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Kitchener-Conestoga MPP Mike Harris was named minister of natural resources just over a week ago in Toronto following Premier Doug Ford's recent majority victory in the Feb. 27 provincial election. Harris was sworn in by Edith Dumont, the lieutenant governor of Ontario.

## Kitchener-Conestoga MPP given new cabinet seat

### Harris named to post his father previously held

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Kitchener-Conestoga MPP Mike Harris Jr. has been appointed to Ontario Premier Doug Ford's cabinet as the minister of natural resources.

Harris was first elected in 2018 and was first appointed to cabinet in June 2024, when he was named the first-ever minister of red

tape reduction. He won a third term in the riding of Kitchener-Conestoga in February's election.

Harris said sitting at the cabinet table is a phenomenal experience.

"To be able to do that as the minister of natural resources is a dream job and role for me. This is something that is true to my heart. It's no secret I'm from northern Ontario and a big outdoorsman, and I have

always been a conservationist."

He added his father and former premier of Ontario, Mike Harris Sr., held the same post 40 years ago.

"In 1985, the year I was born. It was a short-lived tenure for him because that was the tail end of the Frank Miller government and there was an election a few months after he was named minister. It's pretty neat

Continued on page 2

## East Zorra-Tavistock passes 2025 budget with 6.95 per-cent tax increase

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Residents of East Zorra-Tavistock (Ezt) will see a 6.95 per cent increase on the township portion of their tax bills in 2025.

The budget passed unanimously at the March 19 meeting with no discussion by members of council. A total of just over \$8.4 million will be levied by the township from taxpayers this year, an increase over last year's \$7.7-million levy by nearly \$641,000 or 8.25 per cent. However, Ezt saw 1.29 per cent, or more than \$100,500, in growth to the township's assessment base in 2024, leaving the actual tax increase at 6.95 per cent.

This translates into an additional \$153.11 per year or \$12.76 per month on the average property assessed at \$400,000.

Among the major expenditures is the reconstruction of a bridge on the 13th Line, a project with a price tag of \$2.4 million. The township applied for a grant through the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program (MHIP) but was unsuccessful.

"Following an evidence-based provincial review process, your project was not approved for funding. The ... intake was highly competitive and demand for funding exceeded available resources. Projects that were approved were those that most closely aligned with provincial assessment

Continued on page 3

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# Kitchener-Conestoga MPP given new cabinet seat

Continued from page 1

to work in the office here in Toronto and see his picture on the wall and carry on that legacy.”

An issue at the forefront of the current federal election campaign is the looming US tariffs, something that has some politicians pushing natural-resource development. Harris expects a bigger focus on what he called non-traditional resources.

“When it comes to energy, critical minerals, looking at ways we are going to be negotiating with the US and of course, our number one goal is to protect Ontario to make sure we are keeping jobs here and keeping people afloat.”

He added it will be key to reinvest in critical industries and not just sit on the sidelines.

“There is definitely going to be a renewed focus at the ministry, and I am very happy to take on the task and work with our ministerial partners in the premier’s office and do

the best we can to protect the critical sectors that exist within our ministry.”

Harris served as minister of red tape reduction in the last Conservative government, a far cry from his new responsibilities, but he also has experience with the resources file. He said despite the learning curve, he’s ready to get caught up.

“I’m sitting here right now in my Toronto office with two big binders sitting on the desk here that I am trying to get through. The benefit for me is being around the ministry for years. I was the parliamentary assistant and I had the benefit of having what you could call foundational briefings and getting up to speed on a lot of the key processes, industries and projects.”

He explained he would bring his red tape ministry lens to his new position, something he hopes will help natural resources become more efficient. When asked if his new ministry had a top priority, Harris again mentioned the importance of critical minerals.

“We need to figure out how to unlock the potential in Ontario to really bolster that industry. Not being able to rely on some trading partners right now is an issue and we want to make sure we are self-sufficient. Not only from an extraction perspective but also from a refining and end-use perspective.”

He added improving relations with trading partners is also on the government’s mind.

“We have a clean source of critical minerals here. We are usually talking about the US in these conversations, but Western Europe is also interested in what we are doing. Anytime there is talk about tariffs on lumber, it creates panic here and we want to make sure that industry is going to be one of the leading sectors, not only in Ontario but in Canada.”

Despite sitting around the cabinet table, Harris assured his constituents they would be served well by his office staff should they need help navigating anything government

in the province.

“Kitchener-Conestoga is always my number-one priority. We have a great team in our Elmira office and I encourage people to reach out if they have challenges or issues, or if they want to know about something. We are always here for them.”

Harris has come under fire from some Wilmot residents and others in the riding over his government’s role in the plan to acquire 770 acres of farmland for a potential industrial mega site. He explained he is always open to talking to anyone in the riding about what’s on their mind.

“I am willing to hear from anybody and willing to work with anybody. A good idea is a good idea no matter where it comes from. We will continue to work with our partners in the riding, the region and across the province.”



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# EZT passes 2025 budget with 6.95 per-cent tax increase

Continued from page 1

criteria and requirements," said a letter by Trevor Fleck from the province's Ministry of Infrastructure.

"The provincial assessment criteria included reviewing projects based on housing outcomes, project readiness, the technical merit of the proposed project, financial capacity and efficiencies through joint projects."

The reconstruction of William Street North in Tavistock is another big-ticket item, coming in at just under \$1.3 million, but it is a cost-sharing project with Oxford County. Another \$625,000 will pay for a new pumper truck at the Innerkip Fire Station while \$225,000 has been allocated for engineering and site preparation for a new Hickson Fire Station. That build is currently scheduled to begin in 2026.

"Considering what we are doing with the additional funds, I think a 6.95 per cent tax increase is fair," said EZT Mayor Phil Schaefer. "Sixty per cent of the increase is going to reserves for fire, roads and bridges, and buildings, including recreation buildings. The rest is basically going to paving at the Tavistock Fire Hall, extra costs for winter patrol and to cover the increase to the police contract. There is no additional (new staff hires) planned in the budget.

"Funding and maintaining reserves is expensive, but not nearly as expensive as not doing it."

Schaefer added residents can expect to see scheduled 2025 capital projects completed, and he and his fellow elected officials are going to spend the public purse wisely.

"And as far as council is concerned, we will continue to act as prudent stewards of taxpayer's funds."

The Gazette reached out to every member of EZT council for their thoughts on the budget. Schaefer was the only one to reply.

Residents saw the EZT portion of the 2024 property tax bill rise by 6.52 per cent while in 2023 there was a 4.49 per-cent increase.

## Council briefs

Now that EZT has initiated livestreaming of its regular council meetings, the decision has been made to utilize the technology during Recreation Advisory Committee (RAC) meetings going forward.

"I did follow up by email and in person with each member of council and the RAC to advise that internally staff have been able to address the technology and staffing challenges we were concerned with," explained EZT CAO Karen DePrest.

"In addition, I had previously polled committee members for availability and timing...to choose a date to conduct our first streamed and recorded meeting should we be able, and the best date for the majority was April 9. This gives enough time for staff to set up the RAC agendas in the streaming software and allows the committee time to give notice about the intention to allow virtual attendance," she added.

The agenda, when posted, will be available at <https://www.ezt.ca/en/township-office/agendas-and-minutes.aspx>. The meeting will be held in Hickson at the township building at 7 p.m.



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# Wilmot lawyer running for the NDP in Kitchener-Conestoga

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Maya Bozorgzad is a Wilmot resident who has proudly called Waterloo Region home since she was 10 years old.

She is running for the New Democratic Party (NDP) in Kitchener-Conestoga in the upcoming federal election to make positive change.

"I'm a lawyer and a small business owner, and I've spent my career advocating for people who need a strong voice. My passion for advocacy and my deep connection to this community are what drive me to serve and make a difference," she said.

She decided to get into politics because of a deep concern about the growing struggles in the community and the direction it's heading.

"Life is becoming increasingly difficult for everyday people. Owning a decent home, putting food on the table and simply making ends meet are harder than ever. Meanwhile, the priorities of our current leaders seem clear; they consistently put the profits of billionaires ahead of the needs of regular Canadians."

Bozorgzad said it's time for change, one that prioritizes the wellbeing of people so everyone can grow and thrive, not just the ultra-rich.

"I believe that we can build a future where every Canadian has a fair shot at success. I chose to step up and be part of that change."

Among what she sees as the three most

important issues heading into the April 28 vote, economic resilience tops her list.

"We need to stand up for Canadians in the face of global challenges. That means investing in Canada, supporting small businesses, protecting local jobs and ensuring that these attacks do not fall on regular Canadians."

Bozorgzad added people are struggling to keep up with rising costs and bold action needs to be taken to address corporate greed, stop price gouging, lower food prices and ensure housing is within reach for everyone. She is also prioritizing health care.

"Our public health-care system is under immense pressure. We must invest in it, strengthen the Canada Health Act, expand public access to services like dental and pharmacare that the NDP fought for, and ensure that no one is left behind."

As she goes door to door in the riding, there is one issue that stands out among residents beyond any other, and that is affordability.

"People in Kitchener-Conestoga are working harder than ever, but our paycheques simply aren't stretching far enough. The cost of groceries, rent and other essentials has skyrocketed, while corporate profits soar. That isn't a coincidence."

As a resident of Wilmot Township, Bozorgzad explained she understands firsthand the challenges local residents are facing.

"One priority is infrastructure. Rural communities deserve well-maintained

roads and access to essential services. The federal government has a critical role in providing the necessary funding to make these projects a reality without undue delay."

She added supporting local farmers and small businesses is key to ensuring the resilience of the local economy.

"Farmers are facing increasing pressures from trade disputes, climate change and rising costs. By firmly protecting farmland, advocating for fair agricultural policies and addressing unfair trade practices, we can ensure they continue to thrive. Supporting local businesses isn't just the decent thing to do, which should be enough, it is also good for our economy and our best bet for resilience in the face of global trade challenges."

Bozorgzad said another important issue that remains top of mind for many in Wilmot is the concern over expropriation of farmland.

"While much of the decision-making happens at the provincial and municipal levels, the federal government has a responsibility to ensure that the voices of impacted communities are heard and amplified. I'm committed to standing up for residents, advocating for fair and transparent processes, and pushing for policies that protect property rights and prime farmland."

She added politics should be about putting people first.

"Every decision made in Ottawa has a direct impact on our lives, and we deserve



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Wilmot lawyer Maya Bozorgzad is running under the NDP banner in Kitchener-Conestoga in the upcoming federal election.

leaders who listen and act in the best interests of our communities. I'm committed to being that voice, someone who will fight for fairness, affordability and a future that works for everyone."

She said she is always open to hearing from members of the riding, whether it's to share concerns, offer ideas, or ask questions.

"I'd love to connect."

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**The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette**

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# People's Party of Canada names Dupuis as candidate in Kitchener-Conestoga riding

LEE GRIFFI

*Local Journalism Initiative Reporter*

The People's Party of Canada (PPC) have named Kevin Dupuis as its candidate for Kitchener-Conestoga.

Dupuis and his wife, Christine, live in West Montrose and have been married for over 36 years. They have a daughter, Alyssa, a son, Adam, and his wife, Jenny, and their two children.

"I have a passion for technology and innovation, and I have dedicated over three decades to the dynamic field of information technology," Dupuis said. "Throughout my career, I've had the privilege of working with numerous companies where I've played a key role in developing accounting software, barcoding systems, manufacturing solutions and knowledge-management platforms."

Dupuis added his career has taken him around the globe, collaborating with organizations to implement cutting-edge

IT solutions and drive business success. He said he is making a foray into politics to represent his community, ensure their voices are heard and prove the government can work for the people, not just a select few.

"I'm also deeply concerned about the future we are leaving for our children and grandchildren. The decisions we make today will shape their opportunities, their security and their quality of life. I refuse to stand by while short-term thinking and political gridlock put their future at risk. I want to ensure they inherit a country that is not just stable and prosperous, but also fair, sustainable and full of opportunity."

Dupuis said there are three main issues he is focusing on during the campaign, all of which can be summed up under one banner.

"Immigration has become a major factor affecting housing affordability, job opportunities and the strain on our infrastructure. The PPC is proposing a temporary

moratorium on immigration, giving us the time to address the housing crisis, improve job opportunities and strengthen our infrastructure to better support both current and future Canadians."

He added his party also believes in decreasing the size of government to allow business to more easily flourish.

"Remove the government red tape and allow private business to grow and prosper. Too many times, the government creates restrictions to stifle business development, discouraging young entrepreneurs from taking chances on business development."

In terms of the number-one issue for residents of Wilmot Township, Dupuis said he's focused on the Region of Waterloo's land acquisition.

"Our government needs to help keep our farms free from expropriation. I'm an avid supporter of the Fight For Farmland movement."



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

**West Montrose resident Kevin Dupuis is on the ballot in the riding of Kitchener-Conestoga under the People Party of Canada banner.**

# Watson running for Christian Heritage Party in Oxford

LEE GRIFFI

*Local Journalism Initiative Reporter*

A rookie candidate will have his name on the ballot in Oxford on April 28 as he runs for the Christian Heritage Party (CHP) in the federal election.

Jacob Watson was born and raised in Oxford County, just north of Woodstock, on a 50-acre farm.

"Though I did not do any farming personally, my dad grew up on that same farm, farming pigs and working the fields. I was very active in sports. In my teen years, I was overrun by various battles and difficulties."

Watson decided to give his life to the Lord in his early 20s and found his passion serving in church ministries and articulating the principles in the bible.

"For the last seven or eight years, I've served in church and community-based youth ministries, assisting in their development and teachings. More recently, I've moved into evangelism ministries, leading, developing and teaching. For my nine-to-five, I work at Stubbe's Precast as a forklift operator for the receiving department. My wife currently works at Big Brothers Big Sisters and we have been married for five-and-a-half years and reside in Oxford Centre."

Watson explained the nudge to get into politics came from submitting to the supremacy of God and the lasting transformation it gave him.

"As I have seen and experienced what's been going on in our communities and nation, I realized we need transformation as well. When I found out Canada was founded upon principles that recognized the supremacy of God, the dots connected for me. The further we push God out, the easier our nation topples. I got involved in politics to call Canada back to its firm foundation."

He sees three main issues in this campaign; first and foremost is forming a responsible government.

"We need to make sure we are honouring our word and are meeting our commitments, whether it's at the border, in external relationships or promises made to Canadians. We must be transparent and trustworthy, expose corruption instead of covering it up and be frugal with taxpayers' money."

Watson also said monetary policy needs to transform, particularly in the areas of restoring the Bank of Canada, reforming tax policy and rerouting government funding.

"Something I would like to undertake to help make life easier in Oxford is pushing for the federal income tax to be replaced with our fair consumer's tax. Allowing everyone to take home 20-30 per cent more of their hard-earned money; it would help stimulate the economy, increase savings and investment, and make life affordable again."

He added the country also needs to find

alternative and better solutions to abortion.

"The moral turmoil in our country causes a lot of inward division and fighting. The CHP would aim to end all that so Canada can prosper in unity."

Watson explained the job of a member of parliament is to address the concerns of constituents and make sure their voice is being heard in Ottawa.

"Anything that needs to be tackled for the residents in Oxford, it would be my pleasure to line up for them in Ottawa and sack the issues. I want them to know they are heard and their voices carry authority. If they elect me, they will be putting a true representative for them in the House of Commons. I want to hear from them, so Ottawa can hear them."

Watson added he has talked to a lot of people in Oxford who want to vote CHP but are worried the Liberals or Conservatives will win the election.

"They feel obligated to vote for one of the two parties to prevent the other. Your vote is a powerful statement if you're voting for what you stand for and believe in. Voting for the CHP can influence all the parties, like the Green Party did when it had a five or six per-cent increase in the polls. It caused the other parties to adopt a greener platform as they realized Canadians were starting to lean towards the green."

He is encouraging the residents of Oxford to vote with courage and vote with



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

**Jacob Watson is running in Oxford for the Christian Heritage Party in the upcoming federal election.**

their conscience.

"This is your country and you have the right and authority as citizens to stand up and use your voice. You determine how the government does its job, not the other way around. This election, we need more than change, we need transformation. I'd like to call all those who have been voting out of fear to a spot of valour and bravery as they go to the polls late in April and cast their votes with the freedom our democracy entitles them to."

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# Chambers hopes third time is a charm running federally in Oxford

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Matthew Chambers has once again been tapped by the New Democratic Party (NDP) as its Oxford candidate in the upcoming federal election.

Chambers is a lifelong Oxford resident and a two-time former federal candidate, having run in both the 2019 and 2021 elections for the NDP.

He is a director at large and regular volunteer at Stich Supper Club in Ingersoll, an active member of the Zorra Caledonian Society and a member of Royal Canadian Legion Branch 119. He also holds a third-degree black belt in karate and teaches it in Thamesford.

