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(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

Walkers embark from the New Hamburg Community Centre Feb. 22 on two- or five-kilometre routes during the Wilmot Family Resources Centre's Coldest Night of the Year fundraiser. Full story on page 4.

Louis appointed as parliamentary secretary to the minister of Canadian heritage

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Tim Louis, member of parliament for Kitchener-Conestoga, has been appointed as the parliamentary secretary to the minister of Canadian heritage.

Louis will support Pascal St-Onge in advancing policies that strengthen Canada's arts, culture and heritage sector. The new post also comes with a \$14,300 bump in

pay.

"I am honoured to take on this responsibility and to work alongside Minister St-Onge to support Canada's cultural institutions like the CBC that keep Canadians informed, connected and engaged," said Louis. "As media landscapes continue to evolve, it is imperative that we protect independent journalism and reinforce our cultural industries to uphold Canada's sovereignty and national identity."

Louis adds the secretary role to sitting on the standing committee on agriculture and agri-food, but the roles are very different.

"I will be working in a specific ministry and working closely with the minister. I am still on the agriculture committee and that isn't going to change."

Louis is a musician by trade and doesn't feel his background hurt his chances for the appointment. He has also spent some time

Continued on page 2

Wilmot budget passes with hefty tax increase

Two councillors refused to approve the document

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Wilmot Township council has passed an 18.22 per-cent tax increase for 2025.

The final figure is vastly different from the original 50.87 per cent proposed by township staff but it is still a hard pill to swallow for some councillors and members of the public. The common theme among councillors was financial ignorance of the past.

"I could not support an increase of this magnitude as it places a significant financial strain on residents at a time when affordability is already a major concern for people in our community and folks across Canada," said Coun. Kris Wilkinson who, along with Coun. Harvir Sidhu, were the only members of council to vote against the budget.

"Throughout the budget process, I pushed for a more measured approach, one that would balance the township's needs with the realities facing families, seniors and small businesses. While I recognize the financial pressures on the municipality, I believe more could have been done to find efficiencies and lessen the impact on taxpayers."

Lillianne Dunstall was one of the members of council who voted in favour of the document. She said the increase was a difficult but necessary step.

"Years of postponing critical investments and kicking projects down the road have brought us to a dead end. We ran

Continued on page 3



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Louis appointed as parliamentary secretary to the minister of Canadian heritage

Continued from page 1

as a member of the heritage committee and strongly believes in the mandate of the CBC.

"I think it needs to exist as an institution and it needs to be strengthened. The CBC is a big part of our heritage and helps nation-building and rally Canadians together, something more important now than ever at a time when Donald Trump is threatening our very sovereignty."

St-Onge recently unveiled the Liberal government's blueprint for the future of the broadcaster. The 17-page document details how the Liberals want to transform the CBC's funding model and governance by nearly doubling the amount of money Canadians spend each year and removing advertising from news programming.

Louis said he closely watched the minister's press conference and since it is a new role he is still getting up to speed on, but he has been involved in some CBC business

over the years.

"I worked on some of the legislation that asked the CRTC and CBC to modernize. I think there is a way to strengthen our national broadcaster and do it in a responsible way. Funding, updating the funding model and improving governance are all a part of our government's plans going forward."

Louis explained the CBC is equipped to play a greater role in informing Canadians during national disasters and climate crises.

"People turn to our public broadcaster for that so there is a way of making emergency services more effective and we can fight against disinformation. We need those trusted journalists and we also have to innovate because media technology is changing so quickly."

Louis said the CBC, as a public broadcaster, should be above politics and one of the recommendations is the CEO should be appointed by a board of directors, not a political appointment.

"Then we don't get the Conservatives making cuts and the Liberals restoring funds back and forth to come up with standard funding across the board. Can we be more efficient? There is always room for making things better."

He added funding state broadcasters on a per-capita basis is nothing new for countries that have them, and Canada lags behind other nations in that department.

"Most counties invest more in their public broadcasters because they support their artists, their stories and getting your messages out there. I do think these are suggestions and need to be discussed and debated. When I talk to Canadians, they do talk to the CBC as an institution."

Louis supporting Carney in Liberal leadership race

"I took my time to decide and we have a number of strong candidates running, and I am proud of everyone and I have served with some of them. I had good and

challenging conversations but, in the end, I put my support behind Mark Carney."

Louis said Carney's extensive experience as former governor of the Bank of Canada and Bank of England combined with his ideas and the fact he has worked with Conservative and Liberal governments makes him the best candidate to lead the country. As for whether Carney will become the next leader of Canada, Louis said time will tell.

"Elections matter. I think in this day and age people shouldn't be looking at the polls as much as they should be having conversations with neighbours. You get the government you elect. I look forward to seeing this leadership race happen and, some time in 2025, we have a federal election."

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Wilmot budget passes with hefty tax increase

Continued from page 1

out of road leaving no choice but to act to ensure the long-term sustainability of our township. The original 36 per-cent capital requirement was phased over four years at nine per cent annually, making it more manageable.”

The total 2025 budget for Wilmot Township is \$29,278,441 and, for the average property, it represents an annual increase of \$208 or \$17.33 per month.

A news release from the township said the budget begins to address years of financial decisions that have resulted in low reserves, underfunded operational costs and service gaps.

Mayor Natasha Salonen acknowledged the process was particularly difficult given the need to address the township’s fiscal reality while acknowledging the affordability issues many residents and all Canadians are facing. Salonen said she understands some residents will find the end result a tough pill to swallow.

“Affordability is a concern for many and I do not take these decisions lightly. However, as a mayor who ran on and remains committed to fiscal responsibility, I could not ignore the reality of Wilmot’s chronic underinvestment in essential infrastructure and services. Through community engagement during the budget, I feel that council sought to ensure that our approach reflected public input while addressing the long-term health of our township.”

She added difficult choices had to be made but the budget sets Wilmot on a more sustainable path.

“One that strengthens our financial foundation, prioritizes key investments and positions us for responsible growth in the years ahead. This is just the beginning of the work needed to rebuild, and I remain committed to working with residents to navigate these challenges together.”

Sidhu said he was disappointed in the final result but added the budget shines a light on the township’s poor financial health.

“Although there was not a 50-plus increase which I believe should never have even been an option, the 18 per cent is a very significant hit to our tax base. I was not confident in the budget and options that were presented to me. I believe more work should have been done to respect the taxpayers hard-earned money.”

He added he was elected on the promise to be fiscally prudent, something he will continue to do.

“Our township needs to reflect on how we conduct business with the local taxpayers being priority number one.”

Dunstall, in a move to ensure strong guardrails moving forward, introduced a motion to explore a lean-government program based on Six Sigma principles, already successfully implemented in Toronto, Mississauga, Peterborough and Hamilton.

“This initiative focuses on efficiency, teamwork, accountability and cost savings. It also reduces redundancy by identifying overlapping roles and outdated processes while fostering employee engagement through a culture of innovation and adaptability.”

She added a key benefit is improved service delivery which streamlines procedures, reduces wait times and enhances responsiveness to constituents. The motion was unanimously supported.

Coun. Steven Martin said council and staff worked well over the past few months to finalize the budget but admitted it wasn’t easy.

“It has not been an easy process since we have been dealing with a difficult financial situation. However, the final number of an 18.22 per-cent increase is much better than the starting point of 51 per cent. We are working on a longer-term plan to build up reserves, which is good.”

Coun. Stewart Cressman compared the financial state of Wilmot to other municipalities in the province since it has the lowest tax-based reserves of any lower-tier municipality in Ontario. He explained small tax hikes aren’t coming any time soon.

“Like this year, it is proposed the capital budget increase each of the next three years at a rate of nine per cent in addition to the annual operating budget, so tax relief for township residents is not on the near horizon.”

One theme consistent among councillors regardless of which way they voted on the budget was the need to provide residents with the information they need to follow what’s happening at the township level.

“I will continue advocating for greater financial responsibility, transparency and long-term planning to ensure that we do not find ourselves in this position again. Wilmot residents deserve a budget that is both sustainable and fair, and I remain committed to working toward that goal.”

Residents can learn more about the 2025 budget by visiting the township’s website at www.wilmot.ca/budget.

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Coldest Night of the Year at 70 per cent of fundraising goal in support of Wilmot Family Resource Centre

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

As of press time on Wednesday, Wilmot's annual Coldest Night of the Year (CNOY) fundraiser has brought in roughly 70 per cent or almost \$40,000 of the event's \$56,000 goal, all of which will go to support the Wilmot Family Resource Centre

(WFRC) and the vulnerable community members the centre serves.

A total of 134 walkers across 27 teams supported by 30 volunteers turned out for the fundraiser walk in New Hamburg Feb. 22. Before the walkers set off on two- and five-kilometre routes, they gathered at the starting point – the New Hamburg

Community Centre – for welcoming remarks from WFRC executive director Trisha Robinson.

"Poverty looks the same to a child, a family, an individual, or a senior in a rural community as it does in a large city like Kitchener, Waterloo or Cambridge," Robinson said to those gathered. "Poverty looks like someone who suddenly loses a job or becomes sick with cancer or mental illness. Poverty looks like a child who just lost a parent to divorce or separation. Poverty looks like a teen not getting along with his parents and living out on the streets, or a senior citizen on a low, fixed

income, or a graduate student struggling with a loan debt, or a single parent struggling to raise a family.

"In other words, poverty looks like you or me and any of us yesterday, today, or perhaps tomorrow could find circumstances beyond our control have changed our lives in the blink of an eye. Every day, families and individuals in our community are forced to make impossible choices between the basic necessities of life. ... We can do better than this in our region, in our province and in our country, so look around at the face of poverty. It isn't out there; it's here in this room. I wear it and

Continued on page 5



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTOS)

Walkers make their way past the New Hamburg Legion during the Wilmot Family Resources Centre's Coldest Night of the Year fundraiser.



Centre Stage Dance Studio students perform a routine before walkers set off during Wilmot's Coldest Night of the Year fundraiser Feb. 22.



Restoring small-town journalism, one community at a time!

The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette

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Continued from page 4

so do you. It affects us all. Tonight, we are walking together with all the other Coldest Night of the Year walkers across Canada to bring food, shelter and hope to the hurting people in each of our communities.”

After Robinson finished speaking, the walkers watched as students from Centre Stage Dance Studio performed a few routines and the cadets from 822 Tudor Squadron performed a cheer to encourage those participating in the fundraiser walk.

After the walk concluded, participants congregated next door at the New Hamburg Royal Canadian Legion for a

light dinner and fellowship.

According to the CNOY website, the team that raised the most money for the WFRM was the 10-member Steinmann Strollers with a total of \$6,065, followed by the four-member team, the Resource Centre Walkers, which brought in \$4,160.

“We are very thankful for the tremendous support from our Coldest Night 2025 people who helped make this another successful and fun event,” Robinson said after the event. “Please know every step taken will help people in our community.”

Funds will continue to be raised for Wilmot’s CNOY 2025 online at cnoy.org/location/wilmot until March 31.



Members of the 822 Tudor Squadron Royal Canadian Air Cadets perform a cheer for walkers before the Wilmot Coldest Night of the Year fundraiser walk began on Feb. 22.

Snow-clearing on area rooftops in high demand after heavy snowfall this winter



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

With Mother Nature unloading more snow than our area has seen for many years, there are numerous reports of house, barn and shed roofs collapsing in the area and across the province. Pictured, Darcy Erb of Conestoga Roofing was busy last week shovelling snow off the roof of Elgin Missionary Church. He said the roofing company has been busy over the last few weeks lessening the weight of the snow to avoid potential roof collapses.

