

Tillsonburg POST

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Tillsonburg water and wastewater rates not increasing

JEFF HELSDON

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

It's not often that good news comes out of municipal government budget discussions, but this is one tidbit - the water and wastewater rates for Tillsonburg residents won't be increasing.

The average rate calculations, which were discussed in the county budget, are based on average consumption. The situation could vary slightly, dependent on use, and a calculator is available on Oxford County's web site.

Water rates are a combination of consumption charges and charges to cover infrastructure maintenance and replacement to keep it in a state of good repair, which is basically all the infrastructure including wells, water storage, water treatment facilities, and distribution pipes.

Consumption charges will increase by 1.8 per cent for both water and wastewater, which is the Consumer Price Index, across the county. The amount for infrastructure updates varies by municipality, dependent on future needs mapped out in the asset management plan for infrastructure maintenance and replacement and the amount of reserves. This is where Tillsonburg shines.

"With the reserves in the position Tillsonburg is in, there is no need for an increase," said Don Ford, senior manager of water and wastewater services for Oxford County. "What's unique about Tillsonburg is the amount in the reserves."

Tillsonburg has \$6 million in the water reserves and \$12 million in the wastewater reserves.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2



(CHRIS ABBOTT PHOTO)

A NEW YEAR'S TRADITION

The Royal Canadian Legion, Tillsonburg Branch 153 hosted its annual President's Levee on Jan. 1st, featuring 'Moose Milk' and clam chowder from the Ladies Auxiliary, a DJ that kept the dance floor busy, three membership draws, and more than 100 revellers. At least 25 new members signed up Thursday, said Branch 153 president Tom Brown CD, pleased with the fantastic turnout. From left are Claude Archambault (Air Cadet Liaison), Vera Struyk (2nd Vice President), Tom Brown CD (Branch 153 President), Dianne Hodges (Youth Education and Zone B2 President) and Joe Brown (Honours & Awards).

Proposed municipal budget increase sits at 3.64 per cent

JEFF HELSDON

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The first draft of the town's 2026 budget is sitting at a 1.8 per cent hike, plus a retroactive court-mandated policing increase, for a total tax increase of 3.64 per cent.

If approved as presented, the budget will be 1.12 per cent lower than the 2025 budget. For an average home assessed at \$243,000, this means an increase of approximately \$22.36

quarterly or \$89.42 on the town portion of the annual tax bill.

"Our goal is to always balance affordability for residents with the need to invest in critical infrastructure and services," said Mayor Deb Gilvesy. "This proposed increase reflects higher policing costs, mainly due to court-mandated retroactive pay."

The 2026 budget also marks the first completed under the changes with Tillsonburg becoming one of the municipalities with strong mayor powers mandated from the province.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 5

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Tillsonburg water and wastewater rates not increasing

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

There is spending planned in the asset management plan for updates and maintenance items, but Ford said the targets are being met.

"Those targets are being met there is no need to increase the amount," Ford said.

Looking at the numbers, the average Tillsonburg customer using 150 cubic meters of water per year, will see the water charge go from \$506 to \$541. However, this is offset by the wastewater charge, which will see a reduction from \$477 to \$442. This works out to a total of \$983 for both 2025 and 2026 rates.

Ford explained in Tillsonburg's case, there is not a draw on the reserves.

"It's not a transfer out, it's a recognition we don't need as much, so it's an offset,"

he said.

Other communities are not in the same position. The county's water systems are broken down into Woodstock, Tillsonburg, Ingersoll and the remainder of Oxford County. Woodstock rates will increase by 8.5 per cent for an average charge of \$816. Ingersoll rates will decrease by 2.5 per cent for an average charge of \$1,169. The smaller municipalities will see rates varying from a 1.5 per cent increase for an average bill of \$1,186 for Norwich on the low side to a high of a 5.8 per cent increase in Drumbo for a total of \$1,744.

"The county's goal is to fully recover water and wastewater costs through the rates," Ford said, explaining each community's contribution is based on annual

needs.

In Tillsonburg's case, the amount of growth has helped.

"If there's more consumption, more growth, and if there's cost savings, any surplus all goes to the reserve and builds the reserve," he said.

Ford further explained existing users don't pay for the infrastructure for new developments.

"Growth pays for growth and existing customers are paying for the system to be maintained. Growth helps since once people are connected to the system, they are users," he said.

Ford also said wise management by Oxford County and its water distribution service provider, the Town of Tillsonburg,

have assisted in keeping costs down.

The future

Down the road, Tillsonburg will need an expansion of the wastewater treatment plant. Ford explained development charges will fund this initiative, and it's in the 10-year capital plans.

On the water front, predictions are Tillsonburg has enough water until 2046. A study, which will launch this year, will look at how to supply the Town of Tillsonburg and the Township of Norwich beyond that planning window.

"Past that, we'll have to consider if we drill more wells, interconnect communities or find other sources," he said.

From the publisher's desk: Predictions for 2026



STEWART GRANT

Publisher

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

It's a subjective question that's hard to measure, but I had cast my Jan. 1 vote in the "Yes"

column. Maybe that's just wishful thinking. The year is certainly off to quite an interesting start.

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

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

1. Despite Trump's comments to the

contrary at his Jan. 3 press conference, public pressure within Venezuela will sway the American President to eventually support Maria Corina Machado as the rightful leader of Venezuela.

2. A Democratic politician will call for the impeachment of Donald Trump for failing to gain necessary approvals for invading Venezuela, but this goes nowhere.

3. In Canada, the Liberal government's government will hold throughout 2026.

4. Pierre Poilievre will remain as Conservative leader following that party's leadership review in January.

5. Although there will be much speculation, China will not invade Taiwan in 2026.

6. A ceasefire will be negotiated in the Russia-Ukraine war.

7. Drone warfare, one of the staples of the Russia-Ukraine war, will sadly make its first high-profile appearance on this side of the ocean, with a notable strike sparking heavy interest in counter-drone defense systems.

8. American tariffs on Canadian-made products will decrease during the year.

9. Despite worries about an AI bubble, the stock markets will record another positive year.

10. More information will be released from the Epstein files, but no arrests of high-profile personalities will occur.

11. In sports, the Stanley Cup will stay south of the border, with the Colorado Avalanche earning the NHL's top prize.

12. Fans of the Toronto Maple Leafs will be spared the agony of losing in the first round when the team fails to make the playoffs.

13. The Buffalo Bills make it to the Super Bowl but lose to the Seattle Seahawks.

14. Team Canada will edge Team USA in the Men's Olympic Hockey Finals.

15. France will win the 2026 World Cup.

16. Speculation will grow regarding Trump's physical and mental health as he turns 80 years old this year. He will survive the year, but with increased public focus on J.D. Vance as potentially needing to take over as U.S. President in 2027.

17. Late addition to the prediction list - Despite all his talk, surely Trump will not invade Greenland, Colombia, or Cuba in 2026, right??

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



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EDITORIAL

Ushering in a new year

As we usher in a new year, it brings with it hopes, new dreams, fresh challenges and the wish that the coming year would be better than the past one.

In 2026, the new year also brings with it a heightened sense of conflict globally, which weighs heavy on the minds of many. In today's society, the best gauge of what's on people's minds is social media. There is no doubt international affairs and an interest in American politics seem to be the number one topic of discussion.

However, this is not something we as Tillsonburg and area residents and Canadians, can influence. So, why are we stressing about this? It's great to have an opinion on it, and be knowledgeable about global affairs, but what should be front of mind is Canadian, provincial and local af-

fairs.

Many locals have lamented the province, county or municipality should do more to help the homeless. The question is do they know what is already out there? Do they know there are empty shelter beds in Tillsonburg and Oxford County, but the homeless choose not to use these spaces?

A new year brings with it resolutions of change. A simple resolution that could help the community is to pay more attention to what is going on in Tillsonburg – and what is really occurring, not what the latest gossip is on Facebook.

Arthur C. Clarke said, "I don't pretend we have all the answers. But the questions are certainly worth thinking about." Resolving to ask more questions can bring about the possibility of change.

**Have something to say?
Submit your Letter to
the Editor here:
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(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

PHOTOGRAPHERS WANTED

Do you have a great photo you think would look good on the editorial page?

The Tillsonburg Post is looking for images to display in this space from community members who would like to share their art work. All images must be taken in Tillsonburg, or the immediate area, and should not be of people.

Images should be high resolution jpgs. Please send only one image per e-mail, and send no more than three images. Images should be sent to jeff@granthaven.com

Doing the 'good thing' in the Barbados



WRITER'S CORNER

NORMA COLLIS

Tillsonburg Post Columnist

When I first began dating the man who is now my husband, his family invited me to join them on a vacation to the island of Barbados. David had been there many times with his parents. I had only ever visited the Bahamas, so the chance to spend time in a more southerly island paradise, was a thrilling prospect.

A fellow teacher on the staff at my school was originally from Barbados. She asked if we would take Christmas gifts to her family there. I readily agreed but there were rather a lot of wrapped items and both David and I had to repack our luggage and jettison some of our "vacation wear" to carry out the promise that I had made to the Barbadian woman.

Those were the days when wrapped gifts easily passed airport security inspection. At customs in Barbados, I only had to mention the name of the family

that would be receiving the gifts and we were waved on through.

We were all booked into a beachside guest house run by a woman who was originally from Guyana. Upon being introduced as "David's girlfriend", she immediately asked us if we had "done the good thing." We had no idea what she was talking about, so we just smiled and changed the topic.

As we explored the island, we saw many large billboards with the slogan "Do the Good Thing." This led to us to making various and sometimes hilarious speculations as to what the "Good thing" might be.

When we delivered the Christmas parcels to the island family, we were invited to a party at their home on the evening of new Years Day. We readily accepted.

"What should we say if they ask us if we have done the good thing?" we asked each other.

"Well," said David "We have two choices of response. We can either say we have done the good thing and thanks for asking, or we can say we haven't done the good thing and wouldn't think of doing it."

New Years Eve, David's parents took us to a formal ball at an historic hotel called "The Marine" hotel. It had a magnificent mahogany dance floor that gleamed in the soft lighting from chandeliers overhead. At each end of the spacious ballroom

were two live orchestras each on a raised stage. When one group took a break, the other one began to play. The event was being broadcast by radio across the entire southern Caribbean area. It felt as if we were in some sort of exotic movie set.

The evening was a particularly warm one and the ballroom was not airconditioned. Just before midnight, David asked me if I would like to catch a breath of fresh air out in the courtyard adjacent to the ballroom. On the stroke of midnight, he asked me to marry him.

Now to hear him tell the story, he says that the rum punch the hotel was serving was more potent than he realized. He says he asked me "Will you CARRY me?" When he recounts his version of events.

I replied, "Hey, I was there, I know what you asked me, and the answer is still.... yes."

The next evening, our hostess at the guest house was delighted to learn that we were now engaged.

"Oh, you are going to do the good thing" she exclaimed.

It was then that she told us that the "Good thing campaign" was to encourage island couples to marry and to give their children a legal and legitimate last name.

She then presented us with a large special curry dinner, "Guyanese style" in honour of the New Year and of our recent engagement. The meal was extremely spicy and hot. I struggled to get through

it.

We then left for the house party we had been invited to. There was a house full of people waiting to meet us. We were introduced to the Minister of Education for the island, the Canadian ambassador and many other island VIPs. E

ach person asked us "Have You done the Good Thing."

"Oh yes, we are about to do that," we happily replied.