"I come from a strong working-class

family, my dad being a long-distance truck driver and my mom has worked several jobs, including being a home daycare provider. I work as a custodian for the Thames Valley District School Board, and I am a proud member of CUPE Local 4222."

Chambers admitted getting involved in politics wasn't something he envisioned for himself when he was younger, but he developed an interest in the latter part of his high school career when he took civics.

"I joined the NDP in 2017. From there, I became a member of the riding association executive. For me, being involved in politics is about having the opportunity to serve the community. Public service has always been an important aspect of my life."

There is no shortage of issues in this

election and Chambers highlighted three he feels are important.

"Homelessness and access to affordable housing are serious issues for our communities. I believe that all levels of government have a responsibility to work collaboratively to find solutions. In Oxford, ensuring the growth and security of our manufacturing and agriculture sectors is paramount."

He added Canada's public health-care system needs protection from privatization and Americanization, while continuing to expand Medicare to fully cover dental care, prescriptions, vision and hearing care, and mental-health care.

Chambers explained he is concerned about how the illegal trade war started by the US could affect Oxford residents financially.

"I have family members involved in industries affected by CUSMA and we need to implement protections, tax relief and strengthen EI benefits for all affected workers. I would work collaboratively with municipal governments on all issues that cross over into federal jurisdiction, and advocate for our communities by proposing or supporting legislation that benefits Oxford."

Chambers explained he isn't coming into the campaign with a degree in law or political science and he isn't running to cross something off his bucket list before he retires.

"What I am bringing to this campaign is



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

**Matthew Chambers is running for the NDP in Oxford – his third federal-election campaign – in the upcoming federal election.**

the lived experience of someone who has had to work multiple jobs to get by, someone who has had to make tough choices like putting off dental work or waiting for sales to get groceries."

He added what he wants is for people to stop accepting things as they are and not accept another Liberal or Conservative government.

"We are worth more, and we deserve better and better is possible, but only when we decide to make it happen."



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1540 Haysville Road, New Hamburg



The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette





# Wellesley council approves six-hole disc-golf course at Wellesley Recreation Complex

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Disc golfers in Wellesley Township will have a new place to throw closer to home after Wellesley council approved the installation of a six-hole disc-golf course at the Wellesley Recreation Complex.

Councillors were presented with the proposal at their March 25 committee of the whole meeting. The idea for the course was first brought forward to township recreation staff by a group of local residents. Supportive of the idea, staff set up meetings at the recreation complex with two companies that supply and install disc golf courses, as well as representatives of the Wellesley Lions Club.

Proposals from the two companies were shared with the Lions, the Apple Butter and Cheese (ABC) Festival committee and the Wellesley recreation service board, and the submission from ChainLink Disc Golf at a

cost of nearly \$9,160 was recommended to council. That cost will be shared between the three groups with the Lions Club and ABC Festival committee each contributing \$4,000, and the Wellesley recreation service board contributing the remaining nearly \$1,160 from its fundraising account.

"I think they're going to go to nine holes," Mayor Joe Nowak said. "This is sort of a pilot project to see how much enthusiasm there is for this course and, if all goes well, I think they hope to add another three holes maybe next year."

Disc golf is a recreational activity that takes place in open spaces. Participants throw a disc towards a set-in-place basket. The course will consist of mulch tee-boxes and stone-dust areas around the baskets.

According to township director of recreation Danny Roth's report to council, in the future, the tee-boxes could be poured with concrete to make them more permanent.

"The woodchips were recommended by ChainLink Disc Golf to start off," Roth said. "That is to not put that cost out initially on a course in a new area, not knowing what the uptake would be. ... It's much more cost-effective to do that and then to add the concrete pads later."

Like the potential expansion of the course to nine holes, Roth said it would likely be up to user groups to propose course enhancements in future years so council can consider them during budget deliberations.

At the Wellesley Recreation Complex, the site for the course is on the perimeter of the west end, north end and east end of the property. The course will be designed to not impact activities such as soccer or other activities around the multi-use court or playground area.

The project installation would be overseen by ChainLink Disc Golf in conjunction with local volunteers and disc-golf enthusiasts.

Though this project is volunteer driven, recreation staff will assist if required.

"After this donation, have we considered who is going to be paying each year for maintenance (and) what that maintenance may look like going forward?" Coun. Shelley Wagner asked.

"That will fall to the township's recreation staff's maintenance plan going forward, as any project does once the municipality takes on the donated project," Roth responded, noting annual maintenance would be minimal with staff responsibilities focused on raking the woodchips in the tee boxes and regularly emptying garbage cans on the course.

Roth estimated that work could require roughly an hour of staff time every two weeks or so. He also noted disc golfers often rake the tee-boxes themselves, which could further reduce maintenance requirements for township staff.

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## SHOW US YOUR WILMOT



Show Us Your Wilmot Facebook group member Miles Rochford recently shared this photo looking down Huron Street in New Hamburg. Photo courtesy of Show Us Your Wilmot

## Serious collision in Wellesley Township

WILMOT-TAVISTOCK GAZETTE STAFF

[thewtgazette@gmail.com](mailto:thewtgazette@gmail.com)

The Waterloo Regional Police Service (WRPS) traffic services unit is investigating following a collision between a motor vehicle and horse and buggy in Wellesley Township March 23.

At approximately 8:45 a.m., emergency services responded to reports of a collision between a Hyundai motor vehicle and a horse and buggy at Greenwood Hill Road near Hessen Strasse.

The driver of the horse and buggy, a 14-year-old male from Wellesley, was transported by air ambulance to an

out-of-region hospital with serious but non-life-threatening injuries. The driver of the Hyundai, a 21-year-old Wellesley male, was not physically injured.

Greenwood Hill Road between Hessen Strasse and Lobsinger Line was closed for several hours for the police investigation.

The investigation is ongoing and charges are anticipated, police say. Anyone who witnessed the collision or has dashcam footage is encouraged to call police at 519-570-9777.

To provide anonymous information, call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 or submit online at [www.waterloocrimestoppers.com](http://www.waterloocrimestoppers.com).

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# South Easthope Mutual Insurance reports strong results and member rebate for 2024

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

South Easthope Mutual Insurance Company is celebrating another successful year, reporting strong financial results, steady growth and a notable reduction in claims.

At its recent annual general meeting held at Grace United Church Hall, a large turnout of members heard the announcement that a 15 per-cent rebate will be issued on property insurance policies in place as of Dec. 31, 2024. Rebate cheques will be mailed to eligible policyholders in April.

Board chair Jeff Schultz, of Tavistock, credited the company's performance to a combination of premium growth and the absence of severe-weather events.

"Very few large losses were incurred," Schultz said. "Net investment income saw a significant increase, driven largely by unrealized gains in the investment portfolio, which reflected a strong market

performance."

President and CEO Jennifer Kearsey echoed the optimism while also acknowledging the cyclical nature of the insurance industry.

"While we celebrate this strong year, we recognize that the industry is always vulnerable to unexpected changes," Kearsey said. "Market fluctuations, regulatory shifts, severe weather and increased claims are inevitable in some years."

To prepare for future uncertainties, Kearsey said the board of directors has adopted a new three-year strategic plan focusing on financial stability, governance, steady growth and enhanced member services.

"This plan ensures the company remains strong, viable and ready to support both current and future members," she added.

The company also recognized the retirement of Cindy Lotus, who served as an agent in the Woodstock area for 20 years.



(GARY WEST PHOTOS)

South Easthope Mutual Insurance continues its support of Muscular Dystrophy Canada with a \$1,000 donation presented by board chair Jeff Schultz. Pictured with Schultz are Stephanie Singeris (left) and Keiran Albrecht (right), a client of Muscular Dystrophy Canada. The company has donated \$36,500 to the organization over the years.



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Jessica Jorritsma, public educator for Perth East and Perth West Fire Departments, and Shalyn Herrett, fire prevention officer for both municipalities, speak to South Easthope members at the annual meeting about fire safety and lithium-ion battery awareness.



South Easthope Mutual Insurance Company's current board of directors and executive team. Front row, from left: Marianne Cook (Stratford), Michael Munro (Embrow), Linda Drost (Listowel). Back row: Ken Yeoman (Woodstock), Peter Thompson (Clinton), Glen Blair (Embrow), Paul Heinbuck (Tavistock), David Crane (Ingersoll), Jennifer Kearsey (President and CEO) and Jeff Schultz (board chair, Tavistock).

**SEND US YOUR STORY IDEAS AND  
YOUR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR  
TO GALEN SIMMONS AT  
GALEN@GRANTHAVEN.COM**



# Meet the 2025 Wellesley Fall Fair Board

GARY WEST

*Gazette Correspondent*

When it comes to promoting local agriculture, food and community spirit, few groups work harder than the dedicated volunteers behind agricultural societies and fair boards.

These passionate individuals organize not only the region's summer and fall fairs, but also lead youth programming and agricultural education efforts throughout the year.

Last week, the Wellesley Fall Fair board gathered to continue preparations for their newly scheduled late August fair, and excitement is already building for what promises to be a fresh take on a longstanding tradition.

With their eyes set on making the 2025 Wellesley Fall Fair a success, the board is inviting new volunteers to get involved and support local agriculture, community events and youth engagement.

Anyone interested in volunteering can email [wellesleyfallfair@gmail.com](mailto:wellesleyfallfair@gmail.com) or contact president Joanne Stewart at [joanne.stewart@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:joanne.stewart@uwaterloo.ca).



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Pictured are the members of the 2025 Wellesley Fall Fair board. In front row, from left, are Marlene Kuepfer, Manni Hayer and Wendy Richardson. In the back row, from left, are Jim Stueck, Susan Prange, Christine Hayter, Mary Lichti-Neeb, Joanne Stewart, Ninder Singh Hayer, Bea Van Harten Borsato and Barbara Nowak. Missing from photo are Pam Wideman, Katie Kneisel, Karen Schlueter-Weiss and Katie Musselman.

## Wilmot's Prime Ministers Path: Collective Reflections, Future Directions



### COMMUNITY GATHERING #3: NEW FUTURES

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



**Wednesday, April 2, 2025**



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



**Wilmot Recreation Complex  
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Baden, ON N3A 0C4**



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## CARD OF THANKS

*thanks*

The family of the late Ronald Rudy wish to express sincere appreciation for the many acts of kindness, messages of sympathy and visits to the funeral home during our recent loss of Ron. We especially wish to thank Rev. Marilyn Arthur and Jeff Glendinning and all the staff at the Francis funeral home for their guidance, patience and understanding at a very difficult time. Your kindness will never be forgotten.

*Donna Rudy and family*

## OBITUARY

### REIST, Irvin Douglas



Passed away peacefully, on Monday, March 24, 2025, at The Village of Winston Park Long Term Care, Kitchener. Irvin was born 86 years ago in Oxford County, Ontario, youngest son of the late Elgin and Hilda (Rosenberger) Reist.

Devoted husband of Marilyn (Poyntz) Reist, who predeceased him on May 29, 2023,

with whom he cherished 54 years of marriage.

Devoted father of Tanya and husband Joe Fenton, Deanne and husband Luke Gladding and Jason Reist and wife Annemarie. Proud grandfather of Clara and Jacob Gladding and Connor and Madison Reist. Irvin will be missed by his sisters Armintha Belbeck and Joanne Kipfer and by brother in law Allan and his wife Elizabeth Poyntz.

Predeceased by his brother Lester and wife Marjorie Reist and by brothers-in-law Elroy Belbeck, Reynold Kipfer and Paul Poyntz.

Irvin was a long-time member of Bethel Evangelical Missionary Church, New Dundee. He taught Sunday School for many years, was the music leader, and took great pride in looking after the church yards. Irvin served on the New Dundee Board of Trade for many years. Both Irvin and Marilyn enjoyed travelling and Irvin took part in many mission's trips with the church for relief work particularly in Haiti, along with various other locations. Irvin farmed in his younger years in Oxford County, and while he was able, he enjoyed the scenery while riding his bike.

A Celebration of Irvin's life will be held at Bethel Evangelical Missionary Church, 1531 Bridge St, New Dundee, on Sunday, March 30, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. A time of fellowship will follow in the church hall.

As expressions of sympathy, and in lieu of flowers, donations would be accepted to EMCC World Partners through Bethel Missionary Church or Canadian Foodgrains Bank and can be done through the funeral home. 519-662-1661.

Funeral arrangements entrusted to the Mark Jutzi Funeral Home, New Hamburg. Personal condolences and donation information available at [www.markjutzifuneralhomes.ca](http://www.markjutzifuneralhomes.ca)

# New date announced for annual Heritage Day event in Wilmot

## Rescheduled event planned for April 26

WILMOT-TAVISTOCK GAZETTE STAFF

[thewtgazette@gmail.com](mailto:thewtgazette@gmail.com)

After being cancelled in February due to inclement weather, Wilmot's annual Heritage Day has a new date. The event will now happen on April 26 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the New Dundee Community Centre.

For over 30 years, Heritage Day has provided attendees with the chance to explore Wilmot's distinctive culture and history. This year, the event embraces the theme, Celebrating Wilmot's Families, and will also mark the 175th anniversary of Wilmot Township as we know it.

Attendees can expect informative displays about the families that have shaped Wilmot's past and present. There will also be guest speakers discussing a range of topics related to this year's theme.

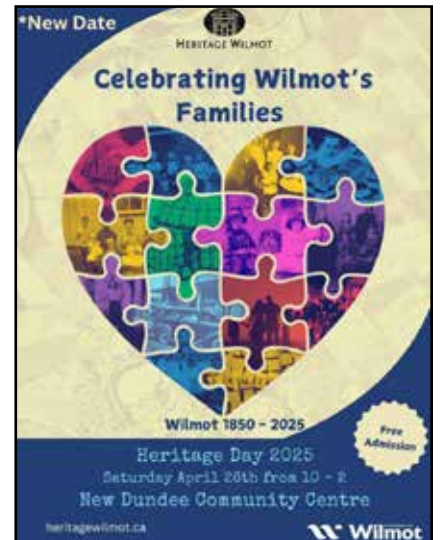
The first speaker, Kristen Hahn,

will take the stage at 11 a.m. with a presentation titled The Historic Buildings of New Hamburg: Writing the Genealogy of a Town. Hahn will chronicle Marie Voisin's journey from assessment-roll research to building family trees of the owners to publishing their book. Another speaker will discuss the history of the Canadian flag.

A delicious lunch will be available for purchase from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

This event is proudly organized by the Heritage Wilmot and castle advisory committee, a volunteer group that advocates for the designation and conservation of properties with historic and cultural value. The committee also promotes heritage interests and works to preserve local history.

For more information about Heritage Wilmot and the Heritage Day event, visit [www.heritagewilmot.ca](http://www.heritagewilmot.ca).



(TOWNSHIP OF WILMOT IMAGE)

ca. Questions about Heritage Day can be directed to Sherri Gropp at 519-634-8444 ext. 9259 or [sherri.gropp@wilmot.ca](mailto:sherri.gropp@wilmot.ca).

# Tree giveaway takes root for third year in a row

## Wilmot residents can register for a free tree starting April 1

WILMOT-TAVISTOCK GAZETTE STAFF

[thewtgazette@gmail.com](mailto:thewtgazette@gmail.com)

The Township of Wilmot is giving residents a chance to support local reforestation efforts this spring.

Starting at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, April 1, Wilmot residents can register to receive a free tree through the Wilmot Roots program.

Now in its third year, this tree-giveaway initiative is made possible through donations from Enova Power Corporation and support from Let's Tree Wilmot volunteers. Residents can choose from six native tree

species, including:

- Autumn Blaze Maple
- Eastern Redbud
- Red Maple
- Sugar Maple
- White Birch
- White Spruce

Quantities are limited to approximately 60 trees per species. Orders will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, with only one tree allowed per household. If an address is registered for more than one tree, the order will be cancelled without exception.

To participate in this initiative,

registrants must live in Wilmot and be available to collect their tree on Saturday, April 26 at the Wilmot Recreation Complex parking lot. Trees will not be held. Registrants must also agree to plant and care for their tree at their own private residence in Wilmot and not on township boulevards or property.

Additional information, including tree pickup details, is available at [www.wilmot.ca/wilmotroots](http://www.wilmot.ca/wilmotroots). Questions about the program can be directed to 519-634-9225 or [wilmotroots@wilmot.ca](mailto:wilmotroots@wilmot.ca).

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



## The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette Weekly Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. What Disney princess wears yellow?
2. What country produces the most peanuts?
3. Which famous artist cut off part of his own ear?
4. In Greek mythology, who is the king of the gods?
5. What gas do cows release?
6. What is the most spoken language?
7. What is the capital city of Nova Scotia?
8. Who was the first Emperor of Rome?
9. What's the name of Hiccup's dragon from "How to Train Your Dragon"?
10. What Japanese cities were struck by an atomic bomb?

