

## TRAIL TROUBLES



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO

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

## Workers worry as COVID-19 outbreak declared at High Park

Heather Wright  
The Independent

Some High Park Farms workers in Enniskillen are voicing concern for their safety after Lambton Public Health declared a COVID-19 outbreak on site.

They say COVID-19 protocols are not being followed at the cannabis facility and contract workers are coming in from Windsor and London - two areas of the province with high transmission of the virus.

Lambton Public Health doesn't identify workplaces in outbreak unless there is a concern for the wider public health.

But *The Independent* has obtained an internal memo

issued Friday which said six production workers had tested positive for the virus. Since then, Lambton Public Health says there has been another case reported in the workplace.

The memo, sent to staff, says "Everyone who has tested positive live together and are production employees. These people were close contacts with the initial positive case we advised you of on Jan. 13, 2021."

The company has three bunkhouses where migrant farm workers live. The affected bunkhouse, according to multiple sources, houses 12 people.

SEE HIGH PARK PG 2

## 'Incredibly urgent' need for vaccine

Heather Wright  
The Independent

Lambton's medical officer of health says there is an 'incredibly urgent need' for the COVID-19 vaccine here.

But there is concern as one of the main suppliers of the drug stops shipments of supplies to Ontario for a week.

Dr. Sudit Ranade, in a teleconference with reporters Thursday, said the area will likely see the first shipment of the Pfizer Vaccine in early February. COVID-19 hot spots like Windsor-Essex and Metro Toronto have been given the first vaccines. The province announced Tuesday all seniors in long term care in those zones have received their first dose.

But Lambton's COVID-19 transmission rates are just as high as the hot spots which have already received the vaccine. Tuesday, the University of

Toronto website said Lambton still has the third highest transmission rate in the province - behind Windsor and Peel.

And seniors, particularly in long term care, are vulnerable here. Lambton has recorded four deaths this week - all seniors and three in long term care. Fifty nine seniors in long term care in Lambton were COVID-19 positive Tuesday.

"The need is very urgent here and the sooner we can get the vaccine the better, especially for that really vulnerable population that we're trying to protect right now given the rise in our institutional outbreaks that we've seen in the last few weeks," Ranade says.

Ranade says public health is getting ready to deliver the vaccine to long term care residents within 24 hours of receiving it. But it's not as certain when that will happen.

SEE VACCINE PAGE 3

## Office **CLOSED** to the public due to provincial lockdown

We are sorry but the office of The Independent is **CLOSED** to the public during the provincial COVID-19 lockdown. We can be reached by phone at 226-738-0728 or via email at [news@petrolialambtonindependent.ca](mailto:news@petrolialambtonindependent.ca) or by dropping a letter or payment in our mail slot.



## High Park employees say COVID rules broken

### CON'T FROM PG 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

At least one of the ministry visits was sparked by employee complaints.

Employees have also been contacting *The Independent* about the working conditions in the production facility.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

She’s concerned she may have been

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Clerk robbed and assaulted in Petrolia

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

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

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

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## COVID-19 rules, outbreaks lead to school staff shortages

Alex Kurial  
Local Journalism Initiative

The Lambton-Kent District School Board is struggling to find teachers to cover classes as dozens of teachers isolated after being exposed to COVID-19.

And the director of education is hoping to hire more substitute teachers to fix the problem.

The issue comes to light after students at North Lambton Secondary School were shifted to online learning Monday. Lambton Public Health declared an outbreak at the school Sunday. The board's website says 15 students now have tested positive for COVID-19.

In a news release, the board said the school could not be operated safely because so many teachers had to isolate after being exposed to the virus.

Director of Education, John Howitt, says the exposure may not have only been at school. "In some cases due to exposure in the community, in some cases due to exposures at school, and in some cases due to exposures within their family that require them to be self-isolating," says Howitt.

The board did try to find substitute teachers to fill the gaps, but there simply wasn't anyone available. All of the substitutes were either isolating or already assigned to other schools.

