

Tillsonburg POST



JANUARY 23, 2025

VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 9

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New daycare coming to Tillsonburg

JEFF HELSDON
Editor

Parents of young families will rejoice at the announcement of a new daycare, which will help to relieve an ongoing shortage of spots.

A letter of intent has been signed between EYES Childcare of Brampton and 360 Developments Group to open a daycare in the development at 361 Quarter Line Road. To be located on the west side of Quarter Line Road and south of South Ridge School, the new facility is expected to be opened later this year and will have 80-plus spots in a 5,500 square-foot facility.

“Ever since the inception of that condo development, it has always had a commercial building, and my vision was to have a daycare,” said 360 Developments president Cedric Tomico.

360 Developments is owned by Tomico, Pete Braun and Margaret and Frank Voth.

Tomico originally had the concept for a daycare when his children were in daycare. He said Braun also had issues finding a daycare provider, adding that he understands that Oxford County is 1,800 daycare spots short.

Saying he understands this has resulted in a two-year waiting list, Tomico noted, “I’ve heard of people who were pregnant and going around and looking for a spot for when the child turns one.”

The mission and goal of Early Years Education System (EYES) is rooted in the belief education is a powerful tool for empowerment and growth. The primary goal is to provide an educational foundation while fostering a child’s confidence and growth. The daycare aims to create the leaders, thinkers and doers of tomorrow.

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COMMUNITY CENTRE CONSTRUCTION CONTINUES (JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)
Chris Baird, project manager for the Tillsonburg Community Centre and pool renovations, overlooks the new customer service area from a newly-created glassed-in meeting room. The construction company will turn the facility back over to the town on Jan. 31. After cleaning, filling the pool and many other tasks, the goal is to have people in the water by the third week in February. Story below.

Community centre and pool construction on schedule

JEFF HELSDON
Editor

Construction of the Tillsonburg Community Centre renovations and pool updates is on schedule, but swimming fans shouldn’t break out their bathing suits quite yet.









The construction company will hand over control of the area on Jan. 31, but time will be needed for cleaning, filling the pool, balancing the chemistry, training lifeguards, and other duties. The goal is for the pool to open the last week of February and for swimming lessons and full programming to start after the March break.

On an exclusive tour through the facility last week, town project manager Chris Baird showed off the facility and explained some of the challenges.

Visitors to the pool or health club will enter off a new ground-level entrance on Hardy Street. The exterior of the entrance area and many of the hallways are glassed, providing natural light and an open feel. A new customer service desk will provide staff a place to direct patrons directly to the pool, health club, or an alternate entrance into the arena changerooms. A new glassed-in meeting room overlooking the entrance dubbed The Deep End, will be available for the community to rent. A new staff room will be below it.

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New daycare coming to Tillsonburg this fall

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

“This childcare center is being designed as a premium Montessori-style daycare, offering a high-quality early learning experience,” said Vikram Vardhan Singh of EYES Childcare. “It will become part of the renowned EYES Child Care network, which spans across Ontario.”

If the facility is approved under the provincial Early Years program and by Oxford County, the cost will be \$22 per day.

Tomico is now in the process of finalizing the building's floor plans.

“Our designer will be working with theirs, with the aim to finalize and go in for a permit next month, and break ground in March,” he said.

Construction should be quick due to the building style being utilized. It will be open in mid to late fall 2025 if all goes well. The building with the daycare will also have a spot for a café on the end of it. Tomico plans to operate the café, and said it will be an open concept, like is often seen in western Canada.

The condos at 361 Quarter Line Road were started in 2021, after the development across the road was complete. The first part started in 2018.

“This is wonderful news for the Town of Tillsonburg,” said Mayor Deb Gilvesy. “I would like to congratulate Cedric Tomico on what was a very long and at times frustrating process. Cedric remained focused and persistent in seeing these new daycare spaces come to fruition. From a town perspective, additional daycare spaces are desperately needed for young families as the county is underserved. As the town’s industrial/commercial base is growing new jobs, more spaces are needed.”

As per provincial guidelines, the daycare will also have a playground attached to it. While it will be restricted to daycare use while the daycare is open, it will be available to the public after hours.

Inquiries to enroll a child should go to eyeschildcare@gmail.com. Job enquiries should also go to the same address.



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

A new daycare will be built in this vacant spot at 361 Quarter Line Road. EYES Childcare of Brampton recently signed a letter of intent to open in a to-be-built building in the 360 Developments property. It is expected to be open sometime this fall.

Out-of-town bus service may be cut at end of March

JEFF HELSDON

Editor

If nothing changes, Tillsonburg’s out-of-town bus service will be cut due to an end of provincial funding.

T:Go’s inter-community transit is funded by a provincial grant, and operated by the town. It’s set up in four routes and connects to Port Burwell, Langton, Delhi, Ingersoll, Woodstock, Norwich and London. Provincial funding will end on March 31, and the operation of the system could end with it if nothing else changes.

The inter-community transit system had 10,384 riders between August 2020 and December 2024. About 70 per cent of the ridership was on Route 1, which goes Monday to Friday and joins rural Oxford communities with Tillsonburg, Ingersoll and Woodstock. By compari-

son, T:Go ridership in town was 44,397 between January 2021 and December 2024.

The system was originally set up through SCOR, which is an economic alliance of southern Ontario municipalities. When it was set up, Tillsonburg was paid to operate the system. While it seems there is a disconnect between transit and economic development, SCOR executive director Kimberly Earls explained there was a need for affordable transit for workers.

“One thing that came up in employer surveys was they had a hard time recruiting and retaining workers due to limited transit options,” she said.

The transit system was funded through the Community Transit Grant Program. This program was replaced by the Ontario Transit Investment Fund last fall.

“Unlike the CT grant, individual mu-

nicipalities cannot apply,” said Chris Baird, Tillsonburg’s acting director of operations and development. “Only project teams can apply involving all lower-tier municipalities. Without the buy-in of our county neighbours, a successful OTIF application is non-viable.”

“The town has reached out to other municipalities who are part of it, but there has been no uptake,” said Tillsonburg Mayor Deb Gilvesy.

Tillsonburg also talked to Norfolk County officials, but the conclusion was the same that support was needed from Oxford municipalities.

In the background are complications within Oxford County. The county proposed a north Oxford transit system last fall. Woodstock and Ingersoll launched a court challenge to try to block the decision, maintaining that transit is a lower-tier responsibility and the county

shouldn’t be involved.

Baird said a discussion with county senior management took place in November 2024.

“We proposed a county-wide levy to each lower-tier municipality,” he said of the discussions. “However, with the potential legal battle over transit, Oxford County wasn’t comfortable moving forward. Furthermore, Oxford County alluded to conducting a study of the proposed routes to make sure it’s a right fit transit solution — with a study, we’d come back to the table and hopefully by then their legal battle would be over.”

An application was made by Tillsonburg to a fund to assist with costs of the study.

Outside Tillsonburg, East Zorra-Tavistock and Perth County also made recent decisions to end their rural transit services.

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Council re-examines Tillsonburg town hall site again

JEFF HELSDON

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A possible site for a new town hall was narrowed after Coun. Kelly Spencer brought debate on the subject back to council with a motion she presented at the Jan. 13 meeting.

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Her motion was to reconsider a motion passed on July 8 for the new hall to be located at 10 Harvey Street. Effectively, the previous motion was to tear down the existing customer service centre at 10 Lisgar Street and to build an entirely new building on that site. Spencer's motion also directed staff to investigate the feasibility of a greyfield site owned by the town on the northeast corner of Brock and Harvey Streets, as well as the possibility of a daycare in the building.

Speaking to her rationale for reconsideration and suggesting a different location, Spencer pointed to the former town hall steering committee that disbanded before she was on council, which recommended the Brock-Harvey location with an estimated price of a new building at \$8.2 million in 2022. Following an environmental investigation at that site, a decision was made to locate the town hall at 10 Lisgar Ave. The mayor favoured this location, and council concurred. However, when a report was presented at the July 8 meeting identifying potential issues at the Lisgar location, a teardown of the existing building was suggested with a complete rebuild and a preliminary price tag as high as \$18 million. Council voted to proceed, but was split on the decision.

In the meantime, Spencer said staff are spread between several locations, leading to lower morale.

"I believe we are going to lose more staff if we don't have a light at this tunnel," she said. "This was to be a temporary placement until the 10 Lisgar town hall was built."

Spencer said there have been comments in the community and on Facebook about "cozy offices for council." She noted this is inaccurate, as only staff and the mayor would have an office in the building.

Fast forward to last fall, and council passed a motion the cost of a new town hall shouldn't exceed \$11 million, and 50 per cent of the costs needed to be in the bank through the sale of land. Spencer apologized to staff for the many reports on the topic over the years.

"This is a massive commitment and an important commitment," she said. "The feedback I received from many people is to build for the future, not to build minimum otherwise it will cost taxpayers down the road unnecessarily large amounts. It doesn't need to be big and fancy, but functional."

It was also suggested traffic would be better at the Brock and Harvey Streets location. Spencer based the

suggestion for a daycare on a similar plan that was done in Zorra Township. She said Sonbeam Daycare has 400 families on a waitlist and Tillsonburg Little School has another 350.

Coun. Chris Parker asked for more information on the contamination at the greyfield site. Economic Development Officer Cephas Panschow explained there were a number of bore holes drilled and there was slight contamination in two holes.

"That's something that has to be dealt with as a part of site development, but there is a difference in the world of environmental science between a site where you are going to put residential uses where people are sleeping and staying overnight and an office site," he said.

Coun. Bob Parsons questioned whether the addition of a daycare would delay moving ahead with a town hall and said he could support the amendment. He still wanted staff to look at the feasibility of 10 Lisgar on a scaled-down basis, with offices built in the bay and the building not having a new fire dispatch area.

"We own the land and have vacant space there," he said. "There is room there for offices and a council chamber."

Spencer agreed to the amendment to the motion.

"Just to reiterate, this is a really difficult and important decision," Spencer said. "It's highly politicized. Everyone wants to do the right thing. I know speaking to the other council members, it just didn't fit. There's nothing wrong with exploring the options to make it efficient for staff and reduce the cost for the community."

She asked if there was design work completed for 10 Lisgar to proceed within the existing structure, and was told there was.

Saying this would cost less money, Deputy Mayor Dave Beres asked for assurances that the report would be written so that if Lisgar didn't work, efforts would be switched to the greyfield site.

Mayor Deb Gilvesy said she favoured the building within the existing structure at 10 Lisgar, saying it would be more cost effective.

In the end, council passed a motion to reconsider the original motion from July 8 to tear down the existing structure at 10 Lisgar and build a new building. Spencer's motion was also passed with an amendment to include investigation of a new town hall within the existing structure at 10 Lisgar while also investigating the possibility of a daycare.

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EDITORIAL

Time for some common sense in provincial politics

Walking through Tillsonburg, evidence of the contributions of service clubs is on display in many places. The Lion's Auditorium in the community centre is one of the most visible examples, but walk out the door and the Kiwanis and Optimist baseball diamonds are across the street. There are numerous examples of the assistance the Kinsmen Club provided across the town's recreation facilities, including Kinsmen Participark and the water park.

If these facilities were built today, the contributions of these clubs would likely be absent. This is not because of issues facing the service clubs, but because money from lotteries and bingos – one of the primary income services for non-profit community groups – can't be spent on government-owned property. A change in regulations from the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Commission, which regulates lotteries, made this restriction when revamping the rules more than a decade ago.

This change isn't new, but today, in the face of tightening budgets, the lack of assistance from service clubs is being really hitting home in Tillsonburg. This issue has

been raised several times in recent month by council members. Council asked for a report on how service clubs could assist, which was presented at the last meeting of council. The report didn't suggest solutions, but Deputy Mayor Dave Beres, who is an active member of the Lions Club, and Mayor Deb Gilvesy, said they would like to find solutions.

Beyond the issue in Tillsonburg, it's safe to assume this is an issue across the province. The changes in the lottery rules weren't made under the Ford government, but it's now in their power to fix it. Many provincial politicians, from all parties, are service club members, and were former municipal politicians. They should have seen the folly of this change and fixed it long before now.

It really is a win-win-win to have service clubs assisting with municipal projects. It helps municipalities by providing a revenue stream outside of property taxes and helps the province by allowing precious grant dollars to be stretched further. Fixing this is a no-brainer and there is no better time to apply the necessary pressure than now.



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Nature gives to every time and season some beauties of its own. - Charles Dickens

SUBMIT YOUR LETTER TO THE EDITOR!

info@tillsonburgpost.com

Courageous Airborne medic looks back on years of service



**EVERYONE
HAS A
STORY
TO TELL**

ROBIN KRAFFT

Tillsonburg Post Columnist

Every other Thursday various members of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 153, gather over a morning cup of coffee. Among them, Sgt. Randall Boughner C.D. (retired) listens, laughs, and reflects.

"We keep track of each other, tell stories, catch up," he says.

They enjoy a unique camaraderie based on an understanding of what it means to serve your country.

He didn't have the easiest start, spending his early years in foster care before he was finally adopted in 1974 by a family in Tillsonburg. In 1975, he joined the Legion as an air cadet, and he got his Junior Gliders pilots license at 16. His trajectory changed rapidly.

In 1981, he joined the Canadian Armed Forces, attending boot camp in Cornwallis, NS. He got his first uniform and was trained in everything from shaving, bed making, uniform ironing and assembling a rucksack to weapons

and warfare. He graduated after 11 weeks, standing second out of his class.

Based on an aptitude test, he requested training as a medic and was transferred to Borden where he attended the Canadian Forces Medical Services School for an additional eight months of training. This time he graduated at the top of his class, but he didn't stay there for long. He had his eye on those maroon berets, and he soon went to Petawawa where he joined the Airborne section for field exercises and clinical training which included static jumps (connected to a helicopter), and high altitude jumps (over 10,000 feet).

Boughner learned fieldcraft, how to set up equipment, put up a hospital and conduct rescue missions, including how to belay down a mountain to retrieve an injured person, and how to get someone out of a tank or out of a tree.

"Our role was in support of the infantry jumpers," he explains. "When they'd go out on operations, we would go with them."

After four years with the Airborne regiment in Petawawa, he was sent to a military hospital in Halifax. He worked in the emergency department and surgery wing before going back to Borden to specialize in p-med, becoming a preventative medical technician. His role was to ensure the general health of the troops, quite a challenge when he was in Bosnia where there were hazards everywhere.

In addition to disaster relief and peacekeeping missions around the world, he's been stationed across Canada, from Gagetown, NB to Wainwright, AB. He was there in July of 1993 when a C-130 Hercules crashed during a training exercise, broke into pieces and caught fire, raining shrap-

nel down around them.

