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Raging Fire Destroys Tottenham Home

Firefighters from New Tecumseth Fire Rescue responded to a house fire in Tottenham on Saturday, Feb. 21. The call came in around 1 p.m., reporting a fire on Mill Street east of Queen Street. Firefighters extinguished the blaze, which engulfed all levels of the home. No injuries were reported.

BRIAN LOCKHART PHOTO

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Serving Your Community Since 1986

New Tecumseth council reviews report on Buy Ontario Act

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Town of New Tecumseth Council received a report detailing the Buy Ontario Act 2025, as legislated by the Province of Ontario, during council meeting on Feb. 9.

This legislation grants the Province authority to establish mandatory procurement rules for municipalities and other public-sector organizations.

The stated mission of the Buy Ontario Act is to prioritize Ontario-made goods and services in public procurement, ensuring that provincial tax dollars support Ontario's workforce.

The act is intentionally broad in scope, with detailed requirements expected to be defined in forthcoming regulations.

Initial implementation is expected to focus on light-duty fleet vehicles and construction procurements.

The legislation is a direct result of the United States increasing its use of tariffs on key sectors, including steel, aluminum, energy, automotive products, and softwood lumber.

These measures caused significant disruptions across the highly integrated North American supply chain.

In response, both the federal and Ontario governments introduced a series of mitigation measures throughout 2025.

The Buy Ontario Act was introduced in Nov. 2025 to safeguard Ontario's economy.

The proposed policy would require Ontario's public sector to purchase or lease vehicles that are manufactured in Ontario first.

A vehicle manufactured in Ontario has the number '2' as the first digit of its Vehicle Identification Number (VIN).

When it comes to infrastructure and construction projects, the proposed policy would apply to major goods and services in capital infrastructure and construction projects to encourage vendors to use Ontario-made and Canadian-made goods and services wherever possible when delivering capital infrastructure and construction projects to support key industries.

There are no direct financial impacts associated with this report; however, the implementation of any resulting directives is expected to incur costs.

Anticipated costs include staff time for stakeholder engagement and internal communications, updates to policies and templates, employee training and user support, development of new evaluation tools, extended evaluation processes, and increased responses to supplier inquiries related to the revised policy.



BUY ONTARIO – The Government of Ontario has implemented the Buy Ontario Act to support the province's workforce and respond to tariffs from the U.S. **CONTRIBUTED PHOTO**

Additional costs may arise from developing compliance-tracking and reporting systems, and from preparing submissions for the province.

From decks to drywall: Understanding New Tecumseth's building permit rules

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

With spring arriving soon, many local residents will be planning home renovations, both inside and outside.

Whenever you plan to build or renovate, you may need a proper building permit for your project.

The Town of New Tecumseth can help you with building and renovating. Permits protect your home and ensure everyone's safety.

Many projects will require a proper building permit.

You must obtain a building permit if you are planning to build new, demolish, renovate,

repair, or add onto a building or structure.

Examples of when a building permit is required by is not limited to, include:

- A new building or structure that is larger than 15 sq. meters (161 sq. ft.)
- An addition or sunroom that is attached to a building or structure
- Agricultural buildings
- A pre-fabricated building/structure, which is greater than 15 square metres
- Any building or structure that contains plumbing, regardless of size
- Any plumbing or HVAC work

You will need a building permit if you are excavating a basement, constructing a foundation, or converting an attached garage into

a livable space.

You also need a building permit if you are installing:

- A door between an attached garage and a house or basement
- An exterior staircase for basement access

When it comes to interior work, you will need a building permit when:

- Installing, changing, or removing or moving load-bearing walls and beams
- Installing new openings in load-bearing walls, exterior walls or changing the size of doors and windows
- Installing a skylight in the roof of a building/structure

Installing or modifying a septic system,

water service, sewer line, heating system, air-conditioning system, fireplace or wood stove.

This includes:

- Installing or repairing a chimney
- Installing, renovating, or modifying plumbing fixtures or plumbing systems
- Constructing, renovating or repairing a sewage system, septic tank or septic field

For outdoor decks, you need a permit to build a wood deck that is more than 600 mm (23-5/8 inches) above ground level.

This includes decks around private swimming pools, and if you are adding a roof over a wood deck.

If you are unsure if you need a permit, contact the town for more information.

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BRIAN
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MPP, Simcoe-Grey

Our Town Food Bank celebrates 35 years of serving Tottenham

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Our Town Food Bank in Tottenham is celebrating 35 years of helping people with food insecurity.

Established in 1991, the food bank opened its doors for the first time on Feb. 14 of that year after founding members realized there was a need for the service in Tottenham.

It was originally located in a modular home in Tottenham; however, the structure wasn't adequate for visitors and required some work.

It was relocated to the rear of 18 Queen St. In 2016, a building that was originally Tottenham Town Hall. The plan was for the food bank to be there for a year, but it worked so well that they are still there.

The Food Bank is run by volunteers, several of whom have been there for over 20 years.

"When the (town) amalgamation happened, which is when this food bank opened, there was a need for this service in town," explained Susan Iacoucci, president of Our Town Food Bank. "We have a shopping model here, so clients can use the points system and shop for what they want. We give

them that dignity to come in and do a quick shop. If you sign up as a client and are having food insecurity, we have a conversation and assess how many points a person should have. We're a supplement – we're not meant to feed you, we are meant to give you a helping hand."

Our Food Bank is open every Tuesday afternoon, and there is usually a line-up of clients waiting for their turn to shop.

Over the years, the food bank has evolved. Food banks used to accept only non-perishable food donations. However, it was finally decided that people can't eat only food from a box or a can, and they can also eat other products like fruits, vegetables, and bread.

The food bank relies on donations from local residents and several local farms and businesses to keep food on its shelves.

"Our operating budget is \$150,000 to \$180,000 to stay open," Iacoucci explained. "Around 99 per cent of the money donated goes right into the food bank. We have only a one per cent overhead. If it wasn't for the community, we wouldn't be here,"

Our Town Food Bank provides a valuable service to local residents who face challenges accessing healthy food.



MAJOR MILESTONE – The Our Town Food Bank in Tottenham is celebrating 35 years of serving local residents. It helps people experiencing food insecurity and is run entirely by volunteers. Our Town Food Bank President Susan Iacoucci and volunteers, John Battaglia and Adam Maciel, were ready to greet clients on Tuesday, Feb. 17. **BRIAN LOCKHART PHOTO**

Updated building permit application form in New Tecumseth now available

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

If you are planning a renovation, addition, or new build in New Tecumseth, you should be aware that the Province of Ontario has updated the Application for a Permit to Con-

struct or Demolish.

The new application is now in effect and must be used for all building permit applications.

These changes come from the province and help ensure applications comply with current rules under the Ontario Building

Code.

- Changes to the new form:
- References to Tarion / Ontario New Home Warranty Program have been removed
 - There is a new section for the New Home Construction Licensing Act builder or vendor license number (for new homes)
 - If you already know who your builder will be, you are encouraged to include that

information on your application. Builders, designers, and homeowners must use the new provincial form starting immediately. Using an old version of the building permit may delay your permit review. You can find the updated form, application requirements, and helpful guides at newtecumseth.ca/BuildingPermit



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Editorial, Letters & Opinion

"The window to the world can be covered by a newspaper."

~ Stanislaw Jerzy Lec

I remember when...

A hug is a rather personal thing.

Generally speaking, you only embrace someone you know rather well or are very familiar with.

Although sometimes there is a hug-by-proxy type of thing where you are introduced to someone who is close to someone you know, where they give you a hug because it's a way of saying they welcome you into their life, or you are distantly related.

