

STRATFORD **TIMES**

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Ritz urges council to reconsider GTR site demolition

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

Stratford architect Robert Ritz is urging city council to rethink demolition for the Grand Trunk Railway (GTR) site, arguing that rehabilitating the existing structure could provide Stratford with much-needed civic space at a significantly lower cost to taxpayers.

In a presentation community town hall meeting on Feb. 5, Ritz laid out a redevelopment concept that would see the massive industrial building repurposed to house several key public services – including the YMCA, the Stratford Public Library and relocating the new police headquarters to the old YMCA site – while avoiding the high cost and environmental impact of tearing the building down.

“Once you decide what you want, you first design with a calculator to determine how you can afford it, then move forward with the design,” Ritz said.

He said the goal of his presentation was to give council “a clear path to move forward and develop the site again with minimal impact to the taxpayer.”

He argued the city already acts as a developer when it comes to major projects, pointing to both the industrial park and the Stratford Rotary Complex as examples.

“The city in itself is a developer. They buy and develop land for parking. They buy and develop land for recreation facilities at the rec complex,” Ritz said, noting that the size of the recreation complex is comparable

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(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Brianna Carlton, Sarah Reid, Kerrie Culliton and Brandon Roth (not pictured) were in good spirits at Community Living's Stratford location on Feb. 10, as the Canadian women's hockey team started to face off against Team U.S.A. The Canadians ended up losing in a 5-0 shutout.

Council feels hands are tied when it comes to Huron Street apartments

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

While most councillors around the horseshoe were in agreement that a proposed apartment project at 315 and 317 Huron St. was not suitable for the city, many were concerned that despite their reservations it was a moot point to deny it.

Although presented at the Feb. 9 Stratford city council meeting by city planner Alex Burnett, the project has been in the works for some time now, having first been presented to council in April of last year during a public

meeting. The proposal is for two three-storey apartment buildings with six units each that share a back parking lot. Along with a list of setback and lot area exceptions, the applicants are also asking for reductions in the required green space (from 30 per cent to 14 per cent) and the amount of visitor parking (from two spots to one).

Just like in the public meeting, residents expressed concerns about many aspects of the project, from increased density and diminished neighbourhood character to privacy, noise and traffic concerns.

“One big thing that doesn't get brought up enough in

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Council unified that Huron Street apartment project doesn't fit city, feels hands are tied

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

many of these meetings is the garbage and recycling," neighbour Rick Brodhagen said at the February meeting. "... Twelve units on a recycling week, which we have every other week, would see three, potentially three receptacles at the curb from each of these units, and then that's 30 feet in front of each unit. So then we have 36 garbage receptacles lined up down here on the street in a 60-foot space. How does that fit? How does that work? Sorry, that's in each one, so even more.

"... I am a local proponent for increasing density to reduce urban sprawl," he continued. "... Yes, increase density responsibly. This does not do this responsibly. The fact that there needs to be a zoning change first of all, fine, but then you have to apply to change all of the rules of that zoning change? Just shows how it doesn't fit the area, it doesn't fit the law

and it doesn't need to be there."

Council evidently agreed. Couns. Larry McCabe, Cody Sebben, Lesley Biehn, Jo-Dee Burbach, Mark Hunter and Bonnie Henderson at one point or another during the discussion expressed that the project had shortcomings and perhaps was not a good fit for the city – be it the size, the character of the area, flooding concerns, garbage and recycling pile-up, the snow removal plan and the lack of parking for renters and visitors alike.

Additionally, many seemed frustrated that despite their concerns, their hands were tied.

"I do see the red flags," Biehn shared. "... The way that I have learned is that if it meets the professional Provincial Planning Statement and the City of Stratford Official Plan, that we really can't deny it.

"... if we denied and it's appealed, then we would have to fight our own staff and

hire outside legal help and all of that to prove that our staff is wrong. It just becomes this big mess that I don't know that we would win it ... If it meets all of those things, our hands end up being tied in the sense that the province has told us what we can and can't and what we do and what we have jurisdiction over."

While Adam Betteridge, director of building and planning, would not comment on whether or not the applicant would win an appeal if the project was



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

A rendering of the proposed apartment buildings located at 315 and 317 Huron St., a proposal hotly opposed by neighbours and some city councillors.

denied by council, he did point to the province's appetite for new housing. Additionally, the proposal is consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement and the city's Official Plan and constitutes sound land use planning, according to the department.

Additionally, Betteridge clarified that while this application request did not come from the planning department (being from the developer), there were some merits to the perceived negatives.

"A unit that doesn't have as many parking (spaces) or zero is going to be a lot more affordable than a unit, an apartment that does have parking spaces assigned to them. So when we're trying to walk that balance of affordability and attainability and accessibility of housing, we usually come down to have an argument or a concern about parking, but removing parking, especially on a main arterial

in Stratford, has an ability to reduce the going rent.

"The current environment with the provincial government is one of housing and one of trying to find a range and mix of housing types, housing affordability, types and locations," Betteridge said. "This one is on an arterial, so I might not be able to answer that (appeal) question directly ... but I do know that Mr. Burnett and the applicant's planners have put a great deal of planning analysis into this proposal."

Before a motion to move the staff recommendation was voted on, chief administrative officer (CAO) André Morin suggested a deferral, noting council's hesitation with the development. By deferring, the applicant could reassess and come back with a proposal more to council's liking.

The deferral motion was unanimous.

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Ritz urges council to reconsider GTR site demolition

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

to the scale of the GTR project. "So we've done it before."

Ritz said that fully demolishing the GTR building would leave Stratford with higher long-term debt due to the cost of removing the massive structure and dealing with environmental contamination on the 17-acre site.

"There's contamination, and that would have to be cleaned up. So the city debt increases as we tear the building down," he said.

Ritz estimated the cost of demolition and cleanup would total approximately \$43 million — or roughly \$3.7 million per acre.

"Tearing it down just doesn't make sense, because nobody will buy it," he said. "So what are the options? To make it attractive to a developer, we have to tear the building down, and then we have a contaminated site and then we have \$31 million in debt."

"I'm trying to encourage council to look at what we have and use it for what you need," he said.

Ritz's plan centres on upgrading the existing structure rather than demolishing it. He said much of the building's steel frame remains sound and could be restored.

"We basically just put a new roof on it," he said. "We clean the steel, replace damaged steel sections, reinforce the steel as required to support snow loads and future solar panels. We put a brand-new roof on it. The walls are probably going to look exactly the way they are."

The interior, he said, would be sand-blasted and finished with exposed steel, creating what he described as an attractive industrial-style space.

Ritz questioned why the city would spend an estimated \$4 million on demoli-

tion when that money could instead be put toward rehabilitation.

"If we're going to spend \$4 million tearing this thing down and we're willing to do that, then why don't we just take the \$4 million and throw it at the rehabilitation?" he said.

Ritz said the GTR site offers a rare opportunity to solve multiple civic infrastructure challenges at once, rather than building several standalone facilities across the city.

"We have the City of Stratford, we have a police department, we have a library, we have community groups that are interested in the building. We have the YMCA," he said. "These are the other parts of the organization."

He argued that Stratford already knows many of its future space needs, pointing to the city's master planning and ad hoc committee work.

"The library needs to get larger, the police need to get larger, and we'd like to have a larger pool at the Y," Ritz said. "More recently, a new police headquarters — all these facilities that several buildings will cost money to build."

The key question, he said, is whether the city continues to build separate facilities on new sites or uses that investment to clean up and repurpose the GTR lands.

"So the debate is, do we build on free-standing sites, or do we use that money towards cleaning up the GTR site to make it work?" Ritz said.

Ritz had businesses willing to take part in the redevelopment project on hand to discuss how they, too, believe in the rehabilitation of the building, as well as historian Dean Robinson, who also supports the project.



(AMANDA NELSON PHOTO)

Stratford residents Rebecca Cheney (left) and Cassie Barclay (right) speak to volunteer Tim Foster (centre) about possible future plans for the Grant Trunk site at the recent community presentation, presented by Robert Ritz

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Editorial

The difference between corporate media and local independents, and why supporting local matters



GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

In my nearly 13-year career in journalism, I've worked for both corporate giants and local independent newspapers.

While both employ excellent journalists and editors who work hard to report the news in ways readers can understand and engage with in their daily lives, in my experience, there are some

key differences that aren't always entirely apparent when we're skimming through our community newspaper or scrolling through headlines online over a morning cup of coffee.

First and foremost – and probably the most obvious point I'll make here – the motivation behind the production of news differs between those who put out your independently owned community newspaper and the folks who pull the strings behind the scenes at national headquarters for your local corporately owned outlet.

The bottom line is a key motivator for any business regardless of who owns it, but in my experience, it plays a much heavier role in restricting what journalists can report on at corporately owned media outlets than at independent

ones. At my previous job, there was a push to focus only on what gener-

ated the most clicks online – breaking news, larger features and topics of wider interest that could be shared across the company. Here at Grant Haven Media and other independent locals, we are free to report on everything and anything that could be of interest to our readers – pageviews be damned!

While that includes breaking news, larger features and stories of more regional interest, it also includes all those community stories about fundraisers, events, minor sports teams, service clubs and communities coming together to support one another. Those are the stories I love to tell because they reinforce that idea of community – that friends, neighbours and total strangers can come together to accomplish incredible things that wouldn't have been possible otherwise. And as newspapers, we play an important role in those accomplishments, helping organizers promote their fundraisers and events, and celebrating their successes for the whole community to see and read about.

At Grant Haven Media, we

value the work of our contributors. Whether stories come from a retired farmer, a high school student or a journalist fresh from college, we invest heavily in our news team with time, training and money to ensure we have the right people in the right places who know how to ask the right questions so we can have as full-some coverage of daily and civic life in our communities as possible. Are we perfect? Of course not, but we do our best to capture every moment of joy, sadness, frustration, triumph and heartbreak that we can, both to inform the communities we live in and to create a record of history for future generations to learn from.

In my experience working for a corporate giant, the mantra was "do more with less." While the editorial teams worked hard to produce the quality of content the communities they serve deserve, the executives and their hedge-fund puppeteers had no qualms with eroding the bedrock on which newspapers are built – the people who report and edit the news.

In my time working in a cor-

porate newsroom, we went from a staff of four full-time reporters down to just two, while other papers in the region lost their complement of editorial staff entirely. With fewer reporters to fill the paper, its pages were instead filled with regional content that, while interesting and well-produced, had little bearing on readers' daily lives and was instead heavily influenced by news and events in urban centres where the bulk of company resources were so often funnelled. As a result of that continued downsizing, the reporters left behind to "do more with less" on a shoestring salary felt underappreciated and overworked. Again, I write from experience.

I guess what I'm trying to say here is we need the support of our readers and our advertisers to continue reporting the news that matters most to our communities. We're not only journalists, editors, salespeople and publishers; we're your neighbours, friends and fellow community members, and we do this work because we care about the communities in which we live.

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STRATFORD **TIMES**

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6. Newspapers strengthen communities
7. Advertisers, big or small, should profit from their ads (meaning sensible ad rates)
8. Newspapers should be locally-owned and operated

Editorial

In case you missed it ...



CONNOR LUCZKA

Times Editor

When I was in my final year of high school, unsure of where I wanted to go or what I wanted to do, I happened to be enrolled in a politics elective – and it happened to be a municipal election year.

My wonderful teacher Mrs. Denomme took the initiative to organize a mayoral debate at the school, with our class set to run the show. Each student was given an assignment, whether they were part of the organizing

team, the group in charge of A/V, moderators, question-askers and the like. My job was to write a profile on one of the candidates, a longtime London city councillor by the name of Joe Swan.

London politics may be exciting, but they are far from well-known (even in the Forest City), and I couldn't exactly find his biographical information online or in my school's Encyclopedia Britannica. So, unsure of what I was doing, I reached out to his campaign and asked to conduct an interview. To my surprise they agreed. A phone interview was set up and I started thinking about what to ask him.

I don't remember much about the interview. If I'm honest, I don't remember much about the debate that our class conducted writ large. I do remember the feeling of hanging up and realizing that I had done something on my own initiative, that I had done a small bit of journalism –

and that it wasn't a disaster.

My now-wife and I had just started dating and I was watching her look at her own future with such certainty. She knew exactly what she wanted to do. I never had that luxury. Like so many others I grappled with my future, wondering what I could do. I was faced with a paralytic decision and I only ever had self-doubt about what I was capable of.

Well, suddenly, here was something I did rather well. My journey in journalism started that evening and I'm pleased to say it's a path that I am still on.

But what if I hadn't taken that initiative? What if I took a different elective? What if I had been graduating the year prior or after, just missing the election year? That interview was a formative experience for me, and I don't know where I would be today without it. Frankly, I don't think that alternative life could com-

pare.

This rabbit-hole was something I thought about for the last few years, thinking about youth today and the opportunities they have for self-fulfillment. So when our regional editor Galen Simmons and I got to talking about partnering with local schools to foster Stratford's next great journalists, I was more than excited.

In case you missed it, we published the first ever Black and Gold edition in the Jan. 30 issue of the Times, a collection of stories created by student journalists at Stratford District Secondary School for their high school peers and the wider community as well. We will be running it in the last edition of every month.

We are very happy to provide these pages to students; however, it is not without cost. As a free paper our only revenue is ad space and our page count is how we can balance our good weeks with our bad. It's a tight balance.

We want strong editorial content for you to read every week and we need to be mindful of exactly how much we print, lest we lose the ability to publish at all.

We will run the Black and Gold edition regardless, because of our belief in its importance, but we are also looking for sponsors. We have limited the edition to two pages right now, given our space restraints, and already we have had to cut content for space. We will hold any content for the next edition, but you can imagine how quickly that can snowball. In order for this experiment to work, we want as many pieces in our paper and as many student journalists to participate as we can. Sponsors and advertisers make that a reality.

So if you know of anyone that has an interest in giving Stratford's youth this opportunity, let us know. Who knows? Their support might help the next Lloyd Robertson find their true calling.

Letters to the editor: From the U.S.A to Canada to Stratford

Ensuring Canadian export rules reflect rule of law principles

Dear John Nater,

First of all, I would like to thank you for the calendar you sent me this month. I kept it, because I like the picture of you and your family. You have beautiful children, and these days it is reassuring to see a safe and smiling family.

Today I am writing you about the No More Loopholes Act (Bill C233), a proposed law to tighten Canada's armsexport controls, especially for military goods sent to the United States, which can end up in international conflict zones without humanrights screening. This bill will go to a vote in parliament on Feb. 19.

