



COLOURING CONTEST! | Page 25

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Canada's most-decorated community newspaper

March 28, 2024

Speed camera ticketing is **all about safety**, Niagara Region says

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

The good news for those who were caught by the speed camera on Niagara Stone Road in Virgil is that this is the final week it

will be enforcing the limit. For now.

And depending on how you look at it, the bad news is a speed camera will begin operating outside St. Davids Public School in April.

It's all part of Niagara

• **Ticketed drivers unhappy with program, Page 6**

Region's Vision Zero program, which aims to reduce speeding and improve road safety for everyone.

It is not a cash grab, but

about safety, the region says. And it is enforced every day, even when school is not in session.

While it is a regional program, Niagara-on-the-

Lake Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa is fully behind it.

"Revenue generation is not being realized," he told The Lake Report. "All funds are directed into road safety (through) either improved enforcement or physical

road improvements for safety. Statements otherwise are not accurate."

"Speeding on a school day or any other day is still speeding. I am not clear

Continued on Page 7

Strong reactions to firing of NOTL librarian

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Members of the public are questioning the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library board's handling of the fallout from a column written by its now-ousted CEO and chief librarian.

There has been a flood of letters to The Lake Report and numerous social media posts in response to the firing of Cathy Simpson over an op-ed she penned to bring attention to Freedom to Read Week.

"I don't doubt the keyboard warriors will be divided," Lara Davidson wrote. "Just like the pickleball outdoor court, the noise bylaw, horse and carriage business in Old Town or the rainbow crosswalk in front of the community centre."

Continued on Page 4

Wait for **walk-in clinic** is over

New nurse practitioner will start seeing patients in mid-April



Local dignitaries welcome the announcement that a nurse practitioner will soon provide full-time services for a walk-in clinic at the Village Medical Centre. From left, Coun. Gary Burroughs, Niagara North Family Health Team executive director Mary Keith, Coun. Sandra O'Connor, Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, Coun. Wendy Cheropita, NOTL's acting CAO Bruce Zvaniga, and Coun. Erwin Wiens. RICHARD WRIGHT

Richard Wright | The Lake Report

Residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake without a family doctor will soon have local options for primary health care services thanks to the long-awaited arrival of a new nurse practitioner in the community.

Flanked by members of town council, municipal administrative staff and Niagara North Family Health Team leadership, Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa led a cheerful and relieved crowd of dignitaries Tuesday for the of-

ficial announcement.

"If you want health care services and you're not a member of the (Niagara North Family Health) Team you have to go to the emergency room, and we all know how terrible that is," said

Zalepa, speaking outside the Village Medical Centre.

"This is now giving residents an option — an option to come here versus having to go just to

Continued on Page 3

Kaleb Dietsch **making an impression** with Ottawa 67's

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

A year ago at this time, Niagara-on-the-Lake's Kaleb Dietsch was winding up his minor hockey career and preparing with

his AAA, team the Southern Tier Admirals, to play in the prestigious OHL Cup showcase tourney.

As a 16-year-old, he also was hoping he'd be drafted by an Ontario Hockey League team and have a

shot at playing top-level junior hockey.

Fast-forward 12 months and Dietsch now lives in the nation's capital where he's been taken under wing by the Ottawa 67's, who see a bright future for the lanky

6 foot 2 defenceman, whom they drafted last spring.

After training camp in September, Dietsch was assigned to the Ottawa Junior Senators of the Central Canada Hockey League where the 67's hoped he'd

gain experience and develop his game.

That all went smoothly. In fact, it went so well that in January, 67's management decided Dietsch should

Continued on Page 21



Kaleb Dietsch.



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Council approves \$48.5M budget and 6.75% tax hike

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report



Coun. Erwin Wiens objects to taking money out of the parking reserves to offset tax increases. EVAN LOREE

After months of planning and debate, council voted Tuesday to approve the 2024 budget.

All in, property owners will be paying 6.75 per cent more in town taxes than they did in 2023.

The levy increase will support a \$48.5 million operating budget for the town, almost \$16.1 million of which will come from tax revenue, said a report signed by three town staffers.

The rising cost is being driven by staff wage increases, five new hirings, rising insurance fees, high legal costs, increased capital funding and enhancements to recreational services, said the report.

The new positions include a mechanic, climate change co-ordinator, senior planner, policy co-ordinator and bylaw officer.

The report said initial quotes for the town's insurance came in 27 per cent higher than they were in 2023.

"This increase is largely due to the town's consistently high loss ratio related to general liability insurance claims, making it difficult to obtain favourable quotations," it said.

Insurance rates also jumped 16 per cent in 2023.

Minerva Ward, president of NOTL Tourism and NOTL Chamber of Commerce, asked the town to make room in the budget for \$67,935 in support of various festivals put on by the chamber.

NOTL Tourism, which markets the town to would-be tourists, is a subsidiary of the chamber.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor suggested the funding be denied and the saved costs, which would have come out

of the parking coffers, be passed on to the taxpayer.

She said the chamber does not need additional town funding, as the town was already giving 50 per cent of the room tax revenue to NOTL Tourism for marketing purposes.

"Let them work within the (room tax) revenue they receive to fund their initiatives and not expect the residents to subsidize tourism promotion," O'Connor said.

However, her peers were not interested in using the saved parking revenue to reduce operational costs charged to taxpayers.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa told The Lake Report it was not sustainable to offset taxes through the town's supply of parking revenue.

O'Connor argued that is exactly what the town did in 2023 to reduce the impact of regional transit costs on municipal taxes.

In the end, council decided not to fork out the \$67,000 for NOTL Tourism.

Zalepa then quickly called the question and the budget was approved.

Province axes 6.1% tax on wine

Jill Troyer
The Lake Report

Carolyn Hurst wanted to see it happen first-hand, so she was among those in the gallery of the Ontario Legislature on Tuesday when the government tabled its budget.

Hurst, chair of Ontario Craft Wineries and president of Westcott Vineyards in Jordan, has worked long and hard with others in the industry to lobby for the elimination of the 6.1 per cent tax on wine sold at Ontario wineries.

The budget made good on a government promise to get rid of the tax.

"We knew it was coming, but until you see it, it's not real. I wanted to be there to witness it after all the work," said Hurst. "It was really cool to be there."

The tax is gone as of April 1 and the impact will be immediate, though consumers likely won't see prices drop.

"It's a 6 per cent improvement on your margin, so it's pretty big," said Richard Liu, owner of Ironwood Cider House.

"It's just fantastic and

for a couple of hundred wineries in the province, it's going to make a difference in their ability to run their business," added Hurst.

For some smaller wineries, getting rid of the tax will mean "the difference between staying above water or sinking," she explained.

For others, the revenue from the elimination of the tax will be turned right back into the business.

For Westcott it represents about \$100,000 a year, Hurst said.

That money can be used to hire another person or invest in equipment or infrastructure. "There are any number of ways we can put that money to good use," she said.

At NOTL's Pillitteri Estates Winery, 35 per cent of wine sales are made directly at the winery.

"So the impact is very significant, when you consider we produce 100,000 cases of wine per year," said Jamie Slingerland, director of viticulture.

"We haven't been able to reinvest over the last four years, so this will allow us to update our equipment

to make ourselves more efficient and bolster our marketing," he said.

Liu said it makes it more lucrative to focus on direct-to-customer sales.

He predicts it will boost tourism as wineries have more resources available to make their on-site offerings more compelling.

Eliminating the tax is especially welcome now, because it's been a difficult time for wineries in Niagara, Hurst said.

"We are very dependent on tourist traffic and last summer the traffic was not what we'd hoped for, and certainly not back to pre-COVID levels," she said.

Weather didn't help, with a cool, rainy spring and wet summer, and smoke from forest fires clouding the sky.

Plus, inflation took a bite out of consumers' discretionary spending. "Even this off-season has been slower than previous winters."

Hurst is hoping this summer will be busier and the weather will be beautiful, hot and sunny.

"We've got all kinds of great things planned, so we're really excited," she said.

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NOTL comes through in clutch for Newark food drive

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

On a snowy Saturday morning, volunteers across Niagara-on-the-Lake braved slushy, slippery streets to pick up food donations from townhomes on behalf of Newark Neighbours.

When Brian Litke and Wally Williams took off from the home of Rod Konik on Line 1 Road in a silver GM Sierra pickup truck, the shelves at Newark Neighbours were still mostly bare.

“With the exception of soup and tuna fish, we had practically nothing,” said Newark Neighbours board chair Cindy Grant the morning of the food drive.

And with almost 120 clients in need of food donations in time for the Easter holiday, Grant was in a pinch.

But then volunteers came pouring into the food bank and the shelves started filling.

“It just makes my heart full,” Grant said in an interview later. “My experience has been that this community always comes through.”

Leading up to the event, only 26 households had registered for a porch pickup.

But by Saturday, that surged to 80.



Rotary Club president Carol Lipsett, right, drops off a basket of donations at Newark Neighbours as Francyne Chenier and Cindy Grant sort through food. EVAN LOREE

It took the effort of three community groups, the NOTL Kinsmen Club, Rotary Club and Lion's Club to bring in the donations.

Carol Lipsett, president of the NOTL Rotary Club, said they did porch pickups in September as well, hitting about 100 homes for the Thanksgiving food drive.

“We do this as a collaborative, community effort,” Lipsett said.

Working in teams of two, the volunteers disperse across town and pick up donations from households who register for pickups.

“For the sake of our community work, we help out wherever we can,” said Kinsmen treasurer Brian Litke between porch pickups.

“Anytime they need us, we'll help them out,” he added.

Litke, and fellow volunteer Wally Williams, drove up and down the cul-de-sac of Weatherstone, where they met resident Barbara Brown.

“I always give to Newark Neighbours,” Brown told The Lake Report after handing off her donations to the Kinsmen volunteers.

“It's hard for people,” she said.

In fact, Newark Neighbours serves about 155 households alone.

And according to Food Banks Canada, food bank usage was up 32 per cent in 2023 relative to 2022.

Food prices also continue to rise in Canada, according to a report from Statistics Canada.

While the increase in food prices this past February was lower than it was in January, the report said food prices have gone up 21.6 per cent since February 2021.

Litke said there are a lot of people “struggling away” and “trying to make ends meet.”

It was one of the reasons he volunteered to pick up donations on Saturday, he said.

Back at the food bank, Francyne Chenier, who's been volunteering with Newark Neighbours for

eight years, said she feels a need to give back.

“I'm very fortunate,” she said.

“I have a lot in my life and to see the appreciation in people's look when we give them the food means a lot to me,” she said.

Ray Hobbs, president of the NOTL Kinsmen Club, said it's becoming hard to find volunteers, especially in a town with a lower population of young people.

“When you've got no younger people in your town, it's really tough,” he said.

But Grant said volunteers like those at Kinsmen are always quick to step up.

“They're terrific, terrific people,” she said.

Grant said the food bank received a swell of donations from St. Davids School and the NOTL community library Monday.

Thanks to these, the food bank is well above target and able to deliver Easter food hampers to households across NOTL in time for the long weekend.

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New nurse practitioner will see walk-in patients

Continued from Front Page

the emergency room.”

In short: NOTL is getting a walk-in clinic.

Not since the Niagara-on-the-Lake Hospital was shuttered in 2015 have primary health care services been available to all residents. About 8,000 people in NOTL do not have a family doctor.

“So, it is going to help those people,” said Coun. Sandra O'Connor.

“It is going to help the tourists — we get 2.2 million tourists a year and someone may fall and hit their head and need some stitches or something like that — the students, the seasonal workers, all those people, it is very critical for



The Village Medical Centre will start accepting walk-in patients mid-April. RICHARD WRIGHT

them,” she added.

Mary Keith, executive director of the Niagara North Family Health Team,

confirmed that the nurse practitioner position is already filled and residents will be able to utilize their

services by mid-April at the Village Medical Centre on Garrison Village Drive.


O'Connor, who has been a vocal advocate for enhanced health care services in NOTL for several years, dating back to her time on the previous town council, expanded on the services that will be provided, noting this is a good day for NOTL.

“They can do stitches, they refer to specialists, they can renew prescriptions — any kind of primary health care (needs).”


“And if they need additional things they can reach out to other people and doctors. They can provide a fairly comprehensive scope of services,” she said.

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Horse-drawn carriage operators compete for **limited** parking permits

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The town may be back to two horse-drawn carriage operators in 2024.

Laura Sentineal, who owns Sentineal Carriages with her husband, Fred, asked council to consider granting her an additional permit to park her company's horse-drawn carriages in Old Town, since a rival company has not indicated an interest in continuing its operations this season.

The rival company, Queen's Royal Tours, is owned by Sentineal's brother-in-law Jeff Sentineal, who decided not to operate his horse-drawn carriage service in 2023 due to health issues.

"We have the infrastructure, we have property, we have everything. We're ready to go," she said.

Sentineal was confused to see a staff report that indicated the town intended to allow Queen's Royal Tours to park its carriages on public property outside the Prince of Wales Hotel, as the permit was to be sublet to an unnamed party.

Sentineal said she re-



Laura Sentineal, co-owner of Sentineal Carriages, wants a permit to park four carriages on King Street this year — the same amount the company had in 2023. EVAN LOREE

ceived four licences from the town in 2023.

But Coun. Sandra O'Connor pointed out that the town granted only three to Sentineal Carriages, one to Queen's Royal Tours and one to Ronda Cave, who also spoke to council at the meeting Tuesday night.

"Somehow that morphed internally and through council into one coming to us,

one to Ronda and, of course, we retained our original three," Sentineal said.

Acting chief administrator Bruce Zvaniga said the rules governing the carriage businesses in town are complicated.

Business licensing is the Niagara Region's domain, he said, but added the town issues a permit that allows the holder to use space in

Old Town to park carriages and rest horses.

"The town currently issues five licences to occupy town land. Complicated term, it's really renting a parking space if you like," Zvaniga explained.

Council allowed Queen's Royal Tours to sublet its parking space to Meagan Sentineal in 2023.

Zvaniga explained that the subletting of that space was done through the regional business licence of Sentineal Carriages.

Sentineal told council she'd like to continue using the fourth spot in 2024 since the business licence for Queen's Royal Tours is still inactive.

Coun. Wendy Cheropita suggested the town contact Jeff Sentineal before granting the request, to see if he intended to activate his business licence for the 2024 season.

After some back-and-forth discussion, council agreed it would do so in one week, assuming Jeff Sentineal does not activate his business licence.

In an interview later, Sentineal confirmed he plans to operate his business for the 2024 season.

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Critics say board was **wrong** to fire Simpson

Continued from Front Page

She also found the timing of Simpson's firing ironic.

"How ironic that the chief librarian was fired over Freedom to Read Week," Davidson wrote.

Another resident, Patrick Wilson, took library board chair Daryl Novak to task.

"After rereading (Simpson's) op-ed and then reviewing the reasoning for the dismissal presented by Daryl Novak, I must conclude that he has used her drawing reference to FAIR, the U.S. organization which promotes freedom to present ideas across the political spectrum as an extremely weak argument," Wilson said.

Another NOTL resident,

Elizabeth Masson, agreed with the decision to terminate Simpson's employment but said the board needs to be more accountable to taxpayers.

"I think the townspeople of Niagara-on-the-Lake, whose taxes provide \$886,461 of the operating budget of the library, deserve quite a bit more transparency about who sits on the library's board and how its decisions are made," she wrote.

Reaction also came from outside NOTL. Toronto resident George Dunbar cited what he called "the recent and dangerous trend of banning the speech of others whose views are at odds with our own."

"It's bad enough that

such a once-revered right in democratic societies has been eroded to the extent that public discussion and opinion (particularly in schools and universities) has now been extended to publishers and libraries."

Hamilton's Murray McCabe, who says he is a retired chief librarian himself, said the wrong person was fired.

"The only people that should have been fired over Ms. Simpson's article are the NOTL library board for not standing with her during this controversy," he wrote.

"As with most censorship issues, those that want to ban books or stop people from sharing opposing viewpoints see only what they want to see and are determined to

stamp out anyone that does not comply with their view of the world."

Reaction was also swift on X (formerly Twitter). St. Catharines resident and one-time People's Party of Canada candidate Rebecca Hahn condemned Simpson's firing.

"Free speech is slipping through our fingers at an alarming rate," she posted.

And Angel Eduardo, a senior writer and editor for the U.S.-based Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), was dismayed that Simpson was fired for taking "inspiration from (FAIR) and (encouraging) viewpoint diversity in library collections. Madness."

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UnFAIR? ‘Misinformation’ led to firing of chief librarian, U.S. organization says

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

An American organization cited by NOTL library CEO and chief librarian Cathy Simpson in a controversial column has been mischaracterized, its executive director says.

In an interview with The Lake Report, Monica Harris of the Foundation Against Intolerance & Racism (FAIR) said it was “distressing” how some members of the community reacted and that the library board had fired Simpson based on what Harris said were “assumptions about FAIR” that labelled it as a group spouting far-right talking points.

“This is not a right-wing organization and it’s offensive to be accused of it,” Harris said, adding FAIR has chapters in Toronto and British Columbia.

On Feb. 22, as part of Freedom to Read Week, a guest column by Simpson headlined “Censorship and what we are allowed to read” was published in The Lake Report.

After complaints from library staff, a few residents and notably a letter published Feb. 29 from resident Matthew French (“Opinion piece espoused right wing talking points”), the library board fired Simpson last week.

That decision was made without finding out more about her organization, Harris said.



FAIR executive director Monica Harris.

“It seems like they’ve done this without really doing adequate research and due diligence,” Harris said.

