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The tragic death of Lukas Smith has left his family devastated, and a large community of friends to mourn his passing. (Photo supplied)

## Smith family surrounded by strong community of friends

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Monday morning, after a week of constantly being surrounded by friends and family offering their love and support, Trish Smith and her children said goodbye to husband and father Lukas at an outdoor service at Cornerstone Community Church.

The outpouring of love “has been unbelievable,” says Trish.

“All that love he gave to others, we’re feeling it given back to us. It’s been amazing. We’ve had friends here around the clock. They loved him too, and they’re struggling the same as I am.”

Trish had difficulty putting the enormity of her gratitude into words, knowing she couldn’t have got through the past days without all the people who have supported her, especially with three children who are struggling with their own grief. Lukas’s friends, she says, “are wrapping their arms around my kids. They’re telling

stories about him, they’re making her kids laugh, and distracting them somewhat from all that’s going on around them.”

Trish describes the funeral, with a simple pine casket designed and hand-made with love by his friends.

Lukas and his two friends (Wes Wiens and Doug Hiebert) had promised each other in the past years that when the time came they would build a rough pine coffin for each other, and they had carried out his wishes.

“But they never thought they’d be doing it now. They thought they’d all be in their 70s and 80s, at least.”

They also had jerseys made for the funeral, so each of his friends had the name of Lukas’s construction company on one side, the real estate company he had just started working for on the other, and his friends’ names, along with the words, “Love people, live life,” says Trish. “That’s what he did.”

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## No word on where 150 Delater St. dogs have been taken

**Mike Balsom**  
Special to The Local

Residents in the Dock Area of Niagara-on-the-Lake continue to express shock following a raid at 115 Delater Street by officials from Provincial Animal Welfare Services last Wednesday.

A spokesperson from the Ministry of the Attorney General confirmed last Thursday that more than 150 dogs were removed from the house, which borders an empty lot on one side, and the

parking lot that was previously used by Niagara Jet Boats on the other.

The incident, which took an entire afternoon and involved at least six vans and the Lincoln County Humane Society mobile adoption trailer, has left many nearby homeowners fearful for their own safety.

The residents contacted by The Local preferred to remain anonymous, but some of them confirmed that with the number of dogs that were seized, they were afraid that

the alleged puppy mill being run out of the house may have connections to a larger crime organization.

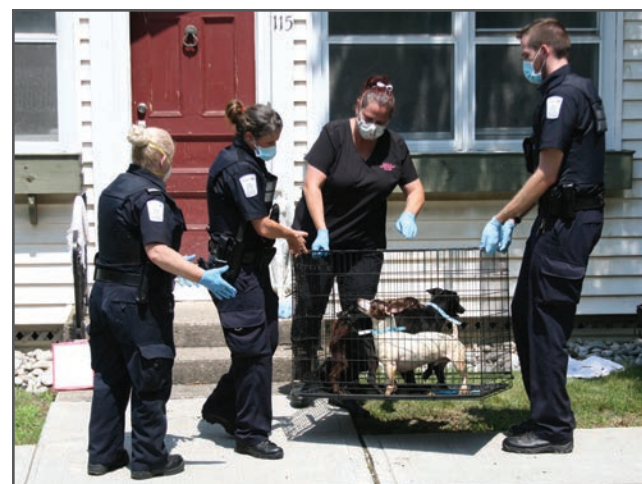
Officials entered the house just before noon last Wednesday and shortly after began transferring a number of small dogs into the vehicles and the trailer.

Officials on hand would not answer questions during the proceedings. Later, Lincoln County Humane Society and Hamilton-Burlington SPCA officials referred to The Local to the Ministry for

any updates.

On Wednesday, the Ministry emailed The Local with this information: “The removal of a large number of animals generally involves a high degree of logistics and planning to organize appropriate shelter and veterinary care. When animals are removed during the course of an investigation, AWS leverages boarding facilities, shelters, humane societies, subject matter experts and

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Officials rescue small dogs taken from a rented home on Delater Street last Wednesday afternoon. (Mike Balsom)



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# Neighbours say all is quiet at raided house

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veterinarians to provide appropriate shelter and care. It would be inappropriate to provide a specific location for the animals for safety and security reasons.”

At one point during last week's raid a woman dressed in scrubs and wearing a stethoscope, presumably a veterinarian, came to the front door to speak with the inspectors. It's assumed she was there to check on the health of each dog before bringing them out of the house.

Dogs were being removed from the home two to five at a time in various sized cages and crates. Some of them were loaded into the vans, others were brought to the mobile unit, where the dogs were removed from the cages to be placed into the kennels. The cages were then brought back to the house for another load.

One local resident had been suspicious of the activity there since the new tenants moved in just over a month ago.

“We noticed coming and going during the night,” the resident told *The Local*, “unusual traffic, cars and trucks, usually men delivering things. It was strange and creepy. And we heard lots of barking. It didn't seem to make sense. There was never anybody outside the house, never any dogs outside.”

During the raid on the house, one man arrived in a grey sedan and went inside. He was seen returning to his car at one point and then re-entering the home. Neighbours confirmed that he had been one of the people arriving late at night on a semi-regular basis.

