

The Lake Report

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Niagara-on-the-Lake's most respected newspaper

January 23, 2020

Hummel sues town for \$500,000 over development freeze in Old Town

Bylaw debate 'shrouded in secrecy,' Rainer Hummel's lawsuit claims

Richard Harley
Editor

Niagara developer Rainer Hummel is suing the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake for \$500,000, plus costs, in an application to quash a development freeze that was instituted by the town at a

special meeting just days after the new council was inaugurated in 2018.

Known as an interim control bylaw, the development freeze prevented any new development in Old Town from going ahead for one year. It was subsequently extended for another year.

"The general reason we're suing the town is ... it is our belief that the initial interim control bylaw put in place was not legal," said Hummel in an interview with The Lake Report.

In documents filed in the Superior Court of Ontario, his company, Hummel

Properties Inc., alleges the town enacted the control bylaw without proper jurisdiction and for an improper purpose.

Specifically, Hummel claims the interim control bylaw should be quashed

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Co-founder of animal rights group Adam Stirr pours what appears to be wine over his head. BRITTANY CARTER

Wine or water? Police draw flack from NOTL residents for not charging protesters

Story on Page 15



Pat Fryer, Susan Sparrow-Mace, Suzanne Vaillant and Laura Gibson of Newark Neighbours with Canopy Growth's Sean Webster and Michelle Fanning. BRITTANY CARTER

Canopy Growth's \$5,000 donation will help Newark Neighbours

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St. Michael Catholic Elementary School teachers strike Tuesday. DARIYA BAIGUZHUYEVA

Catholic school teachers stand for one-day strike

Story on Page 7

All about icewine

Story on Page 8



Icewine Festival attendees try samples of food and icewine Saturday during a heavy snowfall. BRITTANY CARTER

Council approves 8.62% municipal tax hike

Budget means average homeowner will pay \$92 more annually on municipal bill

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

The average Niagara-on-the-Lake homeowner will pay \$92 more in municipal taxes this year after town council approved an 8.62 per cent tax hike Monday night.

The large tax increase passed after councillors narrowly voted down another motion asking staff

to look for more ways to cut the budget.

"I have no interest in opening the budget again," Coun. Clare Cameron told councillors Monday.

"We can't go forward – we're already in the 2020 year – if people don't have a budget. It's our responsibility to keep this town operating. Let's finalize this and move on so we can get some

work done."

The 2020 operating budget was set at \$12,686,151, which is 10.14 per cent more than last year. In actual dollars, spending will rise \$1,167,601. Council also transferred \$650,000 from the town's parking reserves in order to reduce the hit on taxpayers.

A storm levy of \$437,199 (a 2.48 per cent increase

from 2019) means people who live in the town's urban area will pay an additional \$4 fee annually.

For taxation purposes, the average NOTL residence is assessed at \$530,900.

In a news release issued Tuesday, interim CAO Sheldon Randall attributed the budget's increase to legal

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Hummel sues town for \$500K over development freeze

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because it is not authorized by the Planning Act and no bona fide study or review was undertaken with respect to land use planning policies in town.

The lawsuit says that in passing the bylaw, the town acted contrary to principles of transparency, accountability and fairness.

Hummel also questions the timeline in which the bylaw was passed, and alleges the town, contrary to the provincial Planning Act, organized the interim bylaw in secrecy and that there couldn't possibly have been time for due diligence.

The company claims it suffered damages as a result of the bylaw and through "misrepresentations" by Lord Mayor Betty Disero that the bylaw would be lifted soon after it was put in place.

"At 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 5, 2018, some 37 hours after its inaugural meeting, and contrary to announcement provisions in the procedural bylaw of the Town of NOTL, council held a special meeting ... at which time it enacted the initial interim control bylaw," says the court document.

"After the enactment of the (bylaw), the lord mayor of the town made assurance on several occasions beginning in February 2019, that the interim control bylaw would be short term and lifted in an expedient fashion," the lawsuit says.

The town extended the bylaw for a second year (the maximum amount of time it can be active) on Nov. 11, 2019.

"It is our belief that the (interim control bylaw) that was originally put in place is not legal at all, and certainly, we believe the extension of the (bylaw) is also not legal," Hummel said.

He said he is challenging the original bylaw, not the one-year extension.

"(The Municipal Act) clearly states that an (interim control bylaw) should be used extremely sparingly, very, very carefully, because it is an extremely powerful, powerful docu-

ment," Hummel said.

"It is a right given to municipalities by the province and the province expects it to be used very, very judiciously because it has no right of appeal. So when any town does this, no citizen can say, 'Hold on a sec, you can't do that,'" he said.

The initial bylaw can't be appealed to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT). The extension can be appealed and Hummel said other developers have appealed it, including Solmar Development Corp. and Traditional Neighbourhood Developments Inc.

"If you know the recent Solmar case, (developer Benny Marotta) had a right of appeal to the heritage conservation committee. That was his quasijudicial avenue. He chose Superior Court and Superior Court said, 'No, you have another avenue,'" Hummel said.

"No different than if I were to sue under the extension to the (bylaw), I would

expect court to throw it out, because I can go to the LPAT if I don't like it. But I didn't have that choice on the first go around, and that's the one that's costing me a lot of money."

He said the cost to him comes from development in Niagara-on-the-Lake having "absolutely ground to a halt."

"I have property that I'm trying to develop and I can't. And somebody did that, in my opinion, without the legal authority to do so. So, we've now potentially missed a window of sales opportunity for what we wanted to develop, because we can't do it. So the land is sitting there, the money is sitting there."

"The banks have cut off all financing for NOTL because of this," he said. "So whether it's the MacSweens, or whoever else — Josh

Bice, Kekoo Gatta, everybody — their banks have now said, 'Niagara-on-the-Lake is persona non grata.'"

Hummel said when such extreme legislation is used, it "sends shockwaves" through the entire industry.

"So trades who aren't working right now, our tax base or assessment base is not growing. Where's the money supposed to come from to pay the bills next year? We didn't have houses built last year, we didn't have a lot of stuff happen in the last year. We didn't create assessment growth. It's extremely damaging to a community. So as much fun as this may be for them to pass an (interim control bylaw), (the town) didn't think it through."

He said the desired outcome is to cover damages.

"We have shareholders we answer to and those shareholders have been damaged financially, so we want to seek damages for what

we've lost.

Secondly, we want to ensure that councils now and in the future understand their responsibility to the taxpayer with respect to the use of interim control bylaws."

The law surrounding the use of

an interim control bylaw is "very specific," said Hummel.

"You can only pass an (interim control bylaw) for the purpose of conducting a study. The legislation is not vague here at all. An (interim control bylaw) is to give the municipality enough time to conduct a study into a situation that could affect the community, positively or negatively, if they need time to understand it. In other words, something got sprung on them that they need to get expert advice on and they need breathing room to do that."

"What's the study? What study did they do?" Hummel said.

“So what study did you conduct other than to take six or seven months to approve something that was already completed before you even passed the (development freeze).”

**RAINER HUMMEL
HUMMEL PROPERTIES INC.**

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"What's the study? What study did they do?" Hummel said.



Developer Rainer Hummel, owner of Hummel Properties Inc. SUPPLIED

"The claim is, 'We had to do an (official plan amendment).' If you read the (official plan amendment) that this council passed in August (2019), other than a few typo repairs it's the same damn thing the last council did. There's even some staff reports that say 'we're done.'"

"So what study did you conduct other than to take six or seven months to approve something that was already completed before you even passed the (development freeze). So what's the study?"

"The bigger question, outside of my lawsuit, now you've extended the (freeze) — for what? You didn't do a study then, what's your study now?"

He said even if court does say that an official plan amendment is a study, the town approved it.

"If you approved it must be finished," Hummel said.

"The only reason you can extend an (interim control bylaw) for the second year is because you didn't have enough time to complete the study. But you passed it in August. What are you studying?"

Interim control bylaws are

considered so severe under the Municipal Act that a municipality can only pass one for 12 months and one extension for another 12 months. Once a municipality has used an interim control bylaw, it cannot use another one for 36 months after the last one expired, Hummel said.

"So have there been any other (interim control bylaws) by a past council? The Town of NOTL is a corporation, whether Joe Smith is the mayor, whether you're the mayor, it doesn't make any difference. Who's running it doesn't matter, it's the corporation that's liable ... if it passed an (interim control bylaw) under mayor (Pat) Darte, then for three years after the mayor Darte (bylaw) expires, you can't have another one."

Hummel said there were three interim control bylaws in the previous term and one was active during the time council passed the one he's challenging.

The town had one in place for Parliament Oak, one restricting cannabis operations and "even those two together at the same time are questionable whether you're even allowed to do

that," said Hummel.

"And then they passed a third one. Three (interim control bylaws) going on at the same time, when you're not allowed to have them for 36 months after the last one expired. That's going to be interesting to explain to the court."

He said the town's lawyer found a loophole in case law where a precedent was set allowing, the town to create an interim control bylaw while another one is in place, but there are "so many technicalities" that from a legal perspective it's hard to understand.

Hummel has never sued a municipality in the past, he said.

He said two places that have become "very negative" in the eyes of the development community are St. Catharines and Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"We all know each other," Hummel said, and some developers he knows have said they would never buy land in Niagara unless it came with a permit.

"We've damaged our reputation by doing nasty things like (the interim control bylaw)."



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Lord Mayor Betty Disero chairs the council meeting Monday. DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA

Council approves 8.62% municipal tax hike

Continued from Front Page

fees, staff salaries, transfers to the capital reserve and flood mitigation.

Facing a surge in litigation, the town has budgeted \$1 million more for legal fees this year, and \$11,994,607 for salaries, an additional \$445,000 for flood prevention and \$2,440,837 for the capital reserve fund.

The capital budget totalling \$10,393,750 was approved at council's Dec. 16 meeting. That's an increase of \$1,348,000 or 14.9 per cent from 2019. The approved 10-year capital forecast sits at \$80,330,500.

Since the December meeting, when councillors deferred making a decision on the operating budget, town staff identified two options to help council limit the tax increase.

According to a staff re-

port, one option, which was approved, was to include in the budget an additional \$100,000 that the town earns in interest on funds held in various bank accounts. That move brought the tax increase down to 8.62 per cent from 9.48 per cent.

Another option suggested allocating potential revenue from a planned municipal accommodation tax to the operating budget, which would have reduced the operating increase to 5.14 per cent from 8.62 per cent.

Since council on Monday deferred making a decision on the hotel tax, councillors didn't vote on the second option but approved the first one.

In 2020, capital projects include \$3,117,000 allocated to the town's roads department while the water department will receive \$3,083,500.

According to the 10-year capital projects forecast, council will spend \$1,978,000 on parks, recreation and facilities, while the fire and emergency services department will receive \$466,500.

The town will also spend \$5,000 on transit, \$127,000 on street lighting, \$340,000 on wastewater, \$451,000 on public works vehicles and equipment, and \$160,750 on corporate services.

Some of the biggest capital projects include road resurfacing of Circle Street in Chautauqua (\$226,000); on Henegan and Walker Road (\$130,000); Gate Street from Anne Street to John Street (\$283,000) and culvert improvements at Concession 6 Road from Niagara Stone Road to Line 2 (\$121,000).

