

SIMCOE ADVOCATE

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Norfolk approves 2025 budget

LUKE EDWARDS

Advocate Correspondent

The median assessed Norfolk household will pay about \$155 more in property taxes in 2025.

Council approved the 2025 budget at the Jan. 22 council meeting, following a final budget committee meeting the week prior. The Jan. 22 meeting did include one potential tweak from the budget committee recommendation regarding requests from the Norfolk County Public Library for money to hire staff.

The increase came in well below targets that were set earlier in 2024, when council set a residential property tax increase target of 7.5 per cent. The final total came in at 4.3 per cent.

The levy itself is set to increase 6.1, also well below some earlier estimates. Assessment growth and provincial support helped bring those numbers down, said Mayor Amy Martin, though she also credited staff for the work they did.

"Four per cent is still very difficult for a lot of our residents. We will take a lens from the top down and look at everything with prudent financial management top of mind," she said as they dove into the presentation.

In a statement following the budget committee meeting, Martin called the budget "a reflection of our commitment to responsible and sustainable financial management.

"In a time of ongoing economic pressures beyond

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



An abandoned barn is on fire on Brantford Road at Teeterville Road, just after 3 a.m. on Jan. 22.

(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Suspicious fires across Norfolk County

LEAH BAUER

Advocate Correspondent

On Tuesday, January 21st and in the early hours of Wednesday the 22nd there were three structure fires in Norfolk County.

The first call came at 11:30 p.m. from Concession 6 Townsend where an abandoned house was in flames.

The second call for a fire came at 12:10 a.m. from a gas station on Norfolk County Highway 24.

The final call came from a fire in an abandoned barn on Brantford Road at Teeterville Road at approximately 2:20 a.m.

There were no reported injuries and all three fires are being treated as suspicious, bringing the total of

suspicious fires in the county up to 12 in the past two and a half months.

"We understand how frustrating this is and (how) scary it is for the community," said OPP Constable Randi Crawford in a video posted on X. "We are doing everything we can to try to find these individuals and hold them accountable.

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Norfolk approves 2025 budget

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

our control, this budget showcases our efforts to secure meaningful savings wherever possible and invest in critical infrastructure and the delivery of valuable community programs, while balancing our need to invest in Norfolk's future."

Increases in infrastructure funding is the main driver, as the county continues its work to address an infrastructure gap and deal with debt servicing costs.

Staff did recommend a few new budget initiatives that increased service levels. They include: An additional \$346,500 for its stormwater management program, \$301,000 to strengthen paramedic services, \$150,000 for a new traffic engineering specialist, \$131,000 for a facilities capital projects lead, \$150,000 for a realty services specialist, and \$109,700 for a network/system analyst.

Martin did attempt to have the realty services specialist funding removed, suggesting they have a good team in place and while this year's increase is reasonable, that funding will remain for years to come.

"I'm not sold on the realty services specialist," she said, asking why that position was prioritized by staff.

"It's in response to several blind spots we have as a country right now," CAO Al Meneses replied.

Martin's motion to remove that from the budget was

defeated, meaning it remains on the levy.

There were several additional discretionary items that staff left off the budget while seeking direction from committee. They included: \$25,000 for the North Shore Resilience Project, \$35,000 for the Haldimand Norfolk Housing Corporation, and a proposal to remove \$317,400 from revenues generated by the marina that offset the general levy.

The latter proposal was part of the county's move to turn the municipally owned marinas in Port Dover and Port Rowan into self-sufficient entities. The money would be redirected to the marinas' reserve fund.

These were all approved at budget, as was an additional item for the county to continue its membership in the South Central Ontario Region Economic Development Corporation. This decision has no impact on the 2025 budget, as it was for membership continuing in 2026.

The items from the library went undiscussed at the budget meeting. The requests included \$129,400 for a programming and outreach manager, \$62,400 for a training and development coordinator, and \$105,400 for two new part-time library assistants.

NCPL CEO Julie Kent said the increases were needed as the library has continued to increase its program-

ming, developing innovative and popular programs like its film and sound studio, while also providing services like its designation as a warming and cooling centre.

Kent said they want to "remain a vibrant and inclusive hub for Norfolk's diverse population."

The part-time staff would help the library provide similar hours at all branches.

However, committee voted on the overall budget recommendations before discussing those requests. A request for reconsideration at the budget meeting didn't meet the two thirds requirement, forcing councillors to raise it at the Jan. 22 meeting, when Coun. Kim Huffman sought approval to include a budget increase to cover the proposed two new part-time library assistants.

"They (libraries) are vital to our community and I'd like to see our hours expand and be equitable for every taxpayer in the region," she said.

Huffman's motion was defeated, meaning the library won't be receiving funding for any of their budget requests. Martin said while she initially supported the idea, she was worried by the fact the county had already sent out communication regarding the budget, and adding to the increase could cause confusion.

Suspicious fires across Norfolk County

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"What we're asking is, please, if you know anything contact either Norfolk OPP or Crime Stoppers and give us some information that we can hopefully use to try and find these persons. The other thing you can do as well is please check any video surveillance you have. If you live in or around this area - or you were driving in or around this area - please check to see if you see any suspicious vehicles or suspicious people on that footage."

Crawford said a member of the public reported seeing a possible suspect running on Norfolk County Highway 24. The individual is described as a white male, approximately 30 years-of-age, very thin and wearing a hoodie and face covering.

"Again, we're asking for everyone's cooperation, if you can please check your surveillance and contact Norfolk OPP or Crime Stoppers. If you have seen anything, you've heard anything, please give us a call. Major crime is involved and we will continue to update you as soon as we know something."

In a conversation with Norfolk Chief Gord Stilwell, he had messages for the community and kind words to say about those working to fight and investigate the fires on the coldest night of the year. He stated that if anyone has any information they can share regarding the investigation of the specific fires they should contact the OPP or Crime Stoppers.

Stillwell urges the community to offer information even if they don't think it "was a big deal."

The fires occurring on the coldest night of the year created harsh conditions for the work and investigations of the OPP and the Fire Department. Stillwell acknowledged this stating, "my staff are doing an excellent job working in very cold environments and doing the best they can to keep our community safe."

At approximately 9:46 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 19, the OPP Norfolk County Detachment and Norfolk County Fire Department responded to a structure fire on 1st Concession Road in Port Rowan. An unoccupied residence was involved in the incident, deemed suspicious, and no injuries were reported.

At approximately 3:29 a.m. on Monday, Jan. 6, there was an unoccupied structure fire on Windham Road 11 in Delhi, Norfolk County, deemed suspicious.

Between Nov. 12, and Dec. 27, 2024, Norfolk County OPP officers, in coordination with the Norfolk County Fire Department and with support from Norfolk County Paramedic Services, responded to multiple structure fires across the county, all of which are also being investigated as suspicious, including:

- Tuesday, Nov. 12, 2024, at approximately 10:38 p.m. - Windham East Quarter Line Road, Simcoe.
- Wednesday, Nov. 13, 2024, at approximately 1:03 a.m. - Windham Road 13, Simcoe.
- Tuesday, Nov. 26, 2024, at approximately 10:19 p.m. - Fourteenth Street West, Simcoe.
- Wednesday, Nov. 27, 2024, at approximately 12:03 a.m. - 10th Concession Road, Langton.
- Wednesday, Dec. 11, 2024, at approximately 4:09 a.m. - Highway 24 near Concession 11 Townsend.
- Thursday, Dec. 19, 2024, at approximately 11:40 p.m. - Concession 10 Townsend, Waterford.
- Friday, Dec. 27, 2024, at approximately 12:33 a.m. - St. John's Road West, Simcoe.



Norfolk County Fire Department's second call of the night for a fire came at 12:10 a.m., Jan. 22, from a gas station on Norfolk County Highway 24. OPP

(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

The affected structures have been identified as residences, greenhouses, barns, or other outbuildings. No injuries were reported in connection with these incidents.

The investigations are ongoing, and updates will be provided when available. If you have any information that can assist with this investigation, please contact Norfolk OPP at 1-888-310-1122. If you wish to remain anonymous, you may call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 (TIPS) or leave an anonymous online tip at www.helpsolvecrime.com where you may be eligible to receive a cash reward of up to \$2,000.



An abandoned house on Concession 6 Townsend between Angling Road & Old Highway 24 is in flames, Jan. 21, reported about 11:30 p.m. OPP

Two charged in Norfolk arson investigation

Two individuals connected to an ongoing investigation into a series of suspicious fires have been arrested and are facing charges.

At approximately 10:35 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 26, officers from the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) Norfolk County and Haldimand County Detachments, investigators from the Norfolk County OPP Crime Unit, members of the West Region OPP Emergency Response Team, and the Haldimand County Fire Department, responded to a structure fire on Lynn Valley Road, east of Highway 6, in Haldimand County.

The fire involved a vacant barn, and no injuries were reported as a result.

Around 10:49 p.m., officers stopped a pickup truck on Concession 12 Townsend in Norfolk County. The vehicle matched the description of a pickup truck seen near a suspicious fire that occurred in Norfolk County in November 2024.

As a result, the driver and passenger were taken into custody without incident.

Investigators have determined that these individuals were involved in multiple similar incidents throughout Norfolk County between November 2024 and January 2025.

A 30-year-old from Norfolk Coun-

ty has been charged with the following alleged offences: Arson - damage to property (11 counts); and Fail to comply with Probation Order.

A 43-year-old from Norfolk County has been charged with the following alleged offences: Arson - damage to property (11 counts); and Operation while impaired - blood alcohol concentration (80 plus).

The accused individuals remained in custody and were scheduled to appear for a bail hearing at the Ontario Court of Justice in Simcoe on Monday, Jan. 27.

The Norfolk County OPP Crime Unit is urging anyone with information regarding this incident or previously reported incidents to contact the Norfolk County OPP at 1-888-310-1122. Residents in this or any other affected areas are also encouraged to review their home surveillance systems for any footage that could aid in the investigations.

Should you wish to remain anonymous, you may call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477) or leave an anonymous online tip at www.helpsolvecrime.com where you may be eligible to receive a cash reward of up to \$2,000.

Updates will be provided as soon as new information becomes available.

52,000 Ontarians with disabilities left waiting



Anna and Shawn Willson of Turkey Point and their daughter.

(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

A call for help has been issued by people who live with developmental disabilities, along with their families, and the agencies which provide important supports.

Anna and Shawn Willson of Turkey Point know firsthand the toll of waiting for developmental services. Their daughter, Brittany, who lives with OHDO Syndrome, a rare genetic disorder, waited a year and a half after turning 18 to start receiving support.

"The gap between when Brittany turned 18 until she started receiving supports was like a nightmare that didn't seem like it was going to end," said Anna.

During those 18 months, Anna ended up going off on stress leave from work. Anna and Shawn tried to manage Brittany's care themselves, but the lack of support and services impacted their entire family, including their son, Evan.

"When Brittany needed us, Evan often had to wait," Shawn recalls. "I remember him asking, 'Dad, can you make me toast?' And I had to say, 'You'll have to wait.' With services, we're able to put the whole family first."

Now at the age of 26, Brittany has started to receive some supports while still waiting for others. Across Ontario, over 52,000 people are currently waiting for critical supports and services due to funding shortfalls within

the sector.

Supportive services range from teaching basic life skills, helping with medications and appointments, to assisting people to find homes, jobs, and community activities to participate in, so they can truly belong.

"These services are not luxuries, they are lifelines that assist people with disabilities in their daily activities, enabling them to live and work in their communities" says Tricia Morris, Executive Director of Community Living Access.

