

## BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE



MARIANNE VANDERSPEK PHOTO

Dawn-Euphemia fire crews turned up the heat on an already steamy day as they went through training exercises during a controlled burn on Gould Road Saturday. See more on page 8.

## Petrolia housing developments face regulatory road block

Heather Wright  
The Independent

Two major housing developments are on hold after an Enniskillen farmer appealed Petrolia's decision to allow homes to be built on land zoned significant woodlots.

Racher Farms has filed an appeal to the Local Planning Authority Tribunal for the zoning changes for the Spectra Development on Valentina and Edward Street - a 24 home development - and one in Countryview Estates to make way for 74 new homes. Developers Bob Leaper and Louis Bratanek would be removing about 17 acres of bush for the development which was in the plan of subdivision in 2007.

Racher's lawyer, Anthony Petrucci, says Racher's farm abuts both developments and people living within the bounds of Petrolia often creep out onto his farmland. Petrucci says Racher finds people on the lots near the field using his property for things like fire pits or dumping garbage and it can cause damage to his equipment.

SEE APPEAL PG 2

## Giant cracker unit too big for bridge, heading through Corunna instead

Alex Kurial  
Local Journalism Initiative

An oversized load will be forced to take an alternate route to its final destination over concerns of its gigantic mass crossing a local bridge.

Next month Shell will be sending a new fluid catalytic cracking regenerator to its manufacturing centre on the St. Clair Parkway. The unit weighs in at 311,800 pounds. Adding in the 70 foot long, 24 axel self-propelled modular transporter, the total weight jumps to 575,000 pounds.

Mammoet, who is moving the unit for Shell, says the sheer size of the vessel raised a serious engineering issue.

The regenerator is planned to enter the site at the main gate, south of Talfourd Creek Bridge on the St. Clair Parkway. That bridge is just 100 feet long and would have to absorb all 575,000 pounds at once.

And the bridge may not be able to bear the load.

Mammoet spokesman Dave Binkley says a study found the bridge is a "structure of great concern... putting these kind of forces

through that."

Coordinator of Operations Dave Neely says based on the engineering assessment, the bridge "might not be able to handle it."

Another obstacle is the Talfourd Creek portion of bridge on Lasalle is under construction which would delay the move well into the fall.

The Ministry of Transportation is also reluctant to close Highway 40 for an extended period of time.

So, Mammoet officials went to St. Clair council for approval of an alternative route - right through Corunna.

The unit will wind its way down

the back roads to avoid Highway 40, turn onto Hill Street and head right through Corunna before turning north on the parkway.

This raises plenty of other issues though including a necessary power outage.

Binkley says during a previous transport from the Lafarge Dock in Courtright to the NOVA expansion many people missed the Hydro One robocalls informing them of the outage.

"They got a lot of very not so nice phone calls of people and their power being cut off," Binkley says of the feedback Hydro One

received.

"They hadn't listened to the robocall, they were scheduled to go to work the next morning, all of a sudden they sleep-in because their alarm clock resets."

Binkley says since Hydro One couldn't properly inform customers in the past, Mammoet will be renting construction signs along the route in the week prior to the move with a rolling message about the outage.

The Corunna section of the one day move will be done overnight to limit traffic issues.

SEE BIG PG 2

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## Big cracker unit will move through Corunna on its journey to Shell

### CON'T FROM PG 1

The move, from the intersection of Hill Street and Polymoore Drive to the Shell gate, will take place between 11 pm to 4 am to limit disruption to residents through use of the roads and loss of power. The move is scheduled to take place Sept. 24 or 25.

Mammoet will be providing eight workers to assist with traffic control and Sarnia Police will provide a two-officer escort from start to finish.

“These things are big, it can catch someone off guard looking and staring at it,” says Binkley. “Having additional manpower on the road as we’re doing the transport keeps every-

body safe and at a good distance.”

Council unanimously approved the route although Mayor Steve Arnold says compensation for the township seems light given the size of the move.

“I think it’s pretty pathetic that we’re going through the middle of our largest section of community with a vessel off the top of a transport deck and seeing a \$1,200 permit fee, disrupting all four lanes through Corunna and then keeping the parkway closed no matter what time of day it is.”

“We do have fire emergency vehicles that might have to be called out and that road is blocked.



MAMMOET PHOTO

A giant catalytic cracking regenerator similar in size to the photo above, will take the long way to Shell Canada on the St. Clair Parkway to avoid a bridge south of Vidal Street. Engineers think the bridge would not bear the weight of the unit. Instead, it will be moved through Corunna on Hill Street this September.

There’s certain parts once you’re in it, they can’t get out of town unless you

go up to Lasalle or down to Rokeby Line... I think that’s something for Shell to consider in the future,

that the community commitment fund could use some help,” says Arnold.

- THE INDEPENDENT

## Appeal may delay development for months

### CON'T FROM PG 1

It is a refrain heard by council during two public meetings.

Since February 2020, neighbours in the Countryview Estates have voiced concerns about the plans to create 74 housing lots in the trees. For about three hours over the course of two meetings, neighbours spoke against the woodlot being removed with some saying significant trees, like the butternut, are in the area and should be preserved.

Racher also spoke at those meetings, worrying more homes near his cattle operation would mean more problems, including encroachment onto his land and complaints about ordinary farm smells.

Petrucci says while Racher is alone in his appeal of the Spectra development, residents in Countryview Estates have also appealed the removal of the significant woodlot status there.

“There’s a lot of people who are upset,” says Petrucci.

The issue gets confusing, Petrucci says, because sometime between 2007 and now, the zoning on the area changed to significant woodlot and there doesn’t seem to be an explanation for that.

And he can’t figure out how council could have changed the zoning the area which was declared a significant woodlot.

“Why would the town put that designation on it, especially when they knew that there was already an outstanding draft plan approval there? So it doesn’t really make any sense that one, even planners we’ve talked to are kind of befuddled by the process there.

“You can’t you can’t rezone significant woodlots or at least there’s good support and the Official Plan that says you should not be rezoning them. The town arguing that not significant. We are basically arguing that it is significant.”

Leading up to council’s decision to allow the houses to move ahead officials have worked with the developers in Countryview to try to come up with a solution, a buffer of trees which is 60 feet wide, to try to reduce interaction between residents and the Racher’s farm.

But Petrucci says it is not enough.

“It’s still private properties and ... residential lot owners could just do the exact same thing they’re doing with their lots now, but be at the edge of the woodlot not at the edge of their yard,” he says.

The lawyer says Racher “just wants mitigation measures to be put in place, significant buffering to be put in place, so he doesn’t have to deal with the issues of urban sprawl.”

For the Spectra development, Petrucci believes there is a solution - a fence separating the farm field from the town. That would cost an estimated \$40,000 which he says should be born by the developer.

Petrucci says Racher believes the Countryview development in the trees simply should not move ahead.

There are talks scheduled between the town and Racher by the planning authority tribunal for Sept. 14 on Spectra’s development.

