



NOTL filmmaker's movie is a love letter to cinema | Page 13

## NOTL, Niagara Falls sell internet business to Cogeco

Richard Hutton  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is getting out of the broadband internet business, announcing it has sold the

network company it partially owned for two decades.

In a joint statement on Monday, Energy Services Niagara and the Niagara Falls Hydro Holding Commission announced the sale of the Niagara Regional

Broadband Network to cable operator Cogeco Connexion.

The sale price has not yet been disclosed but in 2015-16, the company was valued at \$36 million.

Before the sale, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake,

through Energy Services Niagara, held a minority stake – 25 per cent – in the internet, telephone and television provider company since it was formed in 2004.

The other 75 per cent was owned by the Falls holding

commission.

With the sale, Energy Services Niagara and the Niagara Falls Hydro Holding Commission will retain a minority stake in the



Continued on Page 4 Tim Curtis.



Jimmy Lai.

## NOTL hotelier Jimmy Lai nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

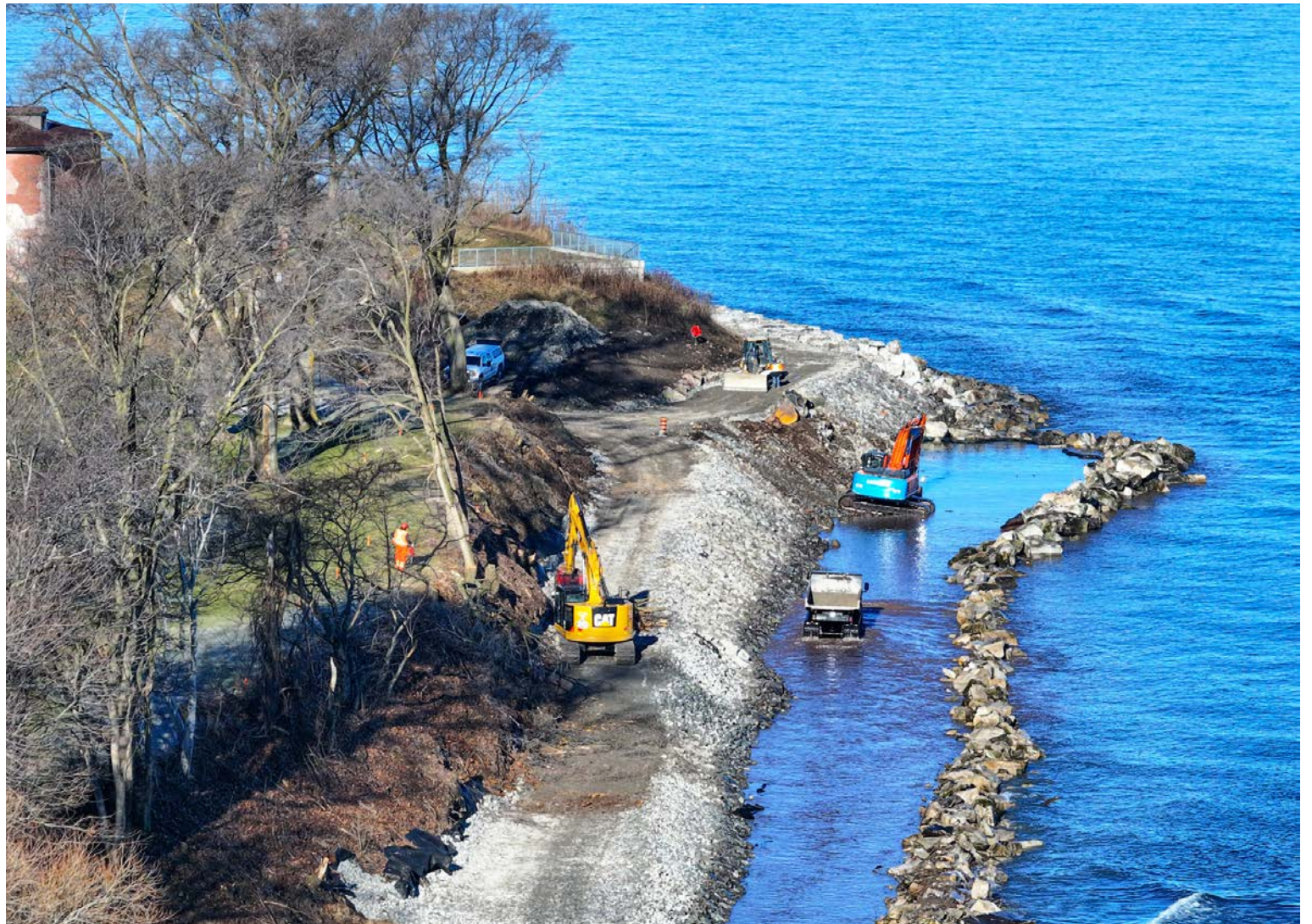
As hotelier Jimmy Lai languishes in a Hong Kong jail cell, on trial for supporting democratic reforms, his family here in Niagara-on-the-Lake last week had no idea he was about to be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for a second time.

Despite that, on Thursday week when two U.S. politicians put forward Lai's nomination for the prestigious honour, his family members weren't surprised, says his niece, Erica Lepp.

It simply seemed just and right.

Continued on Page 4

## Building the breakwall



Workers and heavy equipment are busy building part of a 500-metre breakwall and walkway near Fort Mississauga and along the northern perimeter of the NOTL Golf Club. The multi-million-dollar Parks Canada project started in December and will last about two years. This drone photo offers a bird's-eye view from about 100 feet overhead. **MORE PHOTOS on Page 7.** JOHN DELORENZI

## Community rallies to help after family's home destroyed by fire

On a dark, cold Friday night in December, the Fish family lost almost every material thing in their lives. And their beloved family pet, Mabel, a five-year-old bernedoodle.

Just before 10 p.m. on Dec.

15, a fire broke out in the family room of their modest but newly renovated back-split home in Niagara Falls.

Claire, 14, and Evelyn, 12, and a friend were in their home. Their parents, Kate and Stephen, were down the

street having dessert with friends.

Within seconds the house filled with smoke and toxic fumes. Startled by the cacophony of smoke alarms, the girls called 911 and immediately followed their

well-rehearsed fire escape plan, smashing the screen of a second-storey bedroom, climbing out the window to safety.

Kate, 47, is principal of Crossroads Public School in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The

Lake Report asked her to tell our readers how the disastrous fire has affected them, their feelings just weeks after the devastation and how the family is rebuilding their lives. **Read their story on Page 6.**



Kate Fish.



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# Property owner's request for rental permit **rejected** by council

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

A Virgil resident wants to use a three-storey home as a short-term rental despite previously saying that was not its intended purpose when he built it.

But councillors promptly rejected the request.

Chris Draayer, the owner of 729 Line 1 Rd., appeared at a council meeting Jan. 30 asking the town to let him use the house as a short-term rental after his initial application was declined.

His appeal was dismissed unanimously without generating much discussion.

"We have to stick to our strict bylaws," Coun. Maria Mavridis said.

Bylaw officer April Smith told council the property has not been occupied for four years and so does not qualify for a licence.

Single detached dwellings need to be occupied for four years before they can qualify for a licence, the town's

short-term bylaw said.

"I do remember the controversy around it and you were quoted as saying you were never going to make it an Airbnb," Mavridis said.

Draayer said the house was a "little bit odd" and "lends itself more to short-term stays."

"The moment you walk into this place, it kinda says, 'Don't stay here long,' " he said.

He also considered listing the house for sale, or for a long-term lease, Draayer told council.

"Most of the comments were, 'It's not really conducive to a family life there,' " he said.

He said he wasn't sure what his plans were when he built the house but wanted to "do something interesting" with the small lot.

The property would not be eligible for a licence until Feb. 17, 2027, Smith told councillors.

Draayer told The Lake Report he knew that approval was a long-shot



Chris Draayer asks NOTL council for a short-term rental licence. EVAN LOREE

going in.

"What have I got to lose? It's either going to stay in the family as friends and family use, or I'm going to list it."

Someday, after the four-year clause in the town's short-term rental bylaws lapse, Draayer said it could be an Airbnb.

"I'm just learning more about the whole short-term rental application process," he told council.

Draayer's name is attached to two short-term

rental licences on the town's registry.

These are both for vacation apartments at 1607 Four Mile Creek Rd., also in Virgil. The corresponding Airbnb listings for that address list Draayer as the host.

According to the host's landing page, he has 503 reviews and has been hosting for five years.

Draayer said he had no problems getting licences for his property on Four Mile Creek, though, because the zoning permitted it.

He advertises 729 Line 1 Rd – "the Tiny House" – on the platform as well.

The ad lists it as "Available for summer 2023," but for a minimum stay of 28 days.

"This newly built unique custom home can sleep up to four couples and is located in the heart of NOTL," the ad states.

Draayer said he rents it exclusively to family and friends and does not charge them for their stay.

He said he gets no bookings for the property through Airbnb and the posting has no reviews.

Town spokesperson Marah Minor has told The Lake Report rentals used for more than 28 days are not included in the town's definition of a short-term rental.

Visitors to "the Tiny House" will find a large staircase in the centre leading to the upper floors and basement. The structure has three bedrooms and three bathrooms, a kitchen and living room.

"Everything's tight," Draayer told The Lake Report during a house tour.

"If I could have gotten more room in the bedrooms for dressers and walk-in closets and all that you don't think those would have been there?" he said.

Asked if alternate designs would have made it more comfortable for long-term residents, he said "maybe," but what he built was to code and his architect was

restrained by the zoning bylaws.

Though he could have requested variances or planning amendments to allow alternate designs, Draayer said he chose not to, citing concerns about project delays.

Though he said he was not motivated by the profitability of the short-term rental market, he did say he'd had bad experiences renting to long-term tenants.

He's happy with the renting to long-term residents but a former tenant, he said, "destroyed" one of his old properties.

"I had to put more money into that part of the house than I got from them over the two years," he said.

As for previously saying he didn't plan to use it as an Airbnb, Draayer commented: "What do you want me to say? People can't change their mind?"

"Once you start building and realizing - and living and spending time in it - your thoughts can change." [evanloree@niagaranow.com](mailto:evanloree@niagaranow.com)

# Goettlers give, again: Crowd turns out to support growth of heritage trail

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Almost 50 people came out to support ongoing efforts to restore the Upper Canada Heritage Trail in Niagara-on-the-Lake Monday afternoon.

Town leaders and members of the heritage trail committee unveiled one of six new information boards that now dot the walking trail's route.

Lauren and Vaughn Goettler of the Goettler Family Foundation donated \$6,000 to help pay for the boards.

The Goettlers have also given \$20,000 to support the planting of pollinator gardens along the trail, Lauren Goettler told The Lake Report.

"It's been a long time coming. We started this project last spring. So we could get the plantings done in June," she added.

"If we can really get this pollinator garden going it could be world renowned."

Her husband said the trail was overgrown with a lot of



Rick Meloen, Vaughn Goettler and Tony Chisholm, link arms in front of a crowd of almost 50 people who came out to support the Upper Canada Heritage Trail. EVAN LOREE

non-native species.

"It's a part of our history. And it's a part of our history that we need to protect because so much of it is going away," he added.

"It's here for the town. It's here for the tourists, it's here for everyone. So enjoy."

The boards display infor-

mation on various natural and historical features of the trail, including its wildlife, rare trees, waterways and history, said a town news release.

The information on the boards was written by Owen Bjorgan, who was unable to attend the unveiling, said Tony Chisholm, vice-chair

of the heritage trail committee.

Restoration efforts for the trail go back to 2017, said Rick Meloen, chair of the committee.

While the committee realized it was going to be a multi-year project, "we didn't expect it to be this many years," he told the crowd.

The pandemic slowed down the restoration efforts but, "What I didn't expect is the support that the community has given to this trail," Melon added.

The trail has become much more than a path, it has become a "learning facility."

Despite publicity efforts Meloen said he had not seen an uptick in donations to the heritage trail.

"It's very, very slow," he told The Lake Report after the unveiling.

He said the committee will be pushing people to give more and "open up your wallets" in the spring.

Virgil resident Ingrid Regier said the trail was "one of the last few gems" for residents of NOTL.

She described council's now-reversed decision to grant developer Benny Marotta and his company Solmar a right of way over the heritage trail for access to the Rand Estate subdivision as a "shame."

Lauren Goettler said she was "shocked" when she learned of the initial decision.

"I can't believe that our town council even offered that. That is shocking," she said.

Though the Goettlers planned to pitch in another \$40,000 over the next two years, she said they were asking themselves if they still "want to do that."

"Apparently, we can invest our money in that trail and then the town can just do whatever they want with it."

Coun. Tim Balasiuk, also at the unveiling, said some parts of the Rand Estate wall, which runs parallel to the trail, will likely be "retrofitted" to advance the future subdivision.

"The fact of the matter is, if it's going to be an emergency laneway, then it's going to be augmented at some point."

He also said he'd like to see the trail "stay the way that it is."

Balasiuk said the trail represented his "old stomping grounds," where he once rode dirt bikes as a kid.

"It was just a fun place to grow up." [evanloree@niagaranow.com](mailto:evanloree@niagaranow.com)



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## NOTL approves \$10.2M for capital projects

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The town has approved a \$10.2-million capital budget for 2024.

The decision came at the end of two meetings held back to back at the Niagara-on-the-Lake town hall on Tuesday night.

The \$10.2-million price tag is 5.7 per cent higher, or \$552,000 more, than that for capital projects in 2023, said a town news release.

"Effective capital planning is crucial for the growth and development of our community," Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said in a statement posted to the town's website Wednesday evening.

Last year, the town ap-



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa.

proved about \$9.6 million for capital projects.