Wilmot’s Prime Ministers Path: Collective Reflections, Future Directions



COMMUNITY GATHERING #2: COLLECTIVE REFLECTIONS

Explore information stations showcasing the Working Group's recommendations, background research, and the community engagement process. Participate in activities to help you provide feedback and share your thoughts on recommendations.



Wednesday, March 5, 2025



4:30 PM - 8:00PM Drop-in



Format
New Hamburg Community Centre (Upstairs Hall)
251 Jacob Street
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Township of Wilmot releases strategic action plan

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Township of Wilmot has released its 2025-2027 Strategic Action Plan, a document that provides a roadmap for the organization, giving clear direction on how staff and council can achieve positive results for residents.

The plan was developed in 2024 based on feedback gathered through a public survey and local stakeholder sessions. Hundreds of residents participated, helping to paint a picture of the community's wants and needs. Four key priorities emerged from this process and formed the strategic goals of the plan:

- Financial stability – Build a strong financial foundation to support our community now and in the future.
- Healthy community – Provide core services and build strong community partnerships.
- Prosperous business and balanced growth – Facilitate responsible growth providing opportunities to live and work in Wilmot.
- Trustworthy leadership – Foster a positive and respectful working

environment, engaging and serving our community.

The plan lists several practical, achievable actions that will help the organization reach these goals. These actions will form work plans for staff over the next two years, ensuring the municipality is working efficiently and effectively to enhance the quality of life in Wilmot.

The township has come under fire over what many deem to be poor financial management, and acting CAO Greg Clark admitted the plan is driven by recent experience.

“When we had the planning sessions with council and we were talking about how to move the organization forward, that really was the starting point. We are in this place where things aren't the best financially and there are some issues ... that create a lack of transparency, a lack of trust and a lack of communication.”

He added the plan is all about moving Wilmot Township forward from a council and community lens, particularly in terms of financial stability and trustworthy leadership.

“From council's perspective, improving our financial health was a big thing they

started from. Council and the community are both trying to improve communication, which rebuilds trust and builds good leadership.”

Clark said the other two pillars are generic in any community where the goal is to have a healthy community.

“You want people to feel they have the opportunity to be active and engaged and be a participant. Growth is an interesting idea in that we have the three big cities beside us, we know the region's goal of one million people, so how do we fit into that?”

Once a strategic plan is completed and implemented, it plays a big part in the day-to-day operations of any organization including a municipality. Clark said the goals tie into everything staff presents to council and everything approved by elected officials.

“If you do strategic planning well, it should tie in with what you do every day. You should be able to draw a line between a report that comes forward about the Arts and Culture Master Plan coming forward next month. That ties in with that healthy community. The CAO recruitment ties into the trustworthy leadership. So ... every report should tie into how it supports the pillars and moves the plan forward.”

The Gazette asked Clark if he was hopeful the plan would improve decision-making at the township going forward. He explained the strategic plan won't be collecting dust.

“You mentioned before about not just putting this plan on the shelf. We will be bringing (the plan) back to council in May along with a reporting mechanism. The key is how we are demonstrating how we are working to further each of those pillars. When you drill into financial stability, what are we doing around a long-term, evidence-based approach to drive budgeting?”

He added every report will help council and the public see where Wilmot is meeting its objectives and where they aren't.

“There are going to be things that get bumped out because things happen and things change. By being transparent and clear to the public, they'll be able to see the progress we've made in achieving these things over the next three years.”

Clark explained he didn't want to use the term simple to describe the plan but rather called it focused and targeted.

“There's not a huge list of aspirational items. There are things we can grab a hold of, do and deliver. That's the part I like about his strategic plan. It's focused and very achievable. I'm excited for us to get moving on it and engaging with council on progress.”

A full version of the Strategic Action Plan can be found at www.wilmot.ca/strategicplan. Progress reports will also be posted to this page as they become available.



SOUTH EASTHOPE
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NOTICE OF ANNUAL AND SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING of the SOUTH EASTHOPE MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY

Notice is hereby given that the 153rd Annual and Special General Meeting of South Easthope Mutual Insurance Company will be held at **Grace United Church, 116 Woodstock Street South, Tavistock, Ontario, on Friday March 21, 2025 at 1:30 p.m.**


The meeting will commence with an informative presentation on Fire Safety in the home and Lithium-ion Battery Safety, put on by guest speakers from the Perth East and West Perth Fire Departments.

The business portion will follow the presentation for the purposes of:

1. Receiving and approving the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Corporation held March 8, 2024.
2. Receiving the Auditor's Report and Financial Statement for the year ended December 31, 2024.
3. Appointing Auditors for the 2025 fiscal year.
4. Electing three directors, each for a term of three years. Any member wishing to seek election or re-election as a director must have filed their intention to stand for election in writing with the Secretary of the Corporation at least thirty days in advance of the Annual Meeting.
5. To consider and if thought fit, to approve By-law 1 – 2024 being a General By-law of the Corporation passed by the Board of Directors at their meeting in December 2024, which repeals and replaces the previous General By-laws. The By-Law is available for review by all members of the Corporation at the head office of the Corporation during regular business hours or will be provided upon request.

A complete version of the audited financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2024 are available for viewing on the company website at www.southeasthope.com. A member may also request a copy by written request at least 14 days before the Annual Meeting.

Rachel N. Stewart
Corporate Secretary
For the Board of Directors



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EZT staff brings forward draft budget with proposed 6.95 per-cent tax hike

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

East Zorra-Tavistock (EZT) has tabled its 2025 draft budget as council members grapple with a proposed 8.25 per cent increase.

Thanks to the addition of 35-40 new homes accounting for 1.29 per cent assessment growth last year, property owners in the township would see a 6.95 per-cent potential tax hike if the draft budget is approved as is.

Council held a special meeting Feb. 25 where the budget was presented by staff. The largest hike comes from the planning, community and recreation services line, which is sitting at a 3.15 per-cent increase. The nearly \$250,000 increase includes a \$200,000 contribution to township reserves to help pay for a future multi-use recreation facility.

Councillors asked staff many questions regarding budget lines but discussion about maintenance at Tavistock's Optimist Park garnered plenty of attention. The township and the service club have what appears to be a handshake agreement where EZT staff cut grass at the park once a week, including inside the baseball diamond fence.

The 2025 budget line has \$18,000 set aside for maintenance at the park and some councillors wondered why the township was supplying the service. CAO Karen DePrest said her concern is a possible liability issue.

"If our staff go on private property and do something that is not a municipal service, our equipment and our personnel might be at risk," she said.

Deputy mayor Brad Smith said he isn't against providing the service for the club, but he wanted to ensure the township and Optimists have a proper agreement in

place.

"I think we need staff to look into this a little further. This is a discussion that needs to be had to cover us going forward as far as the liability," he said.

Township staff have been directed to consult with the Optimist Club to develop an official agreement.

The budget also includes a proposed 2.09 per-cent hike in the fire and emergency management services department. Some of the additional \$162,000 includes capital spending for items like new extraction equipment used at motor-vehicle accident scenes.

"They are about \$50,000 a station and we want to do to all three stations at once because of the fact they require specialized training and when we have a two-station response, we wouldn't want one station knowing how to use the equipment and the other station not," DePrest said.

"We thought it was more seamless to buy all three and train all three stations simultaneously."

Staff are asking council to approve a \$100,000 expenditure to repave the parking lot at the Tavistock firehall.

"Why are we repaving the Tavistock parking lot," asked Smith. "Is it not paved now? I missed something along the line here."

Fire chief Scott Alexander explained the drainage from the roof of the building was designed to pool into a catch basin in the parking lot.

"We were having water and ice pooling, creating a safety hazard in the actual parking lot. As we tried to reroute the water underneath the ground to the catch basins, we found out the basins hadn't been constructed 100 per cent and were actually undermining the catch basin."

Continued on page 9

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Continued from page 8

He added as a result, the 20-year-old parking lot is sinking and is uneven.

On the table in the new five-year capital forecast is a new firehall in Hickson. DePrest is hoping to break ground on a new facility next year.

"You can see the Hickson firehall architecture is scheduled to begin in 2025 and the build would happen in 2026 theoretically."

Coun. Scott Rudy questioned if the hall needed to be built in 2026 or if it could be delayed.

"It is possible to delay it," said Alexander. "There have been plans to have an additional bay at that hall since I started in 1992. In 1994, there were plans to put together a reserve for an expansion. Currently, we have four emergency vehicles there trying to compete for three bays. That station is overcrowded at the very best."

Now that the township has acquired

land, Alexander said he would prefer to see a new station built sooner rather than later, but he understands the constraints council is dealing with.

"Having said that, we have also learned with (the new EZT office in Hickson), the more we delay the more costs go up," added Alexander.

The proposed budget sets aside \$225,000 for site and engineering work. DePrest said the goal is to emulate the current Tavistock station.

"We want the drive-through bays and we know we have the four acres (in Hickson) to put it on."

The current price for a new firehall is estimated at \$2.7 million

Residents of EZT will have a chance to comment on the budget at a meeting on March 5 at 9 a.m. Anyone hoping to delegate needed to submit a request by the end of the day on Tuesday. The township is aiming to bring the final draft budget to council at its March 19 meeting.

ADVERTORIAL



Ontario Party Becomes Obvious Choice

The Ontario Provincial election is upon us, February 27th, 2025.

Local resident, Patrick Doucette, is the Ontario Party candidate for Kitchener-Conestoga.

Question: How would the Ontario Party reduce the cost of living and help the citizens of Ontario?

The Ontario Party will fight for a 65% Property Tax Reduction for Seniors; ensuring elderly Ontarians can afford to stay in their homes. The Ontario Party will subsidize municipalities for this and use cost-cutting measures and revenue generation in other areas to support this.

We would also push for a drop in Provincial Sales Tax by 3%, resulting in paying 10% HST instead of the current 13%. This would immediately reduce the cost of goods and services for all citizens of Ontario.

Question: What other revenue generating opportunities might make this possible?

We would work to support provincial infrastructure projects such as the James Bay Port project. We would work to eliminate inter-provincial trade barriers. We would eliminate the practice of health-care tourism fraud and require visitors to Ontario to have their own private medical insurance in place prior to taking advantage of our health care services. This alone could save the province a significant amount of money.

Ontario is such a rich province, there is no reason we cannot reduce taxes for everyone. Instead, government corruption and wasteful spending have caused taxes to continually rise.

Question: How has the campaign gone since you have had such short notice and bad weather?

I am seeing a remarkable thing. Voters are communicating by word-of-mouth and telling their neighbours about the Ontario Party. It is spreading like wildfire among the communities in this riding.

The mainstream news seems to only want to focus on the 'big three' parties but I am seeing more and more buzz directly from citizens and online. I have received numerous emails from voters telling me that they are excited and thankful to support the Ontario Party.

While the Ontario Party is skyrocketing in popularity, I am just as happy to see people realize that their political choice is important, that their vote is powerful, and that they can make a difference. "When the people have faith, change happens."

Any last comments to the voters?

The Ontario Party stands for Freedom, Family, & Faith. We are a party that openly stands up for righteousness and truth in government. Residents can see the policies we stand for at the website, ontarioparty.ca. The policies on education and healthcare are very important. We want to fight against indoctrination in our schools. We want student success to be based on best practices, not a radical curriculum. We want to provide funding for greater hospital bed capacity and more healthcare workers.

If residents agree that these policies make sense, and will benefit our communities, then they will vote for me, Patrick Doucette, and for the Ontario Party.



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OBITUARY

FRANCIS: Peter J.



Passed away peacefully at his home in Tavistock on Friday, February 21, 2025.

