

STAR STRUCK



Dylan Webster sets up his telescope with his camera and points it to the sky at his dad’s house on Churchill Line. The LCCVI student has been photographing stars and galaxies for about a year and is submitting his awe inspiring results to contests for amateur astronomers at NASA. See Story Page 8.

PHOTO CREDIT

Ombudsman faults Plympton-Wyoming for meeting in private to fill council seat

Heather Wright
The Independent

Plympton-Wyoming broke rules for in camera meetings when it decided privately to appoint a new councillor in June instead of holding a by-election.

Ontario’s Ombudsman, Paul Dube, said there is no reason talking about the process to fill a council vacancy – a matter of public interest – should have been a private discussion. That has Plympton-Wyoming’s mayor musing whether there should only be one option to fill a vacant council seat.

Dube investigated a complaint filed in August about the appointment of Mike Vasey after council declared a seat vacant when long time Councillor Ron Schenk died.

In a lengthy decision released Feb. 10, Dube said the council should not have decided in camera (a private meeting of council) to appoint a new councillor instead of holding a by election. He did say their discussion about two people who had expressed interest in the seat could legally be held in camera.

Under the Municipal Act, all meetings of council, local boards, and committees of council must be open to the public, except for some very specific circumstances including receiving legal advice, property matters or dealing with personal matters.

The June 24th meeting listed a discussion about a personal issue, where the Ombudsman found the council talked about how to fill the vacancy. Dube said staff presented a report outlining the town’s options to fill the seat and how the issue had been handled in the past. The 2018 election results were also included.

“Council subsequently discussed the two individuals who had expressed interest in the position... Those we spoke to recalled discussing the individuals’ personalities and if they would be well-suited for a council position,” writes Dube in the decision.

Dube says councillors considered a motion to appoint a new councillor, but a formal vote was not taken. The councillors interviewed by Dube, he says, agreed there was consensus on making an appointment.

But staff told Dube a slightly different story – a story he decided was not true.

SEE SENSITIVE PG 2

Couple wants retreat to save families from ‘heartbreak’

Heather Wright
The Independent

A Dawn-Euphemia couple is hoping township council will help them realize a dream to honour their son.

Dalles Bergsma, a farmer who was a member of the Dawn-Euphemia fire department, died by suicide in November.

His parents, Al and Diane, say he was a “dedicated husband, farmer and volunteer firefighter.

“In his life, he made it his mission to look for ways to contribute to the lives and safety of others in the community

and his family.”

The family wanted to do something in his memory and settled on building a cabin in a 50 acre bush on Shetland Road which they own “to be used as a retreat for first responders and farmers primarily, who might be in need of respite.

“Both of theses professions have a very high rate of suicide...The intent is to provide a welcoming place free of charge for members in these groups who need a time to rest and recharge and heal.”

But they’ve run into a road block with the St. Clair Region Conservation

Authority which says it is a protected woodland.

The family says it is “keenly aware” of the need to preserve the land but want to move forward. “It is our hope to make a positive difference in the lives of others and prevent this heartbreak from devastating other families.”

The Bergsmas asked council to work with them to find a way to realize their dream.

Council agreed, saying the project is important. Staff will work with the county planner to see how the woodland retreat can be built.

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Independent up for six provincial awards

The Independent

The Independent of Petrolia and Central Lambton is up for six awards in the Ontario Community Newspaper Associations’ Beter Newspaper Awards.

The newspaper has been nominated for General Excellence in the small newspaper class. The award recognizes the quality of all aspects of a newspaper. *The Independent’s* competition is the Haliburton County Echo and the Deep River North Renfrew Times.

Heather Wright has also been nominated in the Best Investigative News Story for the ongoing coverage of the

dismissal of three top firefighters in Wyoming, Photographer of the Year and Columnist of the Year for her weekly page 4 missive.

The Lambton County newspaper has also been nominated for Feature Writing for an article on the trials of personal support workers in long term care and Best Sports Section.

The Sarnia Journal was the only Lambton County newspaper in the running with three nominations. Tara Jeffery, Cathy Dobson and Troy Shantz are all nominated for their reporting.

The award winners will be announced in April in a virtual ceremony.

Sensitive info not a reason for secrecy: Dube

CON’T FROM PG 1

“According to the staff member, the purpose of the June 24 meeting was to receive legal advice related to one of the individuals interested in filling the council vacancy. According to the staff member, council had decided to proceed with filling the council vacancy at a previous council meeting, but did not provide my Office with the date of that meeting,” wrote Dube.

“The staff member told my Office that staff had sought legal advice prior to the meeting. They said that this legal advice was discussed by council in camera on June 24, and that council also discussed potential litigation involving the individual. One councillor out of the six council members had a similar recollection of the meeting.

“The other five members of council we interviewed did not indicate that legal advice was received or discussed during the closed session,” says Dube.

“The clerk told my office that council did not discuss any potential litigation or legal advice during the closed session. In fact, according to the clerk, staff had not sought legal advice prior to the June 24 meeting and, therefore, there was no legal advice to discuss.”

The Ombudsman concluded there was no legal advice discussed.

When asked by *The Independent* if the staffer who told the Ombudsman a legal opinion was discussed, Mayor Lonny Napper said he would not be drawn into discussing that.

Dube ruled that while discussing the actual candidates for council and their personalities was properly discussed in camera, the discussion and decision about appointing a councillor instead of holding a by-election should have been open to the public.

“A council vacancy is generally a topic of public interest. There is no reason why discussions involving the process by which the vacancy is filled should be held in closed session,” wrote Dube.

Council had a chance to review Dube’s report before it was made public. “Council members told us that they felt the entire discussion was appropriate for in camera consideration. Council members indicated that filling the vacant seat was a sensitive topic and that the meeting was held during a time of stress for municipal staff and council members.

“I understand that council felt the subject matter discussed during this meeting was sensitive. However, the closed meeting exceptions are not intended to shield council from the public’s scrutiny of sensitive or contentious topics. It bears repeating that the exceptions in the Municipal Act are to be interpreted and applied narrowly, to maximize the information discussed in public. As stated in my Office’s 2014 report about the City of Welland: Although there may have been a desire to maintain confidentiality in order to protect various interests of the city, I must emphasize again that council cannot bring a matter in camera simply because it is considered sensitive or confidential or potentially against the city’s interest to discuss it publicly. Matters can only be discussed in camera if they fit squarely within the exceptions to the open meeting requirements.”

Dube recommends council make sure it follows the rules of the Municipal Act and be aware of what topics actually can be discussed privately.

He also urged council to make sure it clearly identifies the issue it is talking about in camera, the direction given to staff and formally vote on the record “so there is no confusion on what direction or procedural matter was voted on during the properly closed meeting of the council.”

There are no penalties attached to the Ombudsman’s finding, however council is expected to write a report on how it will deal with the issue in the future and place it in on a public agenda.

Napper, in an interview with *The Independent*, said it may be time for the Municipal Act to eliminate options for filling a councillor seat. Currently, the council of the day choses whether another election is held, if the runner up from the last election is installed or if someone is appointed.

Napper says he prefers the runner up in the last election to fill the vacancy.

“I thought it was a fair way to do it as a runner up (they were) the most vote getters, I guess they are just automatically the people,” he says.

Napper says perhaps the province should make a change to the Municipal Act.

“It takes it out of the counselors hands, it take the politics out of it, I think, if you had a policy in place.”



