

St. Marys Independent

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Issue #1323

Thursday, July 23, 2026

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Wildfire smoke forces cancellations, quarry closure in St. Marys



A SMOKY VISTA IN DOWNTOWN ST. MARYS (GORD BARNETT PHOTO)
Looking west to the downtown core on July 15 through the wildfire smoke. The dangerous air quality prompted some closures and warnings stating that the smoky air carries some serious health risks.

Stonetown Heritage Festival almost here: A full day of community celebration awaits

Fun for everyone July 25

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The countdown is on! The 2026 Stonetown Heritage Festival returns to downtown St. Marys on Saturday, July 25, bringing a full day of free family-friendly entertainment, local culture, delicious food, shopping and

heritage experiences to the heart of the community.

The festival will run from 8 a.m. until late, culminating with an exciting evening of live music and entertainment at Kinsmen Summerfest.

This year, the festival is offering more

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Thick wildfire smoke drifting into southern Ontario from forest fires in northwestern Ontario disrupted municipal programs, closed the St. Marys Quarry and prompted the town to take extra precautions to protect staff and residents last week.

Environment and Climate Change Canada issued an air-quality warning for Huron and Perth counties on July 15 as smoke blanketed the region, creating hazardous conditions that lasted through July 17. Huron Perth Public Health warned the smoke could pose health risks for everyone, particularly older adults, children, pregnant people, those with existing heart or lung conditions, people experiencing housing insecurity and anyone working outdoors.

Town director of culture, tourism and engagement Amy Cubberley said municipal staff relied on guidance from Environment Canada and Huron Perth Public Health throughout the smoky conditions and shared public-health messaging through the town's social-media channels.

"In situations like this, the town's practice is to follow guidance from organizations with subject matter expertise such as Environment Canada and the Huron Perth health unit and use our social media channels to amplify their messaging to bring awareness to residents," Cubberley said.

The poor air quality led to the cancellation of several municipal programs, including EarlyON activities, St. Marys Public Library children's programming and the library's Movie in the Park event in Cadzow Park on Friday evening.

The smoke also affected community sporting events. The Ontario Baseball Association cancelled a tournament scheduled to be hosted at the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame, while decisions on local practices and games were left to

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

Heidi James
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COMMUNITY

Wildfire smoke forces cancellations, quarry closure in St. Marys

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

individual sports organizations.

One of the town's most significant closures was the St. Marys Quarry.

The popular swimming attraction closed early at 2 p.m. on July 15 and remained closed through July 17 as staff monitored the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI).

"The decision to close the Quarry was based on public-health guidance, as well as monitoring the Air Quality Health Index," Cubberley said. "When the AQHI is above 10, the advice is to reduce or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors."

She said staff determined swimming, using the Super Splash inflatable course and performing potential life-guard rescues would all require strenuous physical activity, making closure the safest option.

While the quarry was closed, other outdoor amenities, including parks, the splash pad and the Yak Shack, remained open, with residents encouraged to use their own discretion before spending extended periods outdoors.

The smoke also affected municipal operations.

Cubberley said the town implemented its extreme-weather guidelines for outdoor workers, provid-

ing frequent breaks, encouraging hydration, identifying air-conditioned shelter locations and making masks available upon request.

"We asked staff to monitor themselves and each other," she said. "If they needed inside work or needed to leave for the day, that was allowed, as the smoke seems to be affecting everyone differently."

Some contractors working in the community also adjusted their operations because of the conditions, resulting in slower progress or shortened workdays.

According to Huron Perth Public Health, wildfire smoke can cause coughing, throat irritation, headaches, shortness of breath and chest pain. During periods of poor air quality, residents were encouraged to stay indoors whenever possible, avoid strenuous outdoor activity, stay hydrated and consider wearing a well-fitting N95 respirator if they needed to spend extended time outside.

Though the smoke has since cleared from the region, public-health officials note wildfire smoke can travel thousands of kilometres from its source and recommend residents continue monitoring weather forecasts and air-quality advisories throughout the remainder of the wildfire season.



Pictured at right: With the smoky haze in the air, the sun and the sky took on an orange tint.

(GORD BARNETT PHOTO)

Stonetown Heritage Festival is almost here

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

opportunities to grab a ride downtown. Shuttles sponsored by the Downtown St. Marys BIA will run from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on a continuous loop. One will leave from the Pyramid Recreation Centre and the other from the St. Marys Wellness Centre parking lot. Both will drop riders off at either town hall or the Green Bridge near Milt Dunnell Field.

Residents and visitors alike are invited to experience everything the festival has to offer, from the St. Marys Farmers' Market and Kinsmen breakfast in the morning to live performances, interactive activities, food trucks, shopping and heritage programming throughout the day. Downtown streets will come alive with live entertainment, more than 65 outdoor vendors, family activities, face painting, inflatables, lawn games and free attractions for all ages.

Visitors looking to explore the stories that shaped St. Marys can take part in free heritage walking tours and accessible bus tours, offering unique opportunities to discover the people, places and land-

marks that make the community special. Registration is required.

The festival will also feature a free trackless train sponsored by Quadro Communications, a free town shuttle connecting key festival locations and a magic show by renowned performer Ron Gudel in the town hall auditorium.

As the downtown festivities wind down, the celebration will continue at Milt Dunnell Field as Kinsmen Summerfest takes over with midway attractions and an evening concert lineup. Please note that tickets are required for Kinsmen Summerfest performances. Those looking for one final adventure can end the evening exploring the town's haunted history during the St. Marys Ghost Walk, presented by Stratford Walking Tours. Tickets are required for the Ghost Walk.

"The Stonetown Heritage Festival is a celebration of everything that makes St. Marys special," said Kelly Deeks, St. Marys tourism and events manager, in a press release. "Whether you're coming for the entertainment, the local vendors, the food, the heritage experiences or sim-

ply to spend time with family and friends, there's truly something for everyone. We look forward to welcoming residents and visitors for an unforgettable day in St. Marys."

Festival organizers encourage attendees to review the full schedule in advance and plan their day accordingly.

For a complete event schedule and information, visit www.discoverstmarys.ca.



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July-25th

Sun/cloud

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Sunday
July-26th

Sun/cloud

29°C

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EDITORIAL

Canada Post and the shuttering of community newspapers



PAUL DEEGAN

News Media Canada

The shuttering of Winnipeg's Community Review means 200,000 households will no longer get the benefit of a free community newspaper delivered to their door. It also means that more than 800 people who deliver the paper and their families will be affected.

This is an unforced error that never should have happened. How did we get here? The answer is complex.

First, there is a high degree of concentration in the flyer printing market in Canada. Montreal-based TC Transcontinental enjoys the dominant position

in the marketplace thanks, in part, to a 2012 Competition Bureau-approved asset swap.

Second, municipal and provincial politicians have passed environmental regulations. However well-intentioned, they have unintended consequences. Former Montreal Mayor Valérie Plante passed a municipal bylaw that led to the end of distribution of Publisac (a plastic bag with flyers and a community newspaper). Several provinces, including Manitoba, have imposed extended producer responsibility levies on printed newspapers. Ontario's Premier Doug Ford made the wise decision to exempt newspapers from this kind of stealthy journalism job-killing tax in his province.

Third, Canada Post is the biggest culprit. TC Transcontinental, which had distributed Publisac door to door in Quebec, formed a strategic partnership with Canada Post, which as a Crown corporation was not beholden to municipal bylaws. They bypassed Mayor Plante's new regulation by distributing a curated bundle of flyers called Raddar through the national postal service. Unlike Publisac, Raddar did not include a community newspaper. On the sidelines of this saga, news publisher Métro Média and its more than 30

hyperlocal publications – including 17 print newspapers – shut down.

In partnership with Canada Post, TC Transcontinental recently expanded its Raddar offering across Canada. It is understood that Canada Post – which has a mandate to “charge postage rates that are fair and reasonable” – is offering TC Transcontinental rates below what it is offering to community newspapers. To its own benefit, the Crown corporation has effectively shut community newspapers – their private sector rivals – out of flyer distribution, lessening competition substantially in that market.

This is not the first time community newspaper publishers have felt the squeeze of Canada Post in the flyer distribution market. As of January 2024, community newspapers with commercial inserts were no longer exempt from Canada Post's Consumers' Choice program, which allows Canadians to opt out of receiving junk mail. Canada Post made that decision without stakeholder consultation or economic/social impact analysis and failed to recognize that community newspapers – with or without an insert – are not junk mail; they are a social good.

The juxtaposition of the shuttering of

Winnipeg's Community Review at the same time as the revelation of \$30.8 million in bonuses at Canada Post has not been lost on community newspaper publishers across Canada.

What should Ottawa do about it?

First, Joël Lightbound, the minister responsible for Canada Post, should ensure the Crown corporation is treating community newspapers fairly and offering them comparable pricing to what it offers to TC Transcontinental.

Second, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage should conduct hearings into the role Canada Post can play in the sustainability of community newspapers – ensuring the relationship is one of partnership, rather than predatory and parasitic.

When a community loses a newspaper, like Winnipeg's Community Review or Métro Média's publications in Quebec, the information vacuum can lead to people getting their news from less than reliable sources – like AI and social media – which can create division that drives people apart. Without a check on local government, corruption, mismanagement and wasteful spending often flourish, which can result in higher municipal taxes and borrowing costs.

It was not foreign Big Tech monopolists like Google and Meta that caused Manitoba's largest community newspaper to shutter. It was Canada Post.

And it's not like we weren't warned.

Thirty years ago, in his review of Canada Post's mandate, George Radwanski recommended the postal service get out of delivering unaddressed junk mail (i.e., flyers), concluding that the Crown corporation engaged in inappropriate practices that created unfair competition for private businesses like community newspapers.

As a former Toronto Star editor-in-chief, Radwanski knew the news business. He noted that Canada Post was actively siphoning advertising revenue away from the news industry and adroitly cautioned that the state-granted mail delivery monopoly should not be in the business of crippling the financial health of newspapers.

A healthy democracy demands a healthy community news media ecosystem. Let's level the playing field and restore competition in the flyer distribution market before more community newspapers shutter.

Paul Deegan is president and chief executive officer of News Media Canada.

Bravo

We have 2 Bravos this week

1) A bravo to the folks in the LifeLabs line on July 2 who let me go to the front because I had to start work at 8:30 a.m., especially the kind woman in front of me and her childhood neighbour Larry.

2) Bravo to the several individuals who stopped their vehicles on James Street to assist my wife to her feet after she had fallen. She was uninjured and all is well. Many thanks. The town worth living in!

Boo

We have 2 Boos this week

1) Boo to the two people on two separate days who thought it was ok to pull out in front of me on my motorcycle at the Highway 7 roundabout. Neither stopped after seeing me (kept rolling). The first driver I almost ran right into the driver's door, she didn't even look at me until I was almost in her driver's seat.

2) Boo for those pilfering from the gardens at the cemetery. Gardeners pay for their plot and put endless time, energy and finances into growing food for their family and in many cases, those in need in the community. Shame on those who take what does not belong to them.

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

Quote of the Week

"This is one of the most intense wildfire seasons in Canadian history due to extreme heat waves and record-breaking dry conditions. Canada is mobilizing more than 5,000 firefighters and nearly 300 water bombers, helicopters, and evacuation aircraft to contain, control, and mitigate the fires. It's an enormous, complex effort that ultimately depends on dedicated and brave individuals who work relentlessly to keep Canadians safe."

- Prime Minister Mark Carney on combatting the northern wildfires

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St. Marys Independent

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Rest is not the absence
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presence of peace.

An empty tank will
take you nowhere,
take time to refuel.

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racing to the next
moment, what
happens to the one
you are in?

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nothing to do and all
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Heritage weekend
and Summerfest have
arrived. Enjoy every
moment!

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

Quadro accepting applications for annual post-secondary scholarships

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Quadro Communications Co-operative is once again investing in local students through its annual scholarship program, offering three \$2,000 scholarships to eligible post-secondary students living within the co-operative's service area.

The scholarship program, which has been running for more than a decade, provides a total of \$6,000 each year to help students continue their education while encouraging the next generation to consider careers in telecommunications.

"Quadro wants to invest more into the younger generation as they are the future of our industry," said marketing administration specialist Stephannie Metcalfe.

