

STRATFORD *TIMES*

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OCTOBER 16, 2026

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WWII-era grenade closes downtown streets

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The Stratford Police Service shut down the area surrounding its headquarters last Thursday, after a suspected grenade from the Second World War was brought to the station.

Shortly before 7 p.m. on Oct. 8, a resident came to Stratford Police Headquarters to hand it over, after finding it in their home while cleaning it out. The grenade was left in their vehicle, which was parked in the municipal lot across from the police station.

Police shut down the immediate surrounding area, including George Street West between Downie Street and St. Patrick Street.

Waterloo Regional Police Service Bomb Disposal Unit attended at 8:50 p.m. and was able to retrieve the grenade without incident. The area was reopened to all public access by 9 p.m.

Due to their age, devices such as these are known to be highly unstable when moved and could result in serious injury or death to those moving them, as well as anyone else in the area.

The Stratford Police Service would like to stress the importance of leaving these items in their original location when found, and to contact police to make the appropriate arrangements to have them removed and disposed of.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

The U13 BB Stratford Warriors were showing what success and good sportsmanship meant last Saturday. The team were at Zehr's Food Market on Oct. 10, busy helping at the checkouts for the Thanksgiving weekend.

Stratford walking tour honours women's history

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

Stratford Walking Tours is once again hosting a women's history walking tour, this time to support the Rose McQueen Legacy Fund, a new fundraising initiative that honours McQueen and her contribution to the city by

supporting the Stratford Festival's education department.

Lauri Leduc, owner, operator and guide, will host the Step into HERstory guided walking tour on Sunday, Oct. 18, at 2 p.m.

The tour will take attendees through Stratford's streets as Leduc leads the group and discusses women, from

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2



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Stratford walking tour

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Stratford’s first female mayor to pioneering physicians to domestic workers at the Windsor Hotel. Guests will learn some of the forgotten stories of Stratford’s past.

The Oct. 18 date is special, says Leduc, because Canada recognizes it as Persons Day. It marks the 1929 decision by Canada’s highest court of appeal to include women in the legal definition of “persons.” This gave some women the right to be appointed to the Senate of Canada and paved the way for women’s increased participation in public and political life.

“This tour is focused on some of the women who have shaped the history of Stratford and their forgotten stories,” said Leduc. “I will share details about these women and their contribution to the city, and because I’m hosting it on Persons Day, I thought it was a great opportunity to bring those two ideas together. I think it is a great way to celebrate.”

Though this decision did not include all women, such as Indigenous women and women of Asian heritage and descent, it did mark critical progress in the advancement of gender equality in Canada.

Five dollars from each ticket sold for the Oct. 18 tour will be donated to the Rose McQueen Legacy Fund to support emerging artists through the Stratford Festival.

McQueen herself is one of the women featured on the tour. Her story inspired Tom Patterson to found the Stratford Festival.

“She’s a prominent figure in our city’s history,” said Leduc. “She was involved with community education, the Stratford Festival, and so many aspects of the city. She was passionate about education and her students’ lives, and that didn’t end when the school day was over. She volunteered in the evenings at the Y, helping educate young girls, so her job wasn’t just to teach from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. She really involved herself in the community.”

Details about the Rose McQueen Legacy Fund can be found at www.rosemcqueen.ca/the-rose-mcqueen-legacy-fund.

Tickets for the Step into HERstory walking tour are \$20 per person. Advance reservations are required. Tickets can be purchased at www.stratfordwalkingtours.ca.

Pistol, drugs seized during Friday search

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

A Stratford man is facing weapons charges after a search warrant was executed last Friday.

On Oct. 9, the Stratford Police Street Crime Unit concluded an investigation regarding an individual being unlawfully in possession of a firearm.

Shortly before 5 p.m. that day, the crime unit, with support of the emergency response unit and uniform patrol, executed a search warrant as part of this investigation.

The search warrant resulted in the seizure of a 40-caliber Glock 27 handgun, a Glock 27 magazine with ammu-

nition, a prohibited butterfly knife, eight grams of Methamphetamine, 74 25 milligram Hydromorphone pills and two three milligram Hydromorphone pills.

Four individuals were arrested during the course of the search warrant. One of the four individuals was charged, while the other three were released unconditionally.

The individual charged was identified as a 55-year-old male resident of Stratford. Charges included multiple firearms and weapons related offences, possession of illegal substances, as well as breach of probation and breach of several weapons’ prohibition orders.

The 55-year-old male was held for a bail hearing and has been remanded into custody.



The items seized during the search of a Stratford residence. One 55-year-old Stratford man faces multiple charges as a result. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

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Locals to visit Prince Edward Island next year for Stratfords of the World

KEN CLARKE

Stratfords of the World committee

Next September, 2027, citizens from Stratford, Ont. will attend the Stratfords of the World gathering in Stratford, P.E.I., along with people from the five other Stratfords in the association. They came here in 2023, and the following history appeared in the Stratford Times that July. It was written by Geoffrey Lees, former mayor of Stratford-upon-Avon, with help later from local representatives of the committee.

The exchanges began more than 40 years ago. In April 1984, the Stratford Connecticut High School Band visited Stratford, Ont. The following spring the Connecticut Band toured England performing in Stratford-upon-Avon during the Shakespeare Birthday Celebrations along with the Perth County Pipe Band from Ontario and the Stratford-upon-Avon Wind Band Association. This was the beginning of the three-way

link between Stratfords of the old world and the new world.

In July 1986, Connecticut became host to visitors from Stratford residents of Ontario and the United Kingdom. This reunion was followed by others, again with a mainly musical theme, in Stratford (U.K.) in 1987 and Stratford (Ontario) in 1988.

In the following years the opportunity presented itself to include drama, dance and other cultural activities, which formed the basis for the Sister City link, a highlight occurring during summer of 1991 when a group of actors from Stratford, Conn. went to England to present a play entitled Stratford Characters written by Steven Otfinoski. The People of Stratford Drama group from Stratford, U.K. contributed a piece written by local author, Charles Calvert.

Two years later, in 1993, the People of Stratford joined with the English Renaissance Dancers in a week-long visit to Stratford, Conn. As reported in the Connecti-

cut-based Stratford Star: "the two groups presented a series of programs celebrating and re-creating the life, times and works of Shakespeare, using dance, music and, of course, his own words."

Since the early days, people with other interests have joined in. Reunions have continued at approximately two-year intervals over the years including the U.K. in 1992, 1997, 2005 and 2016; Ontario in 1993, 2007 and 2023; and Connecticut in 1986 and 2014. In 1997, the enlargement of the world Stratford grouping saw visitors from Stratford, New Zealand and Stratford, P.E.I., join their hosts in Warwickshire, U.K. Added at the turn of the millennium, Stratfordians from Victoria, Australia joined in. Stratfordians or Stratfordites, you choose ...

Since that time, during which the organisation adopted a new title of "Stratfords of the World," reunions have flourished. There have been gatherings in P.E.I. in 2001 and 2012; in Australia in 2003 and 2018; and in

New Zealand in 2010 and 2025. There was a reunion planned for here in 2020, but the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted plans.

The group has assembled in a Stratford 20 times over the years, by the reckoning of the local committee.

All the Stratfords share an interest in the arts and several have a theatre festival inspired by the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in England and the Stratford Festival here in southern Ontario. There are other Stratfords, but they do not have this obsession. There is a village in Quebec called Stratford, for instance.

There will be a meeting on Nov. 10 for people who are interested in joining in the group travelling to Prince Edward Island. The meeting will take place in the Tim Taylor Lounge in the Rotary Complex from 4 to 8 p.m. The group will also talk about an optional bus tour of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick before the reunion itself and all who are interested are invited.

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Unemployment dropped 3.6% last month, lowest since 2024

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

In September, the unemployment rate in the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula economic region decreased by 0.4 percentage points to 3.6 per cent, the lowest reported monthly unemployment rate in the region since November 2024. Meanwhile, the provincial unemployment rate remained unchanged this month at 7.3 per cent, both unadjusted for seasonality. Total employment in the region fell by 2,200 (-1.3 per cent) to 164,700 with losses in both full-time employment (-500; -0.4 per cent) and part-time employment (-1,600; -5.7 per cent).

In September, the region's overall population aged 15 or over increased by 500 whereas the labour force size de-

creased by 3,100 people. The number of people not in the labour force in the region increased by 3,500. This in turn reduced the region's participation rate by 1.2 percentage points down to 56.2 per cent. Employment in the region increased in the services-producing sector (+1.3 per cent; +1,400) yet decreased the goods-producing sector once again this month (-6 per cent; -3,600). Overall employment in the services-producing sector saw an increase of +1.3 per cent (+1,400 people) in September.

Transportation and warehousing experienced the largest percentage increase in employment (+9.7 per cent; +600 people), followed by public administration (+9.4 per cent; +500 people) and health care and social assistance (+4.9 per cent; +800 people). On the other hand, business, building and other support services experienced the larg-

est percentage decrease in employment (-13.8 per cent; -400 people), followed by accommodation and food services (-2.7 per cent; -200 people) and finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing (-2.7 per cent; -200 people).

The goods-producing sector saw a decrease in overall employment numbers in September (-6 per cent; -3,600 people). Losses were reported in manufacturing (-13.9 per cent; -2,700 people), construction (-5.8 per cent; -1,000 people), agriculture (-2.3 per cent; -200 people) and utilities (-1.5 per cent; -200 people). On the other hand, forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas reported an increase of 18.8 per cent (+300 people).

Current job posting numbers for the Bruce, Grey, Huron, Perth region is over 1,200. Details can be found at www.connect2JOBS.ca.

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Let's go to the movies with the Skeletons of Vivian Line

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

The Skeletons of Vivian Line will have an array of fan favourite and classic movies on display during their 13th season.

The skeletons will be back to their antics starting Oct. 19 for 13 days with the theme "Come to the Movies with the Skeletons." There will be a drive-in theatre set up at 3217 Vivian Line and there will be a different movie display each evening. Fans submitted beloved movies as suggestions for the displays.

"We're still taking requests for movies but we have a really good selection of movies right now and it's going to be a lot of fun," said founder Melissa McKerlie.

However, McKerlie said to not expect horror movies from this year's display.

"Even though it's the 13th season and it's the 13 days of fun, I guarantee we will not be doing Friday the 13th or anything like that," she said. "The whole point of the skeletons is to make people smile and to create smiles through people donating to Operation Smile Canada, so we'll have movies that will appeal to everybody."

Skeletons of Vivian Line began as a way to bring smiles to McKerlie's son Justin, a Halloween enthusiast, and with updates on the skeletons' shenanigans to family and friends via email. After putting the skeletons on the front yard, visitors were driving by to see them and the Skeletons of Vivian Line became a hit with the locals with media coverage from CBC and the Stratford Beacon Herald and eventually worldwide phenomenon with 6.5 thousand followers on Facebook.

Recently, the Skeletons of Vivian Line

got to be part of the 185th Stratford Fall Fair with a 120-foot-long indoor display. The Skeletons of Vivian Line's Facebook post shared photos of the skeletons participating in fair activities after hours like riding the rides and consuming butter tarts.

"The skeletons loved it because they were not out in any weather. They didn't have to be staked into the ground. We didn't have to worry about high winds, rain, snow, all the elements," McKerlie said.

The Skeletons of Vivian Line raises money each year for Operation Smile Canada, per Justin's suggestion, through in-person donations at the site. This year, McKerlie hopes to raise \$40,000 for Operation Smile.

"The whole point of the skeletons is to make people smile, that we always want people to come enjoy the skeletons. It'll be a fun adventure for them to come and see them. You never know what they're up to," she said. "It's wonderful because as a result, we're literally creating smiles for little kids and adults who don't have the ability to smile because they were born with cleft lip and palate."

There are two local sponsors who will dollar match donations up \$40,000 each.

"Every dollar that we can raise in front of the house will be tripled and that is just absolutely phenomenal," said McKerlie.

Trick-or-treaters of all ages can visit the Skeletons of Vivian Line on Oct. 24 and 25. The Skeletons of Vivian Line will also be participating in the Strickland Automotive and Downtown Stratford BIA Trick-Or-Treating events on Oct. 31.

You can see what the Skeletons of Viv-



(MELISSA MCKERLIE PHOTO)

Bone voyage! The Skeletons of Vivian Line are getting ready for their 13th season, which will have a movie theme.

ian Line are up to on Facebook via www.facebook.com/SkeletonsOfVivianLine.

Shelf Help: *The Best Dog in the World*

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To all of you dog lovers out there, I'd like to suggest this little gem of a book of essays, edited by Alice Hoffman. These are accounts by fourteen well-known authors of their relationships with their dogs.

To make it through some of these beautifully written essays, yes, you will need a box of tissues, but others will make you laugh so hard as you follow the antics of this bunch of canine companions.

In one essay by Bonnie Garmus, author of the best-selling *Lessons in Chemistry*, we are introduced to her retired Greyhound, Cake Angel (that was her racing name). Cake Angel is later renamed Ninety-Nine and makes an appearance in *Lessons in Chemistry*.

Greyhounds, says Garmus, have a reputation for being the sleek, fleet-footed gods of the canine world, but in her experience, they are actually lazy couch potatoes! "He's lazy," Garmus is told by a fellow Greyhound owner, "They all are!" But show them a squirrel, says Garmus,

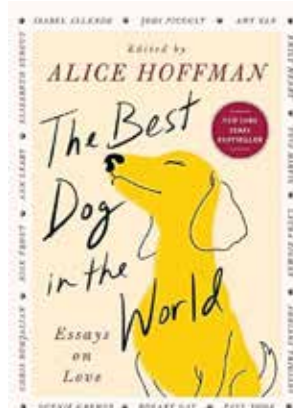
and the race is on.