Several years ago, I noticed a trend in younger people – generally middle school or high school age – where hugging became the norm every time they saw someone they knew.

Because of my job, I spend considerable time in places like local arenas where younger people congregate.

I would see a group of five or six kids run into another group of five or six kids in the arena lobby, and they would all hug each other. Every kid hugged every other kid they just ran into.

I thought that was a little much considering they all probably saw each other that afternoon in school, but they were always smiling and happy, so no harm done.

Then COVID happened. Kids were learning from home, and there was a general 'no contact' rule pretty much everywhere.

Kids were taught to never touch any-

one and remain six feet away from other people.

Now, those younger kids have moved into middle school and high school.

They still seem happy to see other people they know when they meet in the arena lobby, but the hugging culture seems to have disappeared.

Kids were taught that touching someone else means you could get their germs, and they seem to have taken that seriously – no more hugging.

I would imagine the whole 'cooties' thing has a lot more meaning in school yards these days.

I bought my last vehicle during the height of COVID. It was a bit of a challenge because vehicles were getting scarce, and you had to make an appointment just to enter the dealership to look at a car.

I bought a vehicle and made an appointment to go in and pick it up.

A good friend of mine worked at the dealership, and when she saw me, she came out to say hello and gave me a hug because it had been a while since we had seen each other.

The salesperson looked absolutely shocked that her co-worker had actually touched a customer.

I didn't mind at all.

However, later, I hoped this wouldn't turn into some kind of situation where

the salesperson would run to the general manager and announce that my friend had touched a customer and possibly set off a germ chain reaction that would result in the dealership being fined and shut down.

The COVID era changed so many things, and I think we are yet to realize the final impact.

I know of quite a few sports groups, clubs, and organizations that were either banned from meeting during the pandemic or members simply stopped attending out of fear of being in any kind of social setting.

Many of those groups simply faded away and have never recovered.

I also know of several service businesses that were forced to close and never reopened.

Just a few days before the pandemic was announced and some businesses were ordered to close or greatly restrict their service, I interviewed a young woman who had just realized her lifelong dream of opening her own cafe.

A few days later, she was forced to close her doors and was only allowed to serve pick-up orders. It wasn't enough, and she had to close shop.

Her dream disappeared because of the pandemic.

The pandemic has also drastically altered the way we say goodbye to loved

ones who have passed away.

Funerals during COVID were very restrictive. My own mother died at the start of the pandemic, and initially, we were told we could have only five people attend any kind of funeral, including the officiant.

That number was increased to 10 prior to the service. Her funeral ended up being a family meeting at the funeral home prior to a drive to the cemetery and a short service where the funeral director insisted we all stand six feet apart.

The good part of that service was that many people actually did arrive, and parked their cars in a ring around the cemetery and watched from afar so as not to break distancing rules.

Since COVID, many people have been eliminating funerals altogether. After announcing the death, the obituary states, 'a celebration of life will happen at a later date.'

However, with rare exceptions, those celebrations never take place.

It is sad to think we are losing a tradition of a fond final farewell.

The COVID pandemic took many things away.

Some things may return, but others are gone forever.

BRIAN LOCKHART
FROM THE SECOND ROW



A basketful of creativity and wonder

A lot can happen over the course of a week – and the impact of all the myriad possibilities sometimes hits differently depending on where you are.

Spending 10 days staying with friends in the United States recently was an interesting experience. We've become accustomed over the last year-and-a-half to waking up in the morning and girding our proverbial loins before taking in all that may have happened overnight, including unhinged late-night verbal diarrhea from people old enough and smart enough to know better.

Being inside the equally proverbial beast when these rumblings happen is an altogether different story.

Here at home, these rumblings can completely upend the news cycle, with pundits being called in to weigh whether each bowl of word salad is an existential threat to this nation. On the other side, however, it felt like this was simply water off a duck's back, or "just one more thing we have to deal with today. It will be some-

thing new tomorrow."

Some of our domestic issues hit differently as well.

A couple of days before we were due to hit home, we were at an unusual park. Designed to look like a boomtown that would not have been out of place during the California Gold Rush, or any number of once bustling hamlets that remain as little more than ghost towns, it's a place that has been used as a filming location for scores of westerns over the last 80 years.

Once the film crews "get out of Dodge", the quaint storefronts give way to an eclectic group of businesses, including restaurants, a petting zoo, and, more often than not, individual, independent shops showcasing the works of dozens and dozens of artisans, including Indigenous creators.

I couldn't help but find the irony in the fact I got a ping about Doug Ford discouraging university students from "picking basket weaving courses" in their post-secondary careers in a place where the

humble act of weaving – wicker, fabric, and otherwise – was very obviously anything but a dying art!

At the heart of the issue are changes announced by the Provincial government that will reduce the scope of the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) that will see the amount of support available for students dramatically cut, with the maximum grants now standing at a maximum of 85 per cent being cut to 25 per cent.

"In order to protect our province, it's imperative that we continue to train a strong, highly-skilled workforce for Ontario for decades to come," said Ontario Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence, and Security Nolan Quinn. "Through these changes, including \$6.4 billion in new funding for the post-secondary sector, our government is not only ensuring the sustainability of our colleges, universities, and Indigenous Institutes, but also preparing our graduates with the in-demand skills they need

to meaningfully find good-paying, rewarding careers, while continuing to keep education accessible and keep costs down for students and their families."

Changes, they say, will help prepare students for in-demand careers that meet labour market needs, preserve students' ability to "access high-quality post-secondary education, while supporting their ability to appropriately invest in their education and success," and provide long-term sustainability for the post-secondary sector.

"Federal changes have significantly reduced international student revenues and the Province is also facing increased domestic demand for higher-cost programs and a financial aid program (OSAP) that is dramatically out of line with other jurisdictions," the Province said.

Continued on Page 19

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Cuba: It's a matter of time

GWYNNE DYER
OUR WORLD TODAY



Fidel Castro and his Communist band of brothers have had a good long run in power (66 years), but they have run out of road.

Most of the relatively small Cuban middle class fled to the United States after the 1959 revolution, but the new regime certainly had mass popular support for at least the next quarter-century. Then it began to erode, but only quite slowly at first.

The Castro brothers and their allies always faced huge economic problems because of the US trade embargo, but things got much harder after the old Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, eliminating about 85 per cent of Cuba's foreign trade.

The ensuing 'Special Period in Time of Peace' spanned the 1990s and brought great hardship to ordinary people – rationing, blackouts, even severe food shortages – but the economy stabilized (at a permanently lower level of prosperity) by 2000.

At that point 40 per cent of the population would probably still have fought to defend the regime, at least

if the enemy was the United States. The enthusiasm was gone, but Cuban nationalism has always been a powerful force.

However, the institutional rot in a ruling party too long in power continued, and after another 25 years of scraping along the bottom many Cubans are in despair: 2.75 million (out of 11 million) have left the country since 2020. Would those remaining really resist an American invasion? That may be what's coming next, if you believe the current American rhetoric.

Since the recent US raid on Venezuela to kidnap that country's president, Washington has redoubled its threats against the Cuban regime. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio (the American son of Cuban exiles) said that if he were in the Cuban government he'd be "concerned", and President Donald Trump said Cuba "will be falling pretty soon."

Many of Trump's scattershot threats are just idle bad-mouthing of perceived enemies, but he may be serious this time. Cuba imported half its oil from Venezuela and another quarter from Mexico, but both countries have yielded to Washington's demand to stop selling it to Havana.

Trump has also promised to put higher tariffs on any other country selling oil to Cuba, and the US Navy is seizing tankers bound for Cuban ports. It amounts to a total energy blockade of the country, and the result is hugely damaging. Rolling power cuts are shutting industries, transport and even schools for much of the time.

