

Listowel Banner
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 Published by Midwestern Newspapers Corporation

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

Time to get serious about cybercrime

One of the more disturbing stories to emerge in 2023 was a series of bomb threats made against schools and public services, mostly in northern and eastern Ontario.

Pauline Kerr
Off The Record



By the end of the year, a man had been arrested, in, of all places, Morocco. It seems Belgian police were investigating a similar set of crimes and worked with the Ontario Provincial Police to apprehend him. It must be noted that to date, this case has not been through the courts.

All we can do is speculate about the possible motive, keeping in mind a number of the bomb threats included a demand for money in exchange for information about the “bombs.” No explosive devices were found. The whole mess sounds like an attempt to extort money, not unlike freezing hospital and municipal computers and holding them for ransom.

An untold number of individuals, including local residents, have lost huge amounts of money in similar scams.

One might speculate that individuals and public organizations are being targeted because they are less likely than big businesses to have effective security protections in place. These require a level of expertise that comes with a hefty price tag.

One might also speculate it could have something to do with the fact Canada tends not to prosecute cybercriminals with offshore connections (according to a CBC Marketplace investigation).

As stated in a 2023 CBC story, Canadians lost \$416 million to fraud the previous year. One reason is lack of police resources – it’s expensive and difficult to go after criminals in foreign countries, and people tend to have more sympathy for victims of violent crime than fraud, meaning the former gets more funding and public attention.

One wonders how much money was lost to armed robbers last year, compared to fraud.

However, violent crimes

are easier for political leaders and law enforcement officials to understand. The number of Canadians who can wrap their minds around such things as cryptocurrency scams and cybercrime is limited, with experts tending to be employed by multinational corporations at really high salaries, or taking an extended vacation in some tropical paradise with no extradition.

All of us prefer to stay within our comfort zone; political and law enforcement leaders are no different. In many ways, they have more to lose than the guy who hangs around the office water cooler sharing his solution to the latest crime wave.

“We have no clue what to do about your missing million dollars; the person who took it knows more about computers than we do,” sounds nowhere near as good as, “We are focusing our resources on stopping armed robberies.”

With our incomes and savings in freefall and the cost of living skyrocketing, we are fed up with Canada being regarded by the world’s criminals as a cash cow waiting to be milked. We are furious that our most vulnerable citizens, charities and organizations are in constant danger of attack; that our personal information is a commodity to be bought and sold on the dark web; that finances and lives are being ruined with little recourse for victims.

If the same amount of money lost to scammers with offshore connections were being stolen by masked robbers, it would be regarded as a crime wave worthy of major attention.

If foreign criminals were openly attacking hospital and government computer systems in the name of a political entity, it would be called terrorism.

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There’s no weighing the options when it comes to children’s safety

Kelsey Bent
Bent on Writing



Late on Dec. 18, I read a police report that made me stop in my tracks. I read that a 13-year-old driver of a horse-drawn carriage had lost their life, and an eight-year-old passenger was transported to a trauma centre, after a collision with a passenger vehicle at the corner of Perth Line 71 and Perth Road 140, south-east of Donegal.

The collision occurred at 4 p.m. earlier that day.

The report made me question what was I doing at 4 p.m. The answer: I was driving my kids home from school.

My deepest sympathies go out to the families of the victims, but also to the driver of the passenger vehicle. Although their feelings will differ greatly, all will not be easy to process.

I couldn’t help but think back to North Perth council discussing the placement of a new parochial school on Line 87.

During the discussion on Dec. 4, several councillors recognized that the road was not safe to walk on but then also stated they favoured the placement and ultimately voted to approve the request.

The comments ranged from stating, “There are no shoulders on that road anywhere” to “When meeting traffic with a tractor it is terrible, without kids walking on it.”

One councillor called it the worst road for agricultural traffic, adding there is no room for two vehicles to pass with pedestrians on the road.

The one comment that summed up my feelings as a parent: “Wide shoulders on a busy road doesn’t necessarily solve the problem.”

Council ultimately approved the new location for this school on the basis that road improvements, signage, and shared transportation be encouraged.

Please understand that these statements were made before the collision I mentioned previously. I don’t mean to make this council look insensitive to this incident, however, I believe they lacked foresight during this discussion, as well as in other conversations.

Wallace Ward Coun. Lee Anne Andriessen was the lone council member opposed to the parochial school location. A stance that she stuck to the following week when it was proposed to divert transport truck traffic past the parochial school, which was literally approved the

week before.

On Dec. 11, Andriessen questioned her colleagues on council when it came time to discuss a proposed truck bypass route which, if approved, could see as many as 600 trucks per day directed to drive past the new parochial school.

A study in the Transportation Master Plan shared that over a 12-hour period, 1,540 trucks entered and exited Listowel on Perth Line 86. The survey also found that approximately 43 per cent of trucks passed through town, and would therefore be interested in using a truck bypass route.

Andriessen called it ironic that this topic was once again in front of council, however, I would question why this issue was not anticipated by council on Dec. 4.

It was stated in the report that the Line 87 truck bypass route was only to be implemented after an additional traffic study was completed after other truck bypass routes were constructed, to understand if additional alleviation of traffic was necessary.

As someone who read the 400-page master plan – twice – I would like to point out an issue.

It appears pedestrian traffic was not surveyed in the truck bypass study. I admit it was a lot of information to digest, however, I can confidently state that there was a different study that looked at the pedestrian network within the town boundaries of Listowel, but I don’t believe pedestrian traffic was a topic within the study specifically for the truck routes.

This leaves me to assume it might not be a factor in any future study.

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TURNBACKS

Ten Years Ago

2014 – The first baby of 2014 to arrive at Listowel Memorial Hospital was six-pound, 13-ounce Danielle Kristen Biehn, born on Jan. 1, and the first child for Roger and Becky Biehn of Moorefield.

The Listowel Atom Rep, Peewee Rep and Bantam Rep Cyclones teams were all off to the International Silver Stick tournament in Forest in their respective divisions.

Listowel-born blueliner Roland McKeown was named the Ontario Hockey League’s Defenceman of the Month for the previous December. The 17-year-old led all OHL d-men in scor-

ing with 11 points in eight games.

Twenty Years Ago

2004 – A winter storm closed roads and schools while causing power failures in North Perth and Howick Township.

The IPM lifestyles committee asked for recipe submissions for a cookbook to be sold at the event, scheduled to be held in North Perth in 2005.

Thirty Years Ago

1994 – The New Year’s baby at Listowel Memorial Hospital was Brett Cowan on Jan. 2. Parents were Bonnie and Brian Cowan of Fordwich.

Merchants were smiling

after a good shopping season, with sales equal to or better than the previous year.

Forty Years Ago

1984 – The New Year’s baby at Listowel Memorial Hospital was Patrick Rust on Jan. 3, son of Marta and Magnus Rust of Hesson.

