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# GEORGINA Post

December 10, 2019

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GEORGINAPOST.COM

**FREE ISSUE**

## Town Council hikes property taxes 3.94 per cent for 2020

By MIKE ANDERSON

Despite several councillors professing their dislike for higher taxes, it didn't stop them from approving Georgina's 2020 budget on December 4, which will see residents' property taxes increase by 3.94% next year — more than double the rate of inflation.

And, that's not the worst news.

Expect to see property tax increases for the foreseeable future, as Georgina embarks on the most significant capital spend in its history — with the MURC, a new Civic Centre, West Park, Sutton Community Park, the Link — Phase 2 & 3, and the South Keswick Fire Station all slated for construction over the next few years.

According to Mayor Margaret Quirk, the 2020 budget provides “value” to residents by finding a balance between investing in the community and minimizing the impact of tax increases in the long run.

That's being achieved by adding a one per cent capital reserve charge to the 2.94 per cent property tax levy to reach the total of 3.94 per cent — a practice that's intended to build up the town's capital reserves to avoid increasing the tax levy in future years.

“I think we can all agree that we want to make sure that the Town of Georgina has the right tools, the right technology,



REGIONAL COUNCILLOR ROB GROSSI

## Grossi violates Town's Code of Conduct

By MIKE ANDERSON

Regional councillor Rob Grossi violated the town's code of conduct by not declaring a “conflict of interest” during a special council meeting held to deal with the divestiture of the town's lakeside lands on Lake Dr. East and North, according to a report filed by Deborah

Anschell, the town's integrity commissioner.

Specifically, Ms. Anschell states that Mr. Grossi violated sections of the Municipal Act that require town councillors to declare a pecuniary interest, direct or indirect, before taking part in discussions about, or voting

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GROSSI CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

on, a matter before council.

Ms. Anshell states that Mr. Grossi failed to disclose his “pecuniary interest” at the outset of the July 24 special council meeting; he and his wife own a property on Lake Drive East, before engaging in discussions and voting on a motion that would financially impact property owners along Lake Drive.

Mr. Grossi then proposed a motion that would allow Lake Drive owners to acquire adjacent land in exchange for a pro-rata share of land survey and legal costs, a much cheaper option for them.

Although Mr. Grossi later withdrew that motion, he did vote on a final motion that council passed, directing the town to conduct appraisals to help it set an appropriate price for the Lake Drive property owners to acquire the adjacent land.

“In my view, Regional Councillor Grossi had a palpable and apparent conflict of interest that he should have declared at the Council Meeting,” writes Ms. Anshell. “In fact, given Regional Councillor Grossi’s vast experience on Town Council, I find it disturbing that he did not recognize the obvious conflict that arises from his pecuniary interest as a Lake Drive property owner.”

According to the report, the original complaint was brought forward by Joanne Henderson, a local resident and administrator of the Facebook group page “OUR Town of Georgina.”

The report states that in a written affidavit, Ms. Henderson says that “Regional Councillor Grossi did not declare a pecuniary interest at the Council Meeting.” And, that “Regional Councillor Grossi actively led and participated in discussions throughout the Council Meeting. He also voted throughout the

Council Meeting. “

The report also outlines Mr. Grossi’s response to Ms. Henderson’s complaint.

In his reply, Mr. Grossi argues that he has no pecuniary interest in these issues.

He and his wife Carolyn Grossi purchased their Lake Drive East property on August 27, 1985. Since then, MPAC has assessed and taxed his property at a special rate, “as one fronting on a body of water.” So, the Grossi family, and not the town, own the land to the water’s edge.

Moreover, Mr. Grossi also expressed the view that “the value of the Grossi property would not change if he paid for a survey, paid legal fees, and paid to acquire the lakefront abutting his land.” In short, there is no pecuniary interest either way.

This argument did not sway Ms. Anshell. While she acknowledges that it is beyond “my purview” to provide a legal opinion on the ownership of the lakeside lands across from the Grossi property, she asserts the land “may” be owned by the town. In which case, “Regional Councillor Grossi has a conflict. He may be directly impacted financially by any decisions of Council with respect to the Lake Drive issue.”