Planner Rob Nesbitt is hopeful some of the issues on the Spectra development can be resolved since there is “quite a backlog of cases” at the tribunal.

“I think the hope is that some of these cases, maybe even the ones in Petrolia, can be resolved without a full blown hearing - through mediation.”

Council members expressed concern that the appeals are holding up developers.

“I certainly hope they (the tribunal) get their act together as quickly as possible because it does hold things up,” says Mayor Brad Loosley adding the developers and Racher may want to start trying to work out the issues on their own.

“I would hope the best solution for both parties, time-wise, would be to try to resolve it amongst themselves.”

Councillor Grant Purdy was also concerned about the appeal, asking if there was merit to the appeal against the town’s zoning changes for the Spectra project. “Is there some vetting process they will have in case there isn’t (merit) so that things could get sped up?”

Nesbitt says the board does try to narrow down the issues which are still outstanding so the actual hearings take as little time as possible.

But he says it could be sometime before an actual hearing on either of the appeals will take place.

“I think we’re looking at probably quite a few months after that (mediation planned on Sept. 14) before hearing about a date for the hearing,” says Nesbitt.

“But, I think the hope is always that we can mediate some of this before getting to the hearing stage.”

## OPP probe 21 year old’s death

The Independent

Lambton OPP are investigating the death of a 21 year old man in Dawn-Euphemia.

Officers went to Hale School road around 7:30 am Aug. 7, after a call from the rental property. They found a 21 year old man dead at the scene. Officers from the detachment, the Forensic Services and the Crime Unit were investigating.

OPP Const. Jamie Bydeley, says the death does not appear to be a criminal act.

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**Department/Location:** Protective Services

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**Union/Non-Union:** Non-Union

**Wage:** \$14.00 per hour

#### General Outline:

Reporting to the Director of Protective Services, Crossing Guards are responsible for directing the crossing of school-age children and pedestrians across Petrolia Line at an assigned intersection during designated school periods.

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# Masking up for back to school

Alex Kurial  
Local Journalism Initiative

Masks will be mandatory but vaccines won't as kids in Lambton go back to school in September.

The provincial government released its much anticipated back to school plan and, as expected, children will have to mask up again this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Parents and educators have been asking for the guidelines since school let out in June. The province has been widely criticized for doing too little to protect students from COVID in the classroom. Critics called for better ventilation and smaller class sizes. The province did invest in ventilation, however the school year was already underway and some of the projects didn't get off the ground in time to make a difference.

This year, the concerns are heightened as the Delta variant of the virus makes the rounds. The federal government has yet to approve a vaccine for children under 12 and in the US, where students are already in school, the Delta variant is taking hold in the schools and thousands of new cases are being reported.

So critics of the Ford government had been calling for action in the schools sooner rather than

later. Aug. 4, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health released the province's plan for schools.

The mask mandate includes the classroom and the bus but they can be taken off outside during recess and other activities.

The lone exception to the mask rule, which includes all staff and students Grade 1 to 12, is for kindergartners. But the province is still recommending the youngest learners mask up though.

And there was some confusion about what activities would be available for students. Aug. 4, officials said high-contact indoor sports, such as hockey or basketball, would not happen. But Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Kieran Moore announced a day later they would be. Outdoor sports and music were also given the go-ahead.

Despite Moore stressing high vaccination rates as the key to the plan's success, Education Minister Stephen Lecce says there are no plans to mandate the shot for students or staff.

"We're not going to do that," says Lecce.

Students are already required to have several vaccines for other diseases before attending school.

There was a mistake and education workers should all be vaccinated. Steven Del Duca of the Liberals

## BELLE OF THE CORNFEST



ALEX KURIAL/LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

Mya Salomons, 3, was excited to run into Belle at the Watford Cornfest on the weekend. The community came out for celebration centered around free corn, baseball and scarecrows however Belle was surrounded by fans throughout the day.

also says all education staff should have to get the vaccine.

Even though vaccination status won't be known, vaccinated and unvaccinated children will be able to participate in the same activities. Moore had hinted there would be different rules for each group if they come in contact with the virus but this wasn't addressed in the plan.

"I really can't envision or see closure of any schools in Ontario... We must maintain them open going forward," says Moore.

The medical officer of

health raised some eyebrows when he continued "we have to normalize COVID-19 for schools," similar to yearly flu outbreaks. Moore says this will be done through "an approach that's prudent, that's cautious, that realizes, yes, we're going to have a rise in cases, but we're going to adhere to the best practices to minimize the spread and keep our communities safe."

But there was no mention of what will happen if there actually is an outbreak in schools. The final page of the plan says "this section is forthcoming".

Elementary students socialize only with their class while high school kids will take two classes a day to limit the number of people they come in contact with, reducing the risk of COVID-19. The Lambton Kent and St. Clair Catholic District School Board had already announced they'd be taking this approach.

There will be plenty of opportunity for students to find their friends in other grades hanging out with anyone at recess, in shared spaces such as the library or cafeteria, or at assemblies or gatherings.

Students and staff must self-screen for COVID symptoms each day and are asked to stay home if they display any.

Proper building ventilation is another key focus of the plan. Lecce announced the province is providing \$25 million to make sure the province's 5,544 schools are up to code for the opening day of class.

Mechanical ventilation is preferred with use of MERV 13 filters. If that method isn't possible HEPA filters are required.

- THE INDEPENDENT

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**Charlotte's Corner**

**Summertime Q&A with Dr. Charles Winegard**

After so many months stuck at home, social distancing, and riding out the provincial lockdowns, we are all ready to get outside and enjoy the summer weather. When the temperatures rise, so do the number of summertime injuries/medical concerns that present at our local emergency department. In healthcare, we call it "the summertime surge".

We're also seeing provincial COVID-19 restrictions lift just in time for summer. More and more of us are fully vaccinated and we're excited to see (and not over FaceTime) family and friends that we haven't seen in so long. Stores are open again, summer camps are running, and we're beginning to see a glimmer of hope towards getting our "normal" lives back again.

We've all been through so much in the last 16 months; and with all this change comes a lot of questions. I'm here to answer some of the most-asked summertime questions, in hopes you can enjoy your summer while also staying safe:

**What are the signs and symptoms of heat stroke/exhaustion (in children and adults) and when do I need to see a doctor?**  
Thankfully, heat stroke is rare. The symptoms of heat-related incidents include: fatigue, nausea, dizziness, headache, chills, goose bumps, and thirst. Make sure to limit your sun exposure and sweating on hot days, as well as drinking plenty of fluids (not just water).

**How can I avoid a tick bite? And what do I do if I find a tick on myself or my child? How do I know if/when I need to see a doctor?**  
Ticks are everywhere in the woods. Thankfully, the deer tick (also known as the blacklegged tick) which causes Lyme disease, is not common to our area. If you are concerned about a tick on you, don't throw it away; bring it to the health unit or your family doctor to identify which kind of tick it is. Lyme disease symptoms do not develop for days to weeks after a bite.

