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The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette

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(STEWART GRANT PHOTO)

Sculptor Nathan Scott talks about "The Unfortunate Four" after the statue was unveiled with the help of Senator Rob Black and Senator Marty Deacon.

Prime Ministers Path officially reopened in Baden

Four new statues unveiled amid silent protest

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

The Prime Ministers Path (PMP) in Baden is officially back.

A celebration was held Saturday, Sept.

12, on the grounds of Castle Kilbride, where a new statue was unveiled before dignitaries and members of the Wilmot community.

"The Unfortunate Four" was supposed to be installed in June 2020, but the statue

of Sir John Abbot, Sir Mackenzie Powell, Sir John Thompson and Sir Charles Tupper never made it out of storage because of the pandemic.

One year later, Wilmot Township

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Sophie Pullen crowned 2026-2027 Tavistock Fall Fair Ambassador

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

The crowning of the Tavistock Fall Fair Ambassador turned into a family affair Friday night as Sophie Pullen was selected to wear the crown before a large crowd at Memorial Hall.

This year marked the 39th Tavistock Fall Fair Ambassador competition, and Pullen continued a family tradition by following in the footsteps of her sisters, Lily and Emma Pullen, who have also previously served as fair ambassadors.

Sponsored by the Princess Elizabeth Women's Institute, Sophie Pullen was one of three contestants competing for the 2026-2027 title.

Joining her in the competition were Cassidy Heintz, sponsored by the Opti-Mrs. of Tavistock, and Charlee Harvey, sponsored by the Optimist Club of Tavistock.

This year's judges were Andrea Vrbanc of Chatham-Kent, Paige Fawcett of Stratford and Stephanie Szusz of New Hamburg. All three are former ambassadors for their respective fairs and understand firsthand the challenges that come with competing for the title.

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Baden's Prime Ministers Path Returns

Continued from page 1

council voted to kill the PMP when the statue of Sir John A. Macdonald was vandalized and put into storage after a movement to cancel the former prime minister because of his role in the creation of residential schools and associated policies contributing to the oppression and systemic subjugation of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

The statue of the four men was originally labelled "The Forgotten Four," but sculptor Nathan Scott said he changed the name to more accurately reflect the history involved.

"They just never got going. Death and sickness, and they just got nothing done," he said.

The four served a combined five years between 1891 and 1896 after Macdonald and before Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

"It's been so fun to be a part of this project and bringing those guys to life. I've created a conversation. I didn't want them just standing there very formally, and they all knew each other. They were part of the same cabinet," Scott said.

Macdonald suffered a second stroke, which is when Abbot took over as prime minister, although he admitted he never wanted it. He retired after just 17 months on the job after being diagnosed with brain cancer.

The 47-year-old Thompson then took the country's reins and held office for just over two years. He travelled to England's



(STEWART GRANT PHOTO)

Several protesters attended the reinstallation of the Prime Ministers Path in Baden. Some held up signs during the ceremony, which was completed uninterrupted.

Windsor Castle to be sworn into Queen Victoria's Imperial Privy Council but shortly afterwards, suffered a heart attack and died at the castle.

Bowell then took over immediately but

was forced out after serving about 16 months. He was said to be hard to work with, and as a result, seven of his cabinet ministers quit and called him incompetent.

Tupper had the shortest tenure of the four unlucky men. He was prime minister for 68 days and promptly lost an election to Sir Wilfred Laurier, a Liberal.

"He is our shortest-running prime minister. These guys just couldn't get it together. I think the Canadian population at that time just had enough of it and they voted in Laurier. It went from the Conservatives to the Liberals," said Scott.

He added the project was an enjoyable one for him and encouraged people to take a close look at the men.

"When this is all finished, come take a look around and see all the little details. It tells a story."

Scott also became emotional at the end

of his speech.

"This one's for Jim. We miss him."

Jim Rodger, one of the founders of the Prime Ministers Path, died in May 2024 from pancreatic cancer. Alison Rodger, his widow, is a member of the current steering committee and also spoke at the event.

"For me, this is much more than the return of a collection of sculptures. It is the continuation of a vision that my late husband ... helped bring to life. Jim was deeply involved from its inception through its development and right up to the difficult decision to dismantle the path in 2021."

She added her late husband would have been incredibly proud to attend the event.

"He knew that conversations were taking place about the possibility of reinstating the path. He knew there was hope it might happen, but he never knew this day would actually come. I have often wished he could have known and yet, standing here today, I feel somehow that he does know."

In April 2026, council agreed to lease the nine statues to CreateScape for 20 years at \$2 per year and authorized their placement in the park behind the township administration complex. Council also approved covering reinstallation costs up to \$78,000, offset by donations received for the project.

Before the current steering committee, a 12-member community working group met from October 2024 through April 2025 as part of the township's renewed engagement process. It reviewed public feedback and produced the recommendations that ultimately led council to vote unanimously in July 2025 to reinstall the statues.

Wilmot Mayor Natasha Salonen acknowledged the presence of several protestors who also attended the event.

"I would like to acknowledge that there are people gathered elsewhere in our park today to express views that differ from our own. Freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are fundamental rights in Canada."

The protestors remained silent until the ceremony was over, when they addressed the crowd over their own sound system.

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Pullen carries on family tradition as new Fall Fair Ambassador

Continued from page 1

The judges said the competition remained close among all three contestants right to the end and congratulated each of them on a job well done.

Pullen was officially crowned by outgoing 2025-2026 Tavistock Fall Fair Ambassador Brooklyn Ross, beginning her year representing the fair and the Tavistock community.



Outgoing 2025-2026 Tavistock Fall Fair Ambassador Brooklyn Ross, right, crowns Sophie Pullen as the 2026-2027 ambassador Friday night at Memorial Hall. (GARY WEST PHOTOS)



All three contestants in this year's Tavistock Fall Fair Ambassador competition received bouquets of roses from their sponsors. From left are Cassidy Heintz, sponsored by the Opti-Mrs. of Tavistock; 2026-2027 Tavistock Fall Fair Ambassador Sophie Pullen, sponsored by the Princess Elizabeth Women's Institute; and Charlee Harvey, sponsored by the Optimist Club of Tavistock.

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Seatbelt offences concern local OPP detachment following September long weekend blitz

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

It was another busy long weekend for the Oxford detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) throughout Oxford County.

From Friday, Sept. 4, to Monday, Sept. 7, members of the Oxford OPP participated in another long-weekend traffic initiative targeting unsafe drivers along with other West Region detachments.

While responding to more than 200 calls for service, officers charged 41 drivers with speeding, 30 occupants with failing to wear a seatbelt, two drivers with distracted driving and two drivers with impaired driving.

"I can't get over the number of seatbelt charges. I just don't understand," said Oxford OPP media relations Const. Randi Crawford. "That's a lot of people in one long weekend to be caught not wearing a seatbelt. That doesn't even include the people not wearing seatbelts who weren't ticketed."

She added if there is more than one person in a vehicle, the risk of injury or death greatly increases if someone isn't strapped in.

"It's not just a matter of your life. You are then a projectile inside that vehicle if you are involved in a collision. You could hurt or kill someone else. It's often the difference between life and death."

Crawford added she was surprised there were no stunt driving charges laid in the county but at the same time, concerned

DETACHMENT	SPEEDING CHARGES	SEATBELT CHARGES	DISTRACTED DRIVING	IMPAIRED DRIVING	STUNT DRIVING
Brant	86	0	0	2	1
Haldimand	24	3	0	1	1
Essex	165	14	2	14	0
Huron	52	0	0	3	0
South Bruce	88	2	0	2	1
Grey Bruce	45	16	0	5	1
Lambton	62	3	0	5	2
Perth	55	3	0	6	5
Norfolk	53	5	1	0	3
Elgin	52	21	1	0	3
Middlesex	163	22	4	6	11
Oxford	41	30	2	2	0
Wellington	118	53	1	6	3
TOTAL	1,004	172	11	52	37

about the number of speeders caught.

"There are a lot of Oxford roads people like to drive really fast on. Forty-one speeding charges; that's still significant for a long weekend, and we are still seeing impaired drivers. We try to share safety messages with the public and we don't want to give tickets or see people involved in collisions. If everyone would do their part and slow down a bit, we could see much lower numbers."

An obviously frustrated Crawford said some people need to learn the hard way.

"It's not until something very bad happens to them or someone they know

decides to wear their seatbelt or slow down. I'm all ears if anyone has any suggestions on what more we can do to get the word out. Until then, for those who are driving safely, thank you for doing that and leading by example. I hope everyone else follows suit, sooner or later."

Crawford is also the OPP's community safety officer and spends much of her time speaking with residents in Oxford. What she hears from residents is there are many more drivers on the same number of roads in the county.

"We have so many people on the roads, and the more people you have driving, the

higher the risk of collisions happening. But again, if we all do our part and everyone is obeying the law and driving safe, smart and sober, we can all have a harmless drive."

She added there is no excuse when it comes to bad driving habits, and people need to become more self-aware and take responsibility and ownership for their actions.

"Don't be thankful you've gotten lucky so far and make those good habit changes now before it's too late."

The West Region OPP also includes detachments in Brant, Elgin, Essex, Grey-Bruce, Haldimand, Huron, Lambton, Middlesex, Norfolk, Perth, South Bruce and Wellington. The regional headquarters is in London.

West Region officers laid over 1,000 speeding charges during the Labour Day traffic campaign. This year's traffic safety education and enforcement campaign targeted the "big four" bad driving behaviours: aggressive driving, failure to wear a seatbelt, distracted driving and impaired driving. Police say these remain the leading contributing factors to death, injury and property damage on Ontario roads and highways.

During the campaign, officers conducted 2,330 traffic stops and laid 2,142 charges. In 2025, there were 2,155 traffic stops with 1,601 charges laid. One thousand and four of those were tickets for speeding, while 37 drivers were nabbed for stunt driving and 172 for not wearing a seatbelt. 52 drivers were charged with impaired driving.

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Martin seeking second term in Wilmot's fourth ward

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

Steven Martin is looking for residents' support to serve another term on Wilmot Township council.

"I believe that I am a good listener and am willing to collaborate with everyone on council. I do listen to people in the community and to my colleagues on council. I find the discussions to be important and work on making decisions that are based on the group conversations as well as the information that has been given to us. I am seeking re-election for this reason, and I believe that I can help make good decisions with the other elected officials."

Martin added the budget is important, as is continuing to work on financial stability.

"There have been some tax increases in the last four years, but we have been building reserves so that money can be in place in the future for the infrastructure needed. In my first year on council, I was asking questions about reserves when I learned Wilmot Township had one of the lowest levels of reserves in the province."

He said Wilmot Township had been on the lower end of taxes across the province, and now it is in the middle or average compared to other municipalities of similar size and location in the province.

Martin added the Region of Waterloo's purchase of prime agricultural land in the township wasn't something he expected but it is something council has to deal with.

"I would say that I was caught off guard by the mega-site, or 770 acres. This topic

has been a difficult one and continues to be on the minds of many people. When I was elected, I did not anticipate this topic. At the same time, I believe that we have to promote business and find ways of increasing our tax revenue from commercial and industrial businesses so we can have the revenue to support our infrastructure."

He said protecting farmland is important, and further density in settlement areas is a significant consideration.

Martin explained he would continue to act with integrity if re-elected.

"I see myself as a person with integrity, taking people's concerns seriously, and wanting to follow the rules of the Municipal Act. I look forward to working collaboratively with the rest of council if I am elected for another term."



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Steven Martin is hoping for another term on Wilmot Township council serving Ward 4.

Krista Straus aims to keep Wilmot a great place to live

AMANDA NELSON

Gazette Reporter

Krista Straus decided to run for Wilmot council Ward 4 because she believes it's a great place to live and she wants to make sure it stays that way.

"My roots are in Wilmot," she said. "My family has a history of farming and I still have family that farm in the area or work in agriculture. I grew up here in New Hamburg, my parents still live here, and my husband and I are raising our two sons in town. I get to see the township through the eyes of three generations."

Straus said through her experience as a forestry technician for a local municipality, she has gained firsthand insight into how municipalities operate, how decisions are made and the many challenges they face.

"What has been happening at the township and regional council is not new to me, as I have been actively following both for the past few years," she said.

She said the biggest issue facing Wilmot is affordability and says rising property taxes and the cost of living, including housing, are putting pressure on residents and businesses. She said she wants to implement a "Made in Wilmot" strategy for economic growth.

"Economic growth is important," she said. "We have many businesses owned and operated by local people, and we should be doing more to support entrepreneurs, small and medium-sized businesses, and agricultural businesses. There have been a few economic development strategies made in the region, which are valuable, but they lack a true focus on Wilmot."

Straus also believes there is a need to protect farmland, protect groundwater and look after the environment.

"In order to protect farmland, we need to make sure farmers and agricultural businesses can continue to thrive," she said. "I would research, stay engaged, create and support policies and decisions that help agriculture thrive, reduce unnecessary pressures on farmers, protect farmland and resources needed to keep this vital sector strong for future generations."

"I would continue to be engaged with other levels of government with regard to protecting our groundwater. We currently have a sustainability co-ordinator to help with environmental initiatives. It can be a great way to reduce emissions and find cost savings through reduced energy consumption."

Straus said she plans to address the budget and the need for long-term financial

planning, and also address future concerns such as data centres, as well as the region's proposed 770-acre industrial mega site, which she does not support.

"Every decision made by council should have the budget in mind," she said. "I believe the long-term costs of every decision should be looked at to truly determine if we can afford it. We need better engagement with the community on our budget. Our 10-year capital plan needs to be updated yearly, and priorities need to be set."

Straus believes a councillor's role is to engage with the community, listen to them to understand community issues, identify solutions and gather ideas to put forward for discussion.

"A councillor should be aware of what other levels of government are doing," she said. "A councillor should also engage with other municipalities and other levels of government to share ideas and solutions. Above all else, I want to make sure decisions are reflective of Wilmot."

Residents may see Straus out knocking on doors or at fall fairs and debates. She encourages people to say hello.

Straus can be reached at straus4council@gmail.com or on Facebook.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Krista Straus is running for Wilmot council with a focus on affordability, economic growth and protecting Wilmot's farmland and groundwater.



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Louis talks affordability measures as feds continue gas tax holiday

Interprovincial trade barriers continue to be an issue

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

Kitchener-Conestoga MP Tim Louis said his government is taking steps to make life more affordable for Canadians.

Louis, who has the long title of parliamentary secretary to the president of the King's Privy Council for Canada and minister responsible for Canada-United States trade, intergovernmental affairs, internal trade and one Canadian economy, recently announced the temporary suspension of the federal fuel excise tax would continue until Jan. 31, 2027. The government is also applying 50 per cent of the regular excise tax rate from Feb. 1 through March 31, 2027.

"Municipal vehicles keep our roads safe, clear snow and support the essential services residents rely on every day. Lowering the cost of fueling these vehicles helps municipalities manage their operating expenses and limit the pressure on local property taxpayers," said Louis.

The federal fuel excise tax was temporarily suspended on April 20, saving Canadians 10 cents per litre on gasoline and unleaded aviation gasoline, 11 cents per litre on leaded aviation gasoline, and four cents per litre on diesel and aviation fuel.

"Our government is taking practical steps to reduce costs while investing in long-term prosperity. Extending fuel tax relief is one of the measures helping families, workers and businesses navigate global economic uncertainty," he said.

Louis said the trickle-down effect of high gasoline prices will not only help people at the pumps, but also those living in rural areas. He added the government has taken several measures to make life



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Kitchener-Conestoga MP Tim Louis was joined by Gary Anandasangaree, the minister of public safety, in Brantford recently to announce the federal government's decision to extend the pause on the federal fuel excise tax.

more affordable for those who need it.

"This is not the answer; it's part of the solution to help with affordability. We also have the Canada Grocery and Essentials Benefit, affordable child care and dental care, and we lowered taxes for 22 million Canadians. On their own, each one can help, but compounded, we're doing what's in our control."

The economy is currently extremely volatile as tariffs and trade disputes continue to have a negative effect. Louis explained the government has a two-pronged plan to help.

"We are providing investment capital liquidity to businesses, particularly small

and medium-sized businesses, and protecting Canadian workers, especially in the tariff-affected sectors in southwestern Ontario. At the same time, we need to expand our trade with other countries."

He added the government has signed trade agreements with several countries in the last year and a half, and he is part of the conversation to break down interprovincial trade barriers, a process that has been cumbersome and largely unsuccessful to date.

"Part of my portfolio is to work on trade within Canada and be our own best customer. We need to do all of these things at the same time; this is not sequential. These

are the things that are in our control."

The federal barriers to trade between the provinces have been removed and Louis said now it's time for the provinces to do their part.

"Now we're sitting down with the provinces and territories. Minister Dominic LeBlanc and I just came back from the Committee of Internal Trade meetings where we had representatives and premiers at the table. We worked chapter by chapter on the barriers which fall under goods, services and labour mobility."

He added there has been some protectionism from different sectors in some provinces, but he believes there is a will to work towards solutions.

"We want to keep things simple with regulations in the transportation and labour mobility sectors. There are things we can do to make sure workers can go where the work is, goods can move freely throughout the country and customers can benefit from buying anything anywhere in Canada."

The government has also cancelled the consumer carbon tax and brought in GST relief for first-time homebuyers of new homes.

"We cannot control the global forces driving up prices, but we can control how we respond. We are cutting taxes to help Canadians manage everyday expenses while building a stronger, more independent economy. That is how we build Canada strong for all," said Louis.

He also explained it is a tremendous privilege and a big responsibility to be in his current role with the federal government, but said his priority remains representing the people of Kitchener-Conestoga.

Wellesley eyes Line 86, Manser Road for first police CCTV cameras

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Wellesley Township could soon become the latest municipality in Waterloo Region to join the Waterloo Regional Police Service's (WRPS) closed-circuit television and automated licence plate recognition program.

At Wellesley's Sept. 8 committee of the whole meeting, WRPS Insp. Jarrett Brown presented a proposed location at Line 86 and Manser Road for the first phase of the program in the township. The intersection would have two bullet-style cameras capable of capturing high-quality video and reading licence plates of vehicles travelling through the area.

Brown said WRPS selected the location using an evidence-based approach that included a three-year review of crime data, calls for service, areas experiencing

increased crime and disorder, and community concerns.

