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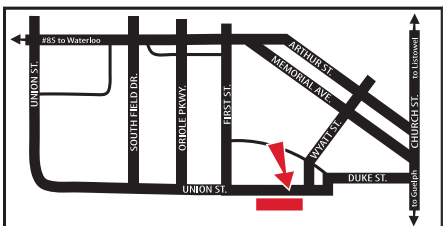
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Local Scouts, Cubs, Girl Guides, Brownies and Sparks gathered early Saturday morning in Elmira for a ride aboard the Waterloo Central Railway with Mr. and Mrs. Claus. Nearly 200 people boarded the train and sang carols and ate goodies along the way. (LIZ BEVAN / THE OBSERVER)

FIRE PITS: Council to look at policy Dec. 7

FROM | COVER

to do things like that. We don't live in the big cities because those things are banned there. These are things we like to keep in a tight-knit community," Wainwright said.

Wellesley fire chief Andrew Lillico looked at the applicable legislation to draft up a bylaw. The Ontario Fire Code specifically bans an open burn in a community and the only way it can be approved is if the fire chief provides an exemption, he said.

Lillico and chief administrative officer Rik Louwagie researched the issue by looking at adjoining com-

munities and brought in the Ontario Fire Marshal's office.

"[They] strongly recommended that we adopt an open burning bylaw for the Township of Wellesley because without the bylaw if we had a non compliance we had no way to enforce it," Lillico said.

The bylaw was created based on documentation, best practices, and recommendations from the fire marshal's office.

If approved, most residential homes in Wellesley will be permitted to have small campfires, permitted they follow the guidelines in the bylaw. For example,

a contained site campfire is defined as "a circle of stones, bricks, concrete or truck or tire rim, of a maximum diameter of 60 cm (24 inches) and includes manufactured non-combustible outdoor fire containers."

There will be a buffer zone in the bylaw that places restrictions on how close to your neighbour's property you can build a fire. The smoke issue, as brought forward by Slack, can't be controlled by the fire department, as it's actually under Ministry of the Environment jurisdiction.

The open-air fire bylaw will be brought to council at their Dec. 7 meeting.

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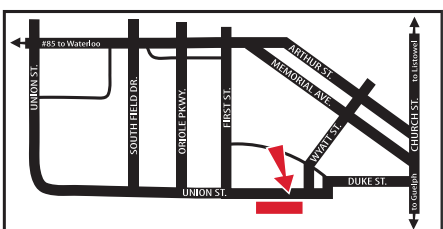
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# Cowan trial on hold until February

After week in which witnesses refuted former mayor's expense claims, closing arguments set for Feb. 29

WHITNEY NEILSON

**WITNESSES AT TODD COWAN'S** trial last week testified at least three meals he claimed as township expenses never occurred with the parties the former Woolwich mayor listed on the receipts.

We won't have a verdict until next year in Cowan's trial as counsel asked for an additional date in order to do closing submissions. All the witnesses have been called and the earliest date they could get for Kitchener court was Feb. 29. It's unclear if the judge will reach a verdict the same day.

Cowan will not testify. He has yet to speak in court except to plead not guilty to both charges of fraud and breach of trust.

Kitchener-Conestoga MPP Michael Harris took the stand Nov. 26 in regards to a receipt Cowan expensed for a meal he said was had with Harris at the



Todd Cowan [FILE PHOTO]

2013 Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference in Ottawa.

Prosecutor Jennifer Caskie asked if he had conversations with Cowan at that conference.

"Oh I'm sure we did, absolutely," Harris said.

Caskie questioned Harris about a receipt that Cowan had submitted as an expense claim for Aug. 17, 2013 for \$44.34. The receipt was for a meal of two pints of Labatt Blue beer, two pints of Budweiser beer, chicken quesadillas, and

nachos. There was a handwritten notation with the name, Harris.

"Did you have that meeting with Mr. Cowan?" asked Caskie.

"I did not," Harris replied. She asked Harris about another meal receipt submitted by Cowan, this one for breakfast of \$35.44.

"No I wasn't even in Ottawa at that time. I didn't get there until Sunday," Harris said.

She asked Harris if he ever had a meal with Cowan.

"I had breakfast one morning in the same restaurant, but not together. I don't believe we ever dined together," Harris said.

"I believe he was with his partner at the time, his girlfriend," Harris said.

Harris also noted there's no mechanism for members of provincial parliament, like himself, to expense

COWAN | 4

## OBSERVER

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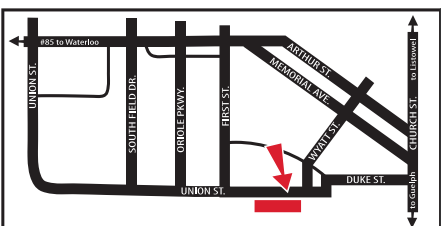
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