

Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

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Several area municipal spots up for grabs with less than a month to file

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

There are plenty of seats up for grabs with just one month remaining for candidates to file nomination papers for the upcoming municipal elections.

A Western University professor who specializes in municipal politics says several factors can discourage people from running for local office, including what he describes as the “incumbency advantage.”

“Incumbents have a huge advantage at the polls, and it’s very substantial,” explained Martin Horak, Associate Professor and Director at the school’s Centre for Urban Policy and Local Governance. “In small places where we don’t have political parties, name recognition matters. A lot of people tend to vote for the folks who are familiar unless they are really unhappy with them,” he added.

Horak said the situation often results in the same people remaining in office for long periods and discourages others from putting their names forward. He added that attracting candidates is already difficult, while the relatively low pay for municipal politicians can create another barrier to running for office. “They typically come with small honorariums, people have other things to do, and these days, politicians face a lot of public criticism and even abuse, and people know that. It can be really hard to get folks to run for that reason as well.”

As of press time on Wednesday, Woodstock’s seven council seats will result in races as two candidates are running for the positions of mayor, deputy mayor/county councillor and city/county councillor roles, with one in each role to be elected. Seven hopefuls have put their names in for four councillor positions.

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(LEE GRIFFI PHOTO)

HOMELESSNESS CENTRE PUBLIC MEETING

Over 200 people attended the first public meeting following Oxford County’s decision to purchase Woodstock’s former YMCA as the site of a future homelessness centre. Story below.

No shortage of criticism and support after Oxford County’s homelessness centre public meeting

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

Over 200 people turned out on July 15 at Woodstock’s South Gate Centre to ask questions about the future Homelessness Support Centre (HSC) in Woodstock.

Planning for the former YMCA on Dundas Street is in its infancy, meaning there were many more questions than answers.

Residents could submit questions in advance or in writing during the meeting, but there was no live microphone for attendees. Vink Consulting facilitated the meeting at a cost of \$4,500.

“The purpose of this session is to share information about the county’s vision about the future (HSC), answer questions, hear concerns and considerations that may help inform the future development and operation,” said Jody Ball, the meeting’s lead facilitator. “

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Some attendees frustrated at format and lack of answers while most elected officials were pleased

CONTINUED FROM FRONT



(LEE GRIFFI PHOTO)

County staff made up the panel for the meeting as Rebecca Smith, the county's director of human services, answered most of the questions.

The question-and-answer session lasted more than an hour, with the first question focusing on community safety once the facility opens to people experiencing homelessness.

"We are planning to have 24/7 security on site. There will also be standards on site for the future operator to ensure safety is the number one priority, which is certainly the focus for us at the county," said Rebecca Smith, the county's director of human services. "We are also looking at some design-related things. Obviously, there will have to be some interior work we have to provide, which will be interior cameras, surveillance as well as controlled entryways," she added.

The new HSC is expected to open in 2027 and will replace the current three-shelter system. It will serve residents from across Oxford County who are unhoused or at risk of becoming homeless.

Health care supports and other community services are proposed for the site. The county is expected to eventually issue a request for proposals to select an operator for the facility.

Oxford County Warden Marcus Ryan said despite the lack of a plan for when the centre opens, he was pleased with how the event went.

"The questions were excellent. I totally agree that there are many, many unanswered questions because the HSC is a year away from opening, and our intention of the public meeting was to get

input from residents before we answer questions. Council does not want the services and site design finalized without public input."

Ryan added the format of the evening was the right choice, despite some participants' frustration.

"We offered opportunities for questions to be submitted before or during the meeting, either electronically or handwritten on paper. This gave the most options for people to submit whenever and however they were comfortable. In my experience, in public meetings many residents are reluctant to speak publicly, and wary of having a negative reaction to their comments, and so don't participate."

Woodstock City/County Councillor Deb Tait criticized the format.

"This was not a public meeting. It was a public orchestration designed to limit real public input and to insulate the elected councillors who supported this shelter location from any accountability to the public. Those that supported and voted for this location were not at the front-a staff person was made to answer all questions-not any of the elected people that supported it."

Smith did most of the talking during the meeting and was joined at the front of the room by Anthony Dolcetti, manager of housing and homelessness, Mike Amy, manager of facilities and fleet, and Jillaine Blair, manager of outpatient mental health and addictions at Woodstock Hospital.

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Tait added the site will have a huge impact on the public and the City of Woodstock.

“This location is going to cost millions of dollars to renovate and will have a direct impact on every single taxpayer in Oxford County. In Woodstock, the public will bear not only the cost of the building but also the additional expenses associated with its location on the city’s main street.”

She added the hardest hit will be the businesses and homes closest to the Y, all done with zero public input or public consultation.

“Anytime you are using taxpayers' money, it should be done in complete transparency. I was not aware of anything on this public meeting other than the date and time. I had no idea that the public could not get up and ask a question. From the people I spoke to, they were not aware either.”

Tracey Sherman has a son who has struggled with homelessness for several years, and thought the meeting was handled well.

“They made it easy for everyone to participate by offering QR codes to submit questions, but they also had paper copies and staff available to help anyone who wasn’t comfortable using technology.”

She added that staff answered questions for well over an hour and were knowledgeable and forthcoming about what they know and what is being planned.

“I know not everyone will leave with the same opinion, but I left feeling encouraged. One thing I’d remind people is that the proposed location is only a short distance from the current one. The service isn’t moving into a completely new area—it’s staying close to where it has already been while creating a better space for both the people using it and the surrounding community.”

Curtis Nicholson lives behind the former YMCA and said the meeting was a scripted corporate facade, specifically designed to not take any real questions from concerned neighbours.

“The QR code didn't work on my phone, and I can assume many others, so I couldn't have a voice even as the immediate abutting neighbour. When we tried to speak, it was drowned out and suppressed by the panel and others. The only thing left for us was to shout our questions, tell them they were deflecting, and do a massive collective walk out.”

He added anything regarding safety or how the perimeter of the building was avoided.

“I know why now in hindsight. They are designing the shelter with the intake process at the back of the building, which would expose my child and other children to drug addicted clients.

Woodstock Mayor Jerry Acchione attended the public meeting and was encouraged by the respectful dialogue and thoughtful questions from residents.

“The feedback shared will help county staff and our community partners continue refining the details of the Homelessness Support Centre and the future use of the property. While some residents felt the meeting format and communication could have been clearer, opportunities were provided for questions to be submitted before and during the meeting, both electronically and in writing.”

He added public engagement doesn’t end with one meeting, and he remains committed to ensuring residents, businesses, and community partners continue to have opportunities to ask questions, provide input, and help shape this important project as it moves forward.

“Public safety and transparency are paramount for everyone involved. Audience applause at the conclusion of the meeting reflected the appreciation many had for the opportunity to be heard.”

The meeting and more details on the HSC are available at <https://speakup.oxfordcounty.ca/homelessness-support>. Updates will also be provided on the same web page.



Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. What is extracted from the ore cassiterite?

2. How many weeks are there in a fortnight?

3. Who tight roped across the twin towers?

4. What animal is known as the king of the jungle?

5. What company was initially known as "Blue Ribbon Sports"?
6. What is the hottest planet in our solar system?

7. What was the original name of the Boston Red Sox?

8. What is the main ingredient in hummus?

9. Ash Wednesday marks the first day of what?

10. What is the name for the process of electing a Pope?

This week’s answers are found on pg. 27

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PizzaFest cancelled but community still shows up for local businesses

KYRAH SMITH

Echo Correspondent

"It is with great disappointment that, due to the current and worsening air quality, we have made the difficult decision to cancel PizzaFest scheduled for this evening."

That was the disappointing social media message delivered by Ingersoll's BIA as it was forced to cancel one of Ingersoll's favourite events on July 16.

"We were working very closely with town staff," said BIA President Dave Cripps.

What would have been the festival's fifth annual celebration was cancelled due to poor air quality and concerns for the community's well-being. The event was scheduled to run alongside Downtown Shopping Night from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m.

The Downtown Ingersoll BIA released an official statement on the day of the event.

"The health and safety of our volunteers, vendors, performers and everyone who planned to attend must always

come first," the statement read. "While this is not the outcome any of us hoped for, we believe it is the right decision given the current conditions."

Cripps added they waited as long as they could given the circumstances.

"We were working very closely with town and health unit staff, hoping the smoke from the wildfires in Northern Ontario would change direction. The board will get together this week and perhaps look at rescheduling for September, but that's up in the air."

The BIA also acknowledged the time, inventory and special promotions many downtown businesses had invested in preparing for the event and encouraged the community to support local businesses however they could. While PizzaFest itself was cancelled, Downtown Shopping Night continued as planned, with local shops remaining open late and offering special sales and promotions.

"Our pizza vendors have worked hard and invested significantly in preparing for tonight," the statement contin-

ued. "Please consider supporting one of our participating restaurants."

The campaign, dubbed "Save the Slice," encouraged residents to order from local pizzerias and support downtown businesses despite the cancellation.

The community answered that call.

"We've been overwhelmed by the support shown to our downtown businesses and pizza shops," said Cripps. "Seeing residents embrace our Save the Slice message and choose to shop local despite the circumstances is a powerful reminder of what makes Ingersoll special. On behalf of the Downtown Ingersoll BIA, thank you to everyone who stepped up to support our businesses when they needed it."

While this year's PizzaFest looked a little different from previous years, one thing remained the same: community spirit. Although the festival itself was cancelled, residents showed that supporting local businesses could still bring a community together.

With files from Lee Griffi

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Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

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ECHO CORRESPONDENT EARNS SIKH AWARD

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

At the 2nd Annual Sikh Games held in Woodstock on July 25, the Dashmesh Sports Club presented an Award of Honour and Recognition to Ron Yuzark for his outstanding contribution to promoting sports within the community. This special acknowledgement celebrated Yuzark's ongoing commitment to athletic development, youth engagement, and the positive visibility of local sporting events through his dedicated photojournalism and editorial leadership. His efforts continue to strengthen community spirit and inspire broader participation in sport across Oxford County.

Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

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UWO professor offers thoughts on small town politics

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

In Ingersoll, the current mayor is the only candidate for the seat, while two people have put their name forward for one deputy mayor position. Only four town residents are running for five council positions.

If the election were held today, there would be just one vote in South West Oxford where two candidates are running for a Ward 3 spot. No one has put their name forward to run in Ward 5.

All four Ward races in Norwich currently have single candidates registered, while two people have put their names forward to sit in the mayor's seat.

Horak said incumbents in many smaller municipalities across Ontario and Quebec are routinely re-elected and are often acclaimed because no one runs against them. He added that anyone hoping to unseat an incumbent may need to get their chequebook out.

"It doesn't matter if (incumbents) spend money or not. They have the same likelihood of winning again. For non-incumbents, the spending can make a difference. It doesn't necessarily overcome the incumbency advantage, but to win, non-incumbents do have to spend money and mobilize volunteers, whereas those in office can usually coast into re-election."