Students entering their second, third or fourth year of undergraduate studies at a Canadian college or university are eligible to apply. While applications are accepted from students in all fields of study, preference will be given to those enrolled in business programs, particularly marketing, and technical programs with an emphasis on electronics or telecommunications.

"While we accept applications from all fields, our main goal is to inspire the

community to join the telecommunication field within the sectors of business and technical programs," Metcalfe said.

To be eligible, applicants must maintain a principal residence, when not attending school, where a Quadro membership is held. Students must also provide proof of enrolment, complete the application form and submit a 500- to 750-word essay responding to one of the questions included in the application package.

Metcalfe said scholarship recipients are selected through a review process led by Quadro's board of directors.

"Applicants submit essays on predetermined questions. This is reviewed by our board of directors. Three applicants are chosen from the submissions," she said.

Applications can be submitted by mail to Quadro Communications Co-operative, 1845 Road 164, P.O. Box 101, Kirkton, Ont., N0K 1N0, attention Scholarship; dropped off in person at Quadro retail locations in Lucan, Mitchell or St. Marys; or emailed to scholarships@quadro.net.

Students interested in applying can find the application form and additional information by visiting Quadro's website at www.quadro.net/scholarship or through the cooperative's social-media channels.

Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance Join Our Board of Directors and Community Council

The Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance (HPHA) Board of Directors is recruiting for the following volunteer opportunities:

Board of Directors

- Director from the HPHA catchment area

Community Council

- Community Member from Clinton & Area
- Community Member from Seaforth & Area

Prospective candidates will bring their relevant skills, expertise and experience to support the important governance work of the HPHA.

Individuals interested in making a meaningful, sustained impact on our local health system, and to the health and wellness of the communities we represent, are encouraged to apply.

For further information about the HPHA Board of Directors, Board Committees and Governance Resources, please visit the HPHA website – www.hpha.ca

The HPHA is committed to equity, inclusion, diversity and anti-racism.



Information Session (Virtual)

Thursday, August 6, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

RSVP to Sue Davey, Executive Assistant
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Application forms are available on HPHA's website
(www.hpha.ca)

Application deadline: August 10, 2026



STONETOWN CRIER

The latest municipal news
from the Town of St. Marys



ELECTION NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN

Nomination packages are available for pickup by appointment only during the construction of the Church St. stairs at Town Hall. Please call 519-284-2340 ext. 212 or email clerksoffice@town.stmarys.on.ca.

Municipal nomination forms must be filed in person (by appointment) at St. Marys Town Hall by Friday, August 21 at 2 PM. Nomination forms for school board candidates shall be filed with the respective municipalities.

More details: townofstmarys.com/elections

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STONETOWN HERITAGE FESTIVAL

There's fun for everyone at the annual Stonetown Heritage Festival on Saturday, July 25! This free event celebrates the cultures, stories and histories that shape the past and present of St. Marys. The festival features family-friendly activities, heritage tours, art, vendor's and farmers' market, and live music and dance.

Learn more: discoverstmarys.ca



WEST QUARRY REOPENED

Council recently approved an updated Quarry By-law to allow for the use of human-powered watercraft, such as canoes, kayaks and paddleboards, as well as fishing between dawn and dusk from April 1 – November 30. Swimming remains prohibited.

Learn more: townofstmarys.com/westquarry



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Senior of the Week



Our senior of the Week is Jeff Drinkwalter!

Born and raised in St. Marys, Jeff spent more than 40 years working at Richardson Foods before a short time at Delmar Foods and officially retiring a few years ago. Jeff is a proud father of two, grandfather to four, and "bonus" grandfather to one lucky granddaughter. A true sports fan, you'll often find him cheering from the stands at his son's baseball games, supporting his grandchildren at their sporting events, or catching Saturday night pickup hockey at the Allman Arena. Known for his kindness and generosity, Jeff is always there when someone needs him—whether it's for a good conversation, a helping hand, or serving as the family's reliable "taxi." If you know Jeff, you know you can always count on him!

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

WEEKEND QUIZ

By Jake Grant

1. Who won the 2026 FIFA World Cup?
2. What does WWE stand for?
3. What was the name of Dorothy's dog in Wizard of Oz?
4. What is the national flower of Japan?
5. What was the main language spoken in the Roman Empire?
6. What is the chemical symbol for Carbon Monoxide?
7. What does CEO stand for?
8. Who shot JFK?
9. What is the only mammal capable of true flight?
10. What is the world's largest commercial passenger plane?

This week's answers are found on pg. 31

\$500,000 in provincial funding announced for community health-care infrastructure

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The Ontario government is investing \$570,053 between 2026 and 2028 to complete upgrades and repairs at the Canadian Mental Health Association Huron Perth – Addiction and Mental Health Services, Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae announced recently in a press release.

This funding is part of Ontario's broader investment of nearly \$15 million through the Community Infrastructure Fund (CIRF) to support infrastructure upgrades, maintenance and repairs at 67 community health service providers across the province.

"The Canadian Mental Health Association Huron Perth – Addiction and Mental Health Services plays a vital role in supporting individuals and families across Perth County," said Rae in a press release. "This investment will help strengthen the organization's ability to deliver high-quality mental health and addiction services, ensuring more people can access the care and support they need close to home."

The Community Infrastructure Renewal Fund enables health-care system partners to address their urgent infrastructure needs including upgrading or replacing roofs, windows, security systems, fire alarms and emergency generators. Since 2018, the Ontario government has dou-

bled its investment through the Community Infrastructure Renewal Fund, allowing more community-based health service providers to repair and modernize their infrastructure and preserve their operational capacity.

"Our government is making historic investments to protect Ontario's health-care system, ensuring that more people in Perth and Huron counties can connect to the care they need, where and when they need it," said Sylvia Jones, deputy premier and minister of health, in the release. "This investment will enable the Canadian Mental Health Association Huron Perth – Addiction and Mental Health Services to address priority infrastructure needs so patients and their families can continue to access vital services and care in their community."

Over the next 10 years, Ontario is investing approximately \$64 billion in major health infrastructure. This is part of the government's plan to get shovels in the ground on more than 50 major hospital projects across the province, which will deliver approximately 3,000 new hospital beds to enhance access to quality care and build a connected, people-first health-care system.

Through Your Health: A Plan For Connected and Convenient Care, Ontario is expanding and modernizing hospitals and building new health-care facilities, making it faster and easier for people of all ages to connect to the high-quality care they need, where and when they need it.



Weekly Specials

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St. Marys Independent

SCAN TO READ THE ONLINE PAPER

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Province invests nearly \$90K in Perth County through Rural Ontario Development program



(AMANDA NELSON PHOTO)

Marty Klomp of Klomp's Home and Garden, Meredith Forget, director of economic development and tourism, Casey Howanyk of The Perth Farmhouse, Perth County Warden Dean Trentowsky, Justin Dias, economic development officer for Perth County, Steve Howanyk of The Perth Farmhouse and others pose in front of one of the 10 picture frame signs funded through the Rural Ontario Development program.

AMANDA NELSON

Independent Reporter

Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae met with Rural Ontario Development (ROD) program funding recipients at The Perth Farmhouse earlier this week.

The Ontario government is investing \$89,468.06 to support economic growth and long-term prosperity in Perth County, aiming to strengthen local economies, support rural workers and assist communities in planning for long-term growth.

Across the region, four projects are receiving funding through the first intake of the ROD program. Funding recipients include The Perth Farmhouse, Perth County, Broken Rail Brewing Company and Klomp's Home and Garden.

Casey and Steve Howanyk, owners of The Perth Farmhouse, said the funding will be used for architectural changes that will allow them to continue offering services during the shoulder season.

"It's incredible to receive the funds," said Steve Howanyk. "Without it, I don't know that we could have taken the leap to extend our operations. It would have taken a lot longer and a lot more sacrifices for us."

Rae said the program demonstrates the provincial government's continued commitment to supporting rural and northern communities across Ontario.

"Strong rural communities are built through partnerships that support local businesses, encourage investment, and create new opportunities," said Rae. "This provincial funding will help Perth

County and its local businesses build on the great work already underway, strengthen the local economy and enhance the quality of life that makes our communities such great places to live, work and visit."

Alongside The Perth Farmhouse, which received \$10,000 to help diversify its winery for year-round tourism, Klomp's Home and Garden received \$8,607.12 to increase roadside appeal, Broken Rail Brewing Company received \$309.69 for equipment and accessibility expansion, and Perth County Tourism received \$70,551.25 for its ongoing wayfinding signage project throughout Perth County.

"When there are investments into our rural communities, the impact helps strengthen local economies, support small businesses and create an environment where tourists and locals alike can enjoy the amazing places and businesses close to home, and that matters not just here in Perth County, but across rural and northern communities," said Rae.

Through the first intake of the ROD program, the province is investing more than \$5.5 million in 116 projects across rural Ontario. The Rural Ontario Development program supports local projects from municipalities, small businesses, not-for-profits and Indigenous groups. Since 2019, Ontario has invested \$34.3 million in 653 projects through the ROD program and the former Rural Economic Development Fund.

The third intake for the ROD program opens Aug. 17. To learn more, visit ontario.ca.

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Local author Aaron Kyte and Betty's Bookshelf bringing Christmas in July to St. Marys

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

When author Aaron Kyte first moved to St. Marys with his partner five years ago, he saw Betty's Bookshelf had paper on its windows and had a sign that indicated it was opening soon.

Thrilled, the book lover sent an email to owner Jan Scott and said he was excited to see an independent bookstore open in St. Marys.

Now, Betty's Bookshelf is running a Christmas in July pre-order special for Kyte's debut novel, *A Christmas Inn, Maine*. Customers can pre-order online before July 31 to receive a copy of the novel, a bookplate autographed by the author, stickers, a bookmark, exclusive access to a video by Kyte and a bonus chapter.

"Anyone who orders the book is getting a really cool array of things," said Kyte.

A Christmas Inn, Maine, to be published by HarperCollins and Avon Books, is a 2SLGBTQIA+ holiday romance. The story follows an editor in New York City who is dumped and fired on the same day before he moves to Maine to live with his aunt, who owns a struggling inn. While the editor tries to get back on his feet and save the inn, he meets a contractor.

"The goal I was going for was Hallmark vibes, Hallmark coziness, but maybe if it was more like – no shade to Hallmark – but if it was a little bit smarter and a little bit more fun. With a book, you have more space to play," Kyte said.

As someone who is part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, he wanted to bring a queer holiday romance for more representation.

"When I first started writing it, there was really nothing. There's been some more queer-focused holiday films in the five years since I first had the idea, but my goal was I just wanted to write the kind of books that young me would've been excited to see on the shelf," he said.

Kyte added that Scott, a published cookbook author herself, has been helpful in every step of the process from writing to finding an agent to publishing. He's part of a few of Betty's Bookshelf's book clubs and has become good friends with Scott.

"This is a really nice extension of that support that I'm really grateful for," Kyte said.

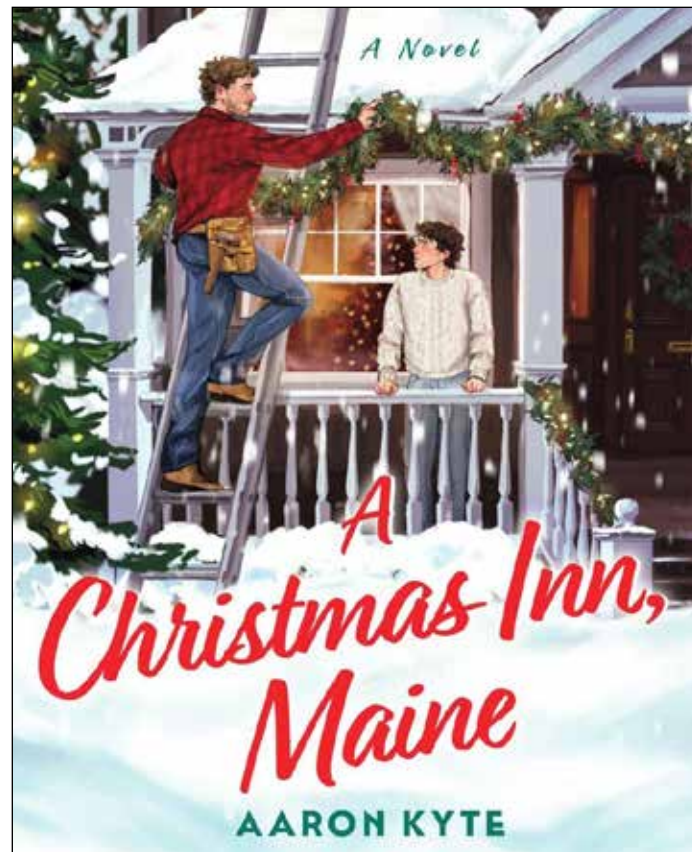
Scott has read the book and recommends it.