The lion's share of this year's capital expenses is going to reconstruction of Concession 6, between Warner and York roads, and to a watermain replacement on Hunter Road.

That's \$1.9 million for the new road and \$1.65 million for the watermain.

The town will also be spending \$750,000 worth in culvert repairs along Dorchester Street using debt.

A town report said the debt would be paid off through taxes annually basis starting in 2025.

The \$750,000 project represents a small tax increase of 0.21 per cent or \$2.71 per resident annually, the report said.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor did not support the budget because she wanted assurances that money for the Dorchester Street project would be used to upgrade the infrastructure to modern standards which could withstand worsening flooding problems.

"It's important we don't fall behind in our infrastructure by delaying this another year," Coun. Erwin Wiens said in response.

The next big ticket items in the capital budget are a

\$500,000 dump and plow truck, and \$400,000 for parking machines, according to slides presented Tuesday night by town treasurer Kyle Freeborn.

Freeborn unveiled a draft of this year's capital budget last September, which proposed almost \$10.4 million in expenses, down from an initial proposal of more than \$14 million.

At a meeting in October, Freeborn presented preliminary options for an operating budget.

The unapproved operating budget was estimated at almost \$16 million, up from almost \$15 million in 2023.

The operating budget is still being formulated, but has not been discussed publicly this year.

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## Town spends \$45K on Four Mile Creek blockages

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Four Mile Creek is getting a long-overdue cleanup.

Niagara-on-the-Lake council has approved up to \$45,000 for the cleanup of clogs and blockages on the waterway, which is used by farmers for runoff from irrigation.

Darren Mackenzie, the town's acting director of operations, said the last recorded inspection of the creek was about five years ago.

The creek was an "on-going issue" for residents dating back seven years, by Coun. Nick Ruller's estimate.

The issue raised questions for Ruller on how often the creek gets inspected.

Later, Mackenzie said the Drainage Act requires towns to inspect their municipal drains every year, but Four Mile Creek is not a municipal drain.

He said there may have been some internal miscommunication at the town over who was responsible for keeping the creek flowing.

The blockages had been caused by various sources, including erosion, upstream construction and storm runoff, he added.



Darren Mackenzie, the town's acting director of operations, seen here at a previous meeting, says maintenance on Four Mile Creek is an ongoing issue. EVAN LOREE

As the creek is used by farmers to dispense with runoff from irrigation, the irrigation community is responsible for contributing to maintenance costs attributable to its use of the creek.

However, the blockages were first reported in January 2023, a time when the agricultural community produced little to no runoff.

"All the damage that's being caused isn't caused by the irrigators," Coun. Erwin Wiens told his fellow councillors in December.

The issue came to light a year ago when a resident reported a collapsed culvert near Paxton Lane in St. Davids, according to a town report.

Debate among members of the irrigation committee

grew heated at a meeting in August, objecting to the possibility that irrigators would be solely responsible for bearing the cost of repairs.

Town staff agree with their assertion.

"The irrigation system should not be responsible for all maintenance on channels that other water impacts. This needs to be addressed going forward," said a report prepared by Mackenzie in December.

This casts doubt on the question of who gets billed for the maintenance.

"We have to go through and see what is obstructing and get a ballpark on how much it's going to cost," Mackenzie told The Lake Report.

In a follow-up email on Jan. 15, Mackenzie said an inspection was done in December but he still had no cost estimate.

He said he expects to complete the maintenance by March.

"Then we'll figure out who should be billed for any of those services," he said.

"I think the big elephant in the room is the property owners don't want to contribute any funding to cleaning up," Wiens told council.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor said she was surprised the town was only planning to address obstructions that impact the flow of irrigation as the creek is also a natural waterway and carries storm runoff.

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# Internet company sold to Cogeco

*Continued from Front Page*

company for the short term, said Tim Curtis, president of Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro.

Cogeco Connexion is a subsidiary of Cocego Communications. Energy Services Niagara and NOTL Hydro are both subsidiaries of Niagara-on-the-Lake Energy Inc.

Curtis said the sale was the culmination of an 18-month process.

"We met with a lot of companies. We met with a lot of people," he said.

When the network was created two decades ago, it was to fill a need for broadband services in Niagara, Curtis said.

"Back then, major telecoms were not investing in Niagara," he said.

That all changed in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Telecom companies changed course to meet the demand for internet and telephone services when many people began working from home.

"Now, there's investments happening all over Niagara," he said. "Bell is making a huge investment. Rogers is coming into Niagara and, of course, we have Cogeco."

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said that the goal of the Niagara Regional Broadband Network was to provide customers with "the best possible

access" to broadband services.

"Working with Cogeco is the best means to achieve this in this new, competitive environment," he said.

As part of the acquisition, Cogeco has committed to continue investing in broadband networks in Niagara, something that the two municipalities could no longer afford, Curtis said.

"We don't have the money to put into it."

The mayor of Niagara Falls, Jim Diodati, agreed.

"Going forward, it would require having much deeper pockets," he said. "We just don't have the resources."

Cogeco, he added, was a great choice when it came time to selling.

"They already have a strong presence in Niagara," Diodati said.

Frédéric Perron, president of Cogeco Connexion, said the move strengthens a commitment the company already has made to Niagara.

"We have a strong commitment to the Niagara community through investing in our fibre-powered network, hiring locally, providing local programming on YourTV, and supporting local charities and community events," he said.

Curtis, meanwhile, said customers should expect little to change with the new ownership.

"We expect that it will be business as usual," he said.  
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# Lai jailed since 2020 for pro-democracy views

*Continued from Front Page*

"My uncle has always been such a peaceful and kind and loving man," Lepp said in an interview.

"As I've known him and as our family has known him, he's always someone that just truly really always leads with love."

Lai, a longtime and outspoken advocate for democratic reform, has been jailed in Hong Kong by the Chinese government and is in the midst of a show trial by the Communist regime.

He has pleaded not guilty to allegations of breaching a national security law imposed on Hong Kong by the Chinese government after massive protests there in 2019. The trial began in December.

The Beijing regime has accused Lai of masterminding the uprising with the help of foreign conspirators.

Lai, who has many business holdings, owns Vintage Hotels in NOTL, which includes the Prince of Wales, Queen's Landing and the Pillar and Post. He also was the longtime publisher of the now-closed pro-democracy tabloid newspaper Apple Daily in Hong Kong.

Lepp, who grew up in NOTL and still lives here, is the daughter of Lai's twin sister, Si Wai Lai. She has fond memories of her uncle.

"I would spend holidays



Jimmy Lai cruises the Niagara River during a 2018 visit to NOTL. SUPPLIED

with him when I was young sometimes. And he just was always leading with love and peace, even in business."

"So, with everything going on" – particularly his trial for championing democracy – "it's not surprising at all that he would be nominated."

"We're all just really proud of him," she said. "He's just such a wonderful, loving, peaceful man."

In 2022, Lai and four other jailed leaders of Hong Kong pro-democracy movement were nominated for the Peace Prize by a

group of 15 academics from around the world.

That year, the Peace Prize went to human rights advocate Ales Bialiatski from Belarus, the Russian human rights organization Memorial and the Ukrainian human rights group Center for Civil Liberties.

Bob Jackson, CEO of Vintage Hotels, told The Lake Report, "We are thrilled to hear of Mr. Lai's nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize."

"As the founder, and undeniable inspiration for Vintage Hotels and the Lais Hotel group in Canada, it is a fitting recognition for someone who has sacrificed so much in the fight for freedom and democracy."

"Our hope is that this continues to shine a light on the unjust trial and imprisonment of Jimmy in Hong Kong. As always, he is in our thoughts and in our prayers," Jackson said.

Leaders around the world, including Canada's Parliament, have been critical of Lai's detention and trial. On Dec. 12, four days after Lai's 76th birthday, the House of Commons unanimously called for his release.

His supporters hope the Nobel nomination helps pressure China to free him.

The Nobel committee generally does not announce the names of nominees – scores of people are

formally nominated for the Peace Prize every year – but nominators are free to reveal the names they put forward.

So last week, Rep. Christopher Smith of New Jersey and Sen. Jeff Merkley (Oregon), chairs of the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China, released their letter to the Nobel committee announcing their official nomination of Lai and three other "champions of human rights, peace and freedom in China and Hong Kong" for the coveted Peace Prize.

Also named for the honour were Uyghur scholar Ilham Tohti and human rights lawyers Xu Zhiyong and Ding Jiayi.

Regarding Lai, his nominators noted that since his detention in 2020, "the Hong Kong government has destroyed press freedom, and all independent news outlets have closed, either a chilling effect of Lai's detention or a result of direct government suppression."

"All these (nominated) individuals embody the spirit of the Nobel Peace Prize and justly deserve the award," Smith and Merkley said.

"The Peace Prize will focus the world's attention on all those struggling to exercise their fundamental human rights in the People's Republic of China."

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# Chloe Cooley plaque unveiling a culmination of years of work for Sadlier

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

For Rosemary Sadlier, witnessing the unveiling of a plaque commemorating Chloe Cooley was the culmination of hard work and dedication over many years of her life.

Standing in Navy Hall, where the Parliament of Upper Canada met 231 years ago to debate the 1793 Act to Limit Slavery, Sadlier gathered with Niagara Parks officials and town members on Saturday to watch the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada present the new plaque.

Cooley was a Black enslaved woman whose struggles with her violent enslaver more than two centuries ago precipitated the Act to Limit Slavery.

Sadlier, president of the Ontario Black History Society from 1993 to 2015, played an instrumental role in Canada's decision

to make Black History Month an annual celebration in 1995.

She was also a leading voice in the recognition of Aug. 1 as Emancipation Day, which members of Parliament voted to officially recognize in 2021, and is the nominator and proponent for the national recognition of Cooley.

At Navy Hall on Saturday, Sadlier said she was "thrilled."

"I have, so far, been able to touch on all aspects of how the acknowledgement of slavery and the end of slavery has come about in this country," Sadlier told The Lake Report.

Cooley, she added, was just one of hundreds of enslaved people alive at that time in North America — including some in what was then Upper Canada.

The Act to Limit Slavery did not abolish slavery for all in the province but made it so that no new

enslaved people could be brought into Upper Canada and mandated that children born to an enslaved woman after the law was passed would be freed at age 25.

That statute is often cited as making Upper Canada the first jurisdiction in the British Empire to pass a law freeing enslaved people, though slavery was not abolished throughout the empire until 1834.

It preceded the abolition of slavery in the United States — through the passing of the 13th Amendment to its constitution — by 72 years.

However, Sadlier said that some Canadians do not understand that racism is present in our country as well as in the United States.

"With all respect to what Lt.-Gov. John Graves Simcoe did, what if he had done it sooner?" Sadlier said, referring to the lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada who instructed the attorney general to draft



Dr. Richard Alway, MP Chris Bittle, Rochelle Bush, Rosemary Sadlier and Jewel Cunningham unveil the Chloe Cooley plaque at Navy Hall on Saturday. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

legislation imposing limits on enslavement.

"In the time that passed where people got wind that legislation was about to be passed that would impact slave owners, they were able to protect their 'assets,' and Chloe was an asset," Sadlier said. "That's another unfortunate reality of our history."

She explained that a big part of her personal history is that her connection to the Underground Railroad.

"I know that my ancestors on my mother's side were from Virginia. What were their options?" she said.

"What would they have done around the time that they had the opportunity to leave? Where would I generations later have found myself?"

Sadlier referred to this history as a "major butterfly effect," impacting slavery and the reality of the possibility of Black migration in early Canada's history.

Rochelle Bush, the owner of Tubman Tours Canada, is also a descendant of freedom seekers and shared with the audience what honouring Cooley means for her.

She explained that it never dawned on her that people of African descent were enslaved right here in Niagara

— until she read more about Cooley's story in a 1993 reference book called "Slavery and Freedom in Niagara."

"I give thanks to Chloe Cooley because her unfortunate circumstances made it possible for hundreds of enslaved African Americans to seek refuge in Canada, my family included," Bush told the crowd.

The plaque is to be installed at the Niagara River scenic outlook in Queenston, near Brock's Monument, at a later date. Visitors are urged to stop by and bring loved ones to read Cooley's story.

[juliasacco@niagaranow.com](mailto:juliasacco@niagaranow.com)



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# 'We hug a lot. Even more than we used to'

Kate Fish  
Special to The Lake Report

We hug a lot. Even more than we used to.

As a family, we just want to be together all the time now ... strength and safety in numbers and a deeper appreciation of each other.

It's hard to start over again, to rebuild our shared life. It's exhausting and sometimes feels like an insurmountable challenge but there is no other option. We just move forward.

In doing so after this experience, however, it feels like our path is somehow more authentic. Unencumbered. And full of gratitude.

When we arrived at my parents' home in Niagara-on-the-Lake just after midnight, only two hours after the call to 911, the girls had no shoes, no coats. We had nothing.

They literally escaped with the clothes on their backs and new memories that still come flooding back unexpectedly and unapologetically.

The first few days there was simply shock.

Shopping for shoes and coats the next day during the last retail push before Christmas Eve was an impossibility. We still smelled like smoke, if only to us.

That smell; I can still smell it. I am reminded in one quick sniff of a candle, food burning, a toaster and taken back immediately to a moment of sheer terror and helplessness.

Regardless, we could not have put the necessary smiles on our faces to fit

into the hustle and bustle. We would have dampened everyone's joyful spirit. It would not have been fair to the excited gift-givers and unprepared sales clerks asking if we were ready for Christmas.

So, a friend went shopping for us. Two of everything. Socks. Pants. Shirts. Sweaters. Coats. Boots. Shoes. Toiletries. Just to get us through the weekend. I literally couldn't think past that.

That was the first offer of assistance we received. It was not the last.

