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Fire and Ice Festival returns to Alton Mill Arts Centre next month

Continued from FRONT

“So there’s some great large-scale family games, some hockey shooting accuracy challenges, giant chess games, and all sorts of things set up outside. There’s also food trucks, fire dancers, you name it.”

“All the fun things that you would want at a festival are happening here,” she added.

There’s just as much happening inside as outside as well. For those who might get too cold or would rather stay warm throughout the evening, Sansom said that you’re covered.

“Inside, we have art vendors set up throughout the building,” she said. “All the artists that have studios at the Alton Mill are on site. You get to see the artists, meet them, talk to them. We also have live music happening indoors, including a drumming circle.”

Sansom continued, “We also have art shows, a hot stove lounge, where you can get something nice and warm to warm you up, and there’s complimentary kids’ craft there all day.

In addition to indoor and outdoor activities, there will be plenty of performers on site, offering live music and entertainment.

The festival’s lineup also features a range of performers and community partners both inside and out. Indoors, guests can take in live music from Larry Kurtz on Saturday and Musical Munchkins, alongside family-friendly activities hosted by Theatre Orangeville.

The Stoney Lonesome bluegrass band performance and a roster of six stand-up comedians anchor the 19-plus Hot Mic comedy and concert night, while Sleeman & Sons of Guelph will be on site offering whiskey tastings.

The biggest event of the weekend is the

dramatically titled “The Big Burn!” and it will be taking ice sculpting to the next level.

“The big burn is a sculptural piece,” Sansom said. “We have a couple of artists that come together, and they build this sculptural piece, and they create a show that goes with it, so an audio and a light show that kind of goes around this piece, and it all tells a story. At 6:30 p.m., it gets lit, and there’s this evolution of the sculpture that happens with the burn... It’s more than a big bonfire, it’s so much more. It’s a spectacle.”

In the past, the burn has featured sculptures such as a dragon whose wings spread as the ice melts, among other incredible works by local artists. The project for 2026 is a secret and will be revealed only on the day of the festival, when the fires are lit.

To make such incredible work possible, Sansom said the festival relies on local volunteers and sponsors, with more needed at all times.

“We want to give a huge thank you to the Town of Caledon and to all of the sponsors that help make this event possible; we could not do it without them,” she said. “To anyone who is interested in participating in the event, we are still accepting volunteers.”

“For businesses that are wondering about how they might be able to get involved, even if it’s not for this year, but for next, we are always open to working with new partners and offering new elements.”

With so many events loaded into one weekend, the Alton Mill Fire and Ice Festival promises to light the fires of excitement, bringing local vendors, food, and entertainment to the small community, with only bigger plans for next year.

For more information, including ticket prices and volunteering, visit <https://www.altonmill.ca/fire-and-ice>.



MARK NIXON PHOTO

BURNING BRIGHT: The penultimate moment of the night, The Big Burn. Combining sounds, lights, ice and fire, this transformational art piece begins as a simple ice sculpture, but as it melts, carefully engineered designs change the shape and tells a unique story. Every year is a different display and is kept as a tight secret until the moment arrives.

Dufferin OPP responds to two copper theft incidents on same street in Melancthon

Written By SAM ODROWSKI

Copper theft continues to be an issue in the region, particularly impacting communities in northern Dufferin, as the price of copper hit a new all-time high earlier this month.

Dufferin Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) are now investigating two separate incidents of copper theft, both occurring along River Road in Melancthon between Jan. 14 and 15. Both incidents are suspected to have taken place during early morning hours.

“These thefts commonly involve telephone lines, utility wiring, and cable infrastructure and are often reported in rural, poorly lit, or isolated areas,” reads a press

release from Dufferin OPP. “These thefts typically occur during the early morning hours but may happen at any time. In many cases, wires are cut from utility poles, dragged to nearby roadways, and collected later to avoid detection.”

Perpetrators of copper wire theft have, in the past, used reflective clothing or safety gear to appear as legitimate utility or road workers when committing theft to reduce suspicion among passing motorists and nearby residents.

“Copper theft is not only a criminal offence but also presents a serious public safety concern. Damage to critical infrastructure can result in service disruptions, including impacts to telephone and internet services

and, in some cases, emergency services such as 9-1-1. These disruptions can delay emergency response and place the public at risk,” reads Dufferin OPP’s press release.

“These thefts can also affect residents in other ways. Repairing damaged infrastructure can take time and resources, which may influence service availability or cause temporary interruptions in affected areas.”

Dufferin OPP is requesting the public’s help in reporting suspicious activity to apprehend individuals who commit copper theft.

“Residents are encouraged to remain vigilant and report individuals cutting or handling utility lines, tampering with infrastructure, or vehicles parked on road shoulders



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

THEFT CONTINUES: Two more copper thefts have taken place in Dufferin County, adding to the growing number of local incidents.

without an apparent purpose. If you observe suspicious activity in progress, contact police immediately by calling 9-1-1,” reads Dufferin OPP.

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Local author’s dog rescue becomes symbol of hope in her debut children’s book

Written By JOSHUA DRAKES
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

A new children’s book inspired by a true story of kindness and community is finding readers far beyond Orangeville.

Written by local entrepreneur Stacey Tarrant, the self-published debut book, *One Love. One Dog. Marley’s Incredible Journey*, tells the true story of Marley, a rescued Jamaican street puppy, and the collective compassion that changed her life.

Illustrated by Toronto-based artist Laura Watson, the book pairs playful imagery with a message of hope, empathy, and the power of community.

Real-life photos of Marley and her rescue journey are included at the back, reinforcing that the story is based on a real journey.

“I had felt so moved by the community that stepped up to help her, and then somebody had suggested I write a children’s book about how the impossible becomes possible when we lean on the hearts of others,” she said. “I thought, oh my God, I love that idea. What a great message for kids, what a great way to even show other people that this can be done... So I thought, this is not only an educational opportunity, but the message is so positive. So I say, ‘yeah, I’m going to do it.’”

Encouraged by others to turn the experience into a children’s book, Tarrant invested about \$15,000 dollars to self-publish, focusing on simplifying the story for young readers while preserving its emotional core.

The inspiration behind the book came roughly a year ago during a vacation in Jamaica. Three days into her trip, Tarrant encountered a tiny stray puppy on a beach.

“It all started a year ago,” Tarrant said. “While I was on vacation in Jamaica, and I was taking a walk along the beach... and out of nowhere this cute little puppy just runs

up and flops up my feet. So I’m petting her, thinking, oh my god, she’s so cute. And then I had this moment of realization that if I left her there, she would die, because it was very clear she was a stray and trying to fend for herself.”

Realizing the dog was struggling to survive, Tarrant contacted Montego Bay Animal Haven and learned it would cost about \$2,000 to bring the puppy to Canada. She launched a GoFundMe campaign, which was fully funded within 48 hours by about 60 donors. As the rescue process unfolded, she shared updates online, drawing a growing following invested in the puppy’s journey.

“I used to work at Family Transition Place,” she said. “So I know that donor transparency is very important. So I set up some social media channels and asked the rescue to send me pictures, so I could keep everyone that donated updated.”

When the dog arrived in Canada, Tarrant and her family decided to keep her, naming her Marley after the famous Jamaican singer/songwriter Bob Marley.

It was at this time that Tarrant began planning her book to share her story with a wider audience. It wasn’t an easy process writing her very first book, especially at the start.

“I found the most difficult part was to try and simplify it so that kids would resonate, but still keep the heart and emotion of the story,” she said. “That was sort of the key writing piece – just to simplify the message, but still keep the powerful tone and lessons woven through it.”

Tarrant also had to adapt to a writing style she wasn’t familiar with. Coming from a business background, she was challenged to fundamentally change the way she usually wrote to tackle this book. But it was a welcome challenge.

“It’s a completely different style and genre

that I found challenging,” she said. “I think the one thing about me is I do love a good challenge. I just worried because I had no experience here. Anybody without the experience should worry, because you want to put a good product out there to do the story justice.”

