



New home for NEOB Lavender | Page 10



Chloe Cooley stamp.

## NOTL schools use Black History Month to tackle a 'tough' subject

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The history of slavery is a weighty topic for the classroom.

That's why schools in Niagara-on-the-Lake tend to use Black History Month as an opportunity to celebrate the culture and accomplishments of Black Canadians.

While the history of slavery in Canada is a sad one, at St. Michael Catholic Elementary School, "Students also learn about the many great accomplishments of members of the Black community," says principal Emma Ferra-Massi.

Grade 8 students at St. Michael are using the month to learn about an "individual from the Black community that has made a significant impact on the world," she said in an email.

Meanwhile, the kids in Grade 7 are working together on a classwide slideshow on Black Canadians who have influenced Canadian culture.

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# A grim picture of Niagara health care

Workers, advocates and patients sound alarm over 'crisis'



Brent Leclair shares some ideas about how to solve some of the problems with the system, like hospital overcrowding. EVAN LOREE

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Niagara's health workers are sounding the alarm over what some are calling a "crisis" in medical care.

Their overwhelming message at a town hall-style meeting hosted by area MPP Wayne Gates is that provincial budget cuts are at the root of the problem.

"We've got a crisis in health care," Gates told the crowd

## 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.

of more than 100 people who packed a meeting room at the Gale Centre in Niagara Falls. "We've got to make sure that we take on home care and invest in it," the New Democrat MPP said.

During the pandemic, for-profit care homes had more outbreaks

and more COVID-related deaths than non-profit homes, according to a 2020 study by the Canadian Medical Association.

Gates, his party's critic for long-term care, said, "It shouldn't be about profit, it should be about care."

A panel of paramedics, nurses, emergency room doctors, addictions workers, and advocates from the Ontario Nurses Association and the Ontario Health Coalition spoke at the Feb. 9 forum.

Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition, told a story about a woman in long-term care with both dementia and COVID-19.

The patient was found by her

*Continued on Page 3*

## In-depth: How new Ontario law curtails town's power over development

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake could soon start to feel the effects of the province's new housing legislation, Bill 23, which became

law late in November.

After news of a four-storey condominium proposal for Mary Street boiled over in mid-January, the question has slowly bubbled to the surface: With powerful new legislation passed by the province, what can the town

do about projects to which council or residents object?

Town councillors have been optimistic that they will be able to work with the province to strike a fair balance between the desires of residents and the fresh directives of the province

aimed at getting "More Homes Built Faster" – which is the official monicker Doug Ford's administration attached to Bill 23.

Expert Matti Siemietycki, an urban planning professor at the University of Toronto, thinks the province is "put-

ting its stamp on the planning system" and that the new bill places the province "in the driver's seat" when it comes to planning.

And Pierre Filion, a retired professor of urban planning at the University of Waterloo, says, "The municipality

will still have a role to play, but the ultimate decisions take place at the provincial level."

He says that's because the power to approve development proposals now

*Continued on Page 2*



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# Municipalities **lose control** with new housing bill

Continued from Front Page

ultimately rests with the Ontario Land Tribunal, a powerful provincial body created in 2021.

Because, as its website notes, the tribunal “adjudicates matters related to land use planning, environmental and natural features, heritage protection, land valuation, land compensation, municipal finance, and related matters,” it is empowered to resolve disputes between municipalities and developers.

In cases where towns refuse to permit development proposals, land owners can appeal such rulings to the tribunal.

## Developers favoured

Niagara-on-the-Lake developer Rainer Hummel argues the tribunal favours developers on appeal because it “is charged with implementing the housing and planning policies of the province” – not the bylaws of the town.

Filion agrees, and concludes that because of this mandate, developers are in a “highly favourable position” when taking a case to the tribunal.

For Hummel, the question of what can be built is clear cut.

“Can you build a four-storey building in Niagara-on-the-Lake? Absolutely. Can you build a six storey? Almost impossible to stop,” he said in an interview.

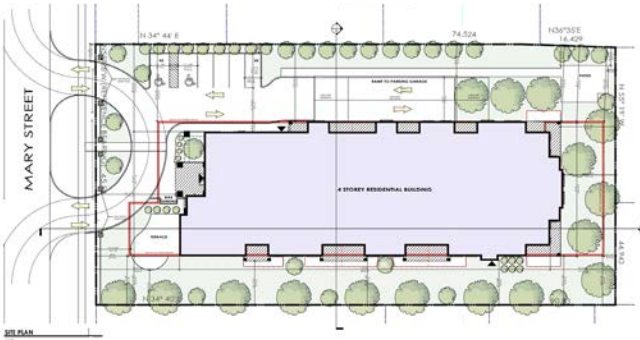
NOTL town councillors have been gung-ho on collaborating with both developers and higher levels of government since election day in November.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa says he has concerns about Bill 23 but he is confident the provincial government has heard the town’s concerns and is open to working with the municipality on solutions.

After hearing residents speak up about the proposal for Mary Street at a public meeting Feb. 14, he said it was important for citizens to “understand the planning process.”

The proposal for the Mary Street condominium is still in the early stages.

Zalepa said he feels there is an appetite – and a need – for



Top to bottom right: Matti Siemiatycki, planning professor at University of Toronto, Pierre Filion, retired professor of urban planning from the University of Waterloo and NOTL developer Rainer Hummel. The planning and development experts say towns might have little-to-no control over developments like the condo complex proposed for Mary Street (above) under Bill 23. SUPPLIED

projects like the one proposed for Mary Street.

In NOTL, there is a “significant population base that does not have the income” to acquire “core housing,” he said.

“I think the town has an opportunity to give more clarity to where certain projects could be appropriate,” he added.

## “Communicate, don’t litigate”

Coun. Erwin Wiens, the town’s deputy lord mayor, figures, “We should be avoiding the (Ontario Land Tribunal) at all costs.”

Ontario’s provincial policy directs towns and their planners to “permit and facilitate a range of housing options, including new development as well as residential intensification.”

That is why Wiens said it’s critical to work with the development community rather than against it.

“Communicate, don’t litigate,” he said.

“They (developers) understand what they’re allowed to do,” Wiens said.

When towns end up in front of the land tribunal, it’s often because they attempted to deny a project without having the legal basis to do so, he added.

And that is why NOTL, like many municipalities, has “a poor track record” in cases decided by the land tribunal.

## David vs. Goliath

Alan Gordon, a resident activist seeking to preserve the Parliament Oak property, acknowledged that it’s a David vs. Goliath scenario where residential developers might be favoured by the tribunal.

However, he said, residents’ concerns about commercial developments, like the hotel proposed for Parliament Oak, might be weighed a little more favourably by the tribunal.

Still, he worries about the financial toll of having to fight deep-pocketed developers who could almost inexhaustibly appeal decisions and re-submit applications.

“The developer can keep coming back to the well as often as he likes,” Gordon said.

“If he doesn’t get what he wants, he can come back again and again.”

It’s difficult to fight that, said Gordon.

## Density and affordability

One of the province’s goals with Bill 23 is densification and allowing more



balanced approach” between “responsible growth” and support for the province’s “municipal partners.”

## Mary Street condominium

So, perhaps the question becomes: Is the four-storey building proposed for Mary Street “responsible growth”?

Many residents have weighed in unequivocally and said, “No.”

The applicant’s planning justification report argues “Yes” and points to the town’s need for more diverse housing options.

It argues the nearby commercial services “contribute to reduced automotive dependence” and permit residents to “live in proximity to community amenities.”

At an open house forum sponsored by the town to discuss the proposal, residents loudly expressed their dissatisfaction with the plan.

Traffic congestion and privacy for adjacent residents were some of the most-cited concerns.

“Traffic is always an issue,” Siemiatycki said. But “traffic should not be a reason why we exclude people from housing.”

The planning professor also pointed out in some urban centres it was not unusual to see midrise buildings three to four storeys tall among single-storey houses, especially in older neighbourhoods.

## Rigorous work needed

Despite the directives under Bill 23, developers still need to go through the rigorous work of planning for impacts on traffic, the environment and surrounding infrastructure.

“You’ve got to do your legwork,” Hummel said.

“We have to prove our point. Neighbours and politicians just say, ‘I don’t like it. I don’t want it.’”

And that, he said, is one reason the province is stepping in.

But it is not the only reason.

Victoria Podbielski, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, said, “One of the biggest factors slowing down de-

velopments is long approval timelines.”

The theory that cutting red tape will help to reduce costs and encourage builders is baked into the legislation, Siemiatycki said.

The “underlying philosophy” of the bill is to “build more,” so the supply can “meet the demand at a lower price,” he said.

And it does this by reducing regulations and curtailing the ability of towns like Niagara-on-the-Lake to slow development.

## Many unknowns, many changes

One of municipal tools the legislation takes aim at are site plan controls.

These are used by towns to regulate a variety of features on a development site.

Under the new legislation, control over features related to “character, scale, appearance and design” have been axed by Bill 23, according to a report by a major law firm, Gowling.

And a Town of NOTL staff report says the elimination of site plan controls could cause “undesirable results and development that does not contribute to a vibrant, attractive neighbourhood.”

