

St. Marys Independent

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Issue #1296

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Mudmen wows audience at St. Marys Town Hall Theatre



MUDMEN BRING THE THUNDER TO ST. MARYS (GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)
The Canadian Celtic-country-rock band, Mudmen, performed for a Stonetown audience at St. Marys Town Hall Theatre Jan. 9. See full story on page 14

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Mudmen brought their signature Celtic-country-rock thunder to the St. Marys Town Hall Theatre during their annual concert in the Stonetown Jan. 9.

As part of their 2025-2026 tour of towns and cities, small and large, across Ontario, The Mudmen once again stopped in St. Marys, a show the members of the band look forward to each year.

“It was a good show; the crowd was nice,” said Mudmen bagpiper Robby Campbell. “They’re great people. We do really good in farming communities – we grew up in a farming community and St. Marys is very farm oriented. I think we went up against the Lincolns that are doing well, so that’s always a competitor, but St. Marys is nothing but good memories.”

Campbell says he always tries to bring his family to St. Marys around the holidays to see the Winter Lights down at Milt Dunnell Field and take in the holiday magic Stonetown is known for. This year, however, the snow over the holiday break kept him away, so he and his bandmates – his brother, Sandy Campbell, on bagpipes, Colin Amey on lead vocals and guitar, Andy Gingerich on drums, Alex Showdra on electric guitar and banjo, and Emett Glancie on bass – were glad to make it to town for their annual show.

No strangers to St. Marys, the Mudmen have sold out local shows a dozen times over the years while sharing stages with artists such as Johnny Reid, The Irish Rovers and The Guess Who. The Celtic-country-rock band has also opened for major international acts including ZZ Top, Loverboy, Brooks & Dunn, Sarah McLachlan and Glass Tiger. Their career highlights are extensive and include performing for the Queen, appearances at multiple Grey Cups, Briers and Memorial Cups, Canada’s Walk of Fame ceremonies,

CONTINUED TO PAGE 14

Perth County council begins 2026 budget deliberations with a proposed 7.93 per-cent levy increase

Draft budget introduced in December, council dives into capital budget Jan. 8

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Perth County council has officially dug into this year’s draft budget, which carries a proposed tax-levy increase of 7.93 per cent, inclusive of growth.

The draft 2026 budget was introduced to councillors at the Dec. 18, 2025, council meeting. It proposes to levy roughly \$27.5 million from ratepayers across the county,

which is up by more than \$2.4 million over last year’s \$25.1-million levy. The county, however, saw 1.76 per cent or \$442,000 in growth to its tax base last year, reducing the impact of the overall levy increase – roughly 9.7 per cent – down to 7.93 per cent or roughly \$1.9 million.

“As we move further beyond the inflationary challenges of 2025, the 2026 draft budget reflects a continued trend of easing

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

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COMMUNITY

Perth County council begins 2026 budget deliberations with a proposed 7.93 per-cent levy increase

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

economic pressures,” Perth County treasurer Corey Bridges told council at its Dec. 18, 2025, meeting. “This marks a shift towards more financial stabilization and a more predictable planning environment. With no usage in the plan of reserves for 2026 county operations, Perth County is entering a phase of fiscally disciplined budgeting with an opportunity for strategic investment, turning the corner after a couple of challenging fiscal cycles.”

The total budget amounts to roughly \$74 million in spending this year, with approximately \$64.4 million of that spending in the draft operating budget and \$9.6 million in the draft capital budget. The net levy includes an operation levy of \$22.4 million and a capital levy of \$5.1 million, the latter of which will be used in addition to reserve funds and government grants to pay for 33 capital projects slated for 2026.

“Major impacts related to the 2026 budget include winter maintenance and a shift of municipal-drains funding from operations to capital reserves, as well as paramedic wages and WSIB impacts accounting for the majority of the 2026 draft increase in operations (costs),” Bridges said.

“... We continue to increase winter-maintenance expenses to ensure the county is maintaining our budget, as well as trying to generate a surplus within that depleted winter-maintenance reserve. The increase in 2026 is approximately \$600,000 to winter maintenance. Municipal drain work continues to be a significant impact to operations, which is why our staff have moved the treatment of these municipal drains to be funded from the bridges and culverts reserve to ease the significant operational costs and smooth the fluctuations through capital-reserve funds. The reduction impact to operations is approximately \$860,000.”

The county is also looking to hire the equivalent of two full-time employees within Perth County Paramedic Services, equating to an additional \$231,000 in salary and benefits. Accounting for COLA and non-COLA salary and wage increases this year, the total salary and benefits cost increase in the draft 2026

budget is roughly \$1.7 million.

For a single-family home assessed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) in 2016 at \$284,000, the proposed 7.93 per-cent tax-rate increase would see the property owner’s upper-tier portion of their tax bill increase by just over \$81. Similarly, the county portion of farmland taxes for a property assessed at the average of nearly \$1.6 million would increase by about \$111; an apartment building assessed at \$807,000 would see a tax increase of just over \$230; a small retail commercial property assessed at \$211,000 would see an increase of \$75; and a standard industrial property assessed at nearly \$502,000 would see a jump by almost \$282.

County begins budgeting for an additional \$10 million in costs for bridges and culverts over the next decade

After the budget was introduced to council on Dec. 18, 2025, councillors returned to the table in the new year to dig into the 2026 draft capital budget in more detail.

During the discussion that ensued on Jan. 8, county public works executive director John McClelland explained the need to increase the county’s contributions to its bridges and culverts reserve by \$910,000 this year – an amount included in the proposed \$5.1-million capital levy, which represents an increase by just over \$1 million or 4.3 per cent over last year’s capital levy.

“Roads and bridges make up the bulk of this budget. Certainly, within all the county’s assets, roads and bridges account for well over 75 per cent,” McClelland said.

“... That being said, we do see some impacts that we’ll be looking at down the road when it comes to bridges and culverts. Perth County will not be alone in this; this will likely be most municipalities within Ontario, if not Canada and North America. There are a significant number of bridges and culverts that were built in the 1960s and they will be coming to the end of their useful life within the next 10-15 years.”

With 43 bridges included in the county road network, McClelland said 30 of those bridges were built in the 1960s or prior and will need to be either reha-

bilitated or replaced in the near future. Many of those bridges have already been rehabilitated two or three times, and McClelland said costs for both rehabilitation and replacement projects continue to increase drastically.

“And rehabilitating one of these old bridges may not extend its service life much more than 10-15 years, if that,” McClelland continued. “... It’s just not a great return on investment. ... However, our current reserve and funding levels are insufficient to replace all the bridges at their end of life, so we will have to look at some of these projects from a rehabilitation standpoint and we need to be looking farther ahead so we have better options to present to you for rehabilitation versus replacement.”

“So, we are looking farther ahead, and we are also looking at funding models with which to accommodate this.”

The following is a department breakdown as to how the county will spend this year’s \$9.6-million capital budget:

- **Technology services:** Total spend – \$298,500; projects include replacements of fire radio equipment, network equipment, printers, a new server, Toughbook laptops for EMS and desktop and laptop computers, as well as an upgrade to the Windows server and client access licences.

- **Bridges and culverts:** Total spend – \$2.2 million; projects include culvert replacements on Perth Road 107 south

of Shakespeare, Perth Road 163 north of Perth Line 8, Perth Road 129 and Perth Road 120 A. Preliminary design work will also be completed for a future rehabilitation or replacement of a bridge on Perth Line 20.

- **Roads:** Total spend – \$5.3 million; projects include 22 kilometres of road rehabilitation on county roads including Perth Road 130 from Perth Road 132 to Sebringville, Perth Line 43 from Perth Line 119 to Waterloo Region boundary, and Perth Road 135 from Highway 8 to Perth Line 39. The 2026 draft capital budget also includes the development of a transportation master plan for the county.

- **Facilities:** Total spend – \$522,000; projects include a number of capital maintenance projects at the county courthouse and work at the paramedic headquarters building in Stratford and the paramedic bases in Listowel and Milverton.

- **Fleet:** Total spend – \$845,000; vehicle purchases include a Class A maintenance vehicle, a Class B tandem truck and a Class C pickup truck and SUV.

- **Paramedic services:** Total spend – \$270,935; projects include replacement of medical equipment and AEDs, and the purchase of bariatric and pediatric restraints.

Perth County council will discuss the county’s draft operating budget at its regular meeting Jan. 22.



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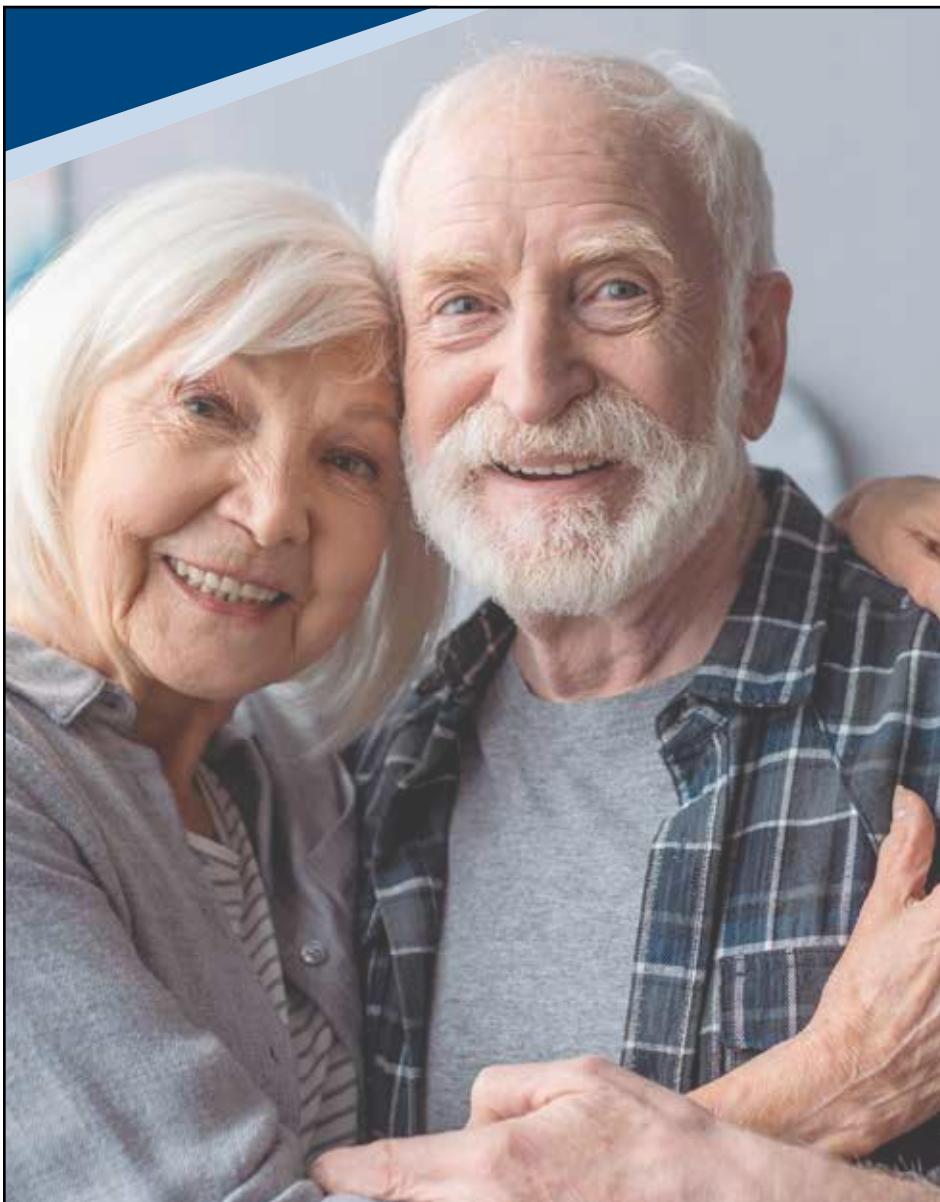
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EDITORIAL

Navigating grey skies and icy ground to get through January

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

No offense to anyone born in the first month of the year, but January sucks.

The holidays are over and those of us who can't afford to escape somewhere sunny and warm are pushing through our vitamin D deficiencies and seasonal affective disorders just to make it from one day to the next.

Sure, we may go into the new year with the best of intentions, but just a couple of days after the fireworks go silent, this deflated balloon of a month sucks up any motivation we may have and leaves us in a crumpled heap, grasping for that last piece of Christmas chocolate lost somewhere in the couch cushions.

Sure, we could go outside or plan an outing to boost our mood, but the weather this time of year seems to be a direct challenge from Mother Nature. "Oh, you feel like getting out of the house, do you? Too bad. Have some snow, rain, ice and wind instead, and go ruin your shoulder shoveling the driveway like you should have done yesterday, and the day before that, and the day before that."

So, we resort to copious amounts of television and endlessly scrolling social media to distract ourselves from the world outside, only to realize the world outside is not only frozen; it's also on fire. In just the first two weeks of 2026, it already seems like we're heading for an even darker place than we did in 2025.

But all of this – all of this darkness, sadness, miserable weather and lack

of motivation – is just January's dirty little trick. January, with its grey skies and icy ground, wants us to focus on the negative. It wants us to dwell on everything wrong with our lives and the world in general.

Or maybe not.

Despite how we may feel, life for many of us isn't really that bad. When we choose instead to focus on the positives, on what we managed to accomplish, both individually and together over the past year, it becomes obvious there are sunnier days ahead. I am beyond grateful for the life I live, the people I get to live it with, the work I do and the communities in which I do that work.

I truly wouldn't have it any other way.

Maybe January isn't about looking outward to find what's wrong in the world; maybe it's about staying home, surrounding ourselves with the people (and pets) we love and taking some time to care for ourselves. Maybe it's time for an internal reset so we can start the year fresh and focus on the aspects of our lives we feel are most important.

Then, after the Christmas chocolate is gone, the weather has warmed and we've spent however long we need on our journeys of self-care, we can re-emerge into the world ready to take on whatever challenges this year may bring.

And maybe, if we find ourselves in a position where we can help someone else who may be dwelling in the depths of January misery, we can use what we learn about ourselves to help lift them up as well.

Bravo

We have 2 Bravos this week.

1) Bravo to the lady who on Dec. 31, at the Independent Grocer, left a gift card at the checkout for us. Your Christmas spirit was a very thoughtful gesture and we really appreciated it. We wish you a very joyful new year and thank you again for your gift card.

