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(MIKE GRUMMETT PHOTO)

The New Hamburg Dam on a frosty yet sunny day in "the Burg."

## Lillianne Dunstall named president of New Hamburg Board of Trade

AMANDA NELSON

Gazette Reporter

The New Hamburg Board of Trade has welcomed Lillianne Dunstall as its new president for 2026, a milestone year marking the organization's 75th anniversary.

"Seventy-five years really reflects a long history of volunteers supporting local businesses and that speaks to the resilience of the Board of Trade," said Dunstall. "We've adapted to economic changes and struggling times over the last 75 years, and we're still standing, and that is a testament to the volunteers and the businesses in New Hamburg."

Dunstall, who also serves as a township councillor for Wilmot, brings years of experience working with and advocating for small businesses across New Hamburg and Wilmot Township. She said she is looking forward to the challenges of the role, with several new initiatives already underway.

Dunstall said she plans to continue organizing signature events while also expanding community connections through new local initiatives, including an International Women's Day event in March.

She said advocacy will be a key focus this year with an emphasis on better connecting businesses across Wilmot.

"I would like to offer them more value for their membership and that, so we've started

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## Area municipalities struggling with road salt shortage

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

Wilmot Township, East Zorra-Tavistock (EZT), Oxford County and Perth County continue to face high demand for road salt, which remains in short supply.

Ontario is experiencing a provincewide road-salt shortage during the 2025-2026 winter season, which is affecting how municipalities, contractors, and residents manage winter road maintenance.

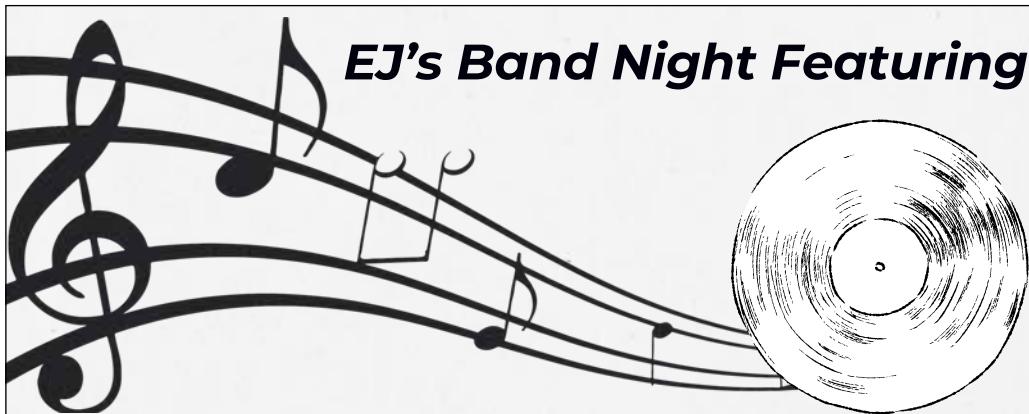
The province saw an unusually early start to winter with frequent snow events and prolonged cold periods, which has pushed supplies to depletion much faster than expected. Municipalities say they've already used far more salt than in a typical season by January. Road salt inventories were already low after heavy use in the 2024-2025 season, leaving less on hand going into this winter.

"We became aware of the shortage in mid-December when reordering to

replenish our supplies following an exceptionally early start to winter weather," said David Kleine, Wilmot's manager of public works.

"We usually receive orders in two to five business days which allows us to have a continual supply of salt. This season, the orders have taken upwards of 21 days to arrive."

The township is part of a municipal co-purchasing group, providing access to



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# Road salt shortage forces winter maintenance changes across region

Continued from page 1

better salt prices. It stockpiles salt in the fall and replenishes it as it is used.

“The supplier is doing their best to meet our orders, but the ongoing, provincewide winter weather conditions continue to be an issue. The salt is slowly being delivered, but it could be an issue for the rest of this season,” Kleine added.

Despite the lack of salt, Kleine said township staff have worked hard to ensure roads are safe for area motorists.

“We have stockpiled winter sand to treat the roads in place of salt. The sand has been doing a decent job of keeping the roads from getting icy.”

Salt is used to prevent snow from bonding to the pavement, allowing plows to scrape the roads more effectively. It also removes ice from pavement, reducing the need for continuous maintenance. Sand only provides traction, does not remove ice, creates dust when it dries and requires additional street sweeping in the spring to prevent storm drains from clogging.

The Goderich salt mine is owned by Compass Minerals, which would not agree to an interview with the Gazette but did provide a statement.

“With the significant impact of winter weather compared to recent seasons, the

entire road-salt supply chain continues to experience high demand for de-icing salt. At Compass Minerals, we are actively working to fulfill all current orders, prioritizing shipments for our municipal clients.”

The added production is increasing and they are working hard to meet the increased demand.

“We are focused on moving product as efficiently as possible, while also maximizing daily output from our Goderich mine to ensure optimal, full-season inventory availability across our network. We remain committed to serving all our valued customers in Ontario and all markets that we serve.”

Oxford County didn’t become aware of the shortage until media reports surfaced.

“We did follow up with the supplier to get an official response, and they said the issue wasn’t with the supply at the actual source (in Goderich), but more about a trucking issue of getting the material out to customers,” said Frank Gross, the county’s manager of transportation.

“They can only load so many trucks a day, so that was the bottleneck, the shipping of the salt.”

Compass transports the salt as per the contract with Oxford, but Gross said the



(OXFORD COUNTY PHOTO)

**Area municipalities have been kept busy this winter clearing roads after higher-than-normal snowfalls, and they’ve had to do it with a shortage of road salt as a Goderich mine struggles to keep up with demand**

county offered to send its own trucks to expedite the process.

“We were told no, we would be in line with everybody else, so it was a matter of how many trucks they could load in a day.”

Some media reports from the area show about 100 trucks in line to receive the salt to take it to destinations across the province.

EZT’s manager of public works said they have also been affected.

“As a result, we have modified our winter-control operations. While we do currently have salt in stock, we have been rationing our supply usage in the event we receive any freezing rain or ice accumulation,” said Tom Lightfoot.

“We have increased our application of sand on the roadways for traction. This works well in these colder temperatures and strong winds we have been receiving. Township staff have also increased plowing operations on our higher traffic-volume roads while allowing snow-pack cover on our lower-volume residential streets.”

He added area roads continue to be within township and Ontario Minimum Maintenance Standards.

Perth County provided a statement to the Gazette, saying it continues to prioritize road safety as Ontario navigates the

provincewide de-icing salt shortage.

“While several suppliers serve the Ontario market, the county strategically sources its supply from Compass Minerals’ Goderich Mine, the world’s largest underground salt mine. Its proximity to Perth County allows for efficient haul routes to various public works yards, supporting our essential winter operations.”

It added the county’s winter operations rely on a rolling supply of de-icing salt. Yard inventories are filled prior to the winter season and rolling salt orders are placed with Compass Minerals over the winter season to maintain a supply for its operations.

“The county became aware of supply issues early in December and adjusted its operations in response accordingly to preserve its supply. In response to supply disruptions that emerged in early December, the county proactively adjusted winter-maintenance operations to preserve existing supplies.”

The county said staff are continuing to work closely with Compass to minimize negative impacts.

“We are encouraged by recent improvements in supply as the region faces sustained cold temperatures.”

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# Dunstall named Board of Trade president

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to look at more advocacy," said Dunstall.

She said one of the strengths of the board of trade is the diversity of voices represented around the table.

"One of the things that I really like about our board of trade is it's really got a lot of diverse voices," she said. "We have people there from retail, from insurance, restaurant owners, real estate agents, financial advisors, people from the manufacturing sector. Those voices are all from very different industries, but they're sitting at that table. So that's something that I think is a real benefit to our community."

Dunstall also said supporting younger entrepreneurs will be a priority in 2026.

"It's very important to me that we try to get some of our younger entrepreneurs, and we've got some now that are on the executive and they've got such amazing ideas," she said. "The board of trade has always supported the entire community, not only our businesses, but our community in general and younger voices can add

to that."

The board of trade has also updated its website, which will launch soon. Dunstall said the new site will provide stronger connections for businesses across New Hamburg, including a resource page with links to small business loans and seminars on topics such as social media and financial management.

Currently, the board of trade has 90 business members across New Hamburg. This year, the organization hopes to continue expanding by offering deeper connections and more support throughout the township.

The New Hamburg Board of Trade is an active part of the Wilmot community, connecting local businesses and supporting the people who live and work in the township. The organization helps organize events such as Canada Day, the Santa Claus Parade and Sidewalk Sale Days, and also maintains the town's water wheel, festive lighting and downtown flower displays.

For more information, visit [www.nhbot.ca](http://www.nhbot.ca).



(IMAGE COURTESY OF NEW HAMBURG BOARD OF TRADE)

The New Hamburg Board of Trade's 2026-2028 executive.

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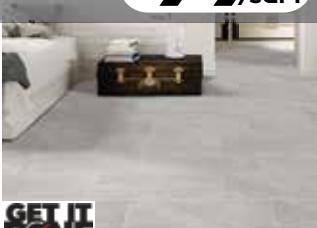


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# Oxford MP returns from Conservative convention

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

“The beautiful thing to see was 3,000 people showed up from across the country.”

That’s how Oxford MP Arpan Khanna described his top takeaway from the Conservative Party of Canada’s national convention in Calgary last weekend. The riding was well represented with 10 people in attendance as delegates, but the MP said he was encouraged by the diverse coalition of supporters.

“We had folks from different regions, different demographics, backgrounds and faiths. We had blue-collar and trade workers; there was even a lady who had a sign, ‘Boomers for Pierre.’ We also had a lot of young people whom I have not typically seen in the past, and that speaks to Pierre (Poilievre)’s leadership to see such a growing blue tent.”

Khanna said he spent a lot of time talking to people from across the country and the issues they brought up were similar.

“They are all facing similar hardships. I was talking to people from B.C. affected by lumber mills closing down. There is a lot of uncertainty and anxiety over the cost of living, affordability and crime.”

He added people are counting on his party for hope and they want a Conservative government when the next election comes around. Khanna said the convention was a big success for the party.

“Overall, it was very positive, not what the mainstream media was saying leading up to it. We saw that the grassroots



(PHOTO COURTESY OF ARPAN KHANNA)

**Oxford MP Arpan Khanna was busy at the recent Conservative Party national convention in Calgary where he delivered a speech to the thousands of delegates. He also appeared on CBC and CPAC panels.**

movement is strong and Pierre received a strong mandate.”

At the convention, delegates held a mandatory leadership review of Poilievre after the party’s defeat in the 2025 federal election. Under party rules, every leader who has led the party through an election loss must face this review.

Rather than holding a complex contested vote, delegates were simply asked whether they wanted Poilievre to remain as party leader and the result was strong. He was overwhelmingly endorsed by his party members as 87.4 per cent of delegates voted in favour of him remaining leader,

making him the first Conservative leader since Stephen Harper to secure a second leadership mandate.

The review came after Poilievre led the Conservatives to a fourth consecutive federal election loss against the Liberals. The leader has secured a clear mandate from party delegates to continue leading the party into the next election cycle.

Khanna delivered a six-minute speech at the convention, praising Poilievre and promising to keep up the fight to overthrow the Liberals at the next vote, which some experts believe could come as early as this spring.

“We need to work hard together to share Pierre’s vision for Canada, where homes are affordable, streets are safe and hard work truly pays off; a Canada that is united, thriving and full of opportunity, where every sacrifice means something.”

He added his number-one priority is to ensure Oxford is well represented in Ottawa, despite not being in government.

“I’ve been working on that since day one, whether it’s in parliament or in the community, listening to people’s concerns and helping thousands of constituents with their issues. I think we had over 5,000 cases resolved for residents last year.”

Khanna said the party is more unified than ever, pointing to Poilievre’s strong support as a benefit when the next writ is dropped. The Oxford MP has a long history with the opposition leader.

“I was his campaign co-chair when he ran for the leadership. I’ve always believed in his vision in terms of getting our country back on track. I’ve had a long history with other elected officials, dating back to the Stephen Harper governments, for Jason Kenney and a few others.”

Khanna has also been involved with provincial politics for the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, and the MP was recently given the title of national outreach chair and sits on the party’s leadership team.

“We are united in our values and love for our country to make sure we have a strong, self-reliant, sovereign and prosperous nation.”

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# Coldest Night of the Year returns to New Hamburg Feb. 28 in support of WWRC

## Annual fundraising walk aims to raise more than \$40,000

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Teams of walkers across Wilmot and Wellesley townships and the surrounding areas are raising pledges and gearing up to once again venture out into the cold for this year's Coldest Night of Year fundraiser in New Hamburg.

With 19 teams and 58 walkers already registered for the annual fundraising walk in support of the Wilmot Wellesley Resource Centre (WWRC), and more than \$9,500 pledged as of Feb. 3, organizers have every expectation this year's event will reach and perhaps even exceed its \$40,000 goal – a feat accomplished last year when 138 local walkers raised a combined \$41,000.

"We're right on target with walkers and teams," said Katie Fisher, events and communications lead at the WWRC. "It fills itself out in the last three weeks quite a bit. We've been getting some sponsors, some new sponsors, and this year we have some entertainment to help cheer people on while they are heading out for the walk."

Along with a demonstration by the New Hamburg Royal Canadian Air Cadets 822 Tudor Squadron, members of which also help with setup at both the New Hamburg Community Centre before the walk and at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 532 next door where walkers gather for a meal afterward, Fisher said she has arranged for Waterloo-based, roots-inspired, folk-rock band Folklore Junction to perform as a way to motivate walkers to head out into the cold.

This year, the teams of walkers – many of which dress in coordinated costumes – will gather at the community centre beginning at 4 p.m. to enjoy games, opportunities to take photos, live music and greetings and words of encouragement from WWRC executive director Trisha Robinson before heading out into the cold at 5 p.m.

Walkers will embark on either a 2.5-kilometre or five-kilometre route, depending on their ability, before finishing off at the Legion for some comradery and a supper of chili, mac 'n' cheese, hot dogs and dessert.

"It's not just a fundraiser, it's a community event where people can feel the warmth of the community even though it's cold," Fisher said. "It's not just, 'Let's just go for a walk and go home.' It's a meal and entertainment and so much more than just a fundraiser."

And while the event certainly generates



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

The staff at the Wilmot Wellesley Resource Centre pose for a photo in front of a wall inside the resource centre where the names of people participating in this year's Coldest Night of the Year fundraiser are posted for all to see.

that sense of warmth for participants, it also provides warmth for those who desperately need it this time of year through the programs and services offered by WWRC.

"Our numbers have gone up for food bank and people out in the cold," Robinson said. "We're giving out sleeping bags and gas vouchers to keep their cars warm because they're living in their cars. It's just things have gotten a lot more complicated, and the needs have really increased. We have tents and heaters and boots, and people are living in motels. People are living in unheated trailers and when we try to find them places (to live), it's nearly impossible because of the housing situation and because of low incomes, and rents keep going up."

