

The Paris Independent

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HIGH NOON WINNER

Legion President Barry Humphrey and Mayor David Bailey present Rob Wilson with the High Noon Trophy following the annual tradition hosted by the legion on January 1, 2026.

(DAVID BAILEY PHOTO)

Snow, Moose Milk and tradition highlight New Year's Day at Paris Legion

CASANDRA TURNBULL

Managing Editor

Tradition and a touch of winter humour marked New Year's Day at Paris Legion Branch 29, where members and guests gathered for the

annual High Noon Golf Tournament and New Year's Levee.

The High Noon Golf Tournament, a Paris New Year's Day staple since 1960, once again drew participants behind the Syl Apps Community Centre. Competitors attempt to drive a golf

ball roughly 60 yards into a hula hoop — a task made considerably more challenging this year by deep snow and frozen ground.

Some years, like last January, there's ample grass and the task is not so difficult. This year's golf challenge was not for the faint of heart with

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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New Year's Levee kicks off centennial celebrations at Paris Legion

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

an estimated two feet of snow adding to the difficulty. "Placing a tee into frozen snow with gloves on is one of the biggest challenges. Be sure to wear appropriate footwear — snowshoes?" joked Paris Legion President Barry Humphrey.

Rob Wilson claimed bragging rights for a second straight year, successfully completing the challenge and earning his name on the tournament trophy once again.

Following the outdoor competition, about 60 people gathered inside the branch for the New Year's Levee, an annual open house tradition held at legion branches across Canada to exchange well wishes at the start of the year.

Attendees included the mayor, veterans, legion executive members, and friends and supporters of the branch. This year's levee carried added significance as it marked the launch of the 100th anniversary of both the Royal Canadian Legion nationally and Paris

Branch 29 locally.

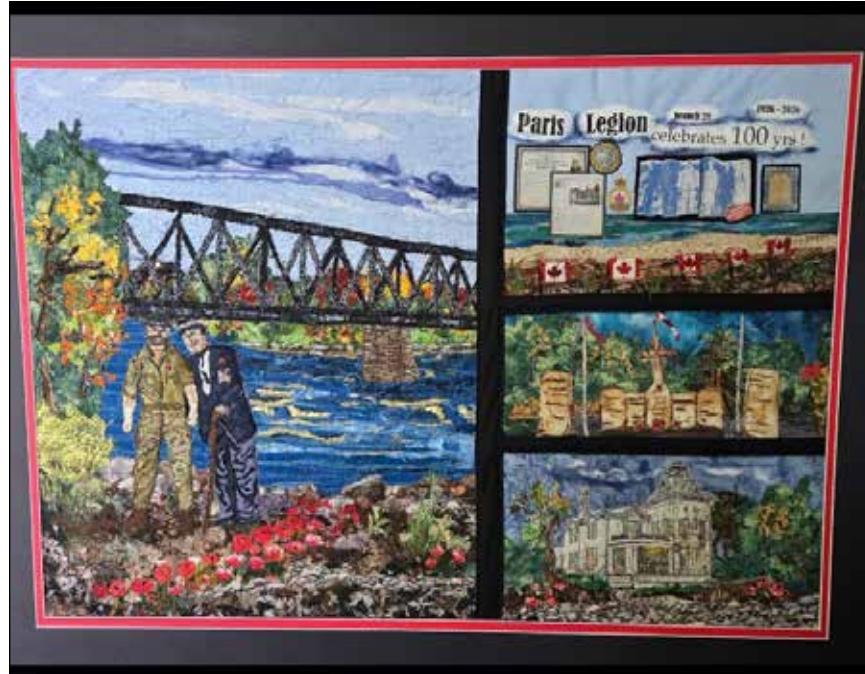
Anniversary committee chair Carrie Moran introduced committee members, thanked supporters and officially introduced the traditional New Year's beverage, Moose Milk, to the celebration. Anniversary committee members assisting with the event included Helen Banks, Sue Bohar, Marilyn Bursey, Brenda Carballo, Katy Osborne-Howie, Cheryl Humphrey, Carrie Moran and Tracy Terryberry.

"Moose Milk is a traditional drink of the Canadian Forces at functions both at home and abroad — a secret blend whose name conjures up many thoughts, one of which is winter and our great outdoors," Humphrey said. Despite its name, the beverage is a cocktail typically made with eggnog, spirits and other closely guarded ingredients.

With laughter, tradition and a nod to a century of service, the New Year's Day events once again brought the Paris legion community together to welcome the year ahead.



A bowl of traditional Moose Milk is ready to be served during the New Year's Levee at Paris Legion Branch 29, marking both the start of 2026 and the launch of the centennial year for the Royal Canadian Legion. The classic beverage is a long-standing New Year's tradition at legion branches across the country.



Suggestions are being accepted for the naming of the 100th Anniversary Fibre Art Quilt, created by Donna Campbell and currently on display at Paris Legion Branch 29. The quilt is part of Branch 29's centennial celebrations marking 100 years of the Royal Canadian Legion, and visitors are invited to stop in and submit their name ideas.

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Man arrested after barricaded incident prompts shelter-in-place in Paris

PARIS INDEPENDENT STAFF

Staff Contribution

A 39-year-old man was taken into custody early Dec. 28 following a lengthy barricaded-person incident that prompted a shelter-in-place order and road closures in the town of Paris.

According to Ontario Provincial Police, officers were called to a residence in Paris' north end at about 6:28 p.m. on Dec. 27 after receiving a report of a health concern involving the homeowner.

Police said officers attended the residence and knocked on the front door several times without receiving a response. Contact was later made by cellphone, during which the homeowner told officers to leave the property.

Shortly afterward, police were advised by the complainant that the man had stated no one should return to the residence because he possessed firearms and was prepared to use them. He also

indicated he would not speak further with police or come to the door.

Based on that information, Brant County OPP determined the situation had escalated and classified the individual as a barricaded person.

As a precaution, police implemented public safety measures and issued an advisory through social media asking residents in the immediate area to remain indoors. Roads were closed to both vehicle and pedestrian traffic while officers secured the scene, and OPP specialty emergency response units were deployed.

At 8:38 p.m., residents in the area of Broadway Street West and Grand River Street North, between Silver Street and William Street, were formally instructed to shelter in place. Police cited an active incident and warned residents to remain indoors with doors and windows locked.

At approximately 11:30 p.m., police said there had been no change in the situa-

tion and reiterated there was no broader threat to public safety. Residents were asked not to attend the area and to avoid sharing photos or videos of police activity online.

Negotiations with the homeowner continued for several hours, police said, but the man refused to surrender. At 5:33 a.m., officers from the OPP's Tactics and Rescue Unit entered the residence with a warrant and arrested the man without incident.

Emergency medical services attended the accused for medical observation. He was held for a bail hearing.

By 5:45 a.m., police announced the shelter-in-place order had been lifted and the incident was resolved.

Anyone with information related to the incident is asked to contact Brant County OPP at 1-888-310-1122. Anonymous tips can be submitted to Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 or online at ontariocrimestoppers.ca.

New Ontario laws take effect in 2026, from impaired driving to job pay transparency

PARIS INDEPENDENT STAFF

Staff Contribution

Here are the new laws and rules being added or updated for Ontario starting in the new year.

Ontario cracks down on impaired driving

Ontario is strengthening penalties for alcohol and drug-impaired driving, with tougher roadside suspensions and longer look-back periods for past offences.

Young and novice drivers will face longer licence suspensions for zero-tolerance violations, while repeat offenders will be subject to mandatory treatment programs.

The changes are being introduced under the Highway Traffic Act, according to the Ontario Ministry of Transportation.

New pay transparency rules for job postings

Ontario employers with 25 or more workers will be required to post salary ranges in public job ads, with ranges start at \$50,000. Postings where the top end of the range exceeds \$200,000 annually are exempt from this rule.

In most cases, all forms of pay must be disclosed, including bonuses, commissions, and any other non-discretionary compensation on top of the salary.

Employers must also disclose the use of artificial intelli-

gence in hiring and notify interviewed candidates of outcomes within 45 days.

The measures amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, according to the Ontario government.

Carbon monoxide alarm rules expand across Ontario

New Ontario Fire Code standards will require carbon monoxide alarms on every floor of a home, even those without bedrooms. Landlords and building owners will be responsible for installation, testing, and maintenance, while tenants must report issues.

The changes are aimed at reducing CO-related injuries and deaths, according to the Government of Ontario.

This rule also comes shortly after the Toronto multi-building fire that left hundreds of residents displaced due to high carbon monoxide levels burning in between the building walls.

Vitamin D levels increase in milk and margarine

Health Canada announced new regulations that will roughly double the required vitamin D content in cow's milk and margarine and increase allowed levels in goat's milk.

The changes are meant to address widespread vitamin D deficiency and improve bone health across Canada.

The changes are meant to address widespread vitamin D

deficiency and improve bone health across Canada.

"As of Right" labour mobility opens doors for workers

Ontario will allow qualified professionals from other provinces, including doctors, engineers, and electricians, to work in the province within 10 business days while completing registration. The province says the changes will help address labour shortages, especially in health care.

