

STRATFORD TIMES

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City council to support trustees in letter to Premier Ford

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

In a unanimous decision, Stratford city council has agreed to compose and send a letter supporting “provincial consultation and transparency regarding potential changes to English public school board governance.”

At the March 23 meeting, the Avon Maitland District School Board (AMDSB)’s board of trustees made a public petition for support when chair Michael Bannerman and fellow Stratford trustee Deepika Mishra delegated that evening.

“Trustees serve as a vital bridge to the function of governance,” Bannerman said. “We advocate for the voices and priorities of families in our local communities at the board level. At the same time, we help bridge the gap between our communities and decision makers at the provincial level, often helping to shape how policies, protocols and curriculum decisions developed in places like urban Toronto are understood in and applied to communities like ours ...”

“I would like to highlight the particular impact these changes may have on immigrant and newcomer families or in our community,” Mishra added. “For many of these families, our education system is far more complex and unfamiliar with very different expectations, processes and points of access than what they may have

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Various partners gather at the front entrance of Schaeffler Group’s main Stratford plant on Ontario Street. Through a partnership with the Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network (OVIN), the manufacturer will be opening its doors for innovators soon.

Schaeffler welcoming innovators through its doors

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Local manufacturer Schaeffler Group has become the Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network (OVIN)’s newest incubator. As Raed Kadri, head of OVIN, told the Times, the partnership is an exercise in future-proofing Ontario’s position as a global leader in the automotive industry.

“This is about building a supply chain of the future,” Kadri said. “As we build our companies, our homegrown companies, they will hopefully grow Ontario. They will employ Ontarians and that’s really our objective in OVIN

– is how do we ensure that we’re creating opportunities and good-paying jobs for Ontarians?”

OVIN is an initiative of the provincial government that aims to advance automotive technology by supplying support for research and development, talent and skills development, technology acceleration, business and technical supports and demonstration grounds.

The partnership between it and Schaeffler, according to the company’s leadership, will accelerate efforts to convene industry, researchers, start-ups and scale-ups to

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Council supports trustees in letter to Premier Ford

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

experienced before. Trustees often serve as an appropriate, approachable and locally grounded point of contact for somebody who's very new to this region. And they reach out to them for guidance, clarification and efficacy when we are unsure how to navigate the system. Removing or distancing that layer of representation risks creating a greater sense of disconnection and uncertainty, leaving families without a clear pathway to have their concerns heard or addressed."

Bannerman and Mishra reiterated the points made in a March 2 letter to Minister of Education Paul Calandra and Premier Doug Ford, in which the local public board argued for the trustee system to continue. In that letter they further argued for the ministry to make the research, evidence, data analysis, policy reviews, stakeholder input and performance evaluations public, to make any decision on the whole system transparent.

In September of last year, Calandra spoke candidly through various traditional media and social media outlets about what he called a problem in the governance of local schools, writing on his Facebook page: "The current school board governance structure is based on an outdated system that needs to be modernized. Our focus is to provide students with better outcomes and certainty, and we are looking to finalize governance changes as soon as possible."

Calandra was speaking after the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB), the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board (BHNCDSD), the

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB), the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) and the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) came under intense scrutiny and criticism over its spending, prompting the province to formally supervise the Near North District School Board, the OCDSB, the Peel District School Board (PDSB), the TVDSB, the TDSB, the TCDSB and the York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB).

Just this past week, Calandra promised reporters with Global News that "significant change" is coming to the system.

"It's very important for democracy to be able to have representation from citizens, for education, for governance, for many reasons," said Coun. Jo-Dee Burbach when moving the motion for council to write the letter. "Efficiencies, as I said, it can't always be the overarching goal. It was very interesting. I listened to a call-in show about this very debate about whether school board trustees should be replaced by an administrator, and someone called in and said, 'Well, school board trustees they're such a huge drain on the budget. They spend all the money.' And that actually isn't true. School board trustees here in the district have earned about \$6,000 a year plus expenses, so for nine of them, it's less than \$200,000 for the trustees. So we know that they're not doing it for money. They're definitely doing it because they want to serve the public. The administrators that the government has been putting in the place of the school boards have been earning \$350,000, so it is actually a little bit more expensive to have an administrator rather than a democratic process."

Stratford company nets \$886K in \$1.6M investment

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

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MVA Stratford Inc. has secured an \$886,000 investment from the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario), in a recent push to support local drivers of the automotive industry.

"The FedDev Ontario funding comes at a time of significant industry uncertainty, when long-standing partnerships are being tested," said Eric Wheal, general manager of MVA Stratford, in a media release. "This support enables MVA to invest in modern, energy-efficient machinery that secures our current business and strengthens our ability to pursue new opportunities, helping us continue our track record of success in the Stratford community."

According to that same release, the funding will go towards modernizing its core production lines through the adoption of new specialized equipment that will strengthen competitiveness and position the company to explore opportunities beyond the U.S. market.

Peter Fragiskatos, parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and Member of Parliament for London Centre on behalf of Evan Solomon, Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation and Minister responsible for FedDev Ontario, was at MVA Stratford on March 19 to announce the investment, which also includes \$750,000 for London-based manufacturer Armo Tool.

"Today's investment in MVA Stratford and Armo Tool will strengthen their roles in Canada's automotive supply chain," Fragiskatos said. "These upgrades will enhance competitiveness, support regional economic

growth, and build long-term resilience."

FedDev Ontario highlighted Canada's role as one of the most productive and innovative automotive sectors in the world, supported by a highly skilled workforce, a strong industrial base and decades of leadership in advanced manufacturing. To sustain that leadership, it and the Government of Canada are focused on supporting the suppliers and manufacturers who form the backbone of this sector – helping them navigate tariff pressures, strengthen their operations, and enhance competitiveness in a rapidly evolving global market.

The Government of Canada's new auto strategy aims to create a stronger, more sustainable, more independent economy built on the solid foundation of strong Canadian industries and bolstered by diverse international trade partners. It contains strategic measures, including the investments through the Regional Tariff Response Initiative, to support businesses impacted by tariffs across all affected sectors, including those in the automotive sector.

Through the Regional Tariff Response Initiative, businesses impacted by tariffs are receiving targeted support to respond to changing market pressures, move forward with modernization efforts, and stay competitive in a rapidly evolving industry.

"Our new auto strategy will help businesses integrate technologies into our existing supply chains to support jobs across Canada," said Solomon in the release. "The auto sector in southern Ontario is a critical part of our economy and the businesses and workers that support it are top of mind. I'm thrilled to support MVA Stratford and Armo Tool as they expand their business within the automotive supply chain in southern Ontario."

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Schaeffler welcoming innovators through its doors

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

help Ontario's automotive and mobility supply chain and strengthen relationships between Canadian and German automotive and mobility technology companies. It will connect Ontario-based small- and medium-sized enterprises with key players in the automotive and mobility ecosystem – players like Schaeffler.

By tapping into Ontario's deep industry knowledge and research leadership, the program aims to help start-ups and scale-ups move efficiently from research to market.

"At Schaeffler, our innovation strategy is centred around key partnerships that advance different fields of motion," said Jeff Hemphill, chief technical officer for Schaeffler in the Americas, in a media release. "Joining OVIN Incubators enables us to work closely with start-ups and academia to accelerate the development of new mobility solutions such as software-defined vehicles, battery tech-

nology, humanoid robotics, and electric aviation, and bring fresh perspectives into our organization. We look forward to connecting with innovators on scaling ideas that have the potential to transform our industry."

"Ontario and Germany have long shared a commitment to excellence across the automotive industry, and today's announcement marks another milestone in our collaborative efforts to strengthen supply chains," added Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. "Through this new strategic partnership, Schaeffler Technologies and OVIN will ensure Ontario-based companies have the tools needed to accelerate research, scale innovation and stay competitive in the international market."

Speaking with the Times, Hemphill was enthusiastic about the project, however acknowledged that the announcement is early and there are no projects yet defined, nor is there a solidified timeline.



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Raed Kadri, head of the Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network (OVIN) said the partnership between them and Schaeffler is about future-proofing Ontario's position as a leader in the automotive industry.



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Jeff Hemphill, chief technical officer for Schaeffler in the Americas, said that the local manufacturer looks forward to connecting with innovators.

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Two blocks of sidewalk to be removed as part of Queen Street reconstruction

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Despite a petition from two neighbours, Stratford city council has opted to proceed with the presented Queen Street reconstruction plan – which will see two blocks of the western sidewalk removed.

“Removing sidewalks struck us as the sort of thing you see in another city, not Stratford,” said homeowner Tara Bissett, who was also joined by Rowan Lubke in her delegation. “Cities such as Kitchener and Toronto, for instance, have policies to add sidewalks where they are lacking, with Kitchener’s policy stating clearly, ‘Sidewalks are a fundamental requirement for an accessible city.’ The provision of sidewalks helps to remove barriers to access for vulnerable popu-

lations, including seniors, children and persons with disabilities. Sidewalks offer a protective, dedicated space for all pedestrians, which is especially important for vulnerable pedestrians.

“... This sidewalk is well used,” Bissett continued. “It is part of a pathway that stretches from the river to the railway line, past the Festival Theatre, past a Domino’s Pizza, across a busy highway and three arterial streets. In the middle of the stretch of sidewalk slated for removal is a variety store, which most people travel to on foot. The sidewalk is bizarrely well loved. In the face of this winter’s relentless snow, the residents of Queen Street were out again and again, clearing the snow before the city plow came by – not an obligation, but pride in our street and care for our fellow citizens.”

The \$3.2 million reconstruction project is to take place on Queen Street from Regent to Brunswick. It will upgrade the storm sewer, sanitary sewer and water mains, replace existing storm, sanitary and water services to the property line, reconstruct the road to a width of seven metres (marginally bigger than the 6.7 metres it is now), upgrade the asphalt roadway, curb and gutter and sidewalk, re-install a sidewalk on the east side of Queen Street at a new width of 1.5 metres, remove trees in poor health and plant additional trees along the path.

The removal of the west sidewalk, as explained by project manager Nick Sheldon, is in line with City of Stratford policy, specifically Council Policy S2.2, which requires a sidewalk on one side of a local residential street.

Sheldon also explained there would be

three mature trees “for sure” that would be removed by reinstalling a code-compliant, 1.5 metre sidewalk on the western side. Because more ground would have to be excavated during the installation, it is possible more mature trees would be impacted.

“It really struck me when (the delegates) were talking...” Coun. Cody Sebben said. “But ultimately, I do support the recommendation because I think if it was tree or sidewalk, for me, I think in this scenario I’d (choose the trees) and it is part of our policy. I think if we want a different policy, we should review that and have that discussion.”

The decision to approve the design and move onto the tendering portion of the project was unanimous. Couns. Bonnie Henderson and Taylor Briscoe were absent from the vote.

Cycle Stratford invites cyclists of all abilities to gear up for 2026

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

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Spring may still be figuring out its cadence, but Cycle Stratford is already warming up for another great season on the roads and trails of Perth County – and this year, there’s more to be excited about than ever.

The club’s popular group rides will return to Market Square in April, with the exact start date determined by weather and road conditions. Post-winter debris on road shoulders can make for tricky riding, so safety always guides the call. Once the green light is given, the announcement will go out on the club’s website and social media channels. In the meantime, ride leaders and sweeps will be complet-

ing their training in early April so they’re ready to roll the moment conditions allow.

Something for every cyclist

Cycle Stratford’s weekly rides continue to offer options for a wide range of abilities and schedules. Sunday morning rides depart Market Square at 9 a.m., with two groups heading out on Perth County roads: the Country Cruisers cover approximately 30 kilometres at an intermediate pace, while the Further Afielders tackle 50-60 kilometres with a bit more zip. Once a month, the Further Afielders swap pavement for gravel – a recent update that has quickly become a fan favourite. Wednesday evening rides at 6 p.m. typically cover 35-45 kilometres, with distance and pace flexed each week to suit the participants.

Better than ever in 2026

The club is tweaking its popular social ride concept – a short loop through Stratford followed by time to decompress at a local coffee shop or pub. It’s cycling with a side of community, and it’s exactly the kind of ride that gets people hooked. Conversations are still underway to determine the optimal timing for these popular rides.

“We’re always open to introducing other types of rides for our members,” said Pete McDonnell, Cycle Stratford’s president in a media release. “We invite cyclists of all abilities to join us. If you aren’t sure where you fit in, reach out through our website or just show up on a Sunday morning – we’ll be happy to help you find the right group.”

Come meet them – Spring Social on April 12

Thinking about joining? Come say hel-

lo at the Cycle Stratford Spring Social on Sunday, April 12, 2026, from 1-3 p.m. at Chuck’s Roadhouse, 33 Market Pl. No RSVP needed – just show up, meet some fellow cyclists, and find out what the club is all about.

About Cycle Stratford

Cycle Stratford is a recreational cycling club based in Stratford. The club supports cycling for fun and for transportation and advocates locally on behalf of cyclists. (Watch for exciting news on way-finding signage for the in-town Festival Route later this Spring!) Weekly group rides are supported by trained ride leaders and sweeps, with periodic excursions to cycling routes across southwestern Ontario. Annual membership is \$40.

Learn more at cyclestratford.com.

