

## OPINION

## A solution no one asked for

During my years as a graduate student at the University of Guelph, I was lucky enough to live in my Mum's childhood home smack dab in the middle of Puslinch. Like many other small hamlets that dot the areas around Guelph, Puslinch was a creation of a bygone era when farmland was carved up willy-nilly for the creation of convenient housing.

In the 1960s when Mum was a little girl, there were still plenty of livestock farms that dotted the hills of Puslinch Township, but by the time I was traveling those same roads to head to class in Guelph there was only one beef farm remaining. Not only was the livestock gone, so was most of the crop production, and where the farmland once stretched there were pockets built up with sprawling rural mansions, complete with massive lawns and the occasional horse.

To make matters worse, the main artery connecting Guelph and Hamilton, Highway 6, couldn't handle the traffic that now flowed through that area and it was a regular occurrence to see folks parked out in front of the house, about 2.4 kilometres away from the traffic light they would eventually get to one village over in Morriston. For a long time this has been a reality of that area, and now that area of Ontario is an excellent reminder of the danger that taking the lazy approach of fragmenting farmland for housing has on our food production system.

In April of this year, the Ford government released a proposed updated version of the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) and coupled it with Bill 97: *Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act*. While the PPS doesn't have a catchy name, it can be considered a municipal planner's bible: a set of rules that guide how land is opened up for development... in essence dictating where and how we can grow, whether it be the smallest village or our largest cities.

Planning is not in my realm of expertise, but thankfully when I was back living in Puslinch I did manage to spend a great deal of time learning about agricultural economics. And, unlike most things in the field of economics, there is a very strong consensus that fragmenting farmland is a rather idiotic thing to do. Not only does it lower the economic output of the land itself, it leads to reductions in efficiency for operators and increases nuisance interactions with non-farming public that does not have the information or experience to be patient with occasion-

**Stewart Skinner**  
The Ivory Silo



ally noisy, smelly, and occasionally annoying farming going on in the neighbouring fields with the piece of toast they're eating at the time.

Given that the agri-food industry is Ontario's largest employer and the overwhelmingly strong consensus that fragmentation of farmland is not a good thing to do, it was very shocking to see that the proposed PPS will do exactly that, fragment the farmland. Every single farm in this province will be allowed to slice and dice up to three lots off themselves. This goes far and beyond the sensible policy that allowed surplus farmhouses to be severed off from farms, given in those cases the house is already there along with the supporting infrastructure a house needs; most notably septic, water, and utilities.

This province needs housing and lots of it. As much as many love to say it's better to grow up and not out, we have to come to terms that this province needs to pave over some farmland to make room for everybody. Take Listowel for example – almost every urban brown-field of my youth has been infilled, often with multi-unit housing. Listowel has to grow out to make room, however it is far more efficient to build higher density housing in clusters around existing urban areas than carving up the rural backroads three lots at a time.

There are parts of both Bill 97 and the PPS that make sense; adding accountability to ensure municipal governments hit targeted approval deadlines for instance. But whoever came up with the idea to carve up farms, mixing a much higher number of non-farming people into areas like Perth County, one of Ontario's largest livestock producing regions, has seemingly never left the towers of Toronto.

It is hard to understand the motivations for these changes without becoming cynical. Ontario needs affordable family housing that is built around important supporting infrastructure. Smart planning today in our small towns like Listowel means that in 50 years, when it is a town of 30,000 people, there will be dense areas to support things like transit without lowering the region's capacity for economic output. These changes as they are proposed don't lead to the creation of more affordable housing, nor do they keep development

restricted to current settlement areas that already have the infrastructure needed to support them. Instead of focusing on supporting the strong agricultural production Ontario needs to support the tens of thousands of people who live and work in urban areas, these changes will instead lower farm production and over time will eliminate livestock production from fast-growing rural areas like Listowel, Ferguson, and Orangeville.

The only benefactors are the people who have the wealth and desire to carve off an idyllic rural mansion and the developers that build them these oversized behemoth houses. Agriculture loses, affordable housing loses, the environment loses, while developers and rich asset holders win. In less than a year, Ford has ripped up the Greenbelt and even referred to it as a sham, despite promising to not touch it during the last campaign, and has proposed or passed a rash of legislation that may as well as been written by the highly-paid lobbying firms that developers send to Queen's Park. It sucks.

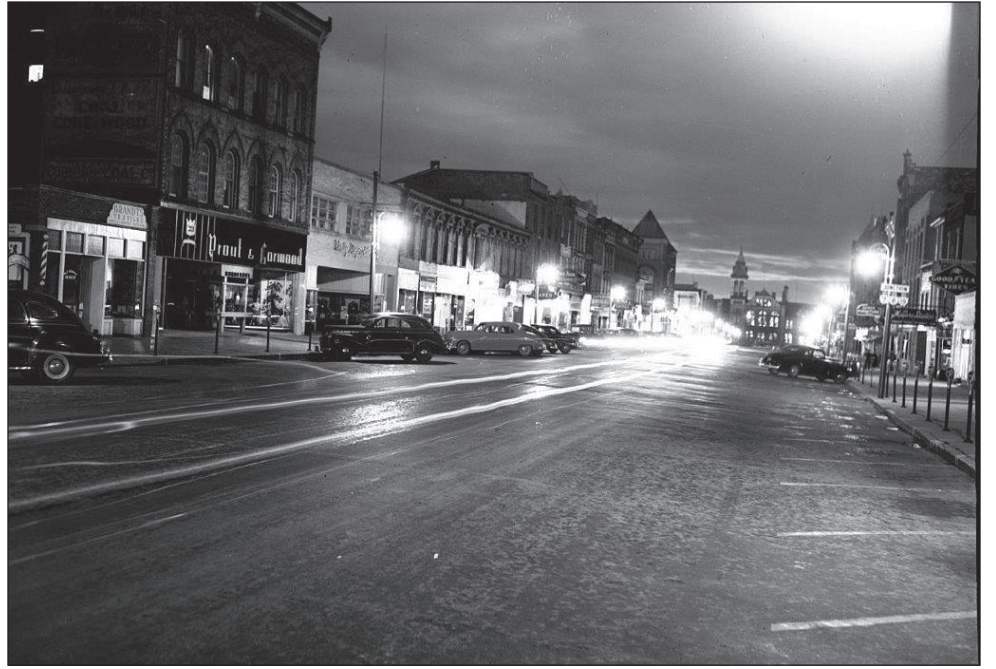
As I sat in the tractor on Friday planting the last of our corn, I explained to one of our employees the true tragedy. If this passes, it will become inevitable that farms will get severed, even by people like me who understand the long-term ramifications. Farmers will not be able to afford to not sever lots once the new value of lots is priced into farmland values. It took only months from relaxed rules around Surplus Farmhouse Severances before the value of the house was added into the selling price of the farm. The same will go for lots, and if farmers don't do it themselves, the developing community will do it for us.

