

# St. Marys Independent

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Issue #1247

Thursday, January 30, 2025

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**WELCOME TO ST. MARYS!** Izzy's Place is owned by Shannon Marriott and husband Matthew Powell. Marriott takes a moment above to show the delicious freshly baked goods. (WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

## Izzy's Place opens at 36 Water Street

LAUREN EEDY

Independent Reporter

Just last week our town was graced with a new family-owned restaurant. Small but mighty, Izzy's Place is located at 36 Water Street at the rear just off Jones Street where the Canteen was located. Owner, Shannon Marriott, named her location after her daughter, Izzy (Isabella) who in turn is named after a family nickname for her grandfather and father.

Shannon has years of experience in the restaurant industry. She even worked at this location previously when it was Pathway Fish & Chips. She cites loving the fast-paced work environment the food industry offers and opened her own location when the opportunity came up.

Izzy's offers an array of reasonably priced and delicious menu items, from breakfast to sandwiches, tacos, burgers, soups, salads, desserts and sides. All the food is homemade and locally sourced. The variety of her menu is impressive considering the size of the location. The menu will change from time to time with specials rotating to ensure prices can remain affordable. Shannon's favorites are the Philly Cheesesteak with house-roasted beef which is a mainstay on the menu, and her Cabbage Roll Soup, one of her many homemade daily soups. All sandwiches come with a side of your choice and a beverage, making this a great option to choose from. See the butcher paper list for daily offerings along with the regular menu.

Special mention goes to the plethora of homemade sweets in the display case ranging from cookies, cupcakes, bars and parfaits. It's a feast for the eyes! I ended up leaving with two boxes of goodies to share with friends, family and of course, indulge myself. I ended up lured back the following day for a delicious breakfast sandwich with egg, sausage and real melted

CONTINUED TO PAGE 5

## Celebrate Heritage Week at the 29th Annual St. Marys Heritage Fair

Taking place on Friday, Feb. 21 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Pyramid Recreation Centre

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

On Friday, Feb. 21, exhibitors will come together to share artifacts, collections and special projects that celebrate local history. It's all part of the St. Marys Heritage Fair, an annual event that is hosted by the St. Marys Museum.

Now in its 29th year, the Heritage Fair is a

chance to catch up on developments in local history. This year's event is themed "Past, Present, Future: Heritage in St. Marys". A variety of exhibitors will be sharing their collections and special projects that inspire connections in our community. The event will take place from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Pyramid Recreation Centre (317 James St. S).

CONTINUED TO PAGE 5

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# COMMUNITY

## What to know about Ontario's upcoming election

NATHAN BEAN

Independent Columnist

It is election time in Ontario, and many of you may wonder what that entails. The expected dissolution of the provincial legislature (assuming this happens on Jan. 29, one day after this newspaper went to press) means a snap election will now occur on Feb. 27.

Why is an election being called?

In Ontario, the King's Representative, known as the Lieutenant Governor, holds the executive power within the province. This means they grant royal assent to bills, turning them into laws. The Lieutenant Governor can also dissolve the legislature and call an election, usually following the Premier's advice. The Premier will call for an early election when they believe it's in the best interest of Ontarians.

The Ontario Election Act sets fixed election dates every four years, but this does not supersede the Lieutenant Governor's ability to call an early election.

Once an election is called in Ontario, there are only 28 days for candidate nominations, ballot printing, and polling station setup.

The Election Act states that when a snap election is called, candidates have until the "third Thursday after the date of the writ" to register. Without the legal jargon, you have two weeks after a snap election is announced to become a candidate and meet the necessary criteria.

Are you wondering when the new election date will be? According to the Election Act, election day will be on the fifth Thursday after an election is called — in this instance, Feb. 27 (again, this assumes the dissolution of the provincial legislature on Jan. 29).

While election day may be one of the

FEBRUARY							2025
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	
			29 Writ Drops (election is called)	30 Special Ballots First Day (write-in)	31	1	
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
9	10	11	12	13 Candidate Nominations Due	14 Advance Polls Open (if ballots are printed)	15	
16 Advance Polls Open (at the latest)	17	18	19	20	21 Advance Polls Close	22	
23	24	25	26 Special Ballots Last Day (6pm)	27 Election Day	28		

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

A calendar showing what the potential election schedule will be according to the Ontario Election Act. Advance poll days may vary.

most popular ways to vote, it is not the only way. You can also vote using mail-in ballots, special ballots and advance polling days.

You can vote at advance polling days for snap elections at the returning office in each riding. These offices are also known as election offices. These polls are open to any eligible voter of the riding for six days between the thirteenth and sixth day before election day.

If ballots are not printed, advance polls open between the eleventh and sixth day before election day, including weekends. That means there will be advance polls open at the election office for six days between Feb. 14 and Feb. 21, inclusive. Advance polls are open from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The local Returning Officer may establish additional advance polls based

on their judgement. These will have identical hours of operation, though each location will be unique.

Do you want to vote in person but can't attend an advance poll or make it on election day? Well, there is another option — a special ballot!

Any eligible voter can go to their riding's election office to request a special ballot. If you bring proof of residency

and a piece of government-issued ID, and you sign a declaration, you can vote! You can vote by special ballot at your election office starting one day after the election is called and ending at 6 p.m. on the day before election day.

The election office will give you a write-in or printed ballot, depending on the day you visit during the election cycle. The printed ballot will have candidates' names on it. To vote, you simply place an 'X' in the bubble beside the person you wish to vote for.

A write-in ballot requires you to write the name of the person you wish to vote for, so double-check the spelling and ensure that the person will be a candidate!

If you are 18 years of age or older on election day, a resident of your riding, and a Canadian citizen, you can vote! Voting is the core principle of democracy. Hundreds of millions of people around the world dream of the right to vote, so please make sure you are registered!

You can check your voter registration status on: [vreg.registertovoteon.ca](http://vreg.registertovoteon.ca). For more information, please visit the Elections Ontario website.

*Embro native Nathan Bean is a first-year student at the University of Ottawa who is working toward a Bachelor's degree in political science and public administration.*

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-3°C	-1°C	-1°C	-9°C	-1°C	0°C	-8°C
Feels Like -11	Feels Like -8	Feels Like -3	Feels Like -11	Feels Like -6	Feels Like -6	Feels Like -14

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# St. Marys Farmers Market hosts a pop-up event at PRC



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTOS)

A pop-up Farmers Market was held at the PRC on Saturday that went until noon for shoppers looking to purchase from local vendors. Items that were available were breakfast sandwiches, books, apples, apple cider, organic beef, freshly baked bread, local honey, crafts and so much more. Above left, from left to right is Lorna Parkinson, Barb Walsh, Colleen Forman and Heather Greenis who are all volunteers for Friends of the St. Marys Public Library. They were at the market sharing information about what the group does, such as organizing the Spring Book Sales which occurs in early May, providing welcome packages for those new to town, and putting on social events on the 2nd Wednesday of each month. All the fundraising put on by the Friends of Library goes toward supporting the library programs and services. They are currently looking for new volunteers to join their group. Above right, Bruce and Nancy White were busy making breakfast sandwiches at the market. They are part of the Holy Name of Mary social committee. Money raised will be going towards an automated bell system for the church. With a push of a button, the bells will start ringing. The group attends the market once a month to make breakfast for the hungry shoppers.



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# EDITORIAL

## The 'Let Them' theory

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

A new phenomenon is taking place around the world all because of a theory by Mel Robbins called Let Them. The premise of this theory is to provide tools on how to recognize what is in or out of your control and ways to react.

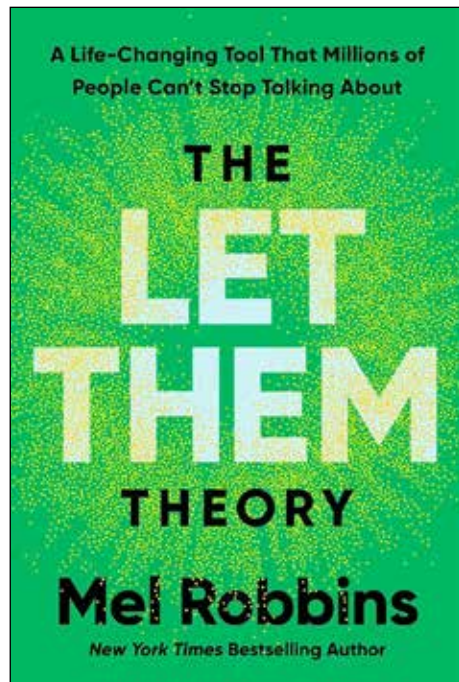
In a world where there is so much hostility and on-line negativity, this couldn't have come at a better time when mental health and well-being is a top priority.

It focuses on creating emotional peace and learning what you can and cannot control. When you are stressed, annoyed and frustrated and there is nothing you can do about it, say "let them". It is a way of not taking on unneeded drama, anger and anxieties. When you say, "Let Them", it lets others live with their choices and carry on with life while protecting your own mental health.

I am sure it takes a bit of practice if you are one who is prone to having the last say or getting drawn into situations that raises your blood pressure, but this theory will help you recognize when walking away is necessary for your own good.

You can also do breathing and meditation to help control emotions or try writing in a journal.

When you "let them" you are letting



go of what others do without needing to change or control them. It is not an easy task at first but has proven to be a game-changer for many people's mental health.

Mel Robbins is an American author, podcast host and former lawyer who is considered an expert in life improvement, mindset and behaviour changes. Her book "The Let Them Theory" can be found at Betty's Bookshelf in town and you can follow Robbins on her podcast "The Mel Robbins Podcast".

### Bravo

We have 2 Bravos this week.

1) Bravo to the fine young gentlemen from the Lincolns hockey team who visited our school and went above and beyond in spending time with the kids during Literacy Week. The smiles on our students' faces interacting with these Lincoln players is a memory these students will hold on to forever. Thank you!

2) Bravo to the kind person who plowed out our driveway. Thank you – it was a sweet thing to do and much appreciated!

### Boo

We have 2 Boos this week.

1) Boo to Americans who elected a criminal to be their President. It's only been a week of his nonsense so far. It's hard to imagine where the state of the world will be four years from now.

2) Boo to not having a roundabout at James Street South and #7. There always seems to be accidents or near misses that take place. It is a scary corner.

\*Please note all Boos and Bravos must be signed in order to be considered.

Bravos and Boos are submitted by community members and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the St. Marys Independent.

### Quote of the Week

*"We need a mandate from the people to fight against Donald Trump's tariffs ... The attack is coming against our families, our businesses, our communities, and with a strong mandate, we will be able to fight with Donald Trump to make sure we stop the tariffs and make sure that we give certainty to the people of Ontario."*

**- Ontario Premier Doug Ford, who reportedly will call this week for an Election to occur on Feb. 27**

## Overheard at the Coffee Shop

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I wonder how the Florida alligators are making out in the snow?

Sometimes I watch American news to remember how lucky we are to live in Canada.

Have you heard something humorous around town that you think might be of interest to others? Either email them to us at [info@stmarysindependent.com](mailto:info@stmarysindependent.com) with the title "Overheard at The Coffee Shop", call 519-284-0041 or drop by the office to let us know!



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**The St. Marys Independent**  
THOUGHTS OF THE WEEK

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Winter is not a season, it's a celebration.

Kindness is like snow, it beautifies everything it covers.

Even the strongest blizzards start with one snowflake.

Every winter has it's spring!



# Celebrate Heritage Week at the St. Marys Heritage Fair

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Admission to the Heritage Fair is free and all are welcome. Those planning to watch the St. Marys Lincolns take on St. Thomas at 7:30 p.m. are encouraged to drop by the event before the puck drops or pay a visit during intermission.

Members of local organizations with a longstanding history in the community

and individuals with unique collections of historic items are welcome to be exhibitors at the Heritage Fair. Those interested should contact the Museum by Wednesday, Feb. 19 to register.

For information, contact the St. Marys Museum at 519-284-3556 or museum@town.stmarys.on.ca.

# Izzy's Place opens at 36 Water Street

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

cheddar - far superior to one you'd order from a drive-thru.

Currently it is take-out and cash only, debit will be coming soon. There are plans for a small outdoor eating area in the warmer months to come just off the walkway.