“From my perspective, both FAIR and Ms. Simpson had been wrongly branded with these inflammatory and divisive labels,” Harris said. “She was terminated based on misinformation. It’s so tragic. This shouldn’t be happening in a free society.”

Neither FAIR nor Simpson have said or done anything that could be construed as racist, Harris said.

“No one among us — certainly not FAIR — or Ms. Simpson supports racism or discrimination in any form.”

Libraries are in a tough spot, Harris acknowledged. That being said, they have an obligation to provide access to information that

expresses all kinds of viewpoints.

“I can fully appreciate that they have a responsibility — and it’s sacred — to provide access and information to all citizens, including those with perspectives that may be deemed unpopular or offensive,” Harris said.

“This may make people uncomfortable, we get it. This is the price of living in a free society. I think what gets lost in this discussion is that censorship is never an effective way of combating prejudice.”

Only when people talk to each other can progress be made, she said.

“Throughout history, we’ve seen that whenever there are hate speech laws, hate doesn’t disappear,” she said. “The only thing that makes hate disappear is discourse — open discourse — education and bringing people together in respectful discussions.”

Harris said that as a Black woman and a lesbian, she has been on the receiving end of accusations of both racism and homophobia because of her position with FAIR.

“We’re living in a time where a Black woman can be accused of being racist, which I have been ... and a gay woman can be accused of being homophobic. I have been accused of that as well,” she said.

“It’s all nonsense. It presumes that I don’t understand my interests and I don’t understand what

racism is.”

The Lake Report also reached out to the Ontario Library Association for comment but the request was declined.

“We won’t be able to speak to this matter,” said Laurel McLeod, a social media and communications specialist for the organization.

She referred The Lake Report to the NOTL library to discuss the matter.

In explaining its decision, library board chair Daryl Novak said that while Simpson was entitled to expressing free speech, the newspaper column gave the appearance that her opinion was shared by the board.

“There was never for a split second any issue about Cathy’s rights to free speech as an individual,” he told The Lake Report in the wake of Simpson’s dismissal.

“However, our rights to free speech get curtailed somewhat when we associate ourselves with an organization.”

As for FAIR, Harris said the group is only trying to honour the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King.

“He dreamed of a world in which everyone was treated equally and that’s all we at FAIR are advocating,” Harris said.

“We are against discrimination in any form, but somehow, that is seen as enabling systemic racism and is a right-wing talking point.”



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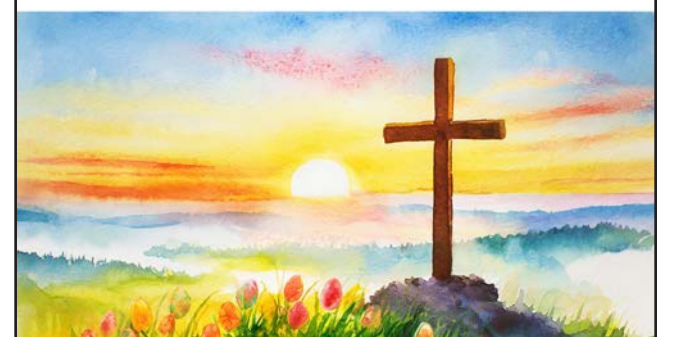
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A who’s who of people involved in the NOTL library drama

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Here are all the people involved in the upheaval at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library:

At the centre of the controversy:

Cathy Simpson: Former chief librarian and CEO, who was fired over the contents of a column published

in The Lake Report about Freedom to Read Week. Simpson was in the position for more than a decade.

Monica Harris: Executive director of the U.S.-based Foundation Against Intolerance & Racism (FAIR). Many of FAIR’s talking points were included in Simpson’s column.

The decision-makers: Members of the NOTL Public Library board

Daryl Novak (chair): Retired executive recruiter at Dysart & Jones Associates, former director of operations Ontario Library Service

Wayne Scott (vice-chair): Longtime career in IT and as an executive coach

Ilze Andzans: Director of regional planning for Metrolinx

Benoit Beausoleil: Plant expansion IT director at

Proctor & Gamble
Katie Desharnais: Strategic marketing manager, economic development for Niagara Region

Susan Elliott: PhD, literacy teacher, education administrator and curriculum specialist whose current work focuses on sustainability education and social-emotional learning

Robin (Williams) Foster: Order of Canada recipient, pediatrician and former chief medical officer of health for Niagara Region, provincial health adviser

Adriana Vizzari: NOTL town councillor



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Ticketed drivers **unhappy** with speed crackdown

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

For the past three months, a speed camera near Crossroads Public School has been targeting drivers who exceed the speed limit.

It's all part of a Niagara Region program to boost road safety and reduce speeding.

And it all begins with an unwelcome letter that arrives with the ticket and a photo of their vehicle.

Many drivers are unhappy with the how the program operates, with complaints about the warning signs, enforcement on non-school days, amount of their fines, lack of blinking lights and the roadblocks they incur trying to pay their speeding tickets.

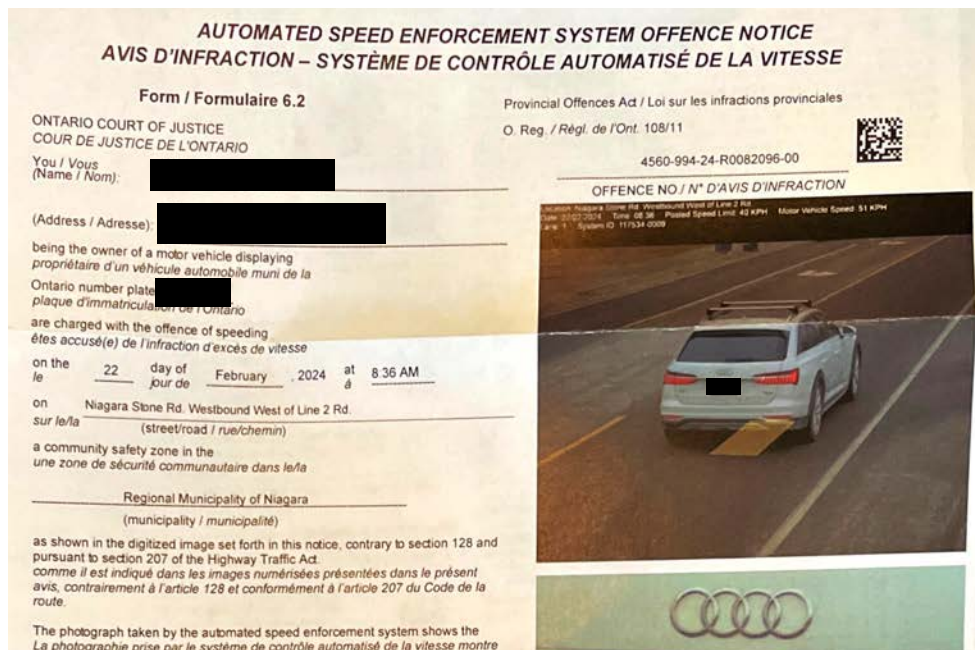
Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Ernest Tucker told us about receiving an \$85 ticket for doing 53 km/h in the 40 km/h zone at 1:45 p.m. on a school day:

"Fair enough, I was speeding and must pay for it, although I know of no police officer who would offer other than a warning for travelling at less than 32 mph."

"The frustration mounted, however, when I tried to pay the ticket. The "date of deemed service" was March 12, so I went online to pay. When I entered my ticket number, the site refused to accept it. Rereading my ticket, I determined that payment could be made three days after the date of deemed service, so I tried again March 15. And 18th. And 19th. And 20th."

"So, I drove to Welland to pay my ticket in person. The officer guiding me through the metal detector responded to my comments about my inability to pay online by saying, "Yes, you have to wait a while." I pointed out that I had waited the required three days, plus an additional five, to the point where I was running out of time before additional penalties would be levied for late payment."

"However, when I gained access to a staff member to actually pay my fine, the truth came out. "Oh, you can't pay online yet. The system isn't in place," she



AUTOMATED SPEED ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM OFFENCE NOTICE
AVIS D'INFRACTION – SYSTÈME DE CONTRÔLE AUTOMATISÉ DE LA VITESSE

Form / Formulaire 6.2

Provincial Offences Act / Loi sur les infractions provinciales
O. Reg. / Régl. de l'Ont. 108/11

ONTARIO COURT OF JUSTICE
COUR DE JUSTICE DE L'ONTARIO

You / Vous (Name / Nom): [REDACTED]

(Address / Adresse): [REDACTED]

being the owner of a motor vehicle displaying
propriétaire d'un véhicule automobile muni de la
Ontario number plate [REDACTED]
plaque d'immatriculation de l'Ontario
are charged with the offence of speeding
êtes accusé(e) de l'infraction d'excès de vitesse

on the 22 day of February, 2024 at 8:36 AM
sur le 22 jour de Février, 2024 à 8:36 AM

on Niagara Stone Rd. Westbound West of Line 2 Rd.
sur la (street/road / rue/chemin)

a community safety zone in the
une zone de sécurité communautaire dans la

Regional Municipality of Niagara
(municipality / municipalité)

as shown in the digitized image set forth in this notice, contrary to section 128 and
pursuant to section 207 of the Highway Traffic Act.
comme il est indiqué dans les images numérisées présentées dans le présent
avis, contrairement à l'article 128 et conformément à l'article 207 du Code de la
route.

The photograph taken by the automated speed enforcement system shows the
La photographie prise par le système de contrôle automatisé de la vitesse montre

4560-994-24-R0082096-00

OFFENCE NO / N° D'AVIS D'INFRACTION

Provincial Offences Act / Loi sur les infractions provinciales

Time / Heure: 08:36 PM / 08:36 AM

Posted Speed Limit / Limite de vitesse affichée: 40 KPH

Motor Vehicle Speed / Vitesse du véhicule: 51 KPH

File # / Numéro: 117334-0308

Readers have received tickets for exceeding the 40 km/h limit in front of Crossroads Public School. The fines varied depending on how much they were over the limit. SUPPLIED

told me. This, despite all the verbiage on the actual ticket explaining precisely how to pay online. So, it would seem the 36-kilometre drive was necessary after all."

We received dozens of messages from people who received tickets. Here are some of their stories:

"I was clocked at 57 in the posted 40 on Feb. 23. The plain brown envelope arrived March 17 with a fine of around \$110. The most frustrating thing is you require the use of a magnifying glass to view it to find your infraction number and payment code on the paperwork. You cannot pay it the day you get it, which also is stated in very minute print. I get it, safety first. But try not to aggravate the people just trying to pay their debt to society. I'm learning to slow down in the Old Town."

"I got a ticket for going 51km/h at 9:42 a.m. on Feb. 16 when it was a PD Day and there were no kids at school."

"I got an unfortunate surprise in the mail yesterday with a ticket for \$85. I was going 53 in what I believed was a 50 zone but apparently it is 40. I am unhappy and I've heard that lots of people are getting dinged. The sign that says is 40 is hidden behind the 50 and is very close to where the camera is."

"On Feb. 22 at 12:05 p.m., I got a \$95 speeding ticket for driving 55 km/h past the camera. I have lived in NOTL since 1964 and drive

past Crossroads school, as much as four to six times a day, between my part-time job and Penner lumber. I totally respect the slower speed in front of the school and I try to put my cruise control to 40 each time I pass it. I have no excuse and will pay the fine."

“Until recently, the signage was clear. The speed in front of the school was 50 km/h unless the flashing lights indicated a reduced speed of 40 km/h. Simple and clear. On Feb. 23, I was proceeding past the school, no lights were flashing, I was driving 50 km/h, which I thought was the limit. So, I was surprised when I received a \$75 fine in the mail.”

TICKETED DRIVER

"On Feb. 20 at 11:37 a.m. I was photographed and clocked going 67 in a posted 40 zone. I have been fined \$257.50. The set fine is \$202.50 with victim fine surcharge and costs of \$55 on top. That sounds dispro-

portionately large to me."

"I most likely was unintentionally driving above the limit. I do question why the signage is so small and insignificant. I hope the money collected for this infraction will be used to replace the signs and add flashing lights at the appropriate time of day (school hours)."

"I will pay the ticket, but I find the signs do not do a good job informing drivers of how it works, especially the speed change from 40 to 50 km/h at certain hours. Better signage might help. They might also give drivers a warning ticket for a first offence."

"I got a ticket going 51 km/h on Feb. 16 at 9:42 a.m. My kids go to Crossroads, so I'm supportive of a reduced speed through a school zone when children are present. However, Feb. 16 was a PD day and there were no kids at the school."

"I was so shocked because I didn't think I was speeding especially since it wasn't when buses were out or kids were leaving the schoolyard. But I do remember a flash going off as I passed the camera, and thought I'm not speeding, I'm going 50 km/h. But my ticket is for 54 in a 40. The worst thing is the cost — \$90 is way too high. I quietly paid it, what can you do?"

"Our ticket was \$75 for going 51 in a 40. Ridiculous cash grab. We will fight it."

"It is a big one — \$235 for doing 62 km/h in a 40 zone, on Feb. 15. The camera is

a money grabber. I picked option #2 and am hoping to reduce the amount of the ticket."

"I'm the lucky recipient of two speeding tickets so far for a total of \$325. I wonder if more are on the way. The signage is a bit misleading: the 50 km/hr is very clear but you really have to read the fine print/pay attention and notice the 40 km/h. I completely support the reduced speed around the school. It's just an unfortunate result for my family that we weren't more informed. I now put on cruise control in the area and hope other drivers are not too irritated. Although the many pages of paperwork indicate you can pay online, you actually can't. The provided URL takes you in a loop. I opted to pay by mail and am keeping my fingers crossed that I am not charged a late fee."

"Haven't had a ticket, however if public safety is the primary reason for the flashing 40 zone warning lights removed? A much better alert system than the signs that replaced them, particularly for visitors to the town. It would be very interesting to check the before and after tickets stats and revenue."

"The flashing light, still in use all over Ontario, is about the best way there is to communicate the time vs. current speed limit. Could they not have just left the light and reprogrammed the controller?"

"I received a speeding ticket at Crossroads — \$115 for driving at 58 km/h. I paid by mail as the internet connection on the ticket did not work."

"I received a ticket totaling \$180 including \$30 surcharge for going 60 in a 40 km/h zone on Family Day. What a cash grab. I am local but if I was a tourist, I'd never come back."

"The issue is not how fast you travel in the zone, but what safety issues are being resolved. This section of the highway has an insignificant number of accidents. The camera does nothing to enhance the safety of the school zone. These cameras generate a laundry list of

other problems, including people bypassing them by driving on less-safe roads. Driving farther and wasting fuel, increasing our carbon footprint. The cameras are nothing but a money grab. This will damage our tourism industry."

"I got a ticket and hopefully will have it reduced with an early prosecutor's meeting. If the cameras are meant to reduce speeds in a community safety zone, then the police should consider getting more cameras around all sections of the community. My beef is that I received a ticket on a stat holiday — no school, no kids, no need for cameras."

"Until recently, the signage was clear. The speed in front of the school was 50 km/h unless the flashing lights indicated a reduced speed of 40 km/h. Simple and clear. On Feb. 23, I was proceeding past the school, no lights were flashing, I was driving 50 km/h, which I thought was the limit. So, I was surprised when I received a \$75 fine in the mail."

"On Feb. 13 my husband was visiting the area and not realizing the speed of 40 km/h is enforced all day as there was no flashing light and he didn't know about the speed cam. He was travelling 52 km/h and received a ticket for \$60 plus \$20 victim fine surcharge for a total of \$80. He was shocked when the ticket arrived in the mail three weeks later as he hasn't had a speeding ticket in many, many years."

"I have lived in NOTL for 45 years and never complained publicly about anything in town, but this now has really got me upset. We try to support businesses in Virgil, my family and I love buying groceries in town and enjoying local coffee houses. My wife and son each received a ticket each in late February for going 53 and 52 km/h. Total fines were \$85 and \$80 respectively. We will pay the fine, but we will take action to avoid Virgil. I believe these automated cameras are a soft way to get extra money into coffers in the guise of safety. We are all pro safety but also common sense."

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Wiens has different view on cams

Continued from Front Page

on why there would be a distinction,” for PD Days or holidays, Zalepa said. “Speeding is a lead cause on injury in motor vehicle accidents. The only difference is the speed threshold is lower on a school day.”

Deputy Lord Mayor Erwin Wiens has a different view regarding speed cameras.

“If ‘vision zero’, is to be achieved, there should be large flashing lights and signs alerting drivers to the cameras. There is some signage, but not enough to deter speeding,” said Wiens, a former police officer.

“Getting a ticket two weeks later (by mail) doesn’t help. It seems to me that because the program is designed to generate funds, by definition, it is assumed that they don’t work. People aren’t slowing down and the region is banking, pun intended, on that.”

“I believe the region has its heart in the right place, but I don’t agree with how they are getting to the goal of Vision Zero,” he said.

School zones always have reduced speed limits and the region chose to install the cameras for three-month intervals at various spots around Niagara.

However, the program has left drivers with a lot of questions and frustrations.

Among them: When the camera went in, why did the region remove the flashing red lights that used to warn drivers about the reduced limit outside Crossroads?

The school zone speed limit is in effect from September through June, according to the signs along the road.

But readers are wondering: why is that lower limit in effect when students are not in school eg. on PD Days? Or statutory holidays, like Family Day? Or during March Break?

The whole speed camera project has been criticized by many drivers as simply a cash grab.

Many blame the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, but in that respect they are wrong.



Some drivers have questions about why the region removed the flashing lights that warned people of the school zone speed limit. They have called the move misleading and criticized the speed camera program as being nothing more than a “cash grab.” FILE

It is wholly a regional program.