Her philosophy of writing paid off. The response to the book has mirrored the outpouring of support behind Marley’s rescue. Before physical copies were even printed, Tarrant pre-sold 725 copies through organic social media support. Total sales have now reached about 800, with books shipped across Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Scotland.

“I was just trying to do the right thing,” she said. “So to see this love ripple out in ways that it has, it’s just surpassed my expectations. Sometimes it just takes those life experiences and moments to realize kind of what life’s all about.”

Locally, the book is available at BookLore in Orangeville and online.

The book’s impact is now expanding well beyond local audiences. A Jamaican animal rescue plans to use it in schools to promote compassion toward animals, while a Grade 5 teacher in Orangeville intends to incorporate it into classroom lessons on empathy, writing, and community action.

Toyota Jamaica has also reached out to Tarrant about a potential collaboration.

“Toyota Jamaica heard about my story,” she said. “They called me and said, ‘You’re a really big deal in Jamaica and we’ve heard about Marley’s story. We’re big supporters of the Montego Bay Animal Haven rescue... We’re interested in bringing 500 copies to the island. Are you interested?’ Of course, I’m like, yeah.”

Toyota Jamaica is also helping to organize media appearances, school outreach, and discussions with resorts about placing



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

PAWS FROM PARADISE: Marley, the star of Stacey Tarrant’s new book, *One Love. One Dog. Marley’s Incredible Journey*, first came to her on a Jamaican beach. Realizing that Marley was in dire straits, Tarrant’s decision to bring her home to Canada has ignited an international sensation, quickly becoming a symbol of hope and compassion.

the book in hotel gift shops. Tarrant will travel to Jamaica next month for meetings, followed by an official Jamaican launch in March. A portion of the proceeds is being donated to Montego Bay Animal Haven, bringing the story full circle.

What began as a simple mission to bring Marley home has rapidly evolved into a growing legacy of compassion, community unity, and hope.

One Love. One Dog. Marley’s Incredible Journey is available now online and at BookLore in Orangeville.

RCMP officially launches National High Risk Child Sex Offender Database, public gains access

Written By JOSHUA DRAKES
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The public now has access to a centralized, accessible database on child sex offenders nationwide for the first time, as part of a bill passed through parliament.

This bill, the High Risk Child Sex Offender Database Act, was brought into force on Dec. 31, 2024. This bill outlined a requirement to establish a publicly accessible database of people convicted of sexual offenses against children and who pose a high risk of committing similar crimes again.

The online database officially launched on Thursday, Jan. 15.

The database was described by Gary Anandasangaree, Minister of Public Safety, as an important move to protect children

across Canada.

“Children are amongst the most vulnerable members in our society, and our government is committed to keeping them safe,” he said. “The High Risk Child Sex Offender Database will help to protect children and their communities from harm by providing law enforcement agencies with an additional tool to ensure appropriate monitoring of high-risk offenders as well as providing the public with verified information to support their personal safety.”

This database is the first of its kind in Canada, as the previous database, the National Sex Offender Registry, is reserved for access by law enforcement only. This new database provides the public with up-to-date, accurate information on high-risk, convicted child sex offenders who officials believe may be at risk of repeat offenses.

Each offender profile may include names, date of birth, gender, a physical description, including any distinguishing marks, a photograph, description of offenses committed, any conditions related, and the city, town, municipality, or other district where they currently reside

It will also provide local police with an easy-to-access, centralized service to present information to the community and other services in a timely fashion, according to RCMP Commissioner Mike Duheme, thereby streamlining the flow of information.

“Protecting children from sexual offenses and exploitation is a responsibility we all share and is a priority for the RCMP,” he said. “The importance of centralizing public notifications of high-risk child sex offenders is two-fold: it now provides Cana-

dians with a tool to get informed and take appropriate precautions and, it also helps the law enforcement community share information more seamlessly on offenders amongst themselves.”

“The RCMP is proud to have worked with Public Safety and the provinces and territories to ensure the Database provides value to communities across Canada,” Duheme added.

This database, while activated by the RCMP, will primarily be expanded and edited by provincial and local police, who will be responsible for identifying and submitting offenders for inclusion in the database, as well as ensuring the accuracy of the information provided.

For more information on the new database, go to <https://rcmp.ca/en/high-risk-child-sex-offender-database>.

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Orangeville Library to mark Family Literacy Day with soup workshop

Written By JOSHUA DRAKES
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Enjoy some fun direction in food making on Jan. 25 as the Orangeville Public Library recognizes Family Literacy Day 2026.

In celebration of Family Literacy Day, the Orangeville Public Library is hosting a unique educational workshop on food-making. The program will take participants through a fun afternoon as they learn how to make Jamaican-style soup-in-a-jar.

Lauren Tilly, head of programming for the library, said that the experience will bring together families to teach them something new and broaden their view of literacy, showing how it goes beyond books.

“Family Literacy Day is something that we’ve celebrated here at the Orangeville Public Library for a really long time, probably about 15 years,” she said. “The soup-in-a-jar workshop is for families with children to come together and put together a recipe for a dry soup mix. They’re going to follow a recipe, they’re going to write down the recipe to bring home, and then make it at home, so it’s got multiple layers of literacy built in it.”

The event follows the national theme for Family Literacy Day 2026, “Make mealtime family learning time,” designed to help families learn not as individuals but as a unit. Whether that would include making shopping lists, following recipes, or simply spending time at the table, the focus is on getting families together in 2026.

Tilly said that the Library was excited to see such a unique approach.

“This year is really exciting,” she said. “We’ve never seen something that’s kind of food related, and I think mealtime and bringing in that family aspect is really exciting for us. It’s a great opportunity for the Orangeville Public Library to align with our mandate of supporting multiple literacies, where we’re supporting that foundational reading

and writing but we’re also encouraging food literacy and cultural literacy.”

The experience will help develop and practice reading, measuring, and sequencing skills for kids and will provide family recipes for caregivers and parents.

Laura Warner, CEO of Orangeville Library, said that learning and literacy must go beyond the classroom and involve all family members. She also highlighted new learning programs to support this commitment.

“There are so many different types of literacies and learning doesn’t stop at the classroom,” Warner said. “It’s very powerful and important that families continue to learn together. Recently, we launched a new platform called Kermode, it’s meant for families to go through these modules together. It touches on things like online safety, online privacy, cyber bullying, other elements such as AI and deepfakes. This is a large and important resource for families to sit down, review, and then have conversations about it at the dining room table.”

Together, these initiatives are highlighting the Orangeville Public Library’s ongoing commitment to supporting families as life-long learners.

“Literacy today is so much more than just reading books,” Warner said. “It’s about understanding information, asking questions and navigating the world, and we are focused on building that capacity for literacy.”

By combining practical programs like the soup-in-a-jar workshop with digital literacy tools such as Kermode, the library is inviting residents of all ages to explore new skills, strengthen their connections at home, and see literacy as an essential part of everyday life - both on Family Literacy Day and throughout the year.

For more information on the soup-in-a-jar event, go to forms.orangevillelibrary.ca/2026-Family-Literacy-Day-Soup-in-a-Jar-Session.

Amaranth resident charged with impaired driving

Dufferin Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) officers charged an Amaranth resident with impaired operation-related offences. The OPP reminds the public that impaired driving is unacceptable and poses a serious risk to everyone on the road.

On Jan. 17, just before 8:30 p.m., Dufferin OPP received a traffic complaint regarding a possible impaired driver. Officers located the individual on Station Street in the Township of Amaranth, conducted a traffic stop, and initiated an impaired driving investigation.

Tyler Murdoch, a 48-year-old male from Amaranth, has been charged with:

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

The accused individual is scheduled to appear before the Ontario Court of Justice in Orangeville. Their driver’s licence was suspended for 90 days, and their vehicle was impounded for seven days. The listed charges have not been proven in court.

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6 tips for winter walking safety

(NC) Enjoying a walk outdoors is one of the best ways to stay active and incorporate daily movement, especially when managing arthritis. But colder months can bring slippery sidewalks and freezing temperatures, making gentle walks a risky adventure. With a few simple precautions, you can stay safe and enjoy the outdoors all season long.

