

TRAIL TROUBLES



Joe and Renee Verberne and their children, Jojo, 10 and Gary, 8, climb over a barrier on the rail trail off Lasalle Line in Enniskillen Township. The family, like many other people, uses it for walks. But recently, as Enniskillen Township considered whether it could become a walking trail to Wyoming, the municipality blocked the entire trail off because a rail bridge is unsafe. The Verbernes' are hoping the township will consider reopening it, at least to the bridge. See story on page 5.

Workers worry as COVID-19 outbreak declared at High Park

Heather Wright
The Independent

Some High Park Farms workers in Enniskillen are voicing concern for their safety after Lambton Public Health declared a COVID-19 outbreak on site. They say COVID-19 protocols are not being followed at the cannabis facility and contract workers are coming in from Windsor and London - two areas of the province with high transmission of the virus. Lambton Public Health doesn't identify workplaces in outbreak unless there is a concern for the wider public health. But *The Independent* has obtained an internal memo

issued Friday which said six production workers had tested positive for the virus. Since then, Lambton Public Health says there has been another case reported in the workplace. The memo, sent to staff, says "Everyone who has tested positive live together and are production employees. These people were close contacts with the initial positive case we advised you of on Jan. 13, 2021." The company has three bunkhouses where migrant farm workers live. The affected bunkhouse, according to multiple sources, houses 12 people.

SEE HIGH PARK PG 2

'Incredibly urgent' need for vaccine

Heather Wright
The Independent

Lambton's medical officer of health says there is an 'incredibly urgent need' for the COVID-19 vaccine here. But there is concern as one of the main suppliers of the drug stops shipments of supplies to Ontario for a week. Dr. Sudit Ranade, in a teleconference with reporters Thursday, said the area will likely see the first shipment of the Pfizer Vaccine in early February. COVID-19 hot spots like Windsor-Essex and Metro Toronto have been given the first vaccines. The province announced Tuesday all seniors in long term care in those zones have received their first dose. But Lambton's COVID-19 transmission rates are just as high as the hot spots which have already received the vaccine. Tuesday, the University of

Toronto website said Lambton still has the third highest transmission rate in the province - behind Windsor and Peel. And seniors, particularly in long term care, are vulnerable here. Lambton has recorded four deaths this week - all seniors and three in long term care. Fifty nine seniors in long term care in Lambton were COVID-19 positive Tuesday. "The need is very urgent here and the sooner we can get the vaccine the better, especially for that really vulnerable population that we're trying to protect right now given the rise in our institutional outbreaks that we've seen in the last few weeks," Ranade says. Ranade says public health is getting ready to deliver the vaccine to long term care residents within 24 hours of receiving it. But it's not as certain when that will happen.

SEE VACCINE PAGE 3

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due to provincial lockdown

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High Park employees say COVID rules broken

CON’T FROM PG 1

In the first wave of COVID-19, some of the biggest outbreaks were in greenhouse operations where migrant workers lived communally.

Ministry of Labour representatives confirmed the outbreak Tuesday saying the ministry was notified of an occupational illness at High Park Farms Monday.

“An employer representative reported six migrant workers tested positive for COVID-19. A ministry inspector has been assigned. The investigation is ongoing,” says Kalem Mc Sween a communications officer for the ministry.

“Our ministry inspectors check to make sure employers are taking all reasonable precautions to protect workers from workplace hazards, including the spread of infectious diseases like COVID-19.”

In fact, the ministry has visited High Park three times since the pandemic was declared in March.

The last inspection was Dec. 9 but Mc Sween says it is not complete yet. No orders were issued in the other inspections.

At least one of the ministry visits was sparked by employee complaints. Employees have also been contacting *The Independent* about the working conditions in the production facility.

While company officials told employees they are working with Lambton Public Health and there is “no additional risk to any of us continuing to work,” multiple employees say COVID-19 practices are lax and they’re concerned they’re going to get sick.

The Independent has agreed not to identify the workers because they fear they will lose their jobs.

While six of the seven people with COVID-19 are production workers who live on site, one High Park employee says the migrant employees work with dozens of other people, usually in close quarters, with social distancing only practiced when an inspector from the Ministry of Labour is around.

He added there are three bunkhouses of migrant workers who all work with the cannabis plants in the greenhouse and socialize together after hours.

The worker also voiced concern a person working in the warehouse has also tested positive.

“They (High Park managers) are trying to say that he wasn’t in contact with many people but that doesn’t make any sense.

“If anything... that should be released just for the public, because we have so many shipments that come and go, that he’s in direct contact with.”

Another worker recently gave one of the migrant workers a ride home. The worker wasn’t masked and she took her’s off for some of the ride. “I had a cigarette and then put my mask back on,” she says.

She’s concerned she may have been

exposed, and in turn could expose her family, some of whom have serious health issues.

The worker is also concerned about contract employees coming into the Enniskillen plant.

An agency from London sends temporary employees from London and Windsor. It’s not clear if they have passed any health screening by the agency. They’re required to answer a few basic questions when they arrive at High Park but the worker questions whether they understand what they are. “None of them really speak English,” she says.

The woman estimates 30 different contract workers have been on site in the last 17 days. And that makes her very nervous. “I cry some days on my way to work.”

Another High Park employee who works every day with the contract workers is also concerned they could be bringing in COVID-19.

“I overhear them in conversations, how they go to Toronto all the time. Like, it just makes me really nervous that they’re not being as cautious as they should be. And they’re also not being held accountable by the company.”

High Park, in an email to The Independent, says “We are continuing our strict protocols at High Park Farms including the use of face masks, social distancing, frequent opportunities for handwashing, increased cleaning and disinfection, and are confident that these measures will continue to limit the potential for exposure to COVID-19.

“The public health unit has advised us to continue to operate with our enhanced health and safety protocols and maintain contact with them in the days ahead.”

Officials added the company uses the screening tool provided by the ministry and if any employee answers yes to any of the screening questions, they’re advised to go home and contact a health care provider.

High Park adds they’re working with public health and believe they have isolated anyone who may have had close contact with those who have tested positive.

“We will be closely monitoring the situation to ensure the health and safety of our employees and the local community.”

And, in the emailed response, company officials say there should be no concern in the community about High Park employees transmitting the virus.

“By submitting to daily COVID screening our employees are doing their part to limit the potential for exposure to COVID-19 at our facility and within the community.”

Officials add the workers who are ill are being monitored and the company is ensuring they have the food and medication they need to make a complete recovery.

Clerk robbed and assaulted in Petrolia

A Petrolia man has been arrested after a clerk at the Circle K was assaulted after a theft.

Lambton OPP were called to the convenience store around 12 am Tuesday for theft and an assault on an employee.

Police scanned the surveillance video recorded during the incident and later arrested Logan Hanlon, 22, of Petrolia. He faces charges of assault and theft and breaking the province’s Stay at Home order under the Ontario Emergency Measures Act.

Stop the
Spread
COVID-19
can be deadly.
Stay home.
Stay strong.
Save lives.



Lockdown may be working

Heather Wright
The Independent

Ontario is recording the lowest number of new COVID-19 cases in the province since Dec. 28 and public health officials say it may be the first signs the lockdowns are beginning to work.

Before Christmas, as the number of cases began to regularly hit 3,000, the province announced a lockdown which would start Dec. 26. When the number of new cases daily climbed above 3,000 on a consistent basis, Premier Doug Ford declared the second state of emergency Jan. 12 and issued a stay at home order which further limited people’s movements and reduced the number of people in workplaces.

In the last three days, the number of newly infected people has dropped first below the 3,000 level and today dipped below 2,000, with 1,913 new cases being reported in Ontario.

Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. David Williams, in a news conference yesterday, suggested this could be the affect of the recent lockdowns.

But Williams muted his comments adding there has not been as much testing in the province in the last few days. Today, Ontario reports there were 34,531 people tested and another 36,750 tests completed but awaiting results.

Williams added he didn’t think lockdown restrictions should be lifted until the number of daily cases dropped below 1,000.

The number of people being hospitalized is still at an all time high with 1,625 people hospitalized Monday, 400 of those in intensive care and nearly 300 on ventilators. Williams has said Ontario’s ICU capacity is

Lambton’s Medical Officer of Health has asked Public Health Ontario to see if the fast-spreading variant – found first in the UK – is in the community.

Dr. Sudit Ranade revealed his request on a teleconference Thursday.

In mid-December, when cases started to rise into double digits, Ranade said some of the cases took place at a meat raffle. He also issued an alert, asking people in adult rec hockey to watch for COVID symptoms because a number of hockey players across the county also tested positive.

precarious and the Ministry of Health has started asking doctors to look at triaging COVID-19 patients for treatment, saying that it is possible only those who have a chance of living past one year will be given lifesaving treatment.

The number of new COVID-19 cases in Lambton is still in the double digits with 28 cases in all reported today.

