

St. Marys Independent

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Issue #1305

Thursday, March 19, 2026

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A FRESH CUP AND A NEW OWNER (STEWART GRANT PHOTO)
Incoming owner of Snapping Turtle Coffee Roasters Jessie Doogan is pictured with present owner Sal Vaianisi, who has owned the business since October 2022. See full story on page 7.

Council backs naming-rights strategy for 14 Church community hub campaign

GALEN SIMMONS
Regional Editor

St. Marys council has approved a key piece of the fundraising strategy for the proposed Community Commons at 14 Church St. N, giving the St. Marys Public Library board and its capital campaign fundraising committee the green light to offer naming rights for rooms within the future intergenerational community hub.

At its March 10 meeting, council unanimously supported a recommendation approving naming rights for rooms within the Community Commons to be offered at 75 per cent of the estimated construction cost for each space. The move is intended to encourage significant private donations while helping offset the capital costs associated with redeveloping the former Mercury Theatre building.

"We'd like some input from you tonight on naming opportunities," library CEO Sarah Andrews said. "This is a bit tricky, we know, because financial times are hard and we want everyone in town to feel like this project is for them and that they can contribute to it at any donor level. Our campaign is starting with the higher-level potential donors and trying to make some strides and build some movement to the campaign, but over the next three years, we do anticipate having a variety of elements to this campaign, right down to read-a-thons with children who are going to raise maybe \$20.

"... Those donors are equally as important to us because we want everybody to feel like

CONTINUED TO PAGE 11

Hawkins-Gignac Foundation donates over 60 carbon monoxide detectors to St. Marys Fire Department

WENDY LAMOND
Independent Reporter

A special presentation was held at the St. Marys Fire Department on Tuesday, March 10, that could end up saving local lives.

John Gignac, executive director of the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation met with local Fire Chief Phil West, chief fire prevention officer Chris St. Clair and firefighter Brandon Dundas to donate more than 60 carbon monoxide (CO) detectors to the St. Marys Fire

Department that will be given to households that don't currently have one.

"This generous donation will help ensure more St. Marys residents are protected from the dangers of carbon monoxide," West said.

The Hawkins-Gignac Foundation was founded in 2010 after Gignac's niece, Laurie Hawkins, and her whole family succumbed to carbon monoxide poisoning from a blocked vent on a gas fireplace. Gignac, who was a firefighter for 34 years, wanted to find a way

CONTINUED TO PAGE 5

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COMMUNITY

Council awards \$249K contract to rebuild town hall staircase



St. Marys council has awarded a nearly \$250,000 contract for the rehabilitation of the two sets of outdoor stairs at town hall.

(WENDY LAMOND PHOTOS)

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

St. Marys council has awarded a contract for the rehabilitation of two prominent staircases at town hall.

At its March 10 meeting, council awarded the project to Everest Masonry Corporation at a cost of \$249,617, including taxes and contingencies. The project will focus on rebuilding the Queen Street and Church Street staircases at town hall, both of which require structural improvements and restoration work to ensure their long-term durability and safety.

"The staircases are getting worn out," town facilities manager Ray Cousineau said. "The pointing is failing on both staircases and needs repairs. To help with this in the future, we're installing a heat-cable system in the staircase and in the surrounding sidewalk panels so that we can reduce, if not eliminate, 90 per cent of the salt and ice melter that is being used in the winter. We know the ice melter and salt has contributed to the deterioration of the staircases."

According to Cousineau's report to council, the work will involve removing the existing stone treads, risers and bronze railings from both staircases. The current capstones will be removed and reused where possible, while a new reinforced concrete foundation will be installed beneath the stairs to provide struc-

tural support.

The project will also include constructing reinforced concrete stairs designed to support the reclaimed stone components. The concrete core of the sidewalls will be tied into the stair base to stabilize the structure and prevent outward movement of the walls over time.

Once the new structural base is complete, the original stone treads and risers will be reset, while new capstones will be installed and secured using stainless steel pins. Existing bronze railings will also be retained and reinstalled as part of the rebuild.

The project was tendered earlier this year with bids closing Feb. 25. According to the procurement summary included in the staff report, the town received 10 submissions, though four were disqualified because of incomplete documentation or insufficient experience.

Following a review by JPM Architecture Inc., Everest Masonry Corporation's submission was determined to be complete, contractually acceptable and the best value for the municipality.

The town budgeted a total of \$480,000 for the project, with the contract award covering approximately half of that amount. The remaining funds are expected to be used for contingency and engineering-related expenses that may arise during construction.

In response to a question from deputy

mayor Brogan Aylward about the timing of the project, Cousineau said he expects construction to begin by May 11, after the St. Marys Community Players' production of Boeing Boeing wraps up in the Town Hall Theatre. Cousineau said the project should be complete by the end of July or the first week of August.

"Will there be some sort of signing directing the public during, say, events or something like that to the other staircase?" Aylward asked. "I know there's events going on during the summer using

the upstairs auditorium."

"During this project we will be directing staff or the public to different doors," Cousineau responded. "It will also affect capacity of the building, so if there's any programs or events scheduled during this timeframe, we're trying to find alternate locations for them or move them to another date."

Funding for the project will come from the town's capital reserve, which has already allocated funds for the work in the 2026 budget.



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EDITORIAL

Now that we're ready to travel, where in the world should we go?

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Though the world seems to be crumbling around us, Julia and I are finally in a position where we can afford to go on a trip somewhere beyond our relatively safe borders.

While there are plenty of good reasons to stay closer to home, we've both talked about travelling together for almost as long as we've been a couple. Sure, we've taken weekend getaways to places like Algonquin Park and The Blue Mountains, but we've never travelled internationally together – other things like buying a house and redoing our kitchen always got in the way.

Personally, I haven't crossed the Canadian border for more than a decade and the last real trip I went on was back in high school when I had the opportunity to take two historical tours through parts of Europe. While I enjoyed those trips, Julia and I are both looking for something that will give us the freedom to explore new cultures, foods, histories and experiences on our own schedule with plenty of time to relax in between.

Every week, I edit the pieces submitted by our travel columnist, Paul Knowles. From European river cruises to golf and fishing getaways – always with a unique tidbit of local history thrown in – Paul's columns tend to get me daydreaming about where in the world we could go to find the travel experience we're looking for.

But I'm an anxious person and there is just so much to be anxious about in the world these days. Mexico – a country with food, culture and history I can't get enough of – is off the list of potential destinations at the moment, at least until the violence between the drug cartels and the government subsides. Similarly, a visit to Cuba is a no-go as that country and its people

struggle to survive amid the oil shortage that resulted from the American overthrow of the Venezuelan government and the subsequent blockade.

Speaking of oil shortages, the United States' current war with Iran could throw all sorts of complications into the mix as roughly 20 per cent of world's oil supply continues to be held up at the Strait of Hormuz. The cost of literally everything travel related (and non-travel related) could soon skyrocket beyond anything we might afford.

I'm not super comfortable visiting Eastern Europe as Russia continues its full-scale war with Ukraine. While I'm sure there are plenty of destinations in the region safe enough to visit, there are simply too many unknowns I'm not willing to gamble on.

And while there are plenty of destinations in the U.S. I'd love to visit and explore, neither Julia or I feel comfortable visiting a country that is actively engaged in persecuting immigrants and foreigners, both for our safety and because supporting such a regime is something we can't bring ourselves to do.

So, what's left? Maybe somewhere in western Europe or Africa or South America?

Luckily, my boss and the publisher of this newspaper, Stewart Grant, also owns a travel agency, Stonetown Travel, and he's offered to sit down with Julia and I, listen to our hopes and dreams – and my fears – and help us find somewhere we can enjoy with a relatively low risk of finding ourselves in the middle of another global conflict.

I recognize complaining about not having anywhere safe to travel is a first-world problem – something so many people around the globe and here at home don't have the luxury of worrying about – but these opportunities come around so rarely for Julia and I, we'd have regrets if we didn't take this chance.

Bravo

We have 2 Bravos this week.

1) Bravo to all the amazing staff at St. Marys Memorial Hospital. We can't say enough about how wonderfully you supported not only our dad but us through these several weeks. Everyone including the doctors, nurses, PSWs, dietary staff, physiotherapists and facilities/housekeeping staff are outstanding. We are so fortunate in this community to have access to such outstanding care.

2) Bravo to the young lady who found my lanyard and keys and returned it to me, much appreciated. Thank you!

Boo

We have 1 Boo this week.

1) Boo to the people who are still parking like they cannot see the lines. Time to start lining it up straight so other people can park around you!

**Please note all Boos and Bravos must be signed in order to be considered. Bravos and Boos are submitted by community members and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the St. Marys Independent.*

Quote of the Week

"Whether I free it, take it, I think I can do anything I want with it,"

- U.S. President Donald Trump told reporters in reference to the nation of Cuba on March 16, 2026.

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journalism, one community
at a time!*

St. Marys Independent

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I decided to watch a
horror movie to de-stress
from the world news.

Have you heard something humorous around town that you think might be of interest to others?
Either email them to us at info@stmarys-independent.com with the title
"Overheard at The Coffee Shop", call 519.284.0041 or drop by the office to let us know!

Hawkins-Gignac Foundation donates over 60 carbon monoxide detectors to St. Marys Fire Department



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Firefighter Brandon Dundas, Fire Chief Phil West, executive director of the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation, John Gignac, and chief fire prevention officer Chris St. Clair show the CO detectors that were donated by the foundation to get the message out about the importance of having a working CO alarm in the home.

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

to share the importance of having a working CO detector in all homes.

The odourless gas is referred to as the silent killer. It is not only odourless but also colourless and tasteless, making it very hard to detect. The foundation promotes public education on the importance of CO detection.

Gignac has been travelling all over the country sharing this message and has donated over 30,000 CO detectors to over 350 fire departments. His passion and dedication to this cause have resulted in some positive results over the years. He says if he can save lives with his message, then he is helping and making a difference.

In 2013, the Hawkins Gignac Act was passed, making CO alarms mandatory in

all Ontario homes. More recently, CO detectors have been made a requirement adjacent to each sleeping area and on every level of the home.

The foundation hosts ball tournaments, barbecues and fundraisers including the sale colouring books featuring Rickey, the CO Safety Ranger. The money raised goes towards purchasing the CO detectors that will be distributed to those who need one.

Having a working CO alarm is a very important step homeowners can take to keep their families safe. CO gets released in the air by everyday fuel-burning appliances like gas ranges, fireplaces, water heaters and gas furnaces.

Visit endthesilence.ca to learn more about carbon monoxide and how to donate to the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation.

New ownership at Snapping Turtle Coffee Roasters

STEWART GRANT

Publisher

St. Marys resident Jessie Doogan will be taking over ownership at Snapping Turtle Coffee Roasters effective March 31.

Doogan, who has worked at Snapping Turtle for the last three years, is excited to take the business into the next era. She'll be closing the doors briefly from March 31 to April 6 to make some alterations

and then will be re-opening on April 7 under their regular hours.

Sal Vaianisi, the coffee shop's current owner, is looking forward to some extra free time to tinker with his motorcycles, spend time out on the boat and catching up on travel.

He also plans to spend time "on the other side of the counter" at the Snapping Turtle, seeing some of the many friends he has made through the business.

STONETOWN CRIER

The latest municipal news from the Town of St. Marys



PET LICENCE REMINDER

If you haven't registered your pets yet for 2026, it's time! Do so before March 31, 2026, when licence fees increase. Pet licences are valid for the life of your pet, with annual registration required.

Current fee: \$25 per pet
After March 31: \$35 per pet

Register: townofstmarys.com/petlicences

THINKING OF RUNNING FOR COUNCIL?

Join the upcoming Candidate Information Session!

March 25 | 6 - 9 PM | Perth East Rec. Complex

Experienced and knowledgeable trainers from Clerks On Call will guide prospective election candidates through the essential information they need before deciding to run for municipal office.

More information at townofstmarys.com/candidate



STRONG AS STONE NOMINATIONS OPEN

Nomination period: March 8 - 22

Do you know someone who is Strong As Stone? If you are aware of someone who consistently goes above and beyond in serving our community, we encourage you to nominate them for a Strong As Stone award. Eligible nominees will be formally recognized at a Council meeting, celebrated through local media, and presented with an official certificate.

