

# STRATFORD TIMES

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## Stratford Festival makes its case to buy Normal School for \$1

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Stratford city council will soon have to make a decision on the former Normal School and there is at least one buyer interested.

At a special public meeting on Jan. 16, Stratford city council heard from members of the public on the possibility of selling the Discovery Centre – formerly known as the Stratford Normal School – which has a storied past in the Festival City.

First among the public to speak was Antoni Cimolino, artistic director of the Stratford Festival.

“Should this building be declared surplus to the city’s needs, it is vitally important that it go to a good citizen – one that will ensure the building is well cared for and used. And used responsibly within the neighborhood and the parkland parameters,” Cimolino said. “The festival has proven to be a good citizen with a track record of keeping our facilities in good order and a commitment to enriching our community, but it’s also a precious citizen, one that has been a driver of the local economy for three quarters of a century.

“I’ll be frank, our budgets are very tight these days. We will be announcing a considerable deficit for the 2024 season. ... We hope that if the city decides to sell

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Hilary Sullivan poses with the chefs from Connection Chiropractic as she samples their “adjust-a-chicken delight” soup at the Alzheimer Society Huron Perth’s annual Soup’s On fundraiser Jan. 11. See page 13 for more photos and story. (JULIA PAUL PHOTO)

## 2025 tax rate passed at 5.41 per cent

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Stratford city council has passed the 2025 budget at the committee level, meaning there is still one more vote before it is officially passed, and residential tax rates are set to increase by 5.41 per cent.

After numerous budget meetings that started late last year, council voted to end deliberations at its Jan. 16 finance and labour relations committee meeting, but not before a spirited debate on its responsibilities.

Coun. Cody Sebben again made a motion to refer the budget back to staff to look for further efficiencies – a

motion he has made every year of this term of council.

“I believe that we should be setting targets for staff at the outset of the budget process,” Sebben said. “That wasn’t done, so I would like to refer the budget back to staff with the target of 4 per cent. ... We should be more comfortable sending the budget back to staff than we should be asking residents to pay an increase.”

Just like in prior years, Sebben got little support from his fellow councillors. Coun. Lesley Biehn, Coun. Geza Wordofa and Mayor Martin Ritsma supported his defeated motion.

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# Stratford Festival makes its case to buy Normal School for \$1

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

the Normal School, you will see the benefits of selling it to the festival for \$1. This move would be an important show of support for the festival at a very difficult time and would also acknowledge the major financial contributions we've already made to the Normal School, as well as the considerable sum that would go into maintaining this historical building going forward."

Cimolino further stated the festival receives no local funding from the city and, citing an economic impact study the festival commissioned last year, it generates \$277 million in economic activity each year.

Post-pandemic, it has struggled financially year after year.

The building in question is located at 270 Water St. It was constructed in 1907 by the province to train new teachers before moving teacher education to newer facilities in the 1990s. The City of Stratford purchased it in 2001 and just recently indicated it could be declared surplus.

The festival has been leasing the property since 2009, using the basement as a gift shop opposite the festival stage since that time, among other theatre uses. In that time, the festival has paid nearly a \$1 million to the city for the lease and has averaged \$42,000 in repairs and maintenance



Antoni Cimolino makes a case for the Stratford Festival buying the former Normal School from the City of Stratford for only \$1. While the festival cannot pledge to pay more for it, he said they can pledge to be a good custodian of the storied building. (CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

year over year.

While some expressed support for the purchase that evening, other residents disagreed.

Jason Davis, a self-described affordable-housing advocate, said the building

should be kept by the city, refurbished and made into a city-owned child-care facility, something lacking in Stratford.

Jane Marie Mitchell said the building should be kept and used by the community as a public building, perhaps as space for

city staff.

Loreena McKennitt said the festival would be a reasonable buyer for the building, but wanted the city to stipulate that should their efforts to maintain the building fail, the festival would have to sell the building back to the city.

No decision was made at the meeting to give time for the public to express their thoughts. A decision on the property – and whether or not to sell – will be before council at a later date.

Before the public meeting began, Coun. Cody Sebben objected to the process. During budget deliberations, the presiding committee had earlier struck the line item for maintenance of the building, which struck him as indicative of a decision already made.

Regardless of what decision is made, the last resident to speak at the meeting offered a singular warning.

"This past season, I have been a member of the festival," said Morag Currie, "and have had a great opportunity in interacting with many of our guests who come to visit. One of the biggest major landmarks that they comment on is the Normal School building. They are fascinated by what it is, what is its history, how beautiful it is.

"If we lose this, we lose much more than just a building."

## 2025 tax rate passed at 5.41 per cent

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

"We're going to be pushing staff to start working on the 2026 budget in the coming months," Coun. Brad Beatty said in response. "Be brave. If you really think that there's money to be found, be brave. Find a \$1 million; find the \$2 million yourself. Put it out there; let's talk about it. We can't keep saying, 'Can

you find something else?' They've already come to us with their best. Let's move on."

Since the draft budget was initially published, there have been numerous amendments made during council's deliberations such as revisions and corrections the treasurer's department has noted, but also additions and subtractions council voted to implement, including:

- Using \$700,000 from the tax-stabilization reserve fund to bring down the levy increase.
- Using Municipal Accommodations Tax (MAT) revenues to fund \$150,000 for Lights On Stratford, saving that money from the levy.
- Striking the costs to maintain the Normal School building in 2025, saving \$250,000, given its potential sale this year.
- Deferring \$60,000 for a traffic-study consultant.
- Approving an emergency exercise for Stratford's first responders, expected to cost \$50,000.
- A new supervisor of policy placemaking position, \$76,296.
- Changing six casual recreation positions into permanent positions, \$16,776.
- A new Ontario Works caseworker position, \$21,730.
- A new bylaw enforcement officer position, \$60,686.
- A new bylaw supervisor position, \$68,705.
- A new financial services supervisor, \$66,514.
- Two vehicles for the new bylaw staff, \$110,300.
- An additional \$45,000 to the CAO's budget, as required, rather than the requested new communications coordinator position.
- A new backflow prevention officer position, \$30,343.

Additionally, council approved a few other changes that will not impact the rise in tax rates. Instead, reserve funds or other savings are expected to fund

these initiatives:

- Using MAT revenues to fund \$150,000 for the Attainable Housing Incentive Community Improvement Plan.
- Supports to investStratford for its Grand Trunk endeavours.
- Two new electronic message board trailers.
- An additional mobility bus.
- A new facilities plumber position and vehicle.
- A new facilities electrician position and vehicle.
- A new water meter technician position.

The budget passed at the committee level, with Sebben, Wordofa and Ritsma opposed to moving it along. Coun. Mark Hunter was absent.

The decision over final approval will be before council at a later date. At any point before the budget bylaw is passed, council may revisit and revise it.

Just before adjournment, council discussed the pressures facing municipal governments – especially when other levels of government are downloading their responsibilities to them. Coun. Bonnie Henderson specifically highlighted the pressure the social services department faces, for instance.

In response, Coun. Taylor Briscoe asked staff to investigate the effect this downloading has on the municipality.

"That's the information I would find valuable to get back from staff ... that, if it gets cut, it should fall at the feet of the people who should bear the cost of that cut," Briscoe said. "I also think it's incredibly important – not just for our awareness, but for the public's awareness. We are going to a vote within the next two to three months provincially and we need to be making informed decisions or, at the very least, asking the tough questions of how are we going to be supported so that we don't bear the final cost, and our taxpayers don't bear the final cost of those downloads?"

# Mayor worries of “gray skies” for Stratford as trade-tariff threats loom

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

“We are in unprecedented times right now,” Mayor Martin Ritsma warned at the Jan. 16, 2025, budget deliberations. “And we can’t ignore that. You turn on the radio or television, you will know the gravity of the situation.”

The situation he was referring to is American President Donald Trump’s proposed 25 per-cent tariffs on all Canadian goods – a proposal Ontario Premier Doug Ford said could see half-a-million job losses in the province.

“We could say, ‘You know what? Those won’t impact the City of Stratford – our manufacturing, our auto sector, they won’t,’ ” Ritsma said about the potential job losses. “But I think it’s easier for us to be prudent right now to make sure that we are aware of the economic impact.”

In response to the trade threat, Ritsma suggested council look at the 2025 budget with the possibility of “gray skies” rather than blue in mind. He put forward a motion to defer all new staff positions previously approved by the budget committee that would increase taxes.

That would have affected six new positions and translated into about \$310,000 in savings. Translated into what taxpayers would see, it would have saved them about \$3 a month.

Coun. Jo-Dee Burbach didn’t support the motion, calling it “performative,” given just how little they impact the levy.

“These expanded positions will actually allow staff to do their work more efficiently,” Burbach said. “And I do worry ... if we don’t have enough people to do the work, how are we ever going to build more housing? How are we ever going to move forward in a productive way that isn’t actually going to cost us more in the long run, taxpayers and otherwise?”

Coun. Brad Beatty agreed with Burbach in part.

“Fifteen years sitting here on council,

I’ve seen a lot. I don’t know if its actually unprecedented times,” he said. “I’ve seen cyber attacks, I’ve seen COVID. ... What’s going on in the states? We have no control. We have no control over what the federal government is going to do. We have no control over what the provincial government is going to do. We can only control what we’re going to do right here.”

“Adding staff isn’t necessarily a bad thing. It’s not evil to add staff. If you want to be brave, be brave. Find \$1 million. Find \$2 million. For me, this is a nice gesture but it’s not going to make a real difference.”

However, Coun. Taylor Briscoe was one of the councillors who supported the mayor’s motion, saying it is an important line to be drawn for upper levels of government.

“We’re hearing rhetoric of canceling our \$10-a-day daycare,” Briscoe said. “That’s going to be a \$30,000ish a year for child cost that families will have to absorb, as well as potentially a family member losing a job. ... So, I share the concerns and I think it’s one of these difficult situations where we’re making a tough call to preserve the immediate affordability for our citizens, but we’re also making a really strong stand against upper levels that we will no longer and our citizens will no longer foot the bill for your inability to meet their needs.”

Though supported by many around the horseshoe, Ritsma’s motion was defeated in a split 5-5 vote. Coun. Mark Hunter was absent.

The budget was subsequently passed at that meeting with a tax rate increase at 5.41 per cent – just shy of the “south of five per cent” the mayor wished to see at the outset of the deliberations; however, council may continue to make revisions until the budget bylaw is passed at a subsequent council meeting.

For more on the recently passed budget and the changes council made, see our cover story.



Mayor Martin Ritsma said council would be foolish to pass the 2025 budget thinking it will be blue skies for the Festival City. U.S. President Donald Trump’s 25 per-cent trade tariffs on all Canadian goods may mean this coming year will be gray skies. (CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

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# Editorial

## We bought a house

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

For a couple of millennials just starting out together, my fiancé, Julia, and I have managed to do the unimaginable.

We bought a house.

If you had asked me a year ago whether we'd be buying a house now, I would have laughed a little too hard (and maybe a single tear would have rolled down my cheek). For my entire adult life, the idea of owning a house seemed so far out of reach, I'd stopped considering it as even a remote possibility – a feeling so many other millennials without any serious financial backing from their families are familiar with.

In fact, I don't even think we would have begun looking for a home when we did if our landlord hadn't decided to try and sell the house we're currently renting, listing it

out of the blue back in October. While that was a nightmare of mine come true, I'm glad we were forced to consider purchasing our first home together as the Government of Canada's introduction of 30-year amortizations for first-time homebuyers made our monthly mortgage payments more affordable. Combined with the expectation that house prices will increase this spring, it really does feel like the right time.

It still doesn't feel real to me, but somehow between the money my grandmother left me and what Julia has managed to contribute to her RRSP over the years, as well whatever we could beg and borrow (definitely not steal) from our family members, together we had enough for a downpayment on a house in Stratford.

Now, don't get me wrong, we didn't have enough money saved to buy our dream home. The house we've purchased is at the

absolute bottom of the market. It's small – a story and a half with a little over 1,200 square feet of usable floor space and an unfinished, half-height basement – but it is in a great neighbourhood, right behind the old Grant Trunk Railway shops in downtown Stratford where the city is looking to build a community hub and develop the surrounding property.

So, we are excited about the potential for our property value to increase after shovels hit the ground, likely in 2026.

The house needs a lot of work, one, to make it livable and, two, to maximize our investment. And that's how we're looking at it, as an investment. If we do everything we're planning for this house – redoing the kitchen and upstairs bathroom, putting in a back door and maybe a deck, installing new insulation, drywall and flooring, and sealing the basement from moisture as much as possible – we're hoping that when

we're ready for our next home in five or 10 years, we'll have built up enough equity to take us up to that next rung on the housing ladder.

One lesson I think Julia and I have both learned as first-time homebuyers is it's okay to settle for a home you're not entirely happy with. Throughout our house hunt, we saw the best and the worst of homes in and around the mortgage range we qualified for. From wet basements and mold to absolutely bizarre layouts and renovations, it quickly became clear that for those of us at the bottom end of the housing spectrum, this house is really just a steppingstone toward what we truly want in a home.

It'll also be a great training ground to learn all those home-reno skills my parents never taught me, so look forward to future editorials about how that goes, good and bad.

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## Letters to the Editor

### Comparing Stratford and Orillia

Recently, city council discussed a proposal to give council members a raise. During the discussions, city staff compared council's pay with several other Ontario towns, one of them being Orillia.

In a previous letter, I compared Stratford's spending to that of Orangeville. As similar as the cities of Stratford and Orangeville are, the cities of Stratford and Orillia are almost identical. Orillia has a population of 34,000 and covers an area of 28.53 square kilometres for a population density of 1,717 people per square kilometre. Stratford has a population of 34,000 in an area of 30.02 square kilometres for a density of 1,107 people per square kilometre.

The figures being used for this comparison are taken from Stratford's 2025 draft budget and Orillia's adopted 2025 budget. Orillia's budget included a 2.5 per-cent tax increase, Stratford's 2025 draft budget, if approved, would include a 5.41 per-cent tax increase.

### Transit

The two cities in this department are basically the same. Orillia's transit budget is \$3,907,880; Stratford's is \$3,873,410.

### Fire Department

Orillia has a hybrid fire department made up of 32 full-time firefighters and 30 volunteer firefighters. It has two fire stations. Its budget is \$9,688,089. Stratford's fire de-

partment, as far as I could find out, has about 40 fulltime firefighters and two stations. Its budget is \$10,064,855. So, Orillia has 22 more possible firefighters for almost \$400,000 less.

### Police Department

Orillia has a contract with the OPP for its police services. Its police budget is \$10,001,239, a 7.49 per-cent increase over 2024. Stratford's police budget is \$16,105,281, a 16 per-cent increase over 2024.

### Totals

Orillia's three departments: \$23,597,208

Stratford's three departments: \$30,043,546

Obviously, the elephant in the room is the police budget. At a recent budget meeting, Coun. Beatty proclaimed, "It's up to council to determine the level of service we provide, so if you think there's money to be found, then find it." I think I found it. As far as level of service goes, I highly doubt you're going to find anyone in Orillia or Orangeville who describes their communities as under-policed, crime-ridden hellscape.

It's high time the city look into contracting its police services out to the OPP unless the taxpayers of Stratford are fond of five to seven per-cent tax increases every year.

John Lewis,  
Stratford

### Jimmy Carter tribute a welcome, spiritual reprieve

After the devastating terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 in the United States, Anne Graham Lotz was asked, "Where was God on that day?" Her reply to the audience was poignant, "I believe America has turned its back on God."

On Jan. 9, 2025, America, through technology, witnessed the largest, spirit-filled tribute to a former president at the Washington National Cathedral as family, politicians and clergy spoke with remarkable grace and tribute to the life of service and love Jimmy Carter gave throughout his 100 years.

When I was involved some years ago with Habitat for

Humanity building homes in Stratford, I was aware of Jimmy Carter's significance in the organization and contacted his office with an invitation to visit our Festival Theatre to speak of his work. They were honoured and excited to act and we began the process until it had to be aborted with his need to travel to Israel.

The service on Jan. 9 brought forth the value of God's spirit working in a man for the good of his country and all mankind. Let us all hope to experience again a leadership built on the values of respect, humility, truth, faith and love.

Laura Pogson,  
Stratford

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# Perth County Paramedic Service recruiting 15 new paramedics

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

The Perth County Paramedic Service is currently in the process of recruiting 15 new paramedics during its annual recruitment drive.

The paramedic service, operated by Medavie Health Services, began accepting applications on Jan. 13 with a closing date of Jan. 26 at 4:30 p.m. According to the job posting for primary care paramedics on Perth County's website ([www.perth-county.ca/en/county-government/employment-opportunities.aspx](http://www.perth-county.ca/en/county-government/employment-opportunities.aspx)), candidates must be certified in Ontario as a primary care paramedic, a paramedic eligible to work in Canada who has obtained or is obtaining the paramedic labour mobility equivalency exam, or a primary care paramedic student writing the provincial certification in June 2025.

