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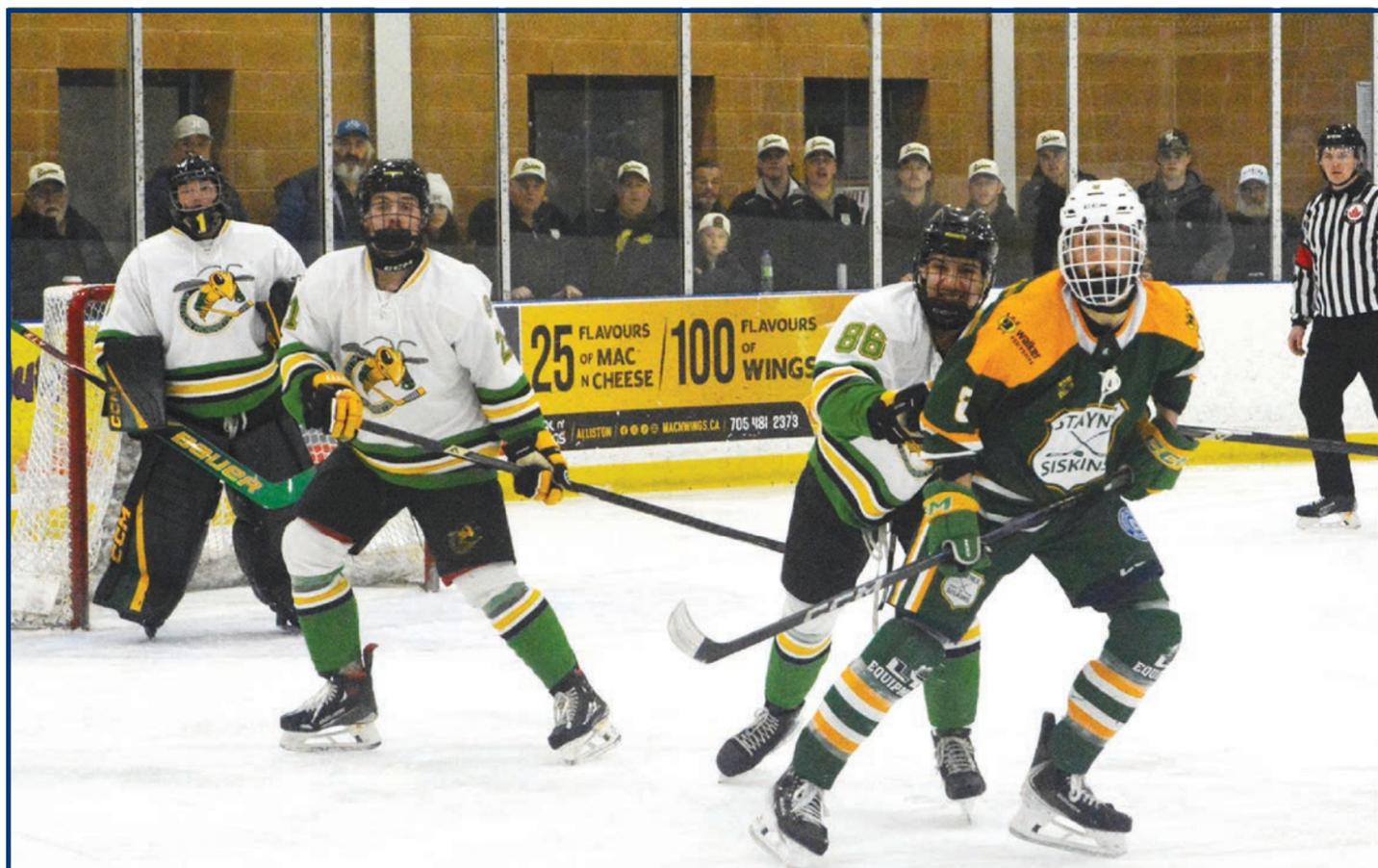
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Championship Fever!

The Alliston Hornets are playing the Stayner Siskins for the North Carruthers Division 2026 championship and the entire town is getting behind them in their quest to come out on top. Local businesses are posting 'Go Hornets Go!' signs to show their support. The largest attendance of the year so far was recorded on Friday, March 20, for Game 2 of the series. The Siskins won this game 4-2, and the series is now tied 1-1. Game 3 will take place in Stayner on Thursday, March 26, followed by Game 4. See a full story on Page 12.

BRIAN LOCKHART PHOTO

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Deadline approaching for 2026 Order of Ontario nominations

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Order of Ontario is the province's highest civilian honour, awarded each year to an Ontarian who has shown the highest level of excellence and achievement in their field, and whose impact has left a legacy in the province.

Members of the Order are a collective of Ontario's finest citizens whose contributions have shaped, and continue to shape, the province's history.

Nominations are still open for 2026, but the deadline is approaching at the end of March.

You can nominate someone for achieve-

ments and excellence in any field. This includes business and technology, health-care and medicine, education, engineering and architecture, skilled trades, mining, arts and culture, sports, and entertainment.

The list also includes law and social justice, media and journalism, social and community services, science and aerospace, literature and writing, and environment and conservation.

To nominate someone, the person must be a long-term or former resident of Ontario. The nominee does not have to be a Canadian citizen.

The nominee should be someone whose career, in any field, has had a major impact or influence on the province, Canada, and

around the world.

The person must be living at the time of the nomination.

You cannot nominate yourself, someone who is deceased, an elected federal, provincial, or municipal politician currently in office, a sitting judge of any court, a legislative officer, a volunteer, or someone for acts of bravery.

To nominate someone, first gather all required information and create an account on the Ontario Honours and Awards Portal on the Province of Ontario website. Visit ohap.haacms.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/signin to submit a nomination.

A nomination must include a brief summary of why you think the nominee is wor-

thy of nomination and how long you have known them.

It should include a detailed description of the nominee, their achievements, and the impact those achievements have had on the province and beyond.

A minimum of two signed testimonial letters from two different people who are not the nominator must be included.

You may include additional material, such as supplementary testimonials, publications, media stories, and news articles.

An independent Advisory Council to the Order of Ontario will review and evaluate all nominations.

The deadline for Order of Ontario nominations is March 31 of each year.