Answers found on the classified page

**SEND YOUR STORY IDEAS  
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# The Old Gazettes

By Sydney Grant

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

**March 18-25, 2015, Edition (10 years ago)**

Last Tuesday morning, March 10, 2015, Doug and his wife Diane, their two children, Chantelle and Blair, and employee Karen Armstrong-Bergsma welcomed patrons to the grand opening of the café at 8 Woodstock St. N in Tavistock. It is part of the newly renovated "Pletsch" block which also contains a laundry and antique shops. The business offers local food prepared fresh at the counter.

Members of the Tavistock & District Skating Club competed in the Futures - Central Invitational Competition held in St. Marys the weekend of March 7 and 8, 2015. The competition included skaters from clubs in the HOME, Grand River and Interclub North regions. Earning medals in STARskate 3 were Jorja Koot - bronze, Emma Brenneman - silver, and Larissa Brenneman - silver. Those earning medals in STARskate 2 were Callie Brenneman - bronze, Alaina Hartman - silver, Rianna Forthuber - silver, Reegan Zeigler - silver, Shelby Vanderhyden - silver, Denise VanGriensven - silver, Tori Jantzi - merit, Alicia Thomson - bronze, Jamie Wilker - merit, and Courtney Wilker - bronze.

The 2015 Feed and Seed Mixed Bonspiel was held Saturday, March 14, 2015, with four teams competing. The winning team was the Sweeping Beauties from Paris with members Denise and Blair Pritchard, and Deborah and Bruce Jepma. Second place went to the P&3D's which includes Don and Donna Wilson, and Doug and Peggy Green. Third place was to Hawaii 4.0 from St. Marys with team members Susan and Jim McCutcheon, and Ray and Mary Chowen.

**March 20-27, 1985, Edition (40 years ago)**

It took a tremendous effort, but a 20-ton crane managed to remove the

top portion of the historic stone gates at the entrance to the park last week. The Queen's Park gates were damaged during snow removal this past winter season. John Sturris Construction of Woodstock has been contracted to rebuild the gates. The landmark was originally constructed in 1929 by the Women's Institute as a monument to their community spirit.

What happened Jan. 20, 1985? Our world disappeared into the midst of the first blizzard of the year. When the storm subsided, our local population had grown by one, a dark-haired, grey-eyed Brazilian named Claudia Monaco who celebrated her 17th birthday on Jan. 27. When Claudia embarked on her first flight in San Paulo, Brazil, the temperature was 23° C. Fifteen hours later at Pearson International Airport, the mercury was about -20° C and there was snow in great abundance, the first Claudia had ever seen. The Tavistock Rotary Club is hosting Claudia's visit and she will be part of four families during a year in Tavistock.

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- Store Packed 2 kg. Bag of Brown Sugar \$1.39

**March 19-26, 1975, Edition (50 years ago)**

The Tavistock Atom All Star team clinched the All Ontario Zone 2, Ontario Minor Hockey Association (OMHA) Championship on Saturday night when they defeated Burford in three straight games in the three out of five series. They go on now to the Grand Valley playoffs, which could be against St. George or Burford again. Saturday night's game was a 7-0 victory for the Tavistock team. Scoring for the locals were Robbie Froese with two goals, Kevin Albrecht with two, Ken Horst, Paul Kalbflesich and Steve Lichti.

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# The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette SPORTS

## PJHL Playoff Roundup: Firebirds take lead in “The Battle of Nafziger Road”

LEE GRIFFI

*Gazette Correspondent*

The first two games of the Provincial Junior Hockey League's (PJHL) Doherty Division final were, at least on the scoreboard, not overly close matchups. Game 3 was a different story as New Hamburg squeaked out a 3-1 win on home ice. The Firebirds have a 2-1 series lead.

The powerplay was a key factor in the game as the Firebirds went two for three, both goals coming off the stick of defenceman Matt Domm. Owen Bruder finally put the game away with an empty net goal with 36 seconds remaining.

“It was a tighter checking game with lots of emotion. It was a typical Wellesley-New Hamburg rivalry game,” said New Hamburg coach Shane Gerber. “I can’t really explain the difference (compared to the first two games) and I don’t really know which way it’s going to go now. It’s a lot of games being played in a short time. The seven-game series (with Norwich) ended so late.”

Applejacks goalie Brandon Abbot stopped 21 of 23 shots

“He was in the Sutherland Cup final

last year with St. Marys when they lost to Listowel. He’s a proven goaltender. We have to keep getting traffic to the net because if he sees it, he’s going to save it. We know that and it makes it extra hard to get the job done.”

Antonio Pasqualino had three assists in Tuesday night’s win for New Hamburg. He now has 18 points in 15 playoff games, something Gerber said is no surprise.

“He plays with a lot of speed. He’s a guy in his last year and he’s playing like a guy in his last year. He’s contributing any way he can, both on and off the ice. He is a competitive player and it’s showing.”

Game 4 is set for March 27 and Gerber is expecting a matchup similar to Game 3.

“It’ll be more of the same. It’ll be back and forth at times, emotions will run high as they always do against them. Discipline will be key. You don’t want to take many penalties in the playoffs, but in a series with Wellesley, it’s 12 minutes down the road, so there’s a lot of emotion that goes with it.”

### Game 1

Wellesley blew open a 1-1 tie after 20 minutes with five straight goals on the

way to a 6-1 victory in New Hamburg. Connor Doerbecker, Dimitri Eleftheriadis and Jake L’Heureux each had a goal and assist for the Applejacks. Evan Silveira, Owen Troyer and Tyler Wagler added single markers. Brandon Abbot continued to shine between the pipes, making 45 saves. Antonio Pasqualino notched the lone Firebirds marker.

### Game 2

After a scoreless first, Jake Thompson gave New Hamburg a 1-0 lead just 26 seconds into the second period on a feed from Owen Fischer and Pasqualino, but Stuart Sinclair tied it up just over a minute later on a pass from Eleftheriadis. However, that was all the offence Wellesley would muster. Jayden Fischer scored the game-winning goal 34 seconds after Sinclair’s goal. Cohen Van Zuilen, with his first of the playoffs, and Jayden Fischer, with his second of the game, added insurance markers for the Firebirds. Owen Fischer added two assists for the winners while Deklan Jermol stopped 23 of 24 shot to earn the win.

### Mayors get in on the action

Wilmot Township Mayor Natasha

Salonen and her Wellesley Township counterpart, Joe Nowak, have placed a friendly wager. The losing mayor will be forced to wear the opposing team’s jersey at the next council meeting once the series is over.

“I’m always up for a friendly challenge, and this bet with Mayor Nowak makes the New Hamburg Firebirds vs. Wellesley Apple Jacks series even more exciting!” Salonen said prior to her team’s win Tuesday night. “With the series tied 1-1, it’s anyone’s game but I have full confidence in our Firebirds to come out on top. Wilmot residents, let’s pack the stands, cheer loud and show our support for our Birds! Go Firebirds!”

“Everyone loves a little friendly competition, and what better time than during the Battle of Nafziger Road,” Mayor Nowak said Wednesday. “I have all the confidence in our Wellesley Applejacks and can’t wait for them to bring the Doherty Division championship title home, on their way to becoming Schmalz Cup champs once again. I hope Mayor Salonen wears the Jacks jersey proudly to council! Go Jacks Go!”

## Tavistock synchronized skating team finishes second at provincials

WILMOT-TAVISTOCK GAZETTE STAFF

*thewtgazette@gmail.com*

On March 23, Tavistock’s Team Unity Juvenile Synchronized Skating placed second at the provincial championships held at the Stratford Rotary Complex.

The team had an amazing skate and scored their personal-best season score. This is the first time Team Unity has won a provincial medal in this Juvenile category. Hard work, dedication and commitment sum up this group of skaters.

This team is coached by Tara Wilkins and Lauren Holdsworth. There are 20 skaters on this team ranging in age from 10-14. This team is made up of skaters from Tavistock, Stratford, Shakespeare, Seaforth, New Hamburg, Hickson, Embro, Waterloo and Langton.

They competed in previous competitions this year in Montreal, Woodstock, Baltimore and Oakville, receiving one gold medal and three silvers.

For the 2024-2025 season, Team Unity had nine synchro teams, including four youth and five adult teams. The youth teams skate out of Tavistock and Stratford. Two of the adult teams skate from home ice in

Tavistock, while three of the adult teams skate out of Burlington.

The Star-Four Beginner synchro team of 18 young skaters competed at three competitions and received a gold medal at their last competition in Kincardine. This team is coached by Holdsworth and Dawn Brokers. The Star-Four Pre-Juvenile synchro team competed at three competitions, receiving first place in Baltimore and second place in Oakville.

The Intermediate synchro team competed in five competitions this season, earning a second place in Baltimore and Oakville to qualify them for the Canada Cup. This Intermediate team competed at the Canada Cup in Waterloo and finished sixth in the country.

Congratulations to all of the synchro teams on a successful season. Tryouts for the 2025-2026 season start this week. More information is available on the Team Unity Instagram and Facebook pages.

The Tavistock and District Skating Club is hosting their bi-annual carnival, “In My Skating Era,” on April 13 with showtimes at 1 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. The carnival will showcase all skaters from the club. Tickets are on sale April 1.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Tavistock Team Unity Juvenile Synchronized Skating team earned the silver medal at the provincial championship hosted in Stratford on March 23. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Grace Kalbfleisch, Charlotte King, Natalie Avey, and Mya Herold. In the second row, from left, are Lauren Hassan, Abby Herold, Riah Wagler, Sydney Robinson, Aemilia Moitoso, Nora Hogan, Laine Moylan, and Aubrey Lange. In the back row, from left, are coach Tara Wilkins, Reese Weicker, Natalee Weicker, Addy Zehr, Jada Hamm, Isla Lammens, Myra Hendry, Claire Rempel, Katherine Missio and coach Lauren Holdsworth.



# Tavistock Skating teams celebrate strong season



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Tavistock Skating Star-Four Beginner synchronized skating team had a great year, with one of the team's top highlights being a gold medal at a Kincardine competition. Pictured from left to right are Bryer Robinson, Aubrey Burnett, Paisley Rennie, Kylie Kobus, Ella McCauley, Gabby Rujescu, Griffin Moss, Madison Roes, Kadence Currah, Adelaide Murray, Adele McCutcheon, Isabelle Megens, Hannah Salt, Laura Neeb, Ella Roosendaal, Neve Walter, Caleigh Moylan, and Ruby Herold.



Pictured is the Star-Four Pre-Juvenile synchro team, which competed at three competitions during this season and earned a Gold medal in Baltimore plus a Silver in Oakville. Pictured from left are Gracie Sutherland, Kenzingtin Cudney, Lyla Wilson, Jane McCutcheon, Lila Hodgins, Kylie Klassen, Katerina Schmidt, Cassidy Weicker, Aubrey Lange, Mikayla Munro, Olivia Andrews, Everly Edgar, Reese McLaren, Edwynn Johnson, Lauren Rujescu, Kadence Bell, Chloe King, and Paisley Wilhelm.



Pictured is the Tavistock Skating Club's Intermediate synchro team qualified for the Canada Cup after winning two Silver medals this season. Pictured from left are Jenna Pickering, Emma Stankiewicz, Hailey Minler, Alexa Klassen, Avery Brenneman, Bria Moore, Molly Froom, Laina Berendsen, Chloe Bell, Candice Dietrich, Hannah Beck, Maddie Moylan, Sophie Pullen, Natalie Dodd, Eilish Moylan, Alexis Bell, Kyleigh Dick, Kaylee Adam, and Hannah Bialik.

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# Plans well underway for Wilmot's 2025 Canada Day celebrations

## New venue will enhance parking options and accessibility

WILMOT-TAVISTOCK GAZETTE STAFF

thewtgazette@gmail.com

unveil plans for the community's 2025 Canada Day celebrations.

This year's event will take place on Tuesday, July 1 at a brand-new location – Norm Hill Park. Located at 251 Jacob St. in New Hamburg, the space provides better parking and greater accessibility.

Admission is free to this family-friendly event, which will include an array of activities like an Indigenous Sunrise Ceremony, live music, games, bouncy castles, vendors, food and more. The celebration will close with a dazzling fireworks display at dusk, weather permitting.

While work on the event is well underway, there are still plenty of opportunities to get involved. The township and task force are currently seeking:

- Volunteers to help with face painting, children's activities, the dunk



(TOWNSHIP OF WILMOT IMAGE)

- tank and more
- Vendors and community groups to promote their products and/or services at the event
- Sponsors to support games, activities or the overall event

Applications for all the above and additional event details are available at [www.wilmot.ca/canadaday](http://www.wilmot.ca/canadaday). Residents can also follow the township of Facebook and Twitter/X for regular updates about the Canada Day event.

This event is a joint effort between the township and volunteer members of the Wilmot Canada Day Task Force. Questions about the event can be directed to 519-634-8444 ext. 9235 or [manny.okrafka@wilmot.ca](mailto:manny.okrafka@wilmot.ca).

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# Horticultural view of travelling

## FROM THE GARDEN

By Nancy Abra



People travel for a multitude of reasons. Some seek out to explore new places and cultures or aspire for adventurous experiences. Whereas, others may want to escape to sunny beaches or rugged retreats to unwind. Then there are people whose goal is to visit ancient historical sites or be immersed in traditional cuisines of certain countries or regions. Travelling can be transformative for person growth, to gain knowledge of different cultures or just to create wonderful family memories.

As gardeners, it's a true delight to explore gardens during our travels. I'm always eager to discover the food crops people cultivate, the flowering plants they cherish, and the hardy flora thriving in wayside areas.

Gaining insight into the plants of a particular region offers a deeper understanding of its climate, soil, and local growing conditions—sometimes even inspiring new additions to our own gardens.

Recently, we returned from a stay in the Algarve region of southern Portugal and the southeastern coastal area of Spain. Despite it being late winter, some plants were already in bloom. Rosemary, a Mediterranean native, was in full flower—a sight I expected. However, I was pleasantly surprised to see the 'French' variety of lavender beginning to bloom as well. In our gardens, this variety typically flowers in July and August.

Osteospermum, commonly

known as the African daisy, is a flowering plant that seems to thrive everywhere in this region. Its vibrant blooms, in shades of purple, pink, yellow, and white, brightened up abandoned gardens, streetscapes planters, and brought colour to rugged waysides. The daisy-like flowers often feature a striking dark center, adding to their charm. Native to eastern and southern Africa, these plants have successfully naturalized in the Mediterranean region. Here, they are a popular choice for our container arrangements and garden settings.

Bougainvillea, a thorny, woody evergreen vine, which is native in parts of South America, is commonly seen growing in private gardens, used in hedging of public areas and also climbing up rocky terrain areas. It's bright showy papery bracts of purple, fuchsia pinks and red was absolutely stunning against white painted houses and old crumbling brick walls.

There were also endless hedges of oleander in this region of southern Portugal. Although not



in flower, their swollen buds will be busting star-shaped pink flowers in the next few weeks. As oleander is a native of subtropical Mediterranean and very adaptable to many environmental conditions, they are used as an ornamental and landscape plant in temperate areas worldwide.

Lantana is a garden favorite in this region, flourishing in Mediterranean climates with their warm summers and mild, dry winters. Its clusters of tiny, colorful flowers bloom year-round, adding vibrant beauty to the landscape. Recently, Lantana has gained popularity as an annual in our gardens, celebrated for its ability to attract pollinators and butterflies

making it a delightful and environmentally friendly choice.

In the public gardens of bustling towns and city centers, vivid displays of blooming cyclamen in bright pinks and reds created a unique contrast planted with the dwarf fan palm. These gardens, brimming with vibrancy, were among the urban streetscape of bitter orange trees, laden with bright orange fruits and delicate, white, fragrant blossoms.

Wherever your travels take you, be sure to explore public gardens or sneak a glance over fences into private gardens. These gardens may spark inspiration and offer fresh ideas for enhancing your own garden spaces.



## NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

**TAKE NOTICE** that the Council of the Corporation of the Township of East Zorra - Tavistock will hold a public meeting on the 2nd day of April, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. in order to consider proposed updates to the Building By-law under Section 7 of the Building Code Act. The Meeting will be held in Council Chambers at the Township Administration Building at 89 Loveys Street, Hickson, Ontario.

**PURPOSE AND EFFECT** – The Township of East Zorra-Tavistock is proposing to amend the costs of the building permit fees following a review of the current permit fees and the costs associated with providing service to enforce the Building Code Act, as amended, with regards to issuance of building permits through Section 7. The effect will be to increase portions of the existing fee structure and introduce new fees.

