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Illegal construction halted

Controversial builder Benny Marotta ordered to stop work on historic building



The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake issued a stop-work order on a stone structure located on 14785 Niagara River Pkwy. after a complaint about activity on the property. The work to demolish the roof of the building had started without required permits or approvals. BRIAN MARSHALL

Zahraa Hmood | The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake officials stepped in to stop illegal construction work taking place on a nearly 200-year-old former schoolhouse on the Niagara River Parkway — more penalties may

be next, the town says, if the property owner doesn't comply with its orders.

Town staff received a complaint about activity at 14785 Niagara River Pkwy., a designated property under the Ontario Heritage Act. The land is known in town records

as the Larkin-Dimitrieff property and is owned by prominent developer Benny Marotta.

The town says the construction work involved the stone schoolhouse building and began without the required permits or approvals. Municipal staff attended the

site shortly after receiving the complaint and have since made other visits, photographed the property and begun co-ordinating next steps, it said in a media release on Friday.

Continued on Page 3

Former region CAO says Niagara could save \$30 million with reform

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

After his name surfaced in a heated February council debate with then-Niagara Region chair Bob Gale, a Niagara-on-the-Lake resident and former top municipal staffer appeared at town hall Tuesday with a bold pitch: scrap Niagara's two-tier system for a one-city

government he says could save \$30 million a year.

Harry Schlange told councillors he believes Niagara should dissolve its current regional structure and 12 local municipalities in favour of what he called "one city, one council" — a single-tier government with one mayor and 16 councillors.

He said he came forward after his name was mentioned during Gale's Feb. 24

appearance before council, when Gale referenced Schlange's earlier amalgamation report during debate over governance changes.

Although town officials have said NOTL helped stave off amalgamation for now — after the province chose regional council reforms instead of merging Niagara's municipalities —

Continued on Page 7



Harry Schlange presented to council on Tuesday his vision to save \$30 million dollars for Niagara through amalgamation of its municipal governments into one.

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43K-square-foot storage building denied

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake had a blunt message Tuesday about a proposed farm market and storage hub on protected specialty crop land in St. Davids: It doesn't belong there.

Councillors voted 7-1 against a staff-backed proposal for 263 Concession 6 Rd. that would have allowed farm equipment storage, a produce storage building and an agricultural market.

Coun. Andrew Niven summed up the concern in two words: "why here?"

Town staff had previously recommended approval, but council later directed staff to seek more input from the town's agricultural advisory committee and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness.

In the revised report, staff also tightened the proposed farm equipment storage rules to ensure the use remains focused on serving local agricultural operations and does not expand into a broader retail business.

Staff said it's confident the application meets pro-



A sketch of the proposed facility. SOURCED

vincial and local planning policies.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa cast the lone vote in favour and Coun. Erwin Wiens was absent.

The vote came after Nicholas Colaneri, president of Centurion Building Corporation, urged council to reject the revised report.

"Farmers of the community have spoken. The neighbours have spoken," he said at the meeting.

"Why is staff still recommending approval?"

Colaneri said Ontario's agriculture ministry advised uses of that nature are generally better suited to hamlets, villages or towns — and municipalities should first determine whether they can be located in settlement areas rather than on agricultural land.

He warned approval

could set a precedent "for agricultural land in this community for generations to come."

"This is not a barn," Colaneri said. "The question of whether a 43,000-square-foot commercial facility — masked as agricultural related use, with no direct connection, local or on-site farm operations — belongs on designated specialty crop area and within the green-belt, is not a local question. It is a provincial one."

"The only responsible option here is refusal," he said.

Following the vote, Colaneri told The Lake Report he was "genuinely grateful to council for listening carefully and making the right decision for Niagara-on-the-Lake" and particularly acknowledged the advisory committee and local farmers for speaking out on the

land's importance.

"This outcome shows that when decisions are made with the greater good of the community in mind, good things are possible," Colaneri said.

Zalepa questioned how the town handles other agricultural-related uses facing zoning issues and how many similar applications it receives each year.

Before backing the proposal, Zalepa argued that similar applicants should be treated fairly and consistently.

