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## Another hotel checks in

Despite parking concerns, NOTL approves seven-storey hotel, restaurant for Glendale



A rendering of the proposed seven-storey, 227-room hotel on York Road. The project, approved by council Tuesday evening, will add to an existing cluster of hotels in the Glendale area. Along with the Staybridge Suites and Holiday Inn Express, it is owned by Niagara York Road Inc. SOURCED

Paige Seburn | Local Journalism Initiative | The Lake Report

A seven-storey hotel and a restaurant are coming to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Council approved the official plan and zoning bylaw amendments needed for the project at 524 York Rd. on Tuesday, clearing

the way for a 227-room hotel and a restaurant next to two existing hotels in the Glendale area. The decision still needs to be formally adopted at an April 28 council meeting.

The development, led by Niagara York Road Inc., includes 273 park-

ing spaces — a number that drew concern from some councillors as being too low.

“Is that how we do planning?” Coun. Gary Burroughs said. “We just hope like heck that they’re not all going to be full at the same time?”

Coun. Andrew Niven also raised concerns about weekends, conferences and weddings.

“Are you confident there’s enough parking for all of that?” he asked.

Continued on Page 3

## Province offers little explanation for not OK'ing NOTL's council cut

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

**OFFICIAL PLAN APPROVED:**  
Council sends final version of guiding document to province for review. **Page 2**

Seven or nine? How many members will Niagara-on-the-Lake's next council have? Probably nine.

So far, Doug Ford's government hasn't formally told the town it won't allow a reduction — but Municipal Affairs Minister Rob Flack indicated to town officials

that its request to cut down council will not proceed for the 2026 election.

However, the minister has yet to provide an explanation to the Town of NOTL for why its request wasn't granted.

Although the change

would have required special provincial permission — Ontario typically requires municipalities to act before Jan. 1 of an election year — council voted March 24, after missing that deadline,

Continued on Page 4



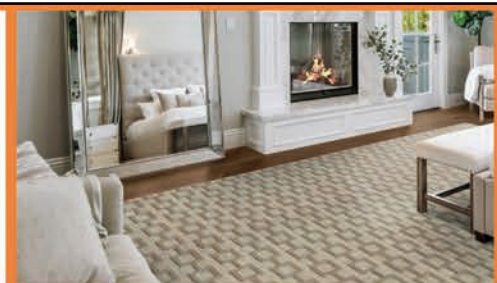
Council's plan to reduce its number of members to seven from nine isn't going to happen ahead of the 2026 election, says Municipal Affairs Minister Rob Flack. A decision like that would have had to be done before Jan. 1 of an election year. The town and mayor have not explained why they tried anyway. FILE



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# NOTL finishes long-awaited official plan, sends to province

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

A plan meant to shape Niagara-on-the-Lake for the next 25 years is about ready to be sent off to the province for final approval — after almost a decade of work and one last change.

More changes could still come to the final draft of the official plan after concerns were raised Tuesday about its wording.

After making one small adjustment, council approved the final draft — which still needs to be formalized through a bylaw expected to be presented at an April 28 council meeting.

Once that bylaw passes, it must be sent to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval before it takes effect.

The updated plan will guide where homes, businesses and infrastructure are built through to 2051, setting rules for housing, roads and services while aiming to protect farmland, heritage and the natural environment.

“This official plan reflects where we are today and sets a clear, confident direction for how we will grow and thrive in the years ahead,” said Aimee Alderman, director of planning, building and development services for the town.

NOTL’s current planning framework dates back to a plan first put in place in 1994 and updated in 2017.

A newer version approved in 2019 never came into force due to changes in provincial policy and the approval of the Niagara Region official plan in 2022, which required the town to update its own plan.

Councillors described Tuesday’s vote as a milestone after a long process.

“This process started in 2017 — that’s nine years ago,” said Coun. Wendy Cheropita. “This is a moment of celebration.”

But before approving the plan, council changed the wording of a policy related to estate and farm wineries.

Coun. Sandra O’Connor asked to bring back earlier wording from the town’s previous plan, requiring that at least 75 per cent of land associated with wineries

be in active vineyard production.

“In the updated one, it doesn’t say anything about 75 per cent. It just says predominantly,” she said.

“We got a letter today saying we need more clarity in our wording — and for clarity purposes, I really think ‘predominantly’ is going the opposite way.”

Council approved the change, passing the modified plan.

While a winery representative warned that some of the proposed wording could make existing wineries non-compliant as soon as the plan takes effect, council did not adopt those changes at the meeting.

“I worry that some of the wording that was put in there actually sets us into a position where some — even the founding wineries — would already not be in compliance with those rules,” said Del Rollo, the vice president of corporate affairs at Arterra Wines Canada.

“The policy changes are important to us because we are a farm-first industry — local fruit matters,” he added.



Fiona Main, senior policy planner for Niagara-on-the-Lake, presents the town’s final draft Official Plan to council Tuesday, where it was approved. PAIGE SEBURN

Rollo asked council to adjust language to better support breweries and distilleries together, maintain a focus on local fruit and better reflect how wineries currently operate.

“We’re happy to meet with staff, councillors anytime to be able to discuss this,” he said.

Staff said it would review his comments and report back to council.

“Our hope is that we’re able to provide a bit of a memo back to council — with any changes or any asks that staff have been requested to consider — to say how we’ve reviewed those and how they’ve been incorporated, or not, into the final,” said Alderman.

“That would be before you for adoption of the bylaw on April 28.”

Gordon Stratford, speak-

ing on behalf of the NOTL Residents Association, supported the plan overall and the work behind it, but urged clearer, more definitive language.

“While we and others would like to have seen greater use of the words ‘shall and will,’ rather than ‘may and should,’ we see this as a strong foundation for the whole planning process going forward,” he said.

Stratford highlighted the importance of a future community planning permit system to improve transparency and predictability.

“Our committee, along with others in town, see this as a vital tool in the planning process,” he said.

Staff said the official plan allows for that type of system, but implementing one would require a new bylaw and likely restarting earlier work on the file.

“We can certainly have staff take a look through the work that was completed in the early 2020s,” said Alderman, after O’Connor and Coun. Gary Burroughs proposed a motion directing staff to do so.

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## Simcoe Park gets makeover

Workers ready the grounds at Simcoe Park for the installation of new playground equipment, replacing the old structures that had reached the end of their lifespan. DAVE VAN DE LAAR



The 524 York Rd. site in Niagara-on-the-Lake, where Niagara York Road Inc. plans a new seven-storey hotel and restaurant alongside its existing Staybridge Suites and Holiday Inn Express. SOURCED

## Council questions whether parking will be adequate for hotel, restaurant

*Continued from Front Page*

Aimee Alderman, the town's director of planning, building and development services, said hotel guests would likely also be using the restaurant and that "staff are comfortable" the plan would not create additional pressure on surrounding parking.

"We feel very confident in terms of it working," said planning consultant David Falletta of Bousfields Inc., representing the property owner.

"We've done a thorough parking analysis based on not only this site, but similar sites throughout the region."

Falletta said buses are expected to drop off guests and leave rather than park on site.

"There's a lot of opportunities throughout the community where these buses can park," he said.

Boroughs asked staff to identify those locations. Staff said it would report back.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor also questioned delays tied to earlier environmental commitments on the site.

"Five years later and fulfilling the other woodlands, reciprocation, replanting hasn't been done yet," she

said. "You're talking about wanting to work on this quickly. Why has it taken five years?"

Falletta said woodland compensation tied to the first phase was planned but never finalized.

"Unfortunately, that agreement never came to fruition, even though my client tried to get that agreement in place," he said.

The current proposal requires that agreement to be secured before any new development can proceed.

"We've advanced what we think needs to go into that agreement," Falletta

said, adding that it will be reviewed by town staff.

The proposal has been years in the making — first pitched as a 10-storey hotel with two restaurants before being scaled back following concerns from the Niagara District Airport last year.

Walkways and landscaping have been added to improve pedestrian safety and connections across the site, and the buildings themselves have also been shifted closer to York Road — "in better alignment with the Glendale district plan," Alderman said.

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# Derbyshire hits 70




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[www.theeyedoc.ca](http://www.theeyedoc.ca)



Friends and fans gathered at the NOTL Legion on Saturday evening to fête Mark Derbyshire, one of Niagara-on-the-Lake's most talented and consistent golfers — ever. The veteran of the links was marking his 70th birthday and a special edition mock front page of The Lake Report was produced to help celebrate the milestone. Derby, as he's known to his friends, was the men's club champion an astounding 30 straight times from 1975 to 2005. After he stopped competing for a few years, he came back and won three more men's titles and two senior men's championships. He also set several course scoring records over the years and remains a dominant competitor. DAVE VAN DE LAAR



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# Council cut likely won't happen soon

Continued from Front Page

to request that Flack reduce its size to seven members from nine.

Coun. Erwin Wiens said Flack told him the decision does not mean the idea is off the table.

"What (Flack) said was, at this point in time, they weren't going ahead with it," said Wiens, adding Flack "did say that this could be done for the 2030 election."

"Timing may have been an issue, but that's a question for Minister Flack."

Flack did not respond to questions by press time about why the proposal was declined — including whether timing or legislative requirements played a role.

Wiens said before Jan. 1, the town "hadn't gotten to the point about reducing council size."

"That's why the request had to go to the province for their assistance," he said.

Town spokesperson Marah Minor said the town has not received a formal written response outlining the decision not to go forward with NOTL council cutdown to seven.

She said that prior to an April 2 press conference — where Flack announced proposed legislation to cut Niagara's regional council from 32 to 13 members and give the chair "strong" powers — there was a conversation between Flack and



NOTL will still have nine councillors ... for now. FILE

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa.

