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NEWS MAGAZINE



The Backroad to Harrison Discovering Hopcott Farm - Chris Millikan full article page 17

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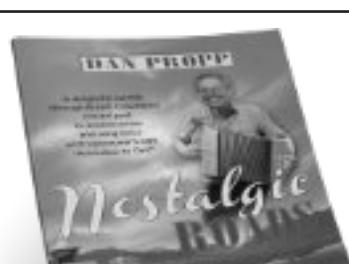
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ACCORDION TO DAN

These are interesting times today and for some of us who used to be youngsters as another

new year makes its latest entrance on the world's stage. Some of us seniors still enjoy performing on a stage with a vaudeville 'pun' type skit. For example, the old comical skit, "Hey buddy, you should be on the stage!" "Really! Why?" "Cause, I hope you will be on it. There's one leaving in a few minutes." Thus, the following bit of rhyme.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Do you recall those simple days? How about the first time you saw an amazing 21 inch black and white TV. Watching the Dinah Shore show in black & white, then suddenly one day Perry Como in living colour on NBC. So much has changed in so many ways. We could never have perceived the concept of Canada becoming a fifty-first state and other 'tariff-ic' concepts, unbelievable! Plus, a similar possibility of Greenland, a semi-autonomous territory of Denmark, going through the same fate, totally inconceivable!

Some of us 'dinosaurs' (hey that rhymes with Dinah Shore) still reflect back to different times.

The word 'inflation' was usually connected to (another pun) 'Good Year' Tires and balloons.

Up here north of the border in the beautiful province of BC, some of us still can remember the provincial highway's slogan "sorry for the inconvenience"; and the days of Premiers WAC Bennett and later Dave Barrett, the rock and roll era and many of the old-time songs. Those were the days of Front-Page Challenge on the CBC; and Walter Cronkite's memorable words as he always signed off from the CBS evening news, "And that's the way it is." Wow how life once used to be. Times sure have changed more than just a small degree, one must confess.

MEMORIES OF YESTERDAY'S VANCOUVER

The Strand Theatre on Granville Street and the Hudson's Bay, oh my now gone and just history slipped away. The Birks clock on the corner of Granville and Georgia Streets, and it doesn't end there. Do you remember Scott's restaurant and their



Yesterday's news lead to memories of the past. (photo: Dan Propp)

amazing fabulous chiffon lemon pie?

How about the Ham Shack close to the Granville bridge and Arnold's Pawn Shop. Recollecting how things used to be in the city, it just doesn't seem to stop. Duthie's Books, Eaton's, Woodward's, Simpson Sears, Woolworths have all waved away. Wosks, The Army and Navy, how life once used to be. For some of us, those years were very special and perhaps quite a price today we pay.

Those wooden houses in Vancouver's West End have over the years been replaced by high rises. Some of us still recall the sound of a horse pulling a dairy van up and down Davie Street in the early nineteen fifties, the old Card Shop on the corner of Burrard and Robson. How about all those amazing tv antennas on top of roof tops. It was a special time. As were so many popular programs we used to watch.

REMEMBER?

The Lone Ranger, The Cisco Kid, Hopalong Cassidy, Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, do you recall

those days? Some of us still have that capacity, reflecting back we fondly gaze. School and lunches and recess, going crazy trying to win at playing marbles back in the early nineteen fifties at school. We fondly recall the British Empire and Commonwealth games in nineteen fifty-four. The thrill of seeing the Bannister and Landy race to break the 4-minute mile barrier which was called the Miracle Mile at Empire Stadium. We also miss those familiar cars no longer regularly on the roads such as Vauxhalls, Austins, Pontiacs, Ramblers, Plymouth and Mercury. "Thanks for the memories," as Bob Hope used to sing and say.

As the year two thousand twenty-six makes its entrance in this still relatively new millennium, it will be interesting to witness what will change and what remains.

Please visit www.Nostalgicroads.Weebly.com
Search for Song CD's by Dan Propp via cdbaby.com and also www.soundcloud.com
Plus books via www.amazon.ca

Telephone Contact Numbers PRODUCTION / DISTRIBUTION

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Online: todaysseniornewsmagazine.com

Columnist & Community Relations:

Mel Kositsky 604-649-1648

or email at: melkositsky@gmail.com

Advertising

John Ross 604-992-0783

Emergency 604-992-0721

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3 RESOLUTIONS FOR A HEALTHIER, MORE CANADIAN 2026

With the start of the new year, many of us are looking for ways to feel healthier, make financial decisions we're happier with and increase our sense of well-being. Setting a list of resolutions and sticking with them can feel like a daunting task, and it can be. But making a meaningful change doesn't have to mean changing everything—here are three simple steps you can take toward meeting your goals:

Eat more healthily by making simple changes. Making meals lighter and more balanced just takes making some simple swaps. Abbey Sharp, registered dietitian, explains:

"One effective way to eat more healthily is to consider adding a couple more plant-based meals to your weekly plan. By working in more nutritious Canadian-grown staples such as chickpeas, lentils, wild rice, peas and beans, or by swapping butter for another Canadian-grown alternative like canola oil, you can start to feel a difference in how you feel throughout the day. Taking small steps can help put you on the path toward real, positive change to your diet."

Make a difference in your community by supporting local. Check the label before buying: "Made in Canada" means that the product was completed here, but may contain imported ingredients. "Product of Canada" means that at least 98 per cent of the ingredients and production costs are Canadian.

There's one ingredient in a surprising number of products that lets you support Canadian growers: canola. It's one of Canada's most widely-grown crop, and is used in a number of different places. For example, it's found in many pet foods,



cosmetics and skincare products and biofuel. In addition, canola oil is a heart-healthy cooking oil and Canadian kitchen staple.

Stay active by exploring Canada. Just about every community here—and the natural spaces in between them—has great scenery to experience. Consider adding some active local getaways to encounter the unforgettable landscapes, wildlife, communities and people Canada has to offer. The outdoor exercise is one benefit, but don't underestimate the impact that being in natural

spaces and taking in gorgeous scenes can have on your mental health.

Making positive change is about reorienting yourself—picking a new direction and heading out. By making a few simple changes, you can set yourself on a course to support Canada, as well as yourself.

You can learn more about choosing healthy and Canadian at hellocanola.ca.
[www.newscanada.com](http://newscanada.com)



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Recharging the mind, body and spirit at sea

In a world that rarely slows down, many travellers are seeking more than just a holiday. They're looking for space to pause, recharge and reconnect with themselves. This shift has given rise to a growing interest in wellness-focused cruising and using time at sea as an opportunity for renewal as much as exploration. Here are a few ways travellers can focus on wellness while cruising:

Focus on fewer, more tranquil destinations. Unlike traditional itineraries packed with daily port stops, wellness voyages often favour fewer calls and longer stretches of peaceful sailing. Whether gliding through the Caribbean or along the coasts of South America, Portugal or Spain, these journeys encourage guests to slow down and soak in the serenity of the sea.

Exercise active well-being. Daily activities such as yoga, Pilates and guided stretching bring gentle movement into each day. For those craving a blend of adventure and exercise, excursions such as kayaking, cycling or hiking let passengers stay active while exploring new destinations up close.

Make time for mindfulness and reflection. Time at sea naturally invites calm and introspection. Many ships now offer programs that support mindfulness and mental clarity, including guided meditation, breathwork and sound healing. These sessions can provide travellers with practical tools for managing stress long after they have returned home.

Use the spa for recovery. From saunas and steam rooms to vitality pools, on board spa areas provide the perfect setting to unwind. Travellers can release tension, restore energy and enjoy the simple luxury of just slowing down.

Feed your wellness. Dining plays an important role in wellness, too. Menus often feature fresh, seasonal and nutrient-rich ingredients that nourish both body and mind. Some chefs also incorporate local flavours from each destination.

Wellness cruising is a new approach to luxury travel that's about balance rather than indulgence. For cruise lines like Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours, wellness is woven into the journey itself through days of peaceful sailing, curated experiences and the freedom for travellers to engage at their own pace.

Caring for body and mind is an essential part of every journey. You can learn more at scenic.ca/wellnessretreats.

[www.newscanada.com](http://newscanada.com)



CHARITY BENTWOOD BOXES ANNUAL EVENT.

Article & photos by Lenora A. Hayman.

Bentwood boxes are traditional to our northwest coast and used in many ways, such as food storage, ceremonial regalia boxes, medicine and burial boxes. Food can be steamed by filling the box with water and dropping stones from a fire into the box.

James Michels, Metis/Cree, steamed, bent and donated the 22 bentwood boxes that he created in the traditional style, each from a single piece of old-growth red cedar. Each artist then decorated the wee boxes for the 2025 Latimer Bentwood Box Charity Event for the Urban Native Youth Association. Bidding originally is done at the Lattimer Gallery, 1590 W. 2nd Ave, Vancouver and the final bidding both by phone and in person was at the gala at the Museum of Vancouver on Sat. 6 Dec 2025.

Gitxsan Jewellery Carver, Meaghan McRae's exquisite Abundance from Balance portrays salmon and their miraculous life cycle.

Tahitan/Tlingit, Dempsey Bob's Bear Mask has a painted design of an abstract eagle with human form and the miniature mask is of the grizzly bear.

Ts'msyen/Cree, Phil Gray, created a porcupine, Buyer Beware, and said "this is a visual representation of my current emotional



availability"!

Generous bidding for these beautiful, wee, bentwood boxes ranged from \$4000, \$7600 to \$12,500 for such a worthy cause.

See you next year!

4 colour photos all by Lenora A. Hayman.

Top: Abundance from Balance by Meaghan McRae.

Left: Meaghan McRae-Gitxsen Jewellery Carver.

Right: Buyer Beware by Phil Gray, Ts'msyen/Cree.

A MULTICULTURAL CHICKEN DINNER TO SPICE UP YOUR WEEKNIGHT

Variety is the spice of life. One example: harissa—a chili paste from North Africa that provides a fast and easy way to add an exotic flair to dinner. This tasty recipe from Chef Devan Rajkumar (aka "Chef Dev") brings it to your weeknight dinner table.