Province to permit 'bring-your-own' alcoholic beverages at municipally approved public events

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Ontario government is expanding 'bring-your-own' event permits for municipally designated cultural or community outdoor public events, including farmer's markets, movie screenings, art exhibits and neighbourhood festivals.

The expanded permit will allow attendees of these events to bring their own alcohol for consumption in designated areas.

It's important to note that the permitting

expansion does not mean patrons of any event can bring their own alcoholic beverages from home. This permit is only eligible in municipalities that approve it and at events where the organizer applies for it.

The province says this will help support local tourism and drive economic growth.

"Starting this spring, Ontario is giving communities more flexibility to safely and responsibly enjoy cultural and outdoor events," said Attorney General Doug Downey. "The 'bring-your-own' event permits will help save attendees money, lower

overhead costs for event organizers and contribute to local economies."

Municipalities will be required to pass a bylaw authorizing the use of alcohol in public if they do not already have one in place. A municipality must establish a local process to determine whether an event qualifies as a community or cultural event and is therefore eligible for the 'bring-your-own' permit.

Beginning April 30 of this year, event organizers in participating municipalities will be able to apply for bring-your-own permits through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario.

"Our government is always working to find new ways to empower local communities, boost economic activity and increase tourism," said Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance. "By giving Ontario municipalities the choice to make use of this new ini-

tiative, our government is directly contributing to their economic well-being while ensuring adults can continue to safely and responsibly enjoy their favourite products."

The 'bring-your-own' permit change will be enabled by an amendment to a regulation under the Liquor Licence and Control Act, giving community and cultural organizations greater flexibility ahead of the spring and summer event season.

Previously, only organizers of live sporting events could obtain this type of permit, typically used for tailgating.

Only individuals 19 years of age and older will be allowed to bring alcohol to events holding a 'bring-your-own' event permit.

The province will continue to work closely with the AGCO to uphold existing rigorous standards for licensing, regulation and social responsibility, ensuring events are safe and reflect community priorities.



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Editorial, Letters & Opinion

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

~ Stanislaw Jerzy Lec

A cashless society

When you were a kid, you likely received an envelope from an older relative on your birthday or at Christmas.

Usually, it had a few dollars inside, although these days it's probably more like a \$50 bill.

It was an easy way to give a kid a chance to buy something they want, rather than trying to guess what a 10-year-old would like to receive for a special day.

It's a lot more fun for a kid to find money in an envelope rather than to receive a gift of new socks or underwear.

Our society is moving dangerously close to a cashless society. I can't remember the last time I put gas in my vehicle and paid with cash.

I still carry some cash in my pocket. It seems ridiculous to pay for a \$1.95 coffee with a debit card.

It seems the goal is to move to a strictly cashless situation.

However, with that cashless system comes some very serious issues that must be examined.

The thing is, with a cashless society, money is no longer tangible. It just becomes digital numbers on a screen.

On the lower end of the problem, no

more piggy banks for your kids to learn how to save money, and forget the birthday card with the cash gift.

No more Craigslist or Facebook Marketplace transactions, unless you happen to own and carry a debit machine in your car.

No more opportunities for a kid to earn \$20 by shovelling snow in the winter or cutting grass in summer.

You won't be able to save that \$20 a week you stuff in an envelope because you are saving up for a new Johnson Rod accessory for the hot rod you store in the garage.

No more yard sales, garage sales, or charity sales, unless everyone goes back to a barter-type system.

You may want to buy that fancy trinket at a yard sale, but with no cash available, you may have to bring a chicken from your backyard chicken coop to trade.

Those are just the little annoyances that will plague a cashless society.

The real issue is the absolute control the state will have over you. And this is a very scary thing to think about.

A cashless society means someone else will have absolute control over your

life. A bank will have full control of every single cent you have.

Bank robber Willie Sutton was asked, 'Why do you rob banks?' His notorious reply was, 'because that's where the money is.'

The banks don't have the money anymore. Try withdrawing several thousand dollars in cash from your bank account.

Most likely, you will be politely asked to come back in a couple of days because they will have to source the cash for you.

In a cashless society, every transaction you make will be recorded. Someone will be able to track your spending habits and your income.

Someone will be able to track your location and follow you across the country if you're on a road trip.

Every time you buy something, someone else can know exactly where you are.

It's a scary thought to think that a total stranger will be able to follow your every move.

If you are on Facebook, you know you are already being observed. Try looking for an item online, and sure enough, your Facebook page will suddenly start sending you ads for similar products because

it has been watching your every online move.

A cashless society reduces your wealth to nothing more than numbers on a screen.

If the power goes out, so does your money.

Those numbers on the screen are not backed by anything. There is no gold standard anymore; there is nothing to back up those numbers as tangible assets, other than the fact that people have faith they mean something.

I'm not sure of the high-level security measures surrounding online banking and control, but I have wondered what stops a computer genius with access to computer systems from simply moving a decimal point to another spot on a bank account?

A cashless society will create a whole new way of life where everything you do, everything you buy, everywhere you go, will be recorded.

I'd rather carry a few \$20 bills in my pocket, rather than have it known that I'm currently sitting in Tim Hortons having a coffee by some unseen person tracking my movements.

BRIAN LOCKHART
FROM THE SECOND ROW



Back to business unusual

Everybody needs a little bit of time away.

At least that's the view of the band Chicago in their 1982 hit "Hard to Say I'm Sorry."

Everybody does need a little bit of time away – that's not in dispute – but, if you're like me, the hardest part of getting a little bit of time away is anticipating what you might be coming back to.

When we're young, the trepidation of returning to school is tempered somewhat by the idea of being able to catch up with friends you weren't able to over the summer, reconnecting and hearing about what they did.

Things change when you get older, and you're in the workplace.

While many are able to fully clock out when their time for a bit of a getaway rolls around, some aren't, for whatever reason, fully able to "turn off" what they're ordinarily tuned into.

I've had a bit of enforced time away recently due to long-awaited hip surgery.

While I've been able to work remotely for the last couple of weeks, the first few

days after the surgery at the start of the month were a bit iffy in terms of what I was able to accomplish. I'm thankful for our teams for pitching in during my absence, and I know the papers were in very capable hands, yet there were still those inescapable questions in the back of my mind: What have I missed? What am I coming back to?

