

# On the Road

MAY 2026 NO. 94

A STOUFFVILLE MAGAZINE



## Ninety Harvests

Ballantrae's Harry Simpson reflects on a century of early mornings working the fields

 Stouffville

### Back in Play

Former sports anchor Joe Tilley turns personal loss into advocacy

### Scaling the Moraine

The Oak Ridges Moraine Adventure Relay returns in June

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## From the Editor

Welcome to the May edition of *On the Road*. I hope spring has been treating you well.

What better way to mark the season than with a look at one of Stouffville's most enduring farm families? Cassandra Papas sits down with Ballantrae's Harry Simpson, whose family has been working the land since the mid-1850s. You can read his story and explore that remarkable legacy on page 12.

Closer to the rink, the Stouffville Clippers U14 team captured the AA hockey title back in March. Jim Mason has all the details on page 10. And speaking of sports, former CFTO sports anchor and summer Stouffville resident Joe Tilley speaks to *OTR* and reflects on his life's journey.

Enjoy the issue,

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# Adventure Relay Puts Focus On Oak Ridges Moraine

## Day of canoeing, biking, running, making three stops in Stouffville along 160 km route June 13

by Jim Mason



Stouffville's Jacquelin Heichert is a natural fit as race director of the 2026 Oak Ridges Moraine Adventure Relay.

She lives and breathes the environmentally sensitive swath of nature that runs through the centre of Stouffville while stretching 200 km from the Niagara Escarpment in the west to the Trent River in the east.

The 15th anniversary edition of the Oak Ridges Trail Association's (OTRA) Adventure Relay on June 13th is expected to be the biggest yet, drawing 250 to 400 people, including racers, volunteers and supporters.

"I'm passionate about the relay because the Moraine isn't an abstract idea to me – it's part of my everyday life," Heichert told *OTR*. "I hike on OTRA-maintained trails almost every weekend, and I know the positive impact being active in nature brings to my life. I see firsthand how important it is that

**"The Moraine isn't an abstract idea to me – it's part of my everyday life."**

- Jacquelin Heichert

these trails are open, well-maintained and accessible to the community.

"The Adventure Relay directly supports that work. It brings people onto the Moraine in a meaningful way, helps raise funds for trail maintenance, and builds appreciation for a landscape that's ecologically and culturally significant. I love that the event brings together athletes, volunteers, families and local organizations around a shared purpose: enjoying the outdoors while giving back to it."

The full relay will see teams of up to 15 participants canoeing, mountain biking and trail running across the moraine from Rice Lake, located between Peterborough and Cobourg, to Aurora through 15 checkpoints, including three in Stouffville.

The average time to complete the full relay is approximately 11 hours. The record is 8 hours and 51 minutes.

There's also a 90 km half-relay for teams of up to seven.

Registration fees support awareness and trail maintenance on the Moraine.

There's a family aspect of the event, too.

Heichert and her mother, Olivia Petrie, managed a checkpoint in Bowmanville during last year's event.

"We liked it so much that we both amped up our responsibilities this year," she said. "My mum is a checkpoint captain again and has brought with her seven of her friends who hike together every Thursday."

Mother and daughter are also organizing the training meeting for the event's 110+ volunteers.

Jeremy Reesor knows. The Stouffville resident and his Reese Lighting team are relay regulars. A director at ORTA, Reesor was instrumental in bringing the event back last year after a five-year hiatus due to COVID-19, Heichert says.

Reesor's mother, Carolyn Reesor, is another checkpoint captain. His mother-in-law, Karla Warkentin, is also volunteering.

Stouffville's Evan Rhyness has been around the race since 2012, supporting the 'Stouffvillains' team his parents managed.

"I grew up volunteering with OTRA doing trail maintenance and love to support the organization by bringing awareness and fundraising," said Rhyness, who will compete for the second time this year. "The relay brings a sense of community for our team by bringing together neighbours and friends. We have been able to expand our community and bring people together for a common goal.

"We love to celebrate everyone's performance with a team party to finish off the night. During the race day, the teams support all the racers as they get through the checkpoints, as we all work towards the same goal of completing the relay." 🏆

## Adventure Relay

Saturday, June 13

For details, including information on participant and volunteer registration, visit [oakridgestrail.org/adventure-relay](http://oakridgestrail.org/adventure-relay)



## Grant Ivens Launches *Why Not!*

Stouffville author Grant Ivens launches *Why Not! Move Your Idea to a Brand* on June 4th, 6:30-8:30 PM at Harmony Hall, Vidorf. Free admission. Register at [whynotthebook.com](http://whynotthebook.com)



## Free Lunch n' Learn at the Legion

Attend a free Lunch n' Learn on Saturday, June 6, from 10 AM to 2 PM at the Stouffville Legion. Learn about cyber safety, financial planning, and oral health, and enjoy a light breakfast and lunch, and live music.

# Battle of Blades Brings Catholic Schools Together for Good Cause

by Jim Mason



Teams from St. Mark, St. Brendan and St. Brigid Catholic schools pose for a photo at the Battle of the School Blades at the Stouffville Clippers Sports Complex on April 14.

Students loudly cheered on their classmates. Parents waved signs supporting their favourite players. Inflated thunder sticks, banged against the arena glass, were the noisemaker of the day.

School spirit is alive, well and loud in Stouffville.

Welcome to the Battle of the School Blades held at the Stouffville Clippers Sports Complex on April 14.

The second annual event featured co-ed teams from Stouffville's trio of Catholic elementary schools: St. Mark, St. Brendan

and St. Brigid.

The event raised awareness for autism and \$635 for For Little Monkeys, a registered Stouffville charity, committed to improving the lives of families of neurodiverse children in York Region.

Former NHLer Mike Angeledis, whose children attend St. Brigid, was on the coaching staff of the Millard Street school's team. He dropped the puck to open the event in a ceremonial faceoff.

Angeledis skated in 14 NHL games with the Tampa Bay Lightning. He also appeared in 747 American Hockey

League games, mostly with the Syracuse Crunch, where he served as captain during four seasons.

Now a head coach in the Markham Waxers AAA minor hockey program, Angeledis was inducted into the Syracuse Hockey Hall of Fame in 2025.

"It was great to have our three school communities come together to raise awareness for Autism Acceptance during the month of April," said Tania Paniculam, the principal at St. Brigid, which organized the event. "Thanks to all the participants, parents, guardians and school staff for their generosity. Special thanks go to Trentadue Torres Group for their donations of thunder sticks, to Scoring Goals for the Community for bringing awareness to our school community event and to having mascots Ollie and Kiki hang out with the players and community. As well, thank you to our Stouffville Spirit Jr. A players for supporting our school hockey teams."

BOTTOM PHOTO: MARKHAM STOUFFVILLE HOSPITAL FOUNDATION | TOP PHOTO: ST. BRIGID CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

## Stouffville Community Recognized for \$1M Donation to Markham Stouffville Hospital

by Glenn Jackson

Oak Valley Health and the Markham Stouffville Hospital (MSH) Foundation have recognized Stouffville Mayor Iain Lovatt and the Town of Stouffville for leading a \$1-million community contribution in support of Markham Stouffville Hospital.

The contribution was celebrated on April 8th with the unveiling of the Mayor Iain Lovatt & the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Seating Area at MSH, located near the main staircase alongside the Foundation's Spiral of Sharing and Heritage Wall. Funds raised will support the purchase of new medical equipment and other hospital priority needs.

The \$1 million reflects years of community driven fundraising efforts led by Mayor Lovatt and supported by Town Council, staff, volunteers, donors, and local partners. Signature events included All Night Lawn, the Mayor's Charity Golf Classic, the Stouffville Gala, and the Stouffville Main Street 5K.

Mayor Lovatt also serves as co-chair of the Campaign for MSH with City of Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti. The \$150-million campaign aims to transform MSH into an integrated health care hub to support a rapidly growing population.

"We are deeply grateful to Mayor Lovatt and the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville for their



Left to Right: Mark Fam, President and CEO, Oak Valley Health, Suzette Strong, CEO, MSH Foundation, Stouffville Mayor Iain Lovatt, Ward 2 Councillor Maurice Smith and Sunny Bains, Chief Administrative Officer, Town of Stouffville.

leadership and commitment," said Suzette Strong, CEO of MSH Foundation. "This contribution shows what's possible when a community comes together to ensure patients receive exceptional care close to home."

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# Joe Tilley

## SHARES HIS FAMILY'S ADDICTION STORY TO HELP OTHERS

by Jim Mason

Former CTV sports anchor talks about his alcoholism, visits to treatment centres, and losing a son to fentanyl in reworked podcast.



