UPWARD WITHDRAWS FROM COUNCIL RACE PAGE 9

PJHL ROUNDUP PAGE 20

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(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Officials gather Tuesday for the official opening of Shakespeare's new $4-million water treatment plant. Pictured from left are Steve Burns, senior engineer with B.M. Ross and Associates; Perth-Wellington MP John Nater; Perth East Mayor Rhonda Ehgoetz; Perth East public works manager Jake Collings; and Andrew Garland, vice president and senior engineer with B.M. Ross and Associates, who oversaw the project.

New Shakespeare water treatment plant officially opens, improving water quality and fire protection

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

After months of planning and construction, Shakespeare's new $4-million water treatment plant is officially up and running, providing improved drinking water quality and additional fire protection for village residents.

The new facility was officially opened Oct. 13, marking an important investment in the community's water infrastructure.

The treatment plant was constructed to address elevated arsenic levels previously

Continued on page 2

Wilmot mayoral candidates talk balancing economic growth with rural priorities

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

All four candidates vying for the Wilmot Township mayor's chair took part in a recent debate hosted by the New Hamburg Board of Trade, discussing several key issues facing the municipality.

Stephanie Goertz, Natasha Salonen, Kris Wilkinson and Clive Woolner shared a stage and provided those in attendance with their thoughts on some of the key issues facing Wilmot today, courtesy of moderator Randy Thompson. Below, the Gazette has published a portion of each candidates response, edited for length and clarity, to one of those questions.

One of the most contentious topics in the township recently has been growth and development, and the candidates shared their perspectives on the challenges and opportunities associated with the municipality growing through additional housing, infrastructure and municipal services.

How would you balance the need for

Continued on page 3

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Paid for by the Natasha Salonen Re-election Campaign

Shakespeare's $4M water treatment plant opens

Continued from page 1

detected in the village's water supply. With the new treatment system in operation, arsenic levels have been reduced to meet provincial drinking water standards.

For residents connected to the municipal water system, the improvements provide greater confidence in the quality and safety of the water flowing into their homes.

Perth East Mayor Rhonda Ehgoetz and Perth-Wellington MP John Nater were among those on hand for the grand opening, highlighting the importance of the project for Shakespeare residents.

The project received $580,000 in federal funding and $480,000 from the provincial government, helping the Township of Perth East move forward with construction of the new facility.

Beyond improving drinking-water quality, the new treatment plant will also provide an important benefit for local firefighters.

According to Perth East Fire Chief Bill Hunter, the upgraded infrastructure will allow fire hydrants to be installed throughout the village, giving Shakespeare-area firefighters improved access to water when responding to major fires.

A large storage tank beneath the treatment plant can hold approximately 400,000 litres of water, providing a significant reserve that can be pumped quickly during emergencies.

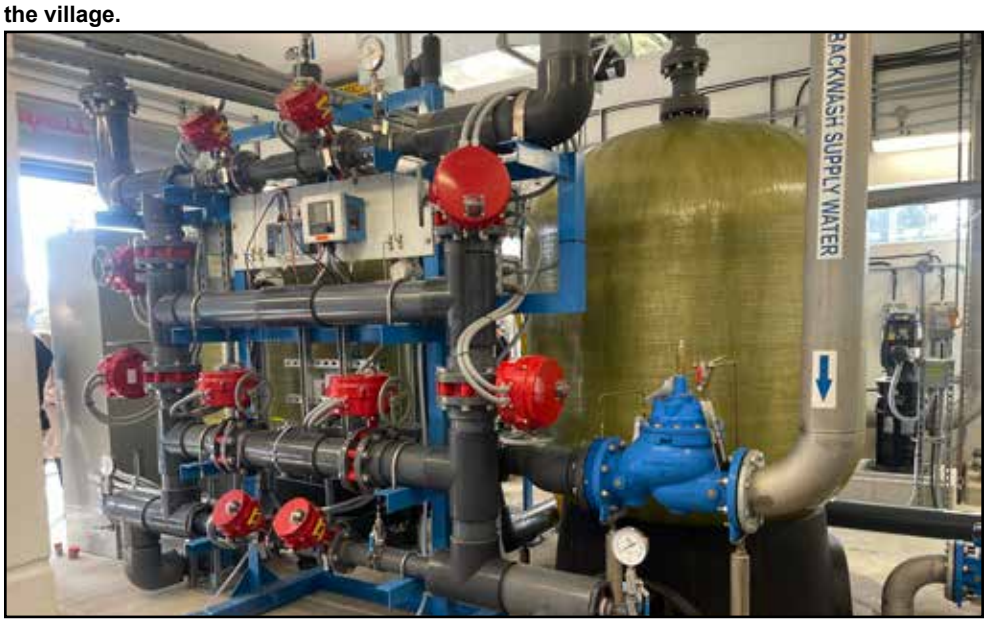
The additional water supply will help improve fire protection for homes, businesses and agricultural properties in the surrounding area.

With the new treatment plant now operational, the township has taken an important step toward improving both drinking-water infrastructure and emergency preparedness in Shakespeare.



(GARY WEST PHOTOS)

A look inside Shakespeare's new water treatment plant, where two large tanks are part of the system used to treat water before it is distributed to homes and businesses throughout the village.



New monitoring and treatment equipment inside Shakespeare's water treatment plant helps ensure water meets provincial drinking-water standards before being distributed to residents.





Wilmot mayoral candidates clash over growth, farmland, and infrastructure at Board of Trade debate

Continued from page 1

housing and economic growth with infrastructure capacity, agricultural land, community character and the concerns of existing residents?

Goertz: *"From what I hear from residents, they move to Wilmot Township for a rural community. ...When we have three new large subdivisions coming to Wilmot Township where you take the maximum units each developer wants to build, and you only put three people in (each one) plus a long-term care home on Neville Street, you're looking at potentially 8,000 people. Wilmot Township grew by only 3,000 (people) in the last 15 years. Eight thousand in eight years? Not making sense. Our official plan says we want to grow by 12,500 in 30 years; those numbers don't add up. ... I'm going to protect farmland. ... Farmland, water and rural character are extremely important to me."*

Salonen: *"I don't think it's growth versus community. Frankly, I don't think any of us would be here without either ourselves or our ancestors having come due to growth. However, our new official plan does manage how we are going to grow and where we are going to grow. It does protect the country sideline, although that language isn't explicitly in there. It still protects the actual area, and it plans for commercial lands to help diversify and bring jobs to Wilmot. We are also working with developers to create housing that your kids can afford, or if you want to downsize into, or if you want to purchase a larger home. ... We are working with those developers to also get benefits for our community. For example, our trails network is heavily donated by our developers."*

Wilkinson: *"Our official plan and where we are headed, based on what the province has asked us to do, is to grow by 8,000-10,000 people over the next 25 years. I think it's reasonable, responsible and it's inevitable. Everybody's growing, and unfortunately there's no way to stop that. I think it's important that we look at those next 25 years and start working with developers in being realistic about what we want to see. That means working with them and negotiating with them, not fighting tooth and nail with them to try and stop growth because I think we've seen the story time and time again. We turn down a development, the developer ... goes to the Ontario Land Tribunal and it ends up costing us as taxpayers $200,000 and $500,000 every time we go there to fight, and we have a 99 per-cent chance of losing."*

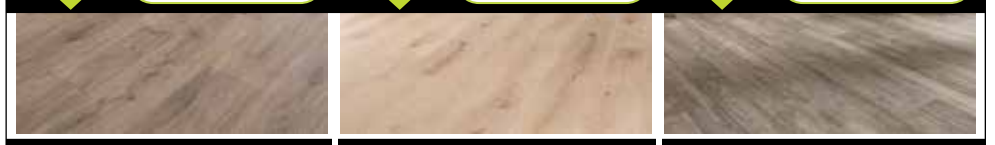
Woolner: *"Growth is going to happen. I think one of the biggest things we need to do on the commercial/industrial side is to create an environment where (developers) feel comfortable investing here. Given our current financial situation, with the high tax increases we've suffered and the development charges we face, I think we just need to work on getting confidence into it, and that should help us attract businesses. The residential side is pretty much going to be driven by demand. I think we still have to work with them to get something that's going to be appropriate for the township and the community they're building in. I would like to see a nice variety of housing and perhaps even some of what I would call affordable housing."*

Other topics included trust, transparency and public engagement as well as rising costs and the impact of property taxes on household budgets.

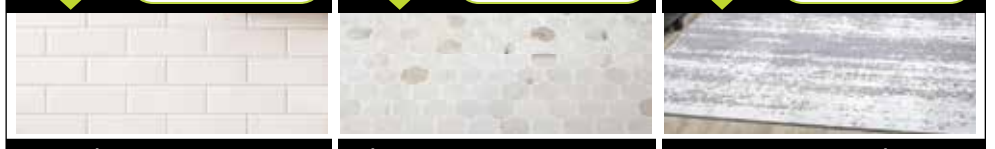
The full debate video is available online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qlAB-rLpKk.

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Waterloo regional police encourage awareness of smart tracking technology

Tech expert warns of criminal use of tools

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

The Waterloo Regional Police Service (WRPS) is encouraging residents to be aware of smart tracking devices and their potential misuse following reports of unidentified trackers on personal property and vehicles.

At the same time, one of Canada's leading tech gurus said the WRPS report shows the duality of the today's technology.

"It can save you the heartache of losing something by zeroing in on where it is, but at the same time, that very same technology can be used against an unwitting victim to identify when they may or may not be home," said London-based Carmi Levy.

Bluetooth tracking devices commonly help locate personal items such as keys, wallets, luggage and other valuables. Using Bluetooth technology and nearby mobile devices, these trackers can provide location updates and help owners recover misplaced property. While these devices offer many practical benefits, investigators have seen an increase in reports of tracking devices being placed on vehicles and personal belongings without the owner's knowledge or consent.

"They can be misused to monitor an individual's movements and daily activities without their knowledge. By tracking where a vehicle is parked, when someone leaves for work, or when a residence is vacant, offenders may identify opportunities to commit crimes such as vehicle theft, theft from vehicles, break-and-enters and other criminal offences," said police.

Levy said we owe it to ourselves to understand the advantages and disadvantages of Bluetooth based trackers.

"On one hand we can use them to not lose the things that matter most to us but on the other hand we can ensure bad actors and criminals don't use them against us."

Trackers can be concealed in a variety of locations on or inside a vehicle, including underneath the vehicle, behind licence plates, within trailer hitch assemblies, inside wheel wells, or among personal belongings or other items stored in or around the vehicle.

Levy, who lives close to a mall in London, said there have been multiple reports of trackers being found on vehicles in wheel wells, behind a license plate inside a bumper and other places people wouldn't normally look for them.

"It allows the bad actor to trace the vehicle and they can find out where that individual lives. They can see when you are home, when you're not and identify when the home is unoccupied if they want to rob it. They can also identify where your car is if they want to steal it."

He added there are also examples of stalkers dropping trackers in backpacks and purses, which they can use to find the location of a victim and either attack them, kidnap them, or worse. Levy also has some advice on how to find potential devices.

"Apple's Air tags are likely the most popular, but Samsung, Google and Tile have their own versions. Both iPhones and Android devices have a feature called Unknown Tracker Alerts which will tell you if a tracker you did not set up is travelling consistently with you."

Levy said the feature is not turned on by default, meaning Smartphone owners need to go into their settings and turn it on.

"It's built into every major phone in the market and it's up to us to go in and activate it. Also, if you are getting repeated Bluetooth pairing requests, you will get a pop up on your phone, but if you didn't initiate it, that is a red alarm and a sign you need to go into your settings and identify what it is."

WRPS investigators said they understand discovering an unfamiliar tracking device can be unsettling. While there may be legitimate reasons for a device's presence in some situations, police encourage residents to treat any unknown tracker seriously and report it to police so the circumstance can be investigated.

"Residents are encouraged to periodically inspect their vehicles and personal belongings for unfamiliar devices and to pay attention to smartphone alerts that may indicate an unknown tracking device is moving with them," said a police press release.

Police say if you locate a smart tracking device, contact police as soon as possible, avoid handling, removing, or disabling the device if possible and note when and where the device was discovered. They also said to be prepared to provide investigators with information that may assist in determining why the device was placed there.

Levy said we as a society have become too "smart" for our own good by introducing technology that has made life more convenient but, in doing so, has made it easier for criminals to track our every move.

"The warning from the WRPS is a warning to us all that this technology can absolutely cut both ways and we need to be more aware of those risks and not treat these tracking devices as benign tools of convenience. They can be very powerful tools in the hand of criminals," he said.

Waterloo regional police continue to investigate reports involving unauthorized tracking devices and encourage anyone who discovers an unfamiliar tracker to contact police at 519-570-9777.

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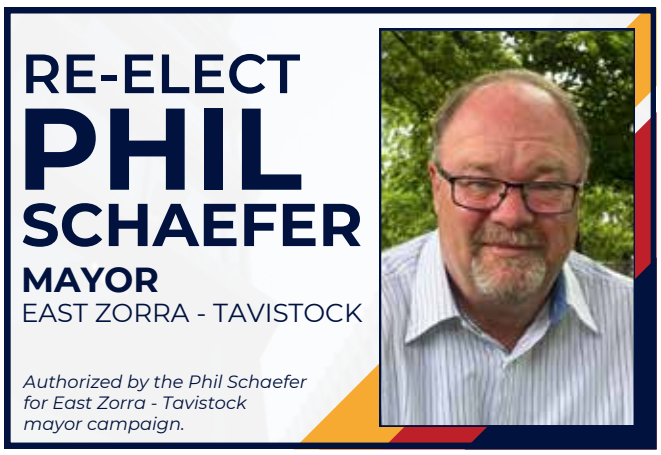
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Local health unit says respiratory illnesses season has arrived

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

The sick season is upon us.

Huron Perth Public Health (HPPH) says COVID-19, influenza and other respiratory viruses are circulating in the area. Since the end of August, five respiratory illness outbreaks have been reported at long-term care homes in Huron and Perth counties.