I wonder if our politicians ever feel the same way?

The halls of Queen's Park were bustling again at the start of this week as Members of Provincial Parliament returned to the job after more than 100 days away from the Legislature.

Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not begrudging these MPPs time off.

In fact, it's not really time off at all. While the duration of their time away from the halls of government is the subject for another day, and, trust me, people have plenty of opinions about how much time off elected representatives "deserve," the reality is this "time off" is more often than not focused on constituency work – that is, meeting with the people they represent, checking

in on worthy organizations within the community, regardless of whether the groups in question have received Provincial or Federal dollars, and, essentially, bringing that important public face to many important elements of our civic life.

During this busy "time away," however, I hope they were able to get some rest and find opportunities to stay in shape because, regardless of what political party they represent, they've had to really hit the ground running.

Premier Ford has left little guesswork as to what the current sitting of the legislature will have to tackle, debate and pass – or not – this legislative season and, from my vantage point, it seems it might be some time before we clear the distractions and get back to substantive business for the people of Ontario.

One announcement ahead of the Legislature resuming that got a deservedly positive reception from members of the public was a series of amendments proposed to make it illegal for concert, sport, and event tickets to be resold for more than their official cost. Of course,

enforcement will be key to the success of any changes, but it's a change for the better and long overdue.

Another positive step is the proposed creation of a Province-wide Primary Care Medical Record System, which will help make things smoother for just about every player in our beleaguered healthcare system.

Another potential positive, although I'm a bit more skeptical on how effective it will ultimately be, is opening up HOV lanes (High Occupancy Vehicles) on highways during non-peak hours. Those lanes are underused, yes, and opening them up in the off-time could certainly help ease congestion on those applicable highways, but it does nothing to encourage carpooling or support transit, which are essential for tackling the root issues of gridlock. A band-aid like this could help, but band-aids are only temporary.

Continued on Page 19

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COMMUNITY VOICE

Monthly Message: My Sister's Place gearing up for community events as weather warms

It's been a busy year so far at My Sister's Place with the planning and execution of our Hats, Heels and High Tea fundraiser. This is our signature event of the year and was once again a great success thanks to the support of our sponsors, donors, and those who bought tickets and attended. With the hard work of our staff, board and volunteers, the event raised over \$23,000.

Moving into spring and summer, we are looking forward to many exciting campaigns, programs, and events.

Once the weather warms up, we will jump into our annual Trees for Shelter campaign, where we sell potted trees in four varieties: White Spruce, White Cedar, Red Maple and Cranberry bushes for \$25 each. We are working on a couple of local sales locations for our trees, so watch our social media and website for those.

In the month of May, we will be partnering on a fundraiser with Murphy's Farm Market & Bakery as a part of their tulip festival. We will be at Murphy's on Friday, May 8; Fri-

day, May 15; Friday, May 22; and Sunday, May 24, helping visitors pick and pack their tulips.

Murphy's is very generously donating a portion of each entry fee back to My Sister's Place (MSP) on these days, so come out and pick your own tulips and support MSP. Murphy's Farm Market & Bakery is located at 5141 County Road 10 in Alliston.

We will also be attending several town festivals and vendor markets during the spring and summer months. We love getting out into the communities we serve and speaking with community members, letting people know who we are, what we do, and how we serve the community. We are happy to answer questions, we have information pieces to hand out, and we sell out Wrapped in Courage fundraising items.



The dates we have confirmed are Saturday, April 25, at the Tottenham Home and Artisan Show at the Tottenham Community Centre, and Saturday, May 23, for the Beeton Honey and Garden Festival vendor market on Main Street (County Road 1) in Beeton.

We will be participating in the Tottenham Community Street Festival on Saturday, July 4, in downtown Tottenham. We are also

looking to attend Bradford Carrot Fest and Alliston Potato Festival. We will post a full list of the confirmed events we are attending on our website.

Other fun third-party events being held in the coming months that will benefit My Sister's Place include Rock and Roll Bingo at The Circle Theatre in Alliston on Sunday, April 26th. This is a fun musical twist on

bingo that will have you dancing in your seat. With prizes and great music, don't miss out. Tickets are \$25 and can be purchased at The Circle Theatre during any show time or online at www.circletheatre.ca.

In August, RockStock Canada is taking place, with tons of great music, a car show, a bike show and camping available; it will be a great weekend of fun. Locations to be announced and ticket prices vary; more information can be found at www.rockstockcanada.com. Keep an eye on our Facebook, Instagram, and website for more events as they are added.

We are looking forward to warmer weather and to being out in the community. We hope to see you at some of these events, stop by and say "hi," or come out to a fundraiser and support My Sister's Place.

100 per cent of money raised from our fundraising campaigns or donated from third-party events goes directly to the shelter, our in-shelter services and our outreach programs.

Simcoe-Grey MPP announces funding for storm recovery through Municipal Ice Storm Assistance program

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

A severe winter weather event that resulted in ice build-up across much of central Ontario left extensive damage to trees and downed hydro lines, and caused prolonged power outages almost one year ago today, on March 28, 2025.

On March 18 this year, Simcoe-Grey MPP Brian Saunderson announced that the Ontario

government is providing up to \$48,000 for ice storm clean-up and emergency response costs in the Town of the Blue Mountains.

The funding is part of Ontario's \$90 million Municipal Ice Storm Assistance program.

"Communities across the region were significantly impacted by the ice storm in March 2025," MPP Saunderson said. "This important provincial funding will help address the substantial costs associated with the storm response and the extensive clean-up that fol-

lowed. I want to thank municipal staff, along with hydro crews, first responders, and volunteers, whose dedication helped The Blue Mountains through a very challenging time."

The storm resulted in widespread damage, leaving nearly 400,000 homes and businesses without power across central and eastern Ontario.

"Our government will always protect Ontario, especially in times of need," said Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and

Housing.

"The relief being announced today will safeguard local jobs and help the Town of the Blue Mountains rebuild – stronger than ever."

The province's Business Ice Storm Assistance program is providing up to \$5 million for small businesses, small farms, and not-for-profit organizations to assist with storm-related clean-up and essential repairs not covered by insurance.

