

## Inferno in nursing homes targeted as state of emergency extended to May 12

Heather Wright  
The Independent

Ontario has extended the state of emergency to May 12.

The Ontario Legislature met Tuesday to pass the bill that extend the emergency measures put in place to stop the spread of COVID-19 including the closure of non-essential businesses and schools.

“This is a health crisis and I’m not going to jeopardize people’s health,” says Ford. “It is absolutely essential we continue down the path we are on.”

During a news conference, the premier said it was clear students would not return to classes May 4 as earlier announced, but he wouldn’t say yet what will happen next. “That doesn’t mean the year is cancelled,” he added.

Ford’s biggest worry as the COVID-19 crisis wears on is the

“inferno” of deaths in long-term care homes.

Ford says now that it appears hospitals are ready to handle any surge “we must redeploy every resource to long-term care.”

The province plans to send hospital based teams to help manage outbreaks in homes and Ford will issue another emergency order Wednesday to limit health care employees to working in one old age home.

The Registered Nurses of Ontario and health care unions have been calling for that since the SARS outbreak in 2003 when people working in multiple workplaces were found to be super-spreaders of the virus.

Jane Joris, the general manager of Long Term Care in Lambton County says until now, most county employees had chosen one workplace during the pandemic.

**SEE INFERNO PG 2**

## Waterville workers out til April 30

Heather Wright  
The Independent

A one-week layoff has turned into six weeks off the job for the employees at Petrolia’s largest private sector employer.

Six hundred Waterville TG employees will be off the job until at least April 30 the company’s human resource officials told employees in a memo issued just before the Easter weekend.

The workers were first given notice of a layoff March 20, when management said through a news release the move was for the maximum protection of their

employees as well as the public.

The workers were supposed to be back on the job by March 30. The layoff was then extended to April 6 and then another week after that. At Easter, the workers got the news they would be back on the job Thursday, April 30 to make enough auto parts for the car companies which are expecting to start production May 4, according to Daren Brown, the plant chairman for UAW Local 254.

“I don’t know if people actually believe were going to go back to work on April 30,” says Brown.

**SEE WATERVILLE PG 2**

## SCHOOL WORRIES



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO

Nevyn McCharles, 11, and his brother Isaac, 9, play on a hammock swing outside their Petrolia home. The boys, like thousands of other students in Ontario, are trying to learn at home during the COVID-19. But Nevyn’s mother, Stacey McCharles, is worried her autistic son will lose some of the skills he’s worked so hard to build during the last school year. See more on the story on page 2.

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# Parents worry special needs kids left behind

**Heather Wright**  
The Independent

Stacey McCharles is worried her son, Neyvn, will be left behind in the province’s at-home learning experiment.

Neyvn is 11 and has autism. He’s been attending school, making friends and a lot of progress this year, McCharles says.

Neyvn and his brother Isac, 9, like the rest of Ontario’s students are trying to adjust to learning at home after the province closed schools to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

McCharles understands the reason for the closure and says she and her family are staying at home and limiting their trips outside to just doing groceries.

But schooling at home is tough. Nevyn, like other autistic children, she says, works best when he has a consistent routine and COVID-19 has turned his routine into chaos.

McCharles says the try each day to do some of the lessons, but Nevyn has a hard time concentrating on the work and sometimes refuses to do it. She spends much of her time trying to help Nevyn and isn’t able to give Isac the help he needs.

And it is frustrating for the family to watch Nevyn struggle.

“He’s come so far this year, that’s what makes me sad,” she says. “I just worry about where he’s going to be next year.”

McCharles fears her son will lose some of the skills he was gaining in the classroom.

“He already struggles as it is,” she says.

“For Nevyn, being at school is a great experience for him, academically, socially, doing physical things, having someone other than my husband and I (working with him)

they’ll push him to do it, where we might not

“It nice for him to have the confidence that he is succeeding ...he’s making gains but now it is at a stand still.”

Laurel Liddicott-Newton, the head of the Lambton-Kent Elementary Teachers’ Federation says McCharles isn’t alone in her struggle. Autistic children, in particular, are having a hard time with the new reality of school.

“This certainly emphasizes how the drastic the cuts the government made to Autism funding limits that helped parents of our most vulnerable students are,” says Liddicott-Newton. “There is total inequality amongst family’s and access to technology, usual supports that their child with special needs would have in their classroom if schools were open.”

John Howitt, director of the Lambton-Kent District School Board acknowledges there are problems for special needs families. And he says they’re trying to make education meaningful for them. “Going to their house to work directly with them is not possible right now. We spoke to parents and resource teachers and it will look different in almost every case as it does already in every school.”

McCharles says Nevyn’s educational assistant has been wonderful, but there is only so much that can be done from a distance.

McCharles is trying to remain positive but says “It is hard to see the future...I always wonder what the future looks like for him day-to-day, hour-to-hour, because things can change... You’re doing the best you can, like everybody else is...we’re all trying to do our part.”

WITH FILES FROM JENNA COCULLO, LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

# Inferno in nursing homes to be put out

**CON’T FROM PG 1**

“Most people have picked a place,” she says adding there were only eight to 10 people at each of the three county homes who did work between two buildings,” says Joris.

“There are a few people, for instance some nurses, both employers need them desperately. But if they work in a home where there is COVID – they would not be working back and forth,” Joris added.

There is only one retirement home in Lambton which has had an outbreak, and it has been deadly.

Eleven people in Lambton have now died of COVID-19, six of the victims were at Landmark Village where 23 people were

diagnosed with the virus. Across Canada, nearly half the deaths have been in long-term care homes.

Tuesday, Ford vowed to push all the resources possible to those homes. “We will spare no expense.

“There will be more staff for the homes that need it most,” he said adding the province will cover the cost and the workers will be found from a job bank of retired workers who have volunteered to help out in the pandemic.

Ford added any home that needs personal protective equipment will get it in 24 hours.

All Lambton County staff are also now wearing surgical masks to prevent any possible spread.

# Waterville closure continues to April 30

**CON’T FROM PG 1**

“All the (auto) plants are saying they’re going back on Monday and we’re going back on Thursday to be ready, but that really does change day-to-day and minute-to-minute. Many people aren’t going to believe it until it really happens.”