Here are six tips from Arthritis Society Canada to make walking in a winter wonderland as safe as possible:

1. BE WEATHER WARY.

Prepare for snow and ice by keeping a shovel, sand or de-icing salt handy at home to clear your path and avoid slipping on your way out. Pick a well-maintained and frequently travelled route and choose the warmest time of day to go on your walk, to give ice a chance to melt.

2. GEAR UP FOR COMFORT AND SAFETY.

Stay warm and cozy with insulated layers, socks, gloves and a hat. For footwear, invest in supportive, warm

boots with good traction and a low, wide heel for better balance. On icy or snowy days, consider ice cleats or ice grippers on your shoes.

3. WARM UP, THEN WALK.

Before you head out, do a quick warm-up to get your blood flowing. March in place and swing your arms or move your foot and ankle in circular motions to get your muscles ready for the cold.

4. WALK LIKE A PENGUIN.

When navigating a slippery surface, channel your inner penguin and move slowly with small baby steps, like a shuffle. Bend your knees slightly to lower your center

of gravity, keep your feet flat on the ground with toes pointed outward for better support and keep your arms out for stability—like penguin wings!

5. USE CAUTION WHEN EXITING VEHICLES.

Getting out of your car can be tricky on icy surfaces. Remember to move slowly, swing both feet out and plant them on the ground first and hold onto the doorframe as you carefully stand up.

6. CONSIDER WALKING AIDS.

Handrails on stairs and ramps are your friends and can help reduce the risk of a fall. If you use a cane, consider attaching an ice tip to the bottom for better grip.

You could also try walking sticks, including hiking poles, for added stability and balance.

Find more arthritis-friendly tips at arthritis.ca.



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Planning Today for the Impact You'll Leave Tomorrow

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE is one of the greatest gifts we can give to the people we love, and to the community we care about. For many, that planning includes preparing a Will that ensures family members are supported and that personal wishes are honoured. Increasingly, it also includes the meaningful act of leaving a charitable gift to a cause close to the heart.

What many people don't realize is that thoughtful estate planning allows you to do both: provide for loved ones and make a lasting contribution to the organizations that matter to you. A gift in your Will can be structured in a way that aligns with your values, fits your financial situation, and still protects everything you intend for your family.

A charitable gift in a Will does not require enormous wealth. In fact, most come from ordinary people, like you and me, who want to make a meaningful difference. Even a small percentage of an estate can have a remarkable impact. For organizations like Headwaters Health Care Foundation, these gifts help ensure exceptional health care close to home for generations to come.

Including a gift in your Will can also bring financial advantages, such as reducing the taxes owed by your estate. For many, this means the ability to leave a larger gift to both family and charity than might have been possible during their lifetime. It's a powerful way to ensure your values continue to support the community long after you're gone.

If you're considering a gift in your

Will, there are important reasons to let us know:

Knowing your intentions allows us to thank you properly during your lifetime. It also gives us the opportunity to understand how you wish your gift to be used, and to ensure those wishes can be fulfilled exactly as you envision.

Also, awareness of future gifts strengthens long-term planning for the Foundation. When we understand the generosity that is coming, we can plan strategically to meet the future needs of the hospital, invest in vital equipment, and ensure patients and families continue to receive the outstanding quality of care we want for them.

Finally, we may be able to recommend ideas to discuss with your lawyer or financial planner to help minimize your estate taxes and maximize what you leave for loved ones and your preferred charitable organizations.

As you review your estate plans or consider updating your Will, I encourage you to think about the causes that have shaped your life and supported your community. A gift in your Will to Headwaters Health Care Foundation ensures that exceptional, compassionate care remains available close to home for your family, your neighbours, and future generations.

It can begin today with a simple conversation.



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Contact Joel Porter at 519.941. 2702 ext. 2303 or by email at jporter@headwatershealth.ca to learn more about how to include Headwaters in your Will.



Your vision loss may not be just a *sign of aging*

(NC) We've all heard the saying "it's all downhill" after a certain age, whether we believe it or not. While many seniors still enjoy active lifestyles, most of us accept that our bodies just won't be as good at certain things as time goes on.

But that acceptance can sometimes keep us from noticing when something is going wrong that isn't "just one of those things." One example is geographic atrophy (GA), an eye disease where

the centre of the retina, called the macula, dies off over time.

GA affects an estimated five million people worldwide, most of them seniors. Vision loss occurs slowly, starting with blind spots in the middle of a person's field of vision, then worsening until household tasks, driving and even facial recognition become very difficult.

That's why it's so important to listen to our bodies and note any changes in vision. Although some symptoms could be nothing to worry about, they could also be signs of a serious condition that will only get worse if left unexamined. Make sure to reach out to your eye-care professional if you notice it's getting harder to read or track objects in your central vision. They can tell you whether you simply need a new prescription for your glasses, or whether it's time to run more tests. There are scans available that can detect GA, but like with many conditions, early diagnosis is essential.

Learn more at livingwithga.ca.

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Seeing is Believing: RETHINKING RETIREMENT LIVING AT AVALON

For many older adults and their families, the idea of retirement living is often shaped by long-held assumptions. It's seen as something to be delayed, avoided, or approached with hesitation ; a decision associated with loss rather than possibility.

But for those who have spent time inside Avalon Retirement Lodge, the experience tells a very different story.

In fact, one of the most common things families say after visiting is simple: "This isn't what we expected." And that's exactly the point.

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Daily responsibilities that once felt overwhelming — cooking, housekeeping, home maintenance — are gently lifted away. In their place comes time. Time to socialize. Time to rest. Time to enjoy meals with others. Time to say yes to activities that bring joy, without worrying about logistics or safety. For many residents, this balance leads to improved overall well-being. Regular meals, consistent routines, opportunities for movement, and meaningful social interaction all contribute to feeling better both physically and emotionally.

And for families, there's something just as important: peace of mind.

MORE QUALITY TIME, LESS WORRY

When adult children visit a parent living independently at home, those visits can sometimes revolve around concerns. Is the fridge stocked? Is the house safe? Are they lonely?

At Avalon, family visits often look very different. Instead of managing tasks or addressing worries, time together becomes just that: time together. Shared meals. Walks. Conversations that aren't rushed or overshadowed by responsibility. Knowing that support is available 24/7 allows families to step back from the role of caregiver and return to the role they value most: son, daughter, sibling, or friend.

SOCIAL CONNECTION CHANGES EVERYTHING

One of the most profound, and often underestimated, benefits of retirement living is social connection.

At Avalon, community happens naturally. Residents greet one another in common spaces. They gather for activities, celebrations, and shared interests. New friendships form not because they have to, but

because the environment makes it easy. Loneliness is something many older adults experience quietly, especially after the loss of a spouse or the downsizing of a social circle. Retirement living offers daily opportunities for connection; the kind that builds confidence, lifts spirits, and brings laughter back into everyday life.

INDEPENDENCE, SUPPORTED, NOT REPLACED

A common fear about retirement living is the idea of losing independence. In reality, many residents find they gain more of it.

With support close at hand when needed, residents are free to focus on living life on their own terms. They choose how they spend their days, which activities they participate in, and how involved they want to be. It's not about being looked after, it's about being supported, so independence can continue safely and comfortably.

A NEW YEAR, A NEW PERSPECTIVE, AND AN INVITATION TO SEE FOR YOURSELF!

While New Year's resolutions often focus on health, happiness, and peace of mind, those hopes don't disappear once January passes. For many seniors, retirement living quietly supports those goals every day of the year. More social opportunities. Less daily stress. A genuine sense of belonging. Confidence in knowing help is always nearby. At Avalon Retirement Lodge, these aren't abstract ideas, they're lived experiences.

Retirement living is often misunderstood because it's rarely seen up close. But when families take the time to visit, talk with staff and residents, and experience the atmosphere firsthand, perspectives begin to shift. They see smiles. They hear laughter. They notice how relaxed their loved one feels. And suddenly, retirement living isn't something to fear, it's something to consider with optimism.

If you're curious about what retirement living can look like for yourself or someone you love, we invite you to experience Avalon firsthand.