The problem is twofold, Howitt says. "We are seeing an increased need for the use of vocational teachers and temporary staff in other job categories due to two main things; one, an increase of cases that has required the staff to self-isolate or two, the self-screener tells them that they are not to report to work that day due to a symptom that they may be experiencing."

Howitt says the school board is attempting to hire more substitute teachers and staff, and also contacting retired members for possible shifts.

And the union representing high school teachers says substitute teachers face another set of problems during the pandemic.

**SEE TEACHERS PG 2**

## HELPING HER NEIGHBOURS



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO

Janessa O'Hara, who grew up in Brooke-Alvinston, reaches into one of the cars at the Brooke-Alvinston COVID-19 drive thru testing centre at the arena in Alvinston Saturday. It was set up by the Central Lambton Family Health Team, which is a partner in the Wyoming testing centre, and the emergency officials in the community after public health closed Brooke Central School. Seven students there tested positive for COVID-19 and two of the cases were variants of concern. For more on the story see page 3.

## Lambton locked down, businesses question why

Heather Wright  
The Independent

Lambton businesses face tight restrictions again as the province imposed lockdown because of rising COVID-19 rates.

It means restaurants are reduced to takeout service, and gyms, arenas and personal services such as hair salons are closed. Retail businesses will be reduced to 25 per cent capacity in their stores.

The move comes as Lambton has the second highest level of COVID-19 cases per capita in the province. Testing has also confirmed the fast-moving COVID-19 variants are in Lambton, including at an outbreak at Brooke Central School near

Alvinston. (See page 3)

For small business people, the latest move is causing frustration. Officials with one Petrolia hair salon took to social media to argue personal services are not spreading COVID-19. Provincial statistics show since Feb. 23, there have been 15 cases of COVID-19 linked to personal services.

"The personal service industry has not been responsible for spread within the community and we have some of the strictest protocols of any industry," Jen Taylor writes in the social media post.

"We have done everything asked of us and then some, the protocols have worked. We will at this time adhere to the mandated closure of our shop once again."

She directs her customers to the government website showing the statistics and then adds. "If after seeing this you feel compelled to question our closure, please contact our MP, MPP, the Premier's office... We deserve an explanation given the documented low to no transmission and outbreak rates within the personal care settings."

Several gyms, including one in Corunna, decided to stay open. Sharky's in Sarnia was visited by police and bylaw enforcement officers on Monday and issued a ticket.

The gym's owners say they won't pay the ticket. An online fundraiser is being conducted to help cover the gym's legal costs.

**SEE LOCKDOWN PG 2**

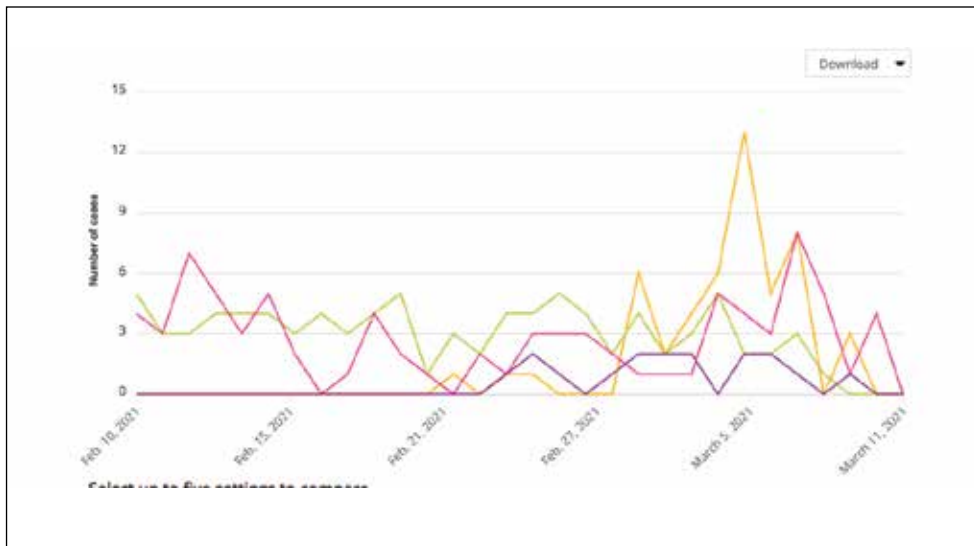
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SUBMITTED PHOTO

This graph from the province's COVID-19 website shows the number of COVID-19 cases linked to some of the businesses which will face the toughest measures under the lockdown which starts Monday in Lambton. Green is bars and restaurants, yellow is recreation and fitness, purple is personal services, like hair salons, and pink is retail. The graph spans two weeks.