"The minister indicated that the request would not be proceeding for the 2026 term of council," Minor said.

Zalepa was not available for comment by press time. Minor said the town's governance working group did not play a role in communicating the proposal to the province. Instead, the information was conveyed through the town's government relations consultant.

She added that staff were directed by council to provide the approved motion wording.

Minor did not respond by press time to questions about whether the approved motion wording will be made public, when it could be released or whether it could be provided.

"I think that the minister made the wisest choice," Wiens said.

"He made some changes, but he did not make massive, drastic changes that were going to have huge implications and costly implications," he said. "He's left it up to Niagara region,

Niagara-on-the-Lake, to make decisions based on their own future."

"So now, we sink or swim on our own."

Wiens said the request was also to show the province NOTL is willing to be flexible with its governance structure — work he said the province acknowledged.

"Yes, he did," Wiens said when asked whether the minister explicitly said letters from Niagara municipalities helped avoid the prospect of amalgamation, calling it "the victory here."

"(Flack) looked at the work we were doing in Niagara and other municipalities, but certainly in Niagara-on-the-Lake," he said. "That helped him make his decision — the fact that we're willing and open."

Other councillors said the proposal raised concerns about representation and limited financial benefit.

"To me, the size of our council only affects the representation for our residents — not any budget savings," said Coun. Gary Burroughs.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor

said if the province wanted the change to happen, "they could have approved it."

"The province changed the size of the Toronto council in the middle of an election period," she said, referring to the province's move July 2018, it reduced the number of council seats in Toronto to 25 from 47, halfway through the year's municipal election campaign.

O'Connor said the town should weigh the broader implications of any reduction.

"The downside is that it reduces the availability of councillors that residents can contact for issues, thus reducing democratic access," she said.

Coun. Andrew Niven said cost savings would be relatively minor in the context of the town's overall budget.

"For that reason, I don't believe cost savings alone should be the primary driver of a decision like this," he said.

He said any future changes would need to balance efficiency with maintaining strong representation across NOTL.

"I do think there will continue to be conversations about council composition," said Niven.

"Whether it remains a priority will likely depend on further input from the province, as well as ongoing local discussion and public feedback."

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# Man dead following Monday collision

Staff  
The Lake Report

A man is dead following a head-on collision Monday morning on Niagara Stone Road.

Niagara Regional Police say officers were notified at approximately 9:32 a.m. following multiple 911 calls

from witnesses and passersby about a crash that involved an SUV and a panel truck. The two drivers were alone in their vehicles.

“Tragically, one male driver was pronounced deceased at the scene,” police said, adding that “the driver of a second vehicle was transported by Niagara

Emergency Medical Services to a local hospital with minor injuries.”

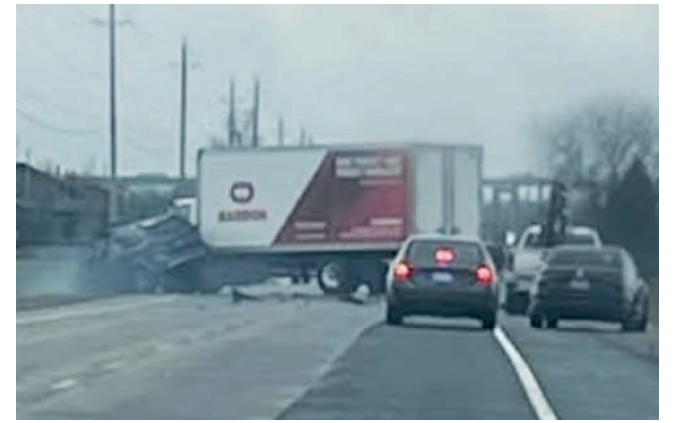
Police would not name anyone involved.

Officers responded to the scene along with emergency crews, including Niagara Emergency Medical Services and Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire and

Emergency Services. The police collision reconstruction unit has taken over the investigation.

Police ask anyone who witnessed the collision, or who may have dash-cam or video footage, to contact them at 905-688-4111, option 3, extension 1009259.

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



A photo of the crash was posted to Facebook on Monday.

## Notice of Virtual Public Information Centre

### QEW Garden City Skyway Bridge Twinning Project Niagara Region, City of St. Catharines, Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

#### THE PROJECT

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) and Infrastructure Ontario (IO) have retained Skyway Bridging Partners to undertake the Detail Design phase for the construction of new 'twin' Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW) Garden City Skyway bridge across the Welland Canal, north of the existing QEW Garden City Skyway. The project limits are from Niagara Street, in the City of St. Catharines, to Glendale Avenue, in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, as shown in the key map below.



The scope of work includes:

- Construction of a 2.2 km twin QEW Garden City Skyway bridge connecting St. Catharines and Niagara-on-the-Lake
- Widening the QEW on approaches to the new bridge
- Realignment of local roads
- Construction of pier protection systems, retaining walls and stormwater management ponds
- Relocation of affected utilities

#### THE PROCESS

MTO completed a Preliminary Design and Class Environmental Assessment (EA) Study in 2017, which followed the approved environmental planning process for Group 'B' projects under the Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Transportation Facilities (2000). The project's recommended plan is documented in the Transportation Environmental Study Report (TESR) (MTO 2017), which received EA approval in 2018.

In September 2025, MTO transitioned this project from the 2000 Class EA to a Group 'B' project under the new Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Transportation Facilities and Municipal Expressways (2024). The rationale for transitioning from the requirements of the 2000 Class EA to the 2024 Class EA was to improve the efficiency of the process, and reduce duplication, while maintaining strong environmental oversight and protection. Any commitments made during the 2000 Class EA process will be considered and/or addressed or fulfilled under the 2024 Class EA process. Further investigations, analysis, identification of protection

measures, and permitting are being carried out during Detail Design, which will be incorporated into the contract package for implementation during construction.

Information produced as part of this project, including background information and the TESR, is available on the project's website at [www.qewgcs.ca](http://www.qewgcs.ca).

#### VIRTUAL PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRE

You are invited to attend a Public Information Centre (PIC) for this project:

The purpose of the PIC is to provide an update on the project, and present and seek input on the design refinements. The PIC materials will be made available on the project website for a two (2) week comment period beginning on May 6, 2026, and ending on May 20, 2026.



Date: May 6, 2026

Time: 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Where: [www.qewgcs.ca](http://www.qewgcs.ca)

Virtual Meeting on Link:  
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Meeting ID: 680 4756 5595

tel: 1-647-558-0588

#### COMMENTS

If you wish to provide comments, have your name added to the mailing list, or if you have questions about the project, please contact one of the project team members listed below:

Grant Kauffman  
Environmental Director  
[Gkauffman@skywaybridgingpartners.com](mailto:Gkauffman@skywaybridgingpartners.com)

Jeff Fellman  
Project Director  
[Jfellman@skywaybridgingpartners.com](mailto:Jfellman@skywaybridgingpartners.com)

Mina Awad, P. Eng.  
Senior Project Engineer  
Major Highway Projects Division  
Ministry of Transportation  
[Mina.Awad@ontario.ca](mailto:Mina.Awad@ontario.ca)

Information will be collected in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. With the exception of personal information, all comments will become part of the public record. If you have any accessibility requirements in order to participate in this project, please contact one of the Project Team members listed above.



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# NOTL in bloom

Old Town celebration of flowers returns in May with animal inspiration

Staff  
The Lake Report

Flowers, food and festivities will fill the streets of Niagara-on-the-Lake next month as the In Bloom Festival returns with a bigger lineup of events and displays.

Running May 8 to 11, the festival will transform Old Town into a flower-filled showcase, with organizers promising expanded installations and new events for this year.

Presented by Vintage Hotels, this year's theme, "all creatures big and small," will feature animal-inspired floral installations across more locations, along with interactive photo opportunities for visitors.

New additions include an afternoon tea experience hosted by HobNob Restaurant on May 9, 10 and 11, as well as hands-on workshops focused on flower arranging, botanical art and garden design led by local experts.

Visitors can also take in large-scale floral displays throughout Old Town and other parts of Niagara-on-the-Lake, designed as walkable, immersive experiences.



One of last year's displays was outside of Zees Restaurant on Picton Street. This year's theme will be "all creatures big and small," focused on animal-inspired arrangements. FILE

The festival will open with the Bonnet Luncheon, where attendees are encouraged to wear floral-themed outfits and compete for best bonnet, alongside food, drinks and photo opportunities.

Other highlights include the Gardens at Pillar and Post, featuring floral art installations, boutique vendors, a gardening speaker series and food and drink from local producers.

Gardening expert Frankie Flowers is scheduled to take part in the speaker series and host the Birds of a Feather Gala Dinner, a

floral-themed culinary event showcasing Niagara chefs and wines.

"We are thrilled to bring Niagara-on-the-Lake In Bloom back for a second year," said April Brunet, vice-president of sales and marketing at Vintage Hotels, in a media release. "With expanded installations, new experiences and fresh culinary highlights, 2026 promises to be the most immersive and inspiring festival yet."

Outdoor floral installations throughout Old Town and participating businesses will be free to view.

Tickets will be required for select events, including access to the Gardens at Pillar and Post, workshops, the Bonnet Luncheon, afternoon tea and the gala dinner.

Admission to the Gardens at Pillar and Post is \$14 plus tax, or \$21 plus tax for a premium ticket that includes a beverage.

Organizers are encouraging visitors to make a weekend of the festival, with accommodations available at Vintage Hotels properties in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

To purchase tickets, visit [notlinbloom.com](http://notlinbloom.com).