Community Living Access, which provides support and services to people with a developmental disability, has been serving Norfolk and Haldimand Counties for over 30 years. During that time the Ontario government has only increased core funding by less than 7 per cent, while the cost of living has risen by over 60 per cent. Without immediate action, the waiting list will continue to grow, forcing more families into crisis and leaving thousands of vulnerable citizens without the supports they need.

Community Living Access and the rest of the developmental services sector are calling on the Ontario Government to act now and provide sustainable funding.

As Anna says, "Everyone can succeed in their own way, given the right opportunity and the right amount of supports!"

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EDITORIAL

Norfolk County looks ahead to promising future



Amy Martin
Norfolk County Mayor

2025 is well underway and Norfolk County is infused with optimism and a strong sense of purpose.

The months ahead promise to be defined by action, progress, and collaboration, as Council and staff work together to build on the momentum of the past year. Over the last year, I introduced numerous motions aimed at addressing critical areas such as our financial history, municipal development corporations, and development infill incentives - initiatives that hold the potential to transform Norfolk's future. This clear direction to staff, combined with the ongoing business of the county, ensures that Norfolk County Council will begin the New Year on solid footing, ready to make impactful decisions that align with the shared vision of

our community.

It has already been a busy 2025 for Council, tackling a full agenda with vigor. The new year kicked off with the AGM for the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus followed by, South Central Ontario Region. Both partnerships provide a platform for collaboration and strategic planning with neighbouring municipalities. On top of regularly scheduled council meetings, we also met to deliberate on the third and final budget, the Operating Budget. The Rural Ontario Municipal Association conference took place in Toronto mid-January, where Deputy Mayor, our CAO and myself attended to discuss our pressing priorities with the Provincial government and applicable ministries.

Council's ambitious agenda for 2025 includes reviewing staff reports and implementing policies that will shape Norfolk County's future. Among the full list is a few key priorities that will be before council for discussion.

Key initiatives on the horizon include determining the sale of the Vittoria Town Hall, and the question of support by the municipal commitment of 1% on the tax levy to preserve it in public ownership.

Council will also review and enhance customer service policies, launch a new Norfolk County website designed to better serve residents, and engage in early discussions to ensure the 2026 municipal election is both accessible and efficient. Additionally, we will explore innovative

revenue-generating opportunities, including sponsorships and advertising, to help support community priorities without placing additional strain on taxpayers.

Over the past year, Council's strategic motions have set the stage for significant advancements. These include improved financial transparency, infrastructure planning, and long-term policy alignment with provincial frameworks. From urban boundary expansion discussions to securing historic funding for water infrastructure, Norfolk County has made strides that will benefit residents for years to come. But much study and review has gone into all of our assets and it is council's job to determine the service levels we wish to continue delivering on. We can't do this without the information that has been compiled through the recreation, water and wastewater, paramedic dispatch and fire master plans that will be before council in early to mid-2025.

Homeless prevention efforts will be reviewed, as well as utilization of public owned spaces like parks in residential areas, or public property in downtown Simcoe that could be used as a catalyst for revitalization of the downtown.

The coming months will also see Council considering initiatives like red-light cameras and automated speed enforcement to improve road safety, as well as whistleblower and lobbyist policies to uphold transparency and accountability in municipal operations.

The challenges of recent years have underscored the importance of resilience and forward-thinking leadership. Norfolk County has emerged stronger, guided by a shared commitment to community and progress.

The agenda ahead is a testament to the dedication of Council and staff, who have worked tirelessly to address immediate needs while planning for the long term. Whether it's updating policies, improving infrastructure, or fostering economic growth, every decision is grounded in the best interests of Norfolk residents.

While it may not be flashy, and we don't have the budget to produce instant results, the work we're doing today will shape the Norfolk of tomorrow and it's a privilege to serve my community while foundational plans are being put in place that will support Norfolk County residents for generations to come.

In closing, as we welcome the new year, let's embrace it with optimism, gratitude, and a renewed commitment to collaboration. Together, we can ensure that Norfolk County continues to thrive, offering a future that reflects the aspirations of all who call it home.

Here's to a successful and inspiring year ahead - Happy New Year, Norfolk and watch out for those Polar Bears on the Port Dover beach!

Libraries can't be forgotten when passing budgets

In a third-season episode of the sitcom Seinfeld, Philip Baker Hall portrays a no-nonsense book cop ironically named Lt. Joe Bookman.

During the episode, Bookman doggedly pursues a long overdue book that Jerry borrowed decades earlier. He treats the case - yes, a book cop goes on cases - as if he was Joe Friday of Dragnet fame.

It seems the Norfolk County Public Library might need a Bookman-esque character in their corner, not to track down long-lost late fees and missing books of poetry, but instead to shake down the municipality for a little financial support.

During the Jan. 22 council meeting, Coun. Kim Huffman lifted the minutes from the previous week's budget meeting to give them another crack at funding the library requested for a few hires. The library was seeking money to hire a programming and outreach manager, a training and development coordinator, and two part-time library assistants.

Julie Kent, the library CEO, explained some of the pressures they've faced as they have doubled programming in the past two years to serve a community increasingly turning to the services they provide. The two part-timers would help the library offer equitable hours for all Norfolk library branches.

Staff included those requests in a list of discretionary items for the Jan. 15 budget committee meeting and

were among the final things dealt with at the marathon meeting.

Councillors ultimately ignored the library items and approved the budget recommendations after discussing - and approving - the other discretionary items.

When they realized they made an awkward, but understandable mistake in forgetting the library items, Coun. Tom Masschaele moved to reconsider. But his motion fell, with colleagues suggesting they could tackle it again at council the following week.

Which is exactly what Huffman attempted. This time the reconsideration was able to go through, but the result was ultimately the same, as Huffman's motion to approve funding for only the part-time positions was defeated.

And this comes after councillors turned down an option that could have provided much needed security support to the Simcoe branch, where many of our community's most marginalized people - some of whom are struggling with mental health and addiction problems - congregate as their only public place to go.

Instead, council voted to provide emergency security support for Talbot Gardens to address similar issues there, a noble move in its own right, but one that leaves the library to fend for itself until staff comes back with a more fulsome report.

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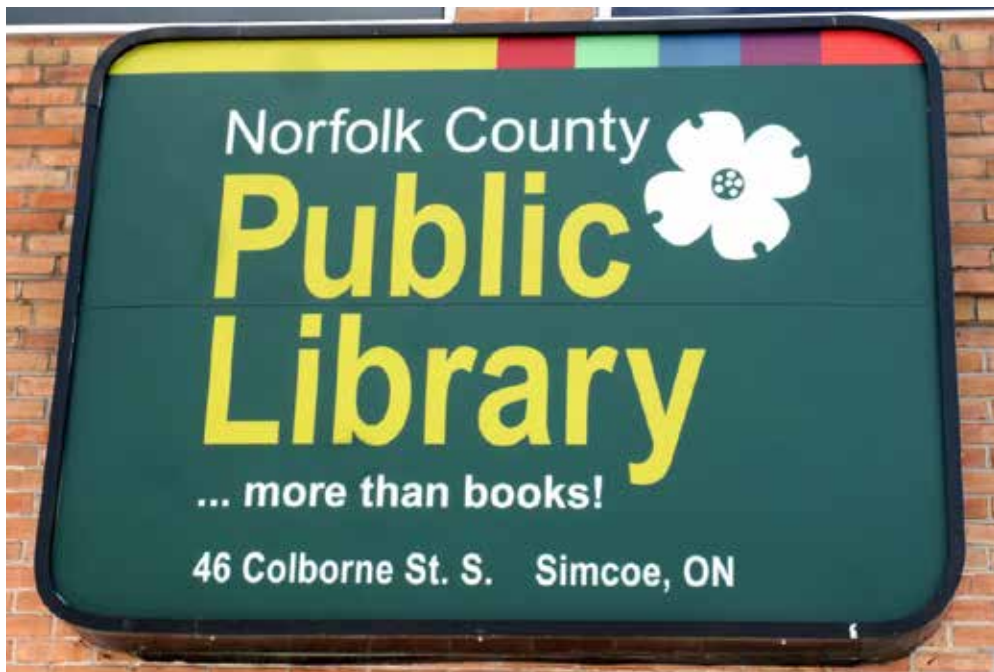
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Libraries can't be forgotten when passing budgets



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

The municipal budgeting process is a thankless and impossible task. Each year governments like Norfolk are forced to make someone unhappy as limited dollars need to be spent on seemingly unlimited needs and wants.

But the recent decisions on money that could go a long way to the vital town service the library provides are disheartening. Libraries provide affordable and accessible recreation and education opportunities that are becoming more difficult for residents and families to find elsewhere.

Additionally, the rationale from Mayor Amy Martin in opposing Huffman's motion - that the county had already sent out communication regarding the budget so any changes could confuse the public

- is surprising. She's not one to take the easy way out, but in this case, it appears like that's what happened. The library shouldn't lose out because county councillors forgot something seven hours into a budget meeting.

Hopefully the coming staff report on security will include some kind of affordable recommendation to help Norfolk's library staff. A few extra dollars to public libraries, whether from municipal or upper levels of governments, would more than be paid back in what they provide to the community.

In the meantime, visit your local branch, thank a librarian, and utilize one of their many services. Just remember to return those books, lest Bookman be put on the case.

Democracy is in peril, but I'll keep fighting for you



**Haldimand-Norfolk
MPP
Bobbi Ann
Brady**

Over the past 10 years, Canada and all Western countries have seen marked changes in the nature of the world order. Two trends are particularly worrisome and have contributed to "democratic backsliding." We see elected governments incrementally eroding democratic institutions, rules, and what we know as social norms. Secondly, there are people in power, and leaders, who are hiding non-democratic practices behind democratic institutions. These leaders are focussed on gaining or retaining power but are undermining democracy using various strategies, such as buying votes and eliminating or silencing political opposition.

You might be thinking, "Sure, that's happening around the world but not in our neck of the woods." Make no mistake - it's happening at every level of Canadian government including Haldimand-Norfolk.

In 2024, I wrote a few newspaper columns citing examples of democratic erosion in the Ontario Legislature. With a quick scan, you'll find numerous examples across Ontario such as school board trustees and municipal councillors being silenced.

On December 29th, the United States' 39th President Jimmy Carter passed away. Like many leaders, Carter left us with much to ponder through the written word. On January 5, 2022, he

penned a piece for the New York Times titled: I Fear for our Democracy.

In this piece, Carter said, "For American democracy to endure, we must demand that our leaders and candidates uphold the ideals of freedom and adhere to high standards of conduct."

While I cannot agree with all his politics, I can wholeheartedly stand by this statement, and I am proud to be working with a handful of others across the country who believe the same.

We must continue to stand up, to ask questions, to demand accountability, because what we are

witnessing is what ensues when powerful business interests have too much sway over government decisions whether it is municipally, provincially, or federally. Sadly, government is not working for you.

We need Reagan's great rediscovery of the 1980s where, "Lo and behold, the moral way of government is the practical way of government: Democracy, the profoundly good, is also the profoundly productive."

Together, we can restore democracy and protect our freedoms. It won't be easy because leaders and special interests have

their people in place to shut us down - they fear monger, and they try to convince voters that opposition should not exist. I remind you that without opposition there is not accountability, and there is no protection of public interest.

These same folk also tell others that the tough questions I ask on your behalf are somehow hurting us. I ask if these people believe in a dictatorship.

"We the people are free. The future should always be ours." It's time government let us get in the driver's seat and take the wheel.