Ward Wettlaufer retired from the Ideal Supply machine shop after 34 years. When he began, it was called the Bill Rolof Machine Shop.

Fifty Years Ago

1974 – The New Year’s baby at Listowel Memorial Hospital was Brenda Van De Kemp on Jan. 2, a daughter for Mr. and Mrs.

John Van De Kemp of Gorrie.

Wallace council increased public works department employee wages to \$3.60/hr.

Starcraft recalled 35 workers who had been laid off before Christmas.

Sixty Years Ago

1964 – The New Year’s baby at Listowel Memorial Hospital was a girl born to Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm Amos of Atwood.

Using electric lights outdoors for Christmas was increasing in popularity, with a large number of entries in Listowel’s home decorating contest. Winners of the contest were Dr. and Mrs. Spence.

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Look for the good

In 2023 I looked for hearts. What started as a fun little picture taking adventure with my kids, ended with a collection of hundreds of pictures of all different kinds of hearts. We found clouds, rocks, chips, crackers and leaves. One of the most amazing finds was when I cut off a piece of an apple and right in the middle was a perfectly heart-shaped rotten spot. Halfway through the year I noticed more than just hearts. I noticed the more we looked for them, the more we found, and I noticed that others spotted them as well. Friends, family and even total strangers had taken pictures of heart-shaped things and, knowing I was collecting them, sent them to me. What I learned was so much more than simply, you can find hearts everywhere. I learned that what we look for, we absolutely will find. What we choose to focus on is what we will see more of.

Alison Brown
Column



at some point during our mentoring process – to look for the good. We all need the reminder, especially when it seems as though the world is full of the opposite and when we know our mental wellbeing depends on having a positive, gratitude filled outlook. To demonstrate how our RAS works to find things for us, I first have my clients look for all the white in my office. They'll notice my paper, the walls, the words on my tapestry, the lights and the floor. Their brain will even offer up shades close to white like the beige on the lamp cover or the light gray on the painting. Then I'll ask them to look for the black in the room and their focus will immediately shift to all things black and darker shades. As they list them, it's obvious the darker colors are the centre of their focus. It is then that I explain the connection between what they choose to look for and how their brain will go to work to find it for them.

In fact, it's proven. The part of our brain called the reticular activating system is always working to show us exactly what we want to see. It acts as a filter allowing in and keeping out information. If we are careful in choosing our focus, it will do its part in presenting to us more of what we are already looking for. This is why someone car shopping sees more of the car on the road they are considering purchasing. It's not that there are more of that type of car, it's just that they're noticing them everywhere because their focus is on that car.

This system in our brain can be used to shape the way we see the world. Ever wonder how two people can look at the exact same glass of water and view it completely different? One says it's half empty and the other says it's half full; both are probably right, but only one is seeing the upside because only one has already chosen to focus on that. Taking it beyond water, two people can look at a situation that appears to be awful or hopeless and one can see all that is horrible about it and the other can list off all of the good things amidst it. My point? The one looking for the good is the one who will see it. As we learn more about the role of the reticular activating system in our brains, we're discovering how the 'glass is half empty type of people' can, over time, actually teach their brains to look for the positive side of things and see the glass half full instead. If they wish to change and become more positive, they absolutely can. This is a challenge I put out to all of my clients

The point is simple: our brains will offer our eyes exactly what we tell them to look for. With practice and attention given to focus, our brains will show us more of what we are wanting to see and less of what we aren't. Regardless of circumstances, our focus is what ultimately determines what we see, and the good news is that we get to choose what that is. The application is that if you're looking for the good in people, the world, yourself or a situation, you'll find it. Shifting our focus doesn't equate to a denial of the existence of bad, rather it allows us to see the good amidst it. My challenge to you in 2024 is to look for the good. When circumstances arise that are difficult, choose to shift your focus to find what is good. There's always something to be grateful for and there is always something good to be found. Even in the hardest, most awful situations there is good, and sometimes we miss it simply because we aren't choosing to find it.

If you are a glass is half empty type of person, the good news is that if you don't want to be, you don't have to be. Make 2024 the year you trained your brain to look for the good and not only will you find it, you'll become it.

This is a monthly opinion piece; Alison Brown is a local business owner, mother and published author.

PIECES OF THE PAST

'Cookies for War-Time'

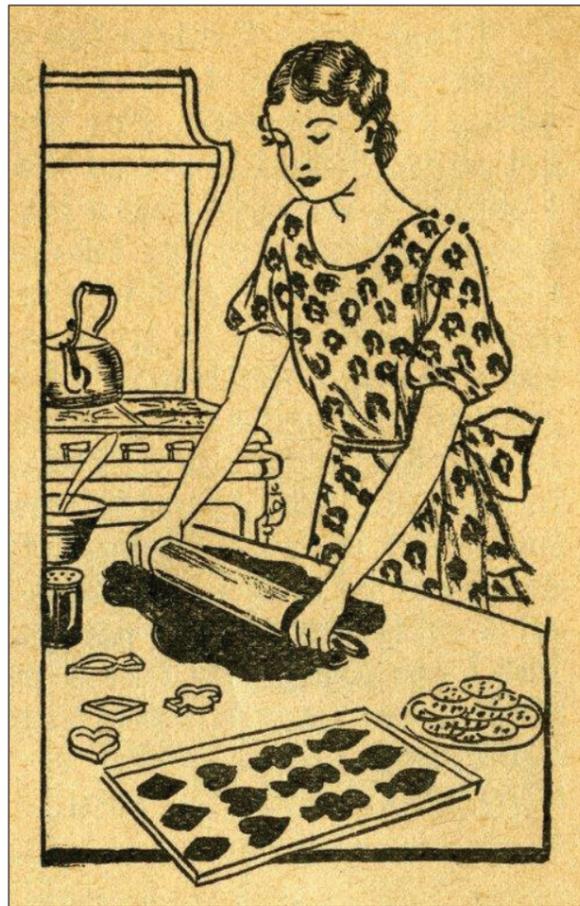
JENNIFER GEORGIU
Stratford-Perth Archives

In January 1918, Canada was still at war. Those with loved ones overseas would frequently send handwritten correspondence or small care packages. Sons, fathers, brothers, uncles, and cousins would appreciate any small offering that made its way through the mail. Things like wool mittens and socks, cigarettes, a photograph or two, stationary supplies, fruitcake, fudge, maple sugars, homemade preserves, and the list goes on.

_packages sent from England and France unusually arrived at the Western Front within a week. Those shipped from distant British dominions, such as Canada, could take two months or more. This meant that every parcel had to be sturdy and filled with only items that would survive several weeks. These packages offered much more than relief from the monotonous relation sent up the line as they were tangible reminders of family affection.

