

STRATFORD *TIMES*

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FIRST WEEKLY EDITION

North sluice gate at RT Orr Dam working as designed, says UTRCA

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

Some questions have been raised, as Lake Victoria still appears more like a mud pit than a lake in some areas due to low rainfall since the RT Orr Dam became lodged with debris and drained over the course of multiple days.

Some locals are taking to Facebook to discuss the ongoing concerns with the dam and the cause of the blockage; however, the recent draining of Lake Victoria was not caused by a broken gate, according to the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA).

The north sluice gate – the one used during the July 24 rainstorm – functioned as designed, officials said. The problem occurred when debris became lodged beneath the gate, preventing it from closing completely and allowing water to continue draining from the lake.

“This incident did not cause damage to the gate,” the UTRCA confirmed in an email. “The north sluice gate was already scheduled for refurbishment and maintenance.”

According to UTRCA, the two gates were operating appropriately, and the debris was an unfortunate incident that

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2



Scarlett, a mute swan mother, and one of her cygnets glide on the Avon River, captured by wildlife photographer Lisa Herlick. For more on Herlick's many adventures in the heart of Stratford, see our feature story on page 8. (LISA HERLICK PHOTO)

City seeks public input on new 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

If the first public open house for the City of Stratford's new 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan proved anything, it's that solving the national housing crisis locally will take all heads working together.

The open house was held in Stratford on Aug. 12 to elicit public feedback on the new plan. As Kim McElroy, social services director with the city, said at the meeting, the dialogue that occurred that afternoon will shape the region's response to the homelessness and housing crisis.

“Let's work collaboratively,” McElroy said. “Work to-

wards building a more inclusive future where every individual in our community has a place to call home.”

The 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Stratford, Perth County and St. Marys was introduced in 2014. It provided a series of recommendations divided into five strategic priority areas: coordination and collaboration, data gathering and sharing, affordable housing options, eviction and homelessness prevention and homelessness reduction.

This time around, there are four frameworks being targeted by the plan: ending homelessness through innovative strategies and sustained efforts, creating attainable

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City seeks public input on new 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

housing options, sustaining community housing and addressing diversity of needs.

Discussions were hosted at four tables that afternoon, one for each of the points city staff wish to explore in this new plan. Members of the public were encouraged to go from table to table, giving their ideas, thoughts and worries and discussing them with other members of the public.

At the sustaining community housing table, for example, the public discussed the pros and cons of a shelter system, or lack thereof. Many Stratford residents have lamented the lack of a suitable shelter in the city, though some – like United Way executive director Ryan Erb – was hesitant about the idea. The city currently uses motels and hotels

for providing emergency housing, something that Erb said is quite strategic.

“At least in my experience, it's able to expand and contract based on the need,” Erb explained. “...The hotel system is actually better than a large shelter. They have safety, there's more security, privacy, all those things.”

Community member and housing advocate Jason Davis, later in the afternoon, disagreed, when the topic was brought up with a new group of residents.

“From people I know that used to be homeless and were addicted to drugs ... for them it was two weeks of having a good place to do drugs. I'm not saying we should stop it. We should definitely have that until something else comes around, but its not great.

“My point is just that we need that first emergency shelter, right?” Davis went on to say. “Everything else is great, but when we're looking at a \$3 million social services budget, and we're allocating \$2.9 million of it before we even start the year, because that's just maintaining the services we're already doing, it's going to be real hard to start looking down those steps of care over the next 10 years.”

City staff were busy at work at the tables, compiling the various and sometimes opposing points being made by community members. As said numerous times that afternoon, all points were valid and worth discussing.

Separate from the 10-year plan currently being developed, the city will soon also develop a new program to address long-term housing pressures.

As announced on July 28, the city received \$120,000 in federal funding from the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH), through the Homelessness Reduction Innovation Fund (HRIF). The funds will go to designing, implementing and evaluating the project, which

will target individuals experiencing homelessness who require a moderate or low level of support to achieve housing stability.

As John Ritz, the city's homelessness and housing stability supervisor, said, Stratford was one of the first communities to receive and announce this funding.

“Ideally, this will make a difference in Stratford, but I think the whole point of the project is really looking at community driven solutions, and I think this is also part of the Canadian Alliance to End Homeless' goal – how can we potentially use this to help communities across Canada?”

Ritz further elaborated that the alliance will take the data from various communities successful in their applications to see what projects were successful, and then to create an appropriate wider response to the housing crisis in the nation.

Ritz added that the department is excited to get started on the project, though did not have further details on it. More information will be available when the project is officially announced.

More open houses on the 10-year plan are to follow the Stratford meeting in other area municipalities. St. Marys hosts one on Aug. 20 and Listowel on Aug. 21.

A survey is also available until Aug. 22 and can be found at <https://engagestratford.ca/housing-and-homelessness-plan>.



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To fill out a
survey on the
new 10-Year
Housing and
Homelessness
Plan, scan the
code.

North sluice gate at RT Orr Dam working

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

could not have been prevented regardless of which gate was used.

The dam has two sluice gates – north and south – which can be used to release or control water flow. At this time, the north gate is awaiting refurbishment, while the south gate is currently in use.

UTRCA officials stated that the refurbishment of the north gate is unrelated to the debris issue, and the south gate was functioning correctly at the time of the debris issue.

UTRCA is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the RT Orr Dam. The City of Stratford pays the authority a levy that covers dam operations, maintenance, and capital projects. The UTRCA also contracts some of the dam monitoring and operations to the city.

Work is ongoing to refill Lake Victoria, with staff continuing to monitor water flow and aquatic health downstream.

“We’re continuing to review the circumstances and the variables that impacted the operations, including the gates,” the UTRCA said. “We will be discussing the event with City of Stratford staff and identifying areas for improvement.”

On Aug. 11, the draining was discussed at city council. When asked by Coun. Geza Wordofa about the crisis at Stratford's waterfront, Mayor Martin Ritsma confirmed that discussions are being had between the two organizations.

“I’ve also asked Upper Thames (River) Conservation Authority, who are the authorities of that particular dam and the weir as well, that they are going to come back and report to council about the situation,” Ritsma said. “How it occurred, and then what they are looking to with regards to mitigating the chance of that happening again.”

“There will be a debrief on this,” Adam Betteridge, interim chief administrative officer with the city, added. “There will be lessons learned, there will be comments about how we can work with the UTRCA to prevent this unfortunate circumstance from happening again. ... There'll be some public information within the next day or two on this about what has been done.”

When pressed about whether or not staff or an organization will take responsibility for the draining, Betteridge said that he won't “accept that staff need to take any responsibility for this.”

“We know how the infrastructure works. We know why the dams have been put in place. We know the functions. Council of the day elected what type and what type of maintenance was put into the infrastructure that controls the flood control through the (Avon) River into Lake Victoria, so I don't believe, with the utmost respect, that one staff person or someone needs to take responsibility for something failed ... No one decided for that gate not to work that evening. It was a fluke.”

City council to stay same size for 2026-2030 term after lengthy discussion on governance structure

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Stratford city council will remain as 11 members for the next term, after a move to condense it to nine members was withdrawn.

Coun. Jo-Dee Burbach originally put forward the motion, which came to the finance and labour standing committee on Aug. 11. As she said, there were a few reasons why she wanted to have the discussion.

“Thinking about our roles on council and the amount of remuneration that we’re paid, and the type of work that we do, and then comparing it to other municipalities of comparable size, it seemed reasonable that we would at least talk about reducing the size of council,” Burbach said. “And my thoughts around the remuneration part was that we would leave the budget line for the next council the same, but we would divide it into eight instead of 10 and thereby increasing the salary level of each councillor.”

“But another big piece of why I was thinking about this was we’re considering a procedural bylaw change, or the change of procedures in the chambers – going from a three-step process to a two-step,

which will change the amount of work for councillors. ... In effect, there’ll be less meetings. So my thought was, if there’s less meetings and less requirements, then the size of council could reasonably be smaller, thus saving possible taxpayer money as well.”

She did have reservations, however. As she and Coun. Lesley Biehn had previously discussed, with the advent of Stratford receiving strong mayor powers from the provincial government, in which the mayor could veto a split council decision, having less councillors would increase the role of the mayor and diminish the role of council. Still, she wanted to have a conversation on the matter.

Council, for its part, was largely in agreement that a reduction was not the answer.

“I don’t support this at all,” Coun. Cody Sebben said. “I think it was initially brought up in subcommittee with a rationale not to save money, but essentially as a pay increase for the lucky eight, I guess, who are elected instead of 10 ... (There’s) nothing I’ve heard from the public at any point that they would like to see less representation on council. From my opinion, I do value that we have 11 voices when we have discussions and votes.”

Coun. Harjinder Nijjar concurred.

“A larger council spreads responsibilities more evenly, instead of taking on additional duties,” Nijjar said. “Cost of governance: fewer councillors will increase individual workloads. Decision making dynamics: more members do enrich debate, good discussion. Scalability: the city is growing and we want it to grow, and we need to think of future growth in services that the public expects from us.”

After further discussion, Burbach withdrew the motion and thanked council for the conversation on governance, though it did not end there. Sebben tried to put forward a motion to establish a ward system, so that council is made up of councillors with constituents of specific areas of the city, rather than all 10 councillors being elected by the whole electorate. His motion died on the floor without a seconder.

The role of the deputy mayor, currently held by Nijjar, was discussed at length. Burbach had put forward a motion to investigate a policy for selecting a deputy mayor by rotation, with a maximum of four councillors permitted to

serve in the role per term.

Currently, the role is appointed by vote of council for a two-year period. During this term, Nijjar has been elected for all four years.

Burbach had the idea after speaking with the deputy mayor of Ottawa, which has a similar process to the one Burbach suggested. The idea would be to give more councillors the opportunity to step into the role.

Her motion was defeated in a split 5-4 vote. She further put forward a motion to have the councillor who received the most votes during an election be appointed deputy mayor for a two-year term, though that was also defeated.

In the end, council voted to retain the current system.

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Editorial

Reaching a recovery milestone and reflecting on accessibility in modern society



GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

For many, an uneven curb cut, a broken electronic door-opener or a shortage of accessible parking spaces can make the difference between a productive day and plans gone unfulfilled – or worse, a feeling of lost independence and the inability to carry out day-to-day tasks without asking for help.

For the past six months, my

fiancé, Julia, and I learned this first-hand after Julia broke her leg quite badly (two bones, about six inches above the ankle, for those who want the gory details). It happened on the morning we were set to move into the home we had just purchased together and, since then, our lives have revolved almost entirely around Julia's injury and her recovery.

Recently and because Julia is once again walking without any assistive equipment, I had the absolute joy of returning the wheelchair and walker we had relied on to get Julia to and from the car and her many doctor's appointments in Stratford, London and Toronto. Getting rid of that equipment on a beautiful, sunny, summer morning was like a sign from above that this long, painful nightmare was near its end.

While Julia was and continues

to be focused on her physical recovery, I made it my mission to coordinate every detail for all our outings, from timing to comfort to mobility and everything in between. Before this happened, I never imagined the exhaustive effort it takes for someone living with a physical disability and their caregivers just to get out the front door and in the car, let alone to do all those other things us able-bodied people do in a day that we take for granted.

I started taking stock of things like broken or missing accessible entrances, how steep a pathway or ramp is, and the often crumbling or poorly designed public infrastructure that makes it difficult to roll a wheelchair up onto a sidewalk or into a public building.

While Julia's disability is only temporary, it was upsetting to

see how our world is built from the perspective of those of us without mobility issues, and it made me think twice about how so many people struggle daily just to live the quality of life I take for granted.

It also made me think of my friend, Diane Sims, an ardent accessibility advocate who pushed the City of Stratford for years to build an accessible entrance to the city's police station, which was only just unveiled earlier this year. Now, she's pushing the city to address another accessibility concern – the slope of the bridge to Tom Patterson Island, which is too steep to get over in a wheelchair or electric scooter.

The fact that Diane is pushing for this change while dealing with her physical decline as she continues to live with end-stage multiple sclerosis is nothing short

of inspirational. The fact that she needs to advocate for this type of change in the first place is downright disappointing.

So, the next time you're walking down the street, have a look at the state of the sidewalk or the number of accessible entrances at the buildings you pass and ask yourself, "Could I manage this if I was using a wheelchair or a walker?"