Four Mile Creek Road will see road improve-

ments from Hunter Road to Wall Street at a cost of \$132,000, and from Wall to Lakeshore Road in the amount of \$420,000. There will also be road construction on Concession 6 Road, from Niagara Stone Road to Line 2, at a cost of \$800,000.

The fire and emergency services department will spend \$50,000 on replacing firefighters' personal protective equipment, such as gloves, helmets, boots, bunker gear, protective hoods and coveralls.

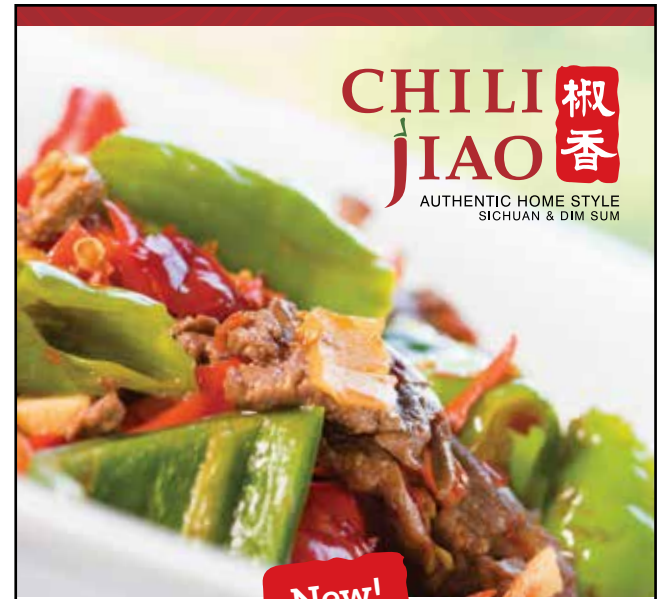
Among other projects, \$500,000 will be spent replacing the public washrooms at 92 Queen St. in Old Town, \$40,000 on library collection development, redesigning the community centre's front entrance at a cost of \$180,000 and expanding tennis courts at Veterans Memorial Park for \$125,000.

Town defers municipal accommodation tax after approving in principle

Niagara-on-the-Lake council has deferred making a decision regarding a municipal accommodation tax after hearing several presentations from various tourism and accommodation industry leaders who were against charging town visitors a hotel tax of four per cent. The presenters questioned why the Town would approve the tax if the industry representatives were in opposition and urged not to approve the levy. Last week, town councillors approved levying the tax in principle.

Council approves bylaw allowing staff to inspect designated properties

Council has approved a bylaw which would allow town staff, municipal heritage committee members, an appointed town historian or consultants working for the Town to inspect and visit a designated or proposed to be designated property under the Ontario Heritage Act. The site visits are necessary for a variety of reasons including an inspection for a heritage permit application or ensuring that work has been completed as required by the Act, town staff reported. A property owner's permission will not be required under the Act to do such visits.



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Contributed by Norm Arsenault:

Save on your water bill by using these simple tips: Turn water off while brushing your teeth; fix leaky faucets and toilets (that one can really add up); shorten your showers; use low-flow faucet nozzles and cover your pool to reduce evaporation.



Contributed by Patty Garriock

Health, contentment and trust are your greatest possessions, and freedom your greatest joy.
 – Buddha

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Editorial

News is **literally** our job, folks

Brittany Carter
 The Lake Report

When news happens, it needs to be reported.

We've said it before, but based on some social media warriors' reactions this week, it bears repeating: There is no "if we want to" or "when it's convenient." If something notable happens in Niagara-on-the-Lake, this newspaper will do its best to cover it. (Of course, if we miss events or are unaware of some issues, we always encourage you to let us know. And you do.)

Whether we disagree with an issue is not relevant – we exercise our news judgment to report on significant happenings in town. We're far from perfect, but with our very small team I think we do a pretty good job covering most local issues. But we always strive to offer the most comprehensive coverage of NOTL matters.

This week I was disappointed with some of the comments on social media. (It's always social media, isn't it?) regarding a small story about animal rights activists during the Icewine Festival. The article was published on Facebook Monday afternoon and within an hour the notifications started pouring in.

Many people commented that we shouldn't give the activists more publicity. We need to stop covering their

actions. We need to just ignore their protests and stop giving them a voice.

But that isn't our job. As a news outlet, we don't get to decide that just because we don't like an issue, we should stop covering it. The protest happened in town, it is an ongoing issue that won't likely disappear, and it is relevant to our readers, NOTL businesses and the community at large. That's news.

Yes, it is our job to report and share our articles – that is simply the role of any media organization.

But, ironically, it is actually social media warriors who are making the issue bigger than it needs to be. Because of the way social media platforms tend to work, with every comment, retort, like and share, you are telling Facebook's algorithms that this story is important, and this story needs to be seen.

We continue to publish every Lake Report article on Facebook every week. But you, the readers, are the ones who ultimately decide which posts are deemed important.

Looking through our own Facebook pages for both The Lake Report and our website, NiagaraNow.com, we can clearly see that stories like the animal rights protest have more than 500 post engagements – which means people clicked, shared, reacted or commented on it more than 500 times.

Published roughly the same time

was an article about The Heritage Trail Committee receiving a sizable donation – also news that is relevant and important to NOTL readers. That post, however, had only 54 engagements initially.

Even last week's articles, arguably more relevant to residents: "Marotta 'likely' to appeal court decision on Randwood" and "Town approves 4% hotel tax – in principle," garnered fewer online engagements than the protesters' story.

The good news is there is a way for you to stay informed about issues like the protests, but not increase those organizations' profiles on social media.

If you want to see the protesters fade into obscurity (please!!), minimize the sharing, commenting or taking part in long threads of debates on those posts. By all means, read these contentious stories, because you need to know what is going on in your community, but stop there. Don't engage further.

It isn't a perfect system, but it seems to work; Facebook algorithms pick up on which posts garner the most traction and share accordingly.

I encourage you to save your comments, reactions and shares for the news you think is most valuable for the town. Use your power to decide which posts are important and what news is spread on social media.

editor@niagaranow.com



Simply raising taxes is **not sustainable**

Dear editor:

As Lord Mayor Betty Disero has said, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake needs to become self-sustainable.

In effect, it needs to achieve a balance between the money it spends on behalf of taxpayers and the revenues from all sources that it takes in during the fiscal year, without making municipal taxes so onerous that residents no longer can afford to pay them.

There are different ways that council could consider to achieve this goal, but in general they all involve either raising revenues, cutting expenditures, finding

ways to operate more cost effectively, or a combination of these things.

Unfortunately, it does not appear likely that council will find the balance needed for the town to be self-sustainable in the near future if the proposed 2020 municipal budget is anything to go by.

The time has come for council to take a much harder look at discretionary grants, including those that have become line items in the budget such as the \$118,000 earmarked for the NOTL Chamber of Commerce.

It must also come to

grips with the need for new sources of revenue, such as an accommodation tax, to ensure that visitors to NOTL contribute in a fair and reasonable way to maintaining the town's critical infrastructure, beautification program and bylaw enforcement requirements.

And it should consider cost efficiencies, including looking at whether town has the right staff doing the right jobs, and the right number of staff, to meet the needs of local residents and businesses.

Ultimately, council will have to take the demographics of residents into account

as well. If, as the average age of NOTL residents suggests, many are living on fixed incomes, continued high annual increases to municipal taxes are clearly unsustainable.

Instead, council should be looking at other options, such as deferred taxation (through which seniors can defer paying a portion of their annual municipal taxes until they sell their home, at which point the deferred taxes must be paid), to help residents be able to stay in their own homes as the cost of living increases.

Terry Davis
 NOTL

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OPINION

Major retailer shows leadership in getting rid of plastic bags

Norm Arsenault
Special to The Lake Report

In a move that can only be interpreted as a major environmental step forward, Sobeys, one of the largest grocery chains in Canada, will be removing plastic bags from its grocery stores at the end of January, a move the company says has been driven by its customers.

In addition, Sobeys-owned grocery chains Foodland, Safeway, Freshco and IGA will soon follow suit. Customers will be able to bring their own reusable bags to the store or obtain paper bags from the checkout.

This move alone will take out of circulation an astounding 225 million single-use plastic bags, relieving some of the pressure on landfills and recycling depots wherever these stores operate around the country.

"It's time for change and we will not stop innovating and bringing to market new ways to remove avoidable plastic from retail," said Vittoria Varalli, vice-president of sustainability for Sobeys. "We are working with our industry partners and key stakeholders on eradicating plastics from the system."

While 225 million plastic bags and other plastic packaging is a great beginning, let's put that in context and hope that other large-

volume retailers, such as Loblaws, Walmart, Home Depot, Home Hardware, Lowes and others will follow suit.

In the U.S. alone, Walmart, the largest retailer in the world, uses 20 billion plastic bags per year. The company has 11,700 stores worldwide. Think of the impact a plastic ban in these stores could have.

In 2019, it is estimated that one trillion plastic bags were produced in the world. That's a trillion with a capital "T."

It has been recorded time and time again the devastating impact these products have caused on the environment, from massive pollution of the oceans, to the death of huge numbers of fish, mammals, birds and other creatures who end up swallowing parts of these products and become sick or literally choke to death.

Industry and governments are slowly waking up to this reality. There are currently 115 countries around the world that have now banned single-use plastic bags. Our own Canadian government announced in 2019 that it will be moving ahead with such a ban as early as 2021. Let's make sure the government follows up on this commitment.

Plastic bags are created using fossil fuels and require vast amounts of water and energy in order to have them manufactured and shipped.



Sobeys has ended the use of plastic bags. SUPPLIED

The production of plastic bags requires the use of billions of pounds of fossil fuels as well as billions of gallons of fresh water. The manufacturing process results in billions of pounds of solid waste and millions of tons of CO2 every year.

Industry is slow to action and only through the ongoing efforts of the population at large putting pressure on the manufacturers, retailers and governments everywhere to eliminate this type of waste, will we see a sustainable change to this ongoing pollution.

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, we still have numerous retailers that continue to use plastic bags – from wineries, to grocers, and general retailers, but we also have some that are starting to look at whether they are part of the problem or the solution and unilaterally taking action to reduce their carbon footprints.

It is time to make your voices heard and make a concerted effort to change this behaviour and demand action.

Let's demand that our favourite retailers get rid of plastic bags and encourage

and provide alternatives in their stores, such as paper bags, or better yet, encourage the use of reusable bags.

Sobeys stores will accept your worn out reusable bags and recycle them. In the meantime, let's make sure to recycle any plastic products that are still in circulation.

We have the power to force change. Make your voices heard loud and clear and help make Niagara-on-the-Lake part of the solution.

Green Tip: If, like many people, you have dozens of plastic bags stashed in a cupboard somewhere, here's what you can do to recycle them – Combine all your plastic bags and wraps into one single bag and tie them up. Put the tied bag in the grey bin on top of your paper products. Don't recycle the bags loosely. They clog up equipment and slow down the recycling process.

Norm Arsenault is a NOTL town councillor and environmental advocate. He writes The Lake Report's weekly Green Tip, which appears on page 4.