To book a personal visit or ask questions, connect with Sales Coordinator Alisa by phone at (705) 527-3493 or by email at athoma@jarlette.com.

Sometimes, all it takes is a visit to see what's possible.



Seeing Is Believing...

Retirement living isn't what many people expect, and Avalon is proof. Here, conversations happen naturally, routines feel lighter, and families notice the difference.

Now It's Time To See For Yourself



SCAN ME



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Ontario Senior Winter Games to bring friendship, fitness and fun



WRITTEN BY: SAM ODROWSKI

The Ontario Senior Games Association (OSGA) 55+ Winter Games is coming to Huntsville from Feb. 3 to 5, with over 1,000 participants competing in a variety of sports. From alpine and Nordic skiing to hockey and curling, the games provide adults 55 and up with an outlet to test their athleticism in a friendly environment.

Mono resident Bob Rice, who competes and helps to organize events for the OSGA, said he joined to remain physically and socially active.

“All OSGA sports and games are played under well-defined rules and standards and are well organized in safe and appropriate venues,” noted Rice, who is a member of the District 19 (Brampton/North Peel/Dufferin) organizing committee

Participants in the game can train as much or as little as they please – the competitions are meant to be a fun outing for older adults.

“As a competitor I am constantly working on my game, in preparation for events. However, many competitors take a more casual approach with little or no preparation,” said Rice.

“I place high value on the friends and acquaintances made during all levels of my

competition. Individual and team spirit are encouraged by OSGA and are frequently displayed.”

Looking at the Dufferin and Caledon area, Rice said, “Residents have achieved success in hockey, pickleball, golf and tennis, just to cite some local success stories.”

At the OSGA Winter Games, Rice will be competing in 10-pin bowling. In the summertime, he takes a particular interest in golf and 5-pin bowling.

In addition to 10-pin bowling, skiing, hockey, and curling, the Winter Games in Huntsville allow participants to try their hand at badminton, table tennis, volleyball, and Bridge.

The OSGA is always seeking more competitors for their events.

“The Orangeville and Caledon areas have generated many active OSGA participants. However, as an organization, we would like to see more participants coming from those areas,” said Rice.

An Ontario Senior Games Association membership is \$15 per year, plus event fees for certain sports.

To become a member or register, visit osga55plus.ca.



What aging drivers can do to improve their driving skills

Motor vehicles have come a long way since the days of the Model T.

Safety features in particular have undergone significant enhancements over the last several decades. Improvements in airbags, structural modifications like crumple zones and technological features like automatic emergency braking have helped to make modern vehicles far safer than the cars and trucks of yesteryear.

While there's no denying that modern vehicles are safer than ever, the human element remains an unpredictable variable. Even in an era marked by vehicles with greatly enhanced safety features, distracted or impaired drivers can compromise the well-being of everyone on the road. Age is another variable unique to each driver that merits consideration when considering road safety.

The National Institute on Aging notes that certain conditions associated with aging, including increased stiffness of muscles and joints, can make it difficult for seniors to safely operate motor vehicles. Seniors who want to ensure they're safe to drive can take various steps to ensure they are not compromising their own safety or the safety of others when getting behind the wheel.

HAVE YOUR DRIVING SKILLS ASSESSED BY A TRAINED PROFESSIONAL. The NIA notes that the American Occupational Therapy Association maintains a database of driving specialists who can help seniors assess their skills behind the wheel. These trained

professionals may assess existing skills and offer advice about how to overcome any issues aging drivers might be having.

TAKE A DRIVING COURSE. Safe driving courses can help drivers of all ages stay up-to-date on the latest safety protocols and advice on how to drive safely. Modern driving is vastly different than it was when many current seniors became licensed drivers. A safe driving course can refresh drivers' memories about safety protocols, and some may even offer advice on how to navigate modern roadways, which may be marked by distracted drivers and feature vehicles with brighter headlights that can make it more difficult for older drivers to drive at night.

SPEAK WITH YOUR PHYSICIANS ABOUT YOUR MEDICATIONS. A recent study from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration found that the average adult age 65 and older now uses roughly four medications. Medications produce side effects that can affect every area of a user's life, including their ability to drive. Those effects might be heightened when taking more than one medication, and interactions also can lead to side effects that might not manifest if individuals were taking just one prescription. Aging drivers can maintain an honest and ongoing dialogue with their physicians to ensure they're aware of the effects their medications might be having on their ability to drive safely. Report any new side effects the moment they appear.

Aging can compromise seniors' ability to safely operate motor vehicles. But aging adults can employ various strategies to improve their skills behind the wheel.

We are Looking for Volunteer Board Members, Volunteer Treasurer & Volunteer Director of Development.

For more information, please contact Gord Gunning at president@abbeyfieldcaledon.org



Abbeyfield Caledon is a non-profit home for independent seniors. Nestled in the beautiful town of Caledon East, our house is dedicated to providing good nutrition and companionship.

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THE BENEFITS OF LIVING IN ABBEYFIELD CALEDON'S NON-PROFIT SENIORS RESIDENCE



YOUR GOLDEN YEARS SHOULD BE A TIME OF JOY, comfort and peace, a period to enjoy the fruits of your lifelong journey in a serene and welcoming environment, At Abbeyfield Caledon, we've mastered the art of blending care, community, and comfort to create an unparalleled living experience for seniors. Set in the heart of Caledon East's tranquil neighborhood, our non-profit seniors residence promises more than just a place to stay - it offers a chance to thrive among peers in a family-like atmosphere. Let's talk about the myriad of benefits that life at Abbeyfield Caledon provides, highlighting why it stands out as an exceptional choice for seniors seeking companionship, independence, and a vibrant lifestyle in their later years:

- WE OFFER....**
- COMPANIONSHIP AND COMMUNITY
 - HOME-LIKE SETTING
 - NUTRITION AND WELL-BEING
 - AFFORDABLE LIVING
 - INDEPENDENCE AND DIGNITY
 - VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

Living in a non-profit seniors residence like Abbeyfield Caledon offers the privilege of a supportive, caring community, nutritious meals, and a comfortable living space. It ensures a secure, dignified, and affordable lifestyle for seniors, helping them preserve their independence while living in a social, stimulating environment. This combination of benefits makes Abbeyfield Caledon an attractive choice for senior living in Ontario.

We can't wait for you to make Abbeyfield Caledon your new home. We are here, ready to welcome you with open arms into our family. Get in touch with us if you are interested in becoming a resident or if you want to join us as a volunteer serving the community. Call Lisa Chevalier, House Manager at: 905-860-0181 or visit us at: abbeyfieldcaledon.org.

Local entrepreneur finds niche market in modular, affordable holiday signs

Written By JOSHUA DRAKES
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Recognizing a growing interest in affordable, reusable signage, the proprietor of Orangeville's Pop Marquee has carved out a place in the market.

When one thinks of holiday signs, the large city Christmas signs usually come to mind. But those large units are usually permanent, expensive, and extremely hard to move.

Those are factors that make such signs unsuitable for small towns, more suited to something similar. Most small towns would be hesitant to spend substantial money on a sign that might not last or be as popular as hoped.

Enter Richard Cowan, a local resident and entrepreneur, who decided to bring those big signs to a more affordable package that allows even local communities to tap in.

"My background for the last almost 15 years has been commercial Christmas decorations," he said. "I had a client in Texas a couple years ago that had a bunch of these gold garland coloured six-foot tall letters.

"I was interested in them because I was considering going off on my own and I was going to use that as a bit of a pilot project to

see if I could rent them out."

The venture proved to be a success and, having observed the signs' impracticality, decided the process could be refined.

So he got to work.

"Over time, I rented them and sold them to various clients and realized that they weren't really designed to be moved around," Cowan said. "So I came up with a design of my own.

"Now our letters are modular so they go together like Ikea furniture would, for example, very easily. Then I kind of just fell into this cycle with many customers, and it's working out pretty well."

When Cowan first started, he was working with heavy steel letters, but realized there was a better way and better materials. Now he uses an aluminum composite material, which makes the signs much lighter, easier to handle, and more affordable.

