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Speed cameras may have been coming to a street near you

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Speed cameras may be coming to Stratford – though recent provincial posturing suggests the project will end before it even starts.

André Morin, chief administrative officer with the City of Stratford, informed the Times that a 24-month pilot project was being discussed. The number of cameras and where they would be located are not known as of yet, though Morin suggested community safety zones, areas around schools, parks or hospitals, are where staff would look to install them.

However, the Province of Ontario announced on Sept. 25 that it intends to ban municipal speed cameras. To improve road safety, the province will establish a new fund to implement safety measures such as speed bumps, roundabouts, raised crosswalks and curb extensions.

“At a time when governments at all levels should be doing everything they can to lower costs and make life more affordable, too many municipalities are using speed cameras as a cash grab,” said Premier Doug Ford in a media release. “Enough is enough. Instead of making life more expensive by sending speeding tickets to drivers weeks after the fact, we’re supporting road-safety measures that will prevent speeding in the

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Patsy-Anne Day, an Indigenous educator and storyteller from the Oneida Nation and Turtle Clan, places sage into the fire during a Sunrise Ceremony held Sept. 30 for the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. (AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation honoured with Sunrise Ceremony

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

Patsy-Anne Day, Indigenous educator, storyteller and member of the Oneida Nation and Turtle Clan, led a Sunrise Ceremony, giving thanks and offerings to the Creator and Mother Earth on Sept. 30 during the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation at the Falstaff Family Centre.

She described the Haudenosaunee teachings of the four sacred medicines: tobacco, sweetgrass, sage and cedar.

“We’re thanking, acknowledging and giving thanks to everything that our Mother Earth gives us,” Day said at

the opening of the ceremony.

“We start every day with thanks,” she said. “Saying thank you is the most important thing that we can do. It connects our minds and our hearts together, to our honour.”

Around the fire, participants listened as Day spoke about the offerings, starting in the east, where the sun rises. This direction represents both the morning and spring. Tobacco was placed there as an offering, symbolizing the beginning of a new day.

“The east represents the time of the year; springtime,”

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Traditional Sunrise Ceremony held Sept. 30 for Truth and reconciliation

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Day said. "It also represents everything new: new beginnings, newborns, everything that begins again."

At the south side of the fire, where blades of sweetgrass sat, Day explained this space represents the red earth and land, as well as youth, summer and the afternoon.

"You can look at the youth and understand a little bit more about what they're thinking and feeling," she said. "They're the ones that are going to need us some-

day. We want to give them good examples and help them understand how we want our world to be."

On the west side of the fire, sage was placed to represent the waters and nation builders, and to symbolize fall and evening.

"The nation builders are people who are our age," Day said. "Those nation builders are the ones that we should be very thankful for. We give gratitude to those who are building the buildings, systems and things that we live with and take for granted sometimes."

Cedar sat at the north side of the fire, which Day described as representing winter, night, spirits and elders.

After her teachings, Day invited attendees to walk in a circle around the fire, taking small pinches of each plant, starting with tobacco, and placing them in the fire while giving thanks to Mother Earth. Day explained that placing the medicines into the fire is a way of giving thanks and sending prayers, with the smoke carrying those offerings upward.

Speed cameras may have been coming to Stratford – before province promised to ban them

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

first place, keep costs down and keep our streets safe."

Ford's comments sparked backlash from area municipalities and law enforcement. The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) has defended the use of speed cameras, as well as other forms of automated speed enforcement.

In a statement, the OACP asserts that automated enforcement "is proven to reduce speeding, change driver behaviour and make our roads safer for everyone – drivers, cyclists, pedestrians and especially children and other vulnerable road users. The use of these tools is controlled by municipalities and deployed in areas of the community, such as school zones and community safety zones, where slowing down saves lives and prevents serious injuries.

"The OACP has clearly indicated that Ontario's police leaders view ASE not as a revenue tool, but as a traffic safety tool." Chief Greg Skinner of the Stratford Police Service agreed.

"The intent was never to be a cash grab as recently characterized, but to hold drivers and vehicle owners accountable for

their driving behaviour with the hope of people making the conscious decision to pay attention and voluntarily comply with the posted speed limits," Skinner said in an emailed statement. "... Municipalities need to leverage available technology to keep our streets and communities safe and the Stratford Police Service and the municipalities policed by the service have been progressive in implementing technology including body worn cameras, digital evidence management, in car camera systems, automated licence plate readers, drones, etc. to support the work that officers do in the community every day.

"Automated speed enforcement is simply another tool available to promote safety and security and to hold those accountable for their driving behaviour as they put other responsible road users, cyclists and pedestrians at risk. I hope that the premier will consult further with the public prior to tabling any legislation that will negatively affect our communities."

If speed cameras do get banned, Morin told the Times that the city will continue implementing safety measures based on engineering, physical options, education, awareness and enforcement.

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Canada Post strike resumes after feds announce end to door-to-door delivery

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

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Right after Joël Lightbound, Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, called Canada Post “effectively insolent” and announced an end to door-to-door delivery on Sept. 26, Jan Simpson, national president of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), immediately called a nation-wide strike.

“This announcement was an outrage,” Simpson wrote in her letter to union members. “Minister Lightbound gave the union no indication that he was going to do this when leadership met with him last week. The Minister said he had the ‘utmost respect’ for postal workers. This is no way to show it.”

Simpson said that the government’s initiatives, which include adjusting letter mail delivery standards, the conversion of four million door-to-door mailboxes into community mailboxes, the lifting on a moratorium on rural post offices and the modernization of the stamp rate, would undermine the public service postal workers do.

Lightbound, on the other hand, said the over-150-years-old institution is in crisis.

“Since 2018, the corporation has accumulated more than \$5 billion in losses,”

Lightbound wrote. “In 2024 alone, it lost over \$1 billion, and in 2025, it is already on track to lose close to \$1.5 billion. Earlier this year, the federal government provided a \$1-billion injection to keep the corporation operational. In the second quarter of 2025, Canada Post posted its worst quarterly results ever, losing \$407 million. Today, the corporation is losing approximately \$10 million every day.

“... Canada Post is a vital national institution worth preserving. The measures announced today will help place the corporation on a stronger financial footing and provide the flexibility it needs to adapt to a rapidly changing environment.”

Lightbound estimates that the proposed changes will save the corporation about \$420 million a year.

This is the second strike in less than a year’s time. Postal workers were previously on strike in November 2024, which concluded after an impasse in talks resulted in the Canada Industrial Relations Board ordering union members back to work.

CUPW announced another strike in late May of this year, but the issue was resolved a day before the strike was expected to begin.

The Times attempted to contact local representatives of CUPW for comment on this most recent strike, however did not hear back in time for press.



The Stratford Canada Post office in Stratford, located on Waterloo Street. Canada Post workers are on strike effective Sept. 26, after Joël Lightbound, Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement announced sweeping reforms. (AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

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Editorial

A day for reconciling, for us too



CONNOR LUCZKA

Times Editor

In June of 2022, I was working as a reporter for the Listowel Banner and wrote a story about the history of Indigenous people in the region. I thought it would be interesting both for readers and for myself. I'm not native to Perth County and any opportunity I can to learn more about the place I'm reporting on is something I always jump on – plus I love learning more about local history, no matter where local is.

Listowel was a funny place to write that story. It's close to the

border of two pivotal treaties, Treaty 29 and Treaty 45 ½, the former of which Stratford also resides upon, and there aren't many self-identifying Indigenous people in the community, which I was told time and time again. Still, I thought to give it a try.

Leading up to June, I remember months of preparation, which isn't common in this profession. Stories are usually developed over a few weeks at most, a few hours at least. But I wanted to really dive into the subject, really learn a lot and share that learning with readers.

Well, what I learned wasn't much and what I shared was even less.

The Stratford-Perth Archives had next to nothing for me, as did the Banner's own archives. I managed to speak with many people through my research and they all repeated something similar at some point in our interviews: that sharing stories was sacred and something of an intimate act. I nodded, asked

my questions and took my notes, not thinking

too much about it or the other similar messages I heard from the half-dozen people I interviewed.

One such interviewee was Randall Kahgee. At the time, he was the former chief of Saugeen First Nation and a lawyer at Olthuis Kleer Townshend LLP who specialized in Indigenous rights law.

Kahgee told me all about treaties, their history and his own negotiating of them today. These aren't ancient history, he told me. They were the fabric of Canada, even if Canadians didn't know that.

Kahgee also said that while he believes proper Indigenous history needs to be taught, there needs to be some caution.

"I think that will depend largely on any given nation as to how they would choose to share that information," Kahgee told me. "I totally respect that communities want to safeguard that and are very cautious in how they share that."

It was only putting together a draft copy that I really thought about what Kahgee and the others were saying.

I was so overzealous that I didn't clue in that they were telling me. I may have wanted to tell these stories, but they weren't mine to tell.

I always thought of journalism and community newspapers like the Banner (and indeed the Times) as forces for good. It never occurred to me that they might not be seen as that for everybody, that they might be seen as the opposite. Journalism is not the government, but it is a colonial tradition after all and that means different things for different people. Plus, the way contemporary media has sometimes operated hasn't done us boots-on-the-ground reporters many favours. We see that amongst Indigenous and settler communities alike as distrust in the press only grows in this country.

As a reporter and a journalist, it is fundamental to every fibre of my being to disseminate stories to as many people as possible. It is drilled in us that we write what the public needs to know and nobody tells us what we can or cannot write about. Speak truth to power.

But in this endeavour, I think we have to check that instinct. If we are writing about respecting Indigenous customs and wishes, we need to actually walk the walk – even if it flies in the face of our mandate.

Of course, there is a balance. The reason why the phrase

"truth and reconciliation" is on so many of our lips today is because of the widespread reporting of the atrocities committed by the Canadian government and people – this is good and should be commended. But other stories, historical stories, should be respected as personal.

In my second draft of that story for the Banner I had next to no information, instead quoting those I interviewed when they encouraged people to look for Indigenous history themselves. It wasn't the article I had wanted to write, but I was glad I had the realization I did. I recall it each year when Indigenous History Month returns in June or National Day for Truth and Reconciliation returns in September, when a small voice in my head whispers that I haven't written enough to commemorate the celebrations.

We cover the stories that need to be covered, attend the important events that need to be attended and try to direct the public to knowledge keepers, knowing that they are the ones meant to tell these stories, not us. We try and reflect and reconcile ourselves. Then, we try to do better next year.

In the end, I think that's all we should do.

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Downtown BIA brings back 10 Bucks Back

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

Designed to help shoppers and diners make their holiday dollars go a little further, the BIA is bringing back its 10 Bucks Back program to encourage shopping and dining in the downtown core.

The BIA's 10 Bucks Back program allows participants to turn in \$100 worth of receipts from downtown businesses between Oct. 1 and Oct. 15 to receive \$10 certificates in return. Participants have until the end of October to exchange their receipts at the bank, with a \$500 limit per person.

Jamie Pritchard, general manager of the BIA, says, "There is nothing more rewarding than getting paid to shop, a great added bonus! I would also like to thank the Royal Bank and Destination Stratford for their continued support by providing redemption for this initiative."

Simply shop or dine at participating downtown shops and bring your receipts to Stratford Royal Bank at 33 Downie St. from Monday to Friday, or to the tourism office at 47 Downie St. on Saturdays, to receive \$10 back in promo dollars that can be used throughout downtown Stratford until Dec. 31.

The popular program is generally run in February, but Pritchard says this year they are running it in October to help boost local sales while also helping people get a head start on their Christmas shopping.

"We want to remind everyone to shop

local, shop downtown, because we've got the best, most eclectic and unique businesses and shops," said Pritchard. "Come downtown and take a look between Oct. 1 and Oct. 15, then cash in, get your coupons and come back and start your Christmas shopping."

There is a total of \$10,000 available and it is first-come, first-served until the maximum amount has been reached. In past years, this amount has run out, so Pritchard says it's important to get receipts in sooner rather than later.

Something else to keep an eye out for is the BIA official announcement of the Winter Wander-land event, where the Polar Express train rides around Stratford City Hall will return along with several other family-friendly activities.

For further information and details on the 10 bucks back program, email kgriffiths@downtownstratford.ca or call 519-271-5140.

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(KIM GRIFFITHS PHOTO)

Stratford's downtown BIA is bringing back its 10 Bucks Back program to encourage shopping and dining in the downtown core.



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Alliance North launches Volunteer Emergency Response Air Corps at local airport

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

On Sept. 27, after three years of planning, Alliance North launched its Volunteer Emergency Response Air Corps (VEAC) here in the Festival City.

