

Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

VOLUME 3 • ISSUE 2

JUNE 20, 2025

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Woodstock Police Chief awarded King Charles III medal

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

“I am deeply honoured and humbled.”

Those were the words of Woodstock’s Chief of Police after receiving the King Charles III medal. Rod Wilkinson was quick to share the honour with the entire team at 615 Dundas Street and Ontario’s premier.

“For me, it’s a personal achievement, but I feel it’s also a testament to everyone in our police force who has supported me along the way, because this doesn’t happen without everyone else. I am grateful to Doug Ford for nominating me.”

Wilkinson, a 29-year law enforcement veteran, said he doesn’t know Ontario’s top politician well, but he is well aware the premier is a big supporter of policing in Ontario.

“I believe that is the reason he nominated me. There are a few other police chiefs who earned the medal throughout the province as well. I’m not sure they were nominated by Premier Ford or not, but that’s where mine came from.”

Wilkinson said being awarded the medal has given him a renewed focus to make the streets of Woodstock safer for the good people living here.

“I’m grateful. It goes to the unwavering support from everyone – family, friends and colleagues. I will continue working hard, and it inspires me to further my efforts. I’m a person who strives for excellence and I want to keep pushing towards that.”

He added it can be lonely at the top and to be recognized is inspiring.

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(RON YUZARK PHOTO)

BREAKFAST ON THE FARM

Left to right: Cox Wensink (owner, Hoenhorst Farms), Hon. Trevor Jones (Minister of Agriculture), Gerrit Wensink, Ernie Hardeman (MPP), Margriet Wensink, and Arpan Khanna (MP, Oxford) at Innerkip’s Breakfast on the Farm event. Guests experienced life on a working dairy farm and enjoyed a locally sourced breakfast. Story on page 10.

Ingersoll’s MURC finding request not approved by province

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

“Shocked, to say the least.”

Those were the words Ingersoll Mayor Brian Petrie used to describe the town’s unsuccessful funding application. The town sent out a news release Wednesday morning to inform the public and the media.

“The Town of Ingersoll expresses its deep disappointment following the Ministry of Sport’s decision not to approve the town’s application to the Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund,” said the release.

The money was requested for the town’s Multi-Use Recre-

ational Centre, expected to break ground next spring.

“It’s extremely disappointing and sad that the province failed to see what this funding and project mean to our community and our partners,” said Mayor Brian Petrie, emphasizing the significant impact the funding would have had on advancing local, regional and provincial goals.

Petrie said the town received a form letter from the province regarding the bad news, but no explanation was provided.

“It’s frustrating because we brought so much to the table as far as collaboration to the whole project. It’s really hard to understand how we didn’t meet the threshold to receive any funding whatsoever. I know there were a lot of applications out there.”

CONTINUED TO PAGE 7



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Wilkinson rejuvenated to make the city safer

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

“It has renewed my vigour and I will keep working hard to make the community safe and ding what we are paid to do.”

Wilkinson said he closely examines the numbers at the end of each year, which is the barometer he has set for progress on policing in Woodstock.

“I think we are making a difference. We have a good younger generation that has been hired and we have some really dedicated officers who work very hard. There’s a cultural shift here in Woodstock where we treat everyone very well, but we also expect some work to be done. We make sure everyone knows our expectations as a police service and what we need to do.”

He explained that if he gets complaints regarding an issue in the downtown core, he is fully prepared to come up with a solution and wants to assure residents he is listening.

“I have had an issue lately regarding open drug use. I am going to deal with that. I am going to direct our officers to do some foot patrols to look at possibly laying a charge and arresting someone for it. We’re not just going to send a generic email saying can you do checks in this area. We are going to direct officers to those areas. There is an issue here, and we are going to deal with it.”

Wilkinson said it has been difficult to have regular foot patrols on part of Dundas because of Streetscape con-

struction, but officers are logging the time they are spending downtown.

“It’s not foot patrol when you have the chance. It’s this is when we want it done.”

The medal was given to Wilkinson by Woodstock Police Service Board Chair Ken Whiteford.

“This commemorative medal honours individuals who have demonstrated outstanding service to their community and country. Congratulations, Chief Wilkinson, on this well-deserved recognition of your leadership and dedication to public safety,” read a post on the service’s Facebook page.

The medal was created to honour Canadians who have made significant contributions to Canada, a province or territory, community, or achieved something abroad that reflects positively on Canada.

Woodstock Police hosts head of IOP

The Woodstock Police Service recently hosted Ryan Teschner, Inspector General of Policing for Ontario, and representatives from the Inspectorate of Policing (IOP).

Inspector General Teschner met with Chief Rod Wilkinson, Deputy Chief Nick Novacich, and Inspector Jamie Taylor, along with members of the Woodstock Police Service Board, including Board Chair Ken Whiteford and Mayor Jerry Acchione.

The visit focused on the mandate of



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Woodstock Police Chief Rod Wilkinson, right, was recently presented with a King Charles III Medal by Police Service Board Chair Ken Whiteford.

the IOP, including its role in ensuring compliance and supporting continuous improvement in policing across Ontario.

The Inspectorate of Policing is an independent body within the Ministry of the Solicitor General. Its mission is to

enhance public trust and accountability by monitoring and inspecting police services and police service boards across the province.

Teschner has concluded meetings with all 44 municipal police services across the province.

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Wienerfest moves to Burford

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

For the first time in the event's 25-year history, Wienerfest will not be held in Woodstock.

The event, featuring hundreds of the lovable dogs and their owners, has moved to Burford out of necessity, not choice.

"After 25 amazing years of growing the Wienerfest Home County Festival, we've once again outgrown our venue, a familiar pattern that seems to happen about every four years," explained Linda Sonnenburg, Executive Director of Wiener Fest Canada. The event will be held on June 21 and 22.

"This time, the move brings us to a beautiful new location, the Burford Fairgrounds. We knew we needed more green space for the dogs to run, more parking, and an environment that's suited for low dogs. We're so grateful to Tourism Oxford for helping scout options, but ultimately, Burford checked all the boxes."

Sonnenburg said those boxes include lush green grass, ample parking and a community ready to embrace the festival.

"As much as Woodstock and more."

The festival was held at the Woodstock Fairgrounds, having just settled in after COVID, but she explained there was no venue in Oxford that was suitable for the event.

"While it served us well, the reality is that no current venue in Oxford County could meet the size and quality we now require. Moving a festival is no small task, kind of like trying to move a house in two days, but we've been working tirelessly these past two months, and the County of Brant has been absolutely phenomenal. Their support, along with the Burford Agricultural Society, local businesses, and volunteers, has been beyond generous."

This year's edition of Wiener Fest is shaping up to be the biggest yet.

"It's our 25th anniversary. We've already heard from people traveling in from across Canada and the U.S. including Kentucky, Alabama, Kingston, Ottawa, and even Mexico," added Sonnenburg.

There are some new events this year, including a Wiener Wedding on Sunday at 2:30 p.m. and a craft, antique, bicycling, and horse shows.

There will also be a lure course, an agility course, bobbing for wieners and a scent training course. Over 145 vendors will be on site for shopping, dog health and wellness, grooming, nutrition advice, and more. A lively food court will feature ribs from Woodstock Ribfest, Jack the Nibbler, and other favourites.

As always, admission is free.

"While sponsorships are a bit lower this year, we welcome and appreciate any financial donations to help keep this



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

one-of-a-kind festival going strong," said Sonnenburg.

She also wanted to thank our longtime sponsors, Big Steel Box for moving everything, and Royal Canin, which has returned as a proud sponsor this year.

"We're excited, we're ready, and we

can't wait to see you, and your dogs, at Wienerfest 2025 in Burford!"

More details are available at www.wienerfest.ca.

In 2024, there were 8,000 two-legged visitors and over 1,000 four-legged folks. Meaning owners.

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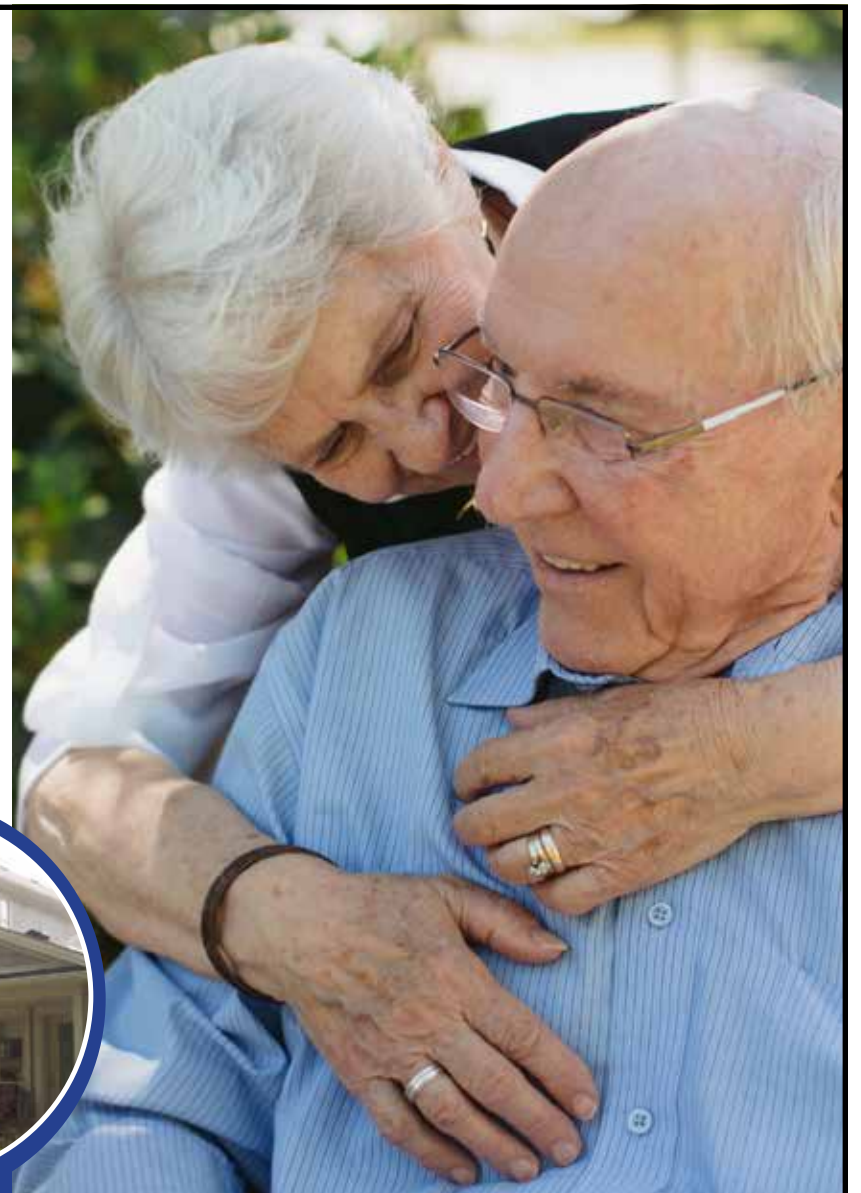
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SWOX Council declares township unwilling host for wind turbine projects

DEBBIE KASMAN

Echo Contributor

With people lined up on the road waiting to get in and over 300 in attendance, South West Oxford (SWOX) Council declared the township an unwilling host to future wind turbine projects in a 5 to 1 vote at its June 17 meeting. Councillors Pickard, Buchner, Durston, Gillis and Way voted to support the motion while Mayor Da-

vid Mayberry voted against. Coun. Pete Ypma was not at the meeting as he decided to sign a lease option to lease with the Cedar Flats wind project. Mayberry expressed concerns about not following municipal guidelines, saying that's why he was voting in opposition to the motion.

A group called 'South West Oxford Residents United in Opposition to Wind Turbines' delegated at the meeting and asked for the unwilling host designation. The group, working alongside South West Oxford and Malahide, say NO to Wind Turbines, gathered 1245 signatures on a petition and expressed concerns about loss of property values, damage to well water, inadequate setbacks, noise and other community impacts.

Malahide Council declared Malahide Township an unwilling host in a unanimous vote on June 5. In October, Zorra Township also unanimously said no to any new wind turbine projects until the province revises its policy and gives municipalities more information about their impacts.

According to Wind Concerns Ontario, 159 municipalities have passed formal resolutions declaring themselves to be unwilling hosts to new industrial wind power sites.