Onlookers could hear distressed cries and barks coming from the air conditioned vans as animal welfare officials continued until about 3:30 p.m. to bring dogs out of the house. Each time the door opened a pungent odour filled the Delater Street area.

Following the raid, *The Local* was able to contact the owner of the house, Arthur Scauzillo, a lawyer from Toronto. Scauzillo said he leased the house to Christina Grein and Anthony Biondi back in April. He was shocked to learn of the activity on his property.

“I called their previous landlord (in Brampton) and I got a very good recommendation for them,” he said. “Supposedly she (Grein) had been living in the house she was moving from for a number of years and she sold antiques from the house. There was never any mention of dogs at all.”

Scauzillo also confirmed that the couple had an excellent Equifax credit report. Most of his communication

with the lessees was via email and text.

When Scauzillo was informed that neighbours had seen two women who they assumed were living in the home, he confirmed that only Grein's and Biondi's names were on the lease.

About seven weeks ago, Scauzillo visited the property. He knocked on the door but no one answered. Assuming no one was home at the time, he proceeded to do some maintenance work in the two out-buildings at the back of the property.

During the conversation with Scauzillo, he informed *The Local* that he would most likely be making a trip to NOTL late last week. Attempts to contact him for an update were unsuccessful.

Prior to the raid, some residents observed large boxes and bins being moved back and forth, and said there had been increased activity over the past few evenings, with people arriving at the house in the middle of the night and leaving in their cars with dogs.

Some who live nearby reported an odour coming from the house that seemed to get worse during recent hotter days. They also reported many garbage bags being put out at number 115 each week and an infestation of flies along the street. Some said their own dogs seemed distressed and often began to bark in the middle of the night.

A number of residents on Delater Street began to report their observations to the Ontario SPCA, and that culminated in the activity last Wednesday.

Neighbours say that since the incident last week they have noticed no activity around the house whatsoever.

In such a quiet neighbourhood, residents remain perplexed as to how this could have been occurring right under their noses. To

the best of their knowledge, the tenants of the house, with no air conditioning and windows covered by thick drapes, blankets and towels, are still living there.

Besides the fear they are living with, the general consensus in the Dock Area neighbourhood is that they are anxious to hear about any charges being laid against the residents of the house, and

they would love to know the fate of the dogs that were removed.

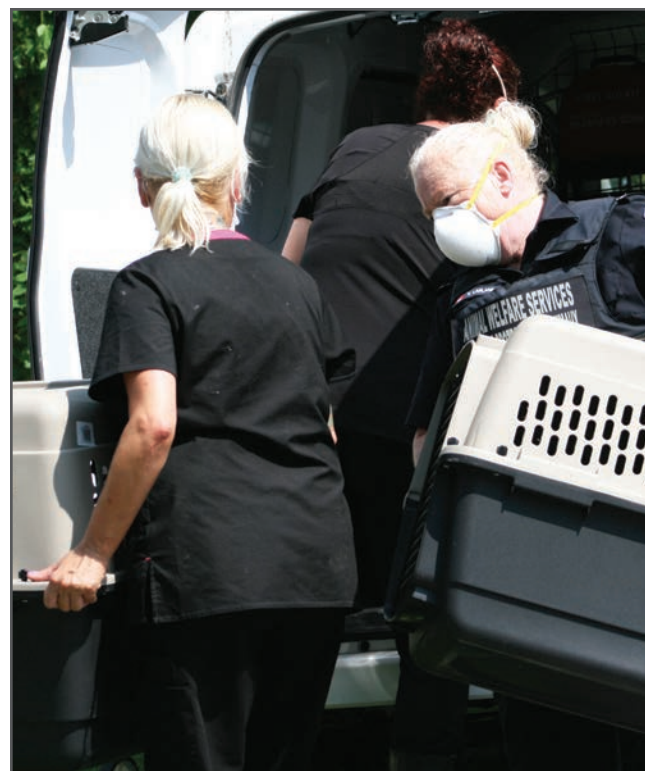
At press time there continued to be no word on any charges laid in the incident.

One woman from a suburb of Montreal called *The Local* this week, saying she had read about the raid, and was looking for a contact to see if she might find her dogs, which were stolen from her

fenced yard two years ago. As unlikely as it seems that they would be found after such an interval, she has made almost a full-time job of searching for her two male purebred brussel griffons after learning dogs are often stolen from puppy mills, and transportation of the dogs from Quebec to Ontario is common. She spoke of the huge organized rings and money to be made,

and the many dogs that are stolen on an annual basis.

A representative of the Lincoln County Humane Society said they have received similar requests from people who have had their dogs stolen, and referred *The Local* to the Ministry that would provide such information about stolen dogs, although by press time no answer had been received.



Several officials removed the dogs, apparently after they were checked out by a veterinarian. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

## Free pony rides for kids



The St. Davids Lions will be offering something a little special with their burger drive-through this Friday, July 23, on the Lions hall grounds on York Road. Pony Paradise, the company that has traditionally offered pony rides at the St. Davids Lions Carnival, will have some ponies onsite for free rides for kids, from 4 to 7 p.m. There will also be free gifts for the kids, another way to give back to the community and make up for two years of cancelled carnivals.