



Tired of speeders | Page 4

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Canada's most-decorated community newspaper

April 20, 2023

## No grounds for charges in \$10K cash exchange, police say

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Police say they found no criminal wrongdoing and no charges will be laid after prominent NOTL developer Benny Marotta

gave Coun. Gary Burroughs an envelope containing \$10,000 in cash.

Niagara Regional Police have concluded their investigation into the cash exchange, an official told The Lake Report on

Wednesday.

Detectives with the Niagara Falls criminal investigations branch have "concluded their investigation and do not have reasonable grounds to lay charges under the

Criminal Code," police spokesperson Stephanie Sabourin said in an email.

Responding to earlier queries by The Lake Report, Sabourin also said no media release would be issued about the investigation "as

no criminal charges have been laid."

The matter is being passed back to Niagara-on-the-Lake town staff as well as the town's integrity commissioner, Ted McDermott, of ADR

Chambers Inc., for further review, she said.

In early March, Marotta handed Burroughs an envelope containing \$10,000 cash during a

*Continued on Page 3*



Activist James Russell.

## Black cemetery protest called 'publicity stunt' and 'misleading'

Somer Slobodian  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

An activist's brief hunger strike in Niagara-on-the-Lake has left some people feeling upset and misled.

Toronto resident James Russell chained himself to the plaque at the Niagara Baptist Church Burial Ground for more than 24 hours last Monday, vowing not to leave until the town agreed to unearth and restore the cemetery's long-buried headstones.

However, he left Tuesday evening, citing his family's concerns for his physical health.

He says the town has done nothing for more than 130 years to protect and main-

*Continued on Page 11*

## New homes away from home

Farmers invest millions to build new, modern living quarters for seasonal workers



Phil Tregunno, left, and his son Ryan stand in front of a brand-new bunkhouse built for seasonal farmworkers. SOMER SLOBODIAN

Somer Slobodian | Local Journalism Initiative | The Lake Report

It's out with the old and in with the new this year at some farms around Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Newly built and extensively renovated bunkhouses for seasonal farmworkers have been

popping up, sparked by some major investments by farmers.

Tregunno Fruit Farms, Thwaites Farms, Meyers Fruit Farms and Erwin Wiens Vineyards are among the operations making an effort to improve liv-

ing conditions for workers.

Tregunno Fruit Farms has built a total of eight new bunkhouses for its workers since 2018.

"We've been doing two a year. And this year we did four, actually," Phil Tregunno, a NOTL

farmer and director of Wine Growers Ontario, told The Lake Report.

His four newest bunkhouses are still under construction.

*Continued on Page 2*

## The Lake Report earns five first-place provincial awards

Staff  
The Lake Report

The Lake Report has been honoured with five first-place awards in the Ontario Community Newspapers Association's annual Better

Newspapers Competition.

In all, The Lake Report was singled out for 17 awards – which, for the third year in a row, is more than any newspaper in the province. The award winners were unveiled Friday.

The newspaper and its website, niagaranow.com, placed second in four competition categories, third in two and received six honourable mentions.

In provincial and national competitions since 2020,

The Lake Report has now won 61 awards, more than any other publication.

The Better Newspapers Competition is adjudicated by independent industry experts, many from other provinces.

The competition was for stories, photos and advertising published between Oct. 1, 2021, and Sept. 30, 2022.

For the second year in a row, The Lake Report won



*Continued on Page 16*



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# Farmers upgrade housing for seasonal workers

Continued from Front Page

“We’re looking at having (it) finished for the guys to come up for harvest, which is (in) early June,” he said.

Tregunno and Meyers Fruit Farms both said the renovations and additions had nothing to do with criticism about the living conditions at some other Niagara farms.

It was just the right thing to do, especially having weathered the COVID pandemic.

“We don’t want to meet the standards. We want to be ahead of the standards,” said Tregunno.

The planning process for his farm’s four bunkhouses started in January 2022 and the old buildings were torn down last September, said Tregunno’s son Ryan.

The concrete foundations were poured before Christmas and contractors started work early in the new year and have been working ever since at the farm along the Niagara River Parkway, he added.

Tregunno has budgeted \$2 million for the construction of the four bunkhouses.

Each bunkhouse will house eight workers, two to a room, with six feet between each bed to meet COVID requirements. The new sleeping quarters replace five older facilities.

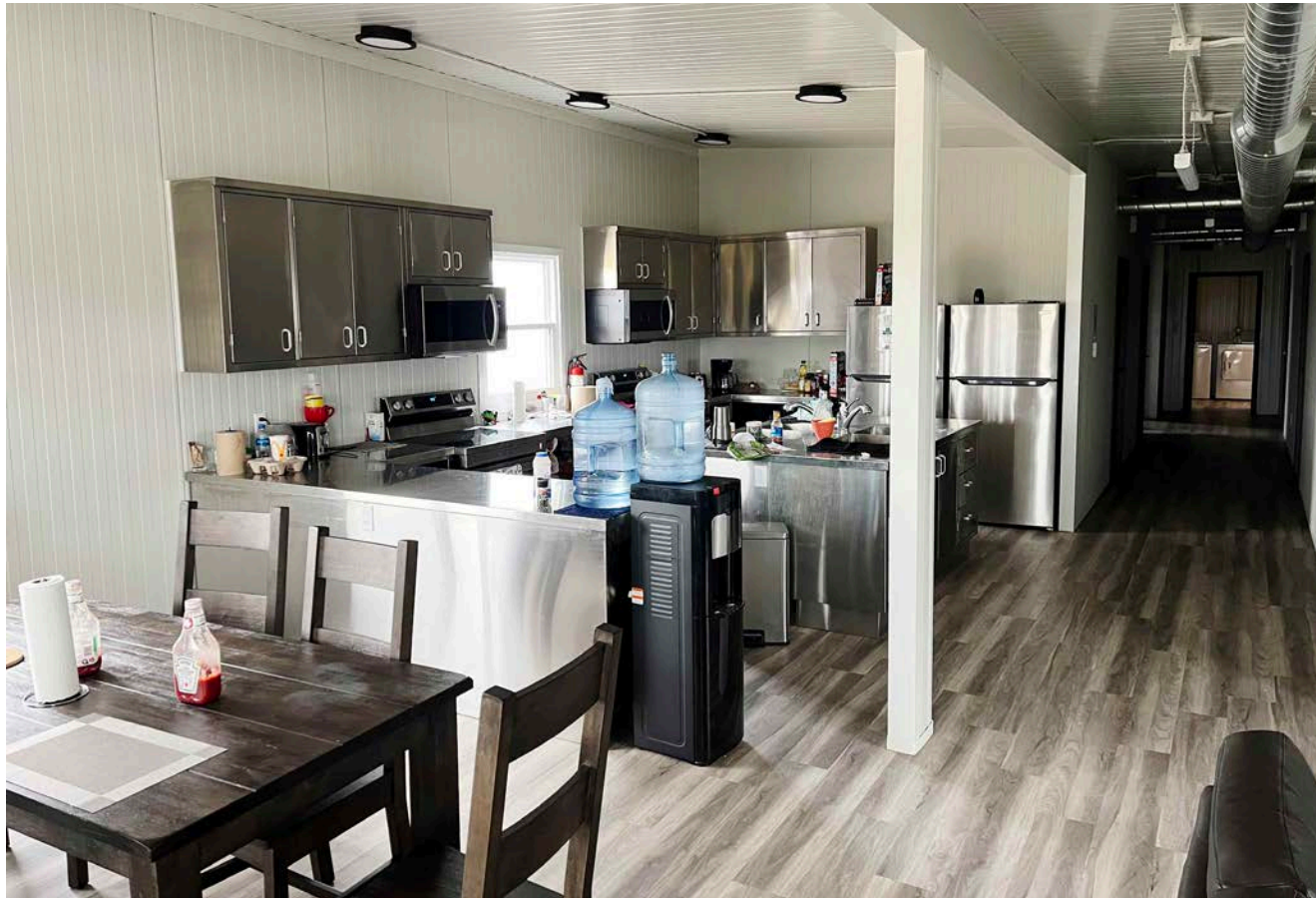
The new bunkhouses are each 1,900 square feet and come equipped with a kitchen, sitting area, wifi and a mud room. There’s also a washer and dryer for every eight men. All equipment is new.

The bunkhouses won’t have air conditioning this season, but Tregunno hopes to install it for next year.

The houses all have upgraded electrical service and utilities, new septic systems and new heating systems.

Keeping them well-maintained will be easier since everything is new, said Tregunno.

Tregunno’s farm has been a part of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program for more than 50 years and this summer he will be employing 115 seasonal workers.



The new bunkhouses at Meyers Fruit Farms have stainless steel kitchen appliances, two bathrooms, a dining room, a living room and a laundry room. Meyers executive Elly Hoff has been living in one temporarily after a fire at her home. SOMER SLOBODIAN

The program allows Canadian farmers to hire agricultural workers from the Caribbean and Mexico when there are not enough domestic workers to fill positions.

“If we didn’t have the seasonal worker program, there really wouldn’t be much of any agriculture anywhere in Ontario,” said Tregunno.

He said many of the workers who have arrived for the season have said they are happy with the bunkhouses and like that they now have one bathroom for every four workers.

“I really appreciate this. This is very nice,” said Narvil Davis, a seasonal worker from Jamaica who has been working at Tregunno Farms for nine years.

He and co-worker Lamar Minott toured a bunkhouse with The Lake Report.

Davis lives in quarters that are similar to the new builds.

However, this was his first time seeing the inside of the newly built houses and he was impressed.

Davis said he loves his work at Tregunno and never wants to switch farms.

He comes to Canada in February and returns to Jamaica in October. The job helps him support his five

kids back home.

Meyers Fruit Farms, a massive operation in the northwest corner of NOTL, also built five new bunkhouses near the corner of Church Road and Stewart Road.

Construction began in the summer of 2022 and workers will be living in the homes for the first time this season.

“Over the years we’ve had these older bunkhouses and we thought we need to change it up,” said Elly Hoff, vice-president of human resources and administration at Meyers.

“We need to just give them what they deserve for the work that they do,” she added.

The 1,904-square-foot bunkhouses can accommodate eight men, two to a room.

“There’s plenty of space. I’ll be very honest. I know it for sure, because I’m living in one of them right now,” she said.

She moved into one of the new builds in the beginning of December after a fire at her home.

“There’s two fridges, two stoves, two microwaves and two double sinks, so that groups of four cook together,” said Hoff.

Each house has a fully-

equipped laundry room, two bathrooms, a mud room and air conditioning.

The project cost more than \$1 million, which included installation of a new septic system.

This year Meyers Fruit Farm will have about 80 seasonal workers.

Not all workers will be in the new bunkhouses. Some will be living in four other houses that Meyers will be updating.

“One group lives in my mother and father’s old house and so now we’re going to update that and we’re going to update a couple more houses,” Hoff said.

About a year and a half ago Thwaites Farms constructed a new bunkhouse at its operation on Lakeshore Road, too.

It houses 20 men, who each get their own room, farm manager Nelson Thwaites said.

He noted many farmers were hesitant to build new bunkhouses, as there’s been speculation since before COVID that the rules for bunkhouse inspections could be changing.

So, Thwaites Farms came up with a plan that gave, as much as possible, every worker their own room.

“We thought, ‘What could be better than that?’”

he said.

They took the existing rules and doubled all the requirements.

“We doubled the facilities of everything (the rules) specify, like showers and toilets and sinks,” he said.

The workers are provided with a kitchen, a common area with couches, tables, a TV and wifi. There’s also a washer and dryer.

Thwaites said they sought input from the workers to figure out what they’d like to see.

Thwaites said they ended up creating a mock bedroom in the barn so workers could see what it would look like.

“They do really appreciate it,” he said.

Along with the newly built bunkhouse, they’ve also renovated existing houses and updated others.

Thwaites Farms, which has participated in the seasonal program since 1972, will be home to about 62 workers this season.

The family-run operation is looking to build another bunkhouse and Thwaites estimated it will cost about \$30,000 per bed space for a 20-man house.

He noted the workers on the farm are extremely hard-working and reliable.

“They come from a situ-

ation where they absolutely need the job as much as we need them to do the job.”

Another farmer, Erwin Wiens, who also is NOTL’s deputy lord mayor, employs eight workers from Jamaica.

He built a new living space for his workers during COVID. Instead of building the average bunkhouse, he decided to build something unique.

He took a 45-foot sea container and turned it into a living space. It cost him about \$120,000 from start to finish.

“It turned out super slick,” Wiens said.