2) Bravo to the lady who helped me after I had a spill with my groceries while leaving Foodland a couple of weeks ago. And, today when returning to get my takeout food, for bringing it out as I was preparing to get out of my car.

Boo

We have 1 Boo this week.

1) It is now mid-January and neighbours who still have their festive lights on until all hours into the morning should be a little more considerate of their adjacent neighbourhood and either reset them to go out by 10 p.m. or shut them off all together.

*Please note all Boos and Bravos must be signed in order to be considered. Bravos and Boos are submitted by community members and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the St. Marys Independent.

Quote of the Week

"To ICE, get the f--- out of Minneapolis. We do not want you here. Your stated reason for being in this city is to create some kind of safety and you're doing exactly the opposite."

- Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, following the fatal shooting of 37-year-old Renee Good by ICE agent Jonathan Ross on Jan. 7, 2026.

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Take time for rest and self-care. You can't serve from an empty vessel.

Taking time to do nothing, puts other things in perspective.

Resting is just as important as going out there and making it happen.

Here is your reminder to unplug and recharge yourself.

Overheard

AT THE COFFEE SHOP

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My new year's resolution is to shop, eat, spend local!

Time zones are weird. In Denmark, it's noon. In Canada, it's 6 a.m. In the U.S., it's 1930s Germany.

Have you heard something humorous around town that you think might be of interest to others? Either email them to us at info@stmarys-independent.com with the title "Overheard at The Coffee Shop", call 519.284.0041 or drop by the office to let us know!

Coldest Night of the Year returns to St. Marys to spread community warmth



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left are Coldest Night of the Year organizers Pam Zabel, Jackie Cousins, Terri Iredale and Gwen Bradley.

ALEX HUNT

Independent Reporter

Locals will have the opportunity to make a difference by using their strides to spread community spirit and warmth next month.

The United Way Perth-Huron is hosting the sixth annual St. Marys Coldest Night of the Year (CNOY) fundraiser on Feb. 28. The initiative aims to support residents struggling with food insecurity and homelessness. Locals interested in walking to raise funds are encouraged to register at cnoy.org.

“Until I started working with the United Way, I just wasn’t aware what was going on in our community,” said Gwen Bradley, an event organizer with United Way St. Marys and area volunteer committee. “I don’t know if it’s just rewarding or eye-opening. I’ve begun to understand things that I didn’t know before.”

Bradley said the goal is to raise \$56,000, and funds will be directed to support the Town of St. Marys’ community outreach worker and the Local Community Food Centre’s Nourish Equal Access Market. Outreach worker duties focus on assisting individuals in finding housing and addressing other

personal challenges while the Nourish Equal Access Market runs a bi-weekly market at St. Marys United Church offering fresh and affordable produce and meats to locals, as well as educational cooking programs.

Bradley hopes as many as 200 locals will walk through the town as part of CNOY this year. Walkers will start at the Pyramid Recreation Centre (PRC) at 5 p.m. and follow the route down James Street South to Elgin Street East to Church Street, then from Queen Street to Milt Dunnell Field. The walk will continue from Water Street towards the museum and finish at the PRC. Upon return, walkers are welcome to help themselves to soup and sandwiches.

Bradley leads the campaign in St. Marys with the support of the local volunteer committee. She said the group is enthusiastic to bring the event back to the community, and it keeps growing every year.

“Being part of this walk makes me feel like I can make a difference. Every year, more people join,” Bradley said. “Seeing the community come together to support those in need is both inspiring and motivating. It’s amazing what we can accomplish when we all work together.”

STONETOWN CRIER

The latest municipal news from the Town of St. Marys



GRAND RE-OPENING

January 24, 2026 | 12:45 - 2:45 PM

Make a splash at the Aquatics Centre Grand Re-Opening event! This event will feature a big splash, ribbon cutting, giveaways, free swim and other celebratory fun!

www.townofstmarys.ca/aquaticscentre

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT WITH THE PERTH COUNTY PARAMEDICS

January 19 | 6:30 PM | St. Marys Public Library

The Perth County Paramedics will be discussing their emergency management practices, Cool-Aid Program and their involvement in community paramedicine. Register today for this free event!

www.townofstmarys.com/perthcountyparamedicsevent



CONVERSATIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY OUTREACH WORKER

January 17 | 10 AM - 12 PM | Snapping Turtle

Drop-in and chat with Community Outreach Worker Jade Orquin and enjoy a free hot beverage. Learn about local support services, financial aid, and how to access resources in St. Marys.

www.townofstmarys.ca/stonetownsupports

ZONING BY-LAW OPEN HOUSE

January 28 | 4 - 8 PM | MOC

The Town of St. Marys is hosting a drop-in Zoning By-law Open House at the Municipal Operations Centre to provide residents, business owners, and members of the community with the opportunity to give input and learn more about the Zoning By-law Review. Not able to attend or have questions? Email: gbrouwer@town.stmarys.on.ca



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St. Marys Independent

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Senior of the Week



We welcome your submissions for our weekly Senior of the Week. Please send a photo and a brief description to info@stmarysindependent.com and we will feature them in an upcoming issue.

If you would like to nominate someone for Senior of the Week, contact us at 519.284.0041 or info@stmarysindependent.com.

WEEKEND QUIZ

By Jake Grant

1. What is the birthstone for January?
2. What is Canada's biggest forest?
3. In the Chinese Calendar, what is the animal of 2026?
4. Who was the President of Venezuela in 2025?
5. In what organ of the body is insulin produced?
6. What was the first single released by Phil Collins as a solo artist?
7. Street Fighter was first released on what gaming device?
8. What is Mr. Beast's real name?
9. What does the federal agency, ICE stand for?
10. What is Canada's only native marsupial?

This week's answers are found on pg. 35

Anna Nails and Head Spa offering manicure and pedicure discounts and free nail trims to seniors

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

Seniors in St. Marys can stay on top of their nail care with free nail trimmings and discounted services from Anna Nails and Head Spa.

In honour of Senior Nail Care Month, Anna Nails and Head Spa will also be offering basic senior manicures for \$20 and basic senior pedicures for \$30, in addition to the free nail trimmings for seniors.

"St. Marys has a large senior population and, especially during the winter months, many seniors find it harder to take care of themselves," the Anna Nails team said in a statement. "This winter has been particularly severe, with snow and bad weather making it even more difficult for seniors to get out safely or manage things like nail care at home. Proper nail care is important for comfort, mobility and overall health, and we want seniors to feel safe, cared for and relaxed when they come in – not rushed or worried."

The nail salon and spa at 26 Wellington St. S prioritizes the health and safety of its clients. Disposable pedicure kits and prepared manicure kits are used, with any tools disinfected thoroughly after use.

As a way to thank the St. Marys community for welcoming Anna Nails and Head Spa warmly when it opened in the fall of 2025, so far there is no end date for the senior nail care services discounts and free nail trimmings.

"During our first two months of opening, the people



of St. Marys supported us more than we ever expected," said the statement. "Many customers came back again and again, brought friends, left kind reviews and even brought us food or small gifts to welcome us. That support meant a lot to us and we feel a strong responsibility to give back."

To book an appointment and for more information, either call or text 382-882-0690 or send an email to annanails.stmarys@gmail.com.



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Local CO call ends safely thanks to working alarms and quick action

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The St. Marys Fire Department is reminding residents of the importance of keeping fire hydrants, vents and all exit pathways clear of snow and ice following a recent local incident that ended safely.

Recently, a concerned citizen contacted the fire department after noticing that decks and rear exits at several residences had not been cleared of snow. The caller raised an important point. While residents are often reminded to clear snow from fire hydrants and vents, escape routes such as doors, decks and exits are just as critical in an emergency.

“This call highlights something we do not talk about enough,” said Fire Chief Phil West in a press release. “In an emergency, seconds matter. Residents must ensure they have more than one clear way out of their home.”

The reminder comes on the heels of a recent carbon monoxide call attended by the St. Marys Fire Department. Fire crews responded to a residence where carbon monoxide alarms were sounding. Upon investigation, firefighters discovered that furnace intake and exhaust vents were partially blocked after a large volume of snow slid off a neighbour’s steel roof, creating a three-foot snow drift along the side of the home.

While the blockage was only partial, the snow buildup created a wall that caused carbon monoxide to be drawn back into the house. When firefighters arrived, their gas detection equipment immediately alarmed due to elevated carbon monoxide levels inside the home.

“The outcome could have been very different,” said West. “The residents were fortunate to have multiple working carbon monoxide alarms. Those alarms very likely saved two lives that night by alerting them there was a serious issue.”

Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless and invisible gas that cannot be detected by human senses. The St. Marys Fire Department reminds residents that Ontario law requires carbon monoxide alarms on every level of a home. These alarms save lives.

Winter safety reminders

Residents are reminded to regularly check their property and ensure the following:

- At least three feet of clearance around all fire hydrants
- Snow and ice are cleared from all furnace and dryer vents
- All exits including rear doors, decks and walkways are kept clear to provide multiple ways out in an emergency

To learn more about carbon monoxide safety, visit www.ontario.ca/page/carbon-monoxide-safety.

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CLEARANCE CENTER BUILDING

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Library Board and the Friends of the Library (FOL)

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Time: 10:30 AM

Location: St. Marys Public Library

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New businesses at 162 Queen St. East



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Loft @ 162 Queen Airbnb located on the second floor at 162 Queen St. E in St. Marys.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

A modern, professional workspace is now available on the first floor at 162 Queen St. E in St. Marys.

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

Taylor McDonald, the owner of 162 Queen St. E in St. Marys, has been busy at work over the last few months with two new business ventures.

The building is one McDonald has known since childhood, where her father's family business, Shackleton's Real Estate Brokerage, operated for many years. After Shackleton's left the space, Partners in Employment operated from there for a short period of time. It was after that McDonald began to imagine a new purpose for the heritage downtown building. With changes to the workforce during and after COVID and many businesses allowing hybrid work arrangements where employees could work from home, McDonald recognized this format gave people flexibility in where they could work, and that the home is not always conducive to getting things done.

Welcome to 162 Queen St. E, a modern professional workspace that includes two private offices with some noise-cancelling buffers on the walls and external monitors available. There is also a boardroom with access to a 65-inch television for meetings.

McDonald, along with her husband, built on their own experiences by seeing others who work from home needing a spot that gets them out of the house but provides the privacy they need. The workspaces provide somewhere that can be booked on an as-needed basis – for a couple hours, day use, or monthly – offering a convenient option as an alternative to renting a permanent space.

McDonald's goal is to provide a helpful, flexible space that supports people professionally so their homes can remain places of rest rather than work.

She also has a love for the downtown core. With professionals working from home, the economic development of businesses is affected. By having a working space in the downtown, she is hoping to help the many businesses that are within walking distance as more people are apt to support them when out and about.

The space offers an in-person spot to meet with clients for services like counselling and team meetings

in addition to being a co-working space, as well as a pop-up spot for retail. The space has even been used as a pre-wedding prep location.

McDonald has many positive plans for the space and has great support from the St. Marys BIA and Stratford and District Chamber of Commerce.

On the first Monday of every month, the business is home to the Bean Social, running from 9:30-11:30 a.m. as a drop-in for coffee, snacks and social time for business professionals discussing topics like upcoming

promotions, projects and sharing ideas on work improvements.

On Feb. 25, McDonald will also host the chamber of commerce's Business After 5 event that will bring many chamber members to St. Marys and the downtown hub from 5-7 p.m.

She is also hoping to have guest speakers, workshops and retreats utilize the inviting workspace. The idea for a retreat leads naturally into the second business at 162 Queen.

For the last 10 months, McDonald has been busy with renovations to the second-floor commercial space, making it into a beautiful, welcoming Airbnb, which could be booked along with the downstairs working environment. The bright, two-bedroom loft is what McDonald calls a true labour of love as the location and setup goes with her love of supporting, dining, exploring and shopping local.

The Loft @ 162 Queen is a short-term rental and has free onsite parking and access to the downtown from the front entrance. Bookings became available on Nov. 21 and has already accommodated over 23 guests visiting the area for events like birthday parties, weddings, work training, family emergencies and just a night away, bringing people to town from Toronto, Chilliwack, Essex, Kenora, Calgary and Niagara. The booking link for the Airbnb is <http://bit.ly/theloftat162queen>.

"Overall, my goal with these two spaces is to create downtown accommodations and downtown working space for the community because when you stay and work in the downtown, you then eat, shop, explore and support other downtown businesses," McDonald said. "It will provide a valuable space to support productive work, community collaborations, flexible options for small-business owners and entrepreneurs, and those visiting our town a welcoming, cozy and inviting space to stay."

The hours for the working space are 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. and it can be booked at <https://162queen.simplybook.me/v2/#book>. Also, anyone who wants to rent the entire space for the day, weekend or week, or for retail pop-ups, can email 162queenstreeteast@gmail.com.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Taylor McDonald has recently opened a workspace and Airbnb accommodation at 162 Queen St. E.

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St. Marys Healthcare Foundation celebrates community donations supporting new X-ray machine



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ST. MARYS HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION)

Glen Spearin has made a \$100,000 donation toward a new X-ray machine at St. Marys Memorial Hospital. The gift was made in memory of Eber and Velma Bayne and will help enhance diagnostic imaging for patients across the community. Shown in the front row, from left, are Glen Spearin and St. Marys Healthcare Foundation board member Cindy Bilyea. In the back row are board members Linda McFadyen, Pam Zabel, Wendy Lamond, Wayne Barber and Mark Kennedy.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ST. MARYS HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION)

Veterinary Purchasing has donated \$25,000 toward a new X-ray machine at St. Marys Memorial Hospital. The diagnostic imaging equipment is used daily by patients of all ages and will help enhance care at the hospital. Pictured from left are Cindy Bilyea, Bernice De Decker, Dr. Jeff Buckland, Dr. George Wood, Dr. Christine Harron, Pat Hinnegan, Dr. Shanna Perry, Dr. Tim Zaharchuk, Brian De Groot, Linda McFadyen and Pam Zabel.

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Facility dog Dusty joins Stratford Police Service to support first responders and community

AMANDA NELSON

Independent Reporter

The Stratford Police Service has welcomed a new four-legged team member aimed at supporting first responders and community members across Stratford, St. Marys and Perth South.

NSD Dusty, an accredited facility dog and yellow Labrador retriever, has been donated to the Stratford Police Service through National Service Dogs, with funding support from Wounded Warriors Canada. Dusty supports Stratford Police Service members, civilians and first responders.

