

STRATFORD *TIMES*

VOLUME 5 • ISSUE 16

NOVEMBER 28, 2025

FREE

BERGER
PLUMBING
519-274-0160

Berger Plumbing is a full service company for all your plumbing, heating and excavation needs! Fully licensed and insured plumbers and gas fitters on staff.



A Passion for People

ROYAL LEPAGE
100 Erie St. Stratford

Hiller Realty
Independently owned and Operated Brokerage

SHERRIE ROULSTON

Real Estate Broker

email: sherrieroulston@royallepage.ca

Direct: 519-272-3578

Recycling bins too big? There are options – for a cost

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

In a letter to the editor published in the Times on Nov. 21, Ken Dodd called the recently distributed 360 litre recycling carts “ginormous” and “wrong on many levels.”

He wasn’t alone. Across social media, Stratford residents have expressed concerns over the size – particularly for seniors or those with mobility issues or are otherwise unable to properly move them or lack the space to properly store them.

The recycling carts are part of an ongoing overhaul to local recycling systems. Per provincial legislation, and starting on Jan. 1, 2026, the companies that make or import products will take full responsibility for collecting, managing and recycling their materials, rather than the municipality, through the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) recycling system. Circular Materials is the administrator for the EPR and Emterra is the local contractor collecting recycling from the curb – and who provided the new recycling carts.

On Nov. 24, Coun. Jo-Dee Burbach said that she likewise received numerous comments about the one-size-fits-all bins and has been in discussion with both Circular Materials and Emterra about the concerns. She confirmed that the program will be accepting two smaller sizes: a 65 gallon, medium-sized option, and a 35 gallon, small-sized option.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 5



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Matthew Chambers and Connor Shantz of the Ontario New Democratic Party (NDP) hold signs up protesting what they called the privatization of Ontario’s health-care system. While the provincial NDP did not organize the protest that occurred on Nov. 21, it did support the Oxford County-chapter of the Ontario Health Coalition, which staged the protest on Stratford’s Ontario Street that day.

Ritz presents vision of GT superstructure as council questions efficacy of its work so far

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Local architect Robert Ritz wants the public to start thinking of the Grand Trunk building as the solution, not the problem.

That was his thesis on Nov. 25, when he presented his vision for the Grand Trunk site in a packed hall of the Army Navy and Air Force Veterans building. Wall to wall were blueprints his firm R. Ritz Architect has been working on and, after his presentation wrapped, renderings of what his

vision may look like, which includes a full revitalization of the building with space for a new library, the YMCA, luxury apartments, a pool and room to grow.

Central to his work was preserving the site’s heritage. The Grand Trunk building was opened in 1871 as a locomotive repair facility, eventually growing to employ 40 per cent of Stratford’s workforce, before being shut down in the 1960s and abandoned in the mid-1980s. Once the lifeblood of Stratford, it has been dormant since then, with redevelopment ideas rising and falling for the last 40 years.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2



Stacked
PANCAKE & BREAKFAST HOUSE

\$6.99
Breakfast
Special



MON - FRI
7 AM - 9 AM
Dine-In Only

925 Ontario St Unit No- 5B,
Stratford

Open Everyday | 7 AM - 3 PM

Uber
Eats

stackedpancakehouse.ca

SKIP THE DISHES

Ritz presents vision of GT superstructure as council questions efficacy of its work so far



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

A before and after of the Grand Trunk superstructure, according to Ritz's vision of the site. With his firm, Ritz has been independently developing a plan for the revitalizing project, which is being directed by Stratford city council.

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

As part of his personal redevelopment plan, Ritz has tracked down the last locomotive which came from the old shops in a museum in Fort Erie, claiming that the organization agreed to donate the locomotive if stored properly.

Locomotive 6218, as it is called, would be a focal point of the Grand Trunk superstructure, displayed in a mezzanine that overlooks a fully realized library, community space, concourse and more.

The project could be done in seven phases, Ritz said, moving from east to west. Phase one would be rehabilitating and modifying the existing structure. Phase two would develop a parking garage and concourse level that will cut through the centre of the superstructure. Phase three would be the McKenzie Entrance (as he would call it) and Locomotive 6218. Phase four would be the Argyle Entrance and eastern concourse. Phase five would be the Stratford Entrance and central concourse. Phase six would be a new YMCA facility within the superstructure and an eight-storey luxury apartment building attached to the

western portion of the superstructure, complete with a shared pool. Finally, phase seven would be the renovation of the original YMCA building into a new police station for the Stratford Police Service, which has been operating out of the severely undersized George Street headquarters.

Phase by phase, level by level, Ritz detailed how it should be constructed with council and the City of Stratford leading the project. Recently there has been discussion about handing the project to a developer; however, Ritz thinks that the city has all the tools to steer the revitalization of the superstructure itself – with a project lead hired on to do it.

He also addressed some key desires and concerns expressed by the public over the years.

On affordable housing, Ritz argued that the site and building itself are not suitable. He argued that there are other more cost-efficient parcels in the city that could be used for affordable housing, while the luxury apartments would go a long way to mitigating the costs of developing the project.

Furthermore, if parking spaces increased at the site – and council adjusted its zoning for the immediate surrounding

area – then area homeowners could add an addition onto their homes for extra, affordable units, he argued.

During the question period of the evening, one concerned resident asked about the restrictions of building so close to the rail line. In the March 7 edition of the Times, it was reported that CN Rail objected to the much-discussed Krug factory redevelopment project due to the proximity to its line.

The caveat for this site, Ritz said, was the line on the south side of the building is not owned by CN Rail, rather the Goderich-Exeter Railway (GEXR). He has been attempting to reach ownership of GEXR but has not been able to discuss his ideas with them yet.

CN Rail may comment on any development a kilometre from one of its yards, which is why he placed the housing portion of the site as far away from the Stratford yard as possible.

Currently, the City of Stratford has invested \$27 million into the project. According to consulting firm Svec Group, which is currently investigating more detailed costing, developing the superstructure could cost between \$43 million and \$126 million.

While Ritz discussed self-financing opportunities this vision would have, he did not have a price tag.

“That’s what I’m working on right now,” Ritz said, saying he’ll be meeting with chief administrative officer (CAO) André Morin and corporate initiatives lead Emily Robson to further investigate his plan.

For those interested, a Youtube video of Ritz’s presentation will be posted by Ballinran Entertainment at a later date. His renderings, likewise, will be posted as well.

Ritz’s presentation came at an opportune time. Just the night prior, Morin and Robson gave an update to Stratford city council. Not much has developed since last they gave an update in July (Svec Group is expected to come back to council with a costing update in Q1 of 2026), but they did

CONTINUED TO PAGE 5

Celebrating 25 years

SALE
15% off Storewide
December 4-7

Kinna Sohna
HANDCRAFTED TREASURES

Natural Fibre
Men's Women's Clothing
Designed By Owner
Art Jewelry
Shawls Carpets...

THINGS OF BEAUTY & SPIRIT

55 York Street Stratford ON
519-275-2837 © kinnasohna



OPTIMIST CLUB OF SHAKESPEARE

The Shakespeare Optimist Club is again selling

CHRISTMAS CURED HAMs
FROM PERTH COUNTY PORK PRODUCERS
3 lbs - \$20

They make great Christmas Gifts!
Pickup is December 4 and 11 at the Shakespeare Optimist Hall.
Call Gary West at 519-272-9140



Maximize your return.

Conservative Advice for Intelligent Decisions



Donna L. Hinz



Franklin E. Hinz

196 Ontario Street
Stratford, Ontario N5A 3H4
519-273-1633 franklinehinz.com



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

There were two passing walkers in downtown Stratford singing, “It’s Beginning to look a lot like Christmas,” when they witnessed the Christmas lights being placed on the large tree in front of the Stratford City Hall this past weekend. Two members from Festival Hydro were putting the final touches on the tree.

OPEN HOUSE
SAT. NOV. 29 10:30 A.M. TO 12 NOON

\$339,900

191 CEDAR ST., CRYSTAL LAKE
191 Cedar St Crystal Lake is nestled in a peaceful, country like setting mins from Stratford and Mitchell. This home offers three bedrooms...an attached heated garage and renos all done over the last 5 years. A backyard with a parklike setting. Enjoy your morning coffee or a cool beverage on the back deck...either way call your REALTOR today to come check out! MLS# NEW

RE/MAX

a-b REALTY LTD.
BROKERAGE
INDEPENDENTLY OWNED & OPERATED

88 Wellington Street, Stratford, Ontario • 519-273-2821

Michael J. Gorse
Sales Representative

Cell: 226-921-1319
michaelgorse@hotmail.com

UP TO 90% OFF!
BUY IT TODAY...TAKE IT TODAY!
SOURCE FLOORING
OPEN TILL MIDNIGHT!

BLACK FRIDAY
MIDNIGHT
MADNESS
SALE!
NO TAX
STOREWIDE
NOVEMBER 28
8AM-MIDNIGHT
1 DAY ONLY!

SOURCE FLOORING

SHOP ONLINE 24/7
SOURCEFLOORING.COM

1362 VICTORIA ST N KITCHENER
MON-FRI 8AM-8PM
SAT 9-6 SUN 10-5

Editorial

Speed cameras are a good thing ... aren't they?



CONNOR LUCZKA

Times Editor

When the provincial government first announced that it would ban the use of speed enforcement cameras by municipalities, I was upset. I'll admit it. We've all seen our fair share of

speedsters zooming through quiet streets or whipping through traffic lane by lane. That kind of behaviour needs to be curbed – and a fine is one way to do that.

Another good thing about them is the cost. Premier Doug Ford called them a cash grab – well, right you are. Municipalities are stretched enough as it is with too much to look after and not enough revenue streams to keep up. These cameras netted money for cities and towns that went to vital services, keeping up with infrastructure, social services, you name it. Calling them a cash grab is rich.

We can do more to stop reckless, dangerous driving and raise money for the city, ergo lower-

ing the burden on the taxbase? I think that's a win-win. Sign me up!

I thought that until I got a speeding ticket in the mail on Monday.

A few weekends ago, I was in Brampton with my wife for a wedding. Coming off the highway, we were picked up by a camera going 60 in a 50 zone. Ouch. And the fee? Over \$180.

I'll admit, I got the letter from the City of Brampton and immediately knew what it was. The moment I opened it and saw what happened, how fast I was going, and what I was being fined, I went through the five stages of grief. I paced up and down my home. "No, that couldn't have

been me. I drive so slow! That couldn't have been me. And 60 in a 50? Get real. Everyone goes 10 over at least."

Then came bargaining: "The cameras were banned. I don't need to pay this! And good thing, too! What a cash grab."

Then the slump – knowing that this was my fault – and now, finally, acceptance. Cameras went the way of the Dodo on Nov. 14. I was picked up on Nov. 8.

I'm fortunate enough that the fine isn't much of a hit, a sting to be sure, but not the end of the world. I still think it was stupid I'll have to pay that amount, but I also still think that municipal speed cameras should be allowed to thrive, just with some

adjustments. The fines should be increased and tickets should be reserved for reckless driving or exorbitant speeding. We have an international culture of speeding in the western world – and if you don't believe me, try going the speed limit on any interstate in the United States – and we shouldn't try to change the behaviour of drivers who by and large are keeping up with traffic. That's an exercise in futility. We should be trying to change the behaviours of drivers who pose a bigger risk on our roads – and if we can make our municipalities a bit of extra money for their coffers? Well, I still think it's a win-win, even as I'm \$180 poorer.

How journalism has changed – and why I'm grateful for it



AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

One of the best things about

being from a small town is how often I get to connect with people who worked in newsrooms decades before I ever dreamed of becoming a reporter. Hearing their stories has given me a deep appreciation for the way we work today – and a sense of gratitude for how much easier technology has made our jobs.

I remember chatting with John Kastner, a past reporter from the Beacon Herald, a few years ago, as he described the old days of newspaper production. He told me how

reporters used to write out their stories by hand, and if a spelling

mistake was made, they'd have to rewrite the entire piece. He recalled the painstaking process of laying out the newspaper – gluing photos and stories onto the page before sending it off to press. He also talked about the energy of a bustling Stratford newsroom and how, back then, reporters were practically local celebrities (in John's case, he still kind of is).

For me, that world feels like a different lifetime. I can interview someone by phone or chat with them over Zoom if they're in another city. I can write from anywhere – on my laptop at a café, in a hotel lobby or even mid-flight – as long as I have Wi-Fi and a charger. I can submit articles instantly and message my editors at any time of day (yes, we occasionally text

each other at 8 p.m.). It's a level of freedom that earlier generations of journalists couldn't have imagined.

When I think back to high school, I can still picture my Grade 9 English teacher – the one who told me I'd never become a writer because my spelling wasn't strong enough. Maybe that's part of why I took a detour into healthcare before eventually finding my way back to journalism. My spelling has improved (thankfully), but I still catch those little red lines under words. I can't help but think of the journalists who came before me – the ones who typed on manual machines, glued down headlines and hustled from story to story with nothing but passion and determination.

I think about how much harder they had to work to produce the same stories we do now. They set the standard for dedication in community news – the kind of dedication that reminds me why I love this job so much.

Being a reporter is, without question, my dream career. Part of what makes it so special for me is the freedom to work from anywhere – whether that's my kitchen table, a car parked in a small town or a coffee shop halfway across the country. That flexibility keeps me energized and inspired.

Would I still love this job if I had to stay rooted in one place every day? Absolutely. But does the ability to pick up my laptop and take my work with me wherever I go make it even better? Without a doubt.

**GRANT
HAVEN
MEDIA**

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

STRATFORDTIMES

Publisher

Stewart Grant • stew@granthaven.com

Editor

Connor Luczka • connor@granthaven.com

Times Reporter

Amanda Modaragamage • amandajanewriter@gmail.com

Graphic Design / Sales Inquiries

Sarah Cairns • stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Business Development

Heather Dunbar • heather@granthaven.com

Billing Administrator

Cindy Boakes • boakescindy1576@gmail.com

Contributors

Galen Simmons, Spencer Seymour, Julia Schneider,
Gary West, Paul Knowles, Emily Stewart, Lisa Chester,
Fred Gonder, Sheila Clarke, Irene Roth, Lee Griffi,
Stuart Lender, Sydney Goodwin, Alex Hunt, Julia Paul,
Patrick D. Burk

36 Water St. St. Marys, ON, PO Box 2310 N4X 1A2

stratfordtimes@gmail.com | 519.655.2341 | granthaven.com



Funded by the Government of Canada
Financé par le gouvernement du Canada



SUBMIT YOUR LETTER TO THE EDITOR TO US!

CALL 519-655-2341 OR EMAIL STRATFORDTIMES@GMAIL.COM

STRATFORDTIMES

Guiding Principles

1. Everyone has a story
2. The news should be free for all to enjoy
3. Good news beats bad news
4. A Newspaper should be a community effort (contribute to your local paper!)
5. Newspapers document history
6. Newspapers strengthen communities
7. Advertisers, big or small, should profit from their ads (meaning sensible ad rates)
8. Newspapers should be locally-owned and operated

Ritz presents vision of GT superstructure as council questions efficacy of its work so far

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

spark a spirited discussion amongst councillors about the project's past and future.

Many councillors expressed frustration in how the project has been directed and the lack of a centralized vision, as well as concerns over the financial viability of the project.

"One of the problems that I have ... is scale," Coun. Larry McCabe argued, saying that council and the public need to be aware it is a municipality of 35,000 people – not 500,000. "When we are looking at this analysis, often people are using scales which don't apply to this municipality. And that is what scares me about this site, is that when we use those sort of frameworks we are setting ourselves up for the catastrophic position that puts the city in a position of bankruptcy in 20 years, when it puts all of this money into this site and it doesn't have the taxes to pay. So that's why I'm very cautious about the idea of developing the site without some sort of economic analysis of what needs to be on that site to drive economic viability.

"... We could have benefited by this being a task force that was struck, as opposed to an ad hoc committee, because then we would have really identified these things now," McCabe had earlier said. "And we are two and a half years into it, coming up



Robert Ritz presents his vision for the Grand Trunk site to a packed hall of the Army Navy and Air Force Veterans building on Nov. 25.

to an election. I have some concerns about where we're at."

"The real problem here is the money," Coun. Mark Hunter agreed. "If we had bags and bags of the stuff, we could do whatever we want, but we don't have that. And I don't see a financial way for the city

to do this project by ourselves. We can do little pieces. ... I think we can probably do a Y and or a library, but that might be it. We might not have enough money left over for the superstructure.

"... We can dream and plan all we want, but if there's nobody out there that wants to

invest money, nothing's going to happen."

Coun. Brad Beatty, who has long advocated to demolish the building and start with a fresh slate, once again got on his soapbox, as he called it.

"The conversation we're having now is Groundhog Day. We're having the same conversations," Beatty said. "... We have 18 acres in our city centre that's going to cost a significant amount of money. I don't care who you ask. You ask three developers, you will get three different answers. And we will sit here and say, 'Well, which one's the better choice?' And we will get befuddled, and we will get paralysis through analysis, and we will not make a decision. I will tell you – guaranteed – that when we finish our term one year from now, we will not be any further."

That was not the first time "paralysis by analysis" has been commented about the Grand Trunk site, something that Ritz agreed with. Speaking with reporters after his presentation on Nov. 25, he said that it's time to move forward.

When asked about another idiom – "too many cooks in the kitchen" – Ritz disagreed.

"It's not that. I'm trying to say that maybe the chefs you have aren't doing a good job," Ritz said. "Let's get a chef to make a meal. That's how I look at it."

Recycling bins too big?

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

"The downside to this announcement is that they have said they will be taking back the large bin from anybody who would like to have a smaller bin, but they will not be providing those small bins," Burbach explained. "So if someone would like a small and medium size cart, they will have to purchase it themselves and make sure that they fit the criteria for the collecting."

In a unanimous vote, council made a motion to entreat Circular Materials, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks Todd McCarthy and Perth-

Wellington MPP Matthew Rae to provide funding for those additional sizes, so that Stratford residents don't pay out of pocket. As both Burbach and director of infrastructure services Taylor Crinklaw stated, other municipalities have had those other bins provided at the cost of the administrator.

Additionally, Burbach told the Times after the meeting that she hopes they will be provided to residents directly. As of now, she is not aware of any major box store carrying those specific sized blue bins.

