



Chautauqua at risk of being hollowed out by short-term rentals, council told

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

In the small neighbourhood of Chautauqua, residents are worried their community is being hollowed out by the growth of short-term rentals, the head of a community association says.

Short-term rentals are “placing in jeopardy the critical balance between residents and visitors that has allowed us to maintain our amazing community while

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Closed Virgil ‘learning pod’ works with ministry to reopen as private school

Evan Saunders
Richard Harley
The Lake Report

The Niagara Alternative Learning Alliance will be restarting operations in the old Virgil school on Four Mile Creek Road after taking steps to become a registered private school with the Ministry of Education.

The private school will begin operation on April 4, co-founder Monica McCourt said in an interview Wednesday.

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A march for seasonal workers’ rights

Farmworkers pay taxes, EI and CPP but aren’t eligible for most benefits, protesters say



Advocates, residents and migrant workers march in front of NOTL’s town hall to call for permanent residency for all seasonal workers. EVAN SAUNDERS

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The sounds of chants, drums and marching feet echoed around Virgil on Sunday afternoon as people gathered to protest grow-

ing concerns about racism in Canada and to demand citizenship for migrant farm workers.

“The reality is that, in Canada, we are living in a two-tier society,” Kit Andres, a march organizer with the Migrant Workers

Alliance for Change, said in an interview outside Niagara-on-the-Lake’s town hall.

“People have more or less rights depending on their immigration status. There’s 1.6 million people in Canada who don’t have permanent status,” she said.

That means one in 23 people in Canada do not have access to the same privileges a citizen does, such as universal health care, even if they work and spend most of their lives in the country, like many of NOTL’s migrant workers do, she said.

Andres said the temporary work programs and difficult paths to citizenship offered by Canada are not enough.

“When workers and refugees and migrants and undocumented people have

Continued on Page 4

New winery owner is honouring the Lailey legacy

Jill Troyer
The Lake Report

Lailey Winery on the Niagara Parkway has a new owner – and founders Dave and Donna Lailey say they’re “thrilled.”

Faik Turkmen, who bought the property in October, exudes a contagious sense of joyful wonder, along with a deep

respect, for the vines, the soil and the climate that nourish them.

Lailey was one of the earliest vineyards in Niagara-on-the-Lake and until the family sold it in 2015 it produced and was renowned for a range of fine table wines.

The new owners focused instead on high volume sales of icewine and large

group tours, from 2015 until 2021.

Turkmen’s purchase of the property portends a return to its roots.

“We are going to forget the last few years happened,” he says. “I’m not interested in continuing with the bus traffic. We are a small winery, just 21 acres.

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Faik Turkmen now owns Lailey Winery. DON REYNOLDS



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NOTL RETURN OF THE FESTIVALS



Left: Julie Hunter and Natalie Dick sell strawberries at the 2019 Strawberry Festival. Right: St. Mark's famous cherry jam is back this year. RICHARD HARLEY/FILES

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

It's the year of the return of the festivals and Niagara-on-the-Lake organizations are gearing up to bring them back with a splash.

The Lake Report has confirmed this year's Virgil Stampede and fruit festivals are a go. The Kinsmen Show and Shine car show and barbecue also will be back, as well as the Festival Market at Grace United Church and two major events by the NOTL Museum.

The Stampede strikes back

The Virgil Stampede is the first on the roster, on the May 24 long weekend.

Things will be a little different this year, said Richard Wall, president of the Virgil Business Association, which hosts the fair.

Indoor activities like the nickel sale and model planes will be postponed this year, just to be safe in case there are additional pandemic restrictions that come forward, he said.

Some other activities like the miniature horse show won't be happening simply because of time constraints.

But the main attractions will remain the same he said, with midway rides,

food stands and the Monday fireworks show.

Wall said he "sensed a lot of excitement" for the stampede at the association's first in-person meeting in two years.

He said he imagines a lot of people are looking forward to getting back out and suspects it could make for a "really exceptional year" for the fair.

He said the goal is to keep the costs low for families, too, and not raise prices.

A new hope for fruit fests

The Strawberry Festival is the first of the fruit festivals and is planned for June 18 at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.

Julie Hunter, chair of the festival, said it's exciting to be getting back to the tradition.

While things still need to be "fine tuned," most of the highlights of the festival should be there this year, including the strawberry sale, book sale, strawberry crepes and barbecue.

The church might scale back the live entertainment this year and there was no time to prepare the popular meat pies in time for the sale, since church members were unable to meet indoors to cook them over the winter.

"I can't wait. I think it's gonna be a fantastic year."

NICOLE CRIPPS
NOTL CHAMBER
DIRECTOR OF EVENTS, MARKETING

Up next is the Cherry Festival on July 9, hosted by St. Mark's Anglican Church. Andrea Douglas, a warden of St. Mark's, said everyone is looking forward to getting back to the annual celebration.

The church had been watching closely to see if provincial and diocese limitations on events would be eased and now that they have, it's "full speed ahead," she said.

"The entire parish is excited and happy to be able to hold the Cherry Festival again, after a two-year absence. It's not only a big event for our church community, but for the larger community," Douglas said.

Personally, she said, it's "a feeling of relief and happiness that some things that I found personally very fulfilling and rewarding and that other people enjoyed so much can resume."

The festival will be similar to previous years, with a jewelry sale and barbecue. The popular cherry pies and cherry jams will also return.

Anyone interested in donating to the jewelry sale

can contact the church to drop off donations.

The Peach Festival is the third major fruit harvest celebration, with plans for the festival to go ahead on Saturday, Aug. 13.

The festival is typically a two-day celebration, with the first day operated by the NOTL Chamber of Commerce and the second day hosted by St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church.

Nicole Cripps, the chamber's events manager, said the chamber portion of the event will see a return of festival favourites that take over Queen Street for a day.

"I can't wait," Cripps said. "I think it's going to be a fantastic year. I've already booked the Toronto All-Star Big Band for it, so they're looking forward to returning and I know the farmers will be looking forward to coming out on the street and selling their peaches."

She said the chamber would be keeping an eye on government restrictions on gatherings, but she is hopeful the event will run as planned.

She noted the popular Shades of Summer dinner is scheduled for the following day and that tickets for it likely will go on sale in June.

St. Vincent de Paul church officials did not answer the phone or respond to emails about its peach event.

The rise of the car show

The Kinsmen Show and Shine car show is planned for Aug. 14, said past-president Ken Slingerland.

The show typically takes over a portion of the Commons near the Kinsmen hall for two days, as NOTLers cruise over to show off their vehicles, new and old.

The museum awakens

The NOTL Museum is planning a whole bunch of events this year, with its two major festivals being the "Past is Present Heritage Festival" on Aug. 1 and the return of Niagara Polo on Sept. 10.

The Heritage Festival will feature historical interpreters and demonstrators, treasures and ephemera sales, free admission to the museum, kids programming and food, said Sarah Kaufman, managing director of the museum.

Niagara Polo will include polo games on the Commons, food and vendors, the popular divot stomp and entertainment, Kaufman said.

The museum's popular "Tiny Museum" mobile exhibit will also be at both events, she said.

"We are really looking forward to hosting events again this year. The Heritage

Festival was full of visitors last year and I suspect it will be the same, if not more, this year as everyone is becoming more comfortable with socializing in public," Kaufman said.

"We have missed Niagara Polo for a few years now and we know how much the community enjoys seeing the polo matches in their community," she said.

"We can't wait to get out and enjoy a day on the Commons with friends and marvel at the strength and skills of our four-legged friends."

Grace: A church sale story

The Grace United Church Festival Market is also planned to return Sept. 3, said church member and event organizer John Sayers.

"As we stand firmly in mid-air with COVID risks still unpredictable, from this distance it looks as though we will have a festival on Labour Day," he said.

A big part of the festival is the book sale and jam sale.

Sayers said the church has already had two personal libraries donated and members David Greaves and Heinz Probst "have been working on crafting jars of heavenly (so to speak) jams, jellies, marmalades and sauces since the last sale."



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Chautauqua group fears short-term rentals will 'hollow out' close-knit neighbourhood

Continued from Front Page

at the same time affording visitors with a great experience," Brian Crow, president of the Chautauqua Residents Association, told councillors during Monday's committee of the whole meeting.

The growth of un-hosted short-term rentals has left some Chautauqua homes barren during the off-season and deprives Chautauqua of permanent residents, he said.

According to maps from the Niagara Region, there are about 250 residential homes in Chautauqua. Data compiled by The Lake Report shows roughly 25 short-term rentals in the neighbourhood.

Only one of these rentals is a bed and breakfast, the others are cottage rentals and villas. This means nearly 10 per cent of Chautauqua's homes are not anyone's home at all.

"We don't like driving around seeing empty homes all winter. We like to see kids, we like to see the families coming to the parks," he said.

"We have a barbecue in September of every summer. We have games for the kids. If we don't have residents, we don't have that barbecue. If we don't have residents, we don't have a community that looks after each other."

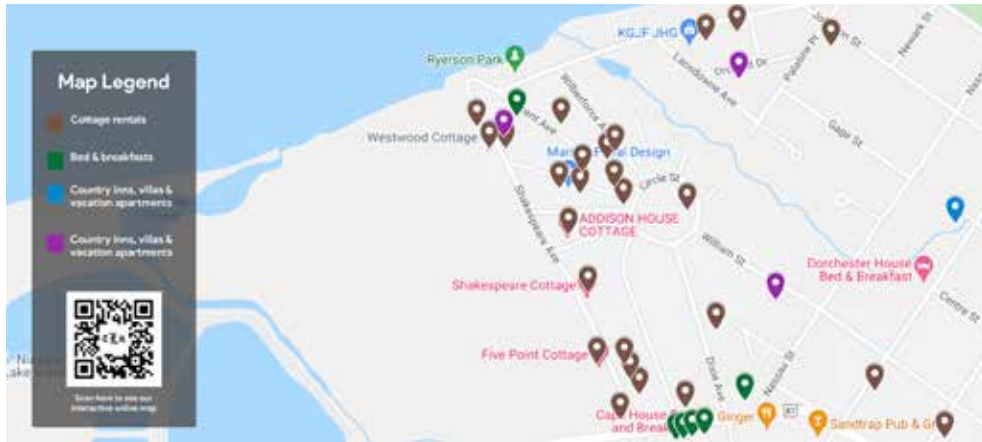
That sense of community is what makes Chautauqua a special neighbourhood, he said.

"There is no question we are experiencing a hollowing out process due to the number of non-owner-occupied short-term rentals operating in our neighbourhood."

"Chautauqua is a very unique residential community," Crow said.

"It is a close and mutually supportive group of people who deeply care about the well-being of their environment, their neighbourhood and each other."

He listed several examples of Chautauquan's drive to help each other. He noted the community rallying behind the Tribe and Sherlock family when Shane Sherlock died in February.