Cuba is sliding rapidly back into the utter desperation of the 'Special Period', but it would still be a big risk for Donald Trump to stage a full-scale invasion of the island. There are undoubtedly several million Cubans who would still resist that,

and they are the ones who have the guns.

A more likely outcome is a deal of the sort that Trumps likes, as close as possible to the Venezuelan template. Find the people in the existing Cuban regime who are willing to sell out if the price is right, and make a deal that gives Trump the final say but protects their privileges and a good deal of their power. Meet the new boss, same as the old boss.

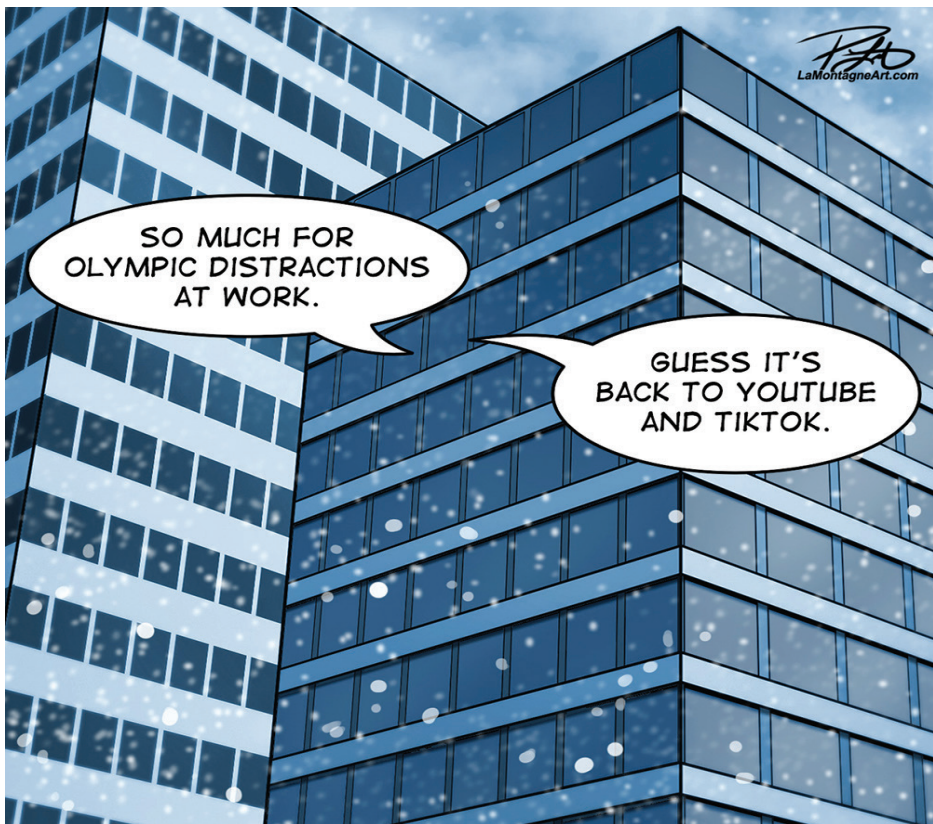
It would be a squalid end for an era in Cuba that started with high hopes and big ideas, but that was probably inevitable because like most Communist regimes it was ruthless and repressive. That formula usually works in the short term, but it generally fails in the long run. Indeed, sometimes you can see the upside and the downside of the package at the same time.

Early in the Special Period I took a large chunk of my extended family to Cuba. Six of us were straggling along the Malecón in Havana when two young men on a bike sliced my mother-in-law's bag off her shoulder with a knife. The younger men in our party gave chase, of course, but the thieves were soon out of sight.

No matter! There was a genuine 'hue and crime': people at windows and balconies all along the street shouting "they went thataway". Then we caught up with the bike – because the police had already stopped it and taken the thieves away. They returned her bag, containing her passport and money.

The next day a different thief grabbed that same bag, knocking my father-in-law to the ground. He was only slightly injured, but they took him to the police station and held him there pretending to investigate. I had to bribe the chief detective \$100 to get him out.

Social solidarity one day, brazen criminality the next. But I fear that the solidarity is now mostly gone.



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CLUES ACROSS

- What travelers must do
- Calendar month
- Hopefully quickly
- Once more
- Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!
- "Cheers" actress Perlman
- Astronomy unit
- Savings vehicle
- Get your ducks in this
- Right away
- Popular sports league
- Containers
- Entireties
- One who wassails
- Turned-up position
- Extreme modesty
- Writing utensil
- Rewards (archaic)
- Ancient capital
- S. American wood sorrel
- General discomfort
- Philippine island
- A witty saying
- One who summarizes
- Covered in
- Mimic
- Henry was a notable one
- Daughter of Hera and Zeus
- Retired NFLer
- Newton
- Playground equipment
- Concept
- Satisfaction
- Fishing net
- Hammer end
- A father's male child
- Japanese drink

- Off-Broadway figure
- Gelatinous substance
- Concern
- "Lick It Up" rockers
- Serbian river
- Part of a hat
- Bowl-shaped
- Semitic language
- Utter a shrill cry
- Long times
- Animal parts
- Causing annoyance
- Amorous talker
- Attempt
- Harmonic effects
- Cost per mile
- They ___
- Bitterly regret
- Not even
- A way to drop
- Title of respect
- World leader
- Georgia rockers
- National capital
- Great Plains people
- Duck-sized dinosaur genus
- Architectural recesses
- Member of U.S. Navy
- Mountainous
- Kite bird
- Sweetheart (archaic)
- Popular snack made of potato
- 70s songsters The Bee ___
- SE China port ___-men
- Something to fill up
- League of Legends character

No one has more self-confidence than the person who does a crossword puzzle with a pen.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: Traffic calming

According to the Ontario Road Safety 2024 report, there were 27,292 vehicle accidents, 409 were fatal, and 24,545 resulted in personal injury. Most of these accidents involved passenger vehicles, and most of these could have been prevented. Just think of how much sorrow and money we could save in medical and insurance fees if we could prevent these collisions.

Today, everybody speeds even though there are signs, speed bumps, and speed cameras. We, in an area where there are no sidewalks and with wide snowbanks, are unable to walk safely in the streets because of fast drivers, yet there are 30 km/h speed signs up all around.

On the 400-series highways, there are never enough lanes to accommodate all the speeders and slow drivers.

So, what's the solution that provides safety for our drivers, passengers, walkers, bicyclists, etc. Maybe we need to find a way to automatically control a car's speed and adjust

it up or down based on location, time of day, weather conditions, and public safety.

In most new cars, there is a feature that reads speed limit signs and displays them on the dashboard or the front window. For instance, the Hyundai Ioniq 5 has a feature that turns the numbers red when you go over the speed limit, so all we need to do is not allow the car to exceed that speed.

For safety reasons, there are rules that say we must wear seat belts. Seat belts became mandatory in Ontario in 1976, and it is estimated that 9,000 lives have been saved. Similarly, catalytic converters were made mandatory in 1988 to reduce acid rain and smog. These rules were all made for public safety.

So why not speed? Here is how it would work. The speed signs would all be electrically controlled, allowing the speed limits to change. For instance, in school zones, the cars would go at the maximum speed the signs would allow. After school, the speed limit could be raised to normal street speeds. Sim-

ilarly, at night, when the traffic is light, the speed could be changed to a higher speed. In a heavy snowfall, the speeds could be altered to fit the conditions, and all cars would go at the same speed.

This means everybody behind you would go the same speed. That way, the older vehicles would have to slow down even if they did not have the technology needed to follow the speed limit.

The other thing technology would ensure is a safe distance between cars. Again, the newer models have a way to set the constant distance between you and the car in front. It would still be up to the driver in the older model to maintain the space between the driver and the car ahead.

