

STRATFORD TIMES

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Over 4,000 local auto jobs stand to be affected by U.S. trade tariffs if enacted on April 2

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Across about 18-20 companies in the region, there are about 4,000 direct employees in the local automotive sector, according to investStratford CEO Joani Gerber, that stand to be affected by the 25 per-cent U.S. trade tariff on all automotive parts manufactured in Canada, which are set to take effect on April 2.

But, as Gerber said, that doesn't include the 100-300 transport trucks moving through the region or the other various industries that will be indirectly affected by these tariffs.

"The trickle-down effect of it will be significant, which is very hard to quantify," Gerber said. "There's always the worst-case scenarios, which I don't think we're going to get to that. I really hope we don't."

"This community is exceptionally resilient, and as we saw through COVID, tourism picks up where manufacturing needs the help and vice versa. So, the diversification of the industries in Stratford, the sectors in Stratford and Perth County and St. Marys, will help us be resilient. It's not going to make us tariff proof, but it will certainly help."

Gerber, who also announced a regional tariff taskforce on March 3 that includes representatives from the City of Stratford, the Town of St. Marys and Perth County, said the 25 per-cent tariffs on all Canadian goods,

CONTINUED TO PAGE 3



Moderator Deanna Horton joined panelists Pamela Jeffrey, Halyna Padalko and Mary Hofstetter for a wide-ranging discussion which touched on mentoring, networking and the state of the world at large. (CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

CFUW Stratford hosts packed panel show for International Women's Day

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

On March 8, International Women's Day was celebrated across the world as it is every year – but it was especially meaningful in 2025, as Cambria Ravenhill said.

In 1975, 50 years ago, the United Nations designated the year as the International Women's Year and began to celebrate the advocacy and action related to the women's suffrage movement and women's equal participation in

society writ large. In the following years, the celebration became the annual day we celebrate today.

"This is the 50th anniversary of women coming together purposely to break down the barriers we faced at that time," Ravenhill said. "Women couldn't get a credit card in their own name, they couldn't sign a mortgage, they couldn't get a car loan – some banks would not let them, allow them, to have bank accounts in their maiden name. We forget how much we've achieved over those decades,

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2



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CFUW Stratford hosts packed panel show for International Women's Day

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

and women have had, now, a place at the political and policy-making table, which was not the case back then. So, this is a particularly special date."

Ravenhill, president of the Stratford branch of the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW), made that statement at a breakfast event hosted by the organization in the Arden Park Hotel, which drew a huge crowd.

The theme for the morning was "breaking barriers – stories of progress," and coinciding with that theme was a panel discussion between moderator Deanna Horton, Mary Hofstetter, chair of Sheridan College's board of governors, Pamela Jeffrey, founder of the Women's Execu-



Halyna Padalko, a Ukrainian expert in strategic communication, propaganda and disinformation, was the keynote speaker at CFUW Stratford's International Women's Day breakfast on March 8. (CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

tive Network, and Halyna Padalko, an expert in strategic communication, propaganda and disinformation.

In a wide-ranging conversation which touched the private and political sectors, the four spoke about the importance of mentoring, networking and the state of the

world at large in particular.

Padalko, a Ukrainian native, was also the keynote speaker. During her opening address, she reminded the gathered crowd about both Ukraine and Canada, saying the day is being celebrated in a time of turmoil.

"We all sense the tension in the air," Padalko said. "It's not my first time living

in a country with a crazy neighbour."

Padalko's allusion was not lost on the crowd, which laughed at her joke. However, as Padalko continued to show pictures of her home country of Ukraine, of Ukrainian women taking their children to school with rifles slung over their shoulders or firing rockets at invading Russian forces, the gravity of both Ukraine's circumstances and Canada's circumstances was felt, in addition to the threats Canada's "crazy neighbour" had been repeatedly making at that point.

Padalko said it is imperative all women be committed to democracy – that it is an obligation of the highest order.

"We must keep democracy alive because only in democracy can women thrive. We know why all of us are here today on the International Women's Day. Our mothers fought for us to have the same rights and opportunities as men, and now it is our turn. It is our duty to protect democracy for the next generations, and we must remain committed to support democracy and growth while fighting for justice and freedom, literally fighting for it on the front lines, in trenches and border lines.

"No one will do that for us. It is our call, and it is everyone's choice which side of history to stand on," Padalko said, ending her address to a standing ovation.

UWPH assures community over tariff concerns

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

A portion of the funds raised through the United Way Perth-Huron's (UWPH) \$2.6-million annual fundraising campaign will go to support community members facing cost-of-living and mental-health challenges related to recent tariffs imposed both north and south of the Canada-U.S. border.

Community members can donate to the Urgent Needs Fund campaign until the end of March. Funds raised support individuals who struggle with job loss, mental health, food security and other related issues made worse by tariffs.

Ryan Erb, executive director at United Way Perth Huron, says the real impact so far has been a collective anxiety due to the unpredictable future, along with changes in the stock market related to personal investment.

"I think everyone is in this pattern of waking up every day and investigating the latest changes and discussions," said Erb. "We can't get ahead of ourselves because we don't know exactly what's going to happen, but at the same time, we want to be prepared and the United Way is trying to make sure that people are aware of the existing social services that are there for them."

Community members are encouraged by UWPH to utilize their 24-7 211 help-

line that's tasked with connecting callers with social services designated to their personal challenges whether it be housing, food, mental health or other hardships.

"211 administers the Urgent Needs Fund, so if people are looking for some financial assistance, they can call 211. If they qualify according to their income, then they can utilize that access and that goes for anyone who lives within Perth and Huron," said Erb.

Erb said tariffs could influence the cost of products along with presenting significant challenges in Stratford's automotive industry due to the design process, which is reliant on a timed system. Disruption to the system can lead to delayed production challenges and cause layoffs.

Aaron Balzer, resource coordinator at Stratford House of Blessing, said the organization has not been impacted by tariff concerns but is prepared for the future.

"We may see an impact when our buying power will be diminished and that people may have less to give, but we have yet to see what that effect will be," said Balzer. "We are preparing ourselves and we are ready, we have gone through recessions and slumps in the past and the community has always stepped up to support us. We have a very generous city in Stratford."

For more information on the 211 helpline or the Urgent Needs Fund, call UWPH at 519-791-7730 or visit perthhuron.united-way.ca.

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Over 4,000 local auto jobs stand to be affected by U.S. trade tariffs if enacted on April 2

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

save automotive goods, and the 10 per-cent tariffs on Canadian energy enacted so far have already had an impact, not only on the day-to-day operations of many businesses, but on long-term capital projects as well. A number of projects have been put on hold until a more certain time presents itself.

Additionally, the uncertainty of the tariffs has had ripple effects. For instance, they have been made aware of customs firms that handle cross-border shipping for companies slapping a blanket surcharge on anything, unsure if the goods they are shipping will be affected by the tariffs or not.

In response to the tariffs announced by U.S. President Donald Trump, then Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced retaliatory tariffs on \$30 billion in American goods, with \$125 billion more planned if the U.S. tariffs persist.

Gerber was largely supportive of the measure, but noted while hitting back may feel good, it is possible adding more uncertainty to the equation may be harmful for local organizations already struggling to make sense of how the original tariffs stand to affect their business.

“But I will say this; the first \$30 billion of tariffs that the federal government put on was pretty well determined. The second round ... the federal government requires a mandatory consultation period, which allows business owners to weigh in on what’s

being considered and the conversations that we’re having at the federal level. They’re very, very keen to hear from businesses on those things. ... Reciprocal tariffs feel good because they hit me and I hit them back, but what that actually means is that it does get more expensive now for Canadian businesses to manufacture and operate, and I think the sentiment is that we’ll tolerate that as long as we’re hitting them back. But when that ball keeps moving and keeps changing, that also gets very complex.”

Gerber said that being mindful of supporting local, buying local and buying Canadian can help the community as it grapples with the tariffs, though acknowledged that for some that is easier said than done, especially if economic hardship is on the horizon.

Additionally, Gerber reminded the public of the resources collected by the tariff taskforce for affected employers and residents, which can be found at www.investstratford.com/taskforce.

Gerber also shared the taskforce is in the process of a mayoral letter-writing campaign for U.S. counterparts whose communities stand to be affected when the trickle-down effect reaches them. The campaign is an effort to make connections and influence U.S. policy from pressures on both sides of the border. Letters from Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma could be going out as early as March 21.



Thank you for your continued support and trust.

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Authorized by the CFO for the Matthew Rae Campaign

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Editorial

How Japan's wonderful toilets reflect a respectful society

STEWART GRANT

Publisher

After spending 10 incredible days in Japan and experiencing their culture, one simple thing I will miss is their incredible, high-tech toilets.

In Japan, everywhere you go, not just in fancy hotels but even in public parks, you will find very nice toilets.

How nice are they? Well, how about a heated seat to warm your tush while sitting? How about a built-in bidet with options to adjust the nozzle position and strength of the spray of warm water? And yet another button to press to activate a dryer when you are all done? The Japanese have proven all of this is possible.

I was particularly surprised that these expensive, multi-featured appliances were available in public spaces accessible by anyone. This couldn't work here

in North America, could it? Can people be trusted not to abuse them?

"This is why we can't have nice things," is a phrase commonly used. It's something we say following the careless actions of others. When people can't be trusted, certain privileges are taken away from society, or not made available in the first place, thus making things a little less nice for us all.

That's why I think Japan's toilets are a byproduct of a culture based on respect – respect for property, respect for rules and respect for other people. We saw instances of this everywhere.

For example, we noticed immediately upon arrival in Tokyo that people walked on the left side of the sidewalk. Later, while visiting the Samurai Ninja Museum, we learned this tradition dates back centuries from the time of the Samurai. If Samurais walked on the right, then their swords, which pointed left,

would collide when passing each other, which may inadvertently launch a duel.

Respect for the rules of traffic were evident at each intersection, where the green "walk" and red "wait" pedestrian lights were strictly followed, even on quiet, narrow crossings with no sign of oncoming cars. People just patiently waited. This is not my style, but we followed the custom and showed respect for the system.

We saw absolutely zero graffiti while walking the sidewalks. There was hardly any litter to be seen, and this is despite (or because of?) the fact there are no public trashcans on the streets. If people have trash, they just hold onto it until they get home or until they find a bin. Even the subways were clean, and they ran on time, to the minute.

Anywhere in commerce, from stores and restaurants to hotels and transportation, business owners and employees

alike showed their appreciation without fail to customers, uttering cheerfully what seems to be the most common words in the Japanese language, "arigato gozaimasu," which translates to "thank you very much."

As I make this list, I'm realizing many of these aspects of kindness and respect are similar to what we experience here in small-town Ontario. I suppose what felt so unique about it in Japan is these positive traits held true in huge cities containing millions of people.

Here in our small town, we give a friendly hello to people that we pass on the trail. We walk on the right side. We don't have a graffiti problem. We do have some litter, and the public restrooms do get trashed occasionally.

But maybe we're not that far off from earning our first fancy public toilet. On a cold Canadian winter day, I'll bet that heated seat would feel pretty good.

Letters to the Editor

Where is the money?

Where would the money come from for the Grand Trunk Railway complex (Cooper site).

If we can look back at some major projects in the city like the Festival Theatre, the recreation centre and the Tom Patterson Theatre, (there was not any tax money

Correction: In the March 7 edition of the Stratford Times, an error was published in the story, "Gallery Stratford's new Battle of the Somme fundraiser a sold-out success," on Page 11. Though the Gallery Stratford curator and director was introduced as David Windrum, his name is Robert Windrum. We regret any confusion this error may have caused.

used to build the Tom Patterson Theatre), we can learn from these projects, how they raised their money and their timeline from start to finish.

Money that is available now

The Kiwanis Centre, which housed the Lakeside Seniors, were promised the \$5 million dollars that was received for the property would be used to have a place in the GTR Rail building (the \$5 million dollars after seven years with interest should be much more).

Leasing GTR property

At the Wellington Street end of the building, indoor parking spaces could be leased.

The roof space on the buildings could be leased to an

entrepreneur for solar panels. What a concept. Green energy.

A location could be leased near the large parking lot for coffee and beverage truck, and could be tendered, outlining the terms and conditions. A donation from the sales could go towards the development.

Lakeside seniors, Library annex, Steam engine that the city can get

The advantage for this location; it is a complete building that runs along St. David Street and can have a shorter timeline than a new building. This used to be the old blacksmith shop in days gone by.

Lorne Bolton, Stratford

Concerned about losing the CBC under Poilievre

Dear Editor,

A national election will be called soon. This will decide how the promise of the new Liberal leadership, under financially savvy Mark Carney will fare against the divisive Conservative leader, Pierre Poilievre.

I don't know about others, but I am as concerned about the latter's threat to the CBC, our national broadcaster, as I am about anything else he represents. I can personally not imagine life, or Canada, without it; it is essential to

me, and yet Poilievre would destroy both.

I wonder what others are thinking. I have volunteered to arrange a town hall meeting in Stratford and would like to receive feedback about interest. My email is workinginbrampton@gmail.com. If you are concerned and interested in attending a meeting, please send me a message, mentioning days and times you are available.

I look forward to hearing from you.

*Sincerely,
Julia Schneider, Stratford*

Voting is the best way to show our national pride

Dear Editor,

From all indicators, a federal election is inevitable this spring. Good. The big question we have to ask ourselves however is, how will all this heart-lifting Rah! Rah! Rah! for being Canadian and "Canadians Stand Together" be reflected in early voting and at the polling stations? The turnout for the recent Ontario election wasn't anything to write home about, was it? Shameful at best – only 44 per cent of eligible voters voted. Bravo to all those who did exercise their vote, no matter the weather or their personal circumstances.

Let's face it, it's really good that Canadians are finally expressing and demonstrating their nationalism in such a meaningful variety of ways, including how they display the flag or shop. It's been quite some time since we've witnessed such to such a degree – best displayed at hockey games and other sports events. Perhaps we've become too comfortable in our skins, living so securely in this marvellous country of ours until Mr. Trump threatened our sovereignty, that is, and signed his executive orders for a barrage of tariffs. Quite the wakeup call to arms, those, to reassess our traditional, more-reserved celebra-

tion of who we are, eh?

But now we need to ask ourselves, will this nationalistic fervour prove to be only window dressing when voters are called to do their duty and cast their ballots for the party and leaders of their choice? I sincerely hope not.

This will be the most significant election this country has held at any level in decades, given both the domestic and international challenges which face us and the leaders to whom we will be called upon to lend our support. And make no mistake; people around the world will certainly be watching, literally. Our brave show celebrating Canadianism has definitely caught their attention.

My hope for the upcoming federal election? No matter one's preferred party affiliation or their age or location or limited familiarity with our civic responsibilities, the participation of eligible voters will speak loudly and clearly about how seriously, and with sincere pride, we regard our national identity and our right and privilege to exercise a free vote.

*Thank you,
James Colbeck, educator, arts advocate, author/illustrator, veteran. Stratford*

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Letters to the Editor

We need to put scaffolding in place to help city's homeless rebuild their lives

Dear Sir,
I am a retired nurse and have the pleasure of volunteering to support our homeless in Stratford and Perth County area and have also been volunteering at a Christian Organization's foodbank for many years. I serve many wonderful people in our community who are homeless and/or are financially challenged to meet their very basic needs. I feel that things are getting worse and I can no longer sit quietly.

During COVID, the provincial government provided funding for an "Outreach Team" in the Stratford area. The team would go to where our homeless were in the community to extend support. A vehicle was generously provided by the Stratford Police department which enabled the team to travel to remote spots, distribute provisions and provide transportation to the downtown area, in particular, the Connection Centre.

Here, people were able to shower, launder their clothes, obtain a hot meal and attend varying appointments with professional supports. With the end of the pandemic, our provincial government made the decision to discontinue the funding. This, it would appear, happened with no planning or insight by our city council on how to sustain such a valuable resource. Now, a fully functioning vehicle sits on the Stratford Police department parking lot collecting snow. Then just recently, we've learned that the rural PC Connect bus has been discontinued, a decision made by the Perth County council. This leaves individuals in low-income hous-

ing throughout rural Perth County stranded, unable to attend appointments or access their supports in Stratford.

My question is, if we aren't providing shelter, aren't travelling to the people in need and aren't allowing them to travel to their supports, how can we expect their situation to improve?

Stratford and Perth County residents, churches, service organizations and businesses must start advocating loudly and consistently to our local, provincial and federal governments on behalf of our vulnerable and disenfranchised. Pressure needs to be placed on those we voted in. Hold them accountable for these decisions and demand more supports. I am well aware that talks and plans are in process, but they aren't happening fast enough or extensively enough.

Can we not have an integrated, collaborative, efficient and, just as important, transparent action plan for our homeless. We need more supportive housing, more community outreach and more public transportation, not less. We need to invest in the scaffolding if we want people to rebuild their lives. By investing in preventative care and support for those who are often overlooked, we not only enhance their quality of life but also alleviate the financial burden on our health-care system.

In conclusion, congratulations to United Way for a successful Coldest Night of the Year fundraising event, an initiative for the purpose of supporting our homeless.

*Thank you,
Katherine Hewitt, Stratford*

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Perth County Paramedic Service meets all response-time targets in 2024

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

For the first time since 2020, the Perth County Paramedic Service met all of its ambulance response-time targets in 2024.

At the March 6 Perth County council meeting, paramedic services chief Mike Adair presented the paramedic service's annual update, which included statistics on ambulance response times in the county across all six categories of calls for assistance, which include vital signs absent (VSA) and all five levels of the Canadian Triage Acuity Scale (CTAS): resuscitation (CTAS1), emergent (CTAS2), urgent (CTAS3), less urgent (CTAS4) and non-urgent (CTAS5).

"The response-time performance plan is a provincial mandate that all municipalities have," Adair said. "Since I've been here, we haven't changed any of our targets in the last five years. This year, we met all of our targets with our new deployment plan with, also, one of our busiest years we've had. Now, having said that, there's always a caveat. You'll see in the VSA category and CTAS1, there's higher fluctuations, and we would expect that because the sample size is so low, it depends on where those calls are.

"We do our best but we have a rural system, so it's going to take longer to get ambulances to rural calls than sometimes to the urban calls."

According to last year's statistics, Perth County Paramedic Service's 2024 response-time targets are as follows:

- paramedics responded to 54 per cent of VSA calls within six minutes (the target is to respond to 51 per cent of VSA calls within six minutes);
- they responded to 71 per cent of resuscitation calls within eight minutes (the target is 70 per cent);
- they responded to 83 per cent of emergent calls within 10 minutes (the target is 75 per cent);
- they responded to 93 per cent of urgent calls within 14 minutes (the target is 75 per cent); and
- they responded 98 per cent of both less-urgent and non-urgent calls within 20 minutes (the target for both is 75 per cent).