"We are a progressive service with a focus on our patients through paramedic engagement," Perth County Paramedic Service chief Mike Adair said. "All of our paramedics are trained and re-certified annually to provide emergency care to our patients. We also focus on staff. Not only do we focus our training on patient care, but we also learn about responder mental health. We like to have fun at work as a team. We are here for the community and would love to employ you if you are interested in clinical excellence, care for the community, and you're looking for a unique place to work, learn and grow."

According to the job posting, each primary care paramedic is responsible for responding to requests for paramedic service and delivering medical care to victims of accidents and illness, ensuring

safe transportation to receiving medical facilities and assisting with the ongoing care of the patient within the facility as may be required.

Paramedics also participate in the ongoing maintenance of ambulance vehicles, equipment and stations, and other duties as may be required by the duty commander or the Perth County Paramedic Service.

Adair said there are numerous opportunities for primary care paramedics to advance and develop their careers within the Perth County Paramedic Service.

"Our service has many areas for engagement that include working as an acting-supervisor, training paramedic and community paramedic," he said. "... Perth County Paramedic Service is a place where people can grow, learn and flourish. We invest in our paramedics and patients in many ways.

"All paramedics practice at the highest primary care paramedic level and must be IV certified. We strive to foster a caring culture of love, respect, excellence and accountability. We provide paramedics with the tools they need to do their job. We have modern equipment and facilities such as powerload stretchers, CPR devices and defibrillators. We engage our paramedics in the way of committee work or through our special positions or programs. We have a peer-support team, paramedic-advisory committee, equipment committee, field-training paramedics and acting supervisors."

Perth County employs 127 people on the paramedic-services team. The county deploys paramedic services from five base locations across the entire geographic region of Perth County including in the City of Stratford and Town of St. Marys.

## Stratford police charge illegal taxi operators

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

The Stratford Police Service (SPS) charged two unlicensed rideshare operators for operating outside of Stratford's taxi bylaw in the last month.

The city's taxi bylaw requires any individual providing a motor vehicle for hire in Stratford to hold a valid taxi-licence and insurance. According to SPS media-relations officer Const. Darren Fischer, police issued a provincial offence notice with a court date to both drivers.

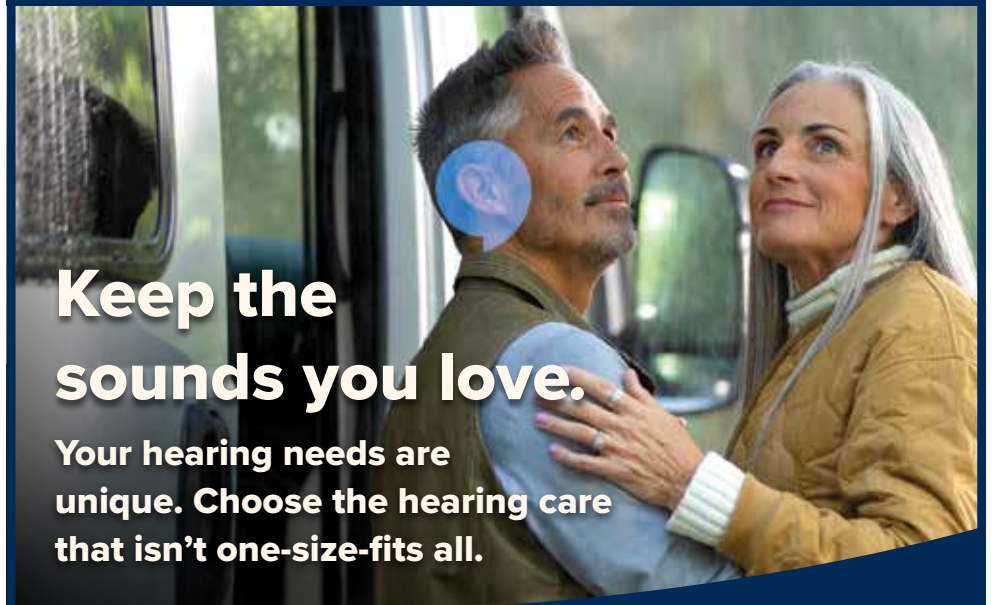
Police say the first ticket was issued to a man using his personal vehicle and charging people for rides, while the second ticket was issued to an Uber driver

from out of town.

Unlicensed rideshare companies or individuals who are neither licensed or insured to pick up and drop off passengers for a fee in the city could be subject to fines under the taxi bylaw. Licensed taxis can be identified by a valid taxi number plate on the exterior of the vehicle, and a licensed driver can be identified by an official photo taxi-driver license displayed predominantly inside the vehicle.

SPS encourages anyone who is aware of illegal rideshare operators conducting business within the City of Stratford to contact the Stratford Police Service at 519-271-4141 ext. 2. Anyone interested in obtaining a taxi licence in the City of Stratford can contact SPS at 519-271-4147 ext. 8235.

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# Regardless of rain and snow, another successful Lights On Stratford is in the books

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

With the fifth season of Lights On Stratford now in the books, organizers are thrilled with both the number of people who came out to see the lights and the number of local businesses and community organizations that embraced this year's winter-lights festival.

This year's lights festival ran Thursday through Sunday starting on Dec. 13, 2024, and it officially wrapped up on Jan. 19. Despite a mix of weather ranging from rain and warmer temperatures to snow and frigid cold, Destination Stratford executive director Zac Gribble said the festival achieved the goal set by organizers back when it was first launched at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

"We're still collecting some information as far as numbers from (last weekend),

but I can tell you this has been the highest attendance ever across our five annual festivals," Gribble said. "We're really thrilled with how this festival performed in terms of getting our community out in a very cold, snowy, deep, dark winter, and also attracting people from further afield to come and celebrate Stratford."

When it first started, the goal of Lights On Stratford was to give locals and visitors alike a reason to spend time in downtown Stratford, spending money at local shops, cafés and restaurants at a time of year previously considered Stratford's off-season, after the theatre season is over.

This year, Gribble said the festival accomplished that goal in spades thanks, in part, to the attention-grabbing, interactive and creative light displays. Gribble said those who attended the festival enjoyed Emergence by This Is Loop and STARGATE by Chalk River Labs – the displays

in Market Square – as well as the Trumpet Flowers and SHROOMS displays on Tom Patterson Island.

"One of the highlights for me personally ... is how much community engagement and partnership is happening now," Gribble said.

"I contrast that to the earlier festivals when we were just getting going. There wasn't a lot of additional, cultural activity happening. This year, there was so much from pop-ups all over town to film festivals to concerts at the Tom Patterson Theatre, partnerships with the Stratford Festival and Stratford Summer Music, and glow-in-the-dark curling at the Stratford Country Club. There was just so much happening in and around the community during Lights On Stratford, which is really important for us in terms of how we intentionally develop this festival and what it can do for the community as it moves

forward and continues to grow."

From opportunities for related experiences at the Stratford Public Library and University of Waterloo Stratford to silent discos, the City of Stratford's roving light displays/hop-on hop-off shuttle service and the NYX: Electronic Drone Choir concert at the Tom Patterson Theatre, Gribble said there was so much for attendees to enjoy beyond seeing the light displays.

While some may not like this year's \$600,000 budget for the festival, Gribble remains resolute in his opinion that the development of Lights On Stratford is crucial to supporting the local economy when the Stratford Festival is not in season.

"This year, I think we've proven this is something that can continue to grow, continue to expand and, with this much community support, I feel like we're in a really good position to do that," he said.



Locals and visitors explore the Emergence light display in Market Square during Lights On Stratford.



STARGATE by Chalk River Labs.

(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTOS)



The SHROOMS light display lit up Tom Patterson Island during Lights On Stratford.



Kids run through the interactive Trumpet Flowers display on Tom Patterson Island, creating a unique soundscape amid the colourful lights.

# InvestStratford looking for locals' ideas to turn vacant lands into housing

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

It is often said that to properly address the housing crisis in Canada, everyone and anyone will need to work together.

To that end, investStratford is looking for residents' ideas on a number of properties scattered around Stratford.

"We're past the time where we can leave land sitting when we have the housing deficit that we have, both provincially, nationally and locally, right?" said Kendra Fry, housing specialist at investStratford. "And so, it's on us to come up with inventive solutions to our housing issues and try to create more opportunities to create more affordability within the Stratford area.

"The idea is to activate (the properties) for as much community benefit in the form of affordable or attainable housing. The City of Stratford, for the most part, is not in the habit of being its own developer. And so, the way to attract developers to build projects is either through an RFP or RFEOI process."

A request for expressions of interest (RFEOI) is used to gather information and gauge interest on a project, different from a request for proposals (RFP), which is binding.

The properties investStratford is currently looking at developing are 161 East Gore St. and 38 Coriano St., both currently vacant lots, and 246 Railway Ave., a

former hydro building that is currently used as storage by the city.

The idea for 246 Railway Ave. is to renovate the interior to create a two-bedroom accessible unit to be run by social services. As a more straightforward project, the city issued an RFP rather than RFEOI.

For the vacant lands, the city is looking for developers to bring forth their ideas for how to create fully affordable or mixed-market affordable, attainable housing.

"And it's up to them to define the form that they think best utilizes the space," Fry said. "It could be townhouses, it could be row housing, it could be duplexes, it could be an apartment building, could be individual houses, could be little, tiny homes. It's really up to the various proponents to explain to us why their particular proposal best meets our needs."

A committee will review the bidders based on a matrix of assessment that will be developed by outside advisors, but city council will ultimately adopt or reject the bids.

While there are currently three properties with requests attached, Fry said the work in identifying suitable lands is not done. More projects will be opened up in the near future.

Bids for the vacant lands are due on Feb. 21. Bids for 246 Railway Ave. will be received until Jan. 29. For more information, visit [www.investstratford.com](http://www.investstratford.com).



246 Railway Ave. is one of the properties investStratford hopes to activate as affordable or attainable housing.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

## The Laramie Project – A personal work

RON DODSON

Times Contributor

In the fall of 1998, I transitioned from teaching secondary drama – having produced and directed nearly 100 plays – to an administrative role with the Avon Maitland District School Board. In mid-October that year, the shocking murder of Matthew Shepard, a gay University of Wyoming student, rocked North America.

Tortured and killed in Laramie, Wyo. simply because he was gay, Shepard's death spurred an outpouring of grief and a reckoning with the attitudes enabling such violence. Over the following years, laws addressing hate crimes and protecting vulnerable minorities were implemented.

Four weeks after Shepard's death, an innovative New York based theatre troupe traveled to Laramie to interview residents. Over six visits, they conducted more than 200 and compiled their journals to create *The Laramie Project*. Premiering in 2000 in Denver and later in Laramie, the play examined the psyche of a community grappling with

its identity and values. It became the most-produced play in the U.S. for two consecutive years.

Five years earlier, Stratford had its own shock, the 1993 brutal killing of "Dougy" Grass, murdered in his home just 550 feet from the building where I worked for 25 years. Dougy's death, also motivated by his sexual orientation, devastated Stratford's theatre community.

In February this year, we mark the 25th anniversary of *The Laramie Project*. I felt compelled as an LGBTQ+ ally and a friend of Dougy's to bring it to Stratford. Stratford Winter Pride offered its arts-stage dates. As word spread, the idea gained enthusiastic support from the cast and creatives.

The play challenges us to confront personal and community values, giving voice to Matthew, Dougy and the ongoing fight for equality.

*The Laramie Project* will be staged at Stratford Intermediate School on Saturday Feb. 8 at 2 and 7:30 p.m. as part of Stratford Winter Pride. To purchase tickets, visit [ticketscene.ca](http://ticketscene.ca) and search "*The Laramie Project*."



## STRATFORD WINTERFEST 2025

Saturday, January 25, 2025

Upper Queen's Park

10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

(Some activities Weather Permitting. Events and Times subject to change)

10:00 a.m. - Blacksmith Demonstrations begin

11:00 a.m. - Zoltan the Adequate Show.

11:00 a.m. - Ice Sculptor begins- Maple Taffy begins.

11:40 a.m. - Great Canadian Lumberjack Show

12:30 p.m. - Zoltan the Adequate Show

1:30 p.m. - Great Canadian Lumberjacks Show

2:30 p.m. - Zoltan the Adequate Show

3:00 p.m. - Maple Taffy ends

3:30 p.m. Great Canadian Lumberjacks Show

SEE EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES ON  
[WWW.STRATFORDWINTERFEST.CA](http://WWW.STRATFORDWINTERFEST.CA)

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT  
[WWW.STRATFORDTIMES.COM](http://WWW.STRATFORDTIMES.COM)

# Advocate warns seniors are at risk of homelessness due to rising tax rates

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Just prior to council approving a 5.41 percent tax rate increase, a homelessness advocate came to Stratford city hall to warn about what that means for one vulnerable population in particular, seniors.

“Every penny is making a difference,” said Baiba Wilde of Safe Haven Perth, an organization helping those struggling with short-term homelessness in the county.

From her position there, Wilde has seen

firsthand how what may seem like a small amount could have large impacts.

She said a common scenario is a senior on a fixed income gets priced out of their own home and has to find somewhere to move. With the increase in rent, it becomes apparent within a couple of months they need more time and will need storage for the lifetime of possessions they have. They couch-surf, move into motels and take on credit-card debt. With storage costs, rising debt payments and the unrelenting cost of living, it becomes insurmountable and suddenly

having a place to call home isn't feasible.

“And that's when they start moving into shelters or sleeping in their cars,” Wilde said.

Kim McElroy, director of Stratford social services, said Wilde's presentation was timely. She had just directed staff to pull data on senior homelessness. Anecdotally, the department noticed a marked increase towards the end of last year.

Wilde asked for policies to be created to promote tax relief for qualifying seniors as a way for them to maintain their dignity and continue to live in their homes, rather than entering into the shelter system.

Wilde's suggestion didn't gain traction at the meeting; however, her message did. Coun. Bonnie Henderson thanked Wilde for the suggestion, indicating it would be best implemented at the provincial level, given the complexity to manage it.

Coun. Taylor Briscoe echoed what Wilde

said and indicated the average age of someone in shelter rose from 35 to 55 in the last 10 years.

“You're seeing a lot more individuals move from shelter directly into long-term care,” Briscoe said. “That used to be the kind of one off and now it's the standard. And so, I thank you for your presentation ... but I encourage you to keep asking these questions and bringing these demands forward. We're on the eve of two major elections in Ontario. We have a provincial election coming up in several months and we know we'll have a federal election later this spring or summer. So, all three levels need to address this.”

“It's a matter of community,” Wilde responded. “It shouldn't be government's responsibility to make sure we look after one another. That's what we need to do – we need to expand our community beyond ourselves.”

## Doherty, Cousins re-elected as chair and vice chair of police board

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The same leaders of the Stratford Police Services Board last year will continue their leadership into 2025.

Tim Doherty and Steve Cousins were unanimously re-elected as chair and vice chair of the board at its most recent meeting on Jan. 15.

Doherty thanked the board after they agreed to continue his position. Cousins was absent from the meeting but previous-

ly expressed interest in letting his name stand in the elections.

Doherty has served as chair of the board since 2022 and had previously served as vice chair. Likewise, Cousins has been serving as vice chair since 2023.

Doherty is a retired principal for both the Thames Valley District School Board and the Huron Perth Catholic District School Board, as well as a former member of United Way Perth Huron. Cousins is a regional general manager for Ontario at Cascades Inc.

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CANADA'S NEWS MEDIA  
**CHAMPIONS  
OF THE TRUTH**

## UTRCA's Nature School programming available for upcoming PA day

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

[stratfordtimes@gmail.com](mailto:stratfordtimes@gmail.com)

The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) is launching a new PA Day program in partnership with the Stratford Perth Museum.

This fun-filled day mimics the UTRCA's Nature School program and is aimed at students between eight and 12 years old. Activities will include fire-making, printmaking and snowshoeing.

“We have some really fun indoor and outdoor activities planned with a focus on the beauty of nature and the stories of different cultures and local history,” said UTRCA community education technician Matthew Marchioni in a press release. “We're really excited to partner with the Stratford Perth Museum and host the PA Day at their venue.”

The program runs on Friday, Jan. 31 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. with options for extended care. For more information or to register, parents and caregivers can visit <https://bit.ly/3DnoJKX>.