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Building strong in Petrolia, Plympton-Wyoming in 2020

Heather Wright
The Independent

Building is booming in both Plympton-Wyoming and Petrolia. The municipalities received their year end building permit reports and even through the pandemic, building was bustling. In Plympton Wyoming, there were 173 building permits issued valued at \$32,525,074. The town issued 72 home building permits worth \$26,530,504 - the largest amount ever and 43 per cent higher than the 2019 value of home

construction. Petrolia also saw a boom in building but not just in new homes. Figures show there was \$10 million for four new commercial buildings under construction including the largest project, the new Shell plaza on the corner of Petrolia Line and Oil Heritage Road which the developer has valued around \$5 to \$7 million. There were 23 new homes built in Petrolia in 2020 with construction valued at \$7,076,000. There were also two multi-residential buildings constructed valued at \$954,000.

In all, there were 32 new dwelling units created. In all, Petrolia issued 73 building permits in 2020, five fewer than 2019, however the value of construction jumped by more than \$6,000,000. "If you want to do the math, the value of construction is this year was \$6,247,862 higher than the previous year," said Mayor Brad Loosley during a recent council meeting. "And I think that's good news under the circumstances of the difficult year we had last year with COVID. We still came out ahead. So I'm really pleased with that."

No conflict with Brooke-Alvinston councillors on pavilion project

Heather Wright
The Independent

Brooke-Alvinston's Integrity Commissioner says Optimist members and municipal leaders Frank Nemcek and Jamie Armstrong weren't in conflict when they voted on a pavilion project. A resident recently questioned whether the pair should be voting because of their membership in the club. Robert Swayze, in a letter to council, said "the two members do not have a pecuniary interest in the construction of the building and therefore do not contravene the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act. It is not required that they declare a conflict on any related matter coming before council." And Swayze says he doesn't favour

adding wording in the municipality's Code of Conflict to make councillors declare a personal conflict. "The purpose of the MCIA is to attract stakeholders in communities to run for council who are required only to declare a conflict if they benefit financially from an issue coming before council. The Code of Conduct should not increase that obligation." But Mayor Dave Ferguson disagreed saying the conflict of interest act also talks about indirect interest and he believes that could cover interest in promoting projects they're personally involved with. "I think we should all be aware of this, and what direct and indirect to in our interest covers, and make ourselves aware at all times when it should be

declaring ourselves in conflict," says Ferguson. Armstrong voiced concern that council would follow a clear procedure when a citizen complains of a conflict. This time, citizens wrote to council and it was dealt with in public, yet Armstrong says the procedure online says people have to submit a written complaint. "We just need to adhere to our procedures because if we don't, in the future, our own procedures will be used against us because we actually went against the procedure that we have in place," Armstrong said at Thursday's meeting. "The reason why you put that procedure in there is because we don't want to deal with false accusations of conflict of interest."

Bird Lane residents may have way to stop lot splitting

Heather Wright
The Independent

Residents of the Bird Lanes in Plympton-Wyoming may have found a way to stop homeowners from subdividing their lots. Tim Dillon, who has taken a number of large lots in Lambton, divided them and built new houses, wants to do the same on Hummingbird Lane. The move required a minor variance. When the issue came to Plympton-Wyoming's committee of adjustment recently, 91 people were at the virtual meeting. That is the largest online meeting Plympton-Wyoming has had since the pandemic moved to an online format. The issue is the size of the lots. The Bird Lanes were developed in the 1970s along the lake with large heavily treed lots. Over the years, as new subdivisions emerged with smaller lots,

the Bird Lanes became highly sought after. Dillon's plan to take one of the lots and divide it in two, neighbours say, would be completely out of character with the neighbourhood. The application is before the committee of adjustment and councillors have told residents there may be little they can do to stop the process. But resident Dale Lane told Plympton-Wyoming councillors Tuesday, neighbours are now concerned this could become a trend which would change the neighbourhood forever. "Staff have identified approximately 29 of the existing 68 neighborhood lots or 42 per cent of them that could apparently accommodate a second lot, which would destroy the character of the neighborhood forever," he says. That includes one landowner who is already considering the move. But Lane says they have found something which may stop the process.

"A resident found an application for an official plan amendment and noted lots in hamlets defined in the official plan can't be split into two. We also noted the associated \$1,200 application fee I'm confident neighbors would support if it immediately stopped other lots from being split in two." Plympton-Wyoming Planner Sarah Baldwin suggested the neighbourhood either ask for a zoning amendment or add this as an issue in the municipality's Official Plan review which is now underway. CAO Carolyn Tripp acknowledged that could take some time and other landowners in the subdivision would be able to move forward splitting their lots. But Councillor Netty McEwen advised Lane and the neighbours to launch an appeal immediately since once it was completed, other severances could not move forward until it was decided on.

MP Marilyn Gladu Sarnia-Lambton

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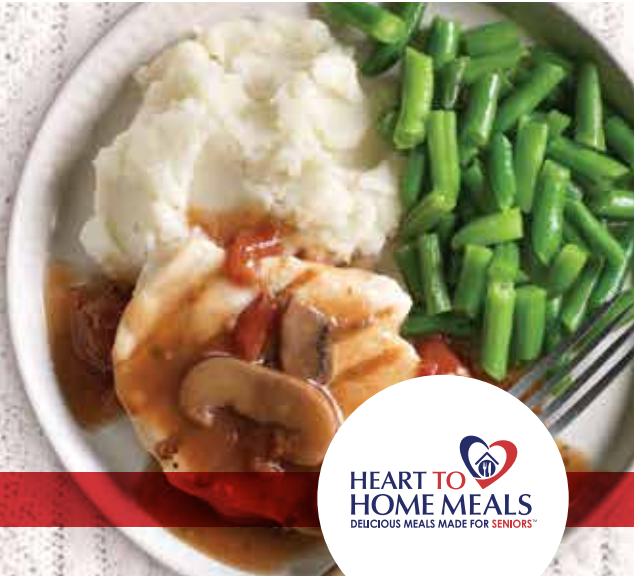
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Editorial

Voters hold the power for council picks

There should be clear rules around how municipal councils appoint people to fill vacancies between elections.

That is very clear after Ontario’s Ombudsman investigated the closed meeting of Plympton-Wyoming council June 24. The meeting was held in camera - behind closed doors - to talk about filling the seat left vacant when long-time Councillor Ron Schenk passed away.

Bear in mind, this was a particularly difficult time for council as residents were demanding answers about the turmoil within the Wyoming Fire Department. It’s likely why, in our opinion, the conversation moved into private. In fact that’s what the Ombudsman found - the councillors felt the appointment of a new councillor would be “sensitive.” As the Ombudsman said, just because something is sensitive doesn’t mean it should be discussed in private.

The Ombudsman ruled talking about the process of how the new councillor was to be appointed should not have been in private. However he did say when the councillors discussed the possible candidates and how they would “fit” with council, that was permissible under the Municipal Act.

Permissible, maybe. Acceptable, we don’t think so. The voters had already discussed the worthiness of the opponents during the 2018 municipal elections. Each person’s ballot counted equally. Councillors should not have more say in the matter.

In the end, councillors did do the right thing, appointing the election candidate who just missed the cut during the 2018 election.

We won’t know if council chose that option because it was the voters will or because they thought the candidate would be a “good fit.”