Harissa Grilled Chicken with Chickpea, Carrot and Cucumber Salad

Ingredients:

Harissa grilled chicken:

- 1/2 cup (125 ml) plain yogurt
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 Mina Halal boneless skinless chicken breasts
- 1 1/2 tbsp (22 ml) harissa paste

Chickpea, carrot and cucumber salad:

- 3 carrots
- 1 English cucumber
- 1 can chickpeas, 19 oz (540 ml), rinsed and drained
- 1 green onion, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup (60 ml) fresh mint leaves, divided
- 1/4 tsp (1 ml) cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp (1 ml) cumin
- 1/4 tsp (1 ml) paprika
- 2 tsp (10 ml) honey
- 2 tsp (10 ml) lemon juice
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) tahini
- 1/2 cup (125 ml) plain yogurt
- 2 tsp (10 ml) harissa paste
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Directions:

Harissa grilled chicken:

- 1 Combine harissa, yogurt and garlic in a small bowl.
- 2 Remove tenders from each chicken breast and set

aside.

3 Place chicken breasts between two sheets of plastic wrap and gently pound to 1" (2.5 cm) thickness using a mallet or heavy pot.

4 Place chicken, along with tenders, in a re-sealable plastic freezer bag. Pour harissa mixture over top and gently massage into the chicken. Refrigerate for one hour or up to overnight.

5 Preheat barbecue to medium-high heat. Lightly coat the grill with a non-stick cooking spray.

6 Remove chicken from the marinade and place on the pre-heated grill. Discard leftover marinade.

7 Cook chicken for 3 to 4 minutes per side or until evenly char-grilled and the internal temperature reaches 165°F (74°C).

8 Remove from heat and allow to rest for 5 to 10 minutes before slicing into strips.

Chickpea, carrot and cucumber salad:

1 Slice carrots and cucumber lengthwise into thin ribbons using a mandolin or a Y-shaped vegetable peeler. Discard the seeds from the cucumber.

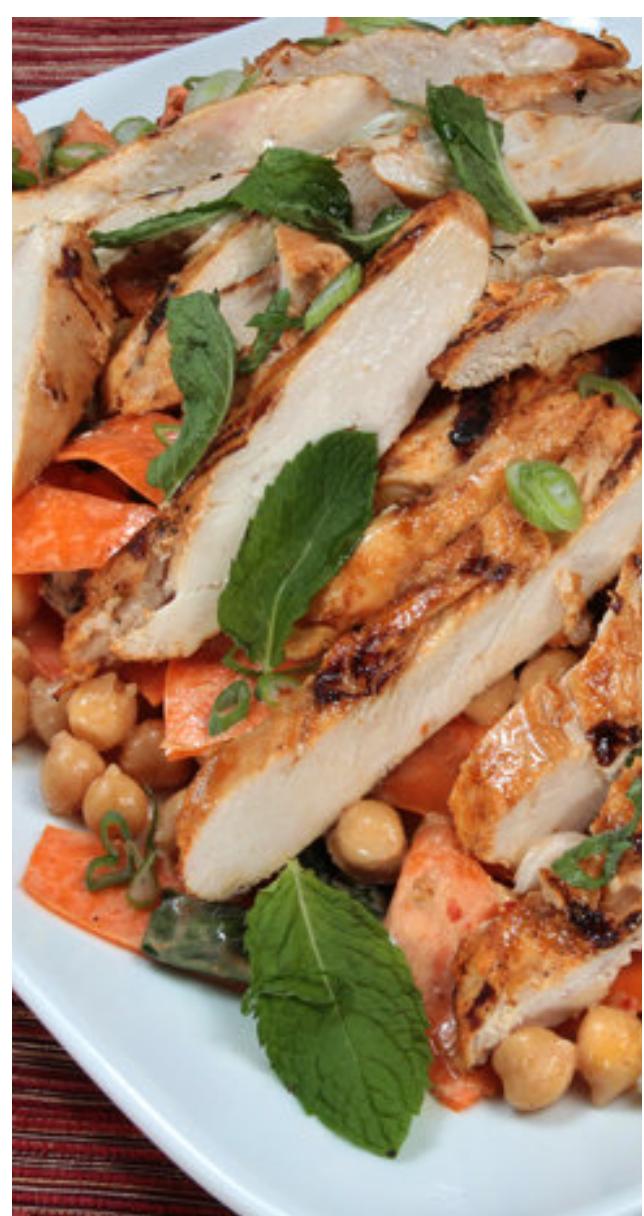
2 Place in a large bowl with chickpeas, green onions and half the mint leaves.

3 Whisk together the remaining ingredients and drizzle over the salad. Toss to coat and season with salt and pepper.

4 Divide the salad between individual plates or serve on a large platter.

5 Top with grilled chicken and any remaining salad dressing. Garnish with mint leaves.

You can find more protein-forward recipes at mapleleaffoods.com/proteinpower.
www.newscanada.com





FINANCIAL NEWS

by Rick C. Singh, Founder, President, and Financial Advisor,

CPCA (Certified Professional Consultant on Aging)
CRS Financial Wealth Management.

What is the TFSA Limit for 2026?

The federal government increased the Tax-Free Savings Account (TFSA) contribution limit to \$7,000 in 2024. This contribution limit of \$7,000 will continue for 2026.

It also means that starting on January 1, 2026, eligible Canadians will now have a cumulative lifetime TFSA contribution limit of up to \$109,000.

What is a Tax-Free Savings Account (TFSA)?

Since 2009, Tax Free Savings Accounts (TFSAs) have helped Canadians earn tax-free income on investments.

Set up as a registered investment or savings account, TFSAs can hold a variety of investments, including cash savings, mutual funds, securities listed on a designated stock exchange, guaranteed investment certificates (GICs), and bonds.

As the name indicates, all income earned in a TFSA remains tax free and allows Canadians to build up tax-free savings over the course of their lifetime.

Want to learn more about this investment option? Read on to learn the ins and outs of TFSAs – from finding your limit to accurately tracking your contributions.

How do I qualify for a TFSA?

Any Canadian who is 18 years old with a valid Social Insurance Number (SIN) accumulates TFSA contribution room each year (since 2009), even if they do not file a tax return or open a TFSA.

Yearly contribution limits are set by the federal government. However, even if you do not max out your TFSA in one year, the unused contribution room will carry forward into the following year as part of your lifetime contribution limit.

Notable exceptions

As stated above, TFSAs are available to any Canadian resident 18 years of age or older with a valid SIN.

The only exception to this rule is if you live in a province or territory where you cannot enter an agreement or contract – which would be necessary to open a TFSA – until the age of 19. In this case, your contribution limit for the year you are 18 rolls over to the following year.

How do I open a TFSA?

According to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) website, to open a TFSA account you must:

1. Contact your financial advisor, financial institution, credit union, or insurance company (issuer).

2. Provide the issuer with your SIN and date of birth so the issuer can register your qualifying arrangement as a TFSA. Your issuer may require supporting documents.

At the time of opening your account, your TFSA issuer can also provide you with specific details about how your contributions could be invested and what types of returns you can expect with each type of investment.

Working with an issuer is critical to ensure that your TFSA is registered correctly so that any income you earn from your account remains tax free.

What's the difference between a TFSA and a RRSP?

Unlike a Registered Retirement Saving Plan (RRSP), TFSA contributions do not provide an immediate tax-deduction. However, unlike an RRSP, when you withdraw funds from a TFSA, they are not taxed.

Additionally, any interest, dividends, or capital gains earned on investments in a TFSA are not taxable while held in the account or when they are withdrawn. This means you never have to report your TFSA earnings or withdrawals as income on your taxes.

This also means your TFSA earnings will never affect your eligibility for income tested benefits (like Old Age Security or Employment Insurance) or federal credits (like the Canada Child Benefit or services tax/harmonized sales tax (GST/HST) credit).

What is the lifetime limit for a TFSA?

Once you turn 18, you will accumulate TFSA contribution room each year even if you have not yet opened an account.

There is no limit to how many TFSAs you can open, but your individual maximum applies regardless of how many accounts you have.

Your total contribution is calculated as follows:

- Your annual TFSA dollar limit (for 2024 this is \$7,000)
- Plus, any unused TFSA contribution room since you turned 18
- Plus, any withdrawals made in the previous year

You can withdraw from your TFSA at any time, and withdrawals give you more contribution room in the future. Withdrawals from your TFSA can be put back in the following year without impacting your contribution room.

Where can I find my TFSA contribution room?

You can confirm your TFSA contribution room through logging into CRA MyAccount for Individuals or by calling the Tax Information Phone Service (TIPS) at 1-800-267-6999. If you have an authorized representative, they can also get these details for you. The CRA can provide you with a TFSA Room Statement to confirm your contribution limit and a TFSA Transaction Summary to confirm the contributions and withdrawals the CRA has received from your

TFSA issuer(s).

Tip: It's a great idea to track your own transaction records of withdrawals and contributions. The CRA determines your available TFSA contribution room based on information provided annually by TFSA issuers, so it's in your own best interest to ensure that your records align with that of the CRA.

What is the penalty for going over my TFSA limit?

If you go over your TFSA contribution limit, this excess amount will be subject to a 1% per month

penalty tax for as long as that excess amount remains in your account. For example, if you over contribute \$3,000 in a year, you will pay \$30 per month, every month you remain in excess – that is \$360 in penalties in one year alone.

Therefore, it's so important to review your TFSA contributions, annual withdrawals, and limits before you add additional funds in the year.

Note: Withdrawals cannot be added back in the same year that they were made. You will have to wait until the following year to add it back.

Source: (FBC.ca/blog Nov.24, 2022)

To find out more about TFSAs contact your investment advisor or contact Rick at 604-535-3367 (Suite 220-3388 Rosemary Heights Cres. Surrey, BC. V3Z 0K7) or email: rick@crsfinancial.ca

RESOLVE TO STRESS LESS IN 2026 WITH SMALL HABITS

The new year often inspires big goals. But instead of chasing dramatic change, try to focus on smaller habits that make a real difference to your well-being.

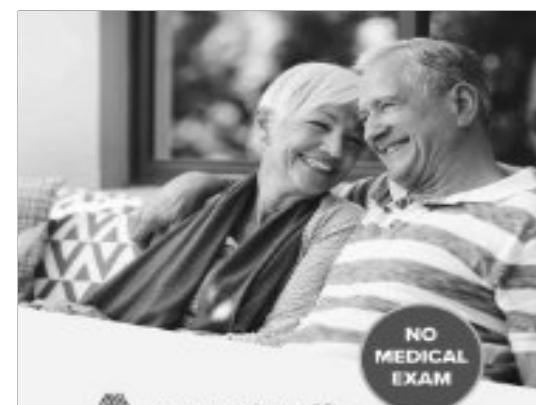
Carve out short, mindful breaks. You can do some stretches right where you are, or while taking a short walk around the room. Stepping outside can be a way to reset, and fresh air can help you feel calmer. Consider combining deep breathing with a mindfulness exercise: focus on the physical sensation of breathing and let your body get heavier with each exhale. Acknowledge any thoughts that come up without judging them, and let them pass, or even "breathe them out."