What would this do? Firstly, the number of police assigned to traffic could be put to better use. There would be a significant drop in accidents, deaths, and injuries, as well as in insurance rates. We would feel safer walking on the streets. No more speeding tickets. Less

ambulance trips to the hospitals.

As cars become more automated and truly autonomous, we would not even have to own cars. We'd call them up, and they would take you where you want to go and pick you up when you told them to. No worries about being side-wiped or hitting cars in front or being hit from behind, as the cars of tomorrow would have even more sensors than today to ensure that the lane is open and can make the change safely.

Just as was done with seat belts, we need to get our governments to change laws so that the vehicles automatically follow the set speed limits. Let your local government know how you feel.

And yes, there would be an outcry for losing the independence that drivers have today, but there would be no opposition to more access to medical care and cheaper cost of living.

Jorma Ikavalko
Alliston

Temporary road closure in Tottenham

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Lionel Stone Avenue East in Tottenham will be getting a facelift and will be closed to through traffic for several months.

The Town of New Tecumseth is getting ready to reconstruct the street in 2026. This work will improve the road surface, sidewalks, streetlights, and important underground infrastructure such as storm and sanitary sewers.

To complete the project safely, the street will be closed to through traffic from May 4

to Aug. 21, 2026.

Local and emergency access will be maintained. Detour signs and construction signs will be posted.

Some early work may occur under single lane closures, including surveying, utility locates, test pits, and installing tree and environmental protection.

For more information and updates, visit newtecumseth.ca/LionelStone.

Residents are encouraged to plan alternate routes and expect minor construction-related delays during peak hours.



ROAD WORK – Lionel Stone Avenue East in Tottenham will be under construction from May to Aug. 2026, to improve the road surface, sidewalks, streetlights, and underground infrastructure. **CONTRIBUTED PHOTO**

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Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit encourages regular STI testing

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit is sending out a reminder that taking care of your sexual health is an important part of taking care of yourself and your partner.

This includes being informed, prepared, and aware of the possible infections you may encounter.

Sexually transmitted infections can spread through many forms of sexual contact, and they don't discriminate based on age, number of partners, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation. Anyone who is sexually active can be at risk.

Many STIs, including syphilis, HIV, chlamydia, and gonorrhea, often show no symptoms in the early stages, which makes regular testing an important part of staying healthy.

Early detection can prevent complications and help reduce the spread of infections to others.

Protection starts with open conversations about safer sex practices with every partner.

Using condoms or oral dams, staying up to date on vaccinations such as hepatitis B and HPV, and being mindful of how using alcohol, cannabis, or opioids can impair judgment are important for reducing your risk.

Free condoms can be discreetly picked up at all health unit offices Monday to Friday during regular business hours.

The Health Unit also operates Sexual Health Clinics located in Collingwood, Cookstown, Gravenhurst, Huntsville, Midland, Orillia, and Barrie.

Appointments are also available on Wednesdays in Elmvale.

The Health Unit's sexual health clinics are safe, judgment-free, LGBTQ2+ friendly spaces and offer full sexual health services including education, counselling and STI testing.

Testing is free to everyone, including those without a health card. STI testing can

be done without providing a name.

The Health Unit also offers free STI treatment for those who test positive for bacterial STIs such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis.

Appointments can be booked online or by calling the Health Unit at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520.

Another option for testing is GetaKit – an online service that delivers free and discreet at-home, self-testing for HIV and other STIs.

Available to residents age 17 and older, with HIV self-testing specifically available to those age 18 and older, the service provides online or mail-delivered requisition forms authorized by a licensed physician.

County of Simcoe council focuses on priority dispatch, early learning, HART Hub

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Simcoe County council has released highlights from its Feb. 10 council meeting, including updates on progress in programs across the region.

Paramedic Services Medical Priority Dispatch System

It has been one year since the Government of Ontario implemented the Medical Priority Dispatch System across the region. Paramedic Services are reporting clear improvements in how emergency calls are assessed and resources are deployed.

The transition has led to more accurate identification of life-threatening emergencies, quicker responses for the most critical patients, and improved overall ambulance availability.

Early learning and child care system management funding allocations

Council approved the 2026 Early Learning and Child Care Funding Plan, totalling \$181.7 million, along with the program strategies and funding allocations, while redirecting any year-end municipal savings to the Social Services Reserve.

With approval secured, the County will move forward with implementing the 2026 allocations, which support licensed child-care, EarlyON programs, Indigenous-led services, special needs resourcing, and sector-wide quality initiatives.

Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hub funding allocations

Council has approved the 2026-27 Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment Hub funding plan, including the full \$6.31

million provincial allocation and the proposed distribution to Primary Partners.

With approval in place, the County will proceed with coordinated HART Hub operations that integrate housing, mental health, addiction, and culturally responsive supports.

The allocations fund a full continuum of care, from withdrawal management to treatment to stable housing.

Simcoe County Archives operations

In 2025, the Simcoe County Archives advanced work across its three core service areas: collection development, preservation, and public access.

Throughout the year, the Archives acquired new municipal and private records, processed backlogged materials, expanded digital and microfilm preservation work, and supported researchers through in-person vis-

its, inquiries, and digitization requests.

Outreach, training, and collaboration with municipal partners also continued to help strengthen awareness, access, and long-term stewardship of the region's documentary heritage.

Community partnerships – nutritional meal support

Council received an update on community partnerships with the County's Long-Term Care and Seniors Services Department. This outlines how they continue to provide high-quality, affordable meals to vulnerable residents across the region.

Key initiatives include the long-standing Meals on Wheels partnership with the Canadian Red Cross, the award-winning Soup for Seniors program at Trillium Manor, and expanded meal support for local emergency shelters and food banks.

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Arts & Local Events

South Simcoe Theatre's production of 'The Gravitational Pull of Bernice Trimble' weighs family obligations and devotion

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

It is an exploration of the darker side of the human condition in The South Simcoe Theatre's production of *The Gravitational Pull of Bernice Trimble*.

Written by Beth Graham, produced by Jason Bowers, and directed by Iain Maggosh, the play centres on a family with a matriarch who calls a family meeting to discuss her new medical diagnosis with her grown children.

In the role of middle child, Iris, Ashlee Brewer is a devoted daughter who displays common sense and walks the middle line when it comes to her family.

Ashlee Brewer carries the bulk of this production, remaining on stage for the entire duration of the play and delivering an enormous amount of dialogue flawlessly.

Linda Alsemgeest, in the role of mother Bernice, is a lively and healthy woman in her 50s, who announces that while her physical body is fine, her mental capacity is diminishing and she has been diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's Disease.

Oldest daughter Sarah, played by Franca Ianni, is shocked to learn about the diagnosis, but at the same time, is in denial, insisting the disease probably won't progress more than it already has.

In the role of Peter, the youngest child, Benjamin Canedo is a man of few words, always in a state of non-confrontation. Once a discussion starts, Peter always finds a reason to leave the room.

Upon learning of her diagnosis, Bernice views it as a black cloud floating over her head. She witnessed her own mother suffer from the effects of Alzheimer's, and she is worried not only about her own future but also about being a burden to her children.



THOUGHT PROVOKING – Family obligations and devotion during illness set the tone of The South Simcoe Theatre's production of *The Gravitational Pull of Bernice Trimble*. On the stage, Ashlee Brewer, Linda Alsemgeest, Franca Ianni, and Benjamin Canedo create a story based on a mother's decision when she learns she has Alzheimer's Disease.

BRIAN LOCKHART PHOTO

Bernice calls a second family meeting to discuss her future plans.

Sarah becomes highly emotional and demands that her mother rethink her plans.

