# the north dundas TIMES

Reaching by direct mail to over 5,600 homes and businesses in Winchester and area

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# Winchester in the running for HGTV's Home Town Takeover





*by Brandon Mayer*

A national television crew is seeking a town to be the subject of an upcoming show, and Winchester has a chance of being in the spotlight. HGTV's "Home Town Takeover" is a hit USA-based television show produced by a Canadian company. This year, it was announced that the show would have a Canadian version, and two local residents jumped at the opportunity.

Janie Grimes and Kelly Windle decided it was worth putting Winchester's name in the running for the series, which follows a single town as it is revitalized through renovations to important historical buildings, businesses, and public spaces. An automated response warned Grimes after her submission that not all applications receive a response due to the "large volume" of applicants. However, a much more promising response soon came.

"Janie, Kelly, and the town of Winchester," the response began. "Thank you again for your application to Home Town Takeover Canada! Your submission really caught our eye, and we're so excited to invite you to the next step in the casting process. Now we'd love to get an even better sense of your town through a video and some supporting photos."

The response gives a deadline of October 10 for the video submission, and Grimes immediately reached out to as many local stakeholders as possible to make the video endeavor a joint project. Chris Power of the North Dundas Chamber of Commerce agreed to shoot the video, and collaboration between downtown business owners ensued.

"Imagine the possibility: national recognition, revitalization, and a chance to highlight the pride we all share in Winchester," said Grimes. "But this only works if we do it together."

Since "Home Town Takeover" is a renovation and revitalization show, the focus of Winchester's entry has been on accessibility. While many would argue that Winchester is already picturesque, a large number of its businesses and public spaces are not accessible. Grimes and Windle are hoping that the show's crew could change that.

"We moved to this lovely small community in 2013, and in 2015, we purchased an existing flower shop – opening our door to the amazing village of Winchester," Windle added. "That's when my love affair with volunteering, supporting shop-local initiatives, and championing the arts truly began. Whether I'm in the shop, out on the street, or at a local event, the welcoming spirit of this community is like no other."

Grimes is emphasizing that community support for this initiative will be critical in the next casting round. She added: "It really does take a village!"

# Chesterville history walk coming October 19

The Chesterville & District Historical Society is pleased to present "Voices of the Past: Meet the people of Chesterville's Old Town Square" on Sunday October 19, between 3 and 5 p.m.

"The Chesterville and District Historical Society is excited to host this walk in Chesterville's Old Town Square. We have uncovered interesting facts and stories and hope everyone will come out and enjoy a fun and informative afternoon with us!" said CDHS Vice Chair John Pemberton.

Tours will leave the Heritage Centre every 20 minutes. Guides drawn from the local community will provide a historical commentary as you stroll down Mill Street, up George Street and return to the Heritage Centre on Victoria Street.

At several points during the walk, interpreters will provide information on events, buildings and people in the story of our town which has spanned three centuries.

Passing by the Chesterville Community Centre, learn about its story, discover a bit about the bridges in our past and the harvesting of ice from the South Nation River. A little further down Mill Street, discover a part of our electoral past or chat with George Hummel, one of our first residents and entrepreneurs.

While walking up George Street to Victoria Street, learn a bit more about our history and the contributions of people who lived in the McAvoy House and visited the McCloskey House over the last couple of centuries. After returning to the Heritage Centre, you will discover more about Chesterville's connection to the Titanic and enjoy some light refreshments.

Admission is $5.00 per person, with children under 12 free. More information is available by contacting the CDHS by email at chestervillehistoricalsociety@gmail.com and visiting their Facebook page. In the case of inclement weather forcing rescheduling, the event information will be posted on the CDHS Facebook page.







# NDDHS wins national Forged by Youth award for mini ice resurfacer project

North Dundas District High School has been named the national 2025 Forged by Youth top prize winner, earning a $15,000 award from the Canadian Welding Bureau (CWB) Foundation for an innovative project led by the Manufacturing Technology class in 2024-2025.

The winning creation is a mini ice resurfacer, repurposed from a plywood feed cart. Designed and built over two semesters, the project was completed just in time to debut at a North Dundas Rockets Junior Hockey Team playoff game last spring. Since then, the resurfacer has served as a promotional vehicle at Rockets' home games and community events. It not only drives, it also includes a drawer that can carry promotional materials.

"This project is a true example of hands-on, real-world learning," said teacher Andrew Whitton, who guided the students throughout the construction process. "The skills our students developed, from problem-solving to precision welding, are ones they'll carry with them for life. We're grateful to the CWB Foundation for supporting opportunities like this through both the award and their ongoing contributions to our program."

Grade 12 student Sam Dean, who earned his welding certification in Grade 10, was responsible for building the intricate nose cone that required five precise bends from a single piece of metal.

"I enjoyed building the Zamboni," says Dean. "Some of the measuring and figuring out the angles was difficult, but even when you don't think you're learning much, you're actually learning so much."

"It was a really cool experience to be part of something that will be seen around the community," adds Grade 12 student Brady Casselman. "Everyone had a role, and when you put it all together, you can see how much effort and skill it takes to turn an idea into a finished product."

The Forged by Youth Award, created and funded by the CWB Foundation in 2021, was established to celebrate the creativity and effort involved in secondary school welding projects and to support welding facilities across the country. These awards recognize outstanding class projects each year, with a financial award presented to the winning schools to strengthen their welding programs.

At NDDHS, the $15,000 award will go toward purchasing a new inverter welder for the school's welding room, expanding opportunities for future students.


# Local firetruck involved in traffic accident

*by Brandon Mayer*

It was an eventful day for first responders on September 29, with two tragic accidents striking within minutes of each other.

First, police officers and paramedics were responding to reports of a tractor rollover in South Dundas at approximately 6:00pm on a trail near the intersection of Caughnawaga Road and Forest Road, northwest of Morrisburg.

"Individuals had been walking on the trail when they located the tractor with an individual pinned underneath," said the OPP in a statement. "The male was pronounced deceased at the scene. He has been identified as a 79-year-old from South Dundas Township. The initial investigation by the SD&G OPP and the OPP TIME (traffic incident management enforcement) team found that the tractor had left the trail and rolled over, pinning the operator, resulting in fatal injuries."

Shortly after the incident, an ambulance was observed leaving the ambulance bay in Winchester, presumably on its way to the tractor rollover site. A firetruck left the station in Winchester shortly thereafter, presumably also on its way to the site.