Bill Pollock is the chair of Local 254.

“They (TG Waterville) are relying upon their customer, so they go by what their customers tell them,” he says.

“If the customer saying they’re down next week, they’re down next week,” Pollock says.

“There are plans and then there are things that interfere with those plans.”

That includes whether both the US and Canadian governments encourage businesses to reopen. The auto industry is still listed as an essential service but Pollock says the UAW pushed the Big Three Automakers to shutdown for the workers’ safety. That led to a chain reaction in the auto parts industry.

Brown has been talking with company officials about what safety precautions will be in place when the workers do return.


Waterville is installing hand washing stations and is looking at ways to put space between employees on the production line where needed.

There will also be new health protocols for workers heading into the plant. “They’ll be doing things like taking our temperatures and ...there is a questions they will be asking everybody when they come in,” says Brown.

The union has also asked about getting masks to protect the employees. “They said as long as they are available they might but they don’t want to take them away from the health industry.”

The company is also looking at other precautions so people won’t need masks including installing plexi glass or plastic between workers on some parts of the line where employees are in close contact.

# LOOKING FOR VENDORS




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# COVID-19



## Take Care of yourself and Each Other

### Keep in touch

- If you are able to, use technology to communicate with your friends and family make phone calls, send texts and have video chats.
- If you are well, be creative when connecting with neighbours. Speak to them over a fence or from your balcony, while keeping two metres (or 6 feet) apart.
- Leave a message of support in your window, yard or condo message board.



### Think of others

If you are well, connect with people who may find this time especially stressful, such as:

- Older adults and those with chronic health conditions who are at increased risk of COVID-19
- People who have a history of depression or anxiety, or who may be heavily impacted by COVID-19 (e.g. job loss, health concern, separation from loved ones)
- People who have mobility challenges or few social supports





### Talk to your kids

- Empower your kids by teaching them the most effective ways to prevent COVID-19:
  - Washing their hands
  - Coughing or sneezing into their elbows
  - Physical distancing
- Children may feel anxious or stressed due to the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19. Reassure them that their feelings are valid.
- Encourage your children to ask questions. Use plain language to explain what's happening.
- Establish a routine that gives your kids structure while they're indoors.

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# Editorial

## We must all do this together

It is tough to take.  
Tuesday, Ontario’s leaders extended the limits on our personal freedoms under the Emergency Measures Act. It means another month of staying home. It is another month away from a job which provides stability in our lives. It’s another month of worrying if we’re walking to close to someone as we travel down the street. It’s another month of wishing that guy at the grocery store would wait just a second while you finish taking things off the shelf instead of leaning in a little too close. It’s another month of anxiety. It’s another month of uncertainty. It’s another month of not seeing grandparents and parents. It’s another month waiting. And, it is hard.  
But, we need to do this. That’s the advice of the province’s best medical experts and that’s the decision of the Premier, Doug Ford. Ford and the experts want to make sure we save as many lives from the horrible respiratory disease as possible.  
There are many people who wonder if it is worth it - if all this financial pain and the sadness and grief of being away from loved ones is worth it. There are all kinds of wild theories swirling on social media about whether the shutdown of the province is working or if we’re doing more damage than good.

But, consider this; consider Ontario’s premier has stressed job creation and business growth for the past two years. He even put up signs along the St. Clair River declaring Ontario open for business.  
Would a premier who is so pro-business keep the economy closed for another month if he wasn’t sure it was necessary? It would be totally against his nature. And we can’t say he would recommend this unless it seemed to be the only option.  
So, the next four weeks will be difficult and it will test our resolve and weigh on our hearts; but we must do this.  
And we must all do this together so, in four weeks, we’re not in the same spot we are now - seeing the positive signs of the end of COVID-19’s hold on our lives but still not being able to resume the normal lives we miss right now.

## Letters to the Editor

*The Independent* welcomes Letters to the Editor. Our preferred methods to receive letters are via email to [news@petrolialambtonindependent.ca](mailto:news@petrolialambtonindependent.ca) (please use Letter in the subject line) or through our website [www.petrolialambtonindependent.ca](http://www.petrolialambtonindependent.ca). You can also deliver letters to *The Independent* at 4156 Petrolia Line, Petrolia or drop them in the mail at *The Independent*, Petrolia, ON, N0N 1R0. *The Independent* reserves the right to edit letters for brevity and clarity. All letters need to be signed and must have a phone number for verification.

## Our Story



This vintage postcard shows children playing with their bicycle on Warren Avenue in Petrolia.

## Seniors deserve better care and COVID-19 proves it

Many years ago, I covered a coroner’s inquest. I remember only some details of it - the inquest was nearly 30 years ago. A woman in her 50s with cognitive disabilities walked out the back door of the country retirement home on a cold winter night and died.  
What struck me most during the inquest was a trip to the home. I wondered how anyone could leave someone they loved there. It was obvious the building wasn’t cared for and the residents during our visits, sat mostly silently together with a big TV blaring. It was unbearably sad to think people were living this way.  
My mind often goes back to that visit, particularly now as our seniors in long-term care homes are in a more vulnerable place than usual. COVID-19 has ravaged homes for the aged. Canada’s chief medical officer of health said Monday half of the 717 deaths in the country were in long-term care homes.  
The homes were not well equipped, many with enough personal protective equipment for just a couple of weeks and until Tuesday, almost all with so

called super spreaders in the building - employees who work more than one job in health care to make ends meet and potentially carry illness from one home to another.  
Pinecrest Nursing Home in Bobcaygeon and Herron Home in Quebec have become symbols of everything that is wrong with our system.  
Pinecrest by all accounts, has loving caring staff; but the building is old with most people sharing a room with only a curtain to separate them. A room like that is COVID-19’s best friend. About half of Ontario’s nursing homes are aging according to the Ontario Long Term Care Association and in need of major repairs.  
Herron Home wasn’t aging. It appears, at least at the outset, to be a place that is all about making money. Short staffed with seniors sitting in their own filth, the province eventually took over care of the residents, but not before 31 people died in three weeks.  
These are obviously extreme cases, and there are homes that are wonderful. But, by and large, we, as a society, don’t seem to worry too much

about the care the people who built this nation receive.  
There are likely dozens of examples of problems and dozens of reports on shelves about how to fix them - everything from increasing wages of staff to stabilizing provincial funding.  
Sure there have been some changes after things go tragically wrong, but when it comes down to it, seniors are not getting the care they need because we, as a society, ignore the issue or simply refuse to pay more for a better way of life for them.  
The care of vulnerable people cannot be about making money. Right now in large part, it is. Even in municipally run homes, the lack of money is a huge factor in the amount of care seniors receive.