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Alliston receives provincial funding for major road repairs

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Town of New Tecumseth will benefit from the Connecting Links provincial program to the tune of \$2,975,366 to improve roads in Alliston.

The Connecting Links program helps to maintain vital roads and bridges that connect people to jobs, support the movement of goods and drive economic growth in rural and northern communities.

Simcoe-Grey MPP Brian Saunderson made the announcement at the New Tecumseth administration centre on Wednesday, March 18.

The planned project will resurface Victoria, King, and Young Streets from the Alliston West Plaza to Industrial Parkway.

“The people of Alliston deserve access to safe, reliable transportation infrastructure, and that’s what our government is delivering,” MPP Saunderson said. “Through the Connect-

ing Links program, we’re keeping communities moving across the province as we continue our work to protect Ontario.”

New Tecumseth Mayor Richard Norcross thanked town staff for their efforts to secure provincial funding for the town.

“This investment is great news for New Tecumseth and our residents,” Mayor Norcross said. “Improvements to Victoria, King, and Young will enhance safety, support local businesses, and help keep our community moving. We appreciate the province’s support in maintaining the infrastructure our residents rely on every day.”

The program budgeted \$50 million for road and bridge improvements. There are over 400 municipalities in the province, so the funding is a substantial amount for New Tecumseth.

“The Province’s continued investment in growing communities like New Tecumseth is greatly appreciated,” said Simcoe County Warden Basil Clarke. “Strengthening our connecting link infrastructure is essential to support-

ing the safe and efficient movement of people, goods, and devices, which ultimately benefits our local economy and broader region.”

The Connecting Links program provides funding for up to 90 per cent of eligible project costs. This includes a maximum of \$5 million for road projects and \$7 million for bridge projects.

In Ontario, there are 352 kilometres of connecting links, including 70 bridges, across 77 municipalities.

The timeline for the road resurfacing has not yet been announced.



REPAIRING LOCAL ROADS – Simcoe-Grey MPP Brian Saunderson visited the New Tecumseth Administration Centre on Wednesday, March 18, to announce provincial funding for road improvements in Alliston. Almost \$3 million in funding will be used to repave major streets in New Tecumseth through the Connecting Links program. MPP Saunderson is joined by New Tecumseth Mayor Richard Norcross, Simcoe Warden Basil Clarke, New Tecumseth Deputy Mayor Stephanie MacLellan, New Tecumseth Councillor Alan Masters and Councillor Chris Rapin during the funding announcement.

BRIAN LOCKHART PHOTOS

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Arts & Local Events

CONTACT wraps up seniors' program with log cabin birdhouse crafts

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Keeping busy is important for seniors so they can stay engaged, socialize, and just have some fun.

CONTACT Community Services has been hosting events through its Seniors Community Grant program, with the final session at the Alliston Legion on Wednesday, March 18, where attendees enjoyed a log cabin birdhouse decorating session.

The birdhouses arrived in easy-to-assemble pieces, but the real fun was painting and decorating each one. Every participant could decorate the little houses any way they wanted, so each one was different.

Around 30 seniors signed up and attended the event.

"This is the last session in Alliston for our Seniors Community Grant program," explained Brenda Pufek, Manager of Community Engagement & Development at CONTACT. "Today we're working with Tabitha Marshall, owner of Tab Creates, and she's an artist from Beeton. She put together this

program of painting log cabin bird houses. This has been such a popular program. We're running the program at six Legions in the area. We're working with the Legions for all of our Seniors Community Grant programs. We are in Everett, Alliston, Bradford, Innisfil, Tottenham, and Beeton, running these programs."

CONTACT has been running the programs since September.

"This is the program for March," Ms. Pufek explained. "Every month we've had a different program. We've done pickleball, exercise programs, chair yoga, Zumba, and aquafit. We've had over 100 seniors in this program. Today we're painting the birdhouses and adding decorations to them. It's a creative class where you're not following a formula. It's a great way for seniors to get together and have a conversation. Not everyone at each event knows each other, so it's a great way to meet new people."

The birdhouses were painted in many different colours, and everyone had a decorative craft they could bring home and hang on the porch.



CREATIVITY ON DISPLAY – CONTACT Community Services held the final session of its Seniors Community Grant program, a log cabin birdhouse painting session at the Alliston Legion on Wednesday, March 18. Participants could decorate the birdhouse however they wanted, encouraging creativity. Linda, Kris, and JoAnne put the finishing touches on their project.

BRIAN LOCKHART PHOTO

Orangeville Blues and Jazz Festival to feature top-tier lineup of Canadian talent

BY SAM ODROWSKI

The 22nd Annual Orangeville Blues and Jazz Festival is taking over Orangeville from June 5 to 7, featuring over 40 acts performing the very best of both genres.

For the 13th consecutive year, the Orangeville Blues and Jazz Festival has maintained its place on Festivals and Events Ontario's annual Top 100 list. The award-winning festival will continue to be a celebration of blues and jazz music, while once again transforming downtown Orangeville into the region's largest music festival and event venue.

The three-day event attracts 30,000 to 40,000 attendees and generates around \$2.5 million in

economic activity for the area.

"On behalf of the Festival Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers, we are thrilled to present another three-day weekend of exceptional music and events for thousands of local residents and visitors," said Festival Board of Directors President Nancy Claridge.

"This incredible event is made possible with support from the Orangeville Business Improvement Area, local businesses, the Town of Orangeville, government funding agencies, our featured performers, and the enthusiastic audiences who attend."

This year's headliners at the TD Mainstage and Opera House include Miss Emily, Emilie-Claire Barlow, Paul James Band and Blackburn

Brothers. Additional featured artists include Steve Marriner, Durham County Poets (Quebec), The Sugar Darlings, and Vinyl Paradise.

There will also be a Jazz Society Big Band Tribute to Sinatra, featuring John Amato, that won't disappoint.

"We are especially proud to highlight an incredible roster of Canadian artists. With over 40 acts scheduled, the 2026 festival will feature some of the finest talent in blues and jazz music," said Larry Kurtz, festival founder and artistic director.

"Our headliners have won major awards such as Juno's and Maple Blues awards. You will be treated to some of the finest talent in the country. There is great diversity in the bands

and performers and with three stages, there is something for most musical tastes."

