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OCTOBER 2, 2025

VOLUME 2 • ISSUE 3

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Town committee calls for boundary expansion

JEFF HELSDON

Editor

The town's Economic Development Advisory Committee is advising council to increase its allotment for institutional/commercial land from 15 to 30 per cent, which would require a boundary expansion to facilitate it.

Jesse Goossens, chair of the Economic Development Advisory Committee, spoke at the Sept. 22 council meeting to explain the committee's recommendations. Oxford County is currently updating a study to forecast growth and land needs for the next 30 years. The committee reviewed the draft findings of the study at its meeting on September 9. As a result, the committee saw a shortage of commercial and institutional land.

Committee members reached the conclusion there was a shortage based on:

- The demand for commercial space, including for large-format retailers
- The presence of multiple churches and institutions seeking land for their growth
- The limited inventory of land to meet these growth needs.

Goossens suggested increasing the percentage of land allocated for institutional/commercial use would help provide motivation for the expansion of the town's boundaries.

"We need a boundary expansion now," he said. "We have two main landlords that own the majority of the excess residential land in town. That puts a lot of upward pressure on the cost of land in our town for more new subdivisions."

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(TILLSONBURG FIRE DEPARTMENT PHOTO)

Tillsonburg Fire Department was assisted by Ingersoll and Courtland firefighters in fighting a blaze at Marwood International's 101 Townline Road plant last Tuesday. The fire caused between \$8 to \$12 million in damages. Firefighters returned to the scene to deal with hot spots the following day, and were on scene an additional two hours. Both Tillsonburg and Ingersoll's aerial trucks are seen here working to tame the blaze.

Fire ravages 101 Townline Marwood plant

JEFF HELSDON

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A fire last Tuesday caused between \$8 and \$12 million in damage to the Marwood International plant at 101 Townline Road.

Employees on the afternoon shift noticed the fire and attempted to put it out with an extinguisher before calling fire at 8:34 p.m. Firefighters were on scene 11 hours, and were assisted by a second aerial truck from Ingersoll and a pumper, rescue and crew from Norfolk's Courtland Station.

"Structural roof collapse and compromised walls limited safe interior access and defensive fire tactics were used to contain the conflagration to the central portion of production area, limiting impact on adjacent production areas and the office area," said Geoff Hayman, Tillsonburg's fire prevention officer. "The sprinkler system limited the spread of fire into the larger production areas, but the entire structure was impacted by the smoke from the fire and water used in suppression of the fire."

Firefighters were called back twice the following day to address some minor hot spots in hard-to-access areas that started burning again.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

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Fire ravages Marwood plant

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Asked about a cause, Hayman said, “The fire started in the smaller production area, adjacent to some service equipment. It appears some product shipping containers, roughly five-foot by five-foot cardboard, were first ignited, where it spread to other combustible material. This portion of the structure is early 1960’s – 70’s construction, and was not sprinklered.”

He explained the size of building at time of construction did not require a sprinkler system, and later additions were sprinklered as per code requirements. At press time, fire officials hadn’t been able to safely access the building to assess what started the cardboard on fire.

Providing more detail on the damage estimate, Hayman said it is dependent on the valuation of equipment, machinery, demolition costs and rebuild cost.

The fire is the largest of the year in Tillsonburg when based on loss value.

Marwood was contacted to provide comment, but company officials were still assessing the impacts at press time. Hayman did provide some insight.

“The management is working diligently to access the impact on the building, equipment and machinery,” he said. “The Tillsonburg Building Department will provide guidance on steps necessary to make the structure safe for use, the Electrical Safety Authority will evaluate the condition of the electrical services and components of process equipment, and structural engineers will determine the necessary repairs to move forward. Depending on the results of the building evaluation, certain portions that received limited fire damage may return to production in near future.

Tillsonburg Mayor Deb Gilvesy called the fire a “devastating loss that will impact operations” of Marwood. She reached out to the management of Marwood, offering the town’s support.



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Tillsonburg firefighters returned to Marwood to extinguish hot spots the next day after the blaze was put out.

Council to decide on land allotment at Oct. 14 meeting

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

He believes more supply will help the price go down. Although the town recently opened the second phase of the Van Norman Innovation Park, Goossens said that in the long term, there could be a shortage of industrial land as well.

Currently, the mix of available commercial/institutional land should be 15 percent of the total available residential land. Tillsonburg has much less than that.

“If a big box store comes to town, where would they go,” he said, saying there is limited commercial land.

The committee’s recommendation was to recommend

to county council to increase the percentage to 30 per cent.

“Is 15 per cent enough to clean up our existing commercial land deficit,” Goossens asked. “Our opinion at economic development is we voted no we don’t think 15 per cent of new residential is enough to create new spaces for commercial that are big enough for some of these new developments, so we suggested 30.”

Raising this number would provide a “lever” to allow boundary expansion.

“We need to get these numbers a little higher so we can

start to go to the county and start to push for more expansion of our town so we aren’t constrained by only a few property owners,” he said.

Economic Development Commissioner Cephas Panshow confirmed there are only two pieces of available commercial land in town, and there is a need for more in the future.

Council pondered accepting the recommendation, but in the end, a decision was made to accept it as information and defer that decision to the Oct. 14 meeting since the report it dealt with hadn’t been before council yet.



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EDITORIAL

Province needs to go further in dealing with homelessness

Homelessness isn't a new problem in Canada, but it is new to small-town Ontario. Likewise, the problem with homelessness in downtown Tillsonburg has accelerated in the last two years.

Mental health and addictions take the blame as the catalyst that drives people to the streets, but the economy isn't helping either, as people lose their homes. Tillsonburg resident Rick Aarnoudse appeared before council, requesting that the issue be addressed and suggesting potential solutions.

Fortunately, many of the items he suggested are already in place. To be clear, solutions to the problem mainly lie at either the county or provincial government levels, although Tillsonburg council has asked for a report on the issue. Community groups have played a significant role in providing solutions to homelessness in Tillsonburg and should be commended for their efforts. The province and county also recently launched several initiatives to assist the homeless.

But, as Mayor Deb Gilvesy pointed out, you can't force people into shelters. The empty beds that are in Tillsonburg's winter homeless shelter are evidence of this. Likewise, people can't be forced into addiction treatment in Ontario.

But the Province of British Columbia has taken the bull by the horns and has amended provincial legislation to allow mandatory treatment. News reports state Ontario is considering compulsory treatment of people involved in the criminal justice system who have addiction issues, but are facing resistance from human rights advocates.

Ontario needs to go a step further and allow people to be taken off the streets for treatment and assistance. Those people on the streets are the children, siblings and, in some cases, parents of someone concerned about their well-being. Those trying to help their loved ones hit the same stone wall – a person can't be forced into treatment. Yet, at the same time, a person with addiction and/or mental health problems can't make rational decisions.

While human rights groups argue that forcing someone into treatment shouldn't happen, ask a parent who lost their child to an overdose on the streets if they would have rather seen their child in a forced treatment centre or a funeral home. It's time for some so-called tough love for the good of the people on the streets themselves, and to stop the potential of a child who may be harmed by picking up a discarded needle in downtown Tillsonburg.



Fall is here.

(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Have something to say? Submit your Letter to the Editor here: info@tillsonburgpost.com

Ghost Tour guide keeps history alive through storytelling



**EVERYONE
HAS A
STORY
TO TELL**

ROBIN KRAFFT

Tillsonburg Post Columnist

Sarah Kennedy has been exploring some of the obscure lore surrounding Tillsonburg's historical residents and buildings.

"Researching and deep diving into things is fun," she said. She's preparing for her role as a guide for the upcoming Eerie Encounters Ghost Tour in coordination with the Tillsonburg BIA. The tour is described as "a mix of history, paranormal sightings and local folklore legends," inviting you to "view your downtown through a different lens."

The BIA has provided the historical facts and sites, but as a storyteller, Sarah is preparing her script. The role is a perfect fit for her, as she's always been interested in the paranormal. She grew up in Delhi with the town cemetery in her backyard and it sparked an interest. She's intrigued by the details and symbolism of old headstones and pioneer graveyards, visiting many local cemeteries and his-

toric sites, always with reverence.

"As humans," Kennedy said, "we don't want to be forgotten; maybe we keep history alive that way. I'm excited, I'm nervous, but I think it's going to get a new generation interested in the town's history."

Her interest in acting and storytelling was sparked by the TV series *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* which featured a group of kids telling spooky stories. Sarah also participated in speech therapy as a child, and it involved lots of reading aloud. As an adult she has recently returned to all of those experiences, culminating in starting her own TikTok which features ghost strolls and lore, and she has developed a loyal following.

She has been on the Kingston Pen tour, investigating Canada's oldest penitentiary, which dates back to the 1830s. She has visited the grounds around the Guelph Correctional Centre, which opened in 1910, and walked the stone fences which were maintained by inmates. She has explored the Lucan Area Heritage and Donnelly Museum, but she's returned to Annandale House several times.

"The first time I walked through, my jaw was on the floor," Kennedy said.

She has even written a fictional horror story based around the grand staircase and inspired by the history of the building itself.

On her social media platforms, she recently shared some fascinating local stories. She described John Troyer, known as the witch doctor of Long Point, who was a farmer and healer. He planted the region's first orchard and gardens to feed settlers in the early 1800s. As well as building roads, a smithy and a grist mill, Troyer craft-

ed remedies from herbs and roots. Kennedy also shared video and photos of the infamous witches' gate at Doan's Hollow Cemetery, one of Norfolk's oldest burial grounds.

"There's always some murky history," Kennedy said, "but I feel like I'm honoring memory when I reveal those stories and bringing it to light."

Sarah and her partner Chris moved to Tillsonburg in 2021. They bought a century home on one of the oldest streets in town. Sarah loves the details of the house, including original stained glass work and a wrap-around porch where they like to sit in the evening with their two young boys.

The couple met in Guelph where Sarah had moved after college, working as a line cook at the The Woolwich Arms ("The Wooly Pub"), situated in a renovated 115-year-old Victorian home that used to be a doctor's office. She recalls old medical equipment in the basement that was simply too heavy to move out. After moving to Tillsonburg, she took a position as cook at the hospital, but with a two-and-a-half-year-old and a nine-month-old at home, she has now devoted herself to full-time parenting.

"It's the most exhausted I've ever been, but the happiest I've ever been," she said smiling.

Diving back into obscure histories and storytelling was a way to challenge herself and meet new people.

"I wanted to show my kids that not everyone is going to like what you like, but if you find your people they'll lift you up and they'll be happy that you're happy," Kennedy explained, "I'm not everybody's cup of tea and that's okay. I think we should stop expecting everyone to be like everyone else, that's just boring!"

Group calls for solution to homelessness

JEFF HELSDON

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A representative of a new citizens' group called on council to do more to address the homelessness problem in Tillsonburg.

Speaking on behalf of Take Back Tillsonburg, town resident Rick Aarnoudse outlined several instances he described as being unacceptable, including people passed out on Broadway, a man yelling at people in downtown parking lots, needles found in public, and people urinating and defecating in public.

"That is not the Tillsonburg any of us want to live in," he said.

He emphasized he wasn't looking down on the homeless, as these are real issues.

"Leaving people to live in chaos in allies and parks and encampments is not compassion," he said. "True compassion is moving those people into safer, structured environments while also restoring dignity to public spaces."

Aarnoudse realizes this situation is not unique to Tillsonburg and cited the recent example of Barrie city council declaring a state of emergency.

Saying the situation can't be accepted as normal as it harms businesses, residents, and the homeless themselves, he provided several suggestions of things that can be done to help the situation, suggesting enforcing existing bylaws against indecency, trespassing, loitering, and public intoxication.

"Laws without consistent enforcement are meaningless," he said. "Ignoring them only encourages more rule-breaking."

He realizes Tillsonburg can't shoulder this alone and needs to partner with Oxford County.

Enhanced community reporting is also needed, and Aarnoudse pointed to the 3-1-1 reporting system used in Alberta. A web or app was suggested as a solution, as were trespass orders for repeat offenders.

After the presentation, Coun. Chris Parker said he shared the same concerns. He pointed out the Tillsonburg app is already in place to allow people to report problems.

"That's a tool in the toolbox we're able to use. It's a great app," Parker said, adding that the town can't collect taxes to deal with homelessness, but the county does.

Coun. Kelly Spencer clarified that if anyone witnesses drug use, they should call the police and not use the app. She said Oxford County is addressing the situation through several homelessness initiatives, which include the new Homeless and Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hub in Woodstock, set to open soon, as well as

transitional services and addiction treatment.