"The best way to avoid and minimize respiratory illnesses is with immunization," said Dr. Miriam Klassen, medical officer of health at HPPH.

"It is very important to stay up to date on the vaccines you are eligible for to protect yourself and those around you. Immunization is safe and effective."

All Ontario residents six months of age and older are eligible to receive influenza and COVID-19 vaccines, while select high-risk groups are eligible for RSV immunization.

Long-term care and retirement homes are required to follow provincial outbreak prevention and management guidance. When an outbreak is identified, homes work with public health to implement measures aimed at reducing transmission and protecting residents.

Those measures can include enhanced screening, the use of personal protective equipment, increased cleaning and disinfection, testing, cohorting ill residents and restrictions on some activities.

"Visitor access may be modified during an outbreak depending on the circumstances and the level of risk; however, homes must also consider the importance of resident wellbeing and essential caregivers when implementing restrictions," Klassen said.

Several factors can contribute to earlier transmission, including increased indoor gatherings as cooler weather arrives, the introduction of viruses into congregate settings and seasonal changes that support the spread of respiratory infections, she said.

"Ongoing surveillance will help us better understand how the season continues to develop. Public health continues to monitor respiratory illness activity and work closely with care homes to prevent and manage outbreaks."

Klassen noted that Ontario's influenza and COVID-19 immunization programs are just beginning, and population immunity builds over time as more people are vaccinated.

"This may contribute to early activity being observed before immunization coverage reaches its peak," she said. "Older adults and those at higher risk of severe illness are encouraged to get immunized now."

Influenza and COVID-19 vaccines will be available to the general public beginning Oct. 26 through participating pharmacies and primary care providers in Huron and Perth.

Many seniors have underlying medical conditions, including heart and lung disease, diabetes or weakened immune systems, that can increase their risk of complications from respiratory infections.

"In long-term care and retirement homes, residents often live in close contact with one another and participate in shared activities, making it easier for respiratory viruses to spread," Klassen said. "Even infections that are mild for younger, healthy individuals can result in hospitalization or serious complications for older adults."

She also urged people to stay home when they are sick to avoid spreading illness.

People should wait to visit loved ones until their symptoms have been improving for at least 24 hours, or 48 hours in cases involving vomiting or diarrhea, and they are no longer experiencing a fever.

Vaccination programs

Free influenza and COVID-19 vaccines are being offered in phases, beginning with high-risk and priority groups. These include hospitalized patients, people aged 65 and older, residents of long-term care homes and other congregate living settings, and pregnant individuals.

Beginning Oct. 26, anyone six months of age and older who lives, works or attends school in Ontario can receive a free COVID-19 or influenza vaccine through participating primary care providers and pharmacies.

The COVID-19 and influenza vaccines can be administered at the same time.

As of Oct. 1, eligible infants, high-risk children and individuals between 28 and 36 weeks pregnant can receive publicly funded RSV immunization. Those who are eligible should speak with a health-care provider.

All adults aged 75 and older, as well as high-risk adults aged 60 to 74, are eligible for the publicly funded RSV vaccine. Eligible adults can receive the RSV vaccine at any time of year and should contact their primary care provider. The program is not available through pharmacies.

HPPH is also encouraging residents to take other steps to reduce the spread of respiratory illness, including:

- Washing hands frequently with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Staying home when sick until symptoms have improved for at least 24 hours – or 48 hours when vomiting or diarrhea is involved – and there is no fever.
- Covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the arm.
- Wearing a mask when appropriate.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces such as doorknobs and light switches.
- Improving indoor ventilation, such as by opening a window.

To learn more about how to prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses, including information about immunizations, visit www.hpph.ca/illness.











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- ✔Developed a Rural Economic Strategy

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Together, building a future that still feels like home. I hope I can count on your support this election.

RE-ELECT

Natasha Salonen

FOR MAYOR OF WILMOT

Online voting starts Oct. 16

Election Day is Oct. 26

Learn more

Paid for by the Natasha Salonen Re-election Campaign

First Fryfogel Tavern Market draws shoppers, raises funds for accessibility improvements

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

The historic Fryfogel Tavern east of Shakespeare was bustling with activity in early October as shoppers turned out for the first Fryfogel Tavern Market.

Located along Highway 7 and 8, the tavern welcomed 18 local vendors for the Sunday market, offering visitors a wide selection of handmade goods and unique gift ideas.

Items available for purchase included handmade cards, crocheted items, fleece blankets, tote bags, press-on nails, ornaments, bookmarks, ceramics, soaps, candles, pet products and much more.

Visitors came from both the local community and further afield, with many taking advantage of the opportunity to get an early start on their Christmas shopping and find something special for those hard-to-buy-for people on their lists.



(GARY WEST PHOTOS)

Shoppers browse the many handmade items and unique gifts available during the first Fryfogel Tavern Market east of Shakespeare in early October.

Vendors were set up throughout the main floor and upper level of the historic tavern, giving shoppers plenty to explore.

Although the day began with rainy weather, the skies eventually cleared and the sun came out, helping make the inaugural market a success.

The event also served an important fundraising purpose, raising more than $1,000 for the tavern.

All proceeds will go toward the installation of a ramp at the rear of the building to improve accessibility for guests.

The market was organized by Emily Coyne and Rachel Bedic, with support from volunteers and members of the Fryfogel Tavern board of directors.

Organizers were pleased with the turnout and hope to build on the success of the first market with similar events in the future.

Those interested in upcoming events are encouraged to follow Fryfogel Tavern's social media pages, where updates will be posted in the new year.

The tavern is also recruiting new board members. Anyone interested in getting involved can email fryfogeltavern@gmail.com for more information.



Visitors explore the wide variety of products offered by 18 vendors throughout the historic Fryfogel Tavern during its inaugural market.



Event organizers Emily Coyne and Rachel Bedic were pleased with the success of the first Fryfogel Tavern Market and hope to see similar events held in the future.

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Highway 59 south of Shakespeare closed for culvert replacement

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

Drivers travelling between Shakespeare and Tavistock will need to find an alternate route over the next three to four weeks as Highway 59 (Perth Road 107) is closed for culvert replacement work.

The closure, which began Tuesday, affects the stretch of road south of Highway 7 and 8 in Shakespeare and north of Perth Road 33 (Pork Street), just north of Tavistock.

Signs have been in place for the past month warning motorists of the upcoming closure, which will allow construction crews to replace an aging concrete culvert beneath the roadway.

Motorists, including farmers transporting machinery between Shakespeare and Tavistock, will need to follow alternate routes while construction is underway.

Residents and farmers along nearby roads are already noticing heavier traffic as drivers detour around the closure, particularly along Perth Road 106 to the east and Perth Road 108 to the west.

Construction began Tuesday, with crews using two excavators to remove pavement and dig down to the existing culvert. By 5 p.m. on the first day, much of the excavation work had been completed.

Crews are hoping for dry weather over the coming weeks to allow the project to be completed on schedule and the road to reopen as soon as possible.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Orange traffic pylons block Highway 59 (Perth Road 107) south of Shakespeare on Tuesday as crews begin work to replace an aging concrete culvert.



By late Tuesday afternoon, crews had removed the pavement and excavated down to the culvert on Highway 59, the first day of construction.

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LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

Officers from the Ontario Provincial Police West Region have launched Project Safe Haul.

The coordinated commercial motor vehicle (CMV) enforcement initiative runs from Oct. 13 to Nov. 1, with the goal of enhancing road safety and reducing risks associated with unsafe commercial vehicles.

Throughout the three-week campaign, OPP detachments across West Region will conduct coordinated CMV inspections at various locations. Officers and CMV inspectors will focus on identifying vehicles that do not meet provincial and federal safety standards, ensuring compliance with legislation and removing unsafe commercial motor vehicles from service.

“Drivers can’t cut corners. They have to do everything possible to ensure the vehicle is safe before it’s taken onto a roadway,” said OPP media relations Const. Randi Crawford.

On Sept. 17, Oxford OPP, Brantford Police and Ministry of Transportation inspectors conducted a commercial vehicle enforcement blitz in Norwich Township. Eighteen commercial vehicles were inspected and nine were taken out of service. Fifty per cent had major defects and six charges were laid. Reported defects included brake problems, driveshaft issues and overweight vehicles.

Crawford said officers who take part in the inspections spend hours in a classroom to become highly trained in the trade.

“They see things a regular officer wouldn’t necessarily be able to detect. We really rely on them, and they aren’t just there to help us on these blitzes; they are there every day to help us ensure we keep commercial vehicles as safe as possible.”

Project Safe Haul will include a highly visible enforcement presence, with officers conducting inspections, educating drivers and carriers, and addressing violations that may compromise public safety. The initiative reinforces the OPP's commitment to preventing collisions before they occur and promoting a culture of safety within the commercial transportation industry.

“We will often use an abandoned property off the 401 and other highways, such as the truck stop in Woodstock before it reopened. We use what’s called chase cars to pull over vehicles and redirect them to the inspection area,” Crawford explained.

“We do have the means to inspect vehicles on the side of the road, but we try to avoid that as much as possible.”

Commercial motor vehicles play a vital role in moving goods throughout Ontario. Properly maintaining and operating these vehicles is essential to keeping roads safe for all users. Defects involving brakes, tires, steering components, cargo securement, and driver compliance can contribute to serious collisions and place motorists at risk.

"Commercial vehicle safety is a shared responsibility,” said Staff Sergeant Lynn McNichol, a member of the West Region Traffic and Marine team. “Through Project Safe Haul, OPP officers will be working proactively with industry partners to identify safety concerns, ensure compliance and remove unsafe vehicles from Ontario roads. Our goal is simple: safer highways for everyone."

Police encourage all commercial vehicle operators and carriers to ensure vehicles are properly maintained, required inspections are completed and drivers are adhering to all applicable safety regulations before travelling on Ontario highways.

Project Safe Haul will share updates and enforcement results throughout the campaign. Crawford said it is an opportunity for public education.

“They could call us and say they are following behind this commercial motor vehicle and something just doesn’t look right, and they remembered seeing an OPP picture. If you can safely get a license plate, call it in. We all know how dangerous it is to have a wheel fall off. It can be catastrophic.”

The OPP’s West Region has also released results from the "Operation Impact" Thanksgiving long weekend traffic campaign.

The campaign, which ran between Oct. 9 and 12, focused on the leading negative driving behaviours that contribute to death, injury and property damage on Ontario roads and highways: speeding, failure to wear a seatbelt, distracted driving, impaired driving and fatigue.

Officers from 13 detachments laid a total of 2,152 charges for a variety of infractions after making 2,251 traffic stops over the course of the campaign. There were 1,030 speeding charges, 83 counts of failing to wear a seatbelt, 15 distracted driving violations and 41 impaired driving charges.

Kiera Upward steps back from Ward 1 council race

AMANDA NELSON

Gazette Reporter

Kiera Upward has decided to step back from running for council in Ward 1 in Wilmot Township.

Though she says she went back and forth on her decision, she said she ultimately does not feel it is the right time.

“I was reflecting on what the actual role would look like over the next four years, and I went back and forth about the decision because it's something I'm really passionate about,” she said. “It's just with the stage of life that I'm in right now, I don't know where I'm going to end up working after I graduate, and I don't know if I'll be able to afford a house in Wilmot.”

Upward says she cannot commit to living in the region for a four-year term, given rising housing prices and concerns about Wilmot becoming less affordable for younger generations.

“Me being young and at the stage that I am at, it's always been my goal to buy a house right after I graduate and own a house as quick as I can. So, this is concerning to me. I might not be able to live that close to the region.”

She also said her career could take her anywhere and she didn’t want to base a career choice around living in Wilmot Township.

“I didn't feel like it was the right time for me, and having to commit four years to council, I didn't want that to hold me back in my career,” she said.

The 21-year-old says though she’s stepping away from the race, she believes it is vital to have different voices on council. This was one of the reasons she ran in the first place.

“It’s so important to have voices of younger people on council,” she said. “Yes, the decisions made affect the residents now, but it also affects people for years from now. A lot of the decisions will affect the younger people who are starting those stages of life, and housing is a concern that a lot of people my age have. The job market is another concern. How Wilmot is growing will affect the culture that I grew up with in Wilmot.”

Upward said council needs to improve communication and says she will continue to advocate for this as a Wilmot resident.

“I feel like a lot of decisions over the past term were made and weren't communicated properly,” she said. “It is really hard to find information on decisions made at council, and that’s public information; it shouldn’t be hard to find, but I had to dig and dig and dig to find specific numbers or information.”

Upward says she plans to run again in four years. In the meantime, she hopes to build local connections and learn more about the needs of the community.

“Being in university, my network is currently at Western,” she said. “I’d like to build relationships and connections with local councillors so I can get a better understanding of the day-to-day tasks, which will really help me understand the cashflow and the backbone of how to truly be involved.”

For more information, contact Upward at kiera4council@gmail.com.

RE-ELECT
Steven Martin
Councillor Ward 4 Wilmot Township – Here to Listen



519.662.9923 mail@stevenmartin.ca
www.stevenmartinwilmot.ca
Councillor Ward 4 Wilmot Township - 2022 to 2026
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- Voted in Favour of Sustainability Manager
- Promoted Electric Car Charging Stations
- Promoted Solar Panels for Township Buildings
- Worked on Fiscal Responsibility, like building reserves for Infrastructure in the Township
- Followed the rules of the Municipal Act
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Shakespeare Optimist Club elects 2026-2027 executive

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

Members of the Shakespeare Optimist Club gathered for their annual President's Night last week at the Optimist Hall, where they inducted new members and welcomed the club's newly elected board of directors.

Jeremy Witzel, who also serves as the Optimist zone's lieutenant-governor, was elected to a second term as club president. Trevor Glaab and David Croskill will serve as vice presidents.

New members who joined the club over the past year include Allan Drost, Brad Boersen, Zach Boersen and Leahm Martens.