Prowind Canada and wpd Canada are hoping to build wind energy projects in the area. Prowind proposed the Bower Hill Wind Farm, which would consist of six wind turbines located near Highway 401. Wpd Canada is proposing the Cedar Flats Wind Project that would have seen up to 34 turbines from Verschoyle south to almost Corinth and then west past Highway 73, with turbines reaching 200 metres or 656 feet tall.

SWOX staff reminded council at its June 3 meeting that passing a resolution declaring a township an unwilling host does not legally prevent a wind energy proponent from approaching council with a formal request for municipal support. The resolution is not binding and does not preclude the township from receiving or considering future proposals. Under the Independent Electricity System Operator's (IESO's) current pro-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

An overflow crowd was on hand in Mt. Elgin earlier this week as members of SWOX council voted to declare the township an unwilling host.

curement processes, what matters is whether a Municipal Support Resolution (MSR) is passed.

Township staff "strongly" recommended council refuse the request to be an unwilling host for any proposed wind energy projects, expressing concern that adopting a blanket position at this stage could limit council's ability to evaluate each proposal independently and on its own merits.

April Nix, Oxford County Manager of Policy Planning, responded to a question asked by Mayberry at the June 3 council meeting saying "the province has made a bit of a mess with all of this...we have had AIA [Agricultural Impact Assessment] requirements in the Official Plan now for a couple of years...the province has then moved that in, that AIA requirement now, into the Provincial Policy Statement. That change became final last fall. And then somewhere in the midst of all of that, they started, they pulled it into energy and said we want parts of this done earlier, this energy process, as well. They've not done a great job on actually explaining the mechanics of how that's supposed to work."

CONTINUED TO PAGE 5

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

"FATHER'S DAY"- A TIME TO SAY THANK YOU

Sunday, June 15th, is "Father's Day". A very important time to say thank-you for the love and care to all of the fathers who have taken the time to help raise a child to adulthood.

Males are not merely sperm donors for the very brief moment of conception. What makes you a father is not the ability to conceive a child but rather the courage to help raise and care for a family.

Child caring is no longer the sole duty of the

females with the vast majority of the males willing and able to do their part to help care for a child. Paternity leave along with maternity leave is now a reality with fathers & mothers choosing to split the time at home to enjoy their newborn. Some of the lost income is covered by the Canadian Federal government.

I am very proud that I chose to get married and became the father of two children and the grandfather of four.

Happy Father's Day,
Len Lesser,
Dorchester

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Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

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Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

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Mayor votes in opposition

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Hundreds of concerned citizens attended Tuesday night's SWOX Council meeting in opposition to proposed wind turbine developments in the township.

Coun. Ypma declared a conflict and took himself out of the discussion and provided the Echo with a statement before this week's meeting.

"As a result...I declared a conflict of interest when the staff report on the subject arose. And I will continue to do so until at least after Southwest Oxford Council has decided upon the Cedar Flats proposal, and potentially longer if I think it necessary."

The Ontario Green Energy Act,

2009, was repealed on January 1, 2019, giving municipalities more control over the siting of renewable energy projects and prohibited the issuance of Renewable Energy Approvals under the Environmental Protection Act

The Green Energy Act was a major point of political debate in Ontario, and its repeal was a key promise of the Progressive Conservative (PC) party during the 2018 election.



NEW ALL-WAY STOP at Holcroft St & Thames St S in Ingersoll



Please be advised that on **June 30th, 2025** the Town of Ingersoll will be installing an **All-Way Stop** at Holcroft St and Thames St S.

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Walk for Lupus fundraiser held in Woodstock



Participants showing their support for Lupus Ontario with purple hair included Terry Aurel Mel Jaxon Isabella and Braylyn.



Lisa Bilodeau, Vice President of Lupus Ontario, addressed the participants and supporters before the start of The Walk.

Project will proceed but timeline may shift

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

The government received \$1.2 billion in funding requests for a \$200 million fund. Ingersoll had asked for \$10 million.

“To receive zero is a real kick, and there is no appeal process,” he added.

The Town of Ingersoll has actively collaborated with various partners to advance several local and provincial priorities through the Multi-Use Recreational Centre property project, including recreation, education, long-term care, emergency management, and, critically, up to 1000 housing units.

The town remains committed to advocating for the MURC project and will continue to educate provincial representatives on the extensive benefits of the project and encourage them to explore alternative funding sources to maximize the property’s potential impact for the community, wider region and the province.

The town is reviewing what the decision will mean for the overall project.

“We’re going to move forward. Staff are

what this means as far as the timeline and scope, but it’s the overall property project that’s going to be affected,” explained Petrie. “We are trying to get some innovative things done with housing and we have to sell land to be able to pay for a portion of the arena. Without that funding, it’s hard to subsidize that land to get the kind of houses we really want.”

The project is well into its design phase and the town has hired a project management firm. Petrie is encouraging Ingersoll ratepayers to contact Oxford MPP Ernie Hardeman and Neil Lumsden, Minister of Sport, to voice their displeasure.

“I invite every resident to join me in sharing their disappointment with the province by contacting them and sharing what this decision means for our community,” added Petrie. “We are looking for other ways to get some funding and get the province to the table. With all the great things happening at that property I can’t see why they wouldn’t want to be a part of that collaborative nature.”

Community members gathered at Southside Park in Woodstock for the fifteenth annual Walk for Lupus on June 7. The event is a key fundraising and awareness event in support of those living with lupus. Organized as part of Lupus Ontario’s provincial campaign, this year’s walk brought participants together to raise vital funds and increase public understanding of the autoimmune disease. The walk has a proud history, beginning over 23 years ago with a single walk and expanding into a province-wide initiative involving thousands. Collectively, it has raised over \$1.5 million for lupus-related causes, in-

cluding the Geoff Carr Research Fellowship, patient education and support services, and advocacy efforts for improved care. Jan Ropp, local organizer and point of contact for the Woodstock event, coordinated the day’s activities and welcomed participants of all ages. Lupus is an autoimmune condition in which the body’s immune system attacks healthy tissue, leading to inflammation, pain, and potentially serious organ damage. Globally, over five million people live with lupus. It primarily affects women, with nine out of ten patients diagnosed between the ages of 15 and 45. There is currently no cure. (RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Organizers gathered to register walkers and oversee event activities.

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Seniors Month kicks off at South Gate

South Gate Centre hosted a free community BBQ lunch on June 6 to celebrate Seniors Month at the Bandshell Pavilion in Southside Park. Seniors and supporters gathered to enjoy an afternoon of food, fellowship, and fun in recognition of older adults in the community. The event featured free hot dogs and burgers, generously sponsored by Century 21. The South Gate Centre organized the event as part of a series of activities taking place throughout June in honor of Seniors Month, aligning with Ontario's 2025 provincial theme of Fit, Active and Healthy Seniors. The theme underscores the importance

of physical health, mental wellness, and community engagement for older adults. Throughout the month, the centre has offered a variety of programming focused on social connection, education, and wellness. From music and dance to art and outdoor gatherings like the BBQ. Seniors Month is observed province-wide to recognize the significant contributions seniors make to our communities and to promote age-friendly environments. Organizations such as South Gate Centre continue to play a vital role in supporting older adults through accessible programs and services.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Angela, Program and Volunteer Coordinator for South Gate Centre, took a big bite of watermelon served by David Hilderly from Century 21.



Volunteers served hungry and deserving seniors at the Seniors Free BBQ.



Some attendees enjoyed the warm afternoon relaxing under a shade tree.

Musical fundraiser for MS

An evening of music and storytelling took place on June 13 at Unifor Hall, all in support of Multiple Sclerosis research. Chris Koster, a former member of The Glorious Sons, headlined the event with a performance that blended live music

and engaging stories. The concert was organized by Tony Dejongh and his wife, Leslie, who met Koster about a year ago during a performance at Ironworks. "All ages were welcome," said Dejongh in advance of the show. "It was a fun event –

Chris played songs, told stories, and answered questions from the audience," said Dejongh. Opening the evening was Katie Schurman, who is originally from Embro but now lives in Fredericton. Since stepping into the music scene shortly after her

19th birthday, she has developed a unique sound influenced by classic rock, Americana, folk, and country. She is currently working on her debut album. All proceeds from the event went towards MS research.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Katie Schurman with MC Leigh Robert, an experienced broadcaster and Professor at Fanshawe College, kicked off the evening.



Unifor Hall was filled with enthusiastic supporters for the multiple sclerosis research fundraiser.

WDDS hosts Fun Fair to recognize \$74,600 grant

STAFF

Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

Woodstock and District Developmental Services (WDDS) hosted its annual Fun Fair last week, a day of celebration for staff, families, and the people they support. The event included carnival games, music, face painting, and a special BBQ, and was made even more meaningful with the recognition of a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF).

"I'm pleased to congratulate Woodstock and District Developmental Services on receiving this well-deserved grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation," said Oxford MPP Ernie Hardeman. "This funding will help strengthen the vital programs and supports they provide to individuals and families in our community. I commend their continued dedication to inclusion, empowerment, and improving quality of life for those they serve."

As a result of the grant, WDDS has been able to provide crucial staff development resources, including access to professional training resources, hire a one-year Planning Facilitator to work with individuals to achieve their goals, and establish a long-term planning cham-

pions committee. These initiatives align with the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services 'Journey to Belonging' framework and ensure that we continue to deliver person-directed, meaningful support to people throughout Woodstock and Oxford County.

"This funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation allows us to invest in not only the lives of the people we support, but also provide training, tools, and opportunities for the people providing that support," said Krystan Maclean, Fund Developer for WDDS. "It's creating internal capacity to put in the work to help people achieve their goals and live a fulfilling life of their choosing."

WDDS is a local nonprofit organization committed to building inclusive communities where adults with developmental disabilities are supported to live full, meaningful lives. Learn more about our services and events at wdds.ca.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation 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 in 732 community projects and multi-sector partnerships. Visit otf.ca to learn more.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Lori Van Opstal, Ontario Trillium Foundation Grant Review Team Volunteer, and Oxford MPP Ernie Hardeman, attended the Fun Fair to celebrate a much-needed grant to WDDS.

City church commemorates centennial with strawberry social



Oxford MPP Ernie Hardeman brought congratulations from the provincial government and presented them to Rev. Susan Cameron.

In celebration of its 100th anniversary, The United Church of Canada hosted a special collective event on June 10 at the Dundas United Church in Woodstock. The event began at 2 p.m. and welcomed community members to participate in a unique initiative. The gathering was one of many held across Canada, providing people with

an opportunity to engage in meaningful connection and reflection. Attendees were invited to remain afterward for a traditional strawberry social, which rounded off the afternoon with refreshments and warm fellowship. Hats and gloves were optional, but warm hearts and open ears proved essential to the spirit of the day.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Janis McCutchen sang and played piano during the service.



Phelys Rev. Margaret Trapnell and Annice presented the history of the founding of the United Church 100 years ago in the form of a short skit.

Breakfast on the Farm brings in thousands



Recognition from the Province for the event and the 100th Anniversary of Hoenhorst Farms was presented by Trevor Jones, Minister of Agriculture, to Margriet Cox and Gerrit Wensink while local MPP Ernie Hardeman and MP Arpan Khanna were also in attendance.

Hoenhorst Farms in Innerkip opened its gates to the public on June 14th for Breakfast on the Farm, an event hosted in partnership with Farm and Food Care Ontario. It welcomed over 2000 guests to experience life on a working dairy farm while enjoying a locally sourced breakfast. Visitors had the chance to tour the farm on the 16th Line, getting an up-close look at dairy cows, modern farming equipment, and automated Lely robots that allow cows to milk on their schedule. The event also included ex-

tensive tractor and equipment displays, interactive games and educational exhibits, and the opportunity to meet local farmers and food producers. Guests were served an all-Ontario-made breakfast, which featured a peameal bacon, egg, and cheese sandwich, apple cider, milk, asparagus, and strawberries. More than 100 volunteers, many with agricultural backgrounds, helped the day run smoothly. The day also marked the 100th anniversary of Hoenhorst Farms.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Entertainment was presented by Lori Lee and the All-Stars.



Along with a healthy breakfast, visitors were able to tour the farm and see machinery of all sizes.

Woodstock High School Class of '75 reunites



Alumni athletes and coaches from the Class of 1975 are, from left to right, Don, Dave, Don, Peter, Peter, Pat and Bob, who came together to share memories of their basketball days.