Count how many times the answer is, "No," and remember we still have a lot of work to do to make our society inclusive for everyone. It's not just up to those with physical limitations to advocate for greater accessibility.

After all, most of us will end up with some kind of disability in our lifetime. When your turn comes, wouldn't it be nice to know we're all pushing for the same change?

Letters to the Editor

Come on Stratford, we can help

As we are hearing about more devastation that the climate change presents, we wonder about how can we, as individuals, help.

We know that every time we draw a breath, we produce CO2. NASA has shown that house plants can turn CO2 into oxygen that is essential for our good health.

If we cover industrial building walls with clinging

plants that cover the walls, it would provide cooling for the building and captures a large amount of CO2. The cost of this would be less than any other covering. This is already being done.

If solar panels were installed, the pay back would be six to seven years, according to the City of Woodstock installations. Planting more trees is also a good example of how trees capture CO2.

An example given by the Department of Lands and Forest (now known as the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry), that a mature cedar tree will capture 40 pounds of CO2 in one year.

Come on Stratford, we can help. Will Stratford be recognized as the city of environmental excellence, or will it be recognized as the DEMOLITION city?

Lorne Bolton, Stratford

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Lead pollution from touch-and-go operations

Dear editor,

I'm deeply concerned about the health risks of tetraethyl lead (TEL), a neurotoxin in Avgas 100LL used by piston-engine aircraft during frequent touch-and-go operations at Stratford Municipal Airport. My concern is strictly about lead emissions from these operations, not the airport's valuable role in our community. These operations, conducted by Stratford Air Services and Waterloo Wellington Flight Centre, release lead particles into our air, soil and water, endangering nearby families and children.

On a recent Friday, I recorded 13 touch-and-go operations between 8:54 and 9:16 a.m., averaging one every 1.7 minutes – a pattern typical of busy training days, likely logged by flight schools for regulatory compliance.

Scientific evidence confirms the danger. A 2000 study at Toronto-Buttonville Airport found lead levels 4.2 times higher than Toronto's background. The U.S. EPA's 2020 data estimates piston-engine aircraft emit

around 170 tons of lead annually, with touch-and-go operations contributing significantly. Lead exposure causes neurological damage, reduced IQ in children and heart and kidney issues, lingering in the body for decades.

Since 1990, the use of leaded gasoline in motor vehicles has been prohibited in Canada, under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA). Progress on unleaded fuels is slow. The U.S. FAA's EAGLE program aims to phase out leaded fuel by 2030, with unleaded UL94 available for some aircraft. Canada lacks a firm timeline. A February 2024 CBC report on airport-related health concerns, while focused on noise, underscores the need to address pollutants like lead.

I urge Stratford's municipal council and Transport Canada to conduct air, soil and water testing to assess lead emissions from touch-and-go operations, using flight logs to quantify activity and to accelerate the transition to unleaded fuels to protect our community's health.

Kim Maloney

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Huron County Local Immigration Partnership shares results of newcomer housing study for Huron-Perth

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Among the findings from a recent study conducted by the Huron County Local Immigration Partnership, entitled “Newcomer Experiences of Housing in Huron and Perth,” the cost of renting and access to housing information were identified as barriers to permanent newcomer settlement in small, rural communities.

At the Aug. 7 Perth County council meeting, Mark Nonkes, manager of the Huron County Local Immigration Partnership, presented all 10 of the study’s findings. The study, he explained, was conducted after finding an affordable place to live was identified as a top challenge for immigrants in the 2023 Huron-Perth Immigrant Survey. As there is little information available about rural immigrant experiences of housing across Canada and housing is known to have a significant impact on overall settlement outcomes for newcomers, the study is intended to begin a conversation around how to improve access to appropriate, affordable and sustainable housing for newcomers.

“Our partners, who work across both Huron and Perth, often ask us to do more work in Perth as there’s no immigration partnership there,” Nonkes said. “So, this research study spanned the two geographies.

“... Why is it important to study newcomer experiences of housing? ... There’s no fall-back; they don’t have family or friends to go back to or rely on. There’s no credit or rental history in Canada which may be a barrier. Understanding the experiences of diverse groups allows decision-makers to keep things in mind like development and infill planning. Representation from dif-

ferent groups is important to break down barriers to enhance people settling in our community. A lack of knowledge of local rental markets or housing support available is often experienced by newcomers. Rural areas often rely on social-connection referrals to rentals; newcomers may not have those networks. And finally, one of the big challenges that newcomers face is racism and xenophobia that other groups may not.”

The study comprised four hour-and-a-half-long focus groups held in Goderich, Exeter, Listowel and St. Marys with a total of 40 newcomers who arrived in Canada since 2018 and live in communities of 10,000 people or less participating. Sixty-two per cent of participants were female while 38 per cent were male.

As for their countries of origin, 15 were from Ukraine, five from Philippines, five each from Mexico and Syria, three each from India and Ghana, two from Guatemala, and one each from Iran, Russia and Ivory Coast. All of the participants rented – 23 lived in houses and 17 in apartment buildings – and 31 live with children in their homes.

The following are the study’s findings:

• **Housing is only one part of settlement experiences:** It is entwined with employment and transportation. Other factors impacting housing for newcomers include English language classes, education for children, access to health care, programming for newcomers at community libraries and proximity to grocery stores.

• **Newcomers face multiple barriers to housing:** Nearly half of the participants pay more than 30 per cent of their income on housing, with those fleeing war paying as high as 40-80 per cent of their incomes. Other barriers include a lack of credit history in Canada, which limits rental options; lengthy wait times

after submitted rental applications; and difficulties finding suitable rental housing for larger families. Living with roommates allowed eight participants to allocate only 20-30 per cent of their monthly income to housing, while some participants were assisted in finding housing by their employers.

• **Multiple moves:** Of the participants, 10 remained in the place where they arrived; 16 moved to new homes once; and six moved twice or more.

• **Suitable housing determinants:** According to participants, the factors that make housing suitable include having enough bedrooms, having enough bathrooms, having a place where everyone in the home can find privacy and that those living in the home can express themselves freely.

• **Housing conditions vary:** Seven participants lived in houses that were in good condition and renovated while four participants highlighted challenges with older buildings. Participants reported their repair requests were often delayed and shared laundry could be difficult to access with equipment in various states of repair.

• **Landlord-tenant relationships:** While participants said the hallmark of a good landlord was their responsiveness to requests, some voiced concerns about their landlords’ views about immigrants.

• **Housing information:** Of the 40 participants, 15 found housing through family or friends, 12 through Facebook, two using a search engine like Google and two with the help of a real estate agent. Participants also noted they had no access to official housing information sources, they are not familiar with government supports for affordable housing and they lack knowledge around tenant rights. Twenty-two participants, over half, said there is not enough information on housing for newcomers in Huron-Perth.

• **Newcomers appreciate small com-**

munities: Of the 40 participants, 33 felt accepted in their communities and they appreciate the slower pace, connection to nature and feeling safe and appreciated.

• **Newcomers find local residents friendly and helpful:** Of the participants, 17 said they have good and helpful neighbours, five have troubling neighbours, five do not know their neighbours, one does not have neighbours, and two did not answer the question. Overall, the participants described locals as welcoming, generous, empathetic and willing to help by sharing information, and they praised volunteers and neighbours who supported their adjustment to their new surroundings.

• **Newcomers unsure if they will stay where they are:** Of the participants, 11 said they plan to remain where they are for the next five years, three said they would move elsewhere, nine said they were unsure and 17 did not answer. The participants said housing affordability and proximity to essential services is a key deciding factor. Many who wished to stay hoped to purchase their own home but recognized the need for permanent residency to do so. They also pointed to limited job options as a factor in whether or not they would stay.

“Now that we have all this information, what we’re doing with it is we’re rolling it out to the people who participated and we’ve organized meetings with immigrant-service providers, community organizations and housing-focused organizations. We’ve been doing consultations with newcomers to share the findings and identify additional solutions, and we’re working towards developing a second publication to highlight ways newcomer experiences with housing can be strengthened locally,” Nonkes said.

Community conversations have already been held in Goderich, Listowel and St. Marys, while the final conversation was scheduled in Exeter for Aug. 13, after press time.

Police warn of fraudulent garbage tags

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The Stratford Police Service is warning the public about fraudulent garbage tags being sold in the city.

In Stratford, only approved vendors may sell tags for weekly garbage collection. Effective this year, one tag costs \$3.86 and they can only be purchased currently at:

- Stratford City Hall – 1 Wellington St.
- 7-Eleven – 327 Erie St.
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- Canadian Tire Gas Bar – 1101 Ontario St.
- Daisy Mart – 555 Downie St.
- East End Variety – 231 Douro St.

- Esso – 501 Ontario St.
- Giant Tiger – 477 Huron St.
- Joe’s Variety – 760 Ontario St.
- Mobil – 180 Erie St.
- Mornington Variety – 231 Mornington St.
- North End Pharmacy – 240 Graff Ave.
- Shell Station – 405 Huron St.
- Sobeys – 581 Huron St.
- Stratford Mini Mart / GoCo – 666 Ontario St.
- Stratford Variety – 542 Downie St.
- Corner Convenience (Video 99 & Convenience) – 332 Erie St.
- Zehrs – 865 Ontario St.

The fraud is currently being investigated. If you think you bought a fake tag, please contact local police at (519) 271-4147, ext. 8191.

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Aug. 11 city council briefs: New licensing appeal committee just narrowly filled

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Stratford city council narrowly filled a new committee just struck to handle short-term accommodation licensing appeals.

During the council meeting on Aug. 11, Coun. Jo-Dee Burbach, Coun. Harjinder Nijjar and Mayor Martin Ritsma put their names forward for the committee, though there was a period where it looked like no councillor would raise their hand for the posting.

Coun. Cody Sebben voiced why he in particular didn't raise his hand: he didn't support the composition of the committee at all, thinking that it should be members of the public rather than councillors that sit on it.

"I think there's a lot of value in having trained members of the public who know about that type of thing and have the right criteria," Sebben said.

He wasn't the only one to voice that opinion that night. Barb Shaughnessy, herself an accommodation-owner, delegated to council and agreed with Sebben's position. She asserted that other area municipalities with similar licensing bylaws have citizen-filled appeal committees, made up of people with knowledge of law and licensing, industry stakeholders and experts in mediation, among other qualities.

Interim chief administrative officer Adam Betteridge, on the city's part, said the committee was straight forward.

"I'm seeing the reluctance of councillors to put up their hand and add themselves to this committee," Betteridge said. "I would think that this is relatively straightforward exercise. When the applications come in, it's not going to be too time consuming. It's essentially taking what the appellant is not agreeing with and staff bringing forward a recommendation and making a decision. So I do think it's rel-

atively straightforward at this point, and if council deems it ever appropriate in the future to move forward to another arrangement, that can be explored as well."

The new committee is set to handle appeals for when appellants are denied a short-term accommodation license, with its first hearing tentatively scheduled for Sept. 3. Council was asked to name three members and an alternate for the committee, though only named Burbach, Nijjar and Ritsma.

Anne Hathaway Daycare adding two full-time teaching assistants

Council unanimously voted to add two full-time teaching assistants to Anne Hathaway Day Care's complement.

According to the staff report presented that evening, 8,136 hours of supply teachers are used each year at the day care, equal to 3.9 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. By utilizing 4,500 hours, the organization can supply two permanent FTE positions that "ensures stable delivery

of program services, reduces stress, and mitigates burnout among full-time staff and ensures that Ministry guidelines for child-to-teacher ratios can be met."

It won't be without cost, however. The staffing shift is expected to cost the city \$28,600 a year due to benefit costs, though the report notes that there may be indirect savings due to lower turnover rates, training and integration costs.

Coun. Geza Wordofa to make motion for a temporary shelter at Rotary Complex during winter

Before council adjourned, Coun. Geza Wordofa put forward two motions he intends to bring forward in September: that a traffic light be installed at the George and Downie Street intersection and that a temporary homeless shelter at the Stratford Rotary Complex be included in the 2026 municipal budget.

That motion will come forward for council consideration at the Sept. 8 council meeting.

Perth South to hire deputy treasurer/asset management coordinator amid department capacity issues

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Unable to meet provincially legislated compliance requirements and missing out on the potential for much-needed infrastructure grants, the Township of Perth South will hire a deputy treasurer/asset management coordinator to help lighten the load in its financial services department later this year.