"We know that the food we give to people is crucial. We do weekly hampers; there's no other food banks doing that. But when I go back to the staff and say, 'Should we go back to monthly,' because we started weekly at COVID, they just say no because people are relying on that food, and we know people are only eating that food."

According to a report presented to Wilmot council by the WWRC, between January and October 2025, the WWRC distributed 3,515 weekly food hampers to 294 unique households, feeding 10,172 individuals. Those numbers represent a 156 per-cent spike in demand over 2024, with demand only increasing over the holiday season and beyond.

The WWRC also provided the following support for locals in need:

- Parenting support: Served 103

families through 29 programs and 92 sessions.

- Mental health counselling: Provided 40 family counselling sessions.
- Youth support: Distributed 91 backpacks via the Backpack Program.
- Housing assistance: Supported 25 individuals (20 adults, five children)

through subsidies, shelter essentials, first and last month's rent, moving costs, gas vouchers (to keep vehicles warm), propane, air mattresses, sleeping bags, tents, utilities costs, phone cards, mini fridges, medication, glasses, cab fares, pet supplies, swim passes (for showers and warming) and other essential services.

- Referrals: Made 5,000 referrals, including 25 critical interventions addressing self-harm or suicidal ideation.
- Harm reduction supplies: Delivered over 100 items since July 2025 to five to 10 regular clients.
- Harm reduction strategies: Partnered with Region of Waterloo Public Health's Neighborhood Nursing Team to provide outreach/travel to marginalized community members on a weekly basis by offering and delivering harm-reduction and sexual-health supplies.

For more information and to register for the Coldest Night of the Year fundraiser in New Hamburg, visit [cnoy.org/location/wilmot](http://cnoy.org/location/wilmot). To learn more about the programs and services offered by the WWRC, visit [wilmotwellesleyrc.ca](http://wilmotwellesleyrc.ca).

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# Oxford, Elgin and St. Thomas recognized as age-friendly communities

## Collaborative initiatives to support older adults are embedded in local community plans

LEE GRIFFI

*Gazette Reporter*

The Ontario government has recognized Elgin-St. Thomas and Oxford County as age-friendly communities for their contributions to more inclusive physical and social environments for aging adults.

The recognition was announced at the recent Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) conference in Toronto on Jan. 18, where the Honourable Raymond Cho, minister for seniors and accessibility, acknowledged nearly 70 age-friendly communities across Ontario.

“We are honoured to recognize and celebrate Elgin-St. Thomas and Oxford County as age-friendly communities,” said Cho. “Through community-led initiatives that promote social engagement and physical activity, you are helping to protect the health and wellbeing of seniors and demonstrating your commitment to continuing to build a province that is inclusive for Ontarians of all ages and abilities.”

Local initiatives to support an aging population are led by the Oxford Age-Friendly and Elgin-St. Thomas Age-Friendly steering committees, comprising local older adults, community organizations and representatives from municipalities, counties

and public health.

“It’s an incredible honour to be recognized by the province in this way,” said Meagan Lichti, chair of both committees. “This work reflects our belief that every resident deserves the opportunity to age safely and with dignity while engaged in community life. We are grateful for the commitment of our partners who continue to champion this initiative locally to ensure aging-related priorities are woven into the fabric of our community.”

According to data from Southwestern Public Health, adults aged 65 and older increased from 16.1 per cent to 20.2 per cent in the region between 2011 and 2021. The proportion of seniors living on low incomes is on the rise, and one in five seniors lives alone. The region also reports a significantly higher rate of emergency department visits for injuries related to falls compared to the provincial average.

Oxford County established its partnership for aging populations in 2024 and completed a local needs assessment in 2025. Revised age-friendly strategies from both committees are anticipated this spring.

“We used a survey, focus groups and interviews. We looked at the eight domains in the age-friendly framework and focused

on the five we thought were most relevant. Those were health care, housing, social inclusion, outdoor spaces and buildings, and transportation.”

Lichti said the biggest need to come through was transportation, something described as a key barrier across all the domains, as well as knowing what programs are available.

“Awareness of existing programs and services, how to access them, who to call and where to go; it’s not like we don’t have programs and offerings for our local older adults, but I would say there is a bit of a gap with some interests. There are programs not geared to everyone’s interests.”

She added a need for more intergenerational programs was also identified.

“Not everything that’s geared at seniors, but more on how we can combine senior and youth programming,” Lichti said. “

Lichti, who is also a community member on the East Zorra-Tavistock recreation advisory committee, felt there are enough programs in rural areas for older adults, but communication needs to improve.

“I don’t know if they need more. I think we need better communication about what we have. There are programs out there, but a lot of people don’t know about them. A better communication strategy around

what’s available and better communication around the availability of space are needed.”

She added there was a good response to the survey from East Zorra-Tavistock residents, whereas Zorra saw a very low rate. Zorra Township has a formal recreation program, and EZT does not, but that could change once the 2026 budget is released.

“Community vitality is a strategic focus for Oxford’s municipalities and the principles of age-friendly communities align with our vision for a healthy, vibrant and sustainable future,” said Oxford Warden Marcus Ryan. “This designation is possible through the strength of our community partnerships, a commitment to inclusivity and accessibility at the highest levels, and the ongoing work and support of Southwestern Public Health.”

The age-friendly committees are planning an Aging Well Road Show for 2026 with stops planned in each municipality.

“Likely some in the spring and some in the fall to try and increase our presence and share information about all the different programs and services that are out there,” Lichti said.

More information about Age-Friendly communities is available at [www.csa.ca/age-friendly-communities-ontario](http://www.csa.ca/age-friendly-communities-ontario).

# Repair Café helps residents fix, mend and learn

DIANE DANEN

*Gazette Correspondent*

Instead of tossing broken household items into the trash, residents of Wilmot and Wellesley townships were invited to learn how to fix them at the Nith Valley EcoBoosters Repair Café in New Hamburg on Saturday, Jan. 31.

The free event ran from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Zion United Church.

Repair cafés are community gatherings where residents bring broken items to be fixed with the help of volunteer “fixers.” The goal of the event is to reduce waste, share repair skills and strengthen connections within the community.

“There was a great turnout at our second Repair Café,” said Ashley Ropp, a member of Nith Valley EcoBoosters. “We repaired fewer items than last time, but more people came out. A lot of people seemed really excited about it.”

Five volunteers helped attendees repair small appliances, mechanical items, books and textiles, with sewing and mending proving especially popular. One visitor came in just to have a button replaced.

“Not only was I able to sew the button on for them,” said Ashley Ropp, “I was also able to teach them the skill so they can do it themselves in the future.”

The group is always looking for volunteers, but it is especially in need of a licensed electrician to help with electrical repairs. To volunteer, email [nvbrepaircafe@gmail.com](mailto:nvbrepaircafe@gmail.com).

The Nith Valley EcoBoosters are planning to host The Repair Café the last Saturday every other month at Zion United Church, 215 Peel St., New Hamburg. The next Repair Café will be held on March 28 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.



EcoBooster volunteer Grace Locke darns a hole in a sweater at the Repair Café.



Kathy Mostardi, volunteer with Nith Valley EcoBoosters, carefully repairs a book.

(ASHLEY ROPP PHOTOS)

# Wilmot councillors vote for more detailed budget report

## Some elected officials not pleased with lack of detail in draft document

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

Wilmot Township councillors and members of the public had their first opportunity to ask questions and comment on the 2026 budget last week.

A pair of motions passed which would see a proposed 9.7 per-cent levy increase drop to 9.22 per cent unless Mayor Natasha Salonen exercises her right under Strong Mayor Powers to veto them. This year's budget was prepared by consulting firm KPMG at the request of Salonen.

One motion was to eliminate a cost-of-living increase for all elected officials; the other was to remove \$65,000 from the mayor and council budget identified as a duplicate cost.

Council also passed a motion, brought forward by Coun. Kris Wilkinson, directing staff to make line-by-line actuals and variances for the 2024 and 2025 budgets, along with detailed line-by-line information for the 2026 budget, available by Feb. 4, something that was not released in the initial document.

Wilkinson asked that detailed spending information from each township department be released to the public so residents can see exactly how the money is being spent.

"I would concur with some of the delegations this evening that the number overall isn't something that isn't palatable. As long as we can back up and justify where the money is going, then it makes sense," he said.

Wilkinson appeared on the Mike Farwell Show on 570 City News in Kitchener on

Tuesday morning.

"The budget in itself was about 40 pages or so and was mainly a high-level overview ... of we're going to spend more money here and more money here and more money here, less money here," he told Farwell.

After going through the pages, he realized he had no idea where the money was being spent.

"It basically just said operating expenses for this department are increasing by 30 per cent. That's a pretty big number, and I think it should be detailed, and the public should be informed. ... It's only fair to say, 'Show us the work.' You showed us the answer, but like your Grade 7 or grade 8 math teacher, show us your work. How did you get there?"

Wilkinson added he would like to see a standardized budgeting process implemented for all municipalities across the province in the best interest of taxpayers.

Coun. Harvir Sidhu took to social media following the meeting to express his displeasure with the budget process.

"After four years on council, I'm frustrated – not because of one meeting, but because of a pattern."

He added council was asked to consider a budget without sufficient detail and without a proper long-term plan to show where the township is heading.

"I've heard the argument that council can sit down one-on-one with staff to ask questions. Respectfully, that misses the point. This is public money and the information should be publicly available from the start, not shared privately and not only if you know which questions to ask."

He added residents have been asked to trust the numbers, but Wilmot's finances are not what they were portrayed to be.

"Given that reality, it's not reasonable to ask the public to simply trust the township again without full transparency."

Sidhu said what's especially concerning is this year's budget was developed before council received a proper 10-year capital plan.

"(It) is essential. It shows the long-term consequences of today's decisions and should be what informs annual budgets, not something completed after the fact. Approving budgets without that roadmap risks repeating past mistakes and pushing costs onto future councils and future taxpayers," he said.

Sidhu thanked his fellow councillors for supporting and passing a motion to release more detailed financial information to the public.

"That was the right decision and an important step forward, but transparency should never be something council has to fight for. After four years, my position hasn't changed. Trust isn't asked for, it's earned. And it starts by showing the public exactly where their money is going."

Council also heard from several residents, including Baden resident David Bernier who expressed his concerns over increases to water and wastewater rates.

"This is a historic increase. Searching the open source, it looks like it puts us at number one in the province for two years. That wouldn't be something we want to be number one at," Bernier said.

Water rates are set to rise by five per cent while wastewater rates would increase by

six per cent.

In the 2025 budget, council and staff acknowledged that years of historically low tax increases and minimal reserve contributions left the township with depleted reserves and underfunded capital needs. Council directed staff to phase in an increase in capital funding within the tax-supported operating budget over multiple years, specifically with a nine per-cent increase in capital investment planned each year for at least three years.

Bernier said he'd like to see a fairer process.

"I don't think it's fair to pass that error on to the taxpayer. That's something that should be stretched over a long period of time."

He also expressed disappointment over what he described as a lack of transparency and poor timing.

"I really appreciate the chance to give input, but you have six business days for council to propose amendments. I don't think that's enough time. My ask for the future is to have more time."

Wilmot taxpayers saw a 10.8 per-cent increase in their property taxes in 2024, a number that jumped to 18.22 per cent last year.

Councillors have until Feb. 9 to introduce motions, when another budget meeting will be held. The deadline for Salonen to exercise her veto is Feb. 19. If no vetoes are issued, the budget will be adopted on Feb. 20.

Residents can provide feedback on the budget by emailing [budget@wilmot.ca](mailto:budget@wilmot.ca).

### QUIZ TIME

BY JAKE GRANT

1. What is the birthstone for February?
2. What is commonly known as the "love hormone?"
3. The Patriots and the Seahawks last met at what Superbowl?
4. Who is Lady Whistledown in Bridgerton?
5. What is the meal called that Muslims eat to break their fast at sunset?
6. How many dots are on a six-sided die?
7. What kind of wool do dogs make?
8. What does CBC stand for?
9. A group of caterpillars is called what?
10. Finish the quote "Shall I compare thee to a \_\_\_?"

Answers found on the classified page

### SUDOKU

by PeterS 2026

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ANSWERS FOUND ON THE CLASSIFIED PAGE

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# Region of Waterloo council discusses preliminary solutions to address Mannheim Service Area water constraint

AMANDA NELSON

Gazette Reporter

At the Jan. 28 Region of Waterloo council meeting, a preliminary list of solutions to address the Mannheim Service Area water constraint was presented.

Existing residents and those issued building permits within the Mannheim Service Area require 1,356 litres per second (L/s) of sustainable supply. At this time, the system can only provide 1,164 L/s of sustainable capacity, according to city staff.

This creates an immediate shortfall of nearly 200 L/s, and in order to support planned growth across the region, an additional 235 L/s of new capacity is required. This means the Region of Waterloo's wells

are currently operating above their sustainable capacity to keep up with demand, which is not viable in the long term.

Karen Redman, regional chair, noted the problem concerns the quantity, not the quality, of drinking water and emphasized that the region is taking immediate action and working to restore resilience by repairing systems, optimizing facilities and implementing innovative projects.

"When I first became aware of the seriousness of this issue, I treated it as an immediate priority," said Redman. "I ensured that senior staff, provincial partners and this council were fully engaged right away, and since that moment, our focus has been very clear: move quickly, communicate early, work collaboratively and

find solutions.

"We're not here tonight because something broke overnight. We are here because we did the responsible thing. We took a hard, honest look at a system and we chose to act before a crisis occurred."

At this time, the region is piloting new modular technology at the Mannheim Water Treatment Plant, including adding infrastructure such as a new pumping station, reallocating the water supply, expanding existing well supply and making immediate investments to repair existing infrastructure.

"We recognize the urgency and I want to reassure the community that we are leaving no stone unturned on our path forward. We are committed to a collaborative,

solutions-based approach that harnesses expertise from across Waterloo Region," said acting CAO Mathieu Goetzke.

Several working groups, including industry experts, municipal partners and the development community, will collaborate on solutions to restore operational resilience and add capacity to the system.

The system constraint is based on the region's ability to pump, store, treat and distribute water to where it is needed to accommodate future growth, while also considering critical maintenance requirements.

Residents can access the full list of preliminary solutions and stay up to date on the region's website at [regionofwaterloo.ca/watercapacity](http://regionofwaterloo.ca/watercapacity).

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# Perth County's Cody McGonigle continues to rack up rodeo championships

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

When local sports fans think about stand-out athletes, their minds often go to hockey rinks, ball diamonds or gym floors, but one of Perth County's most accomplished competitors is making his mark in a very different arena.

North Easthope Township's Cody McGonigle has become one of Canada's top rodeo athletes, earning championship after championship as a professional steer wrestler and rodeo rider. His success, while largely unfolding far from home, is the result of years of dedication, travel and an unbreakable bond with his horses.

