

St. Marys Independent

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Issue #1256

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CHARITY AND CHEESE GO HAND-IN-HAND (WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)
Phillip and Reuben Hulcoop are ready for the tour at the Stonetown Cheese open house event March 29. See full story and photos on page 9.

Plans for community cultural hub at former Mercury Theatre building beginning to take shape

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

As initial renovations to the former Mercury Theatre building at 14 Church St. N near completion, a plan for how the building's first and second floors, and its basement, will be transformed into a community cultural hub while meeting myriad community needs is beginning to take shape.

To date, the Town of St. Marys has spent roughly \$1.5 million to bring the building

to a point where it can be ready for whatever future uses council and its downtown service location review steering committee ultimately land on. At its March 25 regular meeting, St. Marys council approved a list of space requirements for each room proposed for the building that will inform architectural concept designs for the committee and council's consideration.

While council did not discuss the list of space requirements at their March 25

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

Aquatics Centre renovations at Pyramid Recreation Centre extended until July 2025

Supply chain delays and structural surprises push back reopening, but safety and longevity remain top priorities

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

What was supposed to be a seven-month renovation at the Pyramid Recreation Centre's (PRC) Aquatics Centre has been extended until July 2025 as Town of St. Marys staff grapple with global supply-chain delays and more severe structural deterioration than initially expected.

The pool, which closed on Nov. 11, 2024, has undergone a full condition assessment revealing widespread corrosion, particularly in hard-to-access areas near the ceiling. Combined with a critical delay in receiving HVAC components, the town now anticipates the work will take until summer to complete – two months longer than initially projected.

"We understand that this extension may be inconvenient for our community, but it is necessary to ensure the highest quality of renovations," said Doug LaPointe, the town's manager of recreation operations. "We appreciate everyone's patience and look forward to unveiling the improved Aquatics Centre in the summer."

The nearly \$1.75-million project – approved by council in September and awarded to Elgin Contracting and Restoration Ltd. – was prompted by years of mounting air-quality and

CONTINUED TO PAGE 3

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COMMUNITY

Plans for community cultural hub at former Mercury Theatre building beginning to take shape

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

meeting, on March 18, councillors met for a strategic priorities committee meeting and heard from downtown service location review consultant Angela Brayham as she presented the steering committee’s recommendations.

“Today is a key check-in,” town CAO Brent Kittmer said at the March 18 strategic priorities committee meeting. “... I’d always planned and built in this checkpoint where the (steering) committee would work to a certain point, work themselves through the public engagement, develop a list of possible uses for 14 Church St. and 5 James St. (the St. Marys train station), get themselves down to prioritizing those, get themselves down to a point where they can say, ‘This is the amount of space that should be assigned to these uses,’ but we were never going to proceed to concept design until council had said, ‘Yes, we believe this is our vision for the use of these buildings.’ ”

While a potential future vision was outlined for the train station and St. Marys Station Gallery at 5 James St. in an earlier presentation by Brayham at the March 18 meeting, the consultant and former director of Gallery Stratford presented councillors with a list of proposed purpose-built rooms on each of the floors at 14 Church St. N, as well as the space requirements for each of those uses.

On the main floor, that list includes a 700 square-foot multi-purpose programming space, a 375 square-foot community social gathering space, a 650 square-foot art gallery, a 125 square-foot market/gift shop space and a 150 square-foot kitchenette and bar area, as well as the potential incorporation of temporary and moveable stacked-shelving to display a portion of the St. Marys Public Library collection – for example, the teen collection, which could help attract youth to the building.

On the second floor, the list includes a 700 square-foot maker space/art studio or classroom, a 400 square-foot adult-learning classroom/digital lab, a 150 square-foot adult-learning office, a 250 square-foot community meeting space for groups of 10-12 people and

two 90 square-foot meeting/study spaces. That floor would also include 200 square feet of shared office space with room for about three to four people, and three 100 square-foot offices for municipal staff.

In the basement, meanwhile, 150 square feet has been set aside for a staff breakroom, 400 square feet was allocated for a Friends of the Library processing/workspace and 250 square feet each was allocated to a Friends of the Library storage space and an art gallery storage space. Each of the building’s floors is about 3,500 square feet in size, and the remaining space on each floor has been allocated for things like a main lobby and reception desk on the main floor, washrooms, staircases, janitorial storage, corridors and an elevator to ensure accessibility.

“Operating and capital costs are at the front of my mind right now in looking at this,” Coun. Dave Lucas said, voicing some of the concerns he had with approving a plan like this one at this stage in the project. “As I look through our needs, I’m writing down our needs and I’m putting a question mark beside them. We now have a gallery piece in this and we just had a presentation on the (Station) Gallery; we really have no idea where that’s going. ... Adult learning, we’ve tucked space away upstairs for them (and) ... I don’t know what the feasibility of that program is in the future, how that goes forward and what that looks like. My next question mark is library. We’ve got a sizeable budget for the library and I’m struggling getting my head wrapped around the fact that we’re going to increase their (programming) space and their opportunities, but we’re not going to increase manpower, budget size, all that kind of stuff.

“So, I’m just really struggling. I love the idea of the community hub; I think that’s great. I think we’ve gotten to a really good spot, but in my head, I have a lot of questions marks. ... In my head, it’s just how do we operate this without putting a huge tax burden on our ratepayers?”

In response, Kittmer reminded councillors the town purchased 14 Church

St. N without any real operational plan for the building. The reason for purchase, he said, was because it is across the street from town hall and the library, and it is the only real option for new municipal offices as town staff grows in the future. He noted the capital cost of bringing this building online could be an additional \$3-4 million, but the plan, as it stands, solves a lot of St. Marys’ current spaces needs like the library’s need for dedicated programming space and the need for meeting spaces for smaller clubs and groups.

“In terms of operating costs, yes it will add new operating costs because it is a new building,” Kittmer continued. “I’m hoping in initial years, through very good scheduling ... it will just be staffed with our current complement so that when EarlyON is in there, it’s the EarlyON staff that’s responsible for the building and then when they transition it to the library for their programming, it’s now theirs. But that’s my vision, and I know there are conflicting visions out there. I know there are visions where once this happens, service levels can grow, staff can be added and those will be difficult discussions (council) will need to have at budget time every year.”

“In all the discussions to date, the list of spaces we’ve come up with are designs so that everything is multipurpose,” Brayham added. “So, the gal-

lery could be another meeting room. It could be a community space. It’s a box, basically ... so it could be used for anything. Same for the adult-learning space. If you don’t get the contract and they’re not here, you could decide to use that room as a larger office or whatever. Everything that we’ve come up with to date ... can be multipurpose. ... If we’re happy with the general notion of what the space needs are right now, what we label them for down the road could change.”

Ultimately, council approved the list of uses and space requirements with a few additions including a staff wash-room in the basement, the need to bring in as much natural light as possible and the need to ensure clear sightlines for staff who are monitoring the space, among other items. In addition, staff asked staff to present a concept operational plan for the building along with construction costs for consideration when the concept designs are presented to council.

Now that council has approved this plan for the building, architects with a+LiNK Architecture Inc. will develop design concepts that will then be reviewed and refined by town staff and the downtown service location review steering committee before they are presented to council.



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Feels Like -2	Feels Like 15	Feels Like 12	Feels Like 7	Feels Like 4	Feels Like -6	Feels Like -6

Aquatics Centre renovations at Pyramid Recreation Centre extended until July 2025

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

equipment issues. As previously reported, a history of undersized ventilation systems and a saltwater chlorination system used between 2008 and 2018 contributed to humidity levels that far exceeded what the space was built to handle.

“The pool has had a couple issues that are pretty significant over the last couple of years,” LaPointe told council at the time. “We basically listened to the consultant when they recommended to us to improve the air quality. That’s the root cause of the issues we’re having.”

During an inspection in January 2024, a rainwater pipe collapsed into the pool – an incident that reinforced the urgency of the renovations. According to DEI Consulting Engineers, the HVAC unit originally installed had only about half the capacity needed for a pool of this size, and the saltwater system had accelerated corrosion in both exposed and internal components. DEI has since been retained to conduct ongoing inspections and safety audits post-renovation.

The current delays stem from two primary issues. First, key components of the new HVAC system – specifically the compressors – have yet to arrive at the manufacturing facility due to ongoing global supply-chain challenges.



“A delay of one to two weeks is easier to overcome, but this delay could be up to two months, which is unfortunate,” LaPointe said.

Second, once scaffolding was erected over the empty pool shell and inspections could be completed at ceiling height, town staff and engineers discovered more extensive damage than anticipated. Salt and chemical residue from high humidity had led to corrosion on the steel supports and block walls.

That damage is now being addressed through labour-intensive surface preparation that includes abrasive blasting of wall surfaces and hand-cleaning of steel beams before applying industrial-grade epoxy coatings. This remediation alone

is expected to take three weeks but will run concurrently with the HVAC delays and shouldn’t add further time to the overall schedule.

The good news? Despite the added complexity, the project remains within its approved budget thanks to a contingency fund built into the contract based on early recommendations from engineers.

Once reopened, the Aquatics Centre will resume its full schedule of programs, including aquafit, lane swims, public swims, swimming lessons, leadership courses and rentals.

“These programs will resume once the pool reopens,” said Andrea Slade, manager of aquatics. “Registration dates and schedules will be announced once a confirmed reopening date is determined.”

Quarry season returns June 27

While residents wait for the indoor pool to reopen, the St. Marys Quarry opens for the season on Friday, June 27 and runs through Labour Day. The facility will offer public swims with cliff jumping, rafts, a slide, a water trampoline and a dedicated lane for lap swimmers.

Super Splash – the popular floating waterpark – will also return this summer. Quarry Resident Season Passes,

valid for weekday admission, go on sale in May.

PRC programs still running

Despite the pool closure, the Pyramid Recreation Centre remains open and fully active. Alternative programming continues to support residents of all ages:

- **Arena and ice rentals** (until May 16): Public skating and rentals available. (townofstmarys.com/skating)

- **EarlyON Centre**: Free drop-in programs for caregivers and children aged zero to six. (townofstmarys.com/early-on)

- **Friendship Centre**: Programming for adults and individuals with differing abilities. (townofstmarys.com/friendshipcentre)

- **Youth Centre** (open until June 24): A safe and inclusive space for youth. (townofstmarys.com/youthcentre)

- **Summer Camp PRC** (July 2 to Aug. 29): Themed camps for ages six and over, and specialty camps at the Quarry for older kids. (townofstmarys.com/campprc)

Updates on the Aquatics Centre project will continue to be provided through local media, the town’s website (townofstmarys.com), and Facebook (facebook.com/pyramid.centre) and Twitter/X (twitter.com/townofstmarys).

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EDITORIAL

St. Marys should embrace its identity as an arts-and-culture centre

GALEN SIMMONS
Regional Editor

In listening to former Gallery Stratford curator Angela Brayham speak at the town's recent strategic priorities committee meeting about the potential future for both the former Mercury Theatre building at 14 Church St. N and the Station Gallery at 5 James St., I found myself excited over the prospect of embracing St. Marys' growing reputation as an arts-and-culture centre.

Brayham, who I've known and worked with since I started as a reporter in Stratford back in 2017, spoke passionately about transforming the Station Gallery into a proper public art gallery that can attract new and cutting-edge art exhibitions from across the country and around the world while supporting local artists through enhanced educational programming.

She also spoke about how the town could transform 14 Church St. N into a community and cultural hub with space for local artists to display and sell their work, space for local theatre groups to perform, large community spaces where the library and museum can host programming, and meeting rooms where smaller arts groups like the St. Marys Poetry Circle and Stonetown Arts can conduct their business.

More generally, Brayham spoke about the unique opportunity St. Marys has to embrace its arts-and-culture identity.

Whether it's because of the town's proximity to Stratford's theatre scene or the Stonetown's picturesque natural and built landscape, artists and arts professionals seem to be drawn to St. Marys like moths to a flame. From renowned theatre designer and Station Gallery founder Cameron Porteous to visual artist and the creative force behind St. Marys' Art of Ideas Gallery, Eugen-Florin Zamfirescu, there are countless artists and artisans who now call St. Marys home.

According to our own Jim Giles, who has spent years exploring St. Marys' somewhat hidden arts-and-culture scene for his regular Spotlight on Arts and Culture column in this newspaper, there is an untapped opportunity here to connect tourism and the arts in a way that gives visitors a glimpse into the creative world unlike any other.

Giles and I recently met at his home in St. Marys to discuss an idea for a St. Marys arts and culture guide that would feature profiles on local artists, artisans and arts professionals while identifying opportunities for the public to meet those people, get a sneak peak at their creative process, see their work and potentially purchase a piece for themselves, all while visiting the town and spending time and money at local businesses.


While I haven't yet had time to explore that idea further, it is something I'm very interested in pursuing as a way of unifying the local arts community and leveraging whatever economic opportunities that may exist both in support of our local artists and in support of the town as a whole.

During her discussion at the recent strategic priorities committee meeting, Brayham mentioned the idea of forming a St. Marys and region arts council that could do just that and more, unifying not only the arts community in St. Marys but also arts communities across Perth County and in Stratford.

Personally and professionally, I am in full support of that idea. Even though I am a Stratford resident, I'd love to see St. Marys take the lead in establishing an arts council that could support arts organizations, clubs and businesses throughout the region in shedding more light on the unique haven for the arts located smack dab in the middle of farm country that St. Marys, Stratford and the surrounding area has become.

Let's make this happen, St. Marys!

Overheard at the Coffee Shop

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Thinking of all of those affected by the ice storm.

Good luck to the Lincolns as they start Round 2!

Have you heard something humorous around town that you think might be of interest to others? Either email them to us at info@stmarysindependent.com with the title "Overheard at The Coffee Shop", call 519-284-0041 or drop by the office to let us know!

Bravo	Boo
We have 1 Bravo this week. 1) Bravo to the town crew for sweeping up the town streets and getting rid of the winter debris. It's a sure sign of Spring.	We have 1 Boo this week. 1) Boo to those who hit or scrape other people's vehicles, in a big way, and don't even leave a note. It's ridiculous.
<small>*Please note all Boos and Bravos must be signed in order to be considered.</small>	<small>Bravos and Boos are submitted by community members and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the St. Marys Independent.</small>

Quote of the Week

"Our fans create a certain factor for the atmosphere for the team. When I first came here, I knew it was a fun place to play. The fans bring an energy that pushes us. The players feed off the crowd, and it really gives them an amazing experience. The players see the fans, and want to continue playing here for that reason."

- Jeff Bradley, head coach of the Lincolns on the effect of the crowd as the team gets set to start round 2.



Restoring small-town journalism, one community at a time!

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The St. Marys Independent
THOUGHTS OF THE WEEK
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Help people, even when they can't help you back.

The quality of your thinking determines the quality of your life.

No matter how hard the past is, you can always begin again.

April showers pave the way for warm days ahead.

UTRCA bringing nature school experience to PA day



(PHOTO COURTESY OF UTRCA)

The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) is running a Nature School PA Day at Wildwood Conservation Area on Friday, May 2.

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) is running a Nature School PA Day on Friday, May 2 at Wildwood Conservation Area.

UTRCA staff have partnered with the Stratford Perth Museum to create an entire day of outdoor fun for students aged six to 10 years old.

The day will be hosted at the Spruce Grove nature school site, an outdoor, immersive teaching space that allows kids to explore, create and play together. Activities will include guided hikes,

wildflower art, butter churning and stream exploration.

"We can't wait to host students at Wildwood Conservation Area and through collaborating with the Stratford Perth Museum, we've been able to plan lots of fun activities for participants," said UTRCA community education technician Matthew Marchioni in a press release.

The programming runs on Friday May 2 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. with extended care available.

For more information or to register, parents and caregivers can visit <https://bit.ly/43qXNFc>.