In the Jan. 3 issue of the *Milverton Sun*, an article titled "Cookies for War-Time" was published. It encouraged housewives to not only make cookies for their children, but to also make and send some to their loved ones on the front. It also listed several hearty cookies recipes.

"Cookies loom large on the house wife's horizon just at present for winter is near at hand. Wherever there are children there must be wholesome, nour-



ishing, and delicious cookies to cheer their young hearts and please their palates.

In making the weekly supply, the men at the front should not be forgotten for they welcome cookies all the year round, just as much as they did when they were youngsters at home with insatiable appetites. A good scheme is to send the cookies overseas in old baking powder tins. If well sealed, they will arrive at their destination in excellent shape and if the 'kinds that mother makes' are good at home, imagine how much better they are in the trenches.

Wholesome, economical and palatable – these are the requisites for war time cookies whether they go overseas or whether they grace the family table for winter they will be sure to please!

Here are a few hearty cookie recipes for you to try below:

Maple or Brown Sugar Drop Doodles – 1 cup of whole wheat flour, 1 ¼ cups of white flour, 1 egg beaten lightly, ½ cup of shortening, ½ cup of sour cream, ¾ cup of dark brown or maple sugar, ¾ cup of chopped raisins, ¼ cup of light brown sugar,

¼ teaspoon of salt, 1 teaspoon of vanilla. Mix ingredients and drop by dessert spoonfuls on a greased pan and bake in a hot oven for about 10 minutes.

Spice Tea Cakes – 2 cups of brown sugar 2 cups of whole wheat flour, ½ cup of shortening, 3 eggs, 1½ cup of milk, 2 teaspoons of baking powder, 1 teaspoon each of cloves and ground cinnamon, ½ teaspoon of nutmeg. Sift the dry ingredients together before mixing. Bake in small muffin pans until done.

Fruit Cookies – 1½ cups of shortening, 1½ cups of light brown sugar, ½ cup of whole wheat flour, 1 teaspoon each of salt, cream of tartar, and salt, ½ teaspoon of baking soda, 1 cup of seedless raisins, 2 eggs beaten until light. Cream shortening and sugar. Add eggs and then the other ingredients. Use enough whole wheat flour to make a stiff dough. Roll out very thin. Cut into small shapes and put on baking pan. Bake for about ten minutes in quick oven."

Why not try a few of the recipes above and share them with your loved ones this winter? Maybe send a few to the office, too!

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Kerr: Cybercrime poses significant personal risk

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The bottom line is, we want better protection from offshore cybercrime, fraud and other criminal activity than we have been getting.

We want our cars to come with built-in anti-theft measures; our computers to be safe to use by even the most

naïve citizen; and our phones to be free of fake CRA agents, VISA security people and princes.

Elected officials take note: Let 2024 be the year that Canada gets serious about becoming a country not to mess with, instead of an easy target. We need to devote resources to

where the danger is. Most of us are at far greater risk from cybercrime than from armed robbery.

*Pauline Kerr is a journalist with *Midwestern Newspapers*; for comment she can be reached at pkerr@midwesternnewspapers.com.*

Bent: Continue to fight for children's safety

Continued from page 4

I hope I am wrong with that statement.

I recognize that I have been quite critical of council, so now I would like to take a moment to commend them on the great work they have done for children's safety last year – that being their support of the school bus stop arm camera pilot project.

Newry Coach Lines owner John Chapman told council it is estimated that each bus sees two blow-bys per day, or roughly 388 blow-bys for each bus over the 194 days of school.

This would give an annual estimate of 12,804 blow-bys in a school year.

He suggested council support a school bus stop arm camera pilot project, that would cost an estimated \$33,000.

On Nov. 29, when council agreed to fund 50 per cent of the pilot project and encourage the province to increase their support to school buses, it was stated that this pilot project could save lives.

I support their strong stance on child safety here, however, I wished it was also applied during the subsequent discussions

about the parochial school and truck bypass.

I know at first glance these three topics are not generally thought to be related, however, I can't help but draw a correlation between the recent discussions that have occurred in the North Perth council chambers, especially as a parent of two young children.

I urge council to continue to fight for children's safety, regardless of if they ride the bus or walk to school.

*Kelsey Bent is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter with *Midwestern Newspapers*. Comments or feedback can be sent to kbent@midwesternnewspapers.com.*



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Government bureaucracy is out of control – and Canadians are paying the price

If you asked most Canadians if this country needs more bureaucrats, they'd probably say no.

Frank Stronach
Principles of Economics



Unfortunately, Canada's bureaucracy continues to mushroom in size, regulating and micro-managing more and more aspects related to how we live and work.

New figures published recently by the Public Service Commission of Canada show that the federal public service now stands at about 275,000 employees – an astounding 40 per cent increase from a decade ago – and that doesn't include another 85,000 civil servants working in affiliated government agencies.

If you then add in all of the civil servants working for provincial, regional and municipal governments across Canada, the total number of government employees in this country is around four million.

Why is that a problem? It's a problem for two reasons. The first is that more bureaucrats equal more government spending – and that in turn leads to bigger deficits and more taxes.

But the other problem, which is perhaps even worse, is that more bureaucrats also mean more regulations, permits and licenses. All of this red tape is strangling economic growth and progress, particularly for small business, and is one of the major reasons why our living standards are falling.

When I was CEO of Magna International Inc., I could always tell if one of our factories was struggling financially by the number of white-collar workers in the offices above the factory floor. If you've got way too much administration up top, it doesn't matter how hard the employees on the factory floor work, your business simply won't be profitable. The same principle holds true for countries.

The fact is, we can't continue hiring more and more government workers year after year.

Government spending as a percentage of national GDP, or gross domestic product, is closing in on 50 per cent. Back in the 1950s, when Canada's economy was booming, government spending

as a percentage of GDP was just under 20 per cent. We had less government, and a higher standard of living.

The government approach to small business in Canada back in the 1950s and '60s was also much more conducive to creating jobs and growth. Government would do whatever it could to get businesses up and running. Today, however, it seems that governments put more of their time and energy into hampering and blocking businesses.

Canadians are forking over more and more of their paycheques to finance a sprawling government bureaucracy that increasingly does not enhance the quality of our lives. On the contrary, it makes our daily lives more complicated and costly, and it makes operating a small business more difficult.

So, what's the answer? We need to return to some bedrock economic principles that will get our country back on a solid economic footing – principles like not spending more than we take in, eliminating our debt, and unleashing small business, the engine of our economy.

The best way to do that is through the adoption of a national economic charter of rights and responsibilities.

Think about this: there are approximately one million small businesses in Canada. If we dramatically reduced the mountain of regulations and red tape holding them back, these businesses would be free to expand and grow.

And if every small business in Canada hired just one single additional employee, we could create a million new jobs overnight. We would ignite economic growth on a scale this country hasn't seen in many decades.