Phragmites top of mind at rural municipality conference

Town staff has participated in the 2020 Rural Ontario Municipality Association Conference which took place from Jan. 19 to Jan. 21 in Toronto. Staff took part in a delegation regarding phragmites, the use of chemical products and the high costs when dealing with the invasive species. According to the press release, town staff will work with Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs on how to get rid of phragmites.

NOTL resident joins regional board to select design award winners

NOTL resident Gordon Stratford has joined a jury panel comprised of notable urban designers, architects and visual artists from across Niagara and the Greater Toronto-Hamilton area who will select winning projects at the Niagara Biennial Design Awards. Other jurors are Ken Greenberg, Linda Irvine, Amy Friend and Lois Weinthal. The award categories include architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, urban planning, interior design, outdoor art and student design projects. The deadline for submissions is midnight on Friday, Jan. 24.

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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 724 Mississagua St., NOTL.

The Lake Report

Meghan and Harry critique was **mean-spirited**

Dear editor:

Upon reading Samuel Young's letter in the Jan. 16 issue of the Lake Report ("Reflections on Meghan and Prince Harry"), I feel obliged to respond to such a mean-spirited view of Meghan and Harry's decision to leave Britain on a semi-permanent basis.

Perhaps Mr. Young should investigate the state of British print and TV media. Aside from the Manchester Guardian, there seems to be not a single outlet that is interested in accurate reporting and instead favours sensationalist opinions that are presented as facts in the paparazzi style so loved by many present-day news outlets.

The media outlets, together, have manufactured several vitriolic stories about Meghan Markle, which would encourage a quick departure from Britain.

Our celebrity culture encourages readers such as Mr. Young to believe that he intimately knows the subjects of which he speaks and therefore presumes to understand all the reasons for the decision of Meghan and Harry to leave their royal appointments.

Perhaps empathy rather than criticism might be a more worthwhile approach by Mr. Young and others, given how little is known as to why the couple has decided to leave Britain.

*Michael Eagen
NOTL*



Proud to support **NOTL** wine

The Lake Report proudly supports Niagara-on-the-Lake wineries and the Icewine Village festival. This year the paper has its very own ice table, located beside the clock tower cenotaph. If you're attending the festival this weekend, snap a pic of yourself with The Lake Report table and send it to us at editor@niagaranow.com for a chance to be published in next week's edition.

A **wish list** for Queenston jet boat tour buses

Dear editor:

Here is our Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours-related wish list for 2020.

This wish list is meant to bring some peace, quiet and health back to many Queenston residents.

Dumfries Street in Queenston is overrun with buses taking patrons to Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours. There are between 60 and 80 bus movements per day, seven days a week for many months. The season is now six months long, May to October. Communication with the company, Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours, is not easy, therefore this is a public wish list.

1. Replace the old, noisy, sooty buses with quieter, cleaner and more appropriately sized ones, as discussed among Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours, Lord Mayor Betty Disero and the town's interim CAO.

2. Work toward a plan to keep all coach tour buses out of the village. Please find another place on the Niagara River for them.

3. Don't run the shuttle buses empty and why run a full-size bus for only a few passengers at a time.

4. Drive all buses at a maximum speed of 30 km/h through the village. This is necessary in order to be safe while driving around as there are no sidewalks for (dog) walkers, children, gardeners and residents.

5. Please stop driving after 5 p.m. We are not a tourist village with stores or attractions open after 5 p.m. There is no associated benefit from the Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours to Queenston. No taxes are paid nor do local businesses benefit from them. Therefore please, give us peace and quiet hours after 5 p.m.

We hope that most of these wishes will come true this year.

*Adrian Schoot Uiterkamp
"The Dumfries Group"
Queenston*

Live-in B&Bs and short-term rentals need to be **treated differently**



Dear editor:

I'd like to share some thoughts regarding unlicensed short-term rentals and the decision to triple the 2020 licence fees for bed and breakfasts.

I appreciate the concerns expressed by Lord Mayor Betty Disero and found her description of the "hollowing out" of our neighbourhoods to be very fitting.

When we bought our property 25 years ago it was a career choice with the intention of long-term investment, not just financially but in close relationships within our neighbours. We have owned and operated our B&B for 21 years. We take seriously the opportunity to promote local agriculture with every breakfast we serve.

Bed and breakfast owners are front-line ambassadors for all that this area has to offer. Our purpose is about actively creating human

connection in ways that educate, enrich the visitors' experience and encourages them to return because of the relationship formed.

I believe that bed and breakfasts should not be classified the same as short-term rental units that are not owner-occupied.

Around 2000, a bylaw was passed that anyone renovating or building for the purpose of using it as a B&B would have to use it for four years personally before they could apply. Why are short-term rentals of vacant houses or apartments able to circumvent this bylaw?

Owner-occupied bed and breakfasts compliant with town regulations are not responsible for the "hollowing out" of our neighbourhoods.

Taking legal action against unlicensed businesses is prohibitively expensive for the town with the resulting fines going to

the province instead of the affected municipalities. Is there a better way?

Here are a few suggestions to consider:

Recognition of two different categories – B&B applications vs. short-term rentals of apartments or houses.

Identification of rental homes/apartments on the street similar to the signs that B&Bs use.

Property owners of illegal businesses receive an invoice and appropriate application from the town. It would be time-sensitive with notice of intent to pursue legal action if operation is continued.

It is important to understand that AirBnb has taken on a life of its own and is not just another brand or "marketing tool," as many would suggest.

Multinational corporations like AirBnb answer to their investors and stake-

holders for short-sighted profits.

The number of cities around the world that no longer have affordable housing for their own residents is growing exponentially because of the commodification of residential areas.

They do not require members to adhere to local bylaws. AirBnb has steadfastly refused to communicate with municipalities regarding its flagrant disregard of these issues.

The resulting growth of illegal operations to show a quick profit demands that the rest of the community bear the costs of a healthy, functioning town.

We look forward to solving these issues together in a way that encourages healthy relationships in welcoming, caring neighbourhoods.

Sincerely,
*Jane Andres
NOTL*



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Pauline Reimer Gibson
Audiologist

St. Michael Catholic elementary teachers join **one-day** walkout

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

Teachers from St. Michael Catholic Elementary School in Virgil walked off the job Tuesday morning, protesting government cuts to education.

The one-day strike was part of rotating job actions by teachers at Catholic schools in Niagara and elsewhere in Ontario. Public elementary school teachers across Niagara plan their own walkout Thursday.

St. Davids resident Maria Rocca Martin, who is a supply teacher at high schools across Niagara, participated in four school strikes during 36 years of teaching, said there is more support for teachers this time around than in previous years.

"I think the public is very aware of the cuts the government is looking at making to education because parents today are more educated than they've ever been before. They're more involved," said Martin. "It's very heartening to see that support."

Martin, a member of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, joined about 22 teachers on the picket line.

Across the province, teachers represented by different education unions also staged walkouts Tuesday to fight the government's changes to education.

Some of their concerns include increased average class sizes, elimination of the Local Priorities Fund and mandatory e-learning. Teachers also are calling for more support for special needs students and a commitment to the full-day kindergarten program.

"It's unfortunate that this has to happen but it's the only way that (the government) is going to understand these issues are very dear to our heart," said Martin.

Wearing heavy winter parkas to stay warm in the -8C temperatures, some NOTL strikers walked around the roundabout leading into Virgil, while others stood along the roadside, waving signs as motorists drove by.

One teacher said a man gave them a thumbs down and another driver showed a "strange signal with his finger," but the vast majority of passing motorists were honking, giving thumbs up or rolling down windows and waving in support of the strikers, who waved back and shouted "thank you" in response.

"It's a very short-sighted move on the government's part," Martin said, noting that many students aren't independent enough to take online courses and that e-learning doesn't take into account students' mental health or their individual learning styles.

"So many of their moves right now are not in the best interests of the students."

Supply teacher Erica Brunato said smaller class sizes allow teachers to have a more direct contact with students, while online courses may not be suitable for students who don't have enough discipline to regulate themselves.

"It's great to see support from not only the parents, but the students, so that they understand that we're out here fighting for them," she said. "We just want them to know we're doing this for their sake."

Three NOTL parents, Joe Pillitteri, Carrie Bowman and Eileen Pillitteri, as well as F45 fitness studio co-owner Jack Addams Williams stopped by to show their support for the strikers.

Pillitteri, a local comedian and co-owner of Lakeview Vineyard Equipment, brought doughnuts and Timbits with him. He exchanged hugs with a couple of teachers and also took

a selfie with them. As a parent whose four children have attended St. Michael (one is still there), Pillitteri said he wanted to show he supports the teachers.

"It's important that we compensate our teachers well and that we respect the need for appropriate class sizes and having working conditions that are safe for both teachers and students," he told The Lake Report.

The issue is about more than just money, he said. "It's about making sure they are thinking about the next 20 years, not today."

To ease the chill of Tuesday morning's chilly weather, parent Bowman arrived with some white hot chocolate. She said her children are in Grades 6 and 8 at St. Michael and she wanted to support the teachers as well.

"People focus more on what the teachers are asking for, what their salaries are, things like that — but what they don't realize is teachers come in and they deal with behaviours in the classroom. They deal with the class size," Bowman said.

"They're doing this job because they want to do this job. They want our kids to succeed and people are not realizing all of these factors are making it harder for them to do their jobs and harder for our kids to succeed."

Eileen Pillitteri was there to drop off some muffins and show support to the teachers as her children are in Grade 4, 6 and 7, she said.

"These cuts will be detrimental to the children and to the staff, it's not right," Pillitteri said.

Williams, co-owner of F45 studio, said he is a primary school teacher in Australia and is fully supportive of the teachers.

"Solidarity is really important to teachers and communities need to get behind what they're doing," he said. "It starts with an



St. Michael elementary teachers protest government cuts to education.

DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA

education."

This is the first time Catholic teachers across Ontario have announced a full withdrawal of services since 1997.

The education changes were introduced by former Education Minister Lisa Thompson in March 2019.

The province's plan was to increase average classes in Grades 4 to 8 to 24.5 students from 23.84 and high schools to 28 from 22. Another proposed change was to make high school students take one mandatory online course each year.

Last fall, the new Education Minister Stephen Lecce said the province would reduce the average high school class size to 25 from 28, and only require two online courses instead of four in total.

However, the Catholic association, which has 75 local bargaining units, is asking the provincial government to reverse the changes.

"Students will also have fewer supports and programs, a large number of

teaching positions will be lost, and course options will be significantly reduced for students," Marie Balanowski, a Niagara Elementary bargaining unit president, said in an email response to The Lake Report.

"The government doesn't appear to have any plans to improve student learning in any way. We cannot accept a contract that would be detrimental to the learning conditions in our schools."

The Catholic association is one of the four education unions in Ontario that has taken job actions to protest changes to the public education system.

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario started rotating one-day, province-wide strikes on Jan. 20, while the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation has been holding one-day pickets since early December.

The Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens also started a work-to-rule job action last week. The French school board teach-

ers are doing the bare minimum of what is required of them by their contract. They may also refuse to work overtime, put their comments on report cards or attend field trips.