He said he treats his workers like family and he wants them to feel at home while they’re in Canada for six to eight months.

He put a bedroom on each end of the container, along with a washroom and a kitchen in the middle.

“What happens now is two guys have their own kitchenette, their own washroom and then their own bedrooms and they also have their own covered porch,” he said.

Two workers live in the modified shipping container and four stay in another bunkhouse beside it. Everyone gets their own room and there are three bathrooms shared among the workers.

Those living in the renovated sea container can go to the common area in the other bunkhouse as well.

Each room is equipped with its own heat and air conditioning so the men can adjust it to whatever temperature they like, said Wiens.

He also bought another sea container and put storage lockers inside so that workers can stash items there rather than in their rooms.

The workers have their own common space, a patio and high-speed internet. Wiens also has vehicles for them to use so that they don’t have to ride their bikes in the dark.

“I look at all my housing (like) if I live in it. Then I’ll let somebody else live in it,” he said.

“And if it’s not good enough for me, it’s not good enough for anybody else.”



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# Hotel operators argue room tax should apply to short-term rentals

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Hotel operators in Niagara-on-the-Lake say that if short-term rentals are going to exist, they ought to be charging people the town's 2 per cent room tax.

Bob Jackson, chief executive officer of Lais Hotels, said he was never in favour of charging the town's room tax to his guests but thinks in the spirit of fairness, short-term rentals should be doing the same.

Jackson said his company has had "no issues" calculating the town's room tax.

"I can see how it might be harder for a smaller operator," he said, citing issues like a lack of access to technological support and administrative staff.

"It shouldn't be that complicated," he added.

David Jones, owner of 124 on Queen, had a different experience when the town implemented the room tax.

"We had to completely overhaul our property management system," he said.

"It wasn't a huge cost to us. It just took some time," he said.

He and his team had to contact the company that provides their management software and the supplied in turn had to do some reprogramming so it could calculate the tax.



Left: David Jones, owner of 124 on Queen Hotel and Spa, says they had to upgrade their software after the town introduced the room tax. Right: Bob Jackson, chief executive of Lais Hotels Properties. SUPPLIED/EVAN LOREE



"It's kind of unreasonable to think we can be able to turn on a dime like that, but I think we've done that now," Jones said.

He also runs a couple short-term rentals but he pays a commercial tax on them because he considers them to be part of his business.

"We paid commercial taxes from day one, just figuring, well, that's what we should be paying. It's part of our business. It's part of our hotel," he said.

He added that the town would probably get much more money from such properties by charging commercial taxes than just levying licensing fees.

Jones was not too concerned about the competitive threat from short-term rentals, saying they are "not the same kind of competition as a hotel."

Jackson, on the other hand, said short-term rentals are a significant competitor in the vacation accommodation industry because together they have more rooms than Lais Hotels does.

Lais has eight hotels and about 500 rooms in Niagara-on-the-Lake alone.

The town decided to implement the room tax in phases, starting with larger operators and hotels.

This was partly because the council of the time was concerned about causing additional harm to bed and breakfast operators during the pandemic.

The Lake Report found that the town currently has 347 licensed short-term rentals on its list.

Even if they average two rooms each, a low estimate, they would still provide up to 694 rooms, substantially

more than Lais Hotels.

Tony Elenis, the chief executive officer of the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association, said he was against the "commercialization of short-term rentals" by homeowners.

"If you have more than one property that you rent out, then it's commercialization," he added.

Both Elenis and Jones are concerned about the impact of short-term rentals on the housing crisis.

"It takes houses and apartments that would normally be needed for people to stay in," Elenis said.

As for technological barriers smaller operators might face when trying to collect the room tax, Elenis said, "If the system is primitive then somehow some manual bookkeeping must take place."

Elenis is familiar with collecting room taxes in many towns and he said one solution implemented in Toronto was to eliminate unhosted short-term rentals.

"As a homeowner you can short-term rent your principal residence only," says the city's webpage on short-term rental rules.

Elenis explained that Toronto's bylaws force platforms like Airbnb to remove Toronto-area listings that are not licensed by the city.

The town is still working on an update to its short-term rental bylaw.

## No criminal charges after \$10K cash exchange

Continued from Front Page

meeting at his Two Sisters Winery.

In interviews at the time, Burroughs and Marotta independently confirmed the exchange happened, but both said it was not politically motivated.

The two men said no favours were requested and Marotta told The Lake Report that it was meant as a campaign gift to Burroughs.

Burroughs, a former lord mayor of NOTL who has been in politics for 25 years, said he was handed

an envelope and just told to "read it later."

He said Marotta only told him afterward that it was intended as a campaign contribution. He said the developer also later emailed him to reiterate that the money was for his election campaign.

"But my campaign's been closed for a long time," Burroughs said at the time.

"And in fact, this year, my campaign I have to pay money back to the town because I have excess left over. So it can't be about (the) campaign."

Any municipal council

candidate could accept up to \$1,200 from a single party as a donation during last fall's campaign period. But under Ontario law, cash donations cannot exceed \$25.

Burroughs, who said he didn't open the envelope until he got home from the meeting, said there was no mention of it being a campaign donation until he tried to return it to Marotta the next day.

The developer told him to give whatever he couldn't use for his campaign to the church Burroughs attends.

However, Burroughs

brought the cash to the town's chief administrator, Marnie Cluckie, and the town called Marotta to come and collect his cash.

Subsequently, in a special meeting, council voted to send the information to the integrity commissioner and the OPP for investigation.

The OPP, in turn, told the town that the investigation should be handled by Niagara police.

The integrity commissioner has not yet released any detailed statement about his own investigation of the incident.

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# Neighbours **concerned** about speeding

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Some families in Chautauqua are growing uneasy with the rising traffic speeds on Shakespeare Avenue as the town transitions from winter to spring.

Resident Matt Finlin wants the town to install some speed bumps to slow cars rounding the bend on Shakespeare Avenue, the neighbourhood's only through road.

"Don't let the death of a child be your call to action," Finlin wrote in a letter to Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa.

Finlin's daughters, Dylan and Willow, ages four and six, frequently use the street to ride their bikes.

"Last year and then again this year as the spring comes, as people come around that corner on the lake by Ryerson Park, they just gun it down the street," Finlin said.

He said his daughters were out playing on their bikes last Thursday night when a driver rounded the corner and headed down Shakespeare at what he estimated was 70 to 80 km/h.

"People should not be travelling at these speeds," Finlin said. "He was so close to clipping the girls."

Finlin said the driver hit the gas after he shouted at him to slow down.

Fellow Chautauqua resident Tara Rosling said it's odd that the speed limit is 50 km/h on Shakespeare Avenue.

"It's clearly a residential neighborhood," she said, adding that it is "disrespectful" for drivers to treat it as anything else.

She is not scared for her 14-year-old daughter Eliana, but pointed out residents often walk and bike on the road.

"All the streets in Chautauqua are super narrow and there's no sidewalks," Rosling said.

Chautauqua resident Mike Palmer says, "There's no safe place to walk unless you're walking on someone's front yard."

He has two kids, Norah, 9, and Russell, 7, and they are at the point where "they can walk to the park on their own."



Parents of young children on Shakespeare Avenue want the town to enforce a slower speed limit on the street. Cars often speed down the road, which has no sidewalks. The parents are urging action before someone is hurt or killed. From left, Eliana McManus, 14, with her mom Tara Rosling, Dylan and Willow Finlin, 4 and 6, with father Matt Finlin, and Norah Palmer, 9, with father Matt Palmer and Russell Palmer, 7. RICHARD HARLEY

But kids don't always see or hear cars coming, he noted.

"You don't really feel the safest when they leave the house with the cars driving around so fast."

In the absence of sidewalks, residents have to walk on the pavement.

All three parents agreed the town should lower the speed limit to 30 km/h, but Finlin doesn't think posting the speed limit will be enough.

"Enforcement doesn't cut it because people don't care. These people know that you can't drive 80 down this road," he said.

He acknowledged it would be costly for the

town to install speed bumps, though.

"I'm happy to lobby and do the work to try and make some change here, because it's very scary," he said.

Town spokesperson Marah Minor said it would cost the town \$250 plus the cost of staff labour to install a speed bump.

"There are other practical solutions used for mitigation (of speed)," she said in an email to The Lake Report.

In an email to Finlin, Zalepa said he was an "advocate of increased provincial penalties for driving-related issues."

He added that the Niagara-on-the-Lake council was working with the region

on Vision Zero, a traffic safety project designed to reduce traffic fatalities and increase road safety.

The town, not the region, is responsible for setting and posting speed limits on roads under municipal jurisdiction, like Shakespeare Avenue.

Enforcement, however, is the responsibility of the Niagara Regional Police, which only provides NOTL with two police cars.

Zalepa told The Lake Report speeding concerns are "widespread" and not limited to the Chautauqua area.

But he said he has asked staff to investigate the situation.

"We'll get some actual hard numbers on that. We'll have some recommendations, including various measures, which could include adjusting speed limits," he said.

He said he isn't "a big fan" of speed bumps and would have to see an engineer's report because he doesn't think they are "effective."

Zalepa said he noticed the Town of Grimsby using signs posted in the middle of streets to slow traffic.

It "creates an object in the road," raises the awareness of the driver and causes them to slow down, he said.

"I did ask staff to take a look at that and how effec-

tive they've been."

While not pitching it as a solution to the problems on Shakespeare, he said there were other streets that might benefit from them.

Grimsby started its in-road flexible sign project in 2022 to help reduce speeds.

A Feb. 21, 2023, report prepared by a Grimsby town staffer said the flexible signs were successful.

"Based on the data collected and reviewed, this method of traffic calming was shown to have a positive effect on travel speed within the Town of Grimsby," the report said.

The signs have also been used in some Toronto neighbourhoods.

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Left: One of the surviving German guns at Longues-sur-Mer. Right: Arthur Grange is the only known Niagara resident who died during the D-Day invasion. LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA

# THE MONUMENTS MEN

## Flying Officer Arthur Hugh Grange was D-Day pathfinder

*It's been a century since Niagara-on-the-Lake's iconic clock tower cenotaph was erected. Then, in 1926, the Township of Niagara unveiled its own memorial in Queenston. In recognition of those who fought and died in two world wars and beyond, NOTL historian Ron Dale has been researching the stories of the people – all men – whose names are engraved on the two cenotaphs. This is one in a series of stories documenting and remembering the sacrifices of those commemorated on the municipal memorial in Queenston.*

Ron Dale  
Special to The Lake Report

It was June 5, 1944 – D-Day minus 1.

More than 13,000 Allied paratroopers, including 543 men of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, climbed aboard 1,200 aircraft in England.

They were the first troops to land in Normandy in the early hours of D-Day on June 6, 1944.

At the same time, 156,000 Allied soldiers, including 21,400 Canadians were on board a variety of landing craft, sailing toward the coast of France. The long-awaited invasion of Europe was finally under way, with 7,000 naval vessels supporting the effort.

The invasion was a gamble. The Germans were

aware an attack was coming sooner or later so from Scandinavia to Spain they built a series of formidable defences that they called "Atlantikwall."

One of these forts, a coastal artillery battery at Longues-sur-Mer, was sited between the American landing beach codenamed "Omaha" and the British landing beach codenamed "Gold," eight kilometres north of Bayeux.

It was a powerful position consisting of four 15-centimetre naval guns and one 120-millimetre gun in reinforced concrete bunkers and was protected by machine-guns and anti-aircraft guns.

The guns had a range of 23 kilometres and enough destructive force to sink a ship.

On D-Day, several thousand Allied aircraft were involved, attacking the Atlantic Wall defences along the coast. During the day the RAF, RCAF and U.S. air force flew 14,674 sorties against German defences, rail junctions, bridges and vehicle columns.

German fighter aircraft and anti-aircraft artillery shot down 127 planes during the day

The only Niagara man known to have been killed on D-Day, out of the many Canadian soldiers, sailors and airmen involved, was Pilot Officer Arthur Grange of Queenston.

Arthur Grange was the son of Arthur Grange and

Edna May Cascaden. He was born in Niagara Falls on Dec. 14, 1916. When he was six years old Edna divorced his father and married Joseph Ennis in Niagara Falls, N.Y., in 1922.

Arthur attended elementary school in both Niagara Falls, N.Y. and Niagara Falls, Ont. After graduating from secondary school in Ontario, he became a mechanic.

He was living in Niagara Falls when he married Mary Patricia Sheppard of Queenston at St. Saviour's Church in Queenston on June 28, 1938. The couple set up house in Queenston. They had no children.

