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Ombudsman makes suggestions after 2024 bans

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Two years after three Stratford residents were temporarily banned from all city property, some questions have been answered – for some.

After a fiery February 2024 council meeting, the City of Stratford issued notices of suspension from all city property to three individuals: Barb Shaughnessy, Mike Sullivan and Ken Wood, saying that all three had breached the city's respectful workplace policy, though no specific instances were shared with the public.

Following a summer of protests and meetings being abruptly cancelled after the suspended individuals were spotted in the gallery, the suspensions were lifted, city council amended its policy as calls came from the public to revoke it entirely, and Shaughnessy, Sullivan and Jane Marie Mitchell, another resident who was issued a warning, vowed to fight back.

All of that leads to today, after Shaughnessy shared the letter she received from the Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario, who completed a review at her request.

In the letter, which only addressed Shaughnessy's complaint, investigator Johanna Dennie noted the city did not address its concerns with her behaviour prior to issuing the letter of suspension. Under the respectful workplace policy of the day, and the amend-

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(AMANDA NELSON PHOTO)

Susan Powell and Alex Powell of Waterloo take a seat in two of Destination Stratford's new tulip chairs while enjoying a walk along Lake Victoria during a visit to Stratford. For more on the new chairs, see our story on page 6.

Council supports another year of warming centre operations

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

After a successful, if frenetic, first year, the warming centre will be back next winter.

At the July 20 special Stratford city council meeting, council elected to approve its operation for a budget of \$327,031 (with \$88,560 being the city's portion). It will operate Nov. 1 through April 30, 2027.

The centre ran for a total cost of \$235,446 last year, though stakeholders advised council that this year one

more social service worker and the elimination of the security guard position would be recommended, necessitating the increased cost, along with building safety improvements.

"A warming centre is not and cannot be a long-term solution to homelessness," said Kim McElroy, director of social services with the City of Stratford. "It is a temporary seasonal safety measure. The long-term solution ... remains permanent, deeply affordable, supportive housing combined with the prevention, stabilization,

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Council supports another year of warming centre

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

mental health, addiction, income and community supports.

“At the same time, as we continue to work towards that longer-term solution, we have an immediate responsibility to help keep people safe during the winter months. For individuals who are unsheltered, extreme cold can be life-threatening. The warming centre provides a warm, supervised indoor space with meals, connection to supports and an additional option.”

The centre operated for 134 days, including 19 days of extreme cold. While achieving its goal of giving individuals needing refuge more options during cold weather, it also reduced pressure on emergency response systems. The Stratford Police Service reported a reduction of 16 per cent in its contact with unhoused individuals this winter compared to last. Representatives with Stratford General Hospital anecdotally described a decrease in cold weather-related injuries, though formal reporting is not yet finalized.

Attendance ranged from eight to 38 a night. Sixty-two unique individuals created a total of 2,825 visits, with an average nightly attendance of 21.

Additionally, the use of emergency accommodations, a resource the city will use for people needing a short-term stay

at a motel, decreased. Stays decreased by 50 per cent from the previous year.

Along with its successes, the warming centre did have some unintended consequences. As reported in the May 29 edition of the Times, Shelterlink Youth Services experienced significant staffing challenges after several employees left to work at the warming centre, which was offering \$5 more per hour. After a petition in the spring from Shelterlink leadership, council agreed to provide emergency funding for the agency, which faced a significant deficit.

Additionally, as Catherine Hardman, CEO of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Huron Perth, said at the July 20 meeting, there were some internal challenges. Behavioral escalation increased within the space as the hours of operation significantly increased. Twenty-six police incidents occurred, 15 service restrictions were issued due to threats or acts of violence, and three individuals were trespassed due to the severity of their behaviour.

Hardman noted with increased staffing and the experience of last season under their belt, leadership is optimistic about next season.

“We’re proud of the success of this past season and feel well prepared to address the challenges we faced during this initial operation,” Hardman said.

United Housing advocates for ‘housing first model’

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

When it comes to Stratford’s housing crisis, leadership remains focused on supportive housing as the most cost-effective, empathetic strategy.

During a special council meeting on July 20, Kathy Vassilakos, vice president of United Housing, presented a report titled “Social and Financial Cost of Non-Permanent Shelter Systems for Addressing Homelessness,” detailing the pros and cons for different housing options.

Overall, as Vassilakos said, United Housing is supportive of a “housing first model,” while acknowledging that there is no silver bullet solution to the housing crisis. Supportive housing, shelter systems, and other government initiatives will all have a part to play.

“What I’m trying to remind everyone is that all of these components will have a place, right, in a coordinated system change, but we have to be ready to move away from some of that programming that hasn’t been shown to be effective,” Vassilakos summed up. “... It has to flow together in a way that meets the needs of the individuals that are accessing those services. And that’s just a long and complicated way for me to say that we probably all need a lot of different bits and pieces of this, but the main focus should be permanent supportive housing.”

On the housing spectrum, supportive housing is defined as housing with support services tied to help people live independently. Compared to shelter housing, it is by far the least used tool in the province for tackling homelessness. According to the report, out of the 27,138 shelter and housing spaces reported in the province, the majority are emergency shelter beds (65.2 per cent), with only 21.6 per cent categorized as supportive housing. Due to this discrepancy, there is only one supportive housing space for every 14 people, a statistic that United Housing called “a severe mismatch.”

The report noted that due to rising public pressure around the housing crisis, municipalities may put their investment into temporary shelters or tiny home communities; however, there is little evidence to suggest those options are effective in helping individuals reach permanent, stable housing.

The report petitions for the expansion of

supportive housing in favour of non-permanent shelter systems.

“As supported by evidence, the most effective solution to homelessness in Perth-Huron and beyond is to provide more affordable housing, including supportive housing for our most vulnerable residents and other types of affordable housing to meet the growing demand,” the report reads. “The non-profit world is ready to work alongside both public and private sectors to accomplish this solution. (United Way Perth-Huron) encourages everyone to think about how they can contribute to the creation of more housing and be open to additional affordable units in a variety of neighbourhoods and communities across the region.”

“While the pathway may be different for some people, the goal should always be to provide stable, permanent housing. Some may need temporary or permanent financial, medical and social supports, but our goal should always be a foundation that starts with safe, affordable, dignified housing. It is not only the most cost-effective strategy, but also the only proven strategy. Moreover, it is the most compassionate thing to do.”

After a question from Coun. Taylor Briscoe, Vassilakos went a step further and said there needs to be a national strategy with all players (municipal, provincial governments) integrated. Housing is not one of the defined responsibilities of municipalities, which complicates the issue.

“It’s no different than the hospital. So they raised \$35 million to build an MRI, then you can’t cut a ribbon on it because there’s a technician that needs to run that,” Vassilakos said. “And we’re stuck in that same sort of hot potato of different levels of government. And until you can get everyone sort of doing their part that they’re responsible (for), it’s challenging.”

No decision was made at the council meeting, save for council receiving the report for information. The full report can be read at <https://tinyurl.com/yxs5enf8>.

As noted by André Morin, chief administrative officer with the City of Stratford, the city has committed \$5 million to build 12 units of supportive housing. Representatives with the city are waiting to meet with the province for operational funding.

In 2024, there were 81,500 known individuals experiencing homelessness in Ontario, according to the province – a 25 per cent increase since 2022.

Locally, as of May 2026, there were 128 households experiencing homelessness: 103 single adults, 14 youth aged 16-24 and 12 families. Thirty-five were unsheltered, 105 were experiencing chronic homelessness and 16 identified as Indigenous.

Across Perth County, there were 762 households on the centralized waitlist for social housing.



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Ombudsman makes suggestions after 2024 bans

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

ed version used today, staff must be satisfied that the issue has been thoroughly investigated and that there has been adequate communication with the person in question. Neither policy provides staff with guidance about what is considered adequate.

"We also noted that the restrictions issued by the city were very broad, given that the examples of inappropriate behaviour provided were limited to one council meeting," Dennie wrote. "The city did not explain why it was necessary to restrict you from all city buildings. We explained to the city that as a best practice, a trespass notice or a service restriction should be considered as a last resort and should restrict access as little as possible, based on the circumstances."

Moreover, the city's appeal process has the chief administrative officer (CAO) always making the final decision in the appeal, even if the matter involves them.

The ombudsman reviews and investigates complaints about the administration of public sector organizations. It may consider whether the municipality's policies or processes were followed and if they were fair; however, it does not have the authority to direct municipal council decision-making or to force municipalities to decide matters in a certain fashion. The office and its investigators share best practices and suggestions in the hopes of improving municipal processes.

Shaughnessy told the Times that despite the ombudsman not having the authority to enact change at the city level, she is happy the letter affirmed what she

believed.

"It clearly supports the fact that what the city's staff and what council supported was not fair and equitable to anybody," Shaughnessy said. "... Everything to me is a work in progress. If I were to say the chapter is closed, that would mean that I would stop advocating for the people of Stratford, and I can tell you, I am going to continue advocating for the people of Stratford."

When asked to comment on the ombudsman's suggestions and whether they will be considered, CAO André Morin, who was not with the city during these events two years ago, said that staff have reviewed the suggestions.

"In relation to the letter from the ombudsman, their review did not lead to any orders or findings, however they have

provided best practices and recommendations for the city to consider," Morin wrote in a statement. "The city did review and revised the policy in October 2024 and separated the respectful workplace policy into three distinct policies. They can be found on the city's website at <https://www.stratford.ca/inside-city-hall/respectful-community/>.

"Further to that, in May 2026, following the conversations with and the letter from the ombudsman's office, staff reviewed the policies and have noted several further potential changes. Those changes are still under development but will be brought forward for updates later this year and will include further refinements based on recommendations from the ombudsman's office and current best practices."

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Stubbe's hard at work as summer heat continues

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

If readers have worked with Legos at one time or another, they will have enjoyed watching two new apartment buildings being constructed on McCarthy Road in Stratford.

The structures were assembled on site with prefabricated concrete from Stubbe's on Muir Line near Harley, Ont. It is a company that has expanded exponentially over the past number of decades in a business that has seen their products go from one end of the province to the other.

Janelle Rozendaal, digital marketing specialist with Stubbe's, stated that the apartment buildings that are seen off McCarthy Road are known as the Hawthorne Buildings, which are owned by Muirstone Living. They were built and contracted by FastTrack, which is a division of Stubbe's that builds mid-rise apartment buildings in record time.

She says Stubbe's supplies, "Redi Mix" pre-cast concrete solutions and is a leader in the pre-cast industry.

