

Ready or not Lambton reopens this Friday

Heather Wright
The Independent

Both the warden of Lambton County and the mayor of Petrolia admit to being a little nervous as Lambton County opens the doors to restaurants and bars Friday.

Premier Doug Ford announced Monday Lambton will move to stage three of the province's COVID-19 reopening plan. Lambton joins seven other regions dropping some of the restrictions which have been in place since March. Included in Stage Three is the reopening of gyms, playground equipment, restaurants and bars.

Around the world, allowing people to be mixing indoors at restaurants and particularly bars, where people are likely to have a few drinks and let their guards down, has lead to

a resurgence of the virus. Many American states, including Florida, are seeing over 10,000 COVID-19 cases a day.

Warden Bill Weber says that makes everyone a little nervous heading into Lambton's reopening.

"I am quite concerned with bars being opened," Weber told *The Independent*.

"Indoor dining - there's got to be a lot of regulations on that. It's challenging."

Petrolia's Mayor, Brad Loosley agrees. He says while businesses need to reopen, it doesn't come without risk.

"I am still cautious to remind everyone to you know, keep their distance. And wear the mask; when they're inside is still kind of recommended," says Loosley.

SEE LAMBTON PG 2

COVID claims Silver Stick

Barry Wright
The Independent

The COVID-19 pandemic has claimed a holiday hockey tradition in Central Lambton.

In an email Monday, the International Silver Stick organizing group announced the cancellation of all regional Silver Stick tournaments in Canada for this season due to health concerns over COVID-19.

The list of cancelled events includes long-standing tournaments in Petrolia, Alvinston and Watford, all scheduled for this December and North American Finals set for Sarnia - both boys and girls - Mooretown and Lambton Shores in January 2021.

"We're disappointed, but we weren't surprised," says Nick

Salaris, Silver Stick Director for the Petrolia event.

"We understand the situation and respect the decision," he added.

Online reaction to the decision ranged from disappointment to inevitable.

"Sad, but necessary," read one post. "This shouldn't surprise anyone," says another.

Others said they couldn't imagine a winter without Silver Stick.

Although, there are no official numbers for the economic impact of the regional tournaments to their respective communities, Salaris says teams typically frequent eating establishments during the tournaments leaving valuable dollars behind.

SEE SILVERSTICK PG 2

PAINT JOB



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO

It was a hot day, but workers were up high on the Petrolia Library completing the painting of the soffit and fascia of the historic building.



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Lambton readies to reopen

CON'T FROM PG 1

And while there is concern, Weber says it is unlikely the county or local municipalities will impose tougher rules for bars and restaurants now. “We’re going to follow the guidelines, the recommendations from the provincial Medical Officer of Health regarding their guidelines. I don’t see us going farther on that.” As Lambton prepares to reopen, the calls for a mandatory mask bylaw grow louder. Both the Chief of Staff at Bluewater Health, Michael Haddad, and the Chief Communications Officer, Julia Oosterman, chided people to wear a mask in public on social media even though Lambton’s Medical Officer of Health has so far it is not necessary since there is no community spread and all of the six new cases are due to contact with another person with COVID-19. Weber expects the issue will surface again.

“Our medical officer of health has said that at some point, that might be the next step that we take. “We’re doing contact tracing and the numbers are good As long as we can continue in that...We support people wearing a mask; if you want to go to a store and you want to wear your mask, we fully support that. That was the motion of counsel. “We don’t discourage masks; we’re not saying don’t wear a mask. We’re saying wear mask if you can’t physical distance; that’s the message from the province and that’s the message from our medical officer of health; if you can’t physical distance, you should wear a mask.” Weber is also concern making masks mandatory - like the other

major cities in the province - could lead to mask fatigue. “If we make a mandatory now, in a few weeks, people will say, ‘Well, nobody’s enforcing it. Why am I doing this? And they’ll relax and they won’t do it. And that’s when we maybe need them more than we do right now.” Loosley seems reluctant to impose mandatory mask rules but he says without it, merchants are in a difficult spot. He says town staff have been talking to business owners and they’re concerned about policing a mandatory mask policy. Loosley says businesses would prefer to deal with complaints about a masking policy by saying it is government making the rules. “I can understand some of the businesses not wanting to upset their customers by say, forcing them to wear a mask if they didn’t want to wear a mask.” Both Loosley and Weber are urging residents to continue to practice the basics - washing hands and staying six feet from others. As for Friday, Weber says he will likely celebrate the further reopening of Lambton with a barbecue in his backyard. The warden says he and his wife, Ginger, have not eaten out a lot yet because they weren’t comfortable with the idea. “You have to feel comfortable; each individual has to look after themselves and how they feel,” says Weber. “If they don’t feel a store is doing a good job of protecting people ... then you have to keep yourself safe and don’t go there. The rule is, look after yourself and be comfortable with what you’re doing.”

Playgrounds to open, council remains online

Heather Wright
The Independent

Parents rejoice – Petrolia’s playgrounds will reopen Saturday. But if you want to go to a council meeting in person - you’ll have to wait. In a news release, town officials say “playground equipment in our parks will be fully inspected and deep cleaned prior to re-opening Saturday” as Lambton enters stage three in the province’s reopening plan. But Mayor Brad Loosley says there are no plans for council to hold meetings in person. He says officials wanted to keep the number of people down in town hall, even though the new provincial guidelines allow 50

people indoors. The town hasn’t seen that big of crowds since the resignation of the former CAO. Loosley says he had not considered whether the theatre could be used to accommodate an in person crowd of 50 people who were socially distanced. “The other concern was the cost to maintain and sterilize and clean after everything. And I think it was felt at least for now, that we would agree to stay on Zoom until we still see what happens with his level three.” Loosley says he will consider it. For now, the arena will remain closed. The Petrolia Y is scheduled to reopen Aug. 21 and town hall will continue to be open with staff asking people to make appointments.

Silver Stick cancelled for 2020

CON'T FROM PG 1

“It’s going to be different for our local businesses, that’s for sure,” he added. In the past, Tourism Sarnia Lambton has estimated the Sarnia events alone have an economic impact of about \$2 million per year including almost \$900,000 spent in food in local establishments and About \$640,000 in accommodations. Silver Stick says regional and finals

tournaments in the United States, including the North American Finals in Port Huron, can proceed with the blessing of local and state officials. But, the latter will not likely involved any Canadian teams, says Salaris.



WHEAT FIRE IN DAWN-EUPHEMIA



MARIANNE VANDERSPEK PHOTO

Dawn-Euphemia and Oil Springs firefighters contained a wheat field fire Saturday. About four acres of wheat burned at the south-east corner of Bentpath and Hale School Road caught fire Saturday afternoon as farmers rushed to beat the rain which pelted the area Sunday.