He added, "If you like acoustic blues or jazz, then the Opera House is where you will want to be. Our main stage will feature lots of rocking blues, but also big band and classic jazz."

In addition to world-class talent at the Opera House and TD Mainstage in Alexandra Park, which comes at a nominal cost, there is still plenty to do and see, completely free.

Performances on the TD Broadway Stage are free to enjoy, along with the Classic Cars Blues Cruise on Broadway and the Blues & Bikes Show & Shine Event.

Continued on Page 13

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MPP, Simcoe-Grey

Applications now open for Mayor's Student Bursary Program

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Town of New Tecumseth has announced that applications are now open for the Mayor's Student Bursary Program.

This program offers graduating students the opportunity to receive financial support for their post-secondary education or apprenticeship training.

Awarded annually, this program awards up to 12 bursaries of \$2,000 each to eligible students who demonstrate academic achievement, community involvement, and a commitment to their future goals.

Applicants must submit a completed application form, transcripts, references, and a 500-word essay outlining their future aspirations.

"Investing in our students means investing in the future of New Tecumseth," said New



Tecumseth Mayor Richard Norcross. "The Mayor's Student Bursary Program is designed to help young people achieve their educational and career goals, and we are proud to celebrate their hard work and dedication."

The deadline to apply for the Bursary Program is May 4, 2026.

For full details and to apply, go to the Town's website and visit: newtecumseth.ca/StudentBursary

Eligibility

The bursary is available to:

- Any graduating student who is a resident of New Tecumseth and attending Banting Memorial High School, St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Secondary School or any other accredited educational institution in New Tecumseth.
- Whose scholastic achievement would be high enough to gain acceptance to the post-secondary avenue they choose.
- Who has completed the applicable application form and has submitted the following documentation:
 - Proof of acceptance into either university, college or apprenticeship program
 - A copy of their current year transcript to confirm a high standard of scholastic achievement
 - Information relating to community programs, organizations, and volunteer activities that they have been involved in along with their hobbies, interests and any employment information
 - Personal letters of reference supporting the bursary application
 - A 500 word essay on the topic of their educational aspirations and goals with any extra curricular activities, community involvement and work experience and how the bursary would assist in their future educational aspirations and/or goals

Road construction project to move forward, improving Beeton streets

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

For residents living on two streets in Beeton, a few months of construction annoyance will be worth the wait when the job is completed.

The Town of New Tecumseth has announced a full reconstruction and urbanization project for Prospect and Tecumseth Street for planned roadway improvements.

The project will take place on Prospect Street from Dayfoot Street to Tecumseth Street, and on Tecumseth Street from Prospect Street to the south limit.

Work on the project will be completed by

R.J. Burnside & Associates.

Included in the project is a full roadway build, improved sidewalks and active transportation, drainage upgrades, and municipal servicing improvements.

To support the design process, field investigations including topographic surveys, geotechnical testing, and other small-scale site assessments, will begin in Mar. 2026.

These activities may involve temporary lane closures or localized disruptions. Efforts will be made to minimize inconvenience to residents.

Once a preliminary design and project scope are developed, Town staff will provide

the proposed design to the public to collect community feedback and address questions.

Access to properties in the area is not anticipated at this time. If required, a permission-to-enter request will be provided prior to any access.

Prior to the main construction, crews will be drilling into the road. Borehole investigation is a drilling process that provides a sample below the surface to determine the type, thickness, and suitability of the existing asphalt, road base, subbase, and soil materials, as well as groundwater conditions.

Work is expected to begin this month and wrap up early in 2027.



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Province opening HOV lanes to more drivers on provincial highways

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Ontario government is proposing a regulatory amendment to the Highway Traffic Act that would allow single-occupant vehicles to use High Occupancy Vehicle lanes during off-peak hours.

The idea is to better use existing highway infrastructure to reduce gridlock and keep drivers moving on provincial highways.

Ministry of Transportation modelling shows the change would improve travel times for all users, with average speeds increasing in both HOV and general-purpose lanes across major highways during off-peak hours.

If implemented, this change would take place before the end of 2026, following a period of public consultation.

“Gridlock is costing our economy billions of dollars every year and robbing Ontario drivers of valuable time and quality of life,” said Prabmeet Sarkaria, Minister of Transportation. “By allowing single-occupant vehicles to use HOV lanes during off-peak hours, we would help keep drivers moving across the province, so they can spend less time in traffic and more time with their fami-

lies and friends.”

HOV lanes are currently restricted to vehicles with two or more occupants, buses, licensed taxis, green-plate vehicles, airport limousines, motorcycles, and emergency vehicles.

The government is exploring regulatory changes to allow single-occupant vehicles to drive on all existing, planned, and future HOV lanes during off-peak hours.

Existing HOV lane rules would apply outside of off-peak hours.

These times will not include the busiest weekday morning or evening commute periods.

Ontario currently has 237 kilometres of HOV lanes, with plans underway to add another 146 kilometres to the network.

Single-occupant vehicles remain the dominant mode of transportation on Ontario highways, representing 72 per cent of vehicles on provincial roadways in 2022.

Single-occupant vehicles with High-Occupancy Toll permits can pay to access HOV lanes on sections of the Queen Elizabeth Way, Highway 403, and Highway 410.

Commercial motor vehicles longer than 6.5 metres would remain restricted from using HOV lanes under the proposed changes.



CHANGES COMING – Carpool lanes on Ontario highways will soon be available to single-occupant vehicles during off-peak hours. The Government of Ontario is currently looking at implementing changes before the end of 2026. **STOCK PHOTO**



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SPORTS

NEW TECUMSETH TIMES

North Dufferin Baseball League hosts annual awards presentation

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The North Dufferin Baseball League celebrated a successful 2025 season at its annual awards presentation held at the Lisle Legion on Sunday, March 14.

The awards recognize championship teams and individual excellence across the junior and senior divisions.

Provincial success was also highlighted during the event as the Ivy Rangers captured the Senior A Ontario Baseball Association Championship. The Midland Mariners claimed the Senior C OBA title.

At the junior level, the Orillia Royals won the 22U OBA championship.