McGonigle has been riding since he was six years old, when his maternal grandfather, Barry Cole, bought him his first pony. As he grew, that pony gave way to quarter horses and, according to his parents, Susan and Dave McGonigle, Cody McGonigle was rarely off horseback from that point forward. Long days in the saddle, countless hours of training and a willingness to learn from seasoned rodeo competitors became the foundation of his career.

Today, Cody McGonigle spends much of the year on the road, travelling to rodeos across Canada and the United States. Indoor arenas fill his winter months, while outdoor events dominate the summer schedule. His employer, Ed's Concrete south of Stratford, understands the demands of professional rodeo and supports Cody McGonigle despite his being away more than 100 days each year.

Family support has played a major role throughout his journey. His paternal grandfather, Murray McGonigle, a lifelong horseman who still competes with carriage horses at local fairs, encouraged him from the beginning. Before his teenage years,

Cody McGonigle was already competing locally with the Stratford and District Saddle Club, roping steers on a horse gifted to him by his grandfather.

Mentorship from respected horsemen, including John Thomson and Ed DeWettering, helped refine his skills. While attending Waterloo-Oxford District Secondary School, Cody McGonigle competed on the school team before earning a rodeo scholarship to college in Olds, Alta. While studying there, he worked on the ranch of Sid Cook, formerly of North Easthope, breaking horses and honing his roping and wrestling techniques.

After returning home, Cody McGonigle continued competing on the amateur circuit before purchasing his first International Professional Rodeo Association world card. That step launched him into full-time professional competition, with more than 50 rodeos a year and steadily accumulating points.

In 2025, Cody McGonigle was named the IPRA Steer Wrestling Champion and also earned the Western Cup Championship. He holds the Illinois state record for steer wrestling at 3.2 seconds, a mark that still stands. He has qualified for the International Rodeo Finals for the second consecutive year and recently competed at the IFR qualifier in Guthrie, Okla.

Cody McGonigle credits his success to his horses, noting that a well-trained, competitive horse accounts for much of a rider's success. He also credits his parents, grandparents and his sister, Ally, whom he calls his biggest supporter, for keeping him focused and grounded.

Raised on the second concession of North Easthope Township, Cody McGonigle continues to chase rodeo's highest honours with his sights set firmly on the top of the podium.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

Cody McGonigle was gifted this palomino, Daisy, as a yearling by his grandfather. The horse has since become a championship roping mount, earning McGonigle numerous awards and winnings.



Cody McGonigle demonstrates championship form during a tie-down roping event in 2025, where he earned top points and prize money.



Cody McGonigle competes in steer wrestling aboard his quarter horse, Diesel, during an outdoor rodeo event last summer.

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# Wilmot to include construction of new fire station in long-term capital plan

The new fire station on Neville Street in new Hamburg is estimated to cost nearly \$18.4 million

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Wilmot Township has taken another step toward replacing its aging New Hamburg fire station after council approved the next planning phase for a new, purpose-built fire-hall on Neville Street.

At its Feb. 2 committee of the whole meeting, council received a Phase 1 update outlining the schematic design, site feasibility and Class D cost estimates for a new Fire Station 3 and parks and facilities operations centre at 30 Neville St. Council also directed staff to incorporate future phases – including construction costs – into the township’s 10-year capital plan, expected to be complete later this year, pending recommendations from the ongoing Fire Services Master Plan update scheduled to be completed in 2027.

“This is really an initial step of a feasibility study of the site at 30 Neville St., both for the parks and facilities administration centre, but also for the siting of potentially station 3 and looking kind of down the road at a new fire station,” township director of community services Chris Catania told council. “I think at this point ... there are a couple of key components here. One is looking at our updated financial strategy

and long-term capital plan and how we can address a financial strategy for that, and two, earmark the potential for costing that would come with subsequent phases, whether it’s the detailed design piece and subsequent construction, and incorporating those Class D construction estimates into our long-range capital plan.

“That’s obviously going to really be informed by the updated Fire Services Master Plan that’s going to be forthcoming as well.”

The Phase I work represents the first formal design step toward replacing the current fire station at 121 Huron St., which township staff have previously identified as no longer meeting modern operational, safety or regulatory requirements. A 2019 assessment concluded the existing station would require extensive upgrades that could not reasonably be addressed through renovation due to space limitations, site constraints and functional deficiencies.

According to the Phase I report, continued investment in the Huron Street facility would not resolve longstanding challenges related to emergency response, firefighter safety, building code compliance or the future needs of the Wilmot Fire Department.

The Neville Street property, purchased by the township in 2023, was identified as

the most viable long-term solution due to its size, location and ability to accommodate a modern fire station alongside municipal operations. Phase I focused on confirming site feasibility, reviewing regulatory requirements, analyzing infrastructure capacity and developing a functional design concept to support informed decision-making before moving into detailed design and construction.

The preferred concept would retain the existing Neville Street building for fire administration and parks operations while constructing a new, purpose-built addition to support front-line fire services. This approach allows both departments to continue operating without interruption while clearly separating public access, staff areas and emergency response functions.

“I like the designs, I think it’s a good idea; I’m just curious if my colleagues have had people in the public talk (with them) about it,” Coun. Steven Martin said. “I have pros and cons. Some people are in favour of moving our firehall to the Neville Street facilities, but then some people say, ‘Oh, we shouldn’t do that.’”

“... In my mind, it’s something that we need to do, and the downtown Huron Street facility has some problems in terms of size,

even currently, even if we weren’t buying a bigger truck.”

Design features for the new fire station include properly sized apparatus bays, a decontamination room with negative-pressure extraction, SCBA fill station, bunker gear storage, laundry facilities, secure equipment storage and a multi-purpose training room designed for shared use by township departments. The design also incorporates modern life-safety features, improved accessibility, dedicated changerooms with showers, upgraded mechanical systems and multiple paths of egress.

The Class D cost estimate developed through Phase I, totalling roughly \$18.4 million, will be used to inform future budget planning and potential grant applications, but no construction timeline has been set. Further progress on the project is dependent on recommendations from the Fire Services Master Plan update and a comprehensive financial strategy to be brought forward later this year.

“I was very happy to see the focus on long-term financial planning, asset management and the value-for-money assessment to compare cost and benefits before expanding township services,” Coun. Lillian Dunstall said.

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# Brunner post office remains community cornerstone after 45 years

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

The Brunner post office has long been an important part of Mornington Township and the wider Perth East community, thanks largely to the dedication of longtime postmaster Mariette Frijters.

If there were ever an award for outstanding postal service in Ontario, many residents say Frijters would be at the top of the list. As February draws to a close, she marks 45 years managing the busy Brunner Post Office south of Milverton. Known for her courteous, old-fashioned approach to customer service, Frijters continues to greet everyone by name, a quality residents say is increasingly rare.

Like in days gone by, Frijters' home is located alongside the post office, allowing her to remain closely connected to the work she enjoys so much. She says she has no plans to retire, noting the job keeps her busy and gives her something to look forward to each day.

"It keeps me active and gives me a reason to get up in the morning," she said.

Over the past four months, the Brunner post office has also become a small hub for local news. Since beginning to receive the Wilmot-Tavistock

Gazette, Stratford Times and St. Marys Independent, Frijters says she enjoys keeping up with what's happening across the region and sharing that news with customers as she hands out the free weekly papers.

Family is never far from Frijters' workday. Her grandchildren, Wyatt and Willow Westman-Frijters, are frequent visitors and recently stopped by with flowers, something she treasures just as much as her role as postmaster. The pair also help their mother, Heather, deliver rural mail in the Brunner area, a job she has held for the past 17 years.

For many in the community, Frijters' long service and personal touch have made the Brunner post office far more than just a place to pick up mail.

The Brunner post office was part of the Brunner Plazette Grocery store until 1998.

Frijters' husband, Franciscus, passed away in 1986. They had two children, Peter and Eddie. Peter was born in their home country of Belgium, while Eddie was born in Canada. They immigrated 55 years ago.

Before settling in Brunner, the Frijters family spent some time in Acton and Dundalk.



(GARY WEST PHOTOS)

Brunner postmaster Mariette Frijters is pictured with her grandchildren, Wyatt and Willow Westman-Frijters, who enjoy visiting their grandmother at the post office she has managed for 45 years. Wyatt and Willow also help their mother, Heather, with rural mail delivery in the Brunner area.



Wanda Ropp of Brunner, postmaster Mariette Frijters and Hayley Shiell of Rostock stop to chat while picking up mail at the Brunner post office last week.

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# OPP seeking public's assistance with investigation into break and enter at Shakespeare gas station



WILMOT-TAVITOCK GAZETTE STAFF  
 thewtgazette@gmail.com

The Perth County OPP is requesting the public's assistance with identifying a vehicle and person of interest in relation to a break and enter at a gas station in Shakespeare.

On Feb. 1 at 4:30 a.m., officers responded to a report of a break and enter in progress at a gas station at the west end of Shakespeare. The person of interest fled in a vehicle from the scene northbound on Perth Road 107.

The vehicle of interest is described as a white Ram 2500 pickup truck with an extended cab. The person of interest is described as wearing black pants, a black

jacket and hood, and black footwear.

The gas station remains open to the public while the storefront was closed while officers conducted their investigation.

This investigation remains ongoing. There may be a second person of interest involved in this break and enter.

The Perth County OPP is requesting anyone who may have information related to this investigation or who can identify the people or vehicle of interest to call 1-888-310-1122. Should those with information wish to remain anonymous, they can call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 (TIPS) or visit ontariocrimestoppers.ca where they may be eligible to receive a cash reward of up to \$2,000.



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## PUBLIC NOTICE

pursuant to Section 17 (17) of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, as amended

OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT  
 IMPLEMENTATION POLICIES  
 in the  
 COUNTY OF OXFORD

County of Oxford  
 21 Reeve Street  
 Woodstock, ON N4S 3G1  
 Telephone: 519-539-9800

FILES: OP 25-16-9 (County of Oxford)

### Purpose and Effect of the Proposed Official Plan Amendment:

The County of Oxford has initiated amendments to the Official Plan to update the implementation policies of Chapters 10 and 5.5 to reflect provincial legislative and regulatory changes under the Planning Act.

The amendment is intended to further improve the clarity, accuracy, and efficiency of planning processes for the County and area municipalities. This is proposed to be achieved through minor updates to existing review criteria and procedures used for the development approval process or major planning projects, and by enabling the use of optional tools such as delegated approval authority. Other logistical or legislative related updates are also being addressed, in response to changes implemented by the Province.

The proposed policies are relevant to all lands within the County. The application of policies will be subject to the Planning Act, shall be consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 and reflect the intent of the Official Plan. A copy of the proposed amendment is available at:

<https://www.oxfordcounty.ca/en/services-for-you/oxford-county.aspx#Current-Application-Notices-Reports>

### Public Meeting:

The Council of the County of Oxford will hold a public meeting to consider the proposed Official Plan Amendment on:

**Date: Wednesday, February 25, 2026**

**Time: 9:30 a.m.**

**Place: Council Chambers, 1st Floor, 21 Reeve St., Woodstock, ON N4S 3G1**

AND

**Virtual public meeting via live stream - [www.oxfordcounty.ca/livestream](http://www.oxfordcounty.ca/livestream)**

The format of County Council meetings has changed to a hybrid meeting model. The public may attend the meeting in-person or may participate virtually, or by telephone. Public meetings and Council meetings may be viewed through a live stream feed at: <http://www.oxfordcounty.ca/livestream>, should you wish to view the meeting but not participate.

We encourage residents to provide written comments to [planning@oxfordcounty.ca](mailto:planning@oxfordcounty.ca). All written comments received may become part of the public agenda.

If you would like to participate in the public hearing, please email [clerksoffice@oxfordcounty.ca](mailto:clerksoffice@oxfordcounty.ca) or call 519-539-9800 ext. 3001 by **Friday, February 20, 2026**. Leave your name and phone number, as well as the application file number or address of the property you are calling about. Staff will return your call and provide participation options and details. Arrangements can also be made to obtain a copy of the relevant planning report if you are unable to download a copy from <http://www.oxfordcounty.ca/Your-Government/Council>.

Please contact the Clerk's Department if you require an alternate format or communication support with at least 7 days' notice prior to the meeting, at 519-539-9800 ext 3910 or by e-mail at [clerksoffice@oxfordcounty.ca](mailto:clerksoffice@oxfordcounty.ca).

If you have any questions or require additional information, including information about appeal rights, please contact **April Nix, Manager of Policy Planning**, ext. 519-539-9800 ext. 3208. Written comments may be forwarded to the address below or emailed to [planning@oxfordcounty.ca](mailto:planning@oxfordcounty.ca). Please reference "Implementation Policies" in all correspondence.

Yours truly,

April Nix, MCIP, RPP  
 Manager of Policy Planning  
 Community Planning Office  
 County of Oxford  
 21 Reeve Street  
 Woodstock ON N4S 3G1  
 Telephone: 519-539-9800  
 Fax 519-421-4712

# Retiring Milverton teacher leaves lasting legacy after 30-year career

GARY WEST

*Gazette Correspondent*

The name Mathieson is well known and highly respected throughout Stratford and Perth County, and in education circles, it is often associated with longtime Milverton teacher Carolyn Mathieson.

As Mrs. Mathieson begins her retirement following a 30-year career in education, former students, parents and grandparents alike describe her as “the best teacher they ever had.” For 26 of those years, Mathieson taught grades 1 and 2 at Milverton Public School, where she became known for her patience, dedication and genuine care for her students’ wellbeing.

In recognition of her retirement, the Mathieson family has chosen a tribute that reflects her lifelong commitment to children. Through conversations with her husband, former Stratford mayor Dan Mathieson, the family learned about

the hard-boiled egg program offered to Perth County schools by local egg farmers. The program provides students with a nutritious source of protein to support learning and healthy development.

The family decided to sponsor the program at Milverton Public School in Carolyn Mathieson’s honour, ensuring students continue to receive healthy snacks in the years ahead. When she learned of the plan, Carolyn Mathieson said she was thankful and deeply appreciative of having her teaching career recognized in such a meaningful way.

She said she believes students need proper nutrition to succeed in the classroom, noting that healthy lunches and snacks are essential for focus and learning. The hard-boiled eggs are delivered regularly to Perth County schools in individual packs by local egg farmers.

Education runs deep in Carolyn Mathieson’s family. Her late father, David Wright, spent 30

years as a teacher and principal at Northwestern Secondary School (now Stratford District Secondary School), Mitchell District High School and Central Secondary School (now Stratford Intermediate School). During his career, Wright also led science and physical education departments. He passed away in January 2011. Carolyn Mathieson’s mother, Gail, now lives in retirement at McCarthy Place in Stratford.

Carolyn and Dan Mathieson’s two children, Kaitlyn and Riley, also live locally. Riley, a golf coach at Western University, works with his father’s company, Ronocco-Pestell Agri, after graduating from Western. Kaitlyn is completing her studies at Western University in London.