This map shows the number of short-term rentals in the Chautauqua neighbourhood. Based on available data from the Niagara Region, there are roughly 250 homes in Chautauqua, nearly 10 per cent are villas or cottage rentals which have no permanent residents. GRAPHIC BY EVAN SAUNDERS/RICHARD HARLEY

He said residents have recently been assisting a neighbour with errands while she is incapacitated and have been shovelling snow for one woman who broke her foot.

"In short, councillors, residents demonstrate that we care every day."

Crow said he does not consider hosted rentals, conventional bed and breakfasts, within the realm of "short-term rentals" as they provide permanent housing for a resident.

Among Crow's requests of council was that un-hosted rentals be treated as commercial enterprises and face the same tax regime.

"A short-term rental recently listed for sale stated that the annual short-term rental revenue was \$100,000," Crow said.

"That is clearly a commercial operation."

Coun. Norm Arseneault pressed Crow as to why a short-term rental should be considered a commercial business but not, for example, a hairdresser who works out of their home.

"Residential realty taxes are for where the house is used as a residence," Crow replied, noting the residents association was drawing a clear line in the sand between hosted and un-hosted short-term rentals.

A hairdresser operating out of their own home would be akin to a bed and breakfast operator, who lives in the house they also rent.

Crow acknowledged that charging commercial taxes to a residentially zoned property might not be

legally feasible and recommended an alternative route for council.

"The town does have the power to license and charge fees. The town could set the annual fee on non-owner-operated short-term rentals at the equivalent between the difference between commercial and residential realty tax," he said.

Crow asked the town to designate a formula that calculates the maximum number of short-term rentals allowed in a community based on housing density, a recommendation also put forth by the town's own short-term rental committee last July.

Coun. Gary Burroughs, a member of that committee, noted the town needs to catch up with residents on the short-term rental issue.

"The press are having a full debate about short-term rentals every week now and we haven't even looked at our report that came from the committee (in July 2021)," he said.

Burroughs said the town should not be waiting so long to deal with an issue at the front of public discourse.

"The residents are not waiting. They're all making their opinions," he said. "We need to move on this."

Chief administrative officer Marnie Cluckie said a report on the short-term rental committee's recommendations is due to come before council either next week or during April.

Coun. Erwin Wiens said he agreed with Crow in considering un-hosted

short-term rentals commercial activities but looked for specific ways to address that concern.

He noted that in order to charge commercial taxes on a residential property, the rental would need to be classified as a corporation, something Crow originally said he was against.

But in conceding that the town may need to get creative in order to deal with the issue, Crow said he would be fine with treating rentals as corporations.

Wiens also drove home a key issue — as NOTL is a tourist town, short-term rentals do provide a place for tourists to stay. In shifting away from short-term rentals, Wiens asked Crow if he was supportive of building more hotels to accommodate tourists.

Crow said he would be open to possible new hotels as part of a comprehensive tourism plan that addresses short-term rentals and transient accommodation.

"If the tourism plan that we have is going to get us more visitors," Crow said.

He added his concerns are limited to Chautauqua and his desire for more long-term residential homes in the neighbourhood.

"We used to have long-term rentals here. A lot of them have been converted to short-term rentals," he said.

"We've got people complaining that they can't find a place to live."

Council unanimously supported sending Crow's organization's recommendations to staff for review and inclusion in the forthcoming report on short-term rentals.

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NOTL nursing home approved for major expansion

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

The Ontario government is expanding a Niagara-on-the-Lake nursing home as part of a program to modernize and expand six long-term care homes in Niagara and Hamilton.

The Niagara Long Term Care Residence on Wellington Street will receive funding for 100 new beds and redevelopment of its existing 124-bed facility.

No price tag was mentioned when Long-term Care Minister Paul Calandra unveiled the funding during an an-



Construction on a new 224-bed facility at Niagara Long Term Care is expected to start by winter 2024.

nouncement last week in Beamsville.

Construction on the new 224-bed facility is expected to start by winter 2024, Calandra said. The for-profit home is licensed to Arch Long Term Care LP.

“Our government has a plan to fix long-term care and a key part of that plan is building modern, safe, and comfortable homes for our seniors,” Calandra said.

Niagara LTC Residence executive director Chris

Poos was pleased with the news.

“This is a significant milestone for Niagara LTC and the broader long-term care system in the Niagara region,” he said in a statement.

“Redeveloping homes such as ours will provide seniors in the community, and their families, with increased access to much-needed modern, safe and comfortable homes.”

While Niagara LTC is growing, nearby the 80-bed Upper Canada Lodge, which is operated by the Region of Niagara, is still expected to be closed in December 2023.

“Niagara Region continues to move forward on the two redevelopment projects – Linhaven in St. Catharines and Gilmore Lodge in Fort Erie.

When the two new homes open, the beds at Upper Canada Lodge in Niagara-on-the-Lake will close,” regional spokesperson Shelby VanderEnde told The Lake Report.

As well, in December 2020, a new, larger facility at Pleasant Manor in Virgil was confirmed by the province. However, it has yet to be built. Target date for construction to begin is now spring 2023.

Combined with the centre’s current 41 beds, the project will give Pleasant Manor a 160-bed facility as part of a “campus of care.”

The new centre is to be built on Elden Street, behind the current facility, on land occupied by a fruit orchard.

Radiant Care CEO Tim Siemens said it was anticipated the province would cover \$37.5 million of the project, nearly 90 per cent of the construction costs.

The existing 41-bed facility will be converted into community housing for seniors, he said.

NOTL march demands rights for seasonal farmworkers

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permanent status, that gives them access to health care, education — it enables them to be together with their families.”

Similar marches took place across Canada and around the world. Cities such as Toronto, St. John’s and Calgary participated. Gatherings also were held in several Caribbean countries.

One migrant worker, Gabriel Camacho from Mexico, has been coming to work in Niagara for 22 years.

And, since he does not have a simple route to citizenship, Camacho has spent the majority of those 22 years separated from his wife and kids.

“It’s very sad, each year, to be very far away from the family,” he told The Lake Report.

Camacho is grateful for the work he can get in Canada, noting Mexico can be a challenging place to make a living.

“In Mexico, there’s no opportunities, no jobs. It’s very hard to survive there. Here it is better,” he said.

But family is an essential part of the soul, Camacho said, and he is sad he has missed many of the definitive moments of his children’s lives.

“I left my daughter at four years old and my son when he was six months,” he said.



Co-organizer of the march, Luisa Ortiz Garza, delivers remarks to the assembly and leads the crowd through several chants. EVAN SAUNDERS

“I missed my baby’s first steps, her first words. That was very hard for me.”

Camacho said he remembers his son asking him why he never takes him to school, saying, “We need you.”

He said he is lucky to still have his family together because many families of migrant workers disintegrate due to the long periods of separation.

His daughter is in university and his son has graduated. Camacho can look around and see the job opportunities available in Canada and wishes these were available for his children as well.

“My son, in Mexico, he can’t find a job. There are no opportunities. That is

why I would like to bring him to Canada,” he said.

One of the challenges of relying on temporary work programs is workers are not able to come to Canada unless they are hired, which makes them beholden to their employers and unable to search for competitive wages and other opportunities.

“I asked the government for permanent residence for all migrants so that we don’t depend on a single employer. That we can have a pension fair enough to live to a dignified old age because we have spent a large part of our lives helping the Canadian economy,” Camacho said in a speech to the crowd.

He often works 14-hour

days with no overtime, in brutal cold or blistering heat. He has back problems now due to the labour and no right to use the Canadian health care system.

Migrant workers have taxes, employment insurance and Canada Pension deducted from their pay but don’t enjoy the same benefits as other contributing citizens do.

Camacho noted he has experienced racism from the public and from past employers.

“We deserve a dignified treatment without racism or mistreatment. We deserve respect as workers and as human beings. With permanent residency, we can keep our families together.”

About 50 people were

gathered around town hall. They carried banners and marched down to Cornerstone Community Church, chanting “What do we want? Status for all!” and, “No hate. No fear. Refugees are welcome here.”

Sonia Abilas of St. Catharines was there with her husband and their four children. For her, it was important to demonstrate support for Niagara’s migrant workers and instill values of respect and equality in her children.

“We’re here in solidarity with migrant workers and farm workers specifically, who work here and make great contributions, economically and culturally, to our region,” she said.

“And also to teach my kids to value the importance of migrant farmworkers and ask the government to allow farmworkers to live here, to apply for permanent residency and bring their families.”

The march was also a direct response to the use of racist and hateful imagery associated with some participants in the freedom convoy, Andres said.

“This is not the first time we’ve seen a rise in white nationalists mobilizing and it won’t be the last unless we come together and build strong anti-racist communities,” Andres told The Lake Report in an impassioned email.

“Which is why the fight for full and permanent immigration status for everyone is so crucial in challenging white supremacy.”

Andres noted white supremacist groups look for weak spots in society to take advantage of.

“It’s no surprise that hate groups have exploited the pandemic to recruit and advance their white supremacist agenda. We are all feeling the effects of the past couple years. None of us knows what will happen next and that can feel scary,” she said.

The march “was about coming together as a community and saying that we refuse to respond to fear with hatred and division, including racism and xenophobia. Racism is not welcome in this community — in any form.”

She noted racism is often a tool of those in power, used to manipulate the public into senseless divisions for political gain.

“We refuse to let politicians and bosses use racism to pit us against each other and fight over the scraps,” Andres said.

“We all deserve to live in a fair society and to be together with our loved ones. That’s why migrants, refugees, undocumented people, and their supporters are calling for status for all.”

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No plans for fourth vaccine yet: Hirji

But Niagara's top doctor is wary of potential variant driven surge

Evan Saunders
 Local Journalism Initiative
 The Lake Report



Dr. Mustafa Hirji

Niagara's acting medical officer of health says there is no recommendation yet for people to receive a fourth shot of a coronavirus vaccine in Canada.

A fourth shot "would not be advisable because our best scientific bodies have not recommended it at this time," Dr. Mustafa Hirji said in an interview on Monday.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization examines all vaccines carefully, he said.

"They're looking at what are the benefits of the vac-

cine but also what are the potential risks. While side effects are rare, they do happen and we don't want to be giving people unnecessary side effects unless there is a significant benefit from the vaccine."

Hirji said the best protection available right now is a third dose of a CO-

VID-19 vaccine. Vulnerable people are even eligible for a double-dose of their third vaccine, giving them increased protection.

Queries about a second booster shot are arising from situations people are seeing in the United Kingdom and Israel, he said.

"In Israel, they did their first two doses three weeks apart," he said.

In Canada, we learned that "protection from those first two doses was much higher if you spaced them out rather than got them very close together."

"And so we've benefitted from better and longer-lasting immunity from those first two doses."

Hospitalizations are up 35 per cent in the U.K. while Ontario has not seen such a dramatic increase, he said.

But Hirji said Ontario could see a jump in hospitalizations due to the lifting of all provincial measures.

"Continuing to voluntarily wear masks, continuing to make sure we get those three doses as quickly as possible will give us an insurance policy that we don't start to follow the U.K.'s pattern."

Surges in the U.K. and many other places are being driven by the new BA.2 variant, a mutation of Omicron.