It is a family-owned company that started in 1982. Herb Stubbe was the founder and, at first, the business was small, primarily making Hog Feed bunks. In the first 20 years, Stubbe's was steadily growing and the company expanded and grew to many different types of farm livestock feed bunks.

They also began making slats in barns to house livestock of all types, but definitely not at the same rate of growth as the last 25 years have been for the ever-expanding company.

Marketing manager Mikkell Vlietstra said it was in the early 2000s that Stubbes really started to expand outside of just the agriculture industry.

In 2001 they got into hollow core floors, which led to more precast building components in 2006, such as structural wall panels. Then in 2010, the company got into structural columns, beams and double tees.

As the company developed these products, they began to make total precast structures, which then became a staple for Stubbe's. They are now the leading pre-cast building manufacturer in Ontario and they also started their Redi-Mix division in 2007.

Today, Stubbe's has many different divisions such as Precast, Redi-Mix, Cement, Aggregates, Premix, with their new PIVIT bagged concrete line, Logistics and their FastTrack building solutions. They have many locations all over Ontario as far south as London to as far north as Thunder Bay.

Family members include president Andy Stubbe, director of Precast sales Jason Stubbe and Mike Stubbe on fleet maintenance.

Pre-cast concrete in the building of barns and sheds in the agriculture industry is also a big part of the work that Stubbe's continues to be involved in, throughout many counties in Ontario. They continue to service from a number of locations across southern Ontario.

For more info contact JanelleR@stubbes.org or MikkellV@stubbes.com or search their website at www.stubbes.com.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

A picture of the new Hawthorne apartment buildings across from the Rotary Complex off McCarthy Road in Stratford.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Stratford and area motorists will be glad to know that crews of Steve Smith Construction were putting the finishing touches on excavation and paving at the downtown area of Ontario and Church streets in Stratford. Even though there was much to be done below the surface, the needed construction took place over the early summer months. Traffic is moving smoothly again.

Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. Who won the 2026 FIFA World Cup?
2. What does WWE stand for?
3. What was the name of Dorothy's dog in *Wizard of Oz*?
4. What is the national flower of Japan?
5. What was the main language spoken in the Roman Empire?
6. What is the chemical symbol for carbon monoxide?
7. What does CEO stand for?
8. Who shot JFK?
9. What is the only mammal capable of true flight?
10. What is the world's largest commercial passenger plane?

This week's answers are found on pg. 23

New tulip chairs sprouting along Stratford's lakeshore

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

You may have noticed a colourful new addition along the south shore of Lake Victoria over the last week. New tulip chairs have been installed by Destination Stratford to add character and colour to the waterfront. The versatile chairs also provide comfortable seating at several locations along the lakeshore.

The chairs, sourced from the Netherlands, are functional works of art designed for year-round use. Made from recycled plastic and stainless steel, they have been installed in four groupings along Lake Victoria.

"A big part of our work at Destination Stratford is destination development," said Zac Gribble, executive director of Destination Stratford. "We're a cultural destination, but we also have a super creative community, so all of our development work tries to balance things that will benefit residents and involve residents in the creation where possible, while also creating an incredible experience for visitors."

The chairs appeared almost overnight, and Gribble said that was intentional.

"We decided to very quietly install them," said Gribble. "I personally helped install them. The idea was that they would grow from the community soil in Stratford. Stratford being such a creative community that cares about its public spaces and wants to provide opportunities for discovery and joy."

"From a destination marketing perspective, this allows people to capture their experience in Stratford and share it with the world through social media," said Gribble.

The chairs have already sparked community interest, with both residents and visitors stopping to use them. Visitors from Waterloo noticed the colourful addition to the lakeshore and decided to take a closer look.

"We were just walking along and saw them," said Susan Powell of Waterloo. "I noticed they had a handle, so I knew it must be a chair to sit on – they're very cute!"

The comfortable seats feature a soft-close design and are available year-round. Destination Stratford staff will work with the City of Stratford to maintain and keep them clean and functional throughout the year.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

"They're actually surprisingly comfortable, given that you're seated in a petal of a tulip flower," said Gribble. "Another really important aspect of when we do destination development. We aren't just doing for fair weather. We are trying to invest in projects that will benefit the community and the visitor economy year-round."

The tulip chairs can be found along the south shore between the Boathouse and Tom Patterson Island.

Future Destination Stratford projects include additional chair installations and the development of a light trail. Feedback from the community is encouraged to help shape future initiatives.

Photo frame project continues to boost tourism across Perth County

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

Perth County is celebrating the first anniversary of its "Shareworthy Moments" project, which has encouraged visitors and residents to capture and share photos at destinations across the county.

The project was supported by \$30,000 through the Province of Ontario's Rural Economic Development (RED) program. Last year, 10 photo frames, two custom photo installations and 10 custom farm stands were installed throughout Perth County to create photo opportunities for visitors while showcasing local businesses and attractions.

Designed to enhance the visitor experience, the frames provide shareable social media moments for families and tourists while encouraging them to support local businesses and farms.

"It's more about enhancing the experience, giving people an opportunity to take a photo while still having the business name in the background," said Meredith Forget, director of economic development and tourism.

Experiential tourism continues to play an important role in attracting visitors and encouraging longer stays. The installations encourage people to travel throughout the county, discover local businesses, support the agricultural community and share their experiences online.

"A lot of our attractions don't have a sign other than the road sign, and that's not exactly something people are going to post on Instagram," Forget said. "But now they have the frame and visitors can stand

behind it and get a picture with a beautiful background. So I think it's less about creating an attraction and more about enhancing the experience that's already being offered."

The initiative has encouraged visitors to explore Perth County's diverse landscapes and agricultural heritage while creating memorable, shareable experiences.

"Since the frame was installed, we've noticed many visitors stopping to take photos and spending time chatting around the frame and enjoying the moment," said Sarah Tkaczuk, owner of River Valley Golf Course and Winter Tube Slide. "It's been wonderful to see families, golfers, wedding guests and visitors sharing their experiences on social media and discovering River Valley through the project."

Tkaczuk said the frames have added value to the guest experience by giving visitors another reason to stop, stay a little longer and share their visit with others. She added that every photo shared online helps introduce River Valley and Perth County to new audiences.

"The frame has become more than just a photo opportunity," said Tkaczuk. "It has created a destination within our property. It encourages people to pause, appreciate the landscape and create memories with family and friends. We've seen people of all ages use it, from children having fun to groups of golfers, couples and families."

Each frame has been placed to showcase a unique view of Perth County, from farmland and conservation areas to bustling farm markets, family attractions and local culinary destinations.

"Overall, we've been very pleased with



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Marty Klomp of Klomp's Home and Garden, Meredith Forget, director of economic development and tourism, Casey Howanyk of the Perth Farmhouse, Perth County Warden Dean Trentowsky, Justin Dias, economic development officer for Perth County, Steve Howanyk of the Perth Farmhouse and others pose in front of one of the 10 picture frame signs funded through the Rural Ontario Development program.

the project," Tkaczuk said. "It's simple, interactive and creates lasting memories while encouraging people to explore everything our community has to offer."

Frame locations include:

Anna Mae's Bakery & Restaurant
Apple Bottom Orchards
Hoover's Maple Syrup

Lynn River Farm
Pootcorners
River Valley Golf & Tube Slide
Perth Farmhouse
TNT Berries
West Perth Wetlands
Wildwood Conservation Area

Stratford General Hospital Foundation achieves Imagine Canada standards accreditation

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The Stratford General Hospital Foundation has announced its accreditation under Imagine Canada standards. With this achievement, it has become part of a network of nonprofit and charitable organizations dedicated to continuous improvement, transparency, operational excellence and good governance.

The Imagine Canada standards leverage the wisdom and expertise of the nonprofit sector in key areas such as board governance, financial accountability and transparency, fundraising, human resources and volunteer involvement. It supports organizations in strengthening their practices and advancing to the next level by building strong governance and operations – laying the foundation for lasting excellence, resilience and impact.

"At the Stratford General Hospital Foundation, we recognize that every donation represents a profound act of trust," said Cheryl Hunt, executive director of the foundation, in an announcement. "Achieving Imagine Canada Standards accreditation reflects our commitment to honouring that trust through the highest standards of accountability, transparency

and ethical stewardship. This recognition belongs to our dedicated board of directors, staff and volunteers, whose commitment ensures every gift entrusted to us is managed with integrity and invested in strengthening health care close to home."

"On the journey toward great governance, organizations pursue accreditation as a public testament to their commitment to the highest standards of transparency and accountability. We offer our sincere congratulations to the newly accredited and re-accredited organizations, key players in our standards network of 285 organizations nationwide," said Bruce MacDonald, president and CEO of Imagine Canada. "By achieving accreditation, these organizations have solidified themselves as leaders in integrity, efficiency, and transparency in the nonprofit sector."

Since 2012, Imagine Canada standards serve as the only comprehensive guidelines created by the sector, for the sector, to address key areas of governance and operations: board governance, financial accountability and transparency, fundraising, human resources, and volunteer engagement. These standards are designed to promote best practices and transparency within charities and nonprofits seeking to continuously improve.

The goal is to foster resilience and bolster public confidence in both individual organizations and the sector overall.

The accreditation process involves meeting 73 rigorous standards spanning financial management and accountability, fundraising, board governance, human resources and volunteer engagement. The accreditation process is adaptable for organizations of all sizes due to a three-tiered structure allowing nonprofits and charities to get accredited at any level based on their needs. Standards oversight is ensured by the Standards Council, an independent group of sector representatives responsible for maintaining and evolving the standards.

The hospital foundation's policies and procedures in the five areas of compliance were evaluated by a group of independent reviewers from the sector and were found to be compliant with the standards. Accredited organizations are required to complete full reaccreditation on a five-year basis. Compliance and continuous improvement during the accreditation period are supported through a reporting process that requires organizations to submit evidence demonstrating selected standards are being met.

"Imagine Canada Standards Accred-

itation is an important milestone, but it is not our destination – it is part of our ongoing commitment to excellence," said Fritz Steigmeier, board chair. "As volunteers entrusted with the governance of the foundation, our board is committed to continuously strengthening our practices so that our donors and community can have complete confidence in how their generosity is stewarded. We are proud to stand among organizations across Canada that are committed to the highest standards of integrity, accountability and service."

The Stratford General Hospital Foundation raises funds to support the highest priority needs of the Stratford General Hospital site of the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance. While the Province of Ontario provides strong operational support, government funding does not cover the cost of new and replacement medical equipment, vital infrastructure upgrades, or many of the innovations that enhance patient care.