**What summertime activities pose the greatest risk of injury? And how can I better protect myself and my family?**  
Activities that pose greater risk of injury are trampolines, boating, and swimming in unsafe waters. Ensure appropriate supervision in these activities and follow safety guidelines.

**Do I still need to wear a mask now that I am fully vaccinated? Can I still get sick?**  
You can still get sick, but it is unlikely. Wearing a mask indoors where you can't socially distance is a good idea. Wearing a mask outside is not necessary.

**Now that COVID-19 restrictions are lifting and I can start seeing my family and friends again, what is the best thing I can do to protect myself?**  
Ensure you and your loved ones have both doses of any vaccine. Visit with friends and family outdoors where it is easier to socially distance. And continue to wear a mask indoors.

**What are the safest summertime activities for me to participate in as restrictions are lifted? What should I avoid?**  
Any outdoor activities where social distancing is easy, are safe. The main thing to avoid would be large social gatherings, particularly indoors.

Speaking of fun and safe summertime activities: the annual Golf Fore Charlotte golf tournament is taking place next Thursday, August 19th. Your participation will help support the redevelopment project at the Petrolia hospital. If you haven't already signed up, you can register your team of four at [www.bwhf.ca/charlotte](http://www.bwhf.ca/charlotte) or contact Adelle Stewardson at (519) 383-2055.

**Enjoy the rest of your summer and be safe.**

# Editorial

## More hope than plan

It appears the province’s plan for safe schools is the same plan it has had over the past two school years, face masks all day.

That is basically the sum of the entire plan unveiled by Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Education Minister after weeks of educators and parents asking what exactly is the plan heading back to school in September as we continue to deal with living during a pandemic. Face masks and the hopeful plan that schools will not close this time around.

Dr. Keiran Moore told reporters recently all children in Grades 1 to 12 will be masked indoors but not outdoors. School sports can resume as can music programs which were off limits since blowing on a wind instrument could have spread the virus.

There was also \$25 million more for ventilation in schools - a key ask of educators and parents. But let’s examine this a little.

Many of Ontario’s schools were built in the 1960s and 1970s. Few have air conditioning. The ventilation systems for most of them are opening windows and doors in the classroom. Over 5,500 schools will share the \$25 million for ventilation announced by the Education Minister. That amounts to about \$4,510 per school. In the world of heating, cooling and ventilation, that’s not going to get you a whole lot.

And then, there is the timing. The minister announced the new cash in August. He told reporters that, yes, the schools will be ready and the proper ventilation will be in place. Really? School boards likely haven’t even heard how much they will each receive let alone put together a plan to purchase what they need.

And perhaps the minister thinks schools are exempt from the shortages and delays of everything related to construction and building maintenance.

This newly announced cash won’t have an impact by the time kids get back to class.

Parents are left praying that masks will be enough and that the federal government will finally approve a vaccine for kids under 12.

You can’t really call that a plan. It’s only a hope that masks are enough to stop COVID’s Delta variant from spreading. And frankly after 18 months, Ontarians deserve to have more than just hope.

## Letters to the Editor

The Independent welcomes Letters to the Editor.

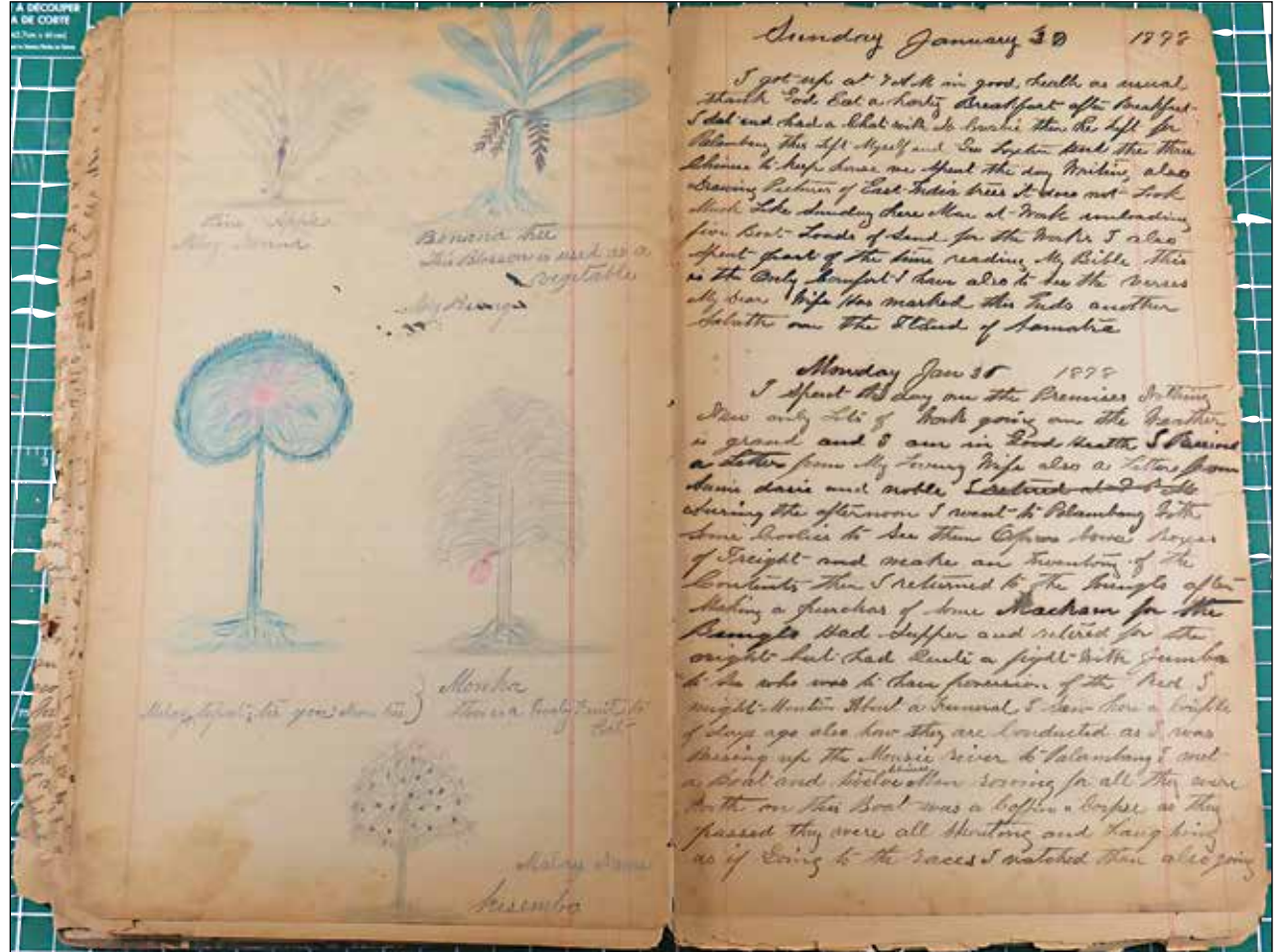
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You can also deliver letters to The Independent at 4156 Petrolia Line, Petrolia or drop them in the mail at The Independent, Petrolia, ON, N0N 1R0.

