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KATE KARKLINS OF KLIKD IMAGES

STEP BY STEP: Town Crier Andrew Welch and Orangeville Flyers hockey players, lead the crowd as Coldest Night of the Year walkers departed from the Orangeville Food Bank for a five-kilometre route on Saturday, Feb. 28. See more photos on Page A7.

Orangeville Food Bank's Coldest Night of the Year approaches \$200,000 fundraising goal

Written By **JOSHUA DRAKES**
 LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The annual Coldest Night of the Year fundraiser, held by the Orangeville Food Bank, drew a festive, high-energy crowd on Saturday, Feb. 28, as residents, volunteers and local groups rallied to support food security in the community.

Carrie-Anne DeCaprio, the food bank's donor engagement and outreach manager, said that the turnout was so large, it actually broke their counting systems.

"It was a fantastic turnout, the best night ever, we had 473 walkers registered, and over 115 volunteers here the day of, so just about 600 people that were here on hand for the Coldest Night of the Year on Saturday," she said. "We will not have an accurate count of that, because we broke the system registration."

"When people were coming in at that 4:30 registration time, that crunch time getting ready for the walk, the whole system just crashed, so we are working from the number counted before that," DeCaprio added.

Despite chilly temperatures and worry over a deep freeze, the evening felt warm with community spirit.

A disk jockey from Orangeville-based company, Dufferin DJs, set the tone, the town crier delivered a themed poem to send off walkers, burn barrels dotted the grounds of the food bank, and a post walk celebra-

tion featured chilli, mac and cheese, and a dance party.

Volunteers worked as route marshals for two-kilometre and five-kilometre walking routes, greeters, kitchen teams, and at registration tables. The volunteers' teamwork created what DeCaprio described as a well oiled machine that guided hundreds of participants smoothly through the event.

Early tallies show over \$190,000 in front end donations, with organizers confident the total will exceed their \$200,000 goal.

"We're gonna hit \$200,000," DeCaprio said. "There are some pledges that haven't been accounted for, and we have an off-site walk happening this Sunday in Grand Valley. So I am very confident that we are going to hit our goal."

The fundraiser highlighted Orangeville's civic pride: the town ranked extremely high among more than 200 Coldest Night events across Canada, a point of local pride given its modest population.

"We are the top nine in all of Canada right now," DeCaprio said. "So there are 222 events happening across Canada, and we are number nine. When you think about that on the grand scale of things, versus cities like Toronto, Mississauga, Vancouver, they're large metropolises... That blows me away every single time."

Friendly rivalries — notably between the Optimist Club and St. Mark's Marchers — helped spur engagement and gave

a playful competitive edge that organizers say increased giving by roughly 30 per cent among those teams.

DeCaprio stressed that while the event's haul is meaningful, \$200,000 represents only a small part of their annual operating budget, underscoring continuing needs beyond a single successful night.

"We also need to remember \$200,000 is [almost] less than one month of operating cost for us," DeCaprio said. "Our operating budget is \$1.5 million annually. So \$200,000 is a good chunk, but it's not a lot. And you know, our needs are increasing, so that \$1.5 [million] is obviously going to increase next year."

With donations accepted through the end of March and next year's Coldest Night set for Feb. 27, the food bank thanked donors and volunteers for their generosity and vowed to build on this year's momentum while keeping goals ambitious but attainable.

"Thank you, we are so grateful for our community," DeCaprio said. "We would not be able to do the work that we do without support. We're just so filled with gratitude. It is at times overwhelming how thankful we are, and we know we are blessed to be in a community that is so close-knit and takes care of itself."

For more information on Coldest Night of the Year, go to en.cnoy.org/location/orangeville.

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Mono council halts effort toward firearm discharge bylaw

Written By JAMES MATTHEWS

Mono council voted to abandon its proposed firearms discharge bylaw.

Council made the decision during its Feb. 24 meeting to recognize that existing federal and provincial legislation is adequate to regulate firearm use in Mono.

Residents were surveyed last year on their feelings about the proposed bylaw. It generated feedback from 753 respondents. Given survey results, the draft bylaw was sent back to municipal staff for possible revisions.

Of those, 383 participants were Mono residents while 309 were non-residents. Sixty-one responses were discarded because they were either duplicates or ineligible.

Fifty-two per cent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the bylaw prioritizes the safety, well-being, and security of individuals and the broader community.

Fifty-eight per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed that the bylaw respects the rights of firearm and bow owners.

Fifty-five per cent of residents who provided an opinion by way of the survey were opposed to any form of municipal regulation.

Fifty-three per cent indicated that the discharge of firearms or bows should be allowed

in hamlets and settlement areas.

Thirty-six per cent felt there should be no minimum lot size, and the proposed bylaw suggests a minimum lot size of two hectares.

Respondents who opposed regulations were asked to indicate which specific prohibitions they opposed.

Of 209 residents who were opposed to the bylaw, 51 per cent opposed a 150-metre setback from parks, educational facilities, or religious institutions; 66 per cent opposed a 100-metre setback from a building or structure without the owner's permission; 62 per cent opposed a 50-metre setback from a highway or recreational trail; and 92 per cent opposed a 50-metre setback from an adjoining property.

Eighty-seven per cent were against a setback from parks, educational facilities, or religious institutions; 62 per cent said no setback from a building or structure; 46 per cent said no setback from a highway or recreational trail; and 72 per cent were against a setback from an adjoining property.

Sixty-three per cent of residents agreed with the exemptions, including normal farm practices, a bona fide gun club, educational institution teaching proper use of firearms, and the use of blank rounds for specified reasons.

Twenty-four per cent of respondents did not own a firearm or bow. The remainder did not or preferred not to answer the question about ownership.

Of those who own a firearm or bow, 30 per cent were hunters and 21 per cent use them for protection. The remainder indicated "Other Uses" or preferred not to say.

Mono resident Paul Briggs voiced his opposition to the proposed bylaw during the February meeting. He said there was a reference made to the need for the bylaw because some residents had experienced close calls with bullets while on their homes' back decks.

"Close calls of bullets is a criminal offence," he said. "There have been no charges ever laid with respect to close calls of bullets (in Mono). This is not the Wild West. That never happened."

That would mean the bylaw is built upon a false premise, Briggs said.

"There were no bullets flying," Briggs said.

Deputy Mayor Fred Nix disputed that claim.

"We did have a woman who lives on the Fourth Line come and report to us that there was a bullet that flew into her deck and broke the Plexiglass or whatever screen she had there," Nix said.

Nix said the woman should have reported the incident to the OPP, but she didn't.

"How do you know it was a bullet, sir?" Briggs said. "How did she know it was a bullet?"

"I didn't personally see it," Nix said.

"Right," Briggs said. "That's the point. There were no charges laid."

Briggs said somebody who lived in a house struck by a bullet would call the police.

"It's pretty hard to believe this woman's house was hit by a bullet and she didn't call the police," Briggs said.

"I know the woman," Nix said. "I know she was telling the truth. Her house was hit by a bullet, OK?"

Briggs maintained his position that no bullet hit the woman's home and suggested that Nix and Councillor Elaine Capes should resign their council seats.

"Because they sponsored a bill they knew was false," he said.

Capes said she didn't appreciate Briggs' accusation.

Meanwhile, Mayor John Creelman provided further context on why the bylaw was originally brought forward.

"This process was not triggered by one incident, whether it was legitimate or not," Creelman said. "The whole issue of discharge of firearms has been a hot topic not only in this municipality, but other municipalities in Ontario."

Creelman said he wanted to hear Mono residents' thoughts about the proposed bylaw.

He called on Joe Wilson, whom the mayor knew was a resident.

Wilson said he has used a .22 calibre rifle on his property to control animals such as skunks and, in one case, a rabid fox. A two-hectare restriction for discharging a firearm is too large, Wilson said.

"This bylaw seems to be based on two or three complaints," he said, and added that he hasn't heard about injuries or fatalities in the 52 years he's lived in the municipality.

Wilson suggested that any buffer should be an acre and should be based on a firearm's calibre. It's also important to remove crossbows, bows, and air guns from the definition of firearms.

"It's much too restrictive," he said.

Wilson said Capes may not like accusations cast her way, but he was at a September council meeting when she favoured the bylaw's adoption as it was then written.

"You (Capes) were asking for second reading at that meeting with no regard for the survey," Wilson said.

Christina Schlecht, a Mono resident, said firearms and their use are regulated at the federal and provincial levels. Municipalities should have no role.

Coun. Ralph Manktelow acknowledged that council heard a lot of feedback.

"I'm not quite sure whether we should be having this bylaw or not," he said and added that, if council favours a bylaw, mention of bows should be removed.

Nix suggested council refrain from adopting the bylaw, and he said he was never in favour of it.

"Originally, I thought the intention was good and I could go for it," Nix said.

The size of his property would preclude him from using a firearm due to the proposed bylaw restrictions. And he owns a firearm.

"The bylaw as it now stands is simply unenforceable," Nix said.

Capes said a Mono firearm discharge bylaw would be better for residents.

"The general public would probably find it more easy to refer to a Mono bylaw than to go look through the federal and provincial bylaws," she said.

Capes said there have been 10 complaints about firearm use over five years, with no criminal charges laid.

"I would like to continue the debate," Capes said.

"I see there are some solvable components of this bylaw that we could implement that we would then have our own Mono bylaw that every citizen that is in Mono can look at, see it, and not have to understand the federal and provincial regulations."

Capes was the only councillor who voted against abandoning the town's draft bylaw.

Happening This March

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Community Calendar

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BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS DUFFERIN & DISTRICT BOWL FOR KIDS SAKE
Friday, April 10, 2026

Come out to Bowl for Kids Sake. Enjoy prizes, games, music and of course Wii Bowling! Know that you're support ensures more local children will be matched with a caring mentor. This year's theme is "Wild West"! For more info & to register visit: <https://tinyurl.com/34697dcw>

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER SERVICE
Friday, March 6 at 1:30pm

Westminster United Church - 247 Broadway
All Churches Welcome! Accessible Location.

This ad space is provided by Tim Hortons Orangeville and is intended for use by non-profit organizations. For information on how to include your community event in this calendar, please call 519-941-2230

ORANGEVILLE AND DISTRICT HORTICULTURAL MONTHLY MEETING
Tuesday, March 10 from 6:30 - 8:30
Topic: A Backyard Garden Retreat
Speaker: Paul Brydges
Orangeville Senior Centre, 26 Bythia St

EASTER CRAFT & BAKE SALE
Saturday, March 28th from 9am - 12pm
Craft tables, bake tables and a cookie corner
Tweedsmuir Presbyterian Church, 6 John St., Orangeville

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Orangeville Food Bank, 3 Commerce Blvd.
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Wednesday 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Thursday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
Friday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
Saturday CLOSED

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Saturday, March 28th

Sunday, March 29th

FREE PARKING & ADMISSION

5pm to 9pm

9am to 5pm

10am to 4pm

orangevillelions.org/homegardenshow



DUFFERIN BOARD OF TRADE PHOTOS

INDUSTRY LUNCHEON: The Dufferin Board of Trade's Industry Luncheon, held at Hockley Valley Resort on Feb. 26, featured Karen Sorensen, who has served in the Senate of Canada, representing Alberta, since 2021. Sorensen is originally from Orangeville and prior to her appointment to the Senate, she was the Banff's mayor for three terms. She spoke about leadership, sustainability, reconciliation, tourism and the power of collaboration. The speech was a reminder that strong local communities help to shape national conversations. The luncheon was held in partnership with the Rotary Club of Orangeville, Grand Highlands Home Builders' Association, and the Dufferin Board of Trade.

Fire at Fratelli Cannabis store deemed non-suspicious by Dufferin OPP

A Fratelli Cannabis store was destroyed by fire on March 2.

On Monday at around 7:46 a.m., emergency services responded to a fire at the pot shop, located on Dufferin Road 109 in East Luther, just south of Grand Valley.

According to a Dufferin OPP news release, the fire has been deemed non-suspicious.

No information was provided about the cause of the fire or damage to the building.

Fratelli Cannabis, which also has a Mount Forest location, posted to Facebook on Tuesday about the fire and expressed appreciation for the community's support.

"While this is a tough moment, we are staying hopeful and grateful, and we will keep you updated on what comes next," stated the post.

The business did not respond to requests for comment.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

BIG BLAZE: Dufferin Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) officers and the Grand Valley & District Fire Department responded to a structure fire on County Road 109 in East Luther on March 2.

Public notice

Official plan and zoning bylaw amendment

A complete application has been submitted to amend the official plan and zoning bylaw for these properties. The proposed land use change would allow for the redevelopment of these lands for a restaurant and parking.

What's being proposed

- Convert the existing residential dwelling at 6 Third Street into a restaurant (pizzeria).
- Demolish the existing adjacent residential dwelling at 4 Third Street to create a parking area.
- Designed to complement the existing restaurant and coffee shop south of the properties.

Application details

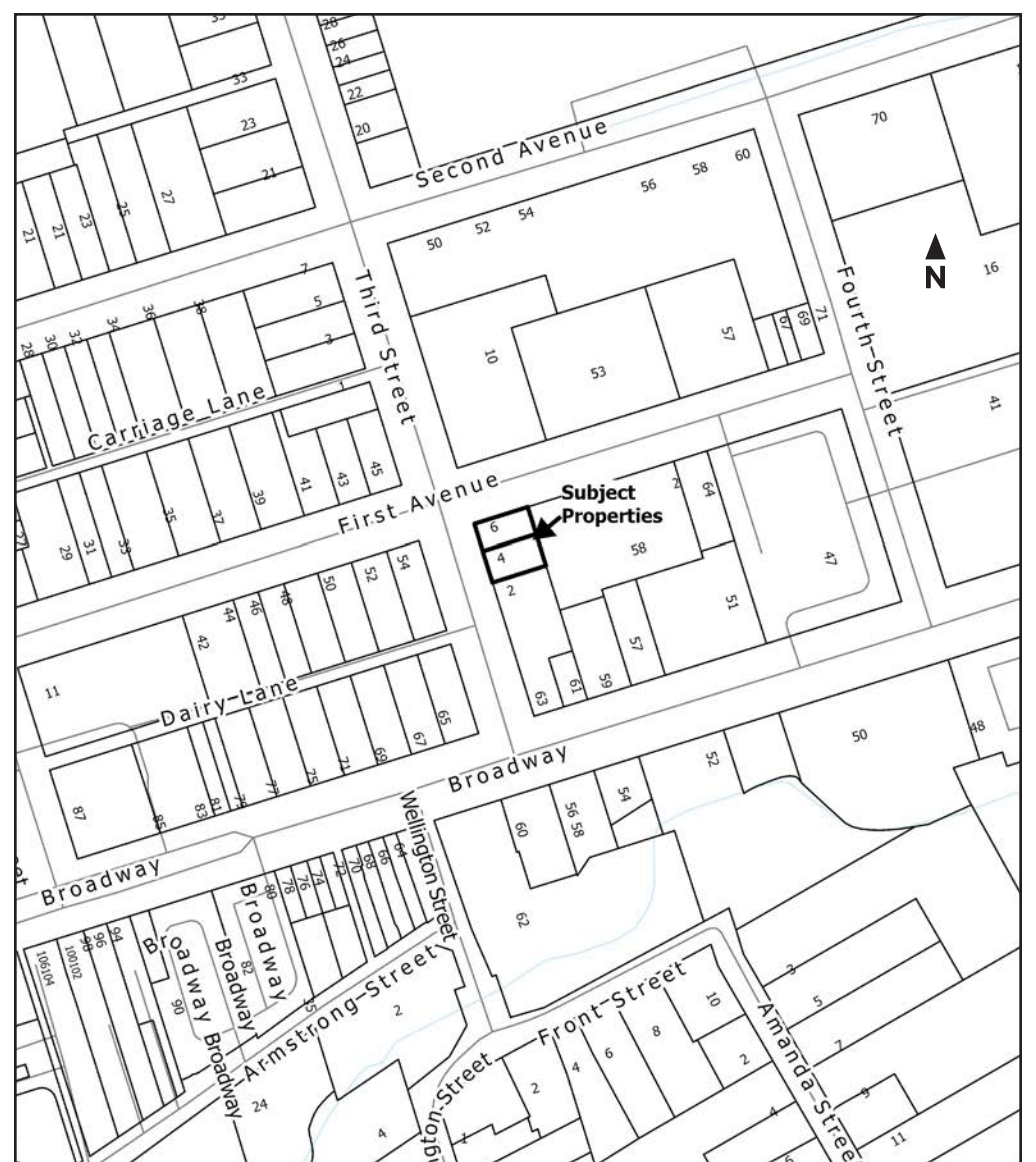
File number: OPZ 2026-01

Location of subject lands: 4 and 6 Third Street

Official plan amendment request: redesignate the property from residential to central business district

Zoning bylaw amendment request: rezone the property from multiple residential medium density (RM1) to central business district (CBD)

Notice issued: March 5, 2026



Location map of the subject lands

Learn more and share feedback

Public meeting

Date: April 27, 2026

Time: 7 p.m.