The modular design also means that if a letter is ever badly damaged, Cowan can repair it on the spot with spare parts in about 20 minutes, leaving it looking new again.

That modularity, he says, has become one of the biggest advantages of his system. It's also allowed him to adapt his designs to be more than letters. He can offer shapes as well.

His signs have shown up in communities

throughout Ontario.

One of his first clients was the Orangeville BIA, and he has since donated displays to local groups such as the Optimist Club for use in the town's parks. In Toronto, his modular word signs were featured in the Love Local campaign.

He provides signage for the 55+ Senior Winter Games, taking place in Huntsville this year, and is returning for the "Love, Orangeville" campaign in February. He has deployments in Brockville and Ottawa, with potential involvement in the annual Winterlude festival.

He will also provide signs for various BIAs in Toronto for the FIFA World Cup games.

A key focus of his business is remaining as Canadian and local as possible. Cowan tries to make as many of his products in-house or as local as he can.

"I am the manufacturer," he said. "I have about seven or eight suppliers between here and Dundalk that are all small farm businesses. We also do the design in-house.

"Of course, not all our material, like our lights, are made in Canada. But all the cutting and manufacturing is done here and some of the material is actually Canadian-made too. We are fiercely Canadian."

Cowan said his venture would not have been possible without the support of key in-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

SUPER SIGNS: The JOY sign and "snow dudes" were products of Pop Marquee. They were among the many decorations at the Orangeville Optimist Club's Christmas in the Park at KayCee Gardens last year.

dividuals and groups who really stepped up.

"I have a long-time Orangeville resident, Tony, who lives close to me, who helps us a lot with our assembly," he said. "I also just want to thank all the BIAs we work with. They're really important to us."

For fellow entrepreneurs who want to start their own businesses, Cowan has one important piece of advice.

"Bootstrap as long as you can," he said. "And that means not borrowing money and just pulling yourself up by your bootstraps and self-funding and self-financing as long as you can."

Mono man asks council to consider ward system of municipal government

Written By JAMES MATTHEWS
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

A question from one resident could result in a drastic change to Mono's municipal governance.

It has been said that change starts with a single voice.

Mono resident Bob McCrea asked the town council during its Jan. 13 meeting whether it might put a non-binding referendum question on the 2026 municipal election ballot asking residents whether they support a change to a ward electoral system for the 2030 election.

Voters will indicate their choices for the next town council on Oct. 26.

McCrea said the municipal council of the previous term initiated an electoral reform task force that recommended switching to a ward system. But a decision was made against pursuing such a system.

The municipal ballot in any election of recent memory hasn't included a specific question to voters, said Fred Simpson, the town's clerk.

Councillor Elaine Capes doesn't believe

there's a requirement to adopt the ward system of elected representatives.

"That only sets up conflict and confrontation about, 'I represent these people,' and we know that Coun. (Melinda) Davie has mentioned many times that we represent every single resident," Capes said. "And I think that is the best approach."

Davie, who wasn't a member of the last council, questioned why the ward system recommendation wasn't followed. It was based on a report written by a group assembled by the council of the day.

She wondered if a lack of input, too few responses from voters, had been the reason behind skuttling the recommendation. Too little input isn't representative of the community's desires.

Deputy Mayor Fred Nix said he was against the ward system of municipal government during the last term.

"If we can, put a question on the ballot to at least seek the opinion of our residents," Nix said. "And if it's a non-binding referendum, fine let's hear their opinion."

However, Nix said he remains against the style of municipal representation.

"I think representing everybody in the municipality is the best way to go," he said.

Coun. Ralph Manktelow said the current system is very good for residents.

"Because we have four people, plus the mayor, who could respond to anybody's concern," Manktelow said.

A resident may approach Manktelow to help with an issue. In the current representation setup, Manktelow could direct the resident to Nix or to any other councillor who may be best suited to address the issue.

He said he's seen over the last almost 12 years that having more than one councillor on issues has worked very well for all parts of Mono.

"I think we have a much superior system," he said.

Mayor John Creelman said for a ballot's referendum question to be binding, the results would need to be driven by a clear majority of the electorate. He said it would need to be something like 60 per cent electoral turnout.

"It's never going to happen," Creelman said.

Twenty-five per cent of Mono's eligible

voters cast ballots in the 2022 municipal contest. And that was with online and telephone voting available to make the election process easier for residents.

A little more participated in the 2018 municipal election when 33 per cent of eligible voters marked ballots. That turnout was blamed on the many candidates who were returned to council by acclamation that year.

Creelman said he'll table a notice of motion for council to consider a non-binding referendum about that question. He said McCrea's question was legitimate, given that a previous council saw fit to seek a recommendation that was turned down.

He believes a fulsome debate could be had by way of a motion.

Creelman said there are neighbouring Simcoe County municipalities that abide by the ward system of governance.

"To that point that you brought up, it doesn't work well for them (Simcoe municipalities)," Capes said.

"Well, I wouldn't want to get into diagnosing Simcoe County," Creelman said. "There are many things that come into play."

David Gauthier
Service Consultant

Maurice McDonald
Service Consultant

Jazz Matharu
Service Consultant

David brings a calm, customer-first mindset to every service appointment. As a MacMaster Certified Service Consultant, he works hard to ensure every visit is smooth and stress-free. Whether you're dropping in for maintenance or need help navigating a repair, David is ready with clear communication, helpful insight, and a friendly attitude.

Maurice is the kind of advisor who makes service feel easy. He's known for his warm, approachable style and his ability to keep customers informed every step of the way. With strong product knowledge and a passion for helping people, Maurice takes the guesswork out of vehicle service at Orangeville Chrysler.

Jazz combines technical knowledge with an easygoing, professional style that customers appreciate. Bilingual in English and Punjabi, he makes sure every guest feels heard and understood. Whether it's a routine visit or a more involved repair, Jazz helps keep the process efficient, transparent, and tailored to your needs.

3 Dealerships, 1 Community

The Citizen CROSSWORD

Puzzle No. 261410 • Solution on page: CLASSIFIEDS SECTION

CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Racket sport pros
- 4. Make tea
- 8. City South of Moscow
- 10. Spanish bullfighting term
- 11. Egg-shaped
- 12. Could not remember
- 13. French modernist painter
- 15. Persons
- 16. Painful intestinal obstruction
- 17. Professions
- 18. Is up to the task
- 21. Wood or metal bolt
- 22. Tax collector
- 23. A way to save for the future
- 24. Georgia rockers
- 25. Midway between north and northeast
- 26. High schoolers' test
- 27. Does not accept responsibility
- 34. One who prepares deposits
- 36. Place to play games
- 37. Book of Genesis character
- 38. Cleans oneself
- 39. Unloaded for money
- 40. Genus of flowering plants
- 41. Take a puff
- 42. Congressmen
- 43. God of battle in Scandinavian mythology

- 1. Type of bomb
- 2. South Pacific islands
- 3. Celestial body
- 4. Negotiates
- 5. Consider in a specified way
- 6. Type of group in organic chemistry
- 7. Buddhist monasteries
- 9. Inhabitant of Bering Sea island
- 10. Body part
- 12. Milestone birthday
- 14. Thyroid-stimulating hormone
- 15. More (Spanish)
- 17. Chicago ballplayer
- 19. Leaves a place
- 20. Cannot be found
- 23. One's internal body parts
- 24. Tell on
- 25. North American peoples of southwest
- 26. Soviet Socialist Republic
- 27. Extract used for jams and jellies
- 28. Greek goddess of the dawn
- 29. Old English letter
- 30. A way to exaggerate
- 31. Get up and leave
- 32. "Boardwalk Empire" character
- 33. More generous
- 34. Hanging cloth used as a blind
- 36. Ancient Greek sophist

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

How they say that in...
English: Clutter
Spanish: Desorden
Italian: Disordine
French: Désordre
German: Unordnung

Getting organized can help reduce this, which is good for personal health.
Answer: Stress

Creating a folder structure with logical names and using consistent names for individual files can help organize computer content.