VEAC is a civilian surge aviation resource trained and ready to support government-initiated emergency response. At the drop of a hat, or at the sending of an alert, VEAC pilots can make a critical difference when roads are blocked, commercial flights are grounded or government aircraft are overwhelmed.

Ontario has 9,000 registered aircraft and many more skilled pilots. As Chirag Chopra, co-founder of Alliance North, said, their organization means to provide formal coordination so that those pilots and planes can provide much needed medical transports, search and rescue, animal welfare, environmental response and humanitarian aid.

“For the last two years, we’ve been building training courses, response plans. We’ve been talking with various municipal, provincial, federal level officials and getting this all together. So today was a culmination of all of that, and we’re here now with a group of pilots, a group of planes and a plan to get it done.”

VEAC pilots gathered for Air Bridge 2025 that day, an emergency response exercise hosted by the city, after an alert went out to the network. Despite delays due to foggy weather which enveloped the region, pilots from across southwestern Ontario, from Chatham-Kent to Kingston, flew to the Stratford Municipal Airport that morning. They participated in a number of demonstrations and exercises hosted by stakeholder organizations.

Gathering in groups, pilots partici-



Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma poses with the Volunteer Emergency Response Air Corps at the municipal airport on Sept. 27, as part of the Air Bridge 2025 event.

(MIKE HYTTINEN PHOTO)

pated in a loading exercise, where they gathered emergency supplies in boxes and stuffed a civilian aircraft full so that it could actually take off. They also gathered around Ali Asgary, an associate professor of disaster and emergency at York University, who piloted a drone with his team in an emergency simulation that involved two hikers, one who was in anaphylaxis due to a bee sting and the other severely dehydrated. With the drone, an EpiPen and other emergency first aid supplies were dropped from hundreds of feet away.

The planning for the day began in July

of this year, though the potential for partnership between the City of Stratford and Alliance North began three years ago when Mayor Martin Ritsma, Chopra and Mark Bett (Alliance North’s other co-founder) first connected.

“This is like Christmas morning to me,” Ritsma told the gathering VEAC pilots that morning, reinforcing all the work that went into the day. “... We journeyed. We journeyed really hard and here we are today. ... So on behalf of the residents of Stratford, on behalf of city council and all staff, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

As Chopra said, this first event was a proof-of-concept.

“This event was more of a showcase than a real exercise,” Chopra explained. “We are showcasing to the federal, provincial, municipal governments that we’ve got a program of training – and getting pilots ... So as much as it was testing out our own protocols and our own procedures, it was very much intended to get the message out to communities, to governments, to whoever needs to know this, that local pilots exist in the communities they want to help.”



Chirag Chopra of Alliance North said the weekend exercise was a proof of concept for area governments – volunteer pilots are here and willing to help. (CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTOS)



Ali Asgary, an associate professor of disaster and emergency at York University, preps a drone for a demonstration on its effectiveness in emergency scenarios.

An emergency hub is the dream – but can it be reality?

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

During the Air Bridge 2025 training event at the Stratford Municipal Airport on Sept. 27, Mayor Martin Ritsma told the gathering pilots and stakeholders that his dream for the local airport is to be an emergency hub.

“Currently, it’s a hub for air Ornge and for OPP operation search and rescue, but I’m hoping that moving forward we will be a provincial hub for emergencies,” Ritsma said. “And so there’s my dream, and my belief is that if we can sell that idea and bring that vision here, then it might have a little better uptake in council chambers.”

A better reception from council is perhaps a steep ask. For the last few years, the airport, a city-asset, has nearly been on the chopping block during annual budget deliberations. Although the airport has a relatively small operating budget (a budget of \$76,899 was approved for 2025), a few councillors have expressed an interest in the airport being revenue-neutral, an unlikely outcome according to a 2023 study by HM Aero Inc. For some around

the horseshoe, it is harder to justify keeping an asset that loses money and is likely to keep losing money.

“I think what we have to do at times ... is look beyond the fuel sales and the hangar fees and the flight school pieces,” Ritsma told the Times. “We have to look at the socioeconomic piece of it as well. What can we do out of this airport that maybe you can’t put a dollar-figure on?”

Fire Chief Neil Anderson was at the Air Bridge event that day, wearing his other hat as the city’s director of emergency services. He said that if the airport were to become an emergency hub, it wouldn’t push out the airport’s current uses.

“Ultimately it would not be taking Ornge out of the package,” Anderson explained. “This would be more for delivery, a place for people to come, wildfires or animals rescued from up north, organ transfers if required, mostly people transfer or equipment transfers. There’s a portable emergency operations centre in there, if our communications go down ... I think the beauty is, you don’t need the infrastructure for it. You just need the people.”

On that note, Anderson did say that in-

frastructure would have to be taken into consideration. The airport’s taxiways are maxed out currently – though the airport is surrounded by farmland currently being leased out. Expansion would be possible, but that takes money.

Ali Asgary, an associate professor of disaster and emergency at York University, was at the Air Bridge event that day. Having seen disasters in other parts of the world, he supported the idea of Stratford’s airport doubling down in its role during emergencies. As he said, small airports have a role to play in the event of crisis as larger airports get overwhelmed. Like Ritsma, he looked at the airport’s role beyond the financial pressure it perhaps poses on the municipality.

“(In) 100 years, if this airport, or any small airport like this, can be used for one emergency, larger scale emergency operation, it has done its job in that regard, because there you can save thousands of lives. I’ve seen it in Turkey. I’ve seen it in Iran. I’ve seen it in Japan. I’ve seen it in Haiti, in all other places. ... So all these regional airports can come to support. They may not be active for very large air-

craft, but still for emergencies, small aircraft, medium-sized aircraft can provide enough support.”

Ritsma said that the next step after the Air Bridge 2025 event is analysis. What was achieved at the Air Bridge 2025 event and what can be done in the future? What other emergency hubs are out there and what can Stratford learn from them? Where does the airport need investment and what partners can the municipality look to?

And with partners comes funding, Ritsma said.

“If we create something in here, maybe it is something that we would look at as a shared service, right?”

For his part, Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae said that the airport is an asset to be leveraged.

“There’s competitive advantage and the unique opportunity potentially for more provincial and federal investments if we can bring the right partners together. I think Alliance North is helping facilitate that, and obviously we’ll be sharing the feedback from today with (Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response of Ontario Jill Dunlop).”



Hayden John, a second-year medical student at Queen’s University, gives the crowd a sit rep in the demonstration: two hikers, one in anaphylaxis, are stranded and need desperate help. The drone that Asgary piloted dropped an EpiPen and other crucial first aid supplies to them.



Mayor Martin Ritsma wants to expand the municipal airport’s role in being a regional hub for emergency response – but can his dream be a reality?



VEAC members pack a supplies box in an exercise, as a civilian aircraft waits to be loaded. (CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTOS)

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Who is the guy behind Dine in 519?

LEE GRIFFI
Times Reporter

Jesse Walker has taken the southwestern Ontario culinary scene by storm, and he’s done it one burger and butter tart at a time. The 36-year-old’s Dine in 519 social media channels are exploding as he travels across the area, thanks to Walker’s charismatic and heartfelt restaurant reviews.

He started the endeavour in 2020 while working as a marketing director for a large company, something he has done for most of his working life. During the COVID-19 pandemic, restaurants were closing down and Walker was working from home.

“I have this spare time,” Walker said. “How can I use my skillset to support the food industry? I was doing photoshoots for restaurants, these ma and pa shops that don’t have a budget for marketing. It grew quickly and I think it resonated because it not only served as a resource for the restaurants but also for the public. I think that’s what hit with people.”

Walker decided to step it up a notch by adding video to his hole-in-the-wall visits by doing food reviews on video in his car. The numbers are staggering.

“Just in the last year I switched to the on-camera aspect, so being in my car, doing the reviews, showing a bit of personality, and I think it struck a chord with people and maybe it’s more organic, I don’t know. It went from 10,000 followers to over 70,000 just on Instagram alone. Facebook has grown by 20,000 in the last couple weeks.”

Walker also utilizes TikTok and has well over 30,000 followers there and has branched out into the event scene.

“All this has brought me to today and I



Jesse Walker brought his Dine in 519 social media experience to Taylor’s Deli in Stratford. Walker (middle) poses with owners Stew Taylor and Amber Taylor. (DINE IN 519 PHOTO)

am now doing large-scale events. I recently did Brunchfest, which was at Kellogg Lane in London, in the courtyard. I did that as a way to earn revenue, and I sold over 2,000 advance tickets and I think over 600 more at the door throughout the day.”

This journalist went to the event and was wowed by not only the incredible selection of food vendors but also the overall vibe and the downright fun had by everyone in attendance. The prosecco stand didn’t hurt either.

“Events are going to be a big part of my

strategy moving forward because people are loving them and it's something I enjoy doing,” he added. He also vows to keep away from chain restaurants.

“I get hundreds of emails a week from chains or those sub-chains with 10 or so locations, but I just don’t feel right doing it. Even though I could make a lot of money doing that, I think what people resonate with is that I highlight what I think is truly great, and I won’t just post a place because they are reaching out and offering money.”

Walker said he has launched his own line of merchandise and recently held an

all-woman dinner event featuring a seven-course curated meal, which sold out.

“Ninety per cent of comments I get are positive, but there’s always that 10 per cent. I posted Taylor’s Deli in Stratford, and they do this beef dip sandwich, which is a three-day process. They’re baking their own bread, doing everything in-house, and it’s \$19 and delicious.”

Walker explained the deli has less expensive options on its menu, and he was getting some negative comments about the cost.

“What people don’t realize is chain sub shops have \$19 sandwiches. It’s not just the cost of food. People don’t look beyond that. I’ve owned a restaurant myself, so I know how many things they are paying for before they get any type of profit.”

As far as his future plans, Walker is open to taking his show to the next level, including television, and he is also open to teaming up with local business improvement areas (BIAs) and townships to promote downtowns across the region.

“I’ve done Windsor and I went up to Bayfield. They put me up in a cottage there, they built me an itinerary, so I don’t have to charge the restaurants that don’t have a budget.”

Walker is adamant that he is not an influencer.

“I think there’s a negative connotation that comes with that. I am an advocate for local, independent food joints and this has exploded. My main focus is online and making videos for these restaurants. I still have the same passion for it five years later.”

You can learn more about Walker on the Uncapped Network podcast at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7btns8lQIRQ>.

Optimist Club of Downie Inc.

OPTI-CASH CALENDAR DRAW

Sept. 21 Bob Phillips, St. Marys	\$50.00
Sept. 22 Judy McCann, Stratford	\$50.00
Sept. 23 Josh Heinbuch, Shakespeare	\$50.00
Sept. 24 Scott Savage, Stratford	\$50.00
Sept. 25 Matt & Jocelyn Ehgoetz, St. Marys	\$50.00
Sept. 26 Bill Nichols, Point Edward	\$50.00
Sept. 27 Janet Heaman, Ailsa Craig	\$200.00
Sept. 28 Tammy Allardyce, Brantford	\$50.00
Sept. 29 Caroline Tinning, St. Marys	\$50.00
Sept. 30 Shawn Brooks, Stratford	\$50.00
Oct. 01 Barry Logan c/o Rob Logan, Stratford	\$50.00
Oct. 02 Lula Koert, St. Pauls	\$50.00
Oct. 03 Terry Green, Astorville	\$50.00
Oct. 04 Ron & Mary Kay Whaling	\$200.00



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Rotary Scotch Mist’s 18th annual event brings a taste of Scotland to Stratford this October

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

A popular Scotch tasting event raising money for the Rotary Club of Stratford’s initiatives is back with tickets nearly sold-out.

The Rotary Scotch Mist returns Oct. 25 at the Arden Park Hotel starting at 5 p.m. The event features the opportunity to try unique Scottish whiskeys paired with a five-course meal featuring 12-hour ale braised beef, deconstructed Scotch eggs, haggis a la stovies and shortbread. Rare and special scotches will be auctioned throughout the night, with a Redtail Golf Session, St. Maarten Penthouse Getaway and a private cocktail experience at Stratford’s Lost Key also up for grabs.

“It’s just a great way for people to get together, see each other and have a great evening out,” said Scotch Mist co-chair Rob Russell.

The Scotch Mist event features whiskies from distilleries in Scotland like Glencadam, the Balvenie, Mac-Tal-

la and Raasay, in addition to Highland Nectar and the Japanese Nikka Whiskey Taketsuru Pure Malt.

