEMORIAM

In Memory of our wife, mother & grandmother

Sandra Swartzentruber

who left us 5 years ago, April 19th, 2020.

*If I could see you one more time, I know just what I'd do.
 Cause all I've thought of since you left, was one more day with you.*

*There's notes in every margin about everything you've missed
 and with every passing day, more gets added to the list.*

*I'd probably invite you to do things simple and mundane
 like walk to get a coffee or listen to the rain.*

*I'd talk about tomorrow like I know it's gonna come
 and for a few brief moments everything would not feel numb.*

*I'd let you speak forever and hear every word you say,
 I won't take it for granted since I know you'll go away.*

I'd ask all of the questions that I wish I'd asked before.

I'd tell that without you I am not whole anymore.

*I'd make sure that before you leave again you know the truth,
 about the very depths of the amount that I love you.*

*Before we said goodbye I would hold you tight as ever,
 the way you hold somebody right before they leave forever.*

I'd say, I'll think of you every part of every day.

You'd tell me that it won't be life if I live it that way.

*That you will be a part of everything I ever am,
 that I need to move on instead of trying to understand.*

And as our time ran out again, I'd try to act real tough.

But no amount of time with you could ever be enough.

*But I won't see you just once more but again and again and again
 because the day that I do not will mean I have found my end.*

*And even when that day does come, I'll see you that day too,
 Cause the first-person I'm looking for once I get there is you.*

— Josie Balka

Remembered with love & missed dearly,
 Ralph and Family

IN MEMORIAM

EARL NICKOLAS

April 20, 2020



IN LOVING MEMORY OF A WONDERFUL
 HUSBAND, FATHER AND POP.
 LOVE SUSAN, TRACEY, JACQUI, TODD
 AND FAMILIES

Fill Not Your Heart with Sorrow

*Fill not your hearts with pain and sorrow,
 but remember me in every tomorrow.
 Remember the joy, the laughter, the smiles.
 I've only gone to rest for a while.
 Although my leaving causes pain and grief,
 my going has eased my hurt and given me relief.
 So dry your eyes and remember me,
 not as I am but as I used to be.
 Because, I will remember you
 all and look on with a smile.
 Understand your hearts,
 I've only gone to rest a while.
 As long as I have the love of you,
 I can live my life in the hearts of all of you*

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

Big sister Blakely, along with parents Morgan and Justin are excited to announce the early arrival of



Jett Wilfred Wettlaufer

Born February 3, 2025, at 10:02 am.,
 weighing 5 lbs 9 oz and 18 inches long.
 Grandson to Cindy Mogk, Lee Griffi & Stephanie
 Jones, Leonard & Suanne Wettlaufer.
 Great grandson of Carol & Ken Mogk,
 Marlene & Ron Wiffen & Tricia Wettlaufer.

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

KALBFLEISCH

Mackenzie, Kenzie and big sister Lennon are thrilled to announce the newest arrival to their family!

Callahan Kenneth Earl

weighing 6 lbs 14 oz,
 arrived on March 24, 2025.

Proud Grandparents are Paul and Jacqui Kalbfleisch and Greg and Tammy Kaufman. Excited Great Grandparents are Ron and Carol Roth, Margarite Kaufman, Carolyn Ramseyer and Rudy Jacobs, and Sandra Kalbfleisch and Hugh Brenneman. Proud Great Great Grandma is Dorothy Bender. Great Grandpas Kenneth and Earl are watching over from heaven.



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 GRADUATION, ETC.**

Place an announcement in the
 Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette

Call Sharon at 519-580-5418
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**SEND US YOUR STORY IDEAS AND YOUR
 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR TO GALEN SIMMONS
 AT GALEN@GRANTHAVEN.COM**

The Old Gazettes

By Sydney Grant

Slowly but surely, I'm reading through the past pages of the Tavistock Gazette (est. 1895). Within this weekly column I'd like to share with you some of my findings.

April 15-22, 2020, Edition (5 years ago)

Even though restaurants are allowed to remain open to provide takeout meals, business during the new reality of COVID-19 is at a minimum. "Sales are down 90 per cent," Quehl's Restaurant owner Cindy Larson said last week after she and her husband/chef, Brian Larson, compared their operation to the same time last year. "There have been a lot of people helping people," Cindy explained. They are picking up meals for their neighbours and shut-ins. Quehl's has also been delivering to those in quarantine or who are unable to get themselves.

Bella and Alyssa Matthews, twin daughters of Kris and Krista Matthews of Tavistock, are in the Grade 4 class of Mrs. Donna Ross at Tavistock Public School. Mrs. Ross asks them to complete 30 minutes of math and 30 minutes of another topic daily for their at-home learning program. Last Tuesday, April 14, it was science. They also have some language (French) work to do with Mr. Dan Green. "Currently, they are using my laptop," their mom, Krista, said, "which means I am not able to work from home while they are 'at school.' It's not an ideal situation since that means two hours (one hour per child) I am not 'at work.' So, we have two Chromebooks on the way."

April 14-21, 2010, Edition (15 years ago)

The County of Oxford has selected Execulink Telecom to help develop the infrastructure and services that will bring high-speed broadband internet to all corners of the county by fall 2011. The Government of Ontario's Rural Connections Broadband Program is providing Oxford with \$988,333 for this project. Once completed, all of Oxford County's 2,041 square-kilometres will have high-speed internet coverage, offering Broadband service to the Town of Ingersoll and Townships of Blandford-Blenheim, East Zorra-Tavistock, Norwich, South-West Oxford and Zorra.

Tavistock Public School held their 25th annual Crokinole Tournament on Thursday evening, April 15, with 48

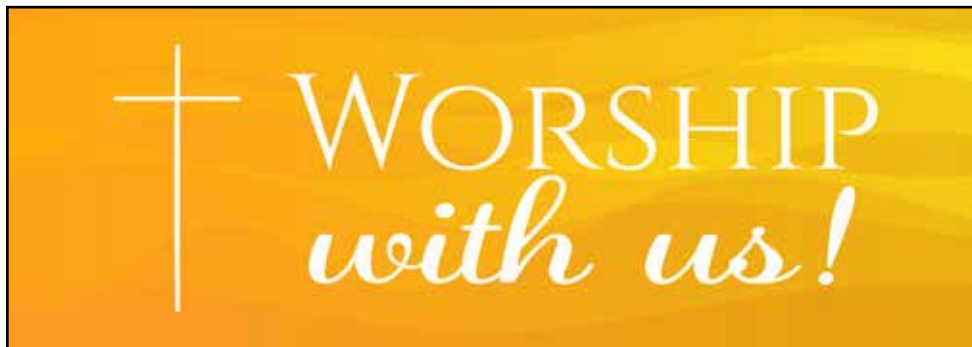
teams registered. Pairs of students and friends, parents, grandparents, siblings and aunts and uncles played 10 preliminary games to determine the highest-scoring teams for the finals. The finals had Jason and Donna Winhold against Kristin and Brian Ropp. The champions were Jason and Donna Winhold.

Thirty-one members of Tavistock Men's Club and two guests gathered on Thursday, April 15 for the club's monthly meeting. Jim McGregor won the 50/50 draw and members of East Zorra Mennonite Church catered the meal. Ron Brenneman reported on the club's Highway Cleanup project completed on Tuesday evening, April 13. "A good crew" took to the roadsides between Tavistock's southern limits and the Cassel sideroad and finished in about one hour, Mr. Brenneman said. He was pleased to see that there is a lot less garbage on the roadsides compared to other years. About 15 bags of garbage was collected in comparison to some 40-50 bags in other years.