"The highest praise I can give it is that it does not read like a debut author," she said. "The writing is charming and witty and because I know the author so well, I can hear his voice as I turn the pages. This is a feel-good holiday romance and is sure to leave everyone feeling a little better about the world when they finish."

Along with the positive reception for *A Christmas Inn, Maine* from Betty's Bookshelf customers, Canadian bookstore chain Indigo listed the book as one of the most anticipated for the fall.

"Becoming a traditionally published author is such a difficult endeavour, it only makes sense to celebrate his – or anyone else's – success," Scott said.

To order the book, visit www.bettysbookshelf.com or order in-person at the bookstore. The novel will be released on Oct. 13 and pre-orders can either be picked up at the shop at 6 Water St. S Unit 2 or delivered by mail.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF JAN SCOTT)

St. Marys author Aaron Kyte is releasing his highly anticipated debut novel, *A Christmas Inn, Maine*. Anyone who pre-orders the book through Betty's Bookshelf up until July 31 will receive exclusive bonus items.





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St. Marys, Ontario

Farmers' Market makes the move downtown for Heritage Festival

One of many delicious and fun activities this season

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The St. Marys Farmers' Market is joining the excitement of the Stonetown Heritage Festival this Saturday, July 25, with a move from Milt Dunnell Field to downtown.

For one day only, the market will set up on Water Street North, between Queen Street and the Green Bridge, just steps away from all the fun.

"Moving downtown for the Heritage Festival will be convenient for our usual customers, and hopefully we'll create some new fans of locally grown and made goods," said St. Marys Farmers' Market board chair and longtime vendor Ann Slater in a press release. "We've worked with the town to make it as easy as possible to find us."

Beginning at 8 a.m. and with pickup points at the Pyramid Recreation Centre and the Wellness Centre (at the north end of St. Marys Memorial Hospital), a continuously running, free shuttle will drop

off patrons at the north end of the Green Bridge for an easy stroll to the market location. There will be limited free parking at Famme and Co. for patrons who may need to park close to the market for mobility reasons. Volunteers will be stationed at the Green Bridge to assist.

In addition to the Kinsmen breakfast happening at the intersection of Queen and Water streets, market favourites Bruce and Nancy White will be serving breakfast sandwiches all morning.

The move to the Heritage Festival is just one of the St. Marys Farmers' Market's fun initiatives this season. The Saturday, Aug. 15, market is dedicated to the furry and feathered friends who frequent the market! The "Dog, Cat and Pet Day of Summer" will include a pet photo booth, a pet costume parade at 10:30 a.m., the Stratford-Perth Humane Society and a dachshund meetup at 10 a.m. Prizes and swag generously provided by Pet Value.

The Sept. 27 market will showcase some of the area's best pie bakers –



(PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. MARYS FARMERS' MARKET)

The St. Marys Farmers' Market will move downtown during the Stonetown Heritage Festival this Saturday.

heaven for pie eaters – via the annual Apple Pie Day fundraiser, with slices for sale and pies on auction. As the seasons cool, the market will heat up with Harvest Soup Day at the Saturday, Oct. 19, market with delicious, chef-crafted

soups available for purchase.

For more information on all market events, follow @farmersmarketofstmarys on Facebook or visit www.stmarysfarmersmarket.ca.



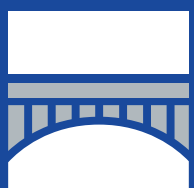
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Photo frame project continues to boost tourism across Perth County

AMANDA NELSON
Independent Reporter

Perth County is celebrating the first anniversary of its “Shareworthy Moments” project, which has encouraged visitors and residents to capture and share photos at destinations across the county.

The project was supported by \$30,000 through the Province of Ontario’s Rural Economic Development (RED) program. Last year, 10 photo frames, two custom photo installations and 10 custom farm stands were installed throughout Perth County to create photo opportunities for visitors while showcasing local businesses and attractions.

Designed to enhance the visitor experience, the frames provide shareable social media moments for families and tourists while encouraging them to support local businesses and farms.

“It’s more about enhancing the experience, giving people an opportunity to

take a photo while still having the business name in the background,” said Meredith Forget, director of economic development and tourism.

Experiential tourism continues to play an important role in attracting visitors and encouraging longer stays. The installations encourage people to travel throughout the county, discover local businesses, support the agricultural community and share their experiences online.

“A lot of our attractions don’t have a sign other than the road sign, and that’s not exactly something people are going to post on Instagram,” Forget said. “But now they have the frame, and visitors can stand behind it and get a picture with a beautiful background. So, I think it’s less about creating an attraction and more about enhancing the experience that’s already being offered.”

The initiative has encouraged visitors to explore Perth County’s diverse landscapes and agricultural heritage while

creating memorable, shareable experiences.

“Since the frame was installed, we’ve noticed many visitors stopping to take photos and spending time chatting around the frame and enjoying the moment,” said Sarah Tkaczuk, owner of River Valley Golf Course and Winter Tube Slide. “It’s been wonderful to see families, golfers, wedding guests and visitors sharing their experiences on social media and discovering River Valley through the project.”

Tkaczuk said the frames have added value to the guest experience by giving visitors another reason to stop, stay a little longer and share their visit with others. She added every photo shared online helps introduce River Valley and Perth County to new audiences.

“The frame has become more than just a photo opportunity,” said Tkaczuk. “It has created a destination within our property. It encourages people to pause, appreciate the landscape and create memories with

family and friends. We’ve seen people of all ages use it, from children having fun to groups of golfers, couples and families.”

Each frame has been placed to showcase a unique view of Perth County, from farmland and conservation areas to bustling farm markets, family attractions and local culinary destinations.

“Overall, we’ve been very pleased with the project,” Tkaczuk said. “It’s simple, interactive and creates lasting memories while encouraging people to explore everything our community has to offer.”

Frame locations include:

- Anna Mae’s Bakery & Restaurant
- Apple Bottom Orchards
- Hoover’s Maple Syrup
- Lynn River Farm
- Pootcorners
- River Valley Golf & Tube Slide
- Perth Farmhouse
- TNT Berries
- West Perth Wetlands
- Wildwood Conservation Area

More than \$6.2 million in provincial funding announced for local hospitals

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT
Staff Contribution

The Ontario government is investing \$6,144,648 to complete upgrades and repairs at North Wellington Healthcare Corporation, Listowel Memorial Hospital and the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance, Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae announced in a recent press release.

This funding is part of Ontario’s broader investment of over \$266 million through the Health Infrastructure Renewal Fund (HIRF) to support infrastructure upgrades, maintenance and repairs at 126 hospitals across the province.

“Investing in hospital infrastructure helps ensure patients and families continue to have access to high-quality care close to home,” Rae said in the release. “Our government is strengthening local hospitals by investing in the facilities and infrastructure they need to deliver exceptional care today and meet the needs of our growing communities for years to come.”

The Health Infrastructure Renewal Fund enables health-care system partners to address their urgent infrastructure needs including upgrading or replacing roofs, windows, security systems, fire alarms and emergency generators. Since 2024, the Ontario government

Hospital Corporations	2026-27 HIRF Formulaic Allocation	2026-27 Exceptional Circumstances Program Grant Funding	Total 2026-27 HIRF Funding
Listowel Memorial Hospital	\$ 309,078	-	\$ 309,078
North Wellington Healthcare Corporation	\$ 415,549	\$ 200,000	\$ 615,549
Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance	\$ 2,527,021	\$ 2,693,000	\$ 5,220,021
Total			\$ 6,144,648

has increased funding through the Health Infrastructure Renewal Fund by 10 per cent each year, allowing even more hospitals to complete upgrades and repairs in a timely manner.

“Our government is making historic investments to protect Ontario’s health-care system, ensuring that more people in Perth-Wellington can connect to the care they need, where and when they need it,” added Sylvia Jones, deputy premier and minister of health, in the press release. “This investment will enable North Wellington Healthcare Corporation, Listowel Memorial Hospital and the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance to address priority infrastructure needs so patients and their families can continue to access vital services and care in their community.”

Over the next 10 years, Ontario is investing approximately \$64 billion in major health infrastructure. This is part of the government’s plan to get shovels in the ground on more than 50 major hospital projects across the province, which will deliver approximately 3,000 new hospital beds to enhance access to quality care and build a connected, people-first health-care system.

Through Your Health: A Plan For Connected and Convenient Care, Ontario is expanding and modernizing hospitals and building new health-care facilities, making it faster and easier for people of all ages to connect to the high-quality care they need, where and when they need it.

Funding allocations from the Ministry of Health are listed above.

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12-year-old Kiril Maslov travels to Ottawa to participate in youth chess tournament

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

Chess is a game that requires a great deal of strategic thinking. For 12-year-old Kiril Maslov of St. Marys, it is a game that is taking him places.

Maslov recently participated in the 2026 Canadian Youth Chess Championship (CYCC) in Ottawa. The tournament is known as one of the most prestigious youth competitions that brings together and showcases many of the country's top-performing competitors.

Maslov finished the tournament with three wins, three losses and one draw in the U14 division. A chess rating of over 2,000 is considered expert level and Maslov faced some experienced players, including some who were over this rating. There were over 750 young chess players who took part in the CYCC.

Maslov was ranked 96th among the 157 players in his age group. Maslov, who only recently started competing competitively, was extremely happy to have qualified for the CYCC and considered it a major milestone for him. According to his mom Kateryna, the experience gave him more confidence, motivation and excitement for the game.

"He returned home determined to keep training, improve his game and compete in more tournaments," she told the Independent.

Though Maslov hoped for a higher result, the tournament was an incredible learning experience.

"What I enjoyed most about the championship was its scale and the opportunity to play against strong, young chess players from across Canada," he said. "I would definitely like to participate again. Next year, the cham-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Kiril Maslov at the beginning of one of his games of chess in Ottawa at the 2026 Canadian Youth Chess Championship (CYCC).

pionship will be held in Hamilton, and I am planning to qualify for it."

Though he was excited, it was also a bit intimidating, especially after hearing how far some players travelled. Though the tournament took up most of their time in



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The CYCC took place in Ottawa from July 6-10. Kiril Maslov qualified to play in the tournament and hopes to qualify again next year.

Ottawa, the family still managed to take in some of the sites like the National Gallery of Canada, the Amphibus tour and the Canadian Museum of Nature where Maslov was impressed by the huge dinosaur skeletons.

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Egg farmers discuss industry innovations and community support at summer meeting



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Egg Farmers of Ontario zone directors attending the summer district meeting included, from left, Scott Brookshaw (Wellington County), Rick Kootstra (Huron County), Sally Van Straaten (Perth-Waterloo), Egg Farmers of Ontario CEO Ryan Brown and meeting host Dan Veldman, Oxford County director and board vice-chair. Absent due to prior commitments was board chair Scott Helps of Lambton County.

GARY WEST

Independent Reporter

Egg and pullet producers from Oxford, Perth, Waterloo, Huron and Wellington counties gathered recently at the Veldman family farm between Stratford and St. Marys for their annual summer meeting and barbecue.

Among the topics discussed was the continued growth in egg consumption across Ontario, which recent reports indicate is up two to three per cent over last year.

Producers also received an update on the In-Ovo sexing technology project, with news that Canadian Egg Technologies has reached a significant milestone through a strategic partnership with Sano Technology Group.

