

LEFT IN DOUBT

Our newsroom email pings frequently with reports from the Special Investigations Unit.

In the fatal shooting of Sheena Jackson by two OPP officers in Burk's Falls, we had been waiting more than a year for that ping.

The SIU's mandate is "to nurture confidence in Ontario's police services" by investigating and assuring the public that police actions when civilians are injured — or, in this case, killed — "are subjected to rigorous, independent investigations."

In the overwhelming majority of cases, we read that the director of the unit saw no reasonable grounds to issue charges as a result of investigations.

In 2021, criminal charges were laid in 12 cases against a total of 14 officers, representing three per cent of the 397 cases closed that year.

The report on Jackson's death was issued on Aug. 23 of this year and she died on Aug. 5, 2021. That's 383 days of anguish for the family of the deceased, and for the OPP officers involved. It was a long time for the community to wait. And wonder.

And yet, the SIU Act stipulates that any investigation is to take no longer than 120 days. Failing that, there is to be a public statement made regarding the status every 30 days.

We are not aware of any monthly statements. We do know attempts to get any information about the case from the OPP or the SIU were met with the response that nothing could be said until the investigation concluded.

Was the holdup due to the report of post-mortem examination, dated Feb. 15, 2022, being listed as received by the SIU on June 16, 2022, from the Coroner's Office? It's hard to understand why it took six months to be concluded, but even more difficult to understand why it then took four months to get from one office to the other.

There seems to have been a troubling lack of urgency. According to the report, only one of the officers involved in the shooting provided a statement to the investigation and refused to provide his notes; the second officer refused to provide a statement or notes. We are told they had legal right to refuse.

Which is confusing again, as the act stipulates that officers have a "duty to comply."

The director disregarded the evidence given by two civilian witnesses who said Jackson was "standing in place when she was shot." The reasoning was that this did not align with the physical evidence.

Perhaps all of this is troubling not for its own sake, but because in the end a woman in crisis, armed with a knife, was fired on by police seven times, hit four times and died that night. And the SIU has deemed this acceptable.

We want to have faith that the people who have sworn to serve and protect us have the training to de-escalate violence and that people in mental health crises are safe from the police. We think it's the SIU's job to help us hold onto that faith.

And yet, in the death of Sheena Jackson, we are left in doubt.



Metroland file photo

The Burk's Falls and District Food Bank 12th annual Hunger Walk will take place on Sept. 10 at 10 a.m. The 4 km walk starts at Stan Darling Park.

WALK TO CURE HUNGER IN BURK'S FALLS REGION

REGISTER FOR ANNUAL FUNDRAISER TODAY, SAYS ANNA BRANCH



ANNA BRANCH
Column

The Burk's Falls and District Food Bank 12th annual Hunger Walk will take place on Sept. 10 at 10 a.m. The 4 km walk starts at Stan Darling Park and includes areas around the village as well as the scenic Magnetawan River.

Pledge sheets are available at the village office, Quik Way and the food bank. If you can't walk, support someone who is walking. Don't know anyone? Take your donation to the park. Winter is coming, and costs go up.

The winners of the Young at Heart Seniors Centre euchre are First Place, Chester Weinhold; 2nd, Helen Horner; and Chris Middleton earned third place. The door prize was taken home by Ron Pflander. Join in the fun

and games every Friday at 1:30 p.m. at the centre is located across from the United Church.