Hours weekly are Monday, Thursday and Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sunday 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Hours will be reviewed to consider later closing times.

Make sure you check out this refreshing local spot and treat yourself!



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# STONETOWN CRIER

The latest municipal news from the Town of St. Marys



## AN EVENING OF VALENTINES II

Feb. 8, 9:30 - 7 PM | Town Hall Auditorium

Enjoy performances with Valentines event collaborators The Bone Radlers and York Street Thought Process. Special guests Stacey Frayne and Makenzie Bartlett will also make an appearance.

For general admission tickets \$20: Call 519-284-3556

## MARCH BREAK CAMP PRC

Say goodbye to boredom this March Break with Camp PRC!

From crafting masterpieces to action-packed games and skating, the fun never ends at the Pyramid Recreation Centre. Register online through ActiveNet today.

townofstmarys.com/campprc or 519-284-2160



## SIX NATIONS BINGO HALL BUS TRIP

March 25, 9:30 AM - 3:30 PM

Come along with the Friendship Centre on an exciting bus trip to the Six Nations Bingo Hall! The fee for members is \$49 plus tax, while non-members will pay \$59 plus tax. Register by February 18.

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## LINE DANCING

Tues. and Fri. from Jan. 7 to Feb. 25

Brush off your dancing shoes this New Year! Line Dancing is returning to the Friendship Centre this winter for both Tuesday evening and Friday morning sessions. All levels welcome!

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# ACTION

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## Senior of the Week



Our senior of the week is Irene Hotson who recently turned 90 on Jan. 23. Irene was born in Petrolia and after living there for a short time, her family moved to the St. Marys/Avonbank area. When she was married to her husband John, she moved to the Hotson family farm where they lived happily for 64 years. Together they had four children, eight grandchildren and three great grandchildren. In her spare time Irene likes reading and loves to garden. Happy 90th Irene.

If you would like to nominate someone for Senior of the Week, contact us at 519-284-0041 or [info@stmarys-independent.com](mailto:info@stmarys-independent.com).

## Weekend Quiz

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1. In what state is Super Bowl LIX being held?
2. How many planets orbit the sun?
3. What year did an NHL team based in Canada last hoist the Stanley Cup?
4. Which organ does a lobotomy target?
5. What infamous mob boss inspired "The Godfather"?
6. What company coins the slogan "What's in your wallet"?
7. An inactive volcano is called?
8. Who invented dynamite?
9. Is the Panama Canal man made?
10. Where was the first blood bank established?

By Jake Grant

This week's answers are found on pg. 25

# Claire Dunbar to participate in the Rotary Exchange Program

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

Rotary International has been in existence since 1905 and has a track record of addressing challenges, creating friendships and has an ongoing commitment to changing the world for the better. One of their more popular programs that you may have heard about over the years is Rotary Youth Exchange. The program allows a young person between the ages of 15-18 to experience new cultures, make new friends and explore new places. The program is sponsored by Rotary in more than 100 countries.

Claire Dunbar from St. Marys will be taking on this exciting challenge in August as she embarks on an exchange to Denmark. When I reached out to her, she was more than happy to share what all was involved, up until now, in this adventure.

When asked what drew her toward the program Dunbar shared, "I've always wanted to travel outside of North America, and when I heard about the opportunity for an exchange, I thought it would be the perfect chance to be able to travel while still going to school." Being immersed in a new language and culture was also a draw.

Dunbar speaks very highly of all the Rotarians that she has dealt with so far in the process saying they have done an excellent job to help ensure that everything run smoothly.

The date for her departure is not yet determined but she does know that she will be going to Denmark mid-to late August and will be there for approximately 10 months which coincides with the school year there.

There will be a Danish student coming to Canada but not necessarily to St. Marys as it does not have to be a direct exchange.

The process, according to Dunbar, is long but definitely worth it. It starts by filling out a form to be considered and once that is approved, you will be contacted by the local Rotary Club. An interview with the student and parents is conducted to see if you are a good fit for the program. Once through to the next step, you will receive a long online application that includes doctor and dentist forms, school transcript, questions about interests and a letter to potential host families. The final part of the application is to choose and rank 12 different countries. Dunbar shared that after this step was done, she completed district interviews in Lambeth. Dunbar was interviewed by a panel of Rotarians, spoke with the District Chair and attended a country fair. At the fair she was able to meet students from other countries or students who have been to other countries and have come back to promote their regions of the world.

In the coming months Dunbar will be attending training sessions with Rotary that will teach her what to



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Off to Denmark this August through the Rotary Youth Exchange, Claire Dunbar held the Danish flag for a recent photo.

expect while she is away and how to develop coping skills to help with issues like homesickness, adapting to change and dealing with isolation because of language barriers.

Parents David and Erin would like to thank the Rotary Club of St. Marys and all the other volunteers with Rotary for their hard work and dedication to the program. "We are very excited for Claire to have the incredible opportunity to participate in the program. As much as we'll miss her, we know that this will be a defining time in her life that will help to shape the person she becomes." they said.

When asked what she is looking forward to the most Claire shared, "I think I am most excited to be able to immerse myself in a culture that is different from the one here. I am also looking forward to learning and speaking another language with people who are fluent in the dialect. I am looking forward to learning about what the popular types of literature, film and music are in comparison to Canada. I'm just really excited for the opportunity."

"The Rotary Club of St. Marys is proud to sponsor Claire's exchange to Denmark!", reported Mark Oliver, Youth Exchange Officer. "We are always looking for young people who are open-minded, mature, curious about other cultures and up for a challenge. Claire has all these qualities and more." "Soon we will begin accepting applications from students who would like to go on exchange in 2026 - 2027. In March we will learn who our next inbound student is and what country they're from. We'll be needing three families who are interested in hosting this student in their homes for three months each. Please contact the Rotary Club of St. Marys if you would like to be involved as an outbound student or as a host family. It's a very enriching experience for everyone involved."

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# Black Creek Mobile Vet Clinic recruiting Pet Loss Heart creators



(PHOTO COURTESY OF BLACK CREEK MOBILE VET CLINIC)

Anyone who can sew, quilt, and craft is encouraged to help Black Creek Mobile Vet Clinic make pet loss hearts.

**EMILY STEWART**

*Independent Reporter*

A regional mobile vet clinic is looking for crafters of all skills to help comfort those grieving as they say goodbye to their beloved pets.

Black Creek Mobile Vet Clinic will host rotating monthly Pet Loss Heart Sewing Bees. The crafting sessions involve participants making hearts for those who experienced pet loss.

The pet loss hearts stemmed from Leslie Switzer's Loss Hearts Initiative. Dr. Erica Dickie, practice owner and hospice vet of Black Creek Mobile Vet Clinic, met Switzer through a Dancing Through Birth circle where participants talked about pregnancy difficulties and pregnancy loss. Switzer made loss hearts for bereaved parents, and eventually Dr. Dickie asked about making pet loss hearts.

"One of the parts of loss afterwards is walking away, whether it's a pet loss or a human loss," she said. "Is walking away from the hospital without anything. To be able to hold onto something is just a special way to recognize and honour that loss and that grief."

Switzer held Sewing Bees where crafters made loss hearts, including pet loss hearts that have rainbows, paw prints, or other pet symbols stitched on top. However, the demand for the loss hearts grew and Dr. Dickie decided to hold her own Sewing Bees. Her patients find the pet loss hearts monumental.

"People will share pictures of their pet's urn or paw print or collar, any-

thing that they have as their, kind of, shrine or memorial space for their pet and that loss heart sits there proudly," Dr. Dickie said. "Or they'll share stories of their children sleeping with the hearts under their pillows or are holding them and how special those have been for the families."

Black Creek Mobile Vet Clinic mainly services St. Marys, Stratford, Sebringville, along with other municipalities in Oxford, Middlesex, Huron, and Perth counties. The first Pet Loss Sewing Bee occurred on Jan. 21 at Raise Your Vibe wellbeing centre in St. Marys and Dr. Dickie was pleased with crafters participating and sharing their own experiences.

"During that time, some people share their stories about their pets and pet loss," she said. "Some just talk about other things and it's just beautiful because it's also, in a sense, a little bit of a pet loss support group,

"Some people would benefit from sharing their experiences but might not like the just sitting around in a circle type of thing, so being able to actively do something to help others who are also grieving or to help yourself is really special."

For those who are unable to make it for the Sewing Bee, they can either make their own at home for either drop-off or pick-up or contribute supplies. More information can be found by either visiting online via [www.facebook.com/blackcreekmobilevet](http://www.facebook.com/blackcreekmobilevet) or by sending an email to [blackcreekmobilevet@gmail.com](mailto:blackcreekmobilevet@gmail.com).



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# New president and CEO of Atura Power has roots in Stratford and St. Marys

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Appointed earlier in January, the new president and CEO of Atura Power, a subsidiary of Ontario Power Generation (OPG) that operates Ontario's largest fleet of combined cycle gas turbine powerplants, has roots in Stratford and St. Marys.

Tom Patterson, who was born in St. Marys and grew up in Stratford, attending school at King Lear Sr. Public School and Stratford Central Secondary School, was appointed president and CEO on Jan. 13 as previous president and CEO Shelley Babin returned to Ontario Power Generation to serve as chief operating officer.

"It was offered to me," Patterson said about why he took the job. "What occurred at OPG is the CEO of OPG, Ken Hartwick, retired late last year. That led to Nicolle Butcher becoming CEO, which then led to Shelley Babin, who is my former boss, becoming chief operating officer, which created space for this opportunity. I was given the opportunity by the executive of OPG to take on this position and to run the subsidiary.

"Call it succession planning in action."

A mechanical engineer, Patterson started his career more than 25 years ago working for TC Energy. After moving to Atura Power, he led the company's energy markets, electricity growth, finance and corporate-service teams.

"I came over, effectively, from Trans



(PHOTO COURTESY OF TOM PATTERSON)

**With roots in both Stratford and St. Marys, Tom Patterson was recently appointed president and CEO of Ontario Power Generation subsidiary Atura Power.**

Canada Pipelines, or TC Energy now," Patterson said. "So, I worked 20 years with them and I developed a wealth of experience in the areas of powerplant engineering, business development, I've supported mergers and acquisition, I've done commercial operations.

"I brought that to the table when OPG acquired assets from TC Energy back in 2020, and then since that time, I've really set up the commercial strategies to operate the business, managed all of the commercial affairs for the business, for the last six months, I've taken on the

CFO function which includes our finance, IT, corporate services including HR and supply chain, and then I've really worked very diligently on managing the relationship with the parent company. ... I bring a host of external relationships to the table from my 25 years of experience in the energy sector."

Ontario Power Generation is owned by the Province of Ontario and is responsible for producing power for ratepayers in Ontario. While Ontario Power Generation is mostly focused on producing hydro-electric and nuclear power, it has also diversified its power-generation capabilities by creating subsidiary companies that generate power in other ways.

As one of those subsidiaries, Atura Power was initially established to operate combined cycle natural-gas turbine powerplants but has since expanded into the clean-fuel sector with the production of hydrogen, as well as, more recently, the development of battery energy storage and a gas-expansion facility at its

Napanee generating station. Currently, the company operates four natural-gas plants in Napanee, downtown Toronto, Halton Hills and in Brighton Beach near Windsor.

As part of his new role, Patterson will oversee an ambitious growth plan that will expand Atura's gas-generation capacity, and develop low-carbon hydrogen production, energy storage and renewable-generation facilities to help build the bridge to a cleaner-energy future.

"Right now, we've got about a billion and half dollars of new investment that is in flight, and these are approved projects ... in the areas of battery storage, new natural-gas-generation facilities, as well as green hydrogen," Patterson said. "We'll be producing hydrogen at the Niagara Sir Adam Beck facility, which is a hydro facility – the big hydro plant at Niagara Falls owned by OPG. We're taking, effectively, excess energy from that facility when it's otherwise not used for power generation ... and converting it to hydrogen, which is effectively completely green hydrogen. And then that hydrogen can be used to sort of decarbonize things like the transportation sector and other hard-to-decarbonize sectors as we look to a cleaner future in, say, the 2050 timeframe.

"It's part of our platform to ... effectively green up the energy sector. Those are locked-in investments ... and then we have ambition to further attract new business in the areas of capacity as well as energy. Capacity could be batteries, could be more natural gas, and the on the energy side, we're looking at renewables including wind and solar."