Public Health data shows however that only one new case was reported Monday – the rest were results of previous days.

Lambton Public Health says 223 people are actively ill – that’s down 17. There were 44 recoveries noted yesterday.

One outbreak in long term care, at Trillium Villa, is over, as is the outbreak at Meadowview Villa in Petrolia.

There are still eight long term care homes dealing with outbreaks. Another staff member at Village on the St. Clair has tested positive for COVID-19. Twenty-two residents and nine staff tested positive for the virus. Two residents have died.

Another staff member at Twin Lakes Terrace is also COVID-19 positive. Sixteen residents and six staff tested positive and public health data shows one of the residents passed away over the weekend.

Vision Nursing Home also has 16 residents and two staff members who are COVID-19 positive.

Across the province there are 1,488 seniors in long term care with COVID-19 and 1,241 staff. Twenty nine more people living in long term care died yesterday bringing the death toll in the second wave to 1,331 in care homes.

Four guards at the Sarnia Jail also have COVID-19.

rollout of the vaccine saying Ontario had moved quicker than most provinces, then pleaded with incoming US President Joe Biden to ship Ontario one million doses of the vaccine from the Michigan Pfizer plant.

It has some local politicians wondering how Lambton’s rollout will be affected.

“It is a concern,” says Lambton Warden Kevin Marriott. “But what do you do when the manufacturer cuts off supply.

“There is no use in talking about concern because it is what it is.

“It is a concern for an extra however many days that it is delayed but I guess... people are just going to have to stay safe for longer.”

Marriott is urging residents to continue following public health guidelines and the Stay at Home order to reduce the spread in the community, which could keep seniors in long term care COVID-19 free until the vaccine does arrive.

Lambton went from having some of the lowest number of cases in the province to where it is today – a case rate that is second highest in the province with 34 cases for every 100,000 people.

Ranade said Thursday the large number of cases in a short period of time prompted him to ask public health to take a look.

“At that time, I definitely made the request to see if the if the labs could analyze the samples from those events so that we could see if it was the new variants,” he says, adding the results have not come back yet.

Ranade said with the rapid rise in Lambton “we wondered if we should ask the question.”

Vaccine shipments to Ontario interrupted

CON’T FROM PG 1

Public health officials in an email to *The Independent* late Tuesday said they were still expecting vaccines to arrive in early February.

But just hours before, provincial officials were voicing concern that Pfizer has not just slowed its shipments to Ontario as they expand their European manufacturing facility - it will stop all shipments next week. The province was slated to get over 80,000 COVID-19 vaccines next week.

Ret. General Rick Hillier, who is heading up the vaccine distribution in Ontario, says his team is working to have all long term care homes vaccinated by Feb. 15.

“Obviously, it is going to slow down what we can do,” he says. “If we fall outside of 15 Feb., it will be because we’re falling short of vaccine but we’re going to push hard to get it all done.”

Premier Doug Ford, who first praised the

Local COVID-19 tests examined for UK variant

Heather Wright
The Independent



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519-882-0400

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Editorial

Buddy, can you spare some vaccines?

It was odd to watch Ontario’s premier beg for vaccines from the man who, at the time, had not yet begun his new job as president. But that’s exactly what Doug Ford was doing Tuesday.

In a news conference to promote a milestone in the province - as it was billed - of vaccinating all the people in long term care homes in four hot spots, the premier begged Joe Biden to help his biggest trading partner out and send a million vaccines to Ontario.

Ford seemed shell shocked after hearing not only was Pfizer - the maker of one of the COVID-19 vaccines - slowing its deliveries, to Ontario, but stopping them for a week. That means Ontario next 80,000 vaccines from the company is delayed as Pfizer retools the plant to ramp up production.

The officials had just heard the news. The prime minister announced it at a news conference just hours before.

So as Ford proudly proclaimed the province had beat its objective to vaccinate seniors in the four areas by Jan. 21, he began lamenting about the delay.

And then, he literally begged Joe Biden - the president of the country where COVID-19 is running rampant, where 400,000 people have now died, where hospitals are rationing care and its own vaccine rollout is a mess - to spare his best trading partner a mere million vaccines to tied us over.

Canada has secured the most vaccines of any nation per capita. If all of the contracts were to be delivered, you could have four vaccines. The problem is not securing them, its manufacturing them. Everyone wants the vaccine but it takes time to fill the orders. Hopefully, when Pfizer ramps up in a month, Ontario’s 80,000 doses andt more will be headed our way.

We believe the premier was trying to distract people from what some doctors have called the humanitarian crisis in long term care. Over 1,300 people have died in long term care since September, even though Ford promised to send more staff and place an iron ring around the homes. He’s obviously failed.

The government is now relying solely on the vaccine to end the crisis. Maybe that’s why he’s reduced to unreasonable begging.

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



CAROL BOYD PHOTO

After seeing the championship Petrolia Bantams last week, a reader dropped by this team photo - the Krall Chicks. They were the first girls' hockey team in Petrolia. They were coached by Bev Boyd and Ted Gravelle.

Province needs to direct LTC to invite families into homes

Many politicians have urged people to stay the course while we try to deal with COVID-19 saying we’re all in the same boat. I believe we are all in the same storm with some of us in fortified army warships and others in dingies with giant holes in them.

The people living in long term care are undeniably in the dingies. Health care advocates have been saying for years that health care workers in long term care simply don’t have enough time to give even the most basic care without rushing. They have, at best, six minutes to dress the elderly and frail residents.

They usually have dozens of people at each meal - many of which could use help eating. Consider that many people in long term care have dementia and Alzheimer’s and react poorly to being rushed. Health care workers can be kind and caring but without time to stop to breathe themselves, they cannot provide the emotional support seniors need.

That’s where families come in. They not only meet some of the basic care needs of the people in long term care, families can mean the difference between having a good day and a disaster.

The province has recognized that and in June made it clear two family members are able to be in the room with seniors even if there is a COVID-19 outbreak.

So, when I was part of a teleconferene recently with two women whose parents were in long term care, I was surprised to learn they had not been in their parents rooms for months.

One had just become an essential care giver in October, the other in November. Imagine what pain they could have saved their loved ones had they known this before.

But there had been no communication from the homes saying this was something they could do to be with their family during this trying time.

They’re not alone. Just scan social media to see how many people cannot get to their families despite the provincial rules.

The province has to step in.

The Minister of Long Term Care could write a simple letter in less than an hour telling homes to provide accurate information to the main contacts of every person in long term care about their right to have an essential care giver.

And then, the ministry should be checking to make sure it has happened.

It’s such a simple thing that would save so many seniors so much suffering.



Heather Wright

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Enniskillen stops cannabis expansion for a year

Heather Wright
The Independent

Enniskillen wants to be ready the next time a cannabis producer wants to set up in the township.

Council has passed an Interim Control Bylaw which stops the development of any cannabis operation in the municipality for at least a year. It buys the council time to come up with some regulations about where the operations could go and could possibly create regulations around the emission of light and odour.

County Planner Rob Nesbitt has been working on ways for a number of Lambton municipalities to deal with the cannabis industry.

“Since the legalization of recreation cannabis in 2018, there’s been an increase in the interest in establishing production facilities within the county,” he told Enniskillen councillors Monday.

“We also note OMAFRA (the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs) stated that cannabis is an agricultural crop like any other. Therefore, this crop cannot be prohibited, but it can be regulated.”

Enniskillen is home to the county’s largest cannabis producer, High Park Farms. At the time Tilray leased an existing greenhouse to begin its operations to produce medical marijuana.

As the recreational market opened up, High Park farms began to focus on producing for the Ontario marketplace.

That production brought problems for the neighbours. Trevor Brand and his mother, Cathy, live just across the road from the facility and have been urging both the municipal and federal government to do something to stop the company from allowing the skunk like odour to escape from the greenhouses.

High Park has spent millions trying to find a solution, however the Brands say it is still an issue. In fact, Brand has taken the unusual step of taking High Park Farms to the Normal Farm Practices Board to try and get relief.

Some councillors, including Judy Krall and Mary-Lynne McCallum who have been vocal about the issue, wanted to create some rules around where cannabis facilities could operate in the township, hoping to prevent other neighbours from facing similar problems.

So Nesbitt drafted the Interim Control Bylaw for Enniskillen to consider. Municipalities don’t use the tool very often because it stops any development cold. But Enniskillen is not the first to enact one; Plympton-Wyoming recently passed an Interim Control bylaw so it, too, could figure out exactly where cannabis facilities would be able to operate.

Monday, at least one councillor questioned whether the Interim Control Bylaw was necessary. Township officials have said in the past there are very few places a large scale greenhouse could set up in Enniskillen since they need

access to natural gas, which is limited in some areas, and lots of water. A greenhouse in Dawn-Euphemia, just south of Enniskillen, didn’t get off the ground because of the lack of water in the line that feeds the two municipalities.