As with Optimist clubs throughout the area, supporting local youth remains a primary focus for the Shakespeare club, while members also continue to help families in need.

Over the past year, the club has contributed more than $20,000 to local organizations, programs and causes, including Sprucedale Public School and North Easthope Public School, Tavistock Community Health Inc. (TCHI), local ball, soccer and curling teams, historical societies, Bimini Youth Camp and families in the village.

Each year, more than $10,000 is also allocated to youth activities and community events. Those include the club's bike rodeo and fishing derby, support for the Shakespeare Community Athletic Association's June Field Day Kids' Midway and year-end sports banquet, the Tavistock and Stratford fall fair ambassador programs, Family Day activities, the Stratford and District Saddle Club and the public school's hard-cooked egg snack and lunch program.

Club members have also been lending a hand with upgrades to the Optimist Hall. A major facelift has already been completed, with renovations to the washrooms planned for 2026.

The work is intended to ensure the hall continues to provide a bright and modern space for recreation, weddings, receptions and other community rentals.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Members of the newly elected Shakespeare Optimist Club executive include, from left, Pete Kreyger, Albert Arnott, club president Jeremy Witzel, Trevor Glaab, Hugh McDermid, secretary Dan Festoso, Owen Smelski, Ted Danen and treasurer Jeff Skubowius. Missing are David Croskill and Kevin Adams.

SEND US YOUR STORY IDEAS AND YOUR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR TO GALEN SIMMONS AT GALEN@GRANTHAVEN.COM

Perth County tweaks stewardship program to give new applicants a better shot at funding

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Perth County is making changes to its Stewardship Program for 2027 aimed at spreading available funding among more landowners, though council remains divided over how much taxpayer money should go toward larger trees, contractors and other planting costs.

At its Oct. 1 meeting, county council approved two administrative changes recommended by resiliency and stewardship coordinator Hannah Cann following an earlier council discussion in August. Beginning with the 2027 intake, first-time applicants will receive five points through the program's scoring system, up from one, while landowners will be limited to one approved application per year across all program streams. Previously, there was no annual limit on the number of applications an individual landowner could submit.

"The report before you outlines the proposed 2027 stewardship program adjustments, which focus on making the program more accessible and distributing funding more broadly," Cann told council.

She said increasing the first-time applicant weighting gives new applicants "a stronger opportunity while keeping the ecological value of projects as the main consideration."

The changes respond to concerns raised in August after council heard the program had been oversubscribed in two of its first three years. Councillors questioned whether repeat applicants were receiving too much of the available funding while new applicants had grants reduced through prorating.

While council approved the changes, the Oct. 1 discussion showed broader concerns with the program remain.

Coun. Bob Wilhelm said he continues to have a problem with the county funding trees costing hundreds of dollars each.

"We have a variation from $100 to $400 per tree and I think we have to have some kind of control on that," Wilhelm said. "That's ridiculous."

Deputy Warden Sue Orr suggested oversized stock be removed from the program, while Coun. Rhonda Ehgoetz argued the program has strayed too far from its original purpose of getting trees into the ground.

"The intent was to plant trees," Ehgoetz said. "And yet now we're paying for them to be delivered. We're paying for them to be planted. We're paying for the site plan, the site to get ready."

Staff, however, recommended against setting a fixed per-tree grant or banning oversized stock. Of 67 completed projects in the landowner and living snow fence streams, only five used oversized trees. Staff argued projects should instead continue to be reviewed individually based on site conditions and environmental objectives.

Coun. Walter McKenzie supported keeping planting labour eligible, saying landowners he has spoken with would not participate if they had to find time to plant the trees themselves.

"If we didn't pay for planting or planting wasn't part of it, they wouldn't do it because they don't have time to do it," McKenzie said.

The county's own figures support that concern. Applications fell to 12 when labour was ineligible in 2025 before rebounding to 21 projects after labour costs were restored for 2026.

Coun. Todd Kasenberg also cautioned against a flat per-tree cap if it pushes landowners toward cheaper species that may be less suited to a particular property. Cann said species prices can vary substantially and limiting support to a set amount per tree could discourage the most appropriate planting choice.

The county is proposing another $100,000 for the Stewardship Program in its draft 2027 budget, the same funding level as 2026, though final approval will rest with the next council during budget deliberations.

Staff told council the spring intake is expected to close Jan. 22, with applications coming back to the next council for consideration in early February. The application period is now open.

More information on the Perth County Stewardship Program is available at

www.perthcounty.ca/living-here/stewardship-program/#2026ProgramGuideandFinalReporting.

Perth County economic development, tourism team caps busy summer with provincial agriculture forum

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

From promoting local tourism and supporting business expansions to hosting government officials and bringing economic-development professionals from across Ontario to Perth County, the county's economic development and tourism division had a busy summer.

Economic development officer Justin Dias provided county council with a recap of the department's work from June through September at council's Oct. 1 meeting, highlighting business retention and expansion efforts, tourism marketing, the development of new visitor experiences and the county's ongoing tourism wayfinding project.

Among the summer's economic-development activities were visits to local manufacturers interested in provincial expansion funding, support for Listowel Technology Inc.'s $13.2-million expansion – backed by $1.5 million through the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund – and continued discussions with provincial and federal officials surrounding a potential new manufacturing facility in Perth County.

The county also supported a business tour and roundtable in August with then-agriculture minister Trevor Jones and rural affairs minister Lisa Thompson involving 15 local business representatives. Five Perth County businesses were also nominated for Ontario Excellence in Agriculture Awards.

On the tourism side, the county supported the launch of Farmhouse Fires at The Perth Farmhouse as a new Signature Experience in June, while its summer marketing campaign included print, digital and social-media promotion.

More than 76,000 tourism brochures were distributed through Canada Post and tourism destinations, while county tourism social-media channels gained more than 1,700 followers since May and generated more than 18,000 interactions. Three summer students featured more than 85 Perth County businesses through reels, stories and other content.

Work also continued on the FRAME + Find Tourism Wayfinding Signage Strategy. Two stakeholder workshops and a county road tour were held in July to identify signage gaps, preferred aesthetics and priority locations, with the project now moving from its discovery phase into strategy development and design.

The summer culminated with Perth County and investStratford hosting the Municipal Agriculture Economic Development and Planning Forum Sept. 28-29.

The first day included an agricultural and business discovery bus tour across Perth County, with stops including Gray Ridge Egg Farms, Anna Mae's Restaurant and Bakery, Lynn River Farm and the Stratford Perth Centre for Business. The county's report says the tour showcased nine Perth County businesses to 56 participants.

The second day brought 122 participants to the Tom Patterson Theatre in Stratford for sessions focused on rural economic development, on-farm diversification, development-ready communities and agricultural bylaws.

Coun. Rhonda Ehgoetz praised staff for the event and said she was struck by how far some participants had travelled.

"It was really impressive to see that they came from everywhere," Ehgoetz said. "It was a bang-up job. You did an awesome job and it was great to see the businesses again."

Warden Dean Trentowsky echoed those comments, saying participants were impressed by the work that went into the two-day format.

"People were impressed with the effort that was made to put together the two-day format," Trentowsky said, also recognizing investStratford and its staff for co-hosting the forum. "It shows teamwork and partnership – the great results that can happen there."

A full report on the Municipal Agriculture Economic Development and Planning Forum will be presented to council at a future meeting.



Perth East Municipal Election 2026

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Little Boxes fundraiser featured at Tavistock High Noon luncheon

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

With the arrival of autumn comes the return of the popular High Noon fellowship luncheons at Grace United Church in Tavistock, where guest speakers share interesting stories and worthwhile causes with members of the community.

Organized through the Tavistock and Area Ministerial Association, the luncheons offer an opportunity for fellowship while learning about the work of individuals and organizations making a difference.

Last Thursday, Richard and Joan Hryniw of Lakeside were the featured guest speakers, sharing the story behind their Little Boxes fundraising initiative.

The retired teachers have spent many years helping those in need, including supporting the international charitable organization Sleeping Children Around the World.

More recently, the couple has been turning used greeting cards and Lang calendars into decorative little boxes and other handmade items, which they sell to raise money for cancer care.

Each year, they select a cancer-related charity to receive the proceeds from their efforts.

Over the years, donations have supported several organizations, including SickKids Hospital in Toronto, the Canadian Cancer Society in Brantford and the London Regional Cancer Centre.

Their fundraising efforts have also helped purchase a new hospital bed for Stedman Community Hospice through the St. Joseph's Lifecare Foundation.

In 2019, the Little Boxes initiative surpassed its fundraising goal of $20,000, with the money donated to McMaster Children's Hospital.

Those funds were used to purchase continuous ambulatory delivery devices, which allow chemotherapy medication to be administered to children.

Richard and Joan continue to collect used greeting cards and Lang calendars to create their handmade items and welcome donations from anyone who has materials they would like to contribute.

The couple can be reached by phone at 519-752-7958 or by email at littleboxes.plus@gmail.com.

The next High Noon luncheon will take place Thursday, Nov. 12, at noon at Grace United Church in Tavistock.

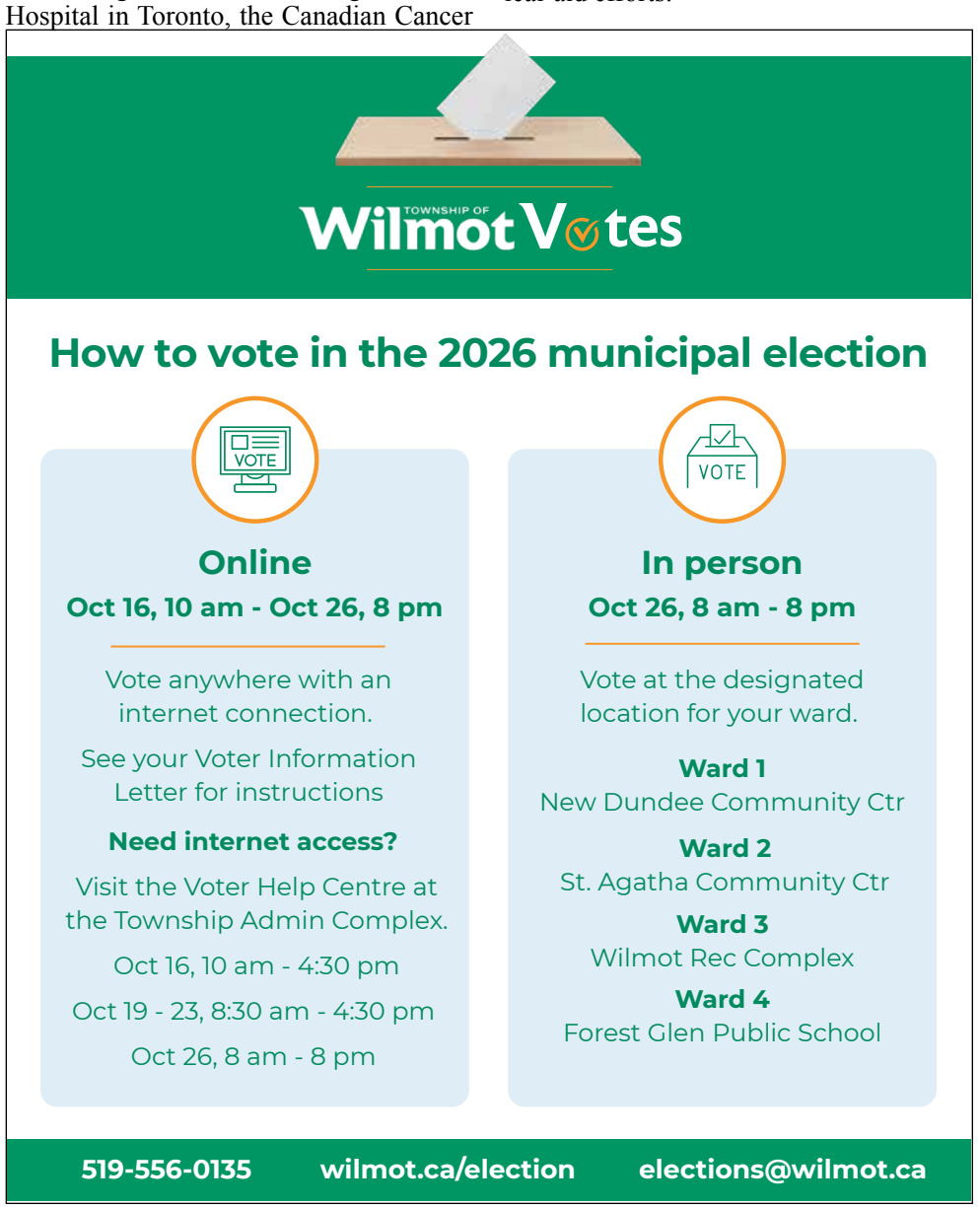
Stratford's Jean Aitcheson will be the guest speaker, sharing information about the Stratford Mission Depot and its charitable work.

Attendees are being asked to bring unused or outdated prescription medications for the Mission Depot's international medical-aid efforts.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Richard and Joan Hryniw of Lakeside display some of the decorative little boxes they create from recycled greeting cards and calendars to raise money for cancer care. The couple shared the story of their fundraising initiative during last Thursday's High Noon luncheon at Grace United Church in Tavistock.





Theatre Wellesley takes on its biggest production yet with Miracle on 34th Street

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Theatre Wellesley is going big for the holidays this year, taking on what director Mary Beth Jantzi says could be the community theatre group's largest production ever.

Miracle on 34th Street will take the stage at Steinmann Mennonite Church Nov. 26-29, bringing the familiar story of Kris Kringle, a New York department-store Santa who insists he is the real thing, to life with one of the largest casts and crews in Theatre Wellesley history.

"This is a bigger play than Theatre Wellesley has done maybe ever, but certainly in a long time," Jantzi said. "We chose it because it was Christmas themed and because it was big. It gives us a bit more of a challenge."

