

IS IT THE MASK?



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO

Harper Rattunga, 1, waited happily for her first visit with Santa during Wyoming’s Christmas in the Village Saturday. But her happy smile turned upside down and Santa was quickly aware Harper was definitely not happy to see him. As soon as her mom and grandmother scooped her up, Harper was happy again and Santa was left saying ‘Ho, Ho, Ho?’ with a shrug before moving on to the next fan. For more photos of the event see page.

Public board ‘anxious’ for school closure moratorium to be lifted

Heather Wright
The Independent

John Howitt says the Lambton-Kent District School Board is committed to rural education; but that doesn’t mean there will be a school in every community. Howitt made the remarks as the board released its annual pupil accommodation report Nov. 23. The document outlines a continuing decline of enrolment in the

region; in the last 10 years, enrolment has declined 11.2 per cent. The board expects to lose another 221 students in the next 10 years. There are 8,421 empty school spaces. There are seven elementary schools under 150 students, including Mooretown-Courtright Public School with 93 students, Aberarder Public School with 105 students, Dawn-Euphemia Public School with 114 students, and Riverview Central School with 136 students.

Three high schools have less than 400 students, Ridgetown, Blenheim and Tilbury. But Lambton Kent Composite School has been removed from this sub-400 list because the Virtual Learning Program for Secondary Students has been tied to their location. Officials say 256 students attend in person and the Virtual student count is 366. Adding to the problem is the cost of repairing aging buildings.

SEE HOWITT PG 2

Petrolia’s Souch won’t face Integrity charges

Heather Wright
The Independent

One August day, Petrolia Councillor Marty Souch walked into the offices of *The Independent* to talk. He was angry. Souch had recently been called to the Lambton OPP station to talk to a detective who had been tasked with shadowing him for 20 days.

A staff member had reported seeing a white van watching summer students work at Bridgeview Park and taking pictures. A senior manager, who had been told of the concern but wasn’t the summer student’s supervisor, took the matter to police suggesting Souch was involved.

Souch told *The Independent* at the time, the detective said it was clear he was doing nothing wrong and that he “was pretty boring” to follow around asking “what do you do all day?”

The councillor spent an hour answering questions at *The Independent* that day but ultimately didn’t want to talk publicly about the investigation - at least not yet.

Souch was taking the matter to Mayor Brad Loosley and expected a fiery in camera meeting to talk about the OPP investigation. Souch wanted to know “what the hell was going on?”

That private council meeting occurred Sept. 12. By November, John Fleming was investigating what was called a “staff/councillor conflict.” He released his report Nov. 25. Souch was never named.

Fleming noted the OPP found no reason to file criminal harassment charges against the councillor. The investigator felt the councillor was making sure taxpayers were getting value for their dollars. “Perhaps appropriately, perhaps not, some take more extreme measures in their interest in cost constraint and spend more time and attention to that “watching than most would consider normal,” Fleming wrote.

The investigator hired by the town to look into the matter turned his report over to Petrolia’s Integrity Commissioner for review.

SEE SOUCH PG 2

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Probe into Souch unlikely

CON'T FROM PG 1

But as of now, it seems unlikely Souch will face an investigation by the Integrity Commissioner.

“There’s been no charges and there’s no investigation that I’m aware of. Now, he (the commissioner) is coming to council to do his presentation on Monday, but I’m not aware of any investigation unless I’m directed to do so,” Mayor Brad Loosley told *The Independent* Dec. 7.

The last time the Integrity Commissioner was called in to deal with a politician who had breached the council’s Code of Conduct, council voted to launch the investigation. Loosley says in this instance, that hasn’t happened.

And the mayor defended the town’s decision to withhold the name of the councillor who was the subject of the police investigation. Loosley says the town was advised by a lawyer not to name him, even though any councillors investigated for breaches of the Code of Conduct is named - whether guilty or not - in the name of public accountability.

“That’s certainly a valid point,” the mayor agreed when asked why taxpayers wouldn’t be able to hold the councillor accountable. “We’re going also by our information given to us. And my understanding is we are not to release that name. So, if it goes to the Integrity Commissioner, then yes, everything will be released.”

Loosley added the report showed “There was no proof of a councillor, at this time, doing that. So there were no charges laid... it was only an allegation.”

The summary of the report released publicly did not go into depth about the allegation - including how many times staff complained about a town councillor observing them - but it does mention there had been discussions about Souch’s tactics in the past. The report notes that had been dealt with by council.

“There may have been repetition in the past, but in this report, there was no fault in this situation at all.”

Sources tell *The Independent* the police investigation not only cleared Souch of being involved, the person taking photos in the white van which sparked a town employee to consult police was a woman.

What concerned Fleming was the actions of the senior manager who went to the OPP without letting the CAO, Rick Charlebois, deal with the issue. “The OPP became involved ahead of any reference to or knowledge of the CAO,” says Fleming.

Loosley believes the Fleming investigation focuses rightly on the actions of town staff.

“The process kind of went over the CAOs head and stated how they (directors) went directly to the police, that that’s a major issue from where I stand,” he tells *The Independent*. “There’s processes for everything, as you know, in most municipalities that have to be followed. So, the report said these were overlooked.”

Loosley, nor Charlebois have commented if action has been taken against staff members involved in the incident. Instead, the news release issued at the same time as the Fleming report talked about how employees have been specifically instructed on how and when the OPP should be called in for a workplace safety issue.

“The system has been fixed, the system has been corrected. And that’s why in the report it talks about it being an education for everyone. It’s been an education for some of the staff as well. But as far as any concern, at this time about a councillor following, in this situation, that is not the issue at all.”

In fact, Loosley agreed almost any member of council could be following a town vehicle at any given time.

“It’s a small town,” he says. “I pull out on Eureka Street, I’m following a town truck and down the main street. I’m not following the pickup - it’s just there in the traffic....that’s going to happen. I agree with that. I think there’s that, that’s the difference... you can do that - bumping into municipal staff, councillors would happen all the time.

“And that’s why you (staff) have to fill out the necessary forms and go through the proper process.”

Monday, the town’s Integrity Commissioner will speak to council about the proper way for councillors to approach problems, including they should never give direction to staff - that’s the CAO’s job. That virtual meeting is public and will be held at 5 pm.

The Independent approached Souch this week about the original police investigation and the report by John Fleming, however he did not want to speak publicly at this time, out of concern he might break the confidentiality rules councillors must follow when an issue is dealt with during an in camera (private) meeting.