“I don’t see making a bylaw for something that’s not going to happen in the township,” said Councillor Wally Van Dun.

“There are only two spots that they could do it and if we can’t provide gas or water, it is likely not going to happen.”

While Nesbitt agreed access to gas and water “is literally going to be a constraint on any similar uses coming to the municipality” he says smaller operations may be possible.

“There has been at least some possibility of a smaller facility where someone is growing for a number of households for example, or medical cannabis, which could be adequately provided with water and gas and yet depending on where they’re located, they could have an impact on the neighboring land uses.

“So this (bylaw) would apply to all facilities regardless of the size.”

Council passed the bylaw Monday. It’s expected there will be a study to see what should be included in the townships rules surrounding cannabis facilities.

Nesbitt adds Enniskillen might get some ideas for the bylaw after the Normal Farm Practices hearing is over.

Family questions need to block entire rail trail

Heather Wright
The Independent

When Joe and Renee Verberne bought a home on Lasalle Line, just outside of Petrolia, they were excited to see a trail just across the road.

Renee would take her children across for walks on a regular basis, making their way down the old railroad corridor which once carried Petrolia’s oil riches to the world. They would walk until they reached the rail bridge.

Even today, she takes 10 year-old Jojo and eight year-old Gary’s hands and leads them across the railroad ties which have gaps large enough to trip over if they want to walk further than the bridge.

The Verberne family uses the path a lot. Joe Verberne will take his horse down the path, avoiding the bridge and using a farmer’s field - with permission - to get around using the railroad ties which could cause injury to his horse.

But in the last few weeks, it’s been a little harder to make their way down the familiar path that they, their neighbours, people from Wyoming and even Hydro One use.

Enniskillen Township has blocked off the former rail line trail worried about the safety of people using the bridge.

Council began discussing turning part of the abandoned rail line into a walking trail to Wyoming - possibly to link to the trail which leads to Reece’s Corners in November.

Councillor Judy Krall, at the invitation of the Lambton Trails Committee, took a walk down the path and began advocating for the township to make it

a formal trail.

But in January, the municipality brought in large cement blocks laying them across the pathway to stop vehicles and then placing a No Trespassing sign on the nearby gate.

The move surprised Verberne since the township didn’t call and tell the neighbours what was going on. And she says it surprised other regular users of the trail, too.

“I’ve noticed other people that have walked down and they kind of look at the trail and then they walk away,” she says.

“The township did put a new No Trespassing sign up on the 13th but somebody stole it overnight on the first night.”

Enniskillen Mayor Kevin Marriott says the bridge is in rough shape and the township’s insurance adjusters advised they close it so they wouldn’t face liability claims if anyone would be hurt.

“It is very, very unsafe for people to be walking across there,” he says. “It’s very dangerous.”

Verberne agrees the bridge is in disrepair. “It has been since we moved here. It’s the old rail bridge. It’s just the old steel frame, and the old rail ties that go across it, the actual tracks aren’t there anymore. So, it is in disrepair.”

But Verberne thinks it could be fixed. The bridge was designed for rail cars to pass over and she says the base is still strong. She believes it would just need a new deck to make it safe for pedestrians.

“I did get a hold of the Lambton

Trails Committee yesterday and talked to them and my understanding is there was actually a grant that Enniskillen could have got which would have actually paid to fix that bridge.

“But Enniskillen opted not to bother with it and just decided to close the trail,” she says, adding it would have been nice if the township would have consulted the neighbours before placing the large blocks.

Verberne plans to go to council to request they look at fixing the bridge and opening the trail again. She knows that may be a tough sell.

Marriott says it is possible, but there are other obstacles which would stand in the way including some of the land which would connect the Enniskillen trail to Wyoming is still owned by CN Rail.

“It would be anywhere from \$20 to \$40,000, I’m guessing if we had that fixed, it would be safe as far as walking, but then we’d have to deal with the other liability.

“If it was just that, it would probably be doable, but with that, and then everything else, you just can’t take any chances. And we don’t know what it would cost to make it completely safe.”

Verberne is hopeful that council might at least consider moving the barrier back to the bridge. That would allow people to walk about a kilometre down the path before turning around.

“That’s a good hike.”

For now, she and her family are still using the trail, climbing over the barrier and making their way down the historic path.

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Where does conflict begin?

Brooke-Alvinston council asks Integrity Commissioner to decide

Heather Wright
The Independent

Brooke-Alvinston is bringing in its Integrity Commissioner to figure out if councillors who are members of community groups have a conflict of interest.

Under the Ontario Municipal Act, politicians are not to benefit financially from their position. At each council meeting, they are to declare if they have a pecuniary or financial interest – directly or indirectly – in any of the items being discussed.

Mayor Dave Ferguson and Deputy Mayor Frank Nemcek say in the last few weeks, residents have been questioning whether Nemcek and fellow councillor, Jamie Armstrong, should be declaring an interest in the Alvinston Optimist’s plans to build a pavilion at the Brooke-Alvinston-Inwood Community Centre.

The project has been in the works for six years in several different forms. The Optimists first suggested a renewal of the arena, and then broke it up into phases to do one part of the project at a time.

Since 2018, Armstrong – first as the chair of the building committee and later when he became a councillor – brought the issue to council a number of times trying to come to some agreement which would see the pavilion built even though the club didn’t have all the money it needed to move ahead.

On Dec. 10, council discussed the issue again. The municipality had already set aside \$80,000 for the project – money which was first expected to be used to hire a grant writer to obtain funding for the project. The money, council agreed, could go to help fund the project.

That night, Armstrong asked council to consider loaning the community group another \$80,000 to be paid back with interest. Twice Armstrong made suggestions on how to proceed with a loan and, according to the minutes, he twice withdrew the motions which would have seen the group obtain the loan.

Instead, council agreed to allow The Optimist to build the pavilion, but wanted to have a legal agreement outlining exactly where and when the project would be built, that the club had insurance to cover the construction site, that the group provide proof they actually had the cash to build the project and that it would be done in a timely manner. Armstrong later told *The Independent* the Optimists had secured a private loan to move forward with the \$310,000 project before the Dec. 10 meeting.

Thursday, Nemcek said community members were confused how he and Armstrong – both Optimist members – could

vote on the issue. “I’ve been chewed out four times by four different people,” he says.

Ferguson says people have been asking him about the issue as well. “There’s a number of people in the township who are very upset about the way this is progressing. Different people have had different phone calls asking ‘is this conflict of interest? Why are The Optimists able to run this through the council?’”

“So, people have written letters, people have called me, and not just one or two, there’s been a number of people have called asking ‘What is going on?’”

Ferguson says this is not the first time he’s questioned whether a council member should have been involved in a council discussion. Councillor Wayne Deans was on the executive of the Inwood Firemens’ Association at the time the township was trying to first work with the group on an agreement to continue leasing the hall and then when council dismantled the Inwood station.

Deans told council Thursday, he didn’t believe he had a conflict. “When we were going through the fire department stuff, I was questioned on a couple different times. And I went, and I looked into it. And I was told by a professional person, that as long as I had no personal or financial gain in it, there was no conflict of interest,” he says.

Armstrong, in an interview with *The Independent*, echoed Dean’s opinion about his own involvement in the Optimist pavilion.

“If myself or my family was going to benefit financially from the Optimist Club building these new washrooms and the pavilion up at the arena, then yes, I would have had to declare a conflict of interest. But the Optimist Club is a nonprofit organization.

“I do not receive any money from the Optimist Club, and I am not in any way associated with the builder that’s going to be building the building up there,” he says.

But council – with Ferguson, Nemcek and Councillor Jeannette Douglas voting in favour – decided to enlist the help of the Integrity Commissioner.

“It’s going to cost us a few dollars, but we’ll be able to say, ‘We’ve done our job. We’re doing our due diligence and this is what has to happen.’... It will give us clarity... This is two issues now and perhaps it’s time that the council has some training and education.”

Nemcek is looking forward to getting some clarity on the issue. “I want to answer Yes, I do or I don’t (have a conflict) and I’ll bide whatever the fate.” But Armstrong says council should not be spending money on the issue. “I’m sure that the Integrity Commissioner is going to rule in our favor,” he says.

PETS SAVED IN ALVINSTON FIRE



DAWSON CURRIE PHOTO

Smoke detectors alerted an Alvinston family to a fire in their Elgin Street home. They were able to get out of the house safely as Brooke Fire Rescue arrived on the scene around 2:15 am Sunday. Watford firefighters were also called to the scene to help. The two stations had the blaze under control quickly but Brooke Fire stayed on the scene for several hours putting out hot spots. Firefighters retrieved two family pets unharmed. The fire was accidental. About \$50,000 damage was done.

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Action needed now in LTC says coalition

Heather Wright
The Independent

Lucinda Allaer says her father used to be the type of guy who was always the joker in the room. Now, when she visits him in his Wallaceburg nursing home, he always asks her to help him die.