"When we examined crime trends in the area surrounding the intersection, we identified incidents involving break and enters, commercial thefts, property damage, fraud, thefts and stolen vehicles," Brown said.

While the intersection does not have the township's highest concentration of police calls, Brown said its location on a major transportation corridor connecting Wellesley with Woolwich Township and North Perth gives it investigative value.

The intersection also has the electrical infrastructure needed to operate the cameras, something Brown said can be difficult to find in rural areas.

The cameras would not be used for speed enforcement, continuously monitored or used for routine surveillance. If police are

investigating a crime, the system can be used to search for licence plates or vehicles and determine where and when they passed cameras throughout the region.

Brown said information not required for an investigation would automatically be deleted after 30 days. Access is restricted to authorized personnel through the WRPS real-time operations centre and all access is logged and auditable.

The program was launched in June and, at the end of its first reporting period, had 12 operational locations in Waterloo, Kitchener, Cambridge and North Dumfries. During its first 44 days, investigators made 19 requests for CCTV and automated licence plate recognition evidence.

Coun. Derek Brick asked how quickly cameras could be installed in Wellesley.

"They could be up in a matter of weeks

once we have a legal agreement in place," Brown said, noting permits and road-safety plans would first need to be completed.

Coun. Claude Hergott also questioned how police would narrow down potential suspect vehicles following a crime. Brown said investigators can search using information such as a vehicle's make, model, colour, full or partial licence plate and the time it travelled through an area.

Following the presentation, CAO Rik Louwagie said township staff had no objections to the CCTV or automated licence plate recognition program and sought council direction to continue working with WRPS on an agreement.

With council's support, staff will now work with police to prepare a memorandum of understanding for the first phase of the program, which will return to council for approval.

Crosshill residents call for action on short-term rental disturbances

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

After hearing from Crosshill residents who say guests at a neighbouring short-term rental have repeatedly disrupted their ability to enjoy their homes, Wellesley Township council has directed staff to examine potential regulations and enforcement options.

Tyler Murdock, Anita Hergott, Christina Hergott and Kevin Hergott appeared before council's committee of the whole meeting Sept. 8 to describe problems they say have accompanied the operation of an Airbnb-style rental in their neighbourhood, including excessive late-night noise, large groups, intoxicated guests and limited options for timely enforcement.

Murdock said some gatherings have involved dozens of people, with music and shouting continuing as late as 5 a.m.

"As a homeowner, I do not believe it is reasonable that I don't get to enjoy my own backyard," Murdock said.

He stressed residents are not seeking a ban on short-term rentals but want regulations that protect surrounding properties and the rural character of the township.

Christina Hergott said the constant turnover of guests has changed how comfortable she feels at her own home.

"There have been nights when guests were screaming, shouting and playing music so loudly that I could hear it clearly inside my house with all of the windows closed," she said.

She also described occasions when interactions with guests left her uncomfortable being alone outside.

"I never imagined that a constant rotation of strangers would change how I feel about being at home," she said.

Kevin Hergott raised concerns about

whether septic systems are designed to accommodate large groups and suggested the township explore alternatives to providing its own around-the-clock bylaw enforcement, including sharing enforcement resources with neighbouring municipalities or contracting the service.

The delegates pointed to the City of Waterloo as one model Wellesley could consider.

Under Waterloo's rules, rentals of 30 days or less require a short-term rental licence and must be owner-occupied. Short-term rentals are limited to five bedrooms, stays of no more than 30 days and a maximum of 275 rental days annually.

Mayor Joe Nowak called the residents' concerns "a bit of an eye-opener" and supported having staff examine how other municipalities regulate short-term rentals.

"I think we should maybe direct staff at this point to do a review," Nowak said. "I think there's something that should be done. I'm not sure what legally we can do."

Coun. Claude Hergott asked that the review also examine options for 24-hour bylaw coverage, including potentially sharing enforcement resources with other municipalities.

Staff cautioned a comprehensive review will take time and involve several departments. Potential considerations include bylaw enforcement, licensing, fire safety, building code requirements and other regulatory tools.

Council ultimately directed staff to conduct the broader review and report back with options.

"Give staff a little bit of time to do some work," Nowak told the delegates. "I guarantee they'll get back to you and we'll come up with a way forward."



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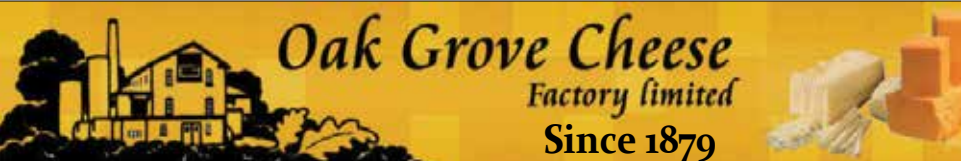


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WIRIWG to host vigil to honour the impact of residential schools

AMANDA NELSON

Gazette Reporter

Sept. 30 marks the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day in Canada.

The Wilmot Indigenous Relations Interfaith Working Group (WIRIWG) is holding a vigil at Trinity Lutheran Church, 23 Church St., New Hamburg, commencing at 5:30 p.m.

The vigil is for everyone to attend to honour the impact of residential schools on Indigenous communities in the region.

"Orange Shirt Day is to honour Indigenous children that went to residential school and promote awareness of what they went through," said Gladys Bender, WIRIWG member. "There were thousands of children, and some of them didn't come home; so many of them didn't come home. That's a piece of history that is important for us to understand and that this continues to impact Indigenous people. There are still people living who experienced residential schools. It wasn't about their education; it was about taking away their culture."

The event will take place in the green space on Peel Street and will host speakers and opportunities for reflection.

WIRIWG members emphasize the importance of settlers acknowledging this day to

remember past injustices and foster reconciliation, in line with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation's Calls to Action.

"I think it's important for us as settlers to understand and to have empathy for what Indigenous people experienced and went through so that we can be good neighbours to them," said Bender.

The WIRIWG fosters respectful, understanding relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in the Waterloo Region. Their goal is to work towards reconciliation.

"The TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) has 94 calls to action for churches, faith communities and schools," said Bender. "This lets us understand the things that we can do to try to work towards hearing the truth and working towards reconciliation."

Formed in collaboration with four Wilmot churches, the group aims to improve relationships between Indigenous Peoples and Canadians through educational events and community projects.

These efforts include creating a community blanket, presenting on Indigenous history and hiring an Indigenous Elder to support the cultural needs of local Indigenous residents.

All are welcome to attend the vigil on Sept. 30.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

WIRIWG will host a vigil to honour the impact of residential schools later this month. Pictured are Joanne Green and Gladys Bender participating in a smudging at last year's event. All are welcome to attend.

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STRATFORD NISSAN



Fifth annual Tavistock Family and Friends Bike Rally celebrates local winners

DANA MACGREGOR

Submitted to the Gazette

The Tavistock Fair hosted its fifth annual Tavistock Family and Friends Bike Rally on Sunday, Sept. 13.

The event, convened by Dana and Jamey McGregor, ran from 1:30-2:30 p.m. and featured an obstacle design contest, a bike decorating contest and an opportunity for participants to ride through an autumn-themed obstacle course.

This year's course featured autumn leaves and pumpkins, including the Hulcoop ramp, pumpkin fields, leafy corridors and a pond feature organized by Jamey McGregor. Several families contributed creative obstacles: the Ropp family brought a rolling hills obstacle, the Wagler family provided a leaf-themed teeter-totter, the Schumm family contributed a sparkling ramp and the Hulcoop family brought an obstacle ramp with a pumpkin feature that moved as riders passed over it. Oslo Schumm was selected by draw as the obstacle design winner and received \$100.

Bike decorating contest winners Chloe



(PHOTO COURTESY OF DANA MACGREGOR)

Participants in the 2026 Bike Rally bike decorating contest included, from left, Reuben Hulcoop, four, Levi Hulcoop, six, \$10 winner, Simeon Hulcoop, seven, Kaden Ropp, nine, Westynn Ropp, six, \$10 winner, Chloe Hulcoop, nine, and Oslo Schumm, four. Missing from the photo is Chloe Hazeleger, nine, also a \$10 winner.

Hulcoop, Levi Hulcoop and Chloe Hazeleger each received \$10 by draw. Bicycle obstacle course winners Westynn Ropp, Isaac Benbow, Izaiah Peprah and Chloe Hazeleger also each received \$10 by draw. The \$100 grand prize, open to

all bike rally participants, was awarded to Izaiah Peprah.

Participants who preregistered before Wednesday at midnight received a treat bag courtesy of Musical Moments Piano and Theory, which also sponsored the

event. The Tavistock Fair Bike Rally 2026 hosted 20 participants. The Tavistock Fair extends its thanks to all participants and their families; they made this year's bike rally a success.



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TAVISTOCK FALL FAIR



(CONNIE JUNKER PHOTO)

Rachel Gummerson pulls her nephew Everett Colburn, dressed as a pumpkin, in their prize-winning “Pick of the Patch” entry during the Tavistock Fall Fair parade Saturday. The decorated wagon was one of many entries celebrating this year’s fall fair.



(CONNIE JUNKER PHOTO)

This bright orange side-by-side was perfectly suited to this year’s Tavistock Fall Fair theme, “Autumn Leaves and Pumpkins Please,” as it made its way through Saturday’s parade.



(CONNIE JUNKER PHOTO)

These young Tavistock “farmers of the future” were a welcome sight as they took part in the annual Tavistock Fall Fair parade through the downtown.



(CONNIE JUNKER PHOTO)

Young participants wave to the crowds lining the streets of Tavistock during Saturday’s annual fall fair parade.



(CONNIE JUNKER PHOTO)

The New Hamburg Concert Band entertains spectators as it marches through downtown Tavistock during Saturday’s Tavistock Fall Fair parade.



(DIANE DANEN PHOTO)

Back to front: Sisters Liv, three, and Leyton Yule, seven, along with friend Malaya Aspden, seven, enjoy the Little Hobby Hill Farm Petting Zoo.



(DIANE DANEN PHOTO)

Twins Bennet and Levi Stock are pictured with their parents, Gordon and Megan Stock. The twins participated in the Baby show and were the recipients of gifts donated by Gloria Wettlaufer and the Tavistock Agricultural Society.



(DIANE DANEN PHOTO)

Anne and Andy Hook of Kitchener bought and restored their 1934 Studebaker Commander in 1990. Since then, they have been participating in local car shows, often taking their classic car to seniors’ homes throughout the area.



(DIANE DANEN PHOTO)

The boys zero to six months category was the largest group at the 43rd Annual Baby Show at the Tavistock Fall Fair. Walter Danen (first on the left), son of Luke and Shelby Danen, won for the longest finger in the group, while Bennet Stock (fifth from the left), son of Megan and Gordon Stock, had the curliest hair.



TAVISTOCK FALL FAIR



(DIANE DANEN PHOTO)

Three generations of the McGregor family are pictured with the 1989 Ford Mustang Cobra convertible owned by Karen and James McGregor. James, his son Scott and grandson Liam live just outside of Tavistock.



(DIANE DANEN PHOTO)

Eric G. Martin with Hawk and Alisha Wilson, founder of Transitions Acres, with Sky, tend to the horses. Transitions Acres brought the Ojibwe Spirit Ponies to the Tavistock Fall Fair and offered pony rides throughout the weekend.



(DIANE DANEN PHOTO)

Connie Junker enjoys a pony ride at the Tavistock Fall Fair.



(DIANE DANEN PHOTO)

The lawn tractor races continue to be a popular event at the fair each year.



(DIANE DANEN PHOTO)

Three volunteers from the audience were invited to take part in the lawn tractor races at the Tavistock Fall Fair this past weekend. Once on the track, they were presented with push mowers instead of the motorized lawn tractors they were expecting. Being good sports, they accepted the challenge and took off running!

Pony rides prove popular addition to Tavistock Fall Fair

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

The Tavistock Agricultural Society wanted to add something unique for younger visitors to this year's Tavistock Fall Fair, and pony rides proved to be a big hit.

The new attraction gave children aged two and older an opportunity to climb into the saddle and experience a pony ride, many for the first time.

Throughout the fair, youngsters lined up for their turn to ride while parents and grandparents stood nearby taking photos and capturing memories of the experience.

The mid-sized ponies proved especially popular with the fair's youngest visitors, who had the chance to feel like cowboys and cowgirls as they were led around the grassy area next to the horse-show ring.

With plenty of smiles from riders and their families, the new attraction added another family-friendly activity to this year's fall fair.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

A young Tavistock girl enjoys a pony ride while one of the handlers leads the pinto-coloured pony around the grassy area next to the horse-show ring during the Tavistock Fall Fair Saturday.



TAVISTOCK FALL FAIR



Celebrating agriculture and family traditions



(GARY WEST PHOTOS)

David Johnson of Thorndale drives his unicorn hitch of Haflingers from Nuview Stables during the horse show at the Tavistock Fall Fair. Johnson and his horses are familiar competitors and prize winners at the annual fair. The Johnson family also milks a large herd of purebred Holstein dairy cows in Middlesex County, continuing an agricultural tradition that would have made David Johnson's late father, Gerald Johnson, proud.



Haflingers, polished wagons and the jingle of silver and black harnesses provided plenty of entertainment for spectators during the horse show at this year's Tavistock Fall Fair.



The peewee class is always a popular part of the cattle show at the Tavistock Fall Fair, giving some of the youngest exhibitors a chance to enter the show ring, often with a little help from their older siblings.



Three generations of the Weldrick family continue a longstanding tradition of showing calves at the Tavistock Fall Fair. From left are Jennifer, Rylee, Bryan, Sharon and Bruce Weldrick, with Liam in front showing his Jersey calf in the peewee class. The family, from the 16th Line of East Zorra-Tavistock, rarely misses the Sept



Grand Champion Heavy Horse honours went to Gord Doughty of Jarvis. Pictured from left are Donna Mogk, Cindy Mogk, Caitlin Dance, judge Andrea Thompson of Holstein, Ont., Doughty and Ken Mogk.



TAVISTOCK FALL FAIR



Sienna Hamilton named Tavistock Fall Fair Junior Ambassador

Sienna Hamilton, left, was named the winner of the Junior Ambassador competition during opening night of this year's Tavistock Fall Fair. Hamilton is congratulated by Charlee Harvey following the competition.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Tavistock Optimists keep the fries frying at fall fair



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Tavistock Optimist Club members kept the fries frying during the Tavistock Fall Fair. In front, from left, are Steve Yantzi and Eugene Bender. In the trailer, from left, are Rob Van Boekel, Grant Meadows, Chris Holdsworth, Kent Killing, Adam Bender, Alex Meadows, Danny Roth and Eric Bender. Missing from the photo is club president Jessie Weicker.

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

As opening night of the Tavistock Fall Fair began winding down Friday, members of the Tavistock Optimist Club finally had a chance to catch their breath after serving up their popular fries to hungry fairgoers.

The club expected to go through hundreds of pounds of locally grown potatoes over the fall fair weekend, transforming them into the homemade fries that have become a popular treat at the annual event.

This year has also been a significant one

for the Optimist Club, which recently surpassed its 50th-anniversary fundraising goal of \$50,000.

Money raised will support an addition to the club's park pavilion, replacement of the lights at its ball field and other upgrades.

Club members thanked the Tavistock community for helping them reach the fundraising milestone and supporting the Optimists throughout their anniversary year.

President Jessie Weicker also thanked residents and local businesses for t

Mogk family honoured for contributions to Tavistock Fall Fair horse show



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Ken Mogk, front, is joined at the Tavistock Fall Fair heavy horse show by, from left in the second row, Jarrett, Donna and Christine Mogk. At back are exhibitor Melissa Keefner of Jarvis, Butch Mogk and draft-horse judge Andrea Thompson of Holstein. Donna Mogk has taken the reins organizing and managing the show, continuing a longstanding Mogk family tradition that also included her late mother, Carol Mogk.

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

The heavy horse show continues to be a popular tradition at the Tavistock Fall Fair, drawing draft-horse exhibitors and spectators to the ringside each year.

Much of the credit for the show's continued success goes to Tavistock's Mogk family, which has carried on a tradition that began many years ago.

Ken Mogk remains proud to see his family continue its involvement with the draft-horse show and help ensure the popular fall fair event continues for future generations.

Donna Mogk has since taken the reins in organizing and managing the show, continuing a family tradition that also included her late mother, Carol Mogk.

The family remembers Carol for always being there to lend a hand throughout the years and for the role she played in making the horse show a successful part of the Tavistock Fall Fair.

This year, the Mogk family was joined at the show by friends, exhibitors and those responsible for judging the draft-horse competition, all helping to continue a longstanding agricultural tradition in Tavistock.

Township of Wellesley to celebrate 175 years in 2027

WILMOT-TAVISTOCK GAZETTE STAFF

thewtgazette@gmail.com

In 2027, the Township of Wellesley will celebrate its 175th anniversary with a year-long series of events celebrating the people, places and traditions that have shaped the community since its founding in 1852.

The anniversary celebration will honour the township's rich agricultural heritage, vibrant rural character, strong sense of community and the generations of residents who have contributed to Wellesley's growth and success.

"As we celebrate 175 years, we have an opportunity to reflect on our past, recognize the people who built this community and look ahead to an exciting future," said Mayor Joe Nowak. "This milestone belongs to everyone who calls the Township of Wellesley home, and we look forward to bringing residents, families, businesses

and visitors together throughout the year."

Two signature events will anchor the anniversary celebrations:

Orchard Music Festival – Aug. 13-14, 2027 at the Township of Wellesley Recreation Complex

The Orchard Music Festival will be presented by the Township of Wellesley in collaboration with Spottydawg Productions, the team behind the popular Hayloft Music Festival in North Perth and Tailgate Music Festival in West Perth.

The festival will transform the Township of Wellesley Recreation Complex into a vibrant outdoor entertainment destination for a celebration of music, community and summer fun. Featuring a lineup of popular artists, food vendors and more, the festival is expected to attract thousands of residents and visitors from across the region and beyond.

Hockey Showcase Weekend – Oct. 2-3, 2027 at the Bill Gies Recreation Centre

Hockey fans will have the opportunity to celebrate local talent and community spirit during the Hockey Showcase Weekend. The event will feature local players and teams and will be highlighted by a special Maple Leafs Alumni Game, bringing an exciting piece of hockey history to the Township.

