

2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette

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2025: Unity in the face of division

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

For so many of us, looking back on the year that was 2025 is a bit of a mixed bag.

It's not possible to think about last year without acknowledging the seeds of division planted across our country by the discordant dictatorship south of the border. The social legitimization of bigotry and selfishness by the Trump regime has flowed northwards, bleeding into our own daily discourse and making it difficult to discuss anything political without someone laying blame on one group or another.

Yet that American chaos also brought us closer together as a country, from our elbows-up mentality in the face of poorly thought-out tariffs driving up the cost of living beyond the societal breaking point to cheering on the Blue Jays as they fought tooth and nail for our national pride. Despite having to endure the inevitable divisiveness of two elections within two months of each other at the beginning of 2025, we once again realized our unity as Canadians is our greatest strength.

As editor of the Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette, I have the distinct challenge each December of finding four photos taken over the course of the year that illustrate the troubles

and triumphs we overcame or celebrated to make it to the new year. The four I chose are published on the front page of this 2025 Year in Review edition of the Gazette – an edition we hope our readers will keep as a reminder of a year in their lives.

The first photo, at the top left of the page, is the view from the cab of a local snowplow as the operator tries to keep up with the significant snowfall we experienced on one weekend in February. This year, both at the beginning and the end, road closures, snow-squall warnings and municipal declarations of significant weather events were more commonplace than many of us would have preferred. The relentless onslaught of frigid temperatures, winter weather and their impact on homes, businesses and infrastructure forced many of us to hunker down and prepare for the worst.

But in this part of the country, we're used to winter's disruptions to everyday life. We know when to stay off the roads and we know when to emerge from our frosty coconuts to do our part in keeping our communities functioning. We're also ready and willing, at a moment's notice, to step in and lend a hand when needed, whether it's helping a neighbour, friend or family member clear the snow from their driveway, or finding warmth and comfort for those left out in the cold.

The second photo, at the top right of the page, is a shot from Oxford Conservative incumbent Arpan Khanna's victory party in Woodstock after winning first full term as a member of parliament in the April 28 federal election. Beyond the joy and excitement of victory Khanna shared with his supporters that night, this photo, to me, represents a key turning point in the year.

With all the challenges facing our communities and our country – both from outside our borders and within – the conclusion of the federal election and the election of a new prime minister in Mark Carney, as well as the re-election of both of our local federal representatives – Khanna for Oxford and Tim Louis for Kitchener-Conestoga – it felt as though we had the chance to hash out our differences in political opinion and come out the other side stronger and more unified. Sure, we don't agree on everything and we never will, but by exercising our democratic right to vote in a national election – as well as a provincial election earlier in the year – I, for one, felt more confident in how we as Canadians and Ontarians responded to the challenges we faced.

The third photo, at the bottom left of the page, captured the demolition of the Old School House and former peopleCare long-term-care home in Tavistock. The demolition marked the end of more than 200 years of built history in Tavistock, as well as a new chapter for peopleCare, an organization that saw its beginnings in Tavistock more than 50 years ago, so it can continue to serve the community and care for seniors in its new facility for years to come.

While the old buildings may be gone, it brings me great comfort knowing all that history will not be lost thanks to the work of the volunteer historians at the Tavistock and District Historical Society (TDHS) and their collection of historical photographs, which are regularly published in this newspaper.

Keeping history alive and front and centre in the minds of locals is an important piece of the fabric of our communities. From the work done by TDHS to the history preserved in historians and authors Marie Voisin and Kristen Hahn's recently released five-volume anthology, *The Historic Buildings of New Hamburg and the People Who Lived in Them*, and the wonderful historical displays created at the Chesterfield Museum by the Plattsville and District Heritage Society, the preservation of our local history is crucial to how we shape our communities for future generations.

The fourth and final photo I have selected, at the bottom right of the page, is of the 822 Tutor Squadron Royal

Continued on page 3

Optimist Club of Downie Inc.

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*Happy
New Year*



Continued from page 2

Canadian Air Cadets standing vigil at the New Hamburg Cenotaph the night before Remembrance Day. These young people standing in the cold all night reminds me of the duty we all have in giving back to the communities we call home.

In this case, the cadets paid tribute to the military veterans of New Hamburg and the surrounding Wilmot Township, reminding us of their sacrifices for our freedom and the lives we can live today because of those sacrifices. But there are so many other ways to give back to our communities, from volunteering with local service clubs

raising money for local causes or hosting beloved annual events and festivals to volunteering with local minor sports organizations or at local schools, and contributing whatever we can – whether that's money, time, effort or all of the above.

Heading into 2026, we need to remember how much our communities truly rely on the generosity of the people who live in them to ensure everyone has what they need to live free, peaceful and enjoyable lives in our townships.

Happy New Year to all our readers. I can't wait to see what new troubles and triumphs 2026 brings!

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The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette

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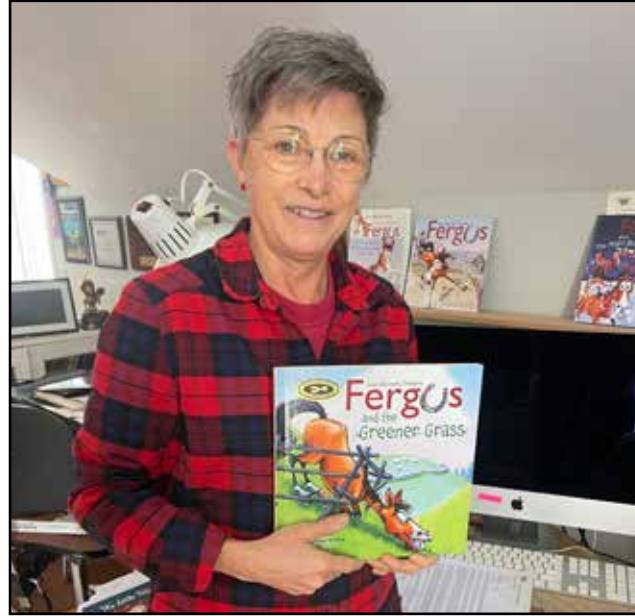
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Funded by the Government of Canada.
Financé par le gouvernement du Canada.



Year in Review – Arts 2025



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Wellesley area artist and cartoonist Jean Abernethy in her studio, showing one of her latest creations, "The Essential Fergus the Horse," in hardcover, as reported on in January.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The 1960s Barbie Canskate D Group performed during the Tavistock Figure Skating Club's In My Skating Era: A Journey Through Time at the Tavistock and District Recreation Centre in April. Pictured from left to right are Corey Armstrong, Ruby McIntosh, Lucy Husk, Nora Moloney, Breanne Poll and Blake Willsey. Group member Tessa Hazelegger is not pictured.



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

The Community Players of New Hamburg head choreographer Kalene Ticknor-Malton works with Arlo Robinson, who plays Nigel, on the opening musical number in the community theatre group's upcoming production of *Matilda the Musical* during a rehearsal at the New Hamburg Community Centre March 2.



(DIANE DANEN PHOTO)

Paul Hyatt, organist at Shakespeare Presbyterian Church, rehearses on the pipe organ in preparation for the concert, "Strings, Pipes and Chords," held in celebration of the first anniversary of the church organ being moved from Parkview United Church in Stratford to its new home at Shakespeare Presbyterian.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

North Easthope Public School students in grades 7 and 8 pause for a well-deserved ovation following their performance at their Celebration of the Arts show in May. At bottom right, helping to hold the Canadian flag, is music teacher and program director Colleen Rothwell.



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Year in Review – Arts 2025



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Conn Smythe entertains residents at The Maples Retirement Home in Tavistock over the summer. With his easygoing style and endless playlist, Smythe says the joy he brings to seniors through music is always worth it. "It brings a smile to so many faces."



(JANICE WAGLER PHOTO)

A spectacular display of creative arrangements and harvest baskets by Garden Wilmot creative gardeners Katelynn Cressman and Tyler Thompson at the New Hamburg Fall Fair in September.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Ukrainian artist Viktoriia Makarova works on the Community Unity Mural at the Ukrainian-Canadian Unity Event in New Hamburg Sept. 20 at the Grassroots Guest House.

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(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Wallenstein's Kassie Lynn wowed judges with her vocals and guitar playing, winning first place and the \$500 grand prize at the 2025 ABC Idol youth singing contest at the Apple Butter and Cheese Festival in Wellesley.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Ester Albrecht of Dundee Pottery sands the bottom of hand-crafted bowls being prepared for this year's Empty Bowls for Haiti fundraiser.

Year in Review – Arts 2025



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The poster for *Dancing on the Elephant*, written by New Hamburg's Lisa Hagen and starring Sheila McCarthy, Mary Walsh and Amanda Brugel.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Student actors Alex Ottoson (Steve Marsh), Phoenix Charland (Tony Bishop) and Sophie Ernewein (Pamela Marsh) perform during a performance of Waterloo-Oxford District Secondary School's production of *Silver Dagger*.



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2025 Year in Review By Month

January 2025

As Wilmot residents faced a proposed 51 per-cent increase in their property taxes, 19 delegations presented to elected officials at a budget meeting in early January while dozens of residents sent their concerns to councillors via email. The message was consistent throughout the night; passing a budget of this magnitude would not be in the best political interest of members of council.

Meanwhile, Wilmot Coun. Steven Martin asked fellow councillors Harvir Sidhu and Kris Wilkinson to leave a Ward 4 townhall meeting about the budget Jan. 4, 2025, at the New Hamburg Community Centre. When they said they wouldn't,

Martin left instead, leaving Coun. Lillianne Dunstall to face an emotional crowd worried about the proposed 50-plus per-cent tax increase and other controversial issues. Coun. Stewart Cressman also attended but vacated the event, concerned about potential ramifications.

Renowned Wellesley bronze sculptor Ruth Abernethy told the Gazette she received a phone call in October 2023 from the governor general of Canada's office. The staffer on the other end of the line told the sculptor, known across the country and beyond for her work memorializing in bronze important Canadians from the past and other historical figures from around the world, that she would be appointed as

a member of the Order of Canada as part of the 2024 cohort.

Mike Harris, who at the time was the MPP for Kitchener-Conestoga and Ontario's minister of red tape reduction, accepted the Progressive Conservative Party's nomination to run for the seat in the Feb. 27, 2025, provincial election.

A development consisting of 34 townhomes was greenlit for Tavistock after Oxford County council approved a plan that will see the residences built on an empty parcel of land between Optimist Park and Village Manor. The homes will be built on six residential blocks and for-sale signs weren't expected to appear until 2027.

Wellesley council officially passed a more than \$12.3-million budget for 2025 with a levy increase, inclusive of growth,

of 3.94 per cent. The total tax levy to be collected in 2025 was just over \$8.06 million, roughly \$595,000 more than the 2024 levy.

East Zorra-Tavistock (EZT) council voted in favour of closing a sewage-dumping station in the parking lot at Queen's Park in Tavistock, but a lack of information as to why the decision was made had some people asking questions.

Residents near the border between Wilmot and Wellesley townships were without phone and internet services in January following the vandalism of local phone and internet lines. Waterloo Regional Police received a report of property damage to a Bell box at Lisbon Road and Nafziger Road in Wilmot Township, just south of the Village of Wellesley, on the morning of Jan. 9.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF TAVISTOCK AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY)

On the walls of the newly built peopleCare long-term care facility in Tavistock are 18 photographs from The Lemp Studio Collection on display. These photographs are a reminder that peopleCare has a long history with Tavistock and is an integral part of the community. The directors of the Tavistock and District Historical Society (TDHS) recently went on a tour of the new facility and experienced the warmth and nostalgia these photographs bring to the home. Kirsten Leenders, the director of programs for peopleCare, is shown here in front of a John Lemp photograph with TDHS board member Bob Rudy.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

The Optimist tobogganing hill in Shakespeare beside the Optimist Hall was a busy spot on Saturday and Sunday as dozens of area tobogganers enjoyed a perfect, snow-packed run – the best it has been for many years. Both parents and kids alike commented that with temperatures at -3 degrees Celsius, snow conditions couldn't have been better.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF 100 WOMEN WHO CARE WILMOT)

Students and staff from Waterloo-Oxford District Secondary School accept a \$10,000 cheque for the school's Student Assistance Fund from 100 Women Who Care Wilmot.