Say hello to your new recycling cart.





Stratford Concert Choir
sharing great choral music



MESSIAH

Conducted by: Alexander Cann

Saturn
December 13th
7:30 PM

Sunday
December 14th
3:00 PM

AVONDALE UNITED CHURCH
194 AVONDALE AVE

THIS CONCERT IS GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY:

DESTINATION STRATFORD
ARTS



STRATFORD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



Conestoga Stratford's Stuffies for Seniors to provide Spruce Lodge residents with weighted stuffed animals

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Students at the Stratford Campus of Conestoga College are looking for community support to ensure seniors living with dementia have a comforting gift for the holidays.

Conestoga College's Stratford campus has a holiday tree set up for the Stuffies for Seniors campaign. Stuffies for Seniors ensures that Spruce Lodge residents living with dementia receive a cuddly weighted stuffed animal for Christmas. Up until Dec. 10, anyone can swing by the campus on 60 Erie St. to pick an animal ornament that comes with instructions on where to purchase a weighted stuffed animal.

The weighted stuffed animals can also be bought at Canadian Tire, Winners and/or Amazon to be dropped off at the campus under the tree in a gift bag.

"People have truly embraced this initiative at the campus, the whole of Conestoga College, and the community of Stratford and surrounding area! It has been shared on social media once – and the number of people commenting and asking how they can support has been overwhelming! Many people are sharing it online and coming into the campus to find out more," Robin Ritz, program coordinator

and professor of academic upgrading, told the Times.

The students were looking to give back to the community and wanted to do an angel tree for seniors.

"This idea was presented to Spruce Lodge, and with their number of residents, that did not seem feasible. However, a program was mentioned – where they provide weighted stuffed animals for those living with dementia – and the students embraced this," Ritz said.

Ritz also said that the Stuffies for Seniors campaign can help out seniors this holiday season by ensuring their comfort.

"The weighted stuffed animals provide comfort and can have calming effects. They provide a tactile comfort that can mimic a hug – thus providing reassurance," she said. "There are a lot of wonderful initiatives this time of year, with many of them focused on the young. It was important to our students to support the more mature community and provide them with a little holiday cheer and community support this holiday season."

The students will be delivering the stuffed animals to Spruce Lodge the week of Dec. 8.

Anyone looking for more information can send an email to rritz@conestogac.on.ca.



(ROBIN RITZ PHOTO)

Through the Stuffies for Seniors initiative, students from the Conestoga College Stratford campus are looking to collect purchases of weighted stuffed animals to give to Spruce Lodge residents living with dementia during the holiday season. There is a tree inside the 60 Erie St. building with the stuffed animals underneath.

BLACK FRIDAY

ENDS DECEMBER 1ST

0% Financing for up to 60 months



2025 ROGUE



Stratford NISSAN

2001 Ontario Street, Stratford ON

519.273.3119

www.stratfordnissan.com

STORE HOURS SALES: Mon.-Thurs. 9:00-8:00; Fri.-Sat. 9:00-6:00

PARTS AND SERVICE: Mon.-Sat. 8:00-5:00. FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE, OUR SERVICE DEPT IS NOW OPEN ON SATURDAYS

STRATFORD NISSAN



LET THE SPIRIT OF THE SEASON SPARKLE WITH ANNIE PLAYING UNTIL DECEMBER 14!

SHARE THE JOY OF LAUGHTER, SONG
AND HOLIDAY MAGIC — TOGETHER.

CRITIC'S PICK
"ONE OF
STRATFORD'S BEST"
THE GLOBE AND MAIL

"FAST ACTION
AND ASTOUNDING
DANCE NUMBERS"
POSTMEDIA

"CROWD-PLEASING"
THE NEW YORK TIMES



**DON'T WAIT 'TIL TOMORROW — SECURE YOUR SEATS TODAY AND
MAKE THIS MAGICAL MUSICAL PART OF YOUR HOLIDAY TRADITION.**

Stratford
FESTIVAL

ANNIE

BOOK BY **THOMAS MEEHAN** | MUSIC BY **CHARLES STROUSE** | LYRICS BY **MARTIN CHARNIN**
ORIGINAL BROADWAY PRODUCTION DIRECTED BY **MARTIN CHARNIN**
BASED ON "LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE"® BY PERMISSION OF TRIBUNE CONTENT AGENCY, LLC

2025 SEASON SPONSOR: OPHELIA LAZARIDIS
PRODUCTION CO-SPONSORS: ROBERT & MARY ANN GORLIN, RIKI TUROFSKY & CHARLES PETERSEN AND PETER & CAROL WALTERS

PRODUCTION
CO-SPONSOR



Perth County council approves phased-in pay raise for warden, deputy warden and councillors

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

As of 2027, after next year's municipal elections in all four of the county's lower-tier municipalities usher in new councils, members of Perth County council will begin seeing an increase to their base pay.

Based on a market review of pay for the wardens/mayors, deputy wardens/deputy mayors and councillors of 11 comparator municipalities – Lambton, Lennox and Addington, Dufferin, Grey, Bruce, Middlesex and Peterborough counties, as well as all four of Perth County's lower-tier municipalities – Marianne Love of ML Consulting recommended the county increase the base pay for warden, deputy warden and councillors to the 45th percentile of its comparators – the same percentile target used by the county to adjust pay for non-union management staff.

"The 45th percentile is ... the dollar amount where 55 per cent of the (comparator pay) values are above and 45 per cent are below," Love said. "So, this is not the highest, this is not the lowest, it's not the middle; it's below the middle of that group. ... The base-pay rates for the coun-

cil elected officials in the County of Perth are low, and it's something for council to consider as you move into the next year of council."

In 2025, the warden is paid a base salary of \$31,614 and councillors are paid \$14,490 with no distinction for the position of deputy warden. Following her remuneration review, Love recommended increasing the warden's base pay to \$39,606 plus inflation and cost of living adjustments (a 25 per-cent increase); increasing the deputy warden's pay to \$25,114 plus inflation and cost of living (a 73 per-cent increase); and increasing councillor pay to \$22,771 plus inflation and cost of living (a 57 per-cent increase).

While councillors saw the need to increase council pay, each spoke in favour of reducing the impact of a council pay increase on the taxpayer, opting for a phased-in approach from 2027-2029.

"It probably does need to be adjusted and, if you're going to adjust it, I think you have to phase it in over a period of time; I don't think it's something you can do in one or two years," said Coun. Walter McKenzie, who represents West Perth on county council. "I think you have to phase

it in even over a whole term of council. There's no question, as it's been said, (Perth County has) the lowest (pay) of all the (comparator) counties, so that tells you something."

"I think to continue to get quality representatives on council, you've got to (pay them) properly."

Ultimately, council voted in favour of the pay increase beginning with 50 per cent of the total increase in 2027 to bring council pay in Perth County closer in line with other counties, and then 25 per cent of the increase in 2028 and the final 25 per cent in 2029. Council opted to phase the pay increase over three years instead of the four-year term of lower-tier councils so the increase will be fully implemented before the next review of council pay set for 2030.

Though Love did not recommend any increases to council benefits, allowances and meeting or event per diems, councillors had a few suggestions of their own.

"The professional development (allowance) was set maybe 10 years ago next year, in 2016, and obviously, the hotel rates, the registration rates have increased," said Coun. Jerry Smith, who represents Perth

East on county council. "That would be the spot where I think an increase would be needed."

"I think if we increase anything, I would like to see the per diem increase if we go to an event because for all of us, especially if you work for another person, if you give up that pay and if you have a family, some of the councillors can't afford to do that," added Coun. Rhonda Ehgoetz, also a representative of Perth East. "If they only get, say, \$130 from us or \$240, whatever it is, they're actually leaving their full-time job. They're making, I'm sure, more at that job in that same time period. I'm wondering if we should just be upping that."

Currently, the warden is provided a maximum of \$6,000 per year and councillors are given a maximum of \$4,000 per year toward professional-development costs. All members of council are offered per diems for conferences, workshops and other training events at \$210.18 for a meeting that lasts over four hours and \$138.84 for meetings under four hours.

Council voted to have staff review the professional development and per diem rates with Love's assistance to determine potential increases to both.

Optimist Club of Downie Inc.

OPTI-CASH CALENDAR DRAW

Nov. 16 Nancy Murphy, Thorold	\$50.00
Nov. 17 Barry Smith, Stratford	\$50.00
Nov. 18 Larry Palmby, Stratford	\$50.00
Nov. 19 Joan Alderman, Lakeside	\$50.00
Nov. 20 Eunice Wolfe, Sebringville	\$50.00
Nov. 21 Harold Wolfram, Stratford	\$50.00
Nov. 22 Stephan Linthorst, Gorrie	\$200.00
Nov. 23 Bob & Sue Hughs, Stratford	\$50.00
Nov. 24 Jessica Kurtz, St. Marys	\$50.00
Nov. 25 Janet Buuck, Mitchell	\$50.00
Nov. 26 Mac Hartley, Leamington	\$50.00
Nov. 27 Carol Boshart, Stratford	\$50.00
Fri. Nov. 28 Tony Black, Stratford	\$50.00
Sat. Nov. 29 Deb Thompson, Woodham	\$200.00

**2026 CALENDARS ARE
ON SALE NOW**



Franklin E. Hinz

196 Ontario Street, Stratford
519-273-1633



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

All the money collected at the Stratford & District Agricultural Society's weekly breakfast sandwich at the Stratford Farmers' Markey went to support the United Way Perth-Huron on Nov. 22, netting \$1,158 for the local charity. Pictured here are Sonya Heyen, resource development manager at the United Way, Laurie Newbrand, ag society president, and John De Wys, longtime volunteer and board member, serving Vicki Burrell, who was glad to donate to this year's campaign.

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT
WWW.STRATFORDTIMES.COM**

To Stratford With Love returns for 37th year

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

One of the most-anticipated Stratford holiday traditions is returning for its 37th year on Dec. 13 at the Stratford Rotary Complex.

To Stratford With Love, a free roast-beef dinner held each year to bring the community together around Christmas time, will see upwards of 600 diners and dozens of volunteers join together for a festive meal, to enjoy live entertainment by Upside of Maybe and the Stratford Concert Band and to celebrate the holiday season.

Though the number of tickets being handed out this year is less than previous iterations of the event – the dinner once served as many as 1,100 Stratford and area residents – organizers Richard and Ruth Kneider of Simple Dreams Ministries say the annual event will be everything so many have come to look forward to in the lead-up to Christmas.

“We’ve ordered (food) for more, but we have opted to go with 600 sittings this year,” Ruth Kneider said. “Last year, we did 800 and we had the overflow – and we still do have overflow should we get the 600 plus – but last year, the back portion of the hall was empty. We had volunteers standing around, not doing anything, and that’s hard. You can’t invent a job for them. So, we’re going with 600 this year and hoping that will be filled, so we’re putting all the effort into that.”

With more than 500 pounds of beef ordered – so much, in fact, the Kneiders may donate a big chunk of it to the St. Marys version of the dinner, To St. Marys With



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

You're invited to the 37th annual To Stratford With Love community dinner on Dec. 13 starting at 5:30 p.m. Reserve a ticket and come enjoy the holiday season with the Stratford community free of charge.

Love – and 12 extra tables, the Kneiders are confident they can accommodate more people should the event prove more popular this year. For now, however, they're focused on making sure everything goes off without a hitch, just as it has for almost four decades.

“The coleslaw has been taken care of, the baked potatoes have been taken care of, vegetables and pies are all sorted out,” Richard Kneider said. “There’s stuff we still have to coordinate, but it always seems to come together. It’s just a matter of getting the restaurants cooking off all the beef.”

Since there isn’t a kitchen at the Stratford Rotary Complex, the kitchen staff at three local businesses – Mercer Hall, Black Angus Bakery & Catering and the Wild Hog Country Market – as well as the Local Community Food Centre, each cook and slice a portion of the beef, and Brad Rickert of Radio Cab delivers the cooked food by way of delivery van to the Rotary Complex.

For many, the To Stratford With Love holiday tradition isn’t about sitting down and enjoying a meal with the community, it’s about volunteering to serve that meal, or helping set up the Rotary complex hall

before the event by hanging lights and decorations and putting up nearly a dozen Christmas trees, or even packing everything up and putting it all away for next year’s dinner after it’s all said and done.

This year, the Kneiders began recruiting volunteers on Nov. 12 and, within just two days, they had already found the 100 they need to serve the meal on Dec. 13. They’re still looking for volunteers to help with setup and tear-down before and after the event, so those who want to fulfill that holiday tradition can still help.

“We’re happy to have so many people who want to volunteer and just lighten the load,” Ruth Kneider said.

“We’ve had numerous people talk to us months ahead, wanting to know when (To Stratford With Love) is going to be, whether it’s volunteering or being there for the dinner,” added Richard Kneider. “And some of them have invited others who have never been to the dinner before. They say, ‘You really have to come to this thing.’”

For the Kneiders, the ability to organize this event with their daughters, their extended family and an army of volunteers each year means they get to share in the Christmas spirit, bring community together and help friends, neighbours and total strangers forget about their stresses and worries for one night while they enjoy a free holiday meal.

For more information on To Stratford With Love, to sign up as a volunteer or to reserve tickets, visit tostratfordwith-love.ca. Tickets can also be obtained at Stratford House of Blessing, the Salvation Army, Stratford City Hall and the Local Community Food Centre.



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Stratford Intermediate School won this year’s Accessibility Award from the City of Stratford’s accessibility advisory committee (AAC), due to its “exceptional” renovations that create barrier-free classrooms, library, office and specialty rooms. Pictured here are AAC chair Roger Koert, principal Erin Cassone, superintendent Cheri Carter, Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma, director of education Graham Shantz and AAC co-chair Diane Sims.

Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. What is the street address of the White House?
2. What kind of dog is Scooby-Doo?
3. The practice of drawing electoral district boundaries to give one political party an advantage is called?
4. What is the main body of an aircraft called?
5. What is the largest country in Africa by area?
6. What does DNA stand for?
7. Who is Katy Perry currently dating?
8. What is Warren Buffett's company called?
9. Who is Bluey the dog's sister?
10. True or False. A group of geese is called a gaggle.

This week’s answers are found on pg. 35

Red Coral

FASHION

PRE-SALE | NOV 24-30

BLACK FRIDAY

sale

30% OFF

ALMOST EVERYTHING!

in-store & online!

DOOR CRASHERS
in-store only!

SHOP DEALS NOW

RED CORAL ST. JACOBS
1385 King St. N.
St. Jacobs, ON
519-664-0297

RED CORAL STRATFORD
77 Ontario St.
Stratford, ON
519-933-9398

www.redcoralfashion.com

Follow Us!    

 **HearingLife**

4.7 ★★★★★  nps.today **51,300+ reviews in Canada.¹**

BLACK FRIDAY SAVINGS

OUR BIGGEST SALE OF THE YEAR

up to
\$2,100

off the latest
hearing aids*

+

**Combine with eligible
government coverage for
additional savings**

*“When paired with comprehensive hearing care,
today’s advanced hearing aids are typically
small and discreet, while being able to improve
auditory experiences and restore meaningful
connections.”*

Katie Koebel, Audiologist, M.Cl.Sc., Reg. CASLPO

Get started with a FREE hearing test*

Proudly serving the community for over 15 years!

Stratford

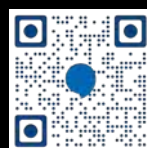
295 Huron Street
1-888-606-9913

Exeter

281 Main Street S, Unit 277
1-888-332-2513

Listowel

1195 Wallace Avenue N, Unit 300
1-888-332-2549



Mention code: **NSP-BKFD-SBTM**

Book online **HearingLife.ca/2100**

*A comprehensive hearing assessment is provided to adults ages 19 and older at no cost. The results of this assessment will be communicated verbally to you. Depending on the province you're located in, an administrative fee may apply if a copy of an Audiological Report is requested. Child hearing tests are conducted at select locations for a fee, please contact us for more information. Offer not applicable for industrial hearing tests. Up to \$2,100 off offer expires on 01/31/2026. Information within this offer may vary or be subject to change. Interest rates starting at 0%. Deposit may be required. Borrower must be age of majority and have a Canadian bank account. Financing is available on select core-brand hearing aids and at select HearingLife locations. Some conditions apply, see clinic for details. Offers not valid in Quebec. [1]Source: review.nps.today/r/HearingLife-Canada. This coupon cannot be combined with other promotions. Limit one coupon per client per transaction. Value not redeemable for cash. See clinic for details.

From hashtag to community event: Local collaboration continues to expand Stratford's creative side

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

Our Stōr(y) will host a creative event showcasing Stratford's identity through the eyes of many this December.

After the success of #howucstratford, a collaborative initiative between invest-Stratford and local business owner Kevin September, September will be hosting a follow-up event showcasing the artwork submitted through that social media project.

The event will take place at September's business address, Our Stōr(y) on 7 George St. W from 5 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on Dec. 6. The event is focused on how artists identify Stratford and will feature a range of creative pieces, such as sculptures, sketches, paintings, and photographs that were submitted through #howucstratford.

"It's really exciting to see so many creatives participating and sharing their perspectives. I wasn't expecting such a strong response from the community," said September. "All the outlets shared something about this, which made me really proud. Now, we're continuing to

grow and welcome even more stories."

The event will feature poetry presentations from Indigenous poet Scott Tillson, award-winning poet and photographer Heidi Sander and a reading from Stratford's Poet Laureate David Stones.

September and investStratford collaborated on an initiative over the summer, encouraging local artists and community members to express how they see Stratford. Participants could write how they saw Stratford on notepads that were scattered throughout the community or submit artwork through social media using the hashtag #howucstratford.

Since starting the initiative, September and investStratford have discussed showcasing the artworks in a central hub. September wants to see the project continued, marking the community event as the first part of something grander.

"I want people to reflect not only on what they love about this place, but also on what they question, what they hope to see grow, shift and evolve," said September. "I'm glad we struck a nerve, that something in this conversation stirred a deeper curiosity about who we are and who we're becoming."

Area municipalities net \$10M from province

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae has announced over \$10 million for local municipalities through the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF) for 2026.