He did say he was consulting a lawyer.

Florence man victim of fatal accident on Croton Line

The Independent

Chatham-Kent Police say a 21 year-old Florence man died in an November accident.

Around 10 pm, Nov. 26, police were called to a fatal single car accident

on Croton Line between Hale School Road and Oakdale Road in Camden township.

Police say the driver, the only person in the vehicle, lost control while travelling eastbound on Croton Line. He left the road and struck a tree.

The vehicle caught fire.

A post-mordem in Toronto find the driver was Jacob Lagace of Florence.

Police are still investigating the accident and ask anyone with information to contact police at 519-355-1092.



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Scammers steal about \$600,000 from four Lambton residents

Heather Wright
The Independent

Scammers have swiped \$600,000 from four people in Lambton County over the past month. Lambton OPP are investigating “multiple reports of fraud in the county with a combined total of roughly \$600,000,” said Const. Jamie Bydeley in a news release Monday. OPP say the fraudsters will often call or email claiming to be an official business or agency.

They will demand money or gift cards to cover taxes or fees for items that you did not order. One claimed to have a suitcase full of money which was being held for the victim at customs which needed to be claimed. Police say the people on the other end of the phone often say it is urgent to get the issue resolved, sometimes saying they will issue an arrest warrant if you don’t turn over cash immediately. Bydeley says at this time of year, fraudsters are more likely to

engage in “sympathetic frauds” where they pose as a loved one in with a dilemma, like a car which has broken down out of town or an arrest where they need cash for bail money. The OPP says you should “be leery regarding fees and taxes on items that you did not order - ask where the package is coming from and check your records to confirm if you placed an order matching the description.” Ask for identification of the

people on the phone and then call the agency they claim to represent before sending any cash. The OPP is urging families to talk to the elderly in their lives since they’re often the target of these scams. Let them know they can call you if they’re approached.

And if you are approached and you’re just not sure, call a trusted family member, friend, your bank or even the police before sending any money. “At the end of the day, if it seems too-good-to-be-true, it probably is,” says Bydeley.

Clean Harbors workers OK new contract

The Independent

After two weeks on the picket line, workers at Clean Harbors have a new contract. The 76 people who process hazardous waste voted 97 per cent in favour of the four year deal Monday according to

Unifor Local 914. The workers walked off the job Nov. 22 after talks broke down over issues like gender equality, seniority, wages and health and safety. At a rally last week, union officials said the local had decided to stay on strike until management agreed

to make sure women had equal seniority rights. Officials say the deal will increase wages by 10 per cent over the life of the contract and improve benefits, provides stronger language for modified work, accommodation and training.

Enniskillen put up flashing speed signs on Marthaville

Heather Wright
The Independent

Enniskillen is hoping to slow down traffic on Marthaville Road. Recently, the municipality has reduced the speed limit to 50 km/hour in the built up area between Petrolia and Lasalle Line. And it went to residents asking what they think should be done. Clerk Duncan McTavish says the survey gave some ideas on ways to keep traffic moving at a slower pace to allow pedestrians safe use of the roadway for walking, but there wasn’t a consensus. But Councillor Mary Lynne

McCallum suggested there should be a number of actions taken including keeping the speed at 50 km/h, continuing the speed enforcement by the OPP, creating a community safety zone in the area to boost the fines associated with speeding in the area and purchasing a portable flashing speed sign for drivers. “You see them everywhere now; they’re not new. And they do make people think how fast they’re going and it is kind of a slap - so slow down.” Councillor Wally Dunn agreed adding there should be some extra signage explaining what a community safety zone is. He believes if people actually

realized they would be facing double the regular fines in the community safety zone, they’d hit the brakes if they saw they were speeding. “That also might help slow people down, knowing that they’re going to be charged twice as much,” says Dunn. The township also is looking at rebuilding the road in the future and at that time, McTavish suggested, a wider shoulder should be constructed to give people a place to walk. He’s also keeping an eye on housing developments in Petrolia and the impact they may have on the traffic on Marthaville since it is a main route out of Petrolia to Sarnia.

Howitt ‘anxious’ for closing moratorium to end

CON’T FROM PG 1

Lambton Kent Composite School for example needs \$13 million in repairs in the next five years according to the report. It would cost \$21 million to replace. East Lambton Elementary School in Watford is also in need of major repairs - \$5.9 million worth - while it will cost \$8.6 million to rebuild. Right now it has 254 students and is at 62 per cent capacity, although the board projects that will grow to about 72 per cent by 2024. Dawn Euphemia school is also in the cross hairs. The board already has studied the Dresden area schools in 2010 where the idea of the JK to 12 school was considered. That would lead to the closure of Dawn Euphemia, Dresden Area Central School, TACS and Zone Central. In the end, the review team suggested changes to boundaries instead of the massive redesign of the system. On the other end of the spectrum, some schools in Plympton-Wyoming are bursting at the seams. Erroll Village school has 244 and is at 128 per cent capacity. The board expects to house another 40 students in the

next four years - even though housing developments are popping up at an astonishing rate in the district. But Howitt says with a provincial moratorium on school closures, the board cannot even think about dealing with the excess spaces or adding new spaces in growth areas. “We’re very anxious for the moratorium on school consolidations to be lifted, to allow us to reduce the number of excess student spaces that we have, which will allow us more flexibility,” he says. “School consolidations can provide significant opportunities to community. We have some very small secondary schools within our system, that limit our ability to provide program to the students. Consolidating those into a larger school would permit far more program opportunities for the students,” Howitt added. “The LKDSB is committed to rural education however, that doesn’t necessarily mean that there is school in every community, especially at the secondary level, you need to really look at where we can consolidate, to provide the best programming possible for our students.”

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Editorial

Echoes of Christmas 2020

It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas, and not in the “candy canes and silver lanes that glow” sort of way.

The current state of the pandemic has echoes of Christmas 2020.

In 2020, the headlines of this paper talked about COVID-19 cases at in workplaces. Today, there are five outbreaks, including three in schools.

In 2020, we were glued to our devices to find out when and where we could get the first vaccines. Today, parents are lining up to get their kids protected against the virus.

In 2020, as people celebrated Christmas, they also prepared for a province-wide lockdown.

Today, the scientist advising the government warned without further measures, hospital ICUs will again be filled with COVID patients.