Treat mom to mimosas and make a difference with Meowmosa fundraiser

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

This Mother’s Day weekend, the purrfect celebration is back with a heartfelt twist. Meowmosa, presented by Clean & Tidy, invites guests to indulge in all-you-can-eat brunch with bottomless mimosas, all while supporting vulnerable cats and kittens (and other pets) during the height of kitten season.

Taking place on Saturday, May 9 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Hampton Inn &

Suites in St. Jacobs, Meowmosa offers a memorable way to celebrate moms, friends, and community while raising vital funds for the Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo & Stratford Perth.

Spring marks the peak of kitten season, when the number of cat pregnancies and newborn litters rise dramatically. The humane society’s animal centres see an influx of nursing mother cats and fragile kittens requiring specialized care, foster support and medical attention. Funds raised from Meowmosa will

go directly toward helping meet this increased need and supporting the animals in our care.

“Mother’s Day weekend is the perfect opportunity to celebrate compassion and care, not just for the moms in our lives, but for the many mother cats and kittens who rely on our support,” said Victoria Baby, CEO of the humane society, in an announcement. “Buying a ticket to events like Meowmosa help ensure we can continue to provide lifesaving care during kitten season and beyond.”

Guests will enjoy a lively brunch experience alongside opportunities to participate in fun fundraising activities, all in support of animals in need. Attendees are also encouraged to explore the charm of St. Jacobs Market before or after the event, making it a full day of local discovery and connection.

Whether you’re treating mom, gathering friends or simply looking for a meaningful way to give back, Meowmosa promises a morning filled with flavour, fun and furry impact.

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Perth County releases 2025 council pay figures

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Perth County councillors received a combined total of nearly \$211,000 in remuneration in 2025, along with \$39,425.66 in travel and professional development expenses, according to the county's annual statement of remuneration and expenses received by council at its March 19 meeting.

The annual report is required under the Municipal Act and provides a detailed breakdown of pay, taxable benefits and expenses paid to members of council and appointed committees.

Among councillors, past warden Doug Kellum received the highest total pay at \$44,757.64, reflecting his time serving as

warden until the election of a new warden in December 2025. Kellum also reported \$21,684.51 in travel and professional development expenses, for a total compensation of \$66,442.17.

Dean Trentowsky, who served as deputy warden for most of the year before being elected warden in December, received \$23,116.24 in remuneration and \$1,251.88 in travel expenses for a total of \$24,368.12.

Other council remuneration totals ranged from \$16,187.66 for Hugh McDermid to \$19,594.60 for Robert Wilhelm. Rhonda Ehgoetz received \$19,029.75, Sue Orr \$19,287.86, Todd Kasenberg \$18,434.72, Walter McKenzie \$17,113.61, Matt Duncan \$17,214.73 and Jerry Smith \$18,239.20.

Council members collectively reported \$34,147.61 in travel expenses and \$5,278.05 in professional development costs for 2025.

The report also includes remuneration paid to members of the county's accessibility advisory committee, which totalled \$6,436.77 in 2025. Individual payments ranged from \$709 to \$1,595.91, with an additional \$23.77 in mileage reported.

"When you go to (the pay statement for) accessibility advisory, there's nobody from West Perth," Coun. Rhonda Ehgoetz said. "(Does West Perth) pay their people separately; do they not claim it?"

"We encourage everybody to submit their expense forms, however, some individuals do not submit their expense forms, so that's why you would see that,"

county clerk Tyler Sager said.

"I realize that. It just seems odd that both of them are from the same municipality; that's why I raised it." Ehgoetz responded. "... Thank you to them for saving us the money."

In addition, council received a summary of remuneration paid to county representatives serving on the Spruce Lodge Home for the Aged board. Jerry Smith received \$841.88, including \$281.88 in mileage, while Sue Orr received \$920.00 in meeting pay. Combined remuneration for the two appointments totalled \$1,721.88.

The statement summarizes all remuneration, benefits and expenses paid to council members and appointees for the 2025 calendar year as required by provincial legislation.

Stratford city council paid out \$470K last year

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The City of Stratford has released its annual report on the remuneration and expenses of its councillors. Over \$470,000 was paid in 2025 to its 11-member council.

The base remuneration for most councillors was \$23,229, along with \$4,000 in

lieu of benefits. As deputy mayor, Coun. Harjinder Nijjar received \$25,250 and Mayor Martin Ritsma received \$90,066 – a total of \$324,380.

\$10,086 was paid in per diems, \$44,001 was paid in lieu of benefits, \$44,942 was paid for conferences and meetings, \$21,976 was paid from local boards, \$35,148 was paid for employer remittances. A total of

\$470,533 was paid.

That amount is slightly more than 2024 (6.5 per cent greater). The year prior, the city paid a total of \$441,796. Ritsma received \$84,231 as his base pay, Nijjar \$23,617, and the other councillors received \$21,724.

Per the Municipal Act, the treasurer of a municipality is required to release the

remuneration report before March 31. Council approved the report at its March 23 meeting.

Find the full report and amounts, including for members of local boards and committees, in the agenda package at <https://tinyurl.com/4458n3fb>.

Submit your letter to the editor to us!
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Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. What 1994 film features a character describing a Quarter Pounder with Cheese as a "Royale with Cheese" in France?
2. What legendary musician wrote "Purple Haze," "Little Wing," and "Voodoo Child"?
3. The Pyramid of Giza is the only ancient wonder still standing today — what other ancient wonder was also located in Egypt?
4. What is the name of the galaxy closest to our Milky Way?
5. In the Bible, who is the eldest son of David?
6. Which country is known as Suomi?
7. How many lines are in a limerick?
8. Do male or female toads croak?
9. What magical phrase did Ali Baba use to open the cave?
10. In *Toy Story*, what is the name of the boy who owns Woody and Buzz?

This week's answers are found on pg. 27

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11 local culture projects get funding from coalition of tourism groups

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

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The 2026/27 Stratford Destination Development Fund (DDF) received an overwhelming response, with 30 applications submitted representing more than \$1 million in project value and over \$200,000 in requested funding support. This strong level of interest underscores the continued momentum and creativity within Stratford's tourism and cultural sectors. As a result, the selection process was highly competitive. Following a thorough review, the committee approved funding for 11 selected cultural projects that will deliver meaningful, year-round destination development opportunities, particularly during Stratford's shoulder and winter seasons. All supported projects are scheduled for completion by the end of March 2027.

Established in 2015 through a collaborative investment by Regional Tourism Organization 4 (RTO4), the Downtown Stratford Business Improvement Area (BIA) and Destination Stratford, the DDF supports high-impact, experience-driven projects that are designed to be widely shared and celebrated. The selected initiatives reflect Stratford's distinct cultural identity while enhancing storytelling opportunities and enriching experiences for both residents and visitors. Funded projects for this cycle will be delivered between April 1, 2026 and March 31, 2027.

"With over a decade of enabling local cultural events and experiences, the Stratford Destination Development Fund continues to strengthen our community while supporting a vibrant, year-round visitor economy. The success of the Fund is driven by our creative cultural community as evidenced by this year's outstanding calibre of supported projects," said Zac Gribble, executive director of Destination Stratford, in a media release.

"The BIA is delighted to be part of the Destination De-

velopment Fund providing funds to give a boost to initiatives that attract visitors to attend events and engage in overnight stays in our community. Our goal is to nurture events that recur year after year and can blossom into a sustainable event," said Jamie Pritchard, general manager of the BIA.

"RTO4 is pleased to once again support the Stratford Destination Development Fund in 2026. Over the years, this program has helped bring forward creative projects that invite visitors and residents alike to experience Stratford in new ways, many of which have grown into well-loved experiences within the community. With such a strong and competitive round of applications this year, we're excited to see how the selected initiatives will continue to shape Stratford's visitor economy and enrich the destination for years to come," said Andrea Gardi of RTO4.

The successful 2026 applications and projects include:

- Boathouse Stratford, The: Voices of the Avon: A River Storytelling Series
- Fresh Idea Collective: Speak to Lead Showcase for Women
- Here For Now Theatre: The Gift Exchange and As Above
- INNERchamber Inc: Season 17 Sept 2026 - May 2027
- Provocation Ideas Festival: Provocation Ideas Festival's Flowing Futures: Avon River Design Challenge
- Stratford Concert Choir: The Big Sing Thing
- Stratford Film Festival: Stratford Film Festival and Monthly Film Series
- Stratford Summer Music: Laila Biali Wintersongs
- Stratford Walking Tours: Boos and Brews
- Stratford Winter Film Festival: Celebrating Film
- Stratford Winterfest: A family friendly, free outdoor cultural winter experience

Passage

I carry this presence with me
and it never leaves:

the night as a young boy
I stood on the deck
of a passenger ship
traversing the grave
of an endless ocean,
England a gathered fog
behind me,
ahead a new
and luminous home
my parents let me know
was Canada.

The waves were round and easy
under a giving moon
and the confident thrum
of prop and turbine
carried like a soft white noise
across the silvered dance floor
of shimmering water.

So small I stood that night
balanced on the razor blade
of such immensity:

the churning, foam-fed runnels
of my childhood

the precious tumblers
of the stars
fastened in that elusive sequence
decreed to guide me
to a shining land
beyond the glistening sea.

David Stones, Stratford Poet Laureate

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Age 16, by Rosena Fung
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Age 16

By Rosena Fung

Age 16 is a sweet and heartfelt coming-of-age graphic novel about three generations of mothers and daughters, each at the age of 16.

It's the year 2000. Sixteen-year-old Roz is deciding what she wants to do after graduation. She is also struggling with body image issues, made more complicated by her mother, Lydia, who often comments on her food choices. When Roz's grandmother shows up for an unexpected visit, things start to boil over with three generations together in one Toronto apartment.

Next, we flash back to 1972 Hong Kong, where we see Roz's mother, Lydia, as a 16-year-old. Lydia wants to know about her father, information that her overly-critical mother, Mei Laan, is reluctant to share.

Lastly, we flash back again to 1954, where feisty 16-year-old Mei Laan is living in Guandong, Chi-

na. Many families are leaving China amid political strife, and an arranged marriage in Hong Kong may be Mei Laan's ticket out.



As each chapter alternates between the three young women, their stories weave together. One of the most remarkable things about this graphic novel is Fung's creative use of colour. Roz, Lydia, and Mei Laan's chapters are each illustrated in a different colour scheme, making it easy to distinguish between time periods. However, as the story builds, certain colours cross over in a beautifully symbolic way.

This family saga explores many nuanced topics without feeling heavy-handed, including mother-daughter relationships, immigrant experiences, and internalized beauty standards. *Age 16* is a work of fiction, although, as Fung mentions in the author's note, it is a deeply personal story and this authenticity shines through.

This is clearly a story told with love. Complete with plenty of fun 2000's references and recognizable Toronto landmarks, *Age 16* is sincere, humorous, and certainly relatable for anyone who has ever experienced being sixteen.

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Mar. 16 Kristin Hammond, Kitchener.	\$50.00
Mar. 17 Janis Antonio, Stratford	\$50.00
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Fresh Idea Collective wraps up International Women's History Month with Speak to Lead showcase

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

A Speak to Lead Showcase for Women will take place at Here For Now Theatre on March 29, where 10 women from across the region will come together to share their signature talks.

The event offers recent graduates of the eight-week Speak to Lead Academy for Women – a course designed and delivered by Fresh Idea Collective – an opportunity to take the stage.

Speakers will cover a range of topics including midlife reinvention, resilience, nutrition, mental wellness and community building. Sessions include Embracing Your Encore: Creating Your Best Life after 50 by Shari Doherty, The Balanced Plate: How Nutrition Fuels Your Success by Danielle Reid and The Laughter Effect: Transforming Communities, Relationships and the Workplace by Jenna Goodhand.

Kerry Ramsay, founder of Fresh Idea Collective, said the program was designed to get women on stage to share their personal stories and inspire others.

"This is all about getting more women on stages, so that women's perspectives are reflected and women's stories are shared," said Ramsay. "Because we know that until women's stories are shared, nothing else changes."

"The advantage for entrepreneurs and leaders is that when you have a signature talk and you're getting paid to speak, it establishes your credibility and your authority. It positions you as a leader in your field," she added.

Ramsay said the location – Here For Now Theatre – was the "icing on the cake" when it came to booking a venue that supports women.

"We approached Here For Now Theatre to partner with us on this event because it's a space that celebrates women and underrepresented voices," she said. "We're particularly pleased to be holding the showcase in this feminist venue, with an all-women board and an incredible artistic director leading the way."

Running a business is never easy – but for women, the challenges can be even greater. Fresh Idea Collective is showing that when women come together in a supportive community, it not only fosters connection but also helps cultivate the next generation of female leaders across the region.

"The community itself is a safe and accountable space where women can gather to look for ideas and exchange solutions," said Ramsay. "Business is dynamic. It's constantly changing. But what is really amazing about being part of a community is that it provides a solid foundation that helps alleviate fears and anxiety when it comes to building and growing a business."

Fresh Idea Collective has connected with more than 500 women across the region, helping to build strength, resilience and a sense of community among entrepreneurs at various stages of business growth.