### As the entertaining late-night sports anchor for CTV News Toronto, Joe Tilley was welcomed into thousands of Ontario living rooms every evening.

Now, he's working to change lives, one person at a time.

Tilley, who summers at Cedar Beach Resort at Musselman's Lake in Stouffville and winters in Mexico, is best known for his 33 years at CTV/CFTO, from 1984 to 2017.

Readers/viewers of that generation will fondly recall his high-octane features, including 'Swiss Picks', 'The Excellent Sports Adventure' and the 'Swissonian Institute', plus his catchphrase, "Coming up!"

The late, great Pat Marsden of Unionville hired Tilley to replace the ever-popular Fergie Olver, who was leaving CFTO to call Blue Jays' games on TSN.

A favourite Tilley story from the CFTO days centres on being barred from entering Maple Leaf Gardens following his on-air criticism of Leafs owner Harold Ballard. The ban was eventually lifted after station management intervened.

Tilley is celebrating another milestone: 33 years of sobriety.

"Addiction runs in my family," said Tilley, who boxed competitively as a teenage alcoholic in his native Edmonton.

A 12-step program helped get the

young dad sober, only after he was "kicked out of the house."

Before that he couldn't drive by a bar, beer store or LCBO on his way home from work without stopping.

He gives plenty of credit for his sobriety to his wife, Penny-Claire.

Joe was 22 years sober when the Tilleys' youngest son, Spencer, died from a fentanyl overdose in Niagara Falls at age 25 in 2014.

Police officers knocked on the door of the family home to break the news.

"Our beautiful boy," Joe says. "It was devastating for us"

Tilley doesn't want other families to feel that pain.

He makes monthly visits to treatment centres with a purpose.

"I share my story, and I share Spencer's story," Tilley told the Ted Woloshyn Podcast in March. "Spencer gets an opportunity to be helpful to other addicts and alcoholics. His story hits home with a lot of people."

"My own story of recovery is helpful, as well. I share my experience drinking, how I got through it and how I came out the other end."

After retiring from CTV, Tilley stayed in the game, hosting a popular podcast, Joe Tilley's Great Canadian Sports Show, on YouTube.

He worked the well-earned contacts list in his phone, and his sterling reputation in the industry – hard.

Guests included NHLers past and present, including Eric Lindros, Joe Nieuwendyk, Justin Danforth, Nick Kypreos, Kris King, Craig Simpson, Chris Stewart and Stouffville's own Keith Acton ("Why pizza wars are fiercer than hockey.")

Sprinter Ben Johnson was featured. The final piece in the Johnson three-parter was entitled "If you could go back, would you change anything?"

Former Stouffville resident and lacrosse legend Glenn Clark, the head coach and general manager of the new Oshawa FireWolves of the National



Joe and his family enjoying Christmas in 1986. From left, son Tyler, wife Penny-Claire, and daughter Maddie-Jo.



Joe in a publicity shot from his CTV/CFTO days in the late 1980s. Joe spent 33 years at the popular Toronto station as sports anchor.

Lacrosse League, guested.

Canadian media personalities making appearances included Jack Armstrong, Mary Ormsby, Stephen Brunt, Michael Landsberg, Leo Rautins, Eric Smith, Mark Habscher, Andi Petrillo and Steve Buffery.

But Tilley flipped the script earlier this year, rebranding the pod to: Recovery Comes Alive | The Recovery Podcast Built For Anyone Touched By Addiction. With co-host Jay Hillier, the CEO of the Hope Valley addiction treatment centre near Lindsay, they talk about their own addictions and those of their guests: Alcohol, drugs and gambling.

Online sports gambling was addressed in the episode "How I lost \$40,000 in 90 Minutes on My Phone."

"It's become such a big thing in our society lately – the brutal side of sports betting," Tilley said in his introduction. "It looks harmless to a lot of people, but it can be, and often is, devastating. It has unbelievable consequences."

After Ontario opened its market to private online gambling, the number of young men reaching out to the province's mental health helpline for gambling-related issues surged dramatically — rising by more than 300 percent, according to a study published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal, which Tilley cited during the podcast episode.

Hillier says Tilley is making a difference.

"Joe's commitment to recovery, service, and community has a real and lasting impact," he told OTR. "Through his volunteering, his advocacy and our podcast, he helps elevate voices that need to be heard."

"In the often challenging, always unpredictable world of addiction and mental health, Joe's work reminds us that recovery is real, it is powerful, and it comes alive when people choose to rise together."

The "Canadian housing crisis" and "The Blueprint for Ending Homelessness" were tackled in more recent shows.

Tilley could play endless rounds of golf and walk the beaches along the Pacific Ocean all winter. He chose another path.

"I got to a point where I wanted to do something a little bigger. I had a chance to help people who needed help," Tilley said. "When I'm helping others, I'm in a good place."

Philadelphia Flyers legend Reggie Leach talked about his 41 years of sobriety in a recent episode.

"Boy, what a life-changing thing (rehab) was, Joe," said Leach, who was in York Region for the Little Native Hockey League tournament during March. "I really worked at it and got myself under control."

The public speaking engagements pay dividends for Tilley.

"There's always two or three people who come up to me afterwards and say 'I lost a really good friend of mine, a son and daughter or a nephew or niece.' Or, in some cases, they say 'I've been resuscitated. I've died. I've overdosed and was brought back by NARCAN'"

"People don't choose to be addicts and alcoholics. It's a disease. Do you think people would choose to live on the streets? We just don't know any way out."

And son Spencer rides with dad Joe. "He's always with me," Joe said.

"Whenever I share my story, I share his story."

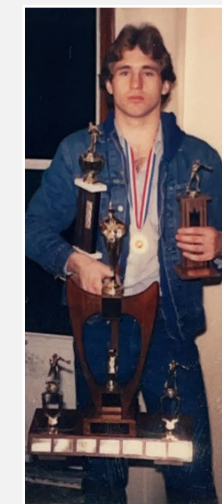
Tilley was interviewed by OTR from Mexico. Earlier in the day, he Facetimed an addict looking for help. Tilley was still glowing.

"I've had a chance to do that with a number of different guys and watching the light go on and there's nothing like it really. It's a spectacular feeling getting a chance to help people find their way."

"I find that when I'm helping others, I'm in a good place." 🍷

### "WHENEVER I SHARE MY STORY, I SHARE HIS STORY."

- JOE TILLEY, ON HIS SON SPENCER



ABOVE: Joe and his wife Penny-Claire enjoying the Stouffville sunshine. LEFT: Joe holding his trophies after becoming the Provincial Welterweight Boxing Champion in 1981.

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## Guest Reader Series Encourages Love of Reading at St. Brigid

by Glenn Jackson



St. Mark's Catholic School's Deacon Gordon reads to students at St. Brigid Catholic Elementary School's Guest Reader Series in March.

swapped hockey gear for storybooks, while familiar media personalities such as CHUM FM co-host David Corey, Shem from KISS 92.5 and TV personality Frankie Flowers delighted students with their lively readings. Local sports broadcaster Rod Black and *On the Road's* own Jim Mason showed students that storytelling is at the heart of their work.

Community roles were highlighted through visits from Stouffville Mayor Iain Lovatt, York Regional Police Staff Sergeant Miguel Torres, SWAT Sergeant Eon MacFarlane and local firefighter Adam Sgroi, each sharing stories and insights into service, leadership and responsibility.

In early March, storytime at Stouffville's St. Brigid Catholic Elementary School took on a life of its own. The school began welcoming a parade of special guests through its doors, each carrying a book and a story to share. Hockey players, broadcasters, first responders, community leaders and creative professionals all pulled up classroom chairs, opened their favourite pages and reminded students that stories have a way of bringing everyone together.

The visits were part of St. Brigid's new Guest Reader Series, a school-wide initiative rooted in a growing focus on literacy.

"This year, our school is placing a special focus on literacy, building a love of reading, strengthening comprehension skills, and helping students see reading as both meaningful and enjoyable," said principal Tania Paniculam. "We want students to see that people of all backgrounds and experiences enjoy the love of reading."

Over the course of the program, which ran through March, April and into early May, students were treated to an impressive and entertaining mix of visitors. Members of the Stouffville Spirit

"We wanted to include people that were of interest to the children, some were connected to the curriculum happening in their classrooms, and some were just for fun," Paniculam said.

Other visits opened windows into careers that sparked curiosity and imagination. Sadie Caldarola, a zookeeper with the Toronto Zoo, brought tales of animals and conservation, while author Ron Sciulli celebrated the joy of writing. Cynthia Undyantara, now working as a production coordinator in the animation industry, offered a glimpse into how stories can travel from the page to the screen.