“There’s not a lot of these events, of course, and other than that, your choice is to buy a full bottle,” Russell said. “This is a way to experiment and see what’s out there without having to commit the money to buying a whole bottle of anything you want to try.”

Over the past 17 years, Rotary Scotch Mist events raised nearly \$300,000 for local and international programs such as Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth, Stratford General Hospital Foundation, Stratford Respite House and Aquabox. In 2024, slightly over \$35,000 was raised at the Scotch Mist.

Russell said that the Scotch Mist events are popular year after year because of the focus on customer experience.

“We take a lot of time selecting rare, hard-to-find whiskeys and then pairing them with really nice food,” he said.

As of Sept. 30, the day of the interview, there are only 24 tickets left. To purchase tickets for the Rotary Scotch Mist online, visit <https://ticketscene.ca/events/53413/>.

Resident starts Grad Adventures to give less opportune grads a chance to travel

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Bruce Whitaker and his family have traveled the world – from Egypt to India – and now he would like to give the same opportunity to Stratford's youth.

"I have three boys and I've been able to take them to different places in the world," Whitaker said. "... My youngest child is Grade 12, so now I want to expand it to the community to go out and see places ... Our goal is really to foster personal growth. We want to shift perspectives, I guess. And then the third thing is to really challenge preconceptions of young people about what the world is about ... and it's all through, connecting with different cultures."

Whitaker and his family are starting Grad Adventures, a unique scholarship program that offers international experience for recent graduates. In partnership with GVI Canada, an organization which connects youth with nature conservation and social development programs abroad, this year three students will be selected for an immersive one- or two-week volunteer program in July 2026.

This opportunity will not be a vacation – selected students will travel to Peru, Nicaragua or Costa Rica to engage in impactful projects that focus on health services, community development and rain forest conservation, respectively.

The initiative aims to cultivate young leaders to think optimistically about the world, even when current events, opportunities and their mental health may steer them towards pessimism. As Whitaker said, the antidote to all of that is travel.

"It's a challenging time for young people," Whitaker said. "There's a lot of anxiety."



Bruce Whitaker has travelled the world with his family, pictured here. Now, he would like to give area youth that same opportunity with Grad Adventures. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

ety. We're seeing a lot of mental health issues. We're seeing a complex world. I want young people to understand that the world is beautiful and that there's a lot of things they don't necessarily see, and the people that they'll be connected with are very similar to themselves. They want love. They want to be cared for. They want to eat good food. So I think it's to get across an understanding that the world is a great place, and there's a lot of people that are very similar to us, and I think we should care for those folks.

"... You know, 1.8 billion youth are about to make strong decisions, and they've got this weight ... on their shoulders. It's important that they make decisions that are not just good for you and I, but are good for the world. And that's what I'm trying to get across to them, because we don't empower our young people and I don't think we ready them for participating in such huge decisions."

Applications are open to graduating students from families with incomes low-

er than \$100,000, and who have a passion for the arts, environmental conservation and mental health.

Stratford residents may recognize Whitaker as an Avon Maitland District School Board trustee, though he clarified that this is a personal project that does not involve the school board. As this is the first year that Grad Adventures is running, Whitaker is personally financing the trips and will be selecting students with his family, though he wants the program to continue into the future with the help of other area donors.

Two-week experiences can range between \$1,500 to \$7,000 and donors may contribute anonymously or be engaged in a hands-on way.

Applications will be accepted until Feb. 28. Students must be nominated by a teacher, family friend or employer and must include a short essay or video explaining why they should be chosen.

A shortlist of candidates will be interviewed in March and successful candidates will be notified by the end of that month. They will have all expenses covered, including food, accommodation, travel, mentorship and training, as well as transportation to and from Toronto Pearson International Airport, as well as transfers to the destination.

Students are being asked to contribute \$500 toward the trip. As Whitaker said, that amount is to show that students have initiative and can work hard.

For more information, or to apply as an applicant or a donor, visit <https://gradadventures.com/>.

Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. What is the traditional birthstone for October?
2. What country is Prague located in?
3. LAN stands for what in computing?
4. When was the last time the Blue Jays won the AL East?
5. Who sings "Rock You Like a Hurricane"?
6. A stop/loss order is used by who?
7. True or False—Ostriches can fly.
8. What is the most common eye color?
9. How many moons does Mars have?
10. What year was truth and reconciliation day created?

This week's answers are found on pg. 31



STRATFORD MARKS TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION DAY WITH FLAG RAISING

The Every Child Matters flag hangs at Stratford City Hall on Sept. 30 to mark the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Mayor Martin Ritsma raised the flag in honour of residential school survivors, the children who never returned home, and their families and communities.

(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

Legion honours members at annual awards ceremony

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

The Royal Canadian Legion hosted its Honours and Awards Ceremony on Sept. 28, where many legionnaires were recognized.

At this year's ceremony, Clarence McCallum was celebrated for his 100th birthday. Certificates were presented on behalf of his majesty the King, the Governor General and the prime minister. Perth-Wellington MP John Nater and MPP Matthew Rae presented the awards.

"It is an absolute honour and privilege to present certificates of congratulations to Clarence, on behalf of his majesty the King and her excellency the Governor General, on a remarkable life and a remarkable life of service to someone who has literally served king and country," said Nater.

Presentations for the five-year pin were awarded to comrades Robert Allen, Elizabeth Clifford, Benedict Cummings, Harold Jeffrey, Paul Reese, Dean Smith, Lorraine Smith, Paul Smith, Jannette Veal, Mike Walser and Greg Young.

Ten-year pins were given to comrades Marion Loghrin-Bolton, Jim Doone, Nater, Randy Petrie, Jonathan Smith, Heather Wickenheiser and Bob Wickenheiser. The Ladies' Auxiliary 10-year pin was awarded to Hilda Faugh.

Fifteen-year branch pins were presented to comrades Tim Bossence, Donna Cassel, Robert Coleman and Timothy Sparks.

A 20-year pin was awarded to comrade Dan Mathieson, with Ladies' Auxiliary pins awarded to Anne Boyde and Joyce Stubbings.

The 25-year branch pin was presented to comrades Mark Mathieson, Rick Micks,



Award recipients and members of the Royal Canadian Legion gather for a group photo following the Honours and Awards Ceremony on Sept. 28.

(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTOS)

and Ellen Miller.

Two 30-year pins were awarded to comrades Joyce Stubbings and Lorne Walters, with a Ladies' Auxiliary pin presented to Marlene Crerar.

The 35-year pins were awarded to comrades David Brickman, Gerry Camden, Dave Hastings and G. Reid Shepley, along with a Ladies' Auxiliary award for Ruth Mordue.

Two 40-year pins were presented to comrades Mike Coles and Catherine Love.

A 45-year pin was awarded to comrades Steve Cross, G.B. Finnigan, Kenneth McKay and Phil Psutka.

Six 50-year pins were awarded to comrades Randy Binkle, John Haines, Edward Holdaway, Tom McArthur, William Smith and Don Young.

An executive service bar was presented to Frank Mathieson and Leroy Workman.

Several certificates of appreciation were given at the ceremony to those who donated their time to the legion. Recipients were comrades Melissa Byers, Jim Doone, Neal Ebel, Marion Loghrin-Bolton, Roger Black, Luka McKennitt, Cheryl Shean, Image Factory, Doug Downey, Long and McQuade and Zehr's Superstore – Trais

Gowland and Krista Dona.

A Ladies' Auxiliary award was given to Doris Ferguson, who was recognized for baking and behind-the-scenes contributions.

Certificates of merit were presented to comrades Pearl Alles, Anne Boyd, Lorena McKennitt and Doreen Zurbrigg.

A poppy appreciation certificate was presented to Zehr's flower department and the Stratford Festival Marketplace.

The Legionnaire of the Year was awarded to comrade Linda Hunter, and a life membership for the Ladies' Auxiliary was awarded to Anne Boyde.



Perth-Wellington MP John Nater, Clarence McCallum and MPP Matthew Rae at the Royal Canadian Legion Honours and Awards Ceremony on Sept. 28. McCallum was recognized for his 100th birthday.



Perth-Wellington MP John Nater presents certificates of congratulations to Clarence McCallum at the Royal Canadian Legion Honours and Awards Ceremony.



Doris Ferguson receives a certificate of appreciation for her contributions to the Ladies' Auxiliary at the Royal Canadian Legion Honours and Awards Ceremony.

Steps for Support helps grieving residents find comfort in walking together

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

A weekly walking group in Stratford is giving people a gentle way to cope with grief, offering fresh air, peer support and connection through Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth.

Registered social workers Melissa McManus and Erin Mills of Rotary Hospice encouraged community members to join them and trained volunteers for Steps for Support, a weekly Tuesday morning bereavement walk that allows grieving individuals who have lost a loved one to share a sense of relatability and comfort.

"The good thing about this is that it's a very informal group so people can come if they are feeling heavy that day or they can come feeling really good," said Mills.

"There is something so nice standing side by side walking, the silences are more comfortable, and people are more able to share. People are outside and they are getting fresh air and there is exercise which is very beneficial for everyone. A lot of grieving people have trouble sleeping so getting that fresh air really helps them out."

McManus said the program is especially important to run through the winter, when the season can feel more isolating. Last year, the group walked around the Rotary Complex's arena, but this year



Erin Mills and Melissa McManus, registered social workers at Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth, encourage members of the community who are grieving to join them on the hospice's Tuesday morning walks. (ALEX HUNT PHOTO)

they plan to use Upper Queen's Park. To keep it flexible, she added, a coffee component may be included on bad-weather days, with the option to move the walks indoors

McManus said people can sometimes feel socially uncomfortable around someone who is grieving, but the walking group helps remove that barrier.

Participants share a similar experience

and understand what others are going through, creating a sense of safety where loved ones can be spoken about without discomfort.

"There is a structure to the walk, we welcome and introduce everybody. We also want people to know that it's okay to have slower days and it's okay to not always be progressing," said McManus. "We start as a group and sometimes people pair off, we have trained volunteers that are there to help facilitate when facilitation is wanted or needed. They help guide the group; we do training for the volunteers for any discussions they might encounter on the walk."

Mills offers six free counselling sessions to those who are grieving or those are caring for their loved one who has a terminal illness. Rotary Hospice schedules quarterly webinars as well as bereavement groups. Everything is free and open to everybody in the community.

"I think more bereavement services have been needed for a long time, we have been lacking those in the community," said Mills. "I would say that Steps for Support is filling this need. This is more of a laid-back approach especially good for someone who isn't sure if they're about to talk about what they're going through."

Those interested in Steps for Support can register through 519-508-4900 ext. 740 or email at sw@rotaryhospice.ca.

Funding opportunity helps youth turn ideas into community impact

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

Got an idea to make your community better? United Way Perth-Huron's Youth in Action Grants give young people the funding and freedom to create projects that matter to them and their peers

The United Way is inviting youth aged 14-24 to apply for its Youth in Action Grants, offering up to \$1,200 for projects that address issues affecting young people in Perth and Huron counties. Applicants will also need an adult trustee over the age of 25.

"Youth in Action Grants are an opportunity for our youth to come to us with some creative ideas on projects that would help benefit their community," said Kristin Crane, director of community impact and research at the United Way.

"They will have a chance to participate in some action-based work and receive the funding to be able to do that, so we hope that it's empowering and inspiring youth to address concerns, challenges or issues that they see."

The deadline to apply for the grants closes on Oct. 26. Crane says that the youth funded projects likely wouldn't start until early next year.

Crane said while schools provide skills and knowledge,

there are often few opportunities for students to access funding and bring their ideas to life. The Youth in Action Grants give young people that chance, she added, emphasizing the importance of youth-led projects that reflect the needs of both participants and their peers.

"We encourage youth and adult trustees to follow up with us if they have questions about the application process," said Crane. "If they have an idea that's not fully formed and they want to chat about their ideas with us, we are happy to work with them."

Crane adds that the United Way wants youth to realize their potential and be able to come together to allow them all that they can be within the community. With the important stream of funding offered by the United Way, Crane says that she's looking forward to what people come up with.

To apply for funding, applicants can visit the website at perthhuron.unitedway.ca.

United Way Perth-Huron aims to reduce poverty, support housing initiatives and promote mental health and well-being. The organization partners with donors and community groups to ensure vulnerable residents across Perth and Huron counties receive the help they need, when they need it. To volunteer or donate, call 519-271-7730 or 1-877-818-8867 or visit perthhuron.unitedway.ca.

GOT AN IDEA TO DO GOOD?