Patterson's parents, John and Nancy Patterson, still live in Stratford and he says he still has many friends who live in the Festival City, giving him plenty of reason to visit regularly. Currently, Tom Patterson lives in Toronto with his wife, Dr. Wendy Martin, and their two children, Gregory and Meredith.



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# Perth South to receive nearly \$1.2 million in provincial infrastructure funding

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

Last week, Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae announced \$11,184,565 in new infrastructure funding to enable the construction of up to 2,705 new homes, including nearly \$1.2 million for the reconstruction of Station Road in Perth South, enabling the construction of up to 265 new homes.

The funding is spread across several municipalities throughout Perth-Wellington and is flowing through the Housing-Enabling Core Servicing Stream of the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program administered by the Ministry of Infrastructure.

“Our provincial government is working with our municipal partners to build Ontario and build the infrastructure that supports more homes,” Rae said in a press release. “Our roads, bridges and round-a-bouts ensure people can get to work and goods can make it to international markets. This infrastructure is also essential to unlocking the oppor-

Municipality	Project	Provincial Funding	Housing Enabled (Up To)
County of Wellington (Palmerston)	Reconstruction of Wellington Road 123/Main Street East and West, Palmerston	\$6,945,468.75	1,447
Township of Mapleton	Sideroad 15 Road Reconstruction	\$914,312.50	301
Municipality of North Perth	Reconstruction of Wallace Avenue North, including a new roundabout and roadway (Street 4).	\$2,133,250.00	692
Township of Perth South	Station Road Reconstruction	\$1,191,533.75	265
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$11,184,565</b>	<b>2,705</b>

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Funding as provided by the ministry of infrastructure.

tunity for over 2,700 families to have a place to call their own.”

This funding is part of a \$400 million investment to help build, repair and maintain municipal roads, bridges and culverts that will promote housing

growth in communities across Ontario.

“We are excited to collaborate with the ministry of infrastructure to ensure the successful completion of this project, which will enhance the quality of life for our residents,” Perth South

Mayor Sue Orr said in the press release. “The new housing units will provide much-needed accommodation for our population, while the improved infrastructure will support economic development and attract new investments to our area. This project is a testament to our commitment to building a prosperous and sustainable future for Perth South.”

The government is also investing \$175 million to launch the Health and Safety Water Stream under the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program. This new stream will support projects that will protect homes and create resilient communities by building, rehabilitating and expanding aging water, wastewater, stormwater, flood and erosion infrastructure.

Through the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program and the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund, Ontario is providing nearly \$2 billion to support housing- and community-enabling infrastructure and build more homes across the province.



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# Perth County council defers Giant Hogweed treatment initiative to 2026

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A plan to monitor, control the spread of and ultimately eradicate the invasive weed species, Giant Hogweed, in Perth County has been deferred for consideration in 2026 as Perth County staff make adjustments to bring it more in line with available grant funding from the province.

At the Jan. 23 Perth County council meeting, councillors voted in favour of a recommendation made by the county's agricultural working group at its meeting in December. Though the working group supports the program in theory as an enhancement to the county's existing forestry and invasive species program, it suggested refinements are needed to the project plan to better align it with the objectives of available grant funding.

"A concern around treating the invasive species called Giant Hogweed was identified as a need, thereby necessitating an expansion to our existing county weed-control program," said county resilience and stewardship coordinator Hannah Cann. "Giant Hogweed is a hazardous, invasive plant from central Asia which poses a risk to humans and ecological health. Giant Hogweed spreads quickly and easily through watercourses as its epic number of seeds disperse easily through the air and the plant often infests riverbanks and marginal lands.

"Treatment is challenging due to this threat to human health and safety with chemical treatment being the most effective option for eradication. Long-term treatment strategies are often required for this species, like many other invasives, and therefore demands for adequate treatment of this species are above and beyond our existing budgetary constraints for weed control in the county, making access to grant dollars desirable."

Cann said there was an opportunity in the fall and winter of 2024 to expand the county's weed-control program to include Giant Hogweed treatment through the Invasive Species Centre's Invasive Species Action Fund, which offered one-to-one, matching-dollar funding for invasive-species mapping and eradication projects.

A plan for the mapping and eradication of Giant Hogweed was presented to the agricultural working group at its Dec. 10, 2024, meeting for feedback because it would involve work on both public and private land across the county. As the working group recommended the program be adjusted, staff brought a report to coun-

ty council Jan. 23 with a recommendation to defer the project to 2026.

The plan, as it was presented to the working group, included the following actions:

- Identifying hotspots for Giant Hogweed in the county through public reports and regular surveys conducted by the county weed inspector in known and potential areas of infestation such as riverbanks, parks and roadsides. County staff would also use historical data and reports from partner agencies to identify areas with repeated Giant Hogweed occurrences to develop patterns and predict future hotspots.

- Mapping current infestations using the county's geographical information systems and evaluate the potential risks to ecological and public health associated with each infestation area. Staff will also be able to prescribe proper treatment methods based on the severity and location of each infestation.

- Chemically treating each infestation by trained, certified professionals who adhere to local and provincial regulations, and environmental guidelines, especially near water bodies. Treatment would likely occur between April and June.

- Monitoring treated areas and retreating if necessary. This plan would also seek to empower landowners and community groups to help monitor, identify and report new instances of Giant Hogweed.

Had this program gone ahead this year, Cann said the county would have looked to spend an additional \$25,000 that could have been matched for a total of \$50,000 through the Invasive Species Centre's Invasive Species Action Fund. The deadline for applying for funding through that program in 2025 has now passed.

"We've been dealing with this in West Perth for a number of years," said Walter McKenzie, county councillor and West Perth mayor. "It's all along the Thames River. I'm going to say three or four years at least we've been dealing with it, and I guess until such time as its control is a little more broader and countywide, what we're trying to do, I guess, is futile if we're not going to control it in other areas.

"I don't know what other municipalities are doing, but I'd assume it must be all along the waterways. Anybody who has had contact with it; it's not nice."

According to the staff report to council, Perth County's weed inspector has been tracking and treating Giant Hogweed since 2007, but there is community knowledge of the plants being in the county for over 40 years. In 2007, the weed inspector petitioned the province to allow Perth County to add Giant Hogweed to

the local list of noxious weeds. Following this request, the Province of Ontario added Giant Hogweed to the Schedule of Noxious Weeds under the Weed Control Act of 2009.

Since that time, Perth County has been unofficially tracking hotspots and treating publicly accessible areas with herbicide, as well as supporting and encouraging landowners to watch for infestations and treat them accordingly.

In recent years, the City of Stratford has undertaken work specifically towards Giant Hogweed, contracting the services of the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) to track and treat infestation locations to reduce risk to humans and environmental health. The local municipalities in Perth County also have treatment contracts with their relevant conservation authorities for the treatment of Japanese Knotweed, Phragmites Australis, Common Buckthorn and others.

While county staff previously reached out to the UTRCA to determine what capacity it has to support the county's proposed Giant Hogweed plan, deputy warden Dean Trentowsky asked staff to touch base with the other local conservation authorities – the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority, Maitland Valley Conservation Authority and Grand River Conservation Authority – to determine what capacity they have to support this program.

A report on this program will likely be brought back to council as part of 2026 budget deliberations in the fall.



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# Update on the West Wing construction: 'Here for You Today, Building for Tomorrow' renovation project



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

Work continues at the St. Marys Memorial Hospital's West Wing renovation project.

**BERNICE DE DECKER**

*Contributed Article*

The St. Marys Healthcare Foundation is excited to announce that the “Here for You Today, Building for Tomorrow” renovation project is in its final stages. This project is focused on enhancing patient care and safety and modernizing hospital facilities so that we can better serve the needs of our community.

Construction began with selective demolition to prepare for installation of a new mechanical system and new construction.

**Key updates include:**

- Fire Protection and Plumbing
- New Headwall Installation
- Patient Care and Staff Safety Systems
- Drywall Installation
- Patient Life Structure and Installation

There have been several small phases of construction to ensure uninterrupted hospital workflow and patient care, such as:

- North Corridor Storage Room and Staff Washroom: Renovated and returned to full use.
- Staff Change Room and Washroom: Currently undergoing updates.
- Patient Care and Staff Safety Systems: Modernized infrastructure to sup-

port both patients and healthcare providers.

- Drywall Installation: Progressing steadily across the project

We're excited to share more updates in the coming months as this project nears completion. Together, we're building a brighter future for healthcare in our community - thank you!

## Quadro Communications donates \$50,000 to Hospital Foundation Campaign



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Quadro Communications Co-operative Inc. contributed \$50,000 this week to the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation to support their 'Here for You Today, Building for Tomorrow' campaign. In the photo above, Quadro Board Chair Remco Brinke (left) and Quadro CEO/GM Darryl Evans (right) present a cheque to the Foundation, represented by Bernice De Decker, Linda McFadyen, Wendy Lamond, and Cindy Bilyea.



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## Lincs continue win streak through rocky back-to-back

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

Although their two most recent performances were far from masterpieces, the St. Marys Lincolns extended their winning streak to 10 games by beating London, Sarnia, and Komoka in a stretch of three games in four days.

The unbeaten stretch, dating back to Dec. 20, is the second-longest win streak of the season by any team in the Western Conference, with the longest being the Lincolns' 11-game heater to start the season.

St. Marys began their busy four-day stretch on Jan. 22 when they visited the London Nationals in the team's first visit to the Western Fair Sports Centre since winning the Bill Weir Trophy in Game Seven of the 2024 Western Conference Final. After a murky start to the game, the Lincolns largely controlled the final 40 minutes and downed the Nationals 4-2.

Head coach Jeff Bradley told the Independent he was "really happy" with the team's overall performance, even despite falling behind early in the game.

"There are some finer details that we've got to get better at," admitted Bradley. "Going down 2-0 in the first period obviously wasn't ideal, but we could have given up when things weren't going our way, and we didn't. The players kept plugging away and trusted what we believe is the right way to play, and eventually, their commitment to our process paid off."

Bradley added that the squad found their way through the murky start thanks to the hard-working play of one line in particular.

"Jacob (McLellan), Chase (McDougall), and Quinn (Gavin-White) was the line that got us going in that period. They've been tasked with giving our guys momentum and playing tough minutes against the other team's top lines, and they had to grind it out for long stretches in that first period. They cycled on the forecheck really well, they finished their checks, and they kept pucks moving up high and then back down low. Our success really was on their shoulders."

With exactly eight minutes to go in the first period, David Brown tipped a point shot by Braedon Clark by Lincs' netminder Colby Booth-Housego for a



(MCGINNY PHOTOGRAPHY PHOTO)

**The 'Milton Magicians' Luca Spagnolo and Jaden Lee, pictured, celebrate Lee's goal with 7.4 seconds left in the St. Marys Lincolns' 3-1 win over the Sarnia Legionnaires on Jan. 24. The goal gave Lee goals in seven straight games, which tied for the longest goal streak in the GOJHL this season. Spagnolo has the longest point streak in the league this year at 18 straight with a point heading into the Lincs' game on Jan. 29 in LaSalle.**

powerplay goal to put London ahead 1-0. Just under six minutes later, Michael Kopcok buried his third of the year to extend the Nats' lead to two.

Booth-Housego made several big saves in the opening period to prevent London from running away with the game early, and finished the night with 25 stops in the Lincolns' crease.

With just seven seconds left in the opening stanza, Ethan Coups clapped a one-timer by London goaltender Casimir Weckström to cut the Nationals' lead in half heading into the first intermission. The goal came after a strong move by Lincoln Moore, who carried the puck down the wing and in behind the net before feeding it out front to Coups.

"What Lincoln (Moore) does with the puck to set up that goal speaks to the patience he has and the confidence he has in his playmaking ability," Bradley said. "And then having Ethan (Coups) jump in to get that goal was incredibly timely for us and great decisions by two veteran players."

The score stayed 2-1 until a powerplay goal by Chase MacQueen-Spence with just under three minutes left in the second frame tied the game at two apiece. Cohen Bidgood and Kyle Morey

picked up the helpers.

