



Subdivision proposal for Rand Estate **nothing new**, tribunal told

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

There's nothing new about Solmar's plan to build a subdivision on the former Rand Estate property, a lawyer for the developer told the Ontario Land Tribunal on Tuesday.

It was the first day of a long-awaited hearing in the dispute over plans for the site.

At the hearing, lawyer Mark Flowers, who is representing Solmar Development Corp. and its owner, Benny Marotta, said Solmar is only carrying on what has been happening with the property for decades.

"The former Rand Estate was severed into multiple parcels several decades ago, with new residential development already occurring on many of those separate parcels," he said in his opening statement.

His client recognizes that the property is significant, he said.

"There is no dispute that the subject properties have cultural heritage value," he said. "Where the parties differ is with respect to the identification of the heritage attributes and the appropriate means by which to conserve significant cultural heritage resources."

The hearing is expected to last 21 days and to wind

Continued on Page 15

Totally eclipsed!

NOTL's view of celestial event dimmed by cloud cover



Photographer John DeLorenzi captured this shot of the solar eclipse on Monday, from St. Andrews Lane in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Richard Wright | Local Journalism Initiative | The Lake Report

With oohs and ahs, cheers and applause, Niagara-on-the-Lake's total eclipse experience was one to remember for sky-watchers — despite the low-hanging cloud cover.

"That was unreal," beamed Mississauga's Josh Diab at Queen's Royal Park where he, his sister and few friends gathered with a large crowd to watch the eclipse.

"We will never see anything

like that again. You just feel shivers come up your spine."

While clouds over NOTL obscured the actual event, preventing people from seeing such spectacles as the ring of fire, the sun's atmospheric corona and

the diamond ring, people around town were still happy to be in the presence of a once-in-a-lifetime event.

The next time NOTL experi-

Continued on Page 5

Province opens bids for Skyway twinning

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The twinning of the Garden City Skyway has taken a step toward becoming reality after the province is-

sued a request for proposals for the project.

In an announcement on April 5, Transportation Minister Prabmeet Sakaria said the twinning is necessary "to ensure our transportation infrastructure

keeps pace" with the needs of a growing population in Ontario.

More than 106,000 vehicles cross the bridge each day, the province said.

"The new and expanded Garden City Skyway will

be a game changer, meaning less congestion and faster travel for the people of St. Catharines and Niagara," Sakaria said.

The request for proposals,

Continued on Page 3



The province has issued a request for proposals for the twinning of the Garden City Skyway. DAVE VAN DE LAAR



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Virgil residents **concerned** over next phase of Konik Estates

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Some residents in Virgil are worried about the impact to their neighbourhood if phase 2 of the Konik Estates project goes ahead, town politicians heard at a public meeting April 9.

The public meeting was held as a part of the regular committee-of-the-whole meeting that deals with planning matters.

The proposed development — located north of Line 2 Road and east of Concession 6 Road — includes 52 single, detached homes along with 102 block townhouses and six street townhomes. The latter would face onto Line 2 Road.

The developer is seeking amendments to the town's zoning bylaw "to address lot frontage, lot area, coverage, setbacks, widths of garage doors and encroachments," senior town planner Aimee Alderman said in presenting the plan to town politicians.

The project is within the town's urban boundary, she added. Surrounding land is already used for single-family homes.



Ken Burr expresses concerns to Niagara-on-the-Lake's planning committee that he and other Virgil residents share about a proposed phase 2 of Konik Estates. RICHARD HUTTON

At a March 18 open house, residents living near the site of the proposed subdivision had a number of concerns including speeding on and access to Line 2 Road, parking, tree removal, sidewalks, infrastructure and the need for a park.

Alderman said the town is continuing to accept comments from residents and judging by a stream of residents speaking to the issue at the meeting, there is plenty of feedback to come.

Riesling Road resident Ken Burr said he was speaking for an association of residents in the area and "we are saddened by the loss of trees" on Line 2 Road.

"We have enjoyed their beauty and their windbreak and the bird life," he said. "Right now, we are seeing significant bird life in that area — bird nesting."

Residents want another study done to determine the impact of removing trees, he said.

"I realize that the environmental constraints assessment reported that there were no identified natural heritage constraints for the property but we'd just like to make sure the birds have a place to go."

Burr added: "I think it would be quite a surprise for the new homeowners next spring to have 1,000 birds land on their property to nest."

He was encouraged, however, that homes bordering existing properties in the

area would be single-family dwellings.

"That fits in with what we have on our homes," he said.

Frontier Drive resident Neil Boyer said the proposal "has generated many discussions between the neighbours" and that concerns centre around construction equipment that will enter the site during the building phase and the increased traffic the development will bring.

"The third and probably most discussed concern is the complete removal of over 800 trees from the property."

He noted that while the report on the proposal indicated there was "no significant impact," the removal of trees is always a much-debated topic.

The loss of trees was a concern for James Webber.

"I was interested to hear the representative of the developer say that it was not a significant wildlife habitat," he said. "I suggest it is to the wildlife that lives there."

Coun. Wendy Cheropita, meanwhile, wondered about parkland and asked Alderman why only cash in lieu

of parkland was being offered by the developer.

"Can we request that accommodation be provided for parkland in that subdivision?" she said.

Alderman said staff were "happy to consider all feedback provided" on the matter.

"Parks and recreation staff did review the proposal and noted that expansion of Homestead Park in the surrounding area is anticipated," she told Cheropita.

William Heikoop, a planner with Upper Canada Consultants, who spoke on behalf of the developer Great Forest Homes, told the meeting that current infrastructure in the area was sufficient "to handle the additional traffic from this development."

The developer has "been active in Niagara-on-the-Lake for quite a number of years" and has done high-quality work, he said.

The decision by councillors is only one step in the planning process. It will return to council at a later date when staff compile a recommendation report on the project.

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Town moves 30 km/h speed limit signs workers put up on **wrong streets**

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

Oops. Chautauqua residents spent three years researching solutions to speeding on the community's narrow streets and then lobbied the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake to implement them. After much to and fro, the result was a one-year pilot project, launched this month.

It reduced speed limits to 30 km/h from 50 km/h on several streets in the quiet neighbourhood just west of downtown NOTL.

Unfortunately, when town workers installed some of the spanking new signs, they put them up on the wrong streets.

William Street, which leads into Chautauqua, was never part of the pilot project but signs popped up there near Nassau Street over the past week.

And Nassau Street from near Johnson south to Lake-



New, lower speed limit signs on Nassau Street were removed after inquiries by The Lake Report. KEVIN MACLEAN

shore Road also was not supposed to be included.

Nor was Lansdowne Avenue.

When a reporter from The Lake Report noticed the signs in the area outside Chautauqua and heard from residents wondering what was going on, we checked with the town.

Sure enough, someone misread or misinterpreted council's intentions.

"Staff can confirm that an error was made and that signage is being corrected this afternoon," town spokesperson Marah Minor said Tuesday.

"The corrected signing will reflect the actual approved motion (of council) along with the notice that was provided to the public," she said.

"We apologize to the community for this error

and appreciate those who have brought it to our attention so that it could be quickly remedied."

For the record, the roads affected by the speed reduction include Addison Avenue, Circle Street, Dixie Avenue, Froebel Avenue, Luther Avenue, Niagara Boulevard from Palatine Place to Vincent Avenue, Oak Drive, Palatine Place from Circle Street to the dead-end, Shakespeare Avenue, Vincent Avenue, Wesley Avenue, Wilberforce Avenue and Wyckliffe Avenue.

Residents near where the signs were erroneously installed, didn't seem to mind the change. They just were puzzled when the signs popped up unexpectedly.

"If it means people drive a little slower, then I'm all for it," one woman commented.

"It's mainly residents who speed here, anyway. Visitors are too busy taking in the sites to speed."

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Skyway work will mean **traffic disruptions**

Continued from Front Page

or RFPs, are to be submitted by November of this year, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Transportation said.

"The ministry and Infrastructure Ontario will then evaluate RFP submissions, which will be completed in spring 2025, for designs to then start," said Tanta Blazina, a senior media relations officer for the transportation ministry, in an email to The Lake Report.

"Detailed design can take up to 18 to 24 months before construction begins," she said.

It is expected that construction of the bridge will start in late 2026 or early 2027.

The work will mean disruptions to traffic and businesses in the south end of Niagara-on-the-Lake for the duration of the build.

The province did not say how long the project will take to complete but for comparison, the twinning of the Burlington Skyway on the Hamilton-Burlington border took two years — from 1983 to 1985.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said it's early in the process and details still need to be ironed out before seeing any poten-



An artist's rendering of what a twinned Garden City Skyway could look like viewed from the Welland Canals Parkway Trail in St. Catharines. INFRASTRUCTURE ONTARIO

tial impact the construction could have on the town.

"We have to kind of wait and see what the (Ministry of Transportation) and different transportation bodies do," he said. "It's going to be a massive piece of infrastructure."

Five teams have been prequalified to bid on the project: AtkinsRealisMajor Products, Garden City Connectors (led by Aecon Infrastructure Management and Sacyr Canada Inc.), Garden City Link (led by Acciona Infrastructure Canada, Amico Major Projects and Pomerleau), Peter Kiewit Sons ULC and Skyway Bridging Partners (led by Dragados Canada, Construction Demathieu & Bard Techno and Green Infrastructure Partners).

The teams were selected based on criteria identified in the request for qualifications process that was issued in December 2022.

The project will include construction of a new 2.2-kilometre span, widening of the Queen Elizabeth Way approaches to the new bridge, realignment of local roads near the bridge, relocation of affected utilities and the construction of pier protections, retaining walls and stormwater management ponds.

Once the new bridge is complete, traffic from the existing bridge will be temporarily switched onto the new span to allow for rehabilitation — including a full deck replacement — of the existing Garden City Skyway.


That work will be completed as a separate project under its own contract.

St. Catharines Mayor Mat Siscoe called the issuing of the RFP "an important step" to making the twinning of the bridge a reality.

"With the projected increase in population and jobs throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe in the coming years, this expansion will allow people and goods to flow more freely through Niagara," he said.

Once complete, each bridge will feature four lanes, with the new bridge handling Toronto-bound traffic and the existing bridge accommodating Niagara-bound vehicles.

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Eclipse creates **economic benefits**: Chamber

Richard Wright
 Local Journalism Initiative
 The Lake Report

Eclipses are good for business.

That's the word from the Niagara-on-the-Lake's Chamber of Commerce following one of the busiest off-season weekends the community can remember.

"April is not necessarily a peak time for us. Things start ramping up normally after the May long weekend," says Minerva Ward, president and CEO of the chamber and Tourism Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"So, it was nice to see that level of business in town."

It was also encouraging to see length of time people stayed, she added.

The chamber has been actively promoting NOTL for multi-day stays, to complement the day-trip destination it already is for many.

"We saw people coming in on Friday. They stayed in hotels, B&Bs, they ate in town — breakfast, lunch and dinner — they are probably doing the Shaw plays, they are doing wineries, they do a bit of shopping while they are here and they



While most early April days in Niagara-on-the-Lake see just a handful of people seeking public walking tours, the eclipse brought increased traffic to town. RICHARD WRIGHT

are taking in the attractions. That was more of our focus."

Because of the eclipse and the added length of stay, local shops, restaurants, hotels, B&Bs,

walkways and public spaces definitely saw increased action, reminiscent of the vitality experienced here on a summer's day.

"It was good energy — lots of people from all over the

world," said Ward.

Not as many people as predicted, however.

Official estimates of a million people or more coming to Niagara for the eclipse never did come to

fruition. For NOTL business, not hitting that mark was a blessing despite the added dollars each individual would have brought with them.

"The numbers we got were great. We didn't want a situation where we could not handle the volume and thankfully it didn't get to that point," Ward said.

"Niagara-on-the-Lake doesn't have the space or capacity for it. We had to be realistic about parking and traffic and infrastructure."

For that reason, she said her organization started more than a year ago making efforts to mitigate crowd sizes and added traffic due to the eclipse excitement.

"We took a strategic decision not to market Niagara-on-the-Lake as a place to visit for the eclipse just because we understand this is a small town with limited space," she said.

"We knew that people were going to come anyway for the eclipse, and they did. What we did was alert businesses that the eclipse is happening and that they should start thinking of private events and their places."

Indeed, that is what happened. Wineries, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, cycling companies, B&Bs and other business such as the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club all had events or special offers planned on their own.

Ahead for the chamber — now that the eclipse has passed and the hype has dwindled — it's back to the regular business of promoting NOTL. Expectations for the local economy in 2024 are good but cautious.

"We are looking forward to a good season," said Ward.

"We are really trying to build more a year-round destination place, but the reality is that spring, summer and fall are the peak times for us, so we are looking forward to that."

"But we are conscious that people are spending less. People have less disposable income," she acknowledged.

"Inflation has obviously eroded some people's purchasing power. People are a little more conscious about how they are spending money."

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Viewing brings Toronto woman **to tears** at Konzelmann party

Richard Hutton
 Local Journalism Initiative
 The Lake Report

For the 100 or so people gathered at Konzelmann Estate Winery, it was almost a case of the solar eclipse that wasn't.

But an audible cheer went up as the clouds parted and gave the briefest glimpse of the once-in-a-lifetime celestial event.

While people didn't get to see the eclipse reach totality, some in attendance were impressed regardless.

Check back for updates and see The Lake Report on Thursday for full coverage, commentary, photos and video of Monday's total eclipse.

Then, day quickly turned to night with only the glow of cellphone screens providing light. All got quiet except for the sound of birds chirping.

"It brought me to tears," said Toronto resident Slava Plerako, who took in the event at the Lakeshore Road winery with her partner David Stout. "It was emotional."