Mayor Deb Gilvesy, the town's representative on county council, said a date for the opening of the HART Hub hasn't been set, but it is coming soon. The county is also looking at creating a low-barrier extended-stay shelter.

"One of the reasons people won't go into shelters is they may have a pet or there may be other issues," she said, explaining the new shelter will have private rooms with lockers and will allow pets.

There are also spaces available in the overnight shelter in Tillsonburg during the winter and the Woodstock year-round shelter.

"This is where the challenge lies. You can't force people into housing, you can't force people into treatment," Gilvesy said.

Gilvesy also said there are outreach programs that inform the homeless about available services and provide toothbrushes. Other local initiatives include meals being available seven days a week, a police unit for outreach, and increased foot patrols. Gilvesy said the province recently made it illegal to consume drugs in public and pointed out some provinces have changed regulations to make it possible to force people into shelters. She said that it is a matter that discussed with the MPP as it would require a change in provincial legislation.

Police charge two with impaired in separate incidents

It was a busy weekend for Oxford OPP with two people charged with impaired driving and other offences.

An individual from the Norfolk County is facing multiple charges after police conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle while on general patrol.

On Sept. 27, 2025, at approximately 8 p.m., the Oxford Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) Detachment were conducting general patrol on Broadway Road, in the Town of Tillsonburg. Oxford OPP officers subsequently conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle. Officers further conducted a search of the vehicle which resulted in the seizure of suspected cocaine and stolen property.

Zachary Shaw, 48-years-old, of Norfolk County, has

been charged with:

- Operation while Impaired - Drug
- Obstruct peace officer
- Theft under \$5000 - Shoplifting (Two counts)
- Possession Property Obtained by Crime Under \$5,000 - in Canada
- Fail to comply with Probation order (Two counts)
- Possession of a schedule I substance - Cocaine
- Driving while under suspension
- Fail to surrender insurance card

A 90-day Administrative Driver's License Suspension (ADLS) and a seven-day vehicle impoundment was initiated as per statute. The accused was held for a bail hearing and has since been released from custody. The accused is scheduled to appear before the Ontario Court of Justice in Woodstock on a later date.

As a result of a separate incident on Friday night, an individual from Tillsonburg is facing impaired driving-related charges stemming from a traffic complaint from a member of the public.

On Sept. 26 at approximately 11 p.m., members of the Oxford Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) Detachment were dispatched to Pressey Road in the Township of South-West Oxford to a vehicle that was reported driving

erratically. Officers located the vehicle in the Town of Tillsonburg on Baldwin Street and conducted a traffic stop.

Joshua Dzinja, 18-years-old, of Tillsonburg, has been charged with:

- Operation while Impaired - Alcohol
- Operation while Impaired - Blood Alcohol Concentration (80 Plus)
- Dangerous Operation
- Driving while under suspension
- Driving motor vehicle with unsealed container of liquor

A 90-day Administrative Driver's License Suspension (ADLS) and a seven-day vehicle impoundment was initiated as per statute. The accused was released from custody and is scheduled to appear before the Ontario Court of Justice in Woodstock on a later date.

The OPP is committed to safety for all who utilize Ontario's roadways. Members of the public are urged to report Impaired Driving by calling 911 in emergency situations. Complaints of impaired, aggressive, or careless driving can also be made by calling 1-888-310-1122.

For more information on the consequences of drinking and driving, check out: <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/impaired-driving.shtml>

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Hospital fire was in exterior grill

Tillsonburg Fire Department responded to a fire at Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital on Sept. 21 at 4:56 p.m. with a report of smoke.

Upon arriving, the found smoke coming from an exterior ventilation vent that was brought under control by nurses with a fire extinguisher. Firefighters applied water to

the vent to ensure the fire was out and did a further inspection to be certain there was no fire inside the hospital.

Cause of the fire was identified as carelessly disposed smoking material that was thrown in a window well and ignited leaves and wood in the bottom of the window well.

Automated license plate technology results in charges

An individual from Tillsonburg is facing multiple charges stemming from an automated licence plate recognition (ALPR) alert.

On Sept. 27 at approximately 11:30 a.m., members of the Oxford Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) Detachment conducted a traffic stop on Plank Line, in the Township of South-West Oxford, after being alerted by the police vehicle ALPR system of a possible prohibited driver.

Richard Anspach, 49-years-old, of Tillsonburg, has been charged with four counts of Operation while Prohibited under the Criminal Code, Driving while under suspension and Operate a motor vehicle without insurance.

Subsequently, 180-day vehicle impoundment was initiated as per statute. The accused was held for a bail hearing and has since been remanded into custody.

Kitchen fire on Vienna Road causes minor damage

Tillsonburg firefighters responded to a home fire on Vienna Road on Sept. 25 at 2:25 p.m.

The fire started in the kitchen area when the home owners were not present. There was minor structural damage as well as smoke and heat damage to the contents. Some fami-

ly pets were overcome by the smoke.

"I cannot confirm whether there were working smoke alarms present at time of the fire," said Geoff Hayman, Tillsonburg's Fire Prevention Officer.

A dollar value for the damage was not available at press time.

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Weekend Quiz

by Jake Grant

1. What is the traditional birthstone for October?

2. What country is Prague located in?

3. LAN stands for what in computing?

4. When was the last time the Blue Jays won the AL East?

5. Who sings "Rock you like a hurricane"?

6. A stop/loss order is used by who?

7. True or False—Ostriches can fly.

8. What is the most common eye color?

9. How many moons does Mars have?

10. What year was truth and reconciliation day created?

This week's answers are found on Page 34



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Three separate impaired charged after complaints

Three drivers were charged with multiple impaired driving offences in separate incidents last weekend.

An individual from the Otterville is facing impaired driving related charges after police received a traffic complaint regarding a possible impaired driver.

On Sept. 21, at approximately 1 a.m., the Oxford Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) Detachment were dispatched to a traffic complaint of a possible impaired driving, near Broadway Road in the Town of Tillsonburg. Officers patrolled and subsequently located the vehicle. Emily Galvao, 31-years-old, of Otterville, has been charged with: Operation while Impaired – Alcohol and Oper-

ation while Impaired - Blood alcohol concentration (80 plus)

An individual from the Norwich Township is facing impaired driving related charges after police received a traffic complaint regarding a possible impaired driver.

On Sept. 20, at approximately 9:30 p.m., the Oxford Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) Detachment were dispatched to a traffic complaint of a possible impaired driving, near Broadway and Quarter Town Line, in the Town of Tillsonburg. Officers subsequently located the vehicle in the same area.

Steve Moniz, 54-years-old, of Norwich Township, has been charged with: Operation while Impaired – Alcohol and Oper-

ation while Impaired - Blood alcohol concentration (80 plus).

An individual from the Tillsonburg is facing impaired driving related charges after police received a traffic complaint regarding a possible impaired driver.

On Sept. 19, at approximately 10:30 p.m., the Oxford Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) Detachment were dispatched to a traffic complaint of a possible impaired driving, located on Highway 401, in the Township of South-West Oxford. Officers subsequently located the vehicle on Plank Line near Mount Elgin.

Amanda Chilcott, 41-years-old, of Tillsonburg, has been charged with Operation

while Impaired – Alcohol and Failure or refusal to comply with demand.

A 90-day Administrative Driver's License Suspension (ADLS) and a seven-day vehicle impoundment was initiated as per statute in all cases. All three were released from custody and are scheduled to appear before the Ontario Court of Justice in Woodstock on a later date.

The OPP is committed to safety for all who utilize Ontario's roadways. Members of the public are urged to report Impaired Driving by calling 911 in emergency situations. Complaints of impaired, aggressive, or careless driving can also be made by calling 1-888-310-1122.

OPP seeking public assistance in theft

The Oxford Provincial Police (OPP) are seeking the public's assistance following a report of a distraction theft at the Oxford Mini Mart located on Lisgar Avenue, in the Town of Tillsonburg.

On Sept. 19, at approximately 8 p.m., members of the Oxford OPP detachment responded to a report of a theft at the Oxford Mini Mart, on Lisgar Avenue, where suspects distracted the store employee, and

stole a sum of Canadian currency. Three male suspects were identified. Photos of the suspects are attached.

The investigation indicates that this incident is part of a broader, ongoing pattern of organized distraction thefts targeting vulnerable individuals across the region. We urge all citizens to remain vigilant in public spaces, especially in crowded areas where distraction thefts are more likely to occur.

Please keep your personal belongings secure and always be aware of your surroundings. If you witness any suspicious behavior or believe you may have been a victim of a pickpocketing incident, do not hesitate to report it to contact the Oxford OPP Detachment. Your information could help prevent further crimes and assist in ongoing investigations.

The Oxford OPP are seeking the public's

assistance to identify the suspects involved in this incident. Anyone with information, including dash camera or surveillance footage from the area of the Oxford Mini Mart in Tillsonburg on Sept. 19, 2025, between 7:15 p.m. and 8:15 p.m., is asked to contact the Oxford OPP at 1-888-310-1122, reference report number (E251279410). Information can also be provided anonymously to Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477).



A deep dive into the integrity commissioner process

JEFF HELSDON

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

With the reports from two separate complaints to the Town of Tillsonburg's integrity commissioner being released at the Sept. 22 meeting, it was the first time this process occurred in Tillsonburg.

Bill 68, the Modernizing Ontario's Municipal Legislation Act, 2017, made it mandatory for all of the province's municipalities to appoint an integrity commissioner to investigate complaints about council. The act also mandated municipalities to create a code of conduct. The integrity commissioner can investigate violations to the code of conduct and conflict of interest allegations.

In this case, three Tillsonburg councillors filed complaints against Mayor Deb Gilvesy and Coun. Chris Parker in connection with a discussion that took place in closed session late last year and in early 2025. The investigation by town integrity commissioner Aird & Berlis LLP cleared them of all wrong doing.

A separate complaint was filed alleging that Deputy Mayor Dave Beres should have declared a

conflict of interest in discussion about the Tillsonburg BIA as his son owns property in the area, and against Coun. Bob Parsons because he is the town appointee to the BIA board. The commissioner found there was no conflict.

Karen Oliveira, manager of communication for Aird & Berlis, explained that legislation does not allow revealing who filed a complaint, but the complainants can "self-identify" that information.

In this case, it is known that three councillors filed the complaint against Gilvesy and Parker. Tillsonburg Councillors Chris Rosehart, Parsons, Luciani and Spencer were asked if they filed the complaint. While Rosehart said she did not file either complaint, the other four either didn't wish to self-identify or didn't answer the question.

Regarding the second complaint against Parsons and Beres, it isn't as clear cut as it isn't known if a council member or member of the public filed the complaint. Gilvesy, Parker and Rosehart denied filing it, while Spencer and Luciani either did not choose to identify they filed the

complaint or didn't answer the question.

In their responses, Beres, Parsons and Spencer did urge putting this behind us and moving on.

While municipalities may pay a retainer to keep an integrity commissioner at the ready, there is an additional cost for an investigation. The final bill isn't in for the Tillsonburg investigation but Parker did say it will be more than \$20,000.

Aird & Berlis acts as integrity commissioners for about 70 municipalities in Ontario. Asked if these types of complaints were common, Oliveira said, "Councillor-initiated code of conduct complaints against other members are not unusual."

She also said the complaint and applications in Tillsonburg are not unusual and most municipalities have similar complaints and applications submitted.

Joe Lyons, assistant professor and director of local government program at Western University, said frivolous complaints under the act can be dismissed if the investigator thinks it is unwarranted.

Speaking more specifically to complaints by

council members about their peers, he said the process could be used to discourage a particular member from running in the future.

"That's one of the concerns with the code of conduct and integrity

commissioner regime is it could be weaponized politically," he said.

Although the provincial government is looking at changes to the legislation, Lyons isn't aware of anything to address using the process for political purposes.

"If you have a dysfunctional council you'll see more of these things," he said. "If councillors work together and treat each other with respect, you'll see fewer of these investigations."



WELCOME BACK

(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Monsignor O'Neil School hosted a Welcome Back to School/Meet Our #One open house on Sept. 24 to give parents an opportunity to meet staff and learn more about the school. Here, Cindy Allan and her daughter Katie, left, talk to Stephanie Gilmore of the parents' council about volunteering opportunities in the school.

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Adult Try Curling – Oct 15 – 7:00 to 8:00 pm
Stones & Scones – Oct 16 – 10:00 to 11:30 am
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AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

The New Investment Commercial Award recognizes significant investments made in the Town of Tillsonburg during the previous year. This award is sponsored by the Town of Tillsonburg and selected by the Town of Tillsonburg's Economic Development Advisory Committee. Kermar Holdings Inc., which owns the Northgate Plaza, was the winner. Owner Casey Kerkhoff of Kermar Holdings Inc. accepted the award.