Siemiatycki said that in some cases towns have used the “character of the neighbourhood” as a reason to exclude street-facing entrances to secondary suites.

These are the types of concerns the new legislation appears to snuff out.

As for how this impacts the town’s power to direct development, a spokesperson suggested, “It’s not a straight-forward answer, as there are many complexities around Bill 23.”

Siemiatycki agreed that there are still a lot of unknowns but he said it is clear that town planners will have substantially “less input.”

It doesn’t necessarily mean residents and towns like NOTL won’t have any say in future developments.

But Bill 23 has changed the planning landscape and exactly how much those changes will alter how neighbourhoods will look remains to be seen.



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Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition, speaks to the crowd at a town hall-style forum organized by Niagara MPP Wayne Gates. She said the province has a long history of under-funding health care. EVAN LOREE

## Niagara **lacking** in essential services, crowd told

*Continued from Front Page*

daughter “severely dehydrated,” unable to feed herself, with “excrement on her hands and feet.”

“Ontario funds our health care at one of the lowest rates in the country,” Mehra said.

“And the province is now saying the only solution is to privatize?” she said.

“It’s patently untrue. It will bring about the decimation of our local public hospitals,” she said.

The president of the Ontario Nurses Association Local 026 in Niagara spoke about a nurse who was put in charge of a floor despite being only one year out of school.

“They had over 30 patients on that unit,” Loretta Tirabassi said, adding that the young nurse was the most senior staff member at the time.

“So, she sat at the desk and cried,” she added.

“Ford’s message to all of you is, ‘Deal with it,’” she said.

Not wanting the audience to “lose hope,” Dr. Raghu Venugopal, an emergency room doctor at the University Health Network in Toronto, gave an account of the waiting times he has seen.

“I have patients waiting eight hours for chest pain – for an EKG,” he said. “The national standard in our country is 10 minutes.”

“I have victims of trauma, three days on an ER stretcher, not admitted to hospital with multiple injuries,” he added.

Paramedic Melissa Lacroix said her colleagues in Niagara had spent up to 33,000 hours waiting with their patients for hospital beds to open up.

“Paramedics are working 12 hours non-stop, no breaks, no food, no rest,” she said.

“We’re doing what we can with what we have. But we need more,” she said.

Venugopal said he frequently finds himself providing care that could be given by a nurse.

This means he has less time to “do the doctoring.”

He ended his presentation by arguing, “The one damn thing” that money “shouldn’t have to buy is health care.”

Heather Whitworth, a nurse practitioner from the Niagara Falls Community Health Centre, said it has become “increasingly challenging to access timely, specialized care.”

She and colleague Alison Mattatall pointed out that impoverished communities are the most vulnerable.

“Almost 50 per cent of our patients for whom we have data are living in poverty,” Mattatall said.

And drug dealers have found “innovative ways to reach youth through social media,” said Meaghan

O’Connor, a human resources worker from Community Addiction Services Niagara.

As a result, her agency has seen more and more youth in need of addiction counselling – and the increasing complexity of addiction has taken a “large toll” on the staff.

During a question-and-answer period, residents shared a variety of concerns.

Also on hand was Francine Shimizu, mother of Heather Winterstein, 24, an Indigenous woman who died two days after being sent home with Tylenol by staff at Niagara Health in St. Catharines in 2021.

“My daughter died from a treatable infection,” she said.

“She wasn’t even given the courtesy of an assessment to include bloodwork and diagnostic imaging.”

Shimizu, who said she has asked the College of Nurses to investigate the triage nurses who cared for her daughter, believes Winterstein was marginalized and discriminated against “based on her race and her history of drug addiction.”

She added, “I have been to the emergency department with gastroparesis flare-ups since the passing of Heather.”

Gastroparesis interferes with the normal function of the stomach muscle and is often a complication of diabetes, which Shimizu

also has.

She said she was once laying in the fetal position on the floor of the Niagara Falls hospital to help with her gastric pain.

“On this occasion, my file was lost and I was kicked out of the queue,” she said.

Shimizu fears her file has been flagged because everytime she goes to the hospital for care, it seems to have been lost.

Venugopal responded by saying that Ontario Health was shielding 16 years of data on the province’s performance in the emergency room and that citizens ought to be allowed to see it.

One woman spoke up to argue that vaccine mandates for nurses were the root cause of low staffing rates among nurses.

Venugopal told her that while he respected her right to autonomy, Health Canada had reported only four confirmed cases of vaccine injury in the country.

This was met with jeers and cheers.

According to a spokesperson for Niagara Health, after it introduced mandatory vaccinations, 87 employees were fired for refusing to comply with the policy.

At the time, nearly 6,100 staff, or 99 per cent of employees were already vaccinated.

Today, Niagara Health is looking to fill 600 job vacancies, the spokesperson said.

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# NOTL schools tackle 'tough' subject of Black history

Continued from Front Page

And students will discover the influence of Black musicians on “genres such as jazz, blues, R&B, gospel, soul, rock and roll, and hip hop” in their music class.

Throughout the month students will learn about “the history of slavery and Canada’s abolitionist history,” Ferrera-Massi said.

“Students need to be taught the sad history of discrimination. We can’t erase the past, but learn from it and become better,” she said.

Jennifer Pellegrini, a communications officer for the Niagara Catholic District School Board, said the board works with Black-led community groups to get “culturally relevant programming” to students.

The board runs a year-round program with Tools of Empowerment for Success, a Black-led advocacy group, to connect Black students with mentors.

The school board also works with Lezlie Harper, founder of Niagara Bound Tours, to teach students about the Underground Railroad, which has deep roots in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Harper, a descendant of an escaped slave, takes a lot of pride in the story of her community and tries to give students a story worth celebrating when taking them on tours or speaking to them in class.

It can be “really hard” to teach kids about “those tough parts,” she admitted.



Grade 7 and 8 students at Crossroads Public School watch Carousel Players’ performance of “Meet Chloe.” SUPPLIED

Harper remembers when she first started Niagara Bound Tours that she tried to explain to a class of Grade 1 students how Black children were often separated from their parents on their journey to Canada.

Not being a teacher, Harper said, “It’s hard to explain it” to younger kids.

“I don’t want to give the children bad dreams,” she added.

The history is still important, though, especially for young Black kids, Harper said.

From the work she’s done with schools, Harper says she worries about how race is talked about in the classroom.

For white students,

“Students need to be taught the sad history of discrimination. We can’t erase the past, but learn from it and become better.”

EMMA FERRA-MASSI, PRINCIPAL  
ST. MICHAEL CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Harper wonders what it’s like to learn in an environment where they hear about “how horrible their race is.”

Lessons about “how ugly colonization was and how awful white people have been” might be causing more “confusion” – especially for mixed-racial children, she said.

Harper thinks it is harmful for Black students to continually hear about how they are “racialized and marginalized.”

we could all – everyone – work together to be comfortable with one another,” she said.

The District School Board of Niagara has provided teachers with an educational resource to help them navigate the tricky task of teaching Black history.

The 39-page slideshow advises teachers to use Black History Month to celebrate accomplishments in the Black community.

It suggests teachers not start with slavery because of how traumatizing it is.

Instead, it recommends they focus on the positive contributions of Black Canadians to their culture.

Carolyn LoConte, a communications officer for

the District School Board of Niagara, said the board offers professional development courses for teachers throughout the year.

Crossroads Elementary School principal Kate Fish said the school has “added hundreds of books to our school library collection” over the last two years to help expose students to more diverse literary options.

The school has a rotating selection of the books on display where kids can see them and perhaps pick one up, she said.

Fish said the Grade 7 and 8 students at Crossroads also have watched a virtual presentation of “Meet Chloe,” performed by the Carousel Players.

“Meet Chloe” is an educational play about a student trying to convince her teachers to share the history of Chloe Cooley with her classmates.

Cooley was enslaved to a Queenston farmer in the late 1700s when she protested her treatment. He took her across the border to the U.S. and it is not known what happened to her.

The incident helped led to the passage of Canada’s Act Against Slavery in 1793.

Carousel Players is a Niagara-based theatre company that produces content for young audiences and frequently performs educational plays like “Meet Chloe” in schools.

Fish said her students also will get the chance to see the NOTL Museum’s display about Cooley in the spring.

# Town appoints two councillors to oversee NOTL’s tourism strategy

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake council has named two of its own to the town’s new tourism strategy committee.

After some back and forth Tuesday night over how much representation residents need on a committee set up to oversee the new tourism strategy, Counc. Wendy Cheropita and Maria Mavridis were appointed.

Coun. Sandra O’Connor had questions about the resident representation on the committee after a consultant presented a five-step plan to turn NOTL’s future tourism strategy into a reality.

“A significant portion of the impact of it will be on the residents,” O’Connor pointed out.



Wendy Cheropita and Maria Mavridis are the two members of council on the town’s tourism committee. FILE PHOTOS

Rebecca Godfrey, presenting on behalf of consulting firm CBRE, suggested that people who work in tourism should make up 50 to 60 per cent of the committee.

Tourism stakeholders will ultimately be responsible for implementing the plan, Godfrey said.