(MIKE GRUMMETT PHOTO)

The New Hamburg dam through the trees running full out after the rain and snow over the Christmas holidays.

2025 Year in Review By Month

February 2025

What was once a summer camp for kids in Tavistock announced plans to open up in a third municipality. Camp Alliawannado and the Township of Wellesley announced a new partnership, just a few years after the operation expanded into Ayr, that would see the camp operate for six weeks at the Township of Wellesley Recreation Complex.

Students in associate professor Adrienne Johnson's Intro to Sustainability course at Wilfrid Laurier University helped to create a sustainable future for residents in the community of St. Agatha in Wilmot Township. Similar to projects undertaken by students in the course in Wilmot Township communities over the past two years, the students partnered with the township's planning department to employ the sustainable-planning practices they've learned in class in a real-world setting.

A proposal from staff at East Zorra Tavistock (EZT) Township to eliminate a month's worth of ice at the Tavistock and District Recreation Centre turned into an hour-long debate on several issues. These

issues included whether user groups had been properly consulted, and the hiring of a consultant to do a study on the 30-year-old facility. Council eventually voted to keep the ice in, at least for August 2025. Coun. Matthew Gillespie was the only one to vote in favour of the motion to eliminate ice use in August.

The weatherman cooperated 100 per cent in Linwood Feb. 1 for the annual Snofest, which brings together hundreds of people from throughout the area to enjoy the winter weather and neighbourhood get-togethers at the Linwood Community Centre.

Wilmot Township, Oxford and Perth counties declared significant snow events over the weekend of Feb. 15 and 16, keeping most area residents indoors as municipal staff throughout the region struggled to keep up with snow-clearing requirements.

A total of 134 walkers across 27 teams supported by 30 volunteers turned out for Wilmot's Coldest Night of the Year fundraiser walk supporting the Wilmot Family Resource Centre (WFRC) in New Hamburg Feb. 22. The team that raised the most money for the WFRC was the



(ADRIENNE JOHNSON PHOTO)

Students in Wilfrid Laurier University's Intro to Sustainability course recently visited St. Agatha as part of a sustainable-planning project being undertaken in partnership with Wilmot Township planning department.



In the Shakespeare Optimist Hall on Family Day Feb. 17 was a large gathering of local youth having fun on Family Day.

10-member Steinmann Strollers with a total of \$6,065, followed by the four-member team, the Resource Centre Walkers, which brought in \$4,160.

Tim Louis, MP for Kitchener-Conestoga, was appointed parliamentary secretary to the minister of Canadian heritage. Louis was tasked with supporting Pascal St-Onge in advancing policies that strengthen Canada's arts, culture and heritage sector.

Wilmot Township council passed an 18.22 per-cent tax increase for 2025. The final figure was vastly different from the original 50.87 per cent proposed by township staff but it was still a hard pill to swallow for some councillors and members of the public. The common theme among councillors was financial ignorance of the past.

The Township of Wilmot released its 2025-2027 Strategic Action Plan, a document that provides a roadmap for the organization, giving clear direction on how staff and council can achieve positive results for residents. The plan was developed in 2024 based on feedback gathered through a public survey and local

stakeholder sessions. Hundreds of residents participated, helping to paint a picture of the community's wants and needs. Four key priorities emerged from this process and formed the strategic goals of the plan: financial stability, healthy community, prosperous business and balanced growth, and trustworthy leadership.

Ernie Hardeman successfully kept Oxford blue in the 2025 provincial election, capturing 55 per cent of the vote. It was only six minutes after the polls closed on election day Feb. 27 when the media declared Premier Doug Ford and the PCs had won a third mandate. Two minutes later, media called it a majority and Hardeman's campaign manager Shelley Ratelband announced his victory locally to a cheering crowd at a post-election party in the Woodstock Legion.

Mike Harris, meanwhile, won re-election as the Member of Provincial Parliament for the riding of Kitchener-Conestoga. Harris, who garnered 41.5 per cent of the vote, told the Gazette on election night he is looking forward to getting back to work at Queen's Park.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

The Tavistock Mennonite Church quilting and comforter knitting group is shown in the church's bottom floor in a room where three large quilts were set up. They include, from left, Kim Brenneman, Ruth Steinman, Pastor Julie Ellison-White, Connie Zehr and Deb Kaster.



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

Walkers embark from the New Hamburg Community Centre Feb. 22 on two- or five-kilometre routes during the Wilmot Family Resources Centre's Coldest Night of the Year fundraiser.

2025 Year in Review By Month

March 2025

As the Apple Butter and Cheese (ABC) Festival committee prepared for the festival's 50th anniversary, Wellesley council approved a budget for the beloved annual event that could see the committee bring in just over \$15,000 in net income. With a balance in the festival's reserve account of more than \$100,000, Wellesley council approved a request from the ABC Festival committee in March to earmark some of that money to community projects including a \$500 donation to the Wellesley Township Fall Fair, \$4,000 for a Lions Club disc golf course project and \$27,500 for the purchase of two new gateway signs for the Village of Wellesley.

One of downtown Tavistock's staple businesses celebrated its 10th anniversary in March and the outpouring of community support for its owners, the Sparling family was, to say the least, heartwarming. D&D Homestyle Cuisine and Café

has been as consistent as the traffic at the town's five-corner intersection where it is located, and has been serving up great food in-store and through its catering side for a decade.

A worldwide gathering of churches at the beginning of March called Gather 25 brought together more than 7 million people from 225 countries together online in a historic event of prayer, worship and community. East Zorra Mennonite Church was among the 21,000 gathering groups that participated in the global event, which aimed to highlight how faith is transforming lives across continents.

Maple Tap Farm, located north of New Dundee in Wilmot Township, was once again recognized for producing award-winning maple syrup. For the second consecutive year, Jennifer and Andrew Sallans were named the Producer of the Year at the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival. The Wilmot Township couple remains humbled by the honour, having now won the prestigious

award four times since 2016.

Tim Louis, Member of Parliament for Kitchener-Conestoga, introduced The Canada Farmland Protection Act. The proposed legislation was meant to establish a national framework for the conservation of Canadian farmland including support for farmland trusts, harmonization of practices, policies for land transfers, incentives for conservation and research and data enhancement.

Gord and Debra Eddy, who have lived at Eddycrest Farms on the 11th Line in East-Zorra Tavistock (EZT) for the past 48 years, won a 2024 Oxford Stewardship Award nomination. Oxford County Warden Marcus Ryan presented the prize to one of the three nominees at the March 26 meeting of county council. The award recognized county landowners who made exemplary contributions to preserve and enhance the natural features and areas on their properties, such as woodlands, wetlands, streams and meadows.

East Zorra-Tavistock council passed the township's 2025 budget with 6.95 per-cent tax increase. The budget passed unanimously at the March 19 meeting with no discussion by members of council. A total of just over \$8.4 million was to be levied by the township from taxpayers in 2025, an increase over last year's \$7.7-million levy by nearly \$641,000 or 8.25 per cent. However, EZT saw 1.29 per cent, or more than \$100,500, in growth to the township's assessment base in 2024, leaving the actual tax increase at 6.95 per cent.

Kitchener-Conestoga MPP Mike Harris Jr. was appointed to Ontario Premier Doug Ford's cabinet as the minister of natural resources. Harris was first elected in 2018 and was first appointed to cabinet in June 2024, when he was named the first-ever minister of red tape reduction. He won a third term in the riding of Kitchener-Conestoga in February's election. Harris said sitting at the cabinet table is a phenomenal experience.



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

The Community Players of New Hamburg head choreographer Kalene Ticknor-Malton works with Arlo Robinson, who plays Nigel, on the opening musical number in the community theatre group's upcoming production of *Matilda the Musical* during a rehearsal at the New Hamburg Community Centre March 2.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF SHOW US YOUR WILMOT)

A photo of some locals canoeing past the ball diamond in New Hamburg's Norm Hill Park over the weekend March 15-16 shared to the Show Us Your Wilmot Facebook page by group member Deb MW.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WILMOT LIONS/LIONESS CLUB)

At the Wilmot Lions/Lioness Club dinner meeting March 17, Lions president Michelle Bousseau presented cheques to the four local charities that benefited from the proceeds of the club's 12 Days of Christmas Draw. This year's recipients were Community Care Concepts, Camino Well Being + Mental Health, Love Your Neighbour Community (LYNC) and Food4Kids. Pictured from left are Lion Maggie McElligott, Lisa Doherty (LYNC), Kathy Herrington (Community Care Concepts), Lion Susan Hammer, Carrie Guse (Food4Kids), Brousseau and Sally Sarachman (Camino Well Being + Mental Health).



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

South Easthope Mutual Insurance continues its support of Muscular Dystrophy Canada with a \$1,000 donation presented by board chair Jeff Schultz. Pictured with Schultz are Stephanie Singeris (left) and Keiran Albrecht (right), a client of Muscular Dystrophy Canada. The company has donated \$36,500 to the organization over the years.

2025 Year in Review By Month

April 2025

As reported in the April 3, 2025, Gazette, a \$180,000 federal government grant gave the Township of Wellesley a tourism boost. A funding announcement was made at the historic West Montrose Covered Bridge, commonly known as the Kissing Bridge. Kitchener-Conestoga MP Tim Louis was on hand and said the investment would help the township make capital improvements to connect Wellesley's trails system with those in the larger Waterloo Region. This funding, provided through the government's Tourism Growth Program, allowed the township to improve its trails and infrastructure. It was meant to fund the planning, design and construction of a walking/cycling bridge over the Conestoga River to link the township's local trails, enhance the ability for active, outdoor tourists to connect and pass through the township, and encourage offseason activities for residents and tourists alike, including snowmobiling, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.

East Zorra-Tavistock (EZT) Township decided to continue with a hybrid voting method for the 2026 municipal election. The township used internet and telephone voting in the 2018 and 2022 municipal elections, partnering with the Township of South-West Oxford, Township of Zorra

and Town of Tillsonburg. Previously, EZT used a mail-in method for the 2010 and 2014 elections after using traditional paper ballots. In the 2018 and 2022 elections, the township also provided a physical voting location and voter help centre at the administration.

Though there wasn't much fanfare with their visit, a New Zealand couple with a direct ancestral connection to New Hamburg founder William Scott spent several days in the Wilmot town last week, staying in the house Scott built and learning more about his life in Canada prior to his departure in 1867. Sheryl Patterson, Scott's third great-granddaughter, and her husband, Ross Patterson, stopped in New Hamburg in April to visit local historian Marie Voisin and her husband, Greg Voisin, on their way to Fort Lauderdale, Fla., where they were set to embark on a Caribbean cruise. This marked just their second-ever visit to the town. Sheryl Patterson's ancestor helped found before he packed up his family and left Canada forever, vowing to disinherit any family member who returned.

With the new peopleCare long-term care (LTC) home up and running in Tavistock, the company's attention turned to tearing down the well-known Old School House and the previous home built in the 1970s. Members of the community gathered in April to bid farewell to the Old School

House, a structure that had stood since the 1800s and served as the original site of peopleCare, which began over 50 years ago.

Miller & Miller Auctions, a New Hamburg-based auction house renowned for selling some of Canada's most valuable and intriguing collectibles worldwide, made its television debut on Rogers TV in April in a new series, Auction Studio: The Best of Miller & Miller Auctions. The series, which premiered on Rogers TV April 5 and is available to viewers across the country and around the world via Rogers' website and YouTube channel, captures the excitement, drama and storytelling behind Canada's most remarkable collections. This television show is the direct result of a partnership between the New Hamburg auction house and Stratford production company Ballinran Entertainment forged at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

General Motors announced in April it was temporarily halting and then reducing production of the BrightDrop electric delivery van at Ingersoll's CAMI Assembly Plant. The union representing the workers, including many from East Zorra-Tavistock, said it was devastating for Unifor members, their families and the entire Ingersoll community after employees were told of their fate and sent home.

The Government of Ontario continued to bolster the unilateral decision-making powers of mayors across the province with a proposal in April to expand strong mayor powers to 169 additional municipalities effective May 1, including East Zorra-Tavistock (EZT), Perth East and Wilmot Township.