Dusty is a graduate of National Service Dogs' Facility Dog Program, made possible through donations and funding from Wounded Warriors Canada as part of its ongoing efforts to support first responders following critical incidents and to reduce occupational stress injuries.

Facility dogs are purpose-bred and trained to work under the direction of professionals, using specific skills to provide emotional support and a calming influence. Dusty will work alongside investigators, front-line members and social workers to support citizens across the region.

Unlike larger centres such as London, which may have facility dogs dedicated to specific programs, Dusty will devote time to the first responder community while also engaging in day-to-day interactions.

"In the last several years, we have had the opportunity to witness the incredible impact these dogs have on those they serve," said Rachel Braden, a social worker and Dusty's primary handler. "They bring light in the darkest of times and provide a type of support that transcends what humans can provide."

Braden said the presence of a facility dog often creates an immediate shift in atmosphere.

"There's a basic human-animal connection," she said. "You walk into a room and if there's a dog to play with, everyone is just naturally a little bit calmer and



(AMANDA NELSON PHOTO)

Const. Darren Fischer, community resource and media relations officer with the Stratford Police Service, NSD Dusty, an accredited facility dog, and Rachel Braden, a social worker and Dusty's primary handler. Dusty recently joined the Stratford Police Service to support first responders and community members in Stratford, St. Marys and Perth South.

happier. I would say it really helps with the bridging between police and the community."

She also noted that facility dogs differ from service dogs, which are trained to support one individual.

"Facility dogs are purpose-bred and trained to work with a variety of people," Braden said. "This is probably one of the only situations where you'll see a dog

in a vest and you're allowed to say hello because of the nature of the work they're trained to do with a professional."

Const. Darren Fischer, community resource and media relations officer with the Stratford Police Service, is one of Dusty's secondary handlers. He said Dusty helps reduce stress and ease interactions with police.

"When Dusty is here, there is an immediate lightening of the mood," Fischer said. "People get playful and you can see that serious work mode take a break for a moment; that decompression from the continuous, ongoing stress of the job. She really allows for a mental health break."

Fischer said Dusty can also help break down barriers for people who may feel uncomfortable interacting with police.

"She has an opportunity to soften that visit a little bit," he said. "(Dusty) can help break down that barrier for people who have concerns about interacting with the police, so officers can better engage and offer support."

Stratford police Chief Greg Skinner said Dusty and Braden add another layer of support for both officers and the community.

"Tragic events can happen to anyone at any time," Skinner said. "We may not be able to eliminate the trauma that comes with tragedy, but we can try to mitigate it through the provision of member and community support."

Skinner said the program will help support people in vulnerable situations, assist victims of crime and strengthen relationships between police and the community.

When Dusty is out in the community, Braden said members of the public are welcome to interact with and pet her. Fischer reminded residents that safety comes first and asking permission before petting any dog is always best practice.

Those interested in following Dusty's work can find her on Instagram at @sps_nsddusty.



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Beginner photography workshop launches in St. Marys

ALEX HUNT

Independent Reporter

Grab a camera and join St. Marys local Claire Thomas for a hands-on photography workshop where participants will learn, shoot and share.

Thomas launched her first "Intro to Photography Workshop" on Jan. 11. For those who missed it, she will be offering a second session on Jan. 25. The workshop will run from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and will take place at 428 Emily St.

Thomas recently returned from Vancouver after graduating from Langara College's professional photography program. With her education and a decade's worth of experience, Thomas is passionate about sharing her craft with others.

"I want people to feel more empowered and confident behind the lens," said Thomas. "The more someone does something, the more they learn. I don't want people to put a lot of pressure on themselves and make every photo amazing. My advice is to just get out and do it."

Along with teaching the fundamentals, Thomas hopes her clients feel a sense of community and connection with each other while attending the workshop. Building friendships is one of the core aspects of her sessions.

Like the first one, the Jan. 25 workshop will focus on using a DSLR camera, composition basics, lighting, por-

trait techniques, file management and basic editing.

"St. Marys is such a beautiful town. With the falls, abundant birds and scenic walking trails, there are so many places to explore," said Thomas. "Being in a town that isn't overcrowded makes it even more enjoyable to take it all in."

Depending on local interest, Thomas said she's open to the idea of developing an intermediate workshop for individuals interested in learning more advanced techniques.

Thomas said she's always seen herself as a visual person. Her interest in photography piqued when she travelled with her family to Peru after her mother gave her a camera.

"I just couldn't put it down the whole trip," she said.

Thomas shared that she's blessed to find something that she's passionate about.

"What makes us unique is what makes us beautiful. It's important not to shy away from that, but to lean into it," said Thomas. "Don't be afraid to look at references, see what's out there and then create your own version. Embrace your own style but also remember that understanding the basics is valuable before pushing yourself too far."

Those interested in attending the workshop can book a spot by emailing claideannathomas@gmail.com.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Claire Thomas, freelance photographer, is hosting beginner photography workshops in St. Marys.

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Local Indigenous author's new children's book to teaches identity and cultural belonging

ALEX HUNT

Independent Reporter

Through writing and storytelling, Indigenous educator Patsy Day and author S.P. Joseph Lyons are shaping how Indigenous youth see themselves and their communities.

A Winter Solstice Celebration was held at Riverwalk Commons on Dec. 21, 2025. The event focused on welcoming winter and included a presentation by Lyons on his new children's book, *Turtle Hatchling Belongs*.

A local Oneida Nation educator, elder and Kaswentha Two Row Now co-chair, Day was also in attendance to honour winter's arrival and support Lyons' book.

Lyons, a member of the Anishinaabe Nation, said *Turtle Hatchling Belongs* is a book about discovering a sense of belonging, and is dedicated to Indigenous and non-Indigenous children in foster care.

"There are many Indigenous children in the foster-care system," said Lyons. "Having been one of them myself, I decided to write books for those children going through the same experiences as I did. These children don't often have a voice or an advocate.

"The idea is that Turtle Hatchling is born unsure of where she belongs or where she is meant to go. Guided by Grandmother Moon, she begins her journey toward the water. Along the way, she is distracted by a curious raccoon, the crab family and the seagull family, but Grandmother Moon continues to light her path. As Turtle Hatchling is trying to figure out where she belongs, she realizes that all of those answers were within her all along."

Lyons said the book is meant to encourage children to pursue a journey of self-discovery and understand

they do belong. Lyons frequently speaks at schools, universities and colleges, sharing his story, from his grandfather's experience in a residential school to his own personal journey.

Day said according to the co-founder of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, Cindy Blackstock, there are 165,000 Indigenous children in foster care.

"There are now more Indigenous children in foster care than there were in the residential schools," said Day. "I see communities working hard to find foster homes within their own Nations to care for these children, and I know this all ties back to the effects of intergenerational trauma."

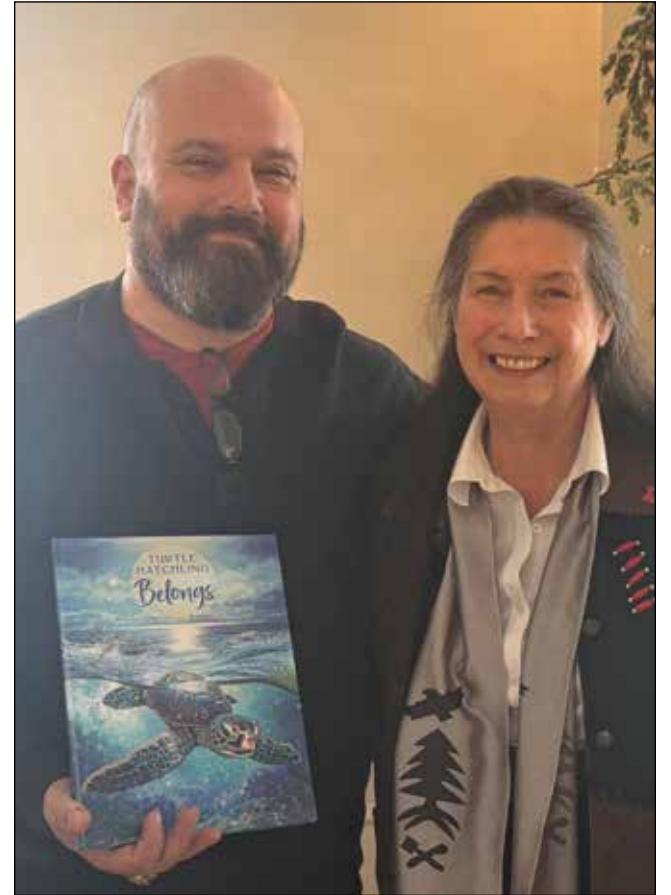
Day explained there is a lack of education on how intergenerational trauma has travelled through generations.

"Our people endured 150 years of this, and I know it will take another 150 years, and better education, to help the whole country reach a deeper understanding."

Kaswentha Two Row Now is a local group comprising Indigenous educators and advocates. Two Row Now focuses on providing cultural programs for Indigenous students, families, and foster children.

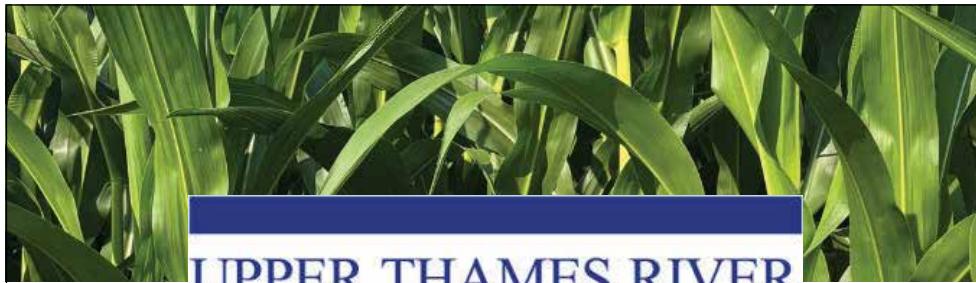
"We do many events around the community, one of which is participating in the Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women," said Day. "We acknowledge those who have suffered and gone missing. We made cardstock red dresses with facts and statistics about the issue written on them and walked down the street to help raise awareness."

Turtle Hatchling Belongs is available on GoodMinds.com and at Betty's Bookshelf in St. Marys.



(ALEX HUNT PHOTO)

Indigenous children's author S.P. Joseph Lyons and Indigenous educator Patsy Day at the Winter Solstice Celebration at Riverwalk Commons on Dec. 21.



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ZONING BY-LAW OPEN HOUSE

DATE & TIME:

Wednesday, January 28, 2026 from 4:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M.

LOCATION:

Municipal Operations Centre
408 James Street South, St. Marys, Ontario, N4X 1B6

PURPOSE OF THE OPEN HOUSE:

The upcoming Open House will welcome residents, business owners, and all members of the community to share their feedback and learn more about the ongoing Zoning By-law Review. This drop-in event offers a chance to discover what the zoning update means for the town. This includes information on permitted building uses, building heights, distance from property lines, parking requirements, etc.. Please note, no decisions regarding the Zoning By-law Review will be made at the January Open House; it's simply an opportunity to get informed and have your say.

TOWN OF ST. MARYS ZONING BY-LAW REVIEW

The Town of St. Marys retained NPG Planning Solutions Inc. (NPG) to undertake a Zoning By-law Review. Under the Planning Act (R.S.O. 1990, c. P.13), local councils are required to amend their Zoning By-law to align with a new or updated Official Plan. St. Marys' updated Official Plan was approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) in October 2024.

The Town of St. Marys current Comprehensive Zoning By-law No. Z1-1997 was adopted by Council on March 11, 1997. Since the Official Plan has been approved, the Zoning By-law will need to be brought into conformity with the approved Official Plan.

WHAT IS A ZONING BY-LAW

A Zoning By-law is a legal document outlining the set of regulations that determine how a piece of land can be used and developed. The Zoning By-law regulates the use of land and buildings; the located and setbacks of buildings and structures; the types of buildings permitted; lot sizes; heights; parking requirements; and performance standards such as landscaping requirements.

The Zoning By-law Review is a collaborative and coordinated process which will involve the preparation of a Technical Memorandum on By-law Issues, Technical Briefs, and the updated Zoning By-law and associated mapping, as well as the necessary public and stakeholder engagement. The project is intended to be completed by October 2026.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

If you are unable to attend and would like to learn more about the event or project, stay updated, request additional information, or be added to the project contact list, please reach out to the individual listed below:

Grant Brouwer
Director of Building & Development
Town of St. Marys
408 James Street South, St. Marys, Ontario, N4X 1B6
Phone: 519-284-2340 ext. 215
Email: gbrouwer@town.stmarys.on.ca



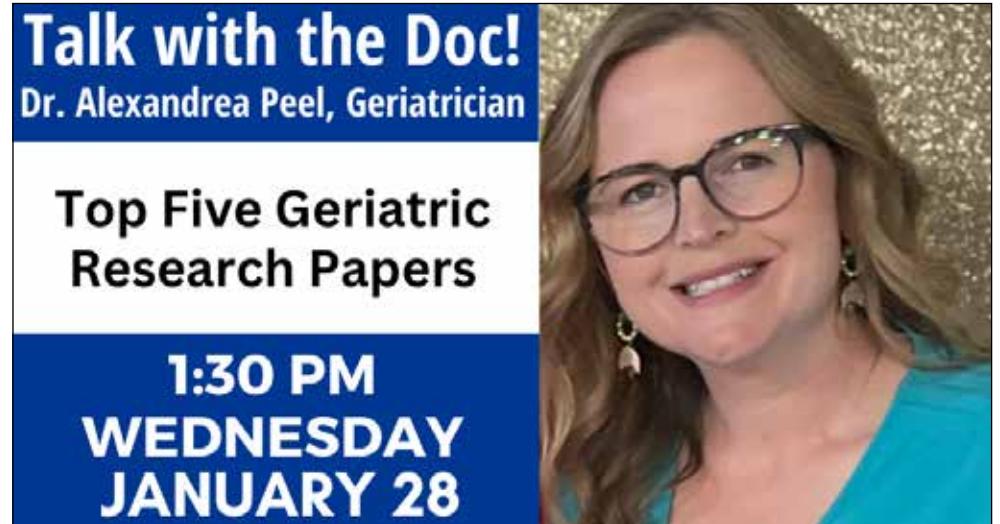
Alzheimer Society of Huron Perth marks Alzheimer's Awareness Month with virtual programming

Programming to offer locals information on Alzheimer's advancements, the basics of dementia and more



(PHOTO COURTESY OF ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF HURON PERTH)

Pictured are the education coordinators for the Alzheimer Society of Huron Perth, Jessica Lawson and Jeanette Sears at the society's Soups On fundraiser in Stratford Jan. 10.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF HURON PERTH)

Local geriatrician Dr. Alexandra Peel returns with her virtual Talk with the Doc! Presentation over Zoom on Jan. 28.