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## Editorial: Facebook politicking

Although Mr. Grossi should have declared a pecuniary interest before discussing the Lake Drive issue at council on July 24, it was widely known that he owned property on Lake Drive, which has been his principal residence since 1985.

This fact was known to the rest of council and, possibly, to most of Georgina. That's why nobody in the council chamber batted an eye when Mr. Grossi attempted to help resolve a thorny issue that's pitted the town against Lake Drive residents.

That is except for Joanne Henderson, who is the unofficial cheerleader for Mayor Margaret Quirk and select members of council.

Ms. Henderson is the administrator of a Facebook group called "OUR Town of Georgina," on which members post comments about council, local news, or whatever is sticking in their craw.

For most people, it's a place to let off some steam, but for Ms. Henderson it's a vehicle to promote her views, which align a little too closely with the Mayor's.

Case in point, this May, she posted an extensive criticism of Mr. Grossi's opposition to the MURC. "In my opinion, it appeared he did not understand the funding mechanisms," she wrote. Remember, she's talking

about someone who has served five terms as Mayor and three years as a local councillor.

Ms. Henderson has also used her position to launch digs at this publication — most recently for printing a correction to a Letter to the Editor, while she conveniently ignored a serious error of fact committed by the Advocate.

Now, Ms. Henderson, not content with politicking on her own FB group, is venturing onto other FB groups to push her take on the Mayor and council - apparently, they can do no wrong - and taunt people she disagrees with.

Most recently, she went on the Pefferlaw Facebook group to provoke a response from Karen Wolfe, who recently wrote a critical opinion piece about the town's draft budget.

In reference to Ms. Wolfe's demand for fiscal responsibility, Ms. Henderson wrote:

"Where should the town start cutting? Karen Wolfe lives on one of the roads to be resurfaced this year. Maybe start there?"

In short, she is not what she seems, a town booster, but rather a cyberbully with a secret agenda. This begs the question: Is Ms. Henderson really a concerned citizen? Or was her complaint against Mr. Grossi politically motivated?

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BUDGET CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

right buildings, processes and facilities for our residents. And, that we have the right financial plan to bring all that together," said Mayor Quirk before voting. "I've said this in the past, failing to plan is planning to fail."

However, council didn't need much convincing with five out of six councillors approving an operating budget of more than \$77 million for 2020 — requiring a total tax levy of close to \$45 million and water and sewage rates of over \$15 million.

Council also approved capital expenditures of more than \$67 million in 2020 — for a total spend of more than \$146 million.

The ten-year capital forecast is now \$286 million, up more than \$10 million from last year's forecast of \$275 million, much of which will be financed through long-term debt.

The 2020 property tax increase roughly translates into a \$79 up-charge for a single-family detached dwelling assessed at just over \$400,000. The increase in water and wastewater rates could add a further \$24 to your bill.

All this runs counter to the sentiments expressed in the town's online budget survey, which indicated that more than 65 per cent of residents wanted either a zero or modest one per cent tax increase.

The only dissenting opinion was offered by Regional Councillor Rob Grossi, who said he couldn't in good conscience support the budget increase.

"We don't know what the external pressures are going to be over the next couple of years," he said. "We simply can't afford a fourth library or a West Park. And when you're looking at the reality of what it's going to cost us, and the debt that we are going to have to finance — and it isn't just the next three years, it's the next 10 to 15 years. I'm not sure that the people of this

community can continue to afford to live here."

The vote on December 4 was proceeded by two days of budget review, where the intent was to find savings. But, there were no additional cuts made.

Instead, several councillors threatened to add to the budget with their suggestions for new capital projects. There were more than a dozen capital projects put forward for consideration — some with hefty price tags, including Councillor Frank Sebo's request for a Water Park Slide at the ROC for "several million dollars," which was deferred for further review.

But others, like Councillor Mike Waddington's request for safety equipment for storm water ponds that kids are using as impromptu skating rinks and the Mayor's request for a wheelchair swing for De La Salle Park were approved, although they will be funded from reserves and not added to this year's tax levy.