## Lockdown rules in Lambton questioned

### CON'T FROM PG 1

A hair salon which was still serving customers in Sarnia was also issued a warning saying all business must stop by March 18.

And two online social media groups are urging businesses which have been closed by the lockdown order to defy it. The sites are also promoting a Saturday rally in Sarnia to speak out against the current lockdown.

While gyms, arenas, performing arts centres, personal services like hair salons, and restaurants are closed to the public by the order, other retail establishments can operate at 25 per cent capacity of their floor space. Here's a summary of changes and restrictions under the Grey-Lockdown zone which are likely to be in effect until at least March 29:

#### Gatherings

No indoor gatherings with individuals other than your household. Option to join a household if you live alone.

Outdoor gatherings capped at 10.

Weddings, funerals, and religious services, rites or ceremonies will be permitted

to allow for up to 15 per cent total occupancy indoors, or up to 50 people outdoors – announced today by the Ontario Government.

#### Restaurants

Take-out only. No sit-down service

#### Sports and recreation

Indoor sports and recreation facilities closed. Exemption for high-performance. Outdoor amenities open for personal use (no teams)

Multi-use centres open for specific social services (not recreational)

#### Meeting spaces

Closed with exceptions. Open for specific social services.

#### Retail

Further capacity limitations

50 per cent primarily groceries/convenience/pharmacy

25 per cent all other retail

Mall must screen patrons before entry

#### Other businesses

Closed with some exceptions for drive-through and pick-up

## Teachers in short supply due to isolation

### CON'T FROM PG 1

“Unfortunately occasional teachers are a little more precarious in their work, in that they don't have access to some of the types of leaves that they would if they were permanent teachers.”

That lack of benefit makes it harder to attract substitutes.

While the board pivoted the school to online learning, Kumpf says that's not ideal either.

“My OSSTF members are teaching the students that chose face-to-face learning, and they chose that in-person learning for a good reason. That works for them and their individual circumstances or for their family.

“So it makes things a little more challenging because they're learning in a format they didn't choose for themselves, unlike someone who selected the virtual school and anticipated to be learning online for extended periods of time,” says Kumpf.

The sudden switch to online learning is just one of the issues high school teachers face this year, but Kumpf says they're doing their best.

“They're working diligently to follow health and safety protocols, and are doing their best to deliver programs in less than ideal pandemic conditions,” says Kumpf.

“There are a lot of additional pieces that are added into a school day that aren't there outside of a pandemic.”

North Lambton is slated to reopen Monday, but Howitt says people need to be smart with their interactions, recognizing what they do affects an entire school community. “For the five hours that we have students a day, we're able to put all the protocols in place to help and it's difficult to accept when the same level of diligence is not going on in the community. And that's a frustration. And here is an example of where a couple of hundred families are impacted by a breakdown in protocols at some point,” says Howitt.

“I am very concerned about the increase in the number of cases within our community. It's not about the schools, the schools are a reflection of the cases in the community.”

Howitt says in Forest, three of the cases have been linked while the others “are separate, distinct exposures outside of the school. So it's not one party that was a super spreader event.

“It is multiple cases of people being in a position where they're exposed to COVID-19. That is very concerning to me. That is about choice and behaviours, and that can be controlled by following public health advice,” says Howitt.

“I just really hope that people are being vigilant out there. We're not through this yet. And the variants of concern brings that to another level.”

-THE INDEPENDENT

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The hospital is governed by a volunteer, skills-based Board of Directors which is responsible for setting policy, establishing strategic directions and monitoring organizational performance. Terms are three years for Directors and one year for non-director committee members (NDCMs). Applicants are required to live in Lambton County.

