

SIMCOE ADVOCATE

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Projects nearly \$70M approved in capital budget

LUKE EDWARDS

Grant Haven Media

With a focus on renewal of existing assets, Norfolk councillors have approved the 2026 capital levy budget.

Nearly \$70 million in projects have been approved for 2026, alongside a 10-year capital plan totaling \$750 million. Items in next year's budget are primarily classified as "renewal" projects and make up 90 per cent of the total. The remaining 10 per cent is divided into "service improvements and studies" at seven per cent, and requisitions from boards and agencies at three per cent.

The municipality has also been able to craft a 2026 budget that allocates no new debt, following a similar achievement with the 2026 rate budget passed earlier this fall.

"It's really great news to see we're not taking on a boatload of additional debt to maintain the services," said Mayor Amy Martin, calling it a mostly status quo budget.

However, Jared Carter, supervisor of financial initiatives and planning, said there is still \$17.7 million in previously approved debt to be issued. He painted a financial picture of a situation that's still daunting, but steadily improving.

"Over the last two capital status reports, 178 projects have also come to completion and that happened net \$8.8 million under budget, showing Norfolk's dedication to getting things done efficiently," he said.

That has, in part, helped the county reduce the debt

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Santa and Mrs. Claus are joined by MC Robynn Beazley, on the left, and Simcoe Christmas Panorama vice-president Lucas Wilson, on the right, and two special guests, Kcie and Klynn Walker, to officially turn on the Panorama lights Saturday at Wellington Park.

(CHRIS ABBOTT PHOTO)

Simcoe Christmas Panorama lights up

CHRIS ABBOTT

Editor

Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus made their grand entrance 'flying' to the Simcoe Christmas Panorama light-up ceremony on Saturday, Nov. 29.

"I have a tracker right here and I've

been texting with Santa," said Panorama MC Robynn Beazley at Wellington Park. "The firefighters are going to bring him over on the Bickle... but not quite yet. First, we need to hear from some special, important guests."

"It means so much to see our community gathered in this festive spirit,"

said Tina Gates, Bobbi Ann Brady's assistant, representing the MPP who was at Port Rowan's first Santa Claus parade.

Gates thanked all of the organizers, volunteers and donors, "who worked so tirelessly to put this event together. Your dedication and hard work does

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Simcoe Christmas Panorama lights up downtown parks

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

not go unnoticed and I hope that everyone who walks through the park over the next month can be thankful for the magic that is created when you bring our community to life during this special season.”

Norfolk Mayor Amy Martin also thanked everyone who came out for the official Panorama light-up.

“I want to give a very, very special shoutout to all of the volunteers and the committee who make this happen each and every year,” said Martin. “And certainly Norfolk County staff who work hard to keep the park in pristine condition.

“It’s a beautiful Christmas event and tradition that we have every year, but it’s also an event that brings people from out of town into Norfolk County and they can shop local and celebrate the holiday season with friends and family. So on behalf of Norfolk County council, very Merry Christmas and happy holidays to each and every one of you... and I am just as excited as you are to get this switch flipped. Merry Christmas!”

Excited was just the word to describe Beazley as she prepared the crowd of several hundred people for Santa’s arrival with sirens wailing and lights flashing.

“I have heard back (from Santa) and the Bickle is on the way! How exciting is this? Everybody, make a lot of noise for Santa Claus! Let him know how excited we are!

“How was the trip?” Beazley asked Santa at the gazebo. “It was cold! It was cold, the snow was behind me,” said Santa, “and it’s coming tonight. Merry Christmas everyone!”

Beazley invited two special guests, sisters Keie and Klynn Walker, to help turn on the Panorama lights after the official count down.

“Wow! Oh wow, look at that, it’s so magical,” said Beazley as the lights came on.

The Panorama lights will be turned on daily from 6-10 p.m. until January 1st.

“There’s many reasons to keep you coming back,” Beazley noted during opening ceremonies. “The horse drawn rides will be taking visitors around the park Dec. 12th, 13th and 19th and 20th. Santa himself will be in the park every single Saturday from 6-8 p.m. leading up to Christ-



(CHRIS ABBOTT PHOTO)

Taylor and Lennyn Mattan, on the left, and Darrell and Archie Mattan, check out Santa’s kitchen at Simcoe Christmas Panorama where elves are hard at work.

mas... just in case you want to remind him what you put on that Christmas list. Sonny’s Llama Farm will be bringing llamas and alpacas to Panorama on Friday and Saturday nights from 6-8. Norfolk Dairy Farmers and Mrs. Claus will be handing out hot chocolate and cookies from her kitchen.

“I am super excited,” Beazley smiled. “I am so excited. It’s so magical and I love it so much.”

Beazley invited visitors to stay warm in the park with hot chocolate – and other beverages and snacks – at the ABEL Enterprises cabin.

“As always, a time-honoured tradition, we also have the Tumaini Children’s Foundation trailer set up – they have hot cider and apple cider donuts.”

“This was crunch week for us,” said Lucas Wilson, vice-president of the Simcoe Christmas Panorama committee. “It’s an entire year process to get to this point and we are so excited to finally see it all lit up – and everybody here. Families like to come a little bit early, get a sneak peek, look at all the displays, some turned on, some not. One of the volunteers, seeing the kids running around, stopped and said, ‘That is why I’m here, that’s why I’m doing it. It’s for the kids.’

“To see them all at once, tonight, it’s a real treat.”

Wilson estimated the number of lights to be nearly

500,000.

“It’s the biggest it’s ever been. We continue to add more and more and more... every year, or at least we try to.

“There’s a lot of Christmas lights,” he laughed. “Compared to Clark Griswold (Christmas Vacation), who said he had 25,000, we are far past what Clark Griswold had.”

Make sure you also cross Norfolk Street to explore Clifton Park where there are more Panorama lights and displays to discover.

“It’s a quiet pathway,” said Wilson. “That’s the hidden gem here at Panorama, people might say.”

Roger Cruikshank, a 25-year volunteer, was recognized during opening ceremonies.

“He’s been on the (Panorama) board for 10 years, and he’s been a volunteer for 25 years, and he’s ‘hanging up his lights’ this year,” said Beazley. “So a big thank you to him for all of his dedication and service to the community.”

Ontario’s original lights festival, Simcoe Christmas Panorama is in its 67th year.

The Panorama is supported by the community through donations and sponsorships. Volunteers are needed. Contact them on Facebook for more information.



(CHRIS ABBOTT PHOTO)

Colourful blues, greens, reds and multi-colour lights can be seen at the Simcoe Christmas Panorama, 6-10 p.m. daily until Jan. 1.

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Support the Tumaini Children's Foundation at Panorama

LEAH BAUER

Advocate Correspondent

When you are headed to the Simcoe Christmas Panorama this year, don't forget to visit the Tumaini: Hot Apple Cider and Apple Cinnamon Donuts booth. Fill your stomachs and benefit a worthy cause at the panorama this year by buying some warm treats.

This year the Simcoe Christmas Panorama is on daily 6-10 p.m. until Jan. 1 in Wellington and Clifton Parks.

Tumaini Children's Foundation is a group of volunteers who are committed to empowering orphaned and vulnerable children in Tanzania. The volunteers work hard to raise money in support of Tumaini, providing the children with not just the basic human necessities but also with on-

going support to ensure the children grow with access to opportunity, safety, independence, and success.

Every year dedicated groups of volunteers from Tumaini put on their mittens and head out to sell warm treats to people attending the panorama. Sharon Norrington, the Director of Child Welfare and Social Work with Tumaini said this is one of the organization's major fundraisers throughout the year. A fundraiser that will raise funds to support the children in Tanzania and help provide them opportunities for a better future.

You can also stay warm at Panorama with a cup of hot chocolate, coffee, tea, or enjoy pop, water, cookies and chips for sale at ABEL Enterprises' trailer.



(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Look for the Tumaini: Hot Apple Cider and Apple Cinnamon Donuts booth at the Simcoe Christmas Panorama.

Projects nearly \$70M approved in Norfolk capital budget

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

commitments in its 10-year plan by \$54 million over last year.

While Martin said she was happy to hear the news, she also warned the 10-year plan has its limitations and unforeseen challenges could crop up.

"We're making our way in the right directions but those are to provide the services of today," she said.

Unsurprisingly, most of the capital budget for 2026 is going to the public works department. Some of the key projects approved that makes up the slightly more than \$40 million in spending are: \$5 million to reconstruct a one-kilometre section of Leamon Street from Nichol Street to Thompson Road including the underground watermain and sanitary and storm sewers; \$4.8 million in shoreline protection work at three priority sites; \$3.5 million to resurface 10 km of McDowell Road from Highway 59 to Charlottesville West 1/4 Line Road; and just under \$2 million total (\$149,000 in 2026) to extend Argyle Avenue from the Bluegrass Phase 4 subdivision to Fertilizer Road.

Another \$21 million in spending is

planned for the community and development services department. That money will be spent on things like ongoing renewal projects for county facilities, its fleet and equipment.

All told, the capital budget will have a 2.5 per cent impact on the net levy when the operating budget is presented in January.

Like most municipalities in the province, staff and councillors in Norfolk have been developing more rigorous asset management plans to identify future capital needs and close the funding gap between those needs and what the municipality brings in.

Under the current plan, the funding shortfall in 2026 is just over \$20 million. The county's goal is to shrink that gap each year, and closing it in 2036.

With new strong mayor powers, the process for municipal budgets is slightly different. Martin waived her ability to present her own budget, instead opting to put forward the staff presented budget. At the Nov. 25 council meeting councillors voted to waive the remaining amendment period to allow staff to get to work on the projects more quickly. Martin said she'd do the same.

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Bobbi Ann Brady

MPP, HALDIMAND-NORFOLK

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EDITORIAL

No appeasing, just representing at Queen's Park

Oranges and lemons served up in Bill 68

Haldimand-Norfolk

**MPP
Bobbi Ann
Brady**



"An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping it will eat him last." – Sir Winston Churchill

In today's political climate, this quote is a powerful reminder of what happens when elected officials prioritize unwavering loyalty to a leader or a party over the duty they owe to the people they serve. When politicians silence their own judgement, uphold poor decisions, or defend the indefensible simply to stay in good standing, they are, in effect, feeding the crocodile – hoping compliance will spare them.