Nearly one in every 11 municipal candidates in Ontario was acclaimed in the 2022 election. About 8.7 per cent of all candidates won their seats without opposition, up from 7.2 per cent in 2018, according to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

32 of Ontario's 444 municipalities had entire councils acclaimed, meaning no municipal election was required in those communities. They all had populations under 10,000 and 22 were located in Northern Ontario.

Closer to home, approximately 25 per cent or 13 of the 51 races for all spots across Oxford County resulted in acclamations four years ago. Of the seven positions on South



(UWO PHOTO)

UWO professor Martin Horak said more municipal politicians are being acclaimed during elections as fewer people across the province put their name on ballots.

West Oxford Township, just one was decided by a vote.

Horak said there are some solutions to get more people on the ballot for municipal elections

"You can increase remuneration, but people are often reluctant to go down that road. I chaired the Council Compensation Task Force here in London last year, and we recommended a significant salary increase, partly to attract really good quality people to run, but the public didn't like it."

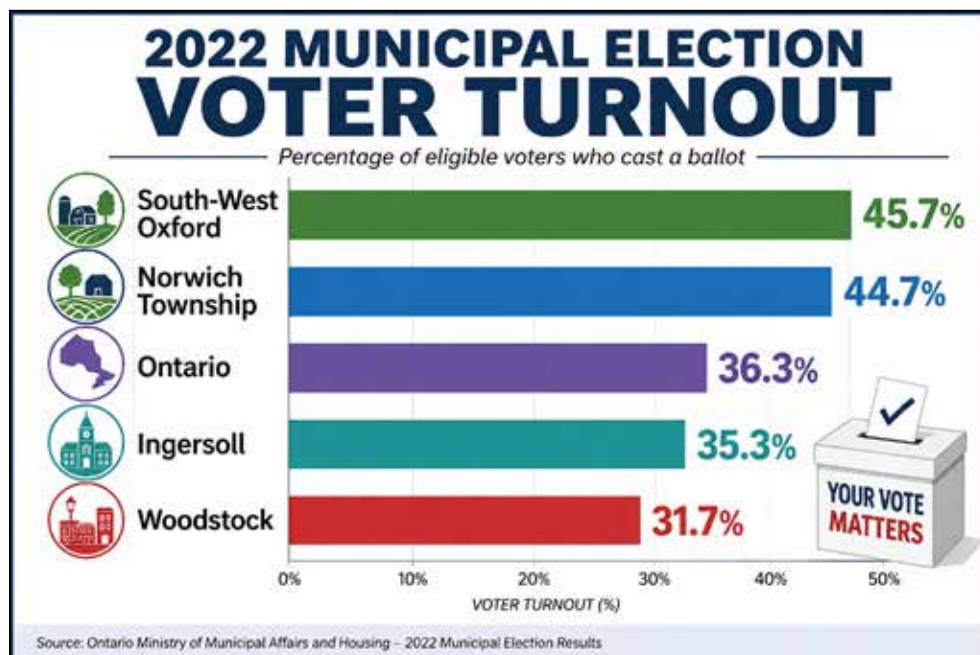
He added more people tend to run in places where good local media coverage exists and people actually know what's happening at the municipal government level. The same can be said in municipalities where a scandal has occurred.

"People then sense an opportunity when there is a lot of attention being paid to a race. It brings out not only candidates, but more voters."

Horak noted there are some countries which have made voting mandatory, including Australia.

Voter turnout during the 2022 election was much higher locally than the provincial average, which sat at 32.9 per cent.

The nomination period ends on Aug. 21 at 2 p.m.



(CONTRIBUTED IMAGE)

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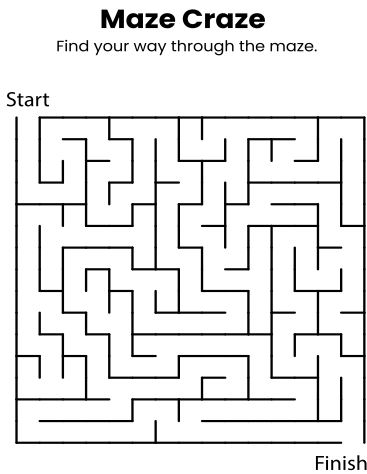
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(KYRAH SMITH PHOTOS)

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On July 23, the Ingersoll Cheese and Agricultural Museum co-hosted a brand-new event, Curds, Cards & Calling Spirits, with Woodstock's own Moonlake Ritual Co. The nearly sold-out evening welcomed guests to the Sherbrooke Barn for an exploration of Spiritualism in Oxford County and the mysteries of pendulum divination. Attendees enjoyed charcuterie and refreshments while learning about different types of pendulums, how to use them, and creating their own pendulum and board to take home.

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Comments regarding the proposed by-law must be submitted to the Town of Ingersoll Clerk's Department no later than **September 08, 2026**.

This by-law is subject to approval of the Registrar, Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, 2002.

For assistance, please contact the Bereavement Authority of Ontario's Licensing department at (647) 483-2645 or 1-844-493-6356 or licensing@thebao.ca.



To review the full cemetery by-law, please scan the QR code or visit:
ingersoll.ca/town-hall/ingersoll-rural-cemetery



POLICE BRIEFS

Ontario Provincial Police briefs

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

Collision claims life of young Woodstock man

Police are investigating the circumstances surrounding a fatal collision in Beachville.

On Saturday, July 25 at approximately 9:47 a.m., members of the Oxford OPP, Oxford County Paramedic Services, and South-West Oxford Fire and Emergency Services responded to a two-vehicle collision involving a sedan and a sport utility vehicle (SUV) on Beachville Road.

The driver of the sedan, a 21-year-old Woodstock resident, was pronounced deceased at the scene. The driver of the SUV and two passengers were transported to hospital with minor injuries.

The road was closed between East Hill Line and George Street for several hours while the West Region OPP Traffic Incident Management Enforcement Team assisted with the investigation. Police are asking anyone who may have witnessed the collision, or who may have dash cam footage or information that could assist, to contact the Oxford OPP at 1-888-310-1122.

Collision alerts lead to a pair of impaired driving charges in Zorra

Members of the Oxford OPP responded to two collisions reported through mobile alert systems last weekend, both resulting in charges for the drivers.

Police responded to a mobile alert of a crash on Road 74 in Zorra Township. A 35-year-old Embro man was charged with impaired driving and dangerous operation of a motor vehicle. He has been released from custody and is scheduled to appear in a Woodstock courtroom on Sept. 8.

Later that morning, police responded to another mobile alert of a crash on Mount Elgin Road in South-West Oxford Township. A 47-year-old Tillsonburg resident was charged with impaired driving. He has been released from custody and is scheduled to appear in court, also on September 8.

Oxford OPP would like to remind the public that no amount of alcohol is safe to consume and drive.

An automatic crash notification system, or automatic collision notification system, uses information such as sudden deceleration, airbag deployment, impact sensors and GPS location to recognize a possible

collision and send an alert to police.

Examples include OnStar Automatic Crash Response in equipped GM vehicles and Apple's Crash Detection, which can use an iPhone or Apple Watch to contact emergency services after detecting a severe crash.

Search warrant leads to recovery of stolen Lego in Ingersoll

Members of the Oxford Community Street Crime Unit, along with members of the Oxford detachment of the OPP, recently recovered 191 boxes of Lego.

Police received a report of a theft from a business on Carnegie Street in Ingersoll on the morning of July 21 after toys being stored there for donation were stolen overnight.

The OPP executed a search warrant on the morning of July 23 at a residence on Hollingshead Road in Ingersoll. Police arrested a 44-year-old man and charged him with possession of property obtained by crime under \$5,000.

The accused has been released from custody and will appear before the Ontario Court of Justice in Woodstock on Aug. 18.



(OXFORD OPP PHOTO)

A London truck driver faces two charges after crashing his trailer into a Zorra County rail bridge**Driver charged after truck collides with train bridge**

A transport truck and trailer sustained significant damage after colliding with a train bridge in Oxford County on Monday, July 27.

Police say the collision occurred at approximately 1:15 p.m. when a transport truck drove under a train bridge on the 17th Line in Zorra Township. Although the bridge had signage indicating height limitations, the truck drove under it. The bridge was closed for several hours to allow members from CN and MTO to attend the scene to ensure there was no structural damage. The road and bridge reopened.

A 38-year-old resident of London was charged with careless driving and disobeying a sign.

Multiple arrests and drug seizures made by Woodstock Police

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

A downtown drug blitz by members of the Woodstock Police Service (WPS) has led to five arrests and the confiscation of illicit drugs.

Police conducted a series of enforcement initiatives resulting in multiple arrests, charges and drug seizures following numerous complaints from the public.

Members of the Street Crimes Unit arrested two males in the area of Dundas and Marlboro Streets on July 2.

"Approximately 1.8 grams of suspected crack cocaine and 12.6 grams of suspected fentanyl were seized, representing an estimated 126 potentially lethal doses. Over \$1,000 in Canadian currency and a digital scale were also taken," said a police press release.

A 37-year-old male has been charged with Trafficking a Schedule I substance (cocaine), two counts of possession of a Schedule I substance for the purpose of trafficking (Cocaine and fentanyl), possession of property obtained by crime, and two counts of failure to comply with a probation order.

A 52-year-old male has also been charged with Possession of a Schedule I substance (cocaine).

The next bust came on July 10 when police conducted a targeted enforcement initiative in response to ongoing complaints of open-air drug use.

Members of the Street Crimes Unit, with assistance from Uniform Patrol, arrested several people for alleged possession of Schedule I substances. Additional Criminal Code charges were laid, and Provincial Offence Notices were issued.

Items associated with the consumption of controlled substances, including glass pipes and foil, were also seized.

On July 12, uniform patrol officers were conducting checks at businesses in the downtown core when they came upon a group of people loitering on private property.

One male, who was known to police, was arrested on an outstanding warrant held by another police service. A search resulted in the location of approximately 8.9 grams of suspected fentanyl, representing an estimated 89 potentially lethal doses.

A 33-year-old male has been charged with possession of a Schedule I substance for the purpose of trafficking (fentanyl) and failure to comply with a probation order.

A citizen turned over property they had located in the downtown core on the following day. It included approximately 7.6 grams of suspected fentanyl, representing an estimated 76 potentially lethal doses, as well as a folding knife.

"The Woodstock Police Service thanks the members of the public who continue to report suspicious activity. We remain committed to working with residents,

businesses and community partners to promote a safe and welcoming downtown," added the release.

The release said police will continue to conduct targeted enforcement initiatives and visible patrols to address community concerns regarding open-air drug use and other unlawful activity in the downtown core.

"We hear the concerns being raised by members of the public, and we are listening. Everyone deserves to feel safe in our community," explained Deputy Chief Jamie Taylor. "That is why we have assigned additional resources to address open drug use and the related behaviours affecting public safety."

He added substance use disorder is a serious health issue but added the possession of illicit drugs remains a criminal offence.

"Our officers will continue to assess each situation individually and use their discretion while enforcing the law. We also recognize that policing alone will not solve addiction. We continue to work with public health agencies and community partners to connect individuals with appropriate supports while addressing open drug use and other behaviours that negatively affect residents, businesses and public spaces."