At the Aug. 5 Perth South council meeting, councillors voted unanimously to create the position and hire someone to fill it at an estimated cost of between \$87,392 and \$109,179 annually. According to the staff report to council, the township is experiencing growing pressure on its financial services because of expanding municipal responsibilities, increasingly complex regulatory requirements and the rising intricacy of financial reporting.

Currently, all financial functions are managed solely by the treasurer. They include budgeting, long-term financial

planning, reporting, payroll, taxation, municipal drains and grants, tile loans, audit preparation, asset management, procurement and oversight of two communal water systems. The treasurer is also the deputy chief administrative officer (CAO), contributing to the day-to-day management of both the financial services department and broader organizational initiatives.

"When Tracy (Johnson) came onboard (as treasurer), we certainly evaluated the capacity of the treasury to do all the things that are assigned to the treasury and all of the expectations of council," Perth South CAO Fred Tranquilli said. "At the moment, the treasury has very limited capacity to do any forward planning, to do any evaluations of the systems that might be on the horizon. ... I think Tracy has done a good job getting her arms around all the work in the treasury, but certainly the demands of the water systems and the financial plans for them, as well as asset management and procurement, are all new expectations laid out in legislation over the last four years

and there's been no additional capacity added to the treasury to respond to those requirements."

"The FIR (financial information return) is actually due (to the province) by May 31 and I don't think that's ever been done here," Johnson said. "I mean, we're doing year-end in December, so with that kind of stuff, they're going to cut off your (Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund) funding if we don't start. ... We've been working on stuff that hasn't been done; the gas tax. To get the gas tax (funding), you have to do a report on it, and the (Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund), it has to be reported on. It's all stuff that gets put on the backburner because you're trying to do the budget, you're trying to do the payroll, you're trying to do the taxes. It's a lot for one person."

According to Tranquilli, this single-person model for the financial services department is and has been unsustainable for a long time. It has contributed to challenges in managing grant reporting and recovering eligible expenditures, and the current workload leaves no room for proactive initiatives such as policy development, strategic financial planning, or internal process improvements. Without additional support, the township risks falling behind in regulatory compliance, operational efficiency and the delivery of essential services.

In addition, Tranquilli pointed out there is no one to take over should Johnson find herself unable to work and, as is the case in many of the township's municipal departments, there isn't adequate succession planning for the role of treasurer currently, should Johnson leave the position or retire.

While Coun. Jaime Martin asked whether the position could be part-time or contracted to save taxpayers the full cost,

Tranquilli said it would be difficult to find a part-timer who would have the right skillset and solve the township's succession-planning issues, while hiring a deputy treasurer on contract would do nothing to address succession planning and may be more expensive than hiring a full-time employee.

Coun. Jim Van Nes asked why this request for a new staff position didn't come to council at budget time, to which Tranquilli said Johnson had only just been hired and she was still getting to know her new role and department.

Van Nes also expressed frustration with the province over how much more it has started requiring from municipalities from a financial compliance standpoint, suggesting the township meet with Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae to discuss its concerns.

"If a new person comes in and it frees up time for trying to get more grants to help us out, it won't pay for itself (but) at some point, it helps pay for it," Coun. Sam Cariveau said. "If we're not submitting for grants, I see a big problem there and, if this will help, I'm for it for sure."

"It worries me that for this position we're saying, 'This person is going to ensure compliance,'" Coun. Jeff Bell added. "It's becoming obvious just through this discussion that we do need some support and when we're talking compliance, that's a big deal. And I think grant funding is really going to help us as well."

As Tranquilli said, the township likely won't have anyone hired for the new position before October. The cost for that position for the remainder of the year can be paid for through this year's budget. For 2026, staff will include the full cost of the position as part of the operating budget.

STRATFORD TIMES

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New building innovation exchange launches in Perth County and area

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

Sustainable Waterloo Region (SWR), in partnership with the Grand Valley Construction Association (GVCA), has officially launched Frameworks: A Building Innovation Exchange – a groundbreaking initiative designed to support the building sector in transitioning toward efficient, innovative and healthy buildings.

Now expanding into neighbouring Perth and Oxford counties, the program offers support that is not available anywhere else in the province.

The initiative is industry-led and

shaped by an executive advisory committee of regional experts in construction, engineering, architecture and building sciences. It aims to bridge the gap and make building practices more efficient, smart and healthy.

The program's goal is to ensure that everyone involved in the planning, design, construction, operation and renovation of buildings has access to the tools, knowledge and connections they need to support sustainable building practices.

"Our job is to aggregate, communicate, help to gather, build momentum behind what other people are doing as well," said Tova Davidson, executive director at

Sustainable Waterloo Region. "We don't claim to be the experts, but we want to make it easier to access the expertise that's out there."

The evolvl project served as a catalyst for the ACE Frameworks program. As Canada's first net-positive energy multi-tenant office building, it is located in Waterloo and helped demonstrate the potential for sustainable, efficient building practices in Ontario.

"The building and development industry is an essential player in how we're going to get to a more resilient future and economy moving forward," said Davidson.

Frameworks currently delivers proven strategies to the building sector through online resources, events and engagement opportunities, training and technical workshops, a policy engagement platform, market acceleration and project-specific support.

"We want to make sure that sustainable buildings are the most efficient buildings to build," said Davidson. "The whole idea is to work towards smart and healthy buildings throughout the province."

For more information or to learn about upcoming events, visit sustainablewaterlooregion.ca/frameworks.

Great coffee and great music for a great cause

SYDNEY GOODWIN

Times Correspondent

The Livery Yard opened its doors in the evening, inviting people to come inside, enjoy some delicious coffee and listen to some amazing music from talented local bands. July 24-26 was the weekend of Livery After Dark, and it was a weekend many came out to enjoy.

Livery After Dark kicked off the weekend of bands on July 24 with Lauren Nelson and the students of the Folk Army, a talented group of singers, songwriters, and musicians that came together to showcase their talents. The next day, the Livery Yard welcomed Cabin Fever, a Sarnia based folk trio. They provided wonderful foot tapping songs throughout the night that made the audience think of getting lost in the forest and listening to the wind in the leaves. The weekend ended off with music and poetry from David Stone and Quinn Mayer, along with accompanying guitar from the talented Jaron Camp. The original works mixed together with the classics of slam poetry made for a moving show that kept the audience captivated until the end.

Livery After Dark was held as a fundraiser. Attendees were asked to make a donation of \$10 (if able), with donations being put towards the Generation Rainbow Collective (GRC).

The GRC is a youth-based and lead group for teens who fall within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, providing a

space for kids to feel welcomed and seen. Sara Catherine works with her son Ollie – the Stratford Perth Pride youth ambassador – to create a youth program that encourages kids to try new things and be who they are.

"It's lovely to have all these people coming together to help fundraise money for queer youth, it shows just how strong we can be as a community," Ollie stated, proud to see how many people have come together to support the organization and the arts.

While the donations are still being counted, Catherine estimates they've received well over \$500.

"We cannot possibly measure our gratitude for the Livery Yard and all the amazing talent who participated in this event series. Support from our community is integral for our group to operate, but more importantly it shows the youth how valued they are in our community. That alone is a wonderful gift," explained Catherine.

Fundraisers like Livery After Dark are important for groups like the GRC, as it is through donations they are able to offer fun activities for the kids, take them out around the city and keep the group afloat.

If you would like to know more about the GRC, you can check them out on social media at [generationrainbowcollective](https://www.instagram.com/generationrainbowcollective) on Instagram. You can also check out the Livery Yard's Facebook or Instagram for more information about upcoming events it will be hosting.



GRC members Julia and Emma, youth ambassador Ollie, and Saturday's performers Quinn Mayer and David Stones

(SYDNEY GOODWIN PHOTO)

PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR HOUSE IS

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A day in the life of a wildlife photographer, right in the heart of urban Stratford

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Every day, Lisa Herlick heads to the Avon River.

If you're lucky you may be able to spot her. Most days she's decked in green camo, or white in the winter. She carries a DSLR camera, a long lens and a tripod, and can spend hours standing still with her eyes on the water.

Like any wildlife photographer she's looking for *it*. The photo. Though, what exactly it will be of changes moment to moment as nature unfolds through her lens.

"I'm all about the action," Herlick told the Times. "I'm all about the eyes ... because the eyes tell it all, right? I like getting close enough that I can see their eyes and they can see mine. And I do think that they sense me as I sense them, and so I like close up stuff, action stuff ... I like the moment, the impact (as it) hits the water."

Herlick is a wildlife photographer and owner of Nature n Focus Photography, best known on local social media channels where she shares her pictures for the wider public to see. As previously mentioned, she mainly focuses on the river, Lake Victoria in downtown Stratford and the surrounding greenspaces in the heart of urban Stratford.

Although surrounded by the hustle and bustle of the Festival City, hidden in the in-between places is a thriving ecosystem that she knows well. As she said, on any given day she can spot up to 36 different species of fauna around her – from common species like Canadian geese and ducks to more rare species like bald eagles, beavers and snapping turtles.

Recently, with the drastic draining of Lake Victoria in late-July due to an issue at the RT Orr Dam, the area looks much different. Herlick said the first couple of days were a hotbed of activity for local species, as they migrated away from the areas that were drying up. Now that



Lisa Herlick poses on the banks of Lake Victoria. A popular wildlife photographer on local social media channels in Stratford, she is out in the wilds of the Festival City every day. (CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

the lake is no longer draining and some calm has returned, she is nervous about the lake's health, though trusts the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority and the powers that be to manage and maintain the waterway.

Right now, Herlick is focused on capturing an elusive creature – one she hasn't photographed yet but is sure is in the area: a peregrine falcon.

"I've heard it scream and my phone registered it twice," she explained. "I've seen it. I've heard it twice. They are in southwestern Ontario, he is located in an area that meets the checklist. I've watched videos. I've listened to recordings ... I would say I'm 100 per cent sure, I just haven't got the photo yet."

Marked by their brilliant yellow beaks and talons, blue-gray backs and bespeckled undercarriage, peregrines are a tricky bird to capture. With a top speed anywhere between 300 to 625 kilometres an hour, they are largely considered the fastest animals on the planet.

Herlick said she started her photography journey with a simple cellphone camera that was gifted to her four years ago. She had no professional photography experience, but persistently came out to the river and grew as a photographer. Later, when she was gifted her first \$500 camera, it was an exciting evolution that opened up a world of possibility.

Now, as her experience and business grows, she upgrades her camera and gear yearly, with enough kit to come out to the river no matter what the elements are. She has rain shields for when it downpours and snowshoes for when there's too much snow to trudge through.

Growing up in Wellesley area, Herlick credits her upbringing in instilling her core beliefs and setting her up for success when it comes to nature photography.

"I grew up at the river fishing," Herlick said. "My brother and I ... all day long, we would just wander. We'd go fishing, just explore. And I did that my whole child life."

"My dad was a fisherman and a hunter, so I was kind of like the second son, right? And I actually liked it more than my brother did. But because I was a woman, you never had these opportunities back then ... You didn't know you could be a wildlife photographer."

The secret to her continued success as a wildlife photographer, if it can be called a secret, comes down to those core values instilled in her in those formative years: patience, respect and curiosity.

"I have this high curiosity," Herlick said. "I want to see its tongue. What kind of feet does he have? I love the ruffled feather look. ... When I see a bird, I don't just say, 'Well, there's the white bird and there's a tern.' I research each one I do, so then it draws even more of a heightened interest for me to photograph it."

Respect in particular is important to Herlick, both in terms of her practice and her goal. Being in the same areas everyday and presumably seeing the same animals frequently, she has come to know them quite well and they have come to know her, too. She believes that by continuing what she's doing, she can spread the same respect she has for nature with the broader public.

"This is why I do what I do, to educate," Herlick said. "If you know more about the bird, if you know more about the facts, people will respect (nature) again. I think years ago we respected nature because we were in nature more. And I think our mentality would be better, and I think our parks would be cleaner. Society's lost that in touch with nature (quality)."

"If I can get birds with names and create stories, it's going to get people drawn in and have new respect – get them out of the house, get them in the park ... Once you get in and lock eyes with animals, you respect it."

To see more of Herlick's work, visit her Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/lisa.herlick.92>, or see her social media posts on popular Stratford-based community groups.



Always about the action, Herlick snagged this photo of a house sparrow attempting to disrupt the feeding of a family of northern rough-winged swallows.



An American mink with a huge crayfish poses for Herlick.