The people who visited the first few days were our family and closest friends. They were the foundation of the community that eventually revealed itself around us in the weeks to come.

Literally hundreds, maybe thousands, of people coalescing around us in support. Our safety net. Our new home. A home built without walls by the expressions of support, compassion, sensitivity, kindness, generosity, thoughtfulness, love, sympathy and friendship we received from expected and unexpected sources.

An intangible home that gave us shelter, safety and security when everything tangible was so uncertain.

They were rallying around us. And despite the initial difficulty I had with appearing vulnerable by receiving and accepting help, I became more comfortable doing so as I came to the profound realization that community doesn't exist without both the people who give help as well as those



Kate Fish and her husband Stephen were visiting with neighbours down the street on the evening of Dec. 15 when fire broke out in the family room of their Niagara Falls home. Their daughters Claire, 14, and Evelyn, 12, were home and followed the family's rehearsed plan to escape the blaze. The family's dog, Mabel, didn't survive. SUPPLIED

who accept it when it is their turn. It was our turn.

In the various personal and professional roles I occupy, I am typically the facilitator of the provision of assistance. I am accustomed to and trained for responding to emergency situations.

I was not, however, prepared for this one. I

don't think anything can prepare you for an experience such as this. I HAD to rely on the generosity, experience, expertise and assistance of others.

I was physically spent, emotionally tapped and wholly overwhelmed. I needed our community. It was an extremely valuable revelation.

So, I let go. I accepted help. I trusted our community and I started saying, "Yes, please."

The offers of assistance, in various forms, were and continue to be, overwhelming. Daily. Hourly. People checking in. Offering things, help, support.

Our wall-less home has a solid foundation that

continues to be built as the physical one is repaired, as well.

The experience of having your home destroyed by fire is horrible. The experience of escaping a house on fire, I have been told by children far more courageous and sensible than I am, is horrible. The experience of grieving Mabel is horrible.

But the gratitude and lessons we have learned are far greater in number than the possessions we have lost.

Correction. There is something that can prepare you for an experience such as this: make sure your smoke detectors are working and that you have enough of them.

Make sure you have an escape plan and practise it. And practise it. And practise it. Doing so may one day give you and your wall-less home, your community, the opportunity be grateful you did.

And thank every first responder you know and even the ones you don't. Make sure they know how valued they are in our shared community so they continue to work tirelessly to keep us safe.

As my eldest daughter, a hero in her own right, profoundly said, "While we ran out of a burning building, they ran into it."

We are forever grateful to the firefighters, police officers, dispatchers and paramedics who contributed to ensuring there was no greater loss of life. Thank you.

*Kate Fish is principal of Crossroads Public School.*

## St. Davids speed enforcement camera will be **active** starting in April

Richard Hutton  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Drivers travelling along York Road near St. Davids Public School may have noticed what appears to be one of Niagara Region's new speed cameras.

They would be right – sort of.

The region's associate director of transportation planning, Scott Fraser, says that as part of its automated speed enforcement programming, it is rotating the use of the four speed cameras through 13 community safety zones the region had at the time program was approved.

"The housing and the pole are mounted permanently

and then as each camera rotates, it's inserted into that now pre-installed pole and housing," Fraser said.

A speed camera is now live on Niagara Stone Road, near Crossroads Public School, and will be active until the end of March before it is moved to the York Road location.

The camera will then undergo a short testing period of less than a week, Fraser said.

"We have to reverify (that) the camera has been set up and installed properly," he said.

Signs notifying drivers of the speed camera's upcoming installation have been posted to warn drivers travelling in both directions along York Road in St. Davids.



A case in St. Davids currently holds no camera. The camera will move from Virgil to St. Davids in April. RICHARD HUTTON

There is a "moderate speed threshold," Fraser said, that is not set by the region but rather by the province. It is also something that will not be disclosed.

"Anyone who's concerned about receiving a ticket should be driving the posted

speed limit on the road because the posted speed limit is the law," he said.

Under the automated system, no demerit points are issued, as is the case with tickets that the police issue.

Fraser said the region has been collecting data, such as

the number of tickets or the number of fines being issued to lead-footed drivers, since the program — a part of the region's Vision Zero road safety campaign — began last September. Fraser said that it is too early to determine the impact of the cameras.

"We are still collecting that information and analyzing it and we intend to come back to regional council in the early spring," Fraser said. "That will be our opportunity to share a lot of the information around what road safety improvements we are seeing, the number of violations and so forth."

Since the program came into effect, the region has been hearing from residents both for and against the cameras.

"I think the community at large recognizes the importance of road safety and that this is a tool that we can use to improve that right across the region as part of our commitment to Vision Zero, which is eliminating fatalities and serious injuries on our road network," Fraser said.

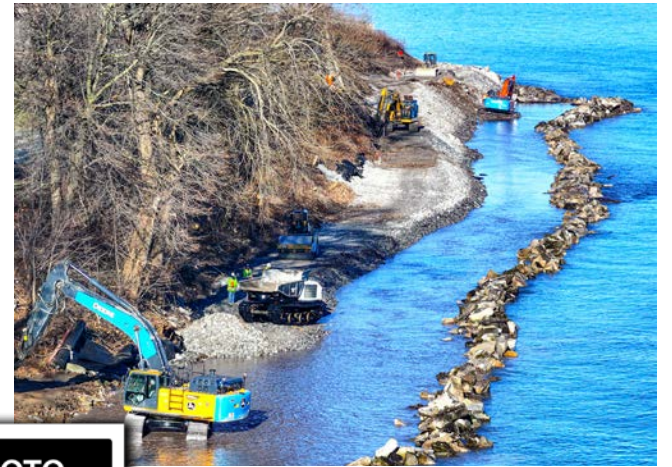
Under the program, fines are levied on the registered owner of the vehicle's licence plate, regardless of who was operating the vehicle at the time of the infraction.

Fines will include the set fine for the speeding infraction, a victim surcharge of 30 per cent of the fine incurred and a \$5 court charge.

[hutton@niagaranow.com](mailto:hutton@niagaranow.com)



# Bird's-eye view of building the breakwall



**PHOTO GALLERY**  
See more pictures at [niagaranow.com](http://niagaranow.com)



Drone photos taken this past Tuesday morning from an altitude of about 100 to 150-feet show work underway on the breakwall near the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club's first tee and clubhouse, left. At right, workers use heavy equipment to prepare the 500-metre extension of the breakwall and walkway near Fort Mississauga. The final phase in the multi-million-dollar Parks Canada project started in December and will last about two years. **MORE PHOTOS at [niagaranow.com](http://niagaranow.com).** PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN DELORENZI

## Inniskillin winemaker sees 'impressive' icewine season after a few rocky years

Zahraa Hmood  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's wineries have wrapped up another month of harvest for icewine production, collecting tons of frozen grapes during last month's cold snap.

At Inniskillin on Niagara Stone Road, its lead winemaker says while the industry took a hit during the pandemic, this year he's seeing a resurgence in interest around icewine — corresponding with, for them, a successful harvest.

As part of the annual Icewine Festival, Inniskillin hosted a vineyard tour and allowed guests to taste this winter's harvested icewine grapes and their raw juice.

Winemaker Nicholas Gizuk showed guests the ins and outs of icewine production during a harvest and brunch.

"The traffic and the vibe around icewine this year is the best I've seen it in a long time," he said.

In its 2022 annual report, VQA Ontario reported that icewine production in the province has been steadily declining over the last five years, with two significant drops in 2019 and 2022.

In 2022, the amount of icewine made in Ontario

was 111,614 litres, down from 502,082 litres in 2021.

Asked if this year's milder winter made for a more challenging icewine harvest season, Gizuk said, "I would consider 2021 way more challenging of a season than it is currently," due to a tough harvest season for table wine grapes at the turn of autumn.

At the end of 2023, however, VQA Ontario reported a significant increase in grapes harvested for icewine, at 4,095 tonnes compared to the 2022 vintage's 765 tonnes.

Despite the unseasonably mild start to this year's winter, Gizuk said harvest and grape pressing production began within the typical harvest period at Inniskillin — the first three weeks of January.

"Our yields are basically on spec for what we contracted," he said. "It was actually a little bit heavier than what we anticipated, which is good."

According to VQA Ontario standards, temperatures have to fall below -8 C before grapes are ready for icewine harvesting.

Gizuk, however, prefers to hold out a little bit longer — until the temperature to hit -10 C.

"I like waiting till -10, till my grapes are frozen solid all the way through," he said. "Gives me a little bit more control over the juice on the back end."

Thanks to the polar vortex, which Gizuk saw coming in the forecast, Niagara hit that temperature the night of Jan. 14.

The team spent a week harvesting and pressing icewine grapes, finishing on Jan. 21.

Those who held out for cold temperatures before harvest found a benefit in one specific area: a higher Brix value — the amount in degrees of dissolved sugar in a liquid solution.

The VQA standard level for the juice is 35 degrees after pressing when harvested at -8 C.

Since Gizuk waited until -10 C, this year's juice is looking at a Brix value of 38 to 42, which also means a lower alcohol percentage than that of a 35 Brix value variety — 9.5 per cent alcohol instead of 12 per cent.

"That's where the artistry comes in where everybody can make them differently," he said.

Based on what the winemaking team has tasted of the juices so far, Gizuk said he's excited to see

what sort of icewine they'll produce.

The Vidal, Gizuk said, has an "overly abundant mandarin, orange peel, clementine" taste. "It's a little more citrus-driven this year."

The same citrus theme comes forward in the Riesling, assistant winemaker Sydney Agbay said, and it tastes like a "much more concentrated version of the table wine" with flavours of lemon-lime and apricot.

As for the reds, she described the Cabernet Sauvignon as a "dark plum," "very rich" and "velvety," while the Cabernet Franc is similar, but more comparative to light red fruits.

"It's more like the raspberry, strawberry (and) cranberry, if you took it and turned it into jam ... They're really good," Agbay said.

Two years removed from Ontario's last pandemic lockdown, Gizuk said he's starting to see more cars sporting Quebec and American licence plates back in town and a big uptick in tourism, continuing from last summer's resurgence.

"It's very impressive to see how many people are actually coming out to try icewine again," he said.



Icewine grapes grow at Inniskillin. SUPPLIED

Plus, with most air travel restrictions lifted and more traffic in airports, one of the big markets for icewine sales is making a comeback — those who purchase wine through airlines and airport shops.

"It's not something you can go on Amazon and buy," he said. "It's still something that you need to go to a shop, go to a store and see and try and get that

real, visceral experience."

The winery is keeping the icewine celebration going this February with its free light display experience every Friday and Saturday from 5 to 8 p.m., until Feb. 24.

Inniskillin's latest icewine collection will be available sometime later this spring, with bottling taking place in April and May.

[zahraa@niagaranow.com](mailto:zahraa@niagaranow.com)





# NOTICE OF INTENTION TO DESIGNATE

## IN THE MATTER OF THE ONTARIO HERITAGE ACT, R.S.O. 1990, CHAPTER 0.18 AND IN THE MATTER OF THE LANDS AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATION IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

### NOTICE OF INTENTION TO DESIGNATE

TAKE NOTICE that the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake intends to designate the property at **12 PRINCESS STREET, ST. SAVIOURS ANGLICAN CHURCH (CP 1 LOT 247 TO LOT 249)** as a property of cultural heritage value or interest under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter 0.18.

#### Description of Property

The subject property is set in a small site which overlooks the Niagara River and the Queenston docks to the east. On the subject property, the church building is located at the intersection of Princess Street and Highlander Street, towards the east of Princess Street. 12 Princess Street also contains a parish hall, located towards the south of the church building. The building was relocated in the 1950s from the St. Martin's Anglican church in Niagara Falls. The open space surrounding the church building and the parish hall is landscaped with a few mature trees located towards the north and south of the subject property. The structures have a moderate setback from Princess Street and Highlander Street. The access to the church and parish hall is through a paved pedestrian pathway through the Highlander Street, towards the northwest corner of the church building.

#### Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

The property known as the St. Saviours Anglican Church has cultural heritage value or interest for its design and physical values, its historical and associative values and its contextual values.

The building which became to be known as the 'St. Saviours Anglican Church' was constructed in 1879. The property has design and physical value because it is a representative example of the Gothic Revival style. The one-and-a-half storey rectangular plan church has a large steeply pitched front and rear gable roof, lancet and pointed arched window openings, diagonally projecting vestry door, tracery on windows, angled buttresses, dressed and undressed voussoirs, stone chimney, and stained glass rose window which is typical of Gothic Revival structures. The asymmetrical façade and symmetrical side elevations and detailing are also typical of the Gothic Revival style.

St. Saviours Anglican Church has associative value as the Brock Memorial Church. It has direct association with Sir Isaac Brock who is considered the 'Saviour of Upper Canada'. He led the charge against the enemy in the Battle of Queenston in 1812. The church is dedicated to his memory and is believed to be the only church in Canada to be named after a layman. There are plaques located on the subject property dedicated to Sir Isaac Brock.

St. Saviours Anglican Church also has direct association with the parish of St. Saviours, which was formed in 1817. They met in various locations until 1879, by then the construction of the St. Saviours church was completed. The church also has the potential to yield information that contributes to the understanding of its parish community. St. Saviours Anglican Church also has the potential to offer new knowledge or a greater understanding of the commemoration aspects of the community's history as a former rector of the church is also buried on the grounds of the subject property near the west elevation.

St. Saviours Anglican Church has contextual value because it is important in maintaining the character of the area. St. Saviours church is part of the historic fabric of the Queenston urban area. It lies in close proximity to the Brock Memorial in Queenston Heights and both the structures are visible from the Niagara River. The church has served functionally to its community as a church to its congregation since 1879. Visually, the church sits on a rise of land which slopes down to the surrounding properties and the landscape and could be viewed from various vantage points in the neighborhood. The church is also designed with its main elevation facing the Niagara River which would have made the church more recognizable and visible for the people coming up and down the Niagara River.