In 2020, the number of cases of COVID-19 were rising rapidly with nearly 2,300 people getting ill a day. Today, the number of cases are rising, however so far, Ontario is reporting around 1,000 cases per day. Of course we have the added joy of a new variant, Omicron. No one really knows what that will mean for our journey through this pandemic. And frankly, in a world weary of COVID-19, it’s not a welcome guest this Christmas.

But, there is one major difference in 2021; vaccines.

Looking back at what happened in 2020, we see far more people ill and on Dec. 19, the province recorded more than 100 people dying from the virus. It was horrific. Today, sadly there are still deaths, but because of science and vaccines, the numbers are not as stark. Monday, three families lost loved ones.

This Christmas doesn’t have to be a repeat of 2020. We have a way to deal with COVID-19 to get life back to normal in 2022 - vaccines; not just in Lambton but around the globe to stop the mutations of variants which could keep us in a perpetual state of wondering what’s next.

We urge you to get vaccinated and to urge our government to share the vaccine with the world for a better 2022.

Letters to the Editor

The Independent welcomes Letters to the Editor.

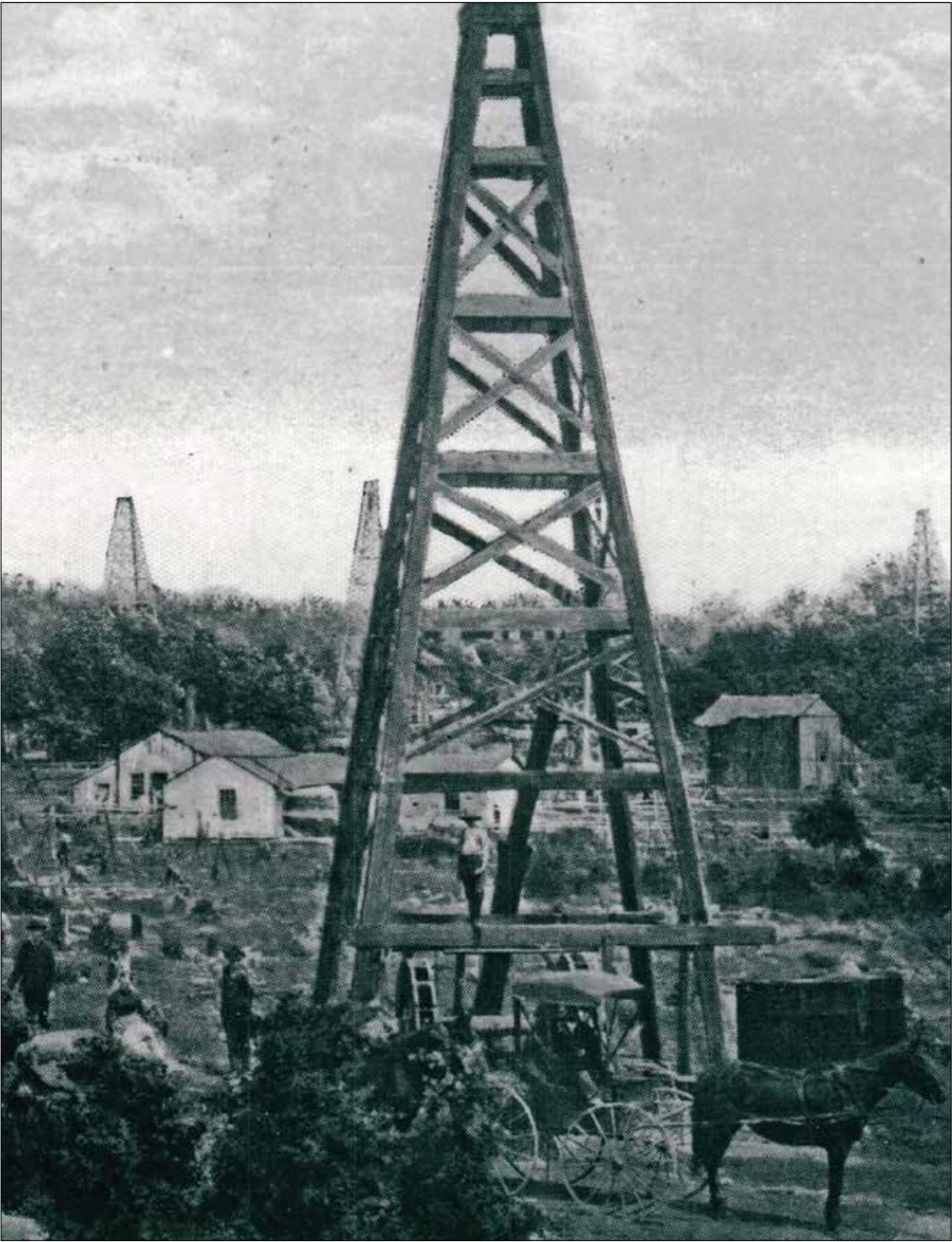
Our preferred methods to receive letters are via email to news@petrolialambtonindependent.ca (please use Letter in the subject line) or through our website www.petrolialambtonindependent.ca

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



THE DAVE BURWELL POSTCARD COLLECTION

This photo from Dave Burwell Postcard Collection is taken in Petrolia and is called “The Heart of Oil Country.”

CORRECTION: In the Dec. 3, 2021 edition of *The Independent*, in the page 7 story A firefighter for 55 years, Keith Milner’s spouse was incorrectly identified. She is Marilyn Milner. *The Independent* regrets the error.

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COVID-19 cases increasing across Ontario

Heather Wright
The Independent

Concern is mounting as COVID-19 cases continue to rise and a new variant leads to uncertainty.

For the first time since May, Ontario registered more than 1,000 people who tested positive for COVID-19 in one day.

Public Health Ontario says 1,031 people tested positive Thursday including 14 in Lambton. Four people, including one in Lambton, died of the virus. As of Tuesday, there are 65 people ill with the virus and public health is monitoring five outbreaks including one at Generations Day Care at St. Philips and an outbreak at St. Annes in Sarnia where six people are ill.

Lambton’s Medical Officer of Health Dr. Sudit Ranade says over the last couple of weeks the number of people contracting COVID-19 in Lambton has fluctuated and we have not see the surge in cases some communities – including Windsor – have experienced. “I think we attribute a lot of that to the impacts of vaccination in the

community,” says Ranade.

“This COVID pandemic surges in different places at different times and it’s not always clear why that surge is happening, but what has been fairly clear in Lambton County is that we tend to be delayed in terms of our surges...It just seems that the social networks of interaction that bring COVID into our community are delayed compared to other larger communities,” he says.