For at least one NOTL resident, who said she was a fan of the crackdown, the speed camera has proven to be a really painful.

A volunteer at the Newark Neighbours food bank, she received four tickets totalling about \$800 in fines and surcharges.

One of the tickets was during March Break. Without the red lights flashing outside Crossroads, she didn’t realize the 40 km/h limit was in effect.

She was one of many who were caught.

We asked the region to respond to some of the lingering questions that people in the community want answered.

Responses from Scott Fraser, Niagara Region’s associate director of transportation planning:

What happened to the flashing lights warning of the school zone speed limit?

Turns out it is mandatory. “Removal of the flashing lights is required by Toronto’s Joint Processing Centre, where provincial offences officers review camera images to confirm if a violation has occurred.”

The reason for removing the “flashing beacons” when speed cameras are installed is so there can be “no question as to what the speed limit was at the time of the infraction. The way the speed cameras operate, it is not possible to show that a lower speed limit

enacted by the beacons was legally in place at the time of an infraction.”

“Therefore the ‘flashing beacons’ are replaced with signs that display the months and times of the lower speed limit instead and the cameras are programmed to enforce the speeds as appropriate for the times of day/months noted.”

“This change is consistent with other municipalities across Ontario that use automated speed enforcement cameras and ensures the units can accurately enforce speeding infractions.”

The change is done before speed cameras are installed “to give drivers an opportunity to adjust to the change before the beginning of enforcement and the new signs will remain in place going forward.”

As well, the flashing lights will NOT be coming back and “the current signage will remain in place so that further changes are not required” when the speed camera rotates back to the area in the future.

“This change must be implemented in any school zone prior to the start of an Automated Speed Enforcement program which will include a change to the Community Safety Zone on York Road between Queenston Road and Concession 3 Road (St. David’s Public School).

How much over the limit before you get a ticket?

“The region does not disclose the automated enforcement speed threshold as we do not want to give the impression that there is any acceptable speed over the posted speed limit that is safe. The speed threshold is set provincially and is consistent across the municipal programs.”

But based on anecdotal evidence from people who have received tickets, The Lake Report has concluded that about 11 km/h over the posted limit is the threshold for issuing a fine.

As well, Fraser disclosed that the Crossroads camera only checks and photographs southwest-bound vehicles, ie. ones driving away from the camera. “Reductions in vehicle speeds and associated safety benefits are generally realized in both directions with the use of automated speed enforcement.”

Why are school-day limits in effect on PD Days, statutory holidays and March Break?

“Niagara Region sets speed limits on regional roads through by-laws approved by council. Speeds are enforced in accordance with the posted speed limits either by speed enforcement cameras or police.”

“Speed limit changes must be simple and consistent to support comprehension of signs by drivers as they travel through an area and not rely on information that may be unknown to drivers such as PD day schedules.”

“All automated speed enforcement units are placed in community safety zones, which are selected in areas where safety is of special concern. Safety concerns related to schools extend beyond the days and times when classes are in session, as schools host other activities such as day camps, extra-curricular activities, youth sports and often have playgrounds.”

As for how many tickets have been issued and how much revenue has been generated for the region, those details likely will be presented to regional council in April.

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Pauline Reimer Gibson Audiologist

Reif life: Wine fans treated to international spread

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Wine aficionados and foodies had the delight of enjoying an international spread at Reif Estate Winery over the weekend.

Visitors to the 52-year-old winery on Niagara Parkway were sampling six different kinds of cuisine with their wines.

Richardson Matias was busy rolling sushi and torching salmon on behalf of Danny's Sushi from Niagara Falls.

Originally from the Philippines, he has been cooking with Danny's Sushi for two years.

Matias seared the top of a salmon nigiri dish and glazed it with a spicy teriyaki sauce before offering it to a pair of diners with two sushi rolls, one with white tuna and cucumber, the other with salmon and avocado.

For those who prefer lamb, cooks and servers



Left: Beth Zola and Michelle Domescek came from south of the border for a taste of Niagara wine at Reif Estate Winery on Saturday. Right: Richardson Matias, a cook with Danny's Sushi, prepares a trio of sushi rolls and torched salmon nigiri. EVAN LOREE



from Kaashi – an Indian restaurant also from Niagara Falls – were offering a lamb methi with buttery-yellow sauce on rice.

There were also some Mediterranean, Peruvian and Italian dishes on offer from other restaurants in Niagara.

Oya Ege and Valentina Axenova were both visiting from Toronto and got to sample these viticulture and culinary delights.

Good wine isn't really about the country of origin, Ege said.

Turkey, for example, produces good wine despite

lacking the international clout of Italy or Spain, Axenova said.

"It really depends on the grape and your taste," Ege said.

Ege said she tends to lean toward a good Cabernet Sauvignon.

"She used to be Merlot

drinker," Axenova said, "and I introduced her to Cabernet Sauvignon."

Beth Zola and Michelle Domescek were visiting from Amherst, N.Y., near Buffalo.

Domescek said she's been coming to Niagara-on-the-Lake since about 1993 and is always impressed with

the quality of the wine and service.

"The experience here with the servers is really special," she said.

The two friends agreed the wine on this side of the Niagara River was better than what they could get at home.

evanloree@niagaranow.com

SPONSORED STORY

Beloved Niagara-on-the-Lake flower shop gets a rebrand

SPONSORED
The Lake Report

In the heart of Niagara-on-the-Lake, a floral transformation is underway as one of the town's cherished flower boutiques prepares to bloom anew.

VanNoort Flower Studio, a long-standing fixture in the community for over two decades, is set to unveil its fresh identity under the vibrant moniker June Floral & Garden.

The original business was started by Rita and Harry VanNoort and then later passed down to their son Rob and his wife, Sharon, both of whom lovingly guided the ship for decades.

In 2022, Sharon decided to sell the shop and retire. After several interviews with potential buyers, she chose Joanne Bassie because she was just the right fit for the shop, staff and community.

The decision to rebrand



The staff at June Floral are ready to help you find whatever floral display you're looking for. From left, Lana, Liliana, Amy and Joanne. Stop by the Grab n' Go market all weekend to pick up your Easter flowers. SUPPLIED



"We are excited to embark on this new chapter and continue serving our community with the same passion and dedication," expressed Bassie, speaking on the journey ahead.

The rebranding of VanNoort Flower Studio is not just about a cosmetic makeover but a testament to the enduring spirit of entrepreneurship and adaptation.

As Niagara-on-the-Lake blossoms with each passing season, June Floral & Garden stands poised to flourish alongside it, weaving its own tale of beauty and growth in the fabric of this quaint town.

A grand reopening event is slated for June, in keeping with the new name.

Stay tuned to Facebook, Instagram, local advertising and junefloral.ca as they reveal a fresh palette of floral promos, events and a renewed commitment to spreading joy, one bloom at a time.

comes as Bassie, a longtime floral enthusiast, seeks to rejuvenate the business and better reflect its essence amidst the evolving tastes of its clientele.

"We wanted a name that embodies the natural beauty and elegance of the flowers while resonating with the spirit of growth and renewal," Bassie said. "We want to reflect our love of flowers and gardens inside and outside the home. The name June reflects that, and

our gardeny aesthetic for floral arrangements."

Bassie, an avid gardener who attended the Niagara Parks School of Horticulture, has worked for many years in the horticulture industry and is very excited to be able to add outdoor services to the shop's many offerings.

You can see this passion in the large seasonally planted front boxes outside the store like this spring's design, including gorgeous

pinks and yellows in ranunculus, daffodils and pansies.

Nestled in the village of Virgil, VanNoort Flower Studio has been a go-to destination for locals and visitors alike seeking exquisite floral arrangements, from quaint bouquets to elaborate event décor.

With its enchanting ambience and commitment to quality, the boutique has cultivated a loyal following over the years.

The rebranding effort

goes beyond a mere name change.

Alongside the new name, June Floral & Garden will introduce a refreshed logo and updated storefront, reflecting a modern aesthetic while maintaining its signature charm.

Customers can expect the same personalized service and attention to detail that have defined VanNoort Flower Studio, now under the banner of June Floral & Garden.



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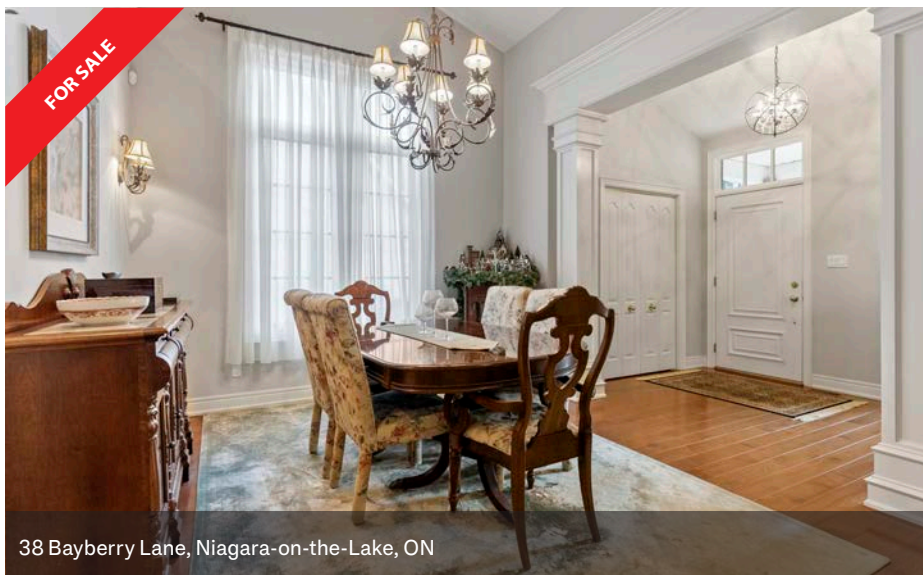
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Contributed by Patty Garriock
 “Be less curious about people and more curious about ideas.” - Marie Curie

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A wintry start to spring



March came in like the proverbial lamb, prompting golfers to hit the links in droves, and tulips, snowbells and daffodils to pop up in gardens around Niagara-on-the-Lake. Then, just a few days into official spring, last Friday's snowstorm dropped a fresh coat of snow on the area. The snow might have covered the plants, but April showers are just around the corner. No foolin'. KEVIN MACLEAN

Editorial

A crisis at the NOTL Public Library

Kevin MacLean
 Managing Editor

The irony of Niagara-on-the-Lake chief librarian Cathy Simpson being fired over an opinion piece about Freedom to Read Week should not be lost on anyone.

There were a few complaints, including an internal letter signed by some library staff members who objected to what Simpson wrote, plus at least one vocal letter to the editor that criticized some of the content of a Feb. 22 guest column that Simpson authored in The Lake Report.

As a result, she was dismissed from the position she held for the past 11 years.

The entire affair is distasteful and unfortunate. It appears to have ended the career of a 60-year-old executive and civil servant about four years before she probably would have retired.

And it likely will end up costing the library — funded in large part by the taxpayers of Niagara-on-the-Lake — more than \$100,000 in severance payments, plus more in legal costs.

If Simpson opts to fight the library and launch a wrongful dismissal suit, the board and taxpayers could be on the hook for thousands more. Plus the deliberations that led to her firing would be put under the microscope.

A lot of questions remain about the dismissal, the debate about the Foundation Against Intolerance and Racism (FAIR) and the role of public libraries in a free, though some might say splintered, society.

There appear to be few easy answers — and in most cases, we might never have them.

Still, one thing is certain: Under our laws, outside of a unionized environment, an employer is entitled to part ways with an individual. They don't really need a reason or just cause, nor do they necessarily have to justify it to anyone.

The only variable is how much the employer ends up paying the fired person in severance. Sometimes it can be substantial.

And yes, there have been numerous instances over the years in which a senior person has been turfed because comments they made or

something they did reflected badly on their employer.

But we don't recall any involving a public library, which is viewed by many as a bastion of free expression and a forum for various viewpoints.

This situation is complex. We believe it is essential to have frank and open discussion of the subjects raised by this crisis — from free expression to a person's duty to their employer. To name a few.

So, let's look at some of the questions that have been asked about the firing of Simpson and the circumstances surrounding it.

We won't touch on them all nor will we suggest that we know better than the library board.

For starters, we don't have all the information the eight-member board had. There's just too much we do not know about the entire affair. But:

Was firing Simpson the right decision? The only alternative?

Was the criticism valid that she espoused right-wing talking points propagated by a U.S.-based organization, the Foundation Against Intolerance & Racism?

Did the NOTL Public Library board — an organization comprised of some highly experienced and esteemed professionals — overreact?

Or act too quickly? Or give too much weight to the public criticism directed at Simpson and the library?

Or, given the circumstances, the complaints, the concerns voiced by the staff of the library, did the board simply make the tough decision and do the right thing?

Should the board have conducted more due diligence and research? Would it have mattered? Was the relationship too fractured?

Is this an instance in which the board should have backed its CEO against the finger-pointing and blaming?

Should the complaints of just a few people be sufficient to effectively derail the career of an administrator who by all accounts was widely respected?

Were those complaints and criticisms valid? Were some of them overstated or taken out of context?

Everyone can have an opinion, but few can really know the full story behind such an internal crisis.

editor@niagaranow.com

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Province and Ottawa need to help fund repairs to Royal George Theatre



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa Special to The Lake Report



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa hopes people, and upper levels of government, will support the Shaw Festival in its efforts to revitalize the Royal George Theatre on Queen Street. FILE

The Shaw Festival is an integral part of our community.

It is not only the cultural centre of Niagara-on-the-Lake, in the Region, but also an economic force that generates over \$250 million of economic impact per year for our Town and the Niagara Region.

As a patron and Lord Mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake, I am keenly aware of how vital The Shaw is to our collective prosperity, which is why rebuilding the Royal George Theatre is so important.

On a recent tour of the Royal George, I saw firsthand how this building, built a century ago as a temporary lecture and training centre for the army, is now well past its best before date.

The clay foundation has been dissolving for decades, leading to regular severe flooding. The Shaw teams have done the best they could over the years to mitigate the deteriorating foundation, but its current condition is now jeopardizing the operations of The Shaw at its iconic theatre on

Queen Street in Old Town.

The Shaw's use of The Royal George Theatre has made it the beating heart of Queen Street for the last 43 years. 100,000 people see shows there every season, bringing over \$70 million annually in revenue to our surrounding businesses. Despite not being a heritage building, its iconic status on Queen must not be lost.

Rebuilding the Royal George will be a significant undertaking. It will require investment from private donors and from all levels of government. We must all come together to support Tim Jennings and Tim Carroll's ambitious vision.

I am confident it will create a new venue that captures the heritage feel of the current Royal George and renews the spirit of The Shaw in ways that those who founded the theatre in 1962 could never have imagined.

The new vision for the

Royal George is to keep the feel of the theatre that we all love so much while rebuilding it as North America's first net zero and Rick Hansen Gold Certified performing arts building - blazing a trail that will combine heritage aspects with modern amenities, green investments and the highest level of accessibility.

It has been calculated that this rebuild and Shaw's programmatic expansions will create 850 new, skilled jobs and generate an additional \$80 million per year in GDP growth for Niagara.

We all have fond memories of the Royal George Theatre. My father-in-law was an usher there when it was a movie theatre over 60 years ago, and he spoke fondly of his time there. Many community members have a personal connection to the space and I've lost count of how many people have shared with me their own stories

and memories.

But we are at a crossroads. We need both the Ontario and federal governments to step up and fund their share of this investment at the Royal George. Without this funding, economic benefits can not be gained, job losses will occur and our historic downtown will be in a position that could be very hard to recover from at a time when we are all working so hard to put the pandemic behind us.

The Royal George Theatre is a critical part of who we are as a community. I hope to see it rebuilt and continue to entertain audiences from here and around the world while contributing to our community's economic and cultural wellbeing.

Together, we can leave a lasting legacy for future generations of residents and tourists to enjoy.

Gary Zalepa is lord mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Vast majority support NOTL's temporary patios

Dear editor:

Rob Bongard's views on Niagara-on-the-Lake's temporary patios ("Temporary patios filthy and attract vermin," letter, March 21) are clearly not shared by the vast majority of our residents, business owners or visitors.

They are also not shared by his hometown of Toronto, which is a large promoter of outdoor patios for local restaurants.

In 2023, the town conducted a survey of residents, business owners and visitors to NOTL to elicit opinions regarding the outdoor patio program.

The response level of 390 surveys was one of was one

of the highest ever received by the town and 93.1 per cent of respondents supported the outdoor patio program.

The main reasons for the strong support were stated as: 1. to enjoy the outdoor dining and the views of Queen Street, 2. patios provide a vibrant, charming ambience and inviting atmosphere and 3. patios support tourism and economic development in the community.

There was no unfair preferential treatment for the few patio operators as all food service businesses on Queen Street and elsewhere could apply for a patio permit.

The patios were built to meet town specifications for safety, accessibility and durability. There have been zero safety issues, traffic problems or accessibility problems identified by the town and reported to owners of the patios.

The patios clearly do not create a town parking problem. Only five of more than 720 paid parking spots in Old Town are used for patios and the average parking spot has a utilization rate of less than 35 per cent, even during summer months.

The exaggerated headline in The Lake Report calling the patios filthy is completely misleading. A few pieces of paper depos-

ited by a pedestrian into a barrel does not equate to a filthy patio and while some vermin have always lived in the area of Queen Street, patios are not the cause.

Virtually every municipality in the area, including Niagara Falls, St. Catharines, Grimsby, Burlington and Toronto have programs to encourage and support outdoor restaurant patios, including patios that occupy parking stalls.

Clearly these municipalities and their residents also enjoy the ambience and outdoor dining experiences created by the patios.