Location: Council Chambers, Town Hall, 87 Broadway

Watch online: orangeville.ca/WatchLive

Join by phone: call 1-647-374-4685 and enter meeting ID 971 5463 1595 # #

Meeting agenda to be posted by April 22, 2026.

How to participate

- learn how to speak at a council meeting at orangeville.ca/SpeakUp
- to attend via Zoom visit the meeting agenda at orangeville.ca/Meetings

Submit written comments

Send comments before the meeting using the contact information provided. All feedback becomes part of the public record.

For more information

For more information about this matter, including information about appeal rights, contact

Susan Pottle

Planner, Development and Community Improvement
 ✉ spottle@orangeville.ca



Black Parent Council says racism continues, UGDSB ignoring concerns

Written By ROBIN GEORGE

Black parents say Upper Grand District School Board (UGDSB) officials may talk the talk about anti-racism, but they are not walking the walk.

And they say that contradiction will endure until Black students are safe.

About 30 students, parents and teachers from Wellington, Guelph and Dufferin filled the board's gallery on Feb. 24.

Most were members of the UGDSB Black Parent Council, a volunteer advocacy group there to delegate about anti-Black racism. It was their second attempt to delegate – their first was denied last May.

Delegates Dr. Marsha Myrie Obi and Nia James said the Black Parents Council has attempted to address anti-Black racism with the board but has been largely ignored.

Mothers have an instinct to protect their children, and they resist that daily to send their kids to school at the Upper Grand, Myrie Obi said.

UGDSB director Peter Sovran, chair Ralf Mesenbrink and human rights advisor Alicia Ralph would not speak with the newspaper about the issue.

Instead, communications lead Heather Loney emailed a statement.

"The UGDSB has taken tangible actions to address anti-Black racism," she said. Loney added that this includes supporting Black students, hiring third-party consultants to develop localized anti-racism action plans, launching an Afrocentric English course, implementing identity-based harm reporting tools, completing audits, hiring a human rights advisor and asking the ministry for a graduation coach for Black students.

But parents say those steps aren't producing tangible results.

Board officials met with the council once, James said, and parents were promised next steps, including quarterly meetings.

But the Rockwood parent said the board cancelled the follow-up meeting and ignored the council's attempts to reschedule.

"That silence speaks louder than any Black Heritage Month statement," said James. "It mirrors exactly what Black families experience when any concerns are raised inside your schools."

Myrie Obi, a UGDSB parent and University of Guelph political science professor, said the council is "growing daily because parents are searching for protection."

The board would not provide examples of how harm is resolved after racist incidents, but stated responses are based on accountability, restoration and learning.

"That silence speaks louder than any Black Heritage Month statement ... It mirrors exactly what Black families experience when any concerns are raised inside your schools."

Nia James

The Black Parents Council wrote a public letter in April that included hundreds of signatures. It said Black UGDSB students are not safe and called for an equity audit of the board.

A week after the letter was published, the board announced it would undertake an independent third-party review, without mentioning the letter or the council.

That review is now complete, and the results were set to be discussed during a committee meeting on March 3. Board officials would not share any results on March 2.

But results alone will not resolve harm, Myrie Obi said. She asked how the board protects Black students and how it measures whether its approach is working.

In an email addressed to Loney, she did not answer the newspaper's questions about how anti-Black racism initiatives are measured, but said the board has increased its data collection in recent years.

During the meeting, trustee Irene Hanenberg asked parents how to measure success.

Myrie Obi said they could help the board figure that out if officials "stop ignoring us." She added the answer deserves honour, grace, care and time, and that's why they wanted quarterly meetings.

James suggested UGDSB officials look to Peel and Halton Catholic school boards – "They could really show you exactly how," James said.

The trustees had no further questions, and the delegates left.

Increased awareness

Nyasha Ward and James, who each have two daughters in Upper Grand schools, sat down for an interview following the delegation.

Ward, a UGDSB Black Parent Council member from Rockwood, said, "It was powerful how many people were in that room, especially the children," as it shows families are impacted.

James doesn't have much hope for change from the board, but said the increased awareness is important.

"Our group is growing ... and that's what's



ROBIN GEORGE PHOTO

GROWING CONCERN: Nia James, far right, and Dr. Marsha Myrie Obi, second from right, delegated to the Upper Grand District School Board (UGDSB) on Feb. 24. They said their children are not safe at school and their pleas for help are being ignored.

going to keep happening, until there is accountability," she said.

And the more eyes on the board, the more careful people will be, she said. That won't stop people from being racist, but it will make them hide it, "and that's fine, because it keeps the children safe," she said.

James expressed deep appreciation for the teachers who attended the meeting.

Black Parent Council

At its core, the council is "a group of parents who are trying to keep their kids safe in an educational system that isn't designed for them," Myrie Obi said.

She said the council creates "a place where we find strength and common language" and they're building awareness that racism is not just individual incidents but part of a systemic pattern.

There are about 20 core members with others who come and go, Myrie Obi said, as they're encouraged to participate however they're able.

"I don't understand why the board is so reluctant and resistant to speak to the Black parents and really support the work we are doing, because at the end of the day it helps them to do better," she said.

The group is building other partnerships, including with local organizations and Black parent groups across Ontario, and is preparing "to take our advocacy to the next level," including through legal routes, Myrie Obi said.

"I am so amazingly disappointed with the UGDSB," she said, adding, "I feel as though the board believes it is accountable to no one."

She added, "You cannot claim progress without demonstrating impact. You cannot declare equity while disengaging from the very community experiencing inequity."

She said being part of the UGDSB Black Parent Council gives her hope, as she's part of the solution instead of "just sitting back and accepting that I have to send my child to a school every day where he is going to be unsafe."

Myrie Obi said there are no quick fixes, and the board needs to release the human rights report and follow its recommendations.

"The only time I am going to stop is when I actually see real, tangible change," she said.



ROBIN GEORGE PHOTO

VOICING ISSUES: UGDSB Black Parent Council representatives Dr. Marsha Myrie Obi, left, and Nia James delegated to the school board on Feb. 24.

Human rights review, measuring success

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JOSHUA DRAKES PHOTO

GET IN THE GAME: Joe Day, general manager of Teleport, wants the new space to feel like a welcoming experience, and has curated the entire experience from the moment customers walk in. From routine breaks and guided experiences, The Teleport will guide new VR users through their first programs and welcome veteran gamers to try out their equipment in a communal space with friends.

New business offers immersive Virtual Reality experiences

Written By **JOSHUA DRAKES**
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Following a grand opening event on Sunday, March 1, Teleport is officially open and offering a multitude of virtual experiences, from tours to games.

Virtual Reality (VR) is one of the newest ways to enjoy video games and other media, donning a headset instead of a screen and digitally stepping into a new world for a far more immersive experience than a TV could provide.

This experience doesn't come cheap, however. A VR headset is expensive, and the accompanying equipment, such as haptic gloves and motion controllers, further increases the cost. This makes such a uniquely focused technology unfeasible for many.

But a new startup in Orangeville is changing that by offering affordable VR experiences. The Teleport, operated by general manager and entrepreneur Joe Day, doesn't break the bank. He said his goal was to give Orangeville a truly unique experience it has never had before.

"I'm super excited to bring this type of experience to Orangeville. I don't think we really have any other VR experiences in town," he said. "The big idea was bringing something truly different to downtown, helping to bring traffic to all the other businesses around, and supporting each other and supporting the downtown core."

The Teleport is a VR experience that offers a wide range of opportunities for customers.

For fans of video games, a virtual arcade is ready and waiting, loaded with a library of popular, entertaining games. For those seeking a bit more of a thrill, a unique Star Wars experience awaits you.

Vader Immortal: A Star Wars VR Series is offered by The Teleport, bringing players to a galaxy far, far away and face-to-face with the famous Sith Lord Darth Vader himself.

But the Teleport is much more than just video games. Day wanted it to be an experience that everyone could enjoy, not just gamers.

"We didn't want to be an arcade. We wanted to be a virtual reality experience studio," he said. "For instance, we have our immersive travel experiences. They're guided tours of big cities that we want to see. So, for instance, right now we have France, we put you in Paris, and it's a whole guided VR 360 tour through Paris. And then we will move you to Nice, (France) and so on."

For tourists that might not have the time or money to travel, the guided tour series offers a substitute experience that comes equipped with more tools to help you feel more immersed, such as fans for wind, heat lamps for temperature control and more. For history enthusiasts, a Titanic experience is also available, with vapour dispensers that mimic the mist rising from the ocean.

The entire experience is designed to be affordable and accessible, with individual bookings costing \$34 and lasting up to an hour, depending on the programs chosen. The entire experience is also curated and guided to make sure all users remain comfortable.

"Instead of them coming in and someone's like, 'Okay, yeah, cool. Here's your headset. Go have fun,' I want it to be like a theme park, where... we give you that experience that I think people want more of, that I think is kind of lost," Day said. "People want an experience... that makes them feel like it's important that they're there, not just 'whatever, go sit down.'"

"We want to curate it so it's as comfortable as possible. We're making sure they're feeling okay, that they don't suffer from motion sickness. We're taking breaks, making sure you're energized and hydrated," he added.

The Teleport is set to make VR access in Orangeville affordable, accessible, and accommodating, offering a variety of experiences, from games to tours to interactive events. For a complete list of programs offered, go to teleportorangeville.com.

Dufferin County grapples with uncertain provincial buying rules

Written By **JAMES MATTHEWS**

Queen's Park has rolled out legislation to govern public sector buying without clearly defining the parameters of those rules.

Ontario Bill 72, the Buy Ontario Act, which governs public-sector procurement, is intended to strengthen provincial authority over public-sector procurement and to prioritize the purchase of Ontario- and Canadian-made goods and services.

It establishes a broader, enforceable framework that applies to government entities and designated broader public-sector organizations, including municipalities.

The Buy Ontario Act authorizes the provincial Management Board of Cabinet to issue binding procurement directives and establishes mechanisms for compliance, review, and enforcement. Municipalities and other public-sector entities are expected to comply with these directives once issued, with potential financial consequences for non-compliance.

County Councillor Fred Nix, who is also Mono's deputy mayor, said there's much that's vague about the legislation. Mono might be looking to buy an electric truck for municipal use. To his knowledge, he said, electric pickup trucks are not made in Ontario.

"When we need a light duty pickup truck and we go to buy an electric one, do we know if this Act will prevent us from doing that?" he said.

"We don't know the answer to that," Nix said. "That's the concern I have."

Chris Hasson, the county's procurement manager, said the legislation is indeed vague. He said the county is being asked to adjust the scorecards used to weigh bids from companies to give Ontario-based ones an advantage.

They're being asked to adjust scoring and pricing and to allow for a 10 per cent increase if it is a higher bid for a product.

"So the score cards are going to reflect an

Ontario/Canadian made product first," Hasson said.

Basically, it is "manipulating scoring to allow for Canadian or Ontario made products," he said.

"If there's no electric pickup trucks made in Ontario, maybe the score card doesn't even apply," Nix said.

Confusion didn't abate for Nix, and Hasson said many public-sector purchasers share it. The province is rolling something out without clearly defined rules and details, he said.

Bill 72 may have several implications for municipal procurement. The legislation will so far reduce local buying flexibility through binding provincial directives that may limit municipal discretion in procurement decision-making.

Municipalities may be required to verify vendor eligibility, track compliance, and document exceptions. That may increase administrative burden, particularly for smaller or rural municipalities.

Preference requirements may reduce competition in certain procurements and may increase costs or extend project timelines, particularly for capital and infrastructure projects.

Municipal procurement is already subject to domestic and international trade agreements. Rigid Buy Ontario requirements may create uncertainty or conflict where federally funded projects or trade obligations apply.

And the legislation gives the provincial government the ability to withhold funding for non-compliance. That introduces financial risk even through technical or inadvertent procurement errors.

"All I can say is stay tuned," Hasson said. "Right now it is very vague."

Councillor Philip Rentsch, Grand Valley's deputy mayor, said he doesn't understand why the new rules should cost purchasers an extra 10 per cent.

Hasson said that's an estimate of a cost increase for local manufacturing.

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Watershed Guardian Awards highlight growing environmental advocacy

Written By RILEY MURPHY
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

On Feb. 26, the Ontario Headwaters Institute honoured five individuals and groups in Caledon with “Watershed Guardian Awards.”

What began as an award ceremony in Caledon East turned into a discussion of watershed protection and environmental consciousness in the community, with each recipient using their spotlight to continue advocating for the issues most important to them.

Opening the event, Andrew McCammon, Executive Director of the Ontario Headwaters Institute, explained that this year brought a shift from individual awards to regional awards, in an effort to acknowledge the cumulative efforts of people working collectively for their watersheds.

The Ontario Headwaters Institute is a registered charity that promotes watershed security, which is protecting resilient and healthy watersheds for ecological integrity, economics, vitality, and social well-being.

Before the awards, McCammon led a discussion on the health of the Credit and Humber watersheds, as well as watershed security.

McCammon discussed numerous issues about the current state of watershed security in Ontario, including the lack of targets to retain natural heritage.

Shifting from discussion to celebration, attendees got ready to acknowledge and celebrate the work of these “guardians” in Caledon.

Five Watershed Guardian Awards were presented through two categories.

A lifetime achievement award was presented to Ian Sinclair, and four Community Advocate Awards went to Democracy Caledon, Forks of the Credit Preservation Group, Paul Newall, and Tony Sevelka.

Paul Newall sadly passed away prior to the award ceremony, but received his award months earlier.

“Paul was one of those extraordinary guys, sort of somewhat unassuming, but he got into every little stormwater pond and all the issues around Alton,” said McCammon.

Newall led the Credit Watershed Alliance as President, articulated the need for Credit Valley to complete 15-year-old sub-watershed studies that had never been completed in its watershed plan, and served on the board of the Alton Grange Association.

It was shared that as a resident of Alton for most of his life, Newall’s love for the area grew into active engagement to protect local watersheds and their natural heritage.

The next guardian awarded was the Caledon group, Democracy Caledon.

“Since 2024, Democracy Caledon has been a leading voice in Caledon for protecting watershed security, natural heritage, and agricul-

ture, and promoting sound land-use planning and public engagement in municipal governance,” said McCammon

He added that concerns addressed by Democracy Caledon have included “challenging the process of improving urban growth, holding municipal Council to account on its decision-making and budget, opposing the destruction of the groundwater-fed lake by dumping construction fill, and advocating for stringent by-law controls on field dumping elsewhere in Caledon.”

“That is a snippet of their work,” he adds. Accepting the award were Democracy Caledon president Debbe Crandall and Erica McNiece.

Crandall took the time to discuss the galvanization of Democracy Caledon when, in 2024, Caledon Council approved the rezoning of 11 of 12 development applications to provide nearly 35,000 housing units in Caledon.

“It was the audacity, it was the shock of a planning system that was being completely turned on its head.”

“But there is always a yin to the yang,” said Crandall, noting that that decision brought together the organization seen today.

“We are committed, we are passionate, we are smart, and we are value-driven,” said Crandall. “We are renewed in our efforts to make sure that the water is protected, that the newcomers come here, and they come here with welcoming arms in well-designed communities. That’s our pledge going forward, so future generations actually have a Caledon that can’t be in the best shape because it’s so degraded, but in really good shape.”