Allaer, speaking at a teleconference organized by the Sarnia-Lambton Health Coalition to highlight conditions in long term care, says her dad moved into long term care at the beginning of the pandemic and it has changed him completely.

Allaer is quick to say the people who work in the long term care home are “caring and loving people.

“The staff are my heroes,” she says adding for some time she and her mother were only able to have contact with her dad by phone or window visits and staff kept them connected.

Those heroes, Allaer says, simply don’t have enough time to really care for the seniors. “I literally see the staff jogging down the hall from one room to the next some days just trying to keep up.”

But even with the jogging, that doesn’t happen. Allaer recounted an incident when her father, who is in his 80’s, needed to use the bathroom. She called staff to help him.

It took 45 minutes for someone to come. “He’s a proud man, he’s on a laxative. At 80 years old, he had to wait. Now this doesn’t happen all the time but it’s an example of the horrendous difficulties on a daily basis of daily living.”

Pat Tate understands what Allaer’s family is going through. Her mother is in long term care in Sarnia. She suffers from vascular dementia, a form of dementia that not only affects memory but deteriorates the body.

Tate described a similar incident, where her mother was moaning in pain because she needed to have a bowel movement.

Tate and her sister, who were on a video call with the senior at the time, called for help, and then watched their mother in pain for 20 minutes before someone came to her aid.

“Most of our visit was watching her in pain... Nothing like this ever happened before COVID,” she says.

Shirley Roebuck, the head of the Sarnia-Lambton Coalition, says the women’s experiences are not unusual. The last 10 months have exposed cracks in the long term care system - particularly understaffing - that health advocates have been talking about for years.

Roebuck has recently been talking with registered nurses who work in long term care who confirm that though the province has made promises around increased care in long term care, the situation inside homes is getting worse as the pandemic drags on. Roebuck says nurses and personal support workers are getting stressed out and tired from dealing with the added work of caring for people with COVID-19 in the homes. Some are off sick, others are on stress leave, and still others have simply quit.

One told Roebuck things won’t get better because “our residents are not valued. They are marginalized members of our society.”

Roebuck says that’s not acceptable. “We’re all citizens of Ontario, whether or not we’re 21, 41, 61 or 91. We all deserve our government’s attention and support.”

The health coalition is calling on the province to act now to improve conditions in long term care. “We need our government to intervene with competent, coherent, fast interventions to improve care.

“We will be unable to beat this COVID-19 until the crisis of staffing and long term care homes is addressed.”

Allaer agrees, saying seniors in isolation need help, and comparing conditions in long term care to “leaving a dog in a crate and you throw them some food throughout the day and that’s it. You have no time to walk and you have no time to talk to them.

“They’re stuck there. And that’s especially during isolation.”

Tate agrees, adding “something needs to be done for our elderly.

“They need to be treated better. They deserve better.”

Dawn-Euphemia adds cash to 2021 budget

Taxpayers face increase of two and a half per cent

Heather Wright
The Independent

Dawn-Euphemia residents could see a tax increase of two and a half per cent this year.

That’s despite the fact Treasurer Scott Gawley recently presented a budget Jan. 11 which would not have increased taxes at all.

Councillors voiced concern at the time they would be leaving the municipality short of cash should COVID-19 continue to cause issues.

Staff presented a \$5.4 million draft operations and capital budget to council Jan. 11, with the same amount of spending as last year.

It used reserves to cover some costs and money from the federal and provincial governments to cover shortfalls from COVID-19.

Mayor Al Broad says council wants to keep the costs as low as possible but he’s concerned about using all the special funding right away.

Broad says revenues are still likely to decline this year.

“We’ve got the community centre still in the budget generating full revenue and if this COVID keeps up ...there is \$15,000 that we’re going to be short.”

And council also voiced concerned in the first budget meeting about keeping the roads in good shape.

Dawn-Euphemia has been trying to increase the gravel budget over the last few years and asked Gawley to include another \$50,000 in the 2021

document.

The township is facing an increasing police bill to help pay for the cost of renting a detachment office in Corunna. Broad expects that would cost between \$7,000 and \$10,000 this year.

And councillors have agreed to hire a full-time treasurer to replace Gawley, who announced his retirement at the last meeting.

Gawley returned to his home community to work part time several years ago after retiring as the administrator of another municipality.

Broad says they will have to hire a full time treasurer and it will be an extra \$44,000.

So Gawley went back and added another \$50,000 into the budget and presented his ideas to council Jan. 18.

The requests lead to a 1.7 per cent proposed tax increase - about \$10 for every \$100,000 of assessed value of property.

But council still wasn’t comfortable saying the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to continue costing the municipality money.

Some members were also concerned the roads budget should be increased even more, and some cash should be put into the budget to deal with some of the township’s bridges which are in need of repair.

So, council has asked Gawley to put another \$50,000 into the budget to help cover any shortfalls from COVID-19 and to put some extra money into the rebuilding of small bridges.

The extra \$50,000 will likely mean a tax increase of between \$15 and \$16 per \$100,000 of assessment.

The budget will be brought to a public meeting Feb. 1.



The Corporation of
The Village of Oil Springs

INVITATION TO TENDER
2021 JANITORIAL CONTRACT

The Corporation of the Village of Oil Springs is inviting tenders for Janitorial/ Cleaning services required at the municipal Office Building located at 4591, Oil Springs Line, and occasional/as-needed at the Youth Centre located at 4517 Victoria Street, as well as the Community Hall (all located in Oil Springs, Ontario).

Sealed Tenders clearly marked **“Tender – Janitorial Service – Village of Oil Springs”** will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. on Friday, February 26, 2021 at the municipal office:

Village of Oil Springs
c/o Lynda Thornton, Clerk-Treasurer
4591 Oil Springs Line
Oil Springs, ON N0N 1P0

The Village of Oil Springs reserves the right to accept or reject any or all Tenders and to waive any informality in the Tenders received, in each case without giving any notice. The Corporation of the Village of Oil Springs reserves the right to accept the Tender which it deems most advantageous.

Faxed submissions will not be accepted.

Tender documents and further information are available online at the Village of Oil Springs website: www.oilsprings.ca, and also available by e-mail upon request. To arrange for a copy, please contact clerk@oilsprings.ca or call 519-834-2939.





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FORM 6
SALE OF LAND BY PUBLIC TENDER
Municipal Act, 2001

Ontario Regulation 181/03, Municipal Tax Sale Rules

SALE OF LAND BY PUBLIC TENDER

The Corporation of the Township of Dawn-Euphemia

Take Notice that tenders are invited for the purchase of the land described below and will be received until 3:00 p.m. local time on February 18, 2021, at the Dawn-Euphemia Municipal Office, 4591 Lambton Line, RR#4 Dresden ON N0P 1M0.

The tenders will then be opened in public on the same day as possible after 3:00 p.m. at the Dawn-Euphemia Municipal Office, 4591 Lambton Line, Dresden.

Description of Lands:

Roll No. 38 06 009 030 05000 0000; Aughrim Line; Part of PIN 43369-0094 (R); Part of Lot 33, Concession 6, designated as Parts 1 and 3 on Reference Plan 25R10287, in the Geographic Township of Euphemia, in the Township of Dawn-Euphemia; in the county of Lambton; File No. 09-01

Minimum tender Amount: \$ 13,578.74

Tenders must be submitted in the prescribed form and must be accompanied by a deposit in the form of a money order or of a bank draft or cheque certified by a bank or trust corporation payable to the municipality and representing at least 20 per cent of the tender amount.

Except as follows, the municipality makes no representation regarding the title to or any other matters relating to the land to be sold. Responsibility for ascertaining these matters rests with the potential purchasers.

This sale is governed by the Municipal Act, 2001 and the municipal Tax Sales Rules made under that Act. The successful purchaser will be required to pay the amount tendered plus accumulated taxes and any taxes that may be applicable, such as a land transfer tax and HST.

The municipality has no obligation to provide vacant possession to the successful purchaser.

A copy of the prescribed form of tender is available on the website of the Government of Ontario Central Forms Repository under the listing for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs.

For further information regarding this sale and a copy of the prescribed form of tender, contact:

R. Scott Gawley, CPA, CGA
Treasurer
The Corporation of the Township of Dawn-Euphemia
4591 Lambton Line
RR#4
Dresden, ON N0P 1M0
(519) 692-5148

St. Clair Township fine tuning ATV bylaw while Brooke Alvinston OKs use

Alex Kurial
Local Journalism Initiative

The St. Clair off-road vehicle saga continues as council continues to fine-tune the details around a potential new bylaw. ATV’s and other off-road vehicles (ORV) became legal on municipal roads in Ontario Jan. 1. Municipalities have the option to pass a bylaw banning them. During their last council meeting at the end of December St. Clair asked for a draft bylaw to be produced that would allow some ORV use. The Jan. 18 draft recommended the township authorize the use of ORV with some exceptions. Notably these included Highway 40, which falls under provincial jurisdiction, and the St. Clair Parkway. “The Parkway is the main thoroughfare of the township and has elevated speed limits in many locations.