Nominations: townofstmarys.com/StrongAsStone

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Senior of the Week



Donna and Donald Pearson are celebrating their 73rd Anniversary on March 21. They were married in Stratford on March 21, 1953. Don, who is 94, was born in West Nissouri and Donna, who will be celebrating her 92nd birthday on April 10, was born in Stratford. They have four children, nine grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren. They also still live in their own home of 53 years.

If you would like to nominate someone for Senior of the Week, contact us at 519.284.0041 or info@stmarysindependent.com.

Kirkton-Woodham Optimist Club donates to hospital foundations from successful breakfast



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

The Kirkton-Woodham Optimist Club was very proud to donate \$4029.76 to both the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation and the South Huron Hospital Foundation. Pictured from left to right are Jim Hodgins, Linda McFadyen, Paul Anderson, Cindy Bilyea, Vernon Thomson, Wayne Barber, Bernice De Decker, Daniel Cipriano, Cliff Thomson, Paul Hodgins, Barry Miller, Mark Kennedy, Krista McCann, Brian Richardson and Mike Veri. Absent is Don Richardson.

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

On Feb. 15, the Optimist Club of Kirkton-Woodham hosted its third-annual community breakfast fundraiser. All donations from the event were donated equally to the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation and the South Huron Hospital Foundation. This year, the breakfast welcomed 517 guests and raised a total of \$8,059.52, resulting in \$4,029.76 for each foundation. The foundations will be using the funds to help purchase high-priority medical equipment for their hospitals.

One of the organizers, Cliff Thomson, shared the club was very happy with how the breakfast turned out. The club wants to thank the following for their contributions and donations:

- Tim Hortons St. Marys
- Huron Egg Producers
- Perth Dairy Producers
- New Life Mills
- Delmar Foods
- Sutherhill Farms
- Urquhart Farms
- Shute Family
- Herline Heritage Maple Products

WEEKEND QUIZ

By Jake Grant

1. What plant is traditionally worn on St. Patrick's Day to represent Irish heritage?
2. What animal is known to eat magic mushrooms?
3. According to legend, what did St. Patrick drive out of Ireland?
4. Claude AI was created by what company?
5. What city dyes its river green every year for St. Patrick's Day?
6. What historic protest in Boston Harbor became a key symbol of colonial resistance to British taxation?
7. What Irish rock band released the famous album The Joshua Tree?
8. Who won best actor at the 2026 Oscars?
9. What Irish musical instrument is considered a national symbol?
10. What might you find at the end of a rainbow?

This week's answers are found on pg. 35

Town of St. Marys and other local municipalities to host election candidate information session

Candidate information session to be held on March 25 in Milverton



ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The Town of St. Marys, Municipality of North Perth, Township of Perth East, Municipality of West Perth, Township of Perth South and the City of Stratford are jointly hosting an Election Candidate Information Session for residents who are considering running for municipal office.

This session is designed to provide prospective candidates with essential information to help them make informed decisions before entering the municipal election process.

Participants will learn about reasons to run or not run for municipal council, key personal and financial considerations, and the roles and responsibilities of council members and municipal staff. The sessions will also include an overview of the powers and influence of municipal government and council members, including strong mayor powers, as well as governance, legislative and decision-making processes.

The importance of transparency and accountability in local government will be discussed, along with general campaign information and strategies for engaging with the media and the public.

The session will be led by experienced trainers from Clerks On Call. Representa-

tatives from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) will also be present to provide guidance on the roles and responsibilities of elected officials and staff, eligibility requirements, the nomination process, campaign finances, compliance audits, and other election-related topics.

The session will take place on Wednesday, March 25, from 6-9 p.m. at the Perth East Recreation Complex, 40 Temperance St. in Milverton. Those wishing to attend virtually can register by emailing elections@pertheast.ca by 4:30 p.m. on March 25.

“Hosting this session is an important way to help residents understand what it means to serve in municipal government,” said Town of St. Marys clerk Jenna McCartney in a press release. “Our goal is to provide clear, practical information about the role of council and what’s involved in running for office so people can feel confident and informed if they’re considering stepping forward to serve their community.”

The Election Candidate Information Session is open to residents of all participating municipalities. No prior political experience is required. For more information, residents are encouraged to visit their local municipal website or contact their municipal clerk’s department.

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Community foundation funding helps tackle food insecurity across Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

As rising grocery prices and increasing demand for food programs place growing pressure on local organizations, the Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation is highlighting how local philanthropy is helping ensure families across the region have access to nutritious food.

During Nutrition Month in March, the foundation is drawing attention to the impact of community generosity in supporting food security initiatives throughout Stratford, St. Marys and across Perth County. In 2025 alone, the foundation directed \$82,525 in grants toward food-security initiatives, supporting 30 programs delivered by 25 local organizations across the region.

Community foundation acting executive director Rachel Smith said the rising need for food supports is being felt in communities large and small.

"Food insecurity is a growing problem. It's not just an urban poverty problem anymore," Smith said. "Rising grocery costs, fixed incomes – it's being felt in schools, in senior households and in families who never imagined they would need support."

The community foundation helps address these needs through endowment funds established by local donors. These funds generate annual grants that can respond to emerging challenges in the community.

"We have endowment funds here at the foundation that generate annual grants that can respond to emerging community needs," Smith said. "We connect donor



(PHOTO COURTESY OF STRATFORD AND PERTH COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION)

Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation acting executive director Rachel Smith and fund holder and donor Courtney Teahen recently visited Romeo Public School in Stratford to see how the community foundation's funds are used to feed students through the school's breakfast program.

intent with those emerging needs."

Three of the foundation's funds were created specifically to address food-related needs – the Chris Kurz Fund, which supports student nutrition programs; the Teahen Family Nutrition and Wellbeing Fund, which supports student nutrition and wellbeing; and the Florence Kehl Fund, which supports the Stratford House of Blessing food bank.

However, Smith said the response to growing food insecurity has extended beyond those dedicated funds.

"When our grant applications started coming in, we actually only have three

funds that go specifically to nutrition and wellbeing," she said. "But when the fundholders saw this emerging need, that's what became really powerful – all of those fundholders came together to respond."

The resulting funding has supported a wide range of programs across the region, from school nutrition initiatives to community food programs.

One of the largest recipients of funding was the Ontario Student Nutrition Program, which provides breakfast and snack programs in schools throughout Perth County, including those operated

by the Avon Maitland District School Board and the Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board.

"They're really boots on the ground doing that work in all of the schools across the county," Smith said. "They do breakfast programs and respond to family needs in the schools."

Community foundation funding has also supported programs at the St. Marys Friendship Centre, local library food pantries in Stratford, St. Marys, Tavistock and Mitchell, and youth programming at the new North Perth Access Centre.

In some cases, the foundation has supported practical needs such as appliances used to prepare food for youth programs.

To help donors better understand the impact of their contributions, the foundation has also brought fundholders into local schools to see the programs in action.

"We went and visited the classrooms and helped with the breakfast programs, really connecting everybody to that cause and seeing their work in action," Smith said.

She said Nutrition Month offers an opportunity to highlight both the challenges many families face and the way communities are stepping up to help.

"Food is fundamental to wellbeing," Smith said. "The good news story here is that local generosity is stepping up in meaningful ways."

Residents interested in supporting these efforts can learn more about creating or contributing to community foundation funds by visiting the foundation's website, www.spccf.ca.

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A new eco-conscious retail clothing store now open in St. Marys



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Julie Skirving welcomes customers to come visit her new, eco-friendly clothing store at 6 Water St. S.

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

While wandering down Water Street, make sure to pop in to Logan & Finley and say hello to owner Julie Skirving.

The new women's clothing store is bright and welcoming, but the best part about it is how passionate Skirving is about her products and business. Skirving, who is originally from London and lived in Cambridge, has ran her business online but also spent 13 and a half years on Queen West in Toronto with a retail location.

What brought her to St. Marys? Skirving was a sales rep for 15 years, which allowed her to travel to many small towns in southwestern Ontario. She would visit her clients, one being the old Trout Creek store, and ultimately fell in love with St.

Marys. When she decided to start looking for somewhere she would like to move her business and eventually retire to, St. Marys was at the top of her list.

The clothing Skirving sells has natural fibres and organic cottons made in an eco-friendlier way. This is a big draw for many people. In the short time she has been open, Skirving said she has already served customers who have come from as far as Toronto, Barrie, Waterloo, London and Guelph.

The business name, Logan & Finley, came from family names representing both sides of Skirving's family to reflect her roots and how she led her life for decades – choosing to live an eco-friendly, low-waste lifestyle and helping people find sustainable solutions for their everyday life.

The store also carries a variety of jew-



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

The new store on Water Street offers a warm and bright space for locals looking for a sustainable shopping experience.

ellery, greeting cards and health-care products from small, Canadian businesses spanning from Ottawa and Coburg to Toronto and Winnipeg. Ingredients for these items are important to Skirving, so she ensures they're fragrance free, natural and within the eco-friendly theme.

Skirving loves St. Marys' small-town feel and she is truly passionate about providing a top-notch retail experience. She can help customers with styling tips and provides personalized support for those looking for a more minimalist wardrobe.

When plans were in the works for the location change, Skirving researched what was already available in town and made some adjustments to her lines so she wouldn't duplicate local offerings. She believes more options available in town will allow for collaboration and bring vibrancy and a good energy to the

downtown. Skirving is a firm believer in the idea of buying good-quality clothing that lasts a long time. The best way to do that is by shopping in person to find the perfect fit. The business has some core products that customers have purchased in different colours or to have a second quality piece in their wardrobe.

Last summer at the Heritage Festival, Skirving ran a pop-up shop at her current location and loved how welcoming the community was. She was excited to find out there was some interest in her niche clothing.

Though Skirving plans to adjust her hours, she is currently open Wednesday to Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. She is also available by appointment.

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Council backs naming-rights strategy for 14 Church community hub campaign

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

14 Church St. is their library and town space, but for now, we are focusing on the larger donors.”

The naming-rights model forms part of a broader, million-dollar fundraising campaign being organized by the library board and its capital campaign advisory committee, which was created late last year to help generate community support and financial contributions for the project.

Under the draft donor-recognition framework presented to council, a range of spaces within the building could be named after donors, organizations or service clubs in recognition of their financial support. Larger spaces such as the Commons Hall, Makerspace, sound studios and community rooms offer the greatest naming opportunities because of their higher construction costs and visibility within the building.

According to the fundraising report presented to council, the committee developed the proposed naming structure by examining benchmarks used in similar community capital campaigns, including St. Marys Healthcare Foundation fundraising projects for the St. Marys Memorial Hospital.

While naming rights for the Makerspace have already been spoken for following the recent donation of \$65,000 by local lawyers John Sipos and Mark Poulton in memory of their friend and colleague, Ben Waghorn, Andrews said basing naming-rights donations on estimated construction costs for each room gives the fundraising committee members a starting point when discussing larger donations with potential donors.

The naming rights, Andrews said in response to a question from Coun. Rob Edney, would likely expire after 10-20 years – a practice that is in alignment with similar fundraising strategies employed elsewhere and allows funds to be raised for the cost of renovating or updating the rooms at 14 Church in the future using the same strategy.

“Seventy-five per cent ... seems like a nice number to focus on,” Coun. Fern Pridham said. “If someone is thinking a smaller number but would still like to be included in a naming, have you (considered) the 25-25-25 (per cent of construction costs) so there’s three names in a space, or four?”

“Absolutely,” Andrews responded. “These are just guides for the team as we’re having conversations with the large donors to say, ‘This is what we feel the room value is that the donation should bring to the project. If that’s really high, would you be willing to share naming rights with another organization?’ There’s lots of discussion that can be had there.”

Andrews also said naming rights for the Community Commons building itself may also be considered, should a large enough potential donation be brought to the table.

In addition to outlining potential naming opportunities tied to construction costs, the fundraising report also notes donors could be recognized through plaques, digital displays within the library, creative installations at 14 Church St. and other forms of acknowledgement as the campaign progresses.

“With the amount of enthusiasm and the nature of the project, I think the fundraising committee has done a remarkable job and has a lot of enthusiasm and put a lot of thought into this,” Mayor Al Strathdee said.

Council receives letters of support for the Community Commons project

Council also received several letters of support from organizations that see the future Community Commons as an important addition to the community’s social and cultural infrastructure.

Among those was a letter from the Canadian Mental Health Association Huron Perth, which noted that centralized community spaces can improve access to services, reduce stigma and help individuals build connections that support mental-health recovery.