The College Avenue Secondary School Grade 13 class of 1975 reunited on June 7 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of their graduation. The event, held at the Sally Creek Community Centre, brought together more than 50 former classmates, staff, and spouses for an afternoon of memories, music, and reconnection. The last reunion was held in 2010, and organizers were hopeful that the passage of 15 years hadn't

changed everyone too much. A committee of eight alumni began planning the milestone event several months ago, initially unsure how much interest it would attract. Their efforts were rewarded with enthusiastic responses from across Canada and the United States, including attendees traveling from British Columbia and several American states. Guests enjoyed light refreshments and a looping slideshow of



The group gathered for a commemorative photo before the day was over.

photographs from their high school years. Just after 3 p.m., the group gathered for a commemorative photo, followed by a short program. The presentation included a moving In Memoriam slideshow honoring classmates and staff who had passed away, as well as messages from those unable to attend. Serving as co-Masters of Ceremonies, Marci MacQueen and Bob Van Wyk guided the event with warmth and

humor. Prizes were awarded for fun categories such as the longest distance traveled. Though the faces may have changed over the decades, the spirit of camaraderie and shared history remained strong. And yes, '70s music still provided a fitting soundtrack for the afternoon, reminding all in attendance that some things, like good music and lasting friendships, never go out of style.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)

Oxford County kicks off 2026 budget process

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Oxford County’s annual budget outreach campaign has kicked off with an online survey. The upper-tier municipality puts the survey information together as it hunkers down and begins the painstaking work of drafting a document for council’s input.

“It is very important that the county receives feedback on the 2026 budget,” said EZT Mayor and County Councillor Phil Schaefer. “As council, we need to know residents’ wishes regarding our services that we provide, and whether they wish to improve, maintain or reduce them.”

Schaefer added not all residents may be totally clear about which level of government provides which services.

“I think, for the most part, residents understand that their tax bill covers more than just the services their local municipality provides. For example, in East Zorra-Tavistock, 47 per cent of the tax bill goes to township services. County services are covered by 41 per cent of the tax bill, and education costs make up the remaining 12 per cent. The township collects the funds from the taxpayers and remits the county and education portions.

Lynn Buchner is Oxford’s corporate services director and explained staff would take a deeper dive into what the public is saying about how they would like to

see the county enhance services, reduce them in certain areas or maintain them as normal.

“Staff will look to incorporate public responses into a draft of the business plan budget document in November.”

Woodstock Coun. Bernia Martin urged residents to do the survey and be proactive before it’s too late.

“This is an opportunity for the public to have their say,” Martin said. One thousand and one hundred people responded to the survey last year out of 130,000 people. Throughout the year, people will contact us with concerns and complaints about their tax bill and level of service. This is their opportunity to shape what the 2026 budget looks like.”

A news release from the county outlined which municipalities can provide input on certain county services.

“Residents who live in Blandford-Blenheim, Norwich, South-West Oxford, Tillsonburg and Zorra are asked about local area municipal services, such as fire services, building and drainage services, parks and recreation, by-law enforcement and more.”

The release added residents from all eight of Oxford’s municipalities are asked through the survey about services provided by Oxford County, such as roads and bridges, waste management, long-term care at Woodingford Lodge, paramedic services, human services, water and wastewater, community planning and others.

Oxford CAO Ben Addley said he’s hoping more people will get involved in the budget process, something that will result in better understanding of how the system works.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 13

Weekend Quiz

by Jake Grant

1. What is the biggest planet in our Solar System?	6. Who brought tulips to Canada?
2. What shape is on the Maldives flag?	7. What is 0.75 as a fraction in simplest form?
3. Who was the lead singer for the Tragically Hip?	8. What NBA players has the most points?
4. True or False. Cats have more bones than humans.	9. When was Boeing founded?
5. The Citadel of Aleppo is located in what country?	10. A beer flat, blind pig, or blind tiger are all different names for a what?

This week’s answers are found on pg. 31

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Oxford MP raises concerns about lack of budget

JEFF HELSDON

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

As the House of Commons prepares to go into summer recess, Canadians are still waiting for a plan on how the government will be spending their money.

Oxford MP Arpan Khanna pointed out the government initially said it would not be releasing a budget in calendar 2025, but has since amended that to release a fall budget.

Technically, Canada hasn't had a bud-

get since March 31. With the exception of Covid, Khanna said the last time Canada went this long without a budget was more than 20 years ago.

"It's just Canadians need to know where that money will be spent," he said.

As an interim measure, prior to the House of Commons breaking for the summer, MPs will be asked to vote on an estimates bill that will approve a half-trillion dollars in spending.

"There is very, very little detail where the money is going," Khanna said of the estimates bill. "From what we've extrapolated, we've been able to identify some areas where they're spending money. For example, they're spending the money that goes to outside consultants."

Providing more detail, Khanna said the previous year the government spent about \$19 billion on outside consultants. This amount has now been increased to \$26 to \$27 billion.

"In the last Parliament we saw that money was spent on Liberal insiders, for example GC Strategies where they gave money to the contractors for the

ArriveScam app, and now we're back in Parliament trying to figure out where the \$100 million went," he said. "We're learning from the Auditor General, it was only a two-man company that barely did any work, and skill sets weren't there for that work."

Although there are provisions for a new government to operate for a time without a budget, Khanna pointed to the rhetoric that Prime Minister Mark Carney would be a man with a plan and a budget, as he was a banker.

"Just like Canadians can't run a household without a budget, and business can't run without a budget, the government can't do that either," he said. "They're just pushing these bills through and getting these estimates through without much scrutiny."

"A half-trillion dollars of spending without oversight is problematic."

Although the last day of scheduled sittings is June 20, Khanna said his party has indicated they are willing to sit longer into the summer to get business done.

From what Khanna has seen, the government is not on top of the files. He pointed to a question he asked on immigration where the minister didn't have the details to answer the question.

"Every day we are asking questions, and tough questions, and not getting good answers," he said.

The Conservatives are not likely supporting the estimates bill, Khanna said. Any finance bill is a confidence motion, meaning if it doesn't pass, Canadians will be back at the polls. Khanna doesn't think that will happen and one of the opposition parties will provide the extra few votes needed to pass the legislation.

The Oxford MP did emphasize his party will support good legislation. He gave the example of Bill C-5, which will aid in building the economy and taking down inter-provincial trade barriers, and that the Conservatives supported it.

He said many other bills have "poison pills" – a term used for legislation that has good points, but also bad measures. Those bills he said, will be scrutinized in Parliament.



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Happy Canada Day!

On behalf of Woodstock City Council, I would like to wish everyone a safe and meaningful Canada Day.

This day offers an opportunity to come together in celebration of the values and communities that make our country strong—from coast to coast to coast. It's also a time to honour the many people who call Canada home, whose diverse histories and experiences enrich our nation.

As we celebrate, we also recognize the importance of reflection. Canada Day is a chance to acknowledge our full history and to reaffirm our commitment to truth, reconciliation, and a shared future built on respect and understanding for all.



- Mayor Jerry Acchione





Staff and elected officials encourage ratepayer involvement

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

“We know overall there is room for our residents to better understand which services are provided by which municipal level. This is a key goal of the annual budget survey. It begins with a short overview about municipal taxes, and then each service is explained and broken out by average annual municipal tax impact to each household.”

He added keeping citizens informed and educated about both municipal services and municipal taxes is an ongoing process.

“Last year we tried something new with The Oxford County Podcast, right now on Spotify and YouTube, which was launched during the County’s budget process.”

A total of 1,136 people responded to the survey in 2024, with 62 per cent indicating the value of the services they receive for county tax dollars is fair or

good, while 24 per cent indicated they receive poor value. More than 650 comments were received through the survey, spanning housing, children’s services, long-term care, paramedic services and roads.

Oxford County’s special budget meetings for the 2026 budget take place on November 13 and November 24, with councillors deliberating taking place at its regular meeting on December 10. Each participating municipality receives and reviews its own survey results to help plan 2026 budgets.

“I would strongly suggest residents take the 5 to 10 minutes the survey requires to make their feelings known. It is open now on the county website and will be available until August 29,” added Schaefer.

The survey is available at www.speak-up.oxfordcounty.ca.

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theecho.ca**

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ROUTINE BUSINESS

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Route to the Past – United in Faith

SCOTT GILLIES

Contributor

“Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation”. “I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvellous works”.

These opening verses of Psalms 5 and 9, capture the essence of Christianity as it was taught and preached in the opening days of Oxford County history.

The first religious service in Oxford seems to have been that conducted by the Reverend Nathan Bangs in 1801 near the site of the present-day West Oxford United Church.

Reverend Bangs was a circuit rider, or saddlebag preacher. He was born in Connecticut in 1778 and was born again as a convert to Methodism in May of 1799 while attending a Methodist Episcopal church service in Newark Upper Canada (present-day Niagara-on-the-Lake). The following year, he began his service to God and to mankind by becoming a travelling preacher.

Journeying alone, on horseback, he carried his Bible and few other worldly possessions in his saddlebags. Church services would be conducted in the homes which he visited along the way. So it was that on September 1, 1801, Reverend Bangs had found welcome and refuge in the homes of our early settlers along the Detroit Trail or what we now call the Old Stage Road. After a few days of respite and relaxation he would saddle his horse, pack his bags and head on to the next area of settlement. Months would pass before he returned,

so visits by the saddlebag preacher were always joyous occasions for many of our early settlers, especially those of the Methodist faith. During these early days of settlement, only the Church of England was recognized by the government and allowed to own land or construct a place of worship. In contrast, Methodists would often organize outdoor services, or camp-meetings, in the bush.

The first established Methodist Church in Oxford was the one represented today by West Oxford. The original structure was burned to the ground by invading Americans during the War of 1812. A replacement was constructed around 1824 and served the community for the next 30 years before being replaced with the present brick structure in 1854.

In 1865, the King Street Wesleyan Methodist Church was constructed in Ingersoll. It was sometimes known as the Two Towers Church due to the architecture of the front façade. One block to the north stood another – the Episcopal Methodist Church, best known as the Charles Street Church. It once stood where the Salvation Army thrift store now operates. Its congregation had amalgamated with the King Street group to form Trinity United before the First World War. During that particular time, the vacant building was used as a drill hall for the members of the Oxford's Own Battalion; that is until the reverberations of the stomp, stomp of their marching feet caused the steeple to topple to the ground! Was it a sign?!

Preachers at the King Street church played significant roles, both locally and abroad. For

example, lay preacher Joseph Gibson (Ingersoll's postmaster) was the leading advocate for the nationwide temperance movement in Canada and world-wide. Reverend E.H. Dewart of Ingersoll was at one time the editor of “The Christian Guardian”, the influential national mouthpiece of the Methodist Church in Canada. He also compiled an anthology of Canadian poetry which was published in 1864, as well as a composing hymns. In the 1870s he was also one of the leading advocates for amalgamating all the different Methodist sects under one united banner as the Methodist Church of Canada. At that time there were six Methodist denominations (Episcopal Methodist, Wesleyan Methodist, New Connection Methodist, Bible Christian Methodist, Primitive Methodist and British Methodist Episcopal). Five of them were represented by buildings in Ingersoll; only the Primitive Methodists did not.

On June 10, 1925, one hundred years ago, a new union took place, this time to form the United Church of Canada, made up from the Methodist Church of Canada, the New Connection Church and some members of the Presbyterian Church of Canada. A massive number of communicants gathered as one body in Toronto to celebrate the unification of these different denominations, “that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God but keep his commandments” (Psalm 78).

By the 1960s there were more than 5,000 United Churches across Canada. Like other organizations that number has dwindled.



Reverend E.H. Dewart. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Driving around Oxford County, one can spot examples of ecclesiastical structures which are now vacant or have been adapted into other purpose such as residential use. Woodstock and Salford afford two such examples. The Sunday School building in Ingersoll is now a private home. Still others, like the former Zenda United Church succumbed to arson. And so, after 100 years, the church continues to evolve, change and adapt to the current needs of its people.

Thanks be to Reverend David Van Patter and the congregation of West Oxford United Church for allowing the public to take part in their centennial celebration earlier this month.