The policy flows from Ontario's Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act, according to the Ontario government.

Grocery code of conduct takes effect nationwide

Canada's Grocery Code of Conduct comes into force, setting standard for how grocers and suppliers do business with each other. While consumers shouldn't expect immediate price drops, the code aims to stabilize food inflation and reduce disputes in the supply chain.

The framework is backed by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, with analysis from Dalhousie University's Agri-Food Analytics Lab.

As the new year begins, Ontarians can expect to see the new changes take effect across the province.

Which Brant County service fees are going up in 2026?

CELESTE PERCY-BEAUREGARD

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Some municipal services are getting more expensive in Brant in 2026 — here are the ones that will hit your wallet the hardest.

Each year, Brant County reviews the user fees for things like summer camps, swimming lessons and facility rentals.

Staff are looking to ensure the charge is "fair, up to date and in line with the actual cost of delivering those services," according to a report councillors saw last month.

Here are some areas Brant County residents will pay more

Weekend Quiz

1. What planet is known as the Red Planet?
2. What Canadian province is home to Banff National Park?
3. What is the name of the fairy in Peter Pan?
4. What year did Canada adopt the maple leaf flag?
5. What fruit is traditionally used to make guacamole?
6. Who was the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean?
7. What is the tallest mountain in Canada?
8. What ocean lies along Canada's west coast?
9. What is the chemical symbol for gold?
10. What city hosted the 2010 Winter Olympic Games?

This week's answers are found on pg. 19

Facilities and recreation

For the most part, facility and recreation fees — things like community hall rentals, picnic shelters and summer camps — are increasing by around three per cent, in keeping with Canada's year-over-year inflation rate of 2.4 per cent as of September.

That means, if you paid \$200 for a week of camp last year, you can expect to pay \$206 (a three per cent increase, rounded up) in 2026.

Outdoor rentals

Rentals for county baseball diamonds, soccer fields and cricket pitches will see more of an aggressive jump.

But even at the highest increase, 40 per cent for a youth practice time, it will only set you back \$7 an hour after April 1, 2026, versus \$5 an hour at present.

Birthday parties

Facility rentals are going up for some birthday parties as well. While a birthday party on the turf at Syl Apps currently costs \$157.52, it's priced at \$212.39 after April 1, according to the report.

Swimming

Going swimming at Paris Community Pool will cost slightly more with increases of up to 41 per cent on fees, like the group pass, which jumps to \$15.93 in 2026 from \$11.28.

Garbage

Expect to pay more for dump runs, with tipping fees going up eight per cent, rounded to the nearest dollar. It brings something like general nonhazardous waste to \$140 per ton from \$130.

There are some instances where the county is holding onto 2025 pricing.

Some recreational drop-in programs

Ice- and roller-skating and the indoor remote control airplane flying, fly fishing and turf-walking drop-ins at Syl Apps are priced the same for 2026.

Water and wastewater

Monthly fixed and volumetric rates remain in place until June 30. (New rates were just introduced on July 1, 2025).

Brant Transit

The \$5 adult transit fare hasn't budged since 2019 — although council is looking at a slight increase as of March 1.

Marriage licenses and land registry fees remain unchanged.

Council has accepted the proposed fees and changes but could make amendments "at any time during the 2026 budget process and/or throughout the year," the report said.

For the full list of changes, visit brant.ca/fees.

Celeste Percy-Beauregard's reporting is funded by the Canadian government through its Local Journalism Initiative.

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EDITORIAL

When winter lies: A reminder about water safety



Buster Beaverton Water Safety

CASANDRA TURNBULL

Managing Editor

Winter arrived early this year, and with it came plenty of snow, cold snaps and stretches of ice that look reassuringly solid. But appearances can be dangerously misleading, especially when it comes to our rivers.

Anyone who has lived near the Grand River, or the Nith for that matter, knows it has a personality all its own. It is powerful, unpredictable, and constantly changing at the best of times. In winter, those risks don't disappear, they simply become harder to see.

In fact, this year's fluctuating temperatures have already created conditions we wouldn't normally expect until late January or February. Ice sheets that formed earlier in the season have been broken up by recent warm, wet weather, sending ice moving through the system and settling into dangerous ice jams.

On Jan. 3, the Grand River Conservation Authority issued a Flood Warning for Brantford and a Flood Watch for the Lower Grand River. Rising water levels and flows led to ice jams forming in slower-moving sections of the river, including through Brantford, with localized flooding already affecting areas such as Gilkinson Street and trails in the Gilkison Flats.

While water levels may fluctuate and even recede after runoff events, ice jams can suddenly set in place, causing water to back up with little warning. With tempera-

tures expected to remain below freezing, further ice formation - and further instability - is likely.

This is when the river becomes most deceptive.

Snow-covered banks can be slick and treacherous. Water levels are higher than normal. And while sections of the river may appear frozen and inviting for skating or exploration, currents beneath the surface can thin ice unevenly, weakening it from below.

No ice should ever be assumed safe, even if it looks thick. Ice can vary dramatically in strength due to currents, wind, runoff and rapid temperature changes.

High flows and unstable ice conditions significantly increase safety risks around rivers and streams throughout the watershed. Parents are urged to keep children and pets well back from watercourses, and everyone is reminded to stay off ice-covered water bodies.

The danger isn't hypothetical. According to the Lifesaving Society, approximately 35 per cent of drownings in Canada occur between October and April, often when people had no intention of entering the water. Snowmobiling and ice-related accidents are major contributors to that statistic.

Rivers are especially hazardous because conditions can change without warning. Dam operators may adjust water flows at any time, instantly destabilizing ice upstream and downstream. Ice near dams and reservoirs is never safe.

For those new to the area, this is an especially important message: admire the river from a distance. It is a beautiful part of our landscape but winter is not the season to test it.

Talk to your children. Awareness matters. We can't follow them everywhere, but we can equip them with knowledge that helps them make safer decisions when we're not there.

If you're looking to enjoy winter safely, there are better options. Follow the County of Brant winter activity updates for outdoor ice rinks. Paris has three: Syl Apps Community Centre, Axton Park and Paris Optimist Park, but conditions change quickly and rinks may close when temperatures

fluctuate. These monitored spaces are the safest places to lace up skates.

Interested in cross-country skiing or snowshoeing? Local trails such as the Paris-to-Cambridge Trail offer great winter experiences. Use caution, stick to marked paths, and stay well clear of riverbanks, which can collapse or give way without warning. Winter can be beautiful, but it can also be unforgiving. The dangers around water this time of year are often invisible until it's too late.

Let's respect the river, listen to the warnings, and make safety our priority so everyone makes it through winter to enjoy spring on the water instead – and stay tuned for that spring water safety PSA!

Letters to the Editor

Ancient Wisdom for Modern Government

To the Editor:

As we ring in the New Year, I'd love to share some age-old, classic wisdom that can't get much simpler or clearer for our governments today:

"When taxes are too high, people go hungry. When the government is too intrusive, people lose their spirit. Act

for the people's benefit; Trust them, leave them alone."

- Lao Tzu, 75th verse of the Tao Te Ching

Hmmmm...a tall order? Or can we somehow make this a reality in Canada?

- Melanie Ely, Paris

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Participation Supports Services earns four-year reaccreditation and seal of sustainability

PARIS INDEPENDENT STAFF

Staff Contribution

Participation Supports Services (PSS) is proud to announce it has been awarded a four-year reaccreditation by FOCUS Accreditation, covering the period from December 2025 through December 2029. In recognition of its long-standing commitment to quality and continuous improvement, PSS has also received a Seal of Sustainability Award—an honour reserved for organizations that have successfully completed three full accreditation cycles.

Accreditation through FOCUS is a comprehensive and rigorous process that examines every aspect of an organization's operations, programs, governance, and service delivery. Through this evaluation, Participation Supports Services demonstrated that it not only meets, but consistently upholds, established best-practice standards in the community support services sector.

Participation Support Services (PSS) in Brantford is a local community-based not-for-profit organization dedicated to helping adults with physical disabilities and complex care needs live as independently as possible in their own homes and communities.

"This reaccreditation reflects the exceptional work happening every day at PSS," said Steve Smith, Chair of the Board of Directors. "Our front-line staff and management are deeply committed to providing outstanding care, and the Board is thrilled to see that dedication recognized with another well-deserved four-year accreditation."

As part of the review process, FOCUS Accreditation conducted an in-depth assessment of PSS's programs and services, confirming the organization's focus on quality, accountability, and continuous improvement. The result is a clear endorsement of PSS's ability to deliver reliable, person-centred supports while maintaining strong organizational leadership and governance.

For service users, families, partners, and the broader

community, reaccreditation serves as a trusted mark of excellence—assurance that Participation Supports Services operates with professionalism, integrity, and a steadfast commitment to those it supports.

"This achievement belongs to our staff," said Sherry Kerr, Executive Director of Participation Supports Services. "They worked incredibly hard to prepare for this reaccreditation, and we look forward to celebrating their success together in the New Year."

FOCUS Accreditation Executive Director Cheryl Whiteman commended PSS for embracing the accreditation process and the transparency it requires.