NEED MONEY

TO MAKE IT WORK?

\$1,200 Grants Available




Funds support youth-led projects that aim to improve the lives of youth in Perth and/or Huron County.




Youth or groups of youth, 14-24 years of age, are invited to submit an application in partnership with an adult trustee (25+). Apply by: October 20, 2025
perthhuron.unitedway.ca or ✉ info@perthhuron.unitedway.ca

United Way Perth-Huron has launched the Youth in Action Grants to help youth launch meaningful community initiatives. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Speak Stratford Toastmasters offering a safe environment for public speaking

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Speak Stratford Toastmasters is looking for more members to join their organization and ensures a safe space to practice speaking for anything from speeches to job interviews to day-to-day conversations.

"Besides a ton of fun, you can expect practice speaking at every single meeting," said club president Morgan Gingerich.

Meeting every Monday evening at the Sobey's community room on 581 Huron St. from 7-8:30 p.m., Speak Stratford Toastmasters offers casual conversation opportunities including literary corner, where one member reads a piece from a

book, magazine, or newspaper aloud each meeting, and table topics where participants can speak in a group off the cuff and without preparation. Although speeches are encouraged, they are not required at Toastmasters meetings.

The chairperson of a Speak Stratford Toastmasters evening will pick a theme for the meeting, and past topics include tomatoes, potatoes, rubber ducks, the sky and the movie Frozen. Meanwhile, the Grammarian will introduce the word of the day and keeps track of the use of filler words such as "um," "ah" and "you know." Both roles rotate weekly.

"It's really important to essentially have that exposure therapy," Gingerich said. "I joined myself to reduce my use of filler words and I stuck around in the group,

well because I had so much fun, but also because I'm developing a lot of other skills – leadership, clear communication, increasing my vocabulary, so those have been key takeaways for me."

Gingerich added that the Speak Stratford Toastmasters offers a welcoming and supportive environment for all, even for those who are terrified of public speaking.

"The first time I joined a meeting I was so scared I actually got to the door and I was so afraid to go in, that I went all the way back out to my car before I got the courage to come in and when I did join, everyone was so welcoming," she said.

Aleah Graff, vice-president of membership, said the club helped her with her public speaking skills in her role as community engagement coordinator at Avon-

dale United Church and her day-to-day conversations.

"I find that even that not within my job, just being able to interact with a variety of people with a variety of live experiences is something that I struggled with in the past and I feel like Toastmasters is helping with my overall confidence, not only in public speaking but making small talk as well," Graff said.

Anyone looking to check out Speak Stratford Toastmasters can attend three meetings, either consecutively or non consecutively, before deciding if they would like to be a member. Once they become a member, they pay a membership fee every six months. More information can be found online by visiting speakstratford.toastmastersclubs.org.

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Stratford Fire Department urges safe charging practices during Fire Prevention Week

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

Fire Prevention Week runs Oct. 5-11, and this year's theme is Charge into Fire Safety.

The Stratford Fire Department is reminding residents to use the right chargers for devices with lithium-ion batteries and to follow manufacturer instructions.

"You shouldn't be using just any charger you can find for a device," she said. "Each

device should come with its own charger, and that charger and battery should never be used if damaged or modified."

Walter also cautioned against charging devices on beds or other soft surfaces. "Always charge on a hard surface, not under a pillow or on any soft surfaces," she said.

When batteries reach the end of their life, they should be discarded properly. "You never want to dispose of any kind of battery in household garbage," she said.

"The city has hazardous waste drop-off days at the landfill four times per year, and you can also bring old batteries to the fire department."

Her final reminder: "Handle with care, charge with caution and know when to call 911."

The fire department will also have a table at Canadian Tire on Ontario Street during Fire Prevention Week to answer questions and share safety tips.



From left: Fire inspector Andrew Rogerson, director of training Kevin Cobb, director of fire prevention Scott Petrie, fire safety educator Lisa Walter, fire administrator Shanna Core and Captain Steve Ford stand in front of a fire truck with the 2025 Fire Prevention Week sign. (AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

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PERTH EAST – MILVERTON STATION

Left to right: Wade Goodwin, Captain Paul Leis, Justin Dietrich, Reid Baillie, Brennan Watson, Travis Hammer, Station Chief Kevin Reis, Gary Streicher, Rob Brett, Captain Scott Smith, Captain Dan Gerber, Ryan Harloff, Captain Adam Ropp, Adam Harloff, Kyle Woodrow, Stephen Jantzi, Station Watch Jerry Smith, Ken Kuepfer.
Absent: Deputy Station Chief Mike Carter, Tony Tabbert, Keela Shantz, Jarvis Kuepfer, Nathen Milovancev, Jess Jorritsma.



PERTH EAST – SEBRINGVILLE STATION

Back row, left to right: Aaron Langille, Andrew Hodgkin, Maxim Mulder, Andrew Thiel, Carson Dunseith, Tylor Walters, Jeremy Root, Brady Simpson, Shay Herrett, Meadow Coulson, Ryan Walters, Jeff Serf.

Front row, left to right: John Timmermans, Tessa Feryn, Captain Walter Ziltener, Captain Jake Jenkins, Deputy Station Chief Corey Keller, Station Chief Dean Simpson, Captain Glen Dunseith, Captain Derrick Robertson, Craig Jezard, Jason Depatie, Travis Clarke.

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Always use the cords that came with the product to charge. Follow the instructions from the manufacturer. Buy new chargers from the manufacturer or one that the manufacturer has approved. Charge your device on a hard surface. Don't overcharge your device. Unplug it or remove the battery when it's fully charged.

RECYCLE BATTERIES RESPONSIBLY.

Don't throw lithium-ion batteries in the trash or regular recycling bins because they could start a fire. Recycle your device or battery at a safe battery recycling location. Visit call2recycle.org to find a recycling spot near you.



fpw.org

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Fire Prevention Week™ October 5-11, 2025

CHARGE into Fire Safety™



Sparky says: Put phones and tablets on something hard when you plug them in.



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sparky.org • sparkyschoolhouse.org



Handle with Care, Charge with Caution, and Know When to Call 911

Handle carefully: Do not throw, bend, crush, or modify lithium-ion batteries

Use original chargers: Always use the manufacturer's approved charger and cord to prevent overheating

Act fast: If a lithium-ion battery is damaged or starts a fire, immediately move the device to a safe, non-flammable spot, evacuate the area, and call 911





Charge into Fire Safety: Fire Prevention Week Shines a Light on Lithium-Ion Battery Safety

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Fire Prevention Week is just around the corner, running Oct. 5-11, and this year's theme from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) is "Charge into Fire Safety – Lithium-Ion Batteries in Your Home."

From cell phones and laptops to power tools and e-bikes, lithium-ion batteries are part of our everyday lives. But did you know, they can become a fire risk if they're damaged or not used properly? That's why local fire departments are reminding residents to take a few simple steps to keep their families safe.

Here are some helpful tips:

- Always use the charger that comes with your device or is approved by the manufacturer.
- Don't charge batteries on beds, under pillows, or near

anything that can burn.

- If a battery looks swollen, feels hot, or gives off a strange smell—stop using it right away. If it is safe to do so, move it outdoors away from any combustibles.

- Charge and store devices away from doors and exits, just in case you need a quick escape.

"Lithium-ion batteries are everywhere in our homes," said Fire Chief Bill Hunter of West Perth and Perth East. "The good news is, with a little care, we can enjoy the convenience they bring while keeping our homes safe."

Throughout Fire Prevention Week, keep an eye out for events and fire safety messages from your local fire department. It's a great chance to learn, ask questions, and get the whole family involved in fire safety.

Thank you to our dedicated
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PERTH EAST – SHAKESPEARE STATION

Back row, left to right: Mike Hill, Dave Wilhelm, Andrew Sebben, Jay Wettlaufer, Zach Lindner, Tim Hodgson, Jim Luckhardt, Ayden Gautreau, Rob Faulhafer, John Knechtel.

Front row, left to right: Ben Lindner, Kyle Soetemans, Captain Dave Bell, Captain Matt Neumeister, Deputy Station Chief Steve Marriott, Station Chief Greg Ankenmann, Captain Jeff Forthuber, Captain Barb Myers, Harley Langford, Adam Higgins.

Absent: Adam Wilhelm.



WEST PERTH STATION

Driver's seat: Dispatcher Randy Satchell

Back of the truck: Top, Jody Catalan. Below, Station Chief Ken Monden

Top of the truck, back row left to right: Ryan Osborn, Trevor Vanderhyden, Emily Dewetering, Chris McKone, David Peeters, Curtis Vessie, Cory Willows, Captain Rick Cook.

Front row, left to right: Amanda Pennings, Deputy Station Chief Mike Montgomery, Lisa Mohr, Brad Brace, Kory McKone, Ben Thompson, Garret Scherbarth, Matt Krug, Captain Rob Lealess, John Wight, Captain Joe Graul, Chris Wise, Captain Cody Feltz.

Absent: Chaplain Bill Ney, Matt Rock, Joe Rock, Brad French.

STRATFORDTIMESSPORTS

Warriors routed Sarnia and crowned Komoka to pick up their first wins of the season

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY
Times Correspondent

The Stratford Hunter Steel Warriors travelled to Sarnia to face the lowly Legionnaires on Sept. 25 and hosted the Komoka Kings at the Allman Arena on Sept. 26.

Stratford entered the game in Sarnia with a winless record through two games and ranked second lowest in the league with only four goals scored. On the final practice of the week on Sept. 24, Warriors Captain Haden Frayne told the Times he is confident that the team will be better and more efficient offensively.

"It's obviously not the best start we

wanted, but I think we're doing a lot of things right," Frayne said.

"We have a good foundation to build off, and I think it's just a matter of time of putting the puck in the net. We have some great forwards, and we know it'll happen, and it'll come."

Frayne's words came to fruition in Sarnia as the Warriors bashed the Legionnaires for 52 shots en route to the 6-1 win, their first of the season. Quinn Kipfer led the Warriors with three points (one goal, two assists).

It was another night of firsts for the Warriors as Lucas Minard scored his first two career GOHL goals and Gage Hurst stopped 30 out of 31 Sarnia shots for his first career win in his first career game in the league. Jonas Schmidt, Aaron Green, and Colin Slattery scored the other goals for Stratford.

On Sept. 26, the Warriors defeated the Komoka Kings at the Allman Arena by the score of 5-3. For the second straight game, Minard led all Warriors goal scorers with two goals. Aaron Green, Jack McGurn and Dax Vader also scored a goal for Stratford.

Schmidt continued his point streak to start the season at all four games as he recorded a pair of assists. Rhyse Brown notched two assists as part of nine different Stratford players who tallied a point in the game. Connor Davis saved

14 of 17 shots to pick up his first win as a member of the Warriors.

After the game, Warriors head coach Dave Williams said he likes how the team responded this week, as well as the performances from both goaltenders.

"I think we took advantage of some of our opportunities. You know, I thought we were doing a better job of getting pucks towards the net. So, I think it's just a matter of putting more pucks towards the net and making sure we're getting more bodies there," Williams said.

"It wasn't probably the opening week-end we wanted to have as a group. I think for both those guys to each get into a game, each get a win, is hopefully good for their confidence. Because this league has so much parity in it that we're going to have to be solid and consistent as we can be from the crease out."

As of press time, the Warriors are ranked 17th out of 23 teams in the GOHL on the power play, with a 12.5 per cent success rate, but ranked 12th on the penalty kill, with a 78.9 per cent success rate.

Looking forward to next week's games against the Hamilton Kilty B's and the Fort Erie Meteors, Williams says the team needs to continue improving their game.

"It's just a matter of continuing to work on the things that we think are part of

our identity, and again, a lot of times just being more consistent with very simple plays," Williams said.

"On top of that, obviously, I think we need to get more focus on special teams. The power play and the penalty kill need to be better. Hopefully it's just a little bit of sloppiness to start the season, and we can find a little structure and consistency with both groups."

On Sept. 29, the GOHL announced Minard was the Western Conference Player of the Week after his four-goal week. Minard is appreciative of the honour, but said that winning both games was important to him.

"It's definitely cool to get something like that. Anytime you can be recognized for anything is amazing," Minard said. "But the other day, it's we got our points in our two games. So, we got four points, and that's really what matters."

Hurst says the team gained confidence in winning the two games after the tough opening week.

"I think the first two games weren't ideal, but the boys stuck together and we got rewarded with our second two games there," Hurst said.