Around 6:10pm, reports came in of a collision at the intersection of County Roads 38/43 and 31 between a tractor trailer and a firetruck. Firefighters were quickly on scene diverting traffic away from the intersection. Two fire vehicles were observed heading in the direction of Winchester from the South Mountain station, and there were reports of emergency vehicles heading the same way from South Dundas, though it's not clear if they were responding to the collision in Winchester, or the tractor rollover incident. Firefighters were seen talking to each other in front of the bay doors of the South Mountain fire station shortly after one of the fire vehicles left.

The next day, the Township of North Dundas posted an update on social media: "We want to assure residents that all those involved were examined and treated for impact injuries, and we are relieved to share that everyone is doing okay." The post referenced two individuals having been treated in hospital and subsequently released.

There was no update on the condition of the North Dundas firetruck as of the time of writing. A member of council confirmed that council is waiting for the police report.

# Forest fire extinguished sustainably

*by Brandon Mayer*

The forest fire that began burning in the Alvin Runnalls forest between Chesterville and Morewood on September 21 has been successfully extinguished, and the state of emergency that was triggered by the fire has been lifted.

In a video update regarding the fire, Mayor Tony Fraser emphasized that municipal water – which is a scarce resource due to the dry summer that caused drought conditions – was not used at all in extinguishing the fire. Instead, the fire was extinguished sustainably using water from a spring fed quarry, north of Morewood.

Firefighters in North Dundas are experts at using water resources sustainably. On September 19, two days before the forest fire ignited, Winchester firefighters stopped after extinguishing a grass fire and gave an ad hoc show to some local kids attending the after school program at Winchester Public School.

A short while after the firetrucks departed on that day, they returned, but one of them made an unexpected stop. It first parked on York Street and let out several firefighters before circling the block and parking at the intersection of St. Lawrence and York, where firefighters proceeded to open up a storm drain cover and attach a large hose to the firetruck, dropping the hose into the storm drain and starting up a pump.

Many onlookers were curious about the unusual activity, including pedestrians and parents who were picking up their children. In true North Dundas fashion, some firefighters walked over to the schoolyard fence and took the opportunity for some community outreach, explaining to the kids that after putting out a grassfire, they needed to refill their water.

Sustainable firefighting remains a priority in North Dundas, especially until a more abundant source of water can be accessed to feed the municipal systems in Winchester and Chesterville. The North Dundas community is lucky that its firefighters are so keen to go above and beyond.

# Progress made on Hallville park

*by Brandon Mayer*

The long-awaited Brian Telford Community Park in Hallville is showing significant construction progress, with infrastructure, a play structure, and a hockey rink in place. Delays in the construction have been a cause of concern for Hallville residents, who have been eager to see the park open since it was first announced in 2022.

The Township has provided the following timeline for further work completion:

September 26, 2025 update: Work has begun to prepare the area for new amenities, including a washroom building, splash pad, and improved rink access. Underground services and foundational work are in progress, with building assembly and interior installations to follow.

Now through late October: Site preparation, including underground plumbing and concrete pad work.

December: Washroom building assembled on-site and area to be prepped for use of rink.

January – spring: Plumbing, electrical, and mechanical installations, followed by commissioning of splash pad components.

June: Walkways and parking lots to be completed as we can proceed with asphalt work.

# 841 million reasons

*by Brandon Mayer*

Canada Post workers being on strike is one of the dumbest things that has happened in 2025 – and it has been a pretty fertile year for dumbness. Unions are seriously getting out of control. Unionized workers used to go on strike to pressure employers to install safety equipment, rescind 7 day work weeks, and pay wages that allowed for the purchase of the most basic necessities. Before worker protections, unions gave workers the power they needed to be treated with at least some decency at work. Unions kept workers safe(er), and helped prevent employers from taking advantage of them.

Now, some unions are an absolute menace. They twist facts into outright lies, and spew them in intentionally provocative ways. Many unions represent the most already-privileged workers, and hold the daily lives of ordinary people and businesses hostage so that they can push for even greater benefits for their workers. While there are still some unions that have value and are realistic in their respective fights, other unions are a more serious problem to the economy than we acknowledge, and it's time we start talking about it.

Canada Post workers should not be demanding anything besides a simple and modest cost of living raise right now. Canada Post can't even afford to give them that, but I support the idea that every worker should be able to rely on a salary that is adjusted to reflect the ever-increasing cost of necessities. Minimum wage workers get cost of living raises – why not everyone else? That said, any smart Canada Post worker wouldn't even be asking for a cost of living raise right now. The smart ones should be keeping their mouths shut and hoping to stay employed.

Canada Post is not a viable business anymore. It's an important service, rooted in centuries-old infrastructure that should not be allowed to die – but financially, something has to change. As a small business owner, I rely on Canada Post. As you likely know, your bi-weekly news is delivered to you for free thanks to the advertising dollars of local businesses. That is my business model. Many businesses pay me via a cheque in the mail – I do not receive those payments during the strike, nor can I mail invoices to those who prefer to stay off the internet. And then there is the elephant in the room – I can't mail out the ND Times during a postal strike!

If you're holding a physical copy of this paper, you either found it on your doorstep or at the end of your driveway, or you picked it up from a local store. During postal strikes, I love employing local kids to deliver the papers in the populated areas, with our employee Sarah filling in the delivery gaps for the routes that are harder to get covered. I myself was a "paper boy" for 3 years in my youth, and it's awesome to be able to provide that stepping stone into the employment world for today's young people. However, there are drawbacks. It is not feasible to hand-deliver copies to rural homes, so rural dwellers must pick up their copy in stores. Also, mail is secure – protected from the elements and often under lock and key until the resident retrieves it. Leaving a paper on an uncovered doorstep on a rainy, windy day is not my number one delivery choice as a newspaper owner. The other aspect is financial – while I can get a few thousand copies of the ND Times out the old fashioned way for around the same cost as I pay the post office, I am taxed on the money that I pay the kids – they are too young to legally work, and therefore it's an informal relationship – the advertising revenue that ultimately is withdrawn from my business account and paid to the kids is shown on my quarterly report as profit (which I pay healthy taxes on), since I cannot assign it as an expense.

In summary – I need Canada Post. I admit that. The North Dundas Times pays Canada Post just shy of $25,000 a year to deliver news to North Dundas residents. Yes, it's a lot, and yes, it's worth it. I respect what Canada Post workers do. I have had nothing but pleasant interactions with the workers at the Winchester and South Mountain post offices where I routinely do business. I actually enjoy visiting the post office because of the friendly service. If the money was in the budget, I would absolutely support raises and increased job benefits for postal workers. But this latest strike isn't just about wages – it's about the proposed ending of door-to-door mail for the minority of Canadians who still get it. Why shouldn't mail delivery be fair across the board? The move makes total sense.