"Inviting an external accrediting body into an organization is a vulnerable step," said Whiteman. "Participation Supports Services has shown strong leadership and integrity by doing so. This willingness to be evaluated demonstrates accountability, honesty, and a genuine commitment to continuous improvement."

During the accreditation process, stakeholders highlighted PSS's greatest strength—its people.

"Our greatest strength is our people," one stakeholder shared. "With decades of experience supporting adults with disabilities—representing more than 50 years of collective service—our dedicated team brings deep expertise, compassion, and strong community relationships. We are known for our collaborative culture, leadership in advocacy, and strong partnerships with hospitals, Ontario Health at Home, and community agencies. Through an interdisciplinary approach and active community engagement, we go beyond basic services to provide meaningful, person-centred support."

Whiteman also thanked Participation Supports Services for its leadership role in advancing accreditation across the Community Support Services sector. "By undergoing such a rigorous process, PSS sets an example for others," she said. "This commitment reassures all stakeholders that the organization is dedicated to operating at the highest level of excellence."



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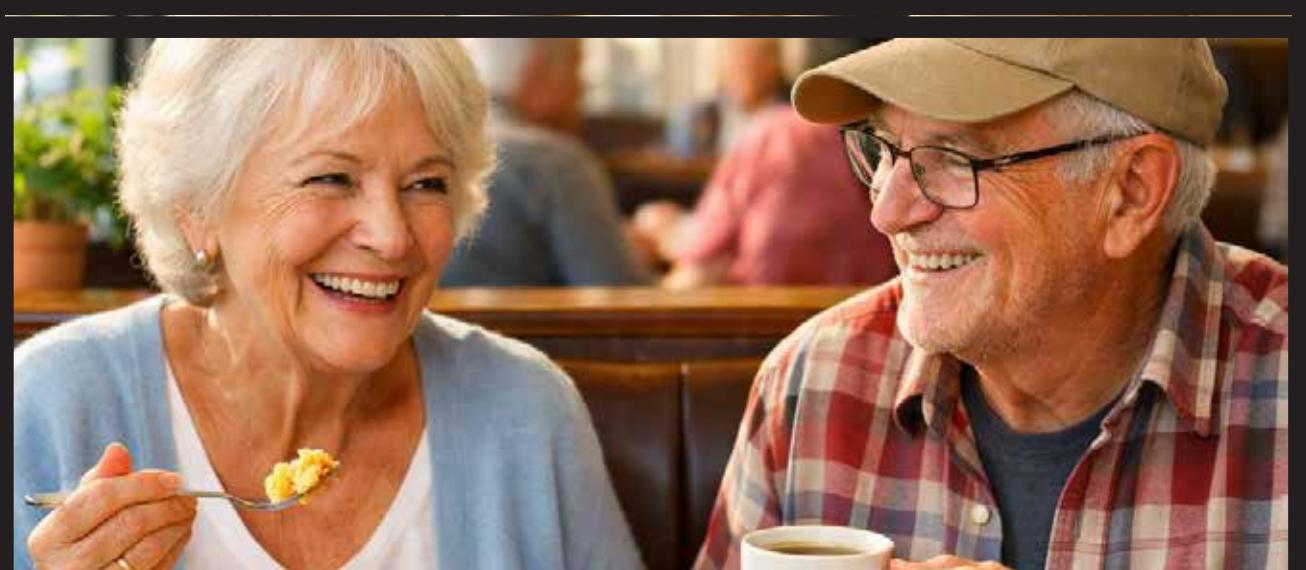
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Paris Curling Club silent auction raises nearly \$800 for local families

CASANDRA TURNBULL

Managing Editor

A long-running holiday tradition at the Paris Curling Club took on a more local focus in December, raising nearly \$800 to support two Paris families during the Christmas season.

Members of the club's afternoon ladies' league held their annual silent auction as part of their Christmas celebration, directing the proceeds to families connected to North Ward Elementary School and Holy Family Elementary School.

"The Silent Auction has been a part of our Christmas celebration for approximately 12 years," said Jean Emmott, chair of the Afternoon Ladies' Social Committee. "Originally, it was initiated to subsidize our catered meal. When we changed to an organized potluck five years ago, we continued the Silent Auction with proceeds going to Nova Vita Women's Shelter in Brantford."

This year, the committee opted to keep the support closer to home.

"One of our Social Committee members suggested we reach out locally and support needy families in Paris," Emmott said. "Our 38 members eagerly supported the idea and we decided to begin this year with two families — one from Holy Family Elementary and one from North Ward Elementary."

Committee member Judie Pezzetta contacted the principals at both schools, who selected families requiring

assistance. Emmott said the two schools were chosen at random and the group plans to support families from Cobblestone Elementary School and Sacred Heart Elementary School next year.

The fundraiser drew strong participation from club members, who donated all of the auction items.

"Many members donated items including home baking, preserves and delicacies, home crafted items, re-gifted items and brand new items, which all brought some exciting bidding on the day of the auction," said Pezzetta, who spearheaded the initiative.

In addition to auction bids, a cash donation box was set up and shared with the club's Wednesday night Under-5 (years of experience) League and Thursday Morning Mixed League, further boosting the total raised.

Once the fundraising was complete, the money and gifts were distributed through the schools to maintain the families' anonymity. At Holy Family School, funds were directed toward winter clothing for a newly arrived family with five children.

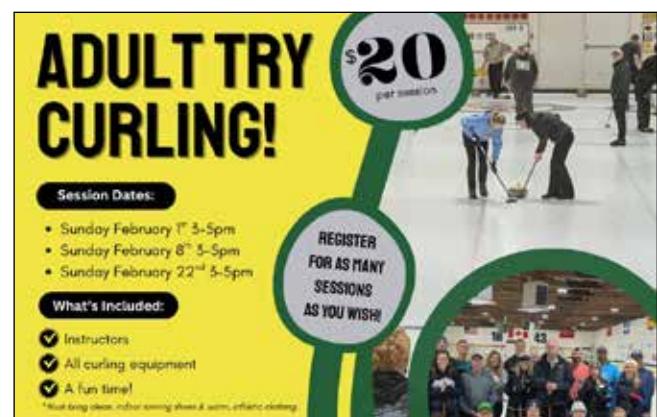
"She had just received five children in one family who had just arrived from a country where snow does not exist," Emmott said of the Holy Family principal. The school principal and a staff member used the donated money to purchase the much needed items on the family's behalf. In a letter of thanks, the parents wrote, "This gesture has made our Christmas season even more special and we are very appreciative of the care and generosity shown to our

family."

Support for the North Ward family included toys, a stuffed stocking for each child, candy, fruit and a \$120 No Frills gift certificate to purchase a Christmas dinner. The mother provided a wish list and the ladies from the club, as well as the principal completed the shopping.

"Our curling groups were so excited to share in the Spirit of Christmas in this way," Pezzetta said. "We look forward with excitement to next year and hope, in some way, this inspires others to reach out and help those less fortunate."

Emmott credited Pezzetta for leading the effort. "This endeavour was the suggestion of Judie Pezzetta who spearheaded this campaign," she said. "We are so proud of her leadership."



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Ontario 

Surprise owl visit turns ordinary afternoon into memorable moment for Paris family

CASANDRA TURNBULL

Managing Editor

What started as a routine trip out the door quickly turned into an unforgettable wildlife encounter for a Cobblestone neighbourhood family after an owl quietly took up residence on the side of their home.

Shantie Bahadur said the family was heading out for errands around 2:45 p.m. on Jan. 3rd when her two-year-old son suddenly froze on the porch.

"He stood there speechless," she said. "After a few stressful moments of coaxing him to move and talk, he finally pointed to the owl on the wall."

The bird blended so well into the brick exterior that the adults hadn't noticed it at all. Remarkably, Bahadur said, their son didn't cry or make a fuss, a calm reaction that likely prevented the owl from being startled.

Later, the family turned the moment into a positive memory for him, telling their toddler the owl had stopped by to wish him a happy third birthday, coming up Jan. 5.

The family isn't sure exactly when the owl arrived but believe it couldn't have been there long before they spotted it.

"It was clinging to the brick, which can't be easy on its talons," said Akshay Bajaj. "While we walked past it quietly to get to the car, it stayed completely motionless."

When the family returned home around 4 p.m., the owl had moved on its own - settling onto the Christmas wreath hanging on the front door. There, it remained until just after 5:20 p.m., when dusk set in and outdoor lights began to turn on.

Concerned but cautious, the family turned to a local social media group to ask for advice.

"Most people were just in awe of this beautiful raptor," said Bahadur. "Everyone advised us to leave it alone, explaining that it's nocturnal and likely just resting."

The responses helped reassure the family, who saw no signs of injury or distress.

"It was unusual to see it on the wall instead of a tree or pole, especially since we have a tree right out front,"

Bajaj said. "But it looked healthy, so we decided to leave as planned and reassess when we got back (from the errands)."

No calls were made to wildlife officials. Instead, the family followed the advice to keep their distance and let nature take its course.

From inside the house, they watched as the owl dozed peacefully.