The pair had stayed over Sunday night in NOTL in



Slava Pleraka and David Stout, both from Toronto, toast Monday's solar eclipse at Konzelmann Estate Winery. The totality brought Slava to tears. RICHARD HUTTON

advance of joining others at Konzelmann.

Admittedly, the couple were not feeling too optimistic about actually getting to see anything at all given the weather conditions.

"We're going to make the best of it," Plerako said. "This was not a bad place to pick."

Likewise, Jessica Kirkpatrick, from Woodstock, Ont., and Carol Bailey from Mississauga were also

not feeling good about the chances of seeing much of the eclipse as the pair took selfies wearing their eclipse glasses.

"We're a little bit disappointed," Kirkpatrick said. "But we're still going to enjoy our time," Bailey added.

But after the weather co-operated, even for the briefest time, the pair were singing a different tune.

"It was something," Kirkpatrick said.

Bailey, meanwhile, said it showed how important the sun is to life on Earth.

"It showed you what it would be like if something happened to the sun," she said.

"Could you have imagined what this would have been like with 100 per cent clear? It would have been amazing. It makes me want to chase eclipses."

For Laen Hanson, Monday's eclipse wasn't just for pleasure.

As a member of the Royal Canadian Astronomers Association, he was there to document the event in photos. With his camera pointed at where it was expected that totality would take place, his disappointment was palpable.

"This is my first total eclipse," he said. "It's just the luck of the draw."

But afterward, he was a little more upbeat. He was able to get a few photos when the clouds parted.

"I'm very happy. I got at least three or four photos in that 15 seconds or so when (the clouds) separated."

Andrew Niven, director of marketing and hospitality at Konzelmann, said whether cloudy or not, the winery wanted to do something to help mark the occasion.

"We're the only lakefront winery in Niagara, so we just wanted to kind of take advantage of it," he said.

He said the event — guests were treated to a charcuterie box and a glass of wine for their \$25 ticket — drew people from NOTL and beyond.

Among the American visitors were Stephanie and Michael Gatti, from Phoenix.

"We caught the red-eye to be here," Michael said.

"We even changed in the car," Stephanie added. "We've only been in Canada for five hours."

"I had to be here (in Toronto) for work," Michael said. "We were in Niagara Falls earlier and it was crazy."

With the cloudy conditions, the couple instead were tracking the eclipse's progress of their smartphones.

"It's beautiful out here," Stephanie said.

Niven, meanwhile, said that whether or not Mother Nature co-operated, became secondary for the organizers.

"For us, it was almost more about bringing people together in this space (and) less about the actual seeing of the sun, but still, it's too bad."

Monday's total eclipse was the first one visible in Canada since February, 1979. The next one won't be until Aug. 12, 2045.

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Fans say the wait was **worth it**, despite clouds

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

Visitors and residents were scattered across Niagara-on-the-Lake Monday afternoon in hopes of catching a glimpse of the full solar eclipse. In the hours leading up to it, spirits were low with most of NOTL covered by clouds. William Brunton, Kati Brunton, Kathy Latour and Carol Hajas sat outside on Simcoe Street to watch it all happen but declare the experience a bit lacklustre. "It's like watching paint dry," William Brunton joked. Check back for updates and see The Lake Report on Thursday for full coverage, commentary, photos and video of Monday's total eclipse.

At Queen's Royal Park, Helen and Sean Kaeley were joined by Dan Pyke and Eileen Forestell, who trekked from Toronto and Fergus to watch the eclipse. Despite the cloudy conditions, the group was excited to take in the rare astronomical event. "It's gonna get dark, so even if we can't see much we will experience what happens," Sean Kaeley said. Pyke added that he was intrigued to see if the rumoured "effects" of the eclipse would happen. "I'm waiting to see what the primal effects are on people. To see if there's dancing or people down on one knee, proposing," he said. After the moon made its way over the sun, crowds

in the Gardens at the Pillar & Post seemed to think all the staring up at the clouds and waiting was well worth it. Melinda Brooks and Trish Tervit made the trek from Toronto. For Tervit, even after seeing a partial eclipse in 2017, Monday's experience was unlike anything else. "It happened so fast. We were overwhelmed. I started tearing up. I don't know why, maybe it's because we were so depressed from the clouds," she said with a laugh. They weren't expecting much and were speechless when full totality hit. "We were always going to stick it out no matter what, but it exceeded our expectations considering the clouds for sure," she said. juliasacco@niagaranow.com



Trish Tervit and Melinda Brooks had their viewing glasses on at the Gardens at Pillar & Post in anticipation of totality during Monday's solar eclipse. JULIA SACCO

Eclipse brought viewers from **far and wide**

Continued from Front Page

ences a total eclipse will be in 2144. Check back for updates and see The Lake Report on Thursday for full coverage, commentary, photos and video of Monday's total eclipse. "I just wish the clouds weren't there," remarked Chloe Diab when the lights came back on. "But I thought it was amazing," she added. "Never in my life I thought I would see it." Throughout NOTL the hype around the eclipse seemed to live up to its promise. While the hordes of visitors and crazy traffic that was predicted didn't come to fruition, there were evident signs of increased activity and excitement. From front-porch private viewing parties to bustling Queen Street patios — despite a chill in the air — to pagan dancing groups and plenty of far and away visitors, everyone was in full eclipse mode. "It's a unique experience," noted Larry Galuszka while walking through Simcoe Park. This was the Door County, Wisc., resident's third eclipse encounter.





Being outdoors to witness Monday's total solar eclipse was a great excuse for Will Fisher of Maryland and Francine Quirant of Mississauga to get in a little painting at Queen's Royal Park. They painted Fort Niagara. RICHARD WRIGHT

"We saw the one in 2017 in southern Illinois and before that I took a cruise in Baha, California, and saw one there." Galuszka and his wife Vickie had also hoped for better weather, but nonetheless will still count this as a memory to cherish. "There are many things you can plan for, and one or two things you can't, and those things are the weather and clouds. I think it is still worth it," he said. Adam and Kat Nelson and their young family from Detroit were caught grabbing a quick bite to eat on Queen Street before heading out to one of the many lakeside viewing points. "It is something special to share with the kids," said Adam. "It's the whole idea of creating core memories.

Hopefully this inspires (my children) either creatively or scientifically." His five-year-old son, Oliver, may have not taken in the science of it all on this day, but those core memories are definitely in place. "I saw an eclipse and it was cool," he said, when asked about what he was going to tell his friends back home. For mom Kat seeing it in NOTL was a wonderful reminder of a time that is special to both her and her husband. "We were here on our honeymoon nine years ago," she said. "So it was really special to see that this once-in-a-lifetime thing was happening here. It was a great excuse to take our new family out and relive the

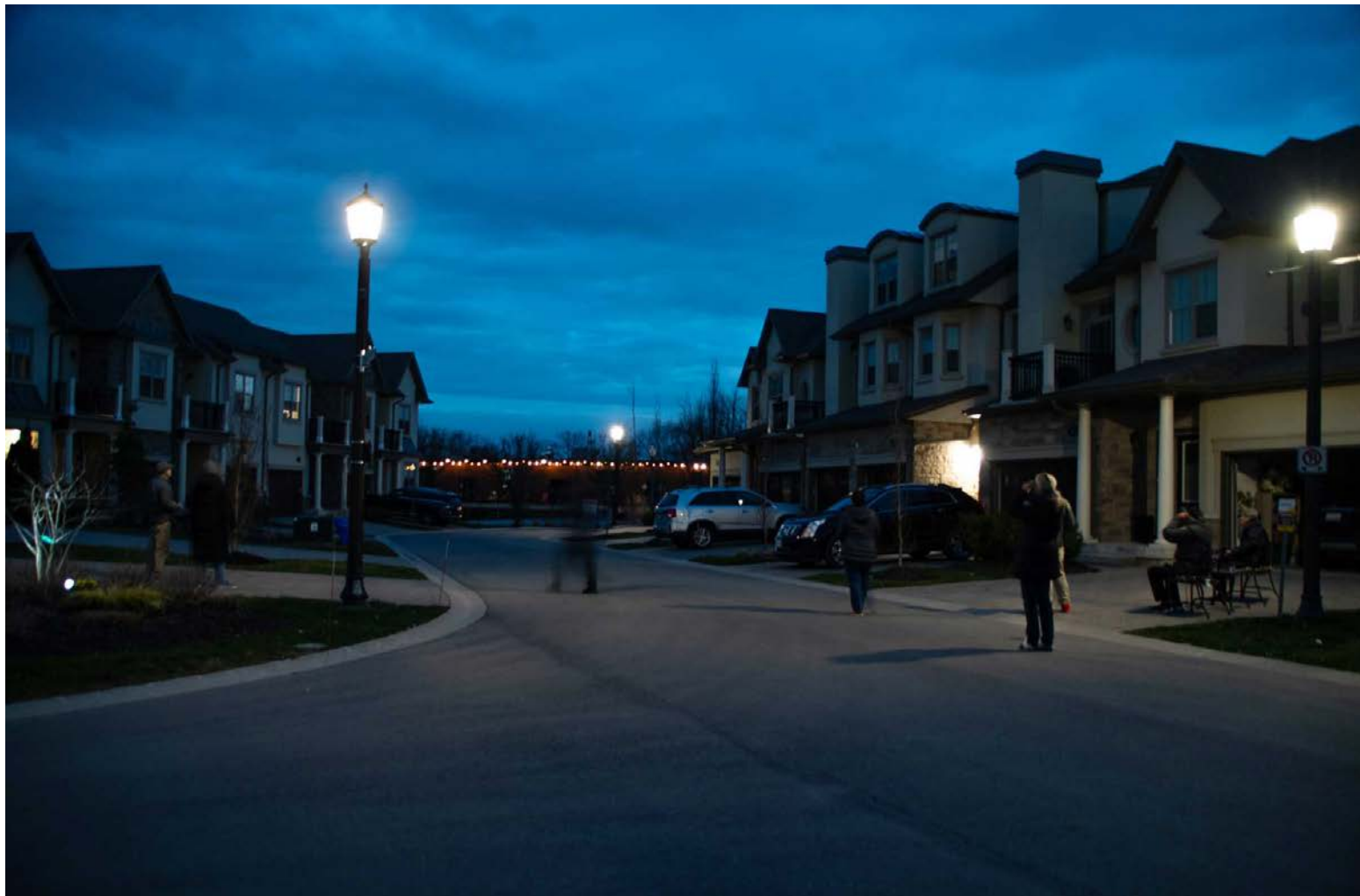
memories and also share some new memories with the kids." Of the things people were interested in experiencing throughout the eclipse, perhaps one of the more forgotten ones is the effect on animals. Many animals regulate their behaviour by the height and brightness of the sun. Gidget Alonso came all the way to NOTL from Costa Rica with her nephew Pablo Leiton just for the eclipse. With her expectations, there was no need to see the actual event in the sky. She was more interested in what was going to happen closer to Earth. "I want to see the birds go to sleep when the darkness comes," she said. Leiton was a bit more existential in his ideas of what to expect. "When you look up at the sky, an eclipse is one of the most attractive things. Everything is night so it is very unusual to witness," he said. "It makes an impact on my perception of things at that moment. It is something that happens and you know it happens but when you are living it, it is a different experience for sure." wright@niagaranow.com

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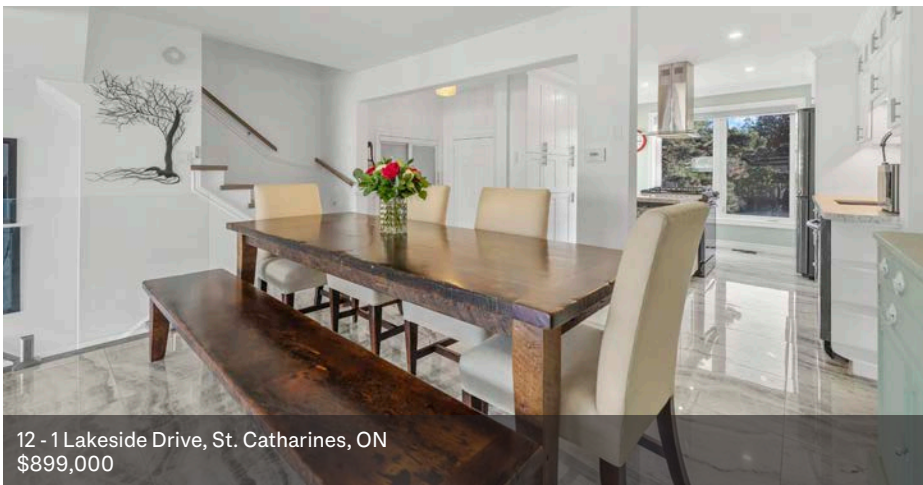

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Street lights turn on during **afternoon darkness**



Photographer John DeLorenzi captured this photo of street lights turning on in St. Andrews Lane during the totality of the solar eclipse on Monday.

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Totally rad tunes to sum up the eclipse

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

Wasn't That A Party? At least no one was Blinded by the Light from Staring at the Sun.

Monday's Total Eclipse of the Heart had the potential to be a marvellous time for a Moondance.

But most people in Niagara-on-the-Lake were Walking on Sunshine, staring at the sky, hoping for a Bad Moon Rising and wishing the Moonshadow would block out the sun.

But there was no Ring of Fire, no Dancing In the Dark, just the light fading in the middle of the afternoon as we were able to Paint It Black for a few brief moments.

Then, the gods Let The Sunshine In as Sunny Days returned and we were able again to enjoy the Seasons in the Sun.

In keeping with the "sunny ways" theme, we collected a list of songs that might apply to the "total eclipse that wasn't quite what everyone hoped it would be." No doubt readers will think of several more.