Frank Stronach is the founder of Magna International Inc., one of Canada's largest global companies, and is an inductee into the Automotive Hall of Fame. He can be reached at fstronachlpc@gmail.com.

PIECES OF THE PAST

A brief history of Perth East's Carthage

CINDY J. SINKO
Stratford-Perth Archives

There are many rural villages throughout Perth County with rich histories. One of these villages is Carthage, which is located in the north part of Mornington Ward in Perth East.

According to research preserved in the E. Lillian Morley papers at Stratford-Perth Archives: "Mornington Township was one of those in which the land was transferred from the Crown to the settlers. These townships, lying north of the Canada Company's lands, were known as the Queen's Bush. The first settlers in Mornington were John Chalmers and his three sons, William, John and Adam. The township was named in honour of Lord Mornington, a member of the British government. It was surveyed by James W. Bridgeland in 1848."

Carthage is situated on Highway 19 and is 13 kilometres north of Milverton. The first post office was established on May 1, 1856. William Johnston's 1903 history of Perth County tells us that: "The naming of this office was done by Mr. Thomas Hamilton, the first settler, and Mr. Gamble,



another early settler. Mr. Hamilton wanted to name it after himself, but the City of Hamilton was already on the Ontario list of offices and hence changed the name to Carthage." This village was quite busy and industrious in the 1860s and 1870s. During this time, it possessed a grist mill, saw mill, cheese factory, two hotels, two shoemakers, and a tailor shop.

According to an account that was published in the Oct. 30, 1874, edition of the *Stratford Beacon Weekly*: "The little village of Carthage... is now favoured with a telegraph office, the Montreal Telegraph Co., having established a direct line

from Listowel to Milverton via Carthage. Mr. Snyder, merchant, has charge of the office. His son is learning the business and he is progressing nicely with it and will soon be able to take charge of the office and do telegraphing himself. We wish him every success."

The first Methodist Church was built at the entrance of the village on the southeast corner. It served as a four-point charge for years. It was in 1926 that a United Church was erected. Mr. Samuel Watson donated land from his farm for a cemetery; it was located on Perth Road 119 and remains a tribute to former members of the church. The tombstones are now

placed in a single row across the rear of the plot behind the memorial cairn dedicated to the European settlers of Mornington Township.

Susannah Askin was one of the early settlers in the area. She came from Ireland at the age of 40. She was a widow with three small children. She settled on two hundred acres, which were heavily wooded. She cleared the land and built her own cabin. She grew vegetables in order to provide for her family. She was known as 'Granny Askin' to many in the area. She died in June of 1906, at the age of 103.

Milverton's 100th anniversary book, *Paths of History*, honours early resi-

dents of Carthage and area, reminding us that "early settlers endured years of sweat, toil, and tears, and may future generations be ever mindful of their sacrifices."

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When the math just doesn't add up

If you cast your attention at all to the app TikTok, then I am sure you have seen the recent trend circulating about math and all its variable forms.

I personally have seen many short videos explaining girl math, boy math, and even dog math. All are comical because, unlike the math you learned in high school, they are not simple black-and-white answers.

A perfect example of girl math is if you buy something in cash, it is essentially free because you don't see a deduction on your bank statement for the item you purchased. It is

Kelsey Bent
Bent on Writing



not exactly correct, but this is what they call girl math.

An example of boy math is not returning a \$20 shirt that is too small because you value your time spent returning the shirt to be greater than \$20, so you keep the shirt – even though it doesn't fit you. Again, questionable but this is boy math.

One more boy math example for good measure. If you receive paid time

off work, and you choose to go golfing during that time, you are a professional golfer because you are being paid to golf. That is boy math.

Perhaps the best, at least in my opinion, is dog math. Dog math is if there are 15 chew toys on the floor but one is stuck under the couch, the dog has zero chew toys. This is dog math.

Funny, right?

If you're still not getting it, let me lay it all out for you. This trend is showing the way we justify poor or funny decisions we make, especially when it comes to money.

I have enjoyed this trend, so much so that I have come up with my own made-up math. I call it municipal council math.

Let me give you some real-life examples from council meetings I have attended or read about.

Municipal council math is justifying a \$25,000 increase to an annual \$9,000 line in the 2024 budget because that money hadn't been spent in the last two years. This actually means it will only be a \$7,000 increase since each year \$9,000 was budgeted. This is municipal council math.

Now because I am a spectator to all council meetings I attend as a journalist, I don't get the opportunity to disagree with their mentality. However, I am taking my chance to do so now.

Maybe I'm incorrect but I'm pretty sure that when you budget \$9,000 annually but don't spend it, an additional \$9,000 is not added to the budget line each year. So even if the money is not spent three years in a row, there is still only \$9,000 allocated to that budget line, not \$27,000.

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Kerr: Time to get loud

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While the debate continues about defining 'affordable' and how to encourage developers to construct a mix of housing, we need to get people out of encampments and into something with central heat and a roof.

It is the middle of a Canadian winter, and local communities have people living in parks and cars. For their sake, it is indeed time to start screaming.

Pauline Kerr is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter working for Midwestern Newspapers. She can be reached at pkerr@midwesternnewspapers.com.

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Shame and stigma

Friends,
In his book entitled *In Arabian Nights*, author Tahir Shah wrote, "Stories are a communal currency of humanity." In the sharing of stories we learn. Validate. Heal. Grow. And come together. I asked a community member recently if I could share their story with you all because, like many of the voices from our community, their experience is one that we have much to learn from, if we are genuinely willing to listen. It's about love, being human and doing our best. I remember the day this person told me about their new job, a few years back. They came into The Village and shared that they had interviewed and been hired and would start soon, and that the wages and benefits with this new position would make all the difference for them and their partner. Over time, and many conversations, they shared that their partner navigated substance use and was unable to work, and so much depended on what income they could earn themselves. As they expressed, going from part-time minimum wage work and no