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Honouring the dead: Town agrees to man's plan to identify early Black Canadians buried in NOTL

Evan Saunders
 Local Journalism Initiative
 The Lake Report



One of the remaining three headstones in the Negro Burial Ground. EVAN SAUNDERS

A Toronto man wants to ensure that one of the most important aspects of Niagara-on-the-Lake's history does not remain buried and lost to time.

And he has the unanimous support of town council to make it happen.

Jim Russell is offering his time and money to perform extensive research and restoration at the Negro Burial Ground on Mississagua Street in order to identify those who are buried and to erect proper headstones for some of NOTL's original residents.

"Our dead are never dead to us until we have forgotten them," Russell told council Monday night, quoting Victorian writer and journalist Mary Ann Evans.

Russell is proposing to use ground-penetrating radar to identify where exactly all the bodies are located in the graveyard, a process he says would take about three hours and cost \$2,000. He is offering his own money and time for the project.

After the bodies are located, Russell said he hoped the next step would be re-

cruiting talented NOTLers to design monuments or headstones for the dead.

"I would ask the town to perhaps launch a design competition to create permanent markers," he said.

"I would also like to produce a short film, which follows the locating and marking process along with a five-minute monologue from a Black history

expert about the history of Black folks in the Niagara Region."

Russell, a former news photographer for the Toronto Star and current founder, writer and producer for MANKS Motion Picture Studios, said the lack of recognition for the burial ground has long been a source of frustration.

"I've been coming fre-

quently (to NOTL) for the last 37 years," Russell said.

"It has always bothered me that the field is simply an open grass area. I would hope that more respect would be given to the dead and at least an effort would be made to identify those beneath the ground."

He said after using the ground-penetrating radar, it might be difficult to determine from municipal records, wills and other historic documents who exactly is buried in the graveyard.

"I'm not 100 per cent sure that I will be successful but I am 100 per cent sure that I will try," he said.

Russell said he is already in communication with the NOTL Museum, the University of Toronto, the Ontario Black History Society, academics and the Baptist Church, which once owned the graveyard.

Council unanimously supported Russell's request and directed town staff to work with him to begin ironing out details for how this sensitive operation can be carried out.

"I drive by that cemetery every day and it's about time we did something about it," Coun. Gary Burroughs said.

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Canada The Local Journalism Initiative is funded by the Government of Canada.

COVID Tracker

NOTL active cases (last 28 days): 125
Region active cases: 1,075
Region deaths: 525
Region total cases: 35,574

**March 16 data per Niagara Region Public Health. Public health warns that "Due to the surge in COVID-19 cases, limited availability of testing, and changes to case and contact management practices, case counts shown (above) are an underestimate of the true number of individuals in Niagara with COVID-19. Data should be interpreted with caution." Case data for municipalities is also now being interpreted in 28-day cycles.*



Contributed by Patty Garriock

"Being negative only makes a difficult journey more difficult. You may be given a cactus, but you don't have to sit on it!" - Joyce Meyer

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

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 Call 905.359.2270 or send an email to editor@niagaranow.com

Toronto skyline glows at sunset

Lake Report contributor May Chang captured the first sunset of spring and the Toronto skyline across Lake Ontario on Sunday.

Calling all NOTL photographers: send us some of your interesting, evocative, quirky images of life around town and we'll consider them for this space on our editorial page. Email images (1 MB or more) to editor@niagaranow.com.



Editorial

Sensible solutions to short-term rental problem

Richard Harley
 Editor-In-Chief

The Chautauqua Residents Association's new president Brian Crow is forward thinking and sees the problems short-term rentals can cause.

He's seen first-hand how short-term rentals have begun to hollow out his tight-knit neighbourhood, how those mini-hotels are unfairly competing with legitimate hotels and accommodation businesses.

This week he gave a heartfelt presentation to town councillors, asking them to work with the association on potential solutions to prevent the further proliferation of short-term rentals and the plethora of problems that come with them.

Among the suggestions was to charge commercial taxes to homes that serve to operate solely as a commercial business and which

don't provide a permanent residence to anyone.

A logical, brilliant thought. Something The Lake Report has also advocated for, since these homes are no longer serving a residential function and are unquestionably commercial businesses.

On that issue, Coun. Norm Arseneault asked how a short-term rental with no one living in it differs from a home where someone is operating a haircutting business on the side.

The answer, as Crow noted, is built in to the question: The primary function of one house is to serve as a residence. The other does not. Simple.

We commend Crow for taking what is sure to be a stance that will surely spark opposition from many short-term rental owners, managers and others who stand to potentially lose money.

But Crow understands that the small minority of

rental owners isn't who the town's politicians were elected to protect.

In a town of 18,000 plus people, only about 290 people operate short-term rentals.

This is why council was entirely wrong to evenly stack its short-term rental committee with half industry stakeholders.

We need proportional representation in this case — not 290 people with a clear conflict of interest holding power over thousands of other residents.

Another issue raised was the municipal accommodation tax, which is largely expected even by industry members to be applied to short-term rentals eventually.

While we agree with Crow's position that full-time, hosted bed and breakfasts shouldn't be subject to the same commercial property taxes, they certainly should be made to charge

the accommodation tax.

Any and all accommodation businesses should be obligated to charge it, if the tax is to be fair.

Unlike our town council, which has allowed town staff to take a year to bring forward recommendations to tackle and which generally seems to give the industry stakeholders the moon and sky (by lowering fees, stacking committees, etc.), Crow has moved swiftly to offer solutions to the problem, despite having been in his position for just a few months.

Keep it up. With luck, our town might start to wake up before we drive off the bridge.

Council agreed to send Crow's recommendations to staff. Now let's make sure those recommendations are taken seriously.

Staff weren't elected to fight for us, our councillors were.

editor@niagaranow.com



Noisy 'open pipe' motorcycles have returned

Dear editor:
 It's spring and the disturbing noise has returned.

In support of Samuel Young's letter of June 24 of last year ("Reckless motorcyclists rediscover NOTL"), I'd like to add the following.

Since arriving in NOTL on Nov. 1, 2019, we have enjoyed the most peaceful and idyllic time. Imagine our dismay when "open

pipe" motorcycles began to use our town as a pass-through between the two main arteries — Niagara Stone Road and the Niagara River Parkway.

They bring a significant level of noise to disturb the main streets and especially Mississauga, Mary and Queen streets.

These groups enjoy their freedom and at the same time disturb our

peace when they come through town. Imagine having a nice quiet lunch only to have to stop talking because these thoughtless people, sometimes with radios blaring, roll through.

From what we've read, places like Toronto have outlawed these noisy motorcycles from their downtowns by restricting their routes.

We don't know how to go about getting a petition together, but I'd be willing to investigate to present this to the proper authorities to ban open pipe motorcycles from our historical district and perhaps force them to use one of the Concession Roads instead.

It will take some time, but it will be worth it

Paulette Kennedy
 NOTL



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From left, Bryan Rose, executive director of the Niagara Community Foundation, Jeremy Garrett of Garrett Group Ltd., Cindy Haines of Garrett Insurance Agency Ltd., and Alice Klamer and Jim Garrett of the Agape Fund Series. SUPPLIED

NOTLers can help with donations for Ukraine

Dear editor:

With the world in chaos, the people of Ukraine are desperately fighting for their right to be able to live in a free democracy.

Here we are, living some 7,569 kilometres away, in a very prosperous little town within our own free democracy, which we often take for granted.

With the Canadian government matching some donations, we felt that we could

make an impact toward helping to address this unprecedented humanitarian crisis.

With so much wealth in this beautiful community we call home, perhaps together the people and businesses of Niagara-on-the-Lake can make a difference where it is so desperately needed.

Anyone wishing to support this cause can do so with a donation made payable to the "Agape Fund Series - Ukrainian Humanitarian Crisis Fund."

Send it to the attention of Bryan Rose at the Niagara Community Foundation, 301-8 Church St., St. Catharines, ON L2R 3B3.

All contributions will receive a receipt for a charitable tax donation. All money received will go directly to the Ukraine humanitarian crisis.

The Agape Fund Series never imagined that someday the need to redirect

funds for such an extraordinary humanitarian crisis would exist in this crazy world that we all occupy.

We hope support from people and businesses in NOTL and across Canada will help the Ukrainians come out the other side of this atrocity and that they will find the same peace and freedom that we enjoy.

Jim Garrett
Alice Klamer
NOTL

Russian invasion of Ukraine is history repeating itself

Dear editor:

Many of us are the last survivors of Second World War illegal occupations of innocent countries by Russia in particular.

As a "gratuity" for Russian assistance in crushing the Nazis, the Western powers sacrificed a dozen countries to Russia, and such sacrifice continues today with China as well allowed to take over countries at will.

Of course, I'll grant you that Russia played a major role in saving the west by throwing masses of manpower at the German military and it had absolutely enormous losses.

That it was owed some form of reparation I also acknowledge. Such reparation might have been Russia

being a more major member of the Marshall Plan to help rebuild Europe, for example.

But, instead, the west, engulfed again by China in Korea, tired of war and quite rightly so (the people of the west, not the war machine corporations, of course) set Russia up as a "Communist Evil Empire" and began a Cold War of mutual military build-up including nuclear weapons.

Russia's response was to surround its territory with buffer nations and, unfortunately, Estonia and Latvia were both on that list, still are today. By that I mean if Russia today took over both our countries overnight,

there is nothing the rest of the world would do about it.

Hence Ukraine, where Russia is being allowed to literally wreck a whole country with a horrible death count and destroyed infrastructure, rendering it useless for economic gain and leaving it solely as a buffer, ostensibly against western military incursion.

That also is nonsense because the west has had no intention of such incursion, so effectively the whole world is dealing with a madman named Putin whose megalomania is unbounded and who is leading his own country to potential ruin.

There is no good endgame here. There is no good path to resolution here before an endgame.

What we are seeing is a complete global lack of moral fibre and Canada is one of the leading contenders of banal verbiage reflecting basically a complete willingness to allow Russia full rein to do literally whatever it wants with Ukraine.

No doubt, not too far down the line, if Putin remains in power, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Finland and others could be in imminent danger. Look what he already has done in Crimea, Belarus and elsewhere.

It's almost as if a mechanism of some sort has its dial turned up toward mankind's most vile self and an inevitability has set in.

I do hope for some sort of a new wave, a new way of thinking, before the sweep of malevolent history drowns us all like a tsunami.

Kaspar Pold
NOTL

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

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The Easter Bunny will be a special guest at the Easter celebrations. SUPPLIED

Easter Bunny Trail and Kinsmen egg hunt return

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

There are a few things to be hoppy about this April, as pair of popular Niagara-on-the-Lake Easter gatherings return after a two-year hiatus.

The Niagara Nursery School will hold its Bunny Trail event and the NOTL Kinsmen will hold the Kinsmen Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 16.

Ken Slingerland, chair of the hunt and past-president of NOTL Kinsmen, said the events have been coinciding for a long time.

"We have run them on the same day and at the same place for about 20 years," he said.