#### Description of Key Heritage Attributes

Key exterior and interior attributes that embody the heritage value of the church at 12 Princess Street in Niagara-on-the-Lake include its:

- One and a half storey Gothic Revival church
- Steeply pitched gable roofs
- Projecting chancel on the west side
- Tower with steeple on the northeast corner
- Stone chimney
- Diagonally projecting vestry door
- Broken course rubble construction
- Lancet and pointed arched openings
- Stained glass windows
- Dressed and undressed stone voussoirs and sills
- Trefoil and tracery details on window openings
- Angled buttresses
- Main door on east elevation with its hardware
- Plaques dedicated by Archbishop E. Scott and Queenston residents
- Brock memorial window above the altar
- The grave of a former rector located on the subject property
- Location of St. Saviours within Queenston facing the Niagara River on a rise of land
- Mature trees and landscaped lawn

#### Objections

Any objection to this designation must be filled no later than 30 days after the date of publication of the Notice of Intent to Designate. Objections should be directed to Grant Bivol, Town Clerk, 1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake, L0S 1T0. The last date to file a notice of objection is **March 8th 2024**.

#### Queries

Any further queries should be directed to Sumra Zia, Heritage Planner at (905) 468-3266 ext. 327 or through email at [sumra.zia@notl.com](mailto:sumra.zia@notl.com).

Dated at the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake this 8th day of February 2024

GRANT BIVOL, CLERK





## NOTICE OF INTENTION TO DESIGNATE

### IN THE MATTER OF THE ONTARIO HERITAGE ACT, R.S.O. 1990, CHAPTER 0.18 AND IN THE MATTER OF THE LANDS AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATION IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

#### NOTICE OF INTENTION TO DESIGNATE

TAKE NOTICE that the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake intends to designate the property at **130 FRONT STREET, KIRBY HOUSE (PLAN 86 PART LOT 11 PART LOT 12)** as a property of cultural heritage value or interest under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter 0.18.

#### Description of Property

The subject property is located on 130 Front Street. The Kirby House is located near the intersection of Front Street and Gate Street. The residential building is set in a large site which has partial views of Lake Ontario on the north. The orientation of the built structure is such that it is placed closer to Front Street and has a large backyard in the rear. 130 Front Street also contains a detached garage located towards the southeast corner of the subject property. The open space surrounding the residential building is landscaped with a few mature trees located towards the west and south of the subject property. The pedestrian access to the house is through a paved stone pathway through the picket fence facing Front Street. Access for cars is through a rubble driveway located towards the east of the residential structure, outside the picket fence boundary.

#### Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

The property known as the Kirby House has cultural heritage value or interest for its design and physical values, its historical and associative values and its contextual values.

The house which has become to be known as the 'Kirby House', was constructed in 1818. The property has design and physical value because it is a representative example of the Georgian style. The two-storey rectangular plan residence has a side gable roof with return eaves, symmetrical façade with three bays, cornice details, six over six double hung windows, the neo-classical doorway and the stucco finish. The balanced, simple and symmetrical side elevations are also characteristic of the Georgian style.

The Kirby House is also of value because of its association with William Kirby. The influence of William Kirby was far-reaching and had an impact locally, provincially, nationally and he also raised recognition of Canada internationally. Kirby first came to Niagara in September of 1839. Initially, he worked as a tanner and then was a partner in a tannery business, from there he transitioned to teaching. After his marriage in 1847 to Eliza Madeline Whitmore, Kirby moved permanently to Niagara and in 1850, became the editor of the Niagara Mail until well into the 1860's. William Kirby was the author of the Annals of Niagara, The Golden Dog, Canadian Idylls and other works. His work, The Golden Dog, went on to become an international best-seller. His work is well known internationally and even helped gain international interest in Canada's history. After his arrival in Niagara, he worked in various industries and was an essential part of many societies. William Kirby was also one of the original Fellows of the Royal Society of Canada. He has a plaque dedicated by the Ontario Archaeological and Historic Sites Board, installed in front of the Kirby house.

The Kirby House also has contextual value because it is important in supporting the historic character of the area. Kirby house is within the boundaries of the Historic Old Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and is in close proximity to the Queen-Picton Heritage District. The house design and layout of the subject property, in terms of the open and built spaces, is in keeping with the surrounding properties.

#### Description of Key Heritage Attributes

Key exterior and interior attributes that embody the heritage value of the dwelling at 130 Front Street in Niagara-on-the-Lake include its:

- 3 bay symmetrical façade
- Side gable roof with overhanging return eaves
- Red brick chimneys on each gable end
- Upper sash and cornice details
- French and six over six double hung windows
- Wooden trim details around openings
- Main doorway with entablature, cornice, sidelights and pilasters
- Plaque dedicated by Ontario Archaeological and Historic Sites Board
- Location of Kirby house within historic old town of Niagara-on-the-Lake
- Mature trees and landscaped lawns
- Mantel piece with fluted pilasters
- Recessed carved fans
- Centre hall staircase

#### Objections

Any objection to this designation must be filed no later than 30 days after the date of publication of the Notice of Intent to Designate. Objections should be directed to Grant Bivol, Town Clerk, 1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake, L0S 1T0. The last date to file a notice of objection is March 8th 2024.

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Dated at the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake this 8th day of February 2024

GRANT BIVOL, CLERK





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## Honours for Cooley



Rosemary Sadlier has put in countless hours of work to honour the history of Chloe Cooley, including sitting on the Canada Post committee responsible for issuing the Chloe Cooley stamp last February. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

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**Contributed by Patty Garriock**

“Once you replace negative thoughts with positive ones, you’ll start having positive results.”  
 - Willie Nelson

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### Editorial

## An essential reminder of our history

Kevin MacLean  
 Managing Editor

Its plain appearance belies its significance and historical importance.

It’s a large metal plaque, almost identical to numerous other plaques erected around this historic town – and around the province.

This new plaque commemorating the capture and enslavement of Chloe Cooley, and the unprecedented response of the government of Upper Canada a few months later in July 1793, marks a time that, looking back, we as Canadians can be justifiably proud of.

While the 1793 Act to Limit Slavery should have been enacted years earlier and should have done more

to outlaw enslavement, for the time it was landmark legislation, setting a precedent across what was then the British Empire.

Many of us see these historic reminders from days long past in our walks around town, in parks and public areas, and occasionally hidden away in corners where crowds rarely venture.

Unfortunately, sometimes they’re almost invisible to us – unnoticed as we go about our lives.

We certainly hope that doesn’t happen with the plaque dedicated to Chloe Cooley and unveiled in a ceremony this week here in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

This new plaque eventually will be erected at the Niagara River scenic

lookout in Queenston, near Brock’s Monument, not far from where Cooley was captured and taken across the river to America.

We hope residents and visitors will stop by and take the time to absorb the gravity of what was happening – even in Canada – in that era more than 230 years ago.

The lookout offers an expansive view of the river and the lands that comprise Niagara-on-the-Lake. It’s a fitting location.

In fewer than 100 words, in both official languages, the plaque offers an essential reminder of yet another time this historic town played a significant role in world events.

Here is what is inscribed: “In March 1793, Chloe

Cooley, an enslaved woman of African descent living in Queenston, was violently seized, bound and transported against her will across the Niagara River to be sold in New York State.

She screamed and resisted but could not break free. Peter Martin, a Black Loyalist witness, brought the horrors of Cooley’s capture to the attention of the Executive Council of Upper Canada.

His testimony emboldened Lieutenant Governor Simcoe to pass legislation restricting enslavement, making Upper Canada a refuge for African American freedom seekers.

Her courageous actions exemplify the resistance of enslaved women.”

editor@niagaranow.com

## Every family needs a plan in case of a fire

Kevin MacLean  
 Managing Editor

If fire strikes your home, do you have a plan? Fire officials have always encouraged Canadians

to create and practise an escape plan if a fire breaks out.

As Crossroads Public School principal Kate Fish reminds us all in a compelling story this week about

her family’s experience, having working smoke detectors and a plan in case of a fire can be the difference in a life-or-death situation.

In her family’s case, when fire roared through their

home 10 days before Christmas, their two daughters were able to escape because they knew exactly what to do.

It’s an excellent reminder for us all.

**Correction:** A story last week about suspended Niagara Catholic school trustee Natalia Benoit not properly reporting her election expenses did not make clear that the Compliance Audit Review committee discussed the issue, not the school board. The Lake Report regrets the error.

# WEDNESDAYS & THURSDAYS

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## LETTER OF THE WEEK

# We need to **commit** to our official plan and bylaws

Dear editor:  
There was a day when the words “bylaw” and “official plan” meant something. A bylaw by definition, is a regulation, something that has been given much serious thought in order to enforce a policy or plan.

Likewise, an official plan is something that has been given much serious thought and has two components. “Official,” as in, this is really serious and has been approved by an official body, and “plan,” something with the intention of being carried

out to build or achieve something. Those fundamentals about good governance appear to have been forgotten as we continue to read about all the variances or deviations from our bylaws and official plans that are being encouraged or per-

mitted by our town staff and councillors. Such is the case, once again, as outlined in “Staff supports King Street condo” (The Lake Report, Jan. 25): A “staff report said the project is consistent with the town, region and provincial planning policies.”

Actually, this is questionable, even at the local level. Let’s pick just one item, unit density. The developer is proposing 52.8 units per hectare; the median permitted density is 30 units. My math tells me that is almost two times the

permitted density. But then again, in the eyes of those who are supporting the development, two is a very small number. We need to do better and be committed to our bylaws and official plan.  
**Bill Garriock**  
**NOTL**

# Saving NOTL history: A plan for future of the **Rand Estate**

*This is the text of Elizabeth Masson’s presentation Tuesday to Niagara-on-the-Lake councillors regarding the Rand Estate’s character study. A copy was submitted for publication. Masson was the author of a four-part series on the history of the Rand Estate that was published in The Lake Report in late 2020.*

I wish to comment on three aspects of the Randwood character study and then conclude with a proposal that I hope will interest Solmar Development Corp. and town council.

The first heritage feature I wish to talk about is the wall that surrounds three sides of the Rand Estate.

The Randwood Wall is recognized by not only the residents of this town but by the many visitors to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The section on John Street is in relatively good shape, being made of concrete. However, the part that runs down Charlotte Street is

beginning to deteriorate and the section on the south side of the estate along the former train tracks is in terrible disrepair.

I’ve been told how difficult the wall is to repair. First, one must search for the correct-sized stones to replace the ones that have disappeared and then attempt to fix them in place, a long and difficult procedure.

I would like to see the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake start maintaining the Randwood Wall as soon as possible. It is definitely the best-known wall in the region, if not the entire province.

The garden around the Rands’ swimming pool was designed by the Dunington-Grubbs in about 1925. When seen shortly before the property was bought by Solmar, the peony alley was still intact and producing numerous blooms. The climbing roses had grown incredibly thick in the 85 years since



Writer Elizabeth Masson thinks Benny Marotta should donate the Rand Estate to the Town of NOTL. FILE

they were planted and had prolific rosehips.

I would like to see these horticultural features maintained as soon as possible. All gardeners will acknowledge that if perennials are neglected for more than two years or so, they are overrun with weeds. This is especially true in Niagara-on-the-Lake, which seems to be the world capital of goutweed.

I was pleased to see the recommendation of installing the axial pathway from the railroad gazebo across the

fields to John Street, thereby creating a pathway from the Upper Canada Heritage Trail to the Commons.

While some people would say that the public should not be allowed to cross private property, I would remind them of how welcoming the Rand family and the Foxes, who owned 144 and 176 John St. from 1993 to 2004, were to the townspeople of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Many people today talk of being invited to the Rand

swimming pool, the first one built in town, while others speak of the tennis tournaments held on the Randwood courts.

Hope Elliott Bradley has told me about the dances held in the Randwood stables that the young people in town attended in the 1940s. In its early years, the opening night party for the Shaw Festival was held on the grounds of Randwood.

Bill and Carol Fox, who ran the School of Philosophy in the buildings that face John Street, allowed organizations in town to hold luncheons in the Randwood house.

They also invited neighbours to explore the pathways at 144 and 176 John St.

However, more recently, all the gates have been shut and nailed closed. I very much hope that the townspeople of Niagara-on-the-Lake will soon be welcome on the Rand Estate.

It is evident that if the of-

official plan amendment under consideration is adopted, there will be very little land remaining on which to build housing units.

I would like to propose that council invite Benny Marotta, the CEO of Solmar Development Corp., to donate the property at 200 John St. and 588 Charlotte St. to the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

He and his family have lived here for at least 12 years and have established many successful businesses in town.

Since they are known for their generosity as witnessed by major donations to Niagara College, the new Niagara Falls hospital and the St. Catharines hospital, why not make a donation of this heritage estate so the townspeople of Niagara-on-the-Lake can enjoy the beauty of the Rand Estate?

I hope the council and Mr. Marotta will consider this idea.

# More **bike lanes** needed in NOTL

Dear editor:  
In John Morley’s guest column last week (“No harm in connecting Rand and heritage trail”), he points out that the Niagara Parkway bike trail was planned in 1985.

We are very fortunate the planning took place at the time but that was at a time when Niagara-on-the-Lake and environs had a much smaller population than is here today.

There are also many more businesses that take advantage of this facility to rent trail vehicles to tourists,



so I suspect the traffic along this trail has much more than doubled since it was planned. Which brings me to my point.

We need more safe, off-road bike trails. They have managed to pull this off in Toronto despite its heavily populated areas.