Start a journal. Journaling is a simple but powerful practice. It can help give a clearer sense of perspective as you write down worries, gratitude or even a daily reflection—putting everything down on paper can help crystallize what's really important. Just the act of writing down a thought that's been bringing stress or anxiety can help bring clarity and calm.

Consider natural support. Adaptogens are herbs and plants that help the body respond to physical and mental pressure. Canadian producers, such as St. Francis Herb Farm, offer herbal blends that support stress management and sleep, making it easier to maintain balance.

Lasting calm doesn't come from overhauling your life. It comes from small, steady steps that can nurture your well-being every day. Learn more about supporting your well-being at stfrancisherbfarm.com/stress-relief.

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THE PHARMACIST REVIEW

By Lyle Sunada

What Might Be the Best Health Device You'll Ever Use

When people talk about improving their health, they usually think about eating better, exercising more, or losing a bit of weight. What often gets overlooked is why weight gain and stubborn belly fat show up in the first place. A major driver is insulin resistance—and it's far more common than most people realize.

Insulin resistance is the foundation of prediabetes and type 2 diabetes. In Canada, about 1 in 3 are living with diabetes or prediabetes, and 80–90% of people with prediabetes don't know it.

When insulin resistance develops, the body needs more and more insulin to keep blood sugar under control. High insulin doesn't just affect glucose—it also promotes fat storage, especially around the abdomen. That's why many people

struggle with weight gain despite eating "reasonably well." Over time, the risk of serious complications like blindness, kidney failure, strokes, and heart attacks increases. It's widely considered a chronic, progressive condition unless caught early.

That's where the FreeStyle Libre 3 continuous glucose monitor becomes a game changer. About the size of a penny, it's worn on the back of the arm and sends glucose readings to your phone every minute. Instead of guessing how your body is responding to food and lifestyle choices, you can see it.

One surprise for many users is discovering that some "healthy" foods cause large glucose spikes. A smoothie, oatmeal, brown rice, or whole-grain bread might look great on paper, but the Libre 3 shows what actually happens after you eat them. Seeing a sharp spike—and how long it stays elevated—often leads people to choose foods more wisely, not by eliminating carbs entirely, but by understanding which ones their body tolerates best.

Many people notice a lower glucose spike when they eat vegetables and protein first, followed by carbohydrates. For example, starting a meal with salad and chicken before eating potatoes often results in a flatter glucose curve compared to eating the carbs first. Going for a 15-minute walk afterward can flatten it further. Seeing that difference on your phone reinforces habits that improve blood sugar control almost immediately. When post-meal spikes shrink, cravings decrease, and belly fat slowly starts to

come off.

The GMI (Glucose Management Indicator) estimates your A1C based on your average glucose. An A1C of 6.0–6.4% indicates prediabetes, while > 6.5% indicates diabetes. Watching your GMI trend downward can be highly motivating, and you don't have to wait 3 months between doctor's appointments.

Different foods, stress levels, sleep, and exercise affect everyone differently. This kind of self-monitoring helps you discover what works for your body, not someone else's. It's a powerful tool for anyone who wants to improve insulin sensitivity and take control of their long-term health—one reading at a time.

To learn more, attend my upcoming Insulin Resistance/Diabetes seminar on Jan 29th.

Lyle Sunada is a compounding pharmacist and NAMS Certified Menopause Practitioner specializing in hormone balancing and alternative medicine at Cloverdale Pharmasave. Everything mentioned in the article is available In-Store.

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4 WINTER WELLNESS TIPS FOR STAYING ENERGIZED

When daylight is short and to-do lists are long, it's easy to feel your energy fade. Staying well through the winter is less about powering through and more about understanding and working with your body's natural rhythms.

A few simple habits can help you stay strong, steady and energized through the darkest months of the year. Here are four ways to get started:

1 Chase the light.

Even a few minutes of daylight can help regulate your sleep-wake cycle and improve your mood. Try stepping outside for a quick walk during a lunch break or keep the blinds open early in the day to soak up extra natural light.

2 Move, even when it's cold.

Gentle activities like stretching, yoga, or an evening stroll keep circulation strong and help combat winter fatigue. It can also boost your mood and support immune function, which can take a hit in colder months. Try wearing layers for any outdoor movement so that you can move easily

adjust your temperature as your body warms up.

3 Support your immune health.

Wellness doesn't begin and end with cold season. Daily immune support can help your body adapt to stress and stay resilient. One way to give your energy and immune system a lift is by using an herbal formula, such as St. Francis Herb Farm's, which blends traditional adaptogens—natural substances that help your body respond to stress, anxiety and fatigue—to help balance energy and strengthen immune response.

4 Don't forget the basics.

Making sure you get enough sleep goes a long way toward maintaining your energy and health. Shorter days and less sunlight often mean lower Vitamin D levels, which can affect both energy and mood. You can consider making up for the loss of sunlight with a supplement to maintain wellness throughout the season.

By giving yourself small daily rituals and gentle

supplemental support that help your energy and wellness, you can stay bright and energized all winter long. You can learn more at [stfrancisherbfarm.com/immunity](#).

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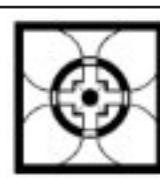
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The Next Chapter

By Mike McCardell

Toys Are Us

Once upon a time bicycles had one gear. That was shortly after the Ice Age. You went faster by pedaling harder, not by up shifting to fifth or sixth gear or by turning up the power on your new electric bike.

That was also the time we had roller skates made of metal. But they would rust if left out in the rain or went through a puddle and they were always left out in the rain, or went through puddles. If they weren't rusted you had to have a key to tighten them onto your shoes, and we often lost the key.

My friend Johnny Martin hungered for things like rusted skates, or skates without keys. He could make magic out of abandoned things. Scraps of wood he would nail together and make forts that were strong enough to stand on and big enough for four kids to squeeze together inside with their knees up by their chins. "This is neat," we would say. "Nobody can find us in here."

When he found a broken, rusted or abandoned skate he would take it apart and hammer the front wheels into the end of a two by four and the back wheels into the back of the wood. Then nail a wooden crate to the front. This was when we had wooden crates, and then nail pieces of a broken broom stick into the top of the box to steer with and presto, magic. A scooter before there were scooters, before skate boards, before things done for you.

He could get the wheels turning by crawling under a parked car and rubbing his fingers around oil dripping from the crankcase and rub the oil on the skate wheels. Worked better than magic because it really worked. And we could all ride on it until it broke or we hit a pot hole or telephone pole and crashed. It didn't bother Johnny. He would just build another one.

I don't know where Johnny is now, or if he is still alive. But if he is I bet he has a bunch of kids in his garage watching the old man make magic in their plastic, video game world. I was thinking of him when I was in a junk shop posing as an antique boutique and saw one old metal roller skate for sale. Five dollars. I thought my wife would love the nostalgia, the story, the memory.

"Not another piece of junk," she said.

"I could have bought you flowers, but look at this beauty," I said. "Remember what Johnny would have done with it."

"Yes," she said in her insightful way, "Johnny was a genius at keeping things alive."

I nodded while trying to turn the wheel that would not turn.

"That's why," she continued, "he would have brought me flowers."

Affordable ways to stay connected this holiday season

Staying in touch with friends and loved ones is always important, especially during the holiday season. Maintaining connections with those who matter to you, no matter the distance, helps keep the season bright. Here are a couple of ways to make sure you stay connected, without stressing your budget:

There are deals if you look for them. Shopping for a mobile plan can be a lot like buying a car—there are a lot of ways to save beyond the sticker price. Keep your eyes open for seasonal deals and limited-time promotions, and make sure to understand exactly what's included so you can get the most out of the benefits throughout your plan.

You can also find some out-of-the-box savings: for instance, some retailers, like The Mobile Shop, allow you to redeem loyalty points towards a new phone purchase to help lower monthly costs. For example, PC Optimum members earn points on their purchases, which can later be used for everyday essentials.

Consider family or shared plans. Many mobile carriers offer discounts for users who bundle services or add additional lines. Different plans have different structures—for instance, some use a shared pool of data while others give each individual their own data plan—so take the time to look through the details to make sure you're choosing an option that works for you and your family.

By taking some simple steps, you can stay connected more easily while keeping your budget in check.

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CANADIAN WINTER PREP 101: GETTING AHEAD OF SNOW SEASON



But with a little preparation before the temperatures dip, you can make winter not just manageable, but easier and more enjoyable. Here are some simple tips:

Gear up early. Before the first snowflakes fall, give your winter tools a quick check-up. Make sure shovels, scrapers and gloves are in good shape, and replace anything broken or worn down. Stock up early on de-icers, windshield washer fluid and other cold-weather essentials.

Getting ahead on these details can help you avoid long service lines and supply shortages once winter truly hits.

Protect your home. A few simple maintenance steps can go a long way toward keeping your home safe and comfortable throughout the season. Clear gutters to prevent ice dams, seal any window drafts, ensure you have access to your winter tools

and schedule a furnace inspection if it's been a while.

For those in heavy snowfall regions, mark your driveway or property lines before the ground freezes to help guide snow clearing and keep pathways safe.

Stay safe and smart. Once the snow starts falling, safety should be your top priority. Keep an emergency kit in your vehicle stocked with blankets, snacks and a flashlight, and have candles, bottled water and backup batteries at home in case of power outages.

Tip: push snow rather than lifting it whenever possible — it's easier on your body and more efficient.

When clearing snow, pace yourself and work in sections to avoid strain. Consider using an ergonomic shovel, like the options from Garant, you can clear more safely and efficiently. Snow blowers can also help you stay on top of accumulation before it freezes or compacts, especially if you have a large driveway or wide paths.

Winter doesn't have to catch you off guard. A bit of planning today means more time to enjoy the cozy side of the season and less time battling the elements. Whether you're clearing your front steps or managing a long driveway, investing in quality tools and working at a manageable pace helps make every snowfall a little easier to handle. You can learn more about snow removal at garant.com.