Included in this funding is an increase of over \$700,000 from the 2025 OMPF. The OMPF is the province's main general assistance grant to municipalities.

"The Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund provides funding directly to our local municipalities, which can use the money to address pressing local needs," said Rae in a media release. "I am proud that our government understands the importance of rural Ontario. This increased investment into our municipalities will provide them with the support they need to build our communities and attract new investments."

The municipalities in Perth-Wellington will see an average increase of over 7.5 per cent in their funding allocations this year. For 2026, the OMPF will include an additional increase of \$50 million to provide a total of \$600 million in unconditional funding to 388 municipalities. The \$50 million enhancement will be targeted to small, northern and rural municipalities and those with a limited property tax base. This funding will assist municipalities in providing critical municipal services to people across the province.

Ontario has been steadily increasing support to municipalities. From 2019 to

2024, key provincial support to municipalities grew by over 45 per cent. In 2024 alone, the government provided over \$10 billion to Ontario municipalities through key transfers. Which includes an additional \$1 billion through the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund (OCIF) over five years starting in 2022, nearly \$654 million annually through the Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP), and almost \$380 million to help 102 municipalities improve local transit through the 2024-25 Gas Tax program.

Ontario has invested over \$2 billion in critical housing and community-enabling infrastructure through the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund and Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program, complementing support already being provided through the Building Faster Fund.

2026 OMPF funding as provided by the Ministry of Finance:

- North Perth, \$2,047,100, an increase of \$179,300
- West Perth, \$1,182,300, an increase of \$93,600
- Perth East, \$1,378,800, an increase of \$110,200
- Perth South, \$490,700, an increase of \$34,900
- St. Marys, \$673,300, an increase of \$49,000
- Minto, \$1,579,000, an increase of \$57,500
- Mapleton, \$1,133,300, an increase of \$85,300
- Wellington North \$1,585,400, an increase of \$101,800

Festive R.I.D.E makes return

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The Stratford Police Service and Perth County Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) joined forces to kick off the festive season in a campaign against impaired driving.

On Nov. 20, local police presented a united front against impaired driving in our area. The campaign moved throughout Perth County, setting up in Stratford, as well as the towns of Sebringville and Mitchell. This marks the kickoff of the annual Festive R.I.D.E. (Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere) Campaign that runs throughout the holiday season.

During the campaign, drivers should expect to see increased police presence

as officers conduct R.I.D.E. initiatives 24-hours a day, seven-days a week, in Stratford, St. Marys, Perth South and throughout the entirety of Perth County.

The Festive R.I.D.E. Campaign is led by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and is a collaboration with all Ontario Police Services to keep roads free of alcohol-impaired and drug-impaired drivers.

Stratford Police and Perth County OPP jointly remind everyone in the area to do their part throughout the festive season and beyond by always driving while sober and never allowing anyone to drive while impaired by alcohol or drugs.

The Stratford Police Service wishes everyone a happy festive season and encourages everyone to drive safely and sober.

Community newspapers are NOT junk mail.



Community newspapers are trusted local voices that keep Canadians informed, connected and engaged. They are local businesses that report news that matters most to the communities they serve. CUPW and Canada Post need to ensure that the processing/delivery of unaddressed community newspapers resumes immediately.

newsmediacanada.ca

News Media Canada
Médias d'Info Canada

SUBMIT YOUR LETTER TO THE EDITOR TO US!

CALL 519-655-2341

OR EMAIL STRATFORDTIMES@GMAIL.COM

A vision for the Grand Trunk



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

Renderings from Robert Ritz's proposal for the Grand Trunk superstructure include an eight-storey luxury apartment building, a splash pad and pool, a new police station, a new YMCA entrance through a concourse running straight through the superstructure, and other amenities.



Not Ok. campaign urges Stratford residents to speak up on gender-based violence

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

According to Optimism Place, a Stratford-based women's shelter, Perth County OPP receive more than 600 calls a year regarding intimate partner violence.

Now, the local women's shelter is inviting everyone to say, "Not okay."

"We're really excited to launch the Not Ok. campaign," Donna Jean Forster, executive director at Optimism Place, told the Times. "... The goal of the campaign is that people are talking and that people are learning the signs of violence against women and, in particular, they're learning the signs related to coercive control and how that might show up in their relationships.

"We often hear that people want to help but they don't know how to help. And so this campaign opens the door to conversations about what's not okay, and also at the same time, helps people to understand what the signs are and the ways that we can help each other."

According to Optimism Place's campaign, coercive control limits a person's freedom, independence, or sense of self. These patterns are often subtle but deep-

ly harmful and there are five forms of abuse which may suggest coercive control: physical, psychological/emotional/verbal, sexual, financial and spiritual.

Furthermore, there are 10 signs of escalating risk that residents should be aware of. Signs include:

- The person fears being hurt, and/or fears for the safety of a child or another family member.

- The partner has a known history of domestic violence.

- The partner shows obsessive behaviour such as stalking, harassment, excessive gift-giving, sexual jealousy, and/or possessiveness.

- The partner has made threats involving weapons, and/or has access to firearms or knives.

- There have been threats to kill the person, a family member, and/or themselves.

- The partner has violated a no-contact and/or other court order.

- The relationship is ending, and/or there has been a recent pregnancy or birth.

- The partner is currently unemployed and/or without stable housing.

- The partner's substance use contributes to an increase in violent incidents.

- The frequency or severity of violent incidents has escalated.

Forster said that it is natural to not speak about abuse or potential abuse in another relationship, but by keeping silent we allow abuse to remain a taboo in communities.

"We want people to start talking about it," Forster said. "That's what we want – people to be aware of it in their own relationships and aware of when they see it in other places, in family members, friends.

"That's why this campaign has a website where people can learn the signs and can help people to understand the ways that they can be supportive to their friends and family members, and also then directs them to the staff at Optimism Place who answer our telephone line 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They're trained professionals who can provide support and guidance to friends and family members."

Optimism Place launched the campaign on Nov. 25 to coincide with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, a United Nations' recognized day that kickstarts 16 days of activism worldwide to curb the trend and ultimately eradicate intimate partner vi-

olence.

As Forster said, gender-based violence is endemic, as can be seen in this community. Throughout the years it has been operating (since 1983), there has been a steady stream of service-users. There may be sometimes where the shelter is being used more often, but the community and outreach programs are always in use.

The Not Ok. campaign is planned as a long-term way of making warning signs of intimate partner violence visible. Violence in a relationship can worsen over time and risk can escalate exponentially. If three out of the 10 listed signs are visible, residents are being asked to contact Optimism Place at 519-271-5550 for a risk assessment and safety-planning support.

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911.

"Our staff are available all the time to answer these calls," Forster said. "And we would rather answer these calls to support people then have people uproot their lives and have something really terrible happen. Being able to support people early and often is really important."

For more information, visit <https://itsnotok.ca/learn-the-signs/>.

He told her if she left,
she'd have nothing.

Not ok.



Visit itsnotok.ca to
understand the signs of
abuse and how you can help.

OptimismPlace
WOMEN'S SHELTER AND SUPPORT SERVICES



**EASTERN
SHOWCASE**

ON OFFER ELITE LIMOUSIN GENETICS
OPEN HEIFERS | BRED HEIFERS | COWS | FROZEN GENETICS | PREGNANT RECIPIENTS

DECEMBER 6, 2025
IN HANOVER, ON

SALES MANAGEMENT **BOHRSON MARKETING SERVICES** WWW.BOHRSON.COM



DILMS www.dilms.ca **BOHRSON**
MARKETING SERVICES

Falstaff hosts Cookies and Carols Dec. 20

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

To help get children and families into the holiday spirit, the Falstaff Family Centre (FFC) is inviting the community to its annual Cookies and Carols event Saturday, Dec. 20. For the first time, the presentation will be offered twice, with an afternoon event starting at 3:30 p.m. and remounted that same evening at 6:30 p.m. (doors open 30 minutes prior).

Once again, the event will be hosted by Michael Fox, with carols, music and readings by Loreena McKennitt, as well as Gemini Award-winning actor Cedric Smith, who will narrate a portion of A Child's Christmas in Wales by Dylan Thomas. Santa Claus himself will appear at 4:15 and 7:15 p.m. and there will be lots of carol singing in between with everyone invited to join in. Cookies and beverages will also be on offer.

"This is a cherished tradition we love hosting for the community," said McKennitt, owner and director of the FFC, in a media release. "We look forward to seeing people again in person and enjoying the spirit of the season."

The event is free but donations will be gratefully accepted for Wellspring Stratford.

"Wellspring Stratford is honoured to be the beneficiary of this year's Cookies and Carols event," said Lisa Stacey, house manager of Wellspring Stratford. "As a community-funded organization that receives no government support, events like this help ensure we can continue offering our programs at no cost to anyone affected by cancer. We're deeply grateful for this generosity."

The FFC has been hosting the Cookies and Carols event for twenty years, since McKennitt bought the former school in 2000.




**Stratford Irish Present
TEDDY BEAR
TOSS**

IRISH **VS** **ALVINGTON KILLER BEES
HOCKEY CLUB**

**ALLMAN ARENA
SATURDAY DECEMBER 6TH
PUCK DROP 5:30PM**

TOSS WILL OCCUR FOLLOWING THE FIRST IRISH GOAL - OR BETWEEN 2ND AND 3RD PERIOD
ALL STUFFED ANIMALS TOSSED WILL BENEFIT LOCAL CHILDREN THROUGH PERTH COUNTY CHARITIES



IRISH **x** **Krispy Kreme**
DOUGHNUTS[®] MC

2025 DOUGHNUT DRIVE

\$16 PER DOZEN **PERCENTAGE OF PROCEEDS DONATED TO LOCAL CHARITY** **SCAN OR CODE TO ORDER**

PLACE ORDERS BY NOV 29TH

ORDERS WILL BE PICKED UP AT STRATFORD
IRISH HOME GAME DEC 6TH VS 

Kinna Sohna celebrates 25 years of craftsmanship and ethical fashion

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

Kinna Sohna, the boutique space at 55 York St., is celebrating 25 years of traditional craftsmanship and ethical fashion with 15 per cent off most items from Dec. 4-7.

Kinna Sohna translates to “how beautiful” or “how handsome” in Punjabi – a fitting name for a shop built around hand-made artistry.

Owner Sartaj Kaur moved her boutique from Toronto’s designer district to Stratford eight years ago. With the rising financial pressures of the city, she knew it was time for a shift and set her sights on finding the right home for her work. Stratford ended up being exactly that.

“I really was just following my heart,” said Kaur. “I wanted to leave Toronto. I wanted to be in a small town. This location became available, and some of my customers from here kept saying I should move to Stratford, and it worked out for me; the timing was just right.”

In her 30s, after stepping away from the corporate world, Kaur found herself drawn to textiles. She began exploring the craft more deeply, learning everything she could about fabrics, production and the global textile landscape. Coming from a family with a strong business background, she knew entrepreneurship was where she was headed – but doing it ethically was non-negotiable.

“I wanted to do something creative,” she said. “I would talk to anybody who was doing what they loved. I talked to them and asked, ‘How did you get to do what you loved?’ to learn from them. I started this business when I was 35, so I did a lot



(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

Kinna Sohna owner Sartaj Kaur stands inside her Stratford boutique, surrounded by the hand-crafted, fair-trade garments and textiles she designs and sources from artisans across the world.

of soul searching. I went through the book Artist's Way about three times. A book that really impacted me was Creating a Life Worth Living. I spent a lot of time figuring out what gives me joy.”

Today, her clothing line is produced through an ethical textile co-operative in India, where artisans earn fair wages, have democratic input and have access to essentials like healthcare and clean water. Kaur chooses her partner communities based on personal experience and meaningful relationships, travelling yearly to work and learn alongside the makers themselves.

“I feel like I've been successful all this time because I'm present while all of the work is being done,” she said. “I'm (in India) on the floor, packing boxes, and I get to be there while they're sewing. I buy the fabric, and sometimes I'm the one going to the block printers and bringing fabric to them.”

Kinna Sohna offers something rare: slow-fashion pieces created with intention. The clothing is vibrant, unique and thoughtfully designed – a mix of bold patterns, memorable colours and timeless silhouettes. Kaur says the shop is for anyone looking to elevate their style while still being mindful of what they're purchasing

and where it comes from.

“My stuff is truly slow fashion – it's sustainable,” said Kaur. “There's the person who washes the fabric, the person who prepares it for printing, then the block printer, then another person washing it again and someone else laying the fabric out in the fields. There are so many people involved – the ones I buy buttons and thread from, as well as the embroiderers themselves. It's almost like supporting a whole village.”

Most pieces in the store are designed by Kaur and crafted from natural, hand-made fibres. The collection includes clothing for both men and women, ranging from XS to 4XL, with each item created as a one-of-a-kind piece.

The shop also carries globally sourced carpets, hand-crafted jewellery and other artisan-made items. Everything in the store – every pattern, print, stitch and textile – comes with its own story.

Kaur is deeply involved in every step of the process and is on site to help shoppers find the right fit, colour and style. Her knowledge of the craft, paired with her personal approach, is part of why her customer base has stayed loyal over the past 25 years.

Being a woman in business hasn't always been easy, Kaur says. From selecting textiles abroad to unpacking new arrivals in the shop, the work is hands-on and often labour-intensive. But the reward is in seeing people wear and cherish pieces that are made to last.

In a culture dominated by disposable fashion, Kinna Sohna offers something different – clothing meant to be loved, cared for and passed down through generations.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Artisans at an ethical textile co-operative in India prepare and create hand-crafted garments for Kinna Sohna, using traditional techniques.

STRATFORD *TIMES* SPORTS

Warriors blazed past Stars and cool down Rockets on home ice

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The level of optimism was very high for the Stratford Hunter Steel Warriors as they entered the week with a four-game winning streak and faced the St. Thomas Stars and the Strathroy Rockets on home ice.

Excluding the overtime loss to Waterloo back in the home opener on Sept. 19, the Warriors have been unbeatable at the William Allman Memorial Arena, with a record of 7-0-1-0.

Dax Vader and Drew Hodge say the team is feeling positive and was looking to play in front of the home fans.

"We've been doing well together. Chemistry keeps building, and it shows in our gameplay. Try to keep it going over the next few weeks," Vader said. "I think this is our first weekend. We got two home games, so we'll be pumped to play in front of one crowd twice in a row."

"It feels good to win those four games. We've got to move our way up in the standings. Every game, every win counts right now, so we will take anything we can get," Hodge said.

"These fans are so awesome that every game you come here, you know that we're going to bring your best effort, and the crowd is going to get us in the game, and we just don't lose in our barn."

Assistant captains Jonas Schmidt and Joseph Curtin echo their teammate's statements about being at home.

"We have a great home record going so far. It's awesome to play in front of these fans in the city. We just got to keep bringing home some wins," Curtin said.

"Obviously, home games are more fun. We love playing in front of the Stratford fans. For me, I like a little more time, a little more time to grade for the game, so it's nice to be at home," Schmidt said.

Head coach Dave Williams says having a homestand at the Allman is an excellent way for the team to play their best hockey.

"It's always great to play in Stratford. We remind our guys all the time. We think we see everybody's best games in Stratford, such a special arena to come and play with its tradition and history," Williams said.

On Nov. 21, the Warriors opened their first of two home games against the St. Thomas Stars.

The Stars scored first at the midway mark of the first period, but the Warriors countered with three unanswered goals by Quinn Kipfer, Will Coward (first in the GOHL) and Drew Hodge in the final half of the opening frame to take a 3-1 lead after 20 minutes.

Midway through the second period, St. Thomas used their offensive might to reclaim their lead as they scored three unanswered goals of their own in under three minutes. But the Warriors regained the



(PAIGE CAMPBELL PHOTO)

Max Wildfong scores the game-winning goal in the Stratford Warriors' 3-2 overtime win over the Strathroy Rockets on Nov. 23. Wildfong scored a pair of goals in the game.

momentum and took control of the game when Jack McGurn scored his fifth goal 11 seconds after the Stars' goal to tie the game. It was followed by Curtin's first of the year and a late-period marker from Schmidt's sixth of the year to give the Warriors a 6-4 lead heading into the final period.

Fifty-one seconds into the period, Schmidt scored his second goal of the game, seventh of the season, to increase the Stratford lead to 7-4. St. Thomas added a late goal with under two minutes left, but the Warriors prevailed 7-5 to extend their win streak at home to eight straight, five straight overall.

Schmidt led the Warriors with four points. Schmidt said it was a matter of taking care of business by sticking to the game strategy.

"It was just about sticking to our game plan and doing all we practice throughout the week, and we know if we do that well, that will get the two points," Schmidt said.

Coward was glad he scored his first GOHL goal, and he got the critical win despite the defensive miscues.

"It feels pretty good to get my first in the GOHL. Just a good dish from Fogger (Max Wildfong) there and traffic at the net," Coward said.

"It was good to pick up the two points tonight. They're a good, quick, fast team, and we'll give it to them. We had a couple lapses there in the second period, but we can't sleep on defence. But we'll take a look at some video tomorrow and clean it up."

Despite the miscues, Williams says he found encouraging signs from the offence in consecutive home games.

"I feel like the game was broken into some different pieces. I liked how we

were playing there when we had that lead, and it quickly evaporated, and then we got back after it again and got the lead again. There are some things in there I think we can clean up defensively, mistakes that we're making on our own, not necessarily mistakes that they're forcing us into place," Williams said.

"I guess the positive really is again, seven goals, considering that we felt like we were maybe gripping the sticks a little bit earlier in the year. So we had back-to-back Fridays where we scored, you know, eight and seven goals. Hopefully, that gives us a little confidence in pushing through."

In front of a large crowd, the Warriors played their second game of the home-stand against the Strathroy Rockets.

Curtin scored his second goal of the season, giving the Warriors a 1-0 lead through 20 minutes, but the Rockets responded in the second period at the 6:12 mark to tie the game. A laser of a goal from Wildfong put the Warriors back in the lead, only for the visitors to tie the game midway through regulation. Despite the Warriors' offensive pressure for most of the game, the game remained tied at 2-2 through 60 minutes and went to overtime.

In overtime, Wildfong sent the home crowd into a frenzy as he outmuscled the Strathroy defender and buried home the game winner to give the Warriors their ninth consecutive win at home ice, sixth straight overall.