STONETOWN CRIER

The latest municipal news from the Town of St. Marys



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CONVERSATIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY OUTREACH WORKER

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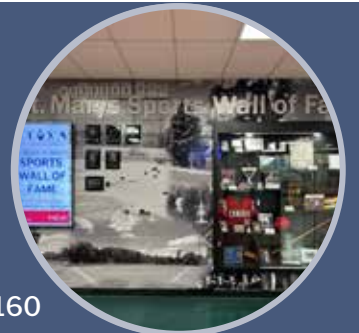
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SPORTS WALL OF FAME 2025

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- > MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING - THURS. APR. 10 - 10AM @ THE LIBRARY - INTERESTED IN GETTING INVOLVED? COME JOIN US!
- > EASTER FARMERS' MARKET - SAT. APRIL 19, 8AM-NOON AT THE PRC

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Senior of the Week



Our Seniors of the Week are four ladies who have been friends for over 50 years so we have aptly named them the “Golden Girls”. Front row, L to R are Nan Skirten and Marlene Weston; back row, L to R are Jackie Iredale and Madelyne Campbell. All of them are over 75 years of age but to them, age is just a number. They are active in their family life and the community and that’s what keeps them young. They meet regularly for lunch and birthday celebrations and for the past 28 years, they have met for a cottage getaway.

If you would like to nominate someone for Senior of the Week, contact us at 519-284-0041 or info@stmarysindependent.com.

St. Marys Horticultural Society: Celebrating 60 years of beautifying and educating St. Marys



(PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. MARYS HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY)

The St. Marys Horticultural Society board for 2025. Front row: John Robinson, Joan Robinson, Donna Stephen, Sue Hicks. Back row: Nancy Habermehl, Ron Hunter, Rick Mann, Bill Lowe, Loretta Czernis, Roger Batch, Antonietta Fletcher, Dorothy Elliott. Absent: Audrey Kaufman, Janis Kapp.

ST. MARYS HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Submitted Article

The St. Marys Horticultural Society is celebrating our 60th anniversary this year!

Stay tuned for the special events we’ll be having.

We had another productive year in 2024. We held several flower shows and hosted various speakers. Master Gardeners are available at our meetings to answer your gardening questions. Our two plant auctions

were a success as were our annual Garden Fair and Garden Tour. The many gardens that our society maintains throughout St. Marys looked great due to our volunteers who help us in our endeavour to assist with keeping St. Marys looking beautiful.

We hope to entice new members to join our society and even join our board so that we may continue our service to our town. If you wish to support our society, please consider purchasing a membership (still only \$10 per person) which may be obtained at any open meeting, from any board member, or by e-transfer to stmarys.horticulture@gmail.com. Our sponsors offer discounts to our members.

We are always looking for volunteers to help with the gardens that we maintain around St. Marys. There’s no set time commitment – just help out whenever you can. This is also a great opportunity for high school students wanting to earn some community service hours. Volunteers are appreciated to assist at the Garden Fair or Garden Tour or any other activity that we support. We will also be having some bake sales, so if you’d like to donate your culinary talents, we would be most grateful. Please contact us at the above email address if you wish to volunteer.

As well, we are looking for homeowners or businesses who may wish to be on our Garden Tour. Please email if you are interested.

Our program for 2025 includes more great speakers as well as the regular flower shows and other activities. You can see the dates on our website or the town calendar, or email us to obtain the list. Our meeting schedule is set for this year, but if you have any ideas for future speakers/demonstrations, please let us know.

We look forward to the coming year. Our next event is April 14 where Cobe Giroux will be telling us about Tips and Tricks for Growing Beautiful Iris.

We hope to see you soon. Happy gardening!

Weekend Quiz

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1. What is the birthstone for April?
2. Where did the SS Edmund Fitzgerald sink?
3. What does CNN stand for?
4. What U.S. president served 4 terms?
5. What was Blackbeard’s real name?
6. How many continents are there?
7. Peabody Museum of Natural History is located at what University?
8. What is the only country lemurs are native to?
9. A perfect game of bowling consists of how many points?
10. Star Wars “Revenge of the Sith” celebrates 20 years on what day?

By Jake Grant

This week’s answers are found on pg. 39

GOJHL PLAYOFFS - ROUND 2

GAME 1	FRIDAY, APRIL 4 @ HOME - 7:30 PM
GAME 2	SUNDAY, APRIL 6 @ LONDON - 7:00 PM
GAME 3	MONDAY, APRIL 7 @ HOME - 7:30 PM
GAME 4	WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9 @ LONDON - 7:30 PM
GAME 5	FRIDAY, APRIL 11 @ HOME - 7:30 PM *
GAME 6	SUNDAY, APRIL 13 @ LONDON - 7:00 PM *
GAME 7	TUESDAY, APRIL 15 @ HOME - 7:30 PM *

Betty's Bookshelf owner expresses concern amid tariff threats

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

A local bookstore owner is concerned about how proposed tariffs on books published in the United States could impact her business and the entire book publishing industry, as well as the community.

In response to tariffs imposed by the United States on Canadian goods, the Government of Canada is imposing 25 per-cent tariffs on imports of certain goods from the U.S., including books, effective April 3. Independent bookstores such as Betty's Bookshelf in St. Marys are at risk as the cost of many popular titles published in the States could go up and affect their business.

"It would become nearly impossible for a small bookstore to thrive if these prices come into effect," said Jan Scott, owner of Betty's Bookshelf.

Scott said the tariffs would make it difficult to compete with online competitors and retailers. Already operating on tight margins, the tariffs would reduce the book shop's ability to offer the diverse selection of books.

"We also see ourselves as a community hub that hosts events and book

clubs," she said. "We work with local authors, the library and some of the schools and believe ourselves to be community builders in town. Increased costs could lead to us (and many other small independent stores) having to close our doors."

In addition to bookstores in Canada, the proposed tariffs affect booksellers, readers, authors and publishers. Libraries and school boards could also be affected.

"It's a complex supply chain that takes books from publishing houses to bookstore shelves, which also means thousands of books written by Canadian authors and published by a Canadian publishing house are still potentially susceptible to tariffs because said books are printed in the U.S.," Scott said.

Scott is grateful for the community support from St. Marys. She encourages residents to write to their local MP and ask the representatives to speak out to exempt books from imposed tariffs. Shopping locally at stores like Betty's Bookshelf is the best way to support bookstores.

"Every purchase helps to keep us open and afloat," she said.



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Thamesview and Main Street United churches celebrate 30 years of Foodgrains Bank involvement

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

In a time when there is so much turmoil in the world, a feel-good story of a community working hard and volunteering to help others is just what the doctor ordered.

When the St. Marys Independent sat down with the committee of the Thamesview and Main Street United churches Foodgrains Bank (CFB) projects, it was easy to identify the passion this group has for this program and the long history that has resulted in them raising over \$362,500 to help with hunger around the world over the past 30 years.

On April 13, those 30 years will be celebrated at the Thamesview United Church in Fullarton. The event will run from 2-4 p.m. and will feature former farm hosts and suppliers. There will be guest speakers and musical entertainment by Les Smith. Donations for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank will be accepted.

Though the group has officially been involved in the program for 30 years, the work started nine years before that when Don Langford from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank spoke about the CFB organization at the church in 1985.

There was much interest and a group of 21 people from a few congregations came together with a commitment to donate 70 metric tonnes of local corn to those less fortunate. The corn was bagged at the Mitchell Co-op over a couple of days with approximately 50 volunteers stepping up to help. The corn was sent to Mali in Africa.

The Canadian Foodgrains Bank was originated by the Mennonite community in 1983 in Winnipeg where the head office still remains. The farmers were having



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right displaying a history board is Bob Hutson, Harry Norris, Blythe Lannin and Nancy Kraemer, members of the committee of the Thamesview and Main Street United church Canadian Foodgrains Banks projects.

a great crop and were looking for a way to help those fighting hunger around the world. Today, the CFB has a partnership with approximately 15 churches and other charitable organizations.

Representatives from each are on the CFB board of directors along with the area coordinators from across Canada.

Over the years, there have been 25 host farmers who have donated a section of their land with the first one being Norman Dow in 1995. Each host farmer markets

their share of the crop, and the CFB committee markets its share.

In return, they get a percentage of the funds. Originally, it started out as a one-third to two-thirds split between the host farmer and the project but, due to more stresses on farmers and higher land rent, the split is now 50:50.


The federal government matches whatever money was sent in by the different organizations at a four-to-one ratio up to \$25 million. In some places, food vouchers are provided by the Foodgrains Bank and handed out to families in need.

The money sent to the underprivileged countries from the head office is used for buying food and for education. They promote a concept known as conservation farming, which helps to teach water conservation and fertilization, and is being encouraged for farmers in disadvantaged countries. By teaching one farmer who, in turn, teaches others, this will help to improve their quality of life.

The donating landowners are asked to give up between 20 and 30 acres of land, so they are also giving up a certain amount of profit from the crop to the foodgrains bank, however, one of the advantages is the seed and fertilizer spray, as well as the labour for spraying and stone picking are all donated, giving the farmer less to worry about.

Currently, soybeans are being planted due to cost efficiency.

The organizing committee is looking forward to seeing many of these volunteers on April 13 as they celebrate the years of involvement and memories with the CFB.



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Stonetown Cheese open house draws record crowd, raises over \$2,500 for St. Marys Healthcare Foundation



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

A group of visitors getting ready for their tour of Stonetown Cheese on Saturday, which included putting on their blue booties.

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

The community came together in a big way this past Saturday, March 29 as Stonetown Cheese hosted an open house, raising funds for the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation.

With admission by donation, the event had a record-breaking turnout of 1,400 attendees. Stonetown Cheese is located at 5021 Perth Line 8 near St. Marys and

was started by Hans and Jolanda Weber.

Stonetown cheese's master cheesemaker Ramon Eberle was on hand to answer questions on how cheese is made, and guests were also able to view the aging rooms and sample the cheese. After the tour, there was an option to fill out a trivia card for a chance at a prize.

Visitors also had a chance to win one of three door prizes. Perth Coun-



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

A display of awards inside the store at Stonetown Cheese.

ty Dairy Producers provided chocolate milk, coffee, balloons, cupcakes and donut holes. There were many volunteers who helped make this event run smoothly.

Their award-winning cheese can be found all over the province, however there is an online store where it can be purchased as well as at the store.

Thanks to the generosity of those who attended, an incredible \$2,532.50 was raised – surpassing the amount shown

on the cheque pictured with this article.

“The St. Marys Healthcare Foundation extends its heartfelt gratitude to the Stonetown Cheese team and the many volunteers who ensured everything ran smoothly,” said healthcare foundation communications and fundraising coordinator Bernice De Decker.

For more information on how to support the foundation, visit stmaryshealthcare.foundation/third-party-fundraiser-events/.



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

St. Marys Healthcare Foundation chair Amanda McCurdy and director Linda McFadyen took their turn at the donation table.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. MARYS HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION)

Stonetown Cheese raised more than \$2,500 for the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation during an open house with roughly 1,400 attendees March 29.

It's another year of wins for United Way Perth-Huron – and a surprise win for executive director Ryan Erb

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The United Way Perth-Huron (UWPH) has continued the trend of setting fundraising records year after year, announcing the region once again raised more money for the most vulnerable than ever before.

At its celebration for the 2024-2025 annual fundraising campaign at the Arden Park Hotel on March 27, the organization revealed that donors, volunteers and the community raised \$2,356,497, slightly above last year's record-setting total of \$2,331,057.

Although short of the just over \$2.6-million goal, combined with a further \$542,050 raised for United Housing, a separate organization started by UWPH to address the housing crisis, \$2,898,547 was raised in total for the 2024-2025 annual campaign.

"Our locally raised and invested funds are imperative to the collaborative good work of United Way and making communities stronger," said Kristin Sainsbury, co-chair of this year's campaign with John Wolfe, at the celebration. "We're excited to see the impact funds raised this year will have on the lives of our neighbours, friends, family and even ourselves."

"I want to just thank all of you because, as everyone has said, it takes a community to contribute – some small, some large – but all of it together has collectively helped us to meet this incredible goal," Sainsbury went on to say.

"It may sound cliché, but our donors and volunteers really are what makes our organization tick," said Ryan Erb, executive director of UWPH, in a media release. "There are so

many challenges we face as a region that are beyond our control. Despite that, the people of Perth-Huron continue to support the work we're doing. We are grateful for the trust our community places in United Way to help deliver important programs and services."

It was a win for Erb that evening, too. Erb was surprised with the King Charles III's Coronation Medal, one of the greatest awards for community advancement in Canada.

As the packed dining room of the hotel erupted in a standing ovation, Erb thanked the "incredible kindness" of his staff and the way they all uplift each other day-to-day, as well as the generosity of the community.

"We can't do it alone," Erb put succinctly.

In addition to Erb, volunteer spirit awards from UWPH were presented to Gerry Bell, David Clarke, Barry Hutten, Cindi Jones, April Selkirk, Eva Sippel, Tom Soltys, Robert Stanton and Grace Theophilopoulos. The Avon Maitland District School Board, McCann Redi-Mix, Goderich Mayor Trevor Bazinet, Goderich councillor Randy Carroll, and Kerry Prober and her teams at McDonald's in Stratford and St. Marys received community spirit awards.

FIO Automotive Canada once again topped the list of workplace fundraising campaigns, raising \$192,194. This total included a dollar-for-dollar corporate match from FIO.

Every year, regional United Way organizations undertake exhaustive fundraising campaigns that go to local issues at the heart of what the charity is dedicated to. In the region of Perth-Huron, the United Way provides funds and services towards "unignorable issues" like lack of housing, low income, mental health, access to services, intimate partner violence, food insecurity and discrimination.



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Ryan Erb, executive director of United Way Perth-Huron, looks onto a standing ovation at the Arden Park Hotel on March 28. Erb was surprised on stage with the King Charles III Coronation Medal, one of the greatest honours for community advancement in Canada, after years of service with the organization.

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A Gardener's Pilgrimage reflects on life lessons learned through gardening

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

A memoir written by a St. Marys Farmers Market vendor reflects on his journey as a gardener from the time he first found his green thumb.

Mac Crummer of H.E. Grows will be promoting his newly published book, *A Gardener's Pilgrimage*, with book signing events in St. Marys and Stratford. Crummer will be at Blowes Cards and Gifts (34 Wellington St., Stratford) on April 5 from 1-3 p.m. and at the St. Marys Farmers Market at the Pyramid Recreation Centre on April 19 from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Crummer began gardening when he was seven years old and growing up nearby Millbank as the ninth of 10 children. He learned as a child that he loves to plant seeds and care for gardens.

"My journeys through life taught me a great deal about gardening, family, friends and strangers. It was during these adventures that I began to reflect on what was important in life and that there was much more to be accomplished," Crummer said.

One of Crummer's friends, an author, suggested three years ago he should write a memoir. However, it took him a

while to open up to the idea.

"I responded by saying, 'Why on earth would I write a book?' I didn't think too much about it for about three months but never forgot that initial conversation with him," Crummer said. "Finally, one early morning, I decided to put a few thoughts down on paper and suddenly it felt so natural to begin journaling, almost like turning a tap on. In fact, I began looking forward to writing my thoughts down during those endless early mornings."

Crummer finished a rough manuscript three years later. He hopes his new book can inspire readers.

"My hope in reading this book is that people will learn a few gardening tips but will also journey with me down memory lane and reflect on their accomplishments and consider those things that are important to them," he said. "Through mistakes and successes, we can better ourselves and have a positive impact on others."

A Gardener's Pilgrimage can be purchased in-person at the St. Marys Farmers Market, the Stratford Sunday Market and at Blowes Cards and Gifts, as well as online on Amazon at <https://a.co/d/ggQb2dx>.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF MAC CRUMMER)

St. Marys Farmers Market vendor Mac Crummer of H.E. Grows shares his gardening journey with his new book, *A Gardener's Pilgrimage*.

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MEET YOUR CANDIDATES

John Nater of the Conservative Party

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

MP John Nater says that coming into this election there are many commitments he and his party are making. The first and number one commitment is one he has made every election.

“The number one commitment, the number one promise I make every election, is that I will work hard on behalf of the people of Perth-Wellington,” Nater said. “That is my first commitment. That is my number one priority. You will get my hard work, my dedication to this community each and every day, should I have the honour of continuing to serve as your Member of Parliament.”