"There's a broad spectrum of unexpected hazards, in so many forms, for those who serve," Boughner said soberly. He's been witness to many disturbing scenes and heard the stories of many soldiers while treating their injuries, both at home and abroad.

He's also been witness to the incredible strength of the human spirit. When Canadian Forces renovated a playroom and spent time at the Children's Surgery Hospital in Bosnia, he was amazed by the resilience of the children. Many had suffered life-altering injuries due to warfare and land mines, yet they still laughed and played.

He accumulated 704 jumps and suffered many injuries himself. Loaded down with a main and reserve chute, 49 pounds of medical equipment and a 65-pound rucksack, he was totally focused on the mission at hand. On one of his last jumps, he landed on a buried log with a protruding limb that tore into his body.

"There's so much adrenaline," Boughner said. "I packed up my parachute and waited for roll call without even realizing that I was hurt. They stitched me up at the drop zone shed and wrapped me with gauze."

At the end of his career, he was back at Base Borden at the CFMSS, but this time as an instructor and course director. Eventually, he was medically released from service. Within a week, he was packed and heading home to Tillsonburg, where he enjoys snooker and social events at the Legion, boating, fishing, hunting and trapping.

The Canadian Forces "serve wherever they're called," he said, "it's a way of life, it becomes an attitude, you're always ready to serve, it's not a job."

Tillsonburg celebrating its 200th anniversary this year



**THE
STAGE
IS THE
WORLD**

LAUREL A. BEECHEY

Tillsonburg Post Columnist

As a volunteer historian for the museum, you might appreciate that I am excited about the 200th anniversary of the founding of Tillsonburg.

Last October I could not understand why no information was available about what was going to happen so groups, teams, clubs, organizations, service clubs, theatre, the arts, music groups, stamp and coin groups and business, stores and industries etc. could get on board. It takes time to strategize, find volunteers and execute a good plan, especially with the possibilities of 20 past decades, the present and future.

I have discovered 'the town' is only funding one event, Oct. 18 at the complex. It was described as a company that demonstrates pioneering skills, or 'something like that'. The one event mentioned were logs being chopped to demonstrate

now to build a log cabin.

I learned at the Mayor's Levee on Jan. 6 there is no money from the town for souvenirs. Alas no wooden nickels, pins shirts, hats etc. but that allows great fundraising potential for your group!

After 57 years of shoestring theatre designing, and resurrecting my 49-year-old college course, now called event planning, I thought I would see what ideas I could think of. Out of the six pages of ideas, the most important is the one big special event where the whole town and others could gather to celebrate. I met with members of the Culture Heritage, Museum, Special Events committee in October and December, asking if the BIA would incorporate the 200th into Turtlefest. After all it is about George Tillson too! I learned at the Levee the BIA said yes! It will be awesome, and Turtlefest is June 13& 14.

The rest of the year does not need to be up to any one group or otherwise to plan. Help your own group, sports teams; service, stamp, or coin clubs, choirs or churches etc. fundraise through your event. Maybe a Second World War/1940s big band dance? Perhaps a flower power or wedding gown fashion show? How about Depression lunches?

Or use your yearly fundraiser just wrapped around the 200th/decade theme. For example, the Shriner's barbecue with a pioneer theme with a wild game dinner, or a dance with the '60s or '80s theme. A

gala dinner celebrating any decade, with entertainment. Another idea is open house events where the public can tour your facility, learn what do and how you operate and the group's history as well. All places of worship can together have a picnic in a park and auction off picnic basket lunches!

Business or groups may have an anniversary this year. Tillsonburg Hospital is celebrating its 100th anniversary, and could they incorporate the 200th as well? Maybe set up a display in an empty room or lobby, showing the history of our hospital buildings, with old equipment or even mock surgery. Perhaps, a modest admission by donation allowing everyone access with proceeds going towards a needed equipment?

The curling club, might have an open house with historic display, special bonspiel, or a chance throw a rock or two? Impromptu, for fun, baseball, basketball, hockey, pickleball or other sports, games with the Tillson Pan Dried team against the VanNormans Victors?

Let's not forget the kids: schools, scouting, church groups etc.

Since October, I have come up with six pages of ways people can celebrate, trying to inspire you, to get involved.

Andrea Greenway of the Culture Heritage, Museum, Special Events committee will be the go-to person. She can be reached at 519.688.3009 Ext. 4221 Perhaps they could help coordinate all event infor-

mation and dates, using the town's calendar, which allows you see what else is on that date and book it. While there, sign into the type of events you prefer, and you will automatically get reminders!

Annandale National Historic Site is leading the 200th with Lunch and Learns. A four-part series with catered lunches served at noon and interesting talks on local history following. Admission to tour the museum is included in the ticket price. Single tickets \$37.00 [with taxes] or a series pass \$123.00 [with taxes]. Preregistration is required. You choose can choose from Thursdays or Fridays. Lined up are: "Earliest Tillsonburg"; In The Words of Dr. Cooper: Excerpt From His Essays," Presented by Kathleen Watkin on Feb. 27 and 28; "Nancy Barker Tillson: Tillsonburg's First Lady", presented by Laurel Beechey on March 27 and 28; "Benjamin VanNorman: Co-Founder of Tillsonburg?" presented by Patty Phelps on April 24 and 25; and the series ends on May 22 and 23 with Joan Weston presenting "All roads Lead to Tillsonburg." to register, call the museum at 519.842.2294

I'd like to resurrect the Tillsonburg Pioneers to tell their stories from past; and/or escort tours of downtown and graveyards or in costume as eye candy at various events. Families, or individuals all ages are needed. Anyone who wants to discuss this concept further can contact me at 519.842.9416.

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Mayor, deputy mayor frustrations continue with service club restrictions

JEFF HELSDON

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A report looking at ways the town can work with its service clubs to assist with the cost of big-ticket projects didn't find any way forward, but this doesn't mean the issue is done.

The report was ordered by council after its Economic Development Committee passed a resolution at its Oct. 8 meeting asking the town to investigate the possibility of partnerships with service clubs. Mayor Deb Gilvesy expressed frustration with restrictions on involving service clubs in town projects. There is a long history of service clubs assisting with town projects, with rooms in the Tillsonburg Community Centre displaying the names of the Kinsmen and Lions, baseball diamonds being associated with the Optimist Club, and many other examples.

At the Nov. 18 budget meeting, council asked staff to prepare a report on the issue. That report was presented at the Jan. 13 meeting. The main takeaway was that most service clubs raise most of their funds through lotteries and raffles, and the Alcohol Gaming Commission of Ontario Licensing Policy Manual states funds raised can't be used on municipal

projects.

"Let's work with how we can do this," said Deputy Mayor Dave Beres, who is also a Lions Club member. "We should be talking to the alcohol and gaming people in Ontario and getting it back to where it was where service clubs can do a fundraiser with lottery and give it to the community to help.

He added, "This tells us where we are now, and we want to see where we are in the future."

Mayor Deb Gilvesy agreed, saying the report doesn't find solutions.

"There have to be ways of thinking outside the box," she said.

The mayor said there are also liability issues if a service club takes on a project, but there has to be ways of working through this. She also maintained this could be one way of completing projects more cost-effectively.

Beres said the report identifies other ways service clubs can raise money besides lotteries, but he said lotteries are the big fundraisers. Even the Lions' Monday night bingo is done under the auspices of the Alcohol Gaming Commission of Ontario.

"I would like to take a dive into what other communities are doing. Is everyone just saying no?" he asked. "How are we working around this?"

Gilvesy agreed, saying other op-

tions should be sought.

Beres said they need to get MPP Ernie Hardeman to assist.

"It's not unique to us, it's everywhere," he said. "In the past service clubs have been great supporters, not just here but across the province."

Coun. Bob Parsons pointed out so many facilities the town has are due to the work of service clubs, mentioning the pool and arena.

"It seems to be a double-edged sword in some ways," he said, further explaining that communities with a casino are required to channel money back into the community.

"You're right it doesn't make any sense," Gilvesy agreed.

Tillsonburg CAO Kyle Pratt, who wrote the report, said he understands council's frustrations, but he said one of the things to ascertain is whether the service clubs want to donate to town projects. He said a survey, which the report suggested, would find answers to that question.

Council accepted the report as information, but Beres said he and the town delegation at last weekend's Rural Ontario Municipal Association conference plan on raising the issue with provincial officials and also other elected representatives from other communities.

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www.tillsonburgpost.com**

Robbery in Tillsonburg

Police are investigating a robbery that occurred at a business in the Town of Tillsonburg.

On Jan. 14, at approximately 8 p.m., an unknown individual entered a business on Broadway and stole men's cologne by force.

The value of the product was approximately \$900.

The male suspect is described as a white male, between 18 and 25 years of age, approximately 6 feet tall, 160 lbs with dirty blonde hair, and minimal facial hair. The suspect was wearing a

black jacket, black pants and a red toque.

The male left the parking lot in a white Honda sedan.

No injuries were reported.

The investigation is ongoing, and anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to contact the Oxford OPP at 1-888-310-1122.

Should you wish to remain anonymous, you can call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 or submit an online tip at www.oxfordcrimestoppers.com, where you could be eligible for a cash reward of up to \$2000.

OPP launches fraud portal and website for victims

The Serious Fraud Office (SFO) of the OPP has launched a new victim portal and website. The portal is a secure and user-friendly online platform designed to enhance communication and support for victims impacted by SFO-investigated fraud.

The portal streamlines the SFO efforts in providing accessible, effective and confidential resources for those impacted by fraud. Individuals who are a victim of fraud that is under SFO investigation will be invited by a victim liaison to access the portal.

The SFO recognizes the impact that fraud has on individuals and is committed to ensuring they receive a high standard of support according to the principles of the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights.

To align with their commitment, the portal offers victims a streamlined way to access critical information, communicate directly with victim liaisons, stay

informed about the status of their cases and receive information about their rights and the resources available to them. It also allows for victim liaisons to efficiently communicate important updates about on-going cases to many victims simultaneously.

The portal was developed through a collaborative effort with victim liaisons, fraud investigators, Crown prosecutors and technology experts to ensure that the platform meets the unique needs of those impacted by fraud.

In addition to the portal, general members of the public can view the new SFO website that offers valuable resources about fraud, how to report fraud, victims' rights and the criminal justice system. To access the new informative website visit sfo.opp.ca.

Both the victim portal and the website have been designed to be mobile-friendly, to ensure information can be accessed whenever and wherever needed.

Interim fire chief appointed

Scott Tegler was appointed as interim Tillsonburg fire chief.

Tegler was previously fire chief and community emergency management coordinator with the City of Woodstock.

"Scott brings a wealth of experience and education to the position," said Tillsonburg CAO Kyle Pratt. "He will serve the members, community and council well during this time of transition."

Shane Caskanette, Tillsonburg's former fire chief, submitted his resignation in December and served his last day with the town on Jan. 5.

Recruitment for a new chief will begin in the near future. The process typically takes three to four months.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Fire causes more than \$1 million in damages



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Tillsonburg firefighters used the aerial truck to suppress a fire in a three-unit townhouse on Jacko Street on Jan. 7. Electrical issues are the suspected cause of the fire, which is not considered suspicious in nature.

JEFF HELSDON

Editor

A fire in a still-under-construction three-unit townhouse on Jacko Court caused more than \$1 million in damage, but is not considered suspicious.

Firefighters responded to the fire on Jan. 7 at 7:15 a.m. at 13 Jacko St. Firefighters were on scene for more than five hours, and had assistance from a pumper from Norfolk Fire Department, Courtland.

"Cold temperatures hampered the operations of the firefighters due to ice and slippery conditions," said Geoff Hayman, Tillsonburg fire prevention officer.

Owned by Oxnard Potters Gate Inc., the fire damage was confined to two of the three units in the townhouse, but there was smoke damage in the third.

Hayman understands there were many in the community concerned due

to a string of suspicious fires in Norfolk County, but he said this is not related or suspicious.

"This is not a suspicious fire," he said. "There were no obvious signs of entry."

He explained with arson there would be materials stacked in a corner that were lit on fire or signs of an accelerant poured on the floor. In this case, there were no signs of either.

Wiring of the units was not yet complete but there were two outlets energized. One was being used for a construction heater.

"Something occurred, rather there was damage to the electrical or damage to the electrical cord where it caused the floor to catch fire," Hayman said. "There was really nothing there to catch fire, the floor was clean."

The exact value of the damage is still to be determined, and Hayman said it will be dependent on if "the structure can be repaired or needs to be rebuilt."

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Tillsonburg council defers decision on waiving rental fees

JEFF HELSDON

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Tillsonburg council waived two requests for rental fee waivers from non-profit groups, pending approval of a policy on fee rentals.

Kelly Gilson, executive director of the United Way Oxford, told council members about the upcoming Coldest Night of the Year event and asked for a waiver of the rental fee for the Lion's Auditorium, where the event is held, while speaking at the Jan. 13 meeting.

United Way services impact one in five people in Oxford County. A local board of directors runs the charitable organization.

"We have local people making local decisions using local money the best way we can to invest in social and human services," she said during her presentation. "We are 100 per cent local all the time."

The Coldest Night of the Year, hosted by the United Way, will be held on Feb. 22. Proceeds from the event will fund Tillsonburg Light House, a transitional house in Tillsonburg. Up to seven people can stay at Light House while putting their lives back together. Gilson described it as "a step to move people forward to a better future." People can stay there for up to 362 days.

United Way covers the operational deficit, which is about \$60,000, and staff and program costs.

The program supported 22 people last year, who were able to get the support they needed and move forward with their lives.

"It's been incredibly successful in such a short period of time," Gilson said.

The United Way has also helped people with other transitional housing programs and prevent evictions.

Last year was the inaugural Coldest Night of the Year, which involved 122 walkers on 23 teams and raised \$42,844.

"It was fun, it was really inspirational, it was encouraging and it was a wonderful way to bring workplaces, family and friends together to address an important need in the community," Gilson said.

The event starts and ends at the Lion's Auditorium, where The Mill provides a free meal for the participants and guests. Gilson asked for a waiver of that fee.

Stephen Owen of the Parkinson Society Southwestern Ontario told the council that the group is bringing its spring conference to Tillsonburg on April 4 in the Lion's Auditorium. The group also rents the Marwood Room monthly for \$616. Owen asked for a reduction or waiver of the fees.

"We hope to work together on some sort of solution," he said.

Council voted to accept both presentations as information and the requests be "deferred for consideration upon the approval of a policy for the waiving of rental fees."