Thursday, the provincial government announced people over 50 would begin to be able to book for a third COVID-19 vaccine on Dec. 13 with appointments opening up in January. Doctors and scientists have been advocating for the move after the emergence of a new COVID-19 variant – Omicron.

Governments around the globe are changing travel restrictions because of Omicron, Ranade says people traveling into the US should take care. St. Clair County, Michigan recorded nearly 2,100 cases of COVID-19 in 14 days.

“Sure, travel is a risk,” says Ranade, “but I would say the purpose of travel

is the propensity to interact socially. It’s the larger risk.”

Meantime, Ranade says Lambton Public Health has also been busy giving vaccinations to 5 to 11 year olds for the first time. As of Thursday, about 500 children have already received their first dose and 2,000 in total have been booked.

The Ontario government has also decided bars, clubs and wedding venues will remain at 50 per cent capacity right now. The venues were supposed to be fully open under the time frame announced by the premier in October however as the number of COVID-19 cases rise, Ontario’s chief medical officer of health has held off on the move.

Meantime, the Ontario COVID-19 Science Table also acknowledged the increasing presence of COVID-19 cases means hospital intensive care units are also under pressure.

The scientist warn without extra interventions, the number of people in ICU will grow to nearly 400 in January putting pressure on the system and risking further delays for those awaiting surgery.

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Here's How It Works: Level: Intermediate

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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Landowners face bill for logs too close to the road

Heather Wright
The Independent

A Dawn-Euphemia landowner will be footing a \$1,440 bill after a logger left a pile of trees too close to a road in the township.

Bruce Kropf of B.Kropf Forestry Service Ltd. was at council Monday to complain about the bill saying when he talked to the township’s public works superintendent, he didn’t think there would be a charge.

On the Friday before the Thanksgiving weekend, Paul Dalton noticed the logs on Mawlam Road. They were about five feet from the roadway and

he was worried about someone hitting them. He called the landowner who told him “he had no intentions to move those logs and that I could shove them.” Dalton said they would be removed and he could expect an invoice.

Saturday morning he went to the site and the logs were still there. So, Dalton called the OPP to be a third party witness. He called the owner of the logging company and told him to move the logs. Kropf sent an employee to the area and it was cleared in about 10 minutes by about 2 pm.

Dalton then sent the owners of the land an invoice for his time investigating the situation and making sure

people didn’t hit the logs.

The public works superintendent says this is not the first time he’s had an issue with the company and the last time there was a problem, he held the logs until the fees were paid.

Kropf complained he was under the impression he wouldn’t have a bill because his staff moved the logs adding “We’re trying to make a living. People have mouths to feed and bills to pay.”

In the end, council decided Dalton did the right thing because if someone had hit the pile, the municipality would have faced a lawsuit.

Council is directing the landowners to pay the \$1,440 bill.

Watford Legion gets \$100,000 accessibility grant

Heather Wright
The Independent

The second floor of the Watford Legion will soon be accessible again.

Legion members heard the news the federal government approved a \$100,000 grant for accessibility improvements in September. It marked the occasion Saturday with MP Liane Rood.

President Tony Plaus says the stair lift which made the second floor room accessible has been broken for some time. The Legion applied for a grant,

but didn’t get one.

It wasn’t an urgent matter during the pandemic because the legion couldn’t rent out the building during many of the restrictions.

But recently, the organization heard it was eligible to apply for a second time. This time the money was quickly approved.

Now Plaus is working with contractors to figure out how and when the work will be completed.

The new stair lift is only one of the items which will be improved to meet today’s accessibility standards. Plaus

says the washrooms will be accessible and doors will be widened. Main entrance will also be improved.

It’s the latest in the long line of improvements the legion has made to the building which used to be the Ford dealership, including a major kitchen upgrade, a new security system and flag poles outside the legion.

Plaus is hopeful the renovations will begin in January, but it will depend on contractors and whether they can get the supplies needed to complete the job.

Indigenous trip to see Pope Francis postponed because of COVID

Heather Wright
The Independent

A Kettle and Stony Point residential school survivor will not be meeting Pope Francis after all.

Marline Cloud, 80, was one of 13 Canadian delegates selected by The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to meet with Pope Francis on Dec. 20. The trip to speak with the Holy Father is described by the AFN as the next step in completing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action

#58, which calls on the Pope to issue an apology to survivors.

Amid a growing number of calls for a papal apology for the Catholic Church’s role in the notorious residential schools, the Pope agreed to meet with three groups of Indigenous survivors – First Nations, Metis and Inuit. Cloud will represent First Nations from Ontario.


She was only six years old in 1947 when she and five siblings were forced to leave their home at Kettle and Stony Point.

Cloud stayed at the Mohawk Institute for six years and was allowed only brief summer visits back home.

By the time she had returned, she had lost her language.

Tuesday, the AFN announced the Dec. 20 trip had been postponed of the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in Europe and the emergency of the Omicron variant. Cloud told *The Independent* she wanted to hear an apology from the head of the church which was responsible for the residential school she survived.

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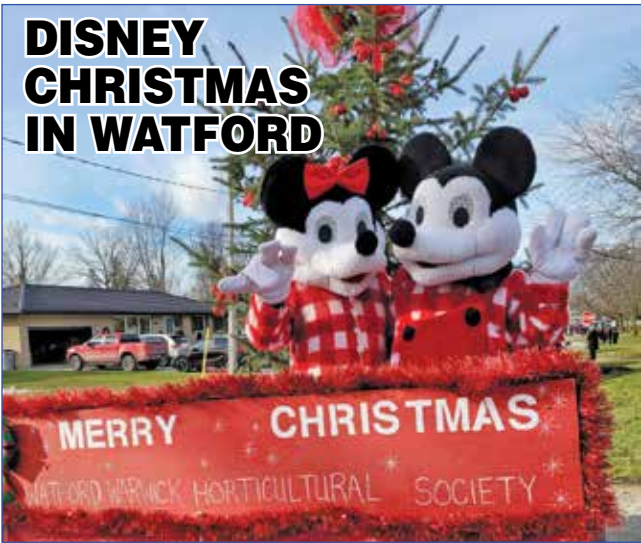
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WELCOME TO OIL SPRINGS SANTA



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO

Clifford McFadden, Jack Carpenter and Jace Spade were anxiously waiting for Santa at the corner of Victoria and Margaret Roads in Oil Springs. It was part of the Tree Lighting ceremony in the village Saturday. Firefighters chauffeured Santa around town before taking him to the municipal office where the lights on the town tree were turned



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Christmas arrived in Watford with a Disney splash Saturday. There were all kinds of Disney characters involved for this year's theme. At the top, the Watford Warwick Horticultural Society brought Mickey and Minnie along for the ride. The Watford Skating Club snagged two prizes with its Disney themed float and of course, the local fire department helped Santa make his way around town.