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Beginning this month as part of Alzheimer's Awareness Month, the Alzheimer Society of Huron Perth is providing several opportunities for locals to learn virtually about Alzheimer's Disease, dementia, memory and aging, and more.

During Alzheimer's Awareness Month each January, Alzheimer Societies across Canada unite to challenge dementia stigma and create a community where everyone feels more comfortable talking about dementia and sharing their own experience.

"For our Alzheimer's Awareness Month, we're just kind of highlighting three pillars," said Jessica Lawson, the local Alzheimer Society's public education coordinator for Perth County. "At the society here, we support people living with dementia and their care partners, and the three pillars are education, support and recreation. We offer client education and public education, we also offer counselling services and support groups and then, with the recreation side of things, we offer group recreation and then we offer in-home recreation services as well.

"... For Alzheimer's Awareness

Month, the key message for Alzheimer Society Canada is 'Forget no one because no one should face dementia alone.'

For the roughly 3,200 people living with some form of dementia in Perth and Huron counties, their caregivers, family, friends and the wider community, the programming planned by the local Alzheimer Society for this month and beyond is intended to reduce stigma by spreading awareness, support those impacted with information they need to know and create safer and more understanding communities for everyone.

Hosted virtually every January since 2021, local geriatrician Dr. Alexandra Peel is returning with her "Talk with the Doc!" presentation on Zoom from 1:30-3 p.m. Jan. 28. This year's presentation, entitled "Top Five Geriatric Papers with Dr. Alexandra Peel," will focus on hot topics and the latest research into dementia medication and treatments, following by a question-and-answer session. Visit <https://bit.ly/Doc-Talk2026> to register for this free event.

The Alzheimer Society's free, one-hour, online education sessions, the Dementia Basics series, also returns this month. With topics of discussion ranging from an overview of dementia and

mild cognitive impairment to the common signs of dementia, brain changes and communication tips, the Dementia Basics series runs virtually over Zoom on Monday afternoons and evenings from Jan. 19 to March 9. For more information and to register, visit <https://bit.ly/ASHPEducationHour>.

Beginning in February, the Virtual Memory and Aging program is the online version of the local Alzheimer Society's popular Memory & Aging Course. Running over Zoom every Wednesday from Feb. 4-18 between 1:30 and 3:30 p.m., the program covers age-related memory changes, how to optimize brain health and helpful memory strategies. While there is a \$25 workbook fee, the Alzheimer Society does offer some financial assistance. Register at <https://bit.ly/MAPWinter26>.

For those looking for a different way to improve their brain health, the Alzheimer Society also runs two ukulele groups as recreation and an opportunity for area residents to meet and socialize virtually with people across Perth and Huron counties. The Golden Ukulele Group meets regularly from October to May and focuses on basic strums and chords, and having fun, while the Beginning Ukulele Group (BUG!) is in-

tended for those new to the instrument, with virtual meetings held every Thursday morning beginning in March. For more information and to register, email jeanettes@alzhp.ca.

Finally, the Alzheimer Society is reminding businesses across Huron and Perth counties, especially those with an aging clientele, about its Dementia-Friendly Communities initiative. According to Lawson, this program offers training on how to reduce the stigma around dementia, increase understanding and support those living with dementia to participate in daily life.

"There are a couple businesses like audiology and optometry clinics that we work with the staff – and we work with any businesses that are interested – in getting that training and how to make their business more dementia inclusive," Lawson said.

Any local businesses interested in receiving training through the Dementia-Friendly Communities initiative can email Lawson at jessical@alzhp.ca.

For more information on the Alzheimer Society of Huron Perth and the programs and services it offers, visit alzheimer.ca/huronperth.

Town of St. Marys hosting zoning bylaw open house

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The Town of St. Marys is hosting a zoning bylaw open house at the municipal operations centre (408 James St. S) on Wednesday, Jan. 28, from 4-8 p.m.

This drop-in event is an opportunity for residents, business owners and community members to share their thoughts about the town's zoning bylaw.

During the open house, topics dis-

cussed will include permitted building uses, building heights, distance from property lines, parking requirements and more. This event is an opportunity for the community to provide feedback. Please be aware that no decisions will be made during the open house. The goal for this event is to hear from the community.

The zoning bylaw sets the rules for how land and buildings can be used in St. Marys. It covers things like where buildings can go, what types are al-

lowed, lot sizes, building heights and parking.

According to the Planning Act, local councils must update their zoning bylaw to match any changes in the official plan. The town's official plan was approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in October 2024. The current zoning bylaw, first adopted in 1997, needs to be updated to line up with the new plan, with help from NPG Planning Solutions Inc.

"Updating the zoning bylaw is a team

effort. The process will include technical reports, updated maps and lots of input from the public and other stakeholders," said director of building and planning Grant Brouwer in a press release.

The goal is to finish the project by October 2026.

To learn more, get updates, ask questions, or join the project contact list, reach out to Brouwer at gbrouwer@town.stmarys.on.ca.

Mudmen wows audience at St. Marys Town Hall Theatre



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

Pipers Sandy and Robby Campbell flank Mudmen lead singer and guitarist Colin Amey as they belt out their Celtic-country-rock bangers during a concert in St. Marys Jan. 9.



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

Pictured during the Mudmen's St. Marys show are bagpiper Robby Campbell and bass player Emmett Glancie.

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Hockey Night in Canada features and national television appearances on CBC, HBO and NBC.

Now in their 28th year together as a band, the Mudmen have played more than 3,000 shows in eight countries, building a loyal, multi-generational fan

base. Robby Campbell, who co-founded the band with his brother, Sandy Campbell, credits smaller communities like St. Marys and rural Ontario for sustaining the band through the years without major label support.

As a final message for area fans before heading off on the rest of the band's

tour, Robby Campbell reminded locals of the importance of buying local and supporting Canadian.

"My brother always talks about shopping local and Canadian," Robby Campbell said. "Just remember the community has to keep the town alive, and if you drive to the States to go shopping

instead of going to Stratford or London or a bigger city, it's going to hurt.

"... Keep your dollars in the community and if you love Canadian music, go out and support it."

For more information about the Mudmen and where they're playing next, visit mudmen.ca.

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FIGURE: BURAE MCGEAKLANE. STYLING BY LISA WRIGHT AND MEGHAN CHOMA. PHOTO BY MATTHEW SON

Police HQ may be leaving downtown Stratford

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Stratford Police Service’s headquarters may be moving from the downtown core.

During the first regular Stratford city council meeting of the new year on Jan. 12, council voted in favour of issuing a letter of intent to purchase the building known municipally as 10-52 Wright Blvd. – perhaps better known to residents as the old Scotiabank building off the corner of Lorne Avenue.

Though nothing in the agenda indicated this was for a new police station, when discussing the item, council debated the pros and cons for the service.

“I do see the potential in the location, but I do have concerns that I’m not able to reconcile,” said Coun. Cody Sebben. “Number one, I strongly believe there’s no substitute for the positive community presence that comes with having our police headquarters in the downtown core. To me, moving this to the edge of the city is a big concern.

“Number two, by moving the police headquarters, along with other municipal administration, outside of the downtown core, we could possibly be removing many potential patrons from stores and restaurants and moving them to the periphery of the city, while at the same time creating a potential vacant site in the core for an indeterminant amount of time.”

Coun. Harjinder Nijjar, who also sits on the police services board, told reporters that although being located downtown is an asset, the Wright Boulevard building has a lot of potential.

“The building ... was built for a data centre, so it was built to handle that type of environment, so it’ll need some modification, but not to the extreme of a new building,” Nijjar said. “I think it’s a great oppor-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The City of Stratford will issue a letter of intent to purchase 10-52 Wright Blvd., the former Scotiabank data centre off Lorne Avenue, with the potential to consider it as an option for a new headquarters for the Stratford Police Service.

tunity ... and also we support St. Marys. It puts us in a good location. More and more municipalities are pushing police stations to the edge of town instead of in the beat. I think we still require presence in downtown, but there’s great opportunity that we can have maybe a small satellite office in the core of the city.”

The current headquarters located at George Street and St. Patrick Street has long been overdue for more space. In November 2023, the board started the process of sourcing a new station or top-to-bottom renovation, but the space issues associated with the building go back far longer. Police Chief Greg Skinner has earlier stated he could find minutes dated 1991 indicating the service needed more space.

At that time, Skinner said the available and suitable

space downtown – which is preferable for police – was negligible. The current station could support renovation, though likely wouldn’t be able to add space on top of the building.

Speaking last night, Nijjar confirmed it would cost at minimum \$30-40 million to renovate the current building to modern standards.

When asked if the board has a budget or timeline for a new station, Nijjar indicated it was still early days.

“At this time, no,” Nijjar said. “The city’s going to go take a look at (the building) and see what the costing is and if it’s a yes or no. ... If it has potential and it will meet police needs, then I think there’ll be further discussions on that.”

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Stop VAW launches community information sessions on intimate partner violence

AMANDA NELSON

Independent Reporter

Stop Violence Against Women (Stop VAW) is hosting a series of community information sessions across Perth County from January through May.

Each session will feature professional service providers who will be available on site to offer support and practical information, along with a general presentation highlighting how community members can help address gender-based violence. The monthly sessions aim to increase community understanding and accessibility with a focus on shifting responsibility from individuals to the broader community. The approach emphasizes early detection, support and community intervention.

“Our goal is to shift towards commu-

nity accountability and community responsibility — to recognize that this is happening in our community and that this is a community problem,” said Jennifer Olenewa, community projects lead with Stop VAW. “It impacts everyone.”

During each session, attendees will learn about the different types of abuse and how to recognize the signs of intimate partner violence (IPV). Participants will also learn what to say to support someone who may be experiencing IPV and about the community resources and programs available throughout Perth County.

“For the last 40 years, the anti-violence against women movement has been geared toward women who are experiencing violence, sending a message that somehow she is responsible for ending the violence, or that if she doesn’t leave,

it’s her fault,” said Olenewa. “It’s very disheartening, and it’s time to try something different. Different interventions, different strategies and really putting this back on the community.”

Each session provides tools and resources to help community members recognize and address gender-based violence effectively.

“Our goal is to reach more community members so we can create a larger, shared understanding of intimate partner violence across all of Perth County,” said Olenewa. “What we’re trying to do is give community members the skills they need so women don’t feel solely responsible for ending violence that isn’t their fault, and so people know how to recognize the signs and speak up.”

Upcoming sessions include:

• Mitchell — Jan. 27 at Upper Thames

Elementary School

• St. Marys — Feb. 17 at Little Falls Public School

• Listowel — March 11 at Eastdale Public School

• Milverton — April 13 at Milverton Public School

• Stratford — Date and location to be determined

Food and drinks will be provided, and free parking will be available at each location.

To learn more or to register for an upcoming session, visit stopvaw.ca and click on Events. Registration is required for food and drink planning only; no personal information will be stored.

Anyone concerned about intimate partner violence can contact Optimism Place’s 24/7 support line at 519-271-5550 or 1-800-265-8598 (toll-free).

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Organizers of annual Community Christmas Dinner thank supporters for another successful year

RACHAEL O'NEILL

Contributed Article

The sixth annual Community Christmas Dinner was another success. This year was the biggest ever with 140 people receiving an incredible Christmas dinner that was prepared by O'Leary's Creamery, and 50 children received toys from Santa, all delivered by a team of drivers on Christmas Eve.

A huge thank you to the following that made this happen:

- O'Leary's Creamery
- Delmar
- Joe's Diner
- Country Roots Market
- Tremblett's Your Independent Grocer
- Foodland
- Canadian Tire
- Stone Town Supply
- Donna Windsor – The Pie Lady
- Dee Skeith – The Cookie Lady
- All the amazing people who donated
- The drivers – John and Terry Thomson, the Borg family, Pete Bushfield, Heather Young and Jack Bullen.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF RACHAEL O'NEILL)

A total of 140 locals received a Christmas dinner Dec. 24, 2025, through the sixth annual Community Christmas Dinner.

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Enjoy Valentine's and help give the Breath of Life

KINSMEN CLUB OF STRATFORD

Contributed Article

On Saturday Feb. 7, the Kinsmen Club of Stratford will be hosting its annual Valentines Gala Dinner in support of Cystic Fibrosis (CF), and all are invited.

Tickets are \$50 a person and include a Roast Beef Buffet, entertainment by Upside of Maybe and a silent auction. All proceeds will go to Cystic Fibrosis. So come on out and help drive our mission and the breakthrough research that brings us closer to a cure for everyone with CF. Give a CF patient the "Breath of Life." Remember a gift of a little of your time may last you a lifetime. Tickets can be purchased at Black Angus or call 519-272-6912 or 519-274-5781.

The Stratford Kinsmen over the years have run many fundraising events in support of their national project, Cystic Fibrosis. Most recently was the annual CF Walk in May and of course the Valentines Gala. Since 1964 with its first \$10,000 donation, the Kinsmen, nationally, have raised in excess of over \$60 Million for CF research.

To the general public, CF remains somewhat of a mystery. What are its symptoms? Can it be cured? How is it treated? Researchers have not found a cure for CF. Cystic Fibrosis isn't always visible. Behind everyday moments are invisible burdens: hours of daily treatments, countless pills, hospital stays and the constant weight of managing this disease.

In 1964, the life expectancy of a CF child was age four. Today, because of research, CF patients are getting married, having children and even have grand children. However, it is important to re-

member that CF patients have their life on the line day after day. There is still no cure for Cystic Fibrosis and lives are at stake. Our greatest hope lies in developing genetic therapies, which are more complex and costly than anything we've ever pursued.

CF patients are fierce advocates, who live boldly with Cystic Fibrosis and believe that life is meant to be lived fully, no matter the obstacles. That is why Kin continues to back the fight against CF because one day, there will be a cure.

The Stratford Kinsmen Club's major fundraising and service projects over the past 65-plus years have included the arena booth, Stratford Blues and Ribfest, high school bursaries and Cystic Fibrosis to name a few. Kinsmen and Kinettes also hosted the Antique Show, Millionaires Night and Winter Carnival. The club still hosts the annual Canada Day celebration and fireworks.