Taylor said possession of small amounts of illicit drugs may sometimes be perceived as a lower-priority issue that does not affect the broader community.

"However, the personal use of an un-

predictable and increasingly toxic drug supply can have serious consequences for individual health, public safety and emergency-service resources."

Last month, Southwestern Public Health issued a drug alert regarding the possible presence of xylazine, fentanyl and benzodiazepines in the local crystal methamphetamine and cocaine supply. This contamination means that individuals may not know what substances they are consuming or what the outcome may be.

"The risks were evident overnight. Within approximately 40 minutes - from 11:30 p.m. on July 22 to 12:10 a.m. on July 23 - police, paramedics and firefighters responded to at least five suspected overdoses. Some of those incidents required the administration of naloxone, and each one had the potential to result in a fatality," he added.

Taylor said the fentanyl and other drug-related items recently seized by police are a reminder of the serious dangers associated with the illicit drug supply.

"Our priority is to protect the community by enforcing the law, working collaboratively with our partners and taking steps to prevent further harm and tragedy. We also want to remind individuals affected by substance use and addiction that help is available. The Oxford County Community Health Centre offers a Rapid Access Addiction Medicine (RAAM) Clinic, which provides timely access to addiction treatment, support and referrals."

Mazur seeking council seat in the Friendly City

LEE GRIFFI
Editor

After finishing eighth in the 2022 election for a councillor seat in Woodstock's, Wes Mazur has decided to run again.

Mazur moved to Woodstock in 2013 and has built his life, career and family with his wife, Sarah.

"Many residents know me as 'Cheesemonger Wes' from Cheesy Cow Company in downtown Woodstock. I am also the founder of Mazur Safety Inc., a workplace health and safety consulting firm that has supported employers and workers across Ontario. My career has focused on occupational health and safety, leadership, education and public policy. Most recently, I served as a policy advisor with Ontario's Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development."

Mazur's community involvement has included founding Curl for Kids, an annual fundraiser supporting local youth initiatives; serving as a former co-chair of the Downtown Woodstock BIA; and serv-

ing with the Woodstock Accessibility Advisory Committee. I currently sit on Theatre Woodstock's board of directors. I have also supported WDDS Runway of Stars, Coldest Night of the Year and other local fundraising efforts. Outside work, he enjoys curling, cooking, community events and spending time with my family.

"Woodstock has given my family and me so much, and I want to give back by helping guide our city through an important period of growth. Growth brings opportunity, but only if it is managed responsibly. Our roads, infrastructure, emergency services, parks, recreation and community programs must keep pace without losing sight of affordability," he explained.

Mazur said residents deserve a council that listens, communicates openly, makes decisions transparently and respects every tax dollar.

"Even when people disagree, council should be able to work collaboratively toward practical solutions. I am not running to change what makes Wood-

stock special. I am running to build upon those strengths and prepare our city for the opportunities and challenges ahead."

He added responsible growth and affordability are fundamental and residents deserve confidence that infrastructure and services will keep pace as Woodstock grows.

"They also deserve value for every dollar they contribute. Council must carefully review spending, establish priorities and distinguish between what would be nice to have and what our community genuinely needs."

Mazur explained that approach should guide decisions about the proposed North Woodstock Recreation Facility.

"I support moving the project forward if it reflects demonstrated community needs and is financially sustainable. We should pursue provincial and federal funding, partnerships, sponsorships and naming rights, consider phased construction and be transparent about long-term operating costs."

He added community safety and well-being are



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)
Wes Mazur.

also issues top of mind for him.

"Homelessness, addiction and mental-health challenges have no simple solution. We must support practical, compassionate and evidence-informed responses while keeping neighbourhoods, businesses and public spaces safe and welcoming."

He added affordability also appears in everyday decisions, and while he supports waste diversion, the increase in garbage-bag tags has placed additional pressure on families.

"Oxford County should

explore including a limited number of bags at no additional cost while retaining user-pay fees for additional garbage. We must also support local businesses, invest in young people and ensure future capital-project decisions are transparent, evidence-based and shaped by meaningful public consultation."

Mazur said his experience crosses several worlds, including standing behind a small-business counter, advising employers and workers, teaching and training people, contributing to provincial policy and working alongside local volunteers and community organizations.

"Put simply, I understand both the front counter and the policy table."

He added his safety background taught me to identify risks, examine evidence and develop practical plans before problems become crises.

"Business ownership taught me that budgets require choices and every expenditure must provide value. Public service taught me how to navigate government, understand different perspectives and

turn ideas into workable policy."

Mazur said as a small-business owner, public servant, educator, volunteer, husband and father, he brings a balanced perspective.

"I will come prepared, ask thoughtful questions, listen to residents and work respectfully with anyone committed to strengthening Woodstock."

He added the experience of running in 2022 made him a better candidate as he has continued to learn, listen and serve the community.

"This campaign is not about adding a title to my résumé. It is about putting my experience to work for the community my family calls home. I believe Woodstock's best days are ahead of us. By planning responsibly, investing wisely and working together, we can keep Woodstock welcoming, safe, affordable and full of opportunity."

Mazur said his commitment is practical leadership, responsible growth and a stronger Woodstock—for today and for future generations.

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Erb running for deputy mayor spot in Woodstock

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

Jarod Erb has lived in Woodstock for over 50 years and has been self-employed since he was 20 years old, and now he has decided it's time to run for the city's deputy mayor.

He owns Erb Signs, a local sign company that he has operated for the past 25 years.

"I raised my children here, and all of my family still lives in Woodstock. This city has always been home, and I care deeply about its future."

Outside of work, you'll usually find him at his hobby farm, Odd Duck Ranch, where he's always building or improving something.

"It's already a place that people come to enjoy, but my goal is to officially open it to the public within the next two years, a place where families can come, relax, and let their kids just be kids."

Erb said he joined Toastmasters because while he's very comfortable talking one-on-one or in small groups, speaking in front of larger audiences has always been a huge challenge for him.

"Instead of avoiding it, I decided to work on it. I enjoy listening to people,

asking questions, and learning from different perspectives."

He explained he is running because he believes city hall works best when people feel heard.

"I don't think any one person has all the answers. My job isn't to tell Woodstock what it needs; it's to listen, ask questions, learn, and help represent what the community wants. I also believe too many people in Woodstock have stopped sharing their opinions because they don't feel they'll make a difference. I think that's unfortunate, because it's the residents' voices that matter most."

Erb added city hall needs better ways for people to have their say, as not everyone can attend a weekday meeting or feels comfortable standing up in front of a crowd.

"If we genuinely want public input, we need to make it easier for people to participate. I want to help build a City Hall that is more transparent, more accountable, and more connected to the people it serves."

Rebuilding trust between the city and the people of Woodstock is one of our biggest challenges, according to Erb, but there are many more issues facing residents.



Jarod Erb.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

"Affordability, public safety, homelessness, and managing growth are all important, but so is making sure residents understand what's happening at city hall and feel they have a meaningful voice before major decisions are made. Good communication and meaningful public involvement lead to better decisions."

Erb added he will listen before making a decision.

"I'll ask questions before I make up my mind. I'll judge ideas on whether they make sense, not on who suggested them. My job isn't to push my own agenda. It's to represent the people of Woodstock and make decisions based on what the community wants. If I'm elected, I'll work hard, I'll keep learning, and I'll never forget who I work for."

He said whether someone agrees with him or not, he wants them to know they'll always be treated with respect.

"I don't have political experience, and I actually see that as one of my strengths. I'm not walking into City Hall assuming that because something has always been done a certain way, it must be the best way. I want to understand why. If there's a good reason, great. If there's a better way, we should be willing to consider it."

Erb added good ideas can come from anywhere, and he's committed to listening to the people in our community and taking their input seriously.

"This campaign has never been about me having all the answers. It's about making sure the people of Woodstock have a stronger voice in the decisions that affect their lives."

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Cripps turning focus on education to Ingersoll Town Council

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

Dave Cripps is well known as being a Thames Valley District School Board trustee, but he is hoping to land a spot as an Ingersoll councillor.

"I have proudly called Ingersoll home for nearly 30 years. Professionally, I work as a consulting director within the insurance industry where I lead teams responsible for delivering large-scale technology and business transformation initiatives."

He added he's learned the importance of listening, bringing people together, making informed decisions, and ensuring that both strategy and projects deliver real value for the people they serve.

"Outside of my career, I am a husband, father, local business owner, community volunteer, and someone who genuinely enjoys being involved in the life of our town. Through my family's event business, my work with the Downtown Ingersoll BIA, Library Board, Community Futures and as one of Oxford County's public school board trustees, I've had the opportunity to work alongside local businesses, volunteers, community organizations, and families who care deeply about Ingersoll's future," he added.

Whether I'm supporting community events, spending time with family, or simply enjoying our parks and downtown, I value the sense of community that makes

Ingersoll such a great place to live.

Cripps said he made the decision to run because he believes Ingersoll has tremendous potential and wants to help ensure we continue growing in a thoughtful, responsible way.

"My campaign isn't about politics, it's about our community. Over the coming months, I want to hear from as many residents as possible about what matters most to them. My role, if elected, would be to listen, ask good questions, evaluate information carefully, and work collaboratively with fellow members of council, partners and staff to make decisions that serve the long-term interests of our community."

He said municipal government is responsible for delivering the services people rely on every day, from roads and infrastructure to recreation, planning, and public spaces.

"Those decisions deserve careful governance, transparency, and respect for every taxpayer dollar."

Like many growing communities, Ingersoll is balancing growth with affordability. Cripps explained residents expect reliable infrastructure, well-maintained roads, quality recreational facilities, strong community services, and responsible financial management.

"As our community continues to grow, we need to ensure those services grow with it while keeping taxes sustainable.

Supporting local businesses is equally important. A vibrant downtown and a strong local economy create jobs, attract investment, and contribute to the quality of life that makes people proud to call Ingersoll home."

Cripps added he believes council must continue to build trust through openness, transparency, collaboration respectful decision-making.

"Residents deserve to understand not only what decisions are being made, but why they're being made."

When it comes to why residents should vote for him, Cripps he brings a combination of professional leadership experience, community involvement, and a collaborative approach to problem-solving.

"Throughout my career I've developed strategic objectives, managed complex projects, balanced competing priorities, worked with diverse groups, and been accountable for delivering results. Those skills translate well to municipal governance."

More importantly, he added, he doesn't believe elected officials should have all the answers before they begin.

"I believe they should have the willingness to listen, learn, ask thoughtful questions, and make informed decisions after hearing from the community. And do so with empathy! My commitment is to represent everyone with professionalism, integrity, and respect, regardless of whether



Dave Cripps.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

we always agree. I want residents to know they have a potential councillor who is approachable, accessible, and genuinely interested in hearing their perspectives."

Cripps said he'll be knocking on doors, attending community events, and having conversations throughout Ingersoll.

"I hope residents will introduce themselves, share their ideas, and tell me what they believe our priorities should be. Building a stronger community starts with listening. I look forward to earning the opportunity to serve the residents of Ingersoll and to help build our town's next chapter together."