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Bluewater Health Foundation's sole purpose is to raise funds to support Sarnia-Lambton's community hospital, Bluewater Health. The Foundation is governed by a volunteer board of directors who are committed to governance, strategic planning and supporting the philanthropic efforts of the foundation. We envision a healthy community sustained through a culture of generosity, while creating, inspiring and cultivating expressions of generosity to equip Bluewater Health in its care for our community. We are committed to a diverse and inclusive board who is representative of Lambton County.

## CARING FOR PETROLIA'S CATS



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO

Julie Medeiros gives Muffin some love on a recent visit to the Petrolia feral cat colony. Medeiros and two others take turns feeding and watering the cats and making sure they're warm. Recently, they've become concerned after young children damaged the colony and stole some kittens. See the story on page 8.

## Petrolia's VPP waits for the green light

Heather Wright  
The Independent

David Hogan believes in miracles, but even so, he's grounded in the reality the Victoria Playhouse Petrolia won't be welcoming visitors in May.

But the artistic director of the playhouse says they are prepared to open the doors as soon as public health officials give the green light.

Theaters around the world went dark in March 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic swept around the world. Hogan and David Rogers hoped against hope there would be a way to present the 2020 season, but by May 1, it had become obvious the season wouldn't happen.

As the pandemic drags on, the artistic directors find themselves in the same spot for another year. And it may be September before they could open the theatre.

"I believe in miracles. And I'm so optimistic as you know, I'm a Pollyanna - positive, positive, positive - and even though all this stuff is saying no, I am on my knees praying yes. And so the pragmatic side of me is you're absolutely correct (it could be September.) The optimistic side is tomorrow we're open!"

"I believe the minute the VPP opens, then they'll come, they'll come."

Originally the hope was to simply move the shows slated for 2020 into the 2021 season. Hogan says if and when theatres get the green light to open, some of the shows simply can't happen. "We won't be doing On Golden Pond, unfortunately, for obvious reasons. Michael (Learned) and Hal (Lynden, who were to star in the play) live in the United States of America."

Currently, the border between Canada and the US is closed to non-essential business.

"If that one happened, we need full houses for that to be viable, but like something like Dynamic Duo's comedy act ...we can definitely do that for a smaller house and make it viable."

SEE VPP PG 2

## Family say OPP special teams took too long to arrive

Heather Wright  
The Independent

The OPP's Professional Standard's Branch is looking into a mental health call near Petrolia which ended with one man dead.

This after the province's Special Investigations Unit cleared two Petrolia officers of any wrong doing in connection with the night.

But the man's family says it took too long for the emergency response team to get to the Marthaville area home - time the man's wife believes may have changed that night's tragic outcome.

Lindsay Sinclair-Mainsfield says her

husband, Michael, lay injured in the barn on their property for hours before police got close enough to see him directly and hear him moaning from his wounds.

In his report, released Feb. 26, SIU Director Joseph Martino released details of the Oct. 26th call saying the officers on the scene "acted with due regard for the health and safety" of the man in distress.

In his report, Martino says at 7:29 pm that night, two officers went to the home near Marthaville after a woman called saying her husband had posted a message on social media saying "Tonight is the night," referencing suicide. She told them he had gone to their barn to do chores, but he

wasn't answering calls or texts and she was worried.

The officers, Martino says, removed the woman and the couple's children from the home when they arrived.

The director says the responding officers knew the man had a gun so immediate action was not taken. "They had been informed that the complainant was suicidal and armed with a rifle. Police intervention was clearly necessary."

Martino says the Emergency Response Team is equipped to deal with situations involving a weapon and was called in. The team didn't arrive on the scene until 10 pm.

SEE FAMILY PG 2

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## VPP won't open in May

### CON'T FROM PG 1

"I would love to say yes, the 2020 season, that will be the 2021 season; it's not. What's going to happen is when we get the green light we're gonna go and what that looks like we don't know," says Hogan.

While other theaters across the nation are trying to come up with ways to get actors on the stage even in uncertain times, Hogan says Petrolia's theatre has a distinct advantage since there are three core people who do the planning for the show.