Nater is Perth-Wellington’s Conservative Party candidate and the incumbent in the upcoming federal election scheduled for April 28. He has served as the riding’s MP since 2015, when the current Liberal government first formed under then Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Much has changed in the last nearly 10 years and as Nater starts his campaign knocking on doors, he is hearing one issue overall: affordability.

“And then, you know, making those concerns even worse is the threat of tariffs,” Nater said. “The threats from Trump south of the border is just one of those overwhelming challenges that kind of gets layered on top of all the other challenges that folks are experiencing right now.”

In response to the rising cost of living, Nater said his party is unveiling its complete platform as the month-long election period goes along. As of press time, Na-

ter shared a number of initiatives a Pierre Poilievre-led Conservative government would make, including scrapping GST on new housing builds, taking the carbon tax off completely (rather than just the consumer portion which the Liberals have already scrapped), and supports for seniors.

“We’ve got some broad policies focused on public safety, public security, fixing the budget to make sure that, you know, we’re not leaving future generations with an untenable burden of debt,” Nater said.

In regard to removing GST from new housing, Poilievre had earlier announced that move would be funded by his government scrapping the \$4-billion Housing Accelerator Fund, a federal program that is meant to support municipalities grow their housing stocks, entirely.

Nater said that loss won’t be felt in the region at all. No municipality in the region had ever been successful in securing funding.

Additionally, Nater said any recipient of the Liberal government’s dentalcare and pharmacare plans will not lose access to those programs under a Conservative government.

“I will work hard on behalf of each and every person in every community, in every corner of Perth-Wellington, whether I’m in government or wherever I’m in opposition,” Nater said. “I hope that folks have seen that over the last nine-and-a-half years that I will fight and advocate on their behalf regardless of where I sit in the House of Commons. But obviously we’re into an election, and elections are about making that choice, and we’re obviously putting forward a strong, positive vision for Canada.”



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

MP John Nater is the Conservative Party candidate, and the incumbent, in the federal election on April 27.



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MEET YOUR CANDIDATES

David Mackey of the Liberal Party

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Though the federal riding of Perth-Wellington has been decidedly blue since its creation in 2004, David Mackey has “no doubt” it is winnable for the Liberal Party this year.

“In 2015, in addition to what was going on locally, the winds were blowing in a good direction for the Liberal Party,” Mackey said. “Those winds are blowing the right way right now outside of Perth-Wellington. What will put us over the top is the local effort. So, all of the volunteers that are coming in, all of the donations that are coming in, which I’m very, very grateful for; we have to work within Perth-Wellington to take the winds that are blowing the right way and put it over the top.”

Mackey is the Liberal candidate in the upcoming April 28 election. He lives in Stratford, where in the past he has volunteered with the Stratford Public Library and the Perth District Health Unit (now called Huron Perth Public Health). He currently serves on the library board.

He said he decided to run in this federal election after trying to find a candidate for his party and a friend told him he should step up himself. After realizing he had the skills to serve in the front row rather than as support, he put his hand up.

As Mackey said, the Liberal Party and the landscape of this year’s looming federal election has changed drastically over the course of last year and 2025 as well – not least due to the resignation of then Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the rise of Prime Minister Mark

Carney, who won a decisive leadership race and assumed office on March 14.

Mackey said with time-honoured Liberal values and a new dynamic leader, the Liberals are posed to be the best party for the riding and Canada overall. He called Carney a leader in every sense of the word, rather than a politician.

When asked about priorities going into this election, he said any initiatives need to be balanced on both sides: revenue and expenses.

“You have to look at both of those, so the issues are balanced,” Mackey said. “You know, there’s some trade-offs. You have to start with a stable, growing economy because you cannot afford to look after any of the social services that we want if you don’t have that revenue side.”

Specifically, Mackey mentioned the modernization of health care and improving affordability as priorities for him going into this election but stressed balance between revenue and expenses will be a throughline throughout the party’s comprehensive platform.

When asked about the anti-incumbency trend going around the world right now, and whether or not a Liberal government in power for nearly 10 years can survive, Mackey pushed back on the idea that the Liberals are an incumbent party this election. He asserted that although the core values are the same, with Mark Carney’s leadership win, it is a “completely different environment.”

“This is a completely different leader. This is a completely different Liberal Party,” Mackey argued.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

David Mackey is the Liberal Party candidate for Perth-Wellington in the upcoming federal election on April 28.

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MEET YOUR CANDIDATES

Kevin Kruchkywich of the New Democratic Party

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

In a world as divisive as ever, Kevin Kruchkywich says a “politics of compassion” is what the New Democratic Party (NDP) is offering.

“I think we offer an approach that takes care of working Canadians and takes care of Canadian jobs, and has a plan to bring industry back to this country using our own resources and our own people and our own know-how,” Kruchkywich said. “I think we are a very Canadian party, and we always have been, and I think we are a party that will take care of people – and now more than ever, we need that in our country.”

Kruchkywich is the Perth-Wellington NDP candidate for this year’s federal election coming up on April 28. He moved to Stratford nearly 13 years ago with his wife, working as an actor and as a general contractor in that time. Now that an election has been called, he is eager to get on the campaign trail.

Affordability and the threats U.S. President Donald Trump have repeatedly made, both in regard to tariffs on Canadian goods and Canada’s sovereignty, are key issues for Kruchkywich this election. He said these issues stand to affect the people who are struggling the most and the NDP offers “real change.”

“I think they need a voice that’s going to speak for them, not just for industries and corporations,” Kruchkywich said. “We’re talking about how we can not just help in-

dustry but help people.”

Specifically, Kruchkywich said the NDP have a plan to protect unionized jobs, use federal land to create rent-control housing and an expansion of the dental care and pharmacare plans that were pushed through this Liberal government due to NDP intervention, as well as moving into mental-health care.

Kruchkywich also said NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh is the best person to deal with Trump, saying the leader won’t acquiesce in standing up for Canadians.

There is a concern that the Liberal Party, with newly selected leader Mark Carney as Prime Minister, will bleed the NDP more this election than the last federal elections, but Kruchkywich said that is always a concern and something which is spoken about each election. He called it fearmongering.

“People are willing to listen, and if people are willing to not accept the status quo, then the NDP is the choice to make. ... What if we vote NDP and try something different for a change?”

“I’m confident. I’m hopeful,” Kruchkywich continued. “I’m hopeful that we’ve been laying the groundwork that we can eventually convince voters who vote in a traditional way to listen to a different option. You know, sometimes you get people who just vote a certain way because they’ve always voted that way, and they don’t put as much thought into it as you hope. And so, you spend your time talking about different options and maybe having people open their eyes to what is possible.”



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Kevin Kruchkywich is the New Democratic Party (NDP) candidate for Perth-Wellington in the federal election on April 28.

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MEET YOUR CANDIDATES

Wayne Baker of the People's Party of Canada

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Keeping government small and business big is key to Canada's future, according to Wayne Baker.

Baker, a small business owner from Arthur and the former president of the Arthur Chamber of Commerce, is the People's Party of Canada (PPC) candidate for Perth-Wellington during the April 28 federal election.

Heading into this election, he said the PPC's top priority is immigration.

"Our population is roughly 30 million in 2015. It's 40 million now," Baker said. "The infrastructure to accommodate that 30 per-cent increase in the population has not kept pace. ... That's why we're seeing huge shortages in housing, huge shortages in health care, issues with our education, issues with our infrastructure. That's the party's perspective."

In response, the party has vowed to institute a moratorium on immigration until the country is able to catch up, Baker said.

"From a personal perspective, an issue that's even bigger and an issue that actually drives our affordability problems ... it's government, the size of our government and the overreach of our government," Baker continued. "Government overreach is a huge, huge factor."

Another key issue this election for Canadians is the threats U.S. President Donald Trump has made to Canada's economy and sovereignty. Baker said the issue as a whole stems from how the governing Liberal Party has "grossly mismanaged government" for nearly 10 years and that Trump sees vulnerability.

"What we should have been doing for the last 10 years is building pipelines and access to the shorelines, both shores," Baker said.

What Baker called the "environmental narrative," climate change, is something he also discussed. He said as Canada relies on fossil fuels given its size and geography, emissions should not be shied away from – though acknowledged that change should come over time.

"I believe our carbon, carbon-based fuels, (are) a finite resource," Baker said. "I believe that we need to develop technologies and encourage that development to gradually wean ourselves off of that resource. We can't do it overnight, and we can't tax our way into doing that. Those two things are counterproductive."

During this election cycle, other political parties have drawn attention to a perceived connection in rhetoric between Trump and Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre as an attack on the Conservatives. When asked whether he was nervous that Trump's unfavourability in Canada might harm a right-wing party like the PPC, Baker claimed the PPC was not right-wing, but centrist.

He further argued the country is in a dangerous place in regard to an "insane drive towards socialism" and far-left extremism promoted by the media.

In response to whether he can flip this historically Conservative riding purple, Baker remained optimistic.

"The first PPC election, the percentage was one per cent. The second was 10 per cent," Baker said. "The team I had and myself, we managed to get up to 10 per cent of the population, or 10 per cent of the voters. If we carry on that trend, then the joke is we'll hit 100 per cent next time."



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Wayne Baker is the People's Party of Canada (PPC) candidate for Perth-Wellington in the upcoming federal election on April 28.



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SPOTLIGHT ON ARTS & CULTURE

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JIM GILES

Independent Columnist

Edited by Alice Rixson

Our world has a rich and ancient past with wood carving. In 1894, prospectors searching for gold in a Russian peat bog unearthed the earliest wood carving ever found. Sophisticated carbon dating of this relic performed in 2014 revealed that it came from a larch tree, native to the boreal forests of Siberia and Canada, that the specimen was 12,500 years old and that the carving, originally 17 feet tall, was shaped 12,100 years ago.

Canada shares in the rich history of wood carving, which includes numerous Indigenous artifacts. One of the most recognized forms of this art is captured in totem poles, some of which towered 70 feet. Totem poles told the history, cultural mores and the complex rules and customs of their creators. They are found on the northwest coast of North America, predominately in British Columbia.

The art of carving totem poles was passed down from father to son and the tools used were often made from bone, antlers or metal. Sadly, in the late 1700s, missionaries discouraged Indigenous carving, and other cultural practices, on religious grounds.

Other influencers in the establishment of the art of carving were the Quebec wood carving schools, which originated from the French Renaissance tradition in the 1600s. The insistence for larger churches and more elaborate decorations in the new styles created a demand for wood carvers.

Local wood carver Ken Felkar was raised in St. Marys where he attended school. His father was a crusher operator at the St. Marys Cement plant and his mother provided child care for many local families. As a teenager, he worked as a lifeguard and swimming instructor at Cadzow Park and St. Marys Quarry.

Law enforcement called him and at the age of 19, Felkar joined the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and he trained in Regina, Saskatchewan. He later transferred to a British Columbia detachment. During the first half of his 26-year RCMP service, he wore a uniform, while for the rest of his career was as a plainclothes investigator. He spent many years as an underwater recovery diver and investigating major crime and fraud.

Felkar's fascination with wood carving started with an appreciation of and the interest in the Indigenous carvings from Canada's west coast. "I started by carving with a jack knife and pieces of drift wood while watching my kids at the beach," says Felkar. "I gravi-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Ken Felkar with a carved gnome.

tated towards wood carving and took some courses as it provided me with an escape by taking my mind off police work."

For his carvings, Felkar uses primarily butternut, basswood and pine because these are abundant. He looks for the ease with which the wood can be carved and for its ability to hold fine detail. A variety of tools is important as one must have carving knives, gouges, chisels but the most important is protective gear.

For more than 25 years Felkar has been creating finely crafted furniture and for the last 15 years, he has been carving clever caricatures, Santa figurines, jewelry and extraordinary animals. He comes across his design ideas in books, magazines and You Tube videos.

Wood carving can be challenging for a number of reasons, starting with the types of wood used, the complexity of the design and the amount of physical effort required, Felkar maintains. Intricate designs can be time-consuming and require specialized tools and patience. Long sessions can cause hand fatigue, cramps and general discomfort.

For Felkar, the repetitive motions and intense focus



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The carvings of Ken Felkar.

required for carving have a calming and meditative effect that helps shift his mind from daily stressors and distractions, providing a sense of relaxation and peace. It gives him a sense of pride and accomplishment, he adds.

A noteworthy object that Felkar fashions is the Comfort Bird. Comfort Birds were originally made and sold by American Frank Foust beginning in 1982, who donated the proceeds from sales to various charities. This carving is a small wooden bird that can be held in the palm of a hand. They are often given as a token of support and affection.

If he knows of someone undergoing medical intervention or experiencing emotional distress, "I will often give them one of my Comfort Birds as they are carved smooth and pleasing to the touch," Felkar discloses. "They are designed to fit in one's hand and be held in times of need."

To view a selection of his extensive accomplishments, visit his website at kenfelkar.com.

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Town support for St. Marys Station Gallery to remain status quo this year

Operational and physical changes, as well as a change in name, could be in the gallery's future

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

While the Town of St. Marys will maintain its support for St. Marys Station Gallery this year, a new path toward operational success, including a potential change in name to recognize the gallery's founder, has been revealed.

At St. Marys council's March 25 council meeting, councillors approved a recommendation from the town's strategic priorities committee that will see town staff work with staff at the St. Marys Station Gallery on the implementation of the gallery's new business plan this year, an effort led by new Station Gallery curator Duncan MacDonald, until a decision can be made about the gallery's long-term operating plan as it relates to the community cultural hub taking shape at 14 Church St. N.

That recommendation came from a presentation at the March 18 committee meeting of the findings from a gallery feasibility review undertaken by consultant and former Gallery Stratford curator Angela Brayham.

"The recommendation today is to continue status quo and ... we continue to work with Station Gallery as is over the next year and a bit, and start to analyze how that's working," said town director of corporate services André Morin at the March 18 meeting. "We've also made a recommendation for some other programming and educational programming at the train station which, as part of the downtown service location review, there are some connections to that and what 14 Church St. N could be.

"... Today is really about putting all this information in front of you so we can start that discussion and then we refine our reviews and continue to work with Angela to refine some of those options as we move forward and as we hear the discussions around both (the train station and 14 Church St. N)."

The Station Gallery has been an important cultural asset for the town for nearly a decade, featuring artworks by local, national and international artists. Cameron Porteous, the founder and curator, has announced his retirement and plans to step back from the gallery in 2025. The gallery currently operates under his name without legal status as a business, charity, gallery, or non-profit.

Each year, Porteous receives a \$10,000 community grant from the town to help fund exhibitions, staff honoraria and miscellaneous operating costs. He pays \$2,400 annually to lease the gallery space at the train station. The gallery has an annual budget of

\$30,000.

Under MacDonald's direction, the gallery has seen increased participation in its educational programs, workshops, and community events. The expansion into the north office at the train station, an additional 421-square-foot space, has allowed for a broader range of activities, accommodating more participants and diverse art forms.

"Having worked as a gallery director/curator for most of my career, for a small institution like this with minimal budget, I think we do have to recognize how well they're doing," Brayham said. "You know, 1,600 visitors a year that are actual guest-book signatures is pretty good because I think you can safely double that (for a more accurate visitor count). ... The value that is given to the community by this little gallery that was started for basically nothing is pretty impressive."

According to Brayham, the gallery has a list of challenges to contend with, both physical and administrative. On the physical side, they include the train-station benches and ticket kiosk limiting available space in the gallery, the use of temporary, partial-height gallery walls limiting what size of artwork can be displayed at the gallery, a lack of storage and climate control, limited space for programming, and a location at 5 James St. that is hidden from downtown.

From the administrative side, Brayham said the gallery is not defined as either a public or community gallery, it does not have a legal status and is therefore difficult to raise funds for, its earned revenue streams, like the gift shop, are not maximized, it is under-resourced and its current operational model is not sustainable as Porteous has been responsible for nearly all facets of the gallery's operations since it opened.

While town staff will spend this year collecting data on gallery usage and determining whether it should remain where it is or be incorporated in some way with the proposed community cultural hub at 14 Church St. N, Brayham laid out a potential vision for a path forward.