The Warriors play two inter-conference games this coming weekend. They will host the Hamilton Kilty B's at the Allman Arena on Oct. 3 and then travel to Fort Erie to face the Meteors on Oct. 4.

Stratford Warriors 2025-26 Stats (as of September 26, 2025)						
Player	Pos	GP	G	A	PTS	
Jonas Schmidt	F	4	3	3	6	
Lucas Minard	F	4	4	1	5	
Rhyse Brown	F	4	0	5	5	
Aaron Green	D	4	2	2	4	
Jack McGurn	F	4	1	3	4	
Quinn Kipfer	F	4	1	1	2	
Dax Vader	F	4	1	1	2	
McQuen HayLock	F	4	1	1	2	
Dominic Marshall	F	4	1	0	1	
Colin Slattery	F	4	1	0	1	
Max Wildfong	F	4	1	0	1	
Matthew Blake	D	3	0	1	1	
Joseph Curtain	D	3	0	1	1	
Will Coward	D	4	0	1	1	
Haden Frayne	D	4	0	1	1	
Coen Galbraith	F	4	0	1	1	
Mateo Craievich	D	3	0	0	0	
Grady Murphy	F	3	0	0	0	
Drew Hodge	D	4	0	0	0	
Goalies	Record	GAA	SV-%			
Connor Davis	1-1-1-0	3.34	0.841			
Gage Hurst	1-0-0-0	1.00	0.968			



Shakespeare Swans wrap up 2025 season

GARY WEST
Times Correspondent

Games are played Tuesday and Thursday mornings from late May until late September.

McCellan said everyone wants to win, but the main focus is on fun and just getting out and staying active while playing ball.

The Swans have taken first place in the league in 2022, 2023 and 2024, and narrowly missed out on the top spot this year. The Swans came a close second. Guelph ended up with .692: 18 wins and six losses, while Shakespeare had an average of .667: 16 wins and six losses (and had two less games due to rain-outs).

According to Sandra McCellan, one of the organizers of the league, team members must be at least 50 years old and there are several who are over 80 and still play good ball.

If residents in and around Shakespeare ever head to the ballpark and see some seniors and almost-seniors playing ball mid-morning, you don't have to take a second look. They are the Shakespeare Swans, a co-ed seniors slow-pitch team.

The fun, yet competitive, league that the Swans are in includes the Kitchener Cougars, the Kitchener Bat Attitude, the Cambridge Legends and the Guelph Royals. It got its name from Stratford's iconic mute swans (pre-COVID-19 pandemic the team was based in Stratford).

GOHL Western Conference Standings (as of September 29, 2025)							
Team	W	L	OTL	SOL	PTS	GF	GA
London Nationals	6	0	0	0	12	30	19
Chatham Maroons	5	1	0	0	10	35	17
LaSalle Vipers	4	1	1	0	9	23	19
Elmira Sugar Kings	4	2	0	0	8	28	15
St. Marys Lincolns	3	2	1	0	7	20	14
Waterloo Siskins	2	1	3	0	7	14	15
Komoka Kings	3	2	0	0	6	20	21
Stratford Warriors	2	1	1	0	5	15	12
Strathroy Rockets	2	3	1	0	5	23	27
St. Thomas Stars	2	3	0	0	4	24	16
Listowel Cyclones	1	5	0	0	2	11	22
Sarnia Legionnaires	0	6	0	0	0	3	44



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Off the Wall opens registration for winter season

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

While summer has made a quiet exit and Stratford Off the Wall's fall workshops are filled to the brim, the theatre production learning centre has announced its winter workshops.

"These workshops are uniquely designed to appeal to anyone with a creative interest in theatrical arts," said Off the Wall board chair Elizabeth Dahmen. "Our instructors, many of whom work at the Stratford Festival, have years of experience and are excited to share their skills in these classes."

Off the Wall is a not-for-profit alliance of production artists from the festival and passionate theatre supporters. Its mission is to promote and support theatre production arts and artists, hiring seasoned professionals to pass on their exceptional experience and unique skills to the next generation of backstage artists for theatres across Canada. Its intensive workshops are open to anyone eager to explore theatre production arts, whether as a hobby or a

pathway to a career.

The winter season includes:

Wig Making – Jan. 5-8

Learn the basics of wig creation, modification and dressing in this popular four-day workshop. Note: Jan. 9 is a weather contingency date.

Pattern Drafting Workshop – Jan. 10-11 and 17-18

Create a three-dimensional costume pattern ready to be cut and sewn from two-dimensional costume designs in this double-weekend workshop.

Theatrical Upholstery Workshop – Feb. 7-8 and 14-15

Discover the joy of turning an older piece of furniture into something special when you learn the basics of upholstery magic.

Art Direction Workshop – March 28-29

Gain insight into the visual world of film and theatre. Learn how art direction sets the tone, mood and character definition in fictional space.

Participants from all backgrounds are



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Off the Wall has opened registration for its winter season, which includes workshops like its Wig Making class.

welcome; these workshops provide an opportunity to expand professional skills with future employment in mind, or simply to explore personal creativity.

The doors are open, but Off the Wall warns that classes fill up fast. Visit <https://stratfordoffthewall.com/> to see times and confirm availability.

stratfordoffthewall.com/ to see times and confirm availability.

Off The Wall is located at Factory163 at 163 King St. For general inquiries email admin@stratfordoffthewall.com or call 519-275-2554.

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Jessica B. Hill's *Pandora* returns to where it all started

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Stratford Festival favourite Jessica B. Hill didn't consider herself a writer, though she knew she loved writing. Only a few years later, Hill is now considered one of Canada's most exciting burgeoning playwrights, having been profiled by the Globe and Mail and featured on CBC Radio's Q program.

Hill's sudden rise is in part due to the Here For Now Theatre-commissioned play *Pandora*, which returns for its inaugural winter season this year.

Pandora tells the story, or perhaps re-tells the story, of the iconic mythical character of *Pandora*, the ancient Greek woman who opened a jar (though commonly referred to as a box) and unleashed all the evils of humanity into the world. Hill's story explores the "unexpected connections between ancient myth and modern science, where quantum entanglement collides with the mysteries of being human," according to Here For Now's website.

But in many ways, for all its quarks, it is about the nature of uncertainty and interconnection, as Hill explained.

"It's a play about hope," Hill explained. "What binds us together? Why do people gather? Why do theatre? How quantum mechanics and science and art are actually closer together."

Hill wrote *Pandora* during the pandemic after Here For Now's founder Fiona Mongillo encouraged her to try her hand at writing. Although not staged that year, it was the subject of a recorded reading in 2021.

Pandora ultimately premiered in Winnipeg in 2023 for the Shakespeare in the Ruins theatre company, a co-production with Prairie Theatre Exchange.

"What really kicked it up a notch is they found this incredible designer called Jaymez from Winnipeg as well to design the show, both the set projections and the soundscape," Hill said. "He took this play and catapulted it be-



Jessica B. Hill as the titular character in the 2023 production of *Pandora* in Winnipeg. The Here For Now-commissioned play returns for its inaugural winter season this year. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

yond my wildest dreams of what this thing could be. And so that's what's coming back to Here For Now, is the fully realized version of this thing he built. So much of *Pandora* is about the box, right? ... He built a steel box that was about the size of the black box theatre on an angle, like on a tilt, like it had just crashed into the black box."

Everything about that knockout run, from director Rodrigo Beilfuss to Jaymez's designs, returns for this newest run. Like all Here For Now productions, *Pandora* will be an intimate show where the audience is front and centre to the titular character, played by Hill in this one-woman production.

It is the kind of show which Hill said perfectly fits in a city like this one, complementing the world-famous Stratford Festival's grand-scale productions.

"It's so important to have something like (Here For Now), where artists can tackle different disciplines they might not necessarily want to explore in the larger context," Hill said.

To that effect, Hill thanked Mongillo for her initial push to get into writing, as well as for inviting the production back to Stratford.

Pandora runs from Nov. 5-16, with its official opening night being Nov. 7. It takes over the Rose McQueen Stage at 24 St. Andrew St.

Those interested can purchase tickets at <https://purchase.herefornowtheatre.com/Events>.

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Jonathan Church named Stratford Festival's next artistic director

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The Stratford Festival's next artistic director will be joining the storied theatre company from across the pond. The festival announced on Oct. 1 that Jonathan Church will take over from Antoni Cimolino in 2027.

Church, a much-celebrated artist whose productions have captivated audiences around the world, will join the festival from the U.K. His work as a producer and director has seen 45 Olivier Award nominations and 12 wins, 12 Evening Standard Award nominations and five wins and six Tony Award nominations.

He's also proud to be a dual citizen of the U.K. and Canada. His Canadian mother ensured this country was a big part of his life. He boasts that he's the only Brit who has a perfect j-stroke thanks to his summer camp canoeing



The Stratford Festival announced that Jonathan Church will take up the mantle of artistic director from Antoni Cimolino in 2027.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

expeditions in Algonquin Park.

Church has been coming to the festival for more than 20 years

and considers Cimolino a friend and admired colleague, as well as one of the top directors of

Shakespeare in the world.

Church has held key leadership roles at major U.K. institutions,

including artistic director of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre and the Chichester Festival Theatre, a sister theatre to the Stratford Festival, with a thrust stage modelled on the one at the Festival Theatre. With a history including both not-for-profit and commercial theatre, he is currently the director of Jonathan Church Theatre Productions, which has produced more than 30 plays and musicals in the West End, on tour in the U.K. and internationally.

In his time at Chichester, a remarkable 48 productions toured or had West End runs, including a critically acclaimed production of *Macbeth*, directed by Rupert Goold and starring Patrick Stewart, which moved to the West End before transferring to BAM in New York and then Broadway. It's one of his many successes.

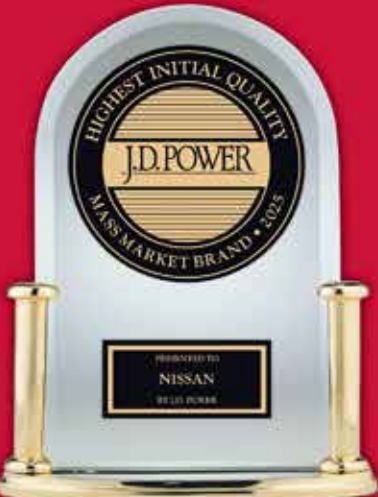
Jonathan will join the festival in March to plan the 2027 season.



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Local band Upside Of Maybe celebrates three awards at prestigious International Red Carpet Awards

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

Band of the Year. Best Blues Song of the Year. Best Folk Song of the Year.

With January's release of the eclectic album *Saints and Sinners*, the band Upside Of Maybe have found international recognition overseas, winning those three awards from the International Red Carpet Awards.

The awards show is based in Europe and aims to put independent artists and small music companies in the spotlight where they belong. The group of local lads led by Michael Bannerman received Blues Song of the Year for the song "Alright" and Folk Song of the Year for the tune "Phat Lady Singing."

They first heard of the nomination about six months ago and learned that these awards were international and quite prestigious, so thought that Bannerman and his wife would attend to network and meet more people in the industry.

"We were actually nominated in eight categories, and we were excited about that but we just weren't sure how legitimate it was until we starting looking into it and found out it was pretty fancy when you get there, so we thought it would be worth going. Even if we don't win something it would be good to go and have some fun and meet some other artists and network a bit," said Bannerman.

The minds behind the awards heard that Upside Of Maybe had a new album out and reached out to the band and asked that the new album, *Saints and Sinners*, be submitted. Once received, they decide which categories the songs fit into. There were 1,200 submissions for Blues Song of the Year.

"It goes to a jury. I was talking to one of the jurors and she listened to 1,200 songs for blues song so ours was selected out of 1,200 submissions for that one spot. Each



The band Upside Of Maybe features Scott Bannerman on keyboard, Troy Lockyer on drums, Andy Horrocks on electric guitar, John Monroe on bass and Michael Bannerman on acoustic guitar. A triumphant Michael Bannerman recently returned from the Netherlands with three awards. (LISA CHESTER PHOTO)

award has a jury of five people who listen to all the material submitted. Then they make a cut, and another cut, and then if you make it to the third cut you'll get notice that says you've received an official nomination. Then they listen to it again and make the awards," said Bannerman.

The ceremony was split over two nights, and Upside Of Maybe won the Folk Song of the Year for the energetic and catchy tune "Phat Lady Singing" early in the evening. It was on the second night that the band won for Blues Song of the Year for the choir backed song "Alright."