McNiece added that she has seen the impact “that poor planning has had on my watershed security.”

“There still is hope that the Caledon that I grew up in 50 years ago, the Caledon that my Dad grew up in, the Caledon that a lot of us grew up in, that it’s still possible for people to come to Caledon and to be able to, for decades to come, really enjoy the jewel that we have in front of us,” she said. “But it requires education, and it requires a drive to want to be able to protect that, and I don’t think that that has to come at the cost of progress or at the cost of money.”

Next to receive their award was another group often seen either out in the community or delegating at Caledon Council, Forks of the Credit Preservation Group (FCPG).

“Similarly to Democracy Caledon, Forks of the Credit Preservation initiated in response to a proposed calamity, an 800-acre below-water table blasting quarry,” began McCammon.

“Forks of the Credit Preservation Group quickly galvanized the community, working tirelessly and constructively on issues from on-site operations, such as noise and dust, to broader impacts on watershed security, air

quality, and public health, and road safety and increased maintenance costs.”

He added FCPG has become a powerful facilitator of local concerns, and “they continue to be a voice seeking the establishment of progressive new aggregate policies under the Town’s Official Plan, and for all of us.”

Debra Wilson, who sits on the board of the Forks of the Credit Preservation Group, accepted the award along with board member Lynn Allen.

Wilson noted the hundreds of years’ worth of information sitting in the room that day, and the different people who have been impacted or have advocated for their local watersheds.

“It is always wonderful to be in a room like this with like-minded people,” said Wilson.

She took her recognition to instead recognize everyone else in the room, including Newall, who she recalled kept boxes of information stacked around his kitchen table, brimming with his work.

“The last of our community advocate awards is another individual who was threatened not only with just outrageous circumstances, but it was beside his property line,” said McCammon, recognizing Tony Sevelka, a forensic real estate appraiser who has turned his life around, focusing on learning everything he could about below-water table blasting, and became a recognized expert with several published papers.

Many may recognize Sevelka from proposed CBM Caledon Quarry meetings or from his newsletter, where he educates the community by passing along numerous papers and write-ups.

“He has been a real champion of good thinking with respect to what this mega quarry might impact us all in the area,” added McCammon.

Sevelka has spent years learning about the proposed blasting quarry’s impacts and educating the community on what this would mean for them.

That night, Sevelka told The Citizen about how, according to a 2009 study undertaken by the Pembina Institute and the Credit Valley Conservation Authority, the Credit River Watershed provides at least \$371 million per year in ecological services to the 757,600 residents of the watershed and saves watershed taxpayers \$100 million in water supply costs every year.

2026 figures show that the Credit River Watershed provides the equivalent of \$900 per resident every year in combined ecological services and avoided water supply costs.

He added “an 800-acre quarry would be a permanent and irreversible ecological disaster with costly financial ramifications for the Town of Caledon, its residents and the 757,600 people who rely on the Credit River Watershed.”

Accepting his award, Sevelka simply stat-

ed, “I think the real hero in our community is Ian Sinclair.”

Sinclair was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Ontario Headwaters Institute.

Whether the community knows him through his delegations to Council, his time spent as a previous Caledon Councillor, or Peel Regional Councillor, to say Sinclair has a wealth of knowledge would appear to be an understatement, as McCammon said, “the problem with saying someone who needs no introduction is that it’s true, but it’s underwhelming. Ian Sinclair has been a pillar and a model in this community for many years.”

McCammon noted that even now, Sinclair does the same as he did when he was a councillor: he asks the simple questions.

He’s sat on numerous committees, commissions, agencies and councils.

Accepting his award, Sinclair dove into his own history, recounting what made him who he is today.

Sinclair grew up near the Don River, where his great-grandfather and grandfather both swam and caught fish. By the time his father was growing up, there were no fish left to catch.

For Sinclair himself, he says what was left was an “industrial sewer.”

“When we came to the river, it wasn’t a question of looking at clear water. It was what colour it was, swirling colors of blue and yellows, all kinds of colors from the mills.”

When Hurricane Hazel struck in 1954, Sinclair noted the impact of the flooding he saw at merely eight-years-old has stuck with him, evident to this day, as in 2020, when, sitting on Caledon Council, he advocated for floods to be added to risk lists.

Sinclair highlighted numerous areas facing environmental challenges, including the Red Hill Creek Valley and the Don Valley.

“Forests were cleared, landforms graded, sound barriers and guardrails installed to make an industrial landscape out of a natural area,” said Sinclair. “As a general comment, natural areas seem to be resources to be extracted.”

“Natural areas such as river valleys meet all the criteria for protection but end up becoming resources to be extracted for development.”

He also voiced his concerns about the Town of Erin’s residential growth and the efforts of the Coalition for the West Credit River.

“My achievements in watershed matters so far,” Sinclair made sure to clarify, “are working constructively with Caledon residents and their associations on water and land use issues, and then speaking up knowledgeably on environmental issues in the various councils, committees, commissions, agencies that I’ve served on in support of the natural environment and good land use planning. Thank you for the recognition of my service.”

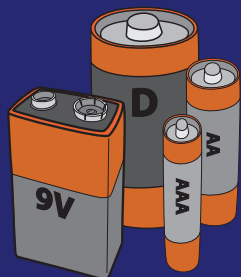
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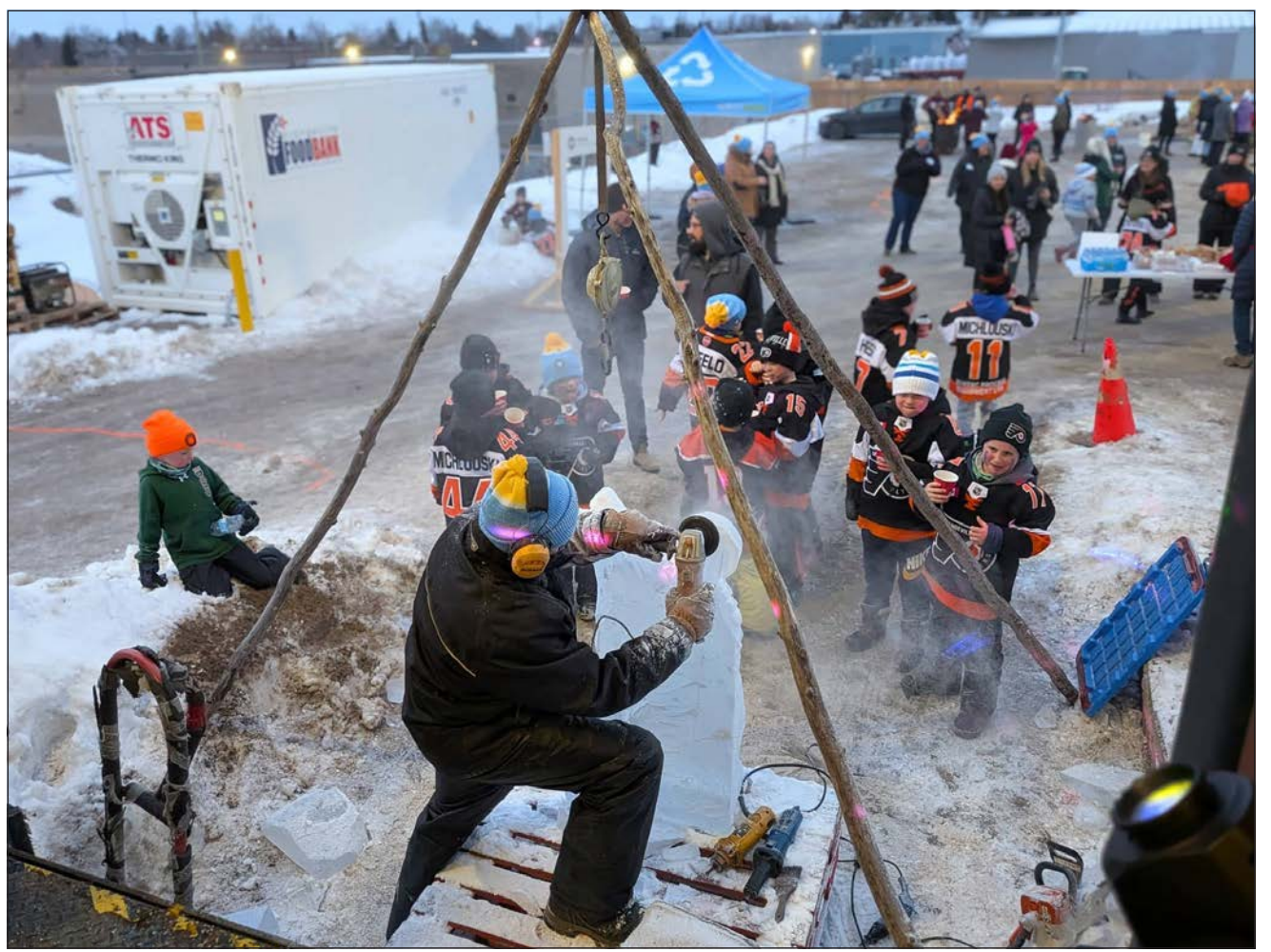
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TURNING COMPASSION INTO ACTION: The Orangeville Food Bank's Coldest Night of the Year walk on Feb. 28 saw incredible support, raising \$190,000 as of press time. The fundraiser is on track to reach its \$200,000 target, with donation forms and pledges still being counted. Mono-based chainsaw carver, Jim Menken, created a masterful ice sculpture of a wolf howling at the moon during the event. The Orangeville Ukuladies also rallied the crowd with their rendition of "500 Miles" by The Proclaimers. Meanwhile, Town Crier Andrew Welch read a poem and rang our a cry to send off the walkers. A total of 473 walkers participated across 71 teams, representing an incredible turnout. The Orangeville Food Bank supports more than 1,500 people each month and fundraisers like the Coldest Night of the Year ensures it can meet the community's ever-increasing need for emergency food access.



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CHOSEN ENTRY: The World Thinking Day plaque was awarded to Ella Roy of the Palgrave Girl Guides, Ontario Council, Community 15, in the Peel area, with over 700 members, were allowed to submit a design for the 100th World Thinking Day celebration. **BIG WIN:** Ella Roy (right) and other recognized winners at the 100th World Thinking Day celebration, Manreet (left), and Kayleigh (middle), celebrated their victory. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Palgrave Girl Guide Member wins 100th anniversary Friendship Crest competition

Written By RILEY MURPHY
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

This year marks 100 years of World Thinking Day, an annual celebration on the shared birthday of the founders of the Girl Guides and Scouts, Lord and Lady Baden-Powell, on Feb. 22.

For the 100th anniversary, this year's World Thinking Day theme was friendship, to encourage curiosity, creativity, and meaningful connections within the global Guiding and Scouting community.

Part of the 100th anniversary was a Friendship Crest Competition, in which all

girls and adult members of Ontario Council, Community 15, in the Peel area, with over 700 members, were allowed to submit a design for the 100th World Thinking Day celebration.

The event had over 300 attendees.

At the event, the winners were announced for the competition, and Palgrave Girl Guides' cheers erupted as 3rd year Guide of the 1st Palgrave Guides, Ella Roy, was crowned the winner.

She was chosen above dozens of entries by adult members and the World Thinking Day event committee.

It was shared that her submission was

chosen for its reflection of sisterhood and friendship within guiding.

"We were told to design a crest of what we think friendship means to us," Ella, 11, told The Citizen. "I chose three girls holding hands because I think friendship means everybody gets along well, and the three girls holding hands for me meant like they all had good relationships with each other, they're all nice to each other."

Also depicted in her design are symbols on the girls' backs, one for Girl Guides, one for Girl Guides Ontario, and one maple leaf representing Canada.

"I was nervous because I didn't know

who was going to win, but then they announced that I won, I was really, really excited," Ella says. "My whole girl guide group was all screaming."

Ella's mother, Dawn Roy, says they were so happy to hear she had won.

"We're really proud of her," she says. Dawn explains that Ella often draws and colours in her free time and really enjoys it.

All Guide members in Community 15 will receive Ella's version of the crest, and she will receive her own crest mounted on a plaque always to remember the special moment.

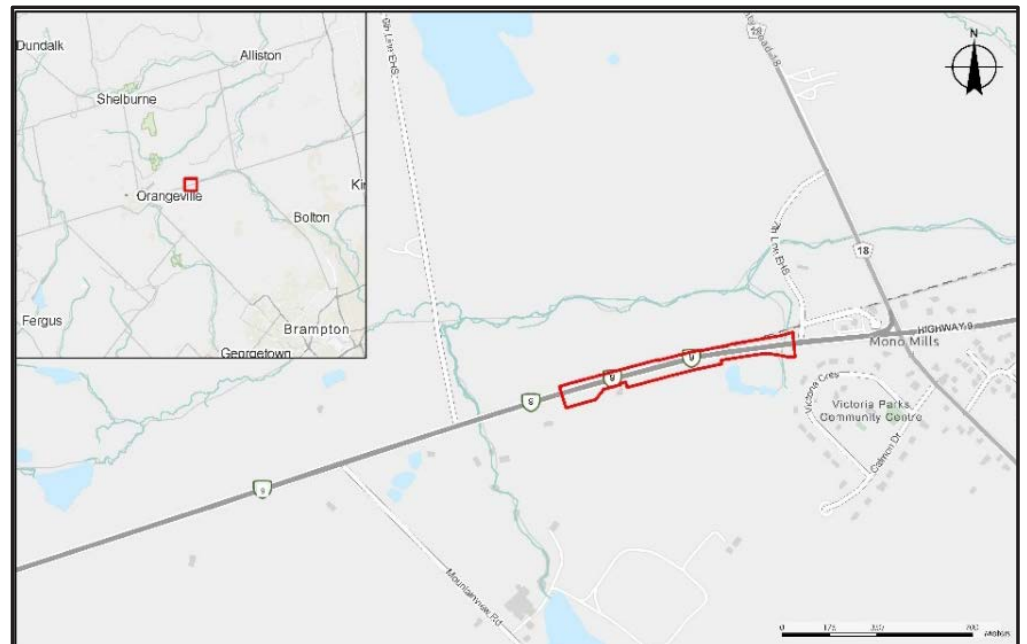
NOTICE OF STUDY COMMENCEMENT

Preliminary Design, Detail Design and Environmental Class Assessment for the Introduction of a Right Turn Taper on Highway 9 (GWP 2045-24-00), in the Town of Caledon

PROJECT OVERVIEW

D.M. Wills Associates Limited (Wills) has been retained by the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) to undertake the Preliminary Design, Detail Design and Class Environmental Assessment for the Introduction of a right turn taper, parallel lane, and entrance on the south side of Highway 9 west of Airport Road, in the Town of Caledon.

The Project includes the construction of a right-turn taper, parallel lane, and entrance into the future Runnymede Health Centre, Post Traumatic Stress Injury facility. The facility is proposed to be located on the south side of Highway 9, west of Airport Road in the Mono Mills area within the Town of Caledon, Peel Region.



PROCESS

The Project is following the approved planning process for Group C projects in accordance with the MTO *Class Environmental Assessment (EA) for Provincial Transportation Facilities and Municipal Expressways (2024)* with the opportunity for public input throughout. A Transportation Environmental Study Report (TESR) will be prepared, with notices of study submission posted at the time of submission to explain the review process and identify locations where the TESR will be available for a 30-day public and agency review period.

A Project Website has been created with Project information and can be accessed at

www.hw9runnymedehealth.ca

COMMENTS

External agency and public consultation will take place throughout the Project. We are interested in receiving your input at any point during the study. If you wish to submit comments, or be added to the Project mailing list, please contact any one of the Project team members below:

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Ministry of Transportation, Eastern Region
1355 John Counter Boulevard
Kingston, ON K7K 0E5
Tel.: 613-449-0544

Notice First Published: **March 5, 2026**

Comments and information are being collected to assist the MTO in meeting the requirements of the Ontario *Environmental Assessment Act*. Information will be collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Access to Information Act*. With the exception of personal information, all comments will become part of the public record. If you have any accessibility requirements in order to participate in this project, please contact one of the project team members listed above.