Most recently, the Kinsmen have made financial donations to the Stratford Hospital Foundation, Wellspring for Cancer, Rotary Aquabox, Stratford Library, Connections Centre and gym equipment for a new outdoor facility by the skate park.

Kin Canada, "Only In Canada EH!" is Canada's largest all-Canadian service organization, made up of Canadian men and women who gather together in clubs to volunteer their time for the purposes of bettering their communities by performing hands-on service work, raising funds for important community projects and having fun.

If you would like more information on the Kinsmen Club of Stratford or would like to come out to a meeting, contact us at www.stratfordkinsmen.ca.

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St. Marys Independent **SPORTS**

U15 B Girls place second at International SilverStick

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The Sam's Home Hardware U15 B Girls St. Marys Rock took the silver medal at the International SilverStick tournament in Sarnia Jan. 1-4.

Head coach Dave Bailey told the Independent the team's play ramped up as they got into the most important games of the weekend.

"We talk about being a cohesive unit and putting the same effort into our defensive side of the game and our back-checking as we do on the offensive side of the game," said Bailey. "That's what I saw us do on the Sunday, and despite the fact we finished on the short side of the final, our effort was excellent and we were very good when we needed to be."

"These girls can absolutely rise to the occasion and compete with any team at this level in Ontario, and I love that they're able to do that. They have that will and that strength about them, and they hate to lose. I think they hate to lose more than they love to win, and I'm fine with that."

St. Marys finished second in their pool with two wins and two losses in the round-robin, setting up a clash against the other pool's first-place St. Thomas Panthers. Bailey explained that St. Thomas has had the Rock's number so far this season, but good team-wide defensive coverage and stellar play in between the pipes led to a win in the semi-final.

"St. Thomas had beaten us twice this year, and they handled us fairly strongly in the past, but we adjusted and we shut them down. Our forwards collapsed in the defensive zone and covered the high slot well, and even when they had their chances, our goaltending was great. Lexi (Flax), our goalie, was fantastic, especially on Sunday. I've told her that she's got to be our best penalty killer. She's got to be our rock, and she was. She made 52 saves out of 55 shots on the Sunday, so there's nothing more she could have done."

The white-knuckle semi-final stayed scoreless until well into the third period when, with just over five and a half minutes left on the clock, Charlotte Matheson put home the eventual game-winning goal, assisted by Tealya Thistle. Olivia Davis added an insurance marker in the final minute to secure a 2-0 win, with Lexi Flax earning the shutout in goal.

In the finals against the high-powered Kincardine Kinucks, the two teams traded goals in the second period before Kincardine found the game-winner in the third to earn a 3-2 win over St. Marys. Madeleine Jeffreys got the Rock's first goal, assisted by Paige Johnson and Lucy McFarlane, with Mc-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Sam's Home Hardware U15 B Girls St. Marys Rock brought home the silver medal from the International SilverStick tournament Jan. 1-4 in Sarnia. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Hailey Pickel, Olivia Davis, Addison Jones, Teadora Walsh, Paige Johnson, Reese Crawford, Chloe Phillips, Madeleine Jeffreys, Tealya Thistle, Avery Fifield, Charlotte Matheson, Lucy McFarlane, Maeve Sheldon and Lexi Flax. In the back row, from left, are head coach Dave Bailey, assistant coach Sarah Bailey, assistant coach Megan Bailey, manager/trainer Kim Jones and coach Nick Sheldon. Not pictured was assistant trainer Scott Walsh.

Farlane later scoring a goal of her own, assisted by Chloe Phillips and Davis.

Throughout the tournament, Phillips, described by coach Bailey as a "warrior who always shows up," led the offensive production with five goals and three assists. Jeffreys and Matheson ended the tournament with two goals and four points each with Bailey saying Jeffreys "plays with passion and grit every second she's on the ice," before calling Matheson "consistent, hard-working and dangerous in the offensive zone."

Bailey also credited the team's defence group of Thistle, Addison Jones, Maeve Sheldon and Teadora Walsh as "the most complete defence group I've seen this season at this level." Bailey also mentioned forwards Reese Crawford, Avery Fifield and Hailey Pickel for their stellar efforts at both ends of the ice throughout the weekend.

"They really like each other," Bailey said of the team's cohesiveness. "We have a good team chemistry and balance in this group, and I think that matters. They'll go to war for each other and that's everything you can ask for as a coach because if you don't have that cohesiveness, you get more individuality, and you can't beat the best team as individuals. They understand what it takes and I think the next step for us is to do it more consistently because there is no question they have the ability."

However, Johnson and McFarlane were arguably two of the biggest bright spots of the weekend. Johnson, who had struggled a bit to score as of late, delivered four goals and one assist in the tournament while McFarlane had four points in the tournament, including a goal in the gold-medal game. Bailey called the two the team's most improved players.

"They're both very hard workers," Bailey said. "Paige (Johnson) is a great example of hard work paying dividends. She had lost some time with hockey due to an injury and she's worked really hard to come back. Six weeks ago, she was so close to burying pucks but they just weren't going in and I said, 'Just keep doing what you're doing. Keep going to the net.' And finally this weekend, they started going in."

"Lucy (McFarlane) is fairly small but there was only one game this year that I had to tell her to play bigger. She is blossoming into a real contributor. She actually landed on a plane from Cuba in Windsor on New Year's Day and they drove right to Sarnia and got to the game 30 minutes before it started. I didn't know what we were going to get out of her with her just coming off a holiday, but she was great and she didn't take her foot off the gas the whole

weekend. And Paige and Lucy are making their line with Madeleine (Jeffreys), who's very offensively gifted herself, extremely dangerous."

With the team's regular season wrapping up last week, the Rock now turns to their post-season, with Bailey saying the intensity of their practices will be increasing.

"Practicing like it's a Game 7 is where we need to be moving forward because in a week or so, every game we play is going to really matter. I told the girls on the weekend, 'The goal is to be perfect. Perfect doesn't always translate on the scoresheet or to wins, but how it translates is that each of you can walk back into this dressing room, look yourself in the mirror and your teammates in the eye, and know you couldn't have done anything more than what you did.' And I'd say, on Sunday, we were close to perfect."

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Lincs continue win streak amidst explosive trade deadline

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

If someone had asked the St. Marys Lincolns 48 hours before the Jan. 10, 7 p.m. Greater Ontario Hockey League (GOHL) trade deadline if they were looking to acquire a goaltender, the answer would have been absolutely not.

After all, they had a tandem of Brogan Colquhoun, who has a 2.07 goals-against average (GAA) and a 0.932 save percentage, and Vaughn Barr, who, after winning back-to-back games on Jan. 9 and 10, stopping a combined 52 of 53 shots, boasts a 2.16 goals-against average and a 0.923 save percentage.

That's a pretty strong goaltending situation.

If someone had asked the team again 24 hours before the deadline, the answer would have been very different, and the team may have been asked for a fire extinguisher as everyone's hair had caught fire by that point.

One day before the deadline, goaltender Brogan Colquhoun was diagnosed with an injury that looked to keep him out of action long term.

One day before the deadline, the Lincolns were suddenly in urgent need of a goaltender, ideally one with a track record of success.

Enter the GOHL's reigning most valuable goaltender award winner, Colby Booth-Housego.

But if fans thought that's where the drama ended, they would be sorely mistaken.

Not long after committing to Booth-Housego, the Lincolns received word that a second opinion had been rendered on the injury to Colquhoun, one that suggested Colquhoun could miss far less time than was suggested in the first evaluation.

The Lincolns had no time; they had to make a move. With the proverbial clock about to strike midnight, they committed to Booth-Housego under the knowledge that Colquhoun was going to miss significant time, only for Colquhoun and the team to then be blindsided with a second diagnosis opposite from the first.

That is how general manager Pat Powers ended the deadline with three goaltenders – Booth-Housego, Colquhoun and 16-year-old Vaughn Barr – and a swirling headache.

"It was a very chaotic situation when we felt Brogan (Colquhoun) was injured long-term," Powers told the Independent following the trade deadline madness. "But, at the end of the day, we were able to add the best goaltender in the league last season back onto our roster. To have three elite goaltenders going into a playoff grind gives us lots of options and lots of insurance."

There wasn't anything Colquhoun or the team did wrong; the timing just worked out in a crazy way. It was also noted by the team that Colquhoun now has the time to fully heal and is focused on getting his body back to full health. Colquhoun was also credited by the team for being a "true pro," and is understanding of the situation the original prognosis put him and the team in.

The team also said Booth-Housego will be "given the runway," while adding the staff will make the most of the situation to make sure no one gets forgotten.

In addition to the John Faulkner Award as the most valuable goalie last year, Booth-Housego combined with Nico Armellini to win the Twin Cities Trophy for the lowest team goals against average. Booth-Housego posted a 1.71 goals-against average and 0.937 save percentage in 28 games last season. No goaltender in the GOHL with at least 22 games played posted better numbers in either category.

"The guys in our dressing room know exactly what Colby (Booth-Housego) can bring as he is a very reliable, athletic and competitive goaltender and person, but adds a different element back into our dressing room as well," said Powers. "Shooters in our league will also know the difficulty that the opposition has



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)

Oliver Lacko celebrates scoring a goal to end a six-game goal drought during the St. Marys Lincolns' 6-0 win over the Listowel Cyclones on Jan. 10.

had over the years shooting on him, and that is another element that gives us an advantage in the competitive atmosphere."

The Lincolns also completed another deal with the French River Rapids of the Northern Ontario Junior Hockey League (NOJHL) to acquire defenceman Pearse Huey. The six-foot-one, 183-pound, Los Angeles, Calif. native who turns 19 years old on Feb. 10 had seven assists in 23 games with French River. Powers said the acquisition of Huey strengthens the depth of the Lincolns' blueline.

"To add Pearse to our lineup gives us another reliable defender with size and the ability to move efficiently up and down the ice," Powers said. "With our defensive core, we want simple puck-movers who can get the pucks to our elite forward group while being strong defenders in all situations, and we feel Pearse makes us stronger in that situation."

The Lincolns also dealt forward Atley Rogers to the Komoka Kings, and sent Will Wright to the Provincial Junior Hockey League's (PJHL) Woodstock Navy Vets as part of their trade deadline activity.

The Lincolns pushed their win streak with a 9-1 win over the abysmal Sarnia Legionnaires, who, as of press time, remain last in the Western Conference with a record of 0-34-0-0 and not even a single point to their credit. Wright and Cam Kean scored their first goals as a Lincoln in the game, and all but three Lincolns got at least a point in the win. Chase MacQueen-Spence scored a goal and three assists while Lincoln Moore and Ryan Hodgkinson each had one goal and two assists.

Assistant coach Michael Siddall noted, despite the quality of the opponent, the team still had a standard for their own play they wanted to maintain.

"That's our second game back after the break, so it's more or less just trying to get our game back in shape. Just because we're playing a team at the bottom of the standings doesn't automatically mean it's going to be an easy game. It's not necessarily about other teams; we've still got to work on us."

One night later, the Lincolns faced much stiffer competition in the form of the highly structured Listowel Cyclones. However, the Lincolns continued to be mechanical in the consistently solid execution of their gameplan.

"Listowel is a team that's well coached and they play the right way," Siddall said. "We came out ready to play right from the start. The line with Ryan (Hodgkinson), Blake (Elzinga) and Declan (Ready) started the game,

and they've started the last couple of games. They're giving us a real fight right off the bat. They're setting the tone and we're coming in waves after that."

For the second straight game, Kean potted the first goal of the game on virtually an identical play as the game against Sarnia, with Kean pinching down from the blueline on his offside to pounce on a rebound. Siddall noted the 19-year-old from Northville, Mich., who has become known for his steady defensive play, has some underrated offensive instincts.

"Cam (Kean) is a highly talented kid," said Siddall. "He is highly relied upon defensively, but he has a good shot and he reads the game really well. I feel like once he scored that goal against Sarnia, I think he felt comfortable taking a little bit more of an offensive approach to a couple of shifts, which is good. He's an older guy, so he understands when to go and when not to go, and he had a few more opportunities to score against Listowel, so he could have had one or two more."

Oliver Lacko, who associate coach Mike Herman compared stylistically to Montreal Canadiens two-way centreman Philip Danault, ended a six-game goal drought when he snapped a quick shot home to put the Lincolns ahead 2-0.

The Lincolns found the back of the net three times in the second frame from Hodgkinson, Moore and Owen Voortman. Coming into the back-to-back against Sarnia and Listowel, Voortman also hadn't scored in six games and had just one goal in his previous 11 outings.

"Owen (Voortman) is an elite shooter. He gets himself in a lot of really good spots and good scoring areas, and he wasn't necessarily pulling the trigger as much a few weeks back before Christmas. Now, I think he's putting himself in those good spots still and he's starting to let them rip more, which is good. He's a big guy and he's strong on the puck, so when he's in the corner, he's winning his battles."

Voortman added a second goal in the third period while Barr finished the night with 31 saves in a shutout bid. Siddall credited the young netminder for giving the Lincolns two solid back-to-back performances.

"Having a goalie competition puts pressure on the coaching staff, which is a good thing. You don't want to have a goalie problem, and we for sure don't have that. We've got three strong goalies now. Vaughn (Barr) is a young goalie and he hasn't had many dips in his game the whole year. He battles hard and he's athletic. He understands the situation he's in and he delivered for us really well in these two games."

U13 A Boys take silver at Barrie tournament

TURNER ROTH

Independent Sports Reporter

The St. Marys Firefighters U13 A Boys St. Marys Rock captured the silver medal at the Georgian Communities Winter Classic Tournament Jan. 2-4 in Barrie.

Head coach Merlin Malinowski explained the team wasn't sure how they would fare in a tournament that was a division higher than they are typically playing in.

"We didn't know what to expect, being against double-A teams, which is a division higher," Malinowski told the Independent. "The boys showed well and did what they've done all year. They moved the puck, they played together, they stuck together. We've got a nice group, a good skating team, kids with skills. They can pass, they can shoot, they can receive. They're a smart team and a lot of fun to coach."

The Rock proved to be one of the tournament's best teams as they hit the ground running with great results throughout the weekend, including a

4-2 win over the eventual champions of the tournament, the TNT Tornadoes. The Rock remained unbeaten through the rest of the four-game round-robin.

Malinowski cited the team's hunger, effort and chemistry as a huge factor in their success.