Information will be provided at the meeting on the estimated costs of enforcing and administering the Building Code Act, the amount of the proposed fee(s) and the rationale for changing (and/or imposing) fees. To obtain a copy of the proposed Building Permit Fees Increase, please refer to the agenda package for the April 2nd, 2025 Public Meeting, found on our website at <https://www.ezt.ca/en/township-office/agendas-and-minutes.aspx>. The agenda package will be available online no later than 4:30pm on March 28th, 2025.

Any person may attend the public meeting and/or make written or verbal representation either in support of or in opposition to the proposed fees.

Dated at the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock this 11th day of March 2025

Meaghan Vader, Clerk  
Township of East Zorra-Tavistock  
PO Box 100, 89 Loveys Street, Hickson, ON, N0J 1L0  
Telephone: (519) 462-2697 x225 Fax: (519) 462-2961  
Email: mvader@ezt.ca

## ROAD HOCKEY TOURNAMENT



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# Exploring Tavistock's history one photo at a time

## VINTAGE VIEWS

Tim Mosher

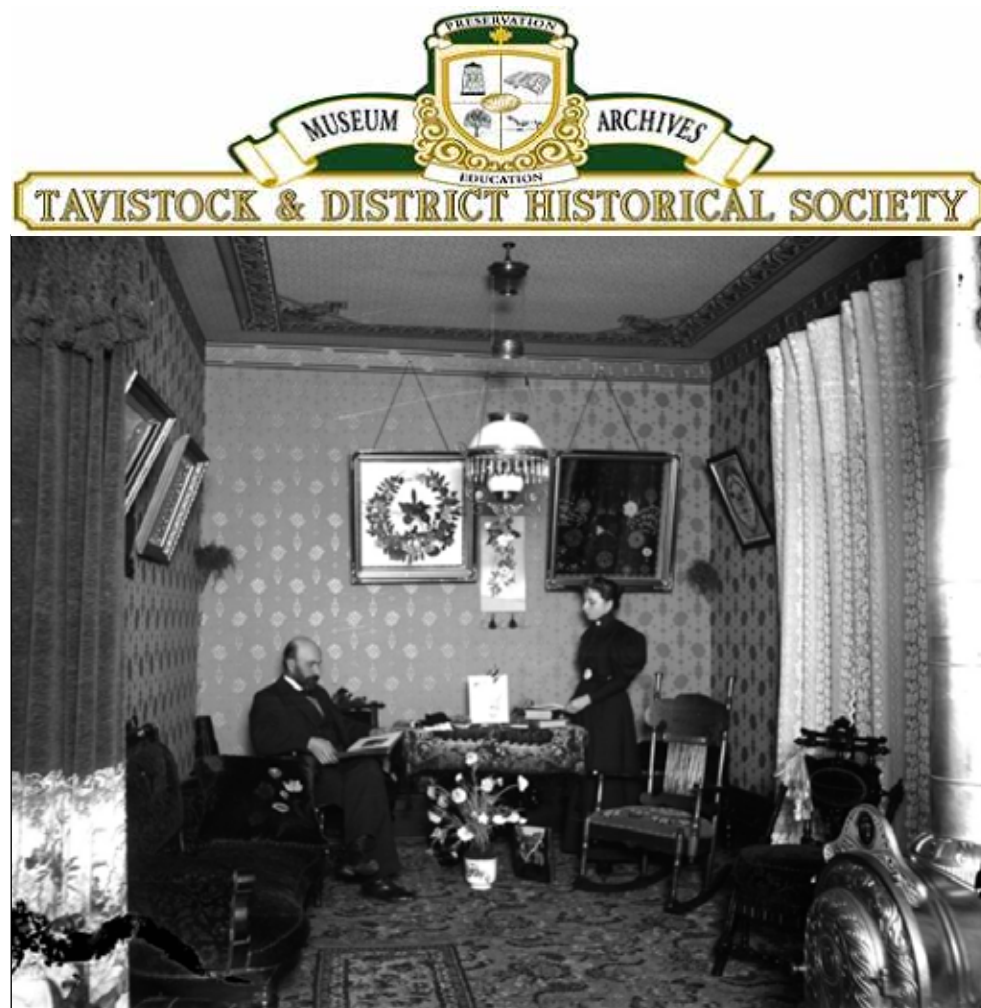
This is the first in a series of photo-articles for the Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette about the Lemp Studio Collection.

It consists of almost 4,000 pictures taken by pharmacist John Lemp and his predecessors, circa 1878-1950. They're mostly of Tavistock and the surrounding villages and a few from Northern Ontario. Most of these images have never been published before, but some are worthy of being seen again.

As a former press photographer, collector of antique photographica and longtime high school photo teacher, I recognize that a large number of these pictures are of very high quality both technically and creatively.

I first learned about photography in Grade 10 while attending Waterloo-Oxford with teacher Mr. John Buchanan, taking pictures and developing them at the school for the yearbooks in the mid-1970s. I then enrolled in the photography program at Conestoga College and this was when John Lemp's son, Lenny (my next-door neighbour), sold the pharmacy and passed on the huge collection of glass negatives to the safekeeping of the Tavistock Gazette. After more than 70 years laying undisturbed in the drug store, save for a few negatives borrowed by Carl Seltzer for his centennial year Fact and Fantasy book, they found a new home and new attention from the Gazette owner/editor Robert Gladding and his son, Bill.

I did the initial sorting of the glass images in 1977 and Bill and Roy Erb then scanned 2,676 of them. Bill published 100 photos between 1978 and 2006 in the Gazette, which many subscribers clipped as keepsakes. The collection was passed on to the Tavistock and District Historical Society (TDHS) in 2006 where they play



an important role in this volunteer community group established in 2002. Bill's son, Luke, built the society's website where the photos were uploaded for all to see. Key in "Tavistock & District Historical Society" and then click on "Lemp Studio Collection" to access all 2,676 images.

Now, almost 50 years after sorting the negatives, I'm just as excited to work with this archaic medium as I was as a college photo student.

The technology that created these historic photos long predates today's popular cell phone cameras but also predates the previous method of picture taking: light-sensitive roll film. The original Lemp Studio Collection is all on sheets of glass measuring from four-by-six to eight-by-10 inches coated with a light-sensitive chemical that, after being inserted one at a time

into a camera, captured a latent image when the photographer opened the shutter.

It was then developed using liquid chemicals in a darkroom, dried and pressed onto light-sensitive paper and exposed to light. This paper was also developed in a similar set of chemicals, dried and then usually mounted on a decorative cardboard mat as a positive image. Sometimes, the photographer's name was embossed on a corner of the mat as this was the final product.

By the 1880s, hundreds of photographers were employed in this 30-year-old medium across Canada. There were few hobbyists in the early days as it was so labour intensive. By 1910, new black-and-white cellulose-roll film became popular and the huge cameras that required tripods using glass negatives slowly disappeared, replaced by small hand-held box cameras made for the masses. John Lemp's photo business then waned, his studio with its large skylight window that illuminated innumerable local people, livestock, products and trophies, became a storeroom by the late 1940s. John's son, Lenny, took over the pharmacy where I left my rolls of film as an 11-year-old. Lemp's store sent customers' rolls of film to Kodak for processing. Today, mostly people older than 40 would be familiar with this type of analog photography.

A few of the pictures that you'll see printed in this ongoing series were published decades ago but most have never been seen since they were first taken almost 150 years ago. So, this edition starts the series of the best of the collection.

### A puzzle in every picture:

To make this fun for young people, there will be a history mystery with every photo. Bill Gladding started this in the 1980s but read on to discover a new twist.

I'll ask a question about every picture and then children or teens can email one answer per person to me. The more difficult puzzles will be for anyone up to age 17 and the less challenging mysteries will be for up to age 14. The first person to email the correct answer will have their name, age and their community's name or rural route number published with the next Vintage Views photo, when a new question will be asked.

### Photo #1: A pretty parlor.

This is a rare indoor domestic scene very likely taken by J.C. Sutherland, one of Mr. Lemp's predecessors around 1885. There are two unusual things about this picture: the people are not looking at the camera, as was the custom of the time, and it appears to be a nighttime photo because there's no light around the curtains. Photographers of this period relied on sunlight almost exclusively to illuminate their subjects, so there are very few outdoor pictures taken after dark. Curiously, Mr. Sutherland didn't rely on sunlight to illuminate this well-to-do parlor setting.

There appears to be fresh flowers, an oil lamp and a papered ceiling. The wood stove in the bottom right had to be well-stoked to keep this home comfortable in winter with such high ceilings. There are no electric fans because electricity was not widespread yet in rural communities. The photographer asked the man and woman to hold still for perhaps three seconds as his glass plate needed time to register the image. If they had a dog or cat in the parlor, it was not included because of how they move at will. The sideways shadow behind the woman indicates that the scene was likely lit with magnesium flash powder and a match on a metal pan held by the photographer behind the camera.

There is no record of the names of these people, or the location of this home.

**The history mystery question for this first photo is for anyone up to and including age 17:** What is the reference to death in this picture? One answer per person emailed with your name, age and what community you live in, or your rural route number to [tim\\_mosher@hotmail.com](mailto:tim_mosher@hotmail.com).

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# LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Wilmot land grab is a polycrisis

Dear Editor,

As the debate over the proposed Wilmot land assembly continues, I want to suggest a term that encapsulates the growing and interconnected challenges facing our agricultural landscape: polycrisis.

A polycrisis occurs when multiple crises converge, amplifying each other's effects and creating systemic instability. The Wilmot land assembly represents just such a situation, where economic, environmental and social pressures intertwine, threatening not only the sustainability of our region's agriculture but also food security and water supply for everyone.

First and foremost, the expropriation of 770 acres of prime farmland for industrial development exacerbates an already critical issue: the loss of arable land. Ontario's fertile farmland is a finite resource, and continued encroachment by industrial and urban development threatens our ability to sustain local food production. Given that less than four per cent of Canada's land is suitable for farming, every acre lost pushes us closer to a future of increased food insecurity and reliance on imported goods.

Moreover, the environmental consequences of this project cannot be ignored. The affected land includes vital waterways that feed into the Nith River, part of a delicate ecosystem that supports biodiversity and provides clean water for surrounding communities. Industrial development in this area risks polluting these waters and contributing to the broader climate crisis, where extreme weather, droughts and soil degradation already threaten agricultural stability.

Additionally, the underlying Waterloo Moraine is a critical but often overlooked factor in this discussion. The Waterloo Moraine is the primary source of drinking water for the Region of Waterloo,

supplying approximately 80 per cent of the region's groundwater. Any large-scale development in this area poses significant risks to groundwater recharge, water quality and long-term sustainability. The paving over of natural recharge zones could disrupt the delicate balance of the aquifer system, increasing the likelihood of water shortages and contamination in the future. Given the growing concerns about climate change and water security, the protection of the Waterloo Moraine should be a priority for both policymakers and the public.

Socially and economically, this proposed land expropriation destabilizes local farming communities. Generations of farmers have cultivated these lands, not only as a means of livelihood but as stewards of a sustainable future. Displacing them disrupts rural economies, diminishes local food sovereignty and sets a dangerous precedent for future land-use policies.

The proposed Wilmot land assembly is not just about one industrial mega-site, it is part of a larger pattern where short-term economic gains come at the expense of long-term agricultural and environmental stability. We must recognize this as a polycrisis and advocate for alternative solutions, such as prioritizing brownfield redevelopment for industrial expansion rather than sacrificing our most valuable agricultural resources.

I urge policymakers, planners and the public to reconsider the irreversible consequences of this project and to take a stand for agricultural sustainability before it is too late.

Sincerely,  
Anne Loeffler,  
New Hamburg

# Gazette Puzzles

## ONTARIO AGRICULTURE

J A U U R P J T O S Z C I O E A K J X J  
Z L O R V J R Q T G M Y N S E T K Z Q F  
L F O S Q I E M A H N J E I C U R E J X  
N Z U S A M C I D F J L F J W L F K G A  
M E L R I D R G A Z T Z C Q B P R P K Z  
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I O J M J V S A H O R T I C U L T U R E  
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X O D R A H C R O Y C S Z W J I I S S D

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# Pet of the Week

## MR. BIG

Meet Mr. Big – a small senior dog with a huge personality! This confident pup knows exactly what he wants - a calm yet active home where he can be the center of attention. While he enjoys socializing with dogs outside, he prefers to have his space at home and doesn't like to share his toys, food, furniture, or people. He may be tiny, but he's full of spunk and needs a dog-savvy adopter who can provide structure, training, and patience. Once he trusts you, Mr. Big is a total sweetheart who loves treats, snuggles, and long walks. Could he be your perfect match?



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# Wrap up National Nutrition Month with healthy hacks

## HEAPS OF HEALTHY TIPS

By Mercedes Kay Gold



Nutrition is defined as “the assimilation by living organisms of food material that enable them to grow, maintain themselves and reproduce,” according to Britannica. This definition is accurate since most people eat the Standard American Diet or S.A.D for short.

The average Canadian dines on processed food and yes, we grow, maintain and we reproduce, but do we thrive? Certainly not. Nutrition is about eating nutrient-dense foods, enabling us to live our healthiest lives. Nutrition is about flooding our cells with vitamins, minerals and an array of antioxidants to minimize inflammation throughout the body.

Change is never easy but a few simple swaps start the ball rolling. In honour of National Nutrition Month, leap out of your comfort zone and spring into spring!

Vinegar comes from the French phrase, “vin aigre” or sour wine, and is acidic in the body thanks to a pH of two to three. Although apple cider vinegar is acidic as well, it’s more beneficial to the body when unpasteurized. This fermented version of vinegar

is famous for its murky mother or sediment at the bottom of the bottle. This stupendous substance is settled bacteria and yeast, probiotic power and gut goodness.

Take conventional white and brown table sugar away once and for all. These common sugars are either from beets or sugar cane, and heavily processed. It’s simply scary sucrose, so say goodbye. New Hamburg is home to heavenly honey, known for its bioactive plant compounds and antioxidants. Riverside Bee Yard and Nith Valley Apiaries both produce handcrafted honey in small batches while supporting the future of pollinators. Mother Nature also offers maple syrup, another crowd favourite. Look for local mega-maple stars, Roth’s and Wagler maple syrup, in nearby stores or visit the family-owned farms.

Inflammation causes disease, and seed oils are a one-way ticket to a slew of health conditions. Seed oils are often from genetically modified crops and sprayed with glyphosate. They are inexpensive for a reason. Common oils such as vegetable and corn are sold in clear plastic

tubs making them susceptible to changing temperatures and light. More often than not, they are rancid. Seed oils create acidity in the body. Please avoid them and certainly don’t reuse seed oils used for frying.

A top-notch choice is rendered animal fat. Tallow is more than a trend, and this holistic nutritionist is obsessed. Tallow was the original fat used to make McDonald’s world-famous French fries until making money won the battle. Tallow has a higher concentration of monosaturated fats, and is helpful for raising HDL and lowering LDL. A win for health, and its mild nutty flavor and beefy taste adds an indescribable flavor for both sweet and savoury dishes. This ancestral favourite is my go-to for frying, and this busy bee picks it up at Nith Valley Butcher and Deli or the Organic Oasis.

Nothing says comfort in a bowl like oatmeal but quinoa, a super seed, is higher in protein. Cook on the stove top and sprinkle with raw nuts, chopped fresh fruit and a drizzle of honey for a nutritious sunrise start or as a side dish instead of rice.

Go for goat’s cheese. Good news for those looking to lose a few pounds, goat cheese is generally lower in calories, saturated fat and cholesterol than cow’s cheese. Goat cheeses are higher in vitamins D and K, and two B vitamins, niacin and thiamine. Goat cheese only contains A2 casein, a protein preventing inflammation in the gut. Goat cheese is easier to digest and those with an intolerance to cow’s milk are often in dairy



(MERCEDES KAY GOLD PHOTO)

### Follow my healthy hacks to round out National Nutrition Month

heaven.

Swap standard soup for mineral-rich bone broth on damp and rainy spring days.

Dill pickles are a low-calorie love for those with salt cravings. Read labels and look for pickles free from green dye, and always choose unpasteurized for gut-boosting bacteria. Drink the pickle

juice after a workout to replenish key electrolyte sodium.

National Nutrition Month is winding down, but every day is a new day to create healthier habits.

I would love to hear from you! Email me at Mercedeskaygoldfitness@gmail.com.

# Downsizing doesn’t have to be scary!

## EXPERT REAL ESTATE ADVICE

By Isabel Livingston



I recently held a downsizing seminar with a colleague of mine to educate and inform people, and it really didn’t take me long to realize it is a very emotional and oftentimes challenging move. This home is likely the one you have been in for many years, raised your family in, made years of memories and have it perfectly to your liking. But maybe it’s not

perfect to your needs anymore.