True leadership requires the courage to speak up, to challenge what is wrong, and to remember public service is not about self-preservation but about safeguarding the integrity of our institutions and the citizens who rely upon them.

I tell you this because during debate on Bill 68, Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2025, I was accused by a government member of talking too much about my riding of Haldimand-Norfolk. Proudly, guilty as charged! The member said: "This is the fall economic statement and we're talking about the entire province of Ontario. All I have sat here and heard is about her own riding and what she can do."

I reminded this member of something very important: "Well, if the member in front of me here doesn't understand that our work here actually has to do with our communities, good luck being re-elected next time is all I say. I stand here in this House, and I fight for the people of Haldimand-Norfolk because they're the ones who sent me here. But I also know that the issues in Haldimand-Norfolk are not unique to Haldimand-Norfolk."

So, being my duty, I raised the issues of importance to Haldimand-Norfolk in relation to Bill 68. There were plenty.

I started by flagging a couple of positives for business, particularly the \$30 billion tariff relief package and the return of the WSIB surplus funds to eligible employers. On the flipside, the government could have lowered the business tax rate from 3.2 per cent to 2 per cent and raised the threshold to access this rate from \$500,000 to at least \$700,000 and indexing it to inflation. Missed opportunity.

I pointed out to the government \$400 million was made available to rural/small communities through the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund to help build vital infrastruc-

ture including roads and bridges. You know where I'm going with this... The Argyle Street Bridge sits waiting for a re-build while the Minister of Transportation and the Finance Minister boast they are getting shovels in the ground building roads and bridges. We need action right here, right now.

Same deal with long-term care. On one hand, government says they are working to keep people in their own homes longer. It's a nice thought and if the supports actually existed to do this, it would be fantastic. \$2.1 billion is slotted to long-term care new builds - great optics but the truth is long-term care is not being built. I reminded my chamber mates the planned 64-bed expansion at Edgewater Gardens in Dunnville has been paused indefinitely due to a funding shortfall.

I only have a limited number of words in this column, so I haven't got the room to mention every issue I raised at Queen's Park, so perhaps "Part II" will be next week's theme.

I'll close by telling you I gave the government a piece of my mind about nurse practitioners. It baffles me why the government isn't using them to their fullest scope. Nurse practitioners can easily provide relief to a strained health-care system by expanding primary care access, managing a wider range of patient needs and helping to address doctor shortages. Everyone knows this needs to be done yet the government sits on its hands.

As I spoke in the Legislature, I could see I was getting the attention of colleagues. In response I offer no appeasement, no backing down. If anything, I'll only be turning up the volume representing you, the people of Haldimand-Norfolk.

More on the Fall Economic Statement (FES) - I thought it contained oranges and lemons. But those I heard from, mostly businesspeople, told me they'd appreciate some of the items in the FES, so I voted in favour of it at Third Reading.

Most also directed me not to stop telling the government what could be improved for future consideration - they want no appeasement.

On the orange side, I loved the part about "Protecting Workers and Businesses." Yes, indeed the government had a fair bit right: protecting workers, businesses, industries, social safety nets, the \$30 billion tariff relief package and the return of the WSIB funds to eligible employers.

On the lemon side, as I reminded the House, in Haldimand-Norfolk we have steelworkers that need protection. Premier Ford, how about protecting the steelworkers by ripping up the MZO to build a city of 40,000 on the Nanticoke Industrial Park? That concept of building homes in that industrial zone, threatening jobs and health is such a headscratcher to me.

The FES earmarked \$400 million through the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund to help rural and small communities build vital infrastructure. Hey, Minister of Transportation, it's time you save lives by immediately making safer the intersection of Highway 6 and Haldibrook Road in Caledonia. Oh yes, and how about the long overdue reconstruction of the Argyle Street Bridge?

Bill 68 is an omnibus bill, which bundles multiple, sometimes unrelated provisions, amendments, or repeals into one package. It makes it difficult to weigh the pros and cons.

As I said, I voted in favour of this bundle but one of the items I'll be contesting is the consolidation of Conservation Authorities (CAs). The government plans to restructure the 37 current CAs into seven. In my opinion, this is another attempt at centralized decision-making, further erosion of democracy as well as an attack on environmental protection.

The Rural Ontario Municipal Associations will be meeting in January, and I certainly hope this is the topic of conversation. Our local Long Point Region Conservation Authority (LPRCA) has done an incredible job for nearly-80 years, protecting people, land, water, and wildlife through science-based decisions, local on the ground expertise, and long-term stewardship. The LPRCA is essential to flood prevention initiatives, watershed health, and habitat protection.

I fear for the future of our education programs at Backus Mill. Full implementation of the new CAs is expected late 2026 or early 2027, so you can be assured this is not the last you will hear from me on this matter.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Thank you to Jumpstart and Simcoe SportChek



Langton Public School would like to extend a great big thank you to Simcoe SportChek! Thank you for your donation of a dozen helmets and the organization of equipment through the Jumpstart grant.

We are incredibly grateful to Jumpstart and Simcoe SportChek for their generous donation of \$3,500 to Langton Public School. Thanks to your support, we were able to purchase skates and helmets for our students – giving every child the opportunity to experi-

ence the joy of skating together.

Your support has made a lasting impact on our school community, and we truly appreciate your commitment to helping kids get active and have fun. Thank you for making this possible!

Beate Michaud,
Langton Public School

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'Brazen' rural thefts a concern for Norfolk officials

County, OPP working to address spate of farm equipment, tool thefts

LUKE EDWARDS

Grant Haven Media

Thefts in rural areas aren't anything new, but Norfolk officials have noted a recent change in patterns that have some concerned.

"These thefts are becoming so brazen," said Coun. Kim Huffman, chair of the Norfolk County OPP detachment board at the board's Nov. 19 meeting.

Historically, thieves would go after four-wheelers and the like. But more recently, Huffman said she's received calls from farmers who have had their equipment, tools and trailers stolen.

Inspector Detachment Commander Andy Tait chalked it up to a couple of reasons. First, he said trailers have strong value on the resale market.

"There is a market, especially what we're finding, is trailers seem to be a very high-end resold item," he said.

The second reason these items are being stolen is for use in illegal cannabis production. To that end, Tait said he recently challenged the detachment's community street crime unit to see what they could do to address the spate of rural thefts. He noted two significant illegal cannabis operations that were shut down, with items seized, as breakthroughs that could address the thefts

that are occurring to help criminals' drug operations.

"Stolen property and illegal cannabis production go hand in hand," he said, adding one of the seizures was of a criminal known to them, and since his arrest there appears to be a decrease in related thefts.

Tait, Huffman and fellow board member Coun. Linda Vandendriessche encouraged farmers to take the extra step and secure their equipment and tools when they're done for the day. Tait acknowledged that can be tough, especially during busy seasons when farmers are working incredibly long hours.

But equipment out in the open with the keys visible are easy targets, Vandendriessche said.

"It's an avenue where those who want to do illegal things can do so very simply," she said.

The discussion came during the same meeting the board also waived a false alarm fee for local farmer Jerry De Carolis. His concerns highlighted an issue with the county's false alarm fee policy.

On two occasions, De Carolis said alarms on his properties were triggered. He has told his security company not to contact the OPP and that he will deal with the alarms and contacting police himself.

If OPP is called to a false alarm they can

bill the municipality, and Norfolk can in turn bill the property owner.

In the case of De Carolis, both times it was a passerby who heard the alarm and called police.

"They're audible alarms and both calls were called in by a passerby that heard alarms and did their civic duty by calling the OPP," said county clerk William Tigert.

De Carolis said he has since taken further steps to reduce the likelihood of having a passerby call in an alarm, though the issue raised a concern for board members in light of the recent uptick in rural thefts.

Coun. Adam Veri said it was a tricky situation. On the one hand, he didn't want to set a precedent that would see Norfolk begin waiving tons of false alarm fees, but on the other hand, charging farmers could lead to unintended consequences.

"I don't want to encourage farmers to not have their alarms activated," he said.

Huffman argued that in this case, since De Carolis has taken appropriate steps and it was a passerby who made the call, the fee should be waived. Other board members seemed to agree, voting to waive the fee.

Tigert said the OPP has responded to 346 false alarm calls, and the county has only waived fees for about four per cent. While the cost might not be significant in the grand scheme of things, false alarm fees



Kim Huffman, Norfolk Ward 7 Councillor

amount to \$200, Tigert said it's not just a financial issue.

"We have a lot of false alarm calls, it does take up OPP time," he said.

Approval of new ice allocation policy on hold

LUKE EDWARDS

Grant Haven Media

Norfolk County officials have called a time out in an effort to get arena ice users back on the same page.

The municipality has been working towards a new ice allocation policy for months, but any decision to change the policy now won't happen until February.

Councillors voted to refer the report back to staff at the Nov. 13 council meeting with the hope that a meeting of senior staff, user groups, and possibly councillors would cool the temperature on an issue that has become overly heated.

"I think we kind of need to restart here," said Coun. Kim Huffman at the meeting.

"I really want to get to the bottom of this as quickly as possible."

According to the staff report, the goal of the revised policy is to provide a more equitable allocation of ice time to user groups, reduce issues of unused ice and prioritize Norfolk residents. At its core, the new policy would see Norfolk dole out a base allocation of ice time to the main user groups using a formula that considers the number of teams and level of play. It would then be up to the organizations to schedule their allotted ice time to their internal teams and groups.

"It's not meant to take ice away, it's meant to allocate the ice correctly," said Brenda Andress, project lead, strategic recreation initiatives.

Priority under the new policy would start with Norfolk County minor user groups/organizations, followed by other organized children, seniors and organizations representing people with disabilities, regular annual tournaments and special events, municipal programs, adult groups, school use, and finally new adult requests and any other request.