Heather Wright

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## CELEBRATING TOGETHER BUT APART



SARAH HILLS PHOTO

When Alvinston's Barb Oke finished her eight round of chemotherapy in London Tuesday, she rang the bell - a symbol for patients completing treatment. But because of the restrictions at hospitals across Ontario, there was no family celebration at the hospital. So instead, Oke's family and friends formed a parade to wish her well as she continues her recovery. Oke went out on her porch to greet the group from afar.

## Oil Springs food bank ready to help families in crisis

Heather Wright  
The Independent

Ila Kimble and Robin Shepherd are determined to help people in need in Oil Springs, even if it is harder as the nation deals with the novel corona-virus.

Kimble and Shepherd have agreed to run the food bank in Oil Springs.

Kimble's grandmother-in-law, Lucy Bennett, started the food pantry in the basement of the Voice of Truth Church in Oil Springs in 2010.

Shepherd says Bennett had been active in mission work and "when she could not go to Florida anymore for the winter to help, she helped set up the food bank here."

But recently, Bennett passed away. Kimble, who is married to Bennett's grandson, Chris Kimble, and Shepherd decided they could step in to help.

"The food bank is very important to the church and it was very important to Lucy," says Shepherd.

And it is needed. Three hundred and fifty people a year from Central Lambton come to the church for help.

For the last few weeks, Kimble and Shepherd have been getting to know the people they serve. And they've been hearing concerns about what the food bank is doing to stop the spread



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO

Robin Shepherd, Chris Kimble and Ila Kimble stock the shelves of the Oil Springs Food Bank at the Voice of Truth Church.

of COVID-19.

Kimble says they are wearing gloves and sanitizing constantly. And they're willing to help clients feel comfortable getting what they need.

"We had one client worried bout getting ill...so we left food outside on her step."

Kimble says they're doing their best to help since they know with many people being laid off because of the pandemic, more people will need help.

"We are not being extremely strict about what their incomes are; this is a

time of crisis.

"We can meet people by appointment and assess them over the phone. I'm not working right now so I have lots of time on my hands," says Kimble.

As the needs in the community rises, so does the need for food. Kimble and Shepherd say they are always in need of the staples, but right now there is a particular need for frozen foods like vegetables and meat. People can drop those items off when the food bank is open on Monday between 10 am and 1 pm or by calling 226-402-3008.

## Big plans for St. Clair River Trail thanks to new grant

The Independent

The St. Clair River Trail Society kept up its end of the bargain, so now St. Clair Township is stepping up to the plate with \$100,000.

The trail society raised \$67,569 in 2019, with events such as the River Run. In March 2019, council agreed to pitch in \$100,000 for the trail, if the group raised enough cash.

"This is a terrific partnership we've had with our council through the years.

That's been a great boon to the trail, believe me, is having their support," says trail society chair Jane Marsh.

Marsh says some of the money will help maintain existing trails along the river. "We've always said in the past that once we got most of the construction done we'd help to maintain the trails. If there was a section that had to be re-paved we would look at helping to finance that. Because of the high water we're now looking at perhaps helping to finance

some shore protection. We also have participated and agreed to help with replenishing tree planting."

"We'll have to do an online survey to find out what the committee would like to finance, and how much they would like to put toward it," Marsh says.

Marsh says the trail has been a great escape for people looking for some fresh air during this period of social distancing. "It's been used non-stop, especially during the pandemic."

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# Anxiety and few answers giving birth in pandemic

Heather Wright  
The Independent

Tara Jeffrey could have never imagined this is how she and husband, Bryan, would be welcoming their fourth child into the world. In a time which should be full of anticipation, the St. Clair Township mother of three is anxious as she waits for her little one to make an appearance around April 17. Jeffrey is giving birth in the middle of a pandemic. “It’s very stressful. I am normally an anxious person to begin with, so this has all been very overwhelming. And as things appear to worsen, my worries just grow by the day,” says Jeffrey. It doesn’t help that Jeffrey is a freelance journalist who has been reporting on the advance of the novel coronavirus in Lambton. “I am hyper-aware of everything that’s happening, here and around the world; every number, news story.” Jeffrey has been investigating what the risks are as she prepares to deliver in a hospital which cares for COVID-19 patients. But there is not a lot of information on how the virus affects pregnancy. “Being pregnant in general can suppress the immune system, so I worry about my risk. I don’t leave the house, except for appointments, and I am constantly cleaning. My husband still has to work, so I worry about what he could be bringing home to us; caring for three young kids at home makes this that much more

challenging.” Jeffrey and her children, Avery, Hallie and Andrew, play and take walks in the bush while school is out as part of the effort to stop the spread of COVID-19. But the children also have questions about the virus. “My youngest asks everyday why he can’t go to Papa and Nana’s house, and that’s hard. I try not to let them see my own stress, but it’s hard not to break once in a while.” The questions about seeing much-loved grandparents also reminds her that they won’t be at the hospital when the new baby arrives. Bluewater Health allows only one support person during labour and delivery right now. Bluewater Health Chief of Communications, Julia Oosterman, says that is unlikely to change. But in a world where so much has changed already, Jeffery still worries. And she worries about who will stay with her children when it is time to go to the hospital. “We’ve actually had conversations about him staying home while I deliver, which is really hard,” Jeffrey says. “My fears about labour and delivery are one thing, then there’s added challenge of bringing home a newborn in the midst of all this. I won’t have the village I normally rely on for help. Jeffrey is not alone in her concerns. Health Canada says right now, there is little information about how COVID-19 affects pregnant women. But officials say