Iris maintains a calm demeanour as she thoughtfully considers her mother's future.

Peter decides to go into another room to watch television.

The play takes a hard look at obligation and

devotion and the course family members will take to support each other.

It is thought-provoking and will touch many people who have experienced family members suffering from Alzheimer's Disease.

The final moments of the play are quite spectacular as Iris observes the bigger picture of where we all are in this universe.

The play has great production values thanks

to set designer Sandy Bishop, lighting designer Mark Hayward, and set builder Gord Hebert.

The Gravitational Pull of Bernice Trimble is on The South Simcoe Theatre stage through to March 8, with performances on Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m., and Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m.

Tickets are available at the Theatre's website at www.thesouthsimcoetheatre.com.

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NewRoads LakeRide concludes with \$1 million raised for Southlake

BY BROCK WEIR

NewRoads Automotive Group concluded ten years of its LakeRide cycling event on a high note – achieving their goal of raising more than \$1 million for Southlake Health.

The NewRoads LakeRide, which took place each summer, setting off on various routes from Newmarket to Lake Simcoe, supported a number of key areas of development for Southlake, but put a significant emphasis on the local hospital’s Mental Health programs.

“Our partnership with NewRoads Automotive Group, through the thoughtful and generous leadership of [NewRoads President] Michael Croxon, has been a point-of-pride

for Southlake Health,” said Jennifer Ritter, President and CEO of the Southlake Health Foundation. “Over the last 10 years, we have seen the NewRoads LakeRide grow and inspire cyclists across the region to fundraise and ride to make an impact on the health of our communities. That impact is felt across our hospital, but nowhere near as acutely as in our Mental Health Program, where care has been transformed through the compassionate support of NewRoads.

“We are so grateful to the entire NewRoads Team for the commitment, enthusiasm, and support they have demonstrated for Southlake Health.”

Within Southlake’s Mental Health Program, funds from the LakeRide have been

used to foster healing environments to meet the unique needs of each patient.

The NewRoads Automotive Group Emergent Mental Health Assessment Unit, which opened in 2020, is a testament to this commitment. The dedicated Unit features six private assessment rooms for patients experiencing mental health crises and requiring urgent support.

A 12-bed adult inpatient unit opened in 2023, which allowed Southlake to increase its capacity for mental health care supports.

The latest phase, which is expected to open this spring, will be a new patio for the program, Southlake’s first outdoor space to support inpatient recovery.

“As a psychiatrist caring for patients in

Southlake’s Mental Health Program, I know the important role that a peaceful and healing environment plays in enabling a patient to recover,” said Dr. Gaurav Mehta, Physician Leader of Southlake’s Mental Health Program. “Patients in our communities who come to us for care are benefiting from our improved and expanded spaces, like the NewRoads Automotive Group Emergent Mental Health Assessment Unit. These light-filled, purposefully designed spaces are tailored to meet the needs of mental health patients and we’re so appreciative of our partners at NewRoads and participants and donors of the NewRoads LakeRide over the last 10 years for making this a reality for Southlake.”

From phantom power to time-of-use: Several tips on how to reduce home electricity bill

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

You need electricity, and we all have to pay for it.

However, there are ways of reducing your monthly electric bill by changing some habits and making adjustments in your home.

Phantom power occurs when electronic devices draw power even when not in use.

You can reduce phantom power usage by unplugging electronics when you’re not using them, plugging electronics into a power bar and switching it off, and setting up a charging station with a smart power strip to limit charging time.

Small changes to your home will help you reduce your power consumption.

Replace furnace filters every three months to reduce the energy usage of your furnace fan.

Use caulking and weather-stripping around doors and windows to keep heat in and reduce your energy use.

Take advantage of natural light during the day instead of relying on overhead lights.

By choosing the cold-water setting on your washing machine, you can reduce your appliance’s electricity usage by up to 90 per cent.

If you are buying new appliances, make sure to check out the power consumption of new units.

EnergyStar-related appliances are designed to use less power.

While remaining comfortable on hot days is important, avoid running your air conditioner between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m., when electricity prices are highest during summer months.

You can choose how your electricity is billed. As of Nov. 1, 2020, most Regulated Price Plan electricity customers can choose either time-of-use or tiered pricing.

If you use most of your electricity during off-peak hours – evenings, overnight, and weekends – and have higher electricity demands, time-of-use may be your preferred pricing plan.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

If you’re a time-of-use customer, the price of electricity is lower at night, on weekends, and on statutory holidays.

Electricity use in Ontario peaks twice per day in the winter. This is early morning and late afternoon.

During the summer, electricity use in Ontario peaks in the afternoon. By this time

of day, more people start running their air conditioners on high.

By being mindful of these times, you can be selective and reduce your energy costs by avoiding using electric devices during these times.

Careful monitoring of your power use can result in savings on your monthly electric bill.

Simcoe students encouraged to apply for Umoja Black Secondary Student Leadership Award

Applications are now open for the Umoja Black Secondary Student Leadership Award. Umoja is a Swahili word meaning ‘unity.’

This award is an annual scholarship for a full-time registered SCDSB Black secondary school student who will be attending

post-secondary school in the fall and demonstrates leadership in their school and in the Black community within Simcoe County.

Selection of the Umoja Award recipient will be facilitated by the SCDSB Human Rights and Equity Office.

The information provided in the application will assist the selection committee (comprised of members of the SCDSB Equity Advisory Committee) in choosing the recipient.

Learn more about the award and how

to apply on the SCDSB website at scdsb.on.ca/cms/One.aspx?portalId=210982&pageId=38446766.

Applications for the Umoja Black Secondary Student Leadership Award are due May 1, 2026.

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New book from Head of School challenges traditional concepts of classroom education

BY BROCK WEIR

The role of a teacher used to be to impart information.

This role has significantly shifted in recent years, says Dr. Cinde Lock, and schools need to recognize this to stay relevant in a window as short as five years.

“Look at the world we live in,” she says. “With AI, everybody is going to have their own private tutor soon – they already kind of do – and it can push them along, help them learn, and give them oodles of extra questions, things to think about and context. If we want to be relevant in five years’ time, we’d better rethink what school is, what we can amplify, and what we can help bring alive that AI can never do – and that is human connection.”

Dr. Lock, an educator of more than 30 years and now Head of School at Newmarket’s Pickering College, explores this topic in-depth in her new book *Connections, Academics, and Purpose: Designing the Future of School*.

Co-authored with her daughter, Anneke Lee, the book explores “a bold and timely reimagining of education – one where learning begins not with curriculum expectations, but with authentic connections, real-world problems, and meaningful community partnerships.”

First published in January and formally launched at Pickering College last week, nearly 900 books had been sold at press time this week and it has already sparked a conversation.

Human connections, says Dr. Lock, can include fostering an environment where students feel involved, valued and heard, and where they can better understand and connect with the world around them.

It is essential to help students forge a meaningful link between some of the challenges facing our world and be a part of the change they want to see in the world. Connecting them with changemakers can help students see the issues through a new lens and see that they can make a valuable contribution.

“From a very young age, they can say, ‘I want to be a part of that journey. It’s informed citizenship and engaged citizenship. It’s also building empathy. It helps them feel like their learning is purposeful and meaningful,’” Dr. Lock explains. “It’s not for the purpose of just being graded. If you go into a traditional school, every day you’re just being assessed. It’s about assessment and not learning.”

“We’re doing that in spades at Pickering College and this is really a love story to Pickering in so many ways, but it’s so much broader than that because it’s about a vision for what school should be and it’s a methodology for teachers on how to actually put it in place.”

Other types of schools and other educational institutions are so ingrained with existing systems and potentially outdated ideas of what universities are looking for in accepting first-year students out of the high school environment, Dr. Lock says.