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The first big snowfall can catch even Canadians off guard, leaving driveways buried overnight and many looking for their salt, shovels and winter gear. With 37 per cent of Canadians polled reporting that snow removal has disrupted their schedules, the first few flakes of the season can be enough to make someone groan.

STAY SAFE AT HOME WITH THESE FIRE PREVENTION TIPS



As temperatures drop and we spend more time indoors, it's a good time to give your home a fire safety check. Fall and winter bring added risks like candles, cooking and twinkling holiday lights. But with a few simple precautions, you can help protect your home and the people in it.

Fire safety starts with prevention

- Keep a close eye when you're cooking. Most house fires start in the kitchen, so don't leave the stove unattended, and keep anything flammable, like tea towels or packaging, away from heat. Clean out the dryer lint trap every time you use it.
- If you use a fireplace or a wood stove, book a

chimney cleaning and inspection every fall before heating season. Stick to safe-burning materials like seasoned wood and never toss in cardboard or household garbage.

- Tidy up the space around your home: keep firewood and dry leaves away from the house, and ensure your barbecue is clean and grease-free, even the in the off season.
- Replace any damaged strings of holiday lights before decorating and be sure to turn them off before leaving the house or going to bed.
- Make sure your alarms and tools are ready
- Test your smoke alarms once a month to make

sure they're working properly. You should have one in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area and on every level of your home.

- Once a year, be sure to replace batteries in smoke alarms not wired into the home and check the expiration date on the alarm. Expired units should be replaced.

- If you have gas appliances or a wood-burning fireplace, consider adding a carbon monoxide detector too. It's an extra layer of safety you'll be glad to have.

- Read your fire extinguisher's instructions carefully and keep it in a place that's easy to reach and close to an exit.

Plan and practise your escape

- If the worst happens and you experience a fire in your home, make sure you have a plan in place for a safe escape. Your home escape plan should meet the needs of everyone in your household, including young kids, older adults and anyone with mobility or sensory needs.

- Know two ways out of every room if possible, and make sure doors and windows open easily. Consider a window ladder for second floor bedrooms—they're portable and can be easily stored in case of emergencies.

- Have an outside meeting place a safe distance from your home where everyone should meet.

- Practise your home fire drill at least twice a year with everyone in the household. Make sure any guests are aware of your fire plan. A few small steps now can make a big difference in an emergency. For more fire safety tips, visit cooperators.ca.

www.newscanada.com

CELEBRATE CANADA WITH THIS HEART-HEALTHY FALL HARVEST LASAGNA

Harvest season in Canada brings savoury favourites and an abundance of fresh produce that's both healthy and full on flavour. Take advantage of those in-season offerings with a new take on a fall classic:

Sweet Potato and Crisped Kale Lasagna with Apple and Sausage

Prep time: 50 minutes

Cook time: 55 minutes

Makes: 8 servings

Ingredients:

- 2 large sweet potatoes, washed and scrubbed
- 2 medium onions, diced
- 2 Granny Smith apple
- 1 bunch kale, washed, stripped and torn up (about 4 cups, or 1 L)
- 5 Italian sausages (500 g), mild or hot
- 1 1/4 lbs (560 g) ricotta cheese
- 1 cup (250 ml) grated parmesan
- 2 tbsp (30 ml) canola oil, divided
- 1/4 tsp (1 ml) ground nutmeg
- 4 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 tsp (5 ml) dried sage
- 1/2 tsp (2 ml) black pepper
- canola cooking spray

Directions:

Lasagna mixture:

1 Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C).

2 Pierce one sweet potato with a fork on all sides. Microwave on high until fork-tender, about 8 minutes. Let cool, remove skin, add to a large bowl and mash.

3 Add ricotta and nutmeg to the mash and mix thoroughly. Set aside.

4 In a large pan over medium-high heat, add 1 tbsp (15 ml) canola oil. Add onion and sauté for 5-7 minutes, until soft. Add garlic and dried sage, cooking for another 1-2 minutes.

5 Remove casing from sausages and crumble into pan. Cook with onion mixture for 10-12 minutes, or until cooked through. Add 2 cups (500 ml) of kale and wilt, about 1 minute.

6 Remove from heat and set aside.

7 Using a mandolin, slice the other sweet potato lengthwise. Slices should be about 1/8" (3 mm) thick. Set aside.

8 Quarter the apples and remove cores. Using the mandolin, slice quarters thinly, about 1/8" (3 mm) thick. Set aside. Assembly and baking:

1 Spray a 9 x 13" (23 x 33 cm) baking dish with canola cooking spray.

2 Line the bottom of the dish with half the sweet potato slices.

3 Top slices with half the ricotta mixture. Spread evenly using a rubber spatula.

4 Top ricotta mixture with half the apple slices, in an even layer.

5 Spread half the sausage mixture over top and sprinkle with half the parmesan.

6 Repeat steps 2 to 4 with remaining ingredients.

7 In a small bowl, toss remaining kale with 1



tbsp (15 ml) canola oil. Distribute evenly on top of lasagna.

8 Cover with tin foil and bake for 40 minutes. Remove foil and return to oven for 10-15 minutes, or until kale leaves are browned.

9 Let cool before serving.

Tip: Using canola oil lets you take advantage of its high smoke point to really crisp up the edges of the lasagna for contrast with the tender inside layers.

You can find more heart-healthy recipes that celebrate what Canada has to offer at hellocanola.ca.

www.newscanada.com



JANUARY: BETWEEN PAST AND PROMISE

By Ursula Maxwell-Lewis

January is an invitation to pause, to take stock, and—whether we intend to or not—to look both backward and forward almost simultaneously. It is why I find myself reflecting on Janus, the Roman god of beginnings, endings, and transitions. You'll know the image: a bearded, double-faced figure carved in stone, one gaze fixed on what has been, the other trained on what lies ahead. Could there be a more fitting symbol for the first month of the year?

As a loyal Scot, I suspect I inherited a slightly fey inclination to feel Janus-like myself. Again, I am aware of standing in an invisible archway, feet planted on either side of an ancient divide. Ghosts of people, places, and past lives tug poignantly at my sleeve. The blank page of the year ahead beckons, impatiently urging me forward. January, to me, feels less like a clean break than a threshold.

Scots, like many cultures, have long understood the importance of marking this rather mysterious annual ritual. The turning of the calendar year is not left to chance. Houses are scrubbed, brasses polished, bills settled, larders stocked. If only family feuds and futile anger could be swept out in the same way. That, I think, would be the most useful housecleaning of all. But I (as is my habit!) digress.

By midnight on Hogmanay (Scottish New Year's Eve), my mother's dining-room table—no matter which part of the world we happened to be living in—would feature Jean Munro's homemade shortbread, scones, and other baking to "bring in the New Year." Ideally, the *first footer* (the first person to step over the threshold at midnight) would be a tall, dark stranger—a lucky sign for the year ahead. A lump of coal, symbol of warmth and well-being, was the traditional offering. That changed with the times, of course, but one should never cross the threshold empty-handed. Any small token will do—even a nearby stone or piece of wood. A wee bottled tipple wouldn't go wrong either. Practical, faintly superstitious, deeply comforting, these small rites impose a sense of order just before life surges forward again into the unknown.

My internal Janus also looks back to another winter, far from Scotland, during my first experience of German *Fasching*, the Carnival season that precedes Lent. That year, I took three months' leave from Air Canada to study at the Goethe-Institut in Rothenburg ob der Tauber, in Bavaria. I arrived to find snowdrifts piled high against medieval walls, bitter cold, and a Christmas tree twinkling with tiny red candles clipped to its branches—still standing in the sitting room of my homestay lodging. Although *Fasching* is a February tradition, the anticipation, colour, and music of those weeks remain among my brightest



memories—proof that traditions, whatever their origin, have the power to lift communities and spirits during winter's short days.

When not in class, my fellow international students and I gravitated to a local *Gasthaus*. At the time, local beers or wines were (to my surprise) more affordable than coffee. Tables were set with complimentary baskets of hard-boiled eggs and jars of breadsticks. Each time new patrons arrived, accompanied by snowy blasts of icy wind, the pianist and regulars would pause to call out "*Grüss Gott!*"—"God bless you"—before conversations resumed. A small gesture, but a fleeting moment of collective welcome and acknowledgment. I sometimes wonder if that easy, communal kindness has survived the passing decades.

So, as Janus peers in both directions this January, I remind myself that looking back is not the enemy of moving forward. Memory is ballast. Ritual is reassurance. Do the customs we pass down through the generations—Scottish, German, Asian, or those we quietly invent ourselves—anchor us, steady us, and give shape to the turning year? I hope so. They whisper that while the future is uncertain, we do not cross into it unaccompanied. Even at the threshold,



even in this bone-chilling northern month, there is warmth to be found—and reason enough to step ahead with cautious optimism. May all that's good attend you in 2026.

Ursula Maxwell-Lewis is a British Columbia journalist and photographer. Reach her at UrsulaMaxwell@gmail.com

Photo Top: My mom, Jean Munro Conway, an antique brass toasting fork I used as a child at my grandmother's in Scotland, one of many travel books - all on grandmother Munro's 100 year old tartan lap blanket.

Bottom: A mini memorabilia collage from my murky past, including from the Goethe Institute in Bavaria.

SMART ENERGY-SAVING TIPS FOR YOUR HOME

Did you know that, according to Natural Resources Canada, 64 per cent of the average home's energy goes into space heating? That statistic is hardly surprising with the winters we get here, but cooling is also a rising concern, with energy use from air conditioning (AC) during hot summers.