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Oakland Giving Garden - plants for a cause

BRENDA MOSER

Advocate Correspondent

I recently had the opportunity to sit and chat with an awesome mother-son team, Brandi and Jackson Bassett, with a shared mission in Oakland.

In 2023 Jackson decided he wanted to raise funds for his school, Oakland Scotland School, so he and mom knew they had to come up with a plan. It didn't take long for their plan to 'grow'.

The Bassetts started their 'plan' in late 2022 and seedlings were planted in Spring 2023. Their first donations, \$1,000 each, were given the summer of 2023 to Oakland-Scotland Public School playground fundraiser and the Burford Skate Park, also \$1,000.

From May 24 to July 1 they sold greenhouse grown vegetable plants at their home in Oakland and at the local store. Their business venture, Oakland Giving Garden, proved successful that first year and was once again continued in 2024 with \$1,000 donated to The South Coast Caring for Cancer group for their Campfire Circle camper bags. As well, \$1,200 was used for treats, toys and food split between Sato Saved Dog Rescue and the Cambridge and District Humane Society.

The Rescue offers foster homes and rehabilitation, run out of Brantford, and their fundraising efforts help to alleviate some of the costs involved in fostering. Brandi said, "We foster as well and our pets are adopted from there. We have volunteer foster home - tons of them - but we are always looking for more."

To help with fundraising they organized a very successful event, held at Oakland Scotland Community Church, offering pics with pets and Santa.

"We had a lot of fun! My hubby, Brad, was involved as the Grinch and Santa. With the picture sessions we were able to raise \$635 for Sato Saved Rescue."

Pictures posted on Facebook were amazing and created some great memories for pet owners! If you would like to donate to Sato you can do so at satosavedrescue.wixsite.com/satosaved or their Facebook page Sato Saved End of the Line Dog Rescue and Rehabilitation.

With that successful fundraiser under their belts, it's time to plan and organize their Spring 2025 vegetable and perennial sales. They have not yet decided who their charities will be this year but have a few in mind and will narrow it down in the Spring. You can follow them on their social media to see who they choose!

It's clear that the Bassett family is dedicated to helping those in the community here and those in need wherever the need arises. Another of their pet projects is Operation Christmas Child Shoe Boxes. This year they had enough to fill 14 boxes. The boxes included toys, soaps, toothbrushes, socks, 'undies', games, sports balls... to name a few things. Donations for this cause are also always appreciated.

When Hurricane Helene hit in the United States, they soon went into action to do what they could to help. Through Samaritan Purse, she ventured off to help with Hurricane Helene clean-up. Brandi and a good friend collected coats and school supplies locally as well as toys and hygiene products. With do-

nations in hand, they headed to Florida to do their part after the state faced major devastation from tropical storm Sara. They loaded their Prius with coats and school supplies and Brandi and her friend made the 14-hour drive. They absorbed the cost of the trip and they were appreciative of donations made to help them cover the cost of fuel. Such great community support!

Right now, the Bassett family is taking a break from their fundraising and are looking to decide which two charities they would like to help this year with their plant sales. At present they have a list of five and will be making a decision soon. You can follow them on Facebook and Instagram under Oakland Giving Gardens as well as their email address at theogg2023@gmail.com to see who they choose.

When you're planning your summer garden be sure to check them out for all of your gardening needs. Beautiful blooms and fresh veggies for a great cause... what could be better?

While Jackson is very involved with their venture, he still has time to enjoy golf, baseball, ball hockey and piano and he likes to 'hang' with his two older brothers and just be an active boy - with a desire to help others. Great job!



Brandi and Jackson Bassett created Oakland Giving Garden, selling greenhouse grown vegetable plants at their home in Oakland as a fundraiser.

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Benjamin Moore

Council struggles finding ways to improve efficiency

Most of 12 suggestions offered by staff turned down by Norfolk councillors

LUKE EDWARDS

Advocate Correspondent

Norfolk councillors took a lengthy look at how to make their meetings shorter, and came away with some options, though they rejected most of what staff brought forward as options to consider.

Of the 12 suggestions staff offered to make meetings flow more efficiently, council outright turned down seven. Another that talked about how reports are introduced was accepted with a tweak, while one that involved deputations was turned down but spurred councillors to pass a motion calling for a change in how follow up questions to deputations are dealt with.

Ultimately, much of the discussion by councillors revolved around the need to police themselves.

"The chair needs to be more assertive and as council members we need to hold each other more accountable," said Coun. Kim Huffman. While she admitted she doesn't want to see meetings that stretch on

for 10 hours, she said she thought councillors have for the most part done a good job.

However, she and others admitted there were times where things would go off the rails a bit. For instance, there are often questions to staff involving operations that could be asked offline, leaving questions at council meetings to things that are pertinent to governance.

"I think there are times when people talk when they don't need to be talking," Huffman said.

Community engagement, a challenge for many municipalities, appeared top of mind for councillors. Finding the balance between giving people time to share their thoughts and not having meetings run too long for people with jobs, families and other commitments is a challenge.

The changes councillors agreed to move forward with were not fully approved. Instead, they decided to have staff come back with another report capturing those changes and what they will mean for council.

Among the 12 staff recommendations,

the three that were outright supported included one that changes how questions regarding consent items are dealt with. A second suggests resolutions that remain unchanged following debates don't need to be read out before a vote. And finally, chairs are encouraged to move more promptly to a vote if there's no opposition to a recommendation.

Councillors tweaked a suggestion on how reports are introduced. Introductions will bypass the general manager of the department, and instead go straight to the staff person presenting the report.

They also put forward a change that would only give deputations one minute to answer a question from council. This is an attempt to keep the presentations of deputations to the allotted five-minute maximum. At times, councillors have asked a question along the lines of "do you have anything else you wanted to say?" which allows the deputation to go on indefinitely, essentially circumventing the maximum time allotment.



Linda Huffman, Ward 7 councillor.

This led to another, unrelated motion that will request deputations asking for funding at budget time be moved from the January budget meetings to one of the fall meetings.

Volunteer group looking to take over Vittoria town hall

LUKE EDWARDS

Advocate Correspondent

A volunteer committee that's part of the Vittoria and District Foundation believes it can turn the Vittoria Old Town Hall into a viable event space.

Norfolk councillors have approved a staff recommendation to consider selling the building for \$1 to a local non-profit. The recommendation would see the county maintain the nearby parkland. Should that option fail, the county will look to sell the parkland and building in a package deal.

A town hall committee that has moved under the foundation has expressed interest in the building.

"People want smaller venues. I know it's in competition with the community centre but it has a different atmosphere," said Nancy Racz, a representative from the committee at the Jan. 15 Norfolk budget committee meeting.

The building has a heritage designation, dating back to 1986. The original public hall was built in the 1860s, but burned down, before being rebuilt in 1879, and has been standing ever since.

Significant work is required on the building. Council approved \$300,000 in capital work on the building in 2022. However, before



Alan Duthie, Ward 5 councillor.

that work could get under way, staff realized there was far more work required than initially thought. Estimates ballooned to \$825,000, which would likely be more now with inflation.

There's also another estimated \$245,000 required in the next 20 years.

Staff believe there's enough capacity in the nearby Vittoria and District Community Centre to absorb what the old town hall was being used for, based on 2023 numbers.

Still, Racz believes there's opportunity, suggesting the hall could host small wedding receptions, birthday and anniversary parties, meetings

and recreational events like yoga and Zumba. Her committee plans to apply for grants and utilize fundraising to help cover costs. Racz said they can also begin revenue generation as soon as three major projects - on the windows, one corner of the building and the washroom - are complete.

Norfolk councillors were wary about the plan. Coun. Alan Duthie questioned the committee about their plans to collect \$275,000 in grants, and what would happen if they were unable to secure those grants.

"I certainly see the passion, which I appreciate. I'm just a little concerned. Obviously there are operating costs, etc., that go along with that," Duthie said.

Racz said should they fail in year one they'll try again in year two, and focus on pledges and fundraising in the meantime.

"We have a person on our team who is quite familiar with that, applying for grants and things, and they're quite hopeful that it would go through," she said.

The committee is also hoping to receive the \$300,000 that was originally budgeted to help kickstart work.

Should the committee be unable to make a go of it, the county would retain first right of refusal.

Staff estimate selling the entire property could net \$520,000 or more.

'Favourable' results for Port Rowan water treatment

LUKE EDWARDS

Advocate Correspondent

Phase two of a planned upgrade to a Norfolk water treatment plant will cost less than the county expected.

A report presented at the Jan. 14 council-in-committee meeting offered up the good news. The lowest bidder for Phase 2 of the Port Rowan water treatment plant project came in at just over \$14.5 million, while the approved capital budget for the project was just shy of \$19 million.

As a result, staff recommended reducing the approved budget for the item by \$2.3 million.

The change will "free up some capital to support some other projects," said Andrew Grice, general manager of environmental and infrastructure services.

All told, the county received four bids on the project, ranging from the \$14.5 million bid that was accepted up to \$18.5 million.

The winning contractor, Industria Construction Corp., has its roots in the west coast but have since opened up an office in the GTA. While Grice said they have yet to do any work with the county, they have completed projects in Ontario and a reference check turned up no red flags.

"We're optimistic things will move forward as planned," he said.

The overall project at the plan will enhance water treatment quality and restore capacity to meet the projected needs of Port Rowan and nearby communities out to 2051.

New county website coming early this year

LUKE EDWARDS

Advocate Correspondent

A revamped county website aims to give residents all the information they need right at their fingertips, though councillors and staff say there will still be options for those who prefer a phone call or good old fashioned in-person service.

The new site is expected to launch early this year, and staff will be monitoring the early days to see how it's received. A presentation to councillors at the Jan. 14 council-in-committee meeting promised a website that is clean, clear and easy to use, while being populated with the latest, up-to-date information.

However, councillors wanted assurances that the website won't be the only option for residents.

"There is still ample opportunity for people to come into... the county for any of their concerns that they have, or looking for documentation or forms and things like that?" asked Coun. Linda Vandendriessche.

Katherine McCurdy, director of corporate customer service and communications, said those in-person options remain and that the website has two pages that should be able to direct residents to all their in-person or over-the-phone needs.

"If users do get to the website and are able to access those two pages I think they'll have everything they need in order to know how to come into a location to meet with Service Norfolk, go to GAB (Gilbertson Administra-



Linda Vandendriessche, Ward 2 councillor

(tion Building) to meet with the planning team, and access the recreation customer service desk," she said.

Some of the enhancements include changes to the facility rental section that McCurdy said should make things easy and more efficient. The communications department will also be more involved with reviewing information on the website to ensure it remains up-to-date. McCurdy said they plan to contact each department regularly to conduct those reviews.

The new system the county is utilizing has other functions that staff haven't even explored yet, so depending on how things go post-launch, McCurdy said they will consider utilizing those functions and adding or improving features as they go.

Norfolk libraries hosting free income tax clinics

The Norfolk County Public Library (NCPL) will be hosting free tax clinics in connection with the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program.

These clinics are entirely run by dedicated CRA community volunteers and are available exclusively at NCPL locations.

The tax clinics aim to support individuals with modest incomes and simple tax situations by providing free assistance with their tax returns. Volunteers generously offer their time and expertise to help community members access this valuable service.

Appointments can only be booked by calling 519-426-3506 extension 1355, and

it is important to call only during the designated hours of 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the following dates:

- Monday, February 3
- Thursday, February 6
- Monday, February 10
- Thursday, February 13
- Monday, February 24
- Thursday, February 20
- Monday, March 3
- Thursday, February 27
- Thursday, March 6

Norfolk County thanks firefighters, OPP, residents

Norfolk County has extended a heartfelt thanks to the Norfolk Fire Department, the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), and residents for their unwavering support and dedication in response to the recent series of fires across the County.