Though retired from the classroom, many residents may still see Carolyn Mathieson working part time at Revel Café in Stratford when time permits.



(MILVERTON PUBLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPAL DON RAUSER PHOTO)

Mrs. Carolyn Mathieson is pictured at Milverton Public School following her retirement from teaching after 30 years in Stratford and Perth County. In her honour, the Mathieson family has committed to supporting the school’s lunch and snack program through the donation of hard-boiled eggs. Mathieson taught grades 1 and 2 at Milverton Public School for 26 years.

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# Artist continues to inspire through workshops

DIANE DANEN

*Gazette Correspondent*

Viktoriiia Makarova, a Ukrainian artist and designer, recently took part in the Brush Off – 13th Edition at THEMUSEUM in downtown Kitchener on Saturday, Jan. 31.

The Brush Off is a live art competition where artists create paintings on the spot during timed rounds. Guests watch the creative process unfold, vote for their favourite pieces and participate in a silent auction, with proceeds supporting THEMUSEUM.

This year's event featured 20 artists competing in three rounds in front of an enthusiastic audience. Makarova was a crowd favourite, earning a place among the top five artists at the event.

In addition to her professional work, Makarova plays an active role in the local community. She recently led a painting workshop, the second in a series of workshops being offered at the Ukrainian Guest House in New Hamburg. She also volunteers at the Hub's Healing Art projects. Her artwork is currently on display at the Cultural Hub.

Community members are invited to attend the third workshop in

the series, a Ukrainian Cooking Workshop, at the Grassroots Ukrainian Cultural Hub in New Hamburg on Thursday, Feb. 26, from 5-7 p.m.

This hands-on workshop will give participants the chance to learn how to make traditional Ukrainian hohubtsi (stuffed cabbage rolls) from scratch. Olga Strasburger, a member of Grassroots Response, says participants can expect "the most delicious cabbage rolls in the world," adding everyone is welcome to

register at no cost.

The event is open to all community members, whether they are experienced cooks or trying Ukrainian food for the first time. Step-by-step instruction will be provided, and all ingredients and materials are included.

Anyone interested in participating in future workshops can register on the event page of the Grassroots website at [www.wr-grassrootsresponse.ca](http://www.wr-grassrootsresponse.ca) or email Olga Strasburger at [marketing@grassrootsresponse.ca](mailto:marketing@grassrootsresponse.ca).



Ukrainian artist Viktoriiia Makarova recently competed at the Brush Off – 13th Edition at THEMUSEUM, earning a spot in the top five crowd favourites.



(OLENA GADOMSKA PHOTOS)

Artist Viktoriiia Makarova works on one of her paintings at the Brush Off – 13th Edition.



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# Oxford Junior Farmers' 2025 year in review

KELLY DEBRUYN AND NICOLE DANEN

*Oxford County Junior Farmers*

The year 2025 was another busy one for Oxford County Junior Farmers, but definitely one for the books!

The year was a packed schedule of Junior Farmers' Association of Ontario (JFAO) provincial events. Oxford members traveled across the province, competing in Winter Games in Stormont-Glenarry, attending March Conference in Niagara Falls, Leadership Camp at Camp Kawartha, Autumn Profile in Wentworth-Niagara and Sing Swing in Huron-Perth. Oxford also hosted the Ambassadors Banquet in Princeton this summer, and in February, some members of the club organized a bus trip to the National Farm Machinery Show in Louisville, Ky.

One awesome opportunity for the junior farmers is the ability to go on an exchange to another country, which one of our members, Amy Danen, did in June to Scotland. She spent three weeks touring around the country, staying with different families.

In July, we hosted international delegates for a week from Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Germany, Switzerland and Austria. These delegates are a part of young farmers groups in their countries, who tour around Ontario with each junior farmer club for a total of 10 weeks in the summer. We showed them the best of Oxford while they stayed with

us and made lifelong friendships along the way.

Our club also made appearances across the county, helping with various events and community betterment projects such as Breakfast on the Farm in Innerkip, Tavistock Fall Fair KidZone, mulching the labyrinth at the VON Sakura house in Woodstock and cleaning up Roth Park in Woodstock. Back in October, members went door to door "trick-or-canning" in Embro collecting non-perishable food items for Operation Sharing. Oxford also tries to organize a social each month with some this year being a learn-to-curl afternoon, a games night, bowling, a Christmas tree burn and a tour of the Tavistock Hops Farm.

We also helped put on the Embro Truck and Tractor Pull again this year, which was yet another great weekend! This event allows us to give back to the community, donating over \$80,000 to the community groups that help at the event, as well as local charities, projects and initiatives in Oxford County! We appreciate the continued support at the tractor pull and we are honoured to be able to make an impact and donate so much back to the community year after year.

Oxford Junior Farmers would like to thank all those people who have supported us this year. Whether it be through attending or volunteering at the tractor pull or donating to our Trick-or-Can drive, thank



(PHOTO COURTESY OF OXFORD COUNTY JUNIOR FARMERS)

The Oxford County Junior Farmers participated in a social each month, including an afternoon learning to curl at the Norwich District Curling Club.

you!

Are you or someone you know interested in joining Oxford County Junior Farmers? Follow us on either Instagram or Facebook to see when the next event is and send us a message for more information! Our monthly meetings are on the second Friday of the month, typically with a social

event every month as well. Anyone from the ages of 15-30 can join; you do not have to be a farmer!

Attention, alumni! Looking to stay up to date with Oxford junior farmer news? Join the alumni email list to receive the newsletter. Contact Kelly at [kellyndebruyne@outlook.com](mailto:kellyndebruyne@outlook.com) to be added.

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## Excellent snow conditions draw riders to trails near Shakespeare

GARY WEST

*Gazette Correspondent*

Snowmobilers travelling near Shakespeare on Tuesday morning were treated to near-perfect conditions as steady snowfall continues to deliver one of the best winters for the sport in years.

"There hasn't been a winter like this for a long time," local riders are saying as they take advantage of well-groomed trails throughout Perth, Waterloo and Oxford counties and beyond.

With repeated snowfalls of 15 to 20 centimetres at a time, a solid base has formed across much of the trail network. That consistency allows grooming equipment to stay ahead of demand, keeping trails smooth and safe, particularly for the busy weekends when most riders head out.

The hundreds of snowmobilers who log thousands of kilometres each season are quick to credit local snowmobile clubs and area farmers for making the sport possible. Volunteers put in countless hours maintaining trails, while landowners continue to grant access across their farmland, ensuring safe and scenic routes through the countryside.

Ontario Provincial Police have also reminded riders to use caution and follow posted signage.

"Please travel carefully and obey the signs set up by volunteers with area clubs," police have said online, noting many snowmobile accidents could be



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Calvin Horst, a hog and chicken farmer from near Shakespeare, and his riding partner, Jason Jantzi, a dairy farmer from near Milverton, take a break along groomed trails near Perth Road 106 east of Shakespeare on Tuesday. The pair have enjoyed snowmobiling for years and say it offers a welcome break from the daily demands of farming. With temperatures hovering around -6 degrees Celsius, they were hoping to ride south toward Turkey Point before heading home.

avoided if riders paid closer attention to trail markers, speed limits and conditions.

Provincial funding has also played a role in expanding and maintaining the trail system. With more than \$4 million earmarked by the Ontario government for the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs, additional trails have been groomed and opened this season. Given the winter conditions, the timing has been ideal.

# Feb. 15 marks the 61st anniversary of Canada's flag, and the 30th anniversary of Flag Day

DIANE BONFONTE

*Flag Wavers of Waterloo Region*

With Cortina's Olympics underway, every time a nation's flag is raised at a medal ceremony, a unique tribute is bestowed to congratulate athletes' achievements, and at the same moment, a nation's pride graces centre stage.

Consider what if Canada did not have its internationally recognized single red maple leaf flag? Hard to imagine, yet prior to Feb. 15, 1965, this was our country's reality.

Anyone over 65 may have a unique appreciation of our cherished flag. People all across the country experienced much drama and acrimony during 1964-1965, at the time dubbed by many as "The Great Flag Debate." All the facts about this process may never be fully known, hidden in the shadows of time and history.

As early as 1919, Maj.-Gen. Eugene Fiset proposed a "single red maple leaf on a white field" to be used as a national flag to correspond with Canada's athletes' uniforms as early as the 1904 Olympics.

During Lester Pearson's 1963 election campaign for prime minister, he championed lofty policy promises that included his assurance of a distinctly Canadian flag. A greater sense of urgency had traction.

Canada's centennial year loomed large. It would begin on July 1, 1967, so preparations to celebrate were underway to host Expo '67 in Montreal.

Over 70 countries participated. Each had pavilions which displayed their culture and more along with their nation's flag. Canada prepared to welcome millions of visitors yet, as the host country, had no national flag to raise. With much fervour, heartfelt commitment and diligence, a process to realize a flag for Canada began in earnest under the leadership of Prime Minister Pearson and John Ross Matheson (MP, Leeds County, Ontario).

Canadians who were accomplished and highly respected experts in their field also contributed to the critically fundamental components that stylized our present flag – George Stanley, Alan Beddoe, Jacques Saint-Cyr, Gunther Wyszcki, George Bist and Ken Donovan and his daughter, Mrs. Joan O'Malley (a very dear friend of mine who still resides in Ottawa).

Google Joan O'Malley. Discover how in secret in the early evening of Nov. 6, 1964, she sewed crude bunting samples of the three finalist flag designs in an Ottawa warehouse of the Government Exhibition Commission. John Matheson delivered them to 24 Sussex. Pearson requested prototypes so he could privately evaluate them during the weekend at his official getaway residence at Harrington Lake.

Sadly, all of these prototypes mysteriously disappeared – never seen again. In 2015 during the 50th Anniversary of the

flag, Joan's role was commemorated by Canada Post issuing its first stamp made from a particular satin-rayon material.

At noon on Feb. 15, 1965, over 10,000 people witnessed on Parliament Hill the single red maple leaf flag officially raised for the first time! Concurrently, all government buildings, schools and other properties did the same across Canada.

"So, at noon today ... our new flag will fly for the first time in the skies above Canada and in places overseas where Canadians serve," Pearson said. "If our nation, by God's grace, endures a thousand years, this day, the 15th day of February 1965, will always be remembered as a milestone in Canada's national progress."

In 1994, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's government began an initiative that determined that Parliament Hill's Peace Tower flag would be changed every weekday, and East and West Block flags on a weekly basis.

"The flag belongs to all Canadians; it is an emblem we all share ... (that) reflects the common values we hold so dear: freedom, peace, respect, justice and tolerance," Chrétien proclaimed on Feb. 15, 1996, Canada's first National Flag Day. "Canada's flag is a symbol that unites Canadians and expresses throughout the world and always our pride in being Canadian ... represents our national identity... honours Canadians of all origins who through their courage and determination have helped to build and are continuing to build our great country: a dynamic country that is open to the future."

"... Let us be proud of our flag! Let us recognize how privileged we are to live in Canada, this magnificent country that encompasses our history, our hopes, our future."

A federal government website provides the opportunity for any resident of Canada to apply to receive a flown Parliament Hill flag. The wait for a Peace Tower flag is now more than 100 years (if ever) due to the increased popularity of this program.

Google Robert Labonte, Flag Master of Parliament Hill. On YouTube, there is a short video of him at work. I consider Robert a very special friend and had the honour on Feb. 15, 2015, to experience his routine in changing the Peace Tower flag.

ALL people's living in Canada only need to fly and wave one banner – our single red maple leaf flag. Our greatest symbol of nationhood yells loud and proud to the world, "Canada is the true north strong and free!"

To learn more, watch the 44-minute documentary on YouTube entitled, "Let's Celebrate Canada's Flag." It presents five Canadians (including Joan O'Malley's first videoed interview) in short segments sharing unique historic perspectives in their own words. The "Canadian Flag Waver" song's video is also on YouTube.



(RIC HALL'S COLLECTION PHOTO)

Managing the flag's halyard during the February 15th ceremony, a young Constable Gaeton Secours (in a fur cap and pea jacket - still resides in Ottawa). Protocol prohibited it to be raised on the Peace Tower since His Excellency George Vanier was present; representing Her Majesty as Head of State. It has never been located after it was lowered.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Joan O'Malley's sewing machine on display at National Museum of History in Gatineau, Que.

# Wayne Simpson wins Wilmot Heritage Fire Brigade cash draw



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

New Hamburg resident Wayne Simpson accepts a cheque for \$417.50 from Wilmot Heritage Antique Fire Brigade president Peter Gingerich as the winner of the brigade's monthly cash draw.

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

The Wilmot Heritage Antique Fire Brigade continues to thank area residents for their ongoing support through its monthly cash raffle, which helps ensure the long-term preservation of the township's firefighting history.

Last week, a cheque for \$417.50 was presented to New Hamburg resident Wayne Simpson, a familiar face around Baden and New

Hamburg and a longtime supporter of local community initiatives. Simpson has won the draw before, but Wilmot Heritage Fire Brigade president Peter Gingerich said he continues to purchase tickets each month, knowing the funds support a worthwhile local cause.

Proceeds from the monthly draw help the volunteer organization maintain and restore antique firefighting equipment, with the long-term goal of displaying the collection at a future location in Baden

for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Gingerich noted that continued community participation is key to keeping the brigade viable and ensuring the township's firefighting heritage is preserved for generations to come.

For more information about the Wilmot Heritage Antique Fire Brigade or its monthly draw, contact Gingerich at peter.gingerich@rogers.com, visit the brigade on Facebook or visit [wilmotfiremuseum.com](http://wilmotfiremuseum.com).

## OBITUARY

### GREGORY WILFRED NAUMANN June 21, 1945 - February 1, 2026



Greg Naumann from Baden passed away on Sunday, February 1, 2026 at Grand River Hospital in Kitchener, Ontario.

He was the beloved husband of Arlene Naumann (Schwartzentruber), and loving father of Tyler and his wife Michelle Naumann. He will be sadly missed by his granddaughters Paige and Taylor Naumann.

He is survived by his sister Joan Wood, his brother-in-law Elmer Koenig and many nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his parents Wilfred and Florence Naumann, his sisters Shirley Koenig, and Dolores and her husband Willy Hauck.

Greg loved the outdoors and spending time with his family especially his granddaughters. He was always willing to lend a helping hand for friends and neighbours.

He was employed at Charles Abel Photofinishing for many years and after he retired he worked part time for PharamaPlus delivering medications to customers.

Relatives and friends will be received at Mark Jutzi Funeral Home, 291 Huron Street in New Hamburg on Saturday, February 7 for visitation from 10:00 am to 10:45 am with the funeral service to be held at 11:00 am in the chapel.

In lieu of flowers donations to Operation Smile would be appreciated by the family and can be done on the funeral home website.

Personal condolences can be posted for the family at [www.markjutzifuneralhomes.ca](http://www.markjutzifuneralhomes.ca)

## The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette

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Ian McKie

Chair of Leadership and Training, New Hamburg Legion

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## OBITUARY

### YANTZI, Paul Henry



Paul Henry Yantzi passed away peacefully on Wednesday, January 28, 2026, at Stratford General Hospital.