Taking on that challenge has meant involving more people both on and off stage, from two assistant directors, a stage manager and producer to set builders, painters, costume designers and other volunteers. Jantzi said the production includes roughly 60 costumes alone.

"It does take a big group to put on a big play," she said.

Perhaps most encouraging for the future of Theatre Wellesley is how many young performers have become part of that group.



(AI PHOTO)

Theatre Wellesley brings a little Christmas magic to the stage with its upcoming production of Miracle on 34th Street, running Nov. 26-29 at Steinmann Mennonite Church in Baden.

Almost every young person who auditioned for Miracle on 34th Street previously took part in Theatre Wellesley's youth workshops, which Jantzi and other members began offering to introduce local kids to acting and live theatre.

The production features the most young actors Theatre Wellesley has had in a show, including two performers who will alternate in the role of Susan before joining the ensemble for the other performances. Other young actors will have speaking or singing roles, while even those without lines have been encouraged to develop backstories for their characters.

For Jantzi, the response demonstrates the workshops are already helping create a new generation of community-theatre performers.

"There's so much interest and so many talented youth in the community," she said. "It's such a privilege to help them develop their confidence and find their voices as performers."

Adapted for the stage by Canadian playwrights Caleb Marshall and Erin Keating from the story by Valentine Davies, Miracle on 34th Street follows Kris Kringle as he brings a little faith, generosity and Christmas magic into the lives of Doris Walker, her skeptical daughter, Susan, and those around them.

Jantzi said "hope" became the central theme she wanted to carry throughout the production.

"For me the anchor was hope," she said. "So, this is a play about hope."

Miracle on 34th Street runs Nov. 26 and 27 at 7:30 p.m. and Nov. 28 and 29 at 2 p.m. at Steinmann Mennonite Church Hall, 1316 Snyder's Rd. W., Baden. Tickets are $25 and are available online at theatrewellesley.com or by cash at Pym's Village Market in Wellesley. Santa will also be in the lobby before each performance for photos and Christmas wishes.



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Wilmot Ward 1 and 2 candidates weigh in on 770-acre industrial site, property taxes at all-candidates meeting

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Candidates vying for seats in Wards 1 and 2 on Wilmot Township council had an opportunity to share their positions on some of the municipality's most pressing issues during an Oct. 1 all-candidates meeting at the Wilmot Rod and Gun Club.

Hosted by the Wilmot Civic Action Network, the meeting brought together Ward 1 candidates Stewart Cressman, Kiera Upward and Peter Varga, along with Ward 2 candidates Alan Dicknoether, Lucy Lantz and Michael Roth.

Candidates fielded questions developed by students and representatives of the organizations involved in hosting the meeting, covering issues ranging from farmland preservation and development pressures to infrastructure, municipal finances and government transparency.

Among the most revealing exchanges were those focused on the controversial 770-acre industrial development site along Bleams Road and the township's recent property tax increases.

The following are the candidates' responses to those two questions, edited for clarity and length.

Would you support a motion declaring Wilmot an unwilling host to the proposed 770-acre industrial development, and would you introduce that motion within your first 100 days on council?

Stewart Cressman (Ward 1): *"There's a lot of misinformation on this one, a lot of narratives that have been floating around. And there's an NDA that existed before we were elected. ... There's specific communications to our council in closed (session) that I cannot go into. That's a challenge for me to speak to this.*

"When the site was identified, I went to Chair Redman and said, 'Why don't you come forward and give the reasons why this site was chosen?' ... Everybody wants answers, but we can't provide any answers. ... I've been on council and haven't brought forward this motion ... because of the NDA primarily."

Kiera Upward (Ward 1): *"I want to ask, unwilling host to what? We've been told it's for infrastructure or employment, but we haven't been told what it is. I don't think it's responsible of me to say that we're an unwilling host and we don't know what it is.*

"It's not knowing what is the actual problem here. There's been no communication. ... This is 770 acres of farmland, land that once we develop on, we won't get back. ... Before we even consider putting forward a motion, I would want to know why specifically this land is being picked. I would want to know what the benefits would be for our economy ... and the impacts on our water and our infrastructure."

Peter Varga (Ward 1): *"I would put a motion forward and would not be a willing host. I've actually stated that publicly on my website that I am not a willing host to this development opportunity.*

"The reason's simple. It is not a reflection of what our community has overwhelmingly said. ... For me to say yes is saying yes to the 770. And I don't think I can because I think our agricultural land is just simply too precious to be consumed for development. ... Someone has to prove to me that this was the best option, not the easiest option. So, I would not be bullied."

Alan Dicknoether (Ward 2): *"Of course, I would put that motion forward. We are not a willing host. People have said it. Delegates at council meetings have said it.*

"Using the cloak of, 'Well, we don't know what's going on, so we shouldn't oppose it because we don't know.' Well, no. That's exactly why we should oppose it. We don't know what's going on. There are NDAs. ... Knowing that they can issue an instant MZO, well, that doesn't mean we should say, 'They're just going to issue an MZO, so don't bother.' No, we need to fight for it. We need to do what we can."

Lucy Lantz (Ward 2): *"The 770 acres, it's a defining issue from the last four years and it's a tragedy, I think, for our community. ... But I do think that, as councillors going in, to say that I would put forward a motion to say that we are an unwilling host, I think there's a naivety there because you don't know everything that's being unsaid under these NDAs.*

"I think the province really kneecapped our local government on this issue. ... To come in and say I would put forward this motion without knowing the information that current councillors are privy to ... feels irresponsible to me, and so no, I wouldn't put forward that motion."

Michael Roth (Ward 2): *"I believe our council has worked very hard and diligently to try and look after this land deal as best that they possibly can. Our region has come in and taken land on us that we're not in favour of. ... I believe that our council has limited options with the region.*

"I might put forward a motion as an unwilling host to a certain point in terms of what we can build on that site. ... That site does need to benefit the township because it's a huge space. It's a huge part of farmland that we're giving up. ... In terms of giving us something that will benefit the community, I'm in favour of that."

What maximum annual property tax increase would you support, where would you reduce spending by five per cent, and which municipal services would you refuse to cut?

Stewart Cressman (Ward 1): *"I guess I'm the one that has to wear these tax increases. ... When we got into our finances the first year, I made the comment that, boy, this is a lot worse than we anticipated.*

"We had some reserves that were in negative balance. ... We've kicked some things down the road like a can, trying to minimize what we had to do. In terms of where I would hope to be, inflation is where I'd like to land. ... We've had a staff review, but I think we have some things that come off the books this year and maybe even some deputy (director) position decisions that we just can't afford."

Kiera Upward (Ward 1): *"I think keeping it as close to inflation is a fair amount. ... It wouldn't be fair for me to stand up here and say what I would and wouldn't (cut) without actually having the 2027 baseline in front of me.*

"My background in natural science ... makes me very detail-oriented, and I look a lot at the future impacts of things and the risks that we're taking on right now if we're not increasing enough or if we're increasing too much. ... Cuts, the decision should fall to the public as much as it can. This is your money and you guys should decide how it's spent as much as you can."

Peter Varga (Ward 1): *"My property tax target would be five per cent. ... That's a number that I'm balancing between what I think we should pay at inflation, but also to not ignore that we're trying to recover from a problem. ... Double digits is not sustainable for our community.*

"When it comes to reducing spending by five per cent, I can absolutely assure you there is opportunity to find efficiencies within the administrative ... (structure) of our township. ... I wonder if we have ever completed a zero-sum-based budget. ... I would not cut any of the social services that are currently available to our seniors in our community. They are essential."

Alan Dicknoether (Ward 2): *"We are striving for property tax increases that are around inflation, the rate of inflation.*

"If I had to reduce spending by five per cent ... first I would look at administrative costs. ... We have a lot of community organizations ... (with) experts ... contributing. So that can reduce our costs if we don't have to hire outside experts.

"I'm a strong believer that a society can be judged on how it treats its most vulnerable. So, I do not advocate for cutting our social programs that we're running. We'd have to look elsewhere."

Lucy Lantz (Ward 2): *"I think we would all want to stay as close to inflation as possible. ... No one wants to see taxes go up. It was a huge impetus for me wanting to run.*

"We need to have councillors who are looking at a budget line by line and looking at places where we can't afford to spend what we're spending. ... We need to be looking at staffing. We need to be looking at services that are underused and making some hard decisions. We can't all say we want taxes cut and then say we don't want to lose anything. ... (I would refuse to cut) anything essential. I think

Continued on page 15



Continued from page 14

major infrastructure projects that, if they don't get done, could have huge impacts on our community."

Michael Roth (Ward 2): *"I would definitely take a look at some of our staffing ... budgets and why they've increased so much over the last five to six years and see if we can do something there.*

"Not our roads ... our roads are terrible. That is definitely a place that I would not cut. ... As a brand-new person running for council, I'm not 100 per cent sure that I can say we're going to increase it by two per cent or we're going to increase it by 40 per cent. ... I'm going to work the best that I can for every person in Wilmot Township to keep the tax levels as low as I possibly can. ... I'm going to be available to tell you why I did it or why I voted for it."

Wilmot Ward 3 and 4 candidates divided over industrial development, tax increases at all-candidates meeting

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Candidates vying for seats in Wards 3 and 4 on Wilmot Township council shared their positions on two of the municipality's most contentious issues during a Sept. 28 all-candidates meeting at the New Hamburg Community Centre.

Hosted by the Wilmot Civic Action Network in partnership with several community organizations, the meeting provided candidates an opportunity to answer questions on topics ranging from groundwater protection and farmland preservation to property taxes, municipal planning and government transparency.

Ward 3 candidates Harvir Sidhu and Kevin Sundberg participated, while Tammy Gaudun Gies was unable to attend. In Ward 4, candidates Jeff Bell, Sam Hiemstra, Steven Martin and Krista Straus participated, while Scott Dunstall declined the invitation.

Among the most revealing exchanges were those focused on whether Wilmot should formally declare itself an unwilling host to the proposed 770-acre industrial development along Bleams Road, and how candidates would approach future property tax increases.

The following are excerpts from candidates' responses to those two questions, edited for clarity and length.

Would you put forward a motion within your first 100 days declaring Wilmot an unwilling host to the proposed 770-acre industrial development?

Harvir Sidhu (Ward 3): *"Yes or no to what? Yes or no to economic development? Yes or no to a business? We don't know what could be coming there. So, saying blanketly, saying unwilling host, I don't think that's going to do any justice. We need to pivot and we need to advocate.*

"What I would ask is why this site was picked. What's the criteria? The threshold and the bar needs to be set very high. Show me, was there any other opportunities? What is going to be the short-term, the long-term benefits to Wilmot? And show us the technical details."

When asked whether he would introduce a motion demanding greater transparency from the region, Sidhu said:

"Absolutely. I would put forward a motion to say, 'Show us the technical details. Show us what criteria you used and show us why other sites in and around this area were not picked and what is so special about this site.' "

Kevin Sundberg (Ward 3): *"I would support a motion. I'm not sure if we'd actually get any answers. It's been two and a half years or so and the information requests have fallen on deaf ears. I think this goes all the way up to the provincial level, so we'd have to start there.*

"Everybody's known about this for a while and we've been left with no answers. So, sure, file a motion and see where it goes. But I think it's also going to fall on deaf ears."

Asked what his motion would look like, Sundberg said he would question why the site was selected, including whether its proximity to power lines, rail transportation and Highway 401 influenced the decision.

Jeff Bell (Ward 4): *"This is where I'm going to say it depends. It's a bit early for me to say whether or not I would put forward a motion for that.*

"Much to what Harvir had mentioned, we really need to get some answers from the region, from the province on exactly why that site was chosen and make sure through our own staff and our own planning that we can support some type of industrial development there.

"The official plan doesn't approve a 770-acre mega site. It's basically saying that it is possible to be approved and it needs to go through all the proper scrutiny that any site would. So, I'm going to reserve my right to say it depends."

Sam Hiemstra (Ward 4): *"I believe that the MZOs that the province has been putting forward are undemocratic. I don't think that the province should be able to step in and make decisions on our planning without the consultation of the people that live here.*

"So, to answer the question, is Wilmot a willing host? No, I don't believe we are. And I would be happy to, once learning how to put a motion forward, put this motion forward.

"This is something that I've been hearing at the doors. I've been hearing it for years over serving coffee at the bowling alley. This is something that I haven't really heard a good alternative argument on."

Steven Martin (Ward 4): *"I would have to say no to that in the sense that I already had the opportunity to put forth such a motion and I didn't do it. So, to say that I would do it in the next 100 days if I get elected would be dishonest.*

" ... The reason I haven't is because there can be pros or cons and, as Harvir has said, we don't know what is going in there. It all depends what goes in there."

During a rebuttal, Martin added:

"Yes, the premier did say at a plowing match all you have to say is you're an unwilling host. But I don't believe him. I don't believe that just because we would say we're an unwilling host that the province would change their mind."

Krista Straus (Ward 4): *"I would definitely put this forward. We are an unwilling host. Doug Ford said that if we stand up and say that we are unwilling, he will just walk away.*

"We need to stand up for ourselves because we have something special out here and the province still needs agriculture in Ontario. We have the high school that supports it. We have the prime agricultural land. We have generational farmers here and what we have is important to Ontario."

What maximum annual property tax increase would you support, where would you cut spending by five per cent, and what municipal services would you refuse to cut?

Jeff Bell (Ward 4): *"My goal would be to try and keep things in line with inflation if possible. As to what I would cut, if I had to reduce by five per cent, what would I cut first? Honestly, I would start looking not at any of our core services or discretionary services.*

"Really looking at administrative growth, outside consultants, procurement, any software duplication, capital projects that are out there without any sound budgets attached to them. What are the things that are happening that we could generally get rid of before we start looking at the taxes or the services that are going to start affecting everyone's lives?"