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Town urged to recognize sexual harassment

Heather Wright
The Independent

Angela Lyon wants to Plympton-Wyoming to call what happened to the municipality’s lone female firefighter what she believes it is - sexual harassment.

Lyon - whose husband was fired from the Wyoming fire department at the same time as Carrie Ann Wilson - has set up a Facebook page in support of the firefighter.

Last month, Wilson, Jason Lyon and Jeff Scott spoke out about their abrupt firing from the department. All were told they were no longer a good fit, even though they were veterans with the department and held positions of authority.

The dismissal happened after an investigation into two incidents between Wilson and another senior male firefighter on two separate calls.

Lyon says it is clear to hear Wilson was sexually harassed and the town is avoiding the issue.

The town hasn’t responded to the allegations, saying it doesn’t discuss personnel issues.

However Lyon on her Facebook page, Fighting Fire with Fire for Carrie Ann, asks members of the community to step up and speak about the issue at the next council meeting July 29.

“Carrie Ann needs the women of the community to stand up,” says Lyon.

“The town council needs to recognize mistakes have been made and this was sexual harassment.”

Meantime, *The Independent* has learned one of the people at the centre of the controversy - Chief Steve Clemens - is off on stress leave.

Sources say firefighters were notified several weeks ago Trainer Chris Freer would be standing in during Clemens’ absence.

The chief’s four week leave has already been extended, multiple sources add.

Texts and emails from *The Independent* to Clemens were not returned by press time.



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO

A car heads up Shiloh Line near AW Campbell Conservation Area. Residents who live there want council to reduce the speed limit to control a few street racers who are using the road.

Shiloh Road neighbours want speed cut

Heather Wright
The Independent

Chris Wyergangs and her neighbour are worried speeders are going to hurt someone on Shiloh Line near AW Campbell Park.

Wyergangs and live near the entrance to the park and in the last four or five years, a select number of cars are hitting some high speeds as they head toward Alvinston.

Wyergangs says they come “from the direction of the park, coming around the curve, and then as soon as they get to the flat, they’re stepping on it.”

She says the activity seems to increase when the park opens and the neighbours have been calling on the OPP to enforce the current speed limit for “three or four years.”

Wyergangs says the police have set up speed traps in the area, but not in the time the racing takes place. And then, she says, they tell the neighbours they have to take action to catch the people involved.

“They say, ‘well, we need a description of the driver, we need license plate number.’

And then it becomes if we can catch them we’ll do something about it.”

Wyergangs says she and the neighbours are worried about what could happen particularly this year when people from nearby Alvinston are walking down the road or going for a bike ride to pass the time because so many activities have been cancelled because of the pandemic.

“If somebody’s racing down the road, and there’s a pedestrian or bicyclist or a scooter, they don’t have a chance.”

Recently, Wyergangs and approached council to ask if they would consider lowering the speed limit in the area since it appears the drivers are gearing up to hit the 80 km/h limit which comes into effect just meters from their houses.

“The only answer Matt and I could come up with at that time is, reduce the speed to 50. Even if it’s only during the camping season, reduce it down to 50. But the OPP also have to do their part.”

Council is expected to discuss the request at its meeting Thursday.

Alvinston Rodeo cancels 2020 show

Another local event has been cancelled because of the restrictions around COVID-19.

The Alvinston Pro Rodeo, which was originally supposed to be in June and then was postponed until late August, has now been cancelled.

“We were very hopeful that we would be able to present our rodeo at the end of August but government restrictions and public safety concerns associated with COVID-19 had other plans for us,” says Dan Cumming, the president of the Brooke-Alvinston Agricultural Society which puts on the event. Recently the province increased the number of people who can be at one event to 100, but the rodeo drew thousands in the last two years.

“I can’t even put into words how having to postpone this event makes me feel. Disappointed doesn’t begin to scratch the surface,” he says.



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Editorial

Be kind. Be Calm. Be Safe.

We need to be a bit kind to each other over the next few days.

The province is allowing more Lambton County businesses to open their doors as we head into the third stage of the pandemic plan reopening in Ontario. And there are a lot of people kind of nervous about what that could mean.

Consider the local businesses that have been locked up for four months - their owners are nervous that despite their best efforts, their business may not survive this. Their fears are real. You just have to look at the number of vacant storefronts already in Petrolia's downtown to know survival is not a given.

And consider the burden they bear for the people who work for them. They need a job but they also have to be healthy to work and an employer has very little control of just who walks through their doors who might be ill - carrying the virus that has crippled the country.

Consider the parents who know their 20 somethings have been "locked up" way too long, who they know will be heading to the bars - a place that the experience of other nations shows us where COVID-19 can spread.

Consider those who are just plain afraid to go out - worried about the possibility of a resurgence of the virus.

And consider the people who govern us, who are in most cases, doing their best in a situation few have encountered before.

All this makes Lambton's reopening an emotional time and we have to be aware of that. After four months of keeping away from each other, we're about to get a lot closer and we need to be kind instead of using our raging Facebook voices.

Offer encouragement to local businesses, spend a few dollars there if you can, thank the girl at the cash register and try to have a normal conversation - we're Canadian, we should be able to talk about the weather or hockey - not this blasted virus.

BC's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Bonnie Henry has it right; Be kind. Be Calm. Be Safe.

Letters to the Editor

The Independent welcomes Letters to the Editor. Our preferred methods to receive letters are via email to news@petrolialambtonindependent.ca (please use Letter in the subject line) or through our website 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



FROM THE DAVE BURWELL POST CARD COLLECTION

Petrolia's Central School stood for decades on Greenfield Street, just down the road from Town Hall. Today, the property is an apartment building, however the stone sign with Central School on it seen in this photo still stands on the property.

The right of citizens to be heard should never be diluted

I'm concerned the COVID-19 pandemic is eating away at the edges of our democratic freedoms and we aren't even paying attention.

Canadians, as a group, are generally pretty reasonable folk and while some rail against government, generally we're not too worried about the state of democracy. The system works even if we don't always like the results.

But there is an imbalance of power right now - at all levels of government - and it isn't good.

States of emergencies and make-do plans for public decision making are fine - for a short time. But, they aren't a permanent solution.

Governments were applauded in the early going for finding ways to keep government working in a public way. Governments turned to technology to continue some form of open meetings.

The premier and prime minister held daily news conferences to answer questions about the pandemic response and later held limited in person sittings of the legislature and the House of Commons.

It was kind of like the school boards giving teachers a couple of weeks to pull together a way to teach students

online; the technology worked - in a pinch. It was a good stop gap measure.