The salt in the wound for farmers is that the Ford government chose to release these proposals on April 6 for public comment with a deadline of June 5 to weigh in. To release something that has such a huge potential impact on every sector of agriculture during the spring planting rush is either ignorant or shameful of the part of the Ford government, and neither option is excusable for a government that is beginning to act like it takes the support of rural Ontario for granted.

\*\*\*

*Stewart Skinner is a local business owner, former political candidate, and has worked at Queen's Park as a Policy Advisor to the Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs. He can be reached at [stewart@stonaleen-farms.ca](mailto:stewart@stonaleen-farms.ca) or on Twitter: @modernfarmer.*

## PIECES OF THE PAST



## 1950 wild fires: 'A weird, eerie sky of many colours at noon...'

ELLEN THOMAS  
Stratford-Perth Archives

To date, there have been well over 500 wildfires in Alberta in 2023. According to news reports, we currently have a haze from these devastating fires.

On Sept. 24, 1950, Perth County went dark when the sky filled with smoke from Alberta wildfires. Coverage of the event appeared in the *Stratford Beacon Herald*, the *Milverton Sun*, and the *Tavistock Gazette*. Surprisingly, the *Mitchell Advocate* and *Listowel Banner* did not cover, what was for many, a frightening occurrence. Perhaps, residents of Mitchell and Listowel were made of sterner stuff, as it caused some panic in Stratford and elsewhere.

*Stratford Beacon Herald*, Sept. 25, 1950  
Smoke from Alberta Cause of Blackout  
Many thought it was the end of the world, others credited it to the atomic bomb, some believed it was an eclipse of the sun, but most Stratford people were at a complete loss to explain the eerie midnight blackness that descended on the city Sunday noon.

Telephones Busy  
Until the official report came through from the Dominion Weather Bureau at Toronto that the phenomenal condition was caused by forest fires in Northern Alberta, panic-stricken and curious residents were frantically phoning the police and to the *Beacon Herald* to find out what was wrong...

Various Reactions  
There were various reactions. One husband went home to find his wife glued to the telephone with only one light on in the house. He asked why she didn't go into the living room and turn on the lights. "I thought it was the end of the world," she said, "and at least you would call me to say good-bye." Other wives became hysterical as they found themselves alone in the house encompassed in darkness and called their husbands to come home before something earth-shattering befell the city. Their spouses hastened to their firesides.

Late sleepers were befuddled when they awoke and discovered it was still night. The Bell Telephone Company reported several calls asking what time it was and then meekly, "A.M. or P.M.?"

City street lights were turned on for part of the afternoon (as seen at about 1:30 p.m., in this *Beacon Herald* photo, from the Stratford-Perth Archives *Beacon Herald* negative collection).

The *Milverton Sun* wrote: "The people of this district will always remember Sunday, Sept. 24, as the day when a weird, eerie sky of many colours at noon, later changed

into a complete blackout that turned the daylight to darkness when lights had to be lit in the homes, street lights were turned on, cars had to use their headlights, and everyone began to wonder what was in store or what was the cause of this strange heavenly phenomenon. Some thought it was the end of the world, others thought it was caused by an atomic bomb or H-bomb, or that Russians had released some new form of blackout, still others thought it was an eclipse of the sun, and some attributed it to man's tampering with the time – it being the day most places in the province reverted to standard time after the summer months. Thanks however, to modern communication, the radio was not long in making the announcement that the blackout was caused by a dense pall of smoke, wafted to the stratosphere by freakish air currents over this part of the continent to blot out the afternoon sun. Meteorologists claimed the smoke was from huge forest fires in Northern Alberta, some 2,000 miles away... Farmers reported the chickens went to their roosts and many amusing incidents were heard of the reaction of different people. One of our ministers had referred to the end of the world in his Sunday morning sermon and when the blackout occurred members of his congregation wondered whether that part of his sermon was prophecy. Others who were enjoying an afternoon nap awoke to wonder if they had slept through the entire afternoon..."

The *Listowel Banner*, two weeks later, chose to compare the blackout to the one of 1881. They wrote: "A remarkable darkness settled on the town and neighborhood on Monday afternoon and continued to about seven o'clock at night. At noon the wind began to rise from the west and in a short time the air was filled with dense clouds of smoke. The sun appeared crimson colour... As the afternoon wore on, the daylight began to fade..."

The ash that fell was quite toxic and hundreds of fish died in the streams. The fire of 1881 was caused by fires in Bad Axe, Michigan.

Back to 1950 – the clouds of smoke, which had blown it at about 11 a.m. had passed by 2:30 p.m., and things returned to normal.

\*\*\*

*Stratford-Perth Archives is open for in-person research and welcomes donations to the collection. For details about what's available during Reading Room drop-in hours and appointments for in-depth research, please visit [www.stratfordpertharchives.on.ca](http://www.stratfordpertharchives.on.ca), call us at 519-271-0531 ext. 259, or email [archives@perthcounty.ca](mailto:archives@perthcounty.ca).*

**Listowel Banner** *Support Your Local Newspaper.*

Send news tips, articles, letters to the editor and photos to  
**Mike Wilson**  
[mwilson@midwesternnewspapers.com](mailto:mwilson@midwesternnewspapers.com)

We reserve the right to edit, condense or reject submissions.



**JACKIE JARDINE**, Sales Consultant, ext. 103  
 sales@midwesternnewspapers.com

**PEGGY HAASNOOT**, Front Office Manager, ext. 101  
 phaasnoot@midwesternnewspapers.com

**KIRA GALL**, Front Office, ext. 112  
 kgall@midwesternnewspapers.com

**MARIE MCKERTCHER**, Production Manager, ext. 107  
 mmckertcher@midwesternnewspapers.com

**MIKE WILSON**, Editor, ext. 118  
 mwilson@midwesternnewspapers.com

**DAN MCNEE**, Reporter, ext. 111  
 dmcnee@midwesternnewspapers.com

**MELISSA DUNPHY**, Local Journalism Initiative reporter  
 mdunphy@midwesternnewspapers.com

**JANINE MARTIN**, Production ext. 108  
 jmartin@midwesternnewspapers.com

The Local Journalism Initiative is funded by the Government of Canada. Canada

## Only in Canada, eh?

There is more to this great country than canoes and maple syrup. Most Canadians consider ourselves more polite than our neighbours to the south. We prefer a rational discussion to a screaming match, a timely apology to a multi-generational feud, and a solution where everyone comes out ahead as infinitely better than one where someone loses.

What we are not is a bunch of rustic canoeists, happily portaging our way around problems like COVID and the world housing crisis, in a maple syrup buzz.

COVID hit this country hard; we are still trying to deal with the consequences. And there are many.

Our health-care system is a mess, for a variety of reasons, the key one being it was not strong and resilient enough going into COVID. Successive governments of varying stripes bought into the bizarre notion that a country can have a world-class health-care system while laying off nurses, closing hospitals and trying to squeeze every penny spent on hospitals in the expectation of getting change.

