

# St. Marys Independent

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## AN EAGLE EYE VIEW

This large bald eagle was hanging out looking for his next meal out on the River Road on Sunday.

(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

## Former provincial Green Party candidate and local teacher urges St. Marys council to endorse Bill 21

Ontario Green Party bill aims to put restrictions on developing farmland

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A local teacher and former Perth-Wellington candidate for the Green Party of Ontario is urging St. Marys council to endorse Bill 21, the Protect Our Food Act, put forward by provincial Green Party leader and Guelph MPP Mike Schreiner and Haldimand-Norfolk MPP Bobbi-Ann Brady.

Speaking as a delegate before council at its Jan. 13 meeting, Ian Morton shared his

and the Green Party of Ontario's concerns with the Conservative government's development-first agenda at the cost of roughly 319 acres of Ontario farmland every day.

"Through my heavy involvement in politics over the last decade, I feel I have a pretty good understanding of the pressures facing communities in Perth County, specifically St. Marys, Stratford and rural areas as well," Morton said. "So, here we come to the great need for housing across the

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

## Local author to debut her first novel at Betty's Bookshelf later this month

ALEX HUNT

Independent Reporter

St. Marys Public Library clerk Laura McAsh has finished her first novel, a project she credits to self-belief and perseverance.

*Alison's Adventures in Time* is a book McAsh has been writing since 2015. Following the publication of her novel later this month, McAsh will host a launch event at Betty's Bookshelf on Jan. 31 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Loosely inspired by Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass* and *What Alice Found There*, *Alison's Adventures in Time* is a whimsical young-adult, science-fiction novel featuring elements of time travel and self-discovery. Set in 2007, the book centres on a 17-year-old girl named Alison who struggles to find her purpose in life. Alison embarks on a journey of self-discovery as she aids a time-travelling organization in helping to overthrow their corrupt leader.

"It's not addressed, but it's alluded that Alison is somewhere on the spectrum, and I'm neurodivergent myself," said McAsh. "Writing this book has been a true healing process for me. I wish a book like this had been around when I was her age because I really struggled with what I wanted to do with my life."

"I hope this book resonates with the (young adult) group. The book is about finding confidence in yourself while retaining who you are."

After facing rejections from traditional

CONTINUED TO PAGE 3

**CB**

**Owen Lewis-Havard**

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COMMUNITY

# Council weighs support for Bill 21 as farmland loss raises concerns

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

province, and hence a lot of the actions that are being undertaken by our provincial government.

“St. Marys, obviously, is growing in many ways, which is great, and across the province this is happening, so we’re being faced with many land-development choices that are being made and enacted, sometimes quite quickly. Provincial legislation Bill 5, now specifically allows for overriding of provincial rules and regulations as well as municipal policies and through the continued use of MZO’s (ministerial zoning orders) or the new potential with special economic zones.”

The Conservative government’s controversial Bill 5, the Protect Ontario by Unleashing Our Economy Act, received royal assent last June and aims to reduce regulatory requirements for developers by amending existing laws including the Endangered Species Act, Environmental Assessment Act and Mining Act, and by introducing special economic zones where selected projects can be exempt from compliance with provincial laws, regulations and municipal bylaws.

As regulations are relaxed for developers, Morton told council the province is losing more farmland to urban sprawl every day. Considering the agricultural sector contributes more than \$47 million to the provincial economy and supports jobs for one in every nine Ontarians, Morton said there is an urgent need to put protections in place against the threat of development.

“To protect our agricultural sector, which is of course vital for so many economies in Perth County and across the province, to protect the autonomy of municipalities to be able to make their own decisions on how development happens within their communities and to make sure that farmers and families have decisions and choices that they can make as well, we come to the need for the creation of Bill 21.

“... Bill 21 would establish the food belt protection plan and advisory committee. This would be a committee made up of independent stakeholders in the agricultural business, in soil sciences and in agricultural land decisions. There would be no politicians involved. The committee’s function would be to make recommendations for a food belt protection plan, they would ensure the preservation and enhancement of a geographically continuous agricultural land base – hence we get the food belt. Much like ... the Greenbelt where we have environmentally sensitive lands, ... the food belt would create a similar idea but based around our food security, protecting our agricultural lands.”

Bill 21, Morton explained, would amend the Planning Act for land prescribed for agricultural use by prohibiting rezoning of those lands unless an agricultural impact assessment is undertaken, regardless of any declarations of MZO’s or special economic zones.

Morton said a number of municipalities have already endorsed Bill 21 and the creation of a Food Belt, including

Hamilton, Grey Highlands, Centre Wellington, Halton Hills and the Town of Minto.

“No matter where the sprawl happens, it’s eventually going to affect all of us because our food supply is going to be affected, correct?” Coun. Marg Luna said in response to Morton’s presentation. “I would like to support a motion (endorsing this bill).”

Having passed its first reading in May 2025, Morton said Bill 21 isn’t expected to be back at the House of Legislature for its second reading until this May, offering Luna and town staff time to bring a notice of motion around supporting this bill with wording specific to St. Marys back to council at a future meeting.

However, some councillors expressed concerns with the idea of adding another layer of red tape to the development process. Coun. Dave Lucas, a general contractor by trade with years of experience in the construction industry, told Morton he isn’t comfortable with the idea of supporting the creation of another regulatory body, especially one without any municipal representation.

“I definitely support agriculture in our community; I guess I look at this as another provincial layer on top of (everything else),” he said. “As far as providing autonomy to the municipalities, this is still a bill coming from the province saying this is farmland that you as a municipality can’t touch unless you jump through A, B and C which, to be quite frank, has gotten us into a lot of the troubles we’re in now.

“So, to say that it would continue to

give municipal councils autonomy, it would still be coming from the province and it would be another layer on top of the Greenbelt, which doesn’t necessarily affect us, but it just creates that layer and it creates that next hurdle for us to go through.”

While Morton said the bill could encourage municipalities to build within their borders instead of expanding beyond them, Lucas pointed out the town is already focused on increasing density and promoting infill developments because it is simply more expensive to develop beyond the town’s settlement area.

Though Lucas suggested the lack of municipal representation on the proposed farm belt committee would leave the town without a seat at the table, Morton said the province’s potential use of MZO’s and special economic zones could leave the town, as well as local agricultural stakeholders, without a seat at the table regardless. Morton pointed to the ongoing procurement of 770 acres of prime farmland down the road in Wilmot Township for an as-of-yet undisclosed mega industrial site as an example.

“I would suggest, from some of the comments I’m hearing, we need to tailor our resolution, if there was a resolution, to be more specific to St. Marys,” Mayor Al Strathdee said. “For example, I think the resolution from the City of Hamilton is quite different, I think, than one coming from St. Marys would be. ... Perhaps we need to do some more research on Bill 21, as well, but I do think this is certainly a worthwhile discussion.”

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# St. Marys author launches debut novel after years of perseverance

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

publishers, McAsh explored the idea of self-publishing but decided that wouldn't work either.

"There was a lot of math and business involved with self-publishing, and I'm not good at any of that; I'm a creative," McAsh said.

McAsh connected with Contrarian Publishing, a hybrid publisher that was interested in publishing the novel. For a fee, hybrid publishing provides services such as editing, formatting and cover design. The process allowed McAsh to collaborate with editors while maintaining creative control.

"It's important to believe in yourself. Writing is an isolating experience and it's easy to be hard on yourself," said McAsh. "Book two is in the works right now, and I plan to make a trilogy; each book will focus on a different member of Alison's family."

*Alison's Adventures in Time* will be available in paperback on Jan. 27 at the library and Betty's Bookshelf. Readers can also purchase it online on the Contrarian Publishing website, Barnes & Noble and Amazon.

"If you're passionate about something, then do it. You're expressing yourself creatively, and who you are, and if one person benefits in any way from your creativity, then it's worth it," McAsh said.



Laura McAsh with her debut novel, *Alison's Adventures in Time*.

(ALEX HUNT PHOTO)



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EDITORIAL

# The need for mandated winter-driving training in Canada

GALEN SIMMONS  
*Regional Editor*

Driving in the winter and driving the rest of the year are two very different beasts in Canada.

While driving always comes with inherent dangers – distractions, impaired or entitled drivers, weather, road conditions and the like – the mere fact that snow and ice are pretty much ever-present on road surfaces in the winter cranks those dangers up several notches.

Stopping takes more time, visibility can reduce to almost nothing in the blink of an eye and there is no way to know if the driver behind you is experienced enough to know how to handle the sudden appearance of break lights ahead of them. Both inexperience and overconfidence can be killers in the winter, and in my opinion, our driver-education system falls short in preparing drivers for what they will face after the first snowfall in November.

I consider myself a fairly adept winter driver, not because I learned that set of skills while taking drivers-ed at age 16, but because I spent the first year and a half of my career in Saskatchewan.

Before I left the relatively mild winters I grew up with in Hamilton for the frigid hellscape that is Saskatchewan in the wintertime, I had the good fortune of discovering Canada’s Worst Driver, a show that aired on the Discovery Channel from 2005-2018. The show, its host, Andrew Younghusband, and its panel of driving and legal experts identified the most dangerous drivers across the country, attempted to rehabilitate them with the skills and knowledge they needed to be safe on the road, and confiscated the license of the driver who, at the end of each season, was deemed Canada’s Worst Driver.

While this show taught me a lot about what not to do on Canadian roads, the

most important lesson I took away from it was what to do when you find yourself skidding on ice and snow. The advice I retained somewhere deep in my subconscious about staying calm, easing off the gas and steering in the direction I want to go, which I then put into practice numerous times while driving the icy roads of our middle prairie province, has saved me from wrecking my car and injuring myself time and again.

But why did I have to learn that from a television show? Shouldn’t winter driving be part of the standard drivers-ed training we all receive, and not just an extra course you can pay for after becoming fully licensed? Should it not be mandatory for newcomers to Canada, especially those immigrating from much-warmer climates who are not used to Canadian winters, to learn how to skid safely and with control?

Understanding the concepts and putting them into practice are two very different things, and the first time a new driver or a driver who is new to Canadian roads puts those concepts into practice should not coincide with the first snowfall of winter. Driving and stopping on ice and snow should be practiced in a controlled setting or, at very least, with a trained driving instructor in the passenger seat.

There are many other lessons Canadian drivers need to learn, including the importance of winter tires, how to prepare your car for the colder months and what to do if you end up stuck in a ditch or a snowbank at the side of the road in the winter.

While that information is all readily available online, including on the Transport Canada website at [tc.canada.ca/en/road-transportation/stay-safe-when-driving/winter-driving](https://tc.canada.ca/en/road-transportation/stay-safe-when-driving/winter-driving), we could all use a little more practice to keep ourselves and others safe on the road.

Overheard

AT THE COFFEE SHOP

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Ok, show of hands, who is tired of snow?

The spirit of Christmas is now gone as the credit card statement arrives

Have you heard something humorous around town that you think might be of interest to others?

Either email them to us at [info@stmarysindependent.com](mailto:info@stmarysindependent.com) with the title "Overheard at The Coffee Shop", call 519.284.0041 or drop by the office to let us know!

Bravo	Boo
<p>We have 3 Bravos this week.</p> <p>1) Thanks you to the store owners, the businesses, and everyone that helped to make our town so beautiful during this Christmas season. The strings of the white lights now on Queen Street help to light up our dark January evenings.</p> <p>2) Bravo to the Lincolns hockey team and all those who make this organization a success. It's a great January Blue's Buster! Bravo to Spencer, Joel, Cole, our broadcasters of the Lincs game on <a href="http://stmaryradio.com">stmaryradio.com</a>, who inform and entertain us when we can't attend in person.</p> <p>3) To all the town employees who weather the storms to keep our roads safe.</p>	<p>We have no Boos this week.</p>
<small>*Please note all Boos and Bravos must be signed in order to be considered. Bravos and Boos are submitted by community members and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the St. Marys Independent.</small>	

Quote of the Week

“The old order is not coming back. We should not mourn it. Nostalgia is not a strategy. But from the fracture, we can build something better, stronger and more just”

- Prime Minister Mark Carney during his speech in Davos, Switzerland Jan. 20.

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St. Marys Independent

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Thoughts OF THE WEEK

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Canada



# Betty's Bookshelf launching monthly audiobook subscription service in February

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

As the popularity of audiobooks continues to grow, Betty's Bookshelf will soon be offering a monthly subscription for audiobooks.

Through the store's Betty's Bookpost subscription program and in partnership with Libro.fm, subscribers of the Listening Edition will receive a curated selection of audiobooks selected by staff as of February.

"As far as we know, we are one of the first Canadian bookstores to offer an audiobook subscription, but this format of consuming books is only increasing in popularity and I think it's important to provide this option to our customers to meet their reading needs in a way that works best for them," said Jan Scott, the owner of Betty's Bookshelf. "We're excited to offer our customers the experience of a curated selection of audiobooks each month, handpicked by the booksellers at Betty's Bookshelf."

The local bookshop has sold audiobooks to customers via Libro.fm since 2023. Libro.fm is similar to Audible but instead of Amazon, the service partners with inde-

pendent bookstores.

"They allow customers to select which independent bookstore they want to support with their purchases, and any unsigned purchases are divided evenly between all participating bookstores," Scott said. "They also support public libraries, fight book bans and have recently become a Certified B Corp. We feel really good working with them."