Here are a few tips for a smarter, more efficient home:

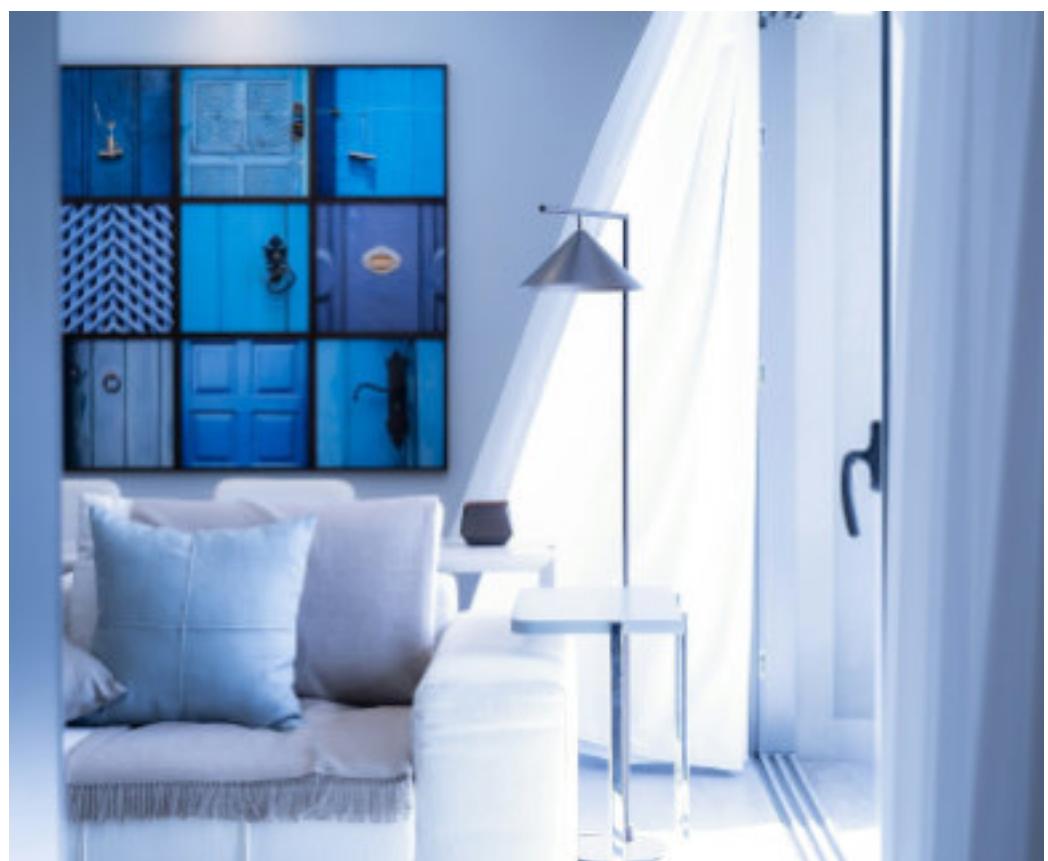
Take a fresh look at your insulation. Your AC and furnace work hard to adjust the temperature of the air throughout your home. Don't let all that work—and energy—go to waste. Without proper insulation, the air in your home will equalize to the outside temperature just through contact with the walls and ceiling. Make sure you have a barrier to prevent this, so that your HVAC system only needs to make small adjustments to keep the temperature where you want it.

Eliminate wasteful airflow. Any draughts or breezes you feel inside are the air in your home leaking out, and the outside air leaking in to replace it. Use caulking and other sealants around every window and check your exterior walls for any potential gaps. Put weatherstripping around all your external-facing doors to keep air from flowing through the doorframe, and consider using it on internal doors, too. This can especially help in multi-story homes where cold air can sink to basement level, and warm air can overheat upstairs rooms.

Make some smart upgrades. Smart home technology has improved to the point where your home itself can help you manage your energy use. Smart home platforms like Samsung's SmartThings can help you monitor and manage your devices' energy usage, create customized energy-saving routines and give you tips to reduce your overall consumption. For instance, rather than trying to maintain one home temperature though the day, a connected thermostat can sense when you wake up or arrive back home and adjust the air when it's needed.

All it takes are some simple upgrades focused on efficiency to regain control of your energy use. Smart investment in insulation, weatherstripping and a responsive home environment will pay dividends in savings as well as convenience.

Learn more about how you can save energy at



samsung.ca/smartthings
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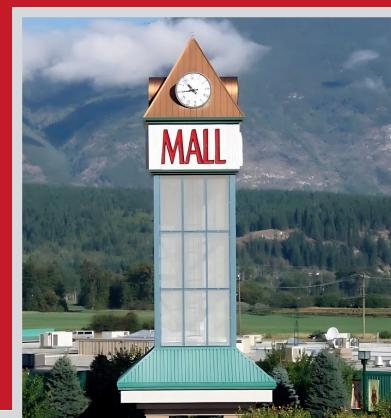
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Straight from the Horse's Mouth

By Mel Kositsky

That was the year that was!

Who would have thought that 2025 would have marked the end of live horse racing in British Columbia – at least for now.

After more than 50 years of writing about the sport and even becoming a full participant in racing and breeding -- as well as being a die-hard fan – there is no longer a track in the Vancouver area to attend. It's heartbreaking for anyone who has been involved or touched by the equine industry and lifestyle.

But as Bob Hope used to say and sing in his signature sign-off: "Thanks for the memories!"

Here we are -- just weeks after the fabulous Breeders' Cup races at Del Mar in southern California (a track created by Hope's old entertainment partner Bing Crosby), The Melbourne Cup (which is a national holiday in Australia on the first Tuesday in November), the Japan Cup, which attracted more than 77,000 fans to the track and world-wide coverage, followed by the International Championships at Hong Kong's two racetracks, which attracted more than 100,000 spectators.

Now provincial and municipal politicians and their media hacks have decided that racing is a dying sport and does not deserve government support any longer. To them, horse racing is just an outdated form of gambling, like bingo -- and it is not as lucrative to the government coffers as the current sports gaming market and lotteries.

Hopefully, something can be worked out to bring back racing as it affects a lot more people and the economy than the provincial government realizes. It would be nice if they made all their studies and reports public so we could try and understand how they could have reached such a decision, but that likely will not happen.

Unfortunately, horse racing is being left out in the cold – a victim of bad politics and decision making by people who probably never watched a horse race or paid a visit to a barn. And they were probably influenced by the animal welfare groups who have been protesting against racing for years.

What people in the equine industry are now finding out is that politics is a "blood sport" and creates its own winners and losers, mostly through backroom deals and lobbyists. There is always money for whatever the government wants to do – and it finds excuses not to fund projects or services they are really not interested in doing or do not meet the governing party's agenda.

There is very little union activity in horse racing. Horse "farmers" are usually too busy taking care of their animals and farms to worry about politics. These decisions just highlight that big "urban-rural divide".

And it is not just happening in British Columbia. In many U.S. states older racetracks have been closed as the land becomes more valuable for urban development, shopping centres, hotels and casinos. The political "buzzword" often used is "entertainment districts".

Last month the umbrella organization for the horse industry issued the following news release.

"Horse Council BC is deeply disappointed by the provincial government's abrupt decision to end slot revenue sharing with harness and thoroughbred racing.

This is a major blow to an industry that has generated significant revenue for government, created jobs, and supported livelihoods across British Columbia. Making this decision without consultation and without considering its far-reaching impact on the equine community is unacceptable and creates serious uncertainty.

"We urge the government to work directly with industry stakeholders to rebuild a path forward—one that supports a responsible, viable, and sustainable future for equine sport in British Columbia. Horse Council BC remains committed to advocating for our 25,000 members and supporting the continued vitality of the equine sector across the province."

The sudden turn of events, which forced the closure of both local racetracks, began in mid-August when Great Canadian Entertainment, which operates both racetracks and casinos through leases of public lands, announced they were ending harness racing at Fraser Downs – just two weeks before the fall meet was supposed to begin. The blame was put on the City of Surrey, who recaptured the lease, and has since begun dismantling the track and demolishing the barns, which were built in the early Seventies. Racing began at Cloverdale Raceway on January 1, 1976 with an unexpected crowd of more than 5,000 spectators. The track should be celebrating 50 years of contributing to the community and the economy – not mourning its death.

Hastings Racecourse & Casino announced on Friday, Dec. 5 that Thoroughbred racing will cease at the Vancouver facility, effective immediately.

Hastings has conducted Thoroughbred racing since 1889, formerly Exhibition Park. It features a large grandstand, a five-furlong racing surface and stabling for several hundred horses. Historically, Thoroughbred racing has been conducted between the months of April and October; as such, there are no horses currently stabled at Hastings.

Great Canadian Entertainment, which leases the facility from the City of Vancouver, has operated Hastings since 2004 with casino operations commencing in 2008. (Just like at Fraser Downs in August, the operation of the casino and simulcast racebook at the facility will continue.)

"This was an extremely difficult decision, especially given the historical legacy of Hastings Racecourse in the local community and its importance to the province's racing industry," stated Wayne Odegard, Regional Vice President, Great Canadian Entertainment. "Unfortunately, this is strictly a business decision based on a lack of economic feasibility to move forward with another season of horse racing at Hastings. We are incredibly thankful for our dedicated team members, racing participants and fan base for their support and patronage for so many years.

"Our focus moving forward will be supporting our impacted team members through this transition, as well as racing participants as they assess their options for Thoroughbred racing in the province in the future," concluded Odegard.

This announcement came right after the provincial government revealed that its financial support for racing will cease in 2026. That announcement was made in a November 25 letter from Nina Krieger, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General of British Columbia, to Jeff Andrus, a lobbyist and director of client services, whose firm Strategies 360, had been hired by Horse Racing BC, which represents British Columbia Thoroughbred and Standardbred interests. (Andrus has since left the consulting firm and began working with the VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation as the Director of Business Planning and Government Relations.)

On November 25 the Minister wrote:

"I am writing to advise that government has completed its review of the horse racing industry in B.C. ("the review"). While the review identified some economic, social, and other benefits flowing from live horse racing in B.C., it also revealed significant concerns

with its financial sustainability and ongoing viability despite revitalization efforts. Horse Racing BC's April 2025 Industry Plan presented a possible path forward for horse racing in B.C., but not without significant additional government funding over the next three years. In the government's current fiscal situation, we are unable to support this additional funding request.

"We also reviewed the practice of providing the horse racing industry with a share of net slot machine revenue from Hastings Casino and Elements Casino Surrey. Given the significant financial sustainability concerns revealed by this review, we have made the very difficult decision to stop providing net slot machine revenue to the industry as of January 31, 2026."

The minister's letter also says "the industry is not sustainable because of a range of factors, primarily declining revenues and public participation and attendance at horse racing events" and that "... this decision will have significant implications for the future of live horse racing in the province and for those who have invested in or work in the industry."

It concludes with the government's suggestion to apply for income assistance programs or re-train through Work BC services to help individuals improve their skills and find jobs. (If that doesn't just add insult to injury!)

Others related events to the track closures are the pending sale by Great Canadian of the Hastings casino to the Tsleil-Waututh First Nation and the announcement by the City of Vancouver that it is considering leasing the Hastings land to the Vancouver Whitecaps to build a new soccer stadium at the Pacific National Exhibition grounds as part of an entertainment district.