She cites a recent discussion with a teacher just out of school as a prime example of this way of thinking. When Dr. Lock asked how the teacher could make her math lesson more interesting, the teacher linked the equation of a curve with art. But that didn’t necessarily underscore the purpose of why students need to make that calculation in the first place.

“What if the student went away and said, ‘there’s something really cool in that, and I thought it was really interesting,’ and, on their own time and in their own way, went



SHARING HER WORK – Pickering College hosted a book launch for Head of School Dr. Cinde Lock last Thursday at the independent school. **CONTRIBUTED PHOTO**

and extended the project far beyond what you’d ever originally assigned?” she says, relating a question she posed to the educator. “What if the student comes back four weeks later and says, ‘Look what I did! I’m so excited about this.’ Would you change the grade in the original assignment?” The teacher said no, and I asked why? What is it that’s so ingrained in your thinking about student learning that your timing and structure have to be so tight that you don’t want to encourage, nor do you want to accept a student that’s gone far beyond, and you don’t want to credit it because somehow that’s an advantage that student had that no other student did?”

The newly minted teacher stuck to their guns and said going down that route would result in “everybody getting 100 per cent,” says Dr. Lock.

“Why is that bad? Isn’t that learning? Don’t you want students to be passionate about their learning? Unfortunately, this is a narrow view of school – it’s about the assessment more than the learning, more than it is about the passion or the interest in learning. If we want to have anything other than disengaged kids,

we’ve got to make changes.”

As *Connections, Academics, and Purpose: Designing the Future of School* continues to reach educators and parents alike, Dr. Lock says she wants the volume to “create a movement.” She senses an opportunity to foster change, she says, just as Pickering College instills in its own students.

“I want to take advantage of the opportunity I have because the truth is the public school system is a bigger, more difficult machine to change,” she says. “They don’t have the ability to be as playful and as innovative as an independent school like Pickering College. If we can do that hard work here and see what works, and actually figure out what school could be, we can show how it can be scaled up and share it.”

“The very core thing we want kids to do is feel that they can actually make a difference in the world, live their lives with a sense of meaning and purpose.”

For more information on *Connections, Academics, and Purpose: Designing the Future of School*, including how to order the book, see supporting materials, and view online workshops, visit www.cindelock.com.

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SPORTS

NEW TECUMSETH TIMES



Alliston Hornets lead Huntsville 2-0 in quarter-final playoff round

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Alliston Hornets are leading 2-0 in their quarter-final North Carruthers Division playoff series against the Huntsville Otters.

The Hornets arrived at the quarter-final as the second-place team in the Division with a 32-10 record.

Huntsville finished the regular season in seventh place with a 12-30 record.

Given those stats, this series is a formality to get out of the way before the Hornets move on to the semi-final round. Even so, the Hornets can't take this team lightly and will have to bring their best game to every match-up during the 2026 playoffs.

Getting underway on Friday, Feb. 20, on Hornets home ice, Game 1 of the series ended with a 6-1 Alliston win.

Alliston's Gunner Kirk opened the scoring with two goals in the first period.

The Hornets pretty much ended the game in the second period when they scored four goals before Huntsville could get one on the scoreboard.

Alliston's goals came from Nick Lamont, Duncan Grube, David Harvey, and Ben Smith.

There was no scoring in the third period.

The teams were back at it two days later for Game 2 on Huntsville home ice on Sunday, Feb. 22.

It was a devastating first period for the Otters when the Hornets scored four goals in under 14 minutes to take charge of the game.

The Otters scored late in the period.

Alliston managed to score one more with just a minute remaining in the period.

Alliston's first-period goals came from



LONG WEEKEND WINS – The Alliston Hornets host the Huntsville Otters during Game 1 of their quarter-final North Carruthers Division playoff series at the New Tecumseth Recreation Centre in Alliston on Friday, Feb. 20. The Hornets won this game 6-1. Game 2 on Feb. 22 in Huntsville ended 8-3 in favour of the Hornets, who now lead the series 2-0.

BRIAN LOCKHART PHOTO

Gunner Kirk, Liam Carroll, Nick Lamont, and two from Duncan Grube.

Kirk got his second goal of the game midway through the second frame to give the Hornets a 6-1 lead. Huntsville scored one later in the period.

The Otters got their third goal of the night at 5:24 into the third period.

Jacob English scored at 12:51 into the period.

Grube got his third of the night and a hat-trick at 16:06 into the third period to end the game with an 8-3 win.

In the other North Carruthers Division quarter-final series, the Midland Flyers have taken a two-game lead over the Penetang Kings.

The Stayner Siskins have a one-game lead over the Innisfil Spartans.

The Orillia Terriers are leading 2-0 over the Muskoka Bears.

The Alliston/Huntsville series will return to the New Tecumseth Recreation Centre in Alliston on Friday, Feb. 27, for Game 3.

Game time is 7:30 p.m.

Provincial Junior Hockey League playoffs underway across the province

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

After a successful 42-game regular season, the Provincial Junior Hockey League has moved into the playoffs to see which teams will be division champions for this year.

Division champions will move on to the Schmalz Cup playoff to see which team will be crowned provincial champions for 2026.

The League regular season wrapped up with

the final games on Feb. 17.

It will be a long season for teams that go the distance. After the division playoffs and Schmalz playoffs, the final series won't get underway until May.

There are eight divisions in the PJHL with 61 teams that will battle it out through division playoffs.

Playoffs are held as best-of-seven series.

In the North Carruthers Division, playoffs got underway with the first games on Friday,

Feb. 20

The division champion Stayner Siskins will be up against the Innisfil Spartans.

The Spartans finished last in the division this season and lost every game against Stayner, so they aren't expected to have much success in the first round.

The Alliston Hornets finished in second place in the division, one point behind the Siskins. They will face the Huntsville Otters in the first round. Huntsville finished in seventh place

with 26 points.

The third-place Orillia Terriers will meet the Muskoka Bears in their quarter-final series.

The fourth-place Penetang Kings will face the fifth-place Midland Flyers in their quarter-final.

This series should be a real battle between the two neighbouring towns.

If the Alliston/Huntsville series goes the distance, which is unlikely, the final game of the quarter-final series will be played on March 4.

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March Break travels increase the risk of contracting measles: Health unit

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

March Break often involves travel and gatherings, meaning travel to some destinations may pose a risk of contracting measles.

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit is reminding residents that this is an important time for families to review and update their children's immunizations, including measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccines.

Adults and children who are not protected against measles and certain other communicable diseases may be excluded from child care, school, or work for a period of time if the disease occurs in the community.

The measles vaccine is safe and highly effective, providing about 97 per cent protection after two doses. In Ontario, children receive the MMR vaccine at one year of age

and again at four years as part of the province's routine immunization schedule.

If you need a vaccination, contact your health care provider or book an appointment online at a health unit immunization clinic in Barrie, Collingwood, Cookstown, Gravenhurst, Huntsville, Midland, or Orillia.

Measles is increasing worldwide, with more countries reporting cases. Outbreaks are currently occurring in several countries, including Mexico and the United States.

As of Feb. 16, 2026, Health Canada reported 192 measles cases in Alberta, Manitoba, Quebec, and Ontario combined this year.

Travelling internationally can increase the risk of exposure to measles and therefore bring the virus home.

Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Health Unit recommend ensuring your immunizations are up to date, including

two doses of MMR by age five, before travelling.

Being vaccinated is especially important for:

- Children aged four to six
 - Older children who missed their second dose of the MMR vaccine
 - Those born in 1970 or after who are planning to travel outside of Canada are also recommended for a second dose
 - Adults 18 years and older who are health care workers, post-secondary students or have been advised by their health care provider
- Infants aged six to 11 months who will be travelling to areas with increased measles transmission, in discussion with their health care provider, can get an early first dose.
- Anyone born before 1970 in Canada is presumed immune due to the measles circulating at that time.