Participants wanted for Coldest Night of the Year

Coldest Night of the Year is a national event that involves a series of community fundraising walks to help the homeless.

Locally, the United Way Oxford took up the torch, starting a walk in Tillsonburg last year. Funds from that event helped start Tillsonburg Light House, a seven-bedroom transitional housing facility.

Kelly Gilson, executive director of the United Way, said the group is looking for more teams of fundraisers and volunteers for this year's event on Feb. 22. The event starts around 4 p.m., with the walk commencing at 5 p.m. Participants can choose to walk either two kilometers or five kilometers, and then return to the Lion's Auditorium for a meal.

"It's a wonderful community event," Gilson said. "It's family-friendly. It's just an inspirational evening."

Any group, be it family, neighbours, co-workers, sports teams or service clubs, is encouraged to enter the walk. Once the

team is set up, individual team members go out looking for sponsors. Anyone who raises \$150 or more will receive a Coldest Night of the Year toque, which is a unique design each year.

"The success is the spirit and commitment of team members who want to make a difference in the community where they live and help those in need," Gilson said.

All funds raised to Tillsonburg Light House, which Gilson said was a huge success.

"We believe this type of supported housing can truly make a difference in someone's life," she said.

United Way staff members at the facility work with individuals based on their needs "to lift them up and move them forward."

Those who want to register a team, sign up to volunteer or want to sponsor a team member should go to the web site at cnoy.org.tillsonburg

tillsonburgpost.com

New energy efficiency programs coming to Oxford

JEFF HELSDON

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Ontario government is launching new energy efficiency programs, including the Home Renovation Savings Program, to help families and businesses in Oxford save money. The programs are part of a new \$10.9 billion, 12-year investment in energy efficiency, the largest in Canada's history.

"These new energy efficiency programs that all Oxford residents have access to will lower energy bills, put more megawatts into Ontario's energy grid, and ultimately put more money back into your pockets," said Ernie Hardeman, MPP for Oxford. "While the previous Liberal government skyrocketed energy prices, our government is taking a different approach that puts affordability at the forefront."

The new Home Renovation Savings Program will launch on Jan. 28, 2025, and offer rebates of up to 30 per cent for home energy efficiency renovations and improvements, including new windows, doors, insulation, air sealing, smart thermostats, and heat pumps, as well as rooftop solar panels and battery storage systems for people who want to generate and store energy at home. Later in 2025, the program will expand to

include rebates for energy efficient appliances, including refrigerators and freezers.

The government's Affordable Energy Act, which came into force on Dec. 4, 2024, ensures the new Home Renovation Savings Program, and other program offerings, will be expanded to homeowners who heat their homes by propane and oil, instead of being restricted to those who heat with electricity, as it was under previous governments. The province is also expanding the popular Peak Perks program with a new program specifically targeted to small businesses, including convenience stores and restaurants. Businesses will receive a financial incentive of \$75 upon initial enrollment in the program and \$20 per year for each eligible smart thermostat connected to a central air conditioning system or heat pump unit.

In addition to the two new energy efficiency programs, the province will continue to support 12 Save on Energy programs, including the highly popular Retrofit Program for business, as well as other programs geared to low-income households, businesses, municipalities, institutions, the agricultural sector, industry and on-reserve First Nation communities.

Community centre construction on schedule

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

After leaving the entrance area, patrons can enter updated male, female, or new accessible pool changerooms. These include eight smaller family-friendly changerooms, each with its own door.

"The entire family can come in here – mom, dad, kids – and get changed," Baird said.

Baird acknowledged one of the big questions was why the project had taken so long. "When you are building a new structure on an existing building that was added to in the '70s, '80s, and '90s, you find things you don't expect.

For instance, he pointed to an area adjacent to the existing customer service desk – which will eventually be closed in for offices – and said asbestos was found there before Christmas. Since it was undisturbed, it was safe, he stressed, but it still had to be removed following protocols and took a week.

"Things like that, when you're looking at a plan and drawings, until you open it up and find things, that's not on our plan," he said.

A new elevator by the entrance connects to the second floor. The pool viewing area is on the second floor and is largely unchanged except for adding a new barrier-free viewing area.

A new accessible ramp to the pool has been added. A special wheelchair will provide access. New tiling has been installed on the pool deck.

In the health club the sauna was removed to add 400 square feet to the health club.

Julie Dawley, a familiar face around the pool and community centre and the newly appointed manager of recreation programs and services, explained there are several steps to be completed. Besides cleaning, filling and balancing the pool, there has to be a public health inspection, a new diving board and lifeguard chairs installed, as well as staff training.

"I don't think people realize there's extensive amounts of equipment," she said. "It's been in storage for almost two years so it has to be cleaned up."

Recently completing a video update of the project, Dawley provided a few highlights, including that adult



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

The health club gained about 400 square feet during renovations with removal of the sauna. Although there are some small tweaks to be completed, it is open to the public now.

swims, public swims, and water fitness will be available only for the first couple of weeks. Registration for swimming lessons will start on March 5, with all other programs following the next day. She suggested that if there has been a two-year break in swimming lessons, registration should be at the last level successfully completed.

"We want to thank everyone because we know it's been a long haul," she said.

Saying it's "pretty amazing" for a town the size of Tillsonburg to have a facility like the Tillsonburg Community Centre, Baird said he knows of several people who have Tillsonburg on a short list of where they would like to live and the facility was a factor.

"Council recognized the need to stay current with our recreation facilities," he said. "This has been a perfect project to refresh the pool and bring it up to standard for people looking to call Tillsonburg home."



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

A new accessible ramp to enter the pool is one of the big changes to the actual pool during the upgrades. The ramp will be tiled when it is complete.

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Council briefs

Runway repairs

A request from the town's airport advisory committee to seal cracks in the runway was endorsed by town council.

In a report to council, the committee advised an estimate from last year put the price of sealing the cracks at \$50,000 to \$60,000. By comparison, it would cost more than \$5 million to completely repave the runway.

"I think this is becoming a bit of a safety issue as well," said Mayor Deb Gilvesy.

The suggested motion was to pay for the sealing through the sale of unused land adjacent to the airport. Gilvesy suggested doing the repairs prior to the land sale, which has been in process for six years, and then reimbursing the repair costs when the land sale was complete.

Council passed a motion to refer the request to staff for analysis and a recommendation for funding and timing.

Accessibility an added condition to town façade grants

Adding a power-assist door operator is being added as a condition to the Tillsonburg Community Improvement Program Façade improvement Program.

Council discussed the issue after a recommendation came forward from the Accessibility Advisory Committee to make the amendment and to investigate expanding the eligibility area for the Accessibility Renovation Grant beyond the BIA boundaries.

Coun. Pete Luciani questioned about situations where there might be cases where a power assisted door can't be put in because of building design features. He asked if there should be some sort of clause addressing this.

Mayor Deb Gilvesy said council will have an opportunity to review the applications when a report comes to council and could make an alternate suggestion at that time.

First lot listed in industrial park

Town council members approved listing of the first lot to be sold in the second phase of the VanNorman Innovation Park Phase 2. After consultation with members

of the Economic Development Committee, staff, and a realtor, the price for the first lot was set at \$250,000.

Modhani approved for program

Modhani's location on Spruce Street was approved for the town's Community Improvement Plan Tax Increment Grant Back Program by town council.

The program grants "a rebate of the town portion of property taxes resulting from improvements to lands and buildings that result in an increase in the assessed value of the property." This means property taxes will still be paid on the property, but any increases in property taxes that result from an increase in assessment related to the improvements to the building will be eligible for rebate within the program. Under the program, 100 per cent of the increase in taxes is granted back for the first six years, and then scales back to 20 per cent in the tenth year.

Tax installment dates changed

Deadlines for Tillsonburg property taxes were changed by council at the Jan. 13 meeting.

Traditionally the due dates have been set at the second last Thursday of February, May, August and October. A decision was made to change the due dates to Feb. 28 and the 30th of May, August and October due to residents receiving Canada Pension and Old Age Security not receiving payments until the 26th to 29th of the month.

Town to look at police billing system

Tillsonburg will be looking at changing the way it bills for policing.

A motion by Mayor Deb Gilvesy asked the finance department to complete a report to examine if the way policing is billed can be changed. Currently, the town is billed a per household rate by the OPP for policing, and then this amount is put into operating expenses and taxpayers pay it as pay of their general levy.

"This system unfairly burdens portions of the tax base while providing much lower rates to others for a system that everyone has access to," Gilvesy said. "Policing should be billed equal at a per household rate as it billed by the provider, the OPP."

Beres is new LPRCA chair

JEFF HELSDON

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Tillsonburg Deputy Mayor Dave Beres is the new chair of the Long Point Region Conservation Authority board.

Beres, who has been the Tillsonburg representative on the board the past 15 years, was selected as the chair at the Jan. 8 meeting. He was previously the vice-chair. Norfolk councillor Doug Brunton replaces him as the new vice-chair. The local authority covers the Long Point watershed and has representatives on the board from Norfolk County, Brant County, Township of Norwich, Town of Tillsonburg, Township of South-West Oxford, Municipality of Bayham and Haldimand County.

"I don't see any major changes, things

are running quite well," Beres said of his ambitions for the coming year with the authority.

The conservation authority board also passed a \$6.9 million budget at its Jan. 8 meeting. Of this, \$2.5 million is from a municipal levy and the other 64 per cent is self-generated revenue from the sale of lumber, parks and fees. The municipal levy increased by three per cent, or the cost of living.

"With all the environmental concerns going on today, we want to ensure we have a healthy watershed with climate change," Beres said. "We also want to encourage cottage life along the lakeshore."

Beres also sits on the board of Conservation Ontario, the body with representation from all conservation authorities in the province.

MP fields questions, hears issues during skate

JEFF HELSDON

Editor

Oxford Member of Parliament Arpan Khanna answered questions about the current state of federal politics and listened to the issues facing the residents of Tillsonburg during a free community skate he hosted on Jan. 12.

One of several community skates, Khanna said the purpose was to put politics aside and get to know people. Admitting he isn't the best skater, Khanna said he strapped on his blades and got back on the ice 20 years later.

One of the questions Khanna heard a lot was confusion surrounding what a pro-rogued government means.

"With the tariffs, they felt the government should be working," he said.

Expanding on this point, he said the Liberals will pick a new leader on March 9, and said if an election follows that month depends if NDP leader Jagmeet Singh stays true to his word in supporting a non-confidence motion.

Parliament is scheduled to resume on March 24. The Liberals have a choice if they have a throne speech or go right to the budget. A supply agreement must be passed by March 31 or the government will run out of money, but Khanna said if the House of Commons dissolves due to an election there are special measures that could be put in place to provide the government with money.

"This shouldn't be a situation where the government has no money," he said.

Another issue raised by those attending the skate was affordability, and he said there was an appreciation of the skates because it gives people a chance to go out and do something with their kids at no cost. The other issue he heard about was homelessness, combined with drugs and addictions.

"Some of the folks said there was an increase in drug use they haven't seen before," Khanna said.

Khanna also has a pop-up clinic the second Tuesday of every month at the Livingston Centre in Tillsonburg.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

MP Arpan Khanna and his son Arvin hold the door open for skaters at a community skate held in Tillsonburg recently. The free skate is one in a series the MP is hosting across the county.

Pastor Paul Robinson retires from St. Andrew's

JEFF HELSDON

Editor

Pastor Paul Robinson is retiring – again, or sort of.

The well-known minister, who was last at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, preached his last sermon on Dec. 29. He will continue doing pastoral care for the church, as well as being Legion padre and hospital chaplain.

His career has been taken him from being the chaplain of the Canadian War Museum and Governor General's Foot Guards to being a local minister in two provinces, and travelling to provide pastoral care in Serbia and Uganda, and to those working at Ground Zero following 9/11.

Born in Cheshire, England, Robinson came to Canada in 1957 with his family at the age of nine. Following in the steps of his father who was in the military during the Second World War, Robinson entered the Royal Military College in Kingston, graduating with an honours degree in English. His first posting was as pay officer in Edmonton.

After serving 15 years in the military, ultimately as a public affairs officer, Robinson came to the ministry in a roundabout way, working first for World Vision before being called into pastoral ministry as assistant pastor at Capital View Community Church.

Two years later, in 1985, he moved to Montreal to pastor the Fairview Alliance Church.

"The French I learned in the military came in handy," Robinson said.

Five years later, he found himself back in the capital, having accepted the call to pastor Redeemer Alliance in Orleans (Ottawa).

While pastoring in Ottawa, Robinson reconnected with the military and was trained as a reserve force chaplain. Once qualified, Robinson was appointed

chaplain to the Governor General's Foot Guards based at the Cartier Square Drill Hall. This historic building is home to the Guards and to the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa. 30 Field Artillery, known as "The Bytown Gunners" also make their home in the capital.

While pastoring and serving with the Guards, Robinson was named honorary chaplain to the Canadian War Museum, and led services on their behalf for the 50th anniversary of D-Day, VE Day and VJ Day.

In 1994, the Robinsons made the move to Tillsonburg.

"Tillsonburg Alliance was looking for a pastor," he recounted. "I came and met with them and accepted the call to come here."

Their time at the church was one of growth as the church nearly tripled in size and went to two morning services.

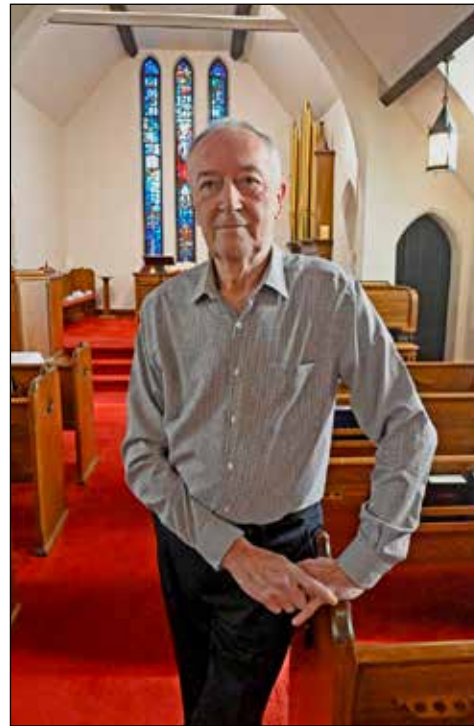
But 11 years into that ministry, tragedy struck when his daughter Heather died from a rare strep infection which took her life in 12 hours. The baby she was about to give birth to also died.

Robinson said it was a special grace from God that enabled him to conduct Heather and Emily's funeral.

"But," he added, "getting back in the pulpit, I was in worse shape than I thought." Shortly after, he had to pull back, and resigned from the church.