A letter from the City of Stratford’s social services department similarly highlighted the benefits of community hubs, noting integrated service spaces can improve health and social outcomes by making supports easier to access and better coordinated for residents across the region. Huron Perth Public Health also expressed support for the project, emphasizing the role accessible public spaces play in fostering social connection and reducing isolation across all age groups.

One of the most detailed expressions of support came from the St. Marys Kinsmen Club, whose representatives were present at the March 10 council meeting. In a letter to council dated March 8, the service club said it has followed planning for the redevelopment of 14 Church St. with interest and sees strong potential for collaboration between the town and local community organizations.

The club proposed making a \$30,000 donation toward the project, paid over five years, along with potential in-kind contributions during the construction phase that could help reduce overall project costs. In return, the Kinsmen have proposed negotiating a lease agreement allowing the club to use a large multi-purpose room within the building for its regular meetings and committee activities, which typically take place monthly from September through June.

The group also suggested naming the room the “Kinsmen Room” in recognition of the club’s long history of community service in St. Marys and its contributions to the redevelopment project.

“(Your letter) says that you want to keep your memorabilia permanently displayed in a room; that would be a community room used for all types of different activities. I just wonder if you would be amenable to (having those items on display) when you’re using the room, and taking them out after?” Pridham asked the club representatives, noting she is worried if the town offers storage or display space to one donor organiza-

tion, it might set a precedent for others that could lead to rooms becoming cluttered.

“We’re very flexible in any approach that you take with regards to the decoration in the room,” responded Kinsmen representative Don Van Galen. “The main concern for us is storage of the items, so some of them could be put into closets or whatever. ... We don’t have a lot, but there are some permanent items we need to take care of on a regular basis we want to have in one location. ... We understand it’s going to be a multipurpose room, but we kind of want to be the lead on this and get you started and make it a facility we can make use of for our own needs.”

If an agreement were reached, the club suggested an initial lease term of 20 years with the possibility of renewal and future collaboration on improvements to the space if needed. CAO Brent Kittmer told council town staff would work with the Kinsmen Club to draft a basic memorandum of understanding for the Kinsmen’s contribution to and use of the Community Commons space, however a formal use agreement won’t be finalized until closer to the project’s completion date, potentially in three to four years.

The capital campaign committee and library board are expected to continue outreach to local businesses, service clubs and community members as they work toward building financial support and momentum for the project in the months ahead.

The Community Commons project envisions transforming 14 Church St. N into a flexible, multi-use hub for residents of all ages with space for library programming, community meetings, adult learning, cultural events and partnerships with local organizations.

Editor’s note: The author of this article is an active member of the capital campaign ad-hoc fundraising committee for the Community Commons project.



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Council awards \$130K contract for Pyramid Recreation Centre roof repairs

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

St. Marys council has awarded a contract for a replacement and repairs to portions of the Pyramid Recreation Centre (PRC) roof following a series of leaks earlier this winter that briefly disrupted programming at the facility.

At its March 10 regular council meeting, council approved awarding a tender valued at nearly \$130,000 to Grand Valley Roofing and Coating to repair sections of the roof above the Blue Rink and the adjacent Friendship Centre. The work is intended to address ongoing issues with the aging roof system and prevent further leaks that could disrupt programming at the PRC.

“We have a report in front of you for a procurement award for the replacement of the flat-roof portion of the Friendship Centre, and that is where all the mechanical equipment sits above the kitchen and above meeting rooms A, B and C,” St. Marys community services director Doug LaPointe told council.

“We’re not replacing the steel roof at this time – it’s in good shape, it’s been properly maintained – and then we’re also carrying an allowance which was already pre-planned prior to the issues we had over the Blue Rink this winter. We’re going to do some major repairs to the metal seams. The metal itself is okay, but

there’s a seam that pretty much runs the length of the rink and we’re going to do some restorations to that.”

LaPointe said Artas Engineering and Design Inc., the engineering firm hired by the town to review the scope of the project and the bids submitted, recommended Grand Valley Roofing and Coating install a new polyurethane elastomeric fluid applied system to repair the rink’s metal seams. While he told council the roofing contractor is not experienced with this product, the roofers have agreed to get trained and certified in its use and the product manufacturer will be onsite during repairs to assist.

During the repairs, LaPointe said staff and its contractors will evaluate the entire Blue Rink roof system to determine how the town can better manage snow load on the roof without compromising weight distribution to prevent leaks and other issues from reoccurring in the future.

In response to a question from Coun. Marg Luna, LaPointe said the roof replacement and repairs will not result in the closure of the Friendship Centre, however users may experience excessive noise and smells associated with the work for a period of between one and two weeks beginning in mid-spring.

The tender award comes after a leak over the Blue Rink in early February temporarily delayed a minor-hockey tournament at the facility while staff and con-

tractors diverted water away from the ice surface and completed repairs.

According to a community services update presented to council Feb. 24, warmer temperatures on Feb. 6 caused an existing leak to worsen, forcing staff to pause the tournament briefly while water was diverted and ice repairs were completed. With cooperation from other user groups, the event was delayed approximately 20 minutes before programming resumed.

Town staff later confirmed the issue was largely the result of extreme winter conditions that persisted throughout January and early February. During that period, St. Marys experienced an extended stretch of temperatures that remained below freezing, allowing snow accumulation of up to four feet in some areas of the roof.

As temperatures fluctuated in early February, melting and refreezing created layers of ice beneath the snowpack. According to staff, those ice layers allowed water to penetrate seams in the roof, contributing to the leaks observed above the Blue Rink.

Following the February incident, contractors were brought on site to assess the situation and carry out temporary repairs while town staff worked to prevent further disruptions.

In a Feb. 13 email update, LaPointe said contractors had spent several days on site attempting to address the issue while

staff monitored conditions on the roof. LaPointe noted the combination of heavy snow accumulation and repeated thaw-freeze cycles had created an ice layer beneath the snowpack that allowed water to seep through seams in the roof structure.

As a precaution, staff installed rain-diverter tarps with hoses beneath the Blue Rink ceiling to channel any additional water away from the ice surface if needed. Those diverters were installed Feb. 14 in the areas where the most significant leaks had occurred.

According to the Feb. 24 update, the tarps successfully prevented further water from reaching the ice surface and no additional disruptions to rink programming had been reported at that time.

“We’ve left everything in place in case because we’d hate to have more disruptions,” LaPointe said in response to a question from Coun. Jim Craigmile about the current state of the leak. “It has been dry; we’ve also had a couple days of significant rain. All this snow has melted from on the roof, so that’s all taken care of. There was some leaking during the heavier rain that we had last week, and then it went away quite quickly.

“So, we’ve left everything that’s there in case there’s an issue, just so we don’t have to worry about it until the end of the year, and then we have more stuff on standby if there’s a leak somewhere else.”

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The evening includes two short monologues portraying life in 1926 – one rural and one urban – followed by an exploration of how technology has changed rural and urban life over the past century.

Doug Johnson and his son Devin will lead a presentation, drawing on their experience at Maplevue Farms, a fifth-generation family dairy and cash-crop operation and the longest continuously milkproducing farm in Perth County.

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Grant Haven Media launches Exeter Examiner 2.0

STEWART GRANT

Publisher

Deb Lord, Stewart Grant and Dan Rolph met last Wednesday at South Huron Recreation Centre as they began distributing the first copies of the re-launched Exeter Examiner.

After buying the St. Marys Independent in 2014, Grant launched the original Exeter Examiner in 2015 before closing it in 2016. Grant renewed his expansion efforts in 2020 with the purchase of the Tavistock Gazette, followed by the launch of several new publications in attempt to fill gaps in news coverage as media conglomerates Metroland and Postmedia scaled back their small-town operations.

“The last 10 years have brought many changes to the newspaper industry, but one thing that hasn’t changed is people’s desire for local news and information,” said Grant.

Lord, who spent much of her career with the Exeter Times Advocate, is thrilled to be back in the business as part of the new team.

“I have been positively overwhelmed with the community stopping me on the street or phoning me about how much they love the new Exeter Examiner,” she said.

Grant Haven Media now has nine community newspapers and three farm publications. Here in St. Marys, the current editions of all newspapers are available for pickup at the St. Marys Independent office at 36 Water St. S or online at www.granthaven.com.



(DICK LORD PHOTO)

Deb Lord, Stewart Grant and Dan Rolph met briefly at the South Huron Recreation Centre March 11 before they began distributing the re-launched Exeter Examiner.

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St. Marys Haul & Help: A truck and an extra pair of hands when needed

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

Brandon Parker and his family have started a much-needed business in town called St. Marys Haul & Help.

The business plan came to fruition naturally. Parker already had a truck and trailer, and he was noticing many people in town were asking for help hauling things to the dump or clearing items from their yards and homes. When the opportunity came about to put the truck and trailer to good use while offering something for the community, Parker saw it as a great way to support his family, especially amid rising costs.

“In a small town like St. Marys, neighbours help neighbours and that’s really the spirit behind it,” Parker said.

The hours available will depend on other work and family commitments as it is a family-run business. Parker shared he will be available evenings and weekends, and he will do his best to work around customer schedules.

The items that can be hauled away include furniture, mattress-

es, refuse from the garage or basement, yard debris and general household junk intended for the dump. If it fits safely in the truck and trailer, Parker will haul it away. Parker also plans on expanding to lawn care later in the year.

Pricing for Haul & Help will depend on the size of the load and distance, but Parker hopes to be able to keep prices affordable for local residents. In-town hauling will start around \$25. Dump runs, depending on size, will start around \$40.

St. Marys Haul & Help is offering a start-up promotion of \$10 off dump runs throughout March. St. Marys Haul & Help can be reached through their Facebook Page by sending a message and picture of what needs to be removed, and Parker will send back a quote.

Parker says his family is very happy to be living in St. Marys. His wife, Sarah, runs a photography studio on Water Street. The family loves being part of the business community and Haul & Help is another way the Parkers can contribute locally and provide an essential service.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF BRANDON PARKER)

Owners of Haul & Help, Lucas, Liam, Brandon, Paisley and Sarah Parker, stand in front of the truck and trailer they will be using to help locals haul away unwanted junk.

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Stratford 3rd Age Learning courses for seniors open for spring registration

AMANDA NELSON

Independent Reporter

Stratford 3rd Age Learning (S33AL) is now open for April-start courses for adult learners.

Courses aim to provide seniors with opportunities for active learning. Unlike traditional, passive learning methods such as listening to speakers or watching plays, S33AL emphasizes active engagement, stimulating various parts of the brain and fostering a more dynamic learning experience along with connection to others.

The ever-popular Aging with Optimism course is back, starting April 10. Leader Jean Hewitt will teach students why the body ages, what changes occur each decade and how we can decrease the risks for mental and physical concerns people associate with this stage of life.

“This is absolutely a wonderful course. I’ve taken this course myself,” said Denise Winger, Stratford 3rd Age Learning registrar. “Participants will learn about what worries them most about getting older. It is clear that maintaining independence, rather than simply living longer, is the goal for most people. So, this course will discuss how we can increase the chances of that happening.”

Novel Approaches to Thinking and Problem Solving is taught by leader Perry Broome and starts April 1. Participants will learn and practice creative approaches to thinking, generating new ideas and solving problems.

“It is not Sudoku and crossword puzzles,” said Winger. “In this exciting course, participants will team together and practice creative approaches to think-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Social Resilience in Retirement was a men’s course offered by Stratford 3rd Age Learning. Pictured are class participants Chris Gillan, Dave Renaud, David Spence, David Swick, Gary Austin, Pat O’Reilly, Paul Stanley, Peter Buckley, Rick Paradis, Ross Campbell and Tom Naylor, with leader Doug Peterman.

ing, generating new ideas and solving problems.”

Another popular course, run by Louise Liu, is Balance and Focus, which starts April 7. Students will learn about breathing, mental focus and balance from a teacher who learned the gentle, fluid movements of tai chi as a child.

Liu will teach simple exercises that let participants shift their weight while maintaining focus and balance, helping to decrease the risk of falls and sharpen the mind.

Local resident David Prosser will lead a course called Hot Topics in the News. Participants will engage in lively discussions about major news stories and gain a better understanding of how pieces of the news fit together and where things may be heading.

“Whether you’re a total news junkie or you feel out of touch and bewildered by the daily torrent of headlines, or if you’d just like a bit more insight into what’s

going on in the world, this course is for you,” said Winger. “It should be very interesting, given the situation in the United States right now.”