In 2023, the paramedic service only responded to 46 per cent of VSA calls within six minutes; in 2022, they responded to 49 per cent of VSA calls within six minutes; and in 2021, they responded to 47 per cent of VSA calls within that time, missing the target in each of the previous three years. In 2021, the paramedic service also

missed its target for resuscitation calls, responding to just 62 per cent of those calls within eight minutes.

According to Adair's report to council, Perth County Paramedic Service does not yet have access to local fire-department data. As firefighters are often first on scene for calls involving sudden cardiac arrest or VSA, Adair indicated the paramedic service is working with local fire services on a data-sharing agreement to better reflect true VSA response times.

Thanks in part to a program launched late last year in partnership with the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance aimed at reducing offload delay, the average time between a patient's arrival at hospital and when paramedics fully transfer patient care to hospital staff went down in 2024 after it increased steadily in 2021, 2022 and 2023.

"Offload delay is something that we continue to focus on, as council is aware," Adair said. "We have implemented an offload-delay program that's funded through the provincial government and we've re-applied for further funding for the next year because we feel that it's working. ... It was implemented in December (2024).

"... We have noticed that throughout last year, collectively, our hospitals have pro-

vided a quicker turnaround for ambulances than in the past, and at our rural hospitals, like in St. Marys and Listowel, we saw a slight increase in terms of how long our ambulances were at those facilities, and we will continue work on that and make sure we are as quick as possible."

The Perth County Paramedic Service's target for transferring a patient to a hospital's care after arrival at an emergency department is 30 minutes. In 2024, the Perth County Paramedic Service spent the equivalent of 25 12-hour shifts waiting at St. Marys and Listowel hospitals beyond the 30-minute target – up from the equivalent of 15 12-hour shifts in 2023. The paramedic service spent an equivalent of 59 12-hour shifts at the Stratford General Hospital beyond the 30-minute target during 2024, down from the equivalent of 77 12-hour shifts in 2023.

In total last year, the paramedic service responded to 11,555 calls for service. Over the past two years, Perth County Paramedic Service has experienced a 6.8 per cent increase in call volume. Recent changes made to the service's deployment plan resulted in a decrease by 32 per cent in standby vehicle movement – approximately 44,800 kilometres – while maintaining response times.

Property tax rates and municipal levies, what is the difference?

NATHAN BEAN

Times Contributor

In the last column, we discussed MPAC and property assessments. This week, we will discuss another piece of the municipal property tax puzzle — the municipal levy.

Before we go any further, let's define a key term: the levy. Simply put, a levy is the total amount of money a municipality needs to function. Think of it as the community's shared bill for essential services like roads, parks and emergency services.

Municipalities can generate revenue in a variety of ways, including grants, service charges, investment dividends, or everyone's favourite, taxes. When municipal expenses rise — whether due to inflation, salary increases, or new projects — so does the municipal levy.

The tax rate is calculated by dividing the total municipal levy by the total MPAC-assessed value of all properties. This means any increase in the levy usually leads to higher property taxes.

However, the municipal levy is more complex than this basic formula suggests. In a single-tier municipality such as Stratford, property taxes consist of three components: the lower-tier tax rate, the MSSC

fees and the education tax rate. Let's break this down further.

First off, there are three types of municipalities in Ontario. Single-tier municipalities operate directly under the province without an additional layer of local government. Examples include The City of Toronto and the City of Ottawa.

While geographically located within Perth County, the City of Stratford is known as a separated municipality. Stratford is fully independent from the County. They do, however, cooperate under the Municipal Shared Services Committee (MSSC). The city pays the county to provide and administer paramedic services and the Stratford-Perth Archives, while the county and other area municipalities like St. Marys pays Stratford to provide social services.

More commonly, municipalities operate in a two-tier system. In this setup, there is an upper-tier municipality that covers a large geographic area and multiple lower-tier municipalities. The Township of Perth East and the Township of Perth South both operate in this system with their respective upper-tier municipality of Perth County.

Upper tiers are responsible for large regional roadways, social services and a

county/region-wide paramedic service. Lower tiers, by contrast, handle local roads, fire services, land-use planning and tax collection. While some responsibilities overlap, each level of government has its own budget and tax rate, forming the municipal portion of property taxes.

The final piece of this property tax pie is the provincial education rate. This rate is established by the provincial legislature and is applied equally across every residential property in Ontario. The power to set an education tax rate was stripped from local school boards in 1997 to create a fairer education system.

Schools in rich communities would no longer have a leg up on disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Funds would instead be collected and redistributed by the province to ensure every student received the same quality of education.

The education tax rate is applied differently to commercial and agricultural properties. For instance, in 2025, the residential education tax rate will be 0.153 per cent, while farmland will be taxed at a lower rate of 0.03825 per cent.

The total tax rate applied to your property is the sum of the upper-tier rate, lower-tier rate and provincial education rate. This number, multiplied by the MPAC-as-

essed value of your land, will equal the dollar amount you owe in annual taxes.

Oh boy, that was a lot! If you have made it this far, I commend your perseverance. Understanding our government can be unnecessarily complicated, but we must understand it. We can't make informed decisions without properly comprehending who does what and why.

We all know it wouldn't make sense to ask a Member of Parliament about garbage collection or discuss national defense policy with your mayor. But do you know who to contact when ambulance response times increase or your road needs repairs?

By understanding how distinct levels of government function, we can ensure our concerns are directed to the right people and that we actively participate in decisions that shape our communities.

As Sir Francis Bacon wrote in 1597, "Knowledge is power."

I would like to apologize for a miscommunication in the last article in this column. When referring to the taxes applied to the fictional municipality of Timestown, I misidentified the tax rate of 0.01 as a percentage instead of a rate. A rate of 0.01 is 1.00 per cent.

Perth County council continues whittling away at draft 2025 budget

Council asks staff to bring back \$284,000 in proposed cuts to reduce tax rate to 10 per cent

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Though they couldn't come up with much in the way of cuts to the draft 2025 budget on their own, several Perth County councillors have asked staff to bring back at least \$284,000 in potential line-item cuts to bring the proposed tax increase down from just over 11 per cent to 10 per cent.

At the March 6 Perth County council meeting, staff presented a report with answers to questions about the draft budget councillors asked at the last county council meeting or submitted to staff since then. The intent of the report was to identify further cuts to the budget to make the overall impact on county ratepayers more affordable.

"I feel that there are some areas that can be lowered; I'm not looking to kick things down the road," Coun. Rhonda Ehgoetz said. "I'm looking to have our budget a little closer to some of the actuals. One of them I'll pick on ... it's in planning. Our technical services doubled (from last year); it went from \$22,000 to \$44,000. Why? Does it have to be that high? Another one is in the clerk's (budget); professional development went from \$8,000 to \$13,000. Why? Do we all have to go to the conferences? Do we have to have 10 of us there standing in front of the minister? I don't think we do."

"Those are the kinds of things I'm more looking for to be closer to our actual (costs in 2023). ... There's nothing to say we are going to kick it down the road. If we are going to take it out of the budget, it doesn't mean it's going to automatically come back the following year. ... As a business owner ... I don't have someone to hand off that I need an extra \$10,000 next year. ... I have to figure out how do that myself ... to make that money. I find it far too easy here to come up with the figures and just hand it off to the taxpayer. Not everybody can afford this. There are an awful lot of people who cannot afford this repeat adding on and adding on."

At the beginning of the budget discussion March 6, the draft budget had a proposed levy increase of 13.11 per cent which, inclusive of 1.77 per cent growth to the county taxbase last year,

meant the proposed tax rate was 11.34 per cent. For the owner of an average MPAC-assessed home in the county with a 2016 value of \$282,000, that would mean an increase by \$103.32 to the county portion of their annual property tax bill.

Ehgoetz, who is also mayor of Perth East, argued the county tax-rate increase on top of lower-tier tax-rate increases is making life harder for property owners in the county. In Perth East, for example, where the average assessed home is valued at \$321,000, the owner would see an increase in their lower-tier tax rate by 4.85 per cent or just over \$69 for the year, while their county taxes would go up by nearly \$118. With an education tax rate of about 16 per cent in Perth East, that property owner would see their tax bill increase by a total of just over \$187.

In an effort to try and reduce the county's part of that increase, Ehgoetz recommended several cuts of line items in the 2025 CAO budget including a new administrative assistant to the CAO at a cost of just over \$52,000, a process review and efficiency projects at a cost of \$20,000, the development of a communications strategy at a cost of \$30,000 and another \$30,000 for corporate communications.

Of her four suggestions,

only the removal of the corporate-communications line item received support from the majority of council, resulting in a decrease to the proposed tax rate by 0.07 per cent, from 11.34 per cent to 11.27 per cent.

Coun. Bob Wilhelm also recommended the removal of \$75,000 in facility audits from the 2025 capital budget, which council did support. However, because capital projects are funded through reserves, grants and funding sources outside of the tax levy, it did not impact the overall tax rate for 2025.

While Ehgoetz's motion to have staff bring back a report outlining potential further cuts to the draft budget with the goal of getting the tax rate down to 10 per cent was ultimately successful, several councillors expressed frustration with the notion of whittling down that percentage to what might be perceived as a more-palatable number for residents.

"I think we have a habit of getting fixated on percentages all the time," Coun. Walter McKenzie said. "Percentage is peanuts; look at the dollar value. ... You've got to compare apples to apples, I think. We can certainly look at neighbouring municipalities, (one of which) has an increase of 3.63 per cent, which works out to \$130.48 per household (this year).

Another municipality was a 6.03 per-cent increase. It works out to \$309 per household. At 11.3 per cent, it's \$103, so you've got to compare numbers. I think percentages is very misleading. You look at the dollar value and then make your decision from there."

While Coun. Hugh McDermid said he'd like to see the tax rate reduced to 10 per cent for the sake of the taxpayers, he cautioned council around the dangers of kicking budget items down the road, and said council doesn't want to become the next Wilmot Township, which began budget deliberations for this year at a whopping 51 per-cent levy increase to tackle an out-of-control, long-term infrastructure deficit.

"I believe in, fundamentally, an organization that fulfills its responsibilities and is effective and efficient," Coun. Todd Kasenberg added. "Sometimes, those two 'E' words kind of conflict with each other because we can imagine a larger spend and a bigger scope of services. I think, fundamentally here, we have to remind ourselves that we're a commissioned government that has responsibilities, many of which are set out by provincial regulation and statute. For us to be saying, 'Oh, I want it to be 10 per cent,' or, 'I want it to be two per cent,' this is ... not a particu-

larly valuable exercise. ... Would it make a big difference just for the sake of finding a round number?"

"To me, that's not the point. The point is we must deliver a certain package of services, and some of them we don't have to deliver. When you talk about \$284,000 ... you could easily take that out of economic development because it's not a statutory service, but none of us have a strong desire to do that. We can look at little bits and pieces here and there, some of which are not relevant to even the levy impact because it's from the capital side of the ledger. We can continue to lean and, in some cases, starve the statutory services, but I'm not in favour of that. ... Setting some kind of target that is sort of picked out of the air because somebody likes 10 instead of 11 or 12 doesn't make any sense to me."

County CAO Lori Wolfe said staff will bring a report with potential cuts to the draft budget at county council's next meeting on March 20. Wolfe also specified the report will include dollar values for each potential cut in addition to the percentage impact on the levy, and staff will indicate whether each potential cut would be permanent or if that line item would reappear in a future budget.



It has survived pandemics and recessions and everything in between in the 65 years it's been operating. Employees at Sinclair Pharmacy, located downtown at 12 Wellington St., gather in the pharmacy to mark the milestone. Owners Heather Konstant, Cathy Stokes, and Hilary Bald thank the community for their continued support over the years.

(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Perth County appoints deputy paramedic chief as community emergency management coordinator

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

When it comes to navigating a local emergency, it's important to have the right person with the right connections and the right plans in place leading the response.

For Perth County, that person is now deputy paramedic services chief Chris Keyser after he was appointed community emergency management coordinator (CEMC) at county council's March 6 meeting.

"I've been involved with emergency management for almost my entire time here," Keyser said. "With various community emergency management coordinators over the years, I usually helped them out with their training. I'm a provincial (incident management system) instructor, so that's the foundation for emergency management from the Ontario perspective. I have experience delivering the training and I think, too, just being in paramedic services kind of lends itself to managing emergencies.

"I'm definitely growth-minded, so I like doing new things, learning about the ins and outs of all of it, and having a better understanding. So, when I was approached about possibly taking this on, I was very excited about the opportunity."

After cycling through several emergency management coordinators hired from outside the county organization over the past several years, Perth County CAO Lori Wolfe said senior staff was looking for someone with Keyser's skills, experience, ability to teach, mindset and community connections. As it turned out, the only person who met those criteria and more was Keyser.

"We've had several great individuals in that role ... and there was a vacancy



Perth County Paramedic Service deputy chief Chris Keyser is the county's new community emergency management coordinator. (GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

in the fall, so we looked at that and said, 'How can we utilize skills that we already have in our system?' " Wolfe said. "It's a regional program for the county and each of the four local municipalities, and our partners in Stratford and St. Marys have their own CEMC, so Chris will work very closely with them. We were looking for a way to provide really good stability in the role because it is one that will often see changes; people will go on to bigger roles with more staff complement and things like that. So, we were looking for a way to find good stability with the role.

"This is an opportunity to use Chris' background. We're looking for somebody in that role that has the ability to train and educate the staff because it's all about prevention. There's curriculum development in that portfolio, there's presenta-

tion, there's heavy training, there's heavy regulatory framework where you have to take the legislation, interpret and apply (it locally). So, when I'm looking over all the county departments ... I need somebody who is going to take (this program) to the next level, and Chris stands out for that."

In his current role, Keyser is heavily involved in both staff training and meeting regulatory requirements. At both the Perth County Paramedic Service and in previous positions he's held with neighbouring paramedic services, Keyser has developed working relationships with all the key players he will be dealing with across the county, in Stratford and St. Marys, and in adjacent counties.

On top of all that, Wolfe said Keyser's ability to calmly and effectively communicate with anyone, whether it's during

one of his training sessions or in a life-or-death emergency, is one of his most-valuable assets.

"I've been involved with paramedic services with the county for over 20 years now," Keyser said. "I've moved up from working as a paramedic in Milverton to a paramedic working in Stratford to a commander on the road managing emergencies on the frontline to now I'm in the deputy chief role. My portfolio deals with regulatory compliance from the ambulance-service perspective ... so regulatory compliance isn't foreign to me. ... I've led the public access defibrillator (PAD) program for the county since its inception 15 or 16 years ago. I placed the first ones, developed the first partnership agreements and, recently, Lori and I have been working on regionalizing that program ... to make it more sustainable in the future. Through that, I have relationships with all of our partners from the Town of St. Marys to Stratford to all of our lower tiers, as well as at all of our county facilities.

"It's nice taking a step into this role because a lot of the players are the same."

For now, Keyser will continue in his current role as deputy paramedic services chief alongside his new role as community emergency management coordinator. He is already working with and training other members of the Perth County Paramedic Service who will gradually take over aspects of the deputy chief role with a goal of Keyser ultimately transitioning full-time to the CEMC role.

Part of that role, Wolfe explained, will also be focused on ensuring there is a succession plan for filling the CEMC role after Keyser and well into the future by providing current staff opportunities to train and take on extra responsibilities.

Food insecurity and the Local Community Food Centre: working together to help those in need

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

An organization in the Stratford-Perth area is addressing the growing issue of food insecurity and is calling on the farming community to get involved.

The Local Community Food Centre, located at 612 Erie St. in Stratford (formerly the Stratford and District Co-op), has been working for years to provide fresh, locally grown and affordable food to those in need. However, the demand for its services continues to grow due to a variety of economic and social factors.

More than a food bank

Many people mistakenly assume the Local is simply a food bank, but it is much more. The centre provides healthy and nutritious lunches and suppers to anyone who walks through its doors each week on Mondays and Fridays. In addition to meal programs, it offers gardening and cooking classes along with a strong sense of community for those facing food insecurity.

The Local relies primarily on donations to

continue its work. Board member Brent Shackleton, who is leading a \$750,000 fundraising campaign, is urging the farming community to lend its support to ensure the centre's long-term sustainability.

Community awareness and open house events

To raise awareness about food insecurity and highlight its programs, the Local is hosting a series of open houses in the coming months. These events will introduce the community to the organization's work and provide opportunities for financial support.

The first open house will take place on Sunday, March 30 from 2-4 p.m., specifically inviting the agricultural community to attend. Shackleton is reaching out to farmers of all commodities, hoping to share the story of the Local and have it featured in local newspapers and farm publications.

For more information, contact Margaret Smart, executive director of the Local, or Julie Docker-Johnson at connector@thelocalcfc.org or 519-508-3663 ext. 1005.



The Local Community Food Centre on Erie Street in Stratford relies on hardworking staff and volunteers to prepare nutritious, homegrown meals for those in need. From left are Nico Quintero, Jules Charbonneau (assistant chef), Lydia Hodder, Braedyn Cote (co-op student), Bernita Pol, Gerry Heyen and Janine Ralph. (GARY WEST PHOTO)

Grand Trunk needs to balance civic assets with economic options according to consultants

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Since the inception of the Grand Trunk renewal project, many have been questioning just exactly how Stratford means to pay for such a project.

Now, the economics of the project will be more deeply explored by a consulting firm with a plethora of experience in rejuvenation projects.

At the most recent ad-hoc Grand Trunk renewal committee meeting on March 17, Joe Svec and Rock Wang of SvecGroup, a development management firm for urban projects retained by the city and assisting with its keystone development project, said their job is to investigate the economic options and present them to the decision-makers.

In this case, they will investigate prudent options in consultation with the industry, namely builders. Throughout their presentation, they both reiterated multiple times it is imperative for a group like the ad-hoc committee and council to dictate what civic assets it needs from potential builders, but to let builders have the space to dictate what is viable for them.

“It comes down to numbers and dollars and cents,” Wang said.

Svec said one key area of concern that is obvious from the outset without much investigation was Stratford’s small size, which hurts the financial viability of such a project. Another issue is the state of the building’s roof which is essentially non-existent.

“This is not a traditional ‘Let’s save the building,’ ” Svec said. “It’s unfortunate that it’s probably the first time you’re hearing it, but the ... financial value is that you really don’t have a building. You have a frame of the building.”