Scott said all kinds of Betty's Bookshelf customers are eager to listen to audiobooks through Libro.Fm.

"Many of our regular customers have signed up for a monthly Libro.fm credit, making the switch from Audible, in order to support our store with their audiobook purchases," she said. "We also have support from people who've only ever shopped at our store once or twice, or from people who love what our bookstore does but don't live close enough to shop with us regularly."

To purchase audiobooks online, visit [www.libro.fm/indies](http://www.libro.fm/indies) and select Betty's Bookshelf. More information about Betty's Bookpost can be found online by visiting [www.bettysbookshelf.com/betty-s-bookpost](http://www.bettysbookshelf.com/betty-s-bookpost).

## Whiteout Conditions Blanket St. Marys During Blizzard Warning



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Environment Canada issued a blizzard warning for the area beginning Monday. Pictured, blowing snow obscured visibility from downtown St. Marys north toward the Grand Trunk Trestle Bridge

## STONETOWN CRIER

The latest municipal news from the Town of St. Marys



### GRAND RE-OPENING

January 24, 2026 | 12:45 - 2:45 PM

Make a splash at the Aquatics Centre Grand Re-Opening event! This event will feature a big splash, giveaways, free swim (courtesy of Quadro Communications) and other celebratory fun!

[www.townofstmarys.ca/aquaticscentre](http://www.townofstmarys.ca/aquaticscentre)



### DOWNTOWN PARKING REMINDER

Parking on downtown streets in St. Marys is limited to 3 hours.

Parking and Traffic By-law include:

- Parking in the downtown core on-street is restricted to 3 hours.
- On-street parking is not permitted in the downtown core between 2 AM and 6 AM.

[www.discoverstmarys.ca/parking](http://www.discoverstmarys.ca/parking)



### ZONING BY-LAW OPEN HOUSE

January 28 | 4 - 8 PM | MOC

The Town of St. Marys is hosting a drop-in Zoning By-law Open House at the Municipal Operations Centre to provide residents, business owners, and members of the community with the opportunity to give input and learn more about the Zoning By-law Review. Not able to attend or have questions?

Email: [gbrouwer@town.stmarys.on.ca](mailto:gbrouwer@town.stmarys.on.ca)



### WINTER SAFETY REMINDERS

Residents are reminded to regularly check their property and ensure the following:

- At least three feet of clearance around all fire hydrants
- Snow and ice are cleared from all furnace and dryer vents
- All exits including rear doors, decks, and walkways are kept clear to provide multiple ways out in an emergency



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**Senior of the Week**



Donna McKay is celebrating her 90th birthday on Jan. 23. Donna was born on a very stormy winter's day in Dorchester. She was married to William McKay for 70 years and has five children, 16 grandchildren, 30 great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren. Donna has always been busy baking ,organizing events with her church and taking care of her family. All of her family wish her the best day.

If you would like to nominate someone for Senior of the Week, contact us at 519.284.0041 or [info@stmarysindependent.com](mailto:info@stmarysindependent.com).

# Soup Crawl returns to St. Marys

ALEX HUNT

Independent Reporter

The Soup Crawl is once again inviting residents to sample soups made by local businesses and vote for their favourite.

On Feb. 25 from 6-7:30 p.m., The St. Mary Downtown BIA is hosting the second annual community Soup Crawl. Participating businesses will make a soup of their choice, allowing locals to sample a variety of recipes along the downtown core, and ballots will be available at each location for residents to vote on their favourite.

The next day, the BIA will tally the ballots and announce the winner. Eighty-one ballots were counted after last year's event.

The idea originated in February 2024 with Betty's Bookshelf owner Jan Scott. Staff at the bookstore made different soup recipes from a cook-book and hosted a tasting, inviting locals to try out a variety of flavours and vote on their favourites.

The idea expanded into a community event with the BIA's involvement the following year.

"We do a lot of things that cost money. I like the idea of doing something for the community where there's no entry barrier and anybody can participate," Scott said.

Scott hopes 15 businesses will take part this year. Last year's crawl featured 10 contestants serving favourites such as Mexican tortilla, spicy chicken, corn chowder, roasted tomato and bean soups. Businesses will provide dietary information on each soup.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Dan Troyer, owner of Troyer's Spices, participating in a previous Soup Crawl.

Scott said she enjoys the idea of the event running to its 10th anniversary and beyond.

"I never thought it would get this popular or expand the way it has," Scott said. "In a small town, people are always looking for something fun

and different to do, and it's worked out really well."

A form was emailed to the BIA membership for businesses interested in signing up to participate in the crawl.

## WEEKEND QUIZ

By Jake Grant

1. What is a second full moon in a month called?
2. What was Alaska called before 1867?
3. What King of England had 6 wives?
4. Legendary American frontiersman "Buffalo Bill" died where?
5. Eczema affects which organ of the body?
6. How many individual 1x1 squares are on a chess board?
7. What animal has the largest ears?
8. The Archipelago Sea belongs to what country?
9. What year did actor Heath Ledger die?
10. What company created Clash Royale?

This week's answers are found on pg. 31



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CLOSED



St. Marys Building Center will now be open Sundays starting January 11th, 10am until 3pm.

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# The Golden Penguin strikes again



(NANCY BICKELL PHOTO)

Peter Rice presenting the Golden Penguin award to co-winners Shirley Porter and Andrew Middleton, members of the St. Marys United Church.

## JOHN STEVENS

*Submitted to the Independent*

In 2022, an annual tradition started during the St. Marys Kinsmen Santa Claus Parade. By the Seat of Our Pants Productions started awarding The Golden Penguin awards.

The award is presented to individuals or groups who do things that create a community spirit and bring people together. Another way of putting it is their efforts provide a continuous reason for celebrating events and actions that make St. Marys such a special place.

Past winners include:

- 2022: The Kinsmen Club for the annual Santa Claus Parade, and the people who organize Giving Tuesday.
- 2023: Marlene Foreman for running the Teddy Bear Reunion, and Stewart Grant and Wendy Lamond for the St. Marys Independent.
- 2024: Rachel Roberts O'Neill for the Christmas Eve dinners, and Dave Steward and Gwen Ament for organizing To St. Marys With Love.

There is only one winner for 2025. Andrew Middleton and Shirley Porter for being the driving forces behind the St. Marys United Church community dinners.

The dinners occur roughly every second Monday throughout the year, excluding July and August. They are open to everyone. The cost is whatever attendees want

to put in the donation bin. Nobody is excluded.

There are many organizations that make these dinners successful by donating to some of the Monday meals. Here is a list of those who contribute to the success:

- Avonbank Church
- Sunset Diner
- Trouw Nutrition
- St. Marys Kinette Club
- St. Marys council
- St. Marys Pickleball Association
- Community Living St. Marys and Area
- Giving Tuesday
- To St. Marys With Love
- St. Marys United Church (Bob Doupe)
- McLean Taylor Construction
- Cascades
- St. Marys Rotary Club
- St. James Lodge
- Hodges Funeral Home
- First Baptist Church
- St. James Anglican Church
- Home Hardware
- St. Marys Lions Club
- Presbyterian Church
- Salvation Army
- St. Marys Kinsmen
- Women of the United Church.

After 17 years of operation, there is no sign of them slowing down. They are certainly a perfect example of what The Golden Penguin is all about.

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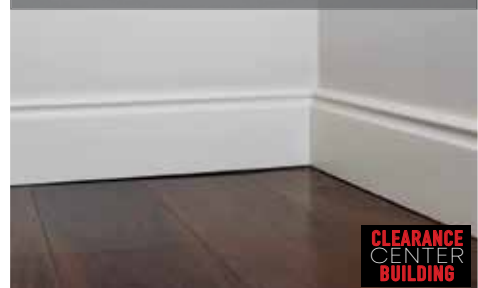
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# St. Marys council chooses not to back UTRCA opposition to provincial government's Bill 68

## Councillors identify potential benefits with province's plan to consolidate conservation authorities

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Though St. Marys council has some concerns with the province's plan to consolidate the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) with seven other conservation authorities under a provincially appointed and overseen governance body, council will not endorse the UTRCA's expressed opposition to that plan.

After Bill 68, the Plan to Protect Ontario Act, received royal assent on Nov. 27, 2025, the UTRCA asked its member municipalities, including St. Marys, to express its formal opposition to the changes proposed to Ontario's Conservation Authorities Act, as well as to a proposal to consolidate Ontario's existing 36 conservation authorities into seven regional conservation authorities. That proposal includes the merging of UTRCA with seven other conservation authorities stretching from as far north as Orangeville and Shelburne to as far south as Windsor and Essex County, which would be called the Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority.

"Instead of being directed by locally elected and appointed representatives in the format that we are currently accustomed to, this action will see your local conservation authority become part of a larger regional authority that will in turn be directed by a provincial agency (the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency)," UTRCA chair and Perth County Warden Dean Trentowsky wrote in a letter asking the councils for the UTRCA's member municipalities to formally oppose the formation of the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (OPCA) and the subsequent conservation authority consolidations.

"... The current conservation authority network was built on the concept of mak-

ing local watershed management decisions by using local resources, local knowledge and local expertise. This also includes the financial resources and the physical infrastructure that has been built up and maintained by the local watershed municipalities over several decades. Therefore, it's essential and vitally important for our local member municipalities that this decision-making and management process remain in the capable hands of the locally elected and locally appointed representatives who remain directly accountable to the communities that they serve."

At the Jan. 13 St. Marys council meeting, councillors were provided with details on the province's plan and more information on why the UTRCA and other conservation authorities are actively opposing it.

After attending an information session hosted by the province on these changes last month, at which he and other municipal representatives had the opportunity to ask questions, voice concerns and provide input on the provincial plan, Mayor Al Strathdee told councillors there are some parts of the plan he supports.

"As we've seen in the past, this is another example where all the changes aren't really spelled out and we're not exactly sure what the act really means. We've gone through this with planning as well, and that is a criticism," Strathdee said. "... In some respects, the province was somewhat conciliatory (at the meeting), saying, 'This is our plan. What do you like? What don't you like? And where do you want to go forward?' And I heard consistently (from those who attended) that 'we don't want any change.' If there's one thing from this government, it's they believe in change and if they intend to make change, they make change."

"So, it was a little bit disappointing for me because there was a number of people

who were just comfortable with status quo and said, 'We don't want change, and by the way, we're making money from campgrounds, so don't take that away from us.' ... It was disappointing because there's certain things we could suggest and feedback we could provide in terms of the scope and the size, but by and large, people didn't want to talk about that."

While Strathdee said he is concerned with the size of the proposed Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority and the potential for St. Marys' seat at the governance table to be diminished, potentially leading to a loss of control over how the local watershed is managed, he said there are a number of components in the provincial plan that could improve how the local conservation authority operates.

"When you talk about the original intent of conservation authorities, the first meeting of (UTRCA) was upstairs in this building (St. Marys town hall) in the upper hall because there was a willingness of the farmers to protect the environment and get together to make change," Strathdee said. "As we've become a more urban country, unfortunately we've gotten away from that and municipalities like ourselves have lost a lot of influence."

"The big thing for me ... is the standardization of regulations (across all conservation authorities). ... There should be a standardization because we consistently run into things that happen in other conservation authorities in other areas that we are not allowed to do here, and it seems to be (about) whoever the engineer at the time is."

As an example, Strathdee pointed to the 2024 installation of an accessible dock and boat launch on the Thames River in Milt Dunnell Field. While the UTRCA had installed the same style of dock at Wildwood Conservation Area and similar docks have

been installed in other parts of the province with conservation authority approval, Strathdee said the St. Marys dock took two and a half years of engineering and \$80,000 before it was finally installed and opened for public use.

Strathdee also suggested the UTRCA's lack of a 20-year capital plan that would allow municipalities to plan for higher capital costs in the future could be another area for improvement under the province's plan.

"To me, when I read the (UTRCA's proposed) resolution (for council to endorse), it just says, 'No, we like what we have,' " Strathdee said. "Well, that's not good enough for me to support the resolution and I think that's what came out of the City of London as well; they want consistency and they want change and that's what the government's proposing."

"... This isn't just about Upper Thames, this is about fairness in terms of the process and it seems like every time we get a new engineer, a new person, the rules change. ... Part of what they're trying to do is important, to standardize regulation. The other part of it, I think we should be focusing on how big (the regional conservation authorities are) and how the governance structure should be."

While the rest of council expressed concerns about the potential for more downloaded costs onto municipalities as a result of the amalgamation and whether the province's plan would actually result in efficiencies and savings through the creation of larger, regional conservation authorities and the provincial oversight body, they ultimately agreed with Strathdee about the need to improve the current conservation authority system and opted not to endorse the UTRCA's recommended resolution in opposition of Bill 68 and the conservation authority amalgamations.



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# Stratford Social Services helping renters bridge the gap toward home ownership

## Affordable homeownership loan program offers up to 5% downpayment on a home

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Stratford Social Services is continuing to offer financial assistance to residents of Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County, as well as prospective area residents, looking to make the jump from renting to home ownership.

The City of Stratford recently posted to its Facebook page about the social services department's affordable homeownership loan program, a provincially funded initiative first launched in 2007 that offers loans of up to five per cent of the purchase price of a home to those with low-to-moderate income who are currently renting and meet the program's eligibility requirements.