Schmidt extended his point streak to seven games with the assist on Wildfong's overtime winner. The veteran forward has 12 points during the streak. With three more points in the two-game weekend, Wildfong has six points in the last six games.

The first year forward was elated with the game-winning goal in the extra frame.

"That was such a great game by us. We battled every shift. This was my first-ever overtime goal. It was exciting," Wildfong said. "It's just a great pass, great play by Callie (Coward), and great draw win by Schmitt (Schmidt). Just scoring that goal means a ton. Got to celebrate it all with the guys. It's very fun."

Goaltender Gage Hurst bounced back from his tough performance against Welland to extend his record to 4-0-0-1. Hurst commended his teammates on the defensive performance against the Rockets.

"I think it was all about playing simply and applying what I was doing in practice and games. Overall, I thought I played well," Hurst said. "The guys obviously played great in front of me and made my job easier."

Williams liked what the team did with the offensive strategy, despite the good performance by Strathroy goaltender Mason Costa.

"I thought it was a good hockey game here this afternoon. Thought we did a lot of things territorially. I thought we spent a lot of time on their half of the ice. We struggled to find the back of the net," Williams said.

"I think we probably hit three or four cross bars and thought their (Rockets) goaltender played exceptionally well, gave them a chance to win. So, I think it was an exciting Sunday afternoon for our guys."

The Warriors will conclude their home-stand by honouring first responders from Stratford and area on Nov. 28 against the Waterloo Siskins. Then they travel to Pelham for their cross-conference road matchup with the Panthers on Nov. 30.

Stratford Irish bolsters roster and beat Six Nations Ironmen

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

Before facing the Six Nations Ironmen on Nov. 22, the Stratford Irish made a series of transactions in a span of 48 hours.

Between Nov. 20 and 21, the team acquired Jeff Silver, Ben Sawyer, Ethan Nothner, Adrian Nabuurs, Ethan Salter, Brendan Charlton, Mateo Cabral and Daniel Di Cristofaro via free agency and trade.

Four of the eight new players – Salter, Sawyer, Charlton and Cabral – spoke to the Times and shared their first impressions of the team and the city.

“Oh, it's great. I love Stratford for the coziness in the summertime. It's a great town

to be a part of, and it's good to be here,” said Cabral. “I was in Halton Hills before, so coming over for my first game today, I could already feel the passion in the arena from the fans, and how good the team is, so it's good to be a part of.”

“It's truly incredible,” Sawyer said. “... The Stratford experience was just incredible. You have the stands filled with people who love hockey and want to come out and have a good time. Playing here is incredible.”

“It's great. It's an exciting environment. Obviously, the fans are great, and it gets nice and noisy and loud when we do something out there, whether it's a big play, a big goal or a big shot on net or something, someone

blocking a shot, we have the city behind us here,” Charlton said.

“It's a very professionally run program. Everyone has bought into the systems and everyone's here to win and work hard, and that's what I'm here to do, to work hard and help the team win wherever I can,” Salter said.

The four men, along with Silver and Di Cristofaro, made their debuts against the Ironmen and played key roles in the 5-2 win.

In the early stage of the first period, the Irish set a strong offensive tempo and were rewarded with two goals in under two minutes from the debuting Silver and Ray Robbins. The Irish increased their lead on a breakaway goal from Cabral midway

through the second period. Six Nations scored a late goal in the middle frame, only for Stratford to respond on a powerplay goal from Thomas Hernandez, his second of the season, with 27 seconds left and restored a three-goal lead.

Six Nations cut down the deficit to 4-2 with less than five minutes remaining, but Cabral scored his second of the game with six minutes remaining to ice the game for the Irish. The Irish improved their season record to 6-2-1, their third straight win, and have picked up seven of the possible eight points in the last four games.

Next up for the Irish is a matchup with the last-place Tilbury Bluebirds on Nov. 29 at the William Allman Arena.

U16 Lakers dominated RedHawks and Cyclones

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The Huron-Perth Lakers U16 AAA squad continued its strong start to the 2025-2026 ALLIANCE season with two wins this past week.

It started with a dominant 5-1 win on the road over the Cambridge Jr. RedHawks on Nov. 14.

Joseph Haskett got the Lakers on the board in the first period with his fourth goal of the season midway through the first period. Colton Van Geffen notched his second goal of the season on the powerplay late in the period to give the Lakers a 2-0 lead after twenty minutes.

Callum Brooks scored his 10th and 11th goals of the season in the second period to put the Lakers' lead at 4-0 through 40 minutes of play.

Evan Fisher's sixth of the season gave the Lakers a commanding 5-0 lead before Cambridge scored midway through the final frame to prevent a shutout bid by Lakers goaltender Rylan Da Costa. Ethan Bridges led the Lakers with three assists.

Huron-Perth improved to a league-best 13-1-0 this season. Head coach Jason Brooks was pleased with the team's overall performance.

“I thought we had a good first two periods. We skated well. We got in on the forecheck, created a lot of turnovers and then capitalized

on our chances,” Brooks said.

“We got a little bit comfortable with our lead in the third. Maybe got a little casual, but ultimately, I'm happy we got the two points. We got the win, and (that's what) we came here to do.”

On Nov. 23, the Lakers played their home game at the Pyramid Recreation Centre in St. Marys as part of Lakers Day, an annual event in which teams in the organization, ranging from U10 to U18, played their games in one day. The U16 Lakers faced the Chatham-Kent Cyclones in the event.

McCotter got things started with his 15th goal of the season on the powerplay midway through the opening period. Bridges notched his sixth of the season with under six minutes

in the first to put the Lakers up 2-0.

The Cyclones got on the board to cut the deficit to 2-1 midway through the second period, but Haskett responded for the Lakers less than a minute later to extend the lead back to two. Owen Jarmuth scored his first of the season with 7:11 to increase the lead to 4-1.

In the third period, the Lakers poured on the goals with four more goals from Kipfer, Miller, Bridges and McCotter as they beat the Cyclones 7-1 to extend their record to 15-1.

Next for the Lakers is looking to defend their last year's championship as they travel to Whitby for the Gloria Rints Memorial International Silver Stick tournament from Nov. 27 to Nov. 30.



PERTH COUNTY OPP



PARK IT.



LOCK IT.



POCKET.

Over half of stolen vehicles had the keys left inside.
Know the risks. Don't be an easy target.

CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design)

Proactive approach to reduce crime by designing and organizing spaces so homes and businesses are safer and harder for criminals to target.

Good news! Perth County residents can request a **FREE** Assessment to identify vulnerabilities in their homes and receive advice on safeguarding their property. Contact Perth County OPP to learn more! (519) 393-6123



PERTH COUNTY OPP

CAMSAFE (Volunteer Registry of Security Cameras)

Volunteer registry aimed at keeping our community safe and informing police if any cameras are available in the neighbourhood.

CAMSAFE does not have access to footage or cameras - only basic contact info. Delete your information or account at any time. Register any cameras with as many or as few details as you wish. Visit camsafe.ca to learn more.



CAMSAFE

Non-Emergency Line: 1-888-310-1122

MINOR SPORTS

SCRAPBOOK



(PAIGE CAMPBELL PHOTO)

Charlie McKay loads up a shot from the blueline during the U11 C Stratford Aces game last Saturday.



(PAIGE CAMPBELL PHOTO)

Nate Micks kneels into a one-time shot on goal during last Saturday's U14 Stratford Warriors game.



(PAIGE CAMPBELL PHOTO)

Emma Van Nes fires the puck off her stick from the point during the U18 A Stratford Aces game this past Sunday.

U11 A Aces win Stratford Festival Cup Challenge

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Times Regional Reporter

The U11 A Stratford Aces captured the gold medal at the Stratford Festival Cup Challenge on Nov. 14-16.

Head coach Lexi Templeman praised the team for their cohesive, hard-working play, which came despite playing their second tournament in as many weeks.

"The depth of our team and the continuous hard work from every single player stood out to me," Templeman told the Times. "When you're only nine and 10 years old, six games in a weekend, especially back-to-back weekends, can seem really daunting, but our girls really stepped up and played hard every single shift they went out there."

The Aces went through the four-game round-robin without suffering a loss, although it wasn't without adversity, which Templeman explained and noted how the team showed maturity in bouncing back from a less-than-stellar performance.

"It's challenging to have conversations with kids that are so young, maybe when they didn't play their best game, but I'm the type of coach that I want to let them know if we didn't have our best game. In our second game against Oakville, I didn't think we played our strongest game. Chloe (Hazeleger) was our goalie, and she played absolutely incredible and kept us in the game, but I didn't think we played our

strongest in front of her.

"We had a conversation in the dressing room afterwards about how we need to work hard every single game, or else other teams will outplay us and beat us," Templeman continued. "I'm just so proud of how they responded, because they came back the next game and worked so much harder, and showed they understood what we were saying."

The Aces found themselves in a tight battle in the semi-final against the St. Thomas Panthers, securing a 1-0 victory to advance to the championship contest. Elena Aroutzidis Desormeaux scored the lone goal of the game in the second period, with assists by Ruthie Bilyea and Riya Michel. Lana Minhinnick earned the shutout in goal.

"Even though it was a tight game, we didn't let our foot off the gas one single shift," said Templeman. "We continued to press against a really difficult St. Thomas team that we've faced many times this season. I'm really proud of the girls and the way they stuck together defensively to get that shutout, but also to get the chances we had and eventually put one on the board."

The Aces continued their strong play in the gold medal game against the Etobicoke Dolphins. After a scoreless first period, Stratford scored three times in the second, with Michel opening the scoring on a goal assisted by Aroutzidis Desormeaux. Sofia Bitzer also scored for the Aces, and

CONTINUED TO PAGE 19



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The U11 A Stratford Aces won the gold medal at the Stratford Festival Cup Challenge on Nov. 14-16. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Lana Minhinnick and Chloe Hazeleger. In the middle row, from left, are Emma Eddy, Elena Aroutzidis Desormeaux, Anne Laverty, Vivian Bohnen, and Reese Kelly. In the back row, from left, are Sofia Bitzer, Lindsey King, Lenna Roberts, Mackenzie Brown, Ruthie Bilyea, Riya Michel and Jillian Devereaux.

Rod Beattie returns to perform his one-man adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* at museum

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

The now beloved tradition of Rod Beattie's adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* is returning to the Stratford Perth Museum for three performances in December. This one-man show is riveting to children and adults alike as Beattie masterfully transforms into each of the characters driving the story before the audience's eyes.

While this adaptation has been performed for the better part of 10 years, this will be the third time at the museum. The adaptation is genuine to Charles Dickens' text leaving Beattie with the onerous responsibility of giving life to characters known by generations all by himself.

He does this in an evolving manner by casting each character as an actor well-known to him and has found himself recasting as time passes and it seems truer to the character. For example, Jacob Marley is now based on the famous actor Richard Burton for the past year.

"From time to time, the actors that claim the characters change, or evolve. I have models in my head for the characters, apart from the narrator, who is me. The characters are played by various British actors, usually, and from time to time they switch parts because it seems to me that they are more appropriate for one part than for another."



(PAT MCKINNA PHOTO)

Rod Beattie in character as a little Cratchit child, one of his favourites to perform. Beattie will be performing his adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* Dec. 21, 22 and 23.

other. I don't know how much the audience will get, but it's a lot of fun for me," said Beattie.

Some characters will be familiar to those who have had the pleasure of attending a performance of *A Christmas Carol*, as one that has not changed since the beginning of the adaptation is the Ghost of Christmas Past. Could that be the voice of Sir John Gielgud? Beattie's skill at embodying each

character is something not to be missed.

Adapting the novel to a play provided an opportunity of new discoveries from the memories he had as a child when his father used to read the story to him over five nights, a stove each night. As an adult, he found that Scrooge is often portrayed as a monster and evil, but instead, found inspiration in the Alistair Sim film version.

"Sim doesn't play him as a monster, he plays him as a damaged, but pretty ordinary person and I hadn't thought of that. But I thought reading to do it as a play, I thought Alistair Sim is right about that, Scrooge is not a man who is wicked or evil, or mal intentioned towards people. He is an ordinary, very good businessman who has had two major tragedies in his life; losing his sister and the love of his life and it has scarred him. He no longer has faith in human nature, and he doesn't have a whole lot of faith in himself," said Beattie.

The character he finds the most challenging to embody is Tiny Tim, because, as Beattie said, "He's far more pure than I am." Secretly, his favourite characters to perform are the noisy little Cratchit children, who are terribly enthusiastic.

Some call this tale the greatest redemption story of all time, and this never ceases to impress and move him. "It's hard to explain, but if you do it justice, take the whole journey and don't cut corners and

give everything the value it deserves in the text, it surprises you. You can read it 500 times and still that happens, it's a miracle."

A Christmas Carol is a sentimental story that brings out all the best of the season, hope, harmony and love. Performing it is a great privilege and one that means a lot to Beattie.

"I think it is something that is worth everyone experiencing once a year and it reminds you of a different time, and it's a time at the end of the year for taking stock, but also time for reminding ourselves that we can be better than we are and the spirit of Christmas is something that can help us do that," concluded Beattie.

Tickets for the performance are available now by visiting stratfordperthmuseum.ca, visiting the museum in-person between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., seven-days-a-week, or by calling 519-393-5311. Dates of the performances are Dec. 21 at 4 p.m., and Dec. 22 and 23 at 7 p.m. Proceeds from the evening will support the House of Blessing and the museum.

For those unable to make it to the museum to see Beattie live in-person, he is performing *A Christmas Carol* online via Zoom on Christmas Eve at 6 p.m., with proceeds going to the Kiwanis Festival of Performing Arts. Details can be found at www.kiwanisfestivalstratford.com/events.

U11 A Aces win Stratford Festival Cup Challenge

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

Jillian Devereaux tallied a pair, en route to Stratford winning the game 4-0. Chloe Hazeleger backstopped the Aces to the shutout win.

According to Templeman, the team's team play led them to the gold medal victory.

"In the finals, it was all about playing as one big group. We've been trying to teach them about coming together as one big unit, and that it doesn't matter who gets the goals or the assists, but it's about a collective effort. That was a shining piece in the finals, how hard they worked as a group, the way we moved the puck, the way we forechecked, and the way we backchecked. It was a complete game from the entire team, and I think that's really what sets us apart from other teams.

"The most successful teams I've been on in my past were the teams that I felt were the closest-knit together and the ones that truly felt like family," added Templeman. "That's what we're trying to instill in these girls from a young age because I think it makes all the difference. It may be hard for kids this young to start thinking about these strangers you've never played

with before as your family, but when you get down the road, and you're playing at the next level, it truly makes a difference."

Templeman reflected on the team's growth through the early months of the season, noting they have made significant progress as a group of largely unfamiliar players.

"The level of development of these kids and the understanding of these kids this early on is truly amazing to me," Templeman began. "They show up to practice every single day, ready to learn, and they're always very receptive to feedback, both on the ice, off the ice, on the bench, during a game and during practice.

"Coming into this season, we only had one player on our roster who had ever played the A level of hockey before. Everyone else has played B or lower, and our one player who has played A, actually played boys hockey up until this year. So, coming into the year, you never know where you're going to get. You have players from all different levels and skill sets coming together for one team. But they are catching on really quickly, and you can just tell they think the game so well for such a young age."



2 Loveys Street East, Hickson Ontario

Discover this charming 4-bedroom, 2.5 bath home on a spacious corner lot with a detached 1 car garage. Step into a fully fenced yard with a new deck perfect for entertaining. Conveniently located a short drive from Tavistock, Woodstock, Shakespeare, and New Hamburg.

\$639,900

Now priced at \$10,000 below the current bank appraised price.

Call 226-779-1063 to book a private showing of this beautiful home.

Mike's Bowling Lanes High Scores Nov. 17-23

PINPALS

Thomas Holland 136
Gregory Jones 101

BOWLASAURUS

Royce Butcher 103
Evangeline Butcher 125
Dominic Rowe 136
Annika Klomp 126

PEEWEE

Lincoln Butcher 109
Finley Wiedemann 75

BANTAMS

Stella Hurley-St. Pierre 122
Coen Everitt 134

JUNIORS

Ruby Parker 152
McKenna Morris 199, 552 triple
Tyler Koch 203
Abby Smith 244, 591 triple
Brent Louwagie 181
Austin Janmaat 175, 460 triple

Myla Douglas 233, 574 triple
Hugo Black 204
Brianna Bauer 256, 571 triple
Ryan Scheerer 267, 569 triple
Anna Ward 174
Hayden Martin 183, 477 triple

SENIORS

Dominic Boyles-Keating 306, 747 triple
Austin Bauer 185
Peyton Boyles-Keating 212
Zachary Clarke 241, 638 triple
Alex Ward 214, 593 triple
Sydney Smith 179
Wiatt Robinson 156
Austin Martin 203, 552 triple
Jake Sippel 178
Payton Petrie 393, 764 triple
Owen Martin 258, 667 triple
Claire Turner 210, 582 triple
Mayla Laukka 211
Carter Bage 214
Devon DeYoung 210
Jocelyn Gethke 193
Julina Colalillo 191

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Jacob Candow 84
Maddie Jenner 146
Sue Dickson 112
Hannah Buckland 131
Caitlin Breedon 161
Derek Wray 198
Luke Patterson 225
Alexander Stubbs 105
Ulysses Selmys 138
Tiffany Keller 176
Courtney Moore 236
Meghan O Donovan 161
Jacob Kaufman 199
Michael Ambrozic 153

Mike's Bowling Lanes hosted the Regional Singles Championship tournament on Nov. 16. The tournament was a five-game scratch format, with the top two male and female bowlers moving on to the Provincial Championship. In the bantam division, Roland Rains scored a 737 total to take second place and move

on to Provincials. Connor Tiegs came in fourth with a total of 656. Mason Morris came in sixth, scoring 627. Talia Klomp posted 715 to take fifth. Kayleigh Heegsma finished sixth with a total of 684. In the junior division, Anna Ward scored 916 to take third place. Myla Douglas came in fifth with a total of 905. Lauren Furtney totalled 716 to finish 14th. Ryan Scheerer came in third on the boys' side with a total of 789. Huge Black scored 784 to come in fourth. Hayden Martin came in sixth with a total of 733. In the senior division, Dominic Boyles-Keating totalled 1,100 to take first and advance to Provincials. Alex Ward scored 991 to come in fourth. Zachary Clarke came in seventh with a score of 939. On the girls' side, Payton Petrie came in fifth with a score of 942, and Peyton Boyles-Keating finished with a score of 797 for 10th place.