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



Staff at the Oil Museum of Canada in Oil Springs are going through some of the archives. One of the finds was the Winnett Diaries - Edward Winnett was an international driller. The first few entries of 1898 are accompanied by the only drawings in the book. Edward was in Indonesia when he drew these pictures of the local plant life.

## We’re to blame for staff shortages in restaurants

This is not unusual, but a Facebook post got my goat. It read, “Sadly, due to government handouts, no one wants to work anymore. Therefore, we are short staffed.” The sign, which had been placed at a restaurant, went on to ask us all to be kind to the servers.

Of course we should always be kind to people who we deal with, however the beginning of the sign is incorrect. There is far more at play here.

Minimum wage for restaurant servers is \$12.55 an hour -that’s \$471.25 a week and many of these jobs are not full time.

Chances are they make more than that with tips but that can be tenuous too. People are arbitrary with tips and you could be as sweet as pie, offend someone and end up with nothing but \$12.55 an hour.

The fact is the minimum wage we

allow our government to enforce means we’re not willing to pay the real cost of our meals out and expect restaurant staff to subsidize our pleasure.

A paper from the Centre for Policy Alternatives says “In Ontario, one in three children who live in low-income families have at least one parent who is working – work doesn’t pay enough to lift them out of poverty. That’s the problem with using the minimum wage as the only standard. It limits the conversation to what’s the lowest amount we can pay workers that’s politically acceptable...When we start the conversation about what it takes for a family to meet basic needs, the question of pay gets situated within a very human dynamic...Can working people afford to pay the rent, buy food, or pay the transportation costs

necessary to get to work every day? We start talking about how to make work pay within real human terms.”

It is not fair to simply lay this at the feet of restauranteurs. They’re keeping the cost of dining out lower so we will come through their doors.

In the long run, customers have to be willing to pay more for dining out so people will make a living wage. Maybe then, they’ll be able to enjoy a night out, too.



Heather Wright

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## BEEF TO GO



ALEX KURIAL/LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE PHOTO

Members of the Lambton Cattlemen's Association were busy during the annual Beef Barbecue in Alvinston Aug. 4. The event normally features families eating together in the arena but because of the pandemic, this year's meal was delivered to the cars, waiting three rows deep even before the 5 pm pickup time.

## 'Homecoming' at VPP as theatre reopens

**Alex Kurial**  
Local Journalism Initiative

The lights will come up again on the stage at Victoria Hall.

Victoria Playhouse Petrolia's artistic directors say they will reopen the theatre after a year of darkness caused by the COVID-19 pandemic for one show which will run into the beginning of October.

"Songs We Love" will debut Sept. 7 and run until Oct. 3. The new musical review will be both a throwback with songs from popular productions of the past decade and include previews of shows coming in 2022.

"This is a homecoming for our patrons, as much as it is for the artists, crew and creative team," says David Hogan, artistic director. "It is the reunion we have all been so anxiously waiting to celebrate."

"We're ringing in and celebrating the new and old," says Hogan. "It's a little bit of a celebration working here for 10 years and also just going down memory lane."

Hogan, along with fellow artistic director David Rogers and pianist Mark Payne, have all been with the playhouse for the past decade. They'll be joined by Alex Baerg, Michael Vanhevel and Jennifer Walls. Rehearsals started this week.

Hogan says the cast are "seasoned performers... we invited them back because they've been oh so popular and oh so successful here, so already the audience is excited to celebrate with them."

Hogan says he's personally looking forward to a medley from the upcoming "Roaring Twenties" performance as well as Payne's rendition of Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah.

The musical review will also be a nod to what many hope will be a better year in 2022. "It's high-energy and looking forward to the future."

COVID protocols will cap the audience at 150; 100 on the main level and 50 up in the balcony. Guests will also receive a specific time to arrive and take their seats.

The six show scheduled for 2021 will be moved to next year. "The Roaring Twenties, On Golden Pond, Dynamic Duos, The Power of Song 2: Divine Women, When Irish Eyes are Smiling and Wingfield: Lost & Found" will all be seen in 2022. Ticket holders will be contacted soon to confirm new dates and seating.

While the playhouse has been closed to the public for more than a year-and-a-half they've still kept busy inside. Hogan says cleaning, remodeling, restructuring and the installation of a new ventilation system have all taken place in advance of reopening.

Holiday performances for this year are tentatively in the works. "We're moving slowly because we don't want to announce something and have to renege," says Hogan.

"We'll just keep waiting to see what's happening in September and October. With a little bit of patience and luck we can open up full capacity, which is 400-plus, for the Christmas show."

- THE INDEPENDENT

## Petrolians pull on their boots Labour Day celebration

**Alex Kurial**  
Local Journalism Initiative

Petrolians will be putting on their boots and scoot'n down to the Farmers' Market this Labour Day weekend as a fan favourite event returns after a one-year COVID-19 hiatus.

Barn Dance is on for Saturday, Sept. 4. The Petrolia Farmers' Market Pavilion will be the venue and feature live music from Scott Manery and the Barnburners. Beer and food will be available and entry is free.

The event was cancelled last year during the COVID pandemic.

It's just part of the festivities

returning after being postponed this summer. The town has rescheduled the postponed Canada Day Fireworks to Friday, Sept. 3.

Start time is slated for 9:00 pm at Greenwood Park.

Shuttles will be provided to and from the fireworks and will have stops throughout town.

In case of rain the show will take place Sunday, Sept. 5.

"We are excited to be returning to in-person events and are very much looking forward to celebrating Canada Day with fireworks and hearing Scott Manery rock Petrolia once again," says Dave Menzies, director of community

services.

And while officials are glad to be able to put on events, there will still be pandemic precautions, says Menzies.

He's encouraging people to check current COVID-19 guidelines around Labour Day weekend to see what's allowed.

"Safety for our attendees is paramount and our staff and volunteers have signed up in record numbers to ensure that all COVID-19 guidelines are met and exceeded and to make sure that everyone has a fantastic time – together," says Menzies.