Woodstock's Museum Square chalked with butterflies to remember Tori Stafford

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

The Woodstock community came together on July 15 to remember Tori Stafford on what would have been her 26th birthday.

Woodstock's Museum Square was covered with chalk art of butterflies, flowers, and messages to Tori Stafford on what would have been her 26th birthday.

Tori's father Rodney said the outpouring of love after 17 years means a lot.

"This many years later, to know the support is still there for Victoria is amazing. It really touches the heart and shows no matter how traumatic something is, we can always turn it into a positive."

Stafford said while it's hard to say what she would be doing today if she were still with us, he has an idea.

"She may have gone into a field to do with animals. We all have the animal lover in my family, and for some reason it's just something I could see her doing."

He added being in public and remembering his daughter isn't easy, but he doesn't let his emotions get the best of him as opposed to the day Tori was abducted.

"April 8 brings different meaning, whereas today is her birthday and we are celebrating it.

This has nothing to do with the two scum involved. We move her birthday to a positive, and we are slowly shifting the other day as well."

Stafford said he plans to continue celebrating his daughter by going to the cemetery and keeping her memory alive. He added while he can't take credit for the idea, he's thankful local artist Sean Hammond did.

"He had painted a mural in front of a church on Riddell, and he asked for suggestions for one of his upcoming projects, and my wife reached out to him and asked him if he would be interested in doing something like a butterfly for Tori on her birthday."



(LEE GRIFFI PHOTO)

Rodney Stafford looks at the giant butterfly chalk-drawn by Woodstock artist Sean Hammond. Many other residents came out to remember Tori Stafford on what would have been her 26th birthday.

Hammond, a Woodstock resident for 18 years, said he didn't hesitate to say yes to the idea.

"I said I would do a big public butterfly and then have the community come down and draw smaller ones. Rodney's wife loved the idea, and it all started with her message."

He said well over 100 people showed up to

draw and support Stafford, someone he met for the first time.

"I said maybe we should have a coffee first so when we see each other we don't break down crying. I've made a new friend out of this, and it just feels good. I was lucky enough to get the message and have the opportunity to be involved in this."

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Chambers running for a spot on Ingersoll council

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

Matthew Chambers has been a lifelong resident of the town and has worked for the Thames Valley District School Board as a custodian for the past five years.

"I come from a working-class family. My father is a long-distance truck driver, and my mother has worked a variety of jobs. I have been involved in many community organizations in Ingersoll and Oxford County, including S.T.I.C.H. Supper Club, where I have been a regular volunteer since 2018 and currently sit on the board of directors."

He also serves as vice-president of The Zorra Caledonian Society, the organizers of the Embro Highland Games, which are the oldest highland games in Ontario.

"I also teach karate in Thamesford

twice weekly. Recently, I have joined Ingersoll's new axe-throwing league and look forward to participating as the league takes off."

Chambers said he is ready to work hard for the betterment of Ingersoll.

"I chose to put my name forward for the position of town councillor as I know the municipal government can have a large impact on the day-to-day lives of people. I would like to make a positive impact in my home community."

He said some of the biggest concerns for the town and its constituents are affordability, housing, and future planning.

"Ingersoll, like many other communities, is facing an affordability crisis. I believe the town should have a greater diversification of housing. In recent years, we have started to build in response to our growing population. I believe a greater diversification, including apart-

ments and townhouses, would potentially be beneficial to meet the needs of our growing population."

He added forward-thinking and considering how Ingersoll would be affected in five or even 10 years will help to build a strong, lasting community.

"I believe I bring a generational point of view to the table for Ingersoll as well as a blue-collar background."

Chambers explained Ingersoll's population and its needs are growing, requiring policies that reflect that fact. We need to think about the moment but also look to the future.

"We also need to think in future terms, being prepared to handle current needs, but also needs that are five and 10 years down the road as well. I cannot wait to hear from and work alongside my fellow residents to build and shape the future of our town."



Matthew Chambers. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Household food insecurity rising across Southwestern Ontario

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

Five public health units have taken the rare step of issuing a joint news release calling for action on the growing issue of food insecurity.

Units across the region are concerned about the growing number of households struggling to afford basic needs, including food. In 2024, one in four families in Southwestern Ontario experienced household food insecurity, meaning they lacked reliable access to enough food because of financial challenges. Rising housing and living costs are also forcing many to make difficult choices between paying rent and buying groceries.

Kendall Chambers is a Registered Dietitian at SWPH and said more households are struggling with the issue, which led to coming together to raise awareness.

"We want to raise awareness of the

magnitude of the problem and also on the evidence on what's really driving household food insecurity."

She explained household food insecurity is linked to poorer physical and mental health, higher risk of chronic disease, and increased pressure on the healthcare system. Among children and youth, it impacts concentration, memory, mood, and motor skills, making it harder to succeed in school.

"Many households are relying on emergency food programs or facing impossible trade-offs, such as skipping meals. While many low- and modest-income households face challenges after covering housing and other essential costs, individuals on social assistance programs like Ontario Works often cannot afford both rent and food, even with careful spending."

Chambers added the health units want the public to have a better understanding of household food insecurity, including

erasing the misconception that it comes from making bad choices or poor budgeting.

"When we look at the evidence, it's really about income. Hopefully raising that awareness in the community can inform conversations amongst the general public but also with decision-makers and organizations that can provide intervention."

The health unit's role is to monitor and assess population health by collecting data and communicating it to its partners, something Chambers said can help inform decision-making at the municipal government level.

"Community partners can also take that data and use it in their own interventions of what they are looking at doing with their programs and services."

Kendall and her team also collect data on the Nutritious Food Basket, a survey on the cost of food which is compared to Ontario income information along with rent costs.

"We put that into a table to show how different households may be able to afford or have more difficulty affording basic needs, including food and housing, transportation and child care. We do that every year and share it with our community partners."

The health unit is encouraging residents to learn how income affects access to food, discuss income-based solutions with local elected officials, and support community organizations while recognizing that food programs alone cannot

address food insecurity.

Kendall added they are also available to support any business or organization in implementing a living wage.

"It can also be providing local tax clinics and different programs and services that can reduce the cost of living. We also may want to talk about having system navigators who can provide some of that support for community members."

The five health units are calling for higher social assistance rates, including Ontario Works, improved income supports for low- and modest-income households, and policies to reduce housing costs and other essential living expenses.

In 2024, data showed a single adult receiving Ontario Works in Southwestern Ontario cannot afford both food and rent, facing a monthly deficit ranging from \$301 to \$859. Many other households with low and modest incomes face similar challenges, with little or no income remaining after covering rent and other essential expenses such as transportation, utilities, childcare, clothing, and medications.

"More people across our region are being forced to make difficult choices about which basic needs they can afford - and too often, food is one of the first things cut," said SWPH Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Ninh Tran. "That has real consequences for physical and mental health. Addressing household food insecurity means ensuring people have enough income to meet their basic needs."

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Celebrate 80 years of Theatre Woodstock with a Night in the Spotlight

EMILY STEWART

Echo Correspondent

Theatre Woodstock will celebrate its 80-year legacy of Oxford County community theatre ahead of the upcoming season.

Theatre Woodstock, previously known as Woodstock Little Theatre, will host A Night in the Spotlight to celebrate its 80th anniversary on Sept. 26 at the South Gate Centre, starting with cocktail hour at 6 p.m. The evening will also feature a buffet dinner, cash bar, and performances from the upcoming *Dracula: A Chamber Musical*, and from the quartet of the widely successful 2024 *Cinderella* musical production featuring Kennedy Wilson, Stephanie MacDonald, Becky Tanton, and Maegan Hansen. Volunteers will also create a display featuring items outlining Theatre Woodstock's history.

Liz Wismer-Van Meer, publicity coordinator for Theatre Woodstock, told the Echo there were plans to celebrate the 75th anniversary, but they were shelved thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We are thrilled to finally celebrate with our patrons, performers, volunteers and supporters," she said. "This is an opportunity to not only celebrate but reflect on Theatre Woodstock's 80-year history of award-winning live theatre, and the community it has created: friendships, part-

nerships, artistic experiences, and artistic expression."

Theatre Woodstock's 80th anniversary also celebrates the many members of the organization over the years, some who spent most of their lives with the community theatre group.

"They started acting as children, continued through high school and post-secondary, into adulthood and retirement - for some, there are multiple generations that have acted with Theatre Woodstock. Celebrating this milestone is one more special memory to carry with them," said Wismer-Van Meer.

Wismer-Van Meer is also thankful for everyone who shaped Theatre Woodstock over the years.

"Community theatre relies on folks who are dedicated, compassionate, driven and talented; Theatre Woodstock (Woodstock Little Theatre) has been blessed to have the best of the best for 80 years," she said. "TW has received several accolades and awards over the years, which speaks volumes to the phenomenal people who have given their time on and off stage over the past 80 years."

Early bird tickets are still available for \$70. Anyone who bought an early bird ticket is entered in a draw for a chance to win a subscription pass for the 2026/2027 season. Tickets will be \$80 after the early bird deadline. To purchase tickets, visit www.theatrewoodstock.com, visit the box office on 22 Reeve St., or call 519-537-2582.

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Wolverines runners-up in OSFL

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

The U16 Woodstock Wolverines football team capped off a solid first season with a runner-up finish after a 34-22 loss to the Clarington Knights in the Ontario Summer Football League final.

“Our U16 Woodstock Wolverines showed incredible heart, determination and character—especially during an outstanding second-half performance. They never gave up, continued to battle and represented Woodstock with pride,” said a Facebook post from the organization.

The team trailed 25-0 at the half, and head coach D.J. Sirois said his halftime talk to his kids was pretty simple.

“To our defence, it was you guys need to wake up. They had shut down the run, but Clarington’s quarterback had the game of his life. He was throwing perfect passes to receivers in stride. We had watched film on him all year long, and we had seen his potential, but none of it was connecting.”

Sirois said the Knights shut down his team’s running game and midway through the first half they needed to start passing.

“Our receivers were dropping balls that they couldn’t if they were going to win. At halftime I told them we need to throw it, and when the ball is in the air you don’t have a route anymore. Just go get it. That’s what is going to get us back in this game, and that’s what they did.”

Woodstock finished the regular season with a record of 4 wins and 3 losses before making an unexpected playoff run.

“We started out wondering if we were going to win a game. Then we picked up a few key players who helped us think we could win a couple of games,” said Sirois. “The magic moment was getting to that championship. Obviously, we would have liked to finish with a win but it was such a



In their rookie season, the U16 Woodstock Wolverines lost in the OSFL championship game.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

compliment to our program, our coaches, and to the players’ efforts.”

Players were able to buy in during the regular season after seeing how hard the coaches worked and how much they wanted to be a competitive team. Sirois said he and his staff made it very clear they valued every member of the team.

“We coached every single player equally. The starters to the backups to the guys

who weren’t going to see the field at all. Along the way we got some surprises. Guys who were starters became backups, and guys who were backups became starters. We had put it out there that try-outs were all season long.”

Sirois, a career running back, has been coaching the sport on and off since 2010 and helping Woodstock College Avenue, his alma mater, to its first-ever title. He

also played for the Brantford Bisons and played for the London Beefeaters in the Canadian Junior Football League.