“Further, the Parkway represents the main downtown corridor for many settlement areas on the west side of the township,” says Clerk Jeff Baranek in a report to council. Council discussed whether ORV could be allowed on the shoulder of the St. Clair Parkway, but David Neely, drainage superintendent, cautioned it wouldn’t be a good idea. “Do you want ORVs intermingled with bikers and walking people?” Select roads in Corunna, Mooretown and Wilkesport were also on the banned list. A township-wide exception for ORV use for work purposes was recommended. Time restrictions were included too, with suggested operating hours between 7 am to 10 pm on weekdays and 8:30 am to 11 pm on the weekends. Potential fines are still being worked out. Much of the discussion in council revolved

around who would actually enforce a new bylaw. “We will have no enforcement by the OPP,” says Mayor Steve Arnold. The police service has repeatedly said they don’t plan to do anything beyond their existing checks of ORV, which consist of making sure drivers are licensed and their vehicles are safe. “I don’t think we can enforce it,” was the concern of Deputy Mayor Steve Miller. “The OPP don’t enforce it now, and I can’t see us having a bylaw officer running around trying to track these people down, because you can’t catch them.” Miller also wasn’t happy with the conduct of certain riders. “When I see the disrespect – one place in particular the (McKeough)dam, where they’re doing a lot of damage. “They actually used their machines to pull the fence down to get in, and they knocked the

signs down – I’m not even sure we should be encouraging the use of them,” he says. “There’s a reason why they’re called an off-road vehicle, because that’s where they belong as far as I’m concerned,” says Miller. Councillor Tracy Kingston also has reservations around legalizing the vehicles. “It’s the whole enforcement thing that’s our issue, and the extra cost of maintenance, signs, fines, all those kinds of things. “I think most of us are kind of on the fence.” But Councillor Bill Myers says despite the issues raised he’s in support of ORV legalization. “There’s a lot of chat around enforcement, and I understand that. And there has been some disrespect (by riders). “But at the same time these issues have been going on for years,” he says. Myers says more trails will be built in the township if council

works with ORV groups, such as the Ontario Federation of All Terrain Vehicles Club. The draft bylaw will be brought back to council for final revisions and an expected vote at their next meeting in February. Meantime, Brooke-Alvinston council agreed to allow ATV’s on rural roads of the municipality. Council decided they would not be used in the communities of Alvinston and Inwood. That concerned Councillor Frank Nemcek who knows people who use the machines to go from town to their farms to work. Mayor Dave Ferguson pointed out the provincial laws allow the use of ATVs for farmers and trappers anywhere in the province. The new bylaw in Brooke-Alvinston means ATVs will be legal on rural roads from dusk to dawn.

- The Independent
with files from Heather Wright

No outdoor rink in Florence this year

The Independent

An outdoor skating rink in Florence will have to wait for a year. A resident approached Dawn-Euphemia council asking if the rink at the community centre in Florence could once again be used for outdoor skating. Deputy clerk Terri Towstuiuc contacted the township’s insurance company which is concerned about a number of liability problems. Towstuiuc, in a report to council, says the municipality doesn’t have enough

public works staff to properly monitor the rink and getting the rink up and running this year would need proper inspections, signage for rules of conduct and open and closing times, contact information for emergency. But the bigger problem for councillors was the pandemic restrictions. Mayor Al Broad says the township would not be able to use it during the lockdown and even after, if the weather cooperated, only a limited number of people would be able to be on the ice. Council decided to approach the resident to organize the outdoor rink next year.


Lost job, high fines after drunk driving conviction

Alex Kurial
Local Journalism Initiative

A Petrolia man is banned from driving for more than three years and owes thousands in fines after pleading guilty to a pair of drunk driving charges. Jeffrey Thompson, 52, was in Sarnia Court Jan. 8. Justice Deborah Austin didn’t mince words when imposing the sentence. “It is extremely aggravating that you are before the court for two similar offenses that pose a risk to public safety,” she says. On July 2019 Thompson was pulled over on Petrolia Line at Mandaumin Rd. Sarnia Police had contacted Lambton OPP and warned them an impaired driver was coming their way. Officers noticed slurred speech, bloodshot and glossy eyes and alcohol on his breath. Thompson was asked to exit the vehicle and he was unsteady and swaying. He said he’d had two beers and was arrested for impaired driving. He was taken to Petrolia OPP station where he blew more than double the limit on the breath test, a reading of .170. More than a year later – as Thompson awaited resolution of the 2019 drunk driving charge – he was arrested for the same offense in Petrolia. OPP officers were patrolling Greenfield St. when they saw a vehicle leave Haywood’s Bar. They followed the car onto Petrolia Line and then Tank St. before the car pulled off into a parking lot. Police made a traffic stop and asked Thompson if he’d been drinking. Again he

said he’d had two beers, and was told to take a breath test. Officers noticed glossy eyes and that Thompson struggled to hand over his papers, and walk after exiting his car. He failed the breath test and was once again taken to Petrolia OPP station. Thompson’s reading was lower this time, but still over the limit at .114. Thompson received fines of \$2,500 for each count, totalling \$5,000. But court heard the consequences go far beyond monetary ones. “I know he’s remorseful, this has ruined his career, he’s out of work,” says Defense Lawyer Christopher Avery. Thompson lost his job as a truck driver over the charges. “Those financial penalties are significant, particularly given the collateral impact of the career-ending outcome as a result of your exercise of poor judgement,” says Austin. “Driving – it was your livelihood and obviously something that is lost to you, and you have to retrain and find alternate ways of making a living.” Austin also imposed a 40 month driving ban. Thompson can apply for the ignition interlock program after one year. “Driving is a privilege and carries with it responsibility, and you have not met the responsibility to be a safe and responsible driver,” says Austin. Thompson is also on a one year probation where he must take substance abuse counselling. “I’m sorry. It’s changed my outlook,” Thompson says. “I’ve already worked on it, and I am working on it to reduce or not have anything anymore.”

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LFA want solution to Line 5 fight to avoid crisis

Heather Wright
The Independent

The president of the Lambton Federation of Agriculture wants to avoid a coming “energy crisis” if Enbridge’s Line 5 is shut down.

It’s one of the main sources of fuel to Ontario and Quebec including natural gas products like propane.

Michigan announced Nov. 13 that the department of natural resources would revoke a 67 year-old easement which allowed the company to operate its pipeline under the Straits of Mackinac.

The result would be the closure of Line 5 by May.

LFA President Gary Martin says while many people are concentrating on the massive loss of jobs which could take place in the petrochemical industry in Sarnia and St. Clair Township, farmers also have a stake in the fight.

Propane makes up about 2.3 per cent of all energy use in Canada. Ontario uses about 40 per cent of that and farmers and agribusinesses use about seven per cent of Ontario’s share to do things such as heat livestock barns, commercial greenhouses, power irrigation systems and, in Lambton County, drying grain.

Lambton farmers know all too well what would happen if that supply was cut off.

When CN Rail went on strike Nov. 19, 2019, it sent shock waves through the agricultural community in Lambton.

After a year of horrible weather, farmers were trying to get their crops off the fields to avoid anymore damage. They were wet and needed a lot of time in the dryer. But when CN Rail Workers went on strike, they were left without the energy to do it.

For a week, farmers were left wondering if the lack of propane because of the rail strike would put the final spike in the coffin of a horrible year.

Martin fears if Line 5 is shut off, the consequences will be far worse - an energy crisis in the agriculture community.

Enbridge has a long term solution in the works. The company wants to invest \$500 million in a tunnel which would house the lines under the Straits of Mackinac, protecting the water from any potential spills.

But Martin says Line 5 has to stay open in the meantime because, among other things, farmers have few alternatives for energy.

Martin says over the last few years,

the provincial government “has been beating the drum on natural gas pipelines in front of every farm for a long time. But you know, a lot of that’s not going to come because it’s just not economically feasible to have expensive pipelines hook up every house,” he says.

And while access to propane is important on the farm, it’s also important to farm families who use propane for heat as well.

Martin adds Ontario is not the only province which would be affected - Quebec is also a big propane user from Line 5. About 30 per cent of the gas in Quebec is used on farms.

Martin convinced the local federation to back a call for governments to work together to solve the problem.

“I thought that being an agricultural organization, we should make a point of showing how Sarnia feeds propane to the rest of Ontario and Quebec as well.” He says labour and business has made its case, but added the voice of agriculture will strengthen the argument. He’s hoping the Canadian Federation of Agriculture will support his call for all levels of government to work with new US president Joe Biden to avoid “an energy crisis in Canada.”