- THE INDEPENDENT

- **Emery Huszka**  
Dealer - Florence ON,  
226-373-6244
- **Julie Maw**  
Dealer - Courtright ON,  
519-384-2281
- **Dave Foulon**  
Dealer - Tupperville ON,  
519-683-2136
- **Dave Emery**, Territory Manager  
South Lambton ON,  
519-360-6072
- **Kirk Van Will**, Territory Manager  
North Lambton ON,  
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### Town of Plympton-Wyoming Development Charges Study and By-law

## NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

The Town of Plympton-Wyoming is holding a public meeting to discuss the proposed Development Charges By-law. This By-law will replace the existing By-law and will set out the new development charge rates. The meeting will be held on **Monday, August 23, 2021 6:00 p.m.**

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.  
<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/298557813>


**You can also dial in using your phone.**  
Canada (Toll Free): 1-888-299-1889  
Canada: +1 (647) 497-9373  
**Access Code:** 298-557-813

New to GoToMeeting? Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts:  
<https://global.gotomeeting.com/install/298557813>

The Draft Background Report is available for review at [www.plympton-wyoming.com](http://www.plympton-wyoming.com). Copies of the proposed By-law will be available 2 weeks ahead of the meeting. Representatives of Council and B. M. Ross and Associates Limited will be at the meeting to present details of the Draft Background Report and answer questions. Those interested in speaking are asked to register to Ella Lassaline ([ELassaline@plympton-wyoming.ca](mailto:ELassaline@plympton-wyoming.ca)) by noon August 23, 2021.

This Notice issued August 3, 2021  
Erin Kwarciak, Clerk, town of Plympton-Wyoming

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## SAY ARRRR



ALEX KURIAL/LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE PHOTO

The Captain Kidds in training were giving their best Arr's and Ahoy Mateys for the crowd during Corunna's Captain Kidd Days on the Civic Weekend. The event was smaller than usual because of pandemic restrictions but the Best Dressed Pirate contest was a hit. Jett McFadden, Trevor Dale and Gavin Summersgill won for their costumes

## St. Clair to fund half of new \$200k skate park

**Alex Kurial**  
Local Journalism Initiative

St. Clair is on board to fund a new skate park in Corunna.

Nicki Krohn of the Corunna Skateboard Park Committee made the pitch to council last month. She presented plans for a 7,200 square foot facility in the Corunna Athletic Park equipped with stairs, rails, ramps, a half pipe and a pump track.

Krohn asked if the township would consider covering half the park's \$200,000 price tag. After receiving

reports from staff and the skateboard committee, council approved \$100,000 from the 2022 capital budget toward the project.

"This is exactly the type of proposal I was hoping to see," says Mayor Steve Arnold.

"I didn't want to see any big domes like we have down in Port Lambton and I sure didn't want to see any depressions like they have up in Sarnia. Because both those things cause issues for people."

Skateboarding equipment will cost

\$100,000 while the pump track will be another \$44,500.

The remaining \$55,500 will go toward various other equipment and necessary items. The skateboard committee has already raised \$20,000 of their share.

The new park will be located in the northeast corner of the park by the Hill and Queen Street intersection. Work is planned to start next year.

The old skate park in the southwest corner of the park is slated to become more of a purely skate area.

## Wildlife groups hope to raise \$625k to add to reserve

**Alex Kurial**  
Local Journalism Initiative

Lambton Wildlife has some lofty goals for the future of the Sydenham River Nature Reserve.

The group, in partnership with Ontario Nature and the Sydenham Field Naturalists, is working to purchase a 100 acre plot of land adjacent to the current reserve. This would increase the size of the nature preserve south of Alvinston by more than 50 per cent.

In 2016, Ontario Nature purchased 192-acres of ravine land near Alvinston which borders on Middlesex County after local conservationist Larry Cornelis noticed a for sale sign on the property and approached the owners about striking a deal for the land.

An almost two kilometer stretch of the Sydenham River winds through the middle of the property.

Twenty-three species at risk have been recorded there including birds, plants, reptiles, fish and freshwater mussels – all nine of which are listed as endangered in Canada, according to Ontario Nature.

The new tract of land includes mature

forest and wetlands along with farm fields.

The wildlife group plans to let these fields grow into a tall prairie grass meadow and from there mature into a contiguous Carolinian forest and wetland habitat.

"Large tracts of forest are incredibly rare in southern Ontario. This reserve will protect the largest remaining forest along the Sydenham River and will remain a home for turtles, birds, rare Carolinian plants and countless other species," says Tanya Berkers, Lambton Wildlife president.

Ontario Nature says more than 98 per cent of Carolinian habitat has been destroyed by development.

"What was once a nearly continuous forest in southern Ontario is now a patchwork of urban space, farms and factories and the remaining fragments are virtual "islands of green," the group says.

Lambton Wildlife says the Carolinian zone has more flora and fauna than any other ecosystem in Canada. Thirty-eight 'at risk' species and 28 'rare' species are believed to live in the 100 acre zone to be purchased.

The purchase won't be an easy task

though.

The selling price is \$625,000 and needs to be raised by December. Lambton Wildlife has committed \$45,000 toward the goal.

"Lambton Wildlife was a partner in the initial Sydenham River Nature Reserve purchase and we now have the opportunity to have an even bigger impact," says Berkers.

To help with the remaining costs the three groups are looking to the community for help.

"We're inviting all residents of Lambton County to join us in protecting this beautiful area," says Berkers.

"Sydenham shouts 'Carolinian'.

To obtain land adjoining the existing reserve is such a bonus that we can't, and shouldn't, let it pass into private hands," says Mike Badyk, a retired professor and donor to the effort.

"I hope other members of Ontario Nature, and anyone else, will join me in acquiring this special place."

Donations can be made through Lambton Wildlife, Ontario Nature or the Sydenham Field Naturalists.



### REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL:

2022-2026 Wyoming Public Cemetery Care and Maintenance of Grass Cutting Services

Additional information available on our website [www.plympton-wyoming.com](http://www.plympton-wyoming.com) – Bids and Tenders

Quotation Due Date: **September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2021 at 11:00 a.m.**

Tentative Acceptance Date: September 29<sup>th</sup> 2021

Request for Quotation to: To provide grounds keeping services for the Wyoming Public Cemetery – 450 Isabella Street, Wyoming ON.

Request for Quotations to be delivered to: Town of Plympton-Wyoming 546 Niagara Street Wyoming, Ontario N0N 1T0

Attention: Executive Assistant - Corporate Services

### NEW VOLUNTEER LED SERVICE AVAILABLE IN WARWICK TOWNSHIP

**Cat Chance is a volunteer non-profit organization providing TNR services (trap, neuter, and return) in Watford to assist with addressing reports of stray cats.**

Contact Cat Chance directly to obtain services through Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/CatChanceSarnia/>

**NOTE TO DOMESTIC CAT OWNERS**  
If your cat is permitted to be outside, please ensure your cat is wearing a collar at all times to ensure it is not mistaken as a stray cat.

Cat Chance is looking for volunteers to assist with delivery of service expansion into Watford. If you are interested in volunteering with Cat Chance, please contact Cat Chance at <https://www.facebook.com/CatChanceSarnia/>.



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

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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# Oil Springs goes big to stay at home

Heather Wright  
The Independent

Oil Springs is thinking big - really big. The village recently purchased a giant inflatable movie screen for local residents. Councillor Connie McFadden says the inflatable screen itself is about 16 feet tall and is easy to assemble.