That's where philanthropy plays a vital role. Through the generosity of the community, the foundation helps ensure that care teams have the tools, spaces and training they need to deliver exceptional health care close to home.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Ruby Barnes from Woodstock, Maria Chesney, owner of Thames Valley Melons, and Kate Hooker from Innerkip pose in their stall at the Stratford Farmer's Market at the agriplex. Maria and Rob Chesney have been coming to the Stratford Market for dozens of years, and enjoy the many special customers from near and far that they continue to serve and connect with. Last week was the first of their Melons at the Market, which they sold out, but planned to have many more.

STRATFORD TIMES

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Get on the green to raise green for children's aid society

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The Huron-Perth Children's Aid Society is inviting the community to come and support it at its first annual charity golf tournament on Aug. 19 at the Stratford Golf & Country Club. This special event will bring together community partners, local businesses and supporters for a day of connection, generosity and community spirit.

The funds raised through this event will directly support the children's aid society's early help and prevention programs, helping it strengthen families and communities through prevention, partnership and connection.

The society is looking for support in the form of sponsors, donors or participants in this inaugural event.

"Your partnership will help us continue providing early support and meaningful resources to children, youth and families across Huron and Perth," the announcement reads. "By investing in prevention, you are helping create stronger, healthier communities where families can thrive by providing stability and support to children, youth and families across Huron-Perth through: child protection services, child and family well-being programs, resources for care providers, youth wellness hub supports, kinship and foster care support, kindness kits and community-based initiatives that help children, youth and families feel safe, supported, and connected."

Those interested can get involved by donating a door prize item, providing a financial contribution or supporting a sponsorship package.

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The aid society welcomes the opportunity to explore a partnership that aligns with any organization's interests and level of support. To discuss how you can get involved, please contact Amy Baillie at amybaillie@h-pcas.ca or Angela Simpson at angelasimpson@h-pcas.ca.

The golf tournament takes place Wednesday, Aug. 19 at the Stratford Golf & Country Club, 53 Romeo St. N, Stratford. It will have a shotgun start and will run until 4 p.m. A light barbecue dinner will be provided.

Communities in Bloom judges coming to Stratford

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The City of Stratford is participating in the 32nd National Edition of Communities in Bloom (CiB) in the Healthier, Livable Cities category, along with Stonewall, Man. and Yarmouth, N. S.

The community will be rated from one to five Blooms, based on the scoring obtained. Also, they will aim to obtain bronze, silver or gold levels in their five-Bloom rating.

The CiB judges, Susan Ellis from Pembroke, Ont. and Larry Hall from Buena Vista, Sask., will be evaluating Stratford on July 27. The community would like to remind all businesses and residents to tidy up their property before the judges arrive.

The National and International results will be announced in Montreal and Rosemère, Que. from Oct. 15-17, during the National Symposium and awards ceremonies.

CiB is a Canadian non-profit volunteer and partnership-driven organization that uses a multi-tiered competitive evaluation process to foster community strength, involvement and continuous improvement. This is accomplished by

nurturing environmental sustainability, enhancements of green spaces and heritage conservation in cultural and natural environments encompassing municipal, residential, commercial and institutional spaces.

Its vision is to inspire all communities to enhance the quality of life and environment through people and plants to create community pride. "Growing Great Places Together" is its slogan, and it captures the essence of the program.

For a complete list of the 2026 participating communities please visit the Explore our Communities section on CiB's website.

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A Small Gathering of Friends

(on the occasion of a Poet Laureate feature poet engagement, Whitby, June 2026)

At some point in the evening, he got talking about the transitioning of things, how light threads through rain, how a person can look at a black dahlia so deeply that they become the black dahlia. And then someone used the word dimensionality, and how an artist can breathe air into pigment, how shading is the close cousin of illumination, how rime filigrees the switch grass and how then the prairie winds produce the sound of a thousand chandeliers, though no one is there to hear it. And someone related this to the composition of a human tear, and a woman said that she now cries too easily, but does not know why. And then someone mentioned that it's often easier to understand someone else than to know one's self. And they all agreed. And someone said how beautiful the night looked, and they all went out onto the terrace and watched a luminous coin of wolf moon climb over the houses. And a person commented that it glittered against the black like an immense brass button on a police officer's uniform, and someone said maybe that's what it is, maybe that's exactly what it is.

David Stones, Stratford Poet Laureate

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STRATFORD *TIMES* SPORTS

Best in class: 15U Nationals crowned SMBA champions in memorable weekend

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The Stratford 15U Nationals endured the lingering smog and humidity to put on a clinical display, going 5-0 and winning the SMBA 15U Tournament at Stratford National Stadium last weekend.

The Nationals' tournament debut was against the North York Blues on July 17. North York started strong, scoring four runs in the first inning with only one out. A crucial defensive play by the Nationals then turned the tide, preventing the Blues from increasing their lead and shifting the momentum of the game, and, for the sake of foresight, their tournament aspirations.

In the following inning, the Nationals' offence surged with 10 runs. Carter Cook started the scoring with an RBI single. Then, with bases loaded, Blake Mogk drew a walk, reducing the gap to 4-2. James Antonio scored on a wild pitch, and Will Molenhuis' groundout with one out brought Cook home, tying the game.

Jackson Goebel's and Jake Price's RBIs gave the Nationals a 6-4 lead, then Dexter Powell hit a three-run triple and Antonio added an RBI single, extending the Nationals' advantage to 10-4 within just an inning and a half.

Stratford extended their lead by scoring seven additional runs over the next three innings before the game was called due to the mercy rule after five innings, resulting in a 17-7 victory for the Nationals. The top of the batting order – Molenhuis, Goebel and Price – contributed significantly, combining for six RBIs and four runs on seven hits.

After the opener, Stratford coach Rick Boon highlighted the importance of cleaner field play to minimize defensive mistakes, as the team had made three or four errors during the game. The focus for the upcoming match was to play without errors in order to strengthen their defence against runs.

"It was about hitting good pitches, hitting pitches that they could hit, swinging at pitches that they could hit for base hits. Early in that first inning, we swung at pitches that we just mopped up and grounded out. We didn't swing at good pitches, and after that, we just focused on hitting fastballs that they could, you know, put into play somewhere. And we did a really good job. We were on time for everything we hit after that," Boon said.

"We need to play cleaner in the field. They scored seven runs, but we still committed three or four errors. We have to play cleaner in the field to cut back on those runs because when it comes down to the plus-minus, it's all about defensive runs against. So we have to be cleaner in the field."

Stratford continued their relentless offensive pursuit the



(MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY PHOTO)

The Stratford 15U Nationals displayed their SMBA 15U Tournament trophy following their tournament-clinching win at Stratford National Stadium on July 19. Team roster: Blake Mogk, Marek Brander, Carter Cook, Cole Morris, Dexter Powell, Jake Price, Jackson Goebel, James Antonio, Landen McCann, Will Molenhuis, Max Barter, Quintin Parr and Reid Musselman. Coaches: Corey Goebel, Jamie Antonio, Mark Price, Rob Mogk and Rick Boon.

next morning on July 18 against the Martingrove White Sox. The visitors scored first in the opening inning, but the Nationals poured on with 10 unanswered runs in their bottom half to go ahead 10-1 after the first inning.

The White Sox added a run back in their top half of the second, but the Nationals added four more in the second and third to put the game within range of the mercy rule. Martingrove added three more runs in the fourth to close the Stratford lead to nine, but runs scored by McCann and Mogk put the home side up by eleven heading into the fifth inning.

Mogk would then put together a clean fifth inning to seal the 16-5 win for the Nationals, putting their record to 2-0 heading into their evening matchup with the Oshawa Legionaires.

Stratford sought a spot in the semifinals with their evening game against Oshawa, delivering their top offensive performance of the season. Led by Powell's two home runs and five RBIs, the Nationals demonstrated a strong offence, scoring 21 runs in the second inning. They also capitalized on six defensive errors by the Legionaires, resulting in a dominant 25-0 win and securing their place in the semifinals.

Following the Oshawa game, Boon discussed the team's performance with the Times, emphasizing that they managed both the game and its outcome with proper etiquette.

"I think our players went to the plate with a plan and they hit good pitches, and they played with a lot of class today. Even though the score was 25-nothing, we didn't run the score up," Boon said.

"We just hit the ball when it was pitched, and we didn't do anything to make them feel like they were inferior to us. We just tried to play the game right, and we showed a lot of class when we did it."

In the morning of the final day of the tournament, the

Nationals faced the Kitchener Panthers in the semifinals, with the Panthers giving the Nationals their toughest test.

Stratford took an early 4-0 lead through the first three innings, but the Panthers rallied with one in the fourth and two in the fifth to close the Nationals' lead to 4-3. Runs by Powell and Morris in the bottom of the sixth gave the Nationals insurance and a three-run lead heading into the final inning of play.

After allowing a walk to start the inning, Cook and the Nationals' defence shut the door by retiring the Panthers' side in order and punched their ticket to the tournament final in the early afternoon.

Stratford's starting pitcher, Landen McCann, pitched three and two-thirds gutsy innings with four strikeouts and allowed two hits and issued five walks on 75 pitches. Reliever Cook weathered the storm and closed out the game with five strikeouts while allowing two earned runs on three walks and three hits.

In the tournament final, the Nationals poured on their offensive masterclass once more in a rematch from their tournament opener, the North York Blues. Led by Powell's two-run home run and a strong pitching performance from Cole Morris and Reid Musselman, the Nationals won the SMBA Tournament in an emphatic 15-3 win.

With his three home runs, 11 RBIs and a .643 batting average, Powell earned tournament MVP honours.

Following the tournament victory, Boon thanks the team for their support and acknowledges their dedication to the game's core principles.

"It's pretty special. It's pretty special for these guys, especially with so many grandparents, parents and family members here to see it. It's really special to win at your home park and the way we did – we played the game right. We did all the little things right, and we respected the quality of the ball game," Boon said.





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Strikers weekly recap: U18 Boys settle for a draw, U15 and U16 Girls compete in Georgetown, U16 Boys continue to win

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The Stratford U18 Boys Strikers challenged the Southwest District Soccer League's top team, Kitchener U17 TFC, pushing them to the brink but ultimately unable to maintain their late lead, ending in a 2-2 draw at Cowan Field on July 20.

Stratford took the lead with a mid-first-half scorcher of a shot from Jelle Zeilstra and extended it early in the second half with a goal from Pierce MacDonald. However, the visitors mounted a late rally, scoring twice in under 10 minutes, which prevented the Strikers from earning all three points and left them with only one.

U18 Strikers head coach Steve Ollson described the team's performance as their best of the year, though he expressed disappointment over the two late goals that resulted in a tie. He highlighted the need to keep improving, prevent losses, and focus on preparations for the final tournament in mid-August.

