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Manu Bahl and Vanessa Gale officially soft-launched their New Hamburg restaurant, Mother Flockers, on Nov. 22. Photo by Galen Simmons

Confusion and frustration by local businesses surrounding federal government's tax vacation plan

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The federal government's proposal to implement a tax holiday for Canadians hasn't been approved yet, but for two local businesses, it has resulted in some head-scratching.

Under the proposed changes announced last week, the GST and HST would be fully removed from some goods for two months starting on Dec. 14. It includes items such as children's clothing, snacks, restaurant meals, wine, beer and various groceries seeing the tax removed.

One area business owner was more than happy to talk to the Gazette but at the same time was worried about outwardly criticizing the federal government. They feel the amount of work for a small business owner to implement the plan on such short notice will create an immense administrative burden.

"The affected items will need to be identified, and each one will need to be programmed with the tax exemption status. Our system is not designed to handle this, so we will have to stay up late after the business closes the night before the implementation and complete the changes. We will then have to repeat the same thing two months later. Will the government compensate small businesses for the overtime needed?"

The feds did not reach out to small business associations like the Canadian

Continued on page 2

Continued on page 3

Mother Flockers Restaurant welcomes New Hamburg area customers into the flock

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A new restaurant specializing in fried-chicken dishes made to order with fresh ingredients and whole foods has recently opened its doors, welcoming hungry New Hamburg and area customers into the flock.

The team at Mother Flockers Restaurant

celebrated a soft launch of the takeout eatery at 174 Union St. in New Hamburg Nov. 22, a momentous occasion for owners Manu Bahl and Vanessa Gale that nearly didn't happen after the pair had resigned themselves to opening a food truck following a months-long search for a brick-and-mortar restaurant, nearly to no avail.

"It's our first restaurant and we are excited," Bahl said during an interview just two

days before the restaurant's soft launch. "It took us forever, firstly, to find this place because of limited commercial real estate. ... This was an Indian restaurant and they weren't looking to sell, so we had to convince them to sell it."

"First, we had spoken with the developer of this plaza," Gale said. "Because we could find no real estate, we thought of asking,

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Mother Flockers Restaurant welcomes New Hamburg area customers into the flock

Continued from page 1

‘How about if we set up a food truck, develop our customer base and when the (brick-and-mortar) restaurant comes, when the real estate comes, we’ll move into a physical location?’ “

Bahl and Gale were literally one day away from putting a deposit on a food truck when they had a conversation with Greg Voisin, the owner of the plaza where their restaurant is now located, in the nearby Sobeys parking lot. The pair was working with Voisin to finalize the food-truck deal when they made one, last, ditch effort to see if Voisin might have a physical space they could open Mother Flockers in.

Voisin said he would try one more time to see if any existing businesses were willing to sell and, just 10 minutes later, he came back with a proposal to sell from the owners of Turmeric Indian Bistro.

“It was last minute. Very last minute,” Gale said.

But the pair’s dream had always been to open a restaurant, so they scrapped their food-truck plans and jumped headfirst into opening Mother Flockers Restaurant.

The name, which has garnered tonnes of attention on social media and through local

news outlets, is a playful hint that the restaurant is like the mother hen of what will ultimately become a whole flock of restaurants.

“We know our name is a play on words and we understand some people may be offended, but the original idea comes from the mother of our flock and we’re leaning into the play on words,” Gale said.

“We had one person who was offended by it and he posted about it on Facebook,” Bahl added. “It was an anonymous post and he deleted it. I am thankful to this community, to be very honest. I am feeling as if I am sitting in my home. They are so welcoming, so kind-hearted and I am in loved with this town.”

The drive behind opening a takeout restaurant in New Hamburg was what Bahl and Gale saw as a lack of options while visiting friends in town.

“There was only pizza in this area, so we were like, ‘We’re not far, let’s come up with some better ideas,’” Bahl said. “We started with only wings; we were going to do a wide variety of wings, and then we thought, ‘How wide can we go with this?’ ”

As Bahl is a vegetarian, Gale took it upon herself to painstakingly develop an original recipe for Mother Flockers’ fried-chicken

dishes, which include traditional fried chicken, wings, tenders, sandwiches, wraps and more.

She said she would stay up all night testing and retesting her recipe until it was delicious, replicable by the line cooks in the Mother Flockers kitchen and, most importantly of all, leaves anyone who eats it feeling good.

“Every time we went somewhere to eat, we would leave that place feeling nauseous,” Gale said. “So, we know they’re using canola oils, which are GMO. That’s an issue for a lot of people. We know they’re using the cheapest ingredients. Even from us finding our own suppliers; we found one supplier that had sort of cheap ingredients that we would never use, but we know a lot of places are using them. So that’s why if we won’t eat it ourselves, we won’t serve it to you or anyone else.

“We want to do fast food better, and our chicken tastes good from real ingredients, not from MSG.”

Bahl also wanted to ensure there were plenty of vegetarian dishes on the menu, which he took the lead in creating. Items like cauliflower bites, battered mushrooms, salads and spring rolls can be found

throughout the menu, offering plenty of options for everyone.

And, to maintain a small piece of Turmeric Indian Bistro’s legacy, Bahl and Gale have included a number of Indian dishes on the menu customers of the previous restaurant may have become accustomed to like chili paneer, lemon garlic chicken tikka, chana masala and, of course, fresh-made naan. The restaurant also offers a number of Indian fusion dishes like the paneer burger, Punjab fries and butter-chicken poutine.

As Turmeric had catering contracts with local schools and New Hamburg Lanes, Gale and Bahl said they have agreed to continue honouring those contracts through their new business.

While the pair had originally offered a full breakfast menu, after the soft launch, they announced on Facebook they would be taking a step back from serving breakfast at least until they improve their preparation process to ensure faster service.

Mother Flockers Restaurant is open Sunday to Thursday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

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Local businesses frustrated by federal tax Vacation Plan

Continued from page 1

Federation of Independent Business (CFIB), something this owner said would have been beneficial.

“Consultation would have allowed all parties to provide input, thus balancing the effectiveness of the program and the effort needed from all parties. It would have allowed for the implementation of a program that truly helps the people who need it.”

CFIB president Dan Kelly called the tax holiday “a mess” in a post on the organization’s website.

“Many retailers right now are in their absolute busiest season and they may have to reprogram their point-of-sale machines not once but twice to remove the tax from some items and then to add the tax back.”

Kelly added some business owners he’s spoken to have to pay \$500 each time a point-of-sale device needs to be reprogrammed.

The local retailer added while sales may increase and people will save a bit of money due to the tax vacation, the drawbacks outweigh the benefits.

“General business logic would suggest that it should help business revenue, but we need to weigh it against the resources needed, future impact to our country’s debt burden and the real value toward the people the program is targeting.”

The Liberal government will be borrowing roughly \$6 million to provide millions of Canadians with a \$250 cheque in April, should the measure pass. The business owner added the pandemic’s safety measures made sense and they were happy to oblige, but this time around, it doesn’t make sense.

“As any small business owner operating through COVID, we were willing to handle the extra burden for activities that truly benefited our community. This program that runs for a short time will compete with our limited resources without truly benefiting the targeted group,” the local business owner said.

They added a government that is willing to take action to help people is always a good idea, but consideration must always be given to the idea’s effectiveness, efficiency and value in tapping the means of small operators.

“Personally, I am indifferent to the idea, but aware that it will create extra non-value-added work for small businesses.”

Angie Scheid is the owner of Cloverleaf Farms Food Outlet in New Hamburg and said there are many unknowns.

“When I read the news the other day, I said what does it mean for me? I guess what we need to do is get into our register



Cloverleaf Farms Food Outlet’s owner is looking for more information on the proposed tax break by the federal Liberals. Contributed photo

system and get a list from the government of what exactly is exempt because it’s very confusing.”

She added some of the items on the list are already tax-exempt, adding to the uncertainty.

“It’s a bit scary because I want to make sure we are exempting the proper things. We need to figure out what those things are and get them taken out. We’re lucky we have barcodes on our taxable items, so I don’t have to worry about relying on staff to try and remember what has tax and what doesn’t.”

Scheid is hopeful the plan will help the store’s sales but added a two-month exemption may not make much of a difference. She said it could help consumers struggling with the cost of food.

“I don’t know, to be honest, it’s so short-lived. People with young families will be able to stock up on things they need but I don’t think it will make them buy more items like candy for example. I don’t think it will have much of an impact on increasing our sales.”

She believed the products affected at her store would be sandwiches and salads, drinks, and snacks like candy and chocolate.

According to a Canadian Press story released Tuesday, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh said while he supports the Liberal plan to give Canadians a tax break during the holidays, he won’t back the \$250 rebate proposal unless the government expands eligibility to the most vulnerable including seniors who aren’t working.

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TVDSB re-elects top two trustees as school board controversy continues

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

London trustee Beth Mai and Oxford County trustee Dave Cripps have both been re-elected as chair and vice-chair, respectively, at the embattled Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB).

Both elections took place during a special meeting of the board on Tuesday evening as the province continues to keep a close eye on the spending habits of school boards across Ontario.

"I am honoured to serve the board for a second year as chair alongside vice chair Cripps, with whom I share the leadership role. Looking ahead, I see our shared vision for the next year as one that builds on the current foundation," said Mai in a recent board press release.

"As we move forward, I see us advancing our core mission of supporting students in the best way possible and addressing emerging challenges and opportunities with the same determination and leadership we've shown so far. And more than anything, I see us standing together as a board, united in our shared commitment, with integrity and purpose."

Mai is serving her first term as a trustee for London wards seven, eight, nine, 10 and 13. She is a resident of London and has been actively involved with the school board for more than 23 years as an employee and volunteer. She was first elected to the position of chair in 2023. Before that, she served as vice chair.

Before the vote for chair was held, Mai gave about a four-minute speech and thanked her fellow trustees for having faith in her.

"It is deep in my belief in the capacity of this board to create meaningful change. I appreciate the trust and the opportunity to continue building on our progress together. I'd also like to recognize the valuable partnership I have had with vice chair Cripps."

She said they have worked together to ensure the board remains transparent, effective and responsive to the needs of schools and the community.

"His contributions have been invaluable in fostering teamwork and supporting the board's progress. I am deeply grateful for his leadership."

Mai didn't touch on the controversy surrounding the recent board retreat to a downtown Toronto hotel that cost taxpayers nearly \$40,000. The fallout saw Mark Fisher, the board's director of education, taking a paid leave of absence. Retired director of education Bill Tucker was named as an interim replacement.

Mai said her goal of improved communication will carry on.

"We have worked to make sure everyone is informed, that everyone has a voice and is heard, and that we are accessible. The past few months have presented unique and complex challenges but they have also been opportunities to strengthen our leadership and resilience."

Mai added she is proud of how the board

has risen to meet the challenges before them with focus and determination.

"I am confident we can continue to do so," she added.

Cripps is also serving his first term as a trustee for Oxford County. He is a resident of Ingersoll where he works as a project and change management specialist and entrepreneur. Cripps has over 15 years of experience serving on elementary and secondary school councils as well as local home and school associations.

Cripps, who accepted a nomination to run for chair but was defeated by a single vote, conveyed his concerns regarding the affairs of the board before the election was held.

"If this was regular times for our organization, I would share with all of you some of my qualifications. I would share I was looking forward to executing our strategic plan and I would share I am excited to support student achievement and wellbeing."

He added these are not regular times for the board.