Can you guess what the bigger picture is?
Answer: Closet shelves

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SUNDAY

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Westside seniors move to second place in District 4 basketball standings

Written By BRIAN LOCKHART

The Westside Secondary School Thunder boys' senior basketball team is having a good season and is currently in second place in the District 4 standings with a 4-2 record.

The Thunder had two games this past week, winning one and losing one.

On Monday, Jan. 12, the Thunder hosted the Norwell District Secondary School Varsity Reds in the gym at Westside.

The final quarter made all the difference when the Westside team put out a huge effort to take the lead.

At halftime, the Thunder were leading 25-19.

The Norwell team challenged in the third quarter and started scoring, tying the game at 29 in the middle of the quarter.

At the end of the third quarter, the Varsity Reds were leading 35-34.

Westside returned for the final quarter and put out a stellar performance, scoring 25 points and keeping up the defence to allow only 14 points for Norwell.

The game ended with Westside winning 59-48.

"I think our confidence level is pretty solid, and it's starting to pick up – we want to just keep rolling," said Thunder forward Zach Barbosa, after the game. "I thought that

at the first half of the game, nothing was going in, but we were taking good shots. After the third quarter, our coaches gave us some motivation and told us to wake up, and it worked out. We knew we had to play better to get this win. I think we were a bit lazy in the third, and we needed to get back in the game. Finally, we found our jam and took it right to them."

The second game of the week had the Thunder up against the Centre Dufferin District High School Royals from Shelburne in the gym at Westside.

The two teams have been matching each other in the standings this season.

In this game, Centre Dufferin got the edge and won the game 62-51.

The Royals will be back on their home court at Westside on Wednesday, Feb. 4, to host Erin District High School.

Game time is 4 p.m.

Junior

The Westside Secondary School Thunder boys' junior basketball team is currently in third place in the District 4 standings with a 2-4 record.

In their most recent effort on the court, the Thunder were up against the first-place Centre Dufferin District High School Royals from Shelburne on Wednesday, Jan. 14.

The Thunder played a good game and

showed a lot of skill on the court, but they had to settle for a 73-40 loss.

The Westside juniors will be back on their

home court on Wednesday, Feb. 4, when they will host Erin District High School.

Game time is 2:30 p.m.



BRIAN LOCKHART PHOTO

INTO THE ZONE: The Westside Secondary School Thunder hosted the Norwell District Secondary School Varsity Reds on the court at Westside on Monday, Jan. 12. The Thunder won the game 59-48 after a huge fourth quarter that saw the Thunder score 25 points to win the game 59-48. Thunder forward Zach Barbosa takes the ball into the Norwell zone during the second quarter of the game.



SHANNAGHN MCMAHON PHOTO

SILVER SUCCESS: The Orangeville Tigers U13 B rep team competed at the 47th annual Huntsville Girls Hockey Tournament from Jan. 9 to 11. The team finished the round-robin undefeated, outscoring opponents 10-4 over three games. In the semi-finals, the team beat Sudbury 3-1 to advance to the final against North Halton. The Tigers took a 1-0 loss in the final to bring home silver medals. The girls played with remarkable skill, determination, and sportsmanship.



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Orangeville Blitz maintains second place after a shutout over Halton Hills Coyotes

Written By BRIAN LOCKHART

The Orangeville Blitz are in second place in the North Division of the Metropolitan League after a 5-0 shutout over the Halton Hills Coyotes on home ice at the Alder Street Arena in Orangeville on Friday, Jan. 16.

The Blitz opened the scoring in the first period on goals from Tyler Randell just past the midway mark in the frame and a late goal with 2:15 remaining in the period from Keenan Suthers.

Continuing to play a strong defensive game, the Blitz shut down the Coyotes' attack in the second period.

Two more Blitz goals from Luca Marandola and Kyle Heffenan made it a 4-0 Orangeville game with one period remaining.

In the final period, the Coyotes remained scoreless, while Cameron Searles got the final goal of the night for the Blitz when he scored with 13:27 left on the clock.

The final was a 5-0 win for the Blitz.

Orangeville goalie Ryan Mantle was named the First Star of the game, making 41 saves for the night.

The Blitz took eight minutes in minor penalties for the night. The Coyotes spent six minutes in the box on minors and took one 10-minute misconduct penalty.

After the weekend, the Blitz are in second place in the North Division with a 10-7 record, including one overtime win, and 20 points.

The Six Nations Ironmen have an identical 10-7 record and 20 points, but have first place based on GF/GA average.

In the number three sport, the Halton Hills Coyotes are well behind with seven points and a 3-15 record, including one overtime loss.

The Woodstock Lakers have won only two games after 17 times on the ice this year.

The Alviston Killer Bees lead the South Division with 28 points, followed by the Strathroy Jets with 27 in the points column.

The Blitz will have one road game on Feb. 1, against the Six Nations Ironmen.

They will return to home ice at the Alder Street Arena on Friday, Feb. 6, when they will host the Strathroy Jets.

Game time is 8 p.m.



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OPINION

Senior discount

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Children under five: Free

How many times have you seen admission prices to an event or festival that list their prices based on age? The above is a fairly typical admission pricing for many events.

I guess the idea is, if you are family, you get a break on the younger kids to make it affordable for two adults and two children.

If you're a 'youth,' you get a break of a couple of dollars because youth typically don't have a lot of money.

Children under five are usually free. I guess that's because kids under that age have no idea where they are or why they are even there, and will forget they were even there by the time they get home.

Seniors get a break on a couple of dollars because it is generally assumed they are no longer working and are on a fixed income.

The definition of 'senior' has changed over the years. At one time, you were considered a 'senior' if you were 65 years of age or older.

Over the years, the age at which some-

one is considered a 'senior' has dropped by quite a bit.

Some places have started offering discounts to seniors aged 55 and over.

Most people are still working at age 55. That may seem older to someone who is 18, but if you're 55 years old and already consider yourself a senior citizen, maybe you need to become more active or something.

The thing is, life is short. One day, you're driving around with your friends to local hot spots, hoping to meet some girls, and the next day, you're bouncing your grandson on your knee, and you wonder where the years went.

I used to work in an office environment that had a lot of young women employed. Most of them were in their early to mid 20s. Pretty much all of them still lived at home. Several were attending university or teachers' college at the time.

They were the 'hip' bunch – all good-looking. They were all friendly, but at the same time, they considered their supervisor, who was in her early 50s at the time, to be an old lady.

Now, occasionally, I'll run into one of them. They are all now in their mid 40's with grown children of their own. They have become the 'older' crowd to their children

and children's friends.

How times change.

Seniors tend to get a break on many things – except taxes.

The county where I live has just announced age-friendly grants to help make homes for seniors more accessible and adaptable, so people can grow older in their own homes.

That's great, except they still have to pay the full amount of property tax, which leaves many people strapped for cash. In some cases, an age-friendly grant is useless because the home a person wants to grow old in is no longer affordable, having been taxed out of it.

Property taxes are the one tax you pay based on a perceived value.

If you make \$50,000 in a yearly salary, you are taxed on a percentage of that income.

If you make a purchase in a store, you are taxed at 13 per cent HST on the amount you paid.

However, when it comes to property taxes, you pay on what someone thinks your home is worth.

If you have lived in a home for 20 years, you haven't made a single cent from it. If you die while living there, you will never make a dollar from it.

Yet, you are given a tax bill based on the

EXPECTED amount of money you will make if you sell it.

What if there is a slump in the market, and you have to sell that home for \$50,000 less than it was judged to be worth? I've never heard of any municipality sending a homeowner a letter saying, "sorry, we overcharged you for the last 20 years, here's your refund."

I understand why property taxes are necessary – I don't understand why a person with a bigger house needs to pay more. Why should you be penalized for having a large family and needing a larger house?

Maybe that person worked harder and saved a bigger down payment than someone else who paid far less for a home, but still has the extra money in a bank account?

Property taxes are used to pave roads and maintain water treatment plants. Why should one homeowner pay more for what we all use?