On Feb. 18, 1942, Arthur joined the Royal Canadian Air Force. He wanted to train as a pilot.

However, the RCAF had other plans for him and sent him to train as an aerial bomber. Between Feb. 8 and April 30, 1943, he trained as a bombardier at Jarvis, Ont., where he completed his training successfully, with the third-highest marks in his class.

He was then sent to Milton for more advanced training, finally receiving his air bomber wings on June 11, 1943.

He was then shipped to England and ultimately assigned to 582 Squadron of the Royal Air Force.

By 1944, now promoted to the rank of flying officer, he was the bombardier on a Lancaster 3 bomber, along

with six highly skilled officers of the RAF, all of whom had won medals for bravery previously in the war.

Arthur's squadron was a specialist force known as pathfinders. Their role on a bombing mission was to be the first to fly over the target, often at low levels, to drop flares over the target to guide the other bombers to their objective.

As a skilled bombardier, Arthur's role was crucial for the success of a mission.

On D-Day, the 582 Squadron's task was to mark the Longues-sur-Mer battery for other squadrons to destroy. Their mission was a partial success.

The bomber stream hit their target and the fire control post was damaged, which limited the battery's effectiveness. However, the German gun positions were still able to fire 100 shells that day.

Naval vessels firing at the bunkers were also unsuccessful. On June 7, the garrison finally surrendered to British infantrymen.

Arthur's plane was unlucky. Anti-aircraft fire (flak) hit the Lancaster. It was, according to the official report, "lost without a trace."

Arthur's final resting spot is unknown. His body was not found nor identified. His sacrifice is remembered on the Runnymede Airforce Memorial in Suffolk and on the Niagara Township cenotaph in Queenston.



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# TLR

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## Bruce Trail fort to fort hike



Hikers make the two-day, 54-kilometre "fort to fort" trek from Fort George to Old Fort Erie. The event is hosted by the Niagara Bruce Trail Club. About 90 hikers started the trek. About 68 of them finished.  
DAVE VAN DE LAAR



## Editorial

### Town needs to tax short-term rentals

Richard Harley  
Editor-In-Chief

#### First in a series

As we reported last week, the town is missing out on an estimated \$600,000 in annual revenue because of the previous council's poor decision to not apply its 2 per cent municipal accommodation tax to all short-term rental businesses.

You read that right — Niagara-on-the-Lake is missing out on more than half a million dollars so far, largely because of influence from the short-term rental industry on our past and current council.

In other words, while our town's politicians are comfortable with hiking the public tax levy by more than 8 per cent, they also seem content in their failure to apply the accommodation tax in a fair manner to all accommodation businesses across the board.

Hotels currently collect the tax and through it generated about \$200,000 for the

town since it was implemented last July.

That's real money that can be used in a lot of ways to help our town grow.

It's a fee that is collected per room, per stay.

Yet, the baffling way it works right now is that short-term rentals (regardless of whether they are owner- or tenant-occupied) aren't being asked to collect the same 2 per cent tax from guests if they have four rooms or less.

The result is that almost all short-term rentals are exempt from having to collect the tax, while hotels are forced to charge it on every room.

Research in 2021 by The Lake Report found just 12 of 255 licensed rentals would have to charge the tax.

Now, the total number of rentals has jumped — to 347 as of February 2023 — with just 29 rentals that might be eligible to collect the tax (those 29 could have four to six rooms, but it's unclear

how many rooms each has).

Instead of collecting the tax and temporarily rezoning the properties as commercial, the town charges operators a pitifully nominal licence fee of \$274 per room for the entire year.

That is pennies on the dollar to what the town would bring in if it were to treat those businesses the way it treats every other business.

The problem with not making rental operators collect the tax is that it's unfair to competitors and continues a perverse pattern of this town giving short-term rentals special treatment.

And let's be honest, the tax is a good thing for our town. Lots of destinations charge a similar tax and NOTL should absolutely charge it, and should increase it to 4 per cent now, not in a few years, as planned.

That \$200,000 generated by hotels since the tax went into effect last year would be \$400,000 and the revenue

from rentals would be over \$1 million — money that can be used to fund tourism-related infrastructure and activities in town.

And in NOTL, just about anything can be justified from that. That means road repairs in just about any area tourists might drive, it means signage, repair work, culverts — almost anything that in some way affects tourism could be justified as a legitimate expense to come from those coffers.

So, why is the town forfeiting \$600,000? Is it to satisfy the short-term rental industry? That's rhetorical.

The town needs to charge its accommodation tax to all accommodation businesses, regardless of their size.

Anything else is unfair. And when things are unfair, litigation looms.

Next week we'll look at how NOTL's unfair taxation of accommodation businesses puts hotels at a disadvantage and how that could lead to legal troubles down the road.

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# Solving the housing crisis at the **expense** of communities



Wayne Gates  
Special to The Lake Report

Housing and development are issues on the minds of nearly every resident I speak with.

Growth and affordability are people's primary concern.

All levels of government are recognizing the rapidly increasing crisis we face as a province and country when it comes to housing. Whether it's homelessness, rental affordability or home ownership, people are feeling squeezed.

In response, the provincial government passed Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act. It's an approach that I've heard many concerns about in town and I can firmly say, I share many of those concerns.

With that said, it's important to remember that op-

posing the approach of this Progressive Conservative government does not mean we are against development. Homes of all shapes and sizes need to be built — that will be a pillar in the plan of addressing the housing crisis in this province.

However, it doesn't need to be done at the expense of our heritage, environment and farmland.

Bill 23 does not solve the housing crisis in Ontario.

The approach of this government will line the pockets of large developers at the expense of Ontario's Greenbelt and specifically the cultural and ecological significance of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

There is no denying the beauty of our town. The natural heritage, ecological gems, historic architecture are what draws people here. We should be doing everything in our power to protect that beauty, not pave over it.

Bill 23 makes it easier to remove properties from the heritage register. Properties in Niagara-on-the-Lake that we know and love are at risk of redevelopment. When companies bulldoze, they erase the very history that

makes heritage properties so special.

The legislation will also have significant financial consequences for our municipality and regional government with both the loss of development fees and possible increased staffing needs.

Development should pay for development — it shouldn't be downloaded to municipalities that are already stretched thin.

Even with the negative consequences outlined, it's hard to see if this approach to residential development will even be successful in meeting housing targets. The Ford government's own budget noted that the current new build forecast is well below the target of building 1.5 million homes.

A full plan is needed to increase rental housing supply and protect tenants from predatory rent increases. This should be the top priority to address issues such as high demand and affordability challenges.

Rent control should be brought back on all units to ensure new tenants are not subject to sudden or arbitrary rent hikes. Non-market housing should be

expanded to provide affordable options for low-income households and those with special needs.

To provide choices for both middle- and lower-income households, diverse housing options should be encouraged in areas where there is a shortage of affordable housing.

A complex issue needs a comprehensive plan to tackle it and the current approach from this government does not stack up.

We cannot pave over the uniqueness of our communities, we cannot pave over prime agricultural land, and we cannot simply rely on tax breaks and deregulation to address our housing crisis.

I urge this government to listen to the concerns of Niagara-on-the-Lake residents and work with municipalities to create a more sustainable and equitable approach to housing development.

We must ensure that any housing strategy puts people first and does not sacrifice the quality of life and natural beauty of our communities.

*Wayne Gates is the New Democrat MPP for Niagara Falls riding.*

## Roundabout is **exactly** what's needed in St. Davids

Dear editor:

As I have previously written, the proposed "yield-at-entry" roundabout in St. Davids is exactly the correct approach to traffic flow, pedestrian access and safety, period.

This matter is simply not one for the general public to weigh in on, as generally we really don't have the knowledge or experience to be able to constructively comment on such infrastructure and engineering projects.

I would draw your attention to the comments of two significant organizations that have completed research and compiled reports over many years, on many similar projects: Canadian Consulting Engineers and the Insurance Institute for



Roundabouts are popular in Europe. Writer Philip Hoad says St. Davids should embrace the idea. PIXABAY

Highway Safety.

The initial capital cost for roundabouts is indeed higher and more disruptive than installing traffic lights, but they are far safer for all parties, and their operational cost is a fraction of traffic lights.

On completion, roundabouts can also become beacons of creative and inspirational landscaping.

Europe has been using roundabouts for more than 60 years with remarkable success in small towns and villages, as well as

in major urban environments.

Four-way stop signs and traffic lights are disruptive to traffic flow, dangerous for drivers and pedestrians, and unsightly to our built environment.

I would suggest that those who have doubts might wish to go out and start practising, using and navigating roundabouts properly (and most certainly observe them in use), in order to better understand their true advantages and benefits.

We need to be providing our children and grandchildren with a safer, simpler, cleaner and more sustainable environment in which to live.

*Philip Hoad  
St. Davids*

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Going outside to enjoy the fresh spring air?



# Preserving our heritage, one house at a time



Brian Marshall  
Columnist

A bonus in writing this column has been the bridges it has built to wonderful folks who live in this community.

Many individuals have reached out to me to share stories and experiences that revolved around a place which had been featured in an Arch-i-text article.

Still others, like the intrepid folks who have committed their time to traverse Niagara-on-the-Lake's byways to identify and record the entire town's surviving historic home, an ongoing endeavour which to date, with several rural districts yet to be completed and not including the four principal settlement areas, has yielded over 200 houses constructed prior to 1925 and a fascinating pattern of rural settlement which may well deserve future academic study.

Then there are the folks who have committed their time, wallet and the work of their hands to the preservation or restoration of a particular part of our shared built heritage.

I have been privileged to meet people like Jon Kormos, who has owned

and taken care of a 19th-century home in Queenston for more than 60 years (that August 2022 article was "Guardians of a 19th-century treasure" and can be found at [niagaranow.com/news.phtml/arch-i-text-guardians-of-a-19th-century-treasure/](http://niagaranow.com/news.phtml/arch-i-text-guardians-of-a-19th-century-treasure/)).

Today, I had the opportunity to visit with Helen and Monty Slingerland (recipients of the 2018 Peter J. Stokes Heritage Commendation Award) at their lovingly restored Greek Revival home in rural NOTL.

A more fulsome profile will appear in this column next week. Like Kormos and many others, the Slingerlands elected to have their historic house heritage designated.

Yet, what do all these folks have in common?

Whether born here, raised here, or come from away (like Peter Stokes, myself and many others), this piece of terra firma speaks to our souls. It offers each of us the opportunity to find and cleave to a history which, while it may not strictly be our own, provides the roots upon onto which each of us can graft our lives.

And, continuing on the personal vein, though I can claim my paternal line has seven generations in Canada I still "come from away," but here, on this soil, I have found a "place to stand" and, apparently, I am not alone.

But, in Doug Ford's idea of Ontario, none of this matters. It seems to be all about sacrificing his Conservative antecedent's (Bill Davis) vision of the



This house in Queenston is slated for destruction. Columnist Brian Marshall says it's an example of another loss of built heritage in Niagara-on-the-Lake. SUPPLIED

province on the altar of profits directed into the hands of big developers and their ilk.

Of course, where the head directs, the body of government follows, as the ethos of pushing ahead while ignoring the harm inflicted on non-priority items (like heritage, ecosystems, agriculture, etc.) permeates the system.

Allow me to illustrate this with the story of three historic houses.

Until recently, near the corner of Queenston and Airport roads, three houses stood side by side.

The first, at #71, was built circa 1859. The second, a

cute little Arts & Crafts bungalow, was constructed circa 1900. The third, a proud three-bay Georgian, was completed circa 1857.

Over the past few years, in preparation for the expansion of the Skyway bridge, each of these properties was acquired by the provincial government, the last of which was the Georgian, which closed late last year.

In fact, as a result of a conversation I had with the former owner, Bill German, I wrote a piece in this column last October, "Fond farewell and a building worth saving," suggesting that saving this house was a

priority worth exploring.

Again, the community responded in the person of a local custom builder who contacted one of his clients and proposed the house be lifted and moved to a NOTL property the client owned. The client indicated he was prepared to undertake the project if the province would agree.

This initiated a series of phone calls and emails to provincial government offices. Initially, the people at Infrastructure Ontario were receptive, seeing this as a win-win.

However, as the communication shifted to the ministry responsible, all

dialogue ceased and it became obvious that they simply did not care about altering their normal modus operandi.

In the intervening months, the 1859 house has been razed and there is no doubt that the others will soon follow.

Bill German spent years preserving and caring for his Georgian. Anyone who owns a historic house understands the time and cost associated with what can best be described as a labour of love.