Orangeville SPCA rolls out the Neuter Scooter, offering free surgeries

Written By JOSHUA DRAKES
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Ontario SPCA's Mobile Neuter Scooter program in Orangeville marked World Spay Day Tuesday, Feb. 24, with a focused push to tackle pet overpopulation and improve access to veterinary care for local families.

World Spay Day is designed to raise awareness of the consequences of unchecked pet populations, including overcrowded shelters and more animals living on the streets.

Shannon Bury, community outreach coordinator for the Ontario SPCA Orangeville Animal Centre, said the mobile clinic is an important tool for accessibility in the region.

"This initiative focuses on underserved communities and helps families access spay and neuter services that they may not have otherwise had access to," she said. "This helps to reduce pet overpopulation in the province. It's an important way to reach underserved communities that otherwise wouldn't have access to the veterinarian care that is offered through static clinics."

Rising demand for spay and neuter services, combined with an ongoing veterinarian shortage and the surge in pet ownership stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, has made programs like the Neuter Scooter

increasingly important.

Appointments for these services typically fill within minutes when bookings open, underscoring the scale of the need.

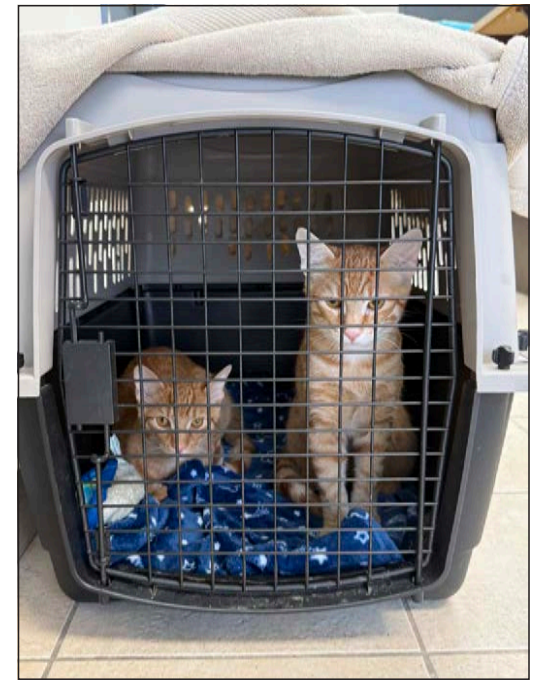
The Neuter Scooter program in Orangeville operates on the second Wednesday of every month, offering surgeries at a reduced cost and, on special occasions like World Spay Day, at no cost to eligible pet owners.

"Across the organization, we were able to offer 227 free spay and neuter surgeries for both cats and dogs across the Ontario SPCA and humane society," Bury said. "Then in Orangeville specifically, we were able to offer 15 free spay and neuter surgeries."

Public reception to the mobile clinic has been positive, particularly among those who face financial or geographic barriers to veterinary care.

"Across the province, the SPCA has received very good reviews and feedback on it and has been able to help so many people that otherwise wouldn't have access to this care," Bury said. "For Orangeville, specifically, it is a bit of a newer program, so we are still getting things off the ground, but for the people who have been involved in the Orangeville clinics have expressed, like, a lot of gratitude and a lot of high impact from the surgeries being offered."

While the Orangeville program is still rel-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

ON THE ROAD: In Orangeville, the SPCA's mobile clinic facilitated 15 spays and neuters, out of a total capacity of 20. Despite being a relatively new program, local visitors have spoken highly of the mobile service, saying it gives them much greater access to critical services they previously could not use.

atively new and still establishing its reputation, participants have expressed strong appreciation for the support and relief it provides.

Overall, the Neuter Scooter is emerging as a key tool in reducing unplanned litters, easing pressure on shelters, and helping families keep their pets healthy and at home.

Family launches GoFundMe to return remains of son following fatal car crash

Written By JOSHUA DRAKES
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

A fundraising campaign is nearing its goal after a fatal crash in the Township of Melancthon claimed the life of a 24-year-old international student.

The online appeal, titled "In Loving Memory of Udampreet Singh," was launched by his cousin, Amanjot Singh, following his death on Feb. 26 at St. Michael's Hospital. Singh had been hospitalized after a motor vehicle collision the previous evening.

As of press time, the fundraiser had raised just over \$38,000 toward its \$40,000 goal in five days.

Udampreet Singh had come to Canada on a study permit with plans to eventually bring his parents to join him from India once he had established himself in the country. His family sacrificed much of what they had to get him to Canada to study.

Originally from Yamunanagar in Haryana, he is survived by his mother, father and younger sister, who remain in India. His family is now working to have his remains

returned to India so his parents can perform his final rites according to their traditions, as well as allowing his family to say a proper goodbye.

Arrangements are being made through the Brampton Crematorium & Visitation Centre.

The collision is under investigation by the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP).

In a separate statement, the Dufferin Detachment of the OPP said officers responded alongside Dufferin County EMS and local fire services to a two-vehicle crash on Feb.

25 at approximately 6:40 p.m.

Emergency crews were dispatched to County Road 124, just north of 20 Sideroad, for a serious collision.

Police said a 24-year-old man from Brampton was transported to a Toronto-area hospital, where he was later pronounced deceased. The investigation remains ongoing.

The OPP is asking anyone with information or dashcam footage of the incident to contact the Dufferin OPP at 1-888-310-1122 or to provide information anonymously through Crime Stoppers.

Two Mono residents charged with impaired driving in separate incidents on the same day

Dufferin Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) officers have charged two Mono residents with impaired operation-related offences following two separate incidents.

On Feb. 25, at approximately 4:46 p.m., Dufferin OPP officers were dispatched to the area of 150 First Street after receiving reports of a female slumped over the steering wheel of a vehicle in a parking lot. Police attended the scene alongside other emergency services and located the driver.

After speaking with the individual, officers initiated an impaired driving investigation.

Marie Macdonald, 37, from Mono, has been charged with:

- Operation while impaired - alcohol and drugs
- Use plate not authorized for vehicle
- Use plate not in accordance with regulations
- Fail to surrender permit for motor vehicle
- Possess unmarked cigarettes

On Feb. 25, at approximately 10:20 p.m., Dufferin OPP officers were conducting general patrol in the area of County Road 124 when they located a vehicle in a ditch that had sustained significant damage. After speaking with the driver, officers initiated an impaired driving investigation.

Kristopher Erdei, 46, from Mono, has been charged with:

- Operation while impaired - alcohol and drugs
- Operation while impaired - blood alcohol concentration (80 plus)
- Drive vehicle or boat with cannabis readily available

The accused individuals are scheduled to appear before the Ontario Court of Justice in Orangeville at a later date. Their driver's licence was suspended, and both vehicles were impounded.

None of the listed charges have been proven in court.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**Next exit:
Making the meeting** 

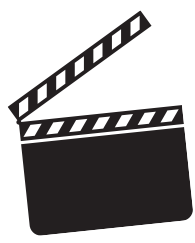
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Arts & Entertainment

LOCAL COMMUNITY EVENTS



Century Church Theatre gears up for 'Blithe Spirit,' a comedy set in 1940s Britain

Written By CONSTANCE SCRAFIELD

Nick Farrow has high praise for the current cast and crew opening *Blithe Spirit* at Century Church Theatre in Hillsburgh. Farrow is directing the play.

In a recent interview with the Citizen, he said, "It's not three acts exactly – the third act is very short. It is a fast pace, very wordy comedy."

He added, "It is technically very challenging, and this is a team of people who work very hard."

To offer a brief synopsis, Coward's wonderful play takes us back to the elegant, sophisticated Britain of the 1940s. It takes place in the Condomines' country house in a small village near Folkestone, Kent, England. Mystery novelist Charles Condomine and his wife, Ruth, have invited their friends, Dr. and Mrs. Bradman, for drinks and dinner.

By way of research for his next book, Charles has also invited a local clairvoyant, Madame Arcati, to hold a séance after dinner so he can observe her behaviour as a character for his new book.

Charles' first wife died five years ago, and he has since been married to Ruth. In the opening scene, she teases him a little about how he was prepared to marry her in those first few years after Ruth's death. Would he do as much again if she died? He protests his love for her while admitting he still has feelings for Elvira.

Little does Charles imagine that his late wife, Elvira, will arrive on the scene once Madame Arcati's séance is in full swing. When Elvira does appear, she makes herself known to Charles, although only Charles and she can talk to each other. Neither the Bradman couple nor Ruth can see or hear her. Naturally, they refuse to believe that Charles has the delightful repartee dancing among him. The ghost of Elvira is extremely funny.

"The comedy begins from the fact that Elvira comes back. Charles can see her but his present wife doesn't believe she

is really there," Farrow offered. "She creates as much mischief as she can between Charles and his present wife. Elvira is a bit of a vamp."

The supporting characters, Dr. Bradman and his wife, who also cannot see Elvira and don't believe she is there either, along with Madame Arcati in the midst of it all, make the comedy quite madcap.

There are a tremendous number of words in a Coward play, but this challenge is accepted wholeheartedly by the cast, and Farrow is impressed by the dedication the actors are giving to coming "off book." He commented that they are rehearsing together via Zoom in addition to their weekly rehearsals at the theatre.

"The actors have been stellar," he remarked.

Rehearsals have been going on since Jan. 5, with a regular schedule of all day Sunday and Monday evenings, managing to deal with winter conditions on the faithful Zoom as necessary, which adds up to 72 hours at the theatre, all told.

The biggest challenge for the actors has been "to get them into the period of the times of the 1940s, and they have studied and come up very good," said Farrow.

Along with the dialogue and the presentation, Farrow is delighted with the costumes, which emulate the look of the '40s so well. Ruth is wearing a beautiful gown, and Charles is wearing a dinner jacket.

It was the British Nick Farrow himself who suggested the theatre company take on *Blithe Spirit* because he liked the challenge. Normally, Farrow and the company do a murder mystery, and this is new for them all.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

REHEARSALS UNDERWAY: The cast of *Blithe Spirit* by Noel Coward rehearses, as opening night approaches on March 8 at the Century Church Theatre in Hillsburgh. This wonderful comedy takes the audience back to the wit and charm of the 1940s as Coward wrote it. The show runs evenings and matinees until March 21. The cast, from left to right, is David Lee (Charles), Jason Riedel (Dr. Bradman), Lucille Weedon (Edith), Michelle White (Mrs. Bradman, sitting), Nicki Simms (Ruth, sitting), Michelle Salmon (Madame Arcati, standing) and Amanda Philip (Elvira), who is missing from the photo.

"In my program notes, I mention that a play by Coward is still relevant to today. He appears as himself in the last movie, *Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale*," Farrow mentioned. "He was invited to come as an entertainer, to sing."

Sir Noël Peirce Coward was a playwright, singer, composer, and actor. Of his many plays, 27 are highlighted and in regular production, even though he wrote more than 50.

His high wit and charm endear him to

theatres around the world. Coward died in 1973.

Blithe Spirit was one of his most beloved plays.

Farrow said, "For me, the conflict is the husband sees his dead wife and his present wife - it is tender love aspiring to last."

Blithe Spirit opens on March 8 and runs over two weekends, with the final show on March 21.

For tickets and details, go to century-churchtheatre.com.

David Gauthier
Service Consultant

David brings a calm, customer-first mindset to every service appointment. As a MacMaster Certified Service Consultant, he works hard to ensure every visit is smooth and stress-free. Whether you're dropping in for maintenance or need help navigating a repair, David is ready with clear communication, helpful insight, and a friendly attitude.

Maurice McDonald
Service Consultant

Maurice is the kind of advisor who makes service feel easy. He's known for his warm, approachable style and his ability to keep customers informed every step of the way. With strong product knowledge and a passion for helping people, Maurice takes the guesswork out of vehicle service at Orangeville Chrysler.

Jazz Matharu
Service Consultant

Jazz combines technical knowledge with an easygoing, professional style that customers appreciate. Bilingual in English and Punjabi, he makes sure every guest feels heard and understood. Whether it's a routine visit or a more involved repair, Jazz helps keep the process efficient, transparent, and tailored to your needs.

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The Citizen CROSSWORD

Puzzle No. 263110 • Solution on page: CLASSIFIEDS SECTION

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11			
12			13		14								
16			17		18								
20				21			22						
		23		24			25						
26	27	28	29				30						
31							32						
33							34	35	36	37	38		
			39	40	41		42	43					
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49							50		51	52	53	54	55
							56		57		58		
59							60			61			
62							63				64		

CLUES ACROSS

1. Unit of dry measure
5. One who defies authority
8. Social media giant
12. Render holy
14. "Much ___ about nothing"
15. Computer manufacturer
16. Creed
18. Immoral act
19. Mountain pass
20. Winged nut
21. Don't know when yet
22. Elected officials
23. Corrupt tendencies
26. Popular adult beverage
30. Made a mistake
31. Morally correct
32. Type of whale
33. Portable conical tent
34. Native people of the Congo
39. More (Spanish)
42. Classroom implements
44. Cognizant of
46. One who tells
47. Free from bondage
49. Thick piece of something
50. Containing two adjacent nitrogen atoms
51. Removed from the record
56. Legendary singer
57. Broke up the earth
58. Hunting expedition
59. Contributes
60. Unit of work or energy
61. Wreckage on the sea bed
62. Affirmative! (slang)
63. Witness
64. Scrape (Archaic)

CLUES DOWN

1. "___ and flows"
2. Humble request for help
3. A position of leadership
4. Continent
5. Adherent of a particular religion
6. Things that can be eaten
7. Self-governing Netherlands territory
8. Long-tailed crow
9. Repeated
10. Bluish greens
11. Humanities
13. Someone who serves in the armed forces
17. Labor (Spanish)
24. Zero
25. Shared by involving three parties
26. Queens ballplayer
27. Consumed
28. Rest here please
29. Men's fashion
- accessory
35. American time
36. Sound unit
37. They ___
38. Soviet Socialist Republic
40. Places to play video games
41. A sudden attack of illness
42. When you hope to arrive
43. Charges
44. Actress Seyfried
45. A tributary of the Ohio River
47. Omit when speaking
48. Armored fish
49. Remain
52. From a distance
53. Adventure story
54. Geological times
55. Eat dinner

No one has more self-confidence than the person who does a crossword puzzle with a pen.

How they say that in...

English: Blanket
Spanish: Manta
Italian: Coperta
French: Couverture
German: Decke

Math Blocks

Fill in the missing blocks with numbers between 0-20. The numbers in each row add up to the totals on the right. The numbers in each column add up to the totals on the bottom.

		3	9
19		20	57
	15	14	45
37	36	38	

This craft involving yarn gets its name from a French term meaning "small hook."

Answer: Crochet

In crochet, the thickness of the yarn should coordinate to the gauge of the crochet hook being used.

CHAIN
the starting stitches of crochet

14	15	16
20	18	19
4	3	2

Solution

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Caledon Meals on Wheels invites community to tasting menu event

Written By RILEY MURPHY
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Caledon Meals on Wheels (CMOW) is inviting community members – and their appetites – to their tasting menu event on March 12.

Attendees will be able to not only meet CMOW's brand-new Chef Arielle, but also try new menu ideas and vote on the dishes they'd like to see added to the menu.

"[We] wanted to make sure that what we're doing is coming from and informed by the people that we're serving," says Executive Director Kim Rodrigues, "I think it's important that they have that input as much as possible and be able to contribute to our programs as well."

Rodrigues says they aim to keep CMOW client-centred, and their feedback is key to the work they do.

She adds they're excited for Chef Arielle to join CMOW, bringing both her new ideas and experience to the table.

"It would be really great to be able to

showcase some of the ideas that she has, and some of the new flavors that she wants to bring. We really want to get away from people thinking that Meals on Wheels meals aren't really that great. They're delicious. They're meals that I would bring home to my family," says Rodrigues.

This event, she says, is a chance for the community to experience that for themselves.

"We're one of a handful of organizations that do a Meals on Wheels program that actually cook their meals from scratch themselves. We're really proud of that," says Rodrigues. "It means that we can really provide high-quality meals that are delicious and meet the needs of the seniors and older adults that might need those meals."