Black Friday Deals are on now @ Stratford Nissan

2018 Ford Edge TITANIUM  iQ GREAT PRICE \$20,999 OR \$236 B/W MILEAGE - 72,110 KM FWD	2024 Nissan Sentra SV  PRICE DROP iQ GREAT PRICE \$22,495 OR \$162 B/W LOW KMS - 24,730 KM FWD	2022 Toyota Corolla LE  PRICE DROP iQ GREAT PRICE \$23,999 OR \$172 B/W LOW KMS - 63,874 KM FWD	2023 Hyundai Elantra SEL  PRICE DROP iQ GREAT PRICE \$24,495 OR \$176 B/W LOW KMS - 18,469 KM FWD	2021 Nissan Rogue SV  PRICE DROP iQ GREAT PRICE \$24,999 OR \$202 B/W MILEAGE - 74,627 KM AWD
2024 Mitsubishi Eclipse Cross ES  PRICE DROP iQ GREAT PRICE \$26,999 OR \$194 B/W LOW KMS - 31,946 KM AWD	2023 Honda Civic EX  PRICE DROP iQ GREAT PRICE \$28,999 OR \$208 B/W LOW KMS - 56,295 KM FWD	2024 Buick Encore GX PREFERRED  PRICE DROP iQ GREAT PRICE \$29,495 OR \$212 B/W LOW KMS - 9,124 KM AWD		
2023 Nissan Rogue SL  PRICE DROP iQ GREAT PRICE \$31,999 OR \$230 B/W LOW KMS - 43,049 KM AWD	2022 Nissan Murano PLATINUM  PRICE DROP iQ GREAT PRICE \$32,495 OR \$233 B/W LOW KMS - 57,278 KM AWD	2025 Chrysler Grand Caravan SXT  PRICE DROP iQ GREAT PRICE \$45,495 OR \$327 B/W LOW KMS - 11,115 KM FWD	2024 Jeep Wrangler Sahara  PRICE DROP iQ GREAT PRICE \$46,999 OR \$338 B/W LOW KMS - 44,603 KM 4WD	2024 Toyota Highlander XLE  HYBRID iQ GREAT PRICE \$56,495 OR \$406 B/W LOW KMS - 19,946 KM AWD

*While every effort is made to ensure accuracy, we are not responsible for any errors and omissions. Please see your dealer for current pricing. Plus tax and licensing. Bi-weekly payments are based on an interest rate of 7.99% O.A.C. Some terms and conditions may apply.

Find Your Perfect Match: Pre-Owned Cars for Every Taste and Budget!

BAD CREDIT... NO PROBLEM! All Credit Approved with \$0 Down.

T&C APPLY, O.A.C.



Stratford NISSAN

STORE HOURS SALES: Mon.-Thu. 9:00-8:00; Fri.-Sat. 9:00-6:00 PARTS & SERVICE: Mon.-Sat. 8:00-5:00

Our Service Department is Now Open on Saturdays

2001 Ontario Street, Stratford ON

519.273.3119

www.stratfordnissan.com

STRATFORD NISSAN



Canadian fiddle champion Scott Woods and his band bringing Christmas Hoedown to Stratford

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Local fiddle fans and those who enjoy Christmas music or a good, old-fashioned variety show will have two opportunities next month to catch Canadian fiddle champion Scott Woods and his band perform their Christmas Hoedown.

With a show scheduled for St. Michael Catholic Secondary School in Stratford at 2 p.m. Dec. 14, the Christmas Hoedown promises two hours of toe-tapping family fun sure to set the holiday season off on the right foot.

"It's been really well-loved; everyone just gravitates to it," Woods told the Times during a pit stop on the Alberta leg of his cross-country Christmas Hoedown tour. "We started on Nov. 1, which is really quite early for a Christmas show. I was worried it was the day after Halloween; people might not be ready to get into the Christmas spirit. But actually, it was the opposite. The crowds have been great and they absolutely love the show, and they go home singing 'Jingle Bells' and all their Christmas favourites."

"The show that we build is a real variety show. You don't have to be a fiddle fan by any means or a country music fan. That's sort of the flavour that the Christmas music takes when we present it, but it's certainly a Christmas show – a family variety show. ... There's some fast, fun stuff, costumes, lots of humour and some serious Christmas stuff as well with songs and an inspirational story. There's really something for everybody, even the kids."

To help bring this show to life, Woods



(SCOTT WOODS PHOTO)

Canadian fiddle champion Scott Woods and his band are bringing their Christmas Hoedown show to Stratford on Dec. 14.

is backed by a stellar group of artists including his sister, Kendra Norris, on

piano, fiddle and vocals, three-time Canadian open step-dancing champion, drummer and fiddle player Leo Stock, Canadian Country Music Awards Guitar Player of the Year Steve Piticco on guitar and vocals, and renowned husband-and-wife bluegrass duo Nadine and Gary Boles – Nadine Boles on acoustic guitar and vocals and Gary Boles on bass and vocals.

Woods says each member of the band brings something unique and entertaining to the show, from Stock's lightning-fast feet as a world-class step dancer to Nadine Boles' hauntingly beautiful vocals that bring depth to Christmas favourites.

And while the show is reminiscent of a traditional Christmas concert, there are newer elements that highlight the multitude of talents of the artists on stage.

"Our musical arrangements are pretty retro, they're pretty old time. We dress with matching outfits on the stage like old-time bands used to back in the '50s and '60s, and we still incorporate high-tech. We have a great sound and lighting system, and we have GoPro cameras on the stage and big-screen projection so you can see Leo's feet up close and personal on the big screen while he's dancing, and Steve's fingers while he's playing guitar, and my fingers when I'm playing fiddle. We have other visual images that enhance the songs and the stories we're telling."

"It's a real fun, kind of retro but modern approach to Christmas music," Woods said.

For more information and to purchase tickets for the Stratford show, visit scottwoods.ca/event/stratford-on-christmas-hoedown/.

HAVE AN UPCOMING EVENT?

Contact: stratfordtimes@gmail.com or call 519-655-2341

STRATFORD ARTS AND CULTURE COLLECTIVE PRESENTS

A STRATFORD Christmas

A FESTIVE TRADITION



SHEILA MCCARTHY DAVID ROGERS MONIQUE LUND



2:00PM SATURDAY DECEMBER 20
STRATFORD FESTIVAL THEATRE
FILL YOUR HEART
WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE
SEASON



WWW.STRATFORDFESTIVAL.CA/CHRISTMAS



@the_stratfordacc
www.stratfordacc.com



Callie McCullough concludes tour with Revival House appearance opened by Nora Joy

LISA CHESTER
Times Correspondent

Hot off the road promoting her new al-

bum, Callie McCullough is coming to Revival House for the conclusion of her tour, with up-and-coming singer/songwriter sensation Nora Joy opening. The concert takes place on Saturday, Nov. 29 at 8 p.m. These two Stratford powerhouses will bring their own brand of music together for a night of new and familiar songs.

McCullough's new album, *Cutting Through the Noise* has been appreciated by audiences from Nashville, New York, Los Angeles to Toronto on a tour planned to wind down for her hometown of Stratford.

"A lot of these songs were written over about two-and-a-half years ago. The overarching theme of the record is about that, cutting through the noise. I think we can all agree that the past few years has felt like a good amount of chaos in the world in a way that we haven't experienced before. This is about raising your own unique voice and realizing that while there's a lot of noise out there you should still be



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

See Callie McCullough conclude her current tour for the album *Cutting Through The Noise* at Revival House with singer/songwriter Nora Joy opening the evening concert.

yourself," said McCullough.

Fans of McCullough's first record will be pleased with the consistency in her approach to songwriting where each piece is a journey of its own while staying true to her roots of folk, country and Americana. The lyrics are all a little bit different, given the songs were all written between 2020 and 2022, a time when there were many questions in the world and in the songwriter's mind.

"I was growing in my 30s and the things I was thinking about was changing and there's a whole song about that called 'What If I Don't' and I was reflecting on my childhood and how I grew up and again I had those universal questions like 'What are we doing here,'" said McCullough.

Most personal to her is "Test of Time," about her life growing up on an apple farm, family and learning to put the work into things and make them last, which were lessons she took with her in her music life in Nashville.

Putting an album together is not a solitary task and there were many collaborations on the album, produced by Dave Brainard. There were a number of talented singer/songwriters working with her, including Stratford's Scotty Kipfer, Ryan Forsdadt and Molly Brown, among others. It was a dream collaboration for her.

Touring the album brings new energy to the music, and getting to tour it with a six-piece band was special, though the Stratford show will be a trio. Performing the title track live has been really exciting for McCullough, as while they have been playing the other songs over the past few years, "Cutting Through the Noise" was kept close to her until she was ready to release the album.

Also appearing with McCullough at Revival House will be the opening act, Nora Joy, an impressive teenager from Stratford with a musical sense beyond her years.

"I asked around town for someone who would be a good fit for the show. I wanted to give an opportunity to a young female artist from the area. I remember myself wanting to have those opportunities and as a female artist it can be a little bit hard to come by those opportunities. I kept hearing her name around town, so I just reached out on Instagram and she responded right away," said McCullough.

Nora Joy is no stranger to performing locally. She was invited to join Ron Sexsmith for the Sexsmith at 60 birthday celebration show here in Stratford. Additionally, she will be familiar to the many who attended the Rotary Stratford Dragon Boat Festival in the past.

"I hope that it will be a great show and the audience will have a great time. I hope that they will be able to fit in all their feelings, the high ones and the low ones, the in-between ones. I hope they will love the music and have a great time. I think at this point we never take for granted that we can get people together in a room and play music for them. It's a celebration, being a hometown show as a hometown girl with people I've known since I was a little girl," said McCullough.

The concert takes place Saturday, Nov. 29 and tickets can be purchased online at <https://ticketscene.ca/events/57207/>. See also www.revival.house/events-calendar for more information. Tickets are \$30 each plus tax and fees.



LEON MARTIN
BROKER

Solid Gold Realty (II) Ltd., Brokerage | Independently Owned and Operated

OPEN HOUSE
NOVEMBER 29TH FROM 1-3PM



IS YOUR PROPERTY GETTING TO BE TOO MUCH?
Why not move to a condo where the outside work is done for you!

Milverton Meadows Condos, 33 Murray Court, Milverton
2 + 3 Bedroom units available. Act now! 2 Bathroom units available all with in-suite laundry .. Fridge, stove, microwave, washer, and dryer all included. Call your realtor today and book a showing. Starting at \$342,000.

ADDRESS: 3 Arthur St. S., ELMIRA | DIRECT: 519-503-2753
EMAIL: leonmartin@remax.net



Baby Faces of 2025

Baby's Name _____

Male or Female _____ Date of Birth _____

Place of Birth _____

Weight (birth) _____ Weight (now) _____

Parent(s) Name _____

Siblings (Name[s] & Age) _____

Grandparents _____

What I Liked best about 2025: (a reply your baby might make) _____

EMAIL YOUR PHOTO TO STRATFORDTIMES@GMAIL.COM BY DEC 12TH AND SEE YOUR LITTLE ONE IN OUR JAN 1ST YEAR IN REVIEW EDITION.

STRATFORDTIMES

GRANT HAVEN MEDIA

ONLY \$50 TAX INCLUDED

HAVE A COMING EVENT COMING UP?
Contact: stratfordtimes@gmail.com or call 519-655-2341

BLACK FRIDAY ON NOW NOV. 27 - DEC. 3 | **NEW DEALS ADDED** ON YOUR FAVOURITE BRANDS

BLACK FRIDAY

Mark's

SAVE UP TO **70%**

Door Crasher deals



HI-TEC®
Waterproof Hikers
Save 70%



WindRiver ICEFX®
Men's Waterproof ICEFX® Winter Boots
Save \$70
Styles shown:
Our reg. \$199.99-\$249.99
Sale \$129.99-\$179.99
5CPEWRF25-6710/12
5CPEWRF24-1406



Sale \$38⁹⁹
Styles shown:
Our reg. \$129.99
CH80376W-VI,
CH80376M-VXI, 9180



WindRiver
Unlined Flannels
Save 60%
Styles shown:
Our reg. \$49.99
Sale \$19.99



Columbia
Women's Suttle Mountain + Men's Point Park Insulated Jackets
Sale \$99
Styles shown:
Our reg. \$219.99

Power Deal



Levi's®
1/4 Zip Sherpa Fleece Pullover
Save 60%
Sale \$35
Styles shown
Our reg. \$89.95

ICEFX® provides enhanced traction on ice but does not guarantee slips will not occur under any circumstances. Care should always be taken when walking on ice. Product and selection may vary by location

First 75 customers in-store on Friday, November 28 will receive a

\$15 Promo Card

To be used on your purchase of \$99 or more* before taxes. Promo card must be used in-store on November 28, 2025.

*Cannot be used towards the purchase of gift cards. Card value is not redeemable for cash and may only be redeemed for merchandise at Mark's or L'Equipeur stores. Card is not valid on previous or online purchases. One card per person, per transaction. Card cannot be combined with any other offer. Each item in the purchase will be charged a proportional share of the \$15 discount. If an item is returned, the proportional discount will not be refunded. Mark's Work Wearhouse Ltd. is not responsible for replacing the value of this card if it is lost, stolen, destroyed, damaged or used without your knowledge or consent. Card must be surrendered at time of use."

1005 Ontario St. Stratford, ON N5A 6W6 | 519-272-1002



THE SALVATION ARMY

Kettle Volunteers

NEEDED

November 13th - December 24th
Various shifts and locations available
Please contact us to book

Mitchell 519-703-5892
St. Marys 519-284-2760
Stratford 519-271-2950



THE SALVATION ARMY

Stratford Registration



<https://tinyurl.com/385e7bw4>

WINTER SAVINGS WITH STRATFORD KIA'S PRE-OWNED DEALS

2022 Kia Forte LX  \$16,995 OR \$61/wk + HST & lic MILEAGE - 98,043 KM STOCK #: S25362A	2021 Mazda CX-30 GX  \$20,995 OR \$75/wk + HST & lic MILEAGE - 91,821 KM STOCK #: S26138A	2023 Kia Seltos LX  \$21,495 OR \$77/wk + HST & lic LOW KMS - 61,581 KM STOCK #: S26101A	2023 Hyundai Elantra Preferred  \$21,495 OR \$77/wk + HST & lic LOW KMS - 48,941 KM STOCK #: P22591	2023 Kia Seltos EX  \$21,995 OR \$79/wk + HST & lic MILEAGE - 92,416 KM STOCK #: P22529
2022 Toyota Corolla LE  \$21,995 OR \$79/wk + HST & lic MILEAGE - 89,338 KM STOCK #: P22587	2021 Kia Seltos SX TURBO  \$22,995 OR \$83/wk + HST & lic LOW KMS - 51,263 KM STOCK #: S26135A	2023 Kia Sportage LX  \$24,995 OR \$90/wk + HST & lic MILEAGE - 88,554 KM STOCK #: P22590		
2021 Nissan Rogue Platinum  \$24,995 OR \$90/wk + HST & lic MILEAGE - 105,440 KM STOCK #: S26105A	2024 Kia Seltos X-Line  \$27,495 OR \$99/wk + HST & lic MILEAGE - 73,558 KM STOCK #: P22581	2023 Kia Sportage X-Line  \$29,495 OR \$106/wk + HST & lic LOW KMS - 60,260 KM STOCK #: S26123A	2025 Chrysler Grand Caravan SXT  \$44,995 OR \$161/wk + HST & lic LOW KMS - 15,003 KM STOCK #: P22593	2023 Kia Telluride SX  \$46,995 OR \$169/wk + HST & lic MILEAGE - 87,166 KM STOCK #: P22552

*While every effort is made to ensure accuracy, we are not responsible for any errors and omissions. Please see your dealer for current pricing. Plus tax and licensing O.A.C. Some terms and conditions may apply.

GOOD CREDIT? BAD CREDIT? NO CREDIT? EVERYONE GETS APPROVED

\$0 DOWN, SIGN & DRIVE

T&C APPLY, O.A.C.

KIA
Movement that inspires

(519) 508-5755
863 Erie St., Stratford ON
www.stratfordkia.com



Stratford

STORE HOURS SALES: Mon.-Thu. 9:00-8:00; Fri.-Sat. 9:00-6:00 PARTS & SERVICE: Mon.-Fri. 8:00-6:00; Sat. 8:00-3:00 (By Appointment Only)
*T&C APPLY. While every effort is made to ensure accuracy, we are not responsible for any errors and omissions. Please see your dealer for current pricing.

Humane society asking for urgent support for two local dogs

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo & Stratford Perth (HSKWSP) is asking the community to come together to support two dogs in urgent need of life-saving care.

Django, a 2-year-old dog currently at the Stratford centre, recently arrived in care and tested positive for heartworm disease during his routine intake exam. Around the same time, Oscar, a 4-year-old dog at the Kitchener centre, also tested positive for the same disease. Having not only one, but two dogs undergoing heartworm treatment is rare for the organization and is also incredibly costly, according to a Nov. 26 media release from the organization.

Heartworm treatment is complex, lengthy and very expensive. Together, Django and Oscars estimated medical costs are \$10,000.

Heartworm disease is a serious and potentially fatal condition spread by mosquitos. A single bite from an infected mosquito can introduce microscopic larvae into a dog's bloodstream, where they grow into

adult worms living in the heart and major blood vessels. Without prompt treatment, heartworm can cause irreversible organ damage.

Django and Oscar will be undergoing a series of treatments over the next couple months to target both adult worms and larvae. They will remain in the HSKWSP's care for approximately two months before safely going up for adoption and finding their forever homes. Throughout their healing journeys, the humane society's veterinary team, animal care staff and dedicated volunteers will support them every step of the way.

"This holiday season, we're asking our community to help give Django and Oscar the gift of health," said Victoria Baby, CEO of HSKWSP. "Your donation will support their treatment and help ensure they each have the chance to enjoy many more holidays in loving homes."