# Pleasant Manor approved for daycare centre

Paige Seburn  
The Lake Report

A daycare for up to 96 children is moving ahead at Radiant Care Pleasant Manor after Niagara-on-the-Lake council approved a zoning change Tuesday, bringing the town's younger and older residents together under one roof.

The amendment allows a licensed daycare within the seniors' residence in Virgil, to be located in the basement of an existing seniors' apartment building at 1743 Four Mile Creek Rd. The space is being repurposed after a new 160-bed long-term care home was completed on the site late last year.

For Radiant Care, the decision marks a turning point.



Pleasant Manor CEO Tim Siemens. KEVIN MACLEAN

"With this decision, it gives us an opportunity now to really mobilize," said Tim Siemens, the organization's chief executive officer.

"We have been doing some work behind the scenes with an architect to cast out prospective,

preliminary designs — but not going too far until the decision was made."

Siemens said it is too soon to discuss detailed plans, timelines or a budget, adding he is not aware of any further zoning changes or approvals needed for the site.

But he said the idea behind the project is already clear.

"Our seniors — they just get a lot of enjoyment of watching children," Siemens said.

"I can't begin to describe how many teary eyes, including my own, that I saw," he said, pointing to a recent visit when about 40 to 60 kindergarten students from St. Davids Public School sang to residents in the facility's great room.

"These kids were singing, 'L, O, V, E, we love you' and other songs," said Siemens.

"It was just so impactful," he said. "Having children interacting with seniors and vice versa — it just brings so much joy and strengthens communities."

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



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# Stephen Lewis fundraiser responds to global HIV/AIDS funding cuts

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

A sharp drop in global funding for HIV and AIDS programs is putting essential services at risk — and a Niagara-on-the-Lake fundraiser is stepping in.

The April 23 event, hosted by Nyanyas of Niagara in support of the Stephen Lewis Foundation, comes as community groups delivering care and support face growing pressure from reduced international aid.

It will feature former Ontario premier and Canada's former ambassador to the United Nations Bob Rae and the foundation's executive director, Meg French, and run from 6 to 9 p.m. at Central Niagara on York Road. Tickets are available at [events.niagaratix.ca/](http://events.niagaratix.ca/) events.



Nyanyas of Niagara is hosting a fundraiser April 23, to hopefully help make up some of the cuts from major global donors to HIV and AIDS programs and research. SUPPLIED

Cindy Grant, a member of Nyanyas of Niagara, said cuts from major global donors are leaving programs in sub-Saharan Africa with fewer resources to provide health care, education and basic services.

Nyanyas of Niagara has operated for about a decade and directs nearly all of its

fundraising to the foundation, contributing more than \$130,000 to date. The funds support efforts such as health care, schools and basic services for communities where grandmothers are raising children with little to no support.

The fundraiser also follows the recent death

of foundation co-founder Stephen Lewis, a longtime advocate for HIV and AIDS awareness, who died March 31 at 88 after a battle with cancer.

Grant said the event serves both as a tribute to the foundation and as an honour of his legacy.

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Soil Yourself is a division of Sykes Landscaping, offering hand-crafted organic compost, premium topsoil, and decorative mulch — all made locally. Call 905-658-7625 to order or inquire about bulk delivery.  
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## Rooted in the Region

Jeff Sykes has spent 20 years building Niagara-on-the-Lake's outdoor spaces. Now he's paying closer attention to what's underneath them.

SPONSORED  
The Lake Report

On a cool morning at the Sykes Landscaping yard, Jeff Sykes is not behind a desk. He's where he tends to be — outside, crouching beside a long row of dark, steaming compost, pressing a handful of the material between his palms and studying it with quiet satisfaction. He smells it. He nods.

"That," he says, holding it out, "is what good soil looks like."

Sykes has been designing and building Niagara-on-the-Lake's gardens and outdoor spaces for more than 20 years through his firm, Sykes Landscaping. Lately, he's been adding a new dimension to that work — one that starts below the surface, before a single plant goes in..

The result is **Soil Yourself**, a new division of his business offering hand-crafted organic compost, premium topsoil, and decorative mulch — all made locally, and all held to a standard Sykes has been

working toward for a long time.

"When we couldn't find the quality we needed, we decided to make it ourselves. Soil Yourself — that's the whole story, right there in the name."

The name, Sykes admits with a grin, tends to get a reaction.

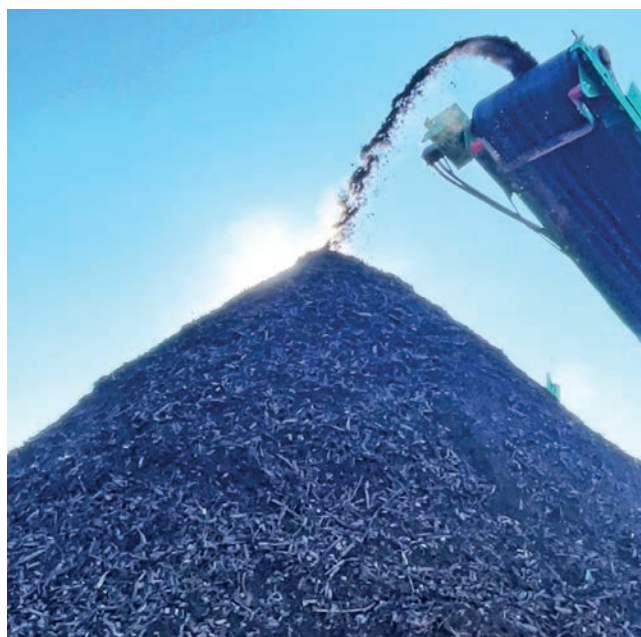
"People hear it and they laugh, and that's exactly the point," he says. "But it means something, too."

The story behind it begins with a problem familiar to anyone in the landscape trade. Great results depend on what's below the surface — and for years, Sykes says, sourcing truly reliable compost and topsoil in this region was a frustrating exercise.

"You'd get material that looked fine and then watch it underperform all season," he says.

"Our clients expected the best, and so did we. Eventually, we decided to stop waiting for someone else to solve it."

So he started making his own. What began as a practical workaround has since



Left: Soil Yourself's high-quality organic compost is available now for all your spring gardening needs.



Right: Founder Jeff Sykes takes pride in producing soil and compost that his own landscaping company uses.

become something Sykes takes genuine pride in.

He spent years refining the composting process — researching inputs, adjusting ratios, learning what good decomposition actually looks and feels like.

He doesn't outsource the quality control. On any given morning, you're as likely to find him turning a compost pile as sitting at a desk.

### Grown Here. Made Here.

Soil Yourself products are available directly through Sykes Landscaping, and are suited for home gardeners and professional landscape contractors alike. Whether you're refreshing a raised bed, top-dressing a lawn or preparing the ground for a new planting, the range covers what most growing projects in this region actually need.

For Sykes, the appeal is straightforward: he knows exactly what's in the product, because he made it — right here in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

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## Lecture will explore **Lake Ontario battles**

Staff  
The Lake Report

Cannon fire echoed across Lake Ontario more than two centuries ago, as British and American forces raced to build ships and control the inland waters — a dramatic chapter of the War of 1812 that is often overshadowed by battles on land.

That lesser-known history will take centre stage later this month as the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum continues its lecture series with a presentation by historian Gurth Pretty.

Titled “The Forgotten Squadron: The Royal Navy on Lake Ontario during the War of 1812,” the talk is scheduled for April 16 at 7:30 p.m.

Pretty will explore the naval clashes that unfolded on Lake Ontario, including a fierce shipbuilding race between British and American fleets. His presentation will examine both triumph and tragedy, from vessels lost in violent storms to



Learn about naval battles of the War of 1812 at the NOTL Museum on April 16. SUPPLIED

the legacy of ships such as HMS Hamilton, HMS Scourge, HMS Wolfe and HMS Royal George.

The lecture will also address the role of the British Royal Navy during the conflict. While Royal Navy forces were largely engaged overseas in the fight against Napoleonic Wars, responsibility on the Great Lakes fell primarily to the Provincial Marine, a British naval force tasked with transportation and defence in Upper Canada.

Despite a reputation for inefficiency, the Provincial

Marine played a key role in supporting British operations, including those led by Isaac Brock, Pretty argues.

Pretty, of Oakville, is a founding member and director of the HMS Psyche Canadian Maritime Heritage Society and regularly takes part in War of 1812 naval re-enactments.

He portrays a warrant officer, serving as both a gun captain and mess cook, and is also a crew member aboard the society’s replica late 18th-century longboat.

In addition to his historical work, Pretty is a

certified cheese professional through the Cheese Education Guild of Toronto and the author of “The Definitive Guide to Canadian Artisanal & Fine Cheese,” which won a World Gourmand Cookbook Award in 2007.

Prints featuring War of 1812 naval themes by Canadian artist Peter Rindlbacher will be available for purchase at the event for \$25 each.

The museum is located at 43 Castlereagh St., and registration is required to attend the lecture.

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# NOTICE OF INTENTION TO DESIGNATE

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

**TAKE NOTICE** that the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake intends to designate the property at **1665 FOUR MILE CREEK ROAD, THE VIRGIL PUBLIC SCHOOL (30R13820 PART 1))** as a property of cultural heritage value or interest under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter 0.18.

### Description of Property

The subject property includes a one room schoolhouse also known as the “Virgil Public School,” constructed in 1872. The building is situated at the north-west corner of the lot near the intersection of Four Mile Creek Road and Field Road. The subject property is an approximately 3.75-acre lot in the Village of Virgil, Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

### Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

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

The single storey stone structure is an example of a 19th century one room schoolhouse constructed in 1872. The schoolhouse is considered a rare surviving example of a schoolhouse structure within the context of Niagara-on-the-Lake. The schoolhouse has historical/associative value for its educational use. The property is associated with education use between approximately 1829 and 2011 for a period of 182 years.