But Bill, like many others, chose not to protect the legacy of his home and his work with heritage designation.

Now, I cannot state that designation would have saved these three houses, but I can assert that it would have forced the consideration of methods to preserve them.

I have yet to meet an owner of a historic property who does not have a bit of a love affair with their old house. So, I ask, why not take the simple steps to ensure it is preserved for future generations to enjoy.

As the Slingerlands stated, the heritage grants they received on their designated property helped to defray the costs of its preservation.

If you are interested in exploring designation, feel free to email me at [homeguide.ca@gmail.com](mailto:homeguide.ca@gmail.com) and I'll point you in the right direction.

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



## Town staffing proposals need a serious rethink

Dear editor:

Ross's Ramblings about the budget process of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake ("Surely town staffing costs can be explained and simplified," March 30), and the possible addition of 16 new positions to the staff, most of which were "co-ordinator" jobs, caused me to reflect on the challenges the new councillors must have in dealing with issues like this, many of which are being faced for the first time in their very first budget deliberations.

Each new position is probably justified in great detail, but can the total

of all 16 be justified, given the cost of each, not counting the extra 25 per cent-plus for benefits and what each might want to spend on programs to fulfil their own ambitions, an amount likely to be at least equal to the salary?

And is the timing right given an expected new strategy? And maybe even ask, "Who is going to do the new work being co-ordinated by all the new co-ordinators?"

Organizations, particularly those of an administrative nature, tend to want to grow.

The CBC reported that federal public service em-

ployment grew 31 per cent, an additional 80,000 employees in the past seven years. Our federal government will spend \$151 billion more next year than it did in 2014-15.

The growth reflects new employees and new programs. A billion here, a billion there, it all adds up.

Northcote Parkinson, of Parkinson's Law fame (Work expands to fill the time allocated for its completion) and Ichak Adizes, Ph.D, a serious business researcher and thinker, wrote extensively on the growth of bureaucracies.

They note how the focus of organizations can shift,

over time, from having clarity of purpose, creativity to achieve growth and meaningful change and high productivity to the many administrative functions like planning, organizing, control and "co-ordination."

So, when I see "co-ordinator" in most of the job titles, I ask if we are heading down this administration mindset and toward the bureaucracies that the authors describe.

While the town seemed to be on track in planning to define longer-term strategies, even hiring a strategic planning person, perhaps the decisions on

staffing are premature.

Part of strategy is to clearly define the purpose of the organization, develop and clarify alternative programs or activities to achieve the purpose, establish priorities with a focus on the most important, and then determine the resources to deliver on the agreed-to programs, including staffing.

It is in the public interest that our town is well-led at the council level and by the staff. That means understanding the implications of recommendations made by staff, being familiar with good management and leader-

ship practices, and being prepared to revisit decisions at the time when the final decisions should be made – most likely once the strategy for the town is determined.

While the federal government may be thinking in billions of dollars, an extra million dollars in the NOTL budget, to be financed by increased taxation, is a noticeable amount of money for those of us who live here.

A million here, a million there, it all adds up. The staffing proposals need a rethink..

*Bill Garriock  
NOTL*





NOTL's hotels collected \$200,000 in municipal accommodation taxes since the tax came into effect in July 2022.

## NOTL room tax is a **bad idea**, handled badly

Dear editor:

I am writing with regard to the article regarding the municipal accommodation tax in the April 13 edition of The Lake Report, "Room tax could collect additional \$600,000 from short-term rentals."

Until May of last year my wife and I owned a five-bedroom country inn here in town. When the accommodation tax was under discussion last year, I wrote a couple of letters to the editor expressing my objection.

I believe at that time there was talk of it bringing in \$1 million, of which 50 per cent would go to the town and the other half to the Chamber of Commerce.

I see now that only \$200,000 has been raised (though the town projects another \$600,000 could be generated if all short-term rentals were subject to the tax).

The article mentions that country inns are considered

four-bedrooms and up but the tax only applies to five and up, even though both are considered country inns.

Of 255 short term rentals examined last year by The Lake Report, only 12 would be affected.

Coun. Gary Burroughs says the law was not applied to smaller short-term rentals as it was too complicated for those folks. Coun. Wendy Cheopita says most smaller B&Bs are run by couples trying to supplement their income and don't have staff.

In my letters to the editor I did comment that the separation of four- and five-room country inns made no sense. I also said the number of short-term rentals affected would not make a huge monetary difference.

Our country inn was run by my wife and myself. No staff. Apparently five-bedroom owners have the mental capability to handle

the tax that three-bedroom owners do not.

Coun. Cheropita suggested the tax collection could be done by a third party. I would assume that a third party would want some pay for doing that. How much of the money collected would go to pay that?

David Levesque, former president of the NOTL Bed & Breakfast Association, stated that the management system used by most B&Bs are not capable of calculating the tax.

We used Quickbooks, so it would just be another item to insert. Coun. Burroughs also pointed out that B&Bs do not have to report their finances to the town.

Even though we are not in the accommodation business any more I still think it is an ill-advised tax from the revenue miscalculation, the unfair application to only a small number of accommodation providers, the process of collecting

and the idea that four-bedroom operations and below don't have the capability to calculate the tax.

I would agree with Coun. Burroughs that the verification would be difficult to enforce as I believe only Revenue Canada has access to my finances.

I presume this would have all been thought out much better before introducing it. And introducing this before the tourism plan was developed makes no sense.

My last point is that I don't understand why the accommodation industry should be the only one to have this tax applied so that tourism can be promoted. Do the wineries, theatres, retailers and the other businesses in town not benefit from tourism yet don't have to collect the tax?

A bad idea handled badly.

**Doug Johnson**  
*Virgil*

## Cookie-cutter homes could **kill** NOTL's golden goose

Dear editor:

I have learned so much from Brian Marshall's columns in The Lake Report. Knowledge which is so important in an historic town like Niagara on the Lake.

The U.S. treasures its history and goes to great lengths to preserve it, whereas in Canada, especially in Ontario, so many historical buildings have been torn down over the years to make room for the modern day's market.

Millions of tourists travel to Europe to enjoy and learn about civilizations hundreds and even thousands of years old.

Charming villages with period architecture entice so many travellers. Europeans' history is very precious to them and they go to great lengths to preserve it.

I see a number of homes being torn down in Niagara-on-the-Lake to make way for large, modern houses.

Initially people were attracted here by the history and charm that millions of tourists come to visit and yet they tear down to

replace with what they left behind. Boggles the mind.

It's amazing during our extensive travels when we are asked where we are from and we answer "a little town 20 minutes from Niagara Falls in Canada called Niagara-on-the-Lake" how many answer that they have been here and sing its praises.

Some developers purchase our heritage to build large hotels and cookie cutter townhomes to increase their profit. Be careful: you are on the path of killing the goose that lays the golden eggs.

Several visitors have commented they have noticed uncomplimentary changes over the years. Why would tourists choose to visit when our charming town, having been voted the second best place to visit in Canada by Trip Advisor, becomes an average town with huge hotels, ho-hum architecture, fast-food outlets and large, modern homes?

No mores golden eggs. Just sayin'.

**Luba Fraser**  
*NOTL*

## Community centre **should be open** on holiday Mondays

Dear editor:

I am writing about the closure of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre on holiday Mondays.

Since 2019, the Town of NOTL has closed the community centre on holiday Mondays.

I have written to the lord mayor and deputy lord mayor asking that the community centre be open on the following upcoming holiday Mondays during 2023: Victoria Day (May 22), Simcoe Day (Aug. 7), Labour Day (Sept. 4), Thanksgiving (Oct. 9), Remembrance Day

observance (Nov. 13).

I have suggested a skeleton staff (i.e. one person) and reduced hours, identical to the current weekend hours, of 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Unfortunately, the town is not willing to correct the mistake it made in closing the community centre on holiday Mondays.

On Family Day, Feb. 20, 2023, these facilities were open across Niagara:

In St. Catharines – the Seymour Hannah Sports & Entertainment Centre, Bill Burgoyne Arena, St. Catharines Kiwanis Aquatics Centre, the Older Adult

Centre at 80 Dunlop Dr. and the community centre programs at 1 Bogart St. and 108 Russell Ave.

In Niagara Falls – the Gale Centre arena and the MacBain Community Centre.

Finally, on the same date the Town of NOTL opened both the Meridian Credit Union Arena and Centennial Arena.

However, the NOTL Community Centre on that date was closed.

In view of what our neighbouring municipalities are doing on holiday Mondays, it is quite

clear the town is failing to provide NOTL residents with the services to which they are entitled.

When the town opens both ice skating arenas but keeps the community centre closed, it is discriminating against residents who attend fitness classes or use the track and fitness area.

Although Family Day has passed, there is ample time for the town to arrange for the community centre to be opened on Victoria Day Monday and on the four remaining holiday Mondays.

**Stephen Lunt**  
*Queenston*



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# Solmar, SORE face off over future of Rand Estate

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Half a decade of land disputes is rapidly boiling down to a couple of hours of prepared speeches and power points.

Solmar Development Inc. and the Save Our Rand Estate (SORE) residents group will make their cases for the future of the historic Rand Estate at a special meeting of town council at the community centre on April 24 at 5 p.m.

The decision coming to council is whether to allow Solmar's request for demolition permits for parts of the Rand Estate or to defer the decision to the Ontario Land Tribunal along with the rest of Solmar's proposed plan for the estate.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake heritage committee is standing with staff and recommending council refuse Solmar's demolition requests, with one amendment.

At its April 12 meeting, the heritage committee recommended council

refuse to permit the demolition of the carriage house.

Committee member David Snelgrove pointed out the building was unique as it was constructed during the transition from the horse and buggy to the automobile.

Snelgrove said the building is viable enough to be moved rather than demolished and commemorated as proposed by the developer.

"The relocated building could be restored and possibly repurposed, possibly using the ground floor as an open community meeting room," he said.

Both SORE and Solmar took 30 minutes to speak after town heritage planner Denise Horne gave her recommendations.

Horne told the committee the heritage features of the estate were "largely intact and in sound condition."

"My recommendations for conservation of the former Rand Estate are to preserve and restore the character-defining elements," she said.

She recommended



The farm complex on the back half of the Rand Estate. EVAN LOREE

demolition "as a last resort" for the summer house and carriage house because alterations by previous owners have already "diminished" the heritage significance of the buildings.

Solmar requested permission to demolish a few historic buildings on the Rand Estate, including the carriage house, Calvin Rand's summer house, the stable house and two sheds that used to be part of the estate's farm complex.

Solmar also proposed to restore the swimming pool designed by architects Howard and Lorrie

Dunington-Grubb, the Tea House and the Whistle Stop.

The development company, owned by Benny Marotta, also proposed to remove several healthy trees, relocate existing structures and to expand the stone pillar estate entrance at Charlotte Street.

Speaking on behalf of Solmar, Stantec heritage consultant David Waverman said it was important to consider who they were preserving the property for.

He said public interest in the Rand Estate would

grow after the development and restoration of the estate's buildings.

"We hope to expand the knowledge of the history of the Rand family and the Dunington-Grubbs," he said.

Catherine Lyons, a lawyer representing SORE, described the estate as "literally a treasure."

Lyons said there was space at the estate for "meaningful densification," which would leave the buildings, gardens and pool intact, unlike the proposal submitted by Solmar.

Mark Flowers, a lawyer for Solmar, said one of the

challenges to designing the property was the entrance.

The company proposes to construct a private road from the development to John Street East, and a separate emergency access road from Charlotte Street

Neither town staff nor SORE speakers were in favour of Solmar's entranceway plan.

Lyons suggested the company build an entrance road along a historic pathway into the estate, the entrance to which is between 144 and 176 John St. E.

Solmar's consultants were not convinced.

"We have an access problem," said SGL planner Paul Lowes. "The rest of the Rand Estate on John Street is another property ownership."

Building a road at SORE's proposed site would require co-operation from another property owner.

He also pointed out that SORE's proposed entrance would require cutting down more healthy trees.

Each team will represent their case to council Monday evening.



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SHANNON LEIGH BEATTIE\*

# Protest criticized as ‘publicity stunt’

Continued from Front Page

tain the inactive cemetery on Mississauga Street near Mary Street.

This came as a shock to members of town council and the Friends of the Forgotten, a community group working with the municipality to memorialize the burial ground.

“We just have to be sure that the town understands what the Friends of the Forgotten is all about,” said George Webber, chair of the organization.

Right now, the burial ground is invisible, said Webber.

He hopes the town will take pride in the site once it is memorialized.