After stepping out of the pulpit, Paul accepted a position for a year as National Director for Micah Challenge Canada, an organization that helps cut poverty and promotes education for women in Third World countries.

In 2007, Robinson returned to the pulpit and moved to Messiah's Corners (outside Port Rowan), to pastor the Port Rowan Mennonite Brethren Church. He stayed there until he was 65 when he retired for the first time and moved back to Tillsonburg.



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Pastor Paul Robinson preached his last sermon at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church on Dec. 29. Although he retired, he will still be providing pastoral care for the church and is the Legion padre and hospital chaplain.

Retirement didn't last though, as he accepted a half-time position at St. Andrew's for a six-month contract.

"My six-month contract became six-and-a-half years," he laughed. "That's when I said it was time to retire again."

He partially retired from this in 2019, sharing duties with another minister, but was back two years later in a half-time role once again.

Still on another six-month contract in 2024 along with another half-time minister, things were lined up for Robinson to retire at the end of September. But the plans fell apart and so he stayed on until a replacement was found for the start of 2025.

"I'm still not really retired," he reflected. "I'm still looking after pastoral care for the church and am happy to do so. Besides, people think pastors don't really retire."

Asked about ministering in different denominations, Robinson answered, "I've often compared the denominations to the different regiments in the army," further explaining that like the regiments with their various traditions, they are fighting for the same cause – and the same Commander.

During his years serving the church, ministry afforded Robinson opportunities outside the pulpit. In 1998 he traveled to Serbia, Hungary and Russia, visiting and encouraging missionaries there. In 2006 he visited refugee camps in Uganda. And shortly after 9/11, he found himself coming alongside rescue workers inside "The Red Zone" in New York as fires still burned. More recently, he was also part of the Legion's Pilgrimage of Remembrance to Normandy in July 2023.

Robinson has been the Legion Branch 153 padre for over 25 years and is continuing in that capacity. He is also the zone padre.

"I feel privileged to work with my comrades there," he said. "We have an amazing Legion here, very active."

Robinson is presently the only chaplain at Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital. He explained there used to be a team providing pastoral care, something he wants to re-establish.

Asked how he keeps going, Robinson answered, "My passion is proclaiming the Good News. My joy is seeing people transformed as they come to know Jesus."

He credits that he couldn't have made the journey without the support of Carol, his wife of 54 years who has been by his side throughout. She is presently the music director at St. Andrew's.

"We've been a good team," Robinson said with a smile.

Tillsonburg POST

Pick Up Locations

TILLSONBURG

Annadale Historic Site
Apple Convenience
Around the Corner Variety
Canadian Tire
Chrissy's Corner Store
Circle K
Cool Convenience
Corner Convenience
Coward PharmaChoice
Coyle's Country Store
Esso
Goodwill Community Store

Home Hardware Bldg

Centre
Korner Perk
Maple View Variety
Nectar Coffee & Bar
Oxford Mini martes
PetroCanada
Pharmasave
Pioneer Gas & Convenience
Queen's Cafe
R&P Convenience
Royal Canadian Legion
Salvation Army Thrift Store

Shoppers Drug Mart

Sobeys
Station Arts Centre
The Country Table
Tillsonburg BIA
Tillsonburg Community Centre
Tillsonburg Library
Tillsonburg Hospital
Tillsonburg Senior Centre
Tim Hortons locations
Walmart
Wiltshire Realty
Zehrs

COURTLAND

Courtland Variety & Cafe
Courtland Bakery Ltd.
MT. ELGIN
Esso
LANGTON
Langton Community Centre
Langton Pharmacy
DELHI
Home Building Centre
Pharmasave
Tim Hortons
Wilkinson's YIG
NORWICH

Shoppers Drug Mart

Circle K
Village Restaurant
Norwich Deli & Bakery
Shell
Home Hardware Building Centre
Norwich Arena
Norwich Feeds Country Store
Rivansh Gas & Variety
Tim Hortons
Foodland
Royal LePage R.E. Wood Realty

Potential measles exposure at Tillsonburg hospital

Public health is alerting the community of potential exposures to measles

Southwestern Public Health is investigating a situation at Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital that carries the risk of exposure to the measles virus.

The potential measles exposure happened on Jan. 14 between 7:30 p.m. and 10 p.m. in the emergency department of Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital. If you were present at this location during this timeframe, and are not up-to-date with your vaccinations, please call public health at 1-800-922-0096.

Other actions to take if you were present at this location during these times:

1. Check your immunization history or contact your health care provider to confirm if you and your family members are up-to-date with your measles vaccinations (MMR or MMRV). Two doses are generally recommended for anyone born in or after 1970. In general, those born before 1970 are considered protected against measles.
2. Watch for symptoms of measles for up to 21 days after exposure – even if

you are up-to-date with your measles vaccinations.

3. Those who were present with an infant under 12 months of age, are pregnant, or are immunocompromised, are advised to immediately call public health at 1-800-922-0096 as you may be eligible for preventive treatment.
4. Call ahead to all health care settings if you have been exposed to, are a contact of, or have symptoms consistent with measles. This ensures that the health care settings can prepare for your arrival to prevent further exposures.

“We are working quite closely with the health care setting to inform all known contacts. I want to stress that there was no gap in infection control processes identified,” said Dr. Joyce Lock, Acting Medical Officer of Health. “This message is really intended for people who were at this location that we cannot reach, such as people who visited even briefly during this timeframe. It is our responsibility to inform anyone as quickly as possible if they have been exposed to this virus.”

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Over 100 guests 'unwrap' shared Christmas dinner at NUC

JEFF TRIBE

Post Correspondant

One-hundred-and-twenty-five people collectively unwrapped the shared community celebration contained within this year's 17th Annual Norwich United Church (NUC) Christmas Dinner.

Some were church members, some came from the broader community, some from beyond, a truly diverse group says NUC's Karen McSpadden.

"We get a real cross-section of people - and they all sit down together."

She, along with husband Dan Cohoe, head up an effort supported by 'an amazing group of wonderful volunteers' numbering in the 25-range. Some head off to family Christmas events afterwards, others alternate between NUC and hosting their own meals, and there are also those like the Cohoe-McSpaddens, who have committed to making this an annual family tradition.

The concept was pioneered by Gary and Shirley Debus and Nancy and Larry Anderson.

"I think they were just chatting and thought it would be a cool thing to do," credited McSpadden, who came onboard shortly after it began. In the earlier years, the event drew between 40 and 60 guests sharing a traditional meal together in the NUC lower hall. COVID necessitated a socially-distanced take-away approach, happily returned to its collective origins post-pandemic.

Last year, a bulk mailing to the Norwich and Burgessville postal areas combining an in-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

From left, this year's 25-member Norwich United Church Christmas Dinner volunteer preparation team included Karen McSpadden, Dan Cohoe, Cheryl Slater, Neil Dolson, Carl Booker, Ross Pollock and Gail Dolson.

invitation to the church's Christmas dinner/Christmas Eve service and seasonal concert resulted in an attendance of 125 on Christmas day. Those record numbers were roughly equalled in 2024 with 120 sit-down diners and 15 deliveries.

"The word is out," said McSpadden.

There is a sense of chaotic purpose as final preparations come together Christmas morning, an inherent challenge in getting that much food in order in a timely fashion, not to mention what seems to be an annual additional uninvited challenge. It can be inclement weather, there was the time the boiler required to heat the building malfunctioned, or this year's electrical spark in a warming

tray. Fortunately, it turned out to be merely a flash in the pan rather than the portent of more serious issues.

"Every year there always seems to be something," McSpadden laughed. "But it has never put us down."

The shifting cast of volunteers included teenagers looking to lock up volunteer hours shovelling snow or helping set up tables, long-time regulars like potato-peeling prep experts Bob and Marie Lester, Ross Pollock, who has literally taken over the heavy lifting of massive cooking pots, or John Palmer on deliveries.

"There is a real sense of camaraderie in the people helping," said McSpadden.

The menu is consistent, turkey (two of five donated by Corwic Farms), a donated ham, mashed potatoes (100 pounds courtesy of Son-In-Law Produce outside of Otterville), stuffing on the side, gravy, Dan's special orange, butter and parsley rough-cut carrot recipe, squash, and a selection of sweet treats ranging through pies, tarts, Christmas baking and Deborah Dufton's trifle.

"There's always an amazing dessert table," said McSpadden.

Guests begin arriving at noon and people keep coming in until around 2 p.m., many tarrying for the duration, comfortably sharing Christmas day time and space.

"We try and make it an easy place to sit down for a meal and chat," said McSpadden. "It's just a really lovely community spirit."

There is no charge for the dinner she emphasizes, however some are moved to leave monetary donations beyond the food and volunteer hours already contributed.

"I think people believe we are trying to reach out to our community," McSpadden theorized.

Admittedly, there is a collective sigh of relief at its conclusion, well-fed guests departing, some carrying leftovers.

"When it's all over and once again, everything has worked out," summed up McSpadden of the quiet sense of satisfaction descending on the year that was, the value contained within, which make thoughts of another year both palatable and even manageable.

"We are inspired to keep this Christmas tradition alive at NUC for as long as possible," McSpadden concluded.

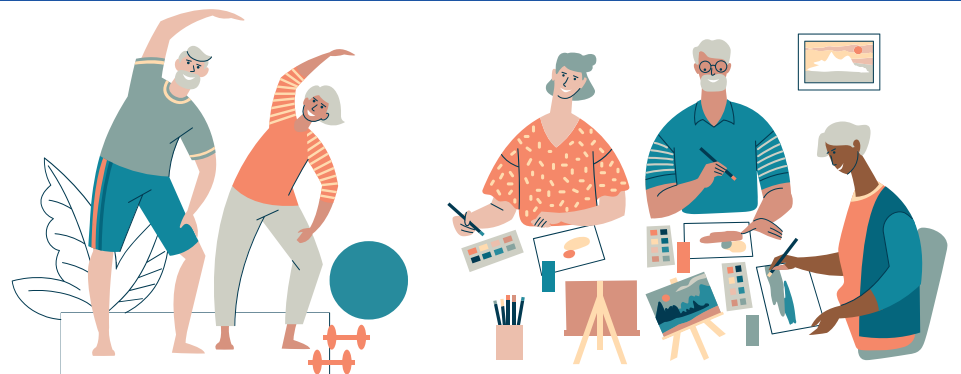
Weekend Quiz

by Jake & Stewart Grant

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) What U.S. state begins with a U? | 6) What city was formerly known as Constantinople? |
| 2) What was the original business of Netflix? | 7) What is the name of the tallest grass on earth? |
| 3) How many pieces does each player 4) have in backgammon? | 8) Who is the governor of California? |
| 4) What actress played the role of Stifler's Mom in the movie American Pie? | 9) What is the birthstone for January? |
| 5) What is the only fruit that bears its seeds on the outside? | 10) In Shakespeare's Hamlet, what is "the soul of wit". |

This week's answers are found on pg. 31

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Glendale art students exhibit at Station Arts Centre

JEFF HELSDON

Editor

Glendale High School's art students had their first chance for their work to be part of an exhibit during a recent show at the Station Arts Centre.

The 28 students in the Grade 11/12 university/college prep art course were busy on Jan. 9 and 10 hanging their work in preparation for the opening on Jan. 13 for the show titled Visions of the Adolescent Mind. The show ran until Jan. 17.

Michelle Dench, art department head, said it's the first time any of the students have had their art exhibited outside of the school.

"We used to (exhibit at the Station Arts Centre) back when Mr. Rabb was art department head," she said. "It's the first time since COVID."

Dench explained it's part of the curriculum for students to learn how to present art to audiences, and the exhibit came with an opportunity on curating and hanging art from the Station Arts Centre staff. She said this is a good skill for the students if they wanted to work in a gallery. Grade 12 students were allowed to choose a theme and then were to create art in the medium of their choice. The Grade 11 students were more prescribed in what they created – for instance all would work in watercolours – but could create their own theme.

Leela LaTulippe, a Grade 12 student, had several



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Nathan Wilkinson and Kendall Young, left, hang a painting as part of the Glendale High School art exhibit at the Station Arts Centre.

pieces that were part of the exhibit and was excited to be part of it. The pieces were a pastel drawing, a mixed media piece and a pencil drawing.

"I do a lot of art in my free time," LaTulippe said. "Art class allowed me to step out of my comfort zone and learn other techniques except drawing."

LaTulippe's hope is art will make her money in the future. She intends to sell art online and move towards an in-person business.

Gracie Heeren, a Grade 11 student, had four pieces on

display, and when asked the exciting part of the exhibit, answered, "Just displaying my art publicly and getting people outside the school to see it."

Grade 11 student Kendall Young had an oil pastel that was part of the exhibit.

"I can finally get to display my art, and not just in front of my classmates and family," Young said.

The next exhibit at the Station Arts Centre, which will feature Sue Goossens and Cathy Groulx, opens Feb. 14.

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BIA introduces movement guide

JEFF HELSDON

Editor

If you made a New Year's resolution to become more active and aren't sure where to go, the BIA introduced The Movement Guide to show people options for fitness solutions within the core area.

The online directory, available at <https://www.downtowntillsonburg.com/community-blog>, provides a listing of fitness locations in the downtown core. This is a new initiative for the Downtown Tillsonburg BIA. Naomi Dube, digital marketing and activations coordinator for the BIA, came up with the idea to tie into New Year's resolutions about fitness.

"The main thought process behind the guide is to act as a go-to resource for newcomers to Tillsonburg and give them a quick overview of the diversity of classes, programs, and fitness solutions offered right here in the core," she said. "We focused on independently-owned businesses to give that small town feel and personable customer service that comes along with locally owned businesses."



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Downtown Tillsonburg BIA staff are also busy looking for sponsors for Turtlefest. For more information, contact Vanessa Fortner at v.fortner@tillsonburgbia.ca

We want to hear from our community!
info@tillsonburgpost.com

The Legion is a year-round community hub

JEFF HELSDON

Editor

Every year, in the days leading up to Remembrance Day, the public's eyes are on the Legion. Its members lead the parade on Remembrance Day and sit in booths selling poppies throughout the community. But there is much more to the Legion, as it's a hub of activity year-round.

While some branches of the Royal Canadian Legion struggle as veterans age, Tillsonburg Branch 153 is still healthy.

"We're very fortunate here we have a lot of community support," said president Dianne Hodges.

In turn, the Legion gives back to the community. Young soccer, hockey, ringette, and baseball players sport the Legion name on their jerseys. The Legion also supports youth through its literary poster and public speaking competitions. Competitors who do well locally can advance to the Legion zone, provincial, and national levels.