"As human beings, we crave community; we are designed to live, work and play in community," said Ramsay. "Increasingly, we have become isolated from each other because of technology. Of course, you can run a business online, but there is power in coming together in the same space – connecting as human beings, laughing together, crying together, sharing wisdom and experiences that really can't be replicated by any AI robot."

To learn more about Fresh Idea Collective, visit www.freshideacollective.com



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Fresh Idea Collective brings together 10 women entrepreneurs to speak at the inaugural Speak to Lead Showcase for Women at the Here for Now Theatre later this month in recognition of International Women's History Month.

Stratford Symphony Orchestra presents "Symphony at the Cinema"

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The Stratford Symphony Orchestra invites audiences to experience the musical magic of the movies at its upcoming "Symphony at the Cinema" concert on Saturday, April 11 at 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. at Avondale United Church.

"This concert will highlight some of the best scores in cinema while showcasing the amazing talent that we have in Stratford," said William Rowson, music director of the Stratford Symphony Orchestra, in a media release.

Its principal bass player, Dan Armstrong, believes this concert will turn movie buffs into orchestra fans: "When we watch a movie or TV show, the music is often not a conscious presence, at least for me," he said. "I was in the orchestral recording session that recorded the noble and beautiful music for Spielberg's film, Lincoln. I liked the music so much that I made a point of seeing the film when it came out, particularly to hear the recorded music in context. As I followed the understated and dark storyline, I realized I hadn't been listening to the music at all, not even my own bass playing.

Since then, I make a point of directing my attention repeatedly to the musical soundtrack whenever I watch a movie or TV show. This deepens my involvement in what I see onscreen.

"In our concert, the audience has a chance to focus on the strong emotional power of the music without being distracted by the visuals. From my point of view, the thrill of concentrating on live orchestral film music in itself is what turns movie buffs into orchestral fans!"

A highlight of the performance will be a special collaboration with the Stratford

Symphony Youth Orchestra, who will join the orchestra on stage for selections from the iconic Harry Potter and Pirates of the Caribbean film series.

"This project is the biggest and most exciting challenge we've ever given our young musicians, and they've risen to it beautifully," said Eric Charbonneau, conductor of the Stratford Symphony Youth Orchestra.

Tickets are on sale now which can be purchased online at www.stratfordsymphony.ca or by phone at 519-2781-0990 through the Stratford Symphony Orchestra box office.

Submit your letter to the Editor to us!
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Creators of the Classic City: The McDonald Surveyors

PAUL WILKER

Times Contributor

John McDonald, the six-foot Scott called “StoutMac,” mapped the area and laid out Stratford itself with one of the most attractive plans in Upper Canada.

He was part of Tiger Dunlop’s survey party in May 1827 and highly respected. His job was to map the Huron Tract along with Mahlon Burwell, whose surveys had already opened up much of Upper Canada. John McDonald would become the architect of the whole Huron Tract.

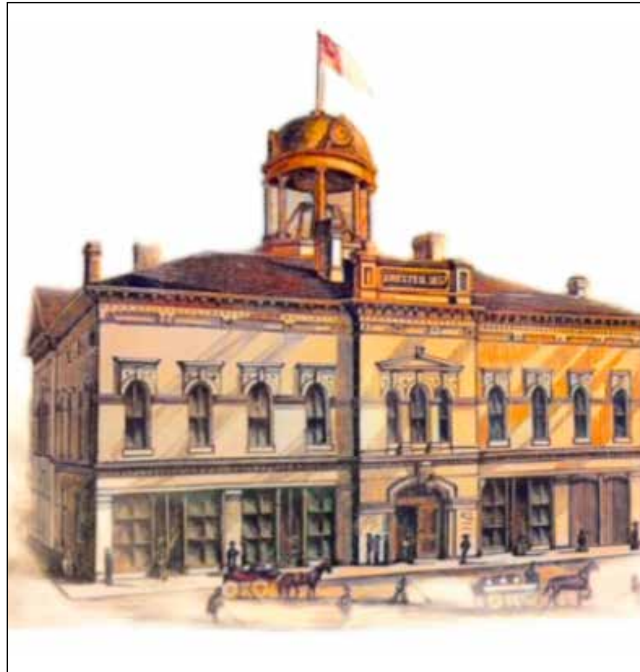
In 1834 he created the Stratford town plan. He placed the geographic centre of town at the meeting point of four townships: Downie, Ellice, North Easthope and South Easthope. That was not far from where Erie and Ontario streets intersect today. He then created three main roads radiating from the centre and named them for the Great Lakes to which they led: Huron, Erie and Ontario. Steadily, more streets were laid out and from and around those three core streets.

Donald McDonald was trained as a surveyor by his cousin John McDonald. Donald worked with John when he was just 16 on numerous surveys and many of the standard maps of the Huron and neighbouring districts were prepared by him.

In 1839 Donald McDonald became an engineer and surveyor in his own right and worked on some early Canadian company maps, including the 1839 map which was a copy of John McDonald’s 1834 map of Stratford that envisioned a city of 35,000 settlers.

In 1855 Stratford was interested in placing a new town hall in the triangle bounded by Wellington, Downie and Grange streets. Donald had the foresight to grasp opportunities from his involvement with surveys. He had a sound knowledge of the area and a good idea of the future prospects. When the small triangular site was up for sale, he took pains to track down its owner and buy it. He sold the land to the municipal council of Stratford with the stipulation to preserve the character of the downtown core.

Market Square was eventually extended southward in 1887 when Donald’s widow Francis, then living in Los



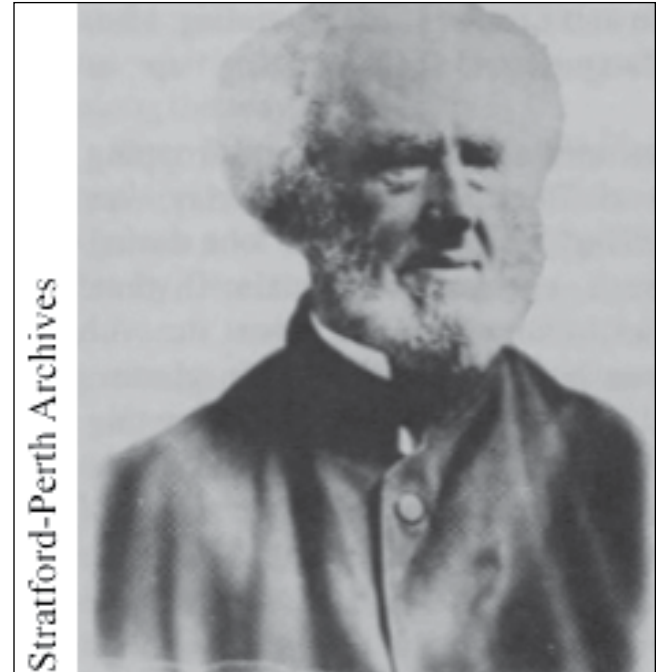
(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Stratford’s first city hall was a two-storey structure that doubled as a market building. It also housed a music club, a debating club and concert hall. Police and fire departments were accommodated there, as was the town’s first library.

Angeles, conveyed for the sum of one dollar a 30-foot strip of land between Wellington and Downie streets to the municipality, again contingent on it being used only as a marketplace. As well, the city was required to replace the pavement fronting the business places on the separate square.

Donald prospered in his first two decades as a young surveyor. In the late 1850s, as the Reform party candidate, he successfully challenged his former superior, Thomas Mercer Jones, for a new seat in the legislative council. He represented the constituency of Tecumseh, which took in 333 municipalities in Huron. In the confederation year, 1867, he was appointed to the senate.

In the triangle of land sold by McDonald to the city, the



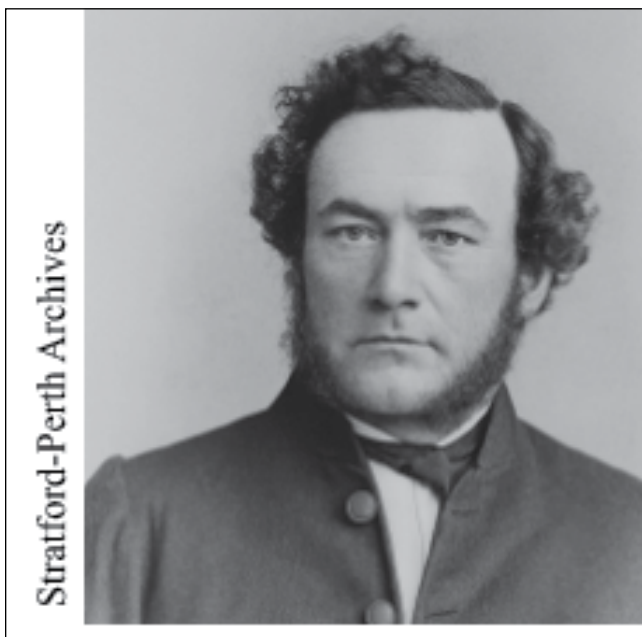
(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

John McDonald, called “StoutMac” by some, was the architect of the Huron Tract, a surveyor for the Canada Company, and the man who created the Stratford town plan.

first town hall was erected. It was a two-storey structure that doubled as a market building. It also housed a music club, a debating club and concert hall. Police and fire departments were accommodated there, as was the town’s first library.

There were stores and butcher stalls on the bottom floor. As a natural outgrowth of the new town hall, the market came to be the social and political hub of the town. The hall was hailed as one of the finest buildings of its kind in Canada.

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



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Donald McDonald, a cousin of StoutMac, was a surveyor and engineer in his own right. Thanks to his foresight, Stratford’s city hall and Market Square were built in the triangle bounded by Wellington, Downie and Grange streets.

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OnStage Gymnastics Club is the first of its kind in Stratford

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

It is with great excitement that Meghan Seamen, owner and artistic director of the well-established OnStage Dance Studio, announces the new OnStage Gymnastics Club opening later this summer. This new endeavour is the first dedicated facility for gymnastics in Stratford and will answer the burgeoning demand in the community.

With 20 years of working with youth in the community in dance, the time has come for this companion business to meet the growing demand for gymnastics within the city, and more specifically, the downtown core. OnStage Gymnastics Club will be located at 65 Albert St.

"It's very convenient because it is a block and a half from the dance studio and it has tons of space in there, and what's important to me is that it is downtown. We've always been a downtown business and part of that community. It's easy to walk to or take public transit, with lots of things for the parents or guardians to do while they wait for their children at dance or now gymnastics," explained Seamen.

There are two driving factors behind establishing this new gym; first is that as an adult, gymnastics became an interest to Seamen. She fell in love with the sport and practiced in London for ages. With an amazing coach she progressed from the beginner level and felt that she wanted it to have a larger presence in her life. Coupled with the fact that there is nothing available



WHERE GYMNASTICS IS FUN FOR EVERYONE

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Introducing the brand new OnStage Gymnastics Club at 65 Albert St opening later this summer.

in Stratford while it continues to grow and felt that as there is a demand to be met locally, she decided to open the gym.

"I happily drive to London once a week to take my class, which is a big commitment. But then when you consider a child that is three or four travelling 45 minutes for a 45-minute class, it is a lot for a child as well as a lot for the parent or guardian," she said.

The facility will be fully equipped with everything a gymnast could possibly want. There will be balance beams, multiple sets of uneven bars, the proper sprung floor, a vault and a tumble track with many different shapes and styles of mats for tumbling.

"We are starting out as a recreational gym. We won't be going to competitions or anything like that yet. We are planning to offer classes starting at 18 months with a parent, all the way up to adult classes. I was surprised, we thought we would stop at the teenage level but since announcing this, we've had many adults reach out and ask if we would be doing open gym or classes for adults," Seamen said.

There will be classes weeknights and weekends, with plans for incorporating pre-school drop-ins during weekdays so that people can come in with their children during the day, as well as open gym on weekends. The five coaches are all Certified Ontario Gymnastics coaches.

OnStage Dance Studio introduced an acro component to their competitive dancers training, which is essentially like the floor routine of a gymnastics performance. Lindsay Otto, who will be the head coach and club manager at OnStage Gymnastics Club used to run the acro component and is well educated as a coach.

The only thing needed to participate is form fitting clothing with long hair tied back. No prior experience is required.

"The nice thing about gymnastics is that if there is someone that is brand new the coaches can work to that level, or if someone is more experienced, we can coach to that," said Seamen.

The anticipated soft launch will be in August with the exact date to come later. The website, www.onstagegymnastics.ca is under development with anticipated registration online availability of May 19. Regular programming will commence September.

"We are really excited to be able to bring this opportunity to our community, I think this is something the youth of Stratford really needs, it's like the missing piece. We've got hockey, we've got soccer, dance, all sorts of stuff but the one that is missing is gymnastics and we are so excited to bring a true gymnastics facility that has a permanent installation of all the equipment needed," concluded Seamen.

Interested applicants are encouraged to sign up for the newsletter for more information on the club at www.onstagegymnastics.ca.

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CMHA Huron Perth to consolidate Stratford services at new Hibernia Street location

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Huron Perth Addiction and Mental Health Services will begin a two-phase move to a new office later this month as the first step toward providing easier access to, and more space for, its services in Stratford.

As of Monday, April 27, all CMHA Huron Perth programs and services in Stratford will be amalgamated and located under one roof at 380 Hibernia St. This integration aims to streamline services, enhance collaboration among staff and improve client access to programs.