The OPP's announcement on Monday, Jan. 27 of charges made in connection with these incidents marks a significant step towards ensuring the community's safety and security.

Norfolk County commends the Norfolk Fire Department for its exceptional bravery and professionalism in attending to the fires. Their efforts were crucial in protecting residents and preserving our environ-

ment.

"Our firefighters have demonstrated extraordinary bravery and commitment, working tirelessly to safeguard our community," said Norfolk Mayor Amy Martin in a media release. "The collaboration between the OPP, our firefighters, and our residents has been instrumental in resolving these incidents. This collective effort showcases the strength and resilience of Norfolk County. Thank you for standing with us."

Further, Norfolk thanks the OPP for their thorough investigation, and to the residents for their support during this challenging time.

Weekend Quiz

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. What State is Super bowl 59 being held? | 6. What company coins the slogan "What's in your wallet"? |
| 2. How many planets orbit the sun? | 7. An inactive volcano is called? |
| 3. What year did a Canadian Hockey team last hoist the Stanley Cup? | 8. Who invented dynamite? |
| 4. Which organ does a lobotomy target? | 9. Is the Panama Canal man made? |
| 5. What infamous mob boss inspired "The Godfather"? | 10. Where was the first blood bank established? |

By Jake Grant

This week's answers are found on pg. 23



Call for application for the Norfolk Haldimand Community Hospice Board of Directors are being accepted until February 16th, 2025.

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SPECIAL *Feature*



A toast to 'something magical' in Norfolk County

JEFF TRIBE

Advocate Correspondent

If you are fortunate to tour the Okanagan or Napa wine regions, you will discover unique agricultural value-added areas offering internationally-renowned products.

You may also return home with an expanded appreciation for the opportunity existing right here in Norfolk County. This county's artisan wineries and breweries may not have the broad recognition of their more established compatriots, but they offer a diverse range of wine, hard cider and beer options for differing palates.

Different experiences perhaps, but there is certainly something to be said for the familiar intimacy of celebrating the agricultural attributes and beauty of one's own backyard.

Following is a quick two-part tour highlighting some of Norfolk's growing 'tour' divided into wineries and hard ciders, and breweries. You won't have to hop on a plane to experience it, and you may well have a chance to meet the people who grow, process and are sharing their own vision and passion.

Burning Kiln Winery

Norfolk County's rich agricultural history is celebrated through branding which will be familiar to those who toiled in the region's to-

bacco harvest.

Strip Room is the winery's top-selling red says the winery's Heather Smith, Horse and Boat a popular Riesling, Kiln Hanger a high-end 'cab-franc' and perhaps particularly appropriately, Harvest Party a house option in both red and white.

Soil testing revealed the former tobacco farm upon which the property sits would support a vineyard, leading to its foundation in 2011. Today, 28 acres of four varieties each of white and red grapes are grown. In total, there are close to 20 Burning Kiln wines says Smith, ranging from red and white through rose, blush and dessert options. They are available bottled and also a handy and portable canned option.

The retail outlet and associated food services are open seven days a week at 1709 Front Road, St. Williams. Burning Kiln features a year-round schedule of special events, entertainment throughout summer weekends on the patio and has also hosted signature acts including

The Barenaked Ladies, Sarah McLachlan and Jan Aarden through its Concerts in the Vineyard series.

"Good food, good people, good times and great wine," Smith summed up. "It's a great combination."

Hounds of Erie Winery

The dog-friendly winery came into existence in 2015 through the passion of Mat and Melissa Vaughan, expanding to a five-acre plantation featuring eight varieties of cold climate grapes producing a dozen white, red, rose, sparkling and dessert wines.

"Hounds" vintages won their share of honours at the 2024 cold climate wine awards, including best sparkling wine Crimson Pearl, wine-maker select L'Acadie Blanc and silver medal Fox & The Hound

Reserve, aged in both oak and bourbon barrels.

"The more time I do this, the better I'm getting at it," said Mat. "They're all pretty tasty, but I'm drawn to our sparkling wines."

"Good food, good people, good times and great wine"

The winery also features five brands of hard cider, along with a light lager Vaughan added to the 2024 lineup as an option for visitors who prefer beer.

The winery's name and branding was inspired by the Great Dane 'Rohan', and dogs remain welcome guests at Ontario's only licensed run, space which is quadrupling in size for 2025.

"It's a unique place for dog, wine and hard cider lovers to stop and enjoy in the summer," said Vaughan.

The winery will re-open to the public at 377 7th Concession Rd Enr, Clear Creek, Thursday through Sunday in April, although online sales and delivery is available throughout the year.

Bonnieheath Estate Lavender & Winery

Bonnieheath offers a wide range of wines: red, white, rose, specialty and dessert, a lineup including Lavender & Lace, Besties and Bubbles, Summer Sweetheart, and Farmhouse Dessert Rouge.

The winery also features a five-variety selection of 'Folkin' Hard Cider', ranging from the straight-up Fresh Apple through True Blue (hints of blueberries and lavender) and the ever-popular Cherry Bomb.

However, Bonnieheath also offers a vari-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11



Burning Kiln's Ashley Walmsley illustrates the tasting experience offered at the winery. (JEFF TRIBE PHOTOS)



Bonnieheath's Hannah Dobson and a selection of product.



Brewer Mat Vaughan and elements of the Hounds of Erie lineup.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

ety of on-farm experiences at 410 Concession 12 Townsend Road, Waterford, including overnight 'Air BnB' accommodation for either two or up to eight, picnics, photography passes, 'Sip and Shop', tastings and tours, private yoga classes and an immersive group wine-making option.

Open seven days a week during the summer, Bonnieheath's retail schedule reflects quieter and busier times during off-peak and winter months, however online order pickup is available daily.



Kathie Gilchrist proffers a bottle of Inasphere Wines inside the on-site retail outlet.

Inasphere Wines

Sitting with a glass of Inasphere Wines' bounty and enjoying the view of Long Point's Inner Bay from its elevated perspective is absolutely breathtaking - an opportunity typically appreciated by guests, rather than the property's owners.

"I can honestly say we don't do that very often," admitted Shantel Bosgoed, who combines a passion for wine-making, family and Norfolk County with husband Ryan.

Inasphere's origin story is linked to carrying a three-generation farm into a fourth and beyond through diversification rather than expansion. Ryan laid the groundwork for this dream through Niagara College's wine and viticulture program and subsequent industry experience, the couple purchasing his family farm and opening Inasphere in 2016 at 1454 Front Rd, St. Williams, guided by two main principles.

"Quality, make sure your quality is top-notch," Ryan summed up.

"And don't ever get comfortable," Shantel added. "Never stop learning."

Inasphere currently has just under nine acres of grape vines planted with plans for more to be added. They offer 13 white, red and sparkling wines and two sangrias. The line features a popular Riesling harkening back to their first year of production, Grey Area, a pinot noir they suggest served chilled like a white wine, and a crystal clear 'Cab Franc.'

"It's drank like a white," said Shantel.

Winter sales are via appointment, with the on-farm retail outlet re-opening seven days a week in May.

Wine-making is not without challenge, an equation including planning and execution within Mother Nature's vagaries.

"But when it all comes together and you come up with a really great finished product, it's really good," said Shantel. It's one thing to appreciate one's own efforts, she added, totally another when a customer reinforces that position. "That's really great too."

The winery fits within a unique 105-acre operation featuring cabbage destined for chain stores, and onions, cucumbers, tomatoes and other vegetables sold in their on-farm market. It is a busy world, and while neither Ryan or Shantel has much time to sit and sip, they do appreciate the day-to-day opportunities with their two sons on what truly is a family farm.

"Some people really get it," Shantel concluded. "It's always nice to share the story with them."

Frisky Beaver Winery

Founded in 2018, the Frisky Beaver/Smoke & Gamble winery features five acres of baco noir, Vidal and Riesling grapes, with the potential to double that acreage.

A wine-making team headed by Adria Howe produces three unique labels under one roof at its location southwest of Port Dover (455 Radical Road), says Jocelyn Kohli.

The original namesake Frisky Beaver line pays homage to a 100 per cent Canadian product, made from 100 per cent Canadian grapes, and the pledge to provide wines a host can be proud to share and enjoy with friends.

Smoke & Gamble Reserve is aged in barrels, a process designed to contribute to structure, body and tannin, 'softening' the wine while adding complexity to its flavour. Aged separately and then blended, the final product is considered worthy of the 'reserve' designation.

Finally, in the spirit of fun running through the company's name and wines, 'Crappy Wine' is on offer. Although of indeterminate origins, it bears the promise of pairing well with or without food, and particularly well with additional Crappy Wine.



Mike Wilkinson gets a little 'frisky' himself while highlighting Frisky Beaver and Smoke & Gamble Reserve options.



Charlottesville Brewing Company beverage names include both a sense of fun and lived experience.

Charlottesville Brewing Company

Serving up delicious and sustainable artisanal beer and food has allowed two born-and-raised 'Norfolkians' who grew up working in tobacco, picking strawberries and blueberries, to realize their dream of returning to a family farm. Tim Wilson and Melanie Doerksen founded the Charlottesville Brewing Company (CBC) in 2015 as an expansion of a hop-growing operation. It reflects their rural roots, creating both consumer options and economic opportunity through sourcing local, organic products while incorporating European influences from extended travel.

The CBC roster features around 25 beers ranging from light ales to stout. Their names, from their flagship '519' through Party Line (an homage to the shared telephone service they grew up with) and Tailgate Party combine a sense of humour with their own lived experience. They are happy to innovate with local fruits and products, incorporating pawpaws from a farmer 'around the corner' into a unique sour beer. European influence from further afield is evident in the addition of an English mild beer, Scottish ales and Germanic pilsners.

"We're trying to lean into it and keep it authentic with regard to the malt and hops," says Doerksen.

CBC is open Friday through Sunday, 1-8, 12-8, 12-6 respectively during the winter (Thursday is added during warmer months) at 1207 Charlottesville West Quarter Line, Simcoe, with 12 beers on tap and food options including the 2025 addition of an outdoor pizza oven. Its founders are both proud and pleased to be part of a mutually beneficial, respectful and diverse Norfolk County craft beer landscape where each brewery has its unique and creative niche.

"I think that's really kind of cool," Doerksen concluded. "They aren't the beers you're going to find at the beer store or in your regular pub."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



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Wishbone Brewing Co.'s Jayne Gervais and Alex Boali- anne highlight a couple of the company's brews.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Wishbone Brewing Co.

Founder Tyler Ferguson's 'craft trivia' night if you will, provides a metaphor for the Wishbone approach.

Originally a concept to liven up quieter Sunday evenings, the care Ferguson puts into crafting original, never-repeated trivia questions from a wide range of genres, along with the energy and enthusiasm he puts in as host, has popularized the event to the point reservations are recommended.

"It's become a part-time job on top of the other 12 hats I wear," laughed Ferguson, who has gone on to host trivia contests at the Norfolk County Fair and Port Dover's Art With A Heart, along with a series of private events this past holiday season.

The same attention and commitment for quality, unique product goes into Wishbone beer, which provides the basis for a micro-brewery experience. Brewing quality beer is an absolute requirement, however Ferguson's goal is adding to that Thursdays through Sundays with a lineup including live entertainment Fridays and rotating Saturday events.

"We really try and push the envelope to make our place a destination for sure."