However, it appears some user groups and users them-

selves were crying foul over a perceived unfairness. Councillors at the meeting noted the influx of calls and emails they received before the Nov. 13 meeting. Norfolk Minor Hockey Association's Kyle Van Groningen spoke at the meeting, expressing frustration with the plan.

"The proposed ice allocation policy will significantly reduce opportunities for Norfolk families and harm youth hockey development in our county," he said.

He said his organization has concerns with the process, saying it's been unclear and lacked meaningful consultation with their group. He also questioned the data, suggesting ice time had been improperly allocated to teams that did not exist or users not from Norfolk.

"When the team counts are wrong the allocation model becomes unreliable," he said.

Coun. Adam Veri noted a "disconnect" between residents, staff and council. Though operations are typically left to staff, Veri wondered if it was time for councillors to be more involved in the discussions.

"Right now, the operations aren't operating," he said.

Bill Cridland, general manager of community and development services, acknowledged that disconnect, but seemed optimistic that a meeting of all interested parties could provide a reset to get things back on track.

"We may not come back with a product that everybody is happy with at a 100 per cent but we'll fine tune it," he said.

Andress said she thought there might be a misinterpretation of what the policy will actually mean for user groups, and some fears arose over worst-case scenario projections that aren't likely to happen.

She also acknowledged staff had limited ability to verify the information they receive from user groups.

"We rely on the associations to give us the information and that is the only information we use," she said.

Other proposed changes in the report included some changes to the definitions of prime time and non-prime

time hours, along with a residency requirement that allows the county to reduce ice time if teams don't contain a minimum of 95 per cent Norfolk residents.

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Publisher

Stewart Grant • stew@granthaven.com

Editor

Chris Abbott • chris@granthaven.com

Graphic Design / Sales Inquiries

Michelle Foster • info@simcoeadvocate.com

Business Development

Heather Dunbar • heather@granthaven.com

Administration

Jen Gaetan • jen@granthaven.com

Contributors

Alex Hunt, Lisa Timpf, Paul Knowles

36 Water St. St. Marys, ON, PO Box 2310 N4X 1A2

info@simcoeadvocate.com | 519.655.2341 | granthaven.com



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Preliminary support offered to energy projects

LUKE EDWARDS

Grant Haven Media

Norfolk councillors have signalled early support for a power generation project and two battery storage projects in the county, though they will likely have further questions should the provincial authority give them the go ahead to move forward.

Proponents from the three projects spoke at the Nov. 25 council meeting as they sought municipal support resolutions, a necessary step in getting approval from the Independent Electricity System Operator. Senior economic development officer Susan Gardner told councillors the support resolutions don't necessarily commit the county to fully backing the projects.

"These resolutions don't negate the need for any additional planning approval, consultations, studies and permits that may be required on the properties should the projects be selected by IESO," she said.

Earlier this year the provincial government instructed the IESO to launch the second long-term procurement for energy supply. With electricity demands expected to increase by 75 per cent by 2050, the province wants to increase capacity to meet demands.

However, municipalities have also been given say on deciding whether they wish to host such projects. Doing so could bring in economic benefits to the area, but also tangible financial benefits through commitments to a Community Vibrancy Fund.

Councillors did have some questions about the projects,

should they move forward, including around noise and potential fire hazards. Matt Lensink, speaking for a proposed project that will generate electricity through natural gas at Mae-Mart Farms, said they're required to mitigate any noise and keep it at existing levels.

Additionally he said their projects are "well designed to mitigate noise and air emissions."

Coun. Doug Brunton also had concerns about one of the projects, a battery storage project on Windham Road 13 in Simcoe, about its proximity to nearby groundwater source.

"I'm certainly in favour of solar panels, wind panels, but I'm not supporting anything that's going to have the potential to deal with Simcoe's drinking water," he said.

General manager of public works Andrew Grice said there is a nearby well head protection area, though it was at a low risk level and regardless the proposal was outside that area. Still, he echoed Brunton's caution about protecting drinking water.

"We don't want to do anything that compromises our groundwater supply," he said.

IESO is expected to decide on the proposals it receives around June of next year. The projects proposed in Norfolk seem to be eyeing a 2028 operational date.

Here is a quick rundown of the three proposed projects:

Norfolk Resilient Generation Inc.

This proposal would see a natural gas co-generation project at Mae-Mart Farms in Waterford. It will feature five reciprocating engines that are fuelled by natural gas, though responding to a question from Coun. Mike Columbus, Lensink left open the possibility of using methane

generated from the onsite hog operation as a fuel.

"These engines will be capable of using that fuel," he said.

The 15-megawatt system would be used when energy demands are higher, and Lensink said the excess heat produced by the generation would be used to heat the barns.

NRStor

Unlike the other two proposals, which are located on agricultural land, this one would be placed in industrial land in northeast Simcoe. Called the Simcoe Battery Project, it would use lithium-ion battery technology to store 150 megawatts/1,200 megawatt hours of power when demand is low to be used when demand is high.

NRStor is also known for its Oneida project, a 250 mw/1,000 mwh project in nearby Haldimand.

The Simcoe proposal is in conjunction with Mississauga of the Credit, and Six Nations of the Grand River Indigenous groups.

Skyline

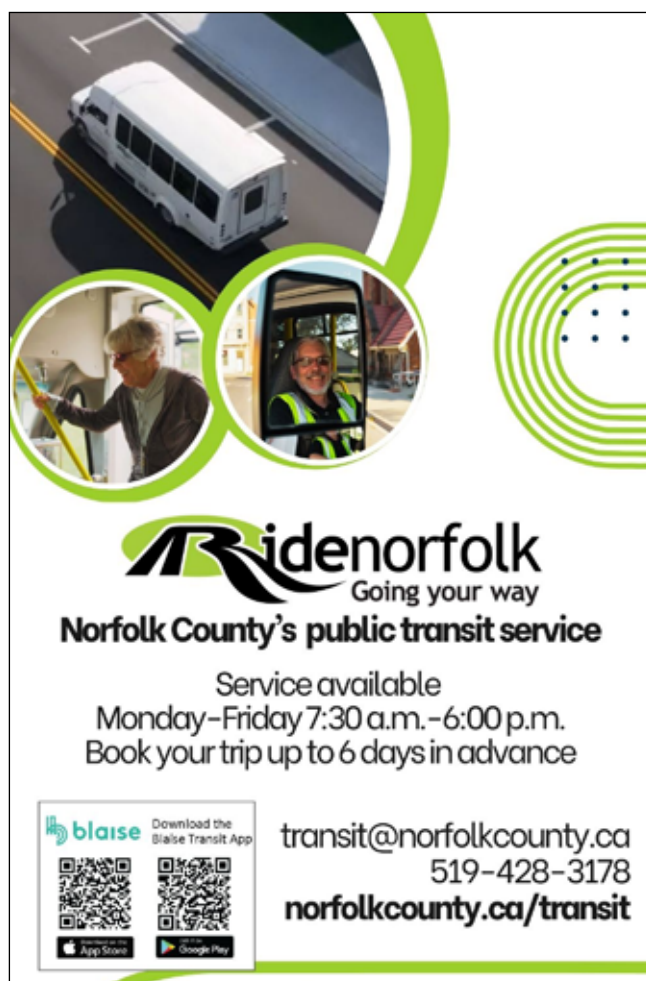
Another battery storage project, Skyline Energy is looking to build on a Windham Road 13 property that already has existing solar power production.

Using lithium-ion phosphate batteries, it comes in at 30 mw, with a potential for 240 mwh.

With the existing solar panels starting to age, Skyline's Matt Kennedy said they can replace the solar panels with higher efficiency options and use the remaining space for the battery storage.

In the future he said they're interested in merging the storage and generation projects into one.

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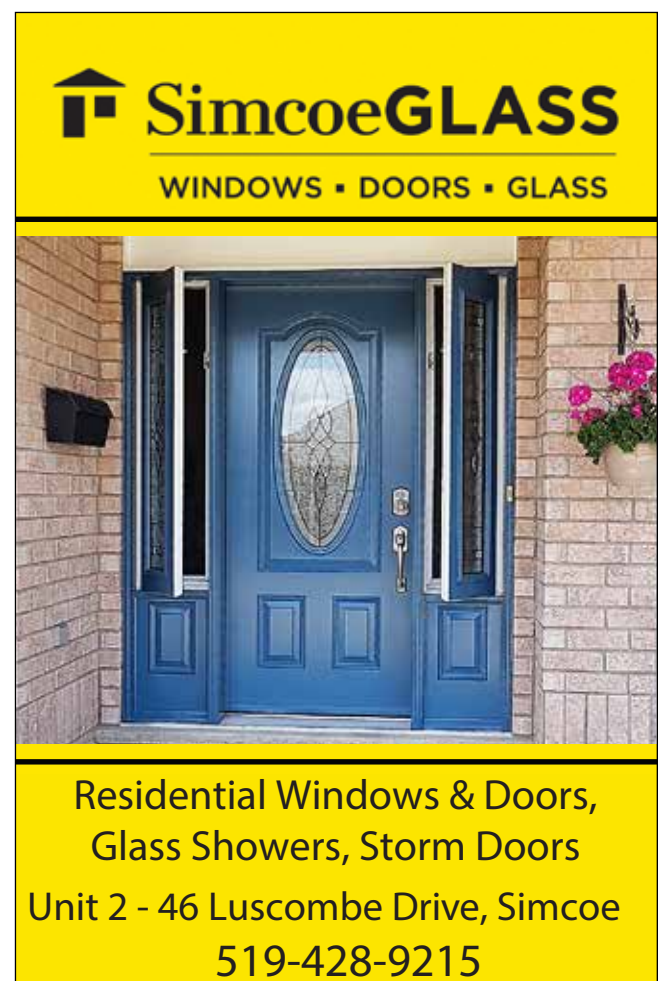
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Norfolk Musical Arts Festival is still going strong

CHRIS ABBOTT

Editor

The Norfolk Musical Arts Festival is gearing up for its March 2-6, 2026 festival.

Registration for participants opened on the festival website (nmaf.ca) in November and it will stay open until the Monday, Jan. 12 deadline.