(LISA HERLICK PHOTOS)

Shelterlink receives \$120 from five-year-old Hugh Smith's lemonade stand fundraiser

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

A child's lemonade stand is ensuring youth facing homelessness get the support they need.

Hugh Smith, a five-year-old, raised \$120 for Shelterlink Youth Services by selling lemonade, freezies and stickers. In a statement to the Stratford Times, his parents

Madeline and Alistair Smith were thrilled to praise their son.

"We are proud of Hugh and his determination to work in the heat to raise awareness for such a worthy cause," said the Smiths. "We've tried to instill a community mindset in our boys and discuss why social service charities such as Shelterlink are so deserving."

When Hugh set up his lemonade stand,

he thought about putting the money towards a new monster truck, but when he saw his first customer, a neighbour crossing the street, he decided to make his lemonade stand a fundraiser for Shelterlink instead.

"It was a warm, but fun afternoon bringing together friends in our neighbourhood," the Smiths said.

Last winter, Hugh created colouring

books to raise money for his school's breakfast program at Anne Hathaway Public School. Hugh and his brother Oscar will also be running in the Kids Race for the Local Community Food Centre in October.

Shelterlink Youth Services posted about Hugh's lemonade stand fundraiser in honour of International Youth Day on Aug. 12.



Residents in five-year-old Hugh Smith's neighbourhood cooled off with refreshing lemonade and freezies for his lemonade stand fundraiser for Shelterlink. He raised \$120 for the organization supporting youth facing homelessness. (MADELINE SMITH/VALERIE TRUDGEON PHOTOS)



HPPH reminds residents to take precautions after West Nile Virus is detected in Huron-Perth

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Huron Perth Public Health (HPPH) is reminding residents to protect themselves against mosquito bites following confirmation that mosquitoes in Listowel and Mitchell have tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV).

These are the first positive mosquito findings of the season for Huron and Perth counties.

"It's not surprising to see positive mosquito pools in the month of August," said Dale Lyttle, senior public health inspector, in a media release from HPPH. "In the late summer months, people are at greatest risk of contracting West Nile Virus, so it is important to protect yourself while outdoors when mosquitoes are most active."

People can protect themselves by using an insect repellent when outdoors containing DEET or Icaridin (be sure to follow the manufacturer's directions); covering up with light-colored clothes, long sleeves and pants when outdoors or in areas where mosquito activity is high; taking extra protection measures at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active; and removing standing water

around the home at least once a week to reduce mosquito breeding grounds.

In Ontario, one confirmed human case of WNV has been reported. Not everyone who is bitten by an infected mosquito will show symptoms of the virus. Of those who do show symptoms, most will experience mild illness, including fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting and rashes on chest, stomach or back. About one in 150 people infected will get seriously ill, with symptoms like high fever, muscle weakness, vision loss and coma. WNV can lead to death.

Symptoms usually develop between two and 15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. People older than 50 are most at risk for WNV infection, as are those with weakened immune systems.

As part of annual mosquito surveillance, HPPH has been trapping and testing mosquitoes in locations across the Huron-Perth region since June. To reduce the risk of potential WNV transmission, larvicide has been applied to roadside catch basins in Stratford, St. Marys, Listowel and Mitchell over the summer to help reduce mosquito breeding.

Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. What is the Michelin man made of?
2. How strong is an ant compared to its body weight?
3. What was Prince's first album called?
4. What are the zodiac signs for August?
5. What is the capital of Alberta?
6. Cindy Lou Hoo is from what story?
7. When was the "Summer of Love"?
8. Which U.S. state is known as the "Sunflower State"?
9. What is the largest species of shark?
10. Who sang the 1970s rock anthem "School's Out"?

This week's answers are found on pg. 23



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Remembrance Day Poppy Project



On Thursday Aug. 7, crocheters and knitters met for one last time at Upper Queens Pavilion to knit poppies for the Remembrance Day Project. In November, poppies will be displayed down the William Hutt Bridge for Remembrance Day.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Avondale's Above All A Roof stained-glass houses to raise money for United Housing

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Avondale United Church's glass artisans aim to piece together hundreds of stained-glass houses to support a local affordable housing initiative.

Members of the Avondale Glass Artisans are making stained glass houses to raise money for their Above All A Roof project. Proceeds from the sales of the stained-glass houses will support United Housing, an initiative from United Way Perth-Huron (UWPH) that focuses on providing affordable housing such as mixed-income rental units.

"It's a fabulous strategy to actually find a way to create a concrete solution," Terri Sparling, chair of Avondale Glass Artisans, said about United Housing.

Community partners of Avondale United Church were invited to watch some of the pieces being created on Aug. 11, including realtors, members of United Housing and Kiwanis Club of Stratford president Heather Herman. The Kiwanis Club of Stratford also funded the foil and solder, as well as donated scrap glass to be used in the project.

Visitors observed the foiling and soldering of the stained glass in amazement and admired the completed stained-



Avondale Glass Artisans are creating stained glass houses in support of United Housing and had a soft launch of their project to partners of Avondale United Church on Aug. 11.

(EMILY STEWART PHOTO)

glass houses. Although the group has been working on Above All A Roof since April, it was the first time community members outside of the church got to look at the completed stained-glass houses so far.

"We've been quietly beaver away

at these houses," Sparling said.

"And we love it," added congregation member Cathy Whelan. "We love the whole idea of the project, and the houses are so funky and interesting and

I haven't personally designed one, but several of the other glass workers have and they're all different and they're all unique and it's a lot of fun."

The stained-glass houses come in a variety of colours and shapes, with more to come, to represent the unique needs of each person facing housing issues.

"They're charming and I think the idea of each one is unique as all of us is unique in our housing needs is just a really lovely, unified message," said Kathy Vassilakos, United Housing director.

Avondale Glass Artisans aim to create 500 pieces for Above All A Roof, and about 100 of them will be completed by September. The houses will be available to purchase for \$30 from Avondale United Church, at the Kiwanis Garlic Festival on Sept. 6 and 7, and at the UWPH's Campaign Kick-off on Sept. 19 from noon to 1:30 p.m. in Market Square. Tickets for the kick-off are \$20 on Ticketscene or \$25 at the event.

For more information, including participating at Avondale Glass Artisan meetings, either call the Avondale office at (519) 271-7946 or send an email to sparlingterri@gmail.com.

Update: Avondale United Church announced that the event Building Children's Resilience: A Family, School, and Community Approach: An Evening with Dr. Michael Ungar, originally scheduled for Sept. 10, has been postponed. The event will now take place on

Oct. 1 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. both in-person at the church and virtually via Zoom. To RSVP, please send an email to eventsavondale@wightman.ca by Sept. 24 and indicate if you're attending in-person or remotely. A Zoom link will be sent out closer to the presentation.

STRATFORD *TIMES* SPORTS

Stratford Skating Club excited for 2025-26 season

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The Stratford Skating Club (SSC) is excited for the upcoming 2025-26 skating season. The new season will be getting underway this coming September.

This year, the SSC will be expanding some of their programming. The SSC will once again be offering preschool, CanSkate, synchronized skating and figure skating sessions. New this year is the adult skating program.

Their very popular preschool programs (for skaters three and four-years-old) and the organization's nationally recognized CanSkate programs (for skaters aged five and up) will be hitting the ice this coming September at the historic William Allman Memorial Arena. The SSC's preschool and CanSkate sessions offer all skaters, young and old, the opportunity to get onto the ice

and enjoy Canada's favourite pastime.

Skaters of all levels are welcome to join these sessions, as there are different levels for skaters in these programs. Skaters work through various progressions, which help them with a number of different skills. Some skaters will start never having skated in the past, and the SSC offers them a fun opportunity to experience the ice under their feet and learn how to get comfortable and move on the ice.

Other groups will be working on furthering their skating development, including forwards and backwards skating, crossovers, on-ice turns and jumps and edge development.

The SSC also offers a wide range of figure skating sessions. Their introduction to figure skating program introduces all skaters to the sport of figure skating. Development of basic skating skills is supplemented with the teachings of early figure

skating jump and spin development. The club's intermediate and senior figure skating sessions offer skaters the opportunity to further develop their figure skating skills in the various disciplines of free skate, ice dance and skating skills. Skaters in these levels have the opportunity to enter into figure skating events in other communities.

Once again this year, the club will have a Star 4-level Synchro team. This is a great way to enjoy the sport of figure skating while doing it through a team lens. This year, the Stratford North Stars Synchro team will be competing in two different Synchro events.

New this season is the adult skating program. This is a program designed for adult skaters who are looking to learn to skate, further their skating knowledge or even start some figure skating skills. The club is looking forward to this exciting new pro-

gram.

This year, the SSC will once again be hosting the Skate Ontario provincial series, the Stratford December Classic competition in December. This year's event will be growing to four days in length, running at the Stratford Rotary Complex from Dec. 18-21. This is an Ontario-wide event that brings skaters from every part of the province to Stratford. Skaters are not only competing within their individual event, but skaters' final marks are tracked and the top marks of the 2025-26 skating season are then invited to the Skate Ontario Provincial Championships.

Registration for all SSC programming for the upcoming season is currently open. To learn more, visit www.stratfordskating.ca.

You can also email stratfordskating@gmail.com or call (519) 275-2379 for further information.



Stratford pickleball players compete at Sudbury provincials



Pictured on the left, from left to right, are Angela Martin and Merlin Leis. Martin, a member of the Stratford Pickleball Club, teamed up with Leis to win the gold medal in the mixed 3.5 skill level doubles competition at the Sudbury Senior Provincial Pickleball Championship on Aug. 5-7. Pictured on the right, from left, are Karen Hill and Heather Henke, both members of the Stratford Pickleball Club. Henke and Hill teamed up to win a silver medal in the women's 4.0 doubles event.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

22U Nationals season ends at the OBA Tournament

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

Despite a valiant effort, the Stratford 22U Nationals ended their season following a second-round exit at the Ontario Baseball Association (OBA) 22U 'B' provincial tournament on Aug. 8.

The Nationals began their tournament play with a morning tilt against the Port Lambton Pirates at Cooper Field in Mitchell.

The game was tightly contested through five innings, as the Nationals' defence and Hunter Reid pitched a strong outing and kept the game scoreless. But the Pirates broke through with five runs in the sixth inning off Will Zurell and won the first-round contest 5-0.

Stratford Manager Brian Hawley commented on the team's effort against Port Lambton.

"Well, I thought we played lockdown D

like we need to do. Jordan Miller gave us a great catch out in right field on a ball over his head. We made all the plays we were supposed to make defensively. Breeder (Reid) gave us a heck of a start," Hawley said.

"Willie (Zurrell), He's a beast. He's a first year. He's a rookie, and so, you know, he just had a little trouble finishing. A couple of the guys that got on had two strikes on him, and he had a chance to close it out, just didn't make the pitch we needed. So at the end of the day, though, they only needed the one when you don't score, you don't win."

The Nationals faced elimination later in the afternoon against the tournament host team, the Listowel Legionnaires. Liam McEvoy got the start on the mound for Stratford and received run support early in the crucial game. In the first inning, Jordan Miller got things started for the Nationals with an RBI triple, followed by

an RBI single from Spencer Eidt. Listowel cut the Stratford lead to 2-1 in the following inning before a one-hour weather delay.

Listowel took the lead and led as much as three runs before Stratford responded with two runs in the bottom of the sixth inning to cut the lead to 6-4. Stratford scored one more run in the seventh and final inning and had a runner in scoring position, but Eidt popped up to centre field for the final out as the Nationals fell short in a 6-5 loss.

After the game, Hawley addressed the team, expressing gratitude for their performance and resilience throughout the long season.

"I'm always proud of the guys. They work their tails off all year long. You know, they were left short handed early in and they fought through every time people knocked them down, they just got right back up again. They're the toughest group

of young men that I've ever coached, and I've never been more proud of a ball club that I've coached in all my life," Hawley said.

Hawley said he is looking forward to spending time with family and setting priorities for the team in the future in preparation for next season.

"This summer, we need more pitching, and so now it's recruiting season and we got to go out and find more pitching. I'll beat the bushes and find some guys that can throw and make this team more competitive," Hawley said.

"For next year, we're graduating some good quality 2003 born players, and you know, so the 2007s will come in and replace them, and then we've got to pick up some pitching as well. So right now, it's just digesting what's happened this weekend, but moving forward, yeah, pitching is the priority. And we'll see how it all plays out in spring."



