

2017 Year in Review: March



March 2

With hydro costs soaring to almost unmanageable levels for residents throughout Dufferin County in recent months, local MPP Sylvia Jones has called on Premier Kathleen Wynne to "step up and take action" in an attempt to prevent the provincial pandemic from getting any worse.

In addressing the premier during Question Period in the legislature last week, Ms. Jones noted that the high cost of electricity was "hitting all Ontarians hard" and condemned the provincial Liberals for allowing the issue to spiral out of control.

While Premier Wynne did not directly respond to Ms. Jones' comments, Ontario's Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault said the government has a plan in place to help alleviate rising hydro costs, but stopped short of revealing what that plan was.

Author Gwynne Dyer was at Dufferin County Museum and Archives this week speaking to Dufferin high school students from the Digital Historian Project (DHP) about the "why now?" behind Donald Trump's election.

"It was definitely the trip of a lifetime."

Those were the words ringing around an Orangeville District Secondary School classroom on Tuesday afternoon as a number of recently-returned students relived their 10-day Costa Rican adventure with local media.

Flying into the Costa Rican capital of San Jose on Feb. 17, the group of 36 senior-level students and six teachers were completely blown away by the beauty of the Central American nation.

For the first three days of the trip, the gang spent their time volunteering at an animal sanctuary in the seaside community of Coastal Puntarenas. A trip north into the Monteverde Cloud Forest ensued, with the group spending a significant amount of time "off the grid", living without all the home comforts one student admitted to taking for granted here in Canada. All in all, the students had a great time, with some saying they'd love to get involved in this coming year's trip, tentatively slated for Ecuador.

The Westside Secondary School Thunder senior boys basketball team captured the District 4 championship with a win over the Centre Dufferin District High School Royals on their home court in Orangeville on Feb. 22.

The Thunder were the favoured team going into Wednesday's game after going undefeated for the season.

March 9

"This is definitely a sellers' market right now."

That's the harsh truth facing prospective homeowners in Orangeville, with the housing market skyrocketing over the past 24 months. While house prices have always been pretty consistent in the area, thanks in large part to its perceived manageable commuting distance to Toronto, Orangeville has experienced a considerable boom in recent times, with the Toronto Real Estate Board reporting the average home is worth nearly 50 percent more today than at this time in 2015.

According to the Toronto Real Estate Board's Home Price Index, since February 2015, the average price of a detached home in Orangeville has jumped from \$370,100 to \$538,300 - a whopping \$168,200, or 45.45 percent increase. Over the same time, the typical attached property has leaped from \$287,500 in 2015 to \$415,800 this year, good enough for a \$128,300, or 44.63 percent

increase. A third listing, noted as composite (which includes both one and two-storey attached and detached single family homes) has seen prices peak at \$513,300 so far this year, up from \$357,300 in 2015 ? an increase of \$156,000, or 43.66 percent.

? The main processing facility and offices of Tupling Farms, located in Melancthon, went up in flames shortly after 1:30 a.m. on March 7.

Firefighters with the Honeywood-based Mulmur-Melancthon Fire Department responded to reports of a large fire inside a building at the potato farm on Mulmur-Melancthon Townline and by the time they arrived on scene the 45,000-square-foot facility had collapsed.

With an estimated \$3 to \$4 million-worth of damage, the Office of the Ontario Fire Marshal has been called in to investigate. Although it is not known at this time how the fire began, Chief Clayton said it is not being treated as suspicious.

? One of the frontrunners in the race to succeed former Prime Minister Stephen Harper as the permanent head of the Conservative Party of Canada made a pit stop in Orangeville this week.

Maxime Bernier, an 11-year veteran of the federal political arena, was at MacMaster Buick GMC on March 7 afternoon for a meet-and-greet with local residents as he firms up his bid for the party leadership.

Currently serving his fourth term as MP for Beauce ? a federal electoral district in southern Quebec ? Mr. Bernier has emerged as one of the favourites among the 14 hopefuls seeking to succeed Mr. Harper, who resigned as leader following the party's defeat in the 2015 federal election.