"Sometimes chemistry just happens, and you're not sure why, but this team just has chemistry. One thing all these kids have is their hunger to play hockey. They're at that age where they still love it and have those dreams that they can make it to the NHL, and maybe they will, but that's the one thing that's common throughout our dressing room is their love of playing hockey."

"They love to come to the rink and be in the dressing room with each other, shooting balls in the hallway with each other, and then it gets onto the ice and they push each other to do better," continued Malinowski. "It's that competition within the group that is helping them to improve and get better, so all that comes together, and that's what makes a good team."

That hunger, according to Malinowski,

ki, makes the job of the coaching staff "really easy."

"You don't have to motivate these kids. It's almost like you have to try and calm them down a little bit. That's really nice when you're not having to motivate them and get them going. These kids are interested in playing from the start. That makes it easy, it makes it fun and you can do things in practice, you can push them, and they're willing to go. You don't have to motivate them to play games and come to practice, which is more important than games. They're ready to go and it makes our job much easier."

In the semi-final game versus the Newmarket Renegades, Attley Ehgoetz and Talan Ward scored while Matthew McCarty earned the shutout in a 2-0 victory to secure a spot in the championship contest.

Malinowski praised the team's all-around play in the tournament.

"Throughout the tournament, we had really good goaltending. Both Matthew (McCarty) and Lucas (Savile) had a great tournament. We limited the other

teams. We didn't give up a lot of two-on-ones or breakaways, so our defence played really well and made good decisions. The forwards, when they didn't have a play at the blueline, were throwing it deep, keeping lots of pressure and cycling it well down there. We managed the puck really well and we weren't just giving it away."

With the newfound experience against higher competition, St. Marys is preparing for their international SilverStick tournament at the end of January.

"It should help us when we go into the International SilverStick towards the end of the month so that we can draw on what we did in this tournament and feel good about ourselves. We won't go into it wondering, 'Are we going to be any good, are we going to get pounded?' We know we can play against double-A teams. I'm hoping that's what they get out of it and feel a little more confident and sure of themselves. Hockey is a game where if you don't have confidence, it will be a real struggle."

Fares, Yates win High-Low Doubles tournament



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Alexis Fares and Shaene Yates. On Jan. 11, six teams participated in the Ontario Five-Pin High-Low Doubles at the St. Marys Bowling Lanes. The team of Fares and Yates placed first and will go on to represent the Grand River Zone at Hopedale Bowl in Oakville on Feb. 22.

Brockman, McKeen compete in Youth Challenge



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Rory Brockman and Nathan McKeen, who competed for the ladies' and men's Grand River Zone teams, respectively, at the Grand Ontario Five-Pin Youth Challenge on Jan. 11 at Echo Bowl in Brantford. Their teams competed against seven other teams from all over the province. McKeen averaged 217, and Brockman's average was 188. Both teams placed fourth, with the ladies' team missing third by just a single point, while the men's team finished just four points back of third.

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MINOR SPORTS **SCRAPBOOK**



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Laura Parkinson fires a long-range shot from the point during this past Sunday's Master-feeds U11 C Girls St. Marys Rock game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Sam Richardson winds up for a long-range slap-shot during this past Sunday's U13 B Boys St. Marys Rock game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Ethan Jarmuth plays the puck through the offensive zone during the St. Marys Cement U18 A Boys St. Marys Rock game this past Sunday.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Cohen Ahrens launches a point shot on target during this past Monday's St. Marys Legion U18 B Boys St. Marys Rock game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Marcus Stuckless loads up a shot during the St. Marys Building Centre U12 A Boys St. Marys Rock game this past Monday.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Everett Crummer rockets a shot on goal during the Social Thirty-One U11 A Boys St. Marys Rock game this past Monday.

COLUMNS

UKRAINIAN CORNER: Sweating out the fever – how raspberry jam saved my childhood

ALONA VASYLIEVA

Independent Columnist

Back home, cold-and-flu season is treated with the gravity of a medieval siege. But here in Canada, I am learning that a cold is just a cold, not a moral failing. To bridge the gap between our two worlds, I've put together a comparison of how we handle the "sniffle season."

In Canada, the medical consensus is clear: "Viruses cause colds, not cold air." It's simple, logical and supported by science.

In Ukraine, however, we believe in a mythical, invisible assassin known as The Draft. To a Ukrainian parent, a slightly open window or a floor that is two degrees below room temperature is not just fresh air, it is a direct invitation for pneumonia to move in and change the locks. If a Ukrainian child's bare feet touch a cold floor, it is legally considered a medical emergency. In Canada, I see children running through snow in Crocs to grab the mail. The first time I saw this, I almost called an ambulance out of habit.

The difference in medical consultations is truly breathtaking:

- The Canadian Doctor: Looks at your child – who currently has a cough straight out of a Dickens novel – and smiles. "He looks great! Give him some water and a popsicle. That will be \$0, please."

- The Ukrainian Doctor: Provides a 14-step tactical protocol. This involves three types of herbal syrups, a complex nebulizer schedule and a stern lecture on why the child wasn't wearing a hat indoors. They treat a runny nose like a full-scale military invasion.

I remember our first winter here; you could easily identify the Ukrainian kids. They were the ones dressed for a North Pole expedition, barely able to move their arms, while the Canadian kids were essentially wearing summer clothes with a light scarf. It was a truly hilarious contrast!



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

A spoonful of resilience: A jar of homemade raspberry jam, a staple in Ukrainian households known for its natural fever-fighting properties and its role as a "comfort cure" during the winter months.

In Canada, the "Holy Duo" of Advil and Tylenol handles everything. In Ukraine, we prefer a more ceremonial approach:

- Mustard Plasters (Hirchichnyky): These are spicy Band-Aids applied to the back. They make the child smell like a ballpark hot dog and feel like they are entering a very localized heatwave.

- Boiled Potatoes: This is my favourite. You don't eat them. You put a towel over your head and breathe the potato steam until you reach a state of spiritual enlightenment or mild lightheadedness.

- Raspberry Jam: This is our secret weapon. You stir it into tea until the child is 90 per-cent sugar. My grandma always said the goal is to "sweat out the fever." Now, as an adult, I realize it's just a delicious way to get permission to eat a jar of jam.

Now on to social etiquette.

This is where the "moral reflection" comes in. In Ukraine, bringing a child with a runny nose to a birthday party is seen as an act of biological warfare. You will be judged. You will be whispered about. You are, quite simply, a "Bad Mom."

In Canada, the "Return to School" policy seems to be, if the child can mostly stand upright, send them in. And I believe it should be that way. This is how the immune system is built – forged in the fires of shared germs and playground sneezes.

I have noticed Ukrainian children are slowly "becoming Canadian." They complain about the three layers of wool I try to force on them and they've started asking for popsicles when they have a scratchy throat.

And honestly, we are happy about it. It's a relief to realize that a runny nose isn't a moral failure – it's just a part of winter

magic (and viruses). We are learning to trade our mustard plasters for a little more Canadian "chill."

Back in Ukraine, we were fortunate to have a pediatrician whose philosophy aligned perfectly with the Canadian approach to the common cold: less is more. Little did I know that this sensible medical advice would soon turn me into a social outlaw among my circle of friends.

I remember one particular episode where my son, Alex, developed a cough that seemed to have its own lease on life. It lasted for two months. To me, following doctor's orders, he was just a kid doing what kids do – processing a bug. But to my friends? I was practically a character in a suspense novel who refused to call for help.

The interrogation was relentless:

"Is he still coughing?" (Yes, as you can hear.)

"What are you giving him?" (Air. And maybe some water.)

"Why aren't you doing anything?"

I found myself trapped in a repetitive cycle of explaining that, no, I wasn't neglecting him; I was simply allowing his immune system to do the heavy lifting. It became a full-time job defending the "wait and see" method every time the poor kid so much as sneezed. I felt like I needed to carry a printed medical disclaimer on my back just to grab coffee with other moms.

And then, poof! As if by some ancient, mystical intervention, the cough simply vanished. Oh, Magic! There were no secret potions, no midnight rituals and no pharmacy-aisle miracles. It turned out that the body – given enough time and a little bit of credit – actually knows exactly how to heal itself.

While the "magic" was satisfying, the real relief wasn't just the silence in the house; it was finally being able to go five minutes without explaining my parenting choices to the neighborhood "cough police."

Straight from the Shelves

LAURA MCASH

St. Marys Public Library

You can't predict when an emergency will strike, but you can prepare yourself for its arrival. Join us at the Library on Monday, January 19 at 6:30 p.m. for "Emergency Management with the Perth County Paramedics", the first offering of the "Life Planning" sub-series of "Learning for Life". Our guest speaker will discuss emergency management practices, their Cool-Aid Program, and their involvement in community paramedicine. To register for this free event, please visit the following link: forms.townofstmarys.com/Library-Forms/Perth-County-Paramedics-Emergency-Management

Up This Week

Thurs., Jan. 15: Adult Learning – Resume Workshop* (5-7 p.m.)

Fri., Jan. 16: Open 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sat., Jan. 17: Edith's Storytime Adventures (10 a.m.)

Mon., Jan. 19: Learning for Life - Emergency Management with the Perth County Paramedics* (6:30-8 p.m.)

Tues., Jan. 20: Fundraising Advisory Committee Meeting (6:30-8 p.m.)

Wed., Jan. 21: EarlyON Play & Read (9:30-10:30 a.m.), Mahjong (1-4 p.m.), Books & Brews*^ (7 p.m.)

Thurs., Jan. 22: Open 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

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HISTORIC ST. MARYS: The Arthur Meighen statue

MARY SMITH

Independent Columnist

On January 5, 2026, sculptor Marcel Braitstein died in Montreal in his 91st year. This internationally acclaimed artist had been born in Antwerp, Belgium, in 1935. His mother died soon after Germany invaded Belgium in 1940 and the little boy was sent to live with his grandparents. As life in Belgium became increasingly restrictive and dangerous for Jewish families, a compassionate pastor arranged for Marcel to live with a Christian family, and so he was a hidden child throughout the occupation. When Belgium was liberated, he was reunited with his grandparents but learned that his father had been sent to a concentration camp and had not survived. In 1951, Marcel and his grandparents immigrated to Montreal where he began his formal art studies. He was a graduate of the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Montreal and by 1969 was a professor at the Université de Québec in Montreal and later the director of the university's Fine Arts Department.

His reputation as a sculptor grew, his preferred media welded steel or bronze. His stylized pieces, often depicting skeletal birds and insects, or elongated human figures, were bought by private collectors for display in their homes and gardens, and acquired by public institutions, including the Art Gallery of Ontario. He exhibited throughout North America and Europe and was an Associate of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. He was also an author, writing poetry, science fiction and a memoir about his experiences as a child growing up in wartime Belgium. He was a remarkable man, and he had a connection with our small Ontario town, St. Marys.

In 1969, 34-year-old Marcel Braitstein received a \$40,000 commission from Public Works Canada to create a statue of the Right Honourable Arthur Meighen, Canada's ninth prime minister. It was intended to be placed on Parliament Hill with the statues of other significant political figures including John A. Macdonald, Wilfrid Laurier, and Meighen's immediate predecessor, Robert Borden. Instead, the Braitstein statue ended up in a small park on Church Street South in St. Marys. How did this happen?

With an upsurge in patriotism as Canada's centennial year approached, the government decided to commission the statues of four prime ministers who had been significant in the nation's growth. The statue of William Lyon Mackenzie was unveiled on Parliament Hill in 1967 and the statue of his successor, Louis St. Laurent, was placed on the grounds of the Supreme Court of Canada. An intended statue of R. B. Bennett, prime minister during the 1930s, was never completed but Marcel Braitstein's statue of Arthur Meighen was delivered to Public Works Canada in 1970.

The three-metre high, 270-kilogram, welded bronze statue portrays a young parliamentarian. Braitstein presented the figure of Meighen standing erect and delivering a speech. His head is back and his arms outstretched, making an emphatic gesture. The sculptor had been given free rein on the style of the statue and had prepared by studying photographs of Meighen in action. He described it as a 20th century statue of a 20th century prime minister and believed that, in its own right, it was a worthy example of contemporary sculpture. Presumably, government



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA, R. LORNE EEDY ARCHIVES, ST. MARYS MUSEUM)

Perth MP Harry Brightwell, Margaret (Mrs. J. S.) Lind, Mayor Gerry Teahen and the Honourable Stewart McInnes, Minister Public Works Canada, unveil Marcel Braitstein's statue of Arthur Meighen on September 14, 1987, in Lind Park, St. Marys.

officials had been aware of his body of work. If they had expected a representational statue like the others in place on Parliament Hill, why had Braitstein been awarded the commission?

When the statue was delivered to Ottawa, it had an extremely negative reception. It seemed that no one liked or defended Braitstein's work or attempted to understand it. Some people downright hated it. Former prime minister, John George Diefenbaker, a longtime admirer of Arthur Meighen, was especially upset. When he saw the statue, he described it as a combination of a daddy long-legs spider and Ichabod Crane. Meighen's widow, Isabel Jessie Cox Meighen, declared that she would not allow the statue to be erected in her lifetime. Arthur Meighen died in 1960, age 86. Mrs. Meighen survived him by 25 years, dying in 1985 at the age of 102.

The statue was put in a government underground storage facility and almost completely forgotten. But in 1986, the year following Mrs. Meighen's death, a Progressive Conservative government under Brian Mulroney was in power. The existence of the Meighen statue was recalled – a statue that had been paid for with taxpayers' money but never publicly shown! Dr. Harry Brightwell was MP for Perth at that time. He proposed that, if the statue was not wanted in Ottawa, perhaps it could find a home in the county where Meighen had been born. Mayor Gerry Teahen and Clerk Ken Storey both believed that this would be a great opportunity for St. Marys. When they learned

that the federal government would pay the cost of shipping and installing the statue, town council agreed almost unanimously. Only Councillor Frank Doyle argued that Mrs. Meighen's wishes should be respected and the "ugly and grotesque" statue remain in storage. He was outvoted.

Council appointed a committee to select a site for the statue and to determine a date for the unveiling. Local businessman Gerald Roe was committee head. He was a longtime Progressive Conservative with lines of communication to Brightwell's office and Ottawa. By January 1987, Councillor Ralph Betteridge, another committee member, reported that several potential sites had been explored. The grounds of either the old or new collegiate had been considered briefly but discarded because neither was municipally owned property. Finalists were: in front of the St. Marys Museum in Cadzow Park, the lawn between the town hall and the library, or, the eventual choice, Lind Park. That property had been acquired by John G. Lind during the 1930s. He had it beautifully landscaped and later deeded it to the town. Since Lind's death in 1947, it had been rather neglected. With the approval and assistance of the Lind family, the park was revitalized and made ready to receive the statue.