"While each guest brought something different to the classroom, the message remained wonderfully consistent. Reading matters. Stories connect us. Books have the power to open doors," Paniculam said.

For the students of St. Brigid, the Guest Reader Series became more than a special event. It became a season filled with curiosity, laughter and the quiet thrill of discovering that the next great story might come from anywhere, and from anyone willing to open a book and begin.

## Student Music Concert Founder Jim Thomas Honoured at 31<sup>st</sup> Edition of Schools' Show

by Jim Mason

The man behind Stouffville's Student Music Scholarship Concert was honoured during the 31st edition of the event at Stouffville District Secondary School on April 1st.

Former *On the Road* columnist and Stouffville newspaper editor Jim Thomas, 97, founded the concert during the 1990s. On behalf of St. James Presbyterian Church, he invited local schools to send bands or choirs to perform. The idea took hold.

All funds collected at the door and from sponsors are divided among the schools participating each year. The grand total of over 31 concerts is now more than \$150,000.

The recipient of this year's scholarship was Jack Boylen, a member of the host high school's band.

Nine schools, the maximum number for the concert, took part in front of a standing-room-only crowd in the Stouffville District Secondary School auditorium this year:

Stouffville District Secondary School, Harry Bowes Public School, St. Brendan Catholic Elementary, Summitview Public School, Whitchurch Highlands Public School, Stouffville Christian School, Oscar Peterson Public School, Wendat Village Public School, and St. Katharine Drexel Catholic High School.



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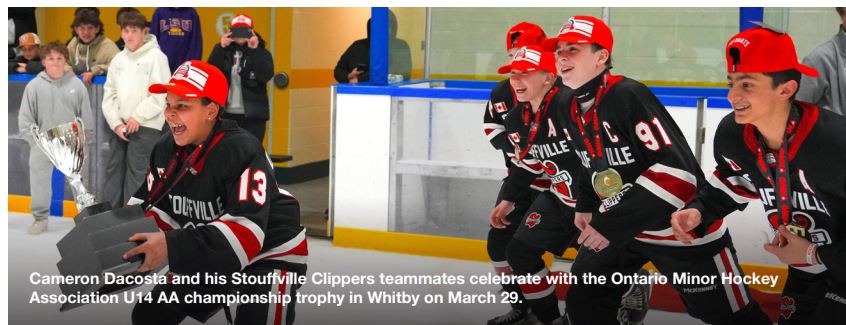
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TOP PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. BRIGID CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

# 'Take It All In': U14 Clippers Savouring Stouffville's First AA Hockey Title

*From winning six games three years ago, the team went 55-7-9, including winning three tournaments*



Cameron Dacosta and his Stouffville Clippers teammates celebrate with the Ontario Minor Hockey Association U14 AA championship trophy in Whitby on March 29.



by Jim Mason  
jimmason905@gmail.com

It hit Chris Carruthers inside a Stouffville supermarket like a fast-moving, errant shopping cart.

Carruthers was head coach of the Stouffville Clippers team that made history this spring, winning Stouffville's first Ontario Minor Hockey Association AA championship ever.

The local association had been snakebit since its rep teams moved from A to the AA level in 2011.

A final appearance here. A regional title there. But no AA OMHA title and the coveted red hats that go with it.

Until March 29 in Whitby, when Carruthers' Clippers erased 3-0 and 6-2 deficits to defeat the Quinte West Golden Hawks from Trenton in the final of the OMHA championship tournament.

"I kept saying 'Did this actually happen?' and 'Wow, this is pretty epic,'" Carruthers told OTR.

"I got stopped in the grocery store the other day with my wife (Mallory). Someone congratulated me," he said. "My wife's like, 'Who was that?' I had no idea."

"The boys have been walking around town with their jersey or their red hats on, and people honk their horns or give them the thumbs up."

"It's pretty epic. I just kept telling the boys to soak it in. Take it all in. Breathe it in. This is unbelievable, you guys."

Epic indeed.

From winning six games three years ago, the team, albeit with reinforcements, went 55-7-9 this season, winning three tournaments.

En route to the title, they scored 323 goals, allowed 13 and recorded 15 shutouts.

"A bunch of them have played AAA and then AA, back and forth," said Carruthers. "They've all known each other for years, between baseball and hockey. It was just time. Some of them weren't winning at AAA and ... wanted to come back home, play with their buddies and make a run for the championship. And they did it."

"I didn't care where anybody came from, what level or what team. We were playing for one reason, for the logo on the front and the guy beside you.

"That was the message all year. You do whatever it takes. To be able to look at that guy that's sitting beside you in the dressing room and tell him you did it," Carruthers said.

The Clippers celebrated winning the title that glorious Sunday evening back in Stouffville at Captain Hook's Bar and Grill.

Another party was in the works this spring, along with the sizing for championship rings that will be delivered later this year.

Whitchurch-Stouffville town council honoured the champs during a council meeting last month.

Carruthers, who grew up playing minor hockey in Stouffville and made it to an OMHA final, sees a renaissance for the sport.

"Hockey's back in Stouffville again," he said. "The (Jr. A) Spirit had a great year and so did a bunch of other teams. The U12s went to the Red Hats semifinals.

"This is what I wanted for Stouffville. It's just so great to see the support from this community filling the arena for games."

What's next?

Carruthers and his coaching staff will be back next season, leading the now U15 Clippers with plans to repeat as OMHA champions. At U15, the OMHA champs advance to the 'All-Ontario' Ontario Hockey Federation championship tournament, along with winners from the GTHL, Alliance (southwestern Ontario) and Northern Ontario.

With AAA and AA spring tryouts on the go at this writing, the Clippers' roster was still a work in progress. 🏒

## Stouffville's 2026 U14 OMHA Champs

Caleb Gregory | Lukas Lehman  
Grayson Rands | Evan Blake  
Cameron Dacosta | Shane Kavanagh  
Tanner Carruthers | Cameron Miller  
Kaden De Freitas | Elliot Doyle  
Mark Tavares | Grayson Stramaglia  
Blake Crowder | Maurice Carlier  
Mikhail Thakor | Ebrahim Gazar  
Caleden Gervais

**Head Coach** - Chris Carruthers

**Assistant Coaches** - Kenny MacDonald and Nolan MacInnis

**Trainer** - Chris Doyle

**Manager** - Jeff Rands

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 AND SIMPSON FAMILY FARMS

by Cassandra Papas



📍 15152 HIGHWAY 48, STOUFFVILLE, ON | 📷 @SIMPSONFAMILYFARMS

On a quiet stretch of land in Ballantrae, up Highway 48 and just south of Aurora Rd., there is a farm that has outlasted wars, weather cycles, economic shifts and the steady march of development.

For more than 175 years, the Simpson family has worked this land.

At the centre of that story is Harry Simpson, farmer, husband, father, and, more recently, a Hall of Fame inductee through the Greater Stouffville Chamber of Commerce, at their Hall of Fame dinner last November, I found myself watching not just a corporate award, but a life unfold.

Titles sit lightly on him. Spend even a short time in his home, and it becomes clear: Harry Simpson is a man shaped by routine, responsibility and a deeply held sense of what it means to live well.

### ROOTS THAT RUN DEEP

The Simpson family's history in the region dates back to the mid-1800s, when Harry's ancestors first settled after arriving during the Irish potato famine. Like many early farming families, survival depended on adaptability. What began as mixed farming, livestock, dairy, and small-scale crops, evolved gradually into the potato-focused operation the family is known for today.

Harry, soon to be 91 years old, represents the fifth generation to operate the farm on this land. Today, the business spans seven generations, with children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren continuing to contribute in different ways.

For Harry, though, this legacy was never something he consciously chose. It was simply the life in front of him.



CURRENT DAY PHOTOGRAPHY SARAH AMELIA | ARCHIVAL & FAMILY PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE SIMPSONS

By his mid-teens, he had left school to work full-time on the farm. It wasn't unusual at the time, many young men made similar choices, but it set the course for everything that followed.

At nine years old, he was already driving a tractor. Before that, he remembers horses still being used in the fields. Farming then, was smaller, slower and more physically demanding. Potatoes were planted and harvested by hand, sacks reused year after year, and labour was constant.

"It was just what you did," he says.

### A LIFE OF WORK, WITHOUT EDGES

When the farm still operated with dairy cows, the work was relentless.

"There was no holiday," Harry explains. "Somebody had to be here twice a day."

Milking happened every morning and every evening, seven days a week. That rhythm dictated everything, when you woke up, when you ate, whether you could leave at all. Even family events had to be planned around it.

"You worked until the work was done," says his wife, Marlene.

And often, the work was never really done.