In the short term, she suggested operational changes like paying staff a living wage instead of an annual honorarium; developing educational programming with in-house staff and by hiring artist-educators; implementing a donor/membership program to bring in more revenue; working with the town to be able to issue tax receipts for donations and membership fees; working with the town to eliminate the cost for renting the gallery space; improving marketing and communication; and considering a change to the

gallery's name.

"Cameron (Porteous) has left a really important mark on the cultural fabric of our country," Brayham said. "Not only has he come to St. Marys and started the Station Gallery, but he is one of the most distinguished and iconic theatre designers in our country. He has worked across the country; everyone in the arts-theatre world, if you mention Cameron's name, they know exactly who he is. So, I think doing something to create recognition of that is important to not just celebrate Cameron, but it also ... is a way to ensure the legacy of the gallery can continue."

"... I'm suggesting that the gallery change its name from the Station Gallery to the Porteous Art Gallery to celebrate Cameron. In cooperation with that, I would suggest that you set up an endowment plan to raise money ... so the gallery has sustainable money going forward."

By changing the gallery name, Brayham said the gallery could then take steps towards Porteous' original vision for it to be a public art gallery with the goal of applying for charitable-non-profit status by mid-2026. Brayham also suggested the gallery reduce its number of exhibitions each year from between eight and nine to between four and five, each of which would coincide with a specific season, including Festival season in Stratford

and the holiday season, to attract additional visitors each year.

Brayham noted renovations to the gallery's interior space and having staff actively applying for grants could further improve the gallery's capacity for cutting-edge exhibitions that would attract more visitors from further afield and make its operations more sustainable.

In conjunction with the gallery's transition to a public gallery, which is not permitted to sell artists' work directly, a smaller community gallery could be established at 14 Church St. N where local artists could display and sell their work.

Brayham also suggested the establishment of a St. Marys and region arts council to serve as an umbrella group for arts organizations, clubs and businesses in St. Marys, Stratford and across Perth County.

"You've got no other arts council in the county; Stratford doesn't have an arts council and Perth County doesn't have an arts council," Brayham said. "If St. Marys did that and took that on, that would speak volumes in cementing you as an arts and cultural centre because not only are you helping your community, you're helping the whole county, or the arts council is, and it also gets buy-in from everybody. It also makes your (gallery) membership so much bigger."



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ST. MARYS, ONTARIO

By addressing poverty at its roots, we'll save money, reduce suffering, and build resilient communities in the face of tariffs

Opinion: Support, not punishment, is needed to end homelessness in Ontario

UNITED WAY PERTH-HURON

Social Research and Planning Council

As Ontarians brace themselves for the impacts of tariffs from the United States, we need to address the cracks in our province's foundations.

According to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), more than 81,500 people are experiencing homelessness in our province, many in one of 1,400 encampments often located in public spaces and municipal parkland.

In Perth and Huron counties, it is now normal to see small encampments. Too many households (286 in January) are without a home, and most of them have been for extended periods of time. On any given night, some of these households will sleep unsheltered, outdoors, in a tent or a sleeping bag.

Encampments are not a solution — not for the people forced to live in them, not for surrounding residents, and not for municipalities struggling to respond.

The right response matters. As Doug Ford begins his third term as premier, we call on him to face a hard truth: punishment is not the answer.

Evidence shows that we cannot police our way out of this problem. Breaking up encampments without providing viable housing and essential supports doesn't solve homelessness — it shifts it temporarily, pushing people into more unstable situations and reinforcing unjust disparities for marginalized groups.

Instead, the Government of Ontario can address poverty at its roots and break the cycles of poverty and exclusion. They can invest in holistic mental health and housing solutions that will meet immediate needs while promoting long-term stability and dignity for all.

With a new majority, Doug Ford's Progressive Conser-

vative government has a major opportunity, and a duty, to address this crisis.

Rural communities are succeeding with compassionate approaches

AMO reports that homelessness is increasing faster in rural areas than in urban centres. This reflects the underlying fact that rural areas typically see lower wages without necessarily having a lower cost of living. In 2024, the region, including Grey, Bruce, Perth, Huron and Simcoe counties, had the second highest Living Wage in the province, with only Toronto having a higher cost of living. At the same time, it has the lowest average wages in the province.

For those facing homelessness, rural areas have limited shelter, transitional housing and specialized support options. Vulnerable individuals must travel a greater distance to access services with fewer transportation options. Marginalized groups like racialized communities or people with disabilities will find it even harder to access supports that meet their particular needs.

Even with these challenges, our rural communities are already developing compassionate and effective responses to encampments. Encampment evictions are costly and degrading without reducing homelessness. Engagement-based models cost less and deliver better outcomes, helping people move from survival to stability.

The Heart to Home Bridge Housing Program in Huron County combines low-barrier transitional housing with intensive supports to help clients access stable housing. In its first three months, one-fifth of clients have graduated to longer-term housing solutions. This partnership between the County of Huron, CMHA Huron Perth and United Way Perth-Huron demonstrates a successful rural model for reducing chronic homelessness.

The City of Stratford social services department has a strategy for responding to encampments across Perth County. They work persistently to build relationships with individuals sleeping outside and connect them to the housing supports they need.

Rural communities are developing approaches that work for managing encampments in their regions. What we need from the province are the resources to create concrete mental-health and housing solutions for people living in encampments, not steeper penalties.

Provincial investments are needed in mental health and housing

A full range of mental-health services, including harm reduction, crisis intervention and long-term treatment, must be part of Ontario's housing strategy.

Without adequate mental-health and addiction supports tailored to varying needs, individuals in crisis end up in emergency rooms, shelters or with law enforcement, without the care they need. Strengthening community-based mental-health services prevents crises, improves outcomes and reduces costs in other systems.

Addictions and Mental Health Ontario estimates the cost of housing with supports is \$2,200 per month (\$72 per day). This provides significantly greater stability than a bed in a shelter (\$2,083 per month), a correctional facility (\$4,300 per month) or a hospital (\$13,500 per month). Low-barrier, permanent supportive housing is more cost-effective while being more compassionate and successful.

Research shows that every \$10 invested in supportive housing saves \$21.72 in health-care, social-services and justice-system costs. Yet Ontario has not made that investment, leaving many people cycling through crisis systems.

The new Ontario government has an opportunity to prioritize mental-health and housing solutions that address the problem at its roots. This is about more than doing the right thing — these are smart investments that help people stay housed and reduce the burden on other public services.

This is about more than encampments — it's about dignity

At its core, this isn't about tents in the park. It's about helping all Ontarians live with dignity, with sufficient income to meet basic needs. That means increasing social assistance rates and ensuring the minimum wage reflects a living wage so people aren't forced into homelessness. As recommended by more than 400 non-profit housing experts convened by United Ways and partners, it's about protecting the existing affordable housing we have and developing a new pipeline of affordable co-op and non-profit housing so people can find an affordable place to live.

The current government wants to protect Ontario from Donald Trump's tariffs. If tariffs raise construction costs and put people out of work, homelessness, mental health and addiction may become even greater challenges.

All Ontarians deserve leadership that prioritizes their basic needs and human rights. Ontario is much stronger when its most vulnerable residents are supported. The Ford Government can act now to address poverty at its roots, prevent rising costs in emergency services and fortify the foundation of a strong Ontario.

This piece may not represent the views of all organizations and individuals who contribute to the United Way Perth-Huron's Social Research and Planning Council. A version of this piece was developed by United Way Greater Toronto with input from United Ways across Ontario.



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Perth County Federation of Agriculture hosts annual MP and MPP meeting to discuss farming future

GARY WEST

Independent Reporter

Before tractors hit the fields for spring planting, the Perth County Federation of Agriculture (PCFA) brought together local farmers and elected officials for its annual MP and MPP meeting.

The event, held last week at the Mitchell Golf and Country Club, offered a platform for commodity groups across Perth County to share their concerns and priorities with political representatives.

Invited to the meeting were Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae and Perth-Wellington MP John Nater. They listened to briefings from representatives of the beef, pork, dairy, egg, chicken and grain sectors, all operating under the umbrella of the PCFA.

The Perth County Federation of Agriculture represents the interests of Ontario's nearly 50,000 farms, which grow more than 200 varieties of fruits, vegetables, grains and livestock. Agriculture in Ontario adds billions of dollars to the province's economy and

supports more than 11 per cent of Ontario's workforce, making it one of the province's most vital industries.

Trade challenges and policy solutions

One of the central topics at this year's meeting was the urgent need to reduce interprovincial trade barriers, especially as Canada's trade relationship with the United States faces new challenges.

The PCFA is calling on the Ontario government to lead efforts in collaboration with other provinces and the federal government to establish a unified Canadian trade agreement.

"A harmonized set of interprovincial regulations," the PCFA brief stated, "would streamline commerce and enable farmers across the country to maintain operations and deliver food to Canadians nationwide."

The organization emphasized that Canada's growing difficulty in importing goods from the U.S. presents a unique opportunity to strengthen domestic self-sufficiency. By taking decisive action, PCFA said Canada can turn these trade challenges into a long-term success story for the agricultural sector.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Directors of the Perth County Federation of Agriculture pose with their elected officials. From left: MPP Matthew Rae, Tim Halliday (director), Sara Wood (director and OFA vice president), Julie Danen (director), Laura Good (recording secretary and director), Laura Barker (director), Pete Nyenhuis (director), Eric McLagan (director) and MP John Nater.

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St. Marys Independent SPORTS

Stonetown Karate Centre competitors thrive at STK Master of the Ring tournament



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Stonetown Karate Centre (SKC) hosted the STK Master of the Ring tournament on March 22, with many of their students earning strong results and some competing in their first-ever tournament. Pictured from left to right are Sensei Jalyne Lorentz, Claire Horenburg, Colton Horenburg and Landon Horenburg. Lorentz earned four gold medals at the tournament, including in the 18+ black belt women's traditional forms, traditional weapons, creative weapons and the traditional forms challenge. The three Horenburg students all captured solid fourth-place finishes in their respective divisions, and Claire and Colton were both competing in their first-ever tournament.

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

Members of the Stonetown Karate Centre (SKC) earned impressive results at the STK Master of the Ring tournament in St. Marys on March 22.

Sensei Jeremy Lorentz discussed the tournament, which was the first the SKC hosted.

"From start to finish, the energy in the venue was electric with competitors, coaches and spectators all bringing their best to the day," said Lorentz. "The level of skill and sportsmanship from the competitors was truly inspiring, and we couldn't have asked for a better turnout and support from clubs across Ontario. Each ring had world event-qualified judges and amazing volunteers who made the entire event run smoothly. It was everything we could have hoped for and more."

Lorentz called the event "an undeniable success" for the local dojo.

"Our athletes performed exceptionally well, demonstrating the discipline, dedication and technique that we strive to instill in all our students. Beyond the medals and trophies, the real victory was seeing our competitors push their limits, support their teammates and represent our dojo with pride. It was a fantastic day for karate in St. Marys, and we are

already looking forward to making next year's event even bigger and better.

"The energy and passion that filled the venue were incredible," Lorentz continued. "The competition was fierce, with athletes giving their absolute best in every match, but what truly made the event special was the sense of sportsmanship and respect among competitors. It was a true celebration of martial arts, and it left a lasting impact on everyone involved."

With the event being the first tournament of its kind for the SKC, Lorentz discussed how St. Marys has the potential to grow as a tournament host.

"From a hosting perspective, the tournament was a great learning experience. Organizing an event of this scale takes an incredible amount of effort and coordination, and it was a great success. To be the promoter of another amazing event on the WKC world circuit is amazing for our dojo."

Marieke Van Lierop and Sensei Jalyne Lorentz each topped the SKC's medal haul with four golds apiece. Van Lierop, competing in the 16-17 girls black belt division, won the top prize in hardstyle forms, classical forms, traditional weapons and creative weapons. Jalyne Lorentz, meanwhile, in the 18+ women's black belt group, took first in traditional forms, traditional weapons, creative weapons and the traditional forms chal-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The tournament was the first hosted by the SKC, which Sensei Jeremy Lorentz called "an undeniable success." Pictured in the front row, from left, are Preston Charfield, Lincoln Bordman, Theodora Cyr, Brendan King, Evelyn Taylor, Beckett Bordman, Parker Charfield and Callum Houston. In the second row, from left, are Platon Ianchuk, Emma Dungo, Sophia Bordman, Samantha Wilson, Emily Gerrits, Chloe Dillon, Adalyn Russell, Santiago Tierra and Fox Houston. In the third row, from left, are Morgan Houston, Rowan Meekes, Elijah Whitson, Olivia Bordman and Isla Houston. In the back row, from left, are Joshua Lariviere, Lisa Sheldon, Geoff Holdsworth, Kaela Hymus and Shannon Campbell.

lenge.

Kaela Hymus picked up a first-place finish in 13-14 girls black belt classical forms, and took second place in traditional forms.

In the 35+ men's novice division, Geoff Holdsworth came in first place in both traditional forms and traditional weapons.

Joshua Lariviere, competing in the 15-17 advanced division, finished first in traditional weapons and second in the traditional forms challenge.

Lisa Sheldon earned the top spot in the 42+ women's black belt point-sparring event, as well as a silver medal finish in 35+ women's black belt point sparring.

Shannon Campbell and Morgan Houston both competed in the 35+ women's advanced category, with Houston striking gold in both traditional forms and traditional weapons, while Campbell captured gold in point sparring and silver in traditional forms.

In the 14-15 boys black belt bracket, Fox Houston added four medals to the SKC's cache, including a silver in open/musical forms, along with three bronze medals in classical forms, hardstyle forms and creative weapons.

Elijah Whitson topped the field in two events in the 11-12 novice division, including traditional forms and traditional weapons.

Emma Dungo also nabbed a pair of first-place finishes. Dungo, who competed in the seven-to-eight intermediate category, finished in the gold medal position in traditional forms and traditional weapons.

Also in the seven-to-eight intermediate division, Parker Charfield finished first in the point-sparring competition.

Santiago Tierra captured the top spot in 11-12 intermediate traditional forms. In the six-and-under Little Ninja division, Beckett Bordman finished first in forms.

Also in the six-and-under Little Ninja category, Preston Charfield took second in forms, while Evelyn Taylor came in third in forms.

Several of the SKC's youngest competitors were competing in their first-ever tournament, including Clair Horenburg, Colton Horenburg, Platon Ianchuk and Adalyn Russell. Claire and Colton Horenburg each finished fourth in their respective six-and-under forms competitions. Ianchuk finished fourth in nine-to-10 traditional forms and traditional weapons. Russell, in the seven-to-eight novice group, also picked up a solid fourth-place finish in traditional weapons.

Landon Horenburg came in fourth in the nine-to-10 intermediate forms bracket.



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Ropp, Lariviere headline St. Marys results at national track and field meet

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

St. Marys residents Anna Ropp and Jonah Lariviere headlined a strong showing by local track-and-field competitors at the Canadian National Indoor Track and Field Championships held at York University on March 21-23.

Ropp, a student at St. Marys DCVI, captured the silver medal in the U20 Pentathlon, while Jonah Lariviere, who attends St. Michael Catholic Secondary, earned a bronze in the U20 800-metre run.

The U20 Pentathlon began in excellent fashion for Ropp, who tied her personal best results of 9.91 seconds in the hurdles event, followed by a 1.45-metre high jump. Ropp kept the momentum going in the shotput competition, recording another personal best at 9.35 metres.

A long jump of 4.60 metres in the fourth event resulted in Ropp slipping to third spot overall heading into the final leg of the pentathlon – the 800-metre run.

Ropp detailed the groove she got into with the good trio of events to begin the pentathlon, as well as her bounce-back after a slightly underwhelming long jump.

“Having a strong start definitely helped with confidence going into the next events,” Ropp told the Independent. “Going into the 800-metre, I knew I was in third and needed to win by four seconds in order to move into second. The 800-metre is one of my stronger events, so I knew it was my chance to increase my place in the overall competition. I ended up winning the 800-metre overall and was just three seconds off my personal best, so I’m proud I was able to get silver with my 800-metre after not having the greatest long jump.”

According to Ropp, who trains with the London Western Track and Field Club, two of her strongest events, the hurdles and high jump, have been the top areas in which she has focused on improving this season.