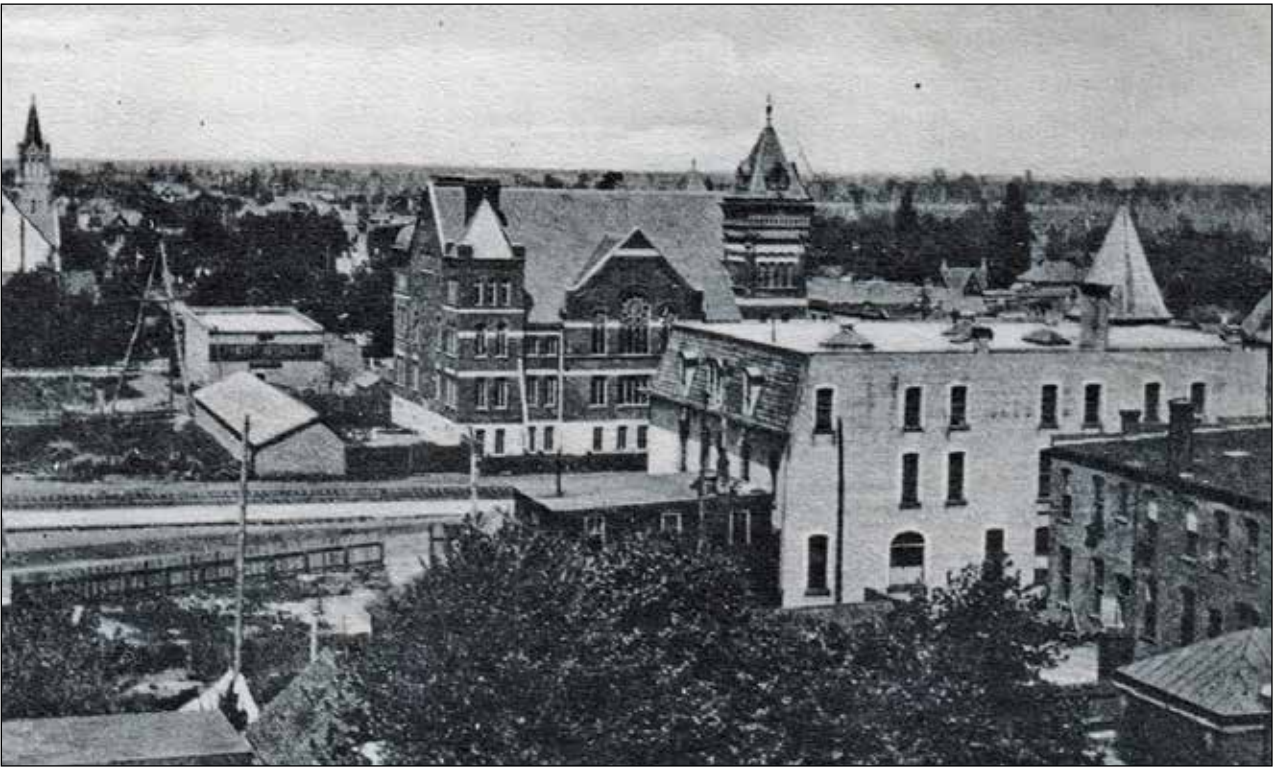
The Ontario government needs to change the Municipal Act which gives municipal councils a range of options to fill vacancies, including an appointment.

Across Ontario, whenever there is a vacant seat, the voters choices should prevail. It’s an easy change that would take the power from the hands of the politicians and puts it in the hands of the people.

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 POSTCARD COLLECTION
A beautiful view of the downtown looking west. You can see the railroad tracks which ran beside the Methodist Church. The structures behind the church are now gone and soon, that area is likely to be home to a new seniors residents.

March Break in March likely would have been safer

If you’re having a hard time understanding why the province decided to move the March Break this year, maybe I can help.

Thursday, Education Minister Stephen Lecce announced instead of March Break being in March – as the name might suggest – it will now be the week of April 12. Why? It seems the Conservative government doesn’t trust the people of the province to stay at home, even though that’s largely what we have almost all been doing.

Here’s some of what Lecce said during his news conference.

“Postponing March Break – not cancelling it – is an important way that schools can help limit community transmission.

“We recognize that congregation is a key driver of the spread of COVID-19, something we realized over the winter break. We will not take that risk again with your child, with our staff with Ontario families.”

Lecce added the province is concerned about the rise of new COVID-19 variants which spread the virus faster.

So, the province wants student’s safe so school can continue in class. Fair enough. But then he says keeping your kids in class is “an important way that schools can help limit community transmission.”

Hmm. So, this isn’t just only about the immediate health of your kids, it’s about making sure you don’t pile the kids in the car and go on a vacation. The province apparently doesn’t believe you will do the right thing, so they’re keeping your kids in school to make sure you can’t go anywhere.

The minister said he talked to educators including trustees and teachers about the idea.

In our community, the public director of education has said he would have preferred the March Break remain in place. John Howitt admitted the public health measures might override educators concerns, but he says everyone, students, teachers and administrators, are tired after online learning and constant changes.

“They’ve been working hard,” he said of online education. “It wasn’t a vacation.” Howitt is concerned about burnout particularly among teachers.

But the minister appears to be override that concern saying he can’t trust Ontarians to do the right thing

Will a March Break in April be any better? I highly doubt it. Scientists widely believe the new COVID variants will mean a third wave of illness, greater than the last two, likely at the end of March and April. I wonder if the April Break will even happen or if our kids are more likely to spend April learning at home, again.

Perhaps, it would have been better to have a little trust in Ontarians doing the right thing and staying home



Heather Wright

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Opinion

Gladu says three faith groups voiced concern about C-6

EDITOR:
Clarifying Bill C-6: An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy)
There has been a lot of misinformation circulating regarding the conversion therapy bill, Bill C-6. Let me be clear: I am strongly opposed to conversion therapy, as is every single person who has contacted my office. That is not the problem with this bill. The issue is the overly broad definition of conversion therapy, which will criminalize behaviors that are not conversion therapy.
Catholic school boards across the country, as well as members of the

Catholic Diocese, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), and many legal groups representing over 14 million Canadians have expressed concern about this bill and are calling on the government to amend the definition.
Here locally, Catholics and churches aligning with the EFC view represent nearly half of the population (reference: Wikipedia, areascore.ca, Sarnia Evangelical Fellowship).
In terms of the definition of conversion therapy, other pieces of legislation use the definition put forward by the medical profession—the Canadian Psychiatrist Association and the Canadian Psychological Association. These would be acceptable to all. The Liberals recognized there was an issue with the definition and put a clarification on the Justice Department web page. Unfortunately, judges have to rule by what is in the bill, not what is on the government’s web page. The Liberals have refused so far to amend the definition as requested.
I am working toward a bill that will criminalize conversion therapy while protecting the rights of freedom of belief and speech for all Canadians.
Marilyn Gladu
Sarnia-Lambton MP

Minister decides to run for NDP nomination after MP’s C-6 petition

Heather Wright
The Independent
Adam Kilner intends to run as the Sarnia-Lambton NDP candidate in the next federal election after Sarnia-Lambton MP Marilyn Gladu’s petition to change the Liberals bill to ban conversion therapy.
“You deserve an MP who fights for every member of our community. One who believes in justice and progress. One who will make you proud in Ottawa,” said Kilner in a social media post.
Kilner ran second to Gladu in the 2018 vote. She won the race by over 16,000 votes over the NDP candidate.
Kilner recently has been raising concerns about the petition filed by MP Gladu in Parliament which called for the Liberals to either clarify a bill which would ban conversion therapy or scrap it.
Gladu said she presented the petition

on behalf of a constituent however a letter written to local churches by the MP explains concerns the bill will limit religious freedoms to talk to people about their “sexual confusion.”
Gladu had said the majority of the churches in Sarnia-Lambton supported the petition. It had been signed by 169 people.
Kilner, who is the pastor of Dunlop United Church in Sarnia, raised concern about the premise of the petition.
And his candidacy is a result of the MPs actions, he says in a social media post.
“The last few weeks have shown us for certain that Marilyn Gladu does not represent our values,” says Kilner.
“You deserve an MP who fights for every member of our community. One who believes in justice and progress. One who will make you proud in Ottawa...because this community deserves an MP who will serve and

respect the inclusive values of Sarnia-Lambton residents,” he added.
“An unprecedented number of people are speaking out against Ms. Gladu’s petition to the House of Commons seeking to alter or withdraw Bill C6.. Altering or withdrawing the bill will harm LGBTQ+ people.”
A petition calling on Gladu to resign on over the petition has been signed by over 3,600 people.
The NDP nomination meeting in Sarnia-Lambton will be held virtually March 1.
The Liberals lead a minority government. There has been speculation there may be snap election during the pandemic however the prime minister has side stepped the issue, saying only it is a possibility.
Gladu, who is the president of the Queen’s Privy Council for the opposition Conservatives, was acclaimed to run for the next federal election in December.