"Our event starts at

10 a.m. Saturday morning and they run theirs immediately afterwards."

Candice Penny, executive director of the nursery school, said there are lots of fun activities planned for kids after the hunt, including balloon twisting with JBean Entertainment, tractor rides provided by Huebel Grapes Estates, and some goats and a donkey from Fox Den Goat Yoga.

Penny said it is a relief to get back to community events.

"We're just thrilled. We are so excited," she said.

She said all public health guidelines regarding COVID will be followed and anyone who wants to wear a mask is encouraged to do so.



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Many in town are still wearing masks

Niagara public health urges people to keep covering up, notes cases have climbed

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Wearing masks is no longer mandatory inside most Ontario businesses and public places, but some people are still pulling one on as a safety precaution and see no need to haphazardly forget about the pandemic.

"I'm used to it, it's not a big thing to me," Tony King of London, Ont., said after visiting the Viking Shop on Queen Street on Monday, the first day that mask-wearing became optional.

"In fact, I feel a little bit naked not wearing it."

King said COVID is still around and it's important to be aware of that and not only for his own sake.

"I think the risk is still here. I'm healthy but I know a lot of people are at risk," he said.

King owns a moving company in London and said he has been wearing a mask for every shift he's worked in the last two years, hot or cold.

"So, I'm used to it and I've had COVID," he said.

For King, it was a week of being sick. "But I know a lot of people who have had it and died," he said.

He said his aunt is 90 years old and he would never forgive himself if carelessness around COVID caused him to transmit the virus to her.

"Be cautious, but let's look forward," King said.

Other people were of a similar mindset — still embracing safety precautions but aware the times they are a-changin'.

"It's a good time to start going back to normal but I'm going to wear my mask whether I'm out in public or in crowded places," Tom Samolczyk, visiting from Kitchener, said as he sat on a bench outside Cows Niagara-on-the-Lake.

His reason was simple and straight to the point: "COVID is still around and we are going to see a spike."

"I'm going to wear it. I'm wearing it now and I'll wear it in stores. I guess, sometimes you'll see me with it off if I'm in the park," he said.



Tom Samolczyk said he is still wearing a mask because COVID-19 has not gone anywhere and he expects there will be a spike in new cases. EVAN SAUNDERS

Samolczyk said masks shouldn't be people's only tool to protect against COVID-19.

"I think it's important to be vaccinated. I know some people disagree with that but I think it's very important," he said.

"I'm going to wear my mask whether I'm out in public or in crowded places."

TOM SAMOLCZYK
VISITOR FROM KITCHENER

"I'll probably drop it after a while but maybe keep it around for a couple more weeks," Peter Laszlo of Dundas said as he visited the shops along Queen Street.

On Tuesday, Niagara's public health department strongly recommended people continue to wear masks.

In a news release, the agency noted cases and hospitalizations had been falling, but "in recent days, that decline has ended and hospitalizations have increased again."

"COVID-19 continues to circulate widely and there is still substantial risk at this time. Even with limitations on testing, we are seeing large numbers of cases every day. The true number of infections is likely still higher than

in any previous wave," the release said.

"Public health strongly recommends everyone who can to continue wearing masks for the next few weeks while COVID-19 infections remain high."

The department also said masks are still required on all public transit, in health care settings, long-term care and retirement homes and congregate care settings.

Masks are also required if you are on day six to 10 of having COVID-19 and are released from isolation or if you are a contact of a confirmed case but not required to isolate.

Public health also said it is a strong supporter of all businesses that choose to keep masking policies as these will "protect employees and clients, and allow our organizations to operate without interruption."

NOTL business operators said they are following the province's orders and leaving mask-wearing up to customers.

"As per (provincial) guidelines, masks are optional for all customers and staff," Tony Hendriks, owner of Hendrik's Independent Grocer told The Lake Report in an email.

"That being said, many customers and staff are choosing to remain masked. No issues have come up one way or the other. People, by now, know how to shop smart, protect themselves

as they feel they need to (and) keep distanced as appropriate."

Other spots such as Penner Home Hardware Building Centre and the Sunset Grill are also making masks optional.

One of the exceptions is the Shaw Festival. Proof of vaccination is still required to attend a Shaw performance, as the company invoked a duty of care "to keep audiences and company members safe throughout the pandemic," spokesperson Jenniffer Anand said in an email.

Masks will still be required for performances through May 2, she said.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library is now mask-free and has increased its hours of operation.

The library will now be open on Mondays as well as its previous Thursday to Saturday schedule. Hours of operation are 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. from Monday to Thursday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Fridays, and 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturdays. It is closed Sundays.

A spokesperson for the Town of NOTL said the municipality no longer requires masks to be worn in any of its facilities.

When children returned to school in St. Davids and Virgil on Monday after the March break, they also had the option to go maskless.

At Crossroads Public School in Virgil, principal Kate Fish said, "Just like in our Niagara communities, there's a mixture of who's wearing a mask and who isn't. Some students have opted to take them off, while others have decided they'd like to keep wearing them."

As well, "some have even decided to keep a mask close by in their backpack, jacket or at their desk, so accessing one when they want to is easy. But what's most important is that no matter what an individual or family has chosen to do, we are respecting and supporting it," Fish said in an email.

"We're focused on ensuring every student feels safe and comfortable at school and that they are continuing to get a quality education."



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United by war, they carry on fathers' legacies

Two Niagara-on-the-Lake women work together to raise money and supplies for Ukraine

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

When the Second World War was raging across Europe, the Soviet Union began drafting young men to fight against the Axis powers.

Two young men decided to flee Ukraine instead of being forced into the Russian army.

More than 80 years later, their daughters, both now living in Niagara-on-the-Lake, are once again helping Ukrainians in the face of conflict, saying it unites them with the suffering of their family before them.

"My father was in Ukraine under Russian rule and he tried to get food from the black market. They arrested him and sent him to Siberia," Chris Wormwell said in an interview.

"What ended up happening was they said to him, 'You have to come and fight in the Russian army,'" she said.

Wormwell's father and a friend abandoned the army in Ukraine and fled to the Polish border. Once in Poland, they ended up joining the Allied forces in the war against Germany.

Her father only ever told her and her family this story one time in his entire life.

She said he most likely suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder from the war and was never willing to engage in discussions about the time.

"I just know he suffered. You just wonder, really, what happened to him?" she said.

When the family went camping, he would refuse to sleep in a tent and would stay in the car instead, Wormwell said.

Because he abandoned the Russian army, Wormwell's father was never able to return to Ukraine while it was under Russian occupation, she said.

Her Ukrainian family has a long history of being driven out of the country by occupying armies. Her mother's family fled to Canada when the country



Chris Wormwell and Lida Kowal Curtis had never met until they both started collecting donations for Ukraine. The two are now fast friends and both their families were driven from Ukraine by Russia in the 1940s. EVAN SAUNDERS

was under Austrian rule in the 1800s.

"Living with someone who suffered back then and now seeing it happening again" inspires her to act, she said.

Wormwell's father died of leukemia. She wonders if seeing the events unfolding in Ukraine now would have prompted him to recall more of his experiences to her.

But she knows "he would have been very, very upset. Very angry" to see the Russian invasion of his homeland.

"He would have been right out there, praying, collecting, doing what he can to be involved in something," she said.

Wormwell began collecting donations for Ukraine in tandem with her parish, St. John the Theologian Ukrainian Catholic Church in St. Catharines.

She made a post calling for supplies in the Facebook group "Buy Nothing NOTL."

Through that group she met fellow NOTLer, Lida Kowal Curtis. The two had

never met before and have become fast friends over their shared support for Ukraine.

Coincidentally, Kowal Curtis is also of Ukrainian ancestry and her family shares a similar story to Wormwell's.

Kowal Curtis' father, Iwan, was the oldest of four boys in the family.

"At 14 years old, my dad fled in the middle of the night. He fled to Italy. No clothes, no food, nothing."

LIDA KOWAL CURTIS

"My grandfather told my father, being the eldest boy, 'You must flee. You must go because they are going to take you into the army, being the only one of proper age,'" Kowal Curtis said.

"So, at 14 years old, my dad fled in the middle of the night. He fled to Italy. No clothes, no food, nothing."

He ended up in the Italian army, she said.

"There was one picture of my dad (in the army) and I remember asking him, 'If you were in the war, did you ever kill anybody?'" Kowal Curtis said.

"There was no answer." After the war, family connections led Iwan to Britain.

Kowal Curtis' mother, Aleksandra, was captured by German forces in Ukraine and ended up working as a nanny in Austria. Once the war was over, through friend and family connections, she also travelled to Britain.

Kowal Curtis' parents ended up in the industrial town of Oldham, where they could work as labourers despite not speaking English.

The tradition in England is to go to a pub after work before heading home. There was a pub in Oldham specifically for immigrants and, every Friday, a dance would be held, Kowal Curtis said.

After both being driven across the continent from their home country by

war, 18-year-old Iwan and 20-year-old Aleksandra met at the dance. They got married, had one daughter and then moved to Canada where Kowal Curtis was born.

The violence the family suffered under Russian rule and the expulsion from their homeland stays with Kowal Curtis to this day.

"My mother, she had two brothers. There was a picture of my two uncles," she recalled.

"One of them was killed by the Russians because he refused to join the army. So, he was shot dead in front of his parents," she said.

"As a warning that, if you don't join the army, this will happen."

Kowal Curtis still has family living in eastern Ukraine, five kilometres from the Polish border in the town of Dobromyl.

"Right now, all they see every day are refugees," she said.

Six of her cousins are still in Ukraine. One now lives in Italy, where she also is organizing relief efforts for the humanitarian crisis

springing from Russia's invasion of the free, democratic nation.

As for her family still in Ukraine, "They're not leaving," she said.

"They're not leaving the homestead. They raise animals and they have crops and they have vegetables."

"And they're crossing their fingers right now that there won't be a nuclear war because they won't have fertile soil," Kowal Curtis said, referencing the fighting that has broken out around nuclear power plants in Ukraine.

"It took 25 years after Chernobyl before they could see a blade of grass growing."

Wormwell and Kowal Curtis both said their efforts to help Ukraine is a part of their families' legacy and gives them a strong, direct, emotional connection to their fathers and what they experienced.

"That's why we fight. That's why we care. Because it's not good enough to sit here," Kowal Curtis said.

"We're very wealthy if you think about the quality of our lifestyle that was gifted to us by our parents."

"They're the ones that fought. They're the ones that gifted me all this freedom. I have children, I have grandchildren and I have to set an example for (them)."

"You have Ukrainian blood in you and you have to be respectful of your fathers and your forefathers and what they have done," Kowal Curtis said she told her youngest daughter.

NOTL is a beautiful place to live and grow, a rich community with cultural history and modern accolades. So are countless places in Ukraine and they are now being devastated by bombs, artillery — their residents killed where they live.

Readers who wish to support the relief efforts for Ukraine can donate to St. John the Theologian Ukrainian Catholic Church at stjohnc.com.

Monetary donations are preferred but a list of essential supply items is available on the church's website.