Despite the town's propensity to spend rather than cut, there were some positives to be found in the budget.

Funding for road repair and maintenance was maintained, although Rob Flindall, Director of Operations and Infrastructure, says the town needs to spend three times as much.

There is funding to develop a broadband strategy, which is urgently needed, with many residents and local businesses experiencing poor connectivity.

Previously neglected assets will also get some much-needed attention, including Pioneer Village, which has several buildings in urgent need of repair. And, finally, there is new funding for the maintenance of the town's parks, including hiring a full-time park employee — the last full-time hire for the parks department was more than ten years ago.

However, some important



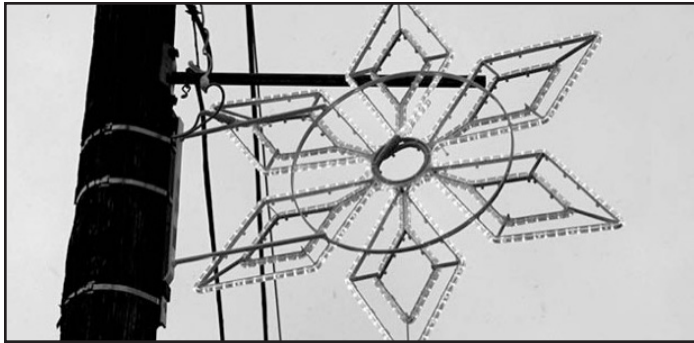
things were left out of the budget.

There is no additional funding to help attract potential employers to Georgina — even though 23 per cent of budget survey respondents, the largest segment, wanted their tax dollars spent on economic development and job growth.

There are also no new initiatives to promote Georgina as a tourist destination, other than additional funding for a

winter banner program for Woodbine Ave and Dalton Rd.

Residents can expect to see the 3.94% tax increase reflected in their 2020 property tax bill, which will be mailed out in January. The first installment will be due sometime in February. Late payments will incur a one per cent penalty. There is also a one per cent interest charge for amounts outstanding.



GEORGINA'S NEW LED HOLIDAY DECORATIONS

## Georgina avoids dark streets for the holidays.

By MIKE ANDERSON

It was a nip and tuck affair, but the town will have new LED holiday decorations up in time for Christmas after all.

But it's scaling back its initial plan to put up 54 of the holiday lights. That's because the cost of mounting them has skyrocketed 200 per cent.

After spending a \$70,000 grant on the new lights, the town discovered this fall that its hydro poles would need electrical upgrades new conduits and GFIs - for the lights to work.

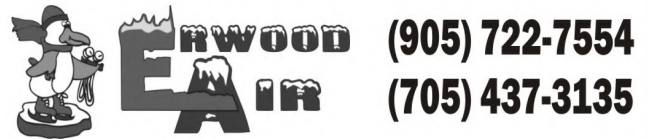
Initially, the cost estimate was \$30,000 — about \$550 per pole. Based on that number, council approved the electrical upgrades — after all, nobody wanted dark streets for the holidays.

But the clock was ticking. So, in the interests of expediency, the town waived competitive bids and awarded the work to two electrical contractors.

Now that decision is proving to be costly. The final bill may come in at \$90,000, according to Rob Flindall, the town's director of Operations and Infrastructure, who broke the bad news to council on Nov 27.

To stem the bleeding, council has halted the upgrades once the 35 poles are completed, asking staff to wait until January to tender the work for the remaining 19 poles, hoping a competitive bid process will bring in a lower price. That means the downtown areas of Keswick, Sutton, Jackson's Point and Pefferlaw will have to share 35 holiday lights between them.

Another company will install the new LED holiday decorations once the electrical work is complete and the 35 lights should be up by Dec 15. The remaining 19 lights will stay in their boxes until next year.