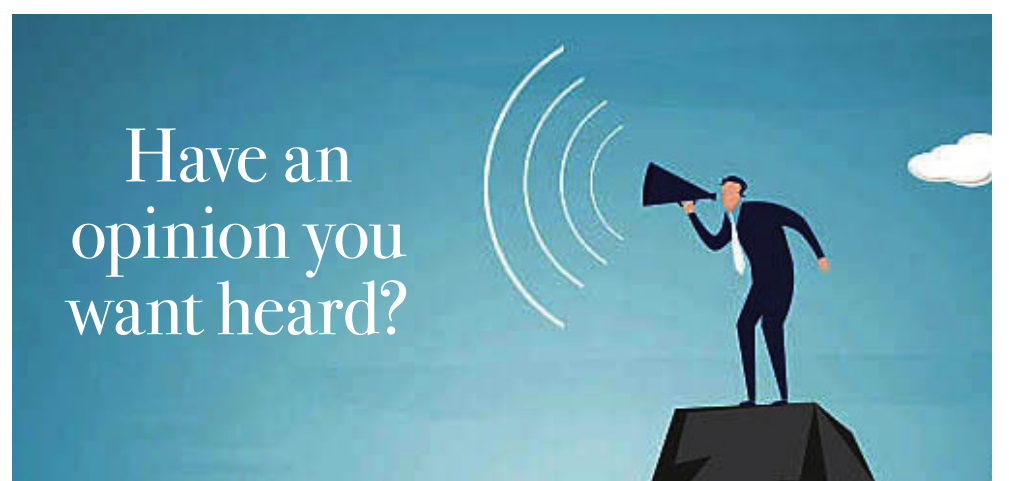
It’s time we started doing

that here. Lakeshore Road was resurfaced and no improvement was made to the bike lanes.

That showed a blatant disregard of the needs of the residents. More effort has to be made by town council to ensure this gets done.

We need safe bike lanes on all major routes so you can get around safely no matter what vehicle you choose. To do otherwise is to discriminate against cyclists.

**Jackie Bonic**  
**NOTL**



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



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# More trouble, and solutions, for affordable housing crisis



Brian Marshall  
Columnist

In Ontario, the Residential Tenancies Act is the piece of legislation that — while being very broad, generally — provides explicit, legal requirements governing all aspects of the landlord-tenant relationship.

This act also establishes the structure, mandate, scope and function of the Landlord and Tenant Board, a tribunal that works under the legislation to adjudicate and resolve issues that may arise between landlords and tenants in a fair, unbiased and timely fashion.

Under the act, both tenants and landlords can file specific applications with the board for adjudication and resolution.

The Landlord and Tenant Board receives over 80,000 applications annually, making it one of the busiest tribunals in Ontario.

These applications have a huge impact on the financial and general well-being of tenants and landlords in this province, making the board a critical part of Ontario's rental housing system.

Unfortunately, the wheels on this bus have never worked well and, in the last decade, have pretty well fallen off — injuring both landlords and tenants.

Eight months ago, Ontario's ombudsman, Paul Dubé, published a report on the lengthy investigation into the operation of the Landlord and Tenants Board.

This report contained 61 recommendations to address a backlog at the tribunal that, at the time, stood at 38,000 applications.

In his recorded address at the time of publication, Dubé noted: "Where once it took the board a matter of days to schedule hearings, it now takes an average of



One of many town-owned properties, this severely under-utilized lot could be divided in half with the grass side portion being developed with affordable housing following the Whistler model. BRIAN MARSHALL

seven to eight months."

"As of February 2023," he continued, "landlord applications were generally being scheduled for hearing within six to nine months of receipt, and tenant applications could take up to two years to be scheduled."

The report detailed the following: "There were tenants stuck waiting while they endured harassment, unsafe living conditions, and improper attempts to force them from their homes."

"And there were small landlords, including those renting out space within their own homes, who were trying to cope with tenants' abuse, criminal conduct, and facing financial ruin and serious health harms."

Based on the conclusions of his report, Dubé concluded, "As an administrative tribunal, the board is fundamentally failing in its role of providing swift justice to those seeking resolution of residential landlord and tenant issues."

"In doing so, it is denying justice to a significant segment of Ontarians," he said.

While Premier Doug Ford's government pushed for an additional \$6.5 million to hire more adjudicators (and support staff) for the Landlord and Tenant Board to assist in clearing the backlog, I'd submit that this is akin to putting a cast on a broken leg that has not

been set — if you don't fix the problem, then all the support in the world isn't going to result in a healthy result.

Meanwhile, we have small landlords suffering on the brink of bankruptcy due to tenants who refuse to move out and are extorting a "cash/for keys" option (see CBC News' online article from June 13, 2023, "When tenants stopped paying rent, Niagara landlord says she offered them \$10k to leave. It didn't work").

And, on the other side, long-term tenants, whose rental costs are well below going market rates, face the threat of "renoviction," wherein a landlord (typically institutional) engages in building renovations, which they claim require the tenant to vacate, allowing the rent to be increased to market rates.

There is also "demoviction," wherein a landlord chooses to demolish a low/medium-density rental complex to utilize the land for a new high-density development.

A landlord may also allow the building to deteriorate into an unsafe condition, generally to justify either renoviction or demoviction before the board.

Simply put, some landlords and some tenants are taking advantage of a sadly broken system to the detriment of the other party in

their rental agreement.

I'm forced to observe that the pain shared by both sides does not, and should not, excuse the use of unethical practices to achieve their respective goals.

And, much as it irks me to say it, the role of government is to intervene and provide a level playing field for all parties, particularly in light of the affordable housing crisis faced by this province.

It behooves the government of the day to get their house in order.

A quick fact to put the "affordable" issue into perspective: across Canada, between 2011 and 2016, roughly 322,600 "affordable" housing units were lost or converted to market-valued units, while a mere 20,000 "affordable" units were created.

That's 302,600 households that may have ended up homeless or paying shelter costs that they really can't afford — through no fault of their own.

Nor is there any indication that this year-by-year loss of affordable housing has slowed down.

To combat this disturbing trend, many experts in the field believe that it is necessary to permanently uncouple a certain proportion of all new homes built from market forces.

Patrick Condon of the University of British

Columbia defined "uncoupling" to include "any housing protected from market forces, thus offering affordable rents and ownership in perpetuity."

So, let's look at one jurisdiction that has actioned this approach.

The Resort Municipality of Whistler in British Columbia has had a long-term affordability crisis with housing.

Similar to Niagara-on-the-Lake, Whistler has both high average housing costs and a large, low-wage workforce employed within the tourism sector in chronic need of housing they can afford.

To address this problem, they established the Whistler Housing Authority an independent, municipally-owned corporation to create, administer and manage price-controlled residential real estate.

This housing is available only to households comprised of either Canadian citizens or permanent residents who are working for a qualified Whistler employer.

As of 2023, the housing authority has 327 long-term rental units.

The rental rates are based on 30 per cent of the applicant's gross household income (with minimums and maximum rental rates for each building), and unit selection is restricted by household size to ensure the inventory is optimized.

That is, a couple would go into a one-bedroom apartment whereas a household with two children would be eligible for a two or three-bedroom unit.

The Whistler Housing Authority also manages an inventory of diverse home ownership properties — 988 employee housing units and 202 additional ownership properties — in Whistler with employee occupancy restrictions that are bought and sold to qualified Whistler employees, drawn from a formal waiting list.

All of the employee ownership housing units have covenants registered on title that require Whistler employees to occupy the homes as their primary residence, to ensure that the employee housing program inventory is used as intended — for Whistler employees.

The employee homes also have restrictions on the maximum resale amounts.

The current covenants tie the resale value to an appreciation formula based on the Core Consumer Price Index.

And, the housing authority continues to grow both inventories, leveraging its local relationships with the municipality (most development has occurred on lands previously owned by the municipality), non-profits, the private sector and financial partnerships with BC Housing and the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Its goal is to add another 758 new units in the near to mid-range future.

As a result of this visionary undertaking, tenants and owners have access to safe, reliable and affordable housing options that allow them to live in the community they work in.

There are many other Canadian examples of solution-based thinking applied to affordable housing.

All by municipalities that understand that a "living" town includes all demographics.

Niagara-on-the-Lake should think about that.

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



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# High-density Tawny Ridge project is **wrong** for St. Davids

Dear editor:  
The zoning amendments for phase 2 of the Tawny Ridge development that intended to densify St. Davids with stacked townhouses, etc. were rejected on Jan. 30 in a 4-3 vote of town council, (“Council OKs 12 homes at Tawny Ridge, rejects townhouses”).

Couns. Wendy Cheropita, Maria Mavridis and Nick Ruller voted in favour of densification of St. Davids, but their decisions were to say the least bewildering. Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa and Coun. Erwin Wiens were not present for the vote. No reason was given.

The urban design committee rejected the zoning amendments for Tawny Ridge. Cheropita leads that committee but apparently doesn't agree with its recommendations, instead relying on town staff's contrary rendition.

The developer now has a couple of choices – develop the property zoned as low-density for residential homes similar to the neighbourhood or make a case at the Ontario Land Tribunal to overturn council's decision.

The land tribunal alternative is probably where they will turn to next. The motive: increased density, increased profits. Other factors don't seem to enter the picture to change that.

I believe that when these three councillors voted in favour of the development their decisions were, aside from assurances from town staff that everything presented by the consultant was copacetic, partly based on the belief the developer would go to the land tribunal which, they believe, would approve the development.

Presentations regarding the deficiencies of the town's drainage and sewage infrastructure, the deficiencies identified in the traffic study, parking, the requests to amend the development to a more compatible one consistent with the neighbourhood weren't adequately persuasive for them to warrant a vote to reject the zoning amendments.

It was a foregone conclusion that the tribunal would approve what the consultant had asked for, and notably what town staff recommended. Why bother



Gienek Ksiazkiewicz calls attention to a petition of the neighbourhood which shows that 100 per cent of the neighbours are against the development. FILE

advocating compliance with the town's official plan?

There also may have been the concern that spending money to hire an outside planner and perhaps legal counsel to argue the case before the land tribunal was an inappropriate and wasteful use of the town's financial resources.

But councillors cannot acquiesce to every zoning amendment just because it will cost money and live or make decisions under the fear that the land tribunal will veto their decision. The town has to take a stand

somewhere, sometime.

Town staff have relied on the studies by the consultant, a paid advocate of the developer. Some of these studies undoubtedly have disclaimers associated with them, or have relied on old historical statistical data that doesn't correspond with real world events. All standard fare – don't bother worrying about that.

However, if this development were to be approved and problems regarding drainage, sewage, traffic, etc. subsequently develop, town staff can always point to the consultant's studies as culprits.

Town staff can argue they relied on “professional” external bodies and reports and could say those external bodies were deficient in their representations.

As a result, town staff escapes culpability.

Councillors can point to town staff to say they relied on them for advice and counsel, also absolving themselves of culpability. Everybody keeps their jobs. Everyone wins.

Except the residents, who wind up suffering the con-

sequences.

It is glaringly evident that the existing water drainage infrastructure of St. Davids, (and apparently sewage capacity, among other things) cannot support a high-density development.

Pictures of water drainage in January of this year, vividly showed the Sandalwood reservoir at maximum capacity, even with the 9.2 acres of Tawny Ridge land absorbing a considerable amount of runoff.

I don't know if councillors are aware that all water drainage west of Tanbark and south of York Road apparently flows to the Sandalwood reservoir, not to the Fireman's Reservoir.

There is no apparent drainage from the Tawny Ridge development or homes west of Tanbark all the way to the top of the hill on Tanbark to the Fireman's Reservoir. Everything flows to the Sandalwood reservoir. This is an infrastructure problem.

Hydrological analysis would undoubtedly show that the rapidity of water flow and short-term volume accumulation with the

concrete and asphalt densification of 9.2 acres would result in the reservoir overflowing onto the vineyard and houses below, damaging crops and homes. Expansion of this reservoir isn't a readily available option.

In addition, the existing berm that keeps the water from bursting its banks is apparently bulging and in recent memory has already burst at least once.

Zoning amendments resulting in a breach of the reservoir could present significant financial liabilities to the town. On this basis alone these three councillors should have voted against the requested zoning amendments.

The consultant's arguments regarding densification seem to be a non-issue and not a justification for their zoning amendment requests.

Both Couns. Gary Burroughs and Sandra O'Connor have stated that NOTL does not have a problem meeting housing start targets. So why a high-density development?

**Gienek Ksiazkiewicz**  
St. Davids

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Left: Lida Kowal and Mary Snider laughed and reminisced after Kowal gave her some flowers and well-wishes. Right: Liz Frank had lots to laugh about with Snider, who has been her longtime neighbour. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

## Mary Snider draws a crowd for 100th birthday

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

When Mary Snider was born a century ago, the first digital camera was still 51 years away.

Now, on her 100th birthday, a long lineup of guests waited their turn to offer well wishes, have a chat and capture a photo all on their cellular phones.

In her 100 years, Snider has made countless friends, many of whom came out to the St. Davids Lions Club on Sunday.

She's well-known in town and has been active in numerous community endeavours. Starting in 1966, Snider helped run the Virgil Stampede every year for 46 years and sat as chair for 29.

Dave Dick, longtime owner of Niagara Motors, said that he still remembers how Snider reacted when she was first asked to help out with the stampede for \$300.

"She said, 'I'm not taking any money and I'll only do



Mary Snider celebrated her 100th birthday on Saturday. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

it for one year,'" he said.

He added that she kept half of that promise – in her 46 years helping run the stampede she never took a dime.

Liz Frank was Snider's neighbour growing up and remembers the times fondly.

"She was just always there. My grandma lived

on one side and she lived on the other. There were always some shenanigans going on between the two houses," she said.