"The festival is open to anyone and everyone who want to perform," said Vicky Lachine, Festival Administrator. "Whether it's singing or playing an instrument, or drama, there are several categories that they can enter."

Performers from Kindergarten age to seniors typically enter, she said, noting some perform in choirs. Entries come from across Norfolk County, and some from nearby centres like Brantford, Hamilton, Ancaster, Paris, Tillsonburg, and Caledonia.

"We also get school bands, both secondary and elementary, and school choirs," said Lachine. "Most of the high schools from the school board are coming, so that is great. We get tremendous support from the local music teachers – in the schools and privately."

Adjudicators are hired during festival week – one for each discipline – to adjudicate all competitors during the festival.

"The feedback they get from adjudicators is meant to enhance their performance, or give them some tips on what they could do better, or how they could re-express them-

selves in a certain way. So a lot of them take that and implement it into their performance. We often see that even during festival week – if they compete in another class later in the week, it just keeps getting better and better each time they compete."

The community is encouraged to see the festival competition throughout the week in March.

"It's always wonderful to see a church full of audience members when you have this kind of talent in our communities. So we're trying to get the word out in general, 'come out and watch the local talent.' There is no audience admission fee – it's a freewill offering. We have a jar at the door. I know from my own past experience, you won't be disappointed."

The 40th annual festival award ceremony is March 10 and it always fills to capacity.

"On the night of the festival highlights, Tuesday, March 10, the winners will get their awards that night. It's pretty exciting. It's also a good time to recognize our volunteers and sponsors – anyone involved with the making of the festival. It's a great way to remind people that we are still around and still going strong and we celebrate everybody that participates and is involved."

Plans are being made to host a kickoff concert on Sunday, March 1st. Festival organizers hope to have past performers, giving the audience a chance to see 'where they are now,' followed by a small reception. Details are still in the works.



(CHRIS ABBOTT PHOTO)

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Uncovering a piece of Norfolk County history

Delhi Tobacco Museum and Heritage Centre's year-long exhibit spotlights Delhi's cycling roots

ALEX HUNT

Advocate Correspondent

The Delhi Tobacco Museum and Heritage Centre is showcasing Norfolk's Golden Era of Bike Racing with a year-long exhibit exploring the history of the county's cycling connection.

The exhibit, which opened Nov. 8, will stay as a semi-permanent feature at the museum as artifacts will slowly be returned to the original donors over the course of the showing.

"There was a golden era that started in the 1930s, and later that decade, Belgian immigrants wanted to bring their passion for bike racing to Norfolk County," said Andrew Moore, museum curator. "They petitioned the local governments to purchase a gravel pit and build a velodrome, which was very similar to the ones they rode in Belgium."

Norfolk's first velodrome was built in 1939 by Jules Schelstraete, Gerard Vanden Bussche and Henry Catry. A parade was held at the grand opening, and the ceremony drew in 2,500 people on the first day.

"These racers would whip around this velodrome at high speeds at 50 to 80 kilometres an hour; it was the thing to do," said Moore. "When the war started, it tailed off at that point. There were bigger concerns in

Canada, and many men were off to war."

The sport was revitalized in 1974 by Jules Schelstraete's son, Albert Schelstraete-Coulter, who petitioned the local government to build an indoor velodrome, which would be a hotspot for local and international racers in the 1970s.

"It was cool to think that Delhi held the international footprint for bike racing," said Moore. "Albert's son Ron Schelstraete came to the museum with items from that era, and we built the exhibit around his father and the history of bike racing that took place here."

"Part of our mandate is to focus on the local community, and I thought this exhibit was the perfect way to highlight Delhi," said Moore. "I love that it's a chance to show something different about the town that people might not have known, and it's amazing to see how a smaller community can have such a big impact on an international audience."

Light up the season Dec. 6 at the museum, 3-6 p.m., at the Delhi BIA Christmas Party. Admission by donation.

Santa will be at the museum 3-5 p.m. then will leave to prepare for the annual Delhi BIA Christmas parade starting at 6



The first Norfolk County Velodrome was built in 1939.

(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

p.m. The parade starts at the Delhi Soccer Club, moves along Main Street to Church, then to Queen to William Street and back to the soccer club.

MITTEN TREES

Delhi BIA Mitten Trees can be found around town, including the Delhi Tobacco Museum and Heritage Centre. Drop off

mittens, gloves, hats and scarves at the museum until Dec. 20.

Other locations include Delhi Flowers and Gifts, Little Miss Busybody, and Delhi Pharmasave, which will accept donations until Dec. 23.

Donations are hung on the Mitten Trees available to anyone needing them.

Norfolk festival competitors shine on stage

Simcoe Little Theatre's production of *Nice Work If You Can Get It* wraps up on Dec. 7 with a limited number of tickets still available.

Many of the cast in the play have connections with the Norfolk Musical Arts Festival, which is now accepting registrations for its 2026 festival in March, online at www.nmaf.ca. The deadline to register is January 12.

"It's amazing," said Vicky Lachine, who watched *Nice Work If You Can Get It* with a friend from the Norfolk Musical Arts Festival board. "We see them perform in the festival, so it's cool to see them performing in professional-type settings."

Lachine said it shows the connection of how many Norfolk Musical Arts Festival competitors, over the years, are active in local arts and music communities.

"There's a real connection there with all the different groups in town."

"Some of the kids in drama have been competing, maybe through their school when they were younger, and continue to do it on their own or one of the theatre groups. So the festival has been an influence for them, for sure. It's a place for them to showcase their work and talent."

Joanne Pond, assistant director, is a member of the festival board of directors and among many duties, she coordinates volunteers for the festival. Joanne is a retired school teacher and brought her school choirs to the festival for many years. Joanne also sings with the Lynn Valley Voices.

Janet Dickson, director, is a former teacher at Waterford District High School and entered her school band and choir in the festival for years. Janet volunteers her time during festival week to help at the various venues.

Jim Donovan, who plays Jimmy Winter, competed in the festival for years. He competed in the instrumental discipline performing with his clarinet.

Christopher Clarke, who plays Cookie McGee, competed in the festival for the first time in 2025. Christopher is a member of Young Theatre Players and studies with Shauna Barrow of Boon's Music Studio located in Delhi. Christopher performed in both the vocal and English speech arts disciplines and he competed in the Ontario Music Festivals Association provincial festival in June.

"We are looking forward to having Christopher compete at the 2026 festival," said Vicky Lachine, Festival Administrator.

Kiana Littlemore, who plays Duchess Estonia Dulworth, also competed in the festival for several years. She participated in both vocal and English speech arts in 2025. Kiana is an aspiring music teacher and just landed an awesome role in the upcoming Lighthouse community show as well. With a full-time job and her many rehearsals, she is preparing for university auditions. Kiana studies with Shauna Barrow of Boon's Music Studio located in Delhi.

Sammy Rixmann, who plays Jeannie Muldoon, is a long-time competitor in the festival. Sammy entered both English and French speech arts and will compete in



(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Kiana and Christopher in Simcoe Little Theatre's production of *Nice Work If You Can Get It*.

2026. Sammy also participated in the Ontario Music Festivals Association provincial festival held in June.

Kayden Benvenuti, plays a flapper dancer and a bubble girl, has participated in the festival for several years, and will compete in the 2026 NMAF.

Edith Senko, who plays a flapper dance and a bubble girl, has also participated in the festival. In 2025 Edith, Kayden and Sammy competed in an English speech arts ensemble as well they participated in the Ontario Music Festivals Association provincial festival in June. Eli Senko, acting as Chief Berry, participated in the school bands category with Waterford District High School. Maggie Dylan Norton Shebib, who plays the Vice-Squad and prohi-

bition citizen, is a festival competitor in voice and English and French speech arts. Maggie is also a member of the Simcoe Composite School band. In 2025 Maggie won the Rotary Club of Simcoe vocal arts award for her performance of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream, Helena - Act I, Scene I". Maggie competed at the Ontario Music Festival Association provincial competition held in June. Maggie studies with music teacher Susan Drayson and will compete in 2026.

"The Norfolk Musical Arts Festival continues to promote performing arts and with the 40th anniversary celebration in 2026 we are proud to have been an integral part of keeping the arts alive in Norfolk County," said Lachine.

Taking a Shadow Lake stroll in Waterford

BRENDA MOSER

Advocate Correspondent

It was a bit of a chilly walk, but beautiful nonetheless, when I decided to take a stroll down the Shadow Lake Trail.

We are fortunate here in Waterford to have easy access to the trail and it's obvious that so many others feel the same.

As I walked the trail I met people of all ages - some walking, some biking, some rollerblading and some exercising their pets. The cold didn't seem to bother too many of them though!

On my walk I noticed some changes and improvements. One of them, in particular, is the new bridge that was re-

cently donated and installed by the Waterford Lions Club. It spans the creek at the Black Bridge Trail and offers access to a beautifully wooded area. It will make it easier for all users to enjoy and connect trails. Just another project by our Waterford Lions Club... thank you ever so much!

At present the Waterford Heritage Trail Association is fundraising for the 'Light Up the Trail' campaign. Speaking with Andy Kooistra, he explained they are looking to light up about 15 trees along the trail, beginning near the parking lot at Alice Street. They will be using energy efficient C9 LED string lights and they will be on now through to the New Year.

Being a volunteer organization, they count on the support of the community to help them with their projects. If

you are interested in making a donation for this cause and becoming a sponsor, all you need to do is make a \$50 donation to the Waterford Trail Association. Donors will be recognized on signs posted at each lit tree. Your support in this project would be greatly appreciated and enjoyed by all who walk the trails in the evening.

If you would like more info on this project or would like to sponsor a tree you can contact them by email at waterfordheritagetrail@yahoo.ca.

Thank you to all of the volunteers who keep our trail beautiful! A lot of hard work goes into maintaining the trail and the volunteers are there when called upon. New volunteers are always welcome.

Festive programs entertain families during the holidays

ALEX HUNT

Advocate Correspondent

Santa Claus and his elves will be bringing storytime and crafts to the Norfolk County Public Library to celebrate the Christmas spirit.

Norfolk County Public Library is providing a variety of programs at its five branches. Storytimes with Santa and holiday crafts have become the focus of bringing people together. All programs are by registration only.