Tim Louis was elected to a third term as member of parliament in Kitchener-Conestoga in the April 28 federal election, but as expected, it was a battle. The riding was decided by 522 votes this time around as Conservative Doug Treleaven came a close second with 29,484 votes. NDP hopeful Maya Bozorgzad was a distant third with 1,821, followed by the People's Party of Canada's Kevin Dupuis with 786.

Incumbent Arpan Khanna handily re-captured Oxford in the federal election on April 28. With 242 of 243 polls reporting April 29, Khanna had 37,995 votes, Liberal David Hilderley captured 27,018 and the NDP's Matthew Chambers received 3,107. Ballots cast for others running were: Jacob Watson, Christian Heritage Party, 1,200; Cheryle Baker, Green Party, 1,057; Steven Beausoleil, People's Party of Canada, 634; Melanie Van Brugge, United Party of Canada, 238; and Akshay Vardhan, Independent, 107. By percentages, Khanna received 53.2 per cent of the vote and Hilderley 37.9 per cent.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Wilmot Township Mayor Natasha Salonen gloats as she stands beside Wellesley Township Mayor Joe Nowak before a recent Wellesley Township council meeting. The two heads of council placed a bet on the recent PJHL Doherty Division final series between New Hamburg and Wellesley, won by the Firebirds in five games. "We deal with a lot of big issues at both Wilmot and regional council, and it was great to bring Provincial Junior Hockey League pride into chambers with our friendly mayors' bet. Mayor Nowak looked great rocking our Firebirds jersey," Salonen said.



(DIANE DANEN PHOTO)

Brian Rancos, a volunteer and member of the New Hamburg Optimist Club, chats with blood donor Frank DeWeerd after serving him a snack at the Blood Donor Clinic at Steinmann Mennonite Church April 7.



(PHOTO FROM NEW HAMBURG BOARD OF TRADE FACEBOOK PAGE)

All four candidates running in Kitchener-Conestoga in the upcoming federal election on April 28 participated in an all-candidates debate hosted by the New Hamburg Board of Trade at Puddicombe House April 14.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF SPRUCEDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL)

Students from the Grade 5/6 class ECO Team at Sprucedale Public School working hard to pick up garbage during the team's schoolwide Earth Day Cleanup.

2025 Year in Review By Month

May 2025

Several school boards in southwestern Ontario announced in May they were stepping away from X, formerly known as Twitter, citing concerns over platform safety, artificial intelligence and shifting communication strategies. The Avon Maitland District School Board (AMDSB) announced it would be leaving the platform as of June 30. The board and all associated accounts said it will no longer be using X to reach their audience, and families have been encouraged to follow along on other platforms instead. The Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) followed suit, releasing a statement in April explaining its decision to step away from the platform. The board cited evolving policies, changes to safety features and the growing use of artificial intelligence as key reasons.

After 20 years stepping back in time as the “schoolmarm” at Brocksden Country School Museum, Gloria Hutchinson, known to many as Ms. Priestap, retired from the role she’s held close to her heart.

For two decades, Hutchinson brought history to life for visiting students. Hutchinson thought of Brocksden as “her little schoolhouse.” While she’ll miss teaching there, what she says she’ll miss most are the children.

Oxford County announced it was installing eight new Community Safety Zones (CSZ) this year. The locations for the zones were decided through an eligibility and evaluation process in consultation with area municipalities and implemented in five municipalities across the county, including a pair in Tavistock – on Oxford Road 24 (Hope Street West) from Woodstock Street to the 50 km/hr limit west, and Hope Street East from Woodstock Street to the 50 km/hr limit east.

A new amendment to the Township of Wellesley’s dog-kennel bylaw removing tattooing as an acceptable form of identification for dogs and puppies, thereby leaving microchipping as the only option locally, had several local kennel owners questioning the future of their operations. At township council’s May 13 meeting,

councillors heard from two local Amish-Mennonite kennel owners seeking exemptions to the bylaw’s microchipping requirement – an amendment approved by council at its July 9, 2024, meeting that will go into effect in August. The amendment was narrowly approved by council after Coun. Shelley Wagner introduced a motion to remove tattooing as an acceptable form of identification, suggesting the procedure can be painful for dogs without anesthesia and that tattoos are not effective when trying to return lost dogs to their owners.

The Township of Perth East announced it would launch a two-year pilot program that will officially allow some residents of Shakespeare and other Perth East communities the opportunity to purchase a licence for keeping chickens on residential properties. After council voted on April 8 to have township staff develop a pilot program that would allow some Perth East residents to keep chickens on their properties for a minimum of two years, township staff presented the program to council at its May 21 council meeting for feedback.

and consideration.

After two years of work and thanks to a \$65,000 federal grant, the Wilmot Family Resource Centre officially rebranded as the Wilmot and Wellesley Resource Centre and it launched a new website aimed at improving its internal operations and its communication with the people and communities it serves. According to resource centre executive director Trisha Robinson and administrative coordinator Kathryn McEwin, who was instrumental in seeing this project to fruition, the rebrand was meant to reflect the services and programs the centre has offered to residents in both Wilmot and Wellesley for more than 40 years.

Through presentations made to Wilmot and Wellesley councils, the Waterloo Regional Police Service (WRPS) reconfirmed its commitment to rural Waterloo Region communities with its new rural policing strategy and a dedicated rural patrol sergeant, Sgt. Jay Hiuser. WRPS also committed to establishing satellite offices in both Wilmot and New Dumfries.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)
On what would have been his 50th birthday week, 45 cyclists gathered in Linwood for Stevie B's Ride for Hospice in memory of local cyclist Steve Baechler.

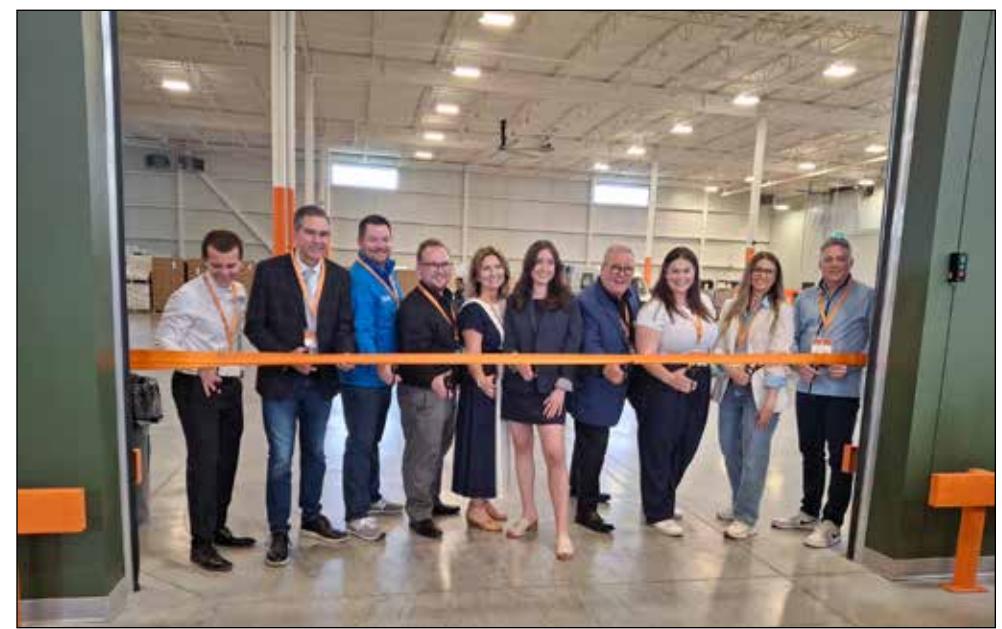


(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)
Families line up to place their orders at the Tavistock Optimists' food truck during the Tavistock Public School Open House on May 5, with proceeds generously donated to the Tavistock Home and School Association's playground fund.



(DIANE DANEN PHOTO)

Charter Members of the Shakespeare Opti-Mrs. Club, from left to right, are Bessie Wilhelm, Lorraine Gingerich and Linda Zehr, all of whom are wearing tiaras to celebrate the club's 50th anniversary in May. Bessie Wilhelm has been a dedicated member since the club started 50 years ago.



(SHARON LEIS PHOTO)
At the ribbon-cutting ceremony for TLC Pet Foods' new headquarters in New Hamburg May 31 was Kieran Shantz, MP Tim Louis, MPP Mike Harris Jr., Nikolas Kuttis, Sandra Kuttis, Kira Kuttis, Erik Kuttis, Wilmot Mayor Natasha Salonen, Megan Clark and Waterloo regional Coun. Michael Harris.

2025 Year in Review By Month

June 2025

The annual tradition of Decoration Day returned to Wilmot Township for the second consecutive year on June 1. Members of the community gathered at Riverside Cemetery in New Hamburg to pay their respects to veterans and loved ones laid to rest.

Tavistock was bustling with activity on Saturday, June 7, as residents enjoyed garage sales, Optimist activities, the World Crokinole Championship and a free barbecue on Woodstock Street North. The four businesses now calling the former Francis Furniture building home — Breaking Element Dance Company, Built Fitness, Crescent Ridge Services and Stonecrest Engineering Inc. — welcomed visitors for a grand opening and open house. Many commented on how impressed they were with the transformed space and the thriving local businesses.

On Sunday, June 22, downtown New Hamburg played host to its inaugural Food & History Walking Tour, a

community-driven experience that blended bite-sized eats with rich local tales. The event paired five participating restaurants with two of Wilmot's most dedicated historians leading a walking tour that fed participants' bodies and brains.

As part of a larger, \$11.8-million funding announcement by the province, the Township of Wilmot received just under \$380,000 in June to help replace end-of-life refrigeration equipment for the ice pads at the Wilmot Recreation Complex, boosting energy efficiency and ensuring the rinks can continue to serve the community.

Wellesley Township council awarded a nearly \$290,000 contract for the development of a new official plan for the township to Nethery Planning Services Inc., a project that was anticipated to take nearly one year to complete.

East Zorra-Tavistock council approved a new asset management plan in June. An asset management plan is a document municipalities are required to prepare and maintain to guide the sustainable management

of their assets over their lifecycle. It plans for the repair, replacement and maintenance of infrastructure like roads, bridges, water systems, wastewater systems, buildings and more. It also allocates resources by making evidence-based decisions and extends the life of assets while minimizing risks and costs. The province made these plans mandatory in 2019. Township CAO Karen DePrest assured council the township's assets are in excellent condition and when the next update is due in five years, a third-party consultant won't be necessary.

Tri-County Mennonite Homes hosted a groundbreaking ceremony in June for a new, modern long-term care home on the grounds of Nithview Home in New Hamburg. The current home holds up to 97 residents, but when the new build is completed in the spring of 2027, it will house 160 seniors and others in need of 24-hour care.

Wellesley council amended the township's fireworks bylaw to limit when they can be set off and where they can be sold. At their June 24 committee of the whole

meeting, councillors approved the by-law amendment that will not only restrict the setting off of low-hazard fireworks between the hours of 8 and 11 p.m. on just three days each year — Victoria Day, Canada Day and Labour Day — but also limit the sale of these fireworks to brick-and-mortar stores, thereby eliminating pop-up or roadside fireworks retailers operating in the township beginning in 2026.

There were hugs, handshakes and more than a few tears at Tavistock Public School on the last day of classes in June as staff and students said goodbye to two beloved teachers retiring together. Chris and Donna Ross, known affectionately to students as Mr. and Mrs. Ross, wrapped up their teaching careers this June — marking the end of an era not just for the school, but for the many students whose lives they touched. The couple, who live in Woodstock and have two children, said they're ready for the next chapter, but it was a bittersweet farewell.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Students line up for their turn on the safety course, guided by Optimist members John Markle, Bruce Swartzentruber, Dan Brenneman and Denise van Griensvan, at the Optimist Bike Rodeo at Tavistock Public School.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF SHOW US YOUR WILMOT)

Show Us Your Wilmot Facebook group member Mary L. Pfaff shared this photo of some locals taking a leisurely float down the Nith River on a hot, sunny, almost-summer day in June. Looks like fun!