The Legion hall is available for rentals for weddings, funerals and other events. Several community groups regularly use the facility. There are monthly Friday night dinners and lunches on weekdays. The Tillsonburg Military History Club holds its meetings in the branch. Dances and musical events take place throughout the year. And the bar is open to the public.



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

The Legion's snooker league is one of many leagues that are open to both members and non-members during the winter. Branch 153 hosts a wide variety of activities for the community, as well as providing a veteran's coffee hour and sponsoring the Royal Canadian Air Cadets squadron.

"Years ago, it was members only, but now it's open to the public," Hodges said.

Snooker, darts, shuffleboard, and euchre leagues are held from fall to March for members and non-members. Tuesday afternoon darts are held year-round.

During the summer, the Legion hosts Friday night bike nights, a gathering for motorcycle enthusiasts. Hodges pointed to the recently resurfaced parking lot as a beneficiary of community support. The parking lot needed repaving, and instead

of having to use Legion coffers, local businesses came together to pay for repaving and landscaping. Hodges said this was a huge assistance to the branch.

The Legion is still there to support veterans. Every other Thursday the branch hosts coffee hour for veterans.

"It's veterans only, and they gather together to talk amongst themselves," Hodges said. "They talk about their service."

This activity started in 2023 with five members attending, averaging 25 to 30. Hodges said the challenge was getting word out about the gathering. Veterans attend from conflicts spanning more than five decades, including the Second World War, Afghanistan, Cyprus, Bosnia, Kosovo, Croatia, Korea and Vietnam.

Branch 153 also sponsors the Royal Canadian Air Cadets, which operate out of the hall on Thursday evenings. Money from the branch's Nevada draw is devoted to the air cadets. The program is free for youth ages 14 to 19.

The Legion Ladies' Auxiliary, an arm's length part of the Legion, operates from the branch. Their members often provide meals and raise funds to help with upgrades in the branch.

Although Branch 153 is healthy, Hodges said they always need more assistance, and so too does the auxiliary. Those interested can join at the branch or online at legion.ca



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

QUARTER LINE ROAD CONSTRUCTION NEARING COMPLETION
Repairs to a retaining wall on Quarter Line Road between Concession and North Streets are expected to be complete on Jan. 31. Temporary paving will be installed for the road to re-open, and then complete repaving and road restoration will take place in the spring. The project was set back due to some buried concrete that was found.

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Tillsonburg Gemini boys hockey program building toward official, unofficial goals

JEFF TRIBE

Post Correspondent

Officially, the Tillsonburg Gemini boys' hockey program's goal is to get to the playoffs.

"But I'm not going to lie that winning a bunch of games and being undefeated isn't a goal too," admitted coach Derek Partlo with a laugh following a home ice 3-1 TVRA South East victory over the visiting Ingersoll DCI Blue Bombers Thursday, Jan. 9.

The Gemini have been closer to that unofficial goal than the official one many years, a strong community minor hockey program and consistency behind the bench contributing factors.

"We have a decent program and are usually retooling, not rebuilding every year," said Partlo.

Ongoing success can in effect, put a target on a team's back, bringing out the best in opponents.

"But it makes you better too, knowing everyone gets up to play against you."

The Ingersoll DCI Blue Bombers brought their A game to the Tillsonburg's Memorial Arena in a fast-paced, structured and well-disciplined outing. It featured the odd heavy hit, timely saves by both goalies at either



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

Tillsonburg Gemini goalie Jack Bruder takes a swat at the puck along with Ingersoll DCI's Jeremy Stiles (left) as Tillsonburg defender Owen Ardy looks on.

end of the ice, just three minor penalties and very little extra-curricular activity.

"They're a good program as well, similar to us," credited Partlo. "They play the right way and their coach does a good job of keeping them under control.

"A good hockey game."

Tillsonburg's Adam Cvitkovic opened scoring with 4:14

remaining in the first period, surgically inserting a wrist shot high to the stick side from the right point. Owen Ardy and Liam Nunn picked up assists, doing the spadework behind the IDCI net to gain control of the puck and feed their teammate.

Logan Almeida upped the lead to two at the 10:52 mark of the second (15-minute) period, set

up beautifully with an open side of the goal following a cross-crease pass from the right wing. Cale Arvai and Johnny Lamers drew assists.

Ingersoll's W. Parsons countered from N. Muller with 10:21 remaining in the third period, setting up a tight final stretch. The Gemini would outshoot IDCI roughly two to one on the

game (unofficially 43-22) and felt Partlo, controlled a majority of the play.

"But it was a 2-1 hockey game in the last ten minutes."

Tillsonburg's Rilan Swain relieved some of the tension with 2:06 remaining, unassisted on a rush down the left wing.

"In the third, they took it to us off the hop," credited Swain, who fired the puck between a defender's legs, finding the net 'high blocker' side. "Our goalie made some saves and we found a way to get one at the end."

Swain is a native of Perry's Cove, Newfoundland, 'population 50', living and attending school in Tillsonburg while playing on the North American Prep Hockey League's Oxford Warlords Hockey Academy squad. Swain, whose goals include improving as a hockey player and gaining exposure toward advancing in the game, has upcoming tournaments in Montreal and New York. He is on the ice three times a week with the Warlords and in the gym twice. Swain is the league leader in points (14) and assists (9) and stands second in points per game at 2.80.

"Got the win," he summed up of the outing against Ingersoll DCI. "But it was a bit closer than we imagined."

CONTINUED TO PAGE 17

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Gemini boys' hockey team defeats Ingersoll in tight game

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

Gemini forward Rilan Swain (right) takes a swipe at the puck as Ingersoll DCI's J. Stewart heads up-ice, in front of the Blue Bombers bench.

There was more than two points on the line for a number of Gemini and Blue Bombers who play minor hockey together with the amalgamated South Oxford Storm, which draws players from both Tillsonburg and Ingersoll. Sitting second in Shamrock League standings as of Jan. 9, they would be back to being teammates that Sunday evening in St. Thomas.

"It's competitive (on the ice during high school games)," said Nunn, one of a mixed group of players from opposing teams amicably comparing notes and chirping just a little following the TVRA South East contest. "End of the

day, it's friends of ours."

"Exactly what it should be," said Partlo. "Play hard on the ice and when it's over, go back to being good buddies."

The win pushed Tillsonburg's record to 5-0, subsequently upped to a perfect 7-0 with wins over Aylmer East Elgin (6-1) and Woodstock St. Mary's CHS (5-1). The regular Gemini season concludes with back-to-back games Feb. 6 and 7.

"Our goal is to make it to our league final and have a chance at WOSSAA," Partlo concluded.

TVRA South East Girls Hockey



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

Tillsonburg Gemini Quinn Lessif (centre) drives to the net against Ingersoll DCI goalie J. Pinnard and Bombers defender U. Jewkes.

Monday, Jan. 13

St. Thomas St. Joe's 5, Tillsonburg Gemini 0

Wednesday, Jan. 8

Aylmer East Elgin 7, Gemini 2

Senior Girls Volleyball

Tuesday, Jan. 14

Gemini 25, 25, 25; Lord Dorchester 13, 23, 19

Tuesday, Jan. 7

Gemini 25, 25, 25; St. Thomas Arthur Voaden 8, 19, 7

Junior Girls Volleyball

Thursday, Jan. 9

Gemini 20, 25, 25, 17, 17; Ingersoll DCI 25, 22, 22, 25, 15

Senior Boys Basketball

Tuesday, Jan. 14

Lord Dorchester 63, Gemini 43

Thursday, Jan. 9

Ingersoll DCI 60, Gemini 47

Junior Boys Basketball

Tuesday, Jan. 14

Gemini 30, Lord Dorchester 10

Thursday, Jan. 9

Gemini 49, Ingersoll DCI 29



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

CURLING BONSPIEL

The winners of the Dale Fanset Memorial Bonspiel were team Armstrong from Ingersoll who are shown above proudly displaying the plaque that will bear their names. They went undefeated coming out on top of the 14-team field. As well as getting their names on the hardware, they went home with the keeper trophies they are holding along with the bragging rights. This year Blue West Equipment Inc. partnered with the Tillsonburg Curling Club as the premier sponsor. Pictured above are from left to right: vice - Darryl Nodwell; Blue West Equipment G.M. Wayne Vansenant; skip - Bob Armstrong; second - Jacques Van Bilsen; and lead - Bob McKinley. The bonspiel was held at the Tillsonburg Curling Club on Saturday, Jan 11.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Team Swatridge from Ingersoll were the winners of the second draw but were outpointed by team Armstrong from the first draw for the overall bragging rights in the 4th Annual Dale Fanset Memorial Bonspiel. Team Swatridge, a previous overall winner, is shown holding the hardware. They are from left to right: lead - Steve Powell; second - Ian Roberts; vice - Jeff Milner; skip - Dave Swatridge and sponsor rep from Blue West Equipment, G.M Wayne Vansenant. The bonspiel had curlers from all over the area vying for the overall spot.

CLUB OXFORD HOCKEY

Tillsonburg Glass' 19-game winning streak ends

JEFF GWYN

Post Contributor

Jan. 5

Fody's 2, Agrospray 2

Fody's fought hard to earn the point. They couldn't get their explosive offence going against a solid Agrospray team, but buckled down to keep Agro at bay. Agrospray looked to be in control as they matched Fody's strength all night. A tough break at the end, but a deserved point.

Blake Ash and Mike Mudford had goals for Fody's. Brady VanYmeren had two goals for Agrospray.

Distinct 4, ReMax 2

Distinct was able to get some scoring from different areas in this one. A good effort in the second to make sure ReMax didn't gain any momentum. ReMax had a solid first, but couldn't get things going in the second. Maybe a step tired after the holidays?

Craig Smith and Mike VanWyk had two points each for Distinct. Brady Sutherland and Johnathan Bouck had goals for ReMax.

Carquest 3, Airmount 0

Carquest played hard offensively in the first and made sure to play tight defence in the second. A good all-around game. Airmount had some chances on rushes, but couldn't get a rebound or a bounce. They had a near full team and didn't let the game get away from them.

Darrick French had two goals and Evan Prouse had two assists for Carquest.

B-Line 3, RND 0

B-Line was able to get a lead before the extra curriculums happened. They held on as RND stepped up the pressure late in the game. RND couldn't get much going until late. They couldn't cash in on a long powerplay and that may have changed the momentum.

Brent Beekman had two points for B-Line.

Precision 5, Source 1

Precision found some scoring, led by Justin French's hat trick. They kept Source away from the front of the net and didn't give up many second chances. Source had a bunch of breaks in this one, but couldn't beat the Precision back check or strong goaltending.

Justin French had a hat trick for Precision. Chris Sebok had a goal for Source.

Glass 2, Royal LePage 0

Glass broke through late and navigated

some penalties to remain undefeated. A strong game to keep Royal LePage from getting on the board. Royal LePage looked to be at least earning a tie, but a bad minute or so, changed things late. A very tough and evenly matched game.

Brendan Soares and Stephen Schafer had the goals for Glass.

Jan. 8

Agrospray 2, ReMax 2

Agrospray started off well and had some great chances on breakouts. They were able to fight for the point as they pressured late in the game. ReMax looked to swing momentum in the second, but couldn't hold off Agro at the end. A good effort with some very good chances in close in this one.

Dan King and Brady VanYmeren had goals for Agrospray. Benson Howey and Brady Sutherland had goals for ReMax.

Distinct 5, Fody's 2

Distinct was able to control things offensively in the second and put three on the board. They were able to check Fody's close all game and took them off their game. Fody's had some speed in the first and looked to be matching up nicely. They got a bit away from their normal game and it kept them from getting much going in the second.

Andrew VanWyk had three points for Distinct. Marty Friedrich and Chris Sanders had goals for Fody's.

Precision 3, Carquest 3

Precision was able to use their special teams to get a couple goals tonight. They were able to keep Carquest from gaining momentum and were able to secure another tie on the season. Carquest was able to get some net front presence and pressure in this one. They were able to tie it up three times to give Precision a run for most ties this season.

Justin French and Devon MacDonald had goals for Precision. Brad Smale and Brett Ronson had two points each for Carquest.

Jan. 12

Fody's 3, ReMax 2

Fody's played well in both ends in this one. They had some chances, but also didn't have the pressure they usually have. They played strong at the end to earn the win. ReMax matched Fody's most of the night. They had trouble getting their rushes going, but also held off Fody's offence for most of the game.

Shane Balcomb had two points for Fody's. Brady Sutherland and Robb Shedden had

goals for ReMax.

Distinct 5, Agrospray 1

Distinct has been rolling as of late. They are adapting lines to get the most out of the team and it's showing how dangerous they are. Agrospray didn't have a lot going and when they did, they ran into a solid netminder. The hard work is there, they just need a bounce.

Quinn VanBoekel had a hat trick for Distinct. Brandon Lawler had the goal for Agrospray.

Precision 2, Royal LePage 1

Precision played a tough game and kept going until the end. They didn't give up much defensively and had some solid chances in the Royal LePage zone. Royal LePage had trouble sustaining pressure offensively and were just missing shots in close. No rebounds or bounces made the chances hard to come by.

Jason Koteles and Justin French had goals for Precision. Chris Koteles had the goal for Royal LePage.

RND 4, Carquest 2

RND bounced back offensively and were able to defeat a tough team. They had good rushes that led them to some great chances all night. Carquest had their chances, but couldn't cash in. They had trouble in front and couldn't get those rebounds tonight.

Caleb Waycott had two goals for RND. Adam Matthews and Ryan Crandall had goals for Carquest.

Airmount 2, Glass 0

Airmount dethroned the undefeated Glass team. They played a very solid game and defensively didn't give up much in their own zone. A solid team effort. Glass lost their 19-game undefeated streak. It wasn't for a lack of trying, but they couldn't get things to go their way, even with a late 5-on-3. Congrats on the streak boys.

JJ Harden had two goals for Airmount.

Source 8, B-Line 3

Source was able to get their scoring spread out and had every line going. They had a ton of shots and a few posts in this rout. B-Line just couldn't stop the Source pressure for very long. They had a few chances themselves, but couldn't get any momentum.

Mike Hedberg had four points for Source. Chris Wilson had 2 points for B-Line.

Jan. 15

Glass 2, Precision 1

Glass got back in the win column with a hard-fought victory. They had some chances, but ran into a hot glove in the Precision net. Precision looked to get the tie late, but couldn't hold the zone. Another fine defensive effort to keep Glass in check.

Jorden Roesch and Jordan Hales had goals for Glass. Devon MacDonald had the goal for Precision.