Born 83 years ago the son of the late James and Ina Francis. Peter is survived by his wife Avis, his sons James, Scott and Brent (Martha) and their families and by Avis' children, Beth Blowes (Mark Arthur), Nancy Altenburg (Gerry), Brian

Blowes (Becky) and their families, brother-in-law Melvin Kelly (Keron) and by close family friend Tom Zimmerman.

Predeceased by his 1st wife Diane in (1988) and by his sister Jane in (2017).

Peter operated the Francis Funeral Home and Francis Furniture in Tavistock since 1962. He supported the community in various ways over the years having been involved in both the Rotary Club of Tavistock and the Tavistock Masonic Lodge #609 A.F. & A.M. for over 60 years, also a member and chairman of the Tavistock Utilities Commission and a member of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch #518. He had also been involved in various other business ventures over the years.

Relatives and friends were received in Peter's home, the Francis Funeral Home, 77 Woodstock St. N. Tavistock on Monday, February 24th from 6-8pm and Tuesday from 2-4 & 6-8pm. Funeral service was conducted at Trinity Lutheran Church, Sebastapol on Wednesday February 26, 2025 at 11:00am. Rev. Leanne Darlington officiating. Interment later in St. Andrew's Cemetery, North Easthope.

In lieu of flowers, donations to The War Amps CHAMP Program or Trinity Lutheran Church would be appreciated by the family. Personal condolences can be posted at www.francisfh.ca

OBITUARY

BONTAINE, Robert Gerald



Passed away peacefully on Wednesday, February 19, 2025, at St. Mary's General Hospital, Kitchener, at the age of 88 years. Bob was born in Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, on January 24, 1937, a son of the late Jack C. and Olive (Hyndman) Bontaine.

A beloved and cherished husband of Marion (Schmitt)

Bontaine whom he married on August 27, 1960, and predeceased him on May 11, 2022. Loving father of Robin Bontaine and Shawn Bontaine and wife Eva. Proud grandfather of Shawn Bontaine and wife Alicia, Ryan Bontaine, Scott Bontaine and partner Chantelle Oliveira, great-grandfather of Kayden Bontaine, Kinsley Bontaine, Stacy Rodger, and Miles Bontaine. Bob will be missed by his brother Jack Bontaine and wife Carol, by brother-in-law Tom Isotamm and wife Norma, as well as by nieces, nephews, and friends.

He is predeceased by his sister Linda Isotamm.

Cremation has taken place. All are welcome to a memorial visitation at the Mark Jutzi Funeral Home, 291 Huron Street, New Hamburg, on Friday, February 28, 2025, from 2 - 4 & 6 - 8 p.m. A memorial service will be held in the chapel of the funeral home on Saturday, March 1, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. For those unable to attend the funeral a livestream link will be available on the funeral home website. Interment in Fairmont Cemetery, Baden, at a later date.

As expressions of sympathy, donations would be accepted to the Diabetes Association or Alzheimer Society and would be appreciated by the family.

Personal condolences and donation information available at www.markjutzifuneralhomes.ca

OBITUARY

KOSLONEN: Dianne Mae (nee Bender)



Passed away peacefully on Friday, February 14, 2025 at Grand River Hospital, Kitchener. Dianne Koslonen formerly of Tavistock, in her 63rd year.

Cherished wife of Tom Koslonen of Woodstock. Loving and devoted mother of Ryan Ouellette (Jennifer) of Norwich and Samantha Brewer (Brian) of Waterloo.

Sadly missed by her grandchildren; Carter Brewer, Caiden and Colton Ouellette. Dianne is survived by her siblings; Charlotte (Ron)Hubbard of Stratford, Judy (Gary) Schmidt of Stratford, Donald (Janet) Bender of Heidelberg, Walter (Jeanne) Bender of Tavistock and Carol (Mike) Huard of Winnipeg.

Predeceased by her parents Wilmer & Eudora (Ruby) Bender and sister Sharon Kurzat.

Private family arrangements have been entrusted to the Francis Funeral Home, Tavistock

In lieu of flowers, donations to the Oxford County Community Health Centre would be appreciated by the family. Personal condolences can be posted at www.francisfh.ca



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March 20 - Cassel Mennonite

The True Vine
March 27 - East Zorra Mennonite

The Resurrection and The Life
April 3 - Grace United

OBITUARY

RUDY: Ronald Clifford
“Ron”



It is with profound sadness that the family of retired Senior Constable Ronald Clifford Rudy, announce his passing on the 10th day of February, 2025, at Stratford General Hospital in his 86th year. Born in Woodstock, Ontario, to the late Dorothy (Webb) Hutchison and Clifford Rudy.

Survived by his true love and best friend, Donna (McGregor) Rudy. Married for 66 years, together they raised four children, Debbie (Murray Paton), Jeff Rudy (Nancy Watts) both of Woodstock, Karen Rudy-Tuffnail and Tracy Lynne Rudy-Petrie (Steve Teixeira), both of London. Extremely proud grandpa to Geoff Paton (Shaughna) of Woodstock, Kelly Paton of Waterloo, Corey Tuffnail (Breanne) of Stratford, Julia Petrie (Brody Roote) of New Hamburg, and Kate Petrie of London. Adoring great grandfather to Brooke and Cole Paton and Colter Tuffnail. Also survived by his sisters-in-law, Pat Rudy and Joyce Wilker.

Predeceased by his parents, as well as brothers Bob Rudy, Harold Rudy, step-father, Elgin Hutchison and brother-in-law, Don Wilker.

Faithful to his God, he served his family, friends and community with pride.

Ron began his career in Embro as an automobile mechanic as well as being a member of the Embro and West Zorra School Board during the time when Zorra Highland Park School was built. Ron was also a volunteer firefighter with the Embro West Zorra department, receiving his 25 year service medal. Intrigued by a career in law enforcement, Ron joined the Woodstock OPP detachment as an Auxiliary Officer, before joining the Tavistock Police Force as a Constable. Never wavering in his service to his community, he stayed with Tavistock Police up to the amalgamation with Oxford Community Police Service where he continued working and ended his 36 year career with the Woodstock Police Service.

A familiar face around the community, Ron was also the Community Service Officer and met many local residents who became life-long friends. Ron's career was only a small scope of his life. He enjoyed travelling, be it one of he and Donna's eastern Canadian road trips, their trips with their friends to Barbados, traveling there 25 times and of course, spending time with his family.

Often shy at first, he would quickly warm up with a smile or quiet joke under his breath. Even as he aged, he made connections with those around him. His time at the Maples Home for Seniors enhanced his life in many ways. Always listening, he was close with the staff and at the age of 85, was consistently in the know of the happenings in Tavistock.

The family wishes to extend their deepest gratitude to Dr. Narayan and his team at Stratford General Hospital, and to the caring and compassionate staff at the Maples Home for Seniors.

Should you wish to make an expression of sympathy, Parkinson's Research Canada or Maples Home for Seniors Resident Council would be appreciated by the family. Personal condolences can be posted at www.francisfh.ca

OBITUARY

HAASE: Jeanette Elizabeth
(nee Kelly)



It is with deep sorrow we announce the passing of Jeanette Elizabeth Haase at the People Care Centre, Tavistock, surrounded with love and many hugs and kisses from her loving family, on Sunday, February 23, 2025, at the age of 78 years.

Predeceased by her husband and love of her life,

Paul Haase, in June, 2024.

Beloved mother of Colleen (Dan) Michaelis, Cathy (Phil) Fidler, and Mike (Sherri) Haase. Most cherished Grandma of Luke, Mark (Rachel), Maggie Danner (Ryan), and Max Michaelis; Aaron and Noah Fidler; and Abbie, Emma, and Lillian Haase. The greatest Great Grandma to Eva, Dean, and Clarke Michaelis. Much beloved sister to Sharon Pospeich, sister-in-law to Jerry Pospeich and Ginette Kelly. Cherished sister-in-law to Helen and Bill Cronk and Sandra Haase.

Predeceased by her parents, Cletus and Rita Kelly and her brother Patrick Kelly, her mother- and father-in-law Clayton and Monica Haase, sister-in-law and husband Marilyn and Peter Dawe, brother-in-law and wife Bob and Jeannie Haase, and sister-in-law Mary Haase.

In 1978 Jan started her career in insurance, which was a lifelong passion. In 1982, while working for C.J. Kaufman Insurance, she earned her Registered Insurance Brokers of Ontario License. She worked in insurance for 38 years in Tavistock, retiring from Zehr Insurance in 2016, mentoring many young women throughout their own insurance careers.

The family would like to thank the staff at the People Care Centre for their care during this difficult time.

Relatives and friends will be received in the Francis Funeral Home, 77 Woodstock St. N., Tavistock, on Thursday, February 27, from 4-7 p.m. Funeral Mass will be celebrated Friday, February 28, 2025, at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Stratford, at 11 a.m. with a visitation before Mass at 10 a.m. in the church until 10:45am. Reception to follow in the church hall.

In lieu of flowers, donations to the Stratford General Hospital Foundation would be appreciated by the family. Personal condolences can be posted at www.francisfh.ca.

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



The Wilmot-Tavistock
Gazette Weekly Quiz

By Stewart & Sydney Grant

1. What mathematical holiday is celebrated annually on March 14th?
2. What is generally more powerful: a 12-gauge shotgun or a 20-gauge shotgun?
3. What is the northernmost country capital in the world?
4. What is the currency of Japan?
5. Who played Amanda Woodward on the TV show Melrose Place?
6. What version of the iPhone is being released this week?
7. How many U.S. states start with the letter A?
8. What Canadian female singer hit the music charts with a cover of John Denver's hit song "Leaving on a Jet Plane"?
9. What element on the periodic table is represented by the letter K?
10. Who scored the winning goal for Canada at the recent 4 Nations Face-Off final?

Answers found on the classified page

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The Old Gazettes

By Sydney Grant

Slowly but surely, I'm reading through the past pages of the Tavistock Gazette (est. 1895). Within this weekly column I'd like to share with you some of my findings.

February 18-25, 2015, Edition (10 years ago)

The Tavistock Curling Club held their annual Men's Bonspiel on Saturday, Feb. 14, 2015, with eight teams participating, including teams from Kitchener and Platts-ville. The early draw was won by skip Randy Schwartzentruber of the Tavistock club and the later draw by skip Bill Green also of Tavistock.

The official groundbreaking ceremony for the new head office for South Easthope Mutual Insurance Company took place on Friday, Feb. 20, 2015. The ceremonial shovel used was the same shovel used in 1967 for groundbreaking for the existing building. "Building for Tomorrow" was the theme selected by Paul Heinbuch who served as a board chair in 2013 when the South Easthope Mutual board made the decision to build a new office in Tavistock on land the company already owns. This will keep the company on the same corner in downtown Tavistock where it has operated for the last 125 years.

Hickson Central Public School council hosted their second annual Pages 'n' Pyjamas night following a pancake supper prepared by the School's Nutrition Program on Tuesday, Feb. 17, 2015. Close to 100 excited youngsters and their parents turned out to enjoy a meal of pancakes and sausages followed by stories from the rocking chair by two local storytellers: Kathy MacDonald and Kristi McKay-Osinga.

February 20-27, 1985, Edition (40 years ago)

The sky was a brilliant orange early Tuesday morning when firemen arrived at the scene of a devastating blaze at Sippel Motor Sales on Woodstock Street North in Tavistock. The garage was totally engulfed in flames with the ceiling and back wall collapsed by the time Tavistock volunteers were alerted at 2:25 a.m. on a call from a night nurse at the Bonnie Brae nursing

home just across the street. A prevailing westerly wind kept flames to the back of the structure which also caused the Sippel home to become involved.