A second chapter to the original Write Away program, Write On will have Evelyn Scott teach students how to stay motivated and inspired in their writing journey. The course will focus on creativity through prompts, exercises and working with others in the class to offer constructive feedback.

A new addition to Stratford 3rd Age Learning is Jump Into Ukulele, taught by Doug Peterman. This hands-on course will help students understand the wide world of the ukulele. Students can expect to play music by the end of the first session. Students will also learn about various ways of writing music and how to use different techniques on this instrument.

Lastly, Winger herself will be teaching a new course called Culinary Delight – The Art of Presentation. This hands-on

class will teach students how to garnish and plate appetizers. Participants will learn the artistic and practical skills required to transform dishes into visually stunning culinary creations.

Stratford 3rd Age Learning is for anyone looking to expand their knowledge, but it’s also about connecting with others, said Winger.

“We want to provide opportunities for socialization along with education in a safe and accepting environment,” she said. “There are people who take classes who have lived in Stratford from day one, and there are people who have relocated here after retiring. Maybe they grew up here and went off to pursue a career and then came back. Some people moved here to be closer to their children, but there are many reasons they may not know many people, so we also like to foster connection.”

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Joe's Diner to host fish-and-chips fundraiser for Thames River Paddling Club

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

The Thames River Paddling Club (TRPC) and Joe's Diner are partnering again for a tasty fundraiser.

There will be a fish-and-chips dinner special in support of the TRPC and its programming on April 18 at Joe's Diner, with takeout and dine-in options available. Those looking to dine inside the restaurant can either attend the 4:30 p.m. or 6 p.m. seatings and enjoy a two-piece fish-and-chips dinner with soup or salad, coffee or tea and dessert for \$35. Takeout dinners can be purchased for \$20.

"It's great to bring this event back for a second year. It was nice to see the community come out and support us last year and we're excited to build on that and make it an annual tradition," Ben Gerber, coach and president, said to the Independent.

Last year's fish-and-chips fundraiser had more than 70 people participate. All proceeds from the fundraiser will support the canoeing, kayaking and dragon boating programs run by the TRPC through their equipment fund. The TRPC is particularly focusing on raising funds to purchase a new dragon boat.

"As a volunteer-based club, community support really makes a difference for us. We have members of all ages and experience levels, and while many come from outside the area, we're really starting to grow and build a presence here in St. Marys," Gerber said. "Events like this help connect us locally and allow us to continue offering accessible, inclusive programs on the water."

The club offers programming for children, youth and adults looking to spend time on the water at the Wildwood Conservation Area. The three-week introductory



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Thames River Paddling Club (TRPC) at the Stratford Dragon Boat Festival. The club is bringing back a Fish-and-Chips fundraising dinner at Joe's Diner on April 18.

dragon boat program for adults starts in early May and wraps up at the annual Wildwood Dragon Boat Festival challenge. The youth introductory dragon boat program for those between 12-to-17-years-old, runs for five weeks and concludes at the Fanshawe Dragon Boat Festival in London, Ont. in mid-June.

The TRPC will also have its annual Wildwood Dragon Boat Challenge on May 23, where teams and community groups come together for a day of fun and friendly competition. The Wildwood Dragon Boat Challenge

is also supporting its event partner, Andrew's Legacy, a non-profit organization installing automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in public areas and raising awareness on the life-saving device and CPR in memory of Andrew Stoddart.

Tickets for the fish-and-chips fundraiser can be purchased in-person at Joe's Diner, 528 Queen St. E, St. Marys, or online by visiting www.thamesriverpaddling-club.com.



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St. Marys Independent **SPORTS**

Lincolns take 2-1 series lead against Strathroy

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The St. Marys Lincolns took a 2-1 series lead into Game 4 against the Strathroy Rockets on March 17, after the Independent's press time, thanks to a pair of wins on home ice.

In Game 1 on March 13, a four-goal third period vaulted the Lincolns to a 5-2 win, with Lincolns Moore scoring a goal and two assists while Ryan Hodgkinson registered three helpers. Though their big offensive breakthrough didn't come until the final frame, head coach Jeff Bradley was happy with the team's performance throughout the night.

"I thought from the first period to the third period, we did what we wanted to," Bradley said. "We had a little trouble scoring. Their goaltender played really well. We took a very minor dip in the second, but I don't think we played too bad. If that's our low, then it's a pretty good low. It's just one step, but I'm really happy with the effort we had."

The game also saw a strong showing by Ethan Weir, who Bradley said could be a major difference maker when he's on his game in the post season.

"There's just a lot he can do," said Bradley. "We were struggling in the faceoff circle, and I felt that Ethan (Weir) is a guy that's going to win a lot of them, especially as a righty, so you can throw him out doing that. He's a very crafty player. When he's engaged on the powerplay, there's no better powerplay guy, in my opinion. There are so many things he can do that if he's going the way he was going (in Game 1), he could really be an X factor for us."

The Lincolns' playoff motto is "No ifs; no tomorrow," the meaning behind which Bradley explained.

"We've had internal conversations as a group of how much we believe in this team and how there could be some greatness there, but that's only if we play well and if we execute. We wanted to take that 'if' out of the question and just make sure it's a standard so that we're not falling back and saying, 'If we just did this or if we just did that.' We want to just focus on going out and doing it and doing it well."

Ronan makes 42 saves as Rockets blank Lincs in Game 2

A lacklustre first period one night later ended up sinking the Lincolns in Game 2 in Strathroy, with Seth Ronan earning a 42-save shutout as the Rockets tied the series at one game apiece in a 3-0 victory.

All three Strathroy goals came in the first period.

The poor start made the rest of the game



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)

The St. Marys Lincolns celebrate a recent win on home ice. The Lincolns won their first two games at the Pyramid Recreation Centre to take a 2-1 series lead on the Strathroy Rockets heading into Game 4 on March 17, after the Independent's press time.

an incredibly tall mountain to climb.

"Obviously, getting down 3-0, it's nearly impossible to come back from that," Bradley said. "The first period was certainly disappointing. We were missing a bit of physicality, but I thought it got better in the second, and there were some good things we did in the third. But ultimately, we had a tough time beating their goaltender, and that's something we're going to have to put a real good effort into doing over these next handful of games here to make sure we have some success."

With a plethora of penalties on both sides, the five-on-five play became difficult to evaluate. Ultimately, the bench boss cited a failure to capitalize on their powerplay chances as another major piece of the loss.

"It was a little hard to judge what was there and what wasn't there because there were so many penalties, but I thought we got a lot of chances in the second and third, but we just couldn't score. If you get six powerplays, there's no real excuse not to score any there, especially when our powerplay has torched this team at times.

"Possession-wise, it was good," Bradley added regarding the powerplay. "Getting in zone; it was pretty good. The (Chase) MacQueen-Spence, (Lincoln) Moore, and Owen (Voortman) unit did a lot of good things, and a lot of things better than they did in the first game, but they just couldn't quite put the puck in

the back of the net, and that was part and parcel with our entire team."

Though they outshot the Rockets 42-33, a lot of St. Marys' shots were unobstructed and placed either high glove side and into the chest of Ronan, who was able to swallow up those opportunities fairly easily. Bradley noted the shot placement and visibility Ronan enjoyed was key to breaking through on the scoresheet.

"We're making some saves pretty easy for him," Bradley said. "He's catching everything, and we just keep going back to the well and going on his glove there. I think we've got to mix things up a bit and make ourselves a little less predictable in his eyes and make his life a bit tougher."

Lincs' offence explodes for 6-0 blow-out

Just 48 hours later, the story was completely different.

In Game 3, the Lincolns not only pelted Ronan with shots lower towards his pads and five-hole, they also routinely had bodies in front of the Rockets' crease, an offensive zone strategy that led to the Lincolns caving Ronan in for five goals on 25 shots before Strathroy made a goalie change and put in Mason Costa.

The Lincolns eventually won 6-0, with Moore scoring two goals and an assist, Hodgkinson scoring twice and Declan Ready adding a goal and two assists.

Bradley noted their two big focal points entering the game were executed to a tee.

"In the pregame meeting, we talked about our breakouts. We were having a

little bit of trouble with their forecheck. We've given them clear direction on where we want to start placing pucks when we're under pressure, and we didn't do that in Game 2, but I thought we did a much better job of that (in Game 3).

"The other thing was we showed them videos of some of our shots on goal in Game 2, where we're just warming their goaltender up and not making it difficult for him," Bradley continued. "Those were the two big things we talked about, and we did a fantastic job getting out of our zone and then making things more difficult on their goaltender."

All five goals allowed by Ronan came either on shots that were low or along the ice with bodies net-front, or off second-chance opportunities created by a low shot on net with traffic around Ronan's net.

Bradley added the responsibility of their forwards covering for their blue-liners was crucial to the Lincolns' strong offensive zone play.

"I thought having F-three supporting high was really good for us. ... Our defencemen were able to make really good reads on when to keep up and when to pinch down. I thought keeping plays alive got us a lot of offence, and that connection between F-three and our defencemen really made that happen."

At the other end of the ice, Bradley was thrilled with the play of Colby Booth-Housego, who made 21 saves to get the win.

"Colby was outstanding. He was just so solid. He looked composed. He made some big saves when he needed to. He played the puck really well. He helped us get through the first when we didn't manage the puck as well. We've been wanting him to get on a roll here, and it's been a bit difficult with three goaltenders, but we're going to ride him as long as he continues to play well."

Bradley tempered over-excitement, however, noting the Lincs weren't perfect on the defensive side, and that they cannot allow one win to make them complacent.

"We got a little bit lucky in the first period," said Bradley. "We were a little careless with the puck and second to pucks at times, but the main thing we talked about was making sure we create some havoc in front of their goaltender, and I thought we did a really good job of that. But we can't be satisfied with this. It's one step, and we have to make sure we're playing even better (in Game 4) because it's a tough rink to play in against a good team."

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U13 BB Girls qualify for OWHA provincials

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The Cascades U13 BB Girls St. Marys Rock have punched their ticket to the Ontario Women's Hockey Association (OWHA) Provincial Championship April 9-12 in Brampton and Etobicoke.

According to head coach Jamie Matheson, reaching the all-Ontario championship tournament checks the team's big goal for the season off their list.

"For many of these girls, it is their third time going to provincials, but for a few of these girls, it is their first time making it to provincials, so it will be a special weekend for the team," Matheson said. "At the beginning of the year, the girls set a goal to make it to provincials, and they have reached their goal. It shifts the motivation from just winning a medal to doing it for each other, which usually makes a team much harder to beat under pressure. You can really feel the confidence coming from these girls."

Matheson detailed how the team has developed on the road to provincials.

"The girls have grown a lot as a team," Matheson said. "They were always great at skating and forechecking, but now they have fine-tuned those skills and expanded their hockey IQ. They've moved past just relying on raw athleticism and hustle to actually manipulating the game to their benefit."

"That shift toward patience and communication is usually the hardest hurdle for



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Cascades U13 BB Girls St. Marys Rock will compete at the Ontario Women's Hockey Association (OWHA) Provincial Championship April 9-12 in Brampton and Etobicoke. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Kylie Blake, Cassie Adams, Alex Harlton and Jaynie Johnston. In the middle row, from left, are Jessica Zwambag, Charlotte Heinbuck, Addison Hudson, Amelia Falkiner, Charlotte Jeffreys and Evelyn McAllister. In the back row, from left, are Emily Chateauvert, Sam Matheson, Jaelyn Seok, Lauren Masellis and Camille Crummer.

youth teams. Once they realize they don't have to get rid of the puck the second they feel pressure, the whole ice opens up. It's the difference between playing hard and playing smart."

To reach provincials, the Rock had to come out on the winning end of a three-game series against the South Huron Sa-

gres, which the Rock swept to earn their trip to the Greater Toronto Area in April.

"In the first game against South Huron, we only had nine skaters due to injuries and holidays," said Matheson. "The girls showed so much grit and determination in the game and came out with a 2-2 tie, which made it a first-to-four-points series.

In Game 2, we had a couple more players back and played one of our best games in a while, and came away with a 6-1 victory. In Game 3, South Huron came out playing hard, and our girls kept right with them and eventually came away with a 2-0 victory to seal the deal and make it to provincials."

Matheson credited the group for their commitment to winning, not just for themselves, but for one another.