"The second night, they had us on stage already for the blues award and that was really cool, and then the judge says, 'Oh by

the way, you also won for Best Band of the Year, too. I'm usually not caught off guard, I'm usually a babler, I usually can come up with something to say, but that left me speechless. I haven't really experienced that often. It's just like losing your breath. All I could say was, 'Oh wow!'" said Bannerman.

He did, however, recover enough to give a speech of gratitude on behalf of his bandmates, for friends, spouses and most importantly, the fans out there that appreciate and support the band along the way.

Being caught off guard as he was, is a moment that really stands out for him from the ceremony. "When you're at an international event, being from Canada, everyone was

really welcoming and nice, everyone genuinely loves Canada. No one had a bad thing to say. One of the first things that happened was meeting a band from Croatia and the keyboard player said he knew a musician from Canada. 'Do you know a Jay Riehl?' and I said, 'You mean from Stratford?' Of all the people from Canada, Jay recorded our very first album from years ago," said Bannerman.

To be on an international stage and to have fellow Canadians recognized was very rewarding for Bannerman, saying that the country was well represented. There were submissions from 38 nations such as Italy, Ireland, Holland and Germany to name a few.

Bannerman is looking forward to the future for the band and the possible opportunities that attending and winning at the event have already presented. He really clicked with some musicians he met from Ireland and together they could possibly connect for a storytelling kind of tour.

Next year they are travelling to Japan where their song "Small Mouth Disneyland" is a big hit due in large part to the popularity of bass fishing and the nickname given a boat. A professional Japanese bass fisherman nicknamed his boat Small Mouth Disneyland where all the fish were coming to play. Upon seeing this on TV, Bannerman looked at his brother Scott and they both thought that would make a great name for a song, so they wrote it, recorded it and sent it to the fisherman who now uses it for his walk on song.

This hardworking band is currently planning on being at Emmanuel United Church Oct. 18 in Kitchener for fans that love the energy of the live shows. Their album *Saints and Sinners* is available on favoured streaming platforms and for digital download on the band's website upsideofmaybe.com.

Cops for Cancer fundraising goal surpassed with over \$22,000 raised so far

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The Stratford Police Service (SPS) and Perth County OPP have surpassed its fundraising goal of \$20,250, after a weekend event in Mitchell put them over the finish line.

As of press time, the two police services have raised \$22,084.50.

The services are participating in this year's Cops for Cancer, organized by the Canadian Cancer Society. The first Cops for Cancer began in 1994 with one police officer who wanted to make a difference. Since then, it has grown into a united effort across Canada, one of the largest fundraising events for childhood cancer research in the country.

Nearly \$56 million has been raised through the fundraiser, with funds going to increase survival rates and support children living with cancer and their families.

Acting Deputy Chief Mark Taylor of the SPS and Sgt. Barry Cookson of the OPP kicked off the event on Sept. 9 when they got their heads shaved at Stone Town Barber Shop in St. Marys, marking nearly a month of raising money for cancer research.

"We would like to thank everyone who has donated so far and a big thank you to everyone who donated raffle prizes," SPS stated in a social media post.

For more information, or to donate, visit <https://tinyurl.com/mr357rxf>.



Acting Deputy Chief Mark Taylor of the SPS and Sgt. Barry Cookson of the OPP kicked off this year's Cops for Cancer on Sept. 9 when they got their heads shaved at Stone Town Barber Shop in St. Marys. The month culminated on Sept. 27, after a Mitchell event helped them surpass the goal of \$20,250, raising \$22,084.50 as of press time. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

New Hamburg author putting the final touches on new book, *The Cat did It: Marvellous and Magnificent Canadian Cats*

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

New Hamburg author Nancy Silcox has long been fascinated by people and their relationships with their pets.

Having written extensively about pets in the workplace in two volumes of *Workin' Like a Dog; Doin' Nuthin' Like a Cat*, Silcox turned her attention over the past year to Canadians and their cats after a characterization of women who own cats during the 2024 American election rubbed her the wrong way.

"I started it in January, and I was so incensed by what was going on in the American election with all this miserable talk about childless cat ladies from J.D. Vance," said Silcox, referring to the resurfacing late last year of then vice-presidential nominee J.D. Vance's 2021 comments calling Kamala Harris a childless cat lady. "It was just ridiculous and I love cats, and I thought, 'We need to celebrate our Canadian cats.'"

With the notion of writing a book featuring Canadians and their cats in mind and the goal of using book sales to raise money for cat rescues, charities and non-profits across the country, Silcox decided she would meet virtually with people from coast to coast to talk about their cats.

"They didn't have to be cats that did amazing things; though it turned out many of them do," Silcox said. "Cats really are amazing."

To connect with cat owners and their feline friends, Silcox took an interview with CBC K-W's Craig Norris. Though she only expected the interview to be broadcast locally, it was syndicated nationally and, before she knew it, Silcox's inbox was flooded with emails from people who really wanted to talk about their cats.

From that long list of submissions, Silcox connected with cats and their owners

from all walks of life, including singer-songwriter Jann Arden and her cat, Shrodie; author Margaret Atwood and her cat, Fluffy; Cole, the last-surviving cat of the Parliament Hill cat colony; Findus, the fearless adventure cat from Vancouver, B.C.; and Gary, the Instagram-famous cat that can ski, hike and paddle.

Closer to home, Silcox had the opportunity to meet Crosby, the cat stolen from a Pet Valu in Waterloo before he was recovered and adopted; Diggory, the musical, orange cat owned by Ken and Roberta Harrison of '80s and '90s pop-rock band Wild Strawberries; and Fern, the greenhouse cat at Stratford District Secondary School.

"One of the people that contacted me was Ms. (Christine) Ritsma at Stratford District Secondary School. She is the green industries teacher ... and she told me they had someone really special. They have a greenhouse cat whose name is Fern. The students found it two years ago outside in the cold, and they brought the kitten in and they adopted it. ... She passed this by the principal and the VP - 'We have a cat living in our greenhouse' - and they said that was fine.

"So, Fern continues to be the greenhouse cat at SDSS, and I went over and met Fern and the kids were wonderful. They adore Fern."

After Silcox thought she had all the cats she needed for her book, one more cat was brought to her attention last month - a cat she knew she had to make room in her book for. Though she is still in the process of setting a day and time to speak with his owner, Nico, the cat owned by Prime Minister Mark Carney and his family, will also make an appearance.

Silcox says she expects *The Cat did It: Marvellous and Magnificent Canadian Cats*, which has been picked up by Dundurn Press, to launch early next year.



Fern, the greenhouse cat at Stratford District Secondary School, will be featured in New Hamburg author Nancy Silcox's upcoming book, *The Cat did It: Marvellous and Magnificent Canadian Cats*. (NANCY SILCOX PHOTOS)



Prime Minister Mark Carney's cat, Nico, will be featured in New Hamburg author Nancy Silcox's upcoming book, *The Cat did It: Marvellous and Magnificent Canadian Cats*.

STONETOWN TRAVEL

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AUGUST 29 - SEPTEMBER 6, 2026



**CHRISTMAS TIME
ON THE DANUBE**
WITH PRAGUE EXTENSION
NOVEMBER 26 - DECEMBER 5, 2026

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9

Wilmot Recreation Centre at 2 p.m.
1291 Nafziger Rd., Baden (Wayne Roth room)

St. Marys Pyramid Recreation Centre at 7 p.m.
317 James St. S., St. Marys (The End Zone - upstairs)

To RSVP, email stew@stonetowntravel.com or call our office.

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Timothy Findley honoured, remembered with blue plaque at 72 Ontario St.

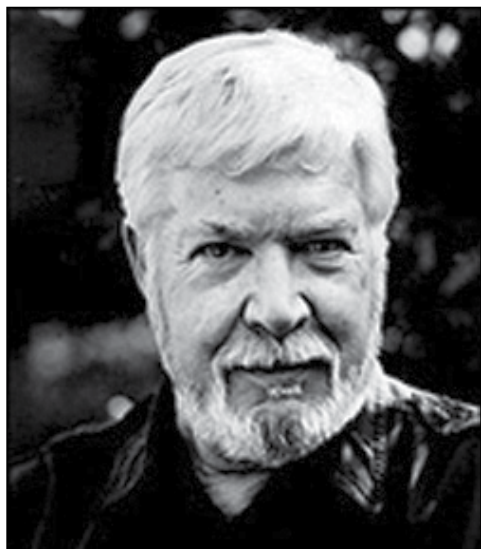
CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The list of Timothy Findley's accolades is a long one – deservedly so – and it grows even today, years after his death.

A 2025 blue plaque honouring Findley, the legendary Canadian novelist and playwright, was presented on Sept. 27. The international plaque program commemorates a link between a location and a famous person, serving as a historical marker. In this case, a plaque honouring Findley will be installed at 72 Ontario St., where he resided on-and-off between 1998 and 2002.

Findley was born in Toronto in 1930, in an upper-class district of the city. He pursued a career in the arts, studying dance and acting.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Timothy Findley, although mostly known for his work as a writer, was also a mentor distinguished for his dedication to passing the torch to another generation.



A family member of Timothy Findley laughs next to Andy Bicanic, a member of the Heritage Stratford advisory committee. The two were at the unveiling of the new blue plaque honouring Findley at 72 Ontario St., where the iconic novelist and playwright once lived.

(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Before focusing on writing, Findley had a prominent acting career. He was a member of the Stratford Festival's opening season in 1953, where he first met and performed opposite to Sir Alec Guinness in *Richard III*. Guinness would become a mentor to him over the years and his lessons proved fruitful even after Findley stopped acting. Findley said his years as an actor had influenced his abilities as a writer.

"It has been the greatest advantage I had when I began writing seriously, to have been an actor," Findley remarked in 2002. "(It is) the best apprenticeship for a writer. Because you learn language, structure, cadence, rhythm, how to build tension."

In 1967, he published his first novel *The Last of the Crazy People*, but it wasn't until 10 years later when *The Wars* was published that he garnered critical acclaim. *The Wars* won the Governor General's Award for English-language fiction and ushered in a storied career with numerous award-winning novels, plays and short story collections under his belt.

His last novel, *Spadework*, is set in Stratford, where he was living at what would be the end of his life. The book returns to his early career with the Stratford Festival, depicting the dramatic lives of young actors and Festival City residents.

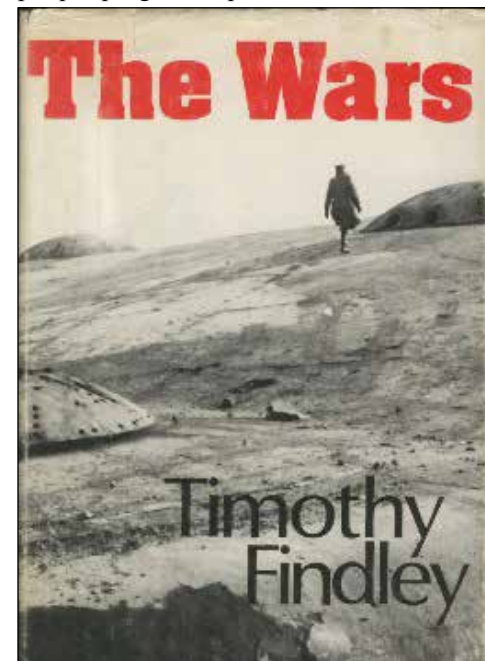
Although most know Findley for his

work as a writer, he was also known as a mentor. He taught at the Humber School for writers and the Humber Summer workshop and was distinguished for his dedication to passing the torch to another generation.

Findley passed away in Brignoles, France (where he and partner Bill Whitehead split their time) in 2002. He was 71 years old.

To learn more about Findley, a page and short documentary video will be posted on the City of Stratford's website.

Once posted, it can be found at <https://www.stratford.ca/en/live-here/blue-plaque-program.aspx>.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

***The Wars*, published in 1977, won the Governor General's Award for English-language fiction and ushered in a storied career with numerous award-winning novels, plays and short story collections under Findley's belt.**

Every child mattered at Community of Christ Church this past Sunday

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

Now that the end of September is here, one of the busiest churches in Stratford is back serving a full breakfast (after a two-month summer break), for anyone in the area – whether church members or not.

The Community of Christ Church at 226 Forman Ave. has been serving meal on Sundays to accommodate not only church congregation members, but also those who would like to join in on this free breakfast.

Church pastor Nancy Brookshaw, her husband Scott and her family, along with local egg farmers and church members, make sure their free-will monthly donations that are collected go to charities in

and outside the city that are in need of a "hand up."