A typical day stretched to twelve hours or more, starting at dawn and ending after evening chores. There was no distinction between weekday and weekend, no seasonal pause, only a continuous cycle of responsibility.

And yet, neither Harry nor Marlene describes it with resentment. If anything, there's a sense of acceptance, of understanding that this was simply the nature of the life they had chosen, or perhaps inherited.

### A PARTNERSHIP THAT ENDURED

Harry and Marlene's story run parallel to the farm itself, steady, enduring and built over time.

They met as young people through



their church community, spending time together skating at local rinks in Cedar Grove, Newmarket and Stouffville. Their relationship developed gradually, shaped by shared values and a shared understanding of what life would require.

This August, they will celebrate 69 years of marriage.

"I couldn't have done all this without Marlene," Harry says simply.

While Harry worked the fields, Marlene helped hold everything else together, raising children, managing the household and contributing to the farm in ways that were often less visible but no less essential.

Together, they built their home in 1964, just steps from the original farmhouse Harry grew up in. For a time, both houses stood side by side. When they moved into the new home, the transition was so close that furniture was carried just a few feet from one door to the next.

"We didn't even pack," Marlene says.

That sense of continuity, of staying in place, of building on what came before, is a defining feature of their lives.

### FROM LOCAL FIELDS TO REGIONAL SUPPLY

Over the decades, Simpson Family Farms evolved alongside the agricultural industry itself.

In 1983, the business expanded formally under the name Simpson Produce, growing into a wholesale operation that now supplies potatoes to restaurants, grocery stores, chip trucks and commercial buyers across the Greater Toronto Area and beyond, reaching as far as Kingston.



ABOVE: Harry and Marlene Simpson at their Ballantrae home, where generations of family history have unfolded. RIGHT: Harry and Jared Simpson in the fields of Simpson Family Farms.

predictable. Input costs, from fuel to fertilizers, have increased. Land values, particularly in regions close to urban centres like Stouffville, have risen dramatically, making it difficult for new farmers to enter the industry.

And perhaps most significantly, the land itself is changing.



Today, the farm operates not just as a producer but as part of a broader network, partnering with other growers, managing logistics and maintaining a consistent supply in a competitive market.

Harry's grandson, Jared, now plays a leading role in that side of the business, overseeing sales and operations, while Harry's son, Larry, focuses on fieldwork.

Life around the farm has changed; where Harry once harvested potatoes one row at a time, modern equipment can process multiple rows in a single pass. Machinery that once cost a few thousand dollars now commands prices in the hundreds of thousands. A new harvester can exceed \$500,000. Tractors capable of pulling it can cost just as much.

"It's bigger stuff now," Harry says.

But with that scale comes risk. Higher capital costs. Greater dependency on market conditions. And a narrower margin for error.

## FARMING THROUGH NINE DECADES OF CHANGE

When Harry Simpson began farming in the early 1950s, Ontario agriculture looked very different.

Farms were smaller, more diversified, and far more dependent on manual labour. A typical Ontario farm might have included a mix of crops, livestock and dairy, with families producing much of their own food and selling surplus locally. Mechanization was still in transition; tractors were becoming more common, but horses had not yet fully disappeared from the fields.

"I can remember my grandfather working with horses," Harry says. "That's a long time ago."

In the decades that followed, agriculture across Ontario underwent a profound transformation.

By the 1960s and 1970s, mechanization accelerated. Equipment became more specialized, allowing farmers to increase efficiency and scale production. At the same time, farms began shifting away from mixed operations toward more focused, commodity-based production, such as potatoes at Simpson Family Farms.

That shift was not unique. Across the province, the number of farms steadily declined, while the average farm size increased. According to agricultural census data, Ontario has lost tens of thousands of farms over the past century, even as overall production has grown. Fewer farms produce more food, with significantly higher inputs and capital costs.

"You almost have to buy used equipment now," Harry says. "The cost is too high otherwise."

Today, agriculture is one of Canada's largest industries, contributing significantly to the national economy. In Ontario alone, the agri-food sector supports hundreds of thousands of jobs and generates billions in economic activity each year. But behind those numbers is a reality that farmers know well: an industry that operates on tight margins, high risk and factors largely beyond human control.

Weather patterns have become less

## FARMING IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Perhaps the most significant shift Harry Simpson has witnessed isn't just technological; it's geographical.

Land that was once farmed by the Simpson family is now subdivisions, golf courses and roads. Fields that once grew potatoes now hold homes.

"A lot of the fields we used to farm when I was a kid are all in houses now," his grandson, Jared, says.

This change is especially visible in Stouffville, where proximity to Toronto continues to drive growth. The same geography that makes this area ideal for farming, particularly the sandy loam soil that potatoes thrive in, also makes it highly desirable for development.

"This is good soil for potatoes," Harry says. "You don't get this everywhere."

Across southern Ontario, farmland has steadily given way to residential and commercial expansion. What was once continuous agricultural land is now fragmented, fields interrupted by subdivisions, busier roads, and rising land values that make it difficult to expand, or even maintain, existing operations.

For farmers, the pressure is practical as much as philosophical. Moving equipment is harder. Access to land is more limited. And the economics of farming have shifted dramatically.

Equipment costs have risen sharply, with modern machinery requiring significant investment. At the same time,

# "ALL THAT YOU CAN TAKE WITH YOU IN THIS WORLD IS WHAT YOU'VE GIVEN AWAY." - HARRY SIMPSON

fewer young people are entering the industry, leaving many farms without a clear succession plan.

"You look around," Jared says, "and a lot of farmers are in their 60s. There aren't that many younger ones coming up."

"Where's the food going to come from?" he asks.

At the same time, Ontario farming sits at a turning point.

Advancements in technology have enabled the production of more food than ever before. Farms like Simpson Family Farms now supply not only local customers but also restaurants, wholesalers and retailers across the region.

But the barriers to entry have never been higher.

"Grandpa always says, if you want to make a million dollars farming," Jared says with a laugh, "start with two."

For many, the path forward is adaptation.

There is a growing demand for local food, transparency and a closer connection to where food comes from. Simpson Family Farms has responded by introducing initiatives such as its Farm Fresh Box program, which offers seasonal produce directly to local families.

"There's a desire for that now," Jared says. "People want that connection."

Looking ahead, the family is exploring ways to deepen that

relationship, whether through expanded on-farm sales or creating more direct, community-facing experiences.

## THE MEASURE OF A MAN

I asked Harry what he is most proud of, and he hesitated.

"I don't know," he says. But those around him have a clearer answer. One story in particular is often shared.

A man once came to the farm to buy potatoes but didn't have the money to pay. Harry gave him the potatoes anyway. Then he lent him another \$20 so he could buy food on the way home.

"I lost money," Harry says simply. But he also trusted that the man would repay him, and eventually, he did.

To Harry, it was just neighbourly. To others, it's a defining moment.

"That's your name. That's your legacy," Jared says. "That's something you can't buy."

In a world that often prioritizes efficiency, profit and transaction, this kind of instinctive generosity stands out, not because it is extraordinary, but because it has become uncommon.

"I had a man tell me once there wasn't a finer man than my grandfather," Jared says. "And when you hear stories like that, it sticks with you. That's your name. That's your legacy."

Sitting across from him, it's easy to understand why people speak about Harry Simpson the way they do.

"All that you can take with you in this world is what you've given away."

It's a sentiment that runs quietly through the generations, not as something formally taught, but something observed. Lived. Repeated in small, unremarkable moments over time.

For Harry, generosity was never positioned as sacrifice or virtue. It was instinct. A way of moving through the world without keeping score.

And for the family and generations following, that example has become something to model in how they run the farm, how they treat people and how they measure success.

"The point of having isn't just to keep," Jared says. "It's to give."



In January 2019, Simpson Produce officially became Simpson Family Farms, representing both the farm's potato operation and its Farm Fresh Box program.

It's hard not to walk away from a conversation like this and take stock of your own life, what you're building, what you're contributing to and what, ultimately, will last.

## WHAT ENDURES

For more than 30 years, Harry sold produce at the very beloved Stouffville Flea Market, building relationships with customers who returned week after week.

"Everybody knew my grandpa," his grandson says.

That kind of recognition reflects a consistent presence in the community, a willingness to engage, and a reputation built over time.

Harry Simpson's life offers something increasingly rare: a long view.

A reminder that legacy is not built quickly or always visibly. It is shaped in small decisions, repeated over time. In showing up. In doing the work. In treating people well, even when there is no immediate benefit.

The farm will continue. The next generation will adapt, expand and make it their own.

But what will remain, what has already taken root:

A reputation for honesty.

A commitment to community.