Canadian Egg Technologies is a partnership between Egg Farmers of Ontario, Egg Farmers of Canada and MatrixSpec. The new partnership is expected to accelerate the development and commercialization of pre-incubation sex identification technology for egg hatcheries in Ontario, across Canada and international-



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Egg and pullet producers from Oxford, Perth, Waterloo, Huron and Wellington counties gather at the Veldman family farm for their annual summer meeting, where they discussed industry developments, emerging technologies and the future of egg production in Ontario.

ly. A global commercial launch is anticipated later this year or in early 2027.

Meeting attendees also heard updates on the Special Ingredient campaign, a joint consumer-awareness initiative involving Egg Farmers of Ontario, Chicken Farmers of Ontario and Turkey Farmers of Ontario. The campaign promotes Ontario's supply-managed poultry and egg sectors and has generated more than 63 million social-media impressions in its first six months.

Perth-Waterloo director Sally Van Straaten said district meetings are about

more than flock management and producing fresh, high-quality eggs at affordable prices.

She said giving back to the community remains an important part of being an Ontario egg farmer, whether through donating eggs to local food banks and schools, supporting community organizations or helping neighbours in need.

Van Straaten added Ontario egg farmers remain committed to providing consumers with a reliable supply of fresh, nutritious eggs while continuing to support the communities where they live and work.

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Save the date for this year's 39th Teddy Bear Reunion



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

This year's Teddy Bear Reunion will be held Saturday, Aug. 16, at Lions Park in Milt Dunnell Field.

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

The Teddy bears are coming back to town on Sunday, Aug. 16, to gather for their annual reunion.

The Teddy Bear Reunion will be taking place at Lions Park in Milt Dunnell Field again this year and is free admission. The parade will start at Milt Dunnell Field at 1 p.m. and the Teddy bear judging will take place at 2:30 p.m.

The judging categories this year are as

follows:

- Best dressed Teddy
- Best Teddy lookalike
- Sportsman Teddy
- Largest Teddy
- Teddy with the most friends
- Best Teddy family.

Along with the judging, the popular event will also have park activities, pony rides, face painting, train rides and lots of games to play. Bring a favourite Teddy bear and join in for a day of fun and laughter.

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Winter barley harvest begins across southern Perth County



(GARY WEST PHOTO)



(GARY WEST PHOTO)



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Augustin Walch harvests winter barley while his daughter, Louisa, unloads the combine with the grain buggy and his son, Georg, trucks the grain to the family's nearby elevator. With three daughters, one son and their spouses involved in the operation, the Walch family looks forward to continuing the farm for generations to come.

Louisa Walch waits with the grain buggy for the signal from her father to pull alongside the combine and unload another hopper of barley. In addition to helping with harvest, Louisa also cares for the family's broiler chickens, a responsibility she says she enjoys.

Augustin Walch says one of the greatest rewards of farming is working alongside his family. He says family farms continue to play an essential role in ensuring Canadians have access to locally produced food for years to come.

GARY WEST

Independent Reporter

The 2026 harvest season is underway in southern Perth County, with combines rolling through winter barley fields as farmers begin bringing in what appears to be another strong crop.

Despite the high winds and heavy rain

that swept through the area on Canada Day, many barley fields remained standing, allowing producers to begin harvesting under favourable conditions.

On the Walch family farm south of Stratford, the harvest is very much a family affair.

While Augustin Walch operates the combine, his daughter, Louisa, keeps

pace alongside in the grain buggy, unloading the combine on the go. Her brother, Georg, transports the harvested barley to the family's grain elevator just a few kilometres away.

Meanwhile, other family members bale the straw into large square bales before the fields are quickly prepared for soybean planting, often within hours of harvest.

Even with grain harvest underway, the family continues to operate its strawberry farm, where Augustin Walch's wife, Birgit, and daughter-in-law, McKenzie Walch, continue harvesting and marketing fresh berries.

The busy harvest season highlights the teamwork that has become a hallmark of the Walch family farm.

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U20 team of local athletes set track record

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

The dedication and hard work of one team comprising four athletes executed an unforgettable performance at the Ontario Track and Field Championship at the Alumni Stadium in Windsor July 10-12.

This three-day event, hosted by the Windsor Essex Athletes Club, featured top-tier provincial track and field U20 athletes from across Ontario competing for provincial titles and qualification standards.

The London Western Track and Field Club's U20 team of Kirk Hallman of Thorndale, Ryan Johnson of Thorndale, Jonah Lariviere of St. Marys and Matteo

Di Ciocco of London set a new provincial record in the U20 Men's 4x800 metre of 7:40.12 at the Ontario championships, beating the previous record of 7:40.40 set by the Mississauga Track and Field Club in 1981.

Hallman, who has been on the London Western Track and Field Club since 2023, said their team worked out three times each week and completed individual running practices six times each week.

"It is awesome to see our hard work has paid off, and we have set a new record. I am proud of all of us," he said.

Hallman, Johnson and Lariviere have been recruited and signed on to the University of Western Ontario Mustangs Track and Field Team where they will be attending university in the fall.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF LONDON WESTERN TRACK AND FIELD CLUB)

Pictured from left to right are Matteo DiCiocco (London), Jonah Lariviere (St. Marys), Ryan Johnson (Thorndale) and Kirk Hallman (Thorndale), members of a local men's track team that set a new provincial record in the U20 Men's 4x800 metre race at the Ontario Track and Field Championship in Windsor July 10-12.

Young Thorndale philanthropists making a difference



(NANCY ABRA PHOTO)

Ray and Mary Chowen support some young philanthropists – Everly Nicholson, eight, her brother, Patrick, five, and their babysitter, Isabelle Vanmoorsel – as they fundraise for the children's hospital outside the Thorndale Lions Community Centre.

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

Philanthropists come in all sizes in Thorndale.

Last month, eight-year-old Everly Nicholson and her friend, Maples, built a lemonade stand with other children in the neighbourhood. The girls decided to donate the money they earned to the children's hospital.

Everly, with her brother Patrick, age five, and their babysitter, Isabelle Vanmoorsel, 18,

were at the Thorndale Lions Community Centre last week selling the cookies they had made and were quite successful as people supported their fundraising project.

"The money is for the children's hospital," said Everly, "because I want to help sick children so they can have a good life like me."

"We have been collecting and saving the money they earn this the summer to donate to the children's hospital along side her friend's family," said Everly's mom, Jessica Nicholson. "We are so proud of them."

VON Meals on Wheels Program in Thorndale area

MACKENZIE WAGHORN

VON Program Coordinator

The VON Meals on Wheels program supports health and independence by delivering nutritious, affordable meals to adults 55 years and older, as well as adults living with disabilities.

The service is designed for individuals who may find cooking or grocery shopping difficult, and meals can be arranged for either shortterm or longterm needs.

The program offers a variety of frozen meals to meet different dietary needs, including regular, diabetic, low-sodium, gluten-free, low-fat and vegetarian options. Frozen entrées cost \$7.75, and soup and dessert are available for \$3. Frozen meals are ordered monthly, with pick-up or delivery options.

The program also offers hot catered meals, with regular and vegetarian options. Each meal includes soup or salad, a main entrée and dessert for \$10. Weekday delivery is

between 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m., excluding holidays. Clients may receive meals daily or choose specific delivery days.

For safety, meals cannot be left unattended. A client, neighbour, or family member must be present to receive each delivery. If no one is available, the meal will be returned to the Dorchester VON office, and the client must arrange pickup; billing still applies. VON coordinators will contact emergency contacts to confirm the client's wellbeing. If they cannot reach anyone, police may be asked to complete a wellness check.

There are currently openings on routes in the Dorchester and Thorndale area. To sign up for Meals on Wheels, clients require a referral from Ontario Health at Home, or they may call VON directly for assistance. Mackenzie Waghorn at VON can help guide new clients through the process. Contact VON at 5192687028 ext. 2 or visit www.vonme.ca for more information.

Town of St. Marys

NOTICE OF OPEN HOUSE



TOWN OF ST. MARYS ZONING BY-LAW REVIEW

PURPOSE AND EFFECT OF PROPOSED ZONING BY LAW: The Town of St. Marys is undertaking a Zoning By-law Review of its Zoning By-law to align with its new Official Plan. St. Marys' updated Official Plan was approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) in October 2024.

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

An Open House will be held to provide residents, business owners, and members of the community with the opportunity to give input, ask questions, and submit ideas and feedback for consideration. A formal public meeting will be held following the Open Houses, at a date to be determined, prior to the adoption of the Zoning By-law Amendment.

A key map has not been provided, as the Zoning By-law Amendment applies to the entire Town of St. Marys.

DATE & TIME: The Open House will be held on Wednesday, August 12, 2026 between 2:00 P.M. and 8:00 P.M.

NPG Planning Solutions Inc. will be presenting proposed changes to the Town's Zoning By-law at 3:00 P.M and 7:00 P.M. If you are unable to attend the presentation materials will be made available at your request by contacting the undersigned.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND MATERIALS: Additional information including a Background Reports and Technical Briefs are available to the public for inspection at the Open Houses noted above, on the project webpage townofstmarys.com/home-property-roads/zoning-by-law/, or contact the under Contact Information via an appointment to review the documents.

LOCATION: The Open House will be held in the following location: Municipal Operations Centre, 408 James St. S

CONTACT INFORMATION:

To find out more about the project and follow along, or if you wish to be notified of the decision of the Town of St. Marys on the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment, you must make a written request to:

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

If a person or public body would otherwise have an ability to appeal the decision of the Council of St. Marys to the Ontario Land Tribunal but the person or public body does not make oral submissions at a public meeting or make written submissions to the Town of St. Marys before the by-law is passed, the person or public body is not entitled to appeal the decision.

If a person or public body does not make oral submissions at a public meeting, or make written submissions to St. Marys before the by-law is passed, the person or public body may not be added as a party to the hearing of an appeal before the Ontario Land Tribunal unless, in the opinion of the Tribunal, there are reasonable grounds to do so.

STONETOWN HERITAGE FESTIVAL

SATURDAY, JULY 25 | ST. MARYS, ON

ST. MARYS FARMERS MARKET 8:00 - 12:00

BREAKFAST HOSTED BY KINSMEN CLUB 8:00 - 11:00

TOWN SHUTTLE 8:00 - 4:00

FREE - 4 STOPS

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT 10:00 - 4:00

FREE - 7 PERFORMANCES

KIDS ZONE 10:00 - 4:00

FREE INFLATABLES + GAMES

FOOD TRUCKS 10:00 - 4:00

WELLINGTON STREET SOUTH

VENDOR VILLAGE 10:00 - 4:00

SHOP 65+ OUTDOOR VENDORS

FREE TRACKLESS TRAIN 10:00 - 4:00

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FREE HERITAGE TOURS 11:00 - 4:00

REGISTRATION REQUIRED

FREE MAGIC SHOW 2:00 - 3:00

RON GUEL - TOWN HALL AUDITORIUM

KINSMEN SUMMERFEST 12:00 - LATE

MILT DUNNELL FIELD (THE FLATS)

HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY'S ANNUAL GARDEN TOUR - SUNDAY 1:00 - 5:00



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#StMarysON

St. Marys Independent **SPORTS**

U9 HPFL Rockies win gold in Embro tournament

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The U9 HPFL St. Marys Rockies emerged as the champions of the EMBA Annual U9 Tournament June 19-21 in Embro.

Head coach Laura Hinz told the Independent the team rose to the challenge of a tournament that offered some unfamiliar challenges to the young squad.

"We weren't too sure what to expect coming into this tournament," said Hinz. "We were already at a bit of a disadvantage as the U9 rules in Huron Perth Fastball League no longer included pitching; however, we entered into this pitching tournament for the girls to gain a bit of experience of what this looks like from the offensive and defensive angles. Our pitchers were able to find the strike zone, and the defence backed them up and cheered them on. It was great to watch and see the excitement across the team."

Hinz added the backbone of the team's success was their excellent defensive play, coupled with strong individual efforts up and down the lineup.

"We had no expectations going in, but only for the girls to experience what a tournament is like and continue team building. The bats were a bit quiet for the first few games, but the girls made up for it with their amazing defensive plays. The key to the semi-final game was to keep Ayr off the board. After squeaking by with a 2-0 win in the semi-finals Sunday morning, the girls were pumped to make it to the final game.