Wishbone has core brands and always 12 on tap from a cumulative repertoire approaching 50 featuring everything from easy-drinking ales to Black Bridge stout, a popular Mimosa seltzer or the recently-released citrusy non-alcoholic hop water. Jam Band Raspberry Lavender Vanilla won gold at the 2024 Ontario Brewery Awards.

"Our main goal is brewing beer that's approachable in every style," said Ferguson.

Wishbone, located at 80-2 Alice Street, Waterford, has received accolades for a range thereof, including IPAs, sours and lagers.

Operating a micro-brewery is a full-on commitment, whether that be working a microphone in front of a crowd or long un-seen hours inside the brewery on the days they're not open. But Ferguson's foundational combination of passion for craft beer, connecting with people and trying to create a meeting place in Waterford continues to be rewarded.

"It really feels like we're doing the right thing."

Ramblin' Road Brewery Farm

'Pairing' is a term usually applied to wine, as in 'this wine pairs well with this food.'

However, it's also applicable to Ramblin' Road, which has successfully paired a 40-plus-year tradition of growing and processing snack foods with a 2012 expansion into craft beer.

"Kind of a little twist on it," agreed Haleigh Picard, daughter of company founder John Picard, noting the beer and snacks divisions of the company go hand-in-hand. "And they have from the beginning."

John Picard's vision came out of a sincere appreciation for Norfolk County's unique combination of soil, aquifer and entrepreneurial agricultural expertise that has led to its well-earned reputation as Ontario's Garden.

"Being grateful for where we are and taking advantage of the growing opportunities we have here," Haleigh explained.

A brewery was established in 2012 and three years later, The Roost Restaurant which offers pizza, wings and appetizers but

at heart is a 'burger joint' earning 'Norfolk's Best Burger' honours for the past three years running.

Ramblin' Road began brewing a pilsner and a lager, adding the Premiere's Award-winning Dakota Pearl Ale, a potato beer sourcing Dakota Pearl potatoes and brewed through a unique process. Today, the micro-brewery features nine beer options including a red lager, apple whit (wheat) and 3D, a triple-chocolate stout containing Picard chocolate.

Ramblin' Road also offers six hard seltzers, whose flavours vary on a rotational basis.

"We have fun with that, depending on the season," said Haleigh.

The restaurant and retail outlet (2970 Swimming Pool Road, Delhi) are open seven days a week, a patio in the summer. The site also hosts four classic car shows annually, including the memorial John Picard event which routinely draws 150-plus participants on Canada Day. Ramblin' Road does its best to make everyone welcome and at home Haleigh concluded, a clientele varying between local farmers with mud-caked boots to urbanites parking their 'Beemers' in the lot.

"We all come and meet here under the same roof."



Sara Revelle (left) and Hayden Chambers show off some Ramblin' Road beverages.

Meuse Brewing Company

Founded in 2019 by Mischa Geven and Estelle van Kleef with an emphasis on local ingredients, the brewery's name and focus pays homage to Belgian-style beers, particularly in the abbey and farmhouse traditions.

"Just to kind of fill that niche in the market," said van Kleef, who like her husband, is of Dutch extraction.

The Meuse line features 24 unique brews, including 'Tripel' which won gold at the Canadian brewing awards, Saison de la Meuse – gold at the 2024 Ontario Brewery Awards, and also a range of oak barrel-aged sours. During the winter, Meuse's retail outlet is open Friday and Saturday on Windham Road 3, Scotland, from noon until 6 p.m., and Sundays from noon until 5. During the summer beer garden (May through October) food is available, either onsite or from a rotation selection of food trucks.

Her husband's 10 years in a fast-changing micro-brewery industry has been 'interesting' says van Kleef, who continues to enjoy the creative outlet testing and perfecting recipes provides, along with open-minded customers willing to both learn about and sample the results.

"That's the most exciting for me."



Meuse Brewing Company brewer Mischa Geven and Estelle van Kleef.

Blue Elephant Craft Brew House

The Blue Elephant's foundational mantra of 'bringing in local' and creating in-house extends into its onsite brewery.

"It ties in together," said brewer Corey Donn.

He cited the example of 'The Elephant's' popular egg rolls, created by hand, in-house, a general approach followed since the restaurant's founding at 96 Norfolk Street South, Simcoe, and subsequent 2012 expansion into craft brewing.

"And why not jump on the beer," Donn continued. "It made sense for us to do that as well."

The Elephant's 11 beer taps feature four 'flagships,' Outlawger Pale Lager, a Friday the 13th tribute beer whose ongoing popularity has made it a staple, Gentlemen's Pilsner, Red Devil Amber Ale (2024 gold at the Ontario Brewery Awards) and Dark & Stormy Black Lager, a dark beer with smoky, chocolate undertones that presents like a light lager on the palate.

Owner Heather Pond essentially gives Donn free rein on the remaining seven taps.

"She kind of just lets me go at it and be creative. And I try and keep them full as long as I can before they sell out."

A popular Simcoe IPA is a frequent visitor amongst a broad array including ales, lagers, porters, stouts, wheat, smoked, European and rice beers, as well as fruit beers and seltzers.

The ability to experiment with complexities and proximity of local Norfolk ingredients is emphasized by seasonal favourite Summer Harvest Strawberry Lager, or the raspberry-rhubarb sour that won a silver award at last year's Ontario brewing competition.

"That was rhubarb right from Heather's garden," Donn laughed.

There is a 'nice array' across the 11 taps at 'The Elephant', however the one consistency is that all are brewed in-house, rather than demand dictating domestic options.

"It just speaks to the people and the community being receptive to what we offer," Donn concluded.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13



The Blue Elephant continued a 'bring in local' tradition when it added a craft brewery to operations.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

Hometown Brew Co.

This brewery's foundation story is tied up in its name. "I wanted to come back home," said Tommy De Vos, President of Hometown Brew Co. "And this is what I knew most."

The other unspoken half of the equation is 'family', the fact Hometown involved his brother Matt and cousin Dusty Zamecnik, a trio of cousins who says Tommy, grew up like brothers.

"We wanted to do something together."

The crew tapped into Tommy's eight years of varied experience with a major Canadian brewery to get Hometown up and running. Its first three beers remain at the heart of production: Southern Ale, Southern Light and Hazy Susan IPA. The line expanded to include a summer Pedal Power Pilsner (with a lime option), Organic Wild Wheat, Coconut Country and a Blueberry Saison.

"The plan is to keep these and add in a lot more variety," said De Vos.

Delays, including COVID, stretched expansion plans in conjunction with Long Point Eco Adventures (LPEA) out to five long years, with De Vos pleased to say they will come to fruition this summer. The Marshview Patio & Bar at LPEA is Hometown's showcase location (1730 Front Road, St. Williams). It features a view of the brewery and its products for sale for consumption both on-site and to take away.

"Relieved that it's done," said De Vos, "and excited for what's to come. Being able to have bigger ideas and have more fun with it is the biggest thing."

As the company moves forward, home and family will remain at its heart.

"The fact we all agree and push it forward together is what kept us going," Tommy concluded. "And it's also what makes it so rewarding."



Samantha White is proud to show off a can of Hometown Brewery's Southern Ale inside the Marshview Patio.

New Limburg Brewery

There is a long version of New Limburg's foundation story. However, it lies in Jo Geven and his son Micha's appreciation for Belgian brew.

"We just wanted our own beer," Jo summed up succinctly.

Originally from Holland, Jo picked up an affinity for Belgian lager while living in that nation.

"It's a completely different approach."

The New Limburg lineup currently features seven tried and true varieties, including Belgian Blond, which Geven considers 'the flagship.'

What originally was a business based primarily on beer has morphed into a restaurant featuring New Limburg beverages. Winter hours at 2353 Nixon Road are normally 12 until 8 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday. A popular destination for those cycling Norfolk's trail system, the New Limburg beer garden will open up again in the spring.

"Come in, sit down and have a beer or something to eat," Geven concluded.



New Limburg's Jo Geven and his signature Belgian Blond.

Front Road Cellars at Blueberry Hill

Blueberry Hill came into the Vranckx family in 2005, the winery Front Road Cellars was founded in 2012, and subsequently both purchased by Nick and Amanda Vranckx from his parents in 2022.

Co-owner and manager Amanda Vranckx speaks to an approach of 'crafting the unexpected', whether a hybrid grape wine that wins a national award, small-batch hard cider with a local twist, or a signature blueberry fruit wine that drinks more like a dry, light-bodied red.

"We want to amaze our guests," she said. "At the same time, we have a focus on making wine approachable. There is no pretentious here - we are family and pet-friendly and absolutely everyone is welcome at our table."

Front Road Cellars offers up to 20 different products at any one time says Vranckx, able to showcase unique vineyard selections through a small-lot style. Co-owner and winemaker Nick Vranckx has been focussed on crafting red wines lately, including two national award winners. In addition, Front Road Cellars is pleased to offer Azul Noir, Norfolk County's first port-style wine.

As well as a wine club and seasonal patio at 1195 Front Road, St. Williams, Front Road offers a variety of tastings including mix and match flights, winter s'mores and pours, and Couch Crushers, four wines paired with junk food snacks. The blueberry portion of the operation is also featured through seasonal pick-your-own and a selection of preserves for sale.

In closing, Amanda Vranckx feels the saying 'A rising tide lifts all boats' is applicable to Norfolk's Toast the Coast members, a truly connected group with a sense of camaraderie not found everywhere. She and Nick feel lucky to be able to do what they do and look forward to a bright future.

"I'd just like to encourage locals to explore their own backyard," she concluded. "Sometimes we get enchanted by the big, shiny wineries in Niagara or Prince Edward County, but there's something magical happening here."

"Our wines continue to get better every single year and I believe all of us have something unique and wonderful to offer."



Melissa Hill along with a sweet red vermouth and Sun + Moon Cabernet from Front Road Cellars at Blueberry Hill.



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SIMCOE ADVOCATE SPORTS

Local students compete in free throw competition

CHRIS ABBOTT

Editor

The annual Delhi-LaSalette Knights of Columbus Council 5095 Free Throw Championships in Delhi was the first step.

And it was a big one for 10 winners, ages 9-13, from Delhi Public School, Saint Frances Cabrini School, and Teeterville Public School.

The January 14th winners at St. Frances are eligible to compete at the district championship, Saturday, Feb. 8 at Lakewood Elementary School in Port Dover. First-place winners from that event advance to regionals in London.

Co-organizer Dan Verhoeve from the Delhi-LaSalette Knights of Columbus thanked St. Frances for hosting the event, and thanked all of the schools for participating, including students and teachers, as well as the volunteers.

Verhoeve, with co-organizer Peter Bacro, said it was another good turnout – about the same as 2024 – but the audience, seated along the sides of the gymnasium might have been a bit bigger.

Students – three from each school in each category – were given 15 shots consecutively. In the case of ties, they were broken in a five-shot shootout.

“It wasn’t that much harder (in the shootout),” said Kate Leclerc from St. Frances, who had completed seven out of 15



Winners at the annual Delhi-LaSalette Knights of Columbus Council 5095 Free Throw Championships in Delhi on Jan. 15 were from left (front) Ivy Robyn, Owen Gaertner, Luka Lowes, Rachel Petrie, (back row) Kate Leclerc, Laura Vigh, Mason Bonaccorso, Jordyn Brooks, Logan Mair and David Whitehead.

(CHRIS ABBOTT PHOTOS)

shots. “It was just kind of like a little more stressful.”

Leclerc was ‘in the zone’ the shootout, scoring on four of her five to win the 13-year-old girls division.