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Beres Catering was the recipient of the Business Improvement Award, sponsored by Marwood International Inc., recognizing improvements in a local business, industry or not-for-profit. Owners Becky and Mike Bezpaly accepted the award, and also paid tribute to their staff.

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AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Positive Change Award (A Made in Tillsonburg Story), sponsored by HR Business Group, was presented to Tyler Vanleeuwen, owner of Ontario Laser Cutting. This award was developed in memory of Jane & Phil Esseltine and is given to an individual who has significantly contributed to the betterment of Tillsonburg as demonstrated by their creativity, community involvement and spirit.



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

The Employer of the Year Award recognizes employers for creating a positive work environment, and is an award where the nominations come from the employees. Sponsored by First Ontario Credit Union, the award went to Good Redden Klosler. Chris Appleton, left, and Dave Klosler accepted the award.



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AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

The Entrepreneur of the Year Award, sponsored by Bossy Nagy Group Chartered Professional Accountants, recognizes entrepreneurs who have made substantial investments in their businesses that have created or enhanced their business. Future Transfer was selected as the winner after the company owners sold the company, bought it back in 2015 and then have expanded substantially since. Left to right are: Charlie Perera, John Lansink, Mike Perovich and Chan Perera.



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Verne's Carpet One was the recipient of the Community Service Award for 2025, sponsored by E&E McLaughlin Ltd.. The local business was cited for its support of the hospital, sports teams and much more. Owners Dave Martin, left, and Shawn Winters not only accepted the award, but also presented the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital Foundation with a cheque for \$100,000 that evening.



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Schep's Bakery Ltd. was the winner of the New Investment Commercial Award, which recognizes investment made in the Town of Tillsonburg during the previous year by an industry. This award is sponsored by the Town of Tillsonburg and selected by the Town of Tillsonburg's Economic Development Advisory Committee. Jonathan Schep of Schep's Bakery accepted the award.



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MEET THE PEOPLE OF THE MEMORIAL VETERAN BANNERS

Gunner William G. Findley

William Findley enlisted with the Canadian Armed Forces when he was 16 yrs old. He served with the 97th Battery of the 7th Medium Artillery Regiment and served overseas under active duty and helped to liberate France, Belgium and Holland.

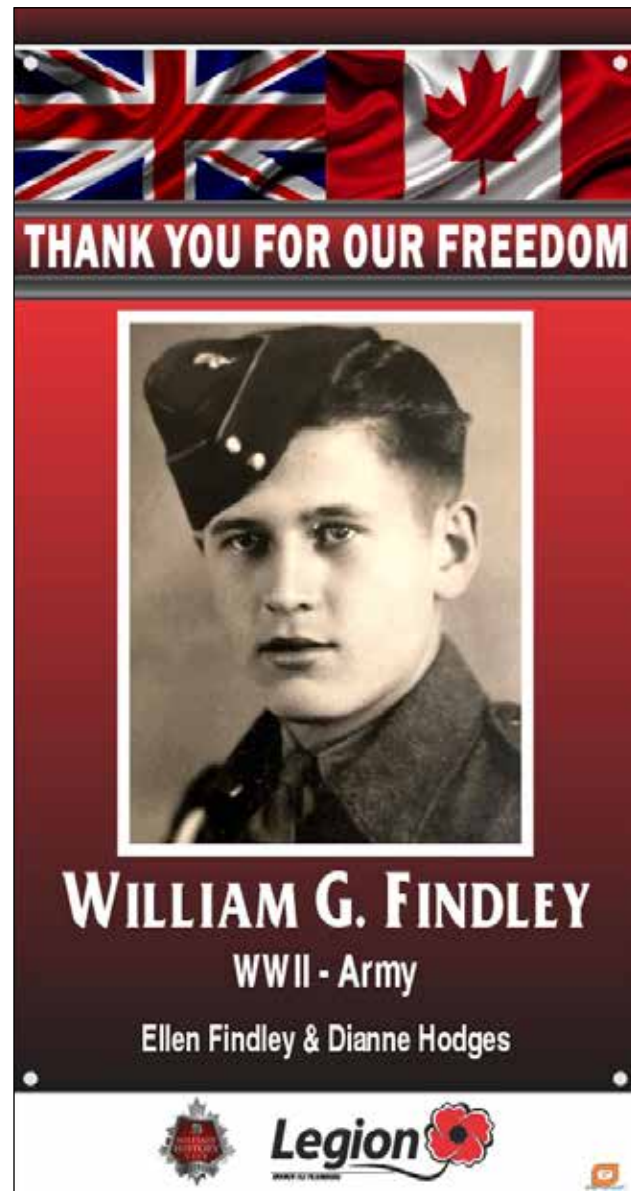
After the war, he worked as a mines rescue worker in Wales prior to returning to Canada. He always said he felt the safest underground.

Once back in Canada he founded Findley's Driver Education and taught Driver Education in Elgin, Oxford and Norfolk Counties for a period of 44 yrs before retiring.

Bill was a recipient of numerous awards from the St. Thomas City Police, Ontario Provincial Police and Fanshawe College EMS program all for his dedication to road safety. He also received the Order of Glendale Award from Glendale High School and was the first recipient of the Tillsonburg Military History Club Local Hero Award. Bill volunteered at local schools as part of the Memory Project and at various student/military events at the Robin Barker-James farm just outside of Tillsonburg where a museum was named in his honour. He was also selected to be a part of the St. Joseph's Health Care Foundations 2010 special salute to Canada's Veterans and Soldiers Tribute Video.

Findley was also the President of Royal Canadian Legion Br. 153 Tillsonburg, and was one of the founding fathers of the Victoria Cross Tattoo that was held for many years in Tillsonburg.

With all his achievements, he was most proud to have been chosen as a 17-year-old soldier to be part of the Guard of Honour for King George VI, his wife Queen Elizabeth, Princess Elizabeth and her sister Princess Margaret on July 1, 1942 that escorted them from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Abbey for the Dominion Day celebrations.



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St. John's Church celebrates 125th anniversary

Dignitaries, an authentic Ukrainian lunch and special music were highlights as St. John's Anglican Church celebrated its 125th anniversary on Sunday, Sept. 14.

Deputy Mayor Dave Beres presented the church with a framed certificate recognizing 125 years of service to the community and expressed the town's appreciation.

Presiding over the anniversary service, the Bishop of Huron, The Right Reverend R. Todd Townshend, noted it was also Holy Cross Day. He said that to many people, the idea of Christ dying on the cross may seem like a sign of weakness or helplessness.

"And yet the cross is the central thing that reveals to us, and gives to us, the power of God," said Townshend. "There is no kind of deadness that God can't speak into, heal and raise up to life. That has been celebrated here at St. John's for a lot longer than 125 years, and it will be for a lot longer than 125 more."

Another special guest, former St. John's rector The Reverend Canon Robyn Lyons, was warmly greeted as congregation members shared fond memories.

Celebrants at the service also included St. John's interim priest, The Reverend Patrick Martin, and deacon The Reverend Vermell Stevens.

"We would like to thank everyone who came out to help us celebrate our anniversary," said Martin. "We are very grateful to Bishop Todd and also happy to welcome Deputy Mayor Dave Beres."

Music for the service was led by organist Joanne Smith and the choir. Special vocal, guitar and piano music was performed by guests Stephanie Tulloch and James Turner from Paris, ON.

The service was followed by a

Ukrainian-themed lunch in the parish hall, prepared by chef and congregation member Rudy Bangaru.

The lunch was a fundraiser for Alongside Hope, the Anglican Church's national organization that provides humanitarian relief and creates development

opportunities with partners in Canada and around the world.

A freewill offering raised \$843 to support an Alongside Hope project in Ukraine that helps young adults with disabilities learn to live independently, a task made much more difficult in times

of war.

To accentuate the theme, there were Ukrainian flags and displays, as well as a menu including perogies prepared in St. John's kitchen, along with cabbage rolls supplied by the Tillsonburg Royal Canadian Legion.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Dave Beres, Deputy Mayor of the Town of Tillsonburg, presented the congregation of St. John's Anglican Church with a certificate of appreciation from the Town on Sunday, Sept. 14, congratulating the parish on its 125th anniversary and 125 years of service to the community. From left: The Reverend Vermell Stevens, Deacon; The Reverend Patrick Martin, Interim Priest; Beres; and special guest The Right Reverend R. Todd Townshend, Bishop of Huron, who led the special anniversary service. The day included an anniversary service, lunch, music and special guests.

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Gemini senior girls keep on pushing through tough season opener

JEFF TRIBE

Post Correspondent

The final score was what one might expect when a developing team opened its Thames Valley Regional Athletics South-East senior girls' basketball season against one of the league's anticipated powers.

"Can't you come back?" Tillsonburg Gemini coach Kait Buchner smiled following a 64-12 final Thursday in favour of the St. Thomas Parkside Stampede, Sept. 25 at Glendale's Community Gym. "Come back later in the season."

"It can't get harder than this," assessed Gemini Vivian Suderman. "I guess... we'll see," she added with a smile.

The game's outcome was decided by halftime, but the broader result of Tillsonburg's resilience played out over the full 32 minutes. The fourth quarter was the Gemini's offensively strongest, Keona Cornish highlighting a modest three-basket run with a coast to coast run up the left side of the court with around five minutes remaining.

Pulling down the rebound, she maintained possession in-

side the scorer's table, cutting back to the middle of the court into traffic near the free throw line, from where she launched a shot which found nothing but net.

"I don't know," Cornish smiled. "All in the moment - I was ready. First basket of the season," she continued, "had to go - had to get it done."

Echoing her coach's words, Gemini point guard Sophia Sillicker spoke to a 'developmental season,' a roster without a lot of game experience. But amidst what Suderman alluded to as 'a positive environment', Sillicker says team members are coming, doing their best, and importantly, still having the courage and confidence to take their shots, teammate Lucie Panschow referencing the famous Wayne Gretzky comment about missing 100 per cent of those not taken.

"It's applicable to basketball too," smiled Panschow repurposing a hockey-based comment.

"I'm very proud of everyone," Sillicker added. "We did the best we could today."

Panschow finished with six points to lead Tillsonburg offensively with Olivia Sillicker, Suderman and Cornish adding one basket each. Parkside's Payton Fleming led all scorers with 14, Brooklyn Pyatt added 12 and Kerris Moore 11.

Parkside is a hard team to beat admitted Tillsonburg's Taylor Sache.

"(But) everyone gave their best, kept going, kept pushing. We still put our effort in."

The Gemini's TVRAA South-East season was scheduled to continue Tuesday, Sept. 30 with the Woodstock St. Mary's Warriors coming to town, and again, Thursday, Oct. 2 on the road at Woodstock College Avenue.

"Learning as we go," Buch-



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

Gemini point guard Sophia Sillicker drives to the basket against Parkside's Kennedy Lawrence.

ner concluded. "Keep learning from every play, every game."

TILLSONBURG GEMINI SCOREBOARD

Junior Girls Basketball
Thursday, Sept. 25
St. Thomas Parkside 25, Gemini 5

Senior Boys Volleyball
Thursday, Sept. 25
St. Thomas Parkside 3 (25, 25, 26, 13); Gemini 2 (19, 9, 27,

24, 15)

Junior Boys Volleyball
St. Thomas Parkside 3 (25, 25, 25); Gemini 0 (16, 9, 18)

Senior Football
Wednesday, Sept. 24
London Saunders 36, Gemini 7
Gemini touchdown - Park-Thomas, PAT - Janzen.

Junior Football
Wednesday, Sept. 24
London Saunders 37, Gemini 14



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

Gemini Vivian Suderman (right) kicks the ball out to a teammate from under the Parkside basket.

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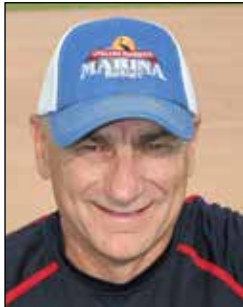
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Slo-Pitch community mourns loss of Darrell Smith



**EYE
ON
SLO-
PITCH**

DAVE WEAVER

Post Columnist

This is a tough column to write as there may be a tear or two trickling on to my keyboard.

A dear friend of mine Darrell Smith passed away last week. I've known Big D as he was passionately known around the diamonds for a lot of years when we opposed each other - me with West Flooring, he with the Cowboys.

Darrell was like an institution at the diamonds, watching his sons' teams play. Also any other games that night, he was

socializing with everyone and their families! He was a great man gone way too soon. On Tuesday, in between games, we honoured his memory with a moment of silence. A celebration of life is planned for Friday, Oct. 3, 6-9 p.m. at Tillsonburg Legion.