Meet author Emily Henry and Dottie, her nervous Pit-bull rescue. Henry warns us that this is a sad essay where the dog dies. She says everyone wants to know before reading a book, where the dog is at the centre of the story, if the dog dies. We want to know this in order to prepare ourselves, or avoid the book altogether. And we want to know it so badly that there's actually a website, thedogdie.com – where we can check before we pick up a book or watch a movie. Despite the inevitable end to this essay, Dottie's is essentially a happy story filled with lots of love and laughter.

Chris Bohjalian tells us all about Jessie the dog he suspected would be too much effort, but who he later found to have the sweetest soul on the planet, giving him her unconditional love.

There are many more stories by Elizabeth Strout, Jodie Picoult and others that are both beautifully written and heartwarming without being sappy.

Dogs impact our lives, often in unexpected ways, and although you might cry with sadness when you read this book, I can guarantee you'll also cry with laughter!



Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. What is the only U.S. state that can be typed in using only one row of a standard keyboard?
2. In human anatomy, what does the "hallux" refer to?
3. What is the only planet in our solar system to rotate clockwise on its axis?
4. Which freezes faster: hot or cold water?
5. What is James Bond's code name?
6. Weighing around eight pounds, this is the human body's largest organ?
7. What do you call a group of flamingos?
8. What is the distance from earth to the sun?
9. Which country is the largest in the world?
10. According to Guinness World Records, what's the best-selling book of all time?

This week's answers are found on pg. 27

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MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

COUNCILLOR CANDIDATES Q&A

Council candidates: Andrew Fraser



Introduce yourself to readers. Who are you?

I've called Stratford home since 2016, raising my family while building two careers: I'm a realtor of 15 years and a mortgage agent for 10 of those years, giving me a practical view of housing and affordability. Both my parents were educators, shaping how I think about community. I've coached youth soccer for seven years. I ran for mayor in 2018 and placed third: the lesson I took was that

council is the only place to start, earn trust, deliver, then build from there. I believe in community engagement and want to be a voice for residents who need one. **What are the core issues you are focused on this election?**

Three things come up at almost every door: taxes, housing and whether this city can actually deliver. After three straight tax increases, households and small businesses need a freeze and a real value-for-money review before new spending, not just another increase. Housing affordability and homelessness need practical, measurable action, not announcements. Grand Trunk needs to be built, with a schedule and accountability. Underneath all of it is transparency: residents deserve plain-language answers, real notice before council votes, and a record of how each coun-

cillor voted so they are held to account, and there are no surprises after the fact.

Next year's budget, like last year's, will be presented and guided by the mayor. As a councillor, what will you do to keep the tax levy low?

As a councillor I don't set the budget alone, but I can insist on the discipline behind it. Every discretionary and capital item should pass a value-for-money review before it gets a cheque, and multi-year budgeting should replace the year-to-year guessing that has driven three straight increases. I'd also push for plain-language budget summaries residents can actually read, so pressure for restraint comes from an informed public, not just council debate. Keeping the levy low means asking harder questions earlier, not scrambling for savings after the

budget is already set. Freeze the taxes, stick to the budget.

Housing and homelessness in Stratford continues to be a challenge. What, in your opinion, is the strategy the city should be taking in building more homes and/or improving affordability?

Housing affordability is personal to me: as a realtor and mortgage Agent, I see every day how far a Stratford paycheck stretches against today's prices. The city needs faster approvals for attainable and missing-middle housing and should put its own land to work where sites make sense. On homelessness, I'd rather see proven local agencies, like the Connection Centre and House of Blessing, resourced to expand into real organized capacity than dollars spread thin across scattered individual subsidies. Polic-

ing should be a last resort behind trained social responders, not the first response to a housing crisis.

Are you in favour of the current council's direction on the GTR? If not, what strategy would you be in favour of?

I support the goal of Grand Trunk, a real community hub with the YMCA and library, but not the pace. This site sat vacant for 17 years and cost taxpayers roughly 27 million dollars before a shovel moved. I want council to publish a firm construction schedule with real penalties if it slips again, and to have parking, transit and policing questions answered before, not after, ground is broken. Stratford has waited long enough for announcements. What we need now is delivery, on budget and on a timeline residents can actually hold council to.

Council candidates: Sarah Merkel



Introduce yourself to readers. Who are you?

Hi! I'm Sarah Merkel and yes, I'm related to all of the Merkels in town! I grew up on a farm just outside St. Pauls, attended school and played sports in Stratford growing up. After university, Justin Ahrens (husband) and I returned to Stratford to put down roots and start a family (four kids ages 10 and under)! I have a Master's in Public Health and love my job at Huron Perth Public Health. I've spent years volunteering, coaching and giving back. I love

Stratford deeply, including our library, parks, theatre, businesses and, most importantly, our people.

What are the core issues you are focused on this election?

1) Families, Seniors and Equity-Deserving Populations: Enhancing our city where people of every age, background and circumstance can thrive/belong.

2) Grand Trunk: Creating a vibrant, accessible community hub that brings community together.

3) Housing, Homelessness and Affordability: Working toward everyone having a safe, stable and affordable place to call home.

4) Healthy Communities and Community Design: Designing neighbourhoods/public spaces people to live, learn, work, play, shop and age.

5) Climate and Sustainability: Taking practical action to protect our environment and build a sustainable future.

6) Community Engagement: Making meaningful community engagement a foundation of how decisions are made.

Next year's budget, like last year's, will be presented and guided by the mayor. As a councillor, what will you do to keep the tax levy low?

A new term of council means starting fresh. As a council, we need to ask: Are we doing this because we've always done it this way? Is there a more efficient way? Are we fully utilizing our staff's time and strengths? Could our service levels be updated? What are our needs versus our wants? We need to look for efficiencies across all departments and services while maintaining the services residents rely on. Finally, we need to attract more industry and employment to our existing industrial lands, growing our tax base so the burden doesn't continue to fall primarily on res-

idents.

Housing and homelessness in Stratford continues to be a challenge. What, in your opinion, is the strategy the city should be taking in building more homes and/or improving affordability?

We need to build more affordable and social housing; locally we can do more through infill, gentle density and complete communities.

We need to get creative about the housing we already have. We have seniors who are living in homes with more bedrooms than they need, while other people are struggling to find a place to live. Are there ways to safely connect those people through home-sharing?

For those experiencing homelessness, the city should continue partnering with local organizations and invest in a housing first approach for more supportive

housing, while meaningfully including people with lived and living experience.

Are you in favour of the current council's direction on the GTR? If not, what strategy would you be in favour of?

I support most of the current direction and want to see the Grand Trunk project move forward. I know the project is contentious, but Stratford has been planning for this for years. We have a 2018 Master Plan, two years of work by the ad-hoc committee and, increasingly, community partners interested in moving it forward. We have the ingredients. Let's make the cake!

I believe we need to fully understand the costs, opportunities and implications of each option presented to date, and understand the full implications of removing the structure completely (which isn't an option that's been included).

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MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

COUNCILLOR CANDIDATES Q&A

Council candidates: Gary Robinson



Introduce yourself to readers. Who are you?

My name is Gary Robinson. I was born and raised in Stratford and have worked here all my life. I have been married to my wife Sarah for 48 years. We raised four sons and I am a proud

grandfather of nine. I have always believed in being involved with my community. I played JR B hockey here in Stratford in 1975-1977 and refereed for the OMHA and Alliance for over 40 years. I also have umpired baseball for over 40 years. For over the past 10 years I volunteered with the Brian Sippel baseball cancer tournament ...

What are the core issues you are focused on this election?

My issues with Stratford ... Taxes are too high comparing them to other cities around us. Infrastructure is moving too slow and only being done when there is an election year.

Housing for seniors. Families for needs to be addressed. The homeless situation needs addressed sooner than later.

Next year's budget, like last year's, will be presented and guided by the mayor. As a councillor, what will you do to keep the tax levy low?

Taxes for 2026 ... \$90 million ... To my understanding the higher the housing markets the lower the taxes. This doesn't happen in Stratford and, in my opinion, Stratford pays out too much in salaries.

Housing and homelessness in Stratford continues to be a challenge. What, in your

opinion, is the strategy the city should be taking in building more homes and/or improving affordability?

For the homeless why can't we do what Waterloo did on Erb Street by Costco. There is a tiny village with homes and a main building for kitchen use and bathrooms for them. The city owns the land out on pork road by the dump where they had the track for driverless cars, why can't we as a community build something there? I'm sure with all the businesses in town that they would help donate supplies and ask for volunteers to build. The high schools could help in

the carpenters class. It is close to the grocery stores for them ...

Are you in favour of the current council's direction on the GTR? If not, what strategy would you be in favour of?

The past city council now have spent \$28 million and haven't broke ground. We should ask for outside investors and possibly government grants, but with all the lawsuits going on now and the past not sure if that will happen. They spent \$10 million on the Waterloo campus and that's all they can show on the Grand Trunk land for the last 20 years.

Creators of the Classic City: Thomas George Whiteside

GORD CONROY

Guest Contributor

Thomas George Whiteside was a self-made man who served the people and businesses of Stratford for more than 50 years beginning in December of 1912. It was in that year that he established the Stratford Paper Box Company in town at the request of local retailers and businessmen.

The factory was located on the third floor of 168 St. Patrick St., on the north-east corner of Erie and St. Patrick streets. The building was owned by Kalbfleisch Brothers, which ran its automotive business on the north-west corner of the same intersection but used the first floor of 168 St. Patrick as a new-car showroom and sales centre.

Whiteside made cardboard boxes for many Stratford and area businesses. They were set-up boxes such as those used for shoes or knitted goods. These boxes are distinct from folding boxes as used in bake shops. As owner and proprietor of the Stratford Paper Box Co., Whiteside had one of the longest records in business management in Stratford, beginning in the early 20th century.

Thomas George Whiteside's father, a butcher in Seaforth, died when Whiteside was seven. He and his younger brother were raised by an aunt there because his mother and older sister moved to Toronto to earn a living as seamstresses. Whiteside stopped school at the end of Grade 8 but worked in the building trades in Seaforth to put a younger brother through high school. By 1900, he moved to Toronto where he worked for the Telfer Paper Box Company for a decade, rising to the position of foreman. He asked for and was granted a leave of absence for six months to set up his own business. He was promised that his position would be waiting for him if he was not successful.

Whiteside never returned to his Toronto position at Telfer's Paper Box, although he did return there to visit relatives. In 1914, he saw a young pitcher hit a home run on



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Text and picture provided by Gord Conroy. The photo (colorized) was originally taken by the Maitland Studio of Stratford.

Sept. 5 at Hanlan's Point ballpark. It was the only home run the young man would hit as an amateur. That same young man also pitched a great one-hit game for the Providence Greys against the hometown Toronto Maple Leafs who lost 9-0. His name? George Herman Ruth, later known as the Babe.

After his marriage in the summer of 1912 in Toronto to Leila Selina Size who was also a seamstress, from Patterson, Ont., now part of Toronto, he moved to Stratford in December of that year. The couple lived for a time at the Queen's Hotel and witnessed the tragic Knox Church fire with its terrible loss of life in May of 1913.

George Whiteside had considered Stratford or London as possible business sites. Stratford, at the time, was a major rail centre, which was important to him for shipping goods. However, even as a businessman, Whiteside supported R. Thomas Orr in the 1913 plebiscite which stopped the CPR railway from running a rail line



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The second photo of the Stratford Paper Box Factory (third floor) was made available by Henry Kalbfleisch, son of the original Kalbfleisch Brothers owner, to Gord Conroy. The photo (circa. 1929) looks east across Erie Street from the Kalbfleisch Brothers Garage (now Grayson Mills).

along the banks of the Avon River. The park system that Stratford residents cherish is the result.

Whiteside shipped products by rail or truck to many businesses in Perth County and beyond. Destinations included New Hamburg, Kitchener, Galt and Preston (now Cambridge), as well as Clinton, Seaforth, Palmerston and Owen Sound. He also provided boxes for a number of companies in town that included Ballantyne Knit, Williams and Trow (Bentro), Stratford Knit, Avon Knit and Stratford Brass. Some orders were delivered to shops nearby in person through the alley access routes behind businesses. For example, all the specialty candy boxes for Olin Brown candies at 88 Wellington St. were delivered on foot through the alley that ran behind the Wellington and Erie Street buildings.

Thomas George Whiteside was known to be a man of integrity and honour. He paid all debts including those major ones

that occurred during the Great Depression when he kept the business running. He also kept people employed in his business at that time, at his own personal expense and gave houses he owned to people renting them in the depression, hoping they might be able to keep them. During his life, he gave time and support to others through the Masonic Lodge, the Knights Templar and various charities.

Thomas George Whiteside is one of many hard-working Stratford citizens who built a business in the city and lived and worked a quiet life serving others. He was also this author's grandfather.

Taken from Creators of the Classic City: www.streetsofstratford.ca.

"Creators of the Classic City" is an ongoing Times series written by Paul Wilker and Gord Conroy, co-authors of the e-book of the same name. Interested readers can find the free book online at <https://online.fliphtml5.com/ypken/pqiv/>.