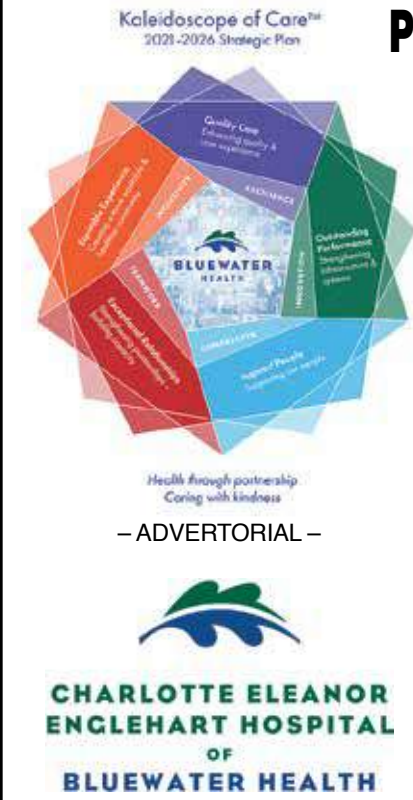
Poor internet, slow mail leave few voting options

Heather Wright
The Independent

Enniskillen Township councillors want to try electronic voting or vote by mail in the 2022 election. But there is concern neither the internet networks nor Canada Post may be able to deliver. The municipality has priced out by the e-voting and vote by mail. They're more expensive than traditional voting - nearly \$25,000 for electronic voting and \$21,000 for vote by mail compared to about \$7,000 for an in person

election - but it has increased voter turnout in other communities. But Councillor Judy Krall is concerned local internet connections couldn't handle the task. "You'd be sitting here hitting send and you could freeze and you don't know if it's been sent or there's been disruption with your internet," she told councillors Tuesday. There was also concern Canada Post's letter delivery is much slower than it used to be and that could mean ballots would not arrive on time. Councillor Wally Dunn admits he's not very good with electronics but noted other municipalities saw a big increase in voter turn out. He hopes the municipality can find a way to do it. "If you don't have internet that we can set something like that up in here (at the municipal office) there is enough room here for that." Clerk Duncan McTavish says Lambton Centennial may be available and if it wasn't, the local garage could be set up for in person voting. Council will take a second look at some solutions in January.

Petrolia Prominently Part of Bluewater Health's Strategic Plan 2021-2026



Successful organizations set clear improvement goals and measure their progress against them. These overarching objectives allow each individual to identify their contribution to achieving the targets. The 2021-2026 Strategic Plan, Kaleidoscope of Care™, is our guide for the next five years. Kaleidoscope of Care™ can be viewed on the Bluewater Health website at bluewaterhealth.ca. Our plan describes the five key areas of focus for Bluewater Health's future initiatives:

- **Quality Care** (such as updating the acute care rooms in the Petrolia hospital);
- **Outstanding Performance** (including the infrastructure work to prepare for the redevelopment);
- **Inspired People** (such as the staff and physicians who work at CEEH and are Petrolia proud and strong advocates for rural healthcare);
- **Exceptional Relationships** (like the relationship with the Town of Petrolia and Central Lambton Family Health Team on the CEEH Capital Redevelopment project); and
- **Equitable Experience** (such as the inclusive crosswalk leading to the Dufferin St. entrance).

In Petrolia, members of the Rural Health Advisory Panel, physicians, and the Central Lambton Family Health Team, elected officials and hospital staff lent their voices to guide our journey. That input reflects forward-thinking relationships – such as those we've built with the Town of Petrolia and Central Lambton Family Health Team – that allow us to achieve far more than we could on our own. This is why this community is often cited as a best-in-class example of collaborative healthcare partnerships. For the Petrolia community, the next five years will bring continued progress on the redevelopment of Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital of Bluewater Health, as we await approval on our recent Stage 2 submission of the larger capital plan. The infrastructure work over the past five years has laid the foundation for the hospital's transformation, including anticipated renovations in patient care areas such as the Emergency Department and Diagnostic Imaging. Bluewater Health would like to thank our team and partners for their hard work and commitment to the residents of Petrolia and surrounding communities, which allowed us to achieve our 2016-2021 strategic plan. Here's to the next five years!

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REVERSE SANTA CLAUS PARADE
Saturday December 11th
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Music at Location
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2 7964 Railroad Line
3 7981 Railroad Line
4 3370 Nauvoo Rd.
5 3107 Broadway St. - 1st Place
6 3109 Broadway St.
7 3219 Lovell St.
8 8046 Centre St.
9 8086 Lorne St. - 2nd Place
10 3210 Church St.
11 3291 Walnut St.
12 3282 Walnut St.
13 3267 Walnut St.
14 3264 Walnut St.
15 3214 Elgin St.
16 3231 Elgin St.
17 3254 Elgin St.
18 3219 Elgin St.
19 3269 Elgin St.
20 3270 Elgin St.
21 8077 Shiloh Line
22 7961 Railroad Line
23 3154 River St.
24 3162 River St.
25 3175 River St.
26 3201 River St.
27 3309 River St.
28 3323 River St. - Honourable Mention
29 3259 River St.
30 3264 Elgin St.
31 8030 Centre St.