Here are ours, in no particular order:

Ain't No Sunshine — Bill Withers
Here Comes The Sun — the Beatles
Tomorrow — (from An-



The Temptations called it with "My Girl," with the line, "Sunshine, on a cloudy day."

nie): "The sun'll come out tomorrow"

Wasn't That A Party? — Irish Rovers

Sunny Days — Lighthouse

Get Off Of My Cloud — Rolling Stones

Black Hole Sun — Soundgarden

Eclipse — Pink Floyd

Total Eclipse of the Heart — Bonnie Tyler

Staring at the Sun — U2

The Sound of Silence — Simon and Garfunkel

Blinded by the Light — Bruce Springsteen

Moonshadow — Cat Stevens

The Moon and the Sky — Sade

You're So Vain — Carly

Simon

You Are My Sunshine — various folk artists

Dancing in the Dark — Bruce Springsteen

The Sun's Gonna Shine Again — Ray Charles

Brighter Than the Sun — Colbie Caillat

Moondance — Van Morrison

Walking on Sunshine — Katrina and the Waves

Sunshine of Your Love — Cream

Fly Me to the Moon — Frank Sinatra

Good Day Sunshine — the Beatles

Seasons in the Sun — Terry Jacks

A Place in the Sun — Stevie Wonder

Let the Sunshine In — 5th Dimension

Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me — Elton John

Moon River — Andy Williams

The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine No More — the Walker Brothers

Who Loves the Sun — the Velvet Underground

Third Stone from the Sun — Jimi Hendrix

Paint It Black — Rolling Stones

Bad Moon Rising — Creedence Clearwater

Revival

Ring of Fire — Johnny Cash

Don't Let the Sun Catch You Crying — Rickie Lee Jones



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style.
Category: SOUNDS SERIOUS

**Alcohol and spicy foods
can cause pyrosis, better known
as this painful sensation.**

Last issue:

Category: STORY TIME

Clue: Lyme disease derives its name from the town of Lyme in this state, where cases were first observed in the 1970s.

Answer: What is Connecticut?

Answered first by: Lynda Collet

Also answered correctly (in order) by:
Lisa Traficante, Jane Morris, Esther VanGorder, Catherine Clarke, Katie Reimer, Susan Dewar, Edna Groff, Jim Dandy, Pam Dowling, Wade Durling, Sheila Meloche, David Spencer, Clive Buist, Marla Percy, Mike Gander, Howard Jones, Kathy Humphries, Hedy Wiebe, Maria Janeiro, Elaine Landray, Daniel Smith, Bob Wheatley, Tuija Johansson

Email answers to editor@niagaranow.com, with your name, for a chance to win a \$25 Irish Harp Pub gift card every week. (Subject line: Riddle me this)

*REMEMBER TO PUT "WHAT IS" FOR JEOPARDY QUESTIONS!

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Contributed by Patty Garriock
 "Live, and be happy, and make others so."
 - Mary Wollstonecraft Shelly

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Luminescent golf at totality



Golfers at the NOTL Golf Club hit luminescent balls during totality of the solar eclipse on Monday. This long-exposure drone photograph captures the light as the balls soar. RENE BERTSCHI

Editorial

The pure power of Mother Nature

Kevin MacLean
 Managing Editor

It was a dull and cloudy afternoon, when day turned to night for just a few minutes.

The promise of a rare total eclipse did not come to fruition in the skies over Niagara-on-the-Lake on Monday, but the experience didn't disappoint many skywatchers, who gathered outdoors in parks, at parties and in neighbourhoods around town to take it all in.

In several cases, fortunate photographers across NOTL were able to catch a few seconds of stunning photos and video just after the so-called totality moment. Many of them shared their images of near-totality with The Lake Report and we're sharing them with our readers in print and on our website, NiagaraNow.com.

(Totality. Now there's an addition to the lexicon that simply wasn't part of almost any regular folks' vocabulary even a few weeks ago. And a million people? Thank you,



Tania Sapielak captured this photo of the eclipse from Read Road.

Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati, but reality check time: just wishfully hyping that mega-number doesn't make it so.)

While it was unfortunate that we in NOTL weren't able to experience the full monty of the sun being blacked out by the moon, it certainly was a treat for those who chose to soak in the event — and relish the moment.

As 3 p.m. approached, the heavens, cloudy as they were, slowly started to slip more and more toward a darker grey. Dusk was approaching in the middle of the afternoon.

On Lake Ontario off Ryerson Park, a large motorboat thrummed east-

ward toward the Niagara River, perhaps trying to reach port before the light went out.

High in the sky, near where many had been told to watch for the sun, the flashing lights of a lone aircraft were visible. A special flight to view the celestial event or just another flight from A to B that happened to coincide with ... totality?

For the 200 souls gathered in the park to bear witness, all that seemed to matter was being part of it all.

Nearby, the streetlights along Niagara Boulevard burst on, all but one at first. Then the lone straggler clicked on as well.

On the park grounds, people grew quiet as the gods seemed to have hit the celestial dimmer switch and daylight turned to near-total darkness. For a few minutes.

People cheered spontaneously, some remarked about how awesome it was to be part of such a unique occasion, revelling in what might have been, but for Mother Nature's overcast

intervention.

Off in the distance, the sound of fireworks erupted. A minute later, the crescent of the eclipse broke through the clouds literally for a few seconds. Then gone and back again twice more, ever briefly.

A few more shouts with each appearance and then quickly — seemingly far faster than the darkness descended — the scene began to return to daylight.

Those in the crowd began to gather lawn chairs, blankets and belongings, heading homeward, many revelling in the experience.

After all they had been part of something that apparently won't happen again in Niagara until — wait for it — 2144. That's 120 years from now. See you there, in spirit.

A little over an hour after the total eclipse, the heavens opened, the clouds dispersed and brilliant sunshine bathed Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The power of the universe, of Mother Nature, of something bigger than all of us was on full display..

editor@niagaranow.com

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

How does NOTL's \$100K club compare?

Dear editor:
It was interesting to read about the 28 Niagara-on-the-Lake members of the province's \$100,000 a year club in the April 4 edition of The Lake Report.

However, it would be much more effective to those in other municipalities, such as Grimsby and Fort Erie (and also Niagara Region), along with their populations, to see if we are overstaffed and over-paid or not.

For instance, it is unclear to me why if we have an overall fire chief and a chief for each district plus a deputy chief.

Years ago we had a volun-



Former NOTL CAO Marnie Cluckie is on the Sunshine List at \$203,300.93 salary.

teer chief and no deputy.

What is the population now versus 15 years ago? And how many times per year has each division been called to action compared to 15 years ago?

The fire calls used to be recorded weekly basis in the paper. Could we not get

back to knowing this?

The majority of volunteer firefighters now use our departments to learn the ropes as a stepping stone to a full-time position with a city or town that has full-time firefighters.

Also, does anyone know how many hours per year the town grader is used? Spending \$450,000 seems like a whole lot of money for a new grader.

I also see that chief planner Kirsten McCauley is director of community and development services and now our tax dollars have hired Ashleigh Myers as the town's first-ever economic development officer.

Seems a little overkill, but I could be wrong.

Just like having a supervisor of roads and a lead hand for roads. Maybe it is time we ask for a job description be printed for each employee, as our taxes go higher the number of homes being taxed is so much more.

Should something not balance itself out here?

And I have learned that we cannot find out what costs are involved in many sectors without paying the town to find out.

Perhaps the town could publish or have available a more detailed budget and not just a general pie chart.

With the touch of a few computer buttons, this could be easily done.

Susan Pohorly
NOTL

Hamas was wrong but so was the Israeli government

Dear editor:
I am writing to respond to Derek Collins' letter, " Hamas must be accountable for its actions," (March 21).

This letter is NOT a defence of Hamas in any way. This is also not intended to place blame on the Jewish people.

The Israeli government is responsible and it must be held accountable for the deaths and suffering it has caused.

It is undeniably true that what Hamas has done is not right. However, we must look at the context of why this group exists in the first place.

Hamas was founded because of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Its actions took place as a response.

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights detailed "widespread, systematic and gross violations of human rights perpetrated by the Israeli occupying power, in particular mass killings and collective punishments."

This was in the early 2000s. This has been happening since the 1960s. Since then, the Israelis have only done more to try to remove Palestinians from their homes, culminating in a genocide occurring right now.

It is also important to note that much of Israel's reports on Hamas are false information. The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) have been responsible for a number of discredited statements.

One example is how the IDF said that it had "fired precisely" at those who posed a threat during the Flour Massacre. This is intended to make Israel look less violent and place blame on Palestinians.

The UN found that the IDF had shot at civilians trying to get food from aid trucks, killing 118 people and injuring 760.

I also want to draw attention to the meaning of the phrase "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free."

The following is from the CBC News: "Yousef Munayyer, head of the Palestine-Israel program at the Arab Center, Washington D.C. ... says today, the phrase is used to reference the lack of freedoms Palestinians have in the

territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea ..."

"That's what has to change. That doesn't mean that there should be any violence against Israelis," Munayyer said.

As of March 5, more than 30,000 Palestinians have been killed. This is the result of the Israeli government's genocide.

Derek Collins says a permanent ceasefire "does not address the nature of the combatants." This is not the case. If Israel stops its oppression of Palestinians, the natural result will be that Hamas will no longer exist.

Hospitals and areas that are supposed to be safe are being raided and bombed by the Israeli military.

People are being starved; Israel won't allow aid entry into the Gaza strip and the UN has stated "famine is imminent."

Alma Jaroor, 12, told her story to the BBC. Her account may be disturbing for some readers.

"I remember waking up under the rubble. I checked my iPad, and saw it was 09:00. I hoped my brother Tarazan would still be alive. I was calling out to him, and holding on to hope that one of them would be alive."

"I could smell the blood. It was dripping on to me. I was screaming for anyone to rescue us. I was hearing others calling out as well."

She found Tarazan's body after she was rescued. "I lifted the blanket that was covering him. I found him in an unimaginable state, his head severed." Alma's whole family was killed by an Israeli airstrike. This was the third place they had fled to for safety.

If you are in a position to be able to help those suffering, please consider doing so. You can make a donation (e.g. UNRWA, ANERA, Palestinian Children's Relief Fund).

Boycott companies that support Israel. Email or call the premier or the prime minister and tell them to advocate for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, an end to the occupation of Palestinian territories, and to officially recognize the State of Palestine.

Sophia Voogt
NOTL

Public site plan is for a private home

Dear editor:
I find it appalling that an angry and entitled resident can have their neighbour's private address published in your paper for all to see. (Letter, "Town of NOTL denies request for copy of a public site plan," April 4).

The "public site plan" that your headline refers

to is most definitely a private home.

I know this because I live right next door to Kip Voege, the author of the letter that you published last week.

Therefore, I am also a neighbour to the people Mr. Voege is harassing. This is not his first public battle with neighbours and we'd

be fools to think it will be his last.

Let Mr. Voege's letter stand as a warning to anyone living in this town that your address is up for public consumption should your neighbour be angry and motivated enough to write letters to the editor of your local newspaper.

I commend the town's

clerks, Shaunna Arenberg and Grant Bivol, for doing their jobs.

It's a tough idea for some residents to wrap their heads around, but private information is private for a reason and I for one am glad that the town clerks understand that fact.

Jason Chesworth
NOTL

Tired of receiving unwanted store flyers

Dear editor:
All of a sudden I am receiving paper copies of store flyers delivered to my driveway in plastic bags. Why?

These flyers from Postmedia's Flyer Force are a waste of paper, not to mention the plastic sleeve they are shoved into.

All of these flyers are available in the stores if you want to look at it in paper form and they can be found online as well.

I know that this is a topic of discussion on many Niagara Facebook pages. From what I have read, no one wants these delivered, and furthermore, most of

them go straight into the recycling bin.

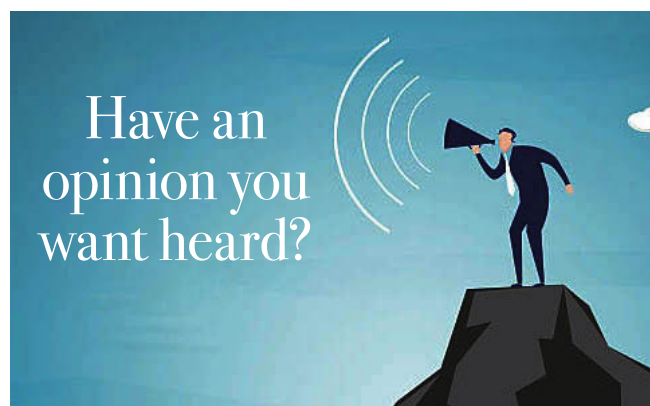
I have written twice to the company, to ask them to stop delivery. If I have to, I will write every time these flyers arrive on my driveway.

If you are fed up with this also, go to Ontario.flyerforce.ca website, click

on resident services and indicate you want delivery stopped.

It seems like a step backward to start delivery of these flyers when we are all trying to go paperless and most of these flyers are available online.

Sheila Serio
NOTL



The Lake Report welcomes your letters to the editor. Please, write early and often. Letters ideally should be under 400 words long. Occasionally, longer letters may be published. All letters may be edited for conciseness, accuracy, libel and defamation. Please include your full name, street address and a daytime telephone number so that authorship can be authenticated. Only names and general addresses (eg. Virgil, St. Davids, NOTL) will be published. Send your letters to editor@niagaranow.com or drop them by our office at 496 Mississauga St., NOTL.

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The Lake Report

The home development system is **broken**



Brian Marshall
Columnist

On March 18, I attended the virtual open house regarding Konik Estates' phase two application for development of lands by Grey Forest Homes Ltd. During this meeting, a question was raised with the applicant's representative, William Heikoop of Upper Canada Consultants, regarding whether or not the new development would contain a park.