"We could see it was fast asleep, which was a relief," said Bahadur. "It kept opening its eyes to look at us with these intense, beautiful eyes, then nodding back off. It was very calm."

Based on feedback from the online community and their own research, the family believes the visitor was an Eastern screech owl, a species they admit they knew little about beforehand.

"We definitely learned a lot," said Bajaj. "We know enough to leave wildlife alone unless it's injured. If it had been hurt, we would have contacted a rescue organization."

Looking back, the family says the experience was equal parts surprising and meaningful and was made even more memorable by the timing.

"It felt special, and a bit eerie, to have such a close encounter in the daytime, on the first super moon of the year," said Bahadur. "It was exciting for both adults and kids."

After the owl moved on, messages from friends and neighbours poured in, with several describing the visit as a sign of good luck or a blessing.

"It's been a tough few years for our family," Bahadur said. "This felt like a really special moment; something positive and calming, right on our front porch."

The family hopes their experience encourages others to pause and observe if they encounter wildlife unexpectedly.

"Keep your distance and watch for signs of distress," said Bajaj. "Even if an animal is injured, approaching it can cause more stress. It's best to contact a wildlife rescue or allow nature to take its course."

For this Paris family, a quiet owl's daytime rest turned into a moment of wonder and a reminder that nature can

surprise you when you least expect it.



(SUBMITTED PHOTOS)

An Eastern screech owl rests quietly on a Christmas wreath at the front door of a Cobblestone neighbourhood home in Paris, taking an afternoon pause before flying off at dusk. The rare daytime sighting offered the family a calm, close-up look at the nocturnal raptor in an unexpected setting. Jim Young stands beside overflowing bin of nonperishable food donations at Sobeys, which will be sent to the Salvation Army later this month.



Kishan Bajaj, 2, watches closely from inside the family's Cobblestone neighbourhood home alongside his father, Akshay Bajaj, as an Eastern screech owl perches on the Christmas wreath at the front door. The unexpected daytime visit drew the quiet attention of the entire family, including mom Shantie Bahadur and older brother Arjun, 7, turning an ordinary afternoon into a memorable moment with nature.

Optimists kick off 2026 with thanks — and a bottle drive

CASANDRA TURNBULL

Managing Editor

As the calendar flips to a new year, the Paris Optimist Club is taking a moment to say thank you — and inviting the community to help start 2026 on a positive note.

Club members extended their gratitude to residents, supporters and volunteers who backed Optimist projects, events and initiatives throughout the past year. With that support, the club says it was able to spread optimism, lend a helping hand and make a meaningful difference for young people in the community.

Looking ahead, the Optimists say they are eager to

continue serving, connecting and creating opportunities for youth and families in Paris.

That work begins early in the new year with the club's first initiative of 2026 - the annual bottle drive.

Residents are invited to drop off empty liquor and beer bottles and cans on Saturday, Jan. 10, from 10 a.m. to noon at the Paris Optimist Club parking lot. Volunteers will be on hand to unload donations.

Proceeds from every bottle and can collected support programs for children and youth in the community.

For the Optimists, it's a simple formula: a small drop-off for residents that adds up to a big impact for local kids — and a hopeful start to the year ahead.

The Paris Independent

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HISTORIC PARIS

PARIS PAST: Winter just like the ones we used to know



By Chris Whelan

As I look out the window this week at the white-veiled streets of Paris, I can't help but feel a strange sense of déjà vu. The wind is howling down Grand River Street, and the snowbanks are beginning to reclaim the sidewalks, turning our charming "Cobblestone Capital" into a labyrinth of white. For many of our newer residents, this winter feels like an anomaly—a harsh disruption to the milder seasons we've grown accustomed to. But for those of us who grew up here in the 1970s, this isn't an anomaly. It's a homecoming.

There is a specific rhythm to an Ontario winter that seems to have been muffled over the last few decades. In the 70s, winter wasn't just a season; it was an era that lasted from late October until the ice finally groaned and broke on the Nith in April. This year, as the plow drifts grow higher than my SUV, I am transported back to a time when those same drifts were taller than me.

I remember the winters of my childhood as a series of "snow canyons." Back then, the municipal plows and the relentless wind would conspire to create walls of snow along the residential reaches of Washington and Catherine Streets. We didn't just walk to school; we navigated a trench system.

The 1970s were bookended by legendary storms. Some of you will recall the "Great Blizzard of 1971," which caught Southwestern Ontario completely off guard. Power went out across town, and you will remember the eerie silence that followed—no hum of the refrigerator, no static from the television, just the whistling wind against the windowpanes. But the undisputed king of memories remains the Blizzard of '77.



1940 - Hwy 24 Paris Road to Cambridge

(PARIS MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY PHOTO)

That January, the world simply stopped. In the County of Brant, as in much of the province, the snow reached the power lines in some spots. I remember my father rescuing me from school that day. To a seven-year-old, it wasn't a disaster; it was the greatest playground ever constructed.

Our "gear" in those days was a far cry from the high-tech, moisture-wicking Gore-Tex of today. We wore heavy melton-cloth snowsuits that felt like they weighed fifty pounds once they got wet. And they always got wet. By the time we trudged home from a day of tobogganing down the hills behind the high school or skating on Watt's Pond, we were encrusted in "snow-balls"—those stubborn clumps of ice that clung to the wool of our mittens and the hems of our pants like Velcro.

The smell of a 1970s winter is the smell of wet wool steaming on a cast-iron radiator. We would line up our mittens and bread-bag-lined boots (a classic trick to keep socks dry!) and wait for the heat to hiss through the pipes.

What I miss most, perhaps, is the way the snow brought us together. When a storm like the one we are seeing now hit in the 70s, there was no "work from home." Everything just paused. Neighbours who hadn't spoken since the autumn leaf-raking would emerge with shovels in hand,

helping to dig out the elderly couple down the block or pushing a stranded Ford LTD station wagon out of a drift.

We spent our evenings at the Paris Arena or outside under the streetlights, playing road hockey until our toes were numb and our mothers called us in for hot chocolate. There was a toughness to it, sure, but also a profound sense of quiet. Without the constant roar of modern traffic, a snowy night in Paris was so silent you could hear the frost cracking the trees in Barker's Bush.

This year, as I watch local kids building snow-forts and tobogganing with glee down our many hills and see the snow-clearing crews working around the clock, I realize we are experiencing a 'classic' winter. It's a reminder of our town's resilience. Paris has always been defined by its rivers and its hills; in the winter, those features truly demand our respect.

So, if you're feeling frustrated by the shoveling and the slow commutes, try to look at it through the eyes of a 70s kid. Grab a sled, find a hill, and embrace the white-out. After all, we aren't just enduring a storm; we're reliving a piece of Paris history.

Just make sure you have some hot cocoa waiting on the stove when you get back.

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A quarter century of highland pride: Paris Port Dover Pipe Band celebrates a milestone year as they look back on 2025

CHRIS WHELAN

Editor

PARIS/PORT DOVER — In the world of piping and drumming, 25 years is more than just a milestone; it is a testament to community, tradition, and the enduring power of the pipes. As 2025 draws to a close, the Paris Port Dover Pipe Band (PPD) is looking back on a silver anniversary year that can only be described as legendary.

From the local streets of Ontario to the historic esplanades of Scotland—and eventually the bright lights of a rock-and-roll stage—the band has spent the last twelve months proving why they remain one of the region's most beloved cultural staples.

From Roots to Results

The year kicked off with a focus on the next generation. The band hosted Haggisfest, a vital fundraiser ensuring their teaching program remains free to members—a mission they have proudly upheld for all 25 years of their existence.

Education remained a theme throughout the year, as the band hosted a world-class tenor drumming workshop with Simon Hodgett of the Grade 1 St. Laurence O'Toole band. That dedication to craft paid off on the field: the competition band officially upgraded to Grade 4 and secured a triumphant first-place trophy at the Kincardine Scottish Festival.

A Summer of Tradition

After a brief hiatus in 2024 to perform in Halifax, the band made a highly anticipated return to Port Dover for the July 1st Canada Day parade, much to the delight of local residents.

However, the "summer of a lifetime" took place across

the Atlantic. Several members spent five weeks in Scotland participating in the 75th Anniversary of the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. Representing the PPD on the world stage, the members described the invitation as a profound honor and a highlight of the band's quarter-century history.

The Best-Kept Secret in Hamilton

Perhaps the most electrifying moment of the year occurred on November 22, 2025. While rumors had swirled for weeks, the band remained under a strict veil of silence until the very last moment.

In a "once-in-a-lifetime" experience, members of the PPD took the stage with Sir Paul McCartney during his "Got Back" tour stop in Hamilton. This marked the fourth time the band has been invited to perform with the Beatles legend.

"For many of our members, it was their first time performing at such a high-profile event," a band representative shared. "We cannot thank Sir Paul enough for this incredible opportunity and wish him success on the rest of his tour."

Event	Highlight
Fall Fusion	Hosted Ontario's largest workshop for the first time since 2015.
Remembrance	Honored veterans in Ohsweken, Paris, St. George, and Waterford.
Competition	Secured 1st Place at @kinscotfest.
Holiday Spirit	Returned to Port Dover for the Christmasfest Santa Claus parade.