Community Grant Program

To encourage broad community participation, the township will offer a special 175th Anniversary Community Grant Program to support residents, community groups, organizations and volunteers interested in hosting events and activities as part of the celebration. The program embraces a grassroots approach, empowering community members to share their ideas, showcase local traditions and create

opportunities that reflect the unique character, history and spirit of the Township of Wellesley.

By supporting locally driven initiatives, the township hopes to ensure that the 175th anniversary is celebrated not only through major signature events, but through meaningful community-led experiences across all corners of the municipality.

From its agricultural roots and thriving rural economy to its strong volunteer spirit and close-knit communities, the Township of Wellesley has remained a place where people come together to support one another and build a high quality of life. The 175th anniversary will celebrate that legacy while looking ahead to the next chapter in the township's story.

Additional details about anniversary events and programming will be announced throughout 2026 and 2027.

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Nelson Dusky celebrates 25 years at Nith Terrace Seniors' Apartments

AMANDA NELSON

Gazette Reporter

Nith Terrace Seniors' Apartments on Waterloo Street in New Hamburg is a small but mighty part of the community, and although the building is self-governed, one person keeps the entire property running smoothly – Nelson Dusky.

Dusky will be celebrating his 25th anniversary at Nith Terrace this October, and current board of directors chair John Hanson says he couldn't do it without Dusky and congratulates him on 25 years.

"On behalf of the board of directors, I want to express our most sincere appreciation for the dedication and professionalism that Nelson brings to the job at Nith Terrace," he said. "He approaches every day with a positive attitude and a commitment to a quality experience for the residents."

Dusky started working for the property in 1991, after Jim Murray hired him for routine maintenance.

Since then, Dusky has taken on more responsibilities and now handles everything from rent and emergencies to refurbishments, with tenants contacting him directly about any property-related issues.

"I did the routine maintenance, like lawn mowing, kept up with plumbing issues and kept up the property," he said. "And then as time went on and Jim Murray

passed away, the new board of directors passed more responsibility onto me over the years, and I now pretty well look after everything."

Before Nith Terrace, Dusky worked 35 years for the Kauffman family as a fleet supervisor and oversaw the family properties. Later, he started his own business as an industrial training consultant for forklifts, lifting equipment and safety procedures, which he ran until 2016. He also worked at Morningside retirement village in maintenance and home warranties.

With his broad knowledge of management, home maintenance and property management, Dusky was the perfect fit to take on the 30-unit complex on Waterloo Street; however, he says his favourite part of the job is the people.

"It's the people. It really is," he said. "There are all different kinds of people who live there. It's talking to them and just learning all about their lives."

Over the years, Dusky says the home has changed and so have the people. Now, more local people live in the building, and Dusky says that makes it feel more like family.

"As the years went by, more people from New Hamburg, Baden, Tavistock filled the building," said Dusky. "We try to encourage that; Jim Murray tried to encourage locals to move there too. It's nice

because you know them and they know you, and they know each other. That's the biggest change I've noticed. They're more family oriented. Everybody sort of helps everybody."

The tenants have social clubs, dinners and regular get-togethers throughout the year, and as a thank-you, Dusky hosts an Oktoberfest party. A small fee is collected, which then goes toward a Christmas dinner for everyone in the building at no cost.

Dusky is 78 years young, and alongside his wife, Maralyn, he is thankful for all the years of travel and time spent with his family. He says his grown children help him around the house, such as opening and closing his pool, but he generally likes to keep busy and maintain things himself if he can.

"We went to Costa Rica and pretty well travelled the Caribbean," he said. "We did our share of travelling, but that's going to start to slow down now because of our health, but I'm glad to have Nith Terrace to keep me going."

Dusky says although his retirement looks a bit different, he believes it's vital for people looking to retire to keep busy, have a small job, volunteer and not retire in the winter.

"Being busy certainly keeps me healthy," he said. "As long as I have my health, I'm good, and I'll continue."



(AMANDA NELSON PHOTO)

Nelson Dusky is celebrating 25 years at Nith Terrace Seniors' Apartments this October. He says the people are his favourite part of the job.

"Never retire before winter," Dusky continued. "Always retire in the summertime. Summertime means you have lots to do. It's a slow process, a slow change from working all the time to retiring that way."

QUIZ TIME

BY JAKE GRANT

1. Who is lead singer of Pearl Jam?
2. What is the name of the AI chatbot developed by OpenAI?
3. What sport is featured in the television series Ted Lasso?
4. Which social media platform is known for its "For You" page?
5. What is the best-selling console of all time?
6. What is the name of the fictional city where Batman lives?
7. Which company owns Pixar?
8. Which famous toy has the slogan "You can be anything"?
9. What year did Canada fully abolish the death penalty?
10. Mach 1 is known as what?

Answers found on classified page

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ANNIVERSARY

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by PeterS 2026

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Answers found on classified page

OBITUARY

WETTLAUFER, Joyce Elaine (née Schwartzentruber) & Earl George



It is with profound sadness that the family announces the passing of Joyce Elaine Wettlaufer (née Schwartzentruber), who died peacefully on Saturday, July 4, 2026, at Brightshores Owen Sound at the age of 85, and her husband of more than 66 years, Earl George Wettlaufer, who passed

away suddenly and unexpectedly on July 8, 2026, in Wiarton, Ontario, just four days after Joyce's passing.

They leave behind a legacy that will be treasured by their children: Ron Wettlaufer (Miriam), Carol Murray, Dave Wettlaufer, Brian Wettlaufer (Michelle), and Elaine O'Hara (Shawn). They were proud grandparents to Leah, Rebecca, Kevin, Kayleigh, Morgan, Brooke, Caitlin, Regan, and Erin, and cherished great-grandparents to 17 great-grandchildren.

Joyce was predeceased by her parents, Allan and Winnifred Schwartzentruber; her brother, Jacob Schwartzentruber; and her son-in-law, Bill Murray. She is lovingly remembered by her siblings Nancy Livingston (Larry), Jim Schwartzentruber, and Bonnie Jokic (John); and by her sister-in-law, Nancy Schwartzentruber.

Earl was predeceased by his mother, Edna Mae Wettlaufer; his sister, Lorene Wettlaufer; her husband, Clarence; and his son-in-law, Bill Murray.

Earl dedicated many years of service to the City of Kitchener. He loved the outdoors and found great joy in spending time at the cottage and living in Red Bay.

Joyce devoted countless hours volunteering with the Wiarton Hospital Auxiliary and the Hepworth Legion, where she was so valued that they eventually hired her. She also enjoyed a long career in the office at Klassen Bronze. Above all else, she was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother whose kindness and caring touched everyone who knew her.

In keeping with their wishes, cremation has taken place. A celebration of their lives will be held on Saturday, September 26, 2026, at the Royal Canadian Legion, 65 Boullee Street, New Hamburg, from 2 – 4 p.m.

Arrangements have been entrusted to the Mark Jutzi Funeral Home, 291 Huron Street, New Hamburg.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations to Brightshores Wiarton Hospital or the Brightshores Owen Sound ICU would be appreciated and may be made through the funeral home.

Personal condolences may be shared with the family through the funeral home's website.

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



Sorry For Your Loss

OBITUARY

Eleanor “Jean” Wagler (Newcombe)



It is with heavy hearts that we announce the peaceful passing of Eleanor “Jean” Wagler (Newcombe) on September 6, 2026, at Waterloo Regional Health Network Midtown, surrounded by the love of her family, following a brief battle with pancreatic cancer.

Jean was born 77 years ago on July 20, 1949, in Chatham, Ontario, and was the beloved daughter of the late Gordon and Beatrice (Speed) Newcombe.

Jean was a cherished and loving mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. Her two sons and their families were truly the centre of her world, and she lived her life with an unwavering love and devotion to them. She will be deeply missed by her sons, Trevor Wagler and his children Sydney (Brad), Kolton (Kelly), and Leah (Nik), and Jeremy Wagler (Andrea) and their children Emily and Grace. She was a proud great-grandmother of Mia. Her love for her family was evident in the countless little ways she cared for them, supported them, and treasured every moment spent together.

Jean will also be lovingly remembered by her dear husband and the father of her children, Dale Wagler; her sister Julie (Ross Hooper); her sisters-in-law Mary Anne Newcombe, Judy Wagler, and Brenda Wagler; and by her many nieces, nephews, extended family members, and friends.

She was predeceased by her sisters, Doreen Penner and Marjorie (Gord Pfaff); her brother Harold Newcombe; her nephew Terry Newcombe; and her brother-in-law Clare Wagler.

Jean was a longtime attendee of Hillcrest Mennonite Church. She enjoyed the idea of travelling and dreamed of seeing more of the world, although she did not have the opportunity to travel as much as she would have liked. In many ways, however, Jean was happiest at home. She was a true homebody who found her greatest joy in the comfort of home and, most importantly, in having her family close by.

Jean enjoyed the simple pleasures of home and quiet time. She loved to get lost in a good book and could often be found doing word searches, enjoying the peacefulness of these little pastimes. She also had a special love for her dog, Bella, who was a cherished companion and brought her much comfort and happiness. These simple moments, spent in the comfort of home with Bella nearby, were among the things that brought Jean the greatest joy.

Her sons, grandchildren, and great-granddaughter were her greatest treasures. They were the centre of her world, and there was nowhere she would rather be than surrounded by the people she loved. Her gentle presence, caring heart, and unconditional love will remain in the hearts of her family forever.

Jean leaves behind a lifetime of love and memories that will be treasured by all who knew her. Though she will be deeply missed, her family takes comfort in knowing how profoundly she loved them and in the beautiful legacy of love she leaves behind.

“She made a home wherever her family was, and her greatest joy was simply being together.”

Cremation has taken place. A memorial visitation will be held at the Mark Jutzi Funeral Home, 291 Huron Street, New Hamburg, on Friday, September 25, 2026, from 5 – 8 p.m. A celebration of life will be held at the Puddicombe Banquet Hall on Sunday September 27, 2026, from 2 – 6 p.m. with words of remembrance spoken at 2:30 by Pastor Kevin Peters-Unrau. Interment will be held at Riverside Cemetery, New Hamburg.

As expressions of sympathy and in lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be given to Operation Smile, or National Service Dogs through the funeral home website and personal condolences can be left for the family by going to www.markjutzifuneralhomes.ca

The Old Gazettes

By Sydney Grant

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

September 9 - 16, 2021, Edition (5 years ago)

Siblings William, seven, Elizabeth, six, and Joseph, four, Hergott, with various back-to-school supplies such as highlighters, binders, scissors and lunch bags, which will be split equally between the Wellesley Township Backpack Program and the Wilmot Family Resource Centre. Along with their mother, Stephanie Hergott, the children hosted a bake sale at Edgewood Court in Wellesley on Sunday, Aug. 29, from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. The venture was a success, as they sold out, raised \$500 along with a tote full of donated supplies.

Local Wilmot-based cheese shop, Mountainoak Cheese, is celebrating two major milestones this month. Twenty-five years ago, on Sept. 6, Adam, his wife Hannie, and their children John, Liesbeth and Arjo Van Bergeijk left their farm in Holland and immigrated to their current location in New Hamburg. This month also marks 40 years that Adam and Hannie started making cheese in Holland. Adam and Hannie took over the Holland dairy farm from Adam's parents in 1976. In 1981, they both attended the renowned cheesemaker's school in Gouda, a centre of cheesemaking experience.

Everyone knows the phrase "Hop to it" as your parents might've told you during the course of your lifetime. But the boys of summer at the Tavistock Hop Company were busy last week doing exactly that, taking in the harvest. Hops, when dried, processed and pelleted will be used in the microbrewing of beer and spirits. The harvesting took place on the farm of Kyle and Julie Wynette, who run a hop yard along with partners Jeremy and Donna Bartlett. Eight different varieties have been har-

vested over the last couple of weeks.

September 14 - 21, 2011, Edition (15 years ago)

Scottish Highland Dancing has been of local interest for many years, especially in the Embro area where the Zorra Highland Games will be celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2012. Young Dancers bringing honour to the area include students of the Sim School of Highland Dance in Embro, owned and operated by Sherry Sim. A number of dancers attended the Scotdance Canada Championship Series in Antigonish, N.S., in July and represented the community with great pride.

After 41 years in business in Tavistock, Dr. Alan R. Low has sold his dentistry practice at 48 Woodstock St. N. Dr. Raphael Jankowski is the new owner of the Tavistock Dental Health Group and brings an experienced team of assistants and hygienists to the Tavistock office. He will not only be working with Dr. Low and Dr. Hans Skariah, but sharing the Tavistock practice with another associate, Dr. Prabdeep Sandhu.

September 11 - 18, 1996, Edition (30 years ago)

On Tuesday, Aug. 20, the annual Ladies Club Tournament was held at the Tavistock Golf Course. Winners were as follows: Diane Lichti, 34; Connie Werner, 35; Shirley Steinman, Marian Wells and Shirley Hyde all tied with 38. The Best yearly average was Connie Werner with 36. The most improved player for the season was Doreen Christian.

The second annual Tavistock Ministerial sponsored Youth Event was held at Tavistock Public School on Saturday, Sept. 14, with over 80 youth on 12 teams competing in a day-long volleyball tournament. The Eagles of Grace United Church, Tavistock, emerged as winners with a perfect 5-0 record defeating their fellow church youth, the Falcons, in the final. The hungry group devoured 24 pizzas from Casaroma Pizzeria during lunch break, as well as seven gallons of orange drink.

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The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette SPORTS

PJHL roundup: Firebirds perfect following PJHL season opening weekend

Braves win while Applejacks split

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

It may be very early in the Provincial Junior Hockey League (PJHL) season, but New Hamburg is sitting on top of the Doherty Division after a pair of weekend victories.

The Firebirds downed the Dorchester Dolphins 5-3 in their home opener on Friday on the strength of a pair of goals from Kaiden Cormier. The Kitchener Rangers U18 AA product played one game with the team last season.

Single markers went to Sean Chernyak,

Rhett Calder and Redden Hart, while Tate Davison and Cohen Van Zuilen had two assists each. New Hamburg was outshot 49 to 21, but Deklan Jermol stopped 46 shots to earn the win.

The Firebirds travelled to Wellesley on Saturday night and came away with a 4-3 win. Cormier again led the attack with two goals and an assist on Josh Soulliere's game-winning goal with 84 seconds left in the third period.

Hudson Parker led the Applejacks with a pair of goals with Kyle Morgan and Cooper Vickerman adding two assists each.

Wellesley bounced back on Sunday with a 4-1 win in Hespeler. The Shamrocks led 1-0 after 20 minutes, but the Applejacks stormed back with four goals in the second period. Cooper Vickerman scored twice and added an assist, with Kyler Morgan adding three assists. Hudson Parker and Tate McKenna added single markers.

Wellesley was outshot 38 to 33, but Brock Schaus was solid between the pipes, making 37 saves.

The Applejacks have two home games this weekend as they host Dorchester on Friday and Hespeler on Saturday. Both

games are set to start at 7:30 p.m.

The Tavistock Braves started their season on the road Friday night with a game in Norwich and earned a 4-1 victory. Newcomer Jacob Skuta led the attack with a pair of goals and an assist while Yann Raskin added one goal and two helpers. Evan Palubeski had two helpers while Carson Bernhardt scored a single marker.

The Braves will host New Hamburg on Friday night for their home opener at 7:30 p.m. The Firebirds are also in action Saturday night with a 7:30 p.m. start in Paris.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF TAVISTOCK BRAVES)

The Tavistock Braves were very visible at the fall fair last weekend. Here, former captain Marc Dionne poses with current captain Keaton Bartlett.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Kitchener-Conestoga MPP Mike Harris sponsored a community event before the Wellesley Applejacks home opener. Harris (centre) poses with team members before their 4-3 loss to the New Hamburg Firebirds.

Tavistock's Roth family earns respect behind the plate

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

As the 2026 fastball season begins to wind down, area players and fans are recognizing those who help keep the games running smoothly.

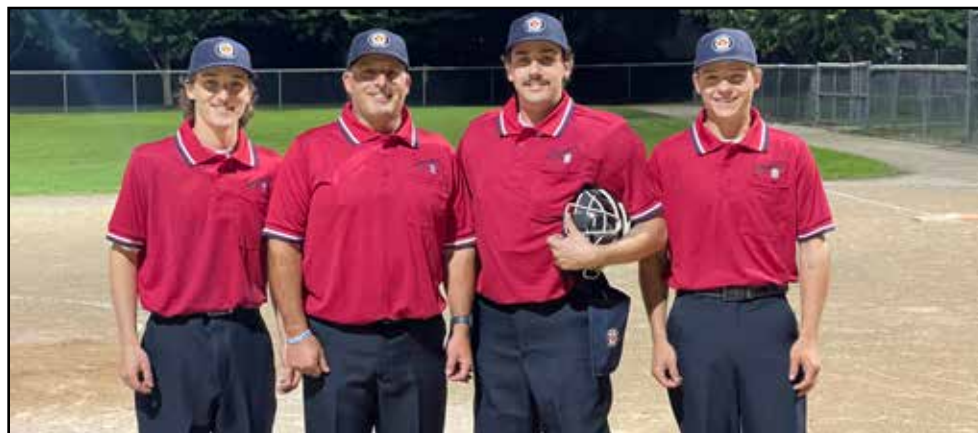
Tavistock's Dennis Roth and his sons Carter, Connor and Zach have become familiar faces behind the plate and on the basepaths, earning respect for their work as fastball umpires.

Umpiring is not always an easy job. Officials are tasked with making split-second calls and, at times, dealing with criticism from players and spectators.

The Roths are part of a larger group of umpires who have helped officiate games in Tavistock this season while also encouraging a younger generation to pick up the indicator and learn the job.

Among the younger umpires working games this year were Sydney Hall, Noah Leis, Camden Bartlett, Jack Pearson and Dakota Maue.

Dennis, Connor, Zach and Carter Roth



(GARY WEST PHOTOS)

Dennis Roth, second from left, is joined by his sons Carter, Connor and Zach, who have followed in their father's footsteps as fastball umpires. Dennis and his wife, Yvonne, not pictured, are proud to see their three sons earning respect as officials both locally and beyond.

were joined by Wayne Triemstra, Don Culbert, Jody Sutherland and Moe Carde in handling the majority of the men's games and games involving older age groups.