Originally, it was hoped that Prime Minister Mulroney could come to St. Marys to unveil and dedicate the statue himself. But it was impossible to find a date when he could visit, and finally the ceremony was set for 12 noon, Monday, September 14, 1987. While the committee consulted with Public Works Canada to plan an appropriate program, a base of St. Marys limestone was built for the statue. A week before the event, Marcel Braitstein came to inspect the site and to oversee the installation. He was pleased that the statue had finally found a home. At a press conference he told reporters: "I had no doubt that someday it would be put up somewhere, but I was convinced it would be long after I was dead and buried."

The day of the dedication ceremony was sunny and breezy. The St. Marys District Collegiate band, directed by Sharon Nightingale, entertained the crowd gathered at Lind Park while some of the local Boy Scout troop handed out programs. At 12 o'clock, the official party, including several members of the Meighen family, processed along Church Street from the town hall, escorted by a RCMP honour guard. When they had taken their places on a platform decorated with flags and bunting, the St. Marys Children's Choir, led by Eileen Baldwin, sang O Canada! There were speeches from Mayor Teahen, Harry Brightwell, and the Honourable Stewart McInnis, Minister of Public Works Canada. The statue was on its new base under a blue fabric covering. At last – the highlight of the afternoon – it was unveiled. The Reverend David Dalton, First Baptist Church, led a prayer of dedication. Marcel Braitstein's interpretation of Prime Minister Arthur Meighen was at last on public view.

In recent years, some of Canada's historic statues have been under attack, some have had to be removed from their places of prominence. The Arthur Meighen statue was controversial right from the beginning for reasons not directly related to Meighen's political history. How fortunate St. Marys is to have this landmark statue, significant as a memorial not only to a former prime minister but also to its gifted creator, Marcel Braitstein (1935-2026!)

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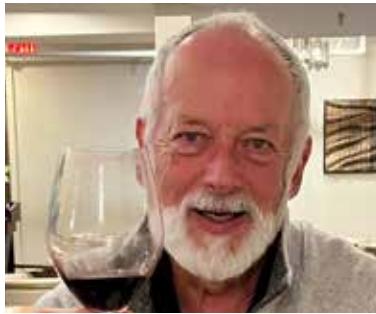
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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Is travel safe anymore? Where should we go?



PAUL KNOWLES
Independent Columnist

It's not too surprising that, from time to time, I get asked questions about travel by email or in person. Once upon a time, they were either, "What are your favourite destinations?" or "We're going to a specific destination; can you give us advice about that place?"

But lately, there has been an increasing number of questions on a third theme: "Is it safe to travel?"

Good question. I know, personally, there are places on my once-upon-a-time bucket list that are now moved to a "probably never" file. The world is changing rapidly and for travellers, not necessarily in a good way.

But the increasing number of people wondering about safe places to travel prompted me to do some research. The results were intriguing. One much-cited, reliable study is the Berkshire Hathaway Travel Protection (BHTP) annual survey that polls thousands of American travellers who have actually visited the countries they comment on and adds data from other sources like the Global Peace Index.

So, according to this survey,

here are the 15 safest countries for visitors, in order: The Netherlands, Australia, Austria, Iceland, Canada, New Zealand, United Arab Emirates, Switzerland, Japan, Ireland, Belgium, Portugal, France, United Kingdom and Denmark.

I find several things quite interesting here. The majority of these are in Europe. Canada is rated highly – number five among a total of 195 recognized countries worldwide.

And you may notice who is missing – the United States. In fact, this survey, which reflects the view of Americans, mind you – rates the U.S. as only the 26th safest country, with respondents citing challenges including violent crime, health access and risk of terrorism.

Another report, published by World Population Review, ranks the safest countries in North America (which includes about half of the Caribbean Islands). Here, Canada is ranked best among 14 countries, immediately followed by Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic. The U.S. is near the bottom, its safety ranking only better than Mexico and Haiti.

We need to acknowledge that while these reports are quite current, nothing can keep up with the challenges presented by our ever-changing global reality.

The BHTP report points out that "safety" is an evolving term. Where once it might simply have reflected the potential for being a victim of crime or terrorism, in today's world, it also includes how safe women, LGBTQIA+ travelers and people of colour feel. And those

factors were key components in identifying The Netherlands the safest destination.

There are sub-sections in the survey, and Canada comes off very well in almost all of them: second in safety from violent crime (after Japan); second in transportation safety; fifth in "health measures"; second, after The Netherlands, in how safe women, LGBTQIA+ travelers and people of colour feel.

It makes me, again, proud to be a Canadian, and glad that at least half of my travel plans take me to wonderful destinations inside our own borders.

The BHTP report also has a "Safe Travel Hall of Fame" – countries that have averaged a top-10 position since 2018. Eight countries are on the list and yes, Canada is one of them, along with Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand, Iceland, Norway, Ireland and Japan.

These surveys – and there are many more just like them – and the worrisome headlines of the day all do suggest that travellers need to keep themselves informed before they make plans.

I am not suggesting that you should make your travelling decisions based entirely on safety recommendations, though it would seem wise to be as aware as possible. I do still plan to travel, a lot – this page doesn't fill itself, you know – and in the next weeks and months I will be visiting the Dominican Republic, Italy, British Columbia and Newfoundland.

But quite honestly, I am also turning down opportunities to travel. To the Middle East, for example, and – full disclosure – to the United States. I have written dozens and dozens of



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

Austria moved way up on this year's Safe Countries list, to be rated as the third safest country for travellers. Shown, the main square in the city of Linz.

articles about U.S. destinations over the years. Some of my closest friends and colleagues in the travel industry represent U.S. destinations, and my heart aches for the professional challenges they are currently facing. But just now, no, I can't go for all the reasons you know about, including the fact that the country simply doesn't feel safe for visitors – and the statistics back this up.

However, many of you will disagree with this, and I have lots of friends who have made their annual trek to Florida, Arizona, the Carolinas or some other warmer U.S. destination. I wish them to be safe and well, but I won't be dropping in.

And since I have become so darned serious in this week's feature, let me dive even a lit-

tle deeper. As an old white guy, I feel the need to ask myself if I am comfortable travelling to destinations where I would probably be okay, but where my friends of colour, or my gay friends, or my single female friends would be in danger. Should I go where they cannot go? I think not.

All of these present-day realities have made my bucket list bucket pretty darned leaky. But it ain't empty, and hopefully, some of the holes will get patched up, maybe 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@gold-en.net.



Canada is rated fifth safest country (of 195 nations in the world); shown are Newfoundland lobster fishers.

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EAT AT OUR HOUSE: Soups on



LAUREN EEDY
Independent Columnist

January is traditionally soup month. Cozy up with the following hearty and healthy recipes that are sure to satisfy any cold-weather cravings.

Marry me chicken and gnocchi soup

Prep: 15 minutes; Total: 30 minutes; Serves: 6
 2 tbsp butter
 ½ tsp sun-dried tomato oil
 1 yellow onion, diced
 2 carrots, diced
 2 ribs celery, diced
 ½ tsp salt
 ½ tsp black pepper
 1 tsp Herbs de Provence
 1 tsp Italian seasoning
 ½ tsp red pepper flakes
 ½ cup sun-dried tomatoes in oil, chopped
 3 tbsp tomato paste

6 garlic cloves, minced
 1 tbsp chicken bouillon + 4 cups of water or 4 cups chicken broth
 1 cup heavy cream
 1 lb shelf-stable gnocchi
 3 cups cooked shredded chicken
 4 oz cream cheese, room temperature
 2 cups baby spinach, chopped
 2 tbsp fresh basil
 ½ cup freshly grated parmesan

Method:

-In a large pot, melt butter and sun-dried tomato oil over medium heat. Add onion, carrots and celery. Season with salt, pepper and seasonings. Cook 5 minutes.
 -Stir in sun-dried tomatoes. Make a well, add tomato paste and cook 3 minutes. Add garlic and cook 1 minute.
 -Stir in chicken bouillon, water and heavy cream. Bring to a boil.
 -Add gnocchi and chicken. Boil uncovered 3-4 minutes until gnocchi float.
 -Turn off heat. Stir in cream cheese until melted.
 -Stir in spinach, basil and parmesan. Season with salt and pepper if needed. Let sit for

5-10 minutes to thicken.
 -Soup can last 4 days in airtight container in refrigerator. Reheat slowly on the stovetop and add a splash of chicken broth to loosen up.

Baked feta soup

Prep: 15minutes; Total: 1 hour; Serves: 4
 2 pt. cherry or grape tomatoes
 3 shallots, roughly chopped
 3 cloves garlic, smashed
 ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
 Kosher salt
 Fresh black pepper
 Pinch of red pepper flakes, optional
 1 block feta, divided
 1 slice white bread, crusts removed, cut into half-inch cubes
 1 ½ cups low-sodium chicken broth
 Fresh dill for garnish

Method:

-Preheat oven to 400°F. In a medium baking dish, combine tomatoes, shallots, garlic and all but 2 tsp of oil. Season with salt, pepper and red pepper flakes if using. Toss to coat.
 -Place 2/3 of the feta onto the centre of the tomato mixture and drizzle with a bit of the oil in baking dish. Bake for 40-45 minutes or until tomatoes are



bursting and feta is golden.
 -Meanwhile on a small baking sheet, toss bread cubes, ¼ tsp salt and remaining olive oil. Set aside.
 -Using a blender or immersion blender, carefully blend tomato feta mixture with broth until smooth. Transfer to a me-

dium saucepan to cook for 10 minutes.
 -Transfer bread cubes to oven and bake until golden brown, tossing halfway through.
 -Serve garnished with croutons, remaining feta, dill and drizzle of olive oil.

FARM FOR SALE BY TENDER WEST PERTH

Property: Part Lot 27 Concession West Mitchell Road Fullarton as in R286049; Municipality of West Perth; County of Perth, being PIN 53225-0010 LT

Municipal Address: Perth Road 163, West Perth [no municipal address]

Total of 49.74 acres including with 27 workable acres (more or less), systemically tiled. This property has a main entrance, forested area and municipal drainage at the front and back.



- Tenders will be accepted until 12:00 p.m. on Friday, February 20, 2026.
- Highest or any tender not necessarily accepted.

•For tender forms contact:

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The Township of Perth South is renovating the municipal offices located at 3191 Road 122, St. Pauls

Qualified contractors are invited to submit bids for this project.

Tenders will be received until 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, February 12, 2026.

Tender documents and detailed working drawings can be obtained by contacting **Martin Feeney** at mfeeney@perthsouth.ca or by calling the Township office at **519-271-0619 Ext. 225.**

Contractors are encouraged to visit the site prior to submitting their tender. To schedule a site visit, please contact Martin Feeney.

Riddles

What animal can you always find at a baseball game?
A bat!

What do you call a sleeping bull?
A bulldozer!

Why are fish so smart?
Because they live in schools!

What do you get when you cross a snake and a pie?
A python à la mode!

What do cats eat for breakfast?
Mice Krispies!

Why did the duck get a time-out?
Because he was being a wise-quacker!

What do you call a pig that knows karate?
A pork chop!

Why did the orange stop rolling?
Because it ran out of juice!

What did one slice of bread say to the other before
the race?
You're toast!

What kind of beans never grow in a garden?
Jelly beans!

Why don't eggs tell jokes?
Because they might crack up!

Why was the banana so good at gymnastics?
Because it could do the splits!

- Word Search -



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The **Riddle Kid**
OF THE WEEK

What kind of lion
never roars?



A dandelion!

Avyn Megens (17 mo)

Hey Kids... Every Riddle Kid that appears in the paper gets a FREE MILKSHAKE at the Sunset Diner!

St. Marys Veterinary Clinic is pleased to be the sponsor of the

PET OF THE WEEK



NEW YEAR, NEW BEGINNINGS: GIVE YOUR PET THE HEALTHY START THEY DESERVE!

January offers a fresh start and a perfect opportunity to reset your pet's health. Embrace this new beginning by focusing on mobility, dental care, and winter skin issues. Small, proactive steps today can prevent larger problems later, ensuring your pet enjoys a healthy and happy year ahead!



OLIVIA

Our Pet of the Week is Olivia, an 11-year-old who began life as a barn cat. She now enjoys running the household, making demands, eating and napping. She is adored and loved by her owners Laurie and Charles.



Thorndale News

A section within the
St. Marys Independent

Required by law: carbon monoxide safety

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

Safety, both outside and inside the home, remains a top priority for families.

Carbon monoxide (CO), an invisible, odourless and potentially fatal gas, poses significant risks. Effective Jan. 1, 2026, the Province of Ontario is mandating carbon monoxide detectors to be installed on every storey of a residence and adjacent to all sleeping areas.

The updated requirements apply to all detached and semi-detached houses, townhouses and cottages that have any of the following: a fuel-burning appliance such as a furnace, water heater, or stove that uses natural gas, propane, oil, or wood; a fireplace; an attached garage; as well as air for heating that comes from a fuel-burning appliance not contained within the home (e.g., an appliance in a utility shed). In owner-occupied homes, the homeowner is responsible for complying with the CO alarm requirements in the Fire Code. In the case for rental homes or units, the landlord is responsible for complying with the CO alarm requirements in the Fire Code.

When purchasing a CO alarm, it



(NANCY ABRA PHOTO)

Owner Conner Darville poses with the carbon monoxide detectors at Thorndale Hardware.

should meet all Canadian performance standards as noted on the package. Some examples of recognized standards testing agencies and their logos include Ca-

nadian Standards Association (CSA), Underwriters Laboratories of Canada (ULC) and Intertek (ETL).

Under the Fire Code, carbon monoxide

alarms are permitted to be hardwired (connected directly to an electrical system), battery-operated (portable or permanently mounted), or plug-in devices to a standard electrical outlet. Many devices on the market are combined units that include both a smoke alarm and carbon monoxide alarm in one device. As always, follow the manufacturer's instructions for installation and placement of CO alarms.

"The Thames Centre Fire Department would stress that everyone should know the details about which alarms they have in their homes – be it, smoke, carbon monoxide, or a combination of both," said Thames Centre Fire Chief Nick Dorken. "They can vary in the alerts that they make. Some alerts are actual warnings, where some are only non-emergency notifications.