He went on to say they don’t know whether it would cost more or less money to build with the frame, or the attachments of the community to the building, though clarified that will be determined in time, citing some examples of other rejuvenation projects which built small food stalls or other business stalls in large frames similar to the Grand Trunk building.

In that sense, he suggested perhaps the community hub portion, which would include a new YMCA, library and various other assets may be more economically viable if built outside the Grand Trunk’s frame, leaving that building to host housing or an open-air park like the Evergreen Brick Works project which transformed the former Don Valley Bricks Works and quarry in Toronto.

Bottom line, Svec said, the city needs to be cooperative with the needs of the private sector, which will be the driver of development, while clearly defining what assets it needs.

Wang also pointed out in such a project as this, housing is where the funding comes from. In short, open-air parks or gardens don’t pay property taxes, but homes and businesses do.

After some clarifying questions back and forth between



The interior of the Grand Trunk building, part of an 18-acre rejuvenation project the City of Stratford has undertaken. As seen in the photo, the lack of a roof may prove to be a significant barrier, according to consultant Joe Svec. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)



The Evergreen Brick Works open-air skating rink in Toronto. Svec encouraged the committee and council to be open to options for the Grand Trunk building, citing this project as a possible example. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

the committee and the presenters, as well as some questions about where tourism or community assets can play into the planning, Adam Betteridge, director of building and planning with the city, told the committee he has been really looking forward to this part of the project.

“When we talk about planning communities, whether it’s a whole community or a site, we can take economics aside and try to envision what we want to see, or we can start or front-end the economics and see what is actually financially feasible for a developer.

“I’ve been to most of the meetings. We’ve talked about all the wants ... whether it’s the community space, the markets, the amenities, the hubs. They have spinoff

tourism and indirect financial benefits to the city, don’t get me wrong, but no developer is going to do it. The city doesn’t have the financial need to do those things. So that’s why we have Rock and Joe here telling us what’s financially feasible. What can the development community do?”

After the meeting, Svec estimated they will be back with initial, high-level findings on what the development community can do at a later committee meeting, likely in the next few months. What they will give to the committee, and subsequently council, is options and cost estimates.

Svec also said there are seven phases to their involvement, which will take place from now until the project’s execution.

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Feb. 23	Keith & Kristine Chambers, Burlington	\$50.00
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Feb. 25	Mary Smith, St. Marys	\$50.00
Feb. 26	Jason Cousins, Stratford	\$50.00
Feb. 27	Judy McCann, Stratford	\$50.00
Feb. 28	Kevin & Jen Turner, St. Catharines	\$50.00
March 01	Ruth-Anne Matetich, Stratford	\$1000.00
March 02	Nikki Leyser, Burnstown	\$50.00
March 03	Ron Brintnell, Kirkton	\$50.00
March 04	Alexandra Bertens, St. Marys	\$50.00
March 05	Heather Burge, St. Marys	\$50.00
March 06	Donna Hinz, Stratford	\$50.00
March 07	Charles Pickle, St. Marys	\$50.00
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The power of shopping local: How OUR Community Dollar strengthens local economies

SCOTT DUNSTALL

Times Contributor

As OUR Community Dollar (OC\$) prepares to launch in Stratford, the importance of shopping locally has never been more relevant.

In an era where big-box stores and online shopping dominate, keeping money circulating within the community is essential for economic growth. Every dollar spent at a local business fuels job creation, strengthens community ties and enhances the overall quality of life. Yet, despite these benefits, many consumers opt for convenience over local impact. That's where OUR Community Dollar steps in, offering a unique way to keep wealth within the Stratford and area economy.

Why shopping local matters

Studies show that for every dollar spent at a local business, significantly more stays within the community compared to purchases from national chains. This is because local businesses are more likely to source goods and services from other local providers, creating a ripple effect that benefits everyone.

Beyond financial benefits, shopping local helps maintain Stratford's unique identity. Small businesses provide specialized products, personalized service and a

welcoming atmosphere large corporations can't match. They also support local charities, sponsor events and create gathering spaces that strengthen neighbourhood bonds.

The challenge of shopping local

Despite its advantages, shopping local isn't always the easiest choice. National chains and online retailers offer aggressive discounts, one-click convenience and fast shipping, making it difficult for small businesses to compete. Additionally, many consumers are unaware of the full impact their spending habits have on their local economy.

This is where innovative solutions like OUR Community Dollar can make a difference, helping Stratford residents prioritize local spending while making it more re-

warding and accessible.

How OUR Community Dollar supports local business

OUR Community Dollar (OC\$) is a membership-based local currency program designed to keep money circulating within the community. By offering an alternative currency that can be used at participating businesses, OC\$ provides incentives for shoppers to choose local first.



(OUR COMMUNITY DOLLARS PHOTO)

With shopping local being top of mind these days, OUR Community Dollars is ready to launch in the Stratford area.

How it works:

- **Earning OC\$** – Members acquire OC\$ through community activities such as volunteering, participating in local events, engaging in the OC\$ Give and Get Marketplace and by becoming an OC\$ member.

- **Spending OC\$** – OC\$ can be used at local businesses as partial or full payment, encouraging repeat spending within the community. A minimum 10 per-cent OC\$ is required.

- **Creating a circular economy** – Instead of money flowing out to national chains or online retailers, OC\$ ensures wealth stays within the Stratford area, benefiting multiple businesses and individuals.

The evolution of OC\$

OC\$ was initially launched in the Waterloo Region over a decade ago but faced challenges due to a strong economy and competing rewards programs. However, economic shifts following the COVID-19 pandemic reignited interest in local economic sustainability. Currently, OC\$ is accepted at over 70 businesses and growing with more coming onboard all the time throughout the Waterloo Region, with Stratford set to become the next city to benefit.

Similar initiatives such as Calgary Dollars and Ithaca Hours in New York have demonstrated how local currencies can strengthen community economies. Unlike digital currencies like Bitcoin, OC\$ isn't meant to replace national currency but to complement it. Businesses accepting OC\$

can use it to make purchases at other participating businesses, keeping money circulating locally. To support this initiative, \$800,000 worth of OUR Community Dollar notes have already been printed, marking a major investment in local economic growth.

Practical examples of OC\$ in action

To illustrate the impact of OC\$, here are some real-life scenarios:

- **A family dining at a local restaurant** – Instead of ordering from a national food-delivery app, a family dines at a Stratford café. They use OC\$ earned from their membership or volunteering at a community event, reducing their bill and reinforcing their commitment to supporting local businesses. That restaurant can then use the OC\$ at another local business.

- **A local retailer gaining new customers** – A boutique clothing shop in Stratford joins the OC\$ program. A shopper, who might have otherwise purchased from a large, online retailer, uses OC\$ to buy a locally made sweater, keeping the transaction within the community. That shop can then use the OC\$ at another local business.

- **Skill-sharing among residents** – A musician offers guitar lessons in exchange for OC\$ and then combines those OC\$ with federal currency for home repairs from another member. This exchange-like system strengthens community ties and expands economic opportunities.

Building a stronger, more resilient Stratford

The OC\$ team, led by Stratford resident Rob Puschelberg, has ambitious plans for expanding the program, including charitable donations and networking events to onboard more businesses. An additional 350,000 OC\$ is being developed to service Stratford and area. By encouraging Stratford residents to embrace OC\$, the initiative not only boosts local commerce but also strengthens community engagement. Business owners can book a complementary consultation by visiting www.OURCommunityDollar.com.

Every dollar spent locally is an investment in Stratford's success. As more residents adopt OC\$, small businesses will thrive, neighbourhoods will become more vibrant and the local economy will grow stronger. If a business offers a discount to attract customers, they do not receive full value for their goods and services. By accepting OC\$, the business attracts customers and earns full value in the transaction.

Come out to the first Stratford OC\$ information and networking event

On Wednesday March 26 from 7-9 p.m., the OC\$ Stratford team will be hosting its first information and networking event at Crabby Joe's Restaurant located at 988 Ontario St., Stratford. Whether a seasoned professional or new to the community, this session is perfect for learning more about how a local currency system can expand one's local network.

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Local business owner recognized for community involvement and high-quality leadership

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

The Stratford & District Chamber of Commerce has named Marian deWever business leader of the year.

With over 35 years of experience, deWever, owner of Home & Company Real Estate Corp Brokerage, will receive the award at the 29th-annual Business Excellence Awards Gala at the Best Western Arden Park Hotel on May 1. deWever will also be as guest speaker for the event.

"I am incredibly honoured and even a bit overwhelmed to be given this honour," said deWever. "It came as a total surprise; I had no idea that I was being considered for this incredible recognition."

deWever, who is a former member of the judging and nominating committee for the Business Excellence Awards, said she had never placed herself in the category or even considered herself for this



Marian deWever, (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO) owner of Home & Company Real Estate Corp Brokerage, has been named business leader of the year by the Stratford & District Chamber of Commerce.

level of recognition.

"It was always incredible to me to learn of the various accomplishments of local companies and the amazing work they were doing," said deWever. "Then, to find out that I was chosen to be the recipient of this award for 2025 is so unexpected; I was stunned."

Aaron Martin, general manager of The Stratford & District Chamber of Commerce, said deWever demonstrates the qualities of a true leader in the business sector, and as a community member. Her community involvement played a major role in the board's decision to nominate her.

"When it comes to community involvement, you seem to see her at every single event, not only on the business side, but she is also involved in the community and that's something we want to see in a business leader as well," said Martin. "We want a person that's amazing at business and is also involved in their

community; that's what true leadership is, in our opinion."

Some of the events deWever has participated in include the Alzheimer Society's Walk for Memories and the Stratford Pride Celebration. Martin said deWever has built a successful firm at Home & Company with a positive and supportive staff who enjoy working there.

"Marian is an absolutely delightful person; she's very warm and welcoming anytime you're talking with her," said Martin. "I always admire that from a person when they have this special aura around them. Even when you interact with some of her employees, you can tell that they are happy, and I think those are the telltale signs of a good leader."

With a legacy of leadership, dedication and community spirit, deWever's recognition as business leader of the year is a testament of her unwavering commitment to both her team and the Stratford community.

Nature School registrations open for spring at Wildwood Conservation Area

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

Children and caregivers will have the opportunity to learn and grow in the wild at Spruce Grove interactive nature area for the spring season.

The Upper Thames Conservation Authority (UTRCA) will offer a child and caregiver drop-in program for six weeks running from April 2 to May 7 every Wednesday from 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Wildwood Conservation Area near St. Marys.

Nature School for Falcons and Fledglings is aimed at kids aged 18 months to six years old, along with their caregivers, to encourage quality time with each other in nature to foster and develop connections with the environment with a focus on the power of play.

Children and caregivers will indulge in activities with-

in the Spruce Grove area at Wildwood, which contains toys, kitchen supplies, tables and books aimed at generating creativity. Other activities will include story time, free play, exploring and learning to treat the forest with kindness.

Each week, the program will feature a theme that ranges from different seasons, animals and species of insects.

Matthew Marchioni, community education technician at UTRCA, said that in past years, many of the participants enjoyed the outdoor kitchen area where they can use their surroundings to enhance their imagination by creating fun, outdoor recipes such as mud birthday cakes.

"I think with our younger participants, I think what we are hoping that they take away from this program is that they expand the ability to use their imagination and play in different spaces that are safe enough to do so," said Marchioni.

"As for the adults that join, it's about presenting them the space and a little bit of guidance on watching their little one and finding joy in the unstructured play, seeing the happiness that comes from these special moments."

Registrations are currently open with little availability left. Anyone interested in signing up can do so at thamesriver.on.ca.

Shelf Help

HEATHER LISTER

Stratford Public Library

This Book is Banned by Raj Haldar

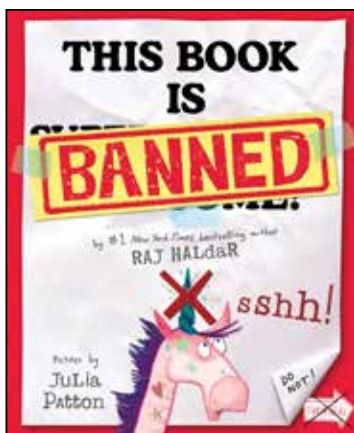
@ Stratford Public Library: JP Halda

"This book is banned. Please don't even try to read it. If you do, you'll find out why we don't want anyone to know what happens in the end!"

We just wrapped up another successful Freedom to Read Week here at the library, and our patrons were encouraged to talk about, and borrow, banned and challenged books.

As we strive to give our community access to a diverse collection of materials, books in libraries and schools are still challenged regularly across North America, and requests are made that they be taken off library shelves, or removed from the curriculum in schools.

This Book is Banned is one of the books we displayed



this year during Freedom to Read Week, and while it isn't a challenged book itself, it explains why it's important for children to explore all kinds of literature, and looks at the consequences of limiting their choices.

Haldar uses child-friendly analogies to make his point, with colourful illustrations by Julia Patton.

"Let's ban dinosaurs from this book," says Haldar, "Because many people believe dinosaurs are make believe. So, we'll just remove them from the story. And what about robots? Oh no! The robot in our story just skated into a lake, and that's way too dangerous, so we'll ban robots from this story too!"

By the end of the book, everything is banned, and there's no ending left to read.

If we don't want our books to disappear, we have to keep reading and sharing. Haldar says, "Even if a book isn't for you, it could still be perfect for someone else."

Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. Who are the "big five" banks in Canada
2. Area 51 is located in which U.S state?
3. The sport of curling comes from what country?
4. What reptile cannot stick its tongue out?
5. How many numbers are on a dartboard?
6. Glossophobia is the fear of what?
7. What year was Snapchat launched?
8. The Birkin bag was introduced by what company?
9. What is Lady Gaga's real first name?
10. What Canadian province produces the most maple syrup?

This week's answers are found on pg. 34

Our buildings tell a story: Avon Theatre Part 4, a major remodeling

PAUL WILKER AND GORD CONROY

Times Contributors

In 2002, a major remodeling of the Avon Theatre costing \$12 million created a completely new façade, lobby and auditorium. Funding was provided by the city, provincial and federal governments.

On May 30, 2002, the Perth County Pipe Band played on as about 250 festival patrons and interested citizens watched the opening ceremony which preceded the Avon opening night featuring the Three Penny Opera.

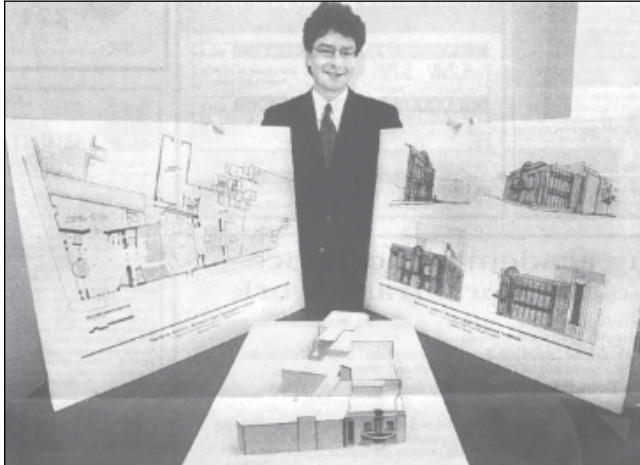
Tom Orr, vice chairman of the board and chairman of the Avon Theatre rejuvenation program thanked the many groups that donated money to the renovation. He was especially gracious in his appreciation to the City of Stratford for donating \$1 million to the project and for the federal and provincial governments for funding.

Included in speeches by dignitaries was the unveiling of the Walk of Fame. Five Bronze stars were uncovered to honour members of the Stratford Festival's inaugural season in 1953: founder Tom Patterson, actor Alec Guinness, artistic director Tyrone Guthrie, actor Irene Worth, and original designer Tanya Moiseiwitsch.

Memories of the Avon as a movie theatre in the 50s

One could go to see a double feature, a cartoon and have popcorn and a coke for 35 cents. Smoking and necking in the balcony were quite popular. We could not miss a serial at every Saturday matinee. Did Batman really go over the cliff? Favourite shows were cowboy movies, The Three Stooges and Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis. Curved screen Cinemascope arrived to present blockbuster movies such as The Ten Commandments and 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea. Another novelty was 3D movies where we had to wear cardboard glasses with a red and blue plastic lenses.

Text and photos provided by the Stratford-Perth Archives. For more on our buildings visit www.streetsof-stratford.ca.



Antonio Cimolino, then general manager and now artistic director of the Stratford Festival, shows sketches of plans for the proposed theatre. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)



The theatre was officially re-dedicated by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. He addressed a crowd of nearly 1,000 people at the ceremony as he whipped the cover off to unveil the cornerstone along with Festival board of governors' chair Don Woodley and artistic director Richard Monette.



Prop maker Ken Dubblestyne looks over an intricate steel cartouche that he made to hang above the stage. The artwork, stretching some six meters across and weighing 200 kilograms (440 pounds), was inspired by an earlier cartouche designed by Tanya Moiseiwitsch and built by Robert Ihrig.



The official opening of the Avon Theatre with members of the Festival Fanfare.

Want to age in your home? Free home-care symposium to shed light on the future of aging in Canada

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Home care, a branch of health care devoted to making sure that people of all ages can access services while staying in their homes, is not always accessible in this country.

Paul Brown, a Stratford based home-care advocate, thinks that needs to change.

Brown's passion for home care over the last few years came after he read former Minister of Health Dr. Jane Philpott's book, *Health for All: A Doctor's Prescription for a Healthier Canada*. Philpott was also just tapped by Ontario Premier Doug Ford to chair a taskforce on connecting Ontarians to primary care doctors within five years.

In the book, Philpott frames primary care in a way that includes mental-health support, palliative care, paramedic sup-

port and, crucially, home care, Brown told the Times.

"And now Dr. Philpott has recommended that primary care embraces a national home-care program and a National Primary Care Act," Brown said. "And I think she's right on with this, and it provides a model that I think is very engaging of communities, of families, of patients and the continuation of care that brings things together, almost on an integrated approach and in your community."

To better inform the public and to maybe generate new ideas on home care and how to shape a local or national program, Brown has organized a free symposium on the subject this April, a whole-day event where attendees can listen to experts and network amongst themselves.

The goal for the symposium is to have a mix of health providers, older-adult representation, families and parents who are raising young adults, and anyone

who stands to benefit from home care. In short, anyone and everyone in Stratford, Brown said.

On whether such a big issue that spans jurisdictions across this country can be tackled effectively on a local level, Brown said the more informed the population is, the better.

"In an event like this, where you have academics that are doing research and have findings and have solid data and information behind them, the more they can present that to a diverse audience, that audience then can come away from an event seeing things the same way, realizing that there's a different way of doing things – that there's a potential that we have to not lose our medicare in this country, but in fact rebuild it and have it stronger than ever. And I think that's where I'm a believer."