"The drive to win and their determination to battle to win for each other is what makes these girls special. In years past, we have asked the girls to just work hard every single game, but this year, we wanted to bring the winning culture to the team, and the girls have bought into it very well."

"In January, we lost two players to injuries and then lost another one in February," Matheson continued. "These girls have never looked back, even with a shortened team. They just kept on competing game in and game out."

Looking ahead to provincials, Matheson said the team doesn't need to change anything about their belief and motivation to find success.

"These girls just need to bring their game and confidence every single game and they will have success at provincials. The girls have developed that winning culture and atmosphere, and moving up to the BB level has helped boost their confidence."

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Local senior athletes win provincial and national track-and-field medals

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

Aileen and Harold Burgin, both in their 80s and from just outside of St. Marys, combined for seven top-three finishes at the Canadian and Ontario Masters Indoor Track and Field Championships at the Toronto Track and Field Centre in North York March 7-8.

The joint provincial and national event saw Aileen Burgin win three gold medals in the 50-metre, 60-metre and 200-metre runs, while Harold Burgin took gold in the shotput event as well as silver medals in the 50-metre, 60-metre and 200-metre races.

Aileen Burgin's 200-metre race was the most interesting of the events, as she was the only runner in the heat, and she also set a new provincial record time of 1:01:47, beating the previous benchmark of 1:17:99 set by Agnes Lamb in 2022. Additionally, she set new provincial best times in the 50-metre and 60-metre sprints.

Aileen Burgin told the Independent the 200-metre run was an experience she'd never had before.

"All I can say is I was thinking, 'I can't fall,'" said Aileen Burgin. "I can't wipe out on this one. I've got to keep going." The 200-metre is my least favourite race. I feel fine at 150, but once I get into that last 50, it's a real struggle. So, being in a heat all by myself, I just wanted to get it over with because everybody at the finish line is waiting for you to get out of the way so they can run."

Aileen Burgin added even when she has been the sole competitor in past races, she has been paired off with competitors in other divisions, so she was running alongside other people.

"They've always paired me with someone," Aileen Burgin said. "I've run with men in their heats. I have run with women in the 60 to 65 age groups, but I've never run alone. I can't put it into words how strange it was. I just wished it was happening to someone else."

"You knew who everyone was cheering for," joked Harold Burgin. "Usually, the cheers are for everybody,



(PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHAGGYSPHOTOS.COM)

Aileen and Harold Burgin run during the Canadian and Ontario Masters Indoor Track and Field Championships at the Toronto Track and Field Centre in North York. The pair combined for seven medals, including four golds, at the joint provincial and national competition, held March 7-8.

but that one was for Aileen."

Aileen Burgin also noted her success was a bit unexpected, given she was just five weeks removed from an operation on her left leg.

"It surprised me, especially because I had surgery

on my left leg in late January and I was bedridden for three weeks," Aileen Burgin said. "It was against my surgeon's orders to actually go and run. He said, 'Even if you were half your age, I still wouldn't tell you what you want to hear.' But I didn't do any damage as far as I can tell."

The successful meet was yet another reminder for Aileen and Harold Burgin of how fortunate they feel to be able to continue to compete at a high level.

"We're just so lucky," Aileen Burgin said. "So many of our age mates can only wish that they could do this. My family history is really short, so I never ever dreamed I'd be doing this. Once I passed (the age of) 65, I thought that was pretty good, but to reach 85 and still be able to run without any distress, my legs don't hurt, my feet don't hurt, I'm flat-footed, is amazing. I think that has saved me from a lot of pain. We're living charmed lives."

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U9 MD Rock ride 'winning mentality' to Angus tournament gold

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The Finnbilt Construction U9 MD St. Marys Rock earned the gold medal at the Essa Eagles John Prince Memorial Tournament March 6-8 in Angus.

Head coach Brett Graham attributed the tournament win to the team's focused mental approach throughout the weekend.

"The kids came into the tournament with a winning mentality and worked hard every shift and every game of the tournament," Graham told the Independent. "Every single player worked hard and contributed to the tournament win. We are very proud of the kids, and it was a very memorable tournament."

The Rock opened the tournament with a 7-1 win over the Coldwater Wildcats in the first of three round-robin games, a win that Graham called one of the team's best showings all year.

"This game against Coldwater was one of the most complete games our team has played all season. It was easily the best passing game our team has had all season. Jackson (Monisit-Brown) was unstoppable in this game with countless highlight-reel plays, and he had five goals, including the game-winner."

Ian Avey and Nate Campbell also scored for St. Marys.

The Rock edged out the Parry Sound Shamrocks 3-2 in their second game, with goals by Avey, Will Graham and Elly Kittmer.

St. Marys then blanked the host Essa Eagles, with Monisit-Brown scoring a pair and Campbell, Marcus Horenberg and Cooper Mitchell also chipping in goals. Mitchell's goal came off a "highlight-reel breakaway" after a tape-to-tape pass through the neutral zone by Angus Palmer, while Campbell's goal came on a great individual effort with two defenders draped on Campbell's back.

Their undefeated round-robin set the Rock up to play the Brampton 45's in the gold medal game, which they won 1-0 in overtime.

The bench boss noted it was a goal-

tender's duel in the championship game, with both teams being denied by strong play in both nets.

"This was an unbelievable hockey game from start to finish," Brett Graham said. "There was excellent goaltending on both sides and chances from both teams throughout the game. Mason (Krauskopf) was stellar between the pipes for us with many unbelievable saves that kept us tied until the end of regulation."

Horenberg had a great one-time opportunity off the draw and a partial breakaway that just couldn't quite find the back of the net. After regulation expired, a five-minute three-on-three, sudden-death overtime was needed to break the tie.

During the extra frame, the Rock successfully killed off a penalty, after which a rush down the ice by a 45's forward was defended perfectly by Palmer, a massive save was made by Mason Krauskopf and a hard backcheck by Will Graham led to the eventual tournament-winning goal. A head-man pass by Will Graham to Monisit-Brown led him down the ice on a one-on-two where a rocket of a shot beat the Brampton goalie for the win.

Brett Graham was thrilled with his team's execution and consistency throughout the entire tournament.

"Before going into the tournament, we talked about playing our game, which includes playing hard, forechecking, backchecking, taking away time and space, and putting pressure on their defenders. The team played every game hard and didn't take their foot off the gas. We were able to keep defenders to the outside, make good passes and get pucks out at our blueline.

"In the Rock Cup tournament a month ago, we lost in the gold-medal game to St. Thomas," Brett Graham continued. "In that game, a couple quick goals in the third by St. Thomas gave them momentum, and we stopped playing our game. We didn't play the entire game hard that day. We reminded the kids that we need to work hard every shift in order to be successful and win. They followed the game plan to a tee."



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Finnbilt Construction U9 MD St. Marys Rock captured the top prize at the Essa Eagles John Prince Memorial Tournament March 6-8 in Angus. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Henley Mykicz, Elly Kittmer, Mason Krauskopf, Logan Bickell, Marcus Horenberg, Clarence Dafoe, Ian Avey, Jackson Monisit-Brown and Cooper Mitchell. In the middle row, from left, are Angus Palmer, Gibson Rumble, Will Graham and Nate Campbell. In the back row, from left, are coaches Brett Bickell, Brett Graham and Chris Rumble.

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St. Marys Minor Basketball hosts grade 3/4s wrap-up night




(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

On the left, Elijah Campbell dribbles the ball while being guarded by Sawyer Eberle during the final night of St. Marys Minor Basketball's wrap-up night for their grade 3/4 division on March 12. On the right, Kashaun Hylton puts up a shot while Hunter Smith gets his hands up to defend the basket. The final night of the grade 3/4 season featured all four teams each playing two games.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)





On the left, Steven Reid speaks with the grade 3/4 players following their two games on March 12. Following the games, each player was presented with a certificate to commemorate their season as part of the St. Marys Minor Basketball program. On the right, all the players stand proudly with their certificates alongside their coaches and program leaders.



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Solutions on pg. 35

MINOR SPORTS **SCRAPBOOK**



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Ben Hemstock dishes the puck while rushing up ice during the Dunny's Source For Sports U10 A Boys St. Marys Rock game last Thursday.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Kai Sherwood sends a point shot on net during last Wednesday's Social Thirty-One U11 A Boys St. Marys Rock game.



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)

Emmett Parkinson blasts a long-range shot during the St. Marys Firefighters U13 A Boys St. Marys Rock game last Wednesday.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Landon McDonald releases a wrist shot in the slot during last Wednesday's A.N.A.F. U15 A Boys St. Marys Rock game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Kolton McAllister rips a shot from the blueline during the St. Marys Cement U18 A Boys St. Marys Rock game last Thursday.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Lacey Terpstra makes a stick save during this past Sunday's Cherry Hill Carpentry-McKinley Hatchery FUN3 St. Marys Snipers (Hibbert) game.

COLUMNS

UKRAINIAN CORNER: Beyond the mannequin – lessons in confidence from Canada to Ukraine

ALONA VASYLIEVA

Independent Columnist

Have you ever stepped into a fitting room, pulled on a pair of jeans two sizes smaller than your usual and felt an immediate, golden rush of euphoria? Before you go out and celebrate with a croissant, let's talk about the psychological wizardry of vanity sizing.

Retailers have realized that a "small" tag is a hit of dopamine. By inflating the physical dimensions of a medium so it feels like a small, they aren't just selling you a garment – they're selling you a mood. It's a clever, if slightly manipulative, catch designed to keep you in a buying spirit. After all, a happy shopper is a spending shopper.

However, the "size games" change drastically once you cross an ocean.

In Canada, the retail landscape feels like a warm, inclusive hug. You walk into a store and see mannequins of every shape, height and skin tone. Whether you are shopping for leggings or a gala dress, the message is, "You exist, and you belong." There is a massive psychological relief in seeing your own body type reflected in a window display.

Contrast that with Ukraine, where the "model size" remains a rigid, often unforgiving gatekeeper. In many boutiques, if you aren't a size small, you simply don't fit the "approach." Seeing a large mannequin is like hunting for a four-leaf clover. When designers shrug and say, "It's just our style," it sends a silent but stinging message to society that if you don't fit the mold, you don't fit the trend. It's a frustrating barrier that suggests beauty is a narrow hallway rather than an open field.

This pressure creates a unique tension for Ukrainian women. There is an ingrained feeling that you must be fully dressed – hair, makeup, heels – even for a trip to the grocery store.

But lately, that tension has evolved into something heroic. When you've spent a sleepless night in a cold bomb shelter, feeling like a zombie both physically and emotionally, choosing your most beautiful outfit for the morning isn't vanity, it's mental-health maintenance.

Putting on a blazer when the world is crumbling is a way to stay afloat. It is an act of defiance against terror.

When tomorrow isn't promised, special

occasions become obsolete. Ukrainian women are pulling out the guest-only China and wearing their finest silk on a random Tuesday. Why wait for a victory to live your best life when surviving today is already a triumph?

While we celebrate the Canadian freedom of casual – the glorious relief of wearing leggings all day – we have to be careful not to lose ourselves in the easy habits.

We live in a world of noise. We are addicted to deadlines, 30-day challenges and instant gratification. We want the "small" tag today, but we forget that health is a long-term project, not a seasonal trend.

Confidence starts at the kitchen table, not the checkout counter. Our appearance is often the sequel to our lifestyle choices. We've become addicted to shortcuts:

- The Filter Trap: It's easier to slide a beauty filter to the right than to do a five-minute lymphatic face massage every morning.

- The Supplement Myth: We'd rather pay a fortune for an influencer's "miracle vitamins" than simply drink water and move.

In a world of fast fashion and fake filters, the most stylish thing you can wear is a body that you actually take care of.

Teenagers are the most vulnerable here, caught between the model-size pressure of the east and the filter culture of the west. We need to teach the next generation that while it's wonderful to find your size at the store, your health is the ultimate luxury. You don't need to be a size small to be happy, but you will certainly feel the difference when you have the stamina to walk your dog without your body feeling like a burden.

I feel a complicated mix of pride and sadness for the women navigating these two worlds. There is pride in their resilience – the way they use a dress as armor – and sadness for the weight they carry on those perfectly dressed shoulders.