Frank said they lived beside each other for so long that their phone numbers were in order.

"It was my grandmother, my aunt, hers and my

uncles, 7029, 7019 ..." she said.

Frank recalled that Snider recently sold her house to developer Rainer Hummel, who said she could live in the home for the rest of her life. She still lives there today.

Terry Dick visits her from time to time and says that she keeps active, still crocheting and doing puzzles.

"Even when I go visit her now she's so fun to visit. She can't hear as well, she can't walk as well but she still laughs at all my jokes," she said.

Among other visitors was MPP Wayne Gates, who stopped in to wish Snider a happy birthday and remarked, "You've done something right if you can fill a hall."

Snider herself was smiling and happy to see everyone. She was especially pleased with her childhood photos on display at the entrance to the hall.

[juliasacco@niagaranow.com](mailto:juliasacco@niagaranow.com)



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# NOTL filmmaker's 'The Movie Man' is a love letter to cinemas

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

Matt Finlin can still remember the first film he saw at Highlands Cinemas when he was only 11 years old.

"'Terminator 2.' And I was probably much too young for it," Finlin joked.

Since then, he has seen countless movies at the five-theatre complex near the Kawartha Lakes, but will never forget his first screening.

It was the passion Highlands' owner Keith Stata has for the art of movie-making that inspired Finlin to direct his own film about this cinema: "The Movie Man," premiering at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival from Feb. 7 to 17.

Working alongside executive producer Ed Robertson of the Barenaked Ladies and composer Kevin Drew of Broken Social Scene, Finlin's documentary shows Stata's dedication to keeping Highlands Cinemas alive throughout the pandemic "against all odds."

In an interview with The Lake Report, Finlin detailed how Stata's kitschy approach to movie-watching stuck with him from the first time he walked into the cinema.

He was camping with his family when his uncle decided they would go to the movies one night — which led them to Highlands Cinemas.

"You walk into this door and it kind of opened into another world," he said. "It's sort of like 'The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe.'

The entire place is filled with movie memorabilia."

It was a "magical place" for Finlin going into his adult years, so when he began a new creative project, the idea to film something there came naturally.

Aside from being a love letter to Highlands Cinemas and Keith Stata, "The Movie Man" illuminates just how important it is to actually get out there and see a movie in a theatre — specifically, an independent theatre.

It's something that cinephiles know to be true: where you take in a film can add or take away from the enjoyment of it.

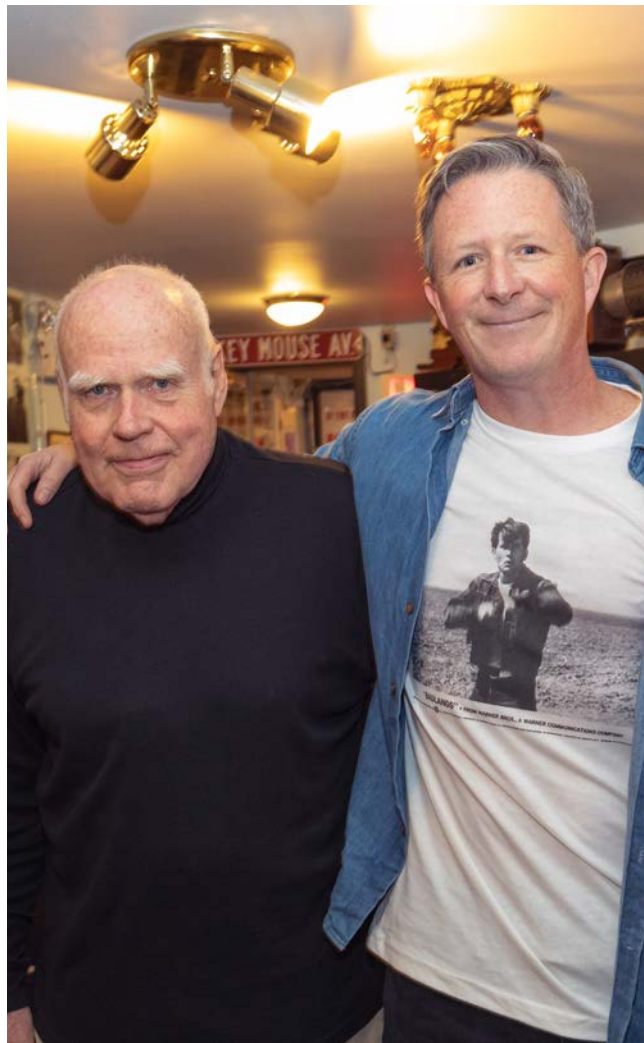
"I think people can sit at home and watch movies but they're looking at their phones half of the time. We used to have this reverence for going to the movies," Finlin said.

For those who still regularly go to the cinema, Finlin urges them to branch out and check out their independent theatres in the area.

"Cineplex doesn't have a popcorn-eating bear that can show up in the parking lot. It doesn't have 45-plus cats that are sort of meandering around outside," Finlin said. "Cineplex doesn't have a museum that would put the Academy's museum in Los Angeles to shame."

He explained that with Highland Cinemas, "Before you even get to sit down in the seats, you're on this magical journey of movie history."

Residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake are perhaps able



Keith Stata, left, owner of Highlands Cinemas was a source of creative inspiration for director Matt Finlin, who based "The Movie Man" around Stata's business and passion for movies and cinema. SUPPLIED

to relate to an experience like this more than others, Finlin said.

The Shaw Festival and its theatres likely experience some of the shame and hardships as movie theatres do in that the reverence for live performances has dwindled over the years, he said.

"People (of NOTL) can relate to taking pride in something that's in your town that provides people with joy, that people dedicate a lot of their time to," Finlin added.

Finlin said that the Shaw Festival and its theatres likely experience some of the shame and hardships as movie theatres do in that the reverence for live perfor-

mances has dwindled over the years.

For those who may not ever make it to Highlands Cinemas to see it for themselves, the message Finlin hopes people take with them is simple: go to the movies.

"Make the most out of the time that you have, go to the movies, take your kids to the movies. Turn off your phone and escape for two hours," Finlin said. "The medium of the experience in the theatre is important and should be revered."

Finlin said he is hoping to organize a screening of "The Movie Man" in NOTL this coming spring or summer. Details to come.

[juliasacco@niagaranow.com](mailto:juliasacco@niagaranow.com)



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style.  
Category: 10, 11 & 12-LETTER WORDS

**Knock knock--who's there?  
It's this noisy type of ghost.**

Last issue:

Category: **DARK MATTER**

Clue: In the Harry Potter books, he's the dark lord.

Answer: What is Voldemort?

Answered first by: Bill Hamilton

Also answered correctly (in order) by:  
Lynda Collet, Claudia Grimwood, Bob Wheatley, Howard Jones, Catherine Clarke, Sylvia Wiens, Sheila Mead, Wade Durling, Jane Morris, Edna Groff, Nancy Rocca, David Spencer, Maggie Adam, Hedy Wiebe, Marla Percy, Sheila Meloche, Pam Dowling, Mike Gander, Jesse Agnew, Jim Dandy, Maria Janeiro

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

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## Virtual lectures continue at NOTL Museum

Barbara Worthy  
Special to The Lake Report

February is that month when winter is too long and spring is too far away ... so stay cozy with the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum's virtual lectures as they continue through February, bringing together a unique offering of specialists, storytellers, hobbyists, and lovers of history.

The virtual lectures are offered weekly, via Zoom, on Wednesday mornings at 11 a.m.: Feb. 14, Feb. 21 and Feb. 28.

**Feb. 14 — Ordnance Boundary Stones:** Updates and Restoration: Ted Rumble, (former NOTL Museum board member and retired orthopedic surgeon), has a long-standing interest in history, particularly military history.

In this presentation, Rumble will give an update on his efforts with the town of NOTL to restore and protect these stones, honouring some of the oldest historical artifacts in the Old Town.

Thirty-seven military ordnance boundary stones, complete with identifying "broad arrows" stamped on



The museum's Feb. 14 lecture focuses on the ordnance boundary stones in NOTL. COSMO CONDINA

the stones, were installed by the British Army between 1823 and 1854 in the town of Niagara.

They marked the boundaries between town land and the four military reserves, continuing a tradition that dates to the 16th century.

**Feb. 21 — The Borderland:** Black Agency and Resistance Between Two Nations: In honour of Black History Month, Josh Poole, visitor experience specialist from the Underground

Railroad Heritage Center, Niagara Falls, N.Y., will discuss the influence and impact of freedom seekers who arrived at this critical borderland between the United States and Canada.

He will also talk about the role played by the free Black waiters of the infamous Cataract House in Niagara Falls.

"They were pioneers of the anti-slavery movement, right here on this border," said Poole.

He will also discuss how formerly enslaved people grappled with the challenges of their new lives once they crossed that border.

**Feb. 28 — Historically Hysterical:** Back by popular demand is NOTL Museum's assistant curator, Shawna Butts, with her presentation on the history of women's health care.

Sometimes toe-curling, but always entertaining, Butts reveals all the vagaries and experimentations that constituted women's health care for centuries.

Misdiagnosis and mistreatment were systematic: "The myths, mysteries and wacky treatments continued well into the 20th century," said Butts. "It's no wonder that the term 'hysterical' was used so often when a woman visited her physician."

So, join the NOTL Museum's virtual lecture audience this month, and feel free to get as hysterical as you want.

A question and answer period follows each lecture.

Registration is required to receive a Zoom link: notlmuseum.ca.

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# Cake Cafe offers great carrot cake and warm company

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

Before getting to the mixing bowl herself, cake artist Stacey MacIntyre spent lots of time watching “Cake Boss.”

“I thought, ‘I could do that,’” MacIntyre said.

Now, with years of baking experience under her belt, including a handful of appearances on Food Network Canada programs, MacIntyre opened Cake Cafe on Niagara Stone Road in November.

She had her own cake decorating company in Mississauga, called Stacey Cakes, before moving to Virgil in 2019.

“The plan was for me to open a bakery in 2020, but of course, with COVID I ended up putting that off for a little while,” she told The Lake Report.

Instead, MacIntyre took on a job at Willow Cakes & Pastries doing custom cakes and wedding cakes



Stacey MacIntyre has a passion for baking to share with Virgil and all her customers at Cake Cafe. Right: A coffee cake dripping with icing. JULIA SACCO



before opening her own business.

Finally, on Nov. 18, the Cake Cafe opened its doors to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

“It’s a storefront, so people can come in and sit down to drink coffee,” she said. “I’ve got cake slices ready to go and there’s

tables that look out the window.”

As a relatively new member of the community, MacIntyre said that having a physical storefront has helped with integrating into town.

“The people of Virgil are incredible. They go above and beyond to support lo-

cal businesses,” she said, adding it is hard to put her gratitude into words.

At her shop, for those interested in trying their first sweet, MacIntyre suggests the popular carrot cake.

“When I was on The Food Network, I did a show called ‘The Big Bake,’” she explained.

“The show was hosted by celebrity chef Ron-Ben Israel, who is actually known as the king of carrot cake,” she said. “He tried my carrot cake and proclaimed me the queen of carrot cake.”

Cake Cafe is located at 1615 Niagara Stone Rd. at Line 1 Road. It is open

from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. from Tuesday to Saturday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday.

For those wanting to expand their baking repertoire, cake decorating classes will be listed on the Cake Cafe website soon. Check [cakecafe.ca/services](http://cakecafe.ca/services) for more info.

[juliasacco@niagaranow.com](mailto:juliasacco@niagaranow.com)



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# Art of the Doughvine: More than just doughnuts

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

Walking into Doughvine, owner Jessica Millet greets you with a smile and musings about which oat milk has the best ingredients.

Within seconds, it is clear that this is more than just a doughnut shop — it's a project spearheaded by one person's passion for the culinary arts.

Millet has owned two restaurants before opening Doughvine last summer and has an extensive knowledge of all things food.

When deciding to open up a doughnut place in Niagara-on-the-Lake, it was all about returning to her roots.

"My first year of apprenticeship was in a pastry kitchen at the National Arts Centre," Millet told The Lake Report. "I loved it."

She looked forward to waking up at 4 a.m. to prepare for work and act as a "sponge," she said, ready to



Jessica Millet owned two restaurants before opening Doughvine last summer. Her love for fresh ingredients and inventive recipes comes through in her unique donut flavours, like Cookie Monster. Doughvine is more than just doughnuts, offering a variety of breakfast and lunch options along with plenty of coffee choices. JULIA SACCO

soak up as much information as possible.

Everything evolved from that point, Millet said, and she began baking bread and evolving her own recipes.

After selling her restaurants just before the pandemic, she decided she wanted to start a business where she could explore her

passions without the crazy hustle of restaurant culture.

"I thought back to one of my first passions which is breakfast, and the best breakfast I can do is doughnuts," Millet said. "I love that nostalgic feeling, you can just have fun with them."

Along with the donuts, Doughvine also offers



different breads, bagels, a variety of cream cheese and an extensive coffee and tea menu — all curated with care and attention to quality.

"I work with (NOTL) farmers. Folino Family Farms is where I get my produce from in the spring, summer and fall. It's so fresh, you walk up to the

stand and she's like "Taste this peach," Millet said.

"That's what buying food should be, not making a phone call and having a truck pull up, but going out and seeing what's growing out there, watching the bees do their dances around the sunflowers," she continued.

The space itself speaks to

Millet's attention to detail. "I bought the house and looked up how to renovate a house into a restaurant," she said, laughing.

The property has been renovated and decorated by Millet, who frequents Facebook Marketplace and antique shops to find the perfect pieces for the space.

"I want it to be a chance for people to chill, especially when the streets can be so busy sometimes," she said. "That's what it's for: downtime. Have a doughnut, watch some TV and go out and have fun in the area," she said.