The whole house party had waited for us before they began to eat. There spread out on several long tables, was a complete authentic Barbadian buffet dinner.

Later, David told me that he was sure he had heard our hosts tell us that we were invited for dinner. I hadn't heard that little detail.

"You are our guests. You must help yourselves first," we were instructed. Our stomachs threatened to rebel, but we gamely tried a little of everything although I must admit I drew the line at blood pudding.

The following day, when we were still suffering indigestion from those two generous-sized evening meals, I apologized to David for the dinner invitation mix up.

"Well," he replied, "I forgive you. I still think we should "Do the Good Thing."

Ah....young love.

Norma Collis is a Tillsonburg author of several books, including "Tales from Holly Cottage".

The past, present and future of Charles Dickens' life



THE STAGE IS THE WORLD

LAUREL A. BEECHEY

Tillsonburg Post Columnist

Another new year and I am sure glad I made it! The things I would like to change, I cannot, so the focus of this article is on something 'new' that I learned while researching my most recent 'past' article, where I mentioned Charles Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol.' Like Scrooge, we will go back in Charles' 'past', for an event that most know nothing about.

Many of Charles' classic novels were first published in monthly installments in the newspapers, which are the dates used. His first, The Pickwick Papers ran from Mar/1836-Nov/1837: Oliver Twist Feb/1837-Apr/1839. Nicholas Nickleby-Mar/1838-Oct/39. The Old Curiosity Shop-1840-41. Barnaby Rudge-Feb-Nov/1841. But Christmas Carol wasn't started until Oct. 1843! What happened in 1842 and part of 1843?

Five novels in six years. Charles had done well but need some time to refresh and reinvent himself. Charles, known to have a social conscious, followed various governments and legal systems to learn how they dealt with social discriminations. What better place to do so than burgeoning North America? Charles, and wife Christine, embarked on a cruise of a lifetime to tour Britain's Province of Canada and the more settled and established United States.

But first, in their 'present', they enjoyed Christmas 1841, with their four children, who would not be accompanying them on their Jan. 3rd, 1842 trip on Cunard Ship-

ping Lines, first steam ship, the 'SS Britannia. Christine's maid Anne Brown and George Putnam, Charles travelling secretary, were of course also on the ship. This non-stop crossing to Halifax, was estimated 12 days at sea.

This specific sailing was written up by Charles R. V. Gibbs: "The most famous 1842 crossing was made by author Charles Dickens, who departed Liverpool on the SS Britannia on Jan. 3 or 4, 1842, and arrived in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on Jan. 20, 1842. Despite severe weather and heavy seasickness, the voyage to Canada took roughly 16 days." Charles also wrote about the coffin-sized rooms and he and Catherine being seasick for virtually the whole cruise due to the rolling seas. This travel adventure from January to June became his next best seller 'American Notes'.

Now, a tour in what would be Dickens' 'future' with 2026 Cunard's Britannia takes seven days in elegance from Britain to Halifax.

The SS Britannia was a steam packet, which carried mail and other goods, so the first stop was in Halifax to deliver and pick up the mail on Oct. 2nd. In the seven hours they were Halifax, Charles was hastily brought ashore by Joseph Howe, future speaker of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly and future premier. While ashore, Charles attended the opening of N.S. Assembly and was pleased that "it was like looking at Westminster through the wrong end of a telescope"

At 30 years-old, Charles was at the top of his popularity

on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. He wanted to see for himself how America, being able to start from the bottom, was reinventing society.

They and the ship steamed off along the U.S. eastern seaboard. Charles arriving in Boston was mobbed with adoration. In most cases, he was received in glory. He would be disappointed as well when he realized that copies of his books and shorter works had been bootlegged and he received no royalties. So, he pushed for international copyright. That didn't go well.

Did Charles really want to help the poor and down-trodden in England? Yes. He would go to various public institutions on his tour to compare to England to North America. His visit to Perkins Institution for the Blind in Boston amazed me. Here, Charles met and wrote about in his travelog, a 13-year-old blind and deaf girl, Laura Bridgman, who had been taught by the director Samuel Gridley Howe, to communicate using Braille and the manual alphabet.

Four decades later, inspired by Charles' published American Notes, Captain & Mrs. Arthur Keller's deaf and blind daughter also attended Perkins and was taught by their teacher Anne Sullivan, also visually impaired. The girl's name was Helen Keller. This is only the beginning of the Dickens' tour. This missive of Dickens' 'past,' written in the 'present', will continue in the very near 'future' 'with his U.S. and Canadian tour, and you will meet his mistress and his second tour in 1867.



SNOW CAROLLERS

Dressed with seasonal revelry, perhaps such as that worn by door-to-door carollers, these snow figures decorated the island in the centre of Lisgar Avenue for a short time before they met their demise due to rising temperatures.

(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

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Total municipal tax increase at 3.64 per cent with policing increase

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

For the budget, this means a shift from the traditional format that saw all of council working on the budget to the mayor working with staff, drafting the budget, and then it being open to council revisions.

The town's initial draft called for an eight per cent increase, but staff worked with the mayor to identify \$1.43 million in changes to reduce the impact on taxpayers while continuing to meet the town's infrastructure obligations. Rising statutory cost increases, including CPP and EI, continue to place additional pressure on the municipal operating budget, outpacing the rate of inflation.

"We know residents expect value for their tax dollars however it is still important that our infrastructure is renewed at time of renewal to avoid large tax increases in the future," adds Gilvesy. "This budget positions Tillsonburg competitively within the region and ensures we can deliver essential services and strategic projects."

The impact of the court-mandated settlement with the OPP would have been a more than 17 per cent increase for municipalities, until the province intervened and reduced the increase to 1.4 per cent. Provincial assistance was also provided last year, and brought the increase down to 0.7 per cent.

Gilvesy pointed out that OPP costs are still more efficient than those of municipal forces. Many surrounding municipalities with municipal forces pay a much larger percentage of their budget for policing. The services that the OPP provide, such as 'no borders' investigative support, intelligence support, and specialized response teams, are a benefit to the community at no additional cost. Municipalities with municipal forces are billed for some of these services.

"From my understanding, we are done with the court-mandated retro pay," Gilvesy explained. "That being said, the OPP's contract with the province expires on Dec. 31, 2026, so there's going to be a new contract."

CAO Kyle Pratt emphasized the importance of long-term planning, which was evident in the budget.

"Municipalities across Ontario are facing rising costs and aging infrastructure," says Pratt. "This budget reflects our commitment to responsible investment and operational excellence, ensuring Tillsonburg remains a vibrant and sustainable community."

Budget details

The proposed 2026 municipal budget totals \$43.5 million, with \$9.8 million allocated to capital projects.

Highlights of the 2026 capital budget include:

- Cranberry Line – reconstruction completion
- Rokeyo Road – reconstruction completion
- Completion of Kinsmen Pedestrian Bridge rehabilitation
- Significant investment to Lake Lisgar, including cleaning and maintenance to Hawkins Bridge, silt removal, repairs and new decking at Gibson House, as well as

- a new perimeter fence at the water park
- Annandale House upgrades, new elevator and kitchen
- Park and sports field updates and refurbishments
- Clock tower refurbishment
- Aging critical equipment replacement at the Tillsonburg Community Centre
- Three new pickleball courts (funded 90 per cent from Development Charges) at a to-be-announced location
- Phase 1 of Customer Service Centre renovations

"This budget reflects a balanced approach, investing in infrastructure, and ensuring we have the resources to meet evolving needs while staying aligned with our strategic plan," Pratt said.

"There's no new significant projects but a lot of smaller projects that deal with our asset management plan," Gilvesy said. "There is a focus on the lake because we have to renew infrastructure there."

Departmental business plan highlights include:

- Continued implementation of the 2021–2030 Community Strategic Plan
- Advancing the Infrastructure Renewal Program
- Ongoing healthcare and physician recruitment efforts
- Strengthened asset management practices
- Supporting economic growth through strategic land sales to build on recent industrial investment and help fund the final phase of the VIP Phase II lands

Residents are encouraged to review the proposed 2026 budget and watch the upcoming Council meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 7, at 9 a.m. The meeting will be available in person and via livestream, making it easy for the community to stay informed about how tax dollars are being invested.

"We want residents to have access to clear information and see the decision-making process firsthand," Gilvesy said. "Your awareness and understanding help strengthen transparency and trust in local government."

The new budget process

Work on the budget started in the summer, with the mayor sending out an e-mail to council, asking for input on capital project suggestions. Gilvesy then sent staff these requests, plus hers, and a target for the budget. The mayor began reviewing the budget in November, working toward finalizing the draft document. It was provided to council before being released to the public on Jan. 2.

Starting with the budget meeting on Jan. 7, council has 30 days to bring forward amendments. Council also has the resolution to shorten the review period by amendment. The mayor then has 10 days to veto those amendments. Council is then provided 15 days to override the vetoes, which must be done by a two-thirds majority. After the 15-day amendment period, the budget is deemed to have been adopted 15 days later.

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A warm welcome for Reverend Stradwick at St. John's Anglican Church

ROBIN KRAFFT

Post Contributor

Reverend Thomas Stradwick is settling in at St. John's Anglican Church and finding his way around town, socializing with the people he meets and marvelling over the amenities.

He was recently appointed as rector on Nov. 1, and it's a long way from his parish at St.-Peter's-on-the-Rock in Kirkland Lake. He was the Regional Dean of the Diocese of Moosonee, responsible for a vast area covering 560 000 square kilometers. He travelled to distant congregations regularly, including Chapleau, Hearst, Hornepayne, Thunder Bay, Moosonee, and Val-d'Or, Quebec. It's quite a contrast to Tillsonburg, the largest community he's served in his 32 years of ordination, with so many conveniences nearby.

"It's a very welcoming place, and it's a really good fit theologically. I've been able to meet my homeless neighbours, and I got to have great conversations with them," Stradwick said. "I've been to the men's breakfast on Thursday morning and met with the other ministers in town to have lunch and share what's going on."

He swims every morning, and then takes a long circuitous walk to the church with Tim Hortons cards in his pocket for those in need. Reaching out and connecting to the community is important to him.

"We have to be in relationship with each other, we're not the body of Christ; we're part of it," Stradwick said. "We have a fabulous deacon, and she has a good relationship with the community already. I want to walk alongside her, not take it away from her. Her vows are to serve, and my vows are to serve and to teach."

Being able to connect with colleagues and getting to know the St. John's church staff and congregation have been joyful experiences. He's still getting used to having an administrative assistant, organist and custodian, and the welcome dinner prepared by Chef Rudy was a delicious surprise.

Reverend Stradwick grew up in St. Catherine's, but his

grandfather had a construction business and often had contracts in Simcoe and Tillsonburg.

"My mother worked in tobacco growing up, I heard stories of it. I remember in high school some kids got out of exams because they were coming to work in tobacco and I wondered why I didn't get to do that," Stradwick said, laughing.

He was married with three children and worked at Kimberly Clark before attending Brock University and then moving to Saskatoon to get his theology degree at the College of Emmanuel and St. Chad.

"I had a yearning, a calling, and people were telling me; there were little signs along the way," Stradwick reflected. "It was always in the background, but I wondered if I was good enough. You're supposed to do that before you marry or have kids."

