

## DOUBLE DRIVING AT THE BRIGDEN FAIR



BLAKE ELLIS/LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE PHOTO

Three year-old Mary Scott gets some help from former Moore Agriculture Society president Dennis Robinson of Beaver Meadows to turn the team during the working wagon team competition on Sunday afternoon during the Brigden Fair festivities this Thanksgiving Day weekend. Nearly 45,000 people came through the gates for the fair dubbed 'The Grand Daddy of Them All' for the first fair since 2019. See more on pages 9, 10 and 11.

## 'It's taxpayers' money - whatever happened to transparency'

Heather Wright  
The Independent

At least one Warwick council member says they were told they couldn't release the cost of the rent for the new municipal building to the public.

The issue came up at an all-candidates meeting in Centennial Hall Oct. 5. That same day, *The Independent* published some details of the deal which saw a new municipal office built on Nauvoo Road by Watford Investment Group. The township is leasing the building for over \$13,000 a month. It can purchase the building four years into

the 25 year lease. If it continues to lease the building for the full term, it will pay over \$4 million in rent.

The council candidates were asked at the all-candidates meeting how much it is costing taxpayers. "Under the Municipal Act, cannot comment on a deal with a landlord," Incumbent Councillor Wayne Morris told the crowd "I don't know exactly, but we can't comment... We were told in camera that it's confidential. We weren't allowed to say anything."

Mayoral Candidate Todd Case asked Morris if he had seen the CAO had released the information to the newspaper and added, "It

is the taxpayers' money. Whatever happened to transparency?"

Jackie Rombouts, the current mayor who is running for re-election, didn't directly address why the information had not been public until now but said the investment is a good one. "The downtown looks amazing and beautiful" with the municipal office anchoring a new set of buildings. "It was a good thing for the downtown and for economic development.

Rombouts added she would like to see the township purchase the building after four years.

**MORE ON THE MEETING ON PG 8**

## Petrolia posters have neighbours worried about hate groups

Heather Wright  
The Independent

A Petrolia family is wondering if a new hate group is forming right in their neighbourhood.

And they've asked the OPP to investigate.

The family, whose identity we're protecting, contacted *The Independent* saying signs with what appeared to be some of the language used in the far right movement started appearing on telephone poles on James St. The photocopied signs read "Calling all local patriots" and have a QR code which links to the Telegram account of a group names Lambton County & LDN Active Club.

The family says patriot is often a term used by hate groups and they're concerned.

"The idea that these groups are advertising recruitments right outside my house, right where my kids play, terrifies me. I have gay and trans family members. My neighbours are refugees. I love my neighbourhood and want everyone to feel safe here. But they can't if hate groups are allowed to post recruitment flyers and operate in secret like this," they said.

The family contacted Lambton OPP and Petrolia's bylaw control office - which is administered by Lambton County. They were told the OPP is investigating.

**SEE HATE GROUP PG 2**



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO

One of the posters on James Street.



**We Deliver!**  
order at: **pizzahut.ca**  
4495 Petrolia Line • Petrolia  
**226-738-0696**

SCAN FOR MENU





## Concerns about hate group in Petrolia

CON'T FROM PG 1

Lambton OPP didn't return our request for information by press time.

However, *The Independent* has learned the small group bills itself as a fitness group. Text messages on Telegram shown to the paper show users talking about the Freedom Convoy and then, the owner of the group raising the issue of drag shows in local libraries. He presenting a video of trans youth, asking "Do u (sic) think it is OK for two lesbians on hormones to cover a child into transgenderism?"

The owner of the group later asks a user if they would be willing to "apply energy towards combating the above type of grooming of children."

Later, the owner says "If you are in any way sympathetic to child sex change surgery, puberty blockers to prepubescent children or promotion of transgenderism to children your beliefs do not align with ours and you will be barred from membership."

Crystal Fach of Diversity Ed is not

surprised by the online exchange saying Diversity Ed gets people "coming at us in droves" saying they are "indoctrinating their children to become trans and that we are grooming kids."