"There's been different pots of provincial money over the years, and then what happens is when the loans get paid back, it goes into a revolving fund that goes back out (in the form of loans)," said Stratford Social Services business integration man-

ager Shannon Archer. "Right now, we're just in the revolving fund; there hasn't been any new funding in several years – probably 2017 was the last time we allocated provincial funding to homeownership."

"The idea behind the program is to recognize the fact there are people in the rental market where their only barrier to homeownership is that downpayment. So, the idea is to provide them with a downpayment assistance loan in order to free up the rental market for those who truly can't afford homeownership."

Those loans, Archer explained, are either forgiven after 20 years if the owners remain residents of either Stratford, St. Marys or Perth County and retain that home as their sole and primary residence, or they are paid back when the home is either sold or transitioned into a rental property at five per cent of the value or sale price of the home.

One recent change to the program is the option for out-of-area renters to apply to the program with proof they have employment or an offer of employment in Stratford, St. Marys or Perth County. The program now also offers downpayment assistance loans on new builds – another recent change.

"(The program) has not been used a lot in the last several years, and I think that is more a sign of what's going on with the market and the craziness through the pandemic, but since 2007, we have extended out 90 loans totalling just over \$1.1 million," Archer said. "We have seen 41 of those repaid to us over the years, so that brought about \$650,000 back into the pot and some of that money has been re-extended out."

"Right now, we do have a healthy chunk of money sitting there. We did three loans in 2025 and then we did two from 2020-

2025 – there was a gap there when it wasn't really well used ... when homeownership wasn't affordable for anybody. And back in the early inception, it was so popular we would run out of money."

As a result of the soaring housing prices during the COVID-19 pandemic, Archer said there were a number of program participants who chose to sell their homes, which led to an influx of repaid loans and money being funnelled back into the program. Now, she said the social services department is once again promoting the program not only to free up rental housing and encourage those who work in the area to also live here, but because there is funding available now.

For more information and to review program eligibility requirements, visit [www.stratford.ca/en/inside-city-hall/housing.aspx](http://www.stratford.ca/en/inside-city-hall/housing.aspx), scroll down and click the "Affordable Homeownership" option.

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# United Way report tells local stories of the housing crisis

**ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT**

### Staff Contribution

The United Way Perth-Huron (UWPH) is continuing to draw attention to the local realities of the housing crisis.

In a new report, UWPH's Social Research and Planning Council (SRPC) shared the voices of Perth-Huron residents affected by rising housing costs, with dozens of quotes drawn from a survey conducted in 2024.

“This report is an attempt to document the impact of the housing crisis on Perth-Huron residents,” said UWPH director of community impact and research Kristin Crane in a press release. “While we hear about housing all the time, we don’t hear how it’s affecting our neighbours, our friends, our coworkers. Our goal was to tell those local stories.”

The report is called “Our Stories of the Housing Crisis.” It analyzes over 700 sur-

vey responses from Perth-Huron residents and lays out the major trends. Among other things, rising housing costs have left residents stuck in inappropriate housing, forced them to cut back on essentials like groceries and degraded their financial and psychological wellbeing.

Just as importantly, the report demonstrates that, “it is real people behind all the cries for help,” in the words of a West Perth resident. Almost half of the report is direct quotes from Perth-Huron residents. That’s because the survey featured open-ended questions to which respondents wrote their own answers.

“Our open-ended survey questions let people share what they felt was most relevant,” said Crane in the release. “It also let us capture their unique voices, their heartbreak, their wisdom and even their humour in the face of adversity.”

Those open-ended responses also allowed researchers to get a better sense of

how Perth-Huron residents think and feel about the housing crisis.

“These stories have so much pain in them and such a deep sense of unfairness,” added Crane. “This has been a harrowing experience for many Perth-Huron residents, and they want change.”

A common thread in the responses inspired the report's recommendation: that governments and community organizations should set ambitious regional targets for new community housing and make serious investments to achieve them.

“Respondents want housing to be affordable. They support new housing, particularly new affordable housing,” said Crane. “That’s a great project for governments, non-profits and all of us to take on in 2026.”

Anyone interested can find more information at [perthhuron.unitedway.ca](http://perthhuron.unitedway.ca).



(PHOTO COURTESY OF UNITED WAY PERTH-HURON)

**Will Wellington, manager of social research and planning for United Way Perth-Huron, poses with the “Our Stories of the Housing Crisis” report.**

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# Stratford Third Age Learning offering five new courses starting February

AMANDA NELSON

Independent Reporter

February courses are now open to seniors looking to expand their knowledge of worldly topics, including philosophy, literature, gender identity and more.

Stratford Third Age Learning (S3AL) is an organization dedicated to providing seniors with opportunities for active learning, which can help promote cognitive resilience and longevity, says Dr. Jean Hewitt, board chair.

"Retirement doesn't mean you just sit back and think into old age. You can't. It's a whole lifetime you have left," said Hewitt. "We have this amazing opportunity to learn about things that have always been on your bucket list."

S3AL is a new organization in Stratford, based on research on the aging brain and the need to keep the brain as active as possible, and also aims to

connect locals on a deeper level.

"The integrated and shared learning that goes on in our courses also means that people also get to know others, form new friendships and have fun," said Hewitt.

February courses have been added to the website, including new classes focused on adult learning and growth.

"I am particularly pleased that talented people are coming forward and volunteering to lead courses," said Hewitt. "Many people will know David Prosser from the humorous and informative talks he has given for the theatre."

Hewitt says that Prosser will teach a course called Pick a Year, in which he will share a year he thinks was pivotal in history. Members of the group will share their choice of a year that changed their lives and/or the world.

Another course offered this February is Where on Earth Have You Been, where Allan Stewart from St.

Marys will lead discussions on their travels.

"This will be a great chance for people to share information about memorable places to which they have been, local or far away," said Hewitt. "Participants can learn more about travelling as a senior, travelling solo and ways to get good deals on travel packages."

Specifically geared toward men, Doug Peterman, creator and educator, will lead a course with discussions focusing on the challenges of retirement, finding a new identity and facing the changes that come with aging.

The popular writing course and art-journaling courses are currently full. Those looking for these courses are encouraged to check back at later dates.

For more information, visit [www.S3AL.ca](http://www.S3AL.ca). For course registration, contact registrar Denise Winger at [stratford3al@gmail.com](mailto:stratford3al@gmail.com).



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# St. Marys Independent **SPORTS**

## Lincs win back-to-back on the road despite inconsistency

SPENCER SEYMOUR

*Independent Sports Reporter*

Since Nov. 23, the St. Marys Lincolns have been almost mechanical in how consistently strong their performances have been. During that stretch, fans would be hard-pressed to find a game in which, for large swaths of time, the Lincolns didn't look either good or great.

However, even the best teams won't stay so good and so consistent every game, but even when the Lincolns stubbed their toes at times in their recent games against the Stratford Warriors and Strathroy Rockets, they still found a way to win.

The Lincolns began a schedule in which four of their next five games were on the road on Jan. 16 when they went up the road to Stratford to face the Warriors. The highly structured play of both teams led to neither giving up much in the first period, with shots reading just 5-4 at the end of 20 minutes. Lincoln Moore opened the scoring for St. Marys, but Max Wildfong answered just eight seconds later for the Warriors.

Head coach Jeff Bradley said he was happy with the team's overall effort, even if the execution wasn't perfect.

"Stratford is a good team and it's a tough task going into a small rink like that where you don't have a lot of time to make decisions, and I thought we did really well," said Bradley. "The first period wasn't our best, but it wasn't our worst and I thought we did a good job getting through it. The second period was tough to judge because we're not used to turning pucks over so much, but both teams were doing it because of the pressure from each team."

The Lincolns struggled mightily in the second, struggling at times just to clear the puck from their zone. Eventually, Haden Frayne scored to give the Warriors a one-goal lead, which held up until the 16:37 mark of the period when Moore found Chase McDougall all alone in the slot, with McDougall firing home the game-tying goal.

"Stratford's gameplan was pretty apparent," Bradley said. "They wanted to get pucks in and attack our zone with speed on the forecheck, and we had to adjust to it. They would probably say they carried the play for most of the second, but it wasn't generating much. They didn't get a ton of shots and definitely didn't have a lot of scoring chances. I thought we held down the fort pretty well until Chase (McDougall) got that big goal for us."

Bradley added the goal by McDougall kicked off one of his best two-game stretches in recent memory.

"It was huge. You don't want to be going into the third period down a goal against a good team like Stratford. So, getting that goal was big, not only for the team, but for Chase himself. I know he's been wanting more out of himself and I think that really



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)

**Chase McDougall scores the game-tying goal in the second period of the St. Marys Lincolns' 6-4 win over the Stratford Warriors on Jan. 16.**

kicked him off this weekend. He was great in both of our games this weekend."

The game broke open in the third, with Ryan Hodkinson scoring just 32 seconds into the period, followed by Callum McAuley blasting a one-timer home 59 seconds later. A powerplay goal by Quinn Kipfer momentarily stopped the bleeding for Stratford, but just a minute and a half later, newcomer Pearse Huey lobbed a wrist shot from the point that found its way past Warriors' netminder Noah Bender, which led to Stratford pulling Bender in favour of Gage Hurst.

It was the second consecutive game in which the Lincolns have forced Stratford into a goalie change mid-game after Bender was pulled following the second period in the first meeting of the two teams on Dec. 11.

Bradley attributed his squad's better play in the third to "getting back to the gameplan."

"I thought our third period was fantastic and we deserved the win," Bradley said. "We stopped trying to make plays in our own zone and started flipping pucks into the neutral zone. I think that took a little bit out of Stratford and took away some of the momentum. It was a funky night for the goalies, especially in the third period. Six goals in the third period is not like either of our teams, so that's a little different for both teams."

The bench boss was also pleased with the steady play of Huey on the back end in his debut.

"We're really happy with Pearse (Huey). We did enough watching of video on him to know what he was, and we were look-

ing for a guy who limits mistakes, defends well and doesn't try to do too much. We wanted a stable player back there, and that's what he is."

Kipfer once again brought the game back within a goal for the Warriors 78 seconds later, but an empty netter by Hodkinson iced the game in a 6-4 final. Colby Booth-Housego got the win in his return to the Lincolns' crease.

It wasn't all good news for the Lincolns, however, as forward Oliver Lacko left the game with an injury. Lacko didn't return and didn't dress the next night in Strathroy.

**Lincs grind out feisty 4-3 win in Strathroy**

While their game against Stratford saw inconsistency in how the team performed as a whole from period to period, the Lincolns' game 24 hours later in Strathroy saw inconsistency in how each line performed.

"I thought there were some guys that played well, and I thought there were some guys that did not play well at all," Bradley said. "It seemed like our mind was elsewhere for some of our guys. I thought (Ryan) Hodkinson's line with (Blake) Elzinga and (Declan) Ready played really well. They do everything right. They don't try to do too much. They all offer something different. Anytime things are bad, I want to throw all three of those guys out, and it's nice to have a line like that."

Bradley also mentioned two blossoming mainstays of the Lincolns' penalty kill – McDougall and Devun Colebrook – as well as affiliate player Maddyx Chaput, as turning in strong showings.

"Chase (McDougall), Devun (Colebrook) and Callum (McAuley) played re-

ally well. Maddyx (Chaput) had a really good first junior hockey game. Chase and Devin played quite a bit. They were on a penalty kill together, and it's what we need and expect out of them.

"Mike (Herman) sees Chase as a fit on the penalty kill, and I think giving Chase a role like that, he takes pride in it," Bradley continued. "Chase is a very trustworthy player and he brings a lot of what we need, so for him to have the weekend he had was really good for him."

In a bizarre start to the game, the Rockets took so long coming onto the ice for the start of the game, it earned the home side a delay of game penalty at the start of the contest, setting up the first goal of the game coming just a minute and 14 seconds in when McAuley ripped home his seventh of the year. Just over 90 seconds later, Blake Elzinga finished off a sweet feed from Hodkinson to snap a nine-game goal drought.

Midway through the first, Ian Nurton cut the Lincolns' lead to one, but just under six minutes later, Ready restored the two-goal advantage with another powerplay goal. A powerplay goal by Zachary LeBlanc late in the first once again made it a one-goal game.

Ethan Weir scored another powerplay marker in the second, which eventually held up as the game-winning goal. LeBlanc once again brought the deficit down to one for the Rockets, but Strathroy couldn't find the equalizer, with Booth-Housego once again earning the win in goal, this time making 34 saves in the winning bid.



# U14 A Boys strike gold at Aurora tournament

SPENCER SEYMOUR

*Independent Sports Reporter*

The Frayne Custom Cabinets U14 A Boys St. Marys Rock won the top prize at the Joe Bentolila Classic tournament Jan. 9-11 in Aurora.

Head coach Josh Becker said the team's primary focus throughout the tournament was to put constant pressure on their opponents, which they did successfully.

"They were first to the puck, beating guys in, getting pucks deep and going to the net," said Becker. "Just those simple things were really clicking this weekend, and that's what we wanted. Our goal was to make it to elimination day, and they did that and then exceeded our goals. We've been pushing them all year, and they actually were pushing each other to be better. That was our biggest theme throughout the weekend, just continuing to push."