There are those that come from not only Stratford, but Tavistock and Shakespeare areas, along with St. Marys and Mitchell, and are always willing to help in making donations. By and large, they are happy for the company of friends, family and neighbours, to share a meal together.

Recognizing that "every child matters," many of those on Sunday wore orange t-shirts, to recognize and show a united support for the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on Sept. 30.

In keeping with the special day, following the serving of 150 gratified church guests and friends, \$700 will be directed to a local Indigenous charity.

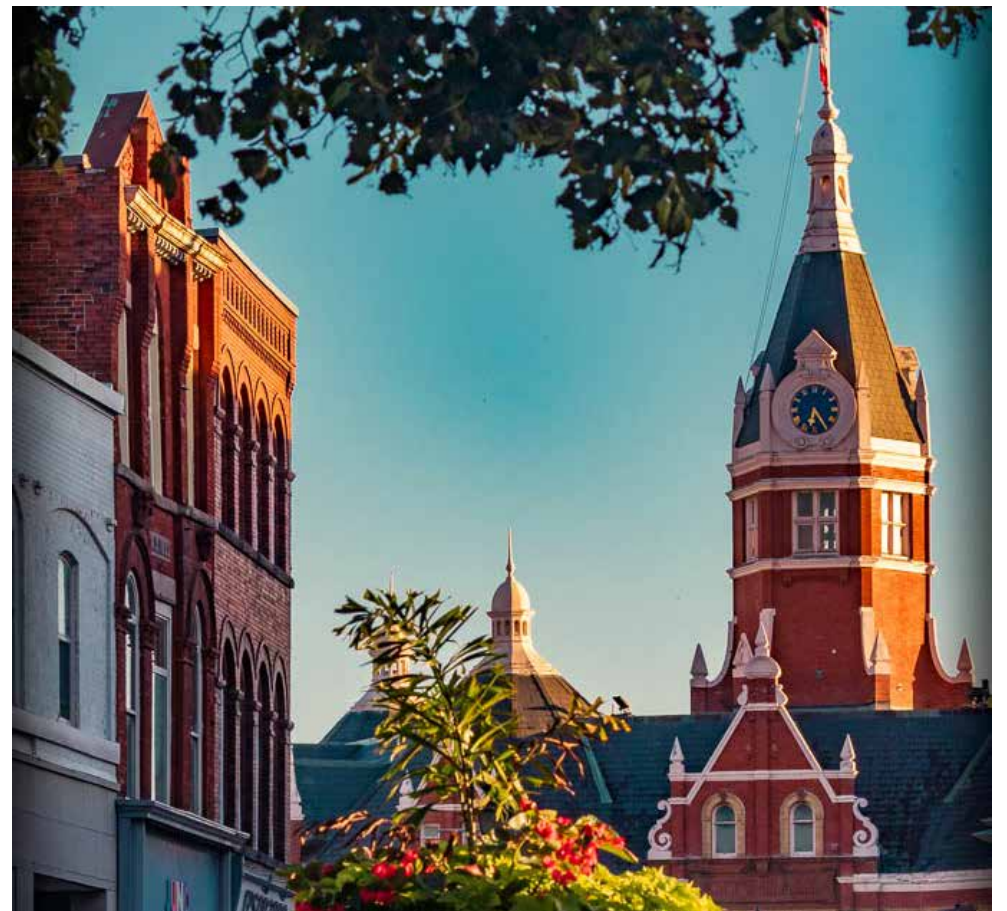


The Brookshaw girls are busy serving scrambled eggs, sausages, pancakes, porridge, toast, coffee and juice, to those young and older.

(GARY WEST PHOTO)

WWW.GRANTHAVEN.COM

Golden hour shines over Stratford



Stratford resident and photographer Will Bailey snapped these photos around the Festival City this past week. For more from Bailey, visit his Facebook page or see his posts on prominent community pages. If you have any pictures to share with readers, email them to us at stratfordtimes@gmail.com.

(WILL BAILEY PHOTOS)

Opinions

The colours of fall: Clarity and comfort in October's glow



IRENE ROTH

Times Columnist

October has a way of taking my breath away. Just when I think I've adjusted to autumn, this month arrives with its grand finale of colour – the fiery reds, glowing oranges and sunlit golds that turn ordinary streets into works of art. It's as if nature saves its most beautiful display for when we need it most, a reminder to keep looking for the light even as the days grow shorter.

October is also when I notice the darkness arriving earlier each night. Supper feels hurried,

and dusk seems to creep into the edges of the day. I used to find this disheartening, as if the hours were slipping away too soon. But in recent years, I've started seeing this shift in light differently.

These darker times signal to me to go inside more, not just inside of my home but inside of myself and examine my beliefs and values and see if they align with my true self.

Therefore, the trees themselves have become my guides. They let go with such grace – shedding what no longer serves them and doing it with beauty. Their blaze of colour feels like a reminder that change, though it can be bittersweet, can also be breathtaking. It's an invitation to think about what I might release this season too – perhaps worries, habits, or mindsets that keep me from feeling light.

October has also become the month I intentionally lean into coziness. I pull out my softest sweaters, brew tea that smells like cinnamon and cloves and fill

my evenings with the warm glow of candles. I linger a little longer in the kitchen, letting the scent of pumpkin bread or apple crisp turn an ordinary day into something worth remembering. These small rituals feel like a way to meet the dark with gentleness instead of resistance.

And then there are the quiet walks that October seems to beg for – the kind where the crunch of leaves under my shoes becomes its own soundtrack. There's something about the golden light filtering through thinning branches that brings a deep, quiet clarity. It's easier to be present this time of year, to notice the way the air smells sharper or the way the wind scatters leaves like confetti.

This season also inspires creativity. There's something about the vibrant colours and the cool, crisp air that makes me want to write more, bake more and invite inspiration to the table. I often keep a journal nearby in October just to capture the little thoughts

or reflections that drift in like leaves on the wind.

This year I am starting a new routine in the evening after supper where I will write for fifteen minutes on one of my passion projects. This will help me feel whole and more connected to my thinking. And I'll be able to finish my e-book by Christmas.

And even though October can carry a quiet melancholy, I've learned that it's not a heaviness to fear – it's an invitation to go inward. To light a candle, sit with my thoughts, and reconnect with what truly matters. There's a kind of peace in accepting that life moves in seasons, and that each one has its own rhythm and gifts.

Yes, the early sunsets can still feel heavy some days. But when I pause to notice how brilliantly the world is glowing, I feel gratitude rise up instead. October reminds me that light doesn't just come from the sky. It comes from colour, from warmth, from connection and from choosing to

savour the moment – by creating a sense of home and hearth.

You may want to start a ritual in October. Pick a single tree that captures your attention – maybe a maple that's at its fiery peak or an oak just beginning to turn. Visit it at least once this week. Stand under its branches for a few moments, take in the way the light hits the leaves, and let yourself just be. If you like, collect a single leaf and bring it home as a reminder that change can be beautiful – and that you, too, can let go with grace.

Sometimes, I think October is nature's gentle way of preparing us for what's ahead. Its brilliance feels like a gift meant to sustain us through the quieter, colder months to come. When I take time to soak in the golden afternoons and the rustling symphony of falling leaves, I feel as though I'm storing up moments of beauty – small lanterns of memory that I can carry with me into November's stillness and December's cold.

Earth Rise: Travelling lightly, living mindfully

ANNA KOWALCHUK

Times Columnist

In this last of three installments, where we have been looking at ways of vacationing and enjoying without destroying our planet, we will focus on the environmental impact of, and some creative alternatives to, air-travel.

According to author and futurist Blake Morgan (see his article "How Far Are We From Flying Zero-emission Airplanes?" on Forbes' website), the GHG emissions from one person flying round-trip from New York to London is the equivalent of heating an average single-family home for a year. This statistic becomes even more staggering when we realize that there are over 35 million commercial flights worldwide on an annual basis (see atag.org/facts-figures), and that number is continuing to rise, as are the tons of GHG's being spewed into the atmosphere.

Clearly, air-travel as it exists today is environmentally unsustainable. The airline industry, laudably, has committed to and is working towards reducing its massive carbon footprint. Research into developing sustainable aviation fuels (SAFs) which includes woody biomass derived from agricultural, forest, and other waste,

processed fatty acids from plant and animal oils, as well as other options, and designing lighter aircraft using fiberglass, aluminum and titanium alloys, is on-going.

But the implementation of these changes on any significant scale is, at best, a decade away, and for complete net-zero emission air-travel, we'll have to wait an optimistic 25 years. The predicted global temperature rise by 2050 is an additional 0.7 degrees Fahrenheit; take the impacts of all the climate calamities we're experiencing today – heatwaves, floods, crop failure, sea-rise, fishery declines, destruction of life-sustaining eco-systems – and double them.

The David Suzuki Foundation (see david Suzuki.org/living-green/air-travel) offers several tips to help air-travellers reduce their environmental impact. Fly economy if you can because the seats are smaller and more compacted, thus maximizing the passenger-to-carbon emissions ratio. Take direct non-stop flights, if possible, as take-off and landing requires the highest amount of fuel use and is, therefore, the greatest source of carbon emissions. Research and choose your airline carefully as there are those that are committed to flying with fewer empty seats,

and there are some that are switching to electric fleets for shorter hauls. These are small steps that all of us can take, but hopefully they will provide much needed momentum.

The foundation website also recommends refraining from flying. So, until we get a handle on this pesky looming-planetary-uninhabitability thing, my favorite way of travelling the world will continue to be via armchair.

The brilliant BBC Earth is just one of many TV and streaming channels that bring us breathtaking films and documentaries highlighting the stunning beauty and bounty of our magnificent world. And the National Geographic, Smithsonian Magazine, and many other award-winning journals are able to take us places to which the average person would never have access. From inside the reconstruction of the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, to an archeological dig of a Roman encampment in Germany, to a sweeping look at the critical importance, richness, beauty and fragility of the Amazon Forest, the world is, literally, at our fingertips.

It was in the mid 1960s, with the advent of the jet engine aircraft, that the airline industry really began ... ahem ... taking off. An increase in the number of airlines,

particularly low-budget and no-frills (such as Laker Airways) offered greater availability of air-travel at a substantially reduced financial cost (environmental costs were never factored in), and along with shrewd marketing campaigns aimed at making air travel to exotic places a status symbol, all led directly to today's environmental Frankenstein monster. Air travel became something we all wanted to do, we all could do and, so, we did.

A contrite Bill Clinton, reflecting once on his infamous bad behaviour, admitted deep regret, not only for his actions, but that those actions were taken, in his words, "for the worst reason of all – because I could." Let's learn from his insight. Let's refuse to indulge in bad environmental behaviour for that most vacuous of reasons – because we can. Let's be better than that. Let's exercise our wisdom and strength of character, dear readers, and firmly commit to treading lightly and mindfully on this, our only and inestimably precious good Earth.

If you know of an individual, company or organization that deserves recognition for their innovative and sustainable environmental practices, please contact me at frogs-a-leaping@tutamail.com.

Opinions

WEBCRAWLING IN THE LEAVES



SHEILA CLARKE

Times Columnist

“Snowbirds” we call the travellers to the southern sun in the winter. I’m thinking of snowbirds I’ve watched on the shores of Lake Huron – it’s breathtaking. I’ve watched them visiting flowering plants, drinking deep, and then setting off, airborne across the great lake, with no land in sight for hundreds of kilometres. Yes, they’re monarchs, totally majestic in their launch into the elements, between here and there. So many of us are helping all we can – everywhere I see milkweed, host plant for their eggs, caterpillars and chrysalises.

Have you seen other butterflies making that epic journey? There are two others that migrate – the long-tailed skipper and the painted lady. Okay, that’s two. Big question, what happens to all the other butterflies? The moths? The millions of other insects and spiders that we share the planet with? Every last one of them is important in maintaining the cir-



This caterpillar will spend the winter near its host plant, sheltered in a cocoon made of dead leaves.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

cle of life, that same circle which includes humans.

They’re not snowbirds, they’re snow residents – they stay here. We tend to think that because we don’t see them, they’ve gone elsewhere. Before I tell you where they are, let me tell a story. A bug scientist – an entomologist – was driving on a summer evening. He noticed very few bugs on the windshield. What? Remember the masses of bugs we used to accumulate on windshields on a summer evening? When the entomologist contacted other entomologists around the world, it turns out the same thing was happening in their countries. Further research found that insect numbers have dropped massively. The estimates vary between

60-80 per cent FEWER insects than we had. That would be agricultural spraying and removal of habitat – cutting down roadside and ditch wildflowers, removal of trees, cleaning out winter gardens and turning lawns into green carpets with no pollinators or native plants.