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Engel & Völkers Americas announced that Nancy Bailey has been recognized as a Diamond level Real Estate Advisor in the global company’s 2021 Elite Club. This distinction recognizes Engel & Völkers Americas advisors who achieved a minimum of \$250,000 in closed gross commission income or a minimum of 36 closed sides for the calendar year 2021.

“Nancy Bailey is a true representative of the expertise and unparalleled level of service that is consistently showcased by Engel & Völkers advisors worldwide,” said Scott Russell, License Partner and Broker of Record, Engel & Völkers Oakville. “Nancy’s outstanding achievements evidence her being a leader in Niagara’s local marketplace, and we could not be more proud.”

“I am honored to be part of Engel & Völkers’ prestigious 2021 Elite Club as a Diamond level advisor,” said Bailey. “Remaining completely focused on the needs of my market’s buyers and sellers has always been my strategy for success. The Engel & Völkers brand provides a supportive network and systems that exponentially increase my ability to service my clients.”



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NANCY BAILEY



New winery owner doing things the **Lailey way**

Continued from Front Page

It was a family winery and we want to replicate that going forward.”

Turkmen is unequivocal in his expression of appreciation for the legacy and tradition of the Lailey vineyard and wines.

The path that eventually led him to buy Lailey last fall began many years earlier.

Turkmen, who worked in finance and consulting at the time, began visiting Niagara-on-the-Lake with his family in 2007, when they first came to Ontario from Turkey.

His children were young then and, for the family, “this was our happy place. We came here every other weekend, to buy wine and have dinner. Eventually we thought, maybe we should buy a piece of land here.”

Fate appears to have played a hand in what happened next.

Turkmen, who comes from a farming family, tells the story this way.

“In 2005, I lost my mother and she left me a small sum of money. One day, years later, when we were visiting Niagara-on-the-Lake, we crossed Line 5. The property there was for sale. The downpayment was exactly the amount my mother had left me. I thought it was a sign and we bought the land.”

Turkmen has added to the few rows of Chardonnay grapes that were already on the 46-acre parcel of land and he is producing wine under the Stonebridge label.

“With Stonebridge, I want to produce wine that reflects the area, with as little intervention as possible,” he explains.



David and Donna Lailey are thrilled with the new ownership of their namesake winery. SUPPLIED

Acclaimed winemakers Peter Gamble and Ann Sterling work with Turkmen, and he’s had seven harvest seasons on that land so far. As the wine aged, he knew he needed a bricks and mortar winery where he could sell it.

Turkmen planned to build a winery, but issues with permits and supply chains were exacerbated by COVID and made construction difficult. So instead, he began to look for a place to buy.

“The agent called me one day and said, ‘There’s a place. It’s way out of your budget, but let’s look.’ So I walk in and make the

standard mistake – I fell in love with it!”

“It,” of course, was Lailey Vineyard.

Turkmen took the money he had saved for construction, got some partners, and bought the place within six weeks.

He reached out to the Laileys and they walked through the vineyard together.

“It’s more their place and I wanted their blessing,” Turkmen says. “I have a philosophy of respecting the land. What I want to do is not very different from what they used to do.”

The admiration is mutual. “I was thrilled to meet

Faik. We spent 45 years of our life on this land, so we’re very happy to see it in good hands,” says Donna Lailey.

When the Laileys bought the land from David’s parents in the early 1970s, it was planted with fruit trees, but farming fruit wasn’t profitable. The Laileys gradually replanted. “First I planted the Pinots and Chardonnay. I looked after those. Nobody touched my grapes. They were the 10 rows at the front of the property,” Donna recalls.

The work was hands-on – and hard.

“I remember one winter, it was the same year that

Terry Fox was running across the country. I was pruning the vines, and it was cold, so cold. I went inside for a moment and saw Terry Fox on the news, and I thought, ‘If he can do that, I can do this.’ And I went back outside and finished pruning,” she recalls with a wry grin.

After many years of selling grapes and grape juice to area winemakers, they decided to build the winery in 2001, and it became very successful.

“We were at our peak when we sold in 2015,” Donna says, adding, “David was 76 and I was 75, so it was time.”

“Derek (Barnett) was our first and only winemaker,” she says.

Barnett, who founded Meldville virtual winery after Lailey was first sold in 2015, is also happy with the new change in ownership.

“I think it’s great. I hope it will get back to where it was. I got a lot of enjoyment making wine from those grapes. It was amazing. We made lovely wine that people enjoyed drinking, and we saw a lot of familiar faces come back. It was a great time.”

Turkmen muses he may “try to convince Derek to come and produce one of his classics, maybe in a couple of years.”

In the meantime, there is much to do, tending to the vineyard, and enhancing the production and storage facilities on site.

“We’ll find creative solutions, to use space more effectively, and we will produce everything here.”

The retail space features both Stonebridge and Lailey wines.

And Turkmen is intent on welcoming NOTL residents.

“We want to get locals back. There are so many people who have stories and memories here,” he says.

“We’ll be doing tastings and wine by the glass outside. After Easter, we’re partnering with Pig Out food trucks to do BBQs on the weekends and we’ll increase seating capacity outside.”

Reflecting on his transformation from successful consultant to grape grower and winery owner, Turkmen flashes a friendly smile and says, “This is more fun.”

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NOTL woman keeps fridge stocked

Catherine Leniarsky plans to help Newark Neighbours with her next food drive

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

When Catherine Leniarsky read that the Lincoln County Community Fridge in St. Catharines was in desperate need of donations, the Niagara-on-the-Lake woman leapt into action with a weekend food drive.

And thanks to her efforts, the fridge is now full again — for a while.

“I saw an article the other day about the community fridge being empty, so I took a drive there before work one morning and found an absolutely empty fridge,” Leniarsky, 33, told The Lake Report last week before the drive.

“My heart broke for anyone who travelled who knows how far to reach that fridge only to remain hungry. I jumped into action. I shot a little video in my car to get things going.”

As well as the video, Leniarsky posted three needed items on her social media every day, and encouraged people to donate either the items or the monetary value of these items — or however much they could afford.

By Sunday, she had raised \$1,000 in cash to help stock the fridge, as well as food contributions, including a “large donation” from the Zehrs on Geneva Street.

“I’m so grateful with the amount that was donated in such a short period of time,” Leniarsky said.

With the donations, she and her friend Karolyne Surowka, also from Niagara-on-the-Lake, went shopping.

“We did a big shop together at Costco for items



Catherine Leniarsky stands beside the Lincoln County Community Fridge in St. Catharines, which she helped stock by running an impromptu food drive. SUPPLIED

and then Zehrs for the items we needed in smaller quantity. I have a few hundred left over that I will do a top-up shop with next week,” Leniarsky said.

On her mission, Leniarsky

said she also “decided to knock on a few bigger doors and Zehrs Geneva really came through.”

The store donated a pallet of food, including peanut butter, soup, beans, rice and

ketchup.

“Many wonderful staples,” Leniarsky said, adding she’s very thankful to the store’s managers, Joe Huibers and Larry Antonio.

Leniarsky said she has been “truly overwhelmed by the generosity.”

“I’m so very grateful for the support around me,” she said.

However, “something really important to note is even though we raised so much and were able to pull together an incredible donation this amount of food will most likely last about two weeks. The need is really eye-opening when you begin getting involved. This is why it’s so important to continuously donate.”

She said she now plans to hold similar fundraisers about four times a year, and her next one will expand to support NOTL’s own food bank, Newark Neighbours. She’s planning to kick it off in June.

“There is such a great need right now,” Leniarsky said.

“Many hard working people have to resort to food banks to make ends meet. As one I can only do so much but with the generosity around me we can feed so many.”

She said one “really special thing” about the Lincoln County Community Fridge is people can just stop by, no questions asked.

“It’s open 7-7 every day and you can go at your leisure. It’s a way to keep dignity for those that may have trouble asking for help. It’s more of a shopping experience than having to register somewhere or explain yourself.”



You can find me in the middle of Toronto. What am I?

Last issue: What word of five letters has one left when two are removed?

Answer: Stone

Also accepted: Other five letter words that do the same, for example phone, alone, drone, clone, money, etc.

Also accepted: Llama (removing the two same letters leaves just “a” — a creative answer.

Answered first by: Anna Medina

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Sheryl Christensen, Terry Nord, Pam Dowling, KC King, Wade Durling, Sylvia Wiens, Rob Hutchison, Howard Jones, Mary Drost, Hedy Wiebe, Graham Gibbs, Mike Berlis, Regina Robb, Margie Enns, Jennifer Siversns, Sheila Meloche, Dennis Blake,


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Master gardeners want town to **expand, enhance** community centre

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Two master gardeners want to ensure the space around the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre is as beautiful as can be.

Betty Knight and Joanne Young proposed a joint initiative with the town to “see best practices come into play in the development of the green spaces around the community centre,” Knight said at council’s March 21 committee of the whole meeting.

“What we are speaking to now is an environmentally sustainable, accessible, multi-use, multi-generational green space designed for, and with an awareness of, all abilities,” she said.

Knight said the duo did not want to suggest any immediate designs for the space.

“Our ask today is to encourage the town to lead a process to engage all interested partners in developing a mini-master plan for the community centre and to invite talented, visionary people to the table to work collaboratively through the process,” Knight said.



Joanne Young and Betty Knight asked council to engage in extensive collaboration with residents and organizations to enhance the community centre’s green space. FILE

The proposal, which was unanimously supported by councillors, most likely would need to be developed as part of the recreational master plan, she said, but the creation of that document is not yet under way, parks and recreation manager Kevin Turcotte noted.

Knight said she would be ready to engage in creative fundraising to support the garden and the inclusion of a memorial garden could help defray some costs.

It would be a community-building project, she said, and encouraged the municipality to embrace NOTL’s reputation for hav-

ing “beautiful gardens.”

Young, who is The Lake Report’s gardening columnist, provided some examples of how the space could be developed.

The intent of the garden would be to “enhance the well-being of its users by allowing them to engage in various exercises through-

out that space,” she said.

“Over the last two years we’ve learned how important being outdoors is and how it affects your mental health,” she added.

Young said one of the features could be an Indigenous garden.

“To give proper land acknowledgement, recognizing and respecting Indigenous Peoples as the traditional stewards of this land,” she said.

Young also recommended a pollinator garden and a sensory garden designed to appeal to all five senses.

A new concept called a rain garden, a depression in the ground filled with plants and shrubs where rainwater can temporarily be held before draining into the soil, was also suggested.

“This garden can be an educational tool for the public to learn about the importance of capturing rainwater,” she said.

The idea of the garden as a tool for education was mentioned frequently by Young, who also recommended a literacy garden and making the space available for schools and various groups to rent out for classes.

There’ll be “educational opportunities for all ages through the use of signage, possible seminars and workshops that would teach people about sustainable gardening and encourage them to do likewise in their own gardens,” she said.

Knight reminded councillors they previously declared 2022 the year of the garden and urged that the concept garden be considered for creation this year.