The event is a two-for-one, Rodrigues adds, offering both a chance for the community to meet their new chef and develop their new menu, but also a chance to celebrate their newest project thanks to the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF).

At the tasting menu event, there will be a celebration of the launch of their new podcast, Aging Out Loud Caledon, which they completed with support from their OTF grant.

The podcast focuses on the lives and stories of local older adults in the community, each with a unique story to share.

Rodrigues says they feel fortunate to be working in the community with seniors and older adults who often provide interesting insight and anecdotes of their lives.

"We often are feeling that we're hearing all of this, and wouldn't it be great for other people to hear?" she says. "We felt for a long time that we were gatekeeping some of those stories, and sharing the amazing lives that so many of our seniors have as well as what they've experienced."

Rodrigues says they wanted to be able to share that more broadly than just their own team and organization, "because truly there's so much that we learn ourselves, as staff members or volunteers, from the people that we're engaging with, and [we]

thought it would be a great opportunity for others."

"Sometimes we don't pause enough, and listen, and learn from people that have walked this path before us. They have a lot to share," she adds.

So far, they have more than 35 people registered, and Rodrigues says they're excited to welcome more.

The free event will run from 10 a.m. to 12 noon on March 12 at St. James Anglican Church in Caledon East.

RSVP must be done before the event so CMOW can ensure there is enough food for all.

"We're happy to accommodate as many as we can. We'd love to meet people that haven't experienced a meal through us or who are currently getting meals through us. We'd love to see them at the event and get their feedback, what they like, what they perhaps don't like, and help us celebrate some of the projects that we've been able to develop most recently through that OTF grant."

Shelburne teacher releases educational children's book focused on mindfulness

Written By CONSTANCE SCRAFIELD

Shelburne teacher Christie Reid recently published her very first book, *The Guide Inside*. It's a children's book, designed to teach youngsters about mindfulness.

Naturally, the first question was to ask for Reid's definition of mindfulness.

Her initial response was aimed at teens and adults, "Mindfulness is being present with our body, aware of our internal self. How my immune system is boosted during meditation."

Along with meditation is breathwork, which she learned from Gio Bartolomeo, a breathwork teacher: "breathing into our chest, into our belly triggers the Vigus nerve and makes you restful," she said. "It is leading you into a sense of calm and peaceful awareness."

For children, Reid suggests they can be shown how to tune in to their body sensations and feelings, learning how to become calm when needed. For example, when a child has a negative picture or an "unhelpful thought" that worries them, suggesting letting the picture flow up into a cloud and be taken up and away can reassure the child and make them feel safe. These are some of the tools for imagining and managing stress.

Reid's daughter, Aura, is four years old and well aware of her mother's solutions to

negativity. It seems the benefits are wider still, as Reid commented that she has noticed her daughter's vocabulary is broader than that of other children.

"She is very imaginative, making up stories that she tells me," Reid said.

Currently, Reid is working on her MA in Counselling Psychology, having already achieved a Master's in Teaching. She said she is really working on her Master's, which she reckons should be done in December.

When presenting mindfulness to children, she introduces the idea of "regulating" anger as a tool for expressing calm and avoiding reactivity.

"Being a teacher, I saw this every day, how not to react but being calm; how well that works for the child and the parent as a discipline using slowing your breath."

Reid's charming book comes with cards to support what is inside the book. In addition to the character she has imagined and brought to tell the children readers stories, the book is also an introduction for parents that gives them a place for self-reflection.

A portion of book sales, \$2 each, goes back to day care and other community programs and emotional regulation workshops.

"Everyone has their sensitivities," Reid said, "the difference is making your house more harmonious. This is a way to build harmonious, loving homes."

She finds that the friends she has talked

to about this love it. There is information on the back of the book about how children from zero to two years old are starting to form attachments, and that parents need to pay attention and begin building that awareness.

When a child pushes a lot and has meltdowns, parents need to learn to regulate. To dive deeper into the issue, Reid took a course on children's mindfulness and yoga.

In addition to furthering her education with her second MA, Christie Reid wants to help people learn to protect their body systems by being calm; to understand and give the tools to "find safety within." She has completed a breath work certification. Recently, she learned about Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) of tapping the pressure points in the body with one's fingers, which once again stimulates the "Vagus nerve," easing anxiety and stress.

This is a holistic therapy born of ancient Chinese medicine.

"The nervous system is an important aspect of our bodies for healing and we have to protect it by breath work and emotional freedom," Reid said.

She sees her future and for her daughter a good life of connecting with people and giving back to the community. Her husband, Brad, supports her efforts.

"Taking care of Mother Earth and for Aura, also dancing for sure."



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

NEW RELEASE: Christie Reid, a Shelburne-based teacher, is happy to release her first children's book, *The Guide Inside*. It is a book about mindfulness for children and encourages self-reflection among parents. The *Guide Inside* is available now at BookLore in Orangeville.

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Don't wait for the water: Take flood prevention measures and stay safe

Floods can wreak havoc on homes, causing extensive damage to infrastructure and personal belongings and posing significant risks to safety.

With warmer, wetter weather in the forecast, Dufferin County is reminding residents about the flood prevention measures they can take to protect their homes and families and what to do if a flood happens.

"Flooding is the most common natural disaster in Canada and floods can happen anywhere, at any time of year, to anyone," said Steven Murphy, manager of 911 and preparedness at Dufferin County.

"A changing climate brings more frequent and intense rainfall events, elevating the risk of flooding in our region," said Sara MacRae, manager of climate and energy at Dufferin County. "By knowing the risks and taking steps to prepare, residents can minimize damage, protect their belongings and ensure the safety of their families."

Prevent a flood

The average basement flood costs \$43,000 to repair. But home protection is easier than you think and you can take basic flood prevention measures for any budget:

- \$0 – Maintain what you have at least twice per year. Remove debris inside and outside your home, test your sump pump, ensure you have a battery back-up and maintain your backwater valve.
- Under \$250 – By tackling some do-it-yourself projects, you can complete simple updates to your home to keep it safe. Install

window well covers, disconnect and extend downspouts, install a flood alarm and install a rain barrel.

• Over \$250 – A contractor can help you with some larger or more complex projects that will help you lower your flood risk. Install window wells, correct grading, install a backwater valve, install backup sump pump power source and consider replacing traditional grass lawn with a rain garden.

For more information and to access valuable flood protection resources, visit dufferincounty.ca/floodprotection

Prepare for a flood

Even with flood prevention measures in place, you should be ready and able to respond quickly during a flood event. There are easy steps you can take to ensure you are ready for potential flooding:

- Ask your insurance provider about water damage coverage. In many cases, flood damage is not covered by insurance. Speak with your broker and review your insurance policy carefully.
- Store your valuables and hazardous materials in watertight containers. Heating fuel like bulk propane or oil should be secured. Gas cans should be stored low, on the ground and in an outbuilding.
- Make and practice a family emergency plan so that everyone knows what to do and where to go in case of a flooding emergency.
- Prepare an emergency kit so that you and your family are self-sufficient for at least 72 hours.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

PREVENT AND PREPARE: The County of Dufferin is encouraging residents to take flood prevention measures to protect their homes and families if flooding occurs.

If flooding does occur, residents are asked to:

- Stay updated. Monitor local weather forecasts and emergency alerts. Seek information from trusted sources including the local municipalities and the Ontario Provincial Police. For road closure information visit Municipal511.
- Avoid flooded areas. Never drive or walk through flooded streets or water-covered areas. Flood waters can rise rapidly, making them unsafe.

There are five different watersheds in

Dufferin County. Each Conservation Authority has a role in flood prevention and monitoring. You can learn more by visiting the Conservation Authorities' websites, which can be found on Dufferin's website at www.dufferincounty.ca.

"Always stay vigilant and follow the guidance of local officials, and take proactive steps to protect your home and loved ones," reads a press release from the County of Dufferin. "Together, we can keep our community safe by being prepared and remaining informed."

Dufferin County creates Citizen's Guide to help residents understand Official Plan, future growth

In September, Dufferin County was excited to announce that after many years of engagement and consultation, it had completed its Municipal Comprehensive Review process.

But what is a Municipal Comprehensive Review?

"A Municipal Comprehensive Review is the process a municipality takes to update its Official Plan to plan for and accommodate growth," says Rajbir Sian, director of planning and development at Dufferin County.

"Dufferin County is expected to grow to approximately 100,700 people and 40,900 jobs by 2051 – an increase of 32,300 people and 14,100 jobs since 2021," adds Rajbir. "The County's approved Official Plan provides policy direction on how land in the community should be used, and based on the Province of Ontario's Provincial Planning Statement, lays out what the future of the community should look like to ensure that Dufferin is a complete, healthy and sustainable community."

While an Official Plan may not seem to directly impact the daily lives of community

members, it is incredibly important for all Dufferin residents. The Official Plan provides critical direction on growth management and land use decisions from a broader, more holistic upper-tier land use planning lens, which directly impacts all eight local municipalities in Dufferin County.

"The Official Plan is basically the blueprint for Dufferin's future. It establishes county-wide growth targets and settlement areas, protects areas for local economic development activity, ensures that prime agricultural lands are strengthened and viable, and preserves the natural heritage and rural character of Dufferin," says Liam Morgan, manager of planning at Dufferin County. "We want our community to understand where Dufferin is going, and what the Official Plan means for them."

"That's why we have published the Citizen's Guide," says Rajbir. "Residents, developers, local planning staff and others are welcome to read the entire Official Plan. But this guide is meant to clearly communicate points of in-

terest related to the Official Plan in an accessible and digestible format."

The County also wants its community members to understand that planning at the local, lower-tier municipalities is different than what the County is responsible for as the upper-tier level of local government.

The lower-tier municipalities are who developers would go to with a planning application they want reviewed and approved. The County sets the framework that all development in Dufferin should adhere to and provides overall guidance to the lower-tier municipalities as part of the planning application review process. The lower-tier municipalities make decisions off the framework established by the County. Together, Dufferin and the local municipalities manage growth in Dufferin with a focus on health, sustainability, the economy and a high quality of life.

What is the Citizen's Guide

Dufferin County's Citizen's Guide is a condensed copy of the County of Dufferin Official Plan. It provides users with a points-of-interest version of the Official Plan Policies in effect for the County.

Highlights include:

- Growth projections – growth in the County will be managed by focusing and promoting growth within settlement areas, optimizing the use of existing infrastructure, developing complete communities, and protecting the natural environment and agricultural areas
- Economic development – the Plan focuses on specific types and scale of economic activity in the local environment best suited to their success, and relies on the local municipal official plans to identify and protect for areas of economic development activity
- Housing and affordability – the Plan has guidelines around Additional Residential Units and Garden Suites to promote more affordable housing in Dufferin

• Prime agricultural areas – lands designated as Prime Agricultural Area are intended to preserve and strengthen the continued viability of Dufferin's agricultural community. Agricultural areas accommodate a diverse range of agricultural uses

• Rural lands – rural lands are intended to protect the natural amenities and rural character of the county while providing opportunities for rural and other agricultural uses and resource-based activities, and recreational and tourism opportunities

• Natural heritage system – a Natural Heritage System has been mapped to support a comprehensive, integrated, and long-term approach to planning for the protection of the County's natural heritage and biodiversity

"Over the past few years, Dufferin County has been working towards the goal of improving its communications," says Liam. "We hope that the Citizen's Guide will help our community understand what the County is responsible for in terms of planning. And we hope that it helps answer any questions about the main amendments of our Official Plan and what they mean for Dufferin now, and into the future."

Up next, the County is required to undertake an additional Official Plan Amendment to ensure conformity with any policies that were added or modified in the new Provincial Planning Statement from the Province of Ontario. The County is currently in the process of retaining a consultant to undertake the amendment exercise.

Questions about the Citizen's Guide or planning in Dufferin? The County's Planning and Development team is here to help. Community members, planners and other stakeholders can reach out toplanner@dufferincounty.ca

The Citizen's Guide, Official Plan and more information on planning policies can be found at www.dufferincounty.ca

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8⁹⁹

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Mini Filled Donuts 8 PIECES 184 g

SKEWERS FOR EVERYONE

24⁹⁹

Beef and Bacon Skewers 15 SKEWERS 360 g

17⁹⁹

Chicken Satay with Peanut Sauce 20 SKEWERS 500 g

17⁹⁹

Herb and Garlic Shrimp Skewers 4 SKEWERS 365 g

SAVE \$2 each

17⁹⁹

Chicken and Pineapple Mini-Skewers 20 PIECES 500 g

NEW!

11⁹⁹ each

Island Style Chicken Skewers 4 PIECES 300 g

27⁹⁹

Lobster Tail Skewers 4 PIECES 200 g

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Orangerville WOMEN *in* BUSINESS

Practical ways to support women in everyday life

(NC) ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES DON'T AFFECT everyone equally, and women often feel the biggest impact. While these realities are rooted in long-standing systems, progress happens when people take action—big or small. Here are some ways you can help create change:

SUPPORT WOMEN'S HEALTH.

Women's health isn't just about what we can see. It also includes everyday realities that often go unnoticed. For instance, did you know that, in Canada, about one in six people who menstruate struggle to afford period products? It's a phenomenon called period poverty, and it's a lived reality for many women, who have to choose between paying for period products or other necessities like rent or groceries.

and empowered to contribute their best. By fostering policies, practices and a culture that actively supports women, organizations can unlock the full potential of their workforce while building a more equitable and thriving workplace for everyone

How can you play your part? For many people, the challenge isn't a lack of good intentions, it's uncertainty about where to start. Topics that are still surrounded by stigma, like periods, can feel unfamiliar simply because we haven't been encouraged to talk about them openly. Building comfort and confidence through education is a meaningful first step. Organizations like The Period Purse offer free workshops and practical resources that help reduce period stigma and support the creation of shame-free spaces.

CREATE A SUPPORTIVE WORKPLACE FOR WOMEN.

Women bring diverse perspectives, skills and experiences to the workplace, but they can face unique challenges, from systemic bias to gaps in equity and inclusion. Creating a safe, respectful and shame-free environment helps women feel valued, confident

The issues affecting women's health are complex and deeply connected to broader social and economic systems, and they won't be solved overnight. But small, intentional actions can add up to real change over time. Learn more about how to support women's health at theperiodpurse.com.

www.newscanada.com



Canadian entrepreneurship growing among women, with federal strategy helping to close the gap

WRITTEN BY SAM ODROWSKI

Canadian women have taken the business world by storm over the last 50 years, more than doubling the number of female-owned businesses.

While women owned less than 10 per cent of Canadian businesses in the mid-1970s, they now own roughly 20 per cent of all private-sector businesses in Canada today.

However, greater advocacy is needed to achieve true gender parity in the business world. Male ownership accounts for the remaining, approximately 80 per cent, of businesses, and women face systemic challenges when pursuing entrepreneurship.

To help close the gap, the Government of Canada launched the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy (WES) in 2018, a nearly \$7 billion initiative that offers a variety of supportive programs.

"Studies show that advancing gender equality and women's participation in the economy can add billions in GDP. Since creating Canada's first-ever Women Entrepreneurship Strategy, our government has helped hundreds of thousands of women start new businesses, grow their existing businesses and expand into global markets. Investing in women entrepreneurs isn't just the right thing to do; it's an economic imperative and a smart strategy for a thriving future," said Rechie Valdez, Minister of Small Business.

One challenge that women face when starting a business is access to financing. To address this, the WES Inclusive Women Venture Capital Initiative is helping to create a more equitable venture capital environment. The initiative funds projects that "strengthen and build a more inclusive venture capital environment for Cana-

dian women," according to the Government of Canada.

Another key support to address funding challenges is the WES's Women Entrepreneurship Loan Fund, which provides loans of up to \$50,000 to female entrepreneurs and business owners.

The WES Ecosystem Fund helps strengthen the entrepreneurship ecosystem's capacity and provides the resources women entrepreneurs need to launch or grow a business.

The WES's Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub provides a one-stop source of knowledge, data and best practices for female entrepreneurs. The hub is a collaboration between 10 regional hubs, more than 250 organizations and thousands of women entrepreneurs.