The Rock went undefeated through the four-game round-robin, finishing at the top of the 11-team pool heading into a semi-final game against the Kirkland Lake Blue Devils. Against Kirkland Lake, St. Marys found themselves struggling to beat a strong netminder, with the first of the game being scored late in the second period by the Blue Devils, sending the Rock into the third period down by a goal.

Grayson Gorley finally found an equalizer for St. Marys just over four minutes into the third with the lone assist going to Greyson Gillespie. A little over five-and-a-half minutes later, Liam Barker buried a go-ahead goal for the Rock, assisted by Lukas Francis, before Francis iced the game with an insurance marker in the final minute to secure a 3-1 victory, backstopped by Oliver Strickler in goal.

Becker detailed the team's resiliency, which went on to also be a theme in the finals as well.

"We had a slow start, but the guys just



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Frayne Custom Cabinets U14 A Boys St. Marys Rock won the gold medal at the Joe Bentolila Classic tournament Jan. 9-11 in Aurora. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Jake Ackert and Oliver Strickler. In the second row, from left, are Ben Becker, Cam Hughes, Greyson Gillespie, Logan Broughton, Grayson Gorley, Jackson Schoonerwoerd and Mason Soumalias. In the third row, from left, are head coach Josh Becker, Rylan Dobinson, Beckham Skillings, Sam Colvin, assistant trainer Joe Wilhelm, Simon Bailey, Elliott Wilhelm, Lukas Francis, assistant coach Ryan Francis, Bryce Blight, Liam Barker, trainer Brian Barker and assistant coach Jayden Rooney.

kept pushing and got pucks to the net, and finally, we were able to get one by the goalie. We came up against a hot goaltender and he stopped a lot. It was a great feeling when we finally broke through. They never stopped once from the semi-final to the finals, being down a goal in the semis and then being down two goals in the finals and eventually coming back to win both games."

In the gold-medal game, the Rock took on the potent LaSalle Sabres who, entering the tournament, were a top-10-ranked team in the province. Once again, St. Marys trailed the game, this time by two goals at the end of the first.

"We got down two goals early in the first and we talked during the intermission, regrouped with the guys, told them to push and they did that in the second and put up

four goals," Becker said. "And just from there, it just kept going. LaSalle is a great hockey club; they move the puck well, get it deep and cycle it around. But our boys just didn't let them get set up in the second and third."

The Rock's offensive eruption in the second period featured three goals in as many minutes, kicked off by Gillespie scoring with assists going to Skillings and Sam Colvin. Rylan Dobinson then tied the game at two apiece with Francis picking up the assist. Francis then scored a goal of his own, assisted by Barker and Simon Bailey, followed by a goal by Bryce Blight. In the third, LaSalle cut the Rock's lead back to one, but Francis scored in the final minute to clinch the 5-3 victory and the gold medal, with Strickler once again getting the win between the pipes.

Becker credited the entire team for delivering well-rounded production throughout the tournament and for always lifting up their teammates in moments of adversity.

"We have a deep group that can continue to push, and it doesn't matter from the first line to the third line. We have scoring throughout the lineup, and everyone shared the load all weekend and all year. We're not just relying on two of three individuals for all the scoring.

"They're always talking on the bench about things they can try differently and what they're doing well," continued Becker. "That's a huge thing we want them to do. I remind them all the time, 'Pick the guy beside you up.' Mistakes happen on the ice, but you have to figure out how to make them better the next time, and our boys do that."

# U11 A Boys capture gold at Peterborough tournament

TURNER ROTH

*Independent Sports Reporter*

The Social Thirty-One U11 A Boys St. Marys Rock took home the gold from the Peterborough Atom Liftlock tournament Jan 9-11.

Head coach Mike Johnson praised the team's effort throughout the weekend, noting the group delivered some of their best hockey of the year.

"I think that the tie against Ottawa in the round-robin and our win against Barrie in the semi-finals were two of the best games we've played all season," said Johnson. "It was really good competition, and the kids rose to it and played really good hockey the way we've been asking them to play. We executed things well and just played the game the right way. We kept moving our feet, moving the puck and playing a simple game."

In the semi-final game against the Barrie Colts, the Rock showed their ability to fight back, going down by a goal twice in

the second period before clawing back to steal the 3-2 win. Lincoln Jennings, Everett Crummer and Bode Keller had the goals for St. Marys.

Johnson praised the team's ability to keep the intensity up and stay in it with Barrie.

"We came out of the gate amazing. We had them hemmed in their end for most of the first period. The kids played great and we just couldn't buy a goal. Barrie scored the first goal, but we didn't waver and just kept the pedal down and battled back hard. Once we got that one-goal lead, the kids really focused on staying on the right side of the puck, winning battles and playing smart, simple hockey to close out the game.

"In moments like that, it's really impressive to see them show that mental toughness," Johnson continued. "We're constantly working with them on focus, accountability and staying on point. They are 10 years old, and at times it wavers, but



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Social Thirty-One U11 A Boys St. Marys Rock won the gold medal at the Peterborough Liftlock Atom Tournament Jan. 9-11. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Elliot Maddock, Nico Thompson, Lincoln Jennings, Kai Sherwood and Ryan Pickel. In the second row, from left, are Owen Simons, Myles Avey, Ashton Ropp, Kyle Johnson, Tucker Posthumus, Everett Crummer, Jack Anderson, Rhett Parkinson, Logan Masselis and Bode Keller. In the back row, from left, are assistant coach Mark Jennings, trainer Scott Crummer, head coach Mike Johnson, assistant coach Jaden Ropp and assistant coach Mitch Watt.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 16



# U15 A Boys earn silver at the Buffalo tournament

SPENCER SEYMOUR

*Independent Sports Reporter*

The A.N.A.F. U15 A Boys St. Marys Rock left Buffalo with the silver medals at the Buffalo River Outdoor Classic tournament Jan. 9-11.

Head coach Ryan Hewlett told the Independent the team's ability to keep their composure throughout the weekend was a big factor in their success.

"Resilience and restraint were major themes in this tournament," said Hewlett. "We didn't know what to expect with USA rules and refereeing tendencies. We cautioned our guys to keep body-checking low and avoid head contact at all costs due to the chance that this may be heavily regulated with consequences. I was proud of how our players showed restraint when receiving multiple head contact incidents in multiple games, as these sacrifices allowed us to stay out of the penalty box and get our powerplays."

The Rock went a perfect three-for-three in the round-robin play, with Hewlett noting several memorable moments in the three games leading up to the finals.

"Beating Lake Erie in the first game showed that we are a resilient team. We kept pushing and wearing down our opponent before pulling ahead in the third period. It was a great win, and as always throughout the year, we had all lines contributing well. We were a little sleepy in our Saturday morning 4-2 win over Perth-Lanark, but our captain, Evan (Wolfkamp), showed great leadership by putting the team on his back and scoring three goals and adding an assist."

Though St. Marys fell in the final game, resulting in the Rock bringing home the silver medals, there were plenty of valuable takeaways for the group with the postseason on the horizon.

"All year, we have emphasized getting pucks on the net and sprinting to the net to get rebounds. Throughout the tournament, we scored many goals that way, which was a big part of our success. It was another reflection of teamwork and racing to op-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

**The A.N.A.F. U15 A Boys St. Marys Rock returned home from the Buffalo River Outdoor Classic tournament Jan. 9-11 with the silver medals. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Drew Bomasuit and Braydon Wheeler. In the middle row, from left, are Landon Hewlett, Hayden Barker, Will Richardson, Quinn Porter, Owen Pletsch, Ashton Elliott and Luke Showers. In the back row, from left, are Ryan Hewlett, Colin Urquhart, Ben Graham, Grayson Urquhart, Evan Wolfkamp, Landon McDonald, Elliott Hudson, Luka Verkuyil, Luke Simons, Jacob Savile, Greg Wolfkamp and Sean Porter.**

portunity areas on the ice.

"We have gone 13-4 in tournaments this year, and after winning a tournament earlier in the year, this tournament gave us the bitter taste of defeat," Hewlett continued. "This will definitely fuel our stretch towards the playoffs, remembering the sting of defeat and how much we need to press to avoid it again in the playoffs."

With the tournament being played outdoors, Hewlett credited the group for battling through ice conditions that weren't always advantageous.

"The ice gets pretty chewed up," Hewlett said. "By the third period, there is a lot of snow on the ice. In all honesty, it limited our strengths a bit because we are built on fast skating, quick transitions and crisp passing, but with softer ice, some of that gets limited."

However, according to Hewlett, it was well worth it to give the players the unique

experience of playing outdoors.

"The outdoor tournament experience is one that the players were very interested in. Due to COVID limitations in their earlier years, only a couple of them have had the chance to experience this. The setting makes it pretty fun and there are different elements to prepare for, obviously, with temperatures, precipitation and the glare of the sun. The players had fun sporting toques, balaclavas, warmers and eye black to resist the elements. The parents braved it all, too, as it gets pretty chilly watching from the stands.

"The venue also allowed us to take in a Buffalo Sabres NHL game, where the excitement and energy of our players caught the attention of the Sabres players," Hewlett added. "All in all, we're very happy that our team could experience this together, and while not the outcome we were going for, it was great team bonding and definitely made lasting memories."

The tournament was yet another notch in the team's solid season to date, with Hewlett noting how the team's development over the last several years under Sean Porter and Greg Wolfkamp, who currently serve as assistants on the coaching staff, was pivotal in reaching this calibre of play.

"This is the most successful season most of these players have had, but really, it is the product of a couple of years in the making of instilling hockey skills, hockey sense and camaraderie among the players. Current assistant coaches Sean (Porter) and Greg (Wolfkamp) have been brewing this success for years. The players are a very high-character group who buy in, give their maximum effort and are genuinely friends on and off the ice, who want to win and compete for each other every shift. This combination of coaches and players is resulting in the upward trend we continue to see with this team."

## U11 A Boys win gold

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

in those big moments, they find ways to rise and battle through."

The bench boss added the moments of adversity are galvanizing the group as they look forward to the most important games of the season.

"It teaches them to play and battle those pre-game jitters, those frustration moments and execute when they're tired," Johnson said. "It's all about getting them ready for hopefully a good playoff drive, and ultimately, a trip to the OMHA (Ontario Minor Hockey Association) Championships. That's our team's goal is to be ready when the moment is the biggest. All these little tests along the way are putting these kids into situations where they can start to learn a little bit about themselves and how to respond to tough and stressful

moments and be ready to perform when things aren't necessarily always perfect."

In the finals, the Rock played the Ausable Valley Coyotes. Both teams were tired and exhausted from the hockey they had played up to that point, and the fun nights at the resort. It was a game where both teams started out flat, but eventually St. Marys took over the game.

"It was a pretty slow game, but we were able to capitalize on a few bounces. Our goalie played great and didn't let anything by him, which really helped because I was a little worried, if something had gone in at the wrong time, whether we would have had that same resilience in the moment.

"It's a historic tournament; it's been around for a long time. Wayne Gretzky

won that tournament, and this is the last year it's running, so we kept the kids amped up. That trophy might end up in the Hockey Hall of Fame someday, and this might be their pathway there, and that was their rallying cry for the weekend, and it worked."

Crummer opened the scoring with 38 seconds left in the first before Kai Sherwood and Kyle Johnson scored a minute and a half apart in the second, en route to a 3-0 victory to claim the gold medal. Ryan Pickel turned in a shutout performance in between the pipes.

According to Mike Johnson, the whole team displayed a commitment to a system of winning hockey.

"We are deep top to bottom. There are no gaps in our roster. We've got great goaltending, strong defence and good

forwards. We are able to just roll kids over the boards, outskate a lot of teams and we have a lot of talent out there. The kids can create things when they need to and create plays with each other, so we're a tough team to play against. When we really commit to a good forecheck and an aggressive system, we just smother teams, and they can't get anything going against us.

"I really think this weekend was about what the team accomplished," Mike Johnson added. "We had good goaltending when we needed it and you're never going to win without that, but there were no big individual performances. Really, it was about a group of 15 kids executing a structure and committing to playing the same way together, and when they did that, they were unbeatable."



# U13 LL Blue, U18 LL Rock earn Stonetown Classic silvers



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTOS)

Pictured on the left is Franklin Anderson making a save for the Easy Lift Doors U13 LL Boys Blue St. Marys Rock during the championship game of the Stonetown Classic tournament in St. Marys, which ran Jan. 15-18. On the right, Brayden Barclay scores a goal during one of the U18 LL Boys St. Marys Rock’s games during the tournament. Both teams picked up silver medals in their respective divisions. The Independent will have more coverage on both teams and their silver medal results in next week’s issue.

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# U14 A Snipers claim silver at Waterloo tournament

SPENCER SEYMOUR

*Independent Sports Reporter*

The St. Marys Rotary Club-A.N.A.F. U14 A St. Marys Snipers captured the silver medals at the Waterloo Ringette Association Winterfest Tournament Jan. 9-11.

Head coach Kim Garniss said the team delivered a very strong compete level throughout the weekend.