Godfrey and Kathy Weiss, the town’s liaison on the project, recommended a committee structure of five industry representatives, two residents, one council-



lor and one person from Tourism NOTL, the town’s destination marketing organization.

“I like the committee representation,” Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said. “I don’t want to tinker around with that.”

He said he was confident council could represent the needs of all residents on the committee.

Cheropita agreed, adding that residents would be consulted throughout the process.

Council rejected O’Connor’s suggestion to add one more resident to the committee.

Instead it opted to include two councillors and four industry representatives.

Cheropita cited her previous experience with the tourism sector and Ontario wine industry as qualifying her to sit on the committee.

“I am not attached in any way to any business opportunity through tourism at the moment,” she said. “I think I can come at it from an objective point of view.”

Mavridis operates two restaurants in Old Town on behalf of her parents, but said she was confident in her ability to remain objective.

“My family does own a small business but I do believe I can still be objective and clear on decisions for the

entire community,” she said.

With the two councillors appointed, the next steps will be to select the other members.

In their presentation to council, the consultants broke down their plan of attack in five phases.

“Our first phase is really the longest,” said Godfrey.

At this point they’ll be consulting with residents and members of the tourism community, assessing the existing tourism infrastructure and looking for areas needing improvement.

Godfrey presented a few different tools to engage people in the consultation process.

She and her team plan to interview at least 20 “operators and community groups.”

The consultants will be

preparing two public surveys – one for residents and one for visitors.

They are also planning to hold two separate focus groups for residents and industry workers.

In the second phase they plan to assess the future impact of tourism on the town’s economy.

In the third phase, the planners will work with the committee to “distill down” the town’s “strategic priorities,” Godfrey said.

In the fourth phase, the consultants will come up with a written plan and draft a strategy to be reviewed by the council.

The plan will then be finalized and presented to council in the fifth phase.

Godfrey said it should be complete by the end of the year.



Gordon Hollingsworth is buried at Brockwood Cemetery in England. COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

## Parks Canada cutting down three **hazardous** trees at Butler's Barracks

Somer Slobodian  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Parks Canada is cutting down three hazardous trees at Butler's Barracks, a national historic site on John Street.

The three trees are located near the parking lot on John Street.

"A hazardous tree is one that shows immediate threat or potential threat for injury or incident," Parks Canada spokesperson Julia Grcevic said in an email to The Lake Report.

"In this case, the hazardous trees being removed are either dead or dying, or

were damaged and knocked over during recent storms," she said.

The three trees at the site pose a risk to public safety. Parks Canada has hired Arbor Moose Tree Care to remove the trees.

Since Butler's Barracks is a federally administered property, Parks Canada is not required to submit a permit or notify the town of the tree removal.

Where the cutting is taking place there are no species at risk, and the tree cutting will take place outside of bird nesting season.

That is to ensure all migratory birds and wildlife are protected, said Grcevic.

# THE MONUMENTS MEN

## Sapper Gordon Hollingsworth's 'death by misadventure'

*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

Gordon Percy Hollingsworth was born in Toronto on Nov. 19, 1903, to George Hollingsworth and Sylvia Moxley.

Gordon's father was born in St. Catharines on Dec. 29, 1871, the son of Abraham and Jane Hollingsworth, members of St. Catharines' large Black community.

Abraham was born in Maryland, likely into slavery. If so, he was a successful freedom seeker, as he was living in St Catharines by 1861.

Gordon's parents were married in Toronto in 1892 and had three daughters and three sons, including Gordon. Tragically, Sylvia died on Nov. 26, 1909,

just after Gordon's sixth birthday.

George Hollingsworth remarried Martha Bell Perkins in Toronto three years later and had two more sons.

Gordon was educated in Toronto but was frequently pulled out of school by his parents, likely at times when his family was visiting relatives in the Niagara region, London, and Buffalo.

After Grade 6 he left school to work. As an adult he was an avid reader.

Gordon worked for a time as a farm labourer in northwestern Ontario before returning to Toronto in 1927.

He joined the Queen's Own Rifles of Toronto as a part-time militiaman and moved to Quebec in 1929 to work on a farm.

He later returned to Toronto and joined the 9th Field Battery of the Royal Canadian Artillery, again as a part-time militiaman.

Gordon married Rachel Rowan on April 17, 1937, and he was then working as a parking lot attendant and taxi driver.

Less than a year after the start of the Second World War, Gordon enlisted, joining the 18th Field Company of the Royal Canadian Engineers on June 5, 1940.

He received training as a Sapper with the Canadian Engineers at Camp Sussex in New Brunswick. The main function of the en-

gineers was to enable the army to move by repairing roads, building bridges, clearing obstacles and general construction.

Gordon's unit boarded ship in Halifax on June 21, 1941, and he disembarked at Gourock in Scotland on June 30. Sapper Gordon Hollingsworth was assigned to the #6 Construction Company of the Royal Canadian Engineers at a camp near East Grinstead, just southwest of London.

On Oct. 12, 1943, Sapper Hollingsworth was granted a nine-day leave and he headed to London for his holiday. He was due back in camp just before midnight on Oct. 21 but overstayed his leave.

At East Croydon, he hurriedly got on a train on the night of Oct. 21 and sat in one of the compartments with several other passengers. He was cutting it close.

As the train got rolling, he asked his fellow passengers if the train stopped at East Grinstead. It did not. He had boarded the wrong train.

When told that the next stop was the Three Bridges Station, he said that he would get off there and catch another train to East Grinstead.

As the train got up to speed, Hollingsworth stood up and grabbed the latch on the door to the compartment "as if going through the door to a corridor," accord-

ing to one of his fellow passengers.

On this train, however, there was no corridor. The compartment doors opened directly to the outside. He opened the door and the wind caught the door and pulled Hollingsworth out of the train.

Another soldier in the compartment pulled the emergency cord and the train stopped about 500 metres from where he had fallen. He was dead, having broken his skull.

On Nov. 29 an inquiry was held to determine what caused Hollingsworth to open the door. Witnesses and officers of his unit were called to testify.

The medical officer stated that Hollingsworth was "a sober man, very cheerful, very happy." This ruled out the likelihood of suicide.

Perhaps his mind was pre-occupied with his inability to get back to base before midnight and the end of his leave.

He may have opened the door without thinking, as if he was on a Canadian train moving from car to car, perhaps to seek out a conductor to check train schedules.

We will never know. In any case, his demise was ruled as "death by misadventure."

Sapper Gordon Hollingsworth is buried at Brockwood Military Cemetery in Surrey.

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Canada

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### COVID Tracker

**NOTL active cases (last 28 days): 36**

**Region active cases: 430**

**Region deaths: 717**

**Region total cases: 51,504**

*\*Feb. 22 data per Niagara Region Public Health.*

*Public health warns that "Due to the surge in COVID-19 cases, limited availability of testing, and changes to case and contact management practices, case counts shown (above) are an underestimate of the true number of individuals in Niagara with COVID-19. Data should be interpreted with caution." Case data for municipalities is also now being interpreted in 28-day cycles.*



**Contributed by Patty Garriock**

"There is in us a deeply seated response to the natural universe, which is part of our humanity." - Rachel Carson

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## Golfing in February



Joel Davis, Chris Louis, Mike Rodrigues, Steward Lott play golf at St. David's Golf Course. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

### Editorial

## Development, NOTL and Bill 23

Kevin MacLean  
Managing Editor

A large condo complex that dwarfs its neighbours on Mary Street.

A high-end boutique hotel on the old Parliament Oak school property, amid a quiet residential area.

A major housing and hotel project on the historic Rand Estate.

A two-storey house, covering more than 40 per cent of a tiny lot, replacing a small single-storey cottage in the Chautauqua neighbourhood.

What do all of these development projects have in common?

Many things, but a strong common denominator is that residents, advocates and some elected officials object to them on principle and don't feel they are properly suited to their locations. Too big, too dominant, too much.

And in all cases, the opponents are correct – not that such developments can't ever happen in Niagara-on-the-Lake, but that the scale or type of proposal needs to be reconsidered.

The question now: In Ontario, in 2023, does it matter what neighbours, residents, town officials – the greater community – thinks?

As our Page 1 story this week outlines, maybe not.

Doug Ford's omnibus Bill 23 became law in November and it stripped municipalities and communities of many of their powers over development.

It's all in service to the "More Homes Built Faster" philosophy and it could mean substantial changes to how small towns like NOTL will look in a few years.

We won't regurgitate here a lot of the ground covered in our expansive look at Bill 23, but it would seem

that the ground has literally shifted and the position of people like Deputy Lord Mayor Erwin Wiens – "Communicate, don't litigate" – might be the only future for towns like ours.

However, it also appears that in whatever negotiating goes on with large or small developers, municipalities will have little wriggle room. One hand (at least) is tied behind the back, thanks to Bill 23.

None of this is to say the community should throw in the towel and give up. Far from it.

Speak up. Push back. Let your concerns be known.

Until the newest incarnation of the provincial authority on planning decisions – now called the Ontario Land Tribunal – starts to weigh in on appeals, there's some slim hope that community concerns might have some influence on the outcome. But no guarantees.