The Tavistock Peewees eliminated Elora in the first round of playoffs with a 6-3 win on Monday night in Elora. Jaysen Cole scored the only goal of the first period unassisted. In the second period, Danny Burton scored unassisted, the first of a hat trick for him. His second goal came just a few minutes later and was assisted by Dale Brennemen and Chad Ziegler. Mike Haase put the Tavistock team well ahead, scoring unassisted early in the third period to make it 4-0. After two goals from Elora, Jamie McGregor came back with an unassisted goal and Burton with his hat-trick goal put it out of reach for Elora.

The Optimist Club of Tavistock held their annual Oratorical Contest on Thursday, Feb. 21 with 10 contestants in the three age categories. Judges were able to come up with the winners after careful analysis of each presentation. Suzanne Killing, a Grade 5 student at Hickson Central School, was given top marks for her adventures with "My Kitten, Muffin." Chad Zeigler was top speaker in the Grade 7 division with his thoughts on "Baby Fae," the infant who received the baboon-heart transplant. In the Grade 8 group, Alison Still reassured those who may have to wear "Braces." She received top marks for her entertaining, yet informative talk.

February 19-26, 1975, Edition (50 years ago)

It is only within the last eight years that medical students studying to be general practitioners have received any training in family medicine, Dr. Wayne Weston of Tavistock told the annual meeting of the Perth-Huron branch of the Victorian Order of Nurses. "The students don't see the spectrum of disease a family practitioner deals with. They see the one out of 750 patients a doctor may treat who ends up in a hospital. Now, Dr. Weston has students from the University of Western Ontario observe his practice in Tavistock for three-week periods to learn what family medicine is all about.



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CORRECTION:

An omission was made in the photo caption for the photo entitled "Handstitched Quilts keep Tavistock Mennonite ladies busy" on Page 6 of the Feb. 13, 2025

edition of the Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette. The woman second from the right in the photo is Laurene Zehr. We regret any confusion this may have caused.

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The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette SPORTS

PJHL Roundup: Applejacks dominate Dolphins, Braves lead Firebirds

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Correspondent

Wellesley began the Provincial Junior Hockey League's (PJHL) Doherty Division with a focus on team defence but turned in an impressive offensive performance in a first-round sweep of Dorchester.

The Applejacks averaged just over three goals per game in the regular season but upped that to just under five goals per game against the Dolphins. Wellesley took the four games with scores of 6-2, 4-1, 7-3 and 2-1. Connor Doerbecker and Boden White led the offence with six points apiece while Hudson Parker and Dimitri Eleftheriadis chipped in with five each.

Head coach Derek Lebold said he wasn't surprised by his team's firepower.

"We had high expectations heading into the playoffs. I think it was just a matter of coming together. We had good meetings and some good practices in the week leading up. Getting out to a hot start always helps and we got a lot of confidence after burying six goals in that first game, and we never looked back."

He added part of the strategy against Dorchester was to get more pucks on net to create more scoring chances.

"I thought we did a great job of executing, driving pucks wide and getting them low. It allowed us to set up below the hash marks and get pucks back to the high slot. Overall, the guys were shooting pucks whereas in the regular season, they would pass up shots to make an extra move or pass."

The Applejacks were hoping to generate 30 shots on goal but surpassed the 40 mark in three of the four games against the Dolphins. The team wasn't thrilled about the schedule initially with four games in five days, and Lebold added the goal was to get the series done as soon as possible, meaning a good rest period before the second round.

Doerbecker and White have six points to lead Wellesley while Hudson Parker and Dimitri Eleftheriadis have five each. Seventeen Applejacks found the score-sheet in the series.

Surprisingly, Braves lead Firebirds

Tavistock has taken a 2-1 series lead

over New Hamburg and they've done it with a pair of road victories.

The Braves took Game 3 by a score of 5-3 on Monday. The two teams traded goals until Nicholas Hambly and Blair Stokes scored goals 43 seconds apart in the third period to put Tavistock ahead for good. Owen Sculthorp pulled the Firebirds to within a single goal with three minutes left in regulation, but Hambly scored on an empty net with one second on the clock.

The Braves took Game 1 by a 4-3 score, but the Firebirds rebounded with a 5-1 win in Tavistock to even the series.

Braves general manager Brent Lange said the entire team is contributing.

"We have won a couple big games on the road. We're playing as a team and everyone is buying into their roles. We have guys on all four lines that can score, along with the six defencemen. We have been battling hard, blocking shots and doing all the small things we need to do. It's paying off."

Lange also gave credit to goalie Lander Hartley, who has played every minute of the series. He added the Firebirds will be



ready for Game 4 in Tavistock (Feb. 26 after the Gazette's deadline) and the Braves will need to come out harder than Game 2 at home. Game 5 is set for Friday in New Hamburg.

"We didn't have a great start at home last Saturday. If we want to keep the good vibes going, we need all 18 guys and our goalies rolling, and now they know what it will take. One shift, one period and one game at a time. We will have our guys ready to go Wednesday night."

Royals season comes to an end

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Correspondent

They fired everything they had against a hot goalie but, in the end, the hot goalie proved to be the difference.

Tavistock bowed out of the Ontario Elite Hockey League (OEHL) playoffs in a five-game, first-round series despite having home-ice advantage. Tavistock outshot Saugeen Shores 44-25 in Game 5 including a 17-7 shooting record in the third period.

After a scoreless first, the visiting Winterhawks jumped out to a 2-0 lead with 2:45 remaining in the second period, but Nicholas Thibodeau and Tyler Reid scored late to give the Royals momentum heading into the locker room. Saugeen Shores would again pot the first two goals of the third period to take a 4-2 lead. Matt Zilke gave the Royals a chance with a goal just inside the one-minute mark but the Winterhawks would score an empty net marker to seal the win.

Tavistock battered Saugeen goalie Clayton Fritsch with nearly 140 shots on goal in the last three games of the series, but the 34-year-old from Desboro was the difference in the series. Fritsch had a mediocre regular season with a 4.14 goals against average and a .849 save percentage in 13 games but, during the series, posted

a 3.21 goals against with a .921 save percentage while playing all five games.

Erik Robichaud led the Royals with seven points in the series while Drew Gerth and Sean Kienapple added five each.

"(Fritsch) was definitely a big factor in the series," said coach Tyson Zehr. "We threw everything we had at him, especially in that third period with 17 shots, but he stood tall. He made key saves at crucial moments in each game and, in a series this tight, those big-time performances swing the outcome."

Despite the early postseason loss, Zehr explained he couldn't be prouder of his team's competitiveness.

"The effort from our group was outstanding right to the final buzzer. There's a lot of pride in that room. People might have their perceptions about the league, but anyone who watches these games knows how hard these guys battle. It's fast, physical hockey and every player is out there competing to win."

Zehr added it is an absolute privilege to coach the team.

"This is a group that works hard, pushes each other and sticks together. The mix of experience and young talent created a great dynamic in the room and it made for a special season. It's clear that it means something to put on that Royals jersey and the guys showed that with the way they

fought all series."

At the end of every season in senior hockey, teams take stock of who's staying and who's deciding to hang up the skates. Zehr explained the search for new talent is already underway and he's confident the team will compete again next season.

"Some guys are thinking about their next steps, but those decisions will come over the next few weeks. Recruiting starts right away. We're really close and it's about adding a few pieces here and there to build on the strong core we already have. The goal is to keep pushing forward and putting ourselves in a position to win."

A successful on-ice product can't happen without an equal or better performance off the ice. Team president Kyle Wynette said the team's volunteers deserve a lot of credit.

"While not the result we had hoped for on ice, I'm proud of how our executive worked together this past year to keep Royals hockey alive in the community. It's because we all care so much that a quarterfinal exit stings so much. I think we all believed we were going to make it through to the semi-finals, but the hockey gods had other plans for us this year."

He added the executive grew this year, adding Grant Meadows, Marti van Griensven, Tracy Medhurst and Chris Traynor.



"As the saying goes, many hands make light work. Each new member brings a new, unique skillset and experience that helps strengthen our team and I'm looking forward to working with them all over the offseason."

Zehr also took time to thank the team's many sponsors.

"Your support all season has been incredible. The energy you bring fuels our team and the backing from our sponsors makes it all possible. It means a lot to the players, coaches and everyone involved with the Royals. We're proud to represent this community and we're already looking forward to next season."

Jersey Ontario 2025 annual meeting in Stratford deemed a huge success

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

Jersey Cattle Breeders from across Ontario were in Stratford, Perth and Huron counties Feb. 21 and 22 attending the Jersey Ontario annual meeting.

The meeting itself took place at Stratford's Arden Park Hotel. Over 200 interested Jersey enthusiasts toured farms in both Perth and Huron counties with a bus and lunch provided by East-Gen on the Friday ahead of the Saturday annual meeting.

Those included Vandeholm Jerseys on the farm of Derek Van De Walle, west of St. Marys, where they milk in a new, free-stall facility with a new robotic-milking system.

The next stop was at the famous Paul-Lor Jerseys farm near Clinton, where visitors were able to view the many all-Canadian Jersey cows, heifers and calves that this highly classified herd of Paul, Lorraine and Janine Franken has become known for.

The next stop was the well-established herd of LowRich Jerseys, owned by Jerrett and Chelsey Skinner and family, southeast of Mitchell. This herd

was established many years ago by Jerrett Skinner's grandfather and grandmother, Ron and Verlyn Skinner, on their farm between Mitchell and Russeldale. Their two sons, Lowell and Richard Skinner, along with their wives, established LowRich Jerseys, which is now under the ownership of the third generation of Skinners.

The annual meeting was organized by members of the Perth-Huron Jersey Club, which was established in the 1940s by Jersey breeders in both counties.

Heather Peters was the Jersey Ontario president in 2024-2025. She farms with her husband, Dennis, and children Hailey and Elliott, along with parents Brian and Wendy Anderson.

Their long-established Athlone herd along with both their registered Jerseys and Holsteins are now milked robotically on the Sebastopol road (Perth Line 29) between Tavistock and Stratford in Perth East's South Easthope Township.

Peters, who chaired the meeting, said the weekend was a huge success with positive discussions on Jersey Ontario programs, and many new ideas brought to

the floor to be discussed by this year's board of directors. She was glad to see so many young families at the meeting.

Jersey Ontario secretary-manager Bev Spriel reported the newly elected Jersey Ontario president is Thomas Judd from the Brant-Norfolk-Golden-Horseshoe club, and farms near Simcoe.

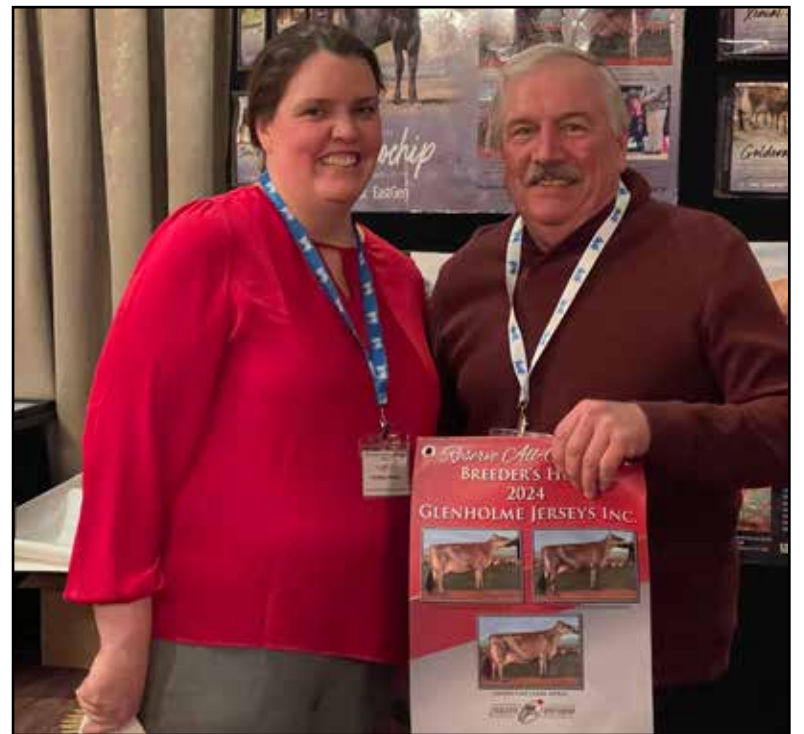
The provincial executive includes Eric Baumann from the Leeds-Grenville club, Cathy Mason from the Oxford County club, John Free from the Grand River club and Jen Fraser from the St. Laurence club.