*Scott Gauld
 NOTL*



MEET JAMES PATERSON
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Have an opinion you want heard?

Send a letter to the editor to
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FAIR responds to claims that led to firing of library's CEO



Monica Harris
Special to The Lake Report

As the executive director of the Foundation Against Intolerance & Racism, I am compelled to address several misrepresentations and falsehoods that were presented to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library board before it terminated CEO Cathy Simpson over a Feb. 22 opinion piece published in The Lake Report.

Not only are some of the claims damaging to FAIR's reputation, but also, and more importantly, because Simpson has suffered immense financial and professional harm based on this misinformation.

FAIR, a U.S.-based non-profit, has challenged diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs at public institutions, however, it is important to understand the context and basis for those challenges.

The organization's mission and founding principle are embodied in the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr., whose quote about being

"judged by the content of our character, not the colour of our skin" is proudly quoted on our homepage.

We oppose diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives only to the extent that they violate Title VII of the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the basis of race, colour, religion, sex and national origin.

FAIR has successfully defended the rights of individuals aggrieved by discriminatory DEI policies and advocates for diversity practices that are legal and authentic, rather than illegal and divisive.

Vilifying FAIR for its efforts to end discrimination of any kind is subversive of the universal equality that King and other civil rights leaders tirelessly fought to secure.

Contrary to what letter writer Matthew French and others have alleged, FAIR embraces inclusion in its purest form and believes unfettered freedom of speech is critical to this effort.

FAIR stands against censorship of any kind and advocates respectful disagreement because we believe bad ideas are best confronted with good ideas — and never with deploring or blacklisting.

Ultimately, the best way to promote tolerance is through education and open discourse.

To this end, the goal of FAIR's library program is



Cathy Simpson.

to assist librarians in their efforts to include the widest possible range of perspectives in curating their collections.

FAIR is also accused of being a "key voice amplifying anti-LGBTQ+ pseudoscience" and those supporting Simpson's dismissal cited Wikipedia as evidence for this assertion.

However, a closer read of this Wikipedia entry reveals that it has been flagged since 2023 because "the neutrality of (the) article is disputed."

It's disingenuous for those seeking inclusivity to demand that the perspective of others be excluded, or their employment terminated, based on arguably biased and unverified information.

To be perfectly clear, FAIR respects and embraces the rights of people of colour and members of the LGBTQ community.

I, myself, am a gay Black woman.

Moreover, Nadine Strossen, past national president of the American Civil Liberties Union and lifelong advocate for free speech and the rights of marginalized groups, is a member of FAIR's board of advisers. How likely (or logical) is it that I would assume a leadership role, or that Strossen would accept an advisory role, in an organization that is racist, transphobic or homophobic?

French argued, "We should not be presenting 'heterodox viewpoints' on settled science or human rights, even if some political groups would prefer it. Climate change is real. Evolution is real. Racism is bad. Gay people are not bad. We should not pay for books that promote Holocaust denial."

However, FAIR does not

deny the reality of climate change, the science of evolution or the Holocaust. We agree that discrimination is bad.

The implication that our support of heterodox views is synonymous with a rejection of settled science, bigotry or genocide is therefore unfair and patently false.

Simpson's critics accuse her of wanting books to be removed to make space for those promoting FAIR's "far right-wing agenda." Once again, they misrepresent FAIR and Simpson's efforts to advance the organization's mission.

While FAIR appreciates public libraries do not have unlimited shelf space or dollars to spend and must exercise discretion in their purchases, this does not justify the exclusion of certain books, or denigration of those who support them, based on ideological fear or unfounded accusations.

FAIR also agrees that it would be inappropriate for any library CEO to publicly pressure colleagues to compromise their professional judgment. Similarly, it is improper to fire Simpson based on public denouncement of her professional judgment.

Lastly, and most importantly, the contention that certain views are unworthy of representation in a library misunderstands the responsibility of public institutions.

Libraries have a sacred duty to provide access

to all citizens, including those whose perspectives are deemed offensive or heterodox. It's dishonest to advocate for human rights while denying citizens the most fundamental of rights in a free society: intellectual freedom.

The inconvenient truth is that issues of discrimination, diversity, inclusion and equity are far more complicated and textured than we are often led to believe.

Ironically, the failure to appreciate these nuances has prompted well-meaning people to resort to the dangerous and inflammatory mischaracterizations employed by the propagandists they condemn, ultimately fomenting the polarizing culture war we all lament.

FAIR believes it is vital to promote viewpoint diversity in library collections while respecting a wide range of perspectives. Rather than succumb to divisive rhetoric and baseless accusations against those whose opinions are deemed offensive or unpopular, I hope in future the NOTL Public Library will strive to foster inclusivity and uphold its duty to protect intellectual freedom.

Monica Harris is executive director of the Foundation Against Intolerance & Racism. This is an abridged version of an opinion piece published March 22 in the National Post following The Lake Report's story on the firing of Cathy Simpson.

Board was wrong to fire chief librarian

Dear editor:

Having read about the firing of library CEO Cathy Simpson in the March 21 edition of your paper I was struck by the following.

Daryl Novak, chair of the library board, says, "The staff were not behind her. She basically lost the confidence of the staff."

Sounds like a case of the inmates running the asylum.

Novak says that as part of their due diligence, board members also researched FAIR "and we all came to the same conclusion."

The conclusion was unstated, however, I am wondering whether their research went beyond accepting the distorted representations of Matthew French contained in his Feb. 29 letter to the editor.

He stated that in a podcast FAIR boasted, "For more than a year, FAIR has been at the forefront of

efforts to eliminate diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives."

French left out the rest of the sentence in the podcast that made it clear the initiatives FAIR opposed were only those that tried to silence people of any colour who challenge the stereotyping of people sharing the same immutable characteristics, such as colour of skin.

Far from campaigning against diversity and inclusion programs, and fighting against anti-racism initiatives, FAIR promotes the concept that we are all human beings and should all be treated equally no matter what our immutable characteristics may be.

Monica Harris, executive director of FAIR, said in a National Post opinion piece: "Simpson witnessed increasing censorship in library curation and was understandably disturbed

by these threats to intellectual freedom and free speech" and she advocated for "library neutrality and pluralism."

In the big picture, it seems there is a divide between those who judge people by their immutable characteristics, which is the worst form of stereotyping, and those who believe you should treat people as individuals regardless of their immutable characteristics.

It seems to me that FAIR comes down on the right side of this argument.

Novak says: "Cathy has a right to free speech. Her right to free speech needs to be protected. That's not the issue."

Actions speak louder than words and one can only draw the conclusion that if you speak out on controversial issues that he disagrees with, as Simpson did, you are "cancelled." Her "right

to free speech" is illusory.

It is telling that no steps were taken to suspend Simpson (which led to her firing) until after French, expressed his distorted and misleading views, a week after her opinion piece appeared.

I believe Niagara-on-the-Lake deserves to have a library board made up of members who do not allow their own biases to accept the false narrative put forward by French as a basis for "cancelling" (firing) Simpson.

I believe NOTL would be better served if the current members of the board were obliged to resign and Simpson reinstated as CEO.

This would also save our community the exorbitant expense of dealing with the fallout from this wrongful firing.

Anthony Powell
NOTL



Cathy Simpson with Wayne Scott, vice-chair of the board.

Agree with firing but who are library board members?

Dear editor:

Since the library moved from the basement of the courthouse in November 2000 to its present location on Anderson Lane, two of its head librarians have been "terminated," the most recent being Cathy Simpson, as documented in The Lake Report on March 21.

And the entire library was totally revamped just 17 years after being built.

From what I understand, the members of the library's board of directors are appointed every four years by the new town council.

When consulting the library's website one finds a list of the names of the current board members but no description of their backgrounds.

While I am in agreement with the board's most recent head librarian firing, I think the townspeople of Niagara-on-the-Lake whose taxes provide \$886,461 of the operating budget of the library deserve quite a bit more transparency about who sits on the library's board and how its decisions are made.

Elizabeth Masson
NOTL



Library board chair Daryl Novak and Cathy Simpson. FILE

Shocked to read of librarian's firing

Dear editor:
It's absolutely shocking to read that an employee of a Canadian public library has lost her job over the free expression of her views on the very subject of free speech ("Chief librarian fired over column in The Lake Report," March 21). Surely, we're all aware of the recent and dangerous trend of banning the speech of others whose views are at odds with our own. It's bad enough that such a once-revered right in democratic societies has been eroded to the extent that public discussion and opinion (particularly in schools and universities) has now been extended to publishers and libraries.

It appeared to me that Cathy Simpson, the fired CEO of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library, was giving her personal opinions and never claimed to be speaking for her employer. Why is the principle of free speech so misunderstood by so many? Fortunately there are some intelligent voices who can explain the matter: George Orwell — "If liberty means anything, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear." Noam Chomsky — "If we don't believe in free expression for those we despise, we don't believe in it at all."
George Dunbar
Toronto

Board had weak argument for dismissing Simpson

Dear editor:
I would like to voice my alarm at the firing (pun intended) of chief librarian Cathy Simpson. After rereading her op-ed and then reviewing the reasoning for the dismissal presented by library board chair Daryl Novak I must conclude that he has used her draw-

ing reference to FAIR, a U.S. organization that promotes freedom to present ideas across the political spectrum, as an extremely weak argument. To my mind her firing underscores the very problem facing librarians that she coherently articulated.
Patrick Wilson
NOTL

Board should have supported Simpson

Dear editor:
The only people who should have been fired over Cathy Simpson's column about Freedom to Read Week are the members of the NOTL Library Board for not standing with her during this controversy.

As with most censorship issues, those who want to ban books or stop people from sharing opposing viewpoints see only what they want to see and are determined to stamp out anyone who does not comply with their view of the world.

We are not talking about protecting hate speech or deniers of the historical record as we have laws on the books that protect us from the truly troubled. As a retired chief librarian I'm shocked and dismayed that the library board would turn tail and run from protecting free speech based on a letter to the editor and some disgruntled underlings. Ironically, library trustees cannot be sacked or forced



The Niagara-on-the-Lake Library. FILE

to resign by a municipal council that appoints them. Why? Because smart people did not want politicians being able to select or censure the collection of library materials. Simpson's article in and of itself only requested that a democratic society listen to opposing viewpoints, not adopt them. The claim that the board had no idea their chief librarian would discuss freedom to read or freedom of speech issues as a CEO

is beyond belief. The board chair admits that Simpson is an exceptional librarian and well-regarded in the profession; she is. The board hired a professional librarian to lead its public library and no doubt agreed to support the library industries' Statement on Intellectual Freedom. Shame on the entire board. Book banning and related censorship issues are alive and well south of the border and that's why

the short documentary "The ABCs of Book Banning" was up for an Oscar this year. I sincerely hope that the board is putting away lots of money for the wrongful dismissal suit that should follow. The NOTL community should be up in arms about this injustice and condemn the lack of principled leadership by the library board.
Murray McCabe
Retired chief librarian
Hamilton

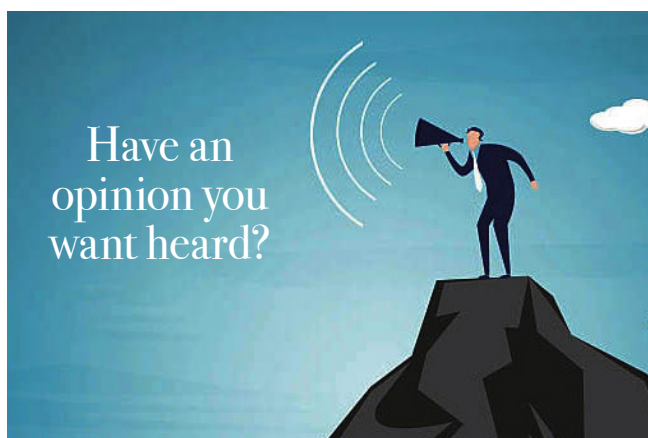
Chief librarian's column viewpoint was valid

Dear editor:
I read with interest, both Cathy Simpson's original column and the letter from Matthew French. He characterizes her comments as talking points from the Foundation Against Intolerance & Racism. The talking points she references sound much more like universal values we should all support, rather than anything from the far right. It bears rereading her article, as the spin put on it by French is not there at all.

His use of the Southern Poverty Law Center as an authority is misguided. It has gotten much wrong over the last few years, including smearing philosopher Sam Harris as being a gateway to the alt-right. It is wrong on FAIR as well. How do I know? Because instead of relying on what others say about them, I've read articles and books by some of their board of advisers, including Andrew Sullivan, Jonathan Kay and Jonathan Haidt ("The Coddling of the American Mind" is a great read) is as far from the far-right as

one can get. Many reasonable and intelligent people are concerned about the dominance of identity politics and its influence on society and culture. In his book "The Identity Trap," John Hopkins University professor Yascha Mounk refers to it as the identity synthesis. The prioritizing of one's inclusion in identity categories such as race, gender and sexual orientation over our individual characteristics is, in fact, a significant departure from the Enlightenment era

ideas of equality and individual rights, or the civil rights era goal of being judged by the contents of one's character rather than the colour of one's skin. This seems to me to be what Simpson is describing and should hardly be controversial. Why her column would be seen as particularly political is a mystery to me and it would seem well within the purview of a library CEO to defend heterodox viewpoints without being chased from her job.
Kevin Leicht
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.

Shouldn't libraries have a balanced collection?

Dear editor:
I'm feeling a bit of whip-lash. On Feb. 22, a half-page opinion piece headlined "Censorship and what we are allowed to read" was published. OK, I confess I gave it a skim. Then a letter was published on Feb. 29, "Opinion piece espoused right wing talking points." That got me curious about this FAIR organization. Then bam! In your March 21 edition we learn the chief librarian, the writer of the original piece for Freedom to Read Week, was suspended then fired? What just happened?

I've since gone back to carefully read the first column by Cathy Simpson. Perhaps she was a little heavy in reference to FAIR. It could be her point was lost. Did she need to lose her position over it? Given a follow-up column for clarification? Was it explosive? It has since become a flash-point, for sure. Since elementary school, I've been an avid reader. I get it from my father. My middle child has followed and is also a keen reader, with my youngest joining the bandwagon. I have never joined a book club, because the thought of

being told what to read does not appeal to me. Just because I read what I want, doesn't mean that I live in a bubble, or am close-minded. It only means that around each decade I explore a different genre at my own leisure. I tend to stay away from bestsellers, because the more people tell me to read a particular book or author the more it doesn't appeal to me. Sound familiar? Public libraries should have a balanced collection without restrictions. Isn't that the mandate of public libraries? I sense a few groups will be up in arms over

this. Some feminists might question if Simpson would have lost her job if she was a man, alt-right peoples will bring their hot tub and occupy the road. Well, you get the idea. I don't doubt the keyboard warriors will be divided. Just like the pickleball outdoor court, the noise bylaw, horse and carriage business in Old Town or the rainbow crosswalk near the community centre. How ironic that the chief librarian was fired over writing about Freedom to Read Week.
Lara Davidson
NOTL

The road to recognizing our town's heritage



ARCHITEXT

Brian Marshall
Columnist

The town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has been described as having the greatest concentration of surviving British Colonial architecture built between 1813 and 1860 of any municipality west of Quebec.

It would be nice to think that this was due to an ongoing, focused preservation effort by decades of townsfolk.

But, when considering Niagara-on-the-Lake's record of formally protecting this legacy, its survival seems to have been more of a happy accident.

Now, to be clear, there have always been resident individuals who have worked, and continue to work, tirelessly to preserve the town's history and built heritage. There are also those who have voluntarily chosen to designate their home.

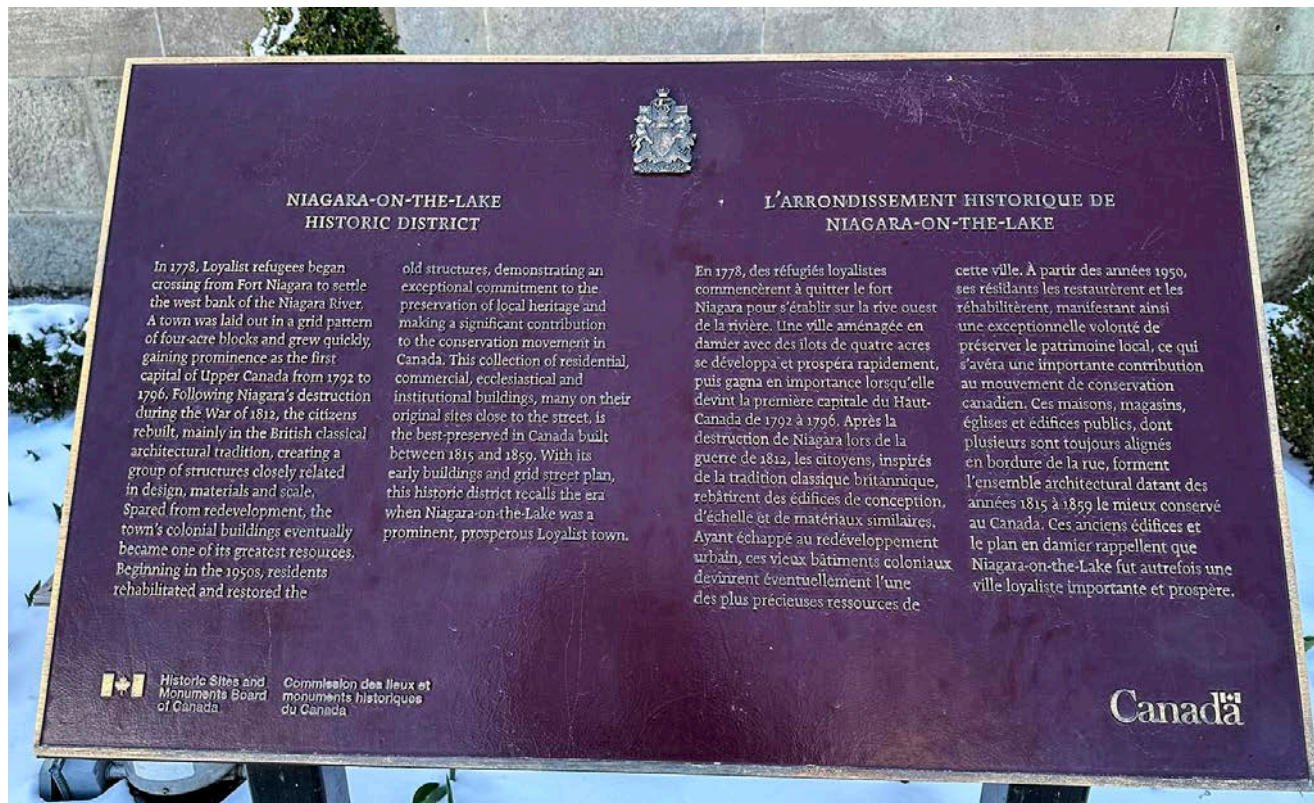
However, on the other side of the fence, there were (and are) those rigorously opposed to formal heritage protection — while the remainder, likely the majority, are fence-sitting neutrals.