Those interested can make a one-time donation for Django and Oscar at <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/139394>.

Any funds raised above the \$10,000 goal will go to the care of animals who need it most.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)



According to the Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo & Stratford Perth, Django, a 2-year-old dog currently at the Stratford centre, and Oscar, a 4-year-old dog at the Kitchener centre, recently arrived in care and tested positive for heartworm disease during routine intake exams.



Stratford Concert Choir and Stratford Symphony Orchestra unite for very special performance of Messiah

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

The beloved holiday tradition of the performance of Messiah will be extra special this year as the Stratford Concert Choir (SCC) and the Stratford Symphony Orchestra (SSO) collaborate to bring the grand experience to audiences. There will be two performances, Dec. 13 at 7:30 p.m. and Dec. 14 at 3 p.m.

This collaboration seemed like a natural one, according to the SCC.

"The choir brings the culture of performing Messiah for many years and the symphony is a mature organization and a strong audience. There hasn't been a big Messiah like this in Stratford for a long time," said Alexander Cann, artistic director of SCC and conductor for the performance.

The orchestra and choir are similar in scale to what George Frederic Handel originally conceived.

"I'm in the fortunate position of having

the strong culture that comes from the choir with the wonderful skill of the SSO. My job is really easy: just trust your artists," said Cann.

The audience can look forward to four soloists: Bethany Horst (soprano), Maria Soulis (alto), Ernesto Ramirez (tenor) and Chris Palmer (bass).

Cann's long-term goals are to kindle that joy of singing in an ensemble while performing and connecting with other artists and arts organizations.

"It will be a very positive experience for everyone because it's one of those, 'When you build it, they will come' scenarios. There's already a buzz in the community about it and I think it will be very joyous. Handel's Messiah is one of the all-time great masterpieces," said Cann.

The concert takes place Dec. 13 at 7:30 p.m. and Dec. 14 at 3 p.m. at Avondale United Church. Tickets are available online at stratordsymphony.ca/Handels_Messiah/. Prices are \$45 for adult, \$20 for students and \$10 for children under 12.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Celebrate a grand collaboration of the Stratford Concert Choir and Stratford Symphony Orchestra who come together to perform Handel's Messiah at Avondale United Church this December.

GRANT HAVEN MEDIA

Wondering how local media can help grow your business? Let me help tailor a customized marketing plan for your business goals.



heather@granthaven.com

226.261.1837

St. Mary's Independent The Paris Independent The Wilmet-Tavistock Gazette STRATFORDTIMES Woodstock Ingersoll Echo Goderich Sun
Simcoe Advocate NORFOLK FARMS BRANT FARMS NIAGARA FARMS INDY

Off The Wall fundraiser celebrates Trillium Foundation grant and the spectacular results

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

Off The Wall (OTW) held its fall fundraiser Nov. 24, themed “A Scandalous Affair” and inspired by the Stratford Festival’s *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*. The evening saw a near sold out crowd of supporters and former students gather for cocktails and hors d’oeuvres in excited anticipation of the evening’s entertainment provided by none other than Sara-Jeanne Hosie and Liam Tobin from this year’s production of *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*. The stars were accompanied on the piano by Karen Rempel.

The fundraiser celebrated the 2024 Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) grant from the Resilient Communities Fund. Thanks to the \$48,300 grant, recent planning efforts have been inspired and supported with the goal of building a more sustainable organization focused on future requirements and strategic priorities.

“This OTF grant is transformative. At Off the Wall, we came to realize that we needed planned growth and more sophisticated marketing, programming and fundraising strategies,” said OTW board director, Michele Boniface. “Over the past 20 years our passionate volunteers have fueled our success, but we need to add professional staff and a more strategic response to changes in the marketplace so we can continue to train up the next generation of backstage professionals.”

OTW is a not-for-profit centre of excellence in theatre production arts education. They provide intensive hands on-training by backstage theatre experts – most from the Stratford Festival – to participants who have a keen interest in theatre production, whether for personal interest or a future career.

“We’re growing and there’s a lot of excitement and interest both in Stratford and in the area, but we need more. We need more people working to continue to expand. We’re really doing well and we want to do more of what we are doing well,” said Elizabeth Dahmen, OTW board chair.

The OTF grant has already helped OTW upgrade its outreach and recruitment via modernized marketing and fundraising efforts that are attracting new participants and generating new revenue. Everything from new graphic designs and a re-configured website with fresh, fun content will encourage engagement and market OTW’s foundational programs, along with the new short-term options. Enrollment for the new workshops and the fall roster have already exceeded expectations with spectacular results.

“One of the stories that we’re most proud of is the fact that we have quite a number of Off The Wall students



(LISA CHESTER PHOTO)

Cast members from *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* Sara-Jeanne Hosie and Liam Tobin performed before an intimate audience at the Gallery Stratford for a fundraiser for Off The Wall. They sang a repertoire of songs from musicals they have appeared in including *West Side Story*, *Book of Mormon*, and *South Pacific*.

who have gone through our program and are now working in professional theatre. I would say anywhere up to a dozen working at the Festival Theatre and some at Blyth (Festival) or the Grand Theatre. We’re very proud of that achievement,” said Boniface.

It is through mentorship of backstage artists that the next generation of artists will develop. Many current artists have been working for 20 or 30 years and are retiring. By passing on their skillset, they aid in the continuity of the world class sets and props audiences delight in.

“The grant is to grow and make more sophisticated our marketing and fundraising, and the marketing has yielded great results. We have gone from our lowest enrollment in 2024 to our highest enrollment in 2025. We did 33 workshops for 2025. Our summer workshops were 100 per cent enrolled and so were our fall workshops,” said Boniface.

Sophisticated was the theme of the fundraiser as attendees dressed up in their finest attire to be either scoundrel, a mark or an heiress. With *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* as their inspiration, they came sparkling and bedecked in jewels and ascots. Prizes for the best costume went to Jean Hewitt and Tom Gray. The pair won \$200 gift certificates. Also, funds were raised with the purchase of jewels for a chance to win a loot bag valued at over \$500. The happy recipient was Patrick Smith.

By sponsoring a student, sponsoring a workshop or simply donating by visiting their website stratfordoffthewall.com, there are many ways to support OTW.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is an agency of the Ontario government with a mission to build healthy and vibrant communities across the province. Last year, OTF invested nearly \$105 million into 732 community projects and multi-sector partnerships.

DON'T WOLF YOUR FOOD

(on the occasion of the Local Community Food Centre's Hunters and Gatherers Gala)

“Don’t wolf your food,” my mother implores with an iron countenance and a wagging finger, the inference being that wolves lunge directly for the gastronomic jugular, no questions asked, no provision for contemplative grace.

I carry that lesson still within my bones like marrow. The most treasured part of breaking bread is in the breaking,

not in the loaf.

Food is more than a destination: it’s the lip-smacking catalyst, the succulent conduit, the delectably savoury, enticingly ambrosial, deep-fried, braised, poached and pureed, mouth-wateringly scrumptious, raw-truth sear of a metaphor

that unifies, ignites, enlightens and welcomes, that empowers, embraces, bridges and heals.

Food is more than sustenance, it is connective tissue, nutrition for not just the body but for the glow and life force

that is the beckoning beacon of the human soul.

To break bread together is to remember that we all belong to the same world: we partake of its joy, we shoulder its anguish and share in our vision to mend that which is broken in building the community we deserve.

We come here tonight, my good friends, not so much as supporters of a noble charity, but as exuberant partners, tireless believers in this pulsing greenhouse of transformation and possibility.

Yes, food is the grand metaphor, the cross-cultural change agent for this joy-ride we call the human experience.

Working together, in the fields, at table, in the gardens of the world we cultivate love and ladle belonging.

So when you’re served your dinner tonight, observe it with a generous eye. It’s more than morsels on a plate. Way more.

And remember as you raise your fork for the attack: “Don’t wolf your food.”

My mother is watching.
-- David Stones, Stratford poet laureate

Be a part of the world class story behind the Phoenix, currently under construction

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

Stratford is no stranger to the world stage and here is another opportunity to be present internationally. Spring-Works-PuppetWorks! has undertaken an ambitious project to not only program outstanding puppetry in all forms, but also to conceive and construct a strolling creation to represent Stratford locally and beyond.

The Phoenix is a giant puppet project conceived by artistic director Eileen Smith, who has achieved international awareness for Stratford by hosting the annual World In A Weekend Puppet Festival and other programming. Her organization was recently accepted into AVIAMA, an association of puppet friendly cities around the world. Stratford is the only English-speaking member in North America, a prestigious distinction.

Since 2011, Smith has been programming puppetry performances and each year the capacity has grown. Now there is the annual World In A Weekend festival that offers both free and ticketed events suitable for everyone, plus events throughout the year. SpringWorks has been a huge draw both locally and amongst tourists with the arrival of international performers brought in and the always popular strolling artists.

It is through the evolution of Spring-

Works, and the acceptance in AVIAMA, that led to the Phoenix, a one of a kind transforming inspiration that will be a signature asset of value to the organization and Stratford alike. In its first form the giant puppet will have the appearance of a train locomotive, then fantastically transform into the second form, the Phoenix, a vibrant manifestation of change.

"We bring in many puppets over many years now and they are expensive to bring in. We thought, 'Why don't we have our own and that will be of value.' This value is an asset we can bring out over and over as the community finds interesting, but we can also send it out as an ambassador to other festivals. Other companies can hire it the way we hire other puppeteers," said Smith.

Inspiration for the giant puppet comes from the Festival City's history, its transformative nature and the interesting intersection between industry and art. The Grand Trunk site, locomotives and old steam engines seemed beautiful and resonated with a whole piece of the city's industrial history. Then when that shifted, the capacity for the city to reinvent itself with theatre, diversified economies and hospitality was like a rising phoenix, Smith explained.

"The Phoenix is a creature that is a metaphor for the invention and the creating of itself. Most of the puppets we bring in are

a singular thing, they are not transforming so we are pushing the envelope with us changing from a singular quality object into a different quality object, which also brings in our theatrical background – and so it will in itself be a piece of theatre," said Smith.

It will travel along as a giant train in its first form, with internal mechanisms for light and sound so that it can be used at night like a lantern puppet. They are usually made of bamboo and are translucent so it will be like a ghost train with a chimney stack that smoke comes out of. At a moment's notice it will evolve from the train into the rising phoenix. Currently they are navigating how many operators it will take to operate the Phoenix with a design such that it is accessible to any physical ability.

"It's super exciting for us and we have lots and lots of expertise and engineering design in function and we're just beginning building it as we speak. It will debut in the spring but it will reappear in the summer at our (World In A Weekend festival) ... We'll definitely be strolling along there," said Smith.

Not only will construction be complete for a spring debut, but it will be in time to join the international puppetry festival circuit to begin paying an immediate return on the investment as it embarks on the role of ambassador to the world.

Fundraising for the Phoenix is now underway to gather the resources and materials needed to construct this giant transforming puppet. Their fundraising goal is to raise \$40,000 by Dec. 31, and thanks to a generous anonymous donor, funds raised will be matched dollar for dollar. This is an opportunity to be a part of this engineering feat, the story behind its creation, and the life it will take on each time it appears as an ambassador of Stratford locally and around the world.

"Any amount of money is helpful to us and on our website you can link to the Zeffy donation platform which provides tax receipts – and 100 per cent of the proceeds goes to the fundraiser. You're actually helping buy wire, wood, fabric, glue, light and smoke machines. It helps pay for puppet operators and pay for storage and our workspace and tools. It's a substantial project so you can have a little hand helping out," said Smith.

She added that community members with materials or expertise can donate in-kind and a tax receipt will be issued as they are a registered charity. Donations can be made in person at Soup Surreal, where they are hosting a tap and pay machine, or online. Visit springworksfestival.ca for the link to the donation platform. In-kind donations can be arranged by emailing Eileen Smith at email@springworks.ca.



Stratford Branch 008

COMING EVENTS

Sunday Nov 2	Remembrance Sunday Drum Head Service, 804 Ontario St, 1:30 p.m., all welcome
Sunday Nov 9	"Lest We Forget" Roast Beef Dinner, Take out 4:30 p.m., Dine in 5 p.m. \$25 (tax included) Call for reservation Frank 519-271-9669, Pearl 519-273-0457, Legion 519-271-4540
Tuesday Nov 11	Remembrance Day Service at the Cenotaph
Wednesday Nov 12	Ladies Auxiliary Lasagna Luncheon. \$16 Call Mary Helen 519-273-1389 for reservation
Friday Nov 21	Friday Night Euchre, \$20 per team. Call Dave 519-703-6544, Anne 519-301-0914 or the Legion 519-271-4540 to register your team
Sunday Nov 30	Christmas Gala - oven roasted turkey, honey glazed ham, salad and dessert bar. Dine in ONLY, 5 p.m., \$30 adults, \$15 6-14, 5 and under eat free. Call for reservation Frank 519-271-9669, Pearl 519-273-0457, Legion 519-271-4540
Wednesday Dec 10	Ladies Auxiliary Luncheon. \$16 Call Mary Helen 519-273-1389 for reservation
Saturday, Dec 20	Christmas meat draw, doors open at 2 p.m., meat draw starts at 4 p.m.

Tuesday Morning Buddy Check, 10:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m. OPEN to all Veterans Widows and First Responders

Friday Afternoon Weekly Social 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Saturday Afternoon Meat Draw doors open at 2:00 p.m., meat draw starts at 4:00 p.m.

804-B Ontario St., Stratford N5A 3K1
stratfordlegion008@gmail.com

Yes, it's that time again — Christmas is coming fast!



Share the Spirit of Christmas with the
STRATFORDTIMES

Get a head start on the season with the **Stratford Times's Christmas Greetings**, publishing **December 19** — a great way to wish the community a Merry Christmas and thank your customers for their support.

A portion of proceeds will be **donated to Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth**, helping provide care and comfort to local families.

Don't wait — reserve your greeting today!

heather@granthaven.com
 226.261.1837 / granthaven.com

GRANT HAVEN MEDIA

Here For Now Theatre review: *Reproduktion* offers a surreal and soul-searching journey into parenthood

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

When given the opportunity to undergo a highly experimental procedure with a 100 per cent guarantee of conception after trying every other method, how far will one couple go to start a family and what lessons about parenthood and their relationship will they learn along the way?

Here For Now Theatre's winter-season, world-premiere production of *Reproduktion*, written by Amy Rutherford and directed for the black-box theatre stage in Stratford by Marie Farsi, answers those questions and asks even more as Flora (Fiona Mongillo) and Neil (Tyrone Savage) put their health and their relationship on the line to achieve the pregnancy both have dreamt of for so long.

Enticed by a vague and poorly translated flyer, the pair flies to Sweden to meet with Dr. Kult (Ryan Wilkie) and his wife, Nurse Svoboda (Maggie Huculak), and discuss what appears to be a medically dubious fertility treatment Dr. Kult promises will result in a baby. The procedure, as best as I can tell, draws on traces of DNA that exist within Flora from her Swedish, matrilineal ancestors, giving Flora the spark she needs to conceive a child without the need for further copulation – much to Neil's chagrin.

The only catch: Flora will be put into an unconscious, almost comatose state for as long as a week as she journeys into her mind and back in time into the shoes

of her ancestor to discover her own inner strength and bring new life into being. Neil, meanwhile, finds himself on a similar journey that intersects with Flora's after he is accidentally inoculated with the same drug used to put Flora under.

Ultimately, through visions of the past, present and future that feel both rooted in the real world and the product of a fever dream, both find the strength and desire to forge their lives together, regardless of whether they are ever able to conceive. By the play's end, it seems that strong bond is exactly what Flora and Neil need to foster a spark of life against all odds.

The magic in this production comes from both the stellar performances of each the actors and the combination of lighting, sound and projection to artfully mix the real and surreal as the audience is left wondering if the events unfolding on stage are part of a dream or if they're actually happening.

Mongillo and Savage do much of the emotional heavy lifting in this production, their onstage chemistry providing depth to two people who, at first, don't know where their relationship might go without a baby. Apart, they each find the strength to fight tooth and nail for their relationship before they rejoin each other as a couple with the knowledge their lives will be beautiful as long as they spend them together.

Huculak and Wilkie, on the other hand, offer a mysterious and often humorous counterpoint as they vaguely describe their "groundbreaking" treatment with



(HERE FOR NOW THEATRE PHOTO)

Tyrone Savage as Neil and Fiona Mongillo as Flora in Here For Now Theatre's winter production of *Reproduktion*.

a level of confidence not shared by Flora and Neil. As Dr. Kult and Nurse Svoboda, Wilkie and Huculak's somewhat farcical performances ground the play in the real world before acting as guides, as well as Flora's ancestors, during the production's most surreal scenes.

Though this play is performed by a cast of just four actors on a sparsely set stage, the story feels rich with emotional depth and meaning.

Reproduktion runs at Here For Now Theatre (24 St. Andrew St., Stratford) until Nov. 30.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

The Perth County's Federation of Agriculture (PCFA)'s annual gala was another success, which celebrated another year of farming excellence in the county – as well as awarded various scholarships. Pictured here are PCFA director Jayden Terpstra with Claire McCorkindale, Raine Satchell and fellow director Pete Nyenhuis. Both McCorkindale and Satchell are continuing their post-secondary education in agriculture.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

On Nov. 22 and 23, the Ontario Fencing Association held a tournament in the Burnside Agriplex in Stratford, drawing hundreds of youth fencers as well as referees, parents and friends.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT GRANTHAVEN.COM

Opinions

WEB-CRAWLING THROUGH THE SEASON – TWO WORDS



SHEILA CLARKE

Times Columnist

They're everywhere this year and so appealing. Stores are working overtime to display the perfect gifts for everyone. How do we handle this season of giving and celebration? Our bills are higher, and we're all facing sticker shock in every direction, trying to navigate that tricky path between want and need. There are two words I'm trying to balance, not always successfully – plastic and thrift.

Looking through a climate fil-

ter, we don't need a list to tell us that climate change is here – and we know that it is driven by carbon in the atmosphere that accumulates and can hang around for over a thousand years. We add to it every time we drive, every time we buy something that comes from afar and every time we buy or accept plastic.