Sam Hiemstra (Ward 4): *"I don't know if I'm going to give a clear answer on something that I would cut. I don't think it's fair to the process of creating a budget. I think that the community needs to be consulted on what is being spent and what they need.*

"There are going to be some difficult decisions to be made and I would be more than happy to take accountability for the decisions I make if elected as a councillor. But I think that the rate that we are going at right now with the increases is unattainable."

Steven Martin (Ward 4): *"I realize that I've been on council and have to take some responsibility here. What I've been saying to people at the door is in the last four years, taxes have gone up. And the reason I supported it (is) because when we look at the top line in the past 20 years, taxes didn't go up enough.*

"Our mill rate was one of the lower ones in the province. Now we're more in the middle in terms of comparing our mill rate across the province.

"As far as services, what would be cut? That's what I asked people at the door. What services would you want to cut? I think there would need to be community consultation before cutting services."

Krista Straus (Ward 4): *"I would want our tax rate to be as close to inflation as possible. And as for what could we cut? Well, I know during COVID, we hired a bunch of staff. Maybe we need to look at, and I know there's some vacancies right now, is there a way we can merge some of those positions together?*

"For municipal services that I would refuse to cut, definitely infrastructure. That's something that we should not cut at all. We need to make sure that none of our roads are crumbling."

Harvir Sidhu (Ward 3): *"Rough math, over the last two terms, our Wilmot portion has gone up almost 74 per cent. I don't know about you, but I don't feel like my services have gone up 74 per cent.*

"I would aim at in and around inflation, predictable and manageable property tax increases. Yes, 20 years ago, property taxes weren't raised enough, but I believe there's been more than enough that we've raised over the last little while.

"While on council, I have voted against a property tax increase every year I've been there. I always thought the first place we should go look is not the residents to raise our property taxes and to make our budgets balance."

Kevin Sundberg (Ward 3): *"You can't really have a maximum amount. It depends on what happened in the fiscal year. I think we need to take a granular approach and look at where all of our spending is, as far as operation costs, and see if there's any places we could scale back.*

"I know if you look at the previous budget, administration costs have gone up significantly. Maybe one area that we could reduce is utility costs, things like that where we can as a municipality cut back.

"What would I cut? I'm not sure. We'd have to reach out to the constituents and see what services they could do without."

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QUIZ TIME

BY JAKE GRANT

1. What is the only U.S. state that can be typed in using only one row of a standard keyboard?
2. In human anatomy, what does the “hallux” refer to?
3. What is the only planet in our solar system to rotate clockwise on its axis?
4. Which freezes faster: hot or cold water?
5. What is James Bond's code name?
6. Weighing around eight pounds, this is the human body's largest organ?
7. What do you call a group of flamingos?
8. What is the distance from earth to the sun?
9. Which country is the largest in the world?
10. According to Guinness World Records, what's the best-selling book of all time?

Answers found on classified page

SUDOKU

by PeterS 2026

4	8	5	7					
6	3	2						
7	1	9	5					
3		4		1				
			2		8			
				9		7		2
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Answers found on classified page

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Historic Erb Transport pickup keeps memory of founder Vernon Erb alive

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

A piece of Wellesley Township and Canadian trucking history was on display recently at a classic car and vintage truck show in Stratford.

Among the vehicles was one of the early pickup trucks connected to Vernon Erb, founder of Erb Transport. The truck still bears the company’s well-known red-and-white Erb Transport insignia on its doors.

Milverton resident Murray Stewart, formerly of Brunner, purchased the pickup years ago, and his family plans to keep it in the family as a reminder of Erb and the business he built.

Family members say the truck also serves as a reminder of Erb himself, who received his early education on the Third Line of Wellesley Township and was known for treating his employees like family.

Erb Transport became an early leader in refrigerated transportation, operating temperature-controlled vans and trucks at a time when that type of service was far less common.

More than 65 years after the company was founded, Erb Transport has grown to employ more than 1,500 people and operate a fleet that includes roughly 2,100 trucks and trailers.

It is an impressive legacy for a business founded by a young man with deep roots in Wellesley Township.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

One of the early pickup trucks driven under the Erb Transport name is pictured at a recent classic car and vintage truck show in Stratford. The 1954 truck still bears the company logo and lettering advertising refrigerated service on the driver’s door.



Election sign vandalism prompts police warning to those involved

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

"A message to Wilmot Township residents."

That's how a social media post from the Waterloo Regional Police Service began.

"Over the long weekend, five campaign signs belonging to the same candidate were taken from the wires, and one wire was damaged on another," police posted.

Police said removing, tampering with, or deliberately damaging political campaign signs is unacceptable and may constitute a criminal offence.

"These actions are not acceptable, regardless of which candidate the signs represent. There are cameras in the affected areas, and this matter will be pursued," the post said. "Everyone has the right to support the candidate of their choice. We can have different political views and still treat one another with respect and uphold the principles of our democratic process."

Police pleaded with township residents to do better.

"Let's show respect, act responsibly and keep our community a place where everyone can participate in the democratic process without intimidation, interference, or fear of having their political expression targeted."

The post added democracy works best when we respect one another, even when we disagree. Police did not release the name of the candidate whose signs were damaged.

Applications open for Parents Reaching Out (PRO) grant for school projects

WILMOT-TAVISTOCK GAZETTE STAFF

thewtgazette@gmail.com

Parents, families and caregivers are invited to share their ideas for potential school projects for the 2026-2027 Parents Reaching Out (PRO) grant.

What is the PRO Grant?

Provided by the Ministry of Education, the Parents Reaching Out (PRO) grant allows school boards to work with their Parent Involvement Committee and/or school councils to develop projects that:

- Address local parent, family and caregiver needs
- Remove barriers to parent, family and caregiver participation in their child's education.

What projects can be funded?

Projects are eligible for PRO funding if they help schools improve in at least one of these areas:

- Creating a safe and welcoming environment at the school for all families.
- Supporting families to feel like valued partners when making decisions about their child's education.
- Enhancing communication between families and school staff
- Informing parents, families and caregivers about the expectations of the Ontario curriculum and sharing other supporting resources

The projects must be completed and expenses incurred between Sept. 8, 2026, and June 1, 2027.

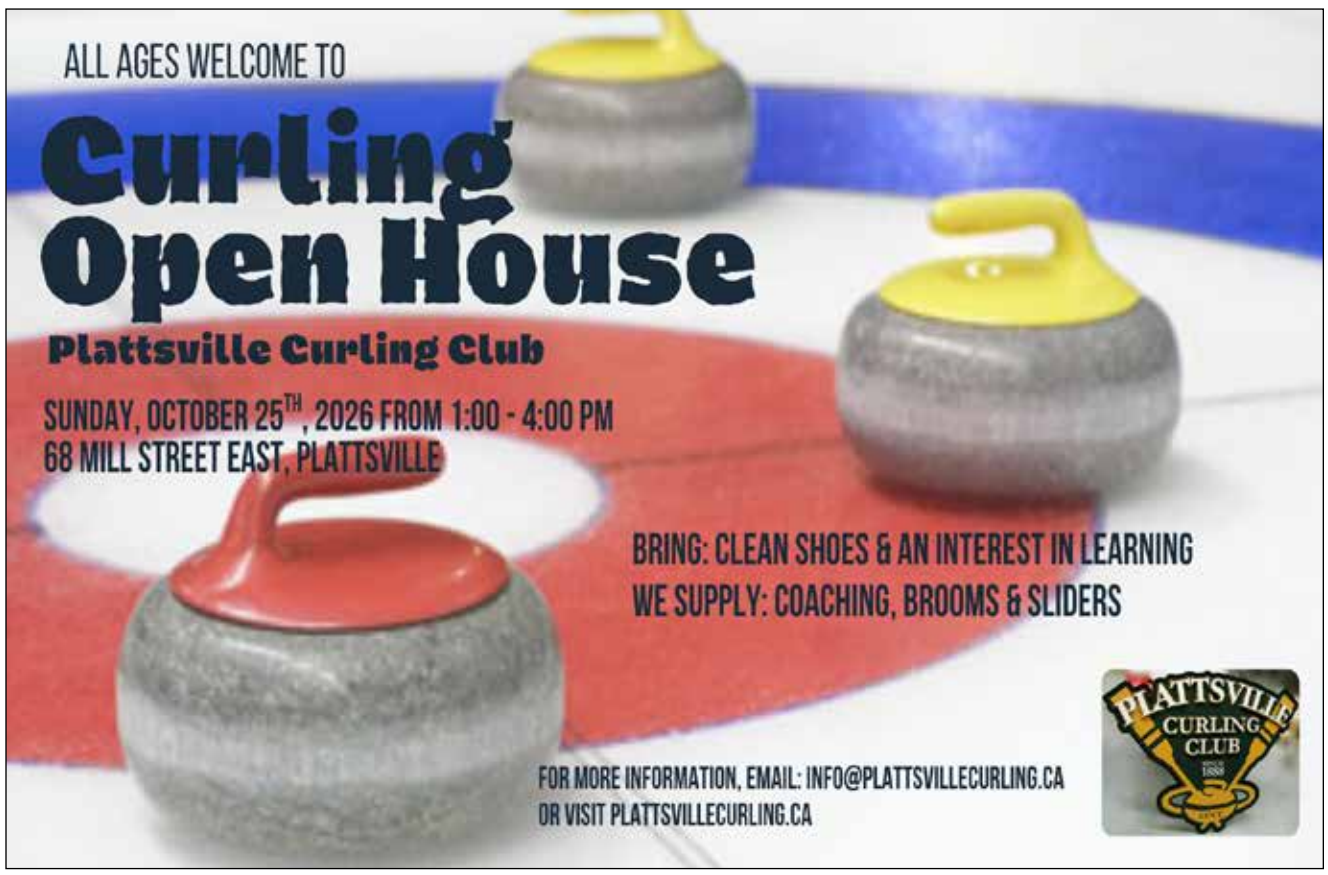
Apply for the PRO grant

Anyone who has an idea for their school or who wants more information can reach out to their school council or contact their principal by Friday, Nov. 20.

The Waterloo Region District School Board's PRO grant evaluation committee will review all submissions and contact successful schools.

For more information visit the PRO grants web page at www.wrdsb.ca/pic/parents-reaching-out-pro-grants/. Questions can be emailed to pic@wrdsb.ca.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT GRANTHAVEN.COM/ WILMOT-TAVISTOCK-GAZETTE





OBITUARY

Ruth Maxine Martin



Passed away peacefully surrounded by family on October 8th, 2026 at Nithview Community, New Hamburg.

Devoted wife of Abner Martin and loving mother to Brad (Donna), Dean (Jane), Yvonne (Kirk) and Barry (Pam).

Much loved grandmother to Courtney (Drew), Christine (Adison), Erica, Angus and Isobel – and great grandmother to Harlow and Oliver.

Ruth outlived her two brothers, Donald and Robert (Joan).

Ruth was born on her parent's (Angus and Salome) farm in St. Jacob's, Ontario in 1928. She attended school in Floradale and Elmira and then had a long and varied career, first as a bank teller, then as a receptionist for the well-known photographer Charles Belair. Ruth finally retired at 82 after working as a dental receptionist for Dave McKenzie's dental practice for more than 35 years.

Ruth was very active in the Shantz Church where she taught Sunday School and assisted at many church functions and funerals. Ruth and Abner were involved with the Mennonite Relief Sale for many years and Ruth also volunteered at the Mennonite Thrift Shop and 10,000 Villages.

Ruth and Abner married in 1949 and were married for 72 years until Abner's death on Christmas Eve of 2021. Ruth and Abner had a large circle of family and friends and Ruth loved to entertain. There were family dinners for every occasion and many Rook games, dinners and celebrations with friends that stretched late into the night. There were also many memorable gatherings at their cottage on Chesley Lake over the years.

Ruth and Abner's home in Morningside was surrounded by beautiful gardens which were Ruth's pride and joy. But, of course, her true pride and joy were her children, grandchildren and many nieces and nephews. They will miss her very much.

In Ruth's later years at Nithview, Ruth was surrounded by members of the community and received wonderful care from the staff there. The family would like to thank them for their kindness.

A visitation will be held at Shantz Mennonite Church on Saturday, October 17th beginning at 11am, with the funeral, interment and reception to follow beginning at 12:00 pm.

As expressions of sympathy, donations would be accepted to the Mennonite Central Committee or the Nithview Community.

Personal condolences and donation information available at www.markjutzifuneralhomes.ca

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



Sorry For Your Loss

OBITUARY

KOENIG: Paul Andrew



Passed away peacefully on Saturday, October 10, 2026, surrounded by the love and support of his dear family, at Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth, just four days shy of his 62nd birthday. Paul courageously fought prostate cancer like he fought fires.

Beloved husband, devoted father, proud grandfather, cherished brother, and loyal friend, Paul will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved him.

Paul was the loving husband of Sharon (Yantzi) Koenig, whom he married on May 2, 1987. Together, they built a beautiful life filled with love, family, friendship, and countless treasured memories. He was the devoted father of Briana (Johnnie Reiner), Nathan (Sarah), and Gavin (Chelsea), and the immensely proud grandfather of Jameson, Mack, Kasey, Emma, Brooks, and Henry. His family was his greatest pride and joy, and he took immense pleasure in watching each of them grow and celebrating their accomplishments.

Paul will be lovingly remembered by his father, Elmer Koenig; his brothers, Stephen (Joanne) and Mark (Kim); his sister, Mary (Bill Elias); his mother-in-law, Dorothy (Bender) Yantzi; and his brothers-in-law, Gary (Elaine), Stephen (Gail), Dan (Diane Leith), Ross (Rose), and Greg (Lisa Carr-Pries). He will also be fondly remembered by his many nieces and nephews. Paul was predeceased by his mother, Shirley (Naumann) Koenig, and his father-in-law, LaVerne Yantzi.