As for whether he will be back next year, Sirois said maybe.

“Every time I finish a season, I always say I will see. It’s a family affair as I have five kids and a wife, and I always make sure everyone is on board, and it takes some time to think about that. We’ll see.”

GOHL implementing OHL rule book for 2026-27 season

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

The Woodstock Navy Vets are not only preparing for their first season in the Greater Ontario Hockey League but will also have a new set of playing rules to learn.

The GOHL has announced it has received official approval to adopt Ontario Hockey League playing rules, further aligning the league with its OHL development partner.

“This important step continues the GOHL’s commitment to providing the highest standard of player development in Ontario. By operating under the same playing rules as the OHL, our athletes, coaches, and officials will benefit from greater consistency, preparing players more effectively for advancement to the next level,” said a league press release.

It added that as the OHL’s recognized development league, this approval reinforces

the GOHL’s dedication to creating an elite, high-performance environment that mirrors the expectations and standards of major junior hockey.

“The GOHL also remains steadfast in its commitment to player safety. Along with the adoption of OHL playing rules, the league will continue to enhance its player safety initiatives through equipment standards and fighting regulations. These remain designed to promote a safe playing environment while maintaining the physical, competitive nature of the game and ensuring the continued development of our athletes.”

GOHL Commissioner Craig Spada said the league is extremely proud to receive the approval.

“Aligning our playing rules with those of the Ontario Hockey League is another significant milestone for our league. It provides a seamless transition for players moving to the

OHL while further demonstrating our commitment to developing elite hockey players at all ages. We remain committed to leading in player safety initiatives that protect our athletes while preserving the integrity and competitiveness of junior hockey.”

The OHL doesn’t play under a Hockey Canada rule book but instead publishes its own official rules. In the 2025–26 season, the OHL expanded coaches’ challenges to cover offside plays leading to goals and certain missed stoppages and delay-of-game penalties. It also introduced a possible four-minute double-minor for slew-footing.

What was not initially clear is how the GOHL would implement video challenges, as currently teams do not have the technology available to make it work. The OHL currently uses a Spideo system, a seven-camera arrangement which includes tablets for referees, or an equivalent standardized replay

system. The Echo reached out to Spada, who clarified the video review will not be utilized in the GOHL.

There are a few interesting rule differences between the two leagues:

Faceoff violations following icing: The OHL changed its procedure. Following an icing, either centre now receives a warning for the first faceoff violation, and a second violation by that same centre results in a minor penalty. Previously, the attacking centre was ejected on the first violation while the defending centre received a warning. I have not found a GOHL announcement corresponding to this change.

Sitting on the boards: The OHL added a specific safety provision. A player sitting on the boards with skates exposed during play generates a team warning, and a second violation results in an unsportsmanlike-conduct minor penalty.

Sikh sports competition held in Woodstock

The 2nd annual Canadian Sikh Games Sports Tournament, hosted by Dashmesh Sports Club in association with United Wings Canada FC, brought together hundreds of athletes and families for two days of competition and cultural celebration at Cowan Sportsplex on July 25 and 26.

The event celebrated unity, athletics and Sikh heritage with a full slate of activities, including soccer and volleyball matches, tug-of-war, children's track and field, three-legged races, Seep card games and musical chairs.

Participants of all ages competed and were cheered on by a lively crowd enjoying free food and family entertainment.

In the Men's Open soccer division, won by Dashmesh FC of Brampton, teams battled for a first-place prize of \$3,100, with the runners up earning \$2,100. The Over 35 category

awarded \$1,500 and \$1,000, respectively, while standout athletes were recognized among the four best players in each division. Kids' and ladies' game winners received gift cards.

The highlight of the closing ceremony was the announcement of the Ultimate Sports Champion Basket. The prize drew applause as organizers thanked sponsors and volunteers for their support. The tournament was streamed live on YouTube via Sukhdeep Live, allowing viewers across Canada to join. Inspired by Sikh values of Seva (selfless service), equality, and Sarbat Da Bhala (welfare of all), the event reinforced community spirit and athletic excellence. For sponsorships and future participation, organizers encouraged contact at dsc.woodstock@gmail.com or through social media at United Wings Canada Soccer Academy.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Across the track and field events, there was no shortage of excitement and spirited competition for the kids.



The United Wings of Woodstock fought hard in every match and finished as soccer tournament runners up



Volunteers and organizers welcomed a steady flow of participants and fans throughout the weekend.

Former Woodstock hockey player named assistant coach at Carleton

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

The Carleton Ravens women's hockey team have announced former Woodstock Wildcat Jaime Magoffin as the team's new full-time assistant coach alongside head coach Stacey Colarossi.

A member of the Guelph Gryphons from 2020 to 2025, Magoffin played 87 U SPORTS games before turning professional in Austria for the 2025-26 season. In 2024-25, Jaime represented Canada at the Torino 2025 FISU World University Games, coached by a staff which included Colarossi. Magoffin and Team Canada took home silver medals at the tournament.

"I had the opportunity to play for Sta-

cey, and she is one of the people who made that experience so rewarding. I am grateful to now work alongside her, and I know she will help me learn and grow immensely as a coach," explained Magoffin.

The now 24-year-old is coming off one season with the Sabres St.Pölten, a professional team in the European Women's Hockey League (EWHL), where she had 28 points in 19 games to help lead the team to a league championship. Despite that success, she said the offer to coach made it easy to come home.

"It's definitely a dream job and I am excited to get involved in this side of the game. It's nice to know I will be working alongside a coach with her expertise."

Colarossi said her new assistant is a big

positive for the Ravens program.

"She's a former captain with the Guelph Gryphons who truly understands the culture and high standards of a contending OUA locker room. She brings strong leadership and a willingness to learn. After spending just a few days with her, I immediately recognized her interest through the many questions she asked."

Colarossi added Magoffin was steady from the beginning to the end of a game and was always present.

"Her faceoff statistics are very consistent, and gaining puck possession off faceoffs is certainly an area we look to have her work immediately with our centers."

Magoffin described her as a two-way center whose strong work ethic will be an asset to the Ravens.



Jaime Magoffin.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

CONTINUED TO PAGE 16

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Former Woodstock hockey player named assistant coach at Carleton

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

"I played very responsibly in the D-zone, and I think being able to bring my view on a team working as a unit by understanding defensive play and finding ways to create offence. I wasn't the most skilled player, but I think I can work with others to create offence by working together."

She added she feels fortunate to work alongside some very experienced coaches who have been in women's hockey for a long time.

"I will be open and eager to learn from them and soak up as much as possible. Where I can help, because I am fresh out of playing, is being able to understand the game from an athlete's perspective."

Magoffin will be just one full season

removed from playing in the U SPORTS loop and will be coaching against some young women she recently shared the ice with. She graduated from Guelph with a Bachelor of Commerce specializing in sports management, experience that will also benefit the Ravens program.

"I was in the co-op program, so I did have some internships and sport marketing positions and some involvement on campus. That will allow me to work on the administrative side and help the program in that sense. I hope I can help it grow and it has a lot of potential."

The coaching staff and the Ravens continue to prepare for the 2026-27 season, which opens on October 7 at Nipissing.

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Rain doesn't wash out Woodstock's annual StreetFest

Downtown Woodstock buzzed with music, food, and community spirit as the StreetFest returned July 17 and 18, drawing residents and visitors for two full days of entertainment, vendors, expanded patios, and family activities. Even after a heavy but brief Saturday rain, crews restored the site, and live music resumed at the West stages while shops, restaurants, and many experiences remained open throughout the core. Organizers thanked the community for its patience and noted that, despite the disruption, StreetFest once again showcased local talent, small businesses, and the Friendly City's signature summer atmosphere.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Justin Maki entertained at one of the many ongoing musical events.



The Foam adventure drew many of the young ones into its bubbly chaos, where laughter, splashes, and wide eyed excitement turned the whole zone into a swirling cloud of pure summertime joy.



The zip line platform proved to be a major draw for the adventurous.

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StreetFest car show well attended

The Woodstock StreetFest Car Cruise rolled back into town on Sunday, July 19, drawing crowds of classic car fans, families, and festival goers to the Friendly City's downtown core. Hundreds of vintage, custom, and specialty vehicles cruised through the streets before settling

into a lively street fest atmosphere filled with live music, food vendors, family activities, and interactive displays. Local businesses extended patios and offered sidewalk specials. The event was organized by South Gate Centre.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



The entire stretch of Dundas Street downtown filled with classic vehicles, drawing hundreds of attendees.



With Sean and Ariana by her side, Rosemary rode her classic to the displayed bike - 2016 Rewaco - she loved most.



Cruise destination Woodstock Downtown reached and finding a spot for attendees to view classics on display.

TVDSB faces over \$20 million deficit amid staff reductions and declining enrolment

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

The Thames Valley District School Board is facing a \$22.1 million deficit as it faces dwindling enrolment and potential job cuts.

The board is proposing to reduce full-time staff by 150 compared to last year.

The Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) is facing another year of difficult financial decisions with a draft budget forecasting a \$22.1 million deficit and more than 150 fewer full-time positions compared with last year's staffing levels.

The board says the changes are largely driven by declining enrolment and shifting student needs, but education workers warn the reductions will add pressure to already stretched staff.

Among the proposed reductions are nearly 30 Early Childhood Educator positions. The board says those changes are tied to an expected decline in student numbers.

Trustees at the board have been shut out of its operations since April 23, 2025. The province took over and appointed Paul Boniferno as supervisor six days later. Oxford County trustee Dave Cripps said there are a few reasons for the board's perilous economic picture.

"I'm reasonably sure the deficit is made up of the increase in Canada Pension Plan contributions the federal government implemented a few years ago that the province didn't fund. Our transportation costs because our board is so rural and has been overbudget for a number of years. Unless we stop taking kids to school, there's no way to fix that."

He added the third problem area is special education and the monetary problems it has posed.

"Our board of trustees was hugely supportive of it, and I suspect the supervisor has gotten in there and realized there's not a lot of wiggle room."

Special education was one of the biggest financial pressures identified in the provincial investigation of the TVDSB. The investigators did not conclude the board was overspending because of mismanagement in special education. Instead, they found the board was providing services beyond what provincial funding covered, resulting in recurring deficits.

The Thames Valley District School Board's special education program has recorded annual deficits ranging from \$2 million to \$7.7 million since 2020. Staffing accounted for nearly all of the program's costs, with about 96 per cent of special education spending in 2024-25 going toward salaries and benefits, ac-

cording to the provincial investigation.

Cripps said there are no other ways for boards of education to generate revenue other than provincial funding. He added the current system sets the board up for failure.

"When there is an increase in payroll the board has no control over, if the province does not fund it, I'm not sure what the expectations are of what the board could do with that. It comes down to looking at the three areas I mentioned and realizing how important they are and funding the proper level."

Each school board across Ontario is distinctive and has its own unique funding demands, something Cripps said should be taken into account when funding decisions are made.

"It's not so much about modifying the funding formula, per se, but funding to the relevant areas of importance to each board. There are very large differences between Toronto and Oxford County. There are differences between the Thames Valley board and Northern Ontario. There is no one-size-fits-all solution here."