### Description of Key Heritage Attributes

Key exterior attributes that embody the heritage value of the structure at 1665 Four Mile Creek Road in Niagara-on-the-Lake include its:

- Single storey massing
- Rubble stone construction with parging at the exterior
- Front (west) elevation Jerkinhead roof
- Front (west) elevation circle shaped date marker, “S. S. No. 8, 1872”
- Wooden roof cupola and weathervane
- Wooden soffits
- Front (west elevation) window openings which have been altered from original window and door openings; and
- North and south elevation window openings which have been altered from original widow openings.

### Objections

Any objection to this designation must be filed no later than 30 days after the date of publication of the Notice of Intent to Designate. Objections should be directed to Grant Bivol, Town Clerk, 1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake, L0S 1T0. The last date to file a notice of objection is **May 15th 2026**.

### Queries

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

Dated at the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake this 16th day of April 2026

GRANT BIVOL, CLERK



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**Contributed by Patty Garriock**

"I always find beauty in things that are odd and imperfect, they are much more interesting."  
 - Marc Jacobs

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## The gift of spring

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society gifted the residents of Niagara Long Term Care and Pleasant Manor the beauty of spring this Tuesday, delivering 263 kalanchoe plants to those living in the long-term care homes, including Diane Losier at Niagara Long Term Care, here with program therapist Brooklyn Gifford.  
 DAVE VAN DE LAAR

## Opinion

# Getting theatrical over the Shaw



**THE TURNER REPORT**

Garth Turner  
 Columnist



Living in a small town is unlike the city. If someone cuts you off pulling out of the grocery store, you don't give them the finger. Odds are you'll meet again in the post office. Awkward. Testy. We all chose to be here. We have to get along. At least, we should try.

This brings us to the delicate and forever subject of the Royal George. As we all know, the Shaw wants to relace the ancient historic pile with an industrial box consuming almost half an entire block with a faux-replica theatre façade facing the main drag and a six-storey rump in the back.

Proponents of the festival think this is a glorious and triumphant thing. Others see it as the wanton destruction of history and irreversible damage to the very streetscape powering the local economy.

Because the Shaw is the plum of NOTL's elite class, our politicians genuflect to it. Tear down four notable buildings and break every heritage zone rule? Sure thing, sire. Here's your permit.

Here's the getting-along part.

Awaiting a court decision, the Royal George and its historic box office building seem destined to soon be piles of rubble. Then come the trucks. GARTH TURNER

A recent column dove into the Shaw's financial statements ("The Turner Report: The little troop that became Shaw Inc.," March 26), since it seems odd a charity suddenly erupts with a \$100-million building spree (the new George, plus the "artists' village" where the old folks residence used to be).

We pointed out the theatre operations last year ran a massive \$20-million loss, rescued by the largesse of taxpayers and donors. We also noted the existence of a \$40-million liquid investment nest egg the Shaw maintains while paying its 600 employees with dollops of public money.

Yes, the Shaw is great for NOTL. Lucky to have it. But ripping up the main street while taking such a financial gamble in dodgy economic times seems rash. So, a little scrutiny is not a bad thing.

After all, the festival depends on public support to survive yet, as a charity — even an empire-building

one with \$45 million in existing real estate — it pays no tax to the town, the province or the nation.

Last week in these pages, resident Peter Barwell ripped me a new one ("Letter: Misquotes and half-truths in Turner's take on Shaw").

My words were rude, he said, and has helped this newspaper become a public menace. "The paper is, in my opinion, responsible for the very poor state of mental health of people living in town," he said.

That doesn't include him, of course.

Why does Mr. Barwell think I have doubts about the Royal George mega-build? It's personal, he says. Because I live in the Old Town.

"There are many other construction projects currently proceeding that seem to have escaped Garth Turner's attention. Maybe this is because he is living too far from them."

(My house is two blocks away. The one with the

extremely hairy, needy dog in the courtyard.)

Does Mr. Barwell have personal reasons for his views? I had a look.

The prominent Chautauqua resident and his wife, Marion, operated successful B&Bs in town, on Queen Street and Niagara Boulevard, catering to Shaw patrons. Mr. Barwell served on the Shaw Guild's executive committee for six years.

He became president of it in 2011, overseeing 300 festival volunteers. He's been in attendance for 80 per cent of the events hosted by the now-defunct Shaw Festival Film Series, he claimed in a media interview.

Supporting the festival is also a Barwell family thing.

Daughter Pippa was in charge of information and communication at the Shaw Guild. She currently works for the festival as sales technology co-ordinator, building on her 10-year involvement with the organization. She's a talented artist and has sold her creations at the Shaw Festival's gift shop.

Other daughter Claudia worked for several years in the Shaw's box office. Her positive experience there is credited with influencing her parent's decision to emigrate from Europe to NOTL two decades ago.

Yes, our town is richer, deeper, better to have the Barwells in it.

More honesty would make us perfect.

Garth Turner is a NOTL resident, journalist, author, wealth manager and former federal MP and minister.

garth@garth.ca

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# Illusion of democracy being watered down

Dear editor:  
I recently became concerned with Ontario's democracy, as we know it, being eroded under various pretexts.  
When certain mayors were given "strong mayor powers," my initial thought was why have councillors when the mayor, if he wishes is able to overturn their decision.

Recently, the Ontario provincial government has decided that regional council shall be made up of 12 mayors and a regional chair. This would result in the loss of our elected regional rep., the voice of the people at region.

Our mayor, during the last election insisted that the mayor's job was part-time, discovering after a month that he required an assistant to help deal with the workload.

If regional council is made up of 12 mayors who are overworked, how can they possibly take on a



Letter writer Luba Fraser recognizes the irony of Doug Ford's campaign slogan to, "Protect Ontario." Instead, she says his new policies to appoint a region chair and reduce councillors threatens the fundamental foundation of democracy, all while introducing laws that stop access to freedom of information requests pertaining to him or his staff. Is he protecting Ontario, or destroying it from the inside out? FILE/DAVE VAN DE LAAR

regional council job which also includes choices of sitting on approximately seven various committees.

To further water down the illusion of democracy, the regional chair, who is also given strong mayor powers, is to be a provincial government appointee with little knowledge of our town. This is known as consolidating power.

Why have the charade of a regional council? Mayors with strong mayor powers can over-ride an elected lo-

cal council.

In turn, the appointed regional chair with strong mayor powers is able to override the 12 elected mayors with strong mayor powers.

Who wins? Obviously our provincial government, who will have protection from the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, which will be retroactive in excluding the premier, his cabinet and their staff. Their Bill 97 also includes 16 other laws.

We must remain cogni-

zant that provincial policies include increased density and height, loss of heritage structures and loss of open space and tree cover. What about the needs of local residents?

I can not believe that the Niagara mayors are celebrating the province for this decision. I thought this started out to be made in Niagara, for the people of Niagara by the mayors of Niagara decision.

Luba Fraser  
NOTL

# Old hospital process needs to reflect our wishes

The following letter was sent to Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa and members of town council. A copy was forwarded to The Lake Report for publication.

Dear Mayor Zalepa and members of council,

Thank you for your response and for sharing the Town of NOTL's April 9 update regarding 176 Wellington St.

After reviewing the town's communication, the 2024 survey results, and recent public commentary, I remain concerned that the current direction of study does not reflect the priorities clearly expressed by residents.

The 2024 engagement results were clear. A strong majority supported a community hub with multi-generational use, community space and amenities that serve residents.

There was also clear support for maintaining community use and green space. At the same time, a significant portion of respondents indicated that parking should not be the primary focus of the site.

Despite this, the town has confirmed that a concept including structured parking is being advanced as part of the feasibility work.

If only one primary concept is being studied in detail at this stage, then that concept should reflect what the community has already identified as its priority, yet council and staff have instead chosen to direct resources toward a parking inclusive model.

This concern is not limited to a single perspective. Residents have been vocal in expressing that this is the wrong direction for the site. Public comments, letters to the editor and community discussions have consistently raised concerns that focusing on parking does not reflect what people asked for.

Many have questioned why a site of this importance is being framed around vehicle storage rather than community use, and have pointed to the risk of increased traffic, underuse outside peak tourist periods and the loss of an opportunity to create something meaningful for residents.

Local media coverage has reflected these concerns as well, noting that council directed staff to focus on a parking based concept while broader community driven ideas were not advanced at the same level.

At the same time, a community-led vision, supported by input from more than 1,200 residents and numerous organizations, has already outlined a concept centered on arts, culture, education and shared public space, with parking treated as a secondary element.

Taken together, the survey results, citizen feedback and public commentary all point in the same direction. The community is not asking for this site to be defined by parking, and many have clearly stated that this approach is the wrong path.

The decision to begin detailed feasibility work with a parking-inclusive concept does more than explore an option. It sets the framework for how the site is evaluated and how future decisions are shaped.

Starting from that position risks narrowing the

outcome before community aligned options are fully considered.

Council has stated that further work is needed to ensure alignment with community priorities. Respectfully, that alignment should be reflected in the starting point of the study itself.

I would ask council to clearly address:

1. Why the current feasibility work is centered on a parking inclusive concept rather than a community hub model;

2. Whether a full feasibility study will be conducted based on a community hub as the primary use of the site;

3. How the town is ensuring that the 2024 survey results and ongoing public input are directly shaping the foundation of the analysis.

This site is one of the most important publicly owned assets in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The process used to evaluate its future should clearly reflect the direction already provided by the community.