So far, Gabrielle Gallant, policy director at the National Institute on Ageing,

Catherine Burns, a professor in the faculty of engineering and associate vice president of health initiatives at the University of Waterloo, John Hirdes, a professor at the School of Health Sciences at the University of Waterloo, and Jean Hewitt, a "superager" at Western University's super aging research initiative, have been announced as guest speakers, though Brown alluded to a fifth lunch speaker as well, if arrangements are successful.

Regardless, Brown is promising a solid and diverse program with representatives from local government, local health-care organizations and service clubs slated to attend.

The home-care symposium is scheduled for April 16 at the Stratford Country Club from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

To reserve a free spot, visit www.eventbrite.ca/e/discover-the-future-of-homecare-tickets-1271744896219.

One of Stratford's oldest and spryest residents turns 103

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

Anyone looking for inspiration on how to age gracefully should look no further than Kaatje Wilhelmina "Willy" Van Loo.

She may have celebrated her 103rd birthday on March 3, but by talking to her, one might swear she was at least 20 years younger.

Born in Vriezenveen in the Netherlands in 1922, Willy was the eldest of 12 siblings. As her son, John, proudly shares, she has outlived all but one – her youngest

sister, Carla, who is now in her 70s.

Willy immigrated to Canada in 1951 with her husband, Albertus Peter (Bob) Van Loo, and spent most of her life in or near Clinton. She became well known among family and friends for her exceptional house-cleaning skills.

She is immensely proud of her large family, which includes two sons, two daughters and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

A jovial and witty spirit, Willy credits her faith in God for her long and healthy life.



A smiling and cheerful Willy Van Loo celebrates her 103rd birthday with family and friends, posing with a birthday cake at a gathering like no other. (GARY WEST PHOTO)

The coming change in Stratford: Not wasted!

JULIA SCHNEIDER

Times Correspondent

What is it about change that makes me deeply apprehensive? What am I doing wrong now? What will I have to do differently? How difficult will it be to adapt to this change?

To my relief, the March 6 Climate Conversation talk at city hall by Emily Skelding, Stratford's supervisor of waste operations, about changes to Stratford's waste collection did not leave me feeling guilty or apprehensive. In fact, from what she said, I am already doing what I should when it comes to making use of Stratford's services.

1. I try to reduce my garbage waste as much as possible for environmental reasons, but also to reduce the purchase of garbage tags, putting it out every four to six weeks;

2. I leave grass cuttings and leaves on the lawn or garden so as to facilitate the propagation of butterflies and other insects that are so essential and threatened;

3. I put out my green bin weekly, however much I have put in it;

4. I haul out the blue bin biweekly to make sure recyclable items are recycled and not sent to landfill.

Skelding told her audience what to expect from Stratford's new process for collection of these four streams of waste including garbage (45 per cent), leaf and yard waste (12 per cent), the green bin (14 per cent), and the blue box (29 per cent).

Where do these all go?

Garbage waste goes into the landfill. Our current landfill in Stratford was started in the early 1950s and has an estimat-

ed 20 years of capacity left, so it is very important to send only unrecyclable items there.

Other waste items face a more useful future. Yard waste is reused for fertilizer, as is what is put in the green bins. The latter goes through a process where the gas produced is used to make renewable natural gas and the solids are used as a nutrient-rich fertilizer for agriculture.

One person in the audience asked whether to put organic waste in garbage or the green bin. The answer came back loud and clear – the green bin!

None of the above is going to be changed by the new system. What it involves is the blue bin. Starting in 2026, the blue bin program will be regulated provincially and the responsibility for recycling will fall on those producing the waste rather than on the consumer. Skelding said the main differences citizens will see is an expanded list of recyclable items, which will be consistent across the province, and a new, wheeled bin, which will be provided. The frequency of collection is yet to be decided, but is likely to remain bi-weekly.

After the talk, I still had a few questions, mainly about textiles, but felt an overall sense of relief. I will continue to be mindful that anything that goes into a waste bin, whether plastics, "cheap" junk, or "disposable" items, has to go somewhere; nothing disappears. Ultimately, what is cheap isn't. The waste program in Stratford seems to be in good hands; what we need to do is to continue to help with its purpose by putting waste in its proper pickup stream and reducing it as much as possible!

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Smith emphasizes the importance of mental health awareness to educators at St. Mike's

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Classes were cancelled at St. Michael Catholic Secondary School on March 6 due to inclement weather, but teachers and other staff listened to Tyler Smith, *Amazing Race Canada* winner and survivor of the Humboldt Broncos bus crash on April 6, 2018, talk about his journey towards mental-health advocacy.

Wearing a ballcap from his mental-health

awareness clothing line, Not Alone Co., Smith talked about the joyful times playing with the Broncos hockey team, honouring those on the team who passed away by releasing balloons into the air, and how moved he felt seeing tributes honouring the players shortly after the tragic crash. He also touched on his journey towards therapy to cope with the losses and leaning on his support system. Smith told those gathered about students who reach out to him after his speeches and how they need-

ed to hear his message, either in-person at the school or online through Instagram.

During his speech, Smith said he hopes by doing public speaking, the day the bus crash happened, which killed 16 people and injured 13 more, will never be forgotten – especially since there are students who are too young to remember the crash or were born after the crash. He also wants the conversation about mental health to continue outside his speeches.

"This wild world of mental health is

so uncomfortable sometimes and weird and difficult, and I'm going to hold on to the hope that just one person is going to go home and have a conversation," Smith said.

Smith spoke at secondary schools across the Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board in Huron and Perth counties thanks to funding from the Ontario Ministry of Education – Mental Health Strategies Supports and Crime-School Safety Grants from the OPP.



Tyler Smith, a survivor of the Humboldt Broncos bus crash in 2018 and winner of *Amazing Race Canada*, spoke about mental-health awareness and his journey with his own mental health for St. Michael Catholic Secondary School teachers and staff on March 6. Students were also supposed to attend, but classes were cancelled due to inclement weather. (EMILY STEWART PHOTOS)



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Stratford Makers Market gears up for a vibrant Easter celebration

JULIA PAUL

Times Correspondent

Stratford's beloved Easter Market is set to bring an exciting mix of artisans, entertainment and community spirit to the Stratford Rotary Complex on Sunday, April 6.

Featuring over 85 local vendors, interactive activities and fundraising efforts for a meaningful cause, this highly anticipated event promises a one-of-a-kind experience for visitors of all ages.

Now in its fifth year, the Easter Market has grown from a humble gathering in co-founder Brittany Henry's home to a bustling community event that continues to outgrow its venues. After previous stops at the Arden Park, the market found its ideal home at the Stratford Rotary Complex, where it has flourished for the past two years.

"This market started small, right in Brittany's home, but it quickly grew," said Sara Clarke, co-owner of Stratford Makers Market. "We had to move to the Arden Park and then, as it kept getting bigger, to the Rotary Complex. It's amazing to see how much support the community has shown for this event over the years."

The event operates with a cash-donation entry fee, with all proceeds going to the Special Care Nursery at Stratford General Hospital. This initiative has resonated deeply with the community, as many families have directly benefited from the nursery's specialized care.

This year's Easter Market will showcase an impressive variety of local artisans and makers, offering everything from handcrafted crochet pieces and candles to sublimated clothing, jewelry, woodworking, bath and body products, and stunning home décor. In addition, floral vendors will



The Stratford Makers Market team consists of Sara Clarke, Brittany Henry, Nicole Bears, Abby Rivers and Rosalie Preikschas. This photo was taken at their 2024 Christmas Market. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

be onsite bringing a refreshing taste of spring with their vibrant bouquets.

"We love local," said Clarke. "Giving hardworking small businesses within our community a space to showcase their talents really means so much to us. With 85 vendors in one location, people get a chance to shop a little bit of everything, whether it's gifts, home décor, or even something special for themselves."

In addition to its impressive lineup of vendors, the Easter Market offers plenty of family-friendly activities. Attendees can

look forward to:

- A special visit from the Easter Bunnies
- Face painting (10 a.m. – 2 p.m.)
- A fun photo booth, available by donation, with proceeds benefiting the Special Care Nursery
- A children's colouring contest with a chance to win a bag of "Bunny Bait" candy from Corner Store Candy Co. (Colouring sheets are available at Ivy Rose Creative in Tavistock, Corner Store Candy Co. in Stratford, or can be downloaded from the market's website and social media pages)

"Our Easter Market is such a fun event for families," Clarke said. "Kids love seeing the Easter Bunnies, getting their faces painted and entering our colouring contest. It's really special to see them get excited about these activities while also supporting a great cause."

To refuel during the excitement, food trucks will be stationed in the parking lot, offering visitors a variety of delicious options before or after their shopping.

For those attending the Stratford Makers Market for the first time, planning to spend a couple of hours at the event is highly recommended. With so many vendors to explore, visitors often prefer to browse first, take note of their favourites and then circle back for purchases. The photo booth is also a must-visit, offering a chance to capture fun memories while contributing to a great cause.

Following the Easter Market, the next major event on the Stratford Makers Market calendar is the Christmas Market, scheduled for Nov. 21-23 at the Stratford Rotary Complex. Expanding into a three-day extravaganza, this festive event will feature over 115 vendors, making it one of the largest seasonal shopping experiences in the region.

"The Christmas Market is our biggest event of the year," Clarke said. "It runs for three days and features even more vendors – over 115! If people love the Easter Market, they won't want to miss this one."

The Stratford Makers Market Easter event is more than just a market – it is a celebration of community, creativity and generosity. With an exciting lineup of vendors, engaging activities and a cause that touches many lives, it promises to be an unforgettable experience for all who attend.



Deb's Dips served up big flavour at the Stratford Makers Market's Food Festival on March 8 at the Stratford Rotary Complex. (JULIA PAUL PHOTO)



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Notice of Annual General Meeting

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June is the time for Pride

SYDNEY GOODWIN

Times Correspondent

Every June, the people of Stratford come together to celebrate Pride and honour those who are members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and their ongoing battle for equality and rights all around the world.

During the month of June, we look at what has been done to aid the members of the community, and we look at what still needs to change. In June, millions show their support for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in various ways, such as parades and advocacy, helping to reinforce a message of love, acceptance and pride.

Stratford is gearing up for the seventh-annual Perth County Pride March (formerly the Stratford Pride Parade), taking place Sunday June 1 at 1 p.m. This

year's march marks the first parade with the Stratford Pride Community Centre and Stratford-Perth Pride merging as one organization under the name of Stratford-Perth Pride. Everyone from all walks of life are welcome to come together and join in the march, which kicks off at the Tom Patterson Theatre and then makes it way up to Upper Queen's Park along Lakeside Drive.

At the end of the march, participants are welcome to stay and enjoy the festivities put together at the Stratford-Perth Pride Festival from 2-4 p.m. The Kids' Zone is an area that will feature several attractions for young participants including lawn games, face-painting and other child-friendly activities, creating a fun and inclusive atmosphere. Ally Alley is where attendees will be able to find community resource



vendors, independent companies showcasing their beautiful products.

There will be a wide array of food trucks and artisan vendors, giving those who attend a chance to grab a tasty treat while they browse the handmade goods of local sellers. The bandshell pavilion lets festival goers enjoy an afternoon filled with live music performances, captivating the audience with a lineup of local and guest artists.

Stratford-Perth Pride is committed to providing a welcoming and open space for members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and its allies. For more information, visit their Facebook page at Stratford-Perth Pride, or stay up to date on Instagram @stratford-perthpride.

Sydney Goodwin is a Program Coordinator for the Stratford-Perth Pride

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HOME IMPROVEMENTS 2025

Building Trust and Quality: How Linton Window & Door is shaping homes and giving back

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

It's not just about windows and doors – it's about trust. When homeowners in Stratford and the surrounding areas invest in their homes, they aren't just looking for a product; they're looking for a company that stands behind its work. A company that shows up, delivers quality and takes care of them long after the job is done. That's exactly what Linton Window & Door has built its reputation on.

Walk into their showroom on Highway 7/8, beside Shakespeare Pizza and Shakespeare Pies, and you'll feel it immediately. This isn't just a business, it's part of the community, and that's exactly what owners Brandon and Melissa Weber set out to build when they expanded Linton Window & Door from its Cambridge roots into the heart of Perth County.

"We could see how much work was coming from Stratford, Tavistock, New Hamburg and the surrounding areas," Brandon Weber said. "It was clear this is where we needed to be."

After driving past the location, Brandon and Melissa immediately knew it was the perfect fit. "Melissa loves small towns, and when we moved here, we knew right away we wanted to give back. After being here for only a short while, we were welcomed into the community. We don't just want to be in the community, we want to be part of it."

A team that stands out

"What sets us apart, hands down, is our service," Brandon Weber said. "We have a full-time service team – something no one else in the Stratford area has – and the strongest warranty in the region. But what really makes the difference is that we have people who genuinely care."

Finding skilled, dedicated professionals in this industry isn't easy, but Linton has built something special – a company that attracts top talent because of its culture, its values and its reputation.

"We've all heard the phrase, it's hard to find good people. I found them; I've got them," Brandon Weber said. "It's not by mistake that last week, a great installer was calling me directly. They heard about us, they'd seen us online, they said they'd checked out our social media and they said we look like a tightknit group of people who look like a family. And I just hired a sales rep who searched us out for the exact same reason."

That's what makes the experience different for Linton's customers. When you choose them, you're not just getting a

new window or door, you're getting a team that stands behind every project, values every detail and treats every home like their own.

Setting the standard in quality and service

Linton Window & Door goes beyond just selling and installing windows – they're setting the bar for what customer service should look like. Every installer and salesperson is Window Wise certified through the Siding and Window Dealers Association of Canada (SAWDAC), a qualification that goes beyond industry requirements. But what truly sets them apart is the ongoing, private training they provide to their team throughout the year to ensure everyone is at the top of their game.

"We're offering a premium product and a premium service," Brandon Weber explained. "But when you have the right people, that premium service doesn't have to come with the hefty price tag people expect. It's about expertise. When you hire the best, the results speak for themselves."

With over 500 five-star Google reviews at their Cambridge location and another 60 and counting in Shakespeare, Linton Window & Door is the highest-rated window and door company in the area.

"If there's something we can do to make things better, I'm going to do it. When things go sideways, I assure you we'll get you to the finish line with a smile. That's the difference," Brandon Weber said.

More than a business – a community partner

For the Webers, success isn't just measured in projects or five-star reviews, it's about giving back.

"Youth sports is something I strongly believe in," Brandon Weber said. "We want to be part of the community, not just another business in it."

Since opening in Shakespeare, Linton Window & Door has sponsored minor sports teams, supported Tavistock Park Fest and contributed to initiatives like the Perth Waterloo School Egg Program. They also helped fund a new playground at Tavistock Public School and donated to the Shakespeare walking path project organized by the local Optimist Club.

"We're not just here to sell windows and doors," Brandon Weber said. "We're here to help build the community we're part of."

Looking to the future

With a strong foundation in Cambridge and Shakespeare, Linton Window & Door is already planning its next chapter – expanding into Woodstock. No matter where they go,

one thing remains the same; their commitment to quality, service and the people they serve.

"It's more than just windows and doors," Brandon Weber said. "It's about building something that lasts – both in homes and in the community."

And in Shakespeare, they're doing just that. Learn more about Linton Window & Door at www.lintonwindow.com.



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Warriors find a way to overcome Vipers in Game 1

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Times Regional Reporter

Though they didn't have the consistency they wanted, the Stratford Hunter Steel Ltd. Warriors found a way to come up with a 2-1 victory in Game 1 of their first-round playoff series against the LaSalle Vipers on March 14.

Head coach Dave Williams admitted there were large swaths of the quarter final's first game that weren't up to par.

"I didn't think we got off to the start we were looking for," Williams told the Times. "I just thought we were sloppy in general with the puck, and we didn't do a good enough job managing it. We were struggling to put multiple passes together and get set up the way we wanted to, and LaSalle put us on our heels for a while in the first part of the game."

The only goal of the first 40 minutes came just two minutes and 59 seconds into the opening period when Max Brocklehurst buried a powerplay goal.

Williams credited goaltender Carter McDougall for keeping the game within the Warriors' reach, specifically during their lacklustre first 40 minutes.

"We were really fortunate that our goaltending held us in it," said Williams. "I thought Carter (McDougall) played really well the entire game, especially in the first couple of periods to keep that game within a goal and give us a chance to win. We've gotten that kind of goaltending from Carter and Chase (Furlong) the entire year. They've been incredibly solid, but we definitely were relying on Carter more than we should have in Game 1."

Just one minute and nine seconds into the third, the Warriors finally got on the scoresheet when Kaedyn Long found the back of the net. Hudson Binder and Drew Hodge earned the assists. According to Williams, Long's goal provided a much-needed shot in the arm to the Warriors that propelled the team to a much stronger showing the rest of the way.

"Once we scored our first goal in the third period, we really seemed to find our legs. We got a lot better and it gave big burst of energy to the bench. A lot of times, goals can make you start skating, competing, and playing differently, and it felt like we were more competitive in the third period after we scored that goal."

The momentum from Long's goal finally paid off for the Warriors just over eight minutes later when Aiden

Wilson fired the eventual game-winning tally, giving the Warriors a 2-1 lead, the eventual final score. In between the pipes, McDougall ended the night with 26 saves.

The series had a lengthy layoff between games one and two, with the second game in the series taking place after the Times' press time on March 19, following four days without a game.

Williams analyzed the matchup of Stratford against LaSalle, noting the similarities of the two squads throughout the season.

"LaSalle is fairly balanced up front and on the back end, and when I look at our rosters and how both teams did in the regular season, there isn't a lot of difference between us and them. I don't think either team is super top-heavy with their scoring, and both teams can play a responsible defensive game, so the 2-1 score didn't completely surprise me. Both teams will have to find ways to have special-teams success and really capitalize on their five-on-five chances."

Game 3 is scheduled for March 21 in Stratford, with Game 4 following on March 23. If necessary, Game 5 is scheduled for March 24, Game 6 would be March 26 and Game 7 is slated for March 30.