To date, over 400,000 women have been supported through the WES strategy.

"Women-owned businesses are not only driving economic growth through job creation but also bringing in higher revenues year over year, generating over \$90 billion in sales revenue across Canada, and accounting for more than 865,000 jobs," said Wendy Cukier, Professor of Entrepreneurship and Strategy at Toronto Metropolitan University.

"There are also multiplier effects of SMEs, including those owned by women, across sectors and communities. And women are more likely to contribute to sustainable development goals. There is a surge in women-founded companies across sectors from technology and finance to health care and consumer goods, attracting significant investment and market attention. As we move into challenging times, we need to ensure women entrepreneurs are central to strategies for resilience and self-sufficiency."



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On International Women's Day, we celebrate the strength, leadership, and contributions of women across Dufferin-Caledon.

Our government continues to invest in programs that help women build strong futures.

The Women's Economic Security Program provides training opportunities in skilled trades, information technology, and entrepreneurship.

Investing in Women's Futures, which helps women develop in-demand skills and access new career pathways.

Through Better Jobs Ontario, we are also enhancing financial supports, including help with child care and living costs, to make it easier for women to enter or re-enter the workforce and pursue meaningful opportunities.

Across Dufferin-Caledon, women play a vital role in strengthening our local economy, supporting families, and building communities.

Today, we celebrate your achievements and the positive impact you continue to make close to home.



SYLVIA JONES
MPP - Dufferin-Caledon

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Orangeville WOMEN in BUSINESS

FTP works to advance gender equality through International Women's Day



WRITTEN BY SAM ODROWSKI

A global celebration of the cultural, political and social achievements of women is being marked locally today to recognize International Women's Day (IWD).

Family Transition Place (FTP) is hosting its annual IWD event at Hockley Valley Resort (793522 3rd Line EHS, Mono) on March 5. FTP is inviting the community to enjoy a morning of connection, celebration and meaningful impact. The event features a buffet breakfast, signature mocktail, silent auction, and prizes. All funds raised from the breakfast will support FTP's mission to build a safer, healthier community.

While IWD is a celebration, it's also a time to advocate for accelerating gender equality by breaking down barriers, eliminating violence, and ensuring equal rights.

"International Women's Day (IWD) is always meaningful for us at Family Transition Place. It's a time to reflect on the services we provide to women, children, and families and on the collective responsibility we all share in creating a community where safety, hope, and equality are possible," said Lynette Pole-Langdon, FTP's executive director.

"This year's IWD campaign is entitled 'Give to Gain' and focuses on encouraging a mindset of generosity and collaboration which contributes to the advancement of women and girls. Living and working in our ever-growing rural community, we see firsthand how deeply connected we are and how

progress happens when we show up for one another."

She added, "Every one of us can make a difference by giving of our time, expertise, advocacy or resources-whether it's volunteering your time and expertise, supporting local fundraisers, or providing donations if you are able, those are the actions that will help us build a more connected, supportive community where we can all thrive."

IWD was started in 1911, when millions of people in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland attended rallies to show their support for women's rights. At the time, women couldn't vote, hold public office or live a life free of discrimination based on their gender.

While progress has been made, there is still more work to do, and IWD provides a great opportunity for the community to come together to further advocacy and reflect on milestones.

The breakfast's presenting sponsors are RBC Royal Bank, Roud Wealth Management RBC Dominion Securities, and GoYoga Orangeville.

"FTP is pleased to partner with these generous sponsors, whose support plays a vital role in making this annual celebration possible and in strengthening FTP's ability to deliver essential programs and services for women and their families across the community," reads a press release from FTP.

For more information, contact Kelly Lee at Family Transition Place (519-942-4122, ext. 243 | kelly@familytransitionplace.ca or visit www.familytransitionplace.ca.

Women-owned businesses are thriving

Women entrepreneurs are not to be underestimated.

Data affirms that women-owned businesses are growing and thriving.

According to North One banking, women-owned firms account for more than 12 million businesses in the United States. In addition, the 2024 Wells Fargo Impact of Women-Owned Business Report, in partnership with Ventureer, Core Women and Women Impacting Public Policy, found the number of women-owned business increased at a rate of 4.5 times between 2019 to 2023. Women-owned businesses are driving economic growth, and a deeper look at some of the numbers supports that notion.

- The Women's Business Enterprise Council says there are 12.3 million women-owned businesses in the U.S., which comprises about 40 percent of the total number of businesses.

- Women-owned businesses bring in nearly \$2 trillion every year, says the National Women's Business Council.

- During the pandemic, women-owned businesses added 1.4 million jobs and \$579.6 billion in revenue to the economy, says Wells Fargo.

- World Bank indicates that roughly one-third of

principal owners of all businesses are female.

- WBENC advises that 64 percent of new women-owned businesses are started by women of color.

- Women's Business Enterprises Canada says more than 85 percent of buying decisions are influenced by women. The Canadian Minister of Small Business notes that women business ownership is growing. In 2023, approximately 18.4 percent of all businesses in Canada were majority owned by women, compared to 15.6 percent in 2017.

- According to Forbes, women-led tech companies achieve a 35 percent higher ROI. A Forbes study with First Round Capital, a venture capital firm, found female-founded businesses in their portfolio outperformed male-founded companies by more than 60 percent.

Women-owned businesses are making a large impact on North America and around the world. Such firms continue to employ millions of people and foster strong economies.



Happy International Women's Day

FROM THE TEAM AT



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Orangeville WOMEN *in* BUSINESS



Kelly Statham Bookkeeping

SOMETIMES WE DON'T SET OUT TO BECOME ENTREPRENEURS but when the opportunity finds us, we step into it with courage. I never imagined I would start my own business, and now I feel incredibly grateful to support so many inspiring people as they build theirs.

I understand how personal a business can be. It's more than numbers — it's your vision, your time, and your heart. With years of experience in administration, finance, startups, taxes, and events, I bring both practical knowledge and real-world understanding to every client relationship. As a four-time graduate of Conestoga College, with a diploma in Business and certificates in Bookkeeping, Design Communications, and Event Planning, I combine education with hands-on experience.

My goal is to create a space where Business owners feel supported, understood, and confident in their finances. While they focus on growing the business they love, I take care of the books with care, professionalism, and a genuine commitment to their success.



kellystatham.com
416-843-0132
kelly.dm.statham@gmail.com



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parksandabbie.ca

Parks & Abbie Co

PARKS & ABBIE CO. is a woman-owned landscape design and gardening business serving Dufferin County and surrounding areas.

Founded by a local entrepreneur Cassandra Smith, who grew up on a family dairy farm south of Grand Valley, Parks & Abbie Co. is rooted in a lifelong connection to the land. After returning to her rural roots, she built the company with a clear purpose: to create outdoor spaces that feel natural, functional, and truly personal. Named after her two daughters, Parks & Abbie Co. reflects both family values and a commitment to building something meaningful for the next generation.

Specializing in landscape design, garden installation, and ongoing property care, the team brings creativity, hands-on knowledge, and professionalism to every project. Each space is inspired by nature and designed for you — places that grow, evolve, and invite people outside.

For landscape design and gardening needs in the Dufferin area, scan the QR code or visit parksandabbie.ca to connect.



CASEY MARACLE, UROSPOT VAUGHAN



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From backyard hobby to award-winning farm: Hereward founder shares her journey

WRITTEN BY SAM ODROWSKI

A small experiment to see if a fragrant purple perennial could flourish on a 250-acre East Garafraxa farm has blossomed into an award-winning agricultural operation.

Hereward Farms owner and founder, Julie Thurgood-Burnett, was sitting at home in 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdowns when she wondered if lavender could grow on her land. She created a plot of 40 plants and, after a successful first harvest, found it to be a fun hobby.

With a background in cosmetology, Thurgood-Burnett pulled out her old textbooks and began researching to see what she could create from the lavender.

After converting the plants into cosmetics and quickly selling out, Thurgood-Burnett's husband, Stephen Burnett, encouraged her to expand the plot to 3,000 plants. While her marketing agency, Green Monkey Creative, was keeping her busy, she kept rolling with the lavender plants and has since found incredible success.

"I thought, what's the harm? If I do this, I'm going to have beautiful lavender plants in my yard. Then it just took off, and we really have followed our own path," Thurgood-Burnett explained.

Hereward Farms is now home to 8,000 lavender plants, which are used to make a lineup of award-winning, all-natural, locally made skincare and home products.

The farm also features 400,000 sunflowers, which are harvested and converted into birdseed, sold locally and distributed across Canada.

Three varieties of lavender grow on Hereward Farms; two are for culinary use, and the other is processed into cosmetics or sold as dried bunches.

"We sell out pretty quickly to some food suppliers that use our lavender in their products... There are a couple of cookie suppliers who use it," Thurgood-Burnett said. "Wholesale and online probably take about 85 to 90 per cent of my profit... then 10 per cent is from our store and field visits."

Hereward Farms has received several awards since its launch.

It received an honorary mention from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) at the 2025 Excellence in Agriculture Awards last November, recognizing its leadership in sustainable farm practices and farm-to-business innovation.

More recently, Thurgood-Burnett was nominated for the RBC Canadian Women Entrepreneur Awards and has been recognized in other ways over the years.

"We were never really out to win awards... so I'm always shocked and humbled that



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

SUCCESS STORY: Hereward Farms owner and founder, Julie Thurgood-Burnett, started her lavender farm with just 40 plants back in 2020. The farm is now on track to grow 8,000 plants this year, in addition to 400,000 sunflowers.

people pay attention to what we're doing," she said. "I have no idea who [nominated us] for the Women in Agriculture [Award]. They have not come forward."

"It makes me emotional that people are recognizing us for our hard work, without us even knowing," Thurgood-Burnett added.

The family of her husband, Stephen Burnett, has lived on the Hereward Farms property for five generations. Previously, it was leased to his brother to farm other crops, who has continued the family farming tradition, cultivating 8,000 acres across Dufferin and Wellington counties each year.

Thurgood-Burnett's background has always been in marketing, working for several large companies before running Green Monkey Creative with a business partner. She sold her stake in the marketing agency in 2021, but has used her knowledge to pro-

mote Hereward Farms.

While Hereward Farms embraces agritourism, its focus is on providing an intimate experience to its supporters when they visit.

"We limit it to 30 people a day to keep that serene, beautiful experience going," said Thurgood-Burnett. "Then we give 100 per cent of the field tickets back to the community."

Funds are divided among Hereward Farms' charities of choice: Family Transition Place, Orangeville Food Bank, Headwaters Health Care Centre, and the Wellington Pregnancy Centre.

"You give out to the world what it's going to give back to you – and it bugs me to no end that there are women and families at Family Transition Place. On major holidays, we make sure they get spoiled, because it's not the ideal place for anyone to really want

to be," Thurgood-Burnett noted.

Reflecting on her entrepreneurial path, she said she never enjoyed working for an employer or had any interest in climbing the corporate ladder.

"I always had a side hustle. Many moons ago, I had a photography business or I consulted on the side. To take that leap in 2017, I quit my job to go into full on consulting, it was huge for me," Thurgood-Burnett said.

"It's not easy. You're working probably more than you would if you were working for someone else, but I get to do what I want."

Entering the lavender-growing industry presented some challenges, but Thurgood-Burnett was eager to learn. She completed a course at the University of Michigan, where she researched and studied everything there is to know about growing lavender.

With Thurgood-Burnett's in-laws farming the Hereward Farms property for generations, she already had much of the equipment needed to grow and harvest lavender. She now leases some of it out to other lavender farms and provides consulting.

Thurgood-Burnett is always happy to provide guidance to individuals just getting started.

"It's a lonely world, in any type of entrepreneurship, you don't have that network of people to call on... you're usually by yourself," she explained. "So, I always like to leave my door open."

When she's not focusing on growing and processing her lavender into cosmetics or clean home products, Thurgood-Burnett can be found speaking at small-business events, sharing her entrepreneurial journey.

The connections made between Hereward Farms and its supporters have been one of the greatest joys of operating the business, according to Thurgood-Burnett.

"I think when you have a small business, those closest to you support you, but then it's that next layer of people that have discovered you, that fall in love with you," she said. "The relationships that I've created and meeting the most amazing people has probably been the biggest highlight of my journey on this lavender path."

Thurgood-Burnett's key message for other women looking to enter the entrepreneurial space is to "walk their own path."

"Don't worry about what everybody else is doing, there's room enough for everyone to do what they want to do. Take every failure as a lesson because I've had many, and could have said, 'I'm not doing this anymore.' Hold onto that dream and that hope – you have to make a lot of mistakes for it to come full circle. But carving out your own path is my biggest advice to anyone," she said. "Just do it."



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Growing up in a household where life revolved around our families financial services business, First Capital Financial, I came to understand early on the importance of money in people's lives. Not as an end in itself, but as a means to an end - financial security and the peace of mind that comes with that. I saw how my Dad helped his clients with their money, allowing them to return their focus to things that really mattered to them - like family, friends, faith, health and hobbies. So the financial world wasn't really about money, but about people.

This understanding was key to my decision to pursue a degree in Integrated Business and Humanities at McMaster University. The program combined my two passions, and taught me that capitalism contributes to social well-being through innovation, employment and wealth. So businesses exist to serve people, not the other way around. People first, in other words, and this begins with financial literacy for everyone.

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Orangeville Otters swim team host Short Course Championships

Written By BRIAN LOCKHART

The Orangeville Otters hosted the Huronia Region Short Course Championships at the Alder Street Recreation Centre pool from Feb. 6 to 8, and welcomed 457 swimmers for an exciting weekend of competition.

Nine visiting clubs travelled from Barrie, Owen Sound, Lindsay, Hanover, Port Elgin, Orillia, Bracebridge, Collingwood, and Peterborough to compete in the event.

This milestone event marked the first time the Otters independently hosted a Huronia Regional Championship.

A total of 66 Otters swimmers competed with determination and pride throughout the three-day meet.

Over the weekend, 14 club records were broken.

Wesley Hall led the charge with 10 new club records, followed by Ava Yardley with seven, Kaitlin Malec with two, and Qyona Egbert with one new record.

Reflecting on the weekend, Otters head coach Sam Kuntz shared his pride in the athletes and the community support that made the championship possible.

"We truly could not have asked for better support, camaraderie, and results," Kuntz said, acknowledging the efforts of coaches, town staff, and those who contributed to a successful event. "I truly could not be more proud of the Otters for such an incredible showing. This experience has inspired me greatly, and I cannot wait to be part of the competitive swim journey of excellence that is forming in Orangeville."

Otters' swimmers were awarded at the



BRIAN LOCKHART PHOTO

SWIMMING SUCCESS: The Orangeville Otters hosted the Huronia Region Short Course Championships at the Alder Street Recreation Centre pool from Feb. 6 to 8. Nine clubs, with 457 swimmers, arrived in Orangeville for the event.

conclusion of the meet.

Ava Yardley earned High Point for Girls 10 and under.

Nethaya Mahadana-Arachchi captured High Point for Girls 16 and over.

Alyssa Smyth was named High Point Para swimmer following an outstanding

performance.

As a team, the Otters finished second overall in team points, capping off a highly successful showing for the host club.

The meet also saw both national and provincial para records fall. Alyssa Smyth set a new national record and established two

S13 provincial records. Austin Nelissen set two S10 provincial records.

Hosting a championship of this size required a great collective effort. Nearly 400 volunteers supported the eight sessions across the weekend to make sure the meet ran smoothly and professionally.

ODSS Nordic Ski Team has successful season, winning the CWOSSA title

Written By BRIAN LOCKHART

The Orangeville District Secondary School (ODSS) Nordic Ski team has had a successful season, winning a team championship with several athletes bringing home gold medals.

The ODSS ski team had 28 dedicated, hard-working students who competed this year.

On Feb. 9, the team competed at CWOSSA regionals at the Sawmill Ski Trails in Warton and finished first, winning the overall school title.

Four ODSS athletes won the top spot in their respective distance races.

Georgia Groves, Chayse Lunnie, Ailsa Bogan, and Ryan Lunnie all won the gold medals in their races.

After a successful regional competition, the ODSS Nordic team competed at the provincial level at OFSAA.