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Perth County economic development, tourism team caps busy summer with provincial agriculture forum

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

From promoting local tourism and supporting business expansions to hosting government officials and bringing economic-development professionals from across Ontario to Perth County, the county's economic development and tourism division had a busy summer.

Economic development officer Justin Dias provided county council with a recap of the department's work from June through September at council's Oct. 1 meeting, highlighting business retention and expansion efforts, tourism marketing, the development of new visitor experiences and the county's ongoing tourism wayfinding project.

Among the summer's economic-development activities were visits to local manufacturers interested in provincial expansion funding, support for Listowel Technology Inc.'s \$13.2-million expansion – backed by \$1.5 million through the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund – and continued discussions with provincial and federal officials surrounding a potential new manufacturing facility in Perth County.

The county also supported a business tour and roundtable in August with then-Agriculture Minister Trevor Jones and Rural Affairs Minister Lisa Thompson involving 15 local business representatives. Five Perth County businesses were also nominated for Ontario Excellence in Agriculture Awards.

On the tourism side, the county supported the launch of Farmhouse Fires at the Perth Farmhouse as a new signature experience in June, while its summer marketing campaign included print, digital and social-media promotion.

More than 76,000 tourism brochures were distributed through Canada Post and tourism destinations, while county tourism social-media channels gained more than 1,700 followers since May and generated more than 18,000 interactions. Three summer students featured more than 85 Perth County businesses

through reels, stories and other content.

Work also continued on the FRAME + Find Tourism Wayfinding Signage Strategy. Two stakeholder workshops and a county road tour were held in July to identify signage gaps, preferred aesthetics and priority locations, with the project now moving from its discovery phase into strategy development and design.

The summer culminated with Perth County and investStratford hosting the Municipal Agriculture Economic Development and Planning Forum Sept. 28-29.

The first day included an agricultural and business discovery bus tour across Perth County, with stops including Gray Ridge Egg Farms, Anna Mae's Restaurant and Bakery, Lynn River Farm and the Stratford Perth Centre for Business. The county's report says the tour showcased nine Perth County businesses to 56 participants.

The second day brought 122 participants to the Tom Patterson Theatre in Stratford for sessions focused on rural economic development, on-farm diversification, development-ready communities and agricultural bylaws.

Coun. Rhonda Ehgoetz praised staff for the event and said she was struck by how far some participants had travelled.

"It was really impressive to see that they came from everywhere," Ehgoetz said. "It was a bang-up job. You did an awesome job and it was great to see the businesses again."

Warden Dean Trentowsky echoed those comments, saying participants were impressed by the work that went into the two-day format.

"People were impressed with the effort that was made to put together the two-day format," Trentowsky said, also recognizing investStratford and its staff for co-hosting the forum. "It shows teamwork and partnership – the great results that can happen there."

A full report on the Municipal Agriculture Economic Development and Planning Forum will be presented to council at a future meeting.

STRATFORD TIMES

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Perth County tweaks stewardship program to give new applicants a better shot at funding

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Perth County is making changes to its Stewardship Program for 2027 aimed at spreading available funding among more landowners, though council remains divided over how much taxpayer money should go toward larger trees, contractors and other planting costs.

At its Oct. 1 meeting, county council approved two administrative changes recommended by resiliency and stewardship coordinator Hannah Cann following an earlier council discussion in August. Beginning with the 2027 intake, first-time applicants will receive five points through the program's scoring system, up from one, while landowners will be limited to one approved application per year across all program streams. Previously, there was no annual limit on the number of applications an individual landowner

could submit.

"The report before you outlines the proposed 2027 stewardship program adjustments, which focus on making the program more accessible and distributing funding more broadly," Cann told council.

She said increasing the first-time applicant weighting gives new applicants "a stronger opportunity while keeping the ecological value of projects as the main consideration."

The changes respond to concerns raised in August after council heard the program had been oversubscribed in two of its first three years. Councillors questioned whether repeat applicants were receiving too much of the available funding while new applicants had grants reduced through prorating.

While council approved the changes, the Oct. 1 discussion showed broader concerns with the program remain.

Coun. Bob Wilhelm said he continues to have a problem with the county funding trees costing hundreds of dollars each.

"We have a variation from \$100 to \$400 per tree and I think we have to have some kind of control on that," Wilhelm said. "That's ridiculous."

Deputy Warden Sue Orr suggested oversized stock be removed from the program, while Coun. Rhonda Ehgoetz argued the program has strayed too far from its original purpose of getting trees into the ground.

"The intent was to plant trees," Ehgoetz said. "And yet now we're paying for them to be delivered. We're paying for them to be planted. We're paying for the site plan, the site to get ready."

Staff, however, recommended against setting a fixed per-tree grant or banning oversized stock. Of 67 completed projects in the landowner and living snow fence streams, only five used oversized trees. Staff argued projects should instead continue to be reviewed individually based on site conditions and environmental objectives.

Coun. Walter McKenzie supported keeping planting labour eligible, saying landowners he has spoken with would not participate if they had to find time to

plant the trees themselves.

"If we didn't pay for planting or planting wasn't part of it, they wouldn't do it because they don't have time to do it," McKenzie said.

The county's own figures support that concern. Applications fell to 12 when labour was ineligible in 2025 before rebounding to 21 projects after labour costs were restored for 2026.

Coun. Todd Kasenberg also cautioned against a flat per-tree cap if it pushes landowners toward cheaper species that may be less suited to a particular property. Cann said species prices can vary substantially and limiting support to a set amount per tree could discourage the most appropriate planting choice.

The county is proposing another \$100,000 for the Stewardship Program in its draft 2027 budget, the same funding level as 2026, though final approval will rest with the next council during budget deliberations.

Staff told council the spring intake is expected to close Jan. 22, with applications coming back to the next council for consideration in early February. The application period is now open.

More information on the Perth County Stewardship Program is available at <https://tinyurl.com/mpfxde8c>.

Lattes, Hoodies and More Support Seniors

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

ONE CARE's Shop for Seniors campaign is back for the month of October for residents and visitors to shop local while supporting seniors and adults with health challenges in the community.

About 20 businesses in Huron and Perth Counties are participating in the 2026 Shop for Seniors campaign. Residents and visitors to the area can purchase an item from participating businesses and a portion of proceeds will be donated to ONE CARE's Driven to Care campaign. The Driven to Care campaign aims to add new accessible vehicles to replace the aging fleet.

"We're so fortunate to have community members and businesses that come out for ONE CARE because they believe in the cause and what we're doing for older adults and people with health challenges," said Stephanie Ellens-Clarke, executive director of ONE CARE.

Brch and Wyn will donate a \$1 from each purchase of the One Care Latte, a blend of chocolate and hazelnut syrup poured over steamed milk and espresso. Jonny Kirwin, owner of Brch and Wyn, told the Stratford Times that the One Care Latte has received a positive reception from customers.

"Our customers are always supportive when we get involved in community initiatives, and it's been great to see people get behind something that has a meaningful impact locally. It's nice knowing that something as simple as enjoying your daily coffee can contribute to a much bigger cause," he said.

Alley Cat Café will donate \$1 from coffee purchases. Mosaic Outfitters will sell One Care hoodies and donate \$1 from

each purchase towards the campaign.

For every box of shortbread sold, MacLeod's Scottish Shop will donate \$1. Demetre's Family Eatery will donate \$1 for every purchase of a senior meal. Chocolate Barr's Candies will donate 25 cents from every milk chocolate mintie sale. Halo Car Wash will donate 50 per cent from every car wash towards Driven to Care and Modo Yoga's Karma Hot Yoga Classes will also support the campaign.

Sirkel Foods sold special sandwiches on Oct. 9 and Corner Store Candy Co. sold dirty sodas on Oct. 2 for the Shop for Seniors fundraiser. Fellini's will donate a portion of proceeds sold on Oct. 19.

Clinton's Boston Pizza and Goderich's New Orleans Pizza are also participating.

"It's a really cool way for people to support ONE CARE through, and also support our local businesses," Ellens-Clarke said.

Participating businesses will also have a neon butterfly in the window display. Anyone can take a photo with the logo and post it on Facebook and Instagram, tagging the business and ONE CARE, for a chance to win a prize basket filled with items from the participating businesses.

The Driven to Care Campaign began in March 2025 and raised more than \$460,000. The organization plans to reach the \$500,000 fundraising goal by the end of 2026.

"Everyone's played their part in that in our community to help us buy some new vehicles and to replace those aging fleet that we have, so that's been awesome," said Ellens-Clarke.

Anyone looking for more information about Shop for Seniors, including business owners looking to participate in the fundraiser, can do so online via www.onecaresupport.ca/shop-for-seniors.

There might be a few questions that you would like answered at some time...

What are the answers I need to know for the funeral home paperwork when someone dies? How can I make things as easy as possible for my family? What are the options for my TFSA when I die? What happens when someone dies in a hospital? In a hospice? In a long-term care facility? At their residence? What are the three types of wills that are recognized in the Province of Ontario and what are the pros and cons of each? How do I read a funeral home contract? What are the ways I can keep costs down and make my funeral more affordable for my family? How in control am I? What are the two types of prearrangements I can make and how do they work? Why is it a good idea to prearrange my wishes? What is aquamation and how does it work? What are the benefits of doing an aquamation and what are the benefits of doing a cremation? What do I need to update at the cemetery regarding my burial? What are the costs for purchasing a plot? A niche? What are the costs to be paid when someone dies and is buried? What is the procedure for obtaining permission for MAiD? How is MAiD done? What are the safeguards in carrying it out? What is probate? Is it necessary for my estate? What are the rules? How and why would I donate my body and for how long? Can my family still have my remains after the time period is up? What is the cost for body donation and is it the same thing as organ donation? What is a "Death Doula" and what do they do? What should I know to make my own end-of-life decisions? What are some of the myths and truths about funeral service that I've heard concerning costs, urns, vaults, aquamation, obituaries, caskets, etc... What does the funeral home do for me regarding paperwork and what is it that I have to do?

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Spring Works~Puppet Works! brings new initiative Studio Works to Factory 163

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

A new initiative of workshops and open studio time has been developed by SpringWorks~PuppetWorks!, creating a puppetry hub where older adults or intergenerational groups can follow their curiosity in the puppetry arts.

StudioWorks is intended to be a relaxed atmosphere to gather together, share a beverage and learn about this ancient, worldwide art form. Beginning Oct. 18 and running until February, on Sundays and Mondays from 1-4 p.m. there will be materials and associated tools like sewing machines for those who are capable in a friendly, artist-led environment.

"We are really excited about it," said Eileen Smith, artistic producer with SpringWorks. "We have had small situations of workshops since day one, but this is a focused, planned out arc of programming which is super fun."

Last summer, during the World in a Weekend International puppet festival, there were some workshops directed toward the older adult, intergenerational set so this will appeal immensely to those who participated previously or those who would like to learn more. There is no skill required so these workshops will prove to be very popular.

There will be Open Studios so that participants can drop in and stay as long as they wish within the 1-4 p.m. window on Sunday and/or Monday and work



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Mike Peterson is an acclaimed puppeteer and will teach a crash course in puppet animation, giving life and personality to creations, Nov. 15 and 16.

with the materials available. Open Studios, led by Liz Collier, are by donation. Workshops will take place Sundays, and be repeated Mondays, offering options of opportunities.

"We're imagining that the Sundays might be intergenerational and Mondays might be more adult focused. Workshops will be the same both days and you can go to both if you feel so inclined. They're meant to be casual, you do not need to have any experience so no pressure. We will also have snacks and beverages so it can be a social and pleasurable experience exploring an art form," said Smith.

Along with the workshops, there will be monthly talks with international artists by Zoom where you can ask questions live and open up to new and exciting avenues of artistic expression. Puppetry is celebrated internationally in so many forms: marionette, shadow puppets, hand puppets are only a few examples. Festivals happen worldwide each year and Stratford has developed an international reputation attracting the finest artists on the circuit.

Workshops begin Oct. 18 and run until Feb. 22, 2027. Workshops include light up lantern making, glove puppet making, animating puppets and Muppet puppetry, and storyboarding to name just a few. Workshops are \$10.

Registration is required, and can be found at springworksfestival.ca, where more detail is provided.

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Docs on Ice coming to Stratford 2028

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Docs on Ice, North America's largest doctor-only hockey tournament, is coming to the area from March 30 to April 1, 2028, raising funds in support of United Way Perth-Huron's United Housing initiative.

"We are very grateful that United Housing has been selected to receive support from Docs on Ice," said Ryan Erb, CEO of United Way Perth-Huron and United Housing, in a media release. "Housing that's affordable for everyone remains one of the biggest challenges facing our community. This event will help raise funds for the

projects we're working on locally."

"We're excited to bring Docs on Ice to Stratford," said Dr. Tristan Walker and Dr. Tyler Rouse, co-chairs of Docs on Ice 2028. "This tournament is an opportunity to support an important local cause and celebrate the community we both love. We hope to create a memorable experience for participating physicians and their families and inspire them to visit again as tourists or even begin or continue their careers here."

Docs on Ice brings together approximately 900 players from across Ontario, from medical students to retired doctors, and promotes friendly competition, camarade-

rie and philanthropy. Games for the 2028 event will be played in Stratford, St. Marys, Tavistock and New Hamburg.

As part of the tournament announcement, organizers also unveiled a first look at the graphics for the event. The black-and-red logo, depicting a swan in front of crossed hockey sticks and the Canadian maple leaf, celebrates Stratford's fierce pride and deep hockey roots. It will adorn patches, T-shirts, jerseys and more.