For ages of 8-12

**P.A. Day NATURE SCHOOL CAMP!**  
January 31st, 2025

Stratford Perth Museum - 9:30 am to 3:30 pm  
275 Huron Road or, 4275 Line 34, Stratford, ON N5A 6S6

**THE THREE SISTERS**  
Learn about local Indigenous peoples and their resourceful practices.

**PRINT MAKING**  
A hands-on printmaking activity.

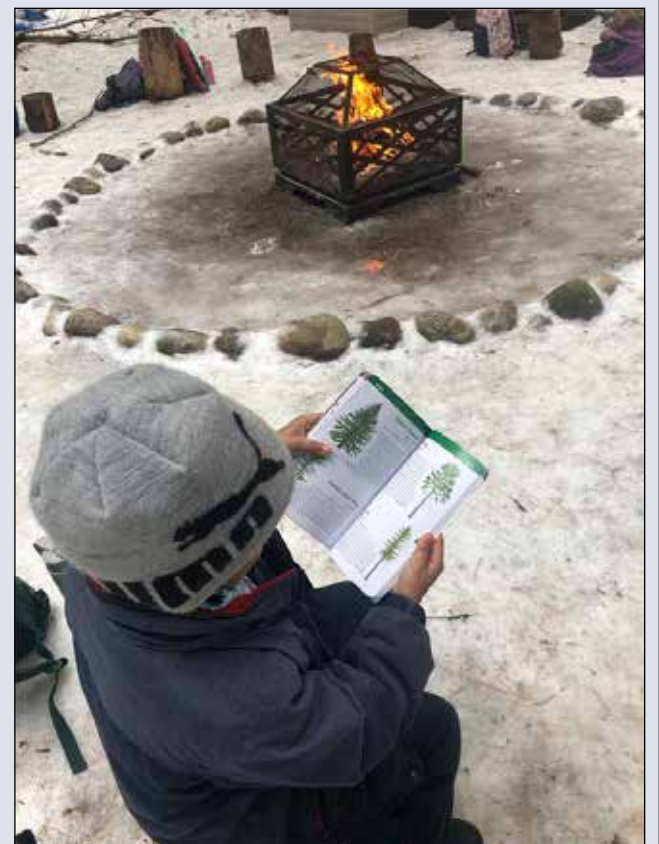
**BOB'SY HANDS**  
Buzz through the basic concepts of pollination and beekeeping.

**SNOWSHOEING**  
Discover the history of snowshoes and learn about the styles of different traditional Indigenous snowshoes and their purpose. Then we will all go on a guided hike using snowshoes!

**FIRE MAKING**  
Learn some of the methods of fire starting and will be taught how to use some of the tools available to start a fire, and enjoy some fireside treats!

UPPER THAMES RIVER CONSERVATION AUTHORITY  
STRATFORD PERTH MUSEUM  
New Community Year Museum

The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) has partnered with the Stratford Perth Museum to offer a PA Day program at the museum on Jan. 31 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (UTRCA PHOTO)





# Architectural Conservancy of Ontario Stratford-Perth plaque program uncovering local history one building at a time

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

For 13 years, members of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario (ACO) Stratford-Perth County branch have been helping owners of residential, commercial and other buildings across Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County learn about and share local built history.

The historical plaque program launched in February 2012 is sponsored by the Stratford-Perth County Branch of the ACO. It helps locals and tourists alike connect with the history of the community by identifying with a plaque residential, commercial and other properties built before the Second World War.

"It's just to make people aware of the history, residents and tourists coming in," said plaque program coordinator Michele Bailey. "I think they like to read the history of the houses. The names on the plaques aren't necessarily the people who built the house, it's the first people that lived in the house (or occupied a building). It's the people who own the house (or building now) who request a plaque. Their neighbours might have had a plaque, so they might want to find out what their house is all about."

Volunteers with the local ACO branch spend between 30 and 50 hours researching the history of each property through



(ACO STRATFORD-PERTH COUNTY PHOTO)

**An example of an Architectural Conservancy of Ontario Stratford-Perth County historical plaque. This one, located at 54 Waterloo St. N in Stratford, recognizes "gentlewoman" Annie Sydney-Smith, who moved into the newly built "granny's cottage" in 1889 and lived there for three years before she died in March 1892.**

the Stratford-Perth Archives and the R. Lorne Eedy Archives in St. Marys to determine the date of construction and the name and occupation of the title holders or registered tenant.

Each plaque records the date the structure was built and the name and occupation of the title holders or tenant of record. Though women were rarely named as title holders, Bailey said the ACO researchers strive to recognize them in one form or another. Plaques are located in an appropriate and clearly visible place on the façade of the building. The details



(ACO STRATFORD-PERTH COUNTY PHOTO)

**This plaque recognizes Stratford grocer William Joseph McCully who had the home at 218 Ontario St. designed by architect James Russell in 1901. McCully moved into the home the following year.**

of the researched information accompanies each plaque presented to the current owners of the property.

"Nine times out of 10, there's nothing very historically significant in a house (or building), but it's always very interesting what you find when you start looking," Bailey said. "... Sometimes, it's just your average person lived there, nothing too crazy, but we always go back to where they come from originally – did they come from England, Ireland, Scotland – and then we found out some really crazy things about some of the houses, too."

"The craziest one that I researched was, there was a murder in the house.

The homeowner was not happy. I was so excited about it; she was not. So, I never put anything in the research about the murder because she didn't want it."

Bailey said the ACO volunteers always work closely with building owners, first to uncover anything they already know about their building or to obtain relevant historical photos and documents they may have, and then to ensure the wording of the plaque and accompanying research is to their liking.

At the moment, Bailey said the local ACO volunteers are researching their 419th plaque since the program began. So far this year, she said requests for plaques have been slow to come in following the recent Canada Post workers strike, however she's hopeful requests will pick up soon.

The plaque program does not involve heritage designation of the property under the Ontario Heritage Act, which means an ACO plaque does not impact what building owners can do on their properties or to their buildings.

"It's just fun," Bailey said. "Fun knowing when it was built, who built it."

For more information on the ACO Stratford-Perth County historical plaque program and to download a plaque-application form, visit [www.stratford-perth-countybranchaco.ca/Historical\\_Plaque\\_Program](http://www.stratford-perth-countybranchaco.ca/Historical_Plaque_Program).

## Provincial Summer Company Grant Program open to students 15-29

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

The Stratford Perth Centre for Business (SPCB) is now accepting applications for grants of \$3,000 through the provincial Summer Company Program.

The program, which has been operating for over 15 years, has helped develop student entrepreneurs as they start and operate their own summer businesses.

"The province increased the funding for the grant program across all the centres that deliver the money, so we have eight grants this year," said Holly Mortimer, SPCB business advisor. "The goal of the participants is to experience entrepreneurship before they are out there and finished educating themselves and incurring debt and experimenting and realize they didn't enjoy it. So here, they can use somebody else's money to experiment with entrepreneurship and learn all the facets that they would need to know and decide if they like it or not."

To be eligible, applicants must be students in high school, college or university, not employed, between the ages of 15

and 29, Canadian citizens and intend to continue their education in the fall.

"The application process for the first time ever is now being done locally. Before, it used to be done provincially, so this is great news. Now, we can customize it for the region as to what we are looking for and what information we are going to gather. They would need to apply online and it's pretty straightforward; who are you, what's your address and what's your idea. Successful applicants will give us a bit more than just the idea; 'I'm thinking of doing this and here's why,' have you done this before and what do you hope to gain," said Mortimer.

Once the application is submitted, Mortimer reaches out and determines if technical criteria is met and if the idea can be viable through a business plan, how much it is going to cost to run and if the grant can help with that. The grant provides \$1,500 in start-up funds and \$1,500 at the end of the season.

"We guide them through a templated business plan and then, at the end of that process, here inside at investStratford,

we have a committee of people that banter it back and forth and decide, yes, it is good. It is first come, first serve, so as long as the idea is viable and they met the entry level criteria, then they are in. We really just want to take the viability of an idea and teach them how to turn that into a business," said Mortimer.

Businesses that have thrived under this grant program include those focused on landscaping, house painting, a children's camp, managing YouTube channels with paid subscribers, computer programming, game creation, tech support for seniors, and even detailers in niche markets.

"Having run this program for 14 years, I can't think of anyone that crashed and burned. We've had a lot of fun and so many success stories. We had a house painter who, in his first year of business, grossed \$85,000 as a university student. This will be his third season returning; he hired a management team and operated it from afar," said Mortimer.

Mortimer said running a business is a good alternative to finding summer employment in the job market.

"The cool thing about this program is I want to see anything and everything. Tell me what you love to do and we can turn that into a business. The biggest challenge that participants face is networking and communication. They come with less experience communicating and struggle to talk about themselves, talk about their business and talk to customers about what their needs are. But we are here to help with that; we always launch with a big launch party and get as many community and private partners to attend to just start talking to them. We have mentors that are really skilled with this," said Mortimer.

The program's impact on youth entrepreneurship in the region has been huge. Typically, 50 per cent of the students who participate decide self-employment is for them and something they would like to pursue. Of that 50 per cent, roughly 25 per cent return the following season to continue their enterprise in either a full- or part-time capacity.

For more information, visit [stratford-perthbusiness.ca](http://stratford-perthbusiness.ca) or email [info@stratfordperthbusiness.ca](mailto:info@stratfordperthbusiness.ca).

# Ballinran Entertainment announces intent to establish film-and-television-production hub in Stratford

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Ballinran Entertainment is leading the charge to establish a film-and-television production facility in Stratford to capitalize on the city's creative potential and take advantage of the transformative changes in the global media and entertainment sector.

Dubbed Stageview Studios, early plans for the project designed by architect Michael Wilson will involve the redevelopment of an existing warehouse on Downie Street, just beyond the city's heritage downtown, in close proximity to the city's proposed Grand Trunk Community Hub, and adjacent to another recent, adaptive-reuse project, the Bradshaw Lofts.

"We're repurposing an existing warehouse on Downie Street next to the Bradshaw Lofts and adapting it," Ballinran Entertainment president and executive producer Craig Thompson said. "... We're using the existing floor plan and the existing structure and building up."

The plan, Thompson explained, is to incorporate a film studio and video and audio editing suites into one multi-purpose production centre with the goal of tapping into the creative talent that exists in Stratford. The production centre won't just be for the use of Ballinran Entertainment, it will be available to other filmmakers and organizations in the city and beyond that are looking to create content but perhaps don't have the equipment or infrastructure necessary to do so.

"The facility available to sort of a spark a regional content-production industry in this part of Ontario," Thompson said. "... It's going to help new companies get started. ... We haven't got all of the plans as to what's going to be inside the building. All I can say is it's going to be designed to make film and television and digital-media technology and resources available in this part of Ontario."

Though completion of this 33,000 square-foot production centre isn't expected until at least 2027, Thompson



An early design concept for Stageview Studios, a proposed film-and-television production centre to be established by Ballinran Entertainment and its partners in a former warehouse building on Downie Street. (DESIGN DRAWING BY MICHAEL WILSON)

and Ballinran Entertainment have garnered the support of several local business leaders, including Lee Helperin, a prominent business figure, musician and property owner in Stratford whose family has owned Hudson's of Stratford, a premiere home furnishing store, for more than 100 years. Helperin also owns the warehouse property which will be adapted for the studio development.

"For more than four years, I've had a ring-side seat witnessing the trajectory and creative journey of Craig and his team at Ballinran Entertainment," Helperin said in a press release. "It's truly remarkable what they've been able to accomplish, and I believe Stageview Studios will be an asset to the creative economy of Stratford and

southwestern Ontario."

The project has also been endorsed by Nick Aroutzidis, an accomplished civil engineer involved with charities and community service organizations over the years in Stratford including the United Way Perth-Huron, Rotary Club, Stratford Warriors Hockey Club and the Rotary Respite House.

"This is truly a visionary project that aligns perfectly with the planning currently underway for the redevelopment of the Grand Trunk Railway shops property in Stratford," Aroutzidis said in the press release. "This is an exciting project that will elevate Stratford to a higher level, and I am thrilled to be a part of it."

## Optimist Club of Downie Inc.

### OPTI-CASH CALENDAR DRAW

Jan. 12	Judy Bond, Ilderton	\$50.00
Jan. 13	John & Brenda Bye, Dunchurch	\$50.00
Jan. 14	Liz Schweitzer, Bayfield	\$50.00
Jan. 15	Brenda Jackson, Stratford	\$50.00
Jan. 16	Grant Rolleman, Stratford	\$50.00
Jan. 17	Cameron Kramer, Shakespeare	\$50.00
Jan. 18	Madonna Manuel, Pasadena NL	\$200.00
Jan. 19	Jean Roach, Stratford	\$50.00
Jan. 20	John & Leah Verbaan, Thorndale	\$50.00
Jan. 21	Judy Elliott, Dorchester	\$50.00
Jan. 22	Sharon Twamley, Stratford	\$50.00
Jan. 23	Dave Standeaven, St. Marys	\$50.00
Jan. 24	Bob Zimmer, Stratford	\$50.00
Jan. 25	Stephen Bender, St. Marys	\$200.00

**2025 CALENDARS ARE GOING QUICKLY**



**Franklin E. Hinz**

196 Ontario Street, Stratford  
519-273-1633

## Main reception desk to be relocated at Stratford city hall

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The City of Stratford is working to centralize customer service and make it more accessible at city hall by relocating the main-floor reception desk to the clerk's office on the ground floor.

This change will be effective Monday, Jan. 27, 2025. This means residents and customers will be able to purchase or make payments on the following in one location at the clerk's office:

- bag tags
- green bins and recycling bins
- bus passes
- property taxes
- parking tickets

The following services will also continue to be provided at the clerk's office:

- marriage licensing
- business licensing
- commissionings
- animal registration
- bicycle licenses



The City of Stratford is moving its main-floor reception desk to the clerk's office on the ground floor of city hall effective Jan. 27. (FACEBOOK PHOTO)

# First-ever Winter Rainbow Festival a colourful celebration supporting Generation Rainbow Collective

JULIA PAUL

Times Correspondent

The Stratford Inclusive Markets in partnership with the Generation Rainbow Collective (GRC) is proud to host the first-ever Winter Rainbow Festival, a colourful and inclusive event for all ages.

Taking place on Sunday, Feb. 2 at the Stratford Army, Navy & Airforce Unit 261 Hall, the festival promises a day filled with fun, connection and celebration.

“Bring your high spirits, dress up in rainbows; this is a celebration. We want it to be fun for everyone,” said Royal de Jong, owner of Stratford Inclusive Markets.

Running from 12-4 p.m., the Winter Rainbow Festival will feature a lively mix of buskers, 25 unique vendors and interactive activities including a colouring station for kids, a temporary tattoo station, a hot-chocolate bar, a silent auction and more.

A standout highlight is the line-dancing session from 12:30-1:30 p.m. featuring music selected by GRC members.

“That is going to be epic. The music that they’ve chosen; ... some of the youth helped pick out some of the songs and a lot of the songs are like gay anthems. So, it’s not like your classic country music line dancing. It’s going to be really youth oriented and fun. I’m really excited about it. It’s going to be amazing,” de Jong said.

Youth from GRC are also actively participating by manning various stations, earning community service hours while fostering connections and creating an engaging atmosphere.

Hosting and co-managing the event is the Generation Rainbow Collective,



The Generation Rainbow Collective can't wait to welcome attendees to the inaugural Winter Rainbow Festival! Pictured here, members of Generation Rainbow Collective enjoy a fun and engaging cooking session with Chef Lucy at one of their recent events. (GENERATION RAINBOW COLLECTIVE PHOTO)

a first-of-its-kind program developed in partnership with Sara McIntyre-Roy, Heather McDowell, Dylan and Ollie. Initially launched as a six-week initiative to provide meals and activities for LGBTQIA+ youth, the program quickly became a cornerstone for the community.

“When we started, we didn’t realize how big the need was for a program like this,” said McIntyre-Roy. “It’s been so popular that people wanted it to continue beyond the six weeks. We’ve now passed our one-year anniversary, operating out of the Stratford Pride Community Centre, and we continue to welcome new members every week.”

GRC fills a vital gap in services for queer youth in Huron-Perth, providing a safe

and inclusive space that was previously unavailable. Through a needs assessment and conversations with local youth and Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) clubs, the organizers discovered a lack of accessible spaces where LGBTQIA+ youth could feel comfortable.

The program offers a wide range of activities chosen by the youth themselves, including rock climbing, beach outings, theatre trips, art workshops and wellbeing sessions. Youth ambassadors, such as Ollie and Toby, help lead the program by voting on activities and managing funding priorities, while adults provide coordination and support.

“It’s a program run by youth, for youth, and we’re

here to help them make their vision a reality,” said McIntyre-Roy.

While the community has been generous, funding remains a significant challenge. GRC initially started with a \$1,000 grant from the United Way Perth-Huron, which lasted six months thanks to community support and discounts from local businesses.

“The community has been amazing, but funding continues to be a challenge,” McIntyre-Roy explained. “We can’t afford to provide full meals every week anymore, though we always have snacks on hand. Additional funding would help us offer more frequent meals and expand our outings and activities.”