Under Dennis Roth's guidance, his three sons have developed their skills and

earned recognition well beyond the local ball diamonds.

That was especially true for Zach Roth this season. He was selected to umpire at the U15 Women's Canadian Championships in Fredericton, N.B., from July 28 to Aug. 2.

Less than two weeks later, Zach Roth was back on the road, this time officiating at the U19 Women's Eastern Canadian Championships in Charlottetown, P.E.I., from Aug. 13-16.

Having a member of the local umpiring group selected to work a national championship is a privilege and recognition of the calibre of officials being developed in the Tavistock area.

Tavistock has long been known for producing talented ball teams, players and coaches. With experienced officials continuing to work local games, younger umpires learning the ropes and opportunities arising to officiate major championships elsewhere in Canada, the community is building a reputation for another important part of the game.

With another ball season nearing its conclusion, area players and fans can thank the Roths and the entire local umpiring crew for taking on an important and sometimes challenging role in keeping the game going.

Firebirds hoping mix of veterans and youth pays off during PJHL season

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

Shane Gerber has been involved in minor and junior hockey for pretty much his entire life, and he's back for another season in New Hamburg as the Provincial Junior Hockey League (PJHL) team's coach and general manager.

"I've been with the team since 2009 but had one year off. I only coached until after COVID when I took on the general manager role."

Gerber's first hockey job was right after he graduated from minor hockey as he took an assistant role with the then Junior D Ayr Centenaires with head coach Kory Green before coaching minor and junior hockey on and off for several years.

New Hamburg finished fourth in the Doherty Division last season with 24 wins in 42 games before losing in the first round of the playoffs to fifth-place Norwich in five games.

The 52-year-old has nine new faces on the team this year, including 18-year-old Kayden Cormier, a graduate of the Kitchener Rangers AA program. Cormier has four goals and an assist so far this season.

"He's not a surprise to us. You don't always know how the challenges of coming from minor to junior will translate, just with strength and speed, but his skill level is really high. We are maybe a little surprised he has four goals in two games, but we had high hopes for him. It just might be happening faster than we thought."

Gerber said the team is keen on the

all-rookie line of Cormier, Tate Davison and local product Oliver Lyon.

"They've been really good. Davison played U18 AA in Guelph and Lyon came from the Junior Firebirds."

Joining Cormier on the Firebirds roster is his 16-year-old brother, Lincoln Cormier. Gerber said the team rarely signs players that age, but the young forward impressed.

"We didn't have any expectations, but his play said otherwise, and he made it so we couldn't say no. He earned his way here, and we're excited for him."

Hometown goalie Deklan Jermol is back for his second full season with the team after being acquired late in the 2024-2026 frame in a trade with Dorchester. Jermol put up solid stats last season with a 2.97 goals-against average and a .918 save percentage with two shutouts. Also signed is Jake Howard, an 18-year-old from Waterloo.

"We know this is Deklan's last year, but it's important we give Jake a good chance in net, and we'll see how the season goes."

Gerber said newly acquired defenceman Redden Hart will help along the blueline, while veterans like captain Jack MacDonald and assistants Aiden Burns and Jayden Fischer will be heavily relied upon.

"It's no secret last season wasn't up to the standard anyone wanted and those guys are looking to push, work harder and make an impact."

He added the locker room culture has been very positive and, while it's early, Gerber is positive about the season's start.

"The level of intensity at practice has been really good. You add a guy like Damon Radley to the mix with some leadership experience, and that also helps. Winning is always easier but the true character will come out when we hit some bumps in the road. How we react and respond to that will be the true test."

Radley, a 21-year-old defenceman who stands at six-foot-one and 200 pounds, spent four full seasons in the Greater Ontario Hockey League (GOHL), the last three and a half with the Waterloo Siskins.

The Firebirds have always had strong community support when it comes to sponsorship dollars and getting butts in the seats. Gerber said it makes it a lot easier to come to the rink and be behind the bench.

"It's fantastic. I think we were in the top five in attendance in all of Junior C last year. That says a lot. The work behind the scenes by all of the executive members is incredible. We have a light show before games, and it's an even better atmosphere. I'm sure it's even more fun for the players."

More people are choosing to spend their entertainment dollars wisely these days, and for the sports fan, Junior C hockey is still a bargain. New Hamburg charges \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors and students 14 and older, and \$6 for kids 13 and under.

"The level of the hockey had grown. It's very entertaining. The skill level of the players in today's game is off the charts. There's also a lot of parity in the league, so it makes it fun to come and watch a game, and it's affordable."



(CENSATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY PHOTO)

Rookie and Kitchener native Kayden Cormier leads the Firebirds in scoring with four goals and an assist in the team's first two games.

The New Hamburg Firebirds host annual Thanksgiving Food Drive

AMANDA NELSON

Gazette Reporter

It's that time of year again. The New Hamburg Firebirds will once again host the annual Thanksgiving Food Drive.

The official launch is Thursday Sept. 24, at the Wilmot and Wellesley Resource Centre's Poor Boy Luncheon, which will run from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and then from 5-7 p.m.

The Thanksgiving Food Drive Meet the Players event will be at both Sobeys and Mackay's No Frills on Saturday, Oct. 3, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and it's an opportunity for everyone to come out, meet their favourite players, take pictures and drop off donations.

The main event, the Firebirds Thanksgiving Friday Night Game, will be on Friday, Oct. 9, at 7 p.m. Advanced tickets aren't required, and everyone is encouraged to bring canned goods and monetary donations to The Nest upon entry.

"It's become a real community-oriented initiative," said Morgan Miller, volunteer. "We sell out the game; they have to stop selling tickets because it's always a full house. It truly brings the community

together."

Since its inception, the New Hamburg Firebirds Thanksgiving Game Night, along with the participation of students and their schools, has collected 59,726 pounds of non-perishable food for the shelves of the Wilmot and Wellesley Resource Centre.

"The New Hamburg Firebirds Thanksgiving Food Drive's huge success is only possible because of the phenomenal help from a community that continues to give," said Miller.

Last year, through the Poor Boy Luncheon, the "Meet the Players" event at both Mackay's and Sobeys grocery stores, the "Shopping Cart Challenge" from the participating schools and the night of the game, 12,337 pounds of food, as well as over \$2,000 in monetary donations, were collected.

"Wilmot has a well-deserved reputation for its welcoming attitude and kindness," said Miller. "While we don't know what changes and challenges lie in the future, we do know that we are resilient, and we can adapt to whatever comes next and continue to learn from the past."

"One of the things that makes Wilmot such a great place to live is the way

residents come together to assist and support each other if the need presents itself. I see this evidence in every part of the community, especially this time of year."

The New Hamburg Firebirds always strive to give back to the community and

rally support for the Wilmot and Wellesley Resource Centre to help more community members have a good Thanksgiving.

For more information, please visit the New Hamburg Firebirds website or call Miller at 519-662-2200.

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EZT crash kills one driver, sends another to hospital



(PHOTO COURTESY OF OXFORD OPP)

Highway 59 was closed for several hours last week after a collision that took the life of a London man.

WILMOT-TAVISTOCK GAZETTE STAFF

thewtgazette@gmail.com

Provincial police in Oxford County say a 50-year-old London man is dead, and another driver was taken to hospital with life-threatening injuries, after a serious crash Sept. 10 in East Zorra-Tavistock.

Emergency crews were called to Highway 59 near the intersection with Cassel Sideroad just after 5 a.m. Police say the crash involved a pickup truck and an SUV.

The man driving the SUV was taken to hospital where he was later pronounced deceased. The driver of the pickup truck was taken to hospital with life-threatening injuries but is now in stable condition.

Highway 59 was closed for several hours between Cassel Sideroad and Maplewood Sideroad as police investigated the cause of the crash. A fluid spill was also reported, but the highway was reopened around noon.

No charges have been laid.

CORRECTION:

An error was printed in the story, "NEAT Antique Tractor Club members gather for

breakfast at Hidden Acres," on page 21 of the Sept. 10 Wilmot Tavistock Gazette. Laverne Lichti should have been credited

alone for parceling off 25 acres of land for donation to the Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp on Perth Line 37, northeast of Shakespeare. The camp was started in 1962. We regret any confusion this may have caused.

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NEAT club wraps up summer tractor tours near Wellesley

GARY WEST
Gazette Correspondent

The North Easthope Antique Tractor Club (NEAT) wrapped up its summer farm tours with a visit to a picturesque property south of Wellesley on Thursday.

The final destination of the summer was the farm of longtime NEAT member Ron Gerber, located along the Nith River.

Gerber has been a member of the antique tractor club for a number of years, and family members and friends joined him in welcoming fellow members to the property.

Visitors had the opportunity to look over a number of tractors from the 1950s and 1960s parked in the yard while enjoying

the company of fellow antique-farm-machinery enthusiasts.

Another North Easthope Gerber family was also on hand, serving breakfast to club members from their food truck.

Gerber shares the property, located about two kilometres south of Wellesley, with his son Terry and daughter-in-law Christa.

Before retiring, Gerber drove a milk truck, picking up milk from area dairy farms. He also worked for Wellesley's Progressive Farming Equipment when the business was owned by Don Green.

The Thursday gathering brought another summer of NEAT farm visits to a close, giving members one final opportunity to bring out their tractors and enjoy some fellowship before fall.



From left, Meagan and Sloan Gerber, Hope, Nathan, Fiona and Shannon Cressman join Eli Blackler, on the tractor, in welcoming North Easthope Antique Tractor Club members to Ron Gerber's farm south of Wellesley for the club's final summer farm tour.



North Easthope Antique Tractor Club members gather for breakfast during the club's final summer farm tour. From left are Bill McMillan, Robert Miller, host Ron Gerber and club president Murray Gingerich.

Gazette Puzzles

FALL HARVEST

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Pet of the Week

PLUM

Meet Plum, a gentle one-year-old sweetheart who is looking for a quiet, loving home to help her blossom. She's on the shy side, but once she warms up, she is ready to melt into your lap or even enjoy some play time.

Though she can be shy, she is full of energy and loves to explore. Plum can be quite vocal as well as food motivated, and her foster describes her as sweet but slightly mischievous. She'll do great with a family who understands cat body language and accepts her playful nature.

If you are looking for a sweet, chatty cat, Plum may just be the purrfect fit! You can meet Plum by contacting our Stratford Centre or visiting our website at kwsphumane.ca/adopt/cats

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Exceptional eggplant

HEAPS OF HEALTHY TIPS

By Mercedes Kay Gold



Ontario eggplant is available, and if you haven't tried the powerhouse purple superfood, ready set go!

Eggplant, aubergine or brinjal belong to the nightshade family, solanaceae, which includes tomatoes, potatoes and bell peppers. This edible fruit is by botanical definition a berry but better known as a versatile veggie across the globe. Fast fact my friends; in 2023, world production of eggplants was 130 billion pounds. China and India account for 85 per cent of the total.

Eggplant is a "whole-istic" food, literally. Remove the stem and all parts can be consumed raw, but that style of preparation is rare due to bitterness. This shiny, spongy-textured vegetable can be found in white, green, yellow and multicoloured. Eggplants are just like us, with shapes ranging from long and slender to large and plump or small teardrops, too.

In two-thirds of a cup or 100 grams of eggplant, the calories are low at 26. For carb counters, eggplants have just three grams thanks to belly filling fiber. Potassium, deficient in the standard American diet, is notable at 222 grams.

Eggplant is especially rich in anthocyanins, namely nasunin. A study in 2016 discovered a link between nasunin and protection to oxidative stress during aging. Inflammation is linked to disease. Longevity is the goal.

Why is the fruit with three names posing as a vegetable? Eggplant is readily available locally, affordable, fiber-dense and satiating. For home chefs with a flair for globetrotting recipes, eggplant absorbs spices and flavours, transforming from bitter to rich and savoury when cooked.

Fall in love with autumn with global cuisines. Middle eastern magic is eggplant dip better known as baba ghanoush and served with pita. Italy is famous for baked eggplant parmigiana or pasta alla norma. Travel to France and ratatouille is remarkable. In the south of India, there's a brinjal curry not for the faint of heart. The dominant flavours of curry leaves and black mustard seeds combine with roasted eggplant in a tomato sauce but once cooked it's more a mush than saucy.

Whether you roast it, sauté, air-fry or grill, eggplant is extraordinary. Let's cook my



Meet the eggplant, a purple-powerhouse superfood.

simple eggplant meal – vegan or animal-based, healthy and checks all the boxes.

A hint of the Middle East: Eggplant

Ingredients:

- 1 medium red onion
- 1 690 ml jar of passata
- *500 grams of ground beef or lamb
- 1 medium globe eggplant
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp Ceylon cinnamon
- 2 tsp fresh ginger
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 2 plus 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 450°F.
2. Wash eggplant and cut the stem off. Leave the skin and cut it into three-centimetre-thick cubes.
3. Coat with two tablespoons of olive oil.
4. Spread eggplant on a parchment-paper-lined baking sheet.
5. Bake until golden and softened, approximately



(MERCEDES KAY GOLD PHOTOS)

This Middle Eastern eggplant dish is perfect either with chickpeas or animal protein.

- 15-20 minutes.
6. Peel the onion and dice.
7. Fry the onions and brown ground meat of choice in one tablespoon of olive oil with salt, cumin and cinnamon on low to medium heat until softened. Do not overcook.
8. Peel and grate the ginger.
9. Add the eggplant to the meat and pour in the tomatoes. Stir in the ginger and let the mixture

simmer, allowing the eggplant to absorb the flavours for 30 minutes if time permits.

10. Serve over steamed basmati rice.

Busy bee tip: Cook the eggplant in the air-fryer or slow simmer in sauce until softened.

Vegan option: Use a can of chickpeas inside of meat and drizzle with tahini for extra plant-based protein and healthy fats.

Shop fresh and local!

Why and how to mulch trees



By Caterina Lindman

Let's Tree Wilmot

Proper mulching is one of the best ways to help your tree flourish!

Mulches are materials placed over the soil surface to enhance landscape beauty, improve soil conditions, protect plants from foot traffic and lawn equipment, and suppress weeds. Mulching mimics the natural environment found in forests.

Mulches are available in two major forms, organic and inorganic. Tree-care professionals prefer organic mulches, such as wood chips, pine needles, hardwood and

softwood bark, leaves, and compost mixes, since they decompose, improving soil structure and increasing soil fertility.

The benefits of mulching are well documented. However, if the mulch is too deep, piled against the trunk of the tree (volcano style), or the wrong material, it can cause significant harm to trees.

The best way to apply mulch is wide rather than deep. Ideally, the mulch goes to the extent of the tree's canopy (which is called the drip line). The drip line will move

out as the tree grows. The mulch is applied two to four inches in depth. It's also important to pull the mulch away from the bark of the tree, and to expose the root flare. This creates a donut shape. The root flare is the part of the trunk that swells up as it forms the root. The idea of mulching is to keep the trunk dry and the roots of the tree moist.

If you do plant a tree, we'd love to hear about it. Contact us at letstreewilmot.ca/wilmot-rooted-together. See more on tree care in the Resources section.

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Why the world comes to Stratford

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO

By Paul Knowles



As we sat in the Festival Theatre waiting for the lights to dim, I found myself wondering about the hundreds of people sitting around us. Where were they from? How many had travelled north across that now-controversial border?

It's easy to forget that familiar old Stratford is one of the key tourist destinations in Canada. But it certainly is, with multiple thousands of visitors coming to the community every season.

Once the play started – that fantastic, hilarious, energetic musical called *Something Rotten* – those thoughts disappeared, as I surrendered to the sheer delight of the performance. But a few days later, the question popped back into my head.

So, I went to the source. I emailed Stratford Festival publicist Helena Turpin and asked two questions: “Where do Stratford audiences come from?” and “How many tickets does the theatre sell?”

I found the answers fascinating and I decided to share them with you, including a full list of the nations represented in those audiences.

The answer to the second question is uncomplicated. In 2025, the Festival sold 482,000 tickets. Many of those are to locals, but that also represents a heck of a lot of tourists.

And I find the information about where these people come from to be very interesting. Helena told me that my question about country of origin was not something she had seen before, and that she was intrigued by the data she accessed through the online ticketing system. She called the findings “interesting and inspiring.” I agree.

So here, stats and trivia lovers, is a full list of the countries from whence came Stratford Festival attendees this year. Top two, not surprisingly, are Canada and the United States – still sharing culture despite all the controversy.

After that, Helena shared the list in alphabetical order. People came to Stratford from Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Japan, Malawi, The Netherlands, Netherlands

Antilles, New Zealand, Panama, Peoples' Republic of China, Portugal, Qatar, Singapore, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Sweden, Spain, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom.

And while the theatre is undoubtedly the biggest draw, there is so much more about Stratford to enjoy. This summer, we have attended outdoor concerts, we have picnicked beside Lake Victoria, we have dined in local restaurants, relaxed in pubs and enjoyed walks along the water, parks and streets boasting amazing front-yard gardens. And we attended plays.

The two most recent we took in have reminded me of the sheer excellence of Stratford theatre. This was most obvious because, in the case of both plays, somebody didn't show up.

The plays were *The Tempest* and *Something Rotten*. Both are on the classic thrust stage of the Festival Theatre – and two more different uses of that space cannot be imagined.

Both are brilliantly staged with great performances, but some of those performances were especially noteworthy because they were carried out by understudies.

Most impressive was the work of Ben Carlson in *The Tempest*. Carlson, who usually plays a lesser character, was elevated to the lead role of Prospero because he is understudy to Geraint Wyn Davies, who was unavailable.

I don't know about you, but when I see that dreaded slip of white paper tucked into the play brochure announcing an understudy, I feel let down.

Wrong. Carlson was amazing. He carried out his new duties

flawlessly and convincingly. His interactions with Marissa Orjalo, who played the exotic spirit, Ariel, were emotionally moving. Altogether, an amazing accomplishment.

You might think that *The Tempest* – Shakespeare's final play written solely by the bard – and *Something Rotten*, a musical written only a decade ago – would have nothing in common. Essentially, that's true, except for the whole understudy thing. Because again, when we saw this terrific musical, one of the lead roles – Portia – was played by an understudy. And again, Michelle Bardach, stepping into the role, was amazing. No offense intended to the usual actor, but I can't imagine a finer portrayal of the character.