Here is the reality: Canada Post lost about $841 million in 2024. In other words, every man, woman, and child in Canada would have to give Canada Post a $20 bill for them to break even on last year's finances. And that's just a single operating year! Years leading up to 2024 have been similarly bad, and 2025 is on track to be even worse. To understand the scope of Canada Post's financial crisis, consider that if I were to pay Canada Post $150,000 per copy to deliver a full issue of the Times, it wouldn't quite wipe out the crown corporation's debt for the year 2024 alone! Something isn't working, and there are about 841 million reasons why postal workers should be thankful to have a job, rather than turning down $1,000 signing bonuses and pushing for benefits they know their employer cannot afford.

During the union's strike, their financially stricken employer loses even more money. Forget biting the hand that feeds them – this is akin to chopping it off entirely. It's time for unions to grow up and be realistic in their demands. The wage is much lower in the unemployment line.

# September 24 council meeting

*by Brandon Mayer*

The regularly scheduled council meeting for September took place on September 24, opening with comments from Mayor Tony Fraser regarding the bog fire in the Alvin Runnalls Forest that had begun burning a few days prior to the meeting. The fire has since been extinguished.

The first item on the agenda was an update from the Ontario Provincial Police, provided by Inspector Marc Hemmerick. The Inspector explained that OPP officers have been encouraged in the last few years to participate in community engagement between calls. The Winchester District Memorial Hospital has been a popular engagement spot due to its close proximity to the Winchester police station. The South Mountain Fair is consistently another popular place for officers to engage positively with the public, and officers have increased their community outreach presence in local schools as well.

Council members asked questions and engaged in discussion about community safety priorities with Inspector Hemmerick. Councillor Matthew Uhrig asked about local crime trends, with rural property crimes being a top concern and priority. The Inspector encouraged reports to the non-emergency police line for non-emergencies, pointing out that multiple reports from different residents can often be pieced together to solve crimes. Regarding traffic concerns, Mayor Fraser encouraged residents to record and report time and incident information when they observe a traffic offense.

The next item on the agenda was a presentation from Arnold Scheerder of the Dundas County Hospice. Scheerder asked council for a commitment of a $3,000 annual donation for a period of 5 years to support its equipment loan program. Council members were supportive of the request and agreed to consider it at budget time.

A presentation from Bonnie Bishop and Rob Hunter of the Ontario SPCA came next. Bishop's presentation highlighted an "animal welfare crisis developing throughout the province", as well as other issues relevant to North Dundas, such as the overpopulation of stray animals. The OSPCA will be opening a new Animal Centre and Veterinary Clinic in 2027, which will serve the broader Cornwall – SD&G – Prescott & Russell area. With a total cost of $8 million, half of which will be covered by philanthropic contributions, the OSPCA has a fundraising goal of $4 million for the project. Council was asked for a commitment of $15,000 payable as $3,000 per year for 5 years. Council members were once again supportive of the request.

The next presentation came from Bill Smirle, who provided a routine update on the recent activities of South Nation Conservation. He discussed the camps and programs that SNC provides for local children in the summer months, and also talked about the very dry summer that led to a level 3 low water advisory and drought conditions in the area.

An update to the officers and committees bylaw was next on the agenda. Marcus Hewitt was newly appointed as the Township's Director of Finance/Treasurer on September 15. A significant revelation in the agenda item is that Meaghan Meerburg's employment with the Township has ended. Meerburg was the Township's Director of Recreation and Culture, and the circumstances surrounding the end of her employment are not known. She attended the August 27 meeting and presented agenda items from her department as usual, with no announcement from the Township regarding the end of her employment sometime between the August and September council meetings.

Council next heard that Township staff are beginning preparations for the 2026 municipal budget. Council members are tasked with considering what the municipal priorities should be for the next budget. Deputy Mayor Theresa Bergeron spoke up to express frustration that North Dundas seems to be getting left behind when it comes to being awarded government grants for critical projects such as arena upgrades, road improvements and water infrastructure upgrades. She provided examples of other municipalities that have received significant funding from the same grants for which North Dundas has been rejected, and posited that the Township may need professional consultation help to more successful with grant applications. In the subsequent agenda item, council members approved a $5,000 budget increase for corporate training initiatives for Township staff.

Next on the agenda, council learned that North Dundas' first Truth and Reconciliation event held in Morewood on September 27 was anticipating a budget shortfall of between $3,000 and $5,000. Council was asked to commit up to $5,000 of public funds to cover any shortfall. Council members agreed that Truth and Reconciliation is important, and approved the request.

Several items were subsequently quickly discussed and passed. The Chesterville derby was declared a municipally significant event to permit the selling of alcohol. Repair work to the Winchester United Church was approved – council's approval was required under the Ontario Heritage Act because the church is designated as a historic building. A community improvement loan of $17,000 for B&G Automotive was also approved.

As happens annually, council was asked to make a decision on next year's water and sewer rate model for Winchester and Chesterville ahead of considerations for next year's budget. Option 1, which was recommended by Township staff, would see the status quo maintained, with water rates comprising of a base charge plus a charge per cubic metre of water used, and separate wastewater rates. Deputy Mayor Bergeron recommended a different model that would involve reducing the initial capital charge to encourage new development, instead collecting some of that revenue in the form of increased water use rates. When Mayor Fraser called the vote on the matter, there was hesitation in the council members, causing the Mayor to read the motion again. The vote then resulted in a tie, with Councillors Matthew Uhrig and Gary Annable voting in favour of the motion, and Deputy Mayor Bergeron and Councillor John Lennox voting against it. The tie resulted in the Mayor having to choose, and he voted in favour of option 1, passing the motion.

Council next passed a motion showing its support for updates to the water and sewer bylaw to allow stricter water controls, among other provisions. One such provision is the installation of flow meters and flow control devices for large water users, so that water use by these users – such as Lactalis – could be restricted to a previously agreed level during periods of drought. Another provision would be the allowance of stricter water restrictions on residential users in times of drought or water crises.

The meeting ended with a closed session portion to discuss the hiring of a new Facilities Manager. The next meeting will take place on October 22.



the north dundas TIMES

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## LOVE AND FAITH
# In need of grace

*by Pastor Scott Sayers*
*Nationside Pentecostal Church*

I don't want to shock or disappoint anyone today – especially those who read this column regularly – but I have a confession to make: I'm not perfect. At times, I've been known to say or do things that may ruffle feathers or even cause offense. The truth is, I still need grace.