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Thirty-four inmates at Sarnia Jail COVID positive

Alex Kurial
Local Journalism Initiative
Thirty-four of the people housed at the Sarnia jail tested positive in the last nine days
The COVID-19 outbreak was declared Feb. 7 and by the end of this week, 14 inmates and two staff members tested positive for the virus.
Over the weekend, Lambton Public Health says another 20 inmates and two staff were found COVID-19 positive.
The Sarnia Jail had 73 inmates in custody as of Feb. 10. The jail has operated at an average of 82 per cent of its 101 inmate capacity during the past six months according to Andrew Morrison, the media relations officer for the Solicitor General’s office.
Morrison says the ministry has tried to reduce the number of inmates in jail through a temporary absence program, where people serving intermittent sentences can do their time in the community.
As of Tuesday evening, only 45 people are still in custody in the jail as officials try to make sure there enough separation between the COVID positive inmates and the healthy.


Several safety measures have been introduced for inmates who must come into the jail, including new inmates spending their first two weeks separated from the general population along with a wave of cleaning protocols for correctional officers.
Jail officials are also working to keep COVID-19 positive cases isolated.
“Any inmate that tests positive for COVID-19 is placed under droplet precautions and isolated from the rest of the inmate population while they receive appropriate medical care,” says Morrison.
The union representing correctional workers said separating prisoners was not easy.
“There’s limited space in a jail. You can’t segregate and you can’t have people stay six feet apart in that kind of a setting. It’s just not there,” when the facility is full, says Laurie Nancekivell, OPSEU regional vice-president for the Sarnia area
Lori Lucas, supervisor of health services for Lambton Public Health, says public health officials have been in the jail and talked with officials about precautions which can be taken.
And she says testing is ongoing as more cases are found. Right now,

Lucas, says testing is taking place every three to five days as cases continue.
And officials are promoting the use of masks.
Joel Bissonnette of OPSEU Local 128 who is also a correctional officer at the jail, says prior to the outbreak, inmates were wearing masks anytime they left the housing unit or moved through the jail.
Since the outbreak hit, they are now wearing masks all the time, including in their cells. Staff and visitors wear masks at all times, too.
Bissonnette says the corrections workers are doing their best in a stressful situation.
“We’re doing our best to prevent it from happening, but when an outbreak does happen it’s no one’s fault inside. It’s impossible to stop this 100 per cent.
“When an outbreak happens, we’re all human, we all have our own anxieties and fears about this, and we all have our loved ones who are vulnerable,” he says. “Despite that everyone’s still coming into work and showing up and doing their best to help manage this.”
- with files from Heather Wright

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BIG SNOWFALL, BIG SNOW PILES



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO

Don Campbell of Total Driveway Maintenance was busy Tuesday helping to clean up from Lambton county’s biggest snowfall of 2020. The snow he moved in the Petrolia Line Plaza and Circle K Store created a pile so high it dwarfed his skid steer. An estimated 20 centimeters - eight inches - fell in the area with more snow expected overnight and into Thursday and Friday. Strong winds caused drifting on local roads. School buses were pulled off the roads Tuesday because of the heavy snowfall.

Brooke-Alvinston’s taxes rise 1.5 per cent

Heather Wright
The Independent

Taxes in Brooke-Alvinston are going up 1.5 per cent.

Municipal council approved the \$4,288,629 operating and \$4,747,130 capital budgets Thursday.

Brooke-Alvinston spent about \$4.226 million in 2020. Treasurer Stephen Ikert held the line on spending for 2021, but the capital budget doubled from 2020. Part of the spending has been transferred from last years budget. A number of items couldn’t be purchased as suppliers were squeezed during COVID-19 shutdowns.

Brooke-Alvinston received a large grant of \$1,854,478 to spend on the \$3.1 million upgrade of Rokeby Line.

But councillors were concerned the municipality

would feel the pinch of COVID-19 through 2021.

They asked Ikert to include another \$45,000 into the budget to be put in reserves to deal with any outfall from the pandemic.

That created a 1.5 per cent tax increase. That will work out to a little more than \$11 per \$100,000 of assessment on a home or \$4 more in taxes per \$100,000 for farms.

While councillors all seemed to agree some extra cash was needed, they couldn’t agree on renovations to the upper meeting room in the arena. The municipality plans to spend \$44,000 to complete the renovations upstairs. Another \$56,000 in renos is expected in the main hall downstairs. Staff had applied for a \$34,000 grant to cover some of the costs.

But Councillor Wayne Deans

didn’t think the work upstairs should go ahead since there was no revenue coming in this year to the hall.

“I personally don’t think we need to do anything upstairs this year at all,” he says.

But Councillor Jeannette Douglas felt the work should go ahead, as did Mayor Dave Ferguson saying there is money available from governments to kick start the economy.

“Right now we’re gonna see money coming down to get some work done and get things fixed up. After this year, it’s going to be critical infrastructure grants only,” says Ferguson.

The majority of council, Ferguson, Douglas and Deputy Mayor Frank Nemcek agreed and the budget was passed with Deans and Councillor Jamie Armstrong disagreeing.

St. Clair wants four ways stops on Kimball

Alex Kurial
Local Journalism Initiative

St. Clair Township is turning to the county for assistance as it tries to solve the issue of road safety at a pair of Kimball Road intersections.

The crossings at Petrolia Line and Courtright Line have been the subject of numerous complaints due to their history of collisions. Two people were killed in crashes at Petrolia and Kimball last year.

Mayor Steve Arnold says when the area experiences heavy snowfall, as it did this week, visibility becomes a factor. “I could barely see the centre light in the intersection but couldn’t tell for sure how far I was away from it and the stop sign was mostly covered in snow making it difficult to see,”

the mayor said after a drive on a snowy day earlier this month.

“I was thinking the flashing lights over the stop signs may help commuters at these deadly intersections,” says the mayor. He says the Lambton has paid for similar lights at Warwick intersections in the past and felt they would do the same for St. Clair now.

Council unanimously approved the request to the county at their Feb. 16 meeting. Councillor Bill Myers wants the township go even further and explore the possibility of a four-way stop at each intersection. Stop signs are only present for vehicles going north/south at each intersection.

“The rate of speed going through there is enough that if there is a collision there it usually is very severe,” says

Myers. “I think having a four-way stop, if there is human error in a collision then it would be at a lower rate of speed.”

Arnold says the idea has been brought before county council before but is usually disregarded due to concerns over reducing traffic flow on the busy east/west routes.

Councillor Tracy Kingston says the problem isn’t caused by vehicles travelling east/west. “It’s mostly people blasting through that stop sign...(Four way stops) will slow that other traffic down, but it’s getting people to stop that are going north and south is the problem,” she says.

Myers’ motion passed 4-2 and now goes to county council for consideration.

- The Independent

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Burnout concerns as March Break moves

Alex Kurial
Local Journalism Initiative

Lambton’s public director of education is worried about staff burnout as the March Break is delayed.

Education Minister Stephen Lecce says March Break will be delayed until April 12.

“Many students have been learning remotely since the start of 2021. It is critical we follow public health advice to protect schools and avoid a repeat of the concerning spike in youth-related cases over the winter break, when students and staff were out of schools for a prolonged period of time.