As we move into this spring, I hope for more than just new trends. I hope for a peace that allows everyone – whether they are wearing Canadian leggings or a Ukrainian Victory Dress – to feel a quiet confidence in tomorrow because at the end of the day, the best fit isn't found on a tag; it's found in a body that is healthy and a soul that is at peace.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF TETIANA DIDKOVSKA)

Exploring the stark contrast between North American inclusivity and Eastern European standards, and how a simple outfit can become a shield for the soul when tomorrow isn't promised.

Ask the Arborist

By Joel Hackett • 519.272.5742 • jtsquote@gmail.com

Joel Hackett is a certified Arborist residing in the St. Marys area. Currently, he spends most of the year running Joel's Tree Service. For contact call 519.272.5742 or email jtsquote@gmail.com



Dear Arborist,

My big maple tree is leaking black stuff from a huge crack right where the two main branches split. What should I do?

Thanks, Worried

Dear Worried,

Your maple has two competing leaders that grew too close together. As they thickened over time, they started pushing

hard against each other instead of fusing properly. Now there's a gap where water and debris collect, which can lead to decay and eventual branch failure.

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Sincerely, The Arborist

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HISTORIC ST. MARYS: Agnes Knox Black

MARY SMITH

Independent Columnist

Agnes Knox was born in St. Marys on March 7, 1864, the daughter of Andrew Knox and Margaret Hunter. Her father, Andrew, was born in 1830 near Paisley, Scotland. His family came to Canada when he was ten years old and settled on a farm in West Nissouri Township. But farming was not for Andrew. As a young man, he apprenticed to a stonemason in Galt, learning the trade that he practiced for the rest of his life. Agnes's mother, Margaret, was born in 1830 in New Glasgow, Quebec, to a Scots family that was also originally from Paisley. In search of better farmland, in 1845 the Hunters relocated to a farm in Lobo Township, near Strathroy. Margaret became a teacher and teaching in West Nissouri when she met Andrew Knox. They were married in 1860 and established a home on Wellington Street in St. Marys where they raised their family.

Agnes was their second child. She had an older sister, Jeannie, born in October 1861. Agnes was followed by three younger brothers – Andrew, Robert, and William. Her parents had a third daughter, Margaret, who was born in 1880 but only lived a few days. The family kept close ties with the Hunter relatives in Lobo Township. Margaret and the children visited frequently, especially in the summer, travelling by train from the St. Marys Junction west on the Sarnia line to Ailsa Craig. Their grandfather or uncle would meet them and take them by horse and buggy to Thornlea Wallace, the family home. The Knox children spent many happy days on the Hunter farm in Lobo.

Andrew and Margaret Knox were strong believers in education for all their children. Both Jeannie and Agnes trained as teachers while their brother Andrew became a doctor. Robert was a high school teacher and a lawyer, and the youngest brother, William, a Presbyterian minister. But after attending Normal School, Agnes was not satisfied with her elementary teaching certificate. She had a flair for the dramatic and loved to recite and entertain family and friends. She might have become an actor, but this was unacceptable in her staunch Presbyterian family. Instead, she chose another career path. She taught until she had enough money to afford university tuition. (Her brothers did the same.) Then she enrolled in the University of Toronto, studying to become an elocutionist, considered a “respectable” profession for a woman. She soon began making professional appearances, giving dramatic recitations of poetry, comic verse and excerpts from great literature. Today, it is hard to imagine the appeal of a live concert devoted to these sorts of recitals but in the late 1800s and the early years of the 20th century, it was an enormously popular form of entertainment. Talented performers earned a good living and were recognized as celebrities.

Right from the start of her career, Agnes enjoyed success. She was invited to perform at the St. Marys Opera House, at local church functions, and in small communities in the surrounding area, and then in cities like Guelph, Toronto and Montreal. In the mid-1880s, she was employed by the Canadian Pacific Railway to bring entertainment to places along the line westward as construction made its way across the prairie provinces towards British Columbia and the Pacific Ocean. She was



(PHOTO COURTESY OF R. LORNE EEDY ARCHIVES, ST. MARYS MUSEUM)

Agnes Knox Black, born in St. Marys in 1864, was a professional elocutionist. Her brilliant performance and teaching skills made her an internationally-known celebrity.

the first woman to give a concert to railway workers in the Rockies.

She continued these trans-continental tours into the 1890s. Readers of the Canadian children's classic, *Anne of Green Gables*, will remember that Anne Shirley also had a talent for reciting, first impressing the audience at her school's Christmas concert. Anne's creator, L. M. Montgomery, actually saw Agnes Knox perform on stage. When she was 16 years old, Montgomery spent a year in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, living with her father and his new wife. In her diary, November 19, 1890, she wrote: “Tonight I went to a concert at St. Alban's Church, and I have never enjoyed such a treat in my life before. The chief features of the entertainment were eight recitations by Miss Agnes Knox, a Toronto elocutionist. It was a pleasure to look at her as well as to listen for she is a very beautiful woman and looked like a queen in her dress of black velvet, with an exquisite bouquet fastened to her shoulder.”

As well as touring, Agnes continued to study and train to improve her skills. She spent time at the University of Edinburgh and worked with private teachers in London, England, Paris, New York and the National School of Oratory in Philadelphia. With these qualifications, she was appointed Instructor in Vocal Interpretation of Literature at Ontario Normal School and the Ontario School of Pedagogy – forerunners of Ontario Colleges of Education. She performed to great success in London and other British cities and for a time held the position

of Dramatic Reader at the Edinburgh Philosophical Institute. On one of her tours, she met another traveller, Ebenezer Charlton Black. Born in 1861 in Scotland, and educated at the University of Edinburgh, in 1891 he had been appointed lecturer of English Literature at Harvard University. The two had many mutual interests and kept in touch.

Even as her career developed, Agnes returned regularly to stay with her parents in St. Marys. But the family's life changed in 1892 when Andrew Knox was injured at work. A large stone fell off a wagon crushing his leg. Infection set in and he died in August 1892 at the age of 62. After his death, his widow, Margaret, returned to Lobo Township to live at Thornlea Wallace with her brother and two older sisters. One of her sons stayed in St. Marys. Andrew Knox, a medical doctor, established a practice here and continued as a popular physician until his death in 1923. His nephew – Jeannie's son, Dr. J. Edgar Williams – took over his practice and lived in St. Marys with his family for many years. And so, although her ties with St. Marys were weakened after her father died, Agnes continued to be a regular visitor to friends and relatives in this town.

In July 1893, Agnes and Charlton Black were married in Edinburgh, Scotland. She returned with him to the academic community in Massachusetts where she continued to perform to enthusiastic reviews. For example, the *Bostonia* reviewer described one of her concerts: “An interpretation so intellectual, a voice so sympathetic, a manner so refined and winning, lift Mrs. Black's readings out of the plane of elocution into the higher regions of an art.” The Blacks moved to Boston where Agnes became head of the School of Elocution of the New England Conservatory of Music, later the Emerson College of Oratory. Charlton Black was appointed Professor of English Literature at Boston College and in 1902, Agnes joined him on the faculty as Professor of Elocution. The Blacks' first child, Margaret, was born in November 1895, a son, John Gavin, in 1901. Their little boy died from croup in 1903. This heartbreak recalled her mother's loss of a baby daughter two decades earlier. The Blacks' second son, Knox Charlton, was born in 1905.

Each summer, the Black family travelled from Massachusetts to Ontario, enjoying their time at Thornlea Wallace. They felt recharged by the start of the next university term. Professor Charlton Black died in 1927 at the age of 66. Agnes continued teaching at Boston College until she retired in 1941. She then returned to Thornlea Wallace permanently. Through these years, she remained in touch with St. Marys. She and her children frequently spent time at her nephew's summer home north of town on the Thames River. In 1942, she was a guest of honour at an event marking the 100th anniversary of St. Marys, joining the former prime minister, the Right Honourable Arthur Meighen, on the stage. Agnes Knox Black died on July 5, 1945, age 81. Her grave is in Ivan Cemetery beside her Hunter relatives.

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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: A bridge to nowhere and a palace bereft of popes



PAUL KNOWLES

Independent Columnist

Anyone who got anywhere near a French class in school remembers the song, “Sur le pont d’Avignon l’on y danse, l’on y danse.” (“On the bridge of Avignon, they are dancing”). We probably learned it right after “Frère Jacques.”

Turns out, we were badly misled, as we learned during a fascinating tour of the southern French city of Avignon.

Oh, there is a bridge all right. Or part of one. While it once spanned the Rhône River, most of it is gone. It was built in the 1100s with 22 spans connecting the west and east banks, but most of it was destroyed by floods in the 17th century, and today, only four spans remain.

But that’s not the problem with the song. The problem is, they didn’t dance on (“sur”) the bridge – they danced “sous” (under) and the prepositions got switched in the centuries since the song was first sung. So, if you go to Avignon and want to be historically accurate, dance under the remaining bits of the bridge, not on top.

Although, frankly, the broken bridge is not close to being the

most interesting thing about Avignon. This ancient city can date its founding to the Neolithic period (the “New Stone Age”, from 10,000 to 2,000 B.C.). Artifacts from those dates have been found in Avignon, and there are a lot of archaeological ruins from the Greek and Roman periods of the city.

But two features stand out above all others: the 14th century city walls, which still completely enclose the old city, and the Pope’s Palace.

These two outstanding examples of architectural heritage are related since the walls were built by order of Pope Innocent VI.

The walls run for 4.3 kilometres. They enclose 151 hectares – the entire old city, including the Pope’s Palace. And therein lies a story.

Though we think of Rome – or more properly, the independent city state of the Vatican – as the historic seat of the papacy, this was not always the case. In 1309, Rome was a hotbed of political intrigue and Pope Clement V moved the Papal Court to Avignon in France where it remained until 1376. By then, the Avignon Papal Palace had housed seven popes. The last of those, Gregory XI, returned to Rome in 1376.

But it didn’t end there. Even while popes reigned in Rome, several other papal wannabes were elected pope in France; they’re now referred to as “antipopes.” Two of them were also based in Avignon. The second of these, Benedict XII, was eventually kicked out of Avignon.

And by the way, in 1409, an

effort was made to solve the dispute when a third pope was elected at a council in Pisa, intended to replace the two other claimants. This didn’t work, so now there were three “popes.”

It wasn’t until 1417 that the schism ended and only one pope was again recognized by the entire Roman church. And you thought church history was boring.

All of this comes to life when you visit the sprawling, soaring Pope’s Palace in the heights of historic Avignon. We toured the site as part of our terrific Viking River Cruise on the Rhône River.

The Palais des Papes is one of the largest and most important medieval gothic buildings in Europe. Much of it is open for tours – including the rooftop, which provides amazing views of the city of Avignon.

Construction of the palace began in 1252, half a century before it became the sole residence of a pope. But when the Papal Court was moved to Avignon, successive popes devised increasingly grand additions and alterations, including several extra towers, a grand chapel and adjoining buildings. Eventually, the size grew to encompass 16,500 square metres. The medieval popes were determined to build monuments, perhaps to God, but more likely to their own memories.

After the pope moved back to Rome, and the messy business of competing popes was resolved, the palace remained as property of the church but was largely ignored for about 350



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

Only a small section of the Avignon bridge remains, but it’s enough to dance on – or more properly, under.

years. Things got worse during the French Revolution when it was seized by revolutionary forces. In 1790, it was the site of a massacre of counterrevolutionaries and then became a prison.

Finally, in 1906, it was named a national museum. Our tour guide pointed out “there is no link with the church anymore.” Restoration work started on building, and that has continued ever since. Tour leaders guide you carefully around scaffolding and across temporary bridges.

Most of the rooms continue to be unfurnished, so the architecture is the star of the show, though during our visit, several of the rooms were adorned with incongruously modern art installations by sculptor Jean-Mi-

chel Othoniel.

We saw a few rooms where the walls still carry original murals from the 13th and 14th centuries, an intriguing juxtaposition with ultra-modern art in neighbouring halls.

Perhaps the most impressive sight on the tour comes as you stand on the rooftop and peer through the castellations; at that moment, you are looking at 12,000 or so years of human history. And later, if you wish, you can dance under (or on) a bridge.

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.



There are a very few original murals still to be seen in the Pope’s Palace.



The pope’s viewing window in the Avignon Palace.



Unusual modern art installations are on display throughout the ancient palace.

FROM THE GARDEN: It is in our genes!



NANCY ABRA

Independent Columnist

It is such a delight when we get a message from a grandchild, or favourite niece or nephew. And when the premise of that message is about gardening, we beam with joy.