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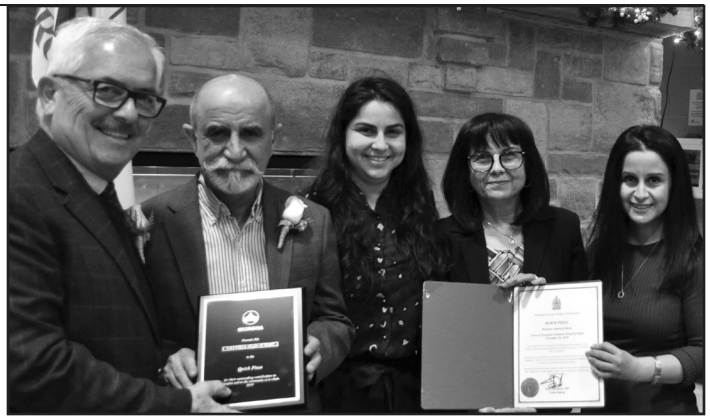
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ROB GROSSI & HEMMATI FAMILY

## Georgina celebrates the spirit of giving

By EWA CHWOJKO-SRAWLEY

"You have two hands, one to help yourself, the second to help others," remarked Regional Councillor Rob Grossi, presenting a Volunteer Award of Merit to the Hemmati family, owners of Quick Pizza in Keswick. The Hemmati family opened their business in Georgina in 1996, and immediately started giving back to the community. They not only support Georgina's sports teams and fundraising ventures, but also sponsor a hot lunch program for several local schools. Hamid's personal thank you to his new country is giving away slices of pizza for free on Canada Day.

Two other popular and much-loved local businesses, Black River Coffee and the Gem Theatre, were also recognized for their huge support of local charities.

Elaine Coates, the owner of Black River Coffee, has her door and her heart open to all in need. Every month she hosts residents of nearby River Glen Haven Nursing Home, offering specially baked treats, lots of smiles and warm chats. She is also wholeheartedly involved with Christmas food and clothing drives, bakes cakes for fundraisers, and even drives those in need to doctors' appointments.

R. J. Gorman, who recently sold the Gem Theatre, provided fun and entertainment to movie

goers for over 20 years. He helped to raise thousands of dollars for local service agencies and non-profits, including more than 30,000 lbs of food for the Georgina Food Pantry.

There are many ways of giving. Some donate goods and funds, and some give their time, skills and heart.

This year six outstanding Georgina citizens and seven exceptional organizations were recognized for helping others. Renate Freels, Lauralee Reily, Ginger Smith, Mary Margaret Thorburn, and teenager Andrew O'Dell were each introduced by the Mayor of Georgina or one of the councillors.

A big crowd gathered at the ROC, on November 26, and heard about the award recipients' dedication, and the long hours of hard work spent helping those in need.

Mary Margaret Thorburn voiced a sentiment felt by all: the great pleasure that it is to volunteer in Georgina, a warm, welcoming community that is like family.

Loud cheers from the audience greeted representatives of the Egypt Hall Board, Georgina Cares, Georgina Studio Tours, Sutton Legion Ladies Auxiliary, Pefferlaw Arts & Crafts Club, and the Kinette Club of Sutton, as the



town representatives thanked them.

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Citizen of the Year award to Gail Moore, who has been volunteering all her life: she told us that it was a tradition in her family, a part of her upbringing. Mayor Margaret Quirk, in her closing remarks, stated that because of the volunteers' selfless giving, Georgina is a better community. MP Scot Davidson congratulated each recipient and thanked them

for their generosity and their dedication.

A comment, often repeated, was that these wonderful volunteers humbly avoid recognition, and never tell what they are doing. But the overwhelming sentiment from the gathered supporters was that the spotlight should be turned on those who give so much. This beautiful ceremony was a great occasion to put them in that deserved spotlight.