However, if they are travelling outside Canada and have never had a measles infection or received a measles vaccine, it is prudent to have one dose.

Measles most often affects young children, but anyone who is not fully immunized is at risk. The virus spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes, and it can remain airborne for up to two hours.

Symptoms begin seven to 21 days after exposure and include fever, runny nose, cough, irritability, red eyes, and sometimes small white spots in the mouth.

Three to seven days after symptoms begin, a red, blotchy rash appears on the face and then spreads down the body.

Complications can include ear infections, pneumonia, diarrhea, encephalitis (swelling of the brain) and occasionally death in the very young.

Ontario ministers release statement recognizing Human Trafficking Awareness

On Feb. 22 Minister of Children, Community and Social Services Michael Parsa, Solicitor General Michael Kerzner, and Minister of Transportation Prabmeet Sarkaria released the following statement to mark Human Trafficking Awareness Day:

"Human trafficking is a horrific crime that targets our most vulnerable, violates victims' most basic human rights and has a devastating impact on families and communities across Ontario.

"Ontario is taking action to support survivors and hold offenders accountable, through a historic investment of \$345 million in our Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy, the largest investment of its kind in Canada. We are taking a whole-of-government approach to end

human trafficking in Ontario, including:

- Launching three Children at Risk of Exploitation (CARE) units since 2021 that unite child protection workers, police and Indigenous liaisons to better safeguard children and youth who have experienced trafficking or are at high risk.
- Equipping law enforcement and justice partners with stronger tools to identify and target perpetrators, dismantle trafficking networks and bring criminals to justice, including through the Intelligence-led Joint Forces Strategy dedicated to fighting human trafficking through intelligence gathering.
- Investing \$6 million from 2025 to 2027 through the Victim Support Grant program to fund 19 projects that help police better sup-

port victims of crime, including survivors of gender-based violence and human trafficking.

• Developing new resources for parents to have early and age-appropriate conversations with their children about human trafficking and how to recognize the warning signs.

• Partnering with the trucking industry to raise awareness and strengthen prevention efforts as well as improving safety at transportation hubs, including ONroute service centres, by improving lighting, security cameras, and displaying the National Human Trafficking Hotline.

• Strengthening law enforcement's access to key information in human trafficking investigations by updating guest registry

requirements for the accommodation sector, including hotels and online accommodation platforms.

"We are deeply grateful for the compassion, dedication and expertise of service agencies and frontline staff across Ontario. Together, we will continue to support victims and survivors and work together to build a safer Ontario for everyone."

For more information, visit ontario.ca/HumanTrafficking. If there is immediate danger or you suspect someone is being trafficked, call 911 or your local police service.

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Police respond to armed home invasion, public assistance sought

The South Simcoe Police Service is seeking the public's assistance in relation to an armed home invasion.

On Feb. 19, at approximately 3 a.m., South Simcoe Police responded to multiple 9-1-1 calls reporting a home invasion in progress at a residence on Dale Road in Innisfil. Officers responded to the area and investigated the incident. An initial report indicated that three male suspects, believed to be armed with firearms, broke the windows of the front door to gain entry into the residence.

Through investigation, it was determined that the suspects entered the home and sub-

sequently fled the area in a black Acura TLX bearing Ontario licence plate CVCT 393. Further investigation revealed that the suspect vehicle had previously been reported stolen from the City of Toronto on Jan. 22.

There were three occupants inside the residence at the time of the incident, and no physical injuries were reported. The incident appears to be isolated, and there is no ongoing risk to public safety.

The suspects are described as:

- Suspect #1: Black male, approximately 6'1" to 6'3" tall, wearing a dark-coloured hooded sweater and a neck gaiter (face/head

covering).

- Suspect #2: White male, approximately 5'7" to 5'8" tall, wearing a black hooded sweater.

- Suspect #3: Short male with a large build. Officers have obtained video footage from the surrounding area and are releasing images of the suspects in an appeal to the public for information.

The investigation is being conducted by the South Simcoe Police Service Crimes Against Persons Unit and is ongoing.

Police are asking anyone with information or who may have surveillance camera or dash

cam footage from Feb. 19, in the area of Dale Road, Hunter Street or Dawson Crescent in Innisfil between 2:40 a.m. and 3:15 a.m., to contact South Simcoe Police Investigative Services at 905-775-3311 ext. 1461 or email investigations@southsimcoepolice.ca.

Should you wish to remain anonymous, contact Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 (TIPS). You can submit information online at www.crimestoppersdm.com. Crime Stoppers does not subscribe to call display, and you will remain anonymous. Being anonymous, you will not testify in court, and your information may lead to a cash reward of up to \$2,000.

Two people charged with impaired driving during Family Day Long Weekend

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The number of impaired drivers on the road remains a concern.

Members of the Nottawasaga Detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police have charged two individuals with impaired driving offences following traffic complaints for suspected impaired drivers.

Shortly after 10 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 14, Nottawasaga OPP responded to a traffic complaint for a possible impaired driver who had been swerving all over the road and turning the opposite direction of their turn

signal. While fuelling their vehicle at a gas station, they were observed to be staggering and almost fell into the pump. Police located the vehicle in Alliston and conducted a traffic stop.

A second arrest was made shortly after 5:30 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 14.

The Nottawasaga OPP received another traffic complaint for a possible impaired driver who had driven into a ditch before managing to continue driving north on Adjala-Tecumseth Townline.

The driver was swerving all over the road, driving at speeds exceeding the posted limit,

and failing to stop at a stop sign, according to OPP. The vehicle took out a mailbox and came to a stop in the ditch.

Officers arrived on the scene and began an impaired driving investigation.

As a result of these investigations, officers arrested both drivers for impaired operation.

The driver from the first complaint, Brandon Hull, 36, of Niagara Falls, has been charged with:

- Operation While Impaired – Alcohol and Drugs
- Operation While Impaired – Blood Alcohol Concentration (80 plus)

The driver from the second complaint,

Harpreet Brar, 38, of Brampton, has been charged with:

- Operation While Impaired – Alcohol and Drugs
- Operation While Impaired – Blood Alcohol Concentration (80 plus)

The accused parties were released on Form 10 Undertakings and are scheduled to appear at the Ontario Court of Justice in Bradford to answer the charges.

None of the listed charges has been proven in court.

Each accused individual had their driver's license suspended for 90 days and their vehicle impounded for seven days.

RIDE checkpoint on County 10 Road in Essa results in multiple charges for two drivers

Nottawasaga Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) officers laid multiple charges against two individuals in unrelated incidents while conducting Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere (RIDE) checkpoints.

On Sunday, Feb. 22, 2026, shortly after 12:00 a.m., Nottawasaga OPP officers were conducting a RIDE checkpoint on County Road 10 in Essa when they observed a vehicle turn around before the checkpoint in what was believed to be an attempt to evade interacting with police.

Police conducted a traffic stop on the vehicle, and an Automatic Licence Plate Recognition (ALPR) device alerted police that the license plate was unattached to any vehicle. Police spoke with the driver and learned that the driver was currently prohibited from driving.

Shortly afterwards, another driver approached the RIDE checkpoint, did not stop as directed, and drove through the RIDE with officers standing on the highway. Officers conducted a traffic stop on the vehicle

and investigated.