Early on in the third, at the 4:14 mark, Jaden Lee found himself in on a partial breakaway and scored his 20th of the season. Linemates Luca Spagnolo and Owen Voortman earned the assists.

With a little less than eight minutes to go, a perfect pass by Morey landed on the stick of Moore, who ripped home his first goal since being acquired by St. Marys from the St. Thomas Stars. Coach Bradley noted the constant growth in cohesiveness amongst the trio of MacQueen-Spence, Morey, and Moore.

"That's a line that we expect big things out of, and they want to build chemistry and you could really see it on Lincoln's goal. It's steadily getting better and better. The three of them had never played together, and all have been asked to do different things in the past, but it's obvious how much talent is there between the three of them, so we just need those guys to keep sticking to the gameplan and that chemistry will keep getting stronger."

**Lincs sleepy in back-to-back wins over Sarnia, Komoka**

The Lincolns returned home on Jan. 26 to host the Sarnia Legionnaires before travelling to Komoka on Jan. 27 to

take on the Kings. While they picked up back-to-back 3-1 wins to extend their winning streak to 10 games, their performances were far from perfect.

St. Marys had an overall solid first 20 minutes against the Legionnaires, with Moore firing the only goal of the period to put the Lincolns up 1-0 going into the second. However, their final 40 minutes were far less impressive.

"You have to give credit to Sarnia for sure, they made life tough on us, but I certainly didn't think we were at our best," said Bradley. "There definitely was a bit of a fatigue factor there, we have been on the ice quite a bit as of late. But we can't afford too many more performances like that. Our players know what we need to do and how we need to play to have success."

Gage Brandon tied the game at 1-1 at the 7:59 mark of the second, a score that held until Ryan Hodgkinson netted his 12th of the season three-and-a-half minutes into the third.

Coming into the contest, Lee had goals in six straight games, which was one game shy of tying the longest goal streak in the GOJHL this season. As time ticked down in the third, it appeared that Lee's goal streak would come to an end, but, in a dramatic flare, a shot by Spagnolo hit off of Lee's leg and sailed into the net with a serendipitous 7.4 seconds left on the clock.

Spagnolo, meanwhile, extended his point streak to 18 games with an assist on Lee's goal, followed by a goal of his own in Komoka. As for Voortman, the Thunder Bay, Ont. native is closing in 100 career GOJHL points.

Lee and Spagnolo now sit side-by-side atop the league's offensive streaks this year, with Spagnolo having the longest point streak in the league this season, while Lee tied the longest goal streak of the campaign.

Bradley said the flowers being heaped on the 'Perfect Complement' line is well-deserved.

"It's been three years in the making for them. They've had incredible leaders and top players to follow and model their game after, and now, it's their turn, it's their team, and they feel like it's their league. To us, Luca (Spagnolo), Jaden (Lee), and Owen (Voortman) is the best line in this league because of what they're able to do offensively and

CONTINUED TO PAGE 13



# U16 A Boys earn Gold at Oakville Winter Classic

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The St. Marys Legion U16 A Boys St. Marys Rock won the Gold medal at the Jan. 16-19 Oakville Winter Classic tournament.

Head coach Bob Davis told the Independent the team displayed a close-knit camaraderie that they had been striving to find going into the tournament.

“We played as a team,” said Bob. “Everyone played well, and everyone played a part. Our biggest hurdle was treating each other like teammates. I believe they finally developed a strong team bond. They didn’t criticize each other at all. They supported each other and backed each other up. That was the most important thing to come out of this tournament.”

The Rock won two of their three round-robin games, which included a 5-0 shutout to begin the tournament, and had one tie before heading into a semi-final clash with the Amherstburg Stars. For the second time in the tournament, the Rock scored a goal on the first shift of the game to take a 1-0 lead, with Donovan McGregor finding the back of the net. By the end of the first period, however, St. Marys found themselves down by a goal.

“We regrouped at the break and, knowing we had two full periods of hockey left, there was no panic in them,” noted Bob. “Even when Amherstburg went up 3-1, the boys simply dug in and worked harder. We went on to score four unanswered goals over the rest of the game. That resiliency was the turning point for us.”

Down 3-1, the Rock’s offence roared



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The St. Marys Legion U16 A Boys St. Marys Rock captured the Gold medals at the Oakville Winter Classic on Jan. 16-19. Pictured on the floor beside the championship trophy, from left to right, are Ethan Culling and Jaxen Brown. In the second row, from left, are Zach Matheson, Nic Brintnell, Zach Larmer, Ben Ewing, and Brody Cox. In the third row, from left, are Kolton McAllister, Donovan McGregor, Jack Turner, Ethan Henderson, Hayden Wright, Cainan O’Doherty, Grayson Gerber, Peyton Wynands, and Hunter Pickel.

back to life with goals from McGregor, Hayden Wright, and Jack Turner before the end of the second period. Kolton McAllister added some breathing room when he scored in the third.

In addition to their cohesiveness, Bob credited the group for executing many of their tactical elements very well.

“There were areas we have been working on that improved this weekend. Things like protecting our own end, back-checking to help the goalie and defencemen out, and covering the opposition’s wingers in the neutral zone.

These all came together. We only had one goalie this weekend, Ethan (Culling), and he played unbelievably. The guys dug deep to give him as much protection as they could and were blocking shots to protect the lead in many cases.”

The final game saw the Rock, taking on the Welland Tigers, have a strong start once again, punctuated by Nicholas Brintnell scoring halfway through the first. Brintnell’s tally held up as the game-winner and the only goal of the game, with goaltender Ethan Culling picking up the shutout.

Coach Michael Davis, who was filling in for Bob running the bench, cited the strong start as paving the way for the team’s eventual victory.

“We jumped out to a fast start in the final and put a lot of pressure on the opposition,” Michael Davis stated. “The boys were focused all tournament on having good starts to our games. We had been preaching good preparation leading up to the tournament. The early pressure and driving the net for rebounds resulted in success with the goal by Nicholas (Brintnell), and the boys confidently defended through the rest of the game to win.”

Michael added that the pressure the squad started with stayed throughout the contest.

“The boys never let off their pressure through the game and killed a penalty at the end of the second period to stop Welland from getting back in the game. There was just solid commitment and consistency from all of our players. The team play, effort level, and good goal-tending ultimately led to our success.”

Both Michael and Bob praised the team for their compete level, a facet of the team’s on-ice play which Bob described as seeing one of the most profound improvements this year.

“The biggest area I have seen growth in with this team, in addition to their bond, is their work ethic,” Bob said. “You get out of the game what you put into it. We played 100 percent for three periods this weekend. I think they finally realized that they have the potential to succeed in whatever they choose but that it comes with work. We are very proud of every single one of them.”

## Lincs continue win streak

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12  
defensively.”

Both Spagnolo and Lee are currently tied for single-season franchise records. For Spagnolo, with his goal in Komoka going down as the game-winner, he now sits tied with Michael Noyes (2007-08) and Colin Martin (2008-09) for the Lincolns’ single-season record for game-winning goals at seven.

In Lee’s case, he has tied Sean Consitt for most shorthanded goals in a single season, with five. Consitt accomplished the feat in both the 2009-10 and 2012-13 seasons.

Against the Kings on Jan. 26, Morey and Spagnolo scored in the second period, with assists going to Lee, Ryder Livermore, and Evan Roach. After having three assists in 26 games with the Stars this season, Roach has already posted three assists with the Lincolns in just five games.

Ben Funston capitalized on a third-period misplay by the Lincolns’ powerplay to score a shorthanded breakaway goal for Komoka, before Jacob McLellan lobbed the puck into an empty net to seal a 3-1 win for the Lincolns.

Bradley elaborated on his thoughts of the games against the Legionnaires and Kings, adding that the team’s “focus” appeared to be lacking.

“I think when your focus isn’t there, you start to try to do things on your own. A lot of what we saw, both

against Sarnia and Komoka, came back to trying to do much on our own as opposed to how we typically try to play. We’ve had a great season so far, so I don’t think we need to be too harsh on them, considering we got four points. But, we’ve got some tough opponents coming up, and we need to get refocused if we’re going to have success against them.”

The two major bright spots for St. Marys came in between the pipes for the Lincolns, with the bench boss having glowing reviews for Armellin and Booth-Housego.

“Nico (Armellin) and Colby (Booth-Housego) were both great for us. We’re really fortunate to have such an incredible pair of goalies and when you have games when you’re not at your best, it’s comforting to know, no matter which guy is in net, that you have someone back there saving your back.”

Armellin finished with 27 saves against Sarnia, while Booth-Housego turned away 24 Komoka shots. Among goalies with at least 12 games played, as of press time, only four have a GAA under 2.00, and only three have managed a save percentage above 0.930. The Lincolns have two in each category.

Armellin sits first in the GOJHL in both GAA, at 1.66, and save percentage, at 0.944. Meanwhile, Booth-Housego has the third-best GAA, 1.80, and second-best save percentage, 0.937, in the league.

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# U18 Girls slay demons to win B.A.D. tournament

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The Hubbard Pharmacy U18 Girls St. Marys Rock won the Gold medal at the B.A.D. Blazers Winter Tournament on Jan. 16-19 in Belmont, Aylmer, and Dorchester.

Head coach Nathan Brown called the tournament a “season-changing” week-end for the squad.

“They really seemed to come together as a group,” Brown told the Independent. “By the end of the tournament, they were doing their stretches in their lines in the dressing room, dancing, blasting music, and just carrying on and goofing off. Two years ago, I may not have understood it, but they found a way to galvanize themselves, and if that’s what it takes to play the game with a smile on your face, then go ahead.”

The U18 Girls, who Brown affectionately calls the team his “old diesels” because of how they improve as they get warmed up in a tournament, opened the round-robin with a 5-2 win over Lucan. However, that was followed by a heated 6-2 loss to a fierce rival of St. Marys in league play, the Ilderton Jets.

Brown detailed his pre-game apology to his team before their next game for contributing to the rising intensity of the game against Ilderton.

“Things got pretty chippy. I would caution other coaches by saying your team can manifest your emotions as their coach. After the Ilderton game, I apologized to the girls. I said, ‘If any of that intensity you showed was because of my behaviour, then that’s on me. So, in our next one, go out, have fun, and the only thing I’ll ask of you is that you



(BRITTANEY MACE PHOTO)

The Hubbard Pharmacy U18 Girls St. Marys Rock earned the Gold medal at the B.A.D. Blazers tournament in Belmont, Aylmer, and Dorchester on Jan. 16-19. Pictured from left to right are Kylie Fifield, Georgia Edwards, Scott Mace, Delanie McKay, Maddie Monisit Brown, Sophia Smith, head coach Nathan Brown, Keirsyn Wood, Sophie Richardson, Cammie Lobb, Jeff Richardson, Rory Brockman, and Regan Mace.

work as hard as you can for each other.’ Things seemed to click for us after that game.”

After winning their third and fourth round-robin games, the Rock were set for a semi-final rematch against Ilderton, and this time, with their gameplan of getting shots from the point executed much better and a strong effort in goal, St. Marys blanked the Jets 4-0 to advance to the Gold medal game.

“We’ve struggled against Ilderton this year,” Brown admitted. “We’ve lost to them a few times and tied them once in league play, and they blew us out during the round-robin of this tournament. It made the semi-finals a bit of a redemption game for us. Winning against our nemesis totally galvanized the team.”

Arguably, the happiest member of the

team following the semis was goaltender Sophia Smith, a former Ilderton Jet who was released in the Summer and subsequently joined the Rock. Brown documented how the team celebrated with their goalie after the win.

“Our goalie, Sophia (Smith), played for Ilderton last year and came to us in mid-August as we didn’t have a goalie, so she quite literally saved our season. Ilderton has had her number at times this season, but in the semis, she just had that little extra push. After the game, I walked into the dressing room and asked Sophia, ‘How did that feel?’ And the room erupted. It was awesome to see everyone getting fired up for their goaltender like that.”

Rory Brockman scored the first goal of the semis on a point shot, a goal that

coach Brown was thrilled to see.

“We’ve been working on Rory all year to have more confidence in her shot. She has a rocket of a shot; she just needs to use it more. As soon as the girls figured it out and got the puck moving high, Rory got two shots of a defence-to-defence pass, and the second one went in.”