“This season, the main focus for me has been on high jump and hurdles, and I think I have improved immensely in both since last year,” said Ropp. “I increased my high-jump personal best from 1.35 to 1.45 and my hurdle personal best from 10.05 to 9.91. I think having all the extra training in these events was evident at nationals because I ended up getting my personal best in both, and I’m grateful for the help I’ve



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

Anna Ropp, pictured on the left, and Jonah Lariviere, right, earned some of the biggest highlight results of all St. Marys attendees of the Canadian National Indoor Track and Field Championships held on March 21-23 at York University. Ropp took the silver medal in the U20 Pentathlon, while Lariviere earned the bronze in the 800-metre run.

received from my coach, Liz (House).”

Jonah Lariviere also brought a medal back to St. Marys, nabbing a bronze in the U20 800-metre run with a time of 1:58:15. Lariviere also represents the London Western TFC, and told the Independent he had great feelings of pride when he crossed the finish line.

“It felt like all my practice had finally paid off,” Lariviere said. “A lot of this indoor season has been about this 800-metre race for me, and a lot of my training has been focused on getting my speed work in and getting a good amount of mileage under me, and I think all of that came through for me. It honestly felt pretty surreal when I saw my name and my time come up on the screen.”

The race remained incredibly close until the final 100 metres, when the crop of competitors picked up their pace, leading to a hotly contested finish. Accord-

ing to Lariviere, his competitors seemed to be pacing themselves early in the run.

“I think most guys who ran that race would agree that it started off pretty slow compared to what we all thought it would be going in,” Lariviere said. “Seeing as it was a championship race, everyone probably expected to be going faster than we were early on. The first few laps were a little slow and everyone was pretty even, but when it got to the last lap, the hammer came down and we all had to put the pedal to the metal.”

Other St. Marys results included Isabella Mills taking fourth in the U18 long jump, fifth in the U18 60-metre hurdles, and sixth in the triple jump. Payton Blight took fourth in the U18 weight throw and sixth in U18 shot-put. Kaleb Dingman took seventh in the U18 3,000-metre run and 16th in the 1,500-metre run.

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MINOR SPORTS

SCRAPBOOK



Everett Crummer launches a wrist shot on goal during the St. Marys Buick-GMC U10 A Boys St. Marys Rock game last Wednesday.



Ben Becker rips a shot towards the net from the point during last Wednesday's Dunny's Source For Sports U13 A Boys St. Marys Rock game.



Hayden Barker unloads a shot from the blueline during the St. Marys Fire Department U14 A Boys St. Marys Rock game last Friday.



Brooklyn Roth fires a shot on net during last Saturday's U15 B Girls Sam's Home Hardware U15 B Girls St. Marys Rock game.



Lexi Flax tracks an incoming shot and makes the save during the Veterinary Purchasing U15 C Girls St. Marys Rock game this past Monday.



Donovan McGregor releases a shot from the wing during last Wednesday's St. Marys Legion U16 A Boys St. Marys Rock game

(TURNER ROTH PHOTOS)

U14 Snipers strike gold at regional tournament

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The U14 St. Marys Snipers (Habermehl) claimed the top prize at the Lower Ontario Ringette League Regional Championships March 21-23, hosted in Dorchester and London.

Head coach Evan Habermehl credited the team's relentless compete level as a major piece in finding their way to the gold medal.

"These girls worked their butts off all weekend," Habermehl told the Independent. "It was a rough second half of the season with all losses and one tie after the Christmas break reseeding. To be able to finish up the season with some wins and a gold in the final tournament was a big deal for the team."

Habermehl added the team had to fight off exhaustion throughout the tournament and the gold-medal game with a much shorter bench than their competition.

"With such a short bench, there was no shortage of ice time. We only had three defenders, so they each ended up being on the ice for two-thirds of the game. The forwards were able to bring so much offence to the championship game and get a lot of points on the board for us. In addition, our goalie, Maelle (Hachler), was able to make some big saves during the tournament."

The Snipers met the Etobicoke Stingers in the gold-medal game, a team St. Marys had defeated earlier in the tournament 11-4. In their two other pre-final tournament games, the Snipers also posted victories over Caledonia and Whitby. Once again, the championship contest was a high-scoring affair, with



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The U14 St. Marys Snipers (Habermehl) won the gold medal at the Lower Ontario Ringette League Regional Championships March 21-23, hosted in Dorchester and London. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are trainer Laurie McCutcheon, Maelle Hachler, Regan Smith, Mikayla Ford, Madi McCutcheon and coach Rebecca Taylor. In the back row, from left, are coach Jim Burlingham, Mary McCutcheon, Peyton Van Straaten, Lilly Murphy, Brenna Bearss, Lyla Habermehl, Amara Grant, and head coach Evan Habermehl.

St. Marys coming away with a 12-8 win to capture the gold.

Lyla Habermehl, Mikayla Ford and Mary McCutcheon jumpstarted the game for St. Marys with three goals in the first five minutes and one second. Etobicoke managed to claw the game back to a 3-3 tie, but the Snipers managed to take a one-goal lead into the intermission after outscoring the Stingers

two goals to one in the final 68 seconds of the opening period. Ford and Madi McCutcheon scored to help give St. Marys a 5-4 lead at the end of the first.

The second frame began very similarly to the first, with the Snipers scoring four straight goals in a stretch of four minutes and 48 seconds, the first of which came from Lilly Murphy just 54 seconds into the period. Peyton Van Straaten scored

twice and Mary McCutcheon netted her second of the game at the 9:18 mark of the second.

After a goal by the Stingers less than a minute later, St. Marys once again had a significant offensive outburst, potting three straight goals in a span of four minutes and 40 seconds. Maddie McCutcheon tallied her second of the contest while Ford and Mary McCutcheon each completed hat-tricks. A late push by the Stingers resulted in three goals in the final two minutes, but Hachler otherwise held Etobicoke off to secure the 12-8 victory and the gold medal.

"The gold medal game was hard-fought for sure," Evan Habermehl said. "With such a short bench, it is hard to keep energized and in the game. The girls did an amazing job of overcoming their emotions and the pressure of the game. They got tested throughout the tournament with a hard-fought, round-robin game against Etobicoke that was a come-from-behind win, which was great to see. But, they also found a way to thrive in a really tight and rough game against Whitby."

The coach noted one of the squad's biggest focal points this season – their cohesiveness – was displayed excellently throughout the weekend.

"One thing we have been working on repeatedly is moving the ring around the offensive end, which they did so well all weekend. We had many great goals in the tournament that were from great passing plays. This is evident in almost all of the players having at least one assist. We as coaches have been preaching teamwork and supporting each other throughout the year, and it was shown on the ice."

Andrew L. Hodges

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FUN3 Snipers show growth in capturing regional silver

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

A year of progression led to the FUN3 U10 St. Marys Snipers earning a hard-fought silver medal at the Lower Ontario Ringette League Regional Championships held in London March 21-23.

Head coach Jamie Hibbert raved about the team's showing, saying the young Snipers' squad "played their hearts out the entire tournament."

"The thing I liked the most about the way the team played was how they played every game as a team," Hibbert said. "Every person was a part of our success, not just one or two players. We had such success this weekend because our team never gave up. Even in the games where we were down on the scoreboard, they kept digging. They were checking for the ring really well and getting lots of shots on net."

After dropping their first round-robin game to the London Lynx (Duddy) on March 21, the Snipers, backstopped by goaltender Mila Vanderpol and vaulted by a hat-trick from Emerson Muir, picked up a 4-0 shutout win over the Guelph Predators (Richardson) on March 22. Natalie Hibbert rounded out the goal-scoring for St. Marys.

The Snipers propelled themselves to the gold-medal clash by handing the Waterloo Wildfire (Thorndyke) a 10-3 defeat later that same day. St. Marys took a narrow 3-2 lead into the second period



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The FUN3 St. Marys Snipers earned the silver medal at the Lower Ontario Ringette League Regional Championships on March 21-23 in London. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Sophia Adcock, Avynne Blight and Jolee Beech. In the middle row, from left, are Isabella Feltz, Noelle McKay, Addie Dundas, Natalie Hibbert, Aubrey Feltz, Charlotte Holliday, Elizabeth Robinson, Blake Munroe and Adelia Verbaan. In the back row, from left, are coach Carly Dundas, Mila Vanderpol, coach Jamie Hibbert and Emerson Muir. Not pictured was coach Kaisu Vanderpol.

when their offense exploded for seven goals to cruise to the 10-3 final score.

Though they come up short in the

championship game, Jamie Hibbert was thrilled with the team's finish to the season. At the beginning of the year, low

U12 registration resulted in three second-year FUN3 players being elevated to the U12 team, creating a large void of experience. Despite that, the team progressed incredibly.

"At the beginning of the season, we had an entire team of players who were playing their first year at the FUN3 level," Jamie Hibbert said. "This is the first level that is full ice and all of the rules, and with all new players to that, we had so much to learn. We've been focusing a lot on our teamwork on the ice. Things like looking for the best pass, getting open and protecting our goalie have all been big focuses for us, and they did these all really well."

The coach added his team's silver medal surpassed all expectations for the young group.

"The other coaches and I are so proud of this team. The progress they've made and how far we've come as a team is really remarkable. In September, I don't think any of us imagined this team of first-year and underage players would make it to the finals at regionals. We went from learning the rules to executing plays. They really learned to believe in themselves."

"In the last game, we were playing a team from London and they were a really good team," Jamie Hibbert continued. "They were beating us the entire game, but our team didn't quit. They didn't give up. They gave it their all until the buzzer went."

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7/8 boys have stellar final games as season winds down

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

St. Marys Minor Basketball's grade 7/8 boys travel team picked up an impressive victory and came within one shot in a pair of games on March 29.

In their first game of the day, St. Marys took on the visiting squad from Goderich and came away with a 40-24 win. Coach Jack Taylor told the Independent one of the keys to the team's strong performance was their continued growth in spreading their five bodies around the arc in the offensive half.

"One of the issues that we noticed was we were getting bunched up together, especially on the right-hand side because most of our players are right-handed," said Taylor. "Once we were able to establish space on the floor, it allowed us to start using the whole floor, which opened up a lot of passing opportunities to the low post, where we have some really strong players who can dominate when they get the ball."

Noah Diehl led the way offensively, scoring 12 points for St. Marys in the victory. Elliott Hudson recorded eight points while Isiah Omel tallied six. Will Richardson posted four, Jake Carpenter and Landon McDonald had three, and Jack Wilkinson and Ben Rumble chipped in two.

This season's St. Marys Minor Basketball's 7/8 boys team fared far better than it did a year ago, with Taylor crediting his players for their substantial progression.

"Last year, we didn't win a game, so at the start of the year, we felt there was room for growth. This year, we have improved tremendously and I think these boys are tough and they understand discipline. When they're told something, they want to execute it for their own sake, for their teammates and to make the coaches proud of them."

Though St. Marys couldn't take the win in their second game of the day against Stratford, they didn't go down easily whatsoever. Going into the final half, Stratford led by five points, but by the end of the game, St. Marys clawed back to within a point, with the game coming down to a scrum for the ball under Stratford's hoop in its dying moments, and Stratford narrowly prevented a buzzer-beating shot.

Taylor reflected on the season for the local Minor



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Noah Diehl, pictured on the left, puts up a shot during one of the St. Marys Minor Basketball's grades 7/8 boys' team's games on March 29. Diehl led the team with 12 points in their 40-24 win over Goderich. On the right, Jake Carpenter is pictured mid-air as he floats the ball to the hoop.

Basketball program, noting the dedication by every young athlete and echoing the sentiments of minor basketball volunteers Tim O'Connor, Steven Reid and Ken French, among others, who called this season one of the best in the history of the program.

"To me, the big takeaway has been seeing a bunch of boys and girls on this team and in the minor-basketball program overall put their heart into the game and bring more basketball to St. Marys. It went away

quite a bit after the pandemic, so the fact that it's growing again in St. Marys is great to see, and I think it matters to a lot of people.

"We have a really good community here where everybody wants to come together and they don't give up on each other," Taylor continued. "We stay with each other the whole way. I don't know if a lot of other centres have what we have."

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Minor Basketball hosts grades 5-8 wrap-up night



St. Marys Minor Basketball's season of weekly play wrapped up on March 27 with championship games in each division. Pictured on the left are players in the organization's grades 6-8 girls division, which saw the Storm defeat the Sun in a 12-11 nail-biter to win the gold medal, while the Fever won the bronze medal game 20-17 against the Sky.



The grades 5/6 boys division concluded with a pair of hotly-contested battles, including with the Spurs winning the third-place game 17-4, followed by the Mavericks edging out the Thunder 12-10 in the clash for the top prize.



(TURNER ROTH PHOTOS)

The grade 7/8 boys division began with semi-final games, which set up a consolation prize match-up between the Tar Heels and Wolverines. The Wolverines came away with a thrilling 18-16 overtime win. In the championship game, the Huskies came away with an 18-4 win over the Crimson Tide.

St. Marys Curling leagues end season with awards presentations



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The St. Marys Curling Club's Monday Daytime League held their wrap-up mini-spiel to conclude their season on March 24. Pictured from left to right are Maggie Burns, Tony Reynen, Verna Strathdee, and Murray Pink. The quartet won the league's Fall 2024 Burns Blacker Award.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left are Ken Long, Nancy Pratt, Terry Todd, and Paul Grose. The foursome was the Winter 2025 champions of the St. Marys Curling, receiving the Burns Blacker for the latter half of the local Curling Club's Monday Daytime league.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The winners of the wrap-up mini-spiel were, from left, Susan McCutcheon, Tony Reynen, Sharon Eby, and Rick Greenaway.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

On March 25, the Curling Club also celebrated their Tuesday Drop-In League, with members of the league pictured above.

Thomson's Martial Arts well-represented at St. Marys tourney

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

Thomson's Martial Arts and Fitness, located in downtown St. Marys, had several students pick up strong results at the STK Master of the Ring tournament in St. Marys on March 22, including a trio of gold medals.

Sebastien Williams, competing in the 11-12 novice category, earned a gold medal in point sparring.

In the 11-12 intermediate sparring division, Callen Close also finished atop

the field to claim the gold.

James Porter took the silver medal in heavyweight adult black belt sparring, while Eric Thomson took the third spot in the same division and event.

Celia Dreossi and Guin Jester each recorded solid fourth-place finishes in their respective sparring competitions.

The tournament was the first of its kind held in St. Marys and Thomson's Martial Arts had multiple competitors turn in valiant performances throughout the event.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Thomson's Martial Arts and Fitness had several competitors pick up strong results at the STK Master of the Ring tournament. Pictured in the front is Eeve Lamond. In the back row, from left, are Callen Close, Eric Thomson and Sebastien Williams. Close, Lamond and Williams each won gold medals at the tournament, while Thomson earned a bronze.



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PRC & Friendship Centre events – See the Stonetown Crier on Page 5
St. Marys Public Library events – See Page 30

- Friday, April 4**
- Royal Canadian Legion “hot dogs and more” lunch at Noon
 - A.N.A.F. meat draw – 6 p.m.
 - St. Marys Lincolns vs London Nationals at the PRC – 7:30 p.m.
 - Mudmen concert at the Town Hall – 8 p.m., Advance tickets \$25, At the door \$28
- Saturday, April 5**
- Hazardous and special product disposal day at the MOC – 8 a.m. to Noon
 - Bob Lang & Butch Hammond memorial pool tournament at A.N.A.F. – Doors open 10 a.m.
 - Poetry showcase and readings from the pupils of The Coyote Nature School at St. Marys Station Gallery – 1-3 p.m.
 - Royal Canadian Legion meat draw – 5 p.m.
- Sunday, April 6**
- Legion bingo – Doors open 11 a.m., Early bird 12:45 p.m., Game time 1-4 p.m.
 - St. Marys Lincolns vs London Nationals at Western Fair Sports Centre – 7 p.m.
- Monday, April 7**
- Community dinner at St. Marys United Church – 5 p.m., Sponsored by Home Hardware
 - St. Marys Lincolns vs London Nationals at the PRC – 7:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, April 8**
- Royal Canadian Legion Buddy Check coffee at the Legion – 10 am to Noon
- Wednesday, April 9**
- Friends of the Library social at the library – 6:30-8 p.m.
 - St. Marys Lincolns vs London Nationals at Western Fair Sports Centre – 7 p.m.
 - Lenton devotions and desserts at St. Marys United Church – 7 p.m.
- Thursday, April 10**
- Friends of the Library management committee meeting at the library – 10 a.m.