In Niagara, all elementary public schools under the District School Board of Niagara will be closed for one day on Thursday, Jan. 23. The walkout will not affect secondary schools.

The provincial government has offered up to \$65 to parents to help cover child care expenses during strike days.

"We fully recognize the negative impacts teacher union escalation is having on families," Lecce said in a statement Tuesday.

"It is why we are calling on these union leaders to end these strikes, given the adverse effects on students and financial hardship on parents. While this union-led escalation happens far too often, we are committed to negotiating deals that keep students in class, while providing financial support for families for child care needs."



NOTL: SPECIAL WINTER EDITION

The Lake Report's winter magazine highlights some of the best places and things to do in NOTL.

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Icewine Village attendees take a moment to sort token chips before sampling icewine and food Saturday. **More photos at niagaranow.com** PHOTOS BY BRITTANY CARTER



Festival goers rest glasses of icewine near the fire pits as they warm up. Right: The Icewine Band performs all weekend for the Icewine Village on Queen Street.



It's all about icewine

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

Last weekend brought droves of new and returning visitors to Niagara-on-the-Lake for the annual Icewine Festival – the village on Queen Street features representatives from area wineries

and restaurants offering samples of their best icewine and icewine-paired snacks.

The snowstorm, which hit early Saturday morning, created a picturesque winter wonderland.

Live music by the Icewine Band and performers like professional juggler Ben

Burland and stilt-walker “Dazzling” Darren Bedford set the festive scene while locals and visitors huddled around several firepits for warmth between samplings.

The Icewine Festival will continue this weekend along Queen Street and through-out area wineries.

Animal rights group pours out wine in ‘spectacle’

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

A group of animal rights activists followed through with a promised “spectacle” at the Icewine Village in Niagara-on-the-Lake on Saturday; six members poured out bottles of wine to garner “more attention for the cause.”

Adam Stirr, co-founder of the group At War for Animals Niagara, said the new tactic aims to bring awareness to the issue of using animals. The action

was live-streamed and posted to the group’s social media channels.

As to how the pouring of wine would actually benefit the cause, Stirr said it’s about making a scene.

“I guess it’s just attention right, it’s just about drawing attention to the cause. And that’s something that activists have used throughout history – it’s just different forms of spectacle,” he said.

The animal rights group is asking its supporters to boycott NOTL wineries and businesses.

Many attendees entering the village took notice of the act before carrying on to the festival.

Kelly Beddick from East Aurora, New York was in town Saturday. After witnessing the activists dumping out bottles of wine she said she couldn’t understand the protests.

“It’s absolutely ridiculous. I have girlfriends who ride horses – they love it, the horses love it. They’re treated better than most children are treated. They’re cared for and loved,” she said.

“I just don’t get it.”

In a social media post about the demonstration by opposition group Locals For Carriages, comments pointed out that buying NOTL wines, whether to pour out or drink, is still supporting the town’s wine industry.

“I don’t get it, they bought about eight bottles of wine from here – isn’t that supporting NOTL wineries?” said a comment by Facebook user Kari Frank.

“In order to waste it, they have had to buy it which sup-



Co-founder of animal rights group Adam Stirr pours what appears to be wine over his head. BRITTANY CARTER

ports Niagara Wine,” echoed another comment by Laurie Jane.

Stirr said the group used bottles of wine it had “laying around,” and that it was more of a “symbollic action.”

The protest group also created a Facebook group called “Don’t Visit NOTL,” which as the name implies

encourages people to boycott NOTL. As of publication time the page only had three “likes.”

As of publication time the Facebook group was shut down by the activists. Stirr said it was created as a tactic to gauge the responses of carriage supporters and it “served its purpose.”



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Five different specimen of dogs, domesticated and wild, are shown in a mountainous landscape. Coloured etching by J. Miller after J. Stewart. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The domestication of animals and, yes, humans

Dr. William Brown
Special to The Lake Report

Wolves were domesticated roughly 30,000 years ago and cats about 9,500 years ago – but what about humans?

Fossil and DNA records suggest humans may have domesticated themselves – as early as 80,000 years ago and possibly much earlier. Why and how?

The evolutionary pressures for such changes aren't so surprising. As the size of human communities increased, so did social complexity, which made the challenges of sorting out who's who and successfully navigating the social landscape, more challenging.

To which the answers may have been for natural selection to favour behavioural traits such as social intelligence – reading the intentions of others and getting along with them – which are associated with altering hundreds, if not thousands of genes. The latter were accompanied by physical changes: a flatter face, less prominent nose and brow ridges and smaller teeth.

In a now famous study in the 1950s, Russian geneticist Dimitri Belyaev changed the behaviour of wild foxes – normally wary and aggressive – into domesticates, whose behaviour was like pet dogs.

He did this by mating

the most docile foxes in successive generations. Just as striking were the accompanying changes in the appearance of the foxes: their snouts became shorter and rounder, the legs shorter and stouter, the ears floppier, the tail curlier and the colour and pattern of their fur changed – all in less than 30 generations.

The changes in the foxes were much too quick for the usually staid course of natural selection acting on random mutations. Such rapid and dramatic behavioural and physical changes suggest the strong hand of epigenetics – the selective activation and silencing of genes already present by the methylation of bases, the influence of chromatin proteins and/or non-coding RNA acting selected genes.

All or some of these changes can be passed on from generation to generation without altering the base sequence of the genome. In the case of the foxes, such epigenetic changes apparently silenced genes associated with “wild” behavioural and anatomical traits, while favouring the equivalent “docile” traits.

Such a mechanism presupposes that the requisite genes – wild and tame – already existed in the fox's genome: it was only a matter of switching which genes were turned on and which turned off.

That seems to be the case on the Gallipolis islands where in some birds the beak size and shape can change in a season or two in response to environmental change – the genes favouring different-sized and shaped beaks existing already in the bird's genome. A similar mechanism probably explains changes within a few generations in the size and shape of some cichlid fish in Africa's Lake Victoria, in response to environmental changes.

Human development, beginning with a single fertilized egg and the subsequent evolution of that cell into the hundreds of different types of cells of what will become the human body, employs similar mechanisms to activate and silence cells in a wonderfully orchestrated and finely timed sequence.

Every cell has the same genome (except sperm and unfertilized egg cells, which have one copy of the genome). Evidence that each mature cell retains the whole genome rests with the fact that mature cells from skin or elsewhere, can, with few exceptions, be reverse engineered by as few as four genes backward to a stem cell.

That may then, with some further chemical manipulation, be made to selectively differentiate into mature liver cells, bone or cartilage cells, and even spe-

cific types of brain cells, by controlling which genes are active and which inactive.

It's been one of biology's most stunning achievements in the last few decades – worth several Nobel prizes – unraveling the mysteries of the biochemistry and machinery of the cell.

And, if that isn't enough to spark your interest, what about recent evidence suggesting that mapping the pattern of methylation of DNA's bases in a hitherto mysterious closely-related species – the Denisovans – can be used to reconstruct the probable appearance of the face, of in this case, a 160,000-year-old female teenage Denisovan. Remarkable!

What about felines?: Cats were more recent domesticates, beginning about 9,500 years ago or about the same time humans took up farming in the Middle East. In their case, tameness and a willingness to hang out with humans, whether for food or company, were associated with changes in some of the 281 genes recently found to differ between near Eastern and European wildcats and domestic cats.

Dr. William Brown is a professor of neurology at McMaster University and co-founder of the Info-health series held on the second Wednesday of each month at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.

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The Lake Report
FACTS

The Lake Report recently conducted a readership survey, and sent information on how to participate to every farm, residence and apartment in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

More than 80% of people surveyed chose The Lake Report as their preferred choice for local news and information.

SOURCE: TLR Readership Survey; October 2019

Did you know?

The Lake Report's printer sources 100 per cent of its paper fibre from industry leading paper mills, which use quick-growth, sustainable, renewable plots of land, rather than clear-cutting forests.

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26	27	28	29
<p>Icewine Festival</p> <p>Death Chats: Safe, Open Conversations on Death and Dying - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Ukulele Workshop - 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Willowbank Sunday Salon Series: ft. Denielle Bassels - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Willowbank</p> <p>Teen Literary Alliance - 1:30 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p>	<p>Fun Duplicate Bridge - 9 a.m. to noon - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Babies and Books - 11 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Famous and Infamous: Louis Armstrong by David Sydor - 2 p.m. - NOTL Museum</p>	<p>NOTL Horticultural Society January Meeting - 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Duplicate Bridge (ACBL Sanctioned) - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>NOTL Rotary Club - Noon - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Niagara Golden Age Club: Seniors Euchre - 1 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Grassroots Community Building: Sponsored by Baha'i Community - 7:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p>	<p>Lord Mayor's Economic Advisory Committee - Committee Room 1</p> <p>NOTL Toastmasters - Niagara College Danforth Campus</p> <p>German Conversation - 9:45 a.m. to 11:20 a.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Yoga with Melaina Tree - 9 a.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p>
2	3	4	5
<p>Open Mic with host Buzz Hummer - 2 p.m. - Legion Branch 124</p> <p>Writers' Circle - 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Superbowl for the Flutie Foundation - 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. - Club 55</p>	<p>Committee of the whole Planning - 6 p.m. - Council Chambers</p> <p>Public Meeting: Zoning Bylaw Amendment - 6 p.m. - Council Chambers</p> <p>Babies and Books - 11 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p>	<p>Nobel Prize Series Nobel Prize in Chemistry - 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Tumble Tots - 9 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>NLH Level 1 Classes - 6:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p>	<p>Author Presentation: Black Waters Flow - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Steam Story Time - 10 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Yoga with Melaina Tree - 9 a.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>NOTL Toastmasters - Niagara College Danforth Campus</p> <p>Chess Club - 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Irrigation Committee - Operations Boardroom</p>

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Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	23	24	25
	<p>Agricultural Committee - 2 p.m. - Council Chambers</p> <p>Seniors Drop in: Casual Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Homeschooler Drop in - 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>NLH Workshop: Playing with Rhythm - 7:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p>	<p>Icewine Festival</p> <p>Duplicate Bridge (ACBL Sanctioned) - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Knit a Bit - 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>January 2020 Red Tent Event - 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. - Red Roof Retreat</p> <p>Homeschool: Technology Petting Zoo - 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>White on Ice Dinner - 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. - 26 Queen St.</p>	<p>Icewine Festival</p> <p>Shaw Festival Film Series: Rocketman - 3 p.m. - Shaw Festival</p> <p>Rocking for the Homeless - 3 p.m. - Club 55</p>
29	30	31	1
<p>Comic Book Club - 7:30 a.m. - El J Patterson</p> <p>Book Club - 7 p.m. - El J Patterson</p> <p>Book Group - 10 a.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>From Salt to Community - 7 p.m. - El J Patterson</p>	<p>Beards on Ice - 11 a.m. - Wayne Gretzky Estates Winery and Distillery</p> <p>Audit Committee - 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. - Council Chambers</p> <p>Seniors Drop in: Casual Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Homeschooler Drop in - 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p>	<p>Duplicate Bridge (ACBL Sanctioned) - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Knit a Bit - 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>NOTL Newcomers Coffee and Conversation - 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p>	<p>Repair Cafe - 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Shaw Festival Film Series: The Biggest Little Farm - 3 p.m. - Shaw Festival Theatre</p>
5	6	7	8
<p>Book Club: Niagara Deep - 6 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Book Club: Dinosaurs - 11 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>From Salt to Community - 7 p.m. - El J Patterson</p> <p>Book Club - 7 p.m. - El J Patterson</p> <p>Book Club - 2 p.m. - El J Patterson</p>	<p>Grinder Pump Committee - 9 a.m. - Council Chambers</p> <p>Homeschooler Drop In - 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Fire in the Bowl: Clare's Chili Cook off - 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. - Clare's Harley Davidson Niagara</p> <p>Harry Potter Book Night - 5:30 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p>	<p>Movie: Harriet - 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>A Brand New Winter Murder Mystery - 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. - Fort George</p>	<p>Reading the Rainbow Storytime - 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Shaw Festival Film Series: The Grizzlies - 3 p.m. - Shaw Festival Theatre</p>

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Hometown Traveller

Prague – If our friends could just see us now



Prague's main train station. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

People from Niagara-on-the-Lake travel to some of the most interesting places on Earth and we'd like to hear about your vacations.