Coun. Erwin Wiens noted, “We’ve been working with George Webber and the Friends of the Forgotten who have done a great job and who have been terrific partners with the town.”

“So, I don’t think it was fair to stir up a controversy that didn’t exist,” he added.

Wiens said Russell’s controversy over the graves was “manufactured” since the wheels have been in motion at the cemetery for a few years now.

“I can’t reiterate enough on how I feel that he hasn’t treated us fairly and he misled people,” he said.

Coun. Maria Mavridis, who backed Russell last week and tried to get council to support his cause, agreed with Wiens that Russell misled people.

Mavridis said she messaged fellow councillors last week after Russell said the town was doing nothing to address the issue.

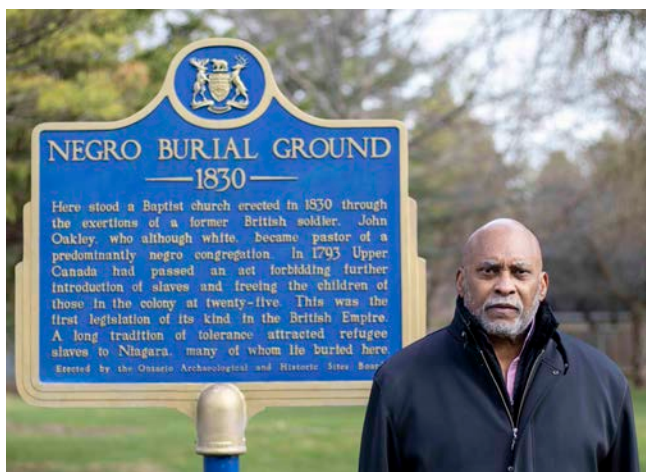
She was told the situation is a work in progress but is complicated as permission is needed from the Bereavement Authority of Ontario.

She also sent messages to past council members, including former lord mayor Betty Disero.

“Betty said, ‘No, I’ve been working on it with him for a few years,’” Mavridis said.

As well, plans are afoot to establish a memorial on the burial ground property.

A search last year by Russell using ground penetrating radar concluded there could be 28 graves and 19 buried



Friends of the Forgotten committee chair George Webber stands at the Niagara Baptist Church Burial Ground. He says a memorial at the burial site would be more effective than unearthing the headstones. SOMER SLOBODIAN

headstones on the site. Now, only two gravestones remain intact on the property.

Lissa Paul, a Brock University professor and member of the Friends of the Forgotten, has been working on a memorial since 2020 and was displeased with Russell’s protest.

“To position himself as the sole saviour is completely unethical,” she said.

Paul wants to erect a sculpture at the burial ground to memorialize the African diasporic people who lived, worked and died in the region.

She said she spoke to Russell in the summer of 2020, so “it’s not that he didn’t know that all of this work is going on.”

Wiens, Webber and Paul all labelled Russell’s protest a publicity stunt.

When told of this, Russell responded by saying, “It was a publicity stunt to bring attention and respect back to the folks who are buried there who have been rendered anonymous.”

Just last month, Webber represented the Friends of the Forgotten at council and asked for the town’s backing in principle — and council voted unanimously to support of the community group.

The organization has raised more than \$5,000, enough to pay for the required stage one archeological assessment at the burial site.

Russell said he respects the Friends of the Forgotten and wishes the group all the best.

However, he also has been heard telling people not to donate money to the Friends of the Forgotten.

“He’s trying to sabotage

us, for sure,” said Webber.

Russell said the community group is “trying,” not “doing.”

“They have not accomplished anything. They have only accomplished trying,” he said.

However, some disagree. NOTL Museum curator and director Sarah Kaufman was disappointed when Russell said nothing had been done at the burial site.

“We have done quite a bit to draw attention to the Negro Burial Ground site,” she said.

The burial ground is listed on the Voices of Freedom memorial in Old Town, it’s in publications at the museum and the site is marked by a memorial plaque from the Ontario Heritage Trust, she said.

“It’s sort of frustrating when someone comes in from out of town saying nothing’s been done when things have been done,” she said.

Yvonne Bredow, a NOTL resident working with Russell, said unearthing and restoring the headstones is a better option than a memorial.

“I don’t know if we’re ever going to know all the names of all the people in there. But we need to try,” she said.

“They’re somebody’s ancestors. They fought for our country. They lived here. They fought for their freedom,” she added.

Mavridis also believes restoring the headstones would be more fitting than a memorial.

“I would hate to go visit my mom at Victoria Lawn Cemetery and there be tourists there reading,” she said.

Russell claims the town buried the headstones more than 30 years ago, but he could not substantiate the accusation with evidence.

The town has stated multiple times that workers did not bury the headstones, but laid the stones down to preserve them.

Since Russell believes the town buried the headstones, he thinks it’s the town’s responsibility to restore them, not the taxpayers’.

He said fundraising is still using taxpayers’ dollars.

However, Bredow told The Lake Report that their group, Negro Burial Ground: Restoration, also is fundraising for the project.

“It’s not different” than what the Friends of the Forgotten are doing, she said.

“It’s just we’re going a different route. The Friends of the Forgotten (is) mainly for this area. We are fundraising all over Canada and the U.S.,” she added.

Mavridis said even if the town had the money to pay for the restoration, the funds would still be coming from taxpayers.

And Wiens reiterated that the town can’t simply go into the cemetery and start digging — it needs the blessing of the Bereavement Authority of Ontario.

David Brazeau, a spokesperson for the Bereavement Authority, confirmed that in an email.

“Because the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake does not have credible maps, records or the identity of any interment rights holders, it cannot disturb the burial site. That would be an offence,” he said.

Because the town didn’t agree to Russell’s demands last week, he and Bredow are organizing a march in Niagara-on-the-Lake on June 18.

Russell said he plans to march from the burial ground, down Mississauga Street and finish along Queen Street.

Webber’s group believes a memorial is the best way to remember and honour the Black lives at the cemetery.

Similar to the cenotaph on Queen Street, a memorial at the burial ground would “remember all of them, but not them individually,” he said.



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# Region needs 91 more doctors, NOTL needs 3

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The Niagara region needs to attract 91 more family doctors to meet the needs of its residents – and NOTL needs at least three more, town councillors heard last week.

Jill Croteau, a physician recruitment specialist with Niagara Region, gave council's committee of the whole a grim overview of the doctor shortage in Niagara-on-the-Lake and the entire region.

The region has a population of about 477,000 and if every doctor has a practice of 1,380 patients, then the region should have 346 family physicians.

Currently, Niagara has just 255 family doctors – and the shortage could soon worsen.

Croteau said 17 per cent of Niagara's doctors are over 65 and expected to retire within the next five years.

Those doctors have more 58,000 patients, Croteau said.

"Over the next three to five years, those 58,000 patients will need to be realigned with a primary care provider as their physician retires," she added.

The current roster of 255 family doctors serves 322,000 people, or 67 per cent of the population.

This means almost 155,000 people in Niagara are potentially without a family doctor.

Croteau said many doctors also provide care to patients outside their practice and that some patients seek primary care through



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa says the town may need more doctors than what the region estimates because of retirement rates and other factors that affect staff turnover in the industry. EVAN LOREE

community health centres instead.

When these patients are considered, that figure drops to about 117,000.

According to the data Croteau shared, about only about 10,500 of NOTL's 19,000 residents are enrolled with a family doctor.

That means NOTL needs 14 doctors to serve every member of the community, she said.

With 11 doctors, it is three short of what is required.

## CODE GREY

"Code Grey" is one in a series of stories in *The Lake Report* about health care in Niagara Region. In hospital parlance, "Code Grey" means loss of essential service.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said that estimate is probably low.

"It's probably four," he said.

He pointed out that losses caused by retirement, burnout and other factors could exacerbate the problem.

"If you're not recruiting, you're shrinking," Zalepa said.

In 2022, Niagara was a revolving door for family doctors.

Croteau said 19 new doctors entered family practice and 19 more left.

Over half of those who left had no successors at their family practice, she added.

While "it is getting a bit better," pandemic-caused burnout is still affecting recruitment of family doctors, she said.

"We're seeing a lot more family doctors choose to work in the hospital or a salaried model such as the community health centres," she said.

There also aren't enough graduating doctors to fill all

the job openings.

"Approximately 400 family medicine residents graduate each year," said Croteau. "We have about 1,800 jobs to fill."

Niagara has to recruit a lot of doctors from abroad, at schools in Ireland, the United Kingdom and the United States because of the gap between the number of Canadian medical school graduates and the number of open positions for them.

"For the Niagara physician recruitment program, a

large component is marketing," Croteau said.

"A big part of our strategy moving forward is to expand our outreach into the U.S., U.K., Ireland and Canada," she said.

She added that the region needs to get the message out on "all the opportunities we have here in Niagara."

"A five to 10-year regional recruitment strategy, I think, would be beneficial," Croteau said.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor was concerned whether the region was considering the town's population of seniors in their estimate of how many doctors each town needed.

"Niagara-on-the-Lake has the highest number of seniors at 65 years of age and greater, at 35 per cent," O'Connor said.

"When you have more seniors the cases are more complex and more time is needed, hence more physicians are needed," she said.

Croteau also noted most family doctors were no longer accepting patients but O'Connor said it is "much worse than it seems."

"The wait list is so long at the Niagara North Family Health Team that they're no longer accepting names for their wait list," she said.

Moving forward, council has decided to continue working with the region's physician recruitment program to expand outreach and develop a long-term recruitment strategy.

Council also agreed to make it a priority for this term's strategic plan, though it has yet to complete that plan.

"It's a tough hill ahead," Zalepa said.

  
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Mateo Barreto, left, Richard Lawson and Sai Kalyanaram at Niagara College's Project Brew Hops by the Dock. They are standing behind Lawson's brew, called Dragon's Breath. SOMER SLOBODIAN

## Students get their brew on at festival

Somer Slobodian  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Guests basked in the sun with an ice cold beer last Friday at Niagara College's Project Brew Hops by the Docks beer festival.

More than 550 people came out to the festival at the Niagara-on-the-Lake campus to sample the 14 distinct brews prepared by the college's brewmaster students.

The student with the best brew wins a \$4,500 scholarship.

"Mark Farrow was announced the winner of the Matt Soos Memorial Scholarship and he won the people's choice

award for his beer, called 'Responsibility.'" Niagara College spokesperson Julie Greco said in an email to The Lake Report.

Farrow created a refreshing cream ale with strawberry and basil.

Michael Kessler was second and Nathaniel Perault third.

"It's just been really fun," said graduating student and project co-ordinator Richard Lawson.

Learning from Prof. Sarah Scott has been a great experience, he said.

His face lit up when he talked about the special brew he called Dragon's Breath.

"It's a smoked strong ale inspired by English and

Scottish strong ales," he said. "It's something that I've wanted to do (since) first term."

The students organized the festival from start to finish.

"They set up sales, they set up all the permits, they map everything out. They sell the tickets, they do media campaigns," said Craig Youdale, dean of culinary tourism and beverage studies.

It prepares them for real work scenarios and gives them hands-on experience.

Each brew was unique in its own way, especially Oanh Tran's entry, Sweet Smile.

Tran created a creamy dark beer with hints of

chocolate and coffee.

"(I like) the fact that it's a coffee brew, but it's not bitter," said Teresa Chordash, an international admissions officer at Niagara College.

Youdale said Project Brew began as a capstone project in 2012, the same year the program launched.

Festivals are like a celebration for the students before they graduate and enter the working world.

"I think that this is one of the best examples of the real deal," said Youdale.

"This is applied. This is real. These are all real customers. They have to make beer that's good," he added.



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

In the Disney film he's  
alphabetically last of Snow  
White's seven dwarfs

Last issue:

Category: 4,4 (TWO FOUR-LETTER WORDS)

Clue: If you can easily determine someone's feelings, you can read him or her like this.

Answer: What is an open book?

Answered first by: Sylvia Wiens

Also answered correctly (in order) by:  
Margaret Garaughty, Elaine Landray

Lots of people got this one wrong on a technicality. Many people answered "like a book," but the clue was two four-letter words! Better luck this week :)

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

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Top: Members of the Niagara Rangers U19 men's basketball work out Tuesday at St. Catharines Collegiate. Left: Josh Smith takes the ball to the rim during practice. Right: Point guard Chad Thorpe, Rangers top scorer in their first two games, lines up a shot. DAVE VAN DE LAAR



# Team defence key in two Rangers basketball wins

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's Chad Thorpe led the Niagara Rangers U19 men's basketball team to two wins in their first weekend of the 2023 season. Teams travelled to

George Brown College in Toronto on Saturday to tip off the Ontario Basketball League season. Niagara beat Guelph Gryphons 67-56 in game 1 and then topped the Sudbury Jam 60-49 in their second match. Thorpe, a 6-foot-3 point

guard who was a starter on Eden High School's senior team this year, had 28 points in the Guelph game and 19 against Sudbury. Dylan Durlov added nine versus Guelph and Ben Johnson contributed 10 in the second game.