It is concerning that lax rules at the border also mean an increasing number of Canadian companies are profiting from doing business with ICE. Examples of this are available in the press. On Dec. 3 of last year the Canadian Press reported on the sale of Roshel armoured vehicles, manufactured in Brampton, to be used by ICE. The Globe and Mail on Dec. 4 found this purchase "deeply troubling," and on Jan. 27 Mike Ramsy of the Star underscored the need for policy to deal with the

problem.

Roshel is not the only Canadian company to do business with ICE. Providers of IT and surveillance software are particularly high on the list (see, for example, David Reevely's article of Jan. 26 in The Logic, which describes the sale of wire-tapping tools). A more extensive list of companies involved can be found on independent journalist Rachel Gilmore's Substack channel.

Every night we see news reports of frightened American families dealing with authoritarian paramilitaries. I find it shameful that ICE agents will be using Canadian-made equipment, and it may sound far-fetched, but we must expect that this equipment would be used if ICE agents were instructed to act against our country. We should not be supplying them with armaments and technology.

We all know that American problems began when government started to accede to pressure from business interests. This knowledge has galvanized Canadian activism and voting patterns. It is vital to stop Canadianmade weapons and components from reaching possibly abusive re-

gimes indirectly via the U.S. "backdoor," and we must end Canadian involvement with the fascist movement against civilians in the U.S.

I hope you will consider all this in your vote to support Bill C-233.

Thank you, John.

*Sharon Collingwood,
Stratford*

Thank you Loreena

Dear editor,

Thank you to Loreena McKennitt for writing, and the Stratford Times for publishing, her astute, articulate and fervent commentary on Justin Ling's Toronto Star opinion piece "In Minneapolis, Trump is making terror a reality," about Trump and his technocrat allies.

We live in difficult times. The more information we have about those who aim to rule the world, and their strategies, the better we are able to act together to arm ourselves against their terrifying techniques.

*Julia Schneider,
Stratford*

Thank you Robert

Dear editor,

I attended the second open house that Rob Ritz held at the Army Navy, on Thursday, Feb. 6.

ARCADIAN Solar Company made a presentation, showing what solar panels would look like on the roof of the GTR building. And the number of years it would take for payback.

The second presentation was made by a company that would cover the exterior walls of the GTR. The panels used are insulated, and weatherproofed, and come in a variety of colours and finishes.

I was impressed with the number of people that attended the second open house.

The mayor and council were invited so they could get a good look at Rob Ritz's proposal. The knowledge obtained from the project would help council make a decision.

After watching the GTR see proposal after proposal, now we have a chance to have the most spectacular community hub, that on completion would generate millions of dollars for the City of Stratford, as pointed out at the presentations.

*Lorne Bolton,
Stratford*

Submit your letter to the editor to us!
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Legion donates \$7,000 to Stratford General Hospital Foundation for cancer care bed

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

Late last week, members of the Stratford Royal Canadian Legion Branch 8 met with Stratford General Hospital Foundation executive director Cheryl Hunt to present a \$7,000 cheque toward the purchase of a cancer care treatment centre bed.

“Thank you to the Royal Canadian Legion Ontario Provincial Command Branches and Ladies Auxiliary Foundation for their donation of \$7,000 to-

ward a hospital bed at our Stratford site,” Hunt told members of Branch 8. “This year, we will be donating more than \$364,000 toward hospital beds. On behalf of your hospital, thank you for everything you do to support your community – it’s simply fantastic.”

All donations to the Legion support veterans and the community at large. The grant was made on behalf of the Royal Canadian Legion Ontario Provincial Command Branches and Ladies’ Auxiliary Charitable Foundation.



(AMANDA NELSON PHOTO)

Frank Mathieson, Eric Ross, Ontario Command; Steve Zurbrigg, poppy chair; Cheryl Hunt, executive director, Stratford General Hospital Foundation; Ken Albert, first vice-president; Tom Soper; Mary Helen McIntosh, president of the Ladies Auxiliary; and Linda Hunter.

Local health-care systems net over \$1.8M from province

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Local health-care systems received over \$1.8 million from the Province of Ontario this week.

On Feb. 6 MPP Matthew Rae announced that the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance (HPHA) received \$1,389,950, specifically for the operation of CT machines and to increase access to, and decrease waiting lists for, a variety of surgeries.

“Healthcare workers across Perth-Wellington deliver exceptional care every day,” said Rae in a media release. “I will continue working with local hospital leaders to advocate for the investments needed to strengthen services.”

“These funds will enable the HPHA team to improve access to care by reducing wait times for essential surgeries and CT scans, helping ensure patients receive the

care they need, when they need it most,” added Andrew Williams, president and CEO of HPHA. “The consistent support shown by MPP Rae – and, through him, Minister of Health Sylvia Jones and the Ontario government – in addressing the health-care needs of our communities is greatly appreciated and plays a vital role in sustaining the high-quality services our residents count on every day.”

That same week, on Feb. 10, Rae’s office announced an additional \$488,400 for Huron Perth Public Health I one-time funding. According to the announcement, the funding is aimed to support local public health initiatives and service delivery priorities.

“Public health units play a vital role in protecting our rural communities,” said Rae. “This investment supports prevention, preparedness and the frontline services families depend on every day.”

CFUW brings clean comedy to the Arden Park Hotel for International Women’s Day

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

The Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) is bringing a night of laughs to the Arden Park Hotel in celebration of International Women’s Day.

The Queens of Comedy show will take place in Stratford on Saturday, March 7, starting at 7:30 p.m. The show will feature Canadian comedians Deborah Kimmett and Ava Val, with all proceeds supporting the Local Community Food Centre.

Headliner Deborah Kimmett is a well-known Canadian comedy veteran, recognized for her sharp observations on life, culture and womanhood.

The clean, intelligent and insightful show will explore themes of womanhood in a smart and engaging way, and CFUW members say they are excited to bring it to Stratford.

“I’m really looking forward to hearing Deborah,” said CFUW member Wendy McNaughton. “She has so much expe-

rience, and she really knows what she’s doing. Yes, her objective is to make us laugh, but also to make us think, and I think that’s what makes good comedy.”

Joining Kimmett is Ava Val, a rising Canadian comedian whose relatable humour and perspective as a trans woman have been gaining attention across the country and online.

“Ava is from Whitby and just seems like such a great, talented comedian,” said McNaughton. “She brings her electric energy and fearless honesty to the stage, turning deeply personal experiences into laughter, bridging vulnerability and joy.”

International Women’s Day, celebrated annually on March 8, recognizes the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women and promotes gender equality.

Tickets to the event are \$45 per seat, with discounts available for tables of eight or more. Tickets can be purchased at ticketscene.ca/events/58060, and will also be available at the door on a first-come, first-served basis.

Stratford Winter Pride returns with a Canadian premiere for a celebrated playwright

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Stratford Winter Pride returns March 6-8 with a suite of shows for area residents and visitors, including a Canadian premiere from celebrated Canadian playwright Brad Fraser.

On March 7, two staged readings of *Shelley’s Shadow* will be performed at Here For Now Theatre. The play is a “slightly fictionalized” story of an out of work writer named David who becomes the reluctant caretaker for his upstairs neighbours, Shelley, a lesbian in her 80s with encroaching Alzheimer’s-related dementia, and her long-time canine companion, Shadow.

Organizer Bruce Duncan Skeaff told the Times that the reading, which is put on by Out & About Theatre Company, seemed natural for Winter Pride this year. Last year, the organizers put on a reading for

The Laramie Project.

“And it went over so well, that we decided to set up a theatre company for new and existing LGBTQ plays,” Skeaff said.

Winter Pride’s inception began five years ago, when organizers became aware of a lack of community events in the late winter. While there are plenty of celebrations in June, Skeaff said there was a desire for events throughout the year. Since that time the event has evolved, with organizers trying different things.

This year, along with Fraser’s play, organizers are hosting the Gay AF (GAF) Comedy Night on March 6, Colourful Words, a lively session of poetry and spoken word hosted by Stratford poet laureate David Stones, on March 6 and a drag brunch hosted by Troy Boy Entertainment on March 8 to close out the weekend.

For more information, visit <https://stratfordwinterpride.com/main>.

Perth County awards contract for courthouse roof replacement

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Perth County staff has awarded a contract to replace a leaking roof section at the recently renovated Perth County courthouse in Stratford.

At its Feb. 5 council meeting, councillors received a staff report recommending Semple Gooder Roofing Corporation as the successful bidder for the replacement of a flat roof located above a second-floor vault at the historic courthouse. The work will address ongoing water infiltration issues in an area of the building currently occupied by the Ministry of the Attorney General.

"The roof is located at the back of the courthouse over a vault on the second level, which is an area rented by our tenant, the Ministry of the Attorney General," said Perth County executive director of public works John McClelland. "Fifty-thousand dollars was budgeted for

the roof replacement, and it is a carryover project from 2025."

The contract, valued at \$43,950 plus HST, came in under the county's approved 2026 capital facilities budget. Under the county's procurement policy, the contract can be authorized and executed by senior staff without requiring additional council approval.

According to the report presented to council, the existing roof membrane has reached the end of its service life and requires replacement to prevent further damage to the structure below. The new roof system will consist of a self-healing modified bitumen membrane with a gravel surface, designed to offer enhanced resistance to ultraviolet exposure and water deterioration.

McClelland said with the inclusion of a special protective coating, the new roof will be warrantied for a lifespan of 25-30 years.

"I'm not a great lover of rooves ... but

the opportunity is probably there right now to put a steel roof on, and that would give us a longer lifespan and prevent leakage coming in there," Coun. Walter McKenzie suggested. "It's just a thought."

"We're dealing with the courthouse; if we are to alter anything with that courthouse as far as aesthetics and/or structural on the outside, we're going to have to go through the heritage committee and the heritage department," McClelland responded.

Three bids were submitted through the county's request-for-tender process, which closed on Dec. 17, 2025. Semple Gooder Roofing Corporation submitted the lowest bid, followed by Proteck Roofing and Sheet Metal Inc. and Atlas-Apex Roofing Inc. While the county has not previously worked with Semple Gooder, staff confirmed the contractor met all tender specifications and provided satisfactory references.

"Everything checks out with their sub-

mission and references," McClelland said.

Construction is expected to begin in early spring, weather permitting, with completion anticipated by the end of April 2026.

The roof replacement follows a series of major upgrades to the courthouse campus in recent years, including the installation of a three-storey, fully accessible elevator and associated interior renovations aimed at improving public access to the 19th-century building. A multi-million-dollar project connecting the courthouse to the former land registry office at 5 Huron St. also saw its formal ribbon-cutting last summer, consolidating Perth County administrative services at the site.

County staff noted the roof replacement is a necessary maintenance project to protect recent investments in the courthouse and ensure the long-term sustainability of the historic building.

Perth County council formally adopts 2026 budget

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Perth County council has formally adopted its 2026 operating and capital budget, approving a financial plan that maintains core service levels while directing new investment toward infrastructure, facilities and long-term sustainability.

The budget includes a total increase of \$2.64 million over 2025, representing an 8.75 per cent levy increase. Based on the average 2016 MPAC-assessed household value of \$284,000, the increase amounts to approximately \$89.24 per year, or \$1.72 per week, for the average household. The increase includes 1.76 per cent attributed to growth to the county's taxbase in 2025.

Perth County Warden Dean Trentowsky said in a press release that council and staff worked carefully to balance rising costs with the need to maintain essential services and invest in the county's future.

"I would like to thank my council colleagues for their detailed review and active participation throughout this year's budget process," Trentowsky said. "Both council and staff recognize the continued financial pressures and economic uncertainty faced by the ratepayers and their families, the farms and the business owners across Perth County. The county is doing the best it can to ensure that essential service levels are upheld in a fair and responsible manner, while continuing to invest in the future needs and opportunities for Perth County citizens."

The 2026 budget supports ongoing service delivery while advancing a number of key priorities, including 33 capital projects representing a total investment of \$9.6 million. Major infrastructure work includes the rehabilitation or replacement of four bridges and culverts, as well as the resurfacing of approximately 22 centreline kilometres of county roads.

Facility upgrades also feature prominently in the budget, with funding allocated for renovations to the provin-

cial-offences courtroom and county council chambers at the Perth County courthouse in Stratford. Council also approved a \$50,000 contribution toward the continued development of the Ontario Agri-Food Discovery Centre, along with funding for the creation of a new county-wide economic development and tourism wayfinding signage program.

In addition to capital and operating expenditures, the 2026 budget includes several financial measures aimed at long-term stability. Municipal drain work will be shifted to capital accounts to help smooth annual budget impacts, while additional funds will be directed to capital reserves to address infrastructure needs and reduce reliance on reserves for operational support.

The county's reserve contributions for 2026 represent 4.3 per cent of the total levy increase, a move staff say reflects a proactive approach to closing the infrastructure gap and managing costs downloaded by the province.

"I know we add only \$10 here, \$10 there to people's taxes, but in 2025, we had 62 more (ratepayers) in Perth East who cannot afford their taxes – so we're up to 380-something," said Coun. Rhonda Ehgoetz, one of Perth East's representatives on county council, prior to council's vote to adopt the 2026 budget bylaw at its Feb. 5 meeting. "I'm not sure where the other municipalities are at, but we have to keep that in mind."

"It's too easy just to keep upping and upping and upping and not think about those people that can't afford it. People have kids and they need to eat, and you're going to feed them before you pay your taxes. So, the numbers are increasing ... and I fear it's going to get worse. I think we're going to have to buckle down here and we're going to have to start making some cuts whether we want to or not because people just can't afford it."

Ultimately, Ehgoetz along with deputy warden Sue Orr and Coun. Bob Wilhelm – both of whom represent Perth

South on county council – voted against the adoption of the budget bylaw. With Coun. Doug Kellum absent at the Feb. 5 meeting, the result of the vote, weighted by population for each lower-tier municipality, was 10-6 in favour of adopting the budget.

Council was first presented with the proposed 2026 budget in December, followed by a series of detailed presentations throughout January. The final budget aligns with the county's 2023-2026 corporate strategic plan, which focuses on economic development, service effectiveness, community planning and long-term organizational sustainability.

Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. What is the highest mountain in Greece?
2. What is a wallaby?
3. The Tower of London is famously "guarded by" which kind of bird?
4. What human organ can regenerate itself?
5. Who won Album of the Year at the 2026 Grammy's?
6. Who did Anne Hathaway marry in 1582?
7. What three headed dog is guardian of the underworld?
8. Which illegal CIA program from the 1950s–1970s secretly experimented with mind control and psychological manipulation?
9. What does NATO stand for?
10. What does the Latin phrase caveat emptor translate to?

This week's answers are found on pg. 31

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT
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Who's Who in the Region

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Al's Auto Body



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An auto collision is more than just a mechanical failure; it is a stressful disruption to daily life. In the moments following an accident, motorists are often overwhelmed by insurance paperwork, repair logistics, and the daunting task of finding a trustworthy company. For seven decades, the residents of Stratford and Perth County have turned to one name to alleviate that anxiety: **Al's Auto Body**.

Collision repair is a complex process requiring specialized skills and state-of-the-art equipment. It is important to remember that as an Ontario motorist, it is your legal right to select the repair shop of your choice. You should not be pressured into using a facility just because it is preferred by an insurance company. When you choose **Al's Auto Body**, you can be confident that your vehicle will be repaired professionally, with all workmanship fully guaranteed.

Established in 1956, **Al's Auto Body** is proudly celebrating its 70th Anniversary this year. Locally owned and operated by **Dan and Sherry Keller**, the business stands as a testament to longevity in an industry that has seen massive technological shifts. What hasn't changed in those 70 years is **Al's Auto Body's** commitment to treating every vehicle as if it were their own.

Modern vehicles are complex machines, and collision repair requires a blend of high-tech equipment and old-school artistry. The facility is equipped to handle everything from minor cosmetic scratches to major structural overhauls. Key services include: Precision Frame Straightening: Utilizing advanced equipment to return a vehicle's structural integrity to factory specifications. Invisible Paint Matching: Expert painters utilize high-end technology to match original factory colors and finishes perfectly. Specialty Services: Beyond standard collision work, the shop is renowned for classic car restorations, rust repairs, and wheel alignments.

Al's Auto Body focuses on total customer service. They handle the complete process, including: Preparing comprehensive free estimates. Direct communication with insurance carriers. Managing all paperwork and claims processing. Arranging towing services, rental vehicles, or courtesy pick-up and delivery.

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A & A

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Many of us are guilty of neglecting regular car maintenance, often waiting until it is too late—resulting in a hefty repair bill or, worse, a broken-down vehicle. While routine care is frequently overlooked, it is crucial for ensuring your vehicle's safety, reliability, and longevity. Neglecting these services can lead to costly repairs, unexpected breakdowns, and potential safety hazards.

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Region's unemployment rate increased to 4.9% last month

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

According to the monthly report from the Four County Labour Market Planning Board, employment in the region by 200 (+0.1 per cent) in January, with gains in part-time employment (+4.8 per cent; +1,800) partially offset by losses in full-time employment (-1.1 per cent; -1,600). In January, the unemployment rate in the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula economic region increased by 0.9 percentage points to 4.9 per cent. Meanwhile, the provincial unemployment rate increased 0.1 percentage points this month to 7.1 per cent, both unadjusted for seasonality. Employment in the region increased in the goods-producing sector (-2.5 per cent, -1,700) as well as increased in the services-producing sector (+1.7 per cent; +1,900).

In January, the region's overall population aged 15+ increased by +200 whereas the labour force size increased by 2,000 people, resulting in the number of people not in the labour force in the region to decrease by 1,800. This increased the region's participation rate up by 0.7 percentage points to 63.5 per cent.

The goods-producing sector saw a decrease in overall employment numbers in January (-1,700, -2.5 per cent), with

losses in agriculture (-900, -7.5 per cent), utilities (-500, -3.9 per cent), and construction (-400, -1.6 per cent). On the other hand, gains experienced in manufacturing experienced an employment increase (+500, +3 per cent).

Overall employment in the services-producing sector saw an increase of +1.7 per cent (+1,900 people) in January. Accommodation and food services experienced the largest percentage growth (+800, +11.8 per cent) in employment followed by finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing (+400, +7.8 per cent), transportation and warehousing (+200, +6.5 per cent), educational services (+500, +5.7 per cent), and wholesale and retail trade (+1,200, +5.3 per cent). On the other hand, professional, scientific and technical services experienced the biggest percentage decrease in employment (-1,500, -12.8 per cent), followed by information, culture and recreation (-400, -6.8 per cent) and other services except public administration (-100, -0.9 per cent).

Current job postings for the Bruce, Grey, Huron and Perth region have increased overtime since the pandemic and can be found at www.connect2JOBS.ca. The current number of job postings, as of publication, exceeds 1,400.



(TIMES FILE PHOTO)

The region's employment figures for January were released this week, with the unemployment rate increased to 4.9 per cent.

Shelf Help with the Stratford Public Library

CJ NYSSSEN

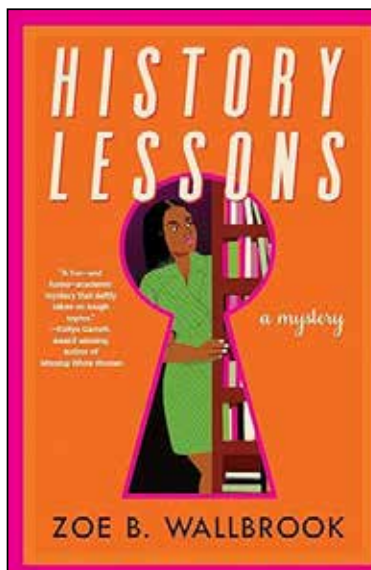
Stratford Public Library

History Lessons

By Zoe B. Wallbrook

FIC Wallb & Libby eBook

This story has it all... Action! Romance! Peanut stew! Professor Daphne Overture is one of the newest (and one of the few African-American) faculty members at ultra-traditional Harrison University. Her life is arranged pretty much how she likes it, and apart from the occasional disaster blind date, she is content -- until she is suddenly drawn into the grisly murder of the anthropology department's most publicly celebrated instructor, Sam Taylor. Right before his death Taylor sent a cryptic text to Daphne, and this causes the attacker to believe Daphne has the information they want. Now Daphne not only has to deal with departmental intrigue, daily micro (and macro) aggressions, and all the usual pressures on a new-



ly hired professor, but she must solve the riddle Taylor sent her before she becomes the next victim.

This tongue-in-cheek mystery features lively characters, a tangled plot, and an interesting setting: full-fledged academia! This is the first in a hopefully long line of Daphne Overture mysteries.

Visit tinyurl.com/5xnyyswx to find this and other similar titles at SPL!

Huron Perth District Women's Institute offering \$500 education award to graduating students

MARGARET MCINROY

Guest Contributor

The Huron Perth District Women's Institute (WI) is once again investing in the future of local youth through its annual Education Award, offering a \$500 scholarship to a graduating high school student from Huron or Perth counties.

The award is open to students who will be continuing their education as full-time learners in their first year at a post-secondary institution or entering an apprenticeship program. All secondary schools serving Huron and Perth counties have received application packages for the 2026 award.

Community involvement and personal growth are key values of the Women's Institute, and those elements will play a significant role in the selection process. In addition to meeting eligibility requirements, applicants must submit a minimum 500-word essay addressing the topic: "How would you entice young people to work in Huron or Perth counties after graduating from their post-secondary education?"

Applicants are also required to include three signed reference letters from community organizers and/or high school faculty members. A maximum of one reference letter may come from the applicant's high school.

Applications will be re-

viewed by members of the Huron Perth District WI education award committee, who will evaluate submissions based on community involvement, quality of the essay and overall merit.

The successful applicant will be invited to attend the Huron Perth District Women's Institute annual meeting on Wednesday, May 27 at the Howick Community Centre, where the Education Award will be formally presented.

For students considering further education and looking to make a positive impact in their home communities, the Huron Perth District WI Education Award offers both financial support and recognition of community-minded leadership.

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February 25 - Pamela Wideman

March 4th - Bruno Hacquebard

March 11 - Sarah McIntyre-Roy

March 18 - Jeff Laustsen

March 25 - Charlie Swartwood

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Sense of safety and belonging amongst Huron-Perth 2SLGBTQIA+ residents needs to be prioritized

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

United Way Perth-Huron's (UWPH) latest report on experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ residents revealed there is more work to be done to ensure the safety and inclusion of the community.

UWPH released the report from their social research and planning council on Feb. 4 and showed that several 2SLGBTQIA+ residents of Huron and Perth counties face high rates of discrimination, isolation and feel unseen and disconnected with the community at large.

Around 60 per cent of 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents either somewhat or strongly agreed with statements like "I feel like I belong" or "I feel accepted" in the community, with nearly 43 per cent somewhat or strongly disagreeing with the statement "I feel safe" in the community. Additionally, about 19 per cent of those with connections to Stratford strongly

felt that they were accepted by the community, compared to nearly five per cent in Perth County and 4.5 per cent in Huron County.

Around three-quarters of survey respondents said they witnessed discrimination towards the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, with more than half of respondents' part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community experiencing discrimination.

Those in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community who left the area had at least one of five common reasons for moving, including no sense of belonging (42.6 per cent), inability to express their identities (41.2 per cent), not enough 2SLGBTQIA+ people in the community (39.7 per cent), not enough services for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community (36.8 per cent) and that they did not feel safe (30.9 per cent).

"It is important to understand how people experience our communities differently and identity and experience that we have may differ from somebody else's

and information like this allows you to hear statements of how people have been impacted and perhaps develop great understanding and empathy towards other community members and look at ourselves and think about what we could be doing in our daily lives to improve the community for everybody," said Kristin Crane, director of community impact and research.

In partnership with the University of Guelph's School of Environmental Design and Rural Development and the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute, the local United Way had nearly 200 people participate in online surveys, workshops, and interviews. Participants were either current residents of the region or had lived there within the past five years.

The report recommended that moving forward, there needs to be a prioritization of creating safe spaces for 2SLGBTQIA+ people, social opportu-

nities that are accessible throughout the year, visible pride symbols and inclusive practices within community organizations and public spaces, and training and education about 2SLGBTQIA+ identities. Crane noted that schools are already making progressive steps forward in their curriculum and in the educational environment. However, there's room for improvement in the greater community.

"When you read the report, you see that people aren't really asking for anything for the most part that's very in depth. It's just having safe spaces to just engage in typical social activity. It could be board games. It could be listening to music. It's just your typical things," Crane said. "People are looking for more opportunities to do that in safe spaces where they can participate and that's sometimes with 2SLGBTQ community members but just with the community at large."

To read the full report online, visit <https://perthhuron.unitedway.ca/research>.

Safety boom to be installed in Lake Victoria after draining event last summer

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Lake Victoria will soon have a new safety feature upon its waters.

At the Stratford city council meeting on Feb. 9, representatives from the City of Stratford and the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) presented a report on the dramatic draining of Lake Victoria that took place last summer – and what is planned to be done to mitigate those risks in the future.

The main feature is a safety boom system with a debris skirt, a visible barrier of bright yellow pontoons that would be anchored and buoyed near the RT Orr Dam. It would warn anyone in the river from dam hazards and also reduce floating debris from entering the gates.

City and UTRCA staff also agreed on a number of mitigation measures as well, including:

- More frequent dam inspections by city staff
- Updating dam operation and maintenance Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)
- Increased and clear lines of communications between city staff and the UTRCA
- Additional debris removal after storm events

The saga began on July 24, 2025, when a storm brought down over 30 millimetres of rain in less than an hour over the region. The rainfall led to the opening of the sluice gate at the dam, what it is designed to do; however, as lake levels receded and the north gate attempted to close, lodged debris prevented that from happening.

The lake began to rapidly lower for a number of days, before the reservoir was low enough that staff could safely clear the debris and close the north gate on July 31.

As reported in the Sept. 5 edition of the Times, members of the Stratford Rotary Dragon Boat Festival, led by Robert Ritz, attempted to fill the lake by pumping water from an upstream quarry into the river system; however, the attempt wasn't needed. On the very same day the pumps were scheduled to be turned on, higher than expected precipitation filled Lake Victoria to pre-drawdown levels.

When asked by Coun. Brad Beatty how the city can make sure an event like that wouldn't happen again, Chris Tasker, manager of water and information management at the UTRCA, replied frankly.

"Ensuring that it absolutely cannot happen again is something that would be very, very costly. I'm not even sure whether it's possible," Tasker said. "I think what's important is to be trying to balance the appropriate measures to reduce the likelihood of that happening. With any under-shot gate, there's always the potential that something gets stuck in it."

The safety boom is not without cost either. It is estimated to be about \$350,000 and is included in the UTRCA's draft budget, as well as the city's 2026 operating budget. Notably, the project would be eligible for 50 per cent coverage through Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECI) funding, making the projected municipal share approximately 50 per cent of the total cost, according to the staff report.



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

After a torrential storm on July 24, 2025, debris caused a jam at the RT Orr Dam, making Lake Victoria to drain for about a week. Water levels across the reservoir were so low that the lake bed was visible in many places.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

A safety boom was recently installed at the Fanshawe Conservation Area's dam. Although quite larger than the boom to be installed at Lake Victoria, it is an example of what will stretch across the very end of the downtown water feature, near the RT Orr Dam.

Your Library Corner: February's Freedom to Read Week

BRANDI GILLET

Stratford Public Library

February is a month of celebration at the library – a celebration of stories, of diverse voices and of the fundamental freedom to read. Freedom to Read reminds us that libraries are more than places to borrow books; they are vital community spaces where curiosity is encouraged, critical thinking is supported and everyone has access to materials that reflect the full range of human experience.

At its heart, Freedom to Read is about ensuring that individuals can explore ideas freely, without censorship or barriers. It protects the right to encounter stories that inspire, challenge, comfort, provoke and expand our understanding of the world. As conversations about book challenges and intellectual freedom continue across North America, libraries remain steadfast in their commitment to openness, inclusion and access for all.

Freedom to Read Week: Feb. 22-28

That commitment is highlighted during Freedom to Read Week, Feb. 22-28. During this week, the Stratford Public Library is celebrating Freedom to Read with engaging displays of banned and challenged books, Freedom to Read buttons, and a selfie station where visitors can snap a photo with their favourite “challenged” title. The week also features a Freedom to Read trivia contest and a limited edition “Read Dangerously” library card.

Blind Date and Play Date with a Book

February is also an invitation to fall in love with reading all over again. Our Blind Date with a Book and Play Date with a Book offer surprise reads for adults and children. Wrapped in paper with only the first line revealed, each mystery book encourages readers to take a chance – with a prize draw ballot tucked inside for an extra bit of fun.