"The boys played really well today. Probably thought it was their best game of the year, and we just kind of fell apart at the end there to give them two late goals for the tie. But overall, it was a good 43 minutes," Ollson said.

"We're just going to keep moving forward and keep staying off the losses and try to keep winning games and get ready for our final tournament of the year in mid-August."

Stratford improved their record to 6-4-1 with 22 points, placing third, 12 points behind the division leaders. The U18 Strikers' next match is against Rockwood FC on July 22. The match result will be featured in next week's edition of the Times.

The U15 and U16 Stratford Strikers Girls competed at the Eustace Collins Memorial Soccer Tournament in Georgetown over the weekend. Originally scheduled as a week-



(MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY PHOTO)

Stratford fullback Kieran Johnson battles for possession with midfielder Owen Blain in support during first half action against Kitchener TFC U17 at Cowan Field on July 20.

end-long event, the U16 Strikers' matches of the tournament were merged into a single day after the heavy smog from the Northern Ontario Wildfires forced the detour.

To accommodate the changes, the tournament officials altered the full match length from 80 to 40 minutes, with two 20-minute halves.

Just as affected by the weather and schedule change, Stratford U15 now played in a knockout-style format, with their first-round match against North Mississauga SC (NMSC) on July 18 at the Gellert Community Centre. The Strikers were unable to advance in the tournament, losing 3-0 to NMSC.

Next up for the U15 squad is returning to SWDSL regular-season play as they host Kitchener TFC U14/15 at Stratford's SERC Tennis Field on July 22, followed by Storm

FC on July 27 at VFG Field at Festival Hydro Park in Stratford.

The U16 Strikers began their tournament run in a winning form, blanking Waterloo

United 3-0 in their first match on July 19 at Trafalgar Sports Park. Stratford settled for a scoreless draw with Soo City United, but were ousted from the tournament with a 1-0 defeat against the Puslinch Predators, their first defeat in regulation in 2026. Soo City defeated Puslinch 5-0 in the tournament final.

Next up for the U16 Strikers is against Oriental SC at Campo Do Oriental in Cambridge on July 21 (after press time) in SWDSL regular-season action, and July 24 versus Waterloo United in their first-round matchup at the U16 Girls Nothers Youth Cup.

U16 Strikers Boys played their lone match of the week on July 14 against Owen Sound United at Kiwanis Park in Owen Sound. Stratford won their fourth straight match as they edged Owen Sound 3-2 courtesy of goals from Jack De Graaf, Miles Hallman and Logan Wilson.

Stratford improved their record to 5-1-3 with 16 points in sixth position in the SWDSL U16 League Standings. Their next match is scheduled for July 21 against Huron-Perth United and they return to Owen Sound for their second-round matchup of the U16 Boys Nothers Youth Cup against Owen Sound United on July 24.

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For further information about the HPHA Board of Directors, Board Committees and Governance Resources, please visit the HPHA website – www.hpha.ca

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(MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY PHOTO)

Stratford goalkeeper Owen Blackburn looks on after doing the goal kick in the first half against Kitchener TFC U17 at Cowan Field on July 20.

Shakespeare Falcons are provincial champions

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

The Shakespeare Falcons U-15 tier one softball team capped off an unforgettable season by capturing the 2026 Provincial Women's Softball Association (PWSA)'s grand championship, earning the title of the top U-15, tier one team in Ontario.

The championship featured 18 of Ontario's top tier one teams competing for the provincial title across Ontario this season.

There were 18 tier one teams and 54 tier two teams competing in the U-15 aged division.

The Falcons opened the tournament play on Friday with an offensive showcase. They defeated the Milton Bats Purple 14-7, the Oakville Angels McKinney 21-5 and the Brampton Blazers Gold 11-0, putting themselves in an excellent position heading into Saturday.

Needing one more victory to secure first place in their pool, the Falcons delivered again with an impressive 8-0 win over the

CONTINUED TO PAGE 13



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The U15 tier one softball champions, the Shakespeare Falcons. Pictured in front: Emma Collins, Ciana McLaren, Sydney Ryan, Brielle Jankura, Alise Crawford and Reese Flanagan. In back: assistant coach Matt McLaren, assistant coach Shawn Collings, Hazel Kilpatrick, Alyssa Graham, Darin Patterson, Delia Bucholtz, Ella Andrews, head coach Shane Graham and assistant coach Bryan Patterson. Not pictured is Roslyn McLaren, team manager.

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Rachel Davis and Darren McMullen to perform at collaborative Avondale and Goderich Celtic Roots College and Festival concert

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Avondale United Church, in collaboration with the Goderich Celtic Roots College and Festival, will be bringing East Coast tunes to Perth County.

Cape Breton Celtic duo Rachel Davis and Darren McMullen will grace the Avondale stage on Aug. 10 starting at 7 p.m as part of the Cape Breton Music Concert. The duo combines vocals, banjo, fiddle and guitar to bring the Celtic sounds of Cape Breton to entertain audiences. Their debut album Home won the 2024 Music Nova Scotia Award.

"Not only are they tremendous musicians, but they are the nicest people I think I ever met and just great teachers," said Dave Bates, member of Avondale's music series planning team and board member of the Goderich Celtic Roots College and Festival.

The church's music series planning team is also collaborating with the Goderich Celtic Roots College and Festival, where Davis and McMullen are performing and teaching. The musicians will have just finished performing in Goderich before heading over to Avondale.

The Goderich Celtic Roots College and Festival, which has more than 5,000 at-



(ALEAH GRAFF PHOTO)

The Cape Breton Celtic duo Rachel Davis and Darren McMullen are performing at Avondale United Church Aug. 10.

tending annually, began in 1993 as a day of music to honour a local teacher who passed away. Goderich is presenting Rural Roots events outside of the festival, mostly in Huron County but Avondale was able to get a show in for Perth County.

"We are coming together with Goderich

to make this happen," Bates said.

Terri Sparling, member of the Avondale music series planning team, is thrilled with the collaboration.

"Most of us are soloing on our events, you know, doing it on our own and so the

opportunity to partner with such a fabulous and well known and well-respected festival and college as is the Goderich (Celtic Roots) College and Festival is just such an honour and to think we may be hosting the first of their Rural Roots opportunity is pretty cool," Sparling said.

There's been lots of excitement over the Cape Breton Music Concert, with tickets in demand before a poster was even created.

"A couple of people I've talked to have been interested in coming because they've been to Nova Scotia for vacation and they've had a little taste of it, and they think it's very cool that it's coming to their own communities," said Bates.

Aleah Graff, community engagement coordinator and staff support for the music series planning team, is also looking forward to the concert and future opportunities from it.

"I hope that by hosting this group, we're able to expose ourselves to more of the Stratford and area community and even people outside of Stratford and within Canada at large," she said.

Tickets are \$20 each and can either be purchased online via TicketScene (<https://ticketscene.ca/events/64063/>) or by calling the Avondale church office 519-271-7946 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Shakespeare Falcons are provincial champions

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

Mississauga North Tigers.

The victory secured first place in their pool and the number one seed heading into bracket play, where one more win would guarantee a spot in the medal round.

Their first bracket play opponent was the Stratford Flames-Wilhelm. The two teams had recently met in Shakespeare during the national qualifying tournament, where the Falcons came away with a 5-1 victory.

Knowing the Flames would be eager for redemption, the Falcons expected the battle and that's exactly what they got.

Stratford struck first with two runs in the opening inning. The Falcons responded with single runs in the first and third innings, and from there, both teams settled into a defensive duel as outstanding pitching and strong defensive play kept the score tied.

The game required extra innings, where the Flames erupted for five runs and, refusing to quit, the Falcons rallied for with four runs of their own, but their comeback fell short as Stratford escaped with a victory.

Now facing elimination, the Falcons needed to win every remaining game to keep their championship hopes alive. They answered the challenge in an impressive fashion. First came a 5-0 victory over the Milton Bats Purple, and then defeated the Aurora diggers 11-1, one of Ontario's top

ranked teams from the national qualifiers, to earn another opportunity against Stratford.

The rematch lived up to the hype. The Falcons built an early lead scoring two runs in the first inning and another in the second.

Stratford battled back with two runs in the third, but the Falcons responded with another run in the fifth to take a 4-2 lead. The Falcons narrowed the gap with a run in the sixth before they escaped a bases loaded threat to preserve the lead heading into the seventh inning.

Stratford refused to go quietly after a one out single and a runner, advancing in scoring position. The Falcons intentionally walked the next batter to set up a force play around the diamond. A clutch strike-out, followed by a routine ground ball sealed the victory, sending the Falcons to the championship game and guaranteeing at least a silver medal. Awaiting them in the final were the Oakville Angels Stix.

Oakville opened the scoring in the second inning, but the Falcons immediately responded with a run in the bottom half before taking control with three more runs in the third.

Holding a 4-1 lead, the Falcons never looked back. The Angels added one run in the fifth, but Shakespeare exploded for six runs in the sixth thinning to put the

game out of reach. When the final out was recorded the Falcons celebrated a convincing 10-2 victory, capturing the 2026 PWSA U-15 tier one grand championship and officially finishing the season as Ontario's number one team in the division. The championship capped off a remarkable season in which the Falcons compiled an outstanding 64-13-3 record.

The Falcons would like to extend their sincere thanks to their coaches, parents,

volunteers, sponsors, the Shakespeare Community Athletic Association (SCAA), headed by Deb Bell and Paul Bender, and the entire Shakespeare community for their unwavering support throughout the season.

As the team's coaches said, championships are never won by a team alone. They are built through countless hours of dedication, encouragement, sacrifice and belief from everyone involved.

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Stratford music review: Lemon Bucket Orkestra brings the energy for a museum crowd

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

At first, there was only one person willing to get up and dance, but by the end of their show at the Stratford Perth Museum July 19, Toronto's Lemon Bucket Orkestra (LBO) had everyone up on their feet rocking out to their fast-paced beat.

LBO puts on a show like I've never seen before. Self-described as a guerilla-folk-punk band, those three words don't really paint the full picture. Comprising 10 very talented musicians playing everything from trombone and violin to the rarely seen flugelhorn, sousaphone and sopilka – a kind of Ukrainian woodwind instrument belonging to the flute family – this band works harder onstage than any other band I know.

A little hoarse from the band's latest tour and dressed in a skirt – perhaps in homage to Nirvana's Kurt Cobain – frontman Mark Marczyk (vocals, violin) told the crowd gathered in front of the museum's outdoor Player's Backstage for the Sunday evening concert that the band would perform two sets, neither of which had been planned out ahead of time. He explained LBO likes to improvise its lineup of songs live onstage based on audience requests and the overall vibe at each of their shows.