But after a couple of months of attending almost every kind of Zoom meeting you can think of, I have observed there are definite problems. Most can only be fix if we allow the public back into live meetings.

News conferences where reporters have only 15 minutes to probe huge issues of great importance, with little debate by elected representatives does not make for good government. We see that in the controversy about the student grants and the WE charity federally and the issue of long term care in Ontario.

And online meetings - while theoretically are more accessible - don't encourage good public debate. Even with instruction, it is rare for a member of the public to speak during an electronic meeting. And the debate among elected officials is poor as well - the technology doesn't lend itself well to thoughtful discussion. Politicians don't always remember to use the technology properly - unmute your mike is a constant refrain - and often the chair of the meeting will miss cues from councillors that they want

to talk - leaving a potentially important thought unsaid.

All this means governments gain a little more power to do what they think is best without a whole lot of public interference. And that is not good for democracy.

Local government should soon return to in person meetings - with an electronic feed. If there are concerns about physical distancing, look for alternative meeting spaces like community halls. And our upper levels of government should not use Emergency Orders to ram through their version of what our country should look like. That's up to the people to decide.

We all have to give a little to get the country through the pandemic, but the right for citizens to be heard in places of power should never be diluted.



Heather Wright

The Independent
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A NEW PETROLIA HOME



PHOTO CREDIT

Habitat for Humanity officially kicked off a project in Petrolia. Kasra Mohammad, Jamila Youssef and their children Yadkar, Nanda, and Adam will help build the 65th home in Lambton County. It's on James Street in Petrolia on land donated by the town. Petrolia Mayor Brad Loosley and Lambton Warden Bill Weber joined the family and members of Habitat for Humanity, Board Chair Donald Haagsma and Angela Kirkland, at the ceremony which was live streamed to avoid a crowd.

Wyoming farmer guilty of impaired driving on his property

Alex Kurial
Local Journalism Initiative

Robert Vandenberghe says a drunken trip around his Plympton-Wyoming property was an effort to put out a fire on his farm.

But he will still be receiving a hefty fine and driving ban as a result.

The 59 year-old farmer plead guilty to drunk driving in Sarnia court July 20. The charge came from an episode in April when a brush fire got out of control on Vandenberghe's rural property.

The Petrolia Volunteer Fire Department responded to the call at around 7:30 p.m. While on scene the Fire Chief Jay Arns called Lambton

OPP saying the owner of the farm and another man were driving around the field in a truck and hampering their firefighting efforts. The chief said the pair seemed intoxicated.

An officer arrived and found Vandenberghe driving a truck down the farm laneway. After pulling him over the officer smelled alcohol and noticed Vandenberghe's eyes were bloodshot.

Vandenberghe said he'd had a few beers during the day. He was then arrested for drunk driving.

Vandenberghe protested he was on his own property. The officer responded that impaired driving is illegal no matter where a person is driving. Vandenberghe would later blow close to twice the legal alcohol

limit on a breathalyzer test.

In court Vandenberghe said he was actually the one putting out the fire.

"I would like to say I put the fire out without the assistance of the fire department. I thought it was a necessity that I drove to extinguish the fire with the fire equipment. The only reason I went back in my pickup truck was to make sure there were no more hot spots," he says.

But he ultimately apologized for his actions. "I would like to personally apologize, I'm sorry for driving on my farmland and committing the criminal act that I did."

Justice Anne McFadyen accepted a joint submission of a \$1,500 fine and one year driving ban.

Driver crashes through Mandaumin roundabout Dukes of Hazzard style

The Independent

Three people face drunk driving charges in Lambton County after three unrelated incidents – including one where a car hit the Mandaumin Road roundabout and went airborne.

Lambton OPP were called to the roundabout Sunday morning at 3 am along with Sarnia fire and the paramedics for a car crash.

Police say the car was going north on Lakeshore Road – instead of taking the roundabout, it went through the center,

going airborne, then smashing through signs before stopping in a ditch.

Paramedics and the OPP took a man to hospital. Police believed he'd been drinking.

Curtis Marks, 20, has been charged with impaired driving.

In St. Clair Township, on Thursday, police were called to a car accident on the St. Clair Parkway. They'd also received a call about a possible impaired driver at the time. Police were told a car hit multiple mailboxes and then collided with the guard rail.

The vehicle finally stopped when it hit a tree.

Harry George, 69, of St. Clair Township, has been charged impaired driving.

Then Friday night, OPP were on patrol on Brigden Road when they stopped a driver. When speaking to the man, they thought he may have been drinking. He was arrested for impaired driving and taken to the OPP detachment for testing.

Patrick Carter, 29, of St. Clair Township, has been charged.

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Six months to decide what to do

Heather Wright
The Independent

Dawn-Euphemia will start handling fire calls in the northern part of the township unless Brooke-Alvinston can come up with a plan for the Inwood fire station in six months.

Council made the decision Monday after months of its neighbouring municipality trying to figure out what to do in Inwood. Brooke-Alvinston was unable to reach an agreement to use the local fire hall after 16 of the Inwood firefighters resigned. The firemens’ association owns the hall.

Since then, the municipality had a consultant look at the issue. The consultant concluded a fire hall in Inwood wasn’t necessary immediately. Council has yet to decide what to do.

With the lack of a solution, and an increase in the cost of fire services to the area of nearly \$5,000, Dawn-Euphemia asked its Fire Chief, Don Ewing and Deputy Chief, Scott Gawley - who is also the township’s treasurer - to look at the issue.

They determined, that in some cases, the Dawn-Euphemia department, responding from Rutherford, would be able to reach the area in the former Dawn Township quicker than the Alvinston fire hall - which is serving the area right now.

And it would be much cheaper. Gawley says because Dawn-Euphemia is charged for fire services based on 15.5 to 17 per cent of the assessed land in the area. With only

one call per year in the Inwood fire area for Dawn-Euphemia that worked out to about \$26,000 per call. Dawn-Euphemia spends about \$5,000 per call.

The township also buys fire service from the Alvinston department. Council thought that agreement should continue.

“We have no sense of what Brooke-Alvinston doing with Inwood station, and we are at a point here whether we’re going to be part of that station or not,” says Dawn-Euphemia Mayor Al Broad.

“We need to start planning for ourselves.”

But the mayor didn’t want to close the door completely on working with a revitalized Inwood department.

“We’ve appreciated what the Inwood firemen did for us up there, and we’re not bailing out on them, but we have to make plans for ourself if nothing is going to happen,” Broad says.

“If Brooke-Alvinston can come back to us with a viable options, by all means, we should be involved in Inwood and make it work,” he added.