“This concept garden could be a capstone project. It could be a beautiful unfurling of a flag as we celebrate the opening of society and the year of the garden,” Knight said.

The idea has support from the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library, and the town’s wellness and diversity committees, she said.

Extensive collaboration should be sought between all facets of operations at the community centre, from the gym to the cafe to the daycare, to ensure the most is made of the space, Knight said.

Council referred the proposal to town staff for a report.

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Pain is **not** a lifestyle: Virgil Chiropractic offers relief

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

Pain is not a lifestyle and Dr. Giuseppe De Divitiis of Virgil Chiropractic and Wellness excels at approaching each patient's individual ailment to ease discomfort and pain at the source.

"Our mentality is the patient's health comes first. It's all about the patient," says De Divitiis.

With a team built around overall holistic wellness, Virgil Chiropractic and Wellness' highly skilled and qualified practitioners work in tandem to heal each person who walks through their doors.

The newly expanded office at 504 Line 2 Rd. boasts seven fresh and newly decorated treatment rooms with six multidisciplinary practitioners providing a variety of wellness services, such as chiropractic, naturopathy, massage and Reiki.

The space offers a sense of calming and relaxation from the moment you step inside. De Divitiis has gone beyond to create a space that reflects the holistic

healing energy the practice is known for.

"Downstairs in the basement is great. You walk in there and you just like instantly feel relaxed," he says of the Thai yoga space.

De Divitiis decided to specialize in chiropractic after a series of kismet experiences set him on the path to redirecting his career, eventually opening his own practice.

"The universe sort of guided me into this," he says.

He was a personal trainer working to become a police officer when he injured his back. After a visit with a chiropractor to ease his own pain, De Divitiis says his perspective shifted.

"I walked in in pain and half an hour later I walked out straight, and I was pain-free. That opened my eyes," he says.

That experience paired with administrative issues delaying his position as a police officer caused him to look into new career options.

The path to chiropractic was almost fated, he says. He received his under-



Dr. Giuseppe De Divitiis is ready to welcome new clients to his newly renovated Virgil Chiropractic. BRITTANY CARTER

graduate degree in biology and his post-graduate degree in chiropractic from D'Youville College, in Buffalo in 2014.

Now at 43 years old, he has been running Virgil Chiropractic and Wellness for seven years, and he

says he is excited about the recent expansion.

Dr. Rhiannon Burkitt is the naturopathic doctor at the clinic. She treats general health concerns and has a special interest in sports injuries, autoimmune disorders, digestive issues,

fertility, pre and postnatal care, women's health issues and pediatrics.

Billy Saxton is a registered massage therapist who was born and raised in Niagara-on-the-Lake. He brings comprehensive knowledge in anatomy and muscle recovery and although he has a diverse skill set, he prefers deep-tissue techniques for various musculoskeletal injuries and imbalances.

Sonia Melnyk is the clinic's Reiki practitioner. On the Virgil Chiropractic and Wellness website, she says, "Reiki helps to balance the body and acts as a beautiful compliment to a person's whole body wellness and healthy lifestyle. It calms the mind, offers stress reduction, can help with pain management and is an experience unique to each person."

Jeannette Johnstone is a Thai yoga practitioner specializing in spiritually focused yoga designed for the general adult population at the beginner to intermediate level. She has a special focus on facilitating self-healing for her clients

through restorative yoga practice and Thai yoga massage.

Each member of the team brings a fresh perspective and a skilled approach to helping patients achieve their own personal wellness goals.

"If you're living in pain constantly every day, or seeing another practitioner and they're not getting the results that you want, why do you keep doing the same things that aren't working?" De Divitiis says.

"It's your health. You should find somebody that is able to help you. If you're in pain, there is no point in living in pain. That's not a lifestyle," he says.

"If you don't want to come to chiro, that's fine. There's physio, there's massage, there's Thai yoga massage, there's acupuncture. There's a whole bunch of stuff that we could do," he says.

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Senior civil servant Sheldon Randall retiring after 25 years with Town of NOTL

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report



Sheldon Randall.

After 25 years with the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, director of operations Sheldon Randall is retiring.

Councillors were eager to express their admiration for the longtime staffer.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero and several councillors said their farewells to Randall during a committee of the whole meeting on Monday.

"This is my first term as Lord Mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake and, I have to tell you, it's been a pretty interesting term," Disero said.

"We've had flooding, we've had the pandemic — who knows what's gonna come next. But I just want to thank Sheldon Randall for working with me, or us working together in the way that we did during our second year of this term," she said.

Randall was acting chief administrator when the pandemic struck in 2020.

"Sheldon worked day and night during that period of time and, notwithstanding

the fact that sometimes Sheldon and I disagree, we can always hug it out at the end to tell each other that we respect our opinions," she said.

"I'm going to miss his practical, innovative ideas the most and I hope he has a wonderful retirement."

"I want to personally say thank you," Coun. Allan Bisback said.

"When I had questions, when I was trying to learn and understand it didn't matter what day or what time it was, you were available," Bisback said, noting he is a first-time councillor.

"I am sure that I will see

you at the Sandtrap."

"He truly always wants to do the right thing and I want people to understand that," Coun. Erwin Wiens said about Randall, whom he considers a personal friend as well as a colleague.

"I honestly have to say there's a guy that worked hard for this community."

Coun. Gary Burroughs echoed the sentiments of Disero and Bisback that Randall has been a source of guidance for councillors.

"He's been my go-to guy as long as I've been involved with politics in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and that's a long time," Burroughs said.

Randall started with the town in 1996 as an engineer. He climbed the ranks over the years before becoming the director of operations in 2015.

Announcements will be made soon about who the acting director of operations will be and a recruitment process will be initiated in the coming weeks, the town said.

Randall's last day on the job will be April 1.

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- Canned Peas • Canned Pineapple
- Stuffing Mix • Canned Gravy
- Cranberry Sauce
- Snack Crackers (any kind)
- Bottled Juice (Cranberry or Apple)
- Cookies (any kind or flavour)
- Chocolates (for Easter baskets)

General Food Bank Supplies

- Canned Salmon • Soda (Soup) Crackers • Flakes of Ham, Chicken or Turkey
- Peanut Butter • Canned Chili or Spaghetti or Ravioli • Oatmeal
- Canned Beef Stew • Cereal (any kind) • Habitant Soups • Granola Bars
- Chunky Soups (beef or chicken) • Canned Baked Beans • Canned Red Kidney Beans
- Jello (any flavour) • Canned Ham, Corned Beef or Spam • Jams (any flavour)
- Canned Tomatoes/Tomato Sauce • Ketchup/Mustard/Mayonnaise/Green Relish
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Jr. A Predators' season ends with loss in semifinals

Team owner says he'll be talking to town officials about returning to NOTL for next season

Kevan Dowd
Special to The Lake Report

The Niagara Jr. A. Predators' debut season came to an end Sunday afternoon with a loss to the North York Renegades in the Greater Metro Hockey League's south division semifinal.

The best-of-five series ended 3-1 for the Renegades who scored their first win last Tuesday night. A 4-3 road win for the Predators the next night guaranteed two more games – both at the Meridian Credit Union Arena – but a 4-3 loss Friday night and 6-2 decision Sunday means a third-place finish for Niagara.

North York now faces the first-place Durham Roadrunners in the division finals.

The Predators will not be returning to the ice anytime soon, but head coach and owner Robert Turnbull says he does not plan on moving his team out of Niagara.

He said he will be meeting with Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake officials next Mon-



The first season of the Niagara Predators ended with a semifinal series loss to North York. EVAN SAUNDERS

day to discuss logistics for a second season in Virgil.

"There's certain things we need going forward that we didn't have this year, but the staff and the rink – knowing what we had to work with going in – it was fine. But in order to present a professional product, we

need some other amenities and different practice times," he said.

He declined to offer details of what the team wants.

"I'll know on the 28th but I'm definitely hoping to stay in the Niagara area."

Either way, assistant

coaches Connor Shipton and Samantha Marson hope to stay on with the team.

"I'm definitely going to be back with Rob. This is definitely the team I want to be with of the two he has," said Shipton. Turnbull also owns the St. George Ravens. "However we decide

to go about it for next year, I'll definitely be here in some capacity."

Marson had similar sentiments.

"As of right now I look forward to sticking with the Predators," she said. "I still have to talk to Robert to see what he has planned but I

still plan to stick with them and see where life takes me from there."

Turnbull had plenty of "thank yous" to spread around.

"I'd like to thank, of course, the players, our staff for what they've done. I couldn't have done this without them. The fans were fantastic, the rink staff and rink management staff were very obliging. I have zero complaints."

"You're only as good as the people around you and I had a great, great group of people around me making this work. It was just a fantastic year."

On the ice, though things may not have gone their way in the end, Niagara's coaching staff were impressed with Wednesday's win over North York and said there was plenty of celebration in the dressing room.

"It was a total team effort. It's one of the better games we played this year, plus we had the goaltending – it was a huge win," said Turnbull. "It was great to see. They deserved it."

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New pro at NOTL Golf Club

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

A little over a week into his new job as head pro at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club, Keith Vant has yet to have a day off – and he doesn't expect much rest for the next little while.

"The days are really flying by," the Niagara Falls native said in an interview Monday.

Vant, 29, a graduate of Niagara College's professional golf management program, is busy getting the pro shop ready for the season, thinking about what activities he might introduce and making plans for the various leagues at the club.

He noted the clubhouse and restaurant reopened on Wednesday and golf superintendent Mike Magwood is hoping the course is ready for play by Monday, April 4 – barring heavy rains or snow.

Meantime, "I have 800 new faces to get to know," said Vant. The club has about 300 full-time members and another 500 social members.

Vant took over the post on March 15 after longtime pro Billy Simkin and associate pro Ricky Watson both



Keith Vant is the new head pro at the NOTL Golf Club.

moved on. Vant has been in touch with both, seeking advice and insights.

The new NOTL pro comes from Legends on the Niagara golf club, where he was an assistant pro.

"I'm looking forward to meeting the members and finding out what they'd like us to be doing," said Vant, but cautioned that, with his late start in the job, technological additions like online bookings and other changes might have to wait.

"We'll probably just be able to do some small things this year," he said.

His dad Jason introduced him to golf when he was barely a toddler. He'd accompany his father on occasional golf outings and hit some shots just for fun.

After high school, unsure what he wanted to do, but knowing he wanted to be involved in sports management, he realized, "I can play golf till I'm over 80" and work at a golf club.

He has only played the NOTL course twice, he said. But both were memorable – for the weather (windy, off Lake Ontario) and for the circumstances.

In 2015, he played on the day he wrote his last college course exam.

And in 2019, he golfed with his parents and an uncle. That turned out to be his uncle's last round of golf as he died after heart surgery the following St. Patrick's Day.

With all that the new job entails and only returning assistant pro Cam Zeppa to help manage things, Vant is not sure how often he will get to play this season.

But he's eager to get a few rounds in.

Meanwhile, he and Zeppa are busy contacting suppliers and trying to make sure the pro shop is well-stocked once the season gets under way.