In the regular season, the Creemore Padres finished first in the junior division with a 15-2-1 record, earning the Sunnysdale Service and Variety Trophy.

In senior play, the Ivy Rangers topped the East Division at 13-7-2 to earn the North Dufferin Baseball League Trophy, while the New Lowell Knights finished first in the West Division with an improved 17-4-1 record and received the Ross Houston Memorial Trophy.

Coaching honours in the senior division went to Pete Kinghan of the New Lowell Knights, who was voted Bud Anderson Memorial Award winner as Coach of the Year, continuing his reputation as a perennial recipient.

Junior division individual awards were highlighted by Aidan Farrow of Innisfil Cardinals 1, who earned the Reg Westbrooke Memorial Trophy as best batter with a .533

average and also led the division with a .583 on-base percentage.

Nic Guthrie of the Creemore Padres led the division with 19 runs scored, while Michael Dawe of Innisfil Cardinals 1 paced juniors with three home runs.

Wyatt Thompson of the Orillia Royals was named best pitcher and most valuable player, while teammate Reese Boyle received the Vice-President's Trophy as most sportsman-like player.

In the senior division, Brett Chater of the Bolton Brewers captured the Creemore Star Trophy as best batter with a .524 average and earned his second consecutive Bruce Jenkins Memorial Trophy as most valuable player.

Adam Shaver of the Owen Sound Baysox led the division with a .644 on-base percentage to win the Bob Doner Memorial Trophy and also topped the league with seven home runs to earn the Bill Lennox Memorial Trophy.

Blake Faulds of the Orillia Majors led the senior division with 24 runs scored and received the Evan Jamieson Memorial Trophy.

Pitching and defensive awards went to Ryan Bartley of the Owen Sound Baysox, who was named best pitcher and received the Lloyd Patton and Bill Gowan Memorial Trophy, and Parker Walker of the Ivy Rangers, who earned his first Carl Gowan Memorial Trophy as best catcher.

The Tom Anderson Memorial Award for most sportsmanlike player was presented to Anson Dupuis of the Creemore Padres.

A service award was presented to past president Chris Fafalios in recognition of his



STAR PLAYER – The North Dufferin Baseball League held its annual awards presentation at the Lisle Legion on Sunday, March 14. Championship teams were recognized, as well as individual player achievements. Wyatt Thompson of the Orillia Royals was named junior division most valuable player and received the Statistician's Trophy from statistician Chris Fafalios. Thompson also won the best pitcher title in the division.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

three-year term as president of the executive board.

The league's annual meeting followed the awards presentation.

There are three new junior entries to bring the division to eight teams. New teams include the Aurora-King Jays, Caledon Nationals and Owen Sound Baysox, joining returning teams Barrie Baycats, Creemore

Padres, Innisfil Cardinals 1 and 2, and the Orillia Royals.

Richmond Hill will not return this season.

The senior division will remain at 12 teams: Barrie Angels, Bolton Brewers, Caledon Cardinals, Clarksburg Blues, Creemore Padres, Ivy Rangers, Lisle Astros, Mansfield Cubs, Midland Mariners, New Lowell Knights, Orillia Majors and Owen Sound Baysox.

Stayner Siskins tie North Carruthers Division Championship series with Alliston Hornets

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The biggest crowd of the year turned out to see Game 2 of the Alliston Hornets–Stayner Siskins championship series as they battled it out for the North Carruthers Division title.

Around 750 people were in the stands for Game 2 at the New Tecumseth Recreation Centre on Friday, March 20.

The final series, between two teams with a long-standing rivalry, got underway in Stayner on Thursday, March 19.

Game 1 saw the Hornets take the lead in the first period with goals from Nick Lamont and Gunner Kirk, who started the scoring for the championship series.

Lamont got his second goal of the night at 25 seconds into the second period.

Stayner got on the scoreboard just over two minutes later, but that was all the Siskins squad could do for the night.

Mark Coish and Hunter Martell scored for the Hornets to make it a 5-1 game with one period left to go.

The only third-period goal came from Alliston forward Tristen Pitt, who scored at 9:46 into the period.

The Hornets left the ice with a 6-1 win to

start the series.

The series came to Alliston for Game 2, and many fans from both teams arrived to cheer on their team.

It was a tough physical battle on the ice, with plenty of end-to-end action, but neither team could score in the first period.

The Siskins scored two unanswered goals in the second period, putting all the pressure on the Hornets to respond in the final frame.

Stayner had a 3-0 lead after scoring at 11 seconds into the third period.

Alliston's Tristen Pitt notched a goal at 8:41 into the third period.

Stayner responded with goal number four late in the period.

Nick Lamont hit the back of the Stayner net with just 14 seconds remaining on the clock on an unassisted goal.

The final was a 4-2 win for the Siskins, and the best-of-seven series is now tied 1-1.

This championship series is only going to get more exciting as it progresses. Both the Hornets and Siskins have large, enthusiastic fan bases who enjoy attending games and supporting their teams.

During the regular season, the Hornets were in first place for most of the year. They were eclipsed by the Siskins in the final

couple of weeks when Stayner took over the top spot and won the division by a single point.

Game 3 of the series is scheduled for today, March 26, in Stayner.

The series will return to Alliston for Game 4 on Friday, March 27, with a 7:30 p.m. start.

Remaining games

- Game 5: Sunday, March 29, in Stayner, starting at 5:30 p.m.
- Game 6: Wednesday, April 1, in Alliston, starting at 7:30 p.m. (if necessary)
- Game 7: Thursday, April 2, in Stayner, starting at 8 p.m. (if necessary)



HORNETS BATTLE – The Alliston Hornets and Stayner Siskins battle it out on the ice at the New Tecumseth Recreation Centre during Game 2 of their best-of-seven division championship series on Friday, March 20. The Siskins won this game 4-2. The Hornets won Game 1, and the series is now tied 1-1. A large fan base from both teams has been attending the games.

BRIAN LOCKHART PHOTO

Annual Job Fair coming to Centre Dufferin Recreation Complex

BY JOSHUA DRAKES
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Town of Shelburne will host its fifth annual Shelburne, Dufferin and Area Job Fair on April 23, bringing together employers and job seekers from across the region for an afternoon of in-person recruitment and networking.