Niagara head coach Jonathon Thorpe said his team's defensive intensity was the difference. "In particular, our full-court press was very effective. Two of the players that really led by example getting a lot of deflections and steals on

our press were Graham and Luke Midgley," he said. The Midgley brothers are from Niagara-on-the-Lake. Niagara, a regional team, has four league games this weekend all in Ajax.

On Saturday, the Rangers play London and South Simcoe. Then on Sunday they go up against Mississauga and Ottawa. The team is sponsored by NOTL realtor Wendy Midgley of Royal LePage and by Taste of Bombay restaurant in Niagara Falls.



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# Kings celebrate 40 years of hockey and camaraderie

## Longtime on-ice buddies started the league in 1983

Al Janzen  
Special to The Lake Report

Back in 1983, a group of young 20-year-olds, led by Bruno Skubel, decided to put together a competitive hockey club with players who had graduated through the Niagara-on-the-Lake minor hockey system.

So, 40 years ago, the Niagara Kings were born and played most of their competitive hockey in the Sportmans League for nearly two decades.

Led by coach Don Read, the Kings won a number of tournaments including two provincial championships – in 1989 and 1991.

The team moved on to playing pickup hockey on Thursday nights and Sunday mornings.

In 2018, Dan Neudorf and Al Janzen formed a new version of the Kings that began playing Thursday afternoons.

The new format was simple: Play a little hockey, tell a few lies in the dressing room and socialize at one of Niagara's fine restaurants after each game.

Thanks to Silks, the Sandtrap Pub & Grill, Butler's Sports Bar & Grill and the Grist for putting up with us on Thursdays.

Two teams were formed: Team White and Team Black, featuring jerseys with a big "K" on the front.

After a gruelling campaign this past season it appears that Team White took the Kings Cup, winning the last game of the year.

But we can't be sure: it all depends on who you talk to.



The Niagara Kings are celebrating 40 years. Members of the two Kings teams were a bit younger when they started playing together. Back row, from left: Al Janzen, Bruno Skubel, Fred Teichgraf, Larry Downes, Scott Read, Ted Skubel, Ron Baerg, Dylan Skubel, Ken Hunter, Andy Vanderhoeven, Pete Buis, Rob Neufeld, John Federkow and Mike Wagner. Front row, from left: Don Holenski, Helmut Friesen, Dan Neudorf, Duane Singer, Erwin Wiens, Tim Dyck, Ivan D'Agostino and Clay Johnson. Absent: Dave Mines, Ian Paul, Joe Pillitteri, Ted Riccardelli, Jerry Skubel and Pete Vanderhoeven. SUPPLIED

# NOTL player works out with top OHL prospects

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's Kaleb Dietsch was one of just 24 elite defencemen invited to the Ontario Hockey League's annual pre-draft development combine last weekend in Oshawa.

In all, 76 of the top U16 players from across Ontario were invited to the two-day assessment camp.

Players were put through rigorous on-ice workouts and dryland testing. All the athletes' results are distributed to OHL general managers ahead of this weekend's junior draft.

The league says the testing of the top players is designed to help teams evaluate players for the OHL Priority Selection draft, to be held on Friday and Saturday.

The draft airs live for free on OHL Live with the first three rounds on Friday starting at 7 p.m.

It continues Saturday at 9 a.m. with rounds 4 through 15.

Last weekend's OHL combine "provides prospective players with a unique experience to enhance their own personal development," says Brodie Barrick, the league's director of recruitment and player services.



Kaleb Dietsch of Niagara-on-the-Lake performs during an on-ice skills drill during the OHL combine last weekend. Players' fitness also was assessed, with workouts like chin-ups during sessions in the gym. ANNA TWOHEY/OHL IMAGES

"The skills testing helps identify on- and off-ice strengths to help players achieve their peak performance, while the games provide players another platform to showcase their talents in a new environment alongside their peers

in advance of the Priority Selection."

Besides some high-level 5-on-5 and 3-on-3 hockey games, the program included testing and skills training, as well as a seminar focusing on proper nutrition and training for elite athletes.

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# Paper earns best front page for second year

Continued from Front Page

Best Front Page (under 10,000 circulation).

The award is for the July 28, 2022, edition, which featured items about two men stranded for hours on a disabled Sea-Doo in Lake Ontario, the labour shortages plaguing NOTL businesses, a new distillery opening in St. Davids, plans to recruit another nurse practitioner to town, and a column about using robotic cats to help seniors with dementia.

An online video featuring the 2022 return of the Bunny Trail and Easter egg hunt won Best Breaking News Video.

Advertising campaigns created by The Lake Report also were singled out for three first-place awards.

The Upper Canada Food Guide, a Jan. 13 and Jan. 20, 2022, project promoting restaurant take-out meals amid the pandemic, was judged Best Feature/Unit Pages.

The campaign created

for Caughill Automotive, promoting owner Wally Dingman's expert advice for customers, was named Best Creative Ad.

Richard Harley and Kevin MacLean won first for Best In-House Promotion, a May 5, 2022, four-page commemorative section celebrating everyone behind the paper's 11 provincial awards and featuring a congratulatory ad from realtor Nancy Bailey of Engel & Völkers.

Second-place prizes went to:

• Dave Van De Laar, runner-up for Photographer of the Year award. His shots of last year's Bunny Trail Easter egg hunt, a Canada goose "running" on water prior to takeoff, an exhausted Sean Wright emerging from Lake Ontario after his swim for the Terry Fox Run and an airborne Niagara Thunderhawks lacrosse player scoring a goal were all entered in the competition.

• Richard Harley, Best News Story, for his March 10, 2022, story about Teresa Wong, a mother of three

who fled Hong Kong for NOTL with two of her children after the Communist regimes crackdown on democracy.

• Former reporter Evan Saunders, for Online Special Initiative, for a March 15, 2022, story about how 10 per cent of all homes in NOTL are short-term rentals, with an online interactive map showing the address and location of each one.

• Richard Harley and Nicholas Rothwell for Multimedia Online/Best Online Experience for a Story, for their Oct. 27, 2021, feature and video, A Short Cut to Mushrooms, about foraging for fungi.

Third-place awards:

• Jill Troyer, Best Rural Story, for her 13, 2022, story on the icewine harvest during the -21C temperatures of the polar vortex.

• A full-page ad on Sept. 22, 2022, promoting World News Day, outlined some of the stories and features that would never have been reported if The Lake Report

did not exist. It was third for Best In-house Promotion.

The Lake Report's six honourable mentions were awarded to:

• Richard Harley, Best Editorial, for his Jan. 27, 2022, piece, "Close maskless school now," after The Lake Report's investigation of a rogue independent "pod school" that was violating COVID protocols.

• Evan Saunders, Education Writing, for his Oct. 7, 2021, story, "Working with troubled youth critical for Indigenous culture, elder says."

• Evan Saunders, Health and Wellness, for his March 10, 2022, story on how 10-year-old Maya Webster convinced the Ontario government to cover the cost of glucose monitors for thousands with diabetes.

• High school student Maddy Gordon, an intern reporter, for Best Guest/Freelance Column, for her April 28, 2022, guest editorial, "Sexual assault rally a chance to be heard," about gaps in the District School



The Lake Report won best front page for its July 28 issue. It was one of five first-place awards.

Board of Niagara's curriculum on consent and sexual assault – and how some people reacted badly to a student rally on the subject.

• Richard Harley, Best Use of Colour, for a back

page Caughill Automotive ad promoting winter tire switchovers.

• The Lake Report team, Best Community Website, for our newly revamped news site, niagaranow.com.

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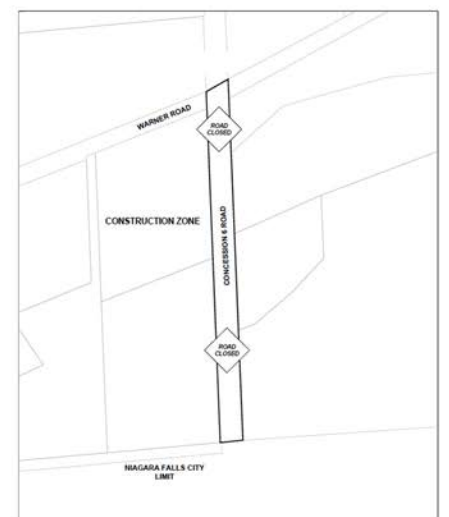


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Niagara-on-the-Lake  
EST. 1781

## Public Notice Road Closure Concession 6 Road



**WHAT:** The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, through its contractor Walker Construction, will commence with the road reconstruction of Concession 6 Road, North of Mewburn Bridge (Niagara-on-the-Lake/Niagara Falls Limit) to North of Warner Road.

A detour route will be provided around the site for traffic. This closure is necessary due to the narrow roadway and to facilitate a shorter construction schedule for road reconstruction.

**WHEN:** The road closure will begin on Monday, May 1, 2023, and be in place for 16 weeks.

**CONTACT:** Any inquiries concerning this road reconstruction may be directed to Mike Komljenovic, Engineering Supervisor, at [mike.komljenovic@notl.com](mailto:mike.komljenovic@notl.com) or 905-468-3266 ext. 240.

Emergency Services have been informed of this closure and have developed a plan to ensure emergency service to the properties in the area of the closure remains unaffected.



# Niagara College BioBlitz a lively celebration of spring



## Keeping it Green

Kyra Simone  
Columnist

Niagara College's eighth annual spring BioBlitz was a flourishing success.

On Saturday, April 15, about 120 people explored the Niagara-on-the-Lake campus to learn about native species.

Sessions throughout the day featured talks and demonstrations by experts from the community.

Katie Bristow, Niagara College's sustainability program and outreach coordinator, led an early bird ID hike at 6 a.m.

Bob Highcock and Jean Hampson of the Peninsula Field Naturalists also guided a group, equipped with

binoculars and long camera lenses, on a bird identification hike later in the day.

Marcie Jacklin, a nationally awarded bird expert and activist, was thrilled to see a palm warbler. "My first warbler of the year!"

"Thirty-three years (of birding) and ... it never gets old," said Jacklin.

Trumpeter swans were also spotted in the wetlands. The swans have black beaks, unlike the invasive mute swan common in Ontario, which has an orange bill.

Kerry Royer, co-ordinator of volunteer and community outreach for the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, donned chest-waders and splashed into the college's wetland area to scoop up benthic invertebrates.

The diversity of these insects, which live in sediment at the bottom of a water body, is a useful way to determine water quality.

Volunteers used an ice cube tray to separate insects and count different types in the wetlands. "There's a lot of diversity here, which is awesome," said Royer.

Participants of all ages were fascinated by the



Paul Furminger demonstrates fly tying at the Trout Unlimited Canada booth. KYRA SIMONE

creepy crawlies. "He's upside down," exclaimed one little girl and promptly helped a water beetle to right itself.

After their aquatic life stage, many of these benthic insects will grow up to be dragonflies, midges and other flying insects.

Throughout the various walks and demonstrations, several people instinctively stooped to pick up litter.

"It's a living campus, which is the most exciting part," said Gregory Ford, executive director of Niagara Coastal.

One of the invited experts, Ford is also an alumnus of the Niagara College ecosystem restoration program.

"Here, people are living harmoniously with nature: from the wetlands to the UNESCO Biosphere of the escarpment, right next to vineyards and the horticulture programs at the college. It all strikes a balance," said Ford.

The Niagara chapter of Trout Unlimited Canada brought along educational materials.

The organization comprises a variety of stakeholders, including anglers, motivated to protect aquatic ecosystems for recreation and environmental conservation.

"Twelve Mile Creek is one of the last cold-water streams," Gary Kosinsky

explained, and it's one of the only remaining ecosystems in Niagara supporting healthy brook trout populations, which are an indicator of water quality.

Representatives from Trout Unlimited also demonstrated how to tie and cast flies for fishing. "Some take five minutes (to tie), some take more than four hours!" said Kosinsky.

Other sessions at the BioBlitz included a campfire with the Indigenous education department, an insect identification hike with entomologist Margaret Pickles, a family-friendly hike led by Owen Bjorgan, and a community cleanup with Home Depot St. Catharines.