The Winter Rainbow Festival offers opportunities for everyone to get involved. Organizers are seeking additional vendors, buskers and donations for the silent auction. Financial contributions will also be accepted at the door.

“We are always accepting new partnerships and donations. If people want to get in touch, they can email us or follow us on social media,” de Jong said. “Coming to the market is a great opportunity to meet the youth, the coordinators and see what we’re all about in a fun, noncommittal setting.”

De Jong concluded with an invitation to the community.

“I hope the community will come out and support this event. It’s the people who make it fun.”

Join the Winter Rainbow Festival and celebrate the joy, inclusivity and vibrant spirit of the Generation Rainbow Collective!

## Shelf Help

ALIDA LEMIEUX

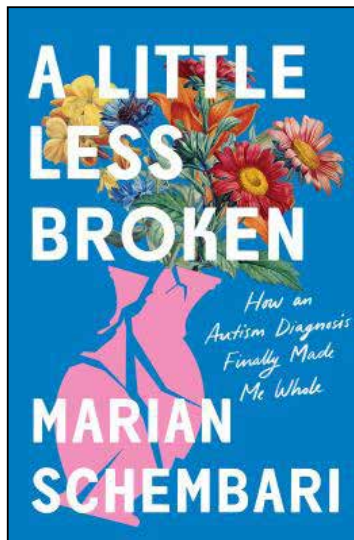
Stratford Public Library

*A Little Less Broken: How an Autism Diagnosis Finally Made Me Whole*, by Marian Schembari

@SPL: 616.858820092 Schem

“You talk too much. You’re no fun. You’re harsh. You’re weird. We don’t like hanging out with you.”

These are the reasons nine-year-old Marian Schembari’s classmates gave for ditching their friend while she hid in her elementary school closet. Growing up, Marian was admonished by adults and peers alike for her behaviors — from hair-sucking, spitting, and nostril-flaring to violent outbursts of rage. As an adolescent and young adult, Marian struggled with significant changes to her routine, such as adjusting to college life, and felt overwhelmed at noisy, crowded bars and parties. Despite excelling at work she enjoyed, she couldn’t seem to hold down a job. Doctors and therapists offered diagnoses ranging from depression to obsessive-compulsive disorder, but medications just left Marian feeling jittery or numb. To



cope, she learned to mask her natural instincts with rehearsed behaviours that she copied from people around her, though it came at great cost to her mental health.

At 34 years old, married and a mother, Marian was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. It is with this newfound understanding of herself that she reexamines her “lifetime of ‘pushing through’” in this candid, thought-provoking memoir. It’s a slow-paced, detailed personal reflection backed up by research and statistics. Marian writes about her journey with humour and compassion, shedding much-needed light on the frustrating gender gap in autism research and diagnosis.

Of the interviews she conducted and accounts she read of other late-diagnosed autistic people, Marian writes that, “once they learned the name for how they show up in the world, there was space to think, change their environment, and forgive themselves for all the ways they had thought they were broken”. This book is an engaging and eye-opening read for neurodivergent and neurotypical folks alike.

## Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. What is rapper Diddy's real name?
2. What Canadian figure skater duo holds the most gold medals?
3. What year was NASA founded?
4. The majority of the human brain is made up of what?
5. What State is Harvard University located?
6. Which city was the main target of the First Crusade?
7. What do bees collect from flowers?
8. True or False. O.J Simpson was considered for the lead role in Terminator.
9. What animal has the strongest bite?
10. What year did Martha Stewart go to prison?

This week's answers are found on pg. 34

# Our Buildings Tell a Story: The Griffith and Majestic Theatres Part 2, the movies

PAUL WILKER AND GORD CONROY

Times Contributors

The Avon Theatre evolved from vaudeville through movies to musicals and plays.

In 1912, Brandenberger declared his theatre to be "The House of Polite Vaudeville and Motion Pictures" and changed its name to the "Griffin Theatre." In 1918, W. I. Kemp leased the building and planned to run attractions and feature pictures. Wesley Kemp had previously established the W.I. Kemp Co. that made patented Kemps manure spreaders.

Movies changed every day and vaudeville acts changed Mondays and Thursdays. During this time, the Marks Brothers continued to make regular stops in Stratford as did the annual show by the Dumbells, a vaudeville troupe that grew out of World War 1 concert entertainers. The Dumbells were among many other touring companies including the show, "San Toy," a Chinese musical comedy, and the San Francisco opera touring productions.

Brandenberger sold his interest in the Griffin Theatre in 1924 and it was renamed the Majestic Theatre. However, Brandenberger remained involved as the manager of the Majestic until his death in 1926.

The theatre property was purchased by a



Barnsdale Mayor

(STRATFORD-PERTH ARCHIVES PHOTO)

**Mayor Elijah Kitchen Barnsdale was the City of Stratford's mayor circa 1915 and starred in a movie called Local Views of Stratford opposite Fire Chief Alf Kapele.**

company known as Majestic Theatres Ltd. The policy of the movie-audible shows was continued. After 1929, it became almost exclusively a movie house, although it was still used for occasional local productions.

In 1937 Majestic Theatres sold the theatre proper and one store within the block to Sarnia Theaters Limited. As a result, the new owners were able to extend lobby



Fire Chief Kapele

(STRATFORD-PERTH ARCHIVES PHOTO)

**Along with Mayor Barnsdale, Fire Chief Kapele also starred in Local Views of Stratford at the Majestic Theatre. He came to Stratford in 1913 after the Knox Presbyterian Church fire killed Hugh Durkin, the former fire chief.**

space under the same roof for three other stores as well as apartments on the second and third floors at the front of the theatre. Ownership of these stores was retained by Majestic Theatres Ltd. The Majestic was now entirely a moving pictures theatre.

Seen here is the Majestic Theatre ad about a movie called Local Views of Stratford, starring Mayor Elijah Kitchen Barnsdale and Fire Chief Alf Kapele.

Barnsdale (1850-1916) owned and operated Barnsdale's Trading Post at 21-27 Market Pl. It was known as The Hub (the name which still remains today), and was one of the city's biggest and busiest stores.

In May 1913, a fire destroyed Knox Presbyterian Church and killed three first responders. One was Hugh Durkin, the city's fire chief. Kapele was as his replacement and came to Stratford July 1, 1913.

For more on the Majestic Theatre, read Part 3: The Avon Theatre movie house in a later edition of the Times. Text provided by the Stratford-Perth Archives. For more on our buildings visit [www.streetsofstratford.ca](http://www.streetsofstratford.ca).



The Dumbells, pictured here, were a vaudeville troupe that grew out of World War 1 concert entertainers and were among many other touring companies who frequented Stratford.

(LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA PHOTO)

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1915 Stratford-Perth Archives

A 1915 ad for the Majestic Theatre, the theatre that would eventually evolve into the Avon Theatre we know today.

(STRATFORD-PERTH ARCHIVES PHOTO)

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- If your event is not free admission or you would like to include more details than stated above, you have the following options:
  - Coming Events Word Ad in Classified section (50 word max.) - \$10 + hst
  - Coming Events Boxed Word Ad in Classified section (50 word max.) - \$15 + hst
  - Display Ad - Sizes begin at a classified business card size for \$35 + hst

# Alzheimer Society Huron Perth's Soup's On celebrates 30 years with record-breaking success

JULIA PAUL AND GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

The 30th anniversary of Soup's On, presented by Hyde Construction, was a resounding success bringing together over 2,000 guests at the Stratford Rotary Complex on Saturday, Jan. 11.

Hosted by the Alzheimer Society Huron Perth, this beloved community event featured 31 soup vendors, a silent auction and plenty of warm, delicious flavors to kick off January Alzheimer's Awareness Month.

"The turnout was absolutely overwhelming," said Erin Dale, manager of fund development and communications at Alzheimer Society Huron Perth. "The community support was amazing, and we couldn't have anticipated the 30th anniversary would go as well as it did. It was fabulous."

The event's success was fueled by unwavering community support with the majority of attendees being enthusiastic

returnees who have made Soup's On a cherished annual tradition.

"This event wouldn't be what it is without the community," Dale added.

This year's event raised an impressive \$115,000 – more than double last year's total – thanks in large part to a generous matching donation from James Hutton. In memory of his parents, Albert and Mona Hutton, James pledged to match donations up to \$30,000. The community enthusiastically rose to the challenge, meeting the goal and demonstrating their unwavering support. These funds will go toward vital education, recreational programs and resources for individuals affected by Alzheimer's disease and other dementias in Perth and Huron counties.

From amateur chefs to seasoned professionals, the 31 vendors served up a wide array of soups for attendees to sample and judge. Some standout offerings included cheesy bacon cauliflower, coconut curry, white truffle parsnip, and Italian wedding.

The coveted Stratford Orthodontic Peo-

ple's Choice Award went to Gilly's Pubhouse for their creamy and spicy jalapeño cheddar popper soup, marking their first win in this category.

Award winners in other categories included:

- Creamy Amateur: GC Financial - cheesy bacon cauliflower
- Hearty Amateur: Hillside Manor – taco
- Vegetarian Amateur: Anne Hathaway - Thai coconut tomato
- Creamy Professional: Pazzo - white truffle parsnip
- Hearty Professional: The Little Kitchen on York - hearty wonton soup
- Vegetarian Professional: Mercer Kitchen Beer Hall - coconut curry
- Best Decorated Booth: The Little Green Grocery

The event's silent auction, supported by 142 donors, added to the festive atmosphere while raising significant funds. Cathy Ritsema, executive director of the Alzheimer Society Huron Perth, ex-

pressed her gratitude to everyone who made the event possible.

"The success of Soup's On is a testament to the generosity of our community. It was a grand day, and I am truly grateful to our dedicated volunteers, vendors, donors and sponsors who went above and beyond to make our 30th anniversary a huge success."

The Alzheimer Society Huron Perth remains committed to creating programs and resources that support individuals and families living with Alzheimer's. While some may experience challenges, others embrace their diagnosis and live well with the condition, emphasizing the importance of community events like Soup's On.

As Dale put it, "This event is a celebration, not only of great soup but of the connection and support that defines our community."

With its 30th year setting new records, Soup's On continues to warm hearts and bowls, proving community support is the key ingredient to its success.



An overall crowd view of the Rotary Complex at the Soup's On event on Saturday, Jan. 11.

(JULIA PAUL PHOTO)



Winner, winner, chicken dinner. Gilly's Pubhouse received the People's Choice awards for their jalapeño cheddar popper soup.

(JULIA PAUL PHOTO)



The Local Community Food Centre served up a popular potato, leek and mushroom soup. From left are chef Jules Charbonneau, Gerry Heyen, Lydia Hodder and Gail Anderson.

(GARY WEST PHOTO)



Alzheimer Society of Huron-Perth staff made a split pea and ham soup with ham donated by Stratford's Wild Hog Market. From left are Emily A., Shannon B., Pamela B. and Shelly O.

(GARY WEST PHOTO)

# Stratford Perth Museum seeking nominations for Agricultural Wall of Fame

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Perth County residents will have a chance to recognize significant contribu-

tions from those in the agriculture sector.

The Stratford-Perth Museum announced in a Jan. 13 press release that the nomination period started for 2025 inductees for the Agricultural Wall of Fame. Members of the public nominate current and former residents of Perth County who contributed to agriculture excellence. A committee determines the honourees after receiving the nominations.

"It's a chance to celebrate history, stories, how agriculture has changed, how some of these former recipients and people who are being nominated have made an impact," said Kelly McIntosh, museum general manager.

The Wall of Fame, which honours the contributions

of 24 Perth County residents, will mark its 10th anniversary in 2025.

McIntosh was new to her role as general manager for the museum when the 2024 Agricultural Wall of Fame nominations opened. She got to visit some of the nominees, including a family that nominated someone posthumously, sit with the committee and go through the nominations, as well as attend the Rural-Urban Dinner at which the inductees are celebrated.

"Perth County has been such a centre of innovation on agriculture for so long," she said. "My eyes were really opened."

While Perth County has a rich agricultural sector, McIntosh said there needs to be more recognition for what she called "the stars of agriculture" in the region. The wall of fame does that.

"We hear a lot about the stars of the town visa vie culture, arts and culture especially, in Stratford," McIntosh said. "It's shining some light on the county; not only the essential service of food production but the creativity and educational opportunities."

Sandi Brock, a 2024 wall of fame inductee and sheep farmer, runs an educational YouTube page called Sheepishly Me about her farm.

"We want to point people in those directions because they don't come up first on Google," McIntosh said. "I think it's a wonderful thing for us to understand and create community together."

Nominations will be accepted until Feb. 28. McIntosh encourages everyone to consider submitting a nomination, including for those who can be honoured posthumously.

"Nominations large or small, if you want to share someone's story, I would love to hear it. The committee would love to hear it," she said.

The wall of fame inductees will be announced at the Stratford Rotary Club's Rural-Urban Dinner on March 27. Nominations can be made online at [www.stratfordperthmuseum.ca/stratford-perth-museum-agricultural-wall-fame-directory](http://www.stratfordperthmuseum.ca/stratford-perth-museum-agricultural-wall-fame-directory) or in person at the museum between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

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# Seminar to offer rundown on recent building-code changes in Ontario

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

Six area municipalities are co-hosting a seminar offering locals a rundown of recent changes to the Ontario Building Code, which focus on enhancing farm and residential buildings.

The informational seminar will be held on Jan. 29 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Stratford Rotary Complex. The meeting will be hosted in collaboration with builders, contractors and developers. The event will deliver information on the changes and how they will impact future projects.

"Getting six municipalities together to convey the same consistent message, in our industry, that's huge" said Connor Occeleston, Stratford's deputy chief building official.

"A Lot of these builders, developers and designers all work in these different municipalities. They are not just in Stratford, they are not just in St. Marys, they are all in the surrounding areas."

Farm buildings that have been regulated under The National Farm Building Code of Canada, last updated in the 1990s, are now being transferred to the jurisdiction of The Ontario Building Code.

In addition to the farm-building updates, the seminar will also highlight details on radon, fire protection, plumbing, accessibility, farming provisions and secondary suites in residential buildings.

"We're seeing a rise in rental properties, basement conversions and detached additional dwelling units, so a lot of that will be spoken under the secondary suite (provisions)," said Occeleston. "The requirements for fire and light safety items, carbon monoxide smoke detectors will be in these types of buildings."

Occeleston said, thus far, the seminar has seen registration by professionals from a number of related sectors including realtors, insurance brokers, contractors, designers, architects and engineers. Occeleston said the new changes represent the largest building code implementation since 2012.

Occeleston says that the building-code changes will provide long-term benefits for building structures across Ontario and promote safe building practices.

To RSVP, email [building@stratford.ca](mailto:building@stratford.ca) or call 519-271-0250 ext. 345.

# Avondale introduces Dr. Ungar's concepts on resiliency

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Parents, grandparents and caregivers will have the opportunity to learn more about what it means to raise resilient kids at a local event next month.

Avondale United Church will host Raising Resilient Children and Youth: It Takes a Village on Feb. 26 from 7-9 p.m. The free event, sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of Stratford, will apply Dr. Michael Ungar's nine things every child needs to be resilient. They include:

1. Physical and psychological safety
2. A sense of belonging
3. Fair and just treatment
4. Parent and child connections
5. Lots of relationships
6. Structure
7. Consequences
8. A powerful identity
9. A sense of control

"The concepts that Ungar offers us are things that all people can do for all kids," said Terri Sparling, a member of the Avondale congregation who was the CEO of the Huron Perth Centre for Children and Youth before she retired. "I think that was probably the biggest message I took away when I first met him, was that these things are important for kids who have complex needs. But guess what? These things are important for all kids to become resilient, regardless of where they live in the world."

Catherine Hardman, CEO of the Canadian Mental Health Association Huron Perth, said most of the youth the organization sees are between 15 and 17-years old. Addiction support is also available for anyone 12 and over who is struggling with substance use. Hardman said teaching resiliency to children could help them overcome

their issues.

"If we can teach kids young how to be resilient, maybe they won't need our services when they're older and when they're an adult because, really, typically most of the people that we see are folks who have experienced some sort of trauma," Hardman said.

Dana Bozzato, CEO of the Huron Perth Centre for Children and Youth, said the centre works with children and youth from birth up to 18 years old, as well as their parents, educators and anyone else who are directly part of their lives. The organization's goal is to support the child and their support network. She said building resiliency in kids is similar to finding the ingredients to bake a cake and following a recipe.

"You can be resilient and mentally well, and have a mental illness at the same time," Bozzato said. "I think that's a really important piece to remind ourselves regularly."

Aleah Graff, community engagement coordinator for Avondale, said the event will be hosted in a breakout-room style where local mental-health professionals, service providers, parents and caregivers will share their experiences around raising resilient children and youth.