“Bringing all our Stratford-based programs and services to one location will provide streamlined access and, ultimately, enhanced care for our clients,” said CMHA Huron Perth CEO Catherine Hardman. “Change can be difficult, but we’re here to support those who access our programs and services however we can as we go through this transition period.”

CMHA Huron Perth’s new Stratford home base will include approximately 9,000 square feet of office space to ac-

commodate all its programs and services and help better serve the community.

The new space will also offer improved accessibility, free parking on-site and is within walking distance of two transit stops.

“We integrated the two organizations about three years ago, and since that time have had two locations in Stratford,” said Hardman. “It’s been a goal for us to find somewhere we can bring all the services under one roof, and we now have that opportunity with Hibernia Street. We’re excited to be able to have everyone in one place.”

CMHA Huron Perth is a local mental health and addictions agency that provides a variety of services, including addiction counselling for youth and adults, mental health case management, peer support, court support, counselling for problem gambling and behavioural change, supportive housing, community withdrawal management and more.

Its goal is to provide quality services and easier access for those impacted by mental health and/or addiction issues in communities across Huron and Perth.

During the transition, there may be changes to scheduling. The Huron-Perth Clinic, which provides physician-led ad-



(AMANDA NELSON PHOTO)

The new home base for CMHA Huron Perth will be located at 380 Hibernia St. in Stratford. With the recent amalgamation, programs and services will now be streamlined under one roof.

diction medicine services, will continue to operate from 380 Hibernia St. on its regular schedule (Mondays and Thursdays), and the Stratford Connection Centre and Warming Centre will contin-

ue to operate from St. Paul’s Anglican Church at 9 Douro St.

Clients and families with questions or concerns may reach out to their worker directly for more information.

Spring shoulder season returns for UTRCA CAs; Wildwood to re-open April 1

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) staff are busy preparing for the spring shoulder season at Fanshawe and Wildwood Conservation Areas (CAs). This adds four weeks of day-use access from Wednesday, April 1 until Thursday, April 30. It is the fourth year offering a shoulder season in response to the demand from visitors to the CAs.

“We’re looking forward to welcoming visitors back to Fanshawe and Wildwood this spring,” Damian Schofield, UTRCA conservation areas coordinator, shared in an announcement. “Visitors are eager to celebrate the return of warmer weather and want to get outside and explore. We’ve had guests reach out expressing their appreciation in having access to the CAs alongside the additional amenities for an extended season.”

Amenities offered to visitors during the shoulder season will include:

- Customer service staff on-site.
- Access to hiking and biking trails.



(TIMES FILE PHOTO)

Wildwood Conservation Area will soon be open for day use as the shoulder season begins April 1.

- Access to Fanshawe and Wildwood reservoirs for canoeing and kayaking (pending reservoir con-
- ditions, rentals not currently available).
- Access to day-use areas including

a playground, BBQs, picnic areas, and green space.

- Access to Fanshawe and Wildwood reservoir boat launch (pending reservoir conditions).
- Washroom facilities.

A reduced vehicle day pass fee of \$11 (up to four people), or a reduced pedestrian/cyclist day pass fee of \$8 for those walking or biking will be charged during this extended season.

Hours of operation will be as follows:

Fanshawe CA
Monday to Friday: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; dam gate will be closed at 5:30 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.; dam gate will be closed at 4 p.m.

Wildwood CA
Daily: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Gate to day-use will be closed at 4:30 p.m. daily.

Visitors can also purchase a 2026 membership which includes day-use access 12 months of the year to Fanshawe and Wildwood CAs. This can be purchased at the Conservation Area Gatehouse or at its online store. The 2026 camping season begins on May 1.

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Stratford Music and Art Sale returns March 28 to support Holy Trinity food banks

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Art, music and community support will come together once again later this month when Holy Trinity Anglican Church (formerly St. James Anglican Church) hosts the Stratford Music and Art Sale, a fundraiser in support of the church's food-bank ministry.

The event will run Saturday, March 28, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the church's upper and lower halls at the corner of Mornington and Hamilton streets. Formerly known as Music and Art at St. James, the event is now in its second year and has been renamed to reflect the recent amalgamation of three Anglican churches in Stratford – St. James, St. Paul's and St. Stephen's – under the Holy Trinity name.

Organizer Karin Mussen said the format remains much the same as last year, with about 23 or 24 artists showing and selling their work over two floors.

"They will be donating a minimum of 20 per cent of their day's sales to the food bank," Mussen said. "We're not a business. We're into fundraising, and it's for the food bank."

That support will benefit Holy Trinity's two food-bank locations – the Tuesday-morning food bank at the former St.

James site and the Friday-morning food bank at the former St. Paul's Connection Centre site.

"This year we decided we would just solely do it on the food bank because the need is so high," Mussen said. "It isn't for the church. It's for the community, and it's for the Stratford community."

In addition to proceeds donated by artists, visitors will be invited to make a freewill donation at the welcome table. Mussen said that combination helped make the event a success in its first year.

Last year, the fundraiser brought in more than \$4,500 between the spring and fall sales for repairs to the church's bell tower. This spring's event will be the first focused entirely on helping the food bank.

While the show is centred on visual art, the music component remains a major part of the experience. This year's lineup includes the Stratford District Secondary School jazz combo directed by Kelsey Regier, along with local musicians N.F. Young and Mike Ryan, and bell chimer Peter Ryde.

Mussen said the event is designed to be relaxed and welcoming, allowing people to browse, listen and speak directly with artists throughout the day.

"It's open to anybody," she said. "We're



(TIMES FILE PHOTO)

Local artists sell their wares to shoppers at the first St. James Music and Art Sale on March 1, 2025, in support of the St. James belltower restoration project.

trying to bring in the community. It isn't just a church thing."

Artists taking part are coming not only from Stratford, but from across the wider region, including Huron County and other nearby communities.

After a successful first year, Mussen

said organizers are hopeful the Stratford Music and Art Sale will continue to grow as a twice-yearly community event.

Entry is by freewill donation. For more information, contact the church office at 519-271-3572 or office@stjamesstratford.ca.

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HSKWSP's Bake for the Animals raises more than \$10K

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

The Humane Society of Kitchener-Waterloo and Stratford Perth (HSKWSP) saw record participation from businesses on the Pastry Path as part of the Bake for the Animals Campaign, and raised lots of dough for animals in need.

The Bake for the Animals Campaign ran for all of February with either third-party fundraisers at businesses, schools and the greater community, or through local businesses participating in the Pastry Path. Those part of the Pastry Path, including Stratford's the Barkery and the Livery Yard, sold treats supporting the regional humane society.

There were 16 total businesses in Kitchener-Waterloo, Stratford, Perth County and area participating in the Pastry Path, more than ever for the HSKWSP and twice the participating businesses from when the region's Bake for the Animals campaign began.

"To those that participated in the Pastry Path, we hope you had a fun time stopping in at all of the businesses that supported us and enjoyed some treats along the way," said Victor Dinh, manager of events and partnerships. "Huge thank you

to those that made those purchases and to those businesses that supported us."

Bake for the Animals raised more than \$10,000 during its February 2026 campaign between sales from the Pastry Path and third-party bake sales within the community including Kitchener-Waterloo and schools in Dublin, Ont. and area.

"It's amazing to have people in all corners of the geography that the Humane Society services coming out and supporting us," Dinh said.

Dinh said proceeds from the Bake for the Animals campaign will support animal care and finding forever homes for the animals in shelter. There will be a focus on preparing for kitten season with the warmer weather approaching and on programs like Spay Your Mama that assist with unplanned puppy and kitten litters.

"We've already had several litters of kittens born in our care from pregnant mothers that get brought in, so likely those funds will go directly towards helping those kittens receive medical care and then helping them find their homes as well," he said.

More information about the humane society and its programming can be found online by visiting <https://kwsphumane.ca>.

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STRATFORD **TIMES** SPORTS

Warriors-Nationals series goes down to the wire

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The GOHL Western Conference Quarterfinal series between the fourth-seeded Stratford Hunter Steel Warriors and the fifth-seeded London Nationals is heading to a deciding game after the Warriors were unable to close out the series in Game 5 on March 20 and Game 6 on March 22.

Stratford looked to put a stranglehold on their series as they travelled to the Western Fair Sports Centre in London for Game 4 on March 18.

Nathan Slaght opened the scoring for the Nationals 3:25 into the first period, but Evan Arnold from Dax Vader and McQuen Haylock responded for Stratford 25 seconds later. Cruz Ferguson from Max Wildfong and Drew Hodge, midway through the period, put the Warriors ahead. Max Mews put the Nationals level with the Warriors less than 90 seconds later.

In the second period, Nicholas Kiss gave London the lead again with 7:56 remaining. However, in the late stage of the middle frame, the line of Dominic Marshall, Coen Galbraith and Grady Murphy equalized for the Warriors when Galbraith scored his second playoff goal, assisted by Murphy. The same Marshall-Galbraith-Murphy line struck again early in the final period, with Galbraith scoring from Murphy and Marshall just 14 seconds in, ultimately securing the game-winning goal.

London attempted a late equalizer, but Noah Bender and the Warriors' defence

held off the Nationals' offence, securing a 4-3 victory and a strong 3-1 series lead. Despite a rough start and frequent net dislodgements, Bender finished the game with 14 saves.

Warriors head coach Dave Williams praised the team for overcoming adversity to win Game 4 and discussed what it will take for the Warriors to secure the series at the William Allman Memorial Arena.

"I don't know if we were necessarily at our best, but credit to our guys that they know, kind of hung in there and found a way. In a

seven-game series, you're not always going to

Games that are just going to be situations where you run the other team over, you're going to have to find some nights where you win without your best stuff. I thought that's a credit to our guys that we were able to find a way to win tonight, maybe without our best stuff," Williams said.

"We need to get off to a better start. In a situation like this, I think the team that's trailing usually plays with a little more desperation, and I thought they came out with a little more than we did. So, you know, we'll be playing for their season on Friday, and we have to respect that and be ready to go."

An ecstatic Murphy and Galbraith spoke to the Times about how the game-winning goal happened and discussed the key to closing out the series at the Allman.

"We got the puck in deep, and I just tried to beat the D man around the net, just throwing towards the net, and I kind of slipped off my stick and found him out front. So it worked out," Murphy said. "We need to come out as strong as we can, make sure they don't get a jump on us and finish off the series."

"It was a good forecheck from the two fellas, Murphy's able to come around the net with the puck, and he fed me in front, and I was able to bury the puck," Galbraith said. "Yeah, got to use our fans. We've got to be very energetic to get this final win here to close that series."

The Warriors looked to punch their ticket to the next round as they hosted the Nationals at the Allman Arena for Game 5 on March 20.

London opened the scoring on an unassisted goal from Nathan Slaght at the midway point of the first period. Stratford equalized when Wildfong put the Stratford home crowd in frenzy with an unassisted breakaway goal 87 seconds into the second period.

Stratford took a 2-1 lead at 7:28 after Haylock scored from Vader and Joseph Curtin, and doubled their

lead with

7:30

left

as

Jo-

nas Schmidt scored his first of the playoffs from Broda and Galbraith.

Just over a minute after the Schmidt goal, the Warriors were rewarded with two powerplays in a 38-second span, giving the home side the opportunity to deliver the knockout blow and clinch the series.

But the Warriors were unable to capitalize, and, unbeknownst to them at the time, the series took another climactic turn late in the middle frame. In a span of 26 seconds, goals from Austen Pomerleau and Cooper McAslan put the Nationals back even, heading into the third period.

In a drama-filled third period, the Nationals took the lead with Pomerleau's second of the game 38 seconds into the final frame, and Jack McGurn would put the visitors ahead by two with 1:09 left. With Bender pulled for an extra-attacker, the Warriors cut the deficit to a goal with 24 seconds left in regulation by a goal from Quinn Kipfer. Stratford pressed for the game-tying goal, but couldn't generate a scoring opportunity in the closing seconds as they dropped a 5-4 loss to the Nationals.

Following the game, Williams emphasized the need for his team to maintain their identity and play with the same desperation as their opponents to win the series.

"Well, I think we liked how we came out to start the game, and even to start the second period there put ourselves in a good spot. Unfortunately, I think the second

goal was just a little bit of bad luck. We lose the face off, and then kind of lose our guy and give up the first power play goal of the series that we've given up to make it 3-3," Williams said.

"I still thought we came out and had opportunities, you know, later in the game to score the go-ahead goal, but we didn't. I like that we battled right to the end, even got another one. There were 24 seconds left to try and get ourselves back to even. So, it's a good hockey team (London) over there. Some nights you're going to play a decent, respectable game, and you're not always going to win."

Game 6 was back at the London's Western Fair Sports Centre on March 22.

In the first period, former Warrior McGurn capitalized on a strange bounce in front of the Stratford zone. His goal with 6:36 remaining in the opening frame put the Nationals ahead for the fifth time in the series. Schmidt scored his second goal of the playoffs from Lucas Minard and Broda at 7:18 to tie the game for the visitors in the second period.