Andrea Charest
It Takes A Village



benefits, to this current job offer, felt a little like winning a lottery. They would be able to better afford rent, groceries and utilities, and have benefits for dental and medical needs. This community member would pop into The Village every so often, to get clothing or food, and share with us that this new position was really going well. There was an excitement to them now, something I hadn't really seen much of before. They explained that it felt great to go to work every day and that they were getting to know co-workers and making new friends. "Community and belonging," I remember thinking to myself. This person seemed somehow stronger and more vibrant. Each time I saw them, I felt gratitude for how their life was becoming what they felt they

needed it to be. Several weeks had passed and I realized I hadn't seen this community member for a while, so I reached out to connect. "Hey you," I wrote. "How's things? I haven't seen your beautiful face for a bit and wanted to check in." In short time, a reply came back. "Hey. I'm OK. I haven't been to work for a few days. I've been sick, so I've been calling in and staying home." I asked if there was anything I could do or if they needed something, but they replied that they were "good" and would hopefully get back to work in the next few days. Several weeks later, they came into my office and asked me to help them write a reply to the employer's human resources department. They shared that they had been terminated for missing so many days, without a medical note and, although they accepted that decision and this letter might not change anything, they wanted to explain to their employer why they were away, in an effort to suggest the importance of this company seeking out mental health or substance use disorder training for management. They shared that there is so much visibility around us, encouraging

awareness of mental health and offering support, but questioned how authentic the support would be for those, or those with loved ones, navigating substance use disorders and understanding the impact this illness can have on every aspect of life. As they sat in my office, the heavy weight of their story began to unfold. Their partner's methamphetamine use had developed into a fentanyl dependency. Their partner was experiencing 'non-fatal' overdoses - which were non-fatal because this person was present, saw their medical distress and used Naloxone to prevent their death. I remember thinking as they spoke, with such strength and yet vulnerability, of how I could not begin to imagine what it does to someone, to live this fear every day. My soul ached, as I began to understand the isolation this person must've felt. They went on to explain the profoundly immobilizing fear of trying to leave for work each day, knowing that their loved one might have a fatal overdose while no one was home to use Narcan or call 911. They shared how this fear made it nearly impossible to focus on their responsibilities

while at work and how they used all their "sick days" to stay home and keep watch. Throughout our conversation that day, they expressed that they had wanted to speak to their manager on several different occasions, about what was going on at home. They expressed wanting to be transparent and honest, in hopes of being able to keep this job they loved. Maybe eventually their partner would be able to get medical help with their substance use. But they simply couldn't find the words. The shame and stigma that often accompanies someone's substance use illness prevented this community member from reaching out, perhaps as it does with many of our community's people, who love someone who is navigating substance use dependency. They wondered out loud, as they sat in my office that day, what they would've even said to management about this very real and human situation, particularly if those handling the human resources administration had no training or little experience supporting people with similar scenarios.

Continued on page 8

Bent: Spicing things up with 'council math'

Continued from page 5
If it was a transfer to reserves, my feelings would change, but that is not this example. A second example of council math came forward during a conversation about how lower-level councils could combat the affordable housing crisis and whether or not building new houses improved the problem, or contributed

to it. It was the opinion of a councillor that creating affordable housing is as easy as upgrading your home. The councillor said if they sell the house that they are living in now for \$450,000 and buy an \$800,000 house the developer just made, then the developer has just created affordable housing because the old house was for sale for a reasonable price. This is what I would call council math, but that doesn't mean it is necessarily correct.

First of all, \$450,000 for a home is not affordable housing. Someone making minimum wage in Ontario brings home \$30,000 a year. It is recommended that your expenses cost no more than 30 per cent of your annual income - therefore they can afford to spend \$9,000 per year on a 20-year mortgage for a home worth \$180,000. Again, because journalists don't often get the chance to oppose councillors during council meetings, this

message was not passed on to the councillor. Secondly, I'm surprised the councillor would not want to personally take credit for improving the affordable housing crisis rather than giving credit to the developer. As a form of respect, I decided not to name the councils or councillors that I have poked fun at here in this column. That is because I truly respect the work that they do, however when you spend as much

time as I do watching council meetings unfold, you need to laugh or else you might cry. Municipal council may not be the most exciting form of government but it is perhaps the one level of government that impacts the regular day-to-day the most. As a journalist who regularly covers municipal politics, I consider a large part of my job to be spicing up council, or making it exciting thus encouraging people to engage. I truly believe that a council with zero engagement will not be successful, as it

will be disconnected from the citizens it serves. If you are a regular reader of *Midwestern Newspapers*, you might be in on this inside joke. If not, I hope that I have piqued your interest and encouraged you to participate with your municipal council. *** *Kelsey Bent is a Local Journalism Initiative reporter with Midwestern Newspapers. She can be reached for comment or feedback by emailing kbent@midwesternnewspapers.com.*

Stork Report

2024

January 6
Colby Debus & Madison Baillie of North Perth, a girl

Roman Cordova & Natasha Wight of Atwood, a boy

January 7
Rob & Samantha Reidt of Perth County, a boy

January 12
Alexis Wilson of Perth East, a girl

Pet peeves

ERNIE NAYLOR
From the Minister's Desk

Do you have any pet peeves? You know, those things that people do that get under your skin and annoy you. I believe I hear or experience pet peeves every day. If I say the words telemarketers, texting drivers, or fingernails on chalk boards - how do you feel about those? My pet peeve is sailing down the highway - no traffic in front, no traffic behind - and having a person pull in front of you, making you break hard and slow to a crawl. What possesses people to do that, when they could have waited five seconds and let me past?

The real problem is relationships - people not thinking of those around them and the consequences of their actions. Families' relations can be a hot bed for revealing pet peeves. I often find an empty recycle jug on the counter in the morning that a family member has left behind. Argh! I now have a new pet peeve moved to the top of my list: people asking "Did you have a good Christmas?" It seems innocent enough - "Did you have family time?" "Were you able to attend church and experience the truth of the birth of Jesus?" I always teased my wife that every day with me is Christmas, but Christmas is so much more. I would suggest you think about this statement in a different way. It suggests that the Christmas spirit

and the reality of Jesus, God himself, entering the world is in the past. We set Jesus aside and wait for the next time that Dec. 25 rolls around. Something powerful happens at Christmas, the generosity of people, the cheer, the smiling faces... why can this spirit of hope and joy not be year-round? God's work is never done in this world. Jesus knew there were the seedy parts of town and he went there. He watched Jewish tax collectors steal money from their fellow citizens, and spoke against it. He observed the way the Romans abused their power to subdue the people around them. But the people that Jesus got the angriest with were the authoritarians and religious people. Maybe Jesus has a pet peeve as well - the people that could keep you from

a close relationship with God. In fact, the Bible mentions several pet peeves in Proverbs 6:16-19: "There are six things the Lord hates - no, seven things he detests: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that kill the innocent, a heart that plots evil, feet that race to do wrong, a false witness who pours out lies, a person who sows discord in a family." I would suggest each has a foundation of a broken relationship, with one another and with God. I would suggest that we need to change "Did you have a good Christmas?" to something different. Perhaps "How did you witness Christ this year? I wonder what God is going to do this year?" *** *Ernie Naylor serves as minister at Atwood Presbyterian Church.*

Listowel Bible Chapel
Tel: 519-291-2511 545 Blake St. E.
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10:00 a.m. - Worship Service
11:00 a.m. - Family Bible Hour
7:00 p.m. - Sunday Evening Service
Weekly Youth Activities
Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved... Acts 16:31

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Published by Midwestern Newspapers Corporation
The Local Journalism Initiative is funded by the Government of Canada. Canada
Printed by Master Web Printing & Publishing

Remembering humble beginnings

I fear that a couple of councils are teetering on a slippery slope, with the recent disapproval of a townhome development.