"We don't need to bring in an army of people to set us up, that's where we're fortunate enough. We could put a two person show up," he says. "And we have so much music and comedy ...David (Rogers) and Mark (Payne) have been writing like crazy. "We have shows ready to present when we get the green light."

And Hogan says the mainstays on the VPP stage will also be ready to go. "That core of people will just say what do you need? Tomorrow? Okay, see you there."

Like so many other things during the pandemic, there isn't a timeline for when they could get started. Many public health experts have said by September, most Canadians will have had the opportunity to get a vaccine, making it more likely gatherings like theatre would reopen again, even if it is with limited audiences.

Hogan is hopeful that will happen,

saying it has become obvious that the theatre and the local business community need each other to thrive.

"Even if we had 200 people here, you know, that's 200 people that are walking up and down the streets, right. That's good for us. We need it," Hogan says.

"It's a little bit of a blessing that we're all realizing that all of us as a community here in Petrolia, we need each other. I need the coffee shop to get it. I need the grocery store to be open so I can eat.

"Now I'm appreciating the value of living in such a gorgeous small community that I can walk to there, to get my mail go there. So I want to support, and I will support, the community."

That concern for the finances of the businesses in the community is real.

Mayor Brad Loosley says 2020 has been tough enough for local merchants and he's hopeful the season will only be delayed.

"The impact on the businesses has been tremendous," he says, noting without a season in 2020, there were 40,000 fewer potential customers.

"When you get that kind of people normally...there is a huge impact to our downtown. It will be really unfortunate if we are delayed too long." A study put the economic spinoff of the theater at \$2 million.

Whenever that light turns to green, Hogan says the VPP will be ready to go. "We'll just have a great time at the theatre."

## Family says ERT response time slow

### CON'T FROM PG 1

"There is no indication they did not move with all due dispatch," says Martino.

At 10:44 pm, ERT officers peeked through a hole in the barn boards and saw the man in pain and called in paramedics.

He died Nov. 1 in hospital.

Martino considered whether the delay could be considered criminal negligence causing death under Canada's Criminal Code.

"The issue is whether there was any want of care on the part of the subject officers in their decision-making that caused or contributed to the complainant's death and was sufficiently derelict to attract criminal sanction," he says.

Martino is "satisfied...the involved officers, including the subject officers, acted with due regard for the health and safety of the complainant throughout the course of police operations."

Mansfield's widow has issues with the SIU report. It reported some of the details of his self-inflicted wounds wrong. And she says the report doesn't say she and the first officers on the scene originally headed for the barn when they arrived. Halfway there, the officers said it was too dangerous because Mansfield had a gun. They called in the ERT and evacuated Sinclair-Mansfield and their four children.

"I didn't want to go anywhere. I was caught in a mix of emotions of what the hell is going on? How did everything go so wrong so fast? I

didn't want to leave."

Sinclair-Mansfield says she was in constant contact with the OPP. "I was hounding them, 'can you hurry up and get into the barn?' I continuously reminded them and spoke to anybody since 6:35 pm." It would be 10:44 pm before the police saw him lying injured and in pain.

Sinclair-Mansfield thinks her husband's outcome could have been different with quicker intervention.

"It would have been four hours of controlling the swelling of the brain, that would have been four hours less blood loss, it would have been four hours less lying on an ice cold barn floor."

She says the delay in the ERT arriving should concern anyone who lives in a small town. "I don't feel that two hours for an emergency response team together, just because we live in a small town, it is not fair to anyone."

Sinclair-Mansfield's sister-in-law, Michelle Currie agrees. She understands why the police needed to take precautions, but the delay to get to her brother is troublesome. She hopes the OPP will consider finding a way to get resources to small towns faster.

The OPP is doing its own review of the incident. Petrolia's Media Relations Officer, Const. Jamie Bydeley says "the OPP have commenced our own review through our Professional Standards Bureau" on the incident.

Bydeley wasn't able to give details of the review since it has just begun.




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## Where's the vaccine? Lambton residents ask MPP

Heather Wright  
The Independent

The phones at Bob Bailey's Sarnia-Lambton constituency office and the question on everyone's lips seems to be "Where is the vaccine?"