As has been said countless times in response to one of those governments' catch phrases – you do not get more for less, you get less for less. Our health-care system has been on the equivalent of a starvation diet for a long time, and lacked the strength to cope effectively with a global pandemic.

Health-care professionals, especially highly-qualified nurses in management positions, have been retiring at a phenomenal rate, and there are no middle-management people qualified to step in and replace them. We, and our leaders, have finally figured out what "running lean and mean" really means.

COVID also messed up supply chains, causing unanticipated shortages in many sectors. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in the construction industry.

Communities that have never seen housing shortages before are having to deal with them now. Prices of houses have hit the stratosphere, and rent is keeping pace. Waiting lists for sub-

**Pauline Kerr**  
 Off The Record



sidized housing are long, and getting longer. Rents have gone beyond what people on welfare, disability and small pensions can pay. No one, in a climate like we have, should have to live in a tent.

Which brings us to global climate change.

While global warming has a certain appeal in the dead of winter, with visions of palm trees swaying in the balmy breezes over Parliament Hill dancing through our maple syrup-befuddled minds, we are facing a less attractive reality.

That reality involves the haze of forest fire smoke that has some former anti-maskers inquiring about N-95s.

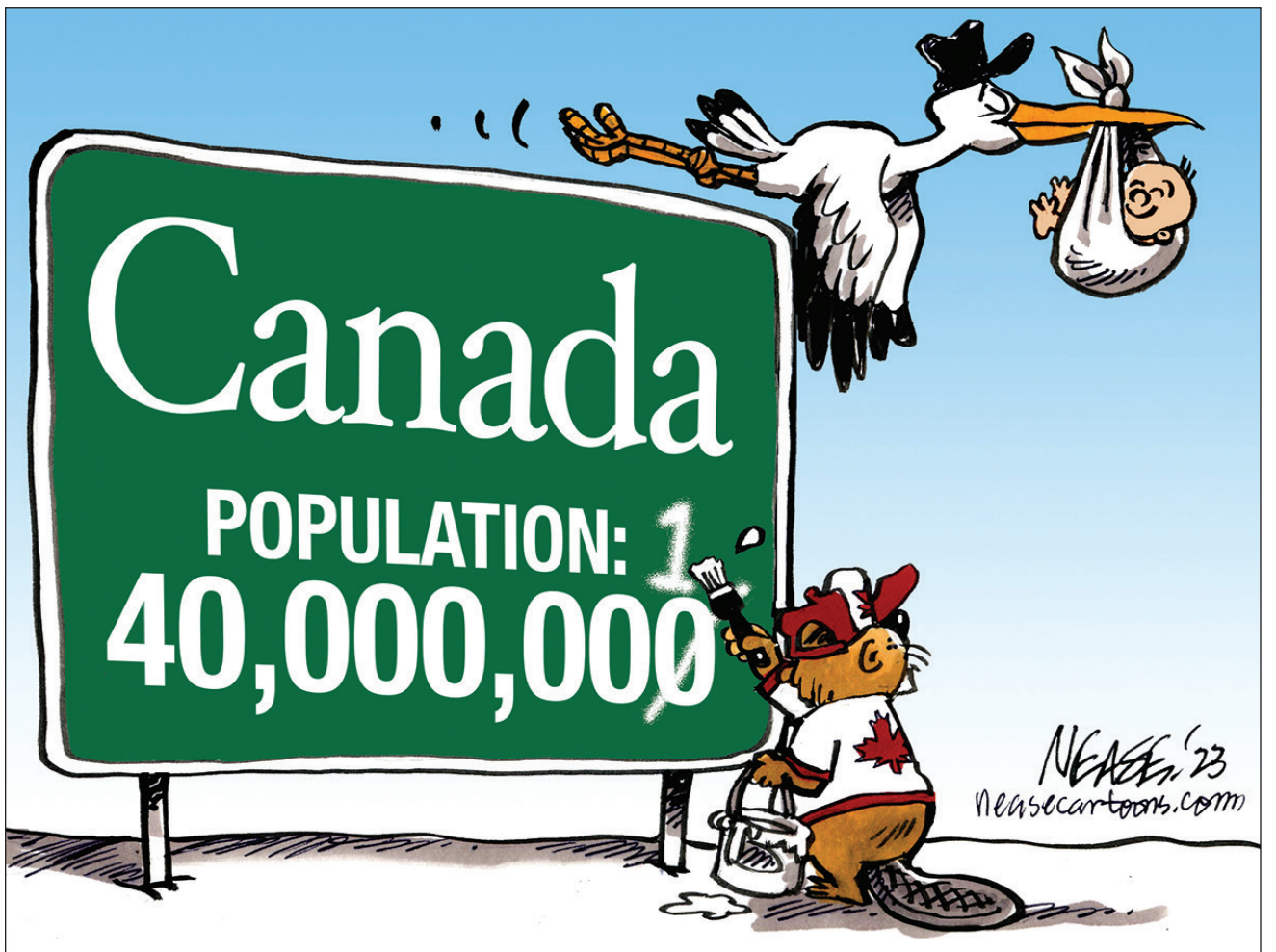
We understand, at long last, that the climate issues we have been warned about for decades are not some future hazard to fear. They are a real and present danger.

Canadians are not immune to flooding, droughts and devastating storms. That "green dark forest... too silent to be real\*" is being incinerated in huge forest fires burning out of control in several provinces.

Canadians have always had a tendency to meet challenges with tenacity and creativity. We need only look at the number of inventions that have a Canadian connection. Most of us know about insulin and baseball, but a quick glance through Wikipedia indicates we also can claim credit for canola, developed from natural rapeseed; instant mashed potatoes; the caulking gun; the IMAX movie system; gas masks; crokinole; Easy-Off oven cleaner; the BlackBerry; Ebola vaccine; and – fortunately for this publication's readers – newsprint; plus innumerable other things, most of which we can be proud of.

This Canada Day, let us celebrate all that is Canadian. This country is so much more than the doughnut capital of the world.

*Continued on page 5*



## Fifty million slaps on the wrist

Anyone remember the publicity stunt a few years back where Loblaws said, "Hey everybody, we are engaged in a massive price fixing ring between Canada's two biggest bakeries and the Canadian grocery oligopoly, here is a \$25 gift card, please take it and give up your future right to take part in a class action lawsuit against us?"

Given that news broke in 2018, you can be forgiven for forgetting the price-fixing scandal of one of the most fundamental pieces of our food system – bread. Last week the scandal was back in the news when Canada's Competition Bureau made headlines with a \$50 million fine against Canada Bread in what was part of a plea deal made by the baker for their role in the multi-year price-fixing scandal.