Fellow defender Kylie Fifield scored for St. Marys in the semis. The scoring summary was rounded out by goals from forwards Ella Carter and Maddie Monisit Brown, the latter of whom then got the Rock’s first goal in the final against the Upper Maitland Mustangs.

Brockman once again fired home a goal for St. Marys, which would eventually go down as the game-winner. Smith stopped all but one of the Mustangs’ shots, and Keirsyn Wood gave the Rock an insurance goal with under a minute to play on a hard-working play that saw her bulldoze her way through multiple Upper Maitland skaters to the top of the faceoff circle and seal the 3-1 win for the Rock.

According to Brown, the offensive zone utilization of their blueliners, including Brockman, Fifield, Cortney Linton, and Cammie Lobb, were all paramount in capturing the Gold.

“They were skating hard all game. There was no stopping them. Everybody was going on every shift. Our puck movement finally started running low to high and defender to defender more like we wanted it to. We want it going down low, make the other team chase us, then pass it up high and fire it on net. All of our defenders can fire the puck, so it was awesome to see them getting a ton of shots.”

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# MINOR SPORTS SCRAPBOOK

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Jacklyn Kittmer fires a shot on target during the Hitching Post U11 C Girls St. Marys Rock game this past Monday.



Evan Ballantyne gets a backhand shot on a breakaway during last Thursday's St. Marys Cement U18 A Boys St. Marys Rock game.



Owen Dittmer launches a wrist shot from the point during the Frayne Custom Cabinets U18 B Boys St. Marys Rock game this past Sunday.



Liv McCutcheon releases the ring off her stick during this past Sunday's U12 St. Marys Snipers game.



Lily Johnston snaps a shot towards the net off of a rush during the U14 St. Marys Snipers (Graham) game this past Sunday.



Marci Linton rips a shot on goal from the faceoff circle during last past Saturday's U16 St. Marys Snipers game.

(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTOS)



# U15 C Girls capture Gold at B.A.D. Blazers tournament

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

A long-awaited offensive jolt, other-worldly goaltending and defence, and a feel-good story helped the Veterinary Purchasing Ltd. U15 C Girls St. Marys Rock win the Gold medal at the B.A.D. Blazers Winter Tournament hosted in Belmont, Aylmer, and Dorchester on Jan. 16-19.

Head coach Dave Bailey praised his group for their strong two-way play, which proved crucial to their success.

“We were really good at both ends of the ice,” Bailey told the Independent. “Six games in one weekend can be a lot, and fatigue was a bit of a factor down the homestretch, but what I really appreciated about the girls’ play was how resilient they were and that they were able to dig as deep as they did to get the job done.”

The Rock had to be resilient right from the start of the tournament, going down by two goals early in their first round-robin game. However, despite a two-goal deficit typically being too tall of a mountain for a St. Marys team bereft of offence in the first half of the season to even up, the Rock’s pain-staking work throughout the year to improve their scoring finally paid off, as they potted three straight goals to secure a 3-2 victory in their tournament opener.

Bailey was “exceptionally happy” with the win, noting that the team “fed off of the comeback” for the rest of the weekend.

“We started a little slow and gave up a couple of easy goals to go down 2-0, but we fought our way back,” began Bailey. “Earlier in the year, when goals were at an even higher premium for us, if we went down by two goals, the girls would still dig in, but it would feel a bit insurmountable. But now, they are starting to find ways to score, and they came back to win that game.”

“They just never gave up, and they scored three unanswered goals to win it. And after that, you could see a new look on their faces and a new swagger about them. It seemed like they truly started believing that no matter what happens, they are never out of a game. It was a huge character and confidence boost for the girls.”

Bailey added the team’s offensive spark came as a result of the improved execution of numerous aspects of their gameplan.

“Offensively, we’ve worked very hard in practice on our passes, getting better looks in the offensive zone, and our communication skills. We talk a lot about keeping your head on a swivel, and I think they’re starting to see the ice better, with and without the puck. They’re getting in better areas to receive passes, set up plays, and get good scoring chances. We’re showing a better net-front presence and starting to bang in rebounds.”

After finishing the round-robin with three wins and one tie, St. Marys met the Upper Maitland Mustangs in the semi-final. Chloe Phillips scored the first and only goal of the contest midway through the second period, with the lone assist going to Reese Crawford.

According to coach Bailey, the team’s semi-final performance was as close to flawless as the team has looked this season.

“I thought our semi-final game was the best we’ve played all year. It would have been nice to get rewarded with a couple more goals, but I just thought everything was done well. They have become a very defensively responsible team. When we really struggled to score earlier this season, we focused heavily on back-checking, defending as a unit, and being sound in our own zone.

“In the semis, against a very good team, we gave up less than 10 shots on net,” Bailey continued. “We’re starting to find the back of the net with a little more



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Veterinary Purchasing U15 C Girls St. Marys Rock earned the Gold medal at the B.A.D. Blazers Winter Tournament, hosted Jan. 16-19 in Belmont, Aylmer, and Dorchester. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Lexi Flax, Sophia Hinrichs, Georgia Agar, Paisley Wood, Silver Breckon, Megan Bailey, and Sarah Bailey. In the back row, from left, are Nick Sheldon, Dave Bailey, Maeve Sheldon, Linley Porter, Ella Frayne, Chloe Phillips, Tea Walsh, Hunter Kennedy, Addison Jones, Isobel Williams, Tealya Thistle, Reese Crawford, and Kim Jones.

regularity, but we haven't lost that defensive-minded approach.”

The 1-0 win over Upper Maitland set the Rock up to clash with the Stratford Aces in the championship game, which St. Marys won by a final score of 3-0.

“The final was all guts, heart, and determination,” remarked Bailey. “Stratford played a really good game. We’ve played them quite a few times, and even though we’ve won each, they are always a tough test. Our defence and goaltending held us in early when we looked a bit tired, but as the adrenaline kicked in, our intensity got better. It wasn’t an oil painting by any stretch, but they refused to lose, and we got better as the game went along.”

One of the standout performances of the tournament was Linley Porter, who opened the scoring for the Rock in the Gold medal game less than a minute into the opening period, assisted by Teadora Walsh.

Porter is an incredible feel-good story as she was added to the team in late December after recovering from surgery to deal with a severe back ailment. At one point, it wasn’t guaranteed that Porter would play hockey at all this year, but got cleared to play just before Christmas.

“Linley is a strong player at both ends of the rink. She picked up four or five points this weekend and has definitely helped make us better at both ends of the ice. We have a pretty strong chemistry amongst our players and she has fit in with our girls like a glove. Linley is definitely an incredible story, and we’re lucky to have her.”

After a scoreless second period, Paisley Wood extended the Rock’s lead to two goals with seven minutes left in the third. Addison Jones added an empty-net goal for the 3-0 final, while goaltender Lexi Flax picked up her fourth shutout of the tournament.

Flax, as she has been for virtually all of the season for St. Marys, was stellar in between the pipes, posting a save percentage over 0.950 and only getting scored on once in the Rock’s final five games of the tournament.

“Lexi (Flax) has been excellent game in and game out this season, and again, she was phenomenal in the tournament,” Bailey said. “She just seemed impossible to score on all weekend. She’s still looking up at

the five-foot mark on the tape measure, but she seems to play like she’s seven feet tall.”

## ST. MARYS CURLING CLUB Competitive League Regular Season Standings (Jan.22)

TEAM	W	L	T	PTS
Adam Hudson	10	1	2	35
Morris Vanderwalle	10	2	1	34
Brady St. Louis	10	2	1	34
Michael Visser	9	4	0	31
Tom Westerveld	8	3	2	31
Lindsay McLeod	6	6	1	26
Pat Murray	6	7	0	25
Gary Crowley	6	7	0	25
Matt McConnell	5	8	0	23
George White	5	8	0	23
Stewart Grant	4	8	1	22
Pete Trumper	4	9	0	21
Merlin Leis	2	10	1	18
Brendan Shute	1	11	1	16

## ST. MARYS CURLING CLUB Doubles League Regular Season Standings (Jan.20)

TEAM	W	L	T	PTS
Johnston / Winchester	9	2	1	31
Murray / Jackson	9	2	0	29
White / Mitchell	7	3	2	28
Hemingway / Leis	8	3	0	27
Grant / Everett	5	6	1	23
Hudson / Zwambag	5	5	0	20
Wierenga / Waugh	4	4	1	18
Hutton / Leaman	3	8	0	17
King / VanWieren	3	6	1	17
DeBrabandere / DeBrabandere	2	7	1	15
Blowes / Blowes	1	10	0	13



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# COLUMNS

## FROM THE GARDEN: A winter garden



NANCY ABRA

Independent Columnist

When we think of a garden, it is often pictured as a landscape of striking flowering perennials, colourful annuals, lush shady plants, shrubbery, with perhaps pathways and other added features and sculptures. A garden in winter lacks the vivid colours like the other seasons but it can still offer a unique and serene beauty.

The focus of a winter garden is entirely different than a summer's garden. This winter our landscapes are covered in snow, adding a blanket of insulation on our gardens, but also providing the perfect setting and contrast of the dark greens of our evergreens.

The foliage of shrubs and trees such as holly, cedar, ju-

niper and pine have more of an emphasis in a winter garden. With the absence of leaves of deciduous trees, their importance is more prominent in a winter's landscape. But the barren branches of certain trees also add interest. Trees, such as birch with their peeling bark or dark thick branches of maple or tulip trees now become focal points. Red branches of the *Conus sericea*, red-osier dogwood and *Cornus sanguinea*, a blood-twig dogwood are striking additions for winter interest.

A couple more interesting shrubs are Witch hazel, *Hamelis* and Corkscrew hazel, *Corylus avellana*. Witch hazel thrives in our chilling cold winter months. Its late winter blooms of yellow, red strands are like a starburst exploding from their branches, making a striking specimen in a dull setting. The Corkscrew hazel, a deciduous shrub, becomes a sculpture in a winter's garden with its gnarled and curly branches.

Many of us grow ornamental grasses in our gardens. Their green structures act as a backdrop for our colourful flo-

ral designs. But in the winter, when the snow has blanketed our perennial beds, they add a subtle beauty and movement. Their seed heads also provide food for birds.

Perennials such as *Echinacea*, *Rudbeckia*, *Eutrochinum purpurem* (Joe-pye-weed) and tall varieties of *Sedum* add a colourful display in late summer as well as being a nectar source for bees and butterflies. In the winter months, they become interesting structures. As well, their spent dried flower heads are an excellent food source for many small birds such as wrens, sparrows and chick-a-dees.

Snow and heavy frost can transform the garden, highlighting shapes and forms, creating a secretive and magical place. The afternoon sun shining through tall trees casts long interesting shadows, bringing another dimension to our gardens.

If you look closely among the snow laden bushes, there are tiny imprints made by the dozens of birds that seek refuge in those evergreens. You may come across a mass of serpentine trails created by other



small critters. We think that our gardens are dead during the winter months. Our plants are sleeping but our gardens are a hub of activity.

Our winter gardens are full of interesting elements that ensures us they still are a place of captivating beauty throughout the cold months.

## Straight from the Shelves

LAURA MCASH

St. Marys Public Library

Celebrate the season of love at the St. Marys Public Library!

Create a DIY gift box at our next "Makerspace Open House"! Drop in on Saturday, Feb. 8 between 10 a.m. and 12 p.m. to make the perfect package for giving someone special a little Valentine's treat. To register for this free program, please call the Library (519-284-3346).

Bring your little ones to our Valentine's-themed storytime and craft a thumbprint-heart clay keepsake! Join us at "Crafty Tales" on Saturday, Feb. 15 at 10:30 a.m. for a heart-warmingly good time. This program is free to attend, and no registration is required.

### This Week's Recommendation

Even the fanciest of snails get a little nervous before Snailentine's Day. Take *Escargot*, for example, a well-read Frenchman with exquisite taste in art

and fashion. Although a fancy hat and a funky dance do wonders to help him get out of his shell, *Escargot* is still surprised by who attends the party. Be *Escargot's* Snailentine by reading "Love, *Escargot*" by Dashka Slater with illustrations by Sydney Hanson. Find this charming story alongside our other Valentine's books in the holiday section of the children's end.