That has huge implications for biodiversity and for the web of life that sustains us. It means fewer pollinators, fewer bugs for birds that eat insects (swallows, wrens, chimney swifts, to name but three), less food for predators that eat birds, fewer birds to eat harmful insects – the entire web of life is threatened by a drop of that magnitude.

Back to the winter residents. The insects that are left have patterns

of survival in the winter, perfected over thousands of years. They hide. Where do they hide? They wrap themselves in leaves, they hide in plant stalks, in the soil, in sheltered places in trees, in gardens, in the woods. Many of those messy leaves on your lawn shelter helping insects, cocoons and larva. What do we do? We rake them up, trim the stalks, clean up the garden plants, and burn them, or pile them in compost heaps to heat up and disintegrate. Sometimes we save the leaves – because after all, as they decompose naturally, they provide fertilizer to lawns and gardens. To help the process along, we chop them up with the lawnmower.

Add that to spray and removal of habitat, it’s no wonder we’re

losing insects worldwide. We’ve fallen for advertising that tells us our lawns and gardens should look neat and sterile. That’s not nature. A recent study by Burghardt and Max Ferlauto found a 45 per cent reduction in moth and butterfly numbers in lawns cleared of leaves versus those where leaves remained. Syrphid flies, those incredibly important tiny little pollinators that masquerade as bees, wasps and flies, hide in sheltered places like leaves as larva, eggs or even adults (They eat aphids, by the way). Spiders decreased by up to 67 per cent, beetles by 24 per cent, and ichneumon wasps – solitary, nonstinging parasitoids that help vegetable gardeners by laying eggs in caterpillars and beetle larvae – dropped by 56 per cent.

Shredding leaves has the same result as raking and bagging. Remember Pogo? “We have met the enemy, and he is us.” You’ve heard the line: LEAVE THE LEAVES. Please do that – from the heart. We need those fellow travellers.

UPDATES:

1. Carbon parts per million (ppm) in the atmosphere as of Sept. 25, 2025: 423.9 ppm. Safe level, 350 ppm passed in 1990.

2. Happy autumn planting – it’s a great time to plant native plants!

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.

COMING EVENTS Email to inquire stratfordtimes@gmail.com

STRATFORD SCRABBLE CLUB

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

TROPHY X DREAM WEAVERS: STORYTELLING THAT TRANSFORMS US

Saturday, October 4; 3:00 - 4:30 p.m. and 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Sunday, October 5; 1- 2:30 p.m.

290 Downie St, Stratford Grand Trunk site — green space across from the bus station

Step into a circle of light and story. Trophy X Dream Weavers transforms Stratford’s historic Grand Trunk site into a glowing village of ten intimate tents, each one home to a powerful tale of transformation, hope, and the dreams that shape who we are. This is a free, all-ages event.

Email: contact@provocation.ca

Website: www.provocation.ca/2025-events--stratford

GARDEN STRATFORD GENERAL MEETING

Monday, Oct. 6; 7:15 – 9:00 p.m.

Army Navy Hall, 151 Lorne Ave. E., Stratford

Featured Presentation: “Secrets of Successful Garden Design”, Elizabeth Spedaliere, Owner of Blue Beech Design and Tri-County Master Gardener

Meeting Open to Everyone; Free Admission

OSTOMY SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Tuesday, October 7, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

93 Morgan St., Stratford

Speaker – Lisa Harper from the United Way. 211 and how it assists us day-to-day
Social time and snacks. Everyone welcome.
519-273-4327

PROBUS CLUB OF STRATFORD WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

October 8, 2025 at 10:00 to noon

The Army, Navy, Air Force facility

151 Lorne Ave. E in Stratford

Hear guest speakers, explore new interests, take tours
Fun and Fellowship in Retirement

BURGER & FRY NIGHT

Thursday Oct. 23

Legion 804 Ontario St B1, Stratford

Bring your friends out for a fun and tasty evening, supporting your local legion. No tickets needed, just show up! The cost is \$13 each or 2 for \$25. Take-out is available if preordered from Dave Hartney at 519-703-6544.

OXFORD PHILATELIC SOCIETY CIRCUIT BOOK FAIR

Saturday, Oct. 25; 10:00 am to 4:00 pm.

Church of the Epiphany, 560 Dundas Street, Woodstock Ontario N4S 1C7

Free Admission & Parking

Stop in and buy some stamps and meet fellow stamp collectors. About 8 participating stamp clubs.

Contact: Don Eaton dhfe@silomail.com

Website: http://www.rpsc.org/chapters/oxford

FRIDAY NIGHT EUCHRE

Friday Oct. 17 and Friday Nov. 21.

Legion 804 Ontario St B1, Stratford

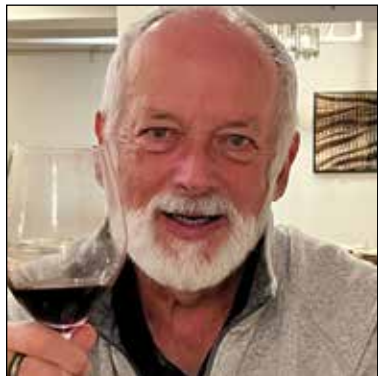
Doors open at 6 pm, play starts at 6:30 pm. Register your team of 2 people for \$20. Prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place. Call Dave at 519-703-6544, Anne at 519-301-0914 or the Legion at 519-271-4540 to register your team.

**HAVE A SPECIAL
EVENT COMING UP?**

Let us know!

**Contact: stratfordtimes@gmail.com
or call 519-655-2341**

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Personal passion produces wonderful attractions in New Brunswick



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Columnist

What do miniature trains, an electronic instrument called a theremin (think the Star Trek theme) and potatoes have in common? Well, they're all featured in quirky, delightful small museums in New Brunswick, a province that specializes in all things quirky and delightful.

So, during our time in New Brunswick, we visited with Guy LaForge, founder, operator, promoter and chief conductor at the Miniature Train Museum in Edmunston. We also dropped in at the Connell House Museum in Woodstock, which has a room that is chock-a-block with rare and wonderful musical instruments. And we toured Potato World Museum & Restaurant located in Florenceville-Bristol, "The French Fry Capital of the World."

And while none of these may be on your travel bucket list, I want to suggest that they – and several other similarly unique stops in New Brunswick – should be because they are fun, interesting and staffed by people who are passionate about their attractions, from trains to music to spuds.

Let's start in Edmunston. The Miniature Train Museum is the personal project of LaForge. He said to me, "I've been doing miniature train



One of many miniature train layouts in the museum.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

layouts since 40 years ago." The museum arose because he made a layout for his son; he confesses, "He grew up. ... I didn't."

And so, he shares his more-than-a-hobby with anyone who will drop by – that's about 3,000 guests a year. LaForge told me, "For a small museum, a lot of people are interested in it."

Visitors learn about the history of railways in New Brunswick, enjoy exhibitions that are changed annually and tour the elaborate miniature (not model) train layout. The museum has its own buildings, but the project has expanded into the basement of the home LaForge shares with his highly tolerant spouse, Geraldine.

Even with the extra room, not everything can be displayed in the museum because people keep giving LaForge bits of memorabilia. His collection now numbers over 4,000 pieces of railway history.

LaForge is as committed to recycling and sustainability as he is to railway history. Almost everything related to the museum has been made from recycled material. He calculates this has resulted in "over \$600,000 in savings!"

The museum is open from June through August, seven days a week, and LaForge loves every minute.

"I did this because I love it. I'm playing!"

Personal passion also sparked the unique musical instrument gallery at the Connell House Museum in Woodstock. The exhibition room is jam-packed with valuable antique instruments, musical devices from around the world and the otherworldly sounding theremin. They are all part of the personal collection of museum chair John Thompson – and the twist is, they are there to be played. There are no "please do not touch" notices in this room; instead, you are

welcome to sample the sounds.

I played a spinet, the theremin (very badly), and could have stayed all day, working my way through the keyboards, stringed instruments and percussion instruments available to visitors. It's an altogether remarkable opportunity for music-loving visitors.

We move on to Potato World which is yet another example of a New Brunswicker who was passionate about a project. Marilyn M. Strong, who passed away in 2019, was a personal assistant to Harrison McCain of McCain Foods for 43 years. McCain's produces one-third of the world's frozen French fries and is a huge employer and client for New Brunswick's essential potato industry.

Strong recognized the importance of the humble spud and she was determined that the history and significance of this key agricultural in-

dustry be properly recognized. The result was Potato World, a museum that tells the story of the potato, the history of farming, the people who have built the industry and its importance in the provincial economy. The attraction also includes the Hall of Recognition, honouring many who have made an important contribution to the potato industry – including Strong, herself.

The museum, which was first opened just over 20 years ago, underwent \$900,000 in renovations in 2023 and now includes a full-service restaurant where you are probably expected to order French fries.

The museum is open from mid-May through mid-October.

And speaking of passionate people, when we arrived at Potato World, we were introduced to our guide for the day. His name? Andrew Harvey. He happens to be the mayor of Carlton North, which includes Florenceville-Bristol. He had graciously set aside the day to spend with us, escorting us to other highlights of his community, including the Andrew and Laura McCain Art Gallery (the McCain footprint is very large in this part of New Brunswick); the iconic covered bridge that crosses the St. John River; the new state of the art recreation facility; and a very unlikely restaurant located in what looks like a full-scale replica of Noah's Ark.

So, quirky? Let's say, again, "passionate." These unique museums are built on the personal enthusiasm and energy of their founders, and I promise you, each place comes with a large side-order of fun.

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.



Guy and Geraldine LaForge, who own and operate the Miniature Train Museum in Edmunston, N.B.



The museum grounds include a historic train-station facade and a handcar.



Exotic instruments ready to be played at the Connell House Museum in Woodstock, N.B.

Riddles

- Why did the firefighter bring a ladder to the party?**

Because he wanted to raise the roof safely!
- Why don't fire extinguishers ever tell secrets?**

Because they might blow it.
- Why was the match always in trouble at school?**

Because it liked to start things.
- Why did the smoke alarm join the band?**

Because it had the perfect pitch!
- What's a firefighter's favorite type of sandwich?**

Anything with extra flame-grilled flavor—safely made, of course.
- Why did the candle fail math class?**

Because it couldn't handle the table of contents—it kept burning out.
- Why don't sparks ever get invited to parties?**

Because they always start something.
- Why was the campfire so good at making friends?**

Because it was always a warm presence—just remember to put it out!
- Why did the firefighter bring string to work?**

In case he had to tie up some loose ends.

Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 31

Pet of the week



LANCE

Lance is a dashing, affectionate cat who adores cuddling with his favorite people. When he's not snuggled up, you'll find him happily bird and bunny-watching from the window or pouncing on his toys with kitten-like charm.

Lance has tested positive for FIV, but that doesn't stop him from living a full, happy life. He just needs to be the only cat in the home, or live with another FIV+ cat. With his gentle nature and love for companionship, Lance is ready to be someone's loyal, lifelong friend.

Adopt Lance today at kwsphumane.ca.



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FIRE PREVENTION

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

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- AWARENESS
- PROTECTION
- PREPAREDNESS
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HELP WANTED



Township of Perth South

EQUIPMENT OPERATOR

The Township of Perth South Public Works Department is seeking a qualified **Equipment Operator**. Reporting to the Operations Manager, applicants will be experienced with the ability to operate and maintain various pieces of equipment, such as road graders, wheel loaders and tandem dump trucks. The candidate will also be required to complete roadside maintenance activities including, trees, signage, potholes, and debris clean up.

Applicants should have road maintenance and construction knowledge, experience in equipment operation and maintenance and a valid "DZ" license. This position is subject to weekend and winter scheduling and some emergency call-out.

The 2025 salary range for this position is **\$27.19 – \$33.99 per hour** based on a 40-hour work week.

The Township of Perth South offers excellent benefits and a competitive compensation package. For a detailed job description of this position, please visit www.perthsouth.ca

We thank all candidates for their interest, however, only those applicants selected for an interview will be contacted.

Interested candidates are invited to submit a detailed resume expressing their interest to the undersigned clearly marked as "Equipment Operator" by **Wednesday October 15th 2025**.

Ken Bettles, Director of Public Works

Township of Perth South

3191 Road 122, St. Pauls, ON N0K 1V0

Email - kbettles@perthsouth.ca

Information gathered is under the authority of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and shall only be used for candidate selection purposes.

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

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