I believe the word downsizing is inaccurate and a challenging word to overcome hearing or saying. I believe simplifying is a truer way of putting it. Whether your reasoning for downsizing is to create a more convenient layout, find more financial freedom or more for accessibility, hobbies or goals, each of these reasons

are met with a desire for a more simplified life. We are clearing out what no longer serves us to make room for what does.

Overcoming the emotional hurdle can be the most challenging. I urge you to acknowledge these emotions and meet them with a positive outlook. “I don’t have to keep things to keep memories.” Acceptance of how what serves you can change as you move through life can prove difficult but ultimately very rewarding when we can allow emotions to be felt and make the choices that provide us with the resources that fulfill what we now need.

The million-dollar question is when is it the right time to downsize/simplify? There really is no one-size-fits-all answer to this but I do have a couple of considerations to help you draw

a conclusion. Ask yourself, am I able to physically keep up with the maintenance my home requires? Am I able to live the lifestyle I want in my current home? Does my home fit into my financial goals? Would I be able to better achieve my goals in a different home? These considerations will help you to identify if making a move might be the right decision.

If you are considering or wanting to make a move, start small, simple and early. Take things one step and one room at a time – decluttering, cleaning and packing. Starting early will help minimize stress and make the transition comfortable. Connecting with a trusted real-estate partner early on to inquire about their partners can be helpful. Many agents will have a referral network to help you with things like decluttering,

moving out unwanted furniture and any possible repairs you are wanting/needing to make.

Simplifying your lifestyle doesn’t need to be a scary or daunting task. Making way for the new and allowing yourself to live the life you want is something you deserve. Assess what matters to you and what will best serve your needs. Maybe where you are right now is serving you or maybe it isn’t. There is no wrong answer as long as it is what is best for you!

For questions or future article inquiries, don’t hesitate to reach out at 226-232-4236 or ilivingstonsells@gmail.com.

Isabel Livingston is a sales representative with Gale Group Realty Brokerage Ltd. and the Jennifer Gale Real Estate Team.



# An enviro-space odyssey

## OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO

By Paul Knowles



The year is 2001. Gardening guru Mark Cullen and I are sharing the back seat of a mini-bus, part of a small group of travel and garden writers touring the south of England. Today, our tour is taking us to a dramatic, brand-new attraction dubbed The Eden Project.

And that was my introduction to yet another visionary project spear-headed by Tim Smits. I knew about Smits, the guy behind the most ambitious garden restoration project of all time – the Lost Gardens of Heligan, which had opened to the public in 1992 and which I had already visited a couple of times (and several more since). I've written about Heligan previously in this space; if you love gardens, architecture, history, or utterly mad endeavors, you should check it out.

Well, by the last '90s, Heligan was up and running beautifully and Smits was looking for something else to do. Other people, like you or me, might then take up golf or knitting, but Smits cast his eye on an unused chalk mining pit, a 20-minute drive through southern Cornwall away. And while others saw an abandoned quarry, Smits saw a spectacular, unique, environmental showcase and the Eden Project was born.

The impossible concept involved constructing a series of linked, geodesic domes, or "biomes," which would house two entire ecosystems – a rainforest and a Mediterranean landscape. There would also be extensive outdoor gardens – the biomes and outdoor gardens cover 30 acres.

The first time I visited the Eden Project, the biomes were complete and full of relatively small plants and relatively big hopes. But would it work? Would this brave new world of artificially created environments survive, and would it attract visitors?

Yes, on all counts, but not without major challenges. In December 2020, torrential rain caused landslides on the chalk cliffs that forced the site to close for five months. But it reopened to enthusiastic crowds of visitors in mid-2021. The latest annual figures show 604,000 visitors in a

12-month period. Since opening, Eden has welcomed more than 19 million guests. It's so popular you need to book timed tickets in advance.

The Eden Project is a tourist attraction with distinct difference. It's a place that definitely offers a lot of entertainment – even including a zip line – but its first priority is not to entertain, it's to educate.

And there is lots to learn, all presented in an immersive, captivating environment. In my most recent visit to Eden, I was again struck by the drama of walking through a genuine rainforest, albeit in a biome in rural Cornwall. The recommended schedule for a visit is four hours, but if you like, you can spend much longer, checking out the flora and fauna (the latter limited to some birds native to the rainforest), and marvelling at the achievement itself.

Because it's all here – the trees, vines, flowers, replica buildings, waterfalls and more.

One piece of advice – you are visiting a site that occupies an unused quarry and covers a lot of territory. There can be a lot of walking and although the paths are level and comfortable, the climb back up from the biomes to the visitor centre and then again to the parking lot can be a bit tasking. But the Eden Project will provide motorized scooters, preferably booked in advance.

On one visit to Eden, I was leading a group that included a couple of women who felt they should use scooters. This was arranged.

They then discovered the joys of scooter racing, and I am surprised they a) survived and b) escaped incarceration. But I digress.

The visionary ambition that inspired first Heligan, and then the Eden Project has not waned. The attraction's website, edenproject.com, includes a section called "New Edens." There are plans underway for unique projects in Dundee, Scotland, Lancashire, England, Derry, Northern Ireland, and much farther afield in China, Costa Rica and Australia. In all cases, the focus is on the environment, sustainability and education. And in all cases, the projects employ many local residents, a true boon to struggling economies. The Eden Project itself employs between 300 and 400 people, as well as having a volunteer group of over 100.

Cornwall itself is one of my favourite destinations in the world. Visitors should definitely schedule time to visit The Eden Project, but my itinerary in this part of England's southwest would also always include The Lost Gardens of Heligan; the late-Victorian country mansion, Lanhydrock; the coastal towns of Fowey (pronounced "Foy") and Mevagissey, all within a few minutes of the Eden Project. That's not to mention the many other fascinating destinations in this westernmost part of the U.K. – St. Michael's Mount, the village of Mousehole ("Mawzle"), Penzance, St. Ives, Tintagel and more. The whole of Cornwall is less two hours from Land's End to Tavistock, so time spent here can involve a minimum of time travelling, and a maximum of time experiencing this unique part of the world, including a lush, indoor rainforest, waterfall and all.

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



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

The biomes that house Rainforest and Mediterranean ecosystems.



A gigantic bee sculpture in the outdoor gardens illustrates the educational and artistic intentions of the creators of the Eden Project.



Even the architecture and pottery are authentic in the Mediterranean biome.



Birds native to the biosystem, like these quail, wander trustingly through the biome.



Unique blooms and other plants are everywhere in these authentic biosystems.



The soaring plant life in the Rainforest.



# Climate Corner: Who cares about climate change anyway?

## CLIMATE CORNER

By Ashley Ropp,  
Nith Valley EcoBoosters



The past few months have brought forth conversations about what our country wants. Because of the US election, our own provincial election and the looming federal election, there is much talk about what people are looking for when deciding how to vote.

According to Abacus Data, a Canadian polling and research firm, 61 per cent of people stated the rising cost of living was among the three most important

issues facing Canada. In second on this list came Donald Trump and his administration with 39 per cent, and in third was health care with 38 per cent.

Climate change and the environment ranked down at ninth, with only 16 per cent of people including it in their top three most important issues. I understand why the rising cost of living is seen as a more pressing matter; it's affecting us right now, every day, and climate change

still seems like this far-off hypothetical, or something that only affects other parts of the world. It's not like we'll be getting hurricanes in southern Ontario!

So, while this prioritization of the cost of living makes sense, as it has a much more tangible and immediate impact on our lives, if we were to dig a little deeper, we might see these issues aren't so separate after all. We might see that if we're going to properly address the rising cost of living, we're going to need to address climate change, too.

The cost of living and the climate crisis are linked in many ways, mainly through their impacts. Most conversations surrounding climate change are about global warming specifically, and I've heard things said like, "But I like the hot weather!," or, "See, it's snowing, so global warming isn't as bad as you say," but the truth is global warming

is only a single part of climate change.

The science of climate change is incredibly complex, so it can help to look at these different aspects as different symptoms. These symptoms include loss of biodiversity, extreme weather that can be both hot or cold, natural disasters increasing in severity and frequency, decrease in soil quality, and, of course, the global average temperature rising. So, our snowy and frigid winter does not mean climate change is a myth; in fact, the unpredictable storms and temperatures we experience are included in the many symptoms. And, unfortunately, all of these different symptoms will impact our agriculture, making our local climate and ecosystems unsuitable for the crops we need.

But that's not all! That's just looking at the impacts to our surrounding environment, and not to other parts of the world. The unignorable effects of climate change have already hit other countries, specifically those in the global south. In an article by the World Economic Forum titled "Climate change is accelerating the global food crisis, we must act now to protect the most vulnerable," they talked about the ways that climate change has impacted countries already suffering from food insecurity, and how that contributes to food inflation all around the world.

It is stated that, "Extreme weather fueled by climate change causes short-term disruptions in crop growing and long-term changes in regional growing conditions." An example they give of this is the rising temperatures affecting the yield of coffee beans in Brazil. The article says, "In fact, if you point at any agricultural region of the world, you will see at least one extreme weather risk impacting the crops grown there and that the shifts have already occurred or will occur in the near-term horizon."

So, even if these more obvious impacts take time to make their way to our little Ontario towns, there are still countries around the world that we depend on for certain crops and materials that have been seeing these impacts for years now. It may not seem like the changing climate of Brazil matters to us, but unless you

plan on growing your coffee beans locally, it matters a lot.

These are not theoretical risks. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) stated "warming above two degrees (above pre-industrial levels) is likely to cause sustained food-supply disruptions globally." Scientists have seen that, on average, yields of major crops such as wheat, rice and soybeans are likely to decrease by three to seven per cent per Celsius degree of warming; and when we look at the fact that we are already well over two degrees of warming, with this increase showing no signs of slowing down, all of this information is quite worrying, to say the least.

We can clearly see the links between our food sources becoming precarious and unreliable, and said food becoming more expensive. People may say they don't care about a government's stance on climate change because the cost of living is affecting them more, and that needs to be dealt with first, but when we examine the situation a little closer, we see these problems aren't so separate after all. So, it comes down to this: if we want food stability, we need our food sources to be stable.

That means adapting our agricultural practices to withstand the coming effects of climate change, as well as working to quickly reduce CO2 emissions and the other practices contributing to the climate crisis, so we can avoid as much further change as possible and restore ecosystems.

So, you're worried about the cost of living? Then it's time to think about how you can help fight the climate crisis! And don't worry, I've got somewhere for you to start.

Climate Corner represents Nith Valley Eco Boosters (NVEB). NVEB is a local group committed to achieving and supporting a long-term healthy environment in Wilmot and Wellesley townships through education, action and collaboration. To help envision and create your sustainable future, visit [nvecoboosters.com](http://nvecoboosters.com). Climate Corner will include NVEB updates and how you can get involved or support us.

As always, thank you for reading!

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# First past the what?

## CIVICS 101

By Nathan Bean



This year will be the year of elections for Ontarians. We just wrapped up a winter provincial election and we're already scheduled for a spring federal election. With all this voting going on, it might be helpful to understand how we vote.

So, what is first past the post?

First past the post, or FPTP, is the electoral system used in Canada, all 10 provinces and many Commonwealth nations. Originating from the United Kingdom, FPTP is named after, of all things, horse racing.

To determine which horse won

a given race, the judges would watch to see which horse passed the finish line, marked by a post, first. Now, this antiquated electoral system, used initially to determine the winners of a horse race, is used to select the leaders of our country.

In this winner-takes-all system, the candidate with the most votes wins. This candidate does not need a majority of votes, just a plurality. A plurality is when someone gets more votes than any other candidate, but they do not have more than 50 per cent of the votes. When you hear about

a minority federal government, the largest party has a plurality of seats but not the majority of seats in the House of Commons.

In a two-party country like the USA, a plurality is almost always a majority. You either vote Democrat or Republican, and the winner will have a majority. In a multi-party country like Canada, this is much less likely.

At the federal level in Canada, you can vote for the Green Party, Liberal Party, Conservative Party, New Democratic Party, or any other registered party. The odds of any candidate receiving a majority of votes are very low. When a candidate wins with only a plurality, it can be considered a "false majority."

These "false majorities" are where the problems with FPTP exist. In many ridings across Canada, candidates are elected with less than 50 per cent of the vote. That means in those ridings, most people did not want the

winning candidate elected. In the 2021 federal election, 215 or 64 per cent of all members of parliament were elected with less than 50 per cent of votes.

One of the worst examples of this was the riding of Nanaimo-Ladysmith in British Columbia. The residents of that riding elected Lisa Marie Barron from the NDP as their MP with only 28.8 per cent of the vote. That means over 71 per cent of people did not want Barron as their MP.

These common "false majorities" are a substantial flaw with FPTP. As a result, electors resort to strategic voting. This type of voting is based on voting for the party that most closely represents your beliefs but also has a reasonable chance of winning.

People also commonly use this voting method to prevent one candidate from being elected rather than voting for their preferred candidate.

FPTP's flaws lead to voter ap-

athy, a real issue in Canada; not enough people feel their vote matters. But as the numbers show, their votes do, in fact, matter.

Across the province, only 45.4 per cent of eligible voters cast a ballot in the February provincial election. If "did not vote" was a party, they would have handily won almost every riding. This group of voters would have easily won in both Oxford and Kitchener-Conestoga.

Until our electoral system changes, we must work with what we have and make the most of this problematic system.

If we want a system that truly reflects our voices, it starts with participation. So, let's show up, cast our ballots and make democracy work for us.

If you need some motivation, repeat the wise words of The Little Engine That Could: "I think I can. I think I can. I think I can."

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# Saying goodbye to a piece of Canada

## DRESS SHARP. SPEND SMART.

By Scott Dunstall



To say that I am saddened and disappointed is probably an understatement. And I find it particularly poignant amid this heightened sense of national unity we've experienced in recent months.

A national icon – one that the entire world associates with Canada – is now in palliative care. I use the word poignant because we as Canadians did this to The Bay. We chose the convenience of sitting on our couches and clicking a button on Amazon and we were forced to shop “cheaper” because of crippling inflation and suffocating interest rates. And the pandemic accelerated it.

I get all of that, but to sit here, wrapped in our flag, proudly professing our national identity while watching one of our most sacred symbols quietly fade away; it completely baffles me. We are all guilty,

myself included.

We should have seen the signs back in 2008 when Richard Baker, a U.S. based real-estate developer, and his firm, NRDC Partners, acquired all of HBC's assets, including its real estate. Their interest was in the skeleton, not the heart. While they did invest in the company, that investment was ill-spent. They overspent – and in the wrong areas – on an online platform while neglecting their bricks and mortar. Walk (or ask your husband to) into the men's washroom near the men's department at Fairview Mall and you'll see it in black and white. The stores have grown tired and haven't seen updates in years. The warning signs were flashing as we came out of the pandemic and the future became all too clear. So, here we are.

Personally, I have deep recollections of The Bay from my childhood,

being dragged from women's clothing to housewares and losing my mind. I remember the circular ramp into the car park at Eglinton Square in Toronto, near where I grew up, and those famous four-colour bars on their trademarked clothing. But it became even more meaningful to me in recent years as I started to explore and build my own personal style. The Bay taught me two valuable lessons, ones that can easily be transferred to other retailers.

### 1. Take your time and plan ahead.

Because The Bay never had commissioned salespeople, I always felt at ease taking my time to study mannequins and look at display photos in the men's section. They weren't just decorative, they were silent advisors, offering inspiration on how to wear and pair pieces.

I learned a lot about which colours looked good on me. I never followed those colour-matching wheels; I did it all by trial and error. I'd take the one piece I liked in the colour I liked and grab it in two, maybe three sizes. I'd do the same with the complementary pieces. Three polos, three pairs of shorts, three pairs of shoes, all in one change room. I'd try on each piece for fit and, once that was sorted, I'd mix and match to build the full outfit.

Through that process, I discovered my favourite colours, the brands that suited me best and the sizes that worked, knowledge I now carry into other retailers like Winners and Marshalls. The Bay was my style boot camp. Because of that experience, I can now walk into a Marshalls, head to the exact rack and walk out with a short-sleeve shirt, jeans and jacket – no guesswork required.

### 2. Practice your online shopping skills.

I also became a much better online shopper thanks to The Bay. I learned to read customer reviews, fit ratings and true-to-size notes. Once I got familiar with how certain brands fit, I relied less on those tools, but they were essential during my early style awakening.

Zooming in on clothing images is a great way to assess fabric and construction. What made The Bay special was its dual presence – online and in-store. In person, you could try on different brands and sizes, but you weren't always guaranteed your favourite colour. Online, you had access to the full range – more colours, more options, more designers.