Bread is a quintessential foodstuff. Every day there are thousands of kids across Canada whose lunch features two pieces of bread with something between. On the other side of the world, I have watched my Kenyan friends eat an entire loaf of white bread as lunch after a busy morning working in the fields. When we were sick as kids, it was toasted bread with honey that often settled our stomach. Bread is not for the rich or the poor... it is for everyone.

And, even though what bread "is" takes on slightly different forms across the world, a massive number of societies have bread as a staple part of their diet. It is that fact that makes this scandal especially horrid. Bread should be a great equalizer. Sure, it can be a luxurious addition to a fancy meal, but more importantly, it should always be available as an affordable, dense source of energy that helps kids get the calories they need as they grow and learn, regardless of their family's income level.

Instead, here in Canada, this price-fixing scandal showed us how blatantly our food retail chain oligopoly feels like they can cheat the market and cheat Canadians on the price of

**Stewart Skinner**  
 The Ivory Silo



that staple food. We have uncompetitive food retail value chains that are dominated by a small number of companies who engage in this type of anti-competitive behaviour regularly. To make matters worse, our regulators take ridiculous lengths of time to provide judgment on what was an open-and-shut case of market manipulation.

Moving up a level from the justifiable outrage that billionaires like Michael McCain and Galen Weston stole money from hard-working Canadian families by fixing the price of a basic foodstuff is an important next step here. It is easy to stop at thinking a \$50 million fine seems enough to pay that price back.

Instead, think about the fine in terms of McCain's fortune, considering he was the CEO of Canada Bread at the time of the price fixing. He has an estimated net worth of over \$1 billion USD, meaning he was assessed a fine of less than five per cent of his fortune that was enhanced by effectively stealing from everyday people. Not to mention he is still able to engage in this same behaviour in current food companies still under his control (Canada Bread was sold to Grupo Bimbo in 2014). Nothing has been changed to ensure that this type of anti-competitive behaviour doesn't happen again, and it brings to light a serious deficiency in the competitive markets that are needed for Canadian economic success.

Canada has serious issues with anti-competitive behaviour. If one reads the *Canadian Competition Act* you would think we have the world by the tail here. This Act is quite extensive and outlines a number of anti-competitive practices

that are theoretically not allowed in the marketplace. The problem is that our Act is not accessible to everyday Canadians.

The actual process of proving anti-competitive behaviour has been made incredibly burdensome and requires incredibly large investments in legal resources to execute a challenge. There are not many small and medium-sized family businesses that can fork over six and seven-figure legal fees to ensure fair marketplaces for all. Like too many other facets of our bureaucracy, we have the window dressing to make it appear all is fine, but when the rubber hits the road everyday Canadians are run over roughshod by the McCains and Westons of the world.

Our own farming experience is seeing the result of uncompetitive behaviour right now; despite wholesale pork prices being significantly reduced for all cuts, prices at the grocery store continue to go up for daily family staples. Last week in Listowel if you wanted to buy sliced black forest ham – one of the most popular things to go in between those two slices of bread in our house – the cheapest option was Wal-Mart and it cost \$16.60 per kilogram. If you are a high roller and shop at Zehrs you had to shell out \$23.30 per kilogram. The folks that actually make the ham like Pillers or Maple Leaf would have paid approximately \$2.30 per kilogram for the unprocessed ham and, in conversations with meat market participants, it was suggested the retailer is likely taking a 100-125 per cent margin at these prices.

How many of us can remember Galen Weston and his cronies singing the blues in front of our parliamentarians that they only make \$4 per \$100 spent? It wasn't true then and it isn't true now. Pork is incredibly cheap right now, yet consumers are not benefiting from that reality because our North American food system is littered with anti-competitive behaviour.

*Continued on page 6*

## TURNBACKS

**Ten Years Ago**  
 2013 – Atwood's Jake Campbell was granted the trip of a lifetime, when the Sunshine Foundation of Canada sent the 14-year-old Hodgkin's lymphoma

patient to Game 3 of the Stanley Cup Finals between the Chicago Blackhawks and his beloved Boston Bruins. Jake would also get to see Game 4 of the series courtesy of Bruins player Gregory Camp-

bell, and Game 6 after meeting millionaire philanthropist Ron Norton. Due to some rainy weather, the 11th annual North Perth Teddy Bear Playday was moved inside Listowel Memorial Arena.

John Hagerty won the cake-eating contest at Royal LePage Don Hamilton Real Estate's anniversary barbecue.

*(Full Turnbacks will return in next week's issue of the Banner)*

The advertiser agrees that the publisher shall not be liable for damages arising out of errors in advertisements beyond the amount paid for the space actually occupied by that portion of the advertisement in which the error occurred, whether such error is due to the negligence of its servants or otherwise, and there shall be no liability for non insertion of any advertisement beyond the amount paid for such advertisement.

Copyright The Listowel Banner 2023



The Listowel Banner is a member of the Ontario Press Council, an independent body set up by the newspapers of the province to uphold freedom of expression and deal with complaints from readers. The Press Council encourages complainants to first give the newspaper an opportunity to redress their grievances. If not satisfied, they may then write to the Council, enclosing a copy of material that is the subject of the complaint, at 80 Gould St., Suite 206, Toronto, Ont. M5A 4L8.

**Subscription Rates:**

\$48+GST per year; \$84+GST for two years

Funded by the Government of Canada





# Happy Gilmore, Bell layoffs and writer's block

One of my colleagues, on more than one occasion, has expressed their amazement to me that I can write an opinion piece every week. "I don't know how you do it," they will say.

**Mike Wilson**  
From the Editor's Desk



Some weeks, I don't know how I do it either.

Those of us who write for a living also suffer from writer's block, especially when it comes to writing an opinion piece. In some instances, it is very easy to have an opinion on a matter – and I have been known to put opinion to paper on various issues, and rather easily.

In other instances, it is sometimes best to bite your tongue when it comes to an opinion piece. Such a situation would be in the early days of a controversial topic when you don't have enough information to form an opinion.

And other weeks, my children provide plenty of fodder for me to write about.

Then there are weeks like this one, where I am sitting at my computer early on a Tuesday morning, wracking my brain and trying to come up with a topic to write about.

And after an hour of sitting here, the best I could come up with is a column about how I have nothing to write about.

And then it hit me...

Bits and pieces.

Bits and pieces are what we in the newsroom call a page or a column that encompasses many topics, some of which have no apparent connection.

It is also a favourite column format of some of our readers, so here are some bits and pieces.

## 'Who the hell is Happy Gilmore?'

That iconic line from the 1996 movie *Happy Gilmore* is often quoted around my house, especially when watching golf and there is a player I have not heard of before.

While scrolling through golf news on the weekend, I came across a story about Happy Gilmore committing to play college golf at Ball State University.

At first, I thought it was a publicity stunt, perhaps for a *Happy Gilmore 2*.

No, it was about a high school senior from Indiana named Happy Gilmore.

"Who the hell is Happy Gilmore?"