“But it is time; we need to make a decision, let’s give them a six month notice... This gives them a clear direction on what were looking at.”

At it’s last meeting, Brooke-Alvinston councillors suggested they would like to buy the former Inwood station from the association. But council is waiting for the results of an association meeting where it was expected the members would give negotiators clear direction to deal with council.

place. But in Sarnia court on July 16 these charges were dropped after Crown attorney David Rows said there were “significant triable issues” and the man’s intent to commit the crime.

Rows and defense agreed the man would enter into a peace bond for the next eight months preventing him from entering Lambton Shores for any reason. He also cannot have any contact with either of the girls that found him.

A peace bond is a less serious form of sentencing that allows someone to avoid a criminal record if they successfully observe all of the terms.

- The Independent

“When we sell below the cost of production, we can get an ad hoc payment to cover the rest of the costs” Neal Craven, owner of Craven Farm, explained.

Craven said farmers may have trouble getting their products to the market due to COVID-19 closures or unpredictable weather conditions.

Ford met with approximately 40 stakeholders in the local agricultural sector to answer questions, Craven said.

Ford also announced a “historic” agreement between the provincial and federal government to allocate \$19 billion in COVID-19 relief funding. Seven billion will go toward Ontario.

“Canada’s premiers stood shoulder to shoulder; we stayed together as a country,” Ford said. “The federal government is stepping up and supporting Canadians when we need it the most.”

Ontario originally asked for \$23 billion.

The money will be used to support municipalities, expand transit and health-care systems, to stockpile personal protective equipment, and aid other services.

- The Chatham Voice

Teens stabbed in Corunna fight

Lambton OPP is investigating after a stabbing in Corunna.

Police, releasing the information two days after the incident, say around 10:40 pm Friday they were called to a home on Albert St. by neighbours who said there was a large group of teens fighting.

One teen was stabbed multiple times.

Paramedics brought the teen to hospital with police say are non-life threatening injuries. One other person was also taken to hospital with minor injuries.

The conditions of the pair are not known at press time.

Police are asking anyone who might know anything about the Friday night fight to call them at 519-882-1011 or call Crime Stoppers.

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Banned from Grand Bend after drunken Canada Day

Alex Kurial
Local Journalism Initiative

A Waterloo man has been ordered to stay out of Lambton Shores for the next eight months after being found naked at the beach’s splash pad on Canada Day 2019..

Lambton OPP went to a Grand Bend splash pad on Canada Day afternoon after receiving calls of a man acting indecently. Two girls had found the 22 year-old man with his pants down, exposing himself near a public washroom. When police arrived they found the man heavily intoxicated.

The man was charged with indecent exposure and an indecent act in a public

Ford bumps insurance cash by \$50 million

Jenna Cocullo
Local Journalism Initiative

The provincial government is speeding up support for the agricultural sector.

On Thursday, Ontario Premier Doug Ford made his way to Chatham-Kent as part of his summer tour where he announced an additional \$50 million in funding per year to the agricultural risk management program.

Reporters were not with Ford, logging in to ask about the tour and his announcements on the telephone.

A total of \$150 million will be spent annually on the program, which covers 80 per cent of eligible commercial production in the cattle, hog, sheep, veal, grains and oilseeds, as well as edible horticulture sectors.

“During this pandemic, dedicated farmers like the Craven family, have risen to the challenge to make sure food gets from farm to fork. This pandemic has been hard on all of us but especially difficult on our farmers,” Ford said.

He made the announcement after taking a tour at Craven Farm, a multi-generational farm, in Chatham-Kent.



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Half Ontario parents OK with back to school

Alex Kurial
Local Journalism Initiative

It looks like half of Ontario parents are feeling comfortable with kids returning to school in September, according to a new poll.

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association conducted the poll at the end of June. Parents were asked several questions, including whether they felt comfortable with the idea of in-person schooling in the fall. More than half, 53 per cent, of people said they were.

In southwestern Ontario, where the number of COVID-19 cases has been lower than places like Toronto, 58 per cent of parents are ready for in person classes.

But Lambton-Kent District School Board Director of Education John Howitt is voicing concern.

"I think we need to be cautious about the poll results in terms of the dates the poll happened versus when we will actually have concrete data and concrete plans of what a return looks like," says Howitt.

"And I think that will have an impact and an influence on parents' choice."

The Ministry of Education is expected to reveal Ontario's back-to-school plan in early August. Howitt says there are three possibilities for a return, and the board is planning for each one.

"The first plan is continued learn-at-home where schools are closed, similar to what we've experienced the last three months.

"The second plan is 100 per cent attendance where all schools attend with enhanced protocol.

"And the third plan is an adaptive model where students would attend in cohorts with no more than 15 in a class," Howitt says.

Parents - in an online forum - have voiced a lot of concern that all siblings go to school on the same day.

And while each plan has challenges, Howitt says online learning is a problem.

"Given our rural setting and the broadband challenges of rural communities, that did impact the satisfaction level, and continues to be

a concern in both Lambton County as well as Chatham-Kent," says Howitt.

"We're pushing heavily with the province around expanding broadband, especially the last mile, which is right to the homes."

The public board made an end of the year push to make devices available to children who needed help accessing the internet at home.

Howitt says children who received a device will be able to keep them for the foreseeable future.

The OPSBA found that less than 60 per cent of parents from rural communities were satisfied with online learning. By comparison, satisfaction was near 80 per cent in urban centers.

Howitt says that despite some public schools having unused space available - such as Lambton Central College and Vocational Institute in Petrolia - it would not be used.

"None of the plans that we are developing involve increasing our square footage or usage of more square footage. That would require additional staff, and that is not contemplated in the ministry's plan," Howitt says.

Catholic teachers head back to class early to take COVID-19 training

Alex Kurial
Local Journalism Initiative

School will be back in session for teachers the St. Clair Catholic District School Board on Sept. 1 this year.

The move follows suggestions by the province that schools start by the first day of September and schedule three professional development days prior to the return of students - provided that in-class learning is able to go ahead.

The board scheduled their three professional development days for Sept. 1-3.

The first scheduled day for students will be Sept. 8.

Teachers will use these days for their traditional lessons and practices, but this year it looks like COVID-19 training will be on the schedule as well.

"The ministry is going to give us information coming up on calendars.

It's widely accepted that there's going to be a need for training, and it's quite likely that some of the days will be occupied by health and safety training, particular to a return to school," says Catholic board director of education Deb Crawford.

The rescheduling means that the Thanksgiving PA day scheduled for Oct. 9 is gone.

The school year will also end a day earlier, on June 28.