And returns? A breeze. No repacking, no courier pickups, just bring it to the store. That luxury is now lost.

Lesson learned: become a smart, efficient online shopper. Use the tools designers and retailers give you because as physical institutions like The Bay and others before it like Sears, Simpsons and Eaton's disappear into the sunset, we'll need to adapt.

So yes, this feels like more than just the closing of a store. It's the end of a chapter in Canadian retail, culture and identity, and it hurts.

Let's at least acknowledge the lessons it gave us before we turn the final page.

*Scott Dunstall has been on a stylistic journey for over 10 years. His belief is that every guy has a style of their own. When it's discovered, it empowers and builds confidence. Scott has appeared several times on Rogers TV Kitchener as a guest on DAYTIME. His writing has been republished by LinkedIn Top Influencer and INC. Magazine contributing editor, Jeff Haden. He has also written several pieces for the Baden Outlook. You can follow Scott on Instagram @everydaystylebyscott or on LinkedIn @scottdunstall or Life & Style Wilmot on Facebook. Feel free to ask questions or propose collaborations: everydaystylebyscott1@gmail.com*

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### SUNDAY, MARCH 30

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

Free workshop will cover all aspects of tree pruning. For details and registration go to [letstreewilmot.ca/events](http://letstreewilmot.ca/events).  
*Mannheim Community Center*  
1467 Mannheim Road

### TUESDAY, APRIL 1

#### Getting Off Gas - Electrify Your Home 7:00 p.m.

A free webinar hosted by the Nith Valley EcoBoosters and Reep Green Solutions. For more information check out [nveco-boosters.com](http://nveco-boosters.com)  
*This is a virtual event*

#### Ostomy Support Group Meeting 7:00 p.m.

Speaker – Karen Skinner, Social Worker  
“Turning the Tide”- coping and navigating life after ostomy surgery. Social time and snacks. Everyone welcome.  
(519)273-4327  
93 Morgan St., Stratford

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2

#### East Zorra-Tavistock Council meeting 9:00 a.m.

*Council Chambers*  
89 Loveys Street East, Hickson

### TUESDAY, APRIL 8

#### Wellesley Council meeting 6:45 p.m.

*Council chambers*  
4805 William Hastings Line, Crosshill

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9

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

Community Care Concepts invites you to join us for lunch and fellowship. Please register by April 4 by calling 519-664-1900 or Toll Free: 1-855-664-1900.  
*Wellesley Recreation Complex, 1401 Queen's Bush Rd., Wellesley*

#### Tavistock Community Health Inc. (TCHI) Annual Meeting 7:00 pm

For more info contact chairman Frank Meconi; [fameconi@rogers.com](mailto:fameconi@rogers.com)  
*Tavistock Men's Club Hall*  
78 Woodstock St N, Tavistock

### MONDAY, APRIL 14

#### Garden Wilmot Garden Talk 7:00 p.m.

Planting and Starting Plants with Pat Tucker from Sheridan Nurseries.  
Free event  
*Wilmot Rec Complex*  
1291 Nafziger Rd, Baden

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16

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

Community Care Concepts invites you to join us for lunch and fellowship. Please register by April 11 by calling 519-664-1900 or Toll Free: 1-855-664-1900.  
*Wilmot Rec Complex*  
1291 Nafziger Rd, Baden



### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23

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

Community Care Concepts invites you to join us for lunch and fellowship. Please register by April 18 by calling 519-664-1900 or toll Free: 1-855-664-1900.  
*Linwood Community Centre, 5279 Ament Line, Linwood*

### MONDAY, APRIL 28

#### Wilmot Council meeting 7-11 p.m.

*Council chambers*  
60 Snyder's Road West Baden

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Cards Monday, Wednesday afternoon 1-4, euchre, crib (bring board), etc. Just drop in to play, good to bring someone. Contact: Bob Routly 519-301-2118  
Crokinole Monday, Wednesday morning 8:30-12, Just drop in to play, good to bring someone. Contact: John Schultz 519-655-2346  
Shuffleboard @ arena, Wednesday 12:30-4 and Thursday 10-4. Contact: Don Junker 519-535-7052.  
VON Smart Seniors Exercise, Tuesday and Thursday morning 9 - 10; Village Manor 10:25 - 11:25. Contact: 519-539-1231 x 6285  
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|---------------------|--------------------------|
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# The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette

March 27, 2025



# FARM EDITION 2025

(PHOTO COURTESY OF SHOW US YOUR WILMOT)  
This “udderly ridiculous,” “mooving” photo of a cow at sunset was shared to the Show Us Your Wilmot Facebook page by Christa Gerber.



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# Young Hickson area farmers making a go of it in small-scale poultry and beef production

GALEN SIMMONS

*Local Journalism Initiative Reporter*

For young farmers starting out, navigating the agricultural landscape and building a sustainable commodity production business can be a slow, tricky road to travel.

Just outside of Hickson in East Zorra-Tavistock, two young farmers – Manita and Brandon La Rose – are balancing full-time jobs and their on-farm duties as they work to gain their footing in the poultry and beef production business at Windrose Farm.

“I grew up on a dairy farm, so I’ve always kind of been in farming,” Manita La Rose said. “Then when we got married, we got a place in town, just outside of Woodstock ... right before COVID. We only had two neighbours, no one in the front and no one in the back, but after a couple of years, it’s kind of like you go home and there’s nothing to do. ... It’s like there was something missing.”

Though Brandon La Rose didn’t grow up on a farm, he has farming in his genes and was raised in the country, so the pair quickly decided they wanted to return to their agricultural roots and find a property where they could have animals to take care of in the barn and enough space to grow a big garden and crops to feed them.

It took a while, but after walking away from multiple opportunities to purchase properties within their limited budget a little farther away from home, they settled on their current farm property, just 10-15 minutes down the road from the dairy farm operated by Manita La Rose’s family.

“It’s kind of central to most of the people we know,” Brandon La Rose said. “Her family farms two or three concessions over near Tavistock, so her dad can rent the land that we can’t use or haven’t grown into yet.”

“We share equipment with my dad; if he needs something planted, we’ll hop in the tractor and plant it for him with his equipment,” Manita La Rose added. “And we help out on the home farm, too, when we can, when it’s really busy.”

When they first started looking at farm properties in the area, the vision was to start their own commercial-poultry operation. While there was some support available, Manita La Rose said the startup cost for the chickens was well beyond what they could afford.

“The cost of the startup is just insane. ... Usually, people have a hog operation on the side that helps pay for it to get it going. Once you get the chickens going, once you’re in, once you’ve paid off the quota, it’s a great system to be in, but it’s really hard to get into,” Manita La Rose said. “To buy a farm and build the chicken barn and buy the quota was just a lot.”

Instead, the La Roses set their sights on the Chicken Farmers of Ontario’s (CFO) artisanal chicken program, which allows small-scale producers like the La Roses



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

**Manita and Brandon La Rose operate a combined poultry and beef farm, Windrose Farm, near Hickson in East Zorra-Tavistock.**

to raise larger quantities of meat chickens – between 600 and 3,000 – to sell at farmers’ markets, and to butcher shops and restaurants.

“The first year we were here, we just missed the deadline (for that program) because we closed on the farm in March and that was the due date to get into the program,” Manita La Rose said. “There’s another program called the family food program from CFO (through which) you can raise your own chickens and it’s more for your own personal consumption for family and friends. There’s more limitations to that; you can’t advertise outside of on your farm. ... You can’t post on Facebook or anything like that.”

After operating in their first year under that program, the La Roses were sure poultry farming was the route they wanted to follow. With minimal renovations to the existing barn on the property – which had an insulated equipment-storage area almost perfect for brooding chickens and raising chicks – and a mobile Quonset-style chicken coop behind the barn that allows the couple to rotate where the chickens forage for bugs and other natural food sources, they successfully applied to the artisanal chicken program the following year and vastly increased their production capacity.

In addition to raising chickens, the La Roses also work with Manita La Rose’s father raising beef cattle.

“We butchered a cow not this past Christmas, but the Christmas before,” Manita La Rose said. “We had one lady buy a quarter cow and the rest we just pieced out to people who wanted individual cuts. Steaks and the ground beef went really quick, and then we were left with a lot of roasts. Moving forward, we’ll change gears a little bit and see if we can sell more quarter-cows and half-cows, and then we’ll try and butcher a cow

calf will be part Holstein and part Angus, allowing the couple to raise it and ultimately butcher it for beef.

“He basically loans us a few cows over the summer – helps us keep the pastures – and then, if we sell one cow, two cows, whatever – they’re going to the butcher – we buy them off him at that point and the rest of the cows go back to dad’s farm and he sells them for beef at the stock market,” Manita La Rose said.

The La Rose’s already grow hay at Windrose Farms, which they use to feed their cows, and eventually they hope to have their own herd of beef cows at their farm fulltime.

“It’s nice that way because we can work with family but, at the same time, we can help each other out,” Manita La Rose said.

In looking to the future of their farm, Manita and Brandon La Rose both hope to make farming their fulltime jobs, continuing to promote the importance of buying local, and understanding and connecting to the food we eat.

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# Supporting those who support the community: How the Interfaith Counselling Centre supports mental health in the agricultural sector

EMILY STEWART

Gazette Correspondent

The Interfaith Counselling Centre is ready to support rural residents, including agriculture workers, and their wellbeing.

Rev. Matthew Isert Bender, executive director of the Interfaith Counselling Centre, says there are a few ways the centre supports rural residents' mental health. The centre serves Wilmot, Wellesley and other surrounding rural communities.

"It keeps it as one of the area community's individuals that are in the forefront for us. How are people doing? How is the rural community doing? How do we support the mental health and wellness?" Isert Bender said.

The Interfaith Counselling Centre has also been working with the Do More Ag Foundation through training initiatives such as mental-health workshops for farmers and for mental-health professionals working with those in the agriculture industry. The centre either runs the Do More Ag initiatives on their own time or with community partners like the Wilmot Family Resource Centre.

The Interfaith Counselling Centre also

seeks out as much available grant funding as possible to provide subsidized counselling to those in financial need. The centre received a \$5,000 grant from the Waterloo Community Foundation.

A 2021 National Survey of Farmer Mental Health in Canada found higher levels of anxiety, depression, cynicism, alcohol use, perceived stress and emotional exhaustion compared to the general population. The survey also found that 76 per cent of farmers reported moderate to high stress levels.

Isert Bender said both farmers and those working in agri-business deal with issues such as isolation, anxiety and financial pressures.

"There's a lot of pressures and big numbers and also the ongoing feeling that you have those big numbers, but so many of the variables you don't control and, if the weather's good, it can be an amazing year's harvest, but it can also go the other way in a lot of work done and very little return."

Relational issues while operating a family business also come up often in counselling.

"It's an adult child working with parents.

It's a 60-year-old parent. 'How do I work with my children' or 'how do I divide farm assets with four children, and two are farming and two are not?' " he said.

As someone who grew up on a farm and understands those in the agriculture industry keep communities thriving, Isert Bender wants to see more mental-health supports for farmers and those working in agri-business.

"There is a sense of responsibility to care for those who provide for us and relieve some of those pressures that are there for them, and the other thing is a need for more recognition that many are struggling," he said. "Some of those stats raise some warning bells and alarms."

The issue is being acknowledged federally and provincially with programs such as the Farmer Wellness Initiative, Do More Ag, and Agricultural Wellness Ontario. Mental health among farmers is also talked about more compared to 25 years ago or even 10 years ago.

"On a broader level, it is being recognized, but we need to be more intentional about caring for supporting farmers' mental health and wellness," Isert Bender said.

Checking in with oneself as well as practicing self-compassion while struggling

can help.

"There's no shame when one recognizes, 'I'm not at my best. I'm so anxious or I'm depressed or I'm not sleeping well or it's two in the afternoon and I've had too many drinks already,'" Isert Bender said.

Isert Bender also suggested those who struggling can reach out to someone for help.

"That reaching out can be a 1-800 number. It can be talking to a friend. It can be reaching out to an agency," he said.

Those who need help but are not in crisis can call the Interfaith Counselling Centre by dialling 519-662-3092. The centre's website, [www.interfaithcounselling.ca](http://www.interfaithcounselling.ca), features a list of the following phone numbers for those in crisis:

- Suicide Crisis Helpline: 988 (Call or text)
- Huron Perth Helpline and Crisis response: 1-888-829-7484
- Kids Help Phone: Call 1-800-668-6868 or text "CONNECT" to 686868
- Reach Out line for Oxford County Residents: 1-866-933-2023
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# The Best Little Pork Shoppe: A legacy of quality and community in Shakespeare

JULIA PAUL

Gazette Correspondent

For more than three decades, The Best Little Pork Shoppe has been a landmark destination for pork lovers in Shakespeare.

From humble beginnings in 1987, when Linda and Gerry Knechtel started selling whole-hog sausage from their back door to its evolution into a full-fledged storefront, the shop has remained committed to quality, freshness and tradition.

Now under the ownership of Ben and Natalie Schelhaas, the shop continues to carry forward its legacy while embracing new ideas.

“We don’t sell anything we don’t like ourselves,” Ben Schelhaas said, a philosophy that has guided the business through its various ownership transitions.

Unlike many butcher shops that carry a range of meats, The Best Little Pork Shoppe specializes exclusively in pork. From classic cuts to unique finds, customers travel from far and wide – including from the GTA – to get their hands on the shop’s signature sausage, smoked pork chops, bacon burgers and traditional off-cuts like pig feet and head cheese.

“Our traditional farmer’s sausage is the best seller,” Ben Schelhaas said. “It’s made with no preservatives or fillers – just pork, salt, pepper and sugar.”



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

The Best Little Pork Shoppe’s inviting storefront has been a must-visit spot in Shakespeare for over 30 years.

The shop’s customer base is diverse, ranging from young families using smokers for backyard barbecues to retirees looking for ready-made freezer meals. With free delivery on orders over \$50 to Stratford and St. Marys, the shop is seeing a steady increase in popularity.

Consumer preferences for pork have evolved over the years. In the 1980s and ‘90s, pork was marketed as lean and comparable to chicken, but today, well-marbled pork is in high demand.

“The fat in pork is what gives it flavour,” Ben Schelhaas said. “More people are cooking it to medium-well instead of overcooking, which helps retain that moisture and taste.”

From a business perspective, Ben Schelhaas has learned a lot about butchery and consumer behaviour since taking over in 2022.

“Pork isn’t graded the way beef is, so customers need to understand the value of different cuts,” he said. “Spareribs, for

example, have more fat than back ribs, making them a better option for slow cooking.”

Ensuring quality and freshness starts at the source. The shop’s hogs are sourced weekly from local farmer Bob McMillan and processed by a local butcher.

“The pigs go to the butcher on Friday, are hung over the weekend and are cut fresh on Tuesday,” Ben Schelhaas said. “Unlike beef, which needs to dry-age, pork doesn’t require a long hang time, so our inventory is as fresh as possible.”

A pig’s diet of grains, including wheat, corn, barley and soybeans, helps maintain a neutral flavour, ensuring customers enjoy the natural taste of pork without any unwanted influences.

The pork industry has faced economic challenges over the years, from fluctuating market prices to international tariffs affecting exports. While Ben Schelhaas doesn’t experience these struggles firsthand, he acknowledges that pork farming requires resilience and adaptability.

“Farmers without contracts with slaughterhouses have struggled to stay profitable,” he said. “And with Canada being a major pork exporter, new tariffs could be a real concern for the industry.”

On the sustainability side, Ben Schelhaas has taken steps to improve efficiency at the shop. Modern refrigeration systems,

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reduced plastic use and future plans for an onsite butcher counter are part of his vision for a more eco-friendly operation.

The Best Little Pork Shoppe is constantly evolving. While pork remains the star, Ben and Natalie Schelhaas have expanded offerings to include barbecue sauces, spice rubs, locally canned goods and fresh baked items like cinnamon buns and Kaisers, using lard rendered inhouse.

"We want people to find everything they need for a great meal," Ben Schelhaas said, "whether it's a cut of pork, a side dish or pantry essentials."

With an eye on the future, Ben Schelhaas envisions slowly adding more products and processes without compromising quality.

Taking over the business was a whirlwind experience.

"From the time I saw the shop was for sale to signing the deal, it was only a week," Ben Schelhaas said.

But one of the most nerve-wracking moments came in January 2023, when the shop closed for a week-long renovation.

"I was terrified we wouldn't get everything put back together in time," he said. "Thankfully, with help from my wife and dad, we pulled it off."

Now, as the scent of smoked pork fills the air and customers arrive with smiles, Ben Schelhaas knows he made the right choice.

"Seeing people light up when they walk in – that's what makes it all worth it."