“We are taking this precaution based on advice from health experts, including the province’s Science Table and the Chief Medical Officer of Health, to help protect against the emerging COVID-19 variants of concern,” said Lecce at a news conference Thursday.

“To keep schools open, we must keep them free of COVID-19. The actions announced serve to limit opportunities for congregation,” he added. March Break is a traditional time for families to take vacations – including trips south of the border. Lecce says the province wants to avoid that.

“Ontarians should refrain from traveling, particularly given the increase in new variants that pose a direct risk to our country.

“Please stay at home as much as possible and continue following the direction of public health officials so that we can keep schools open and protect our seniors, front line health workers and all families.”

John Howitt, Lambton-Kent District School Board’s director of education, speaking to *The Independent* before the announcement, says most educators wanted the March Break to remain in place.

“There’s a misconception that our students were off in January.

“Our students were not off in January. Our students and our staff were waking up in the morning and were in front of the screen and working hard as if they had been in school,” he says.

“Our students have been working very hard... and our students are ready for a break. We’ve been talking a lot about their mental health, and that being at home was taxing on them. They weren’t at home on vacation. They were at home working and learning. There’s a difference,” says Howitt.

“Our staff, similarly, have been going non-stop in trying conditions, and are also due for a break. Burnout is a real, legitimate concern.”

Howitt says most educators favoured leaving March Break the way it was.

“The minister has consulted... with unions, with the trustee groups, with the principal’s associations, with directors, who have pretty consistently suggested that there not be a change in the school year calendar.

“The minister did follow that up though by stating very clearly that this will be a public health decision, and that consultations – while powerful and important – may not overrule the advice given by the chief medical officer of health around the perception of whether or not March Break should occur.”

- The Independent

HONOURING PUBLIC SERVICE



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Jim Lamb was recently honoured for his work with the Lambton County Fire Prevention Association. He’s been president of the group for the last seven years and recently retired from service at the Watford Fire Station after 33 years of

Petrolia woman seriously injured in Blenheim crash

The Independent

A Petrolia woman is in critical condition after a crash near Blenheim.

Chatham-Kent Police say just before midnight Friday, a vehicle traveling on Talbot Trail near Lagoon Road went off the road.

Police believe the woman, who has not been named, lost control of her vehicle, left

the roadway, struck several trees and came to rest just west of Lagoon Road.

The 32 year old woman, the only person in the car, was taken to the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance with life-threatening injuries. She was transferred to Windsor, where, as of Tuesday, she was in critical but stable condition.

The collision is still under investigation.

Lambton business begin cautiously reopening

Heather Wright
The Independent

Restaurants and hair salons are among the businesses able to open as Lambton begins its reopening Tuesday.

Lambton is in the Orange-Restrict level of the province’s reopening framework.

“It is very important for our community to view these changes as a gradual transition with many restrictions and recommended actions still required,” said Dr. Ranade, Medical Officer of Health for the County of Lambton in a news release.

“Be diligent and limit trips in the community to only essential needs, maintain close contacts with only those in your household, and in doing so you will allow services in the community to operate safely.”

Under the Orange-Restrict phase, there can be 10 people indoors and 25 outdoors for social gatherings. Public gatherings will be allowed to 50 people indoor and 100 people outdoor. Religious services will be able to operate at 30 per cent capacity or 100 outdoors.

Restaurants will be able to have up to 50 people indoors with two metres and a barrier between them. Masks have to be worn when patrons are not eating. Customers will also

have to be screened. Liquor can only be sold until 9 pm and the restaurant has to close at 10. Dancing, singing and musical performance is permitted with restrictions.

Gyms will be open, with limits around how close patrons can be. Arenas will also be allowed to reopen with parents being on hand to watch.

Meeting and event spaces will be able to reopen with capacity of 50 people indoors or 100 outdoors.

Retail stores will be able to be open with 50 per cent capacity. Retailers have to have signs on doors warning customers not to enter if they have COVID-19 symptoms. People waiting in lines outdoors will also have to be two meters apart.

Personal services, like hair salons can reopen, with the same capacity limits as retail. They’ll have to take contact information from patrons and follow the same guidelines as before Christmas.

Bingo halls, casinos, theaters and movie theaters can all open with 50 people in attendance indoors and 100 outdoors.

Lambton is the only public health unit in the area in the Orange-Restrict zone. Both London, Windsor-Essex and Chatham-Kent are in Red zone – the most restrictive stage.

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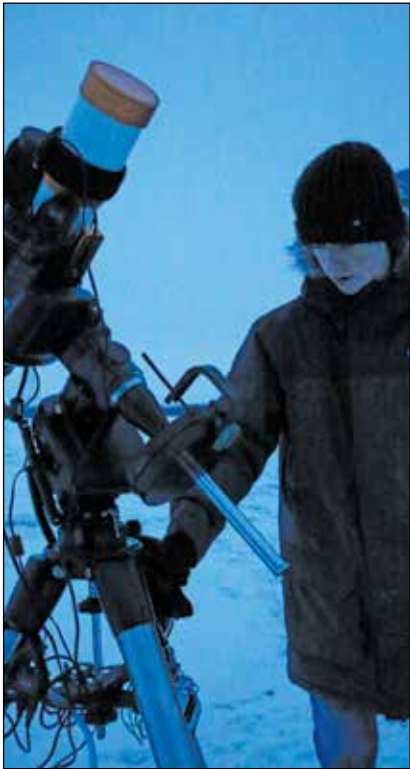


DYLAN WEBSTER PHOTOS

Above is Webster’s photo of the Orion Nebula; the birthplace of the stars found just below the constellation Orion’s “belt.” It’s 1,344 light years from earth. Below is the Pinwheel Galaxy 20.87 million light years from Earth. And to the right is the Comet NEOWISE which was seen in Ontario in July. Webster took the photo on vacation.



Teen discovers galaxies light years away in his Wyoming backyard



Webster uses a camera and telescope to capture the night sky in astonishing detail

Heather Wright
The Independent

Dylan Webster is amazed how big the universe is. The 14 year-old LCCVI student’s hobby gives him an up close view of galaxies millions of light years away, all from the backyard of his dad’s home near Wyoming. For the past year or so, Webster has been taking his telescope and camera outdoors at night to view the stars and take pictures of what he sees. “I’ve always thought those pictures that NASA takes with their Hubble Space Telescope...were so amazing and interesting,” says Webster. “And then, I saw other people were doing it from their backyard, and if you buy the right equipment, you can take photos, just like that. So I thought, if I could do it too, that would be pretty cool.” Webster started with a digital SLR camera in November and set it up on his deck, looking for the nearest constellations. “I just took, like 10 second exposures of the night sky, and I was able to see the constellation.” By the spring, he was hooked, plugging into online forums and learning how to get even closer to the stars. He was given a small telescope with a tracking mount so he could capture even more of the night sky. “I could point it at this one galaxy and it would move and point at it and then it would track the sky. So instead of the night sky moving, it would keep the galaxy in the center of the camera frame.” That produced much sharper images. Soon, Webster was upgrading his equipment, getting a larger tracking mount to see even deeper into space. The equipment is much more complex now, with a larger telescope and a digital camera with a 200 mm zoom lense, warming rings to make sure the telescope doesn’t fog up with condensation and it is all linked to his laptop. The unit weighs about 100 pounds and takes about an hour to set up. For Webster, it’s worth the effort to combine photography, technology and science to capture the stars. “I was still able to see galaxies that are like millions of light years away. The one galaxy I captured, it was the Cigar Galaxy, it’s something like 40 million light years away. “That’s what’s the amazing part is, how big the universe is. “Sometimes I just stop and look and just think like, ‘Wow, how beautiful.’ And then sometimes when the image pops up on my computer after it’s done taking an exposure, sometimes, my jaw just drops because it’s like, that was not what I was expecting.” The teen doesn’t plan to make a career of photographing the stars. But he does want to be close to the stars, working in the aerospace industry. For now, Webster is happy capturing what can be seen in the Plympton-Wyoming night sky and hoping that someday NASA will choose one of his photographs in its Amateur Astronomer competition.