(DIANE DANEN PHOTO)

Sprucedale students loved the Foam Dance Party at the Shakespeare school's Water Play Day June 13.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CANADIAN QUILTERS ASSOCIATION)

R.R. 2, Tavistock's Wendy Anderson made local quilting history in June, earning a national award for excellence at Quilt Canada.

2025 Year in Review By Month

July 2025

The longest-serving current member of the Ontario Legislature recently reached three decades of public service in July. "It's been quite an experience," said Oxford MPP Ernie Hardeman. "Looking ahead, 30 years seems like a long time, but looking back, it seems like just the other day." Hardeman was first elected in June of 1995, defeating NDP incumbent Kim Sutherland. He has since been re-elected nine more times, most recently earning 55 per cent of the vote in the 2025 provincial election. Hardeman's longevity has earned him the official title of Dean of the Legislative Assembly, and he explained being a sitting MPP has never felt like a job.

After dealing with a dilapidated septic system for three years, work on a new one at Hickson Central Public School began in July. Work on the site began on July 2, and the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) expected construction to be complete before the start of the school year on Sept. 3.

Honouring a loved one who has passed away with a memorial bench or tree in Wellesley Township now costs \$2,500 or \$800 respectively, and the placement of those memorials is restricted to five

locations throughout the township. Those changes were part of an official memorial bench and tree policy approved by Wellesley council at its regular meeting July 8. Previously, requests from residents wishing to donate a bench or tree in memory of a loved one were dealt with on a case-by-case basis, leading to inconsistent procedures and expectations, unclear responsibilities for long-term maintenance, and space limitations in some parks. As the demand for memorial installations increases, township staff proposed the policy to ensure transparency, fairness and alignment with park and green-space planning and maintenance practices.

There isn't much in this world that could convince 700 people to sit outside in the summer sun for a few hours on one of the hottest days of the summer, made hotter by several very active, nearby barbecues. Yet that's just what the 700 people who travelled to Petersburg to support Warren Bechthold, his family and their 21st annual childhood cancer barbecue fundraiser did, helping to raise \$31,615.30 through donations and the purchase of hot dogs, sausages, hamburgers, cheeseburgers, soft drinks and ice cream from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. July 10.

Driven primarily by the danger it poses to farm animals, equipment and crops in

the area, the Township of Wellesley officially passed a bylaw banning kite fighting on public and private property in the township in July. A tradition in many South Asian cultures during holidays, kite fighting involves kite flyers trying to intercept each other's lines to cut them down. The strings, often referred to as "manja" strings, are sometimes coated with crushed glass or metal. Following the example of municipalities like Oakville and Mono, which banned kite fighting in recent years, Wellesley council approved its own bylaw banning the sport at its July 8 meeting.

The Conservative member of parliament for Oxford launched a nationwide consultation in July to gather feedback from Canadians on urgent reforms needed for Canada's bail system and broader criminal justice laws. Arpan Khanna engaged with frontline police officers, Crown prosecutors, judges, social workers, victims' advocacy groups, all levels of government and members of the private sector. The goal was to gather insight and shape a private member's bill aimed at strengthening public safety and rebalancing a criminal justice system that has, in his view, under the Liberal government, tipped in favour of repeat offenders.

In July, Grassroots Response to the Ukrainian Crisis, a non-profit started

by Petersburg resident Steph Goertz in 2022 that has since helped more than 4,500 Ukrainians displaced by the war with Russia find homes – and lives – in Canada, announced it has opened a new Ukrainian Guest House at 225 Huron St. in New Hamburg. Formerly owned by the Baechler family and having played a role in welcoming Mennonite refugees from in and around Ukraine, the home is currently owned by Greg and Marie Voisin and is providing temporary housing for Ukrainians as they seek to establish a new life in Wilmot.

Following years of arguments, vandalism and controversy, it was announced in July the Prime Ministers Path would be re-installed in Baden. At its July 28 meeting, Wilmot Township council adopted a resolution that would see nine statues return to the grounds of Castle Kilbride.

The Township of Wilmot announced in July it is formulating a new official plan to guide development across its rural and urban communities. The new plan, lasting until 2051, will replace the existing township and regional official plans and will build on Wilmot's long-term vision for growth with a renewed focus on complete communities.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Student interim pastor Alexis Leis and nine-year-old Garner Zehr present an object lesson together at East Zorra Mennonite Church's Vacation Bible School.



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

Mike Farwell, host of The Mike Farwell Show on 570 NewsRadio Kitchener, mans the grill at the 21st annual Bechthold Childhood Cancer BBQ in Petersburg in exchange for a donation to his Farwell4Hire campaign in support of cystic fibrosis research.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

More than 120 classic cars and trucks packed the back lot of Tavistock Mennonite Church for this year's Zehr Insurance Classic Car Show.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

New Hamburg area farmer Jeff Good loads wheat into the grain buggy while his father operates the combine on the western edge of town, near the B-W Feed Mill.

2025 Year in Review By Month

August 2025

In August, the provincial government pledged over \$4 million to connect more people to primary care in the Waterloo Region, including rural areas. The investment is part of the government's Primary Care Action Plan that it said will help connect 300,000 people to primary care this year. Kitchener-Conegosa MPP Mike Harris said the investment would expand the work of local health teams, including Community Healthcaring KW, New Vision Family Health Team, Waterloo Region Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic and the Woolwich Community Health Centre (CHC), and connect thousands of residents across Waterloo Region to the care they deserve. The funding allowed the Woolwich CHC to set up shop in Wellesley with two new physicians.

Sustainable Waterloo Region (SWR), in partnership with the Grand Valley Construction Association (GVCA), officially launched Frameworks: A Building Innovation Exchange, a groundbreaking initiative designed to support the building sector in transitioning toward efficient,

innovative and healthy buildings. The program offers support that is not available anywhere else in the province. The initiative is industry-led and shaped by an executive advisory committee of regional experts in construction, engineering, architecture and building sciences. It aims to bridge the gap and make building practices more efficient, smart and healthy.

The four rural townships in the Region of Waterloo issued a joint press release in August in response to a lack of precipitation. "Due to hot and dry conditions, the townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich are suspending open-air burning, effective immediately," the release said. The ban prohibited all fires except those set for the sole purpose of cooking food in a contained fire pit.

The 19th annual Morningside Summer Games wrapped up for another year in August at Morningside Village Retirement Community in New Hamburg. The 10-day event featured 21 different competitions, all organized by a committee of five residents and supported by 21 conveners.

A proposed nature trail and the construction of a fence behind residential properties

caused some confusion among Tavistock (EZT) residents in August. Three different reasons were provided to Tavistock residents as to why a fence was going up in very close proximity to some homeowner's property lines. EZT later clarified a nature trail was only proposed for a stretch of land behind one town roadway.

A Quebec-based data company confirmed in August that Wilmot and Waterloo Region are potential spots for its next mega data centre. QScale said it is looking to move into Ontario with an investment of around \$4 billion, and the region was put on the shortlist of potential sites. Martin Bouchard, the company's president and co-founder, told the Waterloo Region Record newspaper that while he couldn't disclose specific options for a future site for competitive reasons, he did confirm Wilmot and other parts of the region were included in the evaluation.

Visitors were welcomed at the Fryfogel Tavern on Saturday, Aug. 23, for an end-of-season open house. Guests enjoyed tours, outdoor games, door prizes and complimentary snacks while celebrating the progress made in the restoration of

this local landmark. The historic tavern was once owned by Sebastian Fryfogel, thought to be the first settler in Perth County. Today, it is lovingly cared for by the Stratford Perth Heritage Foundation, a non-profit dedicated to preserving local history for future generations. Over the summer, employees Hilary Doupe and Nathan Patterson worked hard restoring the proprietor's office on the main floor.

Members of Wilmot Township council received a staff report at an August council meeting highlighting an estimated cost of \$78,000 to install nine statues of Canadian prime ministers on township grounds in Baden. The figure includes six concrete pads worth about \$10,000 each and a contingency fund of \$18,000 to cover any repairs. Before discussing the report, council heard from Karen Dane, a township resident who expressed dismay over the possibility of more taxpayer dollars being spent on the Prime Ministers Path (PMP). Council ultimately decided not to spend any additional taxpayer dollars on the PMP.



(SCOTT DUNSTALL PHOTO)
After three years, thousands of parts and over \$4,000, Mike Horner proudly stands with his LEGO tribute to downtown New Hamburg.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)
Thelma Grimes Steele celebrates 101 years young at Quehl's Restaurant in Tavistock.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)
Residents of Morningside Village Retirement Community in New Hamburg enjoyed friendly competition, colourful parades and community spirit during the 19th annual Morningside Summer Games, which wrapped up with a banquet and awards ceremony in August.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)
In yellow is emcee Marlene Kuepfer, who organized and announced the prize winners at this year's Wellesley Fall Fair Pet Show on Aug. 23. She was helped by this year's fair ambassadors, along with last year's ambassador, Katie Musselman.

2025 Year in Review By Month

September 2025

Wilmot council indicated in September it will likely disband the volunteer-based committee that has organized and run the annual Wilmot Canada Day event for the past two years in favour of a staff-led approach. At the Sept. 8 committee of the whole meeting, Wilmot director of community services Chris Catania told council staff is recommending the dissolution of the Canada Day committee of council to allow staff to take the lead in organizing and running the event going forward, which he said would foster better communication among organizers and more efficiency in the overall event-planning process.

Wilmot Mayor Natasha Salonen asked township staff in September to prepare a policy that would have the township undertake regular reviews of council pay and benefits once during each term of council. At the Sept. 8 committee of the whole meeting, clerk Kaitlin Bos presented a report to councillors informing them of Salonen's mayoral direction to have staff bring back a council remuneration review policy for consideration at council's November

committee of the whole meeting.

Wellesley Mennonite Church marked 50 years since the church was established in September. In 1974, a few families from nearby churches began exploring the idea of starting a new church in Wellesley. By September 1975, the founding congregation began worship services, and the rest is history. The congregation has been celebrating its 50th anniversary throughout the year, and the weekend of Sept. 13-14 marked the highlight of that celebration with a community breakfast, kids' activities, musical entertainment and a special anniversary church service.

East-Zorra Tavistock (EZT) approved the controversial walking trail behind Janelle Drive in September. None of the 20 affected homeowners told the Gazette they were in favour of the recreational trail, however no residents spoke on the topic at the EZT council meeting where the trail was approved. Two members of council voted against the trail, including EZT Mayor Phil Schaefer, who explained he appreciated the need and is supportive of walking trails, but felt the Janelle Drive location doesn't meet the necessary criteria.

Oxford County initiated a forensic

investigation following a cyber attack on the county's information system in September. The county engaged third-party cybersecurity experts to assist with containment, remediation and to conduct the forensic investigation. In addition to the measures in place before this incident, the county began working with third-party cybersecurity experts to introduce additional security measures as needed to mitigate potential future harm to its system.

Grassroots Response to the Ukrainian Crisis hosted a Ukrainian-Canadian Unity event in New Hamburg on Saturday, Sept. 20. The event was held to celebrate the opening of a new guest house for Ukrainian newcomers, the unveiling of the Community Unity Mural and the launch of the book, Voices Across Time. Around 80 people attended the celebration, including Ukrainian families, community members, volunteers and local supporters.

The Wilmot Agricultural Society held its annual Education Day in September at the Hogendoorn dairy farm near St. Agatha, welcoming Grade 4 students from across Wilmot Township. The program, which used to be held at the New Hamburg fairgrounds, was moved to the farm this year

to give students a first-hand look at local agriculture. Students rotated through stations focused on dairy farming, nutrition, water conservation, horses and tack, and farm equipment. They also rolled up their sleeves to plant seeds in the farm's soil.

The Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese (ABC) Festival crowned its 2025 Idol youth singing contest winner Sept. 27. The competition began more than four months prior with tryouts at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Wellesley. From 20 eager performers, eight were selected for the semifinals at the Wellesley Fall Fair in August. A fan-choice winner was also selected at the fair, earning \$125 and the chance to perform alongside the finalists at the ABC Festival. Finalists included Kassie Lynn of Wallenstein, Nora Parks of Wellesley, Breea Shouldice of Elmira, Morrigan Woolner of Petersburg, Kristine King of Baden, Kayla Weeks of Wellesley, Jadeyn Snider of Milverton and Eleanor Maggs of Linwood. Wallenstein's Kassie Lynn wowed judges with her vocals and guitar playing, winning first place and the \$500 grand prize.