The county has the right idea in trying to help seniors age at home, but wouldn't they be even better off if the senior discount applied to property taxes so they can actually live there?

After all, these are people who have paid a lifetime of taxes already.

BRIAN LOCKHART
FROM THE SECOND ROW



Iran: Don't intervene

Any day now, the United States will "come to the rescue" of the protesters in the streets of Iran's cities and American bombers will unleash "hell" on the minions of the theocratic regime – or not, as the case may be.

It's been more than three weeks since the demos started (Dec. 29) and Trump's threats are getting old. His latest exhortation to the protesters, whose will to continue seems to be fraying a bit, told them once again that "Help is on the way!" But there is no useful way that he can keep his promise. Bombs alone won't work.

Trump's bombers cannot eliminate the elite Revolutionary Guard troops and Basij militiamen who are killing the protesters without flattening the cities they all live in together. His high-tech missiles can pick off the regime's political leadership in their homes, but others will simply replace them.

We saw how smoothly President Ebrahim Raisolsadati was replaced by Masoud Pezeshkian when the former was killed in a helicopter crash in 2024. There are three designated successors to the 86-year-old Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. This is not a regime that will crumble because of a few deaths.

A full-scale invasion might do the trick, but Donald Trump couldn't put 'boots on the ground' even if he wanted to. Given his understandable reluctance to incur serious American military casualties, bombs are the only form of violence he can use against the regime of the ayatollahs. So where are they?

As usual with Trump, it was 'speak first and think later', but his long delay before acting suggests that he has finally grasped the nature of the difficulty. He will no doubt bomb a bit in the end, but it won't help.

Non-violent protests of the sort that brought down the Shah 46 years ago are no longer reliable. Every tyrannical regime has studied the techniques and learned to counter them. The new wisdom is that if you control the streets (kill as many protesters as necessary), take over the mass media, and shut down the internet, you can probably smother the protests eventually.

The revolution of 1979 that brought the current regime to power was a classic early example of non-violent revolution, rendered even more effective by the reverence for martyrdom that is very strong in the Shia branch of Islam.

Day after day the protesters came out on

the streets, willing martyrs for the cause, and eventually the army refused to shoot them any more so the revolution won. Iran's current constitution talks about "60,000 martyrs", but subsequent research suggests that the real death toll was between 2,000 and 3,000. It was still enough to overthrow the king.

The killing got off to a much slower start in the protests that were triggered by a collapse of Iran's currency last month, but they have accelerated dramatically in the past few days. The latest figures for the dead range between 2,000 and 2,400, so why are we not seeing the same demoralization in the ranks of the oppressors as in 1979 – and what does this portend?

In general, it confirms the conclusion that non-violent revolution is no longer the sure-fire proposition that many people imagined it was 40 years ago. (New tactics always elicit new counter-tactics.)

For Iran in particular, it means that this attempt to overthrow the country's theocratic regime, despite the courage and determination of the people in the streets, could go either way. Indeed, some protesters are so frustrated that they are resorting to violence themselves: about 10 per cent

of the reported fatalities are officials and soldiers of the regime.

It's doubtful that Trump has bothered to learn much about either Iran or the history of revolutions, but his political instincts are good. A quick hit-and-run on Venezuela can be effective and perhaps even profitable; attacking a very large country in the Middle East in support of a revolution that may fail is not a great plan.

One might add that even a successful intervention that brings the tyrants down may turn out to be counter-productive. It is possible to imagine successor regimes that are even worse than the current one. It's more than four decades since Iranians had a real choice, and nobody knows what will come out of the box if it is opened now.

What we do know is that regime change imposed by the West on countries in the Middle East – e.g. Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya – has an almost perfect record of catastrophic failure. Trump has promised too much already to do absolutely nothing about the massacre of protesters in Iran, but he should do the absolute minimum he thinks he can get away with.

GWYNNE DYER
OUR WORLD TODAY



Solar versus oil

"No country has ever invaded another to seize its solar panels or wind turbines," says the clarion call from the David Suzuki Foundation in its weekly Science Matters article. In it, they propose an examination of the merits of solar panels over oil, titled "A Global Peace – Stop burning Fossil Fuels."

It is interesting to note that, as a collective with reference to our politics, big business and other means of governing, money has a pivotal role in almost all our decisions. Not simply money and profits, but with blindfolds on, as it seems, we have chosen and rely on the most harmful ways to bring energy to our needs. It is very well known, in fact and without any reasonable debate on the matter – that power created by oil, coal and gas is the major cause of the planet's warming; that fracking for "natural"(LNG) gas may even be the cause of minor earthquakes.

Yet, to prove definitively that renewable alternatives work, according to the European Environment Agency, a whopping 50 per cent of electricity in the whole European Union (EU) was provided by renewable sources, like solar, hydrogen and wind, in 2024. The site offers charts to demonstrate the growth in the renewables industry in Europe from 2005 to 2024.

Scientists have been warning world leaders since the 1950's, outlining with real clar-

ity the consequences of using oil, etc., and we are seeing with that same clarity, the truth of their warnings over the past decade.

The approach of the piece, written by David Suzuki with contributions from Senior Editor and writer Ian Hanington, illustrates the fundamentally essential contrast between oil (read: fossil fuels) and solar panels and wind turbines (read: renewables/alternatives). They argue the fact of the politics around oil and the excuse that large sources provide for aggression across international borders. The determination to acquire large reserves of oil by any means is very much in the news at the moment. As the article makes clear, it was openly admitted that the recent invasion of Venezuela was about "seizing control of the South American country's vast reserves of heavy crude oil."

Urging an end to burning fossil fuels, from the view of countries whose oil stock might be the scene of violence or aggression, Suzuki and his team note that oil comes with violence attached, whether as crimes between nations or in the power grab of those who own or endeavour to own reserves of oil. Oil can be monopolized and controlled to the benefit of the wealthy few.

Having made these points, they add that it is impossible to "embargo or attack solar panel sources."

Countries with the need to import oil are also at the mercy of not only their supplier but at the risk of being embargoed, calling the danger of such an imbalance "corrosive dependency."

However much we cling to fossil fuels, Suzuki states firmly that the "growth of renewable energy is unstoppable."

The statistics are in to prove the claim. Shifting from "inefficient, climate-altering fuels" to cleaner energy is inevitable and proceeding rapidly.

More than 90 per cent of new energy capacity in 2024 came from renewable sources, and 91 per cent was less expensive than new fossil fuel alternatives. Global investments in renewable energy have outpaced spending on fossil fuels for the past 10 years.

It is clear that business and investors understand the rise of alternatives as the interest in fossil fuels declines. The evidence of the call for renewables over oil is evident globally. Yet, here we still are, Suzuki notes, talking about pipelines and specifically here in Canada, where one of those pipelines headed for Northwest B.C. is bound to an extremely vulnerable harbour for marine life, including salmon and whales.

According to the World Energy Investment (IEA)'s latest report, clear energy invest-

ment is surging with an unprecedented USD \$3 trillion over 2025, of which "US\$2.2 trillion will go to clean energy technologies, including renewables, grids, storage, nuclear and efficiency initiatives, signalling the accelerating dominance of the so-called 'Age of Electricity'"

Oil can be used in influencing violence, to the extreme, and it causes growingly irreparable damage to the environment, whereas the burgeoning global investment in and safety from renewables offers obvious benefits to our planet. By replacing fossil fuels with renewables like solar panels and wind turbines, which remarkably do the same job for less cost, Suzuki writes, "There's no place in this world for more pipelines, more drilling, more burning."

Humans are prone to addictions – drugs, alcohol, gambling, a long list:

We are addicted to oil as a source of energy.

But we must confront it, call it by its name as an addiction and like any addict, it might be hard to wean humanity off it. The addict's trial is to live through the separation in order to continue to exist well.

Our societies help addicts survive and live better. Now, we must help ourselves.

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COMMUNITY VOICES

Monthly Message: The peaceful January slowdown, happy New Year

Welcome to 2026! As the holiday decorations come down and routines settle back into place, many businesses experience a familiar January slowdown. After the rush of end-of-year shopping and celebrations, the New Year often brings a time of quiet and peace, one that can feel challenging, but also full of opportunity and new hope.