"To name star players would be impossible as this group all contributed in some way," Hinz continued. "We had pitchers trying their hand at pitching and throwing strikes, we had plays in the field to shut the innings down before max runs counted and cheers, oh the cheers, on the bench. It was an amazing example of girls coming together and learning sportsman-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The U9 HPFL St. Marys Rockies captured the gold medal at the EMBA Annual U9 Tournament June 19-21 in Embro. Pictured in the front row is Addie Dundas. In the second row, from left to right, are Jovi Sass, Charlotte Holliday, Gemma Thompson, Natalie Kittmer and Lenny Vergeer. In the third row, from left, are Kerry Vergeer, Laura Hinz, Jamie-Lee Mealey, Alice Hinz, Nora Sicilia, Aaliya Campbell, Adelia Verbaan, Kaelynn Mealey, Natalie Hibbert, Jamie Hibbert and Allie Holliday.

ship with a friendly side of competition."

After winning both of their round-robin games to earn a bye into the semi-finals, where they defeated Ayr 2-0, the Rockies met a strong Innerkip team in the gold-medal game. An early lead for St. Marys proved to be insurmountable, with the Rockies staying ahead the rest of the game, ultimately winning 7-4.

"We knew the finals versus Innerkip were going to be challenging given their success over the weekend, but the girls stayed in the game and continued to cheer each other on," Hinz said. "In our final game versus Innerkip, the girls put it all

together and brought everything to the diamond. The bats were louder and the defensive skills were keeping Innerkip's runs to a minimum, with one defensive inning going three up, three down. We got an early lead and never gave it up."

According to Hinz, above the success the team enjoyed on the field, their character and application of what they've been taught by their coaches stood out during their tournament performance.

"The way this group supports one another both on and off the diamond is what makes a team," Hinz explained. "Yes, we can learn plays, drills and batting, but

each of these players brings kindness and respect to the diamond each time they tie up their cleats. This again rang true in this tournament, where sportsmanship was always evident.

"These girls are always ready to learn and then learn more. They are attentive in our practices and in our games. As coaches, we couldn't be more proud of them to see them take the boring and repetitive drills and apply them to games. Although the girls loved celebrating their victory, I am sure the splash pad across the street will hold an equal memory. We as coaches are beyond proud of them."

U18 OBA Blue Rockies take silver at Stratford tournament

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The Red Rock Construction U18 OBA St. Marys Rockies brought home a silver medal from the SMBA Tournament July 3-5 in Stratford.

Head coach Justin Ewing credited the group for their tenacity at the plate.

"One thing the boys did really well was grind out at-bats," Ewing told the Independent. "We had a lot of long at-bats and hits with two strikes. Also, our pitching continues to keep us in games. Our approach at the plate and base-running were excellent. We continue to drive home the need for having a plan at the plate. We need to continue putting balls in play, move the runners on base and have productive at-bats."

The Rockies finished tied for first in their group with



a perfect three-for-three record in round-robin play, setting them up for a semi-final clash against the Bradford Tigers. According to Ewing, strong performances on both sides of the ball led to the Rockies' 14-3 victory.

"Julian (Walsh) pitched for us and gave up four hits and three runs, only one earned, over five innings, striking out nine and walking four. We had a pretty balanced attack. The team jumped on their pitcher and put a lot of pressure on Bradford's defence. We had 12 hits in the

game. Zach (Larmer) and Parker (Levy) each collected two hits in the game. We scored eight runs in the second inning and five in the fourth.

"Zach (Larmer) had a big weekend," Ewing continued. "He hit .583 over 12 at-bats with seven hits and two walks. Jared (Ballantyne) drove in seven runs, which led the team. Overall, like I said, we were pretty balanced."

The Rockies came up short in the finals against the Mitchell Astros, but Ewing noted the silver medal gave the squad another valuable learning experience.

"As the season winds down, I am hopeful we continue to put ourselves in good spots and have opportunities to win on Sundays," Ewing said. "We will need to find a way to make the plays we are supposed to and a few we aren't, and we need to hit. We seem to grip it a little tight when in these games. I know it's hard but just approach it the same as other games."

River Valley holds ladies league mid-season scramble



(PHOTO COURTESY OF RIVER VALLEY GOLF COURSE)

Thirty-five participants from the ladies league at River Valley Golf Course played in the mid-season scramble on July 8.

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

On July 8, River Valley Golf Course held a fun mid-year scramble for their Wednesday ladies league.

Following the nine-hole scramble tour-

namment, there was live music by the very talented Darryl Romphf and a delicious chicken buffet dinner.

Contests throughout the tournament included closest to the pin and keg holes, longest putt and an optional team skin game.

Players were encouraged to wear their favourite FIFA soccer colours or attire, and all the ladies were welcomed with a Hawaiian lei by course manager Sarah Forbes.

The winners of the scramble, shooting a 29, were Lisa McEwan, Linda Cod-

dington, Lisa Vandenheuval and Dallyce Southern. The team of Darlene Clark, Angela Evertt, Janice Whitcroft and Ketty Conard also shot an impressive 29, however with the tie, organizers had to use the retrogression rule on scores making team McEwan the champs.



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

It's no green jacket, however tournament winners Lisa McEwan, Linda Coddington, Lisa VandenHeuvel and Dallyce Southern show off their new hats they won after shooting 29 in the scramble.

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STRATFORD NISSAN



Lincs add former NHLer Brian Dobbin as assistant coach

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The St. Marys Lincolns have filled out their coaching staff for the 2026-2027 season with the hiring of former pro player Brian Dobbin as assistant coach.

Dobbin joins Mike Siddall as an assistant on the staff of head coach and assistant general manager Jeff Bradley and replaces former associate coach Mike Herman.

Dobbin told the Independent the opportunity to win was a major factor in deciding to join the Lincolns behind the bench.

“I’ve been around hockey a long time, and there’s nothing like winning,” said Dobbin. “In talking with Jeff (Bradley) and Pat (Powers), our visions align, and our coaching styles align. Maybe I’ll bring some other dynamics to the team that may be helpful. How well this team is run and the thought of possibly winning a Sutherland Cup was all I needed to be enticed to come to St. Marys.”

Bradley echoed the sentiment of Dobbin as the team strives for the one prize that has alluded them in their incredible run of four straight conference final appearances.

“He knows what not only me but Pat (Powers), Brandon (Boyd) and our players expect to do here, and we feel like we’ve been right there,” Bradley said. “Winning is important and he’s accomplished a lot in hockey, and I think he wants to give back and to win, and with us, it’s really all about winning. So, to have a guy on board with that mentality, that’s exactly what we need here.”

As a player, Dobbin was a prolific scorer in the Ontario Hockey League (OHL), racking up 126 goals and 317 points in 251 games with the Kingston Canadians and



London Knights from 1982-1986. Dobbin was drafted in the fifth round of the 1984 NHL Draft by the Philadelphia Flyers, and in 1987-1988, Dobbin helped the Flyers’ then American Hockey League (AHL) affiliate, the Hershey Bears, win a Calder Cup after scoring 36 goals and 83 points in 54 games before adding seven goals and 15 points in 12 games as the Bears swept their way to the Calder Cup. In total, Dobbin scored 216 goals and 472 points in 381 AHL games, while also appearing in 63 NHL games with the Flyers and Boston Bruins.

Behind the bench, Dobbin served as head coach of the Lambton Shores Predators in the Greater Ontario Hockey League (GOHL) in the 2016-2017 season before taking the reigns as the bench boss of the U18 Elgin-Middlesex Canucks starting in the 2022-2023 season. Dobbin guided the Canucks to two U18 Alliance Championships

and one Telus Cup appearance, and coached numerous former Lincolns, including Hayden Barch, Liam Ladds and Luke Bogart, as well as current Lincolns’ blueliners James MacGregor and Luke McMillan.

According to Bradley, Dobbin’s resumé as a player and his ability to develop future Lincolns made him a strong candidate for the vacancy on their staff.

“The big thing was obviously his hockey pedigree, both playing and coaching. In talking to a lot of his ex-players, they had a lot of great things to say about him. A lot of his ex-players have come through St. Marys and they spoke about what he’s done for them as players and the teams they played on.

“He has a really good feel of how to coach them and mix between being a player’s coach and being hard on them when he needs to,” Bradley continued. “There are going to be situations during our season that I didn’t see as a player, or the rest of the staff hadn’t seen as a player. So, to have somebody who has been through those experiences to help the guys out a little bit, I think that’s going to be very valuable.”

Dobbin said the culture surrounding the team and the success of the organization made the opportunity to join the Lincolns too good to pass up.

“They’re always competitive. They’ve always put together good teams. The town’s really supportive. They’ve done really well in the playoffs. The staff has been there for a long time. That tells you that players and coaches like being there. They like coaching there. The town gives the Lincolns such great support. It’s such a great, classy organization. They run a tight ship, and they strive for success every year, and that’s something you want to be a part of.”

Powers sinks hole-in-one at Science Hill golf course



(PHOTO COURTESY OF SCIENCE HILL GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB)

Kyle Powers, pictured, earned a hole-in-one flag July 15 at the Science Hill Golf and Country Club. Powers drained the ace on hole 12.

ST. MARYS MEN’S SLO PITCH LEAGUE STANDINGS

(as of July 20th) (W-L-T)

‘A’ Division

1. Flyers (12-2)
2. LA Batts (10-6)
3. Tribe (9-4-2)
4. Merchants (9-4)
5. Diamondbacks (9-6)
6. Royals (8-6)
7. Macindrivers (8-7)
8. Isotopes (7-9)

‘B’ Division

1. Bomberadoes (12-3)
2. Jets (11-4)
3. Bears (10-5-1)
4. Sox (6-10)
5. Rangers (5-10-1)
6. Autobots (5-11)
7. Thunder (3-12-2)
8. LSD (3-13)
9. Pats (0-15)

ST. MARYS WOMEN’S SLO PITCH LEAGUE STANDINGS

(as of July 20th) (W-L-T)

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Bringin the Heat (11-0-1) | 8. Snappers (4-6-0) |
| 2. BBrew (10-1-0) | 9. Wannabees (4-6-0) |
| 3. Free Agents (8-2-0) | 10. Exterminators (4-8-0) |
| 4. Resting Pitch Face (8-2-0) | 11. Field of Queens (3-8-0) |
| 5. Comets (6-4-1) | 12. Wombats (3-8-0) |
| 6. Shenanigals (6-4-0) | 13. Basic Pitches (2-10-0) |
| 7. Mad Batters (5-5-0) | 14. Pitches (0-10-0) |

FOR SPORTS TIPS CONTACT SPENCER SEYMOUR
CALL OR TEXT 519.859.1049 OR EMAIL SPENCER.SEYMOUR88@GMAIL.COM

MINOR SPORTS **SCRAPBOOK**



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Jase Hazen fires a penalty kick on target during the U10 Boys Tier Three ‘A’ St. Marys Storm game this past Sunday.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Harper Hillman kicks the ball out of the air during this past Sunday’s U11 Girls Tier Two St. Marys Storm game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Abilene Votary rockets a pitch towards the plate during the St. Marys Kinsmen Club U13 HPFL Red St. Marys Rockies game last Tuesday.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Isaac Palmer cracks a hit off the bat during this past Monday’s Downie Optimist Club U13 HL Red St. Marys Rockies game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Morgan Reid leaps up to make a catch in the outfield during the Dave Hensel U15 HPFL Blue St. Marys Rockies game this past Sunday.



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COLUMNS

UKRAINIAN CORNER: Passport to the community

ALONA VASYLIEVA

Independent Columnist

With the arrival of summer break, downtown St. Marys has suddenly become so wonderfully busy. The streets are alive with the sound of children's laughter, interspersed with the occasional sigh of well-meaning, slightly frustrated parents who are doing their absolute best to keep their kids entertained for the next two months.

Every family navigates this seasonal shift differently. Some rely heavily on the generous help of grandparents for babysitting, others have a meticulously planned schedule filled with summer camps and daycare, and some parents simply decide to go with the flow, letting the summer unfold as a spontaneous adventure.

Fortunately, our local library has an incredible variety of things to offer. My son, Alex, and his friends were recently signed up for the summer reading program. They each received a little "reading passport" to track their progress, and Alex is so motivated by the promise of prizes that he has already finished his third book. The program runs throughout the entire summer, and with so many daily activities on the calendar, the kids are genuinely excited to participate every single day.