On behalf of the entire slo-pitch community, condolences to Barb, Craig, Kyle, Connor and families.

Men's A Division

The Mill have too much fight in them to go down in three in the final. They won twice last week forcing a fifth and deciding game on Tuesday night.

They held off a late-inning rally from Legend Rubber Cobra Chickens on the Tuesday winning by three. They came out firing on all cylinders in game four, plating 20 over their first three at-bats. Legend rallied a bit, but The Mill came away with a 13-run victory.

The Mill-23, Legend Rubber Cobra Chickens-20

The Mill-Tim Morgan 4-4, 2 HR; Bryan Deblaire 4-4, 2 HR; Josh Stubbs HR; Jeremy Roy HR; Darren Pace HR.

Legend-Jared Froese 4-4; Brian Dyck 3-4; Jesse Froese 3 HR; Nathan Froese HR; Marcus Enns HR.

Game Synopsis-Bryan Deblaire was a force homering three times, doubling and scoring four runs for The Mill in game three. Everyone in their order scored at least one run, Darren Pace had a solid defensive game at shortstop. Clean-up batter Jesse Froese homered three times for Legend.

The Mill-30, Legend Rubber Cobra Chickens-17

The Mill-Billy Wilson 5-5; Steve Derks 5-5, HR; Jeremy Roy 4 HR; Kevin Harrop HR; Bryan Deblaire HR; Ryan Black HR.

Legend-Matthew Reimer 4-4, HR; Jared Froese 3-4, HR; Caleb Reimer HR; Ethan Froese HR; Marcus Peters 2 HR; Ethan Fehr HR; Marcus Enns HR.

Game Synopsis-Too much J.R.(Jeremy

Roy) for Legend as he hit four homers and a double for the winners in game four of the series. Steve Derks was a triple shy of hitting for the cycle and scored five runs.

Men's B Division

Pelicans tied up their series with At My Playground/IQT Logistics with a convincing win in the second game of their series. They took the series lead with a forfeit win the next night. The young squad were missing at least four to Jr. C Hockey.

Pelicans-25, At My Playground/IQT Logistics-16

Pelicans-Steve Leacock 4-4, 2HR; Andrew Dawson 4-4, 3 HR; Adam Jensen HR.

A.M.P.-Riley Balazs 5-5; Landon Partlo 3-4; Duncan McLean HR; Brandon Balazs HR.

Game Synopsis-Pelicans started off quick plating 21 over their first four at-bats. Andrew Dawson homered in three straight innings to lead the way, and shortstop Rob Down had a solid defensive game.

Curling club hosting events to try curling



**ON
THE
BROOM**

NORA PETERS

Tillsonburg Post Columnist

The Tillsonburg Curling Club is hosting a series of free "Come Try Curling" events from Tuesday, Oct. 14 to Thursday, Oct. 16 with the week culminating in a fun night of curling on Friday, Oct. 17. There are several times to give the game a try with some basic instruction, getting on the ice and throwing a few rocks. Open to the interested public and of course club members. More information can be found on the website at tillsonburgcurling.com where you can also register. You need clean indoor running shoes (or curling shoes) all other equipment is provided. If the traditional curling slide delivery might not be easy try the extender delivery 'stick' which allows an upright walking delivery.

The first time to give curling a try is Tuesday, Oct. 14 from 1-3 p.m. with a Jitney Afternoon - this is open to and welcomes all levels of curlers. Enjoy some ice time, curling instruction or practice and some socializing after the game with coffee and cookies.

On the same Tuesday from 6-7 p.m. Youth Try Curling will offer a free curling skills intro for 8-18-year-olds. Kids can learn a great winter ice sport that they can play for many years to come!

At 7 p.m. Try Triples Curling takes to the ice. Triples is a fast-paced format where you compete in teams of three and play three different positions during the game. Again, give it a try for free. Look for more info online at Tillsonburgcurling.com and to register so we know you're coming.

Wednesday, Oct. 15 from 7-8 p.m. is a night for adults to try curling. Adults only, basic skills instruction on the ice- come and give the game a try. Traditional and stick instruction is available.

Thursday morning (October 16) from 10-11:30 a.m. the ladies of the club will welcome all club members, new members and those interested in trying the sport, to come and throw stones and enjoy some tasty scones and socialize as we get back into the season.

Friday has the Brooms and Brews fun night featuring a four-end game followed by three tastings (non-brew alternatives available) and snacks for \$15 / person. Open to everyone (19+) curlers and non-curlers-bring that friend or family member who has always wanted to try the game. Register required on-line. Join in and rock the house!

Team King have been active in the last couple of weeks. In their latest event which was the Tier 2 Grand Slam of Curling in St. Thomas they came through their pool play round robin with a 3-1 record qualifying them for the quarter-finals. They met Team

Casper of the USA. Teams were tied after three ends of play but Casper took two in the fourth which had Team King chasing for the rest of the game. Down 3 coming home with the hammer King was unable to make up the difference and finished on the wrong side of the scoreboard.

Despite the loss, the team has to be happy with how they are playing and their record over their three opening events of the season - making it to semi-final play in Edmonton Next Gen, following that with a finals finish at the K-W Hogged Rock Spiel, where they lost to the Italian Retornaz team, and then

the quarter-finals at the slam. They have played and defeated international teams from Sweden (Edin), USA, Japan, Czechia, Germany, Switzerland (2). They lost to Italy and the USA. The team started the season ranked 45th on the World Team Ranking System and are steadily moving up the list before the Slam they were 31.

For the Canadian Rankings the team sits in sixth position. New rankings were posted after this column was submitted. We're proud to have this young competitive team associated with our club.

Curling rocks! See you at the club!



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Variety of activities on tap for fire department open house

JEFF HELSDON

Editor

Many a child has dreamed of being a firefighter, and happily donned the plastic firefighter hats during fire education programs. The fire department's open house is an opportunity to take that dream one step further.

Using a fire hose to douse the flames of a controlled car fire is one of the many activities that will be available to youth and their parents as part of the Tillsonburg Fire Department's annual open house on Oct. 9 from 6 to 8 p.m. Other activities on tap include the opportunity to check out fire trucks and other emergency vehicles both inside and outside, and a demonstration by the special ops team's rope rescue unit.

"If somebody is in a ravine and they need to be extricated, they could use the special ops team," explained fire department educator Sarah Barclay.

The special ops team is also trained in water rescue, ice rescue and hazardous material handling. This can include fuel spills, biological spills, nuclear and chemical spills.

"They're trained to a certain level of response," said Geoff Hayman, Tillsonburg's fire prevention officer, adding the department will call in mutual aid or experts if needed.

And, of course, the open house includes free food available with the Rapid Relief Team barbecuing hamburgers and hotdogs and Tim Hortons providing coffee, hot chocolate and Timbits.

Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors will be on display and attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions about these life-saving devices. A variety of safety and promotional handouts for children and adults will be available.

For the younger people, Beepa, the new fire safety



(FILE PHOTO)

Having the opportunity to put out a car fire is always a big hit at the fire department's annual open house. Last year's fire prevention day was a huge success, drawing more than 400 people.

mascot originating from Tillsonburg, will be in attendance.

The event drew more than 400 people last year.

"We've been fortunate the weather has been good," Barclay said. "Please Mother Nature . . ."

"If not, it will be revised and indoors," Hayman added.

And for the teenagers out there still holding dreams of being a firefighter, those questions can be answered as well.

Take precautions when charging lithium batteries

JEFF HELSDON

Editor

Charge into fire safety: Lithium batteries in your home is the theme of this year's fire prevention week.

"They're everywhere," said Geoff Hayman, Tillsonburg's fire prevention officer.

The theme for the week is broken down into three sub-categories: buy, charge and recycle.

Hayman explained there could be a temptation to replace a battery with a lower-priced one found on the Internet, but people should be wary of this temptation. While the lower-priced battery may work, slight differences could result in the unit heating up more than it should.

Charging battery-power devices, from phones to drills to vehicles should be done with the correct charger and shouldn't be done without providing some sort of ventilation.

"If you're going to charge a device, you do it in the open and don't cover it up," he explained. "When it's charging and it heats up, you need to have the ability for the heat to dissipate."

Overcharging can be another issue if a device isn't manufactured with smart-charging technology that will shut off the charger.

Recycling lithium batteries properly ensures batteries don't end up in landfill and cause environmental damage.

Lithium battery fires

Tillsonburg Fire Department has responded to four or five fires associated with lithium batteries. Hayman said all were electric bikes where the batteries get tussled and potentially damaged. These fires were caught early and put out relatively quickly.

With the increase in the use of mobility scooters, this is bringing more lithium batteries into these facilities. Hayman said modifications were made in these facilities, explaining, "These are now being charged in areas separated off and protected."

To date, there hasn't been a fire with a battery-powered car in Tillsonburg.

"In most cases, they are safe, and if done properly, there's a benefit to society if charging is done correctly," he said of lithium batteries.

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Inspiring the next generation of female first responders

ROBIN KRAFFT

Post Contributor

Women have become an increasing presence in Canadian fire services. There are currently three female volunteer firefighters with Tillsonburg Fire and Rescue Services, but more and more women are showing interest in the profession and attending recruitment information sessions.

Sarah Barclay is in her 10th year with the department. When Barclay started, there was one other female firefighter, but when she moved on, she recalls a time when she felt like the odd one out. It isn't always easy being a woman in a traditionally male-dominated profession, so she enjoys being a role model. Barclay also serves as the Public Education Officer, and when the local Girl Guides come in for a tour, she's thrilled that the event is conducted by three women in uniform.

Barclay worked security at Toyota, and the fire suppression team sparked her interest.

"Their passion grew on me," she said, and when she saw an ad for volunteer firefighters in the Tillsonburg paper she cut it out and put it on the fridge. With her husband's encouragement, she attended a recruitment session, became part of the reserve pool, and finally got the call.

As an educational assistant, Jennifer Reid said that "firefighting wasn't really on my radar," but after learning how to operate heavy equipment with her father's construction company one summer, she realized her capabilities and began to explore firefighting.

"I did all the training I could leading up to that and it became my passion," she said.

Reid has been with the department for three years, but she started out in Midland as the first female firefighter in their department. She was fortunate to have an excellent mentor who took her under his wing and encouraged her. Reid explained how every aspect of the job is a perfect fit for her: "being compassionate, helping others, being physical on the job, never knowing what you're going into, every day is different and you are constantly preparing yourself."

Emily Wolf recalls a powerful childhood impression: a crew from the Bayham FD arrived in their trucks to build a playhouse in the backyard for her younger sister, which



(ROBIN KRAFFT PHOTO)

Female firefighters (from left) Emily Wolf, Sarah Barclay and Jennifer Reid enjoy being role models for the next generation of female first responders. Their presence and professionalism attracts and encourages women to follow their passion for serving the community.

had been provided by the Make A Wish foundation.

"I was in awe of these people who took time out of their day to come and do that," she said, "that's when I realized that firefighters were real people."

Later, when she was an electrical apprentice, her supervisor was a Malahide firefighter and he often talked about the training and calls that he attended and it sounded like something she wanted to do. She messaged the Facebook group to find out when they would be recruiting, and she and Jenn went through their training together.

"We've all taken different paths," Barclay said, "and we love it here. Tillsonburg is a very progressive fire department."

That doesn't mean that they haven't had to deal with sexism and gender expectations from other fire departments and even the public. Barclay has often been asked if she would be able to get someone out of a burning building.

"Firefighters do not typically carry people out by themselves," Barclay explained,

and efficiency. While there are one-person carry techniques, they are used only as a last resort if a rescuer is alone and needs to move a victim."

"Everything's all about teamwork," Wolf said.

"You're never by yourself, everyone has a partner at the scene." Reid added: "We're structured differently, so we just have to learn to do things a different way. You learn your strengths and your role, and there are some advantages."

Female firefighters, for example, can often fit into smaller spaces than their male counterparts, but they also offer a different perspective when it comes to problem solving, collaboration, and communication.

The industry itself is recognizing the valuable role that female firefighters play. They used to be left with hand-me-down bunker gear, but manufacturers are now making gear specifically for women, sized and tailored to fit.

All three women commented on how much support and encouragement they have received from their male colleagues in the Tillsonburg Fire Service. They feel fully accepted, but they rely on each other as well.

"Having other female firefighters here creates a different dynamic in the fire hall, but also personally," Barclay said, "I have fire sisters."