AVERY JEFFREY PHOTO  
Tara Jeffrey and her daughter, Hallie, 6, pose for a picture taken by sister Avery. The sisters, and their brother, Andrew, are waiting for the birth of a sibling around April 17.

throughout pregnancy, women’s bodies change and that can increase the risk of other illnesses such as viral respiratory infections. The only advice Health Canada gives pregnant women is the same advice it gives the general public, self isolate, keep your physical distance and wash hands frequently. And while Jeffrey is not alone in her concerns, she’s also not the only one going through this now. About 1,100 babies are born each year at Bluewater Health – about two or three each day. Each birth is celebrated by the playing of Brahms Lullaby. “The concept is to remind staff, patients and visitors of the joy and beauty of new beginnings,” says Krista Turner, Manager, Maternal Child Health unit. It was a program that started just days before the novel coronavirus changed everything in Canada. “We never could have imagined nine months ago that this is how I’d be welcoming our fourth child into the world,” says Jeffrey.

# River Road closed as Aamjiwnaang fights virus

Alex Kurial  
Local Journalism Initiative

The Aamjiwnaang First Nation closed off the St. Clair Parkway in an effort to reduce traffic in the community and slow the spread of COVID-19. Aamjiwnaang Band Council ordered the closure of River Road with the exception of local residents and emergency services only until further notice from Marlborough Avenue to the Suncor gate. All traffic will be diverted to Highway 40. River Road is a county road, Sarnia and Lambton County

agreed to the road closure. The presence of several businesses along the road factored in, as these locations are at higher risk for transfer of the virus. Sarnia Police says worker access to plants and facilities along the road will not be restricted, including Suncor’s Sarnia Refinery. St. Clair Mayor Steve Arnold, whose residents use the road as a main artery to Sarnia, says there will be an impact, but important services will remain unaffected. “I’ve had a number of people who have called me about it.” “They (Aamjiwnaang

officials) that they would make sure any emergency vehicles that had to get through would have the right of way and go wherever they need to be, whether it’s a fire truck or ambulance or police,” says Arnold. “I distributed that out to council and senior staff, and nobody had any major issues with it as long as the emergency vehicles were able to go.” Arnold credited Aamjiwnaang First Nations Chief Chris Plain for contacting him in advance of the decision. Waterfront access will also be limited to Aamjiwnaang citizens until further notice.

# Armed robbery in Petrolia ruled a hoax by OPP

What first appeared to be a violent robbery in downtown Petrolia is now being called a hoax. Earlier this week, Lambton OPP said a person walking downtown around 2:40 am April 7, and was attacked by

two people on bicycles. Police said the victim alleged he’d been struck several times by a pipe before his wallet was taken. The initial reports angered residents on social media suggesting the incident could

be linked to the restrictions from COVID-19, others called for a curfew to reduce the potential for violence. Lambton OPP have been investigating the alleged violent attack and now say the allegations were false.

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Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

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# Love conquers all, even a pandemic

Heather Wright  
The Independent

The first time Alyssa Schram saw Kyle Churcher get out of his pickup truck on July 4, 2013, she fell in love.

So, seven years later, as their wedding drew near and a global pandemic threatened to ruin their plans, the couple decided to shed some light in “this crappy time.”

The Oil Springs pair tied the knot on April Fools Day in the middle of a pandemic making sure to closely follow all the physical distancing and crowd requirements in the days of COVID-19.

Alyssa grew up in Dresden and met Churcher on a warm summer afternoon while visiting with friends in Sarnia.

They became a couple and on Christmas 2018, Kyle proposed. They set their wedding date for May 2, 2020.

But by mid-March, they were getting worried.

“With everything that was happening, everyone kept asking

us if we were going to postpone the wedding, but we kept planning as if it was going to happen,” says Alyssa.

But then, friends and family started sending back reply cards.

“Some of the invitations were coming back saying they wouldn’t be coming because of COVID-19,” says Kyle.

“Then one day everyone seemed to get laid off,” says Alyssa and all the vendors for their wedding started calling to put off their planned celebration at the Wilkesport Community Centre.

After a lot of calls and emails, the couple figured out they could be married on Aug. 29. The only thing that didn’t fall into place was the officiant - Jessica Hext was already booked for Aug. 29.

“We were sitting on the couch looking at each other and both of us didn’t want to wait,” says Alyssa. “We really didn’t want to put off getting married any longer.”

So, the couple talked to family and friends and decided to elope.

They called the officiant and she was available on April Fools Day.

The couple met their best man and maid of honour and Hext at Greenhill Gardens in Wilkesport - the original venue - and got married on April 1 in a low key ceremony with everyone but the bride and groom standing six feet apart.

There was also a lot of hand sanitizer, gloves and masks to go around.

“Because we were in the middle of a pandemic and it was April 1, we had some fun with it.

Kyle says Alyssa’s grandfather didn’t believe they were married at first. It took a bit to convince him they were really man and wife.

The couple is glad they moved forward and Alyssa says it was wonderful to see that “even with all this going on, there are people out there willing to make our dreams come true, even if we had to alter our vision of them.”

The newlyweds plan to celebrate their wedding in August with family and friends.



PHOTO VIA FACEBOOK

When the world-wide COVID-19 pandemic threatened to derail their May wedding Alyssa and Kyle Churcher altered their wedding visions and got married anyway.

# Lambton paramedics worry patients might not tell all, leaving them at risk

Heather Wright  
The Independent

When Grant Purdy comes home from a shift as a paramedic in Lambton County, he’s not sure whether to wash his uniforms or burn them.

He’s just one of about 140 full and part-time paramedics walking into homes to care for people who potentially have COVID-19.

Purdy says during a recent shift, four of the five people were suspected to have the respiratory virus. That means a lot of extra precautions.

“If we suspect that a patient may be a positive screen, we don full Personal Protective Equipment - gown, gloves, safety glasses and face shield - outside, before we enter a residence or facility,” says Purdy.

“One medic then enters and does our screening, and takes a patient’s temperature. Based on all that, we make a decision and go from there.

“When we load the patient, the attending paramedic leaves all their PPE on, and the driver doffs everything and puts it in a garbage pail at the back of the unit.