"It's important that residents know which sounds are which. For safety, the Thames Centre Fire Department encourages everyone to adhere to the changes in the Fire Code by ensuring that there are working smoke and now CO alarms on every floor of the home."

Any questions can be directed to Dorken at ndorken@thamescentre.on.ca or by calling 519-268-7334 ext. 720.

Keeping active and socially connected through the Active Living program in Thorndale

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

Not everyone can escape the cold, wintry weather and head for warmer temperatures, but the Active Living program at the Thorndale Lions Community Centre offers an array of activities to engage seniors with warm smiles, inspire their creativity and animate their physical health.

The Active Living program for seniors was expanded in Thorndale by the Municipality of Thames Centre when it was awarded a grant from the Province of Ontario last April. This program offers social, cultural learning and recreational activities for older adults to promote health, social connections and allow Thorndale area residents to be active.

There is something for everyone through this Active Living program during the week in Thorndale.

- Mondays: Strength and Tone class, yoga and the ever-popular pickleball game in the afternoon.
- Tuesdays: Pole walking, Kurling, shuffleboard and euchre.
- Wednesdays: Strength & Tone class and coffee hour for men and women who



(NANCY ABRA PHOTO)

A recent Ladies Coffee Hour, part of Thames Centre's Active Living program for seniors, at the Thorndale Lions Community Centre.

meet separately to enjoy lively conversation over a coffee and sweet treat.

- Thursdays: Crafts in the afternoon.
- Fridays: More physically active class-

es and Old Guys Poker in the afternoon.

Besides these different activities, there is also a movie afternoon and a couple of upcoming bus trips.

There is a small membership cost per person for the Active Living program.

"The purpose of the membership fee is to give folks a discount on all programs and bus trips, free newsletters (non-members pay \$1 for newsletters) and the opportunity to receive the Friday News eblast," said Karen Gress, who leads this program for Thames Centre.

"This email provides weekly updates about everything from programs, events, workshops and bus trips to information about new benefits for seniors from the government, things happening in the community and services (i.e. foot care, VON clinics etc.). There is no obligation to become a member, and new participants are welcome to try any of our classes and programs for free the first time before they decide if they would like to register for the program and/or take out a membership."

For more information on the Active Living program for seniors in Thames Centre, check out www.thamescentre.on.ca/parks-recreation-and-community/active-living-centre/ or contact Karen Gress at kgress@thamescentre.on.ca or 519-268-7334 ext. 708.

OBITUARY

Robertson



William Alan Robertson (Bill)
June 10, 1952 – January 3, 2026

On the evening of January 3rd, surrounded by loved ones at his home just outside of Stratford, William "Bill" Alan Robertson passed away peacefully.

Born on June 10, 1952, to Maida and William Robertson, Bill was the third of thirteen children. He was a devoted brother to Bob, Brenda, Jim, Brian, Pam, Teresa, Ken, Pauline, Virginia, Laura, Arlene, and Dean, and was predeceased by his sister Pam. Family was at the heart of Bill's life, and those bonds remained strong throughout the years.

Everybody's go-to guy, Bill spent over 30 years working as a mechanic at Canadian Fabricated Products. Known for his quick wit, easy humour, and willingness to help, he was a valued coworker and a loyal friend.

Bill loved working with his hands and being outdoors. A skilled mechanic, woodworker, gardener, hunter, and fisherman, he was always busy, whether restoring his 1940 Ford pickup from the frame up, tending the garden, or heading out on a fishing or hunting trip. He especially enjoyed the time spent with his grand dogs Stella and Marley.

Bill shared 43 wonderful years of marriage with his beloved wife Kathy. Together they built a life full of camping trips, Northern Ontario adventures, cherished memories, and a home filled with love for their family and many furry companions.

Beloved husband of Kathy Robertson (Heimpel), Bill will be deeply missed by his daughter Stacey (Tamie), son Kaloeb (Steph), his grandchildren Karly, Trent, and Kaleigh, and his great-grandson Phoenix. Through his siblings, extended family, neighbours, and many friends, Bill's memory will live on.

A celebration of life will be held on May 23rd, 2026 at the Downie Optimist Community Centre in St. Pauls.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Canadian Cancer Society or the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada.

IN MEMORIAM

DeLong

Aronld DeLong • Nov 15, 1932 - Jan 16, 2021



No matter how near Dear, or how far apart, remember you will always be in our hearts. It's been 5 long years, your memories are in our thoughts.

Our family now of 27, you would love those beautiful grandchildren. Now as well 14 great-grandchildren who you would love dearly. Keep us all close to you and watch over us all.

Your loving wife Margaret, Families of Fred and Rhonda, Darlene and Jim, Colleen and Stephen.

As I promised, keep smilin and I'll keep fiddlin

Sudoku

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Solutions on pg. 35

THANK YOU

Cookson

The family of Lesley Cookson would like to extend their deepest gratitude to all those who sent flowers, warm food, sympathy cards, and messages following her sudden passing.

This has been an incredibly difficult time, made much brighter by the overwhelming support shown by our community, close friends, and family.

We would also like to express our sincere thanks to Andrew Hodges of Hodges Funeral Home and Reverend Mark Wolfe as well as all the helpers of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church for their unwavering compassion, guidance, and support throughout this process.

Andrew L. Hodges

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

The Toddler gets what he wants

Last week, The Toddler attacked Venezuela. This week, Greenland was threatened. Next week, who knows, it could be us. Oh, he won't send the military, as even The Toddler know his fellow Americans would not agree with sending the military after those Canadians who winter in Happy Valley communities in Arizona or Florida, or lead fishing trips into northern Manitoba, or provide outstanding athletes for their hockey and basketball teams. But, The Toddler can – and will – attack us economically. For The Toddler thinks he would be a better leader for us, make us great again.

And this model for greatness is a USA national security strategy that harkens back two centuries to an era that produced constant conflict between nations and two global world wars, with millions of lives lost. The Toddler is an expert on war because, well, he managed to avoid serving in war. Bad feet, you know. But he can salute!

And dance, our Toddler can dance, although you'd probably be wise not imitating his moves as he might abduct you.

We should thank all the gods that The Toddler is a stable genius, for without this colossus of a man, where would we be? So far, he has stopped 5,473,968 wars. Pity about those folks in Gaza living in tents, tents that

are not waterproof. But the war has stopped – permanently stopped for those 400 Gazans and 10 Israelis who have lost their lives since the “war has stopped,” although that's not The Toddler's fault as he's been busy planning the Gaza Spa and Resort, marketed to displaced Palestinians, displaced Venezuelans, displaced Greenlanders and displaced Canadians.

Just in case I've not been clear, if you buy anything American, you hurt the woman who just lost her job in The Sault. If you holiday in the USA, you hurt the guy who cleans cabins at Alberta's Emerald Lake Resort. If you buy fruit and vegetables from the USA, you hurt the Canadian kid who needs a summer job for university. If you have anything to do with the United States of America, you are hurting your fellow Canadians and we Canadians deserve better.

The Toddler is a fool but we are bigger fools if we don't respond.

Oh, by the way, did I mention that The Toddler is also a felon, a convicted felon. Yikes!

Last night, I emailed Mark Carney asking for a display of courage, resolve and decency in light of the violation of international law committed by the Americans' attack in Venezuela. I have yet to receive a reply. I think Mr. Carney may be in China.

Deborah Wilson, St. Marys

Looking Back

AMY CUBBERLEY

Independent Columnist



Modern Library

25 years ago (2001)

On Monday, the St. Marys Public Library opened with its new computerized cataloguing system up and running. With the new system, everyone will need to get a new card. Finding books has been made much easier. There are now three patron terminals which allow you to look up books on a computer.

Murray Mitchell has been raising chickens as a hobby for 65 years and is well known for his fancy birds. He started showing fancy chickens about 52 years ago and has won numerous awards.

50 years ago (1976)

R.G. “Kelly” and Eileen Hearn report “the best time of our lives” when they went to Philadelphia for the Flyers vs. Red Army hockey game on this weekend. Son-in-law Terry Crisp of the Flyers had set up a real outstanding program for them, including excellent seats at the game.

What was probably the smoothest burglary in some years around town was discovered at the Royal Edward Hotel last Thursday morning. A 350-pound safe, containing \$1,175 in cash, was missing. There was no sign of break and entry with the theory being that the thief or thieves hid on the premises from the previous evening, loading the safe in the small hours of Thursday morning. Local police, with assistance from OPP identification officers, are investigating the burglary.

75 years ago (1951)

Now that Christmas is well over, the story can be told about the local farmer who, on going out to his fine young woodlot, caught several “city cousins” cutting down a few choice specimens to be used as Christmas trees. The irate landowner exacted a promise from the trespassers. They are to come around in the 1951 tree planting season and do a share of the work.

Gunner Clifford “Bud” Martin, RCHA, who enlisted several months ago in the Special Korean Force, is now back from Shilo, Manitoba, awaiting his discharge from the Army on medical grounds. Gunner Martin was riding in a truck which overturned at Shilo some months ago and received paralyzing injuries to his left hand. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Martin, South Ward.

100 years ago (1926)

G.P. Hurlbut of Preston, who has rented the So-Cosy shoe factory from the town, arrived in town on Wednesday to prepare for the start. He is whipping things into shape and expects to be in a position to commence production about the end of next week. Mr. Hurlbut has his son with him who will help with the business.

Frank Twist of the West Ward made a splendid showing with his Silver Spangled Hamburg Chickens at the Stratford Poultry Show this week. Out of ten entries, Mr. Twist secured five firsts, one second, and one third. In the special prizes, he won for the best old pair, the best young pair, and for the best collection.

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

WANTED TO BUY

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

WANTED

I will pay cash for antiques and collectibles. Coca Cola, Pepsi or any pop company. Brewery items - Kuntz, Huether Labatts, etc. Old radios and gramophones, wristwatches, pocket watches, old fruit jars - Beaver Star, Bee Hive etc. Any old oil cans and signs - Red Indian, Supertest etc. Any small furniture. If you are moving or cleaning out stuff please contact me at 519-570-6920.

FOR SALE

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

HOUSE CLEANING

House cleaning available. Call or text Jacquie at 519-274-5761

FREE

I am moving away and can't take my 5-year-old cat with me. She has all of her shots, fixed, and comes with all her toys. She is an indoor cat. Would like her to go to a good home. Please call 226-236-3216



**FOR HALL RENTALS
CALL 519.271.5343**

Jan 1 Alex Strathdee - St Pauls	\$50.00
Jan 2 Linda Coddington - St Marys	\$50.00
Jan 3 Greg Brown - Egmondville	\$200.00
Jan 4 Lyn Forman - St Marys	\$50.00
Jan 5 Elaine & David Ritchie - Stratford	\$50.00
Jan 6 Bill Helmuth - Stratford	\$50.00
Jan 7 Robin & Charlie Rossi - Stratford	\$50.00
Jan 8 Heather McKertcher - Stratford	\$50.00
Jan 9 Helen Zehr - Tavistock	\$50.00
Jan 10 Scott Langford - Sebringville	\$200.00

FRASER ASPHALT PAVING INC FREE QUOTES 519-271-5690
www.fraserpaving.ca

HAVE YOU BEEN AFFECTED BY SOMEONE ELSE'S DRINKING?

Al-Anon Family Groups could help YOU! Call for time and place
1-800-706-9833 or App Available

QUIZ ANSWERS

- Garnet
- The Boreal Forest
- Horse
- Nicolás Maduro
- The pancreas
- In the Air Tonight
- Arcade game
- James Stephen "Jimmy" Donaldson
- Immigrations & Customs Enforcement
- The opossum

SUDOKU ANSWERS

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



Branch 236, St. Marys

Proudly supporting veterans, families, and our community

WEEKLY AND MONTHLY EVENTS

- SATURDAY MEAT DRAWS**
Enjoy an evening of drinks and friends and try your lucky at quality meat prizes!
- FRIDAY HOT DOG LUNCH**
Drop in for a delicious hot dog at the Legion bar - affordable and tasty!
- TUESDAY BUDDY CHECK**
Free coffee, friendly conversation, and looking out for one another!
- BINGO FIRST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH**
Fun, prizes, and a great social afternoon!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

visit www.rcl236stmarys.ca



FOR YOUR NEXT GATHERING

HALL RENTALS

- 1600 sq. ft. banquet hall
- Capacity of 200 people
- Tables and chairs provided

FLEXIBLE SPACE

AFFORDABLE RATES

BAR HOURS:

- Monday CLOSED
- Tuesday 3-5 pm
- Wednesday 3-5 pm
- Thursday 3-5 pm
- Friday 12-5 pm
- Saturday 12-7 pm
- Sunday CLOSED

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THE WEEK AHEAD



SPONSORED BY: McDonald's St. Marys
752 Queen St. E., St. Marys
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PRC & Friendship Centre events - See the Stonetown Crier on Page 5

St. Marys Public Library events - see Page 26

Thorndale Active Living events - See Page 31

FRIDAY, JAN 16

- Royal Canadian Legion hot dog lunch at Noon
- A.N.A.F. meat draw - 6 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Stratford Warriors at William Allman Memorial Arena - 7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, JAN 17

- Conversation with the Community Outreach Worker at Snapping Turtle - 10 a.m. to Noon
- Royal Canadian Legion meat draw - 5 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Strathroy Rockets at West Middlesex Memorial Centre - 7:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, JAN 18

- Sunday Funday Darts at ANAF. Register at 12 noon, games start at 12:45 p.m.

MONDAY, JAN 19

- Perth County Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario annual general meeting. Arden Park Hotel - 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., RSVP Anna 226-880-0337

TUESDAY, JAN 20

- Royal Canadian Legion buddy check coffee - 10 a.m. to Noon
- St. Marys Legion cribbage - Starts 7 p.m. sharp

WEDNESDAY, JAN 21

- St. Marys Lincolns vs LaSalle Vipers at Vollmer Recreation Complex - 7 p.m.

THURSDAY, JAN 22

- A.N.A.F. sausage on a bun - 12-1:30 p.m.





STRATFORD FESTIVAL

2026 SEASON ON SALE NOW

**The Tempest | Guys and Dolls | Something Rotten! | Waiting for Godot
Death of a Salesman | The Hobbit | The Importance of Being Earnest
Saturday, Sunday, Monday | A Midsummer Night's Dream | Othello
The Tao of the World | The King James Bible Play**

APRIL – NOVEMBER | STRATFORDFESTIVAL.CA