Financial losses steep as Legions start to reopen

Alex Kurial
Local Journalism Initiative

Lambton's Legions are facing steep financial losses as they prepare to reopen.

Under the province's pandemic reopening guidelines, Royal Canadian Legions across Ontario will be able to open their doors to patrons.

While some have opened patios in the last few weeks, many have had little to no income during the past four months of lockdown.

The Petrolia Legion, Branch 216, is no exception. A takeaway breakfast fundraiser on Canada Day was the first income they had seen in months.

And despite being closed the utilities still need to be paid. The Petrolia Legion owns its building and not have to pay rent. But the losses are still mounting.

Branch president Dennis Laker says that hall rentals have by far been the largest loss of income.

Laker says the Legion has applied for a patio license. If approved by the town, Laker is hoping to have an outdoor capacity of at least 15 people.

"Come to our patio when it's open," Laker says when asked how the community can support the Petrolia Legion. He says the branch will also be holding a beef dinner fundraiser in August.

"I know there's going to be a few branches that will not be able to reopen because of financial stuff. Hopefully



ALEX KURIAL/LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE PHOTO

Petrolia Legion members serve up take-out Canada Day breakfast - its first fundraiser since the pandemic hit.

all of the ones around here will be able to reopen when the time comes," says Laker.

The national Legion leadership has been asking the federal government for financial relief. They continue waiting.

Laker has heard talks about potential government plans, but nothing concrete has materialized yet, adding to the stress.

Some Legions have managed to hold firm through the pandemic, and even continue their community support efforts. The Corunna Legion, Branch 447, made a \$750 donation in June to the St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Food Bank.

Things are also holding steady at the Alvinston Legion. They've taken advantage of the downtime.

"We've been busy painting and fixing and doing things that needed to be done at the branch, because the branch is upside down," says branch president

Terry MacDonald.

And while Alvinston officials are anxious to reopen, physical distancing requirements are a problem.

"We're wanting to be able to allow people to sit inside. But if everybody in our branch had to be six feet apart we'd probably have about 10 people. It's not that big of a branch," says MacDonald.

Because of this, Branch 249 brings in most of its income from sports and games rather than hall rentals.

"Our money makers are events during the fall and winter like darts and pool and meat raffles and euchre tournaments," says MacDonald.

"Some of these renovations that we're doing would be nearly impossible to do when we're open."

Like other Legions, MacDonald said they will just have to ride out the storm. "We'll survive. It stings like everybody else. But we'll survive it."

lcds

One person at a time.

VIRTUAL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

September 8, 2020 | 7:00 p.m.

All are welcome to join in!

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We are looking for new Board of Directors to join our team! Please call Nick Salaris at 519-882-0933 x12 or email at nsalaris@lcds.on.ca for more information! Deadline to Apply is August 7, 2020

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We are going on vacation

There will be NO PAPER AUGUST 6TH

We will continue printing on August 13th

The Independent

Sunday storms cause major damage

Heather Wright
The Independent

A major storm ripped across Southwestern Ontario leaving downed power lines near Alvinston and heavy destruction to a barn in Lambton Shores.

Environment Canada started issuing warnings Sunday morning and by 11 am, the VanEngelens were picking up pieces of their dairy barn which had been struck by what appeared to be a tornado.

Juliette Pearson’s brother, Eddie, is one of the owners of the farm. She was in London when the storm hit. Her sister called her with the news.

“She says the dairy just got hit by a tornado...She sent me pictures and she says I cannot believe what I’m seeing. She’s got a cow on her yard. She was down in the basement doing laundry and then she said, I came up and I thought, but why? What am I seeing out here? I got a cow over here.”

In a matter of minutes, neighbours were at the Gordon Road farm cleaning up debris which hung from trees and was spread nearly one kilometre away.

In Alvinston, a row of hydro poles on Old Walnut Road just off Petrolia Road was taken out the storm. There were also a number of trees which came down.

Alvinston Deputy Fire Chief Kris Redick said power in the area would be out until at least midnight as Bluewater Power and Hydro One worked repair the damage.

In all, about 600 customers in the Alvinston area were without power for at least 12 hours.



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO

Hydro One crews keep watch over about a half dozen downed hydro poles on Old Walnut road Sunday. Bluewater Hydro moved in to help repair the main feeder line from the Wanstead power station to Alvinston.



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTOS

Neighbours flocked to Gordon Road after what appears to be a tornado or a wind burst blew right threw a dairy barn owned by the VanEngelen family. Parts of the building could be seen nearly a kilometre away in the bean fields across the road. Pieces of the barn were wrapped around a house on the farm property but relatives say no one was injured. It appeared the dairy cows were also safe. Neighbours were at the farm almost immediately to help with clean up, even though the skies were still threatening. Experts from Western University have yet to determine whether it was a tornado which caused the damage.

Sports

St. Louis wins five races in Dresden

The Independent

Driver Marc St Louis scored five wins at Dresden Raceway in a rain/lightning delayed card of racing Sunday.

The card was delayed by 30 minutes as thunderstorms rolled through the area just before the ninth race of the afternoon.

The Guelph driver’s most impressive triumph came after the downpour when he made up nearly 14 lengths

from the quarter pole to capture the final race of the 11-card event by a half length.

Only one locally-owned horse cracked the top three on Sunday.

Team Leader, owned by Dresden’s Darrell Vleeming, was third in the fourth race.

Dresden Raceway will be making an announcement this week about fans as the grounds will be opened up 100 fans this Sunday with live betting windows.

Management is working out the logistics of how fans will be let in and preparing an emergency accountability list.

The raceway has been able to open since Chatham-Kent entered stage three of the province’s reopening plan during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Track officials say they’re working with public health to make sure patrons can be in the grandstands in a safe manner.



CP PHOTO

Todd Vokes (#18) was part of the 1992 Vanier Cup winning team

Where are They Now: Vokes a Vanier Cup winner

Steve McGrail
Special to The Independent

Todd Vokes was born in Petrolia in 1970 and grew up attending Lambton Centennial School. He moved with his family to Tiverton in Bruce County for a brief time but returned to Petrolia and attended LCCVI.

Vokes played fastball in Bruce County and also played in Enniskillen in 83-84 and has fond memories playing and pitching games at Krall Park. He also played hardball in Wyoming.

He ran Cross Country in Grade 9 and competed on the track and field team. His best event was the 1500m. In Grade 12 and 13, he took up the discus and javelin and competed well locally.

By Grade 10, football was Vokes’ focus. Under the guidance of legendary Lancer Coach Vince Lyons, Vokes and the Junior Lancers won the LSSAA Championship in 1985.