A lifelong resident of Baden, Paul dedicated much of his life to serving and protecting his surrounding community. He was a full-time firefighter with the City of Kitchener, and spent one year of his career serving in Richmond Hill. He was also a proud 3rd generation volunteer firefighter and District Chief for the town of Baden. His commitment to firefighting extended beyond his professional duties through his involvement with the Wilmot Heritage Fire Brigades. Paul took great pride in his work and in the opportunity to serve others.

Paul loved sports all of his life. In his younger years he played baseball, hockey, basketball, track and volleyball and was also a member of the Baden Tennis Club. In high school he was an integral part of the W-O volleyball team that won 2 OFSSA Championships. He also played volleyball at a more competitive level for the Guelph Oaks where they won the Bronze Medal at the Canadian Championships. He enjoyed the friendships and camaraderie that came with his many sporting pursuits. Generous by nature, Paul was known for donating his nostalgic sporting goods and clothing to Wilmot Township and City of Guelph. He wanted others to enjoy memorabilia, like he did.

Paul had a passion for collecting Breweriana items, building a collection for more than 30 years that reflected his enthusiasm for this unique hobby. He was also a longtime member of St. James Lutheran Church.

Above all, Paul treasured time spent with his family. Some of his happiest moments were made at a cottage, where family gathered to relax, laugh, and create lasting memories. He loved to travel, share time with friends and neighbours, and enjoy the simple pleasures of being surrounded by the people who meant the most to him. His pride in his family was unmistakable, and his love and support will remain a lasting part of their lives.

Paul leaves behind a legacy of service, generosity, friendship, and, most importantly, love. Though his passing leaves an immeasurable void in the hearts of those who loved him, the memories he created, the many lives he touched, and the example he set will live on for generations to come. Paul felt driven to bring Prostate Cancer Awareness to others which includes a pin campaign that is to be rolled out for 'Movember'. His family and friends will continue to work at this to accomplish his mission.

He will be forever loved, deeply missed, and fondly remembered.

The Koenig family welcomes any first responder attending to wear their dress uniform.

Relatives and friends will be received in the Mark Jutzi Funeral Home, 291 Huron St. New Hamburg on Saturday, October 24, 2026 from 1-5pm. Memorial Service will be conducted at Shantz Mennonite Church on Sunday, October 25, 2026 at 2:00pm. Reception lunch to follow. Private family Inurnment in Fairmount Cemetery, Baden

In lieu of flowers, donations to the Stratford Rotary Hospice and the Canadian Cancer Society would be appreciated by the family. Personal condolences can be shared at www.markjutzifuneralhomes.ca

The family would like to thank the Stratford Rotary Hospice and the Grand River Cancer Centre for their excellent care.

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The Old Gazettes

By Sydney Grant

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

October 7 - 14, 2021, Edition (5 years ago)

The official grand opening of the artificial turf at Waterloo-Oxford District Secondary School will take place Thursday, Oct. 7. This project has been a joint financial venture by the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) and the Township of Wilmot through capital planning and has been in the works for about a decade. "I know I speak for all of the staff and students at W-O when I say we can't wait for the first kick-off on our new field," said Carolyn Salonen, principal of Waterloo-Oxford District Secondary School.

The provincial government is allocating more than $385,000 to expand a mental health program that supports farmers and their families. "In the Know" is a mental health literacy program developed by Dr. Andria Jones-Bitton and her team at the University of Guelph. The program's goal is to better inform farmers on mental health, how to cope with stresses of running a farm in a healthy way and how to start safe mental health conversations. "Our investment to expand the In the Know program will help more people in the province's farming community access the support they need when they need it," said Minister Lisa Thompson.

The New Hamburg Firebirds have moved into the regular season with a great start. After going through the preseason with three wins, the regular season has followed suit. Our team has a number of exciting new players and a great group of veteran leaders to help show the Firebird way. Captain is New Hamburg resident Zach Mark, and assistant captains are Nathan George, Josh Vale and Cedrick Roth. Our season started down the road in Tavistock. We played a closely contested match with The Birds skating to a 3-2 win. Newcomer Jake Thompson fired home the game-winner to take the game's first star.

October 12 - 19, 2011, Edition (15 years ago)

The Oxford District Women's Institute's fall board meeting was held at Browns' W.I. building the evening of Sept. 27, 2011. The 36 members present experienced a meeting like one Adelaide Hoodless may have attended in her day, with lanterns and candles lit since the hydro failed just prior to the start of the meeting. Anne Innes gave an update for the scholarship committee, announcing the scholarship winners for 2011 – Paul Knoops - Dorothy Fultcher Scholarship; Kayla Schrijver - Maryn Pardy Scholarship; Stephanie Koot - Oxford District Scholarship; Janneke Van der nieuwelaar - Oxford District Bursary.

Wind and rain didn't deter hundreds of supporters of the Empty Bowls for Haiti fundraiser held at the Steinmann Mennonite Church in Baden on Saturday evening, Oct. 15, 2011. A sold-out crowd of 200 people filed into the church auditorium at 5 p.m. for the first sitting and more than 100 at the second sitting at 7 p.m. Fourteen local restaurants and nearly a dozen southwestern Ontario potters joined forces for the fifth annual event that has raised over $40,000 for MCC relief in Haiti.

October 9 - 16, 1996, Edition (30 years ago)

For the first time in almost two years, Ontario dairy farmers will receive an increase in the price they are paid for milk produced for the fluid market. The increase took place Oct. 1 and is one cent per litre. This 1.6 per-cent rise is equal to an annual rate of increase of 0.9 per cent since the last increase in February 1995. This is only the third fluid milk price increase for Ontario's 7,800 dairy farmers since 1990. The average price per litre paid to the farmer for milk sold in the range of fluid milk products available to consumers will be about 53 cents after the increase.

The welcome sound of steel blades cutting through a sheet of ice was heard Saturday morning as the Tavistock & District Recreation Centre opened its doors for the first skaters of the season. Minor hockey participants began at 7 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 12, with access to areas of the arena limited due to further construction in the upper level and spectator sitting area. Figure skating began Thursday night. Sunday afternoon, free public skating was offered, however the official opening and ribbon cutting was postponed.



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All are welcome

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Pastors: Richard Bean and Gabriel Jantzi
www. oasismennonite.com

To have your place of worship listing included here, please contact thewtgazette@gmail.com

SEND STORY IDEAS AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR TO GALEN SIMMONS AT GALEN@GRANTHAVEN.COM

The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette SPORTS

PJHL roundup: Doherty Division tightens up after big Birds' victory

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

Tavistock's undefeated streak to start the 2026-2027 Provincial Junior Hockey League (PJHL) season has come to an end courtesy of New Hamburg.

The Firebirds downed the Braves 7-6 in an overtime thriller Saturday night to not only give Tavistock its first loss of the season, but it was the fifth win in a row for surging New Hamburg who now sit in a tie for second place in the Doherty Division standings.

Kaiden Cormier scored the game-winning goal just before the five-minute mark of the extra period, his 12th of the season, after Kayden Livingston forced overtime with six minutes remaining in regulation time. The Firebirds led 3-2 after 20 minutes and 5-4 after two periods.

Cormier and Ezra Fischer each had three points to lead the New Hamburg attack while Redden Hart, Livingston, Aydan Burns and Tate Davidson added a pair of points each. Keaton Bartlett, Jack Hodge, Tucker Otto and Felix Isert Bender all had two points each for the Braves who still lead the division with 23 points, two ahead of Wellesley, but Tavistock has three games in hand.

Deklan Jermol stopped 30 of the 35 shots he faced to earn the win while Blake Richard stopped 22 of 29 shots in a losing effort.

New Hamburg coach Shane Gerber said there were some good opportunities on both sides of the puck and with two skilled teams, sometimes those chances will result in goals.

"With both teams having that kind of skill, when you make a mistake it can quickly end up in the back of the net. For us, especially, we are going to have games like that because we have a mix of young and old players, but one thing we don't do is quit."

He added the game was back and forth and both teams kept finding a way to get back into it.

"If I look at it as a fan, I will say it was pretty entertaining. … There's a lot of work to be done and things will change but I would like to think you can go to a game between the two of us and be entertained with competitive hockey. Time will tell."

The two teams will battle next on Halloween night in Tavistock, a barn Gerber said his teams haven't had much luck in over the years.

"It's a small sample size only playing them once this season, but if it's a sign of things to come, it looks good for it to be a pretty good rivalry."

Tavistock coach Zac Berg agreed the game was entertaining from the stands but from a coach's standpoint, not so much.

"I didn't like how we came out flat and gave up two early ones. I thought we took them lightly to start the game and also got into some penalty trouble which you can't do against a good team like New Hamburg."

He added there's always room to get better and improve, be it after a win or a loss.

"Even after a W, you look at parts of your game that can be improved and make them a focus in practice. We had too many defensive breakdowns and gave up too many odd-man rushes. We have some drills that we'll be implementing in practice this week to help clean that up and be better prepared going into the weekend."

The Braves were the last of the undefeated teams in the entire PJHL and Berg explained every team needs some adversity throughout the year to strengthen it.

"You need to be in situations where you're losing to see how the group responds because it's almost a certainty you'll face those moments in the playoffs. There were multiple times in that game where we were down, but we battled back and never gave up. That's definitely a positive we can take away from the New Hamburg game."

Outside of the Firebirds loss, Berg added he has been impressed with his team's compete level in the D-zone.

"We've been working hard in front of our goalies, winning the battles at the blue line and, in most games, we've done a good job of coming out on top in the turnover battle against our opponents. I'd like to see us cut back on our penalty minutes. If we can stay five-on-five against teams, I like our chances against anybody."

The Firebirds downed Norwich 6-1 on Friday night. Oliver Lyon and Cormier led the attack with three-point performances while Jake Howard made 37 saves in the New Hamburg net.

Tavistock split its weekend games thanks to a 4-2 home-ice win over last-place Dorchester. The Braves led 4-0 two minutes into the third frame on goals by Tucker and Carter, the Otto brothers, Nolan Miller and Jacob Skuta. Andrew Torchia kicked out 36 of the 38 shots he faced to earn the win.

Wellesley won both games over the weekend, starting with a 6-3 victory over Hespeler. Issac Lorentz, Cooper Vickerman and Benjamin Morton led the charge with three points apiece while Kyler Morgan and Bobby Tsilogianis had two points each.

The Applejacks skated into Paris on Saturday and erased a 5-3 deficit by scoring four consecutive goals, the first with just one second left in the second period by Keegan Metcalf. Metcalf also found the back of the net early in the third and was followed with a pair of markers from Morton.

Royals take first game of OEHL season, prepare for home opener

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

Tyler Schwindt's goal seven and a half minutes into the second period turned out to be the game-winner as Tavistock earned two points in its Ontario Elite Hockey League (OEHL) season opener in Ridgetown on Saturday.

Schwindt scored on a set-up from Mitch Atkins and Andrew Van Boekel. The New Hamburg native, who also had an assist in the game, played for the Binghamton Black Bears of the Federal Prospects Hockey League last season. It bills itself as a professional minor-league hockey organization and describes itself as a Single-A minor professional hockey league.

Deven Kropf and Atkins led the Royals offence with three points each, while Callan Christner added a goal and an assist. Tavistock led 3-2 after 20 minutes and 4-3 after two periods of play. The Rebels outshot Tavistock 45-30, but Andrew Masters was solid between the pipes, making 42 saves.

Next action for the team is Saturday night for the home opener against the Delhi Flames. The puck drops at 7:30 p.m.

Royals president Kyle Wynette said he's very pleased with the progress the league has made since it joined the Ontario Hockey Association after leaving the Western Ontario Athletic Association.

"We are careful who we vet in terms of new teams to ensure we're bringing in like-minded franchises that help strengthen the league. With 19 teams and 19 voices, we naturally don't always agree on everything, but we've structured the league in a way that everyone's voice is heard. A lot of work has been done in the offseason to help strengthen our governance documents with the help of SportLaw."

SportLaw is no stranger to league governance as it helped develop the policies and procedures for the Provincial Junior Hockey League.

Wynette added the expansion team in Ridgetown is a great addition to the OEHL.

"Not only did the proximity fit our expansion plans, but the ownership and management shared our common vision. I had the chance to meet their top brass in person last weekend for the first time and got a great sense from them that they have the community support to make their franchise a success."

The Royals have several new faces on and off the ice this season, including adding Mitch McKay as a coach and players like Sam Rhodes, Will Schlotzhauer, Schwindt, Carter Arseneau and Abram Snider. Wynette said the entire group seems determined and focused this year.

"Our practice turnouts are always a great indicator of that focus. Tuesday night I counted 25 guys and seven staff out."

He added recruiting new faces is a full effort from team officials and players.

"The process takes place as soon as one season ends. The players and our staff regularly communicate throughout the summer to work on improving our club. We learn which junior guys might be interested or might be worth reaching out to and also which former junior players are living in the area or have a connection to our existing guys."

Tavistock has always been blessed with a solid volunteer base, something that leads to a better experience for fans who come through the arena doors. Wynette said this season is no different.

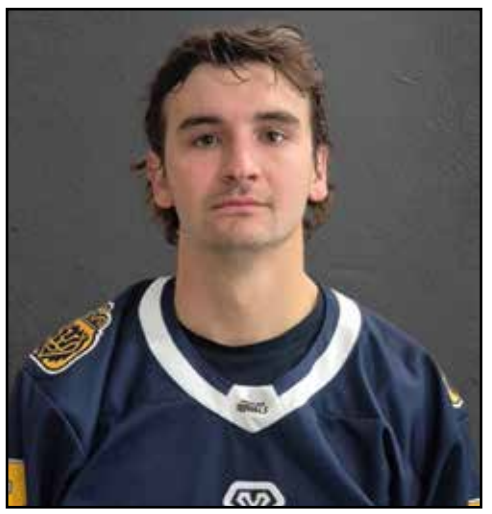
"At last look, I counted 28 volunteers and executive members who help keep this program going. That's one volunteer for every carded player. Having such a strong executive ensures we can execute and deliver a strong player experience for our guys. It's been a steady build-up over the past few years, and every one of them brings an important skillset to the team."