Kirby Davis  
NOTL



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style  
Category: BITE ME

Pass the ammunition with this alliterative phrase that refers to getting on with an unpleasant task.

Last issue category: OUR GREEN PLANET

Clue: It's thought that this tree also called a maidenhair tree was first cultivated in China 1,000 years ago.

Answer: What is a ginkgo tree?

Answered first by: Bob Wheatley

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Emma Balsas, Jane Morris, Claudia Grimwood, Sue Rautenberg, Lynda Collet, Jim Dandy, Jeff Lake, Donna Pearce, Esther VanGorder, Sheila Meloche, Rob Hutchison, Katie Reimer, Maria Percy, Wade Durling, Susan Dewar, Nancy Rocca, Catherine Clarke, Hedy Wiebe, Jimmy van der Zalm, Tuija Johansson, Derek Kraliz, Ella Andres, Margie Enns

Email answers to editor@niagaranow.com, with your name, for a chance to win a \$25 Irish Harp Pub gift card every week. (Subject line: Riddle me this)

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

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# How the Village **lost its way** on architecture and vision



**ARCHITEXT**

Brian Marshall  
Columnist

Perhaps one of the finest Canadian late-20th-century developments can be found in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The Village, designed by the world-famous firm Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co., was envisioned to be a human-scaled neighbourhood contextually sympathetic with Old Town in accordance with the best precepts of new urbanism.

The “finished” plan was to encompass a complete range of amenities and services necessary to realizing a well-rounded lifestyle for residents and, further, would include commercial, retail, entertainment and service building spaces that would help to ensure that the new development became an integrated part of NOTL’s Old Town.

By 2003, about 50 homes had been completed and demonstrated the research

the designers had undertaken to understand the streetscapes and architectural of the town then subsequently embrace that in the new development.

For the next 14 years, build-out of the residential neighbourhood continued and, while the late phases of the development did not achieve the benchmark of architectural design excellence established in the earlier stages, the resultant streetscapes and character of the Village remained true to Duany’s original vision.

In 2018, the developer, Traditional Neighbourhood Development Inc., applied for rezoning on portions of the property to facilitate the promised commercial buildings and amenities that would contribute to a holistic community.

For the first time, we saw architectural renderings — produced under the direction of Duany — of the proposed commercial spaces which would include a hotel, assembly hall, additional retail (including a grocery store), etc. These illustrations showed a relatively bucolic vision, its architecture and site layout largely in-keeping with the traditional forms and spaces of the residential development.

It was this plan that was



It doesn’t take an architectural expert to notice the approved plan for the Village took some dramatic and unfortunate turns away from its original design, which was meant to complement NOTL, writes Brian Marshall.

used during the applications for lot severances (B-11-20 and B-12-20) in late 2020. By September 2022, in appendix I of the documents attached to the site plan approval application, the hotel building has been altered into a curved L-shaped footprint.

Since the application was introduced “at the last minute” in the final meeting of the previous council — something that the developer apologized for, citing the need to have the entire site plan approved in order to complete the infrastructure and medical building within the 2022 calendar year — it is not surprising that the councillors may have missed this alteration.

Interestingly, there were no architectural renderings included in the application documents but, instead, a

“Village Centre code” is provided.

This code, authored by Duany in 2021, was intended to “guide the development” of the commercial spaces and suggested that the individual buildings should “come by the hands of multiple architects”; “adequately accommodate automobiles while being principally oriented towards pedestrians”; and, the architectural design(s) “should grow from the regional climate, history and building practice.”

What is fascinating is that all of the drawings included in the code show traditional building forms and elements. Clearly the intent of the code was to maintain a continuity and cohesive integration with the adjacent residential neighbourhood.

And, I would assume the

code was included as part of the application as an implied assurance to council and town staff that new buildings to be constructed, as per the site plan, would be designed in accordance with same — resulting in contextually appropriate architecture sympathetic to the Village.

Instead, what we have witnessed is the construction of a 21st-century modern glass and metal hotel that speaks neither to Niagara-on-the-Lake generally nor the Village specifically.

Just to be clear, I actually admire the design. However, in no way is it imbued with a “sense of place.” Let’s just be kind and just describe it as a great design in the wrong place.

And, however inappropriate in this place, the hotel can claim to be a product of talented design. Unfortunately, this cannot be said for the buildings that line Perez Street and are exposed to Niven Road.

Meant to partially screen the parking lots from the street, these two-and-a-half-storey, flat-roofed assemblies — constructed of grey and buff brick — are, despite having some horizontal articulation, simply boring and deliver the somewhat tacky appearance of a late-20th-century

industrial plaza.

Currently under construction between Niagara Stone Road and the new hotel are two buildings identified on the 2022 site plan drawings as “mixed use – commercial.”

Now, if the sidewall of the new grocery store is any indication — its flat red brick wall showing a feeble attempt at ornamentation via contrasting lintels and gooseneck lamps — the design of these buildings is likely to be nothing to write home about while blocking the streetview of the only decent building design in the new development.

As a final note, the post-2022 architectural drawings were never brought before the town’s urban design committee (prior to council disbanding same) for their input and comments nor aired in public.

Of course, the discarded 2018 plans were — but that hardly counts, does it?

At the gateway to Old Town, side by side, the Stone Eagle Winery and Garrison Centre welcome visitors to NOTL with a statement of architectural bad taste.

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

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# May hospital history **not repeat itself**

Dear editor:

Between the town's press release of April 9 and NOTL developer and resident Rainer Hummel's opinions in the Niagara Now on April 10 ("Who pays? NOTL hospital site vision sparks backlash from local developer, resident"), it is pretty obvious which way the hot air is blowing.

So, Mr. Hummel's answer is: "The town should put the property up for sale and allow the highest bidder to present a proposal. If that fails, he said it should be sold off and left to a private buyer to decide what to do with it."

Maybe that way we could have fancy big hotels at each end of Queen to book-end Parliament Oak?

And what exactly is the town's concept? After the extensive costly exercise over the past year, which determined that 25 per cent of residents considered parking a good future use and fully 39 per cent said



Bob Bader supports the James Burton Foundation's vision for the old hospital, one he says is based on the identified needs and desires of the community — not mainly a parking garage like the rendering above, as the town has put forward. FILE

that parking should not occur on the site?

The architectural drawings presented at the March 24 council meeting clearly shows at least 80 per cent of both floors of the "new" building are devoted to parking spaces.

The excellent consultation and report led by Denise Horne identified that the site should remain in town ownership and what uses it should serve and came with clear recommendations; of which num-

ber three was to "identify community partners," and they even provided guiding principles to assist in decision-making.

The James Burton Foundation has already heavily invested in community outreach and planning based on the identified needs and desires of the community.

Instead of working with the foundation, we have decided to spend an additional \$80,000 refining what staff or council or our lord mayor seem to think

we need to identify before we can go to a request for proposal.

The hospital as such was closed 10 years ago and was bought by the town in 2018. At the end of the last term of council, there was a request for proposal process embarked upon, which frustrated many and was pointed to as a failure of the last administration.

Hopefully, history won't repeat itself.

**Bob Bader**  
NOTL

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# Let's focus on seniors living, not just seniors housing



Michael Ennamorato  
Special to The Lake Report

As we documented last week, the Niagara-on-the-Lake seniors housing study revealed a broad consensus on basic requirements.

Essentially, seniors want to retain as much independence as possible within their existing NOTL community. The ready availability of health care and incremental access to other supports as needed are critical to ensuring quality of life and reasonable independence through the aging process.

Despite wide agreement on these core requirements, addressing seniors' housing needs will require a multi-faceted approach. Complexity is elevated by the array of personal desires and circumstances exhibited by seniors. These fall into five broad categories.

**Geography:** Seniors living in different parts of NOTL vary significantly in terms of proximity to services and amenities, transportation dependence and dispersion of social networks.

**Community engagement:** Some seniors have

very dense and localized social networks and multiple points of community engagement — and want to retain them.

Others have smaller networks of friends and family that are easier to maintain, but can become deleteriously sparse as people age.

**Household structure:** Seniors living alone (typically women) have unique needs that are not necessarily shared by others. Those needs can become more critical with social isolation, when there are few family or friendship supports available.

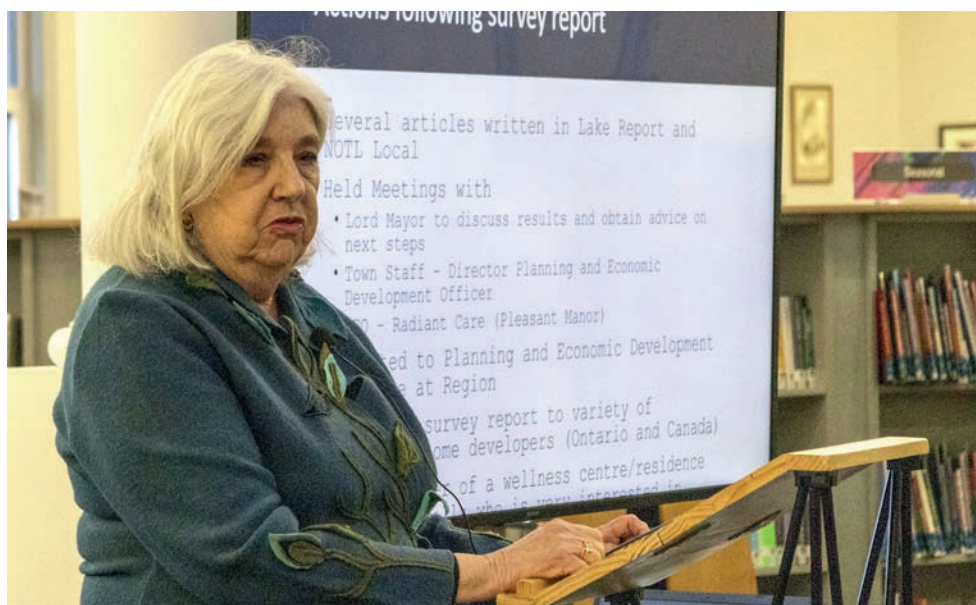
**Health condition:** Physical and cognitive health issues tend to become more acute as one ages, requiring progressive growth in supports. Beyond this, however, the situation is further complicated by the broad range of physical and mental difficulties that exist among the elderly.