"I will ask all of you as you vote, think about coming together. Think about the focus that we'll have to have moving through the next year which will be difficult and most importantly, think about leading with empathy for all the folks we are going to impact with our decision over the next short period of time."

Among those decisions is a continuing lack of funds to run the board.

The Thames Valley District School Board is facing a \$6.4-million budget



London trustee Beth Mai has been re-elected as chair at the Thames Valley District School Board. Oxford trustee Dave Cripps is also back as vice chair. Contributed photo

shortfall on top of its \$7.6-million deficit. About 600 fewer students enrolled at schools in September than what was projected. The board slashed the 2024-2025 budget by \$11 million in June through cuts that included 58 elementary and 24 high school teaching positions. Seventeen early childhood-educator jobs and four positions in speech and psychological services were also removed.

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Changes to Tavistock Public School Christmas program leave some parents concerned

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

For many years, family members of children enrolled at Tavistock Public School (TPS) have watched their kids and grandkids perform during the annual Christmas program.

This year will see grades one to three excluded.

The Gazette received numerous comments from parents regarding the change in process this holiday season. The school and Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) were contacted and a response was given by superintendent Dennis Wright. There is no official word yet, but it appears kindergarten students will hold an event in mid-December and grades four to eight the day after.

Wright said he contacted TPS principal Jill Shushkewich, who said last year's event went on for nearly four hours and the school received many complaints.

"By the time the last classes came out, half the audience had left and unfortunately, we were over capacity for a while because we had so many people from the early grades. They had a conversation as

a staff (at TPS) and decided rather than do every single grade, they would do a musical."

Wright added one of the teachers took the project on and it was open to all grades to try out for.

"That is happening and there is a special presentation from kindergarten students as well. It's just a change of format. We have two or three additional classes this year and as the school grows, it becomes more difficult to have every single class present."

TPS traditionally has one Christmas presentation during school hours and one in the evening on the same day. Wright added in the evening, staff are volunteering their time for it to happen.

"The decision that was made is they would have a play that would have as many students as possible. It's not as if they're not having a production. In fact, they are probably having a more refined production than they have had in the past," added Wright.

The Gazette has reached out to and heard from several parents in grades one to three regarding the opportunity to audition for a part in the play. Those parents said nothing

was communicated to them.

"I think it's ridiculous to leave out three grades," said one parent of a Grade 3 student who didn't want to be named.

"I don't understand how kindergartens can do a special thing on a separate night and not have grades one to three join. Do one to three one night and the musical with grades four to eight another night," she added.

Wright said there was a conversation at TPS parent council last week before the December newsletter was released.

"When the December newsletter comes out, that communication was meant to happen and I think you are a little ahead of the communication. We are letting people know in the newsletter what is happening that evening. Everyone is welcome to come. Everyone is welcome to participate. That's what the teachers have decided to do," he added.

TVDSB has an equity and inclusive education policy which states "The board believes that equity of opportunity and equity of access to all programs, services and resources are critical to the wellbeing of those who serve the school system and to the achievement of successful outcomes by all those who are served."

Wright explained his understanding was anyone was able to audition.

"Everyone was allowed to try out for the play."

When confronted with parental reports of the opposite, he said that was his understanding.

"I'd have to double-check, to be honest with you, but the decision the staff made was to have one production. My understanding is the tryouts were open. If that's not the case, obviously that's something we can look at."

Wright added when longstanding

traditions change, people will be upset. The Gazette asked why parents weren't informed before their children were told what was happening.

"Like I said, it was raised at parent council and there was a plan for it to be in a newsletter. It's not December yet so I'm not sure the timing could be much better in terms of communication. There was a plan for what the holiday event was going to be."

The Gazette attempted to get in touch with someone on the school's parent council but was unable to find any contact information for the group or an updated website.

"We are updating the websites now. We just had a conversation about that today and not all the websites are updated with respect to councils. That information needs to get on the website and it's not, apparently, so we are working on that. There is messaging this week to principals about that," said Wright.

Christmas programs are an extracurricular activity and nothing in teacher's contracts states they need to give their time for it. Wright explained he has been at schools where staff haven't done anything during the holiday season. He added some people felt disrespected by students and parents leaving during the 2023 Christmas event in Tavistock.

"We had to move some people around because of fire code and (the school) had to have a conversation about what that looked like. There are lots of different ways to solve those issues but when it comes down to it, we need staff to lead these things."

Wright admitted that in a small town, a school needs to over-communicate so parents know what's happening and feel included.



Region of Waterloo

Public meeting – December 12, 2024 (Public Consultation Centre #3)

Wellesley Water and Wastewater Master Plan

The Region is responsible for the water and wastewater systems in the Village of Wellesley, and for planning for new growth while meeting regulatory requirements. The Region is developing the Wellesley Water and Wastewater Master Plan (WWWMP) to look at water and wastewater needs to 2051.

We want to hear from you.

Your feedback is an important part of this study. Please join us for a virtual meeting on December 12, 2024, at 7 p.m. Visit [EngageWR.ca/wellesleywater](https://engagewr.ca/wellesleywater) to register for this meeting.

At this meeting, we will review the evaluation criteria and alternatives presented at the second public meeting (PCC#2). We'll also share the preliminary recommendations on the preferred alternatives for water supply and wastewater and look for the public's feedback on the evaluation of those alternatives.

Project Information

More project information, including material from the first and second public meetings, is available at [EngageWR.ca/wellesleywater](https://engagewr.ca/wellesleywater) or contact Kaoru Yajima, project manager at kyajima@regionofwaterloo.ca or Tom Mahood from our consultant team at tom.mahood@jacobs.com

This Class Environmental Assessment Study will be carried out as a Master Plan in accordance with the Municipal Engineers Association's (MEA) Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA) Process (MEA 2000, as amended 2007, 2011, 2015, 2023), an approved process under the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act. The study will follow MCEA Approach #2 for completing a Master Plan, which involves the preparation of the WWWMP at the end of Phases 1 and 2 of the MCEA process.

This notice was first issued on November 28, 2024.

Movin' to the Music gets into the Christmas season



A festive group of women were working out and Movin' to the Music of the Christmas season. Local participants come together twice a week at the New Hamburg Legion under the guidance of Joanne Aitken for fitness, dance and fun. Age is no barrier to keeping fit while moving at any level to music from the '60s, '70s and '80s. The next session will get underway in the new year. For more information, call or text Aitken at 519-497-7028.

Nater refutes claims of hypocrisy as Poilievre vows to scrap Housing Accelerator Fund

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

As federal Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre continues to speak out against the Liberal government's Housing Accelerator Fund – a program he has vowed to scrap if elected Prime Minister – Perth-Wellington MP John Nater is clapping back against claims of hypocrisy related to his supposed support of the program.

In late October, Poilievre announced plans to scrap the \$4.4-billion Housing Accelerator Fund, a program that gives money to towns and cities that commit to reducing red tape to build more homes. At the time, the Conservative leader called the program overly bureaucratic and said he intends to use part of the funding from the Housing Accelerator Fund to support his plan to eliminate GST on the sales of newly built homes with a price tag of less than \$1 million.

"In Ontario today, one-third of the cost of every new home is direct taxes," Poilievre said during the Oct. 28 press conference in Ottawa. "... When you buy a new home today, more of the money you spend goes to bureaucrats than goes to the carpenters, electricians and plumbers who actually build the house.

"... The GST was not meant to apply to the basic necessities of food and housing; that's why the exemption existed in the first place. It is also why today I am announcing that a Pierre Poilievre led common sense Conservative government will axe the sales tax on new homes under \$1 million. ... Getting rid of the GST on new homes will stimulate 30,000 new homes

built every single year. ... We're going to cut two programs for sure and then more beyond that. One, the accelerator fund, has \$3 billion left in it. It has been a disastrous program that has led to less homebuilding and more local bureaucracies."

In response to Poilievre's announcement, federal Housing Minister Sean Fraser said about a dozen Conservative MPs had written to him in recent months advocating on behalf of communities in their ridings for housing support through the program. Poilievre's office then released a list of 17 Conservative MPs who had indeed written to the federal government asking for support for housing projects in their ridings.

One of the names on that list was Nater's, who says he wrote letters in support of local municipalities who applied to the program in the summer of 2023.

Following a recent party directive preventing Conservative MPs like Nater from advocating further for funding through the Housing Accelerator Fund, Nater says his correspondence with the government on behalf of those local communities proves the program did not deliver what it promised for residents of Perth-Wellington.

"Unfortunately, a lot of the public commentary on this Liberal program is nothing more than Liberal political spin and nonsense," Nater said in an email. "The letters referenced are not about current applications. In my case, they were about applications that were submitted over a year ago.

"... I do this frequently in support of local organizations and municipalities. However, each and every application from Perth-Wellington was denied. Not a single

community in Perth-Wellington benefited from this program. All municipalities in Perth-Wellington that applied for funding were rejected in March of 2024. Therefore, it is false to claim that I am withdrawing support."

At the time he wrote his letters, Nater said he shared concerns with the government about the funding-stream criteria. Nater says the fact many communities in Perth-Wellington were classified as large and urban according to the program criteria put them in direct competition for funding with cities like Toronto, Mississauga and Hamilton.

North Perth Mayor Todd Kasenberg echoed Nater's concerns in a letter sent to Fraser on behalf of North Perth council in August 2023.

"With a population of just over 15,000, the Municipality of North Perth was required to apply to the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) under the Large/Urban stream," Kasenberg wrote. "... Although North Perth has experienced strong growth over recent years, the municipality and our communities are still very much characterized as small and rural. North Perth does not possess the resources or amenities of our large, urban counterparts, including rapid-transit systems, financial tools, or municipal staff focused solely on grant writing.

According to Kasenberg's letter, under the large/urban stream of the program, North Perth had to develop a Housing Action Plan with at least seven initiatives compared to the five initiatives under the small/rural/Indigenous stream. That meant

numerous municipal staff had to reprioritize their regular duties and other projects to prepare a plan that could compete with Housing Action Plans from much-larger cities.

"If it wasn't so serious, it would be laughable to compare communities like Milverton, Listowel and Drayton with those of Toronto, Mississauga and Hamilton; but that's what this Liberal program did," Nater wrote in his email.

"Now that we have seen the clear failure of this Liberal program, I completely support scrapping this program. Quite frankly, it has failed to build houses. There is no hope for improving the housing crisis under the current Liberal government. Instead, our common-sense Conservative team will remove the GST from the construction of new homes under \$1 million; a tax cut which will result in the building of as many as 30,000 new homes each year and save Canadians up to \$50,000 on a new home."

According to media reports, since Poilievre has promised to cut the Housing Accelerator Fund, the federal government has written to warn more than 100 municipalities that already have made deals to secure funding.

Some Liberal MPs have claimed the Housing Accelerator Fund will lead to the construction of more than 250,000 homes in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. Minister of Defence Bill Blair, who represents a Toronto-area riding, warned that if Poilievre cuts the program, municipalities with ongoing financial agreements could be left in the lurch.



Christmas Craft and Bake Sale
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- 4 tickets for Drayton Festival - Mathias Bossee
- \$200 - Kim Laderoute
- \$200 - Donna Moss

Thank you
to everyone that supported us.



EZT rec committee provides township with budget wish list after public consultation

Chair hoping to improve communication with residents

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

East Zorra-Tavistock's (EZT) recreation advisory committee (RAC) has operated for over two years with what could be called a low profile, but that may change as the township prepares the 2025 budget.