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Solutions on page 37

Notice of Application for Approval to Expropriate Land Form 2 Expropriations Act

In the matter of an application by the Ministry of Transportation for approval to expropriate land, pursuant to s.11(2) and subsection 11.1(3) of the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act, being in the Geographic Township of Fullarton, Municipality of West Perth, County of Perth, Province of Ontario.

For the purpose(s) of: Property is required to accommodate Highway 23 Russeldale Intersection Improvements.

Notice is hereby given that application has been made for approval to expropriate the land described in the schedule attached hereto.

The approving authority is the Minister of Transportation with an address of:

Minister of Transportation
777 Bay Street, 5th Floor
Toronto ON M7A 1Z8
416-327-9200

Any owner of lands in respect of which notice is given, who desires to comment on the proposed expropriation of the land for the described purpose(s) may do so by submitting the comment within the time stated herein to the Assistant Deputy Minister, Transportation Infrastructure Management Division, Ministry of Transportation, in writing.

The Ministry will review the comments for their technical/engineering information, having regard to the need for the land for the purposes of the project.

The Assistant Deputy Minister must receive the comments within thirty days after the owner is served with this notice, or within thirty days after the first publication of the notice.

The comments must be sent:

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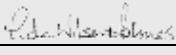
Or by mail to: Assistant Deputy Minister
Transportation and Infrastructure Management
Ministry of Transportation
4th Floor, Garden City Tower
301 St. Paul Street
St. Catharines ON L2R 7R4

Please include the municipal address of the land in the comment.

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416-327-9200

Minister of Transportation

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London ON N6E 1L3
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SCHEDULE A

All right, title and interest in the following lands:

- All right, title and interest in the lands described as follows:
In the Municipality of West Perth, in the County of Perth, being Part of PIN 53212-0025 (LT), being Part of Lots 33 and 34, Concession North of Thames Road, Geographic Township of Fullarton, designated as PART 1 on Reference Plan 44R-6268 (P-2198-39).
- All right, title and interest in the lands described as follows:
In the Municipality of West Perth, in the County of Perth, being Part of PIN 53219-0074 (LT), being Part of Lot 34, Concession North of Thames Road, Geographic Township of Fullarton, designated as PART 2 on Reference Plan 44R-6268 (P-2198-39).
- A permanent limited interest, in the nature of a free right and easement for the purpose of enabling the erection and maintenance of a large traffic sign, in the lands described as follows:
In the Municipality of West Perth, in the County of Perth, being Part of PIN 53220-0010 (LT), being Part of Lot 34, Concession South of Thames Road, Geographic Township of Fullarton, designated as PART 1 on Reference Plan 44R-6287 (P-2198-43).

THIS NOTICE WAS FIRST PUBLISHED ON: APRIL 3, 2025



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COLUMNS

UKRAINIAN CORNER: Walking the streets of Zaporizhzhia

TETIANA DIDKOVSKA
Independent Columnist

Zaporizhzhia is a city that combines scenic beauty with a proud Cossack heritage along the banks of the Dnieper River. Known as a cradle of Cossack glory, it boasts centuries of history as well as modern industrial achievements shaping Ukraine’s economy. From the Dnipro Hydroelectric Power Plant to the legends of brave Cossacks, Zaporizhzhia offers a rich blend of old and new.

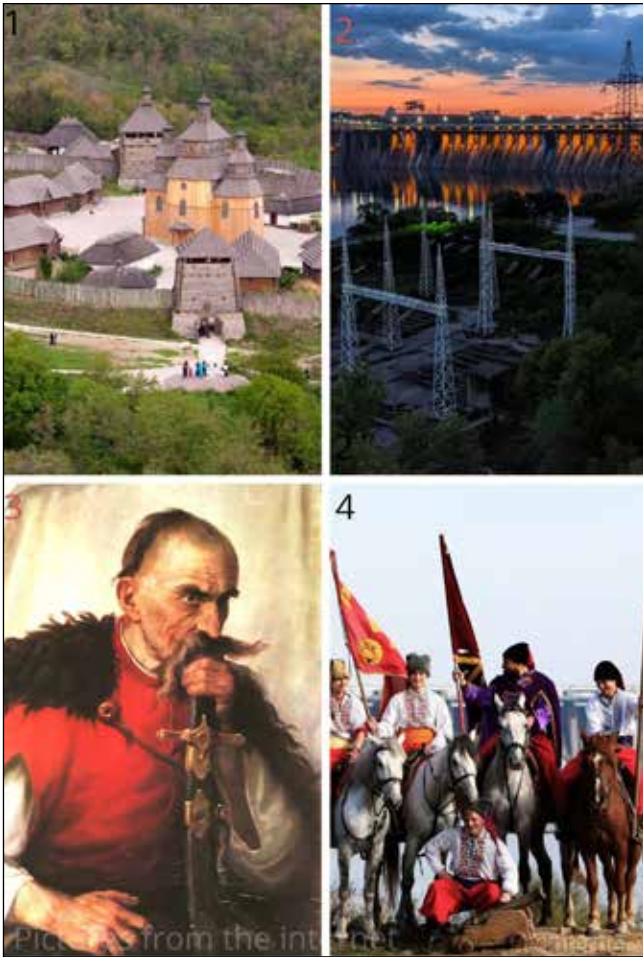
Early references date to the 10th to 13th centuries, when this area was part of Kievan Rus. Over time, the strategic location on key trade routes spurred settlements crucial for defense. As the Cossack movement grew, the region became famous for its free-spirited warriors who protected their homeland. Today, echoes of that storied past stand alongside bustling factories, showing Zaporizhzhia’s identity as both a historic center and a modern industrial hub.

Khortytsia Island, on the Dnieper River, symbolizes Zaporizhzhia’s culture and heritage. An open-air museum presents reconstructed Cossack villages and the Museum of Cossack Glory, displaying artifacts of this influential culture. Outdoor enthusiasts can explore cycling and walking trails with sweeping views of the river and forests.

Zaporizhzhia Sich offers another historical highlight. This reconstruction of a 17th to 18th-century Cossack military camp includes wooden buildings, a church and a palanka (council hall).

For technology admirers, the Dnipro Hydroelectric Power Plant is a key. A marvel of 20th century infrastructure helped transform the region into an industrial stronghold. Guided tours explain how turbines and dams harness the river’s force to produce electricity.

Legendary Cossack hetman Ivan Sirko stands out among the region’s figures. Celebrated for courage and leadership, he was rumored to have supernatural powers, leading the Turks to call him “Shaitan.” Sirko’s legacy reflects the struggle for Ukrainian au-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)
1: Zaporizhzhia Sich. 2: The Dnipro Hydroelectric Power Plant. 3: Legendary Cossack hetman Ivan Sirko. 4: The Cossack Festival.

tonomy, and he remains a potent figure in local folklore.

Beyond history and industry, the city thrives culturally with festivals and events. Its cafés and restaurants serve dishes inspired by diverse influences: baked

Dnieper fish, honey-based desserts and wheat specialties channeling the flavor of the steppe. Evenings often feature music, dancing and friendly gatherings. Before leaving, pick up a vivid souvenir with Cossack symbols or handcrafted items representing centuries of folk traditions.

In Zaporizhzhia, visitors immerse themselves in tales of Cossack valour, marvel at industrial feats and enjoy a welcoming spirit. The harmony of history and modern energy makes any stay here memorable.

The city’s economic significance is also reflected in its massive metallurgical factories, which line the banks of the Dnieper. These industries have long employed skilled workers from across Ukraine, contributing to the region’s prosperity. Despite a focus on heavy industry, Zaporizhzhia has been expanding its infrastructure and embracing innovative technologies, with new business centres and research facilities emerging in recent years. Educational institutions here also produce specialists in engineering, environmental sciences and urban planning, ensuring a continuous exchange of fresh ideas and expertise.

Every year, multiple festivals celebrate the region’s colourful traditions. Among them is the Cossack Festival featuring horseback-riding displays, folk-music performances and reenactments of historic battles. Street fairs often showcase artisanal crafts, from intricately woven textiles to elaborately carved wooden souvenirs. Spring and summer see open-air concerts, while autumn harvest events spotlight local produce like sunflowers, grains and a variety of regional fruits. These gatherings attract locals and tourists alike, fostering a sense of communal and cultural exchange.

Altogether, Zaporizhzhia stands as a vibrant destination. Whether you’re drawn by the allure of Cossack lore or the fascination of industrial marvels, you’ll find countless opportunities to explore, learn and enjoy. From the majestic river to the living echoes of history, this city beckons all who seek a deeper connection with Ukraine’s past and present.

To be continued ...

Straight from the Shelves

LAURA MCASH
St. Marys Public Library

Bring your little ones to the Library on Saturday, April 19 at 10:30 a.m. for the Easter edition of Crafty Tales! Enjoy some sp-egg-tacular stories then decorate a paper egg. This program is free to attend, and no registration is required. See you there!

This Week’s Recommendation

Get up close and personal with rabbits, chickens, geese, and more in “Life-Size Farm” by Teruyuki Komiya. This book contains life-size photos with bite-sized facts about animal friends big and small.

Check it out from the children’s non-fiction section today! Its call sticker reads “J 636 Lif”.

Up This Week

Fri., Apr. 4: Open 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sat., Apr. 5: Dungeons and Dragons (10 a.m.)
Mon., Apr. 7: Euchre Mondays (10 a.m.)
Tues., Apr. 8: Write of Way (6:30-8 p.m.)
Wed., Apr. 9: EarlyON Play and Read (9:30-10:30 a.m.), Mahjong! (1-4 p.m.), Scrabble (6-8 p.m.)
Thurs., Apr. 10: Open 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

*Registration Required

Ask the Arborist

By Joel Hackett | 519 272 5742 | jtsquote@gmail.com



Dear Arborist,

Lets talk about tulip trees, I think that more people should be made aware of them. They used to be very common in the area, but were used for British Navy ship building and have been mostly removed.

Thanks, Bob

Dear Bob,

There is a massive tulip tree in London around 5 ft. across and 100 ft. tall. I can’t remember the exact location. A tulip tree is one of the fastest growing native trees in the area, and are quite nice looking.

Straight and tall with larger flowers, they are sometimes referred to as a

tulip poplar, but are technically in the Magnoliaceae family making it closely related to a magnolia tree. They were called poplars due to common naming in earlier Canadian history. Overall, these are an excellent choice and I have started recommending them more. Planting a tulip tree is a good way to get a replacement tree quickly as they grow around 1 to 2 feet per year.

Sincerely,

The Arborist

Joel Hackett is a certified Arborist residing in the St. Marys area. Currently, he spends most of the year running Joel’s Tree Service. For contact call 519 272 5742 or email jtsquote@gmail.com

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HISTORIC ST. MARYS: St. Marys and the 1911 Tariff Election

MARY SMITH

Independent Columnist

The political parties have launched their campaigns in Canada's 45th federal election. Although we have experienced other elections, this one feels different. Voters are asked to consider, along with various policies and promises, which party is best suited to meet a grave external threat. The 2025 election, however, is by no means the first time the word "tariff" has been a rallying cry in party campaigns. Ever since Confederation, a stance on tariffs has been part of the major parties' platforms. Opposing stances were usually straightforward. Tariffs were either good or bad for Canada's economy and political sovereignty. This time, the issue is how to deal with tariffs imposed arbitrarily on our country and how to take the most effective retaliatory measures.

This election in 2025 is also not the first where American threats to our sovereignty affected the outcome. An example is the 12th federal election, held in September 1911. The leaders of the two main parties were Sir Wilfrid Laurier of the Liberal Party, prime minister since 1896, and his challenger, Conservative Robert Borden, the leader of the opposition. Laurier was in favour of reciprocity with the United States – no trade restrictions on many items that crossed the border between the two countries. He argued that free trade would benefit Canadian agriculture and industry by opening up broader markets. Borden disagreed. He preferred high tariffs on goods coming into the country from the States. Tariffs would encourage Canadian industries to expand and become self-reliant. When Canada traded abroad, it should be with Great Britain. That was where Canada's natural loyalties lay.

The 1911 election also showed that comments by an American politician could influence public opinion in Canada and, perhaps, even choices at the ballot box. During a discussion of free trade in the House of Representatives, the Speaker, James Beauchamp "Champ" Clark, Democrat from Missouri, said: "I look forward to the time when the American flag will fly over every square foot of British North America up to the North Pole." President William Howard Taft and most other members of congress may not have endorsed this statement. Still, Borden and the Conservatives used it frequently to warn Canadians that reciprocity was the opening Americans were looking for, leading to annexation.

While today more than 80% of Canadians live in cities, in 1911, there were still more people living in rural areas. That meant a higher proportion of rural ridings and a stronger voice for rural Canada in federal elections. Perth County was divided into two ridings for both federal and provincial elections – South Perth and North Perth. The South Perth riding included the towns of St. Marys, Mitchell, and Tavistock, along with Blanchard, Downie, Fullarton, Hibbert, Logan, and South Easthope Townships. With this relatively small area, during election campaigns, candidates were able to visit the three towns frequently. They could hold rallies in small township halls and make direct contact with many of the riding's eligible voters. (Note: In 1911, voters had to be male, over 21 years of age, and British subjects by birth or naturalization. There was no such thing as Canadian citizenship and women's right to vote federally was still some years away.)

The Liberal candidate for South Perth was from



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ST. MARYS MUSEUM'S DIGITAL COLLECTION)

Dr. Michael Steele was the Conservative candidate for South Perth in the 1911 federal election. The Conservatives were in favour of tariffs on American goods coming into Canada to protect the national economy.

St. Marys. Gilbert Howard McIntyre (sometimes MacIntyre) was born in St. Marys in 1852, the son of George McIntyre, a pioneer merchant and private banker. George was the town's third mayor in 1866-1867, at the time of Confederation. Gilbert attended local schools and then studied pharmacy. He worked several years in Montreal before opening a drugstore in Guelph. There he met and, in 1879, married Belvedera (Bessie) Stevenson. The couple returned to St. Marys where Gilbert joined his father in the banking business. He enjoyed sports, played on the town baseball team, and belonged to the curling club. Gilbert also served as mayor of St. Marys in 1892-1893. Encouraged to take his political interests to a higher level, he won South Perth for the Liberals in the 1904 federal election. He was re-elected in 1908, although by a very narrow margin. From all accounts, McIntyre was an able member of parliament and was increasingly given additional responsibilities. He was fluent in French, a great asset in Ottawa, and eventually became Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons. When parliament dissolved for the 1911 election, G. H. McIntyre was in line to become the next permanent Speaker.

The Conservative candidate was Dr. Michael Steele from Tavistock. He had lost the 1908 election to G. H. McIntyre by only 29 votes. In 1911, his campaign centred on his party's opposition to free trade. Michael Steele was born on a farm near Avonbank in 1860.

His parents were Thomas and Joan (Todd) Steele from Scotland. They had emigrated to Canada in the mid-1850s and settled in Downie Township. Michael was the seventh in their family of ten children. He attended St. Marys Collegiate and then, like so many other ambitious young people of the day, he went to Normal School (Teachers College) and then taught in rural schools to earn money for post-secondary education. He graduated from Trinity Medical College in Toronto in 1888, came to Tavistock and practised medicine there for more than three decades. When his parents retired from farming, they moved to St. Marys. Dr. Steele and many members of the Steele family were well-known in the community.