March 29 - April 5, 1995, Edition (30 years ago)

It's been 13 long seasons, but the Tavistock Royals have finally clinched a senior hockey title. The Royals defeated Durham Thundercats 5-4 in the sixth game of their best-of-seven final series Sunday night in New Hamburg. Ron White fired the winning goal with 36 seconds left on the clock to give Tavistock the four-games-to-two win. Members of the team include Jeff Roth, Trevor Hunter, Mark Soehner, Tim Yantzi, Brad Snyder, Brad Stere, Terry Casey, Mark Albrecht, Mark Germann, Ron White, Joe Scherer, Bryn Gladding, Steve Simpson, Kevin Albrecht, Kevin Yantzi, Dave Schmidt, Chad Zeigler, Jeff McClenaghan, Greg Snyder, Bob Klagfleisch, Scott Pfaff and Mike Allen.

Two father-and-son teams reached the finals in the annual crokinole tournament held at Tavistock Public School last Wednesday evening, April 12. Burnell Zehr and his son, Adam, were declared champions following a final-shot decision against Murray Grainger and son, Craig. The first three-minute round ended in a tie as the Graingers' 20-point "dookie" cancelled the Zehr's five plus 15-point buttons. Each player then received six shots in the extra round. A total of 47 tables were in action with 188 players on 94 teams.



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The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette **SPORTS**

PJHL Playoff Roundup: Firebirds move on to PJHL final four

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Correspondent

A mostly hometown crowd of over 1,000 fans watched New Hamburg earn the right to a Provincial Junior Hockey League (PJHL) quarter-final series for the second straight year after a seven-game series win over Grimsby.

The Firebirds downed the Peach Kings by a 4-2 count in Game 7 of a thrilling South Conference final series.

Jack MacDonald's second goal of the playoffs gave the Firebirds a 1-0 lead less than four minutes into the first period, but the Peach Kings tied it up just over 10 minutes later on a powerplay. After a scoreless second period, Grimsby went up 2-1 early in the third with New Hamburg captain Owen Fischer serving a high-sticking minor he took at the end of the second frame. MacDonald's second of the game and third of the playoffs at the 7:04 mark gave the Firebirds some momentum while Jake Thompson scored the hard-angle game-winner, his 11th of the postseason, on a feed from fellow veterans Fischer and Matt Domm at the 14:21 mark. Fischer added an empty net goal with 39 seconds remaining.

"I was trailing behind (Fischer) and he made a good move around the defenceman,



(SCREENSHOTS OF 519 SPORTS VIDEO) Jake Thompson scored the winning goal as New Hamburg downed the Grimsby 4-2 on home ice Tuesday night in game seven of the South Conference final. The Firebirds now take on Essex in a semi-final series. No schedule has been released yet

passed it out; I think the guy tipped it. I just reached for it and shot it," said Thompson. "I don't know how it went top shelf, but it did and what a great feeling."

Thompson is one of five overage players in their final season with the Firebirds and he admitted playing in a deciding game is as stressful as it gets.

"It's our last year, Game 7 and thinking it could be the end was really tough, but



this team always finds a way and that's what we continue to do. We still have eight more wins to go and that's the plan," he said.

MacDonald was an unlikely hero in the game. The 19-year-old New Hamburg native scored six goals in the regular season and now has three in the playoffs.

Game 5

The Firebirds dispatched the Peach

Kings with a 5-0 victory as Deklan Jermol stopped all 32 shots he faced on home ice. Thompson led the attack with a pair of goals while Fischer and Cohen Van Zuillen added two assists. Antonio Pasqualino added a goal and a helper.

Game 6

New Hamburg had a chance to clinch the series on the road, but it was all Grimsby in a 6-1 rout. The Peach Kings led 6-0 by the 15-minute mark of the second period before Andrew Gear put the Firebirds on the board about a minute later.

The Firebirds will battle the Essex 73s, who have lost just three times in the playoffs and took the West Stobbs Division regular-season crown with a record of 37 wins against just four losses. The team swept Petrolia in a quarter-final series, outscoring the Flyers 28-7. Essex scored 280 goals while allowing just 77 against in 42 games.

The 73s are led by Patrick McManus, who spent three full seasons with the GOJHL's LaSalle Vipers. He scored 29 goals and added 47 assists during the regular season. The team's second leading scorer is captain Gabriel Piccolo who picked up 70 points after spending time with the Leamington Flyers of the GOJHL and OJHL. He was part of the Sutherland Cup team that defeated Stratford in 2024.

Wellesley Township mayor settles hockey bet with Wilmot mayor



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Wilmot Township Mayor Natasha Salonen gloats as she stands beside mayor Joe Nowak before a recent Wellesley Township council meeting. The two heads of council placed a bet on the recent PJHL Doherty Division final series between New Hamburg and Wellesley, won by the Firebirds in five games. "We deal with a lot of big issues at both Wilmot and regional council, and it was great to bring Provincial Junior Hockey League pride into chambers with our friendly mayors' bet. Mayor Nowak looked great rocking our Firebirds jersey," Salonen said. New Hamburg was battling the Grimsby Peach Kings in a league quarter-final series, and Salonen has decided to push her luck with Grimsby Mayor Jeff Jordan and councillor Jacob Baradziej.

Lori Hartman receives Tavistock skating club's 2025 ConTRIBUTE Award



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Lori Hartman, recipient of this year's Tavistock and District Skating Club ConTRIBUTE Award, is shown with the first group of skaters she coached to achieve their gold level. These ladies were also members of Hartman's first four-star precision team in the '90s, the Tavistock Toepicks. Pictured from left to right are Lindsay Zehr, Jenn Marshall, Lori Hartman, Jessica Wagler and Teresa Weicker.

Tavistock Figure Skating Club dazzles with “In My Skating Era” show

DIANE DANEN

Gazette Contributor

The Tavistock and District Recreation Centre was a hub of excitement this past weekend as the Tavistock Figure Skating Club presented its biennial showcase, In My Skating Era: A Journey Through Time.

Skaters of all ages wowed the crowd with performances inspired by historical eras, combining athleticism and creativity in a memorable on-ice journey.

Skating through the ages

The PreCanSkate group opened the show, delighting the audience as they stomped, glided and roared across the ice in a prehistoric dinosaur-themed routine.

STAR C skaters celebrated female empowerment, while STAR A and B took spectators back to the Paleozoic Era, gliding gracefully in jellyfish-inspired costumes.

Junior STAR skaters portrayed medieval knights and princesses, while CanSkate groups brought fairytale magic to life.

A standout moment came from Team Unity’s Juvenile Synchronized Skating Team, whose energy and precision earned them a provincial silver medal earlier this season.

Themed routines continued with CanSkate cowboys and cowgirls showcasing a wild west number, followed by a modern country piece performed by STAR A to Beyoncé’s “Texas Hold ’Em.”

Kaylee Adam, named Skater of the Year, delivered a poised and artistic solo performance.

The Regency Era was captured through a flowing, elegant group routine, and STAR B skaters brought the spirit of the 1960s to life with a lively tribute to Beatlemania.

Celebrating success

Midway through the evening, skaters



(DIANE DANEN PHOTO)

Star B and C skaters have some fun while warming up before their “Let’s Get Physical”/ Jazzercise routine. In the front row from left to right are Eilish Moylan, Alexis Bell and Kaylee Adam. In the back row, from left, are Hailey Minler, Sophie Pullen and Bria Moore.

from the first half of the show returned for a group parade, followed by the club’s annual awards presentation.

- Colbie Moss was named CanSkater of the Year, recognized for her talent, passion, and dedication.
- Derrick Kearley received the CanSkate Spirit Award for his perseverance, discipline, and positive attitude.
- Myra Hendry was named Program Assistant of the Year, applauded for her leadership and ability to make skating fun for younger skaters.

Adam, chosen Skater of the Year by the

club’s coaching team, was celebrated not only for her accomplishments but also for being a role model to others.

The club also recognized skaters who achieved Gold Test status:

- Annabelle Hendry – Gold Skills (2023), Gold Dance (2023), Gold Artistic (2024)
- Adam – Gold Skills (2024), Gold Dance (2025), Gold Artistic (2025)
- Eilish Moylan – Gold Dance (2025), Gold Artistic (2025)

The prestigious Nancy Pate Memorial Award, named in honour of one of the club’s founding members, was awarded

to Myra Hendry (2024) and Adam (2025). The award was presented by Pate’s niece, Chloe Wilhelm, recognizing kindness, leadership and passion for figure skating.