In Grade 11, 12, and 13 Vokes played on some Great Lancer Senior Football Teams coached by longtime coach Murray Jackson. Mike Reeb, Dennis Meston, Mike Clements, Steve Hull, Jason Levitt, Shawn Forsythe, Rob McRae were all exceptional teammates and football players, he says. Many of these guys went on to play at the university level.

Vokes graduated with Honours from LCCVI in 1989. His first and truly only choice for university was Queen’s University in Kingston. At the time he enrolled at Queen’s he was told that he was one of the first LCCVI grads to go to Queen’s in 20+ years. He was accepted into the Physical and Health Education program and graduated in 1993.

While at Queen’s, Vokes made the practice squad in the first year. It was the start he needed, but unfortunately injuries sidelined him for the entire 1990 season.

Vokes recovered from injuries and returned for his third year (‘91) healthy and determined to play. Vokes started as defensive back and was relentless in his pursuit of the opposing teams’ ball carriers.

In year four (‘92) Vokes started at defensive back again before moving to the linebacker for his fifth and final year (‘93) at Queen’s.

During the 1992 season Vokes and the Queen’s Golden Gaels won the National Championship and brought home the Vanier Cup which is synonymous with being the best university football team in all of Canada. Vokes and his teammates received championship rings to mark their amazing accomplishment.

He graduated from Queen’s with his Bachelor’s Degree in Physical and Health Education and his B.A. in Health Sciences.

He currently lives in Georgetown with his wife, Trina, and daughter, Sydney. According to Vokes, Sydney is a way better athlete than he ever was. Sydney is a top performer on her Rep and High School Volleyball, Soccer, and Track teams.

Vokes has moved into the role of taxi transportation for his daughter and ensures Sydney gets to all of her sports. He is also her biggest fan and supporter.

Todd works for Miller Waste Systems Inc. in commercial sales.

- Steve McGrail is a sports enthusiast and teacher and writes Where are They Now for his Facebook Pages Promoting Wyoming/ Petrolia Athletes

Florence golfer finishes fourth

The Independent

Karolyn Rombouts of Florence carded a 77 and finished fourth in the girls division at the Jamieson Junior Golf tour event last week at the Seven Lakes Golf Course in LaSalle.

She finished three shots behind the winner. Rombouts is a member of the Maple City Club in Chatham.

The tour is scheduled to make a stop at her home course next July 27.

Take 20 minutes to make learning together part of your everyday.

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Activity #15

Play with your food and write words with alphabet cereal and soup.

We like cookie letters too!

FAMILY

See all Take 20 learning activities at www.FamilyLiteracyDay.ca

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Need a Break Child Care Can Help

Lauren is now offering hourly, daily or weekly babysitting services starting July 6th for families who are trying to fill some gaps in their child care in the Town of Petrolia.

Call 519-312-5380 for details or to book child care. References provide on request

Classified Deadline:
Monday @ 12 noon

Classifieds



Word Classifieds: \$10 plus tax for up to 40 words
Stop in at the office 9a-5p Mon-Fri
4156 Petrolia Line – Call 226-738-0728
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Real Estate

Card of Thanks

In Memory

Obituary

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THANK YOU

I would like to thank everyone who helped me enter my retirement with a huge smile on my face. It has been a long time coming. Thank you for coming to my last day send off, the gifts, the arts, the phone calls, all the Facebook shout outs, the great customers on RR4 and the very surprising picture in The Independent. You got me good. I will miss working with you all, and look forward to seeing you around.

Patsy Bright

In loving memory of a dear Mother, Grandmother, Great Grandmother
Genevieve “Jenny” West (Meredith)
on her 95th Birthday July 23

*In tears we saw you sinking
We watched you fade away
Our hearts were almost broken
You fight so hard to stay
But when we saw you sleeping
So peacefully free from pain
We could not wish you back
To suffer that again*

*From your loving Family
Chester (Colleen),
Richard (Janet), George (Penny),
Bob (Joan), Bonnie (Paul),
Ron (Laura), Nancy (Brent)
and families*



McLAUCHLIN
Jean

McLauchlin, Jean - Died suddenly, but peacefully, at her home on **Tuesday, July 14, 2020**. JEAN McLAUCHLIN (nee McPhail), of Petrolia, was **85 years of age**. Jean was predeceased by her husband Clayton (2000). She will be missed by her children Tammy (Jeff) Ditmars, Connie (David) Braswell, and Clayton (Linda) McLauchlin, her grandchildren Jesse (Nicole), Hailey, and Colton. Jean is predeceased by her parents Rosie and James McPhail and was predeceased by her brother Harley (Marg) McPhail. She is also survived a sister-in-law Pat Cousineau. She was an aunt to Danny Cousineau, Jim (Shari) McPhail, Scott (Kim) McPhail, Mac (Donna) McPhail, Wayne (Lois) McPhail, Cindy (Len) Duncan, Rick (Janet) McPhail, the late Harley (Lynn) McPhail, and several great nieces and nephews. A private service will be held, with interment in Hillsdale Cemetery. As expressions of sympathy, memorial donations may be made to the Children's Health Foundation (www.childhealth.ca). Arrangements by Needham-Jay Funeral Home. Memories and condolences may be shared on-line at www.needhamjay.com.

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Card of Thanks

Thank You
Special thanks to all the Laborers who beautify our towns. Driving through Dresden, Petrolia and Wyoming, I Noticed all the colourful flowers. They look so pretty, one can't help but feel thankful to you workers. You are doing an excellent job, thank you so much.
C. Guerette

Card of Thanks

thank you!
Many Thanks to everyone that sent cards, flowers & gifts on the Celebration of my 90th Birthday. All were very thoughtful and greatly appreciated.
Winnafred McEwen

In Memory

BRIDEKIRK - In memory of a dear brother and uncle, **Gary Bridekirk** who passed away **July 24, 1978**.
Think of him as living in the hearts of those he loved... For nothing loved is ever lost and he was loved so much.
Lovingly remembered by Marie & Sandi and your nieces and nephews

Notice

Sarnia Flea Market
Has Re-Opened
Antiques, Fine Furniture
and Collectibles
Every Sunday 9am to 4pm
114 N. Christina Street - Enter off Davis St
Royal Doulton Crystal, Fine China
Sports Cards, Video Games Room,
Jewellery, Books, New Merchandise to General Housewares, Coke Collectables and so much MORE!
Vendors Welcome!

what do you have planned?