Last week, our 20-year-old granddaughter Julie who is studying at York University, surprised me with a text asking me what seeds I saved from my garden last fall. She said she was starting to plan out her veggie garden, and she wanted to add a few more flowers to attract more pollinators and what would I suggest. To every seasoned gardener it is music to our ears when young people ask questions about what to grow in their garden.

In the rally of messages back and forth between us, a telephone conversation would have been easier, I learned more as to what she wanted to plant. Julie said the perennials I gave her last year for her birthday last May attracted butterflies and bees and she wanted some colourful zinnias to attract more pollinators to her veggie garden. She also told me she wanted to plant native blue lupins which was one of her favourites and asked where she could get seeds for them. She added that it attracted the Karner Blue Butterfly. That took me by surprise, and now this old gardener had to do some research to answer her question, but happy to



do that. Besides I could learn something.

Gardening is not a product but a process. And that can easily start with young children. Introducing them to butterflies and bugs in the garden, helping us with seeding or the planting, giving them a little garden plot or a container that they can plant something to look after, inspires and starts that process. Even though Julie does not live close to us, I give her a little garden area at our place where she and I created a little fairy garden. And every time she visited, she would run to that little garden to see what was growing, move the little figurines around and sometimes pick out a couple of few weeds. The following year, I helped her create a little fairy garden of her own at her house. She still mentions that little garden and when I visit her, she points out the remnants of

her first little garden.

I still have fond memories of going to my grandparents' farm in the summer when I was little. I loved being with my grandpa in his garden to help pick peas or beans or seeing how many potatoes were waiting in the warm soil for us to discover. He talked to me about the plants; what insects that were good. But he made it no secret how he hated those 'nasty' tomato worms. He loved his garden and installed that in me as well. Years later I would help my mum in her beloved flower gardens and learned tips from my dad when I helped him in our vegetable garden.

As a gardener, the starting point is different for each one of us – whether it was at a young age, with our first home or when we had more time in retirement. Gardening in my family is generational, and more than likely, 'it is in our genes'!

Looking Back

AMY CUBBERLEY

Independent Columnist



Wild goose chase

25 years ago (2001)

You know that spring is just around the corner when Hearn's Dairy, a Queen Street fixture since 1967, opens its doors for the season. Employee Brittany Fulham served the first cone of the year on March 10.

Long time Tollgate Coffee House employee Donna Collins, along with her husband Jack, are the new owners of the Queen Street East coffee shop. The previous owner was going to shut the coffee house down when the lease ran out at the end of January. Collins, who has worked at Tollgate for 10 years, didn't want to see it close.

50 years ago (1976)

Signs of spring around town are not all that plentiful to date but it is cheering to note that repair parts have arrived for the town sweeper machine and it could hit the road as early as the weekend.

St. Marys, along with Downie, Fullarton, and Blanshard Townships, will send representatives to a meeting in Stratford to decide ways and means of waging war against mosquitoes in Perth County this summer. Expended cost of the program planned basically to avoid an outbreak of encephalitis if possible is about \$5,000 to \$10,000.

75 years ago (1951)

Firemen were called to the Windsor Hotel on Saturday night to attend a chimney which had become overheated. Damage was confined to smoke.

A lady who lives on Church Street has a bouquet for Volly Marziali. She says that as she walked along the street on Wednesday all the cars that passed on the nearby roadway threw slush at her, all except a sedan driven by the above-mentioned young man who thoughtfully slowed down so that the splash was at a minimum.

100 years ago (1926)

Mr. J.H. Robinson of Blanshard had a pair of geese stray onto his farm some time ago. He came to the Journal office and advertised them, and they were claimed by Mr. David Cattel of Russeldale who read the ad in the newspaper.

The Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology, situated in Toronto, is anxious to gather firsthand information regarding the almost extinct Wild or Passenger Pigeon, which at one time was very plentiful in Ontario.

Straight from the Shelves

LAURA MCASH

St. Marys Public Library

Love your Library? Help us build a legacy.

Join us at the launch of the Community Commons Capital Campaign this Saturday at the St. Marys Public Library from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. Tour 14 Church Street, learn about the vision for the space, and meet campaign leaders and supporters. Together, we can make the creation of this vibrant, shared community space happen.

Refreshments will be served at the Library.

Up This Week

Fri., Mar. 20: Drop-In Day (10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

Sat., Mar. 21: Edith's Storytime Adventures (10 a.m.), Dungeons & Dragons (10 a.m.), Family Trivia (10:30 a.m.), Launch of the Community Commons Capital Campaign (11 a.m.)

Mon., Mar. 23: Wills & Estate Planning with Mark Poulton*^ (6-8 p.m.)

Tues., Mar. 24: Sewing Bee with Black Creek Mobile Vet Services (3-6 p.m.)

Wed., Mar. 25: EarlyON Play & Read (9:30-10:30 a.m.), Mahjong (1-4 p.m.)

Thurs., Mar. 26: Open 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

*Registration Required

^Friendship Centre – Main Hall (317 James St. S, St. Marys)

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Riddles

I don't have teeth, but I help you eat, I cut down crops in rows so neat. What am I?
A combine harvester

I wear a coat but it's not for cold, once a year it gets all rolled. What am I?
A sheep

I make milk but don't drink it, I eat grass and never think it. What am I?
A cow

I rise before the sun each day, but I don't need coffee to say "hey!" What am I?
A rooster

I'm full of holes but hold your feed, for hungry animals that need to eat. What am I?
A hay net / hay bale

I go around but never leave, tied in place, I help you weave (the land). What am I?
A fence

I carry water but have no hands, I help crops grow across the land. What am I?
An irrigation system / hose

I'm not a house, but animals stay, safe inside me night and day. What am I?
A barn

I'm driven in lines both straight and long, helping seeds grow big and strong. What am I?
A tractor

- Word Search -



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MCCULLY'S MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL

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

- Annual event
- March weekends
- Weather permitting
- Saturday
- Sunday
- Sugar shack
- Maple syrup
- Horses
- Wagon rides
- Pancake brunch
- Barn tour
- Farm animals
- Family fun
- Shop local



The **Riddle Kid**
OF THE WEEK

What has keys but can't open locks?



A piano!

Hayes Welch (5)

Hey Kids... Every Riddle Kid that appears in the paper gets a FREE MILKSHAKE at the Sunset Diner!

St. Marys Veterinary Clinic is pleased to be the sponsor of the

PET OF THE WEEK



MAKE SURE IDENTIFICATION IS UP TO DATE!

Make sure your dog or cat has a microchip for identification and wears a tag with your relevant contact information. Note that you will need to update your contact information with the microchip company if you move or your number changes. With accurate registration associated with the unique microchip number, a lost animal can be traced back to its owner as soon as they are scanned by a veterinarian, animal shelter or pound.



ELLY

Our Pet of the Week is Elly. She is a beautiful red fox lab. Elly is four months old. She loves to greet people and is learning how to walk on the leash. She has loads of energy and loves to be outside exploring. She lives in St. Marys with the Leslie family.



Thorndale News

A section within the
St. Marys Independent

Thorndale horticulture society celebrates 30 years



(NANCY ABRA PHOTO)

Thorndale and Area Horticultural Society president Jennifer Prgesa with Trudy Nieuwland, the society's first president in 1996.

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

The Thorndale and Area Horticultural Society has been a valued community group that has brought beauty and pride to Thorndale for 30 years. It was a simple undertaking by a couple of caring people that bloomed into something larger.

Last Wednesday evening, March 11, the society celebrated this milestone.

In the fall of 1994, Trudy and Dick Nieuwland planted several hundred tulip bulbs around the flagpole at the library and in a couple of gardens in the village of Thorndale. Their plan was these tulips would bloom the following spring to commemorate the 50th anniversary

of the 1945 Canadian liberation of Holland.

In the spring of 1995, the tulips were a beautiful array of colour throughout Thorndale. Later that spring, Trudy Nieuwland proceeded to plant a couple more flower beds in Thorndale with annuals, perennials and some shrubs with a couple other garden activists joining her.

Their work did not go unnoticed, especially by Gordon Young, who suggested a garden club be established. And that spearheaded the formation of the Thorndale and Area Horticultural Society. Once the organization for the new horticultural society was complete and initial funds raised, the group held its first official meeting at the Thorndale Community Centre on Thursday, March 28, 1996.

The following year, West Nissouri Township approached the society to create a garden rest area on the vacant lot where the former library once stood on King Street. This garden is now the Memorial Rose Garden, the perfect place to sit and enjoy the beautiful roses.

The society was instrumental in re-vamping the gardens at Wye Creek Park, planting the beds at the Cenotaph, creating the Hope Garden dedicated to the fight against cancer, and helped with the plans and planting of the gardens at the Thorndale Library.

The Thorndale and Area Horticultural Society has grown over the years, now with 76 members who maintain six gardens and 17 planters in Thorndale, and host their annual Green Thumb garden

tour in late June. Their monthly meetings held on the second Wednesday of each month, except during the summer, are engaging with knowledgeable guest speakers.

Last Wednesday's meeting was a celebration of their 30th anniversary. Society president Jennifer Prgesa tested members' memories with a brief trivia game and a few members shared stories. Also, Prgesa presented a special President's Award to longtime member Shirley Hacon for her dedication and leadership. Former president Dian Chute presented a lifetime membership award to Trudy and Dick Nieuwland for their dedication and incentive in launching the Thorndale and Area Horticultural Society.



(NANCY ABRA PHOTO)

Dian Chute, former president of Thorndale and Area Horticultural Society, presenting Trudy and Dick Nieuwland with a lifetime membership award.

Heeman's recognized with award at Ontario Southwest Tourism Conference

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

At the Ontario Southwest Tourism Conference held earlier this month in London, Heeman's Greenhouse received the Sustainability Trailblazer of the Year award.

In Will Heeman's acceptance address, he expressed key points regarding the importance of sustainability in business and tourism, his family legacy, and building on what was started by his grandparents over 60 years ago.

Besides being a destination for visitors to experience various activities and tastes they offer, Heeman also emphasized, as farmers, they are stewards of our land.

"It is ours to protect, nurture and invest in for the long term," he said. "That means investing in renewable energy, using biological controls (in the greenhouses), supporting pollinators and designing systems that reduce waste while enhancing our guests' experiences."

"If we do our jobs right today, we give our kids, the fourth generation, the chance to carry on this legacy tomorrow. Sustainability is not separate from tourism. It is what makes tourism worth sustaining. Being here tonight and learning about the incredible work happening across Ontario's southwest reminds us that innovation and responsibility truly do go hand in hand."

(PHOTO COURTESY OF HEEMAN'S GREENHOUSE)

At right, Owner Will Heeman accepted the Sustainability Trailblazer of the Year award on behalf of Heeman's Greenhouse in Thorndale during the Ontario Southwest Tourism Conference in London earlier this month.



OBITUARY

Vannatter



VANNATTER, Ernie
July 6, 1936 - March 11, 2026
Passed away peacefully on Wednesday, March 11, 2026, at the age of 89. Beloved husband of Betty Vannatter (née Good) for 64 years. Dear father of Ivy Vannatter, Todd Vannatter (Cindy), and Tammy Kind (Ralph). Loved grandfather of

Katie, Eric, and Lori. Predeceased by his brother Ford, and his sisters Ruby, Marjorie, Pearl, Zora, and Rena.

Ernie was a dedicated Orange Lodge member for 70 years. His career spanned over 50 years as a welder and metal fabricator. In his spare time, he enjoyed vegetable gardening and fishing in Fenelon Falls. Ernie was dedicated to his family and believed in staying connected to relatives and long-term friends.

Cremation has taken place. Ernie's family will receive relatives and friends at Westmount Memorial Celebration Centre, 1001 Ottawa St. S., Kitchener, (519-743-8900), on Saturday, March 21, 2026, from 10:00 - 11:00 a.m., where the memorial service will be held at 11:00 a.m., with Rev. Chris Fickling officiating. Interment Williamsburg Cemetery at a later date.

As expressions of sympathy, memorial donations would be appreciated to St. James-Rosemount United Church, 171 Sherwood Ave., Kitchener, ON N2B 1K2, or to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, 2300 Yonge St., Suite 1200, Box 2414, Toronto, ON M4P 1E4. Online condolences at www.westmountfuneralchapel.com

THANK YOU



Kraemer

My family and I wish to express our deepest and heartfelt appreciation for all your love and support during Ron's illness and passing.