That word – grace – is one we use often, but do we truly understand our need for it? I am human, vulnerable to weakness, and open to mistakes. Left on my own, I am subject to failure. And I must tell you, the same is true for every one of us. None of us are perfect.

The Bible says it plainly. Psalm 14 and Psalm 53 remind us, "There is none who does good, no, not one." The Apostle Paul echoes this in Romans 3: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." These are not mere poetic words – they are divine truth. Sin is universal, and therefore, so is our need for grace.

Grace, in its simplest form, is God's favor and kindness toward us, even though we do not deserve it. Grace is God giving us blessings instead of judgment. He provides beauty in a broken world, protection in unseen dangers, and provision often just in time. Theologians call these "common graces," poured out on all people, even those who do not acknowledge Him.

But there is a deeper grace: saving grace. This is not just God making life easier – it is God redeeming us when we were utterly lost. It is God seeking out prodigals, restoring the broken, and offering forgiveness through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Scripture gives us vivid portraits of this grace. David sinned terribly, yet was forgiven. Peter denied Christ, yet was restored. Paul persecuted the church, yet was transformed. The prodigal son was embraced by his father before he could even finish his apology. The woman at the well, the adulterous woman, Zacchaeus the cheat, and the paralytic – all received grace.

These are not just their stories; they are ours. Like them, we stand in desperate need of God's mercy. Ephesians 2 tells us: "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins… but because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ – it is by grace you have been saved."

Grace saves us. Grace sustains us daily. And though it is free to us, it cost Christ everything. It looks like nails in His hands, a crown of thorns, and a cross that bore our shame.

Friend, His grace is enough – enough for them, enough for me, and enough for you. But here is the key: to truly receive God's grace, we must humble ourselves. Pride closes the door to mercy, but humility opens it wide. Grace is freely given, but only the humble will ever embrace it.

Do you need God's grace in your life? Simply humble yourself before the Lord and ask Him to pour His grace into your heart today.

# Tid bit musings

*by Elva Patterson Rutters RSSW*

Being held hostage is no walk in the park on a balmy day! Yet repeatedly, strikes continue to hold people hostage in many ways. Unions had their place when backing innocent workers, but the pendulum swung to the complete opposite, now simply protecting the worker from any accountability, irresponsibility, deviance or wrongdoing. History demonstrates that the eventual consequence of strikes ends up in the closing of businesses. Is the Postal Strike engineering the demise of postal services? How does one balance the good with the bad?

Before people elect to strike, can we not mandate they present a workable plan of operations before the strike ensues? Yesterday's prices at today's wages is an obsolete reality. When wages increase, items and taxes increase. Nothing is gained. How do you see the manifestation of your demands being implemented while maintaining respect and dignity to all parties? Wanting different conditions means developing an applicable plan of action. Are you cognizant of the related increase in costs to accommodate your desires? Perhaps having the overseers of strikers and the strikers compose a list of pros and cons of their actions would render some sensibility and awareness of exactly who is being affected.

The horrendous stress created when you can't pay your bills or buy food because your cheque did not arrive, not only strains food banks but affects your credit rating. Those without computers are socially and economically isolated. It could be interpreted as elder abuse or discrimination. To every action there is a corresponding consequence. Some newspapers are not delivered so community support/events are minimized. That affects everyone. It is getting close to putting on the heat in our homes – recycled newspapers and flyers can make good fire starters, but only when people receive them!

To all affected by this recent strike in any fashion, speak up to voice your concerns and solutions. Target your member of parliament and Union representatives to implement strategies for problem solving before we the people are held hostage. To permit is to promote. Retaliation for voicing your concern should not make you a victim of harassment. If it does, report the offenders. Since the squeaky wheel gets the grease, lets unify in compromise, and solutions. Your idea might just be the ticket for effective, economical, and energizing change.



# The Food Corner

*by Paul Cormier, Salamanders of Kemptville*

I've provided you with several pumpkin recipes over the years. So, since it's The Month of the Pumpkin, it's time to give you another, this one for some delicious muffins. Pumpkin Muffins go really well in the children's lunch box or with coffee or tea in the morning before you slip off to work.

**Pumpkin Muffins**

***Ingredients***

2 cups of flour
2/3 cup of golden brown sugar and 1/3 cup of white granulated sugar
1 tablespoon of baking powder
1 teaspoon each of salt and ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon each of baking soda and ground ginger
½ cup of melted butter
1/3 cup of buttermilk
½ cup of canned pumpkin
2 eggs, beaten

***Preparation***

Heat your oven to 375F
Combine the flour, sugars, baking powder and soda, spices and salt in a large bowl. In another bowl, mix the butter, buttermilk, pumpkin and eggs. Combine the dry with the wet ingredients.Spoon the resulting batter into a muffin pan lined with paper muffin cups. Bake for 20 minutes until golden
As usual, you can test for doneness by inserting a toothpick to see if it comes out clean. Once done, you should cool your muffins for at least 10 minutes, then either serve warm with room temperature butter or place in a closed container for use within a few days. These muffins also freeze nicely in a sealed bag for enjoying all through the winter months.

*This is the comfort food season, what with Thanksgiving and all. Stay well and keep those mails coming to Paul at pcormier@ranaprocess.com.*

# Community Food Share: Breaking down barriers to access

*by Lynsay Rainey*

Food insecurity is a reality for many households across our region, and it does not discriminate. It can affect families, seniors, and individuals regardless of their employment status or background. There is a widespread misconception that food banks exist solely for people receiving government assistance, when in fact they support anyone facing food insecurity. In truth, Community Food Share exists to support any resident who is facing difficulty putting food on the table.

Why People Use a Food Bank

The reasons for accessing a food bank are diverse. For some, it may be the rising cost of groceries combined with rent or mortgage payments. For others, it could be an unexpected job loss, medical expense, or the challenges of living on a fixed income. Many of the people we see are working full-time but still find that their income does not stretch far enough to cover basic needs.

Food insecurity is not a reflection of personal failure. It is the result of economic pressures that can impact anyone at any time. By acknowledging this, we begin to reduce the stigma that often prevents people from reaching out for help when they need it most.

A Dignified Approach to Food Support

At Community Food Share, we know that asking for help can be difficult. That's why we have moved away from the traditional pre-packed hamper system and adopted a shopping-style approach. This allows clients to choose their food in a setting designed to promote dignity, choice, and inclusion.