Fire Prevention Week

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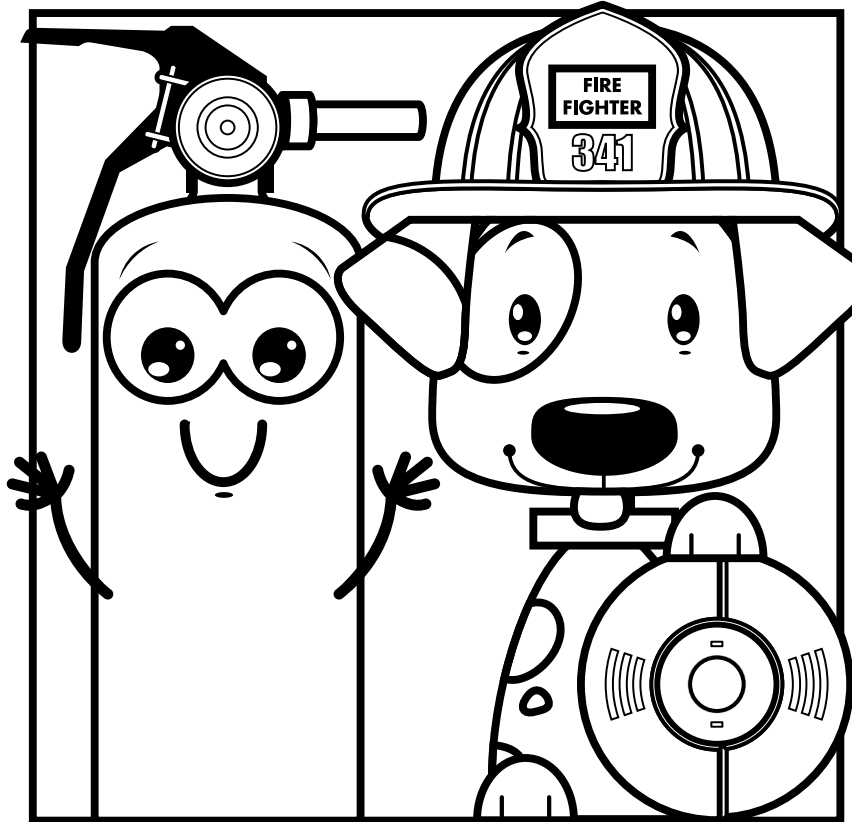




THANKS to Our Firefighters

FIRE SAFETY SMARTS

Color the picture and practice copying these fire safety tips, then post the page on your refrigerator to remind the whole family that fire safety is important!



KIDS, FOLLOW THESE TIPS!

Never play with matches or lighters.



Stay away from stoves, heaters or anything that gets hot.

Make a fire escape plan with your family. Find two ways out of every room and pick a meeting place outside.

SHARE THESE TIPS WITH PARENTS & ADULTS.

Test smoke alarms every month.

Don't leave the kitchen unattended when pots or pans are cooking on the stove.

Never leave candles burning when you leave a room.

WHAT TO DO IF THERE'S A FIRE:

- If you hear a fire alarm, get outside immediately and stay outside.
- Once you are outside, call 911 or get help from a neighbor.
- If your clothes are on fire, stop, drop and roll until the fire is out.
- Fall and crawl to escape a fire. Breathing is easier if you stay low to the ground.



FIRE SAFETY SAVES LIVES

Fire Prevention Week!



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Lithium-Ion Batteries in Your Home

October 5-11, 2025

NFPA FIRE PREVENTION WEEK™

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Tillsonburg's volunteer firefighters are ready to respond



(ROBIN KRAFFT PHOTO)

Firefighters receive clarification and instructions from lead trainers as they respond to the given scenario on training night.

ROBIN KRAFFT

Post Contributor

Demonstrating courage and an unwavering dedication to their community, our volunteer firefighters are always ready to respond to emergency situations.

Tillsonburg Fire and Rescue Services is comprised of a full-time fire chief, an assistant chief of communications, a full-time fire prevention officer and 33 on-call volunteer firefighters, including two platoon chiefs. Tillsonburg Fire Communications Division consists of six full-time communicators (dispatchers) and two supervisors, as well as three part-time staff. The fire dispatch operations cover numerous municipalities, taking 911 calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They coordinate responses with 61 stations, including our immediate area, but extending as far as Gravenhurst and Fort Erie.

"Dispatch is the vital link," Platoon

Chief Tony Hietkamp said. "They give us the first information and continue to send out updates and more information en route. It's an incredibly coordinated response."

Tillsonburg volunteer firefighters respond to about 400 calls per year. They deal with a variety of incidents and life-threatening situations such as fires, multi-vehicle accidents, and carbon monoxide emergencies, as well as water, ice and high angle rescues.

"They need to be prepared for all of these scenarios," Fire Chief Scott Tegler said, "and in the right headspace; calm, and understanding that they're dealing with our citizens."

Tegler spent over 30 years with the Woodstock Fire Department. His first day as deputy chief in 2001 was what is now known as 9/11. Emergency management and an emphasis on preparedness went into further development after that. Public safety is number one, whether that involves being able to mobilize

and accept numerous planes that need to land, or responding to severe storms and damaged infrastructure. Fire Prevention Officer Geoff Hayman reminds residents that Emergency Preparedness Week is held annually to encourage citizens to focus on taking action in order to be prepared to protect their homes, families and communities during an emergency. (getprepared.gc.ca)

Firefighting is intensive, demanding and challenging work, and most of our volunteer firefighters have full-time jobs in other fields. Candidates must commit to pre-firefighter training, including seven to 10 weekends of initial training. Once complete, they write a certification exam, holding them to the same standard as a professional, full-time firefighter. This standardized training provides the knowledge and capacity to do every aspect of the job.

Hietkamp, with his 36 years of firefighting, described the mentoring process: "We share our experience and knowledge and that gets passed on to the next level."

During training and on calls, it's a team effort.

"There's always safety in numbers," he said, "you follow your partner everywhere. Group crews stay together the whole time they're on the fire ground and the senior officer knows where everybody is at all times."

Volunteer firefighters also commit to regularly scheduled, ongoing training sessions to maintain and upgrade their skills, as well as performing vehicle and equipment maintenance. Hietkamp explained how some training facilities offer live burn cells, providing an opportunity to "practice in a controlled environment everything you need to do to fight fires effectively and safely." Heat and smoke are generated by using bales of straw and wood pallets for an experience of what responding to a real fire is like.

Volunteer firefighters in Tillsonburg are on call 24/7 and they are paid an honorarium, based on 200 hours of service per year. They also volunteer for fundraising activities and for planning events that maintain a strong community presence. They appear in parades, hold demonstrations, and offer fire pre-

vention education.

Hietkamp encourages everyone to attend the open house.

"It's their fire department, it belongs to the community and the tax payers." For the firefighters, the firehouse is like a second home, and many come in to do additional work, developing safe operation guidelines, planning for training or conducting research.

Platoon Chief Larry Staley, with decades of expertise as a firetruck mechanic and 42 years of firefighting experience, remembers when there was an air raid siren that called firefighters to duty, and "your home phone would ring even if you were on it."

He added, "It's like a service club for us, that's how we treat it. We're here to give back to the community."

Tegler acknowledged that it's getting more challenging to find people. Potential candidates have to have the time, ability, and the willingness to make that commitment to the community, at a time when so many people are already juggling a work-life balance.

"The reality is that as the community grows, the number of incidents will also increase," Tegler pointed out, which puts a bigger strain on the pool of firefighters. Four firefighters are required on the truck during calls, and with some volunteer firefighters working out of town or on day shifts, there can often be a void during the day. Town council currently funds 80 hours per week of paid duty for firefighters to enable an appropriate response capacity during the day. A bank of staff from the volunteer group fills those hours, so that two paid duty firefighters are in house and available for calls while performing other duties.

Mayor Deb Gilvesy commented, "Town council and the Town of Tillsonburg is blessed in so many ways by having a very dedicated team putting the safety of all citizens first. The team of volunteers to full and part-time employees are very committed to saving lives, protecting our community and surrounding communities through mutual aid agreements. Tillsonburg Fire and Rescue Services stand ready for every moment and every call and I could not be prouder of this amazing team."



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This year's Fire Prevention Week™ (FPW™) campaign, October 5-11, "Charge into Fire Safety™: Lithium-Ion Batteries in Your Home," works to educate everyone about using these batteries safely. The campaign stresses how important it is to **BUY, CHARGE, and RECYCLE** safely when it comes to lithium-ion batteries.

3 STEPS TO HELP YOU STAY SAFE:

Buy only listed products. When buying a product that uses a lithium-ion battery look for a safety certification mark such as UL, ETL, or CSA. This means it meets important safety standards.

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

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



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Beepa, the province's new fire safety mascot, was the idea of Tillsonburg Fire Department Public Educator Sarah Barclay and was co-developed with Jamie Kovacs, executive director of the Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council. Deputy Fire Marshall John McBeth, left, and Kovacs, right, stopped in Tillsonburg Monday to pay tribute for Barclay's efforts.



(CHRIS ABBOTT PHOTO)

SWOX FIREFIGHTERS SHOW OFF THEIR WHEELS

South-West Oxford firefighters volunteered at the annual Canadian Harvard Association Wings & Wheels. South-West Oxford volunteer firefighter Sam Roelens prepares gear for Lukas Ostrowski to try on at the 2025 Wings and Wheels fly day and open house.

MUSIC CORNER

Can't put a price on a good time: Country artist Andy Colonico returns to Tillsonburg



BEN ADDRESS

Tillsonburg Post Columnist

Tillsonburg will get splashed with a healthy dose of backroads tailgating country music when Andy Colonico returns to town this Saturday, Oct. 4 for a special concert at Paddy's Underground. The Niagara-born artist, known both for his solo work and fronting rock band Revive the Rose, is eager

to bring his music to a more intimate stage after a sold out show at the London Music Hall with Brett Kissel.

"Performing at a more intimate venue such as Paddy's is always such a treat," Colonico says. "It allows me to be very flexible with my set list and a chance for me to give other songs a chance where I can wear my heart on my sleeve more versus the big shows where I'm typically opening for a bigger act or an early set on a festival where I'm always ensuring the crowd is always getting fired up. I have to shelve some songs until I get a chance to play a more intimate venue. They can expect the whole salad when I come to Tillsonburg this weekend."

The show comes on the heels of his latest single 'Can't Put A Price On A Good Time' which is a collaboration with the Stratford band Small-Town

Strip Club. The song has already been turning heads and getting frequent plays on radio and streaming platforms including a recent placement on Apple Music's 'New In Country' playlist.

"For a while now, I have been teasing with Small-Town Strip Club that we would write a banger together. Finally, an idea with a hook came to my head when I was driving home one day," Colonico explains. "I was reflecting on how broke I have been in the past from having a great time and investing in myself, but I do not regret any of it. I brought the idea to Johann of Small-Town Strip Club when I realized the melody and sound I had visioned would make a great fit for a collab with those boys. He was great for assisting with lyrics and the band as a whole was fantastic adding parts and flavour to it. All I had was a hook

and some melody ideas so it really took a whole team to bring this beast together. I think people love the high energy I have been bringing from my live show and releases and this song definitely raised the bar."

That same energy has been amplified online where Andy Colonico has found a growing fanbase thanks to the social media app TikTok.

"I don't even know where to begin with TikTok," Colonico laughs "It is quite the magical place. Such a positive community over there, you can really feel a genuine connection with fans on that app. TikTok has exposed my music globally and it is all because I was being myself. I feel I do not have to do what everyone else is doing. The TikTok community taught me very quickly that being authentic with an authentic sound speaks louder now than it ever has before. I never thought a

photo of me holding a hot dog with my song playing in the background was going to be the one to turn heads."

Beyond his solo career Andy continues to fly the flag for Revive the Rose, the rock band that first put him on the map.

"Revive the Rose is still going strong. We have just been keeping low key this past year, the boys have had a lot going on. We told ourselves let's just roll out some new tunes, play the odd show and go from there," Colonico reflects. "Revive the Rose helped me find myself. I was 18 years-old when we started that band, a very fragile time in my life post high school. I'm so grateful for every friendship and experience I have had from being in this band. We are a brotherhood and it has helped me find the confidence I needed to be a front man. They encouraged me to hop off the drums back

then and just focus on singing. We have learned so much together and we are a brotherhood that supports each other with every endeavour we quest on. We are looking forward to getting busier next year."

Whether it is a TikTok hot dog, a catchy new single or a heartfelt ballad saved for the small-room stages, Andy Colonico promises Tillsonburg fans a night they won't forget. Catch him live this Saturday at Paddy's Underground with opening act Addi John. Doors open at 7:30 p.m. with a \$15 advanced ticket available online at Eventbrite.ca or at The Mill. Tickets will also be available night of at the door, limited to availability at an increased price.