Jordyn Brooks from Teeterville, who had completed four out of 15, won a shootout in the 12-year-old girls category. Brooks had sunk her last couple shots in the 15-shot round to force the tie-breaking

shootout, and that momentum carried over. She scored on her first three extra shots.

“I just went to the same spot and did the same thing – I didn’t move my feet,” said Brooks, who admitted being a little nervous.

“Stressed,” said nine-year-old Ivy Robyn from St. Frances, describing the feeling of going to the line for a shootout in her first-ever Knights of Columbus free throw competition.

Robyn said she concentrated on not changing anything to win the nine-year-old girls division.

“I did the same technique,” she said.

The hottest shooter of the day may have been Luka Lowes of Teeterville, who completed 11 of 15 shots to win the 10-year-old boys division.

“It felt good – I did really, really good,” said Lowes, who was successful on his first consecutive seven shots and was ‘kind of’ thinking about hitting an incredible 15 in a row.

Lowes did miss the next two, but rebounded to get four of his last six at his second Council 5095 Free Throw Championship – and his first division win.

His goal at the district championships in Port Dover? Win, of course.

“Maybe, if I try my best,” Lowes smiled.

With five division champions, St. Frances won this year’s overall team trophy.

chris@granthaven.com



Ivy Robyn, St. Frances



Rachel Petrie from Delhi Public School won the 10-year-old girls division.



Luka Lowes from Teeterville won the 10-year-old boys division in Delhi.



Students watch the Delhi-LaSalette Knights of Columbus Council 5095 Free Throw Championship action on Jan. 15 at St. Frances School.

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Thirty years and counting for local Sports Hall

Back in 1994, a group of local sports enthusiasts, including Jim Adams Sr., Mike Bauslaugh, George Bentley, Don Stewart, Chuck Brimmer, George Pond, and others, started discussions about forming an organization to recognize the sporting achievements of local residents.

Out of those discussions, the Simcoe and Area Sports Hall of Recognition, which later became the Norfolk County Sports Hall of Recognition, was formed.

By August 1994, preliminary bylaws and guidelines had been established, and the Sports Hall was off and running, with a mandate of recognizing and honouring individuals and teams who have made significant contributions to Norfolk County's sports history.

In the thirty-plus years since that time, Board members have come and gone and display venues have changed, but the Hall is still going strong. To date, the Sports Hall has inducted around 100 individuals. Each inductee has a plaque outlining their key achievements in the Sports Hall's display area, which is located on the pool viewing level in the Simcoe Recreation Centre.

While walking through the display, one gets a sense of the depth and breadth of sporting achievement in Norfolk. Honourees include professional athletes as well as coaches and organizers who have spent countless hours immersed in local sport.

Among the inductees are several professional hockey players, including Ron "Chico" Maki, Leonard "Red" Kelly, Rob Blake, Nelson Emerson, Rick Wamsley, Dwayne Roloson, and others. The Hall also includes former CFL players Jim Merrick, John Macdonald, and Shane Bergman. They are joined by baseball and softball players, curlers, golfers, Olympians, and Special Olympians.

Long-distance swimming, mountain biking, cycling, harness racing, darts,



The Norfolk County Sports Hall of Recognition's display area includes plaques for each individual inductee, with photos and highlights of accomplishments. To date, around 100 individuals have been inducted into the Sports Hall, highlighting the depth and breadth of sporting talent in Norfolk County.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

skydiving, and other sports are also represented. It seems as though if a sport exists, there's a good chance someone from Norfolk County has excelled at it.

In addition to the individual inductees, the Sports Hall has, over the years, recognized the achievements of standout teams. To honour the many past provincial and national championship teams from Norfolk, the Sports Hall held a series of events from 2012 to 2016 that became known as the Reunion of Champions.

Held in Port Dover, Langton, Simcoe, Waterford, and Delhi, these events

brought together members of past championship teams, once again unveiling the depth of sporting prowess in the county.

Hockey, baseball, and softball teams predominated, but cheerleading, bowling, gymnastics, ball hockey, lawn bowling, basketball, precision skating, football, curling, rowing, soccer, volleyball, and track and field were also represented.

Since 2003, the Sports Hall, in partnership with Norfolk County, has also held an annual Parade of Champions, to recognize teams and individuals who have excelled at the provincial, national, and international levels.

Over the years, the Sports Hall Board has conducted Stanley Cup celebration events honouring Norfolk athletes who have won that coveted trophy, fundraising golf tournaments, and a Torch Relay event for the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Last year, the Hall held a "Skate with the Greats" day. This event, held in Waterford, offered participants an opportunity to skate with Elaine Chuli, goalie with the Montreal Victoire of the Profes-

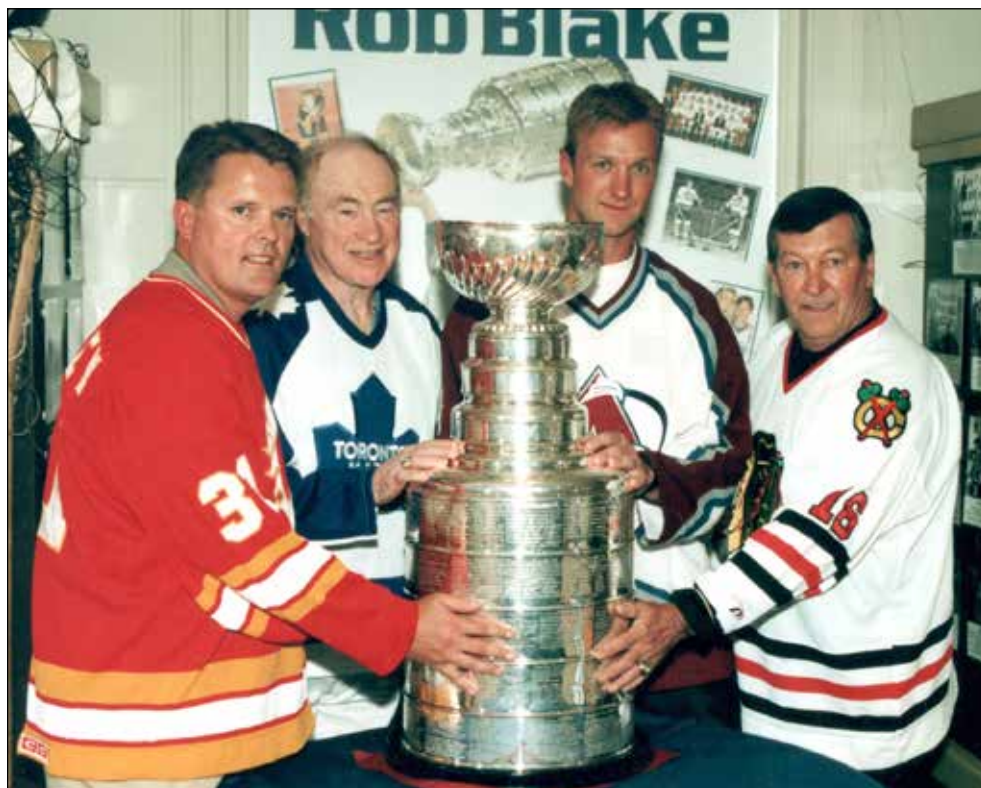
sional Women's Hockey League.

Events run by the Sports Hall have been conducted largely through the efforts of volunteers, and with partnership on numerous occasions from Norfolk County.

Seeing the achievements of others can provide inspiration for up-and-comers, and the many successes enjoyed by Norfolk County's athletes, coaches, and organizers have clearly demonstrated that you don't have to come from a big city to register big achievements.

The Sports Hall's history has been recorded in a book titled Norfolk County Sports Hall of Recognition: The First Twenty-Five Years. The book is available for purchase at the Simcoe Recreation Centre, or at Nifty Gifty in Waterford, and includes profiles of all inductees up to 2019, a list of Reunion of Champions teams, photos from past Stanley Cup events, lists of Parade of Champions honourees up to 2019, and other items.

More information about the Sports Hall is available at their web site, norfolk-sports.ca.



At an event celebrating Rob Blake's Stanley Cup win with the Colorado Avalanche, the Norfolk County Sports Hall of Recognition arranged a photo with some of Norfolk's past Stanley Cup winners. From left are Rick Wamsley, Leonard "Red" Kelly, Rob Blake, and Ron "Chico" Maki.



Among the teams recognized at the Reunion of Champions events was a 1929 provincial championship women's hockey team from Port Dover.

Early ice on Long Point's Inner Bay a welcome sight

The Lost Tribe

By Jeff Tribe

It was a slow morning perch bite off Long Point's Old Cut Monday, January 13th.

Although fortunately, not in every hut.

"Dead sticking," Dan Yeoman explained, showing off a brightly-coloured jumbo. "Didn't actually know he was there at first."

A fan of ice fishing who also spends a winter week on Lake Nipissing's hard water near North Bay, Yeoman was sharing space with Jason Triemstra. The Woodstock-area residents have their own hut and do use it, but given high winds, driving snow and a daunting wind chill, they made a gametime decision to book in with James Carroll of Jimmy Riggin'.

"We could have and we would have," said Triemstra, "but this is better."

With strong winds both moving and clouding Lake Erie's waters, Yeoman was keeping a close eye on his electronics (fish finder). They were using a classic perch ice-fishing tactic, 'flashing' with one of two legal rods (jigging a brightly-coloured spoon to attract curious perch) and 'dead-sticking' (a stationary minnow on a plain hook under a split shot or small jig) on the other.

"They're not hungry today,

so you have to kind of convince them," Triemstra explained.

Experienced anglers who understand it's called 'fishing' and not 'catching' for a reason, the pair continued to work the water, Triemstra catching and releasing a smaller fish. In between the action, there was a chance to enjoy hanging out, relaxing and hope the perch 'turned on' before Yeoman had to leave in order to meet kids getting home from school.

They hoped to hit Long Point at least once more this season, taking advantage of ice which isn't always a given.

"It's an hour from home," explained Yeoman, who while hoping to catch a predatory pike, also values the benefits of a perch fry. "Salt and pepper and butter - maybe a little lemon on the side," he said. "They're fantastic that way."

Long Point Inner Bay's frozen surface is a welcome sight not only for anglers, but also the four ice fishing service operations in the area, stuck on the shore in 2024.

"And the year before," Carroll added. "The huts haven't moved for two years."

He (519-586-7990) began transporting huts Sunday, January 12th, looking to build numbers throughout the week. Over in St. Williams, Woodward's Ice Fishing Ltd. (519-586-7510) had huts on the ice Tuesday, January 14th; Bayside Ice Fishing (519-586-2666) was scheduled to begin Wednesday, January 15th, with Collins Harbour Bait and Tackle (519-586-2212) also gearing up for its 'park and shuttle' option.

The frozen lake hosts many in-

dividual anglers as well, some with their own huts or pop-ups, hardier others going old-school on an upside-down five-gallon pail doubling as a carrier for the day's catch.

All options are viable and can be enjoyable, although on this day, with a hefty wind howling outside, the advantages of a heated, insulated hut was underlined by the staccato of snow peppering its exterior.

However one approaches the sport, no one should venture onto any frozen lake without proper knowledge and understanding of changeable ice conditions let alone a kilometre or two onto Long Point Bay across pressure cracks. Wind sweeping across the ice there can cause whiteouts, even on sunny days. Carroll, who carries a compass on his snowmobile because GPS systems can lose signal in a blizzard, was operating on seven inches of ice on January 13th.

"But I know there's not seven inches in other spots."