London responded with two goals (Kiss and Pomerleau) early in the final frame to put the Nationals up 3-1, and Mews added an empty-netter with 3:20 left in the period to seal the Game 6 win. Marshall, from Murphy and Galbraith, with 13 seconds remaining, added a consolation goal for the Warriors in the losing effort.

Williams spoke to the Times about the Game 6 defeat.

"Well, I mean, it was ... the type of game you expected. You know, they had a fair bit of desperation. We were able to get it back to one at the end of the second, heading into the third. Unfortunately, we made an error on the power play, and they ended up scoring a short-handed goal. So it's tough to overcome when you go up short-handed goals at any time, especially in the playoffs," Williams said.

"So, what we've expected so far are two teams that are fairly evenly matched. The margin of error is really thin, so you know, we need to try and be a little bit more consistent here on Wednesday night than we've been the last couple of games."

Game 7 was played at the Allman Arena on March 25, after press time. The final result can be found on the GOHL official website and an article on the game will be available in the next edition of the Times.

GOHL Western Conference Quarterfinals (#4 Stratford Warriors vs. #5 London Nationals)

Game 1 – London 5 Stratford 2
Game 2 – Stratford 4 London 1
Game 3 – London 1 Stratford 5
Game 4 – Stratford 4 London 3
Game 5 – London 5 Stratford 4
Game 6 – Stratford 2 London 4
Game 7 - London vs. Stratford (William Allman Memorial Arena) March 25, 7:30 p.m.

Series tied 3-3, as of press time

Stratford Warriors Player Stats (Playoffs)

(as of March 23, 2026)

Player	Pos	GP	G	A	PTS
Coen Galbraith	F	6	3	3	6
Dominic Marshall	F	6	3	3	6
Jaxon Broda	D	6	2	3	5
Grady Murphy	F	6	2	3	5
Rhyse Brown	F	6	1	4	5
Jonas Schmidt	F	4	1	2	3
Quinn Kipfer	F	6	2	1	3
Aaron Green	D	5	1	2	3
Lucas Minard	F	6	1	2	3
Max Wildfong	F	6	1	2	3
Dax Vader	F	6	0	3	3
Cruz Ferguson	F	6	1	1	2
McQuen Haylock	F	6	1	1	2
Joseph Curtin	D	6	0	2	2
Evan Arnold	F	5	1	0	1
Will Coward	D	5	0	1	1
Haden Frayne	D	6	0	1	1
Drew Hodge	D	6	0	1	1
Colten Brenzil	F	3	0	0	0
Mateo Craievich	D	2	0	0	0
Goalies	Record	GAA	SV-%		
Noah Bender	3-3	3.01	0.888		



U16 Lakers OHL Cup schedule revealed

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The Huron-Perth U16 AAA Lakers are set to compete in the renowned OHL Cup in Toronto from March 30 to April 4.

Ranked as an honourable mention in the latest OHL Cup Top-10 rankings, the ALLIANCE semi-finalist Lakers will play in the Shanahan Division during the four-game preliminary round from March 30 to April 1 at the Scotiabank Pond in Toronto's Downsview Park.

This division features three U16 powerhouse teams: the Toronto Marlboros of the Greater Toronto Hockey League (GTHL), the OMHA finalists York-Simcoe Express and the 2025 Whitby International SilverStick Champions Detroit HoneyBaked from the Michigan Amateur Hockey Association (MAHA). The fifth team will be decided in the Wild Card qualifier early on March 30.

The Lakers will face the wild card winner in their opening game of the tournament during the evening session of opening day (March 30). On March

31, the Lakers will face the Express in the morning and the Marlboros in the early evening. Huron-Perth finishes its round robin against HoneyBaked on the afternoon of April 1.

The quarterfinals and semifinals will be played on April 2 at the Scotiabank Pond, and the championship game commences at the historic Maple Leaf Gardens (Mattamy Athletic Centre) on April 4.

You can track the Lakers and all OHL Cup games on their official website, ohl-cup.ca.

Huron-Perth Lakers 2026 OHL Cup schedule

Round Robin Game 1 – OHL Cup wild card winner Vs. Huron-Perth (Scotiabank Pond Rink 1) March 30, 5:15 p.m.

Round Robin Game 2 – Huron-Perth vs. York-Simcoe (Scotiabank Pond Rink 1) March 31, 9:45 a.m.

Round Robin Game 3 – Huron-Perth vs. Toronto (Scotiabank Pond Rink 1) March 31, 5:15 p.m.

Round Robin Game 4 – Detroit vs. Huron-Perth (Scotiabank Pond Rink 2) April 1, 3:45 p.m.

Aces draw with the Hornets in Game 2

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The OWHA-Southern Tier-II Consolation Semifinal series between the Stratford Humphrey Fleet Service U18 AA Aces and the Oakville Hornets is tied after two games, following a 3-3 draw on March 23 at the Stratford Rotary Complex.

In the first period, the Aces opened the scoring with 4:38 remaining when Rhyan Davy located the loose puck in front of the Oakville crease and scored into the open net. Just 22 seconds later, Josephine Binning capitalized on an Oakville defensive error, giving the Aces a quick 2-0 lead. Stratford held

onto the lead after successfully killing off the late-period Oakville power play.

The Hornets narrowed the Aces' lead to 2-1 only 2:50 into the second period. As the game progressed, the Aces were on the powerplay on three separate occasions but were unable to score.

Oakville tied the game at 2-2 just seconds after their powerplay expired early in the third period. Brooklynn Ahrens ended the Aces' powerplay scoring woes with 9:54 left in the final frame and gave the home side a 3-2 lead. On Stratford's sixth powerplay of the game with 4:33 left, the Hornets capitalized on a tough bounce in the Aces goal, and the puck got deflected off netminder Callie Aldridge and back in the net for the game-tying

goal.

Stratford preserved the tie with the successful penalty kill late in the period. As a result, the two teams sit at two points each, with the winner-take-all Game 3 set for the Joshua Creek Arena in Oakville on March 27.

Stratford head coach Sean Cameron summarized the outcome of Game 2 and the importance of executing the game plan in Game 3, with the championship berth on the line.

"Oakville is a very strong team. We came out really hot, got two really nice goals that, you know, kind of changed the swing, and then we let Oakville back into it a little bit, but at the end of the day, we came away with the point,"

Cameron said.

"We've got to get more shots on net. We've got to get more quality shots as well. So for us, it's just about pucks on net and sending our next girl in to pounce on the rebounds when the opportunity comes, and hopefully we come away with a victory."

Stratford Aces vs. Oakville Hornets (OWHA-Southern Tier II Consolation Championship Semifinals)

Game 1 – Aces 3 Hornets 3

Game 2 – Hornets 3 Aces 3

Game 3 – Stratford vs. Oakville (Oakville Joshua Creek Arena) March 24, 7 p.m.

Series tied 0-0-2, as of press time

Medalists SDSS and St. Michael compete in the HPAA All-Star Games

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The WOSSAA Junior Boys AAA Champions, Stratford District Golden Bears and the WOSSAA Junior Boys AA Bronze Medalists, St. Michael Warriors, had strong representation in the Junior Boys and Senior Boys Huron-Perth Athletic Association (HPAA) All-Star Basketball games held in Mitchell on March 25.

In the junior boys showcase, coach Chris Cassone and players Zach Bannerman, Brent Van Nes, Landon Miller and Sam Ragona represented the Golden Bears. Tyler Burtenshaw, Ca-

leb Hurley and Jaxon Leppington represented the Warriors.

In the senior boys event, St. Michael was represented by coach Bart Drennan, Reid Terpstra and Liam Eddleston. Zach Davidson, Ryan Cassone, Nate Bannerman and Quintin Whittaker represented Stratford District.

Stratford District won the WOSSAA AAA Junior Boys Gold Medal at Mother Teresa Catholic Secondary School in London on Feb. 26, defeating the host Spartans 51-48. St. Michael secured the WOSSAA AA Junior Boys Bronze Medal on their home court on Feb. 26, defeating Westminster Wildcats 58-53.



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Stratford bowlers have strong showing at provincial Spring Masters tournament



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Abigail Smith, coach Larry Palmbly and Noah Saunders. The trio competed at the Provincial Round of the Spring Masters five-pin bowling tournament on March 22 at Victoria Bowl in Kitchener, and placed fourth as a team with strong plus-210 points. Individually, Smith posted the highest pins over average in the junior division at plus-67, while Smith recorded the bantam division's high singles score at 149.

Bowling League High Scores

Men's

Rob Price 825 triple
Tyler Cook 826 triple
Curtis Mcswain 355

United League

Paul Boyd 209, 220
Steven Walker 210

Stratford Pin Pals

Thomas Holland 122

Special Olympics

Luke Patterson 175, 184
Tiffany Keller 186
Meghan O'Donovan 194
Leah Akroyd Snider 165
Lucas Forte 163
Norm Schenck 178, 172-350 series
Phoebe Bootsma 161
Franny Hitchcock 172
Rob Vannatter 154

YBC Scores

Bowlasaurus

Dominic Rowe 112
Audrey Parker 116
Royce Butcher-Cassidy 101

Pee-Wee & Bantam

Lincoln Butcher-Cassidy 114, 193-307
Double
Rowan Eckert 107
Scarlett Illman 122-315 series

Addi Kollman 247 series

Grey Davidson 244 series
Roland Rains 172,173, 188-533 series
Kayleigh Heegsma 151, 154-454 series
Talia Klomp 165
Caleb Luckhardt 157

Junior

Ruby Parker 173
Mckenna Morris 170, 180
Anna Ward 160, 174, 218-552 series
Brianna Bauer 186, 180-479 series
Ryan Scheerer 168, 227-525 series
Lauren Furtney 166, 196-511 series
Hayden Martin 152, 179-457 series
Myla Douglas 150, 207, 264(100 POA)-621 series
Austin Janmaat 162
Brent Louwagie 158, 168, 189
Hugo Black 177, 190-478 series

Senior

Austin Bauer 198, 256-577 series
Jake Sippel 169, 170-494 series
Zachary Clarke 212, 310, 323-845 series
Alex Ward 180, 191, 209-580 series
Sydney Smith 173, 199-487 series
Wiatt Robinson 169
Owen Martin 185
Yulia Mooers 190
Jocelyn Gethke 193, 235-591 series
Claire Turner 207, 229
Dominic Boyles Keating 192, 219, 253
Payton Petrie 180, 247, 260-687 series

Send in your sports reports

Coaches and/or parents are invited to send in your sports reports and pictures to the Stratford Times to let Stratford and area know how your teams are doing throughout the 2025/26 season (and to create some great scrapbook material to be reflected upon in future years).

Game reports should be kept to a maximum of

100 words. Please include a brief description of what happened during your games, including the names of those who scored and any special efforts made by your players.

Please have all reports and pictures in by the end of the month by emailing stratfordtimes@gmail.com.

Harrington & Area Community Association Presents

IAN TAMBLYN

Singer / Songwriter, Multi-Instrumentalist, Story Teller

Sunday April 19, 2026 @ 2pm

Harrington Hall

539 Victoria Street, Harrington

Doors Open @ 1:30pm

Coffee, soft drinks, snacks, desserts

(This is a no alcohol event)

Learn more about Ian at

www.iantamblyn.com

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Jeremy Witzel: the Shakespeare man on a mission to keep Stratford rolling and safe

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

There is a young man who now lives with his family in Shakespeare, who tries to do his best when it comes to keeping streets, sidewalks and roads in Stratford in very good condition, but sometimes it seems like an uphill battle against the weatherman.

His name is Jeremy Witzel and he is the manager of public works in Stratford.

When asked about the season of potholes, in which we are in right now, Witzel said potholes almost never start as potholes.

“They usually begin as tiny cracks with open joints, worn edges, or utility cuts,” Witzel said. “When snow melt or rain gets into those openings, water works its way down into the asphalt and the road base underneath.

“Then the freeze and thaw cycle does the damage when temperatures bounce above and below 0° Celsius, which can occur sometimes on the same day.”

Trapped water freezes, expands and the cracks widen. After enough cycles, the pavement is weakened often before you can even see a problem on the surface. The manager said “the real surge comes during spring thaw.”

As frost leaves the ground, parts of the road structure can become waterlogged and loses its strength. Under traffic, those weaken spots break apart quickly, turning a cracked area into a pothole in a short time. Traffic is the final “breaker,” as Witzel explained.

“Once the road is cracked and the base is soft, vehicle loads can pop loose chunks of asphalt and the hole grows quickly, especially on busier routes.”

Witzel also said “that poor drainage or blocked catch basins can keep water sitting on and soaking into the road longer. Winter plowing can also impact already weakened edges or older patches.”

Road salt and brine can help move water into cracks and keep it liquid longer during colder season swings, meaning more opportunities for water to get in and freeze again. He said the city’s patrol and triage work is just as important as patching, and they actively look for potholes so they can respond as quickly as they can, especially on priority routes.

Public works are always patrolling and prioritizing makeshift repairs on higher risk locations and busy routes. He said, “Using temporary repairs when conditions are tough, and scheduling permanent hot mix repairs as soon as temperatures and asphalt plant availability allow.”

Witzel reminded the public to report any potholes with the location and details to help the municipality respond faster, which can be done at <https://tinyurl.com/3p9yudxp>.