Something Rotten is actually something unusual in that it was presented at Stratford only two seasons ago. But it's back and I'm glad; it has become one of my favourite musicals ever. The entire cast is terrific, including the astonishing dancers put through their paces by the great Donna Feore, who both directed and choreographed the play. And I confess a special affection for Dan Chameroy, who plays the entirely outrageous Nostradamus, and my friend, Steve Ross, whose Shylock comes to a much better end than Shakespeare ever imagined.

I'm going on at this length about understudies because I think this is strong evidence of the excellence of productions at Stratford. This quality is maintained without missing a beat. And quality is the reason people have come from 30 countries or so to our part of the world.

Now that fall is upon us, we locals still get the opportunity to take in some of the finest theatre in the world. *The Tempest* is on stage through Oct. 24; *Something Rotten* runs through Oct. 31.

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



From left, Mark Uhre as Nick Bottom and Steve Ross as Shylock in *Something Rotten*. (ANN BAGGLEY PHOTO)



(PHOTO COURTESY OF STRATFORD FESTIVAL)

Ben Carlson, who stepped in without a misstep as Prospero in *The Tempest*.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF STRATFORD FESTIVAL)

Michelle Bardach, brilliant understudy as Portia in *Something Rotten*.



(DARIANE SANCHE PHOTO)

Members of the company, *Something Rotten*, including Dan Chameroy, third from left.



(ANN BAGGLEY PHOTO)

Marissa Orjalo as Ariel with members of the company in *The Tempest*.



(ANN BAGGLEY PHOTO)

The great Fiona Reid as Gonzala and David Collins as Alonso with members of the company in *The Tempest*.

Green Bench dedication at the Chesterfield Museum

DENISE TEW

Plattsville and District Heritage Society

On Saturday, Sept. 12, the Plattsville and District Heritage Society celebrated Grandparents Day and officially dedicated our new Elder Wisdom Green Bench.

The day was really about something very simple, but very important – taking the time to listen to one another. As a heritage society, much of what we do is about preserving stories. We collect photographs, documents and artifacts, but some of our most valuable history isn't found in a box or an archive. It is carried in the memories and experiences of people.

Our parents, grandparents and elders have stories about growing up, raising families, working on farms and in local businesses, going to school, attending church, helping neighbours and watching our communities change. When we take the time to sit down and listen, those stories become part of our shared history.

That is why this Green Bench is such a wonderful fit for our heritage society. We are extremely grateful to Ted Hudson from Schlegel Villages for honouring us with an Elder Wisdom Bench and for creating an initiative that encourages communities to recognize the

value, experience and wisdom of older adults. Visit elderwisdom.ca for more information.

For now, this bench will have a home here at the Chesterfield Museum and Archive, and when the work at the Memorial Gates is completed, it will move to Plattsville, where we hope many more people will stop, sit and share a conversation.

And so, on Grandparents Day weekend, we dedicated this Green Bench.

May this bench always be a place of welcome.

A place to sit. A place to talk. A place to listen.

A place where generations come together.

And, most importantly, a place where every person knows that their story matters.

May the conversations that happen on this bench help preserve memories, build friendships and remind us that we have so much to learn from one another. Thank you to Schlegel Villages, to our heritage society volunteers and to everyone who joined us to make this dedication special.

And perhaps the best way to officially dedicate our Green Bench is with the words that capture its purpose so perfectly:

Let's sit. Let's listen. Let's learn from each other. Honouring wisdom. Inspiring connection.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF DENISE TEW)

Members of the Plattsville and District Heritage Society dedicated their new Elder Wisdom Green Bench at the Chesterfield Museum Sept. 12.

Grant Haven journalists recognized nationally

GRANT HAVEN MEDIA STAFF

thewtgazette@gmail.com

The Canadian Community Newsmedia Awards (CCNA) celebrate the best in community publishing from across the country. Therefore, it was a thrill earlier this week to see our journalists, editors and graphic designers recognized for the valuable work they do in their communities.

The 2026 competition included more than 650 entries in 29 different categories which spanned the areas of editorial, photography, multimedia and general excellence from the 2025 calendar year.

The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette took third place nationally for "Best Agricultural Edition" with its 24-page March 27, 2025, special. Along with stories from editor Galen Simmons, the farm feature included articles by Lee Griffi, Emily Stewart, Gary West, Julia Paul, Luke Edwards, Jeff Tribe, Diane Baltaz, Tim Rau and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

"Looking back at the Gazette farm edition, it's clear that it took a lot of editorial planning along with a strong cast of journalists with varied backgrounds," said Grant. "The Best Little Pork Shoppe,

Windrose Farm, the late Donald Hart, Silver Creek Nursery, Danzel Holsteins and Golspie Dairy were among those to be featured in this award-winning edition."

Our company's original newspaper, the St. Marys Independent, recorded a trio of third-place finishes within the General Excellence section for newspapers with circulation of 1,500 to 6,499 copies. The Independent, also under the leadership of Simmons as editor, took the bronze for "Best All-Round Newspaper", "Best Editorial Page" and "Best Front Page". In each of these General Excellence categories, the Nunatsiak News (Nunavut) and Town and Country This Week (Athabasca, Alta.) took the first- and second-place spots, respectively.

"I feel like the St. Marys paper truly has something for everyone," said Grant Haven Media publisher Stewart Grant. "Spencer Seymour consistently puts together one of the best sports sections in Canada; Wendy Lamond captures so many of those small-town feel-good stories that make St. Marys special; Nancy Abra provides excellent regional coverage of nearby Thorndale; Mary Smith provides unparalleled historical features from the

Stonetown; Alona Vasylieva's Ukrainian Corner is a weekly must-read; and this is just a sampling of what's inside each issue."

Simmons also won third place for "Best Local Editorial" for his June 12, 2025, column entitled "Little St. Marys stands up to provincial giant."

Stratford editor Connor Luczka won first place for "Best National Editorial (print circulation up to 9,999)" for his patriotic April 4, 2025, editorial "A eucatastrophic nation." He also won top honours in the category of "Best Local Civic Journalism (print circulation up to 9,999)" for his May 16, 2025, article entitled "Do municipalities have legal authority to fight strong mayor powers? Not according to experts."

Tillsonburg editor Jeff Helsdon won first place for "Best Business Writing (print circulation up to 9,999)" for "A look inside Shaw's, Tillsonburg's own ice cream plant." Helsdon also won second place for "Best Historical Story" for his Oct. 9, 2025, article, "Reimagining Tillson's journey to launch Dereham Forge."

Grant added that any of Grant Haven's past articles and editions from recent years can be accessed by visiting the company's



(FILE PHOTO)

The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette's March 27, 2025 Farm Edition earned third place nationally for Best Agricultural Edition at the 2026 Canadian Community Newsmedia Awards.

website at granthaven.com, selecting the newspaper of choice from the drop-down menu and viewing the PDFs from the Past Issues menu.

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SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

Morningside Community Fall Craft Show
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Free Admission. Wreaths, table decor, Halloween, hostess gifts, Raffle & more Coffee & a Slice.

10 Homestead Place, New Hamburg

Perth County Beef Farmers Annual Beef BBQ Dinner

Dinner 5-7:30 p.m. Live Music 6-10 p.m.
For tickets email perthcountybeef@gmail.com. For more information contact Angela Schneider 519-291-8668
*Milverton Agri Centre (MAC)
17 Pierson Street, Milverton*

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

Wilmot Terry Fox Run
9-11 a.m.

*Wilmot Rec Centre,
Schmidt Woods Trail*

Fairmount Cemetery Decoration Day
2 p.m.

Hosted by St James Lutheran Church, Baden
Everyone welcome! For more information contact Chris at cybaechler@hotmail.com
Brewery Street Extension, Baden ON

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

STRATFORD SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING - Free Open House class

7:30-9:15 p.m.
For information contact stratfordscd@gmail.com or (519) 272-1398
*St. Paul's Anglican Church
9 Douro St. (at Waterloo)*

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

Wellesley Council meeting
6:45 p.m.

*Council chambers
4805 William Hastings Line, Crosshill*

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

Community Care Concepts Lunch and Fellowship
12 p.m.

Please register by September 18 by calling 519-664-1900 or Toll Free: 1-855-664-1900
*Linwood Community Centre,
5279 Ament Line, Linwood*

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

Team Unity Synchronized Skating Teams-Tavistock Skating Club are holding a fundraising drive (bottle and clothing)
9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

To raise money to help offset travel costs this season. Donate by curbside pick up (contact a Team Unity skater for details) or drop off at Tavistock arena
*Tavistock & District Recreation Centre (Arena),
1 Adam St, Tavistock*

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26 CONT

CMHA Huron Perth Recovery Breakfast, in recognition of Recovery Month
9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

By donation. Eggs, Bacon, Hashbrowns, Toast, Fruit, Sweet Treats, Coffee, Tea Juice
Generous Donations by : Ontario Pork Congress, Egg Farmers Of Ontario, Cobs Bread, The Local Community Food Centre, Festival City Dairy, Joe's Diner, To Bean Or Not To Bean, Zehrs.
Holy Trinity Anglican Church (formerly St. James) 41 Mornington Street, Stratford

The Nith Valley EcoBoosters are hosting another Repair Café

9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Contact us at: nvebrepaircafe@gmail.com or check out www.nvecoboosters.com
*Zion United Church,
215 Peel St., New Hamburg*

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

VENDORS NEEDED:

Deadline for vendors for Fryfogel's is Sunday Market is Sunday, September 27
Event date: Sunday, October 4th from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

We are currently accepting applications for vendors. A variety of vendors are welcome, whether you're a knitter, sewer, baker, or painter! For more information email: fryfogeltavern@gmail.com
*Event location: Fryfogel's Tavern,
1931 Line 34 Perth East*

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

Get Pumped! The Nith Valley EcoBoosters are hosting a free information session about heat pumps with local experts
7 p.m.

More information at nvecoboosters.com
*Wellesley Rec Centre,
1401 Queen's Bush Rd., Wellesley*

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

Vigil Service - National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
5:30 p.m.

All are welcome for this service of lament hosted by the Wilmot Indigenous Relations Interfaith Working Group. Please bring a lawn chair as this is an outdoor event on Trinity's Peel St. lawn. Attendees are invited to wear orange shirts.
*Trinity Lutheran Church
23 Church Street, New Hamburg*

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3

Native Tree Planting with Let's Tree Wilmot

9 a.m. - 12 noon
Join us for phase 3 of creating a future forest here. For details and registration: <https://letstreewilmot.ca/events/>
Mannheim Carolinian Corner

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6

Ostomy Support Group Meeting
7:00 p.m.

Speaker – Jaci Sinclair, of Gentle Awakenings. Learn about Chair Yoga and it's healing supports. Social time and snacks. Everyone welcome. For more information: (519)273-4327
93 Morgan St., Stratford

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10

Pumpkinfest '26
9 a.m. - 12 noon

Free admission and hot cider. Live music, no crowds, Pumpkins, Bake Table, fresh flower centerpieces, small & bulk root veg, apples, kale, Squash.
*Morningside Adult Community,
10 Homestead Place, New Hamburg*

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17

Let's Tree Wilmot is partnering with Stonecroft

9 a.m. - 12 noon
Join us to add more trees to their community and increase Wilmot's tree canopy. For details and registration: <https://letstreewilmot.ca/events/>
StoneCroft, New Hamburg

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24

Let's Tree Wilmot is increasing the tree cover on a rural property
9 a.m. - 12 noon

Join us in planting 100 trees offering some of the best opportunities for increasing the tree canopy in our township. For details and registration: <https://letstreewilmot.ca/events/>
Perth Street, New Hamburg

Oxford Philatelic Society Circuit Book (Stamp) Fair

10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Free Admission & Parking
Stop in and buy some stamps and meet fellow stamp collectors.
About 8 participating stamp clubs.
Contact: dheaton3e3@gmail.com
Website: <http://www.rpsc.org/chapters/oxford>
*Church of the Epiphany,
560 Dundas Street, Woodstock*

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25

Rescue Junction: Gospel Bluegrass Concert
6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Free Will Offering taken.
*Rosebank Church
1434 Huron Road, Petersburg*

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9

Wilmot Council meeting
6-7 p.m.

*Council chambers
60 Snyder's Road W., Baden*

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10

Free "Explore Your Future" career expo for Gr 7-12 students/parents
5-8 p.m.

*bepwr.ca/eyf
Tapestry Hall,
74 Grand Avenue South, Cambridge, ON*

TAVISTOCK FAIR BOOK SALE

The Second Hand Book Nook Sale

Friday, Sept. 11, 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.
Saturday, Sept. 12, 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.
Sunday, Sept. 13, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Lots of books, magazines and puzzles for sale
For more information, call (519)590-1617
*Tavistock Fall Fair in the arena
1 Adam St., Tavistock*

EVERY WEDNESDAY

TOPS - Taking off Pounds Sensibly
Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m.

Contact Cathie 519-662-9273
St James Church, Baden

Euchre Night

Wednesdays at 7 p.m.
*New Hamburg Legion
65 Boulee St., New Hamburg*

FREE SENIORS ACTIVITIES

Tavistock Seniors Pickleball

Monday, Wednesday & Friday 12-4 p.m.

Contact: Don Junker 519-535-7052

Tavistock Memorial Hall, 1 Adam St.

Tavistock Seniors Card Games

Monday drop in 1-4 p.m.

Contact: Bob Routly 519-301-2118
Tavistock Memorial Hall, 1 Adam St.

FREE SENIORS ACTIVITIES CONT

VON Senior Exercise Drop-In Standing Class
Tuesday and Thursday 9-10 a.m.

To register contact 519-539-1231 ext. 6319

Tavistock Memorial Hall, 1 Adam St.

VON Senior Exercise Drop-In Sitting Class

Tuesday and Thursday 10:25-11:25 a.m.

To register contact 519-539-1231 ext. 6319
Village Manner; 98 Woodstock St., Tavistock

TAVISTOCK & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM DISPLAYS

Travelling Museum Display: "Heritage of Hickson's Sports Teams"

Check out the earliest Hickson baseball teams and the display full of vintage equipment. History and photos of the Hickson Baseball teams dating back to the early 1900's complement the display.

Hours: Monday-Friday 8:30 am-4:30 pm runs until the end of September 2026.
*EZT Township Administration Building (lobby),
89 Loveys Street, Hickson*

PLATTSVILLE & DISTRICT HERITAGE SOCIETY

Plattsville & District Heritage Society exhibit "Holidays & Celebrations That Bring Us Together"

June 6 to September 19 | Saturdays 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Donations accepted. Refreshments. Contact plattsvilledistrictheritage@gmail.com or call 519.535.1417.
*Archive & Museum at Chesterfield,
816661 Oxford Rd 22, Bright*

WILMOT ALL CANDIDATES MEETING - YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR QUESTIONS, YOUR VOTE

Wilmot Ward 1 & 2: Wilmot Rod & Gun, 2607 Bleams Rd., October 1, 7:00pm

Wilmot Ward 3 & 4: New Hamburg Community Centre, 251 Jacobs St., September 28, 7:00pm

Wilmot Mayor Candidate Debate: New Hamburg Community Centre, 251 Jacobs St., October 7, 7:00pm

Live Stream available.

Contact nvecoboosters@gmail.com

Events submitted for the Community Calendar will be published as space permits. Submission does not guarantee publication, and events may not appear every week prior to the event date. Please submit your events to thewtgazette@gmail.com by Tuesday at 3 p.m.

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Quiz Time Answers

1. Eddie Vedder
2. ChatGPT
3. Soccer (football)
4. TikTok
5. PlayStation 2
6. Gotham City
7. Disney
8. Barbie
9. 1998
10. The speed of sound

**TO PLACE A CLASSIFIED AD CONTACT
HEATHER DUNBAR
AT 226.261.1837
OR HEATHER@GRANTHAVEN.COM**

COMING EVENTS

Team Unity
Synchronized Skating Teams
Tavistock & District Skating Club

SAVE YOUR BOTTLES

Bottle Drive
Sat Sept 26, 2026
9am-12pm

Curbside Pick Up or Drop off outside Tavistock Arena.

Help support our teams travel costs this season by saving and donating your alcoholic or nonalcoholic bottles and cans.

Any Questions, message tavistockteamunity@hotmail.com




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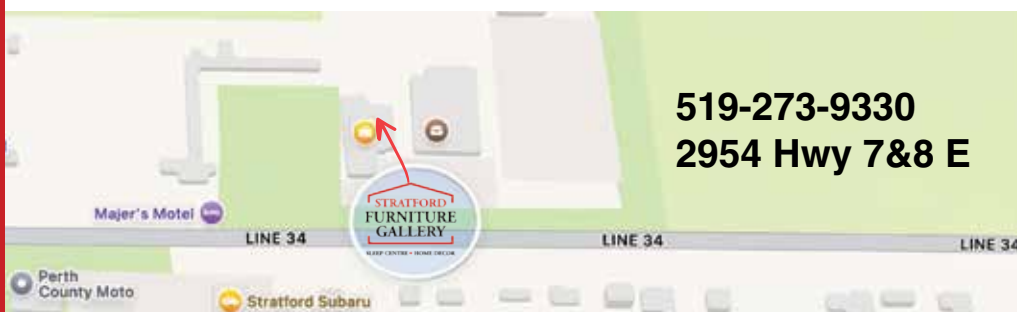


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2026 FALL FARM EDITION

KHANNA CHAMPIONS OXFORD FARMERS

MP praises local agriculture while
calling for less red tape and
support for Canadian producers

B3

BEAN GROWERS FACE A TOUGH MARKET

Trade uncertainty, falling prices
and rising costs put pressure on
Ontario producers

B7

The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette

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Oxford MP pays tribute to area farmers and ag industry as uncertainty continues

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

Oxford County's member of parliament wants farmers to know just how much he appreciates the work they do to keep us fed.

"Our farmers feed our families, and we owe them a debt of gratitude for what they do," said Arpan Khanna.

"Waking up early before sunrise and working the fields to make sure Canadians and the rest of the world get good, nutritious food. That is something we should always be thankful for. They work extremely hard, they are very talented and Oxford has some of the best soil in the country."