While the horse industry has banded together to fight the government's decision, and plans to present some alternatives to keep racing going in B.C., it will be an uphill battle. They are not getting any political support and Hastings is in the provincial riding of the deputy premier.

There have been a few opposition MLAs who have raised questions through the media but the legislature is off on its winter holiday until mid February. All politicians were strangely silent following the Fraser Downs closure so it is not surprising that the government and Great Canadian followed the same pattern to shut down Hastings.

Harness racing has been looking at starting up again at Desert Park in Osoyoos and there has been some talk about creating a thoroughbred track near Vernon.

Thoroughbred industry spokespeople are hoping the City of Vancouver allows them to hold a race meet sometime in 2026, probably after the World Cup soccer games, so they can wind down operations and have more time to plan for the future. It is not known at this time if any horses will be allowed back on the grounds for spring training, which was supposed to start at the beginning of February.

With all that is going on, Harness Racing BC postponed its Annual General Meeting (AGM) originally scheduled for December 9. Harness Racing BC has filed for an extension and plans to reschedule the AGM no later than March 15, 2026.

The provincial government also announced in early December that a new gaming control act would be coming into effect on April 13, 2026 to establish an updated regulatory framework and new regulations for the gambling industry to prevent illegal activities, such as money laundering and fraud. The province also plans to create a new independent gambling control office.

The act, passed in 2022, is meant to address recommendations from two independent reviews – the German Report and the Cullen Commission. The province says the Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch will be transitioning to the Independent Gambling Control Office. It aims to provide regulatory oversight of gambling conducted and managed by the British Columbia Lottery Corporation, charitable gambling and B.C.'s horse racing industry.



Shell Busey the HouseSmart guy

By Shell Busey

I hope your Christmas was a great family & friends visiting time and the New Year right on its tail. Now thinking about diets and all the promises you made to yourself. No, no, we are not going to make this write up go there, for sure.

This will continue to be a home information column for the new year 2026.

Happy New Year to all our readers.

I'm going to start by reminding you of some very important items if you have not already taking care of them:

All batteries in any alarms to be replaced for the New Year.

All water supply faucets shut off on the inside of your home crawlspace, basement, all hoses to the lawns and garden areas drained and stored where it's warm.

Gutters cleaned (please be careful on ladders) if possible redirect down pipes to areas away from the home.

All drainage sumps cleaned of leaves and any other debris; make sure that no water pools up against your home foundation as well as concrete and asphalt driveways.

Instal door weather stripping, caulk window drafts, clean or replace furnace filters, have your furnace ducts cleaned if they haven't been done in the last 3 years.

If your home, apartment or condo is heated by electric baseboard, radiant floor heating or heat pump, geo. thermo set your electronic thermostat at your comfort level and leave it will take care of you. (Note: electronic digital thermostats save you money contact a Red Seal electrician to replace your bi metal strip type, it's just that easy)

Weatherstrip your ceiling attic access panel (very important).

Please note: over many years you've heard me promote "Powersmart" all of the information that BC Hydro and others wanted you have the best insulation, windows, weatherstripping etc. I want to thank you for all your considerations.

Have a wonderful New Year

With your family and friends, God bless.

Two of the most asked questions over the past year are as follows;

How do I remove hair spray from a bathroom mirror?

Answer: wash with your hair shampoo. It's just that easy!

The following information is for you to explain one of the most challenging projects; installing ceramic floor tile.

Installing interior ceramic tile floors:

Firstly it is very important that the under surface that you are tiling over be of sound construction. Movement in the undersurface can cause tiles and grout to crack and spoil the appearance of your floor.

HAPPY NEW YEAR



New Year
Out with the Old
Hats and horns
Family and Friends
Midnight
Noisemakers
Cheers
Festivities

Auld Lang Syne
In with the New
Resolutions
Bringing in the New Year
January First
Champagne
Banging Pots
Health Wealth and Prosperity

Celebrations
Party Favours
Small Gatherings
Ball Drop
Best Wishes
Fireworks
Dancing and Singing
Happy New Year

The stiffer the floor the better. Extra pony walls or braces under the floor or the addition of an extra layer of material on top of existing surface can reduce movement.

During new construction you should consider floor joists on 12" centres instead of 16" centres in areas where you plan to install ceramic tile floors. Double layering of plywood floors is also highly recommended to stop potential cracking.

Laying the tile:

Plan your layout before beginning to lay the tiles down. Remember that often your walls are not completely square. Concentrate on the focal points in the room and place full tiles in these areas. Cut tiles are much less noticeable along cupboard edges etc.

Liquid latex additives are available to add to this set mortar mixes to make the installation more durable. Epoxy ceramic tile adhesives are also available. They are stronger but more expensive. Whatever type of adhesive you are using do not skimp on the coverage. Trowel a thin coat of adhesive onto the floor surface and cover the back of the tile completely, do not leave any ridges. There should be 3/16" of adhesive mortar between the tile and the floor surface. When placing the tile onto the floor do



Photo: Donations to the Storehouse Society Hamper fund collected by the residents of Building # 3 St. Andrews complex. Our third year supporting the hamper fund. Pictured Shell Busey, Rick and Shelley Townsend and Doug Rempel. Including donations from the Building Supply Industry Association collected at their Christmas luncheon attended by Shell Busey. Lots of food items as well as \$250.00 in cash donations

not push too hard as you will force the bonding material out around the edges.

Watch for more information on tile and grouting in the next issue.

Also I want to salute and thank a very good friend and a great local business all year long. Visit Potters Nursery and enjoy their fabulous winter wonderland.



WRITE AS I PLEASE

By Mel Kositsky

Tick tock! Tick tock! Tick tock!

Many seniors might remember that old “pirate” Long John Silver and that famous crocodile. More modern movies and television dramas used to discover hidden bombs by that ticking sound too.

However, nowadays you never hear a clock ticking – well hardly anymore. It has become a rare phenomenon in our new “digital” society.

The clock has already started ticking on the New Year and it is time to think ahead and make plans for a better year. They used to call them New Year’s resolutions but people hardly do that anymore. After all, they are hard to keep.

But people of any age can still set goals and strive to keep them. It might even be fun.

Just think about it.

Have you spotted a clock on the wall lately. (And did it have the right time?)

Clocks have mostly become ornaments and some people are starting to miss those “grandfather” clocks which greeted you in the hallways of many family homes. Some had chimes and swinging pendulums which played a familiar tune.

Often family heirlooms would be displayed on fireplace mantels and passed down through generations. You don’t see many around these days – along with gold or silver pocket watches.

And what about those fabulous “coo-coo clocks” which often looked like designer

birdhouses and sounded off on the hour. It drove some people crazy!

When you look around at retail stores, not only are there less and less home phones for landlines but it is hard to find a “clock radio” anymore. Everyone seems to wake up by the alarms on their mobile phones. It is all becoming too high tech and digital.

Did you buy or receive a 2026 wall or desk calendar during the holiday season? It is another lost item in a society that puts everything on their home computers, laptops, tablets or mobile phones. And they all have to be “synced” or you lose track of your schedule – and time management.

Yes, it is a different world in 2026 – but is life better?

Pen and paper are still the least expensive form of communication. Try it this year as a New Year’s resolution. Leave a note for someone, send a letter or card, or actually sit down and write a real letter – not a text or email. Canada Post will love you if you mail it, but it also can be personally hand delivered – maybe over a coffee meeting or a meal. Or even a beer!

Try writing down a shopping list on paper and checking items off as you go through the store (especially grocery shopping). It is one way of coping with the rising cost of everyday foods so you don’t purchase sale items which you don’t really need. Yes, it’s hard to resist those treats by the check-out cashier but that’s why they are put there.

The digital society relies much too much on putting everything on your mobile device. People are so consumed by their data plans they can only do online shopping, order food to be delivered, bank online and many more activities. Yes, it’s convenient – just tap it -- but what are the consequences when you get “hacked” or can’t remember your passwords?

And now with climate change events taking place more frequently, according to the experts, what happens to your high-tech products when the power goes out. Are you prepared? Do you have a battery powered clock or transistor radio? (Two more items that are also becoming much harder to find.)

We start the year off with a degree of uncertainty. But we can hope for better times.

Thank goodness the financial experts have stopped talking about a pending recession and for some unexplained reason the stock markets indexes keep setting record highs. And, of course, the big banks keep making record profits and they even increased their dividends to shareholders late last year.

It seems that British Columbians and all Canadians are looking for some stability in government and the economy, whether they like the ruling parties in power or not. There are likely to be no changes made through federal or provincial elections in 2026, despite the fabricated stories by the mainstream media outlets on a slow news period.

Yes, there is technically a federal minority government, but there is no way the fringe parties will give up their seats in Ottawa to go back to the polls. In B.C., there is a slim margin of power, but the opposition parties are so disorganized that there is no way they would bring down the government.

Canada, as usual, is in a strange place politically. While the federal Liberals are in power nationally, most of the provinces and territories are governed by different parties. Only New Brunswick has a Liberal party government now and an election in Quebec later this year will tell us what direction that province is really going in. Most of the provinces have Conservative governments and even the Yukon went Tory blue in the fall.

But British Columbians will go to the polls on Saturday, October 17 to vote for their local governments. This year party politics will enter many local governments for the first time as different organizations have already registered their party names in many communities.

And the races are already getting contentious with many more months to go!

Both Vancouver and Surrey already have three different candidates campaigning for Mayor and some have already started filling their slates for Council, School Boards and Regional Districts. Usually that doesn’t happen until late summer.

Let’s hope the big media outlets pay more attention to local issues than spending all their time following the American mid-terms to see if President Donald Trump will lose some of his power. After all, we are not the 51st State – yet!

How small business owners can help prevent fraud

From coast to coast, Canadian small businesses support their communities with goods, services and jobs, strengthening the economy. But they—and those they support—are under increasing threat from financial fraudsters.

According to a report from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB), 50 per cent of Canadian small businesses report experiencing either an attempted or successful fraud attack.

Between phishing, malware, business email compromise, social engineering and more, fraudsters have developed a variety of ways to gain information and access to businesses, with the goal of stealing money.