Sports

Could OHL hockey hit the ice in April?

Barry Wright
The Independent

There remains a glimmer of hope for the Ontario Hockey League to play a shortened season this year.

It was suggested in a report last week in the Athletic the league is working on a plan for a 24 game regular season beginning in early April.

But the league says nothing is imminent. “First and foremost, the Ontario Hockey League is anxious to return to play and eager to get our players back on the ice to drop the puck on a 2020-21 Regular Season,” said Commissioner David Branch. “As we have for many months, we continue to work hard toward ensuring a safe return to play for everyone.” While he categorized ongoing talks with the

provincial government and public health officials as “encouraging”, he says a plan isn’t complete. “The league will share more information with our players, families, staff, billets and tremendous fans as a finalized plan for a safe return to the ice becomes available,” he added.

After granting approval to American Hockey League franchises in Toronto and Belleville to begin their season, Ontario’s Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture hinted in a tweet that Ontario’s top junior league could be next. “I’m looking forward to working with other leagues, like the OHL, on what and when a safe return to play would look like,” said Lisa MacLeod.

The Sting have not played a league game for nearly a calendar year. Their last contest was a 4-1 win over Guelph last March 8 at the Progressive Auto Sales Arena.

Triple A hockey plans to hit the ice in March

The Independent

Following the provincial announcement of Lambton County being placed in the Orange protocol, the Lambton Junior Sting “AAA” hockey program plans on its players getting back on the blades in March.

“The session will be the same as the first two (pre-lockdown) sessions in terms of practices and player development,” said a statement posted last weekend on the Junior Sting website.

The Sting note that any downgrading of the COVID protocol colour in the community will result in changes to the

program which is planned for March 1-31. “While we are doing our best to have the upcoming session resemble the first two sessions, we can guarantee the same amount of ice time or the same dates or times.”

Eligibility for the March session is only open to those who participated with the Lambton Junior Sting in the first two sessions.

Alliance Hockey and the Ontario Hockey Federation has also given teams the option of an extended season that would run from April 1 to the end of May, but the Junior Sting says a decision on such a move will come at a later date.

Brigden’s Fulcher returned to Wings affiliate

The Independent

Brigden’s Kaden Fulcher is among three players who have been reassigned to Grand Rapids of the American Hockey League by the Detroit Red Wings.

Fulcher had been on the Wings’ taxi squad since Feb. 1. During that time he did not see any action with the NHL squad.

The former OHL champion with the Hamilton Bulldogs is looking for a bounce

back season after being limited to just two games with Toledo of the ECHL last season due to injury.

He appeared in 30 games over the previous two seasons with the Walleye. The Griffins, 1-2 on the AHL season, complete a four-game road swing with a game in Rockford Thursday. They host Cleveland in their home opener on Saturday afternoon. It’s not immediately known if Fulcher will see any action in either of those games.

Steeves heads to Toledo to play NCCA hockey

The Independent

Former Mooretown Flags star Max Steeves has signed with the University of Toledo for the coming season.

The Rockets are an NCAA Division II school that plays in the American Collegiate Hockey Association.

Steeves, a product of the Lambton Junior Sting AAA organization, was the MVP

and scoring leader in the PJHL’s Stobbs Division last year. He notched 23 goals and added 42 assists for 65 points ins 38 regular season contest.

The Sarnia native added six goals and nine helpers for 15 points in eight playoff encounters.

The 21 year-old played two seasons each at the Hill Academy and in the OJHL before landing with the Flags.

Forest McGregor to raise money for Fox Foundation

Tyler McGregor hopes to raise \$25,000 for the Terry Fox Foundation when he skates 25 km. along the Blue Mountain Skating Trail in Collingwood this Saturday.

“Terry has always been an inspirational example of courage, hope, perseverance, and selflessness, for me and so many others,” said the Forest native in a social media post.

“Being diagnosed with bone cancer and losing my leg in 2010 gave his life and legacy even more meaning to me

personally.” The captain of Canada’s national sledge hockey team is grateful that his life is one of those saved by Terry Fox’s message of hope.

“Please join me in helping honour Terry’s legacy and find a cure for cancer,” added McGregor.

A link to make a donation can be found on McGregor’s Facebook page.

As of Tuesday afternoon nearly \$15,000 had been pledged.

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Still loved, still missed and very dear.
For death leaves a heartache,
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And love leaves a memory
No one can steal.

Forever loved and missed
Elaine, Len, Kathy,
Linda and Larry
and families

PATRICIA Pat MCLACHLAN

Who passed away one year ago
February 19, 2020



One year has passed since that sad day,
When one we loved was called away
God took her home; it was His will,
But in our hearts she lives on still.



Love your family,
Clayton and Lisa,
Tyson & Jen, Tyler,
Zoey & Sadie
XOXO

Lucan

In loving memory of our precious daughter, sister and auntie
Kristel Leighann Lucan
who left us for heaven at the age of 5 1/2.
February 22, 1987




Love Dad & Mom,
Rick Jr & Lindsey,
Brittney & Shawn and
Gabriella

mcNally

In loving memory of our special little friend 5 1/2 yr old
Cassie Lynn McNally
who left this earth for heaven
February 27, 1987

Eternal joy and memories.
Stay in our hearts forever.
Cassie dear
Today, tomorrow our whole life through.
We will never forget you



Sadly missed and lovingly remembered by
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Brittney & Shawn and Gabriella Lucan

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Notice
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>

Celebration



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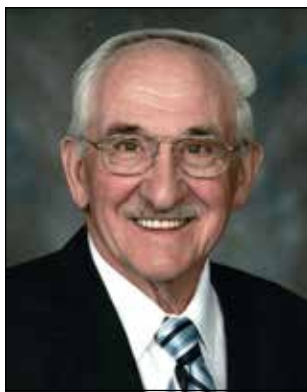
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WAGNER
Ronald Allan

At his home in Sarnia surrounded by family on **Thursday, February 11, 2021**, Ronald Allan Wagner "Dadeo", passed away at the age of **60**. Beloved husband to Cathy (nee Scott) for 30 years. Loving father to Rochelle Clark (Pat Johnson), and Michelle (Jay) Claxton. Proud grandpa to Anthony (Stacey) Clark, Tyler (Amber) Clark, Jordan Claxton, Jocelyn Claxton (Paulo Cunha), Janessa Claxton and Chris Johnson and James Johnson and great-grandpa to Henry and Riley. His memory will be cherished by his mother-in-law Marie Scott. Survived by his brothers, Ed (Julie) Wagner and Don (Laurie) Wagner and his brothers and sisters-in-law, Gail (Walt) Horton, Jack (Shirley) Scott, Terry (Steve) Zavitz, and Dona (Tony) Swift. He will be missed by several nieces, nephews and cousins. He will be remembered by his life-long best friend, Fred Jolly. Predeceased by his parents Ken and Dorothy Wagner and his sister Ruth Johnston-Wagner. The family would like to thank Amelda and Dr. Kim and the palliative team and Bayshore for their loving care. Dadeo worked at Sarnia RV as a technician for many years and made lots of friends and connections to his community. **Due to COVID restrictions, a private service was held. Visitors were received at the Needham-Jay Funeral Home, Petrolia on Tuesday, February 16, 2021.** As an expression of sympathy, memorial donations may be made to St. Joseph's Hospice (<https://www.stjosephshospice.ca/>). Memories and condolences may be shared online at www.needhamjay.com