Fach says in the last few years people have increasingly attacked the trans community saying it is freedom of speech. "They're using freedom of speech to direct hate."

Fach says there are a number of groups in Lambton tracking the small hate groups popping up over the internet and acting at night.

If anyone sees signs of a hate group, Fach says they should contact police or the Sarnia Alliance Against Hate.

"It's important the community knows these groups are here because ultimately, it is vulnerable people targeted. Those folks need to know they are here so they can be watchful."

Fach adds despite the disturbing nature of the group "we have more allies than those who hate us" in Lambton.

## Lambton has a long way to go on inclusion

Blake Ellis

Local Journalism Initiative

Lambton Kent School Board has a long way to go when it looks at promoting diversity and inclusion.

Some trustees were hopeful the board is making inroads in promoting diversity.

"I bet we are in the lead," said Trustee Jack Fletcher, at the Sept. 27th board meeting as the strategic priority of its effort to remove systemic inequities in learning was reviewed as part of last school year's operational plan.

The director of education was quick to dispel that hope.

"Unfortunately we aren't leading the province," said Director of Education John Howitt. He said there are many in the community and among the staff who are resistant to the message of diversity and inclusion, noting there are many with racist or homophobic views. It shows that these efforts the school board has moved forward with, are absolutely necessary.

Lambton Kent School Board provided mandatory training for administrators and board office staff last summer. Voluntary

training was also available to clerical staff. They are also working on the implementation of the professional advisory on anti-Black racism. Two positions were also created on Sept. 1, an inclusive diversity consultant for Kindergarten to Grade 8 and a system coordinator of equity, diversity and inclusion position.

A voluntary student census was completed last March. Results are not yet available and will be released this fall. It was the goal of the Board to have the results available of the census by January 2023. One of the other goals was for the Board to submit a board improvement and equity plan to the Ministry of Education by May 2022, but the ministry currently has this on hold.

The Board's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee started meeting monthly last February. The School District started tracking hate based incidents that take place in the schools at the beginning of this school year.

At LCCVI last spring, the Lambton OPP were called in after slurs were written on a bathroom wall in a room under renovations. The entire school was locked down while the OPP investigated.

## BRINGING JOY



SUBMITTED PHOTO

École Hillcrest Gender and Sexuality Alliance group was spreading some love to Chris Tripp. The students had planned to visit the food truck owner in June. A recent incident where Tripp found a PRIDE flag in a noose at his truck, prompted the group to head down and spread some joy and kindness according to staff advisor Katie Nesbitt.



## TODD WHITE CANDIDATE Warwick Township COUNCIL

Over the last 12 years on council, and as Chair of the Development Committee, I have learned that all councils build on the good decisions of the previous councils before them. Things take time and require a council that works together, as a strong team, all pulling in the community's best interest while guiding staff to put into action the decisions of Council.

Our current council achieved many successes during this term. The build out of the Scenic Court subdivision, the redevelopment of the South end of Main Street, the continued development of our business park, the building of the East Lambton Community Centre and the interest of developers to invest in Warwick Township. *On behalf of my fellow councillors, I wish to thank staff for assisting us in delivering a successful mandate this past term.*

A focus of my platform is to continue to leverage income streams from Waste Management for the development of our community. Our agreement with them has generated significant funds thanks to the councils of the past. This has allowed the current council to have the confidence to make significant investments in the community during this term.

I have a passion for Finance and Development in Warwick Township. I have always had an entrepreneurial personality, and this led my wife Sandra and I to create Brookside Retirement over 20 years ago. We chose Watford because of our personal connection growing up in this community, its central location between London and Sarnia and our passion for small towns.

Having my own personal experience with development has helped me to understand the concerns and needs of developers in Warwick. As a councillor I will continue to work with council to address their concerns and support their developments.

An attractive downtown and new public resources like the East Lambton Community Centre, and the new YMCA, all support and help encourage additional residential development in our community. These things make a strong first impression for those looking to relocate to a new area.