For more information about sponsorship opportunities, volunteer roles and ticket sales, email docsonice2028@gmail.com.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Perth-Wellington MP John Nater was a good sport last Saturday when Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma and Stratford & District Agricultural Society president Laurie Neubrand joined in to deliver a cream pie to his face. Nater had bet his pie at the recent fall fair would bring in the most money during the annual pie auction, and raised a respectable – though ultimately short – \$175.

The Truth About Gardens

(on the official opening of Rotary Hospice's Serenity Garden, October 8th, 2026)

A garden knows its own quiet.
It absorbs us into its stillness
with the lull of a fine French red,
flows us into its harmony
as the bee might enter the blossom,
parting the gilded robes until
there is only silence and the
perfumed blessing of renewal.

Gardens understand reflection.
They carry it inside them, deeply
and imbibed within the green and
throbbing parables of stem and flower.
Serenity, the garden tells us, is
not an emptiness, it is a completion,
the sealed and beauteous
unity of mind and soul.

Gardens lean us into ourselves.
We come here with our burdens,
the weight of memory, our small
defeats and sorrows, and we are
smoothed within the magical
windchime of petals, the dark
machinery of roots and invention,
the wonder of leaf and greening seeds.

A garden never asks us to hurry.
It waits, like an old photograph,
ready to receive, prepared to embrace.
And we step into its frame and sense
the warm and softened fuse that is
belonging, for a garden asks only that
we welcome its patient infinity, the
draped and loving arms of its refuge.

Perhaps this is why gardens endure:
they teach that tranquility lies
not only within the bloom, but is
also the seed and the flower of the
human soul, the life blood eternal
flame that guides us from our dark
interiors to the healing of the golden
rims and the promise of tomorrow.

David Stones, Stratford Poet Laureate

SUBMIT YOUR LETTER TO THE EDITOR TO US

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(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 8 Stratford hosted Oktoberfest celebrations Sept. 24. It was a fun night with music, food and costumes, complete with 80 people enjoying Oktoberfest sausage, sauerkraut, fries and large pretzels. Pictured here was the energetic team that helped cook and serve. In the front row, from left, are Marg Jordan and Steve Zurbrigg. In the middle row is Doreen Zurbrigg, Robbie Ogram, Linda Hunter, Melissa Byer and Maria Hartney. In the back is Colleen Devine, Denise Kane, Bev Hunter, Dave Hartney and Ernie Jordan.

Your Library Corner: Get loud for libraries

BRANDI GILLETT

Stratford Public Library

Once a year, public libraries across Ontario take a week to celebrate what they mean to the communities they serve. This year, Ontario Public Library Week takes place Oct. 18 to 24. It is a chance to recognize the people, places and possibilities that make libraries such an important part of community life.

This year's theme is Get Loud for Libraries.

It's an interesting theme for a library.

Libraries are, after all, typically quiet places. But perhaps getting loud isn't really about making noise. Perhaps it's about making sure people hear what libraries mean to a community.

This year is a particularly meaningful one for Stratford Public Library. While our current building has stood on St. Andrew Street since 1903, Stratford has had a public library for 180 years, ever since the Mechanics' Institute opened in 1846.

Think about that for a moment.

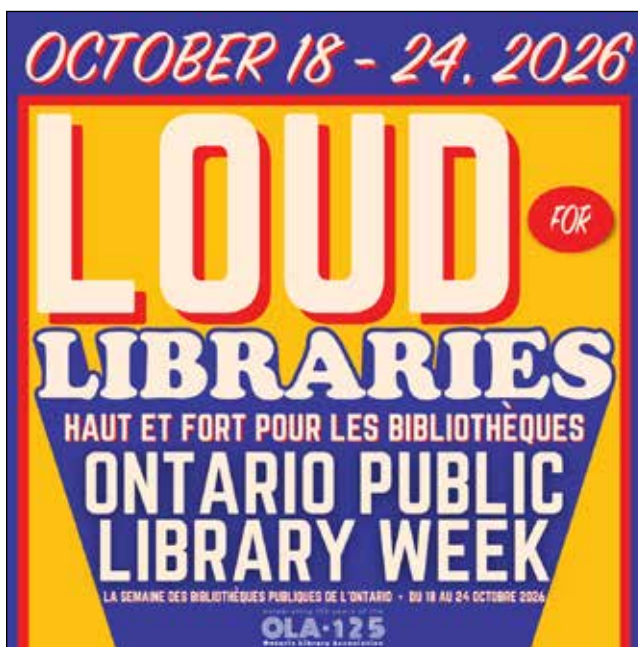
For 180 years, through wars, economic uncertainty, technological revolutions and enormous social change, this community has continued to support the idea that everyone should have free access to knowledge, learning and opportunity.

That's a remarkable legacy.

And it continues every day.

A child comes looking for a book and discovers a love of reading.

A newcomer comes looking for information and begins



to feel a little more at home.

Someone comes in needing help with technology and leaves knowing how to take the next step.

And sometimes, someone comes through the doors because they simply need somewhere to be.

That last one may be the easiest to overlook.

A public library is one of the few places in a community where you can walk through the door without needing to buy something, make an appointment or explain why

you're there. You can be curious. You can be uncertain. You can be having a difficult day. You can be looking for something, or nothing at all.

You are still welcome.

That is a powerful thing.

Libraries are often measured by numbers: more than 400,000 books borrowed each year, hundreds of programs attended, and more than 500 people coming through our doors every day. Those numbers matter, but they are only part of the story.

What matters most is what happens after someone walks through the door.

Confidence grows. Skills develop. Connections are made. Horizons expand. People discover information, opportunities and sometimes an entire community waiting to welcome them.

For 180 years, Stratford's library has helped people do exactly that.

So this week, let's get loud for libraries.

Tell someone what the library has meant to you. Share a favourite memory. Recommend a book. Bring someone through the doors who hasn't been in a while.

Because libraries aren't simply buildings that hold books.

They are places that hold possibilities.

And for 180 years, Stratford has chosen to make sure those possibilities belong to everyone.

That is worth celebrating.

And during Ontario Public Library Week, Oct. 18 to 24, that's certainly worth getting loud about.

HEALTH HUB

Explore a network of local health services, expert care, and wellness solutions designed with you in mind.

'Tis the season for respiratory illnesses

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Respiratory illness season is here, with COVID-19, influenza ("the flu") and other respiratory viruses circulating. Since the end of August, there have been five respiratory illness outbreaks at long-term care homes in Huron Perth.

"The best way to avoid and minimize respiratory illnesses is with immunization," said Dr. Miriam Klassen, medical officer of health at Huron Perth Public Health (HPPH), in a media release. "It is very important to stay up to date on the vaccines you are eligible for to protect yourself and those around you. Immunization is safe and effective."

All Ontario residents aged six months and older are eligible to receive influenza and COVID-19 immunizations. Select high-risk groups are eligible to receive RSV immunization.

Free influenza and COVID-19 vaccines are being offered in phases, beginning with high-risk and priority groups. These include hospitalized patients, individuals aged 65 and older, residents of long-term care homes and other congregate living settings and pregnant individuals.

Starting on Oct. 26, anyone six months of age and older who lives, works or goes to school in Ontario can get a free COVID-19 and flu vaccine from participating primary care providers and pharmacies. The COVID-19 and flu vaccines can be given at the same time.

As of Oct. 1, eligible infants, high-risk children and

individuals who are between 28 and 36 weeks pregnant can get free RSV immunization. If you or your child is eligible, speak to a health-care provider.

All adults aged 75 and older, and high-risk older adults aged 60 to 74, are eligible for the publicly funded RSV vaccine. Eligible adults can get the RSV vaccine at any time of the year and should contact their primary care provider about receiving it. This program is not available through pharmacies.

RSV vaccine provides multi-year protection. If you received a dose of the RSV vaccine previously, you do not need to receive an additional dose.

To protect yourself, your family, your friends and the community during the respiratory illness season, the HPPH is suggesting to:

- Clean hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Stay home when sick until symptoms have improved for at least 24 hours (or 48 hours with no vomiting and/or diarrhea) and you don't have a fever.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your arm and mask when needed, such as when you have respiratory symptoms.
- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces such as doorknobs and light switches.
- Improve indoor ventilation, for example by opening a window.

To learn more about how to prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses, including information about immunizations, visit www.hpph.ca/illness.



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AUTHORIZED BY BILL BOON

U13 Lakers Start Strong, Earn Quebec Tournament Spot

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The U13 Huron-Perth AAA Lakers picked up where they left off last season as a U12 squad by winning the Toronto Red Wings Early Bird Championship late last month and starting their regular season on a positive note last week.

Last week brought a major announcement for the program: the Lakers shared on social media that they had been accepted to the world-renowned Quebec International Pee-Wee Hockey Tournament. The 2027 tournament runs from Feb. 10 to 21 in Quebec City.

In an interview with the Times, U13 Lakers head coach Shawn Walker discussed the announcement and the challenge of competing at the event against top U13 AAA teams from around the globe.

"Yeah, it's obviously very exciting for

our group. I think we're only the second Laker team ever to go to the Quebec TV tournament, and it's a prestigious one that's very hard to get into. For us to be accepted and to go represent Huron-Perth, this is a big opportunity for our team," Walker said.

"Obviously, it's going to be very difficult, and it's the biggest tournament in the world for that age group. So, yeah, we're excited to, you know, represent the organization, and hopefully represent the age group and the ALLIANCE, and put up a good showing. So I think it'll be a great opportunity for the boys. It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that I hope all these boys get to remember for the last for the rest of their lives."

As a U12 squad, the Lakers dominated last season, finishing 69-4-3 overall, winning the Kitchener Blueline and Great Lakes Cup tournaments, and claiming their second consecutive AL-

LIANCE league championship under Walker's stewardship. The squad also reached the finals of the International Silverstick and Florida Panthers Puck Tournaments.

Getting the season off to a great start was important for Walker, who knows the goal is to remain a top provincial team and compete at a higher level.

"Yeah, you know, we knew we were going to be fairly similar. We had 14 returning players and added 3 new players, which we felt helped our team get a little better. So we knew we were going to be right in the mix, but you know, like everybody else is getting better too. So you're playing other good teams, and it's tough to compete with some of the GTHL teams, especially the higher end ones. So you know we weren't sure, like, realistic expectations," Walker said.

"We were aiming for around the top of the province again. So it was nice to get

off to a good start and achieve a good result at the Toronto Red Wings tournament. We have high expectations, and we keep raising the bar as we try to repeat the ALLIANCE again this year. We put ourselves in a lot of really difficult tournaments to try to push the group to another level, kind of. So, yeah, we're very happy with how we started the year."

The Lakers opened the regular season on Oct. 3 with a 3-3 draw against the London Jr. Knights, but won against the Chatham-Kent Cyclones 7-1 at Zurich on Oct. 4, 5-1 against the Cambridge Hawks at the Stratford Rotary Complex on Oct. 9, and 6-1 over the Elgin-Middlesex Canucks in Komoka on Oct. 10.

Next up for the U13 Lakers is against the Waterloo Wolves at RIM Park in Waterloo on Oct. 16, followed by an early-evening game in Brantford against the 99ers at the TD Civic Centre on Oct. 17.

U16 Lakers compete at the Wendy Dufton Classic, Dale embraces opportunity

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

In preparation for the 2026 U16 AAA Wendy Dufton Memorial Tournament in London, U16 Huron-Perth Lakers head coach Greg Swan says the team is maintaining a great attitude, and their primary objective for the upcoming tournament is continuous improvement with every game.

"Yeah, I think they have a positive attitude right now, and like I've said before, a lot of new bodies, new coaching staff for them all, and you know we're still working each and every practice to get to where we want to be, and I think the guys come with a good attitude. They're listening. They're working hard, and we're trending

in the right direction," Swan said.

"I think obviously we would like to play in the playoff rounds, make it to the round of 16. But I think at the end of the day, we've been telling the guys our biggest goal right now is to get better and better every game, and then as we keep building, to get to where we want to be."

Defenceman Tyson Dale says he's excited to be with the team and looks forward to the journey ahead with the Lakers and continuing to grow.

"Yeah, it feels great. Obviously, getting back on the ice with the boys," Dale said. "Obviously, success, but honestly, get noticed, get moving as a group, and hopefully get wins."

The Lakers began the tournament on Oct. 8 against the Detroit Honeybaked.

Will Molenhuis scored their only goal in a 4-1 loss. On Oct. 9, the Lakers started their second day of the tournament with a morning clash with the Toronto Titans.

Samuel Humphrey opened the scoring for the Lakers in the first period, but the Titans answered with a goal midway through the second. Coleson Beirnes put the Lakers back in front with 91 seconds remaining in the middle frame. After Toronto tied it again, Simon Howard gave the Lakers another lead with 1:22 left in regulation. The Lakers couldn't hold on, as Toronto tied the game with 22 seconds remaining, and the teams settled for a hard-fought 3-3 draw.

The Lakers finished day two with an early-evening game against Hill Academy. Dexter Powell put the Lakers ahead

in the opening frame, but Hill Academy took control in the second period with three unanswered goals to lead 3-1. Howard's second of the tournament put the Lakers to within a goal late in the third, but they couldn't find the equalizer and lost 3-2.

In their final tournament game on Oct. 10 against Victory Honda, Colin Dinell scored in the first period to tie the game, but Victory Honda pulled away in the third as the Lakers fell 3-1.