The newly elected Perth-Huron director is Brodhagen's Pete Kaufman.

Jersey Ontario has also named two youth directors, Kyla Lewis in the west and Rachel Tamlin in the east.

Previous Perth-Huron Jersey Ontario presidents include Lowell Skinner (2013), Virginia Warwick (2001), Hans Boonstoppel (1993) and Jack Van Egmond (1979). The first president in 1946 was Jack Pawley.

The Jersey Ontario annual meeting also included production awards handed out. The family



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Heather Peters, Jersey Ontario president for 2024-2025, presents long-time breeder Bruce Mellow of Glenholme Jerseys with the Reserve All-Ontario Breeders Herd award. Mellow, along with his sister, Carol, and Nephew, Curtis, operates their show-winning Jersey herd near Punkey-Doodles Corner west of New Hamburg.

of Tyler and Emily Hendriks of Brucefield came home with most of the trophies.

One of their cows, Hendriks Westport Tracey 918 with her 15,897 kilograms of milk and 866 kilograms of fat, won many of the trophies because of her very high production in 1 lactation as

a senior three year old.

She won the Skinner perpetual trophy for the highest milk yield of 15,897 kilograms, the Mellow perpetual trophy for the highest protein yield with 582 kilograms, and the Grantclare perpetual trophy for the highest fat and protein BCA at 1,060 points.



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Waterloo Region launches new-and-improved EngageWR website

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Region of Waterloo and its six member municipalities are hoping to better engage area residents with municipal projects and initiatives following the recent launch of the region's new-and-improved EngageWR online public-engagement platform.

Since its inception in 2018, EngageWR has helped the municipalities of Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo, Wilmot, Woolwich and the Region of Waterloo communicate and engage with the people they serve. The EngageWR collaborative has now welcomed Wellesley township to this partnership and the new platform is

intended to provide more opportunities for feedback and inclusive participation, giving residents more ways to connect with their local governments.

"The Township of Wellesley is pleased to be joining the new EngageWR platform," said Wellesley executive administrator Samantha Sernoski. "We're excited to engage with residents in this new way and hope the platform becomes a valuable resource for staying informed about current and ongoing projects and initiatives within our township."

"We encourage the public to use our EngageWR page to learn about new projects and to follow updates and participate when appropriate. At the Township of Wellesley, we believe that by sharing ideas

and discussing key issues, we can work together to create positive change."

The new EngageWR platform features a fresh design with a look and feel familiar to users. The platform URL, www.engage-wr.ca, remains the same and current users can access the new site without needing to create a new account. Additionally, all saved project links remain intact.

New features of the platform include:

- Enhanced interactivity: more ways to engage with projects and provide feedback.
- Personalized notifications: users can now select their preferences for notifications based on project categories and municipalities of interest.
- Improved accessibility: the platform

is now designed to ensure that all users, regardless of ability or tech savvy, can easily navigate and participate.

"The Township of Wilmot is thrilled to offer this upgraded platform, which is part of our ongoing commitment to transparency," Wilmot communications specialist Brett O'Reilly said. "EngageWR opens the door to enhanced, two-way communication and we look forward to connecting with more residents, more often."

"We encourage you to explore current and past projects, and to subscribe to the site to be notified when new initiatives are added. By registering and sharing your feedback, you can help to shape the future of Wilmot."

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Nith Valley Ecoboosters to host webinar focused on transitioning the home from gas to electricity

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Nith Valley Ecoboosters and Reep Green Solutions are looking to educate area residents on why and how they should transition their home from natural gas to electricity.

The two organizations are hosting a free webinar April 1 from 7-9 p.m. called Getting Off Gas – Electrify Your Home featuring keynote speaker Heather McDiarmid, a climate consultant and the founder of McDiarmid Climate Consulting who specializes in decarbonizing single-family homes.

“I’m going to be going through some of the reasons people might want to electrify,” McDiarmid said. “And it’s not just about reducing emissions, though I would hope that is a motivator for many. It’s also about improving homes and reducing the amount of energy that the home consumes.”

Buildings are Canada’s third-largest source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Much of that comes from the natural gas, oil and propane used to provide space and water heating, but other equipment in and around the home also uses fossil fuels, such as gas stoves, fireplaces, lawnmowers and generators. According to McDiarmid, electrifying this equipment can significantly lower a home’s GHG emissions while providing many other benefits.

Not only is McDiarmid a climate consultant, she has also personally gone through the process of fully electrifying her home, allowing her to share her personal experience with the process and with using electric appliances like an induction stove and a heat pump.

During the webinar, she said she will present information on a number of topics, including:

- problems associated with the use of natural gas;

- heat pumps and other electric alternatives to gas furnaces, water heaters, stoves, dryers and fireplaces.
- the minimum specs someone should look for in these alternatives; and
- information about the federal interest-free-loan program and the new Ontario energy efficiency rebate program.

“The electric options are often simply just better,” McDiarmid said. “... Probably most people have heard about heat pumps; you can replace your gas furnace with a heat pump. We’ll talk about heat pumps, but it’s not the only thing that you can electrify. There’s your cooking; I adopted an induction cooktop over 10 years ago and there is no way I’m going back to gas. It is so much better.

“... Electric dryers don’t require a vent to the outside. Isn’t that amazing? That changes a whole bunch of things. It means renters can put in a dryer into their apartment. There are some that will plug into a regular outlet and no vent to the outside. That opens up possibilities for where you can put it, and you don’t have to put this great big hole to the outside that, of course, is going to be leaking heat in the middle of the wintertime.”

McDiarmid will also direct webinar participants to Canada’s Home Electrification Toolkit at buildingdecarbonization.ca/canadas-home-electrification-toolkit/, a virtual toolkit with information and resources on electrifying the home she prepared for the Building Decarbonization Alliance.

“I’ll talk a bit about that and what’s in it and what people can access there, sort of helping people to do their research on the various topics of discussion,” McDiarmid said. “It goes into these things in far more detail than I have time to talk about at this workshop.”

For more information on the webinar and to register, visit nvecoboosters.com/index.php/services/.

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(CONTRIBUTED IMAGE)

The Nith Valley Ecoboosters and Reep Green Solutions is hosting a free webinar April 1, Getting Off Gas – Electrify Your Home.

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Local fall-fair ambassadors attend recent OAAS Convention

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

The Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies (OAAS) held its annual convention Feb. 22-23 in Toronto, which saw 75 fall-fair ambassadors from across the province, including those from Wellesley, Wilmot and Tavistock, represent their hometowns.

The convention is held every year and is a chance for agricultural society representatives, directors and fair ambassadors from across the province to get together and become involved in programs that will enhance their local fairs and societies.

OAAS sets up programs at the convention

to not only educate attendees, but also prepare them for some of the events they will be attending to promote their agricultural societies and their different fairs throughout the year in Ontario.

One of the program speakers this year was New Hamburg's own Stephanie Szusz, who led an interesting financial-stability workshop to help fairs to be successful and remain financially viable in the future.

They were also entertained in the evening with a showcase of events and entertainment agriculture societies might be able to host at their fairs to entertain fairgoers.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

A photo of all 75 fall-fair ambassadors from across Ontario who represented their individual agricultural societies at last weekend's Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies (OAAS) Convention in Toronto.



Pictured are all the District 7 fall-fair ambassadors. Pictured from left are Madelynn Cressman (New Hamburg), Lily Pullen (Tavistock), Natalie Dodd (Embro), Emily Younghans (Fergus), Kara Sickle (Paris), Nikki Indtanouvk (Erin), Hunter Jamieson (Six Nations), Katie Musselman (Wellesley) and Haylie Smith (Arthur).



Pictured from left are area fall-fair ambassadors at the OAAS convention in Toronto: New Hamburg Fall Fair ambassador Madilynn Cressman, Tavistock Fall Fair ambassador Lily Pullen and Wellesley Fall Fair ambassador Katie Musselman.



Wellesley Fall Fair ambassador Katie Musselman was presented with the youth of the month award at the OAAS Convention in Toronto over the weekend for all her work in the Wellesley community.

Though it's still too cold to ride their tractors, North Easthope Antique Tractor Club members meet for first time in 2025

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

With spring just around the corner, North Easthope Antique Tractor Club (NEAT) members assembled at the Elgin Missionary Church, on the northwest edge of Stratford, and were served a full breakfast, to help in fundraising for church member activities.

Every week this summer, beginning in May when the weather allows, the members with their antique tractors, who now number over 80, tour many parts of Perth, Oxford and Waterloo counties with their machines from an earlier era. At the same time, they help area groups in their fundraising efforts.

With membership climbing over the last number of years, anyone interested in joining NEAT can contact president John Mohr at 519-662-2264, vice president Murray Gingerich at 519-581-8862, Ron Neeb at 519-801-5747, Wayne Gerber at 519-275-0994, or any other club member.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Pictured are the breakfast club members at Elgin Missionary Church with executive members of the North Easthope Antique Tractor Club. Pictured in front kneeling, from left, are Marilyn Mills and Dorothy Schultz. In the first row, from left, are Wayne Berry, Ruth Noble, Dave Mills, Marlene Robinson, Karen Berry, Faye Docking and Guy Coneybeare. In the back row, from left, are tractor club executive members Kevin Winhold, John Schyff, Wayne Gerber, Gid Jantzi, John Mohr, Ron Neeb, Murray Gingerich and Henry Wagler.

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ONTARIO PC

OPINION: Canada's pride was on the line in recent hockey faceoff with the U.S.

ERIN PARSONS

Gazette graphic designer

As I sat watching Team Canada battle for gold in the NHL 4 Nations Face-Off, my children couldn't understand why I was so emotionally invested. I told them it was more than just a hockey game, it was about pride. It was about national respect. It was about showing the world who we are as Canadians, especially at a time when our closest neighbour's leader has questioned and diminished that respect on the world stage.

For a moment, when Connor McDavid scored that overtime goal and Team Canada stood victorious, it felt like all was right with the world. No matter our political beliefs, backgrounds, or differences, we were united in pride and celebration. Hockey has

always had a way of bringing Canadians together, and on that night, we were one team, one nation, standing together.

I only hope we can carry that feeling forward. While the United States seems more divided than ever, we have an opportunity to put our differences aside and work toward making Canada stronger.

Disagreements are natural and are part of a healthy democracy, but when we stop listening and start insulting each other, that's when progress ends and conflict begins.

We all have something to contribute and if we work together with the same determination, teamwork and unity that Team Canada showed in that gold-medal game, there is nothing we cannot accomplish.



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SHOW US YOUR WILMOT



(PHOTO COURTESY OF SHOW US YOUR WILMOT)
Show Us Your Wilmot Facebook group member Cheryl WG recently shared this photo of an icicle stretching from her porch roof to the floor. How chilling!