MAYOR QUIRK, GAIL MORE & MP SCOT DAVIDSON



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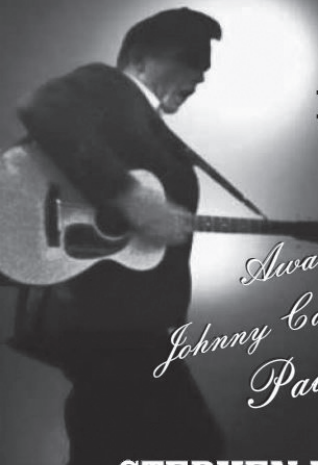
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## Second train derailment in as many years may be due to speed

By MIKE ANDERSON

After a second CN freight train derailed in Pefferlaw in just over two years, Ward 5 Councillor Dave Harding says he's concerned the trains may be travelling too fast through the town.

"There are always issues when it comes to trains, the lengths of them, the weights they carry and their speeds," Mr. Harding said. "After the last train derailment two years ago, CN said that they were going to put the speed down. I've been in town myself and sitting there looking at the trains flying by. They're still doing the speed that they would do outside in the country."

The latest partial derailment, involving three tank cars, occurred on December 2,

between Weir's Side Rd and Forestry Dr.

The tank cars came off the track but remained standing. However, it took CN crews with heavy machinery approximately 12 hours to clear the rails and move the damaged tank cars.

During this time, YRP closed Old Homestead Rd, between Weir Side Rd and Forestry Dr to local traffic only.

"There was no danger to public safety," said Jonathan Abecassis, a senior spokesperson for CN. "No one was injured, and there were no fires and no spills."

While the tank cars were empty, they did contain trace elements of a chemical product, according to Mr. Abecassis. However, he did not name the

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RAIL DERAILMENT IN PEPPERLAW

chemical compound.

But Georgina Fire Chief Ron Jenkins later confirmed the tank cars contained trace elements of sulphuric acid, commonly known as battery acid.

According to the Canadian Centre of Occupational Safety, sulphuric acid is a highly corrosive chemical that can be fatal if inhaled. However, it is not an inhalation hazard unless heated or misted.

CN has not yet disclosed the exact cause of the derailment, as it is currently under investigation.

This is the second derailment in just over two years. The last one, which occurred on March 3, 2017, in downtown Pepperlaw, near Station Rd and Pepperlaw Rd, was considered a major derailment involving 15 cars.

“Any derailment is a cause for concern,” said Harding. “The one, two years ago, had powdered copper content in the cars that got derailed. But in front of that was propane and behind that was propane. So we got away lucky on that one. This time the three cars were empty.”

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CO ALARM: ADOBE STOCK

# It's heating season, and Project Zero wants you to stay safe this winter

By MICHELLE POIRIER

Georgina Fire & Rescue and Enbridge Gas have partnered for Project Zero, an educational program to improve home safety and bring fire and carbon-monoxide related deaths down to zero.

Georgina Fire & Rescue Services has received 156 combination smoke and carbon monoxide alarms through this program. These alarms will be installed in houses which the fire department finds do not comply with current laws.

"When we respond to a house fire, or we respond to whatever that may be, even a medical call, we always check to make sure there is a working smoke alarm," Fire Chief Ron Jenkins said.

It is usually vulnerable residents, such as seniors, who are not in compliance with the law, Chief Jenkins said. Five per cent of the homes the fire department responds to do not have any smoke alarms, and 14 per cent of the households have out of date alarms or do not have the required one alarm per floor. The fire department recorded 156 carbon monoxide alarm calls

in Georgina in 2018.

"Nobody thinks they'll have a fire. Nobody thinks that they'll have a CO emergency. Many times the unfortunate part with CO is that it can present (with) flu-like symptoms," Chief Jenkins said.

While responding to a call this past summer, Chief Jenkins said the firefighters, during their workup, noticed a PVC pipe connected to the furnace had cracked.

"The fortunate piece for this outcome was the fact that we were not in the heating season yet," Chief Jenkins said. "During the winter, the broken pipe might not have been observed. There was no carbon monoxide alarm in the home. There's no smell; there's no taste to carbon monoxide. So whether that would have been noticed in time, we don't know."

Carbon monoxide is known as the silent killer because you cannot hear it, see it, smell it or taste it.