A belief that what you give matters as much as what you grow.

Harry's kind of life leaves a mark. Not only on the land, but on the people who remember it. 🌱



Harry Simpson's great-grandchildren, growing up where seven generations before them have lived and farmed.

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# Ready, But Not Reached:

*Understanding the Awareness and Engagement Gap Among Youth*



by Havish Bhavsar  
townofws.ca/YAWG

Young people today are taught and raised to care. They learn about climate change, humanitarian crises, conflicts and social inequalities, and are made aware that these issues shape the communities in which they live. These messages often have the potential to inspire and motivate youth to get involved in their communities.

Yet, the lack of open opportunities or knowledge of how to get involved has left youths feeling disconnected. For some, even involvement in their own communities, whether through recreational activities, local events or contributing their voices and opinions, feels unnecessary or irrelevant, as though these spaces are not meant for them. Even as opportunities for youth engagement begin to appear, participation remains limited, and the issue may be related to the appeal of such opportunities more than you think.

There are many other ways for youth in Stouffville to get involved, enjoy Stouffville and have their voices heard. In local high schools, students can take on leadership roles through Student Council and Equity or Diversity Committees, where they represent their peers and help organize school-wide initiatives. At the community level, youth can engage through opportunities offered by the Town of Stouffville, such as volunteering for events like the Stouffville Strawberry Festival or participating in Town-run programs and youth recreation initiatives.

Additionally, organizations like the Stouffville Library offer Teen Advisory Groups (TAG) that meet once a month and regular volunteer opportunities when you sign up for their newsletters. Youth can also stay updated on the Town's recreational activities on the @stouffvilleplay Instagram account.

Although a key question remains: how many young people are aware of opportunities like these, to advocate, make change and represent their communities? In many examples,



awareness and engagement seem limited. This reveals an underlying issue of disconnect between the available opportunities and the youth they are meant to reach. This disconnect becomes even more evident when looking at the youth responses themselves. In a recent survey conducted by the Youth Advisory Working Group, a majority of respondents were unaware of the youth working group, and most had never attended one of their events.

Responses also revealed a clear interest in more engaging and relevant opportunities, including social events, career-focused workshops and spaces to connect with peers. However, many of these desired activities are already available to youth. So, why are youth asking for more if these opportunities exist? This may be due to a lack of awareness of these initiatives, suggesting the issue is not about creating opportunities but about ensuring youth know they exist.

In a time dominated by social media, many organizations still rely on traditional methods. Posters, announcements, or passive graphics fail to capture attention or reach a wider audience. Survey responses consistently pointed to the use of platforms like Instagram, with reels that leverage current trends to convey the message. Furthermore, they requested promotion through schools and peer networks. For youth, engagement is not always, or even

entirely, about the content and the event itself, but about how they are depicted to them.

Young people have consistently demonstrated that they care about the world around them and want to make a difference. However, without clear awareness, engagement and the proper methods to bridge generations, the potential is meaningless. Youth cannot be involved if the given opportunities, events, recreation and chances to advocate do not reach them.

From the perspective of youth in the community, there is a clear message for businesses, organizations and community leaders who aim to create opportunities for youth. Whether initiatives are local or global, recreational, extracurricular, or issue-focused, reaching young people requires more than simply offering programs. It requires meeting them where they are. To properly engage and spread awareness to achieve their goals. This means using social media effectively, building connections through schools, and taking the time to engage with youth directly, face-to-face.

Ultimately, in communities like Stouffville, where opportunities are beginning to grow, the focus must now shift toward making those opportunities visible, relevant and accessible to all youth. Because the future is not something youth will simply step into, it is something they are ready to help shape today. 📌

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# Should You Run for Council?

*Passionate Leaders Needed to Uphold Stouffville's Values and Build Our Future*



by Susan Tucker  
OTRtipoff@outlook.com

As spring arrives and the 2026 municipal election season begins, with candidate nominations having opened May 1st, Stouffville faces a simple question with real consequences: who will lead our town for the next four years?

It affects the roads we use, the parks our kids play in, and the growth that will define Stouffville's future. This October, we need more than names on a ballot. We need committed, passionate residents who believe in our community's values and are ready to do the work to make a real difference.

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville's 2022–2026 Strategic Plan is clear about where we are headed. The vision is a welcoming community with a strong rural-urban balance and an exceptional quality of life. The mission is to build a vibrant community through excellent service. These are more than statements on a page. They reflect what generations of Stouffville families have valued and what our community motto captures so well: country close to the city. We want rural charm, modern convenience and decision-making grounded in transparency and collaboration. But with growth projected to push our population toward 100,000 by 2051, that balance is under real pressure. If growth is poorly managed, we risk losing what makes Stouffville special, from safe neighbourhoods and green spaces, to strong local businesses and a true sense of community.

That's why we need candidates who are committed to these values, not as abstract ideals but as daily priorities. Strong leaders step up because they care about protecting our Oak Ridges Moraine heritage while welcoming sustainable growth. They support A Town That Grows by streamlining development without compromising quality. They advance A Healthy & Greener Town by expanding trails, protecting tree canopy, and ensuring parkland keeps pace with growth. They believe in An Engaging

Town by supporting inclusive events, our library and arts centre, and making sure every resident feels heard. And they demand Good Governance through fiscal responsibility, transparent budgeting, and accountability that delivers results while keeping taxes in check.

But passion alone isn't enough. Stouffville needs leaders who are willing to turn values into action. It means long evenings in committee meetings, weekends knocking on doors, tough conversations at Town Hall and the discipline to read detailed staff reports before casting a vote. It also means providing oversight across key service areas, from keeping our roads safe and moving under A Town That Moves, to ensuring emergency services and by-law enforcement protect our community as A Safe Town, to strengthening organizational effectiveness so staff can deliver excellent service without waste.

We've seen what dedicated councillors can deliver, from progress on downtown revitalization and active transportation to economic development that supports farms, wineries and small businesses. But major decisions lie ahead, including diversifying housing, strengthening transit connections and preparing for a growing senior population. We can't afford councillors who coast or pursue personal agendas. We need doers who listen to residents at coffee shops and community events, then roll up their sleeves to deliver results. Strong leaders collaborate across wards, with York Region, and with our neighbours in Markham and Uxbridge. They bring fresh ideas shaped by lived experience, whether as parents worried about school traffic, small-business owners navigating red tape, farmers protecting agricultural land or retirees advocating for accessible recreation.

Running for council is no small commitment. It means time away from family, long evenings and busy weekends. It brings scrutiny, criticism, and the occasional sleepless night before a major vote. But the rewards are meaningful. You help shape the town your children and grandchildren will call home. You build

lasting relationships with neighbours and community leaders. You gain skills in leadership, budgeting and public service that last a lifetime. Most importantly, you leave a legacy of safer streets, greener parks, stronger local businesses and a community that feels more connected than ever.

Stouffville has always thrived when everyday residents step forward. People from all walks of life have served with distinction because they cared enough to contribute. To help new candidates get started, the Town hosted information sessions that explain the role, the rules, and what council service truly involves. And if you've ever raised a concern about traffic on Main Street, called for more family friendly events, or worried about preserving our small-town character as we grow, this is your moment. It's time to move from conversation to action. Stop talking and start leading!

This election is about more than filling seats. It's about protecting the values that make Stouffville unique: integrity in decision-making, collaboration that builds trust and service excellence that puts residents first. We need passionate, hardworking people from every walk of life, in every ward, to step forward. If you believe in our rural urban balance and are ready to help build a vibrant, welcoming future, put your name forward when nominations open. Talk to your family, your neighbours, your colleagues and encourage them to do the same.

The Town has set up a website to get more election information: [stouffvillevotes.ca](http://stouffvillevotes.ca)

Stouffville's best days are still ahead, but only if the right people show up. The town we love deserves nothing less. Who will answer the call? 🗳️

NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN

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Doors Open is a provincial initiative designed to highlight cultural, architectural, and environmental heritage throughout communities and cities across Ontario to provide the public with unique experiences and engage them with the community. Explore some of Whitchurch-Stouffville's oldest buildings and learn the roles they have played throughout our Town's fascinating history.

[townofws.ca/doorsopen](http://townofws.ca/doorsopen)



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 Stroll the back streets of Stouffville Centre North, established as a Heritage Conservation District in 2024. Take the road less travelled to learn about the District, Heritage Awards and Commemorative Plaque Program.



**Site Locations**  : Washrooms Available  : Accessible

**1 Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum & Community Centre**    
 14732 Woodbine Avenue

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum has preserved and interpreted the Town's heritage since 1971. Explore heritage buildings & exhibition galleries. Featured exhibition, *Beyond Words: Dictionaries and Indigenous Languages*, on loan from the Canadian Language Museum.