The event will take place from 1 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the Centre Dufferin Recreation Complex (CDRC) in Shelburne.

Organized by the town's economic development office, the job fair aims to connect local businesses with potential employees while supporting the development of local workforces throughout Dufferin County and surrounding municipalities.

Now in its fifth year, the job fair has grown into a significant local employment event. According to organizers, more than 650 visitors attended the 2025 event.

Carol Maitland, economic development officer for Shelburne, said this year's event is set to be even more significant than last year, promising more opportunities and connections. She also thanked this year's sponsor, Senco, for its support.

"Every year this event gets stronger," she said. "There's something powerful about put-

ting employers and job seekers in the same room, connections get made that just wouldn't happen any other way. I'm proud to bring this back for a fifth year and excited to have Senco on board. If you're hiring or looking for work, April 23rd is the day to be at the CDRC."

The event is designed to provide opportunities for face-to-face conversations between employers and job seekers, offering an alternative to online applications and allowing attendees to make direct industry connections with hiring managers.

The event is open to all backgrounds, including students, newcomers to the area, skilled trades workers and professionals.

Attendees are encouraged to bring resumes, and some employers may conduct interviews on-site during the event.

The job fair is being delivered in partnership with the Centre for Career and Employment Services at Georgian College and the Upper Grand District School Board. Representatives from both organizations will be present to provide information about employment resources, education pathways and training opportunities.

Employers from a range of industries are invited to participate. Booth spaces are available for \$90 plus HST and include an eight-foot display area, a table, two chairs, and refresh-



LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES AWAIT – The 2025 Job Fair drew 650 guests looking to find employment and to network with industry experts in the area. This year's event, the fifth annual job fair, is looking to maintain that momentum. All employers and job seekers are encouraged to attend and bring their knowledge and connections to Shelburne. **CONTRIBUTED PHOTO**

ments for up to two representatives.

Spaces are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Employer setup will take place from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. ahead of the public opening at 1 p.m.

Admission is free, and no pre-registration is required for job seekers.

For more information, email ed@shelburne.ca or go to: eventbrite.ca/e/employers-wanted-2026-shelburne-dufferin-area-job-fair-tickets-1980107880975

Orangeville Blues and Jazz Festival to feature over 40 artists across both genres

Continued from Page 8

There is also the Broadway Ramble, featuring over 35 food and artisanal craft market vendors, as well as workshops at the Mill Street Branch of the Orangeville Public Library.

Street performers will be set up in the downtown core as well, providing intimate

performances throughout the weekend.

"We are very proud of our festival and think it is tremendous value for a very low price for our visitors and attendees. We have been awarded as one of the Top 100 Festivals and Events in Ontario for 13 years running. We have a great reputation in the Canadian music scene as a place that musicians love to perform at," said Kurtz.

Tickets to the Orangeville Blues and Jazz Festival go on sale Saturday, March 21, and provide access to both the TD Mainstage and Opera House.

"We feel the festival offers high quality at a very reasonable price. Most events are free," Kurtz said. "This is such a bargain thanks to our generous sponsors and government support who make our festival super

affordable."

Visit orangevillebluesandjazz.ca to purchase a ticket once they go on sale.

"Come out and enjoy one of the most fun and entertaining weekends of the year. We love seeing everyone getting together and forgetting their problems for a few hours while enjoying some of the greatest music Canada has to offer," Kurtz enthused.

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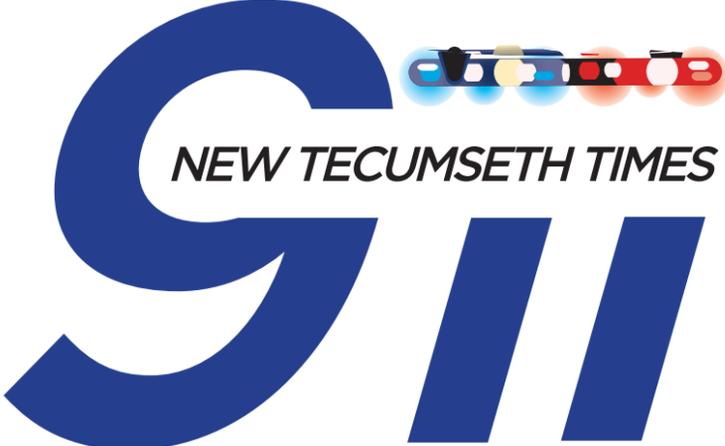
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NEW TECUMSETH TIMES



Nottawasaga OPP alerts residents to ongoing bail fraud scam

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Nottawasaga Detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police is warning residents about an ongoing fraud scheme in which callers impersonate a family member who claims they have been arrested and need bail money. In this scam, the victim receives a phone call from someone pretending to be a family member. This could be a son, daughter, niece, or nephew who claims they were involved in

a motor vehicle collision and were arrested. Shortly after, a second caller comes on the line posing as a defence lawyer and demands cash to secure the family member's release on bail. The scammers typically request that the cash be picked up in person or sometimes a money transfer. Once the money is collected, the victim may receive another call stating that the other driver involved in the collision has died from their injuries and that additional bail money

is now required. The OPP wants people to know that, in situations like this, the caller is not a family member and is likely not involved in any incident. Technology exists to spoof phone numbers, making calls appear to come from a known contact. In addition, voice cloning technology can be used if audio samples of a person are available. If you or someone you know receives a call of this nature, do not provide any personal

information over the phone, including your address or banking information. Police, the court system, and lawyers will never request cash pickups or ask for financial information in this manner. You should hang up immediately and report the call to the police. If you are concerned about the safety of a family member, contact them directly using a known phone number or reach out to someone who would be in regular contact with them.