These are often experienced in unique combinations of comorbidity and severity, resulting in a wide array of health outcomes that must be addressed within a residential setting.

**Financial resources:** While some neighbourhoods in NOTL have a reputation for affluence, this should not mask the reality that many of our seniors are of modest means.

Some live in financially precarious circumstances and almost half admit to some degree of financial apprehension.

Not all can, or even wish



Niagara-on-the-Lake's seniors housing advisory committee, led by Cindy Grant, emphasizes that there's no "one size fits all" solution to the town's seniors housing challenges — no single project or development can provide the answer on its own. FILE

to, pursue the gold standard of assisted living. Care should be taken to remain sensitive to the needs of the less affluent and to avoid a tendency for "high-end," high-profile housing proposals to distract from consideration of more modest options and creative rental, ownership and co-operative approaches.

These sources of variability intersect, creating a wide range of expectations, desires and fundamental needs among seniors when it comes to current and future housing requirements and related supports.

Clearly, seniors do not represent a single homogeneous group with respect to this issue or, in fact, any other. They exhibit at least as much heterogeneity as does any other broad segment of the population.

It follows, then, that the most effective approach to meeting seniors' housing needs will involve establishing a network of multiple housing forms and integrated flexible supports that allow each individual to travel with dignity on a personal journey from full independence through to aging in place, assisted living and possibly long-term care.

As NOTL's seniors housing advisory committee consistently emphasizes, and as our research confirms, there is no "one size fits all" solution to the town's seniors housing challenges.

This becomes even clearer when it is considered that the integration of housing, health care and living supports defines a much broader concept — seniors living rather than simply seniors housing.

When contemplated from this loftier viewpoint, no single project or development could possibly provide the answer on its own. Importantly though, each could certainly contribute to a satisfactory solution in combination with others.

The diversity and complexity of need also suggest there must be an openness to fostering cross-project integration and to considering innovative design options and financing structures.

This takes some pressure off of individual projects since no single one needs to aspire to be THE solution.

There is also the implication that seniors living solutions could function quite well as modest complements to larger multi-use developments, such as might be contemplated for the old NOTL hospital site.

The seniors housing component would both benefit from, and add colour to, the community vibrancy that emerges from such multi-use sites. The same holds true for multi-generational and accessible housing possibilities.

All of this may sound daunting from the perspective of the municipality and other levels of government. Certainly, seniors wish to stay here and the vast majority (90 per cent) feel local government should be doing more to help them do that.

It should be pointed out, though, that the study did not uncover any sense that seniors are looking for a "handout."

Instead, there seems to be an expectation that government step in directly when required, but more importantly provide leadership in creating the conditions necessary for appropriate development to proceed with the goal of establishing a housing ecosystem that benefits all seniors and the community as a whole.

*Michael Ennamorato is a social geographer, retired researcher and former president of TNS Canada. The NOTL seniors housing survey was designed and analyzed by Stephen Ferley and Ennamorato, both NOTL residents with extensive research design and related executive consultancy experience. Fieldwork and data processing were conducted by Niagara College.*

## Maybe a dinner theatre would be better?

Dear editor:

I read, with interest, Nicholas Colaneri's letter in the April 9 edition of The Lake Report, "The question that was never asked of Shaw," outlining the reason's why the 1915 historic site, the Royal George Theatre, was approved to be demolished by the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

He states the reason given was "the building was failing, preservation was not viable, demolition was the only option."

He says the fundamental question that should have been asked and answered — "Could the Royal George have been preserved, modernized and expanded to meet every goal the Shaw Festival identified, within the rules that exist to protect our heritage district, at what cost" — was never asked.

He says, "Industry standard suggests the answer is yes."

I personally wonder why this lovely building could not be upgraded and

renovated to become a dinner theatre. It would be a venue that would allow for a variety of lunch or dinner theatre options, small musical performances with lunch or dinner, comedy nights, jazz/blues, a lot of interesting, intimate offerings for the local residents.

Perhaps it could be a draw for tourists who like a quaint visit to a historical Old Town, maybe a weekend stay at a local B&B or inn, or a romantic getaway mid-week — a year-round

sustainable option that is different from the current offerings.

I wonder: who will come to this second location of the big beautiful new Shaw Festival Theatre, year-round, and how much damage three years of construction and loss of visitors will do to our quaint town?

Will we still have our unique, historical town — the destination that is the real draw for our visitors?

*Megan Wood  
NOTL*



## We welcome your letters

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



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# Democracy will suffer from Ford's government overhaul



David Israelson  
Special to The Lake Report

Remember that old expression, "You can't fight city hall?" Thanks to a sneaky move by Premier Doug Ford, that may become true in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

On Thursday, April 3, just before the Easter long weekend, Ford and Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Rob Flack introduced a bill called the Better Regional Governance Act that will dial back democracy in Niagara Region along with several others (Durham, Halton, Muskoka, Peel, Simcoe, Waterloo and York).

If you have concerns about these proposed major

changes in who we get to vote for and how they govern in Niagara, you'd better speak up fast.

There will be a brief comment period, some quick legislative hearings at Queen's Park, but with its huge majority, Ford's government aims to pass this law and make the changes take effect this fall, right after the municipal elections when voters are supposed to have their say.

Niagara voters will have less say about what happens in the region once this law takes effect. The bill reduces Niagara's regional council from its current 32 members to 13. The new council will be made up of the region's 12 mayors (including Niagara-on-the-Lake's lord mayor) plus a Ford-appointed honcho who will serve as "head of council."

Recall that Niagara's most recent appointed chair, Bob Gale, resigned under a cloud, after trying repeatedly to push forward the idea



Columnist David Israelson says Premier Doug Ford's decision to change Niagara's regional government is a step away from democracy, giving too much power to an unelected chair and lowering the voices of smaller municipalities under a weighted voting system. He says people need to speak up now before it's too late. FILE

of amalgamating the region, a move that would have given NOTL less of a say.

The pro-amalgamation putsch failed, but it doesn't really matter, because under Ford's new legislation, whatever people in this town of 19,000 want

will count for less than ever before.

The proposed legislation gives the new, unelected "head of council" strong mayor powers to overrule any democratic decisions he or she doesn't like. That's where the real power lies.

It also calls for a system of weighted voting among the remaining 12 regional councillors. While it's not entirely clear yet how this will work, it sounds like the votes of the councillors who are also mayors the region's larger cities, such as Niagara Falls, will matter more than the votes of the small-town mayors, such as ours. That weakens NOTL even more.

It all really boils down to one thing: if you're a voter in Niagara-on-the-Lake, the province wants to hear less than ever from you about decisions that affect your town. Your voice will be weaker and smaller.

This is not to say that reforming Niagara's electoral system is entirely a bad idea. It's not: for years, many residents have been unsure of what benefits having all these regional councillors (and paying them) brings to the town.

And let's face it, over the years, successive NOTL town councils have

not necessarily earned the public's adulation by making a lot of popular decisions.

To be fair, it's not easy to please everyone. There's also the argument that the way our local and regional governments are structured gets in the way of efficient decision making, even when we elect the best people possible.

It's frustrating that decisions on crucial issues such as housing, seniors' care and infrastructure seem to go through endless debate and long-delayed outcomes.

Surely there has to be a better way. But surely it's not by ramming through provincial legislation that gives more power to an unelected chair, without asking the people it will affect. If you care about democracy, speak up, while you still can.

*David Israelson is a writer and non-practising lawyer who lives in Niagara-on-the-Lake.*



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# Council needs clear, compelling vision for old hospital plans before decision

Dear editor:  
As I read recent editions of The Lake Report, I've noticed a strong and consistent theme in the letters regarding the old hospital site at 176 Wellington St. Many residents are advocating for the property to remain a community space, with several suggesting that council invite creative proposals through a formal request for proposals process.

There is, however, an important aspect of this discussion that has not been clearly addressed, and overlooking it may come at a real cost to both current and future residents.

It appears that council may be jumping too quickly to decisions about what to build and how to use the space, before clearly defining what the community truly wants this place to become.

This is puzzling. Council took a valuable and commendable step by commissioning research, which showed overwhelming support for maintaining this site for community use. That research captured something essential: the collective aspi-



A rendering of the town's vision for a parking garage at the old hospital at 176 Wellington St. Letter writer Jennifer Reimer hopes town council will keep exploring options that are in line with what the community wants. FILE

ration of the town. In my experience — both in the corporate world and in working for a decade with leadership teams building strategy — the most successful outcomes begin with a clear and compelling vision.

Before plans are drawn or solutions are designed, there is a period of imagining: exploring possibilities, identifying what truly matters and asking what kind of legacy a decision might create.

With that in mind, I would have expected the next step to involve council engaging more deeply with the research and a vision for the property. What could this space become for the community? What needs

could it meet, not just today, but for decades to come?

And, I would expect council to actively engage with organizations that have already proposed meaningful and inspiring uses for the property.