Looking Ahead

As the pipes are packed away and the drums are silenced for a brief winter rest, the PPD looks toward the future with gratitude.

"Thank you to all of our members, volunteers, and followers who have supported us, whether for 25 years or 25 minutes," the band stated in a year-end wrap-up on social media. "Here's to another 25 incredible years—Sláinte!"

The band has already confirmed that Fall Fusion will return in 2026. If 2025 was any indication, the next quarter-century is off to a roaring start.

The Paris Independent

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Building Belonging Across the County of Brant

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Venue: Brant Sports Complex, La Farge Hall
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This workshop brings together residents, community organizations, and service partners to explore ways of strengthening safety, belonging, and equitable access across the County of Brant.



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PUBLISHER'S PREDICTIONS

Will the world be better by the end of 2026? Here's my take

STEWART GRANT

Publisher

A New Year's Day poll on Smerconish.com asked people, "Will the world be in a better place at the end of 2026 than it is today?" Of the 25,000 responses, just over 60% replied "No" while the remainder replied "Yes". What do you think?

It's a subjective question that's hard to measure, but I had cast my Jan. 1 vote in the "Yes" column. Maybe that's just wishful thinking. The year is certainly off to quite an interesting start.

As I finish up this predictions article on Jan. 3, one of 2026's big questions had already been answered, with the news that Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has been removed from power by American forces. While Maduro was an illegitimate leader who had stolen the 2024 Venezuelan election, the brazen manner whereby he was taken out is very concerning, as are the unknown worldwide consequences that may follow.

Here's my crack at how the rest of the year will play out...

1. Despite Trump's comments to the contrary at his Jan. 3 press conference, public pressure within Venezuela will sway the American President to eventually support Maria Corina Machado as the rightful leader of Venezuela.
2. A Democratic politician will call for the impeachment of Donald Trump for failing to gain necessary approvals for invading Venezuela, but this goes nowhere.
3. In Canada, the Liberal government's government
4. will hold throughout 2026.
5. Pierre Poilievre will remain as Conservative leader following that party's leadership review in January.
6. Although there will be much speculation, China will not invade Taiwan in 2026.
7. A ceasefire will be negotiated in the Russia-Ukraine war.
8. Drone warfare, one of the staples of the Russia-Ukraine war, will sadly make its first high-profile appearance on this side of the ocean, with a notable strike sparking heavy interest in counter-drone defense systems.
9. American tariffs on Canadian-made products will decrease during the year.
10. Despite worries about an AI bubble, the stock markets will record another positive year.
11. More information will be released from the Epstein files, but no arrests of high-profile personalities will occur.
12. In sports, the Stanley Cup will stay south of the border, with the Colorado Avalanche earning the NHL's top prize.
13. Fans of the Toronto Maple Leafs will be spared the agony of

losing in the first round when the team fails to make the playoffs.

14. The Buffalo Bills make it to the Super Bowl but lose to the Seattle Seahawks.
15. Team Canada will edge Team USA in the Men's Olympic Hockey Finals.
16. France will win the 2026 World Cup.
17. Speculation will grow regarding Trump's physical and mental health as he turns 80 years old this year. He will survive the year, but with increased public focus on J.D. Vance as potentially needing to take over as U.S. President in 2027.

Do you have any bold predictions for 2026? Feel free to email me at stew@granthaven.com to have your say.

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Ayr Rockets girls reach finals at Jason Cripps Memorial tournament



(CASANDRA TURNBULL PHOTO)

The Ayr Rockets U13LL Girls' Team celebrates following a 1-0 semi final win over the Twin Centre Hurricanes during the Jason Cripps Memorial Hockey Tournament Dec 27-30th. Team members include Scarlett, Sydney, Milena, Calla, Izzy, Bella, Nat, Lucy, Thea, Claire, Charlie, Clara, Rylea, Olivia, Lilah and Bea.

CASANDRA TURNBULL

Managing Editor

The U13 Local League Ayr Rockets capped off a strong holiday showing with a runner-up finish at the Jason Cripps Memorial Hockey Tournament.

The annual event, hosted by Kitchener Minor Hockey, is held in honour of Jason Cripps, who was killed in a motor vehicle collision caused by a drunk driver in 1988. Four years after his death, and following consultation with his family, the tournament was established in his memory, becoming a long-standing Christmas tradition in minor hockey.

The Rockets, made up of an equal mix of players from Paris, Ayr, Brantford and Kitchener, advanced to the championship game in an eight-team division after a weekend of tight, competitive contests.

Ayr opened the tournament on Dec. 27 against the Wilmot Wolverines, edging out a 1-0 victory in dramatic fashion. With just 27 seconds remaining, Rylea Detzler sent the puck toward the Wolverines net, where an unlucky bounce off the goaltender's stick carried the puck over her shoulder and across the goal line. Bella Sayles and Natalie McMillan picked up the assists.

The Rockets followed with a 1-1 draw against the Cambridge Hawks, with Calla Roberts scoring Ayr's lone goal off a feed from Milena Rakanovic.

Ayr then played the Guelph Jr. Gryphons to a scoreless tie, leaning heavily on goaltender Claire Van Houwelingen. Van Houwelingen turned aside a steady stream of chances, keeping the Rockets in the game with a poised

and composed performance between the pipes.

The win and two ties were enough to send Ayr into the semifinals on Dec. 29, where the Rockets earned a 1-0 victory over the Twin Centre Hurricanes. Rakanovic scored her first goal of the season at a pivotal moment, assisted by Charlie Cornish. Both players are new to the sport, making the goal a memorable highlight as it propelled Ayr into the finals.

In the championship game, the Rockets faced a disciplined and undefeated Kitchener Rangers squad. The teams skated through a scoreless first period before Kitchener opened the scoring in the second and added another in the third.

Ayr responded late when Roberts found the back of the net on a rebound, assisted by Bea Promoli and Scarlett Hayward. Promoli carried the puck in on a breakaway after a feed from Hayward, and when the Kitchener goaltender couldn't corral the initial shot, Roberts buried the loose puck. Kitchener sealed the win with an empty-net goal as the Rockets pushed to tie the game in the final minutes.

Reflecting on the championship effort, Rockets head coach Nate Witt praised his team's resilience.

"The girls were grinding out close games all tournament and that's exactly how the final went," Witt said. "They fought hard the entire game against a very good team. Our goaltender was amazing as always, and the defence and forwards really battled to keep us in it and swing the momentum at the end. We've got a great group of girls and the coaches are very proud of the effort and the way they competed all tournament."

BRANT BATTALION SCOREBOARD - WEEK OF DECEMBER 15TH

Monday, December 15

- U10A Battalions lose 5-1 against Cambridge Hawks
- U13A Battalions lose 10-1 against South Oxford Storm
- U14A Battalions win 3-0 against South Oxford Storm

Tuesday, December 16

- U11B Battalions win 7-2 against Tavistock Titans

Thursday, December 18

- U12A Battalions lose 3-2 against Mt Brydges Cougars

Friday, December 19

- U11B Battalions win 7-1 against Norfolk Knights 2
- U13A Battalions lose 6-0 against Waterford Wolves
- U15A Battalions lose 5-2 against South Oxford Storm

Saturday, December 20

- U10A Battalions lose 5-0 against Norfolk Knights
- U14A Battalions win 4-1 against Ausable Valley Coyotes
- U12A Battalions lose 2-1 against Cambridge Hawks
- U16A Battalions lose 7-5 against Ausable Valley Coyotes
- U21A Battalions win 6-2 against Thorold Blackhawks
- U13A Battalions win 4-1 against Waterloo Wolves
- U18A Battalions lose 5-4 against Ausable Valley Coyotes
- U13B Battalions win 4-2 against Ayr Flames

Sunday, December 21

- U11A Battalions tie 3-3 against Norfolk Knights
- U12A Battalions lose 6-2 against Burlington Jr. Raiders
- U13B Battalions win 1-0 against New Hamburg Huskies
- U16A Battalions lose 2-1 against GLHA Jr. Mustangs
- U15A Battalions tie 1-1 against Elgin-Thames 73s
- U18B Battalions lose 9-1 against Twin Centre Stars
- U21A Battalions win 5-1 against Welland Tigers
- U18A Battalions lose 3-2 against Elgin-Thames 73s
- U13A Battalions lose 7-4 against Norfolk Knights

Sunday, December 28

- U21A Battalions win 5-2 against Delhi Norwich 59ers

New website chat bot helps Grand Erie job seekers connect with local work

PARIS INDEPENDENT STAFF

Staff Contribution

Job seekers in Brantford and surrounding communities have a new digital tool to help them connect with local employment opportunities.

The Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie has launched a chat bot on its website designed to help people quickly find jobs and access career-related resources, including resume tools, wage information and training pathways.

"Thousands of area residents already know our job board is the go-to source to see local jobs, but they may be unfamiliar with the many other useful resources they can access," said executive director Danette Dalton. "The chat bot provides a quick, easy way to find information tailored to a person's questions and needs."