Heikoop responded as such: "At this time, the town has indicated to us that they do not want more parkland in this application. Rather, they would take what is called "cash in lieu" of that parkland.

He continued, "So, the requirement under the Planning Act is that we either give five percent of the developable land (as parkland) or the value of that land gratuitously to the town. In this instance, it's been indicated to us that they prefer the cash in lieu option and that money could go to upgrade or improve other parks throughout the town."

"But," Heikoop concluded, "that's something from the developer and we basically cut a cheque and it's at the town's discretion how they use that money."

I have criticized this cash in lieu option several times in past Arch-i-text columns.

At a time when many countries and forward-thinking corporations are working to develop practices that would increase both physically and mentally healthy, sustainable and environmentally-responsible housing options, here in Ontario, we double down on policies like this one that fly in the face of this international movement.

Moreover, these types

of policies perpetuate the issues the current development model has created.

Here are some sad facts – relative to the current state of affairs – to think about.

Multiple studies referenced by Reinier de Graaf in his book, "Four Walls and a Roof: The Complex Nature of a Simple Profession," have conclusively shown that during the last century, the lifespan of buildings (from construction to demolition) has been reduced to half of the established historic norm.

Moreover, this reduction in building lifespan has been reliably projected to continue its downward spiral.

The international professional services firm, KPMG, did a deep dive into the development and construction sector, looking at the years between 2012 and 2015 in its "Climbing the curve" report.

The document states that this sector had the lowest productivity of any industry studied, with only 31 per cent of projects coming in within 10 per cent of original budget and only one in four projects being completed within 10 percent of their original deadlines.

So, we have the industry producing buildings with a foreshortened lifespan which are, in 75 percent of the cases, completed on a longer timeline and at a notably higher cost.

There is also a human cost to our current development model.

In 2018, the Cigna Group – a U.S. based insurance and healthcare corporation – conducted a national survey of 20,000 respondents.

Nearly half of these individuals reported that they sometimes or always feel lonely and socially isolated.

Similar studies in other countries around the world have substantiated these findings.

The effects of this social isolation are increased health and mental health risks.

Julianne Holt-Lunstad, a psychology and neuroscience professor at Brigham Young University, states, "There is robust evidence



Columnist Brian Marshall says we need more green spaces, not less. He argues that if we can preserve at least a part of this pine forest as a "wild space" and "green lung" park, Niagara-on-the-Lake and the environment will be the better for it.

that social isolation and loneliness significantly increase risk for premature mortality, and the magnitude of the risk exceeds that of many leading health indicators."

A 2019 study led by Cassandra Alcaraz, a public health researcher with the American Cancer Society, analyzed data from more than 580,000 adults and found that social isolation increases the risk of premature death from every cause for every race. Her findings were published in the American Journal of Epidemiology in 2019.

She found that among Black participants, social isolation doubled the risk of early death, while it increased the risk among white participants by 60 to 84 percentage points.

Past Arch-i-text columns have visited the research that identifies both vertical and horizontal suburbia as contributing to social isolation, which I will not reiterate.

However, many studies have clearly indicated healthy social interaction that promotes community – and reduces social isolation – is dependent on the existence of three situational aspects within the built environment.

My "real world" interpretation and application of the

academic research may be boiled down to this:

First, the neighbourhood must possess easy access to sidewalks and pathways that encourages street-level foot traffic.

Second, pedestrians must be safe and comfortable as they walk through engaging streetscapes that stimulate intellectual receptivity.

Third, the pathways must encompass communal areas (e.g. parks) where community members may gather in a neutral common space.

A built environment that encompasses these things create proximity between people, opportunities for repeated unplanned encounters with others and provide safe comfortable environs that encourages person-to-person interaction – all of which maintain community and reduce social isolation.

Unfortunately, our new developments simply do not typically enfold these vital necessities. Nor can the dwellings constructed be considered sustainable and environmentally responsible.

In the U.S. Energy Information Administration's 2019 "International Energy Outlook," it's reported that buildings account for 40 percent of total global carbon dioxide emissions.

A life cycle assessment is the systematic analysis of the potential environmen-

tal impacts of products or services during their entire life cycle.

For a standard-built 1,980 square-foot home, or a 184 square-metre masonry bungalow, the life cycle assessment comes in at 11.1 kgCO₂eq/m² a year, equal to 555 kgCO₂eq/m² over a 50-year lifespan.

When one considers the vast numbers of housing units being constructed every year, you can see where this leads.

Taken as a whole, even this small sampling of the facts suggests that a fundamental rethink of the building and development industry is in order.

Thankfully, there are projects around the world doing just that.

Take, for example, the Living Places initiative in Copenhagen, a collaboration between the Velux Group, an international manufacturer of building components, EFFEKT Architects and Artelia Group, a multidisciplinary engineering and project management company.

This initiative stepped completely away from the silo-based management of the construction industry and adopted a transformative partnership methodology.

In short, experts from each "silo" were drawn together in a single group

to exchange knowledge, leverage each other's competencies and openly share ideas to develop the project concept.

This collaboration continues through the design and prototyping stages leading to more innovative and effective solutions.

To quote from page seven of the project's case study: "This process not only results in the completion of assignments but also in the transformation of industry culture and norms."

It continued: "Sharing knowledge is vital in this context because it drives innovation and improvement, breaking down silos and fostering a culture of collaboration and exchange of ideas."

"This, in turn," it concluded, "enhances individual professional growth, keeps the industry current with new developments, and makes industries more adaptable to change, ensuring sustainability and long-term success."

The project developed a basic design which can be utilized in more than 20 different configurations – from single detached through multi-unit complexes and retirement housing.

It embraces the healthy community criteria, considers the requirements of both people and planet, offers the opportunity to reconnect with the ecosystems that sustain us, have a life cycle assessment of just a third of standard built bungalow, but can be completed at the same cost as that bungalow.

If you're interested, you can virtually visit the demonstration site on Youtube, in a video called "Get the learnings from Living Places."

To return to the original point, we need more parks, not fewer.

Perhaps the town and Grey Forest might consider saving half an acre or so of the mature pine forest they propose to cut down as an urban park and eco-lung for the community.

Brian Marshall is a NOTL realtor, author and expert consultant on architectural design, restoration and heritage.



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A health care boost, but so much more to do



Wayne Gates
Special to The Lake Report

As the MPP for Niagara-on-the-Lake, our office is working hard to support our local economy, protect cultural heritage and expand access to high-quality, efficient, publicly funded and publicly delivered health care services for the people of this town.

Last year, my office was contacted by several constituents, as well as members of town council, such as Coun. Sandra O'Connor, with an urgent and concerning issue — the lack of front-line nurse practitioner services.

We know that up to 8,000 residents don't have a family doctor and we also know it has been nearly a decade since the NOTL hospital was closed.

Finally, we know that about one-third of NOTL's population is over the age of 65, and that seniors have much more complex health care needs.

Preventive primary care services, including that of a nurse practitioner clinic, can ensure seniors and residents are getting the care they need, saving money in the long run and reducing the burden on our hospital system.

My office worked closely with Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa and town council — writing joint letters to the health minister and the Premier, raising the issue at Queen's Park, and keeping it at the forefront of the agenda in Question Period.

And starting April 22, we will have a new full-time nurse practitioner in NOTL.

I thank the mayor, Coun. O'Connor and town staff for their hard work on this, and for working closely and collaboratively with my office to get it done. It is a perfect example of what we can do when we work together.

Now, we must keep up the good work — whether it means expanding access



MPP Wayne Gates says there's a lot more work to do to expand access to health care in NOTL. FILE

to front-line public services or supporting our important NOTL industries and employers.

The new Ontario budget includes a \$9.8 billion deficit and real-dollar cuts to many public services.

We got some wins in the budget — including the elimination of the 6.1 per cent basic tax on Ontario wines, which is a major win for the wine industry, helping to create more economic growth and support good local jobs.

This reform was supported by various organizations including the Ontario

Craft Wineries, the Tourism Partnership of Niagara and Wine Growers Ontario, as well as many small and medium-sized wineries. This is legislation I introduced several times, including as recently as this last fall and I am glad to see it included in this latest budget.

But, quite frankly, this budget does not do enough to invest in the health care, infrastructure or education needs of our communities, or to make the right moves to spur growth in Niagara.

The Conservatives like to pretend they are the best fiscal managers of this

province — but they are running the largest deficit in history while also refusing to make the right investments to support people and families struggling with a historic affordability crisis.

The Ford government is still refusing to commit to all-day, year-round GO train service in Niagara. This is such a common sense solution.

It would boost growth, particularly in the tourism and winery sectors, create and protect good local jobs, save commuters time and money, bring more revenue into our municipalities, and help to protect the environment.

This government also only used the word "agriculture" once in the entire budget — just to say, "we care about agriculture."

Farmers, growers and workers in agriculture deserve a government that, at minimum, is going to address the concerns they are facing, and work to protect our farmlands and environmentally significant areas like the Escarpment and the Greenbelt.

We know we are losing 319 acres of prime farmland

every day in Ontario.

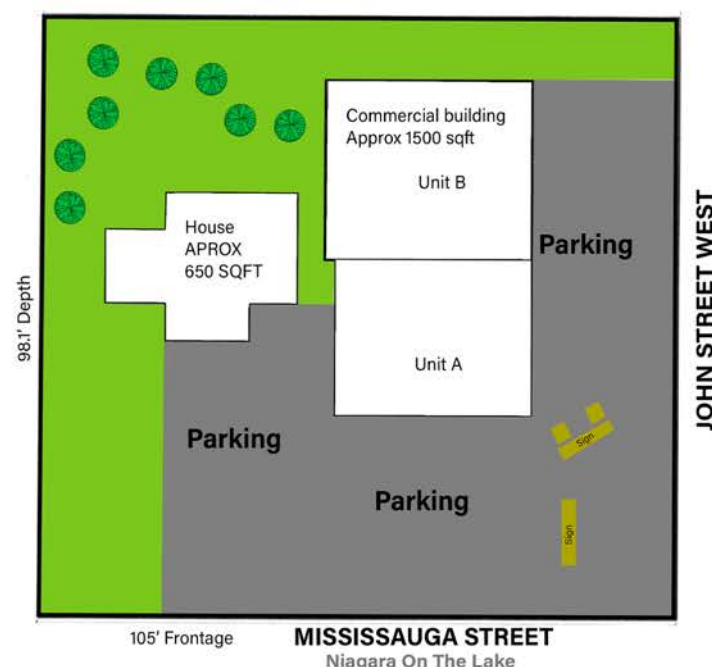
This government also continues to underfund our public health care system. We saw record emergency room and urgent care centre closures last year, we have the lowest number of hospital beds in the country, wait times are growing and we have a government that spent the last several years and millions of dollars fighting nurses in court with Bill 24.

We need a government that will invest in public care, make the right investments to recruit and retain health care workers, and provide immediate support for community health programs, long-term care and home care.

We also need a government that will address the staffing shortages in public schools, reverse the cuts Ford has made to our public school system, and work to address the crisis in childcare and daycare facing our province.

By working together, we can continue to get good things done for NOTL, for Niagara, and for the province as a whole.

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Not your average **community newspaper**

Evan Loree
The Lake Report

When you're surrounded by as much talent as I have for the last year and a half, you tend not to rest on your laurels.

I started at The Lake Report in 2022, picking up where Evan Saunders left off.

The long-haired muck-raker was closing out his contract early to follow his girlfriend to the West Coast and I was to take over a challenging double beat, covering town council and Indigenous affairs.

I was beady-eyed and fresh out of journalism school with not much more than a couple of bylines in my college paper.

I assumed my first year on the job would be spent rewriting news releases in a lonely little cubicle at CBC.

Alas, I got lucky.

My fellow Sheridan College alumnus and life partner Somer Slobodian got her big break in the summer of 2022 when Richard Harley, The Lake Report's editor-in-chief, gave her a full-time position at his multi-award winning paper.

She put in a good word on my behalf and I found myself joining her in The Lake Report's newsroom later that summer.

It wasn't long before we were cranking out stories back-to-back for a weekly print edition in one of the province's last remaining newsrooms.

Good ol' Ross Robinson was always quick to point that out when he stopped by the office to poach our snacks and impart nuggets of wisdom.

The rambler and amateur scribbler sells himself short.

Robinson consistently puts out some of the most original and quirky copy every week.

And for all his clownish swagger, Robinson often impressed me with his general knowledge of all topics under the sun.

If only he could learn to send in his photos properly.

Speaking of photos, it's possible I took yours. If you're part of this town's political class, I may have taken it twice.

And if you think those shots are money, let me assure you I was no Dave Van de Laar when I got this job.

Harley, through months of patient explaining and re-explaining, cut me into the talented candid shooter I am today.

While Harley made me a photographer, he and Kevin MacLean, the Lake Report's managing editor, had the tag-team task of making me a journalist.

Harley has a bloodhound's nose for a juicy story and MacLean has an eagle's eye for bad writing.

Neither were the type to hold back when editing my work.

I can almost imagine MacLean, a veteran of the Toronto Star, muttering under his breath while correcting my spelling from his home office in Chautauqua.

Thanks to them, I know to leave out the jargon, but I still write my stories too long.

Somewhere along the way, I think I learned something about Formula One from Julia Sacco.

The Lake Report's one-of-a-kind weekend reporter can already fill a library with the things she knew before I did.

She also turns in short, to-the-point copy with fun lede

lines every week.

This verbose scribbler can hardly contend with that kind of competition.

Altogether, we were the A-Team — until Slobodian got a Canadian Community Newspaper Award for her investigation into the laundry facilities of migrant farmworkers.

Shortly after that, she put in her two weeks' notice to embark on a new career, dropping it in Harley's lap like it was a bombshell news tip.