"This gives children and adults a chance to make a craft and give it to someone they love for Christmas," said Jennifer Carrier, NCPL community engagement coordinator. "Storytime with Santa allows families to visit our branch on a Saturday and listen to some holiday stories and take

a picture as well."

The Storytime with Santa schedule includes the following:

- Dec. 6 at Delhi at 11 a.m.
- Dec. 6 at 2 p.m. at the Port Dover Branch with the Grinch.
- Dec. 13 at 11 a.m. at the Simcoe Branch and 2 p.m. at the Port Rowan Branch.

Holiday craft workshops for kids will take place between 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.

- Dec. 6 will be at the Port Rowan Branch.
- Dec. 13 at the Delhi Branch.

Holiday Craft workshops for adults will also take place at 5:30 p.m.

- Dec. 4 at the Simcoe Branch.
- Dec. 11 at the Port Dover Branch.
- Dec. 18 at the Waterford Branch.

"During the holidays, or really, any time of year, there's such importance in promoting literacy and the love of books, but also in taking time for one another," said Carrier. "Hosting these events gives families a chance to come in from the cold, feel warm and get cozy, and spend some quality time together."

Carrier said that workshops and story time sessions provide people the opportunity to step away from the Christmas hustle by spending a present moment with family members and friends. For registration information, visit NCPL.ca for more details.



(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Santa Claus provides joy for children of all ages during the holiday season at Norfolk County Public Library.

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Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. What is the street address of the White House?
2. What kind of dog is Scooby-Doo?
3. The practice of drawing electoral district boundaries to give one political party an advantage is called?
4. What is the main body of an aircraft called?
5. What is the largest country in Africa by area?
6. What does DNA stand for?
7. Who is Katy Perry currently dating?
8. What is Warren Buffett's company called?
9. Who is Bluey the dog's sister?
10. True or False. A group of geese is called a gaggle.

This week's answers are found on pg. 23

WWW.GRANTHAVEN.COM

Here comes Christmas in Waterford

Santa parade, toy drive, Breakfast with Santa, free skating, children's Christmas party...

BRENDA MOSER

Advocate Correspondent

Service clubs play an important role in a community and in Waterford we are fortunate to have a very active and involved Lions Club.

I recently contacted Lion member Jessie Kingma for an update and the dish on the events planned by the local club for Christmas 2025. Once again, they are holding their Annual Toy Drive and they are reaching out to the community to make this year's Drive just as big - if not bigger - than last year.

There are a few ways to make a donation to this cause. Once again, the Lions are hosting a Breakfast with Santa at the Lions Community Centre, 53 Church Street West, and you can drop new, unwrapped toys from 9-11 a.m.

It's a free community event - everyone is welcome. Cash donations gladly accepted to help local families. Bring the family out for a yummy breakfast, visit Santa and take photos to make holiday memories.

You can also drop off non-perishable food items for the Food Bank.

Also, there will be a toy drop off spot downtown (Alice Street) after the Santa Claus Parade on Dec. 13th, and food items will be collected for the Food Bank in the parkette before the parade.

The parade on James Street starts at 6 p.m.

As well, you can make your toy donation at one of the free afternoon skates (2 p.m.) at the Waterford Tricenturena, 32 East Church St., on Dec. 6th or Dec. 13th. If you would like to make a monetary donation to the Food Bank, any one of the Lions would be happy to help you out with that.

The Lions believe that every toy helps to brighten a child's Christmas and they say 'Thank you Waterford, for all of your amazing support over the years!' Putting a smile on the faces of the children is what Christmas is all about and Waterford Lions continue to work to ensure there will be presents under the tree for all kids. God bless!

LEGION CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

Another service club in Waterford known for their community involvement is the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 123. Once again, this year they will be hosting a Kid's Christmas Party. It will be held at the Hall, 223 Nichol



The Dec. 13th Waterford Lions Santa Claus Parade on James Street starts at 6 p.m.

(FILE PHOTO)

Street, on Sunday, Dec. 21 from 2-4 p.m.

There will be games, snacks and a visit from a very special someone - Santa Claus himself. He will be taking some time out of his very busy schedule to drop in to see

the kids, so be sure you don't miss it. To reserve a spot, you can contact Sharon at 519-443-7567. The kid's party is always a big hit so contact them right away to reserve your spot for an afternoon of fun!

OPP Festive RIDE campaign continues to Jan. 1

Fifty-three drivers in the OPP West Region are facing criminal charges since the 2025 OPP Festive RIDE campaign kicked off Nov. 20.

To date, West Region OPP officers conducted more than 500 'Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere' checks across 13 West Region detachments, with the following results:

- 53 impaired driving charges.
- 8 warn-range suspensions.

In Norfolk County, there were four impaired driving charges and one suspension through the

RIDE checks.

The Festive RIDE campaign is an annual police enforcement and education initiative aimed at taking impaired drivers off Ontario roads during the holiday season.

During the campaign, the public can expect an increased OPP presence on West Region roads and highways as officers conduct RIDE initiatives 24 hours a day, seven days a week throughout the province.

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

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Male or Female _____ Date of Birth _____

Place of Birth _____

Weight (birth) _____ Weight (now) _____

Parent(s) Name _____

Siblings (Name[s] & Age) _____

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What I Liked best about 2025: (a reply your baby might make)

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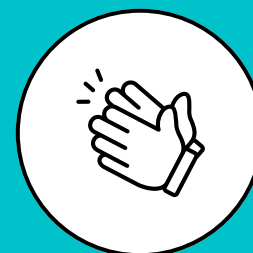
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The Creative BRU-tique celebrates one year in Simcoe

LEAH BAUER

Advocate Correspondent

The Creative BRU-tique is truly a special and unique addition to Downtown Simcoe. Upon entering the storefront at 31 Norfolk Street North, you are immediately struck by two things: number one being the eye-catching designs which line the walls in various mediums, and number two being ‘WOW it smells good in here.’

The Creative BRU-tique is far from being just a cafe. In fact, Stephen and Stephanie Khalla are quick to point out the cafe really isn’t the main function of their business, the cafe is meant to be a catalyst to customers discovering the many other services they offer. As The Creative BRU-tique celebrated its one-year anniversary, Stephen and Stephanie reflected on their business, its origins, where it has taken them, and where they hope to go.

Stephen Khalla describes himself as a “serial entrepreneur,” a statement that is backed up by a long and impressive resume. A resume that includes working at Microsoft’s head office when he was 18, helping to build the architecture for the 2015 Pan Am Games, working in the film industry, and now to Norfolk County where he has founded his newest adventure - The Creative BRU-tique.

Stephen and Stephanie offer many services to help small businesses, or even just people with business ideas to “not just survive, but thrive.” The couple does this through various workshops, aiding hopeful entrepreneurs in deciphering who to turn to for legal or accounting help, branding, and the creation of promotional products.

Their support for local entrepreneurship has no age limit. Earlier in September, they



(FILE PHOTO)

The Creative BRU-tique, which first opened its doors in Downtown Simcoe in November 2024, has celebrated its one-year anniversary.

partnered with Art With Heart to run a series of workshops for young entrepreneurs which helped local kids with big ideas develop business skills, branding, and confidence in entrepreneurship. The couple works hard to ensure they support the local community any way they can, which is why they remain committed to reinvigorat-

ing and uplifting the Downtown Simcoe area.

‘Creative’ isn’t just one half of their catchy business name, it is one of the core tenets of what they do. The Inspired Turtle is a branch of their business that focuses on branding, promotional products, and all things printed. Stephen and Stephanie have

you covered, whether it is a custom design for a fun personalized gift, promotional items for a business, custom wallpaper, or anything in between.

From the outside it may look like your average cafe, but that is not the case here as

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17



(LEAH BAUER PHOTO)

A vintage map of Simcoe was brought into The Creative BRU-tique. Stephen Khalla refurbished it and printed the design on a blanket.



Stephen and Stephanie Khalla in the cafe of The Creative BRU-tique.

(FILE PHOTO)

Governor General awards given to three paramedics

LUKE EDWARDS

Grant Haven Media

Normally Jennifer Hancock is more than willing to take a backseat and let the firefighters with their shiny trucks, or police officers announcing a major bust, take the limelight.

But this time, she and two other Norfolk paramedics were front and centre as they received the Governor General Emergency Medical Services Exemplary Service Medals. Hancock, Tiiu Jaanusson and Steve Potz each received the award and were recently honoured by Norfolk council.

"I am humbled and honoured standing before you today having received this medal," said Hancock, who grew up on a farm in nearby Haldimand County.

"I'm honoured to serve my neighbours, friends and family here in Norfolk."

The medals were created in 1994 as a way to recognize "professionals in the provision of pre-hospital emergency medical services to the public, who have performed their duties in an exemplary manner, characterized by good conduct, industry and efficiency," according to the governor general webpage explaining the medal.

Recipients must have completed 20 years of service, including at least 10 years of service that poses potential risk.

"Each of these individuals has demonstrated the highest standards of service in emergency medical care, often under the most challenging of situations," said Mayor Amy Martin.

"Your exemplary service is deeply appreciated and truly deserving of this national recognition."

Hancock said most of the time people in her line of work don't receive the publicity of other first responders, and they're quite happy to let their firefighter and police col-



(NORFOLK COUNTY PHOTO)

Three Norfolk paramedics, Jennifer Hancock, Tiiu Jaanusson and Steve Potz, have received national recognition for their exemplary service. They were recognized at a Norfolk council meeting. From left are Chief of Paramedic Services Justin Hobson, Hancock, Pots, Jaanusson and Mayor Amy Martin.

leagues take the spotlight. However, she said she and her two coworkers were honoured to be recognized and said it was a testament to their entire emergency medical services team in the county and to their friends and family, who

have offered more support than they could imagine.

"While we don't seek the limelight... we are appreciative of this quiet recognition," she said.

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Dr. Kailey Buller – Babies, Books, and Bits of Time

Surviving Tiny Humans: The Messy Truth About Parenting and Your Guide to Baby's First Year

ADVOCATING FOR AUTHORS

By
Dick Bourgeois-Doyle

Virginia Woolf famously said that a writer, specifically a woman, must have “a room of her own.”