CIVIC HOLIDAY
Monday,
August 3, 2020

Wanted to Buy

WANTED TO BUY - **ANYTHING OLD** including signs, bottles, canning jars, jewelry, tins, paper items, pottery, old lighters, old razors, rustic pieces, etc. Single items to entire estates. **CALL CHAD 519-639-9102.**

FOR SALE

KERI-OUT TYE-DYE T-SHIRTS - Adult - \$20. Kids - \$10. Unique Driftwood Birdhouses. 4717 Lakeside Street (Hillcrest Heights) 519-899-4233. **DRIVE-OUT DISPLAY DAILY.**

Death Notices

July 13 to July 20, 2020

MONDAY, JULY 13

MOFFATT, Donald “Don”
Age 84, of Watford
Denning's of Watford

GIFFELS, Berton
Age 87, of Sarnia
D.J. Robb Funeral Home

FERGUSON, Buelah
Age 106, of Sarnia
D.J. Robb Funeral Home

TUESDAY, JULY 14

McCARTHY, Gary
Age 74, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

WAYE, Cynthia
Age 76, of Petrolia
Needham-Jay Funeral Home

McLAUCHLIN, Jean
Age 85, of Petrolia
Needham-Jay Funeral Home

OAKE, Mary
Age 99, of Sarnia
D.J. Robb Funeral Home

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15

BANNISTER, Irma
Age 96, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

THURSDAY, JULY 16

MILTON, Bert
Age 84, of Forest
Denning's of Forest

FRIDAY, JULY 17

GROULX, Julie Anne
Age 55, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

SHERIDAN, Patrick
Age 80, of Sarnia
McKenzie & Blundy Funeral Home

POORE, Edie
Age 88, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

GARDINER, Bruce
Age 89, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

JACKSON, Mary
Age 92, of Sarnia
McKenzie & Blundy Funeral Home

SATURDAY, JULY 18

GEORGE, Paul “Bucky”
Age 56, of Forest
Denning's of Forest

SUNDAY, JULY 19

WALSH, William “Bill”
Age 55, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

GILLATLY, Ronald
Age 78, of Forest
Denning's of Forest

DOLBY, Lilian
Age 79, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

LANE, Mary Frances
Age 86, of Watford
Smith Funeral Home

WERDEN, Margaret “Vannie”
Age 92, of Watford
Denning's of Watford


MONDAY, JULY 20

ST. MARIE, Raymond
Age 76, of Courtright
D.J. Robb Funeral Home

This information is provided as a community service.
For detailed information, please refer to the funeral home website listing.

For Sale

PLANT SALE - Perennial plants, Rose of Sharon Bushes. **458 Ignat-ifna St., Petrolia. Self Serve. FINAL WEEK**

**Deadline**
for all classified ads is Monday at 12 noon
for the paper that prints and distributes Wed-Thurs

Notice

COVID-19 - The province has approved the County of Lambton to move to COVID-19 Stage 3 of reopening starting July 24. Nearly all businesses and public spaces can reopen with proper public health safety measures in place. Select places and activities with increased risk must remain closed until further notice. Social gathering limits will increase, subject to physical distancing requirements, including indoor gatherings (maximum of 50 people) and outdoor gatherings (maximum of 100 people). Social circle limits remain at a maximum of 10 people. Visit Ontario.ca/reopen for full details on Stage 3 reopening.

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Any items not listed are accepted, if you use it in your home our clients will use it in theirs

Calendar

PLEASE CALL AHEAD TO CONFIRM DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

of events

Events are listed FREE for non-profit groups in Petrolia and Lambton County (space permitting). To be included in this listing email the required information to office@petrolialambtonindependent.ca Subject: FREE EVENT LISTING.

UPCOMING EVENTS				
DATE	START TIME	LOCATION	EVENT	CONTACT INFO
Jul 25	7:30-10:30p	Petrolia	Live Music at the Crabby Joe's Beer Garden Featuring Demi Krall	
Jul 31	8am-1p	Forest	Forest Farmers' Market. Corner of Main St. N and Jefferson.	
Aug 1	7:30-12noon	Petrolia	Petrolia Farmers' Market directly behind the Petrolia Library	
Aug 1	11-2pm	Petrolia	Petrolia Legion BBQ Meal • BBQ Beef on a bun, Potato Salad, Coleslaw. Take-out only. Advance orders only call Friday July 31 from 10am-6pm 519-882-1201. \$10 cash per order.	
Aug 5	4-6pm	Forest	Forest Legion Ladies Hamburger Fundraiser. Order by Aug 2 519-786-2795 or 519-786-4516. Burger \$6 • Add dessert for \$3	
Aug 7	8a-1p	Forest	Forest Farmers' Market. Corner of Main St. N and Jefferson.	
Aug 8	7:30-12noon	Petrolia	Petrolia Farmers' Market directly behind the Petrolia Library	
Aug 8	10-4pm	Petrolia	Petrolia Discovery Public Tours - 4381 Discovery Line	
Aug 9	12:30	Watford	Watford Cornfest Car Cruise. Sit on your lawn from 1-2:30pm to watch cars. Join the parade in your cool car at Watford Car Quest.	
Aug 10-11		Petrolia	Town of Petrolia Curbside Wood Chipping. 519-882-2350 town.petrolia.on.ca	
Sept 26	10-4pm	Petrolia	Petrolia Discovery Public Tours - 4381 Discovery Line	
Oct 19-23		Petrolia	Town of Petrolia Large Item Collection. 519-882-2350 town.petrolia.on.ca	

Classifieds

Word Classifieds: \$10 plus tax for up to 40 words
Stop in at the office 9a-5p Mon-Fri
4156 Petrolia Line – Call 226-738-0728
or email: office@petrolialambtonindependent.ca

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

St. Andrew's Presbyterian 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
www.standrews-petrolia.ca

St. Paul's United Church

4169 Petrolia Line at Centre Street

We invite you to join a virtual congregation and watch the Sunday morning worship on our Facebook Page & Website. Please Stay Safe!
Rev. Susan Cameron
10:30am Service
Church Office: 519-882-1390
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
www.firstbaptistpetrolia.ca
Find us on Facebook!
www.facebook.com/First-Baptist-Church-Petrolia

Wyoming United Church

730 Second Street, Wyoming

Due to the COVID-19 virus will be closed until further notice. We will keep you updated about any changes.