The Lakers open their ALLIANCE U16 AAA regular season on Oct. 16 against the Waterloo Wolves at the Stratford Rotary Complex. They travel to Brantford to take on the 99ers on Oct. 17, then wrap up their opening weekend in Windsor against the Jr. Spitfires on Oct. 18.

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SMHA AA Warriors Weekly: Season in full swing

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

Both the Stratford Warriors U18 and U16 seasons are well underway, with the two teams playing twice over the weekend.

After a narrow 3-2 defeat in Brantford on Oct. 4, the U18 AA Warriors opened their home portion of the regular season on Oct. 10 in a home-and-home weekend matchup with the Sarnia Jr. Sting at the Stratford Rotary Complex.

The Warriors came out strong, scoring twice in the first two minutes to take an early 2-0 lead. Sarnia answered late in the opening frame, cutting Stratford's advantage to 2-1 with 4:06 remaining. Stratford restored its two-goal lead at 7:22 of the third, but the Sting rallied with three unanswered goals to hand the Warriors their second loss of the season.

Stratford travelled to the Pat Stapleton Arena in Sarnia for the second of the two-game series on Oct. 11. The visitors struck first at 1:46 into the game, only for the Sting to respond with 3:45 left in the opening frame. Stratford retook the lead for good 42 seconds later, taking the 2-1 lead heading into the middle frame.

The Warriors' offence exploded in the second period with four goals, three of which came within a span of 3:25, taking a commanding 6-1 lead heading into the third period. Stratford added three more around the midway mark of the final frame, as the Warriors routed the Sting 9-1 for their first win of the 2026-27 season.

Next, the U18 Warriors will face the Cambridge Hawks at the Rotary Complex on Oct. 17, then take on the Woodstock Jr. Navy Vets at the Reeves Community

Complex on Oct. 18.

On Oct. 10, the U16 Warriors visited St. Thomas to face the Jr. Stars at the Joe Thornton Community Complex.

Stratford opened the scoring 3:11 into the first period, but the Stars tied it with 5:56 remaining. The Warriors reclaimed the lead with a late power-play goal, scored with 2:37 left in the opening frame. Stratford padded their lead with two goals early in the second period, making it 4-1 by the midway point.

St. Thomas cut Stratford's lead in half with 4:01 left in the period, and the Warriors took a 4-2 lead into the third. The Stars scored three goals in the final period to win the game. The game-tying and game-winning goals came just 2:24 apart, handing the Warriors a tough 5-4 loss and dropping them below .500 for the second time this season.

Stratford returned home the following night on Oct. 11 to host the Cambridge Hawks at the William Allman Memorial Arena.

Cambridge opened the scoring with the lone goal in the first period. The home side came back in the second period with a power-play goal at 4:07 to tie the game, then took the lead for good with under 8 minutes left in the period. The Warriors added an insurance goal at 3:27 into the third period and held on for a 3-2 win.

The U16 Warriors play three games at home this coming week. They open on Oct. 14 against the Mount Brydges Cougars at the Allman Arena, then face the Sarnia Jr. Sting at the Rotary Complex on Oct. 17. They return to the Allman Arena the following day, Oct. 18, to take on the St. Thomas Jr. Stars.

Mike's Lanes to host 42nd annual Tom Boyes Memorial Best Ball Tournament

NICHELE BUTCHER-BONTRUP

Guest Contributor

As tournament season kicks off at Mike's Bowling Lanes, bowlers can look forward to another exciting year of five-pin bowling, beginning with the 42nd annual Tom Boyes Memorial Best Ball Tournament Nov. 1.

The tournament honours Tom Boyes, a longtime Mike's Lanes bowler. This event was started by two fellow bowlers, one of whom was Rich Thibeault along with his friend John, to show gratitude for Boyes, as he was involved in the youth bowling program and extremely dedicated to helping with anything around the lanes, from cutting grass, to coaching the youth bowlers. What began as a 10-game competition has evolved over the years into the eight-game tournament bowlers compete in today.

The event's history has been kept alive through the dedication of members of the bowling community, including Thibeault, who helped promote the tournament for many years. Boyes' daughter, Laurel Laughton, continues to support the annual tradition by coming out to help with scorekeeping during the event. Her family, including Dennis and Catherine Laughton, also remain connected to the event, helping preserve the legacy of a tournament that has become a meaningful part of Mike's Lanes history.

The 42nd annual event will feature eight games of best ball competition, with cash prizes to be won for first, second and third, as well as eight high-single prizes of \$20, which will also be awarded, one per game.

The entry deadline is Saturday, Oct. 31. Interested bowlers are encouraged to register early for this annual memorial event.

As tournament season gets underway, the Tom Boyes Memorial is just the



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured is Laurel Laughton, daughter of Tom Boyes, who continues to help run the annual Tom Boyes Memorial Best Ball Tournament at Mike's Bowling Lanes. The 42nd installment of the tournament runs Nov. 1 at Mike's Lanes.

beginning of the excitement at Mike's Lanes. The months ahead will bring a variety of competitions for bowlers of all ages, including Youth Bowling events, family competitions and opportunities to qualify for regional and provincial tournaments.

With a rich history behind it and plenty of action still to come, the bowling season is only just beginning. Events like the Tom Boyes Memorial serve as a reminder that bowling is about more than scores and trophies; it is about the people, families and traditions that keep the community strong year after year.

For more information or to register, contact Mike's Bowling Lanes at 24 Lorne Ave. E by calling 519-271-2092, or visit the Lanes' Facebook page.

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Mike's 5-Pin Bowling Association (M5PBA) Weekly Report

Men's

Michael Palmby 357
Kyle McNall 410-829

Monday Senior's

Marlene Crerar 208, 218-621
Steve Van Klooster 236, 200-612
Len Barber 218
Janice Shaw 207

V-Ettes

Frances Sprout 212

Wednesday Ladies

Bonita Baranyi 220

St. Joe's

Henry Groenestege 225

United League

Peyton Boyles-Keating 216
Dominic Boyles-Keating 230, 255-652

Sydney Smith 212, 233
Paul Boyd 237
Nichele Butcher-Bontrup 208

Pin Pals

Jeremy Rathwell 104, 105
Gregory Jones 119
Thomas Holland 122
Emily Jones 102, 122
Cody Medeiors 101

YBC Scores

Bowlasaurus

Abbey Bobor 93
Levi Hamilton 87
Huxley Wybrow 120
Theo Brown 121
Audrey Parker 100
Bodie Clark 99
Cole Casey 122

Emmy Hvidsten 100

Pee-Wee & Bantam

Dominic Rowe 98
Noah Saunders 105, 113, 123-341 series
Stella Hurley St. Pierre 100, 104-300 series
Lincoln Butcher-Cassidy 112, 146-350 series
Grey Davidson 250 series
Kylie Smith 81
Jacob Murray 104
Serenity Robb 105
Leo Parker 128
Kayleigh Mitchell 142-372 series

Junior

Ruby Parker 188
Mckenna Morris 204
Charlee Koyle 156
Lauren Furtney 178, 265-586 series
Abby Smith 170, 173, 262-605 series

Anna Ward 174, 162, 166-502 series
Brianna Bauer 173, 195, 222-590 series
Hayden Martin 185, 190
Clayton Lundrigan Patey 157-375 series
Roland Rains 186, 187-496
Austin Janmaat 159, 168, 204-531 series
Brent Louwagie 150, 182-435 series
Lincoln McCann 175-422 series

Senior

Alex Ward 184, 220-567 series
Wiatt Robinson 198
Sydney Smith 176, 181
Payton Kainz 196
Claire Turner 226, 240-639
Dominic Boyles-Keating 200, 218
Peyton Boyles -Keating 200, 244
Carter Bage 209
Zachary Clarke 250, 259-668 series
Issac Kroesbergen 195
Jocelyn Gethke 185
Owen Martin 188

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STRATFORD NISSAN



Recharged Warriors continue to rack up wins

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

Coming off a fun-filled weekend trip to the United States and a week of preparation, the refocused Stratford Hunter Steel Warriors dug deep to beat the Sarnia Legionnaires, the Elmira Sugar Kings and the London Nationals, extending their win streak to five games last week.

After sweeping the London Nationals and Chatham Maroons over the weekend of Sept. 27 and 28, the Warriors headed to Michigan and Bowling Green for their annual U.S. trip at the beginning of October. They then returned to Stratford for a week of preparation before resuming the regular season.

On their final practice before the annual trip, Warriors head coach Dave Williams noted that the group has been practicing effectively, highlighting their hard work and ability to execute well during recent skates. Despite a break in the schedule, Williams expressed confidence in the team's current preparation levels following their recent wins.

"I think we've had some good practices here. They always come and really work hard and execute usually really well. So I thought we've had good skates. A little break in the schedule. We'll enjoy ourselves down in the United States this weekend at Michigan and Bowling Green," Williams said.

"I think it'll be really good. I mean, maybe a little bit earlier than we're used to, but maybe given the start, it might be a good time for us to get away and have some time to bond and maybe come back to a really tough schedule Thanksgiving weekend. But yeah, I think it'd be good for us to get away together."

Team captain Colin Slattery believed it was important to make the most of the retreat by enjoying the company and spending time away from the rink, given the team's overall age.

"It is a little older than we're used to. But considering the start we have, I think it's nice to go get away from the rink for a couple of days and just enjoy this company," Slattery said.

Defencemen Aaron Green and Mateo Craievich echoed Slattery's remarks.

"Yeah, it's just going to be fun. We're going to spend some quality time with the teammates, bond and hopefully bring our group a little closer and help us on the ice," Green said.

"I think it'll be a good refresh. We got a couple of games under our belt, so I think a little trip with some team bonding should be very beneficial for our group. Come back really strong," Craievich said.

The Warriors resumed regular season play at the homely comforts of William Allman Memorial Arena on Oct. 9.

Stratford got on the board with 3:09 remaining in the first period when Slattery scored his fourth goal of the season on an assist from Max Wildfong. Sixty-five seconds later, McQuen Haylock scored his third of the season, assisted by Declan McCotter and Ethan Bridges.

In the second period, which included 36 combined penalty minutes between the two sides, Stratford doubled their lead with goals from Grady Murphy on the power play at 7:16 and Haylock's second of the night with 44 seconds in the middle frame.

Sarnia scored three unanswered goals in a span of 2:34 to cut the Stratford lead to 4-3, but Colten Brenzil scored his first of the season, with over seven minutes left, on assists from Wildfong and Coen Galbraith to secure the win for the Warriors.

Warriors' netminder Gage Hurst made 24 saves for his first win of the season.

After spending the next day off, the Warriors went to Elmira for the matchup with the Sugar Kings on Oct. 11.

The game remained scoreless until 6:47, when Haylock continued his scoring streak with his third goal in two games, assisted by McCotter and Bridges. Elmira tied the game midway through the period, but Carter Brownlee scored his first career GOHL goal with assists from Slattery and Galbraith to give the Warriors the lead again. Elmira then equalized late in the middle frame.

Following a scoreless third period, the game went to overtime, where Galbraith scored on a rebound in front of the Elmira net for his first of the season, 43 seconds into the extra session, giving the visitors an additional point. Netminder Noah Bender stopped 32 shots in the victory.

Less than 24 hours later on Thanksgiving Day, the Warriors faced the London Nationals in a matinee game at the Western Fair Sports Centre.

The Nationals opened the scoring midway through the first period, but with 4:41 left in the period, Slattery continued his strong showing over the weekend with his fourth point in three games, giving Stratford a 1-1 tie after 20 minutes of play.

London retook the lead at 9:25 of the second period, but Wildfong's third of the season from Coward put the Warriors back on level terms again over a minute later. On a power play late in the period, Haylock found open space in the London crease to score his sixth of the season, assisted by Slattery and Aaron Green, with 3:53 left, putting the Warriors ahead 3-2 heading into the final period.

Haylock scored four goals over the weekend and six in the last five games.

Defenceman Jaxon Broda found paydirt on the man-advantage 2:26 into the third period, with assists from Grady Murphy and Slattery, to put Stratford ahead 4-2. The Warriors had three more power plays to put the game out of reach but were unable to capitalize.

Fortunately for the Warriors, despite a mid-period goal from London to cut the lead to a goal, the team dug deep to lock down the Nationals' attack, ultimately leading to their fifth-straight win with a 4-3 victory.

Postgame, Williams spoke about the team's growth during the weekend and how they endured the toll of playing two road games in less than 24 hours.

"It's a tough weekend for us. You know, we had the opportunity last weekend to travel away, and that's a nice opportunity for our guys. But then the flip side of that is, you know, you come back and have to play Friday, Sunday and Monday, and Sunday night last night against a tough Elmira team to come in here and play, you know, another good team (London) on a short turnaround," Williams said.

"So really happy for our group that, you know, we found a way to put a few games together here, and we just need to keep working hard and getting more consistent with what we need to do on a nightly basis."

Averaging two points per game (two goals, four assists) over the holiday weekend, Slattery said the perseverance paid dividends for the team after the team started the season winless.

"It was a rough start, but we knew we had a lot more to give. We knew we had a good group, so it feels good to see the guys get rewarded," Slattery said.

Hurst has posted a 2-0 record during the three-game streak, with a 3.00 goals-against average (GAA) and a 0.895 save percentage. The Royal Oak, Mich.-native credits a steady, focused mindset as essential to his success in those two victories.

"Just, I think hitting the reset button and staying level-headed during the games, not getting too high, not getting too low, and always hitting a reset in between whistles or whatever it is, and yeah, just staying even-minded throughout the whole game, through all the ups and downs," Hurst said.