Reverse Santa Claus Parade
Saturday December 11th
From 6:15pm ends at 7:30pm
1 Midlife Crisis 70's & 80's Rock/Pop (Petrolia)
2 Sarnia Legion Pipe Band
3 Crop Tour Band (Alvinston)
4 London Fighters/ District Pipe Band
5 Matt Weed & Ryan Duncan Band (Wyoming)
6 Jazzy Jingle Bell's Band (Sarnia)
7 SkyMail Jazz Band (London)
8 Field'z Navidad Wind Ensemble (London)
9 Dragon Breath Fire Show (Kitchener)
10 Incirque Stilt Walkers (Toronto)
11 Sonshine the Clowns (Sarnia)
12 Dawn Dreams Circus "Light Heart" Contact Juggling (Toronto)
13 Hope United Youth Group
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22 CHOK (Radio)
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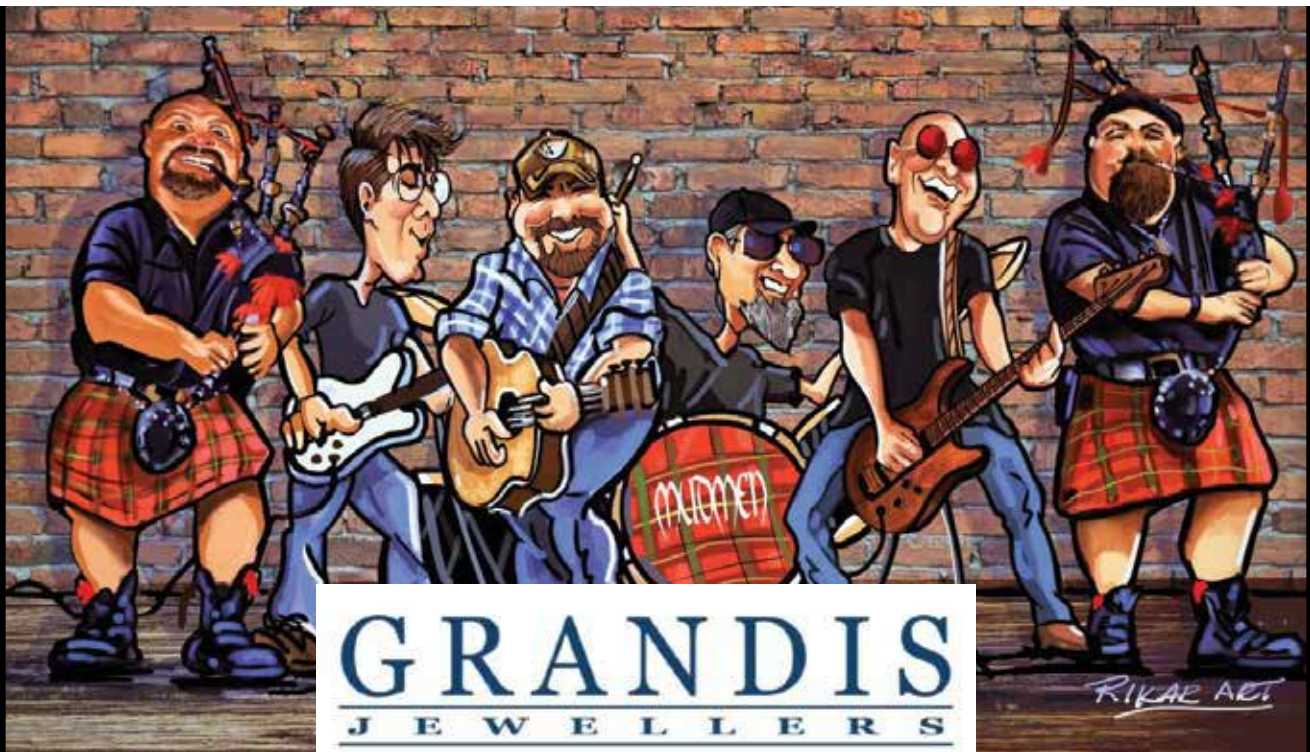
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Sports

Silver Stick returns after a one year COVID induced break

Barry Wright
The Independent

‘Tis the season!
The puck is about to drop on another Silver Stick season in the area.
The first of bevy of tournaments over the weeks to come begins this week (Thursday) with the U13 division in Watford.
The tournaments return this year

after being cancelled last year because of COVID concerns.
Petrolia and Mooretown will play in the B pool, while the host East Lambton Eagles and Lambton Shores will both compete in the C division.
The Oilers and Flags open against Ingersoll and Ilderton respectively in back-to-back games Thursday morning beginning at 8, followed by a

head-to-head contest between the two Lambton County clubs at 2:30.
Lambton Shores’ first game is Thursday at 12:20 against Port Stanley while the host team will debut against Lucan at 6:50 pm.
The tournament continues through the championship games Sunday.
There was some concern about the timing of the tournament this

year. Warwick Township is in the middle of a major overhaul of the arena complex, including a major addition for a community hall.
The arena renovation, including new washrooms, was behind schedule because of delays in getting supplies. But Monday, Mayor Jackie Rombouts told council the rooms will be ready when the first puck drops at the arena Thursday.

Meantime, the East Lambton Eagles won the U13 AE crown at the regional Silver Stick in Ayr on the weekend. They went 5-0 including a 4-0 win over Caledonia in the semi-finals and a 7-1 victory over Dorchester in the championship contest.
The Eagles U11 rep team also played in Fort Erie reaching the semi-finals before bowing to the eventual champions.

Flyers offence goes south in shutouts

The Independent

The Petrolia Flyers will be out to snap a lengthy goalless streak when they take on the Sharks in Wheatley.
The Flyers have not scored in more than seven periods dating back to a late second period power play goal in Essex last Tuesday.
Subsequently, Petrolia lost 5-0 at home to Wheatley Dec. 2 and 1-0 to the Admirals in Amherstburg on Sunday.
Cole Irwin made 39 saves in a losing cause

against the Sharks.
Tyler Richardson stopped 28 of 29 shots he faced against the Admirals.
Petrolia is at home to Essex on Thursday (Dec. 9) at 7:30. It’s the second of four home games during December where fans are asked to donate canned goods in support of the Petrolia Food Bank.
Fans who donate a minimum of three canned goods will receive a ballot for the grand prize of McDonald’s gift cards to be drawn during the Flyers contest on Dec. 23.

Flags on four game winning streak

The Mooretown Flags went two-for-two on the road and have now won four straight games.
Saturday, the Flags blanked Wallaceburg, 5-0 and beat the Blades, 7-2 Sunday in Blenheim
Logan Phillips earned his first career PJHL shutout against the Thunderhawks turning aside 30 shots. Matthew Moore also scored his first career PJHL goal for the Flags in Wallaceburg.

Meantime, Brock Barber had a career-high five points on a goal and four assists to lead the way in Blenheim. Luke Houle also scored his first career PJHL goal.
Mooretown is now 12-3 on the season. They hit the halfway point of the season on Saturday when they host the Wheatley Sharks at 7:30.
The Flags are also asking their fans to bring donations to Saturday’s contest. The team says the need is urgent.