Individuals and families are free to select from fresh, frozen, and non-perishable items that work best for their household. A family of one will leave with about 35 pounds of food which is a 5–7 day supply, while larger households receive more.

By offering client choice, we give people the dignity of deciding what food works best for their household.

A Community Effort

Last year alone, Community Food Share provided food support through more than 6,600 visits across North Dundas, South Dundas, and South Stormont. Our work is only possible thanks to the generosity of local donors, businesses, farmers, volunteers, and partners. Every dollar, every food drive, and every hour of volunteer time contributes directly to ensuring that no one in our community has to face hunger alone.

Accessing support is simple. Clients only need to call and make an appointment, provide photo ID and proof of address. Services are available by appointment at our Morrisburg, Winchester, and Finch locations. Visit www.communityfoodshare.ca to learn more.

Together, we are breaking down barriers to access and building a stronger, more compassionate community where everyone belongs.

# CHURCH DIRECTORY

**Solomon' Porch Nationside Pentecostal**
Box 292 Chesterville 613-448-2272
Pastor Scott Sayers. Sunday Service: 10:30 am.at The Nelson LaPrade Centre
*nationsidepentecostalchurch.ca*
**Southgate Winchester**
539 Main St, Winchester 613-258-6123
Sunday Service: 10:00 am. Kids program for toddlers - Gr 6. The Pulse Youth (Gr 6 -12) bi-weekly on Fridays at 7pm. Play Group (babies to preschool) Wednesdays at 10am. Ladies Group bi-monthly. Contact the church office for more info.
*https://southgatechurch.com/*
**The Gathering House**
2 Water St. Chesterville 613-448-1758
10:00am Sunday Service. Nursery and Sunday school available for children. Adult Bible studies throughout the week. STEM program Wednesday at 6:45pm. Youth Group Thursday at 7:00pm and HUB(youth drop-in) Friday at 7:00pm. Cafe Mon. & Fri. 9am - 4pm and Wed. 12 - 4pm *check FB for updated hours/events
*www.gatheringhouse.ca*
**Winchester Pastoral Charge**
**Winchester United/Hope Springs United Church**
Sunday Services
9:30 a.m. at Hope Springs United Church
11:00 a.m. at Winchester United Church
*www.winchesterunited.ca*
**Winchester Baptist Church**
486 Main St. Winchester 343-649-2204
Sunday Services: 11:00 am. (hymn sing 10:45). "Snack and chat" (lunch) after service, last Sunday each month.
*https://m.facebook.com/groups/WinchesterBaptistOnt/*
**Inkerman Wesleyan**
11486 Queen St. Inkerman 613-989-5312
Email: antony.kiar@gmail.com
Pastor: Tony Kiar
Sunday Service: 10:30 AM
**St. Clare's Anglican Church**
2530 Falcone Lane Winchester
613 774-2236
Sunday Service: 10:00 AM
St. Clare's Anglican Church is on Facebook: "The Anglican Parish of North Dundas at St. Clare's"And on YouTube: "St. Clare's Anglican Church (Anglican Parish of North Dundas)" *www.stclaresanglican.ca info@StClaresAnglican.ca*
**Christ Church United**
5 Casselman St., Chesterville 613-448-2532
Sunday Service at 10:30 a.m.
Rev. Blair Paterson
*ccuchesterville@gmail.com*
**PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**
St. Andrew's - 34 Mill Street, Chesterville 9:00am
St. Paul's - 517 Main Street, Winchester 10:00am
Morewood - 13723 County Rd 13, Morewood 11:15am
Minister, Rev. Ed Charlton -
*edcharlton12@gmail.com*
**St Mary's of the Presentation Catholic Church**
10 Church St. Chesterville, Father Oliver Wekesa. Sunday Service and Children's Liturgy 11:00 am. St Daniels in South Mountain Saturday 5:00pm
*stmaryofthepresentationparish.ca*
**Mountain-South Mountain United Church**
10535 County Rd. 3, South Mountain, Ont. (613) 989-2825 Sunday Service 9:30 a.m. FB Page: 4 United Churches Friends and Family (South Mountain-Hallville Pastoral Charge)
*smhpasch@gmail.com www.4unitedchurches.ca*

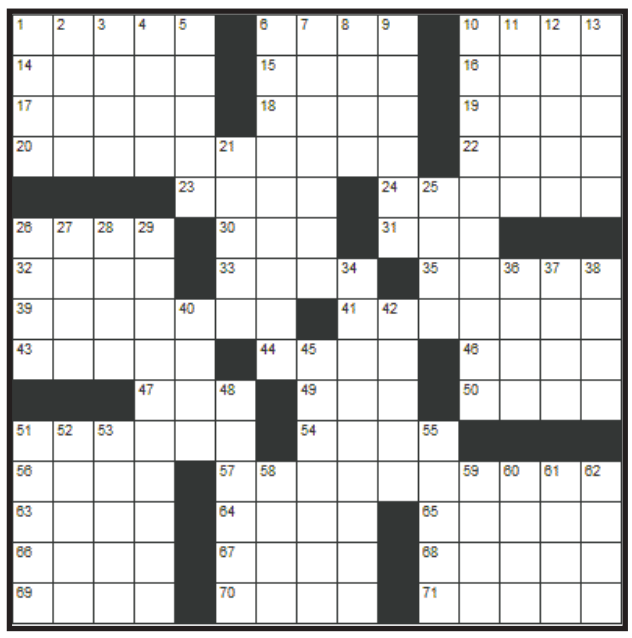
# COMMUNITY EVENTS

## RECURRING EVENTS

**Winchester Open Mic Cafe**
Sundays, 2pm to 5pm The Old Town Hall, 478 Main Street,
Winchester. Free, accessible, everyone welcome.
**EUCHRE** at Pierce's Corners (aka the Marlborough Community Centre) at 3048 Pierce Road on Tuesday, February 18, March 4, 18, April 1, 15, 29, May 13 and 27. Registration starts at 6:00 p.m., play starts at 6:30 p.m. . Contact Debi at debiar@ymail.com
**BID EUCHRE** at Winchester Legion Branch 108 every Friday afternoon in the veteran's lounge. Registration is 12:30, play starts at 12:45. Accessible access at north entrance. Everyone welcome!. Contact cyndiesummers@gmail.com
**The Kemptville Male Choir**
Weekly practices are held every Tuesday evening 7.00pm - 9.00pm at St John's United Church Kemptville,400 Prescott St, Kemptville, ON. We are seeking men of all ages to join us. Note:- Although practices take place at the United Church we are not the actual church choir, which is a mixed one made up of congregation members.
Contacts:John Baldwin 613-258-0835 or Chris Morgan 613-258-7559