A high-energy second act

After intermission, the energy ramped up with a nostalgic trip to the 1980s.

- STAR A skaters lit up the ice with “Girls Just Wanna Have Fun”
- STAR B and C followed with a jazzercise-inspired routine to “Let’s Get Physical”
- Coaches surprised the audience with a black light routine to Taylor Swift
- Team Unity’s Beginner Synchro Team delivered a gold-medal-winning performance
- STAR B’s “Dancing Queens” celebrated the disco era
- CanSkate groups reimagined 1920s Disney characters and brought 1950s Elvis nostalgia to life
- STAR B flappers danced to “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy”
- The Pre-Juvenile Synchro Team impressed with synchronized precision, rounding out a successful season with both gold and silver medals

Special guests Rilee Eby and Jacob Stark, a junior dance pair, added to the evening with a captivating routine.

Closing performances featured CanSkate D skaters in Barbie pink, a return to the rock ’n’ roll of the ’50s, and STAR A’s “Lollipop Sock Hop,” before STAR C wrapped the evening with a grand finale.

The club expressed gratitude to its coaches, volunteers, sponsors, parents and the Tavistock community for their ongoing support. The evening was a joyful celebration of skating, creativity and the club’s strong sense of community.



(DIANE DANEN PHOTO)

Star B Skaters perform their Beatlemania routine. Pictured from left to right are Sydney Robinson, Katherine Missio, Abby Herold and Kiyah Marshall.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The 1960s Barbie Canskate D Group. Pictured from left to right are Corey Armstrong, Ruby McIntosh, Lucy Husk, Nora Moloney, Breanne Poll and Blake Willsey. Group member Tessa Hazeleger is not pictured.

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Junior Firebirds ready for U18 OHF tournament

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The puck drops on the Ontario Hockey Federation's U18 A championship tournament in New Hamburg Friday morning, and the host team's head coach can't wait to get started.

Zach Mark is one of the centre's most well-known figures both on the ice as a player and off the ice as a coach and volunteer with the Junior Firebirds. While his team didn't qualify as the Ontario Minor Hockey Association's winner, they are in the field as the host organization.

New Hamburg is one of the top teams in the Shamrock Hockey League, something Mark said has helped them prepare for the tournament.

"St. Thomas was first in the province, I think St. Marys was third, we were fifth and South Oxford was ranked fourth. When you're in a league like that, every other game, you are playing a top-five team. It's a tough league to be a part of, but it also prepares you for moments like these."

Mark added he constantly reminded his players throughout the regular season they had to show up with their A game.

"I would say it brought our guys a sense of urgency and consistency on a regular basis, which is very unfamiliar to a lot of these guys. We haven't been in a league like this before where it's been as deep. Previously, we would walk into a

building and know we were going to get the win even with a 50 per-cent effort. (The Shamrock) prepared us to give 110 per cent every night."

When Mark started his hockey career, New Hamburg was a BB centre, then he left to play AAA. When he returned to play U18, the jump had been made to the A level.

"We played a lot of big-city teams like Burlington and Oakville in the Tri-County loop, which was great competition, but for a lot of those teams, it was their second or third one in an association as they would have triple, double and then the single A team."

New Hamburg is joined by St. Thomas, Stratford and two northern teams in the tournament, something Mark said makes it difficult to prepare for.

"We know nothing about Hearst or Porcupine. That's the cool thing about these tournaments. We could score-board-watch, I guess, but we have no idea until they get here Thursday night and play them Friday what they are going to look like."

The Junior Firebirds played Stratford, the Alliance representative, earlier in the season during a tournament in Waterloo and came away with a 3-0 victory.

"They are a very good team. They played well, we played well in that game and so when we play them, it definitely could go either way depending on who shows up.

"Not normally do you see a community of 9,000 people host a tournament of this magnitude. To be able to do it in New Hamburg, it is a once-in-a-lifetime thing for our guys and we are the first team here to host and play in the OHFs. It is a cool and historic moment for New Hamburg Minor Hockey and our Junior Firebirds program."

He added his players are pumped to get on the ice and get things going.

"They are pumped. We've had it penciled on our calendar now for about six months. It feels like just yesterday we started the season and all of a sudden, we're two days away. We've had practices every day for the last week and a half. The boys are excited and ready to go."

For 13 New Hamburg players, this weekend marks the end of their minor-hockey careers as they outgrow the U18 age group, unless they decide to play U21 next season.

"I keep reminding them they've played together for 10-plus years and, all of a sudden, it's going to be done by Monday. You'd rather it be done with a medal around your neck than not."

Mark is fully aware his team will play with a lot of emotion come 12:15 p.m. Friday and plans to utilize advice he's received in the past.

"A coach told me once a game is like riding a wave and you can't get too high or too low. Ride the wave, have an even keel.



Focus on what we can do. I tell them to control the controllables and there are so many things out of their control."

Any minor sport in Wilmot Township receives tremendous support from the community, something not lost on Mark who expects a big turnout for the tournament.

"We see a big crowd coming out all the time for all of our sports. (The OHF) is an event more than anything. Obviously, there is good hockey going on, but at the same time, there is so much for families to do. Food trucks, vendors and different games and light shows are all a part of it. Again, it's a once-in-a-lifetime thing you probably won't see back in New Hamburg in a while. Come out and support it and enjoy the event."

"You don't just have to come for the hockey."

New Hamburg plays twice on Friday, the first game at 12:15 p.m. against Hearst and the second at 7:30 p.m. versus Stratford. Admission is free.

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Firebirds seeking sponsorships for new Birds Nest locker room

WILMOT-TAVISTOCK GAZETTE STAFF

thewtgazette@gmail.com

The New Hamburg Firebirds is creating a brand-new, state-of-the-art locker room.

Since moving into the Wilmot Recreation Complex in 2007, the Provincial Junior Hockey League (PJHL) team had the same home, the same locker room and the same stalls. This season, the Ontario Hockey Association (OHA) is expanding roster sizes from a 23-man roster to a 25-man roster, meaning the current room is too small and does not have enough stalls to fit the entire team.

This summer, the team will be undergoing a Dressing Room Initiative to help

raise money for the new room. The new locker room will begin renovations this summer, in preparation for the 2025-2026 season.

The Firebirds are calling on all team alumni (players, coaches, management, executives, volunteers and boosters) to help sponsor and fundraise. In return, the team's goal is to recognize all alumni who sponsor.

Packages range from \$250 to \$2,000 and anyone interested in donating or sponsoring is asked to contact Zach Mark at zach88@rogers.com to organize payment and sponsorship details. There has been a lot of interest so far, and the team assumes the stall sponsors will go very fast.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The New Hamburg Firebirds Junior C team is transforming its current locker room, top, into a bigger and more modern version, bottom, next season with the help of the community.



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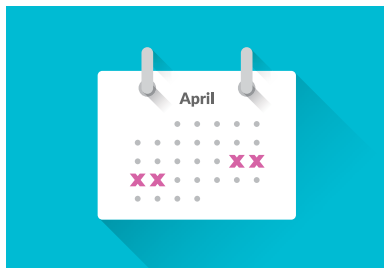
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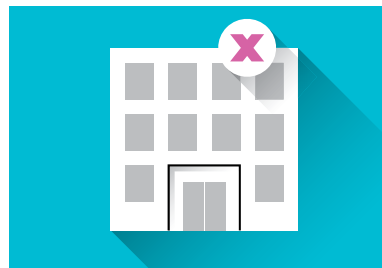
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Waterloo-Oxford DSS students to stage one-act play, Reel Times at Somerset High

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Drama students at Waterloo-Oxford District Secondary School (W-O) will soon stage a comedic, one-act play about a student on a journey of self-discovery as he re-imagines his day-to-day life like scenes from film and television.