**2 Bill Fisch Forest Stewardship & Education Centre**    
 16389 Highway 48

Celebrate the York Regional Forest at this innovative LEED platinum-certified building. Visit the displays and enjoy a guided tour of the facility.


**3 Borlak Law**    
 6372 Main Street

Visit Borlak Law, operating from the c. 1895 home of village carriage maker William Todd. Admire the architecture and some of the original stained-glass windows while learning about the business's offerings today.



**4 Harmony Hall**   
 14663 Woodbine Avenue

Opened in 2024, Harmony Hall is located in the former Vandorf Community Hall and is now a modern live-music and cultural venue. View historic photographs and displays, enjoy live acoustic performances by local musicians and perform your own song.

**5 Holy Theotokos Convent / Joyous Light Candles**   
 4369 Faulkner Avenue

Holy Theotokos is a Greek Orthodox convent that manufactures pure beeswax candles. Tour the chapel and the candle shop to see how this property has changed and adapted over time.

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**Latcham Society**  
**Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation**

Elsie with her mother Mrs. Lui

**6 Jean-Baptiste Lainé Site**  
Parking at 99 Reeves Way Boulevard

The Jean-Baptiste Lainé Site was home to a remarkable late-16th-century ancestral Wendat community. Explore and learn about this amazing archaeological site with self-guided tours and a staffed interpretation table. From 12 PM – 2 PM join the Odeiwin Foundation to learn more about the Community Garden.

**7 Muddy York Brewing Co.**  
50 Innovator Avenue, Unit #1

As the only brewery in Stouffville, Muddy York Brewing Co. provides a welcoming atmosphere for both visitors and locals. Visit the site for a staff-led tour, learn about locally crafted beverages, and try a taste of Stouffville.

**8 Pickering College Blue & Silver Farm**  
17019 Woodbine Avenue

Experience the outdoor learning opportunities that Blue & Silver Farm has to offer. Learn about Pickering College's outdoor learning centre while taking a self-guided tour of the property, greenhouses, forests, and the outdoor kitchen.

**11 Stock & Crown**  
27 Winona Drive

Stock & Crown is a local coffee shop and roastery offering coffee education. Learn about roasting, brewing and tasting coffee. Tours are offered from 11 AM - 1 PM and 2 PM - 4 PM. Enjoy a fresh sample and purchase items in the café.

**⚠️ Please note ongoing construction on Winona Drive.**



**12 Stouffville Creek Retirement Residence**  
40 Freel Lane

Opened in 2009, Stouffville Creek Retirement Residence provides seniors with independent, supportive and assisted living lifestyles. Take part in guided tours, enjoy snacks, refreshments and entertainment.

**13 Wesley United Church**  
15296 Woodbine Avenue

Built in 1881, Wesley United Church features stained glass windows and other unique features. While visiting, enjoy the church's newly acquired organ and take tours of the building and adjacent cemetery.

**14 Willowgrove**  
11737 McCowan Road

Established in 1968, Willowgrove inspires kids and families to get outdoors, learn, and grow together. Explore the hayloft, enjoy wagon rides, visit animals, roast marshmallows at a campfire, browse the pop-up market, and stop by the camp information booth. No pets allowed, service animals are welcome.



**9 Richmond Hill Live Steamers**  
15922 McCowan Road

Experience miniature railway demonstrations at this outdoor model railway run by hobbyists and engineers. Rides are limited to one ride per person. Entry closes at 2 PM.

**10 Shadow Lake Centre**  
15041 Ninth Line

With over 120 hectares (300 acres), Shadow Lake includes a beautiful lake, natural forest, walking trails and buildings over 100 years old. Take in the scenery while enjoying walking tours, slideshows and displays depicting the site's history.



- |   |  |   |  |                                |
|---|--|---|--|--------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> W-S Museum and Community Centre    | <b>4</b> Harmony Hall                                  | <b>7</b> Muddy York Brewing Co.               | <b>10</b> Shadow Lake Centre                     | <b>13</b> Wesley United Church |
| <b>2</b> Bill Fisch Forest Stewardship & EC | <b>5</b> Holy Theotokos Convent / Joyous Light Candles | <b>8</b> Pickering College Blue & Silver Farm | <b>11</b> Stock & Crown                          | <b>14</b> Willowgrove          |
| <b>3</b> Borlak Law                         | <b>6</b> Jean-Baptiste Lainé Site                      | <b>9</b> Richmond Hill Live Steamers          | <b>12</b> Stouffville Creek Retirement Residence |                                |

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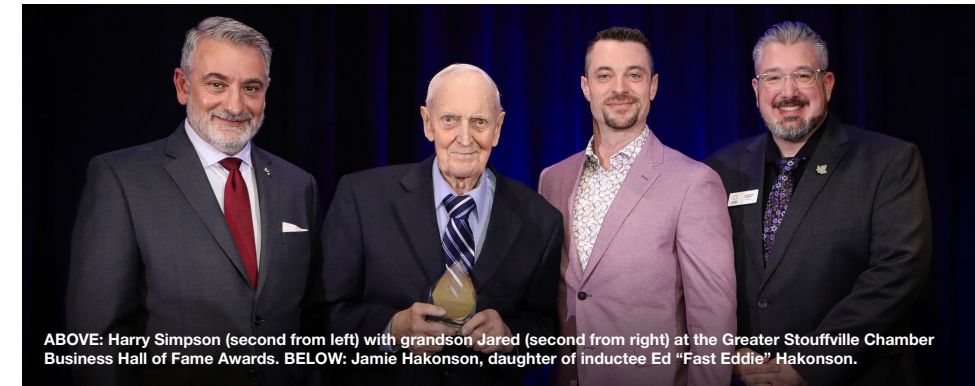
# 2025 Inductees enter Stouffville Business Hall of Fame

by Glenn Jackson

The Greater Stouffville Chamber's Business Hall of Fame celebrates the businesses, people, and families whose ideas, determination, and dedication have shaped Stouffville's business community over generations. Honoured at the Chamber's Hall of Fame Dinner on November 14, the 2025 inductees represent a wide range of industries but share a commitment to excellence, innovation, and strong local roots.

David Barthau of Barthau Jewellers was recognized for his lasting impact on both the jewellery industry and the community through his family's business. Founded in 1968 by his parents, Lloyd and Kay Barthau, the original Markham store established a legacy that has spanned more than five decades. In 1978, David and his wife Janet brought that legacy to Stouffville, evolving the shop from a jewellery and gift store into a trusted destination for fine jewellery and timepieces. The move to Main St. in 2010 marked another milestone, introducing in-house digital 3D design that allows customers to see custom pieces before they are made. As David prepares to pass the business on to his son, his induction honours a lifetime defined by craftsmanship, innovation, and deep community connection.

Patti-Lynn Card, founder of Patti-Lynn Interiors, was honoured for her leadership in the flooring industry and her long-standing commitment to giving back. Her family's flooring story began in 1966 with her father's business in Sudbury, where Patti-Lynn learned sales and customer service at an early age. In 1986, she and her husband Rick



ABOVE: Harry Simpson (second from left) with grandson Jared (second from right) at the Greater Stouffville Chamber Business Hall of Fame Awards. BELOW: Jamie Hakonson, daughter of inductee Ed "Fast Eddie" Hakonson.

launched Patti-Lynn Interiors, combining flooring and window treatments with her skills as a trained seamstress. After moving to Stouffville in 1994, the business continued to grow, eventually becoming a true family enterprise with their sons and daughter-in-law joining the team. Respected for her design expertise and strong industry relationships, Patti-Lynn is equally known for supporting local sports teams and community initiatives. Her induction recognizes a career marked by creativity, entrepreneurship, and community leadership.

The Chamber posthumously honoured Ed "Fast Eddie" Hakonson, founder of Choko Motorsports and Fast Eddie Speedwear, whose entrepreneurial spirit left a lasting mark on motorsports and the community. Born in 1949 and overcoming childhood polio, Ed became a celebrated racer before founding Choko Motorsports in 1983 with his wife Hiedi. What began as snowmobile apparel evolved into a globally recognized motorsport brand and a successful NASCAR race team, EHR. Beyond business, Ed founded the Stouffville Spirit Jr. A Hockey Club, supported numerous community initiatives, and advocated for children with physical disabilities through his work with Easter Seals. His induction honours a life defined by resilience, innovation, and generosity.