Born on January 4, 1943, in East Zorra Tavistock, Paul was the son of the late Henry Lloyd and Lily Mae (Schwartzentruber) Yantzi. On August 30, 1968, he married the love of his life, Alice

(Gerber) Yantzi, and together they shared 57 years of devotion, family, and faith.

Paul was a loving and devoted father to Heidi and her husband John Bailey, and to Heather Yantzi. He was a proud and cherished grandfather to Selina Bailey (Derek McIntyre) and Noah Bailey (Ellie Maidlow-Whitworth), who brought him great joy.

He will be deeply missed by his sisters Elva Jutzi, and Lois Steckley and her husband Leigh; by his brother Mark Yantzi and his wife Glennis; his foster brother Brian Smithers, and by his sisters-in-law Dorothy Pearce and Elsie Gerber; and by his many nieces and nephews.

Paul was predeceased by his sisters Eunice Yantzi and Beulah Yantzi, brother Wilbur Yantzi, foster brother Richard Yantzi, and his brothers-in-law John Jutzi, Norman Gerber, and Bob Pearce.

Well known throughout the community, Paul was often recognized for his green 1955 Ford pickup truck. He resided his entire life at Punkeydoodles Corner and was a charter member of Hillcrest Mennonite Church. Paul was a longtime member of the North Easthope Antique Tractor Club and greatly enjoyed attending various car and tractor shows.

Paul was known as a multi-talented man who loved working on his truck, he worked as a school bus driver, farmer and was known for his dripless rust proofing business. Family meant everything to him. The Yantzi family was known as a singing family, and Paul especially treasured music and togetherness. With a gift for conversation, Paul could connect with anyone and everyone he met.

Paul's kindness, humility, and love for family and community will be remembered always.

Relatives and friends are invited to the Mark Jutzi Funeral Home, 291 Huron Street, New Hamburg, on Friday February 6, 2026, from 4 – 7 p.m. A memorial service will be held in Paul's home church, Hillcrest Mennonite Church, on Sunday, February 8, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.

As expressions of sympathy and in lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to Stratford General Hospital or MCC Meat Cannery and can be done through the funeral home.

Personal condolences can be posted for the family at [www.markjutzifuneralhomes.ca](http://www.markjutzifuneralhomes.ca)

## OBITUARY

### SCHAFFER: Kathryn "Kathy"



Kathy Schaffer passed away peacefully after a courageous and grace-filled journey.

Born in Wellesley, Kathy was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and community volunteer whose life was defined by faith, discipline, generosity, and family.

Kathy married her teenage sweetheart, Bill Schaffer, on June 6, 1969, and together

they built a loving home in Shakespeare, where they raised their daughters Laurie (Gord Bradley) of Vancouver, Angela (Jared Langdon) of Stratford, and Heather (Cory Briese) of Enniskillen. She was a proud and devoted grandmother to Norah and Blake Bradley, Mackenzie and Bennett Langdon, and Avery and Regan Briese, who were truly the light of her life.

Kathy will be lovingly remembered by her siblings Elaine MacMillan (Bill), Donna Pudrycki (Irwin), Jim Green (Susan), and Bill Green (Elaine), and lovingly remembered by her brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law Barb Green (Doug MacDougald), Larry Schaffer (Marion), Barb Mittleholtz (Jack), and Jack Schaffer (Kerry), along with many cherished nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her parents Ken and Ruby Green, her brother Don Green, and her parents-in-law Blake and Mona Schaffer.

Kathy was a faithful member of Hampstead United Church and a dedicated volunteer with the Hampstead UCW as well as the Shakespeare Community Athletic Association for many years.

Diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2004, she faced her illness with remarkable determination and dignity.

The family extends heartfelt thanks to Dr. Jog and the team at London Health Sciences, and the compassionate caregivers at Spruce Lodge for their care, support, and kindness.

Kathy will be remembered for her strength, quiet leadership, unwavering faith, and the deep love she carried for her family.

Relatives and friends will be received in the Francis Chapel of the Glendinning Funeral Home, 77 Woodstock St. N. Tavistock on Monday February 2, 2026 from 2-4 p.m. and 7-9 p.m. Funeral service will be conducted in the Francis Chapel on Tuesday, February 3, 2026 at 11:00 a.m.. Reception to follow the service at Grace United Church, Tavistock.

Private interment will be held at a later date.

Donations in lieu of flowers to Michael J Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research and the Shakespeare Community Athletic Association would be appreciated by the family. Personal condolences can be posted at [www.francisfh.ca](http://www.francisfh.ca).

May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face; the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.



Sorry For Your Loss

## OBITUARY

### DEITNER, Ronald Joseph "Ron"



Passed away peacefully with his beloved wife by his side on Sunday, February 1, 2026, at Waterloo Regional Health Network – Queen's Campus, Kitchener (formerly St. Mary's General Hospital).

Ron was born on August 11, 1949, in Brussels, Ontario, alongside his twin brother, the seventh child of the late Charles and

Josephine (Weber) Deitner.

Beloved husband of Mary (Mantler) Deitner, whom he married on June 1, 1974. Cherished father of Graham Deitner, Mark Deitner (Saida Tesfai), Drew Deitner (Samantha), and Heather Murray (Jason). Proud and devoted grandfather to Nora, Vienna, Hudson, Jack, Connor, Anderson, and Adelaide.

Ron will be deeply missed by his siblings Marjorie Bolger, Ruthann (Karl) Gmach, Marlene (Bill) Henhoeffler, Rosemary (Jim) Trznadel, Donald (Joan) Deitner, and Betty (Mike) Nafziger; by his sister-in-law Pat Deitner; by many nieces and nephews; and by the extended Mantler family.

Predeceased by his sister Pat Orlowski; brothers Raymond (Pat) Deitner and Ken Deitner; and by his brother-in-law Stan Bolger.

Ron was proudly part of a true twin legacy—a twin himself, an uncle of twins, a grandfather of twins, and a great-uncle of twins, with 6 sets of twins total.

A lifelong member of the Wilmot Township community, Ron was a well-known dairy farmer and later operated a hobby farm filled with geese, chickens, cows, pheasants, and a well-loved garden. Many locals fondly remember stopping at his roadside produce stand, "Corn and More."

Ron gave over 30 years of dedicated service to the Spirit 83 and the New Hamburg Firebirds Hockey Association. Following a serious farm accident that resulted in the loss of his leg, Ron never slowed down becoming a tester for new prosthetic designs to ensure they could withstand his determination and drive. He proudly served as Wilmot Township's first dog catcher with one leg, keeping the first dog he caught when no one came to claim it. He also worked as a night watchman with one leg at the fall fair, theatre, and local events, ensuring everything and everyone remained safe.

Relatives and friends are welcome to visit with the family on Monday, February 9, 2026, from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. at the Mark Jutzi Funeral Home, 291 Huron Street, New Hamburg. A Memorial Mass will be held at Blessed Sacrament Parish on Tuesday, February 10, 2026, at 11:00 a.m.

As expressions of sympathy, memorial donations may be made to the Baden Volunteer Fire Department (for equipment costs) or the New Hamburg Firebirds Hockey Association. Donations may be arranged through the funeral home website.

If you are unable to make a monetary donation, the family asks that you consider becoming a blood donor in Ron's honour. Ron was a passionate advocate for blood donation and proudly donated 100 units himself during his lifetime.

Ron's legacy is one of resilience, generosity, service, and unwavering determination, qualities that will be remembered by all who knew him.

Personal condolences can be posted for the family on the funeral home website at [www.markjutzifuneralhomes.ca](http://www.markjutzifuneralhomes.ca)

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## OBITUARY

### Donna Hilderley (nee Love)



Donna Hilderley (nee Love), a wonderful wife, mother, grandmother, Gigi, Sister, Aunt and friend, passed away peacefully on Sunday, January 25th, 2026, at People's Care Nursing Home, Tavistock, formerly of Woodstock, in her 87th year. Donna met and married the love of her life, Bruce Hilderley, on June 7th, 1958, celebrating 67 years of marriage. Together, they built a wonderful life filled with joy, warmth, and countless memories. They loved to travel, Hawaii being their favourite destination. Donna leaves behind 3 children, Cathy McCoskey (Dean), Brian Hilderley (Tracy), and Sheri Phillips (Richy), who will forever hold cherished memories close to their hearts. Donna's Legacy continues through her 6 grandchildren, Trevor McCoskey (2023), Eileigh Cocchetto (Jeremy), Kyle Hilderley (Stefanie), Justin Hilderley (Andrea), Erika Beadle (Joel), Wade Phillips (Paige) and her 6 Great Grandchildren, who called her Gigi, Adriana and Tenley Cocchetto (twins), Avery and Hadley Beadle (twins), Hudson and Hayes Phillips, who all brought her immeasurable pride and joy. Loving sister to Jack Love (Karen). Predeceased by her parents, Norm Love (1981), Jean Love (2012), and sister Margaret Bigham (2008). Fondly remembered by many nieces, nephews, extended family, and friends. Donna was a dedicated Bell Canada employee with 37 years of service, and a place where she made many lifelong friendships. She was a skilled crafter, some of which were knitting, sewing, and tole painting, to name a few. She loved music, going to dances, and in her younger years, she sang in the church choir. Donna will be remembered by many for her sense of humour, laughter, love, and kindness. Our deepest and sincerest thanks to Dr. V. Kustec, Dr. B. Cowing, Dr. S. Davies, and all the staff at the People's Care Nursing Home, Woodingford Lodge Day Program, and Von Day Program. The exceptional care given to Donna will never be forgotten and was greatly appreciated. A Memorial Service will be held at Brock and Visser Funeral Home on Sunday, March 8, 2026, at 2 pm, with a time of visitation starting at 1 pm. If desired, memorial contributions can be made to the Alzheimer Society South West partners of Oxford or to the Ronald McDonald House Canada, would be greatly appreciated. [www.brockandvisser.com](http://www.brockandvisser.com)

## OBITUARY

### Mary Lou Brannan (Edwards)



On Wednesday January 28th 2026 Mary Lou Brannan (Edwards) loving Wife, Mother, Grandmother, Great-Grandmother passed away at age 89 at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. *O death, where is your victory? O grave where is your sting? 1 Cor 15:55*  
She is survived by her three grown children, Stephen (Michele), Kathleen (Charles), & Patrick, 8 grandchildren & 5 great-grandchildren. She is also survived by 2 cousins. For a full obituary, please visit: [affordableburialsandcremations.ca](http://affordableburialsandcremations.ca)

## OBITUARY

### BENDER: Dorothy (nee Gerber)



passed away peacefully on Sunday, February 1, 2026 at Spruce Lodge, Stratford. Dorothy Bender of New Hamburg in her 100th year. Beloved wife of the late Willis Bender who predeceased her August 27, 1998. Loving mother of Carol (Ron) Roth of New Hamburg, Kathy (Danny) Roth of Stratford and Bob Bender (Alan Small) of Waterloo. Sadly missed by her grandchildren Tammy (Greg) Kaufman, Jeff (Michelle) Roth, Jeremy (Jill) Roth, Brad (Jenny) Roth and great grandchildren Kaylee (Kyle), Mackenzie (Mackenzie), Rylee (Tanner), Kyle (Morgan), Justin, Braedan, Turner, Brooklynn, Max and great great grandchildren Lennon Dorothy, Palmer, Payton and Callahan. Also remembered by Nathan (Nathalie) Small, Luca and Ella. Survived by her brother Wesley ( Eleanor) Gerber, sister-in-law Hilda Roth and brother-in-law Delmer Bender.  
Predeceased by her parents Moses & Rachel (Jantzi) Gerber, grandson Jimmy Roth, 4 sisters Alice & Clarence Leis, Marion & Irvin Schwartzenruber, Esther Gerber, Kathleen Gerber and 2 brothers Don & Doreen Gerber, Morris & Joyce Gerber and by many Bender in-laws.  
Dorothy loved spending time with her family. She was an avid quilter and had a sharp wit and sense of humour. She was a member of Hillcrest Mennonite Church, New Hamburg.  
Relative and friends will be received in the Mark Jutzi Funeral Home 291 Huron St. New Hamburg on Tuesday from 4 - 8 pm. Private interment in the 19th line Cemetery will take place prior to the private family service that will be conducted in the chapel on Wednesday, February 4, 2026.  
In lieu of flowers, donations to the Mennonite Central Committee or the Spruce Lodge Blanket Warmer Program would be appreciated by the family. Personal condolences can be shared at [www.markjutzifuneralhomes.ca](http://www.markjutzifuneralhomes.ca)

## IN MEMORIAM

IN LOVING MEMORY OF



### DARRYL GINGERICH

JUNE 30, 1976 - FEBRUARY 7, 2025

One year has passed since the loss of our beloved Darryl, yet the love and memories of him live on and continue to comfort us each day.

We remember Darryl as a wonderful partner, father, son, brother, uncle, nephew and friend. His special gifts of kindness, selflessness and love for life were felt by all who knew him. We feel so grateful to have experienced the special love that only Darryl could give. What a blessing he was to all.

We miss you more than words can say.  
Until we meet again.

*Carolle, Micah, Rick, Doreen, Brittany, Scott, Josh, Daisy, and all of your loving family and friends.*

## IN MEMORIAM



IN LOVING MEMORY OF

### Ronald C. Rudy

who died one year ago on February 10th 2025.

*So dearly loved  
So sadly missed.*

*We think of you every day.*

*Donna and family.*

This is Doug.

Doug is an active member of his community.

Doug knows he can stay up to date by checking the local newspaper, in print and online, for the community calendar and other details about upcoming events and social gatherings.

Doug is smart.

Be like Doug.

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# The Old Gazettes

By Sydney Grant

*Slowly but surely, I'm reading through the past pages of the Tavistock Gazette (est. 1895). Within this weekly column I'd like to share with you some of my findings.*

**February 3-10, 2021, Edition (5 years ago)**

A flurry of activity was seen on William Street South in Tavistock last Wednesday as the result of a rupture in a forcemain pipe buried underground in the field south of Tavistock. According to David Simpson, director of public works, "Oxford County Public Works discovered a break in the forcemain between William Street South sewage pump station and the Tavistock lagoons earlier (on Jan. 20). County system operators quickly responded to complete the necessary repairs to mitigate the leak while utilizing vacuum trucks on-site to manage the wastewater during this repair period."

The year 2020 was a bust for any event where people gathered together indoors. The World Crokinole Championship was one of the casualties of the pandemic after 20 consecutive years of play. The curling season was also cancelled in Tavistock amidst fears of community spread. However, there are a growing number of people taking both of these games and combining them to play outdoors. According to a recent radio show that aired on CBC Radio on Jan. 16, 2021, Crokicurl dates back to at least 2017 in Winnipeg where landscape architect Liz Wreford is noted as one of the game's creators. And thanks to the pandemic, it's gaining a huge amount of popularity this winter across Canada.