Since rejoining the Warriors from the Saginaw Spirit of the Ontario Hockey League, Wildfong has recorded a point in five of seven games, amassing seven points overall. The second-year forward discussed his impact on the team since returning, sharing his thoughts with the Times.

"Yeah, you know, just working hard, just

trying to really compete out there and use my body in a lot of plays too. And a big one for me is just getting to the net more. I think that's how you get more points, and using my body and speed to get to the net," Wildfong said.

At press time, Stratford is in fifth place in the GOHL's Western Conference with 10 points and a 5-3 record. Focusing on next week's games at the William Allman Memorial Arena against the St. Thomas Stars on Oct. 16 and Listowel Cyclones on Oct. 17, Williams wants to emphasize the details and securing four more points.

"Yeah, we get ready for St. Thomas and Listowel, two teams that are off to good starts. And again, I think we just got to keep building consistency in our entire game, whether it's five-on-five or penalty kill or power play. I think it's just continuing to build some consistency because with that break too, you know, we're a little behind in games, and game action is really, really important," Williams said.

Stratford Warriors 2026-27 Stats (as of October 12, 2026)

Player	Pos	GP	G	A	PTS
Colin Slattery	F	7	5	4	9
Max Wildfong	F	6	3	4	7
Ethan Bridges	F	8	2	5	7
McQuen Haylock	F	8	6	0	6
Grady Murphy	F	8	2	4	6
Dominic Marshall	F	8	1	5	6
Will Coward	D	7	0	6	6
Jaxon Broda	D	8	1	4	5
Coen Galbraith	F	8	1	4	5
Francesco Sanita	F	8	2	2	4
Aaron Green	D	8	1	3	4
Declan McCotter	F	8	0	4	4
Drew Hodge	D	8	2	0	2
Chase Martin	F	7	1	1	2
Gibson Grendel	D	7	0	2	2
Carter Brownlee	D	5	1	0	1
Colten Brenzil	F	6	1	0	1
Mateo Craievich	D	8	1	0	1
Ethan McPhee	F	5	0	1	1
Lucas Minard	F	6	0	0	0
Goalies	Record	GAA	SV-%		
Noah Bender	3-0-0-0	3.29	0.907		
Gage Hurst	2-2-0-0	3.28	0.881		
Travis Vanderzwaag	0-1-0-0	4.12	0.778		

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New mural on Ontario Street celebrates local music and artists

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

A new mural has been installed on the side of the Milky Whey building on Ontario Street that catches the eye as you come into the downtown core. Music is a celebrated art form in Stratford and now it has been captured by mural artist Shane Drever in a landmark design.

The call for mural artists resulted in 47 submissions to the committee hosted by the Stratford BIA. The musical concept was to celebrate the music of Stratford and pay tribute to the musicians past and present. A group of people with local music industry, radio, recording industry experience helped decide where they needed to go and who would be put on. A separate jury was established for the artwork to be used.

The final concept is called Strike Up The Band and it features a 45 record complete with the centrepiece recognizable to those of a certain age. At the forefront are instruments; a piano, a guitar and a stand-up bass that are said to conceal the bands that appear to have been missed. There are about 50 bands and musicians detailed on the record.

"I've worked on it for about 10 days. I started out doing murals in high school where people would contact the school asking if there were students to paint their kid's room. It was my first mural and they have just gotten bigger since then. By far, I think this one is my favourite," said Drever.

He works the old-fashioned way, with measuring tape and string. Projectors and VR headsets are not his style. He will measure things out visually with string, then tape it up to represent what he is trying to get up. If the string looks wrong, he can simply move it. Then he marks in the

lines once it looks right by hand.

"Because it's that style, it looks like it fits on this building. When you come up the street, it looks almost like it's always been here," Drever said.

Over the course of the days that he has been painting the community reaction has been outstanding with many people stopping to chat and tell their own stories about music in Stratford.

"One of the bands on there is Small Town Strip Club and they came and gave me a hat. They were super excited and he lives just up the street. The community already feels really positive, and they're coming to make sure they tell me that they feel positive about it. I really, really, appreciate that," adds Drever.

Jamie Pritchard, general manager of the BIA, also wants to give credit to his wife Cathy for her input. It was her idea to make the record a 45 with the plastic centrepiece fondly remembered by so many of us.

"No one knows what it is anymore but there's something hidden in that piece and I'm not going to tell you what it is. Just take a good look. It would be nice for everybody to go look at that centrepiece and decide for themselves," teased Pritchard.

The BIA is compiling an extensive list of musicians and bands connected to Stratford and our area and is turning that list into a series of Spotify playlists – the "Sounds of Stratford." Soon, visitors will be able to access the playlists through QR codes located at the mural, as well as through the Downtown Stratford BIA website. This will allow residents and visitors to not only see Stratford's musical story, but to hear it as well.

A special thank you from Pritchard also goes to all the visitors who come to Stratford and stay in one of the fine inns and hotels, and to the accommodators



(STRATFORD BIA PHOTO)

The newest mural in Stratford is called Strike Up The Band and is on Ontario Street on the side of Milky Whey Fine Cheese Shop.

who work every day to make their experience memorable. Their continued support of the community helps make projects like this possible and contributes to the vibrant arts, culture and hospitality that make Stratford such a special place. Funding for this mural can be attributed

to the Municipal Accommodation Tax.

Additionally, thanks goes to Dulux Paints, Old Pointe Properties, the City of Stratford, Fresh by Selena, Littlebig Creative and Nathan McKay for their contributions to helping bring Strike Up the Band to life.

Escape-It Stratford brings new frights to its annual haunted house

NICHELE BUTCHER-BONTRUP

Guest Contributor

Halloween enthusiasts, thrill-seekers and brave souls alike are invited to experience a new level of fright as Escape-It Stratford returns with its annual Haunted House, opening Oct. 17.

This year, visitors can expect a fresh take on the terrifying tradition, with new creatures, spooky features and exciting surprises lurking around every corner.

In a major change to this year's production, the familiar face of the resident clown has officially been retired, making way for a brand-new character ready to take centre stage. With a revamped lineup of creepy characters and eerie additions, even returning visitors won't know what

awaits them in the darkness.

Whether you're looking for a milder Halloween thrill or a full-blown fright, Escape-It Stratford has something for everyone. Those who prefer a less intense experience can visit Tuesday through Thursday from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m., while those seeking a more terrifying adventure can brave the haunt Friday through Sunday from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m.

With Halloween approaching, Escape-It Stratford is ready to welcome visitors for another season of screams, suspense and unforgettable memories.

The question is: Are you brave enough to enter?

For more information contact Escape-It Stratford at 519-949-SAFE or visit its Facebook page.



Stratford friendship inspires book about guitarist John Till

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

John Till played alongside some of rock music's biggest names, including Janis Joplin, but he was never one to seek the spotlight.

The guitarist played at Woodstock in 1969, performed with Joplin's bands and played on her Pearl album. Before that, he spent several years with Ronnie Hawkins' Hawks.

Now, his story is being told in *Strings of Pearl*, a new book by journalist Michael Byrnes set for release Oct. 28 through Schiffer Publishing.

Byrnes lived in Stratford from 2010 to 2019, where he became close friends with Till. What started as an idea for a magazine article eventually grew into a book that took eight years to write.

"I used to play air guitar to his music, daydreaming during math class. I never thought I'd grow up to be his friend and write his biography," Byrnes said.

The two met after Byrnes learned Till lived in Stratford and wanted him to perform a living room concert at his bed and breakfast. A visit that was supposed to last a few minutes turned into a three-and-a-half-hour conversation, and the two quickly became friends.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

John Till, guitarist for Janis Joplin's band, appears with the singer on The Dick Cavett Show. Till's story is featured in the upcoming book *Strings of Pearl*, by local author Michael Byrnes, set for release Oct. 28.

As they got to know each other, Byrnes began to wonder why nobody had written down Till's story.

"He didn't think anybody would want to read about him," Byrnes said.

Despite his musical accomplishments,

Till preferred to stay in the background, away from the attention that came with playing alongside well-known musicians.

For Byrnes, that was part of what made the story worth telling.

"He's the greatest guitar player that you've heard, but never heard of," Byrnes said.

Written in the first person, *Strings of Pearl* tells Till's story from his perspective, offering a look at the music industry from the point of view of a musician who was often content to stand at the back of the stage.

The book became even more important to Byrnes after Till died before it could be completed. Byrnes continued working on it, determined to see his friend's story published.

Another part of Till's story was his attachment to his guitar. Throughout his career, he had just one guitar that rarely left his side.

That changed in 1974, when he left it in a studio in White Plains, N.Y. The loss devastated him, and he spent years trying to track it down without success.

Then, just two weeks before announcing the book's release, Byrnes found the long-lost guitar; a story for another time, said Byrnes.

Strings of Pearl will be available through major book retailers following its Oct. 28 release.

Byrnes is scheduled to appear at Indigo North London on Nov. 15 for a book signing.

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Results for 2025**

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Donations from Campaign	\$35,653.43
Donations in Memory	\$995.00
TOTAL	\$36,648.43

EXPENSES

Poppies, Centers, Wreaths, Bracelets etc.	\$4,490.18
General Administration	\$756.44

DONATIONS FROM THE POPPY TRUST FUND

Veterans Support including Homeless Veterans	\$4,876.00
Parkwood Institute	\$7,000
Stratford General Hospital Foundation	\$7,500
Rotary Hospice	\$2,434.03
Bursaries	\$2,000.00
Youth education (Art, writing contest)	\$1,083.92
Legion Charitable, Hospital, RCEL, Ontario Poppy	\$4,000.00
19 squadron Air & 223 Army cadet units	\$3,000.00
Resource centers(Camp Maple Leaf) for children of serving and veterans.	\$1,000.00
TOTAL	\$32,893.95

TOTAL SPENT \$38,140.57

Thank you Stratford and area residents for your generous support.

Editorial

On Thanksgiving, give thanks for democracy



DAN ROLPH

Exeter Examiner editor

I've always believed that Thanksgiving is a particularly special day.

In Canada we celebrate occasions stemming from traditions that have shifted over generations. Some are born from religious practices, some are secular, and some stray so

far from one origin that they become something new entirely. Thanksgiving, I think, has become a holiday that is truly unique.

It can be easy for some to remember that our Thanksgiving is very separated from the holiday recognized in the U.S., not only by the date we mark down on our calendars, but by the continued prominence of the American myth of the first Thanksgiving.

In Canada, Thanksgiving is far simpler. It's a time of humility and reflection, when each of us can look at our lives through the lens of thankfulness and remind ourselves of how important it is to recognize the privileges we may forget through the busyness of everyday life.

For some, that may mean

giving thanks for family and friends, a safe place to call home, food on the table, good health, meaningful work or the support of a caring community.

This Thanksgiving, one of the privileges I find myself thankful for is the freedom to have our voices heard through our democracy, particularly as we approach the upcoming municipal elections later this month.

We live in a transformative age. By many metrics, the prominence of democracy on a global level is declining.

In a report released this past September by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), an organization based in Sweden that supports legitimate democratic institutions, this moment in histo-

ry that we find ourselves in is described as a "crisis" for democracies. International IDEA cited mounting pressures such as political polarization, disinformation, the concentration of executive power and a decline in public trust as drivers of that crisis.

In that report, International IDEA noted that just 21 per cent of the world's population lives in a country considered "free" in 2026, less than half of the 46 per cent from two decades before.

It's a staggering reality of the 21st century that democracy and freedom are backsliding globally, but that reality makes it as important as ever to recognize the strength of Canada's democracy as the world changes.

However, Canada is not an island. We are not immune to

the trends of the world, and we can't allow ourselves to become complacent when it comes to the rights generations of Canadians have fought for.

In South Huron, voter turnout in municipal elections dropped by nearly 10 per cent between 2018 and 2022, with less than half the eligible voters casting a ballot in the municipality's last election.

That's a trend that I hope our community chooses to reverse later this month.

So as the next municipal election approaches, remember to be thankful for the good things in your life, and let your thankfulness push you to participate in this important tradition we call democracy. Fewer people in the world today have that opportunity than you may realize.

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(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Richard and Joan Hryniw show the little boxes that are made out of used greeting cards to raise money for local cancer treatment centres, during a high noon luncheon at Grace United Church last week in Tavistock. The couple are continually looking for greeting cards and Lang calendars to make these small boxes and can be reached by phone at 519-752-7958, or at littleboxes.plus@gmail.com.

STRATFORDTIMES

Guiding Principles

1. Everyone has a story
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3. Good news beats bad news
4. A Newspaper should be a community effort (contribute to your local paper!)
5. Newspapers document history
6. Newspapers strengthen communities
7. Advertisers, big or small, should profit from their ads (meaning sensible ad rates)
8. Newspapers should be locally-owned and operated

Opinion

As I See It From America: Keep your wonderful country vibrant and alive



PATRICK D. BURK

Times Columnist

I really learned a lesson these past few weeks. As you are aware, both of our countries are participating in an election process, that may not be perfect, but it happens. I also have mentioned in the past that your process seems to be more compact and efficient, even with the inclusion of many political parties unlike the drawn out, billion-dollar industry in the United States that produces our elected representatives. Do you know that in one Senate race here, more than a billion dollars will be spent to elect a representative of the people. I can think of a lot better ways to spend a billion that truly helps and impacts our citizens.