Unfortunately, it appears, in many cases, especially those involving residential developments, "as of right" is the new buzz phrase, meaning property owners will have a lot more influence than they did previously. And municipalities like the Town of NOTL will have a lot less.

We hope we are wrong in this assessment and that special communities – like Old Town in NOTL – will be viewed through a lens that balances an established area's concerns with a developer's desires and with the province's goal to build more homes.

Premier Doug Ford, embroiled in controversy over his personal relationship with developers, has changed the rules in the name of building more homes. The jury is still out on how those changes will alter life in towns like NOTL.

### We welcome your letters

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

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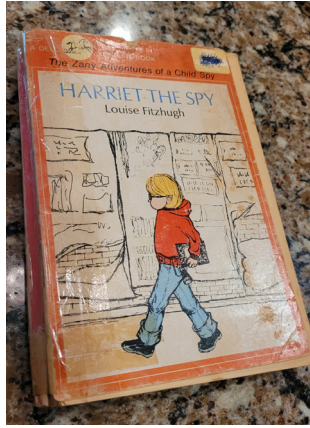
# Misdeed corrected: 'Harriet the Spy' is back on the shelves of library

Dear editor:  
My aunt says that a good-natured child chooses her own punishment for her crime.

Well, some children are a bit obtuse and it has taken me a few decades to get around to righting an old wrong. And I needed a little push.

I recently wrote in The Lake Report ("Insightful teacher inspired me to set and achieve goals") that in about 1972 I filched my favourite book, "Harriet the Spy" by Louise Fitzhugh from the library at Laura Secord Memorial School.

I confessed only because I thought it was too late to get into trouble. Alas, a gentle admonishment from a neighbour, not to mention, a guilty conscience, is a bigger incentive to make reparations than any fear of jail.



A shiny new copy of "Harriet the Spy" is now at the NOTL library.

Ross Robinson asked in his Ramblings column on Feb. 16, (Mrs. Dove should be in Teachers Hall of Fame. But that covert ...), "How can we get 'Harriet the Spy' back to the library, for the enjoyment of students today?"

He suggested that "the statute of limitations on theft may have run out, but

it would be the right thing to do and this simple act may change someone's life."

The idea that there might be a 10-year-old in Niagara who could not read about the zany adventures of a child spy because of my misdeed ... well, I cannot live with that.

This morning, I went to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library and spoke with Ms. Debbie, the librarian. I owned up to my sin. (It is the day before Ash Wednesday, so it seems appropriate.)

Ms. Debbie nodded wisely and said knowingly, "You've come to do penance."

Yes, indeed. I could not bear to part with my ragged, dilapidated stolen book; it is like a security blanket. Instead, I went online to Amazon and ordered a brand-new book.

And to my utter delight, I

discovered that Harriet the Spy is only the beginning. There are three other books in the series: "The Long Secret," "Sport," and "Harriet Spies Again."

All four books will be available in the library within the week. (Ms. Debbie was very forgiving; she said she understood my misdeed - "Harriet the Spy" is one of her favourites, too.)

And who knew that making reparations would feel so good.

I love the thought that other kids will feel the same bond with Harriet that I always have. (A word of caution: spying on your family and friends can get complicated - just ask Harriet.)

So, thank you, Rambling Ross. Your kindly suggestion has righted an old wrong and made my day.

Wallace Wiens  
NOTL

# Crossroads could be used as high school at night

Dear editor:  
I was a candidate last fall for the position of trustee for the District School Board of Niagara.

Had I been successful it was my plan to restore a secondary school in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Since I was a night school principal at Niagara District Secondary School for three years, I am convinced that Crossroads Public School in Virgil could easily accommodate 400 to 500 high school

students between the hours of 4 and 9 p.m.

The closing of NDSS in 2010 was clearly a huge miscalculation that has been proven every four years by the census results.

Niagara-on-the-Lake is projected to have more than 1,000 teenagers in two years' time.

The concept of night school has been around for decades and having one at Crossroads would resolve several issues.

Night school would re-

store the taxpayers', parents' and, most importantly, the students' right to attend a local secondary school for the four most important years of their lives.

I am certain there are local students, plus students from Niagara Falls and St. Catharines, who would prefer starting school at 4 p.m. rather than getting up at 7 a.m., riding a bus and also being able to participate in extra-curricular activities.

I am also certain there are several students, both male

and female, who would like to play hockey at the high school level. I am sure the town would be more than willing to allow access to the arenas in Virgil for this purpose.

If any one would like to discuss this further please call me at 905-682-4066.

I would appreciate any input or ideas about how we can help NOTL teenagers enjoy their high school years in their home town.

Don MacDougall  
NOTL

# How much has town spent on development legal battles?

Dear editor:  
The ongoing debates over the Rand Estate, Parliament Oak, Mary Street apartment and St. Davids' Tawny Ridge developments are but a few challenges facing our new council.

Accordingly, to what extent do we challenge and oppose these proposals and at what cost to the taxpayers?

In order for residents to evaluate such matters it should be incumbent (and

in the spirit of transparency so often promised during the latest municipal elections) on our current council to publicly disclose the actual legal expenditures incurred fighting developers during the tenure of our previous council.

As a taxpayer I thought I had the right to know how my taxes were spent. I requested this information previously, without success. So much for transparency.

These costs to the tax-

payer are discussed behind closed doors and to my knowledge have not been made public.

My sources tell me they run between \$3 million and \$4 million over the previous four-year term.

Our council should release the actual accounting of these legal costs in concert with a summary of the amount we expect to recover from any court rulings in our favour.

Then, and only then, can

the public speak from explicit knowledge what future challenges may cost and the impact on their taxes.

We may all be shocked by the numbers and be gun-shy about proceeding in future with potential frivolous NIMBY challenges.

These must be judiciously avoided at all costs and will challenge our elected officials. Not all residents will be happy with the results.

Samuel Young  
NOTL



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# Taking a road trip to explore **Romanesque Revival**



Brian Marshall  
Columnist

My wife and I decided to visit a recently opened storefront in Vineland which offers sauces, jams, relishes, etc. made principally from produce grown on the owner's 53-acre farm.

The shop, Cultivate Niagara, is located in the "barn" on the Honsberger Estate Winery property in Vineland. Turning onto the long driveway off Jordan Road, it is impossible not to see the substantial (about 5,000 square feet) two-and-a-half storey family home of the Honsberger's, who have farmed the land since 1811.

As we drove past the house's driveway facing facade, my jaw dropped because it bore the telltale elements of a Romanesque Revival built in the last quarter of the 19th century.

Since I have been writing this column, the Romanesque Revival style has never been covered for two reasons: First, they are quite rare and second, there isn't one in NOTL. The style is uniquely interesting how-

ever, so I thought, let's go on a road trip.

Romanesque Revival first broke ground in North American during the middle of the 19th century. Early examples of the style were institutional buildings (Smithsonian in Washington ca. 1841 and University College in Toronto ca. 1856, etc.) but, by the early 1870s, an American architect named Henry H. Richardson had sunk his creative teeth into Romanesque and brought his interpretation into the residential market.

This North American interpretation, generally referred to as Richardson Romanesque, is typified by the coloured rusticated cut-stone masonry used in the foundations and building trim. This is combined with massive stone or masonry (brick) walls, dramatic round-arched, semi-circular recessed door openings, bands of windows, masonry decorative details, projections and/or recesses that interrupt the surfaces of each elevation and towers.

But, all of these elements came at a cost. The expense of premium materials was compounded by the requirement for highly skilled craftsmen to complete the design. As a result, Romanesque houses were typically the purview of the wealthy and, due to the need for craftsmen, generally constructed in urban centres where that skillset could be found.

Hence the Honsberger House is an anomaly — it



The Honsberger House at 4060 Jordan Rd. in Jordan Station. BRIAN MARSHALL

is located on a farm, a good distance (especially in the 1800s) from any population centre.

Given that Romanesque houses came at a premium, there were three general categories of build dependent on how deep one's wallet was. For reference purposes, we can label the categories as "entry-level," "middle-of-the-road" and the "full megilla."

Let's start our road trip with an entry-level in downtown St. Catharines at 33 Duke St.

Here the use of expensive rusticated stone is minimized by a shorter foundation wall, a narrow band wrapping the second storey sill elevation and single block placement plus impost on each side of the entry

surround.

The main brick field is laid in a running bond, strategically punctuated by brick and fired clay decoration, with the majority of the rectangular windows topped by one piece dressed stone lintels. Even on the two-and-a-half storey frontispiece, the architect cleverly created a design which focuses on the balcony while echoing Romanesque elements around the recessed entry and the window to the left.

For this style Duke occupies a relatively small footprint — a modest house with pared down Romanesque features and decoration.

Back in the car, we head to 4060 Jordan Rd. to visit the Honsberger House

which is appreciably larger than Duke although lacking some of its more expensive and ornate decorative touches.

Similar to Duke, the rusticated Grimsby red sandstone foundation is low and, only on either side of the recessed entry does it extend higher — in this case, up to the imposts which, like the sills, are limestone.