Spencer Eidt checks his swing against the Listowel Legionnaires at the 2025 OBA 22U 'B' Provincial Tournament on Aug. 8.



Ken Neabel sets to advance from first base against the Listowel Legionnaires at the 2025 OBA 22U 'B' Provincial Tournament on Aug. 8.



Players of the Stratford Nationals and Listowel Legionnaires shake hands postgame at the 2025 OBA 22U 'B' Provincial Tournament on Aug. 8.



Hunter Reid throws the pitch against the Port Lambton Pirates at the 2025 OBA 22U 'B' Provincial Tournament on Aug. 8.

(MICHAEL H. WILLOUGHBY PHOTOS)

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Award-winning author finds a creative home in Stratford

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

Rabindranath Maharaj, a retired creative writing teacher and award-winning author, recently moved from Ajax to Stratford – a decision influenced by his daughter's encouragement and the town's artistic atmosphere.

His most recent book, *A Quiet Disappearance*, is a collection of short stories that explores the human experience, with a particular focus on characters who are immigrants, thereby deepening their sense of loss.

The stories reflect on the brevity of life, not just its final outcome, but the many small forfeitures that accumulate over time. Many characters are at a crossroads, approaching the end of their lives or grappling with the loss of those they once shared deep connections with.

Maharaj has written six books, including three short story collections and five novels, often drawing on personal experiences and moods. His works explore themes such as the immigrant experience, the transience of life and the impact of artificial intelligence on imagination.

His novel *The Amazing Absorbing Boy* earned both the Toronto Book Award and the Trillium Fiction Prize.

In 2012, Maharaj received a lifetime literary award as part of the commemoration of Trinidad and Tobago's 50th anniversary of independence. The following year, he was awarded Canada's Queen Elizabeth II

Diamond Jubilee Medal.

Originally from Trinidad, Maharaj moved to New Brunswick before settling in Ontario. He says ideas for his writing often come from real life – the human experience – and he's always looking to learn more about the world and its people.

"The minute I step out of the house and I begin to look at things," he said. "The writing cap is a cap you always have on if you're serious about writing. I would say you always have to think like a writer. Every little bit of information, every observation, everything can become a story."

He speaks nostalgically of his early writing years in Trinidad: "When I was in my 20s in Trinidad, I wrote a column for a local newspaper ... Trinidad is a very different kind of place."

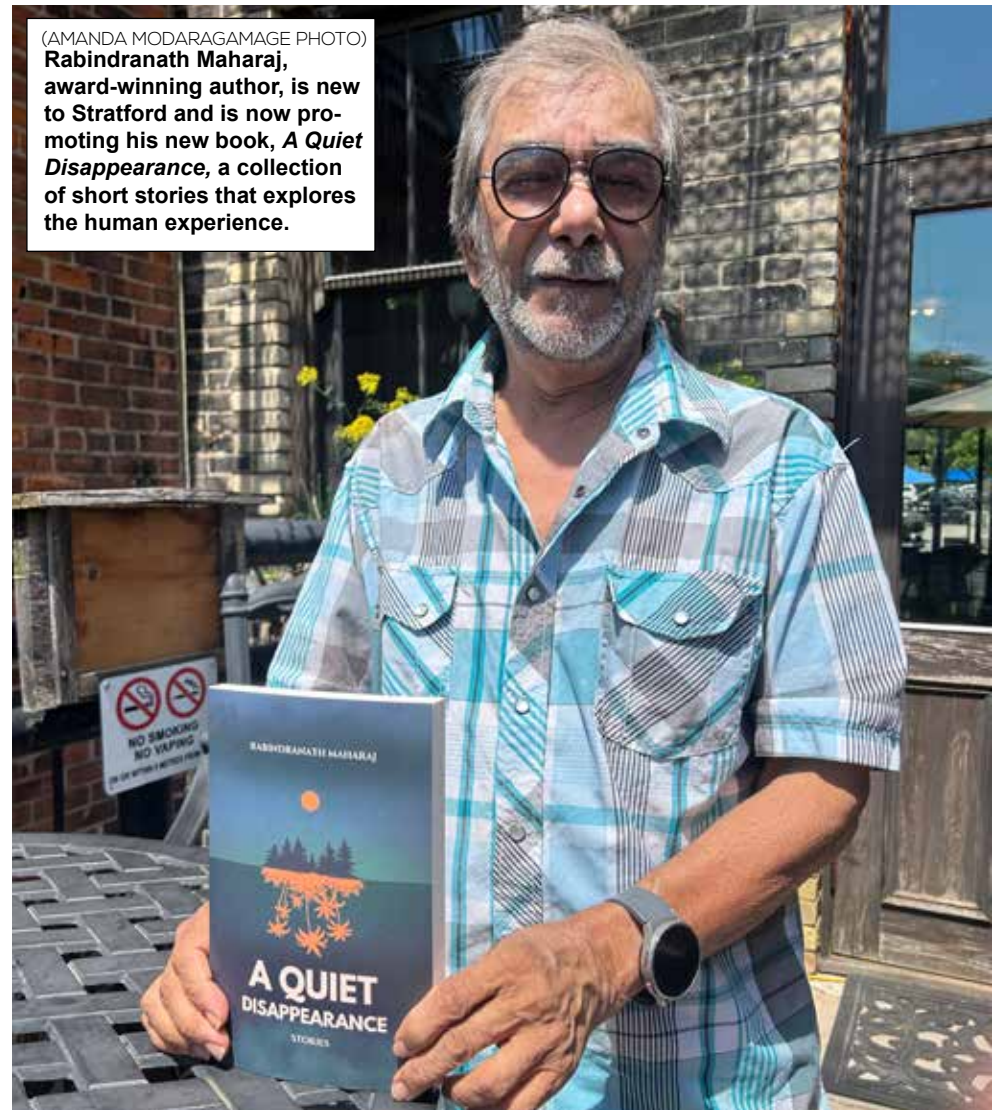
Maharaj's writing is deeply rooted in character, often shaped by the people he's encountered throughout his life, yet grounded in imagination.

"The main thing about a writer is not style or language, but the voice," he said. "You have to show people familiar things, but in a way they have not seen them before. Writing is an aspect of the personality, and you have to decide what kind of sensibility you have."

While writing has given Maharaj the freedom to be creative, it has also offered him something more personal.

"Most literary writers write to find out things about themselves and about their relationship with the world," he said. "It's not a stable sort of exploration."

(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO) Rabindranath Maharaj, award-winning author, is new to Stratford and is now promoting his new book, *A Quiet Disappearance*, a collection of short stories that explores the human experience.



Stratford Arts and Lectures hosts summer garden party with bestselling mystery authors

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

On Saturday, Aug. 16, from 1 to 4 p.m., Stratford Arts and Lectures will host an outdoor summer garden party in the gardens at the Bruce Hotel.

Attendees can enjoy light refreshments while mingling with five of Canada's bestselling mystery authors: Kate Hilton and Elizabeth Renzetti, Bianca Marais, Uzma Jalaluddin and Amy Stuart.

Tickets include admission to the Summer Soirée at the Bruce Hotel, light refreshments and access to two author panels. Guests can also upgrade to a bagged paper lunch. Book signings will follow both panels.

Marais, one of the featured authors, is best known for *The Witches of Moonshyne Manor*, as well as the beloved *Hum If You Don't Know the Words* and *If You Want to Make God Laugh*, and the Audible Original *The Prynne Viper*. Her latest novel, *A Most Puzzling Murder*, was released in June 2025.

She is also the co-host of the popular podcast *The S*** No One Tells You About Writing*, aimed at helping emerging writers get published.

"The lineup is just incredible, so Kate, Liz, Uzma and Amy are just amazing writers at the top of their game," Marais said. "I love that it's a group of women who are writing about murder and mystery, so I think it's going

to be a really entertaining afternoon."

Visiting Stratford for the first time, Marais said she's excited to connect with readers, fellow writers and the city's literary scene.

"I think people are going to learn quite a bit about the craft of writing. Anybody interested in writing will enjoy this event. It's also a great opportunity to pick authors' brains," she said. "We're all writing mysteries, but we're also very, very different. I think as a reader, this is a wonderful opportunity to expand their reading genre."

The day is designed to give attendees a chance to connect with authors while enjoying the gardens of the Bruce Hotel property.

Stratford Arts and Lectures, founded by Rina Barone, offers engaging programming year-round with leading figures in the literary arts. Events include onstage conversations and curated gatherings with authors, critics and cultural figures exploring the creative process, big ideas and our relationship to the world around us.

"Rina is just the best," said Marais. "What she does for the literary community, in terms of excellent literary citizenship, is just amazing and you're lucky to have her in Stratford!"

For more information or to purchase tickets for this weekend's event, visit www.stratfordartsandlectures.com.

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Stratford Festival announces 2026 season, Antoni Cimolino's last as artistic director

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The 2026 Stratford Festival season will be the final year of artistic director Antoni Cimolino's inspired leadership, the festival announced.

With plays united under the theme "This Rough Magic," the season promises to be the culmination of a 40-year career, including 14 seasons as artistic director.

"In planning this season, I chose plays that are among my personal favourites and that hold great meaning for me," said Cimolino in a media release. "I would like to direct all of them myself, but I'm very happy to have so many wonderful directors joining me as I complete my tenure here at the Stratford Festival, a place that has been my artistic home for 40 years."

Taken from Prospero's farewell in *The Tempest*, "The theme of 'This Rough Magic' captures the heart of what theatre does best: it conjures illusion to reveal truth," said Cimolino. "On stage, we witness life in all its complexity, crafted through stories that are both timeless and deeply resonant."

"This season explores the power of performance itself: plays within plays, masques, deceptions, and acts of imagination that remind us that illusion is not just entertainment: it's a tool for truth."

The 2026 playbill features an array of productions that span genres, eras and styles – and theatres.

The Festival Theatre

At the Festival Theatre, Cimolino will direct *The Tempest*, Shakespeare's tale of magic, transformation and reconciliation. As a final Shakespearean offering, *The Tempest* holds profound resonance for Cimolino. Like Prospero, he has conjured worlds from words and guided audiences through storms and wonders. *The Tempest* is not only a masterwork of theatrical imagination, it is a meditation on legacy, on letting go and on the enduring power of art to heal and inspire. It is, in every sense, a fitting farewell.

Two spectacular audience favourites headline the musical offerings of the 2026 season, both directed and choreographed by Donna Feore and presented at the Festival Theatre. First to open will be *Guys and Dolls*, the beloved Broadway classic featuring gamblers, showgirls and unexpected romance. Feore has a thrilling new production planned, with a promise to include some favourite moments from her 2017 production, one of the top-selling musicals in the festival's history. Based on a story and characters of Damon Run-



The Stratford Festival announced the 2026 season on Aug. 12 – and that it will be Antoni Cimolino's last as artistic director. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

yon, *Guys and Dolls* features music and lyrics by Frank Loesser and book by Jo Swerling and Abe Burrows.

And back by overwhelming popular demand is *Something Rotten!*, the runaway hit of the 2024 season. This riotous, irreverent musical comedy takes audiences on a wild ride through Elizabethan England, where two struggling playwrights hope to outshine Shakespeare by inventing an entirely new form: the musical. Packed with clever wordplay, show-stopping numbers, and winking nods to both Shakespeare's canon and Broadway history, it's a joyous celebration of theatre itself. Under Feore's direction and choreography, the production dazzles audiences with its wit, energy and sheer inventiveness. At the Stratford Festival, *Something Rotten!* has found its ideal home, where fans of Shakespeare and musicals can revel in its clever wit and downright silliness. The musical features book by Karey Kirkpatrick and John O'Farrell, music and lyrics by Wayne Kirkpatrick and Karey Kirkpatrick, and is conceived by Karey Kirkpatrick and Wayne Kirkpatrick.

Rounding out the mainstage offerings is a special limited engagement of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, a play that grapples with time, uncertainty and the human condition. Directed by Molly Atkinson, this will be the first time Beckett's absurdist masterpiece has been presented on the festival stage. Haunting, perplexing and sardonically funny, *Waiting for Godot* is the play that changed the

face of drama in the 20th century.