To demonstrate this contention, let's return to 1978 when the town established a Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee to advise council on heritage matters.

Over the next eight years, the committee members assisted property owners in the Part IV designation of 20 properties.

Moreover, they recommended and directly supported the creation of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District under Part V of Ontario's Heritage Act — the district plan's author, Nicolas Hill, acknowledged their contribution.

In 1986, when council



This plaque recognizes the contribution of NOTL residents to the preservation of Canada's heritage, but unfortunately such historical designations carry no legislative protection. Strange as it seems, Canada's national heritage protection is a provincial responsibility. Brian Marshall says it's time we put formal heritage protections on our assets.

approved its establishment, Niagara-on-the-Lake's Conservation District was one of only 20 in the province (counting each of Ottawa's Sandy Hill districts separately) — as of March 2020, there were 134 districts.

It should be noted that municipalities like Goderich, Brantford, Kingston, et al., continued to create new heritage conservation districts, while Niagara-on-the-Lake has been frozen in time vis-à-vis any heritage preservation commitments.

I was always curious why the boundaries of our district were so constrained and somewhat odd — including one side of Prideaux and Johnson streets but not the other, when both sides of each street were (arguably) in possession of equal heritage value.

Several years ago, I posed this question to one member (now deceased) of the committee during that undertaking.

His answer was telling when he replied with some bitterness, "We got what we could, but certainly not what we wanted. I thought of it like a beachhead, if you will, something we could go back and properly expand later. More fool I."

In fact, the committee — underwritten by a thorough research report — did go

back to council in 1996 with a recommendation to expand the boundaries of the heritage conservation district to include all areas from Front Street to Gage Street, extending down to encompass the dock area.

Council responded by passing a bylaw to commission the study required to underwrite the expansion but — for political reasons on which we can only speculate — failed to direct town staff to budget the funds required.

In a staff report to council from May 2014 entitled "Official Plan Review — Heritage, Arts, and Culture Issues Report," staff stated: "While council passed a bylaw to study the area, no further work has been done, although the bylaw has not been repealed."

Having established the town's first conservation district in Old Town, in 1988, at the behest of some residents, the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee shifted part of its attention to the historic village of Queenston.

Significant research and study by committee members resolved into a recommendation for council to consider creating a heritage conservation district in Queenston.

The council of the day thereafter commissioned a heritage conservation district study, which was completed in 2002 and supported the establishment of a district.

Unfortunately, it appears that the level (or form, or both) of community consultation and dialogue was lacking in the process.

The result was an acrimonious rejection of the proposed district by a significant number of village residents and council did not move ahead with its creation.

In the early years of this century, NOTL's conservation advisory committee partnered with the Niagara Foundation and the Niagara Historical Society, assisted by architects William Thomas and James Cooper, with an overture to the federal government to establish a National Historic Site (with boundaries significantly larger than the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District) in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

While rigorously scrutinized by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, this application — with its supporting documentation — was accepted without modification.

In 2004, the federal government created the

to the preservation of their town's heritage."

It is so sad that in Canada — unlike many other countries in the world such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America — the designation of a National Historic Site confers only a recognition of historical importance evidenced by a plaque and website notation, but does not carry with it any legislative protections.

At this point, I am ironically reminded of the Lennon-McCartney lyrics of the Beatles song, "The Long and Winding Road."

Still, what things can we draw from this 50,000-foot level glimpse into the last 40 years of NOTL's record on heritage protection?

First, in a town that holds a remarkable amount of surviving built heritage, the efforts to protect that history have primarily been driven by private individuals and groups.

Town councils have occasionally been obstructionist, at other times laissez-faire, and almost without exception consistently failed to make action vis-à-vis heritage preservation a priority on a non-political basis.

Second, to date, there has been a serious lack of readily available information — in a straightforward, easily read form — concerning heritage protection.

Nor, insofar as I am aware, has there ever been a serious, ongoing community outreach program to provide a forum in which NOTL property owners can gain an accurate picture of heritage protection.

Hence, there has been and still exists both apprehension and misunderstanding in the minds of many folks regarding designation and conservation districts.

It's high time that we correct these and other mistakes of the past.

NOTL citizens deserve to enjoy the financial, cultural and aesthetic benefits conveyed by formal heritage protections.

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

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Modern literature is a **morality-free** zone

Dear editor:
Further to the firing of NOTL Public Library CEO Cathy Simpson, while I don't know which books are excluded from the library collection, many of the books I peruse on library shelves have become, in a word, "rough."

Whereas authors at one time may have had a positive influence on society, they now often seem to reflect a lowering of standards, a somewhat morality-free zone.

I don't have to leaf through a lot of current literature before I run into vulgarity or insensitive language.

There are those of us who still think there are words that should be handled with extreme reverence.

For example, call us old-fashioned (or worse) but the word "God" for some of us still inspires reverence and awe. "Oh my God" is more than just an expression.



Reader Joost Vandelinde thinks literature is far too vulgar these days. He wants to see that combatted. **FIREFLY**

Say what you will but we cringe at some of the things people let fly from their lips.

Unfortunately writers use sacred words out of context all the time, which in my estimation is not only insensitive but childish.

It is a sad state when the name of God and Jesus become nothing more than an expletive. We've become very accepting of the vulgar lexicon, such as the f-word, the s-word and infantile terms for body parts etc.

As a longtime adult I recall my early schooling, so it surprises me now when I meet teachers who use words they once forbade.

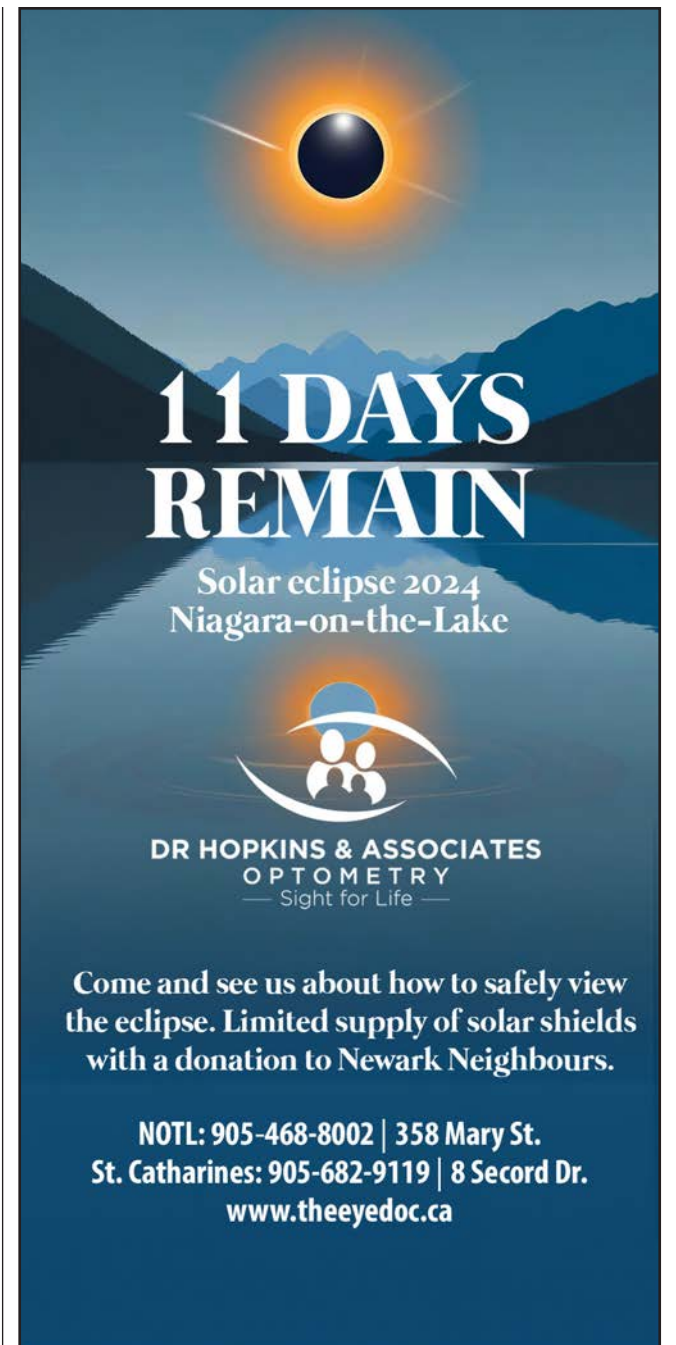
I am reminded of the time my wife came home early from her book club. Not only did she point out some glaringly crude expletives — but her fellow readers didn't even notice — they had become hardened to vulgarity.

None of that group had any idea there was a commandment that condemned such language and fewer knew the source of that commandment.


I may be a poor man to a banker but when it comes to vocabulary I am wealthy. I gather my words from the top shelf.

If it was Simpson's intention to introduce books that counter some of such dark literature, I'm all for it.

*Joost Vandelinde
St. Davids*



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Mulroney funeral a chance to **say goodbye** to old friend

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

For Derek and Judy Insley, attending the state funeral for former prime minister Brian Mulroney was an opportunity to honour a man who played a significant role in their personal lives.

When the couple learned of Mulroney's passing on Feb. 29, it was a gut punch.

Mulroney died in hospital after a fall at his home in Palm Beach, Fla., at 84 years old.

The former prime minister served as the head of Canada's government for more than eight years, in two consecutive terms, from 1984 to 1993.

"It's sad because it's you missing not only a friend but a leader of the country," Derek Insley said.

When Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced a state funeral would be held for Mulroney on March 23 at the Notre-Dame Basilica in Montreal, the Insleys wanted to be there.

Derek Insley reached out to a longtime friend – Michael McSweeney – who had brought the Insleys and the Mulroneys into the same orbit in 1983 when Mulroney was campaigning for the leadership of what was then the Progressive Conservative party.

McSweeney had remained a part of the Mulroneys' circle for decades.

"I emailed him and I said, 'Is there any chance?' He



Judy and Derek Insley attended the state funeral for former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney on March 23 in Montreal. RICHARD HUTTON

said, 'Not likely, but if I can, I will.'"

As it turned out, the Insleys were able to secure an invitation thanks to McSweeney's efforts.

"We had to take buses from the Port of Montreal because there's no parking at Notre Dame," Insley said. "And we had to jump on these beautiful buses. And they just kept pushing people back and forth constantly."

Media reports indicate that about 1,300 guests attended the funeral on Saturday, including former prime ministers Kim Campbell, Jean Chrétien, Joe Clark and Stephen Harper, as well as Trudeau, Opposition leader Pierre Poilievre, NDP leader Jagmeet

Singh, Green Party leader Elizabeth and Premier Doug Ford.

While the Insleys did not have a chance to meet with the widowed Mila Mulroney during their time in Montreal, they did manage to speak to two of the Mulroneys' sons, Ben and Mark, a day before the funeral while Mulroney was lying in state at Montreal's St. Patrick's Cathedral.

"We ran into Ben and Mark and (recalled) a surprise birthday party that they threw for Brian," Insley said. "They were in Brian's office and Judy and I were there. Judy got them to hide under Brian's desk. They were like, 'Oh, that was you!' That was nice."

As they said their goodbyes to the man whom

Insley held in high esteem, he recalled the first time the couple met the Mulroneys.

It was McSweeney, who was working for the Mulroney campaign for the leadership four decades ago, who asked Insley to help out during a campaign stop in Windsor, where the Insleys were living at the time.

The Mulroneys had flown into Detroit and the Insleys were responsible for picking them up and bringing them back across the Ambassador Bridge into Windsor.

"We picked them up at the airport, and spent a lot of time driving them back and stayed at the hotel with them, making sure everything was fine," Insley said.

It was then that the couple, who have called Niagara-on-the-Lake home

for the past 15 years, began a decades-long relationship with the Mulroneys, particularly Mila Mulroney.

She and Mulroney married in 1973 and they were together for 51 years, until Mulroney's death.

"Judy got very close with Mila," Insley said. "And Brian and I just talked about everything."

Insley, a lifelong Progressive Conservative supporter, was impressed with the future prime minister at the time.

"For the first time, I actually had a nice conversation with somebody that understood what was going on in the real world."

It was the beginning of a lasting relationship with the Mulroneys that would see the two couples running in the same circles after the Insleys moved to Ottawa to work for the Tories.

"We lived there for 16 years doing different things for the party and for the government," Insley said.

"We were invited to (see) Prince Charles and Diana when they visited. We went to 24 Sussex (home of the Prime Minister) and the kids had a surprise birthday party for Brian when he was coming back from a visit with Ronald Reagan discussing the free trade accord."

Mila Mulroney was there for the husband Insley as he took his own stab at politics back in the 1987 provincial election when he ran unsuccessfully as the P.C. candidate in the riding of Ottawa West.

His friend McSweeney ran in the same election in the riding of Ottawa South.

It was during that campaign that Insley got some unexpected help from Mila Mulroney.

"She came out to campaign with me," Insley said.

Saturday's funeral was an emotional experience, Insley said.

"I saw people there that I hadn't seen for years that had high office positions, and they were shaken ... it was a beautiful environment to be in."

He was particularly struck by the funeral's conclusion.

"The ending of the whole thing (with a recording of Mulroney) singing his way out, was very emotional. Everyone was talking about it," Insley said.

Mostly, he remains in admiration of Mulroney for his dedication to his family and for being brave enough to make tough decisions that weren't always popular.

Those decisions included the creation of the goods and services tax (GST) and entering into a free trade agreement with the United States.

"That's what Brian showed," Insley said. "There was a huge discussion on the GST. There was huge discussion on free trade within the party and he listened and they were both bold moves at the time."

Following the funeral, Mulroney was buried the same day at a private ceremony at Notre Dame des Neiges Cemetery in Montreal.

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Generations come together at Scouts **Kub-Kar** race

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

This year's scouting Kub-Kar races in Niagara brought together both current Cub Scouts and scouts who blazed their own trails years ago.

Eight-year-old Charlie Squire is only in his first year of Cub Scouts but was joined by three generations of Cubs when he raced his car and placed third overall on Feb. 24.

Squire raced his Reese's Pieces candy bar car that he built alongside dad Mark with both the St. Davids Cubs and at the regional competition in Welland on March 2.

Mark Squire was a Cub

Scout in the early 1990s and his father, William Squire – Charlie's grandfather – was a Cub leader at the time.

Squire, the father, brought his Kub-Kar TransAm replica that he built for a race for a Cub group he volunteered with at the Niagara Children's Centre and Squire, the grandfather, brought one of his cars that he built to race in the 1990s.

As a scout, dad Mark Squire made multiple Kub-Kars to race.

"I made one in about 1990 that looked like my dad's red Mustang convertible that he had," he told The Lake Report.

With his knowledge of the cars, Squire helped his son

Charlie assemble his first Kub-Kar.

"You get a Kub Kar kit which is sold through Scouts Canada. It comes with a block of wood and the four wheels and little nails that work as axles," he said. "You mark out of the wood the shape of your car and the scout leaders help you cut it out on the saw. Once you get the shape cut out, you paint it and you've got yourself a race car."

Squire added that this year's scouts had some interesting cars, one was made to look like a watermelon and one modeled after a Nike running shoe.

Charlie Squire's creation won an award for the most



Three generations of scouts came together at 2024's Kub Car races. SUPPLIED

realistic-looking car.

"It really does look like a Reese's bar. It's been sitting in my office and I've picked it up a few times thinking it was chocolate," Squire joked.

He learned a lot of valuable life skills in his time as a Scout and is happy to pass those skills along to his son, he said.

"We did a lot of camping which I still do, we go

camping as a family now and I started that in Cubs," he said. "And there's still people that I'm friends with 30 years later that I met in Cubs."

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The art of the Irish Harp's 'perfect pint'

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

For many, Guinness is more than just a beer, it's an experience.

From its origins in 1759 Dublin, Ireland, Guinness is now brewed in almost 50 countries and available in more than 120, making it one of the most popular and cult-followed alcoholic brands in the world.

At The Irish Harp Pub in Niagara-on-the-Lake, countless pints go out every single day and they are all poured with the same techniques in mind to present the perfect Guinness to the many customers who pass through.

Brad Norris, head brewer at the Harp has been pouring pints with them for 11 years and after serving Guinness at other pubs and bars, says it comes down to the love and care that The Irish Harp puts into the beer.