Mary Henry is president of CUPE, Local 4222 and said her members are already overworked due to fewer staff.

"A lot of it has to do with the funding cuts that are not being provided by the Ford government, which is, if you ask me, neglect."

Despite the cuts, the TVDSB board said the draft budget does include investments in areas where student needs are growing, including 18 additional educational assistants, 12 of those in special education. The board said it is forecasting 2,800 fewer students.

Henry added if the board is attempting to reduce its deficit, they need to examine other areas instead of where students need the most support.

"When you calculate the math, one superintendent's salary could pay for four or more support staff working directly with students."

The draft budget is expected to be approved sometime in August. The effect on schools in Oxford County is not yet clear.

The London District Catholic School Board is facing a \$3.7-million deficit and is considering a series of spending reductions for the 2026-27 school year.

Proposed measures include reducing the number of school bus monitors, cutting spending on computers, scaling back professional development opportunities for staff and teachers, and lowering sick-time costs.

The board is also reviewing its special education programs to identify potential efficiencies while maintaining required supports for students.



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NOTICE OF STUDY COMMENCEMENT

Oxford Road 4 and Oxford Road 17 intersection improvements - East Zorra-Tavistock and Woodstock

Municipal Class Environmental Assessment Study

About this project

Oxford County has initiated a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (EA) Study for the Oxford Road 4 and Oxford Road 17 intersection to consider a wide range of alternatives for improving the functionality and safety of the intersection.

The 2024 Transportation Master Plan study recommended the implementation of upgrades and improvements to this intersection to accommodate anticipated traffic growth over the next 25 years.

The purpose of this study is to:

- Identify and evaluate alternatives to improve the Oxford Road 4 and Oxford Road 17 intersection, including consideration for nearby CPKC railway crossing to the south and Oxford Road 4 / Oxford Road 60 intersection to the north;
- Select a preferred solution and evaluate a preferred design concept;
- Complete and document the Class EA Study in accordance with municipal and Ontario Ministry of Transportation provincial documents;
- Engage interested parties and the public; and,
- Meet the County's vision "to provide a safe, efficient and sustainable multi-model transportation network."

Study process

This notice signals the commencement of this Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (EA) Study which will define the project; identify and evaluate alternative solutions; and determine a preferred alternative solution in consultation with the public, Indigenous communities and regulatory agencies. Any potential impacts of alternative solutions on social, cultural, economic and natural environments will be evaluated and assessed during the Class EA Study.

This project is being completed as a Schedule "C" project in accordance with the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment process.

Upon completion of this study, a Project File Report documenting the process will be submitted to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks and made available for public review for a period of 30 calendar days.

Public consultation

Public, Indigenous, and agency consultation is a key component of the Class EA process and will be sought throughout the study. Project information, study documents and updates are available on the project website on Speak Up, Oxford! at www.oxfordcounty.ca/speakup.

If you would like to be placed on the mailing list to receive notices and information, or if you wish to provide comments at any time during the Class EA Study process, you can do so through the project contacts.

A Public Information Centre (PIC) to present preliminary study findings is anticipated to be held in the fall of 2026.

All comments received through the course of the study will be considered and documented in the Environmental Study Report as part of the public record.



Project contact

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Information will be collected in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. With the exception of personal information, all comments will become part of the public record.



Growing stronger together

This notice first issued on July 30, 2026

Kiwanis Club of Ingersoll to host fourth annual fashion show

EMILY STEWART

Echo Correspondent

"You will have so much fun. It is just a fun night," said Jane Cole, co-organizer of the Kiwanis Club of Ingersoll's Fashion Show of the upcoming event.

The Kiwanis Club of Ingersoll will have its fourth annual Fashion Show at Belle Vie Carnegie Hall on Sept. 16. The fashion show will feature fall attire from Hometown Style, Little Town Beauty Boutique, Patina's, Roberts and Co. Ladies Wear, and Sew Stylish Wedding Works. There will also be a cash bar, door prizes, a raffle draw featuring prizes from local businesses, and

snacks provided by Tremblett's Your Independent Grocer.

"It's all local. Everything is local," said Cole.

Proceeds from the fashion show will support Kiwanis Youth Projects from the local Key Club, which provides opportunities for teenagers who would like to become part of the Kiwanis Club of Ingersoll. In the past, the Key Club sold around 200 turkey meals around Christmas at the high school and donated Mother's Day flowers to a retirement home. Key Club members also decide how the fundraising money will support the community.

"What I'm trying to do is get the town to know about

the Key Club. It's taken us a while to get the town to know about Kiwanis, but we keep pushing it out there so people can realize what we all do, the Kiwanis Club of Ingersoll, because our motto is one child at a time," Cole said.

There will be three Key Club members featured in the fashion show, as well as a representative from the Children's Health Foundation. The Kiwanis Club of Ingersoll supports the Children's Health Foundation often, as children in Ingersoll and the area in need of medical care go to the Children's Hospital in London, Ont.

Doors open at 6 p.m. and the fashion show begins



(EMILY STEWART PHOTO)

The Kiwanis Club of Ingersoll's annual fashion show returns to Belle Vie Carnegie Hall on Sept. 16, featuring fall fashions from local boutiques.

at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$50 each and can either be purchased by calling 519-902-5999 or in person at Roberts and Co. Ladies Wear on 122 Thames St. S.

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ROUTE TO THE PAST

HISTORY

Henry Crotty and Family

SCOTT GILLIES

Echo Contributor

In the early 1830s, the village of Oxford on the Thames, was mostly confined to a few houses on the southern bank of the Thames River. There were only a couple of log houses on the north side, but all that was about to change with the arrival of Henry Crotty and his family.

Born in 1812 in the county of Tipperary Ireland, Henry Crotty was a son of gentleman farmer Henry and Mary Antony Crotty. Along with his brothers Richard and John, the Crottys emigrated to Canada in 1831 and went directly to this area. Their arrival in November of that year prevented much in the way of improvements other than to clear a few acres of land and erect a small home.

In 1832, when the local plebiscite was held, the citizens chose to rename their community Ingersoll in honour of its founder Thomas Ingersoll. It was also that year that Henry Crotty began farming in earnest.

In those first few months, he and his brothers had cleared close to 10 acres of land. They now proceeded to clear more of the forest and began to plant their first crops.

Henry had acquired 200 acres of land

in what is now the northern part of Ingersoll, as well as an additional 100 acres outside of town. Over the ensuing years, those 200 acres (which ran from the Thames River north to Bell Street) were subdivided into smaller town lots and sold off to new inhabitants in the town.

The sale of these lots, the building of new houses and shops on that property took up much of Henry's time, but this also led to his own personal prosperity, or as "The Canadian Biographical Dictionary and Portrait Gallery of Eminent and Self Made Men" published in 1888 stated, this development "placed him in very comfortable circumstances".

Some of the streets in this part of Ingersoll have been named after members of the Crotty family, most notably Margaret and Cashel. Henry's paternal grandmother had been a Cashel – a noted Irish family.

In the early 1850s, he sold off another piece of his property to the representatives of the Great Western Railway when that new form of transportation arrived on the scene. In the 1870s he was in partnership with James McIntyre, jointly running their furniture and funeral business.

Land speculation and mortality were not Henry's only interests. In 1840, Henry married Margaret MacNab of

Limerick Ireland, and together they would have twelve children! Not all would survive to adulthood but those which did spread the Crotty name far and wide across North America.

The eldest son William moved to Chicago where he was employed by the Union Mattress Company. His first wife Emma had passed away there in 1885 and was buried in the Crotty Family plot of the Ingersoll Rural Cemetery. William remarried two years later, in 1887, to Miss Lizzie Stone daughter of grocer Francis Stone of Kalamazoo Michigan, but within two years, at the young age of 41, he suddenly passed away. He was interred amongst members of the Stone family in Michigan.

One of his youngest sons, Walker Marsh Crotty, worked as publisher of the Oxford County Directory in 1881, the same year that he passed away at the age of 21.

Nieces and nephews also spread their wings.

One of his brother Richard's sons, Henry Samuel Crotty had been born in Ingersoll in 1843. He and his wife Frances moved to Winnipeg where he established the first real estate firm in the city, and, like his Ingersoll-based uncle and namesake, served on municipal council. His own son, Ontario-born Thomas Henry McCaughey Crotty, became a medical doctor of note in Canada and the United States, and served with the Canadian Army Medical Corps during World War One before returning to the forks of the Red River to practice medicine and dabble in real estate.

It seems that Uncle Henry Crotty's original proclivity for land transactions carried through the generations.

While the family home "The Maples" was located on Victoria Street, the men



(CONTRIBUTED IMAGE)

in the household all listed their occupation as farmer in each Census of Canada report from 1871 until 1901, so they may still have owned land on the outskirts of town.

Members of the Anglican Church, the Crotty family attended St. James Church in Ingersoll. Henry was a regular attendee, church warden, and delegate to the Synod of Huron Diocese for some twenty years. He had also been selected to represent the diocese at the provincial synod held in Montreal.

Besides sitting on Town Council for several terms, he was a long-time chairman of the Ingersoll School Board and had been appointed Deputy Returning Officer for both provincial and federal elections. On top of these duties, Henry Crotty had also been appointed a local magistrate for more than a quarter of a century.

The man was well-known, well-liked, and well-respected. That man passed away in 1890.

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Riddles

David’s parents have three sons: Snap, Crackle, and what’s the name of the third son?
David

I follow you all the time and copy your every move, but you can’t touch me or catch me. What am I?
Your shadow

I’m found in socks, scarves and mittens; and often in the paws of playful kittens. What am I?
Yarn

Where does today come before yesterday?
The dictionary

What invention lets you look right through a wall?
A window

What can’t be put in a saucepan?
It’s lid

What goes up and down but doesn’t move?
A staircase

If you’re running in a race and you pass the person in second place, what place are you in?
Second place

What has lots of eyes, but can’t see?
A potato

Sudoku

by PeterS 2026

	9						5	
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Solution found on page 31

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Word Search

ON THE FARM

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AGRICULTURE
AUTOMATIC
CANAL
CHANNELS
CONSERVATION

CROPS
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PIPELINE
PRESSURE

PUMP
RESERVOIR
SATURATION
SOIL
SPRAY

SPRINKLER
SYSTEM
VALVES
WATER

COMING EVENTS

AUGUST

AUGUST 2 | MEMORIAL SERVICE AT 1 PM DECORATION DAY

Langton Baptist Cemetery

If you wish to make a donation towards the upkeep of the cemetery, it would be greatly appreciated. Income tax receipts will be issued for all donations.

Cheques made payable to:

Langton Baptist Cemetery
c/o Barbra Sinnesael
1550 West Quarterline Road
Langton, Ontario N0E 1G0

Attendant will also be at Cemetery from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm

AUGUST 4 & 18 | STARTS 1 PM SACRED HEART PARISH EUCHRE

Henderson Hall, 133 John Street, Ingersoll

We invite everyone to join us for a Euchre afternoon. Refreshments provided.