The Royals have added a $5 student price for high schoolers this season, hoping to attract more fans from that demographic. As always, elementary school kids get in free.

The team is also preparing for its next fundraiser as it will be hosting Hells Bells, an AC/DC tribute band, at the Memorial Hall on Friday, Oct. 30.

"We're expecting that to be a sold-out event, and it's sure to be a night you don't want to miss. We also have our Minor Hockey Night on Saturday, Nov. 7, which is always a great turnout from our young fans."

Among other prizes available, one minor hockey player will win a free registration for the 2027-2028 season.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF TAVISTOCK ROYALS)

Royals rookie Tyler Schwindt scored the game-winning goal in Tavistock's 6-3 victory in Ridgetown on Saturday night. The New Hamburg native also added an assist.

Perth County teen Levi Dill continues winning ways on the drag racing circuit

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

A young drag-racing phenom from Perth County continues to make his mark on the track, bringing home trophies, prize money and impressive finishes at competitions across Ontario and beyond.

Fifteen-year-old Levi Dill, who lives with his family on a country property near Hampstead in North Easthope Township, has been racing since he was seven years old.

Now a Grade 10 student at Stratford District Secondary School, Dill continues to excel in the sport, competing in the Junior Dragster Points Bracket Racing program at Grand Bend Motorplex, where he finished second overall in the standings for the third consecutive year.

Licensed through the International Hot Rod Association (IHRA), Dill races a 2011 Mike Bos chassis junior dragster powered by a Craw's Racing ZR4 single-cylinder, four-stroke engine.

His dragster can cover the eighth-mile track in 7.99 seconds, reaching speeds of approximately 81 miles per hour, or 130 kilometres per hour.

In his age category, Dill is not permitted to run faster than 7.90 seconds and must follow strict safety requirements, including wearing fire-retardant pants, a jacket, gloves, a helmet with a protective skirt, a head-and-neck restraint system, arm restraints, and a five-point safety harness.

His dragster is also equipped with three engine kill switches, two inside the vehicle and one outside.

Unlike traditional drag racing, where the fastest vehicle wins, bracket racing challenges drivers to finish as close as possible to a predetermined time, known as their dial-in time, without going faster.

Slower vehicles are given a head start, allowing racers with different vehicle capabilities to compete on a more even playing field.

Dill regularly competes at Grand Bend Motorplex, St. Thomas Dragway and Toronto Motorsports Park, and has recently raced at Darana Dragway in Milan, Mich.

Speaking about his racing season, Dill said one of his highlights came July 11 at the Motorsports Mayhem event at Toronto Motorsports Park, where he captured first place.

He followed that success with another first-place finish July 25 at a junior dragster fundraiser at St. Thomas Dragway. Entry fees from the event supported Kids Country Club in London, an organization providing respite care for medically fragile children.

Dill continued his winning streak Sept. 27 at Grand Bend Motorplex during the Fall Fast Big Money Weekend, taking first place in his race.

That same weekend, he also helped his 10-member racing team capture first place in a team competition, where racers accumulated points by winning rounds. The victory earned the team a trophy, prize money, jackets and bragging rights.

At the 660 Sportsman Nationals, held Oct. 2-4 at Grand Bend Motorplex, Dill once again demonstrated his racing abilities.

He won the Friday night junior dragster warm-up race before capturing the junior dragster shootout title on Saturday. The event was organized by Drew and Vicki Buchner of St. Thomas.

Most recently, Dill competed at the Turkey Nationals over Thanksgiving weekend at St. Thomas Dragway, where he finished a close second.

His continued success is supported by sponsors W.C. Dill and Company of Stratford and Fox's Auto Sound of Dorchester.

For Dill, racing is also a family affair.

His racing team includes his father, Mike, mother, Kirsten, twin sister, Lexi, and older sister, Jade, 19.

Together, the family travels to competitions, supporting Dill as he continues to develop his skills and add to his growing collection of racing accomplishments.

With another successful season behind him, the young North Easthope racer has plenty of reasons to be proud of what he has accomplished on the drag strip.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Fifteen-year-old drag racer Levi Dill, centre, displays his winning cheques alongside his family and racing team at their country home southeast of Hampstead. Pictured from left are his twin sister, Lexi, father, Mike, Levi Dill, mother, Kirsten, and older sister, Jade.

Gazette Puzzles

COLOURS OF AUTUMN

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Amber
Bronze
Burnt Orange
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Mahogany
Maple Red
Pumpkin
Russet
Rust
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519-655-2422

Pet of the Week

COOPER

Meet Cooper! This three-year-old boy is dreaming of becoming your new best friend. He may be a little shy at first, but with patience and kindness, his sweet, goofy personality quickly shines through.

Once you've earned his trust, Cooper is devoted for life and happiest when he's by your side for an adventure or just relaxing at home. He's also a big fan of tennis balls, which never fail to bring out his playful side.

Cooper is looking for a family with no other dogs who can provide patience and consistent training, and in return, receive endless loyalty, affection, and friendship. Meet Cooper in-person at our Kitchener Centre or online at kwsphumane.ca/adopt/dogs



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Embrace your inner child and thrive

HEAPS OF HEALTHY TIPS

By Mercedes Kay Gold



Health is more than moving your body and meal prep with a side of supplements. Yes, the latest and greatest power foods and exercise are essential. Yes, all the tech trends can track your body fat, water, sleep and slews of other health numbers but at the end of the day, life is, in reality, quite simple.

As the number of candles on the birthday cake increases, life can get a little blurry. It's time to refocus. Go ahead and embrace your inner child for a holistic happiness inside and out. Anger, sadness and resentment will always undermine even the best habits. Youthful energy is the key to radiance; glowing attracts peace, love and heaps of happiness.

Wellness experts worldwide agree that mind, body and spirit need to work synergistically for the body to thrive. Engaging the sympathetic response better known as "fight and flight" raises stress hormones, increasing inflammation throughout the body. When the body is stressed, digestion is halted, nutrients are not absorbed and waste is stored rather than eliminated. Toxins accumulate and it's an invitation to disease.

Life can be complicated but escaping to simpler times is necessary. The body thrives in a parasympathetic state or the "rest and digest" mode. Choosing yoga, breathing, cold plunges, infrared saunas, retreats, organic foods, water and restful sleep may already be part of your personal daily feeling-fabulous protocol and I applaud you. But sometimes, we get lost in counting calories and macros, meal planning and just trying to survive, and somewhere along the path, we forget what thriving looks like.

Children are the best example of living a simple life. It's never too late to fall in love with yourself. Living your best life leads to longevity. It's as simple as that. Mindset is everything. It's true. Your vibes attract your tribe.

Wake up in the morning, look in the mirror and tell yourself you are loved.

Speak kindly to yourself. Your inner dialogue matters. Cultivate deep self-kindness.

Remember how awesome you are.

Make a list of all the things you are grateful for. Anything. Good coffee counts!

Write your younger self a letter.

Sign up for a class. What have you always wanted to learn? The time is now. Life is not guaranteed.

Learn a language.

Go to the zoo.

Visit a farm and feed the animals.

Go to a comedy show. Be fearless and sit at the front.

Go to an amusement park and yes, play the games.

Play hooky from life for a day.

Eat breakfast for dinner.

Book the trip.

Express yourself with colouring, drawing or painting. Hang it on your fridge.

Show up as your true self.

Be authentic.

Engage in nostalgic activities. Plan a games night.

Stay open to wonder. Kids are curious. They ask a million questions without being shy or insecure.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF MERCEDES KAY GOLD)

Meet my inner child. Have you reacquainted yourself with yours?

Be playful. Stop watching from the sidelines. Play with your minis and grand-minis.

Explore. Dig in the dirt. Pick the wildflowers.

Dance like nobody is watching.

Love yourself enough to move your body and eat clean but rediscover the things that made you happy before you took life too seriously. It's a short ride. Have fun!

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Tavistock Agricultural Society announces fall fair 50/50 winner

The Tavistock Agricultural Society hosted our annual fall fair and had great weather and great attendance.

The 50/50 lottery was won by John Thiel of Stratford and he received $308. As part of our ongoing commitment to supporting local organizations, the recipients of the remaining $308 will be split between these local organizations: 4H agricultural, Junior Farmers and Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Thank you for the ongoing support from the community.

Chris Wiffen,

Secretary/treasurer, Tavistock Agricultural Society

The opinions expressed in letters to the editor are that of their authors and not of the Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette or Grant Haven Media

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

An honour and a privilege to moderate the Wilmot Community Debate Series

It was an absolute honour to be selected and invited by the community organizations involved in the Wilmot Community Debate Series to serve as moderator. Having had the privilege of meeting and listening to so many of the individuals who have put their names forward as candidates in Wilmot, I have come away with an overwhelming appreciation for the depth of knowledge, experience, skill and qualifications represented on the ballot in this election.

What has impressed me most is the sheer breadth of backgrounds and expertise among those willing to step forward and serve our community. We have candidates with experience in high-level management, budgeting, small business, community leadership, retired professionals, politically and university educated individuals and so many other areas that shape the lives of residents. These are individuals who bring different professional experiences, perspectives, priorities and visions for Wilmot's future.

It is worth recognizing the courage it takes to put your name forward for public office. Running for municipal council requires a willingness to be scrutinized, to have difficult conversations, to defend your positions and to open yourself up to public criticism. Regardless of political differences or individual perspectives, that decision deserves recognition.

The debate series reinforced how important it is to create opportunities for residents to hear directly from candidates, ask meaningful questions, examine differing perspectives and make informed decisions about the future of Wilmot Township.

I also want to extend my sincere gratitude to the eight community organizations that came together to make this series possible. Their commitment to public engagement, transparency and democratic participation demonstrates what can happen when people with a shared interest in their community work together. Many of you have poured your lifetime into protecting our community for future generations and for that I am grateful.

I feel fortunate to have had a front-row seat to the diversity of experience, knowledge and ideas that exist within our community. Thank you to the Waterloo-Oxford civics classes that participated, reminding us that civic engagement has no minimum age and that the voices and perspectives are equally important. Whatever the outcome of this election, I hope we continue to recognize the value of civic participation, the importance of respectful dialogue and the many ways people can contribute to building a stronger Wilmot.

The debates also provided an important opportunity to explore some of the most significant issues facing Wilmot, including our official plan, the future of farmland, water protections, gravel pits and the long-term vision for our community. These are complex topics that deserve thoughtful discussion, informed perspectives and meaningful public engagement. I particularly enjoyed the wrap-up conversation, which offered an opportunity to reflect on the themes, ideas and questions that emerged throughout the series. For those who were unable to attend in person, or who wish to revisit the conversations, the wrap up and all of the debates are

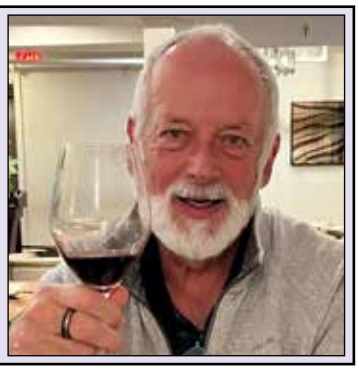
available to watch on YouTube through the WilmotCAN channel. I encourage residents to take the time to watch, listen and engage with the conversations as they consider the future direction of our township. As I look at this map of Wilmot from 145 years ago, I wonder what will be left 145 years from now for future generations.

Angie Hallman,

New Hamburg

Time-travelling in Tarragona

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO



By Paul Knowles

"In Tarragona, you can't move soil or you will find Roman remains." If I thought this was an exaggeration by our guide, I soon realized I was wrong. This Spanish city is absolutely chock-a-block with 2,000-year-old evidence of Roman civilization.

If you are anything like me – and I sincerely hope you do not bear such a curse – you find ancient ruins to be absolutely fascinating. I think it's because we live in a land that, from the perspective of architectural ruins, is a "new world." A building 200 years old in Canada is astonishing; it's a recent renovation in Spain.

But still, walking around a city where large bits of Roman buildings still stand next door to modern shops and homes is an amazing experience. And it doesn't come much more amazing than in Tarragona, this city on the Mediterranean coast an hour and a bit from Barcelona.

Like many – probably most – European cities, Tarragona has a history going back before accurate records. The Phoenicians were probably here in the seventh century B.C. The Romans were certainly here from the first century B.C. until the fall of the Roman Empire in the mid-fifth century. Roman Catholic popes were here – or at least, a would-be pope, crowned as such at the time of the "Great Schism" when there were actually three popes claiming the title – one in Rome, one in Avignon and one in Tarragona.

Supporters of one of the other popes attempted to limit the field by poisoning the Tarragona prelate, but he survived and lived to be over 90.

The so-called pope was not the only public figure to claim heavenly status in Tarragona. Centuries earlier, the Roman Emperor Octavius Caesar chose this site for his declaration of personal divinity.

We were in Tarragona as guests of Viking on a terrific Mediterranean Cruise, and I found the visit to Tarragona to be one of the most interesting excursions on the voyage that took us from Rome to Barcelona.

Today, Tarragona is a city in the region of Catalonia, home to seven million inhabitants and still a very busy fishing port. Our guide told us that Tarragona fishers are responsible for half of all the fishing in Catalonia.

But frankly, while the modern city is interesting, it was all of the evidence of Roman life here that grabbed my attention. I'm not alone in this perspective; Tarragona's ruins are so important that they have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Roman evidence continues to have so much impact on the city that the entire central city plan continues to follow what our guide called "the Roman urbanistic plan." Even the impressive Roman Catholic Cathedral, built starting in the 14th century, sits squarely on the site of a Roman temple.

And right in the heart of the city is an amazingly well-preserved Roman circus – a first-century chariot-racing arena.

The circus, once the site of two-horse chariot and four-horse chariot races, is one of the best preserved of such treasures in the world. We visited part of the track and, perhaps even more interesting, saw extensive spectator seating facilities sitting directly below much more modern houses.