GOJHL Playoff Results (as of March 18):

Western Conference:

1 vs 8 - St. Marys Lincolns vs K-W Siskins
SMY leads 3-0

2 vs 7 - Chatham Maroons vs Elmira Sugar Kings
CHA leads 2-0

3 vs 6 - Stratford Warriors vs LaSalle Vipers
SFD leads 1-0

4 vs 5 - Listowel Cyclones vs London Nationals
LON leads 1-0

Eastern Conference:

1 vs 8 - St. Catharines Falcons vs Hamilton Kilty B's
SCF leads 2-1

2 vs 7 - Ayr Centennials vs Brantford Titans
BFD leads 2-0

3 vs 6 - Fort Erie Meteors vs Cambridge RedHawks
FEM leads 2-0

4 vs 5 - Port Colborne Sailors vs Caledonia Corvairs
Series tied 1-1



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UPCOMING GAMES

Friday, March 21 - 7:30pm
vs LaSalle - Allman Arena

Sunday, March 23 - 2:30pm
at LaSalle - Vollmer Culture R.C.

Monday, March 24 - 7:30pm*
vs LaSalle - Allman Arena

Wednesday, March 26 - 7:00pm*
at LaSalle - Vollmer Culture R.C.

Sunday, March 30 - 3:30pm*
vs LaSalle - Allman Arena

*If necessary

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Stratford Sports Hall of Fame 2025 inductees announced

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Stratford's Sports Wall of Fame organizing committee is pleased to announce the inductees for 2025.

In the athlete category, this year's inductees are Robert White (hockey) and Ben Gerber (dragon boating).

In the team category, the inductees are the 1988 Stratford Memorials Boys Squirt Softball team and the 1990 Stratford Memorials Boys Peeewe Softball team.

In the builder category, the inductee is Ken Gene

(dragon boating).

The City of Stratford will be honouring these Sports Wall of Fame inductees at the annual Minor Sports Council Banquet on April 26 at the Rotary Complex community hall. The reception begins at 5 p.m. with dinner at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$35 per person and must be purchased in advance.

For more information and to purchase tickets, contact Christa Robinson at 519-271-0250 ext. 245 or crobinson@stratford.ca.

Fighting Irish up 2-0 in second-round series against Tilbury

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Times Regional Reporter

After winning their first-round match-up over the Petrolia Squires in six games, the Stratford Bentley's Fighting Irish have gone up two games to none in their semi-final series against the Tilbury Bluebirds.

The series got off to a high-flying start with the Fighting Irish winning the first game of the series on March 15 by a score of 8-6. After the Bluebirds took a 1-0 lead, Graham Brulotte and Cole Thiessen scored just 18 seconds apart to give Stratford a 2-1 advantage. However, the lead didn't last long with the Bluebirds balancing the score a mere 22 seconds later. Zach Magwood scored a shorthanded goal with just six seconds left in the opening frame to give Stratford a 3-2 lead heading into the first intermission.

Both teams continued their explosive offensive out-

put in a six-goal second period, including Fighting Irish goals by Brulotte, Thiessen and Cameron Stokes. In the third, Magwood scored another late-period shorthanded goal, which followed the game-winning goal fired by Justin Murray, with the Fighting Irish taking an 8-6 win to go up 1-0 in the series.

Though the total number of goals was cut in half from the first game to the second, Game 2 remained exciting as the Fighting Irish took a 4-3 win in overtime over Tilbury on March 16. Thiessen recorded the only goal of the opening frame, a period in which Stratford outshot the Bluebirds 15-5.

Tilbury fought back and outshot Stratford 31-19 in the final two periods of regulation, and trailed 3-2 until approximately three minutes into the third when the Bluebirds tied the game at three apiece. Brulotte and Magwood each found the back of the net in the second stanza for Stratford.

The Fighting Irish managed to claw back control of the contest in overtime, doubling the Bluebirds in shots 10-5 before Thiessen tallied his second of the game, the overtime winner. Zach Weir backstopped the Fighting Irish to the win, making 38 saves.

It was just the second win on home ice for the Fighting Irish, who won three of four games in the first round in Petrolia as the Squires took games three and five in Stratford. The Fighting Irish picked up a 4-2 win in Game 4 to put the Squires on the brink of elimination, and eventually eliminated Petrolia in Game 6 with a 6-4 victory.

Game 6 on March 9 was tied 3-3 after two periods, with Stratford getting goals from Brulotte, Matt Henderson and Matt Montgomery. In the third, Montgomery potted his second of the night, the eventual game-winner, with Stokes and Magwood also scoring to lift the Fighting Irish to a 6-4 win. Jonah Capriotti earned the win in goal for Stratford.

SSC hosting 2025 Ontario Figure Skating Championship

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The Stratford Skating Club (SSC) is excited to host the 2025 Skate Ontario Provincial Figure Skating Championships at the Stratford Rotary Complex March 21-23.

The competition's events run from 8 a.m. each morning and wrap up around 9:30 p.m. on Friday and Saturday evenings, and 4 p.m. on Sunday afternoon.

There will be more than 600 of the top figure skaters in Ontario coming to Stratford for this event. The provincial championship will feature men's and women's singles events at the Star-Five-Gold levels, pre-juvenile to novice free programs, dance, pairs and artistic skating events, as well as some synchronized-skating events.

This competition is open for general admission to the public. Admission per person per day is \$10 for adults and \$5 for students (aged four to 18) and seniors (age 60 and over). All children three years and younger are free. Admission will be collected at the door.

The Stratford Skating Club is excited that Mason Clemmer will be competing in the Star-Five Men's O13 event at the provincial championships. Clemmer has been skating with the SSC for three years, with this being his second trip to the provincial championships. Clemmer also competed in the 2023 provincial championship. Clemmer earned a berth into this year's championships by ranking seventh out of all Star-Five O13 Men throughout Skate Ontario's Provincial Series events this 2024-2025 skating season.



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Little Aces Development League girls' hockey program announced ahead of Try Aces Day

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Just ahead of their annual Try Aces Day in late March, a local girls hockey organization is launching a new program for young players.

Stratford Aces Girls Hockey launched the Little Aces Development program for U7 players born in the years 2020 and 2019, girls who are either five or six years old. The Little Aces Development program aims to have 40 girls total on the ice, split into four teams of 10 players.

"It's literally just to get their confidence going and participating together and not have to worry about any other outside environments, just really growing their skills and get to experience girls' hockey at a young age," said Jessie Jacob, director of special events.

There will be no out-of-town games for the Little Aces Development program. Rather, there will be a practice once a week with a scrimmage on the weekend. Jacob said the development league will give the girls a chance to sharpen their skills together.

"Ultimately, it'll help them down the line here so that they're learning to play hockey with their fellow girls from a

young age and it's not just something that has to start up at U9 and U11," she said. "We're giving them the platform to start at a young age and know the excitement that's involved with playing with your peers."

The U7 development league is also looking for sponsorship from local businesses. Anyone looking for more information about sponsorship opportunities can send an email to littleaces@aceshockey.com.

"It's a great way for local businesses to be a part of a new initiative, especially female-run businesses," Jacob said. "It's a great way for them to get involved and help support young athletes"

The Stratford Aces will host their Try Aces Day on March 30 at the Dufferin Arena where girls can try drills with other players for free. All players must be registered online ahead of the session and should show up at least 20 minutes in advance to allow time to put on their skates. The U7 players will hit the ice from 1-1:45 p.m. and the U9s (players born in 2018 and 2017, seven and eight year olds) will practice from 1:45-2:30 p.m.

More information about the Stratford Aces, including registration for Try Aces Day, can be found online at aceshockey.com.



Girls interested in playing hockey will have a chance to practice during Try Aces Day on March 30 at the Dufferin Arena. The Stratford Aces are also launching their U7 Little Aces Development League for girls five and six years old. (JESSIE JACOB PHOTO)

SDSS Golden Bears win second straight WOSSAA curling championship

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

The Stratford District Secondary School (SDSS) Golden Bears girls curling team has claimed its second consecutive WOSSAA gold medal, securing a spot at the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations (OFSAA) provincial championships.

Dominating performance at WOSSAA

Coach Shane Restall praised the team's strong play at the London Curling Club, where they won both their semifinal and championship matches in dominant fashion.

"In the semifinal game, the Bears beat London Saunders, the London Central division champions, by a score of 11-3," Restall said.

In the gold-medal game, the Bears faced Woodstock Collegiate Institute, last year's runner-up, which was looking for redemption. However, SDSS controlled the match, winning 11-2 to secure their second straight WOSSAA title.

The Golden Bears now hold a perfect 15-0 record against high-school competition this season.

A young but experienced team

The SDSS roster features a mix of experienced players and young talent. The team consists of skip Addison Hyatt, a Grade 11 student; vice-skip Hailey Peters and second Deanna Halls, both in Grade 10; and lead Brooklyn Hyatt, a Grade 9 student and younger sister of Addison Hyatt.

Coaching the team are Brian Anderson, Paul Hyatt and teacher-coach Shane Restall. The Bears primarily train at the Stratford Country Club, with additional support from the Tavistock Curling Club and the Milverton Curling Club.

OFSAA championship ahead

Last year, the Bears struggled at OFSAA, finishing 1-4 in pool play and missing the playoffs. This season, they return to the OFSAA provincial championships in Sarnia from March 19-22, determined to make a deeper run.

The Bears will begin pool play Wednesday afternoon against Bishop Allen Academy from Toronto, competing against 19 other top girls' teams from across the province.

Fans can follow the SDSS Golden Bears on Facebook (Team Hyatt) or Instagram (@team.hyatt).



The SDSS Golden Bears curling team celebrates its WOSSAA championship with gold medals and a championship plaque. From left are coach Brian Anderson, vice-skip Hailey Peters, second Deanna Halls, lead Brooklyn Hyatt, skip Addison Hyatt and teacher-coach Shane Restall. Missing is coach Paul Hyatt. (GARY WEST PHOTO)

Stratford poet Heidi Sander launches national poetry competition, the Canada is our Poem Prize

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

To encourage Canadians from across the country to share what Canada means to them, multi-award-winning Stratford poet Heidi Sander has launched a national poetry competition, the Canada is our Poem Prize.

Launched on March 4, the initiative invites Canadians from all walks of life to reflect on their identity and what makes our nation unique, and share those thoughts and stories through poetry, fostering a deeper understanding of what it means to be Canadian.

"I just feel that our country needs it right now," Sander said. "I want to celebrate Canada and also inspire current artists and community members and people from all walks of life to reflect on their lives and

what Canada means to them.

"Whether it's issues of interest, histories, there are so many perspectives that we all need to be aware of at this point, I just want to do my part to connect people and engage through the written word. Poetry is very succinct and immediate, and I find it's a great connector."

At a modest entry fee of \$10, professional and amateur poets alike from communities large and small across the country are invited to submit their poems through the Blue Moon Publishers website at <http://tiny.cc/b9zc001>. A winning submission will be selected after the submission period ends on July 30, and its author will be awarded \$1,000 and one full year's access to Sander's interactive, multimedia Pathways to Poetry course and community.

Additionally, the top 200 poems will be featured in an anthology published

by Blue Moon Publishers in 2025. Financial assistance is available for anyone who cannot afford the entry fee.

"We already have submissions and that's exciting, and that tells me people are looking to share. They're looking for ways to have their voice heard because the submissions that came through were so unique and different. That's what I really love about this," Sander said.

While the winner of the competition will take home \$1,000, Sander stressed the competition really isn't about the money.


"What I really want is that people have their voices heard," Sander said. "To me, Canada is our Poem Prize, it doesn't end with the prize and the anthology. It really is about building community after that point. I'm talking with people about having Canada is our Poem celebrations across the country and that's where build-

ing community connections starts, whether it's poetry readings, workshops, events organized around the prize that creates spaces for individuals to come together and engage with one another.

"It's in those moments, in these kinds of gatherings, where they become melting pots of ideas and emotions where people from different walks of life can share their thoughts and experiences. There's kind of a spirit of comradery that can be formed through that."

Until the Canada is our Poem Prize concludes, the Stratford Times will regularly publish submissions to the competition written by Stratford and area poets as a way to celebrate local poetry and help bring the writing community closer together at a time when unity as Canadians and coming together in our own communities is more important than ever.

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Lots of reasons to laugh during Bad Decisions Comedy Tour

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

A group of comedians are preparing for a night of variety in standup comedy in Stratford this April.

The Bad Decisions Comedy Tour will make a stop in Stratford on April 18 at Brch & Wyn (245 Downie St.). The tour features four comedians who appeared either on Canada's Got Talent, at The Winnipeg Comedy Festival, on Apple TV, APTN and/or Amazon Prime. Comedians Scott Porteous, Chris Basso, Nelson Mayer and Herbert Henries will be performing.

"We're looking to have a lot of fun. I think it's a great tour because we have our own, individually unique styles, so there's really something for everybody in the audience," said Mayer.

Mayer added he's friends with his fellow comedians, which means there's lots of fun memories backstage.

"I've done a lot of tours with comics that I didn't know very well and it's okay. I mean, work is work and it's fun getting on stage and that's what it's really all about, but it's the behind-the-scenes stuff that's

really the most fun for us, so when you're there with people that you're comfortable with and you've known for quite a while, it's just that more-relaxed environment," he said. "It's more easygoing and it's a much more chill vibe, I think."

When asked if the backstage interactions translate into the onstage comedy, Mayer said it depends on the situation because there's a difference between what he called "onstage funny" and "in-the-car funny."

"There's something that will make us laugh in the car, but we recognize that it's probably not something for the stage that will translate well with audiences, but there will be times where we'll just be ripping on something and we'll say, 'Hey, by the way, that's a really funny premise. You should use that,' and comedy will grow from that," he said.

Mayer toured in Ontario as part of the Bad Apples comedy duo with fellow Winnipeg comedian Clayton T. Stewart. However, he's never performed in Stratford before and is looking forward to visiting.

"I just love being in new places. When I get to the hotel, I don't like to sit in the

hotel room," Mayer said. "I like to wander around and get a sense of the vibe in the community and then maybe I can incorporate some of that on stage and talk about the community and poke fun and just have a good time."

The audience can expect different types of comedy from storytelling to observational humour, but they won't have to worry about heckling.

"A lot of people are scared to sit up front because they think they're going to

get picked on or roasted and I'll talk to people in the crowd if they're wanting to engage, but we don't really do anything like that," Mayer said. "We're not here to make somebody not have a good time."

The Bad Decisions Comedy Tour's Stratford show starts at 7 p.m. Tickets for the 19+ event are \$25 each plus tax and can either be purchased online at www.jumpcomedy.com/e/the-bad-decisions-comedy-tour-stratford-on or at the door if any remain.

Step into a Time Machine Ron Finch's newest book

SYDNEY GOODWIN

Times Correspondent

It's 1927, the age of jazz, amazing stories and quantum mechanics. Change is in the air and anything is possible, even the impossible!

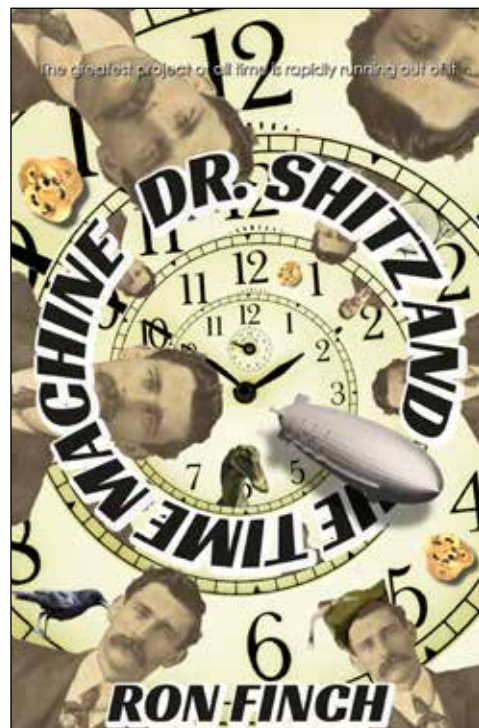
Stratford author Ron Finch has released his 16th book for readers to enjoy. *Dr. Shitz and the Time Machine*, the second book in the Dr. Shitz series, is a wacky novel that will leave readers howling with laughter and set them on the edges of their seats with excitement.

The newest addition to Finch's ever-growing bibliography offers a comedic tale filled with wacky antics, scientific theories and action-packed pyrotechnics. Following Finch's previous book in this series, *Dr. Shitz and the Wayward Ghost*, this story follows the titular character as he is tasked with a seemingly impossible task: build a Time Machine.

"The first thing the infamous doctor of thaumaturgy needs to do is assemble a crack team of specialists. Fortunately, his old friend, professor Adam Baum, knows a guy. If anyone can crack the code of time in time, it's the world-famous physicist, Almer Brainstein," Finch said.

Finch wanted this book to follow a similar tone as the first of this series, with stakes far larger than they should ever be.

"*Dr. Shitz and the Time Machine* opens up a can of wormholes in a world of exciting adventure populated by brutal criminals, mad scientists, tenacious news hounds and other colourful characters,"



The book cover (RON FINCH PHOTO) for Stratford author Ron Finch's latest book, *Dr. Shitz and the Time Machine*.

Finch said.

With the story being equal parts science fiction and paranormal, with action packed pyrotechnics and zany, over-the-top humour, there is something in this book for everyone to enjoy.

Dr. Shitz and the Time Machine can now be found at Fanfare books, 92 Ontario St. and can also be found on Amazon.

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The Bad Decisions Comedy Tour featuring comedians Scott Porteous, Chris Basso, Nelson Mayer and Herbert Henries will make its Stratford stop at Brch & Wyn April 18. (SCOTT PORTEOUS PHOTO)

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Stratford Perth Museum partners with local artist to explore Black history

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Though some might describe HAU as a historian, the Stratford-based mixed-media artist said that wasn't always the case.

"I was not very good at history at school," HAU admitted in a presentation at the Stratford-Perth Museum on March 8. "It was one of my weakest subjects and yet, ironically, today history is a real central pillar of the work that I do. And I don't just explore history, I interrogate it, I blur the lines between fact and fiction, personal and collective memory, activism and art."

"My artistic practice has been long rooted in uncovering a lot of Black stories that have been relegated to the peripheries. I challenge these structures that decide which stories get told and whose legacies endure. And through photography and filmmaking, I excavate the past not as a fixed record, but as a living, breathing mythology that still informs our present."

To an engaged audience in the museum's indoor theatre, HAU shared some of the often-overlooked Black stories in the region in a presentation on uncovering identities, highlighting the Harrison family, early Black business owners in Stratford, and the subject of HAU's most recent project, Aunt Harriet Millar.

Aunt Harriet, a film directed and de-



HAU, a Stratford based mixed-media artist, gives a presentation on uncovering identities when looking at Black history at the Stratford Perth Museum on March 8. (CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

vised by HAU and starring Ahdri Zhina Mandiela as the titular character, exemplifies much of what HAU spoke about in the recent presentation. Coincidentally, it was also shot on the museum's grounds and will be on display at the museum at a later date.