For me, witnessing this level of joy in a library highlights a profound cultural shift compared to the world I grew up in. Back during my university years in Ukraine, navigating the massive departments of the academic library while searching for resources for my diploma research was a deeply intimidating experience.

I vividly remember the heavy silence and the towering, endless rows of wooden card catalogs. As a young student, I constantly felt a wave of anxiety, as if the library employees were quietly watching, waiting for me to make a mistake or fail at deciphering the complex filing

system. I often felt confused, out of place and, frankly, a bit foolish. Yet, I was too afraid to ask anyone for help, convinced that I was the only one who didn't understand how it all worked. That experience left a lasting imprint on my mind, teaching me that a library was a rigid, formal institution – a place to be approached with caution and stayed away from whenever possible.

So, when I arrived in Canada years later and heard someone casually say, "Let's go hang out at the library," I was utterly shocked. To me, combining the words "hang out" and "library" felt like an impossible paradox.

However, stepping inside our local branch in St. Marys revealed an entirely different world. Here, the modern library is a brilliant, multi-functional sanctuary. It is a creative combination of a photo studio, a bustling community hub and a venue for kids' interactive quests and treasure hunts. It offers essential reading-support programs, engaging social events for teens and seniors, and reliable internet access. It seamlessly serves as a warm, welcoming shelter during harsh winter snowstorms and a favourite, air-conditioned escape during scorching summer days. It even provides unexpected access to sports equipment and designated play spaces for children of all ages. Essentially, it is a guaranteed safe space for everyone, regardless of background or age.

Beyond the endless list of amenities, it is the people who truly transform the space. The staff members are not just friendly, they consistently go above and beyond for every single visitor, greeting each customer with genuine warmth, patience and care. There is no judgment here, only an open door and a helping hand.

Seeing my son so eager to fill his reading passport makes me realize that sometimes, the greatest summer adventures don't require traveling across the globe. They just require a library card, an open mind and a community that truly cares about bringing people together



(ALONA VASYLIEVA PHOTO)

Columnist Alona Vasylieva explores the modern library paradox; how a space once defined by rigid silence became the warmest, loudest and most supportive heart of the St. Marys community this summer.

Straight From The Shelves

By Laura McAsh, St. Marys Public Library

This week's Funday Friday program is Chocolate Bar BINGO! Listen for the numbers, mark your cards, and call out BINGO at this sweet twist on a classic game. To register for this program, visit ActiveNet: tinyurl.com/SMPL-ActiveNet. Please note that participants under the age of 7 must be accompanied by a caregiver who is at least 12 years old.

Celebrate the Heritage Festival with us this Saturday by stopping by our table on the Queen Street lawn! Have some fun making a button and indulging in freshly spun cotton candy. The Library will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., so feel free to head inside the building to cool off and to fill up your water bottle throughout the day.

UP THIS WEEK

- Fri., July 24: **Funday Friday – Chocolate Bar BINGO*** (11 a.m. to 12 p.m.)
- Sat., July 25: **Dungeons & Dragons** (10 a.m.)
- Mon., July 27: **Picnic in the Park**** (12-1 p.m.), **Discovery Den*** (3:15 – 4:30 p.m.)
- Tues., July 28: **Reading Help*** (10:30 – 11:30 a.m.), **Tuesday Book Club*** (11 a.m.), **Crafty Kids*** (1:45 – 3 p.m.)
- Wed., July 29: **EarlyON Play & Read** (9:30 – 10:30 a.m.), **Picnic in the Park**** (12-1 p.m.), **Mahjong~** (1-4 p.m.), **Imagination Station** (2-4 p.m.), **Reading Help*** (2:30 – 3:30 p.m.), **Teen Program*** (6-7 p.m.)
- Thurs., July 30: **Mini Makers*** (10:45 a.m. to 12 p.m.), **Fluency Fitness**** (2-3 p.m.)

*Registration Required **Held at Kin Park (109 James St. N)
~Held at the PRC, 1/3 Hall (317 James St. S)

Ask the Arborist

By Joel Hackett • 519.272.5742 • jtsquote@gmail.com

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



Dear Arborist,

A large limb fell off our tree. I think it was a tornado! Have you ever seen something like this before? It was really big.

Thanks, Eddie (age 7)

Dear Eddie,

After the storm a couple weeks ago, I did see many trees damaged by wind. I think one of them might have been damaged by a

tornado. There was a locust tree, 20 inches in diameter, that was twisted right around in a circle and bent over in half.

The worst one I ever saw was a giant maple tree, maybe 5 ft. in diameter at the trunk. The wind had torn 30 ft of the top off, turned it upside down and rammed it back down on the tree in a tangled mess. That tree was a very dangerous mess to work on.

Sincerely, The Arborist

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HISTORIC ST. MARYS: The St. Marys Fair

MARY SMITH

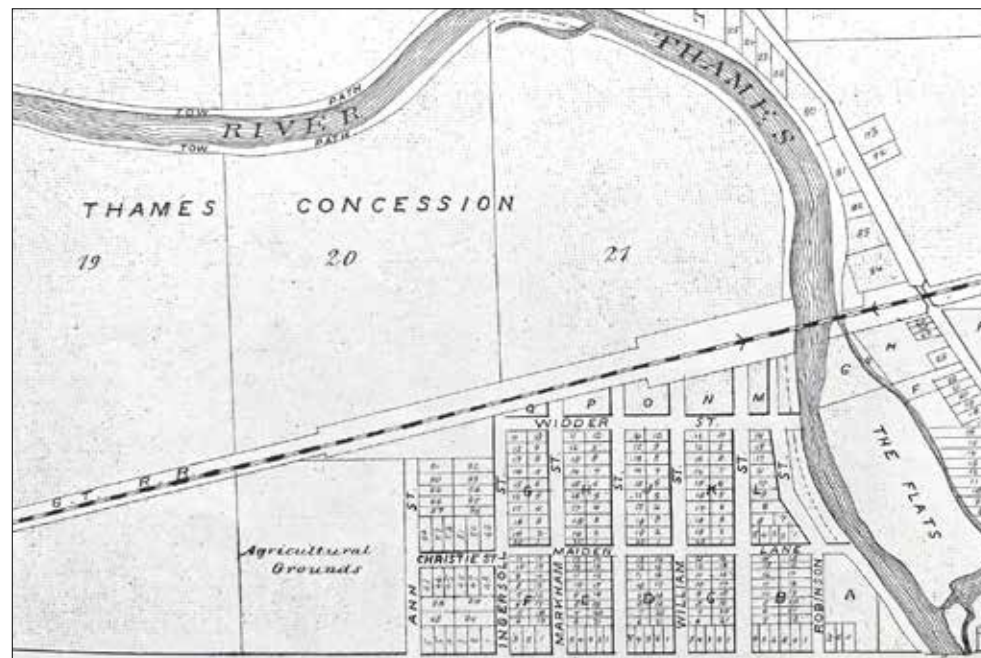
Independent Columnist

This coming weekend in St. Marys will be, for many, the highlight of the summer – the Stonetown Heritage Festival is on Saturday. The Kinsmen Summerfest with the midway and live musical entertainment begins Thursday evening and goes to Sunday, the day the Horticultural Society's annual garden tour also takes place. It will be a weekend with something of interest for everyone! Even so, some will remember with regret the former main summer attraction in St. Marys – the annual agricultural fair. A big part of the fair was the parade with tractors of every make and vintage along with marching bands, baton twirlers, floats and Shriners. The Fair Ambassador, Mini King and Queen, Home-crafts, floral entries, pet judging, demonstrations of antique farm equipment – all these features vanished after the St. Marys Fair's final year – 2007!

The annual fair, held under the auspices of the St. Marys Agricultural Society, did survive for 160 years, an impressive record for any institution. Of course, it was a very different event when it began. In 1997, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the society, Viola Proudlove researched its history, talking to longtime directors and studying old accounts and minutes books. She supplemented this research by reading articles from archived issues of the *Journal Argus*. The resulting booklet is an excellent review of significant events in the society's history and its major focus, the annual fair. Through the years, a theme is evident: the fair's challenge to remain relevant. Certainly, there were some discouraging years when bad weather had an impact on attendance. But from its 19th century beginnings, the agricultural society worked to encourage participation. While they wanted an event that urban visitors would enjoy, the society wanted even more to convince the farming community that the fair was important to them.

One of the resources that Vi Proudlove found useful was a 1934 issue of the *St. Marys Journal Argus*. Publisher Lorne A. Eedy had produced this multi-page special edition on November 28, 1934. Ostensibly it marked the 70th anniversary of the town's incorporation but also, by emphasizing the residents' many accomplishments through its history, it offered hope and encouragement in the dark days of the Great Depression. The anniversary newspaper includes short histories of the town's businesses, churches, sports, clubs and organizations. Harry Bonis, a retired high school teacher, provided the history of the agricultural fair. Although he had earned his livelihood in town, Bonis had grown up on the family farm in Blanshard Township and retained his interest in agriculture. In 1934 when he described its history, he was serving as the society's treasurer. He gave 1847 as the date of the first fair held in St. Marys under the auspices of the Blanshard Agricultural Society.

During the St. Marys Agricultural Society's final meetings in 2008, the directors agreed to place the society's records in the St. Marys Museum's archives vault where



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

A detail from the map of St. Marys in the 1879 Belden Historical Atlas of Perth County, showing the Agricultural Grounds in the west ward. Queen Street West (unmarked) runs along the bottom of this map.

they can still be accessed by appointment. As Vi Proudlove discovered, the records of the society's first nine years did not survive and so much remains unknown about the society and its earliest fairs. For example, where were these fairs held? In the 1840s, many farmers in this area were still struggling to clear a few acres of bush. How many among them had livestock or crops to bring to a competition? Who had the knowledge and experience to do the judging? The surviving records begin in 1856 – the minutes of a meeting on January 21 of the Blanshard Branch Agricultural Society directors.

Canadian agricultural societies in the mid-19th century were modelled after those that had been formed in Great Britain in the early decades of the 19th century. The Royal Agricultural Society of England was established in 1838. Its purpose was to improve agricultural practices by connecting farmers with scientists who could advise on best crops for specific soil and climate conditions and best breeding practices for livestock owners. To encourage these improvements, the society sponsored competitions, organizing judging events and awarding prizes. In his 1902 *History of Perth County*, William Johnston reports that agricultural societies, like those in Britain, were formed in Perth County in the 1840s. The first one was the Stratford Agricultural Society, established in 1841, and the first fair was held that year in front of the county courthouse. (In 2026, the Stratford Agricultural Society is celebrating its 185th year with the annual fall fair on September 24-27.) Johnston points out that society meetings and fairs were not consistently held until the late 1840s when agricultural societies became active throughout Perth County, including the branch in Blanshard Township. These societies were supported by government grants if they could prove they were viable by enrolling local members.

The purpose of that first meeting in January 1856 was to elect the society's executive and directors. William Patterson Smith was elected president, James Mc-

Quaig was secretary and Edward Long was re-elected treasurer. These three members of the executive all lived in St. Marys, and all were local merchants. W. P. Smith sold furniture, James McQuaig had a dry goods store and was an insurance agent, Edward Long owned a general store. Ten additional men were elected directors, some farmers and some businessmen. The prosperity of St. Marys depended largely on the prosperity of the surrounding agricultural area. If the agricultural society was able to improve farm income by encouraging best agricultural practices, the town's merchants would also benefit. Election to the society brought the directors a certain amount of prestige.

The directors met monthly either in the St. Marys town hall or in the National Hotel on the southeast corner of Queen and Water Streets. They discussed dates and locations for livestock shows – one in the spring and another in the fall. Judging of crops was two-fold: a committee visited each farm and evaluated the field before it was harvested; samples (in bushels) from the harvest were judged at the fall fair. For many years, the society purchased high

quality seed in bulk and farmers entering competition bought it at a fair price from the society. For example, in one 1870s fair, the society awarded prizes in these categories: five wheat, barley, peas, oats, timothy and clover. To guarantee improved livestock, the society owned a Durham bull, kept on a director's farm within the north boundary of St. Marys. Farmers brought their cattle to the bull and paid a modest fee if the visit was successful. If after two visits breeding had failed, the farmers were not charged a fee.