Put another way, it's helpful to have means, time, and a quiet space to think if you hope to write in any quantity.

Easier said than done for many people. But it might be particularly hard to imagine for someone like Port Dover's Dr. Kailey Buller, a clinician, educator, emergency-room physician, mother of two young children, and a person with her own health issues.

Finding time and space to write a book in this context is one thing, but add the arduous path to publishing and you realize that Kailey had to be profoundly motivated to bring her book *Surviving Tiny Humans: The Messy Truth About Parenting and Your Guide to Baby's First Year* to life.

Dr. Buller's book walks new or expecting parents and other care givers through the first year of babyhood - feeding questions, sleep-routine challenges, postpartum recovery, common medical worries, and guidance useful to fathers and grandparents as well as mothers. It aims to cut through the avalanche of contradictory online posts and well-meaning but not always well-founded advice flowing around new parents. The book blends solid, practical information and humour that draws on the combination of Kailey's medical training and her personal experiences.

“I was so surprised that 10 years of medical education followed by six years in the field really didn't prepare me as much as I thought it would,” Kailey says, whose genetic condition brought heart failure during her pregnancies. “Also, the vast majority of parenting, all the little things, is not discussed in medical school. So I struggled and was really overwhelmed.”

And it may be this merger of information to share and personal connection to new mothers that allowed her to imagine a unique manual and see it through to completion.

With her dual lens - as a physician and a mother - she delivers evidence-based guidance in her own friendly, down-to-earth tone making *Surviving Tiny Humans* unique and useful. But most of all it is a non-judgmental comfort to those facing daily, difficult decisions with little sleep and in the midst of deeply emotional caring.



(SUBMITTED PHOTOS)

Port Dover author Dr. Kailey Buller is a clinician, educator, emergency-room physician, and mother of two young children.

“I've both been there and seen it in the clinic,” she says. “And I want people to know they are not alone in this experience and these feelings.”

As a double board-certified physician in both emergency and family medicine, she has delivered hundreds of babies, managed infant and childhood emergencies, and cared for families in clinical settings. Yet her own parenting experience included the sleepless nights, the “Googling at 3 a.m.” and the anxiety that shapes those early months of parenting for many people. It was the mix of clinical “text-book” medicine and the lived reality that sharpened her sense of what parents truly need.

“I remember reading a pediatrics book on baby's first year, and it was just so clinical,” Kailey recalls. “For example, there was a section that described eczema as a genetic condition and said that it can be caused by this and can lead to this and whatever, ending with ‘if you think your child has eczema, go see your doctor’ and I thought, ‘well that was the least helpful thing ever.’”

So she wanted to be clear in her book.

“I decided I'm going to say this is eczema, here's a picture of it, and this is what you can do,” she says. “Because

what parents need is help when they have a problem right now, can't see their doctor for a few days or a few weeks, and want to know what to do in the meantime.”

While Kailey says it was not a major factor in her decision to write the book, the content might have an amplified appeal to those living in smaller communities and rural areas where new parents don't have the same access to the care and services available in big cities. Originally from British Columbia and trained in Alberta, Dr. Buller relocated to Port Dover near her husband's family to plant roots and practice medicine in community-focused settings. She has contributed to the area first from the base of a family medicine practice and now as an emergency room doctor at Norfolk General and also as a teacher.

She has translated her book into in-person and online classes, the kind of sessions where local parents, grandparents, and other caregivers not only gain useful information, but also a sense of community.

Given her dedication and demanding profession, one might think that Dr. Kailey Buller would be one of those disciplined authors who schedules time to write, sticks to their agenda, and blocks out other pressures. But no. Perhaps, echoing the erratic nature of baby's first year, she wrote her book in bits and pieces squeezing it in wherever circumstances allowed.

“You just had to grab a bit of time wherever you could find it,” she says. “I think there's even a line in my book where I said ‘even as I'm writing this, my daughter just woke up 45 minutes into her nap’ and then it continues to discuss why a short nap might happen and what it means.”

Kailey says, again in her non-judgmental style, that authors like mothers have to just harness their motivation and find a way of writing that works best for them.

So, perhaps when it comes to finding Virginia Woolf's time and space to write, each of us “must find a way of our own.”

CELEBRATING LOCAL AUTHORS

To link to the podcast interview with Dr. Buller, check out doverwrites.blogspot.com.

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The Creative BRU-tique helps local small businesses

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

the back of the building is an entire printing studio with high quality professional printers. Stephen and Stephanie are able to take your design from a simple idea or concept and turn it into pretty much any branded product you might need.

The Inspired Turtle is perfect for people who want to improve brand recognition for their business, need promotional items for an event, or are just simply looking for a last-minute gift.

While the cafe may not be their main focus, they still manage to create some of the most amazing coffee and treats right here in Norfolk County. Stephen and Stephanie do not mess around when it comes to high quality ingredients.

Their devotion to high quality ingredients offered at an affordable price is what drove them to create Deja-Bru, a coffee company that is sourced from 100% Arabica beans, and brewed using remarkable machines imported from Bergamo, Italy.

In Stephen's opinion, high quality coffee doesn't need to break the bank, you can buy Deja-Bru coffee beans wholesale, or head into the Creative BRU-tique to enjoy it for just \$2.



(LEAH BAUER PHOTO)

Stephen and Stephanie Khalla, showing off socks from their Merch for a Cause Campaign in support of Pawsitive Vibez Dog Grooming.

When Stephen and Stephanie opened their doors in November 2024, they were skeptical about adding food items to the menu. Stephen recalls saying, "If I am

going to do a food item, it has to be innovative. It has to be different. It has to be something that stands out, not just copying someone else."

Next thing you know Stephen was developing recipes for stuffed Croffles, an innovation that is interesting, delicious, and completely unique. The Croffle consists of imported croissant dough from Paris, France, which is then stuffed with fillings and subsequently pressed in a waffle iron. The fillings for the Croffle range from pistachio or biscoff knafeh, imported from Jordan, cream feta and spinach, imported from Macedonia, hazelnut Bueno, and a variety of other flavours that sometimes rotate depending on the season.

The Creative-BRU-tique also imports Chai from India, and organic Matcha from Japan. With French croissant dough, Jordanian fillings, Macedonian feta, and Japanese or Indian teas, you can take your tastebuds on a world tour without breaking the bank, or even leaving Downtown Simcoe!

The Creative BRU-tique is open seven days a week, from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, and then 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

Head into The Creative BRU-tique at 31 Norfolk Street North, in Downtown Simcoe to see and experience their business for yourself! However, I should warn you that the coffee and Croffles are addicting!

Farmer's Market re-opens in new home

ALEX HUNT

Advocate Correspondent

Simcoe Farmer's Market recently hosted a grand opening at its new location underneath the Grandstand at the Simcoe Fairgrounds with a full crowd and happy vendors.

Farmer's Market president Steve Miedema, market board members, and MPP Bobbi Ann Brady held a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Nov. 13 to celebrate the opening. The market was packed with customers and vendors who were getting used to the new space at 172 South Drive.

"We've got a lot of long-standing vendors and new ones too, but the market is also a community social gathering," said Miedema. "People are getting the stuff they need, and you never know who you're going to run into here. It's great for newcomers to the county to discover what businesses are in their community."

Due to the layout change, some customers were changing their routines to discover new vendors. Although the new space is fantastic, Miedema hopes they don't have to move again.

Local vendor Sharon Pilch, owner of the Rustic Spoon, said she loves the new location.

"It's a great location, mostly because we finally have a washroom here," said Pilch. "We used to have to walk quite a distance



(ALEX HUNT PHOTO)

Cutting the ribbon at the Simcoe Farmer's Market grand opening are, from left, Steve Miedema, Simcoe Farmer's Market president; Greg Boyd, past-president; Doug Miedema, past president; MPP Bobbi-Ann Brady; and Orrie Ecker, Harmony Pastry Shop, treasurer of the market association.

just to get to one. It makes such a difference in our day-to-day routine. I also really like the overall flow of the space; everything feels more connected and convenient. It's just fantastic."

Market vendor Cathy Ste. Croix, owner of Catchesoaps, said everything feels more

connected in the new space.

"I love this new building, it feels so homey and comfortable. I didn't realize how much we needed the change until after we moved in," said Ste. Croix. "People keep saying it seems bigger, but it's really not; we're just all a bit closer together now,

more connected and enclosed in a way that makes it feel warm and welcoming."

The market, which first opened at the fairgrounds in 1980, did a soft launch on Oct. 23 to gather customer and vendor feedback leading up to the November grand opening.

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SIMCOE ADVOCATE SPORTS

Delhi Flames finding their way in the OEHL

CHRIS ABBOTT

Editor

Midway through their inaugural OEHL men's senior hockey season, the Delhi Flames are looking at two of their closest rivals looking to make up ground.

"It's a work in progress, guys are coming around," said Flames co-coach Rob Hutchison after a 5-0 loss to the Erin Outlaws in Delhi Saturday night.

Erin scored one in the first period, two in the second, including a power play, and added two more in the third, taking advantage of a mobile blue line and speedy forwards. Travis Brown led the Outlaws with a pair of goals.

"Our guys just have to get used to that style of hockey – and it's coming," said Hutchison. "With new guys, it's a little different and we're trying to 'turn a corner.' It'll get there."

The first and third periods were evenly played with both teams shutting down the rush game.

"We try to slow the team down, we have to."

The Flames, who have three returning players from the 2024-25 season – Andrew Tapsell, assistant captain Bhrett Hibbert, and captain Brendan Briggs – were playing with a short bench Saturday night after an early second-pe-

riod game misconduct (fighting), a knee injury and shoulder injury.

"We've got a lot of guys that are working hard... and we had some good chances," Hutchison noted. "They're taking the shots when they need to now, whereas early in the season, it was trying to make too fancy of a play. Keeping it simple is the main thing for us right now and that's what we have to stick to."