At that time, there were two local newspapers in St. Marys, both publishing every Thursday. The Argus was owned and published by R. H. Davey and strongly supported the Liberal Party. The Journal, published by J. W. Eedy, was Conservative. In the weeks leading up to election day on September 21, both newspapers had extensive coverage of the two local candidates. They also frequently printed articles from city newspapers – both Canadian and American – that supported their points of view. It is entertaining to read the arguments on both sides. For example, on August 17, just as the campaign was getting underway, the Journal reprinted a question from the Winnipeg Telegram: "What is Reciprocity?" and provided the answer: "Reciprocity is the surrender of our fiscal independence, leading as night follows day, to complete national extinction." Every week in September, the Journal included a photograph of Dr. M. Steele at the top of its "News About Town" page, with dates and locations of his upcoming public meetings.

The St. Marys Argus, on the other hand, regularly printed photographs, not only of G. H. McIntyre, but also of his leader, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, by then a respected statesman. The Argus assured readers that, with a leader such as Laurier, Canadian sovereignty was too respected ever to be threatened. A letter to the Argus editor made this point: "As more than half of our trade with the whole world is with the United States, it is certain that an immense and ever-increasing trade will continue to go, not east and west, but north and south for all time to come. It is certain that a mere amount of trade has nothing to do with political allegiance, otherwise at present we would all be Americans."

Both newspapers included paid advertisements for both political parties. The Liberals placed an ad in both papers announcing a rally in the town hall on September 2. "A hearty welcome to Liberals and Conservatives. Come and hear reciprocity debated." A nearby display ad announced "A Great Mass Meeting on Reciprocity in the Opera House, Tuesday evening, September 12, with Dr. Steele, the Conservative candidate. Ladies Welcome." Both newspapers also carried reports of these rallies and debates, but their partisan descriptions of the events were quite different. Next week's column will explain how G. H. McIntyre and Dr. Steele fared on election day.

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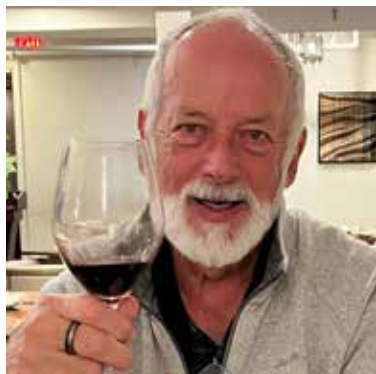
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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Highlights of visiting small but mighty Gibraltar



PAUL KNOWLES

Independent Columnist

You might think that a highlight of visiting the unique destination that is Gibraltar would be your first sighting of “The Rock,” or glimpsing Africa only about 15 kilometres away across the straits, or meeting the famous Gibraltar monkeys that inhabit the nature preserve that covers two-thirds of the peninsula.

And yes, all of the above, but the most entertaining experience for me may have been a ridiculous game of musical chairs carried out by a local resident named Michael.

Let me explain. We were nearing the end of a wonderful, three-week stay in Spain’s Costa del Sol. More of this in coming weeks, but for one day, we left Spain and found ourselves instantly in Great Britain.

Everything on Gibraltar is British except, of course, for the 15,000 Spaniards who clear customs twice a day to work on The Rock. As a long-time Anglophile, it was a treat to be in a community with red telephone booths and postboxes, a well-stocked Marks and Spencer, and British pubs galore.

We strolled up a side street and found a tiny pub named The Aragon Bar, named for one of Henry VIII’s wives. The pub seated no more than a dozen people max, plus four or five at the bar. When we walked in, there was no obvious place for us, but the barmaid immediately pointed to a guy sitting on the bench and said, “Michael, please move,” directing him to a table set for one.

Michael moved, our table was cleaned and we were nestled into the corner. I ordered a pint and steak-and-onion pie. It was probably the only day in three weeks when I did not eat paella.

Soon after our arrival, another couple popped their heads in. The scene was repeated.

“Michael, please move.”

As the servers added a chair to that vacated table, Michael moved to a stool at the bar, being careful to take his pint with him.

Someone else approached the bar. Michael, by now having figured out his fate, moved toward the tiny kitchen and sat down at the back table already occupied by a woman who appeared to be the owner. And eventually, he sidled out of the bar completely, probably returning an hour or two later when these darned interlopers had cleared out and he could reclaim his usual perch. Meanwhile, it being St. Patrick’s Day, I had my picture taken with the Irish barmaid.

For me, these are the quirky moments that make travel memorable.

Of course, there is a lot more to Gibraltar than a tiny British pub. Gibraltar is officially

a “British Overseas Territory,” and it feels like one of the last remnants of the British Empire. It has been ruled by various conquerors over the centuries – the Moors in the Middle Ages, then Spain (which still wants it back) and finally, since 1713, the British. Tangible evidence of all those eras is still found on The Rock.

One of the highlights of the visit is indeed simply seeing The Rock. For visitors who have travelled near sea level along the coast of Spain, the soaring, 426-metre limestone outcropping is an impressive sight.

And then, venturing at least half-way up The Rock into the Gibraltar Nature Reserve adds to the adventure. That’s where you encounter the monkeys – more properly, Barbary macaques – who occupy the reserve. Our guide pointed out the monkeys own two square kilometres of Gibraltar; humans claim only one square kilometre.

There is no doubt the monkeys are wild animals, though our guide admitted they are fed by park staff, not because they need supplements to their natural diet in the reserve, but to attract them to areas visited by the paying tourists, which explains why we spotted two of the animals visiting the gift shop!

That shop is at the entrance to one of the other highlights on Gibraltar – St. Michael’s Cave, an impressive limestone cavern where your visit will include a rather spectacular light show.

Gibraltar is not big; its permanent population is somewhere around 35,000. But it has grown



(PHOTOS BY PAUL KNOWLES)

The author with an Irish barmaid in a British pub, just a stroll through customs from Spain.

in size when it comes to land area because much of the city, including multiple high-rises, is now built on land reclaimed from the sea. And that trend is highly unpopular with the Spanish, who have watched what they see as British “squatters” move ever closer.

The Rock is much more important than its population or land mass might suggest, because it controls the link between the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, the route for about 130,000 ships annually, the majority, merchant vessels. From high on The Rock, you can see many ships at anchor waiting to enter the harbour for refuelling.

So important, yes. Disputed,

yes. Famous, yes – including as the location for the weddings of John and Yoko, Rod Stewart, Sean Connery and others – but still a smallish town and, therefore, safe for visitors. There are currently about eight million of us each year, down from 15 million before the COVID-19 pandemic.

As our driver told us, “Crime is low here. It’s the kind of place where, if you rob a bank, the teller will pick up the phone and call your mother.”

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.



A very British symbol on Gibraltar’s high street.



The light show in St. Michael’s Cave.



A Barbary macaque drops in at the gift shop in the Gibraltar Nature Reserve.

EAT AT OUR HOUSE: The season of spring



The following are some seasonal spring recipes to usher in the new flora and fauna we are gifted with this time of year. Here are some bright colours and flavours to wake up our palates.

Bacon, egg and cheese pastry

Serves: 8; Prep: 20 minutes; Total: 1 hour
Flakey handheld breakfast pockets are perfect for weekends and easy holiday morning gatherings. Simply assemble and store in freezer then place on a sheet pan and bake. Serve with a fruit salad.
8 slices of bacon, halved
7 eggs, divided
2 tbsp grated parmesan cheese
2 tbsp heavy cream
1/4 tsp kosher salt
1/4 tsp black pepper
2 sheets thawed puff pastry
1 cup shredded white cheddar

cheese

1 tbsp everything bagel seasoning

Method:

- Heat a large skillet over medium heat. Add bacon and cook until golden brown and crispy, 6-8 minutes. Let the skillet cool slightly then remove all but 2 tbsp of the bacon grease.

- In a medium bowl, whisk together the eggs, grated parmesan, heavy cream, salt and pepper.

- Return the skillet to medium-low heat. Add the eggs and let cook in a single layer, about 30 seconds. Stir occasionally for the next 1-2 minutes, to create large curds of scrambled egg. Once eggs are set (soft scrambled) remove from heat and transfer to a plate to cool completely.

- Cut the puff-pastry sheets each into four squares, about 4.5x4.5 inches, 8 squares in total.

- Divide eggs into 8 portions, sprinkle 2 tbsp cheese down the centre of the square lengthwise. Place one portion of eggs on top of cheese followed by half a piece of bacon on either side of the eggs. Continue with remaining pieces of puff pastry.

- Brush water all over one of

the available edges of the pastry and wrap the other edge up over the eggs. Roll to create a log shape, press seam to seal, repeat with remaining pastries.

- To bake immediately, preheat oven to 375°F. Place pastries seam-side down on parchment-lined baking sheet. Cut two slits into pastry. Whisk to combine 1 egg with 1 tbsp water and brush pastries. Sprinkle with everything bagel seasoning. Bake for 25-30 minutes until lightly golden brown.

Carrot salad

Serves: 6-8; Prep: 5 minutes; Total: 10 minutes

You can absolutely shred your own carrots for this salad but you can save time by purchasing a few bags of storebought matchstick carrots. You can also substitute dried cranberries for raisins if you wish. This is a suggested side for an Easter lunch menu.

3 tbsp mayonnaise
2 tbsp coarse Dijon mustard
3 tbsp apple cider vinegar
3 tbsp honey
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp ground black pepper
2 bags matchstick carrots
1 red apple, cut into matchsticks

1/2 cup toasted pecans

1/2 cup raisins

2 tbsp fresh parsley, chopped

Method:

- In a medium bowl, stir together the mayonnaise, mustard, vinegar, honey, salt and pepper for the dressing until smooth.

- Add carrots, apple, pecans, raisins and parsley to the dressing mixture. Serve immediately or refrigerate for up to 1 day.

Lavender shortbread wedges

Serves: 12; Cook time: 50 minutes

A sweet ending to a spring celebration.

For Shortbread:

3/4 cup unsalted butter (1 1/2 sticks) at room temperature
1/3 cup granulated sugar
2 tsp finely grated lemon zest
1 tsp finely grated orange zest
1/2 tsp pure vanilla extract
1 1/2 cup all-purpose flour plus more for dusting
1/4 tsp kosher salt

For Glaze:

1 1/4 cups confectioners sugar
1 tbsp lemon juice
1 tbsp milk, plus more as needed
1/2 tsp pure vanilla extract
Dried lavender for topping (can be found at Troyers Spices)

Orange zest for topping

Method:

- Make shortbread: Heat oven to 325°F. Butter 9-inch-round cake pan, then line bottom with parchment paper.

- In a stand mixer, beat butter on medium until smooth and creamy, 1 minute. Add granulated sugar, citrus zest, vanilla and beat, scraping down halfway through until combined, about 2 minutes. On low, gradually add flour and salt and mix until it just comes together.

- Using slightly floured hands, press dough into prepared pan and prick with a fork several times. Bake until edges are light golden brown, 30-35 minutes. Let cool in pan 30 minutes then loosen edges with a spatula and very carefully turn onto a wire rack lined with parchment paper (shortbread is delicate).

- Make glaze: sift confectioners' sugar into medium bowl, add lemon juice, milk, vanilla and whisk. Add more milk if necessary. Spread glaze on cooled shortbread. Sprinkle with dried lavender and orange zest. Let set at least 30 minutes before slicing into 12 wedges.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Opinions expressed in Letters to the Editor are that of their authors and do not reflect the opinions of the St. Marys Independent or Grant Haven Media.

The concrete pillars at the Fishing Quarry are junk

Dear Editor,

I must admit, I concur with the mayor's comment regarding the concrete structures at the fishing quarry; they are industrial "junk." If the town is even remotely entertaining the idea of spending tax dollars restoring industrial "junk," perhaps they should consider taking a fresh look at a piece of our industrial past, the millrace.

If COVID has taught us anything, it has exposed to us the vulnerabilities of relying on the complexities of the global supply chain. In self-reliant circles, there's a saying: "One is none, two is one, three is two." In other words, there's value in having a plan B and C.

The millrace could be refurbished to facilitate emergency hydroelectric generation. There may even be an opportunity to receive government funding to restore the physical structure, itself, under the

guise of heritage restoration. A second phase, funded through the town, could focus on equipment required to facilitate hydroelectric generation.

Yes, I'm a "prepper;" think what you will. It's my opinion, rightly or wrongly, that the town would never receive outside funding from government for any project that afforded its residents some added degree of energy sovereignty beyond what currently exists. I assume there are backup diesel generators to currently power critical infrastructure relating to water treatment and conveyance. Hydroelectric power could be the town's Plan C in the event of an extended hydro outage and potential supply chain glitches.

If we're going to invest in "junk," why not invest in something that has the potential of furnishing a return beyond aesthetic considerations.

Kathy Morrison,
St. Marys



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Riddles

- What is the greatest worldwide use of cowhides?
To cover cows.
- What do sea monster eat?
Fish and ships.
- What can you catch but not throw?
A cold.
- Which word in the dictionary is spelled incorrectly?
Incorrectly.
- What time is it when 12 cats chase a mouse?
12 after 1.
- What is so fragile even saying its name can break it?
Silence.
- What do lazy dogs do for fun?
They chase parked cars.
- What city has no people?
Electricity.
- What has forty feet and sings?
The school choir.
- Why was the belt arrested?
For holding up the pants.
- What is the best thing to do if a bull charges you?
Pay him.
- What gets bigger and bigger as you take more away from it?
A hole.
- What starts with a P, ends with an E & has a million letters in it?
Post office.

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- Structure
- Form
- Rhyme
- Alliteration
- Rhythm
- Stanza
- Line break
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The Riddle Kid OF THE WEEK



Lucas & Tanner Sparling (1&3)

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PET OF THE WEEK



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TYE

Our pet of the week is Tye, a nine-year-old Bernese Mountain dog weighing in at 85 pounds. His claim to fame is being in a CAA insurance commercial, riding in a convertible with a young lady. He is a big lovable "teddy bear" and protector of his family - Katelyn and Jared Tozer, Charli and Ruth. Grandma Linda McFadyen had the privilege of looking after him for two weeks while his family was in Florida.



Thorndale News

A section within the
St. Marys Independent



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Thames Centre Ward 1 townhall meeting held in Thorndale

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

As part of Thames Centre Strategic Plan in community communication and engagement, a mini townhall meeting for Ward 1 was held at the Thorndale Lions Community Centre March 26.

Ward 1 Coun. Tom Heeman thanked everyone for coming and then proceeded to briefly list some upcoming infrastructure projects scheduled for Thorndale and the community.

Slated for 2025 is the Upper Queen Street Urbanization \$2.8-million project, which includes drainage upgrades and curbside parking for this street. Heeman also said there will be park and trail system improvements for Thorndale's Valleyview Two and Wye Creek subdivisions, and that paving of Heritage Road is to be done this summer.

The Thorndale Road/King Street Urbanization Project is a \$3.2-million job slated for 2026. It will encompass this road's infrastructure along with ditching, curbs, sidewalks and traffic-calming features. As this is a county road, the municipality will be working with

Middlesex County.

With the community growing, there is a need for the Thorndale Lions Community Centre to be expanded. Heeman announced \$240,000 has been allotted for the design of Phase 2 of the community centre and an ad-hoc committee for this project with representatives from the community and area residents has been struck. He added depending on grants available and fundraising, this project is not slated to start for another three years.

Heeman said they are still in communication with Hydro One regarding brownout and power outages in certain residential areas of Thorndale as well as in the industrial park. He urged anyone experiencing power interruptions to contact customer service at Hydro One to keep them abreast of this problem for their investigation. He also addressed the concerns of snow removal on area sidewalks, saying they are looking into a second sidewalk plow.

"I am happy to announce the Thames Centre Community Grants for this area," Heeman said. "Boys and Girls Club that operates programming in both Dorchester and Thorndale, Ag. Society, Thorndale

Lions, Thorndale Horticultural Society and the West Nissouri Non-Profit Seniors Complex. Now, I would like to open this meeting to you for your questions and comments."

Each person in attendance was given the opportunity to speak. Many thanked Heeman for this meeting and informing them about the scheduled projects for the area. Many of the attendees voiced their concerns of vehicles speeding within Thorndale, offering suggestions of needing police enforcement, signage, calming features for King Street, as well as better visual enhancement for the crosswalks. There were also concerns of grass cutting and maintenance for the park and soccer field areas.

Heeman thanked everyone for taking time out of their evening for coming and for their concerns and comments.