Reel Times at Somerset High, a fun and high-energy performance, hits the main stage at W-O on April 25 and 26. Written by TJ Young and premiered at the International Thespian Festival last year, the play follows Parker, the president of his school's film and television club, who views the entire world as a cinematic production.

Math class is a horror movie, the lunchroom is a cooking show and phys-ed is a war documentary. When a new student, Dallas, transfers to Somerset High, Parker discovers a new genre – romance. Soon, a whole team of students with surprising talents are working together to help Parker make a big cinematic gesture in real life, but can he really connect with somebody he only sees as a character?

"Parker's a little imaginative; a lot goes on in his brain," said Alex Ottoson, who plays Parker. "He always tries to do the right thing, but he doesn't always know what the right thing is. Like trying to get Dallas to like him; he doesn't always do the right thing and what he thinks is right isn't always good. When it comes to him trying to connect with people, he often puts on different personalities of different people. He's never his true self. He's always a different character in different scenes."

Ottoson said he's embraced the challenge of playing a character who, himself, plays many different characters throughout the play. While it can be difficult to play a character who is imagining himself in a war documentary at one moment and a cooking show in the next, the rest of the cast and crew help set each scene for the audience as Parker is imagining them, something that helps Ottoson remain present as the character Parker is playing.

The premise of the play allows for a lot of humour throughout. One of the story's main comedic drivers is



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

Members of the cast during rehearsals for Waterloo-Oxford District Secondary School's production of Reel Times at Somerset High.

Chef, played by Huxley Morton.

"Chef is hilarious," Morton said. "He thinks of himself as this embodiment of power, which he gets from his father's occupation, which is food-truck driving. He's the comedic relief, and it's really, really hard to keep the audience laughing (without laughing myself). The laughter comes when my character comes out on stage, and a lot of the time ... we can't keep a straight face."

This delightful, multi-faceted, genre-bending performance is a treat for the whole family. With dynamic performances from W-O's talented drama students, Reel Times at Somerset High embraces and indulges in the creative minds of high school students as they make sense of the world around them.

To bring the story to life, however, director and drama

teacher Cody Burns said it requires many of the members of the student-ensemble cast to be onstage at the same time, which can be somewhat chaotic.

"In order to make Parker's vision of seeing everything in a film scenario, it requires everyone to be on board with the same vision and the same plan to make it all unified," Burns said. "We cross between reality and Parker's reality quite often, and it becomes very clear when you see the staging as to when we're in Parker's world and when we're in reality."

"It's a really funny play," added Ottoson. "This amazing cast is doing so well in all their scene changes and they're just really funny people. It's just such a funny play ... but also heartwarming. It's so fun to watch Parker grow as a person."

Reel Times at Somerset High will be staged for Elementary school students at 1 p.m. April 25 and for the general public at 7 p.m. April 25 and 26. Tickets are \$10 at the door and the play runs for about 45 minutes.

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Oxford Meet the Candidates night planned for April 22

WILMOT-TAVISTOCK GAZETTE STAFF

thewtgazette@gmail.com

Oxford County voters will be able to meet the candidates running in the federal election at a Meet the Candidates night sponsored by the Oxford County chambers of commerce and Grant Haven Media.

The concept for the event was initiated by the Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce and Tillsonburg Post. The Norwich, Woodstock and Ingersoll chambers of commerce pitched in, as did Grant Haven publications the Woodstock-Ingersoll Echo and the Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette.

“At the Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce, we believe an informed voter base is essential to a thriving business

community,” said CEO Ashley Edwards. “Our role is to highlight key business concerns and ensure candidates address the issues that matter most. Elected officials who prioritize economic growth and understand local challenges play a crucial role in our region’s success. We encourage all members of our community to engage in meaningful discussions with candidates and make their voices heard.

“Voting is one of the cornerstones of democracy,” said Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette publisher Stewart Grant. “Events like this allow the public to talk to the candidates and be an informed voter.

“Community journalism is fundamental to a strong democracy.”

The event will be held at the Tillsonburg Community Centre’s Lion’s Den on April 22 from 4-7 p.m.

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Steinmann Mennonite Church hosts another successful Blood Donor Clinic

DIANE DANEN

Gazette Contributor

On Monday, April 7, Canadian Blood Services and the New Hamburg Optimist Club held a well-attended Blood Donor Clinic at Steinmann Mennonite Church.

The clinic ran from 2-8 p.m. and saw a strong turnout, demonstrating the generosity and community spirit of Wilmot Township and surrounding areas.

Canadian Blood Services is the national organization responsible for collecting, testing and distributing blood and blood products, including red blood cells, platelets and plasma. These life-saving resources are essential for patients across Canada.

During a typical donation, about 450 millilitres of blood is collected, roughly two cups. While that may seem like a lot, it's only a small portion of the average adult's five litres of blood. One donation is enough to help up to three patients. From start to finish, the donation process takes just over an hour.

Plasma donations in particular are vital for producing therapies for patients with bleeding disorders, trauma and other serious conditions. Some plasma is used directly in hospitals to treat urgent medical needs.

Many factors like holidays, severe weather, or major emergencies can affect blood-supply levels. Currently, supply levels across all blood types are in good shape thanks to donors like those who came out to the Steinmann clinic. With summer approaching, it's more important than ever to donate and help ensure supplies remain strong.

Giving blood is just one way to support Canada's Lifeline. Financial contributions and volunteering are equally important ways to make a difference.

Visit the Canadian Blood Services website at blood.ca to learn about what it takes to donate. Book a donation online, through the GiveBlood app, or by calling 1-888-2-DONATE (1-888-236-6283).



(DIANE DANEN PHOTO)

Brian Rancos, a volunteer and member of the New Hamburg Optimist Club, chats with blood donor Frank DeWeerd after serving him a snack at the Blood Donor Clinic at Steinmann Mennonite Church April 7.

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Edible art by Chok. Fine Chocolates in Shakespeare

HEAPS OF HEALTHY TIPS

By Mercedes Kay Gold



Chok. Fine Chocolates is an adorable boutique featuring small-batch exquisite edible art using Swiss, fair-trade chocolate.

Chok combines premier ingredients, using local love whenever possible in their made-from-scratch fabulous fillings. Sea Buckthorn berries from TNT Berries add vitamin C and an array of antioxidants to a magical midday mini-indulgence. All the

Swiss chocolate bonbons, tablets, bars, barks, sauces and spreads are handmade and one-of-a-kind. Their exceptional lineup of milk, dark and plant-based bonbons are truly decadent.

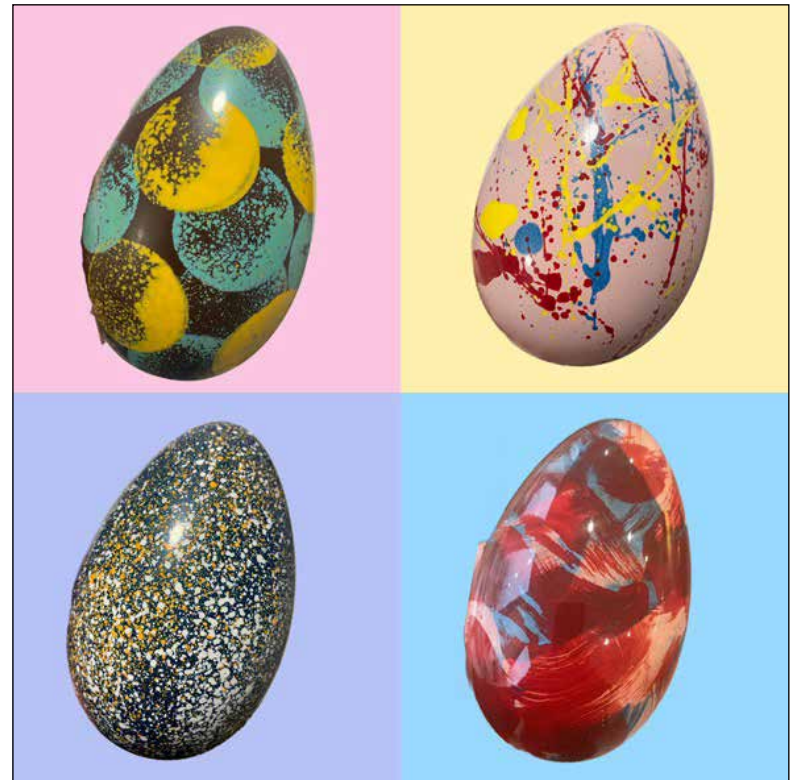
Stephen Beaumont, chocolatier and owner of Chok. Fine Chocolates, along with his team have created a special collection for spring 2025. Their individual bonbons include magnificent

hand painted butterflies. Each piece is unique, ignites the senses and tastes out of this world. The explosion of flavours and textures masterfully crafted by hand with love and attention to every detail. Every perfect piece is made with the finest natural ingredients, containing no preservatives.