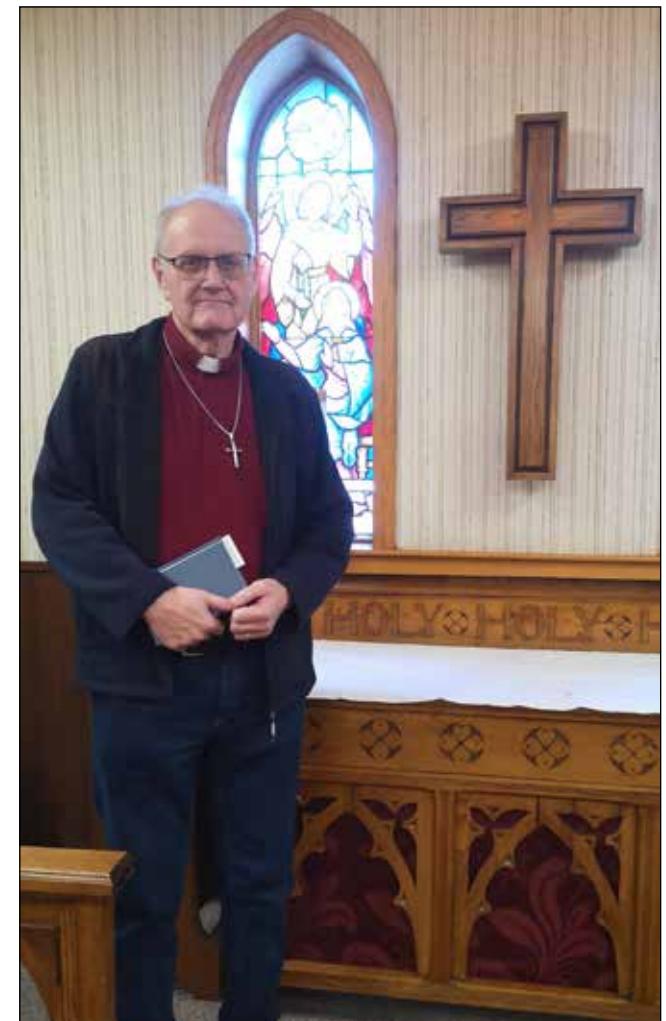
Now, with his years of experience and the many congregations he's served, he brings his good humour and insight to bear as he embraces his new community.

"I believe in empowering people, not dictating. I take a very practical approach, it's Indigenous based, but it's not new, it's something that they used to do here," Stradwick said. "On Sunday mornings we offer the Gospel Based Discipleship (GBD) program, looking at what intrigues us, what it's telling us and what we're going to do about it."

He's also introducing a Dinner and Discussion series, beginning November 24. The first is titled Doctrine of Discovery: Stolen Lands and will help non-Indigenous people understand the issues. Moving toward truth and reconciliation, he's aiming to promote true healing. Three more Dinner and Discussion series are planned for 2026, beginning with the concept of Leading Change.

"How do we go beyond surviving and lead change in our church? Respect, vision, permission to change and to share the gospel that's relative to people," he explained.

It was challenging to find space for the new program, with so much happening at the church on a daily basis. Aside from regular programs like Cubs, Scouts, and Tai



Reverend Thomas Stradwick.

(ROBIN KRAFFT PHOTO)

Chi, many special events are scheduled.

Regular services on Sundays begin at 8 a.m. with the Book of Common Prayer, GBD from 9 – 10 a.m., and service at 10:30, followed by coffee hour. Advent, Christmas and Epiphany will be the focus for December.

"Many people are coming back to the church," he said. "It's wonderful and we'd love to have you."



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Otter Creek Construction specializes in indoor finishing

Trust is essential in the renovation business.

"I stand behind everything we do," said Dennis Vandevyvere, licensed and insured owner of Otter Creek Construction in Tillsonburg, specializing in indoor finishing work that includes kitchens, bathrooms, rec rooms, basement remodels and more.

"You always have to make sure you keep the customer happy - and it usually works out in the end, as long as you're vocal and open with them on what you found... because you always find something in renovations," he smiled.

"We have to make sure our clients are happy and we keep the work coming in, especially in a small town where word of mouth goes a long way."

Vandevyvere started by himself, then hired another employee, found the need for more and now has four employees.

"We almost do everything. We do tile flooring, walls, we do custom showers... and kitchens, of course."

"We do some outdoor stuff, too, but mostly indoor."

Based in Tillsonburg since 2019, Otter Creek Construction has both residential and commercial customers, servicing all of Oxford County, some in London, as well as Elgin County (Aylmer and St. Thomas), and Norfolk County (Delhi and Langton areas).

"We do quite a big area here."

Vandevyvere first talks with clients, then often brings samples to them.

"Sometimes they'll pick out their own samples, but I often deal with people who don't want to drive here, so I'll narrow it down to something



Dennis Vandevyvere, owner of Otter Creek Construction in Tillsonburg.

close and bring it to them.

"We do a lot of work for the Town of Tillsonburg and we do a lot of work for Community Living in town."

They also work on a lot of secondary units (accessory dwelling units) – self-contained apartments within homes suitable for seniors or maybe kids moving back home.

"We've done the odd addition as well," Vandevyvere noted. "I used to build houses when I was younger. But there's enough people out there doing the framing side, I mostly stick to the inside, the finishing. We've done additions, but it's not our main thing."

Vandevyvere hires electricians and plumbers to help complete jobs.

"A lot of people don't want to be the 'middle man,' so we can look after that. We use all local people, and the same with suppliers – all local suppliers."

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Celebration honours Leighton Ronson's achievements

JEFF HELSDON

Editor

As he turned 100, a surprise celebration for Tillsonburg resident Leighton Ronson honoured his achievements within the Legion and the Masons.

The celebration was held on Dec. 18, co-hosted by the Legion and King Hiram



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)
Legion President Tom Brown assists Leighton Ronson to cut a cake at a 100th birthday celebration held on Dec. 18.

Lodge, days before Ronson turned 100 on Dec. 30. Some members of Ronson's family joined him for the event.

Rev. Paul Robinson, who presented certificates on behalf of Oxford MPP Ernie Hardeman and Premier Doug Ford, related Ronson told him a week or two earlier, "I don't want any fuss."

Ronson's ancestors were one of the founding families of Tillsonburg, alongside the Tills. Leighton grew up on Broadway, then worked for Bell Canada after the war. He enlisted with the military when he was 18.

Legion president Tom Brown paid tribute to Ronson's service with the Royal Canadian Signal Corps in Canada and Europe during the Second World War. Ronson joined the Legion in 1970 and was president of the local branch in 1984-1985.

After returning from the war, Ronson joined the King Hiram Masonic Lodge in 1947.

District Deputy Grand Master Scott Gillies provided background about Ronson, before presenting him with a 75-year Mason pin.

"After witnessing the horrors of war, he looked for solace," Gillies said. "Leighton found it in free masonry."

Gillies said Ronson was an example to other members.

"Leighton, you embody all that is good about Canadian society, a willingness to do

what is right," he said.

King Hiram Masonic Lodge Master John Danbrook said few lodges have reached the milestone of having a 78-year-member, and noted Ronson's has inspired younger members.

"Leighton has been a Mason longer than many of us have been alive," he said. "Through changing times, changing communities, and

changing generations, he has remained constant an example of steadiness, fidelity, and brotherly love."

Ronson was surprised and humbled with the celebration by the Legion and the Masons. He has seen many changes in the Legion over the years, "All for the better," he noted.

"I'm proud of the Legion and the way they look after veterans or anyone who needs help."



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

District Deputy Grand Master Scott Gillies, left, and King Hiram Masonic Lodge Master John Danbrook, right, presented Leighton Ronson with a pin honouring his years of service.



GLENDALE CONCERT

Glendale High School's junior and senior bands, guitar ensembles and jazz band played a variety of seasonal favourites during the annual concert on Dec. 16 in the school auditorium. The Junior band was also joined by South Ridge Public School's Honour Band for one number. The choir is seen performing here.

(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Great-granddaughter Emma Elliott looks up to Leighton Ronson at a celebration co-hosted by the Tillsonburg Legion and King Hiram Lodge.

Weekend Quiz

by Jake Grant

- When was the last time Canada won the IIHF World Juniors?
- Which Canadian province is known as 'The Land of 10,000 Lakes'?
- What country has the most oil reserves?
- What does TNT stand for?
- What is the national bird of New Zealand?
- What Disney princess has the longest hair?
- In what year did Adolf Hitler become Chancellor of Germany?
- What kind of animal is a platypus?
- What is the square root of 64?
- What is larger, A US gallon or a UK gallon?

This week's answers are found on pg. 23

Shriner's fish fry and draw on Jan. 16

JEFF HELSDON

Editor

Planning is underway for the Shriners annual Fish Fry and Elimination Draw.

Held on Friday, Jan. 16 this year, the annual event is two events in one.

"You do not have to have an elimination draw ticket to attend the event," said Shriner John Danbrook. "Basically, the fry is the host for the event."

The annual event started when there was an issue with scheduling for the arena for the pork barbecue a few years ago. Instead, the elimination draw and fish fry was held. It was such a success,

the group decided to continue it.

Tickets for the elimination draw are \$100 each, and only 400 are sold. The 100th, 200th and 300th ticket draw will all receive \$100 each. The last ticket drawn will receive \$20,000. Danbrook reinforced this gives people a one in 400 chance of winning \$20,000.

Tickets for the draw are available from Shrine Club members and Danbrook Automotive.

The fish fry will feature all-you-can-eat fish, which will be pickerel. Tickets are \$30 and will be available at the door.

Proceeds from the event will go to local and Shriner's hospitals.



Self-help books for 2026 to help with New Year's resolutions



OCL BOOK TALK

HEATHER MATHERS

Branch Services Librarian, Oxford County Library

A new year brings new energy and the desire to make resolutions. If you're looking to make changes in your life, a self-help book can be a great guide. The right self-help book can bolster lasting change and real growth, not just quick, flashy fixes. It's easy to lose motivation and fall off the resolution bandwagon, but the right book can alter the way you think, feel and show up in your life. The following titles cover topics from mindset and motivation to relationships and wealth management:

The Let Them Theory by Mel Robbins

This book is about letting go of the things you can't control and focusing on what you can – yourself. The Let Them Theory offers a simple fix: let them. Let people be who they are, without trying to change, fix, or micro-manage them. Meanwhile, shift the focus back to yourself and what you can control (eg. your choices, your emotions, your boundaries). Robbins doesn't offer a five-step framework or complicated process. Instead, her theory is all about a mindset shift, one that, when applied consistently, can make a genuine difference. Throughout the book, Robbins explores how this mindset can be applied across every area of life. She does this without pretending to be perfect or preaching from a pedestal. She engages readers by balancing personal storytelling with practical advice and relatable examples.

Countdown to Riches: 21 Days of Wealth-Attracting Habits by Rhonda Byrne

Countdown to Riches is the first in a planned series of new books by Rhonda Byrne. It reveals simple, proven wealth-attracting practices that

can be easily incorporated into daily life. Byrne believes that financial struggle is caused by one thing – our thoughts, and to have a rich life, we must rid ourselves of a scarcity mindset. She condenses the wisdom of many great authors and spiritual thinkers into one, easy-to-understand guide that can boost focus, motivation and positivity.

It Begins with You by Jillian Turecki

It Begins with You delivers a masterclass in self-awareness and emotional intelligence. Turecki dives into the nine hard truths about love that most of us avoid. She makes it clear that if you want a meaningful relationship with connection, security and intimacy, you must look within. The book shows that the key to a better relationship isn't fixing others; it's understanding your own patterns, fears, and desires. Turecki doesn't just tell readers what to do – she shows them how to do it through compelling case studies and actionable strategies. Each chapter ends with thoughtful exercises and reflection questions that help readers integrate the concepts into their lives. The book's message is clear: lasting love and meaningful connections start with self awareness and personal growth.