Kyle Smith is a community member and chair of the committee, and he explained there are three projects RAC has asked council to consider.

"A multi-use facility, a splash pad in Innerkip and a dog park. These were top items to be considered from two open houses as well as an online survey that was completed in the summer by staff and committee," he said.

The results were presented to the committee in the fall and included data from township residents. There was a total of 16 asks by residents and the top three were a multi-use facility, outdoor multi-use courts and more trails. The spray pad came in at seventh on the list while the dog park was 10th.

"From the discussion at the October meeting, township staff indicated there are several grant opportunities that they would look at applying for should council approve such projects. Keep in mind our committee mandate is to make suggestions to council, and it's ultimately their decision to approve our recommendations," said Smith.

Larry Brown is a Tavistock resident who started a walking and social group at the Memorial Hall in Tavistock during the colder months. He said the recommendations, particularly the bricks and mortar part, are a step in the right direction.

"It's good to see at least some interest in

expanding the facilities across the board."

Brown said one of the barriers to expanding the offerings for area residents is a lack of available storage for items such as crokinole boards. He added municipalities need to do more for residents, mainly because fewer people are involved in organizing social and recreational activities.

"The community spirit has definitely diminished. People are extremely busy working multiple jobs and when they get home, they have to rush their kids to hockey and other activities. It doesn't leave a lot of time for anything other than family. That shows up in the lack of interest in service clubs."

Brown, a member of the Tavistock Men's Club, said some people can't afford to pay membership fees nor do they have the time to participate.

Currently, there is no programming offered by the township, but Smith explained some residents have come forward to organize their own.

"The township itself currently doesn't offer programming directly on their behalf but there are some community members that have come forward and started a variety of programs be it outdoors or indoors. We've heard from pickleball groups, a walking group and there's a group that gets together and plays cards in Tavistock."

Brown and his wife, Nancy, have been bringing seniors together on Monday and Wednesday mornings and so far, the township has not asked them to pay for use of the Memorial Hall.

Smith added the committee has talked about the potential of the township itself offering programming directly from the township, but no suggestions have reached

the council table yet. He also said improved communication is needed.

"This was discussed at our last committee meeting about finding ways to communicate to residents. More work needs to be done with this, not only at our committee level but also at the (township) staff level," Smith said.

Very few communities offer no-charge activities for residents of any age. Brown doesn't expect EZT to change the norm based on what other area municipalities are doing.

"People are having to pay, even the Wilmot Recreation Centre is charging to use the walking track. The walking track at Cowan Park in Woodstock is a paid facility. Senior groups in Woodstock and Stratford charge membership fees," Brown said.

Will Jacques, former EZT clerk and current community and recreation services manager, said most recreation opportunities in the community using township facilities are run by user groups or private individuals.

"This has been the case for a number of years and not unlike most other municipalities," he said. "Organizations who use

our recreation facilities have been responsible to pay for their usage. As with all of its programs and services, the township continuously reviews what it offers to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our residents, while also ensuring that we are properly managing the township in a fiscally responsible manner."

He added if additional recreational programming opportunities are made available in the future, it would involve council review and discussion.

"Should there be financial considerations for the township and patrons or organizations, typically these discussions would occur during annual budget deliberations."

The township is also looking into potential grants through the Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund, which provides funding to municipalities, Indigenous communities and non-profit organizations.

The next RAC meeting is scheduled for Dec. 11 in Hickson in council chambers at 7 p.m. Smith said he hopes it will be livestreamed on the EZT website, but Jacques said the township isn't yet sure if that will happen.



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Two sets of triplets arrive in New Hamburg

LOUIS SILCOX

Gazette Contributor

Two sets of triplets have arrived in New Hamburg.

They're trees, recently planted in the Township of Wilmot Arboretum, but they're significant.

Three of them are Eastern White Pines. This is Ontario's official tree. It played an important role in the settlement of Ontario as many were used for masts for the British Navy. The trees grow very tall (one is the tallest-known tree in the province), they're straight, easy to work, strong and light. White pine can live 250 years and is sometimes referred to as the Tree of Great Peace.

In a happy coincidence, white pine needles grow on the twigs in clusters of five, the number of letters in both white and blanc. Spruce needles grow directly from the twig.

The other three are striped maples. Striped maples are also called moosewood, moose maples and (my favourite) goosefoot maples. When you see a leaf next spring, you'll get it.

The stripe on this tree is on the wood, not the leaves. Young trees are green with white stripes and, as they age, the striping will evolve to duller and darker colours. The green means young trees carry out photosynthesis in their trunks, even before leaves appear. These are understory trees, which do well in low light underneath



A Garden Wilmot volunteer plants one of three Eastern White Pine saplings purchased by the garden club in the Wilmot Arboretum. Photo by Marlene Knezevich



Garden Wilmot volunteers plant a Striped Maple sapling at the Wilmot Arboretum. Photo by Marlene Knezevich

other trees, but can shoot up if the opportunity arrives. They are also sequential hermaphrodites, meaning they can switch from male to female during their lives.

Note the mulch around these new

arrivals is shaped like a donut to retain soil moisture, discourage weeds and mowers, and is away from the trunk.

These trees were purchased by Garden Wilmot with a grant from the Ontario

Horticultural Association, and planted with the cooperation of the township.

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Friends and political colleagues remember former Perth County warden Jim Aitcheson

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Fond memories and words of remembrance about his no-nonsense, practical approach to municipal politics are pouring in following the recent passing of Perth South Mayor and former Perth County warden Jim Aitcheson.

According to his obituary posted to the W.G. Young Funeral Home website, Aitcheson passed away on Nov. 21 after a brief battle with cancer. He had been on leave from his duties as Perth South mayor and Perth County councillor since early October.

"I had the pleasure of working with Jim as a fellow member of county council and had the fortunate opportunity to work alongside him as deputy warden during his time as warden of Perth County," said Perth County Warden Rhonda Ehgoetz in a press release from the county announcing Aitcheson's passing. "It has been an honour to work alongside him and his voice and presence will be greatly missed around the council table."

Other members of county council who served alongside Aitcheson said they will miss his presence and leadership around the county council table, and reminisced about his passion for local politics and his ability to tell a story that illustrated any point he was trying to make.

"He was protective of our rural farmlands," said West Perth Mayor and county councillor Walter McKenzie, who worked closely with Aitcheson when McKenzie was warden and Aitcheson was deputy warden. "He was a straight shooter and you never had to guess what he was thinking. He would get a twinkle in his eye and a smile would appear on his face, and you knew that there was going to be one of Jim's one-liner statements about to be heard."

North Perth Mayor Todd Kasenberg, who also worked closely with Aitcheson as a fellow member of county council, described Aitcheson as "passionately fair, stalwart in what was important and possessing a rare mix of humour, wisdom and kindness."

"As warden, he oversaw with grace and skill some rather difficult times during the pandemic. It may be in that service that we owe him our biggest gratitude. He was part curmudgeon and part storyteller, and I enjoyed every minute of our public and behind-the-scenes work together. A call with Jim was always a treat because he called it straight and was very reassuring. You knew where he stood and why he stood there."

Aitcheson was first elected as councillor for the Downie Ward in the Township of Perth South in 2006. He served as Downie Ward councillor until 2022 when he was elected mayor of the Township of Perth South.

Aitcheson spent a total of 13 years serving on Perth County council. He was elected warden of Perth County for three years spanning from 2019-2022. In his time as warden, he led the county through the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. Aitcheson was a tireless advocate for rural life and served on many committees of council.

"Jim was never afraid to speak his mind," Perth South acting Mayor Sue Orr said. "He was very good at asking the hard questions and, at times, had to make hard decisions. His decision making was based on facts and good, long-term business sense not only for Perth South but also for Perth County. Jim would always pick up the phone to talk and to listen. He was an advocate for responsible farmhouse severances, mental-health issues, Woodland Towers, Spruce Lodge Long Term Care and, most importantly, he genuinely cared about them all. He also cared about the farming community, best land-use practices, the Optimist Club and, most importantly, his family. He was fiercely proud of his wife, Lori, and of all his children, especially their work ethics."

Aitcheson also worked closely with his counterparts in neighbouring Stratford and St. Marys on issues of importance like paramedic services, long-term care, public-health services and regional transit.

"I appreciated his style of leadership, which was very direct, however (he was) always able to see the total picture," said Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma, who attended high school with Aitcheson at what was then Stratford Northwestern Secondary School (now Stratford District Secondary School). "His love of agriculture and his passion for farming and the preservation of our valuable farmland certainly resonated with me. ... I know that Mayor Aitcheson's work will continue to bear fruits well into the future."

"I was fortunate to work closely with Jim during the pandemic during his time as warden," said St. Marys Mayor Al Strathdee. "He offered a very cooperative and strong public front during a difficult time. I was grateful for his leadership in strong support of public-health measures. Jim was also a very dedicated member of the St. Marys and Area Mobility Service. His advocacy for seniors and those in need of medical transportation will be missed. ... Never one to shy away from a good laugh, it was always fun to be around Jim. Even in very stressful and serious situations, he had an uncanny ability to lighten the mood."



Perth South Mayor and former Perth County warden Jim Aitcheson died Nov. 21 after a brief battle with cancer. Photo courtesy of Perth County

Flags at municipal buildings across Stratford, St. Marys, Perth County and Perth South were lowered last week in recognition of Aitcheson's passing.

Perth-Wellington's provincial and federal representatives spoke fondly of Aitcheson's political ability and his dedication to serving the people of his township and his county.

"Jim was a dedicated leader both in the community and on council," Perth-Wellington MP John Nater said. "During his three terms as warden of Perth County, Jim navigated some of the most turbulent times in the county's history and earned the respect and friendship of all who worked with him. Over 13 years in municipal government and many decades of volunteer service, he demonstrated strong leadership through his hard work, wise words and sound judgement. No matter the challenge, he was ready to help. I will miss his no-nonsense advice and his deep commitment to those he served."

"During my time working with Jim, I knew him to be a devoted public servant always having the interests of the community at heart," Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae said. "From rural broadband to community infrastructure investments, it was always a pleasure working with Jim to improve our rural communities. Jim was also a proud husband, father and grandfather. I always appreciated his frankness and I know that he will be missed by myself and many others in Perth County and across Ontario."

Outside of politics, Aitcheson was a loyal Downie Optimist from the day he first joined in November 1981. Aitcheson was active as the club treasurer from 1995 until 2010. In 2014, he received Life Member status for his distinguished service as treasurer.

According to his obituary, Aitcheson's favourite pastime was telling anyone and everyone about his children and grandchildren. He wanted everyone to know how proud he was about their various accomplishments and how well everyone was doing.

Aitcheson's family thanks the dedicated staff and volunteers at the Rotary Hospice Stratford-Perth and the Perth County Paramedic Service, as well as all of his friends and family who visited to keep him up to date on everything that was happening in the community.

A celebration of life will be held for Aitcheson at Downie Optimist Community Centre (3185 Perth Road 122, St. Pauls) on Wednesday, Dec. 4 from 1-4 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to the Rotary Hospice Stratford-Perth, St. Marys and Area Mobility Service or the Downie Optimist Club through W. G. Young Funeral Home (430 Huron St., Stratford) or online at www.wgyoungfuneralhome.com.