The specific events that I make mention of took place in North Perth and Perth County council chambers, however, I think the regions outside of these should be aware especially since – dare I say – the housing crisis spans the entire province, country, planet.

A cluster of 19 townhomes was proposed for a neighbourhood which is currently made up of single-detached homes sitting on large lots.

Some of the councillors, and vocal neighbours questioned how the two levels of density would co-exist. One neighbour said he specifically moved to this part of town to get away from these kinds of homes.

Representatives on both levels of government stated this was a great plan, and agreed that the town needed this, but did not agree with the location.

Ironically in the same meeting, another development just a little further down the street, consisting of roughly 300 housing units, was approved with very little discussion from councillors and the neighbours in attendance.

As I sat through both meetings at the municipal and county levels, I felt slightly offended as someone who is extremely proud of the townhome I own.

I feel privileged to not only own a home at my age, regardless of its level of density. I feel this way because I also know that there are many people who make the same amount of money per year as me, if not more, who also believe they will never own a home. The only difference is the years we are/were shopping for homes.

I feel as though I won the lottery because I was financially able to purchase a home in 2016, before the market skyrocketed. I felt even luckier to have been able to capitalize on the increase in price of our country home, and move to a more urban area in 2020. This was all a coincidence

Kelsey Bent
Bent on Writing



of timing.

I stress that I didn't do anything special. I saved my hard-earned money, just like those before me and those saving for a home now. The only differences was timing, and in today's housing market, simply saving your money is next to impossible when the costs of food, rent, and services are also at all-time highs.

A quick look at the majority of the councils across our region tells us it is safe to assume that they are largely made up of folks who are far removed from the struggle that is being a first-time homebuyer.

Regardless of the generation you were born into, buying your first home is a major feat.

I question if the councillors voting on these decisions remember that homebuyers need anywhere from five to 10 per cent of the price of the home down. Twenty per cent if you don't want CMHC insurance.

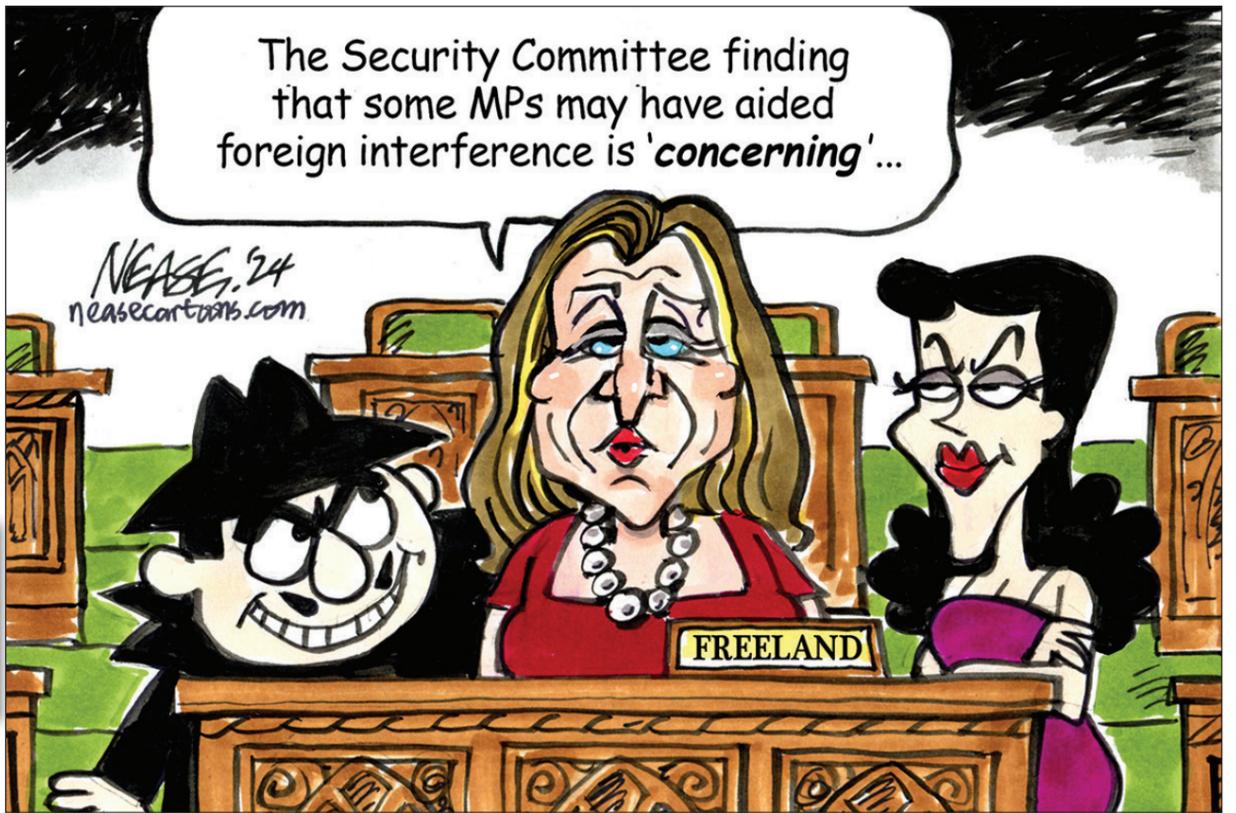
For example, there is a townhome currently for sale across the street from my home that is listed for over \$600,000.

I challenge councillors to disclose what the down payment was on their first homes.

Listening to these conversations unfold, and decisions become finalized in council, I worry that a precedent has been set. One that will segregate different densities of homes from one another.

Let me get slightly out of hand by assuming what could come next if we start segregating the community based on our differences. Will we go back to segregating races of people? How about gender? Or shall we go way back to medieval times when our leaders determined our worth by personally designating us as dukes and lords? Surely not.

Continued on page 5



Bravo to the Class of '24 – pivoting experts extraordinaire

The Class of '24 has been through a lot, be it at the elementary school level, secondary school, college or university.

The children and young adults who will be donning gowns and mortarboards, or, depending on age, cardboard crowns, in a few short days, have endured challenges no one should, especially children. Kids who could barely spell their school's name, could certainly spell "COVID-19" and "pandemic."

They developed skills that will hopefully never be put to large scale use again, including providing IT assistance for their parents trying to make Zoom calls, learning how to wear a first aid mask so it does not make glasses fog up, and figuring out how to get a good game of road hockey going with a team of much younger siblings, a golden retriever who refuses to give back the puck, and Grandma.

The pandemic catch-word was "pivot," and the Class of '24 had so much practice doing that, they were spinning half the time. They pivoted to adapt to the kitchen table classroom, pivoted to use the ever-present hand sanitizer dispensers and pivoted to find ways to hang out with friends that would not result coming down with COVID.