### Up This Week

Fri., Jan. 31: PA Fun Day (drop-in - 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

Sat., Feb. 1: Open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Mon., Feb. 3: Open 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Tues., Feb. 4: Cooking Club\* (10:30 a.m.)

Wed., Feb. 5: EarlyON Play and Read (9:30-10:30 a.m.), Mahjong! (1-4 p.m.), Scrabble (6-8 p.m.)

Thurs., Feb. 6: Open 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

\*Registration Required

## Ask the Arborist

By Joel Hackett | 519 272 5742 | [jtsquote@gmail.com](mailto:jtsquote@gmail.com)



### Dear Arborist,

*With all the wind we have had, a branch broke off my tree. It is not very high off the ground, but it ripped about 5 ft of the bark. Should I put tar or something to seal it off?*

Thanks, Liz

### Dear Liz,

Using a sealant, such as tar, was something they used to do in the past. However, it's not normally recommended now. This is normally explained with the acronym CODIT (Compartmentalization of decay in trees). When a tree is damaged it compartmentalizes the injury, and

then begins to seal it off by growing around the wound. A sealant such as tar slows down this process. In some cases, you might spray it with a light oil to kill insects or fungus, or you can wash it with soap and water. In cases like this, less is more.

Sincerely,

The Arborist

*Joel Hackett is a certified Arborist residing in the St. Marys area. Currently, he spends most of the year running Joel's Tree Service. For contact call 519 272 5742 or email [jtsquote@gmail.com](mailto:jtsquote@gmail.com)*

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# HISTORIC ST. MARYS: The Church Street Bridge

MARY SMITH

Independent Columnist

The photograph with this week's column is also the January photograph for the 2025 Rotary Historic St. Marys calendar. (If you don't have one of these calendars yet, they are still available in the reception area of the St. Marys Museum.) A couple dozen school-aged children are standing on the pedestrian walkway on the west side of the Church Street Bridge, crowding the railing and mugging for the unknown photographer. The weather looks much like what we have been experiencing lately – there is snow on the bridge parapets and the children are all warmly dressed in toques, mitts and warm winter coats. The bridge itself is an important part of the picture. It deserves some consideration before the month changes, and the photograph for February hides this charming picture from view.

Because the Thames River and Trout Creek both flow through the town, bridges have always been important in St. Marys. Maintaining them has been a priority for the public works department since the mid 19th century. Bridges were necessary to cross the Thames River to get from downtown to the west ward, necessary to cross Trout Creek to get to the north ward, and there were vocal and influential taxpayers in these parts of St. Marys. The first bridges were made of logs, followed by sturdier wooden bridges, built quickly from the materials at hand. But during spring flooding, these bridges were often swept away entirely or damaged and weakened by ice and high water.

In 1882, the committee of town council responsible for bridges reported that the wooden Church Street Bridge was no longer structurally safe. Council decided that the time had come to replace this important bridge using something that would withstand ice jams and high water better than wood. They first favoured an iron bridge. However, in this community of limestone and skilled masons, they learned that a stone bridge would cost only slightly more than an iron one. After some deliberation, in May 1884, they accepted the tender of local masons James Clyde and John Elliott to build a bridge designed to the specifications of William Williams who was town clerk as well as an architect. The cost on completion in October 1884 was \$3,800. The town raised this amount through the sale



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ST. MARYS MUSEUM'S HISTORIC IMAGE COLLECTION.)

The photograph of the school children standing on the Church Street Bridge pre-dates 1979 when the 1884 bridge was restored. The building in the background is a feed mill, later demolished to make space for the Old Mill Apartments.

of debentures, the standard procedure for municipalities at that time.

The mayor in 1884 was H. Fred Sharp, a local stationer and express agent. He was a man with some progressive ideas. A year later, in 1885 while he was still mayor, the Bell Telephone Company ran a telephone line between London and Stratford, passing through St. Marys. Mr. Sharp became the Bell agent in St. Marys, in charge of the first small switchboard installed on his premises on Queen Street. He and his fellow councillors were responsible for the Church Street Bridge replacement, a major project during their term of office.

The town clerk, William Williams, probably prepared plans for the bridge as part of his work for the municipality. Born in very modest circumstances in London, England, in 1835, Williams first worked as a plasterer when he immigrated to Canada in 1869. This trade put him in close contact with local builders. He learned all aspects of construction and discovered an aptitude for drawing up plans and specifications. He was appointed town clerk in 1880 and when the Church Street Bridge was being considered, he was already advertising his services as an architect, out of the clerk's office in the town hall. Before he left St. Marys to move to Toronto in 1890, he had designed some remarkable local buildings, including Andrews Jeweller, McIntyre Drug, and Fairhill, a residence on Queen Street East, now part of

the Kingsway Lodge complex.

The two masons who worked on the construction of the bridge had learned their trade in more traditional ways, working as labourers and stonecutters for experienced masons. John Elliott, born in 1854, first worked for his stepfather, a well-known local quarryman, but by 1884, he had started out on his own. He later became well-known for building in brick as well as stone. He prospered but died when he was just 49 years of age. He had built his final residence himself, the large home on the southeast corner of Wellington and Jones Streets, currently Hodges Funeral Home.

Similarly, James Clyde learned his trade from his father, Samuel, a stonemason who had immigrated to Canada from Northern Ireland. James and his brother, Robert, as young men, spent time in the United States, returning to Canada in the mid-1860s to help defend the country against the Fenian threat. After this period of adventure, the two brothers settled in St. Marys. At the time of the 1881 census, they were boarding at the Garnett House on Church Street North. James Clyde's work with John Elliott on the Church Street Bridge is his legacy to St. Marys. He later married and left St. Marys, moving to Manitoba where he died.

The bridge created by these planners and contractors stood for 85 years but in the 1979, it urgently needed either repairs or replacement. Fortunately,

the limestone bridge with its beautiful double-arches was retained, thanks to a sympathetic town council and the advice of the newly formed municipal heritage committee. With the help of a provincial grant, the Church Street Bridge was restored, its arches reinforced, and the service conduits more unobtrusively placed below the pedestrian walkway. With the passing of Bylaw 16-1979, it became one of the first local structures to be municipally designated under the Ontario Heritage Act. It was reopened with great ceremony in the autumn of that year. But increased traffic and winter salting took its toll and four decades later, the bridge once again needed restoration work. The stone caps on the parapets were replaced, salt damage repaired, and a new deck installed and paved. With this conscientious maintenance, the bridge remains a beautiful example of the town's limestone heritage.

A great many influential local people were significant in the story of the Church Street Bridge – Sharp, Williams, Clyde and Elliott in the 19th century, and various administrators, town councillors and heritage committee members in later years. However, for generations, many school children have considered that this bridge really belongs to them. Thousands of children have crossed the Church Street Bridge, to and fro, between their schools and their homes on the other side of Trout Creek. It was part of the daily ritual to stop and look over the railing to check out the water. In the winter, was it totally frozen yet? In warmer weather, was anything interesting floating under the bridge and downstream towards the dam? It was also important to vary the ritual occasionally and cross the bridge by walking on top of the parapet instead of using the pedestrian walkway. This activity was certainly not officially sanctioned but everyone had to do it at least once!

The happy children on the bridge in this week's photograph are a reminder of the significance of this bridge to the history of our town. The children's names and the exact year of the photograph are still unknown although, on the back of the print, someone has written "The Holy Name Gang, ca 1950s." If any reader of the Independent can identify the children and/or suggest a more precise date, please contact the St. Marys Museum: [museum@town.stmarys.on.ca](mailto:museum@town.stmarys.on.ca).

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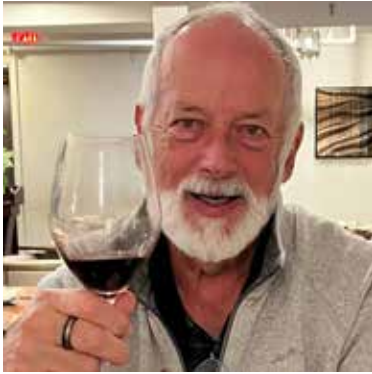
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# OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Fox Harb'r: growing beyond "great"



PAUL KNOWLES

Independent Columnist

One of the perks of my work as a member of the Golf Journalists Association of Canada is I occasionally get to play outstanding golf courses – courses that, if truth be told, are vastly more impressive than my golf game. But I always agree, show up with my clubs and usually allow the course to humiliate me, smiling all the way.

When I was planning our road trip down east last summer, a colleague in Nova Scotia wondered if we would like to play Fox Harb'r and spend a night or two there. I jumped at the chance. Fox Harb'r is one of Canada's premiere golf courses, built by Tim Hortons founder, the late Ron Joyce, and very recently voted Best Corporate Retreat in Atlantic Canada.

This is obviously much more than a golf course. Fox Harb'r offers luxurious ac-

commodations, spa facilities, two restaurants, a private airstrip and more. We stayed in a beautiful suite with our second-floor balcony overlooking the course and, beyond it, the Northumberland Strait.

The course was in superb shape. Nine holes ran along the ocean and the other nine took us inland for parkland-style play. We enjoyed every minute and, for a change, a world-class course did not beat me up! I finished very happy with my score and delighted by the dramatic views, especially on the ocean-side holes.

What we didn't realize was that our round was a unique opportunity to play a course that would cease to exist in that form at the end of the 2024 season. And that's because Fox Harb'r, already an award-winning destination, is upping the ante. What was already great is going beyond that description in virtually every aspect of the resort. It's all part of the celebration of Fox Harb'r's 25th anniversary.

Most dramatic are the developments around the golf course. After I received a news release about the changes, I called Kevin Toth, the genial president of Fox Harb'r, to get an update from the source.

Toth, shall we say, is excited. Really excited. We started by talking about the golf course itself, and that's when I learned the lovely course we had played would never be played again in that form.

That's because the hybrid layout of the course – half ocean-side, half parkland – is being converted through the creation of 18 additional holes.

The eventual outcome will be two very distinct courses – the ocean course and the vineyard course. Yes, Fox Harb'r has its own vineyard, producing unique wines.

Kevin told me the ocean course will be a cohesive, authentic, links-style course, appropriate to its seaside location. It has been created by famed course designers Doug Carrick and Tom McBroom. The vineyard course will be a gorgeous, heathland 18, he says.

This involves more than building 18 more holes, and the existing nine ocean holes are being reconstructed, changing most of the layouts and ensuring that links style is more than just a cliché. That means altering bunkers, fairways, landscaping, greens, the whole shebang.

The plan is to have both new 18s open for play by the spring of 2027. In the meantime, golfers will still be able to play a terrific 18-hole course – in fact, a different one each year as available nines are combined to allow golf fans to enjoy superb 18-hole layouts.

If that sounds confusing, the key is you'll be able to play Fox Harb'r any time in the next seasons, but avid golfers will want to mark spring 2027 on their calendars because that's when we will be able to play the 36 holes of two different, amazing courses at the resort.

Fox Harb'r innovations go beyond the fairways and greens. The resort has opened a new



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

Fox Harb'r's ocean-front golf course, with the Northumberland Strait as the spectacular backdrop.

state-of-the-art fitness centre, and Kevin told me about the \$2-million renovation to the spa and wellness centre, including a new hydrotherapy studio. This is all scheduled to open May 8 of this year. The resort is also adding accommodations, building 18 new town homes.

Fox Harb'r is clearly a destination in its own right. There are a few nearby attractions – the quirky ocean-front town of Tatamagouche is less than half an hour away, as is Jost Winery, one of the finest among Nova Scotia's excellent wineries. But people come to Fox Harb'r for Fox Harb'r, and the number of staff employed by the resort says all you need to know about the service the resort offers. Kevin told me that in 2024, the destination employed 264 staff members. In the long term, he says Fox

Harb'r will employ 325 people. The resort is building more accommodations for its staff and also, according to Kevin, strongly encouraging senior employees to permanently locate in this part of Nova Scotia. Fox Harb'r is not only committed to serving its guests, it's also committed to being a responsible corporate citizen in its community.

But most importantly for the dedicated golfer, Fox Harb'r is offering a unique opportunity to play a different course layout each year through 2027. That's when Fox Harb'r's vision will fully become a golfer's dream come to life.

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](mailto:pknowles@golden.net).