People come to Long Point for perch says Carroll.

"Perch and pike, but mostly perch. Lots of them and easy to catch... most days at least," he laughed.

The odd rainbow shows up, and this year, Carroll also saw the first two brown trout he has seen caught on the ice.

Perch are 'great eating' says Carroll, who cooks walleye or pickerel in a garlic pasta sauce, however takes a more traditional batter and deep fry approach for perch, with a side order of fries.

"The healthy way," he laughed.



Dan Yeoman shows off a classic Lake Erie 'jumbo' perch.

(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

Clients come from 'all over' says Carroll, many urbanites enjoying the chance to get out and enjoy a popular Canadian winter activity.

"A lot of families," he added, "on the weekend, it's a lot of families."

That Friday, the perch had been aggressive said Carroll, tailing off into a 'finicky' Sunday. They were still biting, however only on half minnows, the majority of those on stationary lines.

"If you moved it, they wouldn't touch it."

He subscribes to the 'flasher/deadstick' theory under most conditions, a spoon for the former.

"When it's tough, a minnow just on a hook, that's it. Nothing fancy because if you put all that fancy

stuff down, they won't bite."

The fishing would pick up later that day, the morning slow, although not without fish on the ice. High winds, changing water and critically, says Carroll, a transition from low pressure to high pressure were not the anglers' friends.

"I don't know what it (a pressure change) does to them, but they do not like it."

The change Carroll and others were happiest about however was the transition from Long Point's open blue waters to the greys, blacks and whites of winter, brutally beautiful in the eyes of ice fishers hoping for a lengthy 2025 season.

"I'd like to go right through until March 15th," Carroll concluded with a smile.



James Carroll of Jimmy Riggin' (519-586-7990) is one of four Long Point Inner Bay area ice fishing operators to welcome winter weather to the area.



Jeff Helsdon jigs for perch on Long Point's Inner Bay.

The Governor's Visit Continues at Lynnwood

LISA TIMPF

Advocate Contributor

The notion of traveling through time, portrayed by works like H.G. Wells' 1895 story *The Time Machine*, has long been an appealing fantasy.

Lynnwood Arts may not have perfected time travel, but they're offering the next best thing: a first-hand glimpse at what life might have been like during an important time in Simcoe's history.

From Feb. 20-23, Lynnwood will be the site for *The Governor's Visit Continues*, a play set in 1874. The play revolves around the Governor General's visit to Simcoe, then a small town with a population around 1,900.

Lynnwood Arts is located at 21 Lynnwood Avenue, in the building that was once the home of Mr. and Mrs. Duncan Campbell. Duncan Campbell, as Postmaster of Norfolk County, was one of the most important people in town. He

was the Commissioner for Crown Lands, the Queen's representative in Simcoe, and was also on the Board of the Gore Bank, the only bank in town at the time.

In 1874, the Campbells played host to Lord and Lady Dufferin. Lord Dufferin was the Governor General of Canada, and he and his wife were the most famous, and most recognized, couple in the country, according to Jan Rainey, gallery assistant at Lynnwood. Rainey is both playwright and director of *The Governor's Visit Continues*.

Attendees at the play will get a chance to "peek into the lives of people at the elegant reception welcoming the Governor General," says Rainey. Ticket-holders will begin at the coach house on the property, where they will be met by a guide. They will then be escorted to the front door to begin the evening's adventure.

During the play, the audience will see, and listen in on, interactions between the invited guests as well as the maids and footmen who are cleaning, polishing, and shining every surface to prepare for the big event. The play's cast includes 40 actors clad in period costume, all volunteering their time.

In researching the play, Rainey consulted material from the Norfolk County Archives, as well as local history books. *Waterford and Townsend: A Double Portrait* was, she noted, a useful resource.

Though grounded in fact, the play is also partly "pure entertainment," Rainey says. Those who attended last year's play *The Governor's Visit* needn't be concerned about duplication. The *Governor's Visit Continues* portrays events later the same evening, so show-goers will see new material in this year's play.

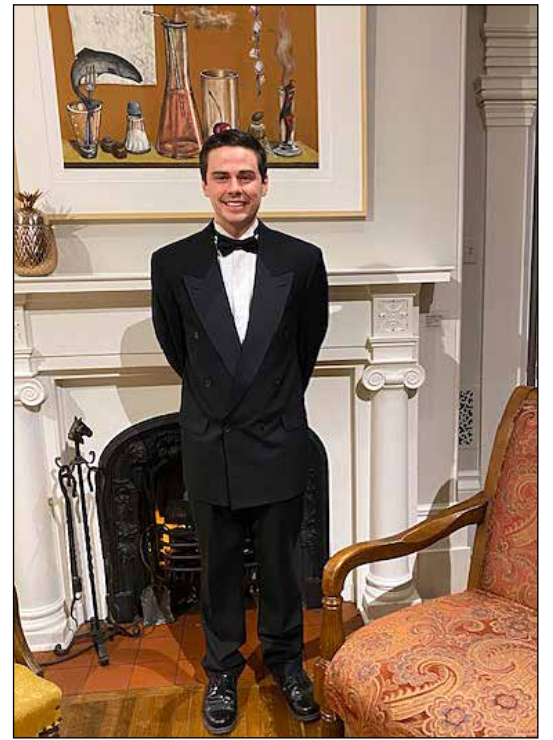
Tickets are available for

ordering through a link on Lynnwood's website, lynnwoodarts.ca. Tickets cost just under \$40, plus fees.

Seating is provided, though last year's demand meant some standing room. The show, which lasts an hour and fifteen minutes, offers start times of 6:30 p.m., 7 p.m., 7:30 p.m., and 8 p.m. Participants will move through the house as the show progresses.

Those with mobility issues who require use of an elevator to travel between floors are advised to book the 8 p.m. showtime, as the elevator will only be available for that time slot.

The *Governor's Visit Continues* is a fundraiser for Lynnwood Arts. Last year's show sold out, says Rainey, and ticket sales for this year's event have been brisk. She hopes for another good turnout, and encourages people to "come out and support the performing arts and Lynnwood at the same time."



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Jacob McGivern will play the role of James Kent in Lynnwood's production of *The Governor's Visit Continues*. The play, set in 1874, revolves around the Governor General of Canada's visit to Duncan Campbell's residence at 21 Lynnwood Avenue.

No warmth in Walsh: Gas pipeline shutoff

LEAH BAUER

Advocate Correspondent

This January came in swinging with low negative temperatures like most Januaries do, but for the residents of Walsh this month has been particularly tough.

On Thursday, January 9th the Technical Standards Safety Authority (TSSA) disconnected gas meters, cutting off heat to all the houses and businesses in the impacted Walsh area. It is estimated by those affected that around 11-14 homes had their gas abruptly disconnected on one of the coldest nights of the year.

Tim Wilson, owner of the beloved Charlottesville Brewing Company, took to Facebook to air his concerns and raise awareness of this potentially life threatening issue. He noted how the TSSA disconnecting the gas meters came with no plan or support, "throwing entire communities into the freezing cold without any forethought."

This is a distressing situation which left families, elderly, and local businesses without heat in -15 weather. It has derailed the lives of the Walsh community in the middle of a very cold January creating conditions where pipes may burst, and many are left in the cold, or even having to leave their homes.

In a conversation with Tim, he stated that he was not given proper warning prior to the shutoff. The TSSA called the brewery the night before stating that there was "an emergent problem and they should seek alternate energy sources." The next

day county workers came and disconnected the gas from the buildings. A week later they received a letter in the mail which stated the same message as the meagre night before phone call from TSSA.

Wilson noted a number of problems with the handling of the situation which led to what he believes is a humanitarian issue. Plainly, the TSSA cut off residences and businesses' heat source in the middle of winter. He noted the lack of proper warning which would have given adequate time for the affected to pivot from gas powered heating to another source. Not to mention that the issue with the gas was a leak in a metal line which likely could have been fixed in 2-3 hours. Wilson expressed deep concern for his community members and their well-being, mentioning that some have had to move into a motel at their own expense.

TSSA has refused to turn the wells back on or give any reasonable support, and while county leaders such as Mayor Amy Martin and MPP Bobbi Ann Brady are empathetic and concerned, they have expressed to Wilson that there is little they can do to help.

Through this Charlottesville Brewing Company remains open, as they have taken on costly and sudden renovations to switch their equipment and heating to propane. If you are looking to grab a beer and/or support local, check out the hours to Charlottesville Brewing Company on their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/CharlottesvilleBrewingCompany>.

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Child Nutrition Network supports school programs

BRENDA MOSER

Advocate Correspondent

Norfolk County is very fortunate to have soil and climate conditions that are conducive to growing and harvesting a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. Some of these crops are shared with local schools, thanks to the generosity of local businesses and companies that help fund a Farm to School program.

The Child Nutrition Network was established in 1998 under the umbrella of Haldimand Norfolk REACH, the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit, and several community members and organizations. Sharon Smyth, program coordinator for the CNN, works for REACH and has been with them for about 18 years now.

There are 44 schools who benefit from the program and Smyth is responsible for about 35 of those schools. CNN supports 49 breakfast, morning meal, lunch and snack programs. In total they provide nourishment to over 9,300 Haldimand-Norfolk children and youth 2-5 days per week, depending on the need. The program is universal for all students and anybody can access it.

The Farm to School program has been running for over 14 years and they are fortunate to be able to work with the Norfolk Fruit Growers, where they keep their apples in cold storage and berries in freezers until needed.

In Caledonia and Dunnville, the Salvation Army offers fridge and freezer space for their use.

At present there are about 100 farmers under the umbrella of Norfolk Fruit Growers. Community clubs and organizations are also very generous in their donations to help cover any costs incurred for the program. They also benefit from fundraising.

The program runs from October to June

and Smyth stated they have been very fortunate in having an abundance of fruit and have only run out one or two times. Smyth describes the program as a real win-win for everyone. As with many other school programs, Farm to School relies on volunteers to step forward to pick the apples up (in Simcoe), once a week on Tuesdays, and deliver them to the schools on the list. They are very appreciative of their delivery driver, Dave Douglas, who volunteers his own time to pick up in Simcoe and drop off at the various schools on that day's list. They also rely on parent volunteers at each of the schools to keep the program running.

The Snack Program, run by the several schools, can also offer such things as fruit cups, applesauce, smoothies, sometimes cantaloupe... all healthy and never high in sugar and certainly not chocolate.

I met up with one of the parent volunteers, Peggy Garbedian, when I visited Boston Public School.

"The students might try something they've never had before and discover they actually might like it," said Peggy.

Apples remain available to the students all day with bins in the office, gym and guidance room. They're able to grab an apple any time.

The Snack Program has been a great experience for Garbedian.

"It's a great partnership hanging out with the kids... I'm very lucky. We're always looking for parent volunteers. Word of mouth seems to work and we welcome seniors as well to apply."

There is a large number of funding partners - provincial, regional and local - and a list can be found at www.hnreach.on.ca. The success of such programs can only succeed with community support and a huge thank you goes out to each and every one of them.



Peggy Garbedian, Boston Public School parent volunteer, holds Farm to School apples delivered by Dave Douglas, Child Nutrition Network volunteer driver.

(BRENDA MOSER PHOTO)

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Kate Leclerc from St. Frances won the 13-year girls division.

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Mobile cancer screening program returns in February



Alyssa Higginson, clinical Lead; Amber Savelly-Howard, receptionist; Meghan Welch, registered nurse; and Carrie Claxton, medical radiation technologist set up the Cancer Screening Mobile Coach Bus in the Norfolk Family Health Unit in Simcoe on Jan. 23.