B-Line 6, Airmount 4

B-Line found some offence in this one. They picked it up in the second and were able to keep their momentum for the rest of the game, scoring four unanswered. Airmount used their speed to control the first half of the game. They got a bit off their game after a penalty in the second and couldn't bounce back.

Jake Steenson and Adam Gignac had three points each for B-Line. Zach Alton and Tyson Simpson had two points each for Airmount.

Royal LePage 1, RND 1

A tight-checking game. Royal LePage were able to grind away to get their goal and then had to focus on defense to keep RND at bay, which they did. RND had some rushes and thought they had scored on one at the goal line. They didn't let that throw them off and were able to cash in for the tie.

Chris Koteles had the goal for Royal LePage. Kyle Underhill had the goal for RND.

CLUB OXFORD A DIVISION	GP	W	L	T	PTS
FODY'S AUTOMOTIVE	20	10	6	4	24
DISTINCT EXTERIORS	20	10	7	3	23
REMAX REALTY	20	8	10	2	18
AGROSPRAY	20	5	10	5	15

CLUB OXFORD B DIVISION	GP	W	L	T	PTS
TILLSONBURG GLASS	21	18	1	2	38
RND CONSTRUCTION	21	9	7	5	23
CARQUEST AUTO PARTS	20	8	6	6	22
ROYAL LEPAGE REALTY	21	7	9	5	19
CALIBRATED PRECISION	21	6	8	7	19
SOURCE FOR SPORTS	20	8	11	1	17
AIRMOUNT FARMS	21	6	12	3	15
B-LINE TRUCKING	21	6	14	1	13

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Two local teams competing at provincial tankard



**ON
THE
BROOM**

NORA PETERS

Tillsonburg Post Columnist

As you read this, Tillsonburg Curling Club activities are back in full swing for the second half of the season.

January features two major bonspiels. The first event was the 4th annual Dale Fanset Men's Memorial Bonspiel that was initiated in memory of our former ice technician, Dale Fanset, who was well known and well liked on the local curling

scene. The spiel, sponsored by Blue West Equipment Inc of Courtland, drew entries from Ingersoll, St. Thomas, Dundas, London, Norwich and our local club. At the completion of two two-game draws, the Bob Armstrong rink from Ingersoll was the overall trophy winner. The other winner on the day was the Oxford Community Foundation, Dale Fanset Memorial Fund which received a donation with proceeds going to support junior curling in Oxford County.

Saturday, Jan. 18 was the Viva Las Vegas fun spiel with two two-game draws. This bonspiel has one draw composed of CYO four-curler teams and the other draw has a full draw of three-person triples teams. This format was tried last year and obviously people had a good time because this year both draws are full with teams on a wait-list! Knowing the convenors, the Vive Las Vegas theme will be in full swing off the ice turning

the club into a fun, noisy gaming place like a casino in Vegas.

Once again this year, club members will have two teams to cheer for at the OCA Ontario Tankard which qualifies one team to represent Ontario at the Canadian Brier. The Tankard this year is being held in Coburg from January 19-26th. Both Jayden King's and Travis Fanset's teams have qualified for the event. Travis begins play on Sunday at 7 p.m. and Jayden's first game is Monday night at 7:30 p.m.. You may remember the thrilling final last year that had Team King losing on the final rock of an extra end to Team Howard. We wish both teams good luck and good curling!!

The Italian Night fundraising take-out dinner is available again this year on Saturday, Feb. 8! This real Italian dinner made from the Gasparetto secret family recipe includes penne pasta, homemade sauce, meatballs, and an Italian crusty

roll. You can also order a salad with homemade dressing, extra meatballs, and a delicious cannoli dessert and/or a bottle of wine to round out your meal. Order forms are available at the club or to download from the club website. Get a great meal and support the club. Ben fatto!!

Looking ahead to events on the February calendar when the club hosts its second Scotch Doubles Spiel on Feb. 14. Both the competitive and recreational draws are almost full. A fun time so get your entry in. The club is offering a practice date for doubles play on Jan. 26. Sign in on the club website. The men's East Elgin Concrete and Forming Ltd Bonspiel takes place on Feb. 22 and has four entry spaces still available. Next column I hope to have some exciting news for our youth curlers and will let you in on an interesting historical curling event in Tillsonburg.

Until then Curling Rocks!

Thunder starting to roll for playoff push

MICHAEL HOLLY

Post Contributor

The Tillsonburg Thunder have started their playoff push to repeat as OSHL champions.

The hill is not going to be an easy one but with support of the fantastic Thunder fans, the team is certainly going to be in the mix.

The run heated up on Saturday, Jan. 11 in Alvinston. The Bees were looking for payback for the only loss they suffered this year, that being from the Thunder. There was a huge crowd in Alvinston as they came with their top lineup. They went home disappointed as the Thunder exploded for a 10-1 victory. Mitch Fitzmorris scored a hat trick with two additional helpers for a five-point night. Andrew Harris added two goals and three assists for another five points. One of Harris' goals have gone viral on the net. Check out the Thunder Facebook page to see it. The Thunder also welcomed back Colton Wiacek from playing pro hockey in the US and newcomers Cory Mallet and Nicolas D'Agostino to the lineup.

January 18 saw the first regular season game for the Richmond Hill Coyotes visiting the Thunder. It was certainly

a spirited affair with a couple of players getting into scraps. The Thunder took an early lead but the Coyotes tied it up in the third. Veteran Thunder players then shut the Coyotes down and scored three more for a 7-4 victory. Player of the game was Nicolas D'Agostino with his first OSHL goal and an assist. The Thunder may have taken them lightly, but we will not make that mistake again. The Coyotes are a new team but they will be a team to contend with in the future.

The two wins puts the Thunder in fourth, two points out of third with a game in hand over the Petrolia Squires, and five points out of second behind the Elora Rocks. There are only four games left. This Saturday, Jan. 25 at home at 7:30 versus the Delhi Flames. The Flames are battling to keep the last playoff spot with Strathroy. The Thunder travel to Delhi on February 1 @ 7:30 p.m.. Both games look to be intense. The Thunder finish the regular season versus their nemesis, the Stratford Fighting Irish, at home on Feb. 8 at 7:30 and in Stratford on February 15 @ 7 p.m.

Come support the Thunder as they continue their push to repeat as Champions!!



CURLERS HELP FOOD BANK

(BILL PRATT PHOTO)

It was a double takeout for Tillsonburg curlers and a big win for Helping Hand Food Bank. Wade Jones, senior league convenor of the seniors curling league, presented \$1,500 donated by seniors in the first half of the season. Henry Puhr, right, brought 460 pounds of food, valued at about \$1,500, collected in the curling club's Christmas food drive. Accepting with a smile was Samantha Hamilton, food bank coordinator. Senior curlers have been donors for several years, with the total reaching well over \$10,000 in the past five years. The food bank is serving some 100 families each week, plus 58 school children in the Backpack Program.

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RINGETTE TEAMS EXCEL IN TOURNAMENTS



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Tillsonburg Ringette U12B Balazs attended the Waterloo Winter Fest Tournament taking home silver after losing in the finals against St Catherine's Comets 8-6. Left to right are: (back row) Sierra B, Chloe V, Taylor M, Mackenna B, Keira D, (middle row) Kiara G, Emma V, Bryn F, Madison T and front goalie Cheyenne D.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Tillsonburg Twisters U12A team Hughes took home silver in the Burlington Blast tournament, losing in the finals against Ottawa West 9-3. Left to right are: (back row) Melissa H, Matt F, Burkley P, Kadence J, Kyla P, Ava P, Dustin D, Steph H. (front row) Ellia G, Brynn W, Morgan S, Harper F, Aaliyah D, Audrey H, and Mackinley H.



Tillsonburg to attend ROMA 2025

Town of Tillsonburg representatives will attend the 2025 Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) Conference from Jan. 19 to 21 in Toronto. Mayor Deb Gilvesy and Deputy Mayor Dave Beres will represent the Tillsonburg at the annual event, along with CAO Kyle Pratt.

The 2025 conference is themed Rural Routes, and provides rural municipal leaders the opportunity to address policy issues and funding concerns, as well as meet directly with provincial Ministers on local issues. Topics on Tillsonburg's agenda include concerns related to workforce training, community emergency management funding and expanded access to health care through a nurse practitioner-led clinic.

"As a growing community, we're facing a number of challenges directly related to population growth and are in need of provincial support to address them," said Mayor Deb Gilvesy. "ROMA provides us with an opportunity to share these concerns with the province and advocate for our citizens."

Tillsonburg is scheduled to meet with a variety of provincial representatives during the conference includ-

ing the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development; the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport; and the Ministry of Health. The group will also meet with the Associate Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response.

"ROMA provides an opportunity to learn from our peers and dialogue on important municipal issues," added CAO Kyle Pratt. "We're looking forward to a busy couple of days and some very productive conversations."

Ontario Premier Doug Ford, opposition leaders, and provincial ministers are scheduled to make presentations at the event. Keynote speakers include political columnist Chantal Hébert and Jordan Simmons, co-founder and CEO of Nominee, discussing democracy and Canada's path forward after the 2024 US election.

About 270 of Ontario's 444 municipalities have populations of less than 10,000, while scores more are rural in character. The rural arm of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, ROMA advocates for policies and programs that will help build thriving rural Ontario communities.

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Roulston's Pharmacy opens in North Gate Plaza

JEFF HELSDON

Editor

Tillsonburg has a new pharmacy with the opening of Roulston's Pharmacy on Monday.

The first business to open in North Gate Plaza, Roulston's has been a fixture in Norfolk County since 1933. The Tillsonburg location is the company's fifth store, and the first outside of Norfolk County.

David Lopes, pharmacist manager/co-owner, is originally from Simcoe, but now lives in Tillsonburg.

"My wife and I moved here five years ago," he said. "We thought it was a good spot to raise a family, and plus the fact it's central to both of our prior homes."

Lopes, who has been a pharmacist since 2015, was manager of the Roulston's location on Donly Drive the past four years. He suggested in February 2022 that Tillsonburg would be a good location to open.

"It took a little bit of persuasion with the owners, and the opportunity with the plaza going up," he recounted as the factors in the decision to open in Tillsonburg.

Lopes said Roulston's is different than many pharmacies in it's more clinically focused and there is a large focus on community outreach. Lopes will prescribe for minor ailments, and there are clinical services such as meeting with people for medication checks. For instance, he can have discussions with patients who suffer from migraines about the appropriate medication.

Those who are diabetics would be interested in knowing Lopes is a Certified Diabetes Educator. A certification he has to renew every five years, he can have conversations with patients about insulin control, diet and other issues facing diabetics. While diabetics is Lopes' specialty, he said within the chain, other pharmacists in the Norfolk stores are specialists in other areas, which can be accessed through Tillsonburg.

Travel medicine, or preventative vaccines for those travelling to an area where inoculations against things like malaria are required, is another service.

"If someone is going to Africa, for instance, and can't get in to see their doctor, they can enroll in a travel medicine consult," he said.

Once the consult is done and a prescription is given, Lopes can administer the necessary vaccines. Other vaccines and can also be given at the new store.

Roulston's will also have home health care products, such as commodes, shower aids, wheelchairs and other mobility aids. These can be either rented or purchased. There are also wound management products, first aid supplies and ostomy supplies.

Outside of pharmaceutical products, there is a giftware section in Roulston's 5,500 square-foot new store. The hope is to feature local products in it.

"What sets us apart is the store is divided in four - giftware, home health care, naturals, and of course, your dispensary will be a large part of it," Lopes said.

Roulston's already has a foot in the door in Tillsonburg as the chain services Maple Manor Long Term Care Facility.

One feature of Roulston's Lopes would like to see operational is the clinical space. Having managed the location in Simcoe with 20-plus employees who would collaborate with a doctor, nurse practitioners, specialists and a dentist, he is open to different ideas.



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Roulston's Pharmacy opened its new location on Monday in the north end of Tillsonburg. Left to right are: Kristin McDowell, front store manager; Treacy McIntyre, resistered pharmacy technician and David Lopes, pharmacist manager/co-owner.

"We'd be open to anybody for the betterment of the town," he said. "The goal would likely be a prescriber."

He is optimistic that spot will be filled.

"I do believe in build it and they will come," he said. Lopes has hired locals Treacy McIntyre as his reg-

istered pharmacy technician and Kristin McDowell as the front store manager, as well as two other employees.

The store will be open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday to Friday, Saturday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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Tillsonburg outdoors enthusiasts featured in upcoming Angler and Hunter TV youth episode

JEFF TRIBE

Post Correspondant

Three girls, a guy, guns and grouse.

These four elements may not line up in the plot line of most Christmas season movies, but thanks in large part to Tillsonburg-area direction, they will come together in the Angler and Hunter TV (AHTV) broadcast on the Sportsman's Channel the week of February 3-8th, 2025, and on City TV February 8th.

"What could go wrong, right?" laughed 20-year-old Nikki Van Brenk, one of four young 'stars' featured in the episode, and one of two coming from Tillsonburg.

The first strokes of the plot were scripted by Chris Madej, who took over as Ruffed Grouse Society of Canada's (RGS) coordinator in the summer of 2023. Seeking the post-COVID rebuild of an organization dedicated to revitalizing mixed forest habitat for the benefit of ruffed grouse, woodcock and other forest wildlife, Madej began working on a number of initiatives.

As part of an overriding awareness in the value of increasing RGS profile through publicity, Tillsonburg RGS committee and national board member Mark Forabosco of Mt. Elgin proposed featuring grouse hunting in conjunction with the RGS in an AHTV episode. Filmed largely in Ontario, the show's national broadcast has led to a huge following says Forabosco, demographically aligned with RGS membership and goals.

"You have to get out there to get noticed," he explained.

Although not knowing AHTV host Mike Miller personally, Forabosco reached out as the friend of a good friend.

"Mike was all for it," Forabosco reported happily. "He was terrific - all in on it."

The approach Miller envisioned was a youth hunt, volunteering daughter August as a participant. Forabosco recruited Van Brenk who he knew from her employment at The Tillsonburg Gun Shop, and who enjoys 'bonding time' hunting with her dad Henry. Tillsonburg's Jeff Helsdon, who when not editing The Tillsonburg Post is an award-winning outdoor writer featured in multiple publications including Ontario Out of Doors, founded the local RGS chapter 35 years ago and is also a member of the national RGS board of directors. He proposed his daughter Abigail, who has grown up sharing Helsdon's love for outdoor pursuits. Madej suggested the son of a new RGS chapter member from Barrie, Joe Witlib, as the fourth youth subject.