So, if you have ever wanted to be a travel writer, here is your chance. Send us a travelogue story about your vacation, along with some photos.

It's impossible to include everything, but stories ideally should be 250 to 600 words and focus on a unique, quirky or particularly interesting aspect of your trip. It can be about a vacation you have just taken, one you're on now (lucky you!), or a holiday you took a few years ago.

Sometimes, just a picture is worth a thousand words. So, if you aren't able to write a story about your trip, send us two or three snapshots from your holiday and we will try to publish some of them.

In all cases, smartphone photos are perfectly acceptable. Just make sure each digital image you send us is around 1 to 2 MB in size. Include destination information and the names (from left) of everyone in each photo. And tell us who took the photo, if possible.

As a bonus, bring along a copy of The Lake Report and include it in your photo!

Send your stories and photos to editor@niagaranow.com and be sure to write TRAVEL in the subject line.

Happy trails.

Graham McMillan Special to The Lake Report

Welcome to Prague (again).

Well there's travelling and then there's travelling. The former is ticking off the sights, sipping cappuccino at quaint sidewalk cafes, and writing clever emails and postcards to your friends back home designed to inspire envy and jealousy.

The latter is all the above, but with just a touch of reality interspersed.

Take for example, our arrival in the early morning drizzle at the central train station in Prague. Somewhat grumpy from being abruptly awakened at 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. for passport checks and too-early wake-up calls, and still in a semi-coma from a sleep-inducing cold remedy, we staggered down the gangway to the station's cavernous center. There we searched vainly for a friendly agent, a street sign in English, or a helpful passerby. We exchanged a few

Euros into Czech crowns at onerous train station rates, and stumbled out into the mist beyond.

On the phone in our living room back home, the hotel agent had advised me to take the #9 tram, go a few stops, and get off at the Andel station. Couldn't be easier, she assured me. I had duly jotted these details on a small slip of paper. Except for the Andel station bit, which for some reason hadn't seemed that important at the time. After a brief search, we spotted a tram line, and as luck would have it, tram #9 was just pulling up. I kicked and punched my way on board the seriously overcrowded vehicle, with our heavy suitcases in tow. Being a few steps behind me, my wife was still outside as the doors began closing. To her credit, she remained calm, as I issued instructions to her through my pursed lips, which were still protruding outside the closed doors. Ultimately the driver relented and opened

the door just long enough to let her board.

Now with several seconds to make up on its schedule, the tram lurched forward just as I was arranging our suitcases between my legs, flinging me headlong across the laps of the first row of passengers. They appeared very understanding, and muttered kindly words and phrases to me and each other, I think.

Now much the wiser in the ways of trams, I grasped the rail with one hand, steadied our luggage with my feet, and with my free hand began fishing for the hotel directions, by now crumpled into a small ball in an obscure pocket. Triumphant at last, I shared this document with several locals who did their best to ignore me, until one kindly advised me that this particular #9 tram was speeding in the opposite direction from our hotel.

As we tumbled from the tram at the first stop (or were we pushed?), we felt

fortunate indeed. True, we were now standing in a ghetto with tough-looking kids greedily eyeing our luggage. But we had ridden the tram with no ticket and hadn't been apprehended. Furthermore, there was a tobacco agent nearby who could sell us the tickets we needed for the next leg of our journey.

After just twenty minutes standing cheerily in the morning drizzle, another tram clanged toward us, this one hopefully heading in the right direction. It was even more crowded than the first, but casting caution to the winds we leaped on, and began peppering innocent commuters with questions about our hotel's location. This was entirely fruitless, but it did make us feel somehow more in control of our destiny.

For the uninitiated, place names in Prague can be intimidating. The typical tram stop name is an alphabet soup of misplaced consonants and vowels. What

was our stop again? Was it Masarykova Nadrázi? Malostranskí Namesti? Sidliste Cervený Vrch? I grew confused.

At last I noticed a name on a tram stop that I thought looked familiar. We disembarked and stood blinking for a few moments, until someone took the paper from my hand and disappeared into the crowd. When all hope was lost, he somehow miraculously reappeared and explained in hand gestures and broken English that we needed to board another tram to go a dozen stops further to the Andel station.

The next tram was less crowded, and much more high tech, with an LED screen and a computer voice reading out the name of each stop, and the one after that. This brilliant concession to the new world order was apparently only semi-automatic; the duty of updating the screen fell on the unshaven and disheveled tram driver. This

realization dawned on us simultaneously, as I watched "ANDEL" scroll lazily across the screen at the very moment my wife noticed the same word fly past the tram window. The next stop was about a mile and a half, which we sat through in a glum and stony silence. The return trip to the Andel station seemed much longer, given the hostile and recriminating sidelong glances we had begun to exchange with one another.

By now, all that kept us going was the thought of the welcoming hot shower and cozy bed that momentarily awaited us. The hotel clerk was pleasant but firm as she assured us that our reservation was on file, but check-in could not possibly happen before noon. It was now 9:30 a.m.

As we retreated sullenly to opposite corners of the hotel lobby for the remainder of the morning, I thought to myself, "Ah, if our friends could just see us now..."



NOTL: SPECIAL WINTER EDITION

The Lake Report's winter magazine highlights some of the best places and things to do in NOTL.

You can pick up a physical copy at all restaurants, hotels and businesses or you can visit our office at 496 Mississagua St. in Old Town.



NOTL'S CHOICE AWARDS

We want to hear what businesses, organizations and individual professionals are your favourites in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The survey can be completed as many times as needed, so you can nominate as many local businesses as you'd like.

To nominate your favourites, go to LakeReport.ca



PRESS PASS PROGRAM

The Lake Report Press Pass Program gets local residents discounts at a long list of businesses in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Valid for local residents only.

To sign up, visit our office for a card at 496 Mississagua St. in Old Town.

NOTL woman helps Newark Neighbours with goal to support **remote northerners**

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
 The Lake Report

With the help of Newark Neighbours, a Niagara-on-the-Lake resident is making sure donated clothing items aren't wasted and go to the "right places," including remote communities in northern Canada.

Louise Waldie is one of the three administrators of a Facebook page called Clothing for Our Northern Friends.

It started in February 2015 and has more than 5,800 members from Canada's northern and southern communities.

The goal of the group is to provide clothing for people residing in remote or fly-in northern communities in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and northern Quebec.

Members can make posts looking for a specific item or post photos of what they're able to donate. All items are offered for free, however, a person donating clothes can ask to have their



Louise Waldie often comes to Newark Neighbours for clothing that she would then send to northern communities. DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA

shipping costs covered.

"There is a connection made on an individual basis and then people in the south ship it to the people in the north," Waldie said. "It's a one-on-one kind of charity."

"We've learned so much about the culture and how different it really is, the northern culture from southern Canadian culture," she added.

"I hope that anybody who donates something locally recognizes this is not a commercial venture. It's a

really grassroots organization."

Besides Newark Neighbours, Waldie also looks for clothing in other stores or receives them as donations.

Waldie ships about 50 boxes a month. Shipping a box can range from \$18 to \$35, depending on the province or territory.

She has also sent more than 800 packages to about 400 individuals or community groups. Her parcels have been sent to Nunavut, Northwest Territories,

Manitoba, northern Quebec and Ontario. Newark Neighbours has also been helping to cover some of the shipping expenses.

"We found out last year it costs quite a bit to ship the items, so we're also helping her out with some shipping costs once or twice a year," said the organization's chair Laura Gibson.

"The nice thing is we're learning about these wonderful organizations that exist that we wouldn't know about in our community, so I think our donors would feel really good about that organization."

Waldie said she also provides a list of different organizations where people can send their donations, but always advises to contact them first to make sure those agencies are in need – or extra clothing will just end up in a landfill.

"You can be overwhelmed with generosity, so you have to balance everything that you're considering, who the recipient is and what you're doing."

Canopy Growth's **\$5,000** donation will help outreach by Newark Neighbours

Brittany Carter
 The Lake Report



Canopy Growth's director of government and stakeholder relations Sean Webster presented a \$5,000 donation to Newark Neighbours Tuesday. BRITTANY CARTER

Newark Neighbours is looking to expand its work in the community and the organization is now \$5,000 closer to its future aspirations with the help of Canopy Growth Ltd.

Tuesday afternoon Sean Webster, Canopy Growth's director of government and stakeholder relations, presented the donation to the NOTL non-profit as part of the company's charitable initiative, called the Tweed Collective, which invests in local charity organizations.

Laura Gibson, chair of Newark Neighbours' board, said the organization is "incredibly appreciative" of the donation from Canopy, one of Canada's largest cannabis producers.

"We are looking at expanding within our community for those in need, so it'll certainly help us in that area," she said.

Although she said the organization is "lucky

enough" that its thrift shop off John Street does well enough to keep the doors open, donations like Canopy's help the organization give back to the community as well.

Canopy Growth has been in Niagara-on-the-Lake since 2014 and has supported numerous local charities through the Tweed Collective in that time, including Heart and Stroke Big Bike, Community Care's Thanksgiving food drive and Christmas toy drive, Stockings for Seniors and Gillian's Place Women's Shelter.