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Grey-Bruce-Perth-Huron-Simcoe's living wage increases to \$23.05



Pictured from left to right are Bill Boon, Nathalia Salas and Sophie Vanstone from Aisin Canada Inc. in Stratford. Aisin is a Certified Living Wage Employer. Photo courtesy of United Way Perth-Huron

JULIA PAUL

Gazette Correspondent

The United Way Perth-Huron has been a longstanding partner with the Ontario Living Wage Network because they believe that solving poverty comes down to making sure people have enough money.

While the current minimum wage is \$17.20, the living wage in the Grey-Bruce-Perth-Huron-Simcoe region has increased to \$23.05.

“Solving poverty comes down to making sure people have enough money, income and housing,” said Ryan Erb, executive director of the United Way.

“What we need to understand is that the minimum wage isn’t enough. A person simply can’t make ends meet when they’re paid minimum wage. But the difference between the minimum wage and the living wage is \$6 an hour. That is a lot of money.”

The living wage increase is primarily driven by housing and food costs. The reason it didn’t increase more is due to federal policies on the \$10-a-day daycare. Though the \$10-a-day daycare policy is not yet available for everyone, it has had some influence on the updated living wage.

The living wage is calculated by considering housing, transportation, child care, food and other expenses such as internet access, a modest annual vacation and clothing. These expenses are weighed against federal subsidies, government taxes, transfers and benefits to calculate the final living-wage amount.

Two of the most prominent social determinants of health are income and housing. United Way works on policy issues to make sure people have the income they need to make a living.

Employers will wonder how they can pay a living wage when they are struggling, but the United Way and Ontario Living Wage Network are here to support businesses that want to provide a living wage.

“Local employers continue to tell us that actually paying a living wage has increased productivity, reduced absenteeism and turnover,” said Erb. “In the end, a number of our certified employers tell us that it actually improves their bottom line. So, there is a business case for a living wage beside the humanity case.”

The Ontario Living Wage Network will work with any employer to put them on a path towards paying a living wage to their employees. Once a business is paying a living wage, they can apply and will be certified within two weeks.

“Some small businesses are struggling,” said Erb. “We understand that here at the United Way. But we also understand that we have to, as a society, find a way to help everyone get to an income level they can manage, whether it is because of federal policy or because of increased wages – it can happen from either direction and both is probably the answer.”

To become a certified living wage employer, visit ontariolivingwage.ca and click certify.

CORRECTION:

An error was printed in the story, "Local egg farmer and volunteer presented with King Charles III Coronation Medal," on page 5 of the Nov. 21 edition of the Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette. The

story states Gary West and his family run Burnbrae Farms when, in fact, they run Westlandyn Farms. We regret any confusion this may have caused.

Retired Const. Ron Rudy celebrates policing collection with family and friends at the Maples Home for Seniors

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

There was a celebration at the Maples Home for Seniors on Monday as resident Ron Rudy, who retired many years ago after spending most of his life as a police constable in Tavistock, was presented with new shoulder badges to add to the hundreds he already has in his collection.

He and his family refer to them as “badges of honour” when he started collecting police shoulder flashes and hat badges. At one time, they didn’t dream his hobby would become so extensive.

On a rough estimate, his collection consists of more than 1,600 items.

Though the uptick in his collection has slowed over the years, the items within it are colourful reminders of long-disbanded police forces across the continent and around the world that still bring him a great deal of joy.

Rudy began his hobby when he became an auxiliary police officer with the Woodstock OPP. Several officers were



The Rudy family, from left, include retired Const. Ron Rudy, Donna Rudy, Jeff Rudy, Karen Rudy, Julia Petrie and Deb Patton, as well as East Zorra-Tavistock Mayor Phil Schaefer.

trading badges and Rudy thought it would be a good hobby to get involved with. He started writing letters to other forces and collected badges from police forces that had been disbanded.

He even stopped by to personally meet a retired chief in the village of Hastings in eastern Ontario to try and persuade him to give up a badge that was sought after by many collectors.

Eventually, he came home with the badge.

Among his collection, which was on display Monday at the Maples Home, are badges that are both colourful and large. An Alabama State Troopers badge tells the long history of the original 13 British colonies. Along with these embroidered shoulder badges are many more cap badges, brilliantly polished and most from outside of Canada.

In an interview, granddaughter Julia Petrie said some of her earliest memories were sitting at her grandparents’ supper

table on Friday nights, awaiting their bird, Tim, to begin his chirp at the sight of a burgundy 1980s Chevy Silverado driving up the lane. This chirp was a signal that Grandpa Rudy would be arriving home after a long day of working the courts and driving a prisoner-transport van as a special constable for the Woodstock City Police.

She said when her grandpa was in high school, he began an apprenticeship to become an automobile mechanic. He worked at two different garages in Embro and eventually became an auxiliary constable with the OPP.

After that, he began a career that would make him Tavistock’s longest-reigning police constable.

After Rudy’s retirement from policing, one could find him working at Zehr automotive in Tavistock, driving the courier

shuttle as well as picking up parts from all over southwestern Ontario.

Petrie says her grandfather officially retired from the working world in March of 2020 when the pandemic hit. It was for his own safety. The decision was made for him to finally retire at the age of 81.

She says she can almost guarantee he still longs for his days as a police officer, working alongside friend and neighbour Rick Walker.

His days look different now. Instead of patrolling the streets of Tavistock, he keeps a careful eye on the bottom floor of the Maples Home For Seniors.

It is here he ensures nobody bumps wheelchairs or speeds down the halls, and that all brakes on all walkers and wheelchairs are applied appropriately because it’s still in his blood to do so!



Only a small number of the shoulder patches and hats Const. Ron Rudy has collected over the years were on display at a reception on Monday in the Maples Home for Seniors in Tavistock.



Retired police Const. Ron Rudy, friend Irvin Zehr and fellow police officer and friend Rick Walker.



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Destination Stratford launches Christmas Trail for the 2024 season

ALEX HUNT

Gazette Contributor

For its tenth year, the Stratford Christmas Trail continues to add a unique twist to the holiday gift-shopping experience.

The Christmas Trail features more than 50 local businesses across Stratford, St. Marys, Mitchell and Shakespeare. Trail passes cost \$35 and can be purchased at Destination Stratford, Bradshaws and Stone Home Creatives, as well as various locations within the participating communities.

“We have been perfecting the experience for 10 years and local businesses have definitely noticed the growth and the benefits for participating during this time of year,” said April Murray, brand manager at Destination Stratford.

“It has been a fantastic way to increase foot traffic into the retailers that are on the trail. The annual event has been shown to boost sales among the shops and there is a true sense of community among the businesses as they come together to enhance those local relationships.”

Gift items such as home decor, stocking stuffers, jewelry,

holidays and other seasonal material will be available to purchase at participating businesses.

The Christmas Trail will have 36 stops in Stratford and 14 checkpoints through St. Marys and Shakespeare

Murray says the event attracts a large amount of outside community engagement in regions such as Kitchener-Waterloo, Toronto and the GTA, and London, and has made a positive impact on local business.

Thousands of people participate in the event every year with last year's event reaching its highest sales record so far. Zac Gribble, executive director at Destination Stratford, mentioned in a press release the tourism organization plans to continue to build on last year's sales numbers.

“This is certainly really rewarding. The visitor economy is vitally important to the local economy and for us to create opportunities for businesses to truly benefit from is an amazing feeling,” said Murray. “We encourage businesses to experience our trails and for our shoppers to continue enjoying the experience.”

The holiday event will run from Nov. 1 to Dec. 20.



Build your own hot chocolate at Mercer Beer Hall is one of many perks for those participating in the Stratford Christmas Trail. Photo courtesy of Destination Stratford

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OBITUARY

Farrell Milton Sippel June 21, 1937 – November 17, 2024



Passed away in Miami Florida, formerly from Tavistock and Stratford Ontario, on Sunday, November 17, 2024, with his family by his side, in his 87th year.

Survived by his wife Carol Sippel (nee Lalonde) and father to Steven Sippel (Jim), Richard Sippel (Laura), Michael Sippel (Sissy) and

Sherry Mercugliano (Larry). Grandfather to Kimberly Sippel (Corina), Samantha Clark (Brandon), Meagan Sippel, Brittany Baldetti (Tony), Nicholas Sippel-Mercugliano (Kaytie), Jessica Mercugliano, Jacqueline Sippel and Jorja Sippel. Great-grandfather to Kallen Sippel-Mercugliano and Abigail Baldetti. His sister Claudette Wettlaufer and his nephews Fred Wettlaufer, Charles Wettlaufer (Chris) and niece Marianne Ruby (Dale), as well as other close family members and friends.

Predeceased by his parents Milton and Florence Sippel (nee Berger), his father and mother-in-law Donald and Lois Elliott (nee Cole) and his brother-in-law Jack Wettlaufer, as well as other close family members and friends.

OBITUARY

Berniece Ronda (Baechler) Girodat



Of Owen Sound, passed away at Brightshores Health System, Owen Sound, on Thursday, November 21, 2024, in her 69th year. Survived by her daughter Lena Elzinga, her grandchildren Chandler and Emma Bergman, and her son Lenze (Lindsay) and his children. Sister of Barry Baechler of Calgary, Brian Baechler

of London, Betty (Wayne) Bell of Chesley, Pat (Steve) Whitelaw of Waterloo, Donna (Scott) Fillier of Kitchener, Grant (Bonita) Baechler of Midland, and Brian Wright of Barrie. Aunt of Layne, Gage, Lindsay, Chris, Kevin, Kyle, Robin, Joey, Melanie, Heather, Paul, Amy and Jennifer. Survived by her many great nieces and nephews, and her mother Eva Schade. Predeceased by her maternal grandparents who raised her, Gertrude and Ernie Holmes, Bill and Annie Baechler, sister Brenda Boyachuk, her father Lloyd Baechler (Lillian), and her stepfather Stu Schade. Cremation has taken place, and a private family service will be held at a later date. Memorial donations to Diabetes Canada would be appreciated as expressions of sympathy. Funeral arrangements entrusted to Rhody Family Funeral Home, Chesley.
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May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face; the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.



The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette Weekly Quiz

1. What year was the first S&P 500 mutual index launched?
2. What was Justin Bieber's first billboard hit?
3. What was the other name for Chutes and Ladders game?
4. Who was the 32nd President of the U.S?
5. Dementors appear in what movie franchise?
6. The only dessert in Canada is located in what province?
7. What animal has the biggest eyeballs?
8. A Geiger counter is used to measure what?
9. When you obtain 5 of the same suit in Poker it is called a ____?
10. What is cardiology is the study of?

Answers found on page 26

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The Old Gazettes

By Sydney Grant

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

November 26 - December 3, 2014, Edition (10 years ago)

Record low temperature was recorded last week for Nov. 19 of -12°C; the lowest since 1914; all the white stuff has melted with heavy rain and +13°C expected on Monday.

Entries in this year's Men's Club Santa Claus Parade on Saturday, Nov. 29, 2014, all had their own ideas. The parade was held on a beautiful, sunny afternoon. The cold morning air started to warm just before noon and brought a big crowd to the downtown to meet Santa Claus beside the post office after the parade.

Council supports golf course boundary adjustment: The council of the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock met in the Hickson Municipal Office at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 5, 2014. Council adopted the October 2014 Pay Voucher in the amount of \$552,832.05. A recreational lot of 4.2 hectares (10.5 acres) will be added to the immediate north of the golf course, containing a house, barn and three accessory structures.

