



# The St. Clair Township BEACON

Discoveries  
That Matter

THE TOWNSHIP  
OF ST. CLAIR

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## Historic 70-year-old bridge receives much-needed make-over



The Holt Line bridge is as good as new thanks to a caring community, government funding, and lots of hard work.

The Holt Line bridge stood - solid, shiny, and reborn - as grateful local residents joined representatives from all levels of government, and from the municipal and engineering crews, to celebrate its return to service. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on March 12 to mark the reopening of the historically-significant structure, which had been closed to traffic for over a year. **For more about the bridge rehabilitation, see page 19.**

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Everyone  
a

Happy,  
Healthy  
Easter



Municipal  
Notes  
Pages  
2, 3

Works Dept.  
Notices  
Pages 7-9

Heritage  
Corner  
Pages 11-13

**2021 Census  
Enumerators  
needed  
See page 3**

Community  
Contact  
Pages 21, 22

Around  
The  
Township  
Pages 24, 23



## Extensive rehabilitation gives Holt Line bridge new life



The ribbon-cutting chore was left up to attending dignitaries, from left: St. Clair Township Councillors Bill Myers, Tracy Kingston, Rose Atkins, Deputy Mayor Steve Miller, MP Marilyn Gladu, MPP Bob Bailey, Mayor Steve Arnold, CAO John Rodey, and Councillor Pat Brown.

Inset top right: Lois Tulloch, 90, who watched the new bridge being built in 1951, still lives nearby. She viewed the ceremony from the shelter of a vehicle to stay out of the chilly weather.

*Bonnie Stevenson photo*

March 12, 2021 was a day of celebration for those who travel along Holt Line on a regular basis. The 70-year-old bridge, built in 1951 by the Sarnia Bridge Company as a replacement for Brown's ferry, has been closed for the past year after it was deemed unsafe for use. The decision to rehabilitate the bridge was made after reviewing public input and to acknowledge that the structure's Parker truss design gives it historical and cultural significance. Bridges using the Parker truss system are very rare now according to project engineer Ken Logtenberg. "There are not too many of them around," he said.

The bridge reopening was a welcomed event for farmers who work the fields along Holt Line according to local resident Bill Sholtens. "The bridge is a big deal in the neighbourhood. We have two farms on the east side of the Sydenham River that our sons own now. I cross the bridge almost daily to check on them," he said, noting his family wasn't the only one affected by the bridge closure. "Many farmers in the area are in the same boat. It was a major inconvenience to drive around with equipment." But the end result of the bridge project is a much appreciated improvement. "It was out for a year and the company rehabbing it and the workers who passed by our house every day did a great job," said Mr. Sholtens.

The extensive rehabilitation effort, with design work

by B.M. Ross and Associates Engineering and the execution of the rehabilitation work by McLean Taylor Construction Ltd., included structural repairs to the concrete abutments, replacement of steel cords and truss members, replacement of the concrete deck, and corrosion proof painting of the entire truss system. (High water levels in the Sydenham River prevented the bottom of the bridge abutment from being replaced, so steel piles were installed and underwater concrete placement completed the project, providing a solid foundation.) The total cost of the project was \$1.6 million. It included a grant from the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program-Rural & Northern Stream program (\$600,000 from Federal government, \$399,960 from provincial government) and \$200,040 from Township of St. Clair. The unforeseen underwater abutment work required an additional \$400,000 from the township.

During the ceremony, MPP Gladu, MP Bailey, and Mayor Arnold cited the cooperation of all levels of government for returning the bridge to service.

Before the significance of the bridge was known, several replacement options were considered, including the construction of a new bridge and the potential use of the Darcy McKeough Dam structure as an alternative crossing.

*Brown's ferry photo courtesy of Wayne Brown*