And while that was an impressive claim, it was quickly overshadowed by



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

Lemon Bucket Orkestra performed in concert at the Stratford Perth Museum July 19.

the clear effort and musical talent of each of the performers onstage. From their wild dancing and Os Kar's (drums and vocals) primal screams to the sheer speed at which they performed their unique blend of Ukrainian polyphony and driving Balkan rhythms filtered through hip hop, punk, jazz and a whole range of global influences collected both at home in Toronto and around the world, LBO puts on one hell of a good show.

Though these musicians are all very obviously talented in their own right, Mark Marczyk said the band is like a family and the connection they have with each other – poking fun at one another and having a blast onstage – spread quickly to those of us seated in the crowd. It really didn't take much for Mark Marczyk to convince us concert-goers to stand up, clap and dance to LBO's take on a traditional Ukrainian toast song in what the

band calls the Lemon Bucket Workout.

Throughout the concert, many of the musicians had the opportunity to take the spotlight for some truly incredible solo work, including Mark Marczyk on violin, Nathan Dell-Vandenberg on trombone, Max Forster and Michael Louis Johnson on trumpet and flugelhorn and Conrad Gluch on clarinet and sopilka. I still can't get over how fast these musicians can play, their hands and fingers a blur as they demonstrate their considerable skill.

As the concert reached its final number, the musicians jumped off the stage, instruments and bullhorns in hand, climbed onto picnic tables and played amidst the crowd, making the show feel more like a Ukrainian backyard party than a concert at a museum.

As an encore, LBO performed a high-energy rendition of a Ukrainian birthday song in honour of dancer, percussionist and vocalist Stepania Woloshyn, inviting everyone in attendance to sing along.

When I left the museum grounds Sunday night, my head was buzzing and my ears were ringing in the best way possible. Seeing LBO perform live in Stratford is one of those shows I couldn't forget, even if I wanted to.

For more information on LBO and their upcoming shows, as well as news about their new album recorded live in Bogotá, Colombia, visit www.lemonbucket.com.



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

Dancer, percussionist and vocalist Stepania Woloshyn sings during the Lemon Bucket Orkestra concert at the Stratford Perth Museum July 19.



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

Pictured from left are Lemon Bucket Orkestra members Ian Tulloch on sousaphone, Max Forster on trumpet, Michael Louis Johnson on trumpet, Nathan Dell-Vandenberg on trombone and Conrad Gluch on clarinet. Behind them is Alex Nahirny on guitar.

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Blyth Festival review: *Curveball: The Fast-Pitch Ladies from the Factory Floor* celebrates an important piece of Stratford sports history with song and dance

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

In recent years, the story of Stratford's Kroehler Furniture Factory's women's softball team and their championship-winning 1953 season – the same year that saw the opening of the Stratford Festival – has become the stuff of local legend.

That is in no small part thanks to the tireless efforts of Kelly McIntosh, both as a playwright and as the general manager of the Stratford Perth Museum. Through research, hours of interviews with members of the Kroehler Girls softball team and the development of a play telling that story as part of the inaugural Here For Now Theatre season in 2021, McIntosh has brought this truly incredible piece of Stratford sports history into the spotlight.

At the Blyth Festival this season, McIntosh, along with fellow playwrights Andy Pogson, Stacy Smith and director Severn Thompson, and Stratford singer-songwriter and musician Dayna Manning, have once again put that story on stage with their new musical adaptation, *Curveball: The Fast-Pitch Ladies from the Factory Floor*.

Having now seen both the musical and its non-musical predecessor, I can say with confidence the Kroehler Girls' story is made even more entertaining with Manning's exceptional compositions. Beyond her incredible solo performance of an introductory song at the beginning of the production and her brief role as the wife of Stratford Festival actor Alec Guinness, Manning spends most the play in the organist's booth at the ball dia-



(ALEX FRANKLIN PHOTO)

Kirstyn Russelle, Shaina Silver-Baird, Alyssa LeClair and Madison Hayes-Crook in *Curveball: The Fast-Pitch Ladies from the Factory Floor*. Blyth Festival 2026.

mond, playing the music that drives the story forward – a mix of her signature folk style with the kind of high-energy music one might hear at a baseball game.

Out on the diamond, at centre stage, the rest of the cast brings to life a Stratford of the past that feels both historically accurate and familiar to those of us who live in the Festival City today.

The story is linked to the Stratford Festival's opening through a relationship between Kroehler Girls novice pitcher Georgie (Shelayna Christante) and rookie actor James (Aiden Altow), bringing into play the looming disruption the festival poses to the Kroehler Girls' Saturday night game schedule. While fastball takes centre stage in this play, it is augmented seamlessly with bits and pieces

of authentic Stratford and Stratford Festival history delivered by CJCS radio host Chick (Alyssa LeClair) and in conversations between the Kroehler Girls, James and the other characters on stage.

As someone who isn't much of a baseball fan, I found the development and growth in each of the members of the Kroehler Girls team to be as rewarding, if not more so, than their thrilling final championship win.

From star player Honey's (Madison Hayes-Crook) journey in overcoming her grief for her brother Charlie's (Altow) death during the Second World War to Georgie learning to become a team player while retaining the unique skills that make her a force to be reckoned with on the pitcher's mound, each of the ac-

tors took their characters to new levels of emotional depth and understanding through their relationships with one another.

And that's not always an easy thing to do in a musical, when high-intensity moments almost always lead into song-and-dance numbers. In this production, the musical numbers felt like natural extensions of the dialogue on stage and didn't, at any point, feel forced or as if they were an add-on to the main story. Instead, the actors sang beautifully together, and as soloists, and performed this production's simple yet entertaining and effective choreography with perfect timing. I'd also be remiss if I didn't mention the excellent physical work each of the Kroehler Girls achieved, along with sound effects by Manning, that made me believe I was actually watching a fastball game, despite there never being a baseball on the stage.

Though this play was developed for the Blyth Festival's outdoor Harvest Stage, poor air quality caused by wild-fire smoke forced the production inside on the Margaret Stephens Stage at the Blyth Memorial Hall. While I had initially questioned whether seeing the play inside would alter my experience in any way, I have to give full credit to the cast and design team for building in the flexibility they needed to pivot to an indoor performance.

Whether the onstage ball diamond is indoors or outside, the games feel real and the characters hit home.

Curveball: The Fast-Pitch Ladies from the Factory Floor runs on the Byth Festival's Harvest Stage until Aug. 22.

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Editorial

Canada Post and the shuttering of community newspapers



PAUL DEEGAN

Guest Columnist

The shuttering of Winnipeg's Community Review means 200,000 households will no longer get the benefit of a free community newspaper delivered to their door. It also means that more than 800 people who deliver the paper and their families will be affected.

This is an unforced error that never should have happened. How did we get here? The answer is complex.

First, there is a high degree of concentration in the flyer printing market in Canada. Montreal-based TC Transcontinental enjoys the dominant position in the marketplace thanks, in part, to a 2012 Competition Bureau-approved asset swap.

Second, municipal and provincial politicians have passed environmental regulations, however well-intentioned, have unintended

consequences. Former Montreal Mayor Valérie Plante passed a municipal bylaw that led to the end of distribution of Publisac (a plastic bag with flyers and a community newspaper). Several provinces, including Manitoba, have imposed extended producer responsibility levies on printed newspapers. Ontario's Premier Doug Ford made the wise decision to exempt newspapers from this kind of stealthy journalism job-killing tax in his province.

Third, Canada Post is the biggest culprit. TC Transcontinental, which had distributed Publisac door-to-door in Quebec, formed a strategic partnership with Canada Post, which as a Crown corporation was not beholden to municipal bylaws. They bypassed Mayor Plante's new regulation by distributing a curated bundle of flyers called Raddar through the national postal service. Unlike Publisac, Raddar did not include a community newspaper. On the sidelines of this saga, news publisher Métro Média and its more than 30 hyperlocal publications – including 17 print newspapers – shut down.

In partnership with Canada Post, TC Transcontinental recently expanded its Raddar offering across Canada. It is understood that Canada Post – which

has a mandate to "charge postage rates that are fair and reasonable" – is offering TC Transcontinental rates below what it is offering to community newspapers. To its own benefit, the Crown corporation has effectively shut community newspapers – their private sector rivals – out of flyer distribution, lessening competition substantially in that market.

This is not the first time community newspaper publishers have felt the squeeze of Canada Post in the flyer distribution market. As of January 2024, community newspapers with commercial inserts were no longer exempt from Canada Post's Consumers' Choice program, which allows Canadians to opt out of receiving "junk mail." Canada Post made that decision without stakeholder consultation or economic/social impact analysis and failed to recognize that community newspapers – with or without an insert – are not junk mail; they are a social good.

The juxtaposition of the shuttering of Winnipeg's Community Review at the same time as the revelation of \$30.8 million in bonuses at Canada Post has not been lost on community newspaper publishers across Canada.

What should Ottawa do about it?

First, Joël Lightbound, the Minister responsible for Canada Post, should ensure the Crown corporation is treating community newspapers fairly and offering them comparable pricing to what it offers to TC Transcontinental.

Second, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage should conduct hearings into the role Canada Post can play in the sustainability of community newspapers – ensuring the relationship is one of partnership, rather than predatory and parasitic.

When a community loses a newspaper, like Winnipeg's Community Review or Métro Média's publications in Quebec, the information vacuum can lead to people getting their news from less than reliable sources – like AI and social media – which can create division that drives people apart. Without a check on local government, corruption, mismanagement, and wasteful spending often flourish, which can result in higher municipal taxes and borrowing costs.

It was not foreign Big Tech monopolists like Google and Meta that caused Manitoba's largest

community newspaper to shutter. It was Canada Post.

And it's not like we weren't warned...

Thirty years ago, in his review of Canada Post's mandate, George Radwanski recommended that postal service get out of delivering unaddressed junk mail (i.e., flyers), concluding that the Crown corporation engaged in inappropriate practices that created unfair competition for private businesses like community newspapers.

As a former Toronto Star editor-in-chief, Radwanski knew the news business. He noted that Canada Post was actively siphoning advertising revenue away from the news industry and adroitly cautioned that the state-granted mail delivery monopoly should not be in the business of crippling the financial health of newspapers.

A healthy democracy demands a healthy community news media ecosystem. Let's level the playing field and restore competition in the flyer distribution market before more community newspapers shutter.

Paul Deegan is president and chief executive officer of News Media Canada.