"We know that the best way to avoid carbon monoxide exposure is to eliminate it at the



source by properly maintaining fuel-burning equipment and that the alarms are a critical second line of defence to protect against carbon monoxide poisoning," Steve McGivery, Director, GTA East Operations, Enbridge Gas Inc., said in a press release.

Just last month in Ottawa, a senior was killed and his wife was in critical condition from carbon monoxide poisoning in their home.

According to the Technical Standards and Safety Authority and the Ontario Fire Marshall, if your home has a fuel-burning appliance, such as a furnace, dryer, water heater, fireplace or stove, or an attached garage, you must install a carbon monoxide alarm adjacent to each sleeping area and on every storey. They also recommend annual inspections for all fuel-burning appliances in your home.

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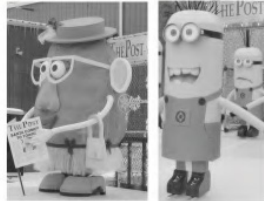
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- EST. 2018 -

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MARTINA & PIPER MAGGIACOMO

## Keswick teen delivers Christmas cheer

By MICHELLE POIRIER

Christmas is shortly upon us, and one Keswick teen is doing her best to spread holiday cheer to those who might be struggling this year.

Piper Maggiacom, 15, has taken it upon herself to create stockings for those in Georgina who are in need of a little extra help.

Her desire to help others was prompted by watching homeless people on the streets outside her Toronto hospital room.

"I go to Sick Kids every few months, and I always look out the windows, and I started counting how many homeless people I saw," she said. "And then I just figured it's really cold, I want to help them."

With a little help from her mom Martina, Piper started gathering and handing out clothing, blankets and other necessities to the homeless.

"My mom posted on Facebook for donations, and then I collected them, put them all into bags, and then walked around Toronto," she said.

"She's a sick kid, so she's been a fighter all her life," Martina said. "She just keeps a smile on her face and wants to give to other people."

After four years of helping homeless people in Toronto, Piper decided she'd help out closer to home.

"I wanted to start something new," she said. "Some kids want to have a Christmas but can't, so giving them a Christmas is really big."

Martina and Piper reached out to Susan Gorman, the Executive Director of Jericho Youth Services, who will be helping Piper deliver the stockings to the families that need them the most.

Piper and Martina would like to thank AT Photography, Leslie Vandkooy, Denise Sabath, Crystal Campbell-Poirier and Dustin Deveau for being the first to donate.

"As soon as I put the post up, they were right there with donations," Martina said. "Originally, Piper said maybe 30 stockings. Now that the donations are coming in, we might actually be able to pull off something even bigger."

Piper is collecting things you would usually find in a stocking: chocolate, candy, hair accessories, socks, little toys, personal grooming products, etc. She is creating stockings for all ages and genders and is hoping to have them done by December 20.

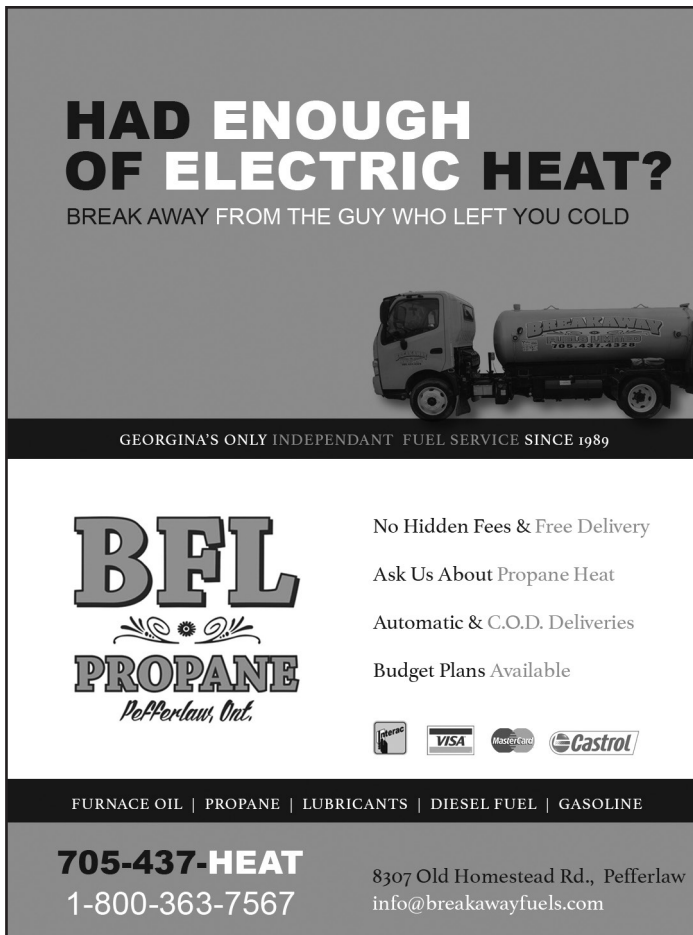
If you would like to donate to Piper's Christmas stocking campaign, you can find Martina Maggiacom on Facebook or email [MMagic63@gmail.com](mailto:MMagic63@gmail.com).