November 24 - December 1, 2004, Edition (20 years ago)

When the next siren sounds in Tavistock, fire and police will respond from their

new headquarters at 260 Woodstock St. S. Since breaking ground in early July, B&B General Contracting has managed to complete the project on schedule. "The result is a great asset to the community," said Fire Chief Bruce Holst as he welcomed present and former firefighters, dignitaries and the public to an open house on Sunday afternoon, Nov. 21, 2004. The total estimated cost of the project was set at \$750,000 and they ended with a total cost of \$856,000.

A brighter, more open-concept reception area greets customers at the newly renovated Hickson post office. Postmaster Ms. Jennie Agnew welcomed the community to an open house on Friday, Nov. 19 to show off the new look and share refreshments and some of her homemade baked goods.

Gorgeous, spring-like weather greeted parade goers Saturday afternoon as the Tavistock Men's Club hosted their annual Santa Claus Parade down the main street of the village. Fifteen entries in the family, non-commercial and commercial float categories, as well as two bands, portrayed the theme of "A Christmas Carol." Lots of colourful Santa hats could be seen as well as larger-than-life, inflated Frosty the Snowman characters. And along behind came that jolly old elf himself, Santa Claus, who stopped at the police office parking lot to hand out about 650 candy bags and take Christmas wishes from the youngsters.

November 21-28, 1984, Edition (40 years ago)

John Pellow was the recipient of this year's Optimist Youth Scholarship Award at the teen dance held in the Board of Trade building on Friday, Nov. 16. Youth activities chairman Glen Seyler made the presentation. John will use the \$250 scholarship to further his education at university.

Seventeen new Brownies were enrolled on Thursday night in the Hickson Township Hall at a ceremony which marked the formation of the First Hickson Brownie Pack. The Brownies, along with four leaders, were formally enrolled by district commissioner Mrs. Doreen Hess. Brownies include Beth Capling, Marcia Oliver, Suzanne Jackson, Mary Elizabeth McBurney, Debbie Wilker, Sarah King, Tricia Oliver, Jenny Walters, Jenny Donaldson, Lori Williams, Karla Reibling, Tanya Donaldson, Angie Walters, Tricia Zehr, Cindy Eaton, Tricia Smith and Sheryl Cottrell. The leaders are Brown Owl Tory Reibling, Tawny Owl Wendy Wilters, Grey Owl Barb Wilker and Snowy Owl Carolyn Jackson.

Santa and Mrs. Claus share a moment on the Tavistock and district figure skating club float Saturday, prior to the start of the second annual Santa Claus parade. Kari Killing played the jolly old elf and Angie Bender knitted a scarf in her rocking chair while a multitude of club members, dressed in animal costumes, elf outfits and at least one tin soldier completed the scene. The float took first place in the commercial and organizations category.

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Van Loon elected for fifth consecutive term as HPCDSB board-of-trustees chair

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

With a vote of confidence from her fellow board members and the strength of her faith behind her, Mary Helen Van Loon has agreed to serve her fifth consecutive term as chair of the Huron Perth Catholic District School Board's (HPCDSB) board of trustees.

At the annual meeting of the board Nov. 18, Van Loon was re-acclaimed to the position of chair after no other board members put their names forward for the leadership position. Van Loon was first elected as the trustee for St. Marys, Perth South and West Perth in 2017 after the previous trustee vacated the position mid-term. In 2019, she served as vice chair of the board of trustees before stepping into the chair position the following year.

"I enjoy the job; I enjoy being chair and I think since we were in the process of hiring a new director (of education), I felt it might be a good consistency to stay with the same chair (to help her) learn the process of the job rather than having everybody new," Van Loon said, referring to the school board's recent announcement that superintendent of education Karen Tigani will be promoted to director of education once current director Chris Roehrig retires in February 2025.

"I was like, 'Someone else is welcome to take (the chair position),' and they were like, 'No, no, it's good. We're happy to keep you there.' So that's great. I'm very grateful for their confidence in me leading the board."

Van Loon she is excited to work with Tigani – someone she and the entire board have been working with for years – through

her transition into the director-of-education role. While she's sad to see Roehrig leave the position, she's encouraged by the opportunity to work with a new director who is already so familiar with the people, schools and policies of HPCDSB.

"(Chris) led us through some very tough times, not only in education but in the world, but Karen is one of ours'. We're very confident in having her at the helm and I think it's going to be a very good transition. They worked very well together, they worked together on our strategic plan and I'm excited about that coming up in the new year, so I think it's in good hands," Van Loon said.

The new chair of the trustee board said she is also excited to continue working with the board's new vice chair, Tina Doherty. Doherty was first elected to the board in 2014 as trustee for the Stratford

area with oversight of Jeanne Sauvé, St. Aloysius, St. Joseph's and St. Ambrose catholic elementary schools, as well as St. Michael Catholic Secondary School. Like Van Loon, she has previous experience serving in this role on the board.

"Two years ago, she was vice chair, and Tina and I are both on the St. Andre Bessette (trust fund) committee, which is a fundraiser for students in need," Van Loon said. "So, we've worked well together and it should be a good year. ... There's lots of experience on the board and thank goodness. That's really helpful when you're trying to make decisions and figuring out how you've done things in the past."

Looking ahead to the new year, Van Loon, Doherty and their colleagues on the board of trustees share Pope Francis' message of joy and hope overcoming all obstacles, whatever they may be.

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The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette **SPORTS**

PJHL Roundup: Braves down Shamrocks to snap two-game skid

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Correspondent

After a pair of weekend losses, Tavistock went into Hespeler for a rare Provincial Junior Hockey League (PJHL) Tuesday night game against the Doherty Division cellar dwellers.

It was just what they needed.

The Braves came away with a very efficient 4-1 victory to move into sole possession of sixth place in the Doherty Division standings, one point ahead of the Paris Titans.

Tavistock jumped out to a 3-0 lead early in the second period on goals from Will Schlotzhauer, Liam Gorman and Carter Arseneau. Arseneau added his second of the game and seventh of the season with four seconds left.

General manager Brent Lange is optimistic despite the team's struggles so far this season.

"We aren't missing much really. This is a good team, we just need to find where guys fit. We have been so hampered by

injuries since Game 2 of the season. We're slowly getting guys back and it is time to see what type of team and lines we can put together finally."

Lange added because of the injury bug, the team is a bit behind others.

"We haven't even got to see how the lines we envisioned at the start of the season will work together until now."

One bright spot for the team has been the play of recently acquired Liam Gorman, who was obtained from the Stratford Warriors of the Greater Ontario Junior Hockey League (GOJHL). The Cambridge native has four goals and two assists in five games as a Brave.

"He has come in since joining with us and made a nice impact. He's the type of player that can play in all parts of our lineup and is a welcome addition to our club."

Tavistock still leads the Doherty Division in penalty minutes with 511 in 22 games, something Lange said has been addressed in the locker room.

"It should be something that will start coming around for the better soon here.

When some guys are playing in different roles throughout the lineup due to the injuries we had or have and some things are not going your way, tempers sometimes get the best of you and boil over when things aren't working out."

He added the division is still tight overall and no one can take a night off.

"You go through the scoreboard night in and night out and the top teams can lose a game to a bottom team any given night. It might not look like that when you just look at it from the outside looking in, or from a computer, but when you get to a game, you can see it night in and night out. This division is so strong."

In Woodstock on Saturday, the Braves dropped a 5-1 decision to the Navy Vets in front of nearly 600 fans. Gorman gave Tavistock a 1-0 lead early in the first period on a setup from Jack Hodge and Izac Blum. Dorchester downed the Braves 4-2 on Friday night. Marc Dionne and Jaden Schiell found the scoresheet for Tavistock.

The Braves have this coming weekend off before travelling to New Hamburg on

Dec. 6 to battle the Firebirds.

New Hamburg splits weekend matchups

The Firebirds kicked off the weekend with a 5-0 trouncing of Paris. Jake Thompson had a huge night with two goals and two assists. Owen Fischer and Cohen Van Zuillen chipped in with two points each while Josh Jacklin earned the shutout with a 28-save performance.

New Hamburg travelled to Norwich on Saturday for a matchup against the first-place Merchants. The Firebirds never led in the game and dropped a 6-3 decision. Fischer, Antonio Pasqualino and Aiden Reid scored in the losing effort.

Applejacks down Shamrocks in overtime

Wellesley earned a 4-3 overtime win thanks to Kian Harron's seventh goal of the season three minutes into the extra period. The Applejacks roared out to a 3-0 lead on goals from Jack Wamsley, Ian Waddel and Harron, but the Shamrocks tied the game with under two minutes remaining in regulation.



SOUTH DOHERTY DIVISION STANDINGS

As of Wednesday, November 27

South Doherty Division	GP	W	L	OTL	T	SOW	SOL	PTS	OTW	GF	GA	DIFF	PCT	PIM	RW	ROW	STK	GPCT
1 Norwich Merchants	21	16	5	0	0	2	0	32	0	80	50	30	0.762	280	14	14	3-0-0-0	0.615
2 New Hamburg Firebirds	21	15	5	0	0	0	1	31	2	91	67	24	0.738	329	13	15	0-1-0-0	0.576
3 Woodstock Navy Vets	21	14	6	0	0	1	1	29	0	84	63	21	0.690	264	13	13	2-0-0-0	0.571
4 Wellesley Applejacks	19	12	5	1	0	2	1	26	1	65	47	18	0.684	406	9	10	1-0-0-0	0.580
5 Dorchester Dolphins	20	8	10	0	0	0	2	18	2	51	63	-12	0.450	321	6	8	0-1-0-0	0.447
6 Tavistock Braves	22	8	13	1	0	1	0	17	0	78	89	-11	0.386	511	7	7	1-0-0-0	0.467
7 Paris Titans	23	7	14	2	0	0	0	16	1	62	87	-25	0.348	308	6	7	0-2-0-0	0.416
8 Hespeler Shamrocks	21	4	14	2	0	0	1	11	0	52	97	-45	0.262	326	4	4	0-1-0-0	0.349

Royals drop second straight

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Correspondent

Tavistock lost 6-4 to Saugeen Shores on the weekend and, in doing so, the Royals dropped to fifth place in the Ontario Elite Hockey

League (OEHL) standings, just one game over .500.

Trevor Sauder scored twice in a losing effort, his eighth and ninth goals of the season while Matt Zilke had a pair of assists. Single markers went to Jeremy Munro and Andrew

Van Boekel.

The Royals outshot the Peach Kings 47-37.

Next action for Tavistock is Saturday as they finish a home-and-home against Georgian Bay.

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Aces qualify for regionals, provincials at first meet of 2024-2025

WILMOT-TAVISTOCK GAZETTE STAFF

thewtgazette@gmail.com

The Wilmot Aquatic Aces showed off for the hometown crowd when they hosted their first meet of the 2024-2025 swimming season Nov. 16-17 at the Wilmot Recreation Centre.

A total of 225 swimmers representing five different clubs from around Ontario, including the Cambridge Aquajets, Norfolk Hammerheads Aquatic Club, Region of Waterloo Swim Club and Rocket Swim Club, competed.

A swim meet of this size required more than 250 volunteer shifts to be filled. The Aces would not be able to host meets without the support of the community and the countless hours contributed by dedicated volunteers. When a technical issue shut down the electronic timing system mid-afternoon on Sunday, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and students were pulled from the crowd, handed stopwatches and made it possible for the meet to continue while repairs were made to the scoreboard.

The Aces came away from the meet with medals, personal best times and regional and provincial qualifying times. The Aces currently have 22 swimmers qualified for the Western Ontario Regional Swim Championships in February 2025. Six swimmers have also qualified for the Ontario Age Group Championships coming up at the end of February.