Quote of the Week

"This is one of the most intense wildfire seasons in Canadian history... Canada is mobilizing more than 5,000 firefighters and nearly 300 water bombers, helicopters and evacuation aircraft to contain, control and mitigate the fires. It's an enormous, complex effort that ultimately depends on dedicated and brave individuals who work relentlessly to keep Canadians safe."

– Prime Minister Mark Carney on the northern Ontario wildfires that covered the region in smoke this week.

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8. Newspapers should be locally-owned and operated

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Opinions

Letters to the editor: Strong mayor powers a disappointment

The court-challenge against strong mayor powers by Stratford Council is a disappointment.

A previous letter to The Times concerning the GTR-redevelopment described Stratford as “tax-afflicted” and Council as lacking “fiscal sobriety.” So, the low budget increase for 2026, 3.2 per cent was both unexpected and savoured -- the prior two years having been 5.5 per cent and 7.9 per cent, respectively.

Yet, at an open-house for the 2026 budget, which I attended simply to applaud the restraint shown, a dismaying fact was revealed: the deceleration of property-tax increases occurred only because the sitting mayor had exercised strong mayor powers. He targeted an increase of 3.09 per cent across all departments, which tilted the budget process, clearly successfully, downwards. It was the first and only

time strong mayor powers were exercised by the mayor, by the way. Otherwise, his (strong mayor) right of veto over Council was not used.

Plainly, the mayor acted forthrightly, but not despotically. Yet, one wonders why strong mayor powers should have been needed at all: Council should be fiscally moderate always, though historically, moderation has usually been beyond their gift.

The opposition of political activists and partisans to strong mayor powers is no surprise. Whatever their high-minded oratory, the fact said powers came from Doug Ford's desk guarantees the opposition of zealots. Perhaps, therefore, councillors-turned-mayorality-candidates favour a court-challenge to draw the votes of such “progressives.” But, based upon evidence and not speechifying, an equal-

ly unflattering motive may be to preserve an unconstrained hand at budget time, one free from the “interference” of fiscally-sober mayors.

*L.W. Naylor,
Stratford.*

Seniors Centre could move to the GTR – costing no taxes

Catherine McKenna visited Stratford in 2020. She looked at the plan for the City bus location, and as the mayor pointed out, that the Seniors Centre located at the GTR.

They would have bus service to and from the GTR.

There could be a covered walkway. This walkway would accommodate handicapped to and from the buses. This would accommodate handicapped citizens, because it is on level ground and out of the

weather.

HOW WOULD THE COST OF THIS MOVE BE COVERED?

Seven years ago, the Tom Patterson Theatre location was sold to the FESTIVAL THEATRE FOR \$5 million. This money was to relocate the Kiwanis Seniors in the GTR.

The Seniors were waiting at the Rec Centre in Splintered locations. The seniors have been waiting for more than seven years, for this move to happen.

Looking at Rob Ritz's plan, I was pleased to see the Seniors Centre in his plan. I could see along with the Senior Centre a internet café and green area with tables and chairs, so people socialize over a coffee.

*Lorne Bolton,
Stratford.*

More than a stage: Why Stratford keeps calling us back

LIAT BRUDNOY

Guest Columnist

Every family has places that become part of its story.

For mine, that place is Stratford.

Growing up in nearby London, Ont., some of my most cherished childhood memories began with a simple car ride. My father would take me to Stratford on weekends, and those visits felt like small adventures. We wandered through the parks, stepped into bookstores and little shops, shared treats, and, whenever we could, found our way into the magic of live theatre.

My parents were devoted readers who believed stories could do more than entertain. They taught me that stories help us see the world through different eyes, understand one another more generously and find meaning in lives and experiences beyond our own. Long before I could fully appreciate Shakespeare's words, I understood the feeling of being drawn into a story and changed by it. I fell in love with opening a book and stepping into another person's experience, discovering new worlds, perspectives and possibilities along the way.

That early appreciation for storytelling has stayed with me ever since. It has shaped how I learn, how I lead, how I connect with others and how I make sense of the world around me. My father passed away when I was 15, but

Stratford has a way of keeping a small part of him close.

As I grew older, Stratford seemed to grow alongside me. Studying English literature deepened my appreciation not only for the festival, but for Shakespeare's extraordinary insight into human nature. *Macbeth* and *King Lear* became enduring favourites because they explore the forces that shape our lives and choices. His characters reach for power, struggle with loyalty, grapple with regret, search for meaning and long for connection. Across the centuries, his stories continue to resonate because they reflect the hopes, flaws and contradictions that make us human. With each stage of life, Stratford revealed something new to me, making every return feel both familiar and fresh.

Years later, my husband and I continued the tradition. We returned to Stratford for unforgettable productions, from Christopher Plummer in *The Tempest* to *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Little Shop of Horrors*. Eventually, we brought our own children.

And then one performance changed the course of our daughter's life.

After seeing *Annie* at the festival, Emily turned to me and said she wanted to sing on a stage like the young actress playing Annie. It was a small sentence, spoken by a child in the glow of a performance, but it opened a door. That moment sparked vocal les-



(TIMES FILE PHOTO)

Residents and visitors alike walk past the Tom Patterson Theatre.

sons, musical theatre training and countless hours of practice.

It also reminded me of something I have come to believe deeply: audiences are not only watching performances. Sometimes, they are watching possibility take shape.

This summer, Stratford became something new once again. For the first time, we were not arriving as audience members. We were arriving for Emily's first audition at the Stratford Festival.

While we waited in the Festi-

val Theatre lobby, Emily's attention was caught by a prop from something rotten! Curious about its unusual title, she asked why it was called that. That simple question led us into a conversation about *Hamlet*, then *King Lear*. We talked about why Shakespeare still matters, and about one lesson from *King Lear* that has stayed with me for years: that true confidence comes not from trying to be someone else, but from understanding who you are.

A play written more than 400 years ago had suddenly become advice for a 10-year-old about to walk into an audition.

That is the quiet magic of Stratford.

It lives in conversations between parents and children. In questions sparked by a costume or a prop. In a beautifully bound book from the Festival Theatre store. In the drive home, when the performance is over, but the story is still unfolding.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 19

Opinions

WEB-CRAWLING THROUGH THE SMOKE



SHEILA CLARKE

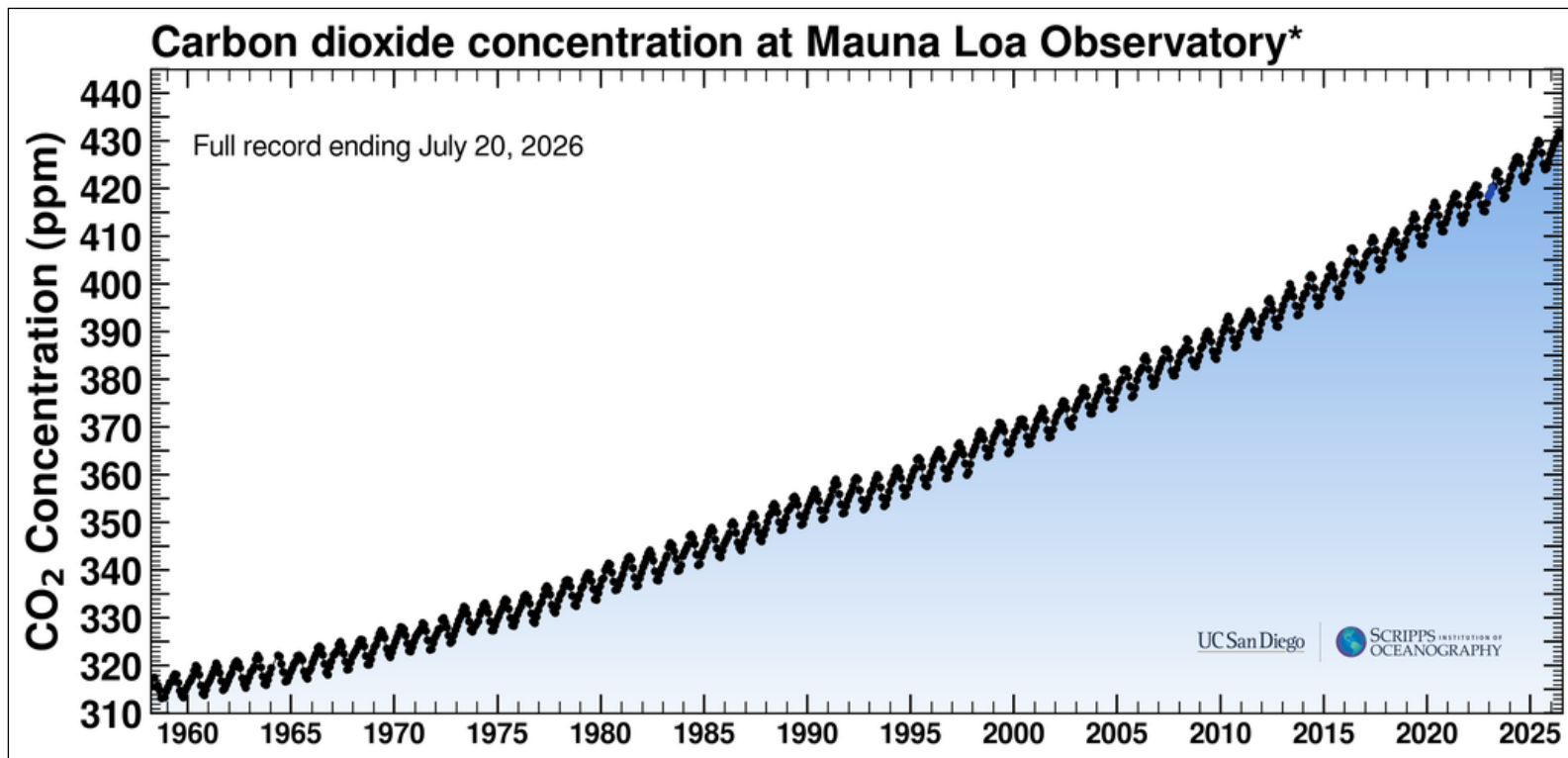
Times Columnist

Two important discoveries took place in the 1950s and '60s. First of all, the company scientists for some oil companies (Exxon e.g.) went to their supervisors and pointed out that carbon was accumulating in the atmosphere. The increased carbon content was a result of burning fossil fuels. Further study by the scientists indicated that should this continue, there would be pollution consequences impacting human health and quite possibly serious environmental consequences.

An organization called the Air Pollution Foundation funded by the American Petroleum Association, released a policy statement in 1955: "That the issue will be addressed via diligent and honest fact finding, by wise and effective action."