As a taxpayer in Watford, I understand that the costs to run the township continue to increase.

With that, having more residents in the community, spreads those costs over a larger group of taxpayers over time.

For the upcoming term of Council, the following I believe should be top priorities:

- The renegotiating and Updating of the Community Host Agreement and emerging revenue streams with Waste Management
- The continued development of residential homes and businesses in Warwick Township.
- The continued updating and redevelopment of the Main Street of Watford.

A successful Council is the sum of many working parts. It takes for-sight, extensive planning, and financial security. The successes of Warwick Township have been years in the making and our future developments will take cooperation, dedication, and the follow thru of the next council and future councils to come.

Thank you.

**Todd White Candidate for Warwick Township Council.**



## Fit Club looking for Petrolia members linked to white supremacists

Heather Wright  
The Independent

A researcher with the Canadian Anti Hate Network believes the Fit Club looking for members in Petrolia has ties to the white supremacist movement.

Peter Smith, a reporter with the non-profit organization, spends his days researching hate groups across the nations. And the Fit Club, like the one advertised on posters near the downtown, has ties to the Vinland Hammerskins which brought the concept to Canada.

Last week, a family on James Street found photocopied posters "Calling all local patriots" to find out about the Lambton County & LDN Active Club. A QR Code on the poster led to the club's Telegram account.

The family says patriot is often a term used by hate groups and they're concerned.

"The idea that these groups are advertising recruitments right outside my house, right where my kids play, terrifies me. I have gay and trans family members. My neighbours are refugees. I love my neighbourhood and want everyone to feel safe here. But they can't if hate groups are allowed to post recruitment flyers and operate in secret like this," they said.

SEE HATE GROUP PG 2

## Voting underway

Heather Wright  
The Independent

Even though the official voting day is still four days away, the ballots have been rolling in across Central Lambton in the 2022 municipal election.

In Petrolia, Clerk Mandi Pearson is releasing daily voter turnout numbers. By 4:30 pm Tuesday, about 16 per cent of eligible voters had cast a ballot online. This is the second time the municipality is using electronic ballots.

SEE VOTE PG 3

## PUMPKIN FACE



BLAKE ELLIS/LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE PHOTO

Two-year-old Merrick Hunter picked out his pumpkin on Saturday afternoon as part of the Great Pumpkin Giveaway put on by the Optimist Club of Lambton Central-Petrolia. Set up in the parking lot of Heidi's Independent Grocer, there were 200 pumpkins to choose from. Local children were encouraged to pick up a pumpkin so they could carve them for a number of community events including community pumpkin carving, Fiery Faces Family Day and the pumpkin lighting display. Optimist organizer Carol Watt said the club decided to first do the giveaway during the COVID-19 pandemic and it has now become an annual event.



**We Deliver!**  
order at: **pizzahut.ca**  
4495 Petrolia Line • Petrolia  
**226-738-0696**

SCAN FOR MENU







HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO

The Active Club listed on a sign found on James St. is one of many waiting for entry into a white supremacy group according to an anti-hate researcher.

## Hate group linked to Petrolia

### CON'T FROM PG 1

The Independent found the small club bills itself as a fitness group. Text messages on Telegram show the owner of the group raising the issue of drag shows in local libraries. He presenting a video of trans youth, asking other's opinions about trans youth and if they would be willing to "apply energy towards combating the above type of grooming of children."

Later, the owner says "If you are in any way sympathetic to child sex change surgery, puberty blockers to prepubescent children or promotion of transgenderism to children your beliefs do not align with ours and you will be barred from membership."

Crystal Fach of Diversity Ed is not surprised by the online exchange saying Diversity Ed gets people "coming at us in droves" saying they are "indoctrinating their children to become trans and that we are grooming kids."

Smith, who has been investigating the Fit Clubs and their ties to white supremacy contacted The Independent after seeing our story.