Veteran Richard Hutton filled her shoes when he left Niagara This Week to join our little operation in September.

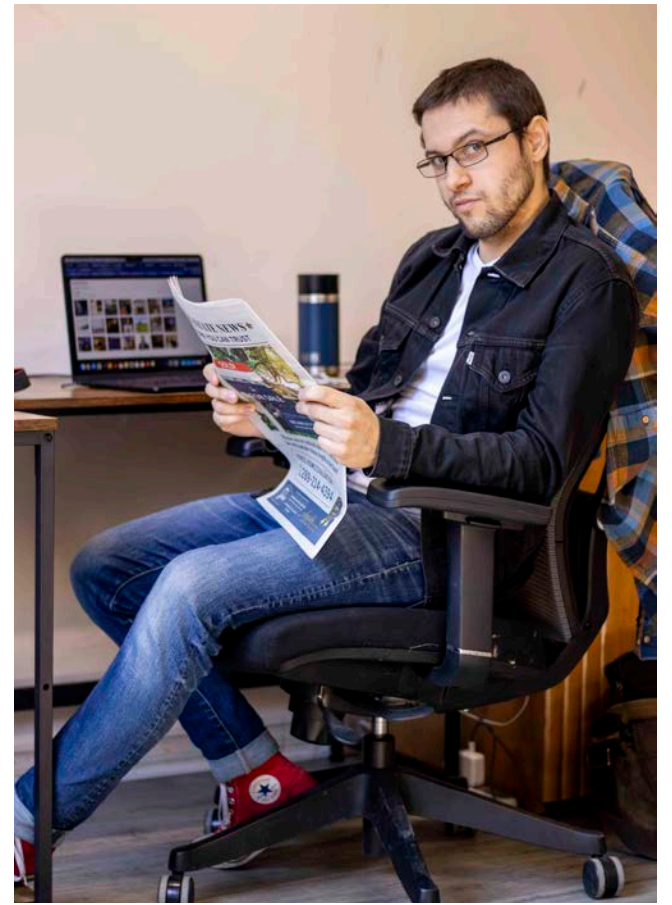
It's easy to feel envious of Hutton's writing, with their quippy puns, music references and apt metaphors.

And before you chalk it up to his experience, let me assure you, the old boy is a talent.

Surrounded as I am by such overachievers, it's hard to stand up for my own ovation.

I will say, though, it has been a privilege to know and serve this town as a daily reporter.

I have been impressed



Evan Loree is saying goodbye to The Lake Report.

from day one with the meticulous attention of everyday residents to the goings-on in their backyards and have learned much from them.

The capacity of this town to give back, take charge or speak up has been an inspiration.

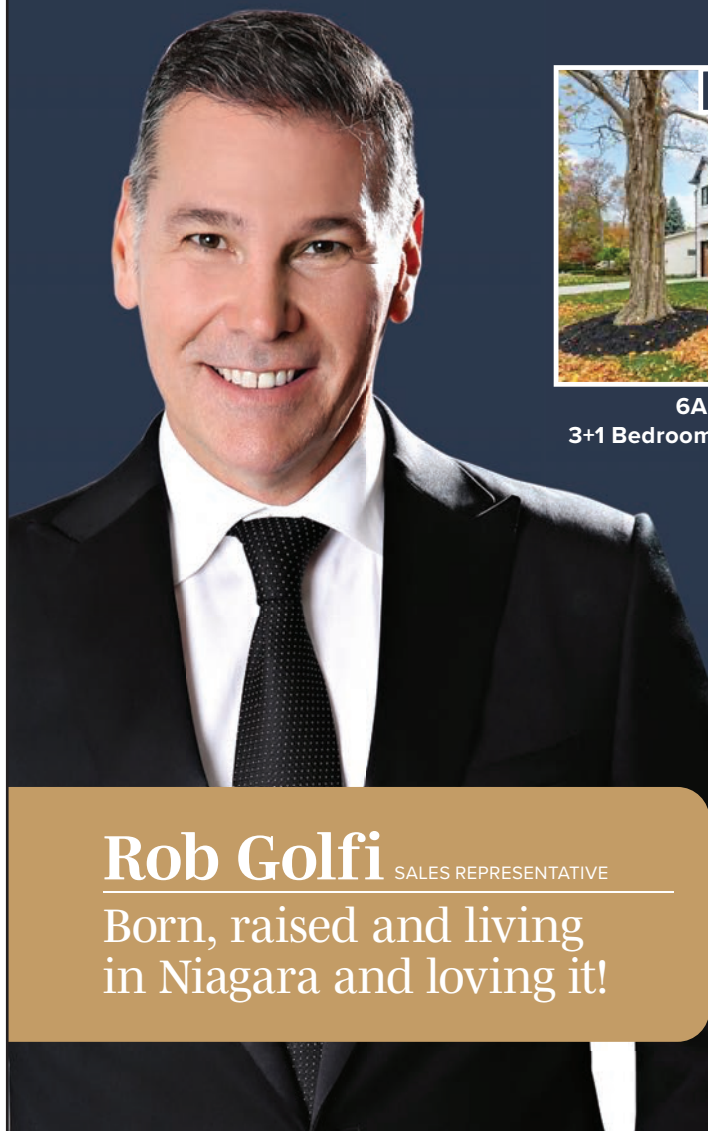
In my short — and hopefully, impactful — stay in

Niagara-on-the-Lake, it has been a privilege to write about the many characters who fill these streets and historic homes, and to share the stories most meaningful to them.

And to those of you who may know me, watch out for my byline. This probably won't be the last place you'll find it.

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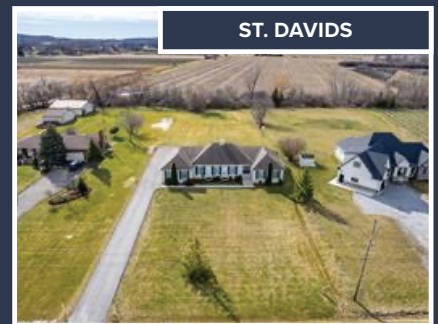
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Learn about the man who burned NOTL

Staff
The Lake Report

History has laid the blame for the devastating fire in the town of Newark, now Niagara-on-the-Lake, in December 1813 on Joseph Willcocks, who led a team that reduced the homes of an entire community to ashes in one night.

The story of the man behind this destruction, however, is “too complicated to tell,” says John B. Lee, author of “King Joe: The Life and Times of Joseph Willcocks,” a book detailing the Anglo-Irish gentleman’s life from birth to death.

Lee will deliver a lecture about the infamous man, based on his book, at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum on Thursday evening, April 18, called “Is Newark Burning?”

He is the poet laureate for Brantford, Norfolk County of the Canada Cuba Literary Alliance, as well as author of nearly 100 books.

On the bone-chilling, frigid night of Dec. 10, 1813 — a year and half into the War of 1812 — Willcocks and the members of his



The NOTL Museum’s April 18 lecture focuses on how Anglo-Irishman Joseph Willcocks led a team of people that burned down what is now NOTL in 1813. SUPPLIED

Canadian Volunteers, acting on instructions from American Gen. George McLure, to order the residents of Newark out of their homes before setting every home in the town on fire.

“What is interesting to me is not so much the horrifying details of that awful night in 1813,” said Lee, “but how did Willcocks evolve from being an ultra loyal gentleman volunteer at the Battle of Queenston Heights, to being so disillusioned, so outraged, that he burned Newark to the

ground - the town he’d been living in for several years?”

Willcocks had, in fact, been a successful politician.

From 1808 until 1812, he was elected without opposition in West York, 1st Lincoln and Haldimand ridings.

Eventually, he moved to Newark, where he published the Upper Canada Guardian from 1807 to 1812, the only newspaper of the day critical of colonial government.

Even Sir Isaac Brock, with war on the horizon, appealed to Willcocks in 1812

to help secure an alliance with the Six Nations Confederacy, whose reserve was in Willcocks’ constituency.

The lecture on Willcocks will begin at 7:30 p.m. at the museum, located at 43 Castlereagh St.

Admission is \$10, or free for museum members. To reserve a spot, call 905-468-3912 or email Amy Klassen at aklassen@nhsm.ca. Seating is limited.

Copies of “King Joe: The Life and Times of Joseph Willcocks” will be available for purchase at the museum.



The list of donors and supporters for our Easter Holiday Hamper program is once again a long one. Our clients and volunteer teams express our deep gratitude and heartfelt thanks to each of you and to the Niagara-on-the-Lake community for your collective generosity.

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- Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library
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Eight of Willowbank's 10 grads were able to attend their convocation, from left, Riley McMahon, Elzbieta Gach, Alexandra Moss, Christine Morgan Rier, Alexander Latham, Charlie Porter, Katherine Slattery and Christy Kirwan. JULIA HODGSON

2024 Willowbank grads all working in heritage sector

Staff
 The Lake Report

The latest cohort of students from Willowbank's heritage conservation program graduated in a convocation ceremony on the weekend — and all 10 grads are now working in the heritage sector.

The graduates represent a diverse array of backgrounds and experiences, "united by their passion for embracing the interconnections of our built, natural, and cultural resources," the Queenston-based school said in announcing the convocation.

The heritage conservation program is known for its progressive and unconventional model, which enables students to gain knowledge beyond the classroom, through a combination of theory and hands-on learning.

"Our students are passionate about history, conservation, traditional building methods, sustainability and community design," the school said in a news release.

The graduation ceremony took place on Saturday in the Bright Parlour at Willowbank, where past-chair Patrick Little welcomed guests to the School of Restoration Arts.

Among those attending were Marie Bowering, Indigenous community connections facilitator, and Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa.

Valedictorian Charlie Porter delivered a poignant, reflective speech.

"We leave this institution as stewards of our cultural heritage, caretakers of our built environment, and advocates for the preservation of Canada's history," he told the audience.

"Whether we find ourselves physically restoring historic buildings and their materials, planning for the future of Canada's heritage, or advocating for heritage conservation policy, our experience at Willowbank will be indelible."

The faculty address was delivered by Bianca Verrecchia, intermediate heritage planner for the Town of Grimsby and a Willowbank graduate.

She focused on the academic achievements of the grads and the impact they will have on the preservation field.

"As Willowbank graduates you understand that heritage is not static. It evolves, adapts and reflects the diversity and richness of our past and present."

In his keynote address, David Adames, CEO of the Niagara Parks Commission,

highlighted how essential the Willowbank program is to the built and cultural heritage in Niagara and beyond.

He stressed the importance of cultural stewardship and also shared impressive updates on the restoration and adaptive reuse of the historic hydro generating stations in Niagara Falls, an example of the genuine need for skills learned at Willowbank.

The diplomas were awarded by Willowbank president Dr. Faisal Arain and a reception hosted by 124 on Queen was held at the school.

With all of this year's graduates employed in the heritage sector, their contributions "to the field of heritage conservation and sustainability will be instrumental in ensuring that our cultural and built heritage continues to thrive for generations to come," the school said.

As well, Willowbank is now accepting applications for the three-year heritage conservation program starting this coming September.

Anyone interested in heritage conservation and sustainability is encouraged to reach out via www.willowbank.ca to learn more about the program.



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Golf club staff support colleague fighting cancer

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

Brenda Breen has been working at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club for nearly 10 years and after a recent cancer diagnosis, her colleagues are banding together to help.

“When the employees, myself and the owners were given the news by her, we wanted to help in any way that we could,” Bobbi Wanamaker, the club’s special events co-ordinator, told The Lake Report.

When Breen said she would happily accept,



Brenda Breen.

Wanamaker and the golf club family put together a GoFundMe to cover medi-

cal expenses and support her family.

“Before she started chemo she had to take a pre-chemo pill and that’s not covered by OHIP so that cost her some money. The chemo itself is covered, but only up to a certain amount,” Wanamaker said.

For Breen, a single mom living in town, the fundraiser will ease her stress while she is unable to work, Wanamaker said.

Those interested in sending money or well wishes can do so on GoFundMe, through the fundraiser “Brenda’s Battle” by Bobbi

Wanamaker or in-person at the club.

“I set a goal of \$20,000 and if it goes beyond that, wonderful. We’re not going to set a time limit on it,” Wanamaker said.

A fundraiser is planned in June, which is Uterine Cancer Awareness Month.

“We are going to do a day when all of the serving staff donate their tips to Brenda’s GoFundMe. The owners said they will match that day as well,” Wanamaker said.

“We’re hoping she’s feeling up to coming down and partying with us that day.”

Neighbours worry about Rand plan

Continued from Front Page

up on May 29. It’s being chaired by tribunal vice-chair Scott Tousaw and member Daniel Best.

This is the latest dust-up in the ongoing battle over the property that has been waged since 2018, when Marotta first unveiled plans to build a hotel on the site.

Nancy Smith, the lawyer representing the town, said Niagara-on-the-Lake’s position is simple.

“The heritage buildings, the heritage landscape features, the heritage natural elements and the wetland that Solmar seeks to demolish, to remove or to relocate to facilitate its subdivision design can all be conserved, can all be protected and can all be retained,” she said.

Likewise, Save Our Rand Estate (SORE) lawyer Catharine Lyons said Solmar’s plan is not a good use of the land and that it is “fiction” to say the destruction or relocation of cultural and natural heritage elements has to occur.

“Intensification can be achieved while meeting other provincial, regional and local requirements of conservation,” Lyons said.

SORE, she said, has been waging its preservation battle since it was formed in 2018 after learning of the plans Solmar had for the property.

Since then, the property



An Ontario Land Tribunal hearing over Solmar Developments’ proposed subdivision to be build on the Rand Estate began Tuesday. RICHARD HUTTON

has fallen into disrepair and trees have been removed.