Witzel thanked everyone for their patience during this challenging pothole season and Mayor Martin Ritsma thanked him, telling the Times that the work of the manager is exemplary.

“Jeremy Witzel looks after his 30+ employees with decency and respect,” Ritsma said. “... He works hard to keep city streets in as great a shape as is possible.”



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

The City of Stratford’s manager of public works, Jeremy Witzel, brings his farming background with him as he continues to work hard, with sometimes long hours, to keep city streets safe for motorists travelling through city streets.

Saddle Club holds first meeting of 2026

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

Members of the Stratford and District Saddle Club held their first organizational meeting of the year at the John Thomson Tack Shop on Vivian Line, near Stratford.

There was good discussion on the upcoming season that begins near the end of May, pertaining to judges and number of classes for young riders with their horses and ponies. The location will again be on the Schlotzhauer Riding Facility east of Stratford in North Easthope Township on Line 37.

They recognized and appreciated the work put in by father Murray and son Trevor Schlotzhauer, owners of the riding complex.

Points again will be tabulated as those who ride in all the shows and the higher the placing, the more points that individuals can accumulate.

At the riding club’s year end award’s banquet, those who participate are given trophies for their accomplishments, while the top points obtained by an individual will receive a large fancy cowboy belt buckle for their efforts.

Talk also took place on allowing English riders to compete and they would be happy to see more young riders wanting to bring their horses and ponies out for the summer of competition as a learning experience.

This year’s show dates include, May 24, June 7, June 21, July 12 and Aug. 16, with Aug. 23 as a make up rain date.

All start at 10 a.m. on the Sundays specified and classes are over by 3 p.m.

There will be barbecued food and drinks on the grounds, at a minimal cost, for family, spectators and riders.

This club has been part of the horse-riding community for decades. Anyone interested in learning more can contact stratfordsaddleclub@gmail.com.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Organizers of the Stratford and District Saddle Club gather for a photo at its first meeting. In front: Martin Switzer, Murray Schlotzhauer and Helen Thomson. In back: Todd Fawcett, Pearl Fawcett, Calvin Jacobs, Sarah Jacobs, Martin Ritsma, Mike Jacobs, Brianne Crawford and Bonnie Jacobs.

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Tamblyn to perform at Harrington Hall April 19

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

The Harrington and Area Community Association is hosting a concert at Harrington Hall, 539 Victoria St., Embro, on Sunday, April 19 at 2 p.m. Doors open at 1:30 p.m. and snacks, soft drinks and desserts will be served to guests.

Ian Tamblyn, a multi-award-winning singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist and storyteller, will perform for the first time in the region next month and says he's looking forward to visiting somewhere new.

"This will be a new experience for me, and despite the fact that I've been playing for over 55 years, I've never been to Harrington," said Tamblyn. "For one reason or another, I seem to find myself in small places with little enclaves of community-based concert halls and coffee houses. I've been doing that for many, many years, and really, I prefer playing in such places."

Tamblyn was nominated as English Songwriter of the Year by the Canadian Folk Music Awards in 2022, and in the same year, he was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada.

His music reflects diverse themes, in-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Ian Tamblyn, singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist and storyteller, will bring his Canadian music to Harrington this April.

cluding Canadian landscapes and people. His upcoming album focuses on small communities across Canada.

"I did four albums celebrating the four coasts of Canada – the Superior coast, the

West Coast, the Arctic coast and the Labrador Coast," said Tamblyn. "I've been to all of them, and I wanted to do an album reflecting those parts of the country, not just the landscape, but the people there as

well."

Attendees will hear a range of music, as Tamblyn says he generally gets a feel for the audience and bases his performance around that.

"Each evening, I don't have a planned set list. I sort of go where I want to go and also get a general vibe from the audience and see what works for them," he said.

The association is a volunteer-operated, registered non-profit that manages several local facilities and events. Its primary role is to oversee and maintain the Harrington Conservation Area and the Harrington Grist Mill, both owned by the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, as well as manage Harrington Hall – the venue for the upcoming concert – on behalf of the Township of Zorra.

The association hosts a number of events each year, including a Christmas potluck, an open house on the second Saturday in August and one or two concerts. Its largest fundraiser is the "Celebrate Harrington Community Auction," an online event scheduled to take place shortly after the upcoming concert.

Tickets for the concert are \$30 and are available in advance at exploreharrington.ca or by calling 519-536-0955.



(AMANDA NELSON PHOTO)

Spring tulips starting to peek through at the Festival theatre earlier this week.



(AMANDA NELSON PHOTO)

The water is officially flowing in the Avon River as pring starts to show it's face throughout stratford.

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BLACK AND GOLD Edition

Enjoy Stratford's Chocolate Trail in every season

NANAKO UENO

Black and Gold Correspondent

Chocolate lovers unite! Enjoy Stratford's Chocolate Trail every season. This guided tour introduces you to its world-famous confectioners and bakers. Every stop is unique and features a different chocolate treat to enjoy.

This trail has many locations to choose from so better plan a route in advance.

Recommended shops

There are many online articles recommending stores on the trail and there are couple of them that tend to be on the list, including:

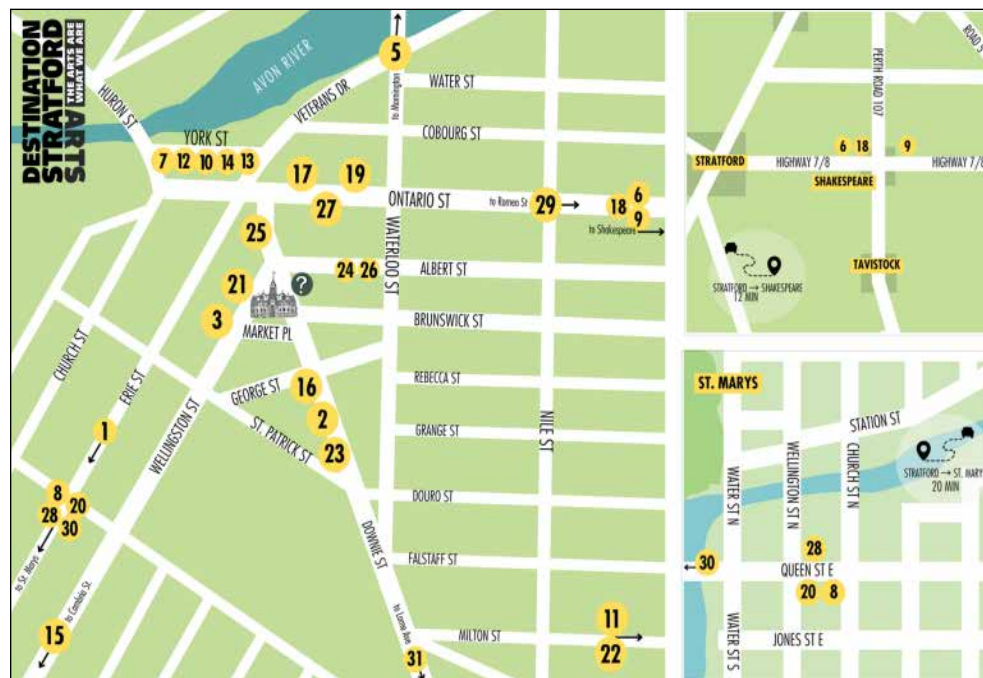
- Rhéo Thompson Candies: a famous chocolate store making chocolates since 1969.
- Rocky Mountain Chocolate: a popular tourist chocolate shop found at many of Canada's well-travelled destinations
- Chocolate Barr's Candies: a local candy store located just down the road from Rhéo Thompson Candies.

Why experience

The Stratford Chocolate Trail is an excellent way for first time visitors of all ages to get a feel of the city's vibe, the incredible food and the artistic shops downtown. Since it is a self-guided tour, it is a flexible way to travel. People can visit all the stops, even just the ones they want a treat from or even spread out the adventure over multiple trips. Participants are also get to meet the makers who craft these treats. This trail is great as a gift, too!

Launched in 2010, the trail has been a staple attraction for the past years. Originally a part of an annual printed culinary guide to Stratford, it was the first of their year-round foodie adventures. With three local chocolatiers, Stratford tested out a paid tour to highlight those sweet shops, which became a hit. Since then other trails like Pumpkin and Maple (now closed) and Bacon and Ale Trails have been added.

This year, there are 30 participating establishments on the Chocolate Trail, including in St. Marys and Shakespeare. To see all establishments and a map, visit <https://tinyurl.com/4wksrr8m>.



A map of this year's Chocolate Trail in Stratford.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

This Year's Chocolate Trail has 30 participating establishments, including in St. Marys and Shakespeare.

OPINION: If a tree falls in a forest, and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?

GRADY FISCHER

Black and Gold Correspondent

This question was first crafted in 1883 by Bishop George Berkeley and has continued to be a prime example of philosophical questions to this day. Berkeley argues that the tree would not make a sound, for if something is to exist, it must be perceived. However, I believe that it is the opposite. After all, some of my most significant failures have been in the eyes of no one but myself.

The lack of information does form a few unknown variables within this question. What we know is this: a tree has fallen; no one was present for it. However, what we do not know is how or where the tree fell, how loud of a sound it would have made if someone was close enough (how far away must one be to 'not be around?'), or what I find the most significant, what does Berkeley consider to be an entity that would qualify as a witness to the falling tree.

Given Berkeley's response, to be is to be perceived, I have made the assumption that the entity he discusses would be of a human nature. This means that any other animal or omniscient presence attending this display would not be considered a

perceiver. Berkeley's response to this dilemma was very similar to Descartes famous saying: I think therefore I am. Many readers probably read my statement of being a sole witness to my own failures and thought that I was making a comparison where a comparison can not be made. However Berkeley's solution is the exact same comparison: The tree represents a person.

Returning to that statement, one may also argue that since I was perceiving my own failures, then someone (myself) was there to hear my fall. But, if we are not giving the tree permission to perceive its own fall, then neither should I be given permission to perceive mine. Additionally, it's possible that the tree was not falling due to failure, but falling due to desire. Maybe the tree had wanted to fall all along?

With that being said, I leave you with these final thoughts: It does not matter who hears you. It does not matter who witnesses your life. It only matters that you try to do everything your heart desires, especially if it only makes sense to you.

If a tree falls in a forest, and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound? Yes, because the tree's voice still matters, even when no one is looking.

Editorial

Letters to the editor: Protect Ontario? Protect Ontarians.

Premier Ford:

I agree that we must Protect Ontario and Ontarians but first and foremost protecting the current education and health-care services, jobs and employees will also protect our future as well as the young and all those needing those services. We need to protect the jobs that already exist here and now which impact everyone including the homeless. Like most Ontarians, people don't want, need or desire the grand projects like a tunnel under the 401, allowing more jets at the Billy Bishop Airport, a grand convention centre by the waterfront which is in Toronto and will not help us at all with the real problems facing Ontarians. The government was elected to protect and look after all Ontarians, not just select ones.

The humongous taxpayer dollars wasted with the unending, constant advertising about Protecting Ontario on television, in newspapers, on the radio and no doubt on social media has been very infuriating to those of us paying for them. Add the extremely expensive Ronald Reagan ad and it feels that the direction of the provincial government is ignoring or avoiding helping out the people that live in the province and really need your direct assistance. Actually caring and helping the people of Ontario would be a great legacy for a premier to be involved in rather than dreaming up other expensive methods of using our hard-earned tax dollars that support the government's endless, nonessential projects. A project that would be beneficial rather than all the additional nuclear stations (that come with a toxic waste problem that needs to be transported quite a distance through heavily populated areas) would be to join the European nations who are using a majority of renewables instead of making new expensive nuclear power and ruining the natural resource of land! Read all the research and studies provided before you go making decisions that affect so many peoples' lives. Show good leadership decisions to benefit and help all Ontarians for now and the future. We all would appreciate that very much.

ciate that very much.

In times when democracy including transparency and accountability is in trouble nearby, we should celebrate and seriously consider the comments of those who want to share their views instead of limiting things that the public can comment on like issues connected to the adoption of Bill 5 and your plans for more limited Freedom-of-Information change to protect the government, not Ontarians. In our democratic society the government should not be creating policies which limit investigations especially retroactively about government actions. Instead why not collaborate and work with the residents of Ontario (your actual elected job) instead of against them and not continually going to court (with our money) to oppose decisions you don't want! Protect Ontarians! I remain totally frustrated along with millions in Ontario!

*Jane Marie Mitchell,
Stratford*

Making primary care primary

It isn't radical to say that navigating our country's health system is a daunting experience for most Canadians. With so many acronyms, provincial balkanization, weird drug names, "long term" care vs health care, etc., not to mention wait times, service closures and staff shortages, it's not hard to become a little bewildered.

But one term that should hold no confusion for any of us is the term, "primary care," with the word "primary," meaning "of chief importance." As Dr. Robert Bell, former president of the University Health Network (UHN) in Toronto, and Dr. Matthew Chow, former president of Doctors of BC, flagged for Canadians in 2022, "Primary care is the foundation for all health care services in Canada." Which to me means that primary care is the prime healthcare tool in our daily survival kit to help us get through life.