The semi-circular arches of the entry and first floor windows to the right are completely made of brick voussoirs which have been accentuated by a course of dark brick enders. In another cost saving maneuver, the two-storey bay has been given a separate flat-sided cone roof to create the impression of the style's de rigueur tower without actu-

ally building one. Again, we see the hallmarks of Romanesque at an entry-level.

Now to the Hendrie House on the corner of James Street South and Herkimer Street in Hamilton where we have a middle-of-the-road example. Although it is constrained by the size of its corner lot, this house displays an intense presentation of towers, gables, roof lines, rusticated stone banding, carved and textured stone and brick decoration. The unfortunate addition of an awning obscures the impressive recessed entry from the road but it's worth a peek from the sidewalk.

Finally, we head to the George Gooderham House at 135 Saint George St. in Toronto which is the "full megilla." Intricate carvings of early Christian and Celtic motifs decorate multiple arches, gables, eaves and column heads. Rusticated stone abounds and a variety of roof shapes, tall chimneys, gables and tower animate the "castle" of the man who was, at that time, the wealthiest in the province. It's full-on Victorian glam words cannot express.

And, since you are in Toronto, swing by the 8,000 square foot Romanesque "starter home" George built for his 21 year old son G. Horace Gooderham at 504 Jarvis St. It isn't too shabby either.

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



## We must **speak up now** about inappropriate projects in Old Town



Writer Christopher Allen says we need to stand up to development proposals that don't fit the character of the surrounding neighbourhood. SUPPLIED

Dear editor:

I am not against development if the project fits the neighbourhood. But the Mary Street apartment proposal is massive and towers over the whole neighbourhood.

Imagine putting something like Queen's Landing Hotel on that lot with the entire surrounding neighbourhood being two storeys.

Except Queen's Landing is only three storeys. The apartment proposal is four storeys.

I know design is always a matter of opinion, but this

project seems out of place, poorly thought-out and an architectural mess.

It is a threat to the neighbourhood and if some restrictions or some changes are not put in place by the town, we are in big trouble.

Developers and their cash, that's all it seems to take to rubber stamp any of these offensive proposals that we are told we need in historic areas.

Regarding the Parliament Oak hotel proposal, we already have at least six other hotels within shout-

ing distance of each other in our Old Town historic area, plus other nearby accommodations.

The hotel is out of place, a massive four-storey building towering over a historic two-storey neighbourhood.

It is really completely unacceptable, in my view. However, to be fair, the actual design and overall look of the hotel may fit in some other location. But not in this low, two-storey residential area.

High-end lawyers and endless cash seem to be

part of the developers' pressure kit.

Some real second thought and rethinking here is absolutely essential.

If the saying "Getting one foot in the door" applies here then we are in big trouble and there will be no stopping these badly thought-out and inappropriate proposals from happening all over town — maybe in your own backyard.

Now is the time to speak up. No second chances here.

*Christopher Allen  
NOTL*



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# Soothing scents and colourful blooms

## NEOB Lavender expands with bigger farm, adds Queen Street storefront

Somer Slobodian  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

This summer, the intersection of Niagara Stone Road and Concession 7 Road will be alive with colour and the soothing scent of lavender.

After 13 years, NEOB Lavender: Niagara Essential Oils & Blend is moving from its 2.5-acre site to 12 acres about one kilometre away at 933 Niagara Stone Rd.

The new farm is almost five times the size of the original location. With that much space, the possibilities appear to be endless.

“It opens up for us to be very creative and to really expand it to a world-renowned type lavender farm,” Robert Achal, who co-founded the business with his wife Melissa, told The Lake Report.

“The purchase of the property was pretty spontaneous. We drove by it many times and we’re always like, ‘That’s a beautiful piece of property,’” he said.

When they saw it was for sale, they hopped on the opportunity.

Big plans are in the works and they are excited.

“This spring, we’re going to be planting 20,000 lavender plants,” said Melissa Achal.

They have also dug up and removed all of the lavender plants from the old farm.

Some of those plants are waiting to be put into the ground at the new site. By the summer, the transferred



NEOB Lavender owners Robert and Melissa Achal are excited about their new farm location soon to open at 933 Niagara Stone Rd. SOMER SLOBODIAN

plants will be flowering.

However, that’s not the only big change.

A new NEOB storefront location at 38 Queen St. opened earlier this month and it’s packed with home-made lavender items.

The company sells more than 150 lavender products and does all of its own bottling and labelling. In addition to lavender, it carries rose geranium and lemongrass.

“We’re just being welcomed by all and having so much fun down there. It’s so

alive and so positive,” said Melissa.

Though it’s only been open since the first week of February, the store has been doing great and the feedback has been positive, the owners say.

A lot of locals like to walk around Queen Street and many have been customers of NEOB Lavender, so it’s been an easy transition, Melissa told The Lake Report.

“It’s just something that they’re liking and the shop owners are saying it’s what’s

been missing,” she said.

When the opportunity to secure a storefront along Queen Street popped up, it was an easy decision to grab it. Within two months, it was open.

“We’ve looked around for many years to get down to the Queen Street area, but it’s something that doesn’t always come up,” said Melissa.

On the farm, another addition will be the two acres of colourful flowers they will plant.

The flowers will be

blooming by the summer and customers will be able to stop in and walk through the fields and pick their own bouquets.

This will be called the “NEOB Lavender flower farm.”

“It’s going to be absolutely beautiful,” said Melissa.

There will be “a wide variety of colours and it’s gonna be an awesome time.”

There’s a lot going on at the new location with big plans in the works and the couple will share more details in the coming weeks

once details are finalized with the town.

“Over time we’ll be beautifying a new property that’ll be just spectacular and everybody (is) really going to enjoy it when it becomes ready,” said Robert.

Along with the new NOTL retail location, NEOB has stores in Elora, Stratford and Bracebridge.

It only made sense to open one in Niagara-on-the-Lake, since the lavender is grown here.

The new farm will be open this summer.

  
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Seedy Sunday, hosted by Master Gardeners Niagara, is Feb. 26 at the St. Giles Presbyterian Church in St. Catharines. SUPPLIED

## Niagara's master gardeners share seeds

Jo-Ann Fraser  
Special to The Lake Report

Want to brighten your February, cultivate day-dreams and be inspired to try something new in the garden?

Pop by the Master Gardeners of Niagara Seedy Sunday event where you can purchase or swap seeds.

Thousands of seed packets will be on sale for only 25 cents. Or, bring your own seeds and swap them for a similar package of seeds for free.

"Seed swapping is an affordable and fun way to add diversity to your garden," says Betty Knight, a master gardener in Niagara-on-the-Lake, who is excited about the number of native seeds available to the public this year.

During the Sunday, Feb. 26, event, 43 kinds of native plant seeds and 26 types of tomato seeds will be available for sale.

It's all free and will be held at the St. Giles Presbyterian Church, 205 Linwell

Rd., St. Catharines from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Food bank donations will be collected.

"The Seed Exchange gives people a chance to experiment a little without investing a lot of money on seed packets or plants," says Bev Campeau, chair of the sale, now in its fifth year.

"We'll also have a variety of catalogues from vendors across Canada who sell unusual plant seeds."

The master gardeners want to encourage people to save and share native seeds, Campeau says.

"Our goal is to encourage gardeners to grow more native plants. You don't need to be 100 per cent native, but adding a few native plants really helps the pollinators."

While some may find saving and starting seeds a bit intimidating, there will be presentations and master gardeners on hand, including Knight.

"We'll be answering questions and suggesting appropriate seeds for sunny,

shady, dry or moist growing conditions," she says.

Knight organized the speakers for Seedy Sunday and is looking forward to hearing more about homesteading, biodiversity and a new strain of corn developed by Palatine Fruit & Roses on Four Mile Creek Road.

"We also coach people on how to start seeds, save seeds and what to do to improve their germination rates," adds Campeau. "It's frustrating to save seeds only to have them not germinate the following year."

Additionally, the master gardeners will share a wealth of broader gardening information.

"There is so much information on gardening available now," says Campeau. "It can be overwhelming. Searching on growing carrots can yield 3,000 websites."

The master gardeners want to cover the basics and explain what's really needed to have a rewarding garden.

"Gardening is about trial and error and learning through others," says Campeau.

The event is child-friendly, offering lots of activities to inspire younger gardeners. As a retired educator, Knight wants kids to come out and get their fingers dirty as they explore the fascinating world of seeds in the children's area.

"We want to capture the imagination of our children," adds Campeau, who is also keen to engage youngsters.

"We want to get them interested in growing their own produce and growing native plants. We want to spark their creativity, imagination and interest."

So, if you've always wanted to start your own seeds, want to learn more about starting seeds or want to spark your child or grandchild's imagination, join the Master Gardeners of Niagara for what promises to be a very Seedy Sunday.



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style.  
Category: IN SEARCH OF ALIEN LIFE

As the name suggests, the \$100 million Breakthrough Listen is a project to detect this type of signal from distant planets.

Last issue:

Category: THEIR '90S HIT ALBUM

Clue: 1992's Grammy-winning Album of the Year: This Brit's "Unplugged."

Answer: Who is Eric Clapton?