“This has been a long haul for (SORE) and all involved and we’ve watched the estate decline in the course of this long proceeding,” Lyons said.

The Rand family are also significant to the town’s history, she said, noting Calvin Rand was one of the founders of the Shaw Festival and that the home hosted many dignitaries in its day.

“The prime minister of India, Indira Gandhi, and Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau visited Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Shaw Festival (in 1973), and were hosted at the Rand house — or Randwood — for a glamorous party,” Lyons said.

Tom Halinski is a lawyer representing Blair and Brenda McArthur, whose

property adjoins the Rand Estate.

Their property is also known as Brunswick Place and the McArthurs are concerned about the impact on their property if an access road is approved along a strip of land referred to as “the panhandle.”

“The McArthurs acquired the property in 2016 from a prominent Canadian artist (Trisha Romance) and have devoted considerable time and resources to its maintenance, the maintenance of the many heritage attributes of Brunswick Place out of respect for its heritage and importance to the town,” Halinski said.

The McArthurs share the concerns about the proposal that were put forward by both SORE and the town. In addition, Halinski said, they

are worried about the impact it will have on their property.

“We will demonstrate over the coming weeks that those impacts are likely to be significant,” he said, adding that the McArthurs believe development of the estate property can be achieved “in a manner that respects both the Rand Estate and Brunswick Place.”

It was about this time last year when Solmar had sought permits to alter and demolish structures on the historic property but the request was turned down by council in a close 4-3 vote.

Sara Premi, the lawyer representing the company owned by Benny Marotta, said at the time that Solmar would appeal the council decision to the tribunal along with the rest of its development planned for the property.

Prior to that meeting, Denise Horne, who was then the town’s heritage planner, had recommended council approve the demolition of three structures including the pool garden, the Calvin Rand summer house and the old stable house.

Smith said she plans to call Horne as a witness “under summons” to speak to her report.

“She prepared a detailed staff report with respect to the heritage permit applications seeking alteration and demolition to facilitate the source subdivision design,” Smith said.

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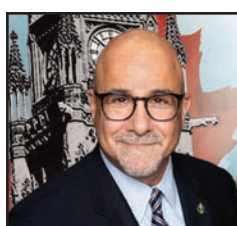
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Have an opinion you want heard?

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St. Davids resident Mike Maves, whose property abuts the proposed Opulence subdivision, speaks to councillors about his concerns April 9 during a planning committee-of-the-whole meeting. RICHARD HUTTON

St. Davids subdivision **moves forward** with planning committee approval

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

A proposed subdivision for up to 28 homes in St. Davids has received the OK from the town's politicians.

Councillors considered a recommendation report from staff, which supported the development of the Opulence subdivision on lands north of Hickory Avenue and west of Tanbark Road, during the committee of the whole planning meeting on Tuesday night.

The proposed development on the 1.776-hectare, or 4.39-acre, parcel would consist of as many as 28 single-family homes, according to the report.

"We've been in town for over 30 years developing and making picturesque communities such as this proposed development Opulence," said Syrina Gatta of Gatta Homes. "Smaller lots and efficient home designs enable us to offer more affordable housing stock by less lot cost without sacrificing energy efficiency or quality of products we always produce in our homes."

But some St. Davids residents were unhappy with the proposed development, and shared their thoughts at the meeting.

One of them, Dyck Lane resident Mike Maves, said his home borders on two other subdivisions – St. Davids Estates and Courtland Valley – and Opulence will make it three.

He expressed concern about the easements through his property the developer and Niagara Region are seeking.

"We don't want this,"

Maves said. "And if appropriate planning decisions were made, this would not be necessary."

There have been "past planning and procedural errors are leading to new planning errors that are now affecting our property," he added.

One of those errors, he said, was assuming Hickory Avenue could serve as a connection between St. Davids Estates and Courtland Valley.

"The drafters of this long-term plan for this area should not have assumed that our land would absolutely become available for the purpose of connecting these two subdivisions," Maves said.

To drive home his point, he showed a photo of the property taken by Google Earth.

"A simple satellite view would show anyone that there is a barn obstructing the proposed street path," Maves said. "That barn has been here long before these subdivisions were here."

Some members of council also had questions.

Coun. Wendy Cheropita asked if Gatta Homes were planning similar work to deal with drainage in the new subdivision as they have in other projects in town.

"In some of your current developments, you've made provisions for additional swales behind homes and (used) mature trees to sort of really help with the drainage. Do you have any plans for the same with this particular development?" she asked.

Speaking on behalf of the developer, Ethan Laman, a planner with Upper Canada

Consultants, said that is being looked at as a part of the design process.

"We contemplated the engineering design already and started to review what this grading design looks like," he said.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor, though, after hearing concerns raised by residents living in the area, said there were two trees in the area of a future town-owned walkway from Tanbark Road into the new subdivision – a copper beech and a black walnut.

"It's in that walkway," O'Connor said of the beech tree, "so, it will be a tree, a tow-owned tree, so from that perspective, I think that we should have some say as to whether that should be kept, preserved or be removed."

But Kristen McCauley, NOTL's director of community and development services, told O'Connor that the beech is located in the same area that will be used as an access to the site during construction,

"It's something we'd have to look at and balance to see if it's appropriate or possible to save the tree," McCauley said.

As for the black walnut, O'Connor said it was part of a grove of four mature trees.

"It's in good condition. It's the largest in that grove," she said. "And I would like that to be looked at for possible preservation as well."

O'Connor, meanwhile, also expressed concern that the proponent was offering cash in lieu of parkland in the development.

"We are seeing a trend in many of the subdivisions

that are coming forward lately that there is cash in lieu of parkland," she said.

"I know this is a small subdivision but we can have a little parkette or we can have walkway parks and I think that walkway to Tanbark would be an ideal location ... and make sure there are trees or benches, something like that."

The proponent had sought a number of amendments to the town's official plan and zoning bylaw.

Currently, the property is zoned residential development and the developer is asking it be changed to residential (R2) zone with site-specific provisions concerning lot frontage, area and coverage, front and rear yard setbacks, exterior side yard setbacks and encroachments.

In its report, planning staff said the project "is consistent" with the Ontario government's provincial policy statement, and conforms with the province's growth plan, the Niagara Escarpment plan and Niagara Region's official plan.

The proponent, staff said, asked for "a modest increase" in density to facilitate the number of lots, "resulting in a residential net density of 20.33 units per hectare (8.24 units per acre)."

The town's official plan said that in the case of low density residential developments, that figure should not be more than 14 units per hectare (six units per acre).

Surrounding developments, the report stated, show a mix of low and medium-density uses.

hutton@niagaranow.com

Learn & Live focuses on heritage trail history

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

Rick Meloen is a strong advocate for learning about the history of the town.

He has a lifetime of knowledge and experience with the inner workings of Niagara-on-the-Lake and on April 22, he'll share some of what he's gathered over the years during a Live & Learn session at the public library.

Titled "A Walk Through History: NOTL's Upper Canada Heritage Trail," Meloen's talk will offer a brief history of the railroad to Niagara and the heritage trail.

A lifelong resident of NOTL, Meloen is the chair of the heritage trail committee and a member of the Niagara Historical Society, where he volunteers as a tour guide.

"This will be a bit of history of when the railroad first came in 1854, right up to 1959 when the trains stopped coming to Niagara," Meloen told The Lake Report.

His presentation will



Rick Meloen is passionate about the heritage trail. Much of his knowledge on the trail will be shared during his upcoming Learn & Live session. FILE/JULIA SACCO

feature some "interesting tidbits" that perhaps some NOTLers didn't know about, he said.

"There's an interesting fellow who was involved with the railroad called Samuel Zimmerman, so without giving too much away I will be talking about him," Meloen said.

"And, of course, I will be giving an overview of the trail, where we are now and where the trail construction is headed," he continued.

For him, the heritage trail is a way of preserving our town's heritage, he said.

"It's not only a trail for people to enjoy the outdoors and get their exercise, it's also a way of preserving our history which means a lot to me," Meloen said.

Registration for the April 22 session is open on the library website, notpubliclibrary.org. It will begin at 6:30 p.m. at the NOTL Public Library.

juliasacco@niagaranow.com



Above: Andrew Ball and Sarah Moorhead tied the knot in Ireland during a trip from March 16 to April 1. Along with them were more than 20 NOTL residents, and family and friends from the U.S. and elsewhere in Canada. Below: Andrew, Sarah and son Ted. SUPPLIED

Ball family, and dozens of locals, head to Ireland for wedding



It was a day for the history books, as NOTL residents Andrew Ball and Sarah Moorhead were married in Trim, County Meath in Ireland, amid the church ruins from 1205. Along with them were dozens of NOTL residents and family and friends. Reception took place at Marcie Regan's Pub, one of the oldest pubs in Ireland, Balls says. "Weather was beautiful, good times had by all. A laid-back, Guinness-fuelled affair. 10/10 would do it again," Ball said.

NOTL resident Michelle Chappell officiated the big day — though Andrew and Sarah were officially married in St. Catharines at the courthouse in September, just after their baby boy Ted Ball was born.

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Location: St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Niagara-on-the-Lake

Date: Thursday, April 18, 2024

Time: 7:30 p.m.

Admission: Free-will offering. Proceeds are for the Niagara Presbytery Refugee Fund in support of a family who recently arrived from Afghanistan.



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TEAM OF THE WEEK

NOTL 'sponge puck' hockey



Members of the Niagara-on-the-Lake "sponge puck" shinny hockey league have wrapped up another season. The players are The Lake Report's Team of the Week. SUPPLIED

David Butler
Special to The Lake Report

Another season of shinny hockey, or "sponge puck" as we call it, has ended.

Niagara-on-the-Lake might be one of the only places in North America where shinny is often played with a sponge puck when goalies are not available.

It's been a tradition here for more than 40 years.

As is tradition, everyone claims victory regardless of what may or may not be reflected on the scoreboard.

Sponge puck attracts a variety of skaters, men and women, from various professional backgrounds.

We have myself (a lawyer), Andrew Perrie (a top Niagara realtor), Thomas Muir (insurance), Rob Vanderveen (windows and siding), Barry Bo-

ese (welcome committee and accounting services), Gordon Ng (property investor), Jay Buffington (Apple engineer), John Read (saw-cutting and coring), Scott Neufeld (border guard) and many more.

The on-ice picture tells a fuller story.

And as this season ends, we're all looking forward to the next one just a few months down the road.



A new season has begun

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club launched another season on Saturday. Members and visitors who have been itching to get back at it hit the links in large numbers. Here, Deena Jain from London, Ont., Aaron Brears from British Columbia, Andrew Smith of Burlington and Jordan McDonald from B.C. celebrate on the first green. Shoreline restoration work has substantially changed the view from the first fairway. Numerous trees had to be removed from the embankment and that resulted in a stunning visual vista looking out over Lake Ontario. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

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NOTL hockey teams hand out **player awards**

Staff
The Lake Report

The 2023-24 hockey season ice has come to an end, the ice is gone from the arenas and the teams of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Minor Hockey Association have handed out the awards hardware to celebrate player performances this year.

And the recipients are:

U11 Local League 1: Amedeo Santini (most valuable player), Mia Unruh (most dedicated), Nathan Flynn (most improved), Norah Palmer (best sportsmanship). And Taylor Steele received a special award for sportsmanship.

U11 Local League 2: Forbes Dick (MVP), Sawyer Moes (most dedicated), Logan Folino (most improved), Blake Felice (best

sportsmanship.

U11 rep: Micah Penner (MVP), Nathan Reid (most dedicated), Nash Funk (most improved), Faith Whyte (best sportsmanship).

U13 Local League 1: Brayden Sacco (MVP), Henry Buffington (most dedicated), Ella Cwierniewski (most improved), Max Lindqvist (best sportsmanship).

U13 Local League 2: Ben Bayne (MVP), Tyler Lebrasseur (most dedicated), Easton Van Berkel (most improved), Liam Waters (best sportsmanship).

U13 rep: Hunter Froese (MVP), August Felice (most dedicated), Mason Nichols (most improved), Nello Pagnotta (best sportsmanship).

U15 Local League 1: Cameron Tiessen (MVP),

Ariel Carr (most dedicated), Blake Lepp (most improved), Dylan Kroeker (best sportsmanship).

U15 rep: Levi Bayne (MVP), Nolan Rappitt (most dedicated), Boyd Hopkins (most improved), Holden Powell (best sportsmanship).

U18 Local League 1: Brice Nolan (MVP), Jacob Cook (most dedicated), Thomas Minerva (most improved), Mario Galbraith (best sportsmanship).

U18 Local League 2: Nick Draayer (MVP), Corson Dick (most dedicated), Jacob Doucette (most improved), Jarvis Neufeld (best sportsmanship).

U18 rep: Quinten Davis and Braden Sawyer (MVPs), Lucas Roberts Ramos (most dedicated), Andrew Bayne (most improved), Devin Hunter (best sportsmanship).



Ophelia Xie, Samantha Frydryk, Katharine VanderKaay, Mary Lamky, Jamie Doucet, Abigail McCabe and Hailey Mitchell all represented the Niagara-on-the-Lake club at the Provincial Series #13 in Brantford in March. SUPPLIED

NOTL figure skaters wrap up a **successful year**

Staff
The Lake Report

Another busy and very successful season for members of the NOTL Skating Club has come to a close.

At the Provincial Series competition #13 in Brantford in February, Hailey Mitchell won the Star 5 U10 competition and Samantha Frydryk was third in Star 6.

Jamie Doucet finished eighth in Star 5 OI3, Abigail McCabe was ninth in Star 5 U13, Ophelia Xie came ninth in the Star 8 category and 11th in Star 7. Mary Lamky placed 12th in Star 8 and Katharine VanderKaay was 16th in Star 6.