“Then, the driver uses hand sanitizer before getting in the cab.

“The attending paramedic calls the hospital so staff there can prepare in advance,” says Purdy. “Once at the hospital, the driver exits the vehicle, and the dons a fresh set of PPE and then we unload and

head in.

“Then, we sanitize and disinfect everything.”

Purdy says all the extra precautions take a lot of extra time.

“This is taking a toll on many paramedics,” he says. “I’m drained emotionally and physically.

“When I get home from work, I just want to burn my uniform.

“You just feel gross and disgusting. And you don’t want to go near your family because you’ve been around positive cases and you worry about them getting sick.

“This is uncharted waters we’re in right now - I worked through SARS and Ebola, and they pale in comparison to this virus.”

Purdy says paramedics are doing what they can to protect themselves, but sometimes, patients aren’t giving them all the facts they need.

“The frustrating part is that some people are not being honest during the screening process. And that doesn’t just put themselves at risk - that puts everyone involved in their care and other people around them and their families at risk,” says Purdy.

“I now pretty much put full PPE on for any call with



Grant Purdy

a suspected fever, shortness of breath or a cough.

“I have colleagues who are in isolation because a patient they treated wasn’t honest during the screening and because of that the medics didn’t suit up. So, when they get notified that their patient tested positive, because they didn’t have all the gear on, they now must be in isolation for 14 days, away from their families. That makes us angry.”

The risk of being infected, even with protective equipment is really high.

As of Monday, 777 health care workers across the province had tested positive for COVID-19 after being in contact with patients. Thirty-nine were in the hospital and 11 were in intensive care.

Purdy believes people calling paramedics may be concerned they won’t get the same treatment if they admit they may have COVID-19 but he says nothing is further from the truth.

He says the front line health care workers are doing their best to help in a very difficult situation.

“I am very proud of my paramedic colleagues, and all the frontline hospital staff who are all facing stress and angst during this pandemic,” he says.

“It takes an enormous toll. Even though we take precautions, there is still a chance - albeit smaller - of contracting it. So if you’re working in and around it all day, it wears on your mind. Especially since it’s

so highly contagious and transmitted.”

Jeff Brooks, the deputy manager of Lambton County’s paramedics, agrees. “Our paramedics have a high level of awareness for every call

they go into.

“I can say without question, I am so proud of the paramedics we have in Lambton. They’re out there, every day, showing up for work, wearing all their equipment.

“I’m super proud of the group we have. They are very professional, working hard every day. The patient care that is out there is second to none. They never hesitate to do what’s needed.”

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# Sports

## Six local teams named OMHA co-champions

**Barry Wright**  
The Independent

Despite the minor hockey season coming to an untimely end a month ago and teams not being allowed to play for provincial championships in their respective divisions, coaches and executives from the three local associations involved are satisfied with a recent decision by the Ontario Minor Hockey Association.

The OMHA says it will name teams that advanced to their playdown finals before the season was shut down by COVID-19 as co-champions as well as sending all teams the coveted red hats, emblematic of provincial supremacy.

“Although it is not how we all wanted the season to end, being declared co-champions is a great accomplishment and gives each team the recognition they deserve” says Adam MacKellar, president of the East Lambton Minor Hockey Association.

The Eagles had four teams, Atom Rep, Atom AE, Pee Wee Rep and Bantam Rep, who had advanced to their championship round.

MacKellar says it takes a great deal just to make it to the finals and all the players, coaches and parents should be congratulated for their effort and enthusiasm.

Meanwhile, the Petrolia Midget Reps were set to open a championship series with Ennismore when the pandemic struck.

“This doesn’t necessarily feel how it’s suppose to after winning an OMHA championship,” says Oiler coach Alex McLean. “But our team and everyone involved should be proud.”

McLean added that he is “disappointed” the players and their families didn’t get to experience the atmosphere of the finals.

That sentiment was echoed by Mooretown Flags Atom Rep bench boss Ian Snedden.

“We were disappointed that



The East Lambton Eagles are one of six local teams being named OMHA co-champions this year.

we couldn’t play, as I’m sure Kincardine (their scheduled opponent) was too, but the OMHA did the right thing in deciding to crown 2019-20 co-champions,” he says.

In a statement, OMHA Executive Director Ian Taylor says the goal of the decision

was to be positive and proactive in a trying environment. “It’s a simple gesture, but hopefully a meaningful one, as well.”

The association says Egg Farmers of Ontario will help defray the cost of the additional red hats. “As a proud partner of OMHA Playdowns, Egg Farmers

of Ontario are pleased to recognize the co-champions and provide the dedicated, hardworking players with an OMHA Champions Red Hat,” says Scott Helps, Chair of Egg Farmers of Ontario. “Teams should take pride in reaching this mark and for everything they accomplished this season.”



PHOTO VIA WYOMING WRANGLERS

Three Wyoming Wranglers have committed to US Colleges.

## Wyoming friends realize baseball dream

**Heather Wright**  
The Independent

Core Jackson and Kaden Gray have been playing baseball together since they were both basically the height of a baseball bat.

Now the two close friends have both committed to play college baseball in the US, albeit about five hours away from each other.

“We’ve grown up together,” says Jackson. “He’s one of my buddies,”

Both young men played for the Wyoming Wranglers since they were both five or six years old and now they both play for the Great Lakes Canadians, a premier baseball organization based in the London region.

Jackson announced this week that he has committed to the University of Nebraska for the 2021 campaign, while Gray will attend Cowley College in Kansas.

Jackson, a shortstop, was recruited last summer while the Canadians were playing

in a tournament in Indiana.

“I talked with other schools, but Nebraska is a power five school and that’s what I wanted,” he says.

Jackson’s Great Lakes coach Adam Stern played baseball with the Cornhuskers alongside Nebraska’s current head coach Will Bolt two decades ago.

Gray, the son of former Cincinnati Reds farmhand Brett Gray, announced his commitment on social media thanking his family and coaches for allowing him to realize his latest baseball dream.

Assuming this season moves forward, Jackson and Gray will play this summer and next for the Canadians U-17 squad before writing the next chapter of their respective baseball chronicles at their separate campuses.