Dalton said the planning board has introduced about 15 online tools over the past five years, with roughly a dozen forming part of its Grand Erie Jobs toolkit. Together, the tools allow users to explore career options, identify in-demand occupations, review local wage data, create basic resumes and learn more about apprenticeships and skilled trades.

Additional resources include a Newcomers Gateway that lists supports for people new to the region, as well as tools for employers, such as a recently launched Business Resource Toolkit.

"The chat bot can help people maximize these resources," Dalton said, noting it also enhances services for residents of Brantford, Brant County, Haldimand, Norfolk, Six Nations of the Grand River and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

The chat bot responds instantly to questions typed by website visitors, using pre-approved information developed by the planning board and refined through user testing. It is not staffed by a live person and does not generate new information on its own, instead providing consistent answers based on existing content.

The project was developed in collaboration with Fahad Sheikh, a student in the UX design program at Wilfrid Laurier University Brantford. The initiative is part of an Employment Ontario project funded in part by the governments of Canada and Ontario.

The Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie is one of 25 non-profit organizations across Ontario that provide leadership in labour force planning at the community level.



A new chat bot featured on the Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie's website helps job seekers quickly find local employment opportunities and career resources by answering questions and guiding users to tools such as job listings, resume builders and labour market information.

New Year New Arrival: Georgia becomes first baby born at Brantford General Hospital in 2026.



(BCHS PHOTO)

The Brant Community Healthcare System welcomed its first baby of 2026 on Jan. 1, with Georgia arriving at 9:08 a.m. at Brantford General Hospital. Weighing 9 lbs., 3 oz., Georgia was originally due on Dec. 24, with parents expecting a Christmas baby rather than a New Year's arrival. Proud parents Ellaya General and Rory Thomas, of the Six Nations of the Grand River, are both doing well as they celebrate their new addition.

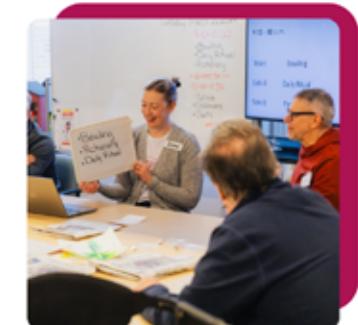


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Music fundraiser at Paris Pub supports Salvation Army Food Bank

CASANDRA TURNBULL

Managing Editor

Local musicians, businesses and volunteers came together just ahead of the holidays to help ensure families in need will have access to food well into the new year.

A live music fundraiser held Dec. 21 at the Paris Pub brought in nearly 750 pounds of food and just over \$700 in cash donations for the Salvation Army Food Bank, filling a critical gap at a time when demand traditionally rises after the holiday season.

The afternoon event was spearheaded by Jim Young of the Jim Young Band and supported by the Paris Pub, which hosted a packed house of community residents who turned out to support the cause.

“It was incredible to see how many people showed up and how generous everyone was,” said Young. The goal, he said, was to make sure the shelves stay stocked after Christmas, when money is often tight for a lot of families.

The Jim Young Band was joined on stage by Kings of Adequate, delivering

several hours of live music that helped turn the fundraiser into both a celebration and a show of community solidarity.

Local businesses also played a key role. Sobeys Paris has committed to matching the food donations and is working directly with the Salvation Army to ensure the cash contributions are used as effectively as possible.

“We’re going to secure some of the most needed items at great cost,” said Jackee Mills, Franchisee of Sobeys Paris. “Will Ratelband from the Salvation Army is going to work with us to identify exactly what’s needed,” she shared. The goal is to try to stretch those dollars as far as they can.

Additional support for the fundraiser came from Fit Effect Gym, adding to the collective effort to help meet rising food insecurity in the community.

The timing of the initiative was intentional, as food bank usage often increases in January and February once holiday donations taper off.

The collected donations are expected to be delivered to the food bank later this month.



(SUBMITTED PHOTOS)

Jim Young stands beside overflowing bin of nonperishable food donations at Sobeys, which will be sent to the Salvation Army later this month.



Members of Kings of Adequate perform to a packed house during a Dec. 21 fundraising show at the Paris Pub in support of the Salvation Army Food Bank. The heartwarming community event raised \$700 in cash and approximately 700 pounds of food, with food donations matched by Sobeys. Band members include Randy Johnson (drums/vocals), Ted Abbott (lead guitar), Jeff Goodall (saxophone) and Jim Young (guitar/vocals).



The power of choosing a new beginning



THE GRIEF JOURNEY

By Tammy Adams

In a society where we have been conditioned to believe we must “play the cards we have been dealt,” it can be difficult to see that we do, in fact, have a choice — and that change is possible. While change may involve a personal investment of time and money, taking charge of our own well-being is one of the most empowering things we can do for ourselves.

It takes courage to take charge of our future. While we are immersed in the creative process, it can be easy to overlook the progress we have made. We must intentionally pause and reflect; celebrate how far we have come, and perhaps identify what has been left unfinished.

Emotional baggage is real and is defined

by unresolved feelings — physical reactions to thoughts — that stem from previous experiences. Whether your expected new beginning is a new relationship, a career shift, a physical move, or something else entirely, there is a very good chance that if you do not complete the past, you may sabotage your future.

It is the shift from intellect to emotion that allows us to discover what remains unfinished when an event or relationship has come to an end.

Why?

Because when we don’t wrap things up — resolve the emotional pain, finish this chapter before we turn the page — we are constantly filtering our new experiences through the emotional pain of our past. If we were betrayed, we look for signs of upcoming betrayal. If we were physically harmed, we search for confirmation that the world isn’t safe, and so on.

Our bodies are driven by our subconscious mind. It is busy with the enormous task of keeping us alive, and therefore has little time for new and different experiences. It is not that it is incapable of learning; it is simply easier to remain in the familiar. To override the system, we must take back the reins. We must take responsibility for the new beginning we desire.

Many of us look for someone else to solve our problems for us. Why? Because it is what we have been taught to do. We have been conditioned to believe our personal well-being is the responsibility of the government, our insurance company,

or other institutions. We reach for services that are included in our coverage, willing to believe these paid services will meet our personal needs. We access them because they are free. However, using free benefits is not the true purpose of coverage. They are intended to be used proactively throughout the year — to manage stress and detox overworked, strained muscles.

So where can you begin to wrap up your past?

AWARENESS

- Identify habits have you developed to distract you from what you don’t want to think about (gaming, shopping, working, drinking, drugs, etc.)
- Begin journaling to allow your unresolved emotions to present themselves, give them a name, practice feeling them without pushing them away

CLARITY

- Create a list of relationships and events that have happened in your life
- Document the experiences that continue to endlessly loop in your mind
- Identify patterns presenting as you walk down memory lane
- This is your private life story and there is no benefit comparing it to another

HONESTY

- This is your future you are designing, and you must be honest with what you want and don’t want
- Embrace open and honest communication

cation so you can clearly articulate your needs to another

ACTION

- Understand we have all been given the wrong tools for action when it comes to resolving our emotional pain
- If you have identified issues that need completion your next step is to ask for support as it can be difficult to remain the observer in our own life.

Support can come in the form of purchasing The Grief Recovery Method Handbook, written by John W. James and Russell Friedman, or by working under the guidance of a Grief Recovery Method Specialist.

When starting over, looking too far down the path can be discouraging; it can even feel hopeless. When we pause and reflect, our path looks different. Do not give away your power by expecting someone else to take care of you. Choose to take charge of your own life. Remember to take a moment, every so often, to notice and celebrate the progress you have made. Identify what has been left unfinished and begin the action steps of completion. This pause, reflection, and intentional action will increase your motivation, ensure your commitment, and improve your personal success.

Tammy Adams is a Certified Coach Practitioner & Grief Recovery Method Specialist supporting individuals Canada-wide. To learn more about The Grief Recovery Method please visit tadams.ca or contact Tammy for a free consultation.

After ‘confusion’ Brant County commits to #ElectRespect for civil political environments

CELESTE PERCY-BEAUREGARD

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

It took two tries, but the County of Brant pledges to #ElectRespect.

During its last council meeting of 2025, councillors unanimously backed a resolution in support of the campaign Halton Elected Representatives hatched to encourage safe and civil environments for elected officials and people thinking of running.

“While there was some initial confusion and hesitation about how it was previously introduced, I’m glad to see that, ultimately, council stands united behind this commitment,” Mayor David Bailey said.

Last month, a similar resolution failed, sending “a terrible message,” local resident Kari Raymer Bishop said at the time.

One councillor expressed confusion about the resolution — which had been taken from the municipality of St. Catharines — while two others said everything in the resolution is already covered by acts, laws, and the county’s code of conduct.

The outcome left Coun. Jennifer Kyle “quite discouraged,” and she heard from “several residents and even a couple of community organizations” who were disappointed by the decision too.

“I believe that how we engage with one another in this chamber, in our communities, and online matters a lot to the health of our democracy,” Kyle said when bringing a new version of the resolution forward on Tuesday.

She cited an increase in harassment and negativity toward elected officials across the province.

It’s behaviour that could deter “good people” from putting their names forward in the next municipal election — “particularly women and individuals from diverse backgrounds who already face additional barriers to participation,” she said.