The village used money from the Creative County Fund which promotes cultural events in the region. The money was originally designated to run the annual Family Funfest. When it was cancelled because of the pandemic, the villages parks and recreation committee started looking into purchasing a screen which could be used any time.

McFadden says the screen, projector and DVD unit cost about \$11,000.

Volunteers picked up the new screen July 22 and immediately inflated it to see just how big it really was.

Then they started planning a family fun night. The village will be hosting a movie night Aug. 27 at the Oil Springs Youth Centre screening the Pixar movie Luca.

McFadden adds they may show the Oil Springs episode of Still Standing as well, since there are many new residents in the community who were not round during its premier in 2015.

While the village bought the screen to host its



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Oil Springs Mayor Ian Veen is dwarfed by the 16 foot blowup movie screen recently purchased by the village with a grant from the Creative County Fund.

own events, McFadden says the big screen is attracting some big attention, with surrounding municipalities asking about the screen and whether the village might be willing to loan it out.

# Fairs find a way around COVID-19

Heather Wright  
The Independent

The agriculture societies in Brooke-Alvinston and Petrolia-Enniskillen have found ways to provide some family fun, despite COVID-19 restrictions.

The Petrolia Enniskillen Fall Fair normally runs the second weekend in September - the first fair of the season. Ag Society President Demi Krall says they cancelled the event in the spring, because of the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19.

"It costs thousands of dollars to put on a weekend event like the fair and with COVID-19 rules, we are limited to the amount of people we can have attend. We couldn't risk putting up that kind of money and only be allowed 50 per cent capacity," says Krall.

But as restrictions started to ease, the board saw an opportunity.

"As the rules started to loosen up, we decided to do something on a smaller scale - something that people could still come and enjoy, but was less of a risk." Krall says Rumblefish will come to play at the Greenwood Park grounds Sept. 10 and Sept. 11 there will be a comedy night. There will also be an antique tractor pull during the day Saturday.

"We are very excited to be able to put on an event and we hope that we can count on the town

and surrounding areas for support. We're doing everything we can to make sure it is a fun and safe weekend for everyone," she says.

In Brooke-Alvinston, Ag Society President Dan Cumming says they're also planning to host a pared back version of the fair the first weekend of October.

"Unfortunately, there will not be a midway this year. The pandemic has heavily impacted the midway industry," he says.

But, there will be a lot of other activities for families.

"We are planning to host a tractor pull on the Friday night, with a beer garden and live entertainment," he says.

"Saturday there will be some exhibits set up in the arena auditorium and an outdoor Pet Show. We plan to hold a drive-thru roast beef dinner on Saturday as well. After the dinner, Alvinston's new Sr. A hockey team, the Alvinston Killer Bees, will be having their home opener," Cumming adds.

And the demolition derby returns Sunday.

Since the only other fair this year in Lambton will be in Forest, the Brooke-Alvinston-Watford event will be the last one of the season.

Both Krall and Cumming says the fair boards have been working with public health to make sure they have the measures are needed under the COVID-19 rules to make the events safe.

# Dawn-Euphemia wants first dibs on Shetland Park

Heather Wright  
The Independent

If the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority ever wants to sell off Shetland Park, Dawn-Euphemia wants it back.

And it doesn't want to pay a lot of cash for it.

The township recently approached the conservation authority about the park after there was confusion about who actually had title to the land. Once the situation was cleared up and it was determined the authority wanted to maintain ownership of the park with Dawn-Euphemia managing its operations, they decided a new lease agreement was needed.

Administrator-Clerk Donna Clermont has been working on the document with SCRCA officials

but is concerned about a standard lease clause which could see Dawn-Euphemia try to match any bids for the property, should it be put up for sale.

The property was first used in 1908 by local farmers holding an annual picnic in the bush. The group eventually formed the Shetland Picnic Corporation and bought the land in 1934. In 1963, the corporation gave the lands to the authority for \$1 on the condition it would be maintained for the use of the people in the Shetland area.

Council has given Clermont authority to ask the conservation authority board to wave the standard lease clause and allow Dawn-Euphemia the first opportunity to buy the land for a very low cost directly from the authority. The suggestion will have to be approved by its board.



# Hot Take: Dawn-Euphemia volunteers practice fire skills on Gould Rd.

MARIANNE VANDERSPEK PHOTOS

Volunteer firefighters spend a lot of time training including when local landowners turn over old buildings to be set on fire for training. Dawn-Euphemia firefighters had a chance to learn more about exposure protection, accountability at the scene, water supply, relay pumping and how to direct firefighters at the scene during training on Gould Line Saturday.





# Sports

## Wammes lives his Olympic dream

Barry Wright  
The Independent

Nick Wammes was not pleased with how his Olympic Games debut ended. The 21 year-old from Bothwell was hoping for more than the 27th place finish in the men's keirin event. "Tough one today," he posted following the weekend event in Tokyo. "Not pleased with it and it stings a little bit," he added. Earlier in the week, he placed 14th in the men's sprint competition and had his personal best time in the 200 metre. But despite not being satisfied with his

performance, he was buoyed by the support he received from back home.

"It truly means the world," he posted. "I got to live out my Olympic Dream! For that I will be forever grateful."

"Representing this team and this country makes it even sweeter."

The national cycling squad won two of Canada's overall 24 medals at the Games, including a gold by Alberta's Kelsey Mitchell in the women's sprint final.



## Flyers hit the ice; Flags acquire Letang

The Independent

The Petrolia Flyers hit the ice this week as the 2021-22 PJHL season draws ever closer. "Boys looking good," said G.M. Dennis Meston in a text to the Independent. "The new signees were impressive." He says the team expects to invite more players over the next few weeks in order to finalize its roster. Although not official yet, it's expected the Flyers will open the new campaign against the Flags in Mooretown on Oct. 2. Meantime, the Flags have announced the

acquisition of winger Ayden Letang from the Sarnia Legionnaires. The 19-year-old son of Sting head coach Alan Letang had two goals and seven assists in 22 games with the Legionnaires in 2019-20, following a nine goal, 16-point campaign with the Flags the year before.

Mooretown will open training camp on Sunday, August 29, followed by skates on August 31 and September 2. The cost is \$40 for all three skates. Any eligible player is asked to register in advance by emailing flagsgm@gmail.com.

## Raiders upset Cattlebarons, Giants topple Pirates

The Independent

Brendan Hecimovich had two hits and scored two runs and was the winning pitcher in relief as the Petrolia Raiders erased a three-run first inning deficit to beat the Wyoming Cattlebarons, 5-4 in Western Counties Senior baseball in Wyoming. Eric Lupton went five quality innings for Petrolia, scattering six hits and striking out five. Mike Sheppard and Shane McPhail each had a pair of hits for the Raiders while Steve Gray drove in a pair. Jeremy Park had two hits, including a home run for Wyoming. The Petrolia victory avenged a one-sided loss to the Cattlebarons in the league opener last month.