The cozy interior of The Best Little Pork Shoppe features a front counter filled with fresh, locally made baked goods because every great meal deserves the perfect side.

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# Oxford County farmer ahead of his time receives honour

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Donald Wallace Hart may not be alive to attend his induction into the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame, but his memory as someone who pioneered soil management continues to live on.

Hart, who farmed in East Zorra-Tavistock, passed away in 2014 and was a leader in developing conservation tillage systems, leaving a significant and lasting impact on the quality and sustainability of Ontario farmland.

Hart's son, Bob Hart, said he feels a sense of pride with what his father accomplished and added his pivot into cash cropping couldn't have been a better decision.

"I think it's a tremendous honour and very well deserved. He was a leader in soil conservation and sustainable farming before sustainable farming became a common term. His father, Douglas Hart, is also in the Hall of Fame for his work in the dairy industry. My dad started as a dairy farm and hated it, so he went into beef feedlot operator before starting with cash crops," Bob Hart said.

Donald Hart graduated from the Ontario Agricultural College in 1953 and in the 1960s, observed soil degradation caused by monoculture corn crops and moldboard plow tillage. Driven by this concern, he sought out likeminded individuals to find solutions. This group, informally known as the Oxford Group, became leaders in soil conservation in Oxford County and across the province.

"He was always willing to try new and different things. He recognized that planting corn year after year after year, monoculture corn, was causing problems and



(BOB HART PHOTO)

Former EZT farmer Donald Wallace Hart will be inducted into the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame at a ceremony in Elora in June

he wanted to do something about it. The group of them were looking for ways to do better," said Bob Hart.

Recognizing the benefits of leaving crop residue on the surface to reduce soil erosion and build organic matter, he brought the concept back to Ontario, claiming to have performed the province's first chisel plowing on his farm.

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s,

Donald Hart was a sought-after speaker at farm meetings across Ontario, consistently encouraging farmers to explore new methods for improving the long-term health and productivity of their soil.

"He hosted a lot of government-type people and talked about what he was doing and why he was doing it," Bob Hart said. "He really enjoyed working with young farmers who had questions and were

sincerely interested. Dad always had time to talk, give different views and put some different options out there."

Bob Hart followed in his father's footsteps and farmed fulltime until about 12 years ago.

"My brother and I had started a seed business called Agworks. We merged with another company to form Sevita International, so I ended up working fulltime there and Doug carried on farming. His sons farm and my boys work at Sevita," Bob Hart said.

Donald Hart's farm was located at the current Sevita, north of Woodstock on Highway 59.

"He was a humble guy. He was never one to jump into the limelight, but he was always happy to share if somebody was interested," Bob Hart said. "He was very concerned about the long-term viability of cash-crop farming in Ontario. I think he absolutely made a difference."

Bob Hart added chisel plowing became one of the main practices for a long time in the province.

"Maybe not so much anymore; it's kind of moved on a little bit. But it was the big thing for a long time, and he was largely responsible for getting it going," he said.

Donald Hart and two other deserving farmers will be inducted at a ceremony on Sunday, June 5 at the GrandWay Events Centre in Elora. More information is available at [www.oahf.on.ca](http://www.oahf.on.ca).

The organization's mission is to acknowledge, record and preserve the contributions made by leaders to the growth and development of Ontario's agriculture and agri-food industry. To date, 262 people have been inducted.



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# Tavistock Veterinarians – Dairy Division helping dairy farmers succeed

EMILY STEWART

Gazette Correspondent

Dairy farmers in southwestern Ontario can work with a specialized vet team based in Tavistock to ensure quality care of cattle and dairy production.

Tavistock Veterinarians' dairy division provides a variety of basic and specialized vet services to dairy farmers in Tavistock and surrounding areas within a 100-kilometre radius, for optimal performance health and production health throughout the farm.

The day-to-day lives of the vets, their technicians and the rest of their team involves anything from analyzing records, vaccination protocols, ventilation work ups, cattle checkups and emergency cow services for critical emergencies.

"Our goal is to help our producers farm to the very best of their ability," said Dr. Amanda Topp, veterinarian and owner of the Tavistock Veterinarians – Dairy Division.

When not attending to dairy farms, the veterinarian team is working on more record analysis and continuing education.

"We meet twice a month. All of us vets get together so that we're always learning new stuff so that we can present our producers with the newest knowledge and help them keep getting better," Topp said.

Topp is passionate about the work she does as a vet specializing in dairy livestock. Her biography on the team webpage of the Tavistock Veterinarians – Dairy Division website say she loved cattle from the time she grew up on a dairy farm in Embro.

"I personally love the dairy industry and love cattle. I love working with them. I love that I can work with dairy farmers

every day, build relationships with them and watch them succeed."

Topp said she likes seeing the dairy farmers work towards improving their agricultural practices and collaborating with them.

"Whether it's a management change or building onto a barn or that kind of thing, it's great to see them build their operations and grow and continually get better as you compare year-to-year," she said.

To learn more about the dairy division of Tavistock Veterinarians, visit [tavistockdairyhealth.com](http://tavistockdairyhealth.com).



(PHOTOS COURTESY OF AMANDA TOPP)

The Tavistock Veterinarians – Dairy Division ensures dairy farmers in Tavistock and surrounding areas are providing the best care for their cattle.



Dr. Amanda Topp, pictured with a calf, enjoys seeing the dairy farmers' achievements.



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# Silver Creek Nursery: Promoting sustainable, homegrown food in Wellesley and beyond

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

When it comes to promoting sustainable agriculture, a nursery in rural Wellesley township is providing the fruit trees, shrubs and bushes, and the guidance their customers need, to grow edible forests in their own backyards.

At Silver Creek Nursery, Zack and Steph Muma, their young family and their crew of six hardworking employees specialize in growing rare fruit-bearing trees, shrubs and bushes for the home gardener and anyone interested in growing their own food across the country.

“My cousin owned the business originally,” Steph Muma said. “I worked for him, but I never imagined becoming a farmer. I come at it from a food perspective. I worked in the food industry; I briefly went to Stratford Chefs School, but I dropped out. I was totally food oriented but kept being disenchanted with the food system and the industry. ... When I was in high school, during summers, I would work for my cousin, who was the founder of the nursery, and then in 2018, he decided he was going to pursue his electrical career, and it was either sell it to the competition or I could take it over.”

Meanwhile, Zack Muma grew up on a mink farm. While he’d always wanted to continue in agriculture, he went to school for engineering and was working at a machine shop in Stratford prior to the offer from Steph Muma’s cousin to take over Silver Creek Nursery.

“Funny enough, (Steph’s cousin), when he started the business, it was actually two



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTOS)

**Silver Creek Nursery co-owner Steph Muma and four-month-old Douglas Muma check out one of their fully grown apple trees, which they use both to verify the quality and variety of the fruit produced by their trees and to monitor how their trees grow after they’re sold.**

doors down from the farm I grew up on,” Zack Muma said. “And Silver Creek actually cuts through that property (I grew up on). While Silver Creek Nursery has moved from its original location, Silver Creek actually dumps into the Nith River just across the road here, so it’s still connected.”

With more than 500 cultivars of food-bearing plants, Silver Creek Nursery offers countless varieties of apples, pears, plums, peaches, cherries, quince, medlars and apricots ranging from the traditional varieties their customers know and love to those that are far more obscure.

Nearly all of their plants are accustomed

to a Canadian climate, and the nursery also grows understory plants to round out their customers’ edible landscape including vines, berries and bushes, along with unique plants like paw paws, almonds, figs, rhubarb and various edible tubers like sunchokes.

The goal of the Mumas’ operation is to give anyone interested in sustainable, eco-friendly agriculture the opportunity to fill their fruit cellars from their own backyards.

“Everything is focused on either food-bearing or nitrogen-fixing (plants) which then helps to support the ecosystem you’re growing the fruit trees in, so

it’s self-sufficient and sustainable,” Steph Muma said. “... I would say the driving factor is getting people to be in touch with their food and interact with it and grow it themselves. To me, the ultimate goal would be if everybody can produce at least some of their food on their own wherever they live.”

The process for growing genetically pure fruit-bearing plants differs from species to species. For apples, one of the nursery’s best sellers and the type of tree with the most varieties available, the Mumas use a process called tree grafting in which a scion from the variety of apple tree they’re trying to grow is secured or “grafted” to the rootstock of a host tree. Over the course of two growing seasons, the Mumas and their team care for the grafted tree until the sapling is ready to be harvested in the fall of the second growing season. The Mumas then keep the harvested saplings in cold storage in their barn over winter before selling and shipping them to customers close to home and from across the country in the spring.

The Mumas also offer advice and guidance to their customers that helps them plant and care for their trees and bushes so they can survive, thrive and reliably produce fruit every season.

“We don’t use any synthetic inputs and we really focus on having a healthy plant because a healthy plant can withstand so much more. That’s our growing philosophy, so when people ask how to grow a fruit tree, there’s a holistic spray we recommend, there’s cultural practices and management, and that basically just means

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providing a habitat that the tree is going to thrive in that has nature all around it. So, you're attracting birds that help eat the bad caterpillars that would eat your fruit tree, and having a really healthy fruit tree that has such a high (sugar) content that pests can't even digest it.

"If you have a really healthy tree, it protects itself in a way," Steph Muma said.

For an added cost, Silver Creek Nursery will even review photos of their customers' yards and help them design an edible forest with optimal soil, light and other environmental conditions.

Zack Muma said he and the team are constantly experimenting with best-growing practices, always with environmental sustainability top of mind. In this way, the Wellesley nursery is constantly working to ensure the trees, bushes and shrubs they sell to their customers are as strong and healthy as possible.

For more information on Silver Creek Nursery, visit [silvercreeknursery.ca](http://silvercreeknursery.ca).



Silver Creek Nursery co-owner Zack Muma and two-year-old Mycelia Muma check out a few of their grafted apple-tree saplings, which will be ready to dig up at the end of this growing season. These trees will then be kept in cold storage over winter and sold and shipped across the country next spring.



Zack Muma offers a peak at his fruit-tree inventory inside his cold-storage barn at Silver Creek Nursery right at the beginning of a very busy selling season.



Members of the Silver Creek Nursery team package fruit-tree saplings for shipment to customers across the country.



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# Canada's new agriculture minister meets with Perth County egg industry leaders

GARY WEST

*Gazette Correspondent*

Canada's newly appointed minister of agriculture and agri-food, Kody Blois, recently met with two influential women in Ontario's egg industry during a meeting in Ottawa focused on key sectors within supply-managed agriculture.

The event, known as SM4, brought together representatives from the egg, chicken, hatching egg and turkey industries to engage with Blois and discuss the future of Canadian agriculture.

Among those in attendance were Perth County egg farmer Sally Van Straaten and Janelle Cardiff, who helps manage operations at Gray Ridge Egg Farms, one of Ontario's largest egg producers.

Both women said they were impressed by the minister's knowledge of agriculture, noting that at just 34 years old, he already has a solid understanding of the issues facing farmers and supply-managed industries.

"He was open, well-versed and focused on collaboration," said Van Straaten.

Blois emphasized his commitment to cutting red tape, encouraging innovation and supporting sustainability in the agriculture sector. He assured those present that he intends to listen to commodity groups across the country and reaffirmed the government's long-term support for Canadian farmers, including those operating under supply management.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Canada's new agriculture minister, Kody Blois, meets with Sally Van Straaten of Perth County (left) and Janelle Cardiff (right) in Ottawa, assuring both that Canadian farmers will continue to have strong federal support.

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# Julie and Ed Danen: Leading by example in Perth County's farming community

GARY WEST

*Gazette Correspondent*

In the heart of South Easthope Township, just west of Punkeydoodles Corners where Perth, Oxford and Waterloo counties meet, Julie and Ed Danen are more than just successful dairy farmers, they are passionate leaders who have helped shape the future of agriculture in their region.

Their farm, Danzel Holsteins, is home to 150 purebred Holstein milking cows and over 320 registered animals in total. In addition to caring for their herd, the Danens also farm more than 500 acres of corn, soybeans, wheat and alfalfa, and custom-feed dairy heifers for fellow producers.

But their contributions go far beyond the farm gate.

Building a farm focused on comfort and care

The Danens built a new freestall barn and milking parlour in 2008 and doubled its size in 2018, with a clear goal in mind – cow comfort.

“Our number-one priority is giving all our animals more space,” Julie Danen said.

That focus on animal welfare is reflected across their entire operation, including the attention they give to maintaining their woodlots and natural areas when time allows.

Leaders in agriculture and in their community

Both Ed and Julie Danen are graduates of the University of Guelph, and both have longstanding involvement in 4-H and the Junior Farmers movement.

Julie Danen continues to serve as a

leader in the South-East Perth 4-H Dairy Club and has spent 14 years as a director with the Perth County Federation of Agriculture (PCFA), where she is now the immediate past president. She has also represented the county for 10 years on the Ontario Federation of Agriculture's policy advisory council, including five years on its steering committee.

Ed Danen has served 12 years with the PCFA, including two as president, as well as six years on the Perth County Milk Committee. He was elected four years ago to represent the county on the Gay Lea board of directors and recently joined the Tavistock Optimist Club, where he supports local youth through club programs and initiatives.

One of the couple's most significant community efforts was pushing for safety upgrades at the Punkeydoodles Corner intersection, a known danger zone for drivers. That project was finally completed in 2024.

A farm rooted in family

Ed and Julie Danen's commitment to agriculture extends to the next generation. Their daughter, Rose, is a journalist working for Canada's National Observer. Their daughter, Emily, along with her fiancé, Bray, is now managing the dairy herd and preparing to take over the farm. Their son, John, is studying computer engineering at Carleton University.

As Julie and Ed Danen continue to serve in leadership roles across the agricultural landscape, they remain grounded in their values and committed to building a better future for Ontario's farm families.



(GARY WEST PHOTOS)

Julie Danen, chairing a recent Perth County Federation of Agriculture spring Forum in Mitchell, flanked by Perth-Wellington MP John Nater (left) and Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae (right). The forum provides a platform for county agricultural organizations to present briefings and pose questions to provincial and federal representatives, especially on issues like trade, food production and rural policy.





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Julie and Ed Danen inside their barn at Danzel Holsteins in South Easthope Township. In addition to producing Grade A milk through Dairy Farmers of Ontario, the couple has played key leadership roles in shaping the future of Ontario agriculture.

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# Tar spot a concern for Ontario corn growers, but there are solutions

LUKE EDWARDS

Gazette Correspondent

It may be an issue that needs to be on the mind of every corn grower in Ontario now, but fortunately there are ready-made solutions to the widespread arrival of tar spot.

"Really, tar spot is everyone's problem now," said Emma Dieleman, an agronomist with Sygenta. Dieleman was one of the presenters at the joint annual general meeting of the Niagara and Haldimand Soil and Crop Improvement Associations. She was one of several in attendance to discuss the fungal disease that has expanded to affect essentially all of the northern corn belt.

While the spread of the disease may seem concerning, Dieleman and others said there's no need to panic.

"Management fits really well into what we're already doing," she said.

Existing fungicides can be quite useful, and timing of application can fit in with spraying for other fungal issues like DON, Dieleman said. And most of the time, one pass is sufficient.

Since growers south of the border have been dealing with tar spot for a decade or so, new genetics are starting to become available that will provide better resistance. Already, she said certain hybrid varieties show considerably more resistance, and Dieleman encouraged growers to consider tar spot resistance in their annual

seed planning.

"Considering tar spot susceptibility is going to be super important going forward," she said.

The fungus was first confirmed in Ontario in 2020, but has now spread throughout the province. It can look similar to other diseases, but includes raised black lesions on the leaf surface that can't be rubbed off. It tends to start on the lower canopy and move up.

Cooler temperatures, high relative humidity, lots of dew and saturated soils are other conditions that tar spot loves.

When those conditions are right, farmers will begin to notice symptoms within about two weeks.

"And the cycle continues as long as we have the right conditions," Dieleman said.

However, farmers are also fortunate in that it seems as though it's the early part of the growing season that is the most worrisome. A late infection offers limited risk, Dieleman said.

In a later Q-and-A panel, local agronomists said tar spot was one of the subjects that often came up during discussions with farmers planning ahead for 2025.

"Tar spot was part of the conversation, but it isn't the only thing we should be paying attention to," said Stephanie Fletcher of Twenty View Farms.

Others agreed, saying tar spot often came up in discussions, but yield continued to lead the charge.



(VECTEEZY PHOTO)

A farmer inspects corn leaves for signs of tar spot, a fungal disease spreading across Ontario, as experts emphasize proactive management and resistant seed selection.

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# Planning for farming or fishing property

TIM RAU

*Sun Life financial advisor*

If you own farming or fishing property, you may benefit from unique planning strategies to help save taxes.