BOGAERT
Hypolitus Petrus

Hypolitus Petrus Bogaert, a resident of Brigden, passed away peacefully at his home on **February 12, 2021**, at the age of **90**. Paul was born in Lamswaarde, The Netherlands on March 25, 1930. He immigrated to Ontario in 1951. Wallaceburg was his home until he met Joan and moved to Brigden where they raised their family. Paul had quite the entrepreneurial spirit most known for Van Communications, and farming with family. He prided himself in his large garden big enough to feed the town of Brigden, visitors did not leave without a basket of produce. One of his biggest passions was travelling; after each trip he was already planning the next. All of his passions can be seen and will be carried on through his children, grandchildren and generations to come. He will be deeply missed by his family and friends. Beloved husband and best friend of Joan for 65 years. Loving father of Michael (Sucely), Kenneth (1970), Christopher (Shelley), Mary (Robert) Smith, Lisa (1994) (John) Butler and daughter-in-law Judy Bogaert. Sadly missed by his grandchildren Terra (Nolan) Wallace, April (Adam) Brown, Bryan (Mary Beth) Bogaert, Kandace (Robert) Stark, Korrie (John) Whitney, Craig Bogaert, Amanda (Derek) Mathews, Ashley (Steven) Smith-Bolyantu, Eddie Butler, Sebastian, Eden, Holiday, Chance, Michael and Kenneth Bogaert. He will be missed by 12 great grandchildren and 1 great great grandchild. Paul's family: Ludovicus (Regina), Gysbertus (Florentina), Josephus, Richard (Berendina), Cyril, Maria (Aloysius VanEsbroeck), Anna (Omere Burm), Theodore (Irene), Ernest (Johanna), Achiel (Edith). Brother-in-law of the late Joseph and Paula Burm, the late Constant and Dianne Burm, Jean and George Van Damme, the late Marjorie and Henry Laevens, Doreen and John Bogaert. **Due to provincial Covid-19 restrictions there will be no visitation or services at STEADMAN BROTHERS FUNERAL HOME, BRIGDEN. A private family Mass will be held at St. Philips Catholic Church, Petrolia. Interment will take place at Bear Creek cemetery.** Sympathy may be expressed through donation to Parkinson's Canada donate.parkinson.ca (send cheque to funeral home) or charity of choice. Memories and condolences may be sent online at www.steadmanbrothers.ca. Steadman Brothers, 519-864-1193.



McCUTCHEON
Charles William

It is with great sadness that we announce the sudden passing of a husband, father and grandfather Charles William (Bill) McCutcheon in his **77th** year at London Health Sciences Victoria Campus on **February 13th, 2021**. Bill is survived by his wife of 54 years Judy, daughter Maureen (David), sons Darcy (Kathren) and Aaron (Shari). Loved Grandpa and Papa to Caleb, Mac, Cole and Marnie. Chosen Grandpa to Spencer, Celia, Reagan, Jocelyn and Taylor. Bill was predeceased by his parents Mac (1977) and Pauline (2009) McCutcheon. Bill is also survived by sister-in-law Jayne Dillon, brother-in-law Jack Brown, nephew Jeff (April) Brown, great-nephew Edward Brown, as well as cousins Darryl (Gisele) Dennis, Barry Dennis and their families. He will also be missed daily by his faithful companion Ted. Bill lived and farmed in Florence. He was a graduate of Ontario Agriculture College. He took pride in the multi generational family farm ... Ridge Farms. Over his lifetime he was very active in many farm and community organizations. He was a member of Tecumseh Sydenham Lodge #245 in Thamesville and the Mocha Temple Shrine in London. He was a former chair of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association. He was also former chair of the Asparagus Growers of Ontario, as well as being instrumental in its inception. He was also a former municipal councillor for the Township of Euphemia. He was also very proud of his three children, their spouses and grandchildren of all their accomplishments. **Cremation has taken place. A private family service will take place at a later date.** Arrangements are entrusted to the John C. Badder Funeral Home, Thamesville. Donations if desired to Children's Health Foundation London Ontario, or the Diabetes Society would be appreciated. Online condolences and donations may be left at www.badderfuneralhome.com.

Notice
Living Tobacco & Vape Free - Quitting is tough. But so are you. This year has been tough but let's use that strength to break bad habits. If you smoke/vape-set a quit date, make a plan, follow these tips, and access resources to help. Make this year all about your quit story. <https://lambton-publichealth.ca/.../quit-smoking-support.../>

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
or email: office@petrolialambtonindependent.ca

Real Estate

**11 Sunset Ave.
WATFORD**



Attractive, desirable, home, move in ready! This brick bungalow has 2 bedrooms, 2 baths, main floor laundry, galley kitchen, separate dining area, master bedroom has a walk-in closet. The spacious lower level has just been totally renovated, ready for family entertaining and children's play area. Front porch to enjoy sunsets together. Walking distance to all amenities.
Call for Details!

\$459,900

MLS#21001390

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Leo Shanahan Sales Representative
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Coming Event

**Lambton County
Science Fair**
Open to students
Grades 3-12
**Judging
April 9&10 2021**
Virtual Event



For information and to register
www.lambtoncountysciencefair.ca
Registration Closes March 26th.

Death Notices
February 6 - February 12, 2021

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6

BEAULIEU, Tony
Age 63, of Petrolia
Needham-Jay Funeral Home

HUME, Murray
Age 68, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

CARTER, Bonita
Age 78, of Sarnia
McKenzie & Blundy Funeral Home

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7

TETREAU, Mavrice
Age 60, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

KRAAK, Cornelua
Age 101, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8

GIFFIN, Elizabeth
McCormack Funeral Home

PAPANAYOTOU, George
Age 73, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

JACKSON, Wesley
Age 96, of Sarnia
McKenzie & Blundy Funeral Home

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9

LAPRISE, Lionel
McCormack Funeral Home

LATAWIEC, Linda
Age 70, of Sarnia
McKenzie & Blundy Funeral Home

WELLS, Phyllis
Age 78, of London
Smith Funeral Home

NIX, Donald
Age 79, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

WYRZYKOWSKI, Hildegarde
Age 90, of Sarnia
McKenzie & Blundy Funeral Home

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10

MACDONALD, Patricia
Age 80, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

CASSELMAN, Helen
Age 89, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

SMEEKENS, Cornelius "Case"
Age 97, of Forest
Denning's of Forest

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11

WAGNER, Ronald
Age 60, of Sarnia
Needham-Jay Funeral Home

BOYLE, Kenneth
Age 78, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

JAREMEK, Feliksa
Age 90, of Sarnia
McKenzie & Blundy Funeral Home

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12

MANHAEVE, Daniel
Age 59, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

LLEWELLYN, Christopher
Age 60, of Sarnia
Smith Funeral Home

CHALMERS, Mary-Anne
Age 75, of Sarnia
D.J. Robb Funeral Home

MARUSCHAK, Robert
Age 76, of Sarnia
McCormack Funeral Home

IRAGGI, Giuseppa
Age 87, of Sarnia
McKenzie & Blundy Funeral Home

BOGAERT, Hypolitus "Paul"
Age 90, of Brigden
Steadman Funeral Chapel

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

**COVID-19**
SOCIAL DISTANCING

**MAINTAIN A DISTANCE
OF AT LEAST 6 FEET
(2 METERS) FROM
OTHERS & remember to
WEAR YOUR MASK!**



**Church
DIRECTORY**

Christ Anglican Church
414 Oil Street, Petrolia

**We are closed due to the
provincial lock-down.**

Rev. Michelle Collins-Wongkee
Church Office 519-882-1430
 christchurchpetrolia@gmail.com