The college was delighted by the event's success, said Bristow. "We've had a very good turnout. We were hoping for about 50 people."

"We had one attendee ask if we could do the BioBlitz every weekend," Bristow said with a laugh. "The weather has helped. It's really gotten people excited to go back outside again."

The BioBlitz, which has not run in-person since

2019, is an important occasion for the college.

"We have certifications on this campus that require us to have a biodiversity inventory, through the Audubon International Cooperative Sanctuary," said Bristow.

"Having a running inventory of what's here really helps with student projects," she said, especially for the ecosystem restoration and environmental field and lab technician programs.

Niagara College is hoping to host a BioBlitz this fall and has also been contacted by the Canadian Wildlife Federation to collaborate on another event.

As for the results? Bristow said they are developing a way for everyone to view the species counts. "We're working with the business analytic postgraduate program ... creating something for biodiversity."

*Kyra Simone is a PhD student in environmental science, with master's degrees in biology and science communication. When not researching climate change, she advocates for a sustainable future, picks up litter and makes recycled jewelry.*



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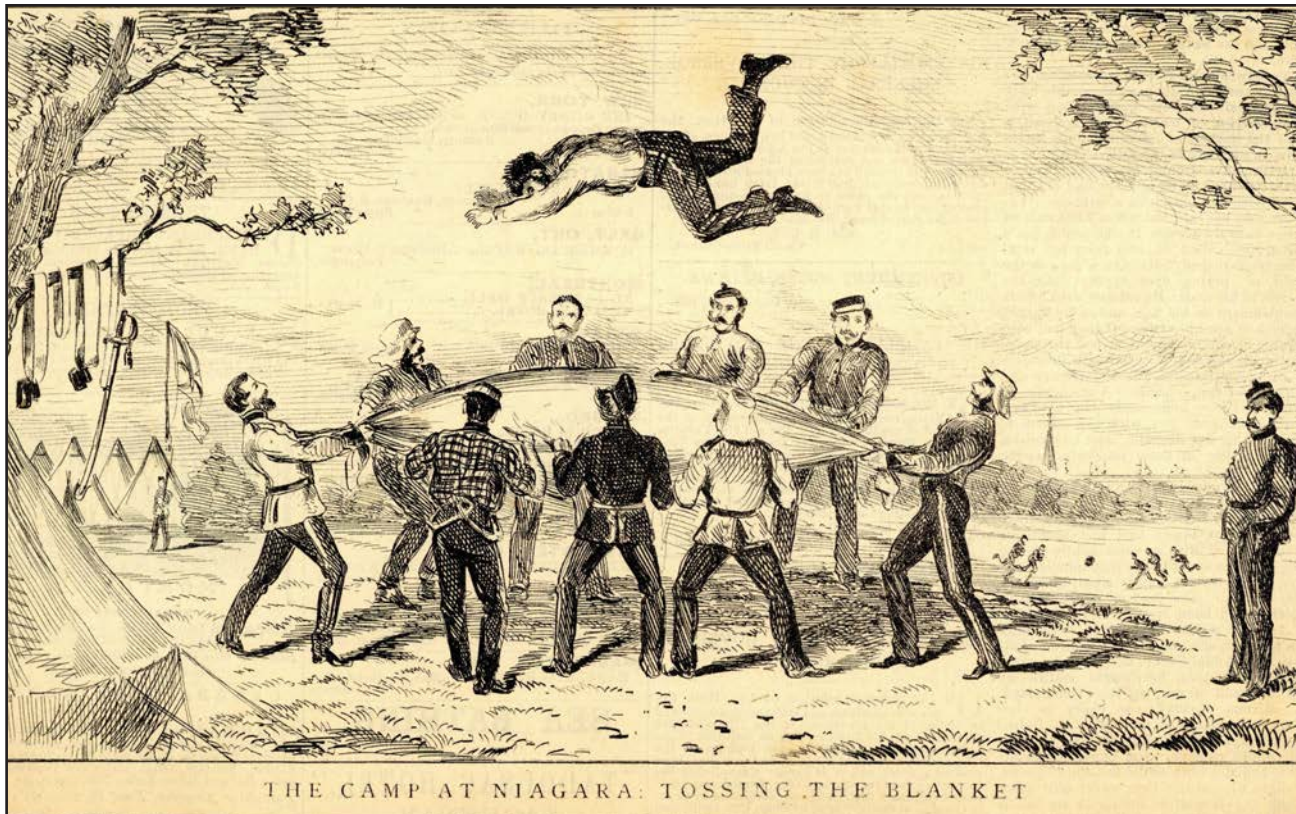
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## EXPLORING PHOTOS

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## Tossing at Niagara Camp, 1872

This illustration shows a blanket tossing at the Niagara Camp military training grounds in 1872. This activity was originally practised by the Inupiat and Inuit from the northern communities. They used a seal skin. It was helpful for hunting parties who were scouting the land. Today, it is used by these same groups for celebrations. Over time it has also been used for many army training camps, for recreation or, depending on the regiments, for hazing of new recruits. As you can imagine it could result in injuries and was therefore frowned upon by many officers.



St. Michael Catholic Elementary School. FILE

## St. Michael trivia night supports uniforms, new gym equipment

Somer Slobodian  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

St. Michael Catholic Elementary School is hosting an adults-only trivia night Friday to raise money for new gym equipment and uniforms.

"We're excited to be able to bring another event to the community," said Brenda Ferguson, chair of the school council.

It costs \$25 to enter or \$175 for a table of eight. Pizza and snacks are included in the price.

There will be a bar serving wine and beer and a raffle table with prizes

donated by Niagara-on-the-Lake businesses.

"We've been really lucky with the businesses in the community. They've donated so many things," said Ferguson.

The last trivia night was in 2017.

"Trivia night was one that I think a lot of people missed" during the pandemic, said Ferguson.

She hopes it will become an annual fundraiser.

Ferguson said that although online registration is now closed, anybody still interested has until Friday morning to call the school at 905-684-1051 to purchase a ticket or a table.

## Reminder of Special Council Meeting April 24 @ 5 p.m. at the Community Centre

Residents are reminded of a special in-person Council meeting at 5 p.m. on Monday, April 24 at the Community Centre.

The meeting is to enable Council to hear a presentation from staff and delegations from the Marotta group, SORE and members of the public on whether the Marotta group should be granted permits to demolish designated heritage structures and designed landscapes to facilitate a subdivision on the Rand Estate.

Staff have recommended that almost all of these requests be DENIED.

Assuming Council accepts the staff recommendation, the denial of these requests will then be appealed by the Marotta group to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) and heard together with the Planning Act applications for the proposed Marotta Rand subdivision. That hearing is scheduled for March of 2024. A reminder that it was the Marotta group that took the fate of the subdivision away from Council by appealing directly to the OLT some time ago.

The Town has booked the Community Centre for this special meeting in anticipation of a large crowd. A previous public meeting on the Marotta hotel and convention centre proposal for the Rand Estate drew an overflow crowd of at least 600 people to the Community Centre in January of 2018.

Given recent events involving the developer in question, concerned citizens hope to see a large crowd at the Community Centre on April 24. A reminder also that any member of the public who wishes to address Council that evening, as to whether Council should approve or deny the Marotta group's demolition requests, must register with the Town in advance.

**A MESSAGE FROM SAVE OUR RAND ESTATE**

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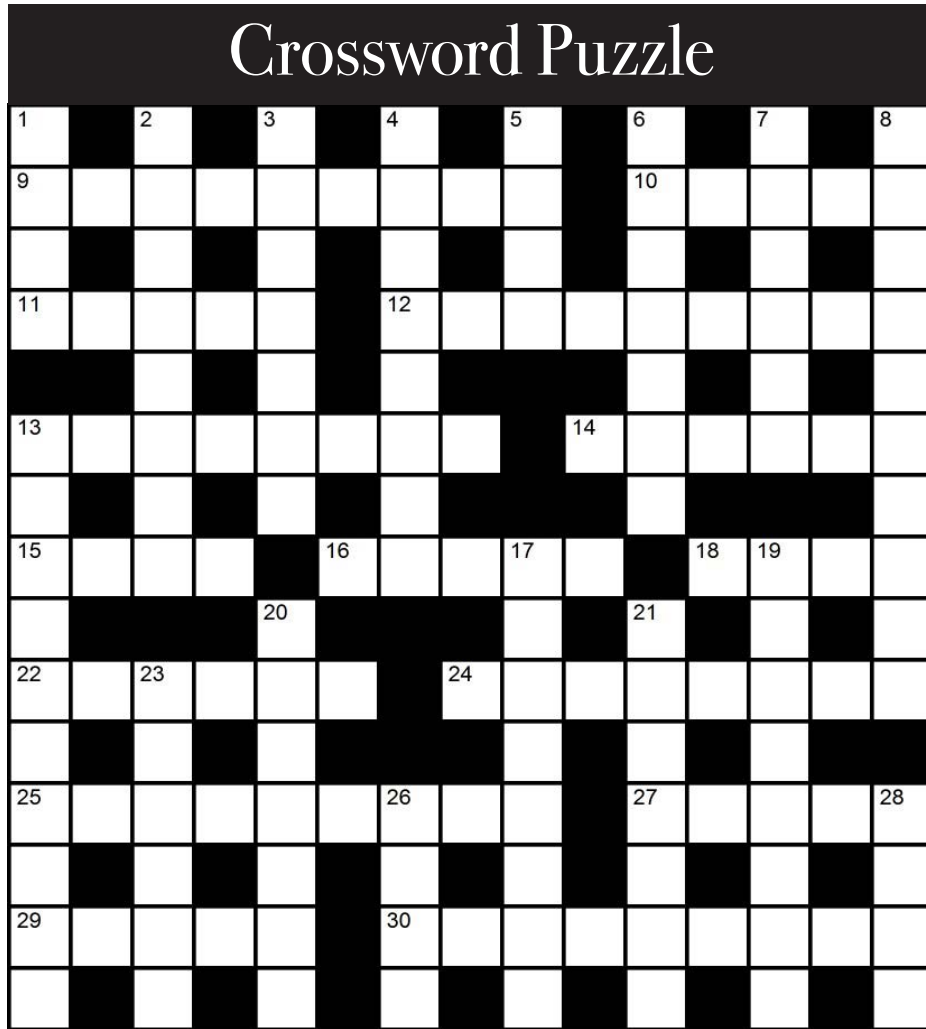


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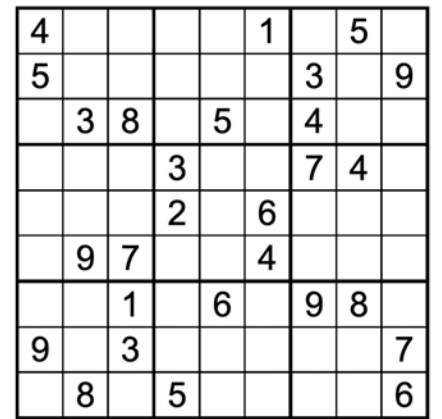
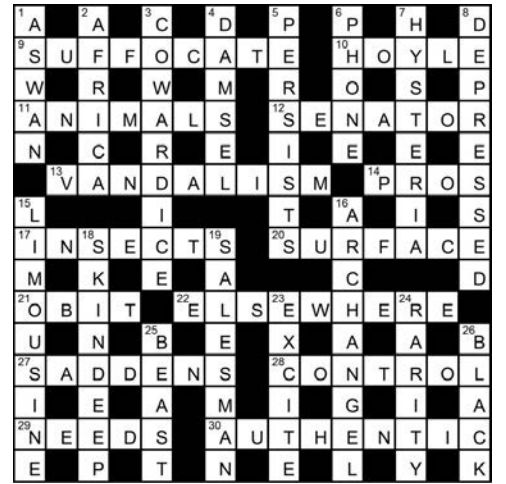
- 9. Deserted settlement (5,4)
- 10. Shout of greeting (5)
- 11. Artist's support (5)
- 12. Square one (9)
- 13. Helps drivers see (8)
- 14. Most secure (6)
- 15. Whirlpool (4)
- 16. More unfavourable (5)
- 18. Grant to the needy (4)
- 22. Arrest (6)
- 24. Railway track supports (8)
- 25. Long-armed anthropoid ape (5-4)
- 27. Anaesthetic (5)
- 29. Boat spines (5)
- 30. Flattery (5,4)