OFSAA competition was held at Hardwood Ski and Bike Trails in Orillia on Feb. 24 to 25.

"At this competition, we have a distance race on the first day – 5.5 kilometres for juniors, and 7.5 kilometres for seniors – followed by a 4x1 kilometre sprint relay race on the second day," explained Stuart Denie, ODSS Nordic Ski team coach. "Athletes are split into two different divisions based

on whether they train exclusively with their high school or also train and compete with a ski club."

Top Individual Results (in fields of 150 or more racers):

- Georgia Groves, Chayse Lunnie, and Ryan Lunnie each placed 3rd in the High School Division.
- Ailsa Bogan placed 6th in the High School Division.
- Oliver Ahokas placed 13th in the Open Division.

Team Distance Results (based on the top four skiers on each team)

- Junior boys – 2nd place
- Junior girls – 4th place
- Senior boys – 5th place
- Senior girls – 7th place

Sprint Relay Results

- Junior boys and girls – 2nd place
- Senior girls – 4th place
- Senior boys – 7th place

Overall Results

- Junior combined – 1st place
- Senior combined – 3rd place
- Overall School in Ontario – 1st place

The ODSS Nordic Team would like to thank their sponsors, the Optimist Club of Orangeville, Mono Nordic Ski Club, and MacLeod Equine Veterinary Services, for their financial support that enabled them to attend the Provincial Competition this year.



BRIAN LOCKHART PHOTO

SUCCESSFUL SEASON: The Orangeville District Secondary School Nordic Ski team has had a successful season, winning at the regional CWOSSA competition on Feb. 9, in Warton, and competing provincially at OFSAA in Orillia on Feb. 24 - 25, with good results. The ODSS Nordic Ski had 28 eight skiers in competition this year.

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OPINION

Women's Day

The 'world' will be celebrating International Women's Day on March 8.

International Women's Day is celebrated globally as a day to celebrate the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women.

There will be events across Canada, the US, Europe, and in other countries as well.

International Women's Day has been around for over 100 years, beginning back in 1911, with a call to those who cared about gender equality.

It started in Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland, where people attended rallies to show their support for women's rights to work, vote, hold public office, and live free from discrimination.

From a modern perspective, it's hard to believe that at one time, women in North America didn't have the right to cast a vote in an election. Women were also limited in other areas where men dominated decision-making, and they were expected to keep their place in society.

I guess women got fed up with being told that, even though they were citizens, they had no say in who was going to form the government.

Of course, there were also forward-think-

ing men who supported this idea and realized that being a woman didn't mean you wouldn't understand politics. After all, every man has a mother, maybe a sister or daughter, and likely a wife.

Why wouldn't you want the women in your life to be successful and enjoy the same rights that you have?

The United Nations, the most useless organization on the planet, which has a reputation for accomplishing nothing, is proudly announcing that it supports International Women's Day.

According to the UN's website, the theme for Women's Day is "Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls," which calls for "action to dismantle all barriers to equal justice: discriminatory laws, weak legal protections, and harmful practices and social norms that erode the rights of women and girls."

On the page, it also says, "In many countries, the law allows for early and child marriage, which erodes the full potential of about 12 million girls annually."

Does it not occur to the UN that the 'many countries' they are talking about are the same countries that are members of the United Nations?

These member nations are the same coun-

tries that treat women like third-class citizens, or worse.

Who at the UN wrote about 'social norms that erode the rights of women and girls', while sitting at a desk next to the representative of a country that has laws stating a female shall not leave home unless accompanied by a male relative?

Who wrote about 'social norms' after having lunch with a representative from a country that practices female genital mutilation as part of their normal way of living?

Who wrote about 'social norms' after having coffee with a representative from a country that bans education for girls, while forcing women to completely cover themselves from head to toe before leaving the house?

How do these women even manage to have friends if you can't even recognize someone you pass on the street?

On the same UN webpage, it states, "Women have only 64 per cent of the legal rights that men hold worldwide."

The UN makes this statement as if something has to be done about this gap in rights. Yet ambassadors to the UN are powerless to even suggest that a country needs to modernize.

I read an interesting essay by a woman who

BRIAN LOCKHART
FROM THE SECOND ROW



was born and raised in the US but had parents who were immigrants from Northern Africa.

The woman had the opportunity to travel to Northern Africa to visit relatives. She was surprised to experience the culture her parents had come from.

Her relatives were shocked that, at age 20, she had not yet been married off. They could not believe this woman was attending university. They had no concept of higher education and told her a woman shouldn't even be attending school.

They told her a woman was supposed to have children and stay home, and that was it.

At the end of her essay, she said she was shocked at how oppressed these women were, and they didn't even know it. She said she was thankful to have been born in the West.

The key to advancing women's rights globally is education.

People living in an oppressive society won't develop the concept of freedom if the cultural norm is oppression, and this is taught to children from birth.

Enjoy International Women's Day 2026.

The fallout from Epstein

"It's amazing how the arrest of a 66-year-old man in Norfolk has raised the spirits of the entire country," remarked a reader on the letters page of the Guardian this week. "Perhaps a few more arrests are in order."

The 66-year-old man was Mr Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, until recently known as Prince Andrew in polite circles and as 'Randy Andy' in the British gutter press. He was arrested on 19 February for 'misconduct in public office', not for raping an under-age girl called Virginia Giuffre in Geoffrey Epstein's houses in London, New York and the Caribbean.

But at least he was arrested (and immediately released on bail).

Four days later, on 23 February, another British notable briefly honoured the inside of a British police station with his presence. It was Lord Peter Mandelson, a renowned 'fixer' in British politics and briefly UK Ambassador to the United States. The charge was the same vague 'misconduct in public office', and he, too, was immediately let out on bail.

But at least he was arrested. Nobody has been arrested in the United States as a result of the release of three million confidential documents belonging to the late financier, convicted paedophile and possi-

ble spy Geoffrey Epstein. Nobody at all is doing jail time for it except his partner-in-crime Ghislaine Maxwell.

The only people who have been arrested are Europeans: Andrew and Mandelson in the United Kingdom and Norway's former prime minister Thorbjørn Jagland (who only accepted free family holidays from Epstein).

It was probably just bad luck that the names of the two British men were not redacted in the Epstein data dump. Their names simply didn't ring a bell with the 500+ Department of Justice employees who spent several months redacting the names of prominent American men who had availed themselves of Epstein's various services.

So they were named and shamed (they have already done their 'perp walks' for British television), but it is unlikely that they will ever spend time in a British jail. 'Misconduct in public office' is a notoriously hard charge to make stick, and the possible charge of rape against Andrew is even harder to prove since the alleged victim is dead.

As for Epstein's vast network of information exchanges (which would also have served Epstein's work as a spy if he really was one), the case may remain open forever. We are left only with speculation – so let's speculate.

Start with the recent remark of US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, billionaire pal of Donald Trump, that Jeffrey Epstein was "the greatest blackmailer ever." Blackmail is usually about money, but it can also be for information.

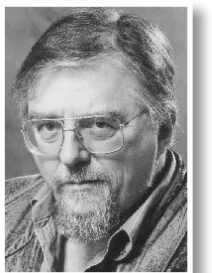
From the guest-lists at his various houses of ill repute, it's clear that many of Epstein's guests were chosen as sources of information or ways of reaching other potential informants rather than just because they were filthy rich. And if they were vulnerable to being blackmailed, it was often because Epstein had taken the trouble to give them guilty secrets.

Why would he do all that? It seems too elaborate if Epstein's intention was just to create a modern version of the Hellfire Club (look it up), but it was the ideal tool if his intention was to gain access to a wide selection of powerful and well-informed Americans.

Some of them just wanted free holidays, some of them wanted to rub shoulders with other famous people, some of them wanted to have sex with under-age girls. Whatever their tastes, Epstein satisfied them.

So what intelligence agency would have the greatest interest in knowing America's secrets, including especially political and

GWYNNE DYER
OUR WORLD TODAY



commercial secrets? Well, the leading candidate is obviously the one that is most dependent on American support in almost every aspect of its existence: Israel.

How would the Israelis have recruited Epstein, if they did? Through Ghislaine Maxwell, whose father Robert had worked closely with the Israeli spy agency Mossad. She moved to New York and linked up with Epstein shortly after her father died.

Does this prove that Epstein worked as an Israeli spy? Of course not, but it certainly makes him a candidate for the role. If he did, it's not such a big deal: Israel has always had spies in America. Jonathan Pollard was caught in the 1980s and spent 30 years in prison. Lawrence Franklin was caught in 2006 and sentenced to 13 years (but released very early).

There were doubtless other spies for Israel who did not get caught: these are almost routine transactions, although the unlucky ones who get caught pay a price. If Epstein was gathering sensitive but not officially secret information, he probably was not even breaking US law. But we'll never know unless Maxwell does a deal under some later administration.

If one insists on being in charge

The time-honoured 20-minute recess twice a day at elementary schools has recently been studied and confirmed as being an essential part of students' days. A silly exercise, really – we all knew that, although it was my habit to try to avoid the benefits of fresh air and playtime with others to dodge the pain of the cold on winter days – even in the sunshine – and more to the point, the bullies.

Anthropologically and from a safe distance of time, it was interesting to observe the schoolyard recess dynamics at the Hockley Valley school Patricia attended, where I served as a parent supervisor during recesses alongside another mom.

Inevitably, groups formed, rarely mixed as to gender – boys frequently roughhousing, which did not necessarily mean fighting but playing at it, as though rehearsing for times to come.

The girls stood together, with their pre-adolescent inclination to watch the boys or gossip about them and about things the teachers said. The younger children played and chased each other, making lots of noise – all excellent release from lessons and the restraints of uncomfortable desks and chairs.

With the extraordinary experience of entering high school, students rapidly began to show shades of their future adult selves as the demands of school dictated, not only

academically but as fully important, socially. Those elementary school recesses were a training ground for coping and establishing their place in the social pecking order or a life of independence.

"Like father, like son" emphasizes how fundamental the influence and, hence, the responsibility of parenthood is. Children usually come into the lives of their parents at the busiest time of their lives. Home and career building, and many other commitments, can take up too much attention and time, but we also teach our children life lessons by example.

I believe that, even very young, we pay much more attention to the adults in our lives than those adults admit. Our failings and strengths, how we see the world and ourselves in it, and how we relate to and deal with each other within and outside the family, are all unwittingly noted by the youths we love.

In high school, those lessons might well be influencing how we interact within the new world that preoccupies and forms us over the four or five years of growth and learning.

The fundamentals of science and math, history and language, sports and socializing, music, drama, clubs: the chance to work almost as equals with adults; the head bumping of emotional crises all mold us, with the clay that is each of us so far.

These are the years when ambition truly strikes, shaped by the examples our parents have set in their own careers. Now the student groups that come together dabble in adult responsibilities, experiments in being adults – smoking, falling in love, taking on leadership roles among their peers, challenging authority all rehearse them for the trials and rewards that the world beyond the nest of family and school will present.

Then, like a massive bucket, high school dumps us out into the world at large, some to the further refuge of higher learning, others to training for trades, or to taking time off for ourselves to think about it.

Along that long road, the first 20 years of our lives more or less direct us; the die is often cast. Of course, from the beginning, money – wealth to poverty – has played an essential role in the whole picture. It can – or maybe not – steer all that happens next as choices and new connections in the wide world are made.

Yet, this is the era of surprises, when the very much expected becomes something else because there are no guarantees.

Yet, this is the start of the road when the system fails us, for all the early lessons of pecking orders – who is rich – who is capable, trustworthy; who can resist corruption and fear.

When it comes to whom of the choicest

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candidates for leadership will come up to the mark? Really?

None of them.

Many will start well but then slide to betray, lie, feed their buddies; compromise where none is valid – blatantly break the law, cover their misdemeanours with rhetoric and charm, as others before them have done.

Am I being harsh?

We lead good lives here in Dufferin County, although the social problems of crime, homelessness, and the demands on the food bank are shocking, given that the community has a lot going for it. This is an exceptionally caring community, one that protects and supports its own. The strength and clarity of the local government sets the bar for how to run a constituency that other provincial and national levels ignore.

Right here, the constant threats of serious environmental damage keep coming from an unnecessary highway, a devastating gravel pit, and rampant development. Across the country, there is talk of building yet another pipeline, crushingly flying in the face of our absolute need to stop the flow of oil.

Our future may be attending the two high schools in town. I hope they hurry. I hope they change everything forward to healing.

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COMMUNITY VOICES

Monthly Message: Coldest Night success fuels momentum for year ahead

If there's one thing I can say with absolute certainty, it's this: there is never a dull moment at the Orangeville Food Bank or Dufferin Food Share – Grand Valley.

As I write this, we're still riding the momentum of our biggest fundraiser of the year, Coldest Night of the Year, which took place on Feb. 28, 2026. It was a powerful, heart-filled evening that reminded me, once again, what this community is capable of when we come together.

We are closing in on our \$200,000 goal, and donations are still being counted. If you participated as a walker or fundraiser, please keep going – your efforts matter more than you know. And if you've been meaning to donate but haven't yet, there's still time. Contributions can be submitted until March 31.

A huge thank you to every single person who contributed to the event's success.

And the momentum doesn't stop there. Local businesses continue to show up in incredible ways. Cobs Bread at 489 Broadway is currently running a month-long fundraiser in support of our work. Customers can add a donation to their purchase throughout the campaign, which wraps up on March 7 with their much-anticipated "Doughnation Day."

On that day, \$2 from every six-pack of Hot Cross Buns sold will be donated. It's such a simple, joyful way to make a difference — and yes, it's also a great excuse to enjoy something delicious. While you're there, make sure you enter their draw to win free bread for a year!

Walmart Orangeville is once again partnering with Food Banks Canada for the annual Fight Hunger Spark Change campaign. From Feb. 20 to March 19, customers can round up their in-store purchases to the nearest dollar, donating the difference directly to support food insecurity programs. There will also be a donation bin at the front of the store for non-perishable food items.

Looking ahead, March 28 will mark our Springalicious Food Drive across Orangeville. Our volunteers will be stationed at Metro, Sobeyes, Zehrs, No Frills, and Fresh-Co, handing out bookmarks that highlight our most-needed items and connecting with shoppers at the entrance. These food drives are about more than collecting cans and cereal—they are about conversations, awareness, and community care. Every



time someone adds an extra item to their cart for a neighbour they may never meet, it restores my faith in humanity.

April brings the promise of warmer days. We'll be diving into our biannual monthly giving campaign, one of the most important pillars of our organization. Monthly donors provide steady, predictable funding that allows us to plan not just for today's needs, but for tomorrow's challenges. Food insecurity doesn't take a month off, and neither do we. Reliable support means we can respond quickly, stock thoughtfully, and serve with dignity all year long.

In May, we are proud to launch our second annual "Leave a Legacy Month." Legacy giving is about more than finances- it's about values. It's about families having conversations around kitchen tables about the kind of community they want to leave behind. Through estate planning and intentional generosity, individuals can ensure their compassion continues long after they are gone. A legacy gift is a powerful statement: that access to food, dignity, and hope should be protected for generations to come.

Our Grand Valley community has some exciting dates ahead as well. The annual Duck Race Day will take place on May 23, and tickets will be available at the Lion's Club Home Show the weekend of March 28. It's always a joyful, family-friendly event that brings the whole town together.

We are also thrilled to share that our second community fresh-produce vending machine has been installed at the new HART Hub. Like our first machine at the lower level of the Mill Street Public Library, this initiative ensures that fresh food is accessible to everyone in the community. Located centrally at the HART Hub, the machine will be accessible daily from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and stocked Monday through Friday. Removing barriers to access—whether they are financial, transportation-related, or stigma-based—is at the

heart of what we do.

On June 15, the Compass Run for Food will kick off for its 11th year. Organized by Compass Community Church, this event supports local food insecurity programs across Dufferin County. Volunteers from both Dufferin Food Share locations — Orangeville and Grand Valley — will be there to help fill the hunger gap after the race. Over the past decade, more than \$597,000 has been invested back into our community through this initiative, and this year's goal is to raise \$80,000.