Gazette Puzzles

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Stressbusting tips to celebrate Heart Month

HEAPS OF HEALTHY TIPS

By Mercedes Kay Gold



Life is an emotional rollercoaster. What's stressful for one person may not be for another. How we handle obstacles is based on past experiences but the key is how we react.

Managing stress is crucial to overall health. An anxiety-ridden or, worse yet, a traumatic situation impacts the body immediately. Our body releases adrenaline, causing breathing and heart rate to soar, as well as blood pressure to increase. The hormone cortisol causes a spike in blood sugar, slowing down digestion and depleting vitamin C.

Each time we feel anxious and overwhelmed, we shift into survivor mode. The body isn't savvy and can't decipher the level of stress, making even the smallest event effect the body negatively. Chronic stress leads to high blood pressure, increasing your odds for medication and a heart attack or stroke.

February, Canada's Heart Month, is a great time to remind readers that while exercise and healthy whole foods are heart

happiness all year, managing stress is imperative.

Stress is hard to avoid in today's overpriced and fast-paced world but resilience helps us thrive. Taking a deep breath, walking away and allowing time to process minimizes reactivity. Words and actions can never be retracted. No one can make you say or do anything.

How do you deal with stress? Alcohol, smoking, drugs and stopping prescribed medications increases inflammation in the body and, over time, the risk of heart disease. Good habits are of the utmost importance, leading to an active, pain- and disease-free life.

Love yourself inside and out. Find other ways to support the body whole-istically and manage the ups and downs of daily pressure.

1. Massage and reflexology are body bliss. Nonsexual touching causes the brain to release the hormone, oxytocin, and stimulates other happy hormones

such as cortisol and norepinephrine to flood the body. Feeling happier and less anxious is a byproduct of these neurochemical changes. Research suggests being touched can lower your heart rate and blood pressure. Cupping and acupuncture relieve inflammation, the root of all disease.

2. The digestion system is crucial for absorbing nutrients from the food we eat and is connected to cardiovascular health. A microbiome imbalance leads to inflammation. The power of probiotics is real. Capsules or fermented foods lead to a trouble-free tummy. Happy gut, happy life!
3. Invest in a fish tank. According to Dr. Allan Schwartz, PhD, "Watching fish swim back is stress and anxiety reducing. The gurgling sound of the bubbles add to the therapeutic effect of looking at the tank. Also relaxing are the colors of both the fish and the background of the tank." Studies suggest watching fish is linked to reducing stress. Does this explain the aquariums in all dental and doctor offices? I think so!
4. Owning a pet, any pet, from cat to bird to iguana and even a snake is linked to lowered levels of the stress hormone, cortisol. Walking a dog is a great form of exercise and a cure for loneliness. Dogs support war veterans suffering from PTSD and the elderly in assisted living. It's not uncommon to see emotional service dogs out and about daily, whether in the mall, on a plane or even on a cruise ship. Horse therapy is also growing in popularity. Book some fabulous farm time and experience alpacas, goats and mini-Highland cows locally at Udderly Ridiculous Farm, makers of the insanely delicious goat ice cream.
5. Take the stress out of daily routines by carpooling, healthy meal prepping and making to-do lists.
6. Set boundaries and stick to them. Say no. Be kind to yourself and don't take on more than you can handle.
7. Have a regular nighttime regime. Take an Epson-salts



(MERCEDES KAY GOLD PHOTO)

Cooking for yourself or loved ones is another great way to reduce stress and eat healthily.

8. This holistic princess is hooked on red-light therapy for reducing inflammation, promoting relaxation and inducing a great night's sleep. Self-care is not selfish and New Hamburg is home to the Zen Den Light and Healing, a perfect first step for anyone looking to take

a more holistic approach to living.

9. Escape with a book at the local library or join a book club.
10. Spend time baking or cooking for yourself or loved ones.

There are lots of ways to lower stress throughout the body. A gentle reminder, once again: please kick caffeine, alcohol, smoking and all the processed foods. Jump onto the health train and find time for sunshine and fresh air. Protect your peace, take a big inhale, exhale and pour a glass of coconut water, natures blood-pressure regulator.

Happy Heart Month!



There are many ways to reduce stress daily. Simple owning a pet, be it cat, dog or iguana, is a proven stress reliever.



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Exploring the history of boating in the Thousand Islands

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO

By Paul Knowles



There are lots of popular attractions in the town of Gananoque – a fine summer theatre, good restaurants, museums and spectacular helicopter rides, among others – but there is no doubt the town they call “Gan” is really all about the water, specifically the waters of the St. Lawrence River.

Gananoque is near the headwaters of the St. Lawrence. I say near because it's not entirely clear where Lake Ontario ends and the river begins – somewhere near Kingston and Wolfe Island, according to the experts.

Gan is about 30 kilometres from Kingston, so we know for sure the waters flowing beside Gananoque are the mighty St. Lawrence and Gan is one of the key launch points for exploration of the Thousand Islands, the world-famous aquatic region that stretches through about 130 kilometres of the St. Lawrence, spanning the international border between Canada and the United States.

So, it's very appropriate that two of the premier attractions in Gananoque take place on the river: the Thousand Island boat cruises offered by City Cruises and the Thousand Islands Boat Museum.

For any fan of boating or history, the Boat Museum is not to be missed. Located right on the Gananoque waterfront, it's a relatively new attraction. The museum opened only ten years ago, and its most intriguing feature – a Thousand Islands boat tour on a classic heritage motorboat – has only been happening for three years.

The museum has four buildings including a boatbuilding shop, a children's activity centre and exhibit galleries, but the highlight is the boat house, which opened in 2023, the result of a five-year, \$5-million project. In the boat house are dozens of historic boats, all afloat at docks where visitors can get up close and personal with nautical heritage.

The Thousand Islands Boat Museum, a non-profit organization, has a full-time staff of two as well as a part-time facilities manager and summer students.

But the facility is a labour of love for a lot of volunteers, from the 14 members of the board of directors to an army of hands-on fans of the project.

The current collection of antique boats includes three-dozen heritage craft, from the 52-foot Windswept III (built by Muskoka-based Ditchburn in 1935) to the 12-foot Jelly Roll, a 1936 lapstrake sailing dinghy built by Hans Nichol森 in Kingston. Heritage boats are on display both at the docks and in an exhibition building.

There is a special emphasis on local boat-builders, of which there were quite a few in Gananoque. Currently on display are five boats built by Charlie Cliffe, whose company, Cliffe Craft, has built over 2,500 watercraft during his 67-year career.

The museum plans to feature other local boat-builders in future exhibitions – names like Andress, Malette, Gerrard and Gilbert.

There are several unique boats on display, including one commissioned by a man named Gerard who wanted a boat that could easily be driven by his wife. The boat on display, the Ribuki, is one of only seven built to those specifications.

But while the boats on display make for a fascinating visit, the highlight for many is undoubtedly the opportunity to get out on the water in a heritage boat. One option is a cruise on the Little Toot, the museum's steel tugboat. This cruise carries passengers along the waterfront, passing under a historic swing bridge into the mouth of the Gananoque River (the second river that touches the town), and also circling some nearby islands.



The Limit Up tour includes great views of classic Thousand Islands cottages.

Our 30-minute cruise was aboard the Limit Up, a stunningly beautiful, classic, polished-mahogany motorboat. We boated around several privately held islands of the Thousand Islands, getting a first-hand look at the old-style luxury of these historic vacation retreats. Limit Up cruises carry only about six passengers.

By the way, are there really 1,000 islands in the Thousand Islands? Well, the folks at the museum will tell you there are actually more – 1,864 to be exact. That's based on one of several differing definitions of an island – the Gan museum people use the criteria that an island has to have two living trees growing on it, and has to have at least one square foot of land that remains above water year-round. Therefore, they admit the actual total could change.

An internet search yields the same number from most sites, though the Canadian Encyclopedia's total is significantly lower at 1,149. So, even by the most conservative estimate, there are more than a thousand islands in the Thousand Islands.

But nobody is lobbying to change the name, and local attractions – like the Thousand Islands Boat Museum – are sticking with the underestimate.

The Thousand Islands Boat Museum is open from the long weekend in May through Thanksgiving. Admission – amazingly – is by donation, although there is, of course, a charge for the boat cruises; the Limit Up cruise costs \$60 per person and Little Toot, a more leisurely 30-minute ride, costs \$25 or \$20 for children.

Both provide a unique way to experience the unique community that is Gananoque and the Thousand Islands, the gateway to the St. Lawrence.

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



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

The Limit Up, the classic boat used for visitor tours of the Thousand Islands.



A view of the Boat Museum from the St. Lawrence River.



Summer student Hannah Arsenault, whose great grandmother, Avis Bateman, owned the boat shown, dubbed the Ribuki.



The boats are kept in their natural habitat – on the water.



A small shop and exhibition space that is part of the four-building museum site.

The risk of assumptions and expectations

INTERFAITH COUNSELLING CENTRE

By John Dinner

I was having lunch the other day with boyhood friends who go back more than half a century. We were sharing a meal after visiting another friend who is now living in a long-term care facility as his dementia steals more of his life in the lead up to his 67th birthday. There wasn't much communication as one might normally define it. I'm not at all certain our friend knew who we were or why we were there.

But as we played some music from our teenage years and rehashed stories of

which our friend played a leading role, there were what I perceived to be brief but rich moments of connection – a sudden wide-eyed moment indicating that, just perhaps, a memory had broken through what otherwise seemed to be an absence of the person with whom we had experienced so much as we navigated those challenging adolescent years.

The discussion that followed during lunch underscored the many assumptions we had carried with us over the decades, along with our expectations about how life would be fair to all and would play out swimmingly according to some ill-defined plan.

The four of us came from contrasting backgrounds and three different countries, just as remarkable as the circumstances that brought us altogether in the same place as newly minted teenagers. After six years, we resumed our disparate ways, pursuing vocations in sales, journalism, prison chaplaincy and acting. Three of us are now tripping over retirement plans,

while one of us is facing a much narrower and, quite likely, a shorter-term fate.

The assumptions and expectations we carried with us as we edged towards adulthood were informed by the limited and rather curated experiences and from a context that bore little resemblance to what the bigger world held in store.

More than 50 years later, this brief but rather profound encounter with old friends in a clinical setting and later over an unmemorable meal provided a poignant reminder of how wonderful and how hard life can be all at the same time. None of us gets a pass on suffering and many of us come to realize the wonder of life comes in those unplanned, sacred moments when we encounter others at their most vulnerable and genuine.

Thankfully, those initial assumptions and expectations were filtered and rearranged by a world that has its own unpredictable timeline and ever-evolving agendas. While our culture prompts us to pursue lives of certainty, control, con-

venience and comfort, our stories are all much richer by the absence of the very things to which we are encouraged to aspire. Their absence resulted in our small group possessing divergent life views and experiences as each of us toys with our individual "best before dates."

One thing each of us knows for sure is, had our expectations and assumptions about life played out as assumed, they would have robbed us of those couple of hours when we were given the opportunity to be more fully human to our friend and to each other. Even in the midst of the hardness of life, it delivered something that was really quite wonderful, even in the absence of certainty, control, convenience and comfort.

John Dinner is a registered psychotherapist who works as a counsellor at Interfaith Counselling Centre in New Hamburg. He is thankful for the relationships that jilt him out of his assumptions and expectations about life.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Harris picks and chooses where and how he will debate fellow candidates

This letter was submitted before the Feb. 24 New Hamburg Board of Trade provincial-candidates debate.

Last week, we held a candidates' meeting here in our community of 350-plus voters in Baden and, surprise, PC candidate Mike Harris didn't feel it was worth his while to attend. I'm informed that he has made a habit of this and has failed to appear in at least seven other election events across the riding. One exception will be the Feb. 24 meeting at the New Hamburg Board of Trade and we know he has set some stipulations on the format for that meeting.