Primary care is also the centerpiece of Jane Philpott's 2024 book *Health for All* where Dr. Philpott calls for a National Primary Care Act. She describes a new way for every Canadian to have ready access to essential everyday services such as mental health, home care, community paramedicine and palliative care, all provided by a local multi-disciplinary team, seven days a week, up to 12 hours per day. What's not to like? It's common sense!

It is Dr. Philpott's book, and her primary care solution, that has inspired the second Stratford Primary Care and Homecare Symposium. Brought to you by a group of community volunteers and visionary sponsors, this year's symposium (a fancy word for a meeting) will feature eight keynote speakers, a University of Waterloo student lightning panel and a community table display area. This free symposium also comes with a challenge to all attendees – regular citizens, service clubs, municipal representatives, academics, small business owners and anyone else expressing interest – how do we help the powers that be make a National Primary Care Act a reality for every person in Stratford and Perth County.

Here's the registration link for the symposium: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/how-homecare-shapes-a-caring-economy-tickets-1980564215885>

*Paul Brown,
Stratford*

A community hub Stratford wants and deserves

The letters to the editor, as well as Robert Ritz's article

about the GTR development in your March 13 issue, all point to the need to look closely at his plan. The GTR site is available to create the community hub Stratford wants and deserves; his solution is a well thought out and innovative one.

After Mr. Ritz first presentation, months ago, I wrote a letter to the editor expressing my disillusion with a former city council. In it I said I felt deceived by that council. When the Lakeside Senior's Centre was demolished to make way for the new Tom Patterson Theatre back in 2018, I believed what it said, that the move to the Rotary Centre was temporary awaiting the Community Centre planned for the GTR site. I am still waiting for the promised replacement.

At the same time, one of the most important community assets in town, the Stratford Public Library, continues to be too small for the town; it is one of the smallest in Ontario for a place our size. As such, the library is in great need of an addition to accommodate its many essential services and to support its vital role.

Given the need for a central location for both these facilities, as well as the Y, the idea of destroying one with the potential that architect and city resident Mr. Ritz shows us is available for all is beyond comprehension. He is the only professional who has given us a way out of the morass of nearsighted vision that seems to afflict some of those on the currently sitting city council. He has shown that a solution to the current impasse is available and he welcomes investigation into what he has said about how the current site can be used without undergoing an exorbitant demolition and decontamination expense. (It is to be noted that this demolition and decontamination would greatly limit the further use of the site). City residents will not be content until due diligence on the Ritz proposal takes place; a city council that represents its constituents should and would undertake this as soon as possible.

*Julia Schneider,
Stratford*

Highlighting local talent at the GTR

In Rob Ritz's plan, he had outlined a performing arts space. This space would allow local artists a chance to demonstrate their talents. In addition, space would be available for youth and seniors to use.

The location could make it easy for people to access, with entry from the parking, and from the east side of the GTR, to the buses.

Leaving the GTR, there could be a covered walkway between the GTR and buses, it is level, so it would make it easy access for handicapped and anyone coming or going from the GTR.

This part of the plan could be one of the phases to be carried out. That Rob Ritz had mentioned.

Another addition to the area would house the steam engine 6128, which was the last engine to be serviced at the CNR.

The steam engine is in Fort Erie. Negotiations are currently underway to bring it to Stratford.

I would like to point out, that Rob's designed plan is for the people of Stratford.

LET'S GET BEHIND ROB AND SUPPORT HIS PLAN.

*Lorne Bolton,
Stratford*

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at a time!*

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Opinions

Spring cleaning the mind: Letting go to grow



IRENE ROTH

Times Columnist

As the earth softens and the first signs of green begin to emerge, spring gently reminds us that renewal is not only possible – it is natural. We open our windows, clear out closets and sweep away the remnants of winter. But perhaps one of the most important places to direct this seasonal energy is inward.

Just as our homes accumulate clutter over time, so too do our minds. Thoughts, beliefs, and internal narratives, especially the unhelpful ones, can linger

far longer than they should.

Mental clutter often forms quietly. A critical comment from years ago, a failure we never quite released or a belief that we are “not enough” can settle into the background of our thinking. Over time, these thoughts begin to feel like facts. We stop questioning them. We carry them with us into new experiences, relationships and challenges, often without realizing how much they shape our reactions and limit our possibilities.

Spring offers us an invitation to pause and gently examine what we are carrying.

The first step in this mental spring cleaning is awareness. What thoughts surface most frequently for you? Are they kind, encouraging and realistic – or harsh, limiting and outdated? Many of us are far more critical of ourselves than we would ever be of others. We replay mistakes, magnify shortcomings and discount our strengths.

Simply noticing these patterns without judgment is a powerful beginning.

Once we become aware of these thoughts, we can begin the process of letting go. This does not mean forcing ourselves into false positivity or denying real struggles. Rather, it involves asking whether a belief is still serving us. For example, a belief such as “I always fail when I try something new” may have originated from a few difficult experiences. But is it universally true? And more importantly, is it helpful? Holding onto such a belief may keep us safe from disappointment, but it also prevents growth and discovery.

Letting go is often less about pushing thoughts away and more about loosening our grip on them. We can acknowledge, “This is a thought I’ve had,” rather than “This is who I am.” That subtle shift creates space – space to choose a different perspective, to respond rather than react.

Another important aspect of mental renewal is releasing outdated identities. Many of us define ourselves by roles we have outgrown or circumstances that have changed. Perhaps you once saw yourself as someone who had to be everything for everyone, or someone who could not rest without guilt. These identities may have served a purpose at one time, but they can become restrictive if we hold onto them too tightly.

Spring encourages flexibility. Just as nature adapts and transforms, we too can evolve. We can choose to see ourselves not as fixed beings, but as individuals in process – capable of change, learning and renewal at any stage of life.

Practical tools can support this inner clearing. Journaling, for instance, allows us to bring hidden thoughts into the light. Writing them down often reveals patterns we might otherwise miss. Gentle reflection questions such as “Is this

thought true?” or “What would I say to a friend in this situation?” can help us reframe our inner dialogue with compassion.

Equally important is what we choose to invite into our lives as we let old thoughts go. Nature does not leave empty space for long – it fills it with new growth. In the same way, as we release limiting beliefs, we can intentionally cultivate thoughts that are more balanced and supportive.

Spring cleaning the mind is not a one-time event. It is a gentle, ongoing practice of noticing, releasing and renewing. Some thoughts will return, as they often do, but each time we meet them with awareness and compassion, their hold weakens.

This season, as you clear your physical space, consider tending to your inner world as well. You may find that as you let go of what no longer serves you, you create room not only for new thoughts – but for a lighter, freer way of being.

UNTIL SOON. LIVE WELL: IF I EVER GET AROUND TO LIVING



STUART LENDER

Times Columnist

Waking light, familiar and new. I’ve been here before, the shapeless room. I know those I’ve loved, but forgotten their names. I sense them instead, at the end of days.

Last night, those short and unconsidered phrases came to me at a time when I was reflecting upon dying which I am wont to do. They flowed out of the pen as simply and quickly as you are reading this sentence now. And when they were complete, I realized I was staring at something tangible that sprung from an abstract idea, as all consid-

erations regarding any living “space” after death, is in the abstract. The words came with no effort at all and they asked me: Will I remember those I’ve loved so dear? Will I experience this world again? Know that I’ve completed a turn?

In the morning, in my own “waking light” the room takes shape and for whatever reason I start to ponder life, living. The human inventory begins – who is left? I run down the list. I have a small family. I’m lying still on the bed. It is my own free will that makes it so. But just how still can I be? I hold my breath. I realize I am “playing” at dying – as a child perhaps, might do – but with closer, more experienced involvement – age, wisdom, gratitude. I tell myself there are whole days ahead for me. A lifetime. Beyond the one day in which so many other’s days have ended.

I’m uplifted – suddenly and without warning, and that expansiveness I’m feeling has happened before. It’s immediate but melancholic, for there’s nothing that need be done and everything that can be – choose. How is life to go? I can

list the names of those who rebooted my life and made me see anew through their leaving – or perhaps it was merely a sense of urgency, of panic. Why is it, despite how melancholy one feels, death can also make the sky bluer, the coffee richer, the interaction more significant? I sip that coffee of which I speak and a favourite line from a Bruce Cockburn song comes to mind: “Can it be so hard / To love yourself without thinking / Someone else holds a lower card?” – and I realize there are such disparate degrees of “lower card,” the lowest of which perhaps, being the fact that you’re dead. Or perhaps that’s the highest, depending upon one’s inclinations towards the answer to the abstract question.

Life fluctuates. It breathes. Expands. Shrinks. It exists between the margins that show themselves at every moment of every day: the good / the bad / the happy / the sad / positive / negative / helpful / harmful – choose. It urges participation. Even non-participation is participation when you’re alive. If you take up space, you participate. And playing dead is exactly that – playing. But what

of it when one is truly so? Has participation ended or are the thoughts of others, about you, enough to warrant inclusion in the game? What do I leave of myself when I am gone?

I have friends who have “bucket lists.” They want to check off their wishes, their dreams, their tasks. Is the completion of the list the completion of a life? Once the desires are satiated and they are done ... does the worth of their experience live on into the lives of those they know? Of course it does. Those experiences blend into what they give. They reshape thoughts, construct beliefs, mold how they act and react and are ready to leak themselves into the world and spread into the imagination of any who would allow it while they live. They will become tinctures in conversation, colouring how things are recounted. The lives of others – enter us – through stories.

But what of tomorrow, when one wakes, works and wonders, about how the routine day will go – after number three on the bucket list is complete – when one is deep in the heart of the repetitive ticking metronome

of existence and the crossed paths of acquaintances. What about the bucket list of the everyday, where there is only one point on the paper of any worth – stating how you interact with the day and the people therein. What word is printed there?

I bring my thoughts back into the room. It’s time to rise. Time to start. Move out into the world again. I have work to do. I’m acutely aware now that I have no bucket list at all, never did, and I ask myself if there is something lacking. I scan my life for that lack, and so, for the emptiness within – and I realize that I am it. I am the vessel that fills and empties out, and what I give is what fills others who are hollow and waiting, like me. We do for each other. A daunting privilege to say the least. For I know that no matter what sits listed upon the pages of my life for me to do, If I ever get around to doing them, they will be done with mercy.

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

Opinions

From Parliament to Perth: Chief Government Whip?

MATTHEW RAE

MPP for Perth-Wellington

Over the past year, one of the questions I've been asked most often is simply: what does a Chief Government Whip actually do?

It's a fair question. The title isn't exactly self-explanatory, and if your only reference is the popular Netflix show, *House of Cards*, you might have the wrong idea.

The reality is much more practical.

My job as Chief Government Whip can be summed up like this: make sure the government can deliver on what it was elected to do.

In the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, decisions are made through votes. That means Members of Provincial Parliament need to be present for debates, committees and recorded votes in the chamber. A key part of my role is making sure our team is where it needs to be, when it needs to be there.

Legislation is often complex. Before any bills are debated or voted on, it is important that members understand what is in a bill, why it matters, and how it impacts the people we represent. I work closely with colleagues to ensure they are ready to speak

to legislation and contribute meaningfully to the process.

The role of the Chief Government Whip is to ensure we deliver results. This is where the role becomes more strategic. I work closely with the Government House Leader and caucus to coordinate how legislation moves through the Legislative Assembly. That includes managing timing, aligning priorities and keeping everyone focused on the government's agenda.

In short, it is about turning plans into progress.

Like much of our parliamentary system, the role of the whip has its roots in British tradition.

The tradition of the role of whip originated in England and the early British Parliament. The first instance of a parliamentary whip being needed was in November 1621.

Sir George Calvert was required to send a letter of summons, on behalf of King James I, to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to report to parliament to support the King's cause and business. Sir Calvert was not referred to as whip, but simply one of the King's secretaries of state.

The contemporary role of Chief Whip did not emerge until the late 18th century and early 19th century, after the tumultuous

reign of King George III and the French Revolution. George III was famous for ignoring parliamentary votes and dismissing prime ministers he did not like. Members of Parliament realized they had a great need for firm party consolidation to counter a king who ignored parliament. Both the Tories and the Whigs saw the merits of an increasingly organized party as being the best hope for the survival and success of their ideals.

In Ontario, a variety of provincial politicians have held the role of Chief Government Whip; from Joan Smith under Premier Peterson, to John Baird under Premier Harris, to Jim Bradley under Premier Wynne.

The government caucus of the day will have a Chief Government Whip, but each recognized party will also have a caucus whip. Currently, Peggy Sattler (London West), serves as Chief Opposition Whip and Adil Shamji (Don Valley East) serves as Chief Whip for the Third Party.

In the 2025 fall legislative session, the assembly passed 12 government bills, six private members' bills, seven private members' motions and 55 committee meetings. Each of those required coordination, preparation and follow-through.

For constituents in Perth-Wellington, this process is how priorities become reality, whether it's building more homes, strengthening local infrastructure or supporting key community services.

The role of the Chief Government Whip also changes depending on the political landscape. In a minority parliament, every vote can be uncertain and coordination becomes even more critical. In a majority parliament, the focus shifts to managing a larger team with a wide range of perspectives, while maintaining momentum.

The goal remains the same: to keep the machinery of government moving forward.