“They competed hard in every game and showed a lot of growth as the tournament went on,” Garniss said. “A consistent theme was our effort to keep the tempo high for the full game, which really helped drive our play and keep us going throughout the tournament. Their work ethic, support for one another and ability to stay focused and resilient stood out, and it was great to see them commit to playing with pace and purpose from start to finish.”

The Snipers emerged from the four-game round robin with a very solid 3-1 record, outscoring their opponents 21-4 in their three round-robin victories. Their strong round-robin results led St. Marys to a semi-final clash against the Arnprior Devils.

Kyla Graham opened the scoring less than a minute into the first period, with assists going to Rachel Mabon and Scarlett Gloor. Approximately eight minutes later, Hadley Bolinger found the back of the net, assisted by Madi McCutcheon and Lily Johnston. Arnprior responded under a minute later to cut the Snipers’ lead to one



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The St. Marys Rotary Club-A.N.A.F. U14 A St. Marys Snipers took the silver medals at the Waterloo Ringette Association Winterfest Tournament Jan. 9-11. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Anna Hogan and Maelle Hachler. In the second row, from left, are Olivia McCutcheon, Lilly Garniss, Meredith Stokes, Madi McCutcheon, Rachel Mabon and Kyla Graham. In the second row, from left, are coach Christen Graham, head coach Kim Garniss, Sam Hamilton, Lily Johnston, Kenzie Shackleton and Mary McCutcheon. In the third row, from left, are Jordyn Schellenberger, trainer Laurie McCutcheon, Scarlett Gloor, Hadley Bolinger, coach Natalie Raey, coach Regan Frayne and coach Kacey Graham.

## ZONING BY-LAW OPEN HOUSE

### DATE & TIME:

Wednesday, January 28, 2026 from 4:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M.

### LOCATION:

Municipal Operations Centre  
408 James Street South, St. Marys, Ontario, N4X 1B6

### PURPOSE OF THE OPEN HOUSE:

The upcoming Open House will welcome residents, business owners, and all members of the community to share their feedback and learn more about the ongoing Zoning By-law Review. This drop-in event offers a chance to discover what the zoning update means for the town. This includes information on permitted building uses, building heights, distance from property lines, parking requirements, etc.. Please note, no decisions regarding the Zoning By-law Review will be made at the January Open House; it's simply an opportunity to get informed and have your say.

### TOWN OF ST. MARYS ZONING BY-LAW REVIEW

The Town of St. Marys retained NPG Planning Solutions Inc. (NPG) to undertake a Zoning By-law Review. Under the Planning Act (R.S.O. 1990, c. P.13), local councils are required to amend their Zoning By-law to align with a new or updated Official Plan. St. Marys' updated Official Plan was approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) in October 2024.

The Town of St. Marys current Comprehensive Zoning By-law No. Z1-1997 was adopted by Council on March 11, 1997. Since the Official Plan has been approved, the Zoning By-law will need to be brought into conformity with the approved Official Plan.

### WHAT IS A ZONING BY-LAW

A Zoning By-law is a legal document outlining the set of regulations that determine how a piece of land can be used and developed. The Zoning By-law regulates the use of land and buildings; the located and setbacks of buildings and structures; the types of buildings permitted; lot sizes; heights; parking requirements; and performance standards such as landscaping requirements.

The Zoning By-law Review is a collaborative and coordinated process which will involve the preparation of a Technical Memorandum on By-law Issues, Technical Briefs, and the updated Zoning By-law and associated mapping, as well as the necessary public and stakeholder engagement. The project is intended to be completed by October 2026.

### CONTACT INFORMATION:

If you are unable to attend and would like to learn more about the event or project, stay updated, request additional information, or be added to the project contact list, please reach out to the individual listed below:

Grant Brouwer  
Director of Building & Development  
Town of St. Marys  
408 James Street South, St. Marys, Ontario, N4X 1B6  
Phone: 519-284-2340 ext. 215  
Email: gbrouwer@town.stmarys.on.ca



goal, but St. Marys held on for the rest of the contest to secure a 2-1 victory and a berth in the gold-medal game.

Garniss noted the team's excellent defensive play was crucial to securing the semi-final win.

“The semi-final was a very tight, hard-fought game from start to finish,” said Garniss. “Our defence really set the tone for us. We spent stretches defending a three-on-two situation, and our defence and goaltending were outstanding in those moments, keeping us in the game when it mattered most. The girls stayed disciplined, coachable and committed to our structure, which allowed us to weather the pressure and capitalize on our chances.”

“That defensive effort and resilience were a big reason we were able to come away with the win and earn a spot in the finals.”

That defensive play, along with their execution in the offensive zone, was, according to Garniss, some of the best play at both ends of the season.

“We really saw some of our practice work come together this weekend. Our defensive triangle and breakout play were strong and the girls did a great job supporting each other with quick, accurate passes. We also emphasize moving your feet and getting into open ice, and they executed that extremely well. Combined with strong low-post play in the offensive zone, it was some of our best execution all season.”

Though the Snipers didn't come away with the top prize, Garniss credited the group for delivering a strong team performance all weekend.

“Goaltending was a huge part of our

success throughout the weekend,” Garniss told the Independent. “Both Anna (Hogan) and Maelle (Hachler) were outstanding in all six games and really gave the team confidence on the back end. Their ability to make timely saves in key moments allowed the girls to play with pace and trust our system.”

“Beyond that, one of the biggest themes was how different players stepped up when needed,” Garniss continued. “Every forward line and defensive pairing contributed in important moments, whether it was a key shift, a smart defensive play, or sustained pressure. It truly was a full team effort and that collective buy-in played a big role in getting us to the finals.”

Garniss added the team hopes the tournament finish boosts the group's belief as they prepare for some of their most important games of the year.

“We hope this result builds confidence as we head into the final stretch of the season. We have one more qualifying tournament at the end of January, and the focus is on continuing to grow and finishing strong. This is our first year together as an A team, with players from St. Marys, Goderich and Mitchell, and the way they've come together and developed as a group has been really impressive.”

“As the season has progressed, they've become more confident, more connected and more consistent in how they play,” Garniss continued. “Our goal has always been to compete for a spot at the All-Ontario Provincials, and they've really come together to show they're a strong contender.”



# DCVI Senior Girls Volleyball team score back-to-back wins

SPENCER SEYMOUR

*Independent Sports Reporter*

The St. Marys DCVI Senior Girls Volleyball team won a pair of home games on Jan. 13.

Head coach Steve Chateauvert praised the team's "aggressiveness" in both of their straight-set victories.

"They played really well (in our first game)," said Chateauvert. "We've been working a lot in practice on just going for every ball you can and diving and hitting the floor, and there were a few really good instances in that match where it helped us and we got the point because of it. I think they did just as well (in the second game). They had some good digs and good hits. They're doing the right things, even if it's not always perfect. If they continue to do the right thing, those balls will be more and more playable."

That aggressiveness, according to Chateauvert, is a key to the team finding success in the post-season.

"It's going to be really important, just having that attitude where you don't let anything hit the floor without some kind of an effort. I think if we continue to do that against better teams, it's only going to help you in the long run, and I think today was a good step in the right direction.

"I think it is the kind of thing where, once you get started, everyone else buys in," he continued. "It's the same with communication and talking and showing some



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTOS)

**Pictured on the left is Libby McCurdy hitting the ball back over the net during one of the St. Marys DCVI Senior Girls Volleyball team's games on Jan. 13. On the right, Charlotte Richardson kneels to keep the ball in play.**

energy, and it takes a couple of players to really get the ball rolling, and then the whole team just follows."

The Salukis defeated F.E. Madill 25-8 and 25-10 in their first game of the day. They followed that up later in the day by defeating South Huron by scores of 25-19 and 25-18.

Chateauvert noted the team has recently found a groove with the deployment of their two primary leaders on the court, Marin Cheatuvert and Katie Namink, which contributed to their consistent success throughout the two games.

"We've got Marin and Katie setting when they're in the back row, and they're hitting

on the left side when they're in the front row. They both have great hands, so they can set the ball to all three positions in the front row, and they're both great hitters, so I think it's the best of both points out there. They're both just so experienced, and they can both really take charge out there, and I think it just gives everyone on the court just a little bit of confidence knowing that they're going to be there to help out when needed," Steve Chateauvert said.

The head coach also noted several other players who turned in especially strong efforts against F.E. Madill and South Huron.

"We saw some really good things from Courtney (Linton) out there today in terms of her attack," Steve Chateauvert said. "Charlotte (Richardson) was hitting the ball well. Libby (McCurdy) played a great game. We did a great job being aggressive. We just need to continue to stay aggressive, and it's not just hitting. You can play aggressively on defence as well, and I saw that out there today, so that was great."

With the season over halfway complete, Steve Chateauvert mentioned the progression in the team's ability to battle and keep balls in play.

"Their effort level and their willingness to go for every single ball and every single play have gotten a lot better. At the start of the year, we talked about being ready on defence and not hesitating in calling the ball, and they're doing a much better job of those core things that we talked about at the start of the year."

# DCVI Junior Girls Volleyball team wins double header at home

TURNER ROTH

*Independent Sports Reporter*

The St. Marys DCVI Junior Girls Volleyball team went undefeated at home on Jan. 13, winning their two games against F.E. Madill and South Huron.

In the game against Madill, the Salukis won each of the first two sets by identical scores of 25-21. Head coach Cooper Preszcator credited the team's energy and communication as key factors in the wins.

"They played really well," Preszcator told the Independent. "We switched up who got to start and got a lot of the girls in, and everyone played well. Communication and energy were key. They came out with a lot of energy and it really helped us get off to a good start. We beat Madill two straight in sets, and I would say a lot of that was just energy driven."

In the second game versus South Huron, St. Marys went down 14 straight points from a strong serving performance by South Huron, eventually dropping the first set 25-11. However, after a discussion between sets, the Salukis found a new rhythm. They managed to control South Huron's serves and bounced back to win the second and third sets by scores of 25-11 and 27-25.

Preszcator praised the all-around performance from the Salukis, as well as their ability to bounce back following the first set.

"South Huron had a really good group of girls that could serve extremely well,"



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTOS)

**Pictured on the left is Brooklynn Roth bumping the ball back into the air during one of the St. Marys DCVI Junior Girls Volleyball team's games on Jan. 13. On the right is Charlotte Johnson hitting the ball over the net. DCVI won both of their games on Jan. 13 over F.E. Madill and South Huron.**

said Preszcator. "We dropped 14 points in a row to one server. It can be hard to keep morale high after dropping 14 points in a row, but they were able to come back and win the next two sets. We had a little chat between sets and they got fired up again, and we were able to stop the good serves the next set. Again, switching up girls was

big. Sometimes you see the same six players every game, but we put out all the girls pretty well and had great results because of it."

When asked about what fueled the comeback performance, Preszcator mentioned the team's setting, hitting and attacking as big factors in the comeback win.

"Brooklynn Roth's setting was awesome. She found her groove in the second set against Madill. All of our hitters made an impact. All of them started swinging last practice instead of just sending over and pushing it to a corner, we wanted to get more attacks going, and everybody was doing that. Our left side and right side hitters were all just swinging hard and getting some good hits, which was nice to see.

"Our best attribute was our communication and positivity and swinging. We need to work on our serve receive, which is a technical thing to work on. It's nice to see that the issue isn't their behaviour or attitude. We dropped 14 points from serves, and we know that serve receiving will be the next thing to work on, and hopefully that improves next time."

The two wins inflated St. Marys' record to five wins and one loss, which has the Salukis in first place in the Huron-Perth standings with league play on hold until Feb. 3 as students enter exam season. Preszcator said the team is striving for a WOSSAA berth.

"We're 5-1 right now, so I don't think it's unrealistic to try and win or play in Huron-Perth and potentially going into WOSSAA as a single-A school," said Preszcator. "Getting to WOSSAA would be awesome. They're a skilled group of girls and they have good energy when we're playing games. If we can practice and play with that same energy, I think we can get there."



MINOR SPORTS

SCRAPBOOK



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)  
Carter May releases a shot during one of the St. Marys Ford U9 LL Boys Blue St. Marys Rock's Stonetown Classic games this past weekend.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)  
Parker Hammond fires a shot off the rush during one of the Stonetown Electric U9 LL Boys Red St. Marys Rock's Stonetown Classic games this past weekend.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)  
Jack Hemstock sends a shot on net during one of the Radar Auto Parts U9 LL Boys White St. Marys Rock's Stonetown Classic games this past weekend.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)  
Mya Grose makes a standing blocker save during this past Sunday's St. Marys Landscaping U11 B Girls St. Marys Rock game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)  
Levi Garniss backhands the puck on net during one of the Nicholson Concrete U11 LL Boys Blue St. Marys Rock's Stonetown Classic games this past weekend.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)  
Caxton Stewart Noeske fires a shot on goal during one of the Tremblett's Independent Grocer U11 LL Boys Red St. Marys Rock games this past weekend.



MINOR SPORTS

SCRAPBOOK



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)  
Dalton McKenzie makes a pad save during one of the Cubberley Plumbing U13 LL Boys Red St. Marys Rock's Stonetown Classic games this past weekend.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)  
Rachel Stuckless makes a save on the goal line during this past Sunday's Veterinary Purchasing U15 C Girls St. Marys Rock game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)  
Zach Zwambag launches a shot from the point during one of the Armstrong Motors U15 LL Boys St. Marys Rock's Stonetown Classic games this past weekend.