Breaking Free from Broke by George Kamel

In Breaking Free from Broke, George Kamel takes the stress out of finance and gives readers a clear path from survival mode to stability. He debunks financial conspiracy theories and lies about credit cards, mortgages, etc. Kamel is incredibly entertaining and funny, even though the topics covered are anything but. Drawing on relatable stories and practical tools, he shows readers how to ditch toxic money beliefs, simplify their systems, and finally feel in control of their financial life.

From powerful mindset shifts and spiritual awakenings to relationship boosts and financial clarity, these books are here to help kickstart your 2026. These titles and many other self-help books can be reserved today by visiting www.oclnet.net and placing a hold.

Heather Mathers is the Branch Services Librarian at the Oxford County Library's Tillsonburg Branch.

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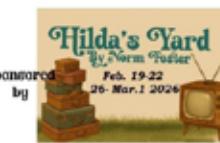


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This Week In the 50's



Welcome to **THIS WEEK IN THE 50's** sponsored by **Hilda's Yard** opening Feb 19th – March 1st 7:30 at Theatre Tillsonburg. It is comedy set in an earlier time with messages that we can all relate to even now.

Our Mission: get our readers into a Hula Hoop, Poodle Skirt & Roadster frame of mind, refresh your 50s pop culture knowledge and entertain you. This week is our first Flashback "Television from the 50's."

One of the story lines from *Hilda's Yard* revolves around the buying of the family's first B&W 21" console TV. Enjoy these facts about TV in the 50's.



DID YOU KNOW?

A 21" black and white console TV in *Hilda's Yard* would cost around \$300 which would be roughly \$3,400 today. The average family income was around \$3,392.00 a year. Like today, buying a TV back then was a big deal.

TV Stars would make thousands per episode, with the highest Jackie Gleason making \$70,000 per episode of the *Honeymooners* while James Arness made around \$20,000 per episode of *Gunsmoke*.

WHAT'S ON TONIGHT?

- We can trace the shows we watch today back to their beginnings in the early days of television.
- The Masked Singer a direct descendant of the 1956 show *What's My Line* where contestants had to guess the occupation of the guest. When the Mystery Celebrity guest came on stage, the contestants wore the masks and tried to guess the identity of the celebrity.
- Game shows and quiz shows started in the 50's games like the \$64,000 Question to Name That Tune, and of course, *The Price Is Right*. Bet we'd all rather play the 50's version of *Millionaire*! In that version, a billionaire went around awarding random people one million dollars cash!
- Theme or genre-based TV shows were also popular. *Dragnet* covered the police shows and *The Medic* and *Dr Hudson's Secret Journal* covered the hospital and doctor shows. Sketch comedies were in full demand with *Red Skelton*, *George Burns*, and *Jackie Gleason* and for music, *Ed Sullivan* fit the bill. And let's not forget that late night TV was invented in the 1950's with a familiar sounding show, *THE TONIGHT SHOW*. The *Yellowstones* and *Walkers* of today were *The Life & Legend of Wyatt Earp*, *The Lone Ranger* and of course *Gun Smoke* of yesteryear. Our tastes in TV shows haven't changed, neither has our obsession with watching.

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Oxford OPP concerned with number of overdoses

The Oxford Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) has recently responded to two separate overdoses in Oxford County. Thankfully, in each instance, naloxone was successfully administered by officers and none of the overdoses were fatal. However, the Oxford OPP would like to issue a public safety alert due to the number of overdoses in a short period of time.

Anyone using unregulated drugs should use extreme caution, should not use alone, and should have Narcan readily available. Anyone who suffers serious illness after consuming a narcotic should call 911, attend a local emergency room, or attend a walk-in clinic immediately.

The Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act is supported by the OPP. It applies

to anyone seeking emergency support during an overdose, including the person experiencing an overdose. The act protects the person who seeks help, whether they stay or leave from the overdose scene before help arrives. The act also protects anyone else who is at the scene when help arrives.

The law provides protection against charges for possessing drugs for your own use and violating conditions of your parole, bail, probation or conditional sentence for a simple drug possession charge. It does not provide protection for trafficking, any outstanding arrest warrants or violating conditions of your parole, bail, probation or conditional sentence for an offence that is not simple possession.

OPP RIDE program final results see increased number of charges

The annual Festive RIDE (Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere) campaign has concluded with nearly 300 drivers now facing impaired driving charges.

From the start of the campaign on Nov. 20, until its conclusion on Jan. 1, 2026, Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) West Region officers conducted 3,095 Festive RIDE spot checks across 13 detachment areas. This is the highest number of Festive RIDE events conducted in West Region in five years.

The charges below represent the final campaign tally:

- 269 impaired driving charges.
- 40 warn-range suspensions.

Last year's West Region Festive RIDE campaign resulted in 292 impaired driving charges and 19 warn-range suspensions following 1,938 RIDE check events.

In Oxford in 2025, there were 214 RIDE events, resulting in 23 impaired charges

and four warnings. In Norfolk's 212 checks, 18 impaired charges and three warnings resulted. Elgin had the highest number of RIDE events at 362, but the lowest number of impaired charges in the tri-county area surrounding Tillsonburg at 10 with two warnings.

"West Region remains committed to keeping our roads safe through proactive RIDE programs and focused impaired-driving enforcement efforts. We remind all drivers to plan ahead, make responsible choices, and always drive sober—if you've been drinking, arrange a safe ride home," said Inspector Michael McConnell, OPP West Region Traffic and Marine Manager.

If you suspect that someone is driving while impaired by alcohol or drugs, it is important to call 9-1-1 to report it.

For more information on Canada's impaired driving laws, click here: Impaired driving | ontario.ca

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OPP officer assaulted in Tillsonburg

An individual has been charged after an incident in Tillsonburg where an officer was assaulted.

On Dec. 26, at approximately 11 p.m., members of the Oxford Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) detachment were dispatched to a disturbance at an address on Bidwell Street, in the Town of Tillsonburg involving a lone individual.

The responding officers interacted with the person which resulted in the person assaulting one of the responding officers.

Kenneth Goodhand, 65-years-old, of London, was charged with Assault a Peace Officer

There were no reported injuries sustained because of the assault.

The accused was released from custody and is scheduled to appear before the Ontario Court of Justice in Woodstock on Feb. 24, 2026.

Anyone with information is asked to contact the Oxford OPP at 1-888-310-1122. Information can also be provided anonymously to Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477).

Man charged in Tillsonburg gas theft

The Oxford Provincial Police (OPP) have identified and charged an accused person following a report of a theft of gas, in the Town of Tillsonburg.

On Dec. 3, at approximately 11:30 a.m., members of the Oxford OPP detachment responded to a report of a theft of gas from a business on Tillson Avenue, in the Town of Tillsonburg. It was reported that unknown suspect(s) attended and left without paying for gas.

Through investigation, Oxford OPP members, with support from the OPP Bail Support Team, were able to identify an accused and

have laid several charges.

On Dec. 15, David Stevens, 34-years-old, of Woodstock, was arrested and is charged with:

- Fail to Comply with Probation Order
- Possession of Property obtained by Crime (Three counts)
- Theft under \$5,000 (Four counts)
- Drive While Under Suspension (Three counts)
- Operation while Prohibited (Twenty-four counts)

The accused was held in custody for a bail hearing on Dec. 16, and has since been remanded into custody.

An insight into the town's insurance

JEFF HELSDON

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Tillsonburg councillors received an insight into how the town's insurance rates are set during a recent meeting.

Rob Fiddler of Intact Insurance presented to council on Dec. 8, explaining Intact is one of the few insurers handling assessing risk, underwriting, issuing policies and handling claims.

Explaining how rates are set based on loss ratios, Fiddler said the majority of the claims come from liability.

Tillsonburg has had 59 claims over the last 10 years, with a value of \$707,351. He said the town has a good loss ratio. Slip and fall, trip and fall and sewer back-up are the largest percentage of the claims.

"Those are the common ones we see across the province," Fiddler said.

More specific to Tillsonburg, he detailed the large claims:

- 2016 – property damage due to storm sewer back-up and sinkhole - \$61,727;
- 2017 – errors and omissions - alleged breach of contract - \$34,263 to defend;
- 2018 – property damage due to ice storm - \$34,249;
- 2018 – trip and fall in parking lot –

\$143,847;
2020 – child fall due to icy conditions - \$119,410;
2022 – slip and fall - \$55,110;
2023 – community centre arson - \$31,565;
2024 – errors and omissions – zoning and permits - \$30,000

Fiddler also offered that Intact offers value-added services such as inspections of buildings, road and sidewalk assessment to mitigate trip and fall hazards.

Coun. Bob Parsons asked how aggressive Intact is in terms of defending against paying out claims.

"We are very aggressive in trying to defend claims from going further," Fiddler said, adding the company has a legal team and experience.

Deputy Mayor Dave Beres asked if the \$15 million in liability the town is carrying is enough. Fiddler answered that is standard, plus the town does have an excess \$5 million in liability coverage.

Council received the report for information.

The town's insurance doesn't renew until April 1. The forecast premium is \$775,980, which is a six per cent increase. However, more recent information from Intact is forecasting it will likely be only five per cent.

Tillsonburg Council Briefs

Subdivision agreements extended

Two separate subdivision agreements were extended by Tillsonburg council at the Dec. 8 meeting.

A request from Lindprop Corp. to extend the agreement of subdivision was submitted for a subdivision with an address of 112 North Street East to register the draft plan of subdivision. The plan is for 315 lots.

A plan for seven lots on the west side of Young Street, between Highway 3 and Rouse Street, was also given an extension after a request from Gene Sandham.

New church changes approved

An application for rezoning a piece of property owned by Thames Valley District School Board at 20 Cranberry Road to allow the construction of a new church was approved by council.

The application was for an official plan amendment and rezoning of the property from residential to major institutional and to allow the creation of a lot from a larger piece of property.

Theo Bouwheer, a member of the Hope Reformed Church congregation, said he has been working on this for over a year.

Planner David Roe explained most of the time was dealing with the school board on the land sale. He added it was good to see a church being located in town instead of on prime agricultural land.

Bylaws appeal committee created

Tillsonburg now has a bylaws appeal committee.

Council passed a motion to create the committee to hear appeals to the town's bylaws at the Dec. 8 meeting.

Under the town's bylaws, the animal control, business licensing and property standards all have provisions to create an appeal committee. Historically, these committees have rarely met and members were not appointed to each.

An appeal to an order to muzzle a dog was filed in November 2025. Previously, an appeal was filed under building standards last year. Neither committee was established at the time of the appeals, and acting clerk Amelia Jaggard suggested forming one bylaw appeal committee to hear all appeals.

Council endorsed this suggestion and appointed Coun. Chris Parker, Coun. Bob Parsons and Coun. Pete Luciani to the committee.

Town crier to receive pay increase

Tillsonburg town crier Brenda Bozso will be receiving a pay increase for her official duties.

Staff completed a report on the remuneration paid after a motion was presented by Mayor Deb Gilvesy at the last council meeting. According to the report, the town crier was still being paid \$50 per appearance, a rate set when the position was established in 1995. The report suggested the town crier be paid \$150 per function, and then adjusted annually by the CPI.

"It's been some 20 or more years since our town crier has taken on that job, it needs to go up," said Coun. Bob Parsons.