AUGUST 9 TOWNLINE CEMETERY DECORATION DAY 296246 - 29th Line, Zorra Township., (near corner with Road 88)

Everyone is welcome to visit this pleasant setting to place flowers and remember their loved ones. Mutterer Family Pipers will attend to provide their gift of music. Donations towards the continuing care of the cemetery are always appreciated and may be made there, or directed to: Townline Cemetery, c/o David Waud, 6 Norsworthy Lane, Ingersoll ON N5C 4G5

AUGUST 9 DECORATION DAY AT CURRIES PLEASANTVIEW CEMETERY

Please feel free to place flowers and visit your family site.

AUGUST 9 | 10:30 AM TEEN CHALLENGE ONTARIO MEN'S CHOIR TEAM

Emmanuel Reformed Church, 170 Clarke Street North, Woodstock, ON

Come and hear a dynamic choir presentaion by Teen Challenge Canada, featuring testimonies and stories of

finding freedom from addiction! Join the Teen Challenge Team in the Basement Fellowship Hall for "Sundae Sunday" Refreshments, coffee, cookies and ice cream sundaes!!

SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER 12 | 9 AM - 4 PM (Rain Date: Sunday, September 13) OPEN HOUSE AND FAMILY FUN DAY

Tillsonburg Regional Airport, 244411 Airport Road, Tillsonburg

Join the Canadian Harvard Aircraft Association for its biggest event of the year, their Wings & Wheels Family Fun Day, September 13. (Rain date: Sept 14). World War II Harvard aircraft, along with hundreds of classic cars will be on display in one location. Bring your classic car or peruse those brought by others. Harvard flights will be available all day long. A great day's outing.

Activities:

- Opportunities for Harvard flight experiences (While pre-booking flights is not necessary, it is recommended. Contact crewflights@harvards.com to ensure your seat)
- Hangar tours and aircraft displays
- Fundraising garage sale & book sale
- Food trucks

All types of vehicles are welcome. If you are bringing a vehicle for display, registering your vehicle upon arrival on-site is highly recommended.

In case of inclement weather, check their Facebook page for RAIN DATE updates. Cost: Cash donation, Contact: info@harvards.com / 519-842-9922, For more info: www.harvards.com

SEPTEMBER 19 | 2 - 4 PM OPEN HOUSE AND FAMILY FUN DAY St. John's Church, Eastwood, 685860 Oxford Rd 2 (Hwy2)

Visit our historic church and learn about our Celtic traditions. Games and refreshments.

ONGOING CLASSES, CLUBS & ORGANIZATIONS

FOOD TRUCKS AT GRACE UNITED CHURCH TAVISTOCK 116 Woodstock St. S. Tavistock

AUGUST 10 | 4:30 - 7:30 PM Born2Eat, Fo'Cheezy, Beavertails
Donations to Grace United Church

AUGUST 17 | 4:30 - 7:30 PM
Siggi's, Pablas Street of India, SWAT
Donations to Tavistock Agricultural Society

AUGUST 24 | 4:30 - 7:30 PM
Berlin 95, Ish n Chips, El Milagro
Donations to Camp Bimini

AUGUST 31 | 4:30 - 7:30 PM
Born2Eat, Los Rolling Tacos, Fo'Cheezy
Donations to Tavistock Agricultural Society

EVERY OTHER FRIDAY | 1 - 4 PM SPRING INTO THE INGERSOLL COUNTRY MUSIC JAMBOREE

Masonic Hall, 190 Thames St. S. Ingersoll

Join us, walk ins welcome. Qualifications - love 50-70's country music. Perform, listen, dance & enjoy! May 15 & 29, June 5 & 19.

3RD TUE. OF MONTH | 6:30 - 8:30 PM CAREGIVER CONNECTION Revel Realty Woodstock, 111 Huron Street (Virutal/ hybrid options available)

Are you worried about your child or youth? Parents and Caregivers for Mental Health (PCMH) is here to listen, support, and walk alongside you on this journey. Our free Caregiver Connection peer support groups offer parents and caregivers a community of support. Can't make it in person? Join one of our virtual or hybrid groups! Visit family.cmho.org or email oxfordcounty@pcmh.ca for more

information.

**EVERY FRIDAY | 1 PM
TILLSONBURG DUPLICATE BRIDGE CLUB**
Tillsonburg Senior Centre, 45 Hardy Ave, Tillsonburg
Don't have a partner? Come anyway and we will match you up with someone. For more information, visit their Facebook page: TburgBridge.

**2ND TUES. OF MONTH (SEPT. TO MAY) | 2 - 4 PM
4TH TUES. OF MONTH (SEPT. TO MAY) | 7 - 9 PM
OXFORD PHILATELIC SOCIETY**
Church of the Epiphany, 560 Dundas Street, Woodstock Ontario N4S 1C7

If you have never belonged to a stamp club, now's the time. Meet new friends, grow your knowledge and collection. Contact: Don Eaton dhfe@silomail.com. Website: http://www.rpsc.org/chapters/oxford

**LAST TUESDAY OF EVERY MONTH | 10 AM - 12 PM
MONTHLY VON BLOOD PRESSURE CLINIC**
Ingersoll Pharmasave, 19 King St. E., Ingersoll
Last Tuesday of every Month.

**3RD WED. OF MONTH | 6:30 - 8:30 PM
PEER SUPPORT GROUP FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS**
21 Wellington St., Woodstock
(Virtual options available)

PCMH is a peer support program providing support to parents and caregivers across Ontario with lived experience raising children and youth with mental health challenges. For more information, please visit family.cmho.org or oxfordcounty@pcmh.ca. We are also on Facebook: Parents for Children's Mental Health ~ Oxford County

VON OXFORD SUPPORTIVE CARE PROGRAMS

Navigating any form of grief can feel overwhelming; however, with the right support, guidance, and education, individuals can discover a pathway to healing. VON Oxford Supportive Care Programs offer assistance for grief stemming from various circumstances, such as the death of someone, caregiving, serious illness diagnoses, and life transitions. Through education, connection, and compassion, our programs create a safe space for individuals to explore their emotions and learn effective coping mechanisms during the grieving process

Contact us today to learn more about VON Oxford Supportive Care Programs. Email: oxford.griefsupport@von.ca, Phone: 1-888-866-7518. All Programs are Free-of-charge.

**4TH WED. OF MONTH | 1 - 2:30 PM
GRIEF SUPPORT FOR MAID RELATED LOSS**
Thamesford Library, 165 Dundas St., Thamesford

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

OXFORD COUNTY DIABETES EDUCATION PROGRAM

Are you looking for support with your Diabetes? Our Team of Registered Nurses, Registered Dietitians and a Social Worker is here to support YOUR goals. We can help with medication adjustments, lifestyle and diet changes, stress management, weight reduction strategies and more. Appointments are available at Alexandra Hospital Ingersoll and Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital and by phone. SELF REFERRALS ARE WELCOME. Please call 519-485-9611 to book an appointment. Let's work together!

THE OPTIMIST CLUB OF OXFORD COUNTY

The Optimists bring out the best in Youth, Community, and Themselves. If anyone is interested in coming out to meet us and learn more about us please email brenda7621@outlook.com



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(519) 290-8800

COMING EVENTS

THE LIONS CLUB OF WOODSTOCK

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

OXFORD COUNTY BRANCH OF ONTARIO ANCESTORS

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

BEACHVILLE LEGION EVENTS: 434852 ZorraLine, Beachville

WEDNESDAYS | 7-8 PM
GENTLE CHAIR YOGA

WEDNESDAYS | 7:30 PM
HUMP DAY DARTS, FREE POOL

THURSDAYS | 7 PM
EUCHRE

FRIDAYS | 8 PM
DARTS, FREE POOL

AUGUST 8, 15, 22, 29 | 1 - 4 PM
THAMES VALLEY BLUEGRASS AND OLD TIME COUNTRY PICKERS
Open Mic (acoustic only). Come enjoy the music!

AUGUST 5 & 19 | 4:30 - 6 PM
OX ON THE RUN BOOKMOBILE

AUGUST 7 & 14 | DOORS OPEN 6 PM
BINGO STARTS AT 7 PM
OXFORD COUNTY FELINE WELLNESS BINGO

AUGUST 28 | 5:30 PM
PORK LOIN SUPPER
To order call 519-423-6363 or rcl495. suppers@gmail.com

AUGUST 29 | 7 - 11 PM
KARAOKE WITH KEN PYLE

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 55 EVENTS: 642 Dundas St, Woodstock, ON

COME PAINT WITH US!

Our Legion is Celebrating 100 years of Service to our Veterans community and the City of Woodstock. Help us honour them with a community mural project. Anyone interested in participating is welcome. Youth taking part in our community mural project, will be credited with community hours. We are also looking for donations to off-set the of cost to the necessary supplies and equipment required for this community project! A reminder for everyone were still looking for donations towards our Art mural and looking for Knitters or Crochets for our Knitted Poppy waterfall. For details contact: The Royal Canadian Legion Br. 55 Woodstock, Ontario: rclbranch55@rogers.com.

TUESDAYS & THURSDAYS
DART LEAGUE

FRIDAYS
CANTEEN IS CLOSED

Unless we have a function which we are open August 14th, Office is open Friday mornings.

SATURDAYS | 7 - 11 PM
EVENING ENTERTAINMENT:

AUGUST 1ST - BACK-TO-BACK
AUGUST 8TH - FLASHBACK
AUGUST 15 - MIKE THROPE
AUGUST 22ND - JEFF DAWDY
AUGUST 29TH - CHUCK MOYER

AUGUST 6 | 11:30 AM - 12:45 PM
SOUP N SANDWICH

AUGUST 8 | 3 PM
MEAT DRAW

AUGUST 11 | 7 PM
BRANCH EXECUTIVE MEETING

AUGUST 16 | 5 - 6 PM
FAMILY DINNER
Beef on a Bun, Coleslaw and Dessert pre-order & pay no later August 12th. Contact the Legion either by email rclbranch55@rogers.com or call 519-537-3112 to order.

SEPTEMBER 19 | 11 AM - 4 PM
OPEN HOUSE
Celebrating our 100th anniversary. We will be selling our tickets for our Gala event in December this day.