Mya Parish competing in the 100-metre butterfly final at the Nov. 16-17 meet hosted at the Wilmot Recreation Centre. Contributed photo

The list of the Aces' regional qualifiers included Grace Bach, Adam Barabas, Lilah Bergman, Sadie Black, Silas Campbell, Drew Currah, Bailey Ewanchuk, Campbell Golem, Mabel Harcourt, Tyler Johnson,

Gracie Kuttscruter, Angela Levac, Lucy Levac, Anna MacDonald, Katie Maund, Taylor Murphy, Elizabeth Pfeifer, Robert Pop, Benjamin Sos, Evelyn Vusich, Tess Weyers and Tessa Whitelaw.

Bach, Campbell, Currah, MacDonald,

Pop and Weyers also earned provincial qualifications.

The Aces will be back in action Nov. 29 to Dec. 1 when they compete for the Trojan Cup in Barrie.

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Nov. 25	Amy Cobberley & Derek Ruthig, St. Marys	\$50.00
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Oxford County 4-H dairy classic team brings home success from Royal Agricultural Winter Fair

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

The TD Classic 4-H dairy team from Oxford County came home from the

102nd Royal Agricultural Winter Fair with their highest-placing county exhibit ever.

Overall, the county team placed second in the Premier County competition.

The following are the individual placings in the final lineup:

- Showmanship: Nathan Wilker - second
- Intermediate: Gavin DaSilva - sixth
- Junior: Bren Zeldenrijk - 16th
- Intermediate: Megan Atkinson - 18th
- Senior: Zack DaSilva - 19th

- Amber Warboys - fourth
- Summer Yearling, Keaton Jones - sixth
- Summer Yearling, Zach DaSilva - sixth
- Fall Heifer: Nathan Wilker - seventh
- Winter Heifer: Gavin DaSilva - 7th
- Spring Heifer: Megan Atkinson - 12th

Confirmation placings in the final lineup:

Pictured are the youth on the Oxford County 4-H Classic Team. From top left clockwise are Zach DaSilva, Megan Atkinson, Nathan Wilker, Keaton Jones, Keenan Grieve(alternate), Amber Warboys, Bren Zeldenrijk, Gavin DaSilva and, in the centre, Carmyn Doan. Contributed image



Members of Oxford County 4-H Classic Dairy team at the 102nd Royal Winter Agricultural Fair in Toronto. Contributed photo

Weldricks win Jersey cattle show Royal Agricultural Winter Fair

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

Every year when the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair rolls around in November, there are many area dairy cattle breeders who take time to get animals ready for the biggest and best show in the country.

The Weldrick family on the 16th Line near Cassel in East Zorra-Tavistock were busy doing just that.

Bryan and Jennifer Weldrick, and their two small children, are becoming known very quickly as one of the top Jersey cattle breeders in the country. As the saying goes, "The proof is in the pudding."

In the past, we have reported on this young family being the breeders of one of the top Jerseys at the World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wis. for an animal they had raised and sold.

Bryan Weldrick will say nothing makes them prouder than to see an animal with their Perennial Farm prefix do well for other breeders, no matter where they farm.

At this year's 102nd annual winter fair, the Weldrick family did what most can only dream of, and that was being named breeder of the Supreme Junior Champion.

Perennial Getaway Frosty ended up first in her class, and later was named Supreme Junior Champion over all other top-placed class winners.

If that wasn't enough, the young Oxford County family also brought home the first-place prize in the Junior Breeder's Herd competition that included an unprecedented 18 other junior breeder's herds from across Canada and the U.S.

The three top-placing Jersey heifers to make up this winning junior herd included Perennial Maverick Kass, Perennial Geronimo Kinky and Perennial Getaway Frosty.

Even though Bryan and Jen Weldrick were very humbled by the awards, Bryan Weldrick's parents, Bruce and Sharon Weldrick, had trouble keeping both feet on the ground dealing with the excitement of the junior couple's wins.



The Royal Supreme Junior Champion, Perennial Getaway Frosty, for the Weldrick family of Oxford County. Photo by Vicki Fletcher



In their recently built free-stall dairy barn are Bryan and Jennifer Weldrick along with their children, Rylee, 9, and Liam, 3, with their rosettes and banners won at this year's Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. Photo by Gary West

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Gazette Puzzles

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Alpine Plant Foods serving New Hamburg and Baden farmers for over half a century

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

Farmers of all types in the New Hamburg and Baden areas have come to know that a liquid-fertilizer company known as Alpine Plant Foods is one of the truly great, local success stories when it comes to supporting the growth of high-yield crops.

The story really started in 1973 when a young New Hamburg entrepreneur, Doug Wagner, started Alpine Plant Foods, but his history before that is also interesting.

Wagner began farming at the age of 14 when his father gave him and his brother some space in the barn to keep a small sow herd, and then a year later they expanded into cropping by renting the neighbour's farm and using their father's equipment.

At age 18, a year after quitting school, Wagner bought a used combine from a retiring custom operator for \$10,000 with \$1,000 down and the seller taking a note for the balance.

That began his custom-farming business. Wagner always had ambitions to do more than just farming, so two years later, in 1968, he got into the fertilizer business by buying truckloads of bagged fertilizer from the United States and selling it directly to farmers in Ontario. He was even able to broker a deal with some of the agricultural retailers in Ontario when he was in a position to do so.

He says money was tight and hard to come by in those days, so Wagner had a strict policy with his customers of cash or cheque on delivery. He said this allowed him to gather up funds needed to pay his supplier the following week so he could buy more fertilizer.

Wagner's business plan had been successful, but in 1971, bulk-blending plants began to appear in Ontario and he quickly realized his business model was soon going to be obsolete. He decided he needed to either get into the bulk-blending business and compete with big companies like CIL, or get into a niche market that would



Founder of Alpine Plant Foods Doug Wagner and Murray Van Zeggelaar, current vice president of New Hamburg's Alpine Plant Foods. Photo by Gary West

enable him to make the margins he was looking for.

In 1972, Na-Churs Plant Food company moved their offices from London, Ont. to Marion, Ohio, and Wagner saw an opportunity to fill this void, so he began importing similar liquid-fertilizer products out of the U.S.

He imported them for about a year but started thinking about how he could manufacture these products himself.

So, he started buying used equipment so

he could manufacture his own fertilizer, and the rest, as they say, is history.

In 1973, Wagner took the plunge and leased a building at 62 Arnold St. in New Hamburg, where he installed his equipment and incorporated as Alpine Plant Foods Ltd.

This was in an old Quonset building located along the railway tracks, which allowed him to begin bringing in materials by rail car.

"It was very difficult to get raw materials the first year as this was the heart of the

1970s energy crisis and many raw materials were on allocation only," Wagner said.

But being a resourceful person as he was, Wagner managed to trade other materials he had access to in order to get the raw materials he needed to supply his fledgling liquid-fertilizer business.

He will be the first to say there were many issues to manage through the '80s and early '90s, and by the mid 1990s, Wagner decided he had taken the Alpine business as far as he could on his own, and the decision was made to look for another owner.

In 1996, Alpine Plant Food Ltd. was sold to KRG capital of Denver, Colo., and the business was then renamed. In 1998, the Na-Churs plant-food company acquired the Alpine plant-food corporation on Dec. 20.

They had two locations one in Corydon, Ind. and New Hamburg, Ont. The liquid-fertilizer business continues to grow at the New Hamburg plant located on Nafziger Road between New Hamburg and Baden, which was built and began operations in 1999 after being acquired by the Na-Churs plant food company.

Farming is not the only line of business in which the company is involved. They also provide runway de-icer for many major airports and industrial applications that include water treatment and concrete additives.

Wagner is proud to know that Na-Churs Alpine has always been community minded and one of many donations it has made included the scoreboard for the new field at Waterloo-Oxford District Secondary School.

They also employ over 30 employees out of the New Hamburg plant, and growth of business is pegged at between five and 10 per cent every year.

From the age of 14 until now, one has to give credit to Wagner for having the foresight to see the growth potential of what has become a very useful liquid ingredient in growing crops today and long into the future.



Murray Van Zeggelaar and Doug Wagner got together last week to reminisce about the good fortunes of agriculture in this area. Photo by Gary West



Aerial view of Alpine Plant Foods' New Hamburg plant. Contributed photo

Navigating the holidays is all about managing expectations

INTERFAITH COUNSELLING CENTRE

By John Dinner

One of the most stressful times of the year is upon us. The holiday season that seems to hold such promise can just as easily betray us. As we anticipate time with family and friends, time away from work and school, and the permission we give ourselves to indulge a bit, the anticipation of the holidays and the accompanying expectations can come with a lot of stress.

The holidays are supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year. Songs have exclaimed this and, as a matter of course, we've been telling ourselves this since childhood. The holidays can also be painfully disappointing because they are supposed to be the best of times, but they can also be the worst.

The main culprit is our expectations for the

season (and those promoted by those who stand to benefit). These expectations are infused with feelings: fear family conflict may not remain contained; panic a meal-time disaster might repeat itself; pressure to surpass last year's gift-giving (the remnants of which may still be lingering on monthly credit card statements); and the residual anger that lingers from the lack of appreciation and gratitude for our thoughtfulness and efforts. It doesn't help when, instead of a fresh snowfall, days are dull, damp and grey. The tree is almost needleless come Christmas Eve and travel warnings threaten to thwart everything.

Much of the anxiety we experience can be laid directly at the feet of overspending, overthinking and underdelivering in comparison with the Pinterest-like perfection we see online. And unique to this emotion, anxiety is the "gift that keeps on giving" to ourselves and to those around us.

Unlike our ability to take a break from work and other routines, it's harder to take a holiday from the holidays. The pressure we assume or impose on ourselves can be unbearable. As much as we may profess to place more importance on presence of others than presents to others, there is evidence the latter often wins out over the



Vecteezy photo

former. But there is hope for those sick and tired of being sick and tired at this time of year.

It starts with setting reasonable expectations and clarifying them with those closest to you. Give priority to your own emotional wellbeing by giving yourself permission to live within reasonable boundaries. Set healthy limits with respect to your time and finances and keep the pressure under wraps by only making those commitments you can gladly and gratefully keep. Protect yourself from the

unreasonable or untenable expectations of others. Try living into the idea that it really is "the thought" rather than the pursuit of perfection that counts. And have a planned response should your expectations not be met, accepting what is and for which you can be sincerely grateful.

John Dinner is a registered psychotherapist who works as a counsellor at Interfaith Counselling Centre in New Hamburg. He skis downhill, likes hiking across frozen lakes and loves winter ... until about mid-March.

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A pumpkin full of health

HEAPS OF HEALTHY TIPS

By Mercedes Kay Gold



Winter is not the time to sit down and wait for the first sprigs of green to poke through the snow.

Healthy living is a lifestyle whether it's snowing, hot and humid, rainy or rustling leaves are calling out to be raked. In the short term, sitting still is simply relaxing but in the grand scheme of life, the choices you make today impact your life in the future.

Noshing all night while sitting on the couch may translate to weight gain today and limited

mobility during your golden years. Move it or lose it is more than a motivational quote. With December almost here, the entertaining season is soon upon us and yes, you can eat healthy.

Before Fall Harvest Farm is closed for the year, take a scenic drive and stock up on pumpkins. This fabulous pumpkin recipe is plant-based party perfection whether you serve it as a side or main course.