One of the MP's concerns when it comes to agriculture is what he described as the government's punishment of farmers through taxes and red tape.

"Canada should be a place where we can make more, grow more, harvest more and become a self-reliant country. I think we have the potential, the foundation, the people, the farmers and the land. It's time we get behind them and support them so we grow more locally and compete with the rest of the world."

Khanna said Canada is the only country

in the G7 with a 30 per-cent fertilizer tax, which comes from the federal government's carbon pricing. He added the cost raises the price of Canadian-produced food significantly.

"We have one of the highest levels of food inflation in the G7, something that doesn't make any sense since we have some of the best farmers. We need to support our farmers so they can produce food at a reasonable price to feed our families."

Another Conservative concern comes from the cost of Canadian-made food compared to other countries we import it from. Khanna pointed to a local pricing example to explain why many consumers are choosing foreign-supplied groceries.

"You can't blame those families. For example, I was at an asparagus farm and they told me it costs \$5 per pound to produce here in Oxford County, yet it costs \$1.50 to produce in Mexico and have it shipped over 3,000 kilometres away. It makes absolutely no sense to me why we are punishing our farmers with rising costs and red tape."

Khanna said increasing taxes on farmers, truckers and retailers results in higher prices at the checkout.

"We are hearing about a lot of farmers

who are selling their land because it no longer pays to be in the business. Putting all the work in and making sacrifices should mean something, and that's what we are fighting for."

One cloud hanging over the heads of many Canadian industries is the ongoing trade and tariff battle with our neighbours to the south, something he said is having a crippling effect on our agriculture industry.

"Even the farm equipment being tariffed is going to push costs higher for our producers. There are talks about supply management and what the U.S. wants to do with our dairy, and Oxford has a strong sector, which raises some concerns. We also need to ensure we can offer our goods to the rest of the world."

Khanna added uncertainty surrounding our relationship with the USA is one of the reasons why the official opposition has asked for parliament to be reconvened early in the interest of transparency.

"We want to make sure our farmers, workers and businesses are fully aware of what's going on so they can have a predictable future. Whether it's for agriculture, automotive or any other industry,

we should be back at the table negotiating with our largest trade partner."

Khanna recently attended Canada's Outdoor Farm Show in Woodstock where he hosted federal Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre. The event highlights the industry as a whole, including new technologies. He said Canadian companies are true innovators.

"There's a lot of AI being used these days for smart, efficient farming. Different tools and technology are making it less labour-intensive and more cost-effective. It's good to see those advances happening, and what blows my mind is seeing Canadian innovation now leading the world and attracting investments and exporting products all over the world."

He also thanked Oxford County farmers for putting in the hard work to feed families locally, across the country and around the world.

"We are forever grateful and hold on; I know there is a lot of red tape and barriers that challenge you every day, but Conservatives will continue to be by your side, championing the issue that matter to you. We will get through these uncertain times and unleash Canada's potential."

“

Our farmers feed our families, and we owe them a debt of gratitude for what they do.

Arpan Khanna



As the Harvest Season Approaches.
Please Be Mindful of Farmers on Our Roads.
We all share the road.
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Passion for beekeeping leads to sweet success

DIANE DANEN

Gazette Correspondent

Staci Leis began her beekeeping journey in the spring of 2021 with just two hives.

What began as an interest in beekeeping, something she felt naturally drawn to, has since grown into Daisy Bee Naturals. Today, Leis produces natural liquid and creamed honey, along with hand-blended flavoured honeys made in small batches with organic and natural ingredients.

Daisy Bee Naturals is part of the Leis family farm just outside of Shakespeare, where Leis and her husband, Greg Leis, grow certified organic crops, including corn, soybeans and wheat, raise chickens and grow fruit and garlic. Other family members also help with the farm operation.

Beekeeping is a side business, with Staci Leis caring for the bees and creating the honey products. Greg Leis helps at markets, where he talks with customers, hands out samples and, as Staci Leis says, “carries the heavy boxes.”

Since 2021, Staci Leis has gradually increased the number of hives to boost honey production and improve the chances of having a healthy number of colonies survive the winter. Today, she cares for a total of 20 beehives.

The name Daisy Bee Naturals reflects Staci Leis' goal of keeping her products as simple and natural as possible. While the farm produces certified organic crops, honey cannot be certified organic because of the wide foraging range of honeybees. Staci Leis does not use antibiotics or synthetic substances in caring for

her bees, and most of her honey is raw, meaning it is unfiltered and unpasteurized.

The flavourings she uses are certified organic whenever available and natural when they are not. She also chooses packaging that is reusable, recyclable, compostable or biodegradable, or made from responsibly managed renewable resources. The farm's electricity comes entirely from solar energy produced on the property.

The beekeeping season begins well before the first honey harvest. Staci Leis visits the bee yard in February and March to assess winter survival and check whether the colonies have enough honey stored to make it through the rest of the winter.

Once the dandelions appear, Staci Leis knows there is enough forage available for the bees. Winter wraps come off of the hives in May, and regular inspections begin and continue throughout the season.

During inspections, Staci Leis removes frames and looks closely at the brood, or developing bees. She checks for a healthy, laying queen, a good brood pattern and bees at various stages of development. She also watches for adequate food stores and signs of pests or disease.

Varroa mites are one of the biggest challenges facing honeybees. Keeping mite populations low is essential to maintaining healthy colonies and improving their chances of surviving the winter. To manage varroa mites, a combination of nature-based solutions including organic

acids, essential oils and mechanical trapping is used.

Weather can also have a major impact on the bees and honey production. Long winters can leave honey stores running low, while wet weather gives bees fewer opportunities to forage. Very dry conditions can also mean less forage is available. As a result, honey production can vary considerably from year to year.

Staci Leis typically harvests honey once a season, aiming to have the work completed by mid-September. After harvest, she feeds the bees sugar syrup, which they turn into honey. Between the feed and nectar collected from the remaining blooms, each colony will have about 70 to 100 pounds of honey to eat over the winter months.

For Staci Leis, one of the most rewarding parts of beekeeping is the opportunity to keep learning. She is currently working toward a Master Beekeeper designation through the University of Montana. The three-part program includes classes over several weeks each spring, allowing her to put what she learns into practice during that year's beekeeping season.

Her interest in honey has also led to the creative side of the business, developing unique flavour combinations. Ideas are often inspired by flavours she enjoys, but there is plenty of trial and error. Some combinations do not work, while others

turn out better than expected.

Lemon and lemon ginger are long-time customer favourites, while mint chocolate was a surprise for both Staci Leis and her customers. She was surprised by how well the flavour came together, while customers have been intrigued by its unexpected texture and flavour. Made during the Christmas season, it can be difficult to keep it on the shelves.

For Staci Leis, one of the most rewarding parts of growing Daisy Bee Naturals has been sharing her products at local markets. She enjoys offering samples and meeting people who are curious about the different flavours.

“There is something especially rewarding about watching someone try a flavour for the first time and seeing their reaction,” says Staci Leis.

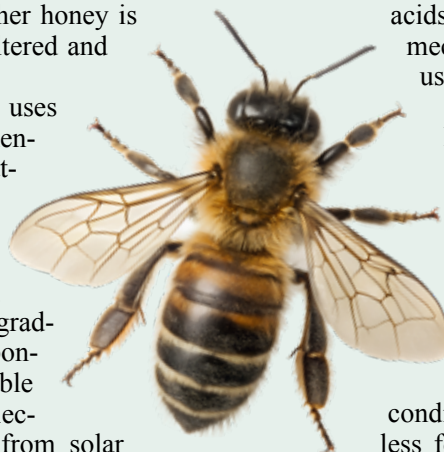
She and Greg often leave their markets feeling inspired and grateful for the conversations they have had and the people they have met.

Daisy Bee Naturals continues to grow and evolve, with a new honey flavour set to be released this month.

“It started with a few customer requests but evolved into something quite different and, I think, much better than the original idea,” shared Staci Leis.

What started as a small beekeeping venture with just two hives has grown into Daisy Bee Naturals, a business that combines Staci Leis' interest in bees, her creativity with honey and her commitment to caring for the farm and the environment around it.

To learn more, visit www.daisybeenaturals.com or email hello@daisybeenaturals.com.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Staci Leis of Daisy Bee Naturals tends to one of 20 beehives located on her family's farm just south of Shakespeare.

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From pasture to plate, JC Cattle Co. builds connection between farmers and consumers



Morgan Kuepfer of JC Cattle Co. based in Milverton tends to her Speckle Park beef herd in a pasture southeast of Stratford on a sunny, late summer morning.

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

On a quiet pasture southeast of Stratford, a group of distinctly patterned cows graze, chew their cud and, for the most part, pay little attention to their visitors.

They are part of JC Cattle Co.'s growing herd of Canadian Speckle Park cattle, a breed that has become the foundation of a young agricultural business built around a simple idea: raise quality beef locally and give customers an opportunity to know exactly where their food comes from.

Based on a family farm outside Milverton, JC Cattle Co. is owned and operated by Morgan Kuepfer, her husband, Jonathan De Vries, and their friend and Jonathan's coworker, Christine Chalmers.

The business began after Chalmers and De Vries, who work together in agriculture, started talking about an empty barn on Chalmers' family farm, where her family had previously operated a dairy farm.

"Those two thought, 'Well, let's go fill it

with some beef because we're getting sick and tired of paying the prices that we're paying for beef and high-quality beef at the grocery store,'" Kuepfer said. "Let's see if we can raise some high-quality beef ourselves.'"

They started with two purebred, first-calf heifers. Three years later, JC Cattle Co. has grown to roughly 100 cows, not including calves and other animals in the herd.

Chalmers introduced her partners to Speckle Park cattle, a Canadian beef breed known for its distinctive black-and-white colouring and, according to Kuepfer, the quality of its beef.

The animals also proved well suited to the operation.

"They're great mums, they have a good maternal instinct, for the most part they're docile," Kuepfer said. "They're a really high-quality beef. So, because we were going direct to consumer and we wanted something that we loved too, it just seemed like a really good fit."



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTOS)

One of JC Cattle Co.'s Speckle Park beef cows stops to pose for the camera.

JC Cattle Co. raises its animals from birth through finishing, with cattle destined either to become breeding stock or enter the company's beef program.

That start-to-finish approach also allows the farmers to have greater control over how their cattle are raised.

Breeding cattle spend roughly six months of the year on pasture, depending on weather, and rotational grazing allows sections of pasture to recover while others are being grazed.

The company also has cattle grazing 40 acres near Cambridge in partnership with rare Charitable Research Reserve, where rotational grazing helps manage the ecosystem and habitat.

Most of the cattle's feed is grown by JC Cattle Co., while what it doesn't produce itself is sourced locally. Its animals receive a grass-and-grain diet through a non-GMO feed program. During the winter, cattle return to barns but continue to have indoor and outdoor access.

"We like to try to keep it as clean and green as we can," Kuepfer said.

That philosophy extends beyond raising the animals.

JC Cattle Co. takes what it calls a "nose-to-tail" approach, finding uses for as much of each animal as possible. Beyond traditional beef cuts, customers can purchase bones and fat, while the company renders fat into cooking tallow and products including skin cream, lip balm and soap. Bones are used for broth, while some organ meat and other products are supplied to The Bark for freeze-dried dog treats.

"There is just so much more than, you know, we all love a steak or a roast or ground beef," Kuepfer said. "Those are great things. They're nutrient dense. However, there's so much more."

The business's direct-to-consumer model is equally important.

Kuepfer handles much of the marketing and sales while continuing to work as a

“

People want to know where their food comes from.

Morgan Kuepfer

supply teacher, while Chalmers and De Vries handle much of the daily cattle and barn work alongside their full-time jobs.

Customers can meet the farmers themselves at the Stratford Farmers' Market at the Rotary Complex on Saturdays and the Stratford Sunday Market behind city hall. JC Cattle Co. also operates an online store and offers free Thursday delivery to Perth County addresses.

For Kuepfer, giving consumers that direct connection to their food is part of what the three farmers set out to accomplish.

"People want to know where their food comes from," she said.

For JC Cattle Co., that means offering customers beef that is "clean and green and it's local and it's Canadian."

And three years into what began with two heifers and an empty barn, the farmers are still figuring out just how large their cattle "addiction" might become.

The herd, Kuepfer said, has been growing as they determine what remains manageable for the three of them.

"We've just been seeing what is still within our management style and reach and kind of just going with the flow."

For more information on JC Cattle Co., visit jccattleco.ca.

THANK YOU FARMERS!

ERNIE HARDEMAN
MPP - Oxford

FCC renews support for farmer wellness

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR AGRICULTURAL WELLBEING

Submitted to the Gazette

Farm Credit Canada (FCC) and the Canadian Centre for Agricultural Wellbeing (CCAW) have announced a renewed partnership to sustain and expand the National Farmer Wellness Network (NFWN) and National Farmer Crisis Line, 1-866-FARMS01 (1-866-327-6701).

The renewed investment of \$1.8 million over three years (\$600,000 annually) will allow the program to continue providing tailored, no-cost mental health and crisis support to Canada's farmers, farm families and agricultural workers.

"The response to the National Farmer Wellness Network Crisis Line since its launch has confirmed what we always knew. There is a deep and urgent need for mental-health support that speaks the language of farming," said Canadian Centre for Agricultural Wellbeing CEO and lead scientist Dr. Briana Hagen. "FCC's renewed investment means we can continue building on this foundation, reaching more farmers and agricultural workers who need immediate, culturally informed support. This partnership is about more than a phone line; it's about ensuring Canada's agricultural community knows it is seen, valued and never alone."

Since launching in February 2025, the National Farmer Wellness Network Crisis Line has connected agricultural workers across Canada with licensed mental-health professionals trained through the Canadian

Agricultural Literacy Program (CALP), specialists who understand the unique pressures of farming life. The renewal ensures this vital service continues uninterrupted.

"Farming and ranching asks a lot of people," said FCC president and CEO Justine Hendricks. "Behind every operation are individuals and families managing uncertainty, long hours and immense responsibility. That's why FCC is proud to continue its support to the National Farmer Wellness Network so farmers and farm families have access to trusted mental-health support from professionals who understand the unique realities of agriculture, whenever they need it."

Farming remains one of Canada's most demanding occupations. Financial volatility, geographic isolation, unpredictable weather and the emotional weight of caring for land and livestock create compounding mental-health pressures that general support services are often ill-equipped to address. The NFWN Crisis Line was built specifically to meet farmers where they are, and this renewed commitment ensures it will keep doing so.

"Renewing this commitment means that farmers and farm families across Canada can continue to count on us, not just in a moment of crisis, but as part of an ongoing network of care," said NFWN chief programming officer Deborah Vanberkel. "The trust that agricultural communities have placed in this program is something we do not take lightly. With FCC's continued support, we are able to grow that trust and deepen our reach into every province."



(VECTEEZY PHOTO)

The National Farmer Wellness Network Crisis Line provides agricultural workers with access to mental-health support from professionals who understand the unique challenges of farming.

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Oversupply and trade issues drive down dry bean prices for Ontario growers

AMANDA NELSON

Gazette Reporter

The 2026 Ontario Bean Growers annual general meeting was held in Stratford earlier this year, where dry bean growers from across the region came together to discuss growing concerns around exports, particularly trade, transportation and domestic demand.

Alvin Klassen of Dry Bean World outlined current challenges as Canada continues to navigate overproduction of black beans and ongoing tariff changes that are limiting trade and creating uncertainty for growers.

"In the last five years, we've experienced several severe ups and downs in commercial markets related to supply and demand, with the influence of producer and dealer pricing," said Klassen.

Despite steady global demand for dry beans, many growers are finding it harder to turn a profit.

Prices across North America have dropped sharply in recent years – in some cases by nearly half – while input costs such as fuel and fertilizer have remained high.

"Throughout North America, we are now sitting where bean prices are half of what they were three years ago, and the cost of production hasn't gone down at all," said Klassen. "In fact, seed pricing hasn't gone down, and it's making it very difficult to sustain production."



A fresh mixed bean salad is one of the many ways Canadians are encouraged to get more beans in their diet during the Ontario Bean Growers Eat More Beans campaign.

The issue, Klassen said, comes down to supply and demand. A strong harvest has left a surplus of beans in storage – known in the industry as "carryover" – giving buyers less incentive to pay higher prices.

At the same time, export challenges and limited processing options in Canada are making it harder for farmers to move their crops efficiently, adding further pressure to an already strained market.

Jeff English of Pulse Canada said the organization is working to increase domestic consumption through its "Love Canadian Beans" campaign, which aims to raise awareness that many beans sold in stores are grown in Canada and encourage more people to include them in their diets.

"It's not about telling people how to eat but showing them how beans can be

incorporated into everyday foods we already know and love," said English. "It's about giving some familiarity to supporting what we see as a great, sustainably grown Canadian crop."

English added advancements in bean-processing technology could also help grow the domestic market.

"Now that we have companies extracting proteins and starches from pulse crops, we should have an opportunity to put more protein into different foods – not necessarily calling them beans, but using them as a high-protein ingredient," he said.

Bill Rosenberg, parliamentary assistant to the minister of agriculture, food and agribusiness, also addressed growers, highlighting the significant role Ontario's bean producers play in the province's agri-food sector.

"Our agri-food sector now generates around \$52 billion in annual GDP," he said. "This is why Ontario is known around the world for safe, nutritious and delicious food."

"Eighty to 90 per cent of the beans grown here in Ontario are exported around the world, and that is something to be proud of," he added.

Overall, the message to growers was clear: while global demand is growing, the industry must navigate trade instability, supply chain risks and the need to build stronger domestic markets to remain competitive.

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Agricultural drones take flight after Health Canada pesticide approval

AMANDA NELSON

Gazette Reporter

A Health Canada approval allowing pesticide application by remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS), commonly known as drones, was granted in June, allowing farmers and small businesses across southwestern Ontario to spray pesticides in accordance with the Pest Control Products Act and the Pest Control Products Regulations.

While Canadian farmers have been able to use drones for mapping, scouting and crop monitoring, the major regulatory hurdle has been using them to apply pesticides.

Now that new approvals have opened the door for drone-based pesticide applications, small business owners such as Justin Shieck, owner and operator of Norfolk Drone Services, say they believe farmers can now utilize the technology for greater efficiency.