Truck troubles as charities try to figure out raffle

Heather Wright
The Independent

Lambton Elderly Outreach and two other charities are assuring supporters a major fundraiser will go ahead as soon as possible.

LEO, the Kidney Foundation and the MS Society were to share the proceeds of a draw for a Ford F-150 truck from Ron Clark Ford. The draw was expected to first take place in August. The charities put the draw off because only half the tickets had been sold during the first COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. The draw was set for Jan. 15 but was postponed the day before with officials saying there was a licensing issue.

LEO Board Chair April Williams

tells The Independent the draw had a licence from the beginning, however the problem was with using the online platform Eventbrite to sell them.

“We did not have authorization to sell online tickets through them, so they all have to be reissued,” says Williams, adding in a news release that LEO is working with the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario and the Lottery Licensing Clerk of the Town of Plympton-Wyoming to bring LEO’s truck raffle into compliance. There is a requirement for the replacement and redistribution of existing tickets.

“We are going to reach out to everyone – we will either arrange for pickup or mail out, depending on what works best for each person.”

LEO has told ticket holders it will be

in touch before March 31 and the draw will be held before Aug. 31.

Online, some ticket holders were upset by the move. “Don’t begrudge these charities - but only the process, for sure! Very disappointed,” wrote one on LEO’s social media post about it.

Others said they would continue to support the charities, despite the problems with the lottery.

“What an unfortunate announcement, however I am still grateful for the effort put forth by Ron Clark Motors and The Kidney Foundation.

“Looking forward to the draw in August and ultimately it wasn’t about the truck, it was about supporting an incredible charity,” says Callie Cormier.

Water rates in Dawn-Euphemia up 2.7 per cent

Heather Wright
The Independent

Dawn-Euphemia water users are facing a 2.7 per cent increase this year.

The municipality passed its Water Financial Plan Monday.

Treasurer Scott Gawley says the plan outlines water rate costs and increases for the next six years.

Gawley, in a report to council, says the township expects the costs to run the system to rise 1.7 per cent each year.

The cost of energy is also expected to rise that much.

Under Ontario law, municipalities have to make water and sewage systems self sufficient, so Dawn-Euphemia will have to raise rates.

Each year, the 387 farm and residential users will see a rate increase just under three per cent each year.

The rate is expected to go up from \$791 per user in 2020 to \$813 in 2021 to \$944 by 2026.

The move will generate an extra \$65,171 in revenue by 2026 to improve the system, which is worth about \$2.71 million.

Gladu honoured by MPs, Macleans as most collegial

The Independent

Sarnia-Lambton’s MP has been named the Most Collegial Parliamentarian for the second time.

MPs from across the nation nominate and then vote on several distinctions for the Maclean’s Magazine awards.

“It means so much to me to be recognized for my contributions to making our Parliament a more

cohesive and productive environment. We all work together better when there is more goodwill between us than otherwise,” she said in a news release.

“Working with members from every party on various Committees and caucuses, it really helps to bring a spirit of professionalism and cooperation to the table. I had a long career in the petrochemical industry before entering politics and bring that

business experience with me now — I’ve found that teams working in harmony are more productive.”

Gladu is in her second term as the MP from the area. She also serves as the critic for the Federal Economic Development Agency and the Privy Council Critic.

She’s also the chair of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women in the 43rd parliament.

MP Marilyn Gladu Sarnia-Lambton

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Thank You!

The Lambton – Kent Ag in the Classroom Committee (LKAITC) would like to thank all the Sponsors and Contributors for your support in 2020. We especially want to thank our Diamond and Platinum Sponsors for their contribution to our various programs:

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We look forward to working with all of our supporters again when it is safe to do so.

Thanks, Judith Krall
CHAIR, LKAITC

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Here's How It Works: Level: Advanced
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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COLD WALK



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO

A few hardy souls set out for a walk during the second provincial lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some people braved the high water at Highland Glen to stretch their legs in a different location.

COVID-19 doesn’t affect Warwick’s waste revenues

Heather Wright
The Independent

While many municipalities are struggling with declining revenue because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Warwick got some good financial news.

In 2020, the municipality received \$3.95 million in revenue from its host agreement with Waste Management.

The municipality negotiated the agreement with the landfill company years ago, when the province approved the largest dump in Ontario. It set a monetary value based on the amount of tonnage of waste which went into the Twin Creeks site which would go to the municipality.

Treasurer Trevor Jarrett says officials with the company told the township in September they were a long way from meeting their yearly target for waste.

But, when Jarrett received the final figures for the year the company collected almost its maximum amount.

“So they had a very good fourth quarter,” Jarrett told council.

The money received from the host agreement is used, in part, to fund capital projects in Warwick. Most of it is invested so once the landfill does close, there will be funds left over to continue benefiting the municipality.

Contractor learns Oil Springs history while renewing a home

Heather Wright
The Independent

Matthew Scott likes to restore communities one house at a time.

The contractor recently set his sites on renewing a turn of the century home in Oil Springs, and he’s had quite an education about the oil industry in the area.

Scott purchased the home on Kelly Road across from Watson’s Machine Shop. He says the home had a good structure but the ceiling was collapsing and the rooms inside were very small.

“It was a disaster,” he says. I was surprised someone was living in it and it was not condemned.”

So, he went to work gutting the home. That’s when he started making discoveries.

“While we’re gutting it we actually have found a Farmers Almanac from 1902 and one of the first editions of what we call it now is Reader’s Digest,” he says.

“I got old newspapers. I got old London Free Press from 1907 ... I found old horse reins. I found old farming equipment, like just hand tools. I even found an old bible

from 1912.”

Scott has also found a chemistry bottle from what he believes was the pharmacist who lived in the home; Albert Dewar.

“I did find his tombstone in the cemetery in Oil Springs. His wife said apparently he died of pneumonia or something. And he had a daughter. I didn’t find out much past that.”

Scott has been working hard to complete the reno. While he works, some of the “old oil guys” have stopped to tell him the history of Oil Springs and its role

in the commercialization of the industry. It’s something he admits he didn’t know before.

Scott hopes to finish later this month. He plans to live in the house for a while, then resell it.

He says he loves the opportunity to make something old new again and benefit the community.

“And I know that this means a lot to the people in the area because it’s one of the original homes and people are like coming up to me and thanking me for taking on the project and restoring it; so I thought that was pretty cool.”



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO

Matthew Scott holds a copy of a 1902 Farmers’ Almanac found in a home he’s renovating in Oil Springs.

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Sports

Iced: local arenas remove ice to save cash

Heather Wright
The Independent

Petrolia says it may put it back in after lockdown
At least two Central Lambton municipalities are taking the ice out of their arenas saying they’re losing money they won’t be able to recover after the provincial shutdown.
Brooke-Alvinston Council heard the municipality would save up to \$2,400 a month by taking the ice out now.
Public Works Manager Randy Hills says while the current provincial State of Emergency is slated to be lifted Feb. 11, if history repeats itself, there is a good possibility it will be extended.
The first lockdown started in March with 28 days and continued until June.
And even after some of the restrictions are lifted, it’s likely the provincial rules will limit the number

of people on the ice.
“It’s hard to justify (the money) when there are just 10 kids on the ice,” says Hills.
Councillor Jamie Armstrong agreed. “Take the ice out; if this is like last year, it will take forever.”
It is unlikely the ice will be reinstalled this year. Hills estimates that would cost about \$3,000 just to lay the ice down without the lines necessary for hockey games.
In Petrolia, administrators say they’re taking the ice out for 28 days and reevaluating the situation then. The town says it consulted with the users of the arena before making the decision.
It is the safest option for users and staff, officials say, but it is also fiscally responsible since the generators won’t have to run for the next 28 days.
In a news release, Dave Menzies, director of facilities and community

services, says there may be a chance to install ice after the shutdown. If that decision was made, it would take just four days to install the ice again.
Warwick Township still has ice in the rink. Mayor Jackie Rombouts says council has discussed what should be done at the Watford arena but most want to find a way to get kids back on the ice.
Rombouts says they would like to be able to offer the ice for a single family to use and she’s floated the idea with Sarnia-Lambton MPP Bob Bailey. The township would need specific approval from the province.
For now the ice in Watford remains in place.
St. Clair Township Mayor Steve Arnold says one of the two ice pads at the Mooretown Sports Complex is without ice but it was removed for maintenance before the lockdown.

Ex-Oiler Fryfogle wins Player of Month

An alumni of the Petrolia Oilers has been named the Mountain Division Defenceman of the Month for December in the United States Premier Hockey League.
Bayly Fryfogle had four goals and 11 points in seven games last month including his first career hat trick in junior

hockey.
He has five goals and 19 assists for 24 points in 29 games this season for the Northern Colorado Eagles.
He is tied for 11th in league scoring by rearguards.
The Eagles are 20-8-1 on the season and in second place in their division.