Oxford MP Arpan Khanna hosted hundreds of constituents in September for a free pancake breakfast. Khanna said the number one topic on people's minds was bail reform and crime.



The midway at this year's New Hamburg Fall Fair lit up the night for both kids and adults.



East Zorra-Tavistock Mayor Phil Schaefer was glad to be riding in Ron Saunderson's racing division's Hot Rod in the Tavistock Fall Fair Parade.



Sully Minor took home first prize in the 41-60-pound class of the pedal tractor pull at the Milverton Fall Fair.

2025 Year in Review By Month

October 2025

Though Wilmot Fire Chief Rod Leeson spoke about the urgent need to replace the Wilmot Fire Department's 75-foot aerial ladder truck in October, township councillors opted not to proceed with the sudden opportunity to purchase a 100-foot ladder truck at a reduced price. At Wilmot's Oct. 6 committee of the whole meeting, Leeson presented the opportunity to purchase a KME 100-foot aerial apparatus from Dependable Truck-Tank & Emergency Vehicles at a cost of \$2.08 million. According to the fire chief, the opportunity represented a discount of roughly \$300,000 from the normal price of one of these trucks, however councillors would have needed to immediately approve the expenditure as part of the township's 2026 budget and provide a deposit within 24 hours of the meeting. Without more information about how the purchase would impact the township's 10-year capita plan, councillors rejected the proposed purchase.

In October, the Township of Wilmot began accepting applications for participation in a community steering committee that will guide the next phase of the controversial Prime Ministers Path project. The project was relaunched following a unanimous council vote in July, the result of an extensive community engagement campaign and recommendations from a working group. One of the group's key

recommendations was to establish a committee made up of volunteers to oversee the reinstallation of the statues and develop inclusive, historically grounded educational materials to accompany them.

Tavistock's Transitions Equine Assisted Learning won the Best New Tourism Product award at the Oxford Tourism Awards of Excellence celebration at the Innerkip Highlands Golf Club in October for its Cowgirl Kickback Experience obstacle course.

The flagpole at Tavistock's five corners got a new neighbour in October — a giant syringe marking the community's ongoing efforts to raise funds for much-needed upgrades to the Tavistock Medical Building. Members of the Tavistock Community Health Inc. (TCHI) board helped install the fundraising syringe, which tracks donations toward their \$500,000 goal. The display serves as a visible reminder of how close the community is to reaching its target and how important local health care remains to Tavistock's growing population.

Wellesley council approved a set of 10 guiding principles that will help the township's consultants move ahead with developing between two and three options for the future use of the property on which the old Village of Wellesley arena and community centre currently sit. At its Oct. 14 committee of the whole meeting, councillors heard from GSP group president and senior planner Steve Wever, who presented the findings of recent public

engagement around what residents would like to see the township do with the old arena and community centre now that the new Wellesley Recreation Complex is open and fully operational.

A challenge posed to Township of Wellesley Fire Rescue by the Perth East Fire Department's Milverton station led the Wellesley fire department to plant a 12-tree urban fruit orchard beside its station in the Village of Wellesley, next to the Wellesley Recreation Complex. At the Oct. 14 Wellesley committee of the whole meeting, councillors approved a request from the Apple Butter and Cheese Festival (ABC) committee to contribute \$1,500 towards the fruit orchard, which had already been planted by the fire department earlier in the month. The orchard includes six varieties of apple trees, two pear trees, two peach trees and two sweet cherry trees.

Let's Tree Wilmot, a project of Garden Wilmot, received \$67,240 from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities in October to support ongoing tree-planting projects. Additional funding was provided through the Township of Wilmot's Community Grants program and other donors. The combined funding will support two years of tree planting and one year of watering and monitoring in communities across the township, including New Dundee, Petersburg, Mannheim and New Hamburg.

Mayor Natasha Salonen announced in October she used her Strong Mayor

Powers to hire KPMG to lead the development of the 2026 budget as well as a long-term financial plan. "There have been some internal changes in the finance department, and with Strong Mayor Powers, the budget is my responsibility to present regardless of people's thoughts on the legislation. Talking with our CAO and corporate leadership team about putting a good budget together we are confident in, we came up with a big-four firm to come in."

A tradition started in Wilmot Township a few years ago spread to Canada's capital on Oct. 31, and local Royal Canadian Legion members are hoping to take it even further next year. To officially kick off this year's Poppy Campaign, New Hamburg Legion members joined Mayor Natasha Salonen, township councillors and staff at the township office and Castle Kilbride in Baden Oct. 31 to raise the "Lest We Forget" Poppy Flag — a tradition started by 33-year Canadian Armed Forces veteran Chief Petty Officer, 2nd Class (retired) Donald Eenkooren in Wilmot back in 2022. While the Poppy Flag was being raised in Wilmot, Eenkooren and New Hamburg Legion members Gerry and Kathy Eichler, and Ian and Connie McKie made the eight-hour trip to Ottawa, where they raised the Poppy Flag — the same flag raised in Wilmot in 2022 — in a first-of-its-kind ceremony on Parliament Hill attended by Legion Command officials and government representatives.



(WENDY RICHARDSON PHOTO)

Pictured from left, 2024-2025 Wellesley Fall Fair Ambassador Katie Musselman shares the Wellesley Pumpkin Experience with 2025-2026 Junior Fair Ambassador Chloe Scott at Fall Harvest Farm's Thanksgiving Open House, where hundreds of pumpkins were available for purchase.



(JOAN HERGOTT PHOTO)

Residents on the extended care side of The Maples Home for Seniors in Tavistock throw their arms in the air with enthusiasm, shouting "Go Blue Jays," cheering on Canada's team during the World Series between the Jays and the Los Angeles Dodgers.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Perth East firefighter Ayden Gautreau helps young Darwin Lindner learn how local firefighters use the jaws of life to extract victims from vehicles after collisions on Highway 7/8 during a Fire Prevention Week open house at the Shakespeare Fire Station.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Guests at Empty Bowls for Haiti enjoyed a variety of delicious soups generously donated by local restaurants including Schmidtsville in Wellesley; Kennedy's in St. Agatha; Old Country Kitchen, Scran & Dram and Adam Brenner in New Hamburg; EJ's in Baden; Pacini Restaurant in Toronto; Homestyle Diner, Tamale Girl, Village Caterer and Pasha BBQ in Kitchener; and Quehl's in Tavistock. Organizer Rosemary Arthurs expressed her gratitude for the restaurants' generosity and encouraged community members to show their support by visiting these establishments and enjoying a meal.

2025 Year in Review By Month

November 2025

On Saturday, Nov. 1, the Nith Valley EcoBoosters hosted a Repair Café at Zion United Church in New Hamburg. The event ran from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and offered community members a chance to bring in broken items for free repairs. Repair Cafés are community events where volunteers help people fix their broken belongings for free while teaching repair skills and promoting sustainability. The goal is to reduce waste, share knowledge and strengthen community connections.

As the cold settled over the cenotaph in downtown New Hamburg on the night of Nov. 10, local air cadets stood in silent rotation, keeping watch in honour of those who served. The overnight Cenotaph Vigil, held by the 822 Tutor Squadron Royal Canadian Air Cadets, began at 8 p.m. and continued through the night, ahead of the community's Remembrance Day ceremony. It marked the squadron's second year conducting the vigil in New Hamburg after several years of doing so at the Central Park-Preston Cenotaph in Cambridge.

Explore Waterloo Region received the Tourism Marketing Campaign Award (under \$50,000) for its 2024 Mistletoe Trail campaign – a festive, art-meets-holiday experience that invited visitors to explore the region through seven unique mistletoe installations – at the Ontario Tourism Awards of Excellence Gala in Ottawa.

After nearly nine years of creating small-batch ales and lagers, Ayden and Katie Gautreaux have passed the taps – and the stainless-steel kettles – to John and Tracey Segeren, the new owners of the Shakespeare Brewing Company on Perth Line 34, Shakespeare's main street. The Gautreaux family, who founded the brewery in 2016, built a loyal following with their dedication to using Ontario-grown ingredients and producing true, local craft beers such as Grumpy Goat IPA, Shakespeare 75 and Coffee Pale Ale. The Segerens, who have lived just north of Shakespeare since 2005, said in November they are excited to continue that tradition while adding their own twist to the lineup.

The second annual "Taste the Culture - Bite and Delight" event in November

was a sold-out celebration of community, diversity and culinary exploration, drawing nearly 240 attendees to the Bill Gies Recreation Centre in Wellesley. Building on the success of its inaugural year, the evening once again invited residents to experience the richness of Wellesley Township's growing cultural landscape. Guests sampled traditional foods, learned about different customs and enjoyed vibrant displays of fashion, music and storytelling.

The Ford government passed legislation that abruptly ended speed-camera programs across Ontario, but affected municipalities were offered a pot of money to implement other traffic-calming measures. The legislature passed Bill 56, Building a More Competitive Economy Act, 2025, which includes amendments to the Highway Traffic Act prohibiting the use of automated speed-enforcement systems across the province. As a result, the Region of Waterloo ended its municipal speed-camera program on Nov. 13. The community was told to expect to see new provincially mandated school zone

signage installed across the 28 school zones where speed cameras were in use.

East Zorra-Tavistock (EZT) Township's first attempt to sell its former office was unsuccessful, prompting the municipality to pay for a pair of studies at 90 Loveys St. in Hickson. EZT hired separate consultants to complete a record of site condition (RSC) and a designated substance survey (DSS) in November. There were no bids received to purchase the property at the time of closing. Several individuals and businesses asked for the sale documents, but no actual offers on the property were received.

The Oxford OPP detachment announced in November its officers are now equipped with body-worn cameras (BWC). In a news release, the OPP said it supports the implementation and use of any tools or technologies that enable improved evidence collection, demonstrate greater accountability and transparency, and enhance public and officer safety in Oxford County and beyond.



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

The New Hamburg Legion Colour Party leads the Remembrance Day Parade from the New Hamburg Cenotaph towards the New Hamburg Community Centre for the annual Remembrance Day ceremony.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Students from a local Woolwich neighbourhood participate in Taste of Ukraine as they work together to make a traditional Ukrainian meal at a recent event.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Construction crews continue work on the new pumphouse in Shakespeare, designed to reduce arsenic and iron levels in the village's water supply.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Tavistock Pre-Schoolers stayed snug as can be, guided by instructors JJ Bannon, Sadie Harrett (director), Elisha Graime and Linda Holst in the Tavistock Santa Claus Parade Nov. 29. Missing was Grace Sullivan.

2025 Year in Review By Month

December 2025

United Way Oxford's annual 12 Days of Giving event returned in December. The event, which started on Dec. 1 and ran until Dec. 12, encouraged community members to show their Local Love by sharing 12 ways to give back to Oxford County and directly support those in need. Activities ranged from dropping off toys to Operation Sharing's The Christmas Place or 104.7 Heart FM's Stuff the Bus and watching United Way Oxford's Community United Conversation Series to learn about the needs and services in the community, to donating to United Way Oxford.

The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) delivered its 2026 invoice to East Zorra-Tavistock (EZT) in December, revealing a sharp increase compared with 2025. The cost of policing in the township is rising by just under \$113,000, or an increase of 9.95 per cent. Municipalities using OPP services will see their 2026 bills rise by no more than 11 per cent compared to 2025 under a provincial cap. The cap is part of a revised cost-recovery and billing model designed to give municipalities more predictability and prevent sudden, steep increases. The province has set aside \$77 million to help offset higher costs next year.

With financial support from the Badge of Hope Foundation and the Government of Ontario, the Family Violence Project Waterloo Region (FVP) is strengthening its impact in preventing and addressing rising levels of intimate-partner and gender-based violence across Waterloo Region, and provide better access to care in Wilmot Township. Established 20 years ago, FVP has evolved to include multi-sectoral services under one roof, emphasizing education, prevention, advocacy and co-ordinated care for those experiencing intimate-partner and gender-based violence.