At the time, neither Kyle nor anyone else on council acknowledged they had quashed the similar resolution last month.

From Kyle’s perspective, that was partly by design.

“I chose to keep my comments centred around the campaign and the importance of supporting it,” she said.

When Coun. Lukas Oakley previously brought it forward, “rather than focusing on the substance of the resolution, the discussion seemed to focus on the fact that it was a St. Catharines’ resolution that featured specifics relevant to that municipality,” she added.

Oakley was glad to see it brought back and “the previous wrong, righted,” he told said.

Among other things, the resolution says council commits to:

- Keeping debates focused on “ideas, issues, and policies — never on individuals.”
- Working to create a space where people of all backgrounds feel safe running for and serving in public office.
- Demonstrating “integrity, empathy, and respect” in all interactions.

Celeste Percy-Beauregard’s reporting is funded by the Canadian government through its Local Journalism Initiative. The funding allows her to report on stories about Brant County.

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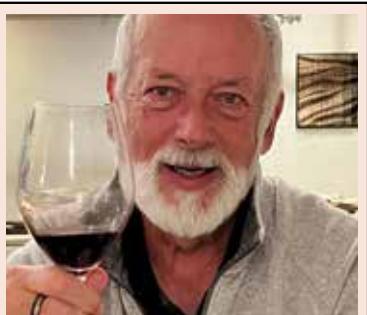
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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Paris, France: a splendidly walkable city



By Paul Knowles

If I were forced to choose among places to visit, I would always pick Ottawa over Toronto, Québec City over Montréal, or Amsterdam over London, England. And my reason is simple: those chosen destinations are all eminently walkable.

I really enjoy visiting a city where many of the places I want to see are within walking distance of each other. And that is one of the reasons that we enjoyed our stay in Paris so much.

We are in the capital of France because we opted for an add-on stay before our Viking River Cruise on the Rhône River. Now, the full story is, we made that decision fairly late in the game, so the more basic hotel included in the package was already fully booked. That being the case, did we want to splurge on the upgrade hotel, at additional cost?

Well, heck, how often are we going to spend three days in Paris? We agreed to splurge.

That put us in the "Sofitel Le Scribe Paris Opéra". It was a perfect location, and we liked our accommodation very much, but after ordering a coffee and tea upon arrival, and being billed



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

Paris, including the Eiffel Tower and many other famous landmarks, as seen from the rooftop terrace of the Galeries Lafayette

something like \$35 Canadian, we quickly understood that we would seek food and drink elsewhere. Which was never actually a problem in this city of cafés.

But the best part was, everything we wanted to see could be reached, comfortably, on foot.

As soon as we had checked in, and I had emptied my bank account to pay for a coffee and a tea, I tucked a map into my pocket, and we set out to explore. The reason for the hotel's name became quickly obvious – we were only a few steps away from the Paris Opera House, an imposing example of baroque revival architecture, completed in 1875. We learned that almost all of the

impressive buildings in Paris are from the 1800's, because Napoleon and his successors were all about urban renewal – or perhaps, all about knocking down everything in sight to build monuments to themselves. Which sounds distressingly familiar. But I digress.

Right across the street from the Opera House is a high-end department store called the Galeries Lafayette. What's special here is the rooftop terrace, open free of charge, which provides a spectacular view of the city.

A couple of blocks into our wandering, we discovered the Church of Sainte-Marie-Madeleine, an imposing structure built in the style of a Roman temple. It

has an intriguing history – it was begun in 1763, during the reign of King Louis XV. Construction stopped completely when the French Revolution abolished the monarchy (quite dramatically, by beheading Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette in 1793). Enter Napoleon, who became Emperor in 1804, who decided, in this time of anti-church sentiment, that the building be re-purposed as "A Temple to the Glory of the Grand Army." An army which was, not coincidentally, headed by Napoleon.

Napoleon died, and the monarchy was reinstated. The "Temple" reverted to its original intention, as a church, but progress on completing the structure was still slow – it was not officially inaugurated as a church until 1842, almost eight decades after construction was begun. Today, it is still a church, but perhaps even better known as one of the finest concert halls in Paris.

We left the church and strolled toward the Seine River, accidentally arriving at one of the best-known features of Paris, the Place de la Concorde. This 20-acre square, situated between the Avenue de Champs-Élysées and the Jardin des Tuileries, is one of the most beautiful parts of the city. However, it has a history that is considerably less appealing.

While today it is dubbed "Concorde" (which means harmony or friendship), in the late 1700's, this was the site of the beheadings of Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, and thousands of others who climbed the steps to lose their heads on the guillotine. At that time the square was known as the Place de la

Revolution.

There is no evidence of the bloodshed today. When we visited, the permanent monuments like the Luxor Obelisk (a 3,000-year-old monolith that was given by Egypt to France in 1829), and the spectacular fountains, were sharing space with an outdoor, nature photography exhibition.

Our wandering continued. We explored the aforementioned Tuileries Garden, and found ourselves surrounded by Parisiens at their contented leisure. On the far side of the gardens, we were suddenly on the grounds of the Louvre.

And nearby were two destinations I have always wanted to visit – the Musée D'Orsay, and the Musée de l'Orangerie. The former holds perhaps the world's best collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist masterpieces, while the latter is best-known for two rooms where the walls are covered with Water Lily murals of Claude Monet.

The two are on opposite sides of the Seine River, about a 10-minute walk apart.

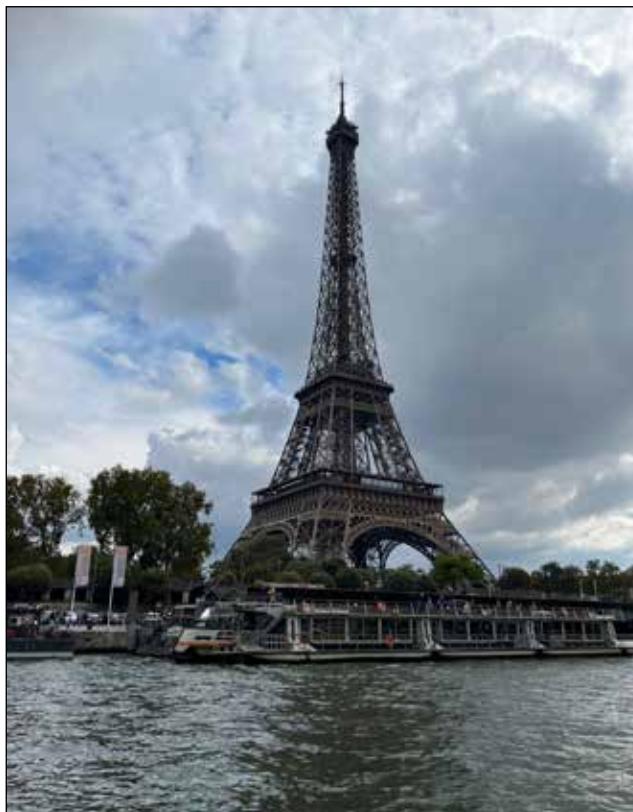
And no, we didn't actually accomplish all of this in one walk. We saved the Orangerie and additional exploration of the Louvre for the following day, when we also made the longer trek along the Seine to the Eiffel Tower.

So... if you are a walker, you simply have to love Paris.

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



The interior of the Church of Sainte-Marie-Madeleine.



The Eiffel Tower, seen from the Seine River.



The famous glass pyramid that is the entrance to the Louvre.



The Paris Opera House, a baroque revival masterpiece.

Paris Legion donates \$3,000 to Christmas Hamper program



(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Paris Christmas Hamper representative Lisa Lewis accepts a \$3,000 donation from Royal Canadian Legion Branch 29. The cheque is presented by Legion executive member for lottery and fundraising Katy Osborne-Howie. Branch 29 regularly supports local community initiatives and welcomes both members and non-members at its events. Visit parislegion29.ca to learn more.



WEEKLY

Horoscope

January 7- January 13 2025

ARIES

Mar 21 - Apr 20



Energy rises steadily, Aries. A small risk sparks progress and brings unexpected momentum. Take the step—it strengthens your confidence and keeps you moving forward.

TAURUS

Apr 21 - May 21



Comfort surrounds you gently, Taurus. Familiar rhythms soothe and steady your mind. Embrace the routine—it restores focus and keeps your heart calm.

GEMINI

May 22 - Jun 21



Curiosity guides you, Gemini. An engaging conversation opens fresh perspectives and surprising insights. Follow what intrigues you—it leads to growth and new adventures.

CANCER

Jun 22 - Jul 22



Calm support arrives, Cancer. A quiet moment restores your emotional balance. Move forward with patience and care.

LEO

Jul 23 - Aug 23



Your presence shines, Leo. Confidence grows as you act with clarity, passion, and heart. Step into the spotlight—it's your time to glow brightly.

VIRGO

Aug 24 - Sept 22



Focus brings ease, Virgo. Completing small tasks gives control and restores peace. Trust your planning—it guides you steadily through challenges.

FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

JANUARY 7

Jeremy Renner, Actor (55)

JANUARY 8

Cynthia Erivo, Actress (39)

JANUARY 9

Nina Dobrev, Actress (37)

JANUARY 10

Rod Stewart, Musician (81)

JANUARY 11

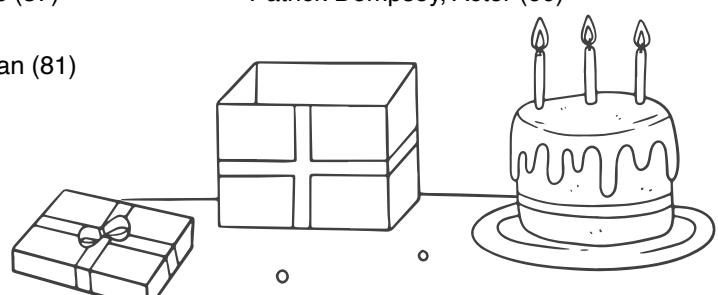
Mary J. Blige, Musician (55)

JANUARY 12

Jeff Bezos, Entrepreneur (62)

JANUARY 13

Patrick Dempsey, Actor (60)



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Riddles

I warm from the inside with steam rising high, a wintertime comfort in a mug held nearby.

Hot chocolate / Tea / Coffee

I'm worn on your hands when the cold starts to bite, keeping fingers warm and snug and tight.

Gloves / Mittens

I sparkle like jewels but vanish by noon, born overnight under winter's cold moon.

Frost

I move fast yet freeze in place, a shiny trap beneath your pace.

Black ice

I bite without teeth and sting without pain, leaving cheeks rosy again and again.

Winter air

I stretch the night and shrink the day, though time itself hasn't moved.

Winter

Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 13

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PET OF THE WEEK



DELILAH

Meet our Pet of the Week:

Delilah, a 16 month- old calico domestic short hair was in to see us for her annual examination and vaccinations. Delilah was very proud of her sleek body condition while perched on the scale and declared she deserved to be pet of the week- and we agree! Beautiful girl!

Stay tuned for more heartwarming stories every week from Paris Veterinary Clinic.



Word Search

GOALS & RESOLUTIONS

H	G	S	O	M	P	U	P	S	Z	P	R	O	U	T	I	N	E	X	S
B	J	C	M	W	Q	D	U	L	C	T	R	J	P	Q	P	D	F	B	H
G	M	N	H	Z	Q	E	R	K	K	E	U	O	I	M	P	R	O	V	E
N	G	I	V	J	Y	J	P	B	S	Q	C	S	G	O	M	A	M	Z	S
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J	O	H	O	Q	E	M	S	D	G	R	O	W	T	H	E	X	S	Y	L
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E	F	P	W	E	L	L	N	E	S	S	I	A	E	E	B	Y	S	N	C
R	I	O	E	O	J	N	O	H	D	D	V	B	A	L	A	N	C	E	A
S	D	S	U	O	O	E	I	D	V	B	A	R	Y	K	Y	R	O	T	R
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E	C	I	A	J	O	J	C	C	W	L	O	X	D	F	N	R	M	S	P
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N	Q	T	O	J	E	B	E	L	Z	E	A	T	E	E	C	Y	C	O	
C	P	Y	Y	K	Z	K	D	I	I	G	E	D	B	R	T	O	I	T	R
E	U	M	B	K	J	R	K	N	A	V	C	J	W	I	Z	F	P	B	I
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Motivation
Discipline
Focus
Progress
Habit
Routine
Wellness
Confidence
Growth
Purpose
Selfcare
Balance
Positivity
Perseverance
Improve
Dedication
Effort
Consistency
Mindset
Fitness

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

EMAIL TO INQUIRE INFO@THEPARISINDEPENDENT.COM

THURSDAY, JANUARY 8

Women Inspiring Women, Women's Institute Monthly Meeting- Thursday, January 8th, 7-9 PM at the Paris Fairgrounds, Community Room. A Discussion with Local Author and Professor Dr. James Cairns & County of Brant Library Updates with Emma Johnston. Bring a mug for tea!

Men's Probus Club of Brantford Monthly Meeting- Thursday, January 8, 10:00 a.m. till noon, at Walter Gretzky Municipal Golf Course, 320 Balmoral Drive with keynote speaker Cirque Du Soleil Assistant Director, Johnathan Meehan, topic,, Stagecraft skills used in putting on a live performance. The goal of the Probus Club of Brantford is to provide fellowship, friendship, and enjoyment for people in their retirement and semi-retirement years. Men's Probus Club, website: brantfordprobus.ca. Mailing address: PO Box 26003, Brantford, N3R 7X4. Come join us.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 17

Juno Award Winner Chuck Jackson at the Paris Legion- Saturday, January 17th from 7 pm to 10 pm. Don't miss Downchild Blues Band, featuring Chuck and Tyler Yarema for an unforgettable night of top-tier blues and soul. This is a rare chance to see a true Canadian music icon up close in an intimate setting. Bring your friends, grab a drink, and settle in for an incredible evening of live music at the Branch. Tickets available at the Legion.

1 & 3 TUESDAY OF EVERY MONTH

The Brantford Stamp Club – In Support of the Food Bank - The Brantford Stamp Club meets on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday September to December and January to May as well as the 1st Tuesday in June and December. Meetings are held at The Branly Community Centre 238 Brantwood Park Drive in Brantford. Doors open at 7pm and meetings start at 8pm.

EVERY OTHER FRIDAY

Ingersoll Country Music Jamboree Meeting – In 2026 it's your fix! Ingersoll Country Music Jamboree meeting every other Friday 1-4 p.m. at Masonic Hall, 190 Thames St. S. Ingersoll. Join us, walk ins welcome. Qualifications - love 50-70's country music. Perform, listen, dance & enjoy! January 16 & 30, February 13 & 27, March 6 & 20, April 10 & 17, May 1, 15 & 29, June 5 & 19.

The Paris Independent

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John M Hall The House of Quality Linen
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Paris Jewellers
Park Lane Terrace
Paris Branch--County of Brant Public Library
PrimaCare Community Family Health Team
Queensview Retirement Community
Rexall Pharmacy
Royal Canadian Legion Branch 29
Sales Decorating
Secret Lunch and Catering
Sobeys
Stacked Pancake & Breakfast House Paris
Telfer Place Retirement Residence
Tim Hortons - Rest Acres
Tim Hortons - Paris Road
Tim Hortons - Grand River St N

The Gem Marketplace

The Grand Bayou Cajun Kitchen
The Paris Wincey Mills Market
Walter's Greenhouses & Garden Centre
Wright's Variety Store
Wilkin Family Community Centre
Willett Urgent Care Centre
BURFORD
County of Brant Library - Burford
Foodland
Nelley's Bake & Brew
PRINCETON
Jim's Lunch
Sinden Feed & Seed Inc.
ST. GEORGE
County of Brant Library - St. George
Freshmart
Tim Hortons — Brant Rd

OBITUARY

Ireland

Ireland, Annie Mae (nee Schertzberg) formerly Elsden

Suddenly at her retirement home in Brampton, formerly of Paris, on Saturday December 27, 2025, in her 78th year.

Annie was born and raised in Brantford, moving to Paris following her marriage and birth of her daughter. She was a long serving Crossing Guard, worked at the Willett Hospital kitchen and was a receptionist at BDO Dunwoody in Brantford, she relocated to Brampton to be with her daughter and was very active in the Senior Living Community at the Retirement Home.



Beloved wife to the late George "Bud" Elsden (1999) and the late Bernard Ireland (2012); loved mom to Rhonda Elsden (Clinton); cherished grandma to her grand pups Riley, Charlie and Misha; dear sister to Lynn Guest, Joyce Harvard (Pete) and sister in law to Tim Offinga. Also survived by several nieces and nephews.

Predeceased by her brother Bob Schertzberg (Dolly), and sisters Gail Cross and Sam Offinga. Friends may call at the Wm. Kipp Funeral Home, 184 Grand River St. N. Paris on Wednesday January 7, 2026 from 11-1 PM. A Memorial Service will follow in the chapel at 1 PM.

Interment later Paris Cemetery.

Donations to the SPCA would be appreciated.

Online condolences and donations may be arranged through www.wmkippfuneralhome.com or by contacting WM. Kipp 519 442 3061

The Paris Independent

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- The Paris Independent Community Calendar allows non-profit organizations to promote their free admission community events at no charge. Event listings can include the event name, date, time and location as well as contact information (ie phone number, email address or website).
- If your event is not free admission or you would like to include more details than stated above, The Paris Independent offers the following options for promoting your community events:
 - Coming Events Word Ad (50 word max.) - \$10 + hst
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3. Tinker Bell	8. Piano
4. 1965	9. Au
5. Avocado	10. Vancouver

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3	6	9	1		2	4	
		4	6			9	

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HOMES OF HEROES:

If you have a story about a Paris Veteran, please email the committee at info@homesofheroes.ca. Let's work together to give all our veterans, living and fallen, in war and in peace, the recognition and honour they deserve. If you have any questions about the project, please email Neil Edwards at neiledwards51@gmail.com.

Contribute to your local community newspaper! Send articles, sports or event recaps, and photos to stories@theParisIndependent.com

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