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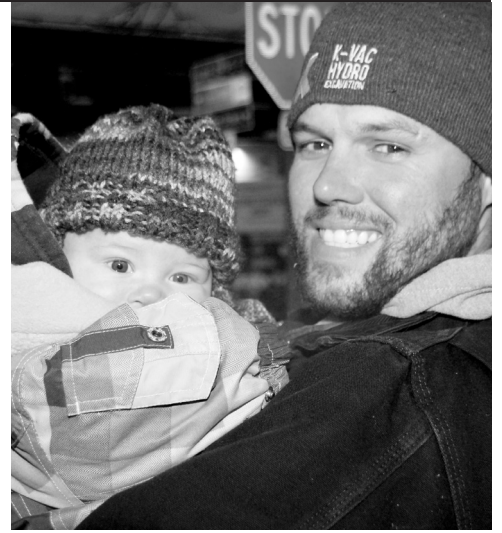


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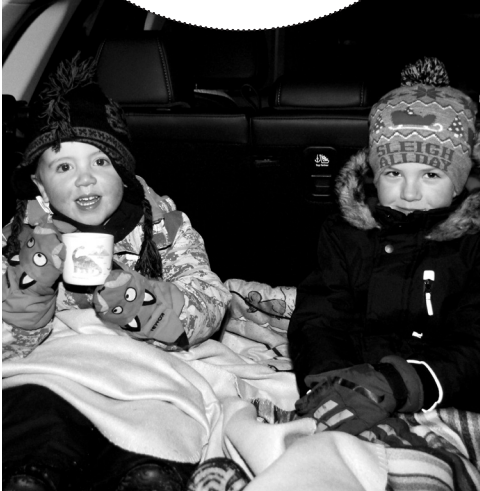
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Trevor with his little nephew



Brayden & Lucas in the back of the truck, drinking



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Mrs Claus & Santa Claus with fans





Ian & Leia



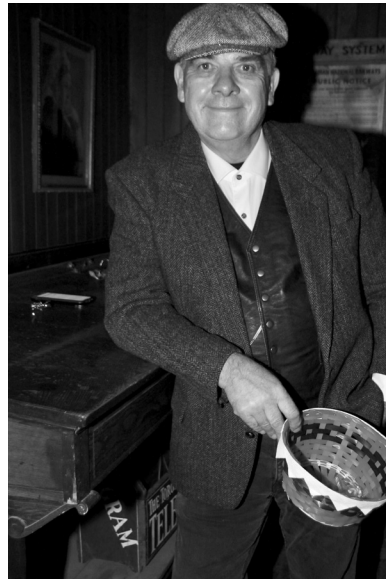
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Corene, Shay, Maggie & Ross



Marg & her little dog, Maggie at the train station



Wayne handing out candy canes



Ravenshoe String Ensemble



Hanging out under the light shaped Christmas tree



Frank with some of the donated toys



HOLIDAY HERO TOY  
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Mayor Margaret Quirk with some of the YRP officers



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Little Lauren with Santa

**COMING EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**GPL - Keswick Branch - Connors Christmas Showcase, Thursday, Dec 12, 6:30 - 7 p.m.**

Join us for a festive sing-a-long with the staff and students of Connors Music! All ages welcome. Pick up tickets at any GPL branch or Connors Music, and at the door while supplies last, for a suggested donation of \$5 per person. All proceeds go directly to Georgina Cares. We will also be accepting donations of non-perishable food items for Georgina Community Food Pantry at the event.