# CROSSWORD



***ACROSS***
1. Get together
6. Acid related to gout
10. Coarse file
14. Fruit of the oak tree
15. Adopted son of Claudius
16. Always
17. Yell
18. Assert
19. Minute opening
20. Gloominess
22. Equips
23. Harness part
24. Wears away
26. Assist
30. Large flightless bird
31. Darjeeling or oolong
32. District
33. Scene
35. Anamgram of "Scare"
39. Curl of hair
41. Paving material
43. Mass communication industry
44. English royal house
46. Celtic language
47. North-northwest
49. Fraternity letter
50. Regard
51. Wear away
54. Legal wrong
56. Caprine animal
57. In an unfruitful manner
63. Hindu princess
64. Places for experiments
65. Cowboy sport
66. Therefore
67. Tall woody plant
68. Not younger
69. Anagram of "Need"
70. Not his
71. Cache

***DOWN***
1. A body of matter
2. Reflected sound
3. Chamber
4. Food
5. Go inside
6. Consensus
7. Income
8. Angers
9. Body-shaping garment
10. Expressed criticism
11. Evade
12. Durable fabric
13. Newspapers
21. Female ruff
25. Harvest
26. Do damage to
27. A Great Lake
28. Extend credit
29. System of numbering pages
34. Veterans
36. Scarce
37. Otherwise
38. Flower stalk
40. Territory 42. By-pass
45. Month after September
48. Fortune
51. Concur
52. Plank
53. Scope
55. Novices
58. Naked
59. Electrical unit
60. Poi source
61. Lascivious look
62. Bygone era

***Solutions to last week's Sudoku***

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 8 | 6 | 3 | 9 |
| 6 | 3 | 8 | 5 | 9 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 1 |
| 4 | 9 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 5 | 8 |
| 8 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 7 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 6 |
| 1 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 8 | 7 |
| 7 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| 2 | 1 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 9 | 5 |
| 3 | 5 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 9 | 4 | 6 | 2 |
| 9 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 7 | 3 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 8 | 6 | 9 | 5 | 7 |
| 8 | 7 | 2 | 5 | 9 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 4 |
| 9 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 3 |
| 3 | 4 | 9 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 8 | 1 |
| 1 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 8 | 3 | 9 | 6 |
| 6 | 8 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 2 | 4 | 5 |
| 7 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 8 |
| 5 | 9 | 4 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| 2 | 6 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 9 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | 2 | 6 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 7 |
| 7 | 8 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 4 | 9 | 3 |
| 9 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 6 |
| 1 | 9 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| 5 | 4 | 8 | 3 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 1 |
| 3 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 9 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 6 | 5 |
| 6 | 7 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 8 | 4 |
| 8 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 9 | 3 | 7 | 2 |

Easy

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 7 | | | | | | 9 |
| | | | | | 6 | 1 | | |
| 9 | 3 | | | | 7 | | 8 | |
| | | 2 | | 1 | | | 9 | 6 |
| | | | 8 | | | | 1 | |
| 3 | | | | | 5 | 7 | | |
| | 4 | | 3 | 7 | 9 | | | 5 |
| 6 | | 8 | | 4 | | 3 | | |
| | 5 | | | | | | 2 | |

Medium

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 1 | | | | 6 |
| | | | | | | | 9 | |
| 5 | 6 | | | | | | | |
| | | | 8 | | | | | 2 |
| 9 | | | | | | 6 | | 1 |
| | | 1 | | | 2 | | 7 | 3 |
| 6 | | | | | | 8 | | |
| 7 | | | 4 | | 8 | | | |
| | 4 | 2 | 6 | 7 | | | | |

Hard

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 9 | | 5 | | 3 | | | 4 |
| | | | | 4 | | 1 | | |
| | | 1 | | | | 2 | | |
| 2 | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | | | | 6 | | | | 5 |
| | | | | 7 | | 8 | | |
| | | | | | | 7 | | |
| 3 | | | | 9 | 6 | | | |
| | 6 | 5 | 1 | | | | | 2 |

Solution to last week's Crossword

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | R | E | N | A | | M | A | S | T | | S | C | O | W |
| C | A | M | E | L | | I | N | C | H | | P | A | C | E |
| T | R | I | A | L | | S | T | A | R | | O | M | E | N |
| S | E | R | P | E | N | T | I | N | E | | N | E | A | T |
| | | | | G | A | Y | | | A | R | S | O | N | |
| C | H | E | R | R | Y | | P | A | T | I | O | | | |
| R | O | D | E | O | | S | A | G | E | B | R | U | S | H |
| E | R | I | S | | O | N | I | O | N | | I | N | T | O |
| E | N | T | O | M | B | I | N | G | | S | N | A | I | L |
| | | | L | I | S | P | S | | F | I | G | U | R | E |
| | C | R | U | D | E | | | E | L | M | | | | |
| C | H | A | T | | S | A | N | G | U | I | N | I | T | Y |
| L | I | I | I | | S | E | A | R | | L | A | M | I | A |
| A | L | S | O | | E | R | I | E | | A | P | P | L | Y |
| M | I | E | N | | S | O | F | T | | R | E | S | T | S |

## Baldwin's Birds

# It's an upside down world

The loud honking of the Canada geese at the end of my road, in the Kemptville Creek, is heralding the fact that yet another migration period is upon us. How quickly time seems to fly and for the second time this year we get to see hundreds, if not thousands, of birds making their pilgrimage either south, or north, to pastures new! It never fails to amaze me that they do this and can travel such mind boggling distances, not just once in a lifetime, but maybe two or three times.

I have just looked up what the average life of a Canada Goose is and it really surprised me. It seems that the average life span of a Canada goose is 10-25 years. There are even reports of geese living more than 30 plus years in the wild. That makes their lifetime twice yearly travels to and fro to be quite a fantastic number, which is amazing!

Coming back to our garden birds and their activities, I am at a bit of a loss at the moment on what to write about, but many of my regulars are still coming to visit, such as the Nuthatches, particularly the White Breasted variety, which never fail to be very impressive once they do. The Chickadees are always a constant, as are the Mourning Doves, Crows and Rock Pigeons and the Downy & Hairy Woodpeckers, but until the really cold weather comes back to be with us, for the remaining months of this year and into early next year, I guess we won't be seeing too much exciting happening. Maybe we shall be able to see a few more varieties once the leaves have really started to fall, but I don't really want to dwell too much on that depressing thought! Stay safe and well.