Another ex-Wrangler and Canadians product Jett Jarvis also recently committed to continue his baseball career at McGill University in Montreal.

## Stock wins MVP for Lambton College baseball team

Joey Stock has been chosen the Most Valuable Player for the Lambton College baseball squad. The award was announced on social media this week. Stock, who also plays for the Corunna Giants of the Western Counties Baseball Association, hit .333 with seven runs scored and three stolen bases in

the Lions’ inaugural OCAA season last Fall.

Drew Pepper was named defensive player of the year. Brady Hogg was Hitter of the Year. Riley Brown and Jake Taylor share Rookie of the Year honours. And Eric Steeves and Paul Sheeler were named co-pitchers of the year.



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# Petrolia Flyers hand out yearend awards

The Independent

Jakob Knowles has been chosen the Most Valuable Player for the Petrolia Flyers this season.

The 19 year-old goaltender backstopped the Flyers to nine of its 14 victories after rejoining Petrolia from the GOJHL's Sarnia Legionnaires in late November.

He had previously played with the Flyers in 2016-17 before moving up to the Junior B ranks.

At the time of his arrival this season, the Flyers had been struggling with just one victory in its previous 13 games. He ended the regular season with a goals-against average of 2.71 and three shutouts. He had a save percentage of .923.

The Sarnia product had 14 games where he allowed three or fewer goals and played in

five games where he faced at least 40 shots, including a 54-save performance in an overtime tie against Essex in late January.

He also appeared in all seven games in a controversial first round playoff loss to the Amherstburg Admirals.

Other winners are:

Owen Oriet Top Defenseman: Eric Marsh  
Ron Tyler Memorial Scholarship: Matt Hunt  
Most Sportsmanlike: Kyle Flamminio  
Most Improved Player: Jack Hackett  
Most Dedicated Player: Tyler Richardson  
Rookie of the Year: Peyton Armitage  
Graduating overage players: Eric Marsh and Curtis Helps

Meantime, the Mooretown Flags are still hopeful that can hold a banquet later this summer to honour their award winners, according to General Manager John Baker.



FILE PHOTO

The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority's annual race is one of many events which have been cancelled as the Ontario government extends the Emergency Act measures to slow the spread of COVID-19.

# Popular events cancelled due to COVID-19

The Independent

Typically this Sunday would be a busy day in and around the Shetland Conservation Authority with the annual Sydenham River Canoe and Kayak Race, but it's the latest event to be axed due to health concerns over COVID-19.

"Based on the recommendations by local, provincial and federal health authorities regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, and with support from the Ontario Marathon Canoe Kayak Racing Association, the SCRCA has made the difficult decision to cancel the 2020 Sydenham River Canoe and Kayak Race, scheduled for April 19, 2020," said the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority on its website.

Meantime, despite its event still being three months away, organizers of the annual St. Clair River Run have also pulled the plug on their event scheduled for the third weekend in July.

"The health and well being of our community is the most critical factor during the current pandemic" read a statement on

the event website.

"We are cancelling the 2020 St. Clair River Run to avoid further infections, and to ensure that resources can be focused where they are needed most."

But, those in charge of this year's Bluewater International Granfondo (BIG) cycling event remain "confident" the competition will go ahead as scheduled on August 2. BIG officials say they will update the situation early next month.

"As the world deals with the challenges of COVID-19 we all need positive distractions. We feel that solo cycling is an ideal activity to maintain balance if you are able to do so while ensuring safe separation from pedestrians and other cyclists in accordance with the restrictions in place in your region,"officials say in an email.

"As long as you are not exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 or subject to mandatory isolation for any reason, we encourage you to get on your bike and enjoy some fresh air, particularly in rural areas where you can do so without encountering others."

# Hall of Famer Whitey Stapleton dies at 79

A former star with the Sarnia Legionnaires has died less than three months shy of his 80th birthday. Pat "Whitey" Stapleton died Wednesday in Strathroy.

Stapleton won two leagues championships with the Legionnaires between 1956 and 1958 as well as a Sutherland Cup provincial crown.

Stapleton was originally the property of the Boston Bruins before being traded to the Leafs in 1965 a day before he was left unprotected and claimed by Chicago. He played eight seasons with the Blackhawks, including appearances in the Stanley Cup finals in 1971 and 73. He played his last five seasons in the World Hockey Association

with the Chicago Cougars, Indianapolis and Cincinnati. The dependable blueliner played more than 1,000 games in the NHL and WHA combined.

Stapleton also donned the Team Canada jersey for the original Summit Series against the Russians in 1972.

As a member of the Team Canada 72 Summit Series squad, he was inducted into the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame in 2005.



Whitey Stapleton

Thursday April 9, 2020

The Independent of Petrolia and Central Lambton

Petrolia women take up their sewing needles to help during the pandemic

# A DAY IN THE LIFE

## during the pandemic

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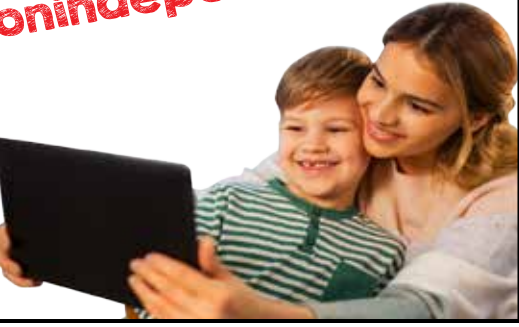

**We'll be publishing as many as we can and will have a special gallery on our website.**

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Death Notices Apr. 7 to Apr. 13, 2020

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For detailed information, please refer to the funeral home website listing.