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Canada Day

COMMUNITY EVENTS



Canada Day celebrations in Oxford County

INGERSOLL

The town of Ingersoll is hosting its annual Canada Day Celebrations on July 1 at Victoria Park from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. The event will include local vendors, food trucks, live music, games for all ages and a spectacular fireworks display to end the night. Entry is free for all. There will also be a Youth Canada Day Art Contest sponsored by the Ingersoll Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

Age categories are Junior Artists from 4 to 11 and Intermediate Artists from 12 to 16. Themes include Sports in Canada, Indigenous Cultures and Traditions, Truth and Reconciliation or Agriculture and Rural Life in Canada. Artists must include their name and contact information and a free canvas can be picked up at Fusion Youth Centre or the Victoria Park Community Centre. The winners will be announced after the opening ceremony in Victoria Park.



WOODSTOCK

Southside Park will be filled with fun for all ages on July 1 from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m., including live music, Canadian Kids Zone activities, and market-place and food vendors. The evening will end with a spectacular fireworks show.

Enjoy free live music and performances throughout the day on the main stage. While enjoying the music, you can take a seat in the Maglin Site Furniture Lounge or play lawn games.

INNERKIP

The Innerkip Lions Club is holding its annual Canada Day event from Friday, June 27, to Sunday, June 29. There will be a beer garden all weekend along with a softball tournament, live music and children's entertainment. There will also be a Fireman's breakfast Sunday morning and fireworks Sunday night.

Happy Canada Day!

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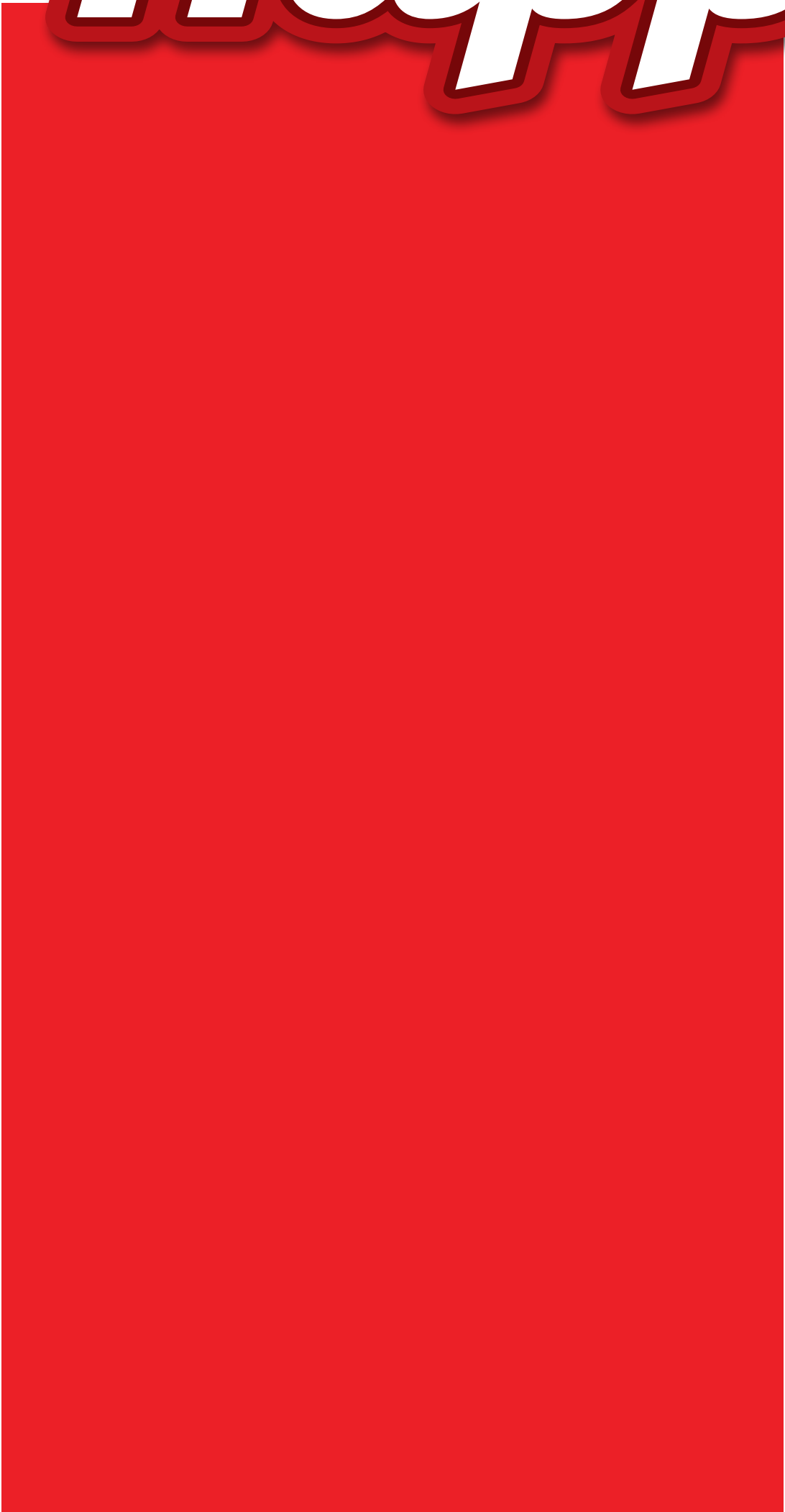
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Woodstock Ingersoll Echo SPORTS

Warriors' OFSAA boys' soccer gold for each other and for Pop

JEFF TRIBE

Echo Correspondent

The Woodstock St. Mary's Warriors senior boys' soccer team's focus did not waver from their first practice until the moment they walked off the team bus in the home parking lot late the evening of June 7, Ontario Federation of Secondary School Athletics (OFSAA) AA championship banner in hand, gold medals around their necks.

"Before every game, we said 'You are playing for one another and you are playing for 'Pop',' (co-coach Valerie Popovich)," summed up co-coach Vanessa Pye. "And that's what they did."

"It's just surreal," added Popovich. "OFSAA is... the gold is bonus. We just wanted to get there, we knew that and that we maybe had a shot."

"They just played at another level we hadn't seen before."

"It's an amazing experience," agreed co-captain Maxwell Odumodu, who had game-winning goals in both the quarter and semi-final games. "It's just the perfect way it could have gone."

"Exactly what we could have hoped for and more."

The Warriors had to go through the defending OFSAA AA champion Courtice Holy Trinity Catholic High School Titans in the gold medal match.

"Just right off the bat, they wanted it," said Pye of her team's opening five minutes. "As a coach, you're like, 'OK.'"

The Titans were a very strong team technically, she credited.

"But we had way more grit, we wanted it more. You could see it in the boys, every single one of them."

St. Mary's built an early 3-0 lead capped by a Noah Allard tap-in off a Tommy Walker corner kick.

"At the time, it felt like it was nothing," smiled Allard. "But eventually..."

There are very few 'gimmies' at a provincial championship, let alone in the final and the game was far from done. The Titans mounted a furious, late comeback, spurred by the energy that some-

times comes with a ten-member roster, closing the score to 3-2 with roughly five minutes to go.

"I kept looking at my watch," admitted Pye, who counter-intuitively felt a familiar calmness descend at that point, her squad rediscovering its structure and game plan at crunch time to close out the gold-medal victory. "They started doing all the things they knew they should."

The Warriors began their OFSAA run on June 5 in Ottawa, opening round-robin play with a solid 4-1 win over Oakville King's Christian College.

"They had four hours of sleep, woke up and knew what they needed to do," said Pye.

The coaching staff felt St. Mary's was the better team in their second outing against Bolton St. Michael's, but suffered their first loss of the season, 2-0. Disappointing on one level, the blemish did reiterate that nothing would come for free, providing an opportunity to re-focus and begin another winning streak.

"And obviously we did that," said Pye, of a St. Mary's team which came out flying the following morning at 8 a.m., downing Toronto Bishop Marraco 8-0. "They stepped up."

Ten minutes prior to the Warriors' final pool game, they confirmed they would advance to the quarterfinals with nine points, allowing the coaching staff to engage its bench strength more fully through a 2-0 win over Belleville Centennial Secondary.

"Everybody had a part of it," said Pye. "Which was important, because everybody contributed."

Finishing second in Pool B, the Warriors faced the Ottawa L'École Seconde Publique Louis Riel Rebelles in the quarterfinals. They were an undefeated side coming out of Pool A with 12 points.

"They were seeded second, but I would say they were probably the best team there... other than us," said Pye. "That game was 100 per cent heart. We put it all out there."



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

They are the champions: The Woodstock St. Mary's Warriors boys' soccer team players and coaches celebrate their OFSAA AA championship in the school parking lot, moments after getting off the bus from the Ottawa-based provincial championship.

Regulation time ended without a goal, leading to two ten-minute, full-time overtime periods.

In the first minute of the first, a high ball went over the top of the defence, said Odumodu, who, following a missed head ball clearing attempt, found himself with the chance the Warriors needed.

"And I just put it away."

"And so, 19 minutes of keep playing hard and that's what they did," said Pye of a 1-0 final.

The Warriors faced the Windsor Catholic Central High Comets in semi-final play, a squad which had not given up a goal in its previous five outings. Pye felt the Warriors dominated first-half play but found themselves down a goal. Crucially, St. Mary's responded in the opening half's final minute, a confidence-boosting tally off a corner kick.

"At halftime, they kept saying, we can beat this team," said Pye.

Odumodu scored the game-winner with around ten minutes remaining in regulation, missing on his first try of a cross which slipped through, running around the goalie for a second chance.

"Buried it, bottom left, inside the post."

Beyond the obvious, there were several extremely satisfying elements to the Warriors OFSAA AA championship, beginning with the fact the team also received the tournament's most sportsmanlike award.

"That means almost as much," said Popovich.

The Warriors games were live streamed to an appreciative audience as cell phones coordinated a welcome committee in the parking lot. It featured parents, friends and an extremely proud principal Tony Doria, flowers for the coaches, celebratory sparklers and congratulatory cheers, and Queen's We Are The Champions cued up in accompani-

ment.

Popovich also pointed to long-time educator, coach and athletic coordinator Pat Sloan, capping a 33-year career with an OFSAA gold he contributed to via three guest pep talks, the key theme being respect.

"And they really responded," credited Popovich.

The victory also celebrated a shared return to OFSAA for Popovich and Pye. They had qualified two decades-plus previously, with Pop coaching Pye at the time.

It's hard to sum up the experience of a lifetime in a game, a moment or even cumulatively across a season.

It all began said Pye, with last year's loss in the Western Ontario Secondary School Athletics Association AA championship game.

"We all said, next year we are going to go to OFSAA," she recalled of a Warriors unit that from day one, came to all the practices, supported each other and built success around 'team.' "Everything they did was toward that goal."

That team had faith added Popovich, faith in their process, faith in each other, and perhaps, a belief fate was taking a hand. She pointed to this year's WOSSAA AA semi-final, the Warriors finishing extra time down two players and their starting goalie unable to continue, trailing 2-0 in penalty kicks before making a remarkable comeback in a game there's no way they should have won.

"From that point on, it's like kind of a calm, right?"

"It felt like it was meant to be, honestly," summed up co-captain Tommy Walker.

From the beginning he said, there was a belief they could do it, a belief built by playing for each other and their coaches, and passion for the game, celebrated in each goal, each game of the season.

"So much passion," Walker concluded.



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

A welcoming committee in the Woodstock St. Mary's CHS parking lot greets the 2025 OFSAA AA boys soccer champions upon their return from Ottawa, co-captains Tommy Walker (carrying the banner) and Max Odumodu leading the team off the bus.

WCI Red Devils' girls soccer team finishes OFSAA on a high note

JEFF TRIBE

Echo Correspondent

The Woodstock CI (WCI) Red Devils finished their Ontario Federation of Secondary School Athletics (OFSAA) A tournament on a high note.

"They played wonderfully, had a great second day," said co-coach Crystal Eberhardt-Gwynne of back-to-back provincial championship victories on June 6 in Welland.

WCI had also played well on its opening day but struggled to put the ball in the back of opponents' nets.

"We definitely had more shots on net," said Eberhardt-Gwynne of a 1-0 tournament-opening loss to Port Colborne. "Their goalie was on fire. Lots of good strikes from Robyn Wilson, they just didn't make it into the back of the net."

A similar result played out in the Red Devils' second opening-day outing, a 1-0 setback to Kenora St. Thomas Aquinas.

"A good team," assessed Eberhardt-Gwynne. "But we definitely could have beaten them."

OFSAA A games were contested in two 30-minute halves, a compressed time-frame emphasizing the value of scoring first. St. Thomas Aquinas managed to do



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

The Woodstock CI Red Devils girls' soccer team, pictured here following their WOSSAA A championship victory, recorded two wins during their and their school's first trip to OFSAA, finishing strong on day two.

so, putting the pressure on WCI.