Deputy Mayor Dave Beres noted the town has had the same town crier for 30 years.

"We're so proud of her of what she does for our community, she does her research," he said. "Other town criers that I've heard, I'll put Brenda against them, at any time, for the quality and the competence she has and the pride she has in our community."

Gilvesy stressed that when she talked to Bozso about the compensation, the town crier wasn't pushing for an increase.

"She loves what she does, but it truly wasn't fair," the mayor said of the pay.

Land sales

Town council approved the sale of two pieces of land at the Dec. 8 meeting.

A landlocked piece of property on Clearview Drive was sold to Future Transfer Co. Ltd. and E & E McLaughlin Ltd for \$75,600. Other parts of the former rail lands were previously sold to Fleetwood Metal for an expansion, but this piece remained that is only accessible through the adjoining properties. The funds will be transferred to the Economic Development Reserve.

A portion of Otter Lane was sold to Walter and Diane Kleer and Cameron and Cynthia McKnight. The unopened road allowance was declared surplus and sold for the independent real estate appraised value of \$14,500. The proceeds will be placed in the town hall reserve.

Budget update

Town staff and council are going through a learning curve with this year's budget due to changes in how the budget is done due to the Strong Mayor's Act.

While the budget previously was an exercise with all of council, it is now completed by the mayor and staff. Council members then have the ability to make changes through a review period.

Although it was originally thought council members wouldn't be able to see the budget prior to its public release on Jan. 2 as it would start the 30-day review process, a legal opinion to another municipality stated

otherwise. With this in mind, council members were provided the budget for their review on Dec. 15.

Fleet sale

The sale of vehicles used by Tillsonburg Hydro Inc. was approved by council for \$600,000.

Historically, the town has owned the vehicles and charged the utility an amount for operation and maintenance. The sale was to complete a request from Tillsonburg Hydro management.

Trail improvement

Council approved a pedestrian crossover at the intersection of the Trans-Canada Trail and Quarter Town Line.

The installation will include a curb cut, side-mounted signs with flashing amber lights, pavement markings and push-button activation. The cost is estimated at \$60,000.

Municipal right of way changes

Tillsonburg council will be considering a bylaw to regulate activities on municipal right of ways.

Council saw a first draft of a municipal right of way bylaw at the Oct. 14 meeting, and asked for clarification on several factors, including snow accumulation placement, responsibility for property restitution, regulations on mud tracking, requirements for draining chlorinated pool water, and encroachment permit requirements. At the Dec. 8 meeting as follow-up, it was suggested wording regarding discharge of water from pools or downspouts be revised slightly to allow discharge on lawns first, and then a right-of-way. There were also some minor wording changes.

Coun. Bob Parsons said he didn't see anything about people putting grass clipping or leaves on the road, adding this is dangerous for motorbikes and bicycles. He also had concerns about bicycles on sidewalks. It was suggested these items be referred to the traffic committee.

Deputy clerk's departure

Acting deputy clerk Amelia Jaggard will be leaving Tillsonburg as she has taken a position with the Township of Wilmot as clerk and manager of legislative services.

Former Norwich and Bayham CAO Kyle Kruger will be filling in for the interim, with the position to be advertised for in early 2026.

- Jeff Helsdon, Local Journalism Initiative reporter

Oxford County Library and Woodstock Public Library partner in new reciprocal borrowing program

Oxford County Library and Woodstock Public Library announced the launch of a new reciprocal borrowing program. The program allows patrons of either library to register for cards and borrow materials from both systems at no cost, meaning Oxford County Library cardholders can borrow from Woodstock Public Library, and Woodstock Public Library cardholders can borrow from any Oxford County Library branch.

This agreement expands access to books, media, and other resources across both systems, offering greater convenience and choice for residents. Patrons can register for a new library card at the partner library using their

existing library card and identification. A valid Oxford County Library or Woodstock Public Library card is required. Library cards are free and information on how to register for a card is available online at www.ocl.net or www.mywpl.ca.

An Oxford County Library card provides access to all 14 Oxford County library branches located in Brownsville, Burgessville, Embro, Harrington, Ingersoll, Inverkip, Mount Elgin, Norwich, Otterville, Plattsburgh, Princeton, Tavistock, Thamesford and Tillsonburg. A Woodstock Public Library card provides access to the Woodstock Public Library.



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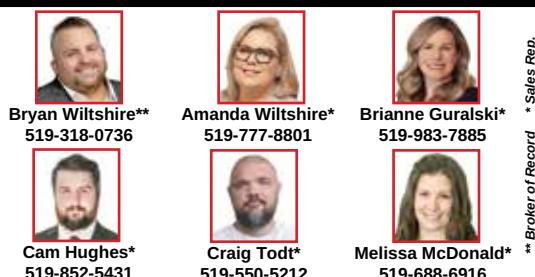
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Gemini junior volleyball girls 'Beliebers' in new year's resolutions

JEFF TRIBE

Post Correspondent

The Tillsonburg Gemini junior girls' volleyball team started their Thames Valley Regional Athletics match well against the Woodstock St. Mary's Warriors Tuesday, Dec. 16 at Glendale.

Unfortunately, their transition to Christmas break came a little early, the Gemini unable to capitalize on a 25-14 second-set victory through a 25-22, 14-25, 25-13, 25-9 match loss to the Warriors.

"We could have done better," admitted

Tillsonburg's Charlotte Cadman.

The Gemini appeared to have the first set in hand, however St. Mary's Mikayla Sevewright ran off 12 consecutive serves to power a come-from-behind victory.

Rather than letting the momentum from that disappointing loss carry over into the second set, Tillsonburg came out strongly, better on the first pass, able to mount an attack from there. The resultant 25-14 victory squared accounts at one, setting up a potentially pivotal third set. Trailing early, Gemini coach Krista Ferguson called a time out at an 11-2 deficit, but the Warriors pushed through to a 12-point win. Tillsonburg had a better start in the fourth, however the Warriors responded to regain an 11-7 lead, locking up the match with a 14-2 advantage from there.

Gemini libero Laila Bowman spoke to a lack of cohesion between first pass and attack during the match's latter sets. Responsibilities looming prior to Christmas break



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

Gemini Avery Haley (left) and Lydia Yarmie (right) share a combined hit against St. Mary's.

might have been a mentally-distracting factor she theorized, for example, essays to complete ahead of the holidays.

"Just couldn't find it today," she said, warming to the idea a Christmas song might have lifted Tillsonburg's spirits and level of play, suggesting Mistletoe by Justin Bieber.

"I don't hear that one too often," said Bowman. "I just like listening to it."

"Maybe if he was here."

"That would be awesome," Cadman agreed.

The Gemini pre-Christmas season didn't finish up as hoped for, however the result did encourage a shared new year's resolution.

"Come back and win every game," said Cadman.

"Finish off strong at least," Bowman concluded.

SENIOR GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

TUESDAY, DEC. 16

GEMINI	25, 25, 25, 24, 13
ST. MARY'S	16, 12, 17, 26, 13

MONDAY, DEC. 15

INGERSOLL DCI	25, 20, 26 25, 15
GEMINI	15, 25, 24, 12, 3

JUNIOR GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

TUESDAY, DEC. 16

ST. MARY'S	25, 14, 25, 25
GEMINI	22, 25, 13, 9

MONDAY, DEC. 15

INGERSOLL DCI	25, 25, 15, 25
GEMINI	17, 19, 25, 9

GIRLS HOCKEY

MONDAY, DEC. 15

ST. MARY'S	2
GEMINI	1

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 3

ST. THOMAS ST. JOE'S	3
GEMINI	0

BOYS HOCKEY

THURSDAY, DEC. 18

GEMINI	3
ST. JOE'S	1

TUESDAY, DEC. 16

GEMINI	9
WOODSTOCK HURON PARK	4

SENIOR BOYS BASKETBALL

MONDAY, DEC. 15

GEMINI	52
INGERSOLL DCI	32

JUNIOR BOYS BASKETBALL

MONDAY, DEC. 15

GEMINI	71
INGERSOLL DCI	32

GIRLS CURLING

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 17

GEMINI	7
ST. JOE'S	4

BOYS CURLING

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 17

GEMINI	6
ST. JOE'S	2

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Source for Sports undefeated in Club Oxford's B Division

JEFF GWYN

Post Contributor

Source for Sports undefeated record in December helped the team stretch its lead on the top of B Division.

Dec. 14

A Division

ReMax 6, Apple Shack 3

A back-and-forth first period, but ReMax controlled most of the second. They spread out their scoring to make each line a threat. Apple Shack looked good in the first, but fell off a step in the second. They just lost a bit of focus as the game went on.

Ben Sharp had four points for ReMax. Matt Wight had two points for Apple Shack.

Fody's 3, Health Hut 2

Fody's had to rely on some spares to fill out the roster tonight. They did well to get some timely scoring and kept things tidy defensively. Health Hut played a tough game. They were in the game and had some pressure at the end. Some bounces would have changed the game.

Kurtis Burton had two goals for Fody's. Ryan Dayman had a goal for Health Hut.

B Division

Royal LePage 4, B-Line 1

Royal LePage has found some momentum and are playing hard in front of the net, making some good plays and getting their chances. B-Line just couldn't get things going tonight. A couple penalties took them out of the games at times. A tough night that they will bounce back from.

Brandon Koppert had three points for Royal LePage. Hunter Luscombe had the goal for B-Line.

Carquest 4, Airmount 2

Carquest fought hard all game. They've been on the bad end of some close games, but pressured all night to secure the win. Airmount had some chances, but couldn't get their shots to go through. Some good rushes made this a close game all the way to the end. Brad Henderson had three points for Carquest. Josh Stubbs had

a goal for Airmount.

Source 2, RND 1

This game was a battle. Source couldn't get their usual breakouts going, but did have chances. They buckled down defensively and made sure not to give up too many rebounds. RND pressured a bunch in this one. They only had trouble a couple times in their own zone, which hurt them. But a solid game against the top team.

Patrick Cottrell had two points for Source. Caleb Waycott had a goal for RND.

Glass 1, Prouse Mortgages 1

Glass played a textbook game. They didn't take too many chances and relied on some quick passes to have some rushes. They didn't give up many second chances. Prouse Mortgages didn't get their opportunities like normal, but didn't give up much in the defensive zone. Even with a late deficit, they didn't give up and earned the tie in this one.

Chase Corbeil had the goal for Glass. Jeff Prouse had the goal for Prouse Mortgages.

Dec. 17

B Division

Royal LePage 3, Airmount 1

Royal LePage found some speed at the end of the first to notch a couple goals. They used their quick passes to get some solid chances in this one. Airmount played a balanced game, and didn't let things stay in their zone very long. They had some chances on rushes, but couldn't get any rebounds in this one.

Jayme Wallace had two points for Royal LePage. Zach Alton had the goal for Airmount.

Prouse Mortgages 9, B-Line 4

Prouse Mortgages came out strong in this one. They swarmed the zone all night and were able to make some short passes in close to get the advantage. B-Line wasn't able to match the goal output of Prouse, but the shooting per-



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

centage was about the same. A tough night in their own zone, but did make a game of it.

Stephan Coulombe and Jeff Prouse had four points each for Prouse Mortgages. Dimitri Carvalho had three points for B-Line.

Carquest 2, RND 1

Carquest had some good pressure down low in this one. They were able to use their passing and defence to get some great chances. A good effort in their own zone limited the RND chances. RND fought hard to keep pace with Carquest tonight. They didn't get a ton of chances offensively, but did have pressure at times. A couple bounces could have changed the outcome.