*Cheers,*
*John Baldwin*

## Common Sense Health

Diana Gifford-Jones

# How to protect against uterine cancer

Why do so many women ignore one of the most obvious warning signs of uterine cancer? It's a cancer that usually announces itself early. But women wait, or brush off the warning signs, and that allows the disease to take hold.

Uterine cancer, also called endometrial cancer, is not rare. And it can strike anyone. Anne Bancroft, the Oscar-winning actress best known as Mrs. Robinson in The Graduate, died of this disease. She never spoke publicly about her illness, a missed opportunity to build greater awareness. And where are the public health campaigns to prevent it? Uterine cancer needs a champion to yell the warning signs from the rooftops.

Each year, thousands of women in Canada and tens of thousands in the U.S. are diagnosed. And the numbers are climbing. Yes, we're living longer. But there's another culprit: obesity. You may not know this, but in addition to the ovaries, fat tissues actively produce estrogen. Too much estrogen is like fertilizer that keeps making the lining of the uterus grow. Research shows obesity can triple the risk.

A recent study points to another concern. Researchers found that women who frequently use chemical hair straighteners have more than double the risk of developing uterine cancer. Why? Possibly because of hormone-disrupting chemicals absorb through the scalp. Are Black women, who use these products most frequently, advised by their salons of this danger?

Other risks are harder to avoid. Women who start menstruating early, or reach menopause late, spend more years with estrogen acting on the uterus. Estrogen itself isn't the enemy. It's essential for reproduction. Each month it makes the uterine lining thicken for a possible pregnancy. Progesterone usually balances this growth, but when it's absent or insufficient, the lining can grow too thick or irregularly. Over time, this increases the chance that abnormal cells will form, and some can become cancerous.

That's why women who never have children, or who don't breastfeed, are at higher risk. Pregnancy and breastfeeding both give the uterus a long holiday from estrogen. It's also why hormone therapy after menopause must be handled carefully. Estrogen on its own increases risk, but combined with progesterone, it can be safe. Other risks, like taking tamoxifen for breast cancer, or inheriting genetic conditions such as Lynch syndrome, can't be avoided, but they do mean vigilance is even more important.

Uterine cancer is one of the cancers that almost always sends a signal. The red flag is bleeding. Before menopause, if periods suddenly change, get heavier, or if bleeding happens between cycles, don't let anyone brush off the incident. After menopause, even a single spot of blood is abnormal.

Diagnosis isn't complicated. An ultrasound can measure the thickness of the uterine lining. But the most reliable test is a biopsy, done in a quick office procedure. If the results aren't clear and bleeding continues, more investigation is needed. This is where women must be their own advocates. Too many walk away reassured when they shouldn't.

Caught early, uterine cancer is highly curable. Surgery to remove the uterus, sometimes along with the fallopian tubes and ovaries, is often enough. If the cancer is more advanced, radiation or chemotherapy may follow. For younger women who want children, hormone therapy can sometimes delay surgery. But the key is catching the cancer before it spreads.

Don't wait for someone to make uterine cancer their cause célèbre before getting active with prevention and early detection. Maintain a healthy weight. Don't let strong chemicals seep into your scalp. And above all, never ignore abnormal bleeding – before or after menopause – not even one drop.

This column offers general health and wellness, not personal medical advice. Visit www.docgiff.com to learn more. For comments, diana@docgiff.com. Follow on Instagram @diana_gifford_jones

# New UCDSB trustee appointed

*Chair of the Board Jamie Schoular shaking the hand of new Trustee Todd Robertson*

Trustees with the Upper Canada District School Board (UCDSB) met on Wednesday, Oct. 1, 2025. Prior to the meeting, the Board of Trustees interviewed three trustee candidates to replace Carole Dufort who stepped down from her role as trustee in June.

After each candidate was interviewed, Trustees held a private vote. Todd Robertson was the successful candidate and was sworn in during the meeting, immediately joining Trustees at the board table.

Robertson has had a 36-year career working for the Province of Ontario in various roles. He currently serves as the Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors for Leeds, Lanark and Grenville Addictions and Mental Health, as an appointed Community Member of the Leeds County OPP Police Service Board, and as a member of the Committee of Adjustment for the Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands.

*Strong Financial Forecast*

Jeremy Hobbs, UCDSB Chief Business Officer and Treasurer, presented the first financial forecast of 2025-26 to the Board of Trustees. The 2025-26 budget, which was approved by trustees in June, projected revenues of $470.4 million and expenses of $470 million for compliance purposes, resulting in a projected year-end surplus of $0.4 million for compliance purposes.

Hobbs reported that this first financial forecast projects revenues of $472.7 million and expenses of $472.2 million for compliance purposes, resulting in a minor change to the projected in-year surplus of $0.5 million.

Hobbs said that while the overall surplus projection remains relatively stable, both funding levels and related expenses have changed since trustees passed the 2025-26 budget in June. The primary factor driving these changes is projected increases in enrolment. This additional revenue is largely offset by corresponding expenses.

The next formal financial forecast will be provided in January 2026.

## EYE ON POLITICS
# Talks continue between Canada and the USA

*by Kerry Turner*

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney won the country's election fueled by US President Donald Trump's annexation threats and trade war, and while his government has made efforts to improve relations ahead of a review of the free trade deal next year, there has been little to show for it. More than 75% of Canada's exports go to the U.S., and Canada recently dropped many of its retaliatory tariffs to match U.S. tariff exemptions for goods covered under the United States-Mexico-Canada trade pact, but Trump continues to remain unappeased.

What comes next might largely occur behind closed doors as Carney is scheduled to visit Washington to meet Trump next week, where trade and tariff issues are expected to dominate the agenda. While Trump continues to prefer showboating during joint press opportunities, Canada has been attempting to hold talks for months with the U.S. on a new economic and security relationship, with the aim of removing all U.S. tariffs on Canadian goods. It is relatively safe to say those talks have continued to stall.

Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre took aim at Carney's dealings on tariffs, saying "everywhere Mark Carney goes, we get hit with higher tariffs." Poilievre says media reports stating he was criticizing Carney's travels were misled – and he was actually criticizing the results. "(Carney) goes to Washington, gets wonderful, gushing media coverage. What's the result? The Americans double tariffs on Canada. He goes to Europe – twice to the U.K. – and what do they do? Lock in the blockade against Canadian beef production," Poilievre said.

Carney said last month on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly that in trade negotiations with the U.S. many remaining issues would move to a forthcoming review of the United States-Mexico-Canada trade agreement. "Canada and the U.S. each launched consultations last month that will inform preparations for the first joint review of (USMCA)," Carney's office said in its statement Friday. "The prime minister's working visit will focus on shared priorities in a new economic and security relationship between Canada and the U.S."