What people, "I ask"? As one person said in that state, "I do not

participate in politics because it does not serve me or my needs. It is an industry that promotes and produces a minion to serve the companies and millionaires that have manufactured and paid for the person's promotion to government to gain control." As long winded and interesting as this comment is, it is not that far from the truth. Why do so many of these elected positions cost so much to get information out to the general voting public about the candidates? Shouldn't that be bit easier? Does it really take a billion?

As I have investigated some of our national races and local western New York races, I realize that much of the money is spent on the demonization of the candidates running. As soon as some television ad hits the airwaves you can expect an answer that uses the first ad to tear down the person. In one such ad a candidate states that he is against large data centres being built near his community. This candidate is running against a well liked and respected incumbent that seems to be a nice family man. And yet, his campaign hits back with a dark and scary television ad that the other guy is totally against business and will vote to remove jobs and manufacturing

from the area. I have not heard that, and I don't think that it is true. The ad includes photos of people standing in line for free food. It is ridiculous.

All of this makes me think. Are the incumbents so worried about losing their positions in the government that even the good guys, the likeable ones, the ones that you were thinking are the shining lights start the nasty and messy campaign lies and fodder? I do know of a few great, elected people. I am often in contact with them and they seem genuine and want to serve the people that have chosen them. I see no nasty or mean streak, nor do I see a complete lack of understanding of the reasons why some people disagree with them. I see them shaking hands and talking in their communities to all their neighbours. Are they the exception?

I am hoping that this latter method of shaking hands, meeting people and talking about real issues and serving as an elected official in Canada is the basic normal model. Most of what I have seen and read seems to reflect that. Issues are issues but the differences in candidates are not highlighted by untruths and if you do not agree that does not make you a monster.

In the United States, from the top office in the land to the local councilperson, the new way to maintain your power is to spend tons of money, belittle anyone that dares to run against you and unleash the nasty. Often the comments that are unleashed are not true or even close to the truth. Look at what is happening in the State of Texas where one candidate had a fairly severe case of the flu and missed some days on the campaign trail. Then the opposing candidate promptly starts news stories about him being in a mental health facility. The "proof" and indeed the whole story is laughable and not even close to reality. It is a totally fabricated story that was debunked in a manner of minutes and yet, it is still running on the paid media and on some online websites. The "campaign of the nasty" is the direction we have taken.

Many wonder why people don't want to go and vote. It is a rare election here when even 50 per cent of the registered voters actually go out and cast their ballot. And there are so many non-registered people, it is mind boggling. I have finally realized that after listening to many sources and discussions, people are really fed up with the whole system. They do not see

it as anything they can impact or change and have relinquished the control of elected officials to the corporations and big money. The Elon Musks of this country, who spend hundreds of millions on morphing elections into the shapes they want them to be, are the ones in control. The guy with the \$10 donation to the campaign is forgotten.

And so we move forward. Your elections are less than two weeks away and ours are a bit less than three weeks. It will be interesting to compare the lead up to our election days. Down here, early voting seems to be popular. Mail-in voting is surviving, although it is under attack, and the ads of untruths and falsehood still are part of the airwaves. I hope that in Stratford, your candidates are at least staying factual. I hope that they still want to serve and are not concerned with gaining prestige and wealth and I hope that the registered voters cherish their right to vote and come out to the polls. I hope that the campaigns of untruths and falsehoods do not become the norm. I hope you Vote Canada and keep your wonderful country vibrant and alive.

Please let me know how you feel about this article. Contact me at burk.patrick1956@gmail.com

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Opinion

WEB-CRAWLING THROUGH AI



SHEILA CLARKE

Times Columnist

Let's talk about AI – by name, Artificial Intelligence, although sometimes I wonder. As a topic, it's also connected to humans, so we have to talk about both.

Last month the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) spoke in favour of a motion to establish requirements for any AI Data Centre in Stratford with regard to energy, land and water usage. We are also contemplating developing policy with regard to benefits and cautions regarding AI itself.

I recently saw a film at Falstaff about AI in education. It was sobering.

Although AI really began to develop in the '50s, it seems as if it has burst into our lives since the COVID-19 pandemic. Giant AI data centres have appeared, based on massive water usage for cooling, high energy and

land use. Newer methods such as LOOP technology (reusing water for cooling) and Direct to Chip technology somewhat diminish the huge water usage, but also use large amounts of "start up" water and more energy use, which increases fossil fuel emissions. The side question exists that when the power fails, whose needs will be met for water and energy, the data centre or the community surrounding it? We have rushed headlong into AI, in the fashion of our frequent adoption of "progress."

I will take a step sideways at this point to briefly look at the UN report released last month, that looks at "progress." Since the industrial revolution, which we surely define as progress, we have been adding fossil fuel emissions to our atmosphere. Limiting Overshoot, the UN report, has addressed areas of necessary resources, including biodiversity and plant life, for life on Earth. We go beyond sustainable use of those areas at our peril – and the peril of all forms of life.

We are currently beyond sustainability in seven of nine areas, a direct result of global warming. In our minds, "progress" has meant technology that invites us to more prosperity and a better quality of life. It could be argued that progress

has invited us to a most uneven quality of life around the globe, depending on whether you are a have or a have not, that warfare has gone hand in hand with our progress, and that we are now in a situation where the very sustainability of our human-habitat is in question. The fossil fuel emissions that have emerged from our progress have poisoned the planet with heat, unpredictable major storms and serious threat to food and water – and all who depend on it. We might look more closely at "progress" as a rationale for adopting any new technology.

I use AI. I understand that the hyper-scale data centres are filled with information, and that there are intricate mathematical formulae that will direct AI to plumb the depths of those data, and will then recombine them in ways that will respond to most requests I make.

There are simple algorithms I use, which will answer a data-based question I have – something direct, informational and precise. That's my level of usage, and I'm grateful for it. It saves me hours of poring over print, trying to track down simple answers.

Where don't I go? I'll tell you a story. I was working on an ecology article – a young relative who was visiting, taught

me how to use ChatGPT and although it was early days, he explained that I could direct it to write my article. After I finished my own article, I took a look at a ChatGPT attempt. It wasn't badly written, although I preferred mine – but it included a point that I had missed. Today you can tell ChatPT to write as a Grade 7 student, a scientist or from a different viewpoint. I haven't touched it since that day, other than the simple data questions – nor will I.

AI has grown astronomically. It is in the hands of corporate interests whose goals are profit. Large Language Models (LLMs) are way beyond simple data questions. When you engage AI on a conversational level using ChatGPT, Claude or Gemini, common interfaces, they are designed to get you involved in interaction, and to keep you engaged. They act as friends, as counsellors and as advisors – in some cases with tragic results. They are notoriously inaccurate. As the world becomes more complex, data are showing increasing loneliness, mental health challenges and disengagement with others. We don't talk to each other as much as we used to. Unfortunately that is fertile ground for manipulative AI.

Yes, it's progress. AI is showing great promise in medical

research and treatment. Maybe the social use is not progress. Maybe it's regress. Maybe we should be ensuring healthy schools with adequate staffing, community and spare time engagement with others and a society that permits stability in employment, housing and medical support – and respect for nature, for those who travel with us. That's my definition of "progress."

UPDATES:

Carbon parts per million (ppm) in the atmosphere as of Oct. 11, 2026: 426.56 ppm. Up from 424.69 ppm at this time last year, an increase of about 1.87 ppm.

Orangutans lived in tropical forests in Indonesia. They were intelligent great apes, with family structures, humour and love. Their habitat has always been threatened by our lust for palm oil. Recently El Nino and global warming combined to consume those tropical forests in fire. The orangutans didn't stand a chance. Most died in pain and in terror. I wanted to say that we know, and that I'm sorry.

Sheila Clarke is a Stratford advocate for the environment, of our community and of our planet. She is a member of CFUW Stratford, Stratford Climate Momentum, and the Perth County Sustainability Hub.

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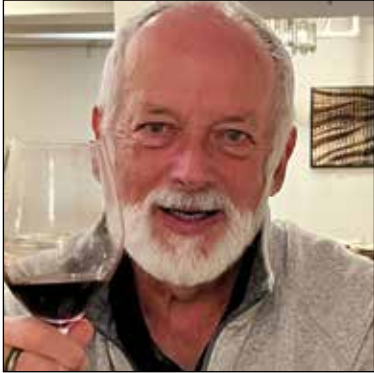


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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Time-travelling in Tarragona



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Columnist

"In Tarragona, you can't move soil or you will find Roman remains." If I thought this was an exaggeration by our guide, I soon realized I was wrong. This Spanish city is absolutely chock-a-block with 2,000-year-old evidence of Roman civilization.

If you are anything like me – and I sincerely hope you do not bear such a curse – you find ancient ruins to be absolutely fascinating. I think it's because we live in a land that, from the perspective of architectural ruins, is a "new world." A building 200 years old in Canada is astonishing; it's a recent renovation in Spain.

But still, walking around a city where large bits of Roman buildings still stand next door to modern shops and homes is an amazing experience. And it doesn't come much more amazing than in Tarragona, this city on the Mediterranean coast an hour and a bit from Barcelona.

Like many – probably most – European cities, Tarragona has a history going back before accurate records. The Phoenicians were probably here in the seventh century B.C. The Romans were certainly here from the first century B.C. until the fall of the Roman Empire in the mid-fifth century. Roman



Roman chariot races once took place in the heart of Tarragona and, today, much of the "circus," the site of those competitions, still stands.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

Catholic popes were here – or at least, a would-be pope, crowned as such at the time of the "Great Schism" when there were actually three popes claiming the title – one in Rome, one in Avignon and one in Tarragona.

Supporters of one of the other popes attempted to limit the field by poisoning the Tarragona prelate, but he survived and lived to be over 90.

The so-called pope was not the only public figure to claim heavenly status in Tarragona. Centuries earlier, the Roman Emperor Octavius Caesar chose this site for his declaration of personal divinity.

We were in Tarragona as guests of Viking on a terrific Mediterranean Cruise, and I found the visit to Tarragona to be one of the most interesting excursions on the voyage that took us from Rome to Barcelona.

Today, Tarragona is a city in the region of Catalonia, home to seven million inhabitants and still a very busy fishing port. Our guide told us that Tarragona fishers are responsible for half of all the fishing in Catalonia.

But frankly, while the modern city is interesting, it was all of the evidence of Roman life here that grabbed my attention. I'm not alone in this perspective; Tarragona's ruins are so important that they have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Roman evidence continues to have so much impact on the city that the entire central city plan continues to follow what our guide called "the Roman urbanistic plan." Even the impressive Roman Catholic Cathedral, built starting in the 14th century, sits squarely on the site of a Roman temple.

And right in the heart of the city

is an amazingly well-preserved Roman circus – a first-century chariot-racing arena.

The circus, once the site of two-horse chariot and four-horse chariot races, is one of the best preserved of such treasures in the world. We visited part of the track and, perhaps even more interesting, saw extensive spectator seating facilities sitting directly below much more modern houses.

Through the city centre, you will find large section of still-standing walls, begging for both historical research and selfie moments. We did both.

Equally impressive is the Roman Amphitheatre, sitting near the sea-shore and still a splendid sight from the roadside high above the theatre.

While Tarragona is filled with large, significant Roman ruins, there are also less obvious bits of evidence of that crucial period in

western civilization. The walls of houses and shops have bits and pieces of Roman buildings in them, re-used as construction materials.

In fact, our guide told us one of the biggest problems facing today's heritage conservators is that the amphitheatre, the circus, the walls and other Roman buildings were used as quarries for readily available construction materials in more recent centuries. This practice is entirely illegal today, of course.

We visited a lot of historical Roman sites during our time in Tarragona but still managed only to see about half of the significant ruins. Also found in and around the city are a Pretorium tower, two fora (provincial and colonial government meeting places), a necropolis (burial place), the palace of Augustus, and several other towers, arches and roadways. Rome certainly left its mark on this Spanish city.

There are plenty of legends around Tarragona, as well. One suggests the city's origins date back more than 2,000 years B.C. Another says St. Paul came to Tarragona, and thus, "Tarragona became the gate of Christianity," to quote our guide.

What is known for sure is that Caesar Augustus, who reigned over the burgeoning Empire from 27 B.C. to 14 A.D., spent his winters in Tarragona, thus establishing a tourism tradition that continues to this day. The emperor enjoyed his visits to the place; so will modern-day travelers looking to get up close and personal with ancient history.

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



The remarkable site of 2,000-year-old spectator seating areas directly adjacent to modern-day homes.



Cats wander through UNESCO heritage site ruins.