Easter is just days away, and you will find Swiss chocolate Easter eggs filled with unique flavours for an exciting Easter egg hunt. To celebrate Canada, Chok continues to feature a signature line, the Canadiana Collection, chocolates representing six of our beloved provinces.

The people behind Chok. Fine Chocolates are truly awe-inspiring artists and craftspeople of edible art, and love collaborating with local artists and artisans. Celebrate life's special moments with chocolate. Bring the beauty of bonbons front and centre, displaying the edible beauties on a "Chokuterie Board" designed by Bob Hudston. The stunning piece of reclaimed wood emulates a Shakespearean theatre in which the chocolates depict the players and audience. The board is the ideal gift for anyone who adores attending the Stratford Festival. The chocolate studio also highlights Art Cards by Stratford artist Kim McCarthy to accompany your decadent and dreamy gift.

Feeling artsy and creative? Chok. Fine Chocolates offers chocolate-making classes in Shakespeare. In just two-and-a-half hours of hands-on



(CONTRIBUTED IMAGES)

With Easter in a few days, check out this edible, holiday themed art at Chok. Fine Chocolates in Shakespeare.

chocolate creating, you will learn everything from molding to hand-painting, and you'll take home 12 chocolates to enjoy or gift to a loved one. With a maximum of 12 participants, workshops fill up fast. Don't delay. Sign up and fall more in love with chocolate. Is that possible?

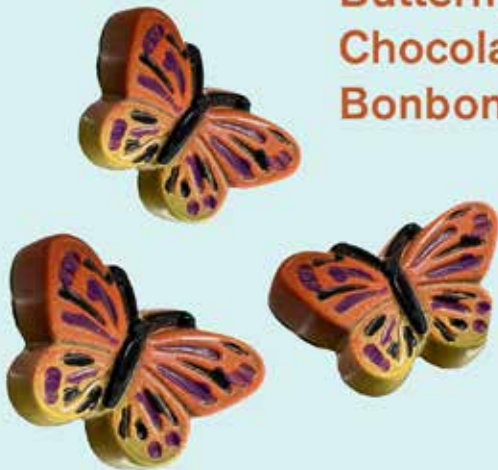
Chok also offers kids' workshops and themed birthday parties. Private events are a great way to build team spirits in the workplace, throw a unique baby or wedding shower or just celebrate life with close friends. Learning

about the art of making chocolate while sipping wine? Sign me up!

Chocolate is a dance for the senses; beautiful rich colour, the aroma, the out-of-this-world taste and even the snap of the bar. This holistic nutritionist is grateful Mother Nature provided us with cocoa for a happy holistic treat!

You can find Chok. Fine Chocolates in their new, fabulous location at 2236 Line 24 in Shakespeare beside The Best Little Pork shoppe. Follow on socials @chok.finechocolates or visit www.chokfinechocolates.ca.

Monarch Butterfly Chocolate Bonbons



Monarch butterfly chocolates from Chok.

Why vote now? The power of one multiplied

By Loreena McKennitt

Guest Columnist

Unless you've been living under a rock, I'm sure it's not news that the upcoming April 28 Canadian federal election is considered by many to have a once-in-a-generation significance.

As far as I can see, there's little or no reason for folks not to vote unless they're deathly ill. Even for those who've become increasingly cynical, choosing the best amongst the worst is better than not voting at all.

I guess the way I see it, to vote is to fulfill one of the obvious and not too onerous duties each of us has to help steer our

country along.

My own litmus test is to imagine myself in the company of any of those who fought in the Second World War and explain to them why I'm not participating in the democracy they fought to defend. I try to envision their reaction.

Sometimes my family and I volunteer at the Canadian Legion in Stratford. Every time we're there I'm reminded of the incredible sacrifices made by so many in order to give future generations the liberty of choosing how their country is run. They passed that torch to us. We must not let them down. Democracies do not thrive as a spectator sport.

As the storms of authoritarianism blow more frequently and closer to home, we can remind ourselves that in addition to

having the choice of whether or not to vote, we have the choice of who to vote for. This is not the case in other parts of the world, such as Russia. They dispatch the competition.

So, what can we do?

Given the threat to our nation, sober thought must be given to the options of who might best protect our democracy and sovereignty – even if you've never voted for them before, or might never vote for them again.

Study up on the subjects and policies using reliable, regulated and accountable sources such as the CBC, our public broadcaster. Abandon the U.S.-owned tech companies and their social media sites which are being weaponised against us by bad actors, foreign and otherwise.

Please keep in your hearts other subjects which we know to be true and for which future generations will bear the consequences, such as climate change and environmental issues.

Get out and vote. Vote early. Help and encourage your neighbours and family to vote, offer to drive them and grab an ice cream cone on the way home to congratulate yourselves. Reach out to any young people who might be voting for the first time. Get them excited about exercising this incredible privilege and learning how their country is run.

Please don't sit this one out – or any election for that matter. Each and every vote counts. The power of one multiplied can have a profound impact. It can mean a life of liberty – or not.

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The Alhambra: A European palace with a dramatic difference

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO

By Paul Knowles



Let's be honest, there is no lack of historic castles and palaces in Europe. Any traveller to that continent will have had the opportunity to visit as many such destinations as they wish, some still occupied and opulent, some merely romantic ruins. After almost four decades of travel writing, my list of castles toured would run past the bottom of this page.

So, why would a jaded travel writer get so excited about visiting yet another palace? Because this was the Alhambra, a unique and magnificent palace and fortress complex in Granada, Spain, and perhaps the best-preserved palace from the time of the Moors. The Moors is a general term for the Islamic people who conquered most of Spain and Portugal, ruling over the region from 711-1492 AD.

And during that time, the Moorish leaders built the Alhambra. It was begun in 1238 and saw continual additions until 1492 when the Islamic state suffered its final European defeat at the hands of the troops of Ferdinand and Isabella.

A lot of history happened right here. There is evidence of inhabitation by the Phoenicians, who came from the eastern end of the Mediterranean from what is now Lebanon to dominate southern Spain more than a millennium BC. Of course, as in all of southern Europe and beyond, the Romans were here, in force, and that evidence remains as well.

Granada was the last bastion of the Islamic occupation of Spain, finally conquered in 1492. And if that date rings a bell, Ferdinand and Isabella immediately occupied the Alhambra, declaring it one of their royal palaces, and it was here Christopher Columbus was commissioned for his voyage to the Americas. As a side note, it's not surprising Columbus is a hero in Spain with his exploits celebrated and his elaborate tomb a highlight of any visit to the cathedral in Seville, but there is little or no recognition that he was not the first European to reach North America or that North America was already occupied by highly sophisticated Indigenous

people. But that's another story.

I have offered this very quick précis of the history of the Alhambra not because it is the most striking thing about the site, but simply to get those details out of the way because the most striking thing about the Alhambra is not what happened here, but the Alhambra itself.

To a traveller used to the castles of the British Isles and the rest of Europe, this is a revelation and an utter delight. Incredible artisanship, creativity and attention to minute detail is evident at every turn in these astonishing buildings.