For more information, music and upcoming tour dates you can follow Andy Colonico on his official website at www.andyclonico.com

UPCOMING SHOWS

OCT. 2 - OPEN MIC W/ BILLY GIBBONS
Paddy's Underground
No Cover - 7:30 p.m. - All Ages/Licensed

OCT. 2 - ACE OF SWORDS
The Copper Mug
No Cover - 8 p.m.

OCT. 4 - ANDY COLONICO W/ ADDI JOHN
Paddy's Underground
\$15 - 7:30 p.m. - All Ages/Licensed

OCT. 4 - THE DO-OVERS
Tillsonburg Legion #153
\$15 - 8 p.m.

OCT. 4 - STUNT
The Copper Mug
No Cover - 8:30 p.m.

OCT. 9 - OPEN MIC W/ BILLY GIBBONS
Paddy's Underground
No Cover - 7:30 p.m. - All Ages/Licensed

OCT. 10 - 50+ KARAOKE
Tillsonburg Senior Centre
1:30 p.m.

OCT. 15 - EUCBRE NIGHT
The Copper Mug
6:30 p.m.

OCT. 18 - BACK TO THE 50'S CONCERT
St. Paul's United Church
\$50 - 2:30 p.m. - All Ages

OCT. 18 - THE MAHONES
Paddy's Underground
\$25 - 8 p.m. - All Ages/Licensed

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TOUGH MUDDER

(CHRIS ABBOTT PHOTO)

Thousands of people completed 5-km or 15-km routes at the 2025 Toronto Tough Mudder held at Gopher Dunes, south of Courtland, on Sept. 13. Participants in the 15-km run had to conquer 26 challenges, including crawling under heavy rope.

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For the Love of Hockey



OCL BOOK TALK

HEATHER MATHERS

Branch Services Librarian, Oxford County Library

I don't think anyone can deny that we Canadians love our hockey. This love is engrained in us from an early age. Many of us learned how to skate not long after we learned how to walk and were donning hockey helmets before putting on backpacks for school. Hockey is a way of life and even makes its way into the written word on a frequent basis.

Below is a list of recently released or soon-to-be-released hockey-themed titles to get you ready for the season:

Life in Two Worlds by Ted Nolan

This is an inspiring memoir about perseverance, identity, and the power of staying true to oneself. Born and raised in the Garden River First Nation, Nolan overcame adversity to reach the highest levels of professional hockey, winning the NHL's Coach of the Year award. His journey was never just about the game—it was about navigating two worlds, facing discrimination, and ultimately returning to his roots to uplift Indigenous youth. Candid and deeply personal, this is a must-read for any hockey fans and anyone moved by

stories of resilience and leadership. This book is also this year's Oxford Reads title. Oxford Reads is a community-wide reading initiative that connects each of Oxford County's unique communities while celebrating Canadian literature and fostering discussion. A Gala event featuring the author is set to take place at the Market Centre Theatre in Woodstock on November 7.

The Next One by Ken Reid

If you're a fan of hockey, you're likely familiar with Sportsnet's Ken Reid. Reid's newly released title shines a light on hockey's hidden superstars – hockey scouts. Hockey scouts can be spotted in arenas across North America, carefully analyzing and hoping to discover the next best player. They are the architects of our favourite teams. *The Next One* takes readers behind the scenes to learn all about the scouting business.

Certified Beauties by James Duthie

Hockey is full of great stories and great characters. *Certified Beauties* is a collection of stories that highlight moments on and off the ice. Written by TSN's James Duthie, this book highlights some of the most compelling, funny, and heartwarming stories in hockey. The book also includes a forward by Sidney Crosby and a special chapter remembering Johnny and Matthew Gaudreau.

If the best game you can name is the "good ol' hockey game", then why not give one of these books a try! All highlighted titles can be reserved today by visiting www.ocl.net and placing a hold. And if you'd like to meet Ted Nolan at the Oxford Reads Gala on November 7, reserve your tickets at www.oxfordreads.ca.

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BIA on hook for cost-sharing program

JEFF HELSDON

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Tillsonburg's Business Improvement Association is on the hook to address an historical shortfall in funding for the Façade Improvement Program.

Applications to the program assist with updates to buildings in the downtown core and are approved by the Façade Improvement Committee. However, the BIA administers the program and contributes to it 50/50 with the town.

The shortfall equates to the BIA portion of the contribution and mostly dates back to the founding of the program in 2012 and 2013, before current BIA executive director Mark Renaud started in that capacity. Adding to the complexity of the issue is the façade improvement program started without a formal agreement between the BIA and town, and a bylaw wasn't passed to formalize it.

The report, from the town's finance

department, outlining the issue provided options to councillors on how the funds should be repaid into the façade fund, and the amount of the funds to be repaid. The money was not kept in a separate account.

"If we don't get this right there will be severe hardship going forward for the BIA," said Coun. Bob Parsons.

Renaud pointed to 2012 as the main culprit for the missing funds.

"It looks like there was a \$50,000 hole that exists at the beginning of the program and the audited financial statements from that time period do not show the BIA's matching funds contribution," he said.

Another part of the program funding shortfall was there wasn't a full contribution from the BIA during the COVID time period as the board of the day gave businesses a break on their contributions.

"Our businesses were struggling and there could have been better decisions made," Renaud said.

Council passed a motion directing the

BIA to top up the shortfall of \$63,954 by 2029. There are currently \$72,079 of completed façade improvement projects in 2025. It also allowed the BIA paying for the Community Futures Oxford Pop-Up Patio Program in 2020 to count towards the BIA contribution and directed staff to develop a formal agreement that includes

establishing a separate bank account for the Façade Improvement Program and both the town and BIA to contribute to it going forward.

Mayor Deb Gilvesy, Deputy Mayor Dave Beres and Councillor Chris Rosehart did not take part in the discussion because they declared a pecuniary interest.

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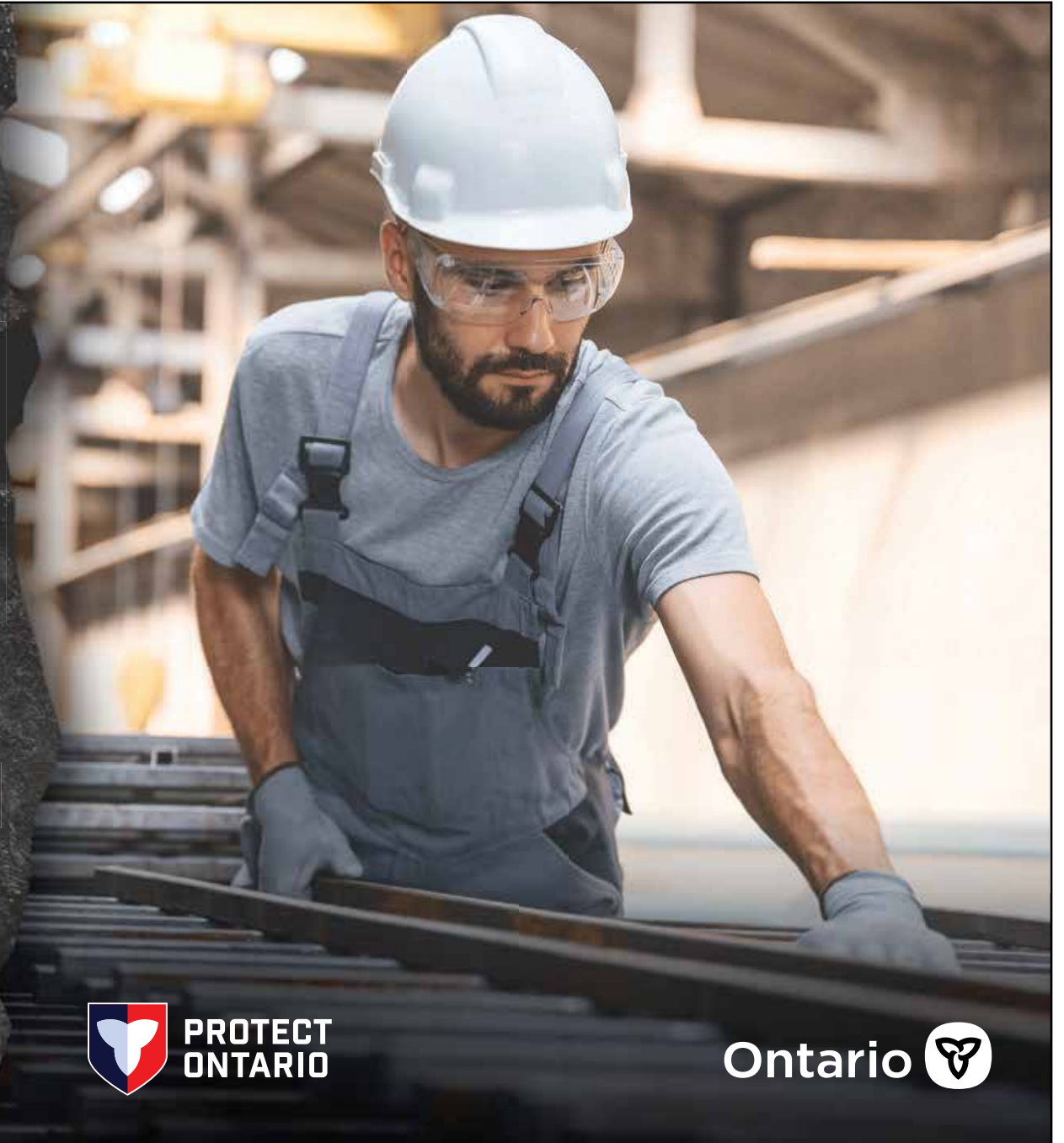
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JEFF HELSDON
Editor

**SOUTH-
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OUTDOORS**

Catching a 40-plus-inch pike on the first night is a good indicator of a good fishing spot. This was a surprise beginning to a trip to Moose Basin Vacations. I won the trip at the Ruffed Grouse Society dinner in Courtland the year prior, and was looking forward to it for a year. Renovations on the cabin on Allan Lake, west of Kapuskasing, were

recently completed. Before settling in, owner Jim Donaldson took fishing companions Marian Chelu, Angelo Dumitru, and me for a tour of Allan Lake, the Opasatika River, and Zadi Lake. This river eventually empties into the Moose River, and Hudson Bay. We were shown the best spots for fishing in Allan Lake in early July, but were told that the Opasatika and Zadi Lake may be better options.

“That lake is very productive for fishing in the spring when the water temperatures are low,” Donaldson said. “When the water temperatures go up, the fish seem to flood into the river.” He said Allan Lake is ideal for hunting, with moose, bear and grouse mentioned.

Dumitru and I couldn’t wait to hit the water the first night, while Chelu elected to stay back. We fished the river and tied into some walleye. The action wasn’t fast and furious like I have seen in the past in the north, but was steady. There was an occasional smaller pike thrown in to make things interesting. Although there are some cottages on Allan Lake, we didn’t see another boat on the water, but did see a bald eagle. Then we were drifting along the shore of Zadi Lake, and Dumitru seemed to catch on bottom, and then it moved. “I’ve got a big one,” he said. I scrambled for the net and quickly discovered we had forgot to grab it on our way out in haste. I offered

to help, but Dumitru said he had it. Watching him land a 43-inch pike with his bare hands was a sight to behold. An amateur taxidermist, he opted to keep the fish to mount it. The cabin on Allan Lake is one of three that Donaldson owns. He has been gradually renovating them and starting to rent them out. His plans are to open the cabin on Kapuskasing Lake in 2027 and the one on Saginash Lake in 2028. The renovation job on the Allan Lake cabin was impressive. The cabin is finished with pine boards on the interior, has electricity, indoor running water, and a porch overlooking the lake. An outhouse/shower building is a few steps away, and although it’s an outhouse, it’s nicer than most.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 30

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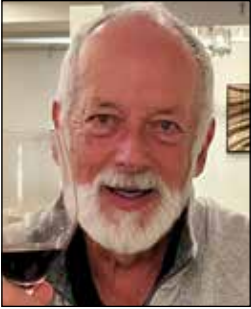
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Personal passion produces wonderful attractions in New Brunswick



**OH,
THE
PLACES
WE'LL
GO!**

PAUL KNOWLES

Tillsonburg Post Columnist

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

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

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

Let's start in Edmunston. The Min-

iature Train Museum is the personal project of Guy LaForge. Guy said to me, "I've been doing miniature train layouts since 40 years ago." The museum arose because he made a lay-out for his son; he confesses, "He grew up... I didn't".