Lancer hockey, volleyball, and basketball all on tap

LCCVI plays its home opener in LKSSAA boys’ hockey on Wednesday (Dec. 8) at Greenwood against St. Pat’s. Game time is 2 pm.
The Lancers opened the season on the road last week with a 2-0 win over Northern. Hayden Duncan earned the shutout. Zach Wilson and Miller Mailloux were the Petrolia goal scorers. The Irish opened last week

with a 10-4 verdict over Great Lakes.
The LCCVI girls opened their season on Tuesday at the Progressive Auto Sales Arena against Northern, but the score was not available prior to our press time. The Lady Lancers’ home opener is next Tuesday against North Lambton.
Meantime, the LCCVI girls’ volleyball squads have a junior/

senior doubleheader scheduled at John McGregor Wednesday before returning home to entertain Wallaceburg in a doubleheader next Monday. And the junior and senior boys’ basketball teams are at home to Wallaceburg Thursday beginning at 5:45. The hoops teams were at John McGregor Tuesday, but the scores were unavailable before our press time.

Squires to play Minto twice

Trying to claw closer to the .500 mark, the Petrolia Squires have back-to-back games with the Minto 81’s this weekend.
The 81’s visit Greenwood on Friday at 8:30. The second game is in Palmerston Saturday.
Friday, the Squires rode a 52-save performance by Brandon Campbell in his season debut in a 4-1 win over Saugeen Shores. Kole Keating led Petrolia with two goals and an assist while Isaac McLean had two assists.
Jack Hackett and Thomas Moxley, both with their first goals of the season, also scored for the Squires.
On Saturday in Tavistock, the hometown Royals scored four times in the second period on their way to a 7-2 win over Petrolia. Ethan Dupont and Tyler Lewis scored power play goals for the Squires. Anthony Hurtubise made 33 stops.

DeKoning traded

A 46-save performance in a shootout loss in LaSalle turned out to be a swan song for veteran goaltender Nolan DeKoning with the Sarnia Legionnaires on Dec. 3.
Sarnia traded DeKoning to Chatham in a GOJHL transaction on the weekend in exchange for goaltender Brenden Stroble.
DeKoning, from Wallaceburg, made his Maroons debut Sunday turning aside 39 shots in a 6-2 win over LaSalle.
Stroble, a rookie from Livonia, Michigan, was 3-5 this season with Chatham with a 3.90 goals-against average.
The Legionnaires will be out to snap a four-game winless slide when they host Strathroy and Leamington this Thursday and Saturday respectively at the Sarnia Arena. Puck drop for both games is 7:10.

Killer Bees sign Ritchie

The Alvinston Killer Bees have signed former PJHL Brendan Ritchie. The Chatham product had 28 goals and 131 points in 107 games over parts of four seasons with the Junior Kings IN Dresden between 2016-20. He finished his junior career in Lakeshore.
Alvinston is on the road this weekend with games at Strathroy and Tillsonburg this Friday and Saturday night.
The Bees lost 7-4 to Elora last weekend to drop to 0-13 on the campaign. Cody Nicolaisen had a goal and an assist for Alvinston and was named player of the game.





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PART 2
POST GAME STRETCHES

QUAD STRETCH
Stand with back to a wall or the rink boards. Kneel onto right knee (use a pad for cushioning) with right foot flat against a wall. Left knee should be bent in front of you at a 90-degree angle for support. Place hand on left knee for balance and lean back slightly to stretch right quad muscle. Hold the stretch for ten seconds. Switch legs and do three stretches on each side.

GLUTE STRETCH
Sit on the ground with one leg slightly bent behind and one leg slightly bent in front. Lower chest toward knee keeping back straight and holding chin up. Hold the stretch for 10 seconds. Switch legs and repeat three times on each side.

HIP STRETCH
Lay on back with knees bent and feet flat apart on the floor slightly more than shoulder width apart. Lower right knee to the floor and place left ankle on top of it pushing the knee towards the ground. Keep hips on the floor. Hold the stretch for 10 seconds. Switch sides and do three stretches on each side.



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A COLOURFUL Petrolia Christmas

HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTOS

Petrolia was alive with Christmas over the weekend. Friday, the lights in Victoria Park were turned on with the Theresa Davidson and her daughters, Grace, Julia and Alia, and Samuel Giles, 5, from Petrolia, getting an up close look. Then Saturday the Christmas Market and parade took centre stage. Parents for Parks won first for their depiction of the theme - The Colours of Christmas. There were all kinds of characters and antics but of course the one everyone wanted to see, including Bruce Fisher, 1, and his aunt, Colleen Dolliver with Mitch Concannon, centre, was the man himself, Santa Claus.



LIGHTING UP THE PARK





Christmas in the Village lights up Wyoming



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTOS
Santa was a very popular guy at Christmas in the Village in Wyoming Saturday. Aside from taking Christmas wishes from William Dam, 5, he helped light the Christmas tree and danced with Mayor Lonny Napper as the singers from Nightingale Chorus sang along with several hundred people who came for the evening's festivities.

CHRISTMAS MARKET
HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO
Despite the cool weather, there were lots of people looking for deals during the first Christmas Market in Petrolia. Above a vendor tries to keep out of the wind late in the afternoon and the MacDougall family from Oil Springs browsed the market looking for something interesting.

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Ken Henry

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Jeff Johnston
Robert Street, Petrolia

PS to Jeff & Sara for everything

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Holiday Reminder

There will be

NO PAPER
December 30

and


The Independent
Office will be closed
the week of Dec. 27



Obituary

FLECK


Marjorie Elda (n Beattie)



Marjorie Elda Fleck (Beattie) passed away peacefully with her family by her side on **December 4th, 2021** in her **97th year**. She was predeceased by her husband Arthur in 1992. Marjorie (Mimi) will be greatly missed by her daughter Jane and husband Tony Straatman, her beloved grandchildren Kevin, Tyler & his wife Caleigh, and Kyle; treasured great-grandchildren Myla, Leo, Georgia and another on the way. Marjorie is survived by her sister-in-law Fay Beattie and several nieces and nephews. Predeceased by parents James and Elda Beattie and her eight siblings Ann, Mary, Jack, Bob, Dave, Sid, Audrey and Lawrence. Marjorie was born August 28th, 1925 in London, Ontario. She moved to the Fleck family homestead on Petrolia Line in 1956. Marjorie and Art were lifelong farmers and sold Pioneer Seed for 45 years. Marjorie was an active member with the Burns Moore Line United Church and was famous throughout the community for her angel food cakes. Her grandsons fondly remember Mimi for teaching them to play euchre, cheering them on at all their sporting events and picking stones with them into her 80s. **The visitation will be held on Wednesday, December 8th from 4-6pm and the funeral service on Thursday, December 9th at 2pm at Needham-Jay Funeral Home, 4059 Petrolia Line, Petrolia. Masks are mandatory in the funeral home.** Marjorie loved giving to charities, her favourites were London Children's Hospital Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Ronald MacDonald House and C.E.E Hospital Foundation Petrolia or a charity of your choice.