Born Landon James Gilmore, he acquired the nickname "Happy" because he hits the ball a long way like the Adam Sandler character. The name stuck, and he loves it.

Gilmore, the student, enters all of his tournaments using the "Happy" moniker and even posed for a photo wearing a Boston Bruins jersey, similar to Sandler's character.

And naturally, his announcement last week committing to Ball State has garnered the attention of media everywhere, from Golf.com to Sandler.

Sandler congratulated Gilmore on social media, quote tweeting Gilmore's post and commenting, "Pulling for you."

Also on Twitter, an account going by the name

Shooter McGavin – the arch nemesis of Gilmore in the movie, played by Christopher McDonald – also congratulated the high school senior.

Of course, McGavin (some believe McDonald is behind the account) got some friendly chirps in while he was at it.

"Congrats but I tell you what, you'd be something in one of those long drive contests. Hell, you'd probably make a very good living. Traveling around, hustling at driving ranges. Just a thought."

Sounds like Shooter McGavin, doesn't it?

I wonder if Shooter will host a party on the ninth green at 9 p.m. for him...

## Bell layoffs

Also in the news... Bell Media announced on June 15 they are laying off 1,300 or so employees, many of them in the newsroom at local radio and television stations.

Bell has also sent a request to the CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission) seeking permission to lower the numbers of local content they are mandated to produce each week.

Bell, Let's Talk...

Bell, like many large media corporations, blame listener/viewer habits as the reason that ratings and revenues are down.

That's not the real reason. They are not successful because Bell, and all other large corporations, deliver a poor product.

Greg Hetherington from 100.1FM The Ranch – a locally-owned radio station – explained it best.

*Continued on page 7*



Contributed Photos

The inaugural Stuff the Truck Foodraiser held at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Listowel on June 22 completely filled two pickup trucks and added another \$1,400 in monetary donations (with more still coming in as of Monday) for the Salvation Army Food Bank. The 'inter-church' effort was organized by members of both the St. Joe's and St. Paul's Lutheran churches, and included a touch-a-truck element for local children and was followed by a community hymn sing. Pictured: Volunteers Pat Yaschuk and Mike Hodgkinson display some donations; Judy Givens hands off another box of goods to Hodgkinson last Thursday evening.



# Ivory Silo: Fifty million slaps

*Continued from page 4*

Behaviour that pads the pockets of a small number of people by stripping the pockets of everyone else. These problems are then worsened by a cumbersome regulatory system that disproportionately hinders smaller businesses who don't have the resources to navigate it. This phenomenon then weakens competition by driving further consolidation as small businesses give up.

If we were serious about tackling inflation in this country, we would take a pause from the singular focus on interest rates and examine how to make Canada more competitive. In doing so we would move toward making life for everyday Canadians more affordable. The real cri-

sis here is it is everyday Canadians are paying the price for an uncompetitive status quo in systems that they are powerless to manipulate.

As long as it is impossible for those without extensive legal resources to hold folks like Michael McCain and Galen Weston accountable, they will continue to conspire in boardrooms to take all they can, no matter the human cost.

\*\*\*

*Stewart Skinner is a local business owner, former political candidate, and has worked at Queen's Park as a Policy Advisor to the Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs. He can be reached at [stewart@stonaleenfarm.ca](mailto:stewart@stonaleenfarm.ca) or on Twitter: @modernfarmer.*

# Love thy neighbour

FRED ERB

From the Minister's Desk

Those of us who are followers of Jesus are to love our neighbour as ourselves. So, why would Jesus affirm the Old Testament teaching to love one's neighbour as the second most important command after loving God with all your heart, soul mind and strength (Mark 12:28-34)? What is the

reason that Jesus wanted us to love our neighbour?

For that answer we need to back up and look at the message Jesus started His preaching ministry with, "repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." By repent, He meant that they were to change the way they thought and conducted themselves, leaving behind the self-centred idea that they could look after their own

lives. Receiving the kingdom that Jesus announced was receiving the rule of God into their hearts and letting God have His way while they submitted to Him.

So, the message of Jesus was a message to change the way you think and now submit to the rule of God in your life. Jesus went on further to teach them to pray "Your kingdom come." In so doing He was directing them to ask Father God for Father's rule over all and that this kingdom rule would become a reality in people everywhere.

Jesus not only preached about this kingdom, He demonstrated it by setting the captives free. He went about healing or restoring humanity to what God intended. The results of this part of Jesus' ministry was that people were experiencing righteousness, peace and joy. We anticipate and long for a future day when the total effects of sin have been removed, this kingdom Jesus demonstrated was bringing certain aspects of this future into their present reality. For those who submit to God's rule in this life, will one day ex-

perience the total removal of the effects of sin. While we wait for that day, no matter the circumstances, we can live in righteousness, peace and joy.

That brings us back to my question, why love your neighbour? We love our neighbour so we can join Jesus in His kingdom work, planting seeds of the kingdom, so more of humanity can enter this kingdom and experience the joys of kingdom living.

\*\*\*

*Fred Erb serves as pastor at Listowel Community Church.*



**Listowel Bible Chapel**  
Tel: 519-291-2511 545 Blake St. E.  
**Sunday Services**  
9:30 a.m. - Worship Service  
11:00 a.m. - Family Bible Hour  
7:00 p.m. - Sunday Evening Service  
Wed. 8 p.m. Prayer & Bible Study  
Weekly Youth Activities  
Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved... Acts 16:31

## Come Worship with us!



*"For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."*  
- John 3:16



**KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
Inkerman W. & Livingstone N., Listowel - 519.291.4690  
**July 2 - 10:30 a.m.**  
Live streaming services still available Sunday at 10:30 a.m.  
[www.knoxlistowel.ca](http://www.knoxlistowel.ca)



**Bethel Christian Reformed Church**  
345 Elizabeth St. E., Listowel  
**July 2 - 10:00 a.m.**  
Worship at [www.bethelcrc.com](http://www.bethelcrc.com)  
Follow us on 

To advertise your church service contact Peggy at 519-291-1660 Ext: 101 or [phaasnoot@midwesternnewspapers.com](mailto:phaasnoot@midwesternnewspapers.com)



**Listowel Banner**  
Printed by Master Web Printing & Publishing

www.midwesternnewspapers.com  
 185 Wallace Ave N., Listowel  
 P.O. Box 97 N4W 3H2  
 T: 519.291.1660 F: 226-430-3022  
 Published by Midwestern Newspapers Corporation

**JACKIE JARDINE**, Sales Consultant, ext. 103  
 sales@midwesternnewspapers.com

**MIKE WILSON**, Editor, ext. 118  
 mwilson@midwesternnewspapers.com

**PEGGY HAASNOOT**, Front Office Manager, ext. 101  
 phaasnoot@midwesternnewspapers.com

**DAN MCNEE**, Reporter, ext. 111  
 dmcnee@midwesternnewspapers.com

**KIRA GALL**, Front Office, ext. 112  
 kgall@midwesternnewspapers.com

**MELISSA DUNPHY**, Local Journalism Initiative reporter  
 mdunphy@midwesternnewspapers.com

**MARIE MCKERTCHER**, Production Manager, ext. 107  
 mmckertcher@midwesternnewspapers.com

**JANINE MARTIN**, Production ext. 108  
 jmartin@midwesternnewspapers.com

The Local Journalism Initiative is funded by the Government of Canada. Canada

# Time to face facts: the health-care system is broken

In Canada, we pride ourselves on having universal health care.