The other discovery was the Keeling Curve. What's that? Developed by a young researcher named Dave Keeling, using infrared gas analyzers he measured the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. His experiment became one of the key features of the International Geophysical Year (IGY) beginning in July 1957 and ending in December 1958. One of the key findings illustrated by the Keeling Curve was that carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was increasing, due to the combustion of fossil fuels by industry and to land use changes.

"By the early 1970s this curve was getting serious attention and played a key role in launching a research program into the effect of rising carbon dioxide on climate. Since then, the rise has been relentless and shows a re-



markably constant relationship with fossil-fuel burning and can be well accounted for based on the simple premise that 57 per cent of fossil-fuel emissions remain airborne."

Early research for effects of fossil fuel emissions continuing to grow were remarkably accurate: global warming has reached some of the highest levels ever fueled by the industrial revolution, chiefly by the accumulation of carbon dioxide (and other gases) in the atmosphere. The average level when Keeling began was 310 parts per million (ppm).

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE.

ADVENTURE A: The oil industries came together on a national basis, collaborating with international companies and recommended to governments worldwide to halt further fossil fuel emissions and actively pursue research and development of alternative energy modes. Working through the UN, international research in clean energy began in earnest.

Tremendous strides were made in wind turbines, hydroelectric power sources (with accommodation for water species migration) and in photovoltaic cells and solar panels. All buildings

were fitted with heat pumps, and where possible, geothermal energy was accessed. Some nuclear power was developed, but due to the difficulties of nuclear waste disposal and safety, it was minimized.

Biodiversity was protected for its advantages to agriculture, to health and to cooling. Trees were planted everywhere, marshes were protected for flood management and biodiversity and mining was carefully controlled.

ADVENTURE B: Oil industries realized that the climate research would severely curtail their production and entered into campaigns to discredit and deny the science. This effort continues to this day. At the COP Conferences convened by the UN in an effort to seek cooperation to lessen increasing global warming, the number of oil company representatives nearly outnumbered the country and science representatives.

Fossil fuel companies appear to heavily influence governments and have branched into other product lines. Plastics, fertilizers and pesticides are primarily derived from fossil fuels. Plastic has become omnipresent and has begun to impact health and environmental from microplastics,

which are shed in deterioration of plastic, and in heating and freezing. Glass milk bottles are even disappearing.

The carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere has continued to climb, trapping the heat of the sun on the planet, leading to feedback loops, such as warming oceans causing melting Arctic ice, which in turn exposes more dark ocean water, which in turn absorbs more sunlight and heat, melting more ice. Scientists fear tipping points which may alter ocean currents.

The warming atmosphere leads to more severe storms, unpredictable weather, heat waves that create massive impacts on the environment, biodiversity and human health. Warming conditions also lead to drier forests, far more vulnerable to "dry lightning" and forest fires. A scientist noted that a house in Fort McMurray was so dry that it took only five minutes to disintegrate to the foundation.

SOLUTION?

If we seem to be mired in Adventure B, is there an exit door? The best one I've seen was in the news the other day: "Just stop burning fossil fuels." That is a consumer-driven choice. Companies and governments will still support the fossil fuel industry.

Money talks. If we don't buy fossil fuel products, they won't continue. "Just stop burning fossil fuels."

UPDATES:

Carbon parts per million (ppm) in the atmosphere as of July 5, 2026: 427.88 ppm.

Rising global temperatures cause hotter, drier conditions that make vegetation highly flammable. These extreme fires burn larger, deeper and release centuries of stored carbon from trees and carbon-rich soils, creating a vicious cycle.

How to avoid fossil fuels?

- Use public transport.
- Carry your own shopping bags.
- Complain about plastic.
- Don't buy plastic.
- Go pesticide free.
- Plant trees. It's far cheaper than attempting to bury carbon – if that works.
- Tell your MP and MPP that it's time for renewable energy – yesterday.

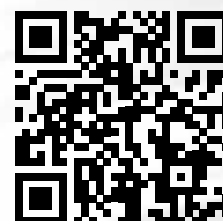
Sheila Clarke is a Stratford advocate for the environment, of our community and of our planet. She is a member of CFUW Stratford, Stratford Climate Momentum, and the Perth County Sustainability Hub.

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Opinions

As I See It From America: Smoke and mirrors



PATRICK D. BURK

Times Columnist

As the summertime ticks by, I am getting increasingly excited about our August visit to Stratford. We will be there in less than a month. It is amazing how much we plan, connect with friends and research about new and interesting things, each time that we are going to be guests in your fair city. It truly brings out some wonderful thoughts and ideas. I see it as a "freeing of the mind." My repose for a very busy schedule mind boggling existence that sometimes happens to me in my day-to-day life.

I have been reading about many things in Stratford and Canada that are making the news. One thing I am asking is if the tourist business has been better this

year in comparison to those in the past? As a city and a destination, do you feel that you are up in visitors or down? Granted this is not always a controllable item. Many things, from the economy to the weather, can be an influence on how tourism is going in any given area. Speaking of the weather, have you been affected by the smoke and the poor air quality at all?

Here in western New York, it has been hit or miss. We did have a few days when the sky was brown, the sunsets were bright orange and the smell of smoke was so prevalent that many had to wear masks. It is interesting that this is happening while many deny that this is a result of climate change or global warming. I surely think that it is. I have lived in this area my entire life and never in the past have I recalled so many fires, burning out of control and spewing smoke and toxins across the skies. This seems like a more recent thing to be happening in both of our countries. The actual fires are quite extensive and uncontrollable. I hope many are heeding the warning.

I get furious when the blame game starts and many think that

Canada, as a country, is responsible for the current lightning induced fires that are resulting in the smoke-filled skies. No country is responsible, however the lack of concern for global warming as well as the ignorance of some, will try to paint this picture. I liken it to a country being at fault for a hurricane or a tornado touching down. Not a country's responsibility at all. The blame game begins and then the non-enlightened start with the name calling and finger pointing. These actions do not help, they divide. They do not solve.

Today it seems that fewer are thinking about science, actual science. They are relying on hyped up charges, media messages from the fossil fuel industry and genuine ignorance of facts. It is all part of that great line, "If you tell the lie enough times, it will be perceived as the truth." Increasing temperatures, less rain and more heat are causing all these changes, and those three precursors are a result of climate change and global warming. That is the fact, pure and simple.

This past week I had a discussion with someone, whom I considered relatively enlightened,

about weather. These hot sultry days and increasing erratic patterns of dry and wet. Pounding rain some days and then heat so bad that there is no enjoyment outdoors at all. I voiced my concerns and was told that it was nothing to be concerned about. This type of weather has been happening for centuries and there was no such thing as global warming. I was further told that the entire concept was made up by the liberal elite as a means to make money from off-beat industries. It is amazing what some people believe. I'm sorry, the weather was not like this when I was a kid, and I think I can tell when things are worsening on a somewhat regular basis. I just let that conversation go in one ear and out the other. No sense trying to change that person's mind.

A more pleasant part of this season is one that I have been involved with for a very long time. Each summer I am part of a program for young people called, "Summer Youth Theater." It has been a part of my life and the life of our local community for over 40 years. I have been the director of the program for the past 34 years. It is incredible what

young people can do and work on when given the opportunity. Our purpose is to provide access to anyone that wants to be in a full-scale musical production. Whether they appear on stage, design, play music or work in production we provide the means to accomplish that. Today I had a member from our group from 34 years ago speak to some of our group.

This year's production is Chicago. While I worry about the inconsistency of today's weather, global warming and climate change, I am also heartened by this type of program and feel that as long as I am capable, I will continue to provide this for our young people. It is my hope that this program will continue into the future. It is a bit too bad that this year it has been affected a bit by heat, weather and the smoke. The weather impact has never happened before. Perhaps the pundits should wonder if it is affecting the young, what it is doing to the elderly and infirmed. I think we need a little less smoke and possibly some more mirrors.

Please let me know how you feel about this article. Contact me at burk.patrick1956@gmail.com

More than a stage: Why Stratford keeps calling us back

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

After Emily was called in for her audition, my husband and I settled into the lobby with a glass of white wine and took in the moment. There was so much to say. We both understood how extraordinary it felt to watch another generation begin its own relationship with this place.

As the day drew to a close, I reflected how many chapters of my own life Stratford had quietly witnessed. Childhood visits with my father. Years spent studying great writers. Countless performances

shared with my husband. And now, Emily's first audition.

In many ways, that is Stratford's greatest gift. Stories are not only performed here. They accompany us through life, gathering new meaning with each generation that encounters them.

At a time when so much attention is focused on emerging technologies, Stratford offers an equally important reminder about what makes us human. Great theatre invites us to see the world through someone else's eyes. It teaches us to listen

more carefully, think more deeply, and approach one another with greater empathy. It encourages curiosity, imagination, resilience, and the confidence to find our own voice.

That is why institutions like the Stratford Festival matter. They preserve an important part of Canada's cultural heritage while helping shape the future by fostering the empathy, curiosity, creativity and self-awareness that enable the next generation to lead with both confidence and compassion.

I do not know where Emily's artistic journey will lead. Whether she ever performs on a Stratford stage is, in many ways, beside the point.

What matters is that she has discovered what Stratford gave me all those years ago: a love of stories, a curiosity about the lives of others and a place that feels a little richer with every visit.

Some traditions are worth passing down. For my family, one of them begins with a drive to Stratford.

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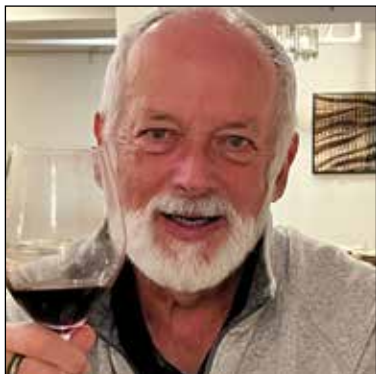
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Worship with us
Sunday 10:00 a.m.
11:00 a.m. – Fellowship and
Coffee Hour

 We are a Welcoming Community

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: A brilliant destination right next door



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Columnist

There was a talented young violinist busking in front of the Avon Theatre. As I dropped a loonie into her case, I couldn't help but notice that the coin nestled into a large collection of American bills.

And that reminded me of a cliché – one that is nonetheless true. We almost never visit wonderful destinations that are too close to home. A good number of Niagara Region residents don't go to see the Falls. Lots of Ottawa folks never visit the National Gallery. Many Winnipeg people have not darkened the door of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

And while Americans and Canadians from farther away pour into Stratford by the score to see some of the best theatre in the world, we locals often give it a miss.

After seeing our first two Stratford productions this season, I have to say we locals are making a big mistake.