“Beat the Winter Blues” Happy Hour

To bring our community together during the winter season, we’re hosting a cozy February Happy Hour. Enjoy live local music, a hot chocolate bar, cookies and light literary-themed activities – all designed to offer warmth, connection and a fresh way to experience the library after hours.

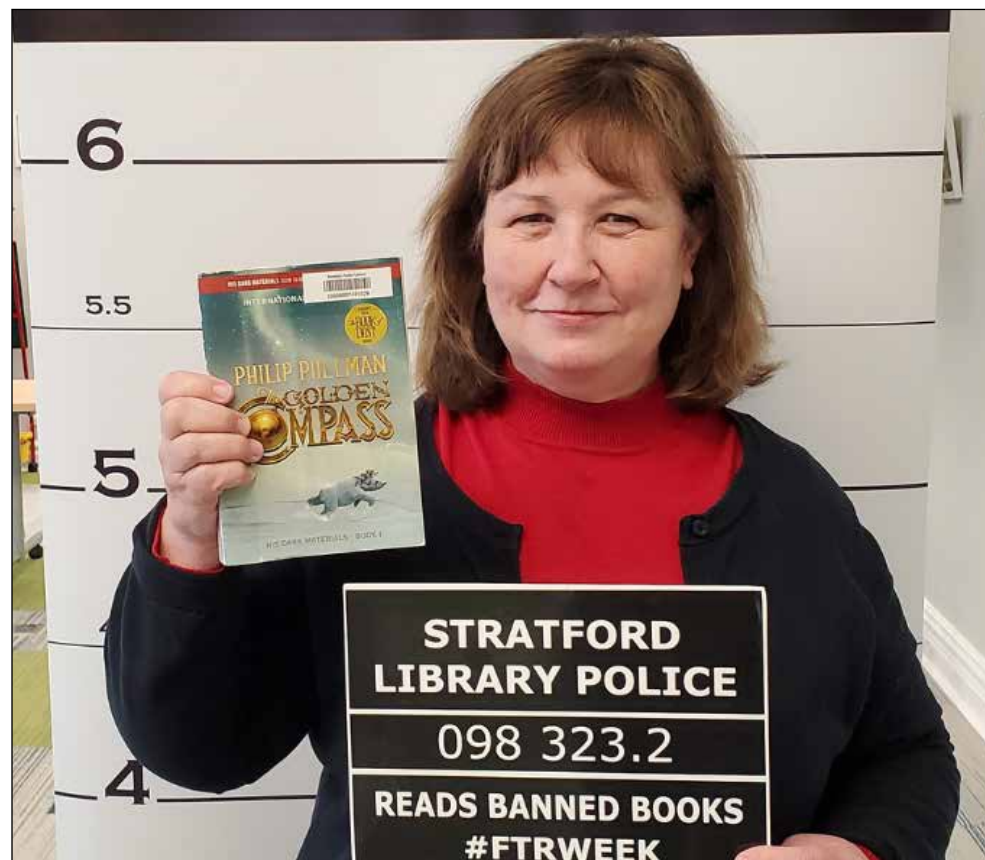
Olympic fun for all ages

As a CBC Olympic Viewing Location, the library is buzzing with activity, including trivia, themed booklists, and scavenger hunts for kids and families – a fun way to cheer on Team Canada while enjoying shared community space.

A month – and a week – to explore freely

Freedom to Read is more than a single week on the calendar, but Freedom to Read Week (Feb. 22–28) gives us a dedicated moment to reaffirm this core library value. This February, we invite you to join us in celebrating the freedom to explore ideas, discover new perspectives and find the stories that speak to you – all year long.

For more information, visit <https://splibrary.ca/>.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Public service librarian Heather Lister is one of the many Stratford librarians – and Stratford readers – caught with the infamously banned book *The Golden Compass* during February's Freedom to Read Week.

ONE CARE is looking for 100 volunteer drivers – could you be one of them?

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

In addition to reaching their fundraising to replace fleet as needed, ONE CARE Home & Community Support Services hopes to recruit several drivers.

ONE CARE offers accessible vehicles to transport seniors and adults with health challenges throughout Huron and Perth counties to ensure they make it to medical appointments, adult day programs, grocery shopping and more. Stephanie Ellens-Clark, executive director of ONE CARE, said that there's an increasing demand for out-of-town rides to places like London and Kitchener for more specialized appointments like MRIs.

“We know that these are such important appointments that people have to get to, so we're just trying to find what's the best way to get them there,” she said. “We have our fleet and we can offer the rights, but volunteers are such a vital part of the system too.”

To meet the demand, ONE CARE is looking to recruit at least 100 volunteer drivers. The target comes from the organization losing plenty of volunteers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Organizations across Canada experienced a similar drop in volunteerism.

“It's ambitious but hopefully doable to

be able meet the need,” Ellens-Clarke said.

Volunteer drivers can transport ONE CARE's clients with a flexible schedule that best meets their own needs. Drivers will also be reimbursed for kilometres driven.

The organization's Driven to Care Campaign, with a total fundraising goal of \$500,000, is raising money to purchase new accessible vehicles. ONE CARE purchased their first accessible vehicle with funds raised from their campaign. The organization added a mini van to their roster, although it's different from the other vehicles in the fleet.

“We wanted to try to see if we could be more efficient with some of those longer trips also with the mini-van, so it's great because we can have one individual in there and then get them to their appointments,” Ellens-Clark said. “We're really excited that the community came together to be able to support that and we're going to keep on raising funds to replace some of the other aging vehicles.”

Volunteer inquiries to be a driver of one of the ONE CARE vehicles can be done via email (volunteering@onecare-support.ca), by phone (1-877-502-8277, ask for volunteer services), or by filling out an online application by visiting <http://onecaresupport.ca/volunteers>.



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STRATFORDTIMESSPORTS

Warriors endured a rough homestand weekend at home

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY
Times Correspondent

The Stratford Hunter Steel Warriors played a pivotal three-on-three homestand as they faced the Chatham Maroons, Waterloo Siskins and St. Marys Lincolns at the William Allman Memorial Arena.

As the Warriors prepared for the key slate of games, Max Wildfong, Quinn Kipfer and head coach Dave Williams spoke to the Times earlier in the week about the matchups.

“It’s going to be a really good test. All three teams playing are of high quality. They’re having a lot of success. You put in that we’re playing all three back-to-back nights, this little added extra challenge in there,” Williams said.

“But I liked how we practiced this week. I thought our guys practiced with a lot of energy and focus and we seem to try to bring that to all three games this weekend.”

“We know it’s going to be a long weekend, and just kind of take it game by game and make sure we’re doing all the right things that we’ve been preaching all week of practice,” Kipfer said.

“We’re just gonna play hard, play our game and stick to our systems,” Wildfong said.

The Warriors kicked off the homestand

against the visiting Maroons on Feb. 6. In front of the 870 fans who braved the cold weather to attend the game, they witnessed an equally chilling offensive performance from the visitors.

Chatham opened the scoring at 4:02 as the goal came off the glove of the Stratford starting netminder, Noah Bender. The Maroons struck again at 5:27 and increased their lead to 3-0 as the shot went between the pads of Bender at the 9:15 mark. Following the third goal, Bender was relieved from the game for Gage Hurst.

Things continued to spiral for the Warriors in the second period as Chatham added to their lead at 6:51. Evan Arnold’s eleventh of the season from McQuen Haylock just over a minute later put the home side on the board. Still, the Maroons responded with eight minutes remaining to put the game out of reach.

Chatham added a pair of goals at 2:45 and 9:33 to patten the lead and walk out of the Allman with the 7-1 win. Bender was credited with the loss as he allowed three goals in six shots in over nine minutes of play, while Hurst allowed four goals in 17 shots in relief.

After the game, Williams reflected on the tough loss.

“Oh, we definitely need to be a lot better than we were. I mean, when you get behind three nothing 10 minutes into the game against ... an excellent team, it’s a tough hole to climb out of,” Williams said.

“You can’t have those situations where you’re down that quickly to a team like that. Couldn’t get away, back out of it. There were parts of the second period that I actually liked. I thought we found some o-zone time in the second period. But to a man, we need to be better.”

The Warriors continued their homestand on Feb. 7 against the Waterloo Siskins.

Cruz Ferguson opened the scoring for the Warriors from Haden Frayne and Will Coward midway through the first period to lead 1-0 through 20 minutes.

Wildfong scored his 18th of the season from Kipfer and Coen Galbraith to put the Warriors ahead 2-0 at 5:45. Waterloo



Stratford forward Rhyse Brown battles with St. Marys defenceman Luke McMillan along the boards during the game at the Allman Arena on Feb. 8, 2026.

responded with the late goal before the end of the middle frame to close the deficit to one heading into the third.

The Siskins would then tie the game midway through the third period and win the game 63 seconds into overtime to pick up an additional point. Stratford netminder Hurst picked up the loss with 19 saves out of 22 shots on goal.

Williams was not pleased with the team’s lack of scoring in a game that was in the cards.

“We got a point out of it. Still need to generate more offence. Still need longer, sustained periods of offence from all our groups. We’re getting it from some and inconsistently from others, but we still need to find ways to create better scoring opportunities than we’re having. I mean, we’ve got to score three to win. That always seems to be a bit of a standard thought in the game of hockey that you keep a team to two, you’ve got to score three, and we need to get some guys here scoring some goals,” Williams said.

“Guys need to be consistently generating offensive opportunities, and we’re not doing that right now. On the other side of the pocket, we’re struggling with some of

our decisions. We’re forcing pucks and I think playing a little bit uncharacteristic to the way we were playing when you know we were winning some hockey games. So we’ve got to look after, and we’ve got to fix it with the big game coming out tomorrow afternoon.”

On Feb. 8, the Warriors renewed their rivalry with the St. Marys Lincolns in a sunny winter late afternoon at the Allman Arena.

Galbraith got things started for the Warriors on a shorthanded breakaway goal, 11th of the season, in the mid-way mark of the first period. The Lincolns tied the game at one apiece with a last-minute goal.

Aaron Green’s eighth of the year put the Warriors back in the lead on the power-play at the 1:46 mark of the second period from Kipfer and Colin Slattery. Stratford doubled their lead with 5:46 to go in the period as Grady Murphy tallied his seventh of the season from Coward and Galbraith.

But the Lincolns scored another late-period goal in the middle frame to cut the Warriors’ lead to 3-2 heading into the third period. Stratford’s defence and the goaltending play from Hurst kept the Lincolns in check in the final frame, and Murphy iced the game with an unassisted empty net goal in the dying seconds to preserve the win.

Hurst made 15 saves to pick up his 11th win of the season.

Following the game, Hurst and Frayne spoke to the Times about the weekend-salvaging win over the rivals.

“I think it was a really tough week. We came into the weekend taking things a little too lightly. It was unfortunate what happened on Friday night. Saturday, we just couldn’t get her done in OT, and I think today the boys really just needed to win,” Hurst said.

Stratford Warriors 2025-26 Stats (as of February 9, 2026)					
Player	Pos	GP	G	A	PTS
Jonas Schmidt	F	33	17	17	34
Coen Galbraith	F	18	11	19	30
Max Wildfong	F	38	18	11	29
Quinn Kipfer	F	35	11	18	29
Colin Slattery	F	36	10	19	29
Lucas Minard	F	38	12	11	23
Joseph Curtin	D	39	4	15	19
Evan Arnold	F	31	11	7	18
Will Coward	D	35	1	17	18
Aaron Green	D	32	8	9	17
Dax Vader	F	37	5	12	17
Drew Hodge	D	39	3	13	16
Dominic Marshall	F	39	10	4	14
Grady Murphy	F	34	8	5	13
McQuen Haylock	F	38	3	10	13
Haden Frayne	D	35	2	10	12
Rhyse Brown	F	36	3	8	11
Jaxon Broda	D	12	2	7	9
Cruz Ferguson	F	8	5	2	7
Mateo Craievich	D	28	0	5	5
Colten Brenzil	F	2	1	0	1
Cody Billings	D	1	0	0	0
Goalies	Record	GAA		SV-%	
Noah Bender	13-9-0-1	2.90		0.897	
Gage Hurst	11-0-2-1	2.17		0.899	

GOHL Western Conference Standings (as of February 9, 2026)							
Team	W	L	OTL	SOL	PTS	GF	GA
Elmira Sugar Kings	30	6	2	1	63	185	100
Chatham Maroons	29	8	2	3	63	202	126
St. Marys Lincolns	30	8	2	0	62	162	88
Stratford Warriors	25	10	3	2	55	152	113
London Nationals	27	13	1	0	55	181	136
Waterloo Siskins	20	16	4	2	46	130	123
St. Thomas Stars	20	17	2	1	43	160	152
LaSalle Vipers	20	19	3	0	43	150	154
Strathroy Rockets	19	19	2	1	41	152	157
Listowel Cyclones	17	21	1	1	36	114	128
Komoka Kings	14	26	2	1	31	139	181
Sarnia Legionnaires	0	41	0	0	0	68	273

Pruim, Cameron and Hawkins recognized on Aces Grad Day, clinched playoff berth

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The Stratford Humphrey Fleet Service U18 AA Aces took part in the annual Aces Grad Day at the Stratford Rotary Complex on Feb. 7. The day-long event celebrated the outgoing players in the organization, and the U18 team secured a playoff berth with a 2-2 draw against the Kitchener Lady Rangers.

The three graduates of this team are Isabelle Pruim, Sloan Cameron and Bronwyn Hawkins.

Aces head coach Sean Cameron was very pleased with the whole day, as well as seeing his daughter, Aces goaltender Sloan, put on the playoff-clinching performance between the pipes.

"It meant the world to us. There was a buzz in the dressing room before the game. That point secured us our playoff berth. It was a huge point for us to come back in the third period like that to get two goals. I'm really happy with the production we got," Cameron said.

"I have to wear a lot of hats in this organization. So I wear the hat of being a president. I wear a hat of being a coach, but most importantly, I wear the hat of being a

dad. That was pretty special for me to see her play like that. She played so well, and I'm just so proud of her."

Pruim appreciates the opportunity to join the organization and was highly impressed with the all-day event.

"The community is super good here. It's only been my first year here, but I've honestly created a family with this team, and it's been an amazing year. Honestly, just my coach, Sean Cameron, he's amazing, and the support group we have here is amazing, and it's just great to play with this team," Pruim said.