"We're hoping that this event will give the Avondale parents that have asked to be involved the confidence that they're doing something right and they are raising resilient children," Graff said. "And their lived experiences is very much valued alongside professional experience of mental-health professionals."

Avondale is an affirming church that accepts anyone regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnic background, financial background and/or physical or mental state.

To register for the event, email [eventsavondale@wightman.ca](mailto:eventsavondale@wightman.ca) by Feb. 19.

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The cover of Ontario's 2024 Building Code Compendium.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)



# Wedding Elegance



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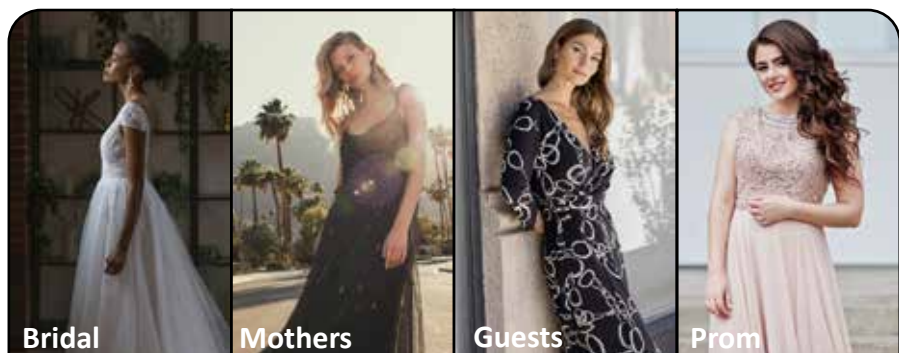
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## Questions to ask when shopping for a wedding reception venue

Engaged couples make plenty of decisions when planning their weddings, and some may be more significant than others. Choosing a wedding reception venue is among the most important decisions couples will make.

The reception venue is where couples and guests will spend the majority of the day, and no two venues are the same. As couples begin shopping for a place to host their reception, they can ask themselves and venue representatives a multitude of questions to narrow down their options and ultimately make the best decision for them.

### What are we looking for in a venue?

Some couples may know precisely what they want their receptions to be like, while others may not have the slightest idea. Of course, some couples may be somewhere in the middle. Prior to beginning the process of choosing a venue, couples can identify what

they're looking for. Is a venue with outdoor entertaining space a priority? Do you want to hold the ceremony and reception at the same venue? How many guests will the venue need to accommodate? Answering these questions and others can help couples narrow down their search.

### How much can we afford?

Budget is a significant variable when shopping for a wedding venue. Some venues offer multiple spaces that can accommodate couples with a wide range of budgets, while others are singular spaces suited to receptions within a specified size. Itemizing a budget and determining how much can be allotted to a reception venue can serve as a guideline when couples begin searching for sites.

### Is our date available?

Once couples know what they want and what they can afford, they can prepare a

number of questions that are worth asking at every venue they visit. Perhaps the most important, at least for those couples who have already chosen a wedding date, is the availability of the site on that date. If couples have not yet chosen a date, they can ask for a list of available dates at each venue they visit and perhaps use that knowledge to pick a day, particularly if they prefer a given venue.

### Who will cater the meal?

Some venues do their own catering, while others may have working relationships with outside caterers. And some venues rent only the spaces and require couples to hire their own caterers and arrange all the details on their own. If a venue caters the meal, ask if they accommodate people with various restrictions, such as food allergies and gluten intolerances.

### How many hours are included in the

### rental agreement?

It's important that couples know what they're getting, including how much time they get in each space they consider. The online wedding resource The Knot notes a standard wedding reception is five hours, the first of which is generally designated as cocktail hour.

### What is the payment structure?

Identifying the payment structure, include down payment due date and when the final payment must be made, is important as well. This knowledge can allow couples to map out their expenses, the most significant of which is typically the reception venue.

These are just some of the questions couples can ask as they plan their wedding receptions.

*This story was made available to the Stratford Times by Metro Creative.*

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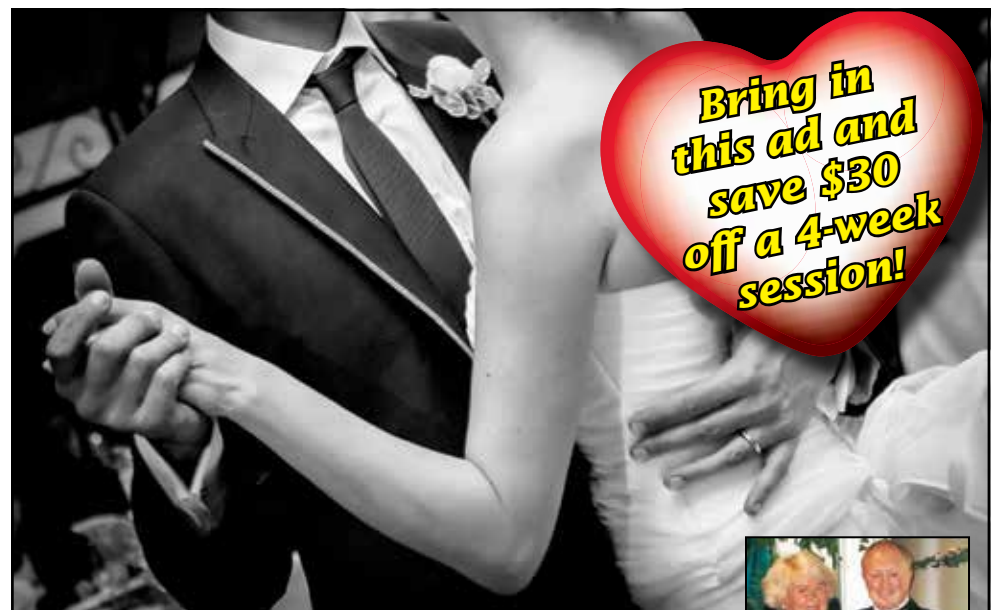
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Patricia and Robert Dodgson



## Write wedding vows with relative ease

MC – The exchange of vows is an integral part of many wedding ceremonies. Vows are promises made to one another that serve as the basis of the marriage commitment. Historians say some of the oldest traditional wedding vows can be traced back to manuals of the medieval church in England. There are no formal wedding vows in the Christian Bible, but those who profess this faith typically incorporate the teachings of Jesus Christ into their vows.

Many modern couples prefer to exchange their own vows rather than share standard verses. This is particularly true for couples who will be having ceremonies customized to their own beliefs and relationship histories. Writing vows enables the soon-to-be betrothed to be creative, personal and speak from the heart. However, when faced with writing sentiments that will be

expressed in front of others, nerves can set in. These tips can help couples draft vows more easily.

- Identify who this person is to you; put a label on your relationship. Is he or she a friend, partner in crime, confidante, or all of the above?

- Be sure to say, "I love you" in the vows. Many couples get so hung up on language that they may forget these most basic words at the heart of the wedding.

- Gush about all of the reasons for that love. Offer personal stories, anecdotes or something that will illustrate to the crowd why you want to spend your life with this person.

- Look to the future. Think about how you want to spend the years ahead. Paint a picture of what you envision your lives will look like, whether that includes chil-



dren, traveling the globe, or other ideas.

- Make promises to one another. Vows are essentially promises, so come up with some you agree to abide by. These can in-

clude similar sentiments to ones that are shared in traditional weddings, or clever and humorous promises, such as to always do the dishes, or pick up clothes from the bedroom floor.

- Include stories that point out your collective strengths and weaknesses. Don't forget to mention instances when things were tough and how you overcame them, and how you can use these lessons in your future as a married couple.

Couples who are writing their own vows should realize they do not have to rival the words of the most profound authors or learned scholars. They should be honest and simple and express the sentiments that mean the most to them as they embark on this new journey.

*This story was made available to the Stratford Times by Metro Creative.*

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# Local Flavour

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### Local sandwich shop soars beyond expectations

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

The owners of a new sandwich shop in Stratford, Taylor's Delicatessen, are thrilled with the early response to their food after the new business first opened its doors earlier this month.

Owners and engaged couple Stewart Taylor and Amber Karaz Tipping say they are overwhelmed with the support from the Stratford community. They have been selling out due to the high public demand since they opened on Jan 6.

"We sell out after making 100 sandwiches a day in two hours," said Karaz. "Everything is made fresh; we want it to be about quality not quantity. If we can't give you same-day produce, meats and breads, then we're not going to serve the public."

Taylor said a focal point for the business is getting a planned charcuterie program going and poten-



Stewart Taylor and his fiancé Amber Karaz Tipping stand in front of their sandwich shop, Taylor's Delicatessen, that launched on Jan 6. (ALEX HUNT PHOTO)

tially applying for a liquor license at the restaurant.

Taylor said there isn't a standard for Ontario when it comes to charcuterie on a municipal level. He

hopes to work with the University of Guelph by submitting his recipes and receiving feedback on avoiding potential health hazards when it comes to food-safety regulations.

Taylor drew inspiration from past ideas and social media when crafting the menu with a focus on American, Mediterranean and French charcuterie.

"This is my fiancé's world and I support his hopes and dreams," Karaz said. "To have something of our own that we can give to the community is wonderful. I lived abroad and he's lived out of town, but we first grew up here, which has always been our home."

The restaurant is open from Monday to Friday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Karaz said they wanted to first ensure the business stays open on Mondays when many downtown establishments are closed.

"I love getting to know the people of Stratford; we ask the name for every order, the name of that person is on the sandwich bag and we get to know their name. It's been a very personal experience for us and ev-

eryone else," said Karaz.

"We have recognized people who have been coming multiple times, and just being engaged with the community and getting to know everyone has been exciting, and giving them the best quality of sandwich that we can has been very rewarding."

On Jan. 4, the engaged couple held a soft opening of their restaurant for family and friends, celebrating the achievement. Alongside the festivities, Stewart proposed to his now fiancé, coinciding with the launch of their business together.

"It was a big thing for Amber and I to have the same last name; it was a promise there. It was Saturday morning when I proposed and we had all our family and friends there. It was wonderful," said Taylor.

The couple said the month has been a joyful rollercoaster and they remain humbled by the community support.

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## Warriors' lack of offence leads to up-and-down results

SPENCER SEYMOUR

*Times Regional Reporter*

The Stratford Hunter Steel Ltd. Warriors have gone 3-2-1 since the start of the new year, a somewhat middling, six-game stretch born of a lack of offensive production.

Head coach Dave Williams explained how the team is working to address their goal-scoring struggles.

"We've spent a lot of time focusing on the process of how you score goals, getting selfish when you've got the puck in good areas and getting bodies to the net," Williams told the Times. "We also are trying to improve our awareness of knowing when we're in positions to score or when we're in a spot to create a second or third scoring opportunity."

The Warriors have scored three goals or fewer in each of their last seven games, and in three of those, Stratford managed just one goal.

Williams also noted, however, the team hasn't always struggled to score due to their own shortcomings.

"I think we have had nights when we still generate a decent number of scoring opportunities, but the puck just doesn't go in for us. On most nights, the work ethic and attention to detail are where they need to be, but it's definitely tough to score every night. With such parity in our conference, you're not going to find too many easy goals. Every play on the ice matters."

Quinn Kipfer opened the scoring just one minute and 23 seconds into the game on Jan. 10 against the Elmira

Sugar Kings. But, after the Sugar Kings tied the game two and a half minutes later, Elmira took over the game in the second frame, scoring three goals in just four minutes and 23 seconds.

Dax Vader found the back of the net for the Warriors in the third, but two more goals by the Sugar Kings pushed Elmira to a 6-2 win.

The Warriors were back on the ice 24 hours later with a chance to get back in the win column against a team that has had even more goal-scoring woes this season than them, the Strathroy Rockets. After Colin Slattery gave Stratford a 1-0 lead heading into the first intermission, Brendan Gerber tied things up at one apiece just 23 seconds into the game.

Slattery's second goal of the contest came with just over four minutes left in the third, and after Kipfer scored an empty net goal, Stratford emerged with a 3-1 victory.

Williams said he was pleased with his team's bounce-back performance.

"I liked our game in Strathroy. We were coming off the loss to Elmira, so it was important for us to try to refocus, and I thought we played a solid game. Both teams were battling really hard to get that go-ahead goal when it was tied 1-1. I thought we defended well and we did a decent job generating offensive opportunities, but we were snakebit around the net, which made it more challenging than we would like."

Although their offensive struggles persisted on Jan. 17, the Warriors had a positive night on home ice, earning

a playoff-style win over the Kitchener-Waterloo Siskins.

Kipfer opened the scoring again, this time on a power-play, his first of two goals in the game, with the second being an empty netter late in the third. His icebreaker also gave Kipfer goals in three straight games.

"Quinn has a good offensive skill set," Williams said. "I think he's been doing a better job of getting to some of those areas that we're talking about in terms of finding pucks closer to the net for more high-danger chances and where the puck has a higher probability of going in the net."

Joseph Curtin fired home his first of the season almost exactly 10 minutes after Kipfer's first goal of the game, and with the Siskins only finding the back of the net once, when Evan Klein buried his 18th of the year in the final minute of the second, Curtin's goal held up as the game-winner.

According to Williams, the game was one of the most physically demanding the Warriors have played recently.

"It was one of the heavier games we've played in a while

CONTINUED TO PAGE 22



Jack McGurn positions himself to defend his net during the Stratford Hunter Steel Ltd. Warriors' game against the St. Marys Lincolns on Jan. 18.

(MCGINNY PHOTOGRAPHY PHOTO)



## STRATFORD Hunter Steel WARRIORS

### UPCOMING GAMES

Friday, January 24 - 7:30pm  
at St. Thomas - Joe Thornton C.C.

Sunday, January 26 - 1:30pm  
at Kitchener-Waterloo - Waterloo Memorial R.C.

Thursday, January 30 - 7:10pm  
at Sarnia - Pat Stapleton Arena

Friday, January 31 - 7:30pm  
vs Sarnia - Allman Arena

Friday, February 7 - 7:30pm  
vs Kitchener-Waterloo - Allman Arena

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# Warriors' lack of offence leads to up-and-down results

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

and I thought we responded well to the physicality level. I thought our details were pretty good. We defended really well, and I didn't feel like we were defensively in trouble a lot. And it was great that the powerplay guys were about to capitalize on their chances, especially as we struggled to score five-on-five."

Williams added the highly physical nature of the game allowed his young squad to get a taste for the brand of hockey they can expect in the post-season.

"Come playoff time, the ice feels a little bit smaller. I think every team that makes the playoffs gets refocused and re-energized. The finer details of your game have to be on point, and the physicality is certainly an important

aspect as well. It had more of that playoff feel to it in terms of the physicality, and I think that's important for us, being a younger group, to experience that and understand what we will have to find our way through in the playoffs."

One day later, the Warriors visited the St. Marys Lincolns, who were going for their seventh consecutive win. Despite having a good first period, Stratford found themselves down by a goal in the first intermis-

sion, a controversial goal that hit off the foot of Lincolns' forward Luca Spagnolo, a goal some onlookers believed shouldn't have counted.

Williams said the goal sucked some of their energy away, and made room for the Lincolns to take over the game in the final 40 minutes.

"We got off to a good start. I really liked our first period, especially coming off Friday night's game when we had battled so hard physically. That first goal at the end of the first took some of the wind out of our sails and took away some of our energy coming out in the second, which turned the momentum in their favour. You have to give them credit; they are a solid team, top to bottom."

Spagnolo and Cohen Bidgood each scored in the second period before Jaden Lee scored for St. Marys in the third. The Warriors managed to end goaltender Nico Armellini's shutout bid with just 30 seconds left in regulation when Carter Petrie ripped home his sixth of the season.

The Warriors received a boost to their lineup at the Jan. 10 Greater Ontario Junior Hockey League (GOJHL) trade deadline, acquiring North Bay native Kaedyn Long from the St. Thomas Stars, who registered 13 goals and 32 points in 32 games with St. Thomas, along with defenceman Matthew Blake.

## 2024-25 GOJHL Western Conference Standings

(Regular season standings as of Jan. 21, 2025)

TEAM	W	L	T	OTL	PTS	GF	GA
St. Marys Lincolns	27	6	1	-	55	138	60
London Nationals	23	10	2	1	49	145	115
Listowel Cyclones	23	10	2	-	48	145	96
Chatham Maroons	22	9	3	1	48	164	110
<b>Stratford Warriors</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	-	<b>47</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>84</b>
LaSalle Vipers	22	14	-	-	44	129	121
Elmira Sugar Kings	20	14	3	-	43	149	115
Strathroy Rockets	18	13	1	1	38	100	107
K-W Siskins	15	14	4	2	36	104	111
Sarnia Legionnaires	15	16	3	1	34	137	151
St. Thomas Stars	11	21	2	1	25	111	175
Komoka Kings	5	30	2	-	12	81	183

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# U11 B Aces win gold at B.A.D. Blazers tournament

SPENCER SEYMOUR

*Times Regional Reporter*

The Famme and Co. U11 B Stratford Aces captured the gold medal at the B.A.D. Blazers Winter Tournament held Jan. 16-19 in Belmont, Aylmer and Dorchester.