**February 2-9, 2011, Edition (15 years ago)**

On Wednesday morning, Jan. 26, 2011, the staff at Sommers Motor Generator Ltd. in Tavistock said goodbye to a project they have been working on since September 2010. A 1.2 megawatt diesel generator weighing 43,000 pounds was loaded onto a truck and sent off to its destination at the new Chapman's ice cream plant in Markdale, Ont. Mammoet Crane from Ayr was called in to lift the generator unit onto a double-drop flat bed truck from BMD Transportation of Lansdowne, Ont. The generator measures 10 feet wide, 27 feet long and 13.9 feet in height.

Le Carnaval d'Hiver (Winter Carnival) is celebrated annually at Sprucedale Public School in Shakespeare,

commemorating the French equivalent which is held annually in Quebec City. This year, the event was held on Friday, Feb. 4 in the schoolyard with lots of snow and cold wind that kept everyone moving to keep warm. The circuit of games depicts winter games and sports, celebrating Canada's winter season. Events for the day included tug-of-war, sled pull, hockey games, building the highest snow mountain, bean bag toss, sack race and an obstacle course.

**January 31 - February 7, 1996, Edition (30 years ago)**

Two Tavistock Public School students earned the right to advance to the zone public speaking contest after winning the annual Tavistock Legion Branch 518 contest on Saturday afternoon. The winners will compete in Norwich on March 2. Garrett Zehr, a Grade 6 student, and Shayda McCutchen, a Grade 7 student, at Tavistock school were voted top speakers in the five-speaker junior and senior categories. Krista Bender of Hickson was runner-up in the junior division and Megan Heinbuch, Sprucedale School, Shakespeare, was the senior runner-up.

There are several community fundraising events taking place to come up with the balance of funds needed to complete the new Tavistock arena project. According to a press release Jan. 31 by the East Zorra-Tavistock arena fundraising committee, there has been approximately \$1.1 million raised to date with about \$125,000 yet to be raised. Corporations are now being contacted for donations. The new arena building's foundation is completed, except for the curling addition. Tendering is still going on for certain stages of the project with a meeting held last week by engineers and contractors to come up with a final agenda. The old rink is closing March 3, 1996.

**February 2-9, 1966, Edition (60 years ago)**

The estimated cost of Tavistock's new proposed public school, including all services and equipment, was given Wednesday night as \$338,031. The figure was revealed at the regular meeting of the school board held at the school and conducted by vice-chairman George Wilhelm. At a previous special meeting of the board, five tenders for the school were opened and that of Guenther Mohrmann Construction Ltd. RR 4, Stratford, of \$289,369 was tentatively accepted.

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Pastor Julie Ellison White

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with coffee and fellowship to follow at 11am.

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Church Phone 519-276-0701

Wellington Street, Tavistock

stpaulstavistock@gmail.com

Pastor Rev. Michael Mayer

#### EAST ZORRA MENNONITE

677044 16th Line Road, East Zorra

Pastors Ray Martin & Mike Williamson

[www.ezmennonite.ca](http://www.ezmennonite.ca)

Service audio recordings available at:

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# The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette **SPORTS**

## PJHL Roundup: Braves take over sole possession of second place

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

The Tavistock Braves extended their win streak to six games following a perfect weekend with three victories in three days.

They now sit five points behind first-place Woodstock and two points ahead of third-place Wellesley in the Provincial Junior Hockey League's (PJHL) Doherty Division.

The Braves hosted Wellesley on Friday and came away with a 4-2 win as they outshot the Applejacks 48-29. Tavistock led 4-0 after 40 minutes as Jackson Andrews scored twice to lead the attack. Ethan Stover and Evan Palubeski added singles while Jack Hodge had two assists. Hudson Parker and Rhys McCloskey scored third-period goals for the visitors.

Tavistock travelled to Dorchester on Saturday and came away with a narrow 3-2 overtime win. The Dolphins forced the extra period with a goal at the 19-minute mark, just 16 seconds after Ryan McKellar gave the Braves a 2-1 lead. The teams traded goals in the second period following a scoreless first, with Palubeski finding the back of the net for Tavistock.

The Braves skated into Paris on Sunday and earned a 4-2 victory. The Titans led 1-0 just 19 seconds into the game, but Tavistock scored the next four goals to take a 4-1 lead early in the third period. Hodge, Stover, Palubeski and Yann Raskin, with his team-leading 33rd, scored for the Braves.

The game wasn't as close as the score would indicate, as the Braves outshot the Titans 59-23.



(ALEC RICHARD PHOTO)

Tavistock Braves' forward Nicholas Hambly battles for the puck at the side of Wellesley Applejacks' goaltender Xavier Bussiere's net during the Braves' 4-2 win on Jan. 30 over the Applejacks.

Tavistock went zero for seven on the powerplay while Paris was zero for five. Also of note, Jacob Reid-Brant played in his 100th game as a member of the Braves.

Tavistock finished in seventh place last season, and while Lange is pleased with his team's position with five games remaining, he is well aware things can change in a hurry.

"Winning all three games this past weekend was a big help with that, and we just want to keep it going. We have brought in a few new guys along the way over the last two months. They have made great impacts for us and fit right in to make us more successful."

He added the team can't take a

shift or game off down the stretch since each team on any given night in the division can come away with a point or two.

"We just want to play our game and have our team playing the way we have been and get better each game down the stretch before the playoffs. Our coaches have the guys locked in and playing at a high pace. We are hard to play against every shift, which is hard for some teams to match."

Lange said he has been pleased with the combination of young talent and veterans, some of whom have been healthy scratches at times.

"It's tough to do, but everyone is buying in and we all have the

same goal in mind here. If someone goes down with an injury, it is the next man up here, and it works. I'm very proud of the team and staff right now."

Tavistock now leads the division in scoring with 159 goals in 37 games, yet Lange said there is still room for improvement, especially considering they pelted opposition goalies with 150 shots on goal over the weekend. The six-game win streak can also be attributed to stellar play in their own end.

"What I'm happier with is our defence and goaltending of late. Over our last nine games, we've been able to shut teams down and hold them to two goals or

fewer each game. Just one game at a time is how we go about our business, and we don't want to get ahead of ourselves. We look forward to the next five games and being ready for a good play-off run no matter where we finish in the standings."

Lange said finishing first isn't a priority, citing the division's history and what could be described as a curse similar to winning the NHL's President's Trophy.

"We honestly don't care if we finish first, second or third, as long as we are playing as a team and we stay healthy going into the playoffs. If history shows anything, teams that finish first don't tend to have luck on their side in the playoffs. I think only one team in the last 10-15 years has overcome that obstacle in moving on."

Wellesley also lost its second game of the weekend, a 3-2 defeat at home to New Hamburg on Saturday. McCloskey gave the Applejacks a 2-0 lead with a pair of goals in the first period, but Josh Soulliere, Owen Sculthorp and Owen Bruder replied for the Firebirds. Bruder now has 200 career points with New Hamburg. Tyler Randerson remains the team's all-time leader with 290 points in 260 games, followed by Owen Fischer with 226 points in 205 games.

The Firebirds downed Woodstock 5-4 in overtime on Sunday as Bruder scored the game-winner nearly four minutes into the extra period. Ben Oliver scored twice and added two assists for the winners, while Sculthorp added two helpers.

South Doherty Division		GP	W	L	OTL	T	SOW	SOL	PTS	OTW	GF	GA	DIFF	PCT	PCT	PIM	RW	ROW	STK	IN-DIV	GPCT
1	<u>Woodstock Navy Vets</u>	37	25	7	4	0	0	1	55	2	151	95	56	0.743	0.000	609	23	25	5-0-1-0	0-0-0-0	0.614
2	<u>Tavistock Braves</u>	37	24	11	1	0	0	1	50	2	159	114	45	0.676	0.000	756	22	24	6-0-0-0	0-0-0-0	0.582
3	<u>Wellesley Applejacks</u>	37	24	13	0	0	2	0	48	6	144	122	22	0.649	0.000	700	16	22	0-2-0-0	0-0-0-0	0.541
4	<u>New Hamburg Firebirds</u>	36	21	10	4	0	0	1	47	3	135	113	22	0.653	0.000	886	18	21	3-0-0-0	0-0-0-0	0.544
5	<u>Norwich Merchants</u>	36	21	12	2	0	0	1	45	4	135	123	12	0.625	0.000	634	17	21	5-0-0-0	0-0-0-0	0.523
6	<u>Hespeler Shamrocks</u>	36	13	19	4	0	2	0	30	3	85	140	-55	0.417	0.000	727	8	11	0-2-0-0	0-0-0-0	0.378
7	<u>Paris Titans</u>	37	11	23	3	0	0	0	25	1	130	177	-47	0.338	0.000	677	10	11	0-4-0-0	0-0-0-0	0.423
8	<u>Dorchester Dolphins</u>	38	8	25	4	0	1	1	21	1	117	172	-55	0.276	0.000	550	6	7	0-8-1-0	0-0-0-0	0.405

# Royals win final regular-season game and prepare for first-round playoff opponent

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

The Tavistock Royals will meet Erin in the first round of the Ontario Elite Hockey League's (OEHL) South Division playoffs, and it might be coming at just the right time.

The Royals skated to a 5-3 road win Saturday night, handing the Outlaws their third straight loss. Goals by Sean Kienapple and Mitch Atkins gave Tavistock a 2-0 lead after the opening period but Erin tied it up in the second before Lucas Bast scored to give the Royals a 3-2 lead heading into the third. Drew Gerth scored a powerplay marker at the 10-minute mark, a goal that stood up as the eventual game-winner before Atkins scored his second of the game into an empty net to seal the victory.

Tavistock goalie Andrew Masters was outstanding, stopping 52 of the 55 shots he faced. The Kitchener native is well-travelled, playing junior hockey in Paris, St. Marys, Sarnia and Georgetown before playing three years at the University of Guelph. His pro career included stops in Sweden, France, Australia and Germany.

The Royals finish the regular season with a record of 12 wins, seven losses and an overtime loss, good for fifth place and two points behind fourth-place Erin. Tavistock downed the Outlaws 4-2 in the two teams' only other matchup back in October.

Atkins led the team in scoring this season with 10 goals and 35 points while playing all 20 games, good for 10th in the entire OEHL and second in the South Division. Deven Kropf followed him with 25 points and Drew Gerth with 22.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Tavistock's leading scorer, Mitch Atkins, is expected to play a major role in the Royals playoff hopes this season. The team begins the postseason on Saturday night with a game in Erin against the Outlaws.

## OEHL SOUTH DIVISION PLAYOFFS

### TAVISTOCK ROYALS VS. ERIN OUTLAWS

<b>GAME 1 – SATURDAY, FEB. 7 AT ERIN, 7:30 P.M.</b>
<b>GAME 2 – SUNDAY, FEB. 8 AT TAVISTOCK, 1:30 P.M.</b>
<b>GAME 3 – SATURDAY, FEB. 14 AT ERIN, 7:30 P.M.</b>
<b>GAME 4 – SUNDAY, FEB. 15 AT TAVISTOCK, 2:30 P.M.</b>
<b>GAME 5 – SATURDAY, FEB. 21 AT ERIN, 7:30 P.M.</b>
<b>GAME 6 – SUNDAY, FEB. 22 AT TAVISTOCK, 2:30 P.M.</b>
<b>GAME 7 - TBD</b>

OEHL CURRENT ONTARIO ELITE HOCKEY LEAGUE SOUTH CONFERENCE STANDINGS																											
RK.	TEAM	GP	W	L	T	OTW	OTL	SOW	SOL	PTS	PP	RM	ROM	GF	GA	DIFF	STK	PIM	PPG	PPGA	SHGA	PP%	TSH	SH%	PPGA	PK%	
1	Seaforth Centenaires	20	15	4	0	2	0	1	1	31	.775	12	14	103	48	55	Lost 1	296	73	11	3	0.151	65	2	6	0.908	
2	Petrolia Squires	20	15	5	0	1	0	1	0	30	.750	13	14	99	61	38	Won 6	322	63	11	2	0.175	78	9	9	0.885	
3	Elora Rocks	20	14	6	0	1	0	1	0	28	.700	12	13	118	78	40	Won 3	246	69	16	5	0.232	57	3	10	0.825	
4	Erin Outlaws	20	12	5	0	1	1	1	2	27	.675	10	11	89	68	21	Lost 3	426	70	12	2	0.171	89	2	12	0.865	
5	Tavistock Royals	20	12	7	0	0	1	0	0	25	.625	12	12	100	76	24	Won 1	307	80	14	5	0.175	72	6	13	0.819	
6	Dunnville Aeros	20	9	11	0	0	0	0	0	18	.450	9	9	92	87	5	Won 1	277	70	17	5	0.243	67	7	13	0.806	
7	Tillsonburg Thunder	20	8	11	0	0	0	1	1	17	.425	7	7	79	76	3	Won 2	406	73	18	2	0.247	85	5	10	0.882	
8	Milverton Four Wheel Drives	20	5	10	0	0	3	1	2	15	.375	4	4	63	96	-33	Lost 1	417	88	16	5	0.182	75	2	15	0.8	
9	Delhi Flames	20	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	0	0	21	174	-153	Lost 19	293	74	5	7	0.068	72	0	32	0.556	

# The difference between corporate media and local independents, and why supporting local matters

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

By Galen Simmons



In my nearly 13-year career in journalism, I've worked for both corporate giants and local independent newspapers.

While both employ excellent journalists and editors who work hard to report the news in ways readers can understand and engage with in their daily lives, in my experience, there are some key differences that aren't always entirely apparent when we're skimming through our community newspaper or scrolling through headlines online over a morning cup of coffee.

First and foremost – and probably the most obvious point I'll make here – the motivation behind

the production of news differs between those who put out your independently owned community newspaper and the folks who pull the strings behind the scenes at national headquarters for your local corporately owned outlet.

The bottom line is a key motivator for any business regardless of who owns it, but in my experience, it plays a much heavier role in restricting what journalists can report on at corporately owned media outlets than at independent ones. At my previous job, there was a push to focus only on what generated the most clicks online – breaking news, larger features and topics of wider interest that

could be shared across the company. Here at Grant Haven Media and other independent locals, we are free to report on everything and anything that could be of interest to our readers – pageviews be damned!

While that includes breaking news, larger features and stories of more regional interest, it also includes all those community stories about fundraisers, events, minor sports teams, service clubs and communities coming together to support one another. Those are the stories I love to tell because they reinforce that idea of community – that friends, neighbours and total strangers can come together to accomplish incredible things that wouldn't have been possible otherwise. And as newspapers, we play an important role in those accomplishments, helping organizers promote their fundraisers and events, and celebrating their successes for the whole community to see and read about.