Answered first by: Jane Morris

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Claudia Grimwood, Mike Bondy, Bob Wheatley, Bill Hamilton, Pam Dowling, Susan Dewar, Marjory Walker, Howard Jones, Jim Dandy, Sheila Meloche, Elaine Landray, Kaitlyn Irving, Gordon Yanow,

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

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Thank you also to the Button Sales team, spearheaded by John Strecker and friends, and to the numerous Parade Marshalls.

These volunteers continued support and assistance during parade day makes it all come together!

An especially grateful thank you to Committee members Darka Jensen, Paul Mace, John Strecker, Pat Tebbutt, Kevin Turcotte, and Erwin Wiens.



## NOTL fire department reports increasing demand for services

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report



As the town gets bigger, the demands on Niagara-on-the-Lake's emergency services are growing.

NOTL Fire and Emergency Services is reporting that in 2022 it responded to 2.3 per cent more emergency calls than it did in 2021.

Call volume has gone up 11 per cent in the last five years, according to a report to council Tuesday night.

This is partially due to a nine per cent increase in the town's population, the report said.

"We want to maintain the volunteer model for as long as absolutely possible," said Fire Chief Jay Plato when asked about the viability of NOTL's voluntary approach to emergency services.

In 2022, the department received a total of 740 calls. Of those, 228 were medi-

cal calls, 177 were for fire alarms, 141 were for car accidents, 81 were for rescues and emergency assistance, 70 were for actual fires and 43 were for carbon monoxide incidents.

Plato said his department focuses more on prevention than on responsive action.

"Having citizens take on the understanding to try to prevent fires just helps us overall as a fire service," he said.

That is why the fire department actively conducts fire inspections. In the last year, it conducted 332 inspections. Short-term rentals accounted for 138 of them.

The fire department also

reviewed 144 special events for fire safety.

The need for fire safety inspections and other preventive activities has gone up 17 per cent compared to 2021, according to the staff report.

The report said the fire chief is looking for ways to prevent "staff fatigue" without compromising the current level of service.

The department has lost staff because of transfers to neighbouring towns and Plato said the service does what it can to attract and maintain staff.

The town's high cost of living can be a deterrent but Plato said the department works hard to make NOTL an attractive option for volunteer firefighters.

"We've never had somebody leave because they've just said this isn't for them. We've had people leave just because of their own life circumstances," he said.



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# Predators nail down **fourth place** and home ice advantage

Kevan Dowd  
The Lake Report

The Greater Metro Hockey League's 2022-23 regular season is officially over, bringing with it a respectable fourth-place finish for the Jr. A Niagara Predators.

A 6-4 win over the Streetsville Flyers last Friday night was enough to clinch fourth, giving Niagara home ice advantage in round one of the playoffs.

The Northumberland Stars and St. George Ravens were both only a few points behind Niagara before Friday's game, but thanks to games-in-hand, the Predators needed just two points to ensure no one could pass them.

They got that many and more in what turned out to be a four-point game.

"We were supposed to go to Streetsville too but because they couldn't get ice this was a four-point game," said Predators head coach Kevin Taylor. "We got the four points and that's all



The Predators start their best-of-three series against St. George this Friday, Feb. 24, at the Meridian Credit Union Arena in Virgil. The action starts at 7:30 p.m. KEVAN DOWD

that matters right now."

Having lost twice to the second-last place Flyers a week prior, it seemed Niagara was sending a message early on with Nick Savoie, Nolan Wyers and Cameron Savoie all scoring in the first 10 minutes. But the 3-0 lead would not last as goals from Streetsville at 13:22 and 16:29 narrowed the gap.

Not 20 seconds later, Anthony Tropea padded Niagara lead but it was short-lived with Streetsville answering back with 1:32 left in the period.

Niagara's Declan Fogarty would get the lone goal of the second period, giving his team some breathing room heading into the last 20 minutes. Then Streetsville notched one 30

seconds in.

With fans on the edge of their seats for the remainder of the game, Tropea earned his second of the night at 6:09 for a two-goal lead that Niagara held for the last 14 minutes.

While the drama played great for the fans, Taylor was less pleased with how the game unfolded. Though he felt selfish and sloppy

play led to an "ugly win," he also credits the Preds' opponents for keeping the pressure on.

"Streetsville's a tough team to play because there's no rhyme or reason for what they do out there. They looked terrible, then they came back, they played hard and they just didn't give up," he said.

"Tonight we had to adapt and change and right now, we didn't adapt to anything."

In the end, the win was all they needed, enough so that a 6-4 loss to Northumberland in their final game on Saturday meant only that the Predators would finish the season with two fewer points.

While this increased the Stars' chances of finishing fifth, it would take St. George's game Sunday afternoon to determine who Niagara would play in the first round of the playoffs.

According to Taylor, things would play out differently depending on who the

Predators wound up facing in the best-of-three series.

"If you play St. George it will be more of a hockey game. The thing with Northumberland is they're bigger, they're a strong team and they go out to punish you. I'd rather see them play one of the other teams for the first round, which might make things more interesting in the second round."

Ultimately St. George would come out on top, finishing fifth, three points behind Niagara. The Ravens beat the Windsor Aces Sunday but who sits on the visitors' bench this Friday is inconsequential to Taylor.

"The plan this year was to finish fourth. It's been rough to get to fourth but we got here and that was one of the goals that I had with the coaching staff. Now it's just on to the next set of goals."

The Predators start their best-of-three series against St. George this Friday, Feb. 24, at the Meridian Credit Union Arena in Virgil. Playoff action starts at 7:30 p.m.



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## Obituary

### Ellen Williams



**WILLIAMS, Ellen Elizabeth (Henry)** – Ellen Elizabeth Williams (nee Henry), beloved mother, grandmother, and retired teacher, passed away peacefully on Feb. 21, 2023 at Hospice Niagara, in St. Catharines, Ontario after

a courageous battle with pancreatic cancer. Born on Jan. 17, 1945, Ellen dedicated her life to her family, her teaching career, and being an active member of her community. Ellen was a devoted wife to Brian, mother to Lesley (David) Jesseau and Scott (Kyra) Williams, and was incredibly proud of her three grandsons, Ben & Nathan Jesseau, and Asher Williams. Throughout her life, she was an active walker, who enjoyed the outdoors and the beauty of nature. After Brian's passing in 2014, Ellen relied on the loving support of her Niagara-on-the-Lake community and friends including her beloved poker group, community organizations such as Newark Neighbours and her travelling companions with whom she travelled to South America, Mexico, Spain and Morocco. Ellen will be deeply missed by her family, friends, and all those who knew her. Her kindness, generosity, and unwavering spirit will forever be remembered and celebrated. The family wishes to thank the incredible staff at Hospice Niagara for their work to support Ellen and them through her final days. Per Ellen's wishes cremation has taken place. The family will receive friends at Morse & Son Funeral Home, 5917 Main St., Niagara Falls, on Saturday, Feb. 25, 2023 between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. As an expression of sympathy, those who wish may make a memorial donation to Hospice Niagara or to Pancreatic Cancer Canada. Memories, photos, and condolences may be shared at [www.morganfuneral.com](http://www.morganfuneral.com)

## NOTL author features town in debut novel

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

Whether you're team Suze or team Jannie, NOTLers likely will get a kick out of Sally Basmajian's debut novel "So Hard To Do."

The novel follows mother and daughter Suze and Jannie through a twisted love triangle involving the two women and Jannie's older neighbour, Aram.

It is billed as an "entertaining tale about mother-daughter relationships, a love triangle and coming into your own."

"Part of the book takes part here in Niagara-on-the-Lake," Basmajian said during a short Q&A session at a launch party in the Q Lounge at 124 on Queen Hotel & Spa with fellow NOTL author Cat Skinner.

Mentions of the town are hard to miss, with the Starbucks on Queen Street a meeting place in the first segment of the book and the old Court House serving as inspiration for the novel's pivotal scene.

"There's certainly a lot of subject matter to find in this town," said Skinner.

Moving to Niagara-on-



Sally Basmajian signs a copy of her debut novel "So Hard To Do" during a launch party at the Q Lounge. JULIA SACCO

the-Lake spiralled her into a career in novel writing, Basmajian said in a phone interview.

She made the move from Toronto in 2013 following a career in broadcasting and marketing sales, most recently at Bell Media CTV. "I loved that career. It was so much fun."

That being said, after about a year of spending free time decorating her new home in Old Town, Basmajian joined the NOTL Writers' Circle in search of

a new hobby.

"I really owe the entire journey to the NOTL Writers' Circle because they really encouraged me," she said.

At the launch party, guests sipped wine and ate nibbles while chatting about the book alongside the author.

NOTLer Chris Esposito said it was more than your average romance novel.

"It was easily relatable, with situations between mother-daughter."

Aside from featuring NOTL, "So Hard To Do" touches on a subject near and dear to the author's heart.

"The book features a couple of people at different points on the (autism) spectrum," said Basmajian.

She has family members who are on the spectrum and said that with the right support and love, they have accomplished a lot.

"I am very familiar with and love people on the autism spectrum and part of the inspiration of writing this book was to give them happy, romantic, happily ever after endings."