For Piraveena Tharmalingam, a Vice President in Canadian Business Banking at TD, protecting a business from fraud is an important part of meeting financial goals. There are also steps owners can take to make their businesses more resilient to fraud. She shares five:

1 Don’t assume your company’s email is secure. While most of us use email all the time, it can be exposed to unsecure networks, and vulnerable to compromise and manipulation. If you receive an email asking for sensitive information, requesting updated payment details and banking information or attempting to redirect funds, it’s a good idea to validate the request by calling the sender at the number they have on file, as a precaution.

2 Use available security tools. Most financial institutions offer a wide array of security features. Some banks, like TD offer tools such as dual authentication and transaction limits, which can help keep a company’s finances safe. Talk to your bank about the security features they offer and take advantage of them.

3 Be careful which links you click. Faked, or “spoofed,” emails and fraudulent websites can infect your system with malicious software to steal login credentials or damage files. Always validate

that sender email addresses are legitimate and never open attachments or links from unknown senders.

4 Reconcile accounts regularly. It’s a best practice to review and reconcile your business accounts regularly—daily if possible. This can help you spot unfamiliar transactions quickly and potentially stop them.

5 Prepare your employees. Encourage employees to think critically and ask questions. Make sure any employees with access to online banking get training on common scams and regularly test their knowledge to identify any gaps.

While there’s no one-size-fits-all solution to preventing fraud, being aware and prepared is always prudent. When owners, employees and business partners work together and look out for each other, it helps make businesses and communities safer from fraud.

After a neurological injury, regaining mobility takes innovative therapy



Neurological conditions such as multiple sclerosis (MS), traumatic brain injury (TBI) and stroke can all affect mobility and coordination. They can make even simple daily activities like walking to the mailbox, grocery shopping or playing with children difficult to manage.

Across these conditions, 70 to 80 per cent of individuals experience lasting issues with gait or balance with some experiencing both.

Losing mobility has a far-reaching impact. These mobility challenges can have a profound impact on quality of life and independence, sometimes leading to reduced participation in work, community activities and family life:

- For those recovering from a stroke, difficulties with gait and muscle coordination can increase the risk of falls, making everyday environments feel uncertain.
- In TBI patients, long-term disability is often linked to balance, fatigue and cognitive symptoms that make returning to work or social life difficult.
- For those with MS, progressive mobility loss can interfere with walking and coordination, affecting confidence and overall well-being.

While each condition presents unique challenges, many share a common goal: restoring function and reclaiming independence.

New tools are supporting recovery. Advances in neurorehabilitation are giving Canadians new ways to improve mobility, such as the Portable Neuromodulation Stimulator (PoNS). It's a non-implantable, orally applied therapy that delivers neurostimulation to the surface of the tongue through a mouthpiece connected to a controller. Used with physical rehabilitation exercises over the course of 14 weeks—two weeks' worth of in-clinic sessions, then 12 weeks at home—it helps patients with MS, TBI and stroke durably improve balance and mobility, addressing a critical gap in neurorehabilitation.

Living proof of progress. "I cannot believe it has been four years since completing the 14 weeks of PoNS treatment," says Beth Foster, who had lived with long-term balance issues following a neurological injury. "Because of the improvements in my balance, my social world is back, my gardening ability is fun again, and I'm able to be the kind of Nana I always wanted to be."

Canadians living with MS, TBI and stroke are finding strength and hope with every bit of mobility regained, giving them even more determination to take their next steps toward recovery.

You can learn more at ponstherapy.ca.

[www.newscanada.com](http://newscanada.com)

Driving and storage tips for getting your car winter-ready

With winter setting in, now's the time to make sure your vehicle is winter-ready. From essential tire changes to smart storage strategies, these practical tips will ensure your car is well-prepared.

Winter tires are essential

If you haven't already, it's time to swap out those all-season tires for winter ones.

Winter tires are designed to provide superior traction on snowy and icy roads, which can make all the difference when temperatures drop.

Make sure your tires have the mountain and snowflake symbol for assured quality. Additionally, monitor your tire pressure regularly since cold temperatures can cause it to drop, potentially affecting your car's handling.

Protect your vehicle in storage

If you're parking your car until spring, talk to your insurer. You may be eligible for a discount on your car insurance to keep you covered throughout the season against potential risks like theft or damage from winter storms.

Before storing, give your car a good cleaning to prevent dirt and grime from causing damage during the storage period. Fill up the gas tank to prevent condensation, inflate the tires to the recommended pressure, and consider a car cover to shield against dust and moisture.

Stay safe this winter with extra precautions

- Slow down: When driving, take it slow and give yourself extra time to reach your destination. Even when roads look clear, they can be slippery with black ice.
- Check your wipers and fluids: Ensure your wiper blades are in good condition and consider washer fluid with antifreeze to maintain clear visibility in cold weather.
- Don't drive on empty: Keeping the tank at least half-full prevents the fuel lines from freezing and adds extra weight for better traction.
- Consider roadside assistance: Many insurance providers offer roadside assistance. Some, like Belairdirect, offer services such as towing and battery boosting, which can be invaluable during winter emergencies.

Tips to reduce your expenses

Reducing spending is important for saving money and helping income go further. But it's not always as simple as making coffee at home instead of going to a coffee shop or using public transit to go to work instead of paying for parking.

Here are some tools for reducing expenses you may not know you had:

Look for ways to lower your bank account fees

You can take advantage of electronic alerts to avoid overdraft charges. Your bank must send you electronic alerts when the balance of your chequing or savings account falls below \$100, or an amount you've set.

As of December 1, 2025, all Canadians can benefit from modernized no cost and low-cost accounts costing no more than \$4 per month with certain federally regulated banks. Certain groups even qualify for no-cost accounts, including youth, newcomers and seniors receiving the Guaranteed Income Supplement. Cutting bank fees each month can make a difference in the long run and help you save on things that matter to you.

Use a budget management tool

Creating a budget can help you keep track and manage spending. Before you set to work on a budget, you should figure out what your needs and wants are—they aren't the same for everyone. Once that's done, you're ready to start your budget.

To create a good budget, you need an effective tool that's easy to use, such as the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada (FCAC)'s online budget planner. It includes tips, advice and alerts to help you improve your financial situation.

If your actual spending changes with time, readjust your numbers to make sure you are staying within your budget.

Find budgeting resources and more money tips at canada.ca/money.

[www.newscanada.com](http://newscanada.com)

Get ahead of the season by implementing these easy and effective winter prep tips. Not only will you increase your safety on the road, but you'll also protect your car from the harshest of elements, helping your peace of mind all season long.

You can find more car safety tips at belairdirect.com.

[www.newscanada.com](http://newscanada.com)

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A NEW YEAR OF GRATITUDE, GRACE, AND HOPE

By Diane Tijman, Retired Educator from Richmond, BC

As I sit with my husband by the Christmas tree on New Year's Eve, we are at peace letting go the heaviness of this past year. We release the stress and the fears and raise a Drambuie to toast in the New Year with optimism and hope.

Tonight, I let go of the past with gratitude. Even the difficult times have shaped me, stretched me, and quietly prepared me for what was to come. I have learned so much about myself, and I carry those lessons forward.

This moment is my reminder and yours that we are allowed to outgrow what once felt comfortable. We are allowed to move on and walk away from what dims our light. We are allowed to choose a life that feels more aligned with who we are becoming.

As my wee dram warms my palate, I cleanse my heart.

As the firelight flickers, I honour the light within myself.

As the night quiets, I remember my yoga teacher's familiar mantra, spoken so gently and clearly:

"May you be safe, may you be happy, may you be healthy, may you live a life of ease."

And so should you.

As the New Year begins, I affirm this: I am



stepping into 2026 with an open heart and spirit ready to receive what is meant for me. I welcome clarity, trust, and the blessings that will surely come.

To everyone reading this, may you release what may have weighed on your spirit. May you move forward with strength, courage and calm. May you remember that you are worthy of a life that is peaceful, purposeful, and full of love.

As we enter this new year, gratitude fills our hearts. We have just learned that in January, our daughter will receive a kidney transplant in a paired swap match organized by Canada's national Kidney Paired Donation Program. At the same time, I will be donating one of my kidneys to someone unknown to me somewhere in Canada. Because of this extraordinary act of connection, both my daughter and another person will have the chance to regain their health, their freedom, and their future. Two lives will be saved.

We step forward into the year ahead with love, hope, and a renewed appreciation for the miracle of life. The doctors and the team at VGH have been so amazing and we are forever grateful!!



Happy New Year everyone!

For those wishing to learn more about the Kidney Paired Donation Program in British Columbia, please visit <https://www.transplant.bc.ca/transplant-patients/living-donor-kidney-transplant>

Reach out to a senior this holiday season Small gestures can make a difference

VICTORIA – The holiday season is meant to be a time of togetherness and celebration but many seniors report feeling lonely and isolated this time of year.

Today, BC Seniors Advocate Dan Levitt is calling on all British Columbians to reach out to older adults in their communities who may be alone over the holidays, whether they are close friends and family, or a neighbour or acquaintance.

"Many seniors spend the holidays by themselves and a small, caring gesture can make a big difference for both the giver and the receiver," says Levitt. "A simple phone call or a visit can remind someone they are not forgotten."

He encourages people to take simple, practical steps to connect with seniors:

- Make a phone or video call, just to check in.
- Invite a senior for a walk, coffee or a brief visit.
- Offer to assist with simple tasks, like getting groceries, clearing the driveway, or giving a ride.
- Contact care homes to ask about visiting. Many residents appreciate short, friendly visits during the

holidays.

The Seniors Advocate also encourages older adults who are feeling lonely or isolated to consider engaging with their community. "Reaching out can feel difficult, but taking even one small action can open the door to new connections," he says.

Seniors can try:

- Contact a community or seniors centre. Many hold events, holiday meals and offer drop-in activities.
- Calling a local seniors organization or support line, such as the Red Cross Friendly Calls service (details below).
- Join group activities in person or online.
- Letting friends, family and neighbours know a visit or conversation would be welcome.

Social connection is important for healthy ageing and is vital to seniors' wellbeing. Loneliness can have serious effects on both physical and mental health. Research shows that older adults are at increased risk of isolation, especially during the holiday season.

"Let's reach out so seniors feel valued, connected and cared for, not only during the holidays, but throughout the year," says Levitt.