"It was amazing. Honestly, the girls set up this beautiful thing in the room for us, and I cried myself. I didn't think I was going to cry, but it was an amazing experience. Just to have everyone set this up for us, it feels really good as a player to have that for my last minor hockey year."

The Aces ended a memorable weekend with a 1-0 victory over the Belmont Blazers at the Rotary Complex. Their three-point weekend raised their season record to 6-10-4-0. They will finish the regular season by hosting the Saugeen-Maitland Lightning on Feb. 13 and the Ayr Rockets on Feb. 14, both games at the Rotary Complex.

Warriors endured a rough homestand weekend at William Allman Arena

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

"It was huge to get two points out of this weekend. Obviously, Friday and Saturday didn't go the way we wanted. It was a lack of just competing for 64 minutes (on Saturday), and I think we really brought it today. We just really wanted this game today, and did everything we could," Frayne said.

Galbraith described how his breakaway goal was set up.

"It was a good way to get it started. I was just happy I got in the slot and was able to put on the ice, especially with the ability to control in the last second. I bobbled it but was able to get it back and try the net," Galbraith said.

Williams praised the team's performance and cited strong defensive play against the rival Lincolns.

"It was a nice effort here this afternoon by the guys. I thought we were good right from the get-go, and it'll put three good periods together. I thought both teams played a really solid game," Williams said.

"I don't think either team gave the other side much room out there defensively. I thought both teams defended really well. And, you know, you had to battle for every inch out there."

When asked about the goaltending decision for the game, Williams says it's about giving Hurst the test to play against a top conference team in preparation for the playoffs.

"Nothing specific, (Hurst has) been playing well. So, I just thought we would give him the opportunity to play here this afternoon against St. Marys, and he played a solid game," Williams said.

"Going into the playoffs, you've got to be able to have two guys who are capable of playing. On any given night, you've got to be able to flip and go to the other guy."

The Warriors will host Pass-The-Bucket Night in support of the United Way as they play the Sarnia Legionnaires for the last time this season on Feb. 13 at the Allman Arena, followed by a trip to Elmira for the weekend evening matchup with the Sugar Kings on Feb. 15.

Lakers shut out the Panthers and outlast the 99ers

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

Looking to bounce back from the rough loss to the London Jr. Knights the previous weekend, the Huron-Perth U16 AAA Lakers continued their final homestand of the ALLIANCE U16 regular season, facing the Sun County Panthers and the Brantford 99ers at the Stratford Rotary Complex.

On Feb. 6, the Lakers faced the Panthers. Evan Miller scored his 15th of the season, assisted by Luke Mclean and Christian Circelli, to open the scoring early in the first period. Midway through the opening frame, Mclean notched his eighth of the season, assisted by Circelli and Miller, to give the Lakers a 2-0 lead.

Ethan Bridges scored his 14th goal of the season with assists from Evan Fisher and Sullivan Kipfer to close the opening period, putting the Lakers ahead 3-0. In the second period, Declan McCot-

ter added his 28th goal of the season on the power play, assisted by Bridges and Wyatt Finch, to extend the lead to 4-0. The score remained unchanged for the rest of the game, with netminder Tyler Wilkinson earning his first shutout with the team in a 4-0 win.

The Lakers faced their next big test against the Brantford 99ers on Feb. 8. In a game with significant playoff implications, the 99ers scored first in the first period, but the Lakers responded with four unanswered goals in the second from Blake Moore, Miller, Joseph Haskett and Callum Brooks to take a 4-1 lead. Bridges notched his 15th of the season to put the Lakers ahead 5-1 early in the third, and the Lakers held off the 99ers' late offensive push for the 5-3 win.

The Lakers conclude their regular season at home in the Rotary Complex against the Windsor Jr. Spitfires on Feb. 13 and against Brantford on Feb. 15.

U18 Warriors frustrated in latest results

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The Stratford U18 AA Warriors faced the London Jr. Knights White on Feb. 4 at the Stratford Rotary Complex, hoping to gain ground for a higher seeding as the U18 ALLIANCE A/AA playoffs drew closer.

Stratford opened the scoring under 90 seconds into the game. London would tie the game with the goal late in the opening frame, and the game remained 1-1 after the first period.

4:22 into the second period, the visitors took the lead, but the Warriors responded with a late-period goal of their own with 69 seconds remaining in the middle frame to tie the game heading into the final frame.

But London took control of the game and the lead for good with the winner at 6:06 into the third period, followed by two more halfway through the period and with 7:07 remaining.

Carter Keating picked up the loss in net for the Warriors. Following the game, Warriors head coach Riley Mathieson appeared visibly frustrated with the outcome of the game.

"I thought we got off to a strong start, and we did what we needed to do in the first period to lead to success later in the game. I think that there were times when we got a little distracted and got in the way of ourselves with some self-inflicted

mistakes," Mathieson said.

"The third period was evidence of a bit of a snowball effect of that happening. I think that's a team we can be successful against. It just comes down to us doing all the little things, and night in the third period, you didn't see that, and that's why we saw the result that we did."

Mathieson then emphasized improving fundamentals ahead of their next game in Woodstock.

"The game plan for the next one is to not get in the way of ourselves. We know what we need to do to be successful. We need to address the areas in the blue line. We need to win our one-on-one battles. You can take care of the defensive side of the puck. And we need to eliminate distractions," Mathieson said.

"I think if we do that against Woodstock, we'll be successful, especially on the big ice over in Woodstock. We need to really look after our positioning and keep them on the outside. Other than that, we have all the tools we need to succeed. It's just a matter of us going out and doing it."

The Warriors travelled to Woodstock to play against the Jr. Navy Vets on Feb. 7. Woodstock scored three goals in the first period, leading to a 5-2 defeat for the Warriors. Two days later, on Feb. 9, the Warriors went to Brantford to face the 99ers. The game was tied early in the third period, resulting in a 2-2 draw.

Stratford will travel to Cambridge to face the Jr. RedHawks on Feb. 15.

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MINOR SPORTS **SCRAPBOOK**



(PAIGE CAMPBELL PHOTO)

Louis Molenhuis unleashes a shot from the wing during the U12 BB Stratford Warriors game last Saturday.



(PAIGE CAMPBELL PHOTO)

Grayson DeGroot stares down an incoming shooter during this past Sunday's U13 BB Stratford Warriors game.

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(PAIGE CAMPBELL PHOTO)

Kara Rolph flies up the ice while carrying the puck during the U18 A Stratford Aces game last Saturday.



(PAIGE CAMPBELL PHOTO)

Cam Medhurst releases a wrist shot off the rush during last Saturday's U18 BB Stratford Aces game.

Five Mike's Lanes bowlers shine at provincial tournament in Brantford

NICHELE BUTCHER-BONTRUP

Guest Contributor

Five youth bowlers from Mike's Bowling Lanes in Stratford delivered an impressive performance at the Ontario Youth Challenge Provincial Round, held Jan. 11 at Echo Bowl in Brantford.

Competing as part of the Grand River team, the five bowlers from Mike's Lanes took part in a highly competitive seven-game scratch tournament across three divisions, including mixed, men's and ladies'.

The event brought together some of the top youth bowlers in the province, all competing for the chance to advance to the Ontario Winter Games and a spot on the national team.

The mixed team, consisting of Dominic Boyles Keating, Jocelyn Gethke, Wiatt Robinson, Owen Martin and Claire Turner, had an outstanding showing, finishing in first place with 33 points. Their strong teamwork and consistent performances secured them the top spot and earned them a place at the upcoming winter games.

In the men's division, Zachary Clarke and Alex Ward finished in fourth place with 27 points, narrowly missing the podium in a tightly-contested field.

The ladies' division saw Payton Petrie finishing in a strong fourth place with 29 points, demonstrating skill and determination against tough competition.

Mike's Lanes bowlers posted impressive individual results. Boyles Keating recorded a total pinfall of



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Claire Turner, Jocelyn Gethke, coach Josh Eldridge (back), Owen Martin, Wiatt Robinson, Dominic Boyles Keating and Ontario Five-Pin Bowling Association representative Sarah Gorman. The team of youth bowlers representing Mike's Bowling Lanes made up the Grand River mixed team that won gold at the Ontario Youth Challenge Provincial Round on Jan. 11 at Echo Bowl in Brantford.

1,647, placing fourth overall in singles. Clarke finished with a total of 1,587 pins, earning 11th place overall and also securing a spot at the Ontario Winter Games.

The results mark a proud moment for Mike's Lanes and the Grand River team, showcasing the talent, dedication and hard work of these young athletes.



(STACY JORDAN PHOTOS)

Cedarcroft Place Retirement Residence held the All Seniors Care Senior Games this week, with residents enjoying friendly competition in bocce ball, cornhole and shuffleboard, among others. The games were created to help lift spirits during the

final weeks of winter and encourage residents to stay active and connected, competing with other seniors across the country. Pictured here are Pat Nilsson, Stuart Romphf, Norma Elliott, Cathy Vanbergen, MaryAnn Herold and Jessica Mills in the front. In the back are Stratford Police Service (SPS) Const. Darren Fischer, Perth-Wellington MP John Nater, Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma, SPS Const. Wanda Hughes and Lisa Walter of the Stratford Fire Department.



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Dorothy Calder plays cornhole during the games.

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Youth Bowl Canada Scores

BOWLASAURUS

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Owen Farthing 118
Royce Butcher-Cassidy 103
Evangeline Butcher-Bontrup 108

PEE-WEE

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Grey Davidson 221 series
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Annika Klomp 103

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Anna Ward 155,167,170-492 series
Brienne Bauer 182,221-547 series
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Ryan Scheerer 168,197-501 series

Charlee Koyle 221-498 series

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Austin Bauer 196,209,217-537 series
Peyton Boyles Keating 154,186,223
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Zachary Clarke 198,200-543 series
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Jim Baker 228
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Bernice Dale 217,231
Linda Barraclough 217
Cindy Baker 202

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Steven Walker 210,245,256-711,(277)
Mike Ormond 205
Paul Boyd 241
Autumn Sladtlander 263
Shawn Yampolsky 180(+70 POA)
Nichele Butcher 203, 221

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Maddie Jenner 168
Luke Patterson 162,174,179,223
Tiffany Keller 162,188-352 triple

Meghan O Donovan 150,162
Courtney Moore 179,159
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Michael Hitchcock 150,167,175
Jacob Kaufman 158,170,197
Norm Schenck 161,163,182
Luca Scipone 102
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Rob Vannatter 152,154
Jeff Paul 116
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Andy Van Schaik 201
Matthew Fischer 158

Irish set course for the playoff rematch against the Jets

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The Stratford Irish will begin their pursuit of the NPHL Metropolitan League Championship against a familiar opponent from last season's WOSHL Championship, the Strathroy Jets, in the opening round of the Metropolitan League Playoffs.

Both teams split their regular-season series at two games apiece, with each team winning one game at their home barn.

The series will have an alternating home format, with the second-seeded Jets hosting games 1, 3, and, if needed, games 5 and 7. Meanwhile, the third-seeded Stratford will host games 2, 4, and, if necessary, game 6.

Stratford will travel to Strathroy for Game 1 on Feb. 13, then return to the Allman Arena for Game 2 on Feb. 14 at 5:30 p.m. Game 3 will be in Strathroy

on Feb. 21, with Game 4 at the Allman Arena on Feb. 22 at 3:30 pm.

If the series continues past Game 4, Game 5 will start on Feb. 27 in Strathroy, and Game 6 might be held at the Allman on Feb. 28. As of now, there is no update on Game 7.

Round 1 playoff schedule – Strathroy (2) vs. Stratford (3)

Game 1 – Stratford vs. Strathroy (Feb. 13 – 7:30 p.m.)

Game 2 – Stratford vs. Strathroy (Feb. 14 – 5:30 p.m. – Allman Arena)

Game 3 – Stratford vs. Strathroy (Feb. 21 – 5:30 p.m.)

Game 4 – Stratford vs. Strathroy (Feb. 22 – 3:30 p.m. – Allman Arena)

Game 5 – Stratford vs. Strathroy (Feb. 27 – 7:30 p.m.)*

Game 6 – Stratford vs. Strathroy (Feb. 28 – 5:30 PM – Allman Arena)*

Game 7 – To be determined (* - if necessary)

Spring Master Zone Round sends local youth bowlers to Provincials



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Noah Saunders, Larry Palmby and Abigail Smith. Saunders and Smith, coached by Palmby, took first place in the Spring Master Zone Round to advance to the provincial championships.

NICHELE BUTCHER-BONTRUP

Guest Contributor

The Spring Master Zone Round, held on Feb. 1, delivered an exciting day of competition and standout performances, with local athletes earning top honours and a spot at provincials.

Leading the way, the team of Noah Saunders, Abigail Smith and coach Larry Palmby, won first place, securing their advancement to the provincial championships.

Another strong performance from Mike's Lanes bowlers came from the

team of Ella MacDonald, Brienne Bauer and Brent Furtney, who finished in fourth place.

Their performance reflected dedication, focus and steady improvement throughout the competition.

In individual achievements, Brienne Bauer earned the Junior Flat Score award, posting an impressive triple score of 560, one of the highest individual marks of the day.

For more news and events, follow the Mike's Lanes 5 Pin Bowling Association page on Facebook.

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT
WWW.STRATFORDTIMES.COM**

Sitting down with Here For Now Theatre's new executive director

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Here For Now Theatre has entered a new phase of its growth with the appointment of Crystal Spicer as the company's first-ever executive director, reflecting both the organization's rapid expansion and setting the stage for its long-term sustainability in Stratford's independent theatre scene.

For Spicer, the role represents a return to her theatrical roots.

"My background is in theatre," she said. "Before going out to Calgary, I was at the National Arts Centre as the technical director for English theatre for eight years. It's really where I would say my passion lives. ... My heart's always been in theatre, so it's kind of a return to that."

Spicer said she was drawn not only to the discipline itself, but to Here For Now Theatre's vision and trajectory since it was first founded as an outdoor-theatre alternative at the onset of the pandemic.

"When I first came back to Stratford just over two years ago, they were out in the tent at the museum," she said. "Then they got this beautiful building and all these amazing things have happened. ... Here For Now is just going to keep on growing, and I just want to be part of it."

Founder and artistic director Fiona Mongillo said the decision to create an executive director role came after a year of unprecedented growth that pushed the company beyond what could be sustained by a small leadership team.