Crossword

CLUES ACROSS

1. Nocturnal rodent
5. Requesting
11. Give temporarily
12. Frivolousness
16. Military arm
17. “Westworld” actor Harris
18. Persian Gulf port city
19. Air hostesses
24. Partner to “Pa”
25. Percussion instrument
26. Raincoats
27. Lower the light
28. Asian mountain range
29. Every one of two or more
30. Lack of difficulty
31. A public announcement of a pro-
posed marriage
33. Reduces in size
34. Make an impact
38. Serviceman
39. A French river
40. Prehistoric people
43. Messenger ribonucleic acid
44. “Layla” singer Clapton
45. Ancient Greek sophist
49. Largest English dictionary (abbr.)
50. “Top Gun: Maverick” actor Powell
51. A way to disentangle
53. Atomic #93
54. Manifesting approval
56. Indigo bush
58. Larry and Curly’s pal
59. Off-Broadway theater award
60. Fencers
63. Masses of fish eggs
64. Passerine birds
65. Arrange systematically

CLUES DOWN

1. Colorless part of blood
2. Of a main artery

3. Photog’s tool
4. Blues Traveler hit “But ___”
5. Grew older
6. Not the leader
7. ___ Lang: country singer
8. A driver’s license is one
9. Nests of pheasants
10. Antelopes
13. One quintillion bytes
14. Japanese lute
15. A type of cat
20. It cools your home
21. Dorm official
22. Pouches
23. German trigraph
27. Form of Persian
29. ___ route
30. Upper body part
31. Bridge building degree
32. Indicates position
33. Political action committee
34. Edible nuts
35. Front part of a quadruped
36. Locate
37. Geological time
38. Of I
40. Northern Utah city
41. They work in the trenches
42. Hammer is one
44. Tall deciduous tree
45. Performers
46. Slang for mistake
47. More open
48. Most slick
50. Provokes
51. Home of the NCAA’s Flyers
52. Sodium
54. Large fish of the mackerel family
55. Not one
57. ___ and behold
61. Atomic #21
62. “The Great Lakes State”

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Pet of the week



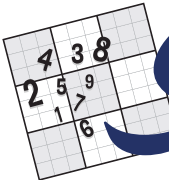
APOLLO

Meet Apollo, a wonderful 3-year-old boy who is full of love and ready to be your most loyal friend! Sweet, gentle, and well-mannered, he is a pleasure to have around. He is happy to spend time with his people, whether that means going for a walk or simply relaxing together.

With his calm and affectionate personality, he is always happy to be part of the family. Apollo has a high level of energy, so he’s looking for a home where he can have daily exercise, enrichment, and structure.

If you’re looking for a sweet boy to share your days with, Apollo may be the perfect match! Meet him by contacting our Stratford Centre or visiting our website at kwsphumane.ca/adopt/dogs





Sudoku

	7		3			6		
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COMING EVENTS

Email to inquire stratfordtimes@gmail.com

CROKINOLE

Men's and Ladies' Crokinole is held every Tuesday at the Agriplex in the Ritsma Room from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Bring your fingers and cues! For more information, contact Oliver at 519-508-5664.

STRATFORD SCRABBLE CLUB

Anne Hathawy Residence 480 Downie St., Stratford

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

STRATFORD ASTRONOMY GROUP MEETINGS

St. Michael Catholic Secondary School, 240 Oakdale Avenue, Stratford Rear parking lot off Matilda. Room #1104 - 1st Tuesday of each month from September to June. 7-9 p.m.

We are night sky enthusiasts. Everyone is welcome to attend. See our website at <https://stratfordastronomy.com/> or call 519-275-4472 for more information

STEPS FOR SUPPORT

Every Tuesday morning and once a month on a Monday afternoon.

Hosted by Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth www.rotaryhospice.ca

Stratford Location

This walking group is an opportunity for people who are grieving to connect while walking alongside others who are bereaved. Contact Jaclyn at sw@rotaryhospice.ca to learn more and register. This is a free program.

PROBUS CLUB OF STRATFORD

Army Navy & Air Force Veterans Unit 261

151 Lorne Ave E, Stratford, ON N5A 2N9

Probus provides Fellowship, Friendship, and Fun for all men and women in their retirement and semi-retirement years.

We meet the 2nd Wednesday - September until June from 9:30 a.m.- 12 p.m. Website <https://www.probusclubstratford.com/>
Email probusclubstratford@gmail.com

CAREGIVER CONNECTION

2nd & 4th Wednesday of each month at 1-2:30 p.m.

Arden Park Hotel

Caregiver Connection is a group for caregivers supporting someone with a life-limiting illness or decline due to aging. Learn about community resources, caregiver tools, and talk with others on a similar journey. All caregivers welcome whether you're a spouse, family member, friend, etc. supporting someone from near or far. Contact 226-921-7314 or referrals@rotaryhospice.ca to register. Free program.

Hosted by Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth - www.rotaryhospice.ca

YOUTH AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

Hosted by Youth Unlimited YFC Stratford

Mondays, 3:00-4:45 p.m., September 14/26-June 21/27

382 Britannia Street, Stratford

Free drop-in for students aged 11-18. Join us for snacks, board games, video games, and connection! Questions? www.yfcstratford.com info@yfcstratford.com 519-272-1614

GRIEF SHARE

**Stratford Christian Reformed Church, 190 Athone Crescent (parking on the upper level)
September 14 - December 14**

Monday 1:00-2:30pm

When a loved one dies, it can feel like you're alone. Few people understand how painful & isolating your grief can be. At GriefShare, you'll find a safe, comforting place where you can talk with others about your grief. Contact: griefstratfordcrgroup2627@gmail.com
Register: griefshare.org/findagroup

YOUTH LUNCH PERIOD PROGRAM

Hosted by Youth Unlimited YFC Stratford

Wednesdays, 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., September 30/26-June 16/27

382 Britannia Street, Stratford

Free drop-in for high school students. Join us for snacks, games, connection (and occasional pizza parties!).

Questions? www.yfcstratford.com
info@yfcstratford.com 519-272-1614

PURE HEART PROGRAM

Hosted by Youth Unlimited YFC Stratford

Wednesdays, 3:00-4:30 p.m., September 30/26-June 16/27

382 Britannia Street, Stratford

Free art program for students aged 11-18. Join us for discussions, guest artists, art instruction, and more! Questions? www.yfcstratford.com
info@yfcstratford.com 519-272-1614

STRATFORD LEGION 100TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Friday October 16; 6 p.m.

Legion 804 Ontario St.

Fun Casino (Tombola) Night. Doors open at 6 pm, play starts at 7 pm. Admission is by donation. Lots of prizes to be won.

STRATFORD LEGION 100TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Saturday October 17; 9:30 a.m.

Legion 804 Ontario St.

Dedication of a new bench at the cenotaph at 9:30 a.m. Legion Open House 11 a.m.. BBQ at 12 noon. Meat Draw at 3 p.m. Dance to Strings & Traps at 7 p.m. All events admission is by donation.

STRATFORD LEGION 100TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OPEN HOUSE

Sunday October 18; 11 a.m. - 2p.m.

Legion 804 Ontario St.

LONDON ORCHID SOCIETY

Sunday, October 18; 2 to 4 pm

Richards Memorial Church, 360 Edgeworth Avenue, London

Meeting Topic: Deb Boersma from Windsor, An Orchid Expedition on the Rio Negro, Brazil. The London Orchid Society meets the third Sunday of each month. Join us October 18, 2026 at 2:00pm for Deb Boersma from Windsor, ON. Her presentation is An Orchid Expedition on the Rio Negro, Brazil deep into the Amazon Rainforest. Everyone is welcome to attend the meeting for more information at www.londonorchidsociety.com; contact Daryl at 519-666-2927.

CHANGE HER WORLD FALL BOOK SALE

Thursday Oct. 22 4-8:00

Friday, October 23 10:00 - 8:00

Saturday, October 24 9:00 - 2:00

Belgrave Community Centre

Accessible parking, food booth Friday & beverages Thursday & Saturday. Payment by donation

All proceeds raised support the library in Chilumba, Malawi, Africa

COME STOCK -UP on winter reading.

CHRISTOPHER LEADERSHIP COURSE (CLC HURON-PERTH)

Starting October 22; 7-10 p.m.

Spruce Lodge

Overcome your fear of public speaking and learn new skills. Age 16 and over. Pre-registration is encouraged. clcnational.com or call Ben at 519-703-4157 or Darlene at 226-880-2115.

OXFORD PHILATELIC SOCIETY CIRCUIT BOOK (STAMP) FAIR

Saturday, October 24, 2026

Church of the Epiphany, 560 Dundas Street, Woodstock

10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Free Admission & Parking

Stop in and buy some stamps and meet fellow stamp collectors.

About 8 participating stamp clubs. Contact: dheaton3e3@gmail.com

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

LEARN2SHINE PERFORMANCE CLUB [L2S]

Monthly on Sundays, 2-4 p.m.

First meeting Oct. 25 at Griffith Auditorium, Woodland Towers.

Suitable for everyone in the family aged 7 and up. A chance to sing, dance, say lines. Registration \$20+HST/hour, with 15% discount if registering 3 or more. www.mckinnamanagement.com/l2s

14TH ANNUAL STRATFORD PUMPKIN PARADE

Sunday, November 1; 5:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Market Square (behind City Hall) 1 Wellington St, Stratford

Pumpkin Drop-off: Starting at 12:00 PM

Give your carved pumpkins one last glowing send-off before Patch earns their degree in soil science (and becomes next year's garden compost).

What to expect: Free Hot Chocolate donated by Tim Hortons; Ken's French Fries; Family Photo Stations; Photos with Patch the Pumpkin Drop off your pumpkin starting at 12 PM and then bring the whole family later that evening to stroll through the pumpkin display, grab some warm treats, and celebrate Halloween's grand finale Sponsored by the Stratford Communities in Bloom Advisory Committee

GARDEN STRATFORD GENERAL MEETING

Monday November 2; 7:15 – 9:00 p.m.

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

Featured Presentation: "The Stratford Festival Gardens", by a Gardener from the Stratford Festival
Meeting Open to Everyone; Free Admission.

FRIDAY NIGHT EUCHRES

Friday, November 13; 6 p.m.

Legion 804 Ontario St.

November 13 – The next Stratford Legion Friday Night Euchre is Friday Nov. 13th. Sign up your team of 2 for \$20 by calling the Legion at 519-271-4540, Dave at 519-703-6544 or Anne at 519-301-0914. Doors open at 6 p.m., games start at 6:30 p.m.

BURGER & FRY NIGHT

Thursday, November 19

Legion 804 Ontario St.

Doors open at 4 p.m. Take-out orders are from 5:00 – 5:30 p.m. and table service starts at 5:30 p.m. No ticket is necessary, simply show up and enjoy. Bring your friends and help support your local Legion.

STRATFORD TIMES

Deadline: Tuesday prior at 3 p.m.

Contact: stratfordtimes@gmail.com

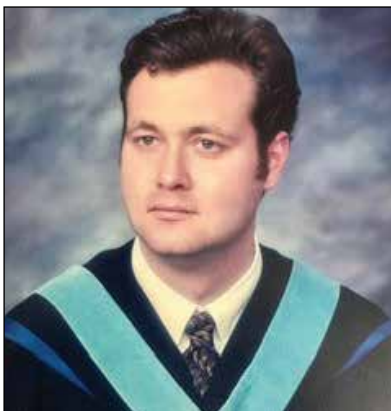
PROMOTE YOUR EVENTS WITH US! HERE'S HOW:

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

CLASSIFIEDS

Email to inquire stratfordtimes@gmail.com

OBITUARY



SEAN JEFFERY ELFORD

It is with great sadness and a deep sense of loss that the family of Sean Jeffery Elford announce his passing at the age of 55 in Stratford, Ontario on Wednesday, September 30, 2026 due to Stage 4 Kidney cancer.

Sean's parents are Donald Stuart Elford (deceased) and Mary Ellen (Latanville) Elford. He was born on May 13, 1971 and raised in Stratford. Cherished brother of Janet (Elford) Keilhack and her husband Gary Keilhack who live in Georgina. Beloved uncle of their children, Stephanie and Mitchell. Grandson of the late John and Ellen Latanville and Milton and Margaret Elford.

Sean attended Avon Public School and Stratford Central Secondary School. He attended Guelph University for one year and graduated from University of Waterloo with a Bachelor of Arts (English) and received his teaching certificate from University of Windsor with his Aunt Helen and Uncle Steve's (Stowe) help in providing financial assistance and accommodation. Sean taught English for two terms in South Korea and helped revamp their English curriculum. He returned to Stratford and worked at Scotiabank data centre for a short time. He was currently employed at FIO Automotive Canada in Stratford, enjoying his employment there and we do thank FIO for their assistance and compassion in our loss.

Sean had many friends and enjoyed leisure pursuits such as gaming, golf and science fiction (especially Star Wars!). We traveled to Georgina a lot, enjoying the cottage on Lake Simcoe and family dinners and events planned and provided by Janet and Gary and Magda and Karl Keilhack every summer and Christmas. He loved our cat Morty and called him Buddy.

Sean's remains have been donated to the University of Western Ontario in London for Anatomical Study, cremation after. As expressions of condolence, the family would appreciate donations to: London Health Sciences Centre (London Regional Cancer Program); Stratford General Hospital Cancer Program; Stratford Rotary Hospice, or a charity of one's own choice; all may be done through W.G. Young Funeral Home www.wgyoungfuneralhome.com.

A Celebration of Life will be held at W.G. Young Funeral Home, Reception Center, at 430 Huron Street, Stratford on Saturday, November 7, 2026 from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m.

Thank you all for loving Sean. He was so good to his mom and adored his family and his cat.

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Annual Pumpkin Parade is Nov. 1 in Market Square

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Stratford's annual Pumpkin Parade will be held Sunday, Nov. 1 from 5-8 p.m. in Market Square.

Each year, after Halloween, the City of Stratford's Communities in Bloom advisory committee hosts a parade where Stratford residents can come and drop off their jack-o'-lanterns, creating a display behind Stratford City Hall for residents and visitors to admire their neighbours' artistry – as well as hosting a spot where they can be discarded appropriately.

Afterwards, the pumpkins are either taken for composting or donated to local farms for feed. This year, the pumpkins will be taken to the landfill for composting.

Pumpkins can be dropped off that day after 12 p.m. (noon) behind city hall.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The annual Pumpkin Parade takes place Nov. 1 from 5-8 p.m. in Market Square.

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