That doesn't mean legislation never changes. Debate, amendments and differing viewpoints are all part of the democratic process. My role is to help ensure that process flows and that it leads to outcomes.

At the end of the day, good government isn't just about ideas. It's about execution.

As Chief Government Whip, my job is to help make sure that the commitments we make don't just stay words but turn into results for the people we serve.

From Parliament to Perth is an ongoing series from the Stratford Times and its local representatives.

Buy Canadian should fund Canadian jobs and news, not U.S. Big Tech

A Message from Canada's news publishers

To the Government of Canada,

We applaud the Government of Canada's ambition to build Canada strong, and commitment in the forthcoming Budget to Buy Canadian.

Last year, the federal government including agencies and Crown corporations spent over \$100 million on advertising. Most of it went to U.S. Big Tech.¹

Why are we funding American tech monopolies that extract tens of billions a year out of Canada -- largely untaxed -- at the expense of local journalism and culture, and whose platforms have become vectors for division and disinformation?

Let's reinvest our ad dollars in Canada. In Budget 2025, the Government of Canada should follow Ontario's lead and set aside a minimum of 25% of its advertising budgets for Canadian news media.

At no additional cost to taxpayers, the government can support local jobs while getting its message out in a brand safe environment. Far fewer Canadians trust ads on Facebook and Instagram than those published by Canadian news media.²

Buying Canadian advertising in Canadian news media is both the right and smart thing to do.

Respectfully,
Canada's news publishers



SOURCES

¹ Annual Report on Government of Canada Advertising Activities 2023-2024, combined with proprietary industry data.

² Totum Research Canada, January 2025. Canadians 18+, n=2418.; Pollara for the Dais, 2025 Survey of Online Harms, Canadians 16+, n=2502.

COMING EVENTS Email to inquire stratfordtimes@gmail.com

STRATFORD SCRABBLE CLUB

Anne Hathawy Residence 480 Downie St., Stratford
Meets every Wednesday evening at 7 p.m. for 3 games.
Check our website for further details stratfordscrabble.ca

CROKINOLE

Every Tuesday at the Agriplex in the Ritsma Room from 1-4 p.m. Ladies and gentlemen, fingers or sticks. For more information call Oliver Davidson 519-508-5664

STRATFORD ASTRONOMY GROUP MEETINGS

St. Michael Catholic Secondary School, 240 Oakdale Avenue, Stratford

Rear parking lot off Matilda. Room # 1104 - 1st Tuesday of each month from September to June. 7-9 p.m.

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

EUCHRE NIGHT

Friday, March 27; 6 p.m.

Legion, 804 Ontario St., Stratford

Enter your 2-person team for \$20 by calling Anne at 519-301-0914, Dave at 519-703-6544, or the Legion at 519-271-4540. Prizes for 1st to 3rd place.

OSTOMY SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Tuesday, April 7, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

93 Morgan St., Stratford

Speaker – Denise Strasser from Action Health Care.

She will update us on assistive devices, mobility aids, other home health products, and the Assistive Devices Program, (ADP) Social time and snacks. Everyone welcome. 519-273-4327

IN THE MOOD WITH BIG BANDEMIC

Saturday, April 11 6:30 pm Doors Open 7:30 pm Show begins.

South Gate Centre, 191 Old Wellington St. S., Woodstock

An unforgettable night of toe-tapping, dancing, and singing along! This 17-piece big band PLUS a fabulous 10-piece strings section and two amazing crooners! Dress to impress in formal or semi-formal attire—1940s styles encouraged! Dance floor awaits! 19+ only. \$50. Book online at www.southgatectr.com/events or call 519-539-9817.

GARDEN STRATFORD GENERAL MEETING

Monday April 13, 2026, 7:15 – 9:00 p.m.

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

Featured Presentation: “How to Grow and Care For

Hydrangeas”, Stephanie Fletcher, Grey County Master Gardener

Meeting Open to Everyone; Free Admission.

BEER/LIQUOR TASTING AND CHILI NIGHT

Thursday April 16; 6:30 p.m.

Legion, 804 Ontario St., Stratford

We have lined up 3 local producers, Black Swan Brewing Co., Junction 56 Distillery and Madmash Brewery to come and display their beers and spirits. This is a ticketed event. You will receive 6 vouchers that you can use to sample any of these 3 businesses products plus enjoy a bowl of home-made chili and a Cobs roll, all for \$20 per person. Get you tickets now by calling Dave at 519-703-6544 or the Legion at 519-271-4540 or online.

EUCHRE NIGHT

Friday, April 24; 6 p.m.

Legion, 804 Ontario St., Stratford

Enter your 2-person team for \$20 by calling Anne at 519-301-0914, Dave at 519-703-6544, or the Legion at 519-271-4540. Prizes for 1st to 3rd place. Registration is brisk, so call now.

STRATFORD TIMES

Deadline: Tuesday prior at 3 p.m.
Contact: stratfordtimes@gmail.com

PROMOTE YOUR EVENTS WITH US! HERE'S HOW:

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

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STRATFORD TIMES

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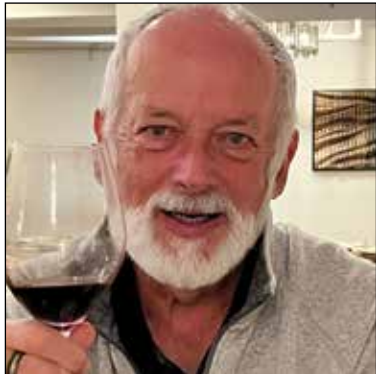
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Stratford Tourism
Coffee Culture
Stratford Public Library
The Parlour Restaurant & Inn
Dick's Barber Shop
The Livery Yard
Town Crier Marketing
North End Pharmacy
Annie's Seafood Restaurant
Avon Pharmacy

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Staying put? But don't stay home!



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Columnist

Let's be honest, there are an increasing number of would-be travellers who are getting rather chilly feet about venturing abroad. Many of us have chosen not to travel to the U.S. Others are understandably nervous about popular destinations like Mexico after the cartel uprising, Cuba with its collapsing infrastructure, or Egypt or Turkey, considering their proximity to the current war in the Middle East. As well, several African nations are doubling down on their oppression of LGBTQ2+ folk.

And then there are the issues that don't involve personal dangers, such as the new requirements in the U.K. for pre-travel documentation or, if you were born there, a British passport. This sort of clearance before arrival in countries is also being initiated in many European countries.

As a travel writer, I will admit I still plan to travel. My near-future plans include Italy and even Mexico, with other trips in the works.

But I do understand we are all looking for alternatives. So, as we get closer to spring, I want to suggest a few drivable destinations that don't involve leaving the province but will, I promise, provide visitors with a great vacation.



Fielding winery is one of the best in the Niagara Benchlands wine region.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

Let's start with the Niagara peninsula. I don't say "Niagara Falls" because while this wonder of the world is undoubtedly the biggest draw on the peninsula, there is so much more to explore here. Although it might be wise to consider staying in Niagara Falls, proper, because now, in the off-season, many of the hotels offer great deals on rooms, which often come with discounts on dining and even a casino voucher. If you're heading toward the Falls, check out those options.

But if you go, don't spend all your time in Niagara Falls. Niagara-on-the-Lake is one of my favourite towns in Ontario where you can browse in interesting shops, dine in good restaurants and pubs, and wander a couple of blocks off the main street to the banks of the Niagara River for terrific views of Lake Ontario, the riverscape and our neigh-

bouring country that sadly shall not be named.

My favourite pastime in the Niagara Region – as regular readers will know – is visiting wineries, and there are dozens to choose from. Many also have good restaurants, and some offer unique accommodations. For a full and informative list of wineries, see winecountry-ontario.ca. And please note that the Niagara peninsula has now been divided into two official wine regions – Niagara Benchlands and Area and Niagara-on-the-Lake and Area. If I had to choose only two in each, it would be Fielding and Ridgepoint in the Benchlands; Bighead and Konzelman in Niagara-on-the-Lake region.

Now, let's head east. It will also not be a surprise to regular readers that I recommend a getaway to our nation's capital, Ottawa. I simply

don't think there is any equivalent destination in Canada, with as much to see and do, almost all accessible on foot.

Highlights for me include two art galleries – the phenomenal National Gallery of Canada and the unexpected Ottawa Art Gallery with a terrific Group of Seven exhibition. I recently wrote enthusiastically about the National War Museum, and I haven't changed my mind – it's really enthralling. In total, Ottawa is home to seven of Canada's national museums.

I always enjoy the quirky artifacts at Laurier House, which housed two prime ministers – Wilfrid Laurier and William Lyon Mackenzie King. The display of memorabilia from King's immersion in the occult is worth the price of admission.

There are many unique sites open for tours in Ottawa, from the tem-

porary House of Commons and the current home of the Senate (once the railway station) to the Royal Canadian Mint and Rideau Hall, home of the governor general.

For my last stay-at-home alternative to foreign travel, I am going to suggest a vacation that covers a distance of less than an hour and a half – the region that runs along the north shore of Lake Ontario and the western end of the St. Lawrence River, from Quinte West to Gananoque, including Kingston. We've had the chance to explore this region in the last couple of years, and there were a lot of unexpected delights throughout the area.

I would probably opt to stay in Kingston because this historic city offers some unique and special bed and breakfasts and inns. And over the course of my week or so in the area, I would be sure to visit the truly fascinating National Air Force Museum in Trenton and the Great Lakes Museum in Kingston (with a note that the highlight, there, the S.S. Keewatin, is not open for tours until May). I would also join Kouri's Kopters in Gananoque for one of their breathtaking helicopter tours of the Thousand Islands (also starting in mid-May).

All of the communities in this lakeside stretch offer unique dining experiences, local live theatre and concerts, and on-the-water adventures in the warmer months.

So, if you are eager to travel but hesitant to leave the comfort of your own province, these three areas provide terrific travel experiences. I have been there, I have done that and I truly intend to do it all again.

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



A Vimy warplane at the National War Museum in Ottawa.



Prime Minister Mackenzie King's library in Laurier House, including a shrine to his mother, with whom he communicated through seances.

Crossword

CLUES ACROSS

1. "Bird of Paradise" constellation
5. Red Sox WS winner Bronson
11. Whirl
12. The State Dept. has a notable one
16. Energy, style and enthusiasm
17. Part of the mind
18. Mountainous country
19. Type of beverage
24. Atomic #109
25. Opposite of falsities
26. Female sheep
27. Rocky peak
28. Sensitive information sharing environment
29. Ethnic group of Thailand
30. Patron saint of Rome Philip
31. Psychedelics
33. Japanese pine
34. Have an impact on
38. Violent disorder
39. A French river
40. Early Mesoamerican civilization
43. Messenger ribonucleic acid
44. Musician Clapton
45. Ancient Greek sophist
49. Largest English dictionary (abbr.)
50. Valley
51. A way to unwind
53. Atomic #93
54. Recommending
56. Indigo bush
58. Larry and Curly's pal
59. Off-Broadway theater award
60. Fencers
63. Small Eurasian deer (pl.)
64. Relating to songbirds
65. A way to assign

4. Assembly possessing high legislative powers
5. Genus of typical owls
6. One with distinctively colored hair
7. Red cross
8. An alternative
9. Abominable snowmen
10. About ear
13. The opening letters
14. Feeling of regret
15. Atomic #39
20. Luteinizing hormone
21. Atomic #55
22. Carries a debt
23. Albanian monetary unit
27. Semitic abjad letter
29. Yes
30. Negative
31. Earn a perfect score
32. Connecticut
33. Partner to cheese
34. Snack nuts
35. Quadruped's body part
36. Locate
37. Pitching statistic
38. "___, myself and I"
40. Utah city northwest of Provo
41. Football players in the trenches
42. One who runs the show
44. Wood
45. Performing artists
46. Slang for a cut
47. More breathable
48. Most crafty
50. Provokes into action
51. University of Dayton
52. Sodium
54. Large fish of the mackerel family
55. Not one
57. ___ and behold
61. Sports highlight show
62. "The Great Lakes State"

CLUES DOWN

1. Some are "secret"
2. Intestinal openings
3. Distant planet

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9	10			
11					12						13	14	15
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Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 27

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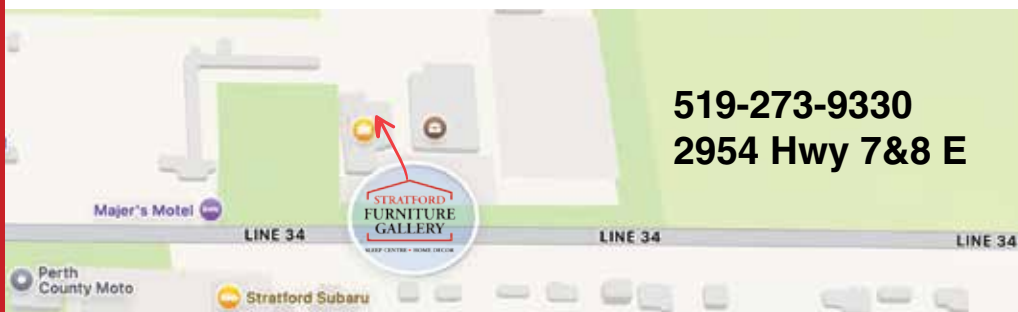
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