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)  
Mira Broughton throws a shot on target during this past Sunday's Hubbard Pharmacy U18 B Girls St. Marys Rock game.



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)  
Chloe Pethick unloads a shot from the blueline during this past Sunday's U18 C Girls St. Marys Rock game.

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## COLUMNS

# UKRAINIAN CORNER: My personality is a 404 Error – why moving countries broke my brand

ALONA VASYLIEVA

Independent Columnist

It is a well-known fact that learning a foreign language widens your perception of the world. What they don't tell you is it also turns your personality into a confusing IKEA furniture set; some parts are missing, the instructions are in a language you only 60 per cent understand and you're pretty sure you weren't this wobbly back home.

You don't just learn new words; you accidentally adopt a brand-new personality, a weird set of cultural tics and a permanent state of internal existential crisis.

Research shows that when you speak a second language, your brain is so busy processing grammar it forgets to be dramatic. In my native Ukrainian, I can craft a Shakespearean monologue about why the dishes aren't done, complete with hand gestures and soul-piercing stares. But in English?

Ukrainian me: "The tragedy of this unwashed fork reflects the decay of our domestic harmony!"

English me: "The fork is dirty. This is ... not optimal. I am slightly displeased."

If you want to win an argument with your partner, switch to your second language. You are literally incapable of being "extra." You become a cold, calculating logic machine because your brain simply doesn't have the "Passionate Outrage" plug-in installed in English yet.

Language is tied to cultural norms, which means your "vibe" shifts depending on the vocabulary. I have friends who are "aggressive and passionate" in Italian or Ukrainian but turn into "shy and polite" woodland creatures the moment they land at Pearson International Airport.

Take the word "sorry." In Ukraine, Vybachte is a heavy word. You use it when you've actually committed a social crime. In Canada, "sorry" is a punctuation mark. I recently found myself apologizing to a mannequin at Hudson's Bay because I



(IMAGE COURTESY OF ALONA VASYLIEVA)

**The immigrant's dilemma: Being a hilarious person in a body that's stuck in translation.**

bumped into it. Then, I apologized to a guy who stepped on my foot.

The hardest part isn't the grammar; it's the timing.

I'll be sitting with Canadian friends, and someone makes a joke. In my head, I am a comedic genius. I have a sharp, witty retort ready that would make a late-night talkshow host weep with envy. But by the time I have translated the joke, checked the tense, ensured the cultural reference isn't accidentally offensive, practiced the "th" sound so I don't sound like a hissing radiator and I'm ready to deliver my comedic masterpiece, the conversation has moved

on to quarterly taxes or the weather in Saskatchewan.

I'm left sitting there with a masterpiece of a joke, laughing silently in my own head like a crazy person, while offering the group a shy, polite smile. It leaves a bitter aftertaste on my self-confidence knowing that everyone thinks I'm "the quiet one" when I'm actually "the hilarious one who is currently buffering."

I am deeply jealous of people who treat grammar like a suggestion rather than a law. My spouse, Sergii, has this superpower.

While I am lying awake at night won-

dering if I should have used the present perfect or the present perfect continuous in a conversation that happened three days ago, Sergii is out there living his best life. He knows he makes mistakes. He knows he's missing words. He does not care. He barrels through conversations like a bulldozer in a China shop. He doesn't waste time overthinking if he sounded rude. He just speaks.

Being "bad" at a language but "good" at confidence is the ultimate immigrant life hack.

In Ukraine, email culture isn't really a thing. In Canada, it's everything. And honestly? I love it.

- Reason 1: I can read it.
- Reason 2: Nobody is staring at me while I process.
- Reason 3: It doesn't require a recovery period.

As an introvert, the phone is my mortal enemy. A surprise phone call in English is basically a horror-movie jump scare. I need three business days to recover from a five-minute quick chat. But an email? An email is a gift. I can read it, translate it, consult a thesaurus, drink a coffee and reply when I'm good and ready.

It's the only time my English personality feels as smart as my Ukrainian one because I have the "Send" button as my bodyguard.

When you're a tourist, you just need to know how to ask for a bathroom without looking like you're doing a desperate interpretive dance. But when you relocate permanently, you have to think in that language. It's a psychological DIY project that changes who you are.

Relocating and changing languages is exhausting, but it's also a "fun" time in the same way that a rollercoaster is fun; you're screaming, your hair is a mess and you're not entirely sure when it will stop, but the view is definitely different from up here.

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# HISTORIC ST. MARYS: Arthur Meighen's legacy

MARY SMITH

*Independent Columnist*

When communities commemorate famous people, there is always a risk involved. Sometimes, years later, unfavourable information about a historic figure comes to light. Then residents might realize they have a street or a building with a name that, in current public sentiment, is embarrassing, perhaps even distressing. Often, the immediate reaction is to quickly change the memorial's name and bury the unsavoury associations from the past. A more measured approach might be to weigh the reasons a person was initially recognized against the recently discovered negative material. Then an informed decision can be made whether the recognition should remain, be modified, or be completely erased.

St. Marys has recognized its famous son, Arthur Meighen, for many years and in many ways. When he was an active politician, his visits to the town were newsworthy events. In 1942, St. Marys celebrated the 100th anniversary of its founding and Meighen was invited to be the guest speaker. A crowd of more than 2000 people gathered on the Flats around a stage erected for the ceremony. It was an anxious time in history. The many Canadian casualties in the disastrous raid on Dieppe in August had shocked the country. Both Meighen's sons were serving overseas, and he shared the concerns that many families in his audience must have been feeling that September. Meighen's speech challenged the people of St. Marys not to lose hope for the future.

A few years later, in 1948, the Presbyterian Church on Widder Street marked its own centennial. By then the war was over and the congregation planned a full week of celebration from Sunday, June 20, to Sunday, June 27. As part of the week's events, a garden party was held on the church grounds on Wednesday, June 23. By this time, Arthur Meighen had retired completely from politics but still had business interests in Toronto, now his permanent home. He and his wife, Jessie Isabel Meighen, were the guests of honour at the garden party. The Meighen family had been members of a Presbyterian congregation in Manitoba that had joined the United Church of Canada with church union in 1925. Although he was no longer a Presbyterian, Meighen was willing to travel from Toronto to help celebrate the church he had attended as a boy. He addressed those at the garden party, posed for photographs, and then reminisced with many old friends.

In 1954, Arthur Meighen returned to St. Marys to perform another official ceremony. On September 22, he cut the ribbon to open the St. Marys District Collegiate Institute on Elizabeth Street. In 1892, he had graduated from the old collegiate in the north ward. After the new building opened,



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ST. MARYS MUSEUM'S HISTORIC IMAGE COLLECTION, R. LORNE EEDY ARCHIVES)

**Arthur Meighen, seated right, with his family, ca 1926. His wife, Jessie Isabel, is beside him and daughter, Lillian, on the left. His two sons, Max and Teddy, stand behind their parents. Although Arthur Meighen had fond memories of St. Marys, the rest of his family did not have the same connection.**

the former high school was renovated and became a senior elementary school. It served that purpose for more than half a century. In 1984, during Ontario's bicentennial, North Ward Public School was renamed Arthur Meighen Public School. However, that memorial building was demolished in 2016.

In his later years, Arthur Meighen enjoyed having his son-in-law, Don Wright, drive him through southwestern Ontario to see the rolling hills, pastures and grain fields, familiar to him from his boyhood. In 1958, the two men visited the St. Marys Cemetery and selected a burial site on a gentle, east-facing hillside not far from Meighen's parents' and grandparents' graves. In the late 1950s, the St. Marys Memorial Hospital badly needed more space and began fundraising to build an addition. Meighen made a substantial donation to the project. The hospital board decided to name the addition the Meighen Wing. On August 10, 1960, the Honourable J. Waldo Monteith, MP for Perth and Minister of Health and Welfare, cut the ribbon to open the addition. The occasion had a sombre note: Arthur Meighen had died just five days earlier, August 5, at his home in Toronto. He was 86 years old. The new wing of the hospital was the first posthumous memorial to Meighen in his old hometown.

Since then, there have been other initiatives in St. Marys to recognize Canada's ninth prime minister. The installation of his statue in Lind Park, described in last week's column, was an important one. The

most distinguished memorial is at the St. Marys Cemetery. To mark the millennium, Parks Canada undertook to place a Canadian flag at the gravesite of every prime minister buried in this country. With considerable pomp, a plaque in the two official languages outlining Meighen's history was unveiled beside the cemetery office. A flag was presented and raised by the gravesite – the site on the east-facing hill that Meighen himself had selected half a century earlier. Meighen's grave is inspected regularly by Parks Canada to determine that it is well-maintained.

Does Arthur Meighen's role in Canada's history merit these memorials? Certainly, he is not considered one of our most consequential prime ministers. He didn't hold office long enough for his principles and policies to make an impact on the country. However, his role as a chief advisor to his predecessor, Robert Borden, especially during the years of World War I, was influential. He drafted the legislation that led to the Wartime Elections Act giving the vote to female relatives of Canadian soldiers serving overseas but taking the vote away from many Canadians who had immigrated from "enemy" countries. Then came the Military Service Act that authorized compulsory military service – conscription – for all male Canadians between the ages of 18 and 45. This Act alienated not only most Quebec residents but also many farmers throughout the country who wanted their sons at home working on their farms, not off fighting in Europe. Meigh-

en believed that conscription was justified and dismissed its critics. Even as he was campaigning in the 1920s, he refused any opportunity to reconcile with francophone Quebecers, a political mistake.

Following the war, in 1919 as Minister of the Interior, he played a role in the brutal crushing of the Winnipeg General Strike, thus alienating all labour sympathizers. Following the war, many of Canada's privately owned railways were deeply in debt, depending on government subsidies for survival. Meighen solved this problem by nationalizing the network of railways, creating the Canadian National Railways. While this action benefited the tax-paying public, it turned many powerful Montreal business interests against him. Although, as a member of parliament, Meighen represented a Manitoba riding, he did not agree with western farmers who wanted free movement of their grain across the United States border. Meighen believed strongly that tariffs were necessary to protect Canada's resources.

It can be discovered that Meighen was involved in drafting legislation relating to the Indian Act and the grievous injuries done to First Nations families by residential schools. This aspect of his political history most offends our sense of social justice, and we probably feel that the sum total of Meighen's political strengths is not an adequate counterbalance. Still, the strengths should be weighed in the measure. He was well-read, intelligent and hard-working. Through his own strong will he went from an Ontario farm boy to the highest pinnacle of federal government. He was courageous and true to his principles. When he believed that his course was correct, he refused to back down, even at a political cost. He did not accept that politics was the art of compromise. For him, logical arguments, supported by facts, should be enough to persuade voters. This straightforward and direct approach met its match in the more devious Mackenzie King.

Meighen was a lover of English literature and by far his favourite author was William Shakespeare. In 1936, he delivered a speech that celebrated "The Greatest Englishman of History" to the Canadian Club in Toronto. (The speech was later published as a small hardcover book, still widely available.) Although Meighen himself always held great affection for St. Marys, that connection meant little to his descendants, raised mainly in Manitoba and Toronto. The Shakespearean connection, however, did stay with them. Acknowledging Meighen's deep admiration for Shakespeare, a branch of his family endowed the lovely Arthur Meighen Gardens beside the main entrance to the Stratford Shakespeare Festival theatre. Playgoers, local residents, and tourists enjoy the gardens' beauty without giving a thought to the political history of their namesake.

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# OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Enjoying a tropical destination in the centre of Canada



PAUL KNOWLES

*Independent Columnist*

As we enter the heart of our beloved Canadian winter, a lot of us are dreaming about visiting tropical destinations; places like Barbados, Cuba, Costa Rica or ... Winnipeg.

Winnipeg?

Okay, I admit Manitoba's capital city is better known for what Randy Bachman highlighted in his song, "Prairie Town." "Portage and Main, 50 below," he sang. But a few months ago, I discovered a tropical paradise in the heart of Winnipeg. It's called The Leaf and while you might not want to travel to this prairie city in January or February, The Leaf is definitely a must-see in Winnipeg in the warmer months.

The attraction offers one more excellent reason to visit Assiniboine Park, also home to the Assiniboine Park Zoo and in the wonderful district that includes The Forks shopping and dining area, the Canadian Museum of Human Rights and the Children's Museum.

In locating all of these attractions in the same area, at the forks of the Assiniboine and Red rivers, Winnipeg has definitively demonstrated the right way for a city to

create public spaces that are compelling destinations yet also provide opportunities for leisure and relaxation. Visitors to Winnipeg will inevitably find their way here and they will be mingling with many, many local residents, for whom the area is a perfect get-away. Personally, I love it there.

The Leaf is the latest addition to this district – and "latest" may be the operative word, here. The \$130-million attraction had a lengthy growth period; it finally opened two years behind schedule in December 2022.

And what is The Leaf, exactly? It's best understood as two distinct parts. The heart of the attraction is the soaring, swirling, steel and glass building that houses four distinct "biomes" which are home to plants and trees from around the world.

And outdoors, all around the building, are many hectares of unique gardens as well.

Let's start indoors – an area that is open all year round.