Delhi goalie Caleb Ursu was busy facing 40 shots, including a 16-shot second period. Erin Outlaws goalie Connor Toogood stopped 25 Delhi shots for the shutout.

"We've got two great goalies, between Caleb Ursu and Cameron Huff, we really do," said Hutchison.

Still looking for their first win, the Flames are finding their way in the Ontario Elite Hockey League.

"It's a great league. I think it's competitive hockey, a lot of good teams, and it's a good step up," said Hutchison. "Anybody can beat anybody at any time and I think everybody's been fairly equal."

"We're going to keep going, keep plugging away."

The Flames travel to Tillsonburg on Dec. 6 to face the eighth-place Thunder (3-9-0). Puck drops at 7:30 p.m.



Delhi Flames' Brenton Carter.

(CHRIS ABBOTT PHOTO)



Delhi Flames' Mike Norris defends in front of goalie Caleb Ursu.

(CHRIS ABBOTT PHOTO)



Delhi Flames' Bhrett Hibbert finds open space to race down the left wing Saturday against the Erin Outlaws.

(CHRIS ABBOTT PHOTO)

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Suggett honoured for 40 years of volunteering in Norfolk County soccer

LUKE EDWARDS

Grant Haven Media

Anyone who’s attended a youth soccer tournament in Simcoe recently has more than likely come across Brian Suggett.

That’s because he’s volunteered his time to every such tournament going back as far as 1996. It’s all part of his 40 years of volunteering with youth soccer in Simcoe that was recently recognized by Norfolk County.

“We thank Brian for his remarkable service, leadership and lasting impact on youth soccer,” said Mayor Amy Martin.

During his 40 years of volunteering, Suggett has taken on a variety of roles as convener, coach, president, treasurer and more.

But for the longtime volunteer, it was all a labour of love. “I do this because I love the game,” he said.

Suggett thanked his fellow volunteers and expressed optimism that more people will join the effort to help youth soccer in Simcoe continue to grow and be successful into the future.



(NORFOLK COUNTY PHOTO)

Brian Suggett was recently honoured at Norfolk council for 40 years of volunteer service. He’s pictured here with Mayor Amy Martin.

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Sudoku



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		9	4			3		8
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4	5		2	8	9	6		

Solutions on page 23

Christmas show debuts Olivia Mae Graham album

Olivia Mae Graham performs in 'the community that raised her' at Dec. 7th Delhi concert

CHRIS ABBOTT

Editor

On Saturday, Dec. 7, 2025, at the Hungarian Hall in Delhi, Advanced Towing is presenting an unforgettable Christmas concert.

Local country artist Olivia Mae Graham is set to perform songs from her debut album, 'Nobody,' along with holiday favourites, at her Third Annual Christmas Show and Album Release Celebration.

To make the event even more meaningful, cash raffles will be available, with 100 per cent of proceeds donated directly to the Norfolk Help Centre to support local families this holiday season.

"Getting to celebrate the release of my debut album 'Nobody' with the community that raised me is incredibly special. And being able to give back through the Norfolk Help Centre is close to my heart," said Graham. "This is our first time bringing the Christmas Show to Norfolk County, so that's really exciting. It feels really good.

Nobody marks a pivotal moment in Olivia Mae's rising career. With accomplishments that include a CMA Ontario Breakthrough Artist of the Year nomination and a Songwriter of the Year nomination at the Manitoba Country Music Awards, she continues to establish herself as one of Canada's most exciting emerging country voices. Her YouTube series, The Moments In Between, alongside her dynamic live performances, has helped cultivate a loyal and growing fan base across Ontario.

Adding to the festive spirit, Graham will also perform her heartfelt original Christmas single, Alone Tonight, a seasonal favourite among fans.

The debut album is now available digitally, along with vinyl and CDs.

"We just got our vinyl records and CDs in this weekend. There are two bonus songs on the vinyl and CD... and those two songs will also be available (digitally) in 2026 – a deluxe edition to come in the new year."

Pre-sales exceeded her expectations, she said.

"I am glad that we did a pre-sale because we were able to order more than I anticipated. It definitely shocked me. It's really cool to be able to see people own something that I worked so hard on over these past few years."

NOBODY

"This project has been such a long time coming," said Graham, who over the last five years has written hundreds of songs.

"It's something that I have been working

towards my entire life. So to actually have it here, and to see it in a physical form, something I can hold and feel, is... I don't even know how to describe it. It's just so, so cool."

Graham is proud of the songs selected for the debut album. They focused on the lyrics, she said, and 'every song counted' and had a purpose on the album.

"I am so glad that we took the time because it is a work of art that I am so deeply proud of and I can't wait to continue sharing it into the new year.

"I really think I've been able to process 'life' through songwriting. It's something that I do on a daily basis. Some people drink a coffee every morning, I have to sit down and write, and just see what comes out. Every day it's different.

"Unfortunately, in the process, there were songs that were going to be on the album... then next day I wrote a better song. So there's so many songs that nobody's going to get to hear."

Graham's earlier releases have been singles, she noted.

"I think that's a good way to do it, to have stepping stones, and to give people a little tidbit at a time. Then build towards an album. It has been a fun process for us."

Olivia Mae Graham – Third Annual Christmas Show & Album Release

- Date: Sunday, Dec. 7
- Location: Hungarian Hall, 71 King Street, Delhi
- Doors Open: 1 p.m.
- Show time: 2 p.m.
- Tickets available at oliviamae-graham.com
- All raffle proceeds donated to the Norfolk Help Centre.

Join Olivia Mae Graham for an unforgettable afternoon of music, celebration, and community.

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(FILE PHOTO)

Olivia Mae Graham's Third Annual Christmas Show and Album Release Celebration is Sunday, Dec. 7, 2 p.m. at the Hungarian Hall in Delhi.



MEMORIES AND MILESTONES

Share them with your local community.

*Let us help you honour and
celebrate every chapter of life –
from anniversaries to obituaries,
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- The Simcoe Advocate Community Calendar allows non-profit organizations to promote their free admission community events at no charge. Event listings can include the 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 Simcoe Advocate 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



Riddles

Why did Santa go to music school?
So he could improve his wrapping skills.

What do you call a reindeer with bad manners?
Rude-olph.

Why did the ornament go to therapy?
It had too many hang-ups.

What's a snowman's favourite breakfast?
Frosted Flakes.

Why did the gingerbread man put on sunscreen?
Because he felt crumby.

PET OF THE WEEK

Nominate your Pet of the Week by emailing info@simcoeadvocate.com



HANSEL

Meet our Pet of the Week:

Hansel and his brother Woody are a bonded senior pair searching for a loving home together. Hansel loves walks, follows his nose everywhere, and is a top-tier cuddle buddy. These brothers must be adopted as a pair, as they don't do well apart. The \$500 adoption fee includes full medical care.

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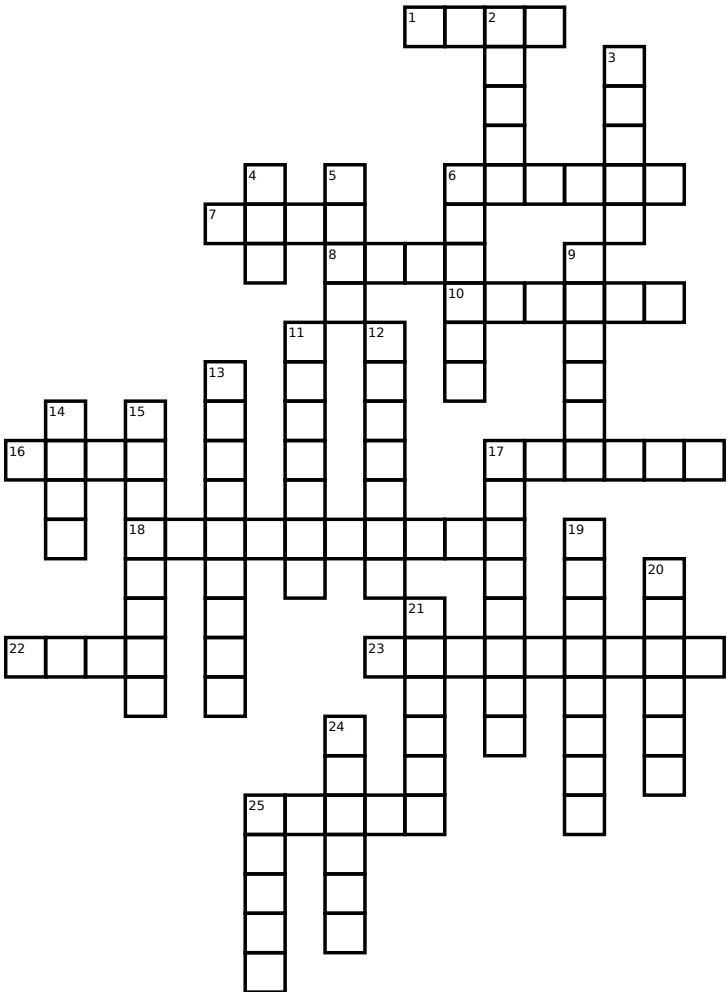
Weekly Crossword

THE PRODUCE PUZZLE - CHRISTMAS PRODUCE

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227 MAIN STREET IN DELHI, ON



Clues

DOWN

- 2. Red fruit hung as a Christmas decoration
- 3. Little red fruit in holiday relish
- 4. Sweet orange veggie for mashed holiday side dish
- 5. Zesty peel used in holiday baking
- 6. Sweet fruit often dried for fruitcake
- 9. Spicy root used in gingerbread
- 11. Herb paired with thyme for roast dinners
- 12. Mini cabbages that kids love to hate at Christmas
- 13. Squash often used in creamy winter soups
- 14. Onion relative often used in stuffing
- 15. Green veggie shaped like trees
- 17. Nut that sounds like it should be roasted on an open fire
- 19. Herb that smells like Christmas trees

ACROSS

- 1. Green veggie often wrapped in bacon for holidays
- 6. Popular veggie in holiday vegetable trays
- 7. Holiday salad green with a slightly bitter bite
- 8. Herb used on roast turkey
- 10. Spicy holiday vegetable used in slaws
- 16. Winter fruit that pairs with cinnamon
- 17. Classic reindeer snack
- 18. Fruit traditionally tucked into Christmas stockings
- 22. Feathery herb used in holiday dips
- 23. Red fruit often in Christmas sangria
- 25. Star-shaped spice from a pod fruit

Answers found on page 23.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Email to inquire: info@simcoeadvocate.com

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4

LANTERN OF LIGHT WORKSHOP

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

A free, guided art-making workshop for those grieving the loss of a loved one. Participants will create personalized lanterns through creativity, mindfulness, and gentle reflection while honouring loved ones and holding space for healing. No artistic experience is needed – just bring your curiosity. Guided by local expressive arts practitioner, Kori Pop.