Fryfogle played junior hockey on this side of the border in Dresden and Strathroy over the past two seasons before heading to Colorado.
Meantime, his younger brother, Brayden has scored twice in the last three games for the Eagles snapping a 17-game goal scoring drought.



Bayly Fryfogle

New COVID-19 funding available for people in horse businesses

Horse racers and trainers may be able to recover some of their losses through a new government program.
The Equine Hardship Program will provide individual businesses offering horse related experiences up to \$2,500

per horse up to a maximum of \$20,000 in financial support to help cover direct costs for feed, water, veterinary care and farrier services needed to maintain horses. Horse experience businesses will be eligible for funding if they

earned at least 50 per cent of their revenue in 2019 from horse experience activities, their 2020 revenue was less than half of what was earned in 2019 due to the pandemic, and will have difficulty caring for their animals.

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STAYING Active

4 REASONS TO STAY ACTIVE DURING COVID-19

HELPS RELIEVE LOW BACK PAIN
All the sitting around during the pandemic hasn't helped your back pain. Exercise, especially core strengthening, has been shown to be very effective in improving the function of your back.

IT IMPROVES BONE HEALTH
Current evidence shows that exercise can increase bone density and decrease the risk of falls and fractures in the elderly. Studies have also shown that exercise is comparable to medication in improving the day to day functioning of people with osteoarthritis.

HELPS MANAGE DIABETES Diabetes affects approximately 2.5 million Canadians, with over 200,000 cases being diagnosed every year. Researchers around the globe have all found that regular exercise, along with dietary changes, can help manage diabetes.

IT CAN HELP IMPROVE BRAIN HEALTH
Individuals who exercise regularly may have a decreased risk of developing dementia. It may also improve balance and function in individuals with Parkinson's disease.

Don't let this pandemic slow you down. Improve your overall health by making exercise a part of your daily routine.

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Obituary

SHAW
William Clayton "Bill"
June 1, 1933 - January 12, 2021

With great sadness the family of Bill Shaw of Brigden, ON announce his passing on **Tuesday, January 12, 2021** in his **88th year**. He will be sadly missed, and lovingly remembered by his wife of 64 years, Betty Anne (Greer) Shaw, and children Susan (John, 2017) Hummel, Barbara (Neil) Steadman and Robert (Sheri-lyn) Shaw as well as grandchildren Ben (Cheyney) Steadman, Scott (Yvonne) Steadman, Matt Steadman, Tim Steadman, Lucas Hummel and Michaela Hummel and great-grandchildren Ardy Steadman and Mabel Steadman. Bill is also survived by sisters Virginia Shaw and Barbara Shaw, brother Logan (Catherine) Shaw, brother-in-law Rene Leblanc as well as several nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by sister and brother-in-law Shirley and Ollie Johnson, sister Elaine Leblanc and sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law Stanley and Violet Greer, Delmar and Claire (Greer) Nicol, Stanley and Dorothy (Greer) Lucas, Gordon and Doris Greer, Ross and Freda (Greer) McElroy and Emmerson and Betty Greer. Bill was a lifelong resident of Moore Township and Brigden. After starting work at the Brigden CO-OP and working several years at Polymer Corporation in Sarnia, he went into business with his brother Logan, and Shaw Bros. Construction built many homes, and completed many home and farm renovations in the area. Later, with wife Betty and family, Bill owned and operated Shaw's Groceries and later The Village Market in Brigden for many years. He was an avid wood worker and craftsman, a loyal fan of the Detroit Tigers baseball club and enjoyed many morning coffee breaks with long-time friends at many different Brigden coffee shops over the years. **Due to provincial Covid-19 restrictions, a memorial service will be held at a later date when we are all able to gather.** Sympathy may be expressed through donations to Brigden United Church. Memories and condolences may be sent online at **www.steadmanbrothers.ca**. Arrangements entrusted to **STEADMAN BROTHERS FUNERAL CHAPELS**, Brigden 519-864-1193.



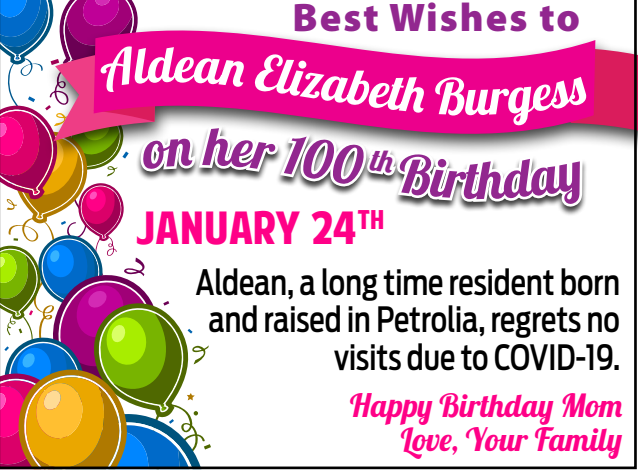
Obituary

EDGAR
Edith

At Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital, on **Sunday, January 17, 2021**, Edith Muriel Edgar (nee Mitchell) of Seasons Strathroy and formerly of Watford passed away in **101st year** with angels at her side. Predeceased by her husband Harold (1990) and son Ray and infant grandchild. Dear mother of Ron (Donna) Edgar of Strathroy. Also predeceased by siblings Florence Cummings, Alex Mitchell, Sadie Searson, Lloyd Mitchell, Donald Mitchell and Grace Irwin. Edith will be missed by many nieces and nephews and their families. Her heart was tired and she heard her name being called. A private family graveside service will be held at St. James Cemetery, Watford. Memorial donations to the Heart and Stroke Foundation and online condolences may be forwarded to the Funeral Home. **www.vanheckfuneralhome.ca**



Celebration



Best Wishes to
Aldean Elizabeth Burgess
on her 100th Birthday
JANUARY 24TH

Aldean, a long time resident born and raised in Petrolia, regrets no visits due to COVID-19.

Happy Birthday Mom
Love, Your Family

Card of Thanks

PATRICK TULLY
1935 - 2020

The Patrick Tully family wish to thank you for the charitable denotations, cards, phone calls, offers of help, food and flowers. As well as generally being there for us during Pat's brief illness and our loss of a wonderful husband, father, grandfather & great grandfather. A special thank you to my Victoria Place family, along with the doctors and hard working nurses at C.E.E. Hospital. Mere words cannot express are full gratitude.

Marilyn, Terry, Laurie, Shawn, Deb & Families

Card of Thanks

Thank You

A big thank you to my family & friends. Thank you for the lawn display, zoom visit with Allan. The many, many phone calls, Facebook messages, cards and treats. A great way to celebrate my 80th Birthday in Covid times.

Love Ada Sisson

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Sign up for the latest program offered by the Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership! Learning for Life: Entrepreneurship Series (good for both new and seasoned entrepreneurs)! <https://www.sarnialambton.on.ca/learning-for-life-entrepreneurship-series-launching-this-winter>



Card of Thanks

THANK YOU
Marion Piggott

Many thanks to all who called, visited at the funeral home, sent cards or in other ways brought comfort to the Pratt and Piggott families during this time of loss. You are appreciated. Thanks also to the staff at Meadowview Villa who were so diligent in looking after Marion. Your capable kindness is noticed and appreciated. Marion will be missed by her many friends and neighbours as well as her relatives near and far.

Pratt & Piggott Families



STAY-AT-HOME ORDER

Yes, you can leave your home to walk your pets



Notice

Lambton Outdoor Club - All upcoming hike's have been canceled until Feb 11, due to the provincial lock down. LOC Online events will still be held. Please check our website for more information. **www.lambtonoutdoorclub.org**

STAY-AT-HOME ORDER

You can leave your home to get groceries, food and beverages



Notice

Kids ask the greatest questions! Share your children's questions about vaccines and learn more about the Questions from Kids Campaign at <https://shareyourvoice.ca/>.