As the number of people testing positive for COVID-19 in Lambton soars and the province begins to roll out the recently approved Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, Bailey says people are questioning when it will arrive in Lambton.

The answer - at least the last answer the MPP had - is late January.

"They watch the TV and the media and, hey, I'm concerned, too. So I can understand how you gotta love one in the (long term care) home, you know, maybe a senior spouse, or a grandparent you're wanting to know, you know,

where is this vaccine?"

The first of the vaccines were given to staff at hospitals and long term care before Christmas. But the Conservative government has faced criticism for the slow roll out of the vaccination program, particularly after the government stopped putting needles in arms during the Christmas and New Years' statutory holidays.

Doctors across the province took to social media offering to be part of a vaccination team and urging the province to get the vials of valuable vaccine out of the deep freezer and into arms.

As of Tuesday, 148,350 doses of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have been received, and about 48,000 of the Pfizer vaccine have been used.

There is also concern, particularly in

Lambton, where the first vaccines will go.

Dr. Sudit Ranade, Lambton's medical officer of health, expressed concern that Lambton is not among the first to receive the vaccine even though we now have among the highest case rate per 100,000 in the province.

Bailey shares the frustration noting the province has committed to vaccinating all the people in long term care in Toronto, Peel and Windsor Essex by Jan. 21.

Lambton, he says, should be in the second phase, but it is not clear when that will occur and how quickly the shipments will arrive. Public health and Bluewater Health have a vaccination plan in place and Ranade says once the vaccine arrives, they will be administered "very, very quickly."

## Corunna man faces second degree murder charge

Heather Wright  
The Independent

Lambton OPP say a 51 year-old Corunna woman is dead and a 51 year old Corunna man has been charged with second degree murder.

In a news release Friday afternoon, OPP said officers were called to

Riverside Drive early Dec. 31. They found a woman dead at the scene.

Another person was arrested at the home.

Police have identified the woman as Cheryl Vanhuisen of Corunna.

Shawn Trowbridge, also of Corunna, has been charged with second degree murder. He made a brief court

appearance and is in custody.

Police, who are still investigating the death, say the murder was "an isolated incident and there is no concern for the public's safety."

Police are asking anyone who may have information about the murder to call police at 1-888-310-1122 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477.

## Corunna woman questions reinstatement of CK officer

Officer plead guilty to domestic abuse charges

Heather Wright  
The Independent

Janine Bechard is locking her doors and looking over her shoulders again after her ex-husband - Chatham-Kent Police Const. Darcy Lunn - was given back his gun and put back on the street.

And she wants the decision to allow the man who threatened her, and her son, to return to work overturned.

On Dec. 15, Lunn plead guilty to one count of neglect of duty and three counts of discreditable conduct under the Police Service Act. The charges stem from "off-duty conduct" according to the CK police news release which occurred as far back as 2009 and were reported in 2019. Lunn plead guilty to assault and uttering threats in a domestic abuse case heard in Sarnia in May. He was given a suspended sentence and three years probation.

The Police Act charges included bringing a service firearm home without permission, threatening to strike his then wife and pushing her against a wall, and calling his wife at work and threatening to harm her.

Lunn was demoted to the rank of fourth class constable. He could be promoted to first class constable - the highest paid constable rank - in two years.

Bechard said she would testify at the hearing. That didn't happen. Instead, Bechard heard from a friend on Dec. 18 that Lunn was back to active duty and carrying a gun again.

"I began shaking, I was scared, I instantly went into survival mode," Bechard says. "I've got to protect myself, I've got to protect my son, (I

was) locking the doors, making sure the windows were locked, making sure the garage door was down, making sure my dogs were out so that if they heard any type of noise outside the house, they could alert me to it."

Bechard says Lunn's service revolver was central to the abuse she suffered over 23 years with the officer.

"Darcy would bring his gun home from work and leave it on the island in the kitchen or on the top shelf of the bookshelf in the living room," Bechard tells *The Independent*. "Darcy threatened to shoot me and my son so that he could feel better about his life and not deal with his problems."