The Perth East 2026 mayor's budget was officially adopted on Dec. 9. The annual budget focuses on the township's corporate values: progressive, service-oriented,

caring, fiscally responsible, collaborative and enthusiastic. The year-over-year levy increase is 5.33 per cent, meaning the after-assessment growth is 3.76 per cent. For a typical single-family home, that translates to a \$92 year-over-year change for the Perth East portion of property taxes.

The holiday season shone brightly in Wellesley over the weekend of Dec. 6-7 as residents laced up for the community's festive Jingle Run/Walk, an event that combined holiday cheer with heartfelt purpose, raising \$1,700 in support of a local boy fighting cancer. Participants were invited to complete either a five-kilometre or three-kilometre route, starting outside the east entrance of the Bill Gies Recreation Complex. Spearheaded by Shauna Johnston, the run drew walkers, runners and supporters of all ages – from young children to great-grandparents – along with a couple of festively dressed dogs.

After recent reports that nearly half of Ontario's Grade 6 students failed to meet the provincial standard in math, the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) and the Waterloo Catholic District School Board (WCDSB) report it's not all bad news. In a media release, the WRDSB said 62 per cent of its students in the primary division met the provincial standard in math, 52 per cent of junior division students met the standard and 62 per cent of Grade 9 students achieved the standard. The WCDSB reported that 65 per cent of primary students met the provincial math standard, 53 per cent of junior students met the standard and 53 per cent of Grade 9 students met the standard.

After more than a decade of exhaustive research, writing and fine-tuning, the authors and historians behind the five-volume anthology, *The Historic Buildings of New Hamburg and the People Who Lived in Them*, officially celebrated its release at a book launch Dec. 21. Hosted at Puddicombe House, the event marked the final chapter of a monumental journey through local history the historians and authors, Marie Voisin and Kristen Hahn, as

well as the late Ernie Ritz, embarked on 15 years ago.

Announced in December, Enbridge Gas Ontario is helping the Wilmot Fire Department purchase firefighting training materials through Safe Community Project Assist. The program, with the Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council (FMPFSC), supplements existing training for Ontario volunteer and composite fire departments. This year's \$125,000 investment from Enbridge Gas will be shared by 25 Ontario fire departments, including the Wilmot Fire Department. Funds are used to purchase educational materials to assist in training firefighters in life-saving techniques. Wilmot Fire Chief Rod Leeson said the \$5,000 gift will be used to

purchase training manuals.

Oxford County council approved the 2026 business plan and budget in December, passing a total budget of \$406.1 million which includes a \$278.2 million operating budget and \$127.9 million in capital projects. The amount of money collected through taxation will be \$96.7 million, resulting in a \$77 increase or 5.3 per cent for residents in the townships, including East Zorra-Tavistock. Homeowners in Woodstock will see a 5.2 per-cent increase or \$69. The dollar figures are based on an average assessment of \$281,377.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Sarah Johnston and daughter Bella stand proudly beside the family's 13-foot snowman on William Shakespeare Street. Wesley Johnston, who was at work when the photo was taken, takes on the challenge each year of building the biggest snowman he can – a tradition the family loves to share with the community.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF WILMOT LIONS/LIONESS CLUB)

A huge crowd gathered in downtown New Hamburg Dec. 5 for the Wilmot Lions/Lioness Club's 42nd annual Tree of Light Ceremony. Christmas music was performed by the New Hamburg Concert Band and Mixology A Cappella Singers, and the young winners of the annual colouring contest were announced.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Young players with Twin Centre Minor Hockey enjoyed an easy ride on their colourful float – much less effort than a hard-fought game on the ice – during the Christmas Tyme in Wellesley parade.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Santa, warm and cheerful, closed out the Shakespeare Santa Claus parade atop the final float. He joked his reindeer were "putting on more miles than ever this year."

2025 Election Results

2025 Canadian Federal Election Results - April 28, 2025

FEDERAL RESULTS:

Party	Leader	Votes	% of Votes	Seats
Liberal	Mark Carney	8,595,488	43.8%	169
Conservative	Pierre Poilievre	8,113,484	41.3%	144
Bloc Québécois	Yves-Francois Blanchet	1,236,349	6.3%	22
New Democratic	Jagmeet Singh	1,234,673	6.3%	7
Green	Jonathan Pedneault	238,892	1.2%	1
People's	Maxime Bernier	840,993	4.9%	0

KITCHENER-CONESTOGA RESULTS:

Party	Leader	Votes	% of Votes
Liberal	Tim Louis	30,001	48.3%
Conservative	Doug Trelevan	29,479	47.5%
New Democratic	Maya Bozorgzad	1,821	2.9%
People's	Kevin Dupuis	786	1.3%

OXFORD RESULTS:

Party	Leader	Votes	% of Votes
Conservative	Arpan Khanna	38,191	53.4%
Liberal	David Hilderley	27,311	38.2%
New Democratic	Matthew Chambers	3,046	4.3%
Christian Heritage	Jacob Watson	1,203	1.7%
Green	Cheryle Baker	897	1.3%
People's	Steven Beausoleil	642	0.9%
United	Melanie Van Brugge	152	0.2%
Independent	Akshay Varun Raj Vardhan	109	0.2%

2025 Ontario General Election Results - February 27, 2025

ONTARIO RESULTS:

Party	Leader	Votes	% of Votes	Seats
Conservative	Doug Ford	2,158,452	43.0%	80
New Democratic	Marit Stiles	931,796	18.6%	27
Liberal	Bonnie Crombie	1,504,688	30.0%	14
Green	Mike Schreiner	242,822	4.8%	2

KITCHENER-CONESTOGA RESULTS:

Party	Leader	Votes	% of Votes
Conservative	Mike Harris	16,946	41.5%
Liberal	Joe Gowing	12,031	29.5%
New Democratic	Jodi Szmanski	7,551	18.5%
Green	Brayden Wagenaar	2,227	5.5%
New Blue Party	Jim Karahalios	1,152	2.8%
Ontario Party	Patrick Doucette	890	2.2%

OXFORD RESULTS:

Party	Leader	Votes	% of Votes
Conservative	Ernie Hardeman	27,061	55.3%
Liberal	Bernia Martin	11,348	23.2%
New Democratic	Khadijah Haliru	5,374	11.0%
Green	Colton Kaufman	2,182	4.5%
Ontario Party	Grace Harper	1,414	2.9%
New Blue Party	Peter Beimers	1,317	2.8%
Libertarian	Henryk Szymczyszyn	276	0.6%



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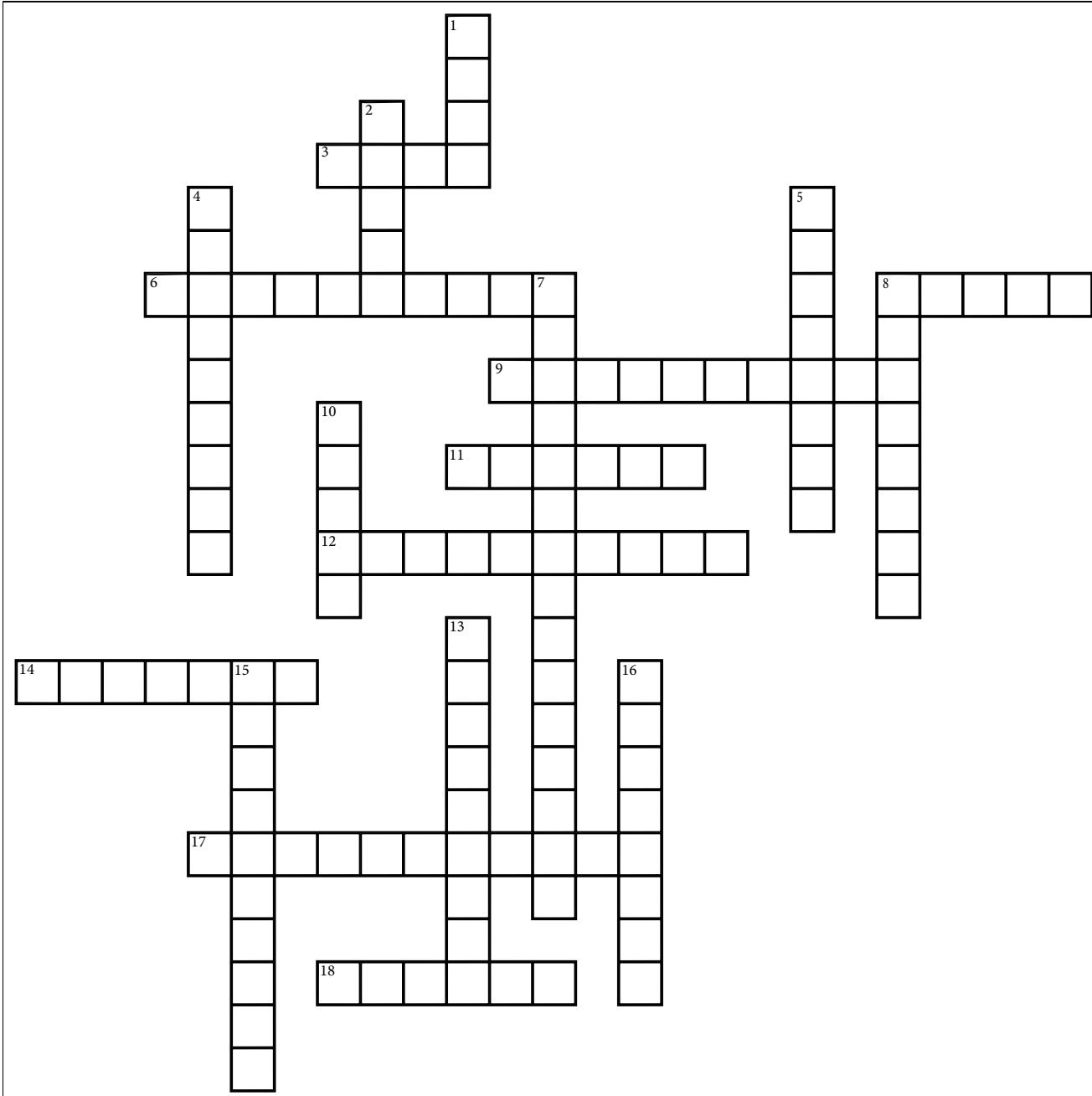
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New Year's Crossword Puzzle



Use the clues below to fill in the words on the crossword puzzle.

Words can go across or down.

Letters are shared when the words intersect.

ACROSS

3. A feeling many have for the new year
6. A chance to begin again
8. What everyone watches as midnight approaches
9. A promise made for self-improvement
11. What lies ahead in the coming year
12. Customs repeated every New Year
14. The first month of the year
17. A festive gathering or event
18. A word said before taking a drink

DOWN

1. What the new year gives us more of
2. Things people aim to achieve in the new year
4. Colorful explosions seen on New Year's Eve
5. When the new year officially starts
7. The year being welcomed
8. Small pieces of paper thrown at celebrations
10. A social event to welcome the new year
13. A sparkling drink used for toasts
15. Looking back on the past year
16. Shows days, months, and the new year

Answers on the classified page

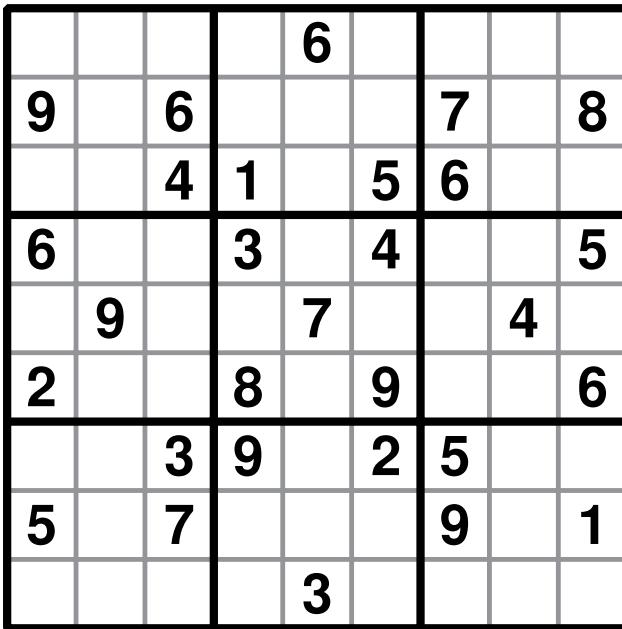
The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette Weekly Quiz By Jake Grant

1. What popular numeric-based phrase annoyed parents and teachers alike in 2025?
2. Who led the Toronto Blue Jays in postseason hits and batting average?
3. What movie won "Best Picture" at the 2025 Oscars?
4. Canadian Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led what pro sports team to a championship in 2025?
5. The G7 Summit in June was held where in Canada?
6. Who is Robert Francis Prevost better known as?
7. Who was elected as Mayor of New York City in November?
8. What AI chip maker is the world's most valuable company at year end?
9. What is the most populated country in the world as of year end?
10. What was the name of the hero who tackled and disarmed one of the gunmen at Bondi Beach, Australia on Dec. 14?