For the cover of the book, Basmajian said she chose the official shade of blue representative for those on the spectrum, noting that although it is a subliminal nod, she wanted to include a "loving recognition and tribute" to those in her life who live with autism.

At her book launch, on a large screen at the front of the room, a message read, "We're all on the spectrum when it comes to love," a sentiment that Basmajian endorses with a love story that's an easy read for all.



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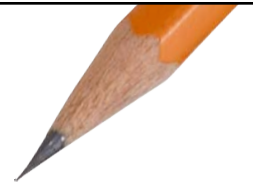
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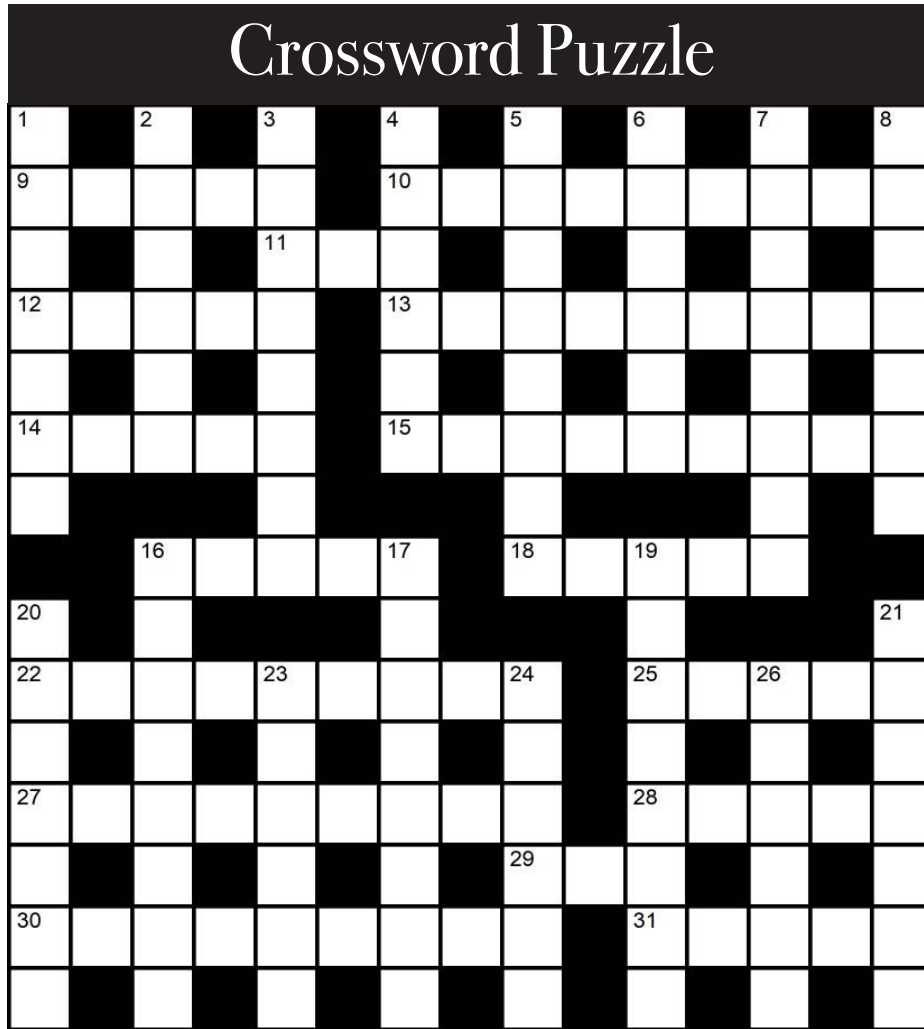
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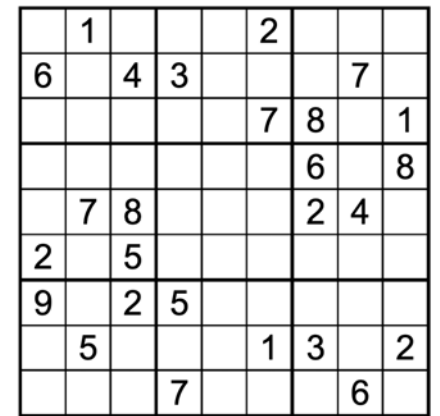
# Have some fun



- Across**
- 9. Icon (5)
  - 10. Dealers to spare or shuffle (9)
  - 11. Part of a journey (3)
  - 12. Disney classic set in a forest (5)
  - 13. Garments that zip up to go down? (9)
  - 14. The former Mrs. McCartney (5)
  - 15. Long periods (9)
  - 16. Authority (3-2)
  - 18. Give up (5)
  - 22. Woebegone (9)
  - 25. Fold-up bed (5)
  - 27. The Crimea, for example (9)
  - 28. Mixes gin or produces beater (5)
  - 29. Amp input label (3)
  - 30. Close by (2,3,4)
  - 31. Musical first lady (5)
- Down**
- 1. Tough terrier (3,4)
  - 2. One not of the cloth (6)
  - 3. Requirement for a Catholic priest (8)
  - 4. Bottleneck (6)
  - 5. Engage afresh (2-6)
  - 6. Wee girl (6)
  - 7. Gesticulated (8)
  - 8. The same old way (2,5)
  - 16. Head count of an army (8)
  - 17. Not vigilant (3,5)
  - 19. Implemented (8)
  - 20. Sterile (7)
  - 21. Overall (2,5)
  - 23. Old weights (6)
  - 24. Andean beasts (6)
  - 26. Start to pay attention (4,2)



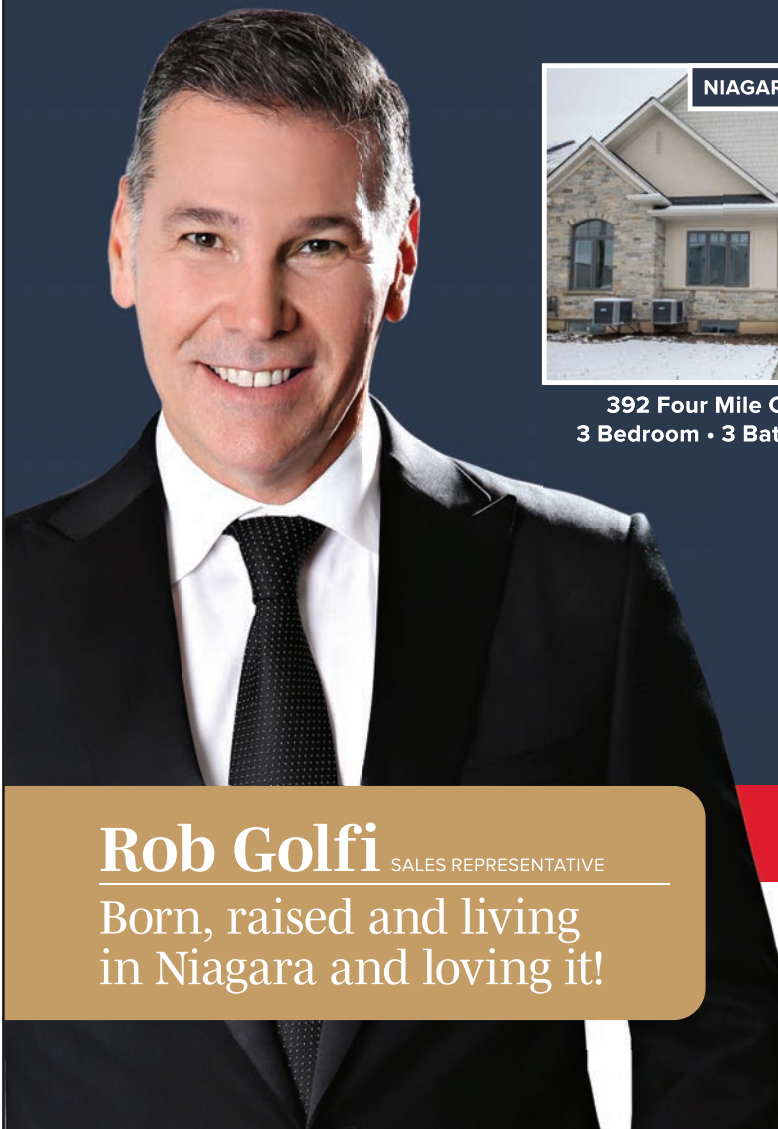
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# Differences between **Neanderthal** and human brains



**DR. BROWN**

Dr. William Brown  
Special to The Lake Report

Neanderthals lived between 30,000 and 400,000 years ago and then, throughout their wide Eurasian range, disappeared for mysterious reasons.

Genetic studies suggest they probably lived in small, widely scattered groups.

That mode of living would have fostered inbreeding, progressive loss of genetic diversity, the accumulation of faulty genes – and eventually, their demise.

Neanderthals mated with their close cousins, the denisovans, as well as modern humans, leaving traces of their DNA in present day Europeans but not those living in Africa.

The DNA of the denisovans is found in peoples of East and Southeast Asia,

including Australian aboriginals.

From the beginning, Neanderthals were cartooned as brutish crude characters because of their thick bones and heavy eye-brow bones. And for a long time, they were thought to be incapable of symbolic oral language and creating art.