Every time we hear of someone complain about health care in the United States, we will joke about our feelings being hurt, "But I can go to the doctor for free to get them checked."

That used to be the case. Today, we're lucky if our community has a doctor we can see, or an emergency room at our hospital that is open.

It's time to face facts: the health-care system in Ontario is broken.

And it is broken by design. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit our area in March 2020, everyone universally praised the efforts of health-care workers as they worked around the clock, wore layer after layer of personal protection equipment – and in some cases lived away from their families – all so they could care for our sick, vulnerable and elderly while making sure they didn't spread a virus that, at the time, we knew very little about.

But, thanks to the Doug Ford Conservative government introducing Bill 124 in 2019, the best way we could thank these hard workers was to give them a one per cent increase in pay. On a side note, Bill 124 has since been ruled unconstitutional in court and the Ontario government is appealing.

By the end of 2021, inflation was at 5.2 per cent. It was 6.8 per cent in 2022. And earlier this year, was as high as 5.9 per cent.

A one per cent increase doesn't go very far in fighting that.

Combine a lack of increase in wages to go with a shortage of staff at local hospitals, and you end up with burn out.

And burnt out they were. Since the summer of 2022, local hospitals announcing emergency department closures due to a lack of staff have become the norm, not the exception.

That isn't right.

The advertiser agrees that the publisher shall not be liable for damages arising out of errors in advertisements beyond the amount paid for the space actually occupied by that portion of the advertisement in which the error occurred, whether such error is due to the negligence of its servants or otherwise, and there shall be no liability for non insertion of any advertisement beyond the amount paid for such advertisement.

Copyright The Listowel Banner 2023



The Listowel Banner is a member of the Ontario Press Council, an independent body set up by the newspapers of the province to uphold freedom of expression and deal with complaints from readers. The Press Council encourages complainants to first give the newspaper an opportunity to redress their grievances. If not satisfied, they may then write to the Council, enclosing a copy of material that is the subject of the complaint, at 80 Gould St., Suite 206, Toronto, Ont. M5A 4L8.

**Subscription Rates:**

\$48+GST per year; \$84+GST for two years

Funded by the Government of Canada | **Canada**

Local long-term care homes, such as the ones operated by Bruce County, have been using agency nurses to fill their shortages. Not surprisingly, these agency nurses come with a higher price tag than a full-time nurse to perform the same tasks.

In Bruce County, \$5.2 million was spent last year on direct care agency staffing. It is anticipated that number will be \$4.7 million in 2023. There are some savings expected – about \$2.1 million – due to not having to pay full-time salaries and benefits.

Other hospitals, such as Listowel, Wingham, Chesley, and Walkerton, have been using nursing externs to fill scheduling gaps in an effort to reduce closures. An outside-the-box idea, yes, but as one nurse told *Midwestern Newspapers* anonymously, "These young adults are being pressured to keep the hospitals open, as per direction from upper management."

"Nursing students are amazing, but no nursing student who is not even completed their education nor registered, should be pressured to 'save the hospital' and 'prevent it from closing.'"

Rural Ontario has, for as long as we can remember, been fighting an uphill battle to recruit and retain health-care workers. New doctors want state-of-the-art facilities and will limit how many patients they will see; current doctors are inching closer to retirement and have limited their office hours; and some nurses want to specialize in a given area of care rather than be a nurse-of-all-trades.

And all nurses want to be compensated fairly.

On July 20, it was announced that the Ontario Nurses' Association won an arbitration ruling against the Ontario Hospital Association, which will see nurses awarded raises amounting to 11 per cent over two years for the average nurse.

*Continued on page 6*



# Something even better

**Stewart Skinner**  
 The Ivory Silo



"If you don't know where you came from, how will you know where to go?" asked the voice recording of my Grandma Skinner. I heard versions of that phrase often when spending time in the log cabin south of Mitchell that my paternal grandparents called home by the time I came on the scene.

Grandma and Grandpa took their history seriously... the log cabin was an original settler building that Grandpa refurbished. The shed was full of steam engines and other machines that had been cutting-edge technology in the back half of the 19th century, and it was rare to make it through a meal around their table without a story from local yore being started by Grandpa and finished by Grandma.

They also made sure that we knew how important it was to them for us to make an effort to make it the triennial Skinner reunion that saw descendants of Josiah and Elizabeth Skinner gather together and learn about who we came from. After a pandemic induced a layoff, the reunion resumed this year with over 125 people coming together at the Kirkton Hall for a weekend of good food, good conversation, and an excellent opportunity to learn about our ancestors.

One tradition that is as old as the reunion itself is a talent show on the Saturday night. I'm pretty sure my stage debut was made in that show with a rather interesting rendition of 'Just Around the Riverbend' from Disney's *Pocahontas*. This year I

was planning on just enjoying the show until I was out and about doing chores on Saturday morning.

There is a bald eagle's nest just south of our farm. Almost every day since the pair of eagles returned, I have had a front row seat to watching their two eaglets, who have doubled in size before my eyes. As I was headed down to do chores that Saturday morning, the young birds were stretching out their rapidly-growing wings in the morning sunlight. One of their parents perched in a nearby dead tree watching while cattle silently grazed the dewy grass.

I was overwhelmed with the beauty and how blessed I was to get to be in this place in this moment.

As I carried on with my chores another memory hit me – a story told to me over a decade ago by my Great Aunt Beth Ferguson. She told a story of how Josiah's parents, Thomas and Julia, gave shelter to a displaced Indigenous couple who made a doll for the Skinner children as a token of gratitude. I couldn't help but allow my brain to wonder where the descendants of those people were on that morning. In the midst of a morning in which I

was able to see my own blessings all around me, I was reminded that not everyone who called this place home in the 19th century has enjoyed over a century and a half of sustained prosperity. So I decided that my contribution to the show would be to share my novice history work that has been done in my attempt to acknowledge the rich history of this land that started well before the Skinners were carving farmland out of the bush in the 1830s.

In the last 500 years there have been many different peoples to call southwestern Ontario home. When European outposts started to pop up along major harbours and waterways, the Attawandaron (Neutral) had semi-permanent villages across the region.