DECEMBER 18
100TH ANNIVERSARY GALA
Did you know it is the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Legion and Branch 55 Woodstock, Ontario? We provide support to cadets, Veterans and local youth among many other things. Support our 100th anniversary gala either with a prize donation or monetary donation. More details by emailing rclbranch55@rogers.com

CROSSWORD

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48						49			50	51	52	53
55						56				57		
59						60				61		
62						63				64		

CLUES ACROSS

1. Egyptian bull god
5. Romanian monetary unit
8. Santa’s helper
11. Fictional Pink Floyd corporal
13. Sea eagle genus
14. Broad volcanic crater
15. Minneapolis suburb
16. Actual commercial worth (abbr.)
17. Exchange rate
18. Ethnic peoples in Guinea
20. Men’s fashion accessory
21. Craft material
22. Offerings
25. Early
30. Large room
31. Soviet Socialist Republic
32. One who hauls
33. Shorthand for accepting
38. Promotional materials
41. Loss of memory
43. One who beheads
45. Photographers
48. Small, rich sponge cake
49. White clerical vestment
50. Partner to “oohed”
55. Abba __, Israeli politician
56. Zero
57. Owl monkey genus
59. Lace bug genus
60. Mild expression of surprise
61. Storage devices
62. Keyboard key
63. Make a mistake
64. One-time Korean president

CLUES DOWN

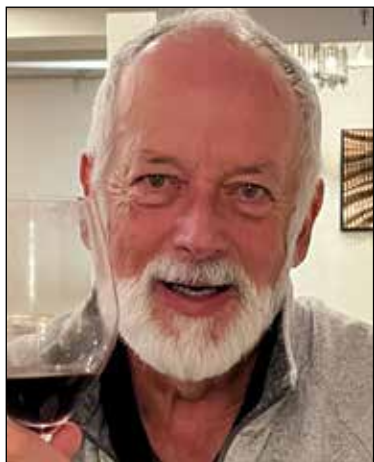
1. Bridge building degree
2. Expression of sorrow or pity
3. Large, stocky, lizard
4. Rumanian river
5. Missive
6. Stout-bodied moths
7. Brings out
8. Bird of prey
9. King of Thebes
10. Cleaving tool
12. African antelope
14. Three are particularly famous
19. Satisfy
23. C. European river
24. Dictator
25. Portion of (abbr.)
26. The 17th letter of the Greek alphabet
27. Consume food
28. Woman (French)
29. Scrape or wear away by friction
34. Popular vegetable
35. Pacific Standard Time
36. Brazilian state capital
37. Paddle
39. Cause to become insane
40. Drier and flakier
41. Mimic
42. ESPN host Kimes
44. One who moseys
45. Secret political clique
46. Behind the stern of a ship
47. Supernatural force
48. Sanctuary in Orthodox churches
51. Swiss river
52. Grayish white
53. Engrave
54. UNC’s chief rival
58. Midway between south and southeast

Solution found on page 27

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO!

TRAVEL

“Foodie” quality at sensible prices – amazing dining at Punch Ltd.



PAUL KNOWLES

Echo Contributor

If you have eaten in hotel dining rooms, you will probably agree that some can be really good; many can be ridiculously pricey; some are just run-of-the-mill or worse... although still often overly expensive.

So when Germain Hotels' France Savard invited us to dine at Punch Ltd., the new restaurant in Le Germain Hotel Toronto, on Mercer Street, I did not know what to expect.

I know, though, what I did not expect: one of the finest meals I have ever enjoyed. But that is exactly what we got. Amazing, unique food, in a very elegant setting, with superb service. A perfect experience.

Am I exaggerating? Well, at one point during the meal, my partner simply said, “This food is absolutely full of flavour!”

That's the work of executive chef Mandar Kulkarni and his eight-person kitchen crew. Mandar, who is from Mumbai, India, chatted with us and explained that the culinary model at Punch Ltd. is “Modern

London... British food with softer Indian touches.” This is not, in any way, stereotypical Indian cuisine; it's in a category all its own.

Punch Ltd. opened its doors last October, in the hotel that opened in 2003. Le Germain Hotel Toronto was the first Germain establishment outside the province of Québec... although most certainly not the last. Germain hotels now exist all across Canada, still independently owned and operated by the Germain family, who are based in Montréal.

Back to the dining table: while you can certainly order individual meals off the menu at Punch Ltd., there are a couple of more interesting ways to dine here. The dinner menu lists the options as “Small Shares,” “Large Shares,” and “Sides”. So sharing is a great way to go.

But the advice at the top of the menu is, “Let our chefs take the lead... enjoy a personally curated tasting journey.”

Now, I have been in restaurants where a “personally curated tasting journey” costs hundreds of dollars. Not here – that option comes with a very reasonable price tag of \$95. In fact, in the holiday months, there is also a “Summerlicious” option – your choice of small share, main dish, dies, and dessert, for \$65. That is definitely not a “foodie restaurant” price – but the food will delight the most demanding foodie.

One other difference – some tasting menus involve minute portions of a variety of food. The portions at Punch Ltd. are very satisfactory.

Our meal? We wisely decided to trust the chef. As well as trusting Lauren Hall, the warm and welcoming Director of Food and Beverage, as well as Punch Ltd.'s sommelier.

She matched our courses with truly excellent wines.

Mandar started us with a unique amuse bouche – a vegetarian version of steak tartare, with beetroot substituting for the steak. Delicious.

We were then served Mumbai Chat-Slaw, mixed at the table, an amazing melange of radishes, beets, green apple, pomegranate, boondi (deep-fried chickpea flour), potato straw, crispy leeks and tamarind yogurt.

Next came duck sausage, with raisins, in puff pastry, topped with a unique, dark, spicy house brown sauce.

Then came what may have been our favourite taste of the meal (except, perhaps, the desserts): Agnolotti (a stuffed pasta) with morels, English peas, snap peas, porcini mushroom broth and maggie butter.

This was followed by exceptional Beef Wellington, one of the many house specialties. The menu lists “tenderloin, prosciutto, wild mushroom duxelles, Swiss chard, sunchoke purée and rogan josh jus”. The jus brings that soft, Indian spin to the very British Beef Wellington – again, a perfect culinary marriage.

And then came desserts – yes, plural because there were, after all, two of us. One was a Punch Ltd. standard – absolutely luscious sticky toffee pudding. The other involved a surprise. Our server brought a white chocolate mousse with a red fruit sauce, and at the table, poured extra virgin olive oil on the mousse, and added cracked black pepper. I was dubious... until my first taste.

That dessert included both saffron – the most expensive spice in the world – and cardamom, third most pricey. Mandar explained that



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

The bar at Punch Ltd., with a very enthusiastic bartender.

both are essential to his recipes, so he insists on them, regardless of cost.

Lauren matched our courses with terrific wines from around the world: a Gruner Veltliner from Austria, Cerisier en Fleur from Alsace, a terrific Bordeaux, and a couple more. The wine list at Punch Ltd. covers 10 pages; there are three more for spirits, and that doesn't include their wide selection of unique cocktails, and beer.

The restaurant features low light, pleasant background music, and wait staff in black suits and white shirts – it all speaks of elegance. But the diners' clothing tended to-

ward smart casual – no formality, here.

I don't write a lot of articles about any specific restaurant, but Punch Ltd. clearly earned the attention it's getting, this week.

You don't have to be a foodie to love Punch Ltd. Sure, foodies will love it, but Punch Ltd. is perfect for anyone who enjoys a dining adventure. You will not be disappointed!

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.



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

The sign that points to culinary heaven, on Mercer Street.



Beef Wellington with all the fixings – superb!

(GERMAIN HOTELS PHOTO)

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CLASSIFIEDS

ANNIVERSARY

Happy 50th Anniversary!

Wayne & Liz Buchanan

Please join us for an open house to celebrate the 50th wedding anniversary of Wayne and Liz Buchanan!

Saturday, August 15th, 2026
1:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Oxford Centre Community Hall
505386 Old Stage Road, Woodstock

Best Wishes Only

OBITUARY

JEFFERY LESLIE BALL

With sadness we let family and friends know that Jeff passed away Tuesday July 14, 2026 at Woodstock Hospital. Jeff is survived by his mother Margaret (nee Ludington) Ball and was predeceased by his father Watson Ball (2022). Jeff is survived by his brothers, John (Ellen) and Murray (Jenny). Jeff will be remembered by many nieces and nephews and their families.

During Jeff's life he had many loyal friends who supported him in difficult times. Thank you to Rick and Bernie Turpin, Henry and Shelly Heeren, Kevin and Nancy Eaton, Marcel and Shelley Pepping, and Al McCullough for your care and concern extended to Jeff in the times he needed help.

Cremation has taken place. Please consider a donation to the Kidney Foundation of Canada London and District Chapter or Diabetes Canada in memory of Jeff. Wareing Cremation Services, 225 Norwich Ave., Woodstock has been entrusted with Final Arrangements. Your messages of remembrance and condolence may be shared at www.wareingcremation.ca

FOR SALE - BURIAL PLOTS

2 Burial plots with deed, 2 vaults, gold cross certificate & memorial bronze marker. Located in Forest Lawn, London. Today's prices \$13,000 - \$15,000. Priced at \$5,500.00 for quick sale. Please leave message or text at 519-670-7107.

OBITUARY

SCOTT RUSSELL WESTON



Born on March 2, 1969, of Ingersoll Ontario, passed away peacefully at home on July 15, 2026.

Scott was predeceased in death by his parents Frieda and Reginald, siblings Mark, Diane and Julie, his grandson Hunter and father-in-law John Daniels. Scott is survived by his loving wife Karen Weston (nee Daniels) of 31 years, his children Sarah (Trevor), Jamie, Jordan (Tera), and Ryan. Grandchildren, Hannah, Nolan, Tarra, Austin, Avery, Brinsley, Cohen, and Kaycen. Scott is Also Survived by his siblings, Kathy (Randy), Sherri (Ken), Tom and his brother-in-law Rick (Lynn). his mother-in-law Una Daniels, as well as his childhood best friends Johnny Bruce, George Cassidy and Joe Griffin. Scott was also a loving cousin, uncle, and friend to many. Scott was highly known around Ingersoll where he grew up and where he and his wife decided to raise their family. He spent his life as a hard working and dedicated husband and father. He enjoyed spending his down time working on anything with an engine, riding motorcycles, dirt bikes, 4-wheelers, and camping. Scott could be seen frequently cruising the main street in his trans-am, while also having his nightly coffee date with Karen and friends. Scott impacted many people throughout his time here and will be missed tremendously by everyone that had the privilege of knowing him. The family asks that they be joined at McBeath-Dynes Chapel of the Glendinning Funeral Home, 246 Thames Street South for visitation on Wednesday, July 22 from 2-4 & 6-8 p.m. Service will be in the Chapel on Thursday at 2 p.m. In lieu of flowers donations to the Lung Association or CHILDCAN would be appreciated. Condolences may be posted at www.gffh.ca

WANTED TO BUY

John Deere riding lawn mower. Running or not.
519-495-6676

TREES

For Sale: Shade Trees; Maples, Oaks, Birch, Beech, Honey Locusts, Elms, Magnolia, Hydrangea Tree, Tulip Tree, Crab apples, Ivory Silk Lilac, Chanticleer Pear, Golden Weeping Willows and more. Apples, Pears, Peaches, Plums, Apricots, Nectarine, Blueberry, Haskap etc. Lots of healthy strong Spruce, Cedars and White Pine for your privacy hedges and windbreaks. Hundred of flowering shrubs.
Reg Hours 7am- 6pm Mon-Sat at Martins Nursery c/o Emanuel Martin. 42661 Orangehill Rd., Wroxeter, ON

CROSSWORD SOLUTION

B	A	T	A					L	E	U			E	L	F
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QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Tin
2. Two
3. Philippe Petit
4. The lion
5. Nike
6. Venus
7. Boston Americans
8. Chickpeas
9. Lent
10. Papal Conclave

SUDOKU SOLUTION

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

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