Thank you to all of you who came from near and far for the visitation and celebration of his life, the tribute flowers and gifts, charitable donations, beautiful cards, phone calls, online condolences and food.

A special thank you to Rev. Young, Kate Monk, Adam Babb and the Thamesview choir, to Garnet/Karen and Stacy for their eulogies, West Perth Growing Project Committee for the Honour Guard, UCW for providing the delicious lunch. We wish also to express our gratitude to the staff and PSWS at the Seaforth Long Term Home for their tender loving care they gave to Ron during his time there especially during his last days.

Thank you to Curtis and Angelena of the Lockhart Funeral Home for their expertise in making all the arrangements for Ron's celebration of life. Really words alone are not enough to express the gratitude we feel so we'll send a HUG to everyone.

Nancy Kraemer and Family

OBITUARY

Larmer



It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of our beloved mother, grandmother, and dearest friend, Sonja Lizette Larmer, who passed away with her family by her side on Saturday, March 7, 2026, at the age of 77.

Sonja was predeceased by her husband George and brother Edmund and is survived by and will be lovingly remembered by her mother, Maria; her sons, Christian, Darren (Rano), Shawn (Caroline), and Justin; and her grandchildren, Anaya, Sierra, Zach, Eva, Annalisa, and Aribella, as well as many other family members and close friends.

Sonja was a woman whose kindness, honesty, and unwavering dedication touched the hearts of so many. She was known for her friendly spirit, strong work ethic, unmatched hair styling skills, and deep love for her family and many friends. Sonja was someone you could always count on. Her presence brought comfort, strength, and plenty of laughter to those around her.

Family was the centre of Sonja's life. She took great pride in her four boys and her grandchildren, and the love she had for them was evident in everything she did. Her legacy of compassion, resilience, and devotion will continue to live on through the many lives she shaped and the memories she leaves behind.

We will be gathering at St. Marys Legion on April 11, 2026 from 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm. She will forever be loved and deeply missed.

IN MEMORIAM

Cumming

Lee Scott Cumming
March 29, 1968 - May 1, 1992



A heart of gold
stopped beating
Working hands at rest
God broke our hearts
to prove to us
He only takes the best.
Leaves and flowers
may wither
The golden sun may
set
But the hearts that
loved you dearly
Are the ones that won't
forget.

Missing you always Lee
The Cumming and Grant Families
And the late Karen Hughes

OBITUARY

Geiger

GEIGER: Andrew John - March 13, 2026

Peacefully in the loving arms of his parents at LHSC - Victoria Hospital, London, Andrew passed away on his date of birth, March 9, 2026. Cherished son of Drew Geiger and Leanne Riddell of St. Marys. Little brother of Carter Riddell and Cameron Geiger. Loved grandson of Jill and Ralph Geiger of Grand Bend, Linda Wydeven (John) and Bill Doupe (Joyce) of St. Marys. Dear nephew of Julia and Trevor Truemner and Jeff Doupe. Loved by his cousins Mason, Brody and Quinton. A private graveside service will take place at the St. Marys Cemetery.

An angel wrote in the book of life our babies date of birth, then whispered as she closed the book "too beautiful for Earth"

HELP WANTED



The Happy Valley Family Health Team is a dynamic team of professionals including 11 Family Physicians, Dietitian, Pharmacist, Mental Health Workers, Nurses, Nurse Practitioners and administrative support.

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1 PART TIME RECEPTIONIST

This position requires the ability to multi-task in a fast paced environment and excellent communication skills. Pleasant telephone manner is essential and knowledge of medical terminology is an asset.

Please forward resume by March 27th, 2025 to:

Happy Valley Family Health Team
Attention: Kimberly Lang, Executive Director
268 Maiden Lane
P.O. Box 1120
St. Marys, ON N4X 1B7
stmmc@stmmc.ca

*Thank you to all applicants who apply.
Only applicants selected for an interview will be contacted.
The Happy Valley Family Health Team welcomes and encourages applications from people with disabilities.
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OBITUARY

Leeson

Leeson, Gordon - October 30, 1943 - March 6, 2026

Dad didn't really live here; he started his life in Wingham and grew up on a farm outside of Walkerton. He spent most of his adult years in Waterloo Region. After a stay at WRHN @ Midtown (Grand River Hospital in Kitchener), mid-summer of last year he came to stay with us to rest and recover, and while here he decided he really liked the warmth of the sun and the comfortable armchair on our front porch.

He loved the way our small town welcomed him through the friendly chitchat of passersby, waiving their hellos and commenting about the beautiful day or how the weather was turning and soon fall would be here, and the frequent 'wow, your house looks great, we've loved watching your renovations' to which he would always proudly reply 'thank you', making some comment about his porch. It is safe to say that he liked it here so much, in fact, that he decided to never leave.

Dad wasn't perfect, and like all of us there will always be stories to tell, but what was so evident in the man my dad grew to become was that he was generous with his heart and his time. The first could easily get him into trouble with the women in his life, the second would see him show up early in the morning and work till late day, still working full time well into his 70's, he would spend evenings and weekends helping friends and family with home repairs, deck and fence building and any other hard work that took many hands to complete.

Dad was a loving brother to his siblings - he counted them among his best friends and they enjoyed many meals and days together, including on the front porch in St. Marys that dad loved so much.

To the adult that I became, I saw my dad through different eyes, matured by my own life experiences; he met me with kindness, support and understanding. He never judged and he always had my back. He loved my partner like his own child; they developed a very special bond over the months that dad lived with us and we took on the role of primary carers. The two of them would joke and torment me, mercilessly, over dinners, they were co-conspirators in the best possible way.

Dad loved and was so proud of all our kids and their partners: to be their grandpa was badge of honour and one he cherished. He's been blessed with great grandchildren too and their energy, laughter and curiosity was a source of great happiness for him, including the 4-legged ones.

He will be missed by many, but most especially by Tracey and Rick, Matt, Meghan, Vera and Ariane, Laura and Rogue, Kendra, Jordan and Gus, Taya, James and Eli, Robyn and Emily, Beth, Bill and Ruth, John and all of their children and their families. Each of us will love and remember him as he was, to us, father, grandfather, brother, uncle and friend.

Dad's last two months were the toughest part of his journey as his cancer was strong, but he wasn't ready to go just yet; he was determined to see the spring again and sit on the front porch one more time. He passed peacefully at St. Marys hospital, not getting back to the porch, after 3 days resting peacefully in the sun through his bed-side window.

Dad's journey was supported by so many, and we were overwhelmed by their compassion and their dedication. Our family could not have cared for dad as we had without the support we found in this community. Before going into the hospital, dad, Rick and I were so grateful for the additional in-home care he received. Heartfelt thanks go out to the community PSWs, nurses and nurse practitioner who helped us to care for him - he was able to live with us until the middle of December.

Once he could no longer stay in the house, as he had lost his eyesight and had become too fragile to remain with us, he found comfort and expert care at St. Marys Memorial Hospital. Our profound gratitude goes out to all the amazing staff at our wonderful community hospital for your compassionate and excellent care of dad. The doctors, nurses, PSWs, Physiotherapy, and Dietary staff were all so outstanding; so many of you were involved in going that extra mile to making sure that dad had the best and most complete care possible. To all of you, we could not have asked for better and you treated and supported dad so wonderfully. Our extended family felt so blessed to have dad so close to home, to take his final journey.

Stubborn to the end, dad entered and left this life at the same time, 3:15 PM. We found a whole lot of irony and more than a bit of comfort in this. It was just as it should be - measured and intentional. Rest easy now Dad as you're finally free. Cancer truly sucks.

Cremation will take place. Respecting dad's wishes for a simple remembrance, a Celebration of life for family and friends will be held this summer in St. Marys.

In lieu of flowers, as expression of sympathy, donations may be made to St. Marys Healthcare Foundation, supporting St. Marys Memorial Hospital in St. Marys Ontario by contacting info@stmaryshealthcare.foundation or going to their website at <https://stmaryshealthcare.foundation/>.

Messages and condolences may be left at www.tricitycremations.com or 519.772.1237.

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THE WEEK AHEAD



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PRC & Friendship Centre events - See the Stonetown Crier on Page 5

St. Marys Public Library events - See Page 26

FRIDAY, MAR 20

- Royal Canadian Legion hot dog lunch at Noon
- A.N.A.F. meat draw - 6 p.m.

- St. Marys Lincolns vs Strathroy Rockets at the PRC, Game #5 - 7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, MAR 21

- McCully's Hill Farm maple syrup festival (farm tours, pancake brunch) - 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

- Royal Canadian Legion meat draw - 5 p.m.

- St. Marys Lincolns vs Strathroy Rockets at West Middlesex Memorial Centre, Game #6 - 7:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, MAR 22

- McCully's Hill Farm maple syrup festival (farm tours, pancake brunch) - 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

- A.N.A.F. general meeting - 1 p.m.

MONDAY, MAR 23

- Community dinner at St. Marys United Church - 5 p.m., Sponsored by St. James Anglican Church

- St. Marys Farmers Market annual general meeting at the library - 6:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, MAR 24

- Odyssey Indigo workshop (memoir/legacy writing) at Riverwalk Commons - 9-11 a.m. \$150 fee for 4 workshops, Register at odysseyindigo.com

- Royal Canadian Legion buddy check coffee - 10 a.m. to Noon

- St. Marys Legion cribbage - Starts 7 p.m. sharp

St. Marys Lincolns vs Strathroy Rockets at the PRC, Game #7 - 7:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, MAR 25

- St. Marys Ministerial Lenton lunch & devotion at St. Marys United Church - 12:15 p.m.

- Election candidate info session at Perth East Rec Complex, Milverton - 6-9 p.m.

THURSDAY, MAR 26

- A.N.A.F. sausage on a bun - 12-1:30 p.m.

Notice of Application for Approval to Expropriate Land

Form 2 Expropriations Act

In the matter of an application by the Ministry of Transportation for approval to expropriate land, pursuant to s.11(2) and subsection 11.1(3) of the *Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act*, being in the Geographic Township of Fullarton, Municipality of West Perth, County of Perth, Province of Ontario

For the purpose(s) of: constructing a new entrance to the property along Perth Line 20 and closing the existing entrance along Highway 23, for improved road safety.

Notice is hereby given that application has been made for approval to expropriate the land described:

A limited interest for a period of time up to and including May 4, 2026, to November 15, 2027, in the nature of a free, uninterrupted and unobstructed easement for the purpose of constructing a new entrance to the property along Perth Line 20 and closing the existing entrance along Highway 23, for improved road safety.

In the Municipality of West Perth, in the County of Perth, being Part of PIN 53219-0071 (LT), being Part of Lot 34, Concession North of Thames Road, Geographic Township of Fullarton, designated as PART 1 on Plan 44R-6439 (P-2198-46).

The approving authority is the Minister of Transportation with an address of:

Minister of Transportation
 777 Bay Street, 5th Floor
 Toronto, ON M7A 1Z8
 416-327-9200

Any owner of lands in respect of which notice is given, who desires to comment on the proposed expropriation of the land for the described purpose(s) may do so by submitting the comment within the time stated herein to the Assistant Deputy Minister, Transportation Infrastructure Management Division, Ministry of Transportation, in writing.

The Ministry will review the comments for their technical/engineering information, having regard to the need for the land for the purposes of the project.

The Assistant Deputy Minister must receive the comments within thirty days after the owner is served with this notice, or within thirty days after the first publication of the notice.

The comments must be sent:

By e-mail to: Property.Process@ontario.ca

Or by mail to: Assistant Deputy Minister
 Transportation and Infrastructure Management
 Ministry of Transportation
 4th Floor, Garden City Tower
 301 St. Paul Street
 St. Catharines, ON L2R 7R4

Please include the municipal address of the land in the comment.

The expropriating authority is the Minister of Transportation with an address of:

777 Bay Street, 5th Floor
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Minister of Transportation

Per: *Linda Wilson-Holmes*
 c/o Linda Wilson-Holmes
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THIS NOTICE WAS FIRST PUBLISHED ON: MARCH 11, 2026



QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Shamrock
2. Reindeer
3. All of the snakes
4. Anthropic
5. Chicago, Illinois
6. The Boston Tea Party
7. U2
8. Michael B Jordan
9. The harp
10. A pot of gold

SUDOKU ANSWERS

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

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