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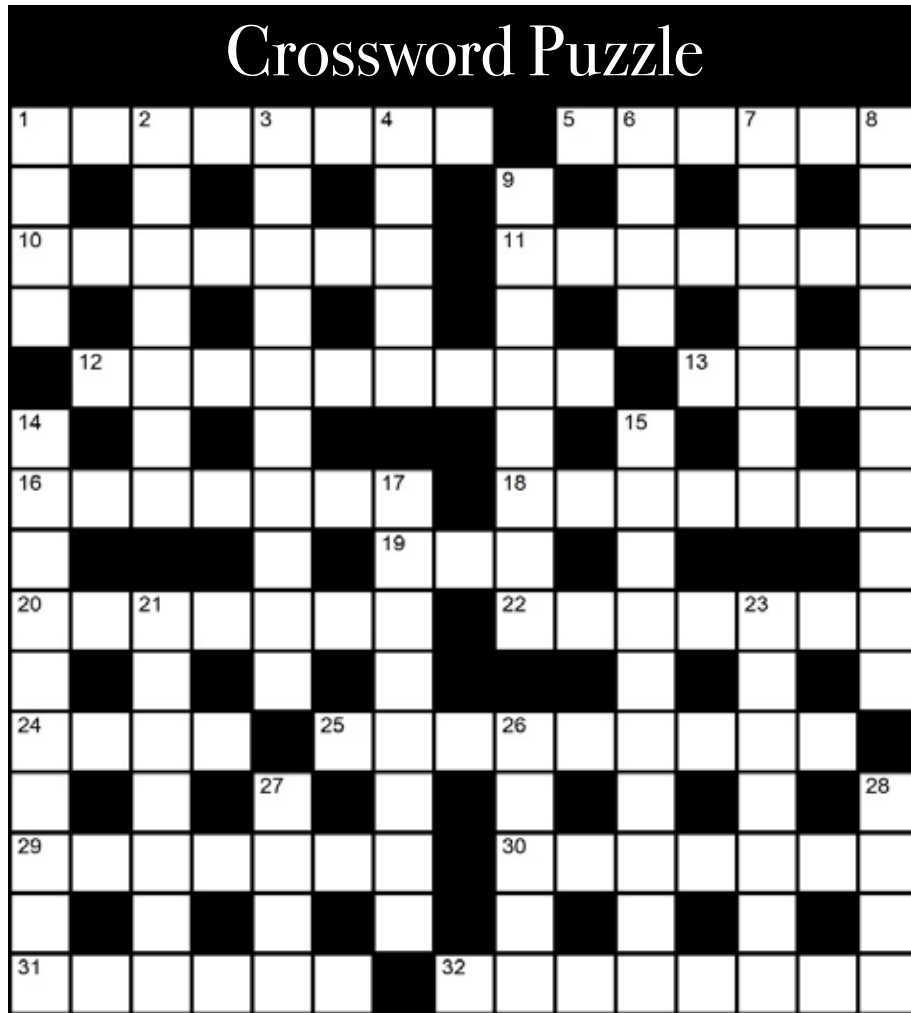
The Lake Report is looking for puzzle makers who would like to help develop this page. We are seeking both standard and cryptic crossword writers. editor@niagaranow.com

Across

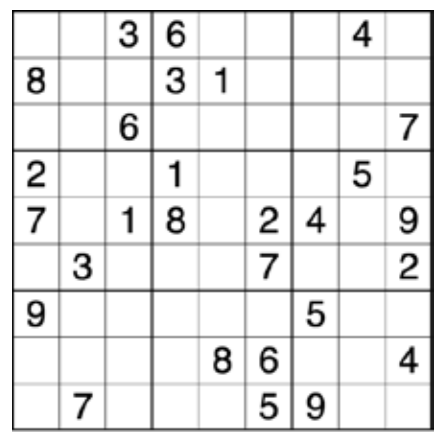
- 1. Injured one (8)
- 5. Mexican vacation destination (6)
- 10. Fencing moves (7)
- 11. Old pals' get-together (7)
- 12. To a small degree (9)
- 13. Blue dye (4)
- 16. Gets back (7)
- 18. Rare plants (7)
- 19. Amusingly ironic (3)
- 20. Generally (2,1,4)
- 22. Quite large (7)
- 24. Grape-skin brandy (4)
- 25. Travel schedule (9)
- 29. Impresario's goal? (4,3)
- 30. Lithuanian capital (7)
- 31. Heavy hammer (6)
- 32. In which Jud Fry dies (8)

Down

- 1. Intersects (4)
- 2. Rising suddenly (7)
- 3. Like a double rainbow, maybe (10)
- 4. Where the Owl and the Pussycat went (2,3)
- 6. Border (4)
- 7. Tuscan wine (7)
- 8. Bewildered about unsold pens (10)
- 9. Hospital conveyances (8)
- 14. Gym machines (10)
- 15. Neopolitan buffalo cheese (10)
- 17. Result of using 14 Down, perhaps (8)
- 21. Place in order (7)
- 23. Tortilla meal (7)
- 26. Kim --, of "Vertigo" (5)
- 27. Poker-like card game (4)
- 28. 30% of the Earth's surface (4)



Last issue's answers



DIABOLICAL



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Wine or water? Police draw flack from NOTL residents for not charging protesters

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

Some Niagara-on-the-Lake residents are criticizing the Niagara Regional Police for not enforcing the law after protesters were seen, accompanied by an underage girl, opening wine bottles and pouring out the contents on the street in front of the Icewine Village Saturday.

Police say they did not charge activists who dumped what appeared to be wine over their own heads, potentially violating Ontario liquor laws, during the Icewine Festival – because the dumped liquid apparently was just coloured water, with zero alcohol content.

Adam Stirr, co-founder of the group called At War for Animals Niagara, said he spoke with local law enforcement before the protest.

“Generally, we communicate with police to ensure the legality of what we have planned.”

He said for this specific demonstration he did inform the police that the group would not be using alcohol during the protest.

Const. Phillip Gavin said in an emailed statement that an investigation was conducted after the demonstration, but he did not provide details on how the investigation was conducted.

“I cannot speak to whether the officers knew or didn’t know about what was in the bottles. All police officers are afforded discretion, which is a key element in policing,” he said.

“Using discretion as to how, when and where an investigation takes place is part of that.”

Gavin confirmed that the liquid from the bottles was not tested forensically.

“We conducted an investigation post-incident



Members of animal rights group At War for Animals Niagara open and pour bottles into the street.
BRITTANY CARTER

... we did not forensically test it. We are satisfied that reasonable grounds do not exist for a charge under the Liquor Licence Act and there would be no reasonable prospect of conviction,” he said.

Many NOTL residents say they’re tired of watching police ignore illegal acts by the protesters, who have been staging events in town for almost two years, and allegedly committed numerous illegal acts in the process, receiving warnings each time from police.

Many people commented on a Facebook post of the article addressing Saturday’s protest.

“Is this proof that liquor laws are broken without recourse. Another blemish on our law enforcement,” Nick Bertoia commented.

A comment from Dorothy Bates on the Lake Report Facebook page called for more action from police and town officials.

“Town officials and the police should not allow these people on the streets. They are the ones that should be banned.”

“My question is how many laws are broken by having alcohol outside of a contained permitted area. Any restaurant would be crucified and fined thousands of dollars for it,” Vinny Bertoia said.

“What this newspaper photo and subsequent vid-

eos are an infraction of the towns special events permit under the Liquor Control Act and can classify as public indecency. So, in all reality every single person caught handling open alcohol outside the permitted boundary,” he added.

Gavin said that not every situation should be addressed immediately, “especially if in the consideration of the attending officer it may cause a further disturbance or cause the situation to unnecessarily escalate.”

He said taking an enforcement and zero tolerance approach would lead to police conflict with either side, “and we would lose much of the co-operation that we have had thus far.”

Stirr said more vigilant police presence on scene would have likely “caused more of a scene” drawing more crowds to the “spectacle.”

It wouldn’t have caused conflict between police enforcement and the activists, he said.

Gavin said the department’s aim is to preserve the rights of Canadians under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms – in this case the right to a livelihood and the right to protest.

“We have strived to find balance between preserving the peace, enforcement and discretion and not causing a situation to unnecessarily escalate,” he said.



From left: Chris Weir, Dave Holt, Corey Fowler, Tim Penner, Ryan Jarret, Vine Rines and Brain Shultz. JESSICA MAXWELL

Referees donate wages, raise \$500 in memory of ‘Mikey’ Labonte

Jessica Maxwell
Special to The Lake Report

All 23 members of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Minor Hockey Referees Association donated their wages from the Michael “Mikey” Labonte memorial hockey game in November and made additional donations, raising a total of \$500.

The money was presented by Tim Penner, head of the NOTL Minor Hockey Referees Association, referees Dave Holt, Brain Shultz, Chris Weir and Corey Fowler to Mikey’s former head coach Vince Rines. The money will go to Ronald McDonald House Charities.

“We appreciate the referees chipping in so unexpectedly. It’s a big bonus to the charity and we thank them for that and supporting us,” said Rines.

“This is something that I felt was important to the team. An opportunity to be with Mikey during the summer when he was going through his battle (with cancer) and also to be there, not only at the end, but also through the season to understand how important he was and how important it is to give back to the people that helped him and his family out during this time.”

Did you know?

The Lake Report’s printer sources 100 per cent of its paper fibre from industry leading paper mills, which use quick-growth, sustainable, renewable plots of land, rather than clear-cutting forests.

The ink is also vegetable-based.

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Card of thanks

Jean Baker and family wish to express their sincere thanks to relatives, friends and neighbours who sent lovely flowers, cards and expressions of sympathy to comfort them in their sad and tragic loss of a devoted husband and cherished father.

Special thanks are due to Father William Roberts of St. Mark’s Church and Dr. William Brown and to all who assisted with the funeral arrangements, acting as Pallbearers, provided music at the service under the able direction of James Bourne and to my former fellow choristers. Together you gave Peter a memorable send off. Sincere thanks to the ladies of the church who provided refreshments.

Underneath are the everlasting arms.

Jean Baker

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FEATURED

NOTL Writers' Circle **Dids' story:** Chasing a German warship

This is the second of three parts.

Richard West
NOTL Writers' Circle

There were six children in our family. I was the youngest, 10 years younger than my brother Dick. Being the youngest, I had been looked after a good deal by my siblings.

When I was five, my father died of tuberculosis, soon followed, by my eldest sister, Eugenie. The family had lived in Peckham, in southeast London, in two rented rooms, no cooking facilities, a gaslight and

little heating. A perfect incubator for disease!

After the First World War, the government built Council House Estates around London. Our family was lucky. We moved into a small house in Downham, in S.E. London. It was too small for the family, but much better than two rooms in Peckham. I was born and grew up in Downham.

By the time the Second World War broke out, I was living with my mother, while my remaining siblings were married. Even though the Downham Estate was away from London itself, we still experienced bomb-

ing, forcing us into air raid shelters at night.

It was from this suburban life that I was catapulted into the Senior Service. Like so many others, I knew nothing of ships, the sea, or war. What I did know, was how to be happy and content. I achieved that with a smile and a chuckle. But what had puzzled me, and my family, was why the Royal Navy would want a sailor who could neither swim, read or write?

In December 1943, the HMS Virago was part

of a convoy's destroyer screen when the German capital ship Scharnhorst ventured out from northern Norway. Two convoys were in the vicinity: ours, returning from Russia, and an outgoing convoy.

A Royal Navy task force was in the area, acting as cover for the convoys. Scharnhorst was located and cruisers attacked her. During this brief fight, Scharnhorst's radar was disabled. There followed a cat-and-mouse search, as the Scharnhorst lost the cruisers in the dark, heavy seas.

Our destroyer group

was detached from the convoy to act as additional escorts for the battleship, Duke of York. We pounded through the heavy seas as fast as possible, without endangering the ships. The Duke of York located the Scharnhorst and opened fire, guided entirely by her radar. The slugging match went on for a considerable time, until the injured Scharnhorst broke away at high speed.

She was located again. Shells from the Duke of York caused further damage. One shell penetrated the Scharnhorst's armour and exploded in the engine

room.