The Avon Theatre

Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* offers a stark counterpoint: a deeply human portrait of illusion turned inward, where dreams and delusions collide in the pursuit of meaning and legacy. After the success of the festival's 2024 production of *Salesman in China*, which offered a compelling new lens on Arthur Miller's most popular play, audiences will now have the opportunity to experience *Death of a Salesman* in its original form, in this production directed by Dean Gabourie.

The Schulich Children's Play, *The Hobbit*, based on the book by J.R.R. Tolkien and adapted by Kim Selody, offers a playful yet profound theatrical experience for audiences of all ages. This fast-paced, imaginative adaptation distills Tolkien's epic into a journey rich with illusion, transformation and creativity, capturing the heart of the original novel while celebrating the magic of live performance. It will be directed by Pablo Felices-Luna.

Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* returns to the Avon Theatre with all its sparkling wit and satirical brilliance. Beneath a charming surface brimming with mistaken identities and social absurdities lies a deeper exploration of performance itself: how we present versions of ourselves to the world, and how those illusions shape our relationships and desires. In Wilde's hands, deception becomes delight and playacting becomes revelation. The production

will be directed by Krista Jackson.

Cimolino's final production as artistic director will be Eduardo De Filippo's *Saturday, Sunday, Monday*, in a brand-new adaptation by Donato Santeramo and Cimolino himself. This is a richly layered comedy that invites audiences into the heart of a Neapolitan kitchen, where love abides but conflict simmers over. With this production, Cimolino marks a remarkable milestone: the festival will have staged four of De Filippo's plays under his direction, placing him among a rare group of artistic leaders in the English-speaking world to champion the Italian playwright's work so extensively. Through these productions, Cimolino has introduced Canadian audiences to the emotional depth, theatrical ingenuity and cultural vitality of De Filippo's legacy – works that explore the illusions we live by and the truths that must emerge.

The Tom Patterson Theatre

The Tom Patterson Theatre offers a dynamic trio of productions that delve into identity, illusion and transformation.

Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* delights in theatrical playfulness. In an enchanted forest, mischievous fairies and a troupe of hapless amateur actors collide in a tangle of love, illusion and transformation. This delicately woven fantasy, filled with glorious poetry, is one of Shakespeare's best loved comedies. It will be directed by Graham Abbey.

In Shakespeare's *Othello* the boundaries between truth and deception blur with devastating consequences as love, jealousy and manipulation unravel lives and loyalties. Beneath its taut drama lies a haunting meditation on how perception can be weaponized, and how fragile the foundations of trust can be. Haysam Kadri will direct the production.

Adding an exciting contemporary voice to the mix is *The Tao of the World*, a dazzling world premiere from Jovanni Sy, who will also direct. Fusing Congreve's *The Way of the World* with the fun and glamour of *Crazy Rich Asians*, *The Tao of the World* is a Restoration comedy for modern times. Following the success of *Salesman in China* (which Sy directed and co-wrote with Leanna Brodie), this inventive mash-up promises hilarity, romance and billionaires behaving badly.

The Studio Theatre

Charlotte Corbeil-Coleman gives the season a bold and provocative new work, *The King James Bible Play*, a Stratford Festival commission. It begins with

a gripping portrait of the men behind the monumental translation of the King James Bible, revealing the power structures and cultural biases embedded in their work. In the second half, a contemporary group of women take to the stage to reclaim the narrative, creating a play about the process. The work is a fascinating interrogation of translation in all its forms: between generations, between genders, between what we inherit and what we choose to believe. It will be directed by Nina Lee Aquino.

With these two new plays, *The Tao of the World* and *The King James Bible Play*, Cimolino will have brought 31 new works to the stage during his tenure as artistic director, a landmark in the festival's history. Reflecting on new play development, Cimolino is struck by the astounding variety of plays, but points to their unifying factor. "What has united all of these plays – and also reflects my own interest in theatre – is that they not only provoke thought but also touch the heart," he said.

Cimolino's legacy

The 2026 season will also feature vibrant and enriching events in the Meighen Forum, a festival within the festival introduced by Cimolino in the first year of his artistic leadership to deepen audience engagement.

"Under Antoni Cimolino, the Stratford Festival has flourished artistically and institutionally, expanding its repertoire, deepening engagement and championing new voices alongside classical traditions," said David Adams, chair of the board of directors. "His tenure has been marked by international acclaim and a steadfast commitment to theatrical excellence."

Cimolino's legacy at the festival will be honoured with a number of events during the season, but Cimolino himself is firmly focused on the work at hand.

"The 2026 season provides brilliant opportunities for the festival's artists," Cimolino said. "I feel it contains some of the best plays ever written and is a terrific way to hand the baton to the next artistic director."

The 2026 season will run from April 20 to Nov. 1. Tickets will go on sale to members of the festival in November and to the public in January.

The 2025 season continues with *As You Like It*, *Annie*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Dangerous Liaisons*, *Macbeth*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *Anne of Green Gables*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Forgiveness*, *Ransacking Troy* and *The Art of War*.

Stratford Film Festival presents the documentary *The Hobby: Tales from the Tableside*

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

The Stratford Film Festival (SFF) is pleased to present the screening of *The Hobby: Tales from the Tableside* by filmmaker Simon Ennis and produced by Stratford native Justin Rebelo. This immersive film takes the viewer behind the scenes and into the creative and competitive world of board gaming.

Through intimate interviews and creative storytelling, Ennis explores the passion and dedication of the people that gather around the table to role-play and strategize, the players, the designers the collectors and enthusiasts alike. This is not just your family playing monopoly, this documentary not only shines the light on the personalities that drive the community but also celebrates the connection and camaraderie that board gaming fosters across generations.

SFF director Megan Smith-Harris was feeling a little nostalgic when selecting this film for screening. As holidays wind down and the board games at the cottage are packed away on a shelf for another season, this film feels like a fresh acquaintance with delight.

"I had been thinking a lot about how over-connected we all are and thought how wonderful to have a documentary about disconnecting to reconnect. I grew up in a family where we came up to the Muskokas and we had no power for years, so the only thing to do at night or on a rainy day was to play cards or boardgames. I thought this film was a lot of fun and wanted to share it with people and remind



Documentary film producer Justin Rebelo will be in town Aug. 23, along with filmmaker Simon Ennis, for a Q-and-A about the film presented, *The Hobby: Tales from the Tabletop*.

people that there are ways of hanging out together that are sociable and fun without devices."

The other attractive connection for screening the film is that Justin Rebelo grew up in Stratford, reinforcing SFF's mandate to promote and showcase the films of people locally, regionally and across Canada.

Rebelo was attracted to the project because he had worked with filmmaker Ennis before on the film *Lunacy!* "I knew he would capture the characters within the sub-culture of modern board gaming with heart and humour. It turned out to be very true," Rebelo said.

Board games still reign in a digital world because of the human connection. "Board games are still groups of people gathering in person to bond whether in collaboration or in competition – community is about people and there's still nothing that compares to the power of physically being together," said Rebelo.

Following the screening, there will be a Q-and-A with both the filmmaker Ennis and the producer Rebelo. This opportunity allows for a further exploration of board gaming or to ask about Rebelo's extensive career of producing over 40 films and TV series.

"Stratford is the place where the dream of having a career in film and television first formed for me, so it's always special to be in my hometown sharing work I'm proud of with friends, family and locals," concluded Rebelo.

The 4 p.m. screening takes place Aug. 23 at the Stratford City Hall auditorium. Tickets are available in advance online at SFF's website, stratfordfilmfestival.ca. In the event that the screening does not sell out, there will be tickets available at the door.

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Local author publishes 18th mystery novel

SYDNEY GOODWIN

Times Correspondent

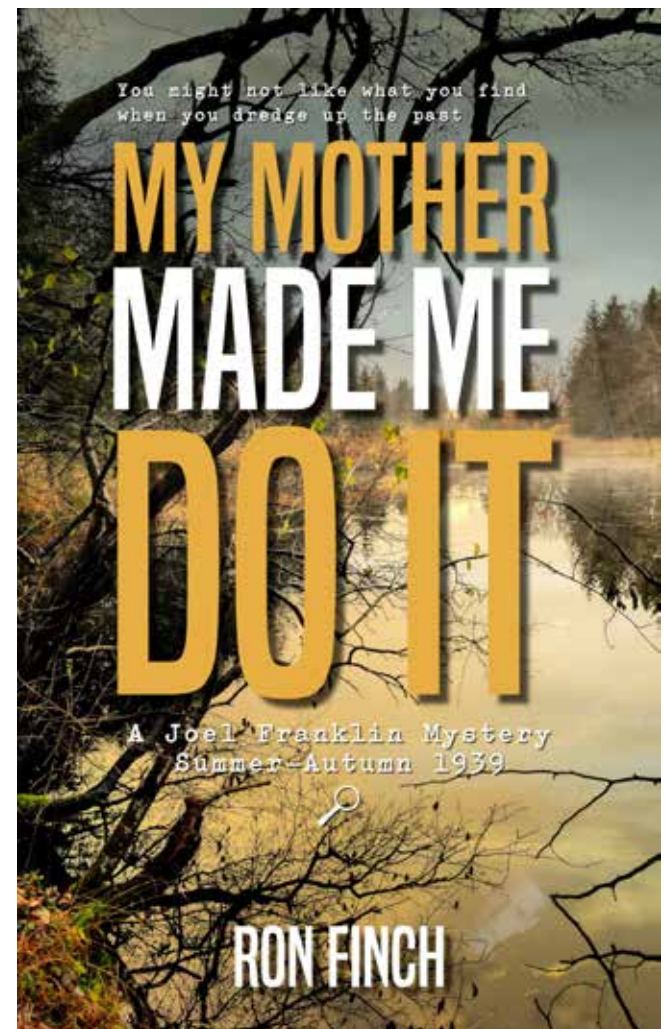
Step back into the city of London, Ont. with detective Joel Franklin, the medium who can unearth secrets known only to the dead as he is set to unravel a game of life and death – as a hunter becomes the hunted.

Ron Finch's 18th novel, and the 14th in the Joel Franklin mystery series, *My Mother Made Me Do It*, is set in 1939. The story follows Franklin as he embarks on a journey to put raising tension between the whole city of London and himself to rest with the aid of his colleagues, the few people he can trust, and the disembodied entities that help him more than the living can.

Franklin's adventure is interlaced with the tales of Jerry Trovelson, a quiet orderly that works at Sanderson's Convalescent Home who keeps himself and his secrets close to his chest, and Terry Harper, a hyperactive and indefatigable investigative reporter for the London Free Press that has just caught wind of a story.

Finch has been writing for the past eight years, taking each moment of inspiration as it hits him and running with it until he is satisfied with the finished work. Finch uses his time working on his novels to create the world that Franklin resides in, mapping out how that world is similar to reality, and how to make it just different enough to remind the reader they're in a different time. Shaping a world blended with fiction and reality, Finch has created a series that provides real life problems with possibly supernatural solutions. Dedicating his time and creativity is how Finch has been able to come up with so many novels, with many more manuscripts tucked away and slowly being perfected.

My Mother Made Me Do It is now available to purchase on Amazon. For more information about Finch's other works, they can be found on Amazon or in local bookshops.



***My Mother Made Me Do It*, local author Ron Finch's 18th novel, is now available to purchase on Amazon or in local bookshops.**

Two months after the IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's, donations are still rolling in

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

At the IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's this year, over \$135,000 was raised for the Alzheimer's Society Huron-Perth – but the organization is still counting as money comes in.

They thanked the public for all the support in making the annual walk a very successful event once again.

The society is continuing to see higher numbers and more suffering from Alzheimer's and various dementia diseases. Staff are always looking for community support year-round, as the society has to raise close to 30 per cent of their budget locally, receiving 70 per cent from the Ministry of Health.

"The society is supporting well over 2,000 individuals and caregivers through one-on-one counselling, education and respite programs, which is a 10 per cent increase year over year for the last three to four years," executive director Cathy Ritsema said.

Ritsema said the society has expanded its first link and education services into more rural communities recently, reducing barriers to access and helping people connect to support earlier in their journey with Alzheimer's.

She said "the community outreach efforts grew substantially, with over 300 public education sessions and workshops, delivered to healthcare professionals, community groups and the general public, serving close to 5,000 participants."

The Dream Project was initiated over the past year, and the society successfully launched the program with one-time funding support.

This innovative initiative was developed to reduce hospital admissions by providing community-based respite care and support services. It aims to divert individuals from emergency departments and redirect them to more appropriate community resources.