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

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

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

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

The museum is open from June through August, seven days a week. And Guy loves every minute. "I did this because I love it. I'm playing!"

Personal passion also sparked the unique musical instrument gallery at the Connell House Museum in Woodstock. The exhibition room is jam-packed with valuable antique instruments, musical devices from around the world, and the



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

Guy and Geraldine LaForge, who own and operate the Miniature Train Museum in Edmunston, New Brunswick.

other-worldly-sounded theremin. They are all part of the personal collection of museum Chair John Thompson – and the twist is, they are there to be played. There are no "please do not touch" notices in this room; instead, you are welcome to sample the sounds.

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

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

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

Marilyn Strong, herself.

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

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

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

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

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



One of many miniature train layouts in the museum.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)



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ERTH OPEN HOUSE
(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)
There was a good turnout at the open house hosted by Tillsonburg Hydro Inc. (THI) and EARTH Power about the possibility of a merger of the two entities. The event gave the public an opportunity to ask questions about how a merger would impact them. Among those answering questions were, back left, THI board chair Dan Rasokas, THI general manager Graig Pettit and Deputy Mayor and THI board member Dave Beres, A second open house will be held on Oct. 7 from 3 -6 p.m. at the Tillsonburg Town Centre.

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Join us as the Forest City Film Festival celebrates 10 years of community, creativity, and cinema in Southwestern Ontario

BRITTANY WHELAN

Industry and Special Events Coordinator, FCFF

Picture this: I was eight years old when a major movie production rolled into my small town in Southwestern Ontario. The downtown transformed into a film set, and I can remember my mother dragging me by hand to a gleaming white limousine. Security moved to stop us, but Julianne Moore said it was okay, and signed my scrap of paper. I didn't know it then, but that brief exchange was the spark that led me to study film and pursue a career in the industry—because film doesn't just entertain, it inspires, connects people, and fuels local economies. Now I work for the Forest City Film Festival, where we help champion the next generation of regional storytellers.

For the past decade, the Forest City Film Festival (FCFF) has celebrated the stories and talent of Southwestern Ontario. Unit-ing movie lovers, empowering creators, and contributing to a \$30 million regional film industry. And the inspiration doesn't stop with film. This year, we're honouring London native David Shore, creator of *HOUSE M.D.* and *THE GOOD DOCTOR*—whose work has influenced not only storytellers, but a generation of doctors and healthcare professionals.

That spark I felt as a kid was the same kind of magic our founder and executive

director Dorothy Downs wanted to share when she launched the FCFF in 2015. A year later, her vision came to life at the Wolf Performance Hall with a three-day event showcasing 25 regionally connected films, capped by a sold-out gala featuring local screenwriter Emma Donoghue. By 2017, FCFF had nearly doubled its programming, introducing an animation category, an international screening, and extending the festival to five days.

2018 brought a dose of nostalgia with a screening of *THE BREAKFAST CLUB* and a live Q&A with London-born actor John Kapelos. Plus the launch of the Short Film Pitch Competition which gave emerging creators the chance to bring their ideas to life. In 2019, the inaugural Forest City Youth Film Festival took centre stage, spotlighting the voices of high school filmmakers from across the region.

When the world went online in 2020, FCFF adapted with a fully digital festival, introducing a Music Video category, virtual Q&As, and on-demand access that connected audiences across Canada. 2021 marked the rebrand of our industry programming into the Ontario Screen Creators Conference, complete with a national-scale Project Pitch competition offering a \$60,000 prize package. In 2022, we expanded our lens with curated Indigenous programming and “Best of the World Fest”



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

(BOWF), bringing highlights from Cannes, TIFF, Sundance, and Berlinale to our local audiences.

By 2024, London's designation as a UNESCO City of Music inspired an electrifying opening night of live performances, music videos, and a world premiere. We also introduced our Lifetime Achievement Award Reception, where Emmy-winning creator David Shore will be honoured in a glamorous evening of signature drinks, generous hors d'oeuvres, and an exciting silent auction. Attendees can also explore the best international films or cheer on the next generation of filmmakers. With so much to see and do, there's truly something for everyone at this year's festival.

This year, as we mark our 10th anniversary, we invite you to be part of 10 unforgettable days with more than 100 films, 60+ events, and experiences that celebrate the power of storytelling. From our high-energy music video opening night to a haunting Halloween screening, and the very best in regional cinema in between, the Forest City Film Festival is where culture, creativity,

and community meet on the big screen.

Audiences will enjoy stories from across Southwestern Ontario, featuring films from Stratford, Cambridge, Hamilton, and beyond, showcasing the region's richness and diversity. Hollywood comes to London with our Lifetime Achievement Award Reception, where Emmy-winning creator David Shore will be honoured in a glamorous evening of signature drinks, generous hors d'oeuvres, and an exciting silent auction. Attendees can also explore the best international films or cheer on the next generation of filmmakers. With so much to see and do, there's truly something for everyone at this year's festival.

So grab your tickets, load up on popcorn, and join us at the theater—because in every seat, there's a dream waiting to be sparked, and a story waiting to be told.

Visit fcff.ca to explore the full program and join the celebration.

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Moose Basin Vacations offers a unique experience

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26

Besides the cabins, Donaldson offers day fishing trips from his home base in Kapuskasing. Prices range from \$350 to \$800, offering a variety of options, including kayak tours, small boats, and larger 18-foot boats. The Allan Lake cabin is \$300 a night.

An ardent angler, Donaldson started weekly

walleye fishing tournaments in Kapuskasing. He has a store attached to his house and bases the tournaments from there.

The three of us went back to the spot to the next day. We caught a few walleye for supper, and some smaller pike. Zadi Lake was a target that evening, and we found a ridge that

seemed to hold walleye both that evening and the next morning. Chelu discovered the hot lure was a Berkley Flicker Shad in fire tiger colour. It showed up well in the stained water.

On our last night, we went back near the spot where Dmitru caught the monster pike. We were



Angelo Dmitru displays the 43-inch pike he caught with Moose Basin Vacations cottage on Allan Lake in July. (JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)



(JEFF HELSDON PHOTO)

Marian Chelu shows a walleye caught in Zadi Lake on the Berkley Flicker Shad in fire tiger that proved to be the colour the fish preferred.

catching fish to take home and had a couple of walleye and two smaller pike on the stringer. We heard a little splashing on that side of the boat and chalked it up to the pike splashing around on the stringer. Hearing it again, Chelu looked over the side.

“Look at that pike,” he said excitedly.

I looked and saw a pike as large as the one he caught previously, or larger. It was chasing after the fish on the stringer. I had my line in the boat and cast out quickly. The monster pike wasn’t interested

in my offerings or what Dmitru or Chelu threw. It will be there for the next angler, and proved there could be more than one fish that big in the lake.

Contact Donaldson at (613) 362-2943 to book, or with questions of his offerings.

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Oxford County paramedic system under strain

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Ambulance response times are increasing in the county, and Oxford County is considering how best to respond to the growing demand. As the county's population continues to grow in both rural and urban areas, officials say new strategies and resources may be necessary to ensure timely emergency care for residents.

East Zorra-Tavistock and Zorra have the poorest response times in the county, mainly due to the fact the two towns have seen high population growth.

"Tavistock and Thamesford used to be called small settlements, but they are pretty well-established areas where historically there haven't been ambulance stations," explained Ryan Hall, the county's Chief of Paramedic Services. "We have had them where the majority of the calls are, which is Woodstock, Tillsonburg and Ingersoll."

Norwich and Drumbo also have stations and there is another location just north of Embro. Hall said the growth in the rural areas is expected to continue.

"With long-term care beds being opened in Tavistock and the former Maple Leaf property in Thamesford being zoned for residential development. That's going to make it even worse," he added.

Hall explained rural areas received a few calls every month twenty years ago but now 15 to 20 is more the norm.

"It has crept up quite slowly, but we are at that threshold now where it makes sense to respond to these areas from a closer location."

Woodstock City/County Coun. Bernia Martin asked Hall at a recent county meeting if the paramedic service has the capacity to respond appropriately to the rise in call numbers.

"If we were one big urban centre, we would have some capacity. Our issue is where our calls are now happening more often is further from where we have ambulances stationed," answered Hall. "We can add all the resources in Woodstock, but the laws of physics prevent us from responding to Tavistock and Thamesford at the same time as we would in Woodstock."

Deputy Warden and Ingersoll Mayor Brian Petrie asked Paramedic Chief Hall whether the 2026 budget would in-

clude measures to address diminishing response times. Hall said he is reviewing the redeployment of resources and will bring forward options for council's consideration.

East Zorra-Tavistock Mayor Phil Schaefer said he has had several discussions with Paramedic Chief Hall about where an ambulance resource could potentially be located in the township. Hall noted similar talks have taken place with Zorra.

"If we did have an ambulance resource, would we be able to partner with you in your firehalls to actively house one? That's something we are considering."

Hall added having conversations with neighbouring municipalities is also on the table.

"Let's talk with Perth about a joint facility, joint response structure or some sort of partnership."

Oxford County Warden and Zorra Township Mayor Marcus Ryan offered a different take on the issue. He said some decisions need to be made.

"In the short-term I think it's almost inevitable we will have to add paramedics and possibly an ambulance. Other than that, there is nothing we can do that is quick. I don't love that, but it's not a surprise."

He added that in the medium to long term, council needs to have serious conversations with both themselves and residents about response times, noting the solution isn't necessarily about bricks and mortar.

"We don't really care where the ambulances are supposedly parked because the reality is they are hardly ever parked there. At the previous term of council we received a report on response times. Where the ambulances, and where does it make sense for them to be. The reality is, you can have a building where an ambulance gets parked, but it's only there for shift changes."

Ryan added an ambulance is likely going to or from one of the three Oxford County hospitals when a 911 call is made.

"In the case of Zorra Township, they aren't sitting around in the Highland yard north of Embro with their feet up waiting for a call. So, it doesn't really matter where the ambulance hall is, but it matters what the response time is. I say that because council needs to start asking for things from our staff, and I think they are ready to give it to us."

He said council's priority is ensuring residents receive the best response times, regardless of where buildings or ambu-

lances are located.

"What is the system that does that? I think to a large extent, we kind of have that now, or pretty close. We need to potentially be willing to partner with Perth, Brant and Middlesex. We partner with them already, but I think we need to explore that partnership more to say, is it possible for residents on both sides of those borders to get better response times if we are willing to be more collaborative, look at different systems, and not be so wedded to having an ambulance parked in my community."

Ryan added that council works best when it doesn't demand a particular solution, but instead sets out the service level it wants to achieve.

"What's the service look like that gets residents the fastest ambulance response time. Who do we need to partner with, and what do we need to consider doing? We can, and I think we will probably need to, throw money at the problem short-term."

Ryan added living in rural areas has its advantages, but also its disadvantages when it comes to emergency services.

"I live on a gravel road. I don't have sidewalks or streetlights. To me, those are features. I like that. The other part of living rural is, yeah, it's going to take longer for an ambulance, as well as police and fire to get to me. That's part of the deal."

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people sleep inside me. What am I?
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thrown away after work. What am I?
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Solutions on Page 34

Level: Beginner

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LYME DISEASE: WHAT IS HAPPENING IN ONTARIO?

Saturday, October 4: 2 p.m.

The Edison, Vienna & Area Museum, 6209 Plank Rd, Vienna

Dr Andrew Peregrine from the University of Guelph will speak to the prevention of Lyme Disease, the ticks that cause it, how to prevent it. Further info if needed email bayhamhistoricalsociety@hotmail.com

This is a free event and made possible by our members that volunteer at Jackpot Time, St Thomas Ontario!!

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The Tillsonburg Rotary Club is holding it's fall book fair at the Tillsonburg Mall from Monday, October 6 to Saturday, October 11. Give your used books, CD's and puzzles a new home! Help the environment by bringing your own bags to take home your purchases.

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If you are interested in playing please drop in to the Tillsonburg Legion Canteen Tuesday thru Saturday between 1 and 5 pm for more information! Must be 19 and over.

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A large selection of clothing and footwear for the entire family. Houseware, glassware, linens, home decor, paintings, toys and trinkets. Christmas decor, jewelry, books and much more. Find us in the fully accessible church hall.

Everyone is welcome. Admission is free. Please bring a bag (or two) to bring home your treasures.

OXFORD PHILATELIC SOCIETY CIRCUIT BOOK FAIR

October 25: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

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

Free Admission & Parking

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

Contact: Don Eaton dhfe@silomail.com

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

CHRISTMAS WITH COMMUNITY LIVING

Friday, December 5 – Free will donation.