**Down**

- 1. Look at amorously (4)
- 2. Ate (8)
- 3. Smart (7)
- 4. Broad-brimmed straw hat (8)
- 5. Obstacle (4)
- 6. Gossip (4-3)
- 7. Mountain plant (6)
- 8. Diva (10)
- 13. Rope-like hairstyle (10)
- 17. Prevented from speaking (8)
- 19. Get too hot (8)
- 20. Revulsion (7)
- 21. Arid areas (7)
- 23. Merchant (6)
- 26. Protruding tooth (4)
- 28. Garden tool (4)



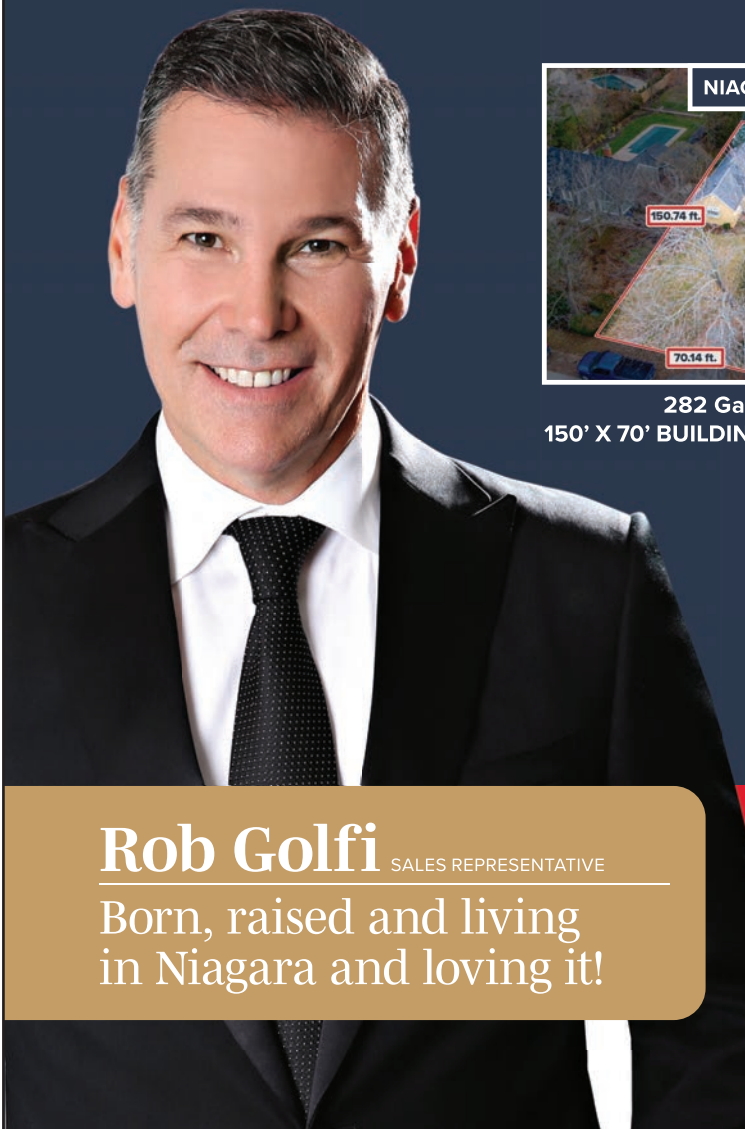
Last issue's answers



MEDIUM

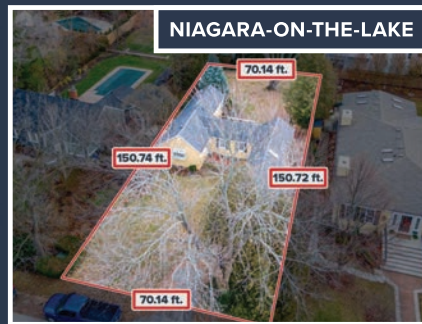
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# The skill behind catching baseballs – and Golden Snitches



**DR. BROWN**

Dr. William Brown  
Special to The Lake Report

In the late 1940s and early '50s, where I grew up, baseball was our favourite game, not so much at school but in makeup games on diamonds in nearby Gibbons Park or a block or so away on the baseball diamond at the old Huron College in London, Ont.

I was a middling player and a better pitcher than a hitter. We used to play for hours, especially on summer evenings, when games lasted till when we could barely see the ball.

No one kept score, except the standard three strikes and out. Home runs sometimes meant broken windows in nearby homes, for which we got into a lot of trouble with neighbours. They complained to the

dean, who cautioned us several times before throwing us off the college's diamond – fair enough.

We used to sneak back onto the diamond and when we heard the tinkle of far-away glass, we knew it was time to skedaddle and later claimed it was someone else. The dean knew better and so did we.

In those days my favourite professional team was the Cleveland Indians but when our family moved to Boston in 1992, we switched to the Red Sox, even if they usually broke the hearts of locals every post-season, by losing to the dreaded and hated New York Yankees.

In the "Philosopher's Stone," the first in the Harry Potter series, the world was introduced to the body contact game of quidditch.

Here, players flew on broom sticks and scored goals by whacking the quaffle ball through the opposition's goal at the end of the playing field in the sky.

Harry Potter's job as seeker was to catch the small erratic flying "Golden Snitch." If caught, you usually won the game.



Playing quidditch would take a lot of motor memory, similar to catching a fly ball, says Dr. Brown.

From a neurophysiological perspective what would catching a fly ball in the outfield or the snitch in quidditch look like?

Let's begin with catching a fly ball. From the moment the outfielder hears the crack of the bat and sees the ball, the outfielder's brain begins to compute the ball's trajectory and where the player needs to go to catch it.

Keeping his eyes squarely on the ball and constantly moving them, his head and neck, while running to intercept the ball involves highly complex, co-ordinated movements.

In the case of a deeply hit ball, it might even require the outfielder to turn his back to the ball and, while running, continue to keep his eyes on the ball and maintain his balance, and near the end, reach out with his glove to catch the ball.

Then, within a second or two, he must turn to face the diamond with the ball in his throwing hand and assess where to throw the ball if there are runners on base.

Such complex sequences are learned via thousands of repetitions, each one a little different but still variations on a common motor program or sequence

of programs involving the sensory-motor and premotor cortex, the oculomotor system, vestibular system, basal ganglia, the cerebellum and motor nerve cells located from the brainstem to the sacral spinal cord.

The motor memory for such complex tasks resides in the motor cortex and cerebellum.

The neural structures involved in quidditch would be similar but the challenge much greater because unlike baseball in which the ball follows a predictable and trackable trajectory, the snitch is erratic.

It can stop on a dime or swerve in any direction and the seeker must follow, while avoiding opposition players who would love to knock him off course or even off his broomstick.

In humans it takes a year or more to progress from lifting the head, rolling over onto their tummy, crawling, sitting, standing and eventually walking.

They're all hard wired and depend on progressive maturation of the nervous system and endless practice but no formal teaching.

Witness some animals such as newborn horses, which manage to stand, albeit wobbly, within minutes of birth.

Complex novel motor activities, such as dancing, tennis, skiing and gymnastics are best learned in the teens or early 20s, with the help of coaching and mimicking what the more expert do and, of course, training, training and training hundreds if not thousands of times.

It is not so easily learned from scratch much beyond the late 20s to 30s.

Learned well in the early years, many retain enough skill into their later years to safely enjoy sports such as skiing and tennis but it's a rare person who continues to have the requisite timing, strength and flexibility to continue with gymnastics much past their 20s. And for quidditch, not at any age for me.

*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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Sedum and miscanthus plants after being cut back in spring. Joanne Young says it's time to start trimming.

## Warm spell means it's time to start **spring cleanup**



**GROWING TOGETHER** 

Joanne Young  
Columnist

With the incredibly warm temperatures last week it felt more like summer coming on than the beginning of spring.

The star magnolias have quickly pushed out their buds, the forsythias are in bloom and even some of the fruit trees are showing a bit of colour.

Before we rush into summer, though, there are lots of spring chores that need to be tackled when cleaning up the bed areas in the garden.

As we are becoming more and more aware of the importance of attracting pollinators to our gardens, we are learning that it's good to leave some fall leaves and perennial stems

in the garden beds over the winter.

This provides a safe haven for many of the pollinating insects to overwinter in the stems. In early spring, many insects are still in hibernation. They will wake up when the weather warms and the day-length increases.

Lots of beneficial insects, including pollinators, like tiny native bees and pest-munching predators like syrphid flies, lacewings and parasitic wasps spend the winter hunkered down in hollow plant stems either as adults or pupae.

Cutting down the dead plant stems too early in the spring will disturb them before they have a chance to emerge. So, wait as long as you can to do your spring garden clean up.

Ideally, you should wait until the daytime temperatures are consistently above 10C for at least seven consecutive days. So, after last week's hot spell, we are now good to start cleaning up our gardens.

In one of the gardens I visited last week, several heathers were in bloom as well as some Hellebores

and the mason bees were in a buzz, pollinating the flowers. Mason bees are one of the first bees to emerge in spring and they are more efficient when it comes to pollinating flowers than the honeybee.

In an area like Niagara, they are important when it comes to pollinating the orchards. It only takes 250 to 300 female mason bees to pollinate an acre of fruit trees. It would take close to 1,000 honeybees to pollinate to do the same.

If you left some of your perennials out for the winter, now is the time to trim back the dead leaves and stems before new growth emerges from the base of the plants.

Cut back the stems to just one inch above the soil and rake up any remaining dried leaves. For taller ornamental grasses, cut down stalks to about four to six inches from the ground.

For shorter grasses, they can be cut back even shorter, about two inches from the ground. Some perennials retain some or all their foliage throughout the winter such as Heuchera (coralbell), Lavendula

(lavender), Bergenia (pig squeak), Helleborus (Lenten rose) and Carex (sedge).

After certain winters some of the leaves can look a little ratty. Simply remove any of the leaves that are browning. If the majority of the leaves have browned, you can cut back the plant as you do regular perennials.

It is also important to remove any wet tree leaves from the previous fall if they have not yet broken down. Don't let them sit in the bed for too long.

A thick layer of wet leaves can suffocate out any bulbs or perennials that are trying to push up through them. The wet leaves contain molds and can cause other diseases on the new emerging plants.

So, over the last two weeks we looked at when and how to prune your deciduous shrubs and this week general cleanup of the gardens. Next week: dividing your perennials.

Until then, keep gardening..

*Joanne Young is a Niagara-on-the-Lake garden expert and coach. See her website at [joanneyoung.ca](http://joanneyoung.ca).*



Coun. Wendy Cheropita says it's not a good time for the town to be raising property taxes. EVAN LOREE

## NOTL taxes rise 8.25%, but support is **not unanimous**

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

After months of discussion, debate and confusion, Niagara-on-the-Lake council approved the town's budget for 2023, but it was far from unanimous.

The final impact to the taxpayer is an increase of about \$100.83, or 8.25 per cent, more than last year for the average property assessed at \$541,000.

People living in the urban boundary will also be subject to the stormwater tax, which is increasing this year by \$9.36, up 8.26 per cent. That brings the total to \$110.20 for the average NOTL home.

Couns. Gary Burroughs, Wendy Cheropita and Sandra O'Connor all withheld their endorsement of the \$43.9 million operational budget.

"There's no new moneys in here to implement the approved climate change adaptation plan," said O'Connor.

She also argued that if not for an almost \$1 million subsidy from the town's parking reserves, the tax hike would be 15 per cent.

"We've been using the parking reserves for many different things over the years, including transit," Coun. Erwin Wiens said in response to her concerns.

Cheropita voted against it because of inflation, rising food costs, plus increases and other tax hikes at the provincial level.

"There are residents in our own community who

are struggling to cover their costs," she said.

"I just think this is not the year to be putting in a big increase."

Burroughs took issue with the fact the town was not using accommodation tax as a source of revenue for town projects.

Instead, the town is assigning a committee to make decisions on how to use revenue from the new 2 per cent room tax.

"There must be some capital projects that might qualify," Burroughs said.

He estimated the town will receive "at least \$800,000" from the room tax, after collecting \$200,000 for the second half of 2022.

"There's a lot of money out there and we should be budgeting both the potential income and potential expenses. We're big on expenses, not so much on income."

"Those that love (accommodation) tax are already saying, 'Well, we should be spending it to reduce our current tax bill,'" he said.

Wiens pointed out the new tax has specific purposes.

"It's supposed to be towards tourism," he said. Still, Burroughs felt the town was "not doing this budget properly."

Almost \$15 million of the budget will be covered by the town's property tax levy. Another \$952,110 will be covered by a special storm levy applicable to properties in urban areas.

The \$9.6-million capital budget was passed earlier.

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