For example, you may qualify for lower or no taxes when you sell certain property. Or you may qualify to defer taxes on the growth if you leave certain property to specific heirs. Whether you can qualify for these tax-planning strategies is the complicated part. Life insurance can also play a critical role in your farming or fishing business succession. We discuss these strategies and more below.

## Farming and fishing activities

Before reviewing the planning opportunities, the first step is to understand what farming and fishing activities qualify.

Will you benefit from tax incentives if you plant berries in your small backyard garden? Or does taking out your fishing boat twice in the summer qualify?

Not all farming and fishing activities qualify for the tax incentives. The scope and context of the farming and fishing activities affects available planning opportunities. Further, qualifying for the opportunities usually requires active farming or fishing activities for a certain length of time. Let's look at the considerations in more detail.

Under the Income Tax Act (ITA), farming includes planting crops, raising livestock and maintaining horses for racing, and beekeeping. Fishing includes fishing for or catching shellfish, crustaceans and marine animals. Some activities may fall into both farming and fishing. For example, aquaculture, which is raising fish or shellfish in a controlled environment.

The more feeding, medication and monitoring, the more the activities relate to farming. However, the ITA definition is not exhaustive. The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) also accepts the common, ordinary and generally accepted meaning. Despite this, the rules specifically exclude certain activities from qualifying for the tax benefits and planning opportunities.

## Renting or sharecropping vs. joint venture or custom-work arrangement

Some farmers may stop personally farming or fishing and rent out property

or equipment or sign a sharecropping arrangement. You may consider this option as you age and have no successor or buyer for the business or property.

From a tax perspective, renting property is normally a passive activity because you're receiving passive rental income. A sharecropping arrangement is also generally passive. Sharecropping is when you take a share of the crops instead of cash for rent. As we will see below, passive activities may disqualify you from many of the tax benefits available.

Instead, you may agree to work with another farmer or fisher, or hire someone to farm or fish using your property. This could be through a joint venture or custom-work arrangement which may qualify as active farming or fishing. Whether the CRA views the activities as passive or active comes down to the facts.

In general, to be active, you must share in the risks associated with the activities. Active involvement may include sharing expenses, making managerial decisions and retaining control over activities. Sharing in the risks involved in farming or fishing also indicates active rather than passive.

If your activities include renting or sharecropping, we recommend you speak with your external tax professionals. They can help determine the nature of your agreement and ensure you keep the tax incentives, where possible.

## Business or hobby

You may partake in farming and/or fishing activities, but are the activities for business purposes, or just a hobby?

Distinguishing between business and hobby is important because only property involved in business qualify for the tax incentives. The government wants to give incentive to farmers and fishers who spend significant time and resources running their business.

The CRA publishes guides on which activities they consider indicate a business rather than a hobby. For farming, you need to actively engage in either managing the day-to-day activities or earning income from the business.

For fishing, several different activities may indicate you're operating a fishing

business. They include participating in making a catch or owning or leasing a boat used to make a catch. It may also include owning licenses to make a catch or other activities.

You also need to have a reasonable expectation of profit for either farming or fishing. On the other hand, hobby activities include farming or fishing for personal reasons. Whether the CRA considers any activity a business instead of a hobby depends on your specific situation. Review with your tax and legal advisors whether your activities meet the definition for active farming or fishing activities.

## Owner or operator

When planning for the tax incentives, two terms often arise: "owner" and "operator" of the farm or fishing property.

You may be the current owner and operator. However, in many farm or fishing businesses, the operator can be different from the owner. Further, many family farm and fishing businesses may change ownership or operators over the years. The ITA recognizes this and expands the normal definitions used to qualify for the tax benefits.

- Although you're the current owner, to meet ownership time-related requirements, an owner can be you or others. This includes your spouse or common-law partner, parent, child, or a family farm or fishing partnership interest owned by you or your spouse or common-law partner. The ITA also expands child to include your child, grandchild, great-grandchild and their spouse or common-law partner. An owner can own their interest directly or as beneficial

owner through a personal trust. We define these as "eligible owner."

- An operator can be any of the same people as an eligible owner (an "eligible individual operator"). In some cases, an operator includes a family farm or fishing corporation of these persons (together, an "eligible operator").

This unique distinction provides flexibility for more farmers and fishers to qualify for the tax benefits below. It recognizes you may not adhere to typical ownership or use structures due to the family nature of the business. You'll see the use of these terms as we go through the tax benefits and planning opportunities.

Further, when discussing property and its use, the CRA views "used principally" to mean more than 50 per cent of time. For example, an owner could use land for farming six years out of a total 10 years. Therefore, the owner can meet the "used principally" requirement since the farming activity represents 60 per cent of the time.

## The bottom line

Tax planning strategies for farmers and fishers are complex and detailed. However, if you qualify, you can reduce and defer tax on qualified farming and fishing property for many generations.

Keep in mind, property not taxed for generations may also carry significant unrealized gains. When you or your family realize these gains, how will you or your heirs pay the taxes? We recommend discussing your options with your advisors to ensure you meet your estate-planning goals. This includes discussing life insurance as a protection for you and your farming or fishing operation.



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# Golspie Dairy whole-milk vending machine provides farm-to-family opportunity



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

Marja DeBoer-Marshall shows off one of the two Golspie Dairy cheeses earning awards at the past year's Royal Winter Fair.

**JEFF TRIBE**

*Gazette Correspondent*

There are likely less and less of us who grew up milking a cow by hand into a pail, pouring its contents through a paper filter, skimming off the cream and drinking the resultant raw milk from a pitcher.

Golspie Dairy ([www.golspiedairy.ca](http://www.golspiedairy.ca)) is providing a hyper-modern Dairy Farmers of Ontario (DFO) tested and pasteurized alternative to old-school methodology, connecting consumer to cow as directly as possible through a vending machine located on the family farming operation at 455259 45th Line, Woodstock.

"It's a different product," says Golspie Dairy's Marja DeBoer-Marshall. "Something you can't find in the grocery store."

DeBoer-Marshall was taking political science and global affairs when she met her future husband, Laurence, at The University of Waterloo – he was studying biology. Their decision to return to his fifth, now sixth-generation family farm necessitated a career reassessment and financial discussion. Against the cost of expanding beyond its existing 30-cow milking herd, they instead diversified with an on-farm dairy combining award-winning cheesemaking and a vending machine dispensing whole milk instead of drinks or snacks.

They had been exposed to the concept during visits to European farms, further research revealing there were a few in BC and one in Cape Breton.

"That showed us it was a possibility here in Canada," DeBoer-Marshall said.

Their Brunimat dispenser is manufactured in Switzerland, shipped to Canada through a supplier in the Netherlands. The concept is fairly simple, says DeBoer-Marshall, essentially a big refrigerator with pumps and an agitator to regularly mix milk, ensuring consistency throughout, rather than the cream rising to the top. While she considers the Canadian dairy system continues to provide the best milk in the world, the Golspie approach offers a whole-milk alternative with associated content, texture and flavour benefits.

"It adds more body to the milk."

The milk is sourced from their own farm, meeting requirements around the transportation of raw product requiring verification and samples for testing and quality assurance through the Dairy Farmers of Ontario milk marketing board.

"It ensures food safety is up to snuff and consumers are protected," says DeBoer-Marshall.

Heated to complete the pasteurization process, milk is then chilled to four degrees Celsius. Golspie's self-serve area is open daily from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. A payment control on the front of a dispenser accepting coins or tap-enabled debit and credit cards allows customers to make their purchase. A second vending machine which accepts coins, \$20 bills and tap-enabled debit and credit cards contains assorted Golspie Dairy cheeses, extra bottles and caps, and pre-filled bottles of



Marja DeBoer-Marshall shows off the milk dispenser at Golspie Dairy, while fronting a second vending machine featuring cheeses, pre-bottled chocolate milk and extra bottles and caps.

chocolate milk.

Consumers seeking milk place their own reusable container, or one from Golspie, into position, choosing between one-quart (946 millilitre) or one-gallon (3.78 litres) fills at \$3 and \$10 respectively. Originally, the dispenser was set up for one quart white or chocolate options. However, consumer preferences for all-white in different volumes encouraged a transition in March 2024.

"We had customers who like to get a large volume of milk at one time," DeBoer-Marshall said, adding that while having a preliminary business plan is essential, it must also be subject to demand. "You have to be flexible enough to respond to these changes."

After each sale, an automatic wash function cleans up any spillage.

"The dispenser is smart enough to keep itself clean."

Customers come regularly from as far away as London and the Kitchener-Waterloo area, says DeBoer-Marshall, though she noted a majority are within a 10-15-minute drive.

Golspie Dairy recognizes the value of digital marketing in a modern world.

"We do some online advertising with keywords," she said, describing the investment pushing them toward the top of the page should someone happen to search "fresh milk," for example. There is also benefit in producing a unique offering, which, for those who like it, tend to like it a lot and share their enjoyment through

word of mouth.

"Honestly, that's the best kind of advertising, when people love your product and want to tell other people about it," said DeBoer-Marshall. "You can't pay for that quality of advertising."

There is no single easily identifiable demographic among their clientele. Some may pick up a quart or two a week, others a significantly larger amount. Many drink the milk, but there is also a percentage who prefer this option for making yogurt or cheese.

"It's been really interesting to talk to them and ask what they use the milk for."

Direct customer contact is among the most rewarding aspect of taking their business in a new direction, even on the rare occasions the feedback is negative.

"You can figure out a better product and better ways of doing things."

Overwhelmingly, reaction has been extremely positive. DeBoer-Marshall considers cheesemaking awards from this year's Royal Winter Fair among indications they are on the right track, along with customer loyalty, enthusiasm and feedback. The latter has also provided a far-more intimate connection to the far-reaching impact of a single Canadian farm, even from what the dairy industry would consider a small operation.

"Our little farm feeds a lot of people," DeBoer-Marshall said. "It's not just for us and the cows; it touches a lot of lives every day."

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# Right to Repair: Farmers influential in prying open “digital locks” on electronics

DIANE BALTAZ

*Gazette Correspondent*

Two federal bills that recently received royal assent restore Canadians’ right to repair their own equipment, including tractors and combines.

On Nov. 7, 2024, Bills C-244 and C-294 – the two bills intended to amend Canada’s Copyright Act – received royal assent. These changes to the act allow circumvention of technological protection measures (TPMs) or “digital locks” in order to allow faster diagnosis, maintenance, repair and interoperability of Canadians’ technological tools, including the right to obtain parts from other companies.

Various lobby groups from across Canada, including the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), laud these bills as a critical step towards Canadian agriculture’s innovation and sustainability.

Bill C-244, introduced in 2022 by Wilson Miao, the Liberal MP for Richmond Centre in BC, allows consumers and businesses to bypass TPMs such as encryption and password locks to access electronic components without having to travel to a dealership for repairs.

Bill C-294, introduced by Jeremy Patzer, Conservative MP for Saskatchewan’s Cypress Hills-Grasslands, focuses on the interoperability of different computer programs or devices in which they are

embedded, including the right to purchase parts from other brands without violating copyright laws.

Simply put, this means farmers can repair their equipment more easily without being forced to pay authorized dealers to diagnose and repair equipment, often at the additional cost of long waits. Equipment breakdowns became particularly detrimental during harvest periods, resulting in lost productivity.

“This is great,” said Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk OFA director Larry Davis of Burford. “We (OFA) have been asking the government for legislation that lets people make their own repairs and run diagnostics without having to travel to a dealership. We want to fix things on our own farms ourselves right now, compared with waiting a week or two for a dealership to fix equipment, especially in the middle of harvest.

“With interoperability, instead of taking my equipment to one colour machine dealer, I can now take it to another colour. We really need to try to work on repairs ourselves, on our own farms.”

Proponents such Western University’s assistant professor Alissa Centivany lauds the new laws’ benefits, including better longevity and care of equipment, minimized waste, improved farm productivity and Canadian food security.

Centivany has researched technology

and copyright issues for decades. She co-founded the Canadian Repair Coalition (CanRepair) and testified on copyright’s impact on right-to-repair at parliamentary committees. She uses what she calls the “Three Cousins” to address systematic issues around consumer products: reparability, interoperability and durability.

While Bills C-244 and C-294 deal with copyright’s impact upon digital encryption on multiple products, Centivany’s advocacy focused on the misuse of copyright to stop repairs that can be done by equipment owners or local mechanics. She said she entered her work “through the farmer portal.”

“Farmers kicked it off – they need credit as they pushed this issue forward,” she said. “It began with the USA farm movement. It went before state and federal legislatures and resulted in memorandums of understanding, and eventually legislation in a few states.”

Centivany explained these initial gains occurred in the United States because that is where the major farm-equipment companies are headquartered. Because these companies are multinational in operation, Canadian farmers’ own advocacy gained momentum after the initial U.S. success. This occurred around 2016, she added.

“One must ask, what has copyright to do with farming?” said Centivany. “Computer codes get treated similarly to copyright on

books, resulting in a ‘lock,’ which farmers are not allowed to break even if the repair has nothing to do with the code.

“Farmers are really sophisticated about their equipment and modifying it. We should let them keep doing what they’ve always done well.”

Though critics call these bills a good step, some advocates say standalone legislation is still needed for a more comprehensive right to repair. These include reforms in provincial consumer protection laws that require manufacturers to design products with ease of repairs without the fear of infringing upon various intellectual-property rights.

“It’s still complicated as farmers need to get the tools,” said Davis. “There are some open dealers and repair shops to get these applications. These repairs aren’t only for farmers but also for other types of equipment.”

Centivany said Canada remains behind Europe in right-to-repair issues. However, she said Quebec passed Bill 29, which protects consumers from planned obsolescence and promotes reparability and durability of goods.

She added the Ontario Legislature passed first reading on Bill 187, an act intended to protect right-to-repair items ranging from household appliances, wheelchairs and motorized vehicles including heavy farming equipment.



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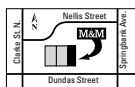
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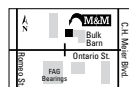


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Remember an investment in health and safety is an investment in your farm's future.

Though Canadian Agricultural Safety Week has already passed this year, commit to prioritizing farm safety every day. For more information, please visit [agsafetyweek.ca](http://agsafetyweek.ca).

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The start of a new growing season is only weeks away, but while we wait for spring, there is still an abundance of homegrown food and farm products that make it easy to choose local – and support a strong, vibrant Ontario at the same time.

“From farm to table, when you buy local, you’re making a choice that extends far beyond the immediate satisfaction of a quality, homegrown product – you’re choosing to support Ontario, our communities and our economy,” said Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) vice president Ethan Wallace in a press release. “Buying local food, flowers, fibre and fuel also supports the preservation of our farmland – our most precious natural resource and one of the strongest tools we have to bolster Ontario against the threat of international political unrest.”

Many local agricultural products are available all year long. Ontario-raised pork and beef, for example, can be found at markets, restaurants, stores and even online delivery services province-wide

– whether fresh, frozen, processed, cured or prepared into ready-made meals.

Other products that are always in season? Think most root vegetables, meat and poultry, fish, eggs, dairy, wines and craft beverages, greens, honey, and greenhouse vegetables.

Greenhouses are also the year-round source of fresh Ontario potted plants and flowers, tulips, freesias, gerberas and more. More than 70 per cent of Ontario’s flower production is exported to the United States, with almost 40 per cent of those sales taking place between March and May. This year, support the more than 200 Ontario flower greenhouses and their 9,000 workers and make your flower choice a local one.

March is typically when the sap starts flowing in maple trees, and that means Ontario sugarbushes and farm-made maple syrup. A cold, snowy winter raises expectations of a good year for Ontario’s maple syrup producers. Find one near you at [ontariomaple.com](http://ontariomaple.com).

The OFA’s Home Grown campaign raises awareness of the importance of preserving Ontario farmland for the production of food, fuel, flowers and fibre. Regular updates on products grown and raised in Ontario and when this year’s harvest will

start to be available can be found at [homegrownofa.ca](http://homegrownofa.ca).

“As we celebrate the arrival of spring, let’s take this opportunity to renew our commitment to Ontario food and farming,” added Wallace. “Our choices matter, and by making a conscious effort to buy local, we are supporting our province, our communities and businesses, and our economy at a time when it’s needed most.”



(ONTARIO FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE PHOTO)



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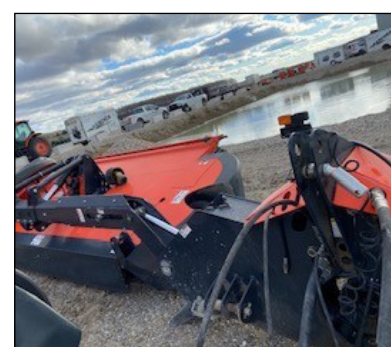
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