Harry Simpson, a fifth-generation farmer and the heart of Simpson Family Farms, was recognized for his contributions to agriculture and

community life. Born and raised on the family farm, Harry and his wife Marlene expanded the operation in 1983 with the launch of Simpson Produce, now Simpson Family Farms. Known for exceptional potatoes and the Farm Fresh Box Program, Harry was a beloved presence at the Stouffville Country Market, where his passion for farming and storytelling were well known. Guided by faith, family, and service, his induction celebrates a lifetime of stewardship and connection.

Finally, brothers Richard and Robert Schickedanz, along with their late father Daniel Schickedanz, were honoured for their impact on the construction industry through FarSight Homes and its predecessor, Schickedanz Bros. Ltd. After immigrating to Canada in 1950, Daniel built his first home in 1951, establishing a legacy of integrity and craftsmanship. That legacy continued when Richard founded FarSight Homes in 1999, joined by Robert in 2001. Both engineers, the brothers combine technical excellence with long-standing community involvement. Their induction honours a family whose work continues to shape Stouffville's landscape and future.

Together, the 2025 inductees embody the spirit of Stouffville – where business success, family legacy, and community commitment go hand in hand. 🏡

For more information about the Chamber and the inductees, visit [stouffvillechamber.ca](http://stouffvillechamber.ca).



PHOTOGRAPHY BY VALERIA MITSUBATA



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Thursday - Friday 9 AM - 6 PM

Saturday 9 AM - 4 PM

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9AM - 2PM 6240 MAIN ST. MAY 9 - OCTOBER 17

# Help Shape the Future of Transit in Stouffville

York Region Transit seeks community input on proposed 2027 service changes

York Region Transit (YRT) is planning route and service improvements for 2027, and they'd like to hear from you.

Learn about the changes and submit your feedback at [yrt.ca/TransitPlan](http://yrt.ca/TransitPlan) until the end of May.

You can also chat with YRT staff in person at the Stouffville Public Works Open House (Operations Centre, 5061 Bethesda Sideroad) on Saturday, May 23rd, from 9:30 AM to 1:30 PM

YRT offers various services in Stouffville to help you stay connected to your community:

## On-Request Services

On-Request is a flexible, ride-sharing transit option available in select areas. You can travel between an address and a YRT route, or another address where a YRT route is not available. You can book rides through the YRT On-Request App or by calling 1-844-667-5327. Fares are the same as regular YRT services. You can pay with PRESTO, e-tickets, debit/credit or cash. Prebooking is available up to one day in advance.

## On-Request Stouffville

On-Request Stouffville allows travel from a home address to a nearby YRT route or another location not served by regular buses within the service area. Service hours are weekdays from 5:30 AM to 11 PM, Saturdays from 8 AM to 11 PM and Sundays/holidays from 8 AM to 8 PM. Weekend/holiday service was recently introduced as of April 26, 2026. This change provides new travel opportunities within Stouffville and Ballantrae, including new connections to Route 9 – Ninth Line and GO Transit service at Stouffville and Old Elm GO Stations. Through the Ride to GO program, customers with proof of GO fare can travel on YRT for free using their PRESTO, credit or debit cards.

## On-Request North-Central

As of September 2025, On-Request service is available in the communities of Gormley, Vandorf and Preston Lake. Service is available on weekdays from 5:30 AM to 11 PM, Saturdays from 8 AM to

11 PM and Sundays/holidays from 8 AM to 8 PM.

## On-Request 65+

Seniors aged 65 and older can take advantage of YRT's On-Request 65+ service, which uses smaller vehicles for door-to-door pickup anywhere in York Region. Available weekdays from 7 AM to 3 PM, this service allows travel within five kilometres of the pickup point. Fares are \$2.52 with a PRESTO card or \$4.50 using cash, debit or credit.

## Mobility On-Request Paratransit

YRT offers a door-to-door, shared ride, accessible public transit service for people with disabilities. To use this service, you must meet specific eligibility criteria. Learn more at [yrt.ca/MORParatransit](http://yrt.ca/MORParatransit)

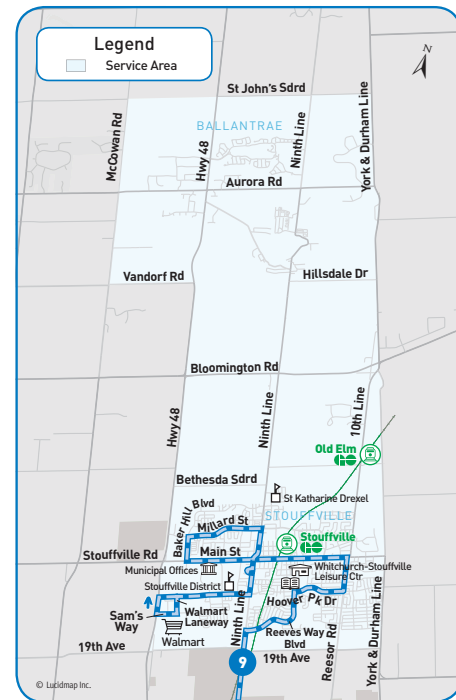
## Route 9 – Ninth Line

YRT continues to operate Route 9 – Ninth Line, serving the Stouffville area seven days a week. YRT plans to extend Route 9 to Steeles Avenue to improve connections with TTC services and businesses in southern York Region.

## School Specials

YRT offers three School Special routes to support students travelling to local high schools: 414 – St. Katharine Drexel, 415 – Stouffville District and 417 – Bill Hogarth. These routes are scheduled to meet morning and afternoon bell times. In September 2026, YRT plans to add an additional Route 414 morning trip, and extend the route along Sunnyridge Avenue, McKean Drive and Yakefarm Boulevard to service the new subdivisions south of Hoover Park Drive.

## On-Request Stouffville



Get the **YRT On-Request App** to book and manage your trips. Download it for free.

Your input plays an important role in shaping the future of transit in York Region. Every comment helps YRT plan services that better meet the needs of our communities.

Make your voice heard at [yrt.ca/TransitPlan](http://yrt.ca/TransitPlan)

# DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

AN UPDATE BY GLENN JACKSON

## Construction tendering process begins

Spring brought a big step forward for the Stouffville Downtown Revitalization project, as the design team, led by Accardi Engineering Group, completed and submitted the detailed design package. Built on months of collaboration, the submission brings together input from Town staff and the community, transforming early concepts into a clearer, more developed vision for downtown.

With the design now in hand, the Town has begun a detailed review. Feedback is being gathered and will help guide the next round of refinements as the project continues to take shape.

As highlighted in the previous edition of *On the Road*, work has also continued behind the scenes with the Town and the project's landscape architect, particularly on streetscaping elements. Key areas of focus include the proposed lounge area on the north side of Main Street near Stouffville Creek, updated streetlighting and electrical design, and new seating areas. These features, which will shape how people experience the downtown area, will continue to be refined as the design evolves.

On the procurement side, the Town has issued a Request for Pre-Qualification (RFPQ) to establish a shortlist of contractors who will be invited to participate in the next stage of the process. The RFPQ was expected to close by the end of April 2026. A Request for Tender is planned for July, with construction anticipated to begin before the end of the year. The next public Open House is slated for this summer.

Construction is expected to roll out in phases, continuing through to the end of 2028. In the meantime, each edition of *On the Road* will share updates as the project moves from design to reality.

## Get project updates

Follow this project and sign up to receive the eNewsletter at [townofws.ca/downtown](http://townofws.ca/downtown)

## TOWN EVENTS

# Looking Ahead to Summer

Summer arrives in Stouffville with a full lineup of free, family-friendly events running from May through August. From live music to outdoor movies and community celebrations, there are many ways to enjoy the warmer months.

The season kicked off on Friday, May 15 with Victoria Day weekend festivities in Memorial Park, which features music and a spectacular fireworks display.

## SUNDAY, JUNE 21

### Main Street 5K & 1K Kids Dash

Memorial Park & Main Street

In support of the Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation, this popular community event welcomes runners, walkers, and spectators. Register now, at [townofws.ca/5K](http://townofws.ca/5K)

## FRIDAY, JUNE 26 – SUNDAY, JUNE 28

### Whitchurch-Stouffville Strawberry Festival

Memorial Park

Returning for its 42nd year, the festival will feature a marketplace, live entertainment, rides, food trucks and fun for all ages. Learn more at [townofws.ca/strawfest](http://townofws.ca/strawfest)

## WEDNESDAY, JULY 1

### Canada Day Fireworks

Memorial Park

Show your Canadian pride with live music, kids' activities, food vendors, and the largest fireworks display of the year.

New this summer, sports fans can join us for Game On, Stouffville. These events will feature live outdoor soccer watch parties on June 12 in Civic Square and July 1 in Memorial Park before Canada Day celebrations begin. Canada Day continues with food trucks, live entertainment, family activities, and fireworks.