"Last year just kind of exploded in growth," Mongillo said. "We doubled our capacity, we added a winter season, we have a new building and we can't keep up with demand in a lot of ways."

She said the company's summer season sold at 92 per cent capacity, while its first-ever winter season sold at 85 per cent



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

New executive director Crystal Spicer sits with Here For Now Theatre founder and artistic director Fiona Mongillo inside the Rose McQueen Theatre in Stratford.

– a level of success that also revealed the limits of trying to manage everything internally.

"I got to a point this summer where for years I felt like I could have every bank transaction in my brain, I could read every play, I could respond to every donor personally – I just had to work every waking moment of my life," Mongillo said, also crediting fellow actor Siobhan O'Malley for stepping in to help run the theatre company in its early years before turning her focus to Here For Now's marketing and communications.

"But then last year, it just got too big for that to be the reality of how things run."

With Spicer stepping into the executive director role, Mongillo said she can now focus fully on the artistic side of the company.

didn't have enough time to do anything thoroughly."

Spicer said her role will initially focus on establishing strong administrative foundations – from finances and contracts to staff supervision and technical operations – before expanding into national partnerships and profile-building.

"Once those things become routine, there's going to be space for conversations and growing the Here For Now portfolio and profile throughout the country and representing Here For Now in our own local community as well, which is really important," she said.

Mongillo said the partnership works because of complementary skill sets.

"I am not somebody who has a huge amount of technical background or expertise," she said. "So, it's like we have a perfect blending of skill sets to really run this company well."

As Spicer prepares for her first summer season with Here For Now, she said her focus is on integration and support.

"You're jumping into a puzzle and you're going to figure out what your part is and how it fits," she said. "We have a great staff, great volunteers and great supporters, and it's great just being here to support everybody as I enter my first summer with Here For Now."

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David Letterman signs on as executive producer for Ballinran documentary on Paul Shaffer

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Stratford production company Ballinran Entertainment and its partners announced last week that David Letterman and his production company, Worldwide Pants, have signed on as executive producers for an upcoming documentary, *Say Hello to Our Good Friend Paul Shaffer*.

On behalf of his partners at Grace Street Media and White Pine Pictures, Ballinran executive producer Craig Thompson told the *Stratford Times* the agreement with Shaffer's longtime friend and colleague represents a significant endorsement of the project – a timely story about one of the most influential figures in music and television.

"Paul Shaffer is a longtime friend of David's, and of course, Paul was his band-leader for 30 years, sidekick, collaborator and friend, and it just made sense at the point where we've assembled and we've got a lot of momentum for the project," Thompson said.

"What you do with these films – and that's why you see so many executive producers on the credits – is you need big

names to help get the streaming deals and help you get through the door."

Thompson said there is a real appetite right now for documentaries on influential people, be it John Candy: *I Like Me* or a project in the works on the life and career of comedian Martin Short.

Say Hello to Our Good Friend Paul Shaffer will chronicle Shaffer's rise from Thunder Bay to the world stage; his start in *Godspell*, his years with the original *Saturday Night Live* Band, three decades as David Letterman's bandleader and comic foil, and collaborations with icons including James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Sly Stone and Ray Charles.

While the film will be told through the lens of Shaffer's life and rise to fame, Thompson said Shaffer will also serve as a guide through the eras of pop music, from the '60s to modern day – a concept that, along with the notion of working with an all-Canadian production team, helped convince Shaffer to do this film.

"Any contribution I have been lucky enough to make to the world of music and comedy has only been possible thanks to my working alongside David Letterman," Shaffer said in a press release. "That's

why Worldwide Pants joining to help tell my story is a dream I cannot wait to share with all of you."

"Paul Shaffer is a show-business friend who became a real friend; a comedic partner whose quickness and timing saved me night after night (and) a composer, arranger and performer with endless range," added Letterman in the release. "His vast knowledge and list of collaborators in music make him a living rock-and-roll hall-of-famer. There is no one more worthy of an examination of his life and work."

Also joining as executive producer is Tom Keaney, Emmy-Award-winning executive producer of Letterman's *My Next Guest Needs No Introduction* for Netflix, and executive producer of the Academy Award shortlisted documentary, *ENO*, directed by Gary Hustwit.

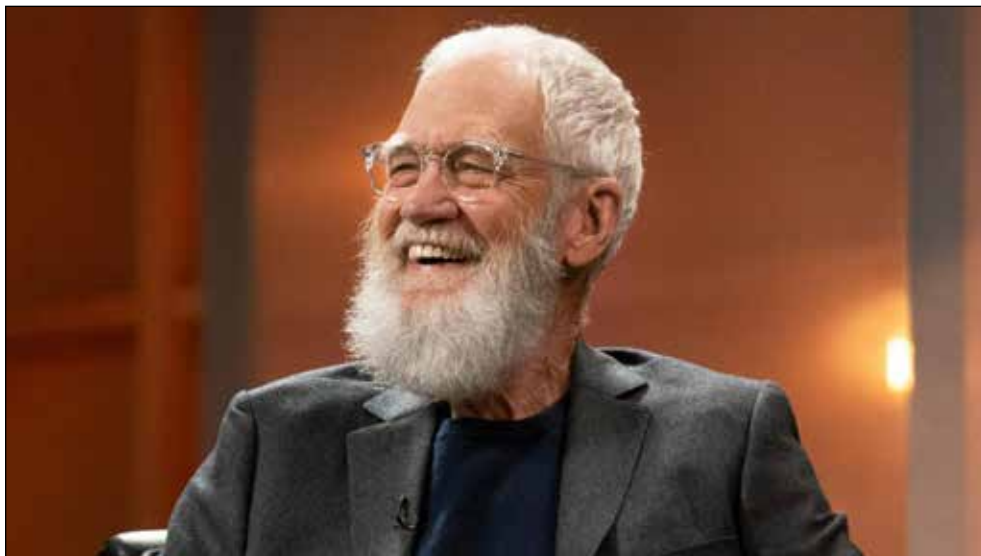
The documentary is represented internationally by Travis Tammero of the Independent Film Group at UTA. The project was first announced during the Toronto International Film Festival and continues to move forward with strong creative momentum and industry interest.

While the film won't be shot locally, Thompson said much of the post- and

pre-production work associated with it will be done in Stratford, offering a boost for the local economy and creating buzz for Ballinran's ongoing development of Stageview Studios – a film and television studio planned in the heart of the Festival City.

"I am trying to invest in the creative economy of Stratford by trying to attract big-name projects," Thompson said. "... Stratford is going to be the place where much of the work on the film will be done. For example, Scott McKowen the graphic designer did the pitch package; Hayden, who works for me, did the sizzle reel. All of that stuff has been developed here in Stratford. We're like the content factory ... and it's really tied to my efforts to boost the film economy in the region.

"... I've done a lot of films with well-known people like Stephen Hawking, William Shatner and Alex Trebek, and one leads to another. I wouldn't be getting this film with Paul Shaffer if it wasn't for this 30-year track record that we've had. ... There's a level of trust ... and it could lead to other things down the road, so it's a boost-up for the local economy."



(BALLINRAN ENTERTAINMENT PHOTOS)

David Letterman (left) has signed on as an executive producer for Stratford production company Ballinran Entertainment's upcoming documentary on Paul Shaffer (right), *Say Hello to Our Good Friend Paul Shaffer*.

CFUW Stratford to host International Women's Day breakfast March 7

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

The Canadian Federation of University Women Stratford (CFUW) will host its International Women's Day breakfast on March 7 at 8:30 a.m. at the Arden Park Hotel.

The public is invited to attend the event, which will feature keynote speaker Maryscott (Scotty) Greenwood.

Greenwood is the global head of government relations for Manulife and an expert in Canada-U.S. relations. A dynamic leader, storyteller and strategic thinker, her career spans international diplomacy, corporate leadership and

senior roles in public policy and global business. She brings a strong voice to discussions about global trade, innovation and economic opportunity.

Her March 7 talk will focus on women entrepreneurs around the world and will offer insight, inspiration and a fresh perspective on how women are shaping economies and communities globally.

"We're looking for people to be inspired and educated," said CFUW Stratford president Cambria Ravenhill. "It's a very fun breakfast for everyone. Last year, the energy in the room was fabulous. Everybody was just having a good time when they came in the door, and it was just wonderful."

Following Greenwood's keynote address, she will take part in an interview and interactive question-and-answer session moderated by Deanna Horton. Horton is a distinguished fellow at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Toronto. Audience members will have the opportunity to ask questions, share perspectives and engage directly with Greenwood.

Funds raised from the event will support the CFUW Stratford scholarship program, which has been in place for 70 years and provides scholarships to young women to help further their education.

The lead sponsor for the event is KDB Law, an all-women law firm in downtown Stratford.

Individual tickets are available, and businesses can sponsor a table.

CFUW Stratford was founded in 1954 with an initial group of 30 women. These women fought for access to post-secondary education for all women. Today, they welcome all women in and around Stratford, those with a university or college degree as well as women who have followed less traditional career paths, who share the CFUW goals.

Tickets to this year's women's day event can be purchased through Ticketscene at ticketscene.ca/events/57826.

Opinions

Love beyond roses



IRENE ROTH

Times Columnist

February arrives wrapped in red and pink – store windows crowded with roses, chocolates and cards promising grand declarations. It's a season that celebrates love loudly. But for many of us, the most meaningful love doesn't arrive in bouquets or candlelit dinners. It shows up quietly, in ordinary moments, without fanfare. And it's this quieter love that carries us through the long winter days and into the rest of the year.

Love beyond roses is the love of showing up. It's the person who texts, "Did you get home okay?" It's the friend who remembers how you take your tea. It's the neighbour who clears a patch of sidewalk for you after a snowfall. None of these gestures come with ribbons, yet they hold a deep steadiness that lasts far longer than flowers ever could.

This kind of love is patient. It waits without resentment. It understands that not everyone has the energy for constant togetherness, that silence can sometimes be a form of care. It doesn't demand proof. It trusts presence over performance. In a culture that often confuses intensity with intimacy, this quieter love reminds us that consistency is its own romance.

There is love in listening – true listening, without interrupting, fixing or rushing someone toward optimism. When someone sits with us in grief, confusion, or exhaustion and doesn't try

to make it better, that is love. It says, "You don't need to be different for me to stay." In many ways, this may be the most radical form of affection we can offer one another.

Love beyond roses is also deeply practical. It looks like shared responsibilities, divided labour and mutual respect. It's the person who notices what needs doing and simply does it. It's partnership that doesn't keep score. It's care that doesn't ask for applause. This kind of love builds lives rather than moments.

It also asks us to soften our expectations of one another. People love differently – some through words, others through actions, presence, or loyalty. When we stop insisting that love look a certain way, we make room for it to arrive as it truly is. We learn to receive care without comparison and to appreciate effort without demanding perfection.

There is love, too, in forgiveness – both given and received. Not the kind that erases account-

ability, but the kind that allows for human imperfection. Love that understands we will disappoint one another, miss cues, say the wrong thing, or fail to show up exactly as hoped. Choosing to stay open despite these flaws is a quiet, courageous act.

And then there is self-love – the most overlooked love of all, especially in February. Amid all the messages urging us to give more, do more, feel more, self-love gently insists on rest. It asks us to speak kindly to ourselves. It reminds us that worth isn't measured by productivity or how much we can give away before we're depleted. Self-love is choosing nourishment over punishment, boundaries over guilt, compassion over comparison.

For those who are single, grieving, caregiving, chronically ill or simply tired, Valentine's Day can feel alienating. But love does not belong exclusively to couples or calendars. Love lives in friendships that stretch across decades, in pets who greet us

like miracles at the door, in communities that make space for vulnerability and in small daily rituals that keep us grounded.

As winter stretches on, love often looks like endurance. It is the decision to keep caring when things feel heavy, repetitive, or uncertain. It is the commitment to gentleness during seasons that feel emotionally sparse. This kind of love does not sparkle – but it sustains.

Perhaps the most important reminder of all is that love is not something we have to earn by being cheerful, productive, or easy to be around. We are worthy of love in our tiredness, our grief, our uncertainty and our becoming. Love beyond roses meets us where we are, not where we think we should be.

So this February, let the roses be lovely – but don't stop there. Look for the love that brings soup instead of champagne, that sends a message instead of a card, that stays instead of dazzles. That is the love that lasts.

UNTIL SOON. LIVE WELL: TRAVELLERS



STUART LENDER

Times Columnist

I have been blessed in my small and insignificant, grand and all-important life. I'm reminded of it often. How sublime and ridiculous life can be, and how calculated and random. Usually when I'm reminded of my blessings, I realize I'm blessed too in how fortunate I've been to be able to see that arbitrary element, and to share many of my days with those I choose to share them with.

It's my opinion, at least through my own observation, that sometimes people enter and leave one's life because they were meant to – either through a lapse in what was once a mutual situation or because of a personal blindness, or due to a distance or break in life's circumstances. And there are times when I look back fondly on some earlier years, usually to

high school friends, a passionate relationship, a missed chance – all of which are lost to time and existing in a vacuum that I dress up in the perfect "forever-land" warmth of idyllic childhood I've conjured up at the tender age of 64. And there's some melancholy in that. When we look back on friendships lost, we can be so hurt when confronted with what we thought was once so permanent, having turned to transience, can we not?

I have not one friend left from those early days who exists in my "real" world. I do, however, have one that entered my life in my early career, that has remained steadfast and dear for over 35 years. I don't dwell on why so much as feeling grateful for the time allotted – both for the "lost" souls as well as the current ones. And then of course, there is family. And despite loving every single family member in the circle thus far, I recall my father saying to me in conversation: "You can't choose your family, nor are you required to love everyone in it." Wise words, I think. Raw truth.

There is, however, a strange and heartwarming situation in my personal life that resonates with me often and it is there to reflect upon in real time. It involves a few women I have loved beyond the bounds of friendship. It forms a pillow I could only lay

my head upon after having been stitched together through forgiveness and understanding and is maintained through a quiet prayer of gratitude. Despite harbouring an ever-so-slight sense of sadness and shame about it, both of which are my issues and not theirs – I've come to understand that I hold an enviable relationship with these women from my past. You see, I am genuinely pleased and a little pensive to say: that I once had a very long-term relationship with a woman (with whom I bought my first house but never married), have been, however, married twice in my lifetime (the first wife with whom I share a magnificent daughter / the second whom I consider a necessary angel) and am now in a clearly grounded and nurturing relationship that has grown ever stronger in the past seven years – someone with whom I share all fears and folly and whatever triumphs a well-meaning life can muster. It took me long while to get here.