Instead, the next step communicated to the public was the hiring of an architectural firm to begin sketching potential uses for the site.

More recently, the move toward developing more concrete plans for a parking lot suggests a direction that does not reflect the community's clearly expressed desire for meaningful community use.

Without a clearly articulated vision to guide these decisions, this risks putting

form ahead of purpose — like asking a builder to begin construction before the blueprint has been agreed upon.

Perhaps there are elements of the process that have not been fully shared with the public. If so, greater transparency around the guiding vision would be welcome.

Because from the outside, it is difficult to reconcile the community's expressed hopes with outcomes that appear (at least in early concepts) to fall short of that potential.

This site represents a rare opportunity. It is not just about land use — it is about identity, legacy and what we choose to prioritize as a community.

My hope is that council will pause, return to the core question of what this place should mean for the community and take the time to articulate a bold and inspiring vision that truly reflects the aspirations of the people it represents.

From there, the practical decisions can follow with clarity and purpose.

**Jennifer Reimer**  
NOTL

# Do we really need another community hub?

Dear editor:  
I must admit that I've viewed the full page ad on page 5 of the April 9 edition of The Lake Report with some concern and some questions. First, some facts.

In 1951, the community of Niagara-on-the-Lake was not the same as it is now. Thanks to a prior provincial Progressive Conservative government, Virgil, Queenston, St. Davids, Glendale and a larger rural

area were added to what is now known as Niagara-on-the-Lake. About a third of the NOTL population lives in what is commonly called Old Town.

For those of us who do not reside right there, Old Town is not on the way to anything. Except to attend Shaw performances and favourite restaurants, I seldom need to visit Old Town.

The 1,200 residents who, according to the ad, have "expressed a clear direc-

tion" represent about seven per cent of the municipal population, not an overwhelming number.

When the current library and community centre building was constructed, it was supposed to become the "community hub." In my opinion, a second community hub not much more than a kilometre away from the first one seems excessive for a town of our size.

Perhaps council and town staff should develop

a comprehensive list of the recreation infrastructure the town owns, manages or otherwise supports to determine whether these assets are widely dispersed in a way that makes at least some of them accessible to all of the population of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

This exercise might identify where additional recreational investment would be beneficial.

**Kenn Moody**  
NOTL

# New parking lot big opportunity for Queen Street

Dear editor:  
I'm probably in the minority, but having seen the town's plan for what parking would look like on the old hospital site, I'm in favour of it. Isn't a lack of parking

(and associated revenue) one of the main road-blocks to having permanent patios on Queen Street?

Who can doubt that we need more parking? And if it keeps the facade

of the old hospital, it wouldn't be an eyesore.

Isn't this an opportunity to think big(ger) for NOTL? Imagine part of Queen Street as a pedestrian-only street, with broad sidewalks

and a beautiful tree-line median.

If that's what we could get by using the old hospital building for parking, then count me enthusiastic.

**Kevin Leicht**  
NOTL



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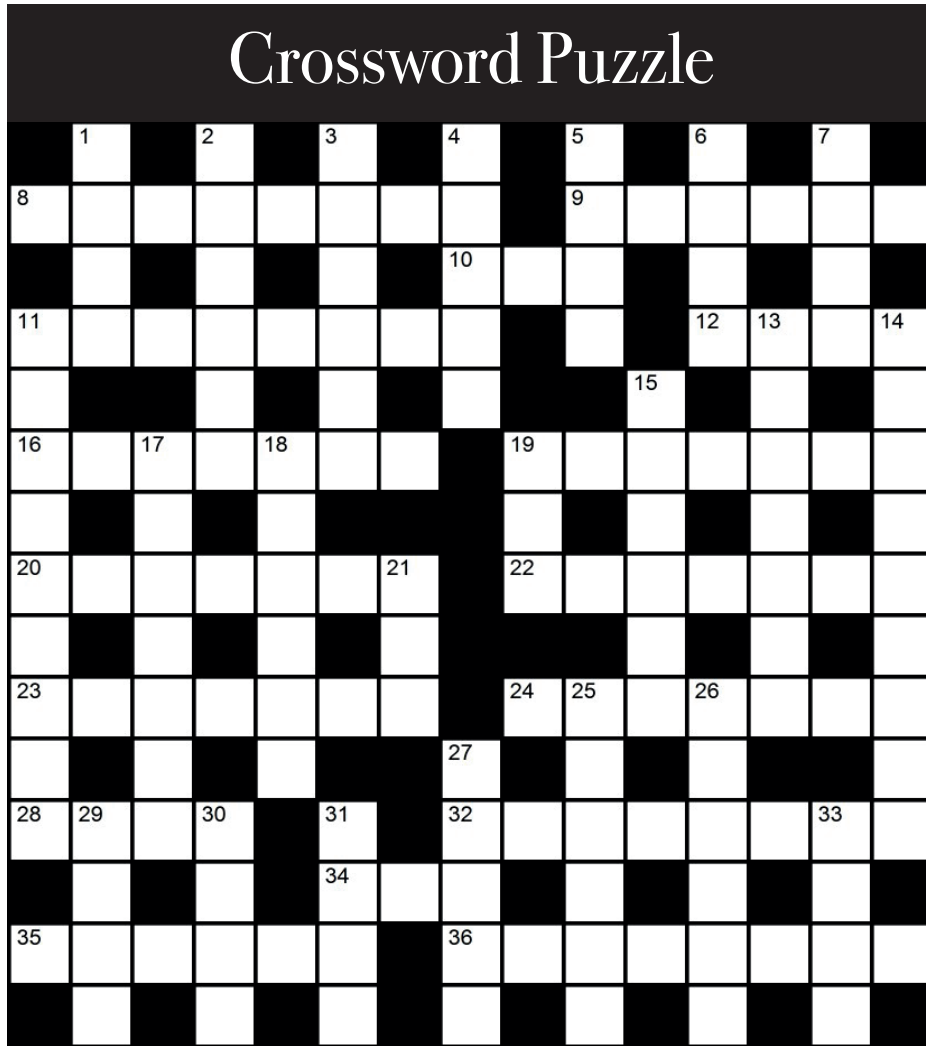


**Across**

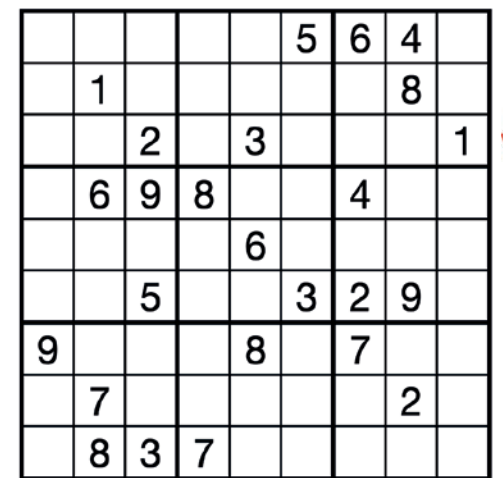
- 8. Bucharest resident, for example (8)
- 9. To an excessive degree (6)
- 10. Company known as "Big Blue" (1,1,1)
- 11. Hearty Sunday lunch (3,5)
- 12. Fan blade (4)
- 16. Mobs (7)
- 19. Close-cropped hair style (4,3)
- 20. Solvent (7)
- 22. Before sunrise (7)
- 23. Piled carelessly (2,1,4)
- 24. As good as it gets (7)
- 28. Scotch partner (4)
- 32. Flattened (8)
- 34. Hard, durable wood (3)
- 35. Seller (6)
- 36. Science of heredity (8)

**Down**

- 1. Game played on horseback (4)
- 2. Capital of Croatia (6)
- 3. He asked "What is truth?" (6)
- 4. One (5)
- 5. Knock (4)
- 6. Very detailed picture receiver (1-1,2)
- 7. Scheme (4)
- 11. Pictures of people (9)
- 13. Applaud (7)
- 14. Twisted into a confusing mass (9)
- 15. Command (6)
- 17. Pepper (7)
- 18. Morning assemblies (6)
- 19. Drinking vessel (3)
- 21. Salesperson (3)
- 25. Nosedive (6)
- 26. Cracked (6)
- 27. Wonky (5)
- 29. Singles (4)
- 30. Assistant (4)
- 31. Tender (4)
- 33. Apiece (4)



Last issue's answers



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**EXPLORING HISTORY**  
WITH NOTL MUSEUM



## A dramatic splashdown into the Pacific

This image from a magazine in the Museum's collection shows the splashdown of the Apollo 11 mission, one of the most iconic moments in human space exploration history. It shows the first astronauts to land on the moon safely returning to the Pacific Ocean, where they were recovered by the U.S. Navy. This stood as a defining benchmark in human spaceflight for more than half a century. That is, until the Artemis II mission returned safely to Earth on April 10. Both missions concluded with successful Pacific Ocean splashdowns, where their crews were safely recovered. During its 10-day mission this April, the Artemis II crew, made up of Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, Christina Koch and Canadian Space Agency astronaut Jeremy Hansen, travelled 694,481 miles. Their lunar flyby carried them farther than any humans have ever travelled, surpassing the distance record set during the Apollo era.

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- Mini Beef Wellingtons 1,405
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- Shrimp and Mango Bowl 1,400
- Skirt Steak 1,121
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# Before modern air travel, there were **seaplanes**



**DR. BROWN**

Dr. William Brown  
Columnist

Who wants to spend time in major airports these days, especially Pearson?

Just getting to the airport can be a struggle given high volume traffic into Toronto at almost any hour, and once there, crowds and lines, and most frustrating, significant flight delays and cancellations. And once up and away and crowded in my seat, there's not much to see from several miles up.