Shieck was initially taken off guard when he read the report stating that pesticide spraying via drone technology was approved back in June, something he thought he wouldn't see until next year.

"There weren't even signs that this was going to happen by the fall. ... We were taken completely off guard about the approval."

Shieck says countries like China, the United States and Australia have been using drone technology in the agricultural sector for around 15 years, and yet Canada is just starting to see the value after getting feedback from competing countries.

"In the States, drones are treated as another aircraft," he said. "What got me into this business was really watching how fast it expanded across the States and seeing YouTube video after YouTube video and news article after news article showing small businesses booming, with young 20-year-olds and different age groups of farmers enjoying what they're doing and bringing a cheaper solution for farming."

Shieck says he believes farmers throughout Canada will soon own and operate drones, similar to the way they own tractors, combines or other farming equipment. He says in farming, timing is everything when it comes to spraying pesticides or fertilizers.

"Do I see every farmer owning one, like a Swiss Army knife in their toolbox? One hundred per cent because farming comes down to timing," said Shieck. "Especially if you're deploying it out of the back of your barn, you can hit timing windows when you really need to."

Compared to small conventional tractors, drones can cover more ground in less time, at about 40 acres per hour; however, large self-propelled sprayers can cover more than 80 acres per hour. These large sprayers are often hard on fields and don't allow for the same mobility as a drone.



(AMANDA NELSON PHOTO)

Justin Shieck, owner and operator of Norfolk Drone Services, demonstrates agricultural drone technology. The June Health Canada approval allowing pesticide applications by remotely piloted aircraft systems opens new opportunities for farmers and agricultural businesses.

The Health Canada report noted that drone application is often the most practical option when fields are soft, wet or too difficult for ground application equipment; when pest outbreaks occur late in crop growth; or for areas that are either too large or inaccessible for ground application.

"If it's been raining a lot, I don't think anyone's pulling a rig through a field," said Shieck. "Then once a canopy gets high, you can't really spray beans or corn because it's too tall. In the fall, I really see drones tackling the heavy canopies where you're not getting that 25 per cent loss from driving over your beans."

Though Canada is behind in its approval, Shieck says it's not all bad news, and being able to track and assess what's happening in other countries before the Health Canada approval has benefited the budget.

"Canada is cautious," he said. "We take a more science-based regulatory approach than most places, and they do it for safety reasons. I would say it's not a horrible thing that we were behind. Watching and allowing other countries to spend a lot of money on research while we sat back and collected data was valuable. Now we have some brands approved, and we're not wasting that time or money on the trial and error they've already gone through."

The report notes that the approval also aligns Canada with other countries like the United States and Australia, helping Canadian agriculture stay competitive internationally during times when competitive prices are key.

"Using RPAS to apply pesticides can make farming more efficient by helping farmers protect crops while using fewer inputs such as pesticides and other resources needed for crop production, including labour, fuel and equipment use," read the report. "This will support food security and help keep food affordable."

The data show that the risks of applying pesticides by RPAS are generally similar to those of conventional aerial application. However, drones also have the potential to apply pesticides very precisely, similar to some ground-based spot treatments.

Health Canada also concluded that pesticide residues on food crops resulting from RPAS applications are not higher than those resulting from conventional application methods, making foods as safe as with conventional applications.

Shieck's company, Norfolk Drone Services, offers agricultural drone services focused on precision spraying, spreading and mapping. Its main agriculture-related services include aerial spraying, granular spreading, mapping and aerial imagery, as well as drone sales, support and training.

The cost of a drone package varies, but Shieck says it is generally around \$40,000 to \$50,000 and includes multiple batteries and packages, including spray equipment that can be used for pesticides, fertilizers, herbicides and biological products.

Shieck encourages anyone interested to visit his website or reach out to him directly at www.norfolkdroneservices.ca.

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Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers welcome new strategy aimed at helping farmers

AMANDA NELSON

Gazette Reporter

With the ever-changing climate for food producers across Canada, including trade shifts, global conflicts and climate change, prices on Ontario produce continue to rise. In response, the federal government has launched Canada's first-ever National Food Security Strategy.

"Too much of what we grow is processed elsewhere, and too many Canadians still rely on imported food at higher prices," said Prime Minister Mark Carney. "Canadian farmers deserve more options to sell their produce, and Canadians deserve more options for where to buy their food."

The National Food Security Strategy includes a \$3.2-billion investment over 10 years with a strong focus on strengthening Canada's food system through a mix of production, infrastructure and regulatory changes aimed at reducing reliance on imported produce, especially in winter.

"This is a significant and forward-looking investment that will directly benefit greenhouse growers across Ontario and Canada," said Richard Lee, executive director of Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers (OGVG).

"The Strategy acknowledges the

essential role our sector plays in producing fresh, nutritious, safe vegetables year-round, while reinforcing Canada's position as a global leader in greenhouse vegetable production, reducing reliance on imports and strengthening supply chains."

A specific \$750-million investment in controlled-environment agriculture (CEA), which includes greenhouses and indoor growing systems, aims to help growers build or expand greenhouse facilities, adopt new growing technologies and produce more fruits and vegetables year-round.

The strategy also aims to support more food processing closer to where crops are grown, meaning infrastructure to turn raw produce into packaged goods locally, reduced transportation costs and reducing spoilage and emissions from long-distance shipping.

The plan also hopes to reduce bottlenecks from farm to processor to retailer and help independent growers and vendors access markets more easily by supporting infrastructure for storage, transport and distribution.

One key point outlined in the plan notes the government is actively looking to cut regulatory barriers, or "red tape," aiming to help speed up approval for fertilizers and crop protection tools, ease the

movement of goods across provincial borders and streamline agricultural regulations throughout the country.

"Through this made-in-Canada approach, we will process more of what our farmers grow here at home, creating jobs, driving economic growth and strengthening Canada's food self-sufficiency," said Heath MacDonald, Canadian minister of agriculture and agri-food.

"By reducing red tape and helping innovative businesses get projects off the ground faster, we will unlock new opportunities for farmers, food processors and entrepreneurs across the agri-food sector."

OGVG says this support will help stabilize food prices in grocery stores, expand producers' market access and reduce the dominance of a few large retailers across the province.

"With the support outlined in this strategy, the greenhouse sector will be able to grow more food more efficiently, and at a lower cost," added Lee. "This benefits not only our farmers, but also Canadian families who are looking for affordable, locally grown food options year-round."

Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers is a not-for-profit organization representing greenhouse farmers who grow tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers in Ontario. With a commitment to innovation,



(AMANDA NELSON PHOTO)

The federal government has launched Canada's first-ever National Food Security Strategy, which includes a \$3.2-billion investment and is aimed at strengthening Canada's food system through a mix of production, infrastructure and regulatory changes.

sustainability and food safety, OGVG members supply fresh, high-quality vegetables to Canadians year-round.

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Ontario accepting new applications for the Rural Ontario Development Program

GRANT HAVEN MEDIA STAFF

thewtgazette@gmail.com

The Government of Ontario has announced that a new round of applications is now open for the Rural Ontario Development (ROD) Program.

Applications are being accepted until Oct. 1.

The Rural Ontario Development Program replaces the Rural Economic Development (RED) Program.

To qualify for the ROD Program, an organization must be a municipality, a not-for-profit organization, an Indigenous community or organization, a local services board, or a small business with one to 20 employees. The ROD Program provides cost-share funding for projects that help rural communities:

- address barriers and build capacity for economic development
- attract, retain and expand businesses
- attract and retain investment and jobs
- strengthen regional partnerships and economic resilience
- address workforce development challenges
- transform community assets to drive economic development

Small brick-and-mortar businesses in rural Ontario with one to 20 employees can

apply through the Business Development Stream, which offers up to 35 per cent cost-share to a maximum of \$10,000.

As well, municipalities, Indigenous communities, local services boards and not-for-profit organizations in rural Ontario can apply through the following streams:

- Economic diversification, competitiveness and capacity building: projects that support communities to build economic development capacity and implement strategies that increase competitiveness to retain businesses, attract investment and enhance growth.
- Strategies and plans: projects will develop strategies or plans that will enhance the ability of communities to be prepared for and engage in economic development activities. This stream offers up to 50 per cent cost-share up to \$50,000.
- Economic diversification and competitiveness: projects will support the implementation of an existing economic development plan or strategy. This stream offers up to 50 per cent cost-share up to \$150,000.
- Capacity building events: projects that support organizations in building community capacity to deliver economic development activities.

This stream offers up to 35 per cent cost-share up to \$10,000.

The workforce development, attraction and retention stream funds projects that support communities to implement strategies and/or to undertake initiatives for attracting and retaining workers. This stream offers up to 50 per cent cost-share up to \$150,000.

The community infrastructure enhancements stream funds projects that update or transform community assets that have been identified as important to the community's economy. This stream offers up to 35 per cent cost-share, with large projects eligible from \$25,000 to \$250,000 and small projects eligible for up to \$25,000.

National survey of farmer and rancher mental health now open

GRANT HAVEN MEDIA STAFF

thewtgazette@gmail.com

A survey of farmers and ranchers across Canada is now open, asking those in the agricultural sector about their mental health experiences.

The survey is being conducted by the University of Guelph in collaboration with the Canadian Centre for Agricultural Wellbeing (CCAW), making it the third national survey of its kind to be conducted through the partnership.

Through the survey, farmers and ranchers from all regions and commodities in Canada are able to share their experiences related to stress, anxiety, depression, burnout, resilience and coping.

Once the survey is completed, the results will help to provide insights into mental health in agriculture through comparisons to national surveys that were completed in 2016 and 2021, helping to identify trends over time.

According to the Canadian Centre for Agricultural Wellbeing, broad participation is essential to ensuring the findings reflect the diverse realities of farming and ranching across Canada to help inform future research, programs and policy.

The survey is confidential, and no identifying information is collected as part of the process.

For more information or to complete the survey, visit ccaaw.ca.



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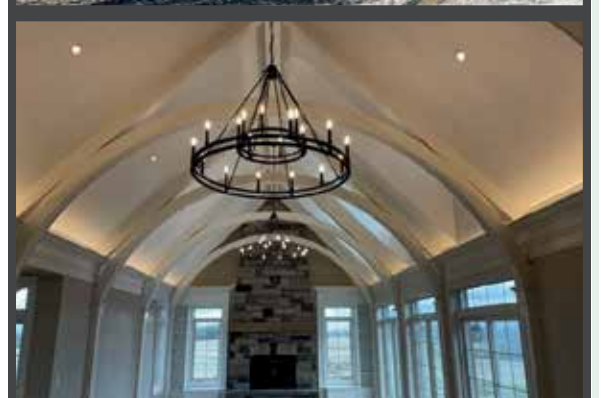


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Tips for staying safe ON THE FARM



The farm is more than a workplace — it's also home. It's where families are raised, crops are grown, and livestock are cared for, all while running a demanding business.

During busy times of the year, like planting or harvest, the pace of work increases, hours get longer, and the risks rise.

Many farm injuries are preventable. Awareness, preparation, and taking a moment to slow down can make all the difference to help keep a life-changing accident at bay.



COMMON RISKS INCLUDE:

- Long days and fatigue
- Heavy machinery and moving equipment
- Time pressure from weather and field conditions
- Road travel with slow-moving vehicles
- Multiple people working closely together
- Working with animals that can behave unpredictably.

When fatigue sets in or distractions creep in, the risk of injury rises quickly.

Farm safety isn't just about rules and regulations, IT'S ABOUT PEOPLE:

- Protecting family members, employees, and neighbours
- Preventing injuries that can disrupt operations during critical seasons
- Reducing long-term physical and mental health impacts
- Keeping farms running safely and efficiently

Accidents can happen in a split second, but many can be avoided with planning and attention — even during the busiest times of the year.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF, YOUR TEAM AND YOUR FARM

You can't eliminate every risk, but small, consistent actions go a long way.

Plan ahead



- Wear protective equipment: gloves, boots, helmets, eye and ear protection, dust masks if needed
- Keep a stocked first aid kit readily available
- Post emergency contact numbers where everyone can see them
- Carry a charged phone when heading out for the day

Inspect equipment



- Check tractors, planters, and attachments before use
- Repair worn or damaged parts and replace missing safety guards
- Shut down equipment before making adjustments or clearing blockages

Educate your team



- Review safety procedures with employees and family members and make expectations clear
- Encourage everyone to speak up about hazards or near-misses

Stay alert



- Avoid working when overly tired, rushed, or distracted
- Take regular breaks and stay hydrated
- Step back and reassess when frustration or stress builds



DON'T FORGET ABOUT KIDS!

Children grow up watching farm work and often want to help — but clear boundaries are essential.

- Keep kids away from operating machinery and active work sites
- Never allow grain bins, wagons, or equipment to be used as play areas
- Teach children to wear proper footwear and safety gear
- Supervise closely around livestock, which can react unpredictably

Mental health is important too



Taking care of your mental well-being is just as important as maintaining your equipment.

Free, confidential support is available 24/7 through the Farmer Wellness Initiative at 1-866-267-6255

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Can seasonal patterns help inform fertilizer purchasing decisions?

LEIGH ANDERSON

Farm Credit Canada

As producers turn their attention to the 2027 growing season, buying fertilizer remains one of the most important and uncertain crop input decisions.

The return of Chinese fertilizer exports has improved supply prospects for some nutrients, but ongoing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and the potential for disruptions to trade through the Strait of Hormuz continue to create upside price risk. At the same time, energy markets and global trade flows remain important drivers of fertilizer costs.

Against this backdrop, one question consistently comes up: How should producers approach fertilizer purchases in an increasingly uncertain market? In this report, we examine current fertilizer market conditions and explore how historical pricing patterns can help inform purchasing decisions amid ongoing uncertainty.

Fertilizer markets are sending mixed signals

Current market indicators highlight the diverging outlooks for nitrogen and phosphate fertilizers heading into 2027. Urea prices in the U.S. Gulf fertilizer market have retreated significantly from the highs reached earlier in 2026 and now sit roughly 15 per cent below pre-conflict levels, while DAP prices at New Orleans (NOLA) remain approximately 25 per cent above pre-conflict levels. The contrast highlights the different forces shaping nitrogen and phosphate markets.



(VECTEEZY PHOTO)

Farmers face uncertainty over fertilizer prices as they plan for the 2027 growing season.

Unlike nitrogen and phosphate, potash prices have remained comparatively stable over the past year.

While Canadian fertilizer prices generally follow U.S. Gulf and NOLA benchmarks, transportation costs, exchange

rates, regional supply-demand conditions and retailer inventories can influence the extent and timing of price changes. As a result, declines in benchmark prices do not necessarily translate into equivalent reductions in Canadian fertilizer prices.

Nitrogen markets easing, but risks remain

Part of the decline in urea prices reflects the seasonal slowdown that follows North American planting, a period often referred to as the summer lull in fertilizer markets.

Continued on page B13

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Continued from page B12

Prices have also softened due to the return of Chinese urea exports after several years of limited participation in global markets, improving product availability and easing pressure on nitrogen prices.

However, lower nitrogen prices should not be mistaken for lower risk. The Middle East remains a critical supplier of fertilizer products, feedstocks and energy, while the Strait of Hormuz remains a key global trade route. Any disruption to regional trade flows, shipping routes or natural gas markets could quickly reverse recent price declines.

Phosphate markets remain fundamentally tight

Phosphate markets continue to tell a different story. Elevated costs for sulphur, ammonia and natural gas – the primary inputs in phosphate production – have squeezed producer margins. So much so that in some cases, phosphate production has even been curtailed. With the Middle East accounting for nearly half of global sulphur trade, ongoing conflict in the region risks further increasing phosphate production costs and constraining supply.

Also supporting phosphate prices is the uncertainty surrounding Chinese exports. While lower U.S. tariffs on Moroccan phosphate may encourage some additional North American imports, they are unlikely to materially loosen global market conditions. Chinese export policy remains a key watch item heading into 2027.

Managing uncertainty through purchasing decisions

With fertilizer prices remaining difficult

to predict, many farms are focusing on timing of purchases as a risk-management tool. Most farms know their expected crop rotation and fertilizer requirements well before spring, and while prices remain uncertain, historical seasonal patterns can provide useful context for purchasing decisions.

Nitrogen exhibits the strongest seasonality of the major fertilizers. Over the past five years, Canadian retail prices have typically been the weakest during late summer and fall before strengthening into the spring application season, with average values peaking in April and May.

Phosphate displays a more moderate but still noticeable seasonal pattern. Prices for Canadian farmers tend to be relatively softer during the second half of the calendar year before gradually strengthening ahead of spring seeding.

In contrast, Canadian potash retail prices have exhibited relatively modest seasonal price fluctuations in recent years, giving producers greater flexibility to manage cash flow.

After summer fill programs, farmers are typically left weighing purchases between fall and spring application windows. Those with storage capacity may be able to separate purchase timing from application timing, while others may use supplier programs that allow fertilizer to be priced ahead of delivery.

Recent experience highlights why these decisions matter. Many producers viewed fertilizer prices as unattractive during summer fill programs last year, resulting in limited uptake. Fall fertilizer

application was also weaker than normal, pushing a larger share of fertilizer demand into the winter and spring months.

Fertilizer purchasing decisions should also be considered alongside grain marketing plans. As discussed in our recent grains and oilseeds report, historical crop pricing patterns can help inform grain marketing decisions amid market uncertainty. Locking in favourable crop prices can help offset higher fertilizer costs and improve margin certainty heading into 2027.

Bottom line

Geopolitical events this past year have highlighted how quickly fertilizer market conditions can change. Historical pricing

patterns suggest nitrogen and phosphate prices often strengthen into the spring application season, contrasting with potash prices which tend to show greater stability. While there is no guarantee markets will follow their typical seasonal path, the latter can be useful in guiding fertilizer purchasing decisions.

Many producers appear to be taking a wait-and-see approach as fertilizer markets move through the fall and into the new year. Given the uncertainty that remains, a phased purchasing strategy may be worth considering. While it will not always result in the lowest price, it can help balance opportunity, risk and flexibility.



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Study seeks to spin new use for stone wool substrate

LUKE EDWARDS

Contributed to the Gazette

Used substrate in Ontario's greenhouses may offer value for farmers and outdoor growers.