The unique, individual spaces in The Leaf building include a tropical biome, a Mediterranean biome, a "display house" and a butterfly garden.

The tropical biome – officially the "Hartley and Heather Richardson Tropical Biome" – is the most dramatic, in part because it features a six-storey indoor waterfall that plays a role in keeping this space at the right level of humidity – "right" meaning "really high."

The "welcome" sign posted near the waterfall says a lot about the multiple aims of The Leaf. "Welcome" is stated in three languages – English, Cree and Ojib-

we, reflecting both Manitoba's heritage and the province's current multi-cultural reality. There is an educational note about the tropics: "The tropics cover a large part of the world and include a variety of environments such as rainforests, seasonal forests, grasslands, savannas and more." The sign points out everyday products we consume that come from the tropics like coffee, tea, spices and fruits. And the welcome also makes the point that "many recent immigrants to Winnipeg come from tropical regions, including Central America, the Caribbean, Africa, parts of the Middle East and Asia." I quote this information at some length because I think this "welcome" tells us a lot about the intentions of the people who planned and built "The Leaf." It's more than an educational institution, it's an inclusive, welcoming space.

We strolled around the tropical biome, marvelling at the beauty of the flowers and foliage, and quite impressed with the size of the plants that soared over our heads. We learned that many of them were full-size when they were transported to The Leaf.

We moved on into the Mediterranean biome, where eager docents are happy to tell visitors all about the plants, including "Dinosaur Trees" – actually Wollemi Pines from Australia, prehistoric conifers which were thought to be extinct until they were discovered in Australia in 1994. Today, offspring of those rare, ancient trees are growing right here in Winnipeg.

Everyone loves an enclosed butterfly garden, and the "Shir-



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

The \$130-million The Leaf opened in Winnipeg in December, 2022.

ley Richardson Butterfly Garden" at The Leaf is no exception. Children and adults alike enjoy watching the many tropical butterflies, and everyone, of course, hopes a flying friend would come to rest on their shoulder.

The Leaf does not end at the exit from the impressive building. Outdoors, there are six gardens to explore, including the Indigenous Peoples Garden, a Kitchen Garden, a Sensory Garden, the Performance Garden, the Seasonal Garden and "The Grove." Some of the outdoor gardens are open 24/7, others from 9 a.m. to dusk, and all the outdoor spaces are of charge. Admission to the biomes is \$17.20 for adults, \$9.40 for kids three to 17, and \$14.90 for seniors. You can save a buck or two in each category by buying in

advance online. And there is another advantage to buying online because admission to The Leaf is by timed tickets, so having tickets in advance guarantees prompt entry.

Do you want to visit Winnipeg when it's 50 below at Portage and Main? Maybe not – although if you do, the biomes will feel like paradise. But in the warmer months, The Leaf and all of its neighbours in Assiniboine Park and The Forks will make for a day full of delight.

*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](mailto:pknowles@golden.net).*



Prehistoric "dinosaur trees," once thought extinct, are now carefully tended at The Leaf.



Look up, look way up to the six-storey-high home of the butterfly garden.



Blooms in the Mediterranean biome.



# FROM THE GARDEN: The hidden life of the garden



NANCY ABRA

Independent Columnist

The garden is quiet. A surreal stillness engulfs it. Recent snowfalls blanket the landscape, lining leafless branches defining the trees' structure. Evergreen trees are laden with cold white masses amongst their branches, where birds snuggle in to keep warm. It is winter and the garden is peacefully quiet.

Our gardens are not dead. They are not lifeless frozen wastelands. They are just resting quietly preparing for Spring.

Snow is more than a winter covering. It is an insulating layer. Beneath it, temperatures stay surprisingly stable, often hovering just below freezing

even when the air above is far colder, dipping into the negative numbers. Under that white insulating blanket, life continues in a small scale, but still alive.

Soil microbes remain active as they keep breaking down organic matter, turning fallen leaves and dead material into essential nutrients, nitrogen and phosphorus which our plants will feast on in the Spring. The slow decomposition improves soil fertility and structure. Microbial byproducts help bind soil particles, creating better aeration and water retention. Microbes also respire, releasing significant amounts of carbon dioxide, a process that can account for much of the summer's carbon uptake.

And there are other tiny creatures at work. Under Mother Nature's white blanket, overwintering insects such as ladybugs, lacewings and native solitary bees, snuggle in and rest in leaf litter, hollow stems and in underground chambers. Earthworms slowly work their way deeper into the soil, continue to tunnel and aerate the soil.

The snow, itself, becomes a

habitat. Snow crystals act as tiny shelters. The miniscule grotto structures traps warmth, creating a micro-climate just above the soil. There is a hidden layer between the snow and ground. It is a whole secret corridor system for small creatures. Voles and mice tunnel their way in these warm passageways, nibbling seeds and roots. Above the snow, we are not aware of rodents' activity in their unique habitat, except perhaps slight dips or raised ridges in certain areas in our garden.

Besides creatures hidden in the winter garden, the flora is also preparing for Spring in silence. Perennial plants concentrate their strength underground as their root systems store energy, fuel for growth in the Spring. Certain plant seeds such as milkweed lay dormant, needing winter to trigger germination. Bulbs quietly prepare their next season's shoots, storing sugars and strengthening cells, waiting for the warming days of early Spring.

Without a consistent snow covering garden plants are exposed to extreme winter conditions that can penetrate deep



into the soil. While many plants can tolerate freezing air, their roots cannot handle the same extreme cold, which can damage or kill their root systems. Also, without the insulating layer of snow, soil can heave on warm, sunny days and at night when temperatures drop to freezing again. This 'freeze

thaw' cycle can push perennial roots and bulbs out of the soil, making them vulnerable to exposure, impacting their health and survival.

Even when our garden seems tranquil and lifeless, there is discreet activity beneath the snow, hidden from us, waiting for Spring.

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# Riddles

- Three men went for a swim in a pond, but why did only two get their hair wet?  
A. The third man was bald
- How did the rabbit travel?  
A. In a Hare plane
- What did the chewing gum tell to the shoe?  
A. I will always stick with you
- What lies at the centre of gravity?  
A. The letter V
- Why did the woman carry her helmet to the restaurant?  
A. Because she was having a crash diet
- Why was the hairband arrested?  
A. It was holding up the hair
- Why does a teddy bear never feel hungry?  
A. Because it is always stuffed
- How did the soldier go eight days without sleep?  
A. By sleeping at night
- What is full of holes but still can hold water?  
A. Sponge
- If you throw a white stone in the Red Sea what would the stone become?  
A. Wet
- What type of music do rabbits like?  
A. Hip Hop!

# - Word Search -



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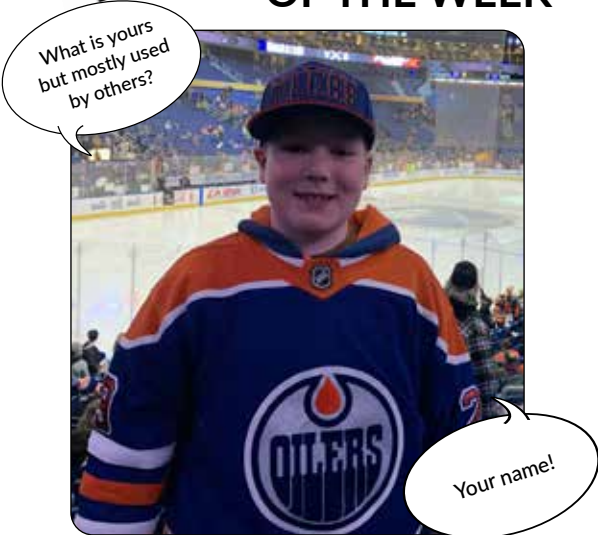
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- The Tempest  
Guys and Dolls  
Something Rotten  
Waiting for Godot  
Death of a Salesman  
The Hobbit  
Importance of Being Ernest  
Midsummer Nights  
Dream  
Othello  
The Tao of the World  
King James Bible Play



## The Riddle Kid OF THE WEEK



Nixon Near (11)

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

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

## PET OF THE WEEK



### CARING FOR YOUR PETS THIS WINTER: HEALTH MATTERS TO WATCH!

Cold weather brings specific concerns for pets. January is an ideal time to address arthritis pain, monitor winter weight gain, and attend to skin issues and parasite prevention. It's important to remember that older pets may need extra support, and winter hazards can pose hidden risks.



### CHICKADEE

Our Pet of the Week is Chickadee, a three-year-old weimaraner. As you can see, he loves running, it's his favorite thing to do. Chickadee's proud owners are Trevor and Shirley Duliban.





# Thorndale News

A section within the  
St. Marys Independent



The Thorndale Agricultural Society presents  
**"A Murder of Scarecrows"**  
A Comedy By Pat Cook  
**DINNER & SHOW: FEB 21, 22 (BRUNCH)  
27 & 28 - TICKETS: \$50.00**  
**SHOW ONLY: FEB 25 - TICKETS: \$25.00**  
For more details go to: [thorndalefair.com](http://thorndalefair.com)  
For info call - Jackie at 519 461-0218



## Thorndale Dinner Theatre prepares two-act play, *A Murder of Scarecrows*

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

For many years, the Thorndale Dinner Theatre has been an integral part of the community's winter calendar. Hundreds of area residents and beyond have enjoyed this annual event and the 2026 Thorndale Dinner Theatre promises to be an entertaining experience from the delicious roast beef dinner by local organizations to the humorous performance on stage.

The Thorndale Dinner Theatre starts on Saturday, Feb. 21, with Dorchester United Church catering the dinner, and continues on Sunday, Feb. 22, with a brunch by the Thorndale Lions; Friday, Feb. 27, with catering by the homecraft division of the Thorndale Fair; and Saturday, Feb. 28, catered by Thorndale United Church. Dinners will feature roast beef and all the trimmings including salad, dessert, coffee or tea, taxes and tips, plus a two-act play, *A Murder of Scarecrows*, to follow. On the evening of Wednesday, Feb. 25, there will be a performance of the play only.



(NANCY ABRA PHOTO)  
The cast of Thorndale Dinner Theatre's *A Murder of Scarecrows* rehearses in the basement of St. George's Anglican Church.

*A Murder of Scarecrows* by playwright Pat Cook is a light comedy thriller centered around protagonists Gerald and Cristine Dandridge's Halloween party at their newly purchased fixer-upper country house.

This house also comes with a haunted scarecrow legend. With mysterious noises and odd sightings, the legend starts to feel a little too real and the party guests get increasingly spooked and uneasy.

*A Murder of Scarecrows* blends comedy with mild suspense as the misunderstandings pile up and the truth behind the scarecrow is finally exposed. It's not clear who will have the most fun, the audience watching the players' antics as they unfold

or these local talented actors jousting with each other onstage.

Making her debut on the Thorndale stage is Jennaya Chou, 19, from Thorndale.

"I've always wanted to do a stage play but have only had the opportunity to participate in musicals until my mom saw the advertisement for auditions last fall for the Thorndale Dinner Theatre. It sounded like a fun, family-friendly play, so I thought, 'Why not?' and I was so thrilled I got the role of Officer MacElroy!"

Chou said she has been in two musicals including *The Sound of Music*, but playing a prominent character in *A Murder of Scarecrows* has been a more intense experience.

"I am quite enjoying it, and everyone has been so welcoming and encouraging," Chou said. "Even though I know the entire play, there are always moments, whether it's a line delivery or an expression from a fellow cast member, that surprises me and makes me laugh during rehearsals. But seriously, if I was in the audience watching *A Murder of Scarecrows*, I wouldn't accept a dare to not laugh during it; not with this cast, at any rate."

Tickets for the Thorndale Dinner Theatre are available online at [www.ticketowl.io/thorndalefair](http://www.ticketowl.io/thorndalefair) or in person (cash or cheque only) at Thorndale Hardware.

## Thorndale Ag. Society presents scholarship to Thorndale Fair Ambassador



(MICHAEL MCCALLUM PHOTO)

At the Thorndale Agricultural Society's AGM on Wednesday, Jan. 14, Bridget Heeman presented Beth McCallum, the 2025-2026 Thorndale Fair Ambassador with a \$1,000 scholarship. The Thorndale Ag. Society, through their Fair Ambassador program, gives a scholarship to the successful candidate each year. The ambassador represents them at various events in the community. McCallum plans to put this money she received towards her college tuition next year.

## Thames Centre continues its Community Improvement Plan

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

Thames Centre council approved the continuation of the municipality's Community Improvement Plan (CIP) at its regular meeting Dec. 8.

Grants are available for several types of projects through the CIP, including improving accessibility, energy efficiency, landscaping, tourism diversification and developing on-farm retail services with the first round of 2026 CIP grant applications to be reviewed in February.

Middlesex County is providing \$1,267.30 to the Municipality of Thames Centre, covering half the cost of their contribution to the project.

"Middlesex County recognizes the importance of partnering with existing lo-

cal businesses," said Cara Finn, director of economic development for Middlesex County. "We support each of our municipalities who have developed Community Improvement Plans to strategically invest in projects that support the economic development priorities of the local community and Middlesex County."

"Business owners can apply with a description of their proposal, and two quotes for the cost of the project," added Amanda Storrey, director of planning and development services at Thames Centre.