Plastic seems neutral, a useful material. Make no mistake, it's a fossil fuel product. The industry has worked so hard to make sure we have few choices: plastic garbage cans, plastic bags of milk, plastic toys, plastic decorations and plastic water bottles. Plastic comes with a stealth weapon, microplastics. We're being cautioned to keep plastic away from babies, away from our food, away from our bodies. Once plastic is created, only nine per cent of it is recycled. Eventually all plastic breaks down into microplastics, which have been showing up in brain tissue, in semen, in plants,

in wildlife, in fish – everywhere.

I almost fell prey to buying new plastic garland this year and I was gobsmailed at the shelf space devoted to plastic seasonal blow-ups, from Santas to snowmen to penguins. So one seasonal watchword: plastic.

The other is thrift. Think about our planet as a doughnut – a lovely jelly doughnut or a duchie. The doughnut is the Earth. The outside of the doughnut is the limits of the Earth. We can't create new resources in the doughnut, what you see is what you get. On Earth, we're using up what we have like gangbusters. We're a throwaway society, our "stuff" that we send to the landfill is astonishing, and we automatically turn around and buy new.

I used to visit places connected with my work: libraries, schools and nature reserves. Now I troll for thrift stores. When I visit a new community, I ask about thrift stores. I've found some gems! Often they're

run by a charity, so double good. It's a fun treasure hunt, looking for items that are just perfect for people on my list.

Our economy has been based on gross domestic product (GDP), which is a measure of all the goods and services produced in a given period. Tomorrow's world will need to look at economic output, but also at quality of life. Continuous resource extraction doesn't necessarily make a happier life. A circular economy based on reduce, re-use and recycle and community will maintain our resources wisely and build a far better future. As you plan your seasonal shopping this year, think plastic and thrift. That will pretty much include local and Canadian goods as well. Good luck, see you in the thrift world.

UPDATES:

1. Carbon parts per million (ppm) in the atmosphere as of Nov. 23, 2025: 426.96 ppm. Safe level, 350 ppm, passed in

1990. The year 2025 has seen record-high levels, with the annual average projected to be about 425.7 ppm

2. Who knew? Tissue paper is not recyclable. Say "no thanks" in the stores! Neither is the vast majority of gift wrap paper – nor sticky tape. Decorate a paper bag, try not to tape, and add a re-used or home-made decoration to the package – bonus!

3. Make a gift! Bake, sew, craft your way to a lovely expression of good will for the holiday season. What a wonderful way to say I care about you.

4. Check out the Canadian Federation for University Women's website for plastic alternatives, <https://cfuwstratford.ca/advocacy-climate-action/>.

Sheila Clarke is a Stratford advocate for the environment, of our community and of our planet. She is a member of CFUW Stratford, Stratford Climate Momentum, and the Perth County Sustainability Hub.

Repeal Bill 5, part six: Youth

NATALIE AND CAMILLE DITTY

Guest Columnists

Lazy, unengaged, unmotivated – these are all words I've heard used to describe people in my generation. We've also been told that we are the last generation – the last generation with a chance to undo the wrongs of the past, to reverse climate change. Imagine how that feels. So much weight falls on the shoulders of a generation, yet only about half currently have the right to vote for the governments that control our future.

So now, imagine how we feel when the government, which is supposed to be making decisions with our best interests in mind, passes a bill which practically guarantees that our future is going to be destroyed.

Bill 5 will allow this government to plough over forested areas. Forests provide life; they provide the very thing that keeps humans alive, oxygen. On average, a human cannot sur-

vive without oxygen for more than three minutes.

Bill 5 will allow the government to eliminate protected areas containing critical habitats such as wetlands. Wetlands play a crucial role in filtering fresh water. Humans cannot survive an average of more than three days without water.

Bill 5 will allow the government to pave over agricultural areas. This land took millennia to develop and has the ability to grow food. Humans cannot survive an average of more than three weeks without food.

Bill 5 allows the government to essentially ignore endangered species by altering the Endangered Species Act itself to make it significantly weaker through changing the definition of habitat to be defined as the direct dwelling place of animal species, and for plants, the critical root zone. This is not a habitat and this is not a sustainable way for any species to live.

These actions will further

amplify issues such as ecosystem collapse, food affordability and access to clean air and safe drinking water. Why should I be motivated about "engaging in my future" when the basic things humans need to survive are being paved over for short-term economic benefit? How is it fair to be told that you need to solve the social justice issue of climate change as you watch the older generations do the exact opposite?

I chose to go to university for environmental science because I wanted to be a part of the solution. I knew I wouldn't feel justified living my life ignoring the very real and current issues that are only going to get exponentially worse in the future if we do nothing about them now. Yet, the people who have the power to make impactful changes that will help solve these issues right now are not only doing very little to aid this cause, but they are actively making decisions that will harm the future I am

working so hard to save. This government's way of thinking – only looking ahead to the end of their current term – is deeply insufficient for ensuring that I will have a safe, livable future only 10 years from now. By then, I won't even have reached my thirties.

Alongside this oversight, the government is completely ignoring the rights of the Indigenous peoples who have lived on the land they now wish to exploit for far, far longer than this government has been in power. If the government is truly committed to working towards reconciliation, they must work with Indigenous peoples, rather than against them, as they are doing with this bill. So now, when Indigenous groups are explicitly saying that Bill 5 is a bad idea, I believe we have an obligation to listen to them.

As an environmental science student, people often say to me, "So, you are going to save the world?" which is my least

favourite phrase. No, I cannot save the world by myself. It will take everyone. We do not all have to carry the same load, but everyone needs to pitch in.

Even though Bill 5 has passed, it does not mean we should give up. There are many ways you can make an impact, such as calling or writing to your MPP. It only takes 30 minutes of your time – which is not a lot – considering that my whole future, and the future of every young Canadian, is on the line. Tell your MPP to repeal Bill 5.

For more information visit repealbill5.ca

Submitted by Repeal Bill 5, a local coalition of advocates dedicated to repealing the Protect Ontario by Unleashing Our Economy Act, on behalf of Natalie and Camille Ditty. Both are post-secondary school students pursuing degrees in environmental science, as well as former members of the Stratford District Secondary School's Eco Club.

Opinions

December lights: Finding hope in humble holidays



IRENE ROTH

Times Columnist

December has always been a season of light – twinkling strings wrapped around porch railings, candles glowing in windows and the soft shimmer of holiday decorations brightening the long nights. This year though, those lights feel especially significant. Many individuals and families in our community are facing financial pressures, personal losses and emotional fatigue. The world feels heavy in places and the season, normally bustling and bright, can stir up more worry

than wonder.

Yet even in challenging years, the lights of December can offer us something profound: a reminder that hope does not disappear, even when circumstances are dim. It merely shines more quietly, inviting us to lean in and notice it.

This year, I have spoken to many people who are reimagining their holidays. The economic pressures are real, such as rising costs, reduced incomes, shrinking budgets. They leave many of us wondering how to celebrate when traditional festivities feel out of reach. But maybe this is precisely the moment to return to what matters most: the humble, heartfelt aspects of the season that can never be bought.

December has always been about togetherness, kindness, joy and the promise that even the smallest spark of light can brighten the darkness. A simple strand of lights on a balcony, a homemade ornament on a well-loved tree or a handwritten card sent to a friend can become acts

of gentle defiance – a way of saying, “Hope still lives here.”

In times like these, it’s natural to long for what we used to have. Many are grieving traditions that are difficult to maintain right now, such as large social gatherings, elaborate meals, or gifts piled up high. But pared-down holidays can still carry an inherent beauty of their own. They make space for us to savour what often gets lost in the noise, such as quiet evenings, meaningful conversations, shared laughter and the deep comfort of knowing we are not alone.

This December, perhaps the most powerful gift we can give one another is presence. A cup of tea with a friend. A phone call to someone who feels forgotten and grieving. A walk through the neighbourhood to admire holiday lights. Having a humble bake-off with a neighbour. These small gestures cost little, but they remind us that connection doesn’t depend on circumstances – it depends on intention.

Communities everywhere are finding creative, budget-friendly ways to keep the season bright. Book exchanges instead of expensive gifts. Potluck soups rather than full-course feasts. Handmade crafts, baked goods or acts of service given in place of store-bought presents. None of these gestures require perfection or abundance. Instead, they invite each of us to contribute what we can, in a way that feels genuine and sustainable.

Even with financial stress, the season still offers opportunities for joy. December lights, in their quiet brilliance, encourage us to slow down and appreciate the simple things: the hush of a winter evening, the warmth of a candle, the feeling of being wrapped in a familiar blanket. These small comforts are not trivial. They are reminders of resilience, the human capacity to find beauty even during difficult times.

And for those who are grieving, struggling or feeling overwhelmed, remember: hope does

not depend on outward circumstances. It grows in community, in kindness, in shared strength. It glows in the neighbour who shovels a sidewalk, the volunteer who offers a meal, the friend who sends a message at just the right moment. Hope is not extravagant – it’s enduring.

As we move through December, let the lights around us become symbols of what is possible. Even a single bulb pierces the night. Even a modest celebration can warm the heart. Even a humble holiday can be meaningful and memorable.

This year, we don’t need the biggest tree, the most festive display, or many perfectly wrapped gifts to make the season bright. We simply need one another. We need our community, compassion and a willingness to embrace the beauty of “enough.”

May this December bring moments of peace, gentle joy, and renewed hope – no matter what challenges you face. And may the lights of the season remind you that even in difficult times, brightness is still within reach.

The 2025 Kia K4

Finance the 2025 K4 LX for

\$89/wk

for 84 Months @ 5.49% OAC + HST



KIA
Movement that inspires

Stratford
(519) 508-5755
www.stratfordkia.com

Opinions

The Swankeeper's Wife by A.M. Porter

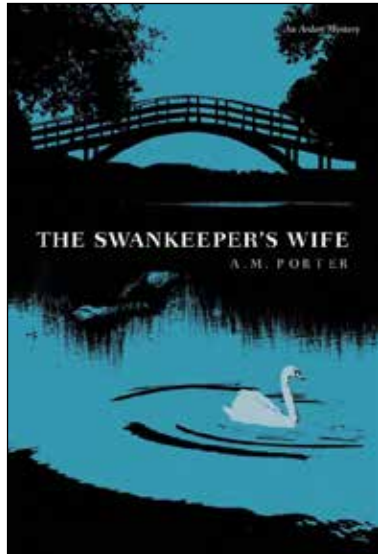
JANE MINGRAY

Guest Columnist

It's the steamy summer of 1954. Queen Elizabeth has been on the throne a year, Leslie Frost is the premier of Ontario and a small town has just launched the second season of a Shakespearean theatre festival. This is the familiar setting for A.M. Porter's recently published mystery, *The Swankeeper's Wife*.

The book opens with the body of a woman floating face down in the Avon River, discovered by organ-playing spinster and amateur sleuth, Mabel Orde, and her terrier, Bing. They are just two of an eclectic cast of characters who populate the fictional town of Arden, a thinly disguised Stratford. In the true spirit of such novels, nothing is quite what it appears, particularly Arden: "Blue sky, the massed green canopies of the trees, peaked roofs, and a church spire created a scene that in many ways resembled a coloured lithograph of a bucolic English town," writes Porter and then she goes on to expose what lurks beneath the surface of the idyll – shady real estate deals, growing unemployment and, of course, a grisly murder.

Porter (a nom-de-plume) lives in Stratford and thinks the city makes an ideal backdrop for her first crime fiction novel. "Aside from the fact that I know it



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Swankeeper's Wife, by local author A.M. Porter, takes place in the fictional town of Arden, a "thinly veiled Stratford," and tells the story of what lurks beneath its tree canopies, peaked roofs and church spires.

pretty well, I was interested in the combination of a still relatively small rural city that had been based on industry and agriculture suddenly becoming a cultural mecca, suddenly becoming the home to very, very different kinds of people: people who are famous, people who are artistic, people who deal in the theatre and people who like Shakespeare enough to come and see a play. It was a totally new thing for Stratford," she said. "I really liked looking at and thinking about and expressing that odd combination that

makes Stratford what it is today, and even more so in the 1950s."

The eponymous swankeeper's wife is the victim, Betty Crawford, a woman with a checkered past who is often the subject of local gossip, "a bottle blonde with a body like a Hollywood starlet and a fondness for CC and gingers." Crawford's unlikely husband is John "Doc" Crawford, the much older local veterinarian, contracted by council to tend the swans that grace the Avon River. Even though Betty's body is found in that same river, pathology reveals that she died not by drowning but by gas poisoning. But why? And how?

One of the locals most keen to find answers is Daniel Connor, a reporter for the Arden Herald. Connor grew up on a farm and thinks of Arden as the big city. He's also a war vet who has turned to writing: "War had taken the farm boy out of Connor and somehow put a writer in its place. It made him stop simply reacting to things and start thinking about the consequences of human behaviour." Porter, who spent the first 18 years of her life in a rural community near Stratford, is herself an accomplished journalist. She has written four non-fiction books and, in her 40 years as a reporter, she has filed stories from all over the world to many well-known publications.

"It was sort of an obvious

choice for me to make, to have my main character as a journalist," said Porter. "The idea of how a journalist thinks, that's the thing that I would certainly have retained and used as I created this character of Daniel Connor. I didn't draw that much on my own experience, I suppose, other than that." Although the geography and occupation were familiar territory, she had to try to channel how a man would have behaved at a time before she was born. "The way he thinks is a combination of how I thought my dad would have thought about things and the way I would think about things," she said. "It was important that Connor think like a person who grew up in a somewhat similar situation to me and a somewhat similar situation to my father. His ideas about morals and what's acceptable behaviour are, to a certain extent, based on the way people would have thought in the 1950s."

Porter's eye for detail perfectly captures the zeitgeist of the era. People drive Packards and Pontiac Chieftains, eat jellied salad from Fiestaware plates, and attend I.O.D.E. meetings. Even her wry tone is reminiscent of hardboiled detective novels. The shabby White Rose restaurant on Main Street serves coffee that tastes like "burnt aspirations." The aptly named Arthur Grossett, editor of the Arden Herald, spends as

much time in the bar as he does behind his desk, "his only meal the fat he chewed with whoever else was there getting soused at that hour."

Connor is a likeable protagonist, and the reader is drawn into his quest to uncover the truth of what happened to Betty. His investigation often puts him at odds with Detective Inspector Joe Milverton who is officially trying to solve the crime. The intrepid Mabel Orde also contributes her theories to the mix. Eventually, the details of Betty's troubled past in Toronto, Kingston and the U.K. emerge, the clues come together, and the killer is revealed.

"The whole idea of crime fiction is that it takes a moment of chaos where everything has gone wrong, or the crime has been committed, and it brings you to an end where there's a resolution of some kind," said Porter. "That's a very satisfying feeling most people get from reading crime fiction, that I certainly get, and so that's why I love reading it and writing it."

This book is the first in a trilogy. Porter has already finished a draft of the second book and has started working on the third. *The Swankeeper's Wife* ends as it began, with Mabel Orde once again finding a body. "Here we go again" she says to her canine sidekick, Bing, neatly opening the door for the next installment, *The Death of a Playgoer*.

COMING EVENTS Email to inquire stratfordtimes@gmail.com

STRATFORD SCRABBLE CLUB

Anne Hathawy Residence 480 Downie St., Stratford
Meets every Wednesday evening at 7 p.m. for 3 games.
Check our website for further details stratfordscrabble.ca

CROCKINOLE

Every Tuesday at the Agriplex in the Ritsma Room from 1-4 p.m.

EXPERIENCE FANSHAWE AT OPEN HOUSE

All locations are open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, November 29

- Meet faculty and current students from all areas of Fanshawe
- Drop-in and ask about your program interests, career options and becoming a Fanshawe student
- Hear from college experts on student life, admissions, financial aid, and more!
- Explore our campuses at London, Woodstock, Simcoe,

St. Thomas, Clinton and Tiverton

MINI MISTLETOE MARKET

Saturday November 29; 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

St James Anglican Church

41 Mornington Street, Stratford

All things Christmas! Baking, savouries and home-made crafts just in time for Christmas giving. Be sure to visit our Snowflake Cafe and enjoy tasty treats as our guest.

Invite readers to your
worship services.

Contact

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Worship
With Us



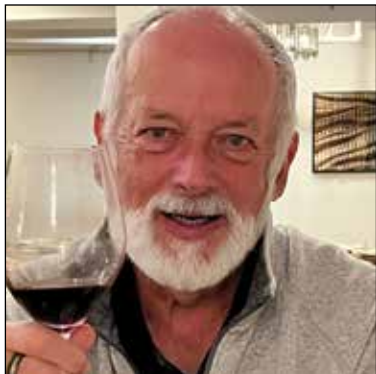
Community of Christ
226 Forman Avenue 519-271-4539

Proclaiming Jesus Christ
with communities of
LOVE, JOY, HOPE & PEACE

Worship with us
Sunday 10:00 a.m.
11:00 a.m. – Fellowship and
Coffee Hour

 We are a Welcoming Community

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Walking in the footsteps of first-century Romans



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Columnist

In Canada, it's pretty common to find a busy hockey arena at the centre of town. In many British and European cities, it's more likely a football (i.e. soccer) stadium. But in Vienne, a French town on the Rhone River, it's a theatre, and the unusual thing is this theatre is about 2,000 years old.

The Vienne amphitheatre was just one of a number of amazing Roman finds we explored during our visit to Vienne. This was a fascinating stop on our Viking Rhone River cruise, which took us from Lyon to Arles in southern France.

Vienne is a quiet French town; its population, listed at about 30,000, has been pretty much constant for the past 50 years.

But those 50 years are just a short paragraph in a long, long story that goes back to an era well before Christ. The community was a key Gallic capital until the apparently omnipotent Romans arrived around 47 B.C. during the reign of Julius Caesar. The Romans made Vienne a provincial capital and built a great many impressive structures in the town. What is even more impressive is how many of them still stand, or have been restored, today.

We did a walking tour of Vienne.



The Roman amphitheatre, as seen from Mount Pipet in Vienne.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

As is often the case on Viking cruises, we were offered a choice of a "leisurely" tour, a regular tour, or an "active" tour. I have to admit that our active tour in Vienne was far and away the most active of any of the thus-named tours during our cruise. That's because our guide led us on foot up a one-kilometre trek – I swear it was at a 90-degree angle – to an amazing vantage point overlooking the town and, most interestingly, the amphitheatre.