Co-head coach Tyler Devereaux called the tournament victory a “true team effort.”

“Our forecheck was as strong as it has been all year and our defence was solid at initiating our breakout with improved first passes,” said Devereaux. “We had contributions from every girl on this team. As always, our goalie, Lauren (Rossi), was our leader. Her abilities between the pipes give our girls the confidence to take some chances as they know that if Lauren can see it, there is a good chance she will save it.”

Devereaux’s sentiments were echoed by fellow co-head coach Josh Bohnen, who cited the team’s cohesiveness as a major positive aspect of the weekend.

“We came out hard and we stuck together,” said Bohnen. “The girls really controlled their attitude and their compete levels. They competed very hard in every game, they did the little things that you have to do to win and, considering how young they are, they are moving the puck really well. They are a young group but they played beyond their years and showed how much pride they have in their compete level.”

Rossi only allowed one goal in all five games of the tournament.

After going undefeated in the three-game round-robin, the Aces picked up a 2-1 victory over the West Northumberland Wild, which played a tight, checking game against Stratford. Emma Rogerson scored the game’s first goal to give the Aces a 1-0 lead, but the Wild responded quickly to tie the game at one apiece.

Right as the second period ran out of time, Jill Devereaux netted the eventual game-winning goal, with strong defence and goaltending preserving Stratford’s 2-1 win.

In the gold-medal game, the Waterloo Ravens jumped out to a 1-0 lead just 30 seconds into the opening period. However, as was perhaps the biggest theme of the weekend for the Aces, they displayed great resilience in the face of Waterloo’s



The Famme and Co. U11 B Stratford Aces earned the gold medal at the B.A.D. Blazers Winter Tournament held Jan. 16-19 in Belmont, Aylmer and Dorchester. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Stella Zacher, Chloe Illman, Vivian Bohnen, Emily Voyce, Lauren Rossi and Macey Green. In the back row, from left, are Allie Lambert, Sabelle Ische, Jill Devereaux, Emma Rogerson, Riya Michel, Luxe Ignor, Lindsey King, Makayla Harrigan, Mackenzie Brown and Lenna Roberts. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

early lead.

Not too long after giving up the game’s first goal, Allie Lambert brought the score to 1-1 with a fantastic solo effort. The Aces turned in an excellent, team-focused game, getting goals from Sabelle Ische and Lindsey King, both set up by Riya Michel, before Devereaux extended the lead to three goals in the final frame. Once again, Rossi refused to allow a second goal, backstopping Stratford to a 4-1 victory.

Both Devereaux and Bohnen credited the team for having the resiliency to battle back, explaining how the team’s improvement in not losing belief in one another has been one of the most profound and fulfilling parts of the team’s season.

“Over the course of a game, there will be highs and lows, and I thought our girls showed improvement this weekend when responding to adversity,” Devereaux said. “Whether it was a call we disagreed with or giving up a goal early in the finals, the bench remained positive and their determination and belief never wavered.”

“We had a tough loss a little while ago and the girls got down on them-

selves and were blaming each other, but ultimately, out of that, they all began to understand the need to learn from it and develop that sense of accountability,” Bohnen added. “They realized that they

are playing for each other and that they have to believe in one another, and as a coach, seeing a team developing skills like that is one of the greatest things you can watch.”

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# Stratford Warriors' "Hockey is for Everyone" t-shirts celebrate Winter Pride

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

The Stratford Warriors are supporting the 2SLGBTQIA+ community with new t-shirts.

The Stratford Warriors will be recognizing Stratford Winter Pride with t-shirts that say, "Hockey is for Everyone," in rainbow font.

In an email response to the Stratford Times, Winter Pride general manager Bruce Duncan Skeaff said he's very happy with the initiative led by the hockey team.

Hockey is for Everyone is a campaign of the NHL and the National Hockey League Players' Association (NHLPA) that advocates for providing positive environments for hockey players and fans, regardless of their race, gender identity, age, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, socio-economic status and/or ability.

Wendell Archer, member of the Warriors' board of directors, told the Stratford Times he wanted to bring Hockey is for Everyone to the Warriors this year.

"Our fanbase has always been extremely supportive of all community groups and initiatives supported by the hockey club," Archer said in an email. "Hockey is for Everyone and other initiatives are important to bring awareness to very important causes in our community, and the Stratford Warriors have amazing fans that are supportive of these causes."

The t-shirts, priced at \$30 each, debuted at the Stratford Warriors' Hockey is for Everyone Night game on Jan. 22. Those who didn't attend the game can still buy a shirt for the remainder of the season, either at the souvenir shop or by sending an email to thearchers1996@gmail.com.

Stratford Winter Pride runs from Jan. 31 to Feb. 9, and will include staged readings of *The Laramie Project* on Feb. 8.



The Stratford Warriors' Hockey is for Everyone t-shirts will recognize Stratford Winter Pride.

(WENDELL ARCHER PHOTO)

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# Stratford singer-songwriter Loreena McKennitt to be inducted into Canadian Music Hall of Fame

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

World-renowned Stratford singer-songwriter Loreena McKennitt will be inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame in Calgary, Alta., in a live ceremony this spring.

On May 15, McKennitt will be one of five new inductees elevated to this prestigious category. The Canadian Music Hall of Fame was established in 1978. It recognizes Canadian artists that have attained commercial success while having an artistic impact on the Canadian music scene and/or around the world, with careers that span at least 20 years from their first recording. The other new inductees will be Dan Hill, Ginette Reno, Glass Tiger and Sum 41.

"I received a phone call last October or November and they said they were thinking of doing this," McKennitt told the Times. "That's how I learned. I really was shocked and I wasn't expecting this at all. When I think of all the other inductees (this year) and the ones who have come before me, I think, 'Whoa, this is serious.'

"I'm honoured, of course. ... Most people don't set out for these awards. They can come along the way if things work out, so I'm very honoured."

This recognition means McKennitt, a two-time Juno Award winner, will now be joining the ranks of Canada's most esteemed talent, including Alanis Morissette, Barenaked Ladies, Deborah Cox, Jann Arden, Joni Mitchell, k.d. lang, Leonard Cohen, Neil Young, Nickelback, Oscar Peterson, RUSH, The Guess Who, The Tragically Hip, Sarah McLachlan and Shania Twain.

McKennitt was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2023. After the cere-



Loreena McKennitt will be inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame during a live ceremony May 15 at the National Music Centre in Calgary, Alta. (RICHARD HAUGHTON PHOTO)

mony this spring, she will have been inducted into two of Canada's four music halls of fame. Only a few select artists are inducted into multiple halls of fame.

McKennitt is a rarity in popular music – a self-managed, self-produced artist who owns her own record label, mounts her own tours, whose music crosses stylistic and cultural boundaries, and who has sold more than 14 million albums worldwide.

"It is an unusual story. I think there are

two distinctive aspects of it. One is how I've taken my inspiration from the Celts. Even though I was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame a year ago, I've not written about my own personal life; I've kind of used this history as my creative springboard and then it culminates as active, musical travel writing. So, that is a less common way of going about looking for inspiration. And then, of course, the fact that I've never had a manager, which most artists would

have; many people who know me and even worked with me would say, 'That makes sense because you're unmanageable.' "

McKennitt laughed.

"I look back and I see always did sort of march to my own drum, so to speak, going back to my childhood in my other hometown, Morden, Man. I think it must have been even some Celtic DNA because the Celts were culturally ... more will than wit. ... Having grown up in a rural community and around the farm, self-sufficiency and protecting your own agency becomes a pretty big hallmark of your mindset. ... Culturally, growing up in a rural community in Manitoba in that period of time; that also fed into this."

Her music, which combines elements of pop, folk and worldbeat styles that's often dubbed "eclectic Celtic," resonates with listeners around the world. Her extensive catalogue includes eight studio recordings, three seasonal recordings, seven live recordings, one field recording, four compilations, a live in-concert DVD, and two DVD documentaries. Available in more than 40 countries, they have garnered critical acclaim worldwide and gold, platinum and multi-platinum awards in 15 countries across four continents including Canada, the United States, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, France, Spain, Italy, Turkey and Greece.

The live hall-of-fame induction ceremony will take place at Studio Bell, home of the National Music Centre in Calgary. The spring ceremony follows the induction of Maestro Fresh Wes during the 2024 JUNO Awards broadcast in Halifax, N.S. and Sum 41, which will celebrate the induction into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame live during the 2025 JUNO Awards broadcast in Vancouver on March 30, 2025.

## Stratford Summer Music promises "special surprises" for 25th year

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Stratford Summer Music (SSM) is already looking forward to warmer days.

This year marks 25 years of the organization bringing world-class music to the Festival City.

"We're super excited," said Crystal Spicer, executive director of SSM. "We've been talking about it and planning it for the last year already, so we're pretty excited to get things launched, to get things going. ... There are a few special surprises that are still yet to be announced ... and by April, everybody will see the entire picture of everything that we have planned for the next year."

SSM is an annual music festival that invites diverse musical acts and experiences to Stratford. Over many weeks, more than 100 artists perform year after year in indoor and outdoor venues across the city.

For anyone who hasn't attended be-

fore, Spicer said the thing which makes this music festival unique is the sheer diversity of acts and venues, from casual folk performances on the music barge in the Avon River downtown to more formal opera performances in the Avondale United Church.

Additionally, this year SSM will be running two academies concurrently as part of the festival.

The Stratford Summer Jazz Academy and the Stratford Summer Vocal Academy will help young musicians develop their skills through workshops, sessions, collaboration and education from instructors across Canada.

The jazz academy runs from July 28



to Aug. 3 while the vocal academy runs from Aug. 5-10.

This year would not be possible without sponsors, Spicer made sure to say. In particular, supporter Elaine Godwin, a generous donor to SSM for many years, made a \$50,000 donation this year – the largest donation she's

made to date.

Additionally, TD Bank Group has signed on as a presenting sponsor for the next two seasons, a sponsorship that has not been a feature of the organization for a number of years.

Spicer said that just as the arts are struggling across the nation, they are struggling in Stratford as well. The presenting

sponsorship is only a piece of the puzzle and donors, sponsors and supports are still just as vital.

"The arts are always needed in a community," Spicer said, "and I think it's really important that the arts are accessible for everybody. ... For me, it's very, very important that we make sure that anybody can come and see a performance."

While SSM hosts a few events throughout the year (like January's partnership with Lights On Stratford, Lights On NYX), its 2025 season officially opens on July 17 with a performance of the German cantata, Carmina Burana, performed by the Ullugiagâtsuk Choir, Deantha Edmunds and the Bergmann Duo.

Spicer told residents and visitors to keep an eye out on their social media and brand-new website – [www.stratfordsummermusic.ca](http://www.stratfordsummermusic.ca) – for updates and announcements on this year's lineup, as well as for additional information on its new summer academies.

# Upside of Maybe releases new album, *Sinners and Saints*

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

*Sinners and Saints* may just be the light needed in the midst of a dark, cold winter.

This latest release from award-winning Stratford roots band, Upside of Maybe, is filled with imagery and stories that inspired the album's title. With the band's recognizable harmonies and tight accompaniment, fans are in for a great time listening to these tracks.

The group consists of Michael Bannerman on acoustic guitar, fiddle, cigar box guitar and lead vocals, his brother, Scott Bannerman, on keyboards, accordion and vocals, John Munroe on bass guitar, Troy Lockyear on drums and vocals, and Andy Horrocks on electric guitar and vocals. The band has been together 11 years and, at the heart of the band, the Bannerman brothers have been playing together since high school.

"We really struggled to come up with a title for the album because it's a collection of stories," Michael Bannerman said. "When we sat down to write the album, we came at it with a folk perspective. We wrote everything acoustically on guitar and it was all about having sing-a-long choruses and thematically it was telling stories.

"So, it was kind of a collection of stories that we kind of heard and thought that would make a great song. We realized, when we



Stratford's Upside of Maybe releases their latest album '*Sinners and Saints*' on January 31st. Expect energetic storytelling with great vocals and rhythmic spotlights. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

looked at the stories, there was kind of a good and bad, the human struggle of good and bad. One of the lines in the song, 'Phat Lady,' there's the line, ... 'Some would say he's a sinner, some would say he's a saint, and I agree.' There's the idea that in each of us is the sinner and the saint."

They actually thought they were done writing and weren't planning on recording another album before the COVID-19 pandemic. At that point, there wasn't any touring to do and Michael

Bannerman wrote a couple songs that were well received when performed live, so the brothers thought more about recording. Once they couldn't imagine life without recording the tracks, they decided to write another album.

"Usually, Scott and I write more together, but this wasn't the case so much. It was more looking at things I had written and he had written and coming together and saying, where does this come from, but really look-

ing at the story theme. At first, we thought this would be more of a folk album, but once in the studio, it morphed into the rock side of things," Michael Bannerman said.

One song that came out of COVID is the ninth track, "Alright." Everything had been lined up for a great summer, but then everything was getting cancelled. It was a dark time realizing that it would be a very long time before they would be performing again. Michael Bannerman wanted to write a song that brought hope without becoming saccharine.

"I remember going in the basement, writing a bunch of songs and they were all minor chords and dark and we're all going to die, but there was also a lot of cheese. People came out with hearts, so I wanted to write something that wasn't so dark that showed hope but wasn't totally cheesy either, so the blues seemed like a good theme for it. So, when that was out, it became one of the ones that we wanted to record," said Michael Bannerman.

Listeners will notice new influences and directions in the album. There is definitely that folk feel to some of the songs, but also some rock and blues. The song, "Revel Café," features Ali Matthews and has a country feel to it. There is 'Honey in the Rock,' a song that has a gospel-meets-Footloose sound complete with the voices of the London Gospel Collective Choir.

This exploration presented challenges initially.

"Recording with a choir is a challenge. When we were in the studio, it was coming through kind of straight and canned. Andy Horrocks was producing it and he went in and said, 'We just need you to be a little more charismatic and Pentecostal, and everyone just laughed.' But after that, they let it go and the choir we heard after that was very different than 10 minutes prior," laughed Michael Bannerman.

The band wants the album to take their fans on a journey; each song is a story to tuck into. Songs like "The Girl's got rhythm" is a great example of how a song grew from their journey in New Orleans at the Chickie Wah Wah where they met a washboard musician name Wanda. To Michael Bannerman, it was a song that begged writing.

There will be vinyl pressings made available in the near future, but not CDs, reflecting the current market trends. The album will be released Jan. 31 and will be available on music-streaming platforms.

"It really is meant to be played as an album, not necessarily as 10 singles. So, I would like to do an album pressing so that there are people out there listening to it as intended," he said.

Be on the lookout for Upside of Maybe as the band promotes the album. For more information on the band and to download its music, visit [Upsideofmaybe.com](http://Upsideofmaybe.com)

## The Bookends join annual Celtic Celebration

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

The Stratford Symphony Orchestra's annual Celtic Celebration will showcase musical talents from the community including local Celtic band, The Bookends.

The annual Celtic Celebration will hit the stage at Avondale United Church Jan. 25 with performances at 2 and 7:30 p.m. The Bookends will guest star with community talents such as Rose Soenen on solo harp/vocals premiering "Castle Dunluce" and Gwendolyn Nguyen playing solo cello in "Adagio on Celtic Melodies."

"Celtic music concerts have been a staple here at the Stratford Symphony for a while. It has a real, loyal following and it's not something most orchestras do," said William Rowson, musical director with the Stratford Symphony Orchestra.

"Stratford is unique in Canada for presenting an annual Celtic Celebration. Celtic, Scottish and Irish music, music of those cultures, is a lot of fun and provides a lot of contemporary arranging and it involves a lot of bands. There is a tremendous amount of music that came out of these



The Bookends will perform as part of the Stratford Symphony Orchestra's 2025 Celtic Celebration. (A.J. ASHLEY PHOTO)

Cait Watson, whistles player in The Bookends, said the band is thrilled to collaborate with the Stratford Symphony Or-

chestra for the second time since 2022.

"Saturday is going to be quite the magical journey, I think. There are some really nice, pretty spots in the performance that

we will be doing," added Miriam Fischer, piano and accordion player in The Bookends.

"There are some dramatic heavy parts that are very lively and full of energetic music. It's a whole journey of music. There are some beautiful melodies. I'm excited to hear it all with the orchestra behind us."

Watson said one of her favourite aspects about Celtic transitional music is people don't have to know it to be familiar with the melodies.