Millet said her next project will be to install a walk-up takeout window for customers to stop by for a quick treat while walking around Old Town.

Doughvine is just steps from Queen Street, located at 183 Victoria Street.

Hours for February are Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. It is also open Valentine's Day.

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# Predators win **close one** versus last-place Flyers

Kevan Dowd  
The Lake Report

Going in, it was just about getting two points, but Sunday's game against the Toronto Flyers proved tougher than expected for the Jr. A Niagara Predators.

With the playoffs imminent and points vital, the match against the last-place Flyers seemed like a sure-fire win. But despite beating them 9-2 a week before, Niagara barely squeaked out a 3-2 victory in their only game of the week.

While Predators head coach Kevin Taylor did not go so far as to call it a bad game, he instead described it as "blah."

"I thought we played down. We didn't step it up," he said.

The Predators started off well with Luca Fernandez scoring 3:08 into the game and Georgy Kholmovsky capitalizing on a powerplay 10 minutes later.

Add in 23 stopped shots



The Niagara Predators celebrate Isaac Locker's second-period goal, which sealed in their 3-2 victory. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

by Zane Clausen – recently named the top goaltender in the Greater Metro Hockey League's south division – and Niagara ended the first period with a 2-0 lead.

Toronto's Iaroslav Morozov narrowed the gap at the 8:09 mark of the second period, with Niagara's Isaac Locker answering back about seven minutes later. A final effort in the third by the Flyers made it much tighter than it should

have been.

Though a win's a win, the closeness of Sunday's game did not escape Taylor. Considering his team's strong record against the Flyers, he feels over-confidence may be to blame.

"I just don't think they take this team as serious as they should," he said. "They're a good team and they worked hard. They're short-benched, they have players that want to be here

and we just didn't take them as seriously as we should have."

That is not to say he had no positive comments about Sunday's game, but he still thinks his team needs to improve in time for the tough final stretch of their regular season.

"Even with the power-play, I thought we were moving the puck well, we were moving it around nice, getting the opportunities.

We capitalized on the one, and the other two, we got chances," said Taylor.

"We'll have to be much better next week. We have three extremely important games next week, huge games against St. George."

The Predators have just four games left in the regular season, three of which are this weekend, starting with a Friday night game at home against the St. George Ravens followed

by road games against the Tottenham Railers and St. George.

Right now, St. George and Tottenham lead Niagara in the standings by no more than three points and are possible opponents in the first round of the playoffs.

For now, Taylor is just happy with the win over Toronto and is trying to keep his players focused heading into a tough weekend.

"We're one step closer to our goal and we'll see what happens with the rest of the games this week," he said.

"Play one game at a time, that's what we have to do, and it doesn't matter where we finish. If we finish sixth, we play Durham and we're happy with that. If we finish fourth or fifth, we play St. George or Tottenham and we're happy with that."

The Predators take to the ice at the Meridian Credit Union Arena against the St. George this Friday, Feb. 9 at 7:30 p.m.

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# TEAM OF THE WEEK

## NOTL Wolves U18 Local League 2



The Lake Report's NOTL Minor Hockey Association Team of the Week is the NOTL Wolves U18 Local League 1 squad. Pictured here behind goaltender Corson Dick are: Ben Dipietro, Noah Mori, Eli Bice, James Quinn and Jacob Doucette. In the back row are: head coach Shawn Quinn, assistant coach Wes Wiens, Nick Draayer, Hudson Dyck, Jarvis Neufeld, Rowan Wiens, Braeden Dyck and trainer Gordon Neufeld. DAVE VAN DE LAAR



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**Across**

- 1. John Grisham best seller (3,4)
- 5. Spanish city at the foot of the Sierra Nevada (7)
- 9. Renaissance master (7)
- 10. Doubter (7)
- 11. Alike (2,1,5)
- 12. Quest (6)
- 13. Oversize jib (5)
- 14. Mass-transit option (5,4)
- 18. Name on an envelope (9)
- 19. Astringent shrub used for tanning and dyeing (5)
- 20. Few and far between (6)
- 23. Post-war Essex new town (8)
- 26. Well-behaved (7)
- 27. Three successive lines of verse (7)
- 28. No longer eruptive (7)
- 29. Giant sequoia (7)

**Down**

- 1. Horsepower booster (5)
- 2. Spelled out (9)
- 3. Lifeless (9)
- 4. Minute particles (9)
- 5. Spout profusely (4)
- 6. "Skyfall" singer (5)
- 7. Communion table (5)
- 8. Boozy (9)
- 13. A light portmanteau (9)
- 15. Targets (4,5)
- 16. Gave evidence (9)
- 17. Bony-plated mammal that rolls into a ball (9)
- 21. Examine the books (5)
- 22. Seductively beautiful woman (5)
- 24. Worthy of attention (5)
- 25. Wen (4)

### Crossword Puzzle

1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8
9								10						
11										12				
13						14		15		16		17		
18														
20		21		22				23						24
26														
28														

Last issue's answers

1	P	2	L	3	C	4	L	5	R	6	L	7	M	8	A
9	I	M	A	G	E	10	O	P	E	R	A	T	O	R	S
	T	Y	L	E	G	E	S	T	U						
12	B	A	M	B	I	13	J	U	M	P	S	U	I	T	S
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14	L	I	N	D	A	15	M	I	L	L	E	N	N	I	A
	L	C													
16	S	A	Y	S	O	17	Y	I	E	L	D				
20	A	T													
22	S	O	R	R	O	W	F	U	L	24	F	U	T	O	N
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	C	H	S	D	S	D	N	L							

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	9	7	5					8
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5				2				3
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	7			5				2
2						9	3	5
8		5				6		





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# Is AI a **useful partner** for physicians and radiologists?



**DR. BROWN**

Dr. William Brown  
Columnist

In my time at University Hospital in London, Ont., from 1972 to 1992, radiologists were very much a part of the clinical scene.

The radiology suite was a busy place where neurologists, neurosurgeons and trainees often gathered and anyone with an interest and something to add, could join in the discussion of cases to the benefit of everyone. On a larger scale, the same happened at grand rounds.

The latter were well-planned events on a rotating basis among the three major neurological centres in the city. The cases were presented by the junior resident on the related service, after which discussion began initially with other residents taking the lead, followed by

staff members.

If those presentations were not enough, there was usually an invited speaker from somewhere in the Western world who spoke for half an hour or so. The whole weekly round usually lasted three hours, including a chat and coffee break in the middle.

Throughout rounds neuroradiologists played vital roles, because with the advent of CT and, eventually, MRI scans, they were well-placed to help neurosurgeons precisely localize lesions such as benign tumours located in tricky places. They could help the surgeon plan an approach that offered the best chance for completely removing the tumour, with the least risk of injuring blood vessels and the cranial nerves.

For that reason and many others, neuroradiologists became essential members of the surgical team and equally helpful for stroke service, epilepsy units and multiple sclerosis clinics.

The introduction of AI to the whole field of imaging now threatens that close relationship between neu-



roradiologists and clinical neurologists or neurosurgeons because AI turns out to be very good at recognizing patterns in images.

Examples include recognizing diabetic retinopathy or differentiating between skin lesions, especially malignant lesions such as melanomas and squamous cell cancers from benign lesions and doing so with a facility that approximates the skill of the best of retinal and dermatologic specialists.

The impact of AI with plain X-rays and CT scans has been similar, with MRI not far behind, provided the data base on which AI

is trained is of sufficient quality. That means imaging equipment located in remote or underserved areas could provide useful imaging services if there is technical support to carry out the studies and backup from a radiologist connected via the internet.

Radiologists, including neuroradiologists, are rightly worried that should AI-supported devices prove as capable as radiologists, there might not be much need for them, except as backup partners. The same could happen in clinical settings, where AI could partner with physi-

cians to operate MS clinics, for instance.

There's no doubt in my mind that properly trained, AI would be an asset in busy MS clinics given the fact that it would be privy to all the patient's medical records, a library's worth of information from excellent sources about MS and, if programmed to read MRIs, would be capable of detecting changes that might well elude neuroradiologists and MS physicians.

AI is also well-equipped to recognize longitudinal changes in MS reflected in the patient's symptoms, standardized physical testing and perhaps images of the retina.

But however competent AI might become in specialty and general clinics, what's missing in current versions would be the human touch and empathy, although the latter could be programmed in AI devices in the future.

But if AI isn't all we would like it to be emotionally, remember most of us have run into physicians on off days when they were grumpy, impatient, even

rude. Even the best, aren't at their best all the time.

The best can be out of sorts for any number of reasons and show it in ways we recognize. When that happens, sometimes it helps to turn the arrow of empathy around from patient to physician or nurse.

It might not be acknowledged but you will have done the right thing and sometimes overworked staff will realize what happened and thank you – provided they're not in too much of a tizzy that day.

When David Elkins and I put on the Meditation and Mindfulness series last September I realized how "mindless" I had been at times in the past and my guess is that physicians and nurses are just as much in need of some version of mindfulness as the public they serve. But they might not realize it. That's my confession.

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



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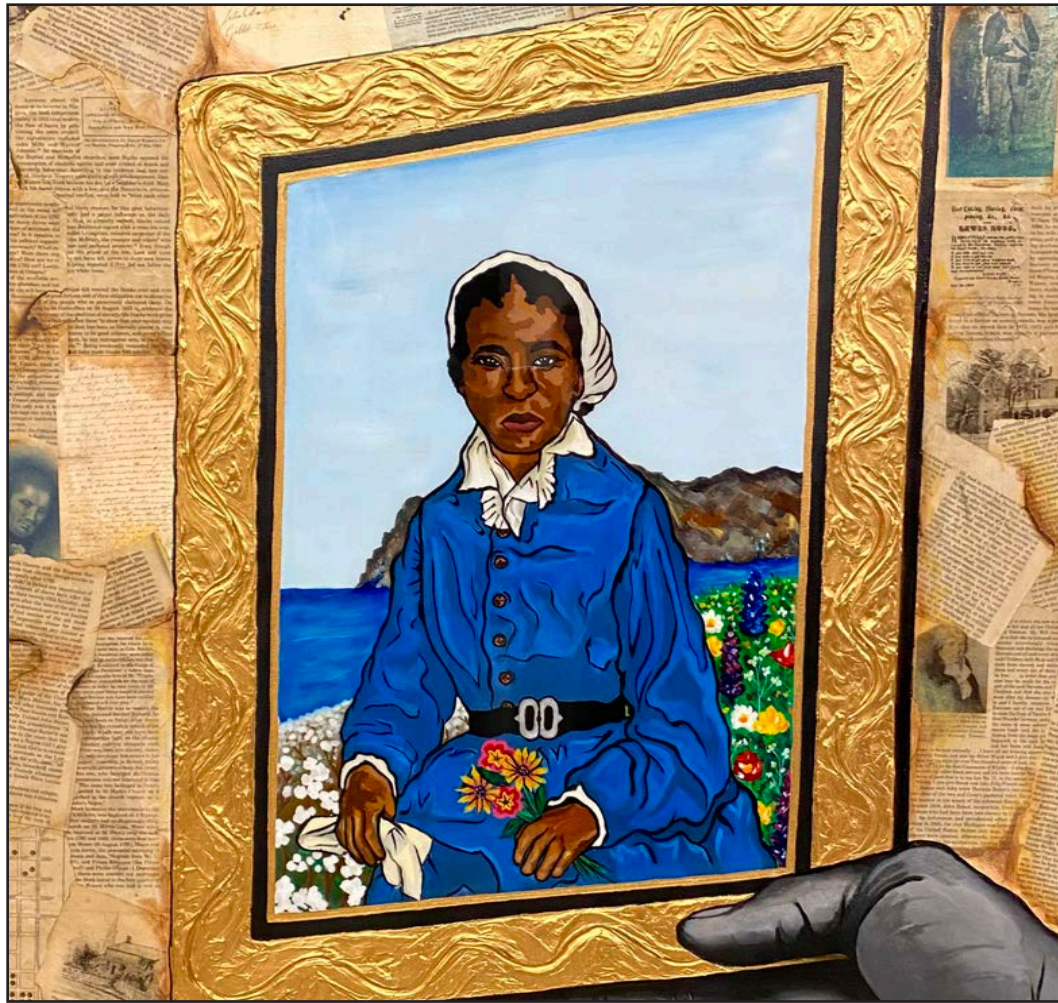
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## Chloe Cooley by Wayne Moore

In 2023, we commemorated the 230th anniversary of the 1793 Act to Limit Slavery and the Chloe Cooley incident with an exhibition titled, “Bound and Determined.” We also hosted the first annual event honouring Black history in Niagara-on-the-Lake on July 9 (2024 date to be announced soon). Here is an original artwork created by Wayne Moore, titled “Chloe Cooley,” that was created for the anniversary. Moore’s work aims to empower Cooley’s legacy rather than focusing on the brutality of what happened to her. It commemorates her legacy and the significant impact her resistance had on people of African descent. To aid in this, the painting features Cooley surrounded by a collage of reproduction archives about the sale of enslaved people, freedom seeker stories and the development of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s rich Black history. At the centre of the piece is the depiction of Cooley. In her hand are two distinct flowers: the African daisy and the primrose. They represent wisdom, strength and having lost someone important. They also represent determination, positivity and courage. Often when images are seen in greyscale, they are seen as “old” or that of the past. In contrast, when images are seen in colour, it creates the feeling of something more modern. The use of the greyscale hand holding Chloe’s picture frame evokes reflection on what is considered the past and the future and how both are valued in the painting seen in the present.

# I tried to watch the all-star hockey weirdness



## Ross’s Ramblings

Ross Robinson  
Columnist

Yes, I gave it my best shot, but I just couldn’t relate to the big hockey show in Toronto last weekend.