The blessing in all of this, considering the trials of disillusionment and pain that all parties went through in the past, is that all but one of the aforementioned "life partners," have become dear friends with one another. That kind of situation provides cause to pause, especially when one attends their former spouses surprise 60th birthday par-

ty, meticulously planned by my daughter, and the woman you bought your first house with as well as your current common-law spouse are in attendance with you at said ex-wife's shindig – each knowing one another, each friends with one another and each genuinely happy to see each other. And this event was not the first. There have been countless times when paths have crossed and pleasantries were genuinely shared – on visits, at events and through phone conversations.

It is not an exaggeration to say I am massively thankful for this, particularly for the example of forgiveness and friendship presented over the years to my daughter who is so fond of them all and who has grown up so well adjusted in the understanding that love and forgiveness may go hand in hand, even after the relationship is over. That example alone is food for strength if things ever fall apart for her.

The healing of these relationships, however, was not a sudden revelatory gift. They needed to be worked on. It required an awareness that we have mutually wounded each other in the past, that words were said and things were done to justify positions – that ultimately parts of ourselves were broken or altered to maintain the role of victim. But through time and honest conver-

sation, particularly with oneself, the illusion of one of us as guilty and the other innocent may reveal itself as sand and sea, both sifting the facts as the water rolls in to suit their own shoreline.

Sure, things change. People come and go sometimes. I mean that not with a flippant devil-may-care attitude, but in the light of a sobering reality and experience. That's okay. Sometimes the healing only happens after all is irreparably damaged. But if one manages to find it within themselves to cast a glance into the other's reality, to freely revisit the shadows of their own past and see themselves in the naked light of a truth they hadn't come to terms with before, they might plant the seed for a different tree to grow.

From my perspective, when and if that happens, there truly will be lifelong friends to celebrate with. All because they... we... strong and fortunate souls in the theatre of life – allowed ourselves to see our own contributions to the mayhem and allowed ourselves to grow our temporarily stifled spirits again, out of the fissure of the broken promise of "happily ever after."

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

Overhauling education – part two



BRUCE WHITAKER

Times Columnist

Part one of "Overhauling Education" appeared in the January issue of the Stratford Times and identified several key challenges in our schools. Part two outlines practical, actionable fixes and begins a down-to-earth conversation about implementing change.

Student disengagement

A recent national survey of student engagement found that up to half of students feel disengaged, split between actively disengaged (disruptive or withdrawn) and quietly disengaged – high achievers who “go through the motions” with good grades but no real connection. Teaching to the middle leaves lessons irrelevant, too easy, or too hard, breeding boredom and frustration.

Disengaged students often re-

spond best to hands-on learning. The solution is in offering more experiential options: workshops, maker spaces, co-ops and community projects. One approach is to split the day: core subjects (math, English, sciences), perhaps in the morning, experiential learning in the afternoon, so students get both foundations and real-world challenges.

AI and adaptive technology are useful in creating customized learning plans that match students’ differing strengths, weaknesses and interests, letting them progress at their own pace and embracing their own passions.

Teacher disillusionment

The education system has moved back to “a one classroom fits all students,” which is often extremely disruptive. Teachers aren’t empowered to come up with solutions; instead, they are expected to follow an outdated teaching routine.

Teachers feel they lack adequate support as they face various challenges from student mental health to new technology.

Schools need to prioritize teacher well-being and break down silos so staff can share what works. Reward innovation and collaboration, and provide regular, meaningful feedback

and professional growth opportunities, not a one-off performance review every five years. Empowered teachers teach better.

Overcrowded classrooms make it difficult for teachers to provide individualized attention to students. This can negatively impact student achievement and teacher effectiveness especially when there are students who feel it is their right to be disruptive in class.

It’s time to no longer tolerate behaviour that negatively impacts learning. Students with repeated unacceptable behaviour should receive additional positive-behaviour supports; if that fails, their access to public education should be revoked until behaviours change – rights come with responsibilities.

Competition vs. collaboration

Schools use grades to rank kids, encouraging short-term memorization for tests. The problem with rote memorization is that it prioritizes surface repetition over meaningful connections, undermining deep understanding, critical thinking, long-term retention, creativity, adaptability and real-world problem-solving.

As influential author James

Joyce suggested, “Mistakes are the portals of discovery.” Schools should make more space for exploration. Shift assessment toward projects, presentations, portfolios, peer review and teamwork. Let students steer parts of their learning so they can explore passions without fear of failure.

Adoption of technology

Many profit-driven AI companies are eager to partner with schools, but their products are not always designed for classroom realities. While it’s important to adopt useful technology, human interaction must remain central. We need to balance tech tools with personal connections to ensure well-rounded, effective education.

Connection with the community

While a trustee, I saw many critical issues that weren’t communicated to the broader community. It is important for our community to be aware of and engaged in such issues as they are often red flags of larger societal problems.

Make financial literacy, digital ethics, mental-health management, cultural studies and basic life skills mandatory. Broaden internships, community projects, entrepreneurship programs and reintroduce study abroad so

students experience learning applied in the real world.

Progressive leadership

Qualified citizens are reluctant to subject themselves to the difficulties and expense of an election campaign. School trustee elections usually attract low voter turnout, leading some people to fear that special-interest groups could easily dominate a board. Many elections are uncontested.

We need to address recent board issues, experienced throughout Ontario, by recruiting at least 50 per cent of trustees through an application process to select candidates with relevant skills rather than relying solely on qualified citizens to run in elections.

Boards need clear, student focused priorities: defining what students should know and be able to do; spending the majority of meeting time monitoring progress on such goals; aligning resources to support them; and reporting results regularly to the community.

This article is a start and not a finish. With a collective effort, we can ignite a passion for learning among our students, empower our educators, and cultivate a school environment that prioritizes holistic growth and development.

Accelerating the dream: Using the FHSA to cut a year off your down payment timeline

MAKLANE DEWEVER

Times Columnist

A survey published last week by Abacus Data, a polling firm, found that 70 per cent of non-homeowning Canadians want to own a home someday. Despite the significant affordability hurdle, many Canadians are leaving free money on the table by not taking advantage of a powerful savings tool: the first home savings account (FHSA).

In 2023, fewer people contributed than were eligible. Among the 5.6 million Canadians aged 25-34, roughly 60 per cent are non-homeowners and eligible to contribute. Yet, only 1.6 million – fewer than three in 10 – actually used the FHSA, meaning many Canadians with the dream of home ownership are not taking advantage of this powerful savings vehicle. Those saving for or considering saving for a house can benefit financially by taking advantage of the FHSA.

What is the FHSA?

Think of the FHSA as a combination of an RRSP and a TFSA, like an RRSP. Every dollar you contribute is tax-deductible, meaning you don’t have to pay taxes on it (more accurately, you get it back in your tax refund). Like a TFSA, any interest you earn on the money or capital gains is tax-free.

You must be a resident of Canada, not have owned a home in the past four years, and be under 71 and over 18. If you end up never buying a home, you can roll it into your RRSP. You can invest the money in a whole range of assets. You can open one at any time, and the earlier you open it, the more contribution room you have. There is no minimum timeline to contribute, meaning you can open one and use the money to buy a house in the same year. Theoretically, you could open one up and get the tax deduction

on the same day.

How much money can I get back?

Your actual tax savings will depend on your full tax situation, but this rough estimate based on an \$8,000 annual contribution was prepared by local financial security adviser Reilly McCann at Vanea Financial Group:

Gross Taxable Income	Marginal Tax Rate	Your tax refund
\$40,000	19.55%	\$1,564
\$60,000	29.65%	\$2,372
Gross Taxable Income	Marginal Tax Rate	Your tax refund
\$90,000	31.48%	\$2,518
\$120,000	43.41%	\$3,473

Essentially, say your income is \$60,000 per year, the government is paying you \$2,372 per year to save for a house. Say you managed to save \$40,000, you would have gotten back around \$12,000.

How much money do I need for a down payment?

First-time homebuyers need a minimum of five per cent down payment. On a \$500,000 home, that is \$25,000. Closing costs can add another \$5,000 to \$10,000. On a \$60,000-\$90,000 pre-tax income, reinvesting your tax refund into your FHSA can accelerate your savings by nearly 30 per cent, meaning if it would have taken you four years to save for the down payment, you could instead save for it in three years, further importantly avoiding a year of rent. Just another benefit of the FHSA.

Saving for a home is challenging, but an FHSA can make it easier.

Maklane deWever is a local realtor at Home & Company Real Estate Corp. Brokerage. You can find more of his writing at deweverrealestate.ca.

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

CROCKINOLE

Every Tuesday at the Agriplex in the Ritsma Room from 1-4 p.m. No cost. 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

PANCAKE SUPPER

Tavistock Memorial Legion, 223 Hope Street West Tavistock,
Tuesday, February 17; serving from 4:30-7:00 pm.
For more information call Mary at 519-655-2992.

LENTON LUNCH

Wed., Feb. 18; 12:00 Noon
Immaculate Conception RC Church
\$15.00 Speaker: Will Kramer of 1st and 2nd St. John's Lutheran Churches

BURGER & FRY NIGHT

Thursday, February 19; 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Royal Canadian Legion, 804 Ontario St.
\$13 or 2 for \$25. Reservations not required. Show up for a burger & fries and support the Branch. TAKEOUT
Call by: Tues. Feb. 17th 519-271-4540 or 519-703-6544
Pickup: 5:00 - 5:30 p.m. on Feb. 19

ALL YOU CAN EAT SPAGHETTI DINNER FUNDRAISER FOR CARTER

Thursday, February 19; 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.
Shakespeare Optimist Hall
Dine in or take out, Adults \$20, Kids 10 and under \$10.
Tickets must be purchased in advance at Sprucedale Public School. All proceeds go to the Kuchma family.

EUCHRE NIGHT

Friday, February 20; 6:00 p.m.
Royal Canadian Legion, 804 Ontario St.
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.
Come out for some fun and support your local legion.

LEARN2SHINE PERFORMANCE CLUB

Monthly starting Sunday, February 22; 2 - 4 p.m.
Infinity Dance 451 Erie St.
Suitable for everyone in the family aged 7 and up. A chance to sing, dance, say lines. Registration \$20+HST/person, with 15% discount if registering 3 or more.
www.mckinnammanagement.com

GARDEN STRATFORD GENERAL MEETING

Monday March 2; 7:15 - 9:00 p.m.

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

Featured Presentation: "Sub-Irrigated Planters", Scott Bremner, Garden Stratford Member
Meeting Open to Everyone; Free Admission.

OSTOMY SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Tuesday, March 3; 7:00 p.m.
93 Morgan St., Stratford
Speakers – Jamie Church and Colleen McConnell from Best Buy Medical. They will inform us of their services for ostomates. Social time and snacks. Everyone welcome.
519-273-4327

OXFORD PHILATELIC SOCIETY OXPEX & OTEX 2026 STAMP SHOW

March 21; 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
St. Mary's Catholic High School, 431 Juliana Drive, Woodstock, ON, N4V 1E8
Free admission and parking.
Framed and Judged exhibits, Stamp dealers, youth gift bags, Sales Circuit, draw prizes.
Contact: dhfe@silomail.com
Web: <http://www.rpsc.org/chapters/oxford>

IN THE MOOD WITH BIG BANDEMIC

Saturday, April 11; 6:30 pm - midnight
Big Bandemic will have you toe-tapping and dancing, maybe evening singing along at South Gate Centre's In the Mood concert.
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Deadline: Tuesday prior at 3 p.m.
Contact: stratfordtimes@gmail.com

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- If your event is not free admission or you would like to include more details than stated above, you have the following options:
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 - 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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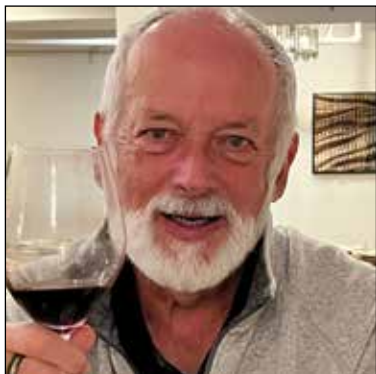
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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Two lesser-known features of Lyon, France



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Columnist

There are plenty of reasons to enjoy a visit to the French city of Lyon. It's the third-largest city in France, known for its unique "Bouchon" gastronomy, for its history dating back to Roman times and before, and for its once-important role as a centre of the silk trade.

All of these things are still in evidence today, but I found two other features of Lyon to be equally fascinating – the incredible mosaic murals in the Basilica of Notre-Dame de Fourviere and the historic importance of Lyon as a centre of the French Resistance in the Second World War.

We were in Lyon as a stop on our Viking Rhone River Cruise; Lyon sits at the junction of the Rhone and Saone rivers. Our walking tour showed us a bustling city with a deep and rich history.

But when we visited the Basilica, I was tempted to skip the rest of the tour and simply stay and savour the incredible mosaics that line the walls. They're not ancient; the gilded mosaics were created from 1872 all the way up to 1964. There are six mosaics covering a vast, 6,000 square metres and portraying two overarching themes arising from the life of Mary the mother of Jesus: Mary and the church, and Mary and the history of France.



A mosaic commemorating Joan of Arc.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

The Basilica itself is awe-inspiring. Like its mosaics, the building is not ancient; it was completed in 1896. But it is magnificent.

That cannot be said for the narrow passageways between buildings that honeycomb the old part of Lyon. As our group wandered through some of these passageways, we found little to be impressed with until we heard two stories told by historian Boris Klein, who presented a lecture onboard our Viking longship. His talk was entitled "Lyon and the Resistance," and the first thing I learned was those impressive hidden passageways were, in fact, absolutely vital to the underground resistance to the Nazis.

Why? The key reason was a feature we had spotted on our tour; inside these covered passageways were what we would call community mail boxes today. In the days

of the underground, they were perfect drop boxes for clandestine communication. Hidden from view of the streets or anything overhead, they were an ideal place for a member of the resistance to leave a message to be collected in secret by a colleague at a later time.

Klein gave us a thumbnail sketch of the circumstances that created the French Resistance. Though in 1939, the French were believed to have the best army in the world, clever German strategy saw France completely conquered in a mere 42 days. The Germans divided France into several parts. Alsace and Moselle were declared to be part of Germany. Northern France was occupied by the Germans; the south, including Lyon, were initially occupied but then became the "Free Zone" or "Vichy Zone" under Marshall Petain, a First World War hero who, by the time of the

occupation, had become a collaborator with the Nazi regime.