Alzheimer's Society Huron-Perth staff members Kyle Hodge, Pamela Balfour, Emily Aye, Alicia Mizzi, Cathy Ritsema, Erin Dale and Lori Speiran pose in front of the office.

(GARY WEST PHOTO)

"To date, there have been close to 300 presentations at the emergency department of hospitals, with over 130 successful diversions facilitated through this Dream Project," Ritsema shared.

These outcomes highlight the program's effectiveness in alleviating pressure on acute care services, while enhancing community-based care pathways.

The Alzheimer's Society has many support groups and education sessions that are an opportunity to connect with others, enhance your understanding of dementia and develop practical strategies for supporting people living with dementia.

Their annual fund development events include the May IG Wealth Management Walk, the Huron Polar Plunge, the annual golf tournament in St. Marys and Soups On. In January, thousands gather at the Stratford Rotary Complex to sample locally made soup, raising thousands of dollars every year for various programs the society runs.

The society's next fundraiser is the aforementioned golf tournament, taking place at the St. Marys Golf & Country Club on Sept. 15. Call Erin Dale at (519) 482-1482 to register or donate prizes.

The society is also still looking for sponsors and vendors for Soups On, scheduled for Jan. 10, 2026.

Your home, their journey: Become a host family for Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board international students

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board (HPCDSB) is welcoming international students for the 2025-2026 academic year, and is looking for families to step up and host.

"As part of our commitment to fostering a globally minded community, this initiative provides students from around the world with an enriching Canadian educational experience," a media release from the board on the program. "Our international student program not only enhances cultural diversity within our schools but also offers local students opportunities to engage in meaningful cross-cultural experiences – broadening their perspectives and preparing them for an interconnected world."

International students will attend either St. Anne's Catholic Secondary School in Clinton or St. Michael Catholic Secondary School in Stratford. They will have access to the same education experience and high academic standards all HP-

CDSB students receive.

The board states it has seen significant growth in the international education program and expanded demand for the area. For September this year, students from Brazil, Spain and Japan have already been accepted and will be joining local school communities.

As a result of increased demand, the board is seeking families to welcome international students into their homes for either one semester or the full school year.

Host families are compensated and must commit to include the international student in family life, providing:

- Three nutritious meals per day and snacks.
- A private room with a door, a window, a bed and a desk.
- A shared bathroom.
- Supervised internet access.

The board is working in partnership with a home-stay provider, MLI Homestay. If you would like to host an international student, please visit their

website at mlihomestay.com.

For more information about the international student program, please visit huronperthcatholic.ca/programs-and-services/international-student-program,

or contact Chris Grace, principal of the international student program at cgrace@huronperthcatholic.ca.

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UNTIL SOON. LIVE WELL: MUSIC FOR A REVOLUTION



STUART LENDER

Times Columnist

Expressing a desire to be overwhelmed by music, Duke Orsino utters the famous line from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*: If music be the food of love, play on.

That's a huge understatement for me. Throughout the decades of my youth and still today, music wasn't merely the food of love but a virtual smorgasbord of inspiration for every emotion under the sun. I would use it, knowingly, to lift my melancholic moods, provide ideas for artistic expression, create peace within a troubled soul and fuel a rage against an injustice.

I was six years old at the height of the "hippie" movement in 1967 and there are recurring social themes today (sadly) that were prevalent then, swimming around in my head: war, racism, sexism, power and wealth. And while these things were largely

on the periphery of my awareness then, the countercultural expressionistic style of peace, love and community extended itself outward and saturated my thinking as I grew. Despite the manner of my dress and hair and the free opinions I expounded later in my teenage years – I was a good student, received A-level grades, did not drop out, was not into drugs and had a great relationship with my parents.

Looking back on that time within a historical context, I can see how the hippies, of which I considered myself at least a member in the values of the culture, was a force to be reckoned with. And nowhere was that force more overwhelming than in the music of the time. And as the sounds of the 70s, 80s and 90s crossed my cassette deck, turntable then CD player – the music of those decades kept informing me. If you want to see the direction the cultural milieu within a society is headed, listen to the most popular music of the time. The values are most often in the lyrics.

It turns out, now that we are in the 21st century, I have been reminded of and looked back on the music of the 20th century, particularly the 1960s/1970s most often – not with a nostalgia for my youth necessarily, but for the content of protest that mirrors the issues of today as it revealed

them back then. The music of socially relevant singers and songwriters became the backbone of the hippie movement because of the political climate, became the backbone of social awareness, became the backbone of social unrest, became the harbinger of change. The pattern was illustrated again in the 1992 song lyrics of Peter Dinklage titled "Fourteen Black Paintings": From the pain come the dream / From the dream come the vision / From the vision come the people / From the people come the power / From this power come the change.

It has always been so. The music of the generation feeds the heads of the people – fuels and fortifies. And what is illustrated is most often the will of the people and the desire for a better way. A better way is a different way, and a different way is usually extreme inclusion and loving kindness, because the human species knows very well how to exclude and hurt. We're good at that. Both are practices. It is very much easier to insulate and ignore, but that is not a step forward. Most often, it's a step back or not a step at all. Humanity has shown that skill set repeatedly, until it becomes time again for a revolution – and music may lead the charge.

So many other competing technologies, however, are perhaps

diluting the ability of the music to spread, creating a cacophony of output through which the clear and brilliant note is diffuse and with no clear direction. Or perhaps it's a lack of musical purpose. At certain junctures in the symphony of sound, one needs to regroup and allow the music you want to hear to rise above. If it's revolutionary and speaks to you as the music of the 60s spoke to a generation of youth, it needs to sink into the sinews of the body and fortify the soul. It needs to be used.

Music is still the first and most powerful universal language. It can be anything one wants it to be and most certainly a scaffolding for inspiration and change. Music has been a formidable force in changing the views of many throughout its long and turbulent history – helping to feed the hungry, illustrating inequality and racist policies, holding firm as the background hum of protest and as the front-line bang of a drum.

Lord knows there is a plethora of causes to rally around, even now. And there are several that are teetering on the precipice of changing the world for the worse. Many of these causes hark back to the "glory days" of revolutionary protest, as we watch decades of advancements erode into the dirt of our own ignorance and fear – back to the stone age of our

evolutionary journey – to start it all over again. Alas.

Listening back – far and not so far, for the fun of it and for the support – here are some songs of defiance to open the heart and soul to free oneself of any lingering apathy:

"Black Man / Big Brother" by Stevie Wonder

"Ohio" by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young

"For What It's Worth" by Buffalo Springfield

"Fortunate Son" by Creedence Clearwater Revival

"I'd Love to Change the World" by Ten Years After

"Won't Get Fooled Again" by The Who

"Driven To Tears" by The Police

"What's Going On / Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)" by Marvin Gaye

"Call It Democracy" by Bruce Cockburn

"I Can't Breathe" by H.E.R.

"Signs" by Five Man Electrical Band

"Guns, Guns, Guns" by The Guess Who

"Bullet The Blue Sky" by U2

"Get Together" by The Youngbloods

Stuart is a celebrant and the manager of Rutherford Cremation & Funeral Services. It is his privilege to serve, dispel myths, and give information concerning his field of compassionate service.

On a perfect summer day, sheep in South Easthope graze



In South Easthope Township, a short distance east of Stratford, a flock of 360 sheep graze in the picturesque Perth County pasture. Jim, Jen and Mike Sebben are carrying on a family farming tradition. Generations of Sebbens have farmed the area over the years.

(GARY WEST PHOTOS)

Opinions

MUSINGS: Lost in Space



MARK HERTZBERGER

Times Columnist

In the darkened, late afternoon classroom, I struggled to finish my arithmetic exercises. All the other kids had gone home, even Sheila the little blonde-haired girl who sat in front of me. I liked Sheila but was kind of glad she wasn't there. She sobbed constantly when they kept her in after school, just adding to the pathos of the situation. In those days, if your work wasn't finished by 4 p.m., you stayed after class until it was.

The public school system was a challenge for me. I simply couldn't focus and it took me twice as long to complete my

work. My Grade 2 teacher had assessed me as "stupid" and told me so. She only said it once though. When my mother caught wind of this, she marched down to the school and words were exchanged, or so I'm told.

In Grade 1, we had to complete exercises in a Dick and Jane workbook. Those of you of a certain age will remember this. Our teacher would carefully explain what we were supposed to do, step by step. I heard none of it. Instead, my attention was focused on a squirrel in the tree outside, a bird on the window ledge, or some imaginary world inside my head. Then she would say, "Now, class, take out your pencils and begin." The first time this happened, I panicked, then realized that if I turned my workbook sideways, I could read the directions that told the teacher what to tell the class. Saved... for the time being anyhow!

My parents were somewhat baffled by my behaviour. One afternoon, I was reading a comic book in our living room. My father was working in the back yard and decided to tap on the window and wave to me. He

tapped once – no response. Tapped again, louder this time – no response. Finally he banged loudly enough for the glass to vibrate. My eyes never strayed from my comic book. I hadn't heard a thing.

As an adult in my 50s, I was diagnosed with mild ADHD, which explained a lot. The term now encompasses a range of symptoms, from inattentive all the way to hyperactive. It comes as no surprise to my friends and family that I'm on the inattentive end of the scale. I once mentioned to a girlfriend that I wasn't into doing drugs. "You don't need to," she said. "You're naturally stoned!"

People with ADHD experience anxiety and other mood disorders at a higher rate than the rest of the population. There are a number of overlaps with autism, but they are separate syndromes. ADHD is a contradictory beast. On one hand, I am easily distracted, particularly when there are multiple sensory inputs at once – large groups of people, noisy, congested streets, sports competitions, etc. Multi-tasking is a foreign

concept to me. But give me an interesting task to perform in isolation and I hyper-focus to the exclusion of the rest of the world.

I did get a consolation prize for having ADHD. Creative thinking abilities tend to be enhanced. A number of celebrities have talked about having ADHD, including Jim Carrey, Ryan Gosling, Emma Watson and even Albert Einstein. I'm no Einstein, to be sure, but ADHD has certainly helped me free-associate when I'm writing my poetry.

Our daughter has been blessed with a higher dose of ADHD than I have. She recalls daydreaming at the back of class one day when her teacher directed a question to her – several times in fact – with no response. Finally the entire class turned around and shouted her name.

Our son-in-law also has ADHD and we're pretty sure the grandkids are blessed as well. This makes for some interesting family gatherings, as you might imagine.

All in all, though, I'm reasonably content these days. My experiences, positive and negative,

have made me who I am. A low dose of medication has helped considerably and has taken the edge off my anxiety and depression. It took some getting used to though. After my first dose, I went shopping at Zehrs. Normally I slink in and slink out amid the chatter, PA announcements and clattering carts, avoiding my fellow shoppers as if they all have COVID. This time, I found myself striking up conversations over the produce at an alarming rate!

I just wish that I had known what I know now and could have accessed the resources that are available today. I imagine my mind would still have drifted, but I might not have been as hopelessly "lost in space."

Mark Hertzberger is a former social services supervisor, human resources manager, conflict mediator, and literacy practitioner. He has since freed his mind and now writes poetry and occasional opinionated columns. Mark has lived in Perth County for 27 years, the last 12 of which have been in Stratford where he resides with his wife, novelist Yvonne Hertzberger.

As I See It From America: The Kingdom of Trump



PATRICK D. BURK

Times Columnist

So, the time has come to look at a strange phenomenon with the American political system. It is baffling. Not only is the system breaking, falling into a detritus of bits and pieces that are produced at a whim by the current ruling party, but then countered by the Democrats muddled attempt to fight back against the tyranny that we are all witnessing. Can you in Canada imagine the redrawing of political lines to promote and enhance a minority party that is losing membership on a regular basis? I have never heard of such a thing in other countries, only in the good old

U.S.A, or as some are referring to it as, the "Kingdom of Trump".

Knowing that the occupant of the White House is more concerned about leaving his tainted name all over our nation's capital, the GOP stranglehold of henchmen is going along with the renaming of national treasures, building expansions and removing historical monuments and information as a means to increase the "U.S. emperor's" name and impact on this country. It is like they all capitulate and surrender as the rest of us watch the deterioration of the very values that this country was based on. The "emperor" is without clothes but may soon be the occupant of a new 90,000 square foot ballroom at his palace, formerly the White House. I wonder if he is fiddling as well.