"There is no leniency in the short games," said Eberhardt-Gwynne.

Because of the tournament's tie-breaking format, the two opening-day losses were an effective roadblock to the Red Devils advancing to the quarterfinals, a

fact the coaching staff did not share with the players before their 8 a.m. kickoff the next day against Trenton St. Paul.

"The girls were hungry for a win," said Eberhardt-Gwynne, citing a quality scoring chance in the game's first 30 seconds.

The Red Devils kept their momentum

going and playing on turf as they had much of the regular Thames Valley Regional Athletics season, fell into a comfort zone after recording their first OFSAA goal. Alex McDonald had two goals and Grade 9 Georgia Zehr a single in a 3-0 victory.

Heading into what would be their final OFSAA game early that afternoon at 12:30, the coaching staff focused on the team's Grade 12 veterans, playing in their last high school game.

Wilson, McDonald, Zehr and Claire Harmer scored for WCI in a 4-0 win, with keeper Kate Hooker recording her second consecutive shutout.

"She only gave up two goals the whole tournament," credited Eberhardt-Gwynne.

The game was very emotional, particularly for the Grade 12 graduates.

"They're all leaving with smiles on their faces," said Eberhardt-Gwynne. "We wish them the best with their future soccer endeavours and hope they come and cheer us on next year."

Overall, the coach looked back on a great year in which WCI had achieved its seasonal goal with the school's first OFSAA qualification.

"I think the girls had fun," she concluded. "It was an experience they'll never forget."

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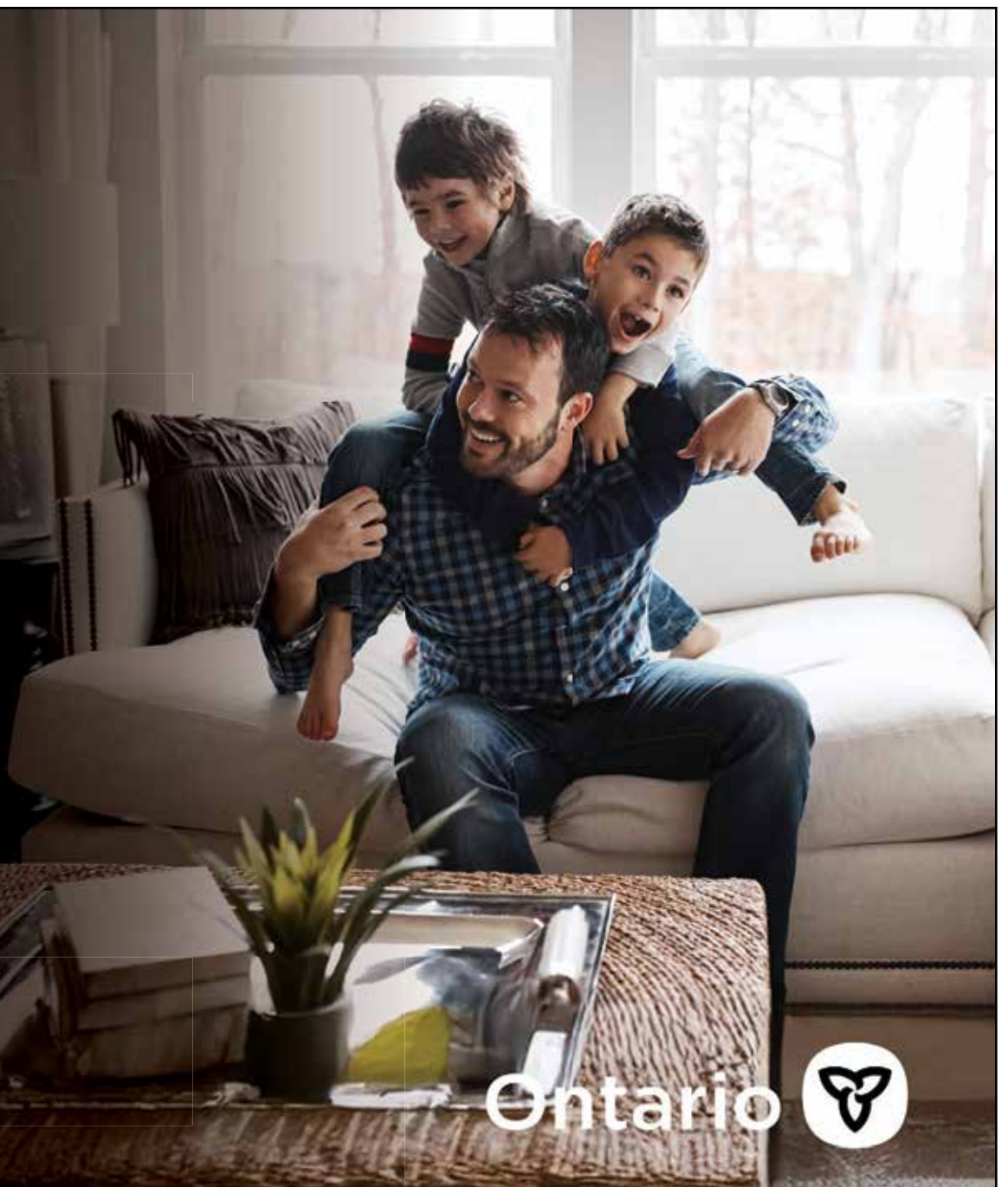
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Ontario



Mckenzie Howard's Italian is weak, but she speaks great softball



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

Mckenzie Howard makes a play at third for the Woodstock College Avenue Knights, one of several softball teams the U15 star enjoys playing for.

JEFF TRIBE

Echo Correspondent

Mckenzie Howard may have to brush up on her Italian.

But the Woodstock College Avenue student's ability on a softball diamond will speak for itself as she takes to the field with Team Canada U15 at a World Cup tournament opening June 23 in Milan, Italy.

"This is like a very wow kind of thing!" Howard smiled following a Thames Valley Regional Athletics outing earlier this season.

Her softball career began at a very young age as a T-ball player out of Swe-

aburg. She tried other sports, including soccer and swimming, "but this one kind of stuck."

Howard moved on from Sweaburg to the Springfield Brewers and thence to the Tier I Waterloo Ghosts at the age of eight or nine.

"I've been with them since," said Howard, who was first drawn to the sport by her elder sister Morgan, a pitcher who is also in the Ghosts' (U17) program.

"She was kind of like an inspiration to me," says Mckenzie, of a mutually respectful and supportive sibling relationship. "We're very close - we support each other very well."

Mckenzie is primarily a pitcher and

shortstop.

"But wherever the team needs me, I can go."

She is also strong inside the batter's box, named the top U15 batter at last year's national championship tournament, where the Ghosts finished second to Quebec.

"Contact - I'm just an on-base hitter," said Mckenzie. "Not home runs, just singles or doubles usually."

Fastball is a large part of her life, beginning with the Ghosts but also extending to playing with her high school team, giving her both 'more reps' and the chance to meet new teammates.

"This is one of the reasons I was really excited for high school."

Howard also plays on a winter team called Northern Force which competes at tournaments in Las Vegas, Tennessee and Myrtle Beach. Howard also headed to Florida in March Break with Team Ontario.

"Lots of experience, that's for sure."

Working towards an NCAA softball scholarship is among her goals, as well as earning a position with Team Ontario's U19 program, which competes at nationals and beyond. That was a longer-term goal for when Howard gets older; however, a training camp in Woodstock last fall opened up a teaching academy opportunity to compete internationally at an earlier age. In conjunction with the World Cup announced in Italy, Canada entered a U15 team into a Mexico-based qualifying tournament, gaining a top-four berth and softball trip to Milan as a result.

Training camp was very strict, exciting and featured a lot of competition, said Howard, who added it was executed in a highly organized, fast-paced manner.

"It was great," she said, thrilled to make the roster. "It's a great opportunity," Howard continued, describing herself as both nervous and excited.

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WCI Red Devils reflect on historical 2025 boys' soccer season

JEFF TRIBE

Echo Correspondent

It wasn't like the Woodstock CI (WCI) Red Devils hadn't learned from their Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations history with the Windsor E.J. Lajeunesse Lions.

But that didn't make repeating it any more fun.

In March of this year in Woodstock, the Red Devils faced the Lions in the OFSAA A boys' basketball championship game, dropping a tight 55-45 decision. On June 7 in Welland, the two met in the OFSAA A boys' soccer quarterfinals, the Lions prevailing once more by a 2-1 margin.

"I texted Moli (WCI coach and athletic director Eric Molinaro) after the game," said Red Devils soccer coach Jason Poole, able with time for reflection to interject an element of humour into his voice. "He was like, again?"

WCI opened pool play on June 5 at 9 a.m. with a solid 3-1 win over Waterford District High School.

"Guys were dialled in," said Poole, pumped up from the previous evening's OFSAA banquet and attendant atmosphere. Everett Carne scored twice and Elisha Dezeeuw added a single to fuel the offence.

"We were able to use our skill a bit in that game," said Poole, against a big, tall and strong squad utilizing a kick-and-run approach.

The Red Devils resorted to their seasonal gameplan of shape, defence and counterattack against Toronto Ursula Franklin Academy, a highly skilled, quick feet ball-possession type of team in game two. Dezeeuw scored the game's



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

The Woodstock CI Red Devils' boys soccer team finished off its most successful season with a WOSSAA AA championship, a 3-2 record at OFSAA and a top eight provincial finish.

lone goal, leaking past the Franklin back line and onto a lead pass in the clear.

"He broke the goalie's ankles and finished," said Poole of a goal scored in the first five minutes of the second half.

Heading into provincial championships, Poole had emphasized how the Red Devils were making history as the school's first soccer team in a position shared with their female counterparts. That living history had unfolded ideally through day one, with WCI atop its pool at 2-0, on the inside track to quarterfinals.

"Pretty incredible, totally in charge of our fate."

The Red Devils kept the positive narrative rolling through their 9 a.m. Friday, June 6th start, shutting down a very disciplined Kenora St. Thomas Aquinas squad out 2-0.

Carne and Depew each found the back of the net and keeper Justin Deschamps recorded his second shutout, despite battling a case of stomach flu for the event's duration. A running team joke was that Deschamps was able to finally eat pop-sicles by Friday.

"But Justin at 50 per cent is better than anyone else at 100 per cent," said Poole. "He's a phenomenal goalie."

The win locked up first place in Pool C, allowing the Red Devils to work their bench through a 2-0 game-four loss to Trenton St. Paul, ensuring players who unquestionably contributed to the team's success also got playing time at provincials, while starters rested for quarterfinals.

"It was the perfect situation," said Poole. "Everyone played and we hung around and competed."

CONTINUED TO PAGE 23

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WCI Red Devils reflect on historical 2025 boys' soccer season

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

Things were set up ideally for their Friday evening tilt with La Jeunesse, the Red Devils all business in contrast to a more-typical pre-game music-rich 'chill.'

"We were ultra-pumped, calm and confident," said Poole.

More used to playing teams focused on using their skill toward ball possession, WCI was admittedly taken aback from a high-intensity, non-stop pressure, pressure, pressure ap-

proach Poole likened to a pack of wild dogs.

"It caught us off-guard a bit in the first ten minutes for sure."

The Red Devils adjusted, Poole feeling they took control of the contest.

"We had probably eight chances, three posts and all the possession, but no goals."

The Lions came out of the first half leading 1-0, getting a foot on a lazy cross. WCI remained quietly confident through the

break and changed its structure to generate more offence. The approach worked but didn't manage to get a ball into the back of the La Jeunesse net.

The Lions went up 2-0 with around 15 minutes to go off a corner kick.

"Head in the guillotine kind of thing at this point," said Poole.

Noah Clements got the Red Devils on the board with roughly five minutes to play. A feisty finish began following the goal,

Poole pleased his players went down, metaphorically swinging, to the final three whistles.

"Credit to them, they played our game against us and won the battle," said Poole. "You can't fault them. That's the only problem with history is when it repeats itself," he added wryly.

A historical perspective also allowed Poole, disappointment aside, to reflect on not only this year, but the growth in the Red Devils program it represented.

"You can't let a single moment engage the entirety of our success in the season," he concluded, reflecting on an undefeated Thames Valley Regional Athletics campaign, Western Ontario Secondary Schools Athletic Association A championship, and a trip to provincial finals. "And top eight in the province, that's a pretty good progression from three years ago when we had three wins... in total."