Resources for seniors facing isolation:

- Red Cross Friendly Calls Program - Matches people with trained Red Cross personnel who connect with them regularly to check in, provide emotional support and encourage healthy coping strategies. Call 1-833-979-9779 or sign up online.
- Office of the Seniors Advocate Information and Referral Line – Seniors' services specialists can help connect older adults to friendly calls programs, seniors' centres and other local and provincial supports. Call 1-877-952-3181.
- BC-211 – Staff can find local, friendly visitor or caller programs and other seniors' supports. Call 2-1-1.

The Office of the Seniors Advocate is an independent office of the provincial government with a mandate of monitoring seniors' services and reporting on systemic issues affecting seniors. The office also provides information and referral to seniors and their caregivers by calling toll-free 1 877 952-3181, via email at info@seniorsadvocatebc.ca, Canada Post and the OSA web site <https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/>.



THE BACKROAD TO HARRISON DISCOVERING HOPCOTT FARM

by Chris Millikan

Near summer's end, we set out for Harrison Hot Springs, our longtime favourite retreat. Leaving our north shore home, we head to Highway 7 aka Loughheed Highway. When our kids were young, we fondly dubbed this alternate to the Trans-Canada Highway, the backroad to Harrison. Bedroom communities of Port Moody, Coquitlam, Pitt Meadows, Maple Ridge and Mission lie along this scenic route. And sometimes we stopped to explore their attractions.

This time, Pitt River Trail offers a perfect opportunity to stretch our legs. The easy, meandering gravel pathway features elevated views of greenery-bordered Pitt River. Here, passersby pause to chat about dabbling duck species. A British couple reports sighting golden plovers in adjacent fields. And a kayak flotilla evokes memorable canoe trips with friends, paddling across Pitt Lake and swimming in Widgeon Creek.

Old Dewdney Trunk Road then leads us over to Hopcott Farms. There, we meet one of the owners. As Brad guides us amid brick-red outbuildings, he proudly introduces his family's farm. "My grandfather bought this property in 1932. Clearing small trees covering the property, he created pastureland...and raised dairy cows for 25 years! But for the last 68, we've raised only beef cattle."

Entering the original barn, Brad shows us his high-quality hybrid herd, all nonchalantly munching sweet-smelling hay raised on the farm. He explains, "By raising this Angus-Holstein breed, we can produce premium meats year-round." Pointing out their new abattoir, he notes that it's also available to fellow beef farmers. "Basically, we're a butcher shop located on a family-run farm," he chuckles.

We learn that onsite corn and hayfields produce their cattle feed. At one time, they'd operated a 6-hectare corn maze, nowadays their wedding venue. And about thirty years ago, they converted 30-hectares of cornfields into cranberry bogs. Partnering with Ocean Spray, they became one of

the company's top tier farms.

Brad clarifies, "Here, we're committed to bringing high quality, farm-fresh goods to customers, near and far. My sister Jen manages the farm store featuring our naturally-raised fresh beef products, as well as specially sourced produce and merchandise such as honeys, jelly, jams, herbs and condiments."

As today's third-generation farmers, Hopcott grandchildren work together in this diversified 'hands-on' endeavor. "Yup! You can even find our dad mowing lawns around the place," Brad grins. We later learn that in 2023, their farm received a notable Canadian award recognizing young farmers demonstrating excellence in the profession.

Following the tour, we return to the country store for lunch. From an extensive list of menu items in the cozy Bistro, we pick grilled cranberry paninis with steaming bowls of homemade vegetable-beef soup. Though shaded patio seats tempt us on this warm, sunny day, we join others inside. Settling on comfy seats, we relish our fresh meal des s a n d w i c h e s . Afterwards, it's a shopping we go!

We pass by frozen lobster, crab and scallops, smoked hams and deli-products made inhouse: sandwich meats, sausages, pepperoni, jerky, and bacon. In a frenzy of delight, we select items and treats for family and friends to try out at home, including bargain Honey Crisp apples and local honey.

Colleagues later tell us Hopcott Farms is their 'go-to'



destination for fresh local produce, specialty goods and first-rate meats. This enterprising farm also attracts customers by hosting seasonal community events and activities. And their extensive catering service offers custom tasting menus.

Stopping at Hopcott Farms brings meaning to their striking logo. 'Know Your Farmer: Know Your Food' signage inspires folks like us to further support such family farms...and to continue buying locally grown food.

Our leisurely stops along Highway 7 provide an unforgettable kickstart to our Harrison Hot Springs mini-holiday.



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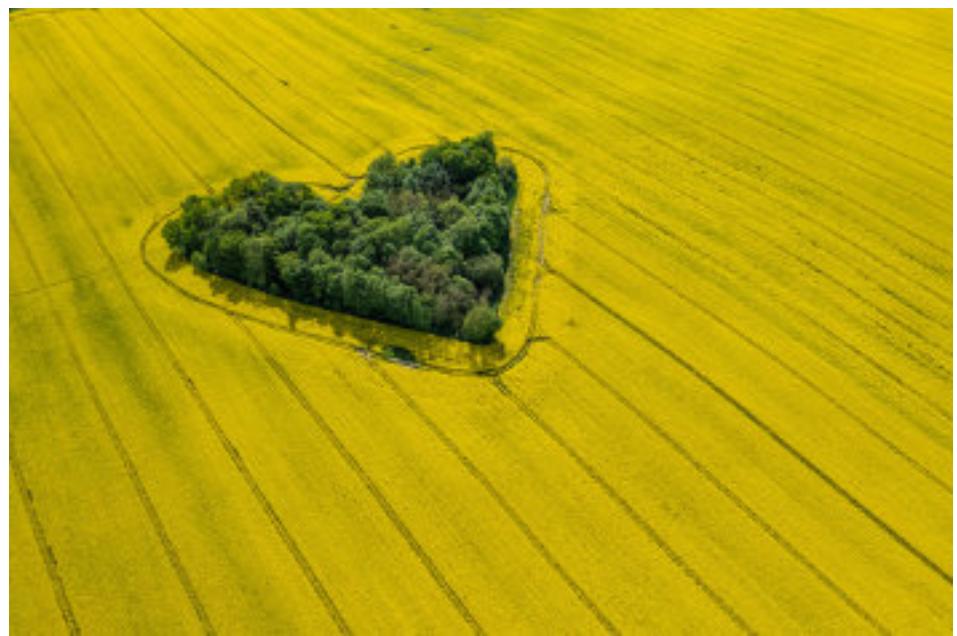
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Celebrating a Canadian innovation in agriculture



The people of this country have contributed a great deal to the world: from feats of engineering like the Canadarm and the electric wheelchair, to medical breakthroughs like insulin and penicillin.

Consumers are becoming more conscious about their purchasing habits and looking to support Canadian products and businesses. In fact, according to data from Angus Reid, 78 per cent of Canadians are committed to buying more products made here.

One particular Canadian creation stands out because it blends in so well that many people don't

realize it's an invention. In fact, you probably have some in your home: canola oil.

Canola is very much Canadian. It's an important component of the "buy Canadian" movement. The product of Canadian innovation and growers, it's a staple in our kitchens and a part of many other locally produced goods. In many ways, it's as Canadian as it gets: wholesome, good for the heart, humble, environmentally conscious

and often underappreciated. Here's what you need to know about this uniquely Canadian innovation:

It comes from a history of cooperation and innovation. What we call canola plants today are the product of decades of experimentation and collaboration between Canadian scientists and farmers. Through the 1930s and 40s, researchers and growers in Saskatchewan discovered that at least three different strains of the *Brassica* plant could be crossbred and modified. They developed strains, called cultivars, that could produce more oil—of a higher quality—and grow in colder

climates.

In the 1960s, plant breeders succeeded in creating cultivars that were low in erucic acid, which had long been a health concern. The new strains, which had a much healthier combination of fatty acids, became referred to as "Canadian (can), oil low acid (ola)"—canola—by the late 1970s.

Today, it helps Canada's agriculture, industry and environment. Canola growers and sellers contribute over \$43 billion to Canada's economy. That's from domestic oil sales and exports, but also from the plant's numerous other uses.

The use of the plants is environmentally friendly, with little going to waste. Farming canola can enrich the soil and provides a valuable source of food and pollen for Canada's honeybees. In addition, it plays a role in a variety of industries, from skin care and cosmetics to pet food and even biofuel.

For anyone looking for ways to start buying more Canadian, canola and the many products it supports can be great places to start. You can learn more about supporting Canadian-made at hellocanola.ca.

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ABSOLUTELY FREE To Low Income Seniors & Disabled!!

NEW BC GOVERNMENT GRANT!

PAYS YOU up to \$20,000!!!

You May Qualify for FREE Bathroom Modifications!!!

Did you know that falling accounts for 85% of hospital injury admissions for people aged 65 and older? Approximately 80% of all fall injuries in the home occur in the bathroom. It really doesn't take much to fall. Most of us slip or trip just about every day, but are able to regain our balance and prevent a fall. Combine that with a poor night's sleep, distraction, mobility problems, or a slippery floor and you dramatically increase your chances of falling which may lead to a serious injury.

Handi Bath has been remodeling homes for over 40 years. We do custom bathrooms and special needs adaptations to modernize your home and keep you safe at home.

Call now to see if you can qualify for the government grant or simply create your dream bathroom. **778-323-0304**



Upgrade to a Safer Bathroom. You May Qualify for a Government Grant



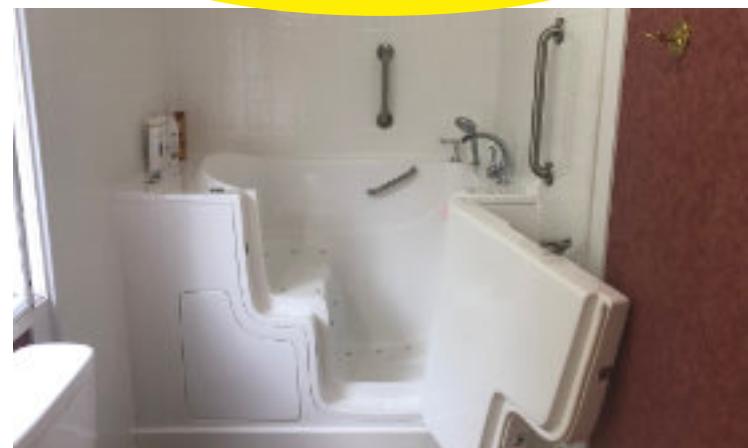
"There is a severe shortage of assisted living and long term care beds in the province of B.C.! This government program will pay up to 100% for safety and accessibility modifications to keep seniors safe in their own homes."

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