As well, Mitchell topped the rankings in the Star 5 U10 category and won the silver medal at the 2024

Skate Ontario Provincial Championships in Brantford in March.

In Brantford, at the Provincial Series #11 February, Alex Hill, Jamie Doucet, Abigail McCabe and Hailey Mitchell competed.

Hill was ninth in Star 8, Doucet was ninth in Star 5 OI3, McCabe placed sixth in Star U13 and Mitchell won in the Star 5 U10 category.



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NOTL's Peter Warrack earns the Meritorious Service Cross

Michel Maisonneuve
Special to The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's Peter Warrack has been formally presented with the Meritorious Service Cross by Gov. Gen. Mary Simon for his work in addressing human trafficking in Canada and beyond.

Warrack's citation for the award notes he "led the creation of Project Protect, a partnership that targets human trafficking by focusing on money laundering."

"Financial institutions, regulators and law enforcers collaborate their efforts to identify financial patterns that indicate criminal activity linked to human trafficking," the citation says.

"Unique to Canada and a model for international agencies, the project has furnished information used to identify trafficking rings and to rescue victims trapped in desperate circumstances."

He was originally awarded the honour in May 2021 but his investiture was delayed by COVID.

Warrack spent more than 30 years as a financial investigator and in 2016 he turned his skills toward chasing the money behind human trafficking and launched Project Protect.

"I was in an anti-money laundering conference in Toronto. At the end of the day a victim of human trafficking, Timea Nagy, basically confronted the audience of bankers and said, 'Help us to try and put an end to human trafficking. You guys can see the money,' " Warrack told The Lake Report in 2022.

"And it just hit me as a reality, 'Yeah, you're right. We probably could (help stop human trafficking),' " he said.

He said he knew next to nothing about human trafficking at the time and set about working with Nagy and other victims of the crime to learn all he could.

His investigative team at the Bank of Montreal researched the issue and Project Protect was born.

It follows the money that funds human trafficking in Canada and abroad.

"You would think that this type of industry is all cash based, and a lot of it is, but the bad guys, the pimps, still need to use the traditional banking system of credit cards, debit cards, accounts to put money in or



Above: Peter Warrack, seen here with Gov. Gen. Mary Simon in Rideau Hall, Ottawa, led the creation of a partnership that targets human trafficking. SGT. ANIS ASSARI Left: The Meritorious Service decorations were created by Queen Elizabeth II and recognize Canadians for exceptional deeds that bring honour to the country. A recipient of the cross is entitled to use the letters "M.S.C." after their name. In terms of precedence, the M.S.C. is just below the Star of Courage and above the Medal of Military Valour. SUPPLIED



take money out," he said.

"If they want to book a hotel, for instance — unless it's like a minus-five star hotel or something — the hotel's not going to accept cash. There's going to be a credit card involved."

Warrack also is known to many in NOTL for his work on the town's cenotaph fundraising campaign.

Work on restoring the landmark will start Sept. 3 and be finished in time for Remembrance Day, he said.

He is also an active member of the Rotary Club, a member and supporter of the Royal Canadian Legion and most recently was appointed to the senate of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Princess Louise's) Infantry Regiment in Hamilton.

Less well-known is that Warrack, as an early board member, together with former premier Bob Rae of the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking, helped ensure the federal government's establishment of the National Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-833-900-1010.

In an interview, Warrack said that, prior to his investiture on March 21, he and his wife Bonita had a private tour of Parliament Hill courtesy of Niagara Falls MP Tony Baldinelli. They also met with Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre.

The formal ceremony at Rideau Hall was "surreal," he said. "It is a beautiful building and like entering the palace of Versailles."

"The staff, soldiers and Mounties were resplendent in their finery and really added to the occasion. We were made to feel honoured and special."

The importance of the occasion and the significance of the award started to sink in as they rehearsed where they needed to stand, the etiquette involved and the logistics of the ceremony, he said.

Eight people received the Meritorious Service Cross and 56 of the Meritorious Service Medal.

"It struck me as I read the citations that I was in the company of giants, everyone being honoured was so deserving and proudly Canadian."

He is still an adviser with Project Protect, which he proudly notes "has gone from strength to strength."

Tens of thousands of intelligence reports related to human trafficking have been submitted to Canada's Financial Intelligence Unit

(FINTRAC)," Warrack said in an interview.

That has led to numerous arrests, identification of missing persons and the rescue of victims of human trafficking, he said.

Of equal importance and a source of personal pride for Warrack is the creation of projects related to elder abuse, child sexual exploitation, fentanyl trafficking, wildlife trafficking, mortgage fraud and organ trafficking.

"Many of these projects are international in their reach and adopted by countries and agencies globally," he said.

As well, the United States Financial Intelligence Unit (FINCEN) has joined Project Protect.

"This is huge as it brings onboard potential intelligence generated over 13,000 U.S. financial institutions," he said.

While human trafficking hasn't been an issue in NOTL, "We do have exposure to child luring as evidenced by the recent arrest and charging of 13 individuals in Niagara Falls, one of whom is from NOTL."

As well, "in Niagara Falls and St. Catharines there have been a number of human trafficking arrests. Often human trafficking, drug trafficking and other crimes go hand-in-hand," he said.



The northern flicker is around all year in NOTL. LILY MCKINLEY

BIRD WATCH Northern flicker

Lily McKinley
Special to The Lake Report

The northern flicker is a year-round resident of Niagara-on-the-Lake, marked by its vibrant plumage and distinctive markings specific to eastern North America.

We are lucky enough to observe the yellow-shafted variant, which dwells in woodlands, parks and even urban spaces.

During the breeding season, flickers carve out nests in tree cavities or abandoned structures.

To communicate with potential mates, they drum as loudly as possible on

wood or metal surfaces, which helps them establish territories.

Unlike traditional tree-drumming woodpeckers, the northern flicker is the only woodpecker species that frequently forages for food on the ground.

They use their powerful bills to probe the ground, allowing them to unearth insects and beetles.

Food availability has been found to directly influence the colouration of flickers and their nestlings, so consider offering suet or fruit in feeders for a chance to witness these unique birds up close.

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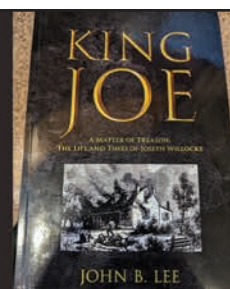
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Have some fun



Across

- 1. Notice (5)
- 4. Slowcoaches (9)
- 9. Summer drink (4,3)
- 10. Strength (7)
- 11. "When pigs fly!" (3,6)
- 13. Islam's majority branch (5)
- 14. False (3,4)
- 15. Incited (7)
- 17. Escalates (5,2)
- 19. Filled tube of meat (7)
- 21. Dutch-speaking resort island (5)
- 23. Interesting and exciting (9)
- 24. Tropical ailment (7)
- 25. Blower or compressor (3,4)
- 27. Log on again (9)
- 28. Top gear for a Bishop (5)

Down

- 1. Sheer silk fabric (7)
- 2. Like National Trust properties (4,2,3,6)
- 3. Equipment (3)
- 4. Learner (7)
- 5. Eminem and Kanye West (7)
- 6. Vows (5)
- 7. Cause of California quakes (3,7,5)
- 8. Unable to progress (7)
- 12. Runs swiftly (5)
- 16. It once was Ayers Rock (5)
- 17. Junk supplier? (7)
- 18. Parcel (7)
- 19. Defunct maker of three-wheeled cars (7)
- 20. Sun blocker? (7)
- 22. Aircraft parking area (5)
- 26. Peculiar (3)

Crossword Puzzle

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Last issue's answers

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The end and beginning of the human species



DR. BROWN

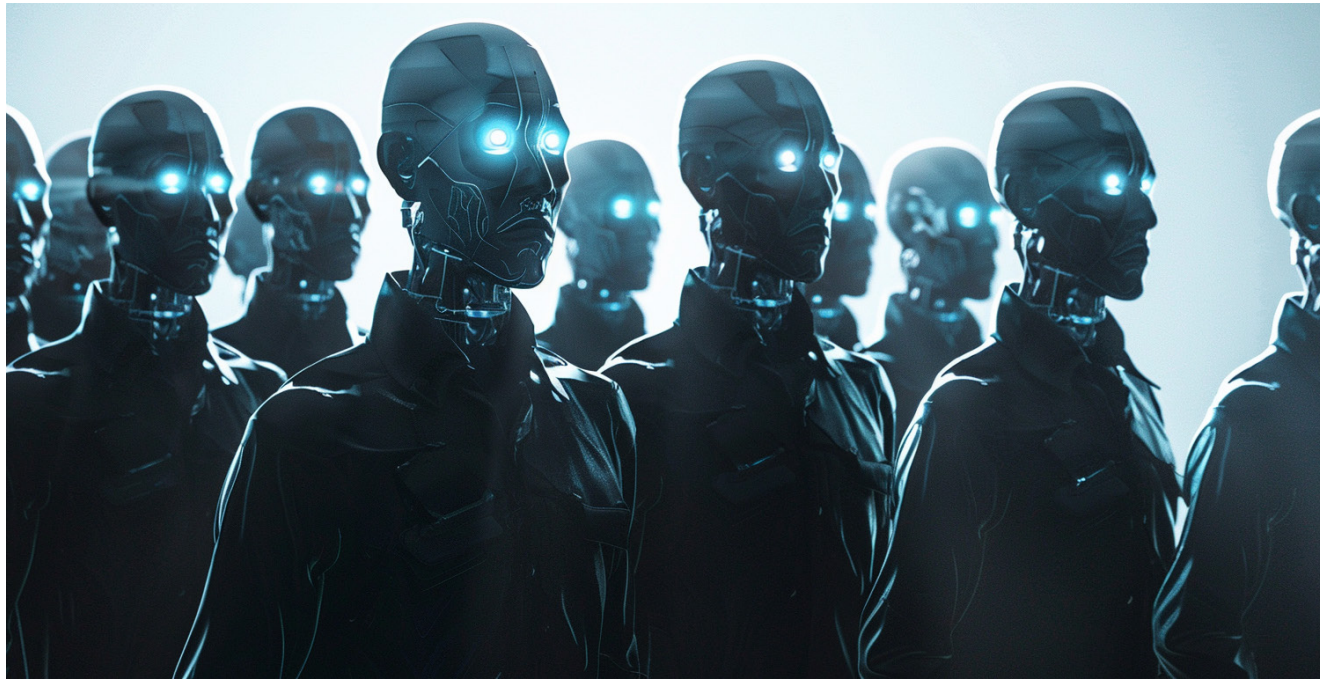
Dr. William Brown
Columnist

Last week's review of the present and future revolution in genetics returns us to the question of whether the human species will continue as is, or morph into other species, possibly genetically engineered to boost desirable physical and cognitive traits.

Based on records of the relentless evolution of our ancient ancestors, evidence of continued and possibly even accelerated evolution in the last 50,000 years and the potential for human tinkering with our genome, it's likely that our species will morph into recognizably new species within the next thousand years or earlier.

By evolution and natural selection's standards, that's very fast.

Continued evolution,



whether by natural selection or by genetic engineering, poses yet another issue.

Will our successor species prove brighter and more creative than our species? And, if so, will the best of our creative efforts in the arts, sciences and engineering look like child's play to our descendants, just as we look backward hundreds of thousands of years at the primitive tool kits of early homo erectus variants two?

My hope is that our descendants evolve to become wiser in managing the planet and all its creatures than we have in our time on Earth.

Then, there's artificial intelligence, which threatens to take over many jobs and disrupt economies.

There's no doubt that we are at the foot of an exponential curve going steeply up concerning AI's power, as computers and their enabling and controlling algorithms become ever more powerful.

That's surely unsettling.

Making matters better or worse, depending on your perspective, is the potential impact of far more powerful quantum computers within a decade or so.

These computers, now in their infancy, would make current challenges with AI potentially much worse because they will likely be capable of breaking any security code, based on silicon computers we're familiar with now.

That and the prospect of hybrid systems, which couple computer chips with the human brain, make for a nightmarish future in our imagination.

Often older folk, including myself, tend to look back, comfortable with old assumptions and content with everything "as is" or better, "as was."

But I think it's best, and more rewarding, to look forward, to focus on later generations, and try to imagine

what wonders await them.

Aside from the inconvenience and possible suffering associated with death, my biggest regret over exiting life's stage is that I won't know how it all turns out a hundred, a thousand, 10,000, 100,000, a million, a billion and yes, even a trillion, years from now.

Wouldn't you like to know how the grand script turns out? I would.

It's a far better prospect than imagining myself mouldering six feet under for millennia to come before the next ice age gouges everything up again.

Some of you might want to weigh in on the subjects brought up in this series.

If so, let Debbie Krause know at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library and we'll put together another series, this time with more discussion led by you.

That's what makes small groups so interesting.

Dr. William Brown is a professor of neurology at McMaster University and co-founder of the InfoHealth series at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.