Evan Prouse had two points for Carquest. John Bouck had a goal for RND.

Dec. 21

A Division

Fody's 4, ReMax 2

Fody's was able to get some secondary scoring and were able to kill off a long 5-on-3. That gave them some energy and they shutdown the ReMax offence. ReMax couldn't connect on their passes tonight and were playing with a short bench. A good game between the top two teams.

Jeremy Hilliard had two points for Fody's. Alex Sutherland had a goal for ReMax.

Health Hut 6, Apple Shack 3

Health Hut found some energy on their second line and it pressured well all night. They kept Apple Shack at bay late in the game. Apple Shack had some struggles getting shots on net. They did have some chances but couldn't get any

assists for Glass. Evan Prouse had a goal for Carquest.

Royal LePage 1, Prouse Mortgages 1

A defensive game by both teams. Prouse had some chances at times in this one, but couldn't find the back of the net. A good effort to earn the point. Royal LePage was able to keep Prouse Mortgages off the scoresheet for the most part. A solid defensive game and a tough neutral zone created some opportunities in this one.

Christian Devlin had the goal for Royal LePage. Dan King had the goal for Prouse Mortgages.

Dec. 28

A Division

Health Hut 3, ReMax 3

Health Hut stayed in this one until the end. They didn't have their passing going, but were able to skate into the offensive zone. A good effort to shut down a tough ReMax team. ReMax looked to be in control, but didn't get their scorers going in this one. Some good defence in the second helped secure the point.

Dave VanWyk had two points for Health Hut. Rob Smith had a goal for ReMax.

Apple Shack 4, Fody's 3

Apple Shack found some legs and were able to pressure all night. They were able to get lots of shots and that helped keep Fody's on their heels. Fody's played a decent game, but couldn't get much pressure. They took advantage of their chances, but they didn't get a ton of them in this one.

Quinn VanBoekel had three assists for Apple Shack. Christian Clifford had two points for Fody's.

B Division

Carquest 3, B-Line 2

Carquest is hoping to change their late game luck and did so tonight. They found some

secondary chances and had pressure throughout the game. B-Line had some trouble defensively at times, but kept the game close. They have to find some other scoring to get back into the win column.

Chad Homick had a goal for Carquest. Wade Kirby had two goals for B-Line.

Prouse Mortgages 7, Airmount 2

Prouse Mortgages came out strong in this one. They were able to get some net front pressure and controlled the puck down low. A high scoring team had confidence tonight. Airmount had trouble getting into the offensive zone, but did get a few chances. They had to play a lot of the night in their zone as Prouse Mortgages kept the pressure on all game.

Jeff Prouse had a hat trick for Prouse Mortgages. JJ Fashin had a goal for Airmount.

RND 4, Glass 4

RND had a good first period. They found some offence and were playing a step ahead of Glass. Getting on the board early definitely gave them confidence in this one. Glass started off slow, but rebounded in the second. They were able to use the blue liners to get shots on net and create some chances.

Matt Snow had two points for RND. Darryl Price had three points for Glass.

Source 4, Royal LePage 2

Source keeps finding ways to win. They were able to get things going even with a short bench. They kept things tidy in their own zone and used their speed to get some chances on rushes. Royal LePage couldn't connect on their breakouts tonight. They seemed to scramble at times, but buckled down enough to give themselves a chance.

Nate Bisschop had two assists for Source. Mitch Ryksen had a goal for Royal LePage.

CLUB OXFORD A DIVISION	GP	W	L	T	PTS
REMAX REALTY	17	11	3	3	25
FODY'S AUTOMOTIVE	17	10	7	0	20
THE HEALTH HUT	17	4	9	4	12
THE APPLE SHACK	17	5	11	1	11

CLUB OXFORD B DIVISION	GP	W	L	T	PTS
SOURCE FOR SPORTS	17	15	2	0	30
JEFF PROUSE MORTGAGES	18	8	4	6	22
CARQUEST AUTO PARTS	18	8	6	4	20
TILLSONBURG GLASS	17	7	4	6	20
B-LINE TRUCKING	18	6	9	3	15
ROYAL LEPAGE	18	5	8	5	15
RND CONSTRUCTION	18	3	10	5	11
AIMOUNT FARMS	18	4	13	1	9

SKATING: HOLIDAY SHOWCASE 2025

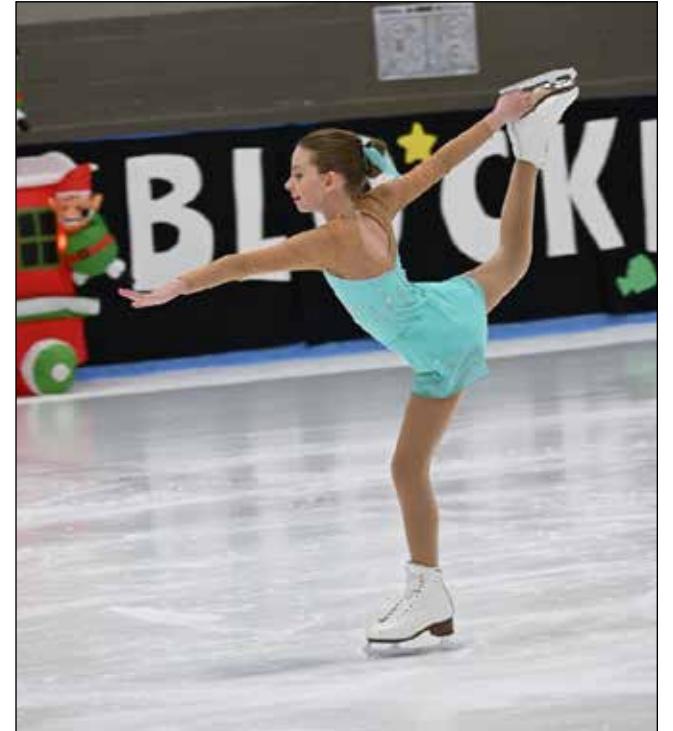
(JEFF HELSDON PHOTOS)



Allison DeWachter is going into a camel spin while performing her solo.



Top coat and scarf, Ryker Simpson played the part in his solo number.



Ella Bossy successfully completes a catch grab during her solo.



Skaters in the Star 1 and Fast Track group presented their rendition of Elf: Pennies from Heaven.



A Charlie Brown Christmas was another classic that was part of the showcase. CanSkate 4-6 presented their skate to Christmas Time is Here from the movie.



Navigating their way under the arms of older skaters, CanSkate 3 skaters performed to the music of Santa Claus is Coming to Town from the Polar Express.



Candle Colombe shows off her skill with a spiral in her solo.

MUSIC CORNER

The Penske File bring new album Reprieve to Tillsonburg



BEN ANDRESS

Tillsonburg Post Columnist

Long-running Canadian punk rock outfit The Penske File return to Tillsonburg with a highly-anticipated tour stop bringing their latest album, *Reprise*, to one of the region's most attentive and thriving scenes. The band performed an explosive set at last summer's Buddies Fest and are ready to showcase new songs when they visit town this Jan. 30.

Formed in Burlington, Ontario, The Penske File have spent more than two decades building a reputation as a fiercely independent, road-tested band with a buzzing live concert that showcases emotional honesty. The trio, consisting of Travis

Miles on guitar and vocals with James Hall on bass and vocals and Alexander Standen on drums and vocals, have played stages across Canada and Europe while steadily evolving their sound and maintaining the urgency and spirit of punk rock.

Released this past October on Stomp Records, the band's *Reprise* captures the band at a reflective yet energized moment in their career. For Miles, the album represents a creative and personal culmination of years spent growing together on and off the road.

"In a way it seems like all of our creative and personal experiences brought us to this album. We have been friends since we were kids and have been creating together for 20 years, which is a crazy thing to say out loud," Miles laughs. "At its core, the album is about holding on to what we find endearing about the youthful spirit, despite the inevitability of aging. It is about struggling with yourself and your own existence, in a way. And through that struggle, holding on to the things you love and the people you love, laughing in the face of mortality and creating a life worth

remembering."

The album features two official music videos so far including the singles 'Almost Young' and 'Dead Maps.' Both these songs capture that spirit perfectly.

"In some kind of abstract yet natural way, I suppose, that all of this comes across in our live show when it works best," Miles explains. "When it feels like a celebration of community and expression and life in general. At least that's the goal post we aim for when we turn on the amps."

That philosophy also shaped how *Reprise* was recorded. Rather than relying on familiar routines, the band brought a fresh perspective into the studio, focusing on instinct and capturing the energy of their live performances.

"We took a bit of a different approach to recording this album than our past couple of albums. For one, we worked with a new producer, our long-time best pal Adam Michael. Being such close friends, it felt great and natural inviting him into the creative fold for the final writing sessions and

the recording process," Miles says.

Aside from being a producer Michael is also known for being a touring guitar, bass and keyboard player for Burlington, Ontario rock band Walk Off The Earth.

"We made a conscious effort throughout the writing to only follow things that felt immediately exciting to us and adopted a sort of first-instinct-wins type of mentality. In addition to that, we recorded most of the record live in an effort to capture the energy of our live shows," Miles explains. "There's songs on this album that are not necessarily a departure from what we have become known for in our community, but rather more like an expansion of that."

That expansion is heard across the album's varied sonic landscape, which stretches beyond the band's traditional punk foundation while remaining unmistakably The Penske File.

"There's longer and more sonically sprawling songs than we have done in the past. At the same time, there's faster, more

straightforward punk rockers than we have ever done, and also songs that are more stripped down and indicative of our more folk-leaning influences," Miles elaborates. "The result is what I feel is our most expansive record to date and something I would be happy to point anyone towards who was looking to get to know our band and what we are all about musically and artistically."

Since the release of *Reprise*, the band has been touring extensively, bringing the new material to audiences. Those experiences have reinforced the band's belief in the importance of smaller cities and close-knit scenes. Playing gigs in places where the connection between band and audience feels immediate and personal.

"The audience response to the *Reprise* tour so far, which has taken us all over Germany, Switzerland and Ontario and Quebec has been very positive. Music, in my mind, works best when it is collaborative. Not only collaborative amongst its creators and performers but collaborative between those who expel the music and those who em-

brace it," Miles explains. "When we feel the energy exchange with a room of people who connect with our music, especially the new album, that is when we really feel like we are on the right track."

Looking ahead, 2026 is shaping up to be another busy year for the band with Canadian dates, festival appearances and international travel already lined up.

"We have got some shows planned around Ontario and Alberta this winter. We are playing Pouzza Fest in Montreal this spring and then back to Europe for some festivals in the summer," Miles says.

On Friday, Jan. 30, The Penske File will perform at Paddy's Underground. The show will also feature opening support from London's Full Throttle and Ingersoll's One Way Streets. Tickets are \$20 in advanced for this all ages/ licensed event and are available at The Mill and online at www.eventbrite.ca. Tickets are also available when doors open at 8 p.m. limited to availability. You can follow The Penske File on social media at www.facebook.com/thepenskefile

UPCOMING SHOWS

JAN. 10 - MP1 SUPERCROSS WATCH PARTY
The Copper Mug
6:30 p.m.

JAN. 11 - TOO COUNTRY
The Copper Mug
5 p.m.

JAN. 14 - EUCHRE NIGHT
The Copper Mug
5:30 p.m.