For more information or to pre-register, please contact Carlee at 519-410-0881 or Maureen at support@norfolkhaldimandhospice.ca

Jarvis Public Library – 2 Monson St., Jarvis, ON

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6

CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Featuring baking, attic treasures, gift table, frozen apple and elderberry pies, frozen beef and chicken meat pies, a penny table, vendors and a luncheon.

For more information please contact, Dorothy Stedman at 519-717-6109 or stedmanles@gmail.com.

Delhi United Church- 105 Church St W, Delhi, ON N4B 1V9

MONDAY, DECEMBER 8

DELHI & DISTRICT HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY MEETING

6:00 pm

FAGM, AWARDS, ELECTIONS & INSTALLATION OF DIRECTORS. ALSO OUR CHRISTMAS POT LUCK SUPPER. Bring your favourite dish to share, plate & utensils. Enter the parking lot off William Street.

Delhi Friendship Centre, 418 Queen St., Delhi, Ont.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9

PORT DOVER COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS SING-ALONG

7:00 pm

\$2 donation. Call 416-505-1658 for more information.

Grace United Church, 18 Chapman St. W., Port Dover

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10

SIMCOE AND DISTRICT HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY MEETING

7:30 pm

The Simcoe and District Horticultural Society will be having their next meeting on Dec 10 at 7:30 at the Junior Farmers building. OPP Constable Andrew Gamble will do a presentation on Online Safety. He is a media relations and community safety officer. Everyone is welcome. There will be a light lunch, refreshments and door prizes. For more info contact Helen at 226 440 2699 or helenuren@live.ca

Junior Farmers Building, 172 South Dr, Simcoe, ON N3Y 1G6

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13

CHRISTMAS CONCERT – LOW NOTES HIGH HOPES SAXOPHONE QUARTET

2:00 pm

Enjoy an afternoon of festive music with the Low Notes High Hopes Saxophone Quartet—Keegan Amy, Blake Lambert, Dave Ward, and Jess Wharram—along with special guests Jennifer Langton and Scott Duffas, on Saturday, December 13, at 2:00 p.m. Come and experience a delightful concert to get you in the holiday spirit!

St. James United Church, 150 Colborne St. S.,

MONDAY, DECEMBER 15

SPECIAL EDITION BINGO NIGHT

5:00 pm (Doors Open)

Early Bird Games at 6:30 pm

Main Games at 7:00 pm

Hosted by ABEL Enterprises at the Simcoe Legion. Featuring over \$3,000 in cash prizes with a \$1,000 jackpot, fun prize draws from local businesses, a 50/50 draw, hot balls, and a concession booth by the Simcoe & District Humane Society. Dabbers and tape available.

Pricing:

Early Bird Packs (4 games) – \$5

Specials & Jackpots – \$2

3 Packs – \$8 • 9 Packs – \$18 • 12 Packs – \$24 • 15 Packs – \$30

50/50 Tickets – \$5 or 3 for \$10 • Hot Balls – \$1

Seat saving may not be available—arrive early. To donate a prize: abelfundraising@gmail.com

Simcoe Legion, West Street, Simcoe

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16

A CANDLELIGHT EVENING TO REMEMBER

7:00 pm – 8:00 pm

A free candlelit evening of reflection, music, community, and light refreshments. This special evening offers a safe, compassionate space to honour and remember loved ones who have passed. Everyone is welcome to come and light a candle.

For more information please contact Norfolk Haldimand Community Hospice at 519-410-0881 or info@norfolkhaldimandhospice.ca

Divine Mercy Catholic Church – 2058 Main St. North, Jarvis, ON

MONDAY, DECEMBER 29

BINGO NIGHT

7 p.m

Doors open 5:30 p.m - Early Bird 6:30 p.m

Presented by ABEL Enterprises. Concession stand run by Simcoe & District Humane Society.

Simcoe Legion, West Street, Simcoe

FREE MAKE & TAKE WORKSHOP

1:00 p.m - 3:00 p.m

Join us for an afternoon of creativity and fun!

Learn greeting card making and fridge magnet crafting—perfect for all ages and skill levels. All materials are provided, and refreshments are included. Bring your friends, family, and imagination! Free-will offering — extras go to Church Out Serving.

St. Peter's Lutheran Fellowship Hall, 155 Colborne St N, Simcoe

MONDAY, JANUARY 5

BINGO NIGHT

7 p.m

Doors open 5:30 p.m - Early Bird 6:30 p.m

Presented by ABEL Enterprises. Concession stand run by Simcoe & District Humane Society.

Simcoe Legion, West Street, Simcoe

EVERY FRIDAY EVENING

CATCH THE ACE

4:30 am- 7:30 pm (Draw at 7:45 pm)

Win over \$10,000.00 (LIC #RAF 14505443)! Tickets are available for \$5 each, 3 for \$10, or 6 for \$20. Proceeds support the Norfolk Haldimand Hospice, Norfolk General Hospital Foundation, and Rotary Norfolk Youth Scholarships.

Simcoe Legion, West Street, Simcoe

MONDAY, JANUARY 19

BINGO NIGHT

7 p.m

Doors open 5:30 p.m - Early Bird 6:30 p.m

Presented by ABEL Enterprises. Concession stand run by Simcoe & District Humane Society.

Simcoe Legion, West Street, Simcoe

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2

BINGO NIGHT

7 p.m

Doors open 5:30 p.m - Early Bird 6:30 p.m

Presented by ABEL Enterprises. Concession stand run by Simcoe & District Humane Society.

Simcoe Legion, West Street, Simcoe

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23

BINGO NIGHT

7 p.m

Doors open 5:30 p.m - Early Bird 6:30 p.m

Presented by ABEL Enterprises. Concession stand run by Simcoe & District Humane Society.

Simcoe Legion, West Street, Simcoe

MARCH 2-6, 2026

40TH ANNUAL NORFOLK MUSICAL ARTS FESTIVAL

Registration opens NOVEMBER 3 2025.

VISIT WWW.NMAF.CA

all individuals, musicians and theatre artists, schools, churches, community groups and theatre groups. the festival is open to anyone who would like to participate. bands | choirs | guitar | english & french speech arts | piano instruments | strings | classical voice & musical theatre

CLASSIFIEDS

Email to inquire: info@simcoeadvocate.com

FOR SALE

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

WANTED

I will pay cash for antiques and collectibles. Coca Cola, Pepsi or any pop company. Brewery items - Kuntz, Huether Labatts, etc. Old radios and gramophones, wristwatches, pocket watches, old fruit jars - Beaver Star, Bee Hive etc. Any old oil cans and signs - Red Indian, Supertest etc. Any small furniture. If you are moving or cleaning out stuff please contact me – 519-570-6920.

SUDOKU ANSWERS

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

HELP WANTED

**GRANT
HAVEN
MEDIA**

o o o o
o o o o
o o o o

**WE ARE
HIRING**

**JOIN OUR TEAM AS A
NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING
SALES REPRESENTATIVE!**

Are you a motivated self-starter with a passion for sales and marketing? Do you thrive in a flexible work environment where you can set your own schedule? If so, we have the perfect opportunity for you!

Location: Work from Anywhere!

Schedule: Your Own Schedule

Type: Commission

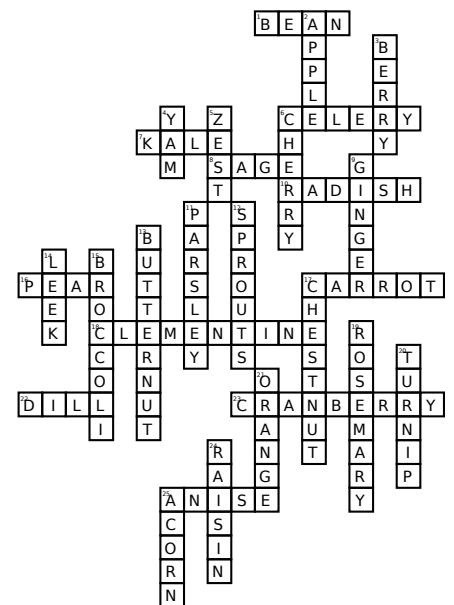
About Grant Haven Media: At Grant Haven Media, we are committed to delivering top-quality news and information to our readers. As a leading newspaper company, we take pride in our dedication to journalistic excellence and community engagement. As we continue to grow, we're looking for enthusiastic individuals to join our dynamic sales team.

**If you are interested, contact
Heather Dunbar at:
heather@granthaven.com**

QUIZ ANSWERS

- 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
- Great Dane
- Gerrymandering
- Fuselage
- Algeria
- Deoxyribonucleic acid
- Justin Trudeau
- Berkshire Hathaway
- Bingo
- True

CROSSWORD ANSWERS





ROBINSON



GMC

22nd Annual Christmas Wish Campaign

Haldimand-Norfolk
REACH98.9
NORFOLK

Listen live Monday to Friday between 9am & Noon and 1pm & 4pm for a Christmas Wish YOU can fulfill by calling into the station at 519-426-7700 ext. WISH (9474)

In-Store: Salvation Army Angel Tree; we are accepting any new, unwrapped gifts until Dec 19, 2025

Wish & Win!!!

Win up to \$25,000 off your new purchase!

play & purchase by
January 2, 2026

*no purchase necessary



Robinson Chevrolet Buick GMC

51 Queensway East, Simcoe

519-426-1680

www.robinsonsimcoe.com



robinsonchevbuickgmc