Elsewhere, Travis Moore registered the complete game victory as Corunna Giants beat Port Lambton, 8-3 Sunday. Brian Riedl suffered the loss. Garrett Miller led the Giants at the plate with three hits and a pair of RBI.

Meantime, Justin Cook went deep twice to power Dresden over Port Lambton's second team, 12-1, Corunna doubled the Raiders, 4-2 and Courtright doubled Port Lambton's second squad, 4-2.

This weekend, Port Lambton visits Wyoming on Friday at 7:30, Petrolia hosts Dresden on Saturday at 1 in a game that was previously rained out, and Wyoming travels to Dresden for a Sunday afternoon contest with the Bulls.

First pitch is scheduled for 1 pm.

## Petrolia's McLean drives in four in doubleheader win

Alex McLean had a pair of hits and drove in four runs to lead the Sarnia Brigade to a 6-1 win over Kincardine in the second game of a doubleheader last Saturday at Errol Russell Park. The Petrolia product was the winning pitcher in the opener in a 7-6 decision. He is now 3-0 on the season. Overall, the Brigade is 10-0.

Sarnia closes out its pandemic-shortened season with a scheduled game at Pullman Field against Lakeside on Friday before returning home to host the Corunna Juniors next Wednesday.

The provincial "AAA" tournament opens on August 20 in Windsor. Sarnia is the defending champion from 2019. The tournament was cancelled last year.

## Former Flyer signs extension with professional team

The Independent

Kyle Brothers will head back to Germany this fall to continue his pro hockey career in Europe.

The former Alvinston Flyer has agreed to an extension with EG-Diez-Limburg for the 2021-22 campaign.

He joined the third division squad back in January, amassing 15 goals and 41 points in just 24 games last season.

He has also played European professional hockey in Belgium and Sweden after a stellar collegiate career at Michigan's

Adrian College.

The 27 year-old from Watford had a breakout season with the GOJHL's Chatham Maroons in 2013-14 registering 65 goals and 139 points in 58 regular season and playoff games after being acquired from the Forest-based Lambton Shores Predators.

He ranks in the top 15 in goals, assists and total points in the history of the Greater Ontario Junior Hockey League.

Brothers registered 16 goals and 47 points in 32 games with the Alvinston Flyers during the 2010-11 campaign.

# MP Marilyn Gladu

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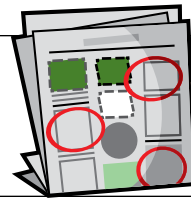


FOOD DONATIONS can be left at: Heidi's YIG - Petrolia; Wyoming Foodland & Corunna NoFrills or dropped off to

4156 PETROLIA LINE, UNIT 1 (REAR) • 519-882-3950 • MONDAY 9-11:30 AM & 4TH WEDNESDAY 6-7:45 PM

**Classified Deadline:**  
Monday @ 12 noon

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**FARMLAND** - Do you want a farmer who wants and values your opinion on how to best farm your land? One who will work with you to develop a crop plan, discuss when your farm is fit to plant and harvest to minimize compaction and maximize profit for the long term? **Then call Shawn at Font Farms (519) 384-2855.**

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## Oil Springs & area residents

with your help we raised over \$3,300 at our July 24th bottle drive. These funds will go along way in helping us with upgrades to our Legion!



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**GREAT WEST REALTY INC. BROKERAGE** John Stephens Auctioneer | Broker 519-464-3560

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Registration starts Sept 3 @ 10:00 am  
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**70 years anniversary**

**Bill & Joyce PRITCHARD**

August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1951

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**Celebration of Life**

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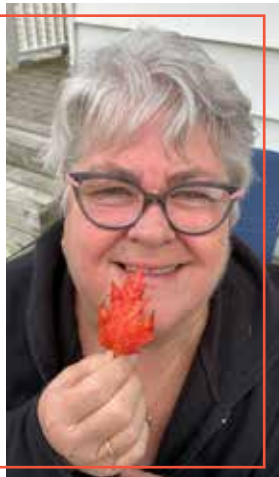
05.21.1951 - 11.25.2020

*Sylvia loved her family, friends, crafting and socializing. Her positive attitude, kind smile and contagious laughter will be missed.*

**Saturday August 14, 2021 1:00 - 4:00 pm**

Wyoming Legion (493 Erie St., Wyoming)

Hope to see you there for some stories & laughter. Who knows, maybe some quilting will break out too...



**Celebration**

**Happy 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Shirley Mitchell August 14<sup>th</sup>**

Please send cards to:  
Shirley Mitchell - Albany Retirement Village  
2-423 Albany St. Petrolia, ON, NON 1R0

**Solution**

Answers to this week's

**Sudoku**

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Petrolia



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

**BUYING**

Cash for **GOLD SILVER JEWELRY ALL COINS** - Fri August 13 Lions Hall 451 Huggard St Petrolia 9am-4pm **PRIVATE APPOINTMENTS AVAILABLE** ALL Gold JEWELRY Any Gold (even teeth) Old coins Canada USA World Covid 19 Precautions in place. Dan Jones B.A.B.Ed.53 yrs Exp. House calls available-519-818-1805

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**Wanted to Buy** - Old and unique items. Single items to entire estates. Call Chad 519-639-9102

**HELP WANTED**

**WATFORD LEGION** - In need of a **Short Order Cook**. Fridays 5 -8 and Saturday Afternoon. Experience With Deep Fryers an Asset. **Mature Part Time Bar Steward** Required As Well. Send Resumé with References to: Tony Plaus: kissmygrites@gmail.com by August 16

Senior needing **someone to rototill small corner garden** in Petrolia. Also needing someone to **help with weeding**. This is a paid position. **Please text 519-466-2646.**

**COMING EVENT**

**Petrolia Resident Compost Transfer Site** - This years site has moved to 546 Maude Street. 2021 Residents are required to have a pas to access the site. Passes are available for no charge at Town Hall now, and at the Petrolia Farmers' market during the 2021 Season. September 11, 18, 25, Oct 2, 9 & 16, 2021 from 8am until 12noon. Petrolia compost depot will accept: grass clippings, dead plants, sticks/branches under 4', and leaves. The depot will NOT accept: mulch & fertilizer bags, rocks/bricks, plastic pots, dirt/sod, plastic barriers/fencing. Tips to make it a smooth drop off: Yard waste and brush will be separated into two bins - please do not bag it together. Please use paper bags or reusable bins. Brush must be of reasonable size and length. Residents will be asked to take unacceptable items home.