The tour actually takes you through three Moorish palaces, each more magnificent than the last. As we toured the palaces, it was immediately evident that there are no images of people or animals in the complex decorations. This is because it is held by Islamic believers that portraying human or animal forms might be interpreted as idolatry, so instead of paintings of people or beasts more common in buildings from so-called Christian eras, here, the motifs are calligraphy and complex geometric design.

There is a marvellous exception to this rule at The Alhambra – a beautiful fountain including 12 sculpted lions. Our guide told us it was a gift to the Islamic rulers from the Jews of Granada, a token of their thanks for being allowed to live in peace in Granada. Perhaps not surprisingly, other explanations of the fountain's

origins can be found online, but I like the story our guide told, so I am sticking to it.

Even though you might think three consecutive palaces would be sufficient to impress visitors, there is much more to The Alhambra. There is another, unfinished palace from the post-1492 era. There are also extensive ruins; the Alhambra was in fact a small, self-contained city with mansions occupied by diplomats and relatives of the Islamic rulers. These had fallen into disrepair until they were occupied by Napoleon's troops in the early 19th century. As was their custom – not unlike certain infamous rock groups – when the troops checked out, they destroyed the buildings.

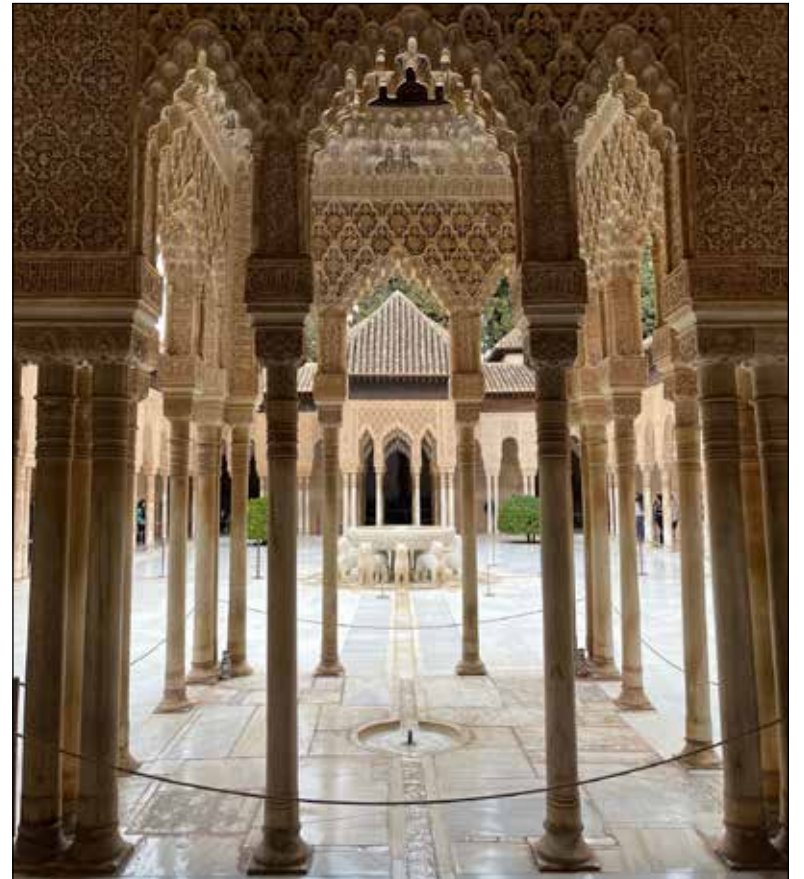
Modern visits to the Alhambra include the extensive gardens, which offer wonderful views of the city of Granada, the mountains and the palaces themselves. Modern is the key word here because these gardens, which seem to fit perfectly into the historic landscape, are, with some exceptions, recent creations dating only to the 1950s when a performance space was built in the midst of redesigned gardens.

My personal reaction to the Alhambra was very different from how I feel when touring the castles and palaces elsewhere in Europe. In those cases, I bring a certain sense of awareness of the history, even if it may be romanticized in my understanding. But here, there was a sense of encountering something new to me, even if it is many centuries old. I came away with a deep appreciation of the incredible artistic sensibility of the Islamic people who lived in southern Spain for seven centuries.

Paul Knowles is an author and travel writer, and president of the Travel Media Association of Canada. To contact Paul about travel, his books, or speaking engagements, email pknowles@golden.net.



Capturing the unique colour palette at the Alhambra



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

The unique fountain in the Palace of the Lions.



Water and geometric symmetry are key elements of the design at the Alhambra.



The modern gardens overlook the city of Granada and the mountains beyond.

So long, Bay Days? Here's what you really need to know

DRESS SHARP. SPEND SMART.

By Scott Dunstall



I've been to all three Hudson's Bay stores in the region and let me tell you, I'm underwhelmed. The sales? Meh. The selection? Also, meh. But I'm not surprised. They're likely following the same gameplan Nordstrom did when they left Canada in 2023; start slow and then ramp up the real discounts as the final exit approaches. So, if you haven't had a chance to check things out yet, don't panic – you haven't missed the good stuff.

My plan? I'll be visiting the Conestoga location two to three times a week starting the last week of May right through to the expected closing date of June 15. I'm also doubling down on my online vigilance. You never know what might sneak through in those final weeks.

One important thing to remember: The Bay isn't vanishing completely. They're keeping three stores open in Toronto along the Yonge Street line, plus three more in Montreal under the "La Baie"

banner. That means they're still selling, just in fewer places, so not everything is going to get that glorious red-sticker treatment. Why would it if they can move it at full price elsewhere?

I walked through the Erin Mills Town Centre location recently, and honestly, it felt like a cross between a museum and a scavenger hunt. Empty shelves, random finds – it reminded me of watching a carcass being picked over. So, what are we going to do when the dust settles?

Local men's stores

You could shift your focus to local menswear retailers like Trends for Men or Stars Menswear. Both have multiple locations, higher-end selections and knowledgeable staff. Yes, they're pricier but you're also treated exceptionally well. I've never felt pressured by their sales teams.

Still, walking into these stores can feel intimidating if you're not prepared. So, do your homework. Going in for jeans? Read up on

brands, materials, fits (straight-leg, bootcut, skinny) and what works with your existing wardrobe. Know what you're after. Then, when a sales associate offers suggestions, ask to see what they're talking about. Buy it or don't, but you'll be in control. Pro tip: browse their websites beforehand. Confidence is your best accessory.

Simons

Someone recently suggested Simons, and yes, they're Canadian, but the closest store is at Square One in Mississauga. Also, they skew younger. I'm not saying The Bay wasn't a little old-school, I'm just saying Simons leans hard into slim fits, bold designs and trendier silhouettes. Great if you're under 30 and your BMI is "barely exists."

Winners and Marshalls

If you've followed my fashion ramblings for the past three years, you know these are my go-tos. You've just got to approach them like a mission. Know what you're looking for and once you figure out which aisle your section lives in, it gets easier every time. There's no catalogue and no merchandising magic, but if you're in the market for two or three specific things and drop in regularly, your odds improve.

I pop into the locations on The Boardwalk twice a week, often for just 10 minutes. If I'm driving by, I stop in. Simple as that.

Winners and Marshalls are

operated by TJX Canada, which is owned by U.S. based TJX Companies. I try to buy Canadian when I can, but let's not forget these stores employ a lot of local people who rely on that paycheque. It's a balancing act.

Online shopping

Ah, the beast that slayed The Bay. Online shopping is convenient, but it's also a gamble, especially with unfamiliar brands. I've talked about online shopping strategies before, but here's a quick recap:

- Read reviews.
- Check the sizing notes (e.g. Steve Madden's 9.5 runs tight, so I buy a 10).
- Zoom in on the material. It lets you view the structure of the material.
- Stick to trusted platforms. I mostly buy on Amazon – I've had bad experiences with other sites like Temu.
- Check return rates. Sometimes a high return rate doesn't mean poor quality. It might just be that people didn't understand the sizing.