Like last year, the COVID hangover is still affecting supply chains.



What: 4-Course Whiskey Pairing Dinner
Where: The Irish Harp Pub
When: Wednesday, April 6 @ 6:00pm

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NOTE: The wrong puzzle was published last week, so this week's is a repeat, with the correct puzzle in place. Thank you to our readers for letting us know about the error.

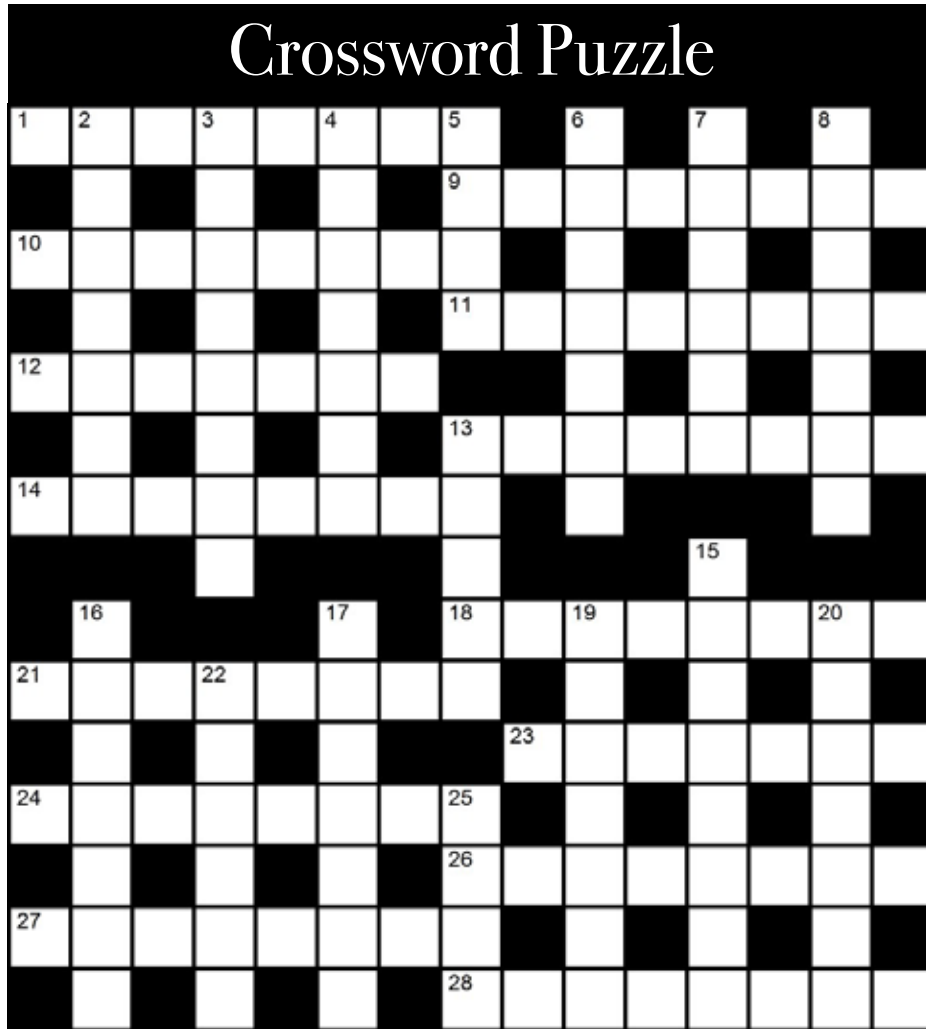
Have some fun 

Across

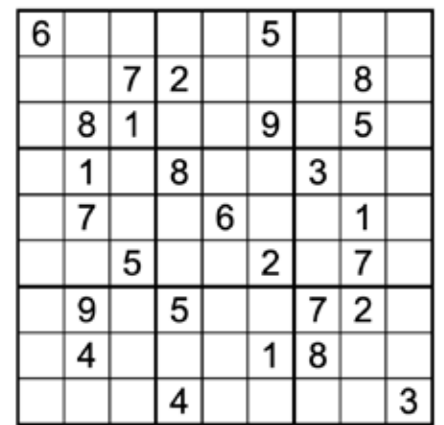
- 1. German liqueur (8)
- 9. Burden excessively (8)
- 10. Self-important (8)
- 11. Travelling case for clothes (8)
- 12. Refrain voluntarily (7)
- 13. Gambling game (4,4)
- 14. Private feud (8)
- 18. Acts (8)
- 21. Bald (8)
- 23. Black magic (7)
- 24. I o W town (8)
- 26. Staple of Mediterranean cooking (5,3)
- 27. Goodbye (8)
- 28. Charismatic (8)

Down

- 2. Responsive to drugs (7)
- 3. Midday (8)
- 4. Musician who could play the Moonlight Sonata (7)
- 5. Drunkards (4)
- 6. Musical performance (7)
- 7. Tranquil (6)
- 8. Cushion for kneeling (7)
- 13. Poches with a torch (5)
- 15. Substantial (8)
- 16. West Atlantic island country (7)
- 17. Decreased (7)
- 19. Covering for a building (7)
- 20. Cocktail (7)
- 22. Battered (6)
- 25. Small island (4)



Last issue's answers



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Virgil ‘pod school’ begins **working with** education ministry

Continued from Front Page

The school was shut down by the ministry in February for operating as a private school while claiming to be a “learning pod” and citing health and safety concerns related to the pandemic.

The ministry received a temporary injunction that closed the school after The Lake Report published a series of stories about the self-described learning pod, its refusal to follow provincial rules during the pandemic and its lack of accreditation as a child care or school facility.

The ministry confirmed McCourt has now submitted the necessary paperwork to operate a private school.

The education ministry will conduct inspections of the school to verify it is meeting the requirements of a private school and will carry out inspections of the facility and of teachers as necessary.

McCourt told The Lake Report she is working “directly with the Ministry of Education myself to ensure

that the operations do meet every single requirement set out by them.”

Co-founder Lori Davidson is no longer involved in the school project, she said.

“I took over communication and began working with the ministry instead of against them,” McCourt said.

She plans to continue to work closely with the ministry to ensure the school meets and exceeds provincial standards.

“I don’t want it to be closed down again,” she said.

McCourt said she is looking forward to getting the school back on its feet and rebuilding its reputation.

“We’re just kind of taking it slow for the first couple months to really build back trust from the community, because I feel like it didn’t start out how it should have,” she said.

Media attention prompted negative criticism of the alliance, but “it was really something that was our own fault, too. I am aware of that,” she said.

“We’ve built back better now and were just really focused on giving the kids a



Monica McCourt is now the sole operator of Niagara Alternative Learning Alliance. FILE

nice place to come.”

Many of the same teachers are coming back to help, she said, and many of the students are returning to traditional schools as pandemic restrictions get lifted across the province.

McCourt said the alliance is an alternative to traditional schooling and not a homeschooling community.

“Alternative schooling has been around for decades. A lot of people are just choosing different styles of education for their kids,” she said.

“And there’s nothing wrong with that.”

The school is equipped with state-of-the-art items, like virtual reality headsets, to give kids a hands-on education with changing technology, she said.

She is also excited to get a community garden started and will be teaching traditional school subjects as outlined by the ministry.

McCourt said she is striving to make sure the school is run appropriately and the educators are well-equipped for the work.

Everyone also has to pass a criminal background check to be involved, she said.

The school will be considered a non-inspected private school, which simply means it will not provide credit courses toward an Ontario secondary school diploma.

Students will have to attend traditional high schools after their education at the Learning Alliance, which is the case with many private schools.

In order to teach at a private school, an educator does not need to have a degree in education, McCourt said, but she noted some of her educators do and most of them have degrees in the

various other subjects they will be teaching.

While private schools are not required to have their children take standardized testing, the Learning Alliance is well-equipped with documents from the education ministry to know exactly what level a child’s education should be at depending on their age.

“We’re working with the Ministry of Education and we do assessments to see where (the kids) are and then work with them to help them better their skills in certain areas,” she said.

“I follow the Ministry of Education guidelines for things like that, because we want to make sure that children are successful.”

She said the period of getting shut down by the ministry turned out to be a learning experience.

“I learned a lot going through it and I feel good,” McCourt said.

“I’m kind of happy that I’ve had this time to regroup and make sure everything is running as it should be.”

In working with the ministry, McCourt said she has realized she shares its

purpose of wanting the best for children.

“The ministry isn’t there to try and stop you from doing things,” she said.

“They’re there to protect the children and that’s their job. Fighting with them and not listening and just trying to protest them is not the way to do it.”

“The (ministry) is there to protect kids and we should be thankful they are.”

McCourt said she had been given poor legal advice and was led to believe that the school would not be shut down for operating outside of the regulations of the ministry.

Despite its tumultuous beginning, the school was never meant to be anything more than a viable education alternative, McCourt said, adding all she wants is to provide a good alternative to traditional schooling and see her students succeed in life.

She said she will also be submitting quarterly data about the demographics of those enrolled in her school to the ministry, as required under ministry regulations.

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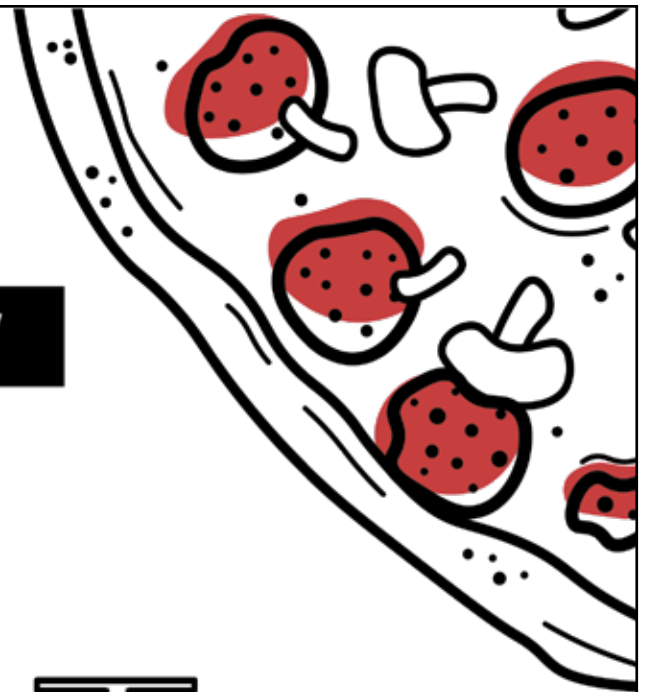
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Brownies on parade for Royal visit

Girl Guide cookies will be on sale in April, so make sure to pick up a box and support our local unit. Here's a photo of our 1939 Brownies unit marching down King Street to see King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (current Queen Elizabeth II's parents) during their 1939 Royal Tour of Canada. The Royal Tour was the first time a reigning monarch set foot on Canadian soil and many Canadians came out to celebrate. You can see the train tracks at the bottom left corner and the house at 169 King St. in the background.