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Guests at Fox Harb'r can enjoy luxurious accommodations, right beside the golf course.



The main street of the quirky, inviting town of Tatamagouche, a nearby community on the Northumberland Strait.



# Thorndale News

A section within the  
St. Marys Independent

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## Behind the scenes at the Thorndale Dinner Theatre

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

For many years the Thorndale Dinner Theatre has been part of the community winter event's calendar. Many from this area and beyond have enjoyed the various plays that have been performed at the Thorndale Community Centre, as well as the delicious meals prepared by local organizations and churches. But what is involved in leading up to this event?

Once the play has been chosen, auditions for the various roles are held. As the cast learn their lines they periodically meet to run through their parts. Rehearsals start the first week in January, meeting three evenings a week for approximately three hours per night, leading up to initial dinner theatre opening night. Besides the actors, there is a support crew of directors, stage managers, producer, as well as volunteers looking after costumes, set and props that attend these play practices.

Unfortunately, the Thorndale Lions Community Centre does not have a fixed stage or hall area, so rehearsals are held in the old scout hall at St. George's Anglican Church. In order for the cast to be familiar with the stage setting, a crew of ambitious builders with a knowledge of the play and with director's guidance, erect the set, complete with windows, working doors, and other prop features that are essential to the play's performance.



(NANCY ABRA PHOTO)

Pictured are the set builders, from left to right Jim Hill, Brian Teall, Gord Abra and Joe Facey.

With only a few days before opening night, the set is carefully dismantled and trucked down to the Thorndale Lions Community Centre. Then, it is all-hands-on-deck with a large team of volunteers from the Thorndale Agricultural Society and the community building a stage and resurrecting the complete set to be ready for sound,

lighting and rehearsal that evening. It is amazing how these dedicated volunteers can transform a gym auditorium into a theatre setting.

This year's Thorndale Community Dinner Theatre is scheduled for Feb. 22, 23, 26, 28 and March 1. The play, 'A Butler Did it' by British playwright Robert Scott, is a dark comedy farce. The death of Aunt Francesca has finally brought the Butler brothers together again. Soon family secrets and lies are almost outnumbered by corpses. The play takes on a classic whodunit plotline with comical twists and turns.

No dinner theatre is complete without the delicious meals served prior to the play performances. Dorchester United Church is in charge of the dinner on Saturday, Feb. 22. On Sunday, Feb. 23, the Thorndale Lions will have their famous brunch. On Friday, Feb. 28, the Thorndale Fair Homecraft looks after the dinner, with the final dinner theatre on Saturday, March 1 with the Thorndale United Church preparing and serving the dinner for that performance.

For the 2025 Thorndale Dinner Theatre tickets, go to <https://www.thorndalefair.com/dinner-theatre/> or they can be purchased at Thorndale Hardware. There is a play performance only on Wednesday, Feb. 26 with tickets available at the door that evening. For further information, contact Jackie Malleck at 519-461-0218.

## Thorndale resident honoured with a special medal

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

The King Charles III's Coronation Medal, created to mark His Majesty King Charles III's coronation on May 6, 2023, recognizes 30,000 Canadians who have made significant contributions to the country, a province, region or community or an achievement abroad that brings benefit or honour to Canada.

On January 17 in St. Thomas, MP Karen Vecchio, along with MPP Rob Flack presented these special medals to 26 individuals of the Elgin-Middlesex-London riding which takes in the Elgin County, City of St. Thomas, Municipality of Thames Centre and parts of London.

In part of her presentation, MP Vecchio stated "Our riding is a prosperous place with citizens like our recipients who are the unsung heroes in our community. They are selfless, devoted and tireless advocates who make Elgin-Middlesex-London a better place for all of us to live and work."

MPP Rob Flack added that these recipients' extraordinary contributions should be recognized and "this



(NANCY ABRA PHOTO)

Pictured are Dick Nieuwland, wife Trudy and daughter-in-law Karen and son Corneal Nieuwland of Thorndale.

award is a way to thank them for their work and efforts to improve the lives of those around them."

Dick Nieuwland of Thorndale along with Betty Crockett and Jean Davis are three from Thames Centre who were honoured at this celebration. Nieuwland stated, "I feel very honoured in receiving this medal. It is my family and the people of the community who are my inspiration."

2025 Thorndale Agricultural Society Dinner Theatre presents

**A BUTLER DID IT**

By Robert Scott  
Feb 22 - Mar 1, 2025

Looking for something to do during the Winter blahs this February?  
Thorndale Agricultural Society is hosting the annual Dinner Theatre at the Thorndale Community Centre

The 2025 production of "A Butler Did It" written by Robert Scott will be performed by local cast members, supported by an amazing crew. The play is considered a dark comedy farce and promises to have you laughing at the Butler family hysterics. We promise you a night to escape the Canadian Winter, complete with a beef dinner or Sunday Brunch.

**Meal and Show tickets \$50**  
**February 26 Show Only \$25**

Tickets are available at Thorndale Hardware or [www.frontdoor.plus/](http://www.frontdoor.plus/) host/61 Feb 26 play only tickets will be available at the door. Also available at the community centre Feb 1 from 10 am -noon and Feb 4 from 6-8 pm

Performance dates include Evening dinner/theatres on February 22, 28 and March 1, plus an afternoon brunch/theatre on February 23. The performance only show will be staged February 26.

**For more information call Jackie at 519-461-0218**

All proceeds support local community groups and the annual Thorndale Fall Fair. Hope to see you there!



# Riddles

What has a face but can't smile?  
A clock.

What has keys but can't open locks?  
A piano.

I'm tall when I'm young, and I'm short  
when I'm old What am I?  
A candle.

What goes up but never comes down?  
Your age.

What can you catch but not throw?  
A cold.

What is full of holes but still holds a lot of  
weight?  
A sponge.

What has a head, a tail, but no body?  
A coin.

What animal says "moo"?  
A cow.

What is yellow and can make you smile?  
A banana.

What gets wetter as it dries?  
A towel.

# - Word Search -



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## GROUNDHOG DAY

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P I G D J F I M A R M O T Q Y G S K O T  
I R A P Z Y Z K C D U G S Z K C Y W R P  
V Y O R J K U Y Y F A D V V X O P T D U  
V T F R T P H U T S A C E R O F B G V U  
U L F X K O S H A D O W U W J Y R L F T  
F O T Y V B N A T N E V E L A U N N A R  
Q R P R Q P Q W Z D A N L E W R H I K A  
C Y Y W C G R C I G B V U N V M M B Z D  
C L W E A T H E R L X B L P E D A V F I  
R S W N C J M Y D W L R G Y Y V F H W T  
K Q K O T D J J K I U I G L R B K P Y I  
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Y O F Q M T B F C S J X T O V G E T E R  
C L I H P Y E N W A T U S X N U P O F P  
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H F F Z P N X K H O X F A I D F Q H S T  
Z W O R R U B L F T T L M L M W Q R D K

- Annual event
- February
- Shadow
- Prediction
- Warton Willie
- Punxsutawney Phil
- Marmot
- Burrow
- Weather
- Tradition
- Superstition
- Forecast
- Bill Murray



The **Riddle Kid**  
OF THE WEEK

I have four legs,  
but I don't walk.  
What am I?



A chair!

**Reid Sparling (2)**

Hey Kids... Every Riddle Kid that appears in the paper gets a FREE MILKSHAKE at the Sunset Diner!

St. Marys Veterinary Clinic is pleased to be the sponsor of the

## PET OF THE WEEK



### New Year, Fresh Start for Your Pet!

This weekly segment is on Training:

- Remember, old dogs can learn new tricks! It's never too late to work with your pet to redirect unwanted/destructive behavior.
- Do your homework. If you are looking into pet trainers, there is a variety of training methods/classes.



### PEANUT

Our Pet of the Week is Peanut, a 12-year-old Labrador Retriever who is a member of the Graham family from Thorndale. Peanut has some arthritis issues but still loves her daily walkabouts, her tail wagging as she busily checks the ground and bushes, hoping to catch the scent of some critter. Her days of chasing bunnies, birds and squirrels are behind her but Peanut loves to think it's still possible.





# HELP WANTED

## The Friends of the St. Marys Museum is seeking a treasurer to join its volunteer Board of Directors

This volunteer role requires approximately 25 hours/year doing the following tasks:

- Depositing cash and cheques
- Preparing charitable receipts
- Recording revenue and expenses
- Reconciling the bank account
- Preparing quarterly and annual financial statements
- Preparing and submitting the annual charitable return and responding to any CRA queries
- Attending and presenting at bimonthly Board meetings

The Friends of the Museum is looking for a treasurer with experience in the following:

- Bookkeeping and preparing financial statements
- Preparing charitable receipts and knowledge of the Income Tax rules regarding charitable gifting and receipting
- Preparing the charitable return and knowledge of Income Tax rules related to charitable foundations, or charities in general

If you are interested in using your bookkeeping skills for this meaningful community experience, please contact Amy at [acubberley@town.st.marys.on.ca](mailto:acubberley@town.st.marys.on.ca) by Friday, February 14 to learn more.



## Maintenance Millwright

Kenpal Farm Products Inc., in Centralia, has a full-time position available for a Maintenance Millwright person. We require a hands-on individual to be responsible for general maintenance and millwrighting duties in our modern livestock feed manufacturing facilities. We offer very competitive wages and a benefit plan.

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- Organizing the other maintenance team members
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- Troubleshoot, diagnose, and repair problems as they occur
- Adjusting/repairing pellet mills
- Complete preventative maintenance jobs
- Work on other jobs as assigned

Electrical experience/qualifications, would be an asset

If you are interested in joining our growing business please submit your resume to: [kpalen@kenpal.on.ca](mailto:kpalen@kenpal.on.ca) via fax at 519-228-6485.

Please note that only those applicants selected for an interview will be contacted

# LOOKING BACK



BY AMY CUBBERLEY

## Horse drawn hearses

### 25 years ago (2000)

Various groups in Huron and Perth counties have joined forces in recent weeks to fight the provincial government's funding formula for rural education. Under the new formula, schools receive funding based on enrolment, including funding for one principal for every 350 elementary students and one for every 900 secondary students. Few schools within Avon Maitland board fall within those targets.

The annual Young Farmers mixed curling bonspiel was held Saturday at the Lind Sportsplex. The first draw was won by the rink skipped by Larry DeNeve. Theresa Goris, John Goris, and Jackie DeNeve were the other members of the foursome. The second draw was claimed by the team of skip John Aarts, Rika Aarts, Maxine Coulthard, Chris Aarts, and Mike Essen.

### 50 years ago (1975)

St. Marys made the D.F.R.B. news on Sunday with word that Toronto scuba divers were planning on doing under water diving at the local quarry but found the ice "rotten" and unsuitable for this popular sport.

Something resembling a traffic jam developed along Brock Street in the east ward last Thursday. Nineteen contractors or representatives had gathered to witness the digging of three test holes for the upcoming Brock Street drain project. One hole went down to a depth of nineteen feet. The nature of the material to be excavated has quite a bearing on the final cost of the project.

### 75 years ago (1950)

The concussion from one of Tuesday afternoon's sharp blasts shattered a window in Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Foster's home on Elgin Street East.

The ice off the Thames River and Trout Creek went out for the umpteenth time yesterday, when the temperature hit the sixty mark. Someone intimated that the Stone Town was apparently in the banana belt this winter.

### 100 years ago (1925)

Twelve sealed tenders were received by the Market, Fire, and Police Committee for the position of caretaker of the Town Hall. No appointment has been made yet.

Funerals in the district have reverted to the type of those seen years ago. The depth of snow, especially in the outlying rural districts, has made it so that motor hearses or motor cars cannot get through the ordinary way. Pall bearers ride in the old-fashioned farm sleigh, with the mourners following the horse-drawn hearse in a similar conveyance. Cutters prevail entirely.

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	3						7
6	2			9		8	
	8			3			
5				1		9	2
	2	1			3		
		5	7				2
			4	2		6	

Solutions on page 25

# NOMINATE YOUR PET OF THE WEEK!

We are always looking for new Pets of the Week. To nominate your Pet of the week email [info@stmarysindependent.com](mailto:info@stmarysindependent.com) with a photo and name / age / owner & a few facts about your animal!