(ALEX HUNT PHOTO)

ALEX HUNT

Advocate Correspondent

A mobile cancer screening coach bus set up in Norfolk County on Jan. 23 was visited by 16 clients.

Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Regional Cancer Program has partnered with the Brantford Brant Norfolk Ontario Health Team to allow individuals to receive cancer screenings who face barriers when seeking medical assessment.

“The mission for the coach is to offer that service to clients who are not able to get cancer screening,” said Dr. Meghan Davis, Regional Primary Care Lead for the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Regional Cancer Program.

“There are a lot of folks who do not have access to primary care, there people are not able to access this at all, there are also many people who can’t take time off work to book and go and get their cancer screening.”

The coach bus arrived for the first time and parked in the Norfolk Family Health Unit parking lot, 185 Robinson St. in Simcoe on Thursday, Jan. 23. It will return Feb. 20.

The bus consists of a fully female staff medical team and provides tests on cancer risk factors and determining a diagnosis. It will provide tests for cancers such as cervical, colorectal as well as breast cancer, and will also provide resources on those

seeking lung cancer medical assessments and nicotine therapy.

“Fear can be a real barrier, and the coach staff do everything to make our patients, the coach does a complete assessment on what sort of tests should be recommended for the individual,” said Davis. “Doing a cervix screening is an intimate exam which requires a patient to disrobe from the waist down and a lot of people with cervixes are more comfortable with a female provider conducting that exam.”

Dr. Davis said that people between the ages of 25 to 69 should get checked for cervical cancer up to every three years. For colorectal cancer people between the ages of 50 and 74 should schedule a check-up every two years. Women between the ages 40 and 74 should get checked every two years.

“Screening is about finding something before getting symptoms. You are trying to find it before it spreads and you have a better chance of surviving it,” said Davis.

Symptoms for cervical cancer include vaginal bleeding and pain. Colorectal cancer shows signs of bleeding, change in bowel habits, and weight loss. One prominent symptom for lung cancer is coughing blood, and for breast cancer, one sign can include discovering a lump or a mass.

There are only two coach buses in Ontario that provide mobile cancer screening. Information and bus schedule dates and locations will be available at hnhb-screenforlife.ca.



Teeterville’s Jordyn Brooks won a shootout in the 12-year-old girls category.



Logan Mair from Delhi Public School won the 12-year-old boys division.

Fox Harb'r: growing beyond "great"



OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO

By Paul Knowles

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

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

This is obviously much more than a golf course. Fox Harb'r offers luxurious accommodations, spa facilities, two restaurants, a private airstrip, and more. We stayed in a beautiful suite, with our second-floor balcony overlooking the course, and beyond it, the Northumberland Strait.

The course was in superb shape. Nine holes ran along the ocean,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This involves more than building 18 more holes, and the existing

nine Ocean holes are being reconstructed, changing most of the layouts, and ensuring that "links style" is more than just a cliché. That means altering bunkers, fairways, landscaping, greens – the whole shebang.

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

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

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

Fox Harb'r is clearly a destination in its own right. There are a few nearby attractions – the quirky ocean-front town of Tatamagouche is less than half an hour away, as is Jost Winery, one of the finest among Nova Scotia's excellent wineries. But people come to Fox Harb'r for Fox Harb'r – and the number of staff employed by the resort says all you need to know about the service the resort offers. Kevin told me that in 2024, the destination employed 264 staff members. In the long term, he says, Fox Harb'r will employ 325 people. The resort is building more accommodations for its staff, and also, according to Kevin, strongly encouraging senior

employees to permanently locate in this part of Nova Scotia. Fox Harb'r is not only committed to serving its guests – it's also committed to being a responsible corporate citizen in its community.

But most importantly for the dedicated golfer, Fox Harb'r is offering a unique opportunity to play a different course layout each year

through 2027. That's when Fox Harb'r's vision will fully become a golfer's dream come to life.

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



There is beauty on every whole of the course, and that will double with the opening of 18 more holes by 2027.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)



The entrance to Fox Harb'r tells visitors a lot about the attention to detail, and the overall beauty of the resort.



The excellent Jost Vineyard is a short drive from Fox Harb'r.



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

Riddles

What do you call a groundhog who drives in the center of the road?

Answer: A road hog.

What's a groundhog's favorite drink?

Answer: Hole milk.

Why is it annoying to watch TV with a groundhog?

Answer: They hog the remote.

How do you stop a woodchuck from digging holes?

Answer: Hog-tie it.

Why was the groundhog afraid of 7?

Answer: Because 7, 8, 9!

What does Warton Willie use to clean his laundry?

Answer: Hogwash.

Does anyone know a good Groundhog Day joke?

I keep hearing the same one over and over again.

Knock, knock!

Who's there?

Sia.

Sia who?

Sia in the spring!

Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 23

PET OF THE WEEK

Nominate your Pet of the Month by emailing info@simcoeadvocate.com



JACKSON

Meet our Pet of the Week:

Jackson is a 1 year old Jack Russell/Pug who has a lot of energy but can always find time to relax under a ray of sunshine.



Word Search

GROUNDHOG DAY

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

Words

- Burrow
- Ceremony
- Early
- Emerge
- February
- Festival
- Groundhog
- Hibernate
- Omen
- Overcast
- Prediction
- Shadow
- Six Weeks
- Spring
- Tradition
- Weather
- Warton Willie
- Winter

Norfolk Sunrise invited to 2026 Rotarian Worlds



On January 23-25, the Meaford and Thornbury-Clarkson Rotary Clubs hosted the 69th Annual Rotary Can-Am Curling Bonspiel.

In attendance were curling teams from centres throughout Ontario and the north-east United States.

The Rotary Club of Norfolk Sunrise was represented by Skip Rob Munden, Vice Jim Simpson (Port Dover), Second Andy Kooistra (Waterford) and Lead Keith Jones (Port Dover).

A great weekend of terrific curling, fellowship and just plain fun resulted. Well done to the Meaford organizing team.

As it turned out, the local club finished in the A Division finals, playing in the Can-Am championship game against a great team from Rice Lake in Wisconsin.

While the Sunrisers had to be happy with a second-place finish in the final game, the RCNS team was privileged to qualify as the Canadian Team invited to the International Curling Fellowship of Rotarians World Curling Championship set for April 2026 in Stranraer, Scotland.

SIMCOE ADVOCATE
PROMOTE YOUR EVENTS WITH US!
HERE'S HOW:
 Deadline: Monday prior at 3 p.m. Contact: info@simcoeadvocate.com

- The Simcoe Advocate Community Calendar allows non-profit organizations to promote their free admission community events at no charge. Event listings can include the 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 Simcoe Advocate 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

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

SUDOKU ANSWERS

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

Reality?

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Email to inquire: info@simcoeadvocate.com

THURSDAY, JANUARY 30

Board Game Nite

6 p.m - 9 p.m

The Norfolk Game Group welcomes all adults and supervised children to join in on the fun!
Norfolk County Public Library
Simcoe Branch - 46 Colborne Street
South Simcoe

FRIDAY, JANUARY 31

Riversyde 83 Presents: David Wells & Socorro Chinnick

6:30 p.m

Friday Fun Nights in the Café
83 Sydenham St. Simcoe

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6

Youth Film Society

4:30 p.m

Embark on a cinematic journey and join us for an exciting evening of film exploration.
Norfolk County Public Library
Simcoe Branch - 46 Colborne Street
South Simcoe

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7

Ingersoll Jamboree

1 p.m - 4 p.m

Enjoy dancing and listening to 50's-70's country music
Masonic Hall, 190 Thames St S
Ingersoll

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7

Trivia Night at Riversyde 83

7 p.m

Café open until 9:00 p.m on Fridays.
83 Sydenham St. Simcoe

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8

Rock Painting for Grown-Ups

11: a.m - 1 p.m

Unleash your creativity at the Library! Rock painting is a fun and imaginative way to add a personal touch to your garden or surprise someone with a hidden gem along a trail.

Norfolk County Public Library
Port Rowan Branch - 1034 Bay Street
Port Rowan

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11

Port Dover Community "Love Songs" Sing-Along

7 p.m

\$2 donation. Call 226-400-1399 for more information.

Grace United Church
18 Chapman St. W., Port Dover

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12

Teen Art Club

4:30 p.m - 5:30 p.m

Grow your portfolio, expand your skills, and connect with other teen artists!

Norfolk County Public Library
Delhi Branch - 192 Main Street of Delhi

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15

Science Saturday

1 p.m - 1:30 p.m

Each week, we'll explore cool science topics like physics, chemistry, biology, environmental science, astronomy, and more.

Norfolk County Public Library
Simcoe Branch - 46 Colborne Street
South Simcoe

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21

Ingersoll Jamboree

1 p.m - 4 p.m

Enjoy dancing and listening to 50's-70's country music

Masonic Hall, 190 Thames St South
Ingersoll

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22

MakerSpace Showcase for Teens

1 p.m - 2:30 p.m

Drop in and explore the Library's MakerSpaces in the different Branches!

Norfolk County Public Library
Port Dover Branch - 1034 Bay Street
Port Rowan

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12

Teen Art Club

4:30 p.m - 5:30 p.m

Grow your portfolio, expand your skills, and connect with other teen artists!

Norfolk County Public Library
Delhi Branch - 192 Main Street of Delhi

MONDAY, MARCH 17

Shine Bright: Diamond Art Workshop for Teens

4 p.m - 5 p.m

Discover the joy of Diamond Art, a relaxing and creative hobby where you craft stunning artwork by placing colourful resin rhinestones on a sticky canvas.

Norfolk County Public Library
Simcoe Branch - 46 Colborne Street
South Simcoe

CLASSIFIEDS

Email to inquire: info@simcoeadvocate.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BI-WEEKLY PUBLICATION DATES

FEBRUARY 13, FEBRUARY 27

MARCH 13 & MARCH 27

DEADLINE IS THE MONDAY PRIOR AT 3 P.M.



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- Annaleise Carr Aquatic Centre
- Aspira Cedar Crossing Retirement Living
- Barnyard Patio & Pub
- Bubbles Laundry
- Canadian Tire
- Cedar St Food Market
- Food Basics
- Ferris Funeral Home Limited
- Harmony Pastry Shop & Cafe
- Joy Bakery Cafe
- McDonald's - 77 Queensway East
- McDonald's - 160 Queensway East
- Norfolk County Archives
- Norfolk County Library
- Peavey Mart
- Pharmasave Clark's Health Centre
- RE/MAX Erie Shores Realty Inc
- Real Canadian
- Superstore Queensway East
- Robinson Chevrolet Buick GMC Simcoe Inc
- Roulston's Pharmacy
- Royal LePage Trius Realty
- Ruffins Pet Store
- Shoppers Drug Mart
- Simcoe Convenience
- Simcoe Recreation Centre
- Simcoe Seniors Centre
- Sobeys
- Tim Hortons - White Horse Plaza
- Tim Hortons - Queensway East
- Walmart Supercentre
- Tricenturena Waterford Arena
- Waterford Heritage & Ag Museum
- Waterford Home Building Centre
- Waterford Pharmacy and Health Food

DELHI

- Canadian Tire
- Circle K
- Crompton Home Building Centre
- Dave's Variety
- Delhi Community Arena
- Roulston's Pharmacy
- Tim Hortons
- Wilkinson's YIG

COURTLAND

- Courtland Bakery Ltd.
- Courtland Variety & Café

LANGTON

- Langton Food Market
- Langton Pharmacy

SCOTLAND

- Scotland Food Market