Less than a century later, a westward push by members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy decimated the inhabitants along with the Huron people to the north. The Haudenosaunee people lost their hold on this land through conflict with the Anishinaabe at the tail end of the 17th century, and by the time of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 (in which King George bestowed 'borders' on the various Indigenous nations based on current land holdings) almost all southwestern Ontario was controlled by members of Anishinaabe. It was members of the Anishinaabe that signed Treaty 29, the land purchase that created the Huron Tract, and it included the land just south of Mitchell where Thomas and Julia Skinner homesteaded.

*Continued on page 5*

## TURNBACKS

### Ten Years Ago

2013 – Amanda MacCannell was crowned the Listowel Agricultural Fair ambassador. The fair itself was very well attended over its four days, with only a brief Friday night storm putting a slight damper on what was perfect weather the rest of the weekend.

Some Listowel mosquitos tested positive for the West Nile Virus.

Corey Connors, fresh off his third year at Kent State University, was set to play in his first RBC Canadian Open.

The 20th and final installment of the Listowel Charity Golf Classic was held, featuring appearances from the NHL's Ryan Strome

and coach Peter DeBoer, among others.

### Twenty Years Ago

2003 – Kelly Bristowe, 17, of Listowel was crowned Listowel Fair ambassador. A dead crow in Listowel tested positive for West Nile Virus.

Area dairy farmers gathered at Carson's Farms for a discussion on the effects of the BSE (mad cow) crisis; cattle prices were below half of what they were previously.

### Thirty Years Ago

1993 – Andrea Dunnell of Listowel won the Listowel Fair ambassador competition.

At the fair, when MPP Karen Haslam had some 'modesty issues' with her

skirt as she participated in the tricycle race, Ag. Society member Ralph Coneybear took off his shirt so that she could make shorts. To which he quipped, "I always knew the NDP would take the shirt off my back."

### Forty Years Ago

1983 – Nancy Nichol of Atwood was crowned Listowel Fair Queen. Fair attendance was down which frustrated organizers, as those who did go said the event was 'better than ever.'

The Vander Wal dairy barn on Line 86 was destroyed by fire, although most of the cattle were saved. Offers of help to clean up, set up alternative milking sites, and for free hay came within hours of the blaze.

### Fifty Years Ago

1973 – A Listowel youth, 18, was jailed for 30 days after aiming his speeding car at three children walking on the road 'to scare them.' They had to jump in the ditch as their horrified mother witnessed it from her front yard.

Council gave permission for a beer garden to be included at the Sidewalk Sale event.

### Sixty Years Ago

1963 – Listowel Memorial Arena raised its rental rates for the upcoming season. Hockey practice was \$5-\$10 per hour and \$20 for a three-hour game; public skating admission was 35¢ for adults and 10¢ for children.



# We can do it together

Friends, I recently returned from a solo road trip out to Western Canada.

Things have been quite heavy at The Village lately, particularly with another fatal overdose of a community member who was a leader, educator, and fundamental to advocacy within Listowel, and my soul knew our team just needed a “pause.” We closed The Village down for two weeks and everyone took a break.

Personally, I needed time to think. Not just think about the “everyday” moments of life, family and community work, but rather a “deep dive” into what I suspected was my own grief about this most recent fatal overdose here in Listowel.

Anecdotally, I hear often of non-fatal overdoses. Community members will share that so and so “went down.” Folks will also express that 911 wasn’t called in some of these non-fatal overdoses because those present with the person who was in this drug-induced medical crisis were able to administer Narcan, the antidote for an opioid overdose, successfully. What that can mean though, is that many overdoses within our communities go unreported.

For the first several hours of my trip, I drove in silence. It wasn’t until somewhere after Sudbury and before Sault Saint Marie that I finally turned on the radio, now almost excited to tune in CBC for the brief time I had a signal through those twists and turns. In the quiet of my own company, I found myself running through my emotions surrounding that community member’s death and the reality of fentanyl, opioids and overdoses.

I struggled with how I was finally allowing myself to feel, because when we work with people, boundaries can trump emotional responses. And here I was, grappling with all these feelings! In the privacy of my own thoughts, I cried for the loss of this person, pondering why I felt so impacted, and for the pain of those who loved him.

In the dialogue within my mind, as the road changed from the 400 to Highway 69, I hurled anger at him, angry for when he expressed, in that painfully-honest conversation we had recently, that he knew his limit with fentanyl, as though someone could possibly harness control over a substance widely known to have such miniscule margins of what levels can cause one to overdose and have a medical crisis. I felt such frustration at the seeming unwillingness of many to accept that this opioid crisis is present here, as it is in almost every rural and urban area of Canada, and that it is a “people” issue, and not a “city” issue, as some clearly believe. And I felt sadness, because in not acknowledging that issues and struggles exist, we deny

someone the validity of their story and lived experiences.

Substance dependency, or substance use disorder (SUD), active addiction, relapses and supports needs to be openly spoken about and conversations normalized, if we ever hope to be proactive in combating a crisis that is present in North Perth. One only has to listen to the language and attitudes widely used to describe a person whom others identify as one navigating substance dependency or perhaps mental illness, to appreciate how a community member may decide it is better to struggle alone and in private, rather than be courageous and honest and risk standing alone in the arena of public opinion and misaligned morality.

Sadly, we hear it when someone’s life has ended by suicide; “Why didn’t they talk about it?” Maybe the space to discuss mental illness, sexuality, substance use, gender expectations or trauma didn’t feel safe and supportive. We can change that.

As the sun set and I realized I was now very much alone on the Trans-Canada Highway, I hoped desperately, as I drove through the thick darkness of trees, walls of rock and warnings of deer and moose coming out at night, to see a beacon up ahead, perhaps a set of tail lights from a transport truck also driving this route. A reassurance that those twists and bends in the road weren’t so scary, because someone else was there too. And I wondered if this was, yet again, the universe showing me a sign; a metaphor of feeling so alone and in a darkness and just hoping someone will be present with you. No judgment. Just there to take the journey together.

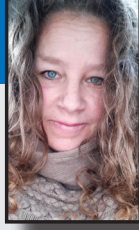
In short time, beautiful red tail lights from a semi appeared on the highway and a sense of relief blanketed me. “Thank you,” I whispered to myself, as I set my cruise control to stay as safely close to the truck as I could. Unbeknownst to that truck driver, my solo journey soon became an “us” thing. And a few hours later, when they turned into a roadside truck stop to sleep, I did too, grateful that they helped me get through that darkness and I was safe to embark upon another day of my trip.

Life is like that, huh? How easily we can give one another the reassurance to keep going and the beacon that they are not alone. That we can do it together. Because we are all just walking each other home.

Take good care of each other, friends.

\*\*\*  
Andrea Charest serves as director of the Listowel It Takes A Village location.