Bechard alleges Lunn had mental health problems linked to his use of injectable steroids. Lunn is involved with Slam Wrestling under the name of Danny Steel.

"My ex-husband was protected by the badge he was given when he became an officer with the Chatham Kent police back in 1998," she says.

Bechard says he became a police officer "who strikes his wife, his son, threatens their life, brings his gun home without permission from his department, phones me at my workplace and threatening me over the phone...punches me so badly my son had to stop Darcy from continuing and possibly causing severe damage or even killing me, hitting me in the face in a stairwell falling backwards down the stairs hitting a cement wall and becoming unresponsive, blacking out and when coming to screaming for help."

Bechard says Lunn has never apologized and he didn't speak during the criminal trial.

The Police Act Hearing Officer, Terence Kelly, retired deputy chief of York Regional Police, said that Lunn's action is "completely at variance with the standards expected of members of

the Chatham-Kent Police Service."

But he says his guilty plea, which Kelly says was a "recognition of his misconduct" and that he wanted to "rehabilitate his reputation with management" or he would have considered a greater penalty.

Bechard says it's proof CK Police are protecting their own.

"It is unfortunate that the Chatham Kent Police Service does not take into consideration the victim of the abuse at the hands of their officers," she says.

Michelle Schreyer, the executive director of the Chatham-Kent Sexual Assault Crisis Centre, is concerned Lunn is back on the street since the public isn't aware of what steps he may have taken to deal with the issues that led to the domestic violence.

"In order to maintain public confidence in the system, there needs to be some kind of accountability to the public," she says. "I don't know whether or not Const. Lunn went through the work toward rehabilitation in terms of his attitudes and behaviours that led him to be violent and to threaten violence against a woman who was his intimate partner."

"That's relevant in reestablishing trust with the public."

For her part, Bechard hopes a public outcry will lead police to revisit the police act charges. And she hopes by coming forward, other abuse victims will find strength to get help.

"I need to come forward, and I need to share what's happened so that I can help other people, but not just help other people help my son," says Bechard. "He needs to have a stable base that he can make sense of this, as much as he can, and be able to move forward and be successful in his own life and not carry this and hold on to it like I did for 23 years and wonder if you know, you're ever going to be able to come out of this."

## MP Marilyn Gladu Sarnia-Lambton

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**Town of Plympton-Wyoming  
WINTER MAINTENANCE NOTICE**

**Snow Removal**

- Under the Highway Traffic Act Section 181 – Deposit of snow on Roadway, states that "No person shall deposit snow or ice on a roadway without permission in writing to do so from the Ministry of Transportation or the road authority responsible for the maintenance of the road."
- This generally applies to the snow that accumulates in laneways from precipitation and from private or municipal snow plowing operations. Those who insist on plowing snow from private property onto public roads can be fined.

**\*\*NEW for 2021\*\* No Overnight Parking on Roadways**

- There is no overnight parking on roads between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. January 7th until March 15th 2021 and November 15th to March 15th each year after.
- This allows for the Town's road crews to plow the roads safely and efficiently. We ask that you please cooperate and be considerate of the road crews when they are out doing their best to keep our roads open and in safe condition for emergency services.
- Vehicles that are not in compliance will be given a first time warning and then towed if still not in compliance.

**Parking on Roadway**

- Under the Highway Traffic Act Section 170 **'Vehicles Interfering with Traffic'** (12) *Despite the other provisions of this section, no person shall park or stand a vehicle on a highway in such a manner as to interfere with the movement of traffic or the clearing of snow from the highway. R.S.O. 1990, c. H.8, s. 170 (12).*

**Sidewalks**

- The trail on Oil Heritage Road will get plowed once. The trail will get a second plow once all of the roads and sidewalks have been done.

**Emergency Parking Ban**

- As per the Town's Winter Operations Plan section 4.6.12 cars parked on the streets during a snow removal effort may be ticketed and/or towed away. A snow emergency parking ban may be declared by Operations Coordinator, or their designate. The Ontario Provincial Police, Lambton Detachment and media will be notified when the parking ban is initiated.

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