"I think a part of that makes it so universal," she said. "It's lovely how broad of an appeal it can have. You can't come away from this music feeling grumpy; it's a huge mood boost. No matter what, you and everyone can find the joy in this music."

Rowson said there are still two more performances to take the stage before the end of the symphony orchestra's 20th anniversary season – Orchestral Fireworks on April 5 and HMS Mother's Day on May 10.

Tickets for the annual Celtic Celebration can be purchased at [www.stratfordsymphony.ca](http://www.stratfordsymphony.ca).

# Gallery Stratford hosting annual student-art exhibition

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

The art created by Stratford District Secondary School (SDSS) students that is now on display as part of an annual art show at Gallery Stratford is all focused on a central theme of mental health.

Artwork created by 20 students from SDSS is currently displayed on the walls of Gallery Stratford until Feb 2. Called "Human Condition," the exhibition showcases works from students expressing their relationship with mental health.

Nicholas Lewis, a Grade 12 student at SDSS, said his piece is focused on creative burnout, explaining he struggled earlier in the school year with how he was going to balance his studies and work life.

"Being stuck and feeling dead; creative burnout was a way that I could create art and use it to express the struggle," he said. "Mental-health art, especially from my class, is something I really appreciate because we are trying to express something raw and emotional in our art."

Abby Johnson, another Grade 12 art student at SDSS, says her piece demonstrates her relationship with herself. Johnson said her piece is a self-portrait and she plans to study toward becoming an art teacher after high school.

"Part of our mandate is education, and not only through skills development and workshops, but also for high school students to have a professional gallery experience where their work is displayed like a



Pictured from left to right are Nicholas Lewis, Stratford District Secondary School (SDSS) student volunteer, and Robert Windrum, curator and director at Gallery Stratford, standing amongst SDSS' annual art show, "Human Condition."

professional artist," said Gallery Stratford curator and director Robert Windrum.

"It's beyond the students delivering the

work to the gallery but also the step-by-step process on the development of how that work is displayed and presented to the

public."

Lewis said working with the art gallery has been a fascinating experience, and he's enjoyed working with his classmates' art on an intimate level and visualizing the stories they were expressing with their work.

"I was looking into universities and I saw a post-graduate degree in gallery curating, and I thought that was really interesting and worked out perfectly with the Grade 12 art show at Gallery Stratford," said Lewis. "It has been a great experience with setting up the exhibition. I don't think I'll give anything in the world to take it back; this has been helping me decide what I'm going to do in the future."

Alongside "Human Condition," another exhibition at the gallery, "NOTURNING: MALCOLM PATE," expresses humankind's relationship with the world's nocturnal elements and lighting styles. The exhibition was held in conjunction with Lights On Stratford and tells the story of the endless flights of barn owls searching for a home that will never remain permanent due to human and environmental obstructions, all brought to life by an ominous lighting projection.

Gallery visitors can gaze within the inverted fire animation or fluttering lights resembling the vibrations of flapping bat wings, which are all enhanced by an immersive soundscape to amplify its unnatural mood.

"NOCTURNING: MALCOLM PATE" will run at Gallery Stratford until March 2.

# INNERchamber continues 15th season with third concert, Transplanted

SYDNEY GOODWIN

Times Correspondent

Get ready for a night of great food and great music as INNERchamber is excited to preform in Transplanted, the third concert of its 15th season.

This performance is taking place at Factory163, 163 King St. in Stratford, on Sunday Jan. 26. The concert starts at 7 p.m. and a dinner being served at 5:45 p.m.

INNERchamber is a concert and dinner series held in Stratford celebrating the wonderful music written for smaller groups of instruments. Fine music, delicious food and unexpected twists are mainstays of the concert series.

Transplanted will showcase the brilliant work of mezzo-soprano Maria Soulis and the INNERchamber ensemble featuring James Mason on the oboe, Peter Shackleton on the clarinet, Andrew Chung on the violin, Ben Bolt-Martin on the cello and



Charmaine Fopoussi playing the piano. These talented musicians

have come together to share pieces tied to their various heritages, as well as larger-scale works that have been "transplanted" into this intimate concert space.

Andrew Chung is not only the violinist in the show, but also artistic director of INNERchamber. After starting the company in 2010, Chung has been able to see INNERchamber thrive and grow with each show.

"This is a concert that covers a lot of musical ground with a variety of music originally written for a wide-ranging number of players, anywhere from two to 50," Chung said. "With a musical ensemble of five, we will be performing a transcription of Johannes Brahms' beautiful 'Serenade No. 2 in A Major.' Together with Maria, we will perform his deeply moving 'Der Einsame im Herbst' from Gustav Mahler's symphonic masterpiece, 'Das Lied von der Erde' (Song of the Earth), as well as Maurice Rav-

el's 'Five Greek Songs,' and 'Anaktoria' by Canadian-Greek composer Christos Hatzis."

Chung said Soulis will help bring the curated pieces to life with her voice. INNERchamber will also be sampling work from Alice Ping Yee Ho's musical recollection of a "Hong Kong Night Market," as well as Ralph Vaughan Williams' "Six Studies in English Folk Song."

Tickets are now on sale at [www.innerchamber.ca](http://www.innerchamber.ca) or \$50 at the door. Student and arts-worker discounts are available. Tickets will include dinner if purchased by 5 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 24. Tickets purchased after the cut-off will be available at the same price but will not include dinner.

More information about INNERchamber and upcoming performances can be found on social media – [innerchamber.music](http://innerchamber.music) on Instagram and INNERchamber on Facebook.

# Environmental Heroes: Be the Change

ANNA KOWALCHUK

*Times Contributor*

The recent images of swathes of Los Angeles burning to ash have, no doubt, sent terror-chills up the spines of even the most stalwart of us. It is nearly impossible not to be staggered by this further evidence that our environment has now become our enemy, an unwitting accomplice in these ever increasing and devastating scenarios of floods and fires of epic proportions.

Processing disasters of this magnitude can certainly be a challenge. Our natural defense responses tend towards denying, rationalizing or becoming numb as we try to protect ourselves from the emotional impact of these disasters. But, however natural these responses may be, none are helpful in any way.

A remarkable scene from long-ago recently came to mind. My Grade 7 teacher wrote on the chalkboard one simple word, "THINK." Then he wrote it again, then again and again, until the entire board was covered with that one word. And then, in a small corner, he wrote, "DO." That was my truly memorable and invaluable introduction to the power of critical thinking and the heartening process of problem-solving.

So, dear readers, while it is tempting, let's not turn away or become overwhelmed or discouraged by what we are witnessing with such frequency now. Our predicament is, indeed, dire but it is also completely and indisputably solvable. We absolutely can think and do our way out of this existential crisis – if we choose to.

Let's begin with a quick analysis of the problem itself.

Carbon and other greenhouse gases (GHG) generated by human activity are entering the atmosphere and becoming trapped there, acting like a blanket that now covers the entire planet. While the sun's direct rays are able to penetrate this blanket and warm the Earth, instead of an equal amount deflecting back into space and, thus, maintaining that perfect temperature balance, the heat is now becoming absorbed by this GHG blanket and much of it is being deflected back down to Earth.

Heat is now accumulating on the planet at an excessive rate and it will continue to do so until we intervene. There are two components to this intervention but, for now, let's just look at the first logical step required – reducing/eliminating the amount of carbon and GHG we are emitting so that, at the very least, we don't allow this pollution blanket to become any thicker. But what exactly are these emissions and where are they coming from? Let's do a quick breakdown.

GHG, of which carbon makes up approximately 75 per cent, come from a variety of sources including the production and burning of fossil fuels, commercial and industrial activities, agriculture, and landfills. The research and data collected shows that approximately 30 per cent of global emissions come from each of the following three: manufacturing, heating/cooling, and transportation (which includes air-travel) with agriculture making up the remaining 10 per cent. All of these areas, with perhaps the exception

of agriculture (and I'd love to hear from our farming heroes!), lie easily within our control and, therefore, our ability to affect and change. That being the case, let's look at what we can do, direct solutions we can apply to prevent any further rise in the temperature of our desperately fevered planet.

Reducing emissions generated by the manufacturing industry is not so much about doing as it is about not doing. Some items, such as plastics, are far more polluting than others to manufacture, so we can certainly make a positive impact by curtailing our purchases of plastic products. But, generally, in order to reduce the overall amount of pollutants emitted through manufacturing, we will simply have to reduce the amount that we purchase.

An amazingly effective solution that will almost entirely eliminate carbon emission from our home heating/cooling functions is to replace our gas furnaces with heat pumps, solar panels or other non-polluting technology. While these technologies can be expensive and currently out of financial reach for many of us, there are significant assistance and rebate programmes available (please see Greener Homes Grant – Ontario). Something that we can all do in the meantime, and at no cost to ourselves, is lower our thermostats a little during heating and raise them a little during cooling, if only by a degree or two. These may seem like insignificant acts, but they will accumulate to make a difference.

The third major source of carbon emissions, transportation, is the easiest, by far,

to reduce immediately and almost entirely. If an electric vehicle is not yet affordable, there are alternatives at the ready. Our local transit system, admittedly in much need of improvement, is a real and significant solution to our environmental predicament, especially as it moves towards electrifying its busses. Cabs are plentiful and, though expensive, they are a miniscule fraction of the cost of owning a car. And, in a city as small, safe and pretty as Stratford, walking, even biking for the hardier of us, is an excellent way of improving the health of our planet, as well as our own. While it is absolutely true that not all of us can manage entirely without a car, were we to draw that line between needs and wants a little more firmly, most of us would find that we absolutely can.

As you can see, dear readers, solving the problem of planetary over-heating and inevitable self-annihilation, is surprisingly simple: it requires that we reduce the amount we purchase (plastics in particular), and that we change out our gas-powered furnaces and vehicles for greener options. We have overdrawn massively from our 'healthy planet account' and must make immediate and substantial contributions to restore that balance. And now that we know what must be done, let's prove ourselves worthy of this gift of a planet, and do it!

"Be the change you wish to see."

*If you know of an individual, company or organization that deserves recognition for their innovative and sustainable environmental practices, please contact me at [frogs-a-leaping@tutamail.com](mailto:frogs-a-leaping@tutamail.com).*

## The start of a fresh vision for Stratford



BRUCE WHITAKER

*Times Freelance Columnist*

Stratford has been fortunate to have been led by visionaries such as Thomas Mercer Jones (explorer), John Daly (first mayor), R. Thomas Orr (park protector) and Tom Patterson (theatre promoter). Now it's time for a new vision to lead us forward to continued prosperity. There have been attempts by past city councils such as becoming an "intelligent city", but nothing has really stuck.

A new vision should be developed by community members in order to generate creative responses to challenges and har-

ness resources towards shared goals. A community inspired approach will have more support and a much longer life span than a top-down government introduced plan. Being transparent about not knowing exactly what the future holds creates an open and inviting way to start the conversation with residents.

In developing an effective vision, a bit of research is needed to uncover what truly makes a city great. The new vision can be measured against the parameters of great cities.

According to a report by McKinsey and Company, "How to make a city great," such cities identify and nurture the very best opportunities for growth, plan ways to cope with demands, integrate environmental thinking, and ensure that all citizens enjoy a city's prosperity. Great cities secure revenue opportunities, explore private-public partnerships, embrace technology, make organizational changes that eliminate overlapping roles, and manage expenses prudently.

The current trend of cities is to

be more alike. There is a focus on templated neighbourhoods and the same big box stores at the edge of each town. A better approach is to foster a unique identity by celebrating differences. Stratford already has an advantage here with its varied retail mix, market square, industrial diversity and arts culture. How about a year-round Festival City leveraging the Stratford Festival with theatre (summer), film (winter), music (spring) and the visual arts (fall)?

A great city is built for diversity, inclusion, and equality while providing affordable housing for all in mixed neighbourhoods. Such cities create opportunities to address under-housed communities in a tangible, integrated way. A great city is designed on a human scale and encourages the playful side of humans by promoting curiosity, wonder and discovery. It nurtures a vibrant public life with access to culture and activities, as well as appealing public spaces for well-being, and learning.

From large parks to tree lined

streets, green space can transform a city. Parks provide vital outdoor space for residents to enjoy themselves. They can also be used as places of gathering for outdoor events that bring people together. Such places are not meant to be static, but should be built to transform a city based on the demands of its residents. A great example is the All Wheels Skate Park and Urban Gym in Stratford's Shakespeare Park. Each year a new feature is added based on feedback from users. The next phase will hopefully be a dirt bike track enabling users to transform it each year.

Equally essential in creating a great city is a high-performing team of municipal civil servants who embrace a mandate to engage stakeholders and residents. Ideally, the team would collaborate across departments to generate ideas and coordinate on projects.

Implementing zero-based budgeting is another important step for a great city. It ensures that every line item of the budget is approved. All expenses are jus-

tified for each period starting from zero, as opposed to starting with the previous budget and adjusting it as needed. By staying lean in good times, cities can put funds aside to cover operating costs when tax revenue falls short, thus avoiding cuts to core services when the cycle turns and people need the services most.

Great cities invest in infrastructure that reduces emissions, waste production and water use, as well as in building high-density communities. Such cities embrace non-vehicular traffic. They also boost health and provide safety for all, along with an emphasis on crime prevention and rehabilitation.

It's time for our citizens to come together to develop and articulate a vision and then present that vision to council. It should be a vision with short-term successes in order to gain buy-in from the community. A vision supported by popular support is attractive to most, especially to young adults – a key demographic that Stratford needs to appeal to in order to remain sustainable.

# Is Being Alone Such a Bad Thing?



IRENE ROTH

*Times Freelance Columnist*

Our culture shuns people who are alone. In most commercials, you see people mingling, eating together and socializing. So, it would seem that being alone is unhealthy and not recommended. But is this really the case?

I believe that the media and culture conflate solitude with loneliness and automatically believe that if we're alone, we're lonely. But this need not be the case, and for many people, being alone is a pleasant thing. In fact, they are perfectly happy living alone and doing things alone.

In 2021, 4.4 million Canadian adults were living alone. This is

more than ever before and the number of those living on their own has been growing since that time. For many of these individuals they want to live alone. They love their solitude, despite the common perception that it is hard living alone.

Thus, living alone doesn't mean that you will automatically experience loneliness or isolation. These are two different states of mind and heart. Loneliness is a subjective concept and it highlights our interpretation of what we want our interpersonal relationships to be. Social isolation, on the other hand, can be measured objectively, and underscores the importance of having good quality relationships which allow for deep conversations. This is essential to feel less isolated and connected to others, even if we live alone.

The most important thing we should try to realize is that our happiness should not come from other people but from ourselves. We should be able to be our own best friends at the hardest times in our lives and to be self-compassionate when no one else is.

Living alone can be an incredibly rewarding experience when approached with intention and positivity. While solitude might seem daunting at first, it provides an opportunity to grow, explore, and discover what truly makes you happy.

Here are seven practical tips to help you thrive while living alone.

## 1. Create a cozy and inviting space

Your home is your sanctuary, and it should feel like one. Take time to design your space in a way that reflects your personality and makes you happy to be there. Use warm lighting, add comfortable furniture, and include decor that sparks joy. Plants, artwork, and personal mementos can make your home feel lively and welcoming.

## 2. Establish routines

Routines bring structure and purpose to your days, helping you feel grounded. Set regular times for work, meals, exercise, and leisure activities. Having a predictable rhythm to your day can provide stability and make your time alone more fulfilling.

## 3. Pursue hobbies and passions

Living alone gives you the freedom to fully dive into hobbies and passions without distractions. Whether it's painting, writing, gardening, or learning to cook, take advantage of this time to explore new interests. Joining online or local classes can also help you develop new skills while connecting with others who share your enthusiasm.

## 4. Embrace solitude as self-care

Solitude can be a powerful tool for self-discovery and self-care. Use quiet moments to reflect, meditate, or journal. Practicing mindfulness can help you appreciate the calm and freedom that comes with living alone. These practices nurture your mental health and foster a sense of peace.

## 5. Stay active

Exercise is essential for both physical and mental well-being. Staying active boosts your mood, energy levels, and overall health. Try at-home workouts, join a gym, or take walks in nature. Living alone allows you to choose activities that you genuinely enjoy and tailor them to your schedule.

## 6. Treat yourself well

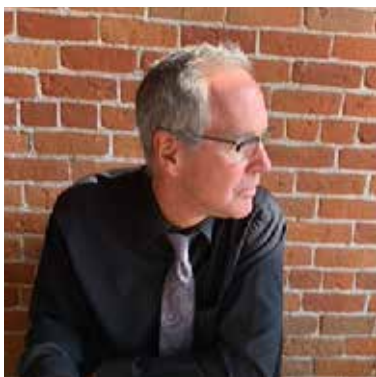
When living alone, it's easy to fall into habits like skipping meals or relying on takeout. Instead, prioritize cooking nutritious and delicious meals for yourself. Indulge in self-care rituals like bubble baths, skincare routines, or relaxing spa days at home. Treat yourself as kindly as you would a loved one.