TUESDAY, APRIL 7

VANDERBURGT, Larry  
Age 63, of Sarnia  
Smith Funeral Home

CLEASBY, James  
Age 64, of Sarnia  
McCormack Funeral Home

RICHARDSON, Gordon  
Age 84, of Watford  
Denning's of Watford

FARRELL, Helen  
Age 91, of Petrolia  
Smith Funeral Home

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8

SZABO, Karen  
Age 73, of Sarnia  
McKenzie & Blundy Funeral Home

BILLINGTON, Tom  
Age 79, of Petrolia  
Needham-Jay Funeral Home

CAPOZIO, Giovanna  
Age 82, of Sarnia  
Smith Funeral Home

DUNN, Ann  
Age 89, of Forest  
Denning's of Forest

METCALFE, Gordon  
Age 91, of Sarnia  
Smith Funeral Home

THURSDAY, APRIL 9

AINSWORTH, Maureen  
Age 79, of Point Edward  
Smith Funeral Home

MURRAY, Helen Bertha  
Age 93, of Sarnia  
Smith Funeral Home

FRIDAY, APRIL 10

WOODWORTH, Wren  
Age 27, of Sarnia  
Smith Funeral Home

MATHEWS, Nancy  
Age 73, of Forest  
Denning's of Forest

FOWLER, David  
Age 82, of Sarnia  
Smith Funeral Home

DAFOE, Leslie "Les"  
Age 88, of Petrolia  
Needham-Jay Funeral Home

HALL, Jeanne  
Age 100, of Warwick  
Gilpin Funeral Home

SATURDAY, April 11

DAVIS, Norma  
Age 69, of Oil Springs  
Gilpin Funeral Home

JACKSON, Lavern  
Age 83, of Forest  
Denning's of Forest

LeCAPELAIN, Laurence  
Age 90, of Sarnia  
McKenzie & Blundy Funeral Home

SUNDAY, APRIL 12


PROCTOR, Brenda  
Denning's of Forest

TUDINO, Antonia  
Age 86, of Sarnia  
Smith Funeral Home

MONDAY, APRIL 13

BECHARD, Harold  
Age 84, of Sarnia  
McKenzie & Blundy Funeral Home

BELL, Jo Maxine  
Age 86, of Sarnia  
Smith Funeral Home



Celebration



Shirley Johnston (Pegg)

Happy 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday


APRIL 15, 2020

To a woman who defines what it means to age with grace and beauty. May you enjoy this wonderful milestone. Still the prettiest mom in the world!



With love from your family

Card of Thanks



Thank You

Our family really appreciated the care that Vern was given on his many trips to the C.E.E. Hospital.

The nurses and doctors were wonderful. A special thanks to Dr. Butler and his staff. Vern survived much longer than was expected. And a shout out to the ambulance attendance who helped him out, many times.

Dawn Fox & Family

Card of Thanks

THANK YOU

The family of the late Harley McPhail wish to extend sincere thanks for the many condolences and abundance of support received during this difficult time.

Special thank-you's go out to Lambton E.M.S. paramedics for their promptness and medical attention; to Dr.Al-Dhaher and nursing staff at C.E.E. Hospital for their expertise, care and support; to the Petrolia Lion's Club in providing a delicious luncheon; to the neighbours, family and friends for their visits, food, flowers and cards; to those who risked coming to the funeral visitation and funeral during the troubled times of COVID-19; and to those who generously donated to the Ontario Heart & Stroke Foundation and to the C.E.E. Hospital Foundation.

Thank you to the pallbearers; Jim, Scott, Mac, Wayne, Rick and Jamie. Also, a huge thank you to Marie for conducting the funeral service and adding such a personal touch to its content.

Harley would have been so proud of all the support.

Lynn, Kayla and Connor

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



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Obituary



FOX

George Laverne "Vern"

On **Monday, April 6, 2020**, at C.E.E. Hospital, Petrolia, George Laverne "Vern" Fox passed away at the age of **75**. Beloved husband to Dawn (nee Connelly). Loving father to Darcy (Scott) Stonehouse and Del Fox and proud grandpa to Shaina Fox (Christian Hattinga), Clay Fox, Seth Stonehouse and Tayt Stonehouse. Dear brother to Jack (Barb) Fox and the late Sandra (Cecil) Wilson. Vern rode his scooter up town to go for coffee at Tim Horton's with the guys. He loved to sit in the backyard on sunny days watching his grandsons cut grass and fix things around the place. His granddaughter helped with groceries. He worked at Twilight Haven and L.M.V.V. for over 30 years. Vern was an accomplished carpenter, renovating the home he and Dawn shared for many years. We remember what a fighter he was with his battle against cancer, heart disease and blindness. We will miss his humour and we send all our love. **Cremation has taken place. Due to the current circumstances, a celebration of Vern's life will take place at a later date.** As an expression of sympathy, memorial donations may be made to C.E.E. Hospital Foundation (www.ceehf.ca). Memories and condolences may be shared online at **www.needhamjay.com**

Card of Thanks



Thank-you for all the beautiful birthday cards, phone calls & best wishes for my birthday. They were all greatly appreciated.

Sincerely  
Marie Sheppard

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## COVID-19 IN LAMBTON

Local events that have been cancelled or postponed because of the coronavirus outbreak. **PLEASE CALL AHEAD TO CONFIRM DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