What about those Toronto stores?

As mentioned, The Bay is keeping three locations open in Toronto. The question is, will they actually invest in modernizing them? Most stores are still using fixtures from 20-30 years ago, and the overall shopping experience has felt dated for a while.

There's also no confirmation whether the online store will survive. My gut tells me they're keeping those flagship locations open to move the best merchandise without slashing prices and eventually, they'll close those too.

Final thoughts

Are these ideal options? Not really, but it is what it is.

I'll continue sharing what I'm seeing at the local Hudson's Bay stores right up until their final day in June. Whether you're a bargain hunter, a last-chance shopper, or just mourning the slow fade of another Canadian retail giant, you're not alone.

Stay tuned, stay sharp and happy hunting.

Scott Dunstall has been on a stylistic journey for over 10 years. His belief is that every guy has a style of their own. When it's discovered, it empowers and builds confidence. Scott has appeared several times on Rogers TV Kitchener as a guest on DAYTIME. His writing has been republished by LinkedIn Top Influencer and INC. Magazine contributing editor, Jeff Haden. He has also written several pieces for the Baden Outlook. You can follow Scott on Instagram @everydaystylebyscott or on LinkedIn @scottdunstall or Life & Style Wilmot on Facebook. Feel free to ask questions or propose collaborations: everydaystylebyscott1@gmail.com

The importance of supporting local media

NICK CADOTTE

Special to the Gazette

Editor's note: The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette received this Op-ed from Nick Cadotte, general manager of a number of area radio stations including The Ranch in Listowel and Shoreline FM in Goderich, Kincardine, and Port Elgin.

As a local business owner, I've seen firsthand how the "shop local" movement has helped bring awareness to the importance of supporting businesses in our own community. However, in this growing movement, I believe that one key element is being overlooked: the importance of advertising through local media.

There seems to be a misconception spreading that local media – whether it be radio, newsprint, cable, or bill-

boards – are either too expensive or primarily owned by large corporations. This narrative has led many businesses to allocate their advertising dollars to American-based social media platforms. While social media can serve its purpose, it's essential to recognize that local media outlets are experiencing a resurgence as many people move away from American-owned platforms, streaming services, and satellite radio. More and more, local media is where we find meaningful, relevant content that directly connects us with the community.

This is not just about my business; it's about the future of local media as a whole. Just as we ask customers to support local businesses, we need to ensure that we, as business owners, are investing in the media channels that are vital to the economic and social fabric of our community.

Local media does far more than deliver news – it plays a critical role in our local economy. These outlets employ local people, pay taxes here, and provide targeted expo-

sure that connects businesses directly to the community. By choosing to support local media, we are helping to ensure the vitality of our region and giving back to the very networks that keep us informed and engaged.

By diverting advertising dollars to American platforms, we are undermining the core message of supporting local. We're inadvertently contributing to the same practices that we are trying to avoid – similar to choosing to shop on Amazon instead of supporting our local shops.

When we invest in local media, we are investing in our local economy. I encourage the Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), and all business associations to remind their members of the essential role local media plays. We must lead by example and direct our advertising dollars to local, Canadian-owned businesses and media outlets.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Together, we can make a significant impact on the success and growth of our local economy.

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A toast to the newlyweds

VINTAGE VIEWS

By Tim Mosher

Tavistock and District Historical Society

The Bauer Hotel in Sebastopol, just north of Tavistock, was a handy location for well-dressed groups to gather following weddings, funerals and almost any activity happening at Trinity Lutheran Church just across the street in this hamlet. On June 17, 1903, eight friends of newlyweds Lisetta Bauer and Peter Brueckner made their way to the Bauer after their wedding. Here they quenched their thirst on the steps of the hotel where the bartender was pleased to provide a secular version of communion.

The majority of the almost 4,000 glass negatives in the Lemp Studio Collection, housed at the Tavistock and District Historical Society, have no names or dates recorded but this one does! Clockwise starting on the left are Henry Kalbfleisch, William Schaefer, Eckhardt Kalbfleisch, Fred Kalbfleisch, John Olies, Conrad Wilker, John Issler and Conrad Grein. The barman is Henry Feick. The name of the little girl on the right was not recorded.

The picture is beautifully posed and lit. Most of the men's hats are on the porch behind them; the fellow on the bottom right is holding his and two have their hats tilted well back. It's likely that the photographer

asked the men to do this so as to not have shadows obscuring their faces. The raised glasses and relaxed nature of everyone is a very nice departure from the often-stiff poses of the first 50 years of the photography craft.

This photo was taken two years before John Lemp was in the pharmacy and photo business in Tavistock, so it was likely produced by one of the eight transient photographers, but most likely A. Murry or W. Becker. They both offered photo services in the area during the year of the marriage, 1903.

It's probably a good thing that the groom did not join his companions in the picture. The Bauer Hotel is now a private home.

This week's History Mystery: What is attached to the short chain that's hanging from two of the men's pockets? It's very likely that the other men have similar chains, but they're covered by their jackets. This question is for readers up to age 18. Send your answers to tim_mosher@hotmail.com and include your name, age, community name or rural route number. The first person to forward the correct answer will have this information published in the next edition.

Last week's History Mystery: What is the object on the grass silhouetted against the sidewalk in front of the group posing for the camera? The Decew Street home in Tavistock, like most, had a black metal object almost knee high between the sidewalk and the road year-round. A correct answer was not forwarded. The object is a step that people used to alight from a carriage stopped beside it.



(LEMP STUDIO COLLECTION - #5043)

Friends raise a glass to celebrate a wedded couple.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Mountains of garbage under the melting snow

Dear Editor,

As the snow melts and spring arrives, I am disheartened to see the amount of garbage and plastic waste lining our streets, boulevards, parks and reservoirs. As many are aware, single-use plastic containers and food wrappings have become a predominant form of packaging in modern society. What may be less obvious is how much micro-plastic pollution is affecting our environment and our bodies.

Science research has shown that micro-plastics now exist in the air we breathe, the soil we grow our food in, in our body and brains, and throughout the earth's land and waters. The chemicals in plastics affects our hormones, contribute to cancer, slows photosynthesis in plants and injures insect and bird life which humans need for pollination. Plastics themselves are a fossil fuel that contribute to climate warming.

As I walk the streets in my neighbourhood, or drive roads and highways, there is plastic litter on every boulevard and

gutter, in storm-water ditches and clogging the storm drains. When we don't pick up plastic, it gets run over by cars and broken into smaller pieces that may not be noticed. Much of this gets washed into the storm drains polluting our water.

What to do as an individual? Check on your recycling day whether plastic containers have blown out of your bin. Pick them up and help your neighbours out, too. Organize a litter pick-up with your neighbours to clean up a local park, trail, or street. Teach your children about the impact of plastic pollution and the importance of not littering. Avoid single use packaging and bottles.

As Earth Day 2025 approaches, I'd love to hear other initiatives to help sustain the Earth that feeds us.