Four people charged with impaired operation in separate incidents over nine days

Nottawasaga Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) officers have arrested and charged four people with impaired driving and related offences in separate incidents over nine days. Police were conducting traffic enforcement on Mill Street in Angus on March 14, shortly before 7 p.m., when a vehicle was stopped, and an officer detected an odour of alcohol coming from the driver. An impaired investigation began, and as a result of the investigation, Catlen Ree, 32, of Victoria Harbour, has been charged with:

- Operation while impaired - blood alcohol concentration (80 plus)

Police were dispatched to a fail-to-remain motor vehicle collision on Adjala-Tecumseth Townline on March 20, shortly before 4:30 p.m., in response to a vehicle that struck a mailbox and continued driving. The vehicle

involved in the collision was located, and the driver was arrested for impaired operation. Lindsay Mack, 30, of Loretto, has been charged with:

- Operation while impaired - blood alcohol concentration (80 plus)
- Operation while impaired - alcohol
- Fail to remain

Police were dispatched to a traffic complaint on County Road 10 in Essa, where a northbound vehicle was reported to be driving all over the road and into oncoming traffic on March 22, shortly after 1 a.m. The vehicle and driver were located, and the driver was arrested for impaired operation. Balkaran Kajla, 29, of Angus, has been charged with:

- Operation while impaired - blood alcohol concentration (80 plus)

- Operation while impaired - alcohol

Police were dispatched to a fail-to-remain motor vehicle collision on March 20, shortly before 11 p.m., where the driver was travelling westbound on Highway 89, had struck a median and a sign, and continued driving. The driver was located and arrested for impaired operation. Francisco Tardio-Alarcon, 49, of Alliston, has been charged with:

- Operation while impaired - alcohol
- Failure or refusal to comply with demand
- Fail to remain
- Fail to report accident
- Owner operate a motor vehicle without insurance
- Drive motor vehicle, no currently validated permit

All four accused parties had their driver's



licence suspended for 90 days, had their vehicles impounded for seven days and were released with a future court date at the Ontario Court of Justice in Bradford to answer to the charges. None of the listed charges have been proven in court.

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Rufus and Magic

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BIG WIN – Francisco Pereira of Bradford West won \$50,000 in the LOTTO 6/49 Super Draw on Feb. 14. Pereira, 59, who works as a bricklayer, said he plans to put the new winnings towards a deck, paying off some bills and taking a trip to Florida later this year. The LOTTO 6/49 Super Draw included 20 Guaranteed Prize Draws of \$50,000, in addition to the Gold Ball Draw and Classic Draw. The winning ticket was purchased at Bradford #1 Smoke & Variety on Holland Street East in Bradford. **CONTRIBUTED PHOTO**

Museum introduces Museum Makers program

BY BRIAN LOCKHART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Simcoe County Museum is introducing a program for youth where kids ages 9 to 13 can explore the colourful world of textiles.

“Museum Makers – Sew What?” is a Saturday morning program that encourages kids to let their creative side run wild.

Kids will learn how to sew, stitch, and design a one-of-a-kind project.

They can use fabric, choose colours, and craft a project that is totally their own design.

From experimenting with colours and textures to putting their new skills to work with personal flair, kids can let their imagination shine as they bring their ideas to life – thread by thread.

The “Museum Makers – Sew What?” program will take place on three Saturdays in April: April 11, 18, and 25, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

The cost is \$45 (\$36 for members) for all three weeks. Spaces are limited, so register early.

For more information, visit www.museum.simcoe.ca.



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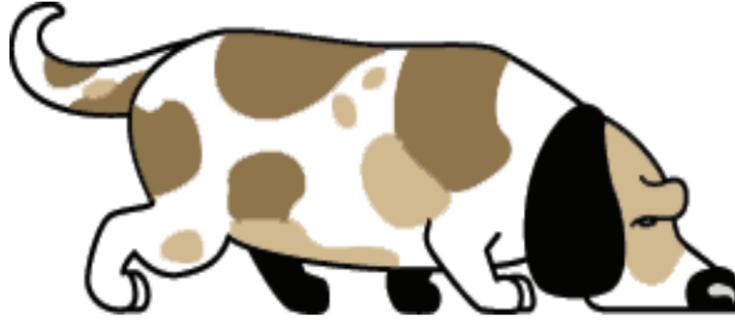
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Continued from Page 4

Brock's Banter: Back to business unusual

Then there's the proposal to allow "Bring Your Own" booze to outdoor public events across the Province. Now, this is an issue that caught me off-guard, as I haven't once heard this identified as an issue for Ontarians in the most recent or any of the myriad Provincial campaigns I've covered. But, then again, neither was allowing booze sales in gas stations or corner stores.

"Starting this spring, Ontario is giving communities more flexibility to safely and responsibly enjoy cultural and outdoor events," said Ontario Attorney General Doug Downey in a statement. "The 'Bring-Your-Own' event permits will help save attendees more money, lower overhead costs for event organizers, and contribute to local economies."

Sure, it just might do that, and while municipalities will have to pass appro-

appropriate bylaws to regulate the consumption of alcohol in public before this is a model that can come to our communities, it could, to my mind, stretch already-resource-strapped municipalities even further – the security issues alone could be eye-watering – but also place towns and cities in the awkward position of declining to move forward with this, and leaving them to deal with the blow-back from residents looking forward to lifting a few of their own cold ones with friends during, say, Canada Day celebrations in the local park.

Then there's the question of the financial hit a move in this direction would cause many of our service clubs who partner with communities to offer beer gardens, for example, at municipal events, a win for municipalities who don't want to take on the responsibility

of doing it themselves, a win for the service clubs who make money to invest back into the community, and a win for all those looking to wet their respective whistles.

Then there's the Premier's calls on the Federal government to legalize the use of pepper spray in self-defence, billing it as a "common sense way to help people, especially women in vulnerable situations," and to livestream bail hearings.

I don't know about the rest of you, and while I champion everything women can do to protect themselves in vulnerable situations, the idea of just about everyone having the ability to carry this around on their person, doesn't necessarily fill me with a feeling of safety and security. In the heated environment we find ourselves living in, it's not beyond

the realm of possibility that it could be deployed in the most minor of cases, and even to "settle" differences of opinion.

And as for livestreaming bail hearings, we only need to look as far as the frequent judicial circuses that happen south of our border to see that it's not the best idea.

Does bail reform need to take place? Absolutely. Is live-streaming bail hearings the right solution? If only Jay Leno can connect us with the surviving Dancing Itos for their insights.

Everybody needs a little bit of time away, so I hope our elected representatives rested up for what's certainly sounding like a wild ride.

Buckle up for it, sure, but wait to see what shakes down before hitting the HOV lanes for a solo cruise.

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