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

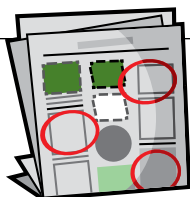


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Death Notices

January 9 - January 15, 2021

SATURDAY, JANUARY 9

HERNANDEZ, Luis Enrique
Age 26, of Sarnia
D.J. Robb Funeral Home

SMITH, Reginald "Jamie"
Age 60, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

CUDMORE, Ruby
Age 87, of Sarnia
D.J. Robb Funeral Home

PAYNE, Floyd
Age 92, of Petrolia
Smith Funeral Home

SUNDAY, JANUARY 10

CRICKARD, Gladys
Age 69, of Sarnia
McKenize & Blundy Funeral Home

FILION (REILLY), Marie
Age 90, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

MONDAY, JANUARY 11

WILKINS, Martin
Age 79, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

ROY, Linda
Age 71, of Petrolia
Smith Funeral Chapel

MEYERS, Carol
Age 79, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

TUESDAY, JANUARY 12

MORINGSTAR, Shirley
Age 84, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

LAMARCHE, Joseph "Reg"
Age 88, of Sarnia
D.J. Robb Funeral Home

LENEVE, Thomas
Age 88, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

SHAW, William "Bill"
Age 88, of Brigden
Steadman Brothers Funeral Chapel

SILLS, Hazel
Age 91, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

VAN DELFT, Johanna
Age 92, of Norfolk
McKenize & Blundy Funeral Home

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 13

FOWLER, Joan
Age 85, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

CRAIG, Betty
Age 93, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

THURSDAY, JANUARY 14

WHITE, William Ernest
Age 91, of Sarnia
McKenize & Blundy Funeral Home

SLATER, Oliver
Age 95, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

TYMSTRA, Simon
Age 95, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

FRIDAY, JANUARY 15

JACKSON, Shelly
Age 51, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

FLEMING, Beverley
Age 52, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

ROSS, Garth
Age 69, of Sarnia
Gilpin Funeral Home

LAANSTRA, Lillian
Age 70, of Sarnia
McCormack Funeral Home

SIMCOE, Iva Marie
Age 74, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

BRESSETTE, Keith
Age 77, of Kettle & Stoney Point
Gilpin Funeral Home

CHUCK, Bruce
Age 88, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home



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

Church DIRECTORY

Christ Anglican Church
414 Oil Street, Petrolia

Happy New Year!
We are closed due to the provincial lock-down.

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 St. Andrew's.
10am Service - Live
www.standrews-petrolia.ca

St. Paul's United Church
4169 Petrolia Line at Centre Street

In-person services have been suspended until the end of the provincial lock-down.

10:30am Service
Rev. Carey Wagner
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

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Addiction to prescription drugs leads to life of crime and five years in prison

Alex Kurial
Local Journalism Initiative

A Sarnia man whose addiction to prescription drugs led to life as a drug dealer, will remain behind bars for more than five years after pleading guilty to trafficking massive amounts of fentanyl and other drugs.

Adam Schramek, 37, plead guilty a year ago to dealing fentanyl and possessing cocaine and meth and was only sentenced Jan. 14. During a February 2019 raid more than 156 grams of fentanyl was discovered in the Ross Ave. home Schramek lived with his twin four-year-old children.

A myriad of other drugs were present, including cocaine, meth, heroin, psilocybin, and carfentanil. Many of these drugs had been combined with the fentanyl. Police also found two tasers, close to \$10,000 cash, drug counting

tools, multiple cell phones, and a stolen high-end bike worth around \$5,000.

Schramek appeared by video from the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre in London for sentencing.

Justice Christopher Bondy outlined the story of downfall from an opioid-prescribed drug addiction following a workplace injury.

“Mr. Schramek’s moral blameworthiness is to a limited extent ameliorated because his addiction appeared to have been a result of him having placed his faith in the medical system,” says Bondy.

Court heard Schramek has been addicted to drugs including dilaudid, hydromorphone, fentanyl, and crystal meth. He has been drug-free in prison however, engaging in rehab programs while planning for residential treatment

upon release.

Bondy also noted Schramek had no criminal record and appeared to recognize the consequences of his actions.

“Unlike many offenders the focus of Mr. Schramek’s remarks was on the harm he had done to others rather than himself. He stated he had taken his relationship with his father and his children for granted,” says Bondy. “He also recognized the negative impact that his incarceration will have on his father’s retirement plan, because his father will be raising Mr. Schramek’s children while he is incarcerated.

“Mr. Schramek also acknowledged that he had hurt other people and their families,” Bondy says, referencing the many people he sold drugs to.

“I found Mr. Schramek’s comments insightful.”

But several aggravating factors

remained, including the fact large amounts of drugs and a pair of tasers were found in areas frequented by Schramek’s young children.

“No doubt the offender’s children will be significantly and negatively impacted by his imprisonment,” says Bondy.

There was also the issue of the trafficked drug being fentanyl, a highly potent and dangerous street narcotic.

“It is a pernicious drug responsible for grievous loss of life, immense and unsustainable strain on our public health system, and has devastating impacts on the safety and integrity of our communities,” Bondy read from prior case law on fentanyl trafficking sentences.

“Fentanyl is a scourge. It imposes intolerable risks of accidental overdosing because it is much more powerful than

morphine,” Bondy also cited.

He added that the powdered form of fentanyl – which Schramek was discovered with – is the most dangerous form of the drug, especially when combined with other drugs.

Bondy called the presence of carfentanil – which is 100 times more potent than even fentanyl – another aggravating factor.

Using other cases as a guide, Bondy determined 7.5 years total on the drug charges was appropriate. He added another year on the theft and weapons counts to run concurrently.

Schramek has credit for 740 days jail, leaving him five years, five months and 22 days left to serve. Schramek also received a 10 year weapons ban, forfeiture order for the tasers, a \$1,000 fine, and an order to give a DNA sample.

- The Independent

Victim supports ex’s four month sentence so he can get help for his addiction

Alex Kurial
Local Journalism Initiative

“It certainly wasn’t a great year for many, and if you look at Mr. Noble’s record it certainly was not a good year for him.”

That’s how defense lawyer Nick Cake described 2020 for his client Christopher Noble, during a Jan. 7 court appearance. The 32-year-old Sarnia man plead guilty to several charges including a violent assault. This capped a destructive year for Noble which saw him lose his freedom, and leave a lengthy recovery ahead.

Noble – who had a no criminal record until January 2020 – was on probation Mar. 20 when he

attacked his partner as she slept in the early morning hours. Noble grabbed her hair and pulled her out of bed before punching her repeatedly in the face.

The woman fought back and managed to escape downstairs to the kitchen. Noble threw a glass at her head but just missed. The glass was thrown with such force that it embedded in the wall. The woman’s sister heard the fight and called police, who arrested Noble.

In November Noble showed up at the woman’s Exmouth St. home and refused to leave, a breach of his probation. He finally left when she called police in fear for her life. Noble was later located at the Inn of the Good Shepherd – where

he’d been banned from – and arrested. He’s been in jail since.

Crown attorney Nila Mulpuru. and defense lawyer Nick Cake asked for four months jail followed by two years of probation, where Noble cannot contact the woman. He also must take counselling for domestic violence and substance abuse.

Cake says his client is “clearly someone with a drug problem,” and eager to focus on recovery.

“He doesn’t want to be this person, he doesn’t want to keep continuing this criminal record, he doesn’t want to keep acting in the manner that he was acting.”

Cake says Noble has taken some substance abuse classes while in

jail, and now that he has a release date will be able to schedule admission to a residential treatment program.

Noble received a letter of support from the woman he assaulted. “He needs stability on his meds. He has a rare opportunity to stay with his long-time friends and family members as long as he remains sober, committed to (rehab), and rectifying the horrible things that transpired under influence,” she wrote.

“He needs rehab, a long, real recovery plan, and a place to reclaim his life and learn triggers. He deserves a chance.” The woman added that it may be possible for her and Noble to reconcile in the

future.


“I know the past year I’ve suffered from a lot of violent tendencies due to my illicit drug use,” says Noble. “I’ve made steps to try and better myself... to make sure I could get back to a place where I’m mentally stable and can be with... [the woman].”

Austin – who originally sentenced Noble a year ago – says there are many troubling factors including a history of violence

But Austin says he’s gained insight into his addiction. “That’s an addiction that you admit you have, and that’s an addiction that you are actively taking steps to address.”

Noble will serve 49 more days in jail and face two years probation.


PLEASE REACH OUT



COVID-19 HAS INCREASED SAFETY RISKS FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH ABUSE

Women's Interval Home of Sarnia-Lambton Inc.

is here for you and staffed 24/7 for in person or over the phone crisis and support services:
519-336-5200 ext. 221
info@womensintervalhome.com



HOW TO HELP:

- Ensure they are at a safe location when discussing abuser and safety planning
- Talk to them in a calm, supportive manner about your concerns for their safety
- Remain non-judgemental
- Discuss how you can increase their safety
- Refer them to their local Domestic Violence Shelter

- Create a code-word that states you are in danger or need police assistance
- Encourage them not to confront their abuser if they are planning to leave (this can increase safety risk)
- If possible, offer your home as a safe place to stay
- Encourage them to pack a small bag of essential items (clothing, ID, phone charger, emergency cash, children's items, etc)

SIGNS OF ABUSE:

- Apologetic and/or makes excuses for abuser's behaviour
- Checks up on them often, even while at work
- Isolation, not allowed to see friends or family (or only with abuser's permission)
- Hurtful language/put downs
- Tries to cover bruises

The Women's Interval Home of Sarnia-Lambton provides services 24/7. Some services include: emergency shelter, crisis support, individual counselling, transitional services, safety planning, family support and child witness counselling services. **During the pandemic, the Women's Interval Home remains open, and our phone lines are available 24/7. We can help you directly or help you assist someone else.**