The 'cast' was rounded with Forabosco's friend Brayden Boucher, a Southern Ontario waterfowl guide who hails originally from the Kapuskasing area, and has shared hunting experiences with Forabosco there.

Shooting a grouse-hunting episode is tricky says Forabosco, their potentially



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

The young hunters and their guide make a plan before heading into the woods for filming for Angler and Hunter TV. Left to right are: Joe Witlib, Nikki Van Brenk, Abby Helsdon, Derek Witlib, AHTV host Mike Miller and cameraman Brent Richardson.

explosive flush providing scant filming opportunity compared to, for example, a static deer or bear stand, or the often graduated progress of a wild turkey toward decoys. The challenge was exacerbated by the fact they had a one-day shooting schedule in late September, 2024 featuring four comparatively inexperienced participants.

"The guys were pretty nervous," recalled Van Brenk with a laugh. "Taking a bunch of random girls up, they didn't know if we could shoot."

In fact, Van Brenk would open fire, harvesting the day's first bird and enjoying a classic retrieve from Forabosco's Black Lab Emma.

"It kind of broke the ice for the rest of the day, that's for sure," Van Brenk said. "Everyone seemed to walk a little lighter after that."

'Abby' Helsdon, a 22-year-old student, says her father always encouraged, but did not force her to share his passion for the outdoors.

"But I fell in love with it," said Abby, who got her apprentice licence as soon as she was 12. She is an enthusiastic angler and waterfowl, pheasant, turkey, deer and bear hunter.

Abby watched hunting shows with Jeff when she was a little girl, fantasizing at the time about being in one herself, but never imagined the chance would arise. She was interested to see the behind-the-scenes process for filming for the episode, expecting it to be quite structured and strict.

"But it was very much a casual, fun time," Abby said, heading into the day far more nervous about being on TV than anything else. "Been hunting forever," she explained with a laugh, "TV, that's a little stressful."

Like Van Brenk, Abby was relieved to get her first bird, and harvested several more. She also thoroughly enjoyed

how it goes."

Forabosco for one was not surprised the girls more than held their own on the day, backing up his long-held contention they may have less ego than male counterparts and tend to listen a little better.

"They're pretty good shots."

In summation, camaraderie was shared, birds were harvested and the makings of a great AHTV episode ended up 'in the can', cast and crew feasting on goose, venison and hamburgers as the sun dropped toward the horizon.

"It was that entire outdoor experience," said Forabosco. "Just a wonderful day."

"It was a great trip," added Miller. "Northern Ontario has lots of grouse hunting opportunities and is the perfect way to spend some time walking the woods, and even better if you are new to hunting and looking to gain experience."

Beyond outdoors-related enjoyment, RGS members hope the episode also generates broader understanding of their organization. Its chapter work in the Tillsonburg area has included plantings in support of ruffed grouse and woodcock populations, invasive species control and an educational display at Backus Education Centre. Numerous when Forabosco was himself a youth, numbers have declined due in part to egg predation from avian predators, raccoons and opossum along with habitat loss or evolution toward mature stands of trees. Grouse and many other species greatly prefer a mixed stand, with younger growth. Money raised through RGS initiatives goes back into environmentally-positive activity says Forabosco, part of the responsibility inherent to those enjoying its attributes.

"You have to give back to nature."

The work of the local RGS chapter is ongoing, its 33rd annual fund-raising banquet scheduled for Saturday, May 24 at the Courtland Community Centre. Those seeking more information on the organization or tickets for the event are invited to contact Helsdon at 519-983-3947 or email jeffhelsdon@gmail.com.

the experience, both her father's supportive role (although he was not part of filming) and meeting other young people with similar interests. She does run across other youthful hunters, although not many females.

"And especially not as enthusiastic as I am about it."

Her biggest concern is how she'll look and sound on camera, reserving the right to call a halt, if necessary.

"I'll be like, that's enough," she laughed.

Van Brenk summed the experience up as 'exciting, a thrill,' and 'a rush' when she harvested her bird.

"Plus, they're really good eating as well."

If she has any nervousness about the experience, it involves her on-camera exit interview, hoping it's not a 'big slew of words.'

"They got the raw version, that's for sure," Van Brenk laughed. "We'll see



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

The young hunters and cameraman Brent Richardson walk down a trail in search of grouse. Left to right are: Joe Witlib, Ruffed Grouse Society of Canada Canadian coordinator Chris Madej and Nikki Van Brenk.



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**OH,
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PLACES
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GO!**

PAUL KNOWLES

Tillsonburg Post Columnist

As I consistently confess to groups who invite me as a guest speaker: in my career as a travel writer, I am a very lucky guy, and I don't deserve amazing experiences I get on a regular basis. It's a great gig.

And sometimes, it's even better than "great". There are very few destinations I don't enjoy, but occasionally, I find myself somewhere that is darned near perfection.

That happened on my first and only visit to the small, eastern-Caribbean island of Dominica. I fell in love with the place, with everything about it.

I wrote several pieces about Dominica, two of them for Grant Haven papers. Another article, published in the Toronto Star, featured the amazing Coulibri Ridge resort founded by Canadians Daniel Langlois and Dominique Marchand. Then, tragedy struck. About a year after those articles were published, Daniel and Dominique were brutally murdered, apparently by an American neighbour, the grisly result of a land dispute.

I was deeply saddened. I had spent time with both Daniel and Dominique, and had come to like them, immediately. Oddly, the photo of the couple used in all of the media coverage of their deaths was strikingly similar to one I had set up and taken – a staff member must have stood beside me and captured the same image.

Why do I tell you all this? As I said, I fell in love with Dominica. And I guessed that this very bad news would tarnish the island's reputation and discourage others

who might have visited this small piece of paradise.

So, imagine how thrilled I was when I read an article on the BBC website, declaring Dominica as their number one recommended "Best Place to Travel in 2025."

Journalist Pier Nirand wrote, in part, "Visitors can explore hidden gorges, towering waterfalls and feast on local cuisine at unique eateries... Dominica isn't just a destination – it's a movement to support a burgeoning model of eco-tourism that balances biodiversity conservation with economic growth, ensuring that your adventure helps protect this natural paradise for generations to come."

That's high praise. And I would echo every word.

In a world of travel where the word "unspoiled" is vastly over-used, Dominica is just that. This volcanic island, located just north of Barbados, is in the chain of islands that includes Guadeloupe and Martinique. The land rises sharply from the coast to misty mountain heights. Unlike stereotypical Caribbean islands, all gated resorts and beach bars, Dominica has accurately been dubbed "the Nature Island." Visitors enjoy hiking, leisurely river cruises, diving, unique cuisine, and constant, friendly interaction with local residents.

And speaking of friendly interaction, the BBC report informs us that there is something brand new here: Dominica's waters are the location of the world's first sperm whale reserve. This protected marine area is a safe space for the giant, marine mammals... and also offers "limited permits" for visitors interested in actually sharing the water with the whales.

In my brief time on Dominica, I found that there was always something wonderful around almost every corner. One of my favourite activities didn't initially seem all that impressive. I was informed we were taking a river cruise, and having enjoyed luxury voyages thus described on the rivers of Europe, I was somewhat discouraged when I first spotted a shabby rowboat with plank seats, and a guide with oars. Hm-



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

Trafalger Falls, high in the mountains.

mph.

Turns out, I could not have been more wrong. That leisurely afternoon on the Indian River was amazing. The slow pace allowed us to savour the scene: tropical trees, flowering plants, birds, and animals. And by the way – Dominica has no poisonous animals or insects, a huge plus for any tropical destination. The cruise included a stop at a rustic bar, where we sipped rum concoctions and watched hummingbirds flit among the bright, red ginger lily flowers.

A drive high into the mountainous area brought us to the site of hot springs – common on the island, because there are still nine active volcanos here, none spewing lava but the source of hot water than local entrepreneurs have used to create relaxing hot spring spas.

The twin Trafalger Falls are a very popular stop in the heights of the island – viewing stations provide the opportunity to take

in the sheer beauty of the place.

I stayed at two eco-friendly resorts during my time on Dominica – Coulibri Ridge, which I am happy to say continues to operate, despite the loss of its visionary founders, and Jungle Bay, founded by Dominican entrepreneur Sam Raphael, and guided day to day by general manager, Canadian Laura Ell. As a big fan of gardens, I could have spent weeks there without leaving the property, home to more than 75 species of fruit and nut trees, as well as innumerable shrubs, and flowers.

Dominica was named "The Nature Island," not first because you can encounter nature here, but because here, nature comes first!

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.



Laura Ells of Jungle Bay.



Tropical beauty along Dominica's Indian River.

Heading to the U.K. this year? Read this first



STEWART GRANT

Publisher

There's an important new step to complete before packing your suitcase and heading overseas to the U.K.

As of Jan. 8 to be exact, Canadians are among those who will be required to apply for and get approval for the new Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) before entering the United Kingdom.

This new requirement applies not just to those who are visiting the U.K.,

but also to those who are connecting through a U.K. airport.

The intended benefits of the program are to strengthen border security and to use modern technology to expedite the arrival process of those entering the U.K. The cost of applying for the ETA is £10 per person, but the ETA is valid for a period of two years (or until your passport expires, whichever is sooner) and is good for unlimited trips to the U.K. during that time.

There are two ways to apply for the new U.K. ETA, but it is strongly recommended to apply through the UK ETA app rather than through the government website. In fact, if you visit the government website at www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-an-electronic-travel-authorisation-eta, they will also push you towards the

app, which is available through your app store on Google or Android.

Using the app is preferred because the camera function on your phone is helpful to take photos of your passport and of your face during the application process. The estimated time required to complete the application is 10 minutes, and most approval decisions are rendered within three business days but could be as fast as just a few minutes.

Whether you're heading to England, Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland, it is a great time to visit the United Kingdom. Just make sure that you avoid problems at the border by applying for the new Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) in advance of your travels.

Stewart Grant is owner of Stonetown Travel Ltd., with offices in St. Marys and New Hamburg.

MUSEUM CORNER

Place Name Origins

Have you ever wondered where Tillsonburg got its street, views and place names?

When Tillsonburg was incorporated in 1872, the streets of Tillsonburg were names with "good and sufficient reason." (Ellen Eff, 1963).

Ellen Eff continues in her document "How Streets Got Their Names." (1963)

"First, three sets of the older streets, Venison, Bear and Wolf have animal names, given by George Tillson due to his fondness of hunting." First principle street, Bloomer St, got its name from the bloomer forge George Tillson operated

there. First main street, Van St., no doubt was named in honour of the man associated with the founding of Tillsonburg, Benjamin Van Norman. Potter's Road got its name in conjunction with the pottery works said to be in operation there. Tillson Ave, likely names in honor of the Tillson Family."

While some streets were named in 1872, others have been added as the community grew. Let's explore the origins of other street names in Tillsonburg. Thank you to Laurel Beechey and Kathleen Watkin for delving into the archives to discover these street name origins.

Brock St. was named for Sir Isaac Brock the hero of the War of 1812. Despite facing desertions and near-mutiny, he commanded his regiment in Upper Canada (part of present-day Ontario) successfully for many years. He was promoted to major general, and became responsible for defending Upper Canada against the United States. While many in Canada and Britain believed war could be averted, Brock began to ready the army and militia for what was to come. When the War of 1812 broke out, the populace was prepared, and quick victories at Fort Mackinac and Detroit defeated American invasion efforts. Brock's actions, particularly his success at Detroit, earned him accolades including a knighthood in the Order of the Bath and the sobriquet "The Hero of Upper Canada". His name is often linked with that of the Native American leader Tecumseh, although the two men collaborated in person only for a few days. Brock died at the Battle of Queenston Heights, which the British won.

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Early ice on Long Point's Inner Bay a welcome sight for hard-water anglers as perch fishing picks up



**LOST
TRIBE**

JEFF TRIBE

Tillsonburg Post Columnist

It was a slow morning perch bite off Long Point's Old Cut on Jan. 13.

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 game time decision to book in with James Carroll of Jimmy Riggins'.

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

The frozen lake hosts many individual 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 were 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 Jan. 13.

"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.

Clients come from all over says Carroll, with 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/dead-stick' 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."

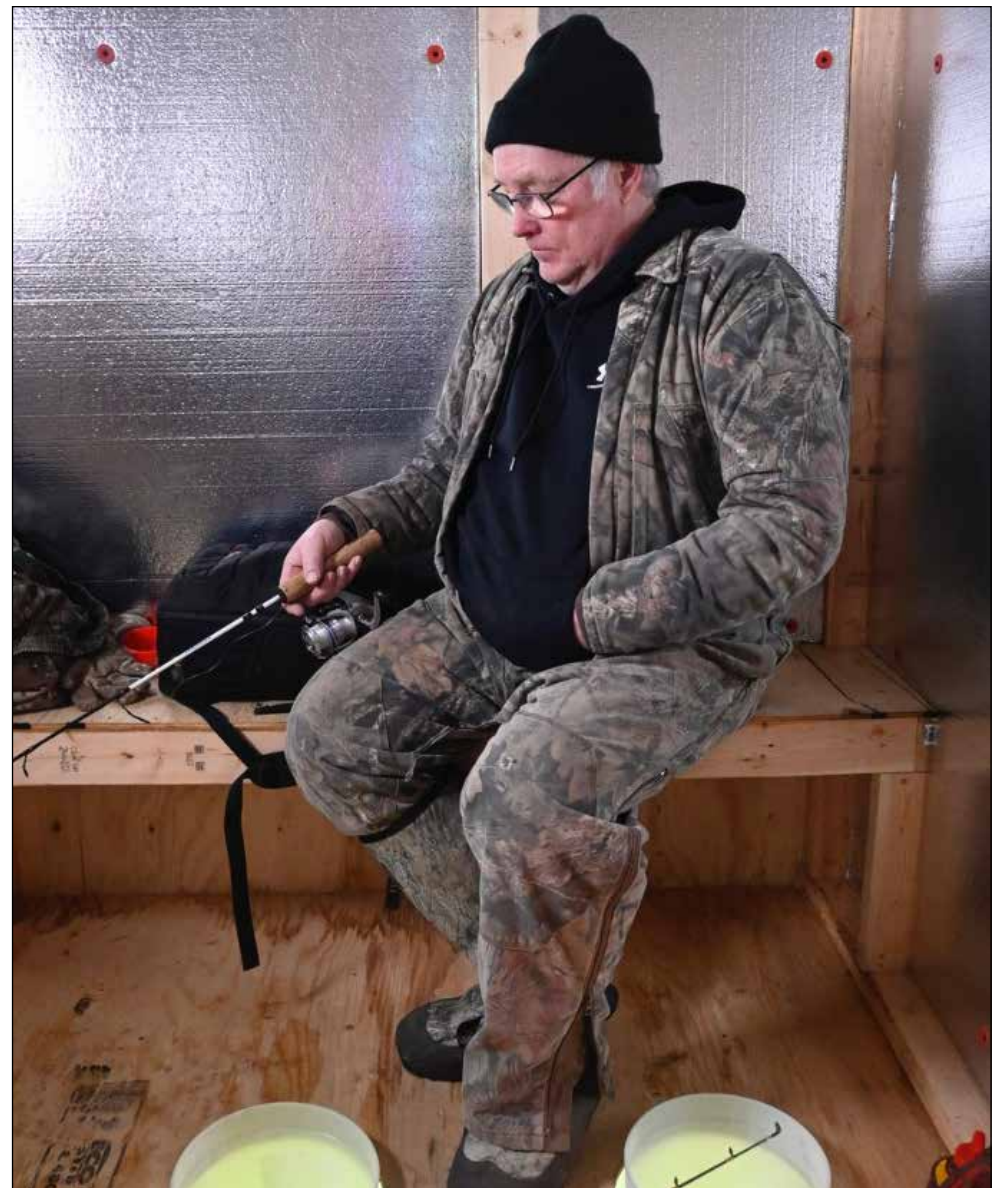
The change Carroll and others were happiest about however was the transition from Long Point's open blue waters to the greys, blacks and whites of winter, brutally beautiful in the eyes of ice fishers hoping for a lengthy 2025 season.