Andrea Charest It Takes A Village



## PIECES OF THE PAST

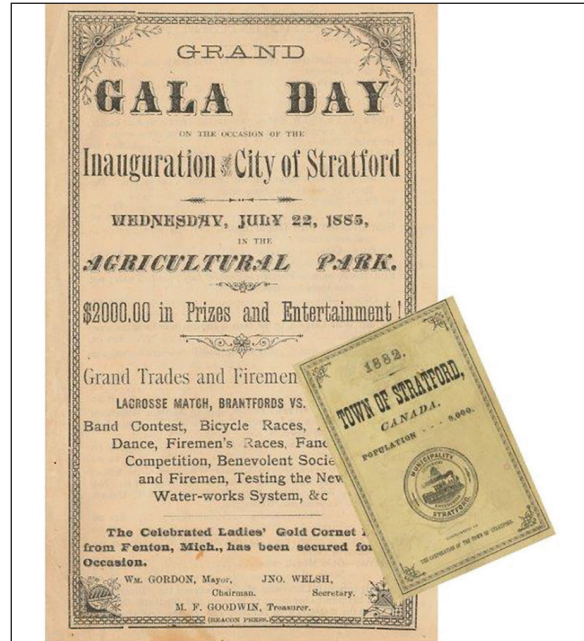
# Stratford’s road to obtaining city status

JENNIFER GEORGIU Stratford-Perth Archives

On July 22, 1885, the former Town of Stratford hosted a grand gala day to celebrate its new status as a city. The programme – preserved as part of the city’s records at Stratford-Perth Archives – boasted of \$2,000 in prizes and entertainment.

Some of the events for the day included a band competition, a hook and ladder race, hose reel race, best-dressed fire department competition, bicycle races, and a championship lacrosse match – Brantfords vs. Ontarios. Entertainment was provided by the Celebrated Ladies’ Gold Cornet Band from Fenton, Michigan. The celebration concluded with a torchlight procession and a fireworks show in Market Square.

The happy day had been a long time coming. A



special provincial statute was passed on March 30 allowing the change, as Stratford did not yet have the required 10,000 in population to automatically become a city under the *Municipal Act*. However, a referendum was called and citizens went to the polls to vote

on whether or not the town should apply for a special Act of Parliament to immediately allow the city to incorporate. The vote was irrefutable, with 1,262 in favour and 322 opposed.

When the results were announced that evening, a large bonfire was lit in

the market square and a procession led by the Grand Trunk Railway band with members of council and other Stratford citizens following them. The formal date for the change in status is March 31, because city council took care of the final formalities the day after the legislation passed. It then took more than three months to get ready for the big celebration.

\*\*\*

*Stratford-Perth Archives welcomes donations to the collection and is open for in-person research from Tuesday to Saturday – closed on holiday weekends. For details about what’s available during Reading Room drop-in hours and appointments for in-depth research, please visit [www.stratfordpertharchives.on.ca](http://www.stratfordpertharchives.on.ca), call us at 519-271-0531 ext. 259, or email [archives@perthcounty.ca](mailto:archives@perthcounty.ca).*

# ‘The Robin Hood of El Dorado’

At the height of the California Gold Rush in the mid-19th century, prospectors from all over the continent made their way to the territory for the opportunity to literally find their fortunes in the rough terrain surrounding the American and Sacramento rivers.

These ‘Forty-Niners,’ as they would become known, traversed great distances for their crack at the gold. They came from the Eastern United States, Canada, East Asia and Central America in huge numbers; it is estimated that nearly half a million people flocked to Northern California after news reached the rest of the world of incredibly rich strikes that had been found.

In actuality, this first true American gold rush would make relatively few of those prospectors wealthy – the remote possibility of actually staking a successful claim with the high influx of miners to the region didn’t leave favourable odds. The California Gold Rush’s true legacy is that it accelerated the former republic’s acceptance as an official U.S. state in 1850, while also accelerating the rapid decline of the Indigenous popula-

Dan McNeen Banner Blitz



tion that had lived in the region for hundreds of years before the gold was even discovered. The California Genocide killed tens of thousands of Indigenous people, with white settlers capturing tens of thousands more as forced labourers, children included.

The vicious racism did not stop with the Indigenous population. The Chinese and Mexican prospectors were constantly harassed by the white Americans, who believed they had the only legitimate claims to the gold. Many were driven out by the whites in an ongoing campaign of violence, which included assault, robbery, rape and murder.

Joaquin Murrieta allegedly arrived in California from northwestern Mexico with his new wife in 1849. The term ‘allegedly’ is re-

quired because it’s difficult to separate the fact from fiction about this man, who would become one of the most notorious outlaws in the state during this period. It was not by design, but evidently stemmed from some of those afore-mentioned acts of racism by the white prospecting community. If the story holds true, those prospectors would pay dearly for crossing him.

After joining his stepbrother who had already been living in California, Murrieta apparently had early success prospecting. But the systemic racism and rampant jealousy that existed in the mining camps of the time also extended up to state government levels, and a ‘Foreign Miners Tax’ was implemented in California around the time that Murrieta’s family began to see success from their gold claim, of which they were eventually forced off.

This is where the history gets really murky. There were reports that Murrieta was attacked by a group and beaten under the false pretext that he and his brother had stolen a mule.

*Continued on page 6*

# Ivory Silo: Part of something better

*Continued from page 4*

There is a copy of the deed that formalized the purchase of the Skinner Homestead in 1859 following over 20 years of work to prove the claim. The seller of the land on that deed was the Canada Company and the purchase price was just over 77 pounds for 140 acres of land. At the time, the land speculators of the Canada company made an incredible return on their investment. While the amount of back-breaking work to prove that claim is unfathomable for someone of my vintage, that 77-pound investment into 140 acres has spurred an also unfathomable return given it became the root of a family tree that has seen thousands of descendants make positive contributions to the world around them. The land alone (something that can be calculated) cost less than \$5,000 when adjusted into 2023 dollars. Today, \$5,000 doesn’t even buy you a quarter-acre of prime Perth County farmland.

When Grandma and Grandpa told me stories of where we came from, it sparked a love of learning about my past. Now that they are gone, I have a wonderful opportunity to do the same with the next generation.

If we do this the right way then my own children

will have an opportunity to learn not only our own settler history, but also the history of those before us. Learning about those who paved the way before us does not detract from our own successes. Rather, it provides the context we need to acknowledge that we could not have done it on our own. I simply do not get the opportunity to drive down a lonely sideroad at sunrise, watching the beauty of creation all around me if those Skinners didn’t commit themselves to over a century of honing our farming craft. In that same vein, I don’t get these opportunities if there were not systems designed to see settlers succeed at the expense of Indigenous peoples.

All of those things happened before I hit the ground at Listowel Memorial Hospital and I cannot change a single thing that already happened. All I can do is keep learning more about where I come from to guide the work of being a part of something even better.

\*\*\*

*Stewart Skinner is a local business owner, former political candidate, and has worked at Queen’s Park as a Policy Advisor to the Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs. He can be followed on Twitter: @modernfarmer.*