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Two local charities say thousands of families will have a brighter Christmas thanks to the generosity of Londoners. The Salvation Army's Christmas Hamper program was able to provide food hampers to 5,117 local families this holiday season, and nearly 6,663 children received a bag of toys. The 17th annual Business Cares Food Drive exceeded its campaign total after collecting just over 325,000lbs of food for the London Food Bank.

## LSTAR Supports Local Charities

The London and St. Thomas Association of REALTORS® (LSTAR) presented \$12,000 to two local organizations Wednesday as part of its community investment program. LSTAR 2016 President Stacey Evoy and LSTAR CEO John S. Geha bestowed cheques of \$4,500 to *Investing in Children* and \$7,500 to *Hockey Helps the Homeless*.

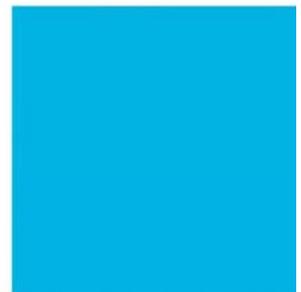
Warren Shantz, Broker at Sutton Group Preferred and Tracy Marino, Chair of the *Hockey Helps the Homeless* Organizing Committee and LSTAR Director of Business Development, accepted the \$7,500 cheque for *Hockey Helps the Homeless*.

"We are thrilled to support this one-day fantasy hockey tournament for the fourth consecutive year," said the President of LSTAR. "Every year, hundreds of our members show their passion for this event, volunteering and getting involved in the tournament. Since 2014, the event has raised \$360,000 for Merrymount Children and Family Crisis and Support Centre, Youth Opportunities Unlimited and the Unity Project."

Anita Gilvesy, Executive Director of *Investing in Children* and Jane Graydon, Salesperson at Royal LePage Triland Realty, were on hand to receive the \$4,500 cheque for *Investing in Children*. *Investing in Children* offers opportunities for children to grow, learn and thrive, including a program that provides nutritious meals and snacks to more than 10,000 children across 85 area schools.

LSTAR adheres to a *Quality of Life* philosophy, supporting growth that fosters economic vitality, provides housing opportunities, respects the environment and builds good communities and safe neighbourhoods. The awarded funds come from LSTAR's Business Partners Program, sponsorship, various fundraising events and the Ontario REALTORS Care Foundation, of which LSTAR is a proud supporter.

<http://www.lstar.ca/news/lstar-supports-local-charities>



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# 2016 Marks Milestone Year for Real Estate

The London and St. Thomas Association of REALTORS® (LSTAR) announced 2016 was a historic year for real estate, with residential sales surpassing 10,000 for the first time. In 2016, a total of 10,193 homes were sold, up 8.8% from 2015. "Overall, it was an incredible year for residential real estate in our region," said the LSTAR 2016 President. "Throughout 2016, we observed high demand with low supply that contributed to a very robust marketplace. Six months of the year saw their best sales since LSTAR has been tracking date, which speaks to why the industry thrived in 2016."

January 4, 2017 - London and St. Thomas Association of REALTORS®.



## Breakdown of 2016 Residential Sales

| 2016 Average Prices (YTD) |               |                    |
|---------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Type                      | Average Price | Increase from 2016 |
| Detached                  | \$297,480     | 5.4%               |
| Condo                     | \$200,335     | 5.6%               |
| Total Residential         | \$279,057     | 5.5%               |

| Type                 | Units Sold | Average Price |
|----------------------|------------|---------------|
| 2 Storey             | 2,550      | \$383,082     |
| Bungalow             | 1,803      | \$226,283     |
| Ranch                | 1,153      | \$341,800     |
| Townhouse Condo      | 895        | \$173,161     |
| High Rise Apt. Condo | 460        | \$173,205     |

St. Thomas had another strong year, with a total of 854 homes sold, up 2.9% from the previous year. The average home price in St. Thomas was up 7.7% over 2015, at \$233,476.

## Tips to Prepare Your Home For Winter

As the cold weather approaches, it's important to ensure your home is ready before the first snowfall hits as winter can dish out its share of risks for any home. Make a list with these tasks to ensure your home is ready for 'Old Man Winter'.

### Inspect Your Furnace and Replace the Filter.

Be sure to change it several times throughout the season. Have your fireplace professionally attended so that it's ready for use. Store firewood in a dry place away from the outside of your home. Ensure all smoke and carbon monoxide detectors have fresh batteries.



**Examine the exterior of your home for cracks and crevices that could allow cold air to seep inside.** Apply weather-stripping around doors and caulk older windows. Warm air rises, so adding extra insulation to your attic will ensure the warmth stays where it's needed.

**Prune Trees and Shrubs,** particular those that hang close to the home, to minimize potential snow damage. Clear out planters and store for spring. Drain all garden hoses and shut off outside water.

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## Everything You Need to Know About Winter Home Inspections

Before you make a decision on whether to include a home inspection in your contractual offer, be aware that different seasons and weather conditions tell different stories about a home's condition.

While some shortcomings of a home will not be as evident under snow coverage, winter also presents an opportunity to see things that snow can teach us about the condition of a house.

For example, a snow-covered roof may hide the overall state of the shingles, while large spotty patches of melted snow on a roof and dripping icicles are indicators of insulation deficiency.

Every season teaches us something about the condition of the home, but cold weather and snow may prevent a home inspector from accurately evaluating certain features, such as the grade of the land. You'll want to know if rain and moisture

drains away from rather than toward the house. In rural areas, testing the health of a septic system is a task much better left for warmer weather.

In order to protect yourself from possible future expenses that result from a winter inspection that cannot uncover certain conditions, speak to a professional about your plans.

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