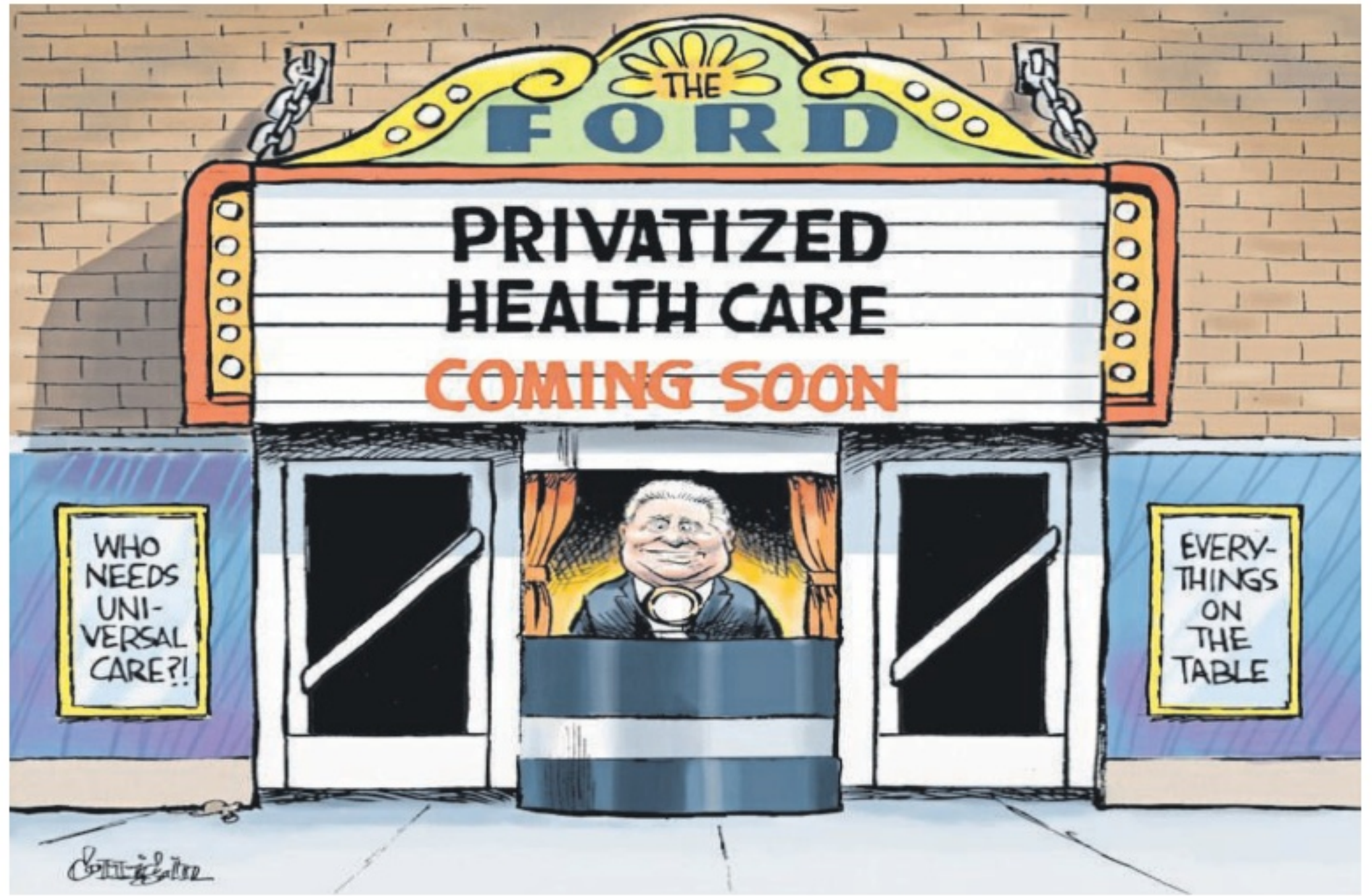
September is fall fair time, and the Armour, Ryerson, Burk's Falls Agricultural Society is looking forward to once more presenting a fun-filled event focusing on local activities and people. If you have never entered your best preserves, biggest cucumber or your needlework etc., now is the time to start. Fair is Labour Day weekend.

Visit www.arbfas.ca for more details.

Who doesn't love chicken wings? Get your fill at the Burk's Falls legion on Wednesdays. Place your order starting at 2 p.m. on Wednesday. Pick up or eat in from 4 until 7 p.m. 705-382-3137. Bring your appetite and a bib.

If you are holding a community event in Burk's Falls or Katrine, please contact me by email or call 705-382-5610. Please put "Newspaper ad" in the subject line. Deadline is 6 p.m. on Monday.

Anna Branch is a columnist with the Almaguin News. Her column, Burk's Falls and Katrine News, appears weekly. She can be reached at anajb08@gmail.com.



CONTRIBUTED OPINION

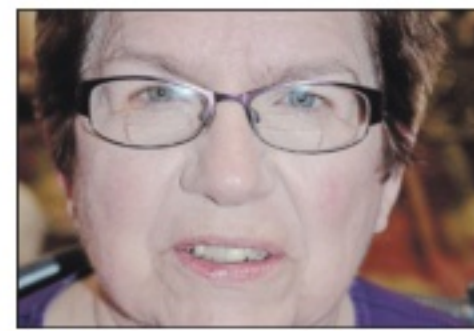
FUN FOR ALL AGES AT POWASSAN FALL FAIR

GAMES, LIVE MUSIC AND MORE FOR EVERYONE, SAYS MARY HEASMAN

The Powassan Agricultural Society will host its 125th Fall Fair at the Powassan Fairgrounds on Sept. 3 and 4.