Losing speed, Scharnhorst turned and fought, what all knew would be her final fight.

Badly damaged, but still firing any remaining operating guns, she was attacked with torpedoes. We were in the final attack group, racing toward our quarry with all guns blazing. The noise was terrifying, especially down in the locked engine room, with all the screaming machinery.

Torpedo hits caused the Scharnhorst to capsize under the black sky, and sink in the freezing sea.

To be continued.

COOKING WITH COLLIN

Grandma inspired love of pickled beets



Pickled beets. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Collin Goodine
Special to The Lake Report

As a child growing up in a French-Canadian home, with my parents originally from the east coast, Grandma's pickled beets were on the kitchen counter or dinner table all the time it seemed.

I have been unable to retrieve my grandmother's pickled beets recipe or to recreate it, but this is a very simple yet good one that will allow you to enjoy pickled beets at your dinner table all year round.

Pickled Beets

Ingredients:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2 bay leaves | 1 cup sugar |
| Pinch peppercorns | 1/2 cup kosher salt |
| 1 litre red wine vinegar | 4 medium-sized purple beets |
| 3/4 litre water | |

Directions:

Place pickling liquid (bay leaves, peppercorns, vinegar, water, sugar, salt) into a pot. Heat the mixture until boiled, stir until the sugar is dissolved.

Prepare the brine or pickling liquid ahead and have in the fridge for a rainy day.

When it comes time to pickle, peel and dice the beets. Cook the beets in salted, boiling water until fork tender.

Strain the beets in a colander and set aside in a Tupperware container or mason jar.

Heat the pickling liquid and pour over the beets. Make sure the beets are covered with the warm liquid.

Put the lid onto the container when the beets have cooled and place in fridge.

Enjoy these beets as a side dish on the holiday table or with a cheese board with friends.

STAY FIT NOTL



Jaclyn Willms showing a runners lunge stretch. STAY FIT NOTL

Five stretches to reverse effect of sitting

Jaclyn Willms
Special to The Lake Report

Our culture invites you to take a seat ... and we are inviting you to stand!

Prolonged sitting can be dangerous and associated with an increased risk of heart disease, diabetes, obesity, depression and joint and muscle pain.

The #1 way to avoid these risks are to stand more!

If standing more isn't possible because of a long

commute or desk job then be mindful to get up as much as possible to keep your body moving and feeling alive.

Even working out before or after your work day may not compensate for extended sitting.

In an eight hour work day try to take at least two walking or movement breaks to avoid the effects of prolonged sitting.


Here are five stretches to help you loosen up your muscles and joints that

get tight and tense due to sitting.

1. Runners Lunge
2. Doorway Chest Stretch
3. Figure 4 glute stretch
4. Child's Pose to Cobra stretch
5. Foam Roll your upper back (if you have access to a foam roller)

Perform all stretches for about one minute.

For videos on how to perform these stretches correctly visit @niagarafit on instagram.



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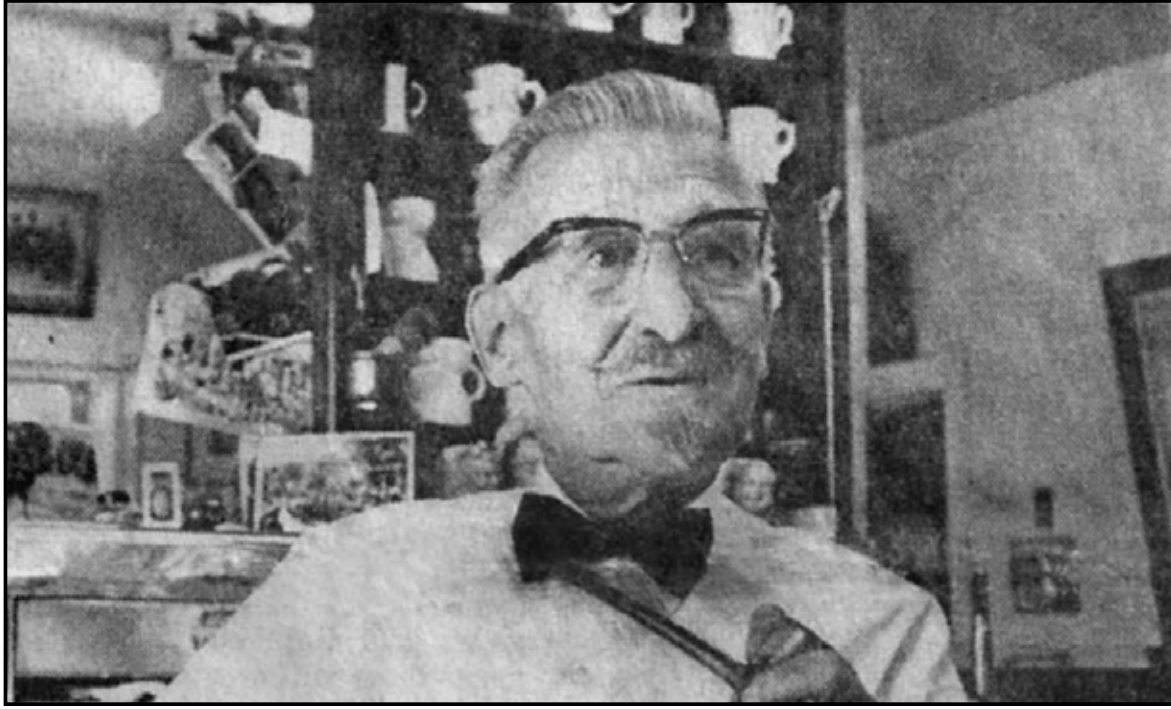
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EXPLORING PHOTOS

WITH JIM SMITH



Fred Curtis

Fred Curtis ran his barber shop on Queen Street for more than 50 years. When Fred started cutting hair in 1927 there were four barbers on Queen Street. One of those four was my great grandfather, Charles Smith. In 1939, Mr. Curtis bought 9 Queen St., which is next door to the present Exchange Brewery. He ran his shop there and lived upstairs with his wife Gene, where they raised two daughters. Fred was also a Boy Scout leader and an avid birdwatcher and photographer. I saw him trek across the Commons on snowshoes with his long-lens camera mounted on a rifle stock for stability to photograph birds.

SUPPLIED PHOTO/JIM SMITH

ARCHITEXT

Considering a reno?

Brian Marshall
Featured

Several times in the past few weeks I am asked for advice concerning the best approach to a renovation.

While multiple television renovation shows have focused on raising our level of concern that any renovation be done correctly, actual guides to successfully managing the process remain scarce. So, if you're considering undertaking a reno, where do you start and how is it managed?

It begins by understanding you are about to embark on an undertaking that will require at least one, and very likely multiple, business transactions.



What is the best way to approach a renovation? SUPPLIED

As such, it is important from the onset that the approach adopted should be the same as that used by a commercial project manager. This always starts with a clear, written definition of the problem to be solved.

As an example, let's say you are thinking about a kitchen renovation. Is your motivation rooted in aesthetics or function or both? An "up-date" is clearly a more straightforward project than the redesign/rebuilding of the entire kitchen and sometimes a

functional problem can be quite simply fixed.

However, while the question itself may seem simple, understanding the real root cause(s) of your motivation to renovate, often takes a bit of research. This is key, because bluntly, there's nothing worse than discovering your brand new kitchen doesn't address all the issues you had with the old one.

When contemplating any renovation, my advice is that you commit to keeping a diary for at least a month. As you move through each

day, when something bugs you, make a note of it in the diary.

At the end of the month correlate your entries. Generally, you will find that these notations produce a pattern from which you can both identify the issues and also prioritize their importance in the context of your lifestyle.

Keep in mind that not all budgets are large enough to fix every one of the issues, so making sure the "biggies" are addressed becomes very important.

Now, with the problem defined and the issues prioritized, it's time to set some parameters on the project's scope.

Answers to questions such as: "What is the total budget for the project?" and "How much disruption in your lifestyle can you stand and for how long?" form the basis for developing a scope-of-work. And that is the topic of next week's column.

The Lake Report

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The Lake Report encourages readers to support the businesses that advertise with us. **These businesses allow us to operate and keep the paper free and independent.**

When you're looking for a service or product, check The Lake Report and support someone who lives in your hometown. There are plenty of great businesses inside to choose from — **don't forget to mention you saw them in The Lake Report!**

The Lake Report would also like to acknowledge and thank those who have made financial contributions to the paper. **Your donations and contributions help support young, local journalists, as well as student interns, local charities, and so much more.**

We encourage all residents to support The Lake Report through an annual "voluntary" subscription. We suggest just \$50/year (less than \$1 per issue) per household. **That's less than most people spend on coffee.**

Larger donations are also greatly appreciated.

Donations can be made online at www.lakereport.ca, or cheques can be mailed to the NOTL Post Office, L0S1J0, PO Box 724.

Please make cheques payable to The Lake Report.

- Richard Harley

The Lake Report

FACTS

The Lake Report recently conducted a readership survey, and sent information on how to participate to every farm, residence and apartment in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

More than 80% of people surveyed chose The Lake Report as their preferred choice for local news and information.

SOURCE: TLR Readership Survey; October 2019

Did you know?

The Lake Report's printer sources 100 per cent of its paper fibre from industry leading paper mills, which use quick-growth, sustainable, renewable plots of land, rather than clear-cutting forests.

The ink is also vegetable-based.



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NIAGARA'S HISTORY UNVEILED

The roots of NOTL's Legion



Gen. Charles M. Nelles was the first president of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124. BRITTANY CARTER



Denise Ascenzo
Exclusive/The Lake Report

This is the first of two parts

It was November 25, 1925, that the Royal Canadian Legion was founded by veterans of the First World War who pushed for a national organization. The purpose of such an organization was to preserve and honour the memory of all who served in the Canadian Forces.

Prior to the establishment of the Legion, there were various service clubs that had been established by veterans throughout many communities. By 1926, many of these veterans' groups started to amalgamate and become

part of the Royal Canadian Legion.

In 1928, the Niagara Veterans Association here in NOTL joined the new national organization and was called Branch 124 of the Royal Canadian Legion.

On April 26, 1928, the first meeting of Branch 124 was held in the Masonic Hall on King Street. Thirty-one First World War veterans were in attendance. An election was held and the first president of Branch 124 was Gen. Charles M. Nelles. The first elected committee were; A.J. McClellan – first vice-president; Dr. A.B. Greenwood – second vice-president; D.A.R. Rodgers – secretary/treasurer; E.W. Field, R.L. Griffith and I. Lavell – executive members.

Membership of Branch 124 followed the national standards which included the following: all people who had served in the Canadian military; RCMP; provincial and municipal

police forces; Royal Canadian Army, air and sea cadets; and direct relatives of veterans.

During the first year of Branch 124 new members were recruited and all veterans who served in the military prior to 1885 were made honorary members. In later years, "social members" were accepted if three active members sponsored them and a two-thirds majority vote by members was given. The social membership cost \$5 per year, while a regular membership cost \$2 annually.

The Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE) soon became affiliated with the different legions and that included the branch here in Niagara. Women had also served during the First World War and were permitted to join the legion but were not allowed to participate in any bar activities.