And they triumphed. Many were traumatized by the pandemic to a certain extent – adults were, too. The trauma was exacerbated by the difficulty in accessing social services and counselling during lockdowns.

Some of the younger folk made light of the six-foot separation rule by walking around holding opposite ends of hockey sticks, drew funny

Pauline Kerr
Off The Record



faces on their masks, gave theatrical performances on the front lawn for the neighbours and were enchanted by drive-through Santa Claus parades.

Some college work could be done online, but certain courses demanded hands-on work. Those classes got postponed. Some students lost the part-time jobs they depended on for rent money and moved home for a year. Some lost out on sports scholarships when live games and practices ceased. They missed out on proms, class trips, celebrations, and contact with friends. They coped with it all.

When school resumed on a sort-of-normal basis, they pivoted, and then once more when extracurricular activities got going again.

Most, at every school level, had a huge amount of catching up to do. And they did it.

Some are undoubtedly worried about their future; they can rest assured that the adults who watch them accept their certificates, diplomas and degrees have no such worries. Considering what these young people have been through already, they will have no problem handling whatever happens next.

They can wear their caps and gowns with confidence as they celebrate this milestone achievement, and step forward to take on new challenges.

The Class of '24 will meet those

challenges with grace and toughness, and they will need both. They were dealt a difficult hand, and they triumphed.

They face another bad hand – reaching adulthood in the age of social media and climate change - and will triumph over that one, too.

Over the next decade, the children of the pandemic will take their places as heads of everything from individual families, to major corporations. Some will lead scientific exploration in fields that do not even exist right now. Some will take their place as the next decision-maker for the family farming operation. Some will create wonderful works of art, award-winning literature or lovely buildings.

It will not be easy. Those they will replace – us - have made horrendous mistakes. We leave the Class of '24 a legacy of microplastics contamination, the opioid crisis, a health-care system that allowed thousands of our most vulnerable citizens die of COVID and remains in a state of near-chaos, and a society that seems ethically deficient. Coping with all that, plus whatever fate throws their way, will be a tall order. However, this is the Class of '24, that met the challenges of a global pandemic. If anyone can succeed, it will be them.

Three cheers for the Class of '24 – pivoting experts and tomorrow's leaders. One can only wonder what their most extraordinary accomplishments will be.

Pauline Kerr is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter with Midwestern Newspapers. She can be reached at pkerr@midwesternnewspapers.com.

TURNBACKS

Ten Years Ago

2014 - LDSS principal Diane Home-wood retired after working there for 31 years.

- Perth County Council narrowly approved a motion to proceed with investigating the trail project with a vote of 9-8. The council meeting included a delegation from the Perth County Federation of Agriculture, and past president Bert Vorstenbosch spoke on behalf of the Federation of Agriculture and the landowners who expressed concern over the proposed trail from Monkton to Milverton.

Twenty Years Ago

2004 - Thanks to several factors,

North Perth ratepayers saw their taxes go down by a small margin from the previous year.

- Listowel Memorial Hospital unveiled a 15-year, three stage redevelopment project; the first hospital in Ontario to submit one under the new guidelines.

Thirty Years Ago

1994 - Tom Albrecht and Steph Schinbein were king and queen of LDSS's prom, "Escape in the Untamed Garden".

- Because of the new graduated licensing, fees for required road tests went from \$31 to \$125.

- LDSS's Black Door Theatre put on

the play Quiet in the Land.

Forty Years Ago

1984 - Shelly MacDonald, 17, was crowned LDSS's At Home Queen.

- Playing at the Capitol Theatre was Romancing the Stone.

- Tara Beharry placed first for solos at Central P.S.'s MusicFest.

Fifty Year Ago

1974 - Debbie Thompson, 19, of Listowel created the winning design in a centennial crest contest. It was an hourglass.

- Kristina McCoag and Bob Graham were overall champs at Eastdale P.S.'s track and field day.

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The iris is Stratford's civic flower

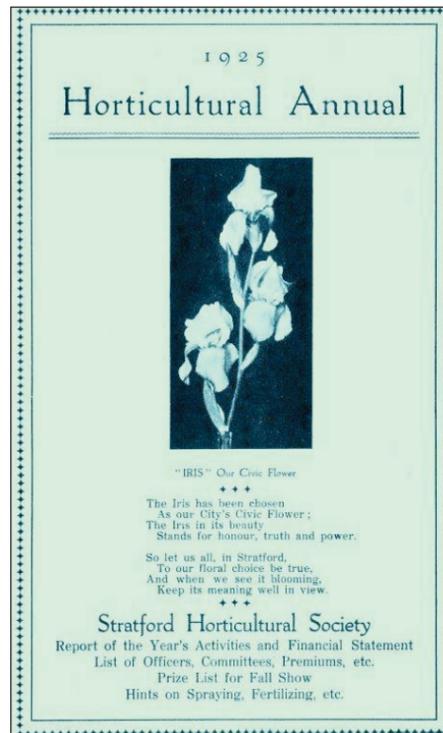
ELLEN THOMAS
STRATFORD-PERTH ARCHIVES

As most know, Ontario's official flower is the white trillium. Found in the forests and woodlands of Ontario, the white trillium blooms in late April and May. Picking a flower can severely damage the plant. It may take years to recover. This is not true of Stratford's hardy civic flower, the iris, seen here on the cover of the Stratford Horticultural Society's 1925 annual report. On January 14, 1925, at a regular meeting of the Stratford Horticultural Society, the following was recorded in the minutes: "The matter of a civic flower was then taken up, and after a very general discussion during which the iris and the rose were the chief flowers spoken of, it was decided to take a vote and decide which of these should be Stratford's civic flower. The final result, being decidedly in favor of the iris. And such was declared, by the chairman, as our civic flower."

A poem on the cover of the Annual, suggests pride in the choice.

*The iris has been chosen
As our City's Civic Flower;
The iris in its beauty
Stands for honour; truth and power.*

*So let us all, in Stratford,
To our floral choice be true,
And when we see it blooming,
Keep its meaning well in view.*



Contributed photo

There were many reasons why the iris was chosen. In the 1925 report, it was stated that "It costs little, it yields much." Other points in the flower's favour were listed as "its fragrance; its beauty; its durability, both as a flower and for its foliage; its profusion; the duration of its blooms; its adaptability, and its freedom from disease." It was described as being so hardy

that it needed no protections, and it would thrive in any soil, although it preferred rich moist clay loam. It was also said that as cut flowers, they were invaluable. "If they are taken, like the gladioli, just as the buds are about to open, and allowed to expand indoors, the colours will be much richer and will last a long time."