A final argument for livability and affordability

Brian Marshall
Columnist

For several weeks now we have been considering the issues facing our towns and cities to build affordable housing in a form that is human scaled and supports livability.

Decades of car-centric development have created sprawling urban deserts and sterile island towers, which may house people but at the cost of community. Moreover, this model of development is at the expense of the financial health of the city (or town) that has been built out.

I have driven through city after city in North America on roads that are cracked, patched and have seen much better days.

Not a week goes by without hearing from one mayor or another talking about municipal budgets, which seem to have chronic shortfalls requiring either spending cuts or cash injections from other levels of government.

Since this is an endemic problem shared by the majority, it is unlikely that its cause can be completely laid at the feet of municipal government incompetence and/or irresponsible spending.

For some time, I have suspected there is something fundamentally wrong with the typical revenue generation model employed by our cities and towns.

Here and there over the last couple of decades I have seen data from studies on individual cities that pointed to the root problem, but until very recently I'd been missing an address directed toward the "big" picture.

A week ago that changed when a good friend of mine sent me a link to a presentation by Patreon entitled "Suburbia is Subsidized" (available on YouTube) in which the data and conclusions from multiple studies are brought together in a very compelling argument.

In short, it conclusively illustrates that residential suburbs developed after 1960 are a net loss against city expenses (per acre infrastructure/services cost significantly more than tax revenues generated).

While car-centric retail (malls, big-box power centres and the like) contribute less than six per cent of the revenues generated by medium-density retail/commercial in a form typical of the Main Street in most towns and cities. In fact, car-centric retail is also a net loss lodged against municipal budgets.

What I find truly fascinating is that low-density mixed-use (retail/residential) buildings, such as this column suggested last week, actually contribute nearly five times more to municipal coffers on a per acre basis than car-centric retail developments.

And, when these low density mixed-use buildings are compared to residential suburbia, one finds a revenue stream of nearly \$4,000 more per acre.

Given these numbers is it any real surprise that, after receiving the results of their own study in 2013, the City of Guelph elected to drasti-

cally curtail the rapacious outward expansion of its suburbs and support in-fill construction, particularly of mixed-use buildings.

To be clear, I am not ringing the bell to suggest that all single-family residential building in NOTL be halted. There is a demographic for these homes which should be satisfied.

On the other hand, there is a significant demand (perhaps larger than that for the single house on a big lot) for low- or no-maintenance dwellings in walkable, livable community environs.

Further, there is absolutely no harm in allowing the establishment of commercial endeavours off of Queen Street, Niagara Stone Road, Four Mile Creek Road, etc.

Having a few art galleries, cafes or shops in other locations around Niagara-on-the-Lake's communities would benefit the residents while encouraging a more immersive visitor experience. To say nothing about our ability to manage the context of development within our streetscapes.

All this and higher municipal revenues, too. It's worth considering.

Looking to the Stars



April is coming and maybe some dreams will come true

This week we see Mercury entering Aries and Venus conjunct Saturn.

Thursday, March 24: The moon moves from all-knowing Sagittarius into matter-of-fact Capricorn, setting up a challenge to finish something started but not yet complete. On March 24, 1911, was born the man who gave life to Fred and Wilma Flintstone, George and Jane Jetson and other characters. He was Joseph Barbera.

Friday, March 25: Early this morning, the sun and the moon are 90 degrees apart, a formation known this time as the third-quarter moon in Capricorn. News today includes a surprise from the future. He was born Reginald Kenneth Dwight. We know him as Elton John. Today he turns 75.

Saturday, March 26: As the moon moves from conquer-all Capricorn to refreshing Aquarius, it sets up a night of busy dreams. Happy birthday to U.S. politician Nancy Pelosi who turns 82 today.

Sunday, March 27: Today Mercury enters Aries. In the past two weeks, Mercury has been racing through Pisces, concocting some big plans with Jupiter and Neptune. When Mercury finally leaves Pisces and enters Aries, it's reality check time. Aries is the "a little less conversation, a little more action" sign.

Those ideas and possibilities that stand a realistic chance to get materialized will now be put into action. Movie director Quentin Tarantino turns 59 today.

Monday, March 28: Venus is conjunct Saturn this afternoon, encouraging us to "check in" with our heart. Are these Piscean plans, ideas and initiatives aligned with our values

(Venus)? Can they fit into the big picture of our life (Aquarius)? Can they stand the test of time (Saturn)? If yes, then the upcoming month, April 2022, is our chance to make our wildest dreams a reality. In April we have the much-anticipated Jupiter-Neptune conjunction in Pisces, as well as two Uranian eclipses that promise interesting twists and developments. In March and April, the universe is truly giving us a unique opportunity to up-level our lives. This month allow yourself to dream big, bigger than you ever before. The past two years have framed us to look at life through Saturnian lenses, and putting on a new pair of (pink) glasses can feel a bit weird. Don't think about the how just yet. That's a job for Aries and Taurus. For now, just go with the flow and allow yourself to dream big, like you did as a child when everything was possible. Happy birthday #36 to Lady Gaga.

Tuesday, March 29: Mercury leaves imaginative Pisces for impulsive Aries and then gets a boost from Mars in Aquarius, bringing into play news or ideas that have a futuristic and fearless quality. It was March 29, 1848, that the water ceased to flow over the cataract at Niagara Falls due to an ice jam above the brink.

Wednesday, March 30: While our emotions get a boost, or rather, two boosts, first from Jupiter and then from Neptune, our mental state is also kept thanks to a positive alignment with Saturn. So, it should be a happy 54th birthday for Celine Dion, born March 30, 1968.

Bill Auchterlonie's weekly podcast Looking up to the Stars is at www.lutts.ca.

Astrology is a form of entertainment, not a science.



Club House open for the season

Name That Tune returns March 24 at 6 p.m. Course will remain closed until nicer weather.

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Joanne Young says to use a light rake on your lawn before reseeding and top dressing. SUPPLIED

Raking, fertilizing and getting your lawn ready



Joanne Young
Garden Columnist

Spring is officially here. It had to happen at some point. The temperatures are warming up, the snow is melting and the birds are singing.

One of the first tasks that we tackle in the garden each spring is getting our lawns off to a good start.

Raking: The first step in spring care is raking over the lawn with a fan rake. This is to help clean up any debris left on the lawn over winter and reduces the chance of disease on your lawn, such as snow mould. It also loosens up the soil surface before putting down grass seed.

Fertilizing

If crabgrass was a problem in your lawn last year, then you will want to get it under control this spring. Early to mid-April (when the forsythia is just com-

ing into bloom) is the right time to apply a crabgrass preventer such as corn gluten. Corn gluten meal is a powdery byproduct of the corn milling process. This natural protein is very effective as a plant food as well as a weed suppressor.

As a plant food, corn gluten has a N-P-K ratio of 9-1-0. As a weed suppressant, it acts as a natural "pre-emergent," meaning it inhibits seed germination by drying out a seed as soon as it cracks open to sprout. If you can keep the crabgrass seeds from germinating for those first couple weeks of spring, they will most likely stay dormant for the entire season.

If crabgrass wasn't a problem last year, then you should be fertilizing the lawn with a higher nitrogen fertilizer (high first number). Try to use organic fertilizer wherever possible. Most fertilizers are effective for five to six weeks.

Dethatching

Thatch is the layer of slowly decomposing grass stems, dead roots and debris that accumulates above the soil and below the grass blades. Having some thatch (less than one-quarter inch) is beneficial. It helps to absorb moisture and keep it at the root level, and it shades the roots so that the soil does not dry out as quickly.

Thatch becomes a problem when it is thicker than one-quarter inch and is more of a problem when you have acidic soil or where a lot of high-nitrogen fertilizers have been used. The micro-organisms that help to break down the thatch layer do not like soils high in nitrogen or acidic conditions.

Dethatching should be done just before vigorous growth in spring or fall, but it does not need to be done every year, just when it is more the one-quarter inch thick. To check to see if you need to dethatch, dig up a small area of sod and check the thickness of the spongy layer below the grass blades, and above the roots.

Dethatching is done with a sharp, diamond-toothed thatching rake. Simply pull the rake through the grass and it will pull out a lot of the brown, decomposing debris.

Aerating And Rolling

Aerating your lawn is a procedure where cores of soil are removed to allow more air into a compacted soil. This does not need to be done every year unless you have very heavy, hard soil. Aerating is best done early spring or in the fall, especially if we have had a very dry summer. There are aerating tools for the homeowner, but you may want to

consider hiring someone to do this for you.

Another job to be done is rolling your lawn. This will help smooth out rough areas. This also does not need to be done every year – it will compact your soil even more and just fills in the wormholes that were helping you aerate the soil naturally.

Rolling your lawn should be done when soil is slightly moist. If it is too dry it won't be as effective.

Reseeding or Top Dressing

Before you begin to reseed your lawn, rake up any dead debris that remains from the winter. Then put a thin layer of fresh topsoil or compost over area that you will be re-seeding. Next, generously scatter the seed over the desired area. You can lightly cover or rake over the scattered seeds in to hide them from the birds. Keep the seeded area evenly moist for the next week or two. The seeds should germinate in 10 to 14 days. The thicker the lawn is, the fewer weeds you will have.

Just remember, "If the grass is always greener on the other side, then others must feel that way about your side."

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



The NOTL Museum is seeking new members. FILE

Museum launches campaign to recruit new members

Barbara Worthy
Special to The Lake Report

If you believe in heritage. If you believe in the power of culture to build community. If you believe in the safeguarding of artifacts, records, publications, and pictures ...

And if you believe in the stories that shape and define Niagara-on-the-Lake, then you believe in a modern museum. And that's exactly what the NOTL Museum is all about.

For more than 125 years, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, operating by the Niagara Historical Society, has been collecting, preserving and safeguarding the community's heritage.

But stand by for the next 125 years, because the NOTL Museum will also be a cultural hub, an interactive and welcoming space and a place where living history is as much a priority as collecting history.

The proposed expansion for the NOTL Museum will ensure it continues to be a hub for knowledge, history and resources that reflect Niagara-on-the-Lake.

However, the museum's community events, activities, prized lectures, concerts, and hugely popular volunteer and research opportunities, will be en-

hanced and multiplied.

And that's why the NOTL Museum has launched a membership drive currently. For a relatively low outlay, a membership at the NOTL Museum indicates that heritage and culture are important qualities of life here in Niagara.

Basic memberships run at \$35 for individuals and \$60 for a dual household. Plus the museum has introduced a whole series of enhanced options offering even more benefits for joining the historical society.

Back in 1895, the first members of Janet Carnochan's beloved Niagara Historical Society were charged the whopping sum of 50 cents for the privilege of being part of a brand-new venture.

Those early members provided a rich heritage for all of Niagara's residents today, and certainly set a standard of excellence that the NOTL Museum is proud to continue. Feedback to the museum has ranged from "Love the events, love the gift shop, love the books" to "For a little museum, you think Big!"

For more information about membership and volunteer opportunities, email bworthy@nhsm.ca, or call the museum at 905-468-3912.

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