Millar is an interesting character of local history. In a 1932 article published in the Toronto Star for her death, Millar was described as "one of the most picturesque

characters Guelph has ever known." At the time of her death, she was believed to be well over 100 years old, but she had lost her memory and family, meaning that fact is questionable and many other details of her life are simply unknowable. However, through HAU's research and "interpretive exploration," and by using spoken word and surrealism to evoke memory loss, who she was and how "picturesque" she was will be front and centre in the

film.

HAU said it is the City of Guelph that is to thank for Aunt Harriet. After being selected as one of Guelph's 2024 artists in residence, HAU delved through various regional archives to learn more about who Millar actually was.

As HAU said, the focus was to explore how to build a picture of a real person, rather than just portraying a myth that everyone has heard of.

"That's part of the exercise, is seeing who those pioneers are and building a little bit of a tapestry of understanding what it was like," HAU said.

That pursuit is also why HAU is drawn to the story of Stratford legend Charley Lightfoot as well.

Lightfoot, born in West Flamborough in 1880, grew up and lived in Stratford for nearly all his life. He was one of the first Black professional hockey players in Canada and got his start playing here in the Festival City.

However, Lightfoot was much more than just a "first," something HAU wants to move away from as the sole signifier of a person. Lightfoot was one of the firsts, HAU said, but he was more than that and exploring who he was is something both HAU and the museum are looking forward to uncovering.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 27

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Stratford Film Festival's spring programming is deliciously appealing

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

The Stratford Film Festival (SFF) has revealed its spring programming and a special culinary treat to commence the 2025 season.

Each month will feature a film screening leading up to the four-day festival in November.

First up is *Dinner and a Movie* on March 29 at the Bruce Hotel, where the chef and sommelier have teamed up for a six-course meal with optional wine pairing based on their interpretation of food inspired by the film, *The Taste of Things*. This cinematic event will take place in the beautiful main dining room offering an immersive experience in art and food.

"The chef and the sommelier both watched the film to get a feel and a flavour for what they are trying to accomplish and how food is central to the theme of the film," said Megan Smith-Harris, festival director. "This is the first screening in the dining room, so the screen is going to be up high where guests can read the subtitles and not be disrupted by activity around them."

It is a soft and elegant film starring Juliette Binoche and Benoit Magimel set in 19th-century France. The film follows cook Eugénie and her longtime employer, Dodin, as their culinary creations intertwine with their slow-burning romance. Courses will be timed to coincide with lulls in the film so there is minimal distraction from the screen.

"I'm looking forward to chatting with

the chef and sommelier prior to the event. I haven't spoken to them at all, so that it will be fresh. I will interview them to find out what inspired them and what they took away from the film," said Smith-Harris.

The Taste of Things has received critical acclaim, earning 29 award nominations and winning eight prestigious awards, including Best Director at the Cannes Film Festival, Best International Feature at the César Awards and the Audience Award at the Toronto International Film Festival. Tickets are \$125 per person.

The next event is April 12 at city hall where Harris-Smith is excited to present the Canadian-Korean film *Riceboy Sleeps* with showings at 4 and 7 p.m. In this touching film set in the '90s, a Korean single mother raises her young son in the suburbs of Canada determined to provide a better life for him than the one she left behind.

This film is from the TIFF film circuit and stars Ethan Hwang, who will be familiar to fans of the Netflix series, *The Umbrella Academy*. Hwang will be appearing at the screening for a Q&A.

"Part of it is a coming-of-age story but also, it's an immigrant story about giving up everything and coming to another country with nothing and doing it to give your child a better life. It's a maternal sacrifice and putting your dreams and wishes aside to benefit your family. Canada is a country of immigrants and immigrant stories. I was deeply moved by this film and the mother's journey," said Smith-Harris.

Saturday May 17 brings the film *The*



Juliette Binoche starring in the film, *A Taste of Things*. The film will be shown alongside a six-course dinner in the main dining room at The Bruce Hotel for an immersive culinary treat. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Cowboy and the Queen to city hall for screenings at 4 and 7 p.m. This is a charming film about the controversial techniques employed in horse training that caught the attention of the Queen of England. The iconic British monarch with a lifelong love of horses and a renegade California cowboy forge the most unlikely friendship and fulfill shared goals of finding a better way to be with animals and a kinder way to be in the world.

"It shows how one person who stands up for what they believe in and believe

something that is true and good can make a difference and how we can work together across borders," said Smith-Harris.

There will be a Q&A after the film with details to be announced at a later date.

"I want people to feel hopeful and to be reminded of the goodness in the world and that there are good leaders and change can happen in the world," said Smith-Harris.

Tickets to each of these events are available at stratfordfilmfestival.com/projects-8. Saturday screenings are \$15 for adults and \$10 for students.

Stratford author releases new book celebrating his love of 45 RPM records

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Stratford's Steve Elliott has a deep, nostalgic love for 45 RPM vinyl records and the sound they produce. He loves them so much, in fact, he has written a book to share his obsession with fellow audiophiles and collectors.

As Elliott describes it in the book's introduction, *A 45 R P aMble On A Flat Foot* "started as a short collection of ideas about the 45 RPM record, grew into a ramble and is now an amble, a 45 R P aMble." The book is filled with more than 200 lists, organizing Elliott's considerable record collection by sound attributes, visual aspects of the record sleeves, where and when they were bought. Scattered throughout, Elliott shares context from his life at the time he first listened to the records – most of which feature singles with an A side and a B side – as well as information about each of the bands at the time these records were released and where they ranked on the charts.

"I'm quite a fan of the 45 RPM record, but I know there aren't so many people out there that are fans of 45s as there are fans of albums," Elliott said. "So, for me this was sort of a story about the 45 being a poor cousin, and it doesn't really get the same love that the album does. I've stood by the 45 for a long time.

"... I'm an audiophile, a musician and a record collector, and, as I describe on the back cover of my book, I'm always

searching for that elusive analogue sound. It's hard to describe to people that don't really know what you're talking about."

With a total of about 2,000-2,500 45s in his collection, Elliott said, over the years, he has recorded the songs from those records on between 600 and 700 cassette tapes – the original digital backup – so he can listen to his treasured music in its original analogue sound again and again without wearing out the fragile vinyl records.

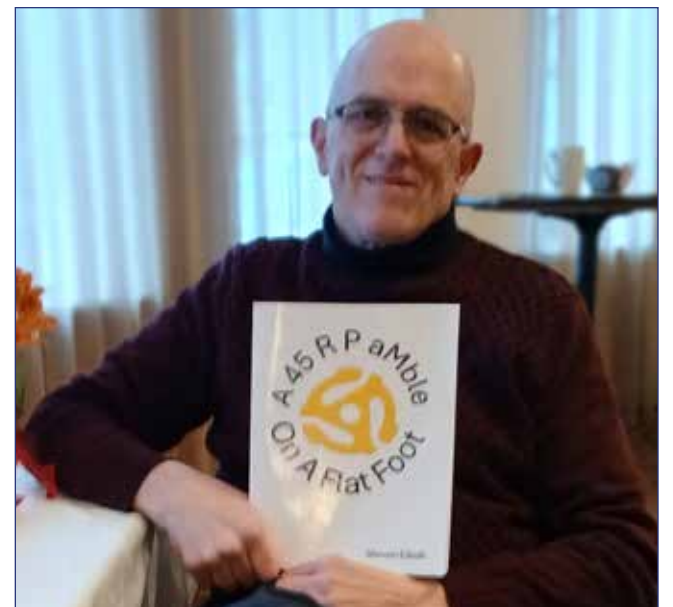
Elliott says he enjoys meeting with a monthly record-collectors' group at Revival House in Stratford. Each month, the group's members bring a 45 from their individual collections, forming the playlist for the evening as they enjoy each other's company and their memories of music from the past.

One of his friends from that group has a collection of 45s that dwarfs Elliott's own collection, numbering upwards of 20,000 records, and Elliott said at least part of his inspiration for writing his book was to help his friend and collectors like him catalogue their collections for future enjoyment and preservation.

"I have a newfound appreciation not only for people who write books, but people who work in the library sciences, too," Elliott laughed. "... It's a book full of lists and all the lists have something in common. What I like about it is the book is so all over the place. It's the sort of book you don't have to read cover to cover; you can just pick it up and read little bits and pieces at a time and go back to it later."

Elliott celebrated the launch of his book with family, friends

and supporters with an event at The Parlour Inn in Stratford March 6. The book is now available at Sound Fixation in Stratford or by contacting Elliott by email at sde0037@gmail.com.



Stratford audiophile, musician, record collector and, now, author Steve Elliott with his new book, *A 45 R P aMble On A Flat Foot*, at his book-launch event March 6. (STEVE ELLIOTT PHOTO)

Review: Production of *The Vagina Monologues* united women for the United Way Perth-Huron

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

Two sold-out productions of *The Vagina Monologues* by Eve Esler raised almost \$7,000 for the United Way Perth-Huron on March 7 and 8 at the Stratford Country Club.

Over the course of the two evenings, 220 patrons witnessed courage, honesty and humour from the stellar cast directed by Astrid Roch-Russell and Jennifer Paquette.

Producer Elizabeth Cooper, who also performed, was thrilled to bring the production to the audience of predominantly women and a few curious men on the occasion of International Women's Day.

"I have been wanting to bring this production back to Stratford since I saw it in 2020," she said. "I gathered an amazing production team together back in September of 2024 and we made it a reality in March."

The production, where Cooper is supported by Katie DeBlock Boersma and Ruby Joy, went off without a hitch from the beginning, and featured original music by Marion Adler. The song, "The Little Death," sung by Adler, Martha Farrell and Ayrin Mackie, perfectly set the mood for the rest of the performance.

"I couldn't be happier with how the entire production went; from months of planning to getting sponsors to finding the stellar cast and then making the show happen. It truly was one of the most enjoyable and exciting events I have ever been part of. I am so grateful to everyone involved who donated their time and talent to this fundraiser," said Cooper.

The cast was simply phenomenal as



The cast and directors of *The Vagina Monologues* fundraiser for United Way Perth-Huron. The two performances sold out in four days and raised close to \$7,000. (LISA CHESTER PHOTO)

each delivered their monologue with the strength, courage and brevity of the women who inspired the writing of the book. The cast, in order of appearance, was Adler, Farrell, Mackie, Hannah Thomas, Peggy Coffey, Brenda Bazinet, Siobhan O'Malley, Cooper, Kinley Mochrie, Kelly McIntosh, Jessica B. Hill, Kim Horsman, Ijeoma Emesowum, Maud Weaver and Sheila McCarthy.

"The cast was frankly unbelievable," said Cooper. "To be reading with the likes of Marion Adler, Jessica B. Hill, Peggy Coffey, Kim Horsman and Sheila McCarthy, to name a few, was very humbling for me. I was honoured to just be in the

room with the entire cast and I will always be thankful that they gave their precious time to this."

The audience was ready to be taken along for the ride as the lights went down and the first notes rung out of Adler's guitar and the song, "The Little Death," commanded attention. This groundbreaking play explores themes of womanhood, sexuality and empowerment through a series of monologues expertly, exquisitely and empathetically delivered by this group.

From the introduction to the finale by McCarthy, the audience's attention was fixed on the stage. They laughed, gasped and, at times, cringed as some of the truths

spoken were difficult to hear. The Vagina Happy Fact, delivered by Cooper, had people smiling and sitting a little taller in their seats while her Not-So-Happy Fact monologue left the audience in silence. Themes of gender identity were explored in the monologue, *They Beat the Girl Out of My Boy ... Or So They Tried*, by Kinley Mochrie, who was sweet and touching in her delivery.

Adler had the audience in the palm of her hand, delivering the monologue, *The Woman Who Loved To Make Vaginas Happy*, about a dominatrix who specializes in women. They couldn't have laughed harder as she unabashedly explored pleasure, making her a tough act to follow, or so said McCarthy as she approached the stage to deliver the closing monologue, *I Was There In The Room*. Her performance was, of course, nothing less than riveting, as was every one of the women who were part of the production.

I had never seen the play before, nor had I read the book, so there were no expectations for what I was to experience that evening. I can't say I have spent as much time thinking about or talking about the vagina as we did that night, but it was entertaining and endearing, a truly empowering evening I can, without hesitation, recommend for reaffirming your womanhood.

The headline sponsor for this fundraiser for United Way Perth-Huron was KDB Law, and food and registration sponsor was Home & Company Real Estate. Poster and programme design was provided by Claire Scott. For more information about United Way Perth-Huron's supported partners or to donate, visit perthhuron.unitedway.ca.

Stratford Symphony Orchestra plans explosive show as part of milestone year

CONNOR LUCZKA

Times Correspondent

In a spring concert promised to rival summer fireworks, the talented musicians who make up Stratford's principal orchestra will be given a spotlight.

A.J. Ashley, general manager of the Stratford Symphony Orchestra (SSO), said that in the SSO's 20th season, a focal point has been to highlight the musicians from within the orchestra individually. For its April 5 *Orchestral Fireworks!* performance, three will be given center-stage.

Cellist Gwendolyn Ngyuyen plays David Popper's "Hungarian Rhapsody for Cello and Orchestra, Op.68," while Kaye Royer on the clarinet and Dan Armstrong on the double bass perform Giovanni

Bottesini's "Gran Duo for Clarinet & Contrabass," joining the wider ensemble as they perform a litany of other spell-binding songs.

"A 20th anniversary season is a huge accomplishment for any arts organization," Ashley said. "So, (we) really wanted to highlight the orchestra itself and many of our members, who are spectacular musicians and have had spectacular careers and are now performing with us here in Stratford, which is truly great to be able to work with such high-calibre musicians."

The idea for highlighting individual performers came from William Rowson, principal conductor and music director at SSO. Rowson has worked with orchestras across Canada and is dedicated to bridging classical music to the modern world through creative means – a passion re-

flected in in this season, which has included performances of familiar favourites such as Beethoven's "Fifth Symphony" and newer pieces that may be a surprise even to fans of the artform.

This show in particular, Ashley said, is explosive.

"The musicianship in those pieces sort of represent fireworks, if you will, if they were going off in the air," he said. "We just get different sounds, different movements."

Ashley also said the season as a whole has been spectacular. It began with a September performance of the previously mentioned "Fifth Symphony" and, most recently, showcased a Celtic celebration at the tail end of January in addition to many other concerts featuring guest performers and core members alike.

The support the community has shown the SSO has likewise been spectacular. Ashley thanked the donors, sponsors, attendees and the wider community in Stratford, noting there have been so many new audience members and return guests coming to this season's concerts.

Another concert has been announced for Mother's Day in May and its signature *Cows and Classics* event is planned for June, with further details to be announced for the latter concert in April.

The *Orchestral Fireworks!* concert takes place on April 5 at the Avondale United Church, like all regular-season events. It starts at 7:30 p.m.

To purchase tickets or for more information on the *Orchestral Fireworks!* concert and other concerts performed by SSO, visit www.stratfordsymphony.ca.

VISIT US WWW.STRATFORDTIMES.COM

St. Marys fur farmer inducted onto Stratford-Perth Museum Wall of Fame

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

St. Marys area fur farmer Kirk Rankin is the latest local farmer to be inducted onto the Stratford-Perth Museum's Agriculture Wall of Fame.

Each year, the Stratford-Perth Museum seeks nominations from across Perth County to recognize individuals and farm families who have made outstanding contributions to the region's agricultural industry. This year, Rankin, of R.B.R. Fur Farms Limited in Perth South, has been selected as one of the honourees.

The Rankin family has been raising mink on their St. Marys area farm since the 1930s. At its peak in the mid-2000s, the farm housed and raised kits from 4,100-4,300 breeding females, along with hundreds of males.

Rankin took over the operation from his father, Jim, who is now 95 years old and is still living on the farm. Jim Rankin had previously inherited the business from his father, Dow.

A leader in the fur industry

Kirk Rankin's contributions to the mink industry extend well beyond his farm. He began his involvement in industry organizations as president of the St. Marys Mink



Recently at the doorway to one of their mink barns during their busy breeding season, Stratford-Perth Wall of Fame inductee Kirk Rankin holds three of their beautifully coloured breeding females – part of their 1,100 breeding stock. Standing with him are his sons, Jamie (left) and Curtis (right). Kirk's wife, Judith, not pictured, is also an integral part of their St. Marys mink farm.

(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Breeders' Association and later served as a director with the Perth County Federation of Agriculture from 1994-2020. He also held the position of president of the Ontario Fur Breeders Association.

His leadership continued at the national level as a member of the North Ameri-

can Fur Association, North American Fur Producers Inc. and North American Fur Auctions.

In 2004, Kirk Rankin was elected to the board of the Canadian Mink Breeders Association (CMBA) and served as a board member until 2018. From 2013-2015, he

was president of the CMBA.

Throughout his tenure, Kirk Rankin played a key role in industry standards and welfare practices. He chaired the CMBA finance committee, the code committee and the committee for the care and handling of ranched mink, leading the Certifur Canada certification program.

He also represented the CMBA at several animal-welfare conferences and attended National Animal Care Council meetings.

Recognition for agricultural excellence

In 2018, R.B.R. Fur Farms Ltd. received the BMO Bank of Montreal and Ontario Plowmen's Association Family Farm Award, recognizing their exceptional contributions to Ontario agriculture. The Rankins were one of just 11 farms in Ontario to receive this honour that year.

Beyond the fur industry, Kirk Rankin has contributed to discussions on local agricultural issues, advocating for careful land-use planning and ensuring agriculture remains a key priority in Perth County's planning documents.

Kirk Rankin and his family's farm will be officially recognized at the Rotary Rural-Urban Dinner on March 27 at the Stratford Rotary Complex.

Carl Schade to be inducted into Stratford-Perth Museum's Agriculture Wall of Fame

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

The late Carl Schade will be inducted into the Stratford-Perth Museum's Agriculture Wall of Fame during the Stratford Rotary Club's annual Rural-Urban Night on March 27 in Stratford.

Schade, who was widely known among Perth County dairy farmers and beyond, dedicated nearly 50 years to the dairy service industry. A resident of Fullarton Township in West Perth, he grew up near Milverton and built a reputation for his expertise in dairy equipment. He began his career with Debus Dairy Supplies before becoming the owner of Advanced Dairy Systems.

A lifetime of service and dedication

Schade provided exceptional service to the dairy industry, specializing in automatic milking and feeding equipment for Bou-Matic – a global dairy equipment company – while also servicing other brands when needed.

Prior to his passing, Schade traveled to Madison, Wis., in the fall of 2024 to attend the World Dairy Expo with his wife, Susan, and their family. There, he was recognized for his lifetime contributions to the dairy industry at a worldwide Bou-Matic reception, where he received a golden clock inscribed with his name – an honour he said his family would treasure forever.