## OBITUARY

### Siddall



Rose Siddall passed away peacefully Sunday January 26, 2025 in her 95th year. Dear wife, best friend, soul-mate of the late James Howard Siddall for 67 plus years (2021).

Loving mother of Cathy and Mike Stead, Deb and Bruce Hodge and Jim and Valerie Siddall. Proud Grandma of

7 Grandchildren Sheri and Sevy Van Bolhuis, Kelli and Scott Rathwell, Sarah Hodge, Krista and Adam McCann, Jamie Hodge and Niki Hunter, Joey Siddall and Becca Gagnon, Michael Siddall and Ellen West-elaken. Proud Grandma to 12 Great Grandchildren Tucker, Griffin, Anna, Reegan; Molly, Henry, Hazel; Landen, Jordyn, Brittany; Hayden and Dillyn. Fondly remembered by several special nieces and nephews. Survived by her brother John and Elma Fletcher. Sisters-in-law Florence (Teada) Campbell, Betty Siddall and Dorothy Siddall. Pre-deceased by her parents Arthur and Rose Fletcher; sister Edith and Robert McCormick; Walter and Katherine Fletcher. Pre-deceased by in-laws Leroy and Sara Siddall; Mary and Stanley (Tye) Burgess; George and Betty; Jack; Shipley and Bernice; Bill and Florence Siddall and brother-in-law Jack Campbell.

Mom wore many hats during her life. She spent much of her time as the bookkeeper of Jim Siddall Trucking and was an employee of Campbell Soup Company for 11 years. She enjoyed social involvement with the Kirkton Woman's Institute, Kirkton U.C.W., the Class that Counts and the Horticultural Society. Using the produce from her garden, she enjoyed many hours baking and canning. She also would enter her produce and flowers into the Kirkton Fall Fair.

She proudly followed and supported all of her grandchildren's sporting events, recitals and school programs. Mom and Dad moved from the Kirkton Community in 2014 onto Oliver Lane in St Marys. In 2021 she moved to the Wildwood Care Centre on the Retirement side where she spent her remaining years. Cremation has taken place.

A Memorial Service will be held at the PYRAMID RECREATION CENTRE, 317 James St. S in the 2/3rd area of the Community Hall on Friday, January 31, 2025 at 2 pm. A reception will follow until 4 pm. Spring interment in St. Paul's Anglican Cemetery in Kirkton. Memorial donations may be made to the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation. Arrangements with the Andrew L. Hodges Funeral Home (519-284-2820). Online tributes at [www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca](http://www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca).

## THANK YOU

### Baird

The family of the late Margaret "Peggy" Baird wish to express their sincere thanks and appreciation to everyone who has offered many acts of kindness, support and messages of sympathy. All continue to be a great source of comfort to us. We also extend our thanks and appreciation to Reverend Robert Lawson, Andrew Hodges Funeral Home and St. James Masonic Lodge #73.

The Baird Family

## OBITUARY

### Hopson



We are deeply saddened to share the news of Wayne Grant Hopson's passing. Wayne passed away peacefully, after a difficult struggle with Lewy Body Dementia, at Stratford General Hospital on January 21, 2025, at the age of 81.

Wayne leaves behind his beloved wife of 56 years. Barbara Hopson (Janes). He was a loving father to LeeAnn and Kelly Walsh, Laura Lynn and Dean Gibson. A most cherished Pa of his five grandchildren Kiersten (Tanner), Brad, Rebecca (Ryan), Ally (Jack), and Rachel. He was a dear brother to Helen and Ian Hyatt, and brother-in-law to Larry (Sophie) Janes. Wayne was predeceased by his parents Grant and Dorothy Hopson, brother Brian Hopson, nephew Shane Hyatt, and brothers-in-law Ron (Rita) Janes and Dennis (Lynda) Janes. He will be missed by his nieces, nephews and extended family members.

Wayne was a lifelong farmer and a dedicated steward of his land, known for his success as a broiler chicken producer. His great strength was his deep love for his family. For years, Wayne could often be found inspecting his crops, maintaining his lawn on his rusty Steiner tractor. Always ready to lend a hand, he was the first to help a neighbour in need, especially when they were stuck in the snow or a spring lawn needed raking. His family will greatly miss his calm presence and constant love.

A private family funeral service will be held, followed by cremation. A graveside service will be conducted at the ST. MARYS CEMETERY, 150 Cain St. St. Marys, on May 3, 2025 at 11am followed by a reception celebration of life at the farm. Memorial donations may be made to the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation or the Alzheimer Society Huron Perth. Arrangements with the Andrew L. Hodges Funeral Home (519-284-2820) with online tributes at [www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca](http://www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca)

## THANK YOU

### Davis

It is with heartfelt appreciation that the family of Jacqui Davis would like to thank everyone who contributed to our final moments with Mom. From the wonderful staff at both the St Marys and Stratford Hospitals, to the neighbours and friends who prepared meals and treats, sent flowers or offered their condolences, we are truly grateful. Mom was obviously surrounded by much love. She will be greatly missed.

Bob, Ann, Sue, Lynn and their families

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## OBITUARY

### McCotter



Catherine Dymphna McCotter (nee McAloon) passed away peacefully at the Stratford General Hospital, on January 24th, 2025, in her 83rd year. Known to her Irish family and friends as Dymphna, and in Canada as Cathy, she was born in 1943 in Enniskillen Town, Co. Fermanagh, Ireland.

Predeceased by her father James, mother Rose, and

younger sister Elish. Cathy was the second of six children, survived by her siblings Thomas, Bernadette, Rose, and Seamus. Cathy leaves the loves of her life, sons Stephen (Deanna), Damien, Kevin (Tara), and Niall (Kate), and her eight grandchildren, John, Declan, Seamus, Pearse, Sean, Grace, Maud, and Aengus.

Coming from humble beginnings, Cathy and her siblings were brought up in a three-room thatch cottage next to Lough Macnean. Her family were mixed farmers who grew their own vegetables, caught trout in the Arney River, and drew water from a well and milk from their cows. Cathy would often tell her boys that she had the most wonderful childhood, and never wanted for anything.

After earning a Masters Degree in teaching, Cathy emigrated to Canada in 1970, landing her first teaching job in Toronto. Cathy was married in 1971, and she and Phelim moved to St. Marys in 1975, where they raised their four boys. A lifelong elementary school teacher of over 40 years, Cathy was passionate about education. She was known to be strict and no-nonsense in the classrooms and playgrounds, but was held in high regard for the manner in which she taught, and her ability to bring the best out of every student.

She was a stickler for both the written and spoken word, in English and French, and there are no doubt corrections she would make to this dedication. Some of her fondest memories were the Grade 8 class play productions she would put on each year. Knowing first hand the societal importance of a quality education system, Cathy was a strong advocate for the interests of teachers, spending many hours long into the night negotiating on behalf of her teachers' union. She was also active in politics, playing important roles in many campaigns, both federally and provincially.

Locally, Cathy also looked back fondly on her time with the St. Marys Community Players, often hosting the closing night after-party at her home on Church Street. Cathy's life was one grounded in her devout Catholic faith, being a weekly churchgoer at Holy Name of Mary Parish for 50 years. It was this deep faith that was the foundation for the person she was, both as a mother and grandmother. Her sons and grandchildren were her everything, often checking on her grandchildren saying "When they aren't well, I'm not well." She leaves a giant hole for her family, but a lasting legacy that they will carry with them for all their days. Cathy asked that we ensure to acknowledge the incredible medical care she received over her final months, not only in St. Marys, but also Stratford and London. The care, compassion, and dignity she was shown by the medical professionals was beyond description, and we thank each and every one of them.

Donations in her memory can be made to the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation. Family and friends are invited to HOLY NAME OF MARY PARISH, Northeast corner of Peel St. N. and Widder St. E. St. Marys, on Wednesday, January 29, 2025, for visitation in the parish hall from 10 am until the time of the Funeral Mass at 11 am. Arrangement with the Andrew L. Hodges Funeral Home (519-284-2820). Online tributes at [www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca](http://www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca).

Burial following in St. Marys Cemetery.

All are then invited to the Westover Inn to celebrate her wonderful life.



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1	3	9	5	8	4	2	6	7
6	5	2	3	7	9	4	8	1
9	8	7	2	5	3	1	4	6
5	6	3	8	4	1	7	9	2
4	2	1	9	6	7	3	5	8
3	1	5	7	9	6	8	2	4
7	9	8	4	2	5	6	1	3
2	4	6	1	3	8	9	7	5

## OBITUARY

### Nash



M. Luella Nash (Jones) passed away in her 90th year on Friday January 24, 2025 at Stratford General Hospital with her family by her side. Luella was born August 25, 1935 in Picton Ontario which resides in Prince Edward County. Luella was predeceased by her loving husband Gary Glen Nash in 2002.

She is lovingly remembered by her son Robert Nash (Alice) and her daughter Luanne Harkes (Robbie). Proud grandmother of Kyle Harkes (Shay), Tiffany Harkes, Theo Nash (Rose), Vicki Nash (Jason) Jenni Nash, Dakota Harkes and great-grand-daughter Ariyah Harkes. Brother Doug Jones (Pat), sister Peggy Walker (John), sisters-in-law Joan Newsome and Lynne Fraser (Colin). Luella is fondly remembered by many nieces and nephews. Luella was predeceased by her son-in-law Allan Harkes (1989), father and mother, Pierce and Margaret Jones, brothers Hugh Jones, Roger Jones, brothers-in-law Vince Newsome and Daniel Nash, sister-in-law Nancy Sabean and her grand-daughter Caitlin Nash. Luella was a member of the St. Marys United Church and a life member of the Girl Guides of Canada. A private family interment in St. Marys Cemetery with a celebration of life in the spring.

Memorial donations can be made to St. Marys Veterinary Clinic. Online tributes at [www.hodgesfuneral-home.ca](http://www.hodgesfuneral-home.ca).

## THANK YOU

### Baker

Verneta Baker passed away on January 6, 2025 at the age of 101.

The family of the late Verneta Baker wish to express our deepest heartfelt gratitude to all our relatives, friends and neighbours who have supported us through this difficult time with cards, prayers, messages, flowers and donations.

Many thanks to Andrew Hodges Funeral services and staff, the pallbearers and special thanks to the United Church minister Robert Lawson and the organist Tim Gilbert, all in helping to make such a beautiful memorial service. That's exactly how she wanted her service.

To the U.C.W. ladies, a special thank you and appreciation for the excellent luncheon. We all wish to thank our cousin Ken Baker for his excellent informative reading about the history of our family & special memories of our dear Auntie Pat. "Rest in Peace."

Special thanks to our St. Marys Memorial Hospital, doctors, nurses and other staff and to Wildwood Care Centre, Scott Walsh, his staff, kitchen staff and everyone who helped her in so many ways. Everyone's kindness and thoughtfulness will be treasured forever.

**The Baker Family**

## CELEBRATION

### The cat's out of the bag!



He won't be able to hide behind his youthful looks anymore!

**Wayne Murray is turning 75!**

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## THE WEEK AHEAD

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PRC & Friendship Centre events - See the Stonetown Crier on Page 5

St. Marys Library events - See Page 18

### Friday, January 31

- Royal Canadian Legion "hot dogs and more" lunch at Noon
- A.N.A.F. meat draw - 6 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs LaSalle Vipers at the PRC - 7:30 p.m.

### Saturday, February 1

- Royal Canadian Legion meat draw - 5 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Elmira Sugar Kings at Dan Snyder Memorial Arena - 7 p.m.

### Sunday, February 2

- Royal Canadian Legion Bingo - Early bird 12:45 p.m., Game time 1-4 p.m.

### Monday, February 3

- Thorndale Lions Club Valentine Bingo at Thorndale Lions Community Centre - 7 p.m.

### Tuesday, February 4

- Royal Canadian Legion Buddy Check coffee at the Legion - 10 am to Noon

## QUIZ ANSWERS

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| 1. New Orleans    | Financial                              |
| 2. Eight          | 7. A Dormant Volcano                   |
| 3. 1993           | 8. Alfred Nobel                        |
| 4. The brain      | 9. Yes                                 |
| 5. Frank Costello | 10. The Western Front (Frontlines WW1) |
| 6. Capital One    |  |



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