Ron Armstrong sets world swimming record

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Echo Contributor

Ron Armstrong, a Masters Swimming competitor originally from Ingersoll who now resides in New Hamburg, added eight Canadian records and his first world record to his storied swimming career earlier this year.

According to Armstrong, swimming has been a constant and central part of his life.

"My dad loved to swim, so I basically grew up swimming," Armstrong told the Echo. "My two brothers, Ken and Jim, and I were always around the Maude Wilson Memorial Pool in Ingersoll. It was our babysitter all summer long. All three of us were on the local swim team. It was just a summer playground-type swim team, as we had no indoor pool at that time. When we became teenagers, I went to Woodstock to swim on their YMCA team, and Ken became a diver. My mom sacrificed a lot of sleep, waking up at 5:30 in the morning to drive me to Charles Street in Ingersoll and I would hitch-hike from there to Woodstock. Ken went on to become a Canadian Olympic Diver and Olympic Coach in both Canada and the USA."

During his teenage years, Armstrong detailed how he could have moved away from swimming, but for one phone call from the man who first taught him how to swim.

"One day that changed my whole life with regards to swimming was when I was in high school and turning 16. I had applied for a job at the Voyager restaurant on the 401, which is now called OnRoute, in between Woodstock and Ingersoll, and a lot of high school kids would work out there, pumping gas or waiting on tables. I had applied for a summer job but didn't hear back. Then, I received a call from Maude Wilson Swimming

Pool manager, Buck Billings.

"Buck was the man who first taught me how to swim when I was a little kid, and he called me and explained how they were hiring one male and one female junior lifeguard," continued Armstrong. "He asked if I would be interested in being the male junior lifeguard, and I said I was. The next day, I received a call from Voyager telling me I had the job with them, but even though they were offering more money, I said, 'I'm sorry, I've already accepted another job.'"

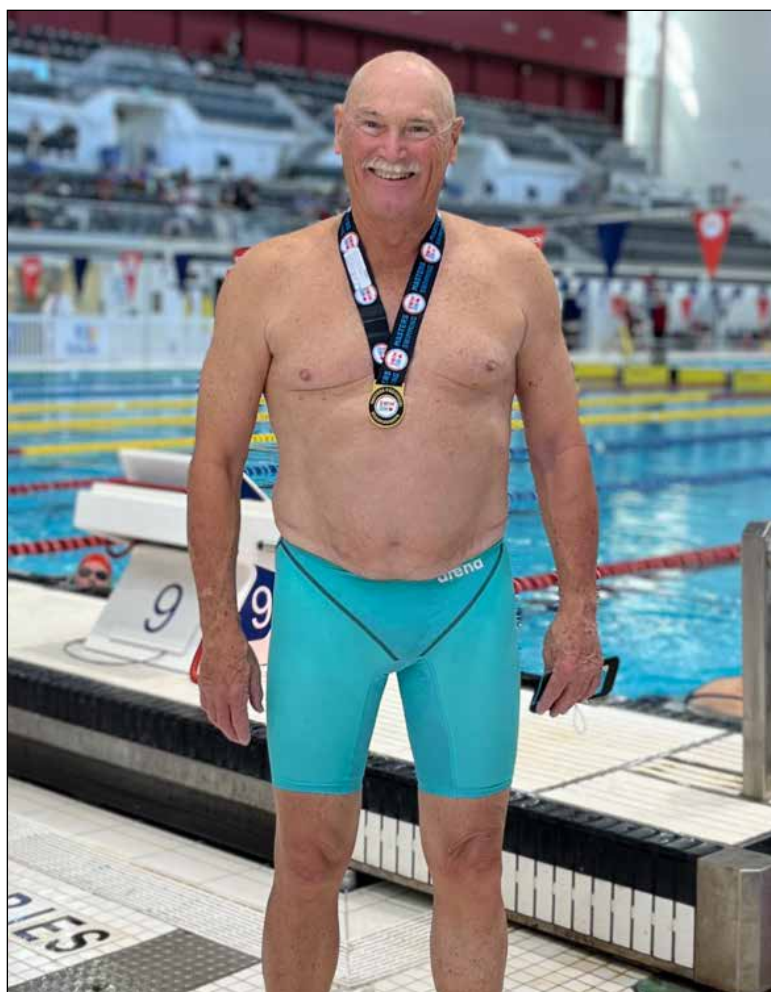
This job offer proved to be a pivotal moment in his life, with Armstrong stating it "kept me in swimming."

"If it hadn't been for the decision and I had gone to the Voyager restaurant to work, I don't know where I'd be today. I probably wouldn't be swimming, so that one day made all the difference in my life. And through swimming, I met my wife, Marilyn, as she was a lifeguard at the St. Marys Quarry."

Armstrong swam at the YMCA under coach Rick Coad for a couple of years. While finishing high school, he then trained under Bob Eynon at Western University before moving to Kalamazoo, Mich., to attend junior college. He was a five-time All-American swimming champion in college.

This led to a swimming scholarship at the University of Hawaii, where Armstrong spent one year. A disharmony between Armstrong and his swimming coach in Hawaii led to Armstrong leaving the school and moving to Trois-Rivières, Que., to work for Reynolds Aluminum.

"Swimming got me my first job out of university. I swam and lifeguarded in Ingersoll at the swimming pool with Wendy Connell. Wendy's father worked for Reynolds Aluminum, and he had known me through Wendy and asked if I might be interested in interviewing for a sales job



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured is Ron Armstrong, originally from Ingersoll and now a resident of New Hamburg, with the gold medal he won in the 400-metre individual medley at the Ontario Masters Swimming Championship on Apr. 25-27 in Markham. Armstrong's time of 6:20.44 set a new world record in the men's 75-79 division.

like his when I decided I wasn't going back to the University of Hawaii."

Armstrong spent a year and a half in Trois-Rivières before being transferred back to Toronto by Reynolds Aluminum, leading to a chance encounter in Armstrong's apartment building that set the stage for one of the great passions of Armstrong's life to resurface.

"I was living in an apartment building in Etobicoke that had a swimming pool, and I was just doing some laps, and there was a Toronto firefighter named Bob Tilley there," Armstrong said. "Being a firefighter, they were

allowed to come into different facilities and swim. I hadn't swum in a couple of years at that point, and Bob suggested I come out and swim with the Etobicoke Masters' Swim Club. And I've been swimming with them now for almost 50 years."

As a member of the Etobicoke Olympium club, Armstrong travelled the world and added numerous medals and Canadian records to his swimming résumé, with his first appearance on the global stage ending with an upset victory for Armstrong.

"My first Masters World Championships was in 2006 at Stanford University," noted

Armstrong. "I was training hard. I got in very good shape. I won the 400-metre individual medley, which was a total shock to me. I wasn't the favourite going into the race, but I swam very well and won. I beat the current record holder of the event. I was off the wall excited."

Most recently, Armstrong set a combined eight new Canadian records in the 75-79-year-old men's division at the Rowdy Gaines Masters Classic on Jan. 31-Feb. 2 in Orlando and the Ontario Masters Swimming Championship on Apr. 25-27 in Markham.

In Orlando, Armstrong set Canadian records in the 50-metre freestyle, 100-metre freestyle, 400-metre freestyle, and 100-metre individual medley.

Meanwhile, at the provincial championship, Armstrong's Canadian records came in the 50-metre backstroke, 50-metre butterfly, 200-metre medley, and 400-metre individual medley.

The highlight was Armstrong's 400-metre individual medley. His final time of 6:20.44 at the Ontario Masters Championship not only set a national benchmark but also set a new World Record for men aged 75-79. It is the first global best set by Armstrong, and was recently certified by the Lusane, Switzerland-based World Aquatics as an official World Record.

"I was ecstatic about the world record," Armstrong said, recounting his reactions as he finished the 400-metre individual medley. "I've never done that before. What was so exciting was that everybody knew I was after that record, and I happened to be in the outside lane, right beside where all my teammates were cheering me on. It's not very often that you can hear cheering while you're in the pool, but I could hear them cheering me on. When I touched the wall, it was elation, and I was just so ecstatic."

Local Dragon Boat teen heading to Germany to represent Canada

EMILY STEWART

Echo Correspondent

Jane Mouland started her dragon boat journey with the Woodstock Juniors at just 11 years old and will soon compete in an international tournament representing Canada.

Mouland will be part of Canada's U18 team for the International Dragon Boat World Federation (IDBWF) championship in Germany this July. Mouland received the invitation to join the Canadian team in April and is thrilled to be on board.

"I never thought going into dragon boat at 11 that I would be on Team Canada," Mouland said. "It's a pretty exciting feeling to represent your country in the sport, I'd say. Especially across the world."

The 17-year-old began her training for Team Canada in 2022. The same year, she endured a life-changing accident where she lost three fingers on her dominant hand.

"When it happened, it was, as you can guess, pretty devastating. It was hard to dig myself out of that hole, but, of course, friends and family supported and motivated me."

After several surgeries and another amputation, Mouland returned to training in the fall of 2024 by joining a gym to prepare for Team Canada tryouts. The support of her loved ones still motivates her today, and her coach will also remind her to think of her family and friends backing her up.

"It keeps me going. It's something to push through, through every little wrong that I still can do it. And I'm on Team Canada, so clearly, I can."

To prepare for the world championship, she trains three times a week and works out at the gym whenever she can fit it into her schedule, focusing on weight training and cardio. Mouland



(RON YUZARK PHOTO)

Jane Mouland (right) and her father Jeff. Jane has loved dragon boat as a physical and social activity from a young age. She will be part of the U18 team representing Canada at the World Dragon Boat Racing Championship in Germany this July.

enjoys the physical and social aspects of dragon boat racing.

"It's a really good way to work out. I find it's fun. You're out on the water in nature all the time," she explained. "I like that part, and I especially like doing that with my friends. It's a good community and all the teams that I'm on, it's good to speak with them and spend that time with them, even if it's a hard day."

Mouland and the rest of Team Canada will compete in the World tournament in Germany from July 16 to 20. Dragon

Boat racing does not receive any government funding, so travel expenses must be covered by families. Mouland is saving money from her part-time job, running a bottle drive, and has a GoFundMe link for donations to cover the costs of travel, like hotels, meals, and flights. |

"I cannot be more grateful. Going into this, I didn't know we were going to start a GoFundMe, let alone all of this," Mouland said. "It feels really good to have so many people support me, espe-

cially with a cost being so big. Having that cut down a little bit with the people who support me is nice, and thank you, everyone."

She will also be with the Optimist Club of Oxford County during Wienerfest at the Burford Fairgrounds on June 21 and 22 collecting donations to help with the cost of accommodations.

To donate to Mouland's GoFundMe, visit <https://www.gofundme.com/f/u8kfru-Jane-on-team-canada-ul8-world-championship>.

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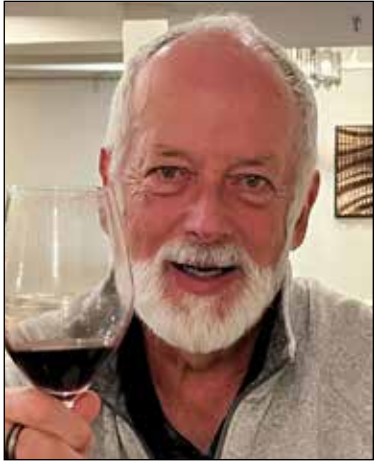
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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Regensburg: a well-preserved Medieval gem



PAUL KNOWLES

Echo Contributor

It's not a challenge to find something "old" when you are walking around the cities and towns of Europe. The history here goes deep, but it is also frequently on display, all around you.

And in a city like Regensburg, Germany, the place is not just old, it's special – as acknowledged when Regensburg's Old Town was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Ironically, while the designation honours the city's Medieval architecture (the Middle Ages lasted a long time, from the fifth century to the 15th), the actual UNESCO recognition is only two decades old – it happened in 2006.

A walking tour of Regensburg (and it is very walkable), will take visitors through many centuries of history, and many architectural eras. But perhaps

the most striking thing about Regensburg is something that has not changed since before the Romans came here, in the first century: the Danube River.

The Danube flows right through the city, and at the time of our visit, the mighty river was on full, powerful display. It's one of the remarkable things about Regensburg and other communities along the Danube – that they have withstood the onslaught of the river in flood, for many centuries.