Schade passed away on Oct. 21, 2024, just three weeks after receiving his award in Madison.



Carl Schade and his wife, Susan, three weeks before his passing, receiving a 50-year service award at the World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wis., in October, for his lifetime of dedicated work with the worldwide Bou-Matic Dairy Company.

A lasting impact on the agricultural community

Following Schade's passing, Bou-Matic released a heartfelt statement acknowledging the loss of one of their most dedicated industry professionals.

"It is with great sadness that the Bou-Matic family acknowledges the passing of Carl Schade. We had the privilege of honouring Carl at the World Dairy Expo for his contributions to Bou-Matic and to the dairy community surrounding his dealership near Wellesley, Ont. We extend our deepest sympathies and condolences to Carl's family and friends. He will be deeply missed by many in the agricul-



Carl Schade's wife, Susan, proudly holds a recent photo of her and her husband receiving Carl's Bou-Matic 50 Years of Service Award at the World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wis.

(GARY WEST PHOTOS)

tural community."

Those who knew Schade remember him not just as an industry leader but as someone who gave back to the community in countless ways. "Carl was a professional at every point in his life," one local farmer shared. "He was always there to lend a hand, whether it was installing new milking systems or ensuring that milk from dairy shows at the Stratford fairgrounds could be shipped to a local dairy as Grade A milk."

Schade was instrumental in setting up stable facilities at the Stratford fairgrounds, making it the only fairgrounds in Ontario where milk could be tested and shipped to a local dairy after a show.

His generosity extended beyond his profession; many non-profit organizations benefited from his donated time and expertise, and invoices were rarely sent for his assistance.

A legacy of hard work and kindness

In a recent interview, Schade's wife, Susan, reflected on her husband's work ethic and dedication.

"No matter how big the problem, he would always stick with it until it was resolved," she said. "He would work until two or three in the morning to make sure equipment was repaired properly and up and running for his farmer-customers."

Even in the months leading up to his passing, Schade took pride in servicing family farms for four generations. Susan recalled that most of his workweeks stretched between 60 and 100 hours.

"Carl stepped in to relief milk for farm families experiencing personal tragedies," she added. "He never left a job until it was done – and done right."

For countless farmers, Schade was the person they could rely on when they had nowhere else to turn.

Congratulations to Carl Schade on being recognized as a 2025 inductee into the Stratford-Perth Museum's Agriculture Wall of Fame.

Cost saving methods in funeral service options



STUART LENDER

Times Contributor

In keeping with being a “teaching funeral home” and the public’s sense of an increasingly unpredictable financial climate, Rutherford Cremation & Funeral Services has put together a list of some very practical ways to keep funeral costs lower for those who are looking to do so, without compromising the respectful honouring of the one that is loved and departed.

In an effort to put you in control of your choices and carry out the deceased’s wishes, it is important to have the information so that proper decisions may be made. Throughout the years now we have served families where money is no object and families that have struggled with the cost of the most straightforward funeral service – and indeed, like everything else, funerals are not immune from inflation. Despite your financial situation, the options for services might be the same but the cost does not necessarily have to be.

This would be an appropriate time once again to remind you, dear reader, that honouring someone has nothing to do with

how much money is being spent. You cannot equate a tangible sum to how much you love and miss someone. Here then, are some options for you to consider:

THE SELECTION OF THE SERVICE: I am an advocate for carrying out the deceased’s last wish. If there was nothing discussed concerning disposition, (burial, cremation, aquamation, graveside service, traditional service, etc.) the options are open. These are the typical services offered by some funeral homes from most costly to least costly. Traditional Service / Memorial Service / Celebration of Life Service / Graveside Service / Direct Aquamation / Direct Cremation / Donation of Body to Science.

FUNERAL HOME INVOLVEMENT OR NOT: If a casket is involved at any kind of service, with the decedent present, a funeral home will be involved – but not necessarily if a cremation or an aquamation has been carried out beforehand. Enquire with the funeral home about how they would be involved if they are participating in what is called a memorial service or celebration of life service, and the cost difference between holding the service at the funeral home or elsewhere. You may want to create your own tribute as well.

URNS: Urns for cremated or aquamated remains are options, not necessities. You may also use a family heirloom or receptacle from home to house the remains. Likewise, if an urn is not desired, you can still hold a memorial service with a photo-

graph of your loved one present without having the urn on display.

CASKETS: There are always more modestly priced caskets that have an elegance equal to more costly options. If a cremation or aquamation is desired after a service has been carried out, rather than paying for a “rental casket” (talk to the funeral home about what that is), there are some natural wood containers that may be used for a service. In fact, more than once, we have used a modest wooden casket on which those attending the service have written their names and their farewells with colourful sharpie markers along with their children who have drawn images in crayon. This idea provides for a very unique and personal down-to-earth service in which people may participate directly. Photographs of the casket have been taken as keepsakes. This is of course, not to everyone’s taste. But I think – if the deceased would have loved it – make it happen!

VAULTS: Vaults for caskets and urns in a cemetery burial are most often options and not necessities. There are specific areas in cemeteries where vaults are required as the ground may be compromised due to angle of the earth or dampness of the ground or some such thing, but generally the decision is yours.

OBITUARIES: Obituaries are free on funeral home websites but not in newspapers. Some folks nowadays forego the newspaper option and that often depends upon a few things – the cost of the notice, whether there will be a service or not, if every-

one could be told verbally that your loved one has died, if most every relative or friend is predeceased, etc.

FLOWERS: Flowers definitely add beauty to a gathering, but if money is a concern – instead of buying a casket spray for a traditional service, consider the simple elegance of a single long-stemmed red rose laying atop the casket. Anytime this option has been chosen, the love for the deceased is just as heartfelt as it would be with a spray atop the casket. A designed bouquet of flowers for a funeral will usually cost more than purchasing loose flowers for the service.

TIME OF SERVICE: It is always less costly to have a visitation and a service on the same day rather than holding a visitation on one day and the service on another. Likewise, it may be more costly to hold two visitation periods rather than one. Check with the funeral provider.

TIME/DATE OF BURIAL: If an urn or casket is to be buried in a cemetery, have the funeral home check the cemetery by-laws concerning additional costs for burying on a weekend and the cost of “overtime” for cemetery staff, if the burial extends beyond the official closing hours of the cemetery.

RECEPTIONS: It’s not a requirement to hold a reception. The cost of receptions includes the cost for the space and the cost of the food. Usually, it is a prescribed amount per, however many people you think will attend. This can often be one of the costliest parts of any service depending upon that number. Funerals and subsequently, re-

ceptions, can be private events for folks who are invited to attend and need not be a public forum. Receptions also need not be carried out at a funeral home. If those attending are deemed to be a small number, or the gathering afterward is only for immediate family and friends, it could be a gathering in a local restaurant, the family home, the Legion or another space. Also, the time of reception may play a part. If the reception takes place around lunchtime, those attending may expect more of a meal than if the reception is held well before lunch or in the afternoon where a light snack may be all that is needed.

PRE-PAY YOUR FUNERAL ARRANGEMENT: Lock in costs by doing a pre-paid arrangement with the funeral home. It’s flexible in payment, the payment gains interest and the funeral is paid for when the time comes, with money left over for the family once the money has been used for the funeral specified. I’ve never met anyone who is not grateful for this thoughtful gesture so that the remaining family is not burdened with questions or finances. Pre-arrangements are transferrable to any funeral home, anywhere. No money is lost and they may be cancelled at any time. UNTIL SOON. LIVE WELL.

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

Stratford Perth Museum partners with local artist to explore Black history

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

“It’s something that I approached Kelly (McIntosh) about with Aunt Harriet filming,” HAU1 said. “And I think what grew from that was wanting to curate a show around Blackness in the region. So, in an official sense, yes, we are planning to do a curated show around the pigmentocracy – the idea there is willfully designed hierarchy built on racism and colourism in the world – of Stratford.”

Until then, HAU1’s most recent project will be available in fall 2025, with plans for subsequent presentations in a cross-provincial gallery tour across Ontario until spring or summer 2026, supported by the Ontario Arts Council.

More information can be found at auntharriet.ca or hau1.ca.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Cinematographer Raymond Tuquero, Ahdri Zhina Mandiela as the titular character and HAU1 during filming of *Aunt Harriet* on the grounds of the Stratford-Perth Museum.



The power of puttering: Finding joy and productivity in small tasks



IRENE ROTH

Times Freelance Columnist

In a world that glorifies busyness and constant productivity, the simple act of puttering is often overlooked. Puttering, which is the art of engaging in small, seemingly insignificant tasks without urgency, has long been a source of joy, creativity, and even unexpected productivity. While it may not appear as structured or goal-oriented as traditional work, puttering has a quiet power that contributes to mental clarity, relaxation, and even problem-solving.

More specifically, puttering is the gentle, unstructured engagement with minor tasks that bring satisfaction without pressure. It can include activities like rearranging books on a shelf, tidying up a workspace, watering plants, sorting through old letters, or fixing

small household items. Unlike multitasking or rigorous scheduling, puttering allows for a free-flowing approach to daily life, where one task seamlessly leads to another without a strict plan.

One of the most profound effects of puttering is its impact on mental well-being. Engaging in low-stress, repetitive tasks can be meditative, providing a sense of calm and presence. In today's fast-paced world, where digital distractions and work deadlines create constant pressure, the ability to step back and focus on small, tactile tasks can be grounding. Puttering allows the mind to wander, fostering creativity and reducing stress levels.

Moreover, puttering encourages mindfulness. When we engage in small tasks with care, we become more attuned to our surroundings. The simple act of cleaning a drawer or tending to a neglected corner of the home fosters a sense of accomplishment and control. These small wins contribute to a more positive mindset, helping to counteract anxiety and mental fatigue.

While puttering may seem like aimless activity, it often leads to surprising bursts of productivity. Many people find that when they allow themselves to put-

ter, they naturally stumble into completing larger tasks without the burden of expectation. For example, a casual decision to dust the bookshelves may lead to reorganizing an entire room, or a brief moment of tending to houseplants might inspire a full-scale gardening session.

This approach aligns with the psychological concept of productive procrastination, where engaging in low-pressure tasks can build momentum for tackling more significant challenges. Instead of forcing motivation, puttering provides a gentle way to ease into productivity, often yielding better results than a rigid, stressful approach.

Many people experience moments of clarity and problem-solving breakthroughs when they least expect them – often during routine or low-focus activities. Puttering creates the mental space necessary for subconscious problem-solving. When the mind is not intensely focused on a problem, it has the freedom to make connections and generate insights. This is why great ideas often emerge during a leisurely walk, a warm shower, or even while absent-mindedly arranging a drawer.

By allowing yourself to putter, you create an environment where your brain can work through challenges in the back-

ground. This is particularly useful for creative individuals, writers, and problem-solvers who need to step away from structured thinking to find new perspectives.

The emotional comfort of puttering

Beyond productivity and mental clarity, puttering offers emotional comfort. Engaging in familiar, gentle tasks can bring a sense of stability, especially during stressful times. Many people turn to puttering as a coping mechanism, whether it's tidying a desk when feeling overwhelmed at work or rearranging a room to feel a renewed sense of order in life.

Puttering also connects us with our personal spaces in meaningful ways. The small acts of care – dusting a sentimental object, reorganizing a kitchen drawer, or tending to a neglected hobby – remind us of our personal histories and preferences. These acts reinforce a sense of home, belonging, and self-care.

How to incorporate puttering into daily life

To harness the power of puttering, one must embrace a mindset of gentle curiosity rather than obligation. Here are some simple ways to integrate puttering into your routine:

- Start small: Choose one

small, enjoyable task without setting expectations for completion.

- Follow your instincts: Let one task naturally lead to another rather than forcing a structured plan.

- Allow mindfulness: Engage fully in the moment – notice the textures, colors, and sounds around you.

- Take breaks from screens: Puttering is best enjoyed without the distraction of digital devices.

- Embrace the unexpected: If a task inspires a bigger project, go with the flow and see where it leads.

Therefore, the power of puttering lies in its ability to cultivate joy, clarity, and effortless productivity. In a world that demands constant efficiency, puttering offers a gentle counterbalance – an opportunity to reconnect with our surroundings, ease our minds, and even discover creative solutions.

Whether it's rearranging a bookshelf, tinkering with a neglected hobby, or simply tending to the little things that bring us peace, puttering is a reminder that productivity isn't always about grand achievements. Sometimes, it's the small, unhurried moments that make life feel most fulfilling. I hope you'll take time to putter this week.

Tundra swan migration is an incredible journey



JEFF HELSDON

Times Contributor

The mysteries and splendour of spring migration never cease to amaze me.

Seeing clouds of ducks darken the sky as they lift off the water leaves me in awe each time I witness it. On a quiet day, the whirring of the wings of a large flock can be heard from a few kilometres away. But, while this en-masse spectacle is a sight for the eyes and ears to behold, the voyage of tundra swans is more magnificent.

Tundra or whistling swans are

slightly smaller than Canada's other native swan, the trumpeter swan. Both tundra and whistling swan apply to the swans that migrate through Southwestern Ontario and have interesting stories behind them.

The term whistling swan was first coined by Meriweather Lewis of the famed Lewis and Clark duo that explored the American west for the whistling noise made by the bird's wings while in flight. More than 220 years later, that name stuck, as well as the term "whistler," which I have heard some locals use.

Tundra swan is a more recent name that was given to the whistling swan and also encompasses the Eurasian Bewick's swan. Both are now considered the same species. They are not to be confused with the invasive mute swan, which is native to Eurasia.

Tundra swans can be seen in both the spring and fall. In Southwestern Ontario, the birds first appear in the Long Point area, but spread out slowly in smaller groups, gradually moving north

as the snow recedes and waste agriculture crops become available to feed on. This provides a longer-lasting opportunity for viewing.

Swans congregate at the Aylmer Wildlife Management Area where viewing platforms are constructed. It's not uncommon to see flocks of these birds feeding on fields outside Tillsonburg or flying overhead while driving country roads.

Then, as temperatures warm, the swans edge northwest, often stopping in Lambton County before heading across Michigan and Wisconsin, the prairie provinces and then turn their migration north beyond the tree line.

The migration of tundra swans is an incredible journey. The majority of the birds winter around Chesapeake Bay in Maryland, North Carolina and Virginia. Taking wing in late winter, their 6,000-kilometre journey into the high Arctic begins. In this case, high Arctic means at the top of the Canadian mainland along the Arctic Ocean in the Northwest

Territories, Nunavut and Quebec. Often, this journey takes two to three months.

After reaching their breeding grounds, the swans mate, rear their young and then start the journey south again in September.

Breeding in the high Arctic where there aren't a lot of people, little was known about the migration routes until about 25 years ago. The few tidbits about the route and timing was derived from observation of birds with neck collars with numbers and letters.

That changed when Dr. Scott Petrie started at the now-defunct Long Point Waterfowl. He used satellite transmitters to gain insight into the tundra swan's voyage, its timing, layover points and end destinations.

As an area reporter, I wrote several stories on this research, gaining insight into these birds. Tundra swans were captured with rocket nets, weighed, sexed and other criteria recorded before a satellite transmitter was surgi-

cally implemented and the bird released.

This was an expensive process and Petrie appealed to the community to help by sponsoring a swan. I was part of the Long Point and Area Fish and Game Club when members decided to support the cause, fondly naming our bird Harriette after longtime president Harry Stark. The public could log onto a web site to watch the journey of the swans.

Seeing one of these birds up close and personal was an experience I will never forget. At 1.2 to 1.4 metres in length, the tundra swan is not a small bird. It's wingspan is over two meters, or seven feet.

Each time I see a tundra swan, I fondly recall how fortunate I was to see these birds up close and gain insight into their incredible journey.

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

Musings: A beautiful mourning



MARK HERTZBERGER

Times Freelance Columnist

In paler sun now rest the fields of grain. / While I lament like waves on ocean sand, / friends still tell me that time will ease my pain.

These are the poignant words written by Mildred Rose when her granddaughter, Kathryn Rose, was eight or nine years old. They are in a book of poetry cherished by Kathryn who was inspired to compose a choral arrangement around them entitled *Continuum*. Stratford Concert Choir will perform this beautiful, gently melancholic piece in their March 22 concert, *Her Song*.

Last week, I interviewed Kathryn, now living in London, England about the artistic path she has followed from her childhood home in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. We talked about her passion for music – and for gardening! Indeed, her home was fertile ground for musical education – her father played and taught violin; her mother, a musical director at their church, taught piano: “I remember bouncing on the couch while my mother played her songs!”

Kathryn quite literally sang before she could talk – and she was a good talker and creative writer at that, says Jill Wright, her mother, a member of the Stratford Concert Choir. “On one occasion in her teens”, says



Jill, “Kathryn spontaneously wrote out an arrangement of the Super Mario theme for her brother.”

By the time Kathryn was four, she was studying music. At seven years old, she had written her first piece for piano, and by eleven she had taken up the French horn. She wasn’t enthralled with violin lessons, though: “My fondest memory of those years was eating green Jell-O at my violin teacher’s house!”

Kathryn studied at the University of Lethbridge, before moving to London in the year 2000 where she studied at Trinity College. As she explored her path through music, she soon realized that orchestral music wasn’t

for her. Nor was she drawn to the dissonant, more modern “squeaky gate” music favoured by some of her colleagues. Her passion turned out to be choral music, particularly sacred music embodying rich melodies. When a friend was ordained, she wrote an anthem for her first eucharist and this led to further immersion in choral composition.

She now lives in London with her husband, a talented photographer. She has completed her Master’s degree in contemporary sacred choral composition at the University of Aberdeen with renowned Welsh composer Paul Mealor. Her works have been performed internationally and in some of Britain’s greatest

cathedrals.

She works mostly by commission but is passionate about making her music accessible to everyone.

And in her “spare time?” Kathryn has one tenth of an acre allotment garden, where her recent yield of organic vegetables topped 500 kilograms. She is creative in her gardening as well as her music, currently developing a landrace of blight-resistant tomatoes. She is not worried about her garden being perfectly neat and tidy, but says she prefers the term “diverse wildlife habitat” to “messy!”

Kathryn also grows vegetables in the churchyard for her church’s soup kitchen at her church: “It’s a small contribution that often feels symbolic, but people experiencing food insecurity often have difficulty sourcing high quality fresh vegetables and all the nutrition those involve, so even if all I can contribute is a handful of greens, it’s still worthwhile.” The soup kitchen also gets allotment surplus in season: “Of course, there are only so many runner beans one household can eat!”