The latter turns out to be wrong because there is evidence that Neanderthals living in Europe created decorative art and left their handprints and some figurative art on cave walls thousands of years before modern humans reached Western Europe.

Even so, Neanderthals left nothing like the wealth of figurative art found in many caves throughout Europe depicting the animals modern humans encountered between 10,000 and 40,000 years ago. This leaves some to wonder if the Neanderthal brain was as cognitively capable as that of modern humans.

The shape of the skull hints of what the shape and possibly functional capacities of the underlying brain might be. The volume of the average Neanderthal brain



As one might expect, evidence suggests Neanderthal brains were not as capable as those of modern humans. PIXABAY

is roughly 100 to 200 cc larger than the human brain. But the shape of the human and Neanderthal skulls, and hence the underlying brains, are very different.

The Neanderthal skull is flattened longitudinally, the forehead slopes back and there is a noticeable enlargement at the back of the skull, the occipital bun, not found in the human skull.

The orbits and the canal for the optic nerves are also larger in the Neanderthals than modern humans.

The latter three, the larger orbits and optic nerve canal and occipital bun, suggest a larger visual system, but the sloping forehead and longitudinal shape compared to the far more globular shape

of the human skull, and the upright forehead suggests the human neocortex in the frontal and temporal regions may be significantly larger than Neanderthals'.

What be to see whether there are any significant differences in the development of the Neanderthal and human brains. Development of the normal brain from progenitor cells is a highly choreographed, precisely timed, and complex affair leading to the creation of the neocortex, all under exquisitely timed genetic control.

Great strides have been made in tracking the genetic and cellular developmental process in the human brain by the creation of human

mini-brains and gene editing.

Adult skin cells may be reverse-engineered to create stem cells and then re-engineered to create the earliest progenitor cells which in turn, create brain cells and guide them to their destination. Within a matter of a few days, these tiny several millimetre-sized minibrains develop layered neocortex similar to that found in a normal human brain at an early developmental stage.

Investigators found one protein encoding gene called *TKTL1*, which plays a key role in the development of the fetal brain. Neanderthals and modern humans share this gene, with a difference.

The protein product of the gene differs between the two species by a single amino acid.

If the Neanderthal version of the gene is substituted for the human version of the gene in normal human minibrains, fewer nerve cells and connections are made. Or if the human version of the gene is introduced into Neanderthal minibrains, more nerve cells and connections are created.

That's a startling result for one gene and suggests the brains of Neanderthals were not as capable as those of modern humans.

And it reminds us that small changes in single genes can have profound consequences for the brain's development and potential.

This year the Nobel Prize in medicine or physiology was won by Svante Paabo for his pioneering work on ancient DNA, beginning with mitochondrial DNA and later nuclear DNA from Neanderthals.

He showed how their genomes differ from ours and from a species, the denisovans, that he was the first to identify, using DNA salvaged from a finger bone, which showed they were close cousins of the Neanderthals.

The technology has been used to explore the relatedness of other species and track the evolution and migrations of our own species.

*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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## Five ways to take containers **beyond the patio**



### GROWING TOGETHER

Many of us will use container plantings to provide an accent of colour at our front doors or on our decks and patios.

These pots will often be used for seasonal plantings – bulbs in spring, annuals in summer etc.

But there are other ways to use decorative pots, vessels and jars to accomplish different goals in the garden.

**1. Use a single vessel as a focal point in the landscape.** A well-placed pot or vessel among plantings can be just the thing to draw the eye out into the landscape. Sometimes you need an item in the garden to be an accent. It could be an area where you need something different than another plant for it to stand out from its surroundings. Select a large vessel for extra drama and impact. A bold colour, such as cobalt blue will also make it stand out. Keep in mind your style of garden and the overall feeling that you are wanting to create when choosing your container.



Get creative: Use pots to separate garden areas. It's a bonus if the colour of the pot matches what will eventually be blooming. And you can always add a little extra.

**2. Cluster pots in a planting bed.** For larger garden areas you may want to select a series of pots with similar shapes, colour schemes or surfaces to create a lively grouping that breaks up a planted bed. The surface of the pots – whether smooth, rough or shiny – not only will provide interest in a planted bed but will also give the eye a place to rest. The pots don't all have to match, but at least one of the elements listed here should tie them all together. Depending on the height of the surrounding plantings you might have to elevate the pots to have them stand out. Varying heights of pots are most effective in a cluster.

**3. Accent or screen an awkward or overlooked spot.** Adding a single pot or a group of pots can be a

perfect way to fill an empty corner where a plant would just not work. Also, we will often have a large blank wall area below overhangs, which can be notoriously difficult for plants. These are ideal places for decorative containers with or without plants placed in them. Other places to use a pot or pot grouping include in front of an air conditioning unit, a generator or a utility box.

**4. Mark a garden boundary.** Use pots to delineate a transition from one garden space to another. We hear more and more now about creating "garden rooms." A simple row of pots can make an area feel enclosed and separate from the next area.

**5. Anchor opposite sides of a gate.** Placing a pair of pots on either side of a gate serves two purposes. First,

they can be an easy way to interest to the entrance. They can add prominence to the gate and match the colour of the sculpture and gate frame. Secondly, as soon as you place a pair of any item, spaced apart from each other, we have been programmed that you must enter the new area by going in between the two items. This is a great way of directing your guests to go the way you want them to. It seems to draw the eye in and makes it more inviting to visitors.

So, as you are sitting inside, anticipating the coming spring, think about how you could be using decorative containers to enhance your garden..

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

## EXPLORING PHOTOS WITH NOTL MUSEUM

### NOTL's first Black town councillor: John Waters

John Waters was one of the most successful Black men to live in Niagara-on-the-Lake. He was a successful farmer but was also a local businessman who had tavern and grocery businesses and also rented properties to many in the community. Waters was also the first Black man to be elected as town councillor in 1874. He was re-elected a few times and held the position until he died in office in 1880. He was remembered as being well-respected and had the reputation of being a wise councillor. This photograph shows the former Waters home on King Street. It would have been located across the street from the current Pillar and Post Gardens, near John Street. The home was later owned by the Russell family, whose children are pictured here.

**Correction:** Last week's photo mentioned the Jarvis Family living in Queenston. In fact, during that time they were living on Front Street in the town of Niagara.



## Looking to the Stars

### Conjunction of Jupiter and Chiron will **influence your week**

Bill Auchterlonie  
Columnist

**Thursday, Feb. 23:** In the last week of February, we don't have any significant aspects, except for the Jupiter-Chiron conjunction. Jupiter is now at 11 degrees Aries, Chiron at 13 degrees Aries. The conjunction is slowly building up (and will become exact in March). Pay attention to feelings, events or developments – anything that stirs inside your feelings of vulnerability. Chiron is that "owe" we all feel, that wound we all share. And Jupiter will put the magnifying glass on it. Not to make us suffer, but to help us pay attention to what matters. You may have flashbacks of old hurts from your childhood. A parent who ignored you. A classmate who bullied you. A teacher who made you feel inadequate. An event where you felt exposed or ashamed in front of other people. Old wounds will resurface to remind us of painful experiences we haven't fully processed. This acknowledgment of the wound is a normal part of the healing process. Healing will come, but first, we need to make friends with the wound. Today we celebrate Stan Laurel, who died on Feb. 23, 1965.



**Friday, Feb. 24:** As the moon moves from Aries into Taurus, we have the feeling of fresh – and that is good. It feels good. Happy birthday to Wilhelm Grimm, born this day in 1786. Together with his brother Jacob they brought the world the tales by the Brothers Grimm.

**Saturday, Feb. 25:** With Uranus conjunct the moon, it's a great day for a surprise. You can surprise yourself. George Harrison, the quiet Beatle who was also one of the Traveling Wilburys, was born Feb. 25, 1943.

**Sunday, Feb. 26:** With the moon and Saturn in harmony, it's a day for disciplined progress. Don't bite off too much or you may fear indigestive pains. When he was born, he was Antoine Dominique Domino Jr. He became Fats Domino, who once was more successful than Elvis. He was born on Feb. 26, 1928.



**Monday, Feb. 27:** It's the day of the first quarter moon, with the sun in Pisces and the moon in Gemini. It's a good day to catch up on things you've been neglecting. Is she more famous for her love affairs or for her "purple" eyes? You choose. I speak of Elizabeth Taylor, born Feb. 27, 1932.



**Tuesday Feb. 28:** For most of the day, the moon is in talkative Gemini. Then she moves to her home sign of Cancer. It's a very busy day, capped by a quiet time tonight. He was born in Toronto and his designs include art galleries, museums and major public buildings around the world. He is Frank Gehry, born Feb. 28, 1929.

**Wednesday, March 1:** Harmony between the sun in Pisces and the moon in Cancer is a cosmic note to enjoy yourself. Happy birthday to Justin Bieber, born March 1, 1994. He is the only singer to have seven songs from one LP appear on Billboard's Hot 100.



Check out my podcast **Looking up to the Stars** at [www.lutts.com](http://www.lutts.com).

*Astrology is a form of entertainment, not a science.*

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