In 1865, the name of the society was changed to the South Perth Agricultural Society to conform to the new electoral districts created within the province. The annual fair was still based in St. Marys but plowing matches – also the society's responsibility – were held in different townships from year to year. The residents of the northern portions of the nearby townships of East and West Nissouri, although not in Perth County, tended to do business in St. Marys. Both townships eventually appointed directors to the South Perth Agricultural Society and contributed to its support.

Through the 1860s and 1870s, a major concern was establishing permanent fairgrounds. As early as 1860, some prosperous residents owned a driving park, a members-only racetrack on property along the north side of Queen Street in the west ward. Some driving park association members were also directors of the agricultural society and gradually, the agricultural society seems to have taken over responsibility for this property, including the racetrack. Harness races became a popular feature of the annual fall fair. The Perth Registry Office records show that in 1875, the South Perth Riding Agricultural Society took out a mortgage to purchase a parcel of land west of Ann Street from the Connors family. On the map of St. Marys in the 1879 Belden Historical Atlas of Perth County, the Agricultural Grounds are clearly marked on the north side of Queen Street West, part of Lot 20 in the Thames Concession. Next week's column will explain how the agricultural society made these grounds their home for the next 90 years.

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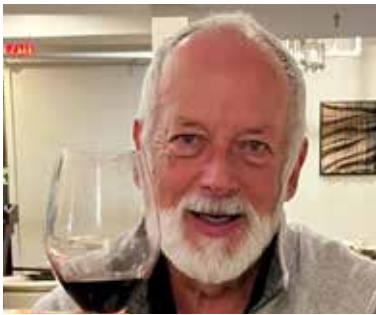


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PAUL KNOWLES

Independent Columnist

There was a talented young violinist busking in front of the Avon Theatre. As I dropped a loonie into her case, I couldn't help but notice that the coin nestled into a large collection of American bills.

And that reminded me of a cliché – one that is nonetheless true. We almost never visit wonderful destinations that are too close to home. A good number of Niagara Region residents don't go to see the Falls. Lots of Ottawa folks never visit the National Gallery. Many Winnipeg people have not darkened the door of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

And while Americans and Canadians from farther away pour into Stratford by the score to see some of the best theatre in the world, we locals often give it a miss.

After seeing our first two Stratford productions this season, I have to say we locals are making a big mistake.

I often hear people comment on the cost, sometimes comparing it to other regional theatres. Well, yes, Stratford is more

expensive than the others. But frankly, as good as the regional theatres can be, Stratford is consistently several steps higher on the ladder of excellence.

We've just seen *Guys and Dolls* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. The acting, singing, dancing, sets – in fact, everything – is simply the best, by far, that you will find anywhere in this area. The productions, I venture to say, are as good as anything theatregoers will find anywhere!

And another note about the cost – we locals are often offered bargain basement prices. Last week, I received social media notifications of ticket prices at the Festival as low as \$29, and ranging upward, but never getting near the usual price.

It also occurs to me that, even at full price, tickets to see amazing theatre are still less expensive than good seats at a Blue Jays' game, and way less than tickets to see the Leafs lose. I say this as a lifelong Leafs fan, by the way.

Enough about economics. Stratford is a destination that locals are foolish to ignore. Not just the theatre, but also the restaurants, the concerts (often outdoors and free), the shops and the beautiful parks and gardens.

But most of all, the theatre.

The two plays I've seen were both enormous fun. Difference genres, but both full of laughter, extremely talented performances and very clever sets.

Let's start with *Guys and Dolls*. In my mind, the star of the show never appears on stage;

she is Donna Feore, a Stratford resident who is a wildly talented choreographer and director. She performed both duties for *Guys and Dolls*, and the dance sequences are more than worth the price of admission on their own.

The cast is terrific – Mark Uhre as Nathan Detroit, Olivia Sinclair-Brisbane as Sarah Brown, Jennifer Rider-Shaw as Miss Adelaide. But I admit I am biased; I have enjoyed the work of Dan Chameroy every time I have seen him on stage, and I did so again. And the show-stealing song, "Sit Down, You're Rocking The Boat," is performed magnificently by Steve Ross as Nicely-Nicely Johnson. Full disclosure, Steve is a much-treasured acquaintance of mine, and to see him nail the performance was a highlight of the afternoon for me.

The entire play is performed with great energy, and yet, minute attention detail. If you like musicals with happy endings, you will love *Guys and Dolls*. If you don't like musicals with happy endings, I don't think I can help you.

If song and dance is the signature of *Guys and Dolls*, words are the focus of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. This clever, funny, satirical piece is the work of Oscar Wilde, and it is jam-packed with his wit. But it's also silly in a brilliant way.

Again, the cast was excellent; Carter Gulseth as Algeron Moncrieff, Allison Lynch as Gwendolen Fairfax, Marissa Orjalo as Cecily Cardew and Joe Perry as John Worthing were in



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

The busker at the Avon Theatre attracted a lot of American patrons.

the lead roles, and were terrific. But the play holds a special treat. Two giants of Canadian stage and screen were featured in this production; Fiona Reid as the unstoppable Lady Bracknell and Lucy Peacock as Miss Prism, a prim spinstress with a deeply guarded secret.

A secret which is, of course, revealed, along with many other misunderstandings, misconceptions and downright lies that form the basis for the hilariously unfolding plot.

I am guessing that most of the audience had seen a performance, or the movie, of *Earnest* prior to taking their seats in the Avon Theatre – including me. It says everything about the excellence of Stratford theatre that

prior knowledge did not detract one bit from the sheer enjoyment of the performance. Even the big reveal by Miss Prism was received with shouts of laughter – not because folks were surprised, but because Lucy Peacock was so good at her job.

Stratford: a destination that attracts visitors from all across North American and beyond, and where the doors are wide open to the Festival's neighbours all season long. Enjoy!

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



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

A sign that means "some of the best theatre in the world."



(DARIANE SANCHE PHOTO)

From left: Mark Uhre as Nathan Detroit, Jennifer Rider-Shaw as Miss Adelaide, Dan Chameroy as Sky Masterson and Olivia Sinclair-Brisbane as Sarah Brown, *Guys and Dolls*. Stratford Festival 2026.

FROM THE GARDEN: Woodland beauties



NANCY ABRA

Independent Columnist

The simplest undertakings in life often become the most memorable. After a few invitations over the years, my husband and I finally got the opportunity to visit friends in Bruce Peninsula. Many people hike the backcountry trails of the rugged 'Bruce' but when you have friends who are your personal guides through their woodlands, you see Mother Nature's resilience and beauty in a whole new way.

Our friends, Dorothy and Allan, are true advocates for the natural world. They led us through thick forest growth, ducking branches and pointing out emerald-green ferns growing from cracked porous rock, and lush mosses adding colour at the base of rotting trees. As we picked our way across the moist, spongy forest floor, they spoke about the diversity of

their woodland and the plants that thrive within its dense canopy. Soon we arrived at a small opening of dappled sunlight where they introduced us to a patch of tall Showy Lady's Slippers. They were breathtaking, even at the end of their blooming period.

Orchids are commonly known as tropical houseplants. But Ontario is home to more than fifty native orchid species, some of the most specialized plants in our forests. On the Bruce Peninsula alone, over forty species, roughly 70% of the province's diversity, flourish in limestone-rich soils, moderated climate, and a mosaic of rock, bog, and hardwood forest.

Six to eight species of Lady's Slipper orchids grow in Ontario with the Bruce Peninsula one of the richest regions for these members of the genus *Cypripedium*. Their slipper-shaped pouches act as clever pollination traps, guiding insects inside and releasing them dusted with pollen.

The Pink Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium acaule*), also called the Moccasin Flower, grows 20–40 cm high and prefers acidic soils. Though common in eastern Ontario, pockets exist on the peninsula where pine and hemlock dominate. Its deep rose-pink pouch and narrow brownish

petals bloom from late May to June.

The Yellow Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium parviflorum*) thrives in moist, calcium-rich soils and forest edges of the Bruce Peninsula and Grey County. Its bright yellow pouch and twisted brown petals appear from late May to June.

The Ram's Head Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium arietinum*) is smaller than other slipper orchids, blooming in late May to June with a deep burgundy pouch streaked in white. One of the rarest orchids in North America, it is easily overlooked—making any sighting a treasure.

And then there is the Showy Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium reginae*), one of Ontario's largest slipper orchids. Rising nearly a metre from the boggy forest floor, it glows like a lantern—white petals and a rosy pouch soft and luminous. In their quiet colonies, they signal an undisturbed ecosystem, the kind only healthy forests can sustain. Seeing them in person felt like being welcomed into one of the forest's rare secrets.

Native orchids in Ontario are protected under provincial legislation, safeguarding endangered and threatened species such as the Eastern Prairie Fringed - orchid and the Small White Lady's



- slipper. Their survival depends on precise relationships with soil fungi and moisture levels, making them exquisitely sensitive to environmental change. It can take up to sixteen years for some varieties to mature, and transplantation is rarely successful. It is a serious offense to harm or collect these plants.

Because orchid roots are shallow and easily damaged, hikers should stay on designated paths

in areas like the Saugeen Bruce Peninsula. If you come across a colony, keep its location safe - avoid geotagging to protect them from poachers.

I have a small woodland garden with a few native bloomers, but nothing compares to the colour and texture of a natural forest. Thank you, Dorothy and Allan, for opening our eyes and our hearts to Mother Nature's woodland beauties.

UNDERSTANDING GEN Z:

What do you want to be when you grow up?



MEREDITH A. STOKES

Independent Columnist

When adults approach a kid, there is a set list of questions that are apparently acceptable to ask us. Mundane things such as "What school do you go to," "What's your favourite colour," and, "Do you play any sports," are reoccurring. Simple questions with one-word answers that the asker is near guaranteed to forget by the next time you talk. And for some unfathomable reason, society has deemed, "What do you want to be when you grow up," one of these questions.

Adults, have you ever had someone you barely know walk up to you,

introduce themselves, then demand you tell them all your problems? If you have, I suggest you find different people to hang around. The rest of you would likely be unnerved by such an encounter, and rightfully so. You just don't pour your heart out to a random stranger. And career choices? Those are one of them.

Why, you may ask, would your future career be something to hide?

To start with, do you have any idea how much thought we put into this? Everyone around us is constantly telling us about the amount of preparation we need and hinting that we're running out of time. I wish I was kidding when I said I had a teacher remind us of this, then proceed to say tick, tock like a demented clock determined on making our lives even more stressful than they already are. We have spent uncountable nights lying awake, wondering who in the world came up with the "feeling your true calling" idiocy.

Just when we think we might have the beginnings of aspirations, someone asks what they are. Well,

then you can just about kiss those dreams goodbye because the adults that asked you are about to poke more holes in your logic than Swiss cheese. I know you probably don't know you're doing it at all. After all, you're "only trying to help" and "save us from failure." But whoever decided mistakes make you grow was onto something. We would much rather find these things out ourselves than get it as an offhand comment from you.

So, what do we say? "I dunno." And sometimes it's true. Not all of us know what we really want, but I'm pretty sure that's universal for all age groups. Life is nothing but a journey to find ourselves.

I don't want you to start avoiding that topic like the plague now, but try considering your questions from our point of view before you ask them next time and see how you might feel.

If you have any specific questions or ideas, feel free to reach out to the St. Marys Independent and I will do my very best to answer.

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Riddles

What runs but cannot walk, has a mouth but no teeth, and has a bed but cannot sleep?
A river.

There is one word spelled wrong in every English dictionary. What is it?
Wrong.

What goes in your pocket but keeps it empty?
A hole.

What has legs but cannot walk?
A chair.

I sometimes run but cannot walk. You follow me around. What am I?
Your nose.

What word begins and ends with the E but only has one letter?
Envelope.

What do you find at the end of a rainbow?
The letter W.

I'm taller when I'm young and shorter when I'm old.
What am I?
A candle.

What is always right in front of you, yet you cannot see it?
The future.

What has a tongue but cannot talk?
A shoe.

What is easier to get into than out of?
Trouble.