You can't help but be aware of the river during your visit, because one of the highlights of any tour is the Old Stone Bridge, an engineering masterpiece constructed between 1135 and 1146. During the second and third crusades, knights crossed this bridge; today, it is used by tourists and residents alike, but by very few soldiers in chain-link armour.

The ancient bridge is itself the subject of some great local stories. One that is certainly true is that the project included impressive towers. There is one fewer, today, because a failed effort to blow up an ice jam on the Danube blew up one of the towers, instead. It was never replaced.

A less certain account involves a competition between the builder of the bridge, and the builder of a cathedral, now replaced but under construction at the same time. The story is,

the bridge-builder made a deal with the devil to guarantee finishing first: he promised the devil the souls of the first three to cross the bridge when it was completed, as long as that happened before the completion of the cathedral. He won – and offered up the souls of the first three to cross the bridge, which happened to be a dog and two chickens. There is no report of the devil's reaction.

Perhaps the most striking ancient building in Regensburg is Dom St. Peter (Regensburg Cathedral). Founded on the site of much earlier churches (dating back to about 700 AD), construction on this magnificent church started after fire destroyed previous churches. Work on the present version began in 1275 and the cathedral was completed in 1320... sort of. In fact, work continued for centuries, with the cathedral's towers (which measure about 106 meters in height) only finished in 1869. And as any visitor will notice, a view of the cathedral includes serious scaffolding, which has been in place for 20 years, and which residents suspect to be permanent). As with almost every European cathedral, expensive, ongoing restoration work is an omnipresent reality.

In total, there are nearly 1,500 listed heritage buildings in Regensburg, dating from the Roman period on.



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

Regensburg is located at the northern-most point of the Danube River. This photo was taken when the Danube was in flood – a continual challenge to riverfront towns.

As in many heritage cities in Europe, there are interesting examples of art, both ancient and modern, throughout the city. One very striking example is the mural on "The Goliath House", a 16th-century work depicting David's defeat of the giant. The house itself is several centuries older.

I was also struck by a back-alley mural portraying the artist Pablo Picasso, there for no apparent reason, but a really well-executed painting (except for the random branch of ivy that appears to be running up his nose).

There is more to do in Regensburg that wandering around

looking at buildings – although that can take quite a while. The city is home to Germany's oldest bratwurst restaurant, the Alte Würstküche (Old Sausage Kitchen) and a number of breweries. Personally, I enjoyed a Gluck's Pilz at Jolie's Café.

Not enjoyable, but more essential, is the part of any tour of Regensburg that involves the history of the Jewish residents of the city. As is frequently the case, this is a story of persecution, betrayal and eventual genocide. In the late Medieval period, Jews were protected in Regensburg, but when a recession hit in 1500, the "Christian" leaders realized they could solve their financial problems by driving the Jews – to whom they owed money – out of the city.

By the 20th century, the Jewish population had recovered, but in 1938, the Nazis destroyed the synagogue, and several Jewish-owned homes and stores. During World War II, hundreds of Jews were deported, many to their death at the Dachau concentration camp.

Today, a newly created architectural/artistic work commemorates the location of the synagogue, and honours the memories of the Jews who died in the persecutions over the centuries.

It's a sobering stop on a fascinating tour of one of Germany's best-preserved Medieval cities.

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



A typical, historic street in Regensburg, with the modern touch of a helicopter flying overhead.



Dom St. Peter has been fronted by scaffolding for at least 20 years.

COMING EVENTS

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GRIEF SUPPORT FOR MAID RELATED LOSS

This monthly in-person grief support group for loss related to Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) offers a compassionate, safe space to explore this unique loss. **The group will meet the 4th Wednesday of the month from 1 – 2:30 p.m. at the Thamesford Library, 165 Dundas St., Thamesford.** The group is free of charge and pre-registration is requested. **The next meeting is Wednesday, June 25th.** To register or inquire about an evening group, contact Faye Brekelmans at 519-866-3016 or email faye@compassionategriefsupport.ca.

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Caring Hearts Support Network: St. David's United Church, 190 Springbank Ave., Woodstock ON

A safe and supportive space to explore your grief, with the guidance of trained facilitators. Please contact for upcoming dates. No cost to attend. To register or for more information call or text 519-536-3370. www.caringheartssupportnetwork.com. One-on-one grief support is also available.

VON OXFORD GRIEF CARE:

FREE MONTHLY GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

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

TILLSONBURG

WHEN: 2nd Tuesday of every month

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

TIME: 6:30PM-8:00PM

INGERSOLL

WHEN: 4th Tuesday of every month

WHERE: Ingersoll Public Library 130 Oxford St., Ingersoll

TIME: 10:30AM –12:00Noon

WOODSTOCK

WHEN: 3rd Saturday of every month

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

TIME: 10:30AM-12:00 Noon

THE LIONS CLUB OF WOODSTOCK

The Lions Club of Woodstock has been serving the community and Oxford County with kindness and generosity since 1931. The Lions always place the needs of neighbours and communities first. Through the dedication and hard work of our volunteer members, we are serving those in need together. If you are interested in becoming a member or simply wish to learn more by attending one of our monthly meetings, please email Steve Iorio at steveiorio4@gmail.com for more information.

OXFORD COUNTY BRANCH OF ONTARIO ANCESTORS

Are you looking to start a summer pastime? Are you interested in your family history? Oxford Branch has an extensive collection of family history and genealogical resources that can help you. **Come visit our Resource Centre at 82 Light Street, Courthouse Square, Woodstock. We are open Tuesdays to Thursdays 10:00 am to 4:00 pm** where volunteers are ready to help you get started or help you research for missing information. You can also connect with us on the web at <https://oxford.ogs.on.ca>. We are dedicated to supporting and promoting genealogical research in Oxford County. Hope to see you through the summer!

HURON PARK BAPTIST CHURCH EVENTS:

199 Berwick St, Woodstock

BASKETBALL POWER CAMP

August 18-22 9 am-12:50 pm

Ages: 5-14

Call the church 519-421-4722 for Registration details.

DOWNTOWN WOODSTOCK BIA

IMPORTANT DATES:

MUSIC IN THE SQUARE

Every Thursday Until August 28

Come to Museum Square for a little lunchtime concert. Music in the Square happens every Thursday from 12 pm to 2 pm during the Summer months.

Grab some lunch from one of the neighbouring businesses or bring your own and enjoy live bands and musicians.

DOWNTOWN WOODSTOCK SHOPPING NIGHT

June 26, July 17, August 28, September 25, October 23, November 27, December 18 - 5pm-8pm

Our monthly shopping event, Woodstock Shopping Night, typically occurs every 4th Thursday of the month. Participating stores stay open late until 8 pm to facilitate late-night shopping. Enjoy a great night out in downtown Woodstock with extended store hours & exciting specials.

DOWNTOWN WOODSTOCK SUMMER STREETFEST

July 18/19

Summer Streetfest is a two-day celebration happening every July. Formerly known as Sidewalk Sales, Summer Streetfest invites you to discover Downtown Woodstock. With Dundas Street closed off for cars, stroll the street and discover our charming downtown businesses. Enjoy live music, kids' entertainment, exciting sales, yummy eats or take a seat on one of the many patios for a cold drink.

CHRISTMAS IN THE SQUARE

December 12/13 & December 19/20

Get ready for a festive family adventure in Downtown Woodstock! Join us for free festive fun in Museum Square; expect smiles, laughter, and a jolly good time. Bring the kids and snap a free photo with Santa at his house. Take the opportunity to do some last minute shopping for your loved ones at the wonderful downtown businesses.

FOOD TRUCKS AT GRACE UNITED CHURCH, TAVISTOCK

June 23, 4:30 - 7:30

Serial Griller, Pablas Street of India, Ish n chips, Beavertails. Proceeds go to Grace United Church

June 30, 4:30 - 7:30

Wild Boar, Berlin95, Los Rolling Tacos, Moreish Ice Cream. Proceeds go to Agricultural Society

CEDARVIEW RETIREMENT LIVING EVENTS:

511 Finkle St, Woodstock, ON

FREE POKER (no money)

Monday June 23 at 2:00pm

RSVP at Cedarview Retirement Home 519-602-0282. All are welcome

BINGO AND OR CARD BINGO (0.25 per round)

Tuesday June 24 at 2:00pm

RSVP at Cedarview Retirement Home 519-602-0282

All are welcome

FREE SEATED ZUMBA

Every other Wednesday at 9:30am

RSVP at Cedarview Retirement Home 519-602-0282. All are welcome

FREE FISH FRY WITH ENTERTAINMENT

June 26th, 11:30am-12:30pm

RSVP at Cedarview Retirement Home 519-602-0282. All are welcome

FREE EUCHRE TOURNAMENT

Sunday June 29th followed by BBQ

2-4pm

RSVP at Cedarview Retirement Home 519-602-0282. All our welcome

3RD ANNUAL WHEELS OF HONOUR AT

CEDARVIEW RETIREMENT HOME

Presented by The Ontario Military Vehicle Association

Saturday July 12th 11am-3PM

Please bring a non parishable food item for the food bank.

Toddsdogs Food Truck,

Dance in Style Performing at 11-11:30am

Ingersoll Pipe Band from 12-1pm

All are welcome

ELVIS IN HAWAII

July 4th @ 7:30-8:30pm

With Roy Leblanc. \$20.00 a ticket.

RSVP at Cedarview Retirement Home

Bring a nonperishable food item. All are welcome

FREE PRESENTATION WITH BROCK & VISSER END OF LIFE OPTIONS

July 17th at 2:30pm-4pm

Cedarview Retirement Home

Embalming & Tools, Organ Donation, Cremation vs

Water Cremation and more.

RSVP at 519-602-0282

SOUTH GATE CENTRE EVENTS:

www.southgatectr.com or 519-539-9817

FALLSVIEW CASINO

Friday, July 18 and Friday, September 19: 9 am – 6 pm

South Gate Centre Bus Trip

Members pricing and non-members pricing.

DAY IN PORT DOVER

Wednesday, September 10: 10 am – 5:30 pm

South Gate Centre Bus Trip

Lunch at Erie Beach Hotel, Lighthouse Theatre's "Here on the Flight Path," travel by luxury motorcoach. Members pricing and non-members pricing.

BLUE JAYS VS. TAMPA BAY

Saturday, September 27: 11:30 am – 8 pm

South Gate Centre Bus Trip

Members pricing and non-members pricing.

BEACHVILLE LEGION EVENTS:

434852 ZorraLine, Beachville

KARAOKE WITH KEN PYLE

June 21: 7-11 pm

KICKOFF TO CANADA DAY WEEKEND

Friday June 27

BBQ Burgers and Salads 5:30-6:30

Ice Cream Truck

Entertainment starting at 6 in Clubhouse. Deb and Fred Country/Rock Music

Outdoor games available and Free Pool

519-423-6363 to preorder and avoid disappointment

EUCHRE THURSDAYS 7 pm

DARTS FRIDAYS 8 pm

FREE POOL

Woodstock Police briefs

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Break and enter investigation leads to arrest and recovery of stolen property

The Woodstock Police Service has laid multiple charges following a comprehensive investigation into a series of break and enters at a local business.

Between August 2024 and May 2025, police responded to several reports of break and enters at a business located in the area of Vansittart Avenue. During these incidents, suspect(s) gained entry and stole various items, including cash, alcohol, and other merchandise.

The investigation led to the execution of a search warrant at a Woodstock residence on June 10, where officers recovered stolen property linked to the break and enters. A 39-year-old male from Woodstock has been arrested and charged with break and enter – commit an indictable offence, three counts of possession of property obtained by crime under \$5,000 and possession of an identity document.

Dirt bike driver faces charges

A Woodstock resident is facing charges after driving dangerously in the city.

On the afternoon of June 6, police ob-

served a dirt bike travelling at a high rate of speed in the downtown area. A short time later, the same vehicle was seen operating dangerously in the area of Pittock Park Road.

The operator of the dirt bike was identified as an individual known to police with a history of dangerous and unlawful driving behaviour. The suspect failed to stop for officers during a traffic stop attempt.

As a result of the investigation, a 27-year-old male from Woodstock was arrested and charged with dangerous operation and flight from a Peace Officer. He was held in custody pending the outcome of a bail hearing.

Impaired driving arrest

Police have charged a city man with impaired driving following an incident on June 6.