For 20 years, our family got around by flying single-engine aircraft to and from our cottage in Haliburton, points west as far as Chicago, Florida to the south or to the east, Boston and Halifax.

The whole experience was much better than commercial flying. We could see migrating birds in season, the unfolding country we were crossing, and overall travel times rivaled commercial flying because of all the time gobbled up getting to and around large com-

mercial airports.

Flying small aircraft was also safe because the aircraft we owned were well-maintained and on-board flight-instruments, navigational-aids and real-time weather information rivaled what some commercial aircraft carried in those days.

Powered controlled flight began with the Wright brothers in 1903 with a very fragile-looking aircraft powered by a 12 horse power engine and flights lasting less than a minute.

But it wasn't long before increasingly reliable and powerful engines and much improved aircraft designs led to the production of close to 200,000 aircraft in the First World War, most single-engined biplanes some of which were capable of level speeds in of 120-130 miles per hour.

Following the First World War, there were steady improvements in aircraft design and the piston engines which powered them spurred on in the 1930s by Germany's military ambitions and responses by Britain, France, the U.S. and later Russia.

Development continued throughout the Second World War and led to the revolutionary introduction of the first jet aircraft in early 1943-44 in Germany, Britain and the United



Among the intercontinental aircraft in service between the two world wars, the Boeing 314 Clipper was often considered the best of the lot. WIKIMEDIA

States, with speeds well beyond those of the most powerful piston-engined aircraft of the day.

These days, there are lots of land-based airports around the world but in the interwar period of the 1920s and 1930 there were few and far between, especially in underdeveloped regions of the world.

Hence the need in the interwar period for large, long-range aircraft designed to take off and land on water (seaplanes), some later were fitted with landing gear, making them amphibians — able to take off and land on land as well as water.

Those intercontinental aircraft were four-engined giants designed to carry passengers, the number of which was dictated by the distance to be flown and

hence fuel needed to get to the destination, plus a generous margin for safety.

The best of the lot based on overall performance was the Boeing 314 Clipper, which could carry up to 74 passengers. For night flights, there were up to 36 berths.

What's striking are photographs of the day which reveal a luxury of the accommodation far exceeding what's available today including generous dining spaces complete with table clothes, flowers, well-dressed passengers and staff and gorgeous meals.

The tables were repurposed for various games between meals. Fights may have been long but there was plenty of space to move about and excellent service. And not a seat belt in sight.

For its day, the Clipper's performance was excellent.

Range was 4,200 miles, and the cruising speed with four reliable Pratt and Whitney radial engines each generating up to 1,600 horse power, was 180 miles per hour — the same as our family four-place lightplanes.

It's obvious from the numbers that crossing the Pacific from San Francisco to Hong Kong would have taken at least 40 to 50 flight hours, depending on the winds aloft, and several days with two or more enroute stops to refuel and service the aircraft as needed at bases in Honolulu, Midway, Wake, Guam and Manila before reaching Hong Kong.

The bases included classy overnight accommodation provided by the airline. Today's commercial jets make the trip non-stop in 13 to 15 hours with far less room and luxury.

The British Short Empire flying boats were a little smaller and shorter-ranged compared to the Boeing Clipper and designed to service the far-flung British Empire through a series of stops between the U.K., Egypt, South Asia and Australia.

With the onset of the Second World War in Europe, most of those aircraft were repurposed by the government to maintain links throughout the empire and in the Atlantic provide protection against German

submarines by surveillance, sometimes attacking, and even sinking, surfaced U-boats.

By the end of the war and the accompanying huge expansion of land airports, there was little need for giant seaplanes despite attempts to market newer, higher performance designs with turboprop or jet engines for the civilian and military markets.

The result was that most died out except for a few repurposed to fight forest fires.

The passing of those magnificent giant seaplanes mirrors the rapid evolution of aviation, which began with the Wright brothers 123 years ago and much else in science and engineering over the same period.

The pace of this is picking up with RNA and DNA engineering, cosmology through ground-breaking telescopes that allow us to peek to edges of the known universe and AI, the darling or devil depending on your perspective, which, coupled with quantum computing, will profoundly change science, how we live and what we understand

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



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FRED LUK**

JUNE 24, 1955 — OCTOBER 29, 2025

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Please join us in honouring  
the life and memory of Fred  
on Saturday, June 13, 2026  
from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at  
The Barn at Pillar and Post  
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—  
Fred was a remarkable human being and meant so much  
to so many — family, colleagues, employees and friends.  
We know he would be happy to see everyone getting  
together and enjoying themselves. We hope you can join  
us in sharing stories and memories and celebrating a  
wonderful man and a life well lived.

—  
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**Obituary**

**John (Bob) Lavery**



LAVERY, John Robert (Bob) —  
May 13, 1942 - April 12, 2026

Bob was born in Toronto and grew up in London,  
Ontario, where he completed his high school education.  
He went on to earn his Chartered Professional  
Accountant designation from Queen's University.

He began his career in Toronto with Ernst & Ernst,  
an international firm of business consultants and CPAs.  
It was there that he met Elaine Shawlinski, who became  
his lifelong partner and a constant source of strength  
and support in both his personal and professional life.

Bob worked in the Toronto, London and Winnipeg offices of Ernst & Ernst,  
eventually becoming the partner in charge of the Winnipeg office. This role brought  
the family to Winnipeg, where Bob and Elaine raised their two daughters, Shaunna  
Lynn and Cara Joyce.

During his career, Bob undertook an advisory assignment with a European  
company, which ultimately led to the formation of Winpak, a company he was asked  
to lead. Under his guidance, Winpak grew and prospered, and Bob remained at its  
helm until his retirement in 2005.

Following his retirement, Bob continued to contribute to the business community,  
serving on the boards of several Winnipeg-based companies and remaining actively  
involved in community initiatives. In recognition of his leadership and service, he was  
honored with a Paul Harris Fellowship from the Rotary Club and named a Fellow of  
the Institute of Chartered Accountants.

In 2012, Bob and Elaine retired from Winnipeg and moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake,  
where they embraced a new chapter filled with activity and enjoyment. They shared  
many happy years there until Elaine's passing in 2020. Bob is lovingly remembered by  
Shaunna and her children, Zach and Ella, as well as Cara and Anne and their children,  
Jack and Henry.

Bob's family offers deepest appreciation to those who supported him in the final  
weeks of his life. Special thanks are extended to good friend Michelle Scott, the  
doctors of St. Catharines Hospital and the staff of the Royal Henley.

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



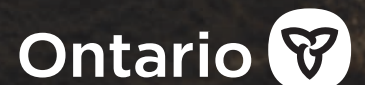
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## NOTICE OF INTENTION TO DESIGNATE

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

**TAKE NOTICE** that the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake intends to designate the property at **115 DELATER STREET, THE DOCK COMPANY MANAGER HOUSE (PLAN M16 LOT 18)** as a property of cultural heritage value or interest under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter 0.18.

#### Description of Property

The Dock Company Manager House is a one and a half storey wooden framed building constructed between 1830-1840. A series of later additions have been added onto the structure. The property is located on the east side of Delater Street in the historic Dock Company area.

#### Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

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

The residential structure at 115 Delater Street is a representative example of a Greek Revival style residence. The subject property is one and a half storeys in height with a symmetrical three bay façade and asymmetrical side elevations. The roof type of the main structure is a gable roof with overhanging eaves and projecting verges, featuring a fretted verge board detail at the gable ends. The subject property contains vertical rectangular window openings. The façade contains double hung windows with a six-over-six configuration. The main entrance to the residence is located in the center of the façade. The residence sits on a low foundation.

115 Delater Street has associative value with the history of the Town's Dock Area and the former Niagara Harbour and Dock Company (NHDC). The NHDC contributed heavily to the growth of the Town, as the commercial-industrial enterprise brought settlers and business. The industry in the Dock Area evolved to include the use of railways and steamships which provided further economic contributions, as well as tourist opportunities to the community of Niagara-on-the-Lake. The residence at 115 Delater Street is a vestige of the NHDC and the larger Dock Area industry that impacted the development of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

115 Delater Street has contextual value because it is important in maintaining the historic character of the area. The modest Greek Revival style residence on the subject property reflects the impact of the NHDC development on the design of the buildings within the Dock Area. This is also reflected through its relationship with the other remaining structures along Delater and Ricardo Street. The subject property lies near various other historic buildings listed on the Municipal Heritage Register. The subject property acts as a character supporting resource for the diminishing modest residences reflective of the NHDC and early Dock Area industry.

115 Delater Street has contextual value because it is historically linked to its surroundings as part of the original NHDC lands and the Dock Area of Old Town. Visually, the subject property is linked to the location of the original marina, which remains today, and is visible from the subject property.

#### Description of Key Heritage Attributes

Key exterior attributes that embody the heritage value of the dwelling at 115 Delater Street in Niagara-on-the-Lake include its:

- Original one-and-a-half storey Greek Revival structure
- Original box-like structure
- Symmetrical three-bay façade
- Gable roof with overhanging eaves
- Fretted verge board at gable ends
- Rectangular window openings throughout
- Low foundation
- Location along Delater Street
- Existing setback from the road
- Historical connection to Niagara Harbour and Dock Company
- Historical connection to Dock Area of Old Town

#### Objections

Any objection to this designation must be filed no later than 30 days after the date of publication of the Notice of Intent to Designate. Objections should be directed to Grant Bivol, Town Clerk, 1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake, L0S 1T0. The last date to file a notice of objection is **May 15th 2026**.

#### Queries

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

Dated at the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake this 16th day of April 2025

GRANT BIVOL, CLERK

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