This seasonal pause offers businesses a chance to reset. January is an ideal time to review what worked, refine strategies, and plan thoughtfully for the months ahead. With Valentine's Day just around the corner, this slower period allows owners to prepare

promotions, refresh offerings, and reconnect with customers in meaningful ways before activity picks up again. For our food service businesses in the community, that may mean finding yourself surrounded by tiny pink and white hearts on the menu items, while others may find themselves eating those candy hearts we all say we can't stand (as our hand reaches for another in the bowl).

The New Year also arrives after what has



been, for many, a year marked by uncertainty and rapid change. That businesses are still standing, and have adapted so well, is no small achievement. Resilience has become more than a buzzword — it is a defining strength. Adapting to shifting conditions, supporting staff, and continuing to serve communities have required creativity, endurance, and optimism.

Adding to that sense of renewal, the year ahead is celebrated as the Year of the Horse.

Traditionally associated with success, determination, and forward momentum, the Horse symbolizes progress through perseverance and hard work. For businesses, it's a fitting reminder that steady effort and bold movement can carry them toward growth, even when the path is unpredictable.

While January may be quieter, it is far from unimportant. It is time to regroup, refocus, and move forward with confidence. As businesses look ahead to Valentine's Day and beyond, the New Year offers not just a fresh calendar but a renewed chance to build, strengthen, and thrive.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: Reflecting on 2025

This year has been an exciting one for Dufferin-Caledon, with many important investments and community milestones that continue to strengthen our towns and enhance local quality of life. I'm proud to share some highlights from across our Dufferin-Caledon:

Across both Dufferin and Caledon:

- The opening of Dufferin-Caledon's first MRI, which the Smart Headwaters campaign raised \$18 million to bring to our region and the province will be contributing around \$800,000 annually to help residents access diagnostic imaging and better healthcare closer to home.

- The Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT), a collaboration between Caledon OPP, Dufferin OPP and Headwaters Health Care Centre, received over \$680,000 to ensure individuals experiencing mental health or addiction crises receive the specialized services they need.
- In Dufferin:**
- The Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund (HEWSF) provided over \$8 million to Orangeville to help build approximately 3,055 new homes, supporting growth and housing availability for families.
- The Rotary Redevelopment Project re-

ceived over \$1 million from the Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund (CSRIF) to help revitalize Rotary Park into a vibrant, year-round hub for sport, leisure and community life.

In Caledon:

- Construction on Highway 413 is now underway, an important project that will reduce gridlock, improve travel times, and support local job creation.
- Caledon Community Services (CCS) received \$52,800 through the Ontario Trillium

Foundation (OTF) to develop a new intake and information referral process to better connect families with young children to essential supports.

As we look toward 2026, I am proud to serve you and work together to make Dufferin-Caledon even stronger.

Wishing you a safe, happy and healthy holiday season and all the best in 2026.

Sincerely,
Sylvia Jones, MPP
Dufferin-Caledon

Interfaith community to host potluck at Westminster

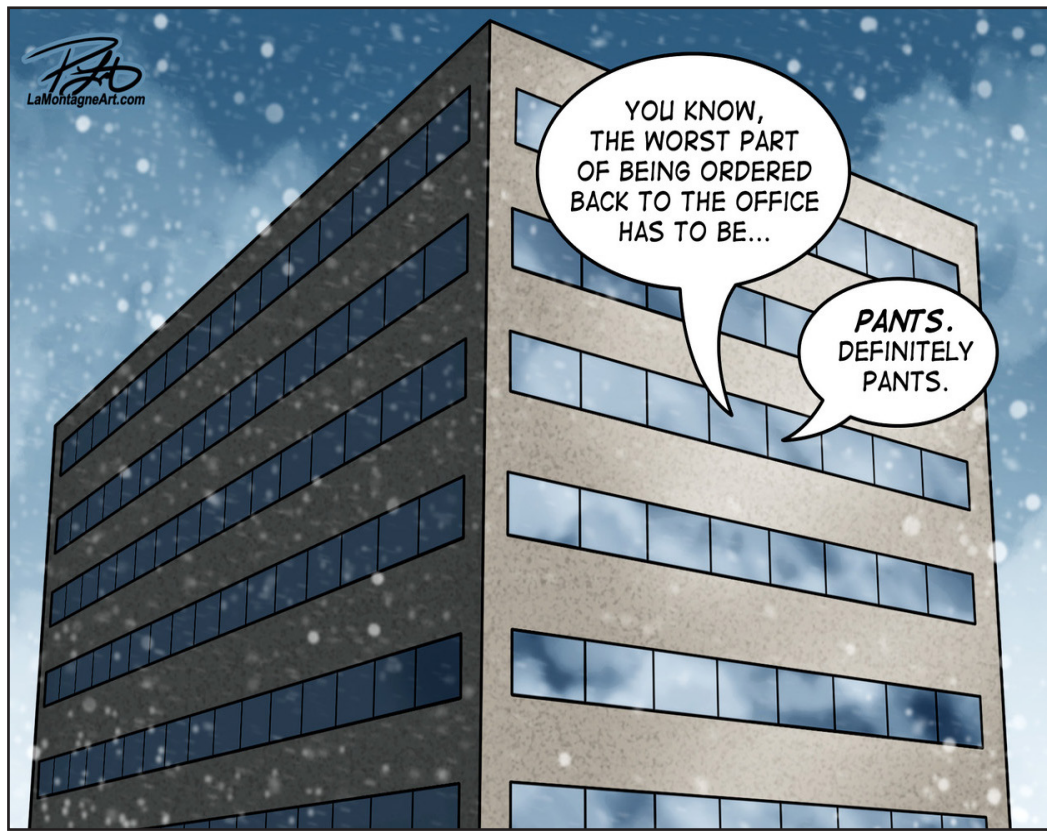
The Dufferin Interfaith community is inviting the community to a potluck dinner on Saturday Feb. 7 at 5:30 p.m. at Westminster United Church, Orangeville (247 Broadway).

World Interfaith Harmony Week (Feb. 1 to 7) is a UN-designated observance and involves thousands of activities held around the world.

Come and bring a dish to share with friends. Everyone is welcome.

Join us in a deepening conversation on what we hope for in interfaith connections in this region.

Contact Rev. Bruce Gregersen at 519-942-6314 or Shaila (Bella) Kibria at shailacarter@gmail.com for more information.



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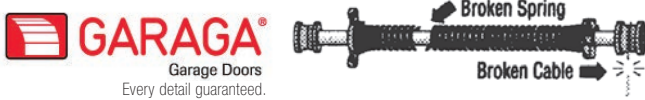
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Mono council looks to tighten regulations surrounding large home builds

It's hoped that Mono's intention to address the scourge of monster homes will gain ground in the top part of this year. The issue first came to town council's attention in October 2022 and has been on its Unfinished Council Business list, assigned to the municipality's planning department. It was feared that so-called monster homes were a threat to Mono's rural character. So council considered a draft amendment to the town's Official Plan that would add stronger wording about lot development and aesthetics.

Some of the problems with larger homes are on lots created outside the Official Plan process. Or they're built on large lots that were hoped to have been developed farther back from the roadway. Other issues with Monster Homes range from the superficial to the practical. They include such concerns as creating a higher demand for water due to large swimming pools and extra bathrooms. Development on larger lots should be minimally intrusive on Mono's rural character. Just as smaller lots of under 20 acres should be discouraged in areas with little foliage to screen them from municipal roads. Basically, the intent of the amendment is to hide a development's footprint. To prevent blemishes on Mono's picturesque landscape. Michael Dunmore, the town's CAO, said a draft report about residential Monster Homes was recently reviewed by staff. It's in the planner's hands for discussion, and Dunmore said it is hoped to be included as an agenda item during Mono's next council meeting.

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9⁹⁹ each

Hot Honey & Chicken

Gourmet Mushroom & Black Truffle Oil

Flatbreads
460 g - 515 g

CHOOSE FROM 4 VARIETIES



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