Smith says the idea for the clubs came from a white supremacist in the US named Robert Paul Rundo. It's meant to draw people into the movement.

"He is called this movement, white nationalism. 3.0 ... white nationalism 3.0 is this idea in a culture war...you're prepared to defend yourself or commit violence. But you're also well read... they encourage these people to do all kinds of positive things to be, physically fit, to engage with philosophy, to stay off drugs, to develop and work on yourself as an individual, but all of this is kind of underscored by a current of, you know, whites only white nationalism," he says.

"When you when you look at the larger network that's operating Canada of active clubs, it is run explicitly by a very old and international, white nationalist gang or a racist skinhead gang called the Hammerskins Nation, and specifically here in Canada, the Vinland Hammerskins.

Smith has found 38 different active clubs in Canada.

What raised suspicious with the photocopied poster in Petrolia was the symbolism.

"The symbol with a wolf's head in it is a Celtic cross, which is a white

supremacist symbol... I've seen Hammerskins use it before."

Smith says the Hammerskins espouse the Nazi ideology of a superior white race and have used violence in the cause including trying to blow up a Sikh temple.

The homo and trans phobia seen in the Petrolia chat room is also part of their belief system.

"Homosexuality, transgenderism - any type of different gender expression as a subversive element created by the Jews should destroy western society. Or at the very least, they'll say it's the type of immoral degeneracy which is part of what they try to reject about modern society."

At first Smith said it appeared the Petrolia group could be linked to the Hammerskins Active Clubs. After doing some research, one of the organizers of the Lambton group was found on the white supremacist group's website in a cue to be vetted for entry.

Smith says the method the Petrolia group used - a photocopied poster pinned to a hydro pole - is typical.

"The purpose is (to get) that picture and to get it online, where it will be seen and shared by many, many more people and get things like media attention that displays these URLs or displays the ways to find them," he says.

The Independent cropped the QR code in the photo to stop people from using it online, which is a good practice, according to Smith.

"That is what they hope - that it gets put up somewhere. It doesn't matter what the article says it matters that the website is displayed. The QR code is displayed."

And while the group attempts to use media to spread its message of hate, Smith says it is important to bring the groups to light.

"We have to consider how large things will grow if we ignore them, versus how large things will grow," he says noting how fast information can move on the internet. "People need to know what, who, and what is being organized in that town... having something that is called an active club sounds very innocuous...but when you when you talk with these individuals, when you're in their online spaces, when you're in a physical spaces, it is unadulterated hatred towards people who are not European people are not perceived as white."

Voting Election Day is Monday October 24, 2022, concluding at 8:00 p.m. Ballots must be cast by the close of polls October 24th.

Who can Vote? To vote in the municipal election, you must be a qualified elector.

That means you must be:

- a resident of the Municipality in which you are voting or a non-resident owner or tenant of lands in the Municipality or the spouse of such non-resident owner or tenant;
- a Canadian citizen;
- at least 18 years of age; and
- not prohibited from voting by law

If you live in a Municipality and own or rent more than one property in that same Municipality, you must vote where you live. You can only vote once per Municipality regardless of how many properties you own.

#### Advance Voting and Proxy Voting

Municipalities using Vote by Mail and Electronic voting methods for the 2022 Municipal Election. These systems replace the traditional polling place method and eliminates the need for advanced polls and proxy voting.

#### Vote by Mail:

Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston  
Township of Dawn-Euphemia (school board only)  
Village of Oil Springs (school board only)  
Township of St.Clair

Voting Kits will be mailed to all electors on the Voters List on or about September 26th, 2022.

Electors will be able to cast their vote anytime following receipt of their voting packages, up until the close of polls 8:00 pm on Voting Day October 24th, 2022. Ballots must be received by the close of polls October 24th. The last day recommended for mailing back ballots with Canada Post is October 13th, 2022.

If you are an eligible elector and do not receive your Voting Kit by October 5th, please contact your municipal office.