With the help of a grant from the Greenbelt Foundation, researchers at Vineland Research and Innovation Centre (VRIC) are conducting a study to see how valuable used stone wool is as a soil amendment. And while Mother Nature's whims during this year's trials may not yield as much information on one of the main proposed benefits as researchers hoped, Jason Henry is nonetheless optimistic for a future benefit.

"The industry is moving to waste recovery because landfilling these types of materials is becoming more costly. It's becoming a lot more costly," said Henry, a research scientist for plant responses and the environment at VRIC.

Finding creative reuse of greenhouse waste is nothing new for Vineland researchers. Much work has gone into finding ways to divert the vines, leaves and unusable fruit away from landfills. However, Henry's project takes that research underground, in a sense.

Substrate makes up a small but still significant amount of the overall greenhouse waste, something in the neighbourhood of 15 per cent, Henry said.

Reuse of other greenhouse material has

helped add nutrients back into the soil. While previous research found stone wool doesn't offer the same kind of nutrient infusion, Henry said it does show significant promise when it comes to water retention.

"It acts like a sponge," he said.

That water retention could be valuable during summer droughts when plants are thirsty. Adding used stone wool into the soil could keep water available to plants when it's really needed.

VRIC's study is looking at sweet corn and broccoli, utilizing self-contained growing boxes at the Vineland campus. Four different treatments see researchers comparing plants grown in basic soil, plants grown with different rates of stone wool applied, plants grown with composted hen manure and finally, plants grown with a mix of manure and stone wool applied.

While it's too early to know the results, Henry said he's optimistic.

In addition to water retention, Henry said they think the stone wool can similarly act as a sponge for the nutrient in the hen manure, holding them for later use by the plants.

Unfortunately, the wet spring and summer means they'll gain limited insight on water retention. However, Henry said one of the concerns is the possibility the used stone wool could introduce disease into fields where it's applied. The project will help researchers gain insight into that



(PHOTO COURTESY OF FARMPHOTOS.CA)

A joint project between researchers at Vineland Research and Innovation Centre and soil-less growing media provider Grodan is seeking to find ways to reuse stone wool substrate to reduce waste produced by greenhouse production.

potential issue.

To conduct the study, VRIC partnered

with Grodan, a company that produces soilless growing media such as stone

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wool. If they're able to scale up the success they've found in the lab to real life scenarios, Henry said the industry can begin looking at processes to make it viable.

Yianni Monahan, product manager, lifecycle North America at Groden, called the project foundational.

"This project will provide important foundational research to evaluate the potential of this material as a soil amendment," Monahan said.

One of the side issues Henry said they face is confusion over regulatory standards. Henry said they want to provide more information to farmers and greenhouse growers on the rules to help make things easier as well.

Public and industry events are planned for the future, as well, to help inform growers about the project and its results.

The project began in April and is scheduled to last nine months. Henry said he'd love another chance to conduct the trials when there's less rain. In a future trial, they could install covers in the self-contained boxes to control how much water the plants receive, giving them a better idea of the water retention qualities.

As tipping fees rise dramatically and landfill space in Ontario dwindles, finding creative ways to reuse greenhouse waste is becoming more important.

Henry said they're grateful for the Greenbelt Foundation's funding, calling it a "huge honour" to be selected.

Perth County Beef Farmers to host annual Beef BBQ



(PHOTO COURTESY OF PERTH COUNTY BEEF FARMERS)

The Perth County Beef Farmers are hosting their second annual Beef BBQ Dinner at the Milverton Agri Centre Sept. 19.

WILMOT-TAVISTOCK GAZETTE STAFF

thewtgazette@gmail.com

The Perth County Beef Farmers are busy putting the finishing touches on their second annual Beef BBQ Dinner taking place on Saturday, Sept. 19, at the Milverton Agri Centre (MAC) located at 17 Pierson St. in Milverton.

The meal, which will served from 5-7:30 p.m., includes locally sourced foods and is a real testament to the vision of "Farm Gate to Dinner Plate." On the menu is smoked beef brisket served on a Guenther's Bakery kaiser, Anna Mae's Coleslaw, locally grown baked beans, baked potato and corn on the cob.

For dessert, enjoy a slice of homemade

pie. Tickets are just \$30 each and children 10 years and under get a free kid's meal with the purchase of a \$30 ticket. A kid's meal includes a hot dog, cookie and a juice box. Additional kid's meals can be purchased for just \$5.

Organizers say an event of this magnitude takes volunteers, so it is being hosted in collaboration with the Milverton Agricultural Society and the Milverton Lions Club, as well as some community youth who will be helping with set-up and clean-up.

The goal is to sell 300 meals like last year.

"It will be a true testament to not only the Perth County Beef Farmers, but all the participating businesses who work

hard every day to bring us safe, delicious and nutritious locally grown and prepared foods," organizers said in a press release.

To round out the evening, there will be live entertainment from 6-10 p.m. and the event is licensed. Performances begin at 6 p.m. with the Perth County Line Dancers taking the stage, followed by local musicians Dan Gropp, Jadeyn Snider and the Jeff & Trish Duo. Entertainment is included with any meal ticket purchase, or people can simply attend for the entertainment after 6 p.m. by donation at the door.

For more information or to purchase a ticket, email perthcountybeef@gmail.com or call Angela at (519) 291-8668.

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Autonomous robots aim to cut nitrogen fertilizer needs

JOHN MINER

Submitted to the Gazette

If Maize Runner succeeds, corn growers will be able to cut the amount of nitrogen fertilizer they use while boosting yields.

Maize Runner is a fifth-generation robot that is currently being tested on more than 3,000 acres on 31 farms across Ontario by Waterloo-based Upside Robotics.

The idea behind the lightweight solar-powered robot is to regularly spoon feed nitrogen to corn plants throughout the growing season, matching the growth requirements of the plant.

“

We are hoping to get to a point where one robot by itself can manage at least a 100-acre field.

Tanya Franklin

At present, farmers using current fertilizer application equipment can make one or two nitrogen applications during the season, but much of the nitrogen is gone by post-tassel when the corn plant still requires about 40 per cent of the nitrogen.

In contrast, Maize Runner can apply fertilizer throughout the growing season, covering between 20 to 25 acres a day.

The autonomous robot typically applies fertilizer for about four hours before returning to a base station to recharge, refill and head back out again. It can run 24-7.

"We are hoping to get to a point where one robot by itself can manage at least a 100-acre field, making weekly applications," Upside Robotics agronomist Tanya Franklin told participants attending the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association farm day at the Huronview Demo Farm near Clinton.

The field results from the nitrogen robot application have been positive with some farms cutting their nitrogen applications by as much as 70 per cent and maintaining yields.

Upside Robotics was co-founded in 2023 by Jana Tian, a chemical engineer, and Sam Dugan, who grew up on a farm and trained in mechatronics at the University of Waterloo.

The first two generations of robots developed by Upside Robotics, Buddy and Marley, were driven by an Xbox controller that required an operator to walk behind the robot through the whole field.



(JOHN MINER PHOTO)

Speaking at the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association farm day at the Huronview Demo Farm, Upside Robotics agronomist Tanya Franklin describes how the Maize Runner robot can cut nitrogen fertilizer requirements. The solar powered autonomous robot covers 20 to 25 acres a day.

"We put in about 30,000 steps a day to get those applications done," said Franklin.

There were also significant issues with motors quitting. By the end of the season, co-op students literally hooked up a harness to the robots and dragged them through the field to get the nitrogen applied, she said.

Last year, the liquid fertilizer tanks mounted on the robots above the computers and electronics leaked.

"We were blowing up robots daily," Franklin said.

The robots also relied on GPS and field maps to navigate between the rows. The maps turned out to be out by as much as

Continued on page B17

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150 centimetres, causing the robots to trample the corn.

"We actually had to shut down the entire fleet for about two and a half weeks at the beginning of the season."

This year's robot model, Maize Runner, no longer relies on planting maps to manoeuvre between the rows.

It is equipped with front and back cameras, a multi-spectral camera, canopy camera, temperature and humidity sensor, magnetometer and gyroscope. Data is collected metre-by-metre as the robot moves through the field.

"It's really cool, the amount of data that we're gathering on plant health, on how weather conditions affect things," said Franklin.

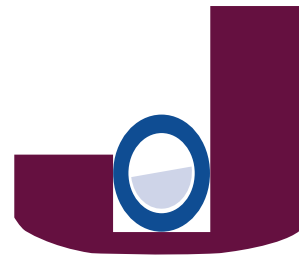
The base station for the robot is equipped with a rain-fall sensor and temperature sensor. If it is going to rain within two hours, robots at the base station can no longer go to the field and robots in the field are programmed to return to the base.

If the base station detects rain, the robots in the field are automatically shut down and stay in place in the field until it dries out enough that they can start back up, return to the station and recharge.

Franklin said she doesn't have a price on the robot system yet.

"We know we want to sit in a spot where we can get the hardware reliable enough that when we sell it to you, you don't really have to do anything with it for about three years at least.

"Year one, at minimum, it breaks even. Year two and three are for profit. That is the goal."



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Thank a Farmer!

G.J.'s Harvest Centre names winners of summer colouring contest

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

G.J.'s Harvest Centre in Milverton recently announced the winners of its first summer colouring contest, an initiative aimed at getting some of the youngest members of the local farming community involved.

G.J.'s is one of Milverton's newer farm-machinery dealerships, with a service and sales area for CLAAS combines, harvesters and tractors, along with other makes and types of farm machinery.

This summer, the dealership invited children of its customers to take part in a colouring contest, with their completed artwork proudly displayed on a wall in the showroom.

Organizers said they were pleased with both the number of entries and the range of ages represented in the contest. Based on this year's response, they are already planning to bring the contest back next year with even more prizes.

"It was a joy to see the kids' faces when they brought in their artwork, and they were very proud of what they had," organizers said.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

Five-year-old Mila Schapendonk holds the artwork that earned her first place in the junior division of G.J.'s Harvest Centre's summer colouring contest in Milverton.

Five-year-old Mila Schapendonk took first place in the junior division with her colourful entry, earning herself a CLAAS Bruder toy.

In the senior division, 13-year-old Amber Ropp impressed with the detail she put into her entry. Ropp meticulously coloured and shaded the picture, giving it a realistic

appearance.

For her efforts, Ropp received a Brixies Arion building-block set.

Parts manager Jaime Lehmann thanked everyone who participated and said the dealership looks forward to holding another colouring contest for local farm kids next year.



Thirteen-year-old Amber Ropp shows off her winning entry in the senior division of G.J.'s Harvest Centre's summer colouring contest for children of the dealership's customers.



Mike HARRIS
MPP KITCHENER-CONESTOGA

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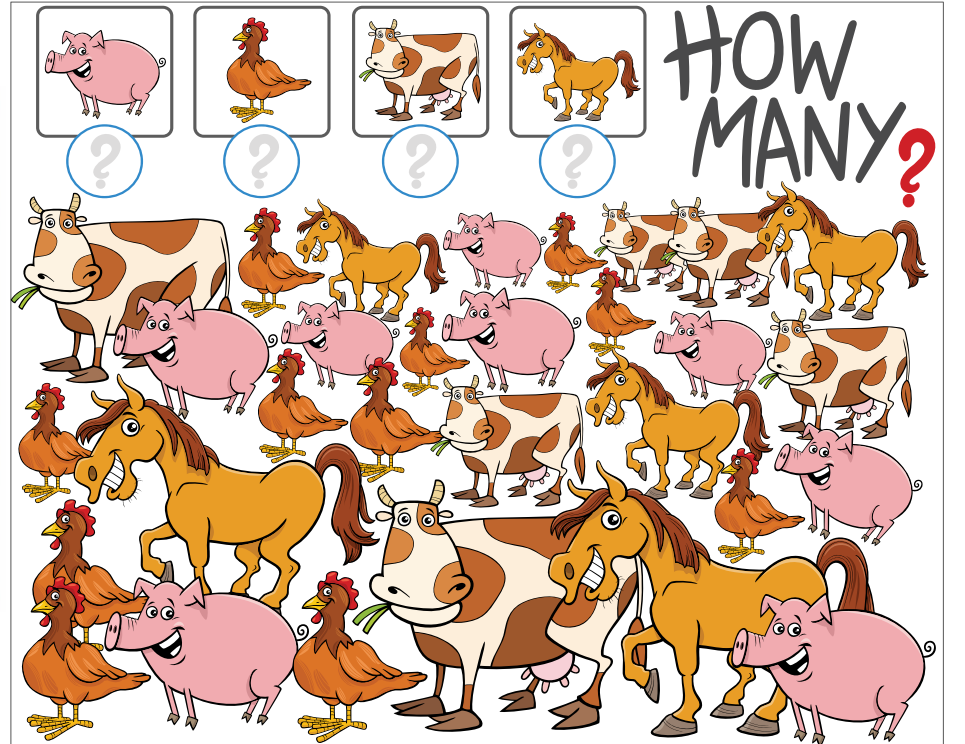
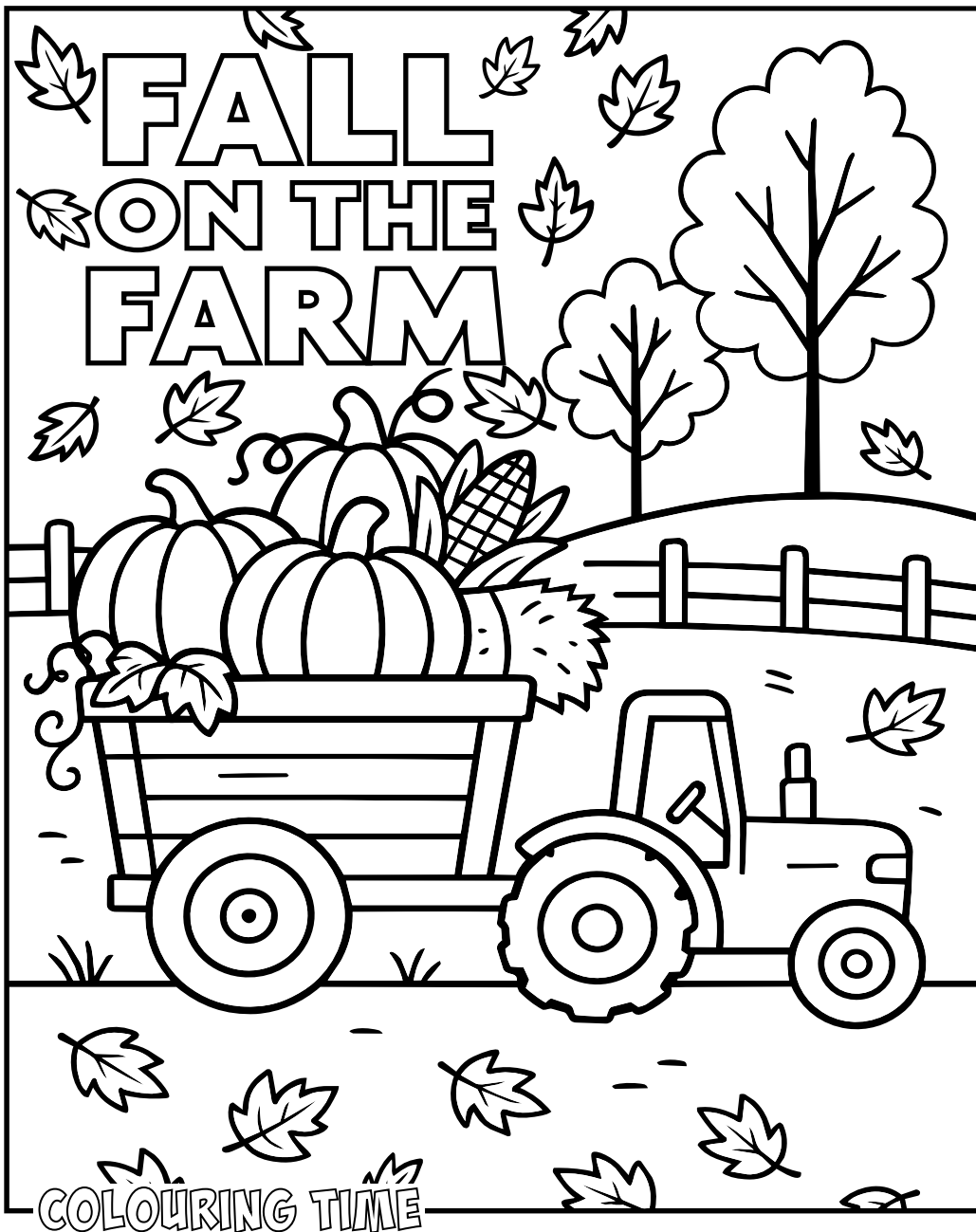
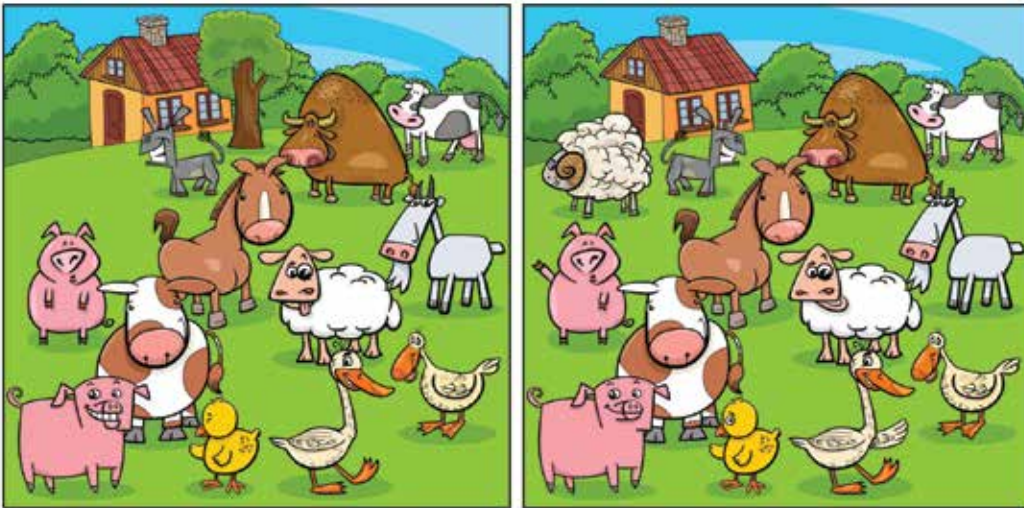
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