## 7. Cultivate gratitude

Reflect on the benefits of living alone, such as independence, freedom, and control over your environment. Keeping a gratitude journal can help you focus on the positive aspects of your life. Regularly acknowledging what you're thankful for fosters a sense of happiness and contentment.

Living alone is an opportunity to build a life that is entirely your own. By creating a nurturing environment, maintaining meaningful connections, and embracing self-care, you can transform solitude into a source of joy and fulfillment. With these tips, you'll find that living alone can be one of the happiest and most empowering experiences of your life.

# UNTIL SOON. LIVE WELL: Our vision in the world of funeral service 2025



STUART LENDER

*Times Contributor*

Now more than ever... heading into the uncertain financial and emotional climate of 2025, I feel there are three essential things in my field of work that must be focused on in the offering of compassionate and respectful service to the public.

1. Making services affordable.
2. Making service personal to the one receiving it whether a funeral is being carried out at the funeral home or not, and
3. Actively educating on dozens of topics of which people are unaware so that they are the ones in control of their decision-making and not being led.

My name is Stuart Lender

and since I became manager of Rutherford Cremation and Funeral Services in 2018, I have strived to turn the funeral home into something more. Already, we don't look like your average funeral home, nor do we want to be. The change was deliberate. A tasteful, intimate space for 60-65 people with larger venue options if needed and costs lower. It has always been my belief that a funeral home should be a source of information on most everything related to preparations, funerals, end-of-life care and estate matters. And while questions are welcome and certainly encouraged, I have found that most folks don't know what the questions should be: from pre-planning to wills to grief counselling, green options, burial options, scattering of remains, what is needed and what is not needed – a funeral home should give you the answers to these things whether it is asked of them or not.

That said, Rutherford Cremation and Funeral Services has consistently pointed out that the cost of any service carried out, no matter what service is provided, has nothing to do with the depth of honour you hold for

the one you love. Don't make the mistake of thinking that the more money you spend the greater the honouring. Untrue. I have seen graveside services as emotional and meaningful as any traditional service at church and I have been at private celebrations carried out by family that are as beautiful as any organized in any funeral home. In my humble opinion, it is the wishes of the deceased that should be carried out first and foremost – and if there were no wishes specified, then the family has carte blanche to honour the way they see fit. After all, who knows the deceased better than a spouse, life-long friend, child or family member? Over decades of service, honouring has taken the form of traditional services, prayer groups, celebrations in the spaces of private residences or restaurants and informal "living room" style setups in the Rutherford funeral home space.

Each one of these events had its own flavour, its own emotional vibration and at the end of the shared stories, the laughter and the tears, people went home with a soul more deeply felt, a personality better known. That is the great privilege of funeral service

– aiding in the bringing together of a time and a space for honouring, for healing and for reflection – with or without the funeral home being involved beyond the compassionate care it offers for the one you love.

It's precisely that focus on service in any way we can be of service that causes us to take what it is that we do, and what it is that we know, out into the public forum as a "teaching" funeral home – to create opportunities for conversation and learning and to be a source of information for anyone who is unafraid to know more and become better prepared and informed about the many things of which they were never aware.

At the beginning of 2025 I would say that there are still many who feel anxiety concerning just how much control they have when they walk into a funeral home, because understandably, they don't often feel in control. It is important to me as manager of Rutherford Cremation and Funeral Services that the face of the industry change and I would like to think, year by year, I am helping that along – that the substance of what the funeral

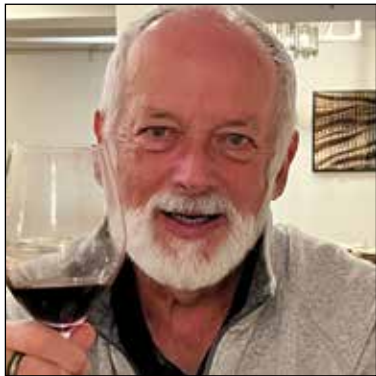
home does becomes deeper, in taking on more of an educational role and providing empowerment for people. When something new is available to the public such as the environmental benefits of Aquamation as a means of disposition, you can bet that we are going to offer the option. When there's something you should know about your TFSA (tax free savings account) that affects your estate, we are going to talk about it.

In a world that is increasingly playing upon people's fears, displacing them from themselves and community, making them feel helpless or lost in uncertainty, when real and personal tragedy strikes – expected or not – what they need to feel is a safe space opening up for their sadness, their love, and a sense of assurance and understanding; not anxiety, at a time when they need to be grounded.

Be good to yourselves in 2025 and live well.

*Stuart is a celebrant and the manager of Rutherford Cremation & Funeral Services. It is his privilege to serve, dispel myths, and give information concerning his field of compassionate service.*

# OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Amazing murals bring Sherbrooke's history to life



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Contributor

We were to meet our guide, Chantal Turgeon, in the lobby of the Grand Hotel Times, our very temporary place of residence in Sherbrooke, Que. The plan was to do a walking tour of the unique murals located around Sherbrooke city centre.

We knew that was not going to happen – it was pouring rain, a deluge so persistent the streets were running with water and some patios had turned into small ponds.

But never underestimate the determination of a tour guide. Turgeon showed up with umbrellas and a smile, and by the end of the tour, soggy shoes, wet pantlegs and all, we were very glad she did, because the 18 Sherbrooke murals are amazing.

The murals are gigantic, genuine works of art beautifully executed, full of local detail and often painted with a lot of humour. They cover entire sides of buildings and feature the clever “trompe-l’oeil” (“to deceive the eye”) style, which creates optical illusions suggesting three dimensions.

The mural project has been ongoing for more than 20 years. The first was completed in 2002, Sherbrooke's bicentennial. It features a scene depicting life in 1902, but perhaps the best place to start is



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

The mural, “Tradition and Prevention,” was unveiled in 2007. The only figure in the photograph that is not part of the painting is our terrific guide, Chantal Turgeon.

with a mural near the Sherbrooke Tourist Information Office, a scene dating back to 1867.

The murals are not all historic in theme. There are recent and modern scenes, right up to the 2019 mural, “The Fifth Element,” a visionary, modernistic image depicting a family viewing huge symbols of fire, earth, water and air – the fifth element being the spectators themselves.

One of the murals, dubbed “Nékitotegwak,” depicts the junction of the Magog and St.-François rivers. The title means “where the rivers meet.” It's especially appropriate because, as we discovered during our wet and wild tour, visiting the murals includes walking the dramatic, metal boardwalk along the river that surges through the city.

Visitors to Sherbrooke should

pick up one of the free guides to this open-air art gallery. They recommend two possible walking routes, one a half-circuit that takes you to 11 of the murals, the other, the full circuit of all 18.

The pamphlets add to the fun of the tour, suggesting a number of items included in the murals that kids – and whimsical adults – can find as they enjoy the art.

For instance, at the “Heart, Culture and Education” mural that is a building-sized bookshelf, visitors are invited to spot one apple, one pregnant woman, one dog, one owl, two butterflies, one blue jay, one fairy, one dragonfly, one mole, one happy face, 10 ladybugs and one grasshopper. What is not mentioned is the books on the shelves are the works of local authors, including Louise Penny, whose Inspector Gamache thrillers are

situated right here in the Eastern Townships.

All of the murals are fine pieces of artistic achievement. A few of our favourites included:

- “Canada Games 2013,” a mural comprising 224 panels so full of life that the main figure, a female athlete in full motion, is leaving panels scattered in her wake.

- “Tradition and Prevention,” a commemoration of Sherbrooke's fire-prevention history that is nonetheless filled with humour and nostalgia, from the shopper in very hip '60s fashions to a young boy about to wreak havoc with a garden hose.

This mural is located very close to St. Michael's Cathedral-Basilica, a Gothic Revival masterpiece that has been very much in the news of late; it is the resting place of St. Marie-Léonie Paradis,

founder of the community of the Little Sisters of the Holy Family. This local hero was canonized by Pope Francis in October 2024, a cause for huge celebration in Sherbrooke as well as in Rome. Her story, memorabilia and relics are all on display in the cathedral.

As we waded through temporary ponds and unsuccessfully dodged raindrops, we soon realized that seeing the Sherbrooke murals was more than worth the effort in any weather. We were also very grateful to be accompanied by Turgeon, as well as Shanny Hallé, a Sherbrooke native who is the very hospitable, Eastern Townships' media liaison.

Our recommendation? At the very least, get the guidebook. It includes QR codes that let you learn more on your phone. The best option, if possible, is to get a living, breathing, fast-paced human guide like Turgeon. You will appreciate the works of art that much more.

For example, we stopped at “We Are In the Movies,” and at “CHLTV, 50 Years Of Looking At It Our Way.” Both murals feature a cast of local characters, a few named in the brochure, but each one was identified for us by Turgeon and Hallé, all of which made the experience of visiting Sherbrooke's amazing murals all that more intriguing.

As you do the trek to see the murals, you will also be passing coffee shops, restaurants, boutiques, museums and more, all of which can make for a fascinating day out in this rather special capital of Québec's Eastern Townships.

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).



The “Canada Games” mural commemorates the games coming to Sherbrooke in 2013.



The “Sherbrooke 2002 Bicentennial” mural includes 23 characters from 1902.

**OBITUARY**



**LOIS SHIRLEY GOFORTH**

Lois Shirley Goforth, age 94, lifelong resident of Stratford, passed away peacefully on January 3, 2025, at Spruce Lodge. She was the daughter of the late Stanley and Nellie (Gibson) Kunder.

Predeceased by her true love and best friend, Frank "Tony" Goforth (January 3, 2018). Loving mother of Waverley (Declan) Griffin. Dearly loved grandmother of Lindsay (Ellen) McClure, Kieran (Allison) Griffin, and Amber (Ryan) Mansell. Great grandmother of 7. Also fondly remembered by her son in law, Paul McClure, and David Watt. Lois is survived by sisters-in-law Marlene, Wendy and Marion Kunder, as well as many nieces and nephews.

Predeceased by her daughter, Jo-Ann McClure, brothers, Don, Wayne and Keith Kunder, brothers-in-law Reid, Bob, Roy, Gord, and Art Goforth, sisters-in-law Ruby, Roberta, Barbara, and Edna Goforth, Marilyn "Molly" and Marilyn Kunder.

Throughout her life, Lois was employed at Kroehler Furniture, Sears Catalogue, Doctors Office on Albert Street, Perth Motors, and the Central Secondary and Northwestern Secondary School cafeterias.

Lois was a parishioner of St. Paul's Anglican Church. She was an active member of the "Friends of St. Paul's", as well as a Sunday School teacher.

In her youth, she was an avid basketball and baseball player and enjoyed continuing to cheer on her grandchildren in the same sport endeavours. She also loved square dancing and bowling and won competitions in both activities.

A private family interment will take place at Avondale Cemetery, Friday April 25, 2025 at 1p.m., Then friends, and acquaintances are invited to join us for a gathering, from 2-4 p.m., at the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch #8, 804 Ontario Street, Stratford.

As expressions of sympathy memorial donations may be made to the Alzheimer Society of Huron Perth through the W. G. Young Funeral Home, 430 Huron St, Stratford, ON. [www.wgyoungfuneralhome.com](http://www.wgyoungfuneralhome.com)

**COMING EVENTS**

Email to inquire [stratfordtimes@gmail.com](mailto:stratfordtimes@gmail.com)

**FRIDAY EUCHRE TOURNAMENT**

February 21, March 21 & April 11; 6:30 p.m.  
Stratford Legion, 804 Ontario St.

\$20 per team of two players. Each game consists of 2 deals per player. Register to game date. Anne: 519-301-0914, Dave: 519-703-6544, Legion: 519-271-4540 or online.

**GARDEN STRATFORD GENERAL MEETING**

Monday, January 13, 2025; 7:15 – 9:00 p.m.

Army Navy Hall, 151 Lorne Ave. E., Stratford

Featured Presentation: "Design Solutions for Small Spaces", Tom Temming, Landscape Designer, Touch of Dutch. Meeting Open to Everyone; Free Admission.

**GARDEN STRATFORD GENERAL MEETING**

Monday February 3, 2025, 7:15 – 9:00 p.m.

Army Navy Hall, 151 Lorne Ave. E., Stratford

Featured Presentation: "Vanquish Invasives", Ellizabeth Spedaliere, Tri-County Master Gardeners Meeting Open to Everyone; Free Admission.

**WINE TASTING**

Friday, February 7; 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Stratford Legion

Our Sommelier, Bob Latham, will be discussing 3 white wines and 3 red wines from Meldville Wines, that you will be tasting. The evening will conclude with some

great snacks. Tickets are \$25 pp. Get tickets online or from Flowers on York, at the Legion (519-271-4540) or from Dave Hartney (519-703-6544)

**KIWANIS FESTIVAL'S 2025 FEATURED MUSICAL**

Friday, March 28, 2025; 7 p.m. (live & livestreamed)  
Avondale Church, 194 Avondale Ave, Stratford

"A Midsummer Night's Dream" by Christopher Norton and Wendy Edwards Beardall-Norton Singers accepted until Feb. 3. Great for families! All non-professional singers welcome, no audition required. Rehearsals begin in late January. Cast will receive script, music and rehearsal tracks to use during holidays. Visit [kiwanisfestivalstratford.com/events](http://kiwanisfestivalstratford.com/events)

**STRATFORD SCRABBLE CLUB**

Anne Hathaway Residence 480 Downie St., Stratford

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Derek Barnes and Barry James Payne perform live at The Local Community Food Centre's community meal on Monday Jan. 20.

(JULIA PAUL PHOTO)

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# Riddles

What's the best way to talk to a monster?  
Long distance

How do fisherman make their nets?  
They just take a lot of holes and sew them together

What's wet and says "how do you do?" sixteen times?  
Two octopuses shaking hands

What's the same size as an elephant but doesn't weigh anything?  
An elephant's shadow

Which insect eats the least?  
A moth - it just eats holes

What lies on the ground, a hundred feet in the air?  
A centipede sleeping on his back

On which side of a chicken are the most feathers?  
The outside

Why do elephants have trunks?  
Because they'd look silly with suitcases

What Rooms can't you enter?  
Mushrooms

What falls but never gets hurt?  
Rain

# Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 34



# Pet of the Month



## OTIS

Meet Otis, a large-breed dog with a big heart and an adventurous spirit! This energetic boy thrives in an active home with space to roam and play. Otis loves long walks, quality time with his people, and learning new skills. He's selective with other dogs but could do well with a friendly, young canine companion after proper introductions. Otis isn't suited for homes with cats or small animals. He's working on leash manners and training, so his ideal family will be patient, dog-savvy, and ready to continue his progress. Loyal and eager to please, Otis will make a wonderful companion for those ready to help him thrive! Learn more about Otis at [kwsphumane.ca](http://kwsphumane.ca).

# Word Search

## HEART HEALTH

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

- AORTIC
- BLOOD
- PRESSURE
- CARDIAC
- CARDIOLOGIST
- CHOLESTEROL
- CORONARY
- FAILURE
- HEART
- MITRAL
- PACEMAKER
- PRESSURE
- PULMONIC
- PULSE
- STRESS
- STROKE
- SYSTOLIC
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- THROMBOSIS
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- Fat
- Massachusetts
- Jerusalem
- Nectar, Pollen
- True
- Crocodile
- 2004

## SUDOKU

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

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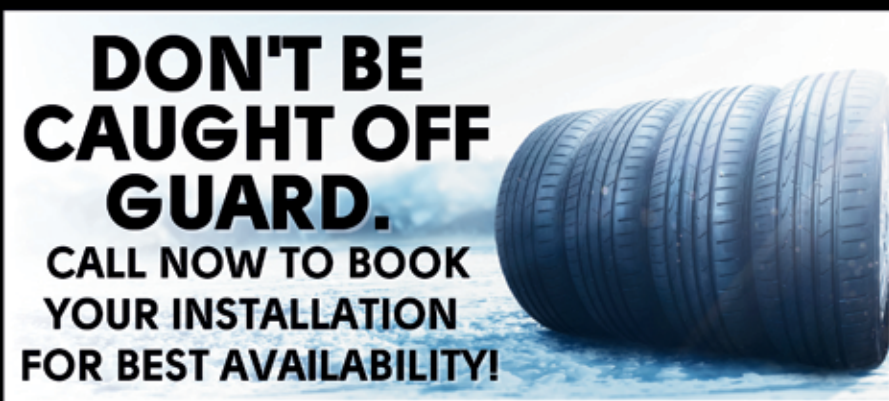
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