#### Electronic Voting:

Town of Petrolia  
Town of Plympton-Wyoming  
Township of Warwick

Voter Information Letters will be mailed to all electors on the Voters List on or about September 26th, 2022. If you are an eligible elector and have not received the letter by October 13, 2022 please contact your municipal office.

Electors will be able to cast their vote starting at 9:00 am on Friday, October 14, 2022, up until the close of polls 8:00 pm on Voting Day October 24th, 2022.

#### Traditional Ballot exclusively

Township of Enniskillen (school board only)

Electors will be able to cast their vote in person on the Advance Voting Day, Saturday, October 15, 2022 from 12:00 noon to 5:00 pm and on Election Day, Monday, October 24, 2022 from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm at your Municipal Office.

### 2022 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Notice to the municipal electors of the



#### NOTICE OF ELECTION

Municipal Elections Act, 1996 (s. 40)

Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston

Vote By Mail

MAYOR 1

COUNCIL MEMBERS 4

Janet Denkers, Clerk

Township of Enniskillen

(ALL ACCLAIMED)

MAYOR 1

COUNCIL MEMBERS 4

Duncan McTavish, Clerk

Town of Petrolia

On-Line/Paper Ballot Voting

MAYOR 1

COUNCIL MEMBERS 6

Mandi Pearson, Clerk

Township of St. Clair

Vote By Mail

MAYOR 1

DEPUTY MAYOR 1

COUNCIL MEMBERS: 3

Ward 1 3

Ward 2 2

Jeff Baranek, Clerk

For General Election Inquiry:

1. Contact your local Municipal Office by phone or stopping in.
2. Visit your local Municipalities website.
3. Municipalities conducting Electronic Voting will have "how to" videos posted on their individual websites.

To check that you are on the Voters' List:

1. Contact your local Municipal Office by phone or stopping in.

Township of Dawn-Euphemia

(ALL ACCLAIMED)

MAYOR 1

COUNCIL MEMBERS 4

Donna Clermont, Clerk

Village of Oil Springs

(ALL ACCLAIMED)

MAYOR 1

COUNCIL MEMBERS 4

Martha Gawley, Clerk

Town of Plympton-Wyoming

On-Line/Telephone Voting

MAYOR 1

DEPUTY MAYOR (ACCLAIMED) 1

COUNCIL MEMBERS 5

Erin Kwarciak, Clerk

Township of Warwick

On-Line Voting

MAYOR 1

COUNCIL MEMBERS 4

Amanda Gubbels, Clerk

#### BOARDS OF EDUCATION:

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE LAMBTON KENT DISTRICT SCHOOL**

**NORTH LAMBTON:** Lambton Shores, Plympton-Wyoming, Warwick.

(1) TRUSTEE

**CENTRAL LAMBTON:**

St. Clair, Brooke-Alvinston, Oil Springs, Petrolia, Enniskillen.

(1) TRUSTEE

**SOUTH LAMBTON/NORTH KENT:** Dawn-Euphemia, Chatham-Kent.

(1) TRUSTEE

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE ST. CLAIR CATHOLIC DISTRICT**

**NORTH & CENTRAL LAMBTON:** Brooke-Alvinston, Enniskillen, Petrolia, Oil Springs, Plympton-Wyoming, Lambton Shores, Warwick.

(1) TRUSTEE (ACCLAIMED)

**SOUTH LAMBTON/EAST KENT:**

Dawn-Euphemia, St. Clair, East Kent.

(1) TRUSTEE (ACCLAIMED)

**FRENCH LANGUAGE PUBLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

**Conseil Scolaire Viamonde - Area 8**

geographic area 8 comprised of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, and Counties of Elgin, Haldimand, Lambton, Norfolk, and Oxford

(1) TRUSTEE (ACCLAIMED)

**FRENCH LANGUAGE SEPARATE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

**Conseil Scolaire Catholique Providence - Area 1**

geographic area 1 comprised of the Counties of Bruce, Grey, Huron, Lambton, and Perth

(1) TRUSTEE