At Grant Haven Media, we value the work of our contributors. Whether stories come from a re-

tired farmer, a high school student or a journalist fresh from college, we invest heavily in our news team with time, training and money to ensure we have the right people in the right places who know how to ask the right questions so we can have as fulsome coverage of daily and civic life in our communities as possible. Are we perfect? Of course not, but we do our best to capture every moment of joy, sadness, frustration, triumph and heartbreak that we can, both to inform the communities we live in and to create a record of history for future generations to learn from.

In my experience working for a corporate giant, the mantra was "do more with less." While the editorial teams worked hard to produce the quality of content the communities they serve deserve, the executives and their hedge-fund puppeteers had no qualms with eroding the bedrock on which newspapers are built – the people who report and edit the news.

In my time working in a corporate newsroom, we went from

a staff of four full-time reporters down to just two, while other papers in the region lost their complement of editorial staff entirely. With fewer reporters to fill the paper, its pages were instead filled with regional content that, while interesting and well-produced, had little bearing on readers' daily lives and was instead heavily influenced by news and events in urban centres where the bulk of company resources were so often funnelled. As a result of that continued downsizing, the reporters left behind to "do more with less" on a shoestring salary felt underappreciated and overworked. Again, I write from experience.

I guess what I'm trying to say here is we need the support of our readers and our advertisers to continue reporting the news that matters most to our communities. We're not only journalists, editors, salespeople and publishers; we're your neighbours, friends and fellow community members, and we do this work because we care about the communities in which we live.

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# Kitchener resident arrested for theft in Tavistock

WILMOT-TAVISTOCK GAZETTE STAFF  
 thewtgazette@gmail.com

Officers with the Oxford OPP made an arrest after investigating a theft complaint at a business on Woodstock Street North in Tavistock on Saturday.

On Jan. 31 at approximately 1:30 p.m., Oxford OPP said officers were called to a

business in Tavistock for the report of stolen gasoline.

As a result of the investigation, Shane Allen, a 45-year-old resident of Kitchener, has been charged with theft under \$5,000.

The accused has been released from custody and is scheduled to appear in the Ontario Court of Justice in Woodstock on March 10.

# Gazette Puzzles

## JANUARY NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

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

- |                   |                      |                   |
|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Alex Pretti       | Iran uprising        | Snowstorms        |
| Canada China deal | Maduro captured      | Spain train crash |
| Carney WEF speech | New England Patriots | Stranger Things   |
| Greenland         | Renee Good           | US leaves WHO     |
| ICE in Minnesota  | Seattle Seahawks     | Venezuela         |

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# Pet of the Week

## CODY

Cody is a total people-dog who loves being part of the action. Once he feels comfortable, he thrives on human connection, and spending time with his favourite people is truly his love language. New environments and unfamiliar faces can make Cody a little nervous at first, so he'll do best with someone patient who understands that confidence takes time. Once he settles in, his sweet personality shines and he becomes a cuddly companion who loves being close to his person. If you're looking for a loyal companion who will reward your patience with endless affection and heart-melting cuddles, Cody might be your perfect match. Visit [kwsphumane.ca](http://kwsphumane.ca) to learn more about Cody!



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# SHOW US YOUR WILMOT



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SHOW US YOUR WILMOT FACEBOOK PAGE)

The Groundhog Day sun casts a golden glow over frost-covered trees in Wilmot Township on Feb. 2. The photo was captured and shared by Amber Porchak on the Show Us Your Wilmot Facebook page.

LIVING ~ LOVING ~ LEARNING ~ LAUGHING

# EMBRACING CHANGE

VOL. 8 ISSUE 6 FEBRUARY 2026

Feature Business of the Month  
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# Sugar Care Spa: Sweet!

## HEAPS OF HEALTHY TIPS

By Mercedes Kay Gold



Hello February, Cupid's favorite month.

Love is in the air and whether you celebrate with chocolate, flowers or champagne, it's about being sweet to loved ones all year long. Valentine's Day is synonymous with spoiling and pampering. This year, I am shedding light on happy holistic body care from local business Sugar Care Spa.

Brigitte Szucs moved to Canada in 2008 from Romania with her family, and a few years later, settled into New Hamburg. Our cozy town is "the perfect blend between city and small community," she says. Loving life in Canada but feeling unfilled and stuck in her call-centre job, Szucs took a leap of faith.

A self-proclaimed fan-favourite of all things sugaring, an ancient art of removing unwanted hair, Szucs quit her job, became certified, opened a home business and hasn't looked back.

Szucs is a girl boss and one-woman show who believes in sugaring wholeheartedly, starting originally as a faithful

client. Removing unwanted hair for both females and males, and from kids to older clients can be troublesome.

There are so many options on the market. Sugaring is superior to waxing and shaving. It's officially time to toss out threading. Sugaring is stupendous for larger areas. Sugaring is all-natural. The happy holistic ingredients are simple; sugar, water and lemon. The procedure is safe, gentle and works like a charm on sensitive skin, even with super-sensitive skin conditions such as eczema, dermatitis and psoriasis.

The process is easy-peasy, removing the hair in the direction it grows, making the removal less painful. For all the ladies, dermaplaning, a fancier name for shaving, removes peach fuzz, but sugaring is an amazing alternative. Szucs focuses on personalized skincare education, not just hair removal.

Szucs is not just the queen of sugaring; she also specializes in brow correction. Say so-long to sparse, overly arched eyebrows lacking shape.

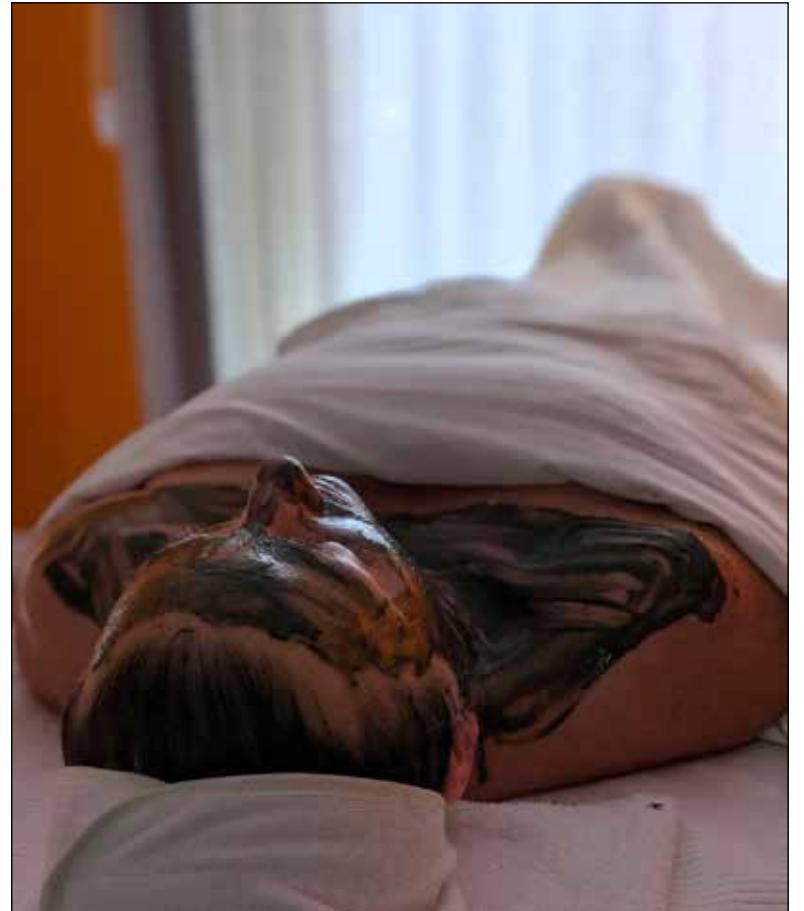
By focusing on regrowth, Szucs helps clients achieve a youthful, fuller eyebrow.

Szucs also offers "Sweet and Plump," a luxurious, relaxing and rejuvenating facial using sugar and Hungarian mud. The steps are simple, tried and true. Detoxing the skin, the body's largest organ, removes impurities. Hydration adds moisture creating a plump appearance, softening the appearance of fine lines. Massaging the face brings blood flow, transporting vital nutrients and leaving clients with a lovely pink glow.

Szucs' mission is simple. She desires all guests, whether new or longtime lovers, to feel comfortable and confident in choosing Sugar Care Spa. Prior to the treatment, first-time clients sit down for a one-on-one chat to establish their unique needs based on skin type, allergies and medications taken. All new clients receive 10 per cent off their first service and any of the Canadian retail brands offered at the spa.

With Valentine's Day just around the corner, a winter escape for some body-care bliss is the perfect gift for a loved one or a smidge of self-love. Sugar Care Spa is located in the lower level at 246 Maurice St., conveniently in New Hamburg.

Follow Szucs on Instagram, @sugarcarespa, for the latest and greatest. Her social account has tons of testimonials and boatloads of before-and-after photos.

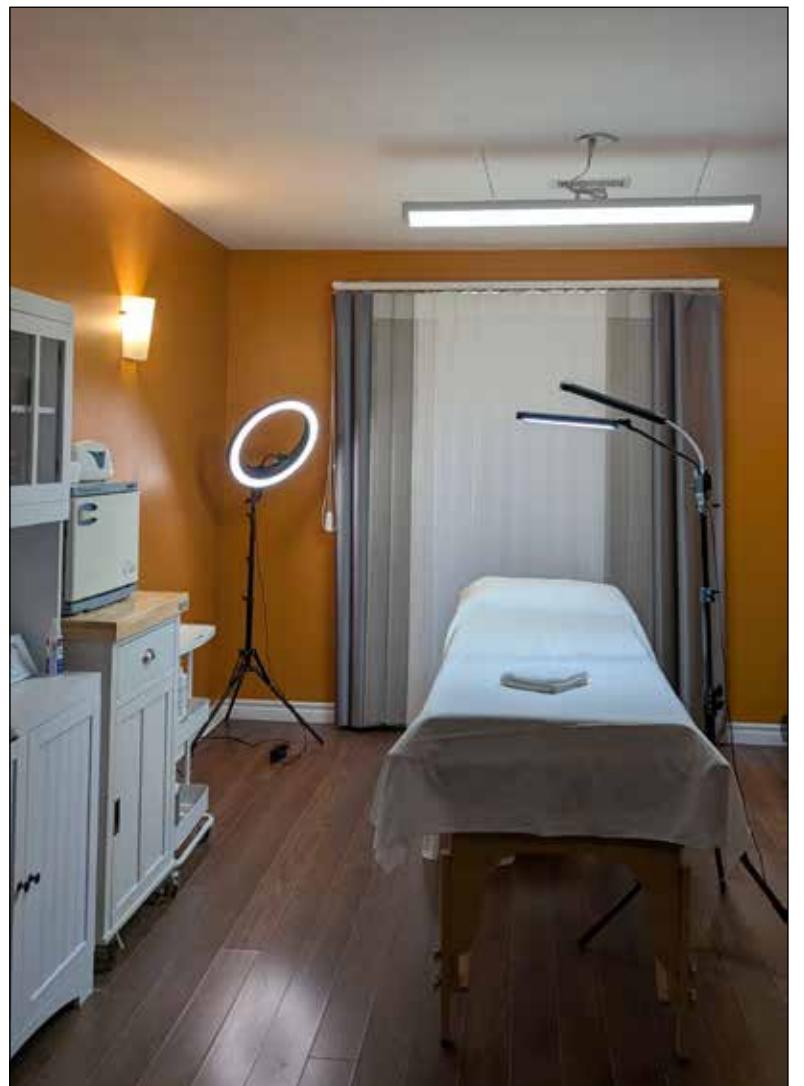


(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

A treatment at Sugar Care Spa in New Hamburg is the perfect gift for Valentine's Day.



Brigitte Szucs, owner of Sugar Care Spa.



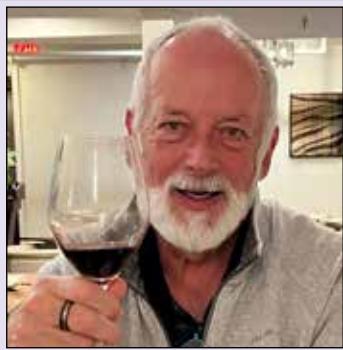
The treatment room at Sugar Care Spa.

**FOR ADVERTISING INQUIRIES IN The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette CONTACT HEATHER DUNBAR AT 226.261.1837 OR HEATHER@GRANTHAVEN.COM**

# In the midst of history

## OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO

By Paul Knowles



One of the many things I love about travel is that sometimes, out of the blue, you find yourself in the middle of an historic moment.

Perhaps my oddest moment came in 2004 when I was staying at a National Trust moated manor house in England. The owners were passionate fans of fox hunting, which was about to become illegal in the United Kingdom. There was one hunt left – would I like to come along?

I did. I was cheering for the fox, especially when I learned that the hunters, mounted on horses and following hounds, were using cell phones to report the fox's location. That seemed rather unfair. The good news for me and the fox, if not the hunters and hounds, was the fox escaped and I added an odd but genuine historic experience to my travel-writing resumé.

I've been in the U.K. for more significant events. Way back in 1995, we happened to be staying in the village of Stadhampton, just outside Oxford. We were there on May 8, the 50th anniversary of VE Day – the end of World War II in Europe. We were invited by our B&B hosts to join a community event on the village common. I remember music, lamb stew, a world-class bonfire (a tribute repeated across the U.K.) and the apparently unscheduled appearance of a dark-suited man with a cigar, a doppelganger for Winston Churchill. It was a remarkable evening of nostalgic joy and sad reflection.

Two years later, I led a group of good friends on the "Grand Tour" of the U.K. We were there in the first week of September 1997 – the week following the death of Princess Diana on Aug. 31.

Throughout our two-plus weeks in the U.K., the tragedy was top of mind. We saw the forest of floral arrangements in front of Buckingham Palace. We purchased Elton John's "Candle in the Wind" CD in Harrod's. We adjusted our itinerary to account for the closure of everything on Sept. 6, the day of her funeral.

And during our tour of Canterbury Cathedral, I noted that the personal speakers they then used for tours had a different program from my most recent visit. The

tour was avoiding the beautiful Chapter House. "Come with me," I said, and led my friends to the Chapter House. The doors were open and, inside, there were tall candles burning and a number of "Books of Remembrance" open on tables, ready to be signed. And, in all sincerity, keenly aware of the mourning of a nation, we each sat and signed the books that were eventually to be given to Diana's family.

These kinds of moments, when as a traveller I was dropped straight into history, have happened in other parts of the world as well. A few years ago, I had the amazing fortune to be part of a small group of travel journalists invited to witness – and dive – at the installation of a huge number of statues at Grenada's Underwater Sculpture Garden. Joining us was the sculptor, Jason deCaires Taylor, an artist who is making vital and dramatic artistic statements about our environment all over the world.

There have been other such moments such as a free, pop-up concert by Jimmy Buffett in Key West; or the celebration of the Hungry Ghost Festival in Hong Kong. But what actually sparked today's feature were two events in the United States, a country I currently am not visiting, though I deeply regret the need for such a decision. And these two moments, to which I was a silent witness, capture for me the entire recent history of our neighbour to the south.