"I don't have many good ideas," he said, "but I do have good ears, and I am always happy to listen to your good ideas and your concerns. Community ideas always lead to the best results."

For more information on upcoming public announcements and meetings, visit www.thamescentre.on.ca.

Thames River Cleanup in the Thorndale area

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

Each spring, there is a cleanup blitz of the Thames River Watershed.

Hundreds of volunteers concerned about the environmental quality of the heritage river converge in various places along its watershed, including its tributaries, to clean up garbage and debris that is harmful to wildlife and the quality of its water.

The Thames River, designated a Canadian Heritage River since 2000, flows from its source near Tavistock, through Woodstock, London and Chatham, and finally into Lake St. Clair. This river, along with contributing branches, creeks and streams, covers a drainage basin of over 5,800 square kilometres, making it a substantial river in southwestern Ontario.

The Thames River Cleanup is scheduled for Saturday, April 12 in various communities, towns and cities along its flow route. Danielle Lockie, who works at Ad-

vanced Drainage Systems Inc. (ADS) in Thorndale and is a councillor for the Municipality of Thames Centre Ward 2, is passionate about environmental matters of Thames Centre, including the community of Thorndale. She is organizing the Thames River Cleanup in this community for Saturday, April 12, asking volunteers to meet at the Thorndale Lions Dog Park, 21668 Nissouri Rd. at 8:45 a.m.

Volunteers are requested to wear waterproof boots as well as proper clothing for the weather of that day. Lockie said garbage bags and gloves will be supplied. This volunteer opportunity is not limited to adults, as families and teens are also encouraged to come out to help with the cleanup.

"The more volunteers we get, the more of the river in this area can be cleaned up of garbage and debris that morning" Lockie said. "Also, this is a great opportunity for teens to gain their volunteer hours. Many of my coworkers at ADS and their families have signed up."

"As they say, 'Many hands make light work', I look

forward to seeing more people of this community on Saturday, April 12 to help with the river's cleanup."

For more information on the Thames River Cleanup in the Thorndale area, contact Lockie at dlockie@thamescentre.on.ca or call her at 519-777-7237.

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OBITUARY

May



It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Doris Irene May on Monday, March 24th, at Kingsway Lodge in St. Marys in her 94th year.

Beloved wife of 65 years of Walter Harold May (died 2016). Loving Mother of Kent

May and his wife Phyllis of Blenheim and Lanna-Sue and her husband Herb Jantz of Sarnia. Predeceased by sons Gregory (1959) and Reid (1961). Much loved Nana of Becky, Isaac, Karl, and Max (wife Brittany). Great Grandmother of Navy Grace. Sister of Shirley Rogers (late Roger), Marjorie King (late Bill), Harry (Sharon), David (Anne), Ron (Beth) and Sister-in-law of Gladys (late Norman). Predeceased by Brothers and their wives Carman (Yvonne), Norman (Evelyn) and Allen (Ruth).

Born in Biddulph Township, near Lucan and growing up in Ingersoll, she was the eldest of nine children of Edward and Hazel Mott. She spent her later teenage years and earlier married life in Woodstock, in which Chalmers United Church formed an important part of those days. Moving to St. Marys in 1970, Doris and Harold operated St. Marys Home Furnishings Ltd. on Queen St. for a number of years. Later, upon retirement, they opened their home as a bed and breakfast business in the good weather, then wintered in Florida.

They also took many trips abroad, including around the world voyage in a cargo tainer ship in 2000. The family would like to extend their sincere gratitude to the amazing staff at Kingsway Lodge and Dr. Donaldson. Also, her special volunteer friend, Margaret Jean Watt, whose visits were arranged by the Kingsway staff and brought Mom great comfort and companionship. Mom's manner of dressing, as well as entertaining her guests with a sense of style was important to her. Our family benefited greatly from her energy, organizational abilities, her high standards, and above all, her capacity for love. Her manner of dressing, as well as entertaining her guests with a sense of style was important to her.

The Memorial Service was conducted at the St. Marys United Church on March 31, 2025. Interment in Woodstock Anglican Cemetery at a later date. Memorial Donations may be made to the St. Marys Lions Club, and the St. Marys United Church. Arrangements with the Andrew L. Hodges Funeral Home (519-284-2820). Online tributes at www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca.

IN MEMORIAM

Thomson

In Loving Memory of

Lloyd, Murray and Barry Thomson

We hold you close within our hearts,
and there you shall remain.

To walk with us throughout our lives,
until we meet again.

We Miss You

Lovingly Remembered by Anne and Glen, Kim and Mark, Michelle and Kent and families

OBITUARY

Pickel



Audrey Eilleen Pickel passed away peacefully on Thursday March 27, 2025 in her 95th year. Predeceased by her husband Jack in 2021.

Dear mother of Robert (Barb), William (Lee), Mary Gibbs (Ken, deceased), Hugh (Debbie), and Allan (Pamela). Proud grandmother of Jessica

(Stefan), Daniel (Jazmine), Burton (Nicole), Charlotte (Kaitlin), Laurel (Luke), Jasmine (Adam), Timothy (Katrina), Priya and Eliana. Great-grandmother of Rowan, Brynlee, Naila, Annika, Jorie, Elliott, June, Ada, Avery, Jacob and Anderson. Lovingly remembered by many nieces, nephews, and cousins. Predeceased by her parents Harvey and Ada (Kerslake) Parkinson of Blanshard Twp. Also predeceased by siblings Fred (Butsy), Ken (Madeline), Dave (Ruth), Marion Hill (Ken) and infant daughter Ruth Elizabeth in 1955. Survived by in-laws Geordie and Dorothy Pickel and fondly remembered by many nieces and nephews.

Mom was the youngest child of Harvey and Ada, raised on a farm on Line 4, Perth South, attending Woodham United Church. After attending the Metropolitan School on Line 4, and St. Marys DCI, she graduated from London Normal School. She taught in Benmiller and Wellburn SS#13, when she met Jack. They married on November 7, 1953 at Kensall Park Baptist Church, London. They farmed together on the South River Road, raising a family of five. They began attending First Baptist Church, St. Marys, becoming faithful members.

Mom worked at Westover Inn, her favourite spot. Always a nurse at heart, she also worked for the Canadian Red Cross, caring for many in the St. Marys area. When Dad's health declined, they moved into Kingsway Lodge, where she continued to care for him, and those around her. Her final years were well lived at Kingsway, under their loving care.

The Funeral Service was conducted at the First Baptist Church in St. Marys on April 1, 2025 with Rev. Dr. Mark McKim. Burial took place in St. Marys Cemetery. Memorial donations may be made to the First Baptist Church or the Canadian Red Cross. Online tributes at www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca.

THANK YOU

Forrester

The family of the late Marilyn Forrester would like to say thank you for the flowers, cards, food and the beautiful quilt made by the Stonetown Quilters St. Marys, that she loved. Also we would like to thank Cedarcroft Place Retirement Home, Stratford General Hospital, Sakura House for taking such good care of Marilyn and the members of J.W. congregation that were always there for her. Also, thank you to Hodges Funeral Home for your help and guidance and the Rotary Parkview complex for the use of their hall for Marilyn's celebration of life.

OBITUARY

Davis



Jacqui Davis (Fort), who passed away on January 16, 2025 in her 92nd year, will have an Open House Celebration of Life at the ST. MARYS GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB, 769 Queen St E, St. Marys, on April 13, 2025 from 1:30 to 3:30 pm.

Cherished mother of Bob (Mary Lou) Davis, Ann Davis, Sue (Peter) O'Grady and Lynn Lewis. Adored grandmother to Michael (Liv), Andrew (Shelby); Marty, Greg (Lellie), Nick; Michele (Taylor), Ashley (Nathan) and Robyn. Doting great-grandmother to William. Treasured sister and aunt to Jan and Steve Kerho and their children Steve (Ken), Mike (Nancy), Suzanne (Henry) and their families. Special and loving aunt to Marg (Wayne), Anne (Morrell), Jane (Bill) and their families. Predeceased by her husband Bill and her parents Dot and Art Fort.

Jacqui leaves behind a legacy of her many special gifts, most importantly her family, which meant the world to her. She taught us the love of spending time together, whether it be outside golfing, playing board games or enjoying a family barbeque. She was a generous and thoughtful soul who cherished her friends. Creative beyond measure, Jacqui will be remembered for her many talents; teaching dance, Girl Guiding, serving on the Hospital Auxiliary, community sports and sharing the love of her intricate handiwork.

Memorial donations may be made to the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation or the St. Marys United Church. Arrangements with the Andrew L. Hodges Funeral Home (519-28-2820) with online tributes at www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca.

OBITUARY

Barclay

It is with profound sorrow that the family of Leslie (Ashley) Barclay announces her passing on March 2, 2025, in her 78th year. Leslie attended elementary and secondary school in St Marys, received her B.A. at the University of Western Ontario and moved on to a successful career in management with Sears Canada in Toronto.

She was a prolific reader, a talented writer and a world traveller with a fondness for Italy. Following retirement, she volunteered her management skills to establish fledgeling businesses in Bolivia and Malaysia.

Predeceased by her parents, Doug and Hazel Ashley (1971, 1987) and by her husband, Richard Barclay (2008), Leslie will be remembered by her step-children Tamara (Michael) Barclay-Stec and Todd (Sarah) Barclay and their children; by sister-in-law Pam (Peter) Moore and family; by niece Alix (Peter) Crawley and nephew Michael (Gerilyn) Danishewsky and their children; by cousins and friends in Canada and U.S.. and by her sister, Lynne Ashley, of St Marys.

SUBMIT YOUR LETTER TO THE EDITOR TO US
CALL 519-284-0041 OR EMAIL INFO@STMARYSINDEPENDENT.COM

OBITUARY

Binkle



Linda Anne Binkle passed away at her home in St. Marys on March 31, 2025 at age of 72.

Predeceased by her parents Floyd and June Hubbard. Linda is survived by her brothers Wayne (Shirley) and Gary Hubbard. Mother of four children: Rhonda Klein (Jeff), Dan Hundt (Heather), Greg Hundt (Tori) and Michelle Hundt. Remembered by many grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren. Also cherished by her partner Murray Robinson and his children Robert, Sheila and Pam.

Linda worked many years as a RPN at Spruce Lodge. Mom loved her family and friends, music, a game of cards, Yahtzee or Scrabble. A private family celebration will take place. Memorial donations may be made to the Perth Regiment Veterans’ Br. 236 St. Marys Royal Canada Legion. Online tributes at www.hodges-funeralhome.ca.

OBITUARY

Young



Gord Stewart Young, the last of nine siblings, passed peacefully in St. Marys on March 30, 2025. Gordon was born in Kincardine, Ontario, on February 14, 1934 to MacLean and Agnes Young.

He is survived by his wife Reta (nee Smith), whom he was married to just shy of 70 years; his children Twyla and Doug Petrie of Tasmania, Jennifer and Jeff Leslie of St. Marys, Jodi and Kevin McGuffin of Thorndale, and Kyle and Erin Young of New Hamburg. Gordon’s grandchildren were much loved: Liz and Nick Jones, Richard and Jess Petrie, Katelyn Petrie and Brian, Eric Leslie and Lily, Chad Leslie and Madi, Jordan McGuffin, Lauren and Evan Young; and great grandchildren Evelyn, Kingston and Freya Petrie. Predeceased by son-in-law Brian Verellen (1998).

Gordon and Reta lived for 52 years on their farm near Thorndale before moving to St. Marys five years ago. The family would like to thank the staff of Fairhill and Kingsway Lodge for their care, kindness and support. Cremation to take place.

Family and friends are invited to the ST. MARYS UNITED CHURCH, 85 Church St. S. St. Marys, on Saturday, April 5, 2025 for visitation from 10 am until the time of the Memorial Service at 11 am. A video of the service will be taken and posted on the funeral home website afterwards. A reception will take place in the church hall after the service followed by interment in Siloam Cemetery, London. Benevolence, education, advocacy and empowerment were important to Gordon.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to the Canadian Food Grains Bank, World Vision, or Doctors without Borders. Online tributes at www.hodges-funeralhome.ca.

LOOKING BACK



BY AMY CUBBERLEY

Toe jam

25 years ago (2000)
The St. Marys P.U.C. will soon cease to exist. Instead, homeowners, businesses and industry in the town of St. Marys will become customers of the City of Stratford’s electric department.

The Paul Brothers and Shirley have published a book on their Life and Times in the entertainment business. The proceeds from their book sales go directly to St. Paul’s Anglican Church in Kirkton.

50 years ago (1975)
Bruce McLean of McLean-Foster Construction has a new sporty vehicle to drive this coming summer. It’s a “Jeepster” which he purchased in Ohio recently – bright red with very musical horns.

The increased bottle returns policy has resulted in more people, youngsters and oldsters, joining the bottle-picking brigade along the area ditches. Four St. Marys boys, David White, Tim Pearson, Bob Ravensberg, and Andy Pearson estimate they collected \$10 worth of bottles during the winter break last week.

75 years ago (1950)
Some farmers have tapped their maple trees. They report a fair run of sap during the milder weather of this week.

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Lewis are leaving from Hong Kong by air this morning and expect to be in Vancouver on Saturday. They will arrive in St. Marys sometime next week. Mr. and Mrs. Lewis will reside in the O’Dea block adjacent to the Lewis Bros. restaurant.

On display in the office window of the egg grading station of Clifford Brown on Main Street in Thorndale is an Arctic snowy owl, a very rare specimen of Canadian bird life.

100 years ago (1925)
There was a large audience in the Methodist church on Sunday evening to hear the pastor of the church, Rev. Dr. Knowles, speak on the subject of “Rome and Religion in the Public Schools”. There were members of all the other churches in town present. Knowles argued that religion should not be taught to pupils in public schools. The government should instruct every boy so that he can go out and earn an honest living, but the state has nothing to do with a man’s religion.

Mr. E.H. Blackler, foreman of the C.N.R. Section gang, met with a painful accident last week. While loading steel rails on a car one of the heavy pieces slipped and struck Mr. Blackler’s toe, smashing it to a pulp. He is now able to get about on crutches.

Legion

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

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Diamond | 5. Edward Teach |
| 2. Lake Superior | 6. Seven |
| 3. Cable News Network | 7. Yale |
| 4. Franklin D. Roosevelt | 8. Madagascar |
| | 9. 300 |
| | 10. April 25, 2025 |



Job Title: Driver, St Marys & Area Mobility Service
Status: Full-time, Part-time, or Casual
Reports To: Manager
Review Date: March 2026

Role Overview

Reporting to the Manager, the Driver role provides the frontline service or the organization, driving accessible buses and vans to provide transportation services to our clients. Drivers are responsible for the safe and efficient operation of mobility vehicles, as well as daily reporting of any issues, service needs or client concerns. Drivers have access to the Mobility office and Friendship Centre during regular office hours to access facilities, as well as cleaning supplies and other materials needed to provide the service.

Key Accountabilities

Daily Operations

Supports the daily operations of the service

- Safely and professionally drives mobility vehicles to provide transportation to our clients
- Responsible for all cleaning and sanitization on board the vehicles, both to ensure safety between clients and to leave a clean and safe work environment for their colleagues
- Responsible for all daily inspection logs, and reporting of issues or service needs to the Mobility Manager
- Responsible to maintain all necessary supplies for cleaning and maintaining vehicles, and restock from the office stores as required

Monthly Operations

Completes daily/monthly inspection logs, and submits paperwork at month end

Qualifications

Skills and Experience

- Minimum 1 year experience working with vulnerable populations and providing direct service
- Minimum 3 years experience driving and able to provide clean driver abstract
- Clean vulnerable sector police check through local police provider
- Valid CPR-C certification or ability to complete
- G or F class license in good standing
- Strong interpersonal skills and caring nature

Environment and Working Conditions

This role reports to the Mobility office, 317 James St S, St. Marys. Start and stop of shifts happen at this location, but service is provided all across our region using the mobility vehicles

- Working hours are determined based on employment status and demand for service. Staff schedule is provided a minimum of 30 days in advance
- This role requires hours of sitting in a vehicle, as well as bending, lifting, stretching, etc. as required to support clients

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