Okay, maybe it wasn't 90-degree tough, but it was worth the effort anyway.

The amphitheatre seated 13,000 people and it is used today, for the extremely popular Vienne Jazz Festival, which attracts huge crowds of music-lovers each year. A famous player who performed here many times was Miles Davis,

and you can find as much Miles Davis memorabilia for sale in the shops as you do Roman images.

But reminders of the Romans abound. Early in our tour – before the tortuous trek to the top (did I mention that?) – we saw still-standing Roman walls, aqueducts, drain systems and archways. The people of Vienne have created a beautiful, park-like garden among ruins beside one of the most impressive remaining walls.

We then walked past the ground level of the theatre, which, from that perspective, could only be viewed through openings in a fence. Thus, the climb to the top of the town.

There, we enjoyed amazing views of the theatre, of the entire town of Vienne, and of the Rhone. We also visited the Chapel of Notre Dame de Pipet – more of this

later.

As we strolled back down the lengthy path, our guide assured us the best was yet to come. Having just seen the impressive Roman theatre, that seemed unlikely. But it was true. Nonetheless, right in the heart of Vienne stands a restored Roman temple, an enormous structure featuring everything you might expect – mighty columns, lots of fancy architectural details. It's the Temple of Augustus and Livia, constructed at the command of Roman Emperor Claudius, who ruled Rome in the middle of the first century AD. And it is breathtaking, especially as it sits right in the middle of a modern French town.

There are more surprises from the Roman era here, as well. I am familiar with European and British roads of today that follow the same

route as roads built by the Romans. They say, if you find a straight motorway anywhere in Britain, for example, the route was laid out by the Romans. In Vienne, in a lovely park close to the Rhone docks, they have excavated a portion of a genuine Roman road; you descend several steps to get to that level, but then you are free to walk in the exact footsteps of Roman women and men from the first century. Amazing!

Now, let's make that climb back to the top of the town, to the height called the Mount Pipet because, in addition to the incredible view, this is the site of the Chapel of Notre Dame de Pipet, an elegant church dedicated to the Virgin Mary, especially connected to the story of an appearance of Mary to two children. That event – known as "Our Lady of La Salette" – occurred in a community about 170 kilometres south of Vienne. The Vienne chapel – which features statues of Mary and the two children – is one of several in the region dedicated to this "Marian apparition."

The Christian history of Vienne is almost as old as the Roman story; and by the time Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in 312 AD and brought the whole Empire with him, Vienne was already a place of Christian worship. Its first bishop, it is claimed, was a disciple of Saint Paul. Today, there are churches in Vienne whose founding date back to the fifth century.

In short, seldom have I visited a destination that so immersed a visitor in its fascinating history.

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

JOYLAND HAS EXCELLENT DEALS ON SHUFFLEBOARDS AND POOL TABLES TO ENHANCE YOUR GAME ROOM. OUR KNOWLEDGEABLE STAFF CAN ASSIST YOU IN FINDING THE PERFECT STYLE FOR ANY SKILL LEVEL.

\$500 OFF ANY FLOOR MODEL SHUFFLEBOARD!

\$750 OFF SELECTED NEW POOL TABLES!

All items pictured are while supplies last! Grab them before they're sold out! Joyland also has many more hidden gems just waiting to be discovered.

Joyland's
Billiard & Games Warehouse

**64 Linton Ave
STRATFORD, ON**
BOARD GAMES - DARTS
JIGSAW PUZZLES - BILLIARDS - AND MORE!

**GIFT BOXES, BASKETS
& NOVELTY CHRISTMAS
PACKAGING**

THE ORIGINAL
PICARD'S
INCREDIBLE SNACK CO., LTD.
SINCE 1982

Original Picard's Products since the beginning.
Locations: Talbotville, Waterdown, St. Jacob's, Waterford, NOTL

Crossword

CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Popular wine ___ Spumante
- 5. Greatly impressed
- 11. ___ and that
- 12. Uttered with passion
- 16. Boats
- 17. Veteran actor Harris
- 18. Casserole with game
- 19. Reprehensible acts
- 24. They precede C
- 25. Says under one's breath
- 26. Taxis
- 27. It transfers genetic info
- 28. NFL great Randy
- 29. Where college students sleep
- 30. Major European river
- 31. Taco condiment
- 33. -frutti
- 34. Polish city
- 38. Astronomy unit
- 39. Khoikhoi peoples
- 40. Bears QB Williams
- 43. Scrambled, fried, boiled
- 44. Price indicators
- 45. One-time world power
- 49. When you hope to get somewhere
- 50. Farm building
- 51. Choose carefully
- 53. Magnum was one
- 54. One who combines
- 56. Nursemaids
- 58. Partner to Pa
- 59. Notable river
- 60. Officially honors
- 63. Colorless compound
- 64. A fancy chair
- 65. Email function

CLUES DOWN

- 1. The central area in a building
- 2. Religion of Japan
- 3. Leggings

- 4. Officially distributes
- 5. Arabian Sea seaport
- 6. Spanish doctors
- 7. It cools your house
- 8. Currency of Poland
- 9. Slowly moves into
- 10. Days (Spanish)
- 13. Unit of volume
- 14. Emit
- 15. With two replaceable hydrogens
- 20. Title for a man
- 21. Equally
- 22. Scarlett's home
- 23. One-time tech titan
- 27. Subway dwellers
- 29. One-tenth of a liter
- 30. Central European river
- 31. Distress signal
- 32. Expression of sympathy
- 33. The bill in a restaurant
- 34. Football equipment
- 35. Dance music
- 36. Russian river
- 37. Cosmetics giant Mary ___
- 38. Gym class
- 40. Automobiles
- 41. Roman honorific
- 42. Losses in sports
- 44. Skin tone in summer
- 45. Distant planet
- 46. Critical humor
- 47. Illegally obtained
- 48. Go back over
- 50. Home appliance brand
- 51. Unit of radioactivity
- 52. Home of the Flyers
- 54. Short official note
- 55. Emit coherent radiation
- 57. Anno Domini (in the year of Our Lord)
- 61. Most common noble gas (abbr.)
- 62. Toward

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9	10	
11					12						13 14 15
16					17			18			
19				20 21			22 23				24
25						26				27	
28					29				30		
				31 32				33			
34 35 36 37								38			
39					40 41 42						
43				44					45 46 47 48		
49				50				51 52			
53			54				55				
56		57				58			59		
60					61 62				63		
			64						65		

SPONSORED BY:

Adult Learning Programs of Perth, Upstairs at the St. Marys Public Library
(700 Church Street North, St. Marys, ON)
Phone: 519-284-4408 | Cell: 226-374-8231
alearning@town.stmarys.on.ca | www.adultlearningperth.ca
Facebook: @AdultLearningProgramsofPerth



Pet of the week



GLADYS

Gladys is a sweet, outgoing, independent kitty with a heart as big as her personality! She loves meeting new people and will happily follow you around to be part of the action. Her adorably misshapen ears add extra character! They don't bother her at all, and she's as healthy and happy as can be.

She prefers affection on her terms and will gently tap you when she's ready for pets. She isn't a big fan of being picked up, so a home that appreciates her independent streak is ideal. If you're looking for a friendly, unique companion full of charm and purrs, Gladys is your girl! Visit kwsphumane.ca to learn more.



Pure
Pets

Sponsored by:

123 Waterloo St. S., Stratford ON,
519-305-7387

www.purepets.biz | purepetsstratford@yahoo.ca

Sudoku

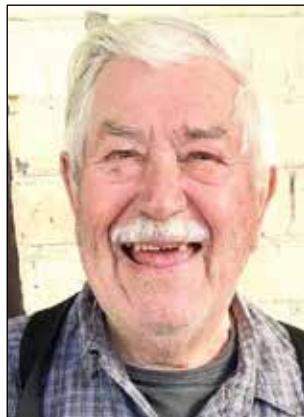
7		4	6					1
					1		5	8
1					2		9	
	7	6			8	5		
8			2			6		
		5						9
	8	2		9		3		
6					3			
	3			4	7			

Solutions on page 35

CLASSIFIEDS

Email to inquire stratfordtimes@gmail.com

OBITUARY



GORDON MOORE

Gordon Moore, born on October 9, 1936, passed away peacefully on November 19, 2025 surrounded by his loving family. He had a brief illness; however, he left without pain and with the same gentle grace that guided his long and wonderful life.

Gordon was known for his warm humour and his love of telling jokes. He brought laughter to every room and made people feel welcome with his easygoing spirit. He was preceded in passing by his beloved wife Connie in the year 2019, as well as eight siblings. He is survived by two sisters, Joyce Hutchison and Marion Chappell.

Gordon is also survived by his sons Roy and Gordon Moore (Monika), and by his daughters Shirley Moore (Toni) and Loraine Diehl. He was a proud grandfather to Christopher Moore (Dawnalee), Chantel Ruth (Daniel), Kassandra, and Justin Moore, Amanda Elieff (Justin), and Britany Quehl (Adam). He leaves six loving great grandchildren.

Gordon lived kindly, loved deeply, and brought joy to all who knew him. His memory will continue to brighten the lives of those he leaves behind.

A Celebration of Life will be held on December 6, 2025 from 2-4 pm at the Army/Navy/AirForce, located at 151 Lorne Avenue in Stratford. All who loved him are warmly welcomed to join in honouring his memory. He would have truly appreciated having everyone together to celebrate his life.

Arrangements entrusted to Rutherford Cremation & Funeral Services. 519-271-5062.

OBITUARY



DORIAN JOSEPH DWYER

In his 83rd year, Dorian Joseph Dwyer died peacefully at his long-term care residence in Mitchell. Beloved husband of Patricia and father of Dorian (Tamara) and David (Bonnie).

Dorian and Patricia made Stratford their home for 59 years and raised their sons there after having moved from Niagara Falls with the Dominion Chain Company.

He leaves behind his sister Joan Mottola (Louis) of St. Mary's, grandchildren: Amanda, Lauren, Tyler, Joshua, Nicole, and Kyle, and four great grandchildren. Dorian is predeceased by his brother Bill and parents William and Dorothy of Niagara Falls.

After retirement, Dorian spent many hours in his workshop, making carvings and pursuing his genealogy hobby, and both Dorian and Patricia shared their love with their pets.

A celebration of Dorian's life will be held in Niagara Falls in the spring.

Donations in memory may be made to the Ontario SPCA (www.ontariospca.ca), the Stratford Perth Humane Society (kwsphumane.ca) or the Alzheimer Society (www.alzheimer.ca), directly or through Rutherford Cremation & Funeral Services. 804 Ontario St., Stratford, ON. N5A 3K1. 519-271-5062.

HELP WANTED

**GRANT
HAVEN
MEDIA**

o o o o
o o o o
o o o o

**WE ARE
HIRING**

**JOIN OUR TEAM AS A
NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING
SALES REPRESENTATIVE!**

Are you a motivated self-starter with a passion for sales and marketing? Do you thrive in a flexible work environment where you can set your own schedule? If so, we have the perfect opportunity for you!

Location: Work from Anywhere!

Schedule: Your Own Schedule

Type: Commission

About Grant Haven Media: At Grant Haven Media, we are committed to delivering top-quality news and information to our readers. As a leading newspaper company, we take pride in our dedication to journalistic excellence and community engagement. As we continue to grow, we're looking for enthusiastic individuals to join our dynamic sales team.

**If you are interested, contact
Heather Dunbar at:
heather@granthaven.com**

o o o o
o o o o
o o o o

WANTED

\$ Cash Paid \$ for your RECORDS and LPs. Jazz, Blues, Rock, Pop, Folk, Soundtracks, and more. Selectively buying CDs, Cassettes, Turntables, and Stereo Equipment. For more information: **DIAMOND DOGS MUSIC** 114 Ontario St. Stratford / 226-972-5750

WANTING TO BUY – All collectibles including sports cards, beanie babies, Funko pops and stamps. Highest prices paid. Free appraisals. Are you downsizing or need an estate clean out? We can help. Call or text Stan anytime 519-868-3814.

Fair value offered for your vinyl records, cassette tapes & hifi components. Please contact **Sound Fixation, 519-801-5421, 4 George St. W, Stratford.**

I WILL PAY CASH FOR ANTIQUES AND COLLECTIBLES – Coca Cola Pepsi any pop company, Brewery items Kuntz, Huether Labatts etc. Old radios and gramophones,

Wristwatches and pocket watches, Old fruit jars Beaver Star Bee Hive etc. Any old oil cans and signs Red Indian Supertest etc. Any small furniture.

If you are moving or cleaning out stuff please contact me - 519-570-6920.

FOR SALE

Hundreds of shade trees, fruit trees, apples, pears, peaches, plums, sweet and sour cherries, apricots, nectarines, blueberries, haskapp grapes, raspberries, elderberries etc. Lots of spruce, pine, cedars for windbreak and privacy hedges. Sizes 1-8 ft. in containers ready to go. Flowering shrubs and much more. Mon-Sat 7:00am to 6:00pm Martin's Nursery, 42661 Orangehill Rd Wroxeter, ON N0G 2X0 (1 Conc. North of Wroxeter on Belmore Line)

STRATFORD **TIMES**

***"I know the paper is free,
but can I get a subscription anyways?"***

Yes. We understand that some people might like the convenience of the Stratford Times arriving at their home (located near or far) through Canada Post, so we do have subscriptions available for this purpose.

The price for a subscription is \$77.00

To subscribe, please e-transfer granthavenmedia@gmail.com and include your full mailing address in the comments, or send a cheque with mailing address to Grant Haven Media, PO Box 2310, St. Marys, ON N4X 1A2.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

Email to inquire
stratfordtimes@gmail.com

ACCOUNTING

Famme & Co.
Professional Corporation
CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS

125 Ontario St., Stratford
519-271-7581 | Fax 519-271-2737
office@fammeandco.on.ca

CLEANING

FreshFab Restore

Professional cleaning for sofas,
carpets, mattresses and all
upholstered furniture.
Stain and odour removal.
Pet-friendly, eco-safe products.
Fast, reliable, affordable.

Call/Text: 226-261-2994

EAVESTROUGH

EAVESTROUGH CLEANING

Fully Cleaned, Downspouts
Unblocked, Free Estimates,
Quality Workmanship

Stratford
519-273-4713

FENCING / DECKS

ALL SHORES
Fencing & Decks
519-273-2003

info@allshoresfd.ca

INVESTMENTS

Franklin E. Hinz
196 Ontario Street, Stratford
519-273-1633
www.franklinehinz.com

CONSTRUCTION

FRASER
ASPHALT
PAVING

"Serving Stratford & area since 1977"

www.fraserpaving.ca

Driveways • Parking Lots • Excavating
Truck Rentals • Asphalt Patching
Call Scott or Denise
for a free quote for 2022

519-271-5690

VL KARLA CONSTRUCTION CORP.

Flat roof installation & repair
(bitumen torch-down).
Gutter cleaning,
roof cleaning, snow removal.
Quality work.
Safe, dependable service.

Call/Text:
226-261-2994

HANDY MAN

Bruce Burleigh
40 Years of Handy
(519) 703-1936

HOME APPLIANCES

PHELANS PLACE
Appliances

APPLIANCES • PARTS

237 Huron Road,
Sebringville
519-393-6181
info@phelansplace.com

www.phelansplace.com

MARKETING



MORTGAGE

Mortgage solutions to suit your needs.



Rona Marquez
Home Financing Advisor
226-921-4536
rona.marquez@scotiabank.com

Scotia

© Registered trademark of The Bank of Nova Scotia

REAL ESTATE



ROYAL LEPAGE Hiller Realty

Tina Grasby BROKER,
Royal LePage Hiller Realty
ph. 519-275-7663
tinagrasby@royallepage.ca
www.tinagrasbyrealestate.com

ROOFING

ROOF TRUSSES & OPEN WEB FLOOR JOISTS

Residential/Commercial/Agriculture
Contact Zach at
Watson's Home Hardware 519-335-3551
zach@watsonshomehardware.com

REAL ESTATE

LUCIE STEPHENS
SALES REPRESENTATIVE
519-703-0333
RE/MAX a-b REALTY LTD. BROKERAGE
SOLD!

Sutton **Liz Yundt, Realtor®**
FIRST CHOICE
Sutton Group First Choice Realty
Ltd Brokerage
151 Downie St., Stratford, On
I will always do my absolute best for you!
Cell: 519-272-9017
lizyundt@sutton.com

WINDOW CLEANING

COMMERCIAL - RESIDENTIAL
SQUEEKS
PROFESSIONAL WINDOW CLEANING
JARED GOWAN | HEATHER GOWAN
519-854-5254
jaredsqueeks@live.ca / www.squeeksclean.com

QUIZ ANSWERS

- 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
- Great Dane
- Gerrymandering
- Fuselage
- Algeria
- Deoxyribonucleic acid
- Justin Trudeau
- Berkshire Hathaway
- Bingo
- True

TRAVEL

STONETOWN TRAVEL

150 Queen St. E., St. Marys
519-284-2332

210 Mill St., New Hamburg
226-333-9939

www.stonetowntravel.com
agent@stonetowntravel.com

WATCH/CLOCK REPAIR

Watch & Clock Repair

FREE ESTIMATES
Watch batteries, bands
& crystals

All makes & models.
New & Old.

House calls available
Antiques in Time
45 York Street | 519-272-0411
www.antiquesintime.ca

CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

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

WWW.STRATFORDTIMES.COM

Community newspapers are
NOT junk mail.

Community newspapers are trusted local voices that keep Canadians informed, connected and engaged. They are local businesses that report news that matters most to the communities they serve. CUPW and Canada Post need to ensure that the processing/delivery of unaddressed community newspapers resumes immediately.

newsmediacanada.ca

News Media Canada
Médias d'Info Canada





Home furniture

BLACK FRIDAY SALE

While Supplies Last



**No Pressure
Sales Team**

**MANY SPECIAL
PURCHASE ITEMS**

**OUR LOWEST PRICE
GUARANTEED**

**PROUDLY
STRATFORD
OWNED**



519-273-9330
2954 Hwy 7&8 E

Mon. - Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-5,
Sun. 12-4

Follow us on:



www.stratfordhomefurniture.ca
www.homefurniture.ca