On January 15, 1925, a day after the flower was chosen by the Horticultural Society, the *Stratford Beacon Herald* ran a lengthy column on the Society and its choice of flower:

"The iris was chosen as Stratford's civic flower, at the annual meeting of the Horticultural Society held in the board room of the city hall last night. The Society has enjoyed steady growth in the last year, the membership now being 2,083, and increase of 331 over the previous year. The financial statement showed that the year ended with a surplus of \$179.73. The revenue from all sources for the year was \$3,454.65 (about \$60,576 today). The choosing of the civic flower was discussed at the close of the routine business session. The matter has been discussed for some time without definite results being effected. As the premier horticultural society in the city, the gathering decided that it would make the iris the civic flower. Although the rose and the gladioli were discussed, they did not vie with the iris for popularity. It was pointed out that the flower chosen might be grown with less trouble and attention than either of the others. It was also more appropriate as it grew well along the waterway. In this way, it would fit into

Stratford's park system. The meeting was informed that there was a piece of land on the north of the river which could be developed into a municipal flower bed where the flower could be developed."

The article and minutes give great insight into the popularity of gardening in the early twentieth century. The annual report boasted that "Stratford has one of the largest Horticultural Societies in Ontario." It was only a dollar to join the Society. That dollar included your choice of "Premiums." You could have a subscription to the *Canadian Horticulturalist* for one year, or fifteen gladiolus bulbs, 25 choice tulip bulbs, or a "due bill for 65 cents worth of plants" from one of several local growers. Should you have planted iris's that year, you would have been eligible to enter a special exhibit, where the prize money was very generous. You may have won \$2.50 for first prize, \$1.50 for second, and \$1.00 for third.

As our gardens are starting to fill out with late spring and early summer plantings, if you don't already have the iris in your garden, perhaps, you might consider it to be a beautiful and hardy addition.

Stratford-Perth Archives welcomes donations to the collection and is open for drop-in research from Tuesday to Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm. For details about what's available by dropping in and to set up appointments for in-depth research, please visit www.perthcounty.ca/StratfordPerthArchives, call us at 519-271-0531, ext. 259 or email archives@perthcounty.ca.



Patrick Raftis photos

North Perth Mayor Todd Kasneberg was first in line to place an order when the new Wendy's location in Listowel opened June 6. Above: Kasneberg, left, places his order with Wendy's franchisee Sanjay Dahya, centre and general manager Carrie Wakeford. Right: The mayor gets set to enjoy his meal.



Wendy's opens Listowel location

PATRICK RAFTIS
editor@midwesternnewspapers.com

LISTOWEL – Fast food aficionados have a new option with the opening of a Wendy's location here on June 6.

Among the fans of the franchise is North Perth Mayor Todd Kasneberg, who was first in line to place his order when the restaurant opened for business at noon that day. Kasneberg said getting a burger from a Wendy's in

his home community was a "bucket list" item for him. "My first encounter with Wendy's was probably 1975. My aunt, who was an American, was visiting Windsor, Ontario, which had, I think, one of the flagship Canadian locations. And sure enough, she takes me to Wendy's... So I've been a fan of Wendy's for a long time now, and certainly really happy to see this location in Listowel to add to the mix of many great choices that are here,"

Kasneberg told the Banner. "We're super excited. We're happy to be in town and the whole team here has been training for a few weeks - and some that have started in February - they've been anticipating this day," said Listowel Wendy's franchisee Sanjay Dahya.

While the restaurant opened its doors at 605 Mitchell Road South on June 6, an official grand opening is planned for June 28.



Drayton Entertainment photo

Directed by David Connolly, *Beehive* has various afternoon and evening shows at the Drayton Festival Theatre until June 23. Call the box office or order tickets online at draytonentertainment.com.

Drayton Festival Theatre opens season with 1960s girl power in *Beehive*

MARLENE OTTENS
SPECIAL TO THE BANNER

DRAYTON – Even though I was a very small child during most of the 1960s, I appreciate the variety of songs of that era and how the changing music reflected the progression of society's attitudes towards women. This is represented in the Drayton Festival Theatre's 2024 kickoff show, *Beehive*, a tribute to women's music of the '60s.

The first half is light and cheerful and girly, with bright go-go dresses, a charming set filled with colourful flowers, and puffy beehive hairdos. The songs are also mostly upbeat with a theme of boyfriends and love. Many favourites are included, such as *It's My Party*, *Where Did Our Love Go?*, *You Can't Hurry Love*, *One Fine Day*, and *My Boyfriend's Back*, playing tribute to the Supremes, the Ronettes, the Angels, Connie Francis, and Lesley Gore.

Several songs include some audience participation, so if you're in an aisle

seat you might be invited to dance. The audience also had fun with the song, *The Name Game*, where people tried to sing their own name in the rhythm of the popular song - *Mary, Mary, bo-bary; bonana, fanna, fo-fary; fee, fi, mo-mary; Mary!* If you plan to attend, you might want to practice in advance!

As the first half came to an end, the tone began to shift, just as the music and attitudes of the '60s changed with political unrest, women's liberation, and the Vietnam War. Although the British Invasion put an endless number of male groups on the music charts, the women of Britain responded with hits from Dusty Springfield and Lulu.

The second half was decidedly more gritty and demanding, both vocally and politically. Although the set remained the same, the lighting cleverly changed the cotton candy flowers to a more earthy and muted tone; and the costumes switched from tight and cute to comfortable and flowing with the previously lacquered hair now

messy and flowing. Songs about women finding their voice were featured, with powerful tributes to Tina Turner, Aretha Franklin, and Janis Joplin.

The six-member cast is a powerhouse of voices, whether as soloists or harmonizing. Tiffany Deriveau as Tina, Ocean Williams as Aretha, Caitlyn MacInnis as Grace Slick, and Kelly Holiff, Laura Mae Nason and Erica Peck each taking a turn as Janis - all are mesmerizing performances.

Beehive is another jukebox musical, something Drayton Entertainment does best. Whether you were there in the 1960s or not, it's worth travelling to Drayton this month to take a trip back to a time when women were finding their voice, both musically and in the world.

Directed by David Connolly, *Beehive* has various afternoon and evening shows at the Drayton Festival Theatre until June 23. Call the box office at 519-747-7788 or toll-free at 1-855-drayton (372-9866) or online at draytonentertainment.com.

Bent: Remembering humble beginnings

Continued from page 4

If the strategy going forward is to only place like homes beside one another, I cannot see this as anything less than elitism.

I am a firm believer that regardless of the year you enter the housing market, everyone deserves the right to housing within their means.

I think our leaders would benefit from a reminder of their own humble beginnings.

Lastly, municipal and county councils often complain about the lack of engage-

ment from the public. Perhaps the public is too busy working to afford a roof over their head, than to have the privilege to partake in these meetings. And by not approving developments, such as the one I listed above, councils are contributing to the competitive rat-race that is the current housing market.

Kelsey Bent is a Midwestern Newspapers reporter. She can be reached by emailing kbent@midwesternnewspapers.com.