? The Orangeville District Secondary School Bears boys hockey team captured the district 4/10 championship with an at home win on March 1.

The Bears are undefeated this year, winning all ten regular season games and finishing in first place before steam rolling through the playoffs to claim the District title.

March 16

? If you were to sit down and start to think about Canada's greatest heroes, there are probably a few prominent names that instantly come to mind. For the political enthusiasts, there's former Prime Ministers such as Lester B. Pearson, Pierre Trudeau and Sir John A. Macdonald. Those with an affinity for sports may point towards Wayne Gretzky, Sidney Crosby or Rosie MacLennan, while the thoughtful or curious mind may raise a Chris Hadfield or David Suzuki.

While different people may have wildly conflicting views on the aforementioned Canucks, there's one individual everyone will agree deserves a spot at or near the top of the list. The name Terry Fox has almost become synonymous with the word hero here in the Great White North, and local residents now have a chance to learn more than ever before about the man behind the name thanks to the Dufferin County Museum and Archives.

Arriving at the museum on March 7 and sticking around until May 27, the Terry Fox: Running to the Heart of Canada exhibit captures the full story of the country's second greatest hero

March 23

? Dufferin paramedic Jason Dzikowski was off duty, playing hockey with friends at the Grand Valley arena on March 19 when he recognized that patrons were exhibiting signs consistent with carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.

The Orangeville native, who has been with the Dufferin County Paramedic team for 11 years, contacted the Grand Valley Ambulance Station and it was quickly determined that a high level of CO was present.

Four ambulances were used to transport 13 patients to hospitals in Orangeville, Fergus and Guelph and a fifth ambulance remained on standby to do assessments of residents returning to be checked, having been at the arena earlier in the day. Orangeville Fire Department also assisted in the assessments.

? Stacey Daub is a woman on a mission.

Less than two months into her role as the new President and CEO of Headwaters Health Care Centre (HHCC), Ms. Daub knows she's stumbled across something special.

Having spent the majority of her health services career in the concrete jungle of Toronto, she says her first few weeks in the Headwaters area have been like a ?breath of fresh air?. And while she has enjoyed shaking hands and rubbing shoulders with prominent local figures ? both in the hospital and throughout the broader community ? over the past few weeks, Ms. Daub is under no illusions that she is here to do a job.

And while that job, for the most part, encompasses managing all that goes on between the walls of the hospital, Ms. Daub sees herself more as a ?community representative? in the way that she will be fostering a new approach to formulating plans for health care delivery in Dufferin and Caledon.

Having most recently enjoyed a 5 1/2-year stint as CEO of the Toronto Central Communication Care Access Centre, Ms. Daub knew

her next position would be one for the long haul. A self-professed small town girl herself, having grown up in a modest area of Kitchener, she is excited for this new chapter of her life away from the bright lights of the big city.

? Despite numerous recent complaints on social media slamming Orangeville's lack of downtown parking, a recent study shows the Town is currently meeting the average parking demand.

The issue was discussed at length at Monday night's Town Council meeting as Gene Chartier, Vice-President of Paradigm Transportation Solutions Ltd. presented the results of a study his organization worked on throughout 2016.

Mr. Chartier noted there are currently 1,642 parking spaces in the downtown area. Those spaces are separated into three distinct groups; public on-street parking (235 spots), municipally controlled off-street parking (343 spots) and privately owned but publically accessible off-street parking (1,064 spots).

The study, funded by both the Town and the Business Improvement Area (BIA), involved parking counts on eight different days over a six-month period so as to capture fully the demand and utilization of parking across a range of days, including weekends, holidays and special-event days.

March 30

? It has been a rapid rise to success for teenage tennis sensation Jayden Templeman who, in just a little over four years, has transformed himself from a complete novice of the sport into one of the top emerging talents in the country.

Jayden will test his skills against 11 of the nation's other best young athletes at the Under-14 Rogers Junior Nationals, to be held in Vancouver from April 3 to 9. While it will be Jayden's first time competing at the highest level, his coach, Miran Cehajic ? a former Canadian pro player ? believes he has what it takes to make a lasting impression on the big stage.