JAN. 16 - MUSIC TRIVIA
The Copper Mug
8 p.m.

JAN. 17 - KARAOKE
The Copper Mug

8 p.m.

JAN. 21 - SPAGHETTI FUNDRAISER
The Copper Mug
\$20 for Adults / \$10 for 10 and under - 4:30pm

JAN. 22 - FELICIA MCMINN
The Copper Mug
8 p.m.

JAN. 24 - HARD CHORDS
The Copper Mug
8:30 p.m.

JAN. 25 - ROB CROMWELL
The Copper Mug
5 p.m.

JANUARY 30 - THE PENSKE FILE, ONE WAY STREETS & FULL THROTTLE
Paddy's Underground
\$20 - 8 p.m. - All Ages/Licensed

FEBRUARY 26 - THE FLATLINERS
Paddy's Underground
\$50 - 8 p.m. - All Ages/Licensed



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Life on the Hawkins' chicken farm many decades ago

DOUG LESTER

Post Contributor

On a spring day in 1951, my mother chased me down and scrubbed me so thoroughly behind the ears that 70 years later I still have memories of that morning. I didn't know what was happening, but I knew it was important.

Our 1937 Ford sputtered to a halt in the yard of a white stucco house at the front of Roger Hawkins' chicken farm just east of the Tillsonburg town limits. I soon learned that this was to be our new home—or at least part of it was. We were to occupy the back half of the house for the next six years. Our half of the house had two bedrooms, a kitchen large enough for a table for four, a living area with a coal stove, and beyond that a doorway leading to a bathroom and basement which we would share with the husband and wife and their two young daughters who lived in the front of the house. Both parts of the house were accessed through a common entrance door.

As my parents met with my father's new employer I began playing with his son, Hugh. Soon we were laughing and romping like we had known each other for years. The details of my father's employment faded into the background as I basked in the first friendship of my

young life. By the time my father and his new boss, Roger, shook hands to finalize their agreement, Hugh and I had forged a bond that would last the rest of Hugh's short life, and impact me for the rest of mine.

Within days we had moved in, with Larry and I sharing a double bed tucked into the corner of the northeast bedroom. Larry occupied the half next to the wall and I had the benefit of easy access and a window to the east, just next to the bed. The window was a source of never-changing enchantment. At night I would fall asleep watching the moon and stars. On cloudy nights the clouds would drift across the sky transporting me to dreamland on puffy ships. On stormy nights lightning would light up the sky and rain would lash our window on the world. In the winter the window would ice over with long fingers of frost beginning at the bottom and moving up the window. As the sun rose in the morning the window would sparkle with delicate crystal designs.

The 100-acre farm was an amazing rural wonderland for Larry and me. It included buildings, a huge pasture, and woods. The gravel driveway in front of our house led to the farm gate next to the main barn and extended through the open range to another gate at the edge of the woods. Inside the farm gate was the main barn, a storage barn, and a huge maintenance building where a full-time mechanic kept everything, including tractors, farm trucks, delivery vehicles, and Roger's station wagon, running well.

The farm was only one part of a very successful feed store and poultry operation with a hatchery and retail egg and feed sales in Tillsonburg and Ingersoll. Each spring, thousands of chicks would arrive to be nurtured and sold once they began laying in September. In the fields behind the barns there was a large open range with small, sheltered roosts scattered throughout where thousands of young hens would spend their first summer as they grew to maturity. In the fall they were either moved into our barns or sold as layers to hobbyists and farmers. The barnyard was always filled with a crew of several men with a variety of responsibilities. Everything on the farm except the laying hens was overseen by a mountain of a man, Mert McClintock.

At Hawkins farm my father had taken on the role of flock manager

for a flock of 2,000 laying hens housed on three floors of a converted dairy barn. Each floor housed over 600 leghorn chickens bred to lay almost 365 days a year. The south wall of each floor was lined with nesting boxes. Each hen claimed a nesting space and like clockwork returned each day to deposit an egg. Aside from feeding and caring for the chickens, Dad gathered every egg by hand, putting them in large wire baskets that were transported into town where the eggs were sorted, packaged, and sold. Along the north wall of each floor, there was a huge roosting area covered with fencing wire where the chickens gathered each night to sleep. This roosting area, which sat a couple of feet off the floor, also collected the droppings from the chickens. By the time the annual cleaning and whitewashing took place, the ammonia generated by the feces was enough to give my father serious sinus issues and to have a lifelong impact on my ability to detect subtle odors.

My father worked six days a week from seven in the morning till six at night, with basic egg gathering and chores left to his discretion on Sunday. In return, Dad's pay was \$50 per week, a rent-free home, all the chickens and eggs needed to feed his family, and a week of summer holidays at a trailer owned by the boss located on the shore of Little Lake in Midland, Ontario.

As Dad's boss's son, Hugh, prepared to begin school we received an unexpected bonus. Since Hugh had turned five in February and lived within the town limits, he was entitled to begin half-day kindergarten in September. However, even though I was five, since I lived outside the town, I would be expected to attend a one-room rural school a few miles down the road. As a rural student, there was no kindergarten. I would begin school with grade one a year later. Hugh's father offered to pay my tuition to attend the town school so that Hugh and I could attend classes together.

So the country boy got to attend the town school in Tillsonburg—a blessing with implications that would help shape my future.

*Editor's note: Doug Lester was born in the Tillsonburg area and lived here for many years. This excerpt is reprinted with permission from his book *With a Little Bit of Luck*. Copyright © 2024 by Douglas H. Lester. Published by Rock's Mills Press. Available from the publisher (www.rocksillspress.com) and through Amazon and other retailers.*

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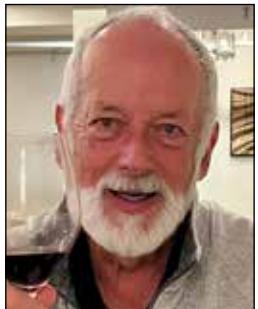
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**OH,
THE
PLACES
WE'LL
GO!**

PAUL KNOWLES

Tillsonburg Post Columnist

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

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

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

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

That put us in the "Sofitel Le Scribe Paris Opéra". It was a perfect location, and we liked our accommodation very much, but after ordering a coffee and tea upon arrival, and being billed something like \$35 Canadian, we quickly understood that we would seek food and

drink elsewhere. Which was never actually a problem in this city of cafés.

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

As soon as we had checked in, and I had emptied my bank account to pay for a coffee and a tea, I tucked a map into my pocket, and we set out to explore. The reason for the hotel's name became quickly obvious – we were only a few steps away from the Paris Opera House, an imposing example of baroque revival architecture, completed in 1875. We learned that almost all of the impressive buildings in Paris are from the 1800's, because Napoleon and his successors were all about urban renewal – or perhaps, all about knocking down everything in sight to build monuments to themselves. Which sounds distressingly familiar. But I digress.

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

A couple of blocks into our wandering, we discovered the Church of Sainte-Marie-Madeleine, an imposing structure built in the style of a Roman temple. It has an intriguing history – it was begun in 1763, during the reign of King Louis XV. Construction stopped completely when the French Revolution abolished the monarchy (quite dramatically, by beheading Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette in 1793). Enter Napoleon, who became Emperor in 1804, who decided, in this time of anti-church sentiment, that the building be re-purposed as "A Temple to the Glory of the Grand Army." An army which was, not coincidentally, headed by Napoleon.

Napoleon died, and the monarchy was rein-



The Paris Opera House, a baroque revival masterpiece.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

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

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

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

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

hibition.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)



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

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

RIDDLES

I have a screen, but I'm not a TV. I fit in your pocket and can call your friends. What am I?
Phone

I have a sharp point, but I'm not a knife. I help you sew. What am I?
Needle

I'm full of holes, but I can still hold something. What am I?
Sponge

I'm always in the middle of "middle." What am I?
The letter D

I have a lock, but no key. I protect your secrets. What am I?
Password

I'm a place you go to buy food, but I'm not a restaurant. What am I?
Grocery store

I have a head and a tail, but no body. What am I?
Coin

I'm full of pages, but I'm not a book. I help you write. What am I?
Notebook

I can run but I can't walk. I have a mouth but I can't talk. What am I?
River

I'm tall when I'm young and short when I'm old. What am I?
Candle

I have hands but I cannot clap. What am I?
Clock

I'm something you can catch, but you can't throw me. What am I?
Cold

SUDOKU

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

Level: Beginner

Solutions on Page 23

PET OF THE WEEK



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Mon - Fri: 9 a.m. - 8 p.m.
Sat: 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Nominate your pet to be Pet of the Week by emailing info@tillsonburgpost.com

WORD SEARCH

WELCOME 2026!

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

FRESH START

ROUTINE

HABITS

PLANNER

FOCUS

GOAL SETTING

MOTIVATION

PROGRESS

CONSISTENCY

REFLECT

INTENTIONS

ORGANIZE

RESET

DISCIPLINE

JANUARY

COMING EVENTS

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**PROFESSIONAL PRUNING
TECHNIQUES IN THE GARDEN AND
LANDSCAPE**
Monday, January 12: 7:30 p.m.
Delhi & District Horticultural Society
Hosted at the Delhi Senior Friendship
Centre, 418 Queen St., Delhi, ON (Enter at
rear parking lot off William St.)
Guest Speaker - Jason Overdevest of
Nanticoke Nursery. Should be very
interesting.

**FAITH IN ACTION: HARVEST
CELEBRATION**
Saturday, January 17: 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Fellowship to Follow
Crosspoint Community Church,
150 Concession Street West, Tillsonburg
Join us as we celebrate God's faithfulness
through the Growing Project—hearing stories
from farmers, partners, church leaders, and
learning how lives are being transformed
locally and globally. RSVP by January 10,
2026. Please confirm your attendance for
planning purposes.

"THE SUITCASE"
Saturday January 24: 2 p.m.
The Edison, Vienna & Area Museum
6209 Plank Rd. Vienna
Don't miss this fascinating true tale! "The
Suitcase" & its captivating contents!
Presented by Frank Moore & Ben Mayville.
Discover the journey of how it entered Frank's
home, its future destination & its connection
to World War I ~ Ten Boer, Holland. Jason
Pankratz, EDD - author of
"Six Graves in the Village" Will also be at the
presentation!
Bayhamhistoricalsociety@hotmail.com

**ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION
BRANCH 153 EVENTS:**
16 Durham St, Tillsonburg, ON N4G 1V7

**KEN LIGHTHEART AND THE
NORTHSHERE RAMBLERS DANCE**
Friday, January 9 and Friday, January 23:
1 p.m. - 4 p.m.

\$7 at the door, Cash Bar Open, All Welcome!

LEGION LUNCH

Wednesday, January 14: Noon - 1 p.m.
Hot Homemade soups, sandwiches, coffee,
tea, homemade desserts for only \$15 (includes
HST) cash at the door. All Welcome!

**THE WRIGHT STUFF LIVE BAND IS
BACK**

Saturday, January 17

Come out and dance to rock, country, pop
from the 60's-2000's. Advance tickets \$15 or
at the door \$20. Cash Bar open. All Welcome!
For more info call 519-842-5281.

**MODERN SQUARE DANCING IS FOR
YOU!**

Looking for something to do in the evening
or something new to try? Modern square
dancing is a great way to learn something new,
have fun, meet new friends, relieve stress,
and get some exercise! **At Thames Valley
Dance Club, we dance on Monday nights
from 7 - 9 p.m.** All you need is comfortable
shoes and casual clothing. No experience or
partner is required and anyone over the age
of 12 is welcome (children from 12-15 with
an adult, please). **The 2025-2026 season has
started at the Ingersoll Pipe Band Hall, 108
Wonham St. S. Ingersoll.** The first night is
free, and after that the cost is \$7.50 per person
each Monday, paid monthly at the start of the
month. For more information, contact Julie at
519-535-3314.