Police responded to a report of a vehicle colliding with a fence in the area of Alice Street and Norwich Avenue. Officers located a vehicle still running and observed an individual in the driver's seat who appeared to be unconscious. The driver eventually woke up and was assessed for impairment.

The 20-year-old's driver's licence was suspended and the vehicle was impounded for seven days.

Oxford Ontario Provincial Police briefs

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Woodstock man arrested after wild evening in Oxford

Provincial Police and members of the Woodstock Police Service joined forces to arrest a Friendly City man following a single-vehicle collision on the border of Oxford County and Woodstock.

On June 15 at about 7 p.m., members of Oxford OPP were dispatched to a collision on Oxford Road 4 in the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock.

After investigating a 27-year-old from Woodstock was charged with dangerous operation, failing to stop after an accident, assault, failure or refusal to comply with a demand and obstructing a peace officer.

He was held in custody pending the outcome of a bail hearing.

Another flag stolen in Norwich

Police are investigating the theft of a

rainbow Pride flag from a Norwich Township school, the third act of vandalism at elementary schools in the township.

Sometime between 9 p.m. on June 3 and 6 a.m. on June 4, unknown individual(s) attended an Old Stage Road address and removed the flag from the flagpole. Police did not release the school's name, but East Oxford Central Public School is located on the road.

There are currently no suspects and the investigation is ongoing.

The theft follows two earlier ones at Emily Stowe Public School, the first on May 16 and the second on May 25. Both incidents saw two hooded suspects remove the flag and set it on fire.

The OPP is reminding the public that theft and vandalism are criminal acts and will not be tolerated. Any individual who engages in vandalism or theft may face a criminal charge.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Oxford OPP at 1-888-310-1122 or *677 on a cellphone.

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Zorra Township News

Thamesford church paints rainbow sidewalk to show its support

EMILY STEWART

Echo Correspondent

After learning that someone felt accepted at the church with just a small rainbow sticker on a door, Westminster United Church decided to include more signs of support.

Westminster United Church painted a rainbow sidewalk outside to let members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community know they are welcome and accepted in the space. Rev. Mark Marshall said that the idea came about a few months ago when the church put on a play, and a woman saw a loonie-sized sticker of a rainbow on his office door. As a result, she felt more welcome.

"She came from a family background that wasn't accepting her sexuality," Marshall said.

"She's already had her girlfriend come once with her to a rehearsal and didn't introduce her that way - she was just a friend until then - but that made her feel comfortable enough to

open up to a few people to say how welcome she felt and eventually had her girlfriend come with her and introduced her as such and people embraced both of them together."

Westminster's board then came together and came up with ideas to show solidarity with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

"If something that small could make that big of a difference, could we be making a better statement that's outside of our doors that would help people know?" Marshall said. "We're not going to get it perfect, we're not pretending we are, but we're going to try to do our best and be as welcoming to every human as we can."

The church thought about including a Pride flag but decided to have a rainbow sidewalk instead, as flags could be torn down, ripped, or fade. The sidewalk was painted to commemorate Pride Month in June as well as to celebrate 100 years of the United Church of Canada.

Marshall said that while backlash was expected, comments about the rainbow sidewalk have been positive.

"For the most part, we've just heard nothing but kudos from the community and from our congregation," he said.

The United Church of Canada was the first to ordain same-sex marriage, elect an openly gay member to the clergy, and apologize publicly for previous treatment of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Marshall acknowledged past mistakes in churches have alienated people in the community, it is important to take steps forward.

"The church has made mistakes in the past that have certainly made people feel unwelcome. We also have certain parts of the Christian church that would still have those people be unwelcome," Marshall said. "We want to be able to say that we have a different understanding of Jesus' teachings that we understand love to be the biggest answer to any ques-



(MARK MARSHALL PHOTO)

Westminster United Church painted a rainbow sidewalk to show support for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

tion that's asked, that Jesus accepted with everybody, that he ate with

everybody, that his message was for everyone."

Zorra Township's assets have a \$1.5 million investment shortfall

CONNOR LUCZKA

Echo Correspondent

The 2025 asset management plan (AMP) paints a complicated picture of Zorra Township's assets, as Coun. Paul Mitchell noted at an earlier June 4 council meeting.

"If there are two disturbing things in this report, it's the dollar figures involved. The other is what I thought were very low ratings in the condition assessments," Mitchell said.

Connor Brennan, a specialist with Oxford County, presented an update on the AMP at that meeting, ahead of council's decision on what to do with the plan on June 18.

As Brennan presented, the AMP in-

dicates that the replacement value of the township's assets is estimated at \$338 million. Of that value, about \$135 million is related to roads, fleet, transportation equipment, streetlights and sidewalks, \$101 million to bridges and structural culverts, \$69 million to facilities, \$20 million to urban stormwater, \$8.5 million to fire department fleet and equipment and \$4 million to recreation assets.

To fully fund the municipality's assets, \$6.73 million of investment is required each year. A nearly \$5 million investment target has been recommended, though in this year's budget only \$3.45 million is slotted for asset investment, leaving a \$1.52 million shortfall.

A two to 2.4 per cent tax levy increase

would be required each year over the next five to meet the investment target.

Within the plan, each asset is given a rating ranging from "excellent," that it is well maintained with no defects, to "critical," that it no longer functions.

When it comes to bridges and culverts, two per cent of the assets are excellent, 63 per cent are good, 35 per cent are fair and none are poor or critical. Transportation services assets tell a different story – 11 per cent are excellent, 15 per cent are good, 52 per cent are fair, 14 per cent are poor and eight per cent are critical.

About 86 per cent of stormwater assets are in excellent condition, 13 per cent are good and one per cent are fair. None are in poor or critical condition.

About 24 per cent of recreation assets are in excellent condition, 49 per cent are in good condition, two per cent are in fair condition, five per cent are in poor condition and 20 per cent are in critical condition. About 37 per cent of facility assets are in excellent condition, 11 per cent are in good condition, 43 per cent are in fair condition, six per cent are in poor condition and three per cent are in critical condition. About 25 per cent of fire department assets are in excellent condition, 14 per cent are in good condition, 14 per cent are in fair condition, 22 per cent are in poor condition and 25 per cent are in critical condition.

Although at a glance the assessments seem dire, Brennan said many assets

are being properly managed even if they may have a fair or poor rating. If a building is set for replacement in 10 years, the municipality is not going to replace the roof with five years left if it is functional.

"I don't want residents to look at this and say we have bridges in poor condition," Ryan said after Brennan's clarification. "In an asset management context, we do. Functionally? Not necessarily."

The full 2025 AMP was presented to council at its June 18 meeting, after press time. A report on council's decision will be available in a future edition of the Echo.

The 173-page report can be found on the Zorra Township website.

Embro Highland Games returns for 86th year

CONNOR LUCZKA

Echo Correspondent

Calling all highlanders – the Embro Highland Games returns this Canada Day for its 86th year.

The annual games, a keystone, one-day festival in Zorra Township, is facilitated by the Zorra Caledonian Society. As it has in the past, it takes place at the Embro Zorra Community Centre, located at 355644 35th Line.

Alex McKay, president of the society, told the Echo that the games' significance to the community cannot be understated.

"It's just a great way, a great day, to celebrate Scottish heritage and our Zorra Township com-

munity," McKay said. "I think I've been there every year since I've been alive ... I wouldn't know a life without the games, and I wouldn't know an Embro without the games."

"For me, it's a day of joy," he went on to say. "There're just so many entertaining things going on ... and I don't think it really matters where you're from or what it is. I think this is so intertwined into the Embro community now that everybody's welcome to come and appreciate it for what it is."

This year, there is a full lineup of activities and attractions planned.

There are over 248 entries in the individual piping and drumming competitions, which be-

gin at 8:30 a.m. The Massed Bands take over the main field of the grounds at 12:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. For McKay, who comes from a long line of McKays that have been involved with the games and the Embro community, the Massed Bands are a particular highlight.

"My dad was heavily involved in the Caledonians," McKay said. "His dad helped out and his dad was a Caledonian back when it first kind of got started. So, you know, when I hear the Massed Bands ... For me, that just sends chills all over me. It's like feeling the weight of three other generations ahead of me."

Back by popular demand, Grade 2 Pipe Bands have been invited to Embro, travelling

from further afield and performing with a higher degree of difficulty.

For guests wanting to take in some true Scottish culture, the highland dance competition begins at 9 a.m. and runs all day, with 84 dancers registered so far, four from Scotland and one from Australia. This year, the dancing will be held indoors for some much-needed shade.

In keeping with the theme, a wide variety of Scottish vendors will be on site selling Scottish jewelry, food, tartan clothing and Celtic arts, crafts and more.

Back again in Embro is the popular tug-of-war competition. Five teams are registered, including local teams Ellice (near Stratford),

CONTINUED TO PAGE 29



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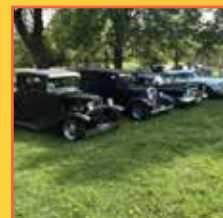
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Games set for Canada Day

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 28

Bluewater (Dashwood) and an army team from London. There are also teams from Nova Scotia and Minnesota travelling to compete.

Heavy events (complete with the caber toss), featuring male and female athletes from across the province vying for top honours, start at 10:30 a.m.

For those animal enthusiasts, the Scottish livestock area will be open all day with breeds of cattle, horses and sheep that have all originated in Scotland. Scottish dogs on parade, always a favourite show for visitors, will "strut the ring with their humans" at 11 a.m. There will also be two dog agility shows and three sheep herding demonstrations.

Returning to Embro are local craft breweries Upper Thames Brewing Co. from Woodstock, Junction 56 Distillery from Stratford and Mad-Mash Brewery and Restaurant from Tavistock, a new vendor. The Paddy Stones and the Doppelgangers will perform some rousing live music in the "Muckle Tent."

The Embro and Zorra Agricultural Society is organizing the wee Highlanders' play area so the youngest guests can blow off some steam. For those wanting a slower pace, the Scottish Tea Room will be open from noon to 4 p.m., hosted by the Knox Presbyterian Church in the arena lobby.

More events and vendors are set to appear at this year's games. For more information on what's on tap, visit the Zorra Caledonian Society's website: <https://zorracaledoniansociety.ca/embro-highland-games/>.

McKay thanked the society for all the work they do in putting on the games, in particular Helen Dowd and Geoff Innes for their work, as well as the sponsors that make the day a reality.

As the event nears, he said that they are still looking for volunteers to help out on the day.

Gates open at 7 a.m. on Tuesday, July 1. Admission at the gate is \$30 for adults or \$27.50 if bought online in advance. All visitors under 18 years of age are admitted at no charge. Park-



(ZORRA CALEDONIAN SOCIETY PHOTO)

President - Alex McKay, Heavy Events - Berle Conrad, Tug-of-War - Maxwell Sim Bish, Ingersoll Pipe Band Bass Drummer - Doug Turvey Highland Dancers - Iain Sim, Elise Toth, Emersyn Morris. The two Sheltie dogs are in the photo promoting their show "Scottish Dogs on Parade".

ing is complimentary. Visitors are welcome to bring along a lawn chair and a refillable water

bottle, as a new hydration station will be debuted at this year's games.

Riddles

I'm red and white and fly up high,
With a leaf in the middle beneath the sky. What am I?
Canadian flag

I say "eh" and I'm known to be nice,
I brave the cold and skate on ice. Who am I?
A Canadian

I live in trees and build my home,
With teeth so strong, through wood I roam. What am I?
Beaver

You'll find me sweet and sticky, too,
From maple trees, I drip for you. What am I?
Maple syrup

I'm a dish of fries, cheese, and gravy,
From Quebec, I'm rich and savoury. What am I?
Poutine

You'll see me in the west so tall,
I'm covered in snow and stand over all. What am I?
Rocky Mountains

I wear a uniform, skate real fast,
With a puck and stick, I shoot and pass. What am I?
Hockey player

You'll need me if you want to say,
That you're proud to be Canadian, eh? What am I?
Maple leaf

Sudoku

by PeterS 2025

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

Solutions on page 31Simple (0)

PET OF THE WEEK



BOBBY
She likes to curl up on the satellite receiver to snooze on her favourite warm up spot. Her other favourite spot is on anybody's lap. She's quite unique with grey calico coloring. Lynn and Al are lucky owners.

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1. Jupiter
2. Crescent moon
3. Gord Downie
4. True
5. Syria
6. Princess Juliana
7. $\frac{3}{4}$
8. LeBron James
9. 1916
10. Speakeasy

SUDOKU

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

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