"There's more than just the pour that goes into it," Norris told The Lake Report.

He said that because the pub goes through so much of it, the kegs are consistently being rotated. This combined with a great relationship with Guinness as a brand, means representatives are also coming to routinely clean the lines



The proper presentation of a Guinness includes a Guinness coaster and the clover stem facing the customer, says the Irish Harp's head bartender, Brad Norris. JULIA SACCO

around every four weeks.

"Without us even having to ask, they have us on an automatic maintenance schedule," he said.

Norris added that the perfect pour is also a testament to owner Jovi Jokie and the hard work and dedication she puts into making the Irish Harp a great place to work.

Depending on the time of year, 5 to 7 people are able to pour a Guinness and Norris walked The Lake Report through the entire process.

"In terms of starting, it should be a Guinness pint glass because they manufacture their glasses a certain way. It shouldn't be wet, it shouldn't be pre-rinsed, it should be a clean, dry, room temperature glass," he said.

The Guinness is then poured at a 45-degree angle with the tap open forward all the way. The liquid should hit off the glass, just below the rim of the glass so that it gently cascades into the glass, Norris said.

"You fill it about three-quarters and at that point

you turn it back to upright and let it do its resting, which right from Guinness now is a standard 119.5 seconds," he continued.

According to Guinness, Norris said, at 119.5 seconds all the necessary reactions have taken place and you are able to finish off the beer.

When the pour is finished, there should be a nice foam "just proud of the rim of the glass," which most places achieve by pushing the tap handle forward for the final pour.

"What we do is after the 119.5 seconds we then draw the three-leaf clover right on top of it," Norris said.

"When we've poured it, it should be that when we face it down with the Guinness coaster in front of the guest, the Guinness logo with the clover stem should be facing the customer," he added.

The clover on top, which Norris added is not necessary for the "perfect pint" but adds a nice touch, is something that takes the average bartender more than 100 pours to perfect at the Harp.

Of the 23 beers on tap, Norris favours pouring a Guinness, for the art of it and the process.

"People who like Guinness do appreciate when you pour it right and I can always tell who those people are," Norris said.

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

In this 1818 classic, a Swiss scientist isn't neutral about playing mix-and-match with some corpse parts.

Last issue:

Category: WEATHER

Clue: Flooding in Venice has been aggravated by these Italian-named winds that originate in northern Africa.

Answer: What is scirocco?

Answered first by: Lynda Collet

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Bill Hamilton, Bob Wheatley, Wade Durling, Brianna Rhi, Maria Janeiro, Pam Dowling, Jane Morris, Sheila Meloche, Jim Dandy, Ather Alibhai, Marla Percy, Catherine Clarke, Rob Hutchison, Edna Groff, Hedy Wiebe, David Spencer, Nancy Rocca, Tuija Johansson, Daniel Smith, Richard Maxwell, Elaine Landray

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

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Baristas brew **black gold** at Virgil Starbucks competition

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Whose cup o' Joe gets the judges jonesing the most?

If you asked some of the folks at Starbucks in Virgil last Thursday afternoon, Scooter Sousa brewed the best.

Sousa, who works at a Fort Erie Starbucks, was the winner of the company's district-wide barista contest held in NOTL and has the opportunity to move up to increasingly higher levels of the competition.

The finals will take place in June in Seattle, where 23 of the company's best will go mug-to-mug with their signature drinks.

Starbucks will send the winner on a free trip to Hacienda Alsacia, the company's coffee farm in Costa Rica.

Internal barista competitions began in 2013 but this is the first time one has spanned Canada and the United States.



Left: Rachel Linthorne shares some laughs with other Starbucks employees before the competition gets started. Right: Louis Phan walks the judges through his pour method, suggesting they nose the coffee before taking a sip. EVAN LOREE



A news release estimated 15,000 stores are participating, each represented by one hourly paid employee.

As baristas in green aprons milled about the small Virgil shop, Jack Fox, a shop manager from Niagara Falls, was snapping photos and trading smiles with his friends and co-workers.

He compared the role of the baristas in the competition to that of a sommelier, walking the judges through the taste of their brews and explaining where they get their flavours and aromas.

"There's more to it than beans and water," said Liz Lawrence, one of the

nine baristas to compete in Virgil.

"There are so many levels of complexity and nuance to coffee. The littlest things can completely change a cup of coffee," the four-year barista added.

The taste of a particular coffee bean varies depending on where it's grown,

Lawrence explained, with African coffees having a more fruity flavour, while Latin American beans are more chocolatey.

Even the elevation it is grown at can alter the acidity of the bean, she said.

While Lawrence was not among the competition's finalists, her peer Rachel

Linthorne tied for second with Cheri Smith.

"I have met all of my greatest friends through working at Starbucks," Linthorne.

In fact, she began her java journey with Starbucks: the first cup of coffee she ever had, she recalled, was its light roast "True North Blend."

She shared it with a stranger who has since become her best friend, she said.

Louis Phan has been with the company for five years and likes it so much he wants to start his own coffee shop one day.

"It's kind of a ritual for me. It's a very meditative and therapeutic experience," he said.

The next stage of the competition begins in April.

Winners in their respective districts will go on to compete across Niagara, looking to impress the company's judges with their signature brews.

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Raise your gimlet for the Shaw at **Shivaree** on April 13

Arlyn Levy
Special to The Lake Report

When guests arrive at the Shivaree, the annual fundraiser for the Shaw Festival, they're traditionally greeted with a gimlet.

This classic cocktail is a lot like the event itself — refreshing and eminently enjoyable. As an aperitif, it whets the appetite for both culinary and artistic pleasures.

"We want attendees to feel part of something special," says Chris Semple, chair of the Shivaree committee.

"It starts with a unique drink because they're in for a unique evening. It's carefully planned to entertain, lift the spirits and support the world-class theatre we're lucky enough to have in our own backyard."

The Shivaree takes place



Chris Semple is the chair of the Shivaree, the Shaw Festival's annual fundraising extravaganza. It will be held April 13 at the Jackie Maxwell Theatre. SUPPLIED

on April 13 at the Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre at the Shaw.

According to Semple, ticket sales are brisk — not only because the event

was sold out in 2023, but also because guests get quite the bang for their charitable buck.

In the elegant theatre-turned-gala space, there are

culinary stations provided by familiar local favourites: Cake Café, Chz Plz, Garrison House, Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery, Ruffino's Pasta Bar & Grill, Treadwell Cuisine, Wellington Court, Yorkshire Pudding Catering, and even the Shaw Festival's own Green Room.

At the bars, Peller Estates, Dillon's Small Batch Distillers, the Exchange Brewery and Oast House Brewers are all represented.

Fun Fact: The gimlet was either named for Rear-Admiral Sir Thomas Gimlette of the British Navy, or for a hand tool used to bore holes. Hence: gimlet-eyed stare.

"Our motto has always been 'Eat, drink, dance and bid merry,'" Semple added.

"So, besides the amazing food, wine and beer, we're bringing back the wildly popular George St. Kitts

Band to heat up the dance floor. And, of course, for many people, the silent auction is a real highlight."

Throughout the night, revellers can turn their own gimlet-eyed stare to their mobile devices and place bids. There's something for everyone — from winery, dining and hotel experiences to collectible art to event tickets to exotic car racing.

"What we've found is the 'money-can't-buy' items are the most sought-after," she said. The silent auction pieces, specifically created for the Shivaree, include private catered parties, a week's stay in an idyllic oceanfront cottage in Bermuda, or a walk-on part in a Shaw Festival performance.

"We're fortunate to live in such a philanthropic community," Semple said.

"We have a volunteer

committee for the event, individuals and local businesses who donate to the auction and enthusiastic residents who believe in the arts and come out to celebrate."

"We've also got incredibly generous sponsors, including Niagara-on-the-Lake Realty, Niagara-on-the-Lake Local, Bar Ruffino and Niagara Trailers (St. Davids)."

Tickets for the 2024 Shaw Shivaree are \$195 per person and available at shawfest.com or by calling the box office at 1-800-511-7429. Funds raised support the theatre company.

The 2024 season features 10 productions on three stages, countless Beyond the Stage activities, four specially created and distinctive shows in the Spiegelent — the enthralling cabaret and music space — and much more.

Music Niagara announces **new chair** ahead of summer fest

Staff
The Lake Report

A new chief is stepping up to lead the way at Music Niagara for another season of celebrating Niagara's talented and passionate musicians.

Paul Shelestowsky, a supporter of Music Niagara for more than seven years, is slated to become the organization's new board chair.

He has been board secretary and will succeed Patrick Little as chair.

Shelestowsky will bring to this new role an honours bachelor of music degree and more than three decades of experience in the financial industry, said a media release from Music Niagara co-authored by Shelestowsky and Atis Bankas, founder and artistic director.

"His vision and dedication have been instrumental in steering the organization toward a vibrant future where music and community thrive," the release stated.

With his "imminent appointment" to this new role, his "unique blend of financial expertise and lifelong devotion to music" will guide Music Niagara to further achievements and engagement with the community.

As the Music Niagara team gears up to kick off



Paul Shelestowsky.

the 26th season of its summer festival, it is asking for the community's continued financial support in the form of donations.

"Your support at this pivotal moment is crucial. It will enable us to elevate the festival's offerings and ensure that Music Niagara remains a beacon of cultural richness and artistic excellence," the release stated.

Those interested can visit musicniagara.com/donate to make either a one-time donation or commit to a monthly donation to Music Niagara's operating fund.

As for what's in store for this summer's festival, Bankas and Shelestowsky advise everyone to "stay tuned" as they will announce further details "in just a few weeks."

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Radiant Care Pleasant Manor CEO Tim Siemens, right, with a resident. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Easter bazaar brings in **\$5,000** for Pleasant Manor auxiliary

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The women's auxiliary annual Easter bazaar and bake sale came and went in a flash, but left the long-term residents of Pleasant Manor a little more enriched in its wake.

Anne Litke, chair of the ladies' auxiliary, estimates the Saturday morning sale raked in about \$5,000 for the residents of Pleasant Manor.

The money will go toward

items outside the budget of the long-term care home, Litke explained.

"We're going to be buying some outdoor furniture for this garden area, and we want to update that," she said.

Some of the funds will go to the Montessori programs the home uses to support people with dementia.

Litke has been with the volunteer group for about two years.

"This is my passion," she said. "I like working with older people."

She said her mother and grandmother both stayed at Pleasant Manor before they died, and her brother now lives in the long-term care community as well.

"This is a good place to be. It's a wonderful community," she said. "No home is perfect, but I think this one is doing pretty good."

Litke estimated about 200 people turned out for the bazaar, which was organized by a team of about 20 volunteers.

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Red Roof needs **auction donations** for pasta dinner fundraiser

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Steffanie Bjorgan knows there'll be a large crowd of hungry mouths to feed come April 28.

That's when Red Roof Retreat will host its annual fundraising pasta dinner and Bjorgan, the non-profit organization's executive director, said the popular event is once again sold out. "We sold 360 tickets in two days," Bjorgan said. "It's such a popular community event."

Even before the first plate is served up, a lot of work has been done to get ready for the big evening, Bjorgan said.

"It's like organizing a wedding every year," she said.

Last year's dinner raised \$105,000 for the organization, which offers recreational and respite services to children, youth and young adults with special needs and their families.

Red Roof's main hub, called The Ranch, is located on Concession 6 and a sec-



Donations are needed for auction items for a pasta dinner fundraiser for Red Roof Retreat. FILE

ond facility, Kevan's House, on Concession 2.

The Ranch is home to Red Roof's adult day programs on weekdays and children's respite on weekends.

Kevan's House is home to the organization's adult weekend respite and emergency residential care.

While dinner tickets have all been sold, there is still work to be done and Bjorgan is hoping businesses and individuals in the community can help.

"It would be great to have more prizes and sponsorships," Bjorgan said, adding that no donation is too small and that items can also be grouped together to create something unique.

"It's amazing what packages you can put together," she said.

The dinner will be held at John Michael's Banquet & Event Centre on Upper's Lane in Thorold. Doors open at 4 p.m. with dinner being served at 5 p.m.

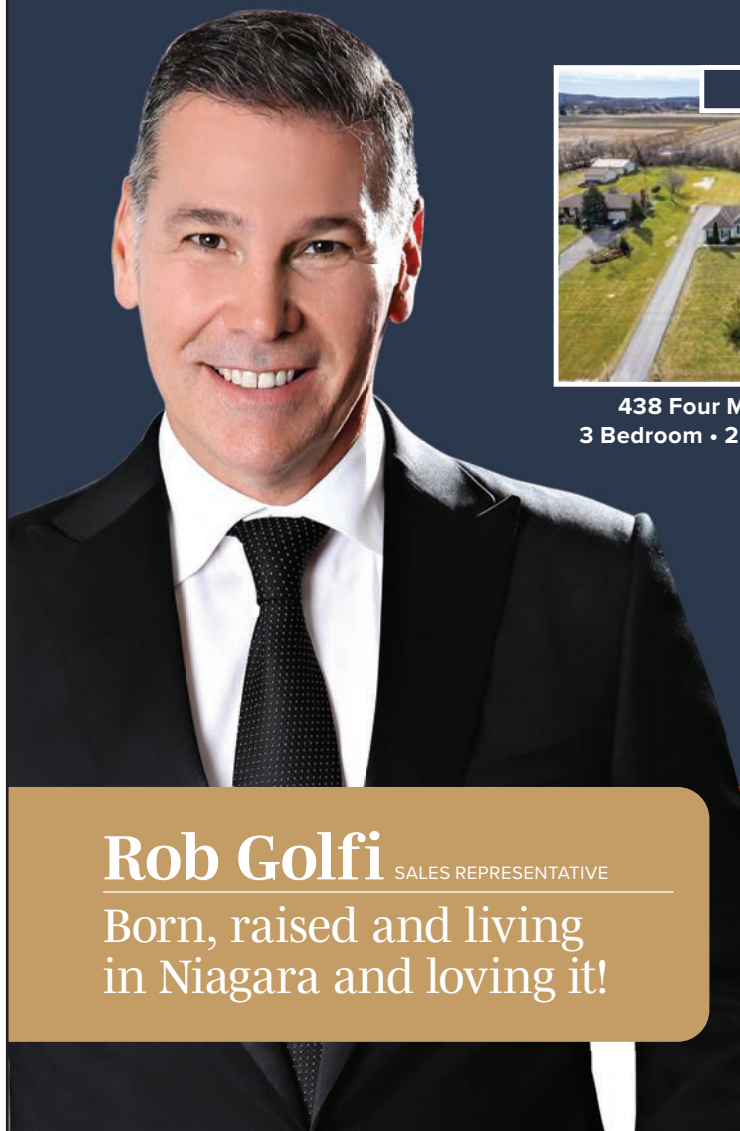
For more information about the event, to become a sponsor or to donate items to the raffle or auctions, contact Bjorgan via email, steffanie@redroofretreat.com, or call 289-868-9800.

Donations to the live and silent auctions are needed by April 16 while cash sponsorships are needed "a little earlier than that," Bjorgan said.

hutton@niagaranow.com

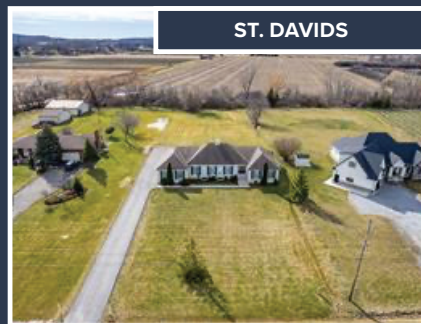
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Dietsch works out and practises with OHL club daily

Continued from Front Page

spend the rest of the year with the main club.

So, for the past two months, he has been rostered with the 67's — living and breathing the major junior dream, training, practising and working out with the big boys, waiting for his chance to shine.

The playoffs start Friday, March 28, with the 67's on the road facing off against the Brantford Bulldogs in a seven-game series.

So, Dietsch, who turned 17 in January, has to be prepared to step in to the lineup at any time, something assistant coach Paul Stoykewych is confident he is ready to do.

While he's only seen action in a handful of league games so far, Stoykewych is full of praise for his young defender.

When called upon to compete, "Kaleb has stepped right in and influenced the game. He has proven that he can play and it's really exciting to see," Stoykewych said in an interview.

And now that he's part of the main club, "he's made some huge strides in his development."

Along with a few other

young players, Dietsch is "on a predetermined plan now, off-ice and you can see direct results, with Kaleb putting on some extreme strength. His mass, his physical stature is already noticeably different."

He works out and practises with the team, "with the skill development guys and he's getting one on one time with myself and the rest of the coaching staff," Stoykewych said in an interview.

In practice, "We're challenging him to go up against top-end players all the time, so when he does get put in that position in the game, he knows the pace, he knows the physicality," he said.

"He's really accepted that challenge and I give him full credit. He's an incredible young man and his attitude has been phenomenal throughout this time," said Stoykewych.

Everyone wants to be playing and he acknowledges it can be tough on a young player who's waiting for his chance to get into more games.

But that's also the reality for most first-year players in the OHL.

For his part, Dietsch says he's loving the structure and



Ottawa 67's assistant coach Paul Stoykewych, left, has high praise for his team's defence prospect Kaleb Dietsch, right. TIM AUSTEN/OTTAWA 67'S

routine provided by the 67's.

Since last fall, he's been immersed in junior hockey and only returned home to NOTL to visit proud parents Paul and Natasha and older brother Liam over the Christmas break.

In Ottawa, "I'm always

doing something. The days are jam-packed," he said in an interview.