The power of whole foods is wholesome

Ingredients:

- 2-3 mini carnival pumpkins by Fall Harvest Farm
- 1 lb bacon
- 454-gram bag of Brussels sprouts
- ¼ cup tallow, olive or avocado oil
- ¼ cup plus 2 Tbsp Wagler Maple Products maple syrup
- ½ cup pecans
- 100 grams of feta cheese or crumbled goat cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit.

1. Wash and cut Brussels sprouts in half. Place in bowl and toss with olive or avocado oil. If using tallow (my personal favourite) cut into squares and add to the bowl.
2. Coat with ¼ cup of maple syrup. Mix. Sprinkle with salt and pepper.
3. Lay the Brussels sprouts in a single layer spreading out evenly on a baking sheet. Roast until tender.
4. Prick the pumpkin with a fork a few times. Roast until soft.
5. Cool. Cut the top off and scoop out the strings and seeds.
6. Fry the bacon on medium heat until cooked and set aside.
7. Toast pecans in 2 tbsp maple syrup at low heat in the maple syrup until lightly



Stuffed mini-pumpkin is a great side dish with chicken or beef. Photos by Mercedes Kay Gold

golden brown.

8. Place Brussels sprouts in serving bowl and add the bacon, drippings, pecans, cranberries and crumbled goat cheese. Combine.
9. There are two options. Stuff the mini pumpkin and replace the stem to serve or cut the pumpkin in half and fill with the mixture.

This stuffed mini pumpkin is nutritious, delicious and a colourful, stunning side dish with chicken and beef. For plant-based lovers, mix the roasted Brussels sprouts with faux feta, seeds and dried fruit and place back in the pumpkin prior to serving.

Happy healthy entertaining!



Hurry to Fall Harvest to get the last of the pumpkins before the season ends.



After it's scooped out, this mini-pumpkin can be a great serving dish.

Keeping it real at Christmas

SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO OUTDOORS

By Jeff Helsdon



Just a few decades ago, cutting and decorating a Christmas tree was a part of Christmas for most families in rural areas of Ontario.

The tree brought a magical quality to homes with its pine scent. The real tree added an extra sense of magic as families gathered to decorate it. Fake trees look real, and may have the same meaning, but lack some of the Christmas spirit associated with the real tree. Fake trees are also gaining in popularity.

Outside of the Christmas meaning associated with a real tree, an environmental component is often overlooked – a green thing in more ways than one. With the demand for real trees, there were many more acres of trees in Christmas tree farms. These trees provided nesting spaces for birds and their dense cover was shelter for a diversity of wildlife during harsh winters, and they helped prevent erosion. I have found deer bed-

ding in Christmas trees numerous times. In addition, the dense stand of trees next to a deciduous forest creates an edge effect, which promotes a wider diversity of bird and wildlife species as some species, such as ruffed grouse, depend on edges for prime habitat.

In Ontario, more than 500 Christmas tree farmers produce more than a million trees for the market every year. With a dense planting of trees, Christmas tree farms are an excellent carbon sink, removing carbon dioxide from the air over the eight to 10 years it takes a tree to reach market size. An acre of Christmas trees can produce enough oxygen for 18 people. Christmas trees also filter pollutants out of the air.

Cutting your tree is a great family outing and a chance to get outdoors. My family always looked forward to the annual adventure

of travelling to the country to cut a tree for the living room. For those less connected to the outdoors, a trip to a Christmas tree farm can be an educational experience beyond buying a tree from an in-town retailer.

Some people may think cutting a tree is bad for the environment. The opposite is true, as there are always more trees in various growing stages for future years, and the demand for trees fuels this environmentally friendly crop.

But what do we do with the tree after the seasonal magic has wound down? In Tillsonburg, trees can be dropped off at the transfer station. These will be ground into mulch. Another alternative is to turn the tree back to nature. It can be a great activity for a family or youth group to collect several trees and make brush piles in woodlots. These provide small mammals and

birds a place to seek shelter from predators and weather out storms. Of course, permission is needed from the landowner before dropping off trees.

Using a real Christmas tree supports a local farmer who puts money back in the community. Real trees are also a way of buying local. A lifetime of trips to a farm a few kilometres away would expend less fuel than shipping an artificial tree from halfway around the world.

Include a real tree in your seasonal plans for the year; it's the environmentally friendly, family-friendly choice.

Jeff Helsdon is an award-winning outdoor writer, a columnist for *Ontario Out of Doors* and writes for several other outdoor publications.

Historic art restoration on public view in Amsterdam

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO

By Paul Knowles



I will never forget the advice my Dutch host gave me on my first visit to Amsterdam.

"If you write about the Red Light District or the coffee houses where they serve marijuana, not coffee, you won't be invited back."

I had no trouble following those instructions; Amsterdam is an amazing city full of art, history, culture and that complex system of canals. I fell in love with the place immediately.

My visits to Amsterdam have been filled with memorable moments – seeing Van Gogh's sinister "Wheatfield with Crows" in the Van Gogh Museum, standing in solemn silence in the Anne Frank House, being surrounded by lemurs at the Artis Zoo, marvelling at the cuisine at De Kas restaurant. And one of the most striking experiences was my first look at Rembrandt's famous painting, "The Night Watch," at the Rijksmuseum.

When I have had the opportunities to see this enormous painting – its full title is "The Night Watch Militia Company of District II under the Command of Captain Frans Banninck Cocq," so you can see why it is usually shortened – it was exhibited in a room where several other paintings of a similar theme, but by other artists, were also on display.

The impact of this was instant and astonishing. Rembrandt's work, especially his use of light, was so strikingly more effective and dramatic that the other paintings paled to comparative insignificance.

You could sit through a three-hour lecture on Rembrandt's use of colour and come out with less information than that first sighting of "The Night Watch" provides.

But if you visit today, you will not have quite the same experience because the gallery is now enclosed in glass. That's because the Rijksmuseum staff are undertaking a year-long, \$4.4-million restoration of the famed work.

This is slow, careful work. The painting is immense, measuring 3.63 by 4.27 metres, weighing 337 kilograms. It's also practically priceless; it's owned by the City of Amsterdam and its value is esti-

mated at \$700 million.

The normal practice of art restoration would see the painting removed from exhibition and restored in an off-limits studio somewhere, but not this time.

Rijksmuseum director Taco Dibbits says, "The Night Watch is one of the most famous paintings in the world. It belongs to us all. That is why we have decided to conduct the restoration within the museum itself, and everyone, wherever they are, will be able to follow the process online."

Visitors to the museum will also be able to view the painting and see the restoration team at work. This is a unique opportunity for any travellers planning to spend time in Amsterdam. More than two million visitors come to the Rijksmuseum annually.

The restoration project, dubbed Operation Night Watch, began five years ago with research and re-stretching of the painting extending over that time. According to experts at the Rijksmuseum, "Over the last five years a large team of conservators, curators, scientists and other specialists have studied 'The Night Watch' using the most advanced technologies from digital imaging to scientific and technical studies, and from computer science to artificial intelligence. This work has led to various breakthroughs in our understanding of the painting's condition and the artist's way of working."

After five years of research, the actual removal of the varnish on the painting began on Nov. 12 of this year, and that is a very precise process.

"Our conservators are using a special type of tissue to remove the varnish layers that were applied to the painting as part of its restoration in 1975-1976. The conservators place the tissue, prepared with a solvent, against the surface of 'The Night Watch' for a short, limited amount of time. The varnish is solubilised and absorbed into the tissue. Then, using a microscope, they carefully remove any remnants of even older varnish with cotton swabs."

The results may completely change art lovers' perception of

this iconic painting because a debate is underway as to whether Rembrandt intended the painting to be set in night time, or if it is simply generations of darkened varnish that have caused this effect. The outcome of the restoration will be historic, appropriate for a work which itself holds a unique place in the history of art. When Rembrandt painted "The Night Watch" in 1642, it was the first time a group portrait portrayed the subjects in action, rather than simply standing still.

This is not the first effort to restore the painting. There are records of at least 25 such efforts, but it is the most extensive and certainly supported by the best research. Previous restorations have been carried to repair the painting after it was attacked with a knife twice and sprayed with acid. Having survived all of these incidents and accidents, Rembrandt's masterpiece will be returned to its original glory and we'll get the chance to see both the process and the result, whether we travel to Amsterdam or watch the project live online at www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/stories/operation-night-watch.

And one more thing. One of the most remarkable flash mobs I have ever seen was staged in an Amsterdam shopping mall. Instead of a musical performance, the actors invade the mall, eventually forming a tableau of "The Night Watch." Check it out at www.youtube.com/watch?v=dt-BLJ6QuzCE.

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.



Rembrandt's "The Night Watch," exhibited in Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum. Photos courtesy of The Rijksmuseum



Self portrait of Rembrandt.



The team of experts working to restore "The Night Watch" to its original glory.

The Missing Ink: First-ever edition of the Tavistock Gazette rediscovered

PAUL BARTLETT

Tavistock and District Historical Society

A fire ran through the centre of Tavistock one Hallowe'en night around the turn of the last century and in the ashes were all the early copies of the Tavistock Gazette.

Because of the fire, there has always been a large gap in the history of Tavistock. The Gazette began publishing in 1895 but the earliest issue of the newspaper that has survived was from September of 1896 and there had already been 51 issues of the newspaper by then. And in the period between 1896 and 1910, only sporadic issues of the Gazette have been found.

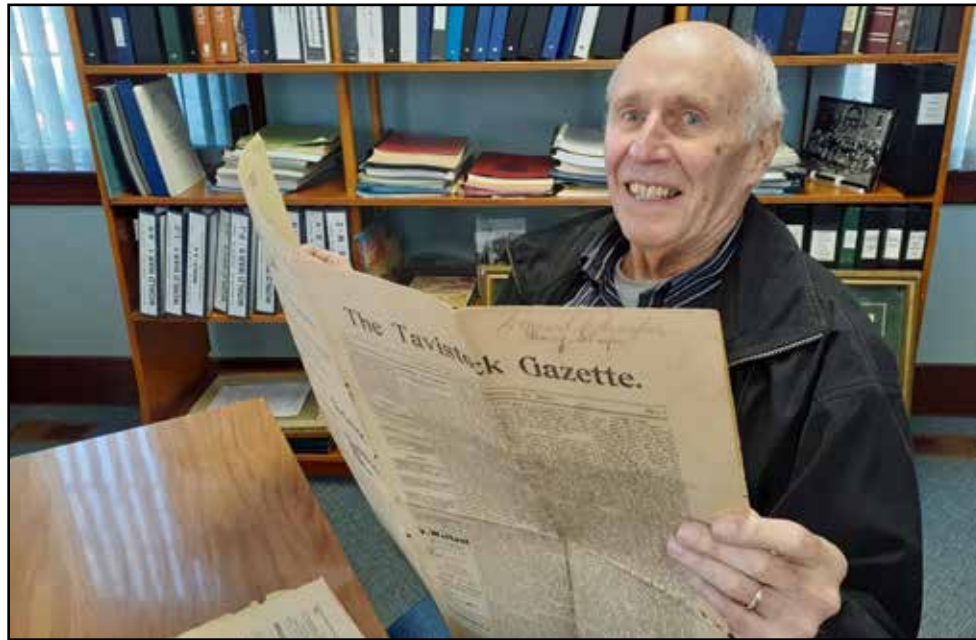
Walter Scholz, who once lived near Harmony but now resides in Stratford, was going through some files recently that had been handed down to him from his grandfather, Conrad Schaefer. The Schaefer farm was on the road to Harmony just out of Tavistock. Among the items Scholz came across were some old newspapers. One of these happened to be the first-ever issue of the Tavistock Gazette that was published on Sept. 26, 1895. Another was the first issue of a rival newspaper, the Tavistock Mail, that had been published three weeks earlier. What a treasure this find has been!