The parade starts at 10 a.m. Saturday, followed by opening ceremonies and the cutting of the anniversary cake and the horse pulls at 1:30 p.m.

The demolition derby will be held Sunday at 1:30 p.m. Other events and ex-



MARY HEASMAN
Column

hibits include the Steve Featherstone reptile show, Speaking of Wildlife show, live music, games and entertainment on both days.

The Commanda Community Centre, 4009 Ontario Highway 522, will host a community yard sale on Sunday, Sept. 4, from 8 a.m.

until 2 p.m.

Come and see what treasures you can find. Barbecue, food and drinks will be available. To be a vendor, contact Mike at 705-492-3990 to sign up. Rates are \$10 for outdoors or \$20 for indoors.

Condolences are extended to the family of Ronald Lorne Hamilton who died at North Bay on Aug. 11, 2022. He was 85. Ron was the founder and operator of Hamilton Printers since 1983 and, in recent years, partnered with his son Scott in the business. He was the husband of Glenna (MacGillivray); father of

Christine Stauffer (Gordon), Mark Hamilton (Tara) and Scott Hamilton (Lee); grandfather of seven and great-grandfather of three. A service of remembrance will be announced at a later date. For information, contact the Paul Funeral Home at paulfuneral-home.ca or call 705-724-2024.

Euchre winners at the Powassan Golden Sunshine Club on Aug. 22 were: Alex Jackson, high man; David Reid, low man; Monica Kunkel, high lady; Marg Jang, low lady, and Alex Jackson played the most lone hands.

Contact me at 705-724-2601 or email if you have items for the column.

Mary Heasman is a columnist with the Almaguin News. Her column, Powassan News, appears weekly. She can be reached at mary.bob@bell.net.

LETTERS & COMMENTARY

LACK OF HOUSING IS A PRIORITY PROBLEM

Why is the problem of housing discussed as if homelessness is a natural disaster?

A lack of housing is a symptom of a psychological or moral failing. It is not a supply chain issue. We cannot have our cake and eat it too. We cannot have housing if we prefer x, y and z, and these use the resources needed to build homes.

We might want to ask why Canada has free medical care and education but not free housing. Not that free anything is good, but it drives home the point that shortages are more about political choices than laws of nature. If housing is important, why not build houses instead of other things? Why do we keep replacing what ought to last a lifetime? The problem is not a lack of housing, the problem is other priorities.

We need to change what we think is important before we can alter the consequences of our choices.

Yours truly,

ROBERT BURK
MUSKOKA

GROUPS OFFER MPPS INSIGHT INTO NORTHERN ISSUES

On Aug. 15, NOMA, FO-

NOM and NOSDA had the opportunity to meet with a multi-minister delegation from provincial government at the annual AMO conference to discuss the housing, mental health, addictions and homelessness crisis in the north.

The Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA), the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) and the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM) jointly discussed the crisis of housing, homelessness, mental health and the opioid crisis with the provincial government at the AMO Conference. NOMA president Wendy Landry, FONOM president Danny Whalen and NOSDA chair Michelle Boileau shared with provincial ministers, associate ministers and parliamentary assistants the experiences and challenges in our communities.

The three organizations provided the government with a research paper written by the Northern Policy Institute, entitled "More than Just a Number: Addressing the Homelessness, Addiction, and Mental Health Crisis in the North." This paper identifies eight strategies that need to be developed.

Danny Whalen commented that "having the

three organizations, representing 144 municipalities and 10 DSSABS, coming together shows how critical these issues are to Northern Ontario communities and the need for this government to help our municipalities address these concerning issues in a way that recognizes the unique challenges of the North."

President Wendy Landry commented that "it is important to take an all-of-government approach, to address and create made-in-the-North solutions to the housing, mental health and addictions crisis."

MPP Vic Fedeli commented: "The north now has seven MPPs on the government side that represent Northern Ontario and they welcome new ideas so we can collectively advocate for the North."

The three organizations asked the province to work with and directly support the municipalities and DSSABS to develop the strategies in the "More than Just a Number: Addressing the Homelessness, Addiction, and Mental Health Crisis in the North" paper.

DANNY WHALEN,
FONOM PRESIDENT
WENDY LANDRY,
NOMA PRESIDENT
MICHELLE BOILEAU,
NOSDA CHAIR

#THROWBACK THURSDAY TO FAIR FUN IN EMSDALE



Kathleen, 6, and Xavier Hughson, 4, share a snack with a friendly camel at the petting zoo during the Emsdale Fall Fair in 2011.

Metroland file photo

ABOUT US

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