In the past, presidents and their spouses may have had some impact on the interior of our nation's first family home. They may have changed some things subtly, colours or decorations, however most of the building and its environs were handled by the National Park Service and the White House chief usher and

staff. These are usually appointed by a president and are very non-political. It is seen as a job with specific skills in maintenance and upkeep, often serving under many occupants no matter of political persuasion. Our "emperor," in the spirit of his second reign, has decided to gild everything with a layer of gold and remove the idea of this being the "people's" home. It is now his palace. Let's hope that most of this is removable and will fade into the past when the "emperor" is no longer its resident. One can only dream.

I still have a sense of hope as I see National Guard troops being sent into cities to quell the restlessness and protests that this administration has born. The more I see the heavy boot of the "empire" coming down on the cities across our country, the more I realize that many will not be willing to accept this type of governance in perpetuity. The cracks are starting to appear. Even some non-surrendered GOP leaders are starting to buck the trend and realize the emperor has no clothes and that in fact, he is not finite. As a member of the Re-

publican Party, you must kneel to this emperor and pay homage, or his minions will remove you from office in the absurd and manipulative primary season. Since the Congress of the United States is elected every two years, they are always seeking reelection, always bending the knee and always taking the path of least resistance with constituents, to maintain their lofty positions. They basically become beggars.

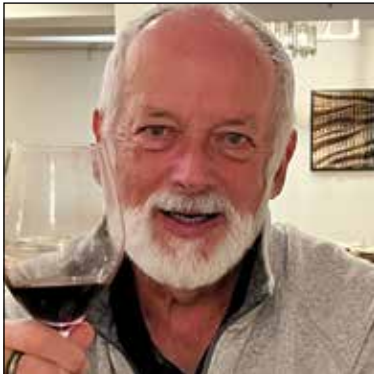
I was once told that when the "little people" start speaking up and taking an interest in politics, it always changes, usually for the good. As the "emperor" is working hard to eliminate certain inalienable rights and install a regime, we are seeing many that have been on the sidelines starting to pick up the protest sign and start getting to work. Independent and Democrat registrations are up. People running against an "emperor" candidate in some areas are getting major traction. The GOP capitulators are being challenged and we are seeing a lot of backfires from the drawing of Congressional lines to keep the minority party in power. Is it right for the blue states to fight

back this way as well? Probably not, but it may be the best way to save the country from the MAGA red hat emperor's fascist army.

In a few short days, my wife and I will be heading your way once again. It is amazing that we have U.S. friends that are concerned that we are not going to be treated all that well in your fair land, because of our nationality. I have no concern. Even though we come from the "Kingdom of Trump," I am certain that the fair and just people of Canada will welcome us with open arms. Stratford is our safe place. It is our home away from home and we visit quite often. It will be a wonderful homecoming for us as we see all the shows that we can see, some for the second time, and marvel at the amazing talent of our theatre friends. More importantly, it will be wonderful to see the smiles of the Canadian people and their welcoming spirit. It gives me additional hope. It will underline the very reasons why sanity and fairness shall prevail, and the "Kingdom of Trump" will fall.

Please let me know how you feel at burk.patrick1956@gmail.com

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Halifax has converted its waterfront into a welcoming destination



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Freelance Columnist

Fun fact; no point in Nova Scotia is more than 60 kilometres from the sea. And that geographical reality translates into innumerable delights for visitors to this Maritime province.

From Cape Breton – where the Cabot Trail is a must-do for all visitors – to the Acadian Shores; from Digby on the Bay of Fundy coast to Lunenburg, home of the Bluenose on the Atlantic, the sea is an intrinsic part of so many visits to Nova Scotia.

And nowhere is the connection with the sea more beautifully realized than in Halifax, where inspired vision and incredible effort has gone into transforming the waterfront into one of the most visitable destinations in Canada.

Visitors can walk the entire waterfront and it will take a while because there is so much to do here. Major attractions include the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, and the HMCS Sackville, the last remaining “Flower-class Corvette” from the Second World War, and now a National Historic Site and a naval museum. The Sackville



The 105-year-old, now-electric boat of Halifax Harbour Tours.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

is permanently moored in Halifax Harbour.

And speaking of boats and Halifax Harbour, a terrific way to get a waterside perspective on the scene is by taking the unique Halifax Harbour Tours cruise. What’s so special about this particular cruise? It truly is unique. The boat is 105 years old, built in England and once used in Florida’s Everglades. But while it has all of this history, it’s also thoroughly modern, having been retrofitted as “Halifax’s only all-electric harbour cruise.”

Captain Glenn Fraser told us that the retrofit, which was admittedly expensive, has meant the operating cost of each 90-minute cruise is about \$1.

The cost to passengers is \$40 per adult – in my opinion, quite a bargain when compared to a lot of tourism experiences.

The cruise not only provides wonderful views of the entire waterfront including ships ranging

from luxury yachts to imposing military vessels, it also provides a good look at Georges Island, home to Fort Charlotte. A few years ago, Parks Canada opened Fort Charlotte to the public with its maze of underground tunnels. Guided tours are available and visitors to the island may also encounter the unique, black and white species of garter snake that has evolved on the island.

The harbour tour is really worthwhile, but you will also want to spend time strolling along the waterfront, taking in all the attractions big and small. These will range from unique sculptures commemorating the history of Halifax as the first port of call for immigrants to buskers offering live entertainment along the way.

There are play areas for kids including the iconic and accessible sculpture, “The Wave,” which is continually populated by climbing kids and which gives me the

willies as I wait for someone to fall off the crest. This does not seem to happen, though!

You can find the entire spectrum of dining experiences along the waterfront. There are plenty of pubs and craft breweries, as well as higher-end dining. And there are food shacks selling every variety of fast food, including, of course, beaver tails, donairs and ice cream.

A fairly recent addition to the waterfront is the luxury hotel, the Muir. It’s an attraction in its own right and the development created an amazing waterfront space that includes an event area, sculpture gallery, a vast staircase into the sea and lots of spots for boutiques and restaurants.

One of my favourite shops on the waterfront is the Peace by Chocolate boutique. Peace by Chocolate has an inspiring story – a business founded by Syrian refugees to Canada committed to making a positive difference

in the world, and also to producing some of finest chocolate I have ever tasted! The founding Hadhad family – who still own the business – are based in Antigonish, N.S., the location of their factory, but the Halifax waterfront shop certainly offers all the best of their admittedly addictive products.

The developers of the waterfront had the brilliant idea of making sure every visitor has an opportunity to simply relax. So, there are innumerable chairs provided for lounging with a great view of the sea – perhaps even for napping?

There is a lot more to do in Halifax away from the water: the famous Citadel, one of the most visited historical attractions in Canada; the Nova Scotia Art Gallery, which includes the highly decorated home of primitive painter Maud Lewis; and not to be forgotten, the Alexander Keith’s Brewery. But I have a confession to make: during our two-day stay in Halifax, we never actually left the waterfront. We stayed at the Westin Nova Scotia, spent hours and hours at the Museum of Immigration, and the rest of our days strolling, cruising and exploring along the waterfront. It was a wonderful, relaxing visit.

Next time, Halifax, I will try to pry myself away from your amazing waterfront to enjoy everything else in this welcoming city, but it won’t be easy.

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.



The HMCS Sackville, the last remaining WWII Corvette of its class.



The Wave, continually inhabited by risk-taking children!

Riddles

- Why don't elephants use computers?**
Because they're afraid of the mouse!
- What do you call a dog magician?**
A labracadabrador!
- Why did the cow win an award?**
Because she was outstanding in her field!
- What do you get when you cross a fish and an elephant?**
Swimming trunks!
- Why did the chicken join a band?**
Because it had the drumsticks!
- How do cows stay up to date?**
They read the moos-paper!
- What do you call a bear with no teeth?**
A gummy bear!
- Why did the duck go to the doctor?**
Because it had the quacks!
- What's a cat's favorite color?**
Purrr-ple!
- Why are frogs so happy?**
Because they eat whatever bugs them!
- What do you call an alligator in a vest?**
An investi-gator!
- Why don't seagulls fly over the bay?**
Because then they'd be bagels!

Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 23



Pet of the Month



ANNA

Meet Anna! This beautiful large-breed mix is bursting with love and personality. Anna adores people and truly believes she's a lap dog- don't be surprised when she tries to snuggle right into your arms! Anna is a smart cookie who already knows a bunch of cool tricks and is always eager to learn more. Training time is one of her favourite things, and with positive reinforcement, she thrives! Whether it's adventuring outdoors or curling up for a cozy nap, Anna is happiest when she's with her people. She's looking for a home that will continue her training journey and provide her with plenty of love, structure, and snuggles. Learn more about Anna at kwsphumane.ca.

Word Search

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FARMERS MARKET

Z	U	B	Z	L	L	D	Y	O	A	J	K	Q	A	E	A	W	D	B	U
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- APPLES
- BASKET
- BREAD
- CHEESE
- CIDER
- CORN
- EGGS
- FARMER
- HERBS
- JAM
- ORGANIC
- PEACHES
- PICKLES
- PLANTS
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- SEASONAL
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Fair value offered for your vinyl records, cassette tapes & hifi components. Please contact **Sound Fixation, 519-801-5421, 4 George St. W, Stratford.**

I WILL PAY CASH FOR ANTIQUES AND COLLECTIBLES – Coca Cola Pepsi any pop company, Brewery items Kuntz, Huether Labatts etc. Old radios and gramophones,

Wristwatches and pocket watches, Old fruit jars Beaver Star Bee Hive etc. Any old oil cans and signs Red Indian Supertest etc. Any small furniture.

If you are moving or cleaning out stuff please contact me - 519-570-6920.

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Looking to hire or rent to an RMT or any quiet business that would complement a spa. We are located downtown Stratford. This room is wheelchair accessible. Thespa@quadro.net

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Meets every Wednesday evening at 7 p.m. for 3 games.
Check our website for further details stratfordscrabble.ca

OXFORD PHILATELIC SOCIETY

Meetings: 2nd Tuesday (2-4pm) and 4th Tuesday (7-9pm)

September to May

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

If you have never belonged to a stamp club, now's the time. Meet new friends, grow your knowledge and collection.
Contact: Don Eaton dhfe@silomail.com

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

FOOD TRUCKS

Grace United Church. Tavistock

August 18, 2025 from 4:30-7:30

Crystal's Fries, Ish n Chips, Fo'Cheezy

Donations to Tavistock Agricultural Society

FOOD TRUCKS

Grace United Church. Tavistock

August 25, 2025 from 4:30-7:30

Berlin 95, Born2Eat, Los Rolling Tacos, Beavertails
Donations to Grace United Church

GARDEN STRATFORD GENERAL MEETING

Monday September 8, 2025, 7:15 – 9:00 p.m.

Army Navy Hall, 151 Lorne Ave. E., Stratford

Featured Presentation: "Blowing in the Wind – Native Grasses and Sedges", Shaun Booth from In Our Nature, Orangeville. Meeting Open to Everyone; Free Admission.

BURGER & FRY NIGHT

Thursday Sept. 25 and Thursday Oct. 23

Legion 804 Ontario St B1, Stratford

Bring your friends out for a fun and tasty evening, supporting your local legion. No tickets needed, just show up! The cost is \$13 each or 2 for \$25. Take-out is available if preordered from Dave Hartney at 519-703-6544.

OXFORD PHILATELIC SOCIETY CIRCUIT BOOK FAIR

Saturday, October 25; 10:00 am to 4:00 pm.

Church of the Epiphany, 560 Dundas Street, Woodstock

Ontario N4S 1C7

Free Admission & Parking

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

Contact: Don Eaton dhfe@silomail.com

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Approx 10,000 records

Sunday, August 24; 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

ANAF Unit 261 Hall, 151 Lorne Ave E, Stratford

ADMISSION: Donation to Stratford Humane Soc.

Rock – Metal – Soul – Jazz – Blues

Also 45 rpms \$1.00 each

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Deadline: Tuesday prior at 3 p.m.

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- The Community Calendar is for non-profit organizations to promote their free admission events at no charge. Event listings can include your event name, date, time and location as well as a phone number, email address or website.
- If your event is not free admission or you would like to include more details than stated above, you have the following options:
 - Coming Events Word Ad in Classified section (50 word max.) - \$10 + hst
 - Coming Events Boxed Word Ad in Classified section (50 word max.) - \$15 + hst
 - Display Ad - Sizes begin at a classified business card size for \$35 + hst

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