I often hear people comment on the cost, sometimes comparing it to other regional theatres. Well, yes, Stratford is more expensive than the others. But frankly, as good as the regional theatres can be, Stratford is consistently several steps higher on the ladder of



The busker at the Avon Theatre attracted a lot of American patrons.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

excellence.

We've just seen *Guys and Dolls* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. The acting, singing, dancing, sets – in fact, everything – is simply the best, by far, that you will find anywhere in this area. The productions, I venture to say, are as good as anything theatregoers will find anywhere!

And another note about the cost – we locals are often offered bargain basement prices. Last week, I received social media notifications of ticket prices at the festival as low as \$29, and ranging upward, but never getting near the usual price.

It also occurs to me that, even at full price, tickets to see amazing theatre are still less expensive than good seats at a Blue Jays' game, and way less than tickets to see the Leafs lose. I say this as a lifelong Leafs fan, by the way.

Enough about economics. Stratford is a destination that locals

are foolish to ignore. Not just the theatre, but also the restaurants, the concerts (often outdoors and free), the shops and the beautiful parks and gardens.

But most of all, the theatre.

The two plays I've seen were both enormous fun. Difference genres, but both full of laughter, extremely talented performances and very clever sets.

Let's start with *Guys and Dolls*. In my mind, the star of the show never appears on stage; she is Donna Feore, a Stratford resident who is a wildly talented choreographer and director. She performed both duties for *Guys and Dolls*, and the dance sequences are more than worth the price of admission on their own.

The cast is terrific – Mark Uhre as Nathan Detroit, Olivia Sinclair-Brisbane as Sarah Brown, Jennifer Rider-Shaw as Miss Adelaide. But I admit I am biased; I have

enjoyed the work of Dan Chameroy every time I have seen him on stage, and I did so again. And the show-stealing song, "Sit Down, You're Rocking The Boat," is performed magnificently by Steve Ross as Nicely-Nicely Johnson. Full disclosure, Steve is a much-treasured acquaintance of mine, and to see him nail the performance was a highlight of the afternoon for me.

The entire play is performed with great energy, and yet, minute attention detail. If you like musicals with happy endings, you will love *Guys and Dolls*. If you don't like musicals with happy endings, I don't think I can help you.

If song and dance is the signature of *Guys and Dolls*, words are the focus of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. This clever, funny, satirical piece is the work of Oscar Wilde, and it is jam-packed

with his wit. But it's also silly in a brilliant way.

Again, the cast was excellent; Carter Gulseth as Algeron Moncrieff, Allison Lynch as Gwendolen Fairfax, Marissa Orjalo as Cecily Cardew and Joe Perry as John Worthing were in the lead roles, and were terrific. But the play holds a special treat. Two giants of Canadian stage and screen were featured in this production; Fiona Reid as the unstoppable Lady Bracknell and Lucy Peacock as Miss Prism, a prim spinstress with a deeply guarded secret.

A secret which is, of course, revealed, along with many other misunderstandings, misconceptions and downright lies that form the basis for the hilariously unfolding plot.

I am guessing that most of the audience had seen a performance, or the movie, of *Earnest* prior to taking their seats in the Avon Theatre – including me. It says everything about the excellence of Stratford theatre that prior knowledge did not detract one bit from the sheer enjoyment of the performance. Even the big reveal by Miss Prism was received with shouts of laughter – not because folks were surprised, but because Lucy Peacock was so good at her job.

Stratford: a destination that attracts visitors from all across North America and beyond, and where the doors are wide open to the festival's neighbours all season long. Enjoy!

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



A sign that means "some of the best theatre in the world."



(DARIANE SANCHE PHOTO)

From left: Mark Uhre as Nathan Detroit, Jennifer Rider-Shaw as Miss Adelaide, Dan Chameroy as Sky Masterson and Olivia Sinclair-Brisbane as Sarah Brown, *Guys and Dolls*. Stratford Festival 2026.

Crossword

CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Listen to
- 5. Presents
- 10. A type of guitar
- 14. Actor Idris
- 15. A citizen of Iran
- 16. Pretentiously artistic
- 17. Harness
- 18. Diamond weight measurement
- 19. "Better Call ___"
- 20. Fervent support
- 22. Male cat
- 23. Jewish spiritual leader
- 24. Disposed to venture or take risks
- 27. A way to nail
- 30. Cool!
- 31. Women's ___ movement
- 32. "Losing My Religion" rockers
- 35. Step-shaped recess
- 37. A princess can detect it
- 38. Tractor-trailer
- 39. Leslie and Leon are two
- 40. Color at the end of the spectrum
- 41. Lines where fabrics are sewn
- 42. Dodgers great Hershiser
- 43. Floor covering
- 44. Traveled aimlessly
- 45. Rocker Stewart
- 46. Body art
- 47. Congressman (abbr.)
- 48. No seats available
- 49. Breaks apart
- 52. Hand gesture
- 55. Ballplayer's tool
- 56. Sword
- 60. Baseball team
- 61. Upper bract of floret of grass
- 63. Italian Seaport
- 64. Mars crater
- 65. Tube on a shoelace
- 66. U. of Miami mascot
- 67. South American nation
- 68. Video game series "Max ___"
- 69. Upper body part

CLUES DOWN

- 1. German courtesy title
- 2. Ancient Greek personification of mercy
- 3. Jewish calendar month
- 4. Family of long-legged frogs
- 5. Photo
- 6. Delivered a speech
- 7. Lute used in Indian music
- 8. Decorated
- 9. Cease to stand
- 10. The bottom layer
- 11. Member of a Semitic people
- 12. Part of a ticket
- 13. Defunct monetary unit
- 21. Challenges
- 23. Body part
- 25. Tell on
- 26. By way of
- 27. Shady green alcove
- 28. Egyptian city
- 29. ___ and flowed
- 32. Widens a hole
- 33. Eurasian wheat
- 34. Act incorrectly
- 36. "Be back later"
- 37. Al Bundy's wife
- 38. Ocean
- 40. Large root eaten as a vegetable
- 41. Units of subjective loudness
- 43. Music genre
- 44. A way to drench
- 46. Popular hot beverage
- 47. Silk-like cotton fabric
- 49. Rumanian city
- 50. Come back
- 51. Vaccine developer
- 52. Canadian law enforcers
- 53. Wings
- 54. Observational comedian Bill
- 57. Small fry
- 58. ___ Clapton, musician
- 59. Take a chance
- 61. Semi-liquid food for babies
- 62. Consumed food

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Meet Swift, an energetic and affectionate 2-year-old pup who brings excitement everywhere she goes. She loves staying active, whether that's exploring the outdoors, playing fetch, or unleashing a good old zoomie session.

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Swift's been looking for her furever home for almost six months now, but we're sure the right family is out there just waiting to make her their new best friend. Meet Swift in-person at our Stratford Centre or online at kwsphumane.ca/adopt/dogs/



Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 27

COMING EVENTS

Email to inquire stratfordtimes@gmail.com

STRATFORD SCRABBLE CLUB

Anne Hathaway Residence 480 Downie St., Stratford
Meets every Wednesday evening at 7 p.m. for 3 games.
Check our website for further details stratfordscrabble.ca

STRATFORD ASTRONOMY GROUP MEETINGS

St. Michael Catholic Secondary School, 240 Oakdale Avenue, Stratford

Rear parking lot off Matilda. Room # 1104 - 1st
Tuesday of each month from
September to June. 7-9 p.m.

We are night sky enthusiasts. Everyone is welcome to attend. See our website at <https://stratfordastronomy.com/> or call 519-275-4472 for more information

FOOD TRUCKS

Monday, July 27; 4:30-7:30 p.m.

Grace United Church Tavistock

Siggi's, El Milagro, Ish n Chips

Donations to Tavistock Health Clinic

(no trucks on August 3, 2026)

FOOD TRUCKS

Monday, August 10; 4:30-7:30 p.m.

Grace United Church Tavistock

Born2Eat, Fo'Cheezy, Beavertails

Donations to Grace United Church

STRATFORD LEGION YARD & BAKE SALE

Saturday, August 15; 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Legion 804 Ontario St.

Stop in at the and check out all our yard sale items, enjoy a back bacon on a bun and our many bake sale goodies

FOOD TRUCKS

Monday, August 17; 4:30-7:30 p.m.

Grace United Church Tavistock

Siggi's, Pablas Street of India, SWAT

Donations to Tavistock Agricultural Society

BLACKSMITH DEMONSTRATION

On Saturday, August 29, starting at 10 a.m., come to the Brocksden Country School Museum for an incredible demonstration of how a blacksmith used his forge!

FOOD TRUCKS

Monday, August 24; 4:30-7:30 p.m.

Grace United Church Tavistock

Berlin 95, Ish n Chips, El Milagro

Donations to Camp Bimini

FOOD TRUCKS

Monday, August 31; 4:30-7:30 p.m.

Grace United Church Tavistock

Born2Eat, Los Rolling Tacos, Fo'Cheezy

Donations to Tavistock Agricultural Society

FRIDAY NIGHT EUCHRES

Friday, September 11; 6 p.m.

Legion 804 Ontario St.

Sign up your team of 2 for \$20 by calling the Legion at 519-271-4540, Dave at 519-703-6544 or Anne at 519-301-0914. Doors open at 6 p.m., games start at 6:30 p.m.

EDMONTON ELKS VS TORONTO ARGONAUTS

Sunday, September 19

The Stratford Legion is hosting a bus trip to see the Edmonton Elks vs Toronto Argonauts football game. It is a 3 p.m. game and the Badder bus leaves from the Cooper Lot at 12 noon. The cost is \$105 p.p. Contact Dean at 273-4463 to reserve and pay for your spot. Tickets are selling fast!

FRIDAY NIGHT EUCHRES

Friday, November 13; 6 p.m.

Legion 804 Ontario St.

November 13 – The next Stratford Legion Friday Night Euchre is Friday Nov. 13th. Sign up your team of 2 for \$20 by calling the Legion at 519-271-4540, Dave at 519-703-6544 or Anne at 519-301-0914. Doors open at 6 p.m., games start at 6:30 p.m.

STRATFORD TIMES

Deadline: Tuesday prior at 3 p.m.

Contact: stratfordtimes@gmail.com

PROMOTE YOUR EVENTS WITH US! HERE'S HOW:

- The Community Calendar is for non-profit organizations to promote their free admission events at no charge. Event listings can include your event name, date, time and location as well as a phone number, email address or website.
- If your event is not free admission or you would like to include more details than stated above, you have the following options:
 - Coming Events Word Ad in Classified section (50 word max.) - \$10 + hst
 - Coming Events Boxed Word Ad in Classified section (50 word max.) - \$15 + hst
 - Display Ad - Sizes begin at a classified business card size for \$35 + hst

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