Most days start pretty early. Up at 6 a.m., out the door by 6:45, a team meeting at 7:30, hit the ice by 8:30 till 10 or 10:30, and then off to school until 4 p.m.

"And then right after school, we head back to the rink and work out, which is usually about an hour, and I get home around 6."

Tiring? Yes, but he's committed to it. While he rested up a bit more over March Break, he was careful not to

mess up his sleep schedule.

On the ice, the biggest difference from Tier II and his years of minor hockey prior to that is the intensity of the game and the speed at which decisions have to be made. The game gets faster at each step up the competitive ladder.

Teams like the 67's employ a lot of systems, so while you might know where your teammates are supposed to be in any given situation, the mental part of the game becomes more and more important.

Dietsch is embracing it and sees how he has progressed.

Being challenged "really helps me to think about how much more work I'm going to have to put in to become one of the better guys on the team. It really just shows how hard it is."

In major junior hockey, there are few guarantees.

While Dietsch hopes to be a regular on the 67's blueline next fall and maybe even during this year's playoffs, he knows it is crucial to stay focused, keep working and continue developing.

"I'm trying to get better and so is everybody else. It's a matter of who wants it more."

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Kinsmen donate **\$1,000** to Thunderhawks lacrosse

Tracey Hope
Special to The Lake Report

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Kinsmen Club has generously donated \$1,000 toward the Niagara Thunderhawks 2024 lacrosse season.

A group of parents and player from the club attended a Kinsman meeting to accept the donation.

Donations such as this are a huge help, as the NOTL lacrosse club relies on sponsorship dollars to keep registration fees affordable.

Fees for families are actually priced below the cost of running the program. The remainder of the club's funding comes from sponsorships and team fundraisers.

Although all of the coaches are volunteer, there are still many expenses, such as equipment, referees and floor rentals.

With the support of our sponsors, the club is able to offer a few free options for



NOTL Kinsmen present a \$1,000 cheque to Niagara Thunderhawks lacrosse club players Brock Friesen, Bennett Hope, Harper Herriman and Catherine Hope. With them are, from left, Thunderhawks board secretary Tracey Hope, Kinsmen president Ray Hobbs, coach Jared Hope and Kinsmen treasurer Brian Litke. SUPPLIED

families.

In February, the Thunderhawks hosted three free

sessions at which kids were able to come and try out the sport in an informal and fun

atmosphere.

The club also has a free spring/summer long la-

crosse program for children aged 3 to 5 that includes a free stick.

There are still openings for the spring/summer 2024 season and anyone interested can go to niagalacrosse.com to register. The season runs from mid-April until the beginning of August.

The Kinsmen Club has a long history of supporting the Niagara Thunderhawks organization, starting way back in 1972.

In addition to sponsoring the club, many Kinsmen members previously played lacrosse with the organization.

In 1973, the "Niagara Kinsmen Warriors" won the trifecta: gold medals at the Ontario Summer Games and the Canada Games (which included the Founder's Cup) and the Ontario Lacrosse Association championship.

And Kinsmen Monty and Ken Slingerland were among those who continued to volunteer their time coaching minor lacrosse teams over the years.

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Zambito powers NOTL to berth in Ontario championships

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

Defenceman Calo Zambito was the big-game hero again for the Niagara-on-the-Lake U18 Wolves rep team, scoring their lone goal in a 1-1 tie last Thursday night against the Fort Erie Meteors.

One goal meant one point and it was all NOTL needed to qualify for the provincial championship tournament in Kingston from April 5 to 7.

That single point earned for the tie gave the Wolves the series win over the Meteors four points to two.

The teams had tied game one 1-1 last Monday and then NOTL took game two 3-0 at home on Wednesday.

It was the second time this year that Zambito's offence figured in a high-profile team win. He also scored both goals in NOTL's championship victory in the prestigious Midland Silver Stick Tournament in November.

Now, the Wolves will



Five members of the NOTL Wolves U18 rep team are in their last year of minor hockey, from left, Logan Smythe, Nick Munera, Marco Gruosso, Lucas Roberts Ramos and Carter Lalonde. The team will compete in the OMHA championship tourney April 5 to 7. SUPPLIED

compete with seven other teams from across the province for the Ontario Minor Hockey Association U18 Tier 1 Championship.

For five members of the Wolves, it will be a chance to end their minor hockey careers on a high note.

Captain Marco Gruosso, assistant captain Lucas Roberts Ramos, Logan Smythe, Nick Munera and Carter Lalonde are all in their final year of eligibility with NOTL minor hockey.

In game 2 against Fort Erie, the team's top sniper, Dylan Price, ended a scor-

ing drought and notched all three goals in 3-0 shutout win at home.

Price, who had only one goal over the previous seven playoff games, lit it up big time with a natural hat trick (all on the power play) to put Fort Erie on the brink of elimination. Quinten Davis was solid again in net to record the shutout.

On Thursday night, team discipline was key, head coach Devon Neudorf said afterward.

"They more or less stayed out of the penalty box, came together as a group and

rallied together toward the common goal."

The Wolves were down 1-0 after two periods and knew they only needed a tie to gain the fourth point and advance to OMHA finals.

"The coaching staff drove home the fact of sticking to the game plan, defending well and that if we could win that third period we would advance to OMHAs," Neudorf said.

Zambito's power-play goal with 12:05 left in the third came on a point shot, with forwards Andrew Bayne and Roberts Ramos

screening the Meteors' goaltender, the coach added. Bayne earned an assist on the goal.

Neudorf had high praise for Zambito.

"He also scored both goals in our 2-1 win over South Muskoka in the finals of the Midland Silver Stick back in November," he said.

He was the team's player of the game Thursday as he was battling hard in the corners even prior to scoring his goal, the coach added.

"Missing two of our top defencemen, we rallied together as a group to defend well and had strong performances all series by Mitchell Olsen, Brandon Falk, Devin Hunter and Logan Smythe," he said.

Defender Eddie Friesen was away last week and Lalonde was injured in a tournament in February, Neudorf said.

Friesen will be back for the OMHAs and Lalonde, who has been practising with the team this week, hopes to have clearance

to return to the lineup in Kingston.

Defence was a huge factor in the Fort Erie series, the coach noted. "They cleared the front of the net to make our goalie's job easier."

Davis once again turned in a stellar performance in net Thursday, allowing a single goal on about 30 shots, including a few point-blank saves, he added.

"Davis was a brick wall all series in net and the Fort Erie coaches commented on that to us after the (final) game."

Next up is the Niagara District Hockey League Championship game versus Port Colborne.

It's a one-game, winner-take-all format and was to be played in Virgil on Wednesday night. Results weren't known at press time.

Looking ahead to the OMHA tournament in Kingston, NOTL will kick things off with one game on Friday, April 5 and then a pair of matches on April 6.

kevin@niagaranow.com


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Pruning shrubs to stay **a cut above** the rest



GROWING TOGETHER

Joanne Young
Columnist

In last week's article, I explained why it is that we prune deciduous shrubs from late winter to early spring, which I have summarized in the next paragraph.

In this week's article, I will be going through some basic tips to help take away the mystery of pruning.

In general, the best time to prune any deciduous woody plant is just before the new growth starts in spring (the late dormant period: March to mid-April).

Pruning at other times can rob the plant of stored food and energy. It may also mean a loss of flowers or fruit.

With that said all rules have some exceptions. Here are those exceptions:

- Any early spring flowering plants (plants that bloom off old wood) should be pruned immediately after flowering and before leaves unfold.

Some examples of these plants are magnolia, forsythia, wisteria, service-

berry, lilac, quince, bridal wreath spirea and most viburnums.

- Trees such as maples (including Japanese maples), flowering dogwoods, birch and elm will bleed if pruned in late winter or early spring.

A better time to prune these trees would be mid-summer.

Let's be honest ... how many of your shrubs have the same shape after you have pruned them?

Chances are once the plants have been in your garden for a couple of years, they all start looking the same – like ice cream cones.

The top of the shrubs get wider and wider while the base of the plants remains bare with no leaves.

Many people, when pruning deciduous trees and shrubs, will just shear back the top of the plant to reduce the overall height of the plant, but this is only one part of proper pruning techniques.

If this is you, you need to take another look at the plants and follow these three steps.

Step 1: When pruning any shrub or tree, you always start with the 3 Ds of pruning. This means that you prune out any dead, diseased or damaged branches first.

Step 2: Next, remove any branches that closely cross with other branches or that cross through the middle of the plant. You want to have



Joanne Young says to remove one-third of the oldest growth to keep shrubs healthy.

branches that come from the center of the plant and head outward.

Step 3: When pruning any plant, it is always good to know what your goal is and that will help you determine how to best prune your shrub.

There are four main goals of pruning that you should consider before you begin:

Goal 1: Control the size of the plant

The best way to control the size of a plant is by natural pruning, which means that you are making selective cuts to thin or reduce the overall size of the plant.

The last thing that you want to do is to take your electric shears and give your shrub a crew cut: not just shearing off the tips but removing branches

with secateurs or loppers.

When you only shear back the tips, your shrubs will become very wide at the top because of this increased branching, giving your shrub an ice cream cone-like appearance.

When the top is so wide, it stops the sunlight from hitting the base of the plant and you are left with a plant that is bare at the base.

When pruning is completed, it should still have its natural form.

Goal 2: Increase the amount of flowers and fruit

Proper pruning will aid in the production of flowers.

Most flowers are produced on the tips of the stems, therefore, the more tips that there are, the more flowers you have, and the more fruit will be produced.

To accomplish this goal, you cut back the stem tips, stimulating the side branches and developing more tips for the flowers to form on.

Just remember that the more flowers that a plant produces, the smaller the flowers will be.

Goal 3: Maintain a certain shape

One of the goals of pruning might be to maintain a certain shape such as a hedge, a globe form, or specimen plants like spirals and pompons.

This is best achieved by shearing. With shearing you are just removing new tip growth, creating a full dense look.

Even though electric shears make the job easier, hand shears make a much nicer job of things.

Electric shears just tear the plant tissue while hand shears make a cleaner cut.

When the plant tissue is torn there is more die back at the tips giving the sheared shrub a brownish tinge.

Always make sure that any pruning tool is sharp and clean before using it to prevent this from happening.

Goal 4: Rejuvenate an older shrub

We tend to let shrubs grow year after year and once they become too large, we hack (not a proper horticultural term) them back hoping that they will survive and become beautiful again.

It is much easier to do a bit of pruning every year than to wait until the shrub is out of control.

The best way to rejuvenate an old flowering shrub is to do so over a three-year period.

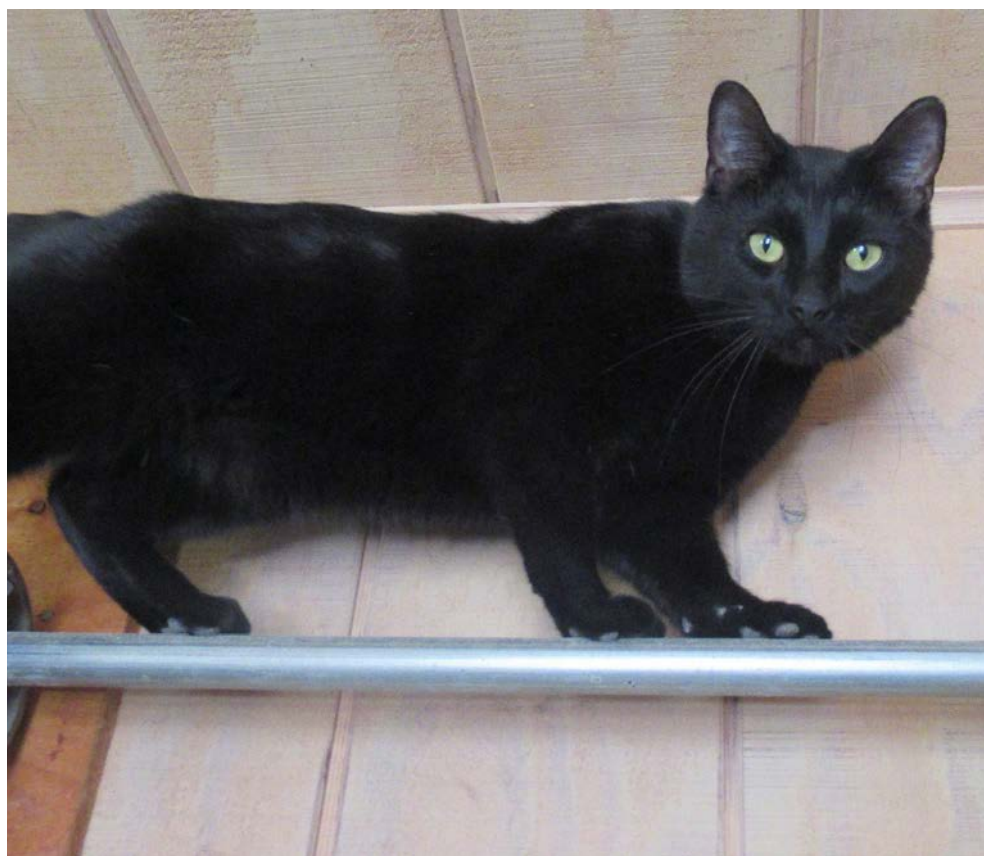
This can be achieved by removing one-third of the oldest growth every year right back to the base, which will then stimulate growth to come from lower down.

In three years, you will have completely rejuvenated the entire shrub.

Keep these tips and goals in mind as you tackle your garden this spring and you will be a cut above the rest.

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

NOTL Cats Rescue getting ready for 'kitten season'



Nelson is a Bombay mix cat who recently came into the care of NOTL Cats. SUPPLIED

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Although the colder temperatures and flurries of the past week or so might make it seem otherwise, spring has sprung.

And the changing of the seasons means the start of what's commonly referred to as "kitten season" – NOTL Cats, like other rescues in Niagara, is bracing for an influx of new feline arrivals.

"We actually have a few kittens now who were rescued from a less-than-desirable location in Niagara-on-the-Lake," volunteer Tanya Rice said.

But while kittens grab most of the attention, Rice worries about some of the older cats in their care.

"It's the moms that get left

behind," Rice said. "Everybody adopts the cute and cuddly kittens."

The rescue hosted a meet-and-greet this past snowy Saturday at the Pet Valu in Virgil, where a pair of its charges — Honey, a six-month-old female shorthair and Harvey, an eight-month-old grey-and-white shorthair — were on hand to meet with potential adopters.

The pair are among eight cats being fostered by the rescue.

"Any cat or kitten made ready for adoption has been fully vetted," Rice said. "That means they have been vaccinated, spayed or neutered, microchipped and dewormed."

NOTL Cats will also be hosting a planter sale this Saturday, March 30 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 456 Line 2 Rd.

Several different planter styles will be available with prices ranging from \$25 to \$50. Payments by cash or debit will be accepted.

All money raised will be used for the care of the cats being looked after by the rescue.

Rice, meanwhile, stressed that the work being done by NOTL Cats wouldn't be possible without support from local businesses like Pet Valu and the Husky Truck Stop, which hosts regular raffles in support of the rescue.

For the sale, NOTL Cats also received support from Kaulzaric Family Farm, Handmade Presence and Bellyacres Farm.

More information and photos of cats available for adoption can be found at notlcats.weebly.com.

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Across

- 1. Its capital is Pristina (6)
- 5. Sleeper's curse (3,5)
- 9. Misbehaving divas eject parts of speech (10)
- 10. Bluebottles (4)
- 11. Decay (7)
- 12. Musical drama (5)
- 15. "You're welcome" (2,8)
- 16. Emaciated (4)
- 17. Picked up the bill (4)
- 19. Rumour mills (10)
- 21. Point in question (5)
- 23. Type of thinking (7)
- 26. Creep (4)
- 27. Some urban dwellings (10)
- 28. Longing (8)
- 29. Quit (6)

Down

- 2. Decommissioned River Severn nuclear power station (7)
- 3. Set aside by a higher authority (9)
- 4. Too far away (3,2,5)
- 5. Group of birds (4)
- 6. Partial darkness (4)
- 7. Summarize (5)
- 8. Non-prescription analgesic (7)
- 13. UAE city sounds like an invitation to spend (5)
- 14. Profited (10)
- 16. Improves (9)
- 18. It proverbially encourages fondness (7)
- 20. Corresponds (7)
- 22. Wedding aide (5)
- 24. Get in position to take off (4)
- 25. Put on the wall (4)

Crossword Puzzle

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9						10	
11						12	
13				14			
15						16	
17	18			19			20
21		22				23	
24			25				
26			27				
28						29	

Last issue's answers

1	T	G	A	L	A	P	A	G	O	S	R	
2	O	H	N	O	A	R	A	U	P	E	E	L
3	E	B	S	C	O	T	T	I	E	A		
4	E	C	Z	E	M	A	V	T	C	O	P	Y
5	A	Y	G	E	E	Z	E	R	B	O		
6	I	N	T	O	W	N	R	R	P	E	R	U
7	N	N	A	B	B	A	S	S	A			
8	A	B	I	D	E	O	B	C	E	A	N	
9	C	R	D	A	R	C	Y	A	A	D		
10	O	N	I	T	E	O	A	R	M	A	N	I
11	M	S	G	R	A	T	I	N	B	I		
12	A	C	H	E	I	U	K	N	O	C	K	S
13	R	D	A	V	I	N	C	I	D	I		
14	M	A	C	E	D	N	I	O	T	A		
15	M	N	O	S	T	A	L	G	I	A	A	

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8	7	5			1			
	9					7	3	





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Origins of life – from single cell to **complex creations**



DR. BROWN

Dr. William Brown
Columnist

In this third instalment in a five-part series on “Middle Land: worlds beyond our senses,” our attention shifts.