Grand Valley will also host its second Purolator Red Bag Food Drive over two weekends in June. Red bags will be delivered to households on Saturday, giving families a week to fill them before Purolator returns to collect the donations the following weekend. It's another example of how businesses and residents work hand in hand to care for their neighbours.

The need in our community continues to grow -but so does the generosity.

To stay up to date on events, campaigns, and volunteer opportunities, please visit our websites or follow us on social media. If you have questions, I would love to hear from you. You can reach me, Carrie-Anne DeCaprio, at 226-558-2109 or by email at carrie-anne.decaprio@orangevillefoodbank.org.

Together, we are building something strong, compassionate, and sustainable — and I am so grateful to be doing this work alongside you.



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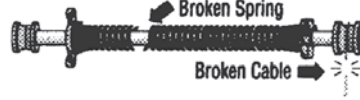
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REMEMBER TO SHOP LOCAL!

Westside Thunder compete in District 4 girls' hockey playoffs

Written By BRIAN LOCKHART

The Westside Secondary School Thunder girls' hockey team has completed a successful season in District 4 competition after taking a loss in their semi-final game against the Centre Dufferin District High School Royals from Shelburne.

The semi-final game was played at the Centre Dufferin Recreation Complex in Shelburne on Monday, Feb. 23.

District 4 girls' hockey is played as a series of tournaments, with each tournament taking place at a different venue in different towns.

On tournament day, each team plays three games, making it a challenge for all players and coaches.

Westside finished the regular season in fourth place with a 3-7-2 record.

The semi-final game got underway at 12 p.m., with both teams coming out with their 'A' game in an effort to win.

It was a fast-paced game between two talented squads. Most, if not all, girls on both teams have experience playing hockey outside of school, so there is a deep talent pool for girls' hockey in the region.

Westside opened the scoring in the semi-fi-

nal game for a 1-0 lead.

The second period saw the Shelburne team tie it up in the second period.

Center Dufferin scored two more second-period goals to take a 3-1 lead with one period remaining. The Westside team showed real grit in the third period, putting forth a huge effort and scoring to make it 3-2.

The Thunder kept up the pressure, and with 3:07 left on the clock, they scored to tie the game at three.

Neither team could score in regulation, so the game went to overtime to decide a winner.

Overtime featured four-on-four play, meaning there was a lot more ice to cover.

Centre Dufferin scored at 1:48 into the OT period to earn the right to advance to the District 4 championship.

In the other District 4 semi-final, Erin District High School defeated Wellington Heights High School 2-1.

That set up the District 4 championship game, with the Erin District High School Raiders and the Centre Dufferin District High School Royals facing off on Thursday, Feb. 26.

Erin came out on top with a 3-1 win to claim the 2026 District 4 title, and will now go on to compete at the regional level at CWOSSA.



BRIAN LOCKHART PHOTO

PLAYOFF BATTLE: The Westside Secondary School Thunder girls' varsity hockey team take on the Centre Dufferin District High School Royals during their District 4 semi-final playoff game at the Centre Dufferin Recreation Complex on Monday, Feb. 23. It was an exciting, fast-paced game with the Thunder scoring late in the third period to tie up and force an overtime period. Centre Dufferin scored in OT to win the game 4-3.

Reduced load season in effect on Dufferin County roadways until further notice

Reduced load season is underway in Dufferin County.

Launching on March 1, load restrictions will remain in effect until further notice. The load restriction is a maximum of five metric

tonnes per axle.

"Reduced load restrictions help protect roads during the spring thaw when road damage is most likely to occur. The County asks all road users to adhere to the road load

restrictions to help protect its roads," said the County of Dufferin in a press release issued on March 4.

Load restriction updates can be found at dufferincounty.ca. To access the Municipal

511 website, visit municipal511.ca.

Dufferin Roads is no longer using X to communicate and will no longer be sending e-blasts through Mailchimp. Road users are encouraged to access the Municipal 511 website for road condition and closure information. M

The general Dufferin County account remains on X and can be followed at x.com/DufferinCounty

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OPP warns residents of increase in CRA-themed scams during tax season

Written By **BRIAN LOCKHART**

As Canadians begin preparing their 2026 income tax returns, the Ontario Provincial Police are reminding the public to stay vigilant against Canada Revenue Agency impersonation scams.

This includes phishing emails and text messages designed to steal personal and financial information.

According to the Canada Revenue Agency, scammers frequently impersonate CRA employees and may contact victims by phone, email, text message, or through fake websites that appear official.

The CRA confirms that it will never send refunds by e-transfer for text message, request personal or financial information by email or voicemail, or pressure you to click links to receive benefits or avoid penalties.

The Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre continues to receive high volumes of reports involving tax-related fraud. It notes that fraudsters increasingly use phishing messages, spoofed caller ID numbers, and official-looking CRA branding to trick victims into sharing sensitive information.

The CAFC stresses that it does not contact individuals to request money or personal information, and encourages all Canadians to report suspicious activity.

There are several common tactics used in CRA scams.

Residents should be cautious if they receive:

Emails or text messages with links urging you to 'claim your refund,' 'update your tax account,' or 'avoid account suspension.' Scammers often use threats or promises of refunds to pressure victims into clicking fraudulent links.

Phone calls demanding immediate payment or threatening arrest, deportation, or legal action are used to intimidate victims. The CRA states it will never threaten arrest or use aggressive language.

Fake websites imitating CRA long pages, often using unusual domain endings or extra characters, are used to dupe victims. Official CRA sites always start with canada.ca or end in .gc.ca.

You may be dealing with a scam if someone sends you a link and asks you to click it, or requests personal details such as your SIN,



banking information, or passport number.

Be aware if someone asks for payment by cryptocurrency, gift cards, or e-transfer. CAA does not accept these transactions.

If you are unsure if you are being scammed, hang up, delete the message, and contact CRA yourself.

If you believe you have been targeted by a

CRA-related scam, whether or not you shared personal information, you are urged to report the matter.

The Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre advises all Canadians to report any scam or attempted scam, even if no money was lost.

Reporting helps law enforcement identify patterns and prevent further victimization.

OBITUARIES - FOREVER IN OUR Hearts

PETER HAROLD BELL APRIL 20, 1941 – FEBRUARY 13, 2026

Peter, born on April 20, 1941, in Brampton, grew up in Cataract. After just six weeks of high school, he decided that was enough and embarked on his career as an entrepreneur, exploring many options in his earlier years.

Peter sold and delivered baled shavings and hay from South River before he was even 16 years old. He hauled blocks for Peel Block, bought and sold cedar rail posts from Manitoulin Island, trucked potatoes from Alliston and hauled equipment for many from all over.

In 1968, Peter married Marjorie (nee Gray), who passed away in 2009. Peter and Marjorie had two sons, Craig (D-2013) and Darryl and blended their family with sons Gary, Brent (D-2021), Paul, and Mark.

Peter purchased 100 acres in Mono Township, five miles north of Orangeville on Highway 10 in 1966 and from there he began buying and selling farm and industrial equipment, which he continued to this day.

Peter possessed a sharp mind for numbers and a keen eye for a good deal. He frequented equipment auctions and sales across the province, never missing a Saturday auction and amassing a unique collection of goods. He was known for his hard bargaining skills and unwavering commitment to his prices.

Peter also provided valuable financial solutions as a private lender to many when traditional banks were not an option, helping to make homeownership a reality.

Peter was old fashioned and still enjoyed reading newspapers from all over and listening to radio broadcasts for the latest news and weather updates. Peter didn't mind driving many miles to pick up the papers from small communities and stopping to check out potential deals and tend to his many properties along the way. He was fond of drinking strong beer and had a wicked sweet tooth for chocolate milk and Chapman's ice cream.

He will be deeply missed and remembered by his numerous associates across the province, friends, neighbours, and family.

Peter is survived by his son Darryl (Coralee), daughter-in-law Debbie (Craig, predeceased), and stepsons Gary (Bettina), Paul (Patty), and Mark as well as grandchildren Jeffrey, Amy, Adam (Jayda), Tyler, Tonya, Sean (Melissa), Dustin, Rio (Kaleigh) and Carter, and eight great-grandchildren.

Peter was the son of Harold Thomas (D-1981) and Doris (nee Moore) (D-1961) Bell, brother of Diana (D-2018).

The family would like to thank the nurses of E Wing at Headwaters Health Care Centre, and Dr. Akula for their compassionate care in the last few weeks of Peter's life.

As expressions of sympathy donations to Bethell House Hospice or Matthews House Hospice would be appreciated.

A Celebration of Peter's Life will be held at In Memoriam Funeral Services Inc. (28 Main St N, Grand Valley). on Saturday, March 14, 2026. from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Online condolences can be made at www.imfunerals.com

In Memoriam Funeral Services Inc. has been given the honour of serving the Bell Family.



EDNA MARY MACDONALD (NEE WILSON)

On Wednesday, January 28, 2026, Edna Mary MacDonald (nee Wilson) passed away peacefully in her 92nd year following a brief illness. During the night, the clouds lifted, and the angels ushered Edna to heaven.

Edna was the loving wife and dearest friend to her husband Jack (2021) for nearly 69 years. Edna was the loving mother to Andy MacDonald and his wife, Erin O'Flynn and Wendy Empey and her husband, Terry Empey. She was a devoted and very proud grandmother to Amanda (nee Empey) and Kevin Bruce; Hayley (nee Empey) and Kyle Weszner; Alannah (nee MacDonald) and Michael Gillan; Bret and Ashley MacDonald (nee Morrison). Edna's great-grandchildren, Madison, Blake and Ava Weszner; Lucas Bruce; and Bridget and Chelsea Gillan filled her heart with love and will carry on the legacy that Edna and Jack built.

Dear daughter of the late James and Louise Wilson (nee Fieldhouse). Predeceased by her cherished sisters, Mildred Ward (Earl), Grace Tennant (Ted), Ruth Workman (Herb) and her adored brothers Lorne Wilson (Joanne) and Robert (Bert) Wilson. Edna is survived by her brother Ken Wilson and his wife Judy Brown along with sister-in-law Helen Wilson (Bert).

Edna worked for Lorne Wilson Transportation for 33 years, driving a bus and then in the office.

Edna and Jack shared their love to travel and loved being with their many lifelong friends and shared many stories of their adventures.

Edna lived a life filled with kindness, strength and generosity. She was a lifelong volunteer and very active in her community. She was especially proud of her association with Mayfield United Church as President and life member of the UCW, choir member, Sunday School teacher, treasurer and Member of Session. She continued this association even after moving to Cedarview Retirement Living in Woodstock (2020) where she became Ambassador to new residents and met many new friends.

Edna was Past President and lifelong member of the Snelgrove Women's Institute, 4-H leader, Brampton Fair Board member, Canadian Blood Services volunteer, baseball coach and most importantly, someone who was always there to help anyone in need. Edna drove cancer patients to Toronto for their treatment. Volunteering helped Edna give back for all her many blessings.

Edna was loved by many and was often seen as a surrogate mom and a loyal friend.

She loved a good laugh and a competitive game of cards. A family gathering wasn't complete without a game of books and runs.

She will be greatly missed by all the lives she touched along her incredible journey and especially for her famous sourdough tea biscuits.

Our sincere thanks to the Nurses at Woodstock Hospital and to Dr. Vu for Mom's care. We appreciate all they did to provide comfort to our mom and our family and to the ones who came to visit Mom while she was in the hospital.

The family will receive their friends at Egan Funeral Home, 203 Queen Street South, Bolton (905-857-2213) on **Friday, March 27th**, from 2-4 p.m. and 6-8 p.m. Funeral will be held in the chapel on **Saturday, March 28th** at 11:00 a.m.

Celebration of Life for both Edna and Jack will follow funeral service at Egan Funeral Home. Spring Interment at Dixon's Union Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Mayfield United Church, 12496 Dixie Road, Caledon L7C 2L7 (www.mayfieldunitedchurch.org) or S.H.A.R.E. Agriculture Foundation, 12801 Bramalea Road, Caledon L7C 2R1 (www.shareagfoundation.org).

Condolences for the family may be offered at www.EganFuneralHome.com.

SHIRLEY ANNE HALL (NEE MEUNIER)

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Shirley Hall on Thursday, February 26, 2026 at the age of 79. Beloved wife of Larry. Dear mother of the late Kenneth, late Joseph, Donna (Dan) and Terry (Kathy). Cherished grandmother of Kenny, Vickie, Robbie, Micheal, Steven. Beloved great-grandmother of Darius, Destiny, Ava, Elise, Aiden and Tristan. She will be missed by her brother George (Sharon) and David Meunier; predeceased by her parents Urgel & Norma Meunier and her sister Rose. Shirley will be dearly missed by Chrystal. Shirley will also be greatly missed by other relatives and many friends.



Funeral Service will be held at Dods & McNair Funeral Home, Chapel & Reception Centre 21 First St Orangeville, Ontario on Saturday, March 7th, 2026 at 2:30 pm. Visitation will begin at 1:30 pm.

Memorial donations to High Country United Church would be appreciated by the family.

A tree will be planted in memory of Shirley in the Dods & McNair Memorial Forest at the Island Lake Conservation Area, Orangeville.

Condolences may be offered to the family at www.dodsandmcnair.com

RALPH BARTELLO

Ralph Bartello passed away peacefully on Sunday, February 22, 2026, surrounded by his loving family.

Ralph will be deeply missed and forever cherished by his devoted son Davin (Noor), his beloved daughter, Melissa; and his treasured grandchildren Garrett (Ludi), Mitchell, Liam (Flo) and Lexi. He also leaves behind two precious great-grandchildren, Fay and Leighton and Ralph's sister Helen whose lives carry forward his spirit and memory.

Ralph was a man whose presence brought strength, warmth, and quiet wisdom to those around him. He loved to pass the time with a good game of chess, cribbage and scrabble. Ralph loved to listen to classical music and himself was very musical and played the clarinet, saxophone, banjo and guitar.

Though he has passed from this life, Ralph's memory lives on in the hearts of those who loved him, from the many meals around a table at home or at his favourite restaurants. He will be remembered with love, gratitude, and deep respect.

The family received their friends at the Egan Funeral Home, 203 Queen St. S., Bolton for a memorial visitation on Friday, February 27 from 4 to 7pm. Condolences for the family may be offered at www.EganFuneralHome.com



GWENDOLEN AUDREY BOUGHEN

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Peacefully passed away with her family by her side at Extencicare Brampton, on Thursday, February 26, 2026, Gwendolen Boughen, at the age of 93 years. Beloved daughter of the late Gladys and Stanley Boughen. Gwen grew up with four brothers, Raymond (Claire) (both deceased), Donald (Margaret), Wally, Stanley (Pat) (both deceased). She will be remembered by many nieces, nephews and extended family. Gwen shared a special bond with her sister-in-law, Marg and niece, Lesley and treasured the time they spent together.

Gwen enjoyed a long career at Pfizer and had many interests and talents. She loved to travel, knit, crochet, arrange flowers, and bake. She also found great joy in spending time at her cottage.

Heartfelt thanks to the staff at Extencicare Brampton, especially the team in Heartlake wing, for their compassionate care and kindness.

The family will receive their friends at the Egan Funeral Home, 203 Queen St. S. (Hwy. 50), Bolton (905-857-2213) for a memorial reception on Friday, March 6 from 2 - 4 o'clock. If desired, memorial donations may be made to the Shriners Children's Hospital (www.shrinerschildrens.org). Condolences for the family may be offered at www.EganFuneralHome.com



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Orangeville Hydro Limited
Public Call for Board of Director Applications

Orangeville Hydro Limited is seeking an individual to serve as an active member on the Board of Directors. There is one (1) open position on the Board of Directors for up to a three (3) year term.

For further information, visit orangeville.ca/jobs.
 Application deadline is 4 p.m. on Friday, March 13, 2026.

Applications may be submitted online at orangeville.ca/jobs, or in person to the Town Hall located at 87 Broadway.

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Stan Douglas (b. 1960), *Masonic Lodge, Barkerville* (detail), 2006, laserchrome print, 127 x 145 cm, courtesy of the artist, Victoria Miro, and David Zwirner © Stan Douglas

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