The IODE was first

established in Fredericton, N.B., in 1900. Its prime purpose was to support Canadian Forces departing Canada to fight with the Empire Forces in South Africa.

The IODE would raise funds, clothing and food to be sent over to Canadian soldiers. One such fundraiser was their "Rose Day," where small paper roses were sold to support veterans and children of veterans. In 1901, the headquarters for the IODE was moved to Toronto.

As the Royal Canadian Legion evolved, so too did the working relationship between the Legion and the IODE. Eventually the two worked together with the most successful fundraising campaign being the poppy sales.

It was the Great War Veterans Association in Canada that adopted the poppy as a symbol of remembrance on July 5, 1924. And much like the Rose Day funds, poppy

sales went to assist veterans and their families.

By 1928, Branch 124 and the local IODE had co-ordinated their efforts with the sale of poppies. Proceeds from poppy sales even to this day go to the local legions to support veterans and outreach programs in the community.

The branch was growing and needed more permanent quarters. The first year saw meetings held in the Masonic Hall and even the mayor's office. But it was time to find new quarters. In 1930, Branch 124 rented the Curtis House at 175 Victoria St. This new place facilitated the Legion meetings and even a few social gatherings.

On Nov. 11, 1930, at 11 a.m. the first memorial service was held at the cenotaph in town (A.K.A. the clock tower). In past years many memorial services were held at different times of the year, depending on the community.

However, in 1931,

through the efforts of the Royal Canadian Legion and with the support of the branches, the Canadian government set aside Nov. 11 at 11 a.m. as the official day and time of remembrance of all war veterans.

Branch 124 here in Niagara-on-the-Lake organizes the remembrance celebrations. Wreaths are purchased and guests are invited.

The 809 Newark Air Cadets Squadron (of Virgil) are in attendance; the lord mayor, town councillors, representation from the local police force and fire departments, Legion members, veterans and the public are all invited to attend. It's a tradition that has carried on for eight decades now.

Part two: The NOTL Legion in modern times.

More Niagara's History Unveiled articles about the past of Niagara-on-the-Lake are available at: www.niagaranow.com



COMMUNITY



We invite you to submit photos and stories for consideration in this section. Send your submissions to editor@niagaranow.com for a chance to be featured.



Community photos



The 23 soccer balls, which were collected in the fall and brought to Jamaica by local farm worker Prophet Elisha Steele, have been delivered into thankful hands. The balls were purchased from the excess money raised for a cricket mat for the farm worker's cricket team. Steele has been collecting soccer balls and bringing them back home with him for 20 years. The sight of children kicking around pop cans and bottles inspired his efforts to bring supplies home for the students, he said in an interview this fall. SUPPLIED



THE GOLDEN PLUNGER

With Betty and Jane

Ferox Winery



Simon Hacker accepts the award for Ferox. THE GOLDEN PLUNGER

We'd had our eye on Ferox Winery. Familiar with Rancourt winery we were curious to see what to expect. It did not disappoint. The washroom is located off the small tasting room. Convenient and accessible it was well appointed. A favourite was the well-designed toilet tissue holder. A very non complicated slip on design is preferable to the complicated mechanical triggered holders. No one wants to be in need while the holder requires special instructions to remove the empty roll. After a tasting of Dornfelder Icewine, a rare grape in Niagara, we declared our loyalty. It was fabulous and we became fans. Fans of the icewine and the bathroom. We had a great visit and Ferox earned itself 3.5 Golden Plungers.

3.5/5 Golden Plungers



NOTL DART LEAGUE

Each week, dart teams face off at local restaurants and pubs. Find scores here weekly, exclusive to The Lake Report.

Jini	131
Legion Guzzlers	115
Close Shavians	108
Legion Guyz	100
Legion Airs	97
SandTrap	91
Silks Legends	86
Legion Dartbags	52



Tarot of the week

Lisa Tache/Special

DATE: Jan. 23, 2020

The Two of Pentacles is all about balancing and juggling different jobs, relationships and rolls simultaneously. How

do we find enough hours in a day and also have time for rest and re-charge? There are so many choices and obligations. This card invites you to manage your priorities and your time carefully so you can maintain balance. Be cautious about overbooking yourself. You need to prioritize or you'll end up missing important deadlines, meetings and other obligations. The Two of Pentacles is a card of coping. It calls your attention to the concept of balance, being patient, flexible and adaptable as you try to juggle your responsibilities with your family, friends, work, finances, health and new challenges. Be prepared for last minute plan changes. Use the time you do have wisely!

ASK YOURSELF THIS

What two area of life are you juggling effectively?

RIDDLE ME THIS

Different lights do make me strange, thus into different sizes I will change. What am I?

Last Week: I'm a common English verb. I become my own past tense by rearranging my letters. What am I?

Answer: Eat (becomes ate)

Answered first by: Megan Vanderlee

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Quinn Tiller, Margie Enns, Chuck Jackson, Pam Downing, Sadie Wilms, Britiney Turasz, Katie Reimer, Sheila Meloche, Ross Robinson, Thom Stoneman, Ross Midgley, Margaret Garaugthy

Email answers to editor@niagaranow.com for a chance to win a prize.



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FEATURED LOCAL STORY

Draining the canal for the icy season

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

Where did all the water go?

Draining the 43-kilometre Welland Canal is an annual process that is essential for winter maintenance and to inspect the canal's infrastructure.

Staff of the non-profit St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corp., including mechanical supervisor Alan Noble, tech co-ordinator-HV power Joel Minor and maintenance manager Jim Wheeler, took The Lake Report on a tour last week to explain behind-the-scenes work when the canal closes for the shipping season.

The canal typically closes by Dec. 31 but, as part of a pilot program the season was extended to allow the canal to run for an extra week. Closer to the end of December, the ice starts to form on the Great Lakes and it ends up in the canal. Thanks to warmer weather this year, the experiment was deemed successful, Wheeler said.

"If we do have ice on the lock and we drain, we have to go slower because all of that ice just drops down, so you have to be careful," Noble added.

"And you have to flush down the ice at the same time as you're draining. This is the perfect year to do it: there's no ice, it's warm, no issues, all equipment is working. It's fantastic, perfect conditions."

Part of the St. Lawrence Seaway and Great Lakes Waterway, the canal is used by ships to bypass Niagara Falls.

The canal is 9.1 metres deep over the sill and 8.2 metres deep in channels. There are eight locks connecting the canal from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario.

Each of seven lifts locks has an average lift of 14.2 metres, while Lock 8 at

Lake Erie is a control lock with a shallow lift ranging from 0.3 to 1.2 metres. The locks, from breast wall to gate fender, are 24.4 metres wide and 233.5 metres long.

Some of the biggest repair work taking place now includes major maintenance at the valves, gates and flight locks.

Another major job will be replacing sliding walls that ships rub along to direct themselves into the lock. The \$12-million project is scheduled to start this year but due to how big the project is, it will be completed over two years, Wheeler said.

"Throughout the year we just maintain all that stuff. During navigation, we have maintenance programs set up ... to make sure everything keeps running the way it was supposed to run," Noble said.

If a piece of equipment stops working during the navigation season and if it can't be repaired, it will be shut down and isolated until winter maintenance begins, he added.

The not-so-big "medium" jobs involve redoing slider pads as well as gates' and valves' rehabilitation. One previous big project also included replacing tie-up walls and implementing hands-free mooring units that suck on to the ship and allow it to securely pass the canal from one lock to another, without requiring staff to manually tie them up.

"Now, 90 to 95 per cent of our ships use hands-free mooring, so it is very eerie. You can come in and the ships are going through and there isn't a single person on the lock," Wheeler said. "Everything is operated remotely."

The decommissioning process starts after the last ship, which is usually a Coast Guard boat that lands and secures buoys, enters

the canal. The dewatering team then follows the ship either upbound to Lake Erie or downbound heading to Lake Ontario and starts draining behind the ship. As the vessel leaves each lock, the valves and gates at that lock are then electrically shut off.

"Everything from here just goes down to Lake Ontario," said Noble.

The canal is drained from Lock 7 up to Lock 1 at Lakeshore Road. The channel, from Lock 7 leading up to Lock 8 at Lake Erie, doesn't have any operating equipment, so that portion isn't drained, said Wheeler. The city of St. Catharines and Ontario Power Generation also draw some water off from the channel.

This year, there were two ships travelling in opposite directions along the canal, so the team waited until the last ship crossed Lock 7 before starting the process, said Noble.

There are large waterways between certain locks that are called a "reach." The reaches act as a buffer to allow the water in the canal to raise and lower ships.

These reaches are drained through the locks at the end of navigation season and then filled again when the shipping season starts again in March.

The ideal rate of draining is two and a half to three inches per hour. If the water is lowered faster, it may cause channel banks to slide or collapse. A fast drainage can also create an air bubble that will reach the charge valves, about 24 metres down, which will then come all the way up the valve house, create blowback and move the steel roof weighing from six to eight tonnes.

It's been decided to leave water in reach 2 between the Carlton and Queenston bridges this time around because there's not a lot of work going on in this area



The St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation's maintenance manager Jim Wheeler explains the draining process of the Welland Canal. DARIYA BAIGUZHIYEVA

and it will be used to generate power, said Noble.

The funding for major projects, ranging from \$30 million to \$50 million, comes from Transport Canada. The budget for smaller jobs, about \$5.2 million, comes from tolls that the St. Lawrence Seaway Corp. collects from ships, Wheeler told The Lake Report.

"It's based on a five-year plan, so some years we'll spend more, some years we'll spend less," he said. "But it has to equal the total we're allowed to spend over five years."

It takes only two people (Noble and Minor) to oversee the massive draining process, thanks to the equipment modernization and upgrades.

"We used to do it with five or six people, but you also need to have people at the locks to do water watches to make sure the water is going down," Noble explained. "Now, we have remote sensors and you're able to calibrate a lot finer. So, once you set it up, it's good to go."

The rewatering process – refilling the canal for the shipping season – starts at Lock 7 in March and takes about three days.

"With filling, you got to be a more precise and when we're filling since there are such major works happening at the locks, some of it gets behind schedule and you have to work around their schedule," Noble said.

The shipping season is usually celebrated by the captain of the first ship



The canal's dewatering allows to inspect and repair the canal's infrastructure that is usually inaccessible during a navigation season. **More photos at niagaranow.com** DARIYA BAIGUZHIYEVA

to enter the canal receiving a top hat.

It is "a rare occurrence" a vehicle or a body are found in the canal, but these situations do happen during draining, said Alvina Ghirardi, manager of regional services and marine facilities for the seaway corporation.

"A primary reason is that many years ago vehicles were able to freely access tie-up walls and, for example, stolen vehicles would be found during draining the canal," she said in an email.

"Since then, tie-up walls have been fenced and access is restricted. This has

eliminated those draining discoveries."

If a vehicle ends up in the canal, seaway authorities are always involved in its removal, providing safe entry into water and land to Niagara Regional Police and towing companies. Police divers are also involved to identify the vehicle or to recover a body, Ghirardi said.

Just this week, a vehicle landed in the canal in St. Catharines. Police said it was carrying six people when it hit a tree and ended up in the drained canal.

The vehicle was a write-off, police said.



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