St. John's Anglican Church,

46 Ridout Street West, Tillsonburg, Ontario

Join us, with our friends from Community Living, to start the Christmas season off with Christmas music and a good old Carol Sing. Christmas treats for all.

MODERN SQUARE DANCING IS FOR YOU!

Looking for something to do in the evening or something new to try? Modern square dancing is a great way to learn something new, have fun, meet new friends, relieve stress, and get some exercise! At Thames Valley Dance Club, we dance on Monday nights from 7 - 9 p.m. All you need is comfortable shoes and casual clothing. No experience or partner is required and anyone over the age of 12 is welcome (children from 12-15 with an adult, please). The 2025-2026 season has started at the Ingersoll Pipe Band Hall, 108 Wonham St. S. Ingersoll. The first night is free, and after that the cost is \$7.50 per person each Monday, paid monthly at the start of the month. For more information, contact Julie at 519-535-3314. Hope to see you on Sept 8th at the Ingersoll Pipe Band Hall!

INTERESTED IN BRIDGE?

Join us every Friday at the Tillsonburg Duplicate Bridge Club at 1 p.m. at The Senior Centre. Don't have a partner? Come anyway and we will match you up with someone. For more information, visit their Facebook page: TburgBridge.

TILLSONBURG LIONS

The Tillsonburg Lions meet on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays. You are invited to their dinner meetings in the Lion's Den at the Community Centre. If you are interested in giving back to your Community contact Jim at 519 409 0876 for more information.....all are welcome.

OXFORD GRIEF CARE:

FREE Monthly Grief Support Group

Register at: oxford.griefsupport@von.ca or 519-539-1231

Ext 6299 or 6296

TILLSONBURG

WHEN: 2nd Tuesday of every month

WHERE: VON Oxford Office 24 Brock St. W., Tillsonburg

TIME: 6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m.

INGERSOLL

WHEN: 4th Tuesday of every month

WHERE: Ingersoll Public Library 130 Oxford St., Ingersoll

TIME: 10:30 a.m. –12 Noon

WOODSTOCK

WHEN: 3rd Saturday of every month

WHERE: Sakura House Hospice 715180 Oxford Rd.4, Woodstock

TIME: 10:30 a.m. –12 Noon

OXFORD PHILATELIC SOCIETY

Meetings: 2nd Tuesday (2-4 p.m.) and 4th Tuesday (7-9 p.m.)

September to May

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

If you have never belonged to a stamp club, now's the time. Meet new friends, grow your knowledge and collection.

Contact: Don Eaton dhfe@silomail.com

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

FREE FRIENDLY BRIDGE GAME

Every Wednesday evening

Tillsonburg Senior Centre

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Sat.1 pm-10 pm, Sun.1 pm-6 pm.

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Friday, October 3, 17; Registration at 6:45

Starting at 7:00 p.m.

Everyone is Welcome. Draw for partners.

Cash only, we do not have debit, or ATM.

WINGS & THINGS PUB NIGHT

Friday, October 24; Starting at 5:00 p.m.

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OH SO MUCH SCARY, GHOULISH FUN!

JOIN US FOR OUR HALLOWEEN PARTY AND DANCE

Friday, October 31st

DRESS UP and enjoy a great night of fun and devilish adventure! Dance the night away with music and Karaoke by SUNSET DJ & KARAOKE. Cash only, we do not have debit, or ATM.

LEGION CHRISTMAS CRAFT & VENDOR SHOW

Sunday, November 23; 11:00 am- 3:00 pm

To book a table contact the legion and leave your name and phone number, or pop in during business hours. Cash only, we do not have debit, or ATM.

MEMBERS GENERAL MEETING

1st Wednesday of every month

Starting at 7 pm

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OBITUARY

ALEX FRANK MORE (AUGUST 8, 1945 - SEPTEMBER 28, 2025)



It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of Alex Frank More, surrounded by his family at St. Thomas-Elgin General Hospital on Sunday, September 28, 2025 at the age of 80 years. Beloved husband and best friend of Barbara More. Proud and loving father of Fay McCague (David) and Janna K. More (Donovan) and step father of Beverly Speirs and Rob VanDoninck (Nancy). Cherished grandfather of Nickolas Speirs, Claire VanDoninck and Ian VanDoninck. Beloved brother of Linda Chanyi and Kathe McCall (Jack).

Alex spent his working life as a farmer and later was employed at the Delhi Research Station and also enjoyed a rewarding career in real estate. Alex had a deep passion for history; especially classic cars and boats. He was a craftsman at heart specializing in wood and metal. Alex loved to tinker with anything that had a motor including cars, boats, tractors and combines. He spent countless hours refinishing two mahogany boats and for this he was featured in an article in the Parkinson's Journal magazine about how he was able to work with his hands while having Parkinson's Disease. The article was entitled "I Have Parkinsons But It Doesn't Have Me". Alex was truly a man of many talents and he had a unique ability to connect with all. A life well lived.

In keeping with Alex's wishes, cremation has taken place. A Celebration of Life will be held at the Hickory Hills Recreation Centre on Saturday, October 11, 2025 from 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm. At Alex's specific request, in lieu of flowers, memorial donations to Parkinsons Research may be made directly online or The Edison, Vienna & Area Museum may be made by contacting Ostrander's Funeral Home (519-842-5221) who have been entrusted by the More family. Condolences may be made at www.ostrandersonline.com

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CLASSIFIEDS

OBITUARY

CYRIL CHANTIEL DEVELTER

(MARCH 12, 1930 - SEPTEMBER 29, 2025)



Passed away peacefully, surrounded by his loving family, our much-loved father, grandfather, great-grandfather and friend, Cyril Chantiel Develter has been happily reunited in Heaven with his dearly missed wife Josie, on September 29th, 2025, at Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital, in his 96th year. Cyril was born in Chatham, Ontario, to Leon and Alida (nee Hollevoet) Develter. Cyril was a member of St. Mary's

R.C. Church, where he volunteered often over the years. Cyril grew tobacco in the Delhi and Tillsonburg areas for several years. He was then a dedicated Custodian at St. Joseph's Catholic Elementary School, Tillsonburg between 1977 and 1994. Cyril loved this position, where he could socialize with the kids. In his ongoing effort to support St. Joseph's, he recently generously contributed towards a fundraising effort for new playground equipment, which was installed in June 2025. Above all else, he was so proud of his children and their families. Always a caring father and father-in-law to: David (Holly), of Georgetown; Danny (Carol), of Tillsonburg. Very proud grandfather to: Eric (Jen) Develter; Adam (Nicole) Develter (their children Adeline & Scarlett); Tabitha Verbuyst (Zac) (Tabitha's children Chloe, Lilah); Brandon (Melanie) Weber (their children Kaiden, Keilex & Violet); Kelly (Quintin) D'Arcey; Vanessa (Brandon) Starr (their son Henry). Also survived by several extended family members. Predeceased by his beloved wife of 50 years Josie (Verheyden) Develter (January 16, 2005) and by his brothers Andy (2001) (wife Emily, 2001); Gus (2009) (wife Agnes, 2008).

"The Develter family wishes to acknowledge the Tillsonburg & District Multi-Service Centre for all of your services, care and support. Also, we wish to acknowledge the wonderful care and comfort provided to Cyril by the Doctors, Nurses and Staff at the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital."

Friends, neighbours and relatives are invited to attend public visitation on Friday, October 3rd, between 2:00 and 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 and 8:00 p.m. in the Maurice J. Verhoeve Funeral Homes Chapel, Tillsonburg. Parish prayers will be held on Friday evening (time not set before press time). In keeping with Cyril's expressed wishes, a traditional Funeral Mass of Christian Burial will be held on Saturday, October 4th, 2025, at 10:30 a.m. at St. Mary's Church (51 Venison St. W.), by Rev. Fr. Seejo John. Burial follows in Tillsonburg Cemetery. All funeral attendees are invited to attend a reception, at the Tillsonburg Soccer Club (275 Quarterline Rd.), immediately following interment.

Everyone who knew Cyril is invited to share favourite memories, photos, personal condolences or to contribute memorial donations to "St. Mary's Church- Building Fund" or to the "Tillsonburg & District Multi-Service Centre" via Cyril's online tribute page at www.verhoevefuneralhomes.com or by contacting the Maurice J. Verhoeve Funeral Homes- Burial and Cremation Services Inc. (519) 842-4238, which has been entrusted with all funeral arrangements, with confidence.

OBITUARY

ANN MCKNIGHT DURALIA



Ann McKnight Duralia was an eager participant in life, greeting the world with a full heart, kind words and an easy smile. Her compassion, strength and good humour nourished those around her, so it is with great sorrow that we announce her passing on Sept. 22, 2025, at age 68.

Born in Tillsonburg on Nov. 21, 1956, Ann was a determined and resilient woman whose life was defined by personal growth, professional reinvention, and boundless love for her family.

Above all was her love for her sons, Mitchell and Aiden, her grandchildren Audrey and Elliott, and her husband John. Her boys were her world, and she made every sacrifice to ensure their wellbeing and success. When her grandchildren came along, they became the sparkling lights of her world.

After graduating from Annandale, Ann married her high school sweetheart, Walter Kleer, with whom she had her children. While family was unequivocally Ann's proudest achievement, she was also a successful career woman. She worked at the Tillsonburg News, then became a dental hygienist in both Tillsonburg and Port Colborne. After completing university, she moved into human resources, working for WSIB, Tillsonburg Livingston Centre and ultimately as the manager of HR for the County of Perth.

Ann and her second husband, John, lived together in Tillsonburg a few years before he relocated to New York City. Together, they embarked on an unconventional long-distance marriage -- while Ann made a new home in Stratford, John settled into life in Queens. Their cross-border life was full of travel, hosting friends and family in NYC, and soaking up the culture and vibrancy of the city. Ann genuinely loved visiting NYC. While she enjoyed the bright lights of Broadway and the many concerts she and John attended, she equally appreciated the simpler rhythm of the city. Ann frequently perused the shops and eateries of Austin Street in Forest Hills and was most at peace in her favorite spot, Bryant Park. It was there she would often wait, enjoying a quiet moment before meeting John after his workday had finished.

She loved music. Her youth was filled with concerts, from Elvis to Harry Chapin. The stereo was always playing, and she knew the lines of every song ever done by the singers that defined her generation -- Carole King, Cat Stevens, Carly Simon -- but she cherished newer artists too, from Amy Winehouse to Jack White

and Justin Bieber. That love for sound inspired her children's passion for music, with both becoming proficient musicians.

Ann was modest and reserved, except when she wasn't. Lifelong friends and family were well acquainted with her carefree, "let's get into a bit of trouble tonight" attitude.

Whether it was youthful misadventure at the Hungarian Hall or showing New Yorkers what revelry on the dance floor really looked like, Ann knew how to have fun.

While Ann mostly took the backseat to others, sometimes the spotlight found her. In her youth, she was a champion figure skater, racking up medals and trophies and many friends along the way. Throughout her life, Ann was active in recreational and volunteer activities, including helping the disadvantaged in Honduras.

Ann's zest for life was blunted by Parkinson's disease. The diagnosis pushed her to early retirement, and John returned to Canada shortly after. They moved to Ancaster, and together travelled near and far, from Canada's east and west coasts to various European and Caribbean destinations, with Ann sampling every dessert on offer along the way.

Ann is lovingly remembered by her husband John Duralia, and her sons Mitchell Kleer and his wife Chelsea Gabel, Aiden Kleer and his wife Michaela (nee:Parker), as well as her cherished granddaughter, Audrey, and beloved grandson, Elliott.

She was predeceased by her parents, J.C.R. McKnight (1995) and Ruby Louise Jacob (1996), stepfather Bob Jacob (2024), and is survived by her siblings: brothers Cam (Cynthia nee: Horton) and Ashley (Darius Tamondon) and sisters Carol (Bernie Smit), Lisa (Andrew Yeates), Louise (Paul Bining) and Rene (Tom Duralia). She was a precious stepdaughter to Pat McKnight, and a playful and loving aunt who will be greatly missed by her many nieces and nephews, and of course, by her cherished dog, Lucy.

A Celebration of Life will be held at the Tillsonburg Curling Club on Saturday, Oct. 4 from 1 - 4 p.m. All who knew and loved Ann are welcome to attend.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Ann's memory to Parkinson Canada.

Ann will be deeply loved, missed and forever remembered. Her precious time with us left a legacy that will continue to inspire us. She was a loving mother, sister, grandmother, daughter and friend, who is now at peace. We mourn her loss, remember her and continue to live in her honour.

Thank you so very much Ann for everything.

TREES

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