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

WORSHIP SERVICES
Via ZOOM
Sunday Mornings 10:30am

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

**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

Wyoming United Church
730 Second Street, Wyoming

**In-person services suspended until end
of provincial lock-down. Join us for on-
line worship in January.**

 Church Office 519-845-3963
Find us on Facebook

Business & Service Directory

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Shotgun search raises questions about police searches

Alex Kurial
Local Journalism Initiative

The discovery of an Enniskillen man’s sawed off shotgun prompted concerns about when police can justifiably investigate people at the scene of a drug overdose. Jonathan Clark, 27, was sentenced to a year in jail after pleading guilty to illegally possessing a sawed-off shotgun. Clark is already serving an 18 month sentence after pleading guilty in December to several assault charges and uttering death threats. The incident took place nearly two years ago on a March afternoon. Police were called to a home on Aberfeldy Line in Enniskillen for an overdose. Emergency services were able to reverse the overdose effects and save the patient. When police initially arrived at the scene, they found Clark and another person in a car on the front lawn. Officers ran the plates and found the car was stolen, and the pair were arrested. A search warrant was granted for Clark’s house where several stolen items were found. Most notably was the 12-gauge sawed-off shotgun with the serial number ground off. Defense Lawyer Sarah Donohue says Clark should not have been investigated at all that day. “This was an investigation that was entered into independently of the reason

why the OPP were called to the residence in the first place,” she says. “The OPP were called to the residence for an overdose call, and then engaged in what the defense submits is an improper investigation into running license plates of vehicles on the property.” Donohue says this could set a dangerous precedent. “I want to make it very clear that this sentence does not have a chilling effect on persons that are calling in overdose calls in the future.” Donohue wants to ensure that “persons who are calling in overdose calls in this jurisdiction can rest assured that the police will not investigate unrelated occurrences on the property. They’re there to make sure the safety and welfare of the persons involved is upheld.” Crown Attorney Sarah Carmody says OPP officers were well within their rights to investigate the vehicle and its occupants. “It was within plain view, and the police running that license plate was a perfectly appropriate use of their power as to why they were called to the property.” Justice Deborah Austin acknowledged had the case gone to trial, the nature of the search may have been contested. “There were triable issues in this case, and you have heard a very brief argument from the crown and defense of what would have been several

days of trial and evidence about the nature and extent to which police were lawfully searching.” “The circumstances were somewhat extraordinary, and your household called for assistance because of a life and death overdose situation, and thankfully that person has survived. But that is what launched the steps that were taken that allowed the police to retrieve this item,” says Austin. However, Austin concluded by telling Clark “You have, in entering your plea, abandoned any Charter application, abandoned raising those issues, and have acknowledged the truth of what was going on with respect to that firearm, and acknowledging your guilt.” “I’m very sorry for my actions. I’m very happy that the person that was overdosing is still alive. I hope I never have to go through anything like that again,” says Clark before sentencing was finalized. “I’ve been working on my addictions, and I try to just do the best that I can and turn my life around.” Donohue says after Clark is released he’s looking forward to “moving completely away from any past association he has had with the local drug subculture, as well as some inappropriate associations in this jurisdiction.” Clark also received a 10 year firearms ban, must submit a DNA order, and must forfeit the shotgun.

SUPER SNOWMAN



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO


Krista Brand gives The Hulk a snowy hug at her Petrolia home Tuesday. She entered the green superhero in the Petrolia Snow Sculpture Contest. Brand worked on the project three days, before the big snowfall, bringing buckets of snow over to shape into The Hulk. Family members and some neighbourhood children helped her put the finishing touches on Sunday.

First round of COVID-19 vaccine complete in LTC

Heather Wright
The Independent

Lambton Public Health says every senior in long term care in the county who wanted a COVID-19 vaccine has now had the first dose. Public health says it completed the vaccinations of every resident of long term care and high risk retirement homes in Lambton and at elder care facilities in Aamjiwnaang, Kettle and Stony Point and Walpole Island First Nations Friday . “We have established an efficient process and look forward to receiving more doses of the vaccine, so we can continue to protect our most vulnerable residents with their second dose,” said Dr. Sudit Ranade, Medical Officer of Health for Lambton County in a news release. The news came three days after a provincial goal of having all long term residents receive their first dose of the vaccine by Feb. 10. Meantime, the Minister of Long Term Care sent out a news release Thursday saying the province had reached its deadline to vaccinate all residents of long term care. Premier Doug Ford, in a radio interview with CHOK Thursday, said he’d been told Lambton’s vaccinations were complete when there were still well at least 150 more residents to be reached. It was reported as many as 9,000 seniors across Ontario still had not been offered their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine by Thursday. The province has faced criticism of the first phase of its vaccine roll out. Ontario started receiving the much sought after vaccine in mid December. At the time, long term care residents – the most vulnerable to COVID-19 – were among a group of receiving the vaccine which included health care workers in long term care

and hospitals. The first vaccines went to COVID-19 hotspots in the province including Toronto, Windsor and Ottawa. At the time, Lambton was at the height of it’s second wave and some local politicians – including Sarnia-Lambton MPP Bob Bailey – pleaded with the government to start sending the vaccine here. By Jan. 20, only 20 per cent of long term care residents had received the first dose of the vaccine. Then the federal government’s supplies dwindled when drug makers delayed delivery. The Ford government decided on Jan. 24 only the province’s 75,000 long term care residents should be vaccinated. Lambton still had not been given any vaccines. Lambton received its first vaccines – 500 doses – the next day. On Jan. 26, Valerie Verberg in Trillium Villa Nursing Home became the first person to receive the Moderna vaccine. By then, the three long term care and retirement homes were in the middle of the worst outbreaks of the second wave in Lambton. They all started after the first vaccines arrived in the province. Eight people would die of COVID-19 at Twin Lakes Terrace, Village on the St. Clair and Vision Rest Home. All but one of the residents of Vision’s rest home tested positive for COVID-19. All three homes are still in outbreak. It took until Feb. 5 for the next round of vaccines to arrive in Lambton – 600 in all. Ranade said public health revised who would get the vaccines – just long term care homes and those in high risk retirement homes, older homes or those attached to long term care. Friday, residents of Vision Nursing Home received the vaccine. They were among the last in the province to receive it.



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 TOWN OF PETROLIA

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 March 10, 2021, at the Petrolia Municipal Office, 411 Greenfield Street, Petrolia Ontario.

The tenders will then be opened in public on the same day as soon as possible after 3:00 p.m. at the Petrolia Municipal Office, 411 Greenfield Street, Petrolia.

Description of Land:

Roll No. 38 19 000 080 15200 0000; 4317 Discovery Line, Petrolia; PIN 43329-0100(R); Part of Lots 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30 Registered Plan 26 (PA), Town of Petrolia, County of Lambton, designated Parts 3, 4 and 5 Plan 25R-6964; File No. 18-09
According to the last returned assessment roll, the assessed value of the land is \$83,000
Minimum tender amount: \$35,148.82

Tenders must be submitted in the prescribed form and must be accompanied by a deposit of at least 20 per cent of the tender amount, which deposit shall be made by way of a certified cheque/bank draft/ money order payable to the municipality.

Except as follows, the municipality makes no representation regarding the title to, crown interests, or any other matters relating to the land to be sold. Responsibility for ascertaining these matters rests with the potential purchasers. Any interests of the Federal or Provincial Crown encumbering the land at the time of the tax sale will continue to encumber the land after the registration of the tax deed. The assessed value according to the last returned assessment roll may or may not be representative of the current market value of the property.

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:

Rick Charlebois
CAO/Treasurer
The Corporation of the Town of Petrolia
411 Greenfield Street
Petrolia ON N0N 1R0
519-882-2350 Ext. 225
rcharlebois@petrolia.ca
www.town.petrolia.on.ca