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



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

(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Tillsonburg Post contributor Jeff Tribe jigs for perch on Long Point's Inner Bay.

MUSIC CORNER

The Copper Mug hosts TDMH Foundation's Winter Warmer Fundraiser on Jan. 31



BEN ADDRESS

Tillsonburg Post Columnist

The body is a very complicated structure and when something goes wrong it can be daunting. It is even more intimidating while realizing the current state of Ontario's health care funding. Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital Foundation has helped ease that stress

since 1984 by encouraging generous contributions from members of the community to assist with new equipment, facility upgrades and to support special projects of the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital through fundraising efforts and activities.

The Copper Mug's co-owner Kim Sage has been a strong community builder over the years.

"Owning a small-town family run community pub has put us in a position to be able to reach out to our community in different ways." Reflecting on her hometown of Tillsonburg Sage notes "As the old saying goes 'It takes a village' and boy what a village we have."

In September 2024, Ministry of Health spokesperson Hannah Jensen wrote

in an e-mail that "Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government has made record investments in our health-care system, investing over \$85 billion this year alone, a 31 per cent increase from 2018."

However, hospitals are still struggling with staffing cuts and deficits due to the increased costs of labour and supplies.

"Without getting political, things aren't as easy today as they once were. The hospital and fire department can always use a helping hand. We would like to do our part." Kim explains how The Copper Mug doesn't charge a rental fee to charities and assists with covering the logistics including liquor licence, insurance, finding volunteers, booking entertainment, printing

tickets and advertising. "These fundraisers allow the charity organization to be able to literally enter the building and reap the rewards. 100% of the ticket proceeds go directly to the charity. We take care of the rest."

Local musician Chase Beres is no stranger to the local music scene and was the first artist Kim Sage thought of when booking the TDMH Foundation's Winter Warmer Fundraiser.

When asked about waiving his performance fee for charity events Chase answered modestly, "I think that it is important to be a part of fundraising events and help raise money for a good cause. Being in a small town like Tillsonburg everyone has been great with sup-

porting me and my music journey. Supporting the community by performing is the least I could do."

Beres' musical influences, Zach Bryan and Cameron Whitcomb, have inspired him to write songs so catchy that he is picking up new fans at every concert he performs. At last year's Forge Fest, Chase waived his performance fee to help raise funds for the Canadian Mental Health Association of Oxford.

"I've started a TikTok campaign where I post every day until Boots and Hearts Music Festival notices me and let's me play one or two songs on a side stage. That's my main goal for 2025," Chase grins as he explained his love for music and his community. "That being said, I would

not be where I am today without my family and places like The Copper Mug and other small-town businesses that have been so supportive in my music career."

Come enjoy the TDMH Foundation's Winter Warmer Fundraiser on Friday, Jan. 31 at The Copper Mug, located at 79 Broadway Street with live performances from Chase Beres, Tim Davis and Hard Chords. The event starts at 9 p.m.. Reserving a table in advance is suggested by calling the Copper Mug at 519-842-6227. Tickets for this all ages events are \$40 with all sales donated to the TDMH Foundation.

Anyone wanting more details can visit www.tillsonburghospital.on.ca or The Copper Mug's Facebook page.

UPCOMING SHOWS

JAN. 23 - OPEN MIC WITH BILLY GIBBONS
Paddy's Underground;
20 John Pound Rd,
Tillsonburg
Free - 7:30 p.m. - all ages/licensed

JAN. 24 - JAY ROCK
The Copper Mug; 79
Broadway, Tillsonburg
Free - 8:30 p.m.

JAN. 25 - IAN BW, THE MCBAINS & MOORE AVE
Paddy's Underground;
20 John Pound Rd,
Tillsonburg
\$10 - 8 p.m. - all ages/licensed

JAN. 25 - BLURR RODEO
The Copper Mug; 79
Broadway, Tillsonburg
Free - 8:30 p.m.

JAN. 26 - ROB CROMWELL
The Copper Mug; 79
Broadway, Tillsonburg
Free - 5p.m.

JAN. 30 - OPEN MIC WITH BILLY GIBBONS
Paddy's Underground;
20 John Pound Rd,
Tillsonburg
Free - 7:30 p.m. - all ages/licensed

JAN. 31 - TDMH FOUNDATION'S WINTER WARMER FUNDRAISER
w/ CHASE BERES,
TIM DAVIS & HARD
CHORDS
The Copper Mug; 79
Broadway, Tillsonburg
\$40 - 9 p.m.

FEB. 1 - COTY ROBINSON
The Copper Mug; 79
Broadway, Tillsonburg
Free - 8:30 p.m.

FEB. 2 - NORTH OF 60
The Copper Mug; 79
Broadway, Tillsonburg
Free - 5 p.m.

FEB. 7 - RUN OF THE MILL! IMPROV COMEDY w/ FM96'S JIM KELLY
Paddy's Underground;
20 John Pound Rd,
Tillsonburg
\$20 - 8 p.m. - all ages/licensed



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90TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

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90th Birthday

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OBITUARY

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OBITUARY



VAN LOUWE, MARY ANN
(MARCH 1, 1940 - JANUARY 17, 2025)



Passed away peacefully, on Friday, January 17th, 2025, at the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital, Mary Ann Stephanie (nee De Leemans) Van Louwe, at age 84, a lifelong resident of the Langton area. Mary Ann dedicated her life to nurturing not only her children, but also the community she cherished. She was an active member of the Langton Skating Club and dedicated 50 years to the Catholic Women's League. Alongside her late husband, she worked hard to run their tobacco farm, where she cultivated more than crops - she cultivated memories, lessons and traditions that will live on through the generations. Mary Ann's greatest joy was her family. She was predeceased in death by her beloved husband, Albert Van Louwe (2017). She is survived by her children, Alan Van Louwe (Ginny) and Michelle (nee Van Louwe) Burger (Steve Csire). She leaves behind four grandchildren: Zachary Van Louwe (Emily Leger), Alyssa Van Louwe and Brooke (nee Burger) (Zachariah) Alton and Haley Burger. Her legacy continues through her great-grandchild, Toby Alton, who brought her immense joy in her last year. Dear sister of the late Ronnie De Leemans (Zarina), sister-in-law of Annie Van Louwe (Frank 2012) and Irene Andries (Marc 2011). Also remembered by several nieces, nephews, cousins and dear friend Sharon Hurley. Predeceased by her parents: Victor De Leemans and Elizabeth Vervaet. Extended thank you and appreciation for the exceptional care and compassion of the PSWs and nurses at Tillsonburg Retirement Residence as well as her family physician Dr. J. Andrews. Also, thanks to the doctors and nurses at the ICU unit.

Friends, neighbours, and relatives are invited to attend public visitation on Wednesday, January 22, 2025, between 5:30 and 8:00 p.m. in the Maurice J. Verhoeve Funeral Homes Chapel, 40 Queen St., Langton. Catholic Women's League Prayers will be held on Wednesday evening at 5:00 p.m. in the Chapel. Funeral Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Thursday, January 23rd, 2025 at 10:30 a.m. in Sacred Heart R.C. Church, 24 Albert Street, Langton, by Rev. Fr. Seejo John. Interment follows in Sacred Heart R.C. Cemetery, Langton.

Everyone who knew Mary Ann is invited to express personal condolences, share favourite memories and photos, send flowers via Mary Ann's tribute page at www.verhoevefuneralhomes.com or contribute memorial donations to the Langton Skating Club (donations payable by cheque or e-transfer to: langton.payment@gmail.com) or by contacting the Maurice J. Verhoeve Funeral Homes- Burial and Cremation Services Inc., Langton (519) 842-4238, entrusted with all funeral arrangements, with confidence.

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Why don't skeletons fight each other?
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What do you get from a pampered cow?
Spoiled milk.

How do you make a tissue dance?
Put a little boogey in it.

Where do polar bears vote?
The North Poll.

What did the fireman's wife get for Christmas?
A ladder in her stocking.

What lies at the bottom of the sea and shivers?
A nervous wreck.

What do you call an American drawing?
Yankee doodle.

SUDOKU

by PeterS 2024

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Solutions on page 31

Basic (2)

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- DONATION
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- MAINTENANCE
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- SORTING
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COMING EVENTS

VALENTINE'S CHILLI SUPPER

Saturday 15th February
The Hall, 699 Norfolk County Rd 28
4pm - 7pm
 11yr + \$15, 5yr - 10yr \$8, under 5yr FREE
 Potluck desserts - bring your own or to share!
 Cash on the door
 Everyone Welcome!

THE FRIENDSHIP TABLE - FREE FRIENDSHIP DINNERS

Monday, Feb. 10, Mar. 10, Apr. 14, May 12, June 9, 2025;

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KIDS' FREE VALENTINE'S CHOCOLATE BAR BINGO

Tillsonburg and Area Optimist Club

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Sunday, February 16th, 2025. 2-4pm

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 Register at: oxford.griefsupport@von.ca or 519-539-1231 Ext 6299 or 6296

TILLSONBURG

WHEN: 2nd Tuesday of every month

WHERE: VON Oxford Office 24 Brock St. W., Tillsonburg

TIME: 6:30PM-8:00PM

INGERSOLL

WHEN: 4th Tuesday of every month

WHERE: Ingersoll Public Library 130 Oxford St., Ingersoll

TIME: 10:30AM-12:00Noon

WOODSTOCK

WHEN: 3rd Saturday of every month

WHERE: Sakura House Hospice 715180 Oxford Rd.4, Woodstock

TIME: 10:30AM-12:00Noon

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April 10 - May 15 2025;

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6:30-8:00PM

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Jan. 31, Feb. 14 & 28

Tillsonburg Legion

MEATLOAF DINNER

Tillsonburg Legion, Friday January 31

\$18 Adult. \$10 child (under 10). Serving from 5:00pm - 6:00pm. Includes mashed potatoes, gravy, vegetables, desserts, coffee and tea. Cash only. All Welcome! For more info call 519-842-5281.

OPEN MIC JAM

Tillsonburg Legion

Saturday February 1st from 1-4pm.

\$6 cash at the door. Featuring North of Sixty Band. Pulled pork on bun available noon to 2pm for \$6. Cash only. All Welcome! For more info call 519-842-5281.

VALENTINE SWEETHEART BRUNCH

Tillsonburg Legion

Sunday February 9th from 9am to 1pm.

Bring your sweetie to the Legion for bacon, pancakes, scrambled eggs, sausage, toast, tea and coffee. \$15 Adult \$8 child (10 and under). Flower for first 100 ladies! For more info call 519-842-5281.

JOIN US ON FEB. 1 AT MESSY CHURCH AS WE "FLY INTO FEBRUARY"

St. Paul's United Church 88 Bidwell

St. Tillsonburg

10am to 12 noon

Snacks, crafts, games, music, story and a hot lunch.

OTTER VALLEY TAI CHI

is hosting a free class/Open House on Monday, January 27.

Otter Valley Tai Chi is a location of the Canadian Tai Chi Academy (www.canadiantaichiacademy.org), which is a registered non-profit Canadian charity.

OTTER VALLEY TAI CHI

New Monday morning classes began Feb. 3: 9:00 - 10:30 am Introduction, 10:30 - 11:30 am Foundations.

Location: St. John's Anglican Church, 46 Ridout St. W., Tillsonburg

Enjoy gentle exercise with others as you work to improve flexibility, balance, and stamina.

Call 519-688-9779, email ottervalley@canadiantaichiacademy.org, visit canadiantaichiacademy.org

TILLSONBURG AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The February General Meeting will be held on Monday, February 24th at 7 pm at Annandale House NHS. We welcome

Dr. Jason Pankratz who will once again be hosting his always entertaining Trivia Night. He will be offering a variety of historical and popular subjects. Don't miss this free, fun event!! All are welcome!

The March General Meeting will be held on Monday, March 17th at Annandale House NHS starting at 5:30 pm. Please

join us for a potluck dinner followed by the Business Meeting at 7 pm. Please bring a main course, salad or dessert, along with your own utensils and dishes. The Business Meeting schedule includes the election of the Executive for the next year as well as the adoption of the Annual Budget. All are welcome!

INTERESTED IN BRIDGE?

Join us every Friday at the Tillsonburg Duplicate Bridge Club at 1 p.m. at The Senior Centre. Don't have a partner? Come anyway and we will match you up with someone. For more information, visit their Facebook page: TburgBridge.

Tillsonburg POST

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Coming Events are for non-profit organizations to promote their free admission events at no charge. Event listings can include your event name, date, time and location as well as a phone number, email address or website. If your event is not free admission or you would like to include more details than stated above, you have the following options:

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1	9	5	7	2	4	6	3	8
4	7	6	9	8	3	2	5	1
8	2	3	5	1	6	4	9	7
9	6	8	3	4	7	5	1	2
5	4	2	6	9	1	7	8	3
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FISH FRY A SUCCESS (JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)
The Tillsonburg Shrine Club's second annual fish fry and elimination draw was another success. About 200 people attended the fish fry and all tickets were sold for the elimination draw. The last three people still in the draw chose to split the \$20,000 prize. Fish fry chair Cedric Tomico is seen here breaching the fish in preparation for supper.

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