Had he come to our meeting, he would have heard from a sizeable number of residents about their bad experiences trying to get in touch with, or get some assistance from, his constituency office.

It seems he doesn't feel it's important to attend to the needs of his constituents, which I thought was the primary task of a member of provincial parliament. As well, he would have been treated to a list of complaints about his party's policies on several fronts. Seems he would prefer to just ignore us.

Kitchener-Conestoga needs a representative who truly believes in looking after their constituents, not someone who was parachuted in here some time ago and has demonstrated no real connection with the people here.

Let's make sure this inattention to our needs stops on Feb. 27.

Donald Kasta,
Baden

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Region needs to get its priorities straight as regional workers strike looms

Dear Editor,

With a potential strike by regional workers in CUPE 1656 looming on March 3, it's crucial to reassess the region's priorities. The workers who clear our roads, manage waste and ensure our drinking water is safe – let's not forget the tragedy in Walkerton – are being undervalued and denied the support they deserve.

Meanwhile, the region is using taxpayer dollars to purchase rare prime farmland in Wilmot Township, even resorting to threats of expropriation if landowners refuse to sell – not to mention the destruction of crops before harvest. How does this make sense? Why are we neglecting

the workers who keep us safe while disrupting the very land that feeds us?

It's time for leadership that prioritizes people over politics, food over pavement, and safety over reckless spending. We must demand accountability and fair treatment for the workers and farmers who sustain our region.

Chair Redman, Mayor Salonen, the time for excuses is over. Stand with workers, protect our resources. It's time for action.

Angie Hallman,
New Dundee

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Perceptions shift as Russia-Ukraine war continues past three-year mark

FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

By Stewart Grant



I looked back this week at my editorial from three years ago, during the early days of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"... The brave response of the Ukrainians in the first days of the invasion inspired the world, and united the world," I wrote.

Recall those first moments when the 13 defenders of Ukraine's Snake Island defiantly set the tone, by not surrendering to the threat of an imminent bomb attack but instead holding their outpost with a defiant response: "Russian warship ... go f*** yourself."

This message was in concert with the resilient actions of

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Refusing offers of a safe haven outside of the country, he stayed with his people. He stayed to lead them, to inspire them.

"When you will be attacking us, you will see our faces, not our backs, but our faces," Zelenskyy said within his first-day address.

Recall that in late February 2022, it seemed the entire world was with Ukraine. A flurry of economic sanctions against Russia were established while Ukraine's blue-and-yellow flag was raised everywhere in solidarity.

Three years later, the war con-

tinues. Ukraine has not been defeated but cracks are beginning to show in worldwide support. As always, the United States is the powerful straw that stirs the drink.

Earlier this week, the United States made a powerful and shocking statement regarding their current position when they voted at the UN General Assembly against a resolution which condemned Russia's actions and supported Ukraine's territorial integrity. Instead, the Americans voted on the same side as Russia, North Korea, Sudan, Hungary, Israel and Belarus, and on the opposite side of its traditional European allies. Despite the American vote, the UN resolution passed by a measure of 93 in favour and 17 against, with 65 countries abstaining.

Canada's current administration showed their support of Ukraine by supporting the UN resolution, and this sentiment was echoed by Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre, who took a break from slamming the Liberals to write a

thoughtful Facebook post reflecting on the last three years of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

He wrote, "Just hours after the full-scale war began, I told a rally of Ottawa's Ukrainian community that 'Canadians stand in total solidarity with you, and we will be by your side throughout.' Three years later, our dedication has not wavered. Canada's common-sense Conservatives remain committed to getting Ukraine the weapons they need – and to promoting Canadian oil and gas as an alternative to Putin's energy blackmail. And I want to be completely clear, Conservatives believe that no process for peace negotiations should happen without Ukraine being part of these discussions. Ukrainians have the right to determine their own future."

Poilievre's post, which was most likely to be read by his 814,000 Facebook followers, quickly received over 5,000 comments, of which no consensus was apparent. Many of the louder rebuttals were from voters

who were unable to reconcile his Trump-style "Canada First" slogan with this show of support for another democratic nation.

"What has Ukraine ever done for us?" was among the most concise of the contrasting comments.

There isn't space in this editorial to dig into the opinions on both sides, so if you are interested in seeing the range of opposing views, visit Poilievre's Facebook page, scroll past the posts obsessing about Mark Carney, and find the Feb. 24 post that I'm referring to. It's quite something.

What you'll find is the supporters of the Conservative Party are very much divided on this important issue. As the federal election draws nearer, it will be interesting to see how the party deals with this difference of views and whether it will be able to hold sufficient support to stave off the resurgent Trudeau-free Liberal Party.

As the Russia-Ukraine conflict shows, a lot can change with the passage of time.

Property tax rates and municipal levies, what is the difference?

CIVICS 101

By Nathan Bean



In the last column, we discussed MPAC and property assessments. This week, we will discuss another piece of the municipal property tax puzzle — the municipal levy.

Before we go any further, let's define a key term: the levy. Simply put, a levy is the total amount of money a municipality needs to function. Think of it as the community's shared bill for essential services like roads, parks and emergency services.

Municipalities can generate revenue in a variety of ways, including grants, service charges, investment dividends, or everyone's favourite, taxes. When municipal expenses rise — whether due to inflation, salary increases, or new projects — so does the municipal levy.

The tax rate is calculated by dividing the total municipal levy by the total MPAC-assessed value of all properties. This means any increase in the levy usually leads to higher property taxes.

However, the municipal levy

is more complex than this basic formula suggests. In lower-tier municipalities like Wilmot Township and East-Zorra Tavistock, property taxes are made up of three parts: the local tax rate, the regional tax rate and the education tax rate. Let's break this down further.

First off, there are three types of municipalities in Ontario. Single-tier municipalities operate directly under the province without an additional layer of local government. Examples include The City of Toronto and the City of Ottawa. You may be surprised to learn the quaint Town of St. Marys also holds single-tier status!

More commonly, municipalities operate in a two-tier system. In this setup, there is an upper-tier municipality that covers a large geographic area and multiple lower-tier municipalities. Wilmot and East-Zorra Tavistock function within a two-tier system, working alongside their upper-ti-

er municipalities: the Region of Waterloo and Oxford County, respectively.

Upper tiers are responsible for large regional roadways, social services and a county/regionwide paramedic service. Lower tiers, by contrast, handle local roads, fire services, land-use planning and tax collection. While some responsibilities overlap, each level of government has its own budget and tax rate, forming the municipal portion of property taxes.

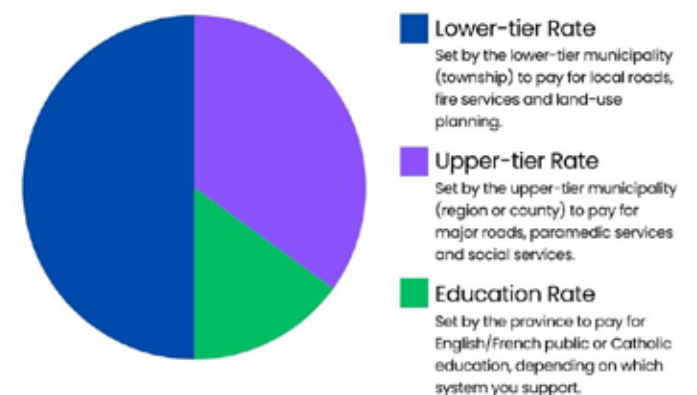
The final piece of this property tax pie is the provincial education rate. This rate is established by the provincial legislature and is applied equally across every residential property in Ontario. The power to set an education tax rate was stripped from local school boards in 1997 to create a fairer education system.

Schools in rich communities would no longer have a leg up on disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Funds would instead be collected and redistributed by the province to ensure every student received the same quality of education.

The education tax rate is applied differently to commercial and agricultural properties. For instance, in 2025, the residential education tax rate will be 0.153 per cent, while farmland will be taxed at a lower rate of 0.03825 per cent.

The total tax rate applied to

MUNICIPAL PROPERTY TAX RATE



(CONTRIBUTED IMAGE)

A pie chart showing the three components of the municipal property tax rate.

your property is the sum of the upper-tier rate, lower-tier rate and provincial education rate. This number, multiplied by the MPAC-assessed value of your land, will equal the dollar amount you owe in annual taxes.

Oh boy, that was a lot! If you have made it this far, I commend your perseverance. Understanding our government can be unnecessarily complicated, but we must understand it. We can't make informed decisions without properly comprehending who does what and why.

We all know it wouldn't make sense to ask a member of parliament about garbage collection or discuss national defense policy with your mayor. But do you

know who to contact when ambulance response times increase or your road needs repairs?

By understanding how distinct levels of government function, we can ensure our concerns are directed to the right people and that we actively participate in decisions that shape our communities.

As Sir Francis Bacon wrote in 1597, "Knowledge is power."

I would like to apologize for a miscommunication in the last article in this column. When referring to the taxes applied to the fictional municipality of Gazetteland, I misidentified the tax rate of 0.01 as a percentage instead of a rate. A rate of 0.01 is 1.00 per cent.

OPINION: The waters have moved on

DIANE SASEK

Gazette Contributor

I am not a politician, nor do I claim to understand every nuance of the political, economic, or social landscape. But I am a Canadian and, like many of my fellow countrymen and women, I have thoughts and feelings about the direction our nation is heading.

Growing up, we all had a favorite swimming hole – a place that held our fondest childhood memories. The water was clear, the surroundings familiar and it was a place of comfort, adventure and reflection. But the waters of time move on and while the swimming hole may still exist, the landscape around it has changed. The water has shifted its course and what was once a place of purity and freedom now feels different, altered by forces beyond our control.

So too, Canada has changed. Once a nation that stood proudly on principles of prosperity, self-sufficiency and opportunity, we now find ourselves teetering on the edge of economic instability. Over-taxation, over-regulation and mass immigration without sustainable planning have left our country struggling. The cost of living has skyrocketed, the housing crisis is worsening and the decline of our dollar has made us vulnerable in a world that is becoming increasingly competitive and uncertain.

The Waters Have Moved On ... Canada

once had a strong, independent identity. We took pride in our nation's ability to stand on its own, to offer opportunities while ensuring fairness and to be a beacon of multiculturalism that worked. Today, however, it feels like we are losing our sense of self. In the pursuit of inclusion, we seem to have forgotten who we are. Social programs, once a point of national pride, are now stretched beyond capacity and left unchecked, misused and unsustainable. Where is the accountability? Where is the balance?

I, for one, would welcome a Department of Government Efficiency – a system to track exactly where our tax dollars are going. Wouldn't you? Why do we not already have one? How much money is lost in waste, mismanagement and redundancy?

The Waters Have Moved On ... And the face of Canada has changed dramatically. Multiculturalism once meant embracing different cultures while remaining unified under the banner of being Canadian. But today, the immigration policy appears to be less about diversity and more about volume with an overwhelming influx from the same demographic, creating pockets of communities where the traditions, values and laws of their home country take precedence over being Canadian.

To be clear, this is not about rejecting immigration – it is about ensuring that those who come here embrace Canada first. Citizenship is a privilege, not a right. When newcomers condemn the very country that

has welcomed them, exploit social programs without scrutiny and refuse to integrate, we must ask: What went wrong?

Somewhere along the way, Canada abandoned its history and heritage in the name of inclusion, but inclusion should never mean erasing the foundation upon which this country was built.

Radical inclusivity without respect for the existing identity of a nation leads to division rather than unity. If you come to this great country, Canada must come first.