INTERESTED IN BRIDGE?

Join us every Friday at the Tillsonburg
Duplicate Bridge Club at 1 p.m. at The
Senior Centre. Don't have a partner? Come
anyway and we will match you up with
someone. For more information, visit their
Facebook page: TburgBridge.

TILLSONBURG LIONS

The Tillsonburg Lions meet on the 1st and
3rd Tuesdays. You are invited to their dinner
meetings in the Lion's Den at the Community
Centre. If you are interested in giving back to
your Community contact Jim at 519 409 0876
for more information....all are welcome.

OXFORD GRIEF CARE:

FREE Monthly Grief Support Group
Register at: oxford.griefsupport@von.ca or
519-539-1231 Ext 6299 or 6296

TILLSONBURG

WHEN: 2nd Tuesday of every month
WHERE: VON Oxford Office 24 Brock St.
W., Tillsonburg
TIME: 6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m.

INGERSOLL

WHEN: 4th Tuesday of every month
WHERE: Ingersoll Public Library 130
Oxford St., Ingersoll
TIME: 10:30 a.m. -12 Noon

WOODSTOCK

WHEN: 3rd Saturday of every month
WHERE: Sakura House Hospice 715180
Oxford Rd.4, Woodstock
TIME: 10:30 a.m. -12 Noon

MEMBERS GENERAL MEETING

1st Wednesday of every month
Starting at 7 p.m.

Not a member contact us to join
The Wagner Memorial Teeterville Legion
Branch 526. 3890 Teeterville Road,
Teeterville, Ontario. For More Information
Call, the Legion 519-443-5588
<https://www.teetervillelegionbranch526.ca>

WOULD YOU LIKE TO VOLUNTEER TO HELP AT ONE OF OUR EVENTS? WE WELCOME YOU!

The Wagner Memorial, Teeterville Legion
Branch 526

3890 Teeterville Road, Teeterville, Ontario
You do not need to be a member to Volunteer,
Just contact the legion and leave your
name and number and purpose of your call.
Someone will get back to you as to where
you might be needed. Students and Adults
welcome. Open hours. Wed.-Fri. 3 pm-10 pm,
Sat.1 pm-10 pm, Sun.1 pm-6 pm. For More
Information call, the Legion at 519-443-5588
or teetervillelegionbranch526.ca

OXFORD PHILATELIC SOCIETY Meetings: 2nd Tuesday (2-4 p.m.) and 4th Tuesday (7-9 p.m.)

September to May
Church of the Epiphany, 560 Dundas
Street, Woodstock Ontario N4S 1C7
If you have never belonged to a stamp club,
now's the time. Meet new friends, grow your
knowledge and collection. Contact: Don Eaton
dhfe@silomail.com
Website: <http://www.rpsc.org/chapters/oxford>

TILLSONBURG SENIOR CENTRE WEEKLY PROGRAMS FOR 50+

Scrabble Tues mornings, Drum Fit Wed
afternoons, BINGO Fri afternoons, Karaoke
second Fri afternoon of month, and many
more! Over 35 programs a week! Call 688-
2520 for details.



PIONEER CHRISTMAS TEA

Diane Clark was dressed in period costume and playing the lyre harp as entertainment
at the Pioneer Christmas Tea at Annandale National Historic Site. The event on Dec. 19
drew a packed crowd for the tea and goodies.

(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)



FITNESS FOR TWO GOOD REASONS

The Friday Fitness group at Tillsonburg Senior Centre spearheaded a campaign to
bring in donations for the Helping Hand Food Bank. Other members joined in to also
donate. Tillsonburg Senior Centre Treasurer Lisa Belliveau is pictured with Helping
Hand Food Bank Past President Tom Langrell with the full boxes of donations.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

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1. 2023
2. Manitoba
3. Venezuela
4. Trinitrotoluene
5. Kiwi
6. Rapunzel
7. 1933
8. Mammal
9. Eight
10. UK gallon

SUDOKU

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

CLASSIFIEDS

OBITUARY

ELLA MARGUERITE MONK (FOREMAN)



Passed away peacefully on December 20, 2025 at People Care Nursing Home Tavistock, Ella "Marguerite" Monk (Foreman), a lifelong resident of Springford and Tillsonburg surrounded by love of her family at the age of 95. Marguerite was born in Tillsonburg, daughter of the late Norman Foreman and the late Vera Foreman (Scott).

Her life's passion was her "boys" and a nursing career of 23 years at the Tillsonburg & District Memorial Hospital further fulfilled that life. Over the years, Marguerite supported the family farm whether it was with beef cattle, asparagus or apples; she was there with a smile and her laughter was infectious to those nearby. Loved ones often would hear her say "Love Ya More" to which the reply was often "I'm working on it".

Marguerite is the much loved wife and best friend of 65 years of Edward Judson Monk (predeceased 2018). Loved and respected mom of: Jeffrey (Diane); Timothy (Laurie); Robert (Jodi) all of Tillsonburg, Special Nana to grandchildren: Kylie, Ian, Joshua, Madison (Syn), Samantha Michielsens.

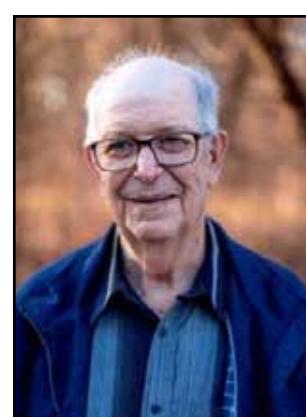
Predeceased by a sister Helen Shelton (William) of Ingersoll. Survived by several nieces, nephews and cousins.

In keeping with Marguerite's expressed wishes, cremation has taken place, with neither visitation nor funeral service. A private family celebration will take place at a future date. Memorial donations in Marguerite's memory are by cheque to "VON Oxford - Sakura House". Personal condolences and favourite memories may be shared at www.verhoevefuneralhomes.com. The Maurice J. Verhoeve Funeral Homes- Burial and Cremation Services Inc., 262 Broadway, Tillsonburg (519)842-4238, entrusted with all arrangements, with confidence.

OBITUARY

ROGER ERNEST SEGHERS

APRIL 23, 1934 - DECEMBER 25, 2025



The family of Roger Ernest Seghers sadly announces his passing at the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital on Thursday December 25, 2025 at 91 years of age. Loving husband of 70 years to his late wife Donna (2025). Caring father to Kathy (Karl) Kisilak and Shelley Houze. Father-in-law to Ron Blondeel. Grandfather to Marsha, Tonya, Johnathon, Crystal, Jade and Cody. Great grandfather to Kailah, Carter and Zander. Roger is predeceased by his parents Arthur and Prudence Seghers, daughter Linda Blondeel, grandson Jason Blondeel and brothers Jerry and Germaine Seghers. Roger is survived by his sister Yvonne Edwards.

At Roger's expressed wishes, cremation has taken place. A Memorial visitation will be held at Ostrander's Funeral Home, 43 Bidwell Street, Tillsonburg, ON N4G 3T6 (519) 842-5221 on Saturday, January 10, 2026 from 12:00pm until 1:00pm followed by a memorial service for Roger, starting at 1:00pm. Rev. Paul Robinson to officiate. A private interment will be held at Straffordville Cemetery in the spring. Donations in memory of Roger can be made to the Heart and Stroke Foundation or the Alzheimer's Society and can be done online directly with each or via cheque payable to the charity by contacting Ostrander's Funeral Home. Condolences and memories can be made at www.ostrandersfuneralhome.com.

TREES

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



Consider This: Many people choose to preplan their funeral at Verhoeve Funeral Homes.

Thinking about final wishes doesn't mean that a person's sad, depressed, or looking forward to death. Individuals preplan because they want to give their family and friends as much comfort as possible on that difficult, yet inevitable day. Whatever their reason may be, preplanning is a logical decision that a rapidly growing number of people make each day.

4 Key Benefits To Prearranging Your Final Wishes:

- Your wishes are known to your family
- Urgent Decisions Are Completed Now
- Your Peace of Mind
- Addressing Funeral Costs

Benefit 1 - Your family and friends are the most important parts of your life, but without your clearly expressed final wishes, it will be up to them to come together to try to reach a consensus during a difficult time. Flowers, music, readings, and other simple decisions now can create feelings of animosity and disunity. **Preplanning eliminates the guesswork** and lets your loved ones have peace as they focus on their own healing and remembrance.

Benefit 2 - Prearranging aims to take care of urgent decisions now and protect your family from unnecessary pain and expense. When that inevitable day arrives, **you want your loved ones to be focused on the truly important things – remembrance, family support, and healing** – not making arrangements and decisions about your funeral. Preplanning prevents them from having to make considerable financial and logistical choices while under emotional duress.

Benefit 3 - There is peace of mind that comes with knowing that you will say goodbye in a way that uniquely reflects you and your life. By prearranging your specific final wishes you ensure that your family will be guaranteed to have the service you would have wanted on that important day. **Your decisions can shape how your family and friends remember you** and can help their healing process with a personalized service that truly reflects your individuality and unique personality.

Benefit 4 - Preplanning and prefunding your funeral addresses funeral costs today and lessen the financial burden for your family down the road. Many people assume savings or life insurance will cover their final expenses. By funding your funeral in advance, **you lock in the price of your specific wishes at current prices**, avoiding rising costs caused by inflation. You can then enjoy the rest of your life confident in the financial relief you'll give to your loved ones. Furthermore, there is no risk to prefunding your funeral; all prefunded trust monies remain in trust for the purchaser until services are rendered. **These funds are also fully transferrable** to another funeral home, such as in the case your wishes change or you relocate.

In short, prearranging your funeral allows you to show your love in a way your family will never forget. By taking care of all the details yourself – and well in advance – your preplanned funeral will exemplify the selfless love and generosity you have shown your loved ones throughout your life. Nobody is eager to reach the day of their funeral, but taking control of that inevitable step and organizing your final wishes is simply the right thing to do for yourself and for your family. Completing the preplanning process will create a great sense of clarity, joy, and pride.

Getting started is easy. Turn to your local professional funeral directors at the Maurice J. Verhoeve Funeral Homes - Burial and Cremation Services Inc., Maurice or Robert would be pleased to talk or meet with you, without obligation, to answer any questions that you may have. The Verhoeve family has been serving the Langton and Tillsonburg communities since 1958, we are 100% family owned and operated with the goal of putting your family first.



Our professional staff are available 24/7 to assist at need families, contact us at:

519-842-4238

Email: verhoevefuneral@kwic.com
Website: verhoevefuneralhomes.com

262 Broadway Street
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40 Queen Street
Langton, Ont. N0E 1G0

Maurice J. Verhoeve Funeral Homes - Burial and Cremation Services Inc.

TILLSONBURG and LANGTON



Maurice J. Verhoeve, Owner/Funeral Director



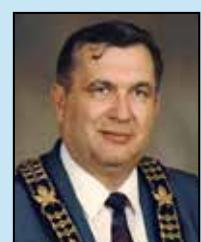
Margaret Verhoeve, Secretary



Robert Verhoeve, Funeral Director



Krystyna Verhoeve, Funeral Director



Hector Verhoeve, (1938-2015)