The poetry or text that accompanies her music often has nature as a theme. In fact, Kathryn sees a resonance between her gardening and her music:

“I have learned to plant my garden and then let nature take its course. You can’t predict the influence that weather and other unplanned factors have – such as a recent invasion of slugs! The garden is not done yet and it never really is. I’ve learned to be flexible in gardening and, similarly, in music. I try to tailor my commissioned pieces to the size and maturity of the choir who will be performing it, conduct and provide guidance to the best of my ability, then leave it to the singers or send it off to the publisher. You need other perspec-

tives for the music to be real. There’s an art to knowing when you’ve done enough. Sometimes the best things happen when you let go.”

Kathryn writes her first draft with pencil and paper, drawing melody from the structure and rhythm of the text. She will often go for a walk when she encounters an impasse in her composing: “I am very fortunate to live a five-minute walk away from Epping Forest and all it has to offer! By the time I get back home, the piece is in my head. Occasionally, though, I have to scrap it completely.”

Much of Kathryn’s music embodies a graceful, empathetic sadness. She says: “It is about giving people a space outside of themselves to experience their grief, to lament, and to find some peace in nature and community. In grief we sometimes lose the capacity to connect with and express our feelings. I hope that my music helps this process in some way.”

Experience the sensation of “beautiful mourning” for yourself on March 22 at 7 p.m. when *Continuum* will be performed as part of *Her Song*, The Stratford Concert Choir’s next concert. Find out why Kathryn’s family is proud of her and “fascinated by her creative mind and spirit.”

Tickets are available at Blowes Stationery in Stratford or via Zeffy <https://www.zeffy.com/en-CA/ticketing/169f5505-dcea-4505-ad07-d957841385d1>.

Mark Hertzberger is a former social services supervisor, human resources manager, conflict mediator, and literacy practitioner. He has since freed his mind and now writes poetry and occasional opinionated columns. Mark has lived in Perth County for 27 years, the last 12 of which have been in Stratford where he resides with his wife, novelist Yvonne Hertzberger.

Rethinking No Mow May

LESLYE GLOVER

Tri-County Master Gardener

No Mow May is an initiative that was first popularized in the U.K. and is now widely participated in throughout North America. It urges people to let their lawns grow freely for a month, supposedly to feed early emerging insects, particularly bees. It also serves as an excuse for lazy folks not to bother mowing and is a “band-aid” action, allowing people to rationalize that they are doing something to help the environment.

Possibly in the U.K., where bees evolved in tandem with plants that grow in turf grass, there is a benefit to insects. In North America, particularly in lawns maintained

with chemicals, no insect-supporting plants grow. The typical lawn is a monoculture of grasses which does not support insect life at all. It provides little pollen or nectar and no habitat. Many lawns are filled with invasive species such as creeping charlie, quack grass, garlic mustard and our old friends, the dandelions. If any of these plants have pollen, it is of poor quality for early emerging insects. There is no benefit to letting such plants grow unabated for any length of time.

Bees will forage among dandelions if nothing else is available, but dandelions lack proteins essential to bee health.

No Mow May is not a solution to the worldwide loss and degradation of pollinator habitats.

Let’s look at some better ideas, which will assist pollinators in May and beyond. Replace part (or all) of our lawns with a mixture of plants native to our region. Include early flowering shrubs such as red maple (*Acer rubrum*), willows (*Salix* spp.), serviceberries (*Amelanchier* spp.), cherries (*Prunus* spp.) – especially choke cherry (*Prunus virginiana*) – and fragrant sumac (*Rhus aromatica*).

We can add native perennials such as goldenrods, asters and coneflowers to the beds we already have, remove invasive species (which do not support native insects), and learn to love the mess of decaying leaves, dead plant stalks and tree stumps. The latter provide pollinator habitat. The David Suzuki Foundation has

more suggestions.

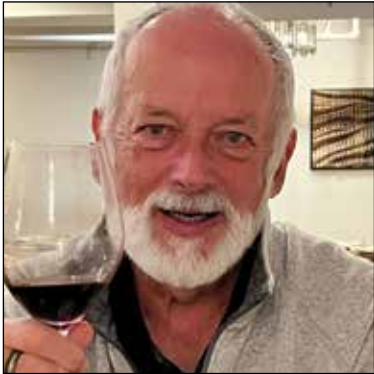
Here is a link to the ecoregional planting guides from Pollinator Partnerships which detail the plants native to all the areas of Canada: pollinatorpartnership.ca/en/ecoregional-planting-guides.

Together, we can nurture the natural communities upon which we all depend.

The Tri-County Master Gardeners will be providing an opportunity for the public to purchase native shrubs and perennial plants on June 14. The sale will be held from 9 a.m. until noon at Avondale United Church in Stratford, in the back parking lot on Huntington Avenue. Watch our Facebook page and our website, tricitycountymastergardeners.ca, for species and prices.

We hope to see you there!

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Bunnies, stallions and a sweet, secret recipe



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Contributor

When I thought about Vienna, Austria, the first things that came to mind were Mozart, waltzing, heavy baroque architecture and a strange obsession with coffee and pastries.

What I didn't think about were bunnies and horses. Bunnies were the first residents of Austria's capital city we encountered after disembarking from our river-cruise home away from home, the Viking Var.

There is a berm between the Danube docks and the city streets, and that berm is highly populated with extremely cute, small rabbits. To be honest, I think we smiled more as we strolled the paths along the berm than at any other time in the city – although we did, indeed, enjoy our visit to Vienna.

And horses? You may remember Vienna is home to the Spanish Riding School and its white, Lipizanner stallions. A walking tour through the heart of Vienna included a visit to the stables, but before that, we were delighted when several of the majestic horses with uniformed riders cantered by within an arm's length of us on a busy Vienna street.

So, between the bunnies and



An impromptu encounter with Lipizanner stallions as they cantered down busy Vienna streets.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

the stallions, we'd already had a pretty good day before we even started to soak in the majesty, the music and the obsession with cake that is Vienna.

Many visitors come to Vienna just for the music. After all, this city was home to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Joseph Haydn, and was also a frequent host to Beethoven, Schubert, Strauss and many more classical composers.

The city's claim to musical fame is never subtle; as you walk around Vienna, you will inevitably encounter dozens – literally – of Mozart look-alikes, all selling tickets to one of the innumerable concerts performed on a daily basis. Some are great, some perhaps not so much. It's helpful to get some local guidance on this. If you happen to be on a river cruise, like our great Viking experience, an excellent concert will be one of the special excursions offered to its guests.

A side note: you may not even have to leave the ship. On our cruise, one of the onboard evening features was an excellent performance of classical and operatic music by a talented quartet of local musicians. That became a unique experience when I was recruited to act as the love interest of one of the female singers. I was required to be silent but react appropriately to her declarations of love and eventual abandonment of me. I am not sure I have yet recovered from the emotional trauma.

While great musicians definitely made their mark on Vienna, there is no doubt the city, today, owes almost everything to a European dynasty – the Hapsburgs. The Hapsburgs ruled over a central and eastern European empire for 650 years, from the 13th century to the end of World War I.

A fun fact: Danube expert Isis-Sybille Frisch told us the

family carried the aristocratic designation "Von Hapsburg" but was forced to drop it when bearing an aristocratic name was made illegal at the conclusion of World War I. Hapsburg descendants continue to have influence throughout Europe, including in the United Kingdom, where King Charles is a direct descendant.

Frisch underlined the importance of the Hapsburg legacy when she said, "In Vienna, there's no escaping them!"

That's especially evident when it comes to the architecture of the city – the imposing baroque buildings come from an era in the Hapsburgs' history beginning around 1699, when the Hapsburgs defeated the Ottoman empire. Frisch told us the end of that war freed up financial resources, which were immediately put to use creating landmarks like the Hofburg palace in Vienna's inner city and the sprawling Schönbrunn

Palace, enlarged to its present enormity by the famed Empress Maria Theresa in 1750.

The building didn't stop with baroque; there are remarkable examples of neo-Renaissance and Gothic-Romanesque creations as well – none of them small or delicate. This is a city whose masters intended to make a statement and make it big.

But there is a more relaxed side to Vienna and that brings us back to the coffee and cakes. Vienna's café society has flourished for more than 300 years. The cafés serve a selection of coffees that even Starbucks might envy, but the real stars of the show are the pastries – apfelstrudel, Linzer Torte and especially that amazing Viennese culinary creation, Sachertorte, invented by Franz Sacher in 1832.

The Sachertorte recipe is still a carefully guarded secret. If you search for the recipe online, the official Sacher website will only supply an "approximate recipe," which includes chocolate, vanilla, eggs, butter, sugar and apricot jam. You might produce something approximating Sachertorte, but it won't be the real thing – Franz Sacher's heirs make sure of that.

For the real deal, you'll just have to go to Vienna and relax in a café where locals read newspapers, sip coffee and perhaps enjoy a string quartet before heading out to walk the imposing streets of one of Europe's architectural masterpieces.

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.



The quayside in Vienna boasts an unexpected group of bunnies!



Viennese architecture was clearly designed to be imposing, and it is.

COMING EVENTS Email to inquire stratfordtimes@gmail.com

FRIDAY NIGHT EUCHRE

Friday, March 21

Stratford Legion

We have had a full house for each of our euchre nights. Come and enjoy some friendly competition on Friday Mar. 21st. Doors open at 6:00 pm. Register your team of 2 for \$20 by calling the Legion at 519-271-4540 or Anne at 519-301-0914.

KIWANIS FESTIVAL'S 2025 FEATURED MUSICAL

Friday, March 28, 2025; 7 p.m. (live & livestreamed)

Avondale Church, 194 Avondale Ave, Stratford

"A Midsummer Night's Dream" by Christopher Norton and Wendy Edwards Beardall-Norton

Singers accepted until Feb. 3. Great for families! All non-professional singers welcome, no audition required. Rehearsals begin in late January. Cast will receive script, music and rehearsal tracks to use during holidays. Visit kiwanisfestivalstratford.com/events

BURGER & FRY NIGHT

Friday, March 28 28; 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Stratford Legion

Don't miss out on our last burger & fry night of the winter. The burgers are great, and you have all the condiments you could want, plus gravy for your fries. The price is 2

meals for \$25 or \$13 each. No tickets are needed, simply show up. Please preorder take-outs at 519-271-4540 or 519-703-6544.

OSTOMY SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Tuesday, April 1; 7:00 p.m.

93 Morgan St., Stratford

Speaker – Karen Skinner, Social Worker. "Turning the Tide" - coping and navigating life after ostomy surgery Social time and snacks. Everyone welcome. 519-273-4327

GARDEN STRATFORD GENERAL MEETING

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

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

Featured Presentation: "Demystifying Plant Breeding: Experiences and case studies from my academic career in horticulture.", Rodger Tschanz, University of Guelph. Meeting Open to Everyone; Free Admission.

STRATFORD SCRABBLE CLUB

Anne Hathawy Residence 480 Downie St., Stratford

Meets every Wednesday evening at 7 p.m. for 3 games.

Check our website for further details

stratfordscrabble.ca

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Rec Centre, 2nd floor Ristma room Stratford

For more info call Oliver Davidson 519-508-5664

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Wednesdays; 6:45 – 9 p.m.

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Sunday, March 30; 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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STRATFORD TIMES

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- The Community Calendar is 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:
 - Coming Events Word Ad in Classified section (50 word max.) - \$10 + hst
 - Coming Events Boxed Word Ad in Classified section (50 word max.) - \$15 + hst
 - Display Ad - Sizes begin at a classified business card size for \$35 + hst

Community of Christ
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 with communities of
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 11:00 a.m. – Fellowship and
 Coffee Hour

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 Reformed
 Presbyterian Church**

Quality Inn Festival
 (1144 Ontario St., Stratford)

WORSHIP TIMES:
 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.
stratfordarp.org

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STRATFORD TIMES

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 Expressway Ford
 McDonald's - Erie St
 Tim Hortons - Erie St
 Stratford Mazda
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 The Urban Barber
 Erie Convenience
 Mr. Sub
 Balzacs Coffee
 Shoppers Drug Mart - Ontario
 New Orleans Pizza

Zehrs
 Food Basics
 Tim Hortons - C.H. Meier
 Festival Marketplace
 Stratford Nissan
 Stratford Subaru
 Stratford Honda
 Quality Festival Inn
 McDonald's - Ontario St.
 Papa Johns
 Fore Everyone Golf
 WalMart
 Stratford Motor Products
 A&W
 Toner & Ink Shop
 Rutherford Funeral Home

Athens Greek Restaurant
 Stratford Legion
 Gino's Pizza
 Rosso's
 Buzz Stop
 Union Barber
 Mornington Variety
 Split Rail
 Stratford Rotary Complex
 Agriplex
 No Frills
 Cozyn's
 Sebringville Esso
 Dave's Diner - Sebringville
 Stratford-Perth Museum
 Sobey's

Shoppers Drug Mart - Huron
 Circle K - Huron
 West End Pharmacy
 Tim Hortons - Huron
 Stratford Hospital
 Video 99 - Erie St
 Jenny Trout
 Stratford Medical Pharmacy
 Stratford Chamber of Commerce
 A.N.A.F.
 Stratford Hyundai
 Daisy Mart
 Foodland
 Stratford Variety
 Brch & Wyn
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 AJ's Hair
 United Way Perth Huron
 Sinclair Pharmacy
 Blowes Stationery
 Stratford Tourism
 Coffee Culture
 Stratford Public Library
 The Parlour Restaurant & Inn
 Dick's Barber Shop
 The Livery Yard
 Town Crier Marketing
 North End Pharmacy
 Annie's Seafood Restaurant

March musings



BRUCE WHITAKER

Times Freelance Columnist

New Orleans's shooting

It took me a while to get to this article as our family was confronted by tragedy on Bourbon Street in New Orleans during New Year's Eve celebrations. My three sons were at the location of the attack thirty minutes before fourteen beautiful souls were gunned down in the early hours of New Year's Day. The search for answers is never easy. It's human nature to try and understand. The answers for this one have yet to be

uncovered.

First time on transit

After walking to the heated shelter at the bus terminal, the bus arrived on time. It was a short and rather direct route to the Stratford Mall to pick up a thing or two. The real-time arrival app gave me the return time providing just enough time to grab a coffee. One of the common issues often raised with Stratford transit is that the 'butterfly style' system is not very practical when you need to go a few blocks in an adjacent direction as all riders are routed back to the main terminal and then out again. Some consider that it would be better for a main transit line to follow the central streets of Stratford (Ontario, Erie and Huron) and then use a feeder system to the communities.

Conestoga College moves downtown

Conestoga College is moving from the hospital grounds to the former home of Scotiabank's call centre on Erie Street. The

22,000 square-foot brick building, next to the City Hall Annex, is being thoroughly renovated. This will lead to a welcome increase in customer traffic for local businesses and a younger, energetic demographic.

Scammers are getting smarter

After calling Expedia, or at least who I thought was Expedia, the so-called agent advised me that our trip from New Orleans to Toronto was cancelled due to maintenance issues. This was certainly not a surprise as Flair Airlines is known for cancelling flights to fill later ones. The scammer reviewed our itinerary from the start of our vacation quoting all the details, including my birthdate, address and more. I was duped into buying five fake airline tickets. Scammers are increasing the depth of the data profiles of victims making it hard to decipher who is fake and who isn't. Beware!

ONEX Bus offering

Rather than leaving my car for

a week at the Pearson Airport, and then having to dig it out upon my return, I decided to do the smart thing and take transit. On weekdays, the ONEX Bus leaves the Stratford bus terminal at 6:55 a.m. and gets to Pearson Airport at 8:30 a.m. It also leaves Stratford at 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. The cost is affordable. The bus returns from Toronto Pearson at 6:35 a.m. 10:20 a.m. 2:30 p.m. and 7:15 p.m. There are other drop-off points in Toronto and a stop at Sportsworld Drive in Kitchener.

CAO retires

We should be thankful to Joan Thomson for stepping in as CAO from city clerk during the pandemic. It is now time for council to find a progressive leader to drive Stratford forward. This is a very important hire, not to be taken lightly. A well-reputed CAO will also support the attraction and retention of key employees.

Revel and La Osa

Congratulations to two community minded Stratford en-

trepreneurs for running very successful businesses. Anne Champion took over Revel more than 14 years ago, moving it from Wellington Street to its current location. Pamela Conybeare of La Osa has closed down her eclectic vintage store, but will remain online.

BIA dresses up city

Great to see the steel crafted hearts connected to street posts for bike lockup, though don't leave your bike for long as bike theft is a huge problem in Stratford. Not sure if the police have a strategy to address it. Large oval maps were also recently installed on ten light posts with QR codes to help tourists find their way around downtown.

Living locally

Who is sleeping well with all of the strange and unpleasant happenings in the world from Trump's directives to the continuing Gaza crisis? My wise sister recommended to me to focus on living locally, yet how can one ignore the pain and suffering of so many?

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Riddles

Why is spring the most romantic season?

Because it's when flowers start to bloom!

What did the tree say to spring?
"What a re-leaf to see you again!"

Why couldn't the flower ride its bike?
Because it lost its petals!

What kind of bow can't be tied?
A rainbow!

Why do bees have sticky hair?
Because they use honeycombs!

What's a gardener's favorite kind of socks?
Ones with tulips on them!

Why was the math book excited for spring?
Because it had too many problems in the winter!

How do April showers bring May flowers?
They just wet their turn!

What did one spring flower say to the other?
"Hey bud, what's up?"

Why do cows love springtime?
Because the grass is always greener on the other side!

Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 34



Pet of the Month



CINNAMON

Meet Cinnamon! This lively, energetic large-breed pup is bursting with enthusiasm and looking for an active, experienced family to match her zest for life. With her guardian and working breed heritage, Cinnamon is happiest when she has a job to do and plenty of ways to stay engaged—both physically and mentally. She's eager to learn and ready to thrive in a home that understands her unique needs. With the right guidance and plenty of love, she's sure to become a wonderful and devoted companion. If you're looking for a spirited pup with tons of potential, Cinnamon is your girl! Apply for Cinnamon at kwsphumane.ca.

Word Search

FINANCIAL TIMES

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

- Accrual
- Allocation
- Amortization
- Appraisal
- Assets
- Balance
- Bond
- Budget
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5	7	2	8	1	6	4	9	3
8	3	6	9	7	4	2	5	1
9	1	4	5	3	2	8	7	6
7	4	1	3	2	9	6	8	5
2	9	8	6	5	1	7	3	4
3	6	5	4	8	7	1	2	9
6	2	7	1	9	3	5	4	8
4	5	9	7	6	8	3	1	2
1	8	3	2	4	5	9	6	7

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