The hardest working people were the talking heads who laboured mightily to add some excitement and drama to the all-star goings-on. They tried to keep me watching, so I would see the commercials.

Back in the day, the defending Stanley Cup champions took on 15 or so “all-stars” from the other five NHL teams, with the winning side getting about 500 bucks each. The losers got half that.

Ostensibly, and in theory, any proceeds went to a pension fund that was administered by hockey czar Alan Eagleson. The players are still looking for those contributions.

Boom Boom Geoffrion, Rocket Richard, the Golden Jet, Tim Horton, and Carl

Brewer could have used that money, and rightfully felt duped and cheated. Carl Brewer and Suzie Foster eventually got much of the money for the players, but the court battle was long, bitter and expensive. (Read, “The Power of Two.”)

In those days, the defending champs and the all-stars played hard, with a lot of pride and dislike on display. Shots were blocked, elbows thrown and hip checks delivered. Occasionally, fisticuffs and a donnybrook. Tickets probably cost about 10 bucks for the Saturday evening game.

Now, for big bucks, fans can sit in the chosen arena and watch a bunch of very talented and very wealthy young men display their awesome technical skills. The overriding emotion is love and respect for one another. “Ha Ha, powerful move, and nice facial hair.”

At the risk of sounding like an elderly curmudgeon, I think that All-Star Weekend should be sponsored by Gillette or Foamy. With only a few exceptions, the young superstars appear to have stumbled out of a nearby logging camp.

Couldn’t they at least get up a few minutes earlier and make the big effort to shave their chins and sideburns? Most of their faces look cluttered.



Ross Robinson thinks hockey players should take better care of their hygiene.

Please forgive me if I ramble off in a silly direction, but really, how about making the effort to tidy themselves up for one of the few times of the year when potential new fans might be watching?

The arena and the surrounding streets are appropriately tarted up for the weekend and a few B List celebrities make an appearance or two. Wow, Justin Bieber as a guest coach, doing his best to appear engaged, as a native of Stratford.

I wonder if he knows that Howie Morenz, the Stratford Streak, was from Stratford? (Actually, the Mitchell Meteor was from Mitchell,

about 20 miles north of Stratford.) But I go on.

Back in my college hockey days, our magnificent coach wanted every player moving all the time. In practices and in pre-game warmups, every player was always moving, fast and hard.

Watching the poorly produced All-Star Skills Competition, I usually saw about 20 players watching one player skating, shooting, or passing. It took them forever to get around the rink, slowed down only a bit by their weird all-star logoed toques. Boring and repetitive.

The Breakaway Challenge really showed how adept

the all-stars were at skating, but again, why not have two or three players in action simultaneously?

A friend asked me how I would do in such a challenge. Truthfully, I would have gotten my feet tangled up and fallen down in an embarrassing heap.

Why didn’t they include a punching contest? Who can hit the heavy bag hardest, or who can make the loudest noise while hitting the Plexiglass. OK, enough rambling about fighting in hockey.

The shooting accuracy contest begs for an appropriate sponsor. Instead of generic round Styrofoam targets in each of the four

corners of the net, why not get Canada’s favourite franchise involved as a primary sponsor?

Surely their wise and high-energy marketing folks could come up with targets relating to their products. The aforementioned Tim Horton would be proud, eh?

Four circular Styrofoam targets, appropriately decorated. One Chocolate Glazed, one Maple Dip, one Sprinkle and one Cinnamon? And in the middle, how about a retro Dutchie? With raisins, please.

The winner of the All-Star Skills Competition got a million bucks. Hope he donated a fair chunk to a charity, or to the Players Association for the pension fund.

During the week, with laser like timing, commissioner Gary Bettman announced that NHL players would be allowed to compete in the next two Winter Olympics.

Apparently he outmuscled the International Ice Hockey Federation into paying for player travel and insurance expenses. Attaboy, Gary.

Did I mention the awful, pervasive focus on gambling now promoted and endorsed by the NHL? After all, the commissioner’s surname is Bettman.

It all makes sense, if you follow the money.



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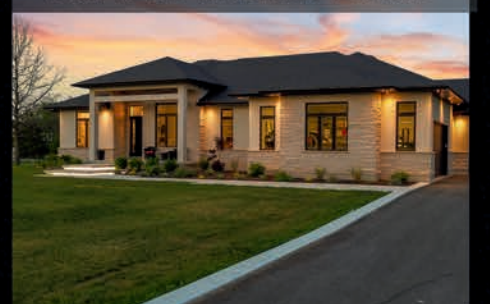
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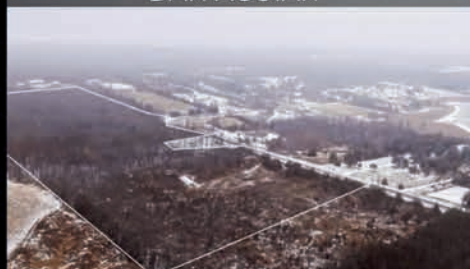
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# Caring for your **houseplants** in winter



Joanne Young  
Columnist

As we wait for spring to arrive — and for the time to get back out into our gardens — we can get our plant fixes by tending to our indoor plants.

Winter can be a tough time for our houseplants. Plants were never intended to live inside buildings, especially in our climate.

With the low light levels and shorter hours of daylight, our plants' rate of growth and productivity are limited.

So, how can we keep them looking good?

The first way to help them out is to move them closer to a light source.

Because there is naturally less light in winter, it is beneficial to move your plants a bit closer to the window, so that they can receive similar light conditions as they would in spring and summer.

Of course, all plants thrive in different light levels, so you need to consider that as well.

Plants like a peace lily or orchid do best in a brightly lit area, but away from direct sunlight, whereas an ivy and cast iron plant can tolerate very low light levels.

So, make sure you know what light level your plant requires and make sure you move them closer to windows in winter.

Another helpful tip to keep your indoor plants



Joanne Young says to make sure humidity in your home is appropriate for your tropical plants.

thriving throughout the winter is to cut back on the watering that you normally do.

Because they are receiving less light, the plants are not growing as vigorously and therefore require less water.

We tend to overwater our plants more than we under-water them.

Make sure that the top inch or so of soil is dry before adding more water.

How much water is required depends on the plant, the size of the pot and how much light it receives.

If you have difficulty telling, you can purchase an inexpensive moisture meter to help you out.

As spring approaches and days grow longer and light levels increase, you can increase your watering and decrease the length in between watering times.

When you think about it, most of the plants we have indoors are from a tropical

climate.

It only stands to reason that they prefer to grow in a location where there are short, regular morning showers.

This creates an atmosphere with higher humidity levels.

The air inside our heated homes tends to be drier in winter months.

Houseplants grow best when humidity levels are between 40 to 50 per cent, but wintertime humidity levels are typically 20 to 30 per cent inside homes — sometimes lower.

A simple way to ramp up the humidity around plants is to cluster them together.

Water evaporating from the potting soil, as well as water lost naturally through the leaves, will raise the relative humidity right around your plants.

Another easy method to increase humidity is to place plant trays filled with pebbles and water underneath the plants.

The bottoms of the pots should be above the water level to avoid root rot.

As the water evaporates, it creates a more humid microclimate for your houseplants.

Misting plants is not as effective when wanting to increase humidity. Studies have found that misting would have to be done many times a day to raise the humidity level enough to make a difference.

To make the most of the limited winter sunlight levels, make sure that leaves are free of dust and grime.

You can do this by wiping down the leaves with a damp cloth or sponge or even setting them in the shower for a quick rinse-off.

Resist repotting your plants in early winter.

Plants take well to repotting when they are actively growing. That's why spring and summer are the best times to repot them.

Repotting the plants when they are in a resting state can shock dormant indoor plants.

You can tell when a plant needs repotting by tapping the pot off and seeing if the roots are tightly circling on the outside of the root ball or if the soil is pulled away from the inside edge of the pot and water runs straight through.

Cut back leggy plants in late winter or early spring.

As the days are lengthening and the sunlight becomes stronger your plants will begin to grow more.

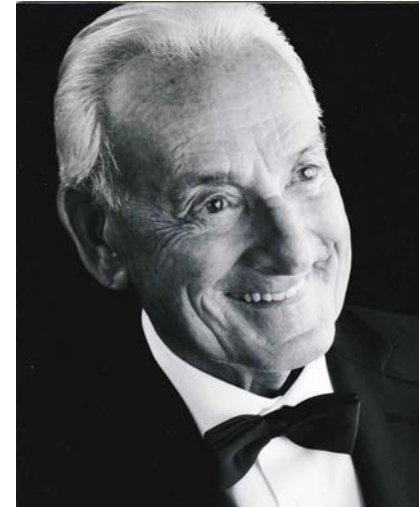
The best time to prune back indoor plants is just before a growth spurt.

This will help to increase the branching creating a denser plant.

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

## Obituary

### Gerald Shelly



SHELLY, Gerald "Gerry" Edwin —

With sweet sadness we announce the peaceful MAID assisted passing of Gerald Edwin Shelly on February 5, 2024, at his home in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Gerry was born May 26, 1933 in Walkerville, Ontario to Denis

and Muriel Shelly. When Gerry was five, he, along with his siblings and mother had to work to support the family as his father joined the war effort. Gerry began selling the Liberty newspaper for five cents and was able to pocket a penny. As he grew older and stronger, he was able to deliver ice, bale hay, and many other jobs. His favourite was exercising the horses at the racetrack behind their house. Later in life, he was able to enjoy the horses for pleasure, including competing in the Royal Winter Fair and playing polo.

With his work ethic well established, Gerry graduated from high school and studied graphic arts at Ryerson, which led to a job at the Etobicoke Press as a typesetter. He quickly realized that his brother was making far more money selling automobiles, so, starting at the bottom washing cars he began a lifetime in the automotive industry. He and his brother established Carway Motors, and the pinnacle of his career was becoming president and partner of Chrysler's Big Three in Toronto.

Gerry always had a fondness for travel, especially to warm climates. As a young man, he spent a lot of time in Acapulco deep-sea fishing. He had a great love of the water and had many boats over the years. Whether he was on his beloved Ardilaun Island in Georgian Bay or his winter home in Treasure Cay in the Bahamas, Gerry loved to be behind the wheel of a boat. He retired early enough to enjoy all these things and then he added another. He played golf with a passion and loved to practice. Last year was an incredible golf season for him, his seasonal average score was below his age.

With his twinkling eyes and quick, easy, welcoming smile, Gerry was a man who exuded warmth, contentment, and a true enjoyment of life. He was a perpetual optimist. Gerry noticed and appreciated all that was beautiful in life, water, the sun, roses, fine dining, tea and cookies in the afternoon, and a good golf course.

Gerry married his beloved Helen (Sorkilmo) who predeceased him in 2004. He was the much-loved father of Gerald (Linda), Darryl and Denise (David), five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Love blossomed again for Gerry, and he married his cherished wife, Peggy Larder in 2007. They felt like two teenagers as they began their life together. Gerry was predeceased by his parents Denis and Muriel, and siblings, Denis and Maureen.

In keeping with Gerry's wishes, cremation has taken place, and his ashes are to be scattered among many treasured places. The family will have a private celebration of life at a later date.

A heartfelt thank you for the exceptional care and compassion shown to Gerry by the health personnel. As an expression of sympathy, those who wish may make a memorial donation to Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Palliative Care, who provide a tremendous service to our community. Special thanks to friends who made this journey with us, may your kindness be returned a thousandfold. Farewell to a true gentleman.

Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at [www.morganfuneral.com](http://www.morganfuneral.com)



## Nursery School thanks donors

On Sunday staff at the Niagara Nursery School held a reception to thank donors and unveil a special wall installation recognizing all individual and company donors who support the nursery. Olivia Fabiani, president of the board of directors at Niagara Nursery School, pictured here, extended thanks to all donors during Sunday's reception. Fundraising has allowed the school to continue expanding and help meet the growing need for child care in NOTL. JULIA SACCO



# THE LOVE REPORT

## VOLUME 1 COMING SOON

The Lake Report is looking for a bit of romance this Valentine's Day.

We're asking NOTL residents to submit their most romantic photos, love stories and artwork to be published in our Feb. 15 issue.

Know a good love story? Want to surprise a friend or family member?

Send us your creative content by Feb. 12 to be considered. There is a limited amount of space available, so hurry to get your stories to us! Send them to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com)

While this feature is themed to Valentine's Day, The Lake Report will be working on a monthly "good news" report to accompany our regular news content.

Likewise, send us all of your good news and we'll consider it for a future edition.

Much love,

- The Lake Report Team



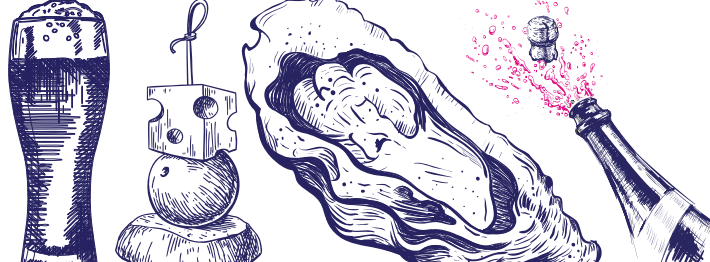
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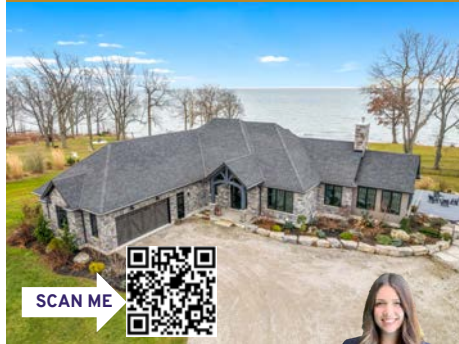

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