**Stephen Leacock Theatre - A Very Merry Holiday with the Queensville Players, Friday, December 13, 7 - 8pm.** "A theatrical show so great you will cheer it, and leave warm and fuzzy with Holiday Spirit!" Free tickets to this all-ages event will be available at all library branches. Thanks to Foch Family Real Estate for sponsoring the event.

**Udora Hall - Udora Leaksdale Lions - Spaghetti Dinner, Friday, Dec 13, 5:30 p.m.**

**Trinity United Church-Cannington - Yuletide Harmonies, Saturday, Dec 14, 2 p.m.** Featuring "Take Note" vocal ensemble and extensive display of Nativity Scenes - Tickets: \$15.00, \$5.00: 12 & under

**Sutton Legion - Branch Christmas Party, Saturday, Dec 14, 5 p.m.** Members & guests. A gift exchange game. No more than \$10. Music by Do You Wanna Dance DJ. Light food. Must be 19 years of age or over.

**Club 55 - Keswick - Christmas Dinner Dance, Saturday, Dec 14.** Happy Hour 6pm followed by a catered dinner at 7pm. Featuring DJ. Dave Jones. Cash Bar, Door prizes, Share the wealth draw. \$15.00 for members \$20.00 for non members. 19 years plus.

**The Mansion House - Christmas Sign Painting, Saturday, Dec 14, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.** Come out for a couple hours of fun and make an amazing Christmas sign! \$40/person. 129 High St. Sutton

**LINK WINTER MARKET, Sunday, Dec 15, 9 am to 2 pm.** Enjoy a one-of-a-kind shopping experience right in the heart of Georgina. 20849 Dalton Rd. Sutton

**Stephen Leacock Theatre - Serena Ryder Christmas Kisses Tour, Thursday, Dec 19, 8 p.m.** Tickets \$79 Plus HST. Box office: 905-476-0193.

**St. James Anglican Church - Christmas Eve Family Eucharist & Carols, Tuesday, Dec 24, 4 p.m.** Christmas Eve Family Eucharist & Carols at 4 p.m./ Traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 9 p.m./ Christmas Day at 10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist and Carols.

**Kin Community Centre - Community Living Bingo, Thursday, Dec 26, 12:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.**

**Ravenshoe United Church - Christmas Eve Service, Tuesday, Dec 24, 9:30 - 10:30 p.m.** A beautiful service on Christmas Eve...hope you can join us. 3252 Ravenshoe Rd, Queensville.

**Sutton Legion - New Year's Eve Party, Tuesday, Dec 31, 7 p.m.** Doors open at 7pm. Music starts at 8pm. Door prizes, spot dances, party favors, hot & cold buffet. Tickets: \$30. There will be buses to and from Keswick and Pefferlaw. Info will be in the club-room and posted on Facebook when available. Must be 19 years of age or over.

**Club 55 - Keswick - Ring in the New Year, Tuesday, Dec 31, 7 p.m. to 1 a.m.**

Dance the night away with DJ. Dave Jones or visit our Games Lounge For card games such as bid euchre, cribbage, regular euchre, scrabble and more. Cash Bar, Door prizes, Buffet at 10 P.M. Everyone 19 years plus welcome. Tickets: \$25.00 Call Mary Louise Barber 289-264-3892

**The ROC - ROC'n New Year's Eve Family Bash, Tuesday, Dec 31, 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.**

Ring in the new year with your family and friends. Take part in fun activities and enjoy entertainment by live performers. Kiddie countdown at 8 p.m. with a hot chocolate toast. Admission to this event is FREE but regular prices are in effect for tube/lift tickets as well as chalet menu items.



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