Kathy Mostardi,

New Hamburg

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR - APRIL/MAY/JUNE 2025



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23

TOPS - Taking off Pounds Sensibly Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m.
TOPS is a non-judgmental weight loss support group. Need help on your weight loss journey. For info call Cathie 519-662-9273.
St James Church, Baden

Community Dining for Seniors in Wilmot and Wellesley Townships 12:00 p.m.
Community Care Concepts invites you to join us for lunch and fellowship. Please register by April 18 by calling 519-664-1900 or toll Free: 1-855-664-1900.
Linwood Community Centre, 5279 Ament Line, Linwood

FRIDAY, APRIL 25

Fundraiser Spaghetti Dinner. Serving from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
ADVANCE TICKETS ONLY. Email: paulmackie@rogers.com or call 519-498-9302. Sponsored by Wilmot Lions/Lioness.
New Hamburg Legion 65 Bouleee St, New Hamburg

SATURDAY, APRIL 26

Tree Planting 1:00 pm
Help create sustainable habitat. All ages. Join us! Details at letstreewilmot.ca/events
Perth St. Wetlands, New Hamburg

MONDAY, APRIL 28

Wilmot Council meeting 7:00 - 11:00 p.m.
Council chambers 60 Snyder's Road West Baden

SATURDAY, MAY 3

Tree planting 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.
Join Let's Tree Wilmot for tree planting for habitat restoration. Details at letstreewilmot.ca/events
Nithview Floodplain, New Hamburg

TUESDAY, MAY 6

Ostomy Support Group Meeting 7:00 p.m.
Speaker - Perth County MIH Paramedics - Medical Assistance in the home. Social time and snacks. Everyone welcome.
(519)273-4327
93 Morgan St., Stratford

WEDNESDAY, MAY 7

East Zorra-Tavistock Council meeting 9 a.m.
Council Chambers 89 Loveys Street East, Hickson

TUESDAY, MAY 13

Wellesley Council meeting 6:45 p.m.
Council chambers 4805 William Hastings Line, Crosshill

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14

Community Dining for Seniors in Wilmot and Wellesley Townships 12:00 p.m.
Community Care Concepts invites you to join us for lunch and fellowship. Please register by May 9 by calling 519-664-1900 or Toll Free: 1-855-664-1900.
Wellesley Recreation Complex, 1401 Queen's Bush Rd., Wellesley

THURSDAY, MAY 15

Nith Valley EcoBoosters will be hosting a free webinar 7:00-9:00 p.m. EDT
"Why Hope Matters: The Practice of Evidence-Based Hope in a World of Climate Doom" For more information check out the upcoming events page at <https://nvecoboosters.com/> or contact nvecoboosters@gmail.com

WEDNESDAY, MAY 21

Community Dining for Seniors in Wilmot and Wellesley Townships 12:00 p.m.
Community Care Concepts invites you to join us for lunch and fellowship. Please register by May 16 by calling 519-664-1900 or Toll Free: 1-855-664-1900.
Wilmot Rec Complex 1291 Nafziger Rd, Baden

SATURDAY, MAY 24

Tree Planting 9:00 p.m.
Join Let's Tree Wilmot to plant trees for habitat restoration and increase tree canopy. All ages. Details at letstreewilmot.ca/events
Scott Park, New Hamburg

WEDNESDAY, MAY 28

Community Dining for Seniors in Wilmot and Wellesley Townships 12:00 p.m.
Community Care Concepts invites you to join us for lunch and fellowship. Please register by May 23 by calling 519-664-1900 or toll Free: 1-855-664-1900.
Linwood Community Centre, 5279 Ament Line, Linwood

SUNDAY, JUNE 1

"Y" Knot Quilt Show and Sale 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
Many beautiful new and antique quilts will be for sale with all proceeds going to help support the Stratford Family Y and Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth. For more information please visit yknotquiltshowandsale.com.
Falstaff Family Centre 35 Waterloo St. Stratford

THURSDAY, JUNE 19

Fundraising Golf Tournament
Tavistock Community Health Inc. is hosting a fundraising golf tournament. All the money goes to the renovations at the Tavistock medical health building in Tavistock. Information is available at: info@tchi.ca
River Valley golf club 4725 1 Line, St. Marys

FREE SENIORS ACTIVITIES

Tavistock Seniors Activities
Pickleball Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoon, 12-4. Contact: Don Junker 519-535-7052
Cards Monday, Wednesday afternoon 1-4, euchre, crib (bring board), etc. Just drop in to play, good to bring someone. Contact: Bob Routly 519-301-2118
Shuffleboard @ arena, Wednesday 12:30-4 and Thursday 10-4. Contact: Don Junker 519-535-7052.
VON Smart Seniors Exercise, Tuesday and Thursday morning 9 - 10; Village Manor 10:25 - 11:25. Contact: 519-539-1231 x 6285
Tavistock Memorial Hall 1 Adam St. Tavistock ON

The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette
Deadline: Tuesday prior at 3 p.m.
Contact: thewtgazette@gmail.com

PROMOTE YOUR EVENTS WITH US! HERE'S HOW:

- The Community Calendar allows non-profit organizations to promote their free admission community events at no charge. Event listings can include your event name, date, time and location as well as contact information (ie phone number, email address or website).
- If your event is not free admission or you would like to include more details than stated above, The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette offers the following options for promoting your community events:
 - Coming Events Word Ad in Classified section (50 word max.) - \$10 + hst
 - Coming Events Boxed Word Ad in Classified section (50 word max.) - \$15 + hst
 - Display Ad - Sizes begin at a Small Classified Display ad (3.3" x 2.5") - \$35 + hst

FOR STORY IDEAS IN The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette CONTACT EDITOR GALEN SIMMONS AT GALEN@GRANTHAVEN.COM

CLASSIFIED ADS —

FOR SALE

Hundreds of shade trees, fruit trees, apples, pears, peaches, plums, sweet and sour cherries, apricots, nectarines, blueberries, haskapp grapes, raspberries, elderberries etc. Lots of spruce, pine, cedars for windbreak and privacy hedges. Sizes 1-8 ft. in containers ready to go. Flowering shrubs and much more. Mon-Sat 7:00am to 6:00pm
Martin's Nursery, 42661 Orangehill Rd Wroxeter, ON N0G 2X0 (1 Conc. North of Wroxeter on Belmore Line)

PRAYER TO ST. JUDE

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be adored, glorified, loved and preserved throughout the world now and forever. Oh Sacred Heart of Jesus, pray for us; St. Jude worker of miracles, pray for us; St. Jude helper of the hopeless, pray for us. Say this prayer nine times a day, by the eighth day this prayer will be answered. It has never been known to fail. Publication must be promised. S.F.

WANTED

Local elderly Tavistock couple in search of someone to drive them to new Hamburg at least twice a month and sometimes to Kitchener. Willing to pay a reasonable amount. Please contact Janice at 519-412-0461

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\$ Cash Paid \$ for your RECORDS and LPs. Jazz, Blues, Rock, Pop, Folk, Soundtracks, and more. Selectively buying CDs, Cassettes, Turntables, and Stereo Equipment. For more information: DIAMOND DOGS MUSIC 114 Ontario St. Stratford/ 226-972-5750

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I will pay cash for antiques and collectibles. Coca Cola, Pepsi, any pop company, Brewery items Kuntz, Huether Labatts, etc. Old radios and gramophones, Wristwatches and pocket watches, Old fruit jars, Beaver Star Bee Hive etc. Any old oil cans and signs Red Indian Supertest etc Any small furniture. If you are moving or cleaning out stuff please contact me - 519-570-6920.

HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE - FORMER WELLESLEY ARENA AND COMMUNITY CENTRE LANDS

THE TOWNSHIP OF WELLESLEY WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Now that the new Township of Wellesley Recreation Complex has opened, the Township is exploring options to reimagine how the former Wellesley Arena and Community Centre lands at 1004 Catherine Street can best serve the community in the years ahead.

We're working with GSP Group to establish guiding principles for the future of the lands - we want to know what matters to you.

JOIN US AT A PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE
(DROP IN ANYTIME DURING THE SESSION):

WEDNESDAY, MAY 7, 2025 | 3:30-8:00 PM
Bill Gies Recreation Centre - 1401 Queens Bush Rd., Wellesley

THURSDAY, MAY 8, 2025 | 3:30-8:00 PM
St. Clements Community Centre - 1 Green Street, St. Clements

Can't attend in person?

Share your thoughts by completing our online survey at the link below.
The survey will be open from May 8th - June 8th, 2025.

www.engagewr.ca/reimaging-wellesley-arena-and-community-centre-lands



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Weekly Quiz Answers

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Polaris | 5. Elephant | 9. Ireland |
| 2. The yolk | 6. 12 | 10. The resurrection of Jesus Christ |
| 3. Petra | 7. Euchre | |
| 4. 2011 | 8. Gargamel | |

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