Beyond the dazzling worlds of physics and astronomy lay the equaling intriguing and far more complex worlds of molecular biology, genetics, evolution and life itself, of which we are but one of many millions of editions.

We don't know how life began, but we can imagine based on what we know of the earliest cells or the chemical smudges they left behind and examining the simplest cells today.

Life on Earth may have begun roughly 3.8 billion years ago, hatched perhaps in deep-sea vents by mineral-rich waters perco-

lating through myriads of crevices in the nearby rock.

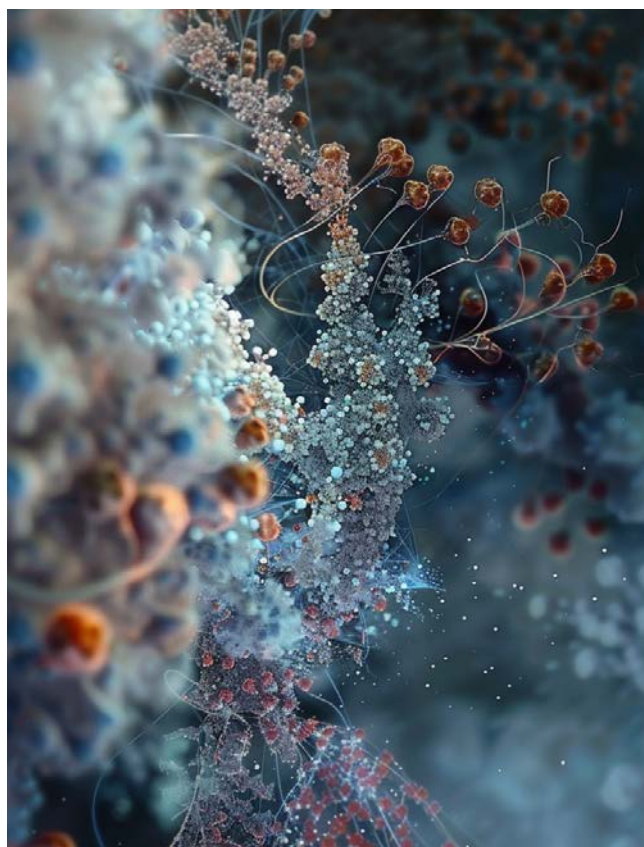
In the process, this may have created proton pumps to provide the necessary energy to make organic compounds such as early forms of self-replicating single-stranded molecules (RNA), amino acids and sugars.

In the process, metals such as iron and nickel embedded in rock formations may have catalyzed many of the earliest biochemical reactions.

Later, those prototype rock-bound cells acquired membranes and thus the wherewithal to maintain a stable environment within those membrane walls.

Once early membrane-bound cells formed, those cells were free to move beyond their rocky hatching grounds and evolve into what probably looked like simple single cells such as archaea and bacteria — but don't be fooled.

Examples of single cells in each of the two major ancestral families for all life — archaea and bacteria — may look simple under



the microscope, but they are not.

Both families are highly evolved and despite looking similar to one another, their genomes differ widely.

It took those two cell families, working together, to launch complex single cells (eukaryotes) more than a billion and a half years ago.

Later, assemblies of eukaryotes led to the first multicellular organisms 800 million years ago, and in the last hundred or so million years, eventually led to highly intelligent and social animals.

The whole story tracing the emergence of life and subsequent evolution into

what became an extraordinary explosion in the diversity and complexity of life so evident to our eyes, together with genetic evidence pointing to the deep relatedness of all life, is incredible — and a tale scarcely imaginable less than two centuries ago.

Stars and life have much in common. Both depend on periodic destruction and creation as major sources for their evolution.

In the case of stars, the high temperatures and pressures created by gravitational compression fuse simple atomic nuclei, such as hydrogen and helium, into heavier elements while releasing enormous amounts of energy. This process is called fusion.

However, beyond forming iron, the creation of heavier elements requires the higher temperatures and pressures generated when the cores of dying stars collapse.

The outer shells of the stars crash inward into the dense core before being blasted backward and outward, carrying and scattering all the elements created during the star's life out into

space, where some of those elements become incorporated in newly forming stars.

That's the cycle of creation, interims, endings and recreation for most middling and larger stars.

In the case of life, evolution is not the steady incremental process Charles Darwin imagined but a series of explosive evolutionary advances in the wake of periodic extinctions.

The latter situation opens up huge niches in the environment, into which survivors of the extinction event expand, taking advantage of every new nook and cranny offered by the disappearance of their former occupants.

This is just as the disappearance of the dinosaurs opened the door for many mammals including primates, 65 million years ago.

Next: Tackling the question of our fate as a species.

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



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WITH NOTL MUSEUM



Walnut Tree Cottage

Shoemaker George Flynn built this house circa 1860 at 22 Johnson St., on land given to him by his mother, who operated a recess (a liquor store by today's standards) next door on King Street. Its best-known early owners were the Flanigans, who had an epic love story of a young local girl and an Irish soldier stationed at Camp Niagara under the First King's Dragoon guards (we have his uniform in the museum's collection). They married and raised a family in this house. Their two daughters, Bella and Minnie, became known as the most fashionably dressed girls in town by the 1870s. During the Second World War, the Knights of Columbus used the building to entertain troops from the army camp. It is amazing what you can find about your property if you have the time to dig in. If you're interested in learning how to research your property, consider joining our Land Registry Workshop on April 6 from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. It will give you the background you need. Space is limited, so register today.

Sometimes not conforming to 'norm' is the way to go



Ross's Ramblings

Ross Robinson
Columnist

Swimming against the current can be a good thing, with positive results. Stay the course with me as I put my thoughts to paper after a chance incident in Niagara-on-the-Lake last week.

In the world of politics, people usually vote for candidates who agree with them on the issues of the day and who all too often people who share a similar background.

When an outlier contests an election, they swim upstream.

I think of Naheed Nenshi, who was the mayor of Calgary from 2010 to 2021. Could he have been more different, in so many ways, than the stereotypical Albertan?

Not born and grazed on the Prairies, or within sight of the magnificent and red neck Rocky Mountains.



Ross Robinson says something must be done at the old Parliament Oak site, and that people should embrace change. FILE

Born in Toronto, a definite "new kid on the block," he enjoyed much political success for more than a decade, and now he is turning to provincial politics. Still sartorially resplendent in purple threads.

And Ranj Pillai, the current premier of the Yukon. He certainly does not fit the traditional image of a Whitehorse resident, but he is the leader of this Canadian territory with so much potential.

Here in NOTL, we have the determined Andrea

Kaiser. She was an effective member of town council and is now working for us at the regional level. (How much more time will she have to spend on the St. Davids roundabout issue? By the way, they used to be called traffic circles.)

Being in a car going around the traffic circle in Stoney Creek or Niagara Falls was always a highlight of our visits to our grandparents in Niagara back in the 1950s. All the way from Winnipeg. This area seemed so modern and advanced.

And let's remember Lord Mayor Art Viola, who capably led our town from 1994 to 2000. He was the first Filipino-born elected mayor in Canada and, after his mayoralty, said that in terms of friendship, he was the richest man in town.

Let's all take a big leap back to the election of U.S. President Barack Obama. What a win for mankind and only a few decades after a Catholic had won the right to lead the most powerful country in the world. And a young Catholic at that.

John F. Kennedy had swept in, bringing youthful vigour and pizzazz to the White House. And then it all ended so terribly, so quickly.

Obama sold his message of hope, saying, "Yes, we can." He governed with integrity and did so much for the aspirations of Black Americans. My goodness, the stress of that job changed his hair colour in just eight years. From black to gray, but still he stayed athletic and visionary.

Which awkwardly brings me to the sad situation on King Street in our wee town. I pass the old Parliament Oak Public School building almost every day. Fading yellow bricks, dirty windows, derelict and totally inactive.

I understand a demolition permit has been issued, but let's see some progress. Between the old public school and the old NOTL hospital and, soon, the old Upper Canada Lodge stagnation, NOTL needs a strong and authoritative kick in the pants.

Let's get something done. We need a big shot of positive energy.

Just last week, I was delivering a birthday card to Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa. We go back many years and he has always worked hard and followed the rules.

Frankly, I was surprised when he was elected lord mayor — because in a town so dominated by grey, silver and white hair, he ran for office with a full head of curly, dark hair. But now, there are flecks of grey appearing.

Let's get a major and visible project under way. It will do us all good. We'll get used to the changes.

Let's embrace change. It's inevitable.

Selling some of your unwanted ‘stuff’ is an option



From junk drawers to overstuffed basements, many of us have a lot of “stuff” we no longer need. This is the last in a four-part series designed to help you deal with it and maybe give new life to old items..

Denise Ascenzo
The Lake Report

There is one last option to assist you in clearing out a lifetime of accumulated “stuff.”

Selling items might be time-consuming but the benefit of having a bit of extra cash can be appealing.

Valuables like watches, jewelry or art should be taken to experts for proper valuation.

Most jewellers will give an estimate and might even be willing to purchase the items. Art galleries might be able to help or will certainly tell you who could.

A garage sale might seem like a fun idea but the amount of work and the number of people needed for it to be successful can be overwhelming.

Brandie Sinclair of Ni-



Brandie Sinclair of Niagara’s One Source Moving Solutions can help you clear out unwanted “stuff.” SUPPLIED

agara’s One Source Moving Solutions says that “if you have just one item to sell it might be easier to donate.”

And she advises: “Do you want strangers coming into

your home to play ‘Let’s Make a Deal’?”

When it’s a bigger job, you might need professional help.

If an entire house has to

be cleared out, Sinclair uses a company called MaxSold Auctions when working with her clients.

Cesar Fuentes of MaxSold Auctions explained how his company works.

The company comes to your home and catalogues all the contents to be sold. Many items might be grouped together for a quicker sale.

Fuentes said he then gives the client a complete catalogue to go through to ensure it is what they want.

Then MaxSold puts the pictures on its online auction site with details about what each item’s bid will start at and when the auction will close.

Buyers must register with MaxSold, provide credit card information and indicate any items they are interested in.

Once the auction wraps up, the winning bidder is charged for the items they bought and given a date and time for pickup.

It is considered a controlled and secure way to sell the contents of your home.

Fuentes’ company offers two types of service — MaxSold Managed or Seller Managed.

The latter means you must do all the work and only use the MaxSold auction site for a determined fee.

This might work for a small apartment, but not a large house.

MaxSold Managed means the company does everything, including moving furniture. There is an administration fee and a split of the sale proceeds: 35 per cent to the auction company and 65 per cent to the seller.

“With MaxSold, sellers can sit back and relax while MaxSold transforms unwanted items into cherished treasures,” Fuentes said.

For Sinclair, of One Source Moving Solutions, “the biggest goal when clearing out a home is to eliminate as much anxiety as possible.”

Many people who downsize feel a loss or sadness, she said, so her company tries to turn downsizing into a bit of an adventure.

For offspring left with this task, Sinclair likes to help use positive motivation to keep moving forward and not get bogged down with emotions.

Similar to Magnusson, the author of “The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning,” and Arlene Stephenson of Downsizing Divas, Sinclair recommends just doing one room at a time.

And focus on the four key categories: keep, garbage, donate and sell. Use Post-it notes on larger items to stay organized.

NOTL residents have one other option for clearing their home of “stuff.”

Buy Nothing Niagara-on-the-Lake is a community Facebook group run by volunteers and just about everything has been posted on the site to be given away. The group’s real goal is to avoid adding stuff to our landfills.

Within the Buy Nothing community are many who can refer you to another place or person who will take such items as sewing machines, bicycles, material for quilts and much more.

Aging baby boomers remain a large segment of the Canadian populace and throughout our lifetime we have dealt with diverse challenges. Today, it might mean struggling with availability of seniors apartments and nursing homes.

Decisions will be forced upon us so now is the time to take control of our possessions. Is Gram’s tarnished silverware sitting in the bottom of your cupboard or is Gramp’s favourite tool box full of rusting tools really that treasured?

Give them away and just cherish the memories while relieving your children of the task of clearing out your mess.

As Magnusson says, “A loved one wants to inherit nice things from you — not all things.”

Cookie sales help Girl Guides take trip of a lifetime

Lucy Hopkins
Special to The Lake Report

The sale of hundreds of \$6 boxes of Girl Guides cookies is helping send a group of Niagara-on-the-Lake teenagers on a whirlwind trip to Europe.

Mid-July 2024 is a time the NOTL Girl Guides look forward to, as they will embark on a 12-day trip overseas.

Leader Amanda Fretz describes it as “a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity” for the guides.

“We will spend 12 days travelling across Europe, learning valuable life and leadership skills, exploring sites of historical and cultural significance, and meeting members of guiding from around the world,” Fretz told The Lake Report. “This is an amazing opportunity that will provide them with experiences and knowledge that will stay with them for life.”

Fifteen-year-old Sophie



From park cleanups to food drives and Niagara Period Project initiatives, the NOTL Girl Guides do what they can to fundraise for communities in need. SUPPLIED

Cadeau is a student at Governor Simcoe Secondary School and has been a part of Guides for nine years.

Cadeau is one of many guides going on the trip and is excited to have experiences she has never had before.

“We’re going to four different countries. I’ve never been to Europe, so I’m excited to go to a different

continent and have fun,” Cadeau said.

“We’re going to a war museum, we’re visiting the Louvre, so I’m excited for that. We’re going to big Girl Guides world centres in both London and Switzerland.”

Girl Guides world centres give the opportunity for guides from all around the world to meet with and

learn about each other.

“It’s a big thing,” Cadeau said.

“I don’t think I’ll go on another Girl Guides trip that huge, and it’ll be fun to learn.”

But this \$6,000 trip is only affordable with the hard work of fundraising.

“We’re trying to sell as much as we can, I think it’s like 25 per cent of our fun-

draising has to be cookies, along with other ways we can fundraise,” Cadeau said.

“They try to make it accessible for us, it’s cookies so it’s like really easy, which is something we’ve always done.”

“Everybody loves the cookies, so it’s really easy to sell. I even sell at school,” Cadeau said.

Fretz said without support from the local community, Girl Guides would not have a thriving program, or even have as much fundraising for this upcoming trip.

The NOTL Kinsmen, St. Davids Lions Club, Grace United Church, Town of NOTL, Phil’s Independent Grocer and other local businesses support the unit through help in cookie sales, space to hold meetings, providing guest speakers, and donating money toward large events such as their trip to Europe.

“Being a non-profit group, a lot of our local businesses help us out,” Fretz said.

Because of this big community support, Girl Guides makes sure to give back to NOTL.

Fretz said youth members volunteer at other non-profit organizations and participate in local events, ceremonies and markets.

From park cleanups to Niagara Period Project initiatives, “all of the NOTL guiding units plan and participate in activities in our community,” Fretz said.

“Girl Guides programming offers opportunities for youth to become more active in their communities and make a difference in the lives of others,” she said.

“It teaches them that they are important, powerful, and fully capable of making a difference.”

To support or volunteer for the Girl Guides NOTL unit, contact Inotlpathfinders@gmail.com. To help with cookie sales, email guideramanda1@gmail.com.

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Obituaries

Michael Browne



BROWNE, Michael Thomas. Born Kilwinning, Ayrshire Scotland on June 5, 1938.
 Died peacefully on March 16, 2024. Pre-deceased by dearly beloved wife of nearly 52 years, Agnes. Loving Father of Lesley and Louise (Larry). Proud and caring Pa of Isabella and Joey. Pre-deceased by brother James (Patricia), and sisters Elsie (Fred), and Kathleen (Angus). A caring and well-loved uncle to many nieces and nephews, and their children. Michael will be missed by extended family and long-time friends; Jim (Sandra) Hand, Ann McLeod, Jim (Ina) Patience, and David (Lorraine) Craig.

In lieu of flowers, the family would ask that donations be made to Newark Neighbours Niagara. A private memorial service has already been held. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com.



Janet Thomas



THOMAS, Janet E.A. –
 Born in Maesteg, S. Wales, March 5, 1945, passed away March 18, 2024, after a long battle with Alzheimer's disease, at home, with her loving husband and two beloved daughters. A paragraph cannot express the beauty, wonder, or glory that Janet gave to the world. Janet was a devoted mother to Helen and Jayne, grandmother to Sarah, Mathew, Amy, Alyn and Riley and great-grandmother to Wrenley. After moving from S.Wales to London, England, she married the love of her life, and soul mate Peter. The family moved to Canada in 1976. Janet obtained her teaching degree from the U of Wales and spent her adult life teaching at Havergal College. This wondrous woman found time in-between these academic

duties to care for her family, travel to all parts of the world with her husband, a physician at St. Michael's Hospital, Toronto. Janet was a potter, enjoyed playing tennis, golf, and fervently supported the Welsh rugby team. Janet was a member of the RCYC and enjoyed sailing with her husband.

After retirement, Janet and Peter moved to NOTL where they made many new friends. Janet will be missed by many but the memory and her passion for life will live on forever. Cremation has taken place; a Celebration of Life will take place in the summer at home; details with Morgan Funeral Home, Niagara-on-the-Lake. As an expression of sympathy, those who wish may make a memorial donation to the Alzheimer's Society. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com

In Memoriam

Denise Lundy



*It's lonely here without you
 We miss you more each day
 For life is not the same to us
 Since you were called away.*

Forever loved and in our hearts,
 thoughts and prayers.

Denise Lundy: A loving Wife, Mother
 and Grandmother.
 Born January 16, 1961
 Passed away April 01, 2019.

Love, Tony, James, Michael, Jen and Rose.



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