The first happened on Jan. 20, 2009. I was with a buddy in a waterfront bar on the Intracoastal Waterway in Pompano Beach.

We couldn't help but notice that all service had completely ceased. Everyone – bartenders, wait staff, cooks, hostesses – had abandoned their posts and were glued to the TVs mounted behind the bar.

This was a moment no one had dared to hope for – the inauguration of Barak Obama, the first Black President of the United States. There were cheers and tears, and no one minded that it took an extra hour to get a drink or dinner. It was a time of enormous hope.

In contrast, I was back in the state of Florida, this time in my beloved Key West, on the morning of Nov. 9, 2016. I came down to breakfast at the B&B to find the gay couple who owned the place sitting in shock while their Latino cook sobbed in the kitchen. The reality was sinking in; Donald Trump had won the election and all three of these folks were terrified that their lives had changed for the worse and forever.

So today, as I have considered the question, "Should I travel to and write about the United States," those two moments are front and centre in my thoughts. And for now, I stand with my Key West friends against what is happening in the U.S. while hoping the spirit of 2009 may again become the dominant reality, and soon.

*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](mailto:pknowles@golden.net).*



Key West's "Southernmost Point." While tourists posed, many local residents mourn the current political situation.

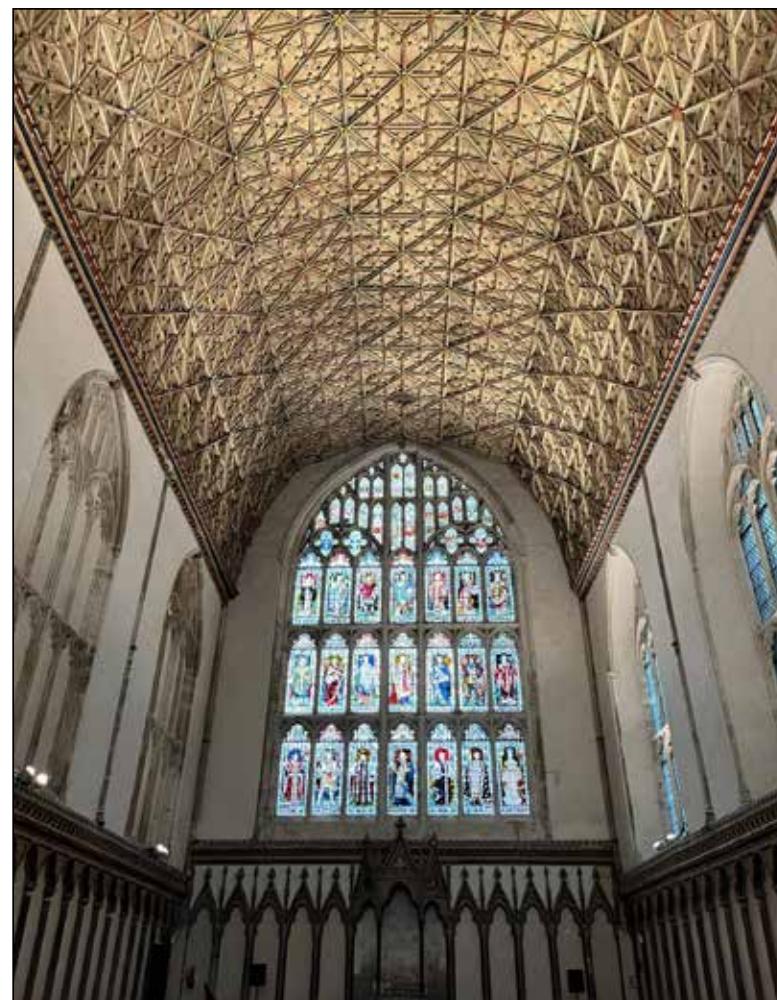


Sculptures added to Grenada's Underwater Sculpture Garden. (ERIK R. TRINIDAD PHOTOS)

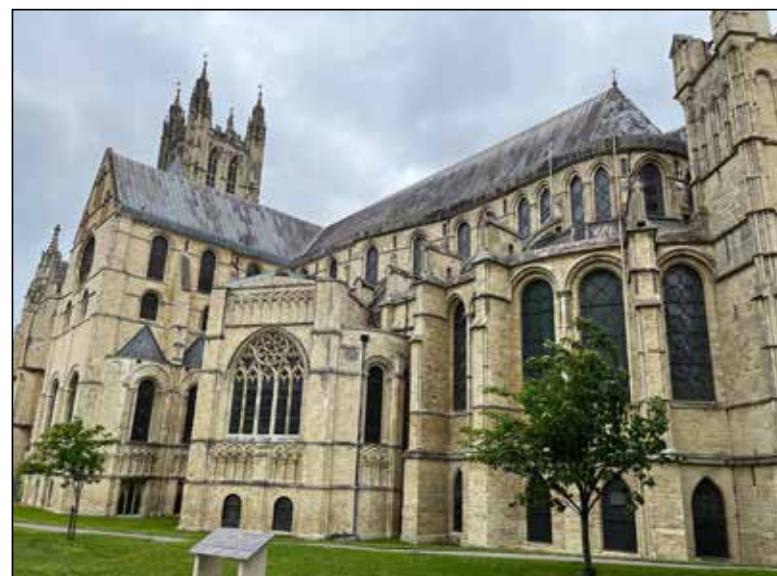


(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

Stadhampton celebrated the 50th anniversary of VE Day with a huge bonfire in the village square.



The Chapter House in Canterbury Cathedral where, in 1997, the author and friends signed books of condolence following the death of Princess Diana.



Canterbury Cathedral.

# Annual book and puzzle sale returns to Tavistock's Scotiabank

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

Tavistock's Scotiabank is once again inviting area residents to stock up on reading material and puzzles while supporting a local cause through its annual book and puzzle sale.

Senior customer experience associate Nichelle Horst was setting up the display at the Tavistock branch last week and is encouraging the community to stop in and browse. Books and puzzles are available for \$5 each, with all proceeds going to the Tavistock Agricultural Society in support of the annual fall fair.

Residents are also welcome to donate gently used books and complete puzzles they no longer need, giving others the opportunity to enjoy them during the winter months while staying warm indoors.

Now in its fifth year, the sale has become a popular seasonal fundraiser and runs until March 26. Horst hopes residents will drop by, find something to enjoy and help support one of Tavistock's longstanding community organizations.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Nichelle Horst invites area residents to stop by Tavistock's Scotiabank to browse books and puzzles during the branch's annual fundraiser in support of the Tavistock Agricultural Society.

## A local economist's take: Here's what I learned

### EXPERT REAL ESTATE ADVICE



By Isabel Livingston

After attending a recent economic seminar, one message was clear; the 2026 housing market in Wilmot Township, Waterloo Region and Oxford County is shaping up to be steady, cautious and very local in nature. Here are some of the big topics.

Interest rates and mortgage renewals  
Interest rates continue to be one of the biggest factors influencing our local housing market. Economists expect the Bank of Canada to hold rates relatively steady through much of 2026 after easing in 2024-2025.

While this brings some stability, many homeowners renewing mortgages this year may still see higher monthly payments – especially those coming off ultra-low rates from several years ago. As a result, affordability remains top of mind for many local

households.

New builds and housing supply  
New home construction and condo development play a major role in price stability. In both Waterloo Region and Oxford County, construction has slowed, limiting new supply.

When fewer homes are being built, buyers have fewer options and the resale market feels that pressure quickly. While prices may soften short-term, limited supply helps protect long-term home values, particularly in established communities like Wilmot and surrounding townships where resale homes make up most of the inventory.

Employment, income and buyer confidence

Employment and household income continue to shape buyer confidence. Job growth across the region is expected to remain modest in 2026 and, while some price declines were seen in 2025, economists expect prices to remain mostly flat or see only modest growth this year.

Affordability challenges remain, especially as incomes have not fully kept pace with housing costs – a trend felt more strongly in rural communities compared to larger urban centres.

Rental market impact

Rental prices also influence buyer behaviour. High rents over the past few years pushed some renters toward homeownership, increasing demand for entry level homes. As rents begin to stabilize in parts of the region, some households may choose to keep renting, easing pressure slightly on first-time buyer demand.

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Local takeaway  
The 2026 local housing market is expected to remain balanced rather than booming. Stable interest rates, limited new supply and affordability pressure along with government trade concerns will continue to shape buying and selling decisions.  
As always, local conditions matter most

and understanding neighbourhood-level trends is key.

For questions or article inquires, reach out. I'd love to chat! 226-232-4236 or isabel.livingston@century21.ca.

Isabel Livingston is a sales representative with Century 21 Heritage House Ltd., Brokerage.

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## COMMUNITY CALENDAR - FEBRUARY/MARCH 2026

### SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7

**Hicktown Hoedown 2.0**  
8 p.m. - 1 a.m.  
Raffles and prizes, food and local beer, line dancing. Event is 19+, proceeds go to Wellesley Fall Fair  
*Bill Gies Recreation Centre, 1401 Queens Bush Rd, Wellesley*

### MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9

**"Jumping Worms & Other Invasives" Garden Wilmot meeting**  
7 p.m.  
Free event  
*Wilmot Rec Complex, Meeting Rm A (upstairs) 1291 Nafziger Rd Unit #1, Baden*

**Wilmot budget meeting**  
5:30-10:30 p.m.  
Council chambers  
*60 Snyder's Road W, Baden*

### TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10

**Wellesley Council meeting**  
6:45 p.m.  
Council chambers  
*4805 William Hastings Line, Crosshill*

### TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17

**Pancake Supper at the Tavistock Memorial Legion**  
Serving from 4:30 until 7:00 pm  
For more information call at 519-655-2992  
*Tavistock Memorial Legion 223 Hope Street West Tavistock*

### WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

**East Zorra-Tavistock Council meeting**  
7 p.m.  
Council Chambers  
*89 Loveys Street East, Hickson*  
**Perth East council meeting**  
7 p.m.  
Council chambers  
*25 Mill Street East, Milverton*

### THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19

**All-You-Can-Eat Spagetti Dinner in support of Carter Kuchma**  
4:30 - 6:30 p.m.  
Hosted by Sprucedale Parent Council and Quehl's Restaurant with all proceeds going to the Kuchma family. Tickets must be purchased in advance at Sprucedale Public School  
*Shakespeare Optimist Hall 3976 Galt St., Shakespeare*

### MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23

**Wilmot Council meeting**  
7-10 p.m.  
Council chambers  
*60 Snyder's Road W, Baden*

### SATURDAY, MARCH 21

**Oxford Philatelic Society OXPEX & OTEX 2026 Stamp Show**  
9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Free admission and parking. Framed and Judged exhibits, Stamp dealers, youth gift bags, Sales Circuit, draw prizes.  
Contact: dhfe@silomail.com  
Web: <http://www.rpsc.org/chapters/oxford>  
*St. Mary's Catholic High School, 431 Juliana Drive, Woodstock*

### TUESDAY, MARCH 24

**"LIFE WORTH LIVING"**  
7 p.m.  
The one-hour film was produced by Woodstock native, Alex Schadenberg, Executive Director of Euthanasia Prevention Coalition and will be followed by a Q & A session with Alex. Admission is free. For more information, please email info@oxfordcountyrighttolife.com  
*Woodstock Polish Hall, 878 Dufferin Street, Woodstock*

### MORNING & EVENING BIBLE READING

**Read the Bible in a Year in Community**  
**Morning meeting 6:00 a.m. daily**  
**Evening meeting 6:00 p.m. daily**  
Contact Arthur Rosh if interested.  
Phone number: 226-899-1551  
Email address: arthur.rosh@gmail.com  
*Location to be determined in New Hamburg, Tavistock, Baden, Wellesley, New Dundee, St. Agatha, Shakespeare, Petersburg, Hickson, Punkeydoodle's Corner and area*

### EVERY WEDNESDAY

**TOPS - Taking off Pounds Sensibly**  
**Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m.**  
TOPS is a non-judgmental weight loss support group. Need help on your weight loss journey. For info call Cathie 519-662-9273.  
*St. James Church, Baden*

**Wednesday Night Euchre at the New Hamburg Legion**  
**Wednesdays at 7 p.m.**  
*65 Boulee St., New Hamburg*

### STAMP CLUB

**Oxford Philatelic Society**  
**Meetings: 2nd Tuesday (2-4 p.m.) and 4th Tuesday (7 to 9 p.m.)**  
**September to May**  
If you have never belonged to a stamp club, now's the time. Meet new friends, grow your knowledge and collection.  
Contact: Don Eaton dhfe@silomail.com  
Website: <http://www.rpsc.org/chapters/oxford>  
*Church of the Epiphany 560 Dundas Street, Woodstock Ontario N4S1C7*

### FREE SENIORS ACTIVITIES

**Tavistock Seniors Activities @ Tavistock Memorial Hall, 1 Adam St. Tavistock ON, except Shuffleboard**  
**Pickleball** Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoon, 12-4 p.m. Contact: Don Junker 519-535-7052  
**Cards** Monday, Wednesday afternoon 1-4 p.m., euchre, crib (bring board), etc. Just drop in to play, good to bring someone. Contact: Bob Routly 519-301-2118  
**Inside walking** Monday & Wednesday morning 8,30 a.m. - 12 p.m. Contact: Larry Brown 519-240-6715  
**Crokinole** Monday, Wednesday morning 8,30 a.m. - 12 p.m., Just drop in to play, good to bring someone. Contact: John Schultz 519-655-2346  
**Shuffleboard @ arena**, Wednesday 12:30-4 and Thursday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Contact: Don Junker 519-535-7052.  
**VON Smart Seniors Exercise**, Tuesday and Thursday morning 9 - 10 a.m.; Village Manor 10:25 - 11:25 a.m. Contact: 519-539-1231 x 6285

# The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette

Deadline: Tuesday prior at 3 p.m.  
Contact: [thewtgazette@gmail.com](mailto:thewtgazette@gmail.com)

## PROMOTE YOUR EVENTS WITH US! HERE'S HOW:

- The Community Calendar allows non-profit organizations to promote their free admission community events at no charge. Event listings can include your 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 Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette offers the following options for promoting your community events:
  - Coming Events Word Ad (50 word max.) - \$10 + hst
  - Coming Events Boxed Word Ad (50 word max.) - \$15 + hst
  - Display Ad - Sizes begin at a Small Classified Display ad (3.3" x 2.5") - \$35 + hst

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**OR dropped off at D&D Homestyle Cuisine & Café, 8 Woodstock St N, Tavistock**

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## Quiz Time Answers

- |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. Amethyst               | 6. 21 dots                               |
| 2. Oxytocin               | 7. Chiengora                             |
| 3. Superbowl XLIX         | 8. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation |
| 4. Penelope Featherington | 9. An Army                               |
| 5. Iftar                  | 10. Summer's day?                        |

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

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