Other highlights include Symphony Under the Stars on July 17, Movies in the Park on July 24 and August 14, and Stouffville Ribfest from August 7 to 9.



For full event details and sponsorship opportunities, visit [townofws.ca/events](http://townofws.ca/events)

# Zoning changes denied for mosque on Winona Dr.

Pool expansion, whistle cessation move forward after Council backing



by Glenn Jackson  
glenn.jackson@townofws.ca

## Place of Worship on Winona Drive

On May 6th, Council considered a zoning by-law amendment for the property at 27 Winona Drive to permit the development of a new Place of Worship. Council reviewed revisions made since the June 18th, 2025, statutory public meeting and accompanying staff analysis. At the meeting, Council did not approve the zoning by-law amendment, and the proposal will not proceed under the current application.

The proposed amendment would have applied a site-specific zoning exception within the Commercial Mixed Use – Western Approach zone to allow a three-storey building with a gross floor area of approximately 1,922 square metres, integrated on-site parking, and modified setback and landscaped area standards. Revisions to the original proposal were intended to address public concerns, including a reduction in building size, removal of a proposed gymnasium and community hall, and the provision of additional parking to meet zoning requirements.

## Whistle Cessation Report Update

On April 15th, Council received an update on the Whistle Cessation Project at the Hoover Park Drive and Reeves Way Boulevard railway crossings. The project, approved in 2019, aims to eliminate train whistling by upgrading the crossings to meet federal rail safety requirements.

Staff reported that coordination with Metrolinx and the contractor revealed a more complex scope than originally anticipated, including accessibility compliant sidewalk reconstruction, pedestrian safety features, upgraded markings and signage and required railway protection. These requirements increased both project complexity and costs.

Council approved the reallocation of approximately \$348,500 from savings in



On May 6th, Stouffville Council turned down zoning amendments that would have permitted a mosque at 27 Winona Drive (concept drawing above).

closed 2025 capital projects to address the funding gap and allow construction to proceed this year, avoiding cancellation costs and mitigating higher future expenses.

## Leisure Centre and Pool Expansion

On May 6th, Stouffville Council received an update on the Leisure Centre Pool Expansion.

The update noted the expansion would be approximately 2,300 to 2,800 square metres, and include a new six-lane, competition-ready 25-metre pool, a universal changeroom with accessible stalls, second-floor walking track and studio space, additional parking, and improved internal circulation. The project is intended to address ongoing capacity pressures, as the Leisure Centre pool continues to operate at full capacity with sustained program waitlists.

Council also directed staff to apply for federal funding through the Build Communities Strong Fund to support this project. Staff highlighted that the project is considered shovel-ready, aligning with eligibility requirements. If approved, staff will engage external grant support to strengthen the Town's submission.

Design funding was approved in the 2025 Capital Budget, with construction identified in the 2026–2030 Long Range

Capital Budget Forecast. Construction costs are estimated to be between \$27.5 million and \$30 million. If grant funding is secured, the Town's share is expected to be funded through development charges, reserves and potentially debt financing.

## COUNCIL & PUBLIC PLANNING MEETINGS

### Upcoming Council Meetings:

Wednesday, June 3 – 1 PM  
Wednesday, June 17 – 1 PM

### Next Public Meetings:

Wednesday, June 3 – 7 PM  
Wednesday, June 17 – 7 PM

Agendas for Council and Public Meetings will be available on [townofws.ca/council](https://townofws.ca/council) at 12 PM the Thursday prior to the meeting.

Anyone wishing to provide comments may attend the meeting in-person at the Municipal Offices.

Contact [clerks@townofws.ca](mailto:clerks@townofws.ca) for more information.

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# talk of the town

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## PUBLIC NOTICE

### Weekend Road Closure

May 1 – Sep. 28 | Fri 3:30 PM – Mon 8 AM

Burkholder Street, between Park Drive and the Leisure Centre driveway (2 Park Drive), will be closed every weekend. On long weekends, the closure extends until Tuesday at 8 AM.

[townofws.ca/closures](https://townofws.ca/closures)

### Pride Flag Raising

Jun. 3 | 4 PM | Community Flag Pole

Join us as we celebrate inclusivity and acceptance in our community at the Pride Flag Raising.

[townofws.ca/prideflag](https://townofws.ca/prideflag)

### Musselman's Lake Community – Ninth Line Visioning

Jun. 18 | 7 – 9 PM | Ballantrae Community Centre

Join us for Open House #3 to learn more about the Ninth Line Visioning work and share your feedback.

[townofws.ca/ninthlinevision](https://townofws.ca/ninthlinevision)

### Help Shape Stouffville's Economic Future.

The Town is launching a new Economic Development Strategy and Downtown Economic Development Roadmap with the Canadian Urban Institute to support business growth, investment, jobs, and long-term prosperity.

A community survey will launch in June, with opportunities to learn more and share your feedback.

[townofws.ca/ecdevstrategy](https://townofws.ca/ecdevstrategy)



Stay in the loop on projects shaping Stouffville, visit [townofws.ca/projects](https://townofws.ca/projects) to explore the initiatives helping build our community's future.

## MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

### 2026 Municipal and School Board Trustee Election

Stouffville voters will have a new option in the 2026 Municipal Election: internet voting. Electors can vote online from October 17 at 10 AM to October 26 at 8 PM.

### Interested in running for office?

Nomination papers can be filed by appointment only with the Clerk's Office until August 21 at 2 PM.

[stouffvillevotes.ca](https://stouffvillevotes.ca)

## MUSEUM

### Whitchurch-Stouffville Heritage Awards

Nominations open May 6 – Jul. 10

Recognize outstanding conservation, adaptive reuse and heritage restoration in the community.

[townofws.ca/heritage](https://townofws.ca/heritage)

### Teddy Bear Tea

May 23 | 10 – 11:30 AM | \$10 per child

Bring your favourite teddy bear for a morning of stories, crafts, snacks and fun activities. Adult chaperones are free.

[townofws.ca/museumevents](https://townofws.ca/museumevents)

### In Conversation with Waubgeshig Rice

Jun. 16 | 7 – 8:30 PM | Free

Join acclaimed Anishinaabe author and journalist Waubgeshig Rice for a discussion of his bestselling novel Moon of the Turning Leaves. Ages 12+.

[townofws.ca/rice](https://townofws.ca/rice)

## 19 ON THE PARK THEATRE

### Line Dancing Social (19+)

Jun. 4 | 7 – 10:30 PM

From beginner-friendly instruction to open dancing, enjoy a lively night on the dance floor.

### The Beresfords: Country on the Patio

Jun. 25 | 7 PM | Free

York Region favourites bring country-rock classics and original songs to the Patio Series.

[townofws.ca/19otp](https://townofws.ca/19otp)

## RECREATION

### Summer Camp 2026 Open House

May 23 | 10 AM – 1 PM

Visit the Leisure Centre to meet camp staff, ask questions, enjoy activities and get a preview of this summer's camps.

[townofws.ca/camps](https://townofws.ca/camps)

## EVENTS

### Public Works Open House

May 23 | 9:30 AM – 1:30 PM | Operations Centre

Get an up-close look at big trucks and equipment at our Touch-a-Truck experience, fun for kids and kids at heart!

[townofws.ca/publicworks](https://townofws.ca/publicworks)

### Stouffville Main Street 5K

Jun. 21 | 8 AM | Memorial Park

Lace up and hit the pavement in support of the Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation. Enjoy a lively run through downtown while helping raise funds for our local hospital. Register by June 14.

[townofws.ca/5K](https://townofws.ca/5K)

## Helping **Stouffville Homeowners** Rent Their **Secondary Suites** for Income

**Secondary suites** such as basement apartments and other additional residential units (ARUs) can help homeowners **generate additional income** when times are tight.

-  This year, I'm assisting up to **five Stouffville homeowners** market their existing secondary suites to secure tenants at no cost for my services.
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This initiative **supports homeowners** while helping add more rental options within our **Stouffville community!**

### UPCOMING EVENTS

SELLER'S SEMINAR

BUYER'S SEMINAR

BOARD GAME NIGHT

MOVIE NIGHT

APRIL 9  
MAY 21  
JUNE 18

APRIL 23  
MAY 14  
JUNE 11

APRIL 16  
MAY 21  
JUNE 18

APRIL 19  
MAY 29  
JUNE 14



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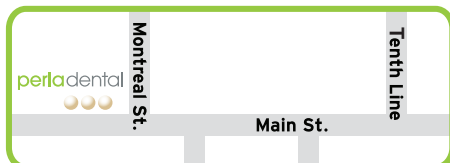
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