And what about Canadians who have been here their entire lives? Why is our government prioritizing "New Canadians" over the elderly who have worked and contributed for decades? Why do those who have built this country receive less than those who have just arrived? Where is the fairness in that?

The Waters Have Moved On ... And it is time we start asking hard questions.

Canada should be one of the richest, most self-sustaining nations in the world. We have the resources, the land and the workforce to thrive independently, yet we find ourselves increasingly reliant on foreign economies and policies that weaken our sovereignty. How did we get here? And, more importantly, how do we fix it?

The Waters Have Moved On ... And so should we. With looming Trump tariffs, a prorogued government and both provincial and federal elections on the horizon, Canada finds itself at a critical crossroads. The rallying cry of "Put Canada First" is growing louder, with calls to match U.S. tariffs dollar for dollar and prove that we won't back down. But is this truly in our best interest?

Consider this: the U.S. economy is nearly ten times the size of ours. Their GDP in 2023 was approximately \$27.72 trillion while Canada's sat at just \$2.89 trillion – a staggering difference. The standard-of-living gap between our nations continues to widen, with U.S. GDP per capita now 43 per cent higher than Canada's and expected to approach 50 per cent in 2024. Meanwhile, Canada's services industry, which accounts for 70 per cent of our economy, is slowing down.

We can talk tough but, when push comes to shove, financial wellbeing – not political bravado – determines our future. Our personal wealth, our purchasing power and our standard of living should be at the centre of every decision we make. Instead of posturing with economic policies that could hurt us more than help, maybe it's time we seriously explore what an economic partnership with our southern neighbor would mean for the average, hardworking Canadian.

The Waters Have Moved On ... With the Illusion of "Free" Health Care.

Many Canadians fear that closer economic ties with the U.S. would threaten our health-care system, but let's be honest, our health care isn't free. We pay for it every time we fill up at the pump, buy groceries, heat our homes, or pay our phone bills. It's called taxes – income tax, property tax, capital-gains tax, carbon tax, sales tax and

more. And yet, despite this endless taxation, our health-care system is crumbling. More than 6.5 million Canadians do not have access to a family doctor. Emergency wait times average 20-plus hours, often with patients being treated in hallways. Specialist appointments and surgeries are delayed for months, sometimes years. So, if we're already paying for a broken system, why not rethink how we fund and deliver health care? Why not look for ways to improve efficiency, cut waste and explore private-sector solutions that don't burden taxpayers but provide better care?

The Waters Have Moved On ... Strength in Numbers – A United America.

It's time to start putting Canadians first – not just as a slogan, but in real, tangible ways that improve our economic and personal wellbeing. There is strength in numbers and the reality is that our small, resource-rich country cannot afford isolationism in a rapidly changing global economy.

Does that mean we have to become the 51st state? Absolutely not, but it does mean we should start looking at ways to strengthen economic and political cooperation with the U.S. in ways that preserve our sovereignty while eliminating barriers to prosperity.

Imagine a United America, not as one nation, but as an economic and political alliance – a partnership where:

- Canada and the U.S. share a common currency (1 USD = 1 CAD).
- Borders are eliminated, allowing free mobility for citizens to live, work and study anywhere in North America.
- Trade wars and tariffs are eliminated, creating a stronger, more competitive North American economy.
- A council of the United Americas is formed, where both nations have representation and vote on key economic and policy decisions, ensuring cooperation without sacrificing national identity.

This isn't about giving up what it means to be Canadian, it's about adapting to a new world reality where standing alone may no longer be an option.

The Waters Have Moved On ... And perhaps it's time we did too.

Would you consider it? Would you trade the illusion of nationalistic defiance for the opportunity to truly put Canadians first, not Canada and its political agenda but Canadians first to create a stronger, wealthier and more secure future for our citizens and our country?

It's time to ask ourselves: What does putting Canada first actually mean? Because if it means economic decline, lower wages, unaffordable housing and crumbling health care, then maybe we need to redefine what it means to be Canadian in the 21st century.

Right now, we are at a crossroads. *The Waters Have Moved On ...* And we must decide whether we will let ourselves be swept away or if we will find a way to rebuild, adapt and reclaim what it means to be Canadian.



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COMMUNITY CALENDAR - MARCH/APRIL 2025

TUESDAY, MARCH 4

Community Pancake Supper 5 - 7 pm

Hosted by the Junior Optimist Club of Wilmot. Contact Kathy Gray at cagey1@sympatico.ca for more information.

Wilmot Rec Complex
1291 Nafziger Rd, Baden

Ostomy Support Group Meeting 7:00 p.m.

'What's New with Convatec Ostomy Supplies' with Inge Prey, Territory Manager. Social time and snacks. Everyone welcome. (519)273-4327
93 Morgan St., Stratford

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5

East Zorra-Tavistock Council meeting 9 a.m.

Council Chambers
89 Loveys Street East, Hickson



TUESDAY, MARCH 11

Wellesley Council meeting 6:45 p.m.

Council chambers
4805 William Hastings Line, Crosshill

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12

Community Dining for Seniors in Wilmot and Wellesley Townships 12:00 p.m.

Community Care Concepts invites you to join us for lunch and fellowship. Please register by March 7 by calling 519-664-1900 or Toll Free: 1-855-664-1900.
Wellesley Recreation Complex, 1401 Queen's Bush Rd., Wellesley



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19

Community Dining for Seniors in Wilmot and Wellesley Townships 12:00 p.m.

Community Care Concepts invites you to join us for lunch and fellowship. Please register by March 14 by calling 519-664-1900 or Toll Free: 1-855-664-1900.
Wilmot Rec Complex
1291 Nafziger Rd, Baden

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26

Community Dining for Seniors in Wilmot and Wellesley Townships 12:00 p.m.

Community Care Concepts invites you to join us for lunch and fellowship. Please register by March 21 by calling 519-664-1900 or Toll Free: 1-855-664-1900.
Linwood Community Centre
5279 Ament Line, Linwood

SUNDAY, MARCH 30

Tree Pruning with Mike Yost 1:30 - 3:30 pm

Free workshop will cover all aspects of tree pruning. For details and registration go to letstreewilmot.ca/events.
Mannheim Community Center
1467 Mannheim Road

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9

Tavistock Community Health Inc. (TCHI) Annual Meeting 7 pm

For more info contact chairman Frank Meconi; fameconi@rogers.com
Tavistock Men's Club Hall
78 Woodstock St N, Tavistock

FREE SENIORS ACTIVITIES

Tavistock Seniors Activities

Inside walking Monday & Wednesday morning 8:30-12. Contact: Larry Brown 519-240-6715

Pickleball Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoon, 12-4. Wednesday night 7-9. Contact: Don Junker 519-535-7052

Cards Monday, Wednesday afternoon 1-4, euchre, crib (bring board), etc. Just drop in to play, good to bring someone. Contact: Bob Routly 519-301-2118

Crokinole Monday, Wednesday morning 8:30-12, Just drop in to play, good to bring someone. Contact: John Schultz 519-655-2346

Shuffleboard @ arena, Wednesday 12:30-4 and Thursday 10-4. Contact: Don Junker 519-535-7052.

VON Smart Seniors Exercise, Tuesday and Thursday morning 9 - 10; Village Manor 10:25 - 11:25. Contact: 519-539-1231 x 6285

Tavistock Memorial Hall
1 Adam St. Tavistock ON

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Contact: thewtgazette@gmail.com

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- If your event is not free admission or you would like to include more details than stated above, The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette offers the following options for promoting your community events:
 - 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 Small Classified Display ad (3.3" x 2.5") - \$35 + hst

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- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. Pi Day | 7. 4 – Alabama, |
| 2. 12-gauge | Alaska, Arizona, |
| 3. Reykjavik, | Arkansas |
| Iceland | 8. Chantal |
| 4. Japanese yen | Kreviazuk |
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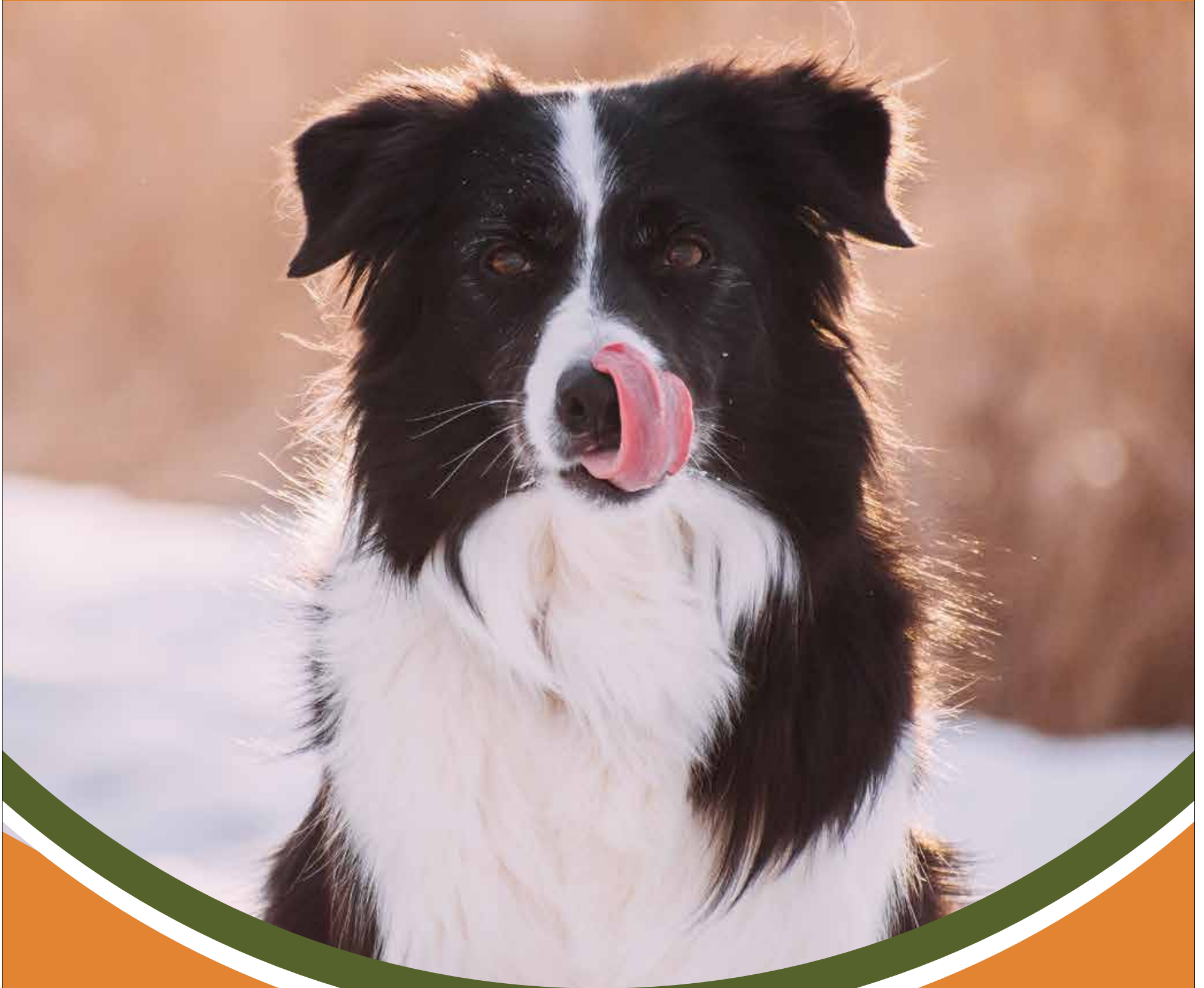
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