Answers found on the classified page



by PeterS 2025



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OBITUARY

WAGLER, Susan "Sue" Elizabeth

Passed away peacefully with her family by her side on Sunday, November 23, 2025, at Groves Memorial Community Hospital, Fergus. Sue was born 68 years ago, a daughter of the late George and Esther (Shelley) Penney.

Devoted and loving wife of Edward Wagler whom she cherished 48 years of marriage with. Cherished mother of Amanda Wagler and husband Kyle Dietrich, Meghan Wagler, and Stephanie Wagler and husband Jesse Cressman. Sue was a doting grammy to Maren, Harrison, Mayelle, Camille, Ezra, and Wilson. She will be fondly remembered by her sister Louise Gingerich, brother Mike Penney and wife Ellen, and by her multiple brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, nieces and nephews. Sue will also be missed by her elderly dog Stew.

Sue made friends everywhere she went and will be missed and remembered by her many friends, neighbours, fellow volunteers at MCC Thrift – New Hamburg, her pickleball family and by her Wilmot Mennonite Church family. Sue was employed with Hybrid Turkeys for 30 years.

At Sue's request, cremation has taken place. Relatives and friends are invited to Wilmot Mennonite Church, 2995 Bleams Rd, New Hamburg, on Saturday, January 3, 2026, for a memorial service beginning at 11:00 a.m. with Pastor Susan Allison Jones officiating. A reception will follow at the Puddicombe House, New Hamburg. For those unable to attend the reception, the family will receive at the church beginning at 10:00 a.m. until the time of the service.

As expressions of sympathy, memorial donations can be made to Groves Memorial Community Hospital, or the WRHN Cancer Centre and can be done on the funeral home website.

Personal condolences can be posted for the family at www.markjutzifuneralhomes.ca

Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to the Mark Jutzi Funeral Home, New Hamburg.

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OBITUARY

SCHUMM: Reta Barbara (nee Schultz)

Passed away peacefully at Stratford General Hospital surrounded by her family on December 18, 2025. Reta Schumm of Tavistock in her 94th year.

Beloved wife of Daniel Schumm who predeceased her December 24, 1997. Loving mother of Bruce and wife Barbara of New Hamburg, Virginia and husband Daniel Mucuk of New Hamburg, Mary and husband George Trachsel of Huntsville, Wayne and wife Michelle of Tavistock and Paul and wife Ingrid of Stratford. Sadly missed by her 14 grandchildren and 17 great grandchildren. Survived by her brothers Herb and Shirley Schultz of New Hamburg, Katherine and husband Don Snyder of Waterloo, David and wife Marilyn Schultz of Milverton, sister Phyllis Gropp of Kitchener and sisters-in-law Irene Schultz of New Hamburg and Audrey Schumm of Tavistock.

Predeceased by her parents Mahlon and Elizabeth (Lichti) Schultz, sister Mary & Stanley Ropp, brother Alvin Schultz, brothers and sisters-in-law Alfred Schumm, Lamar Schumm, Fannie Mae & Glenn Schwartzenruber, Catherine Currah and Geneva & Mervin Lichti

Relatives and friends will be received in the Francis Chapel of the Glendinning Funeral Home, 77 Woodstock Street. N. Tavistock on Sunday December 21, 2025 from 5-8pm. Funeral service will be conducted at the Tavistock Mennonite Church on Monday December 22, 2025 at 11:00 a.m. Reception to follow. Private interment to follow at East Zorra Mennonite Church Cemetery, 16th line.

In lieu of flowers, donations to the Stratford General Hospital or Tavistock Mennonite Church would be appreciated by the family. Personal condolences can be shared at www.francisfh.ca.

OBITUARY

WETTLAUFER: Claudette Edna (nee Sippel)

Passed away peacefully at her home, peopleCare, Tavistock surrounded by her family on December 17, 2025 in her 86th year.

Beloved wife of the late Charles "Jack" Wetlaufer who predeceased her October 17, 2022. Loving mother of Fred of Tavistock, Charlie and wife Chris of Tavistock, Marianne and husband Dale Ruby of R.R. 2 Tavistock. Sadly missed by her grandchildren Riley and Travis Wetlaufer and Jayden and Simon Ruby. Survived by her sisters-in-law, Carol Sippel of Miami Florida and Gloria Wetlaufer of Tavistock, and by her Goddaughter Kim Gilmore (Byron) of Brantford.

Predeceased by her infant daughter in 1967, by her parents Milton and Florence (Berger) Sippel, brother Farrell Sippel, father-in-law and mother-in-law Percy and Ruth (Hinz) Wetlaufer, brother-in-law Robert "Bob" Wetlaufer, William "Bill" Wetlaufer and sister-in-law Lynda Wetlaufer.

Claudette had a real love for music, regularly playing the piano and organ. She had a love of animals especially cats. Claudette was interested in family history and she contributed photos and history to the Tavistock Historical Society.

Relatives and friends will be received in the Francis Chapel of the Glendinning Funeral Home, 77 Woodstock St. N. Tavistock on Friday December 19, 2025 from 5-8pm. Funeral Service will be conducted at the Grace United Church on Saturday December 20, 2025 at 11:00am. Interment in Grace United Church Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations to the Grace United Church would be appreciated by the family. Personal condolences can be shared at www.francisfh.ca

NOTE OF APPRECIATION



The family of Wray Luke Bender wishes to express their appreciation for all the kind expressions of sympathy and support that we received after Wray's sudden passing on November 16, 2025. Parting is such sweet sorrow. For everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven.

A heartfelt thank you to Pastor Julie Ellison White for her outstanding pastoral care during this difficult time, and Stratford General Hospital staff for their compassionate palliative care. A special thank you to Glendinning Funeral Home for their excellent and caring assistance.

Cathi Bender,
Krista&Dan Charbonneau,
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The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette

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YEAR IN SPORTS



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

JANUARY: Reeve Houle has his hand raised following one of his wins. The Tavistock native has a 3-1 record in his burgeoning MMA career, most recently earning a second-round TKO win over William Hall on Dec. 14, 2024.



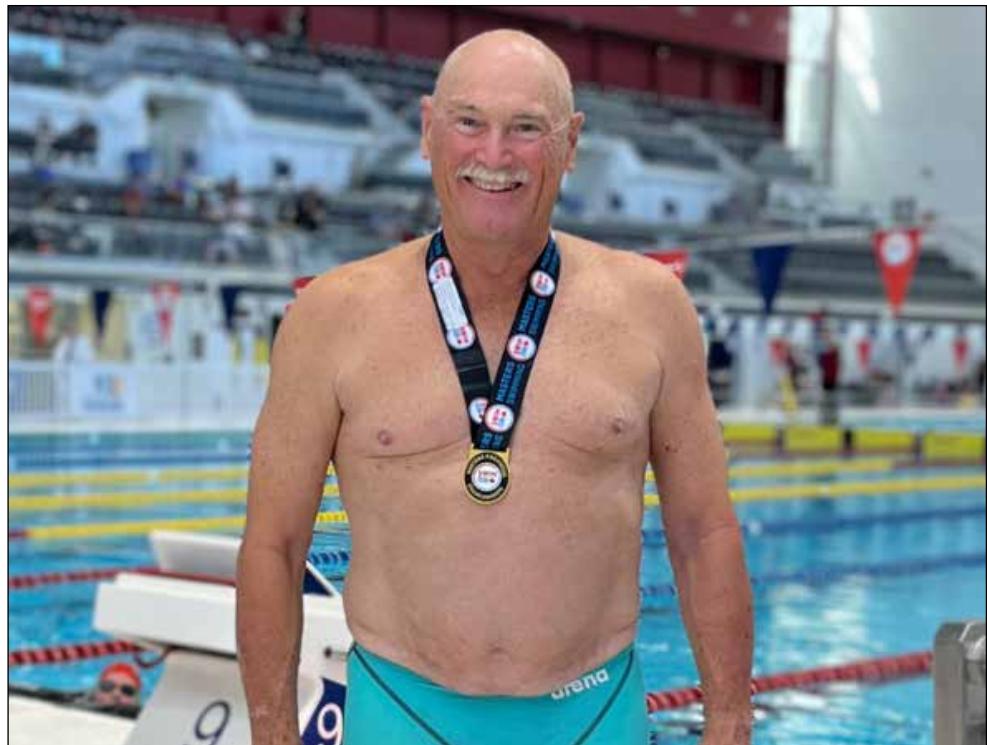
(PHOTO COURTESY OF TAVISTOCK ROYALS)

FEBRUARY: Royals goalie Zach Shomphe makes one of his 42 saves during the Royals' loss to Saugeen Shores Feb. 14.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

MARCH: New Hamburg Firebirds forward Antonio Pasqualino celebrates one of his two goals in the series-clinching game against the Wellesley Applejacks on March 28. The Firebirds went on to face Grimsby in a PJHL quarter-final matchup.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

APRIL: Pictured is Ron Armstrong, originally from Ingersoll and now a resident of New Hamburg, with the gold medal he won in the 400-metre individual medley at the Ontario Masters Swimming Championship April 25-27 in Markham. Armstrong's time of 6:20.44 set a new world record in the men's 75-79 division.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

MAY: The Braves presented all three graduating players with framed jerseys at the team's annual awards banquet May 24. Pictured are Lander Hartley, Trent Davies and Will Schlotzhauer.



(ROSLYN MCLAREN PHOTO)

JUNE: The Shakespeare Falcons U17 team celebrates their Barrie Bash championship victory in June. Pictured in the front row from left are Kalia McLaren, Ava Harmer, Olivia Parsons, Annalise Glaab, Taya McLaren and Adele Nelson. In the back row from left are Matt McLaren, Andrew Medhurst, Kennedy Vail, Sierrah Babcock, Eden Fraser, Cam Medhurst, Deanna Halls, Bree Weber, Taylor Pletsch and Randy Halls.

YEAR IN SPORTS



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

JULY: Members of the Tavistock U15 Athletics softball team pose for a photo with their on-field rivals from Wilmot. Many of the players attend Waterloo-Oxford District Secondary School together and are friends off the field. The U15 Tavistock team won gold at a provincial elimination tournament in Napanee in July, punching their ticket to the national championship tournament in Manitoba.



(SHANNON HILL MEDIA PHOTO)

AUGUST: Pictured from left to right are Elaina McGraw, Cali Gaudun-Gies, Bryn Stachowski, Arilynn Van Alphen, Shelby Dubrick, Mya Bannerman, Jordyn Thomson, Calee Richmond, Holly Pembleton, Lainey Chambers, Payton Goerz and Indigo Gaudun-Jones. The U11 girls Wilmot Thunder ended their season on a high with a round-robin game that was called their best game of the entire season during the Aug. 8-10 Year-End Tournament in Ayr.



(ALEC RICHARD PHOTO)

SEPTEMBER: Riley Noble skates with the puck for the Wellesley Applejacks during their game against the Tavistock Braves on Sept. 19. Kian Harron scored the overtime winner for the Applejacks. Luke Schofield and Tyler Chadwick also scored for Wellesley, while Evan Palubeski and Carter Otto scored for Tavistock.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

OCTOBER: The championship curling team from Stratford District Secondary School includes, from left, Deanna Hallis (Second), Hailey Peters (Vice), Addison Hyatt (Skip) and Brooklyn Hyatt (Lead) – all from Tavistock and Poole.