Elsewhere at the General Assembly, Foreign Minister Anita Anand took a cautious, diplomatic approach at the UN, pushing back against U.S. isolationism while defending Canada's trade ties. Trump has continued to isolate Canadians, and Anand delivered gentle pushback on Monday when she told the General Assembly that, "multilateralism remains our best hope to address global challenges rather than rejecting international norms." Switching to Canada's second official language, French, she added, "Today, the multilateral system is threatened and some countries are turning toward protectionism and unilateralism." Canada continues to balance on the tight rope of Trump's diplomatic approach to international relations, as it seeks to redefine where we fit in globally in a political climate that doesn't seem to be going anywhere.

Daniel Béland, a political science professor at McGill University in Montreal further elaborated that, "The emphasis on both resilience and multilateralism can be understood as a response to the Trump White House's current trade and foreign policies... the growing level of uncertainty on the global stage is triggering a rethinking of the country's global role in the era of Trump 2.0."

The president was speaking about his "Golden Dome" missile defence plans in front of military officials in Virginia last week, who had been abruptly summoned to Quantico, near Washington. Trump told the assembly that "Canada called" a few weeks ago to ask to be part of the missile defence shield. Trump said he replied that Canada should join the United States to get it for free. However, Carney and Defence Minister David McGuinty have said Canada is interested in joining as part of a larger security agreement that the two governments have spent months trying to negotiate along with a new trade deal.

Internationally, the war in Gaza continues, where Israel and terrorist organization Hamas remain in conflict following an attack by Hamas at an Israeli concert in 2023, which saw its two year anniversary on October 7th. The history of the long standing and complicated conflict in the region would far surpass the article space this writer is permitted, however, earlier this fall the UN has declared that Israel was perpetrating a genocide against the people of Palestine who inhabit the Gaza Strip. Israel has broken international laws that have directly caused a human-made famine in Gaza, and led an insurgency that is openly targeting women and children, hospitals and refugee camps. Foreign aid has been trickling to a halt, and Israel recently stopped 50 plus humanitarian ships from bringing critical supplies such as baby formula and medicine to the shores of Gaza.

Trump has again touted his diplomacy and that his famous Peace Plan will bring an end to the conflict in the region. Trump's proposal would see Gaza's reconstruction and administration turned over to a "Board of Peace" led by the U.S. president and former British prime minister Tony Blair. It is worth noting that Trump did not consult with the Palestinians as part of this plan. In a statement, Hamas issued its response to Trump's 20-point plan after the U.S. president gave the Palestinian militant group until Sunday to accept or reject the proposal, indicating that it was considering some of the points outlined. Notably, Hamas did not say whether it would agree to a stipulation that it disarm, a demand by Israel and the U.S. that it has previously rejected.

Carney said that the push by Canada and other countries to recognize a Palestinian state was "necessary" because of what is happening in Gaza. He said Canada, along with other countries, are "at minimum" trying to create conditions for a ceasefire and a peace process following that.

"We urge all parties to help it realize its full potential," Carney wrote of the proposal on X (formerly Twitter). "We will continue our close co-ordination with international partners to build a just and lasting peace that builds on today's progress, with a sovereign, democratic, and viable State of Palestine building its future in peace and security with the State of Israel." Carney called for all parties to help the plan reach "its full potential" and said Hamas releasing all Israeli hostages is "the critical next step." The deal also calls on Israel to release hundreds of Palestinian prisoners and detainees, and provide amnesty to Hamas fighters.

# Starting the conversation: A reflection on death

*by Tracy Avery*

In life, we are promised two things: death and taxes. Taxes get plenty of airtime. Death, however, remains cloaked in taboo. At least, that was my experience growing up.

As a child, death scared me, mostly because it was never explained to me. Thoughts of cold hospital rooms, eerie funeral homes, the smells of both of these buildings, my Great Gran looking like, well, not like Great Gran anymore. Being told "they're in a better place" but not what that place is or why they needed a better place than this place... with me. Never getting answers to curb a curious mind and being told it was "rude to ask" created a sanitized narrative of dying that is far from reality. The reality – people die. So why not talk about it?

As my parents and I have aged, the conversation has shifted. Now, they openly share their wishes: DNRs [do not resuscitate] and DNIs [do not intubate], cremations or burials, strict "no sadness" funeral rules, and even which belongings should go to whom. I'm grateful for this, although not surprised. My mom can organize the bejesus out of anything and everything, and have it gathered up with an elastic and a label to boot. In our family, that's the easy part. It's logistics, not emotions. Outside of my little family, talking about aging, dying, mourning a death or an anticipated death is often private, hushed, and uncomfortable, but it doesn't have to be. In contrast, many cultures around the globe openly embrace mortality.

In Mexico, Día de los Muertos transforms streets into vibrant celebrations where loved ones are remembered with colour, music, and joy. In Hindu philosophy, moksha is the cycle of death and rebirth. Living a good life walking out in the world and in private as described in the Yoga Sutras, is the way closer to the ultimate liberation. Through my yogic studies, I've come to resonate deeply with this idea.

In Bali, death is not seen as an end but as a passage into reincarnation. Their cremation ceremony, Ngaben, is filled with laughter, music, and colour. Families believe the deceased has returned to God, and so grief transforms into celebration. Don't get me wrong, death is hard, I miss people that have moved on, deeply, and it strikes me without apologies at the strangest of times. But, these cultural differences highlight our fundamental disconnect. Instead of death being perceived as a failure of medical science, even feared, there is familiarity. Instead of silence and tears, there is celebration.

As a Death Doula-in-training we learn of the consequences of the silence, including what is called "a bad death". A bad death is when the death is the opposite of their wishes and this happens in part, as a result of not being able to express their wishes, their feelings and needs for this moment in their lives. They may feel they are a burden, a gross falsehood in many cases, or they are trying to protect their circle from their own mortality.

This is where our work begins. Death Doulas help normalize these conversations. We provide space to speak openly, to plan, to reconcile, to grieve and to be heard. We bring in resources, offer guidance, create legacy projects and provide comfort in just listening.

I invite you to start the conversation about death. With your family, your friends, or within yourself. Normalizing these conversations is a gift for those who are dying and for those who continue living. If this topic brings up something difficult for you, please know you're not alone. Reach out to a local counsellor, a doula, a clergy member, or simply someone who will hold space for you. Go where you feel safe.