### CANCELLED EVENTS

DATE	LOCATION	EVENT	CONTACT INFO
Apr 15	Petrolia	Petrolia Legion <b>Open Euchre</b>	
Apr 16	Petrolia	Petrolia Lions Club <b>Meat Raffle</b> at Haywood's	
Apr 16	Petrolia	Petrolia Optimist <b>Meat Raffle</b> at Crabby Joe's Bar & Grill	
Apr 16	Petrolia	Petrolia Legion <b>Fun Darts</b>	
Apr 17	Watford	Watford Legion <b>Meat Raffle/Catch the Ace</b>	
Apr 18	Alvinston	Alvinston Legion <b>Chili Cookoff</b>	
Apr 18	Alvinston	The Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston <b>Rabies Clinic</b>	
Apr 18	Oil Springs	Oil Springs Legion <b>Meat Raffle</b>	
Apr 18	Petrolia	Petrolia Legion <b>Meat Raffle</b>	
Apr 18	Petrolia	First Baptist Church <b>"Wild Wild West Event"</b>	
Apr 19	Lambton	<b>Sydenham River Canoe &amp; Kayak Race</b>	
Apr 20	Watford	Watford Legion <b>Darts</b>	
Apr 21	Watford	Watford Legion <b>Euchre</b>	
Apr 21	Petrolia	Petrolia Lions <b>Meat Bingo</b>	
Apr 22	Petrolia	Petrolia Legion <b>Euchre</b>	
Apr 23	Petrolia	Petrolia Lions Club <b>Meat Raffle</b>	
Apr 23	Petrolia	Petrolia Optimist <b>Meat Raffle</b>	
Apr 23	Petrolia	Petrolia Legion <b>Fun Darts</b>	
Apr 24	Watford	Watford Legion <b>Meat Raffle/ Catch the Ace</b>	
Apr 24-25	Petrolia	<b>Petrolia's Annual Town Wide Garage Sale Days.</b> Provincial Police will be patrolling the community that weekend and fines will start at \$750.00 for anyone that should choose to proceed.	
Apr 25	Oil Springs	Oil Springs Legion <b>Meat Raffle</b>	
Apr 25	Alvinston	Alvinston Legion <b>Meat Raffle</b> in support of the Alvinston Ace's	
Apr 25	Petrolia	Petrolia Legion <b>Meat Raffle</b>	
Apr 25	Sarnia	<b>Bluewater Anglers Club Spring Derby Outing</b>	
Apr 27	Petrolia	Petrolia <b>First Baptist Church "Me Time"</b>	
Apr 27	Watford	Watford Legion <b>Darts</b>	
Apr 28	Watford	Watford Legion <b>Euchre</b>	
Apr 29	Alvinston	<b>Alvinston Guthrie Church Free Lunch</b>	
Apr 29	Petrolia	Petrolia Library <b>workshop "Eviction Basics"</b>	
May 1-10	Sarnia	Bluewater Anglers <b>44th Annual Salmon Derby</b>	519-869-2593
May 2	Wyoming	Wyoming Legion Ladies Auxiliary <b>Vendor and Craft Show</b>	
May 6	Wyoming	Wyoming Lions <b>Meat BINGO</b>	
May 10	Alvinston	Alvinston & District Optimist Club's <b>Mother's Day Brunch</b>	519-898-2946
May 18	Watford	<b>Watford Alvinston Road Race</b> - full refunds will be given to those who pre-registered	
May 30	Sarnia	Bluewater Anglers <b>"Kids Training Day"</b>	
Jul 10	Florence	<b>Florence Truck &amp; Tractor Pull</b>	

### POSTPONED EVENTS

DATE	LOCATION	EVENT	DATE
Mar 16	Petrolia	<b>St. Paul's United Church Irish Dinner &amp; Concert</b>	TBD
Mar 26	Wyoming	<b>Wyoming Wee Ones Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser</b>	TBD
Mar 29	Petrolia	<b>Petrolia Optimist Run for the Groceries Draw/Event</b>	TBD
Apr 8	Petrolia	Petrolia Community Theatre production of <b>"Sandy Toes &amp; Salty Kisses"</b> NOW Postponed until 2021	
Apr 11	Alvinston	Alvinston & District Optimist Club <b>Triva Night</b>	TBD
Apr 17	Petrolia	The Optimist Club of Lambton Central - Petrolia <b>Annual Spelling Bee</b>	TBD
Apr 18	Alvinston	The Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston <b>Large Item Day</b> – Moved to Fall	
Apr 17	Petrolia	Town of Petrolia <b>Large Item Collection</b>	TBD
Apr 28	Petrolia	<b>The Victoria Playhouse Opening 2020 season</b> has been postponed until June 2, 2020. Please contact the VPP with questions 519-882-1221	
May 1	Petrolia	Town of Petrolia <b>Large Item Collection</b>	TBD
May 1	Wyoming	Plympton & Wyoming Agricultural Society Annual Salad Luncheon New Date <b>TBD</b> 519-845-3161	
Jun 17	Petrolia	Petrolia Lions <b>FREE Senior Picnic BBQ</b>	TBD
Jun 19-21	Alvinston	<b>Alvinston Pro Rodeo</b> has been moved to August 28, 29 & 30, 2020 <a href="http://www.alvinstonprorodeo.com">www.alvinstonprorodeo.com</a>	
Jun 21	Alvinston	Alvinston & District Optimist Club's <b>Cowboy Breakfast</b> has been moved to August 30, 2020	

# Church DIRECTORY

**Christ Church Anglican**  
414 Oil Street, Petrolia  
All worship services in the Anglican Diocese of Huron are suspended until further notice. Please continue to hold one another and our communities in your prayers.  
Rev. Michelle Collins-Wongkee  
Church Office 519-882-1430  
[christchurchpetrolia@gmail.com](mailto:christchurchpetrolia@gmail.com)

**St. Andrew's Prebyterian Church**  
416 Queen Street, Petrolia  
(Behind the Post Office)  
In this time of Social distancing we invite you to join a virtual congregation and watch the Sunday morning worship at Knox Presbyterian Church in Thedford.  
9:30am Service - Live  
[www.kpcthedford.com](http://www.kpcthedford.com)  
[www.standrews-petrolia.ca](http://www.standrews-petrolia.ca)

**St. Paul's United Church**  
4169 Petrolia Line at Centre Street  
We will be closed until further notice due to the COVID-19 virus. Please Stay Safe!  
Rev. Susan Cameron  
10:30am Service  
Church Office: 519-882-1390  
[stpaulsunitedpetrolia.net](http://stpaulsunitedpetrolia.net)

**First Baptist Church**  
418 Greenfield Street, Petrolia  
SERVICE SUSPENDED until further notice in compliance with Ontario Corona Virus meeting guidelines  
Pastor: Alex Craig  
Church Office 519-882-2480  
[fbcpetrolia@gmail.com](mailto:fbcpetrolia@gmail.com)  
[www.firstbaptistpetrolia.ca](http://www.firstbaptistpetrolia.ca)  
Find us on Facebook!  
[www.facebook.com/First-Baptist-Church-Petrolia](https://www.facebook.com/First-Baptist-Church-Petrolia)

**Wyoming United Church**  
730 Second Street, Wyoming  
Due to the COVID-19 virus. We hope to start services again on April 5th. We will keep you updated about any changes.  
Join Us for Worship - All are Welcome  
Church Office 519-845-3963  
Find us on Facebook

## Business & Service Directory

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