(ALEC RICHARD PHOTO)

NOVEMBER: New Hamburg Firebirds forward Owen Bruder fires a shot onto goaltender Logan MacMillan during the Firebirds' 8-6 win over the Wellesley Applejacks on Nov. 7. Bruder scored one goal in the third period.



(ALEC RICHARD PHOTO)

DECEMBER: Cameron Schmidt leaps and hits the ball while supported by Quinn Witzel during the Waterloo-Oxford District Secondary School (W-ODSS) junior girls volleyball game on Dec. 9 against Cameron Heights Collegiate Institute (CHCI).

Looking back at 2025 fads in health and wellness

HEAPS OF HEALTHY TIPS

By Mercedes Kay Gold



this sounds spectacular but the jury is out. As a personal trainer, I would advise you it can't hurt to add but it's not a replacement for consistent aerobic and strength training.

Infrared face masks and mats are holistic wellness devices that emit heat, penetrating deep into the body in as little as 20 minutes. The red light provides tonnes of therapeutic, body-boosting benefits. If you haven't been to the Zen Den Light and Healing Studio in New Hamburg, it should be on your to-do list for 2026. They have a booth, so bring a buddy.

Face yoga; yes, you read that right. Face yoga is at-home facial workouts designed to minimize wrinkles, get rid of a double chin, eliminate eye bags and get rid of face fat by improving skin tone and facial muscle tightness. To be honest, I have never tried it. This busy bee finds it challenging enough to find time for physical activity, and knowing leg strength is linked to longevity, not a lack of wrinkles, you will find me in the gym.

Muscle scraping is not new to athletes and gym-goers, but podiatrists and massage therapists are all over social media posting videos. Muscle scraping uses a Graston tool or gua sha, but I have even used a spoon to break up painful scar tissue. The repeated scraping action increases blood flow, bringing lots of oxygen and nutrients, stimulating the body's

based on ruminant animals. The diet includes beef, goat, bison, deer, water and high-quality sea salt.

Intermittent fasting revolves around eating and fasting generally with the shortest fast being 16 hours, leaving you a window of eight hours to enjoy food. The longer the fast, the more whole-body healing benefits. There are multiple methods. Whether you follow time-restricted, periodic or alternate-day fasting, the body uses stored sugar for energy, and once that's gone, the body moves to fat-burning mode. Fasting improves weight-management, insulin resistance and cholesterol, plus lowers inflammation and brain fog.

Whole-body vibrating machines are quite the craze on TikTok. Exercising as little as 15 minutes a couple of times a week by merely standing or laying on a vibrating machine may increase blood flow, reduce soreness, build strength and balance. Yes,



response to speed up healing. This is a godsend on shin splints and plantar fasciitis.

Farmer's carry is a simple weighted exercise, carrying dumbbells or kettle bells in each hand while walking a set distance. Jump on the bandwagon today. Don't delay. Pick a starting weight. Stand tall, feet shoulder width apart and arms hanging at your sides. Looking straight ahead, walk with your belly button pulled in, holding the weights with a tight grip. Aim to walk a minimum of 30 seconds. Increase the weight and distance to build functional, total-body strength inside and out.

There are always heaps of hyped-up new things and some are just that, hype, and some are awesome. Use common sense, speak to your health practitioner and stick to something long enough to find out if it's the perfect fit for you.

One thing I am sure of; aggressively getting out of your comfort zone is the key to quality of life. Get comfortable in the lazy body and your days are numbered. Get lazy in the kitchen and inflammation slowly increases. Health is earned. Make 2026 the year to try new foods and feel soreness from physical activity.

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Wilmot Muslim Centre has submitted proposed cemetery by-laws to the Registrar under the *Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, 2002*.

Any interested parties may contact Khaled Wahab of Wilmot Muslim Centre for information or to review or obtain copies of the proposed by-laws at:

Wilmot Muslim Centre**Email:** info@wilmotmuslimcentre.ca**Phone:** 226-646-1052**Address:** 1000 Knechtel Court, Wilmot, ON N0B 1E0

These proposed by-laws are subject to the approval of the Registrar under the *Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, 2002*.

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



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2025 real estate market recap: A year of adjustment across our local communities

EXPERT REAL ESTATE ADVICE

By Isabel Livingston



Average sale prices across the region remained resilient throughout the year, highlighting the ongoing desirability of rural and small-town living. Wilmot Township had an average sale price of \$851,892 in 2025, while Wellesley/Woolwich led the group at \$911,678, reinforcing strong demand for homes that offer space, community and access to nearby urban centres. Blandford-Blenheim saw an average price of \$786,665, Perth East/Shakespeare at \$733,400 and East Zorra-Tavistock at \$709,267, demonstrating healthy price stability across residential real estate. Please note these numbers don't reflect or include agricultural real estate patterns.

One of the most notable shifts in 2025 was the rise in new listings compared to completed sales. In every area, new listings outpaced sales, signalling a clear increase in inventory. Wellesley/Woolwich and Wilmot Township saw particularly strong listing activity, giving buyers more choice than they've had in recent years. This shift eased the intense competition seen in previous markets and allowed buyers to move forward with greater confidence and fewer pressure-driven decisions.

With more homes available, average days on the market increased, reflecting a return to a more traditional selling environment.

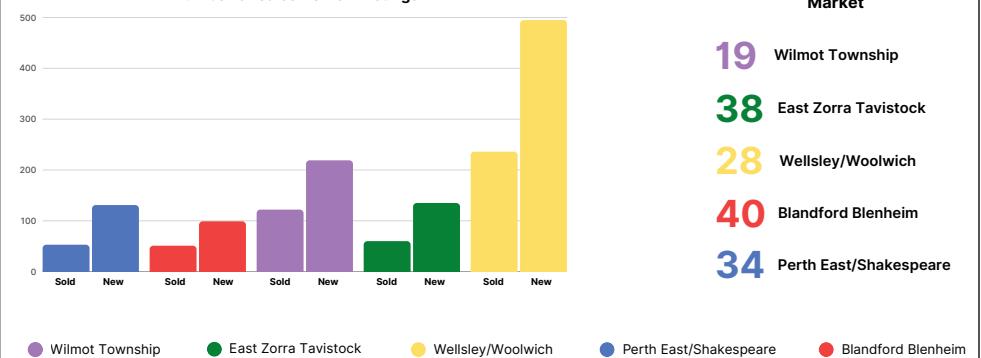
Township, Wellesley/Woolwich, Perth East/Shakespeare, East Zorra-Tavistock and Blandford-Blenheim reflected a year of recalibration. Following several years of rapid change, the market settled into a more balanced rhythm – one defined by increased inventory, steadier pricing and more thoughtful decision-making from both buyers and sellers.

2025 RECAP - REAL ESTATE STATS

INFORMATION GATHERED FROM HABITAT

| Average Sale Price |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| \$851,892 | \$709,267 | \$911,678 | \$733,400 | \$786,665 |

Number Of Sales VS New Listings



Average Days On Market

19	Wilmot Township
38	East Zorra Tavistock
28	Wellesley/Woolwich
40	Blandford Blenheim
34	Perth East/Shakespeare

Properties no longer sold instantly, and successful sales were increasingly tied to strategic pricing, strong presentation and realistic expectations. Average days on the market ranged from approximately 19 to 40 days, depending on the community, detailing the importance of preparation and professional guidance when listing a home.

For sellers, 2025 was a year that rewarded those who adapted. While well-priced, move-in-ready homes continued to perform strongly, over-priced or poorly presented properties often required multiple price adjustments and longer marketing timelines. Buyers, on the other hand, benefited from improved negotiating power, more conditional offers and the ability to explore options without the urgency that once defined the market.

Overall, 2025 marked a more balanced real estate landscape across our local communities than previous years. The market moved away from extremes and toward sustainability, creating opportunities for buyers to enter thoughtfully and for sellers to succeed with the right strategy. As we move forward, local expertise, clear communication and personalized planning remain key to navigating the evolving market with confidence.

For questions reach out; I am always happy to chat! isabel.livingston@century21.ca or 226-232-4236.

Isabel Livingston is a sales representative with Gale Group Realty Brokerage Ltd. and the Jennifer Gale Real Estate Team.

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Tips to stay the course with a New Year's resolution

The holiday season is steeped in tradition. Many of those traditions are rooted in celebrants' faith, but one of the last customs people embrace each year is largely secular.

The tradition of making New Year's resolutions is older than many people may realize. According to History.com, the ancient Babylonians are believed to be the first people to make New Year's resolutions when they began doing so roughly 4,000 years ago during a 12-day festival known as Akitu. That festival was religious in nature, but many people now make resolutions with a goal toward self-improvement unrelated to their faith. As people ponder their resolutions for the year ahead, the following strategies might help them stay the course over the next 12 months.

Give serious thought to a prospective resolution

Statistics regarding New Year's

resolutions vary, but a 2024 survey from the Pew Research Center found that 13 percent of adults polled indicated they kept none of their resolutions. Numerous variables can affect whether or not a person keeps a resolution, but giving a potential resolution little thought ahead of time can make achieving a goal unlikely. Give any potential change ample thought before committing to a resolution. If you aspire to lose weight, identify the ways you're going to go about that. Find a local gym to join, identify ways to eat a more nutritious diet and, perhaps most importantly, study how you can make time to stay the course. A little legwork in advance of declaring a resolution can pay off in the long run.

Set periodic goals

Small goals along the way to the larger goal can serve as motivation to keep going. If you aspire to watch less television and

read more, resolve to read 100 pages per week and then gradually increase that total if you so desire. Small goals can provide a great means to measure incremental progress that will ultimately make achieving a larger goal more likely.

Be realistic

Realistic goals are more likely to be achieved than ones that seem good on the surface but are too difficult to keep. For example, if you aspire to exercise for an hour each day but obligations to work and family leave little time for physical activity, then you may need to reduce those expectations in favor of a more realistic, achievable goal. Taking on too much will only discourage you when hurdles inevitably appear, and that is likely to compel you to abandon the resolution entirely. If your initial goal is realistic, then any challenges that arise are less likely to derail your efforts.



Don't go it alone

Many people employ the buddy system as a means to stay motivated with fitness-related resolutions, and that approach can be applied to any goal you set at the beginning of the year. Having someone there to hold you accountable, and doing the same for

a partner, increases the chances you'll stay the course.

New Year's resolutions are an ancient tradition, even if the majority tend to be abandoned rather quickly. But anyone can buck that trend and stay the course by employing a few simple, yet effective strategies.

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East Zorra-Tavistock Council meeting
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*Council Chambers
89 Loveys Street East, Hickson*

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Shuffleboard @ arena, Wednesday 12:30-4 and Thursday 10-4. Contact: Don Junker 519-535-7052.
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3. Anora	7. Zohran Mamdani
4. Oklahoma	8. NVIDIA
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2	4	1	8	5	9	3	7	6
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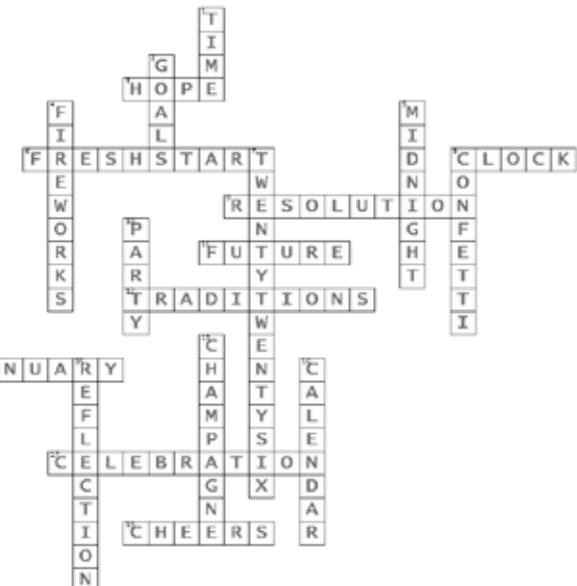
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