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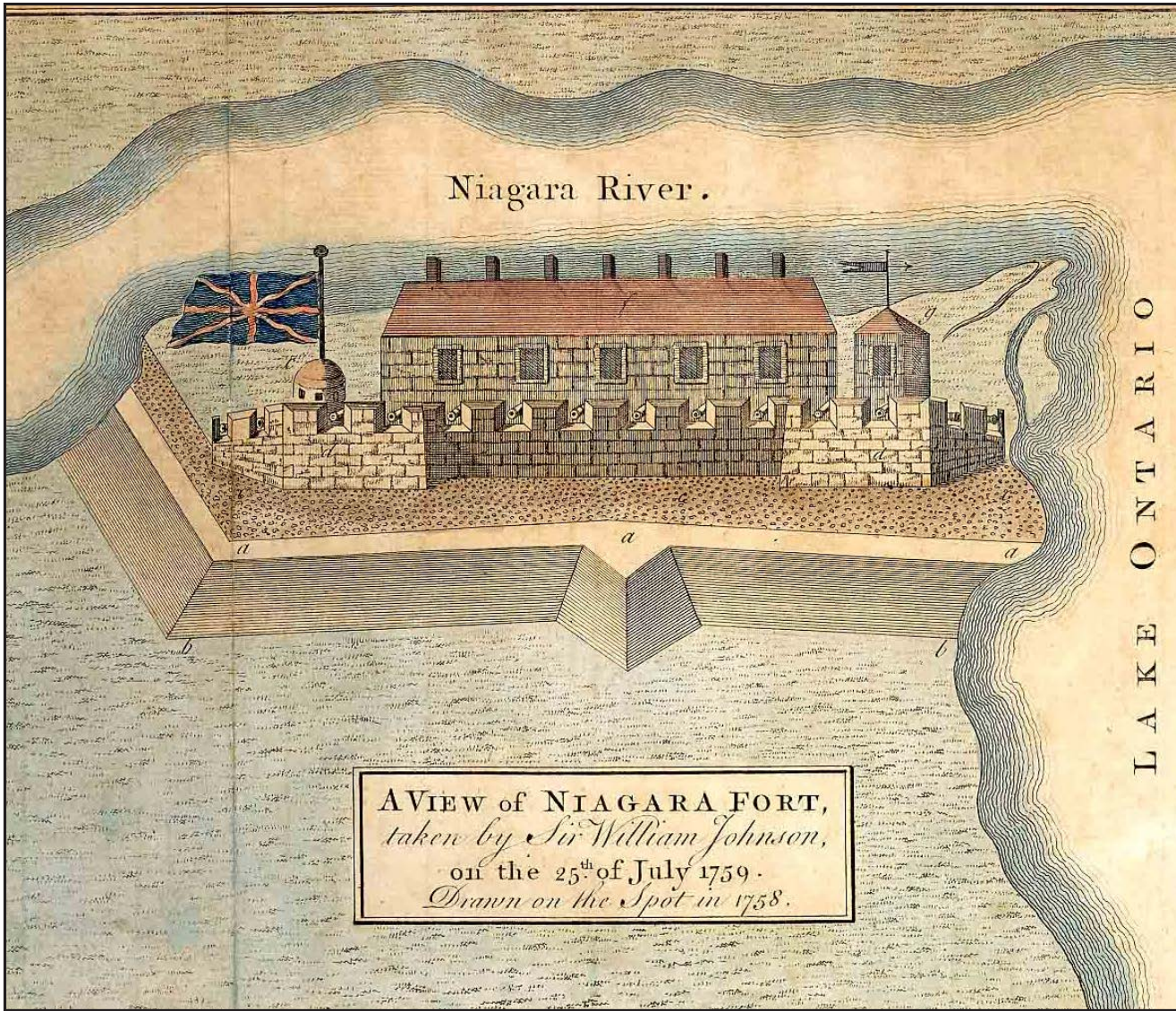
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Fort Niagara, 1758

This piece is titled, "A mounted view of Niagara fort taken by Sir William Johnson on the 25th of July 1759. Drawn on the spot, 1758." It is a print of the original done by Johnson (1715-1774). In 1736, Johnson began working for Peter Warren, managing his estate which was located in New York's Mohawk Valley. Since he learned the Mohawk language and customs he was appointed as the British Agent to the Iroquois. In 1756 he became the British Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Northern Colonies. During the French and Indian War he commanded Iroquois and British militia involved in the battles at Lake George and the capture of Fort Niagara in 1759.

124 | Q | HOTEL & SPA

HYDROTHERAPY CIRCUIT

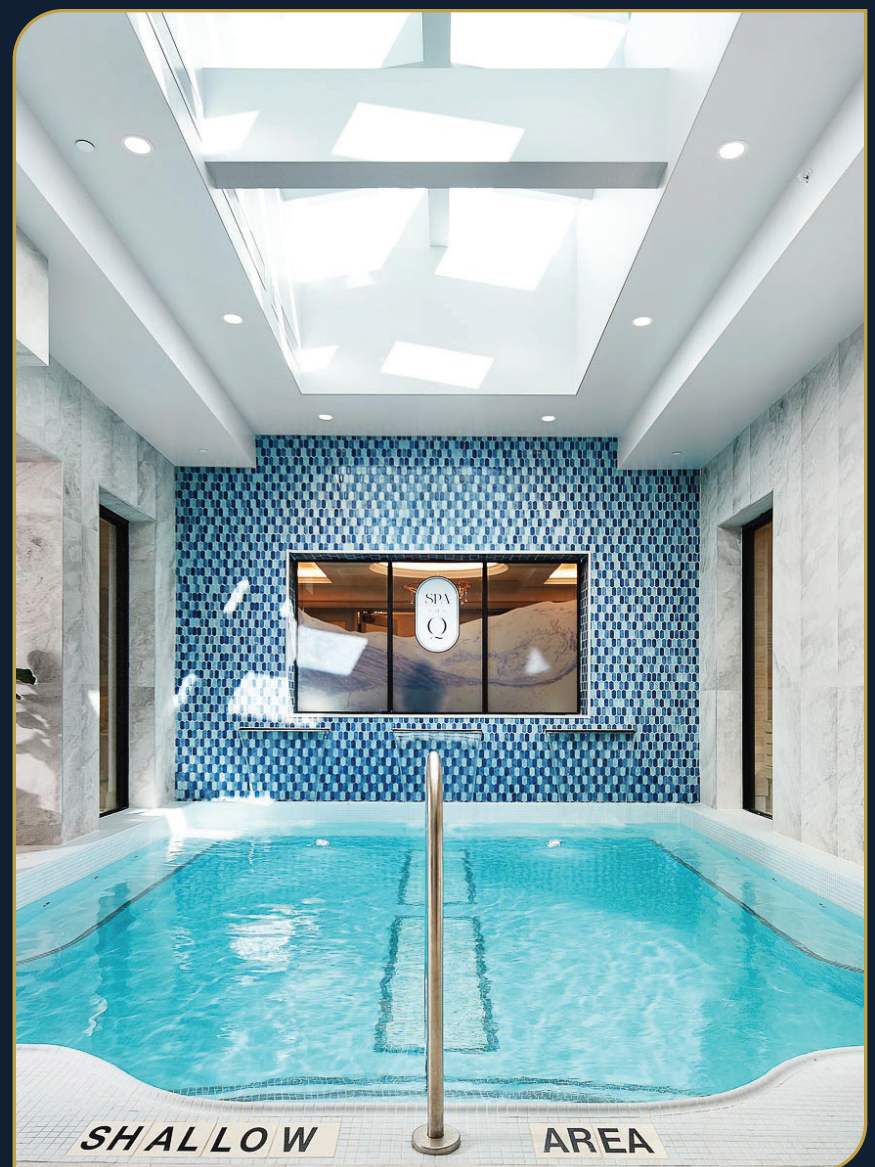
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Get your lawn **in shape** for spring



GROWING TOGETHER 

Joanne Young
Columnist

This past Sunday I spotted the first ones of the season ... that's right: the first dandelions of the year.

I know most of us dread to see them coming up in our lawns, but they are happy-looking little flowers.

If only they would come up in someone else's lawn.

The heavy rains last week have also helped the lawns to green up and start growing.

So, now is the time to get the lawn in shape for the season.

Once the lawn area has dried up a bit and the soil is no longer feels spongy, your first task will be to clean up branches and give the lawn a good rake over with a fan rake.

This is to help clean up any debris left on the lawn over winter and reduces the chance of disease on your lawn, such as snow mould.

It also loosens up the soil surface before putting down grass seed.

If you had a problem with crabgrass in your lawn last year, then you will want to get it under control this spring.

Early to mid April (when the forsythia is just coming into bloom) is the right time to apply a crabgrass preventer, such as corn gluten, to keep the crabgrass seed from germinating.

Corn gluten meal is a powdery byproduct of the corn milling process.

This natural protein is very effective as a plant food as well as a weed suppressor.

As a plant food, corn gluten has a NPK ratio, the proportion of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium in fertilizer, of 9-1-0.

As a weed suppressant, corn gluten acts as



Joanne Young says reseeding your lawn every spring is the best way to choke out weeds from forming. The thicker the lawn, the less weeds there will be. MIDJOURNEY

a natural "pre-emergent," meaning it inhibits seed germination by drying out a seed as soon as it cracks open to sprout.

If you can keep the crabgrass seeds from germinating for those first couple weeks of spring, they will most likely stay dormant for the entire season.

You must follow the instructions carefully to be successful.

If crabgrass wasn't a problem last year, then you should be fertilizing the lawn with a higher nitrogen fertilizer (high first number).

Try to use organic fertilizer wherever possible. Most fertilizers will remain effective for five to six weeks, so do not apply another fertilizer for at least a month and a half.

Also, if you have applied corn gluten do not seed your lawn for the same length of time.

Spring is a great time to address any thatch problem that you might have.

Thatch is the layer of slowly decomposing grass stems, dead roots and debris that accumulates above the soil and below the grass blades.

Having some thatch (less than a quarter inch) is beneficial.

It helps to absorb moisture and keep it at the root level, and it shades the roots so that the soil does not dry out as quickly.

Thatch becomes a prob-

lem when it is thicker than a quarter inch.

Thatch is more of a problem when you have acidic soil or where a lot of high nitrogen fertilizers have been used.

The micro-organisms that help to break down the thatch layer do not like soils high in nitrogen or acidic conditions.

Dethatching should be done just before vigorous growth in spring or fall, but it does not need to be done every year, just when it is more than a quarter-inch thick.

To check to see if you need to dethatch, dig up a small area of sod and check the thickness of the spongy layer below the grass blades, and above the roots.

Dethatching is done with a sharp, diamond-toothed thatching rake.

Simply pull the rake through the grass and it will pull out a lot of the brown decomposing debris.

You can also remove some thatch by using your fan rake in a brisk manner.

Another spring task is aerating your lawn.

Aerating your lawn is a procedure where cores of soil are removed to allow more air into a compacted soil.

This does not need to be done every year unless you have very heavy, hard soil.

Aerating is best done early spring or in the fall especially if we have had a very dry summer.

There are aerating tools

for the homeowner, but you may want to consider hiring someone to do this for you.

Having your lawn rolled is another ritual of spring. This will help smooth out rough areas.

This does not need to be done every year because it will compact your soil even more and just fills in the wormholes that were helping you aerate the soil naturally.

Rolling your lawn should be done when soil is slightly moist. If it is too dry, it won't be as effective.

Reseeding your lawn every spring is the best way to choke out weeds from forming. The thicker the lawn, the less weeds there will be.

Before you begin to reseed your lawn, rake up any dead debris that remains on the lawn from the winter.

Then, put a thin layer of fresh topsoil or compost over area that you will be reseeding.

Next, generously scatter the seed over the desired area.

You can lightly cover or rake over the scattered seeds in to hide the seeds from the birds.

Keep the seeded area evenly moist for the next week or two. The seeds should germinate in 10 to 14 days.

Joanne Young is a Niagara-on-the-Lake garden expert and coach. See her website at joanneyoung.ca.

Obituary

Roderick 'Roy' McCormick



It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of Roderick ("Roy") McCormick on March 27, 2024 after a brief struggle with cancer.

Roy was a devoted, generous, loving husband, father, and grandfather. He is survived by his beloved wife, Caroline, his children, Taryn and Matthew, and

granddaughter, Delaney. He will be greatly missed by his sisters, many nieces, nephews, cousins, extended family, and many friends.

Roy was born in Moose Jaw Saskatchewan in 1947 and grew up in Calgary. The family moved to Camrose, Alberta where he attended Camrose Composite High School where he served as Student Council President (in spite of his bemused teachers). He returned to Calgary to continue his education at the University of Calgary (B.A. Econ) where he met his true love and best friend of more than 50 years, Caroline.

Roy had an innovative and successful career in the parking industry for 30 years, initially with Impark (Canada and US) and later with VinciPark, Oxford Properties, Trizec Hahn, and his own consulting firm, International Parking Consultants (InterPark). He served as Director of the Canadian and National Parking Associations and was part of a trade mission to China with BC Premier in 1993.

Roy and Caroline enjoyed building and renovating houses together, and camping in their many VW Westfalias, especially with their children who they introduced to roughing it in the bush very young. Work and vacations took the family all over North America, Asia, and Europe, sharing adventures and building memories.

Roy and Caroline retired in Niagara-on-the-Lake, where their home became a hub for family and friends to share time and celebrate holidays together. The highlight of Roy's retirement was time spent with cherished granddaughter, Delaney. His days were also greatly enriched by the friends and acquaintances he met in his daily walks around town and while putting with his vintage VW and Volvos in the driveway. He was also an ostensibly reluctant (but secretly very proud) member of the Friends of Laura Secord, founded by Caroline in 2012. Despite some occasional good-natured muttering, his unwavering support of Caroline's passion for her famous ancestor made countless irreplaceable contributions to the success of the organization.

Roy will be greatly missed by family and friends who delighted in his warmth, joy, wry sense of humour, the wonderful memories he provided, and the impact he made on their lives.

The family will be celebrating Roy's life on Friday April 19 at the historic Navy Hall, 305 Ricardo St., Niagara-on-the-Lake from 12:30 p.m. For those interested, there will a mass in Roy's memory beforehand at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, 73 Picton Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake at 11 a.m.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation in Roy's name to Kensington Hospice in Toronto, Ontario, a team and organization that made Roy's last days as peaceful and meaningful as possible and to whom we are forever grateful for their kindness and care.

For obituary and memorial inquiries, please contact editor@niagaranow.com.



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