As a result of the first investigation, the driver, Blayne O'Rourke, 30, of Innisfil, has been charged with:

- Operation While Prohibited
- Use plate not authorized for vehicle
- Fail to notify change of name
- Fail to surrender permit for motor vehicle
- Fail to surrender of insurance card

As a result of the second investigation, the driver, Justin Smith, 19, of Brampton, has been charged with:

- Fail to stop for police
- Fail to surrender permit for motor vehicle
- Driver fail to surrender licence
- Owner operate a motor vehicle without insurance

The first driver had their vehicle impounded for 45 days and was released on a Form 10 Undertaking with a future court date at the Ontario Court of Justice in Bradford. The second driver was issued four Part III Summons with future court dates to answer the charges.

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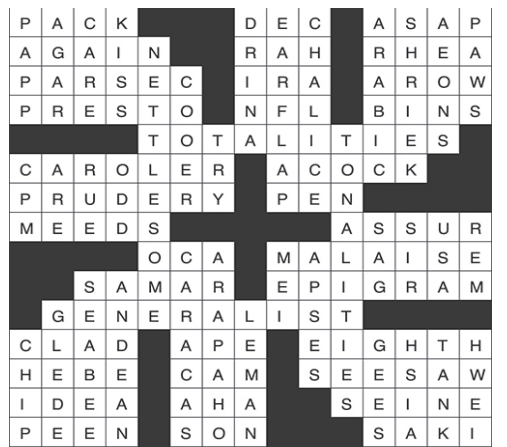


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Continued from Page 4

Brock's Banter: A basketful of creativity and wonder

"To ensure the Province's world-class institutions continue to produce one of the most competitive world-class institutions continue producing one of the most competitive workforces in the G7 for generations to come... a stronger, more sustainable OSAP system will ensure financial assistance remains available for future generations while supporting students' appropriate investment in their education and success.

"To strengthen the long-term sustainability of OSAP and bring it in line with other provinces, Ontario students will be eligible to receive a maximum of 25 per cent of their OSAP funding as grants and a minimum of 75 per cent of their funding as loans. OSAP will no longer offer grants to students at private career colleges, in alignment with changes made by the federal government to its own student support funding."

Opposition pushback to the plan was

swift and continued into this week, with Opposition Leader Marit Stiles stating the cuts will make it harder for students and families to get by and further marginalize students that are already facing barriers.

Pushback to the pushback was also swift from Premier Ford.

"You have to invest in your future, to in-demand jobs," he said. "I'm not one to say, 'You're picking basket-weaving courses and there's not too many baskets being sold out there.' Go into healthcare, go into the trades, go into the jobs of the future. Focus on STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Math – those are where the jobs are."

Now, basket-weaving has always been low-hanging fruit for people who want to make a point as the occupation and hobby has certain connotations that are thankfully largely outmoded, but the fact basket-weaving once again found itself in the crosshairs of politics is part of what I

believe is a larger issue.

Careers in STEM – outlined by Ford as Science, Technology, Engineering and Math – are, of course, key in our collective futures, but I much prefer the acronym STEAM as it includes Arts in the equation.

Whenever education funding comes into question, it almost always seems like the Arts and related subjects are the first on the chopping block, or, at the very least, the first subjects mooted to me less impactful and less valuable than the others – and that's far from the case.

One only has to look at the outpouring of love that followed the sudden passing of Catherine O'Hara recently for just one example of how the arts have significant impacts on our lives, and impact us all in different ways – especially when home-grown artists are given the opportunities to flourish, no matter what their chosen media might be.

It is, of course, vitally important to sup-

port students choosing to go into those in-demand jobs, that's just common sense, but we also have to keep in mind that in our rapidly evolving world and the alarming proliferation of Artificial Intelligence in just about every facet of our lives, what might be an in-demand job today could be among the once-hot occupations advertised by Sally Struthers in the 1990s on behalf of International Correspondence Schools. Think VCR Repair, Learning the Personal Computer, and Gun Repair.

Many examples of existing art have been used to feed the beast and "teach" AI how to create. But what comes out the other side is by no means a matter of creativity.

There will be no substitute for the creative human minds around us, and the beauty and joy they bring to the world.

Are they in-demand jobs today? Maybe, maybe not. But tomorrow, in the next year, and in the next decade, it might be a very different story.



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37 Young Street, Alliston 705-435-1405

M&M FOOD MARKET

INCREDIBLE PRICE
SAVE \$10
29⁹⁹



Boneless, Skinless Chicken Breasts
8-12 BREASTS 1.36 kg

OUR LOWEST PRICES ARE HERE!*
*Based on 2025 pricing.

INCREDIBLE PRICE
SAVE \$5
9⁹⁹



Apple Butter Pork Tenderloin
400 g

SAVE \$10
INCREDIBLE PRICE
24⁹⁹



Chicken Strips
27-33 PIECES 1.36 kg

EVERYDAY LOW PRICE
9⁹⁹



Lasagna
907 g

SINGLE SERVES 275 g - 340 g **18 VARIETIES** **SALE**



4⁹⁹ each

Homestyle Shepherd's Pie, Cabbage Rolls, Shanghai Style Beef Noodles, Beef Chili, Chicken Teriyaki

SAVE \$8
INCREDIBLE PRICE
11⁹⁹ each



Meat Loaf Minis
4 PORTIONS 680 g

SAVE \$6
INCREDIBLE PRICE
11⁹⁹ each



Italian Style Beef Meatballs
89-95 PIECES 907 g
Other size available: 130-140 PIECES 1.36 kg
\$17.99 SAVE \$7

SAVE \$3
16⁹⁹

WING NIGHT. TONIGHT.
No reservations needed.
Fully Cooked Chicken Wings
Choose from 7 varieties.

BETTER VALUE NEW SIZE
680 g



Buffalo, Louisiana Style, Crispy Breaded

MEAL KITS 840 g - 907 g **7 VARIETIES**



SAVE \$2
19⁹⁹ each

Lemon Herb Chicken and Pasta, Chicken Stir Fry, Shrimp Fettuccine Alfredo, Creamy Tuscan Style Chicken and Pasta

Also available: **IT'S BACK!** Beef Stroganoff Kit 907 g • Chicken Fajita Kit 1.05 kg **\$21.99 SAVE \$3**

WINTER WARMERS

UNDER \$5
SALE
4⁹⁹ each



Pot Pies 225 g - 250 g 2 Varieties, Quiche 170 g 3 Varieties, SOUPS 255 g - 400 mL **SAVE \$2** **4⁹⁹ each**, French Onion, Broccoli Cheddar, Loaded Potato, Wonton, Tomato and Grilled Cheese

*** MULTI BUY * Buy 2 for \$10** Regular price \$5.99 each

SAVE \$1.98

MIX AND MATCH



Pink Salmon in Sauce 142 g, Herb and Garlic, Applewood and Maple, Dill

GLUTEN-FREE ZONE



SAVE \$7
27⁹⁹
Breaded Chicken Fillets 15-25 PIECES 907 g

SAVE \$3
9⁹⁹ NEW!
Gluten-Free Margherita Pizza 330 g

SAVE \$9
22⁹⁹
Country Style Chicken Breasts 6-10 PIECES 907 g

SAVE \$2
17⁹⁹
Panko Shrimp 454 g

SAVE \$2
14⁹⁹ each
Seasoned Breaded Cod 4-5 PIECES 400 g

SAVE \$2
17⁹⁹ each
Dessert Bar Variety Pack 675 g

SAVE \$2
17⁹⁹ each
Haddock Tenders 8-12 PIECES 454 g

SAVE \$2
17⁹⁹ each
Chocolate Lovers Variety Pack 850 g

 To view the full flyer, scan the QR code or go to mmfoodmarket.com

PROUDLY SERVING CANADIANS SINCE 1980 

ALL PRICES IN EFFECT THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26 TO WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2026 UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED.

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