The application deadline for the next intake of CIP grant applications is Feb. 6 and can be submitted to [planning@thamescentre.on.ca](mailto:planning@thamescentre.on.ca) for review.

For more information, including a more thorough explanation of CIP grants available, visit [www.thamescentre.on.ca/CIP](http://www.thamescentre.on.ca/CIP).



OBITUARY

Magner



Elizabeth Ann Magner, of St. Marys and formerly of Toronto, passed away at Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth on December 24 2025. Liz moved to St. Marys in the fall of 2024 and loved the town. Liz was a free spirit and a true seeker. The proper measure of her success in life was that she had many friends. Liz was from a Celtic background but was an Italian at heart and a student of spirituality and cinema. Liz is survived by her brother Ron (Mississauga) and sister Holly (Abbotsford, B.C.), niece and nephews and loyal dog Teddy. Memorial donations in Liz' memory may be made to Wellspring in Stratford. Online tributes at [www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca](http://www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca).

As her favourite poet Leonard Cohen wrote:  
"We are so lightly here  
It is in love that we are made  
In love  
We disappear."

OBITUARY

Robinson



It is with great sadness we announce the passing of Murray Robinson, of St. Marys, on Sunday, January 11, 2026, at the age of 79. Murray passed away peacefully surrounded by his loving family in the Stratford General Hospital. Beloved husband to the late Patricia Robinson (Ingram) for 51 years. Father of Pamela Robinson, Sheila Kruse (Robinson) and Robert Robinson (Elizabeth). Grandpa of Edsel Boyd, Josie Hendry, Alicia Hendry, Tanner Kruse, Whitney Robinson and Great-Grandpa to Athena Boyd and Emilo Lourie. Brother of Jack, Roy (Ann), Ruth, Nolan (Tam), Shirley Harlow, Sharon Swartz (Carl), Patsy Robinson and Doris Robinson. Also surviving are a number of nieces, nephews and cousins. Predeceased by his parents Alvin and Stella (Vannatter) Robinson, brother Oren (Evelyn), sister Betty Robinson, James (Jennie), Bruce (Linda) David and niece Jennifer Robinson. Murray maintained a few careers through his life. He worked many years helping people fix up their homes as a general contractor and loved what he did. Eventually moving on to a long-haul truck driver and eventually retired to a school bus driver. He absolutely loved ensuring the kids made it to school and home safely with a little bit of fun added in with the kids. Anyone that knew Murray knew that he was a jokester and liked to have fun. His nieces and nephews say he was a "one of a kind" uncle that they will never forget. Murray enjoyed playing cribbage and euchre at the Friendship Centre and always made a point of going to the meat draws at the Royal Canadian Legion and Army Navy. A Celebration of Life Open House will be held at the ST. MARYS LEGION PERTH REGIMENT VETERANS BR. 236, 66 Church St. N. St. Marys, on January 25, 2026, from 2 – 4 pm. Donations can be made to the Onecare Home & Community Support Services, the St. Marys Legion Br. 236 or St. Marys Army & Navy Air Force Unit 265. Online tributes at [www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca](http://www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca).



Sorry For Your Loss

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

OBITUARY

Roy Winstone

January 21, 1938 – January 17, 2026



Roy Winstone, of St. Marys and formerly of Toronto, passed away at Kingsway Lodge, St. Marys on January 17, 2026 at the age of 87. Roy was the son of the late Harold and Verna Winstone of Toronto. Roy grew up with his five brothers and his only sister in Toronto. His father would pull him out of school to help him with his busy landscaping business. He started work very young at the Club Coffee Company and learned and worked every job in the company. He became a valued employee and was an expert at the art of blending coffees and travelled around the world advancing his knowledge of coffees. He introduced the company retail coffee specialty stores to Toronto, such as we know and experience them today. He became the owner of a retail business and along with Lorraine they expanded the retail business in Toronto. Eventually they sold it off to Timothys Coffee Company. He later joined the Toronto Transit Commission and retired from there. He enjoyed his visits to St. Marys and convinced Lorraine to move to St. Marys and retire here. They left Toronto and moved to St. Marys in 2005. Roy and Lorraine loved the Toronto theatre and were happy to be near the theatres in Stratford and vicinity. Roy volunteered with the St. Marys Community Players and the St. Marys Friendship Centre. Roy was also a Rotarian for a couple of years. Roy was loved by many and will for certain be missed. Roy's siblings: Jean Carrier (deceased), George, Harold and Gail (both deceased), Gordon and Margie, Bruce (deceased), James "Jim" and Jean-Anne. Roy and his wife Lorraine loved each other deeply and enjoyed 56 years of marriage. Cremation has taken place and there will be no visitation or funeral. Memorial donations may be made to the Alzheimer Society Huron Perth or the St. Marys Friendship Centre. Online tributes at [www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca](http://www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca).

"Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a well preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside in a cloud of smoke, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming "Wow! What a Ride!"

Hunter S. Thompson

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Solutions on pg. 31

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## OBITUARY

### Leavitt



Dr. Barbara "barb" Jane Leavitt died peacefully in her sleep on Wednesday, January 14th, 2026, surrounded by her family at the Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth. She was 63. barb (with a lower case 'b') will be remembered by her children, Analee and Campbell (Cait) and husband, Glen. She is also survived by her mother, Doris (Jack - predeceased) and brothers, Randy (Pam and family) and Barry (Sue and family). There is never enough space to note the extraordinary life that barb lead. She often said that what made her life special were the people she was surrounded by. She loved well and was well loved. In lieu of flowers, please consider a random act of kindness, or a donation to Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth in barb's name. Online tributes at [www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca](http://www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca).

## CELEBRATION OF LIFE



### *Celebrating the life of* **PAUL "CHICAGO" RIORDAN**

who passed away on  
December 8, 2025

We hope you can join us as we  
celebrate Paul's life together.

**OPEN HOUSE  
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Saturday, January 24, 2026  
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## THANK YOU

### Ruppel

The family of the late John Ruppel would like to thank everyone for their kindness in remembering John through their condolences, donations, cards, flowers and food.

Thank you also to the staff at Wildwood Care Center for their amazing care, kindness and thoughtfulness during his time as a resident.

Thank you also to Dr. Travail who cared for John with kindness and compassion when he was in emerg. The support shown to us during this difficult time was sincerely appreciated.

**Mary and family**

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY



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## Looking Back

AMY CUBBERLEY

*Independent Columnist*



## Chicken thieves

**25 years ago (2001)**

St. Marys could have a "Wellness Centre" in its midst in the not-too-distant future. A steering committee comprised of members of the hospital board, Foundation, and hospital staff is overseeing the project.

The public works department received kudos from several sources for its quick removal of snow from the downtown core during several heavy snowfall received already this winter. At last week's Council meeting, Mayor Jamie Hahn recounted how 125 truck loads of snow had been removed overnight from 3 a.m. onwards on January 9.

**50 years ago (1976)**

Something new and different for St. Marys may join the pool table, euchre tables, and shuffleboard courts on the top floor of the Friendship Centre at Cadzow Park. Plans for installation of an indoor bowling green are being bandied about, according to one report.

Former St. Marys Lincoln Ed Parkinson has developed into the number one scoring threat of the University of Pennsylvania Quakers in Philadelphia. Ed leads the team in goals with 10 this season and shares the point leadership with a linemate, both at 19.

**75 years ago (1951)**

This town is no place for stray dogs. Several of these wandering canines have fallen victims to cars on our streets. The number of strays which have been reported lately seems to indicate some dog raisers are dumping their surplus puppies upon the streets of St. Marys, hoping some kind citizens will give the doggies a home.

Some St. Marys citizens seem to think that a "smear campaign" is being engineered by outside interests against the St. Marys Memorial Hospital these days, following the convening of an inquest into the death of a five-day old baby. One outside newspaper even featured the story for three days running with various errors and corrections.

**100 years ago (1926)**

Chicken thieves in St. Marys are by no means all locked up in cells, as there are still a few stray bad men wandering the streets. This was evidenced by the disrespect caused to Mrs. Jardine's chicken house on Monday night when the padlock on the door was smashed and two fine fat pullets were lifted gently off the roosts.

Lorne A. Eedy has been appointed delegate from Walkerton to the Prohibition Convention in Toronto. He spends his weekend at the Renfrew with his friend Roy Sayles, late manager of the C.W.N.A and then goes on to Montreal next week to meet the Advertising Agencies on behalf of the Weekly Newspapers Association.

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### HOUSE CLEANING

House cleaning available. Call or text Jacquie at 519-274-5761

## HELP WANTED



## WE'RE HIRING!

### Dairy Nutrition/Seed Sales Advisor

#### POSITION OVERVIEW

We are seeking a highly motivated, dedicated and proactive Dairy Nutrition/Seed Sales Advisor to join our team.

In this role, you will be representing The Hitching Post on farm, providing proficient advice with high-quality products to help our clients maximize their productivity.

Your primary focus will be servicing our existing loyal customer base while strategically growing our footprint in the area.



VISIT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE FOR FULL JOB DESCRIPTION & QUALIFICATIONS

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:**  
**JANUARY 31<sup>ST</sup>, 2026**

For more information or questions please contact Mark  
mark.ross@thehitchingpost.ca

## HELP WANTED



Tradition Mutual Insurance Company is proudly seeking applications for a position in representing the company as a **Board of Directors member**.

This position is to serve a three year term starting March, 2026.

All applications will be accepted until February 16, 2026.

*Tradition Mutual thanks all applicants for their interest.*

To apply or to learn more information please visit our website:  
[www.traditionmutual.com/financial-information-and-resources/](http://www.traditionmutual.com/financial-information-and-resources/)

*Position is open to all policyholders of Tradition Mutual.*

## THE WEEK AHEAD



**SPONSORED BY: McDonald's St. Marys**  
**752 Queen St. E., St. Marys**  
*Founding and Forever partner of Ronald McDonald House*

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

### FRIDAY, JAN 23

- Royal Canadian Legion hot dog lunch at Noon
- A.N.A.F. meat draw - 6 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Waterloo Siskins at the PRC - 7:30 p.m.

### SATURDAY, JAN 24

- St. Marys Farmers Market at the PRC - 8 a.m. to Noon
- Library board & Friends of the Library annual general meetings at the library - 10:30 a.m.
- Aquatics Centre grand re-opening at the PRC - 12:45-2:45 p.m.
- Paul Riordan celebration of life at the St. Marys Legion - 1-4 p.m.
- Royal Canadian Legion meat draw - 5 p.m.

### SUNDAY, JAN 25

- Thorndale Lions Club community breakfast at the Community Centre - 8:30-11:30 a.m.
- Intro to Photography workshop at 428 Emily Street - 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Email [clairedeannathomas@gmail.com](mailto:clairedeannathomas@gmail.com) to book a spot

### MONDAY, JAN 26

- Community dinner at St. Marys United Church - 5 p.m., Sponsored by St. Marys Rotary Club

### TUESDAY, JAN 27

- Royal Canadian Legion buddy check coffee - 10 a.m. to Noon
- St. Marys Legion cribbage - Starts 7 p.m. sharp

### WEDNESDAY, JAN 28

- Alzheimer Society "Talk with the Doc" zoom presentation - 1:30-3 p.m. Visit <https://bit.ly/Doc-Talk2026> to register for this free event
- Town of St. Marys zoning bylaw open house at the MOC - 4-8 p.m.

### THURSDAY, JAN 29

- A.N.A.F. sausage on a bun - 12-1:30 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Hamilton Kilty B's at Dave Andreychuk Mountain Arena - 7:07 p.m.

## HELP WANTED



### Join Our Team Finance Coordinator, Part-Time

The St. Marys Healthcare Foundation is looking for a dedicated and detail-oriented Finance Coordinator to join our team. This is a unique opportunity to contribute directly to the health and well-being of our community.

#### About the Role

The Finance Coordinator will manage and oversee the Foundation's financial records, systems, and processes, including, accounting, bookkeeping, banking, record-keeping, and all related financial administration. This key role ensures transparency, compliance, and efficiency in all financial operations.

**Interested?** Learn more and apply today by visiting, [hpha.ca/careers](http://hpha.ca/careers) or by scanning the QR code.



## FOR HALL RENTALS CALL 519.271.5343

Jan 11 Mike Bannerman - St Marys	\$50.00
Jan 12 Daniel Gregory - Komoka	\$50.00
Jan 13 Vanessa Beckett - St Marys	\$50.00
Jan 14 Martin Riddell - Granton	\$50.00
Jan 15 Steve & Marian Van Klooster - St Pauls	\$50.00
Jan 16 Elise Clark - Chatham	\$50.00
Jan 17 Mark Schwartzewtrubor - New Dundee	\$200.00

### FRASER ASPHALT PAVING INC

**FREE QUOTES 519-271-5690**  
[www.fraserpaving.ca](http://www.fraserpaving.ca)

#### QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Blue moon
2. Russian America
3. Henry VIII
4. Denver, Colorado
5. Skin
6. 64
7. African Elephant
8. Finland
9. 2008
10. Supercell

#### SUDOKU ANSWERS

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

## FOR ADVERTISING INQUIRIES IN THE ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

CALL 519.284.0041 OR EMAIL [INFO@STMARYSINDEPENDENT.COM](mailto:INFO@STMARYSINDEPENDENT.COM)



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