The Tavistock and District Historical Society has digital copies of most of the back issues of the Tavistock Gazette on its premises at 37 Maria St. in Tavistock but was missing these important early issues. Scholz was aware that Gazettes from the past are an integral part of the society's collections and he felt these early editions would find a welcome home there. He kindly donated the papers to the historical society where he was assured they would take pride of place.

Scholz's grandfather was a collector. Schaefer was born on a farm just east of Sebastopol, and Trinity Lutheran Church and the community of Tavistock were the centre of the family's life. When he passed away, the driving shed on his farm was filled with material he had amassed during his lifetime, much of it related to Tavistock. Scholz and his mother sorted through the material and discarded much they did not think was of value. Included in that were a lot of old newspapers, but they were from the '30s and '40s – Scholz does not believe they threw away any older than the two original issues they found.

Scholz himself has a passion for collecting. His specialty was die-cast toys. Among his large collection are at least one large box and two scrapbooks of material related to Tavistock. He finds that young people today have little interest in the past and so he wants to find a home for his items where they will be appreciated. As he slowly works his way through his collection, he says he will continue to give to the historical society any items of interest to them when he comes across them.

It has long been known there was a bit of controversy about the beginnings of the Gazette and these new issues of the



Walter Scholz with the first-ever edition of the Tavistock Gazette – dated Sept. 26, 1895 – he recently discovered and donated to the Tavistock and District Historical Society. Photo courtesy Tavistock and District Historical Society

Tavistock Gazette and the Tavistock Mail have clarified the situation.

Tavistock was a thriving community back in the 1890s with many established businesses, but it had long been without a newspaper. Residents might find the occasional brief note about Tavistock in the Stratford Beacon, the Stratford Herald or the Woodstock Sentinel Review. If they were German readers, they might get information in *Der Kanadische Kolonist* published in Stratford. The Tavistock coverage, however, was always scant.

N. H. Boden, publisher of a weekly newspaper in Drumbo, believed that a “first-class lively weekly newspaper would be in the interest of the reading community (in Tavistock).” On Sept. 6, 1895, he presented to the “intelligent reading public of Tavistock” the first issue of his Tavistock Mail. The paper was filled with news mostly from Drumbo and Plattsville, however. Boden apologized, asking the public to “overlook our failings as the time at our disposal was so limited for the work required for the first issue of a newspaper.” He said that, should the enterprise be a success, he promised to “bring a plant (to Tavistock) in the course of a few months.”

Meanwhile, there was another editor who thought Tavistock deserved a weekly newspaper. James W. Green began a newspaper apprenticeship in Galt at the age of 16 and later joined the staff of a Chicago newspaper, being employed there at the time of the disastrous Chicago fire. He had founded the *Mildmay Gazette* and the *Wellesley Maple Leaf*, and also published weekly papers in Gorrie and in Parkhill. In September of 1895, Green proceeded to set up an office in the Loth Block at the main intersection in Tavistock and welcomed editors from Stratford, Woodstock and New Hamburg to support him.

On the Sept. 26, 1895, J. W. Green presented to Tavistock the first edition of his Tavistock Gazette, just three weeks after

the appearance of Boden's Tavistock Mail. He promised his newspaper would be “devoted to the interests of the section to which it serves.”

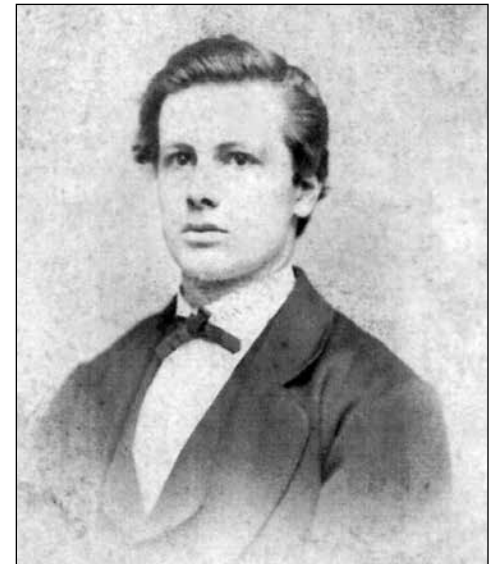
“In order that it may be fairly tested,” he added, “the paper will be sent for the first four issues free.”

The entire first page of the Gazette was devoted to the Tavistock Fall Show of the South Easthope and East Zorra Agricultural Society. The columns were filled with the names of all of the prize winners in all of the many prize categories, and who doesn't like to see their name in print?

With these incentives, J. W. Green won the “Battle of Inkerman” as Carl Seltzer

would call it in his history of Tavistock book, “Fact and Fantasy.” Green told Boden it was his “Divine mission” to run Boden out of town. With the competition from the Gazette, the Tavistock Mail may have folded after just two issues as no others have been found. Since 1895, the Tavistock Gazette and now the Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette have been where the people of Tavistock get their local news.

The Tavistock and District Historical Society is very grateful to Scholz for his generous gift to the society of these first editions of the Tavistock Mail and the Tavistock Gazette. They have added greatly to our knowledge of the events and businesses in town at the time. And who knows how many more early editions of the Gazette remain out there, hidden away in closets and attics and driving sheds waiting to be discovered!



Early editor of the Tavistock Gazette J.W. Green. Contributed photo

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Walking Through The Fire visual-album release an enlightening experience

On Nov. 14, about 200 people packed the Zion United Church in downtown New Hamburg to watch one of the premiere showings of a unique film, a visual album, *Walking Through The Fire*. It was a very powerful experience because it explored the themes of what it means to face the truth and work towards reconciliation.

Walking Through The Fire is a metaphor for facing the hard truths of destruction, such as the colonial project to “take the Indian out of the child,” or even the climate-change induced forest fires of today. As these truths are faced, we have the opportunity to make way for new growth, which is what happens, albeit slowly, after a forest is burned. The forest takes time to rest, renew and reconnect to foster new growth.

Creating the album and touring it is itself a collection of many acts of truth

and reconciliation. It is a collaboration between the Sultans of String, which is a group of settlers, and Indigenous artists from across Canada such as Shannon Thunderbird from the Coast Tsimshian First Nations.

Lost and Found is a sad song written and performed by Thunderbird which takes a fascinating turn with the chorus, “And a small voice whispered, ‘It's okay now, you found us, you found us!’”

Maybe things will be okay if we have the courage to do the work of truth and reconciliation. And engaging with music, such as the *Walking Through The Fire* collaboration, is a wonderful way to do so.

*Caterina Lindman,
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COMMUNITY CALENDAR - NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2024

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28

Wellesley Council budget meeting
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Council chambers
4805 William Hastings Line, Crosshill

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 29

**The 41st Annual Wilmot Lions /
Lioness Club Tree of Light Ceremony**
6:30 p.m.
The New Hamburg Concert Band
Centennial Fountain by the Post Office.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30

**Tavistock Men's Club
Santa Claus Parade**
1 pm
Info call 519-655-3573
Begins at the corner of Jacob St. W. and
Woodstock St. Ends at Queens Park pavil-
lion parking lot

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1

New Hamburg Santa Claus Parade
6:00 p.m.
Bring a non-perishable food item or
a new unwrapped toy for the Wilmot
Family Resource Centre.
Downtown New Hamburg

MONDAY, DECEMBER 2

**Tavistock Royal Canadian Legion
Branch 518 Monthly Meeting**
7:00 pm
Monthly Meeting 1st Monday of month
223 Hope Street West, Tavistock

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4

East Zorra-Tavistock Council meeting
9:00 a.m.
Council Chambers
89 Loveys Street E., Hickson

**Tales for Tots | Join Miss Kathy for
storytime!**

10 - 11 a.m.
Tavistock Public Library
40 Woodstock St., Tavistock

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5

Wellesley Council budget meeting
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Council chambers
4805 William Hastings Line, Crosshill

MONDAY, DECEMBER 9

Wilmot Council budget meeting
6-9 p.m.
Council chambers
60 Snyder's Road West Baden

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10

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

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11

**Tales for Tots | Join Miss Kathy for
storytime!**
10 - 11 a.m.
Tavistock Public Library
40 Woodstock St., Tavistock

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14

**A Jazzy Christmas Concert with Jack
and Kyla**
7 p.m.
Pay What You Can - All are welcome
Zion United Church
215 Peel Street, New Hamburg

MONDAY, DECEMBER 16

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

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18

East Zorra-Tavistock Council meeting
7:00 p.m.
Council Chambers
89 Loveys Street E., Hickson

**Tales for Tots | Join Miss Kathy for
storytime!**
10 - 11 a.m.
Tavistock Public Library
40 Woodstock St., Tavistock

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 25

**Community Christmas Dinner for
those in need of community, food or
cheer**
12 noon
Email info@wilmotfamilyresourcecentre.ca
or call 519-662-2731 by December 18 to register
Steinmann Mennonite Church
1316 Snyder's Rd W, Baden



DECEMBER 26, 2024



JANUARY 1, 2025

The
**Wilmot-Tavistock
Gazette**

Deadline: Tuesday prior at 3 p.m.
Contact: thewtgazette@gmail.com

PROMOTE YOUR EVENTS WITH US! HERE'S HOW:

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

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Snowblower. Cub Cadet, 5 hp. Electric Start. Heated handles, headlight, steering trigger control. Many extras. Good condition. Wellesley 519-656-0522

FOR SALE

TREES: Shade trees, Fruit trees, Apple, Pears, Peaches, Plums, Sweet and Sour Cherries, Apricot, Nectarines, Blueberry, Haskopp, Black Chokeberry, Grapes etc. Lots of Spruce, Pine, Cedars for windbreaks and privacy hedges, Sizes 1 to 6+. Flowering shrubs and much more. Come check us out Mon-Sat 7:00am - 6:00pm Martin's Nursery, 42661 Orangehill Road, Wroxeter (1 concession north of Wroxeter on Belmore Line)

PRAYER TO ST. JUDE

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

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

SPEAKERS FOR SALE

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PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN (never known to fail)

O, most beautiful flower of Mt. Carmel fruitful vine, Splendor of Heaven, blessed Mother of the son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me in my necessity. O Star of the Sea, help me and show me hear in, you are my Mother. O Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth! I humbly beseech you from the bottom of my heart to succor me in this necessity. There are none that can withstand your power. Oh, Show me herein you are my mother, Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for who have recourse to thee (three times). Holy Spirit, you who solve all problems, light all roads so that I can attain my goal you who gave me the divine gift to forgive and forget all evil against me and that in all instances in my life you are with me. I want in this short prayer to thank you for all things as you confirm once again that I never want to be separated from you the eternal glory. Thank you for your mercy towards me and mine (The person must say this prayer three consecutive days. After three days, the request will be granted). This prayer must be published after the favour is granted.

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- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. 1976 | 6. British Columbia |
| 2. One Time | 7. The Colossal Squid |
| 3. Snakes and Ladders | 8. Radiation |
| 4. Franklin D. Roosevelt | 9. Flush |
| 5. Harry Potter | 10. The heart |

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