LASSALINE

Charles Felix



Charles Felix Lassaline, 96 years of Petrolia, died peacefully with family by his side at C.E.E. Hospital, Petrolia on **Thursday, December 2, 2021**. He was predeceased by his wife of nearly 70 years, Imelda Lassaline (nee Benoit) (2020). He will be sadly missed by his children Donna and Pat Holm, Pauline and Pete Pavlovic, Yvette and Jack Parkin, Elaine and Rick Elliott, and Chuck and Darlene Lassaline. He was a proud pepe to 13 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren. He started his farming career in St. Joachim then moved with his new bride to Petrolia on their 200 acre farm. Besides farming and his family, he loved gathering with friends, playing cards and wintering in Florida. The stories of his youth will be missed by family and friends. Thank you to the entire Albany community for the care and companionship given. **A funeral mass was celebrated at St. Philips Parish, 415 King St. Petrolia, on Tuesday, December 7, 2021, at 11:00 am. Interment was in Mount Calvary Cemetery.** As expressions of sympathy, memorial donations may be made to the C.E.E. Hospital Foundation (www.ceehf.ca). **Memories and condolences may be shared online at www.needhamjay.com.**

SAMKO

John Peter

John Peter Samko died peacefully on **Wednesday, December 1, 2021** in his **83rd year**. John was a faithful member of St. Philips Parish in Petrolia and was involved with the St. Vincent de Paul Society for many years. John will be missed dearly by his many family members and friends. John will be remembered as a kind and generous person who was always willing to help. **A visitation and funeral service was held at St. Philip's Church.** Sympathy may be expressed through donations to the Petrolia Food Bank or the Sarnia & District Humane Society (cheques mailed to the funeral home or made online, please). **Arrangements entrusted to SMITH FUNERAL HOME, 1576 London Line, Sarnia.** Memories and condolences may be sent online at smithfuneralhome.ca

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Oil Springs Optimists

Meat Bingo

Thurs., Dec. 16 @ 7pm
at the Oil Springs Youth Centre

To Enter and Play, you must:

• Show Proof of Double Vaccinations

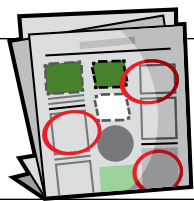
• Wear a Mask

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Classifieds

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EARLY BIRD PRIZE #1: \$500

DRAW DATE: MONDAY, NOV. 22ND AT 7:00PM

**EARLY BIRD PRIZE #2: TWO TICKETS TO THE VICTORIA PLAYHOUSE 2021
CHRISTMAS JAMBOREE, PETROLIA**

DRAW DATE: SUNDAY, DEC. 5TH AT 7:00PM

**EARLY BIRD PRIZE #3: \$50 GIFT CERTIFICATE TO THE BIG FISH STEAK &
LOUNGE, SARNIA**

DRAW DATE: THURSDAY, DEC. 23RD AT 7:00PM



FINAL DRAW: **DEC. 30TH AT 7:00PM**

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christchurchpetrolia@gmail.com

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now taking place
Sunday's @ 10:30am
Rev Carol Ferguson
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www.stpaulsunitedpetrolia.net

First Baptist Church
418 Greenfield Street, Petrolia
IN PERSON
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10:30am
Pastor: Alex Craig
Church Office 519-882-2480
email: fbcpetrolia@gmail.com
www.firstbaptistpetrolia.ca
www.facebook.com/First-Baptist-Church-Petrolia

**Wyoming United
Church**
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wyoming_united@outlook.com
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St. Clair to spend \$4.6 million on roads, bridges

Cathy Dobson
Local Journalism Initiative

St. Clair Township council has approved its \$4.69 million capital budget. That’s an increase of \$655,000 from 2021 and represents an additional \$53 on a property tax bill for a single detached home worth about \$400,000, said CAO John Rodey. While the wish list for capital expenditures is always long, the municipality is focused on maintaining what it already has, he said. St. Clair council met Nov. 25 and approved the draft budget presented by staff after reviewing the priorities of each municipal department. The only item removed from the draft was \$15,000 for playground equipment at the Paddock Green subdivision and supported by the Optimist Club. Councillors noted the playground had support from the local Optimists but said they’d prefer to wait because expansion at the Paddock Green development is expected and there may be a better location for a playground closer to Queen Street. “It’s a shame we have playgrounds at schools and the kids can’t use them after hours,” said Councillor. Tracy Kingston. “It’s a total waste.” Several council members said they understood that some residents won’t be happy their pet project was left off the list. Others said the tax increase is a difficult pill to swallow. “People have to understand there’s infrastructure here that has to be fixed and, yes, it’s bazillions of dollars,” said Kingston. “But

if we don’t fix it, it’s going to be two bazillion dollars the next time we go to do it.” Maintaining St. Clair’s roads, bridges and existing facilities has to take priority over new builds or acquisitions, agreed Mayor Steve Arnold. “We have a tremendous number of people on pension in our community, and not a really good pension,” he said. “We can’t have super big tax increases.” Among the bigger projects approved for 2022 are:

- Murray Street reconstruction from Thane to Cameron streets (\$400,000);
- Repaving St. Clair Parkway from Rokeby to Emily (\$800,000);
- Replacement skateboard park on Hill Street (\$100,000);
- Shoreline protection at Dedecker Park in Port Lambton (\$480,000);
- Bridge refurbishment on Smith Line over the Sydenham River (\$330,000);
- Bridge refurbishment on St. Clair Parkway over Marshy Creek (\$550,000).

Council approved the 2022 capital budget in principle, pending news related to Ontario Critical Infrastructure Funding (OCIF). The provincial government hinted in the fall that municipalities may receive more than their usual infrastructure grants. In 2021, St. Clair Township received \$1.17 million in OCIF grants. The 2022 capital budget is based on receiving that amount and will be confirmed in January.

SCOUTS HONOUR



PHOTO CREDIT

After a two-year pause because of the pandemic, Petrolia Beavers, Cubs and Scouts were officially invested as members of 1st Petrolia Scouting in late November. Organizers says meeting in person was a welcome change for the program which emphasizes the outdoors and group meetings.

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