Through the city centre, you will find large section of still-standing walls, begging for both historical research and selfie moments. We did both.

Equally impressive is the Roman Amphitheatre, sitting near the seashore and still a splendid sight from the roadside high above the theatre.

While Tarragona is filled with large, significant Roman ruins, there are also less obvious bits of evidence of that crucial period in western civilization. The walls of houses and shops have bits and pieces of Roman buildings in them, re-used as construction materials.

In fact, our guide told us one of the biggest problems facing today's heritage conservators is that the amphitheatre, the circus, the walls and other Roman buildings were used as quarries for readily available construction materials in more recent centuries. This practice is entirely illegal today, of course.

We visited a lot of historical Roman sites during our time in Tarragona but still managed only to see about half of the significant ruins. Also found in and around the city are a Pretorium tower, two fora (provincial and colonial government meeting places), a necropolis (burial place), the palace of Augustus, and several other towers, arches and roadways. Rome certainly left its mark on this Spanish city.

There are plenty of legends around Tarragona, as well. One suggests the city's origins date back more than 2,000 years B.C. Another says St. Paul came to Tarragona, and thus, "Tarragona became the gate of Christianity," to quote our guide.

What is known for sure is that Caesar Augustus, who reigned over the burgeoning Empire from 27 B.C. to 14 A.D., spent his winters in Tarragona, thus establishing a tourism tradition that continues to this day. The emperor enjoyed his visits to the place; so will modern-day travelers looking to get up close and personal with ancient history.

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.



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

Roman chariot races once took place in the heart of Tarragona and, today, much of the "circus," the site of those competitions, still stands.



The remarkable site of 2,000-year-old spectator seating areas directly adjacent to modern-day homes.



Another section of Roman wall in central Tarragona.



The Tarragona amphitheatre sits near the Mediterranean seashore.

Baden resident wins September heritage fire brigade 50/50 draw

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

The Wilmot Heritage Fire Brigades continues to see support for its monthly 50/50 draw, with recent winners coming from both near and far.

In August, Toronto resident Richard Desrocher purchased a ticket online to support the organization and ended up winning $650.

The September winner was much closer to home.

Baden resident Ruth-Anne McLeod took home $350 in the latest draw supporting the Wilmot Heritage Fire Brigades and its efforts to preserve historic fire trucks and firefighting equipment.

President Peter Gingerich said the monthly 50/50 draw will continue through the fall and winter.

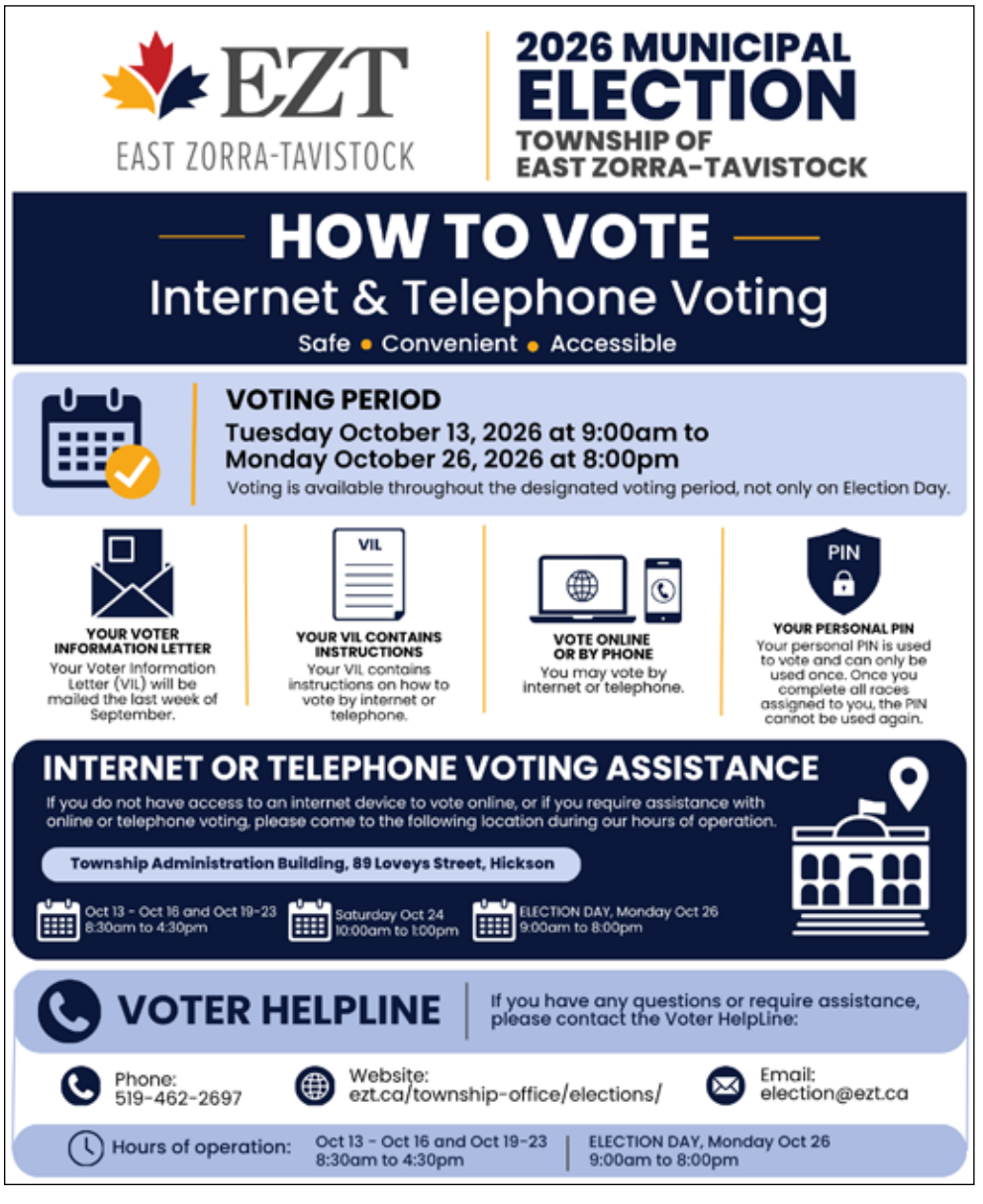
He hopes residents across the area will continue supporting the organization's preservation work, with the added possibility of taking home a cash prize.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Wilmot Heritage Fire Brigades president Peter Gingerich presents Baden resident Ruth-Anne McLeod with a cheque for $350, her winnings from the September monthly 50/50 draw supporting the preservation of historic fire trucks and firefighting equipment.





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COMMUNITY CALENDAR - OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2026

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17

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

Optimist Club of Petersburg is hosting a Bottle Drive
9 a.m. - 12 noon
Let us take your empty bottles and cans back, as this allows us to raise funds to help organizations and youth in our community. Also accepting donations fo the food bank. For information call 519-465-1157, leave a message and we will get back to you.
Bechthold Home Improvements
1239 Notre Dame Drive Petersburg

Perth East Fire Fest
9 a.m. - 12 noon
Explore fire trucks, tackle the firefighter obstacle course, spray the fire hose, explore the fire safety house, watch a live extraction demo, fire safety giveaways, light refreshments and more!
Shakespeare & District Optimist Hall
3976 Galt St., Shakespeare

Tavistock & District Historical Society Museum
1-4 p.m. (other times by appointment)
Email: info@tavistockhistory.ca or call 519-655-3334. All welcome.
37 Maria Street, Tavistock

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20

Free Caregiver Connection peer support groups
6:30-8:30 p.m.
Worried about your child or youth? Parents and Caregivers for Mental Health (PCMH) offers free peer support groups for caregivers, in person, virtual, or hybrid. Visit family.cmho.org or email oxfordcounty@pcmh.ca for more information.
Revel Realty Woodstock,
111 Huron Street, Woodstock

Perth East council meeting
7 p.m.
Council chambers
25 Mill Street East, Milverton

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21

Community Care Concepts Lunch and Fellowship
12 p.m.
Please register by October 16 by calling 519-664-1900 or Toll Free: 1-855-664-1900
Wilmot Rec Complex,
1291 Nafziger Rd, Baden

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21 CON'T

East Zorra-Tavistock Council meeting
7 p.m.
Council Chambers
89 Loveys Street East, Hickson

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23

Flag Raising Ceremony hosted by Royal Canadian Legion Branch 532 New Hamburg
10 a.m.
You are cordially invited to attend a Flag Raising Ceremony in honour of Canada's Veterans and active service members. The ceremony will include brief remarks, a moment of reflection, and the raising of the Royal Canadian Legion Lest We Forget poppy flag.
Castle Kilbride
60 Snyder's Rd W, Baden

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24

Let's Tree Wilmot is increasing the tree cover on a rural property
9 a.m. - 12 noon
Join us in planting 100 trees offering some of the best opportunities for increasing the tree canopy in our township. For details and registration: https://letstreewilmot.ca/events/
Perth Street, New Hamburg

New Hamburg Optimists Pumpkin Carving Event
10 a.m. to 12 noon - FREE pumpkin pick up
6 p.m. - Return with your carved pumpkin
Come and pick up a free pumpkin between 10 a.m. - 12 noon and then take it home to carve it. Then dress up in your halloween costumes and bring your carved pumpkin back at 6 p.m. There will be a kids' costume contest, loot bags, face painting, Zombie Walks at 6:15 and 6:45 and fire truck demos.
Wilmot Township Fire Station 3
121 Huron St, New Hamburg

Tavistock Fall Expo: Market & Carnival
10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Shop local this fall with our amazing vendors, and join us for our FREE family carnival. We will have games, candy prizes, Bouncy Castle, and more. Lunch is also available to be purchased at the market. For more information, find us online: www.facebook.com/tavistock.church
Tavistock Missionary Church
77 Mogk St, Tavistock

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24 CON'T

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

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25

Rescue Junction: Gospel Bluegrass Concert
6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
Free Will Offering taken.
Rosebank Church
1434 Huron Road, Petersburg

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28

Community Care Concepts Lunch and Fellowship
12 p.m.
Please register by October 23 by calling 519-664-1900 or Toll Free: 1-855-664-1900
Linwood Community Centre,
5279 Ament Line, Linwood

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9

Wilmot Council meeting
6-7 p.m.
Council chambers
60 Snyder's Road W., Baden

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10

Free "Explore Your Future" career expo for Gr 7-12 students/parents
5-8 p.m.
bepwr.ca/eyf
Tapestry Hall,
74 Grand Avenue South, Cambridge, ON

Wellesley Council meeting
6:45 p.m.
Council chambers
4805 William Hastings Line, Crosshill

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21

The Catholic Women's League of Saint Joseph's Catholic Church Annual Christmas Market\Bazaar
9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Free admission. Crafts, baking, Silent Auction, lunch in the Church hall available for purchase. All proceeds allow the women to donate back to the church and community.
Saint Joseph's Catholic Church
96 Huron St., Stratford

EVERY WEDNESDAY

TOPS - Taking off Pounds Sensibly
Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m.
Contact Cathie 519-662-9273
St James Church, Baden

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

FREE SENIORS ACTIVITIES

Tavistock Seniors Pickleball
Monday, Wednesday & Friday 12-4 p.m.
Contact: Don Junker 519-535-7052
Tavistock Memorial Hall, 1 Adam St.
Tavistock Seniors Card Games
Monday drop in 1-4 p.m.
Contact: Bob Routly 519-301-2118
Tavistock Memorial Hall, 1 Adam St.
VON Senior Exercise Drop-In Standing Class
Tuesday and Thursday 9-10 a.m.
To register contact 519-539-1231 ext. 6319
Tavistock Memorial Hall, 1 Adam St.
VON Senior Exercise Drop-In Sitting Class
Tuesday and Thursday 10:25-11:25 a.m.
To register contact 519-539-1231 ext. 6319
Village Manner, 98 Woodstock St., Tavistock

TAVISTOCK & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM DISPLAYS

Travelling Museum Display: "Heritage of Hickson's Sports Teams"
Check out the earliest Hickson baseball teams and the display full of vintage equipment. History and photos of the Hickson Baseball teams dating back to the early 1900's complement the display.

TAVISTOCK MEN'S CLUB SAUERKRAUT & BBQ PORK CHOP SUPPER

Supper Date: Wednesday, November 11, 2026
Supper Time: 4:00 7:00 pm
Pick Up Only
TAVISTOCK MEMORIAL HALL
3 Adam St., Tavistock

Tickets are available from club members or call 519-655-3573 or at Tavistock arena booth or email: info@tavistockmensclub.ca or online at www.tavistockmensclub.ca.
Starting on October 10th until November 10th tickets will be available at Men's Club Hall (78 Woodstock St N) every Wednesday from 4-6 pm and Saturdays from 11am-2pm

The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette

Deadline: Tuesday prior at 3 p.m.
Contact: thewtgazette@gmail.com

PROMOTE YOUR EVENTS WITH US! HERE'S HOW:

- The Community Calendar allows non-profit organizations to promote their free admission community events at no charge. Event listings can include your event name, date, time and location as well as contact information (ie phone number, email address or website).
- If your event is not free admission or you would like to include more details than stated above, The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette offers the following options for promoting your community events:
  - Coming Events Word Ad (50 word max.) - $10 + hst
  - Coming Events Boxed Word Ad (50 word max.) - $15 + hst
  - Display Ad - Sizes begin at a Small Classified Display ad (3.3" x 2.5") - $35 + hst

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WANTED
$ Cash Paid $ for your RECORDS and LPs. Jazz, Blues, Rock, Pop, Folk, Soundtracks, and more. Selectively buying CDs, Cassettes, Turntables, and Stereo Equipment. For more information: Diamond Dogs Music 114 Ontario St. Stratford / 226-972-5750

Quiz Time Answers

1. Alaska.
2. The big toe.
3. Venus.
4. Hot water.
5. 007.
6. The skin.
7. A flamboyance.
8. 93 million miles.
9. Russia.
10. The Bible.



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

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