**NOTICE**

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**LFA** LAMBTON FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE **OFA**

Join the LFA and the OFA for:  
**OFA's Lambton County Regional & Delegate Selection Meeting**  
**August 19, 7:00 PM via Zoom**

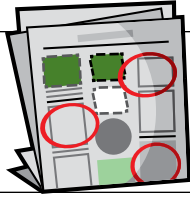
**Meeting Highlights**

- Guest Speaker - Mark Robinson From StormHunter.ca & The Weather Network
- Highlights from the Lambton Federation of Agriculture
- OFA Zone Director - Crispin Colvin
- Election of OFA Policy Advisory Council members, OFA Convention Delegates and Alternates

- The OFA Annual General Meeting is scheduled for November 22, 2021 online

RSVP At [info@lambtonfederation.ca](mailto:info@lambtonfederation.ca) or [lambtonfederation.ca/August19](http://lambtonfederation.ca/August19)

**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  
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or email: office@petrolialambtonindependent.ca

**COMING EVENTS**

**Plympton Wyoming Truck & Tractor Pull**  
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**OBITUARY**



**YAKUBOVICH**  
Mrs. Myrna

At University Hospital, London, on **Saturday July 31st, 2021**, Mrs. Myrna Yakubovich a long-time resident of Florence in her **83rd year**. Cherished daughter of the late Sherman and Hazel Card. Beloved wife of the late Steve (2017). Loving mother of Darlene Groenenberg and her husband John of Dresden and their children Andy (Colleen) and their children Darcy and Ian, and Brad (Sarina); Susan Rickman and her husband Jeff of Florence and their children Chris (Leslie) and their children Bailey and Trent, and Amy (Justin) McLellan and their children Brianna, Mykayla and Emma; and Tammy Elliott and her husband Scott of Shetland and their children Ryan (Amanda) and their children Owen, Avaya, and Eric, and Dayna (Glynn) and their daughter Elsie. Dear sister of Ida Vsetula, Luella Courneyea, Elaine (Mervyn) Jaques, and Eldon (Bernice) Card. Myrna was an active member of her church and her community. She loved gardening, her walking club and chair yoga. Myrna was a talented quilter and quilted numerous quilts with her friends of the "Village Stitchers". **A private family funeral will be held with interment at St. Matthew's Cemetery.** Arrangements entrusted to the Alexander & Houle Funeral Home, 245 Wellington St. West, Chatham, 519-352-2710. Friends planning an expression of remembrance are asked to consider St. Matthew's Anglican Cemetery, The Mental Health Network of Chatham-Kent, and Chatham-Kent Hospice Foundation. On-line condolences may be left at [www.alexanderfuneralhome.ca](http://www.alexanderfuneralhome.ca)

**OBITUARY**



**SHORTT**  
Wayne

With heavy hearts we announce the passing of our loving dad Wayne Shortt, a resident of Petrolia on **Sunday August 1, 2021** at St Joseph's Hospice in Sarnia. Born in Oil Springs **86 years ago**. Son of the late Russell and Beatrice Shortt. Father of Laurie Smith (Bill), Tami Page (Will), and James Shortt (Missy). Grandfather of Jennifer Edwards (Jay), Julie Smith, Kendra Whitney (James), Nathan Page, Britney Scholte (Kyle). Kameron Turner. Great grandfather of nine. Survived by sisters Eldine Bedell, Joyce Stinson, and Geraldine Caven (Bruce). Predeceased by sister Verlaine Bresett. Survived by many nieces and nephews. Also survived by special friends Sharon and Wendy. Wayne worked for many years as a truck driver and farmer. He loved his family time sitting around the campfire at his treasured farm. Loved to camp and socialize. **Keeping with Wayne's wishes, no service will be held. Cremation has taken place and a private family gathering will take place at a later date.** Expressions of sympathy appreciated through donations to the St. Joseph's Hospice, Sarnia. Arrangements entrusted to Life Transitions Burial and Cremation Service Inc.

**CARD OF THANKS**

**THANK YOU** - I would like to thank everyone for their birthday gifts cards phone calls and facebook greetings for my surprise 94th birthday party. It was a very enjoyable day with family and friends.  
Thanks again & God Bless You all,  
**Grace Ross**

# Church DIRECTORY

**Christ Anglican Church**  
414 Oil Street, Petrolia

**We are closed due to Covid-19 at this time.**

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](http://www.standrews-petrolia.ca)

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

**In Person Services now taking place Sunday's 10am**

We will be closed for Summer Break August 1, 8 & 15 with no Sunday Service

Service will resume August 22 at 10am

Rev. Carey Wagner  
Church Office: 519-882-1390  
www.stpaulsunitedpetrolia.net

**First Baptist Church**  
418 Greenfield Street, Petrolia

**IN PERSON CHURCH SERVICE**

Sunday Mornings 10:30am

Pastor: Alex Craig  
Church Office 519-882-2480  
email: fbcpetrolia@gmail.com  
www.firstbaptistpetrolia.ca

Find us on Facebook!  
www.facebook.com/First-Baptist-Church-Petrolia

**Wyoming United Church**  
730 Second Street, Wyoming

**In Person Services taking place Sunday's at 9:30a.m.**

Rev. Steven Longmoore  
Church Office 519-845-3963  
wyoming\_united@outlook.com

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## New director looks for new normal

**Pam Wright**  
Local Journalism Initiative

Scott Johnson has his sights set on the ‘new normal’ whatever that may be.

Recently appointed as director of education for the St. Clair Catholic District School Board, the long-time educator will take the helm from Deb Crawford in October.

“I’m curious about the new normal,” he said, noting the system will need to adapt after the pandemic “flipped the world upside down.”

The past year saw students go through three provincial lockdowns, putting students outside schools more than they were in class and adapting to online learning.

Understanding how students coped during the pandemic and reorienting them to the face-to-face learning will be the primary focus of the first few weeks of school, Johnson said.

“As a Catholic system, we need to embrace everyone and meet them where they are,” Johnson added.

The incoming director started his career in the

Greater Toronto Area, where his first job after university was in corrections.

He spent five years working at a young offender’s facility before embarking on a 28 year career as a teacher. Johnson’s experience with troubled youth has made him sensitive to students at risk of falling through the cracks.

“We want to support marginalized students,” he said.

Johnson didn’t set out in the education field with the idea of one day becoming a director of education.

“It wasn’t something I set out to do,” he added.

“One opportunity at a time presented itself and the timing just seemed right.”

Johnson said he works with an “incredible” team, adding he’s been honoured to work under Crawford’s leadership calling her “an incredible human.”

Board chairman John Van Heck said Johnson’s experience and leadership skills make him “well positioned” to lead the board into the future.

—THE CHATHAM VOICE

## HONOURS FOR MIRACLE MAX FOUNDER



TRISH ANDERSON PHOTOGRAPHY

Wyoming Lioness Lion Lois Wakefield presents Brian Schoonjans of Miracle Max’s Minions with the Melvin Jones Fellowship at the sunflower patch he uses to raise money for children’s cancer causes. It’s in memory of Max Rombouts, a two year old who died several years ago of cancer. The award is named after the founders of the Lions organization and represents dedication to humanitarian service in the highest degree. The Wyoming Lioness Club - which has become a Lion’s Club recently, nominated Schoonjans for the honour for his work in support of childhood cancer research. The fellowship program raises money to help Lions around the world with humanitarian causes including anti-drug use programs and programs to restore sight.

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