Join Us for Worship - All are Welcome
[Church Office 519-845-3963](https://www.facebook.com/WyomingUnitedChurch)
Find us on Facebook

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
Jul 24	Dresden	Southwest Ontario Tractor Pullers Association Dresden Pull
Jul 25-26	Bright's Grove	2020 Bluewater Triathlon and Duathlon/Ironkid Triathlon
Jul 31-Aug 2	Sarnia	14th Annual Greekfest at Christina Street
Aug 7-8	Bothwell	Bothwell Car Show & Optifest
Aug 14-16	Forest	2020 Annual Western Ontario Steam Thresher Reunion
Aug 15	Inwood	Inwood Fireman's Association Annual Chicken BBQ & Ball Tournament
Aug 16	Camlachie	Fish n' Chips at Camlachie united Church
Aug 21-23	Alvinston	Alvinston Pro Rodeo www.alvinstonprorodeo.com
Aug 22	Alvinston	Alvinston Arts & Music Fest
Aug 22	Wyoming	Plympton-Wyoming Truck and Tractor Pull
Aug 23	Alvinston	Alvinston & District Optimist Club's Cowboy Breakfast

POSTPONED EVENTS			
DATE	LOCATION	EVENT	DATE
Mar 26	Wyoming	Wyoming Wee Ones Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser	TBD
Mar 29	Petrolia	Petrolia Optimist Run for the Groceries Draw/Event	TBD
Apr 8	Petrolia	Petrolia Community Theatre production of "Sandy Toes & Salty Kisses" NOW Postponed until 2021	
Apr 11	Alvinston	Alvinston & District Optimist Club Trivia Night	TBD
Apr 18	Alvinston	The Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston Large Item Day – Moved to Fall	
May 1	Wyoming	Plympton & Wyoming Agricultural Society Annual Salad Luncheon New Date	TBD 519-845-3161
May 2	Camlachie	The Plympton-Wyoming Museum's 2020 Season Opening 6745 Camlachie Rd	TBD
May 6	Sarnia	Sarnia The Stampeders - Celebrating 50 Years	Oct 26, 2020
May 23	Enniskillen	Enniskillen Rabies Vaccination Pet Clinic	TBD
Jun 19	Sarnia	LiUNA "Do it for Sarnia" Block Party	Sept 11 & 12, 2020
Jun 21	Oil Springs	Oil City Cemetery Decoration Day Service	TBD
Jun 22	Petrolia	LCDS Annual General Meeting	Sept 8, 2020
Jul 18	Wyoming	Plympton-Wyoming Agricultural Society Broasted Chicken Diner	TBD
Oct 20-15	Sarnia	Pinty's Grand Slam of Curling	Oct 19-24, 2021

Business & Service Directory

PRO-TAX

Professional INCOME TAX SERVICES

519-882-2966
3927 Petrolia Line

jam_jo11@hotmail.com
Joanne Jamieson
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Care givers should have access: MPP

Gretzky says province shouldn't allow seniors, disabled to be isolated again

Heather Wright
The Independent

Lisa Gretzky says people in long term care and group homes need their essential care givers and they need them now.

The Windsor area MPP says the Ford government ignoring the advice of health care professionals and the pleas of families to allow essential care givers back into Ontario's long term care homes. In many cases, essential care givers are family members who have power of attorney over their care.

March 13, the Ford government closed all long term care and group homes to visitors in the effort to stop COVID-19.

However even with the drastic step, nearly 70 per cent of the people in Ontario who have died from COVID-19 lived in long term care homes.

Just recently, the province allowed outdoor and indoor visits with restrictions.

"What was it all for?" asked Dr. Vivian Stamatopoulos, Associate Teaching Professor at Ontario Tech University during a Monday news conference.

"After four months...the goal of keeping residents safe by removing them from essential care givers failed; in fact it made them more vulnerable." Stamatopoulos adds essential care givers are "a critical source of labour" in homes and "a demonstrated safe guard against abuse."

Gretzky says while families were able

to talk to residents by phone or video links, that isn't good enough.

"Not everyone has the ability to communicate by phone...for some, it has to be that in person contact," she says.

Pam Libralesso agrees. Her 14 year-old non-verbal son lives in a group home in the Toronto area.

Normally, he sees his brother at school and his family on weekends. He communicates, she says, by touch – giving family members a blanket when he's tired or taking their hand and bringing them to the refrigerator when he's hungry.

Libralesso hasn't seen her son since March 13.

She's confident his physical needs are being met, but is worried he is not getting the chance to communicate.

Gretzky says seniors with dementia are in the same boat and need family on hand.

"We are pushing the government to immediately implement a COVID-19 Essential Caregiver Plan which would recognize that essential caregivers – often family members – are more than just visitors, and that individuals have the right to access their essential caregivers in their agreed upon, preferred manner," she says in a motion introduced in the Ontario Legislature Monday.

The plan would also make sure the provincial government has to consult essential care givers when making changes.

And Gretzky says those changes should never prevent people from having access to their essential care givers, even in a pandemic.

Gretzky says the government has to work with families and unions to develop a plan to make sure essential care givers are seen as support in the nursing homes.

Lambton is lucky as two more win cash

Heather Wright
The Independent

It seems Lambton is a lucky place to live.

Earlier this month, an Inwood father and daughter won \$16 million.

Two more people from Central Lambton have won big money in the lottery.

Adam Martin of Brigden seems to have been repaid for a good dead with a \$100,000 win. The 35 year-old father of two, who is engaged, went back to the store after noticing he had not paid enough for his items. Out the way out, he picked up a Hot Card.

Martin checked the ticket and found he'd won \$100,000. "I didn't know if I was going to have a heart attack or cry," he told the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Commission.

"I help people when I can and try to set a positive example for the kids. The fact that I got this ticket when going back to the store to pay for an item that I was undercharged for is a strong indicator that good things happen to good people," he explained.

Meantime, Watford resident Cathy Case has been playing her regular numbers for a while. They include family birthdays, anniversaries and her kid's hockey jersey numbers.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

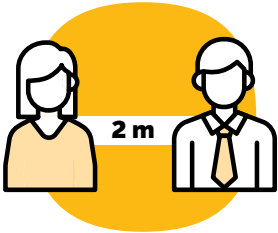
Adam Martin of Brigden is one of two Lambton County residents who recently picked up big lottery winnings.

She discovered her win at the gas station and found she won \$195,706.60.

"I probably looked strange standing there at the Ticket Checker for so long," she told OLG officials. Case doesn't have plans for the money yet but is looking forward to taking her family, including former Warwick Mayor Todd Case, to a Toronto Blue Jays gammon the future.

"This win is a turning point for all good things for the remainder of the year," she says.

As more businesses and services reopen, and with social gatherings increased to 10 people, we all must continue our efforts to protect each other.



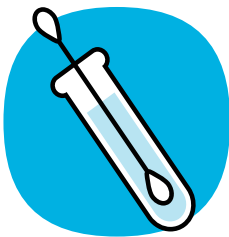
Practice physical distancing, stay two metres apart.



Wear a face covering when physical distancing is a challenge.



Continue to wash hands frequently.



Get tested if you are worried you may have COVID-19, or have been exposed to the virus.

Inside or out, stay safe. Save lives.

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