- Word Search -



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The **Riddle Kid**
OF THE WEEK



Jack O'Drowsky (4)

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

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PET OF THE WEEK



Long weekends mean trips, gatherings, and extra activity—but pets can get stressed, lost, or injured. Keep them secure, hydrated, and supervised, and make sure ID tags are up to date.
A little planning keeps tails wagging and whiskers happy all weekend!



ZIGGY

Our Pet of the Week is Ziggy, a five-year-old golden doodle. Ziggy's greatest attribute is her ability to travel without any issues. She loves road trips and has been to Nova Scotia several times. Ziggy enjoys the hotels on the way and knows where the elevators are. Her owners haven't figured out how.



LIVING RETIRED: 'I have seen the light!'

GARY CHALK

Independent Columnist

I never, never, never thought the day would come that I would say I enjoy soccer. However, after 30 days of The World Cup, I managed to emerge from underneath crumpled Bud Lite empties and crushed Dorito bags and screamed, "Glory be to FIFA!"

Yes FIFA – Fake Injury Football Actors – won me over. So much so that I started playing indoor soccer in our living room. This is how it went.

First off, to be a soccer player you need to have tattoos all over your body. I went on Amazon and scrolled through pages and pages of temporary tattoos, eventually settling on the Marine Collection that feature glow-in-the-dark, waterproof tattoos of turtles and colourful fish. I pressed "complete order," then went to the front door and picked up my package of temporary tattoos. Just like that I was ready to begin playing soccer.

Day One. The first day was player introductions. I put on a pair of easy-stretch waist shorts with suspenders and my Skechers Slip-Ons; it wasn't pretty. The players walk onto the pitch holding hands with a young child. All I could come up with was Teddy. Jan displays Teddy in our guest bathroom to remind our guests sitting on the toilet of our son Tyler's furry friend when he was six months old. Teddy is dressed as a train engineer. With Teddy dangling from my hand, I walked into our living room to a thunderous ovation! The emotion of it all was enough for the day so I tossed Teddy back near his throne in the bathroom.

Day Two. I played striker/centre forward. This is a soccer team's best scorer so I thought it would be fun. I was surprised how easy it was. I scored five goals on five shots at net before I had a mandatory hydration break, so I celebrated with a couple of Bud Lites.

Day Three. Today I thought I would try

my hand – oops, my feet – at playing defence. All that running around the living room yesterday tuckered me out. You know what happened? Even playing defence, I scored three goals – and I only played five minutes before the game was suspended; Jan wanted to vacuum.

Day Four. Playing soccer is a lot of running at least for guys like me living retired, so I decided today I would play goalie. The goal was our living room sofa, so I stood there wearing Jan's oversized puffy Betty Crocker oven mitts and scaring the bejeebers out of the opponents by doing jumping jacks. Playing goalie, I still managed to score two goals! Three, if you count the one on my own net.

Day Five. Today I played Announcer. This was my shortest game because all I did was stand there screaming, "GOOOOOOAAAALLL!!!" This was the one day playing soccer that I didn't score.

Day Six. This was my most fun day

playing soccer. I played hydration break. More Bud Lites.

Day Seven. This day playing soccer was more fun than I thought because I got to play fan in the stands. I got caught up with their antics and got inebriated and tore down the living room drapes! Oh, I managed another goal.

Day Eight. I played referee and medic. As referee, I wore black shorts and ran around the living room waving Hallmark greeting cards in the air. I didn't last long playing medic because I don't like the sight of blood. And Jan said, "Gary, if you get blood on the living room carpet, the only way you will ever play soccer again is if Trump intervenes with FIFA!"

Living Retired is written weekly by Gary Chalk and published throughout Canada and USA. Gary is a popular keynote speaker at service clubs, corporate events and retirement parties. Contact Gchalk@me.com

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OBITUARY

Scheuermann



Douglas Everett Scheuermann passed away at Wildwood Care Centre, St. Marys on July 12, 2026, a month from his 90th birthday.

Beloved husband of Jessie (Dunsmore), married on July 26, 1958. Father of Bill (Lynn), Joe (deceased)(Mary), Rodger (Elaine). Grandfather of Ryan

(Marta), Britany, Shauna (Tyler), James, Katherine, Carrie (Craig), Nicole (Matt), Angela (Jody) and Shawn (Kristen). Great-grandfather of Jaxson, Maverick, Rowan, Jace, Cole, Emma, Berkley, Bennett, Hayden, Clara, and Calvin. Brother of Harold (deceased), Margaret Petrie (Len, deceased), Leona Kittmer, Jack (Lois, deceased), Dave (Pat), and Don (Ruth). Also remembered by extended family members, nieces and nephews. Predeceased by his parents Louie and Irene.

Doug was a retired employee of the St. Marys Cement Plant. Member of the Canadian Army Reserves, 50-year member of the Royal Canadian Legion Br. 236, and charter member of the Optimist Club of Downie, since 1976.

A Graveside Service will be conducted at Avonbank Cemetery, 3000 Perth Road 134, on July 24, 2026 at 11 am. Those attending are invited to bring a lawn chair. A reception will then follow at the St. Marys Legion Br 236, 66 Church St. N. St. Marys, until 2 pm. Members of Br. 236 will conduct a Legion Service in the hall at 1 pm.

Memorial donations may be made to the Heart & Stroke Foundation or the St. Marys Legion Br. 236.

Online tributes at www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca.

OBITUARY

McCauley



Kevin McCauley passed away at St. Marys Memorial Hospital on July 18, 2026, surrounded by his family, at the age of 80.

Beloved husband of Gail (White), married on Oct. 31, 1964. Dad of Brenda Metcalfe (Dan), Randall McCauley, and Sandy McCauley (Maurice). Grandpa Mc of Derek (Alyssa), Dustin

(Stephannie), Doug, and Stuart. Great-grandpa Mc of Arianna, Gwenivere, Talia, Stevie, and Annabella. Brother of Dave McCauley (Lin, deceased), Sue Robinson (Paul), Gayle Cooper (Kevin), and Wendy Roy (Joe). Also survived by many nieces, nephews and extended family members. Predeceased by his parents Lorne and Eloyce McCauley and nephew Cormick Wheeler.

Kevin was long time employee of Campbell Soup and bus driver extraordinaire. A Celebration of Life Open House will be held at GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH, on Saturday, July 25, 2026 from 1 – 4 pm. Memorial donations may be made to The War Amps, Heart & Stroke Foundation, or Grace Community Church.

Online tributes at www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca.

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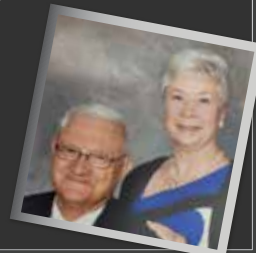
DATE: Sunday, July 26th

TIME: 2 - 4 pm

LOCATION: Parks Lawn Bowling Club at
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Marc, and all of your
grandchildren and great
grandchildren



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Solutions on pg. 31

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Opinions expressed in Letters to the Editor are that of their authors and do not reflect the opinions of the St. Marys Independent or Grant Haven Media.

Canada's test of Sovereignty

The United States has long viewed the western hemisphere as its sphere of influence – a region where American power shapes the political, economic and strategic choices of neighbouring nations, even when they remain formally sovereign.

Throughout its history, Washington has asserted that influence through diplomacy, economic pressure, covert operations, sanctions and, when deemed necessary, military intervention. The language has varied – defending democracy, containing communism, protecting national security – but the underlying objective has remained remarkably consistent: preserving American strategic dominance.

That objective is now turning northward.

Greenland has acquired immense strategic value because of its Arctic location, emerging shipping routes and vast reserves of critical minerals. As climate change transforms the Arctic, competition among the United States, Russia and China is intensifying. Canada, too, has become indispensable. Rich in oil, natural gas, critical minerals, timber, freshwater, aluminum and steel, it occupies one of the most strategically important positions on the continent. As the Arctic opens, Canada's northern frontier becomes an increasingly valuable geopolitical prize.

The Trump administration openly expressed interest

in acquiring Greenland and repeatedly pressed Canada to increase defence spending. Whether these proposals reflected legitimate security concerns or a broader ambition to expand American influence is for history to judge.

Canada's greatest vulnerability, however, is not military, it is economic. Nearly three-quarters of Canadian exports are destined for the United States. That dependence gives Washington enormous leverage through tariffs, investment and trade policy. A nation whose prosperity depends so heavily on a single customer cannot exercise complete freedom of action.

Canada's response must be equal to the challenge. It must dismantle internal trade barriers, strengthen its Arctic presence, invest in its own defence, diversify its trading relationships and, above all, preserve national unity.

Empires rarely announce themselves. They expand through influence long before they resort to force. Canada faces no imminent threat of invasion, but it does confront a profound test of its sovereignty. The question before us is whether Canadians possess the foresight – and the resolve – to preserve their independence while living beside the most powerful nation on earth.

John Leberg, St. Marys

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St. Marys and Area Mobility Service is pleased to welcome community members, staff and Board Members to our

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

DATE: Wednesday July 29, 2026 TIME: 1:30pm
LOCATION: St. Marys Municipal Operations Centre,
408 James St South

Virtual Option also available

Please contact Amber Miners, Manager, at 519.284.4010 with any questions or for more information.

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THE WEEK AHEAD



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

St. Marys Public Library events – See Page 22

FRIDAY, JULY 24

- A.N.A.F. meat draw – 6 p.m.

SATURDAY, JULY 25

- St. Marys Farmers Market on Water Street N, – 8 a.m. to Noon. The Whites are serving breakfast sandwiches

- Stonetown Heritage Festival in downtown St. Marys – 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

- Kinsmen Summerfest at Milt Dunnell Field – 12 p.m. – late

- Free magic show at town hall auditorium – 2-3 p.m.

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

- Thorndale Back Forty Bash at the Thorndale Fair Grounds – 7-11 p.m.

SUNDAY, JULY 26

- St. Marys Horticultural Society garden tour – 1-5 p.m.

- Randy Petrucci Celebration of Life at Parks Lawn Bowling Club, Milt Dunnell Field – 2-4 p.m.

MONDAY, JULY 27

- McCully's Hill Farm summer day camp begins (July 27-31). Register at www.mccullys.ca

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29

- St. Marys and Area Mobility Service annual general meeting at the MOC – 1:30 p.m.

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Looking Back

AMY CUBBERLEY

Independent Columnist



New Shur-Gain plant

25 years ago (2001)

One woman's passion for St. Marys and its beautiful architecture has led to the success of the Stonetown Heritage Festival. Festival Coordinator, June Cunningham, has been busy planning this year's festival since last September.

The foursome of Fred Gracey, Dave Shepley, John Queenan and Bill Holst scorched the St. Marys fairways last Thursday to win the 8th annual St. Marys Memorial Hospital golf tournament. A full field of 144 golfers took part.

50 years ago (1976)

The local swim team, coached by Bob Davis, is having one of its best seasons to date with 55 members. Two home meets and away meets at Exeter, Kin-cardine, Teeswater, and Mt. Forest are scheduled.

Preliminary stripping operations are underway at the site of the future Shur-Gain warehouse and feed mixing plant on the southern extremity of James Street. Work on the 1.5-million-dollar plant complete with rail siding, is expected to get underway within a week.

75 years ago (1951)

The Trustees of S.S. No. 9 Downie are looking for the gang of miscreants who broke practically every pane of glass in that Downie Township school one night recently.

A local citizen had the first flat tire on his new car while driving around the downtown area one evening this past week. The flat was caused, not by a nail, a phonograph needle, or a piece of glass, but by an innocent looking small wooden golf tee.

100 years ago (1926)

Wednesday was, in many respects, as trying a day to live through as Tuesday. The thermometer stood at 80 at seven o'clock in the morning and reached 96 in the afternoon. There were twelve deaths from heat in Chicago and two in Hamilton. The thermometer reached 102 degrees in St. Thomas.

After a 2000-mile holiday trip, covering two weeks, Allan Crozier and Milton Dunnell returned on Saturday from the jolliest jaunt that either of them has had in his lifetime. They covered Rochester, Buffalo, Utica, Scranton, Albany and Brooklyn in their adventure.

St. Marys Independent

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