The French Resistance arose in opposition to the Nazis and their puppets, and Lyon became the centre of the resistance. And yes, those mailboxes and enclosed passages played a role, but there were lots of other factors too.

Lyon is located relatively close to Switzerland, a neutral country. Lyon was a centre for trade unions, who joined with anti-Nazi political and religious organizations to oppose the Vichy regime. A common cause united unusual allies: "Jews, Catholic priests, communists, patriots all sat at the same table," said Klein. Of course, they could not operate openly – Petain had set up a French militia that was essentially an arm of the Gestapo.

So, opposition to the Nazis went underground – or more precisely in Lyon, into the multitude of pas-

sageways throughout the old city. By the end of 1940, Lyon was recognized as the centre of the French Resistance.

According to Klein, the resistance produced anti-Nazi leaflets, provided Jews and others who needed such with fake ID papers, printed underground newspapers and organized clandestine meetings.

Charles DeGaulle, who was leading the fight against the Nazis from exile in England, sent a man named Jean Moulin to Lyon, where he played the key role in uniting the resistance as "The Secret Army." Moulin was eventually captured and tortured to death in 1943. By then, Germany had taken over direct control of the south of France, but at the same time, the Secret Army had taken a more active role in guerilla-style warfare against the occupiers.

On Sept. 3, 1944, Lyon was liberated by Allied forces.

The story of the resistance movement is in certainly heroic, but Klein noted that after the fact, DeGaulle created a less-than-accurate myth. He told the people of France, "You are a great people who never accepted defeat." In fact, said Klein, a great many French people accepted the presence of the German occupiers and frequently collaborated with them. Perhaps the most shocking example is that the Vichy police – French officers, not German – sent 75,000 Jews to die in concentration camps.

Klein noted that only in the 1970s or '80s did it become possible to discuss the complicated reality of the Nazi occupation of France.

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.



Lyon's Basilica of Notre-Dame de Fourviere, home to 6,000 square metres of gilded mosaics.



One of six astonishing mosaic murals in the basilica.

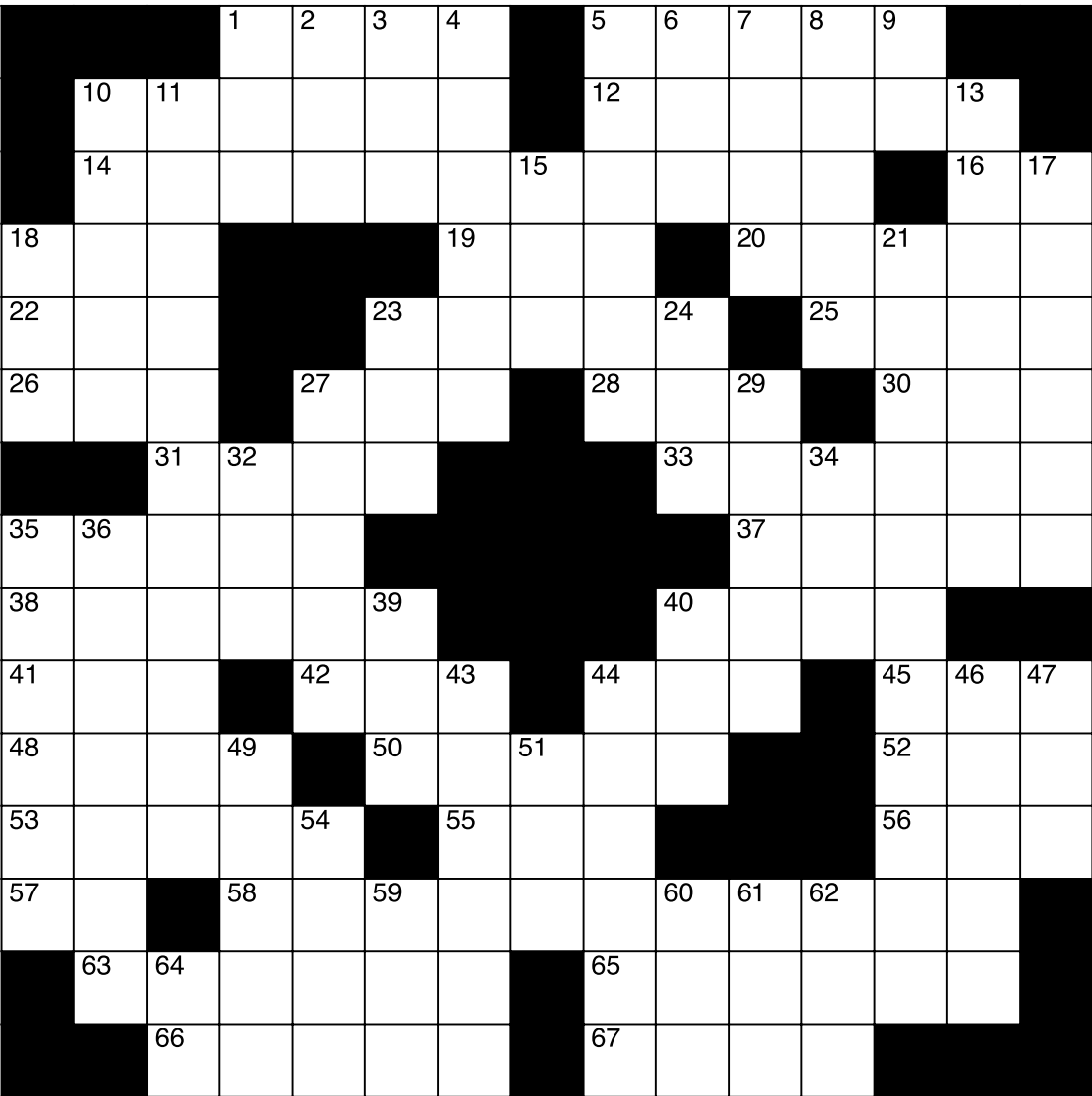
Crossword

CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Native American group of N. California
- 5. Geological times (Brit. sp.)
- 10. Tool to remove
- 12. Rods
- 14. One who renews
- 16. They precede C
- 18. Chatter incessantly
- 19. ___ King Cole, musician
- 20. Insect parts
- 22. One from Utah
- 23. The world of the dead
- 25. Singer Redding
- 26. NBA legend Nelson
- 27. Indicates wrongly
- 28. Unhappy
- 30. Anger
- 31. Dark brown
- 33. Some are in kitchens
- 35. Made a mistake
- 37. Damp
- 38. Type of fuel
- 40. Actor Damon
- 41. What thespians do
- 42. One's mother
- 44. Disallow
- 45. Swiss river
- 48. A banana has one
- 50. Philipines lake and volcano are two
- 52. Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
- 53. Agave
- 55. Journalist Tarbell
- 56. One-time tech giant
- 57. Indicates upon
- 58. Intestinal bacteria
- 63. Loose sheaths around the spinal cord
- 65. It goes with nook
- 66. A fashion
- 67. Very eager to hear or see

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Witch
- 2. Utilize
- 3. Writing utensil
- 4. Where rockers go to work
- 5. Subsidies
- 6. Consume
- 7. Greek mythological figures
- 8. California mountain town
- 9. Tin
- 10. Muse of lyric and love poetry
- 11. Animates anew
- 13. Humorous criticisms
- 15. Cool!
- 17. Worst
- 18. Wet dirt
- 21. Designed to be useful
- 23. Hebrew unit of liquid capacity
- 24. High schoolers' test
- 27. Computer device
- 29. Indian territory ___ and Diu
- 32. A place to sleep
- 34. AI tool
- 35. Pass or go by
- 36. Indicates a purchase
- 39. A digital tape recording of sound
- 40. More (Spanish)
- 43. Disfigured
- 44. White (Spanish)
- 46. Church building
- 47. Georgia rockers
- 49. Type of surgery
- 51. Much ___ about nothing
- 54. Make by braiding
- 59. Local area network
- 60. Unit of work or energy
- 61. Member of indigenous people of Thailand
- 62. Liquefied natural gas
- 64. Distance to top



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Sudoku

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



SANDRA LEE HUNTER

Mrs. Sandra Lee Hunter, beloved wife of Thomas Hunter, died peacefully at her home in Stratford, in the early hours of Thursday, February 5, 2026. Sandra was born in Stratford on December 11, 1943, the daughter of the late Edwin Ernest Dale and Melvina Marie Powley.

Sandra is survived by her husband Thomas Joseph and daughters Kelly Anne and partner Jean Charlebois of Ottawa and her daughter Brittany Maltby nee Lauzon (Devin Maltby) and their children Annabelle and Jacqueline Maltby. Paula Evanne Hunter of Comox BC, and her children Lane Hunter- Leiski of Vancouver BC and Claire Hunter- Leiski of Victoria BC; Children of her late daughter Pamela Jane (d. 2008 in Orleans) son Ryan Coyle (Cheyanne) and their children Olivia, Liam & Hunter and daughter Amanda Coyle (Mike Legasse) of Orleans ON. Debbie Lynne Hunter and her daughter Athena Hunter of Orleans, ON.

Sandy is also survived by her brother Michael Dale (Darlene Grainger) of Stratford and predeceased by her sister Gloria Marie of Stratford in 2007.

Sandy was close to her in-laws Evanne Hunter IBVM of Toronto, Ted Hunter and Jeanette (Whiting) of Brantford, the late Peter Hunter d. 2014) and Sherry (Petrie) of Cambridge, Danny Hunter & Linda (Murray of Stratford and Terry Hunter & Carol (Mills) of Cambridge

Sandra had a very interesting life. She was born when her father was serving in the RCAF and on his return she grew up in downtown Stratford before her family moved to the end of Albert St in 1953. She attended Romeo and Juliet Public Schools (in the same class a Richard Manuel) and High School at the Loretto Academy. She started working at the age 16 at O'Cedar and Fram until 1962 when she met Tom Hunter who was home on leave from the Canadian Army. The next year they were married in Camo Gagetown, New Brunswick and Sandy became Army wife for the next 26 years living in Fredericton, Camp Petawawa, Winnipeg, Camp Shilo, Manitoba then back to Gagetown until 1973 when Tom took a transfer to Ottawa to the Mapping and Charting Establishment. The family lived in Ottawa before moving to Rockcliffe Base they lived until Tom retired in 1988. While living in Ottawa Sandy took a position clerk with Statistics Canada at Dow's Lake and Tunney's Pasture. Tom was frequently away in the summers for months on Mapping Surveys in the High Arctic, leaving Sandy to raise her 4 children alone.

Sandy and Tom lived for the next 26 years just outside Ottawa near Navan, On. In 2014 they decided to move back to Stratford to the city she loved and took up residence in the Huntington on Front St. Sandy loved Queens Park and used to walk around the river daily. Condo life was not to her liking so later that year they purchased a house with a large lot more to her liking. It became difficult for her to walk to the river, but they drove there every day and had their coffee with the swans right up to last fall.

Sandy loved her children and Grandchildren and went so far as to learn all the video games they played, and she used to beat them often, much to their surprise.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE OF CREDITORS



NOTICE TO CREDITORS AND OTHERS IN THE ESTATE OF MATTHEW ARBOGAST MACKEY

All persons having claims against the Estate of **Matthew Arbogast Mackey**, late of Stratford, Ontario, deceased, who died on October 18, 2025, are hereby notified to send into the undersigned Personal Representative of the said deceased, on or before the **17th day of March, 2026**, full particulars of their claims. After the said date, the Personal Representative will distribute the assets of the said deceased, having regard only to the claims of which he shall then have notice.

DATED at Stratford, Ontario, this 2nd day of February, 2026.

A. Paul Parlee
Personal Representative
by his Solicitors,
KDB Law Professional Corporation
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3. Ravens
4. The liver
5. Bad Bunny
6. William Shakespeare
7. Cerberus
8. MKUltra
9. North Atlantic Treaty Organization
10. Buyer beware

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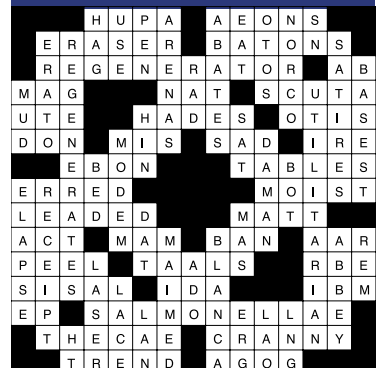
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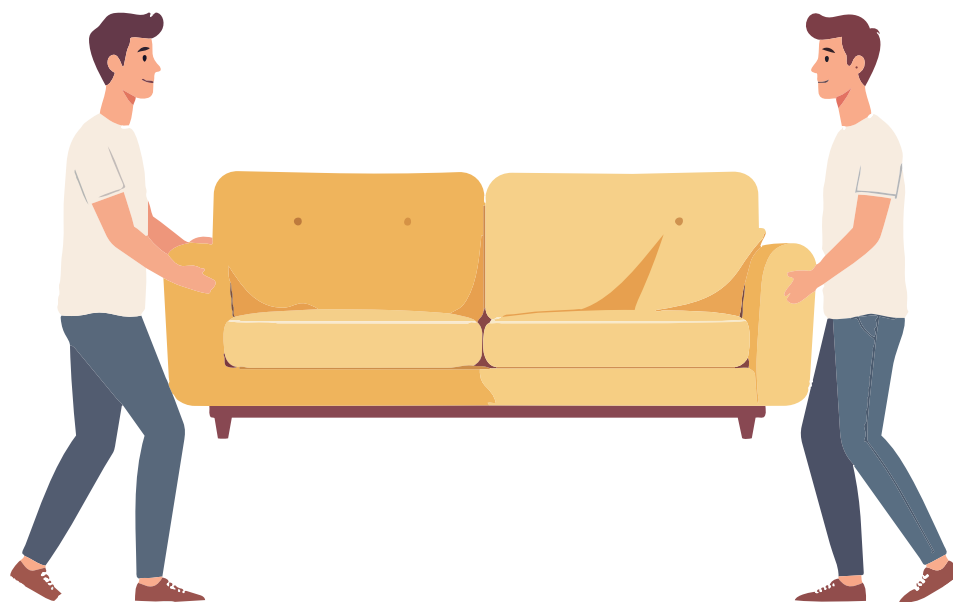
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