But several councillors said the proposal did not belong on specialty crop land.

"In my opinion, this development really isn't what our vision for agricultural lands is in Niagara-on-the-Lake," Coun. Sandra O'Connor said.

She said NOTL can take a stricter approach because of its specialty crop designation.

"Niagara-on-the-Lake is allowed to be more restrictive than the provincial policy, or (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness)," O'Connor said — as long as it remains consistent with other conditions.

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NOTL repays pickleball club \$14K after closure

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake will repay its pickleball club almost \$14,000 after shutting down the Virgil Sports Park courts for the 2026 outdoor season, while the future of the site — and long-term local play options — remains unsettled.

Councillors backed a \$13,748.17 reimbursement to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Pickleball Club on Tuesday, for money the club contributed toward noise-reduction panels installed when the courts reopened in 2024.

Council also supported a review of town zoning rules to help identify suitable locations for future pickleball courts.

Both recommendations still must be formally adopted at next week's council meeting.

"I totally agree with the repayment," said Coun. Gary Burroughs.

The total cost of the panels was about \$23,000, said NOTL Fire Chief Jay Plato.

The Virgil courts were ordered closed for the 2026 season after council considered the issue in February in a closed session meeting.

They will remain closed until staff can find an alternate outdoor location.

For now, residents are being pointed to other places to play. Indoor pickleball remains available at the NOTL community centre, for public and club-reserved use. Outdoor options also exist at Queenston Heights Park, where Niagara Parks Commission operates four courts.

Wherever new courts end up, they can't be too close to a residential area, staff recommended.

Staff said a review of town parks found no suitable site with a 200- to 500-metre buffer that would not affect existing sports fields or amenities.

Plato said the town is still weighing options.

"We've had a number of community members reach out, offering suggestions on what it could be turned into," Plato said.

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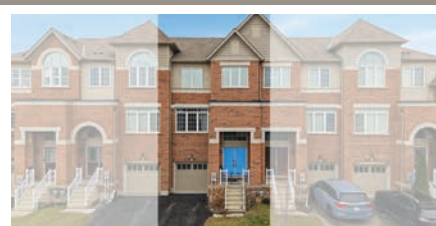
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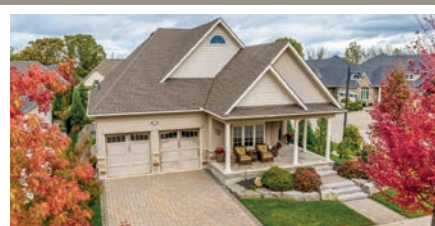
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Simcoe Park ready for fun



Workers spread fresh mulch around the newly installed playground at Simcoe Park, where construction is nearing completion. The previous playground was installed in 1997, and had reached the end of its lifespan, according to the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. The replacement cost about \$150,000, with another \$140,000 allocated to rebuild the playground at Memorial Park. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Town stops work on historic schoolhouse

Continued from Front Page

It did not specify what kind of work took place. However, photos obtained by The Lake Report, taken from the site last Thursday and Friday, appear to show the roof being dismantled.

Under the Building Code Act, the town issued a stop-work order on Friday directing the property owner to halt all work until proper approvals are obtained. Orders were also issued requiring the building to be secured.

Municipal officials said they are working with the owner to bring the property into compliance, but warned that more enforcement action could follow if the orders are not met.

The town added the viola-



Benny Marotta, right, at the old schoolhouse property, where the town issued a stop-work order. SUPPLIED

tion may also be subject to penalties under the Ontario Heritage Act. It did not say what kind of penalties it may pursue.

The Larkin-Dimitrieff property sits next to the former site of Glencairn Hall, a 19th-century home at 14795 Niagara River Pkwy. The home burned

down last April in a fire police are investigating as criminal arson.

A 2011 document from the Town of NOTL states the schoolhouse was "probably" built in the 1830s for the estate workers of Glencairn Hall's then-owner, entrepreneur John Hamilton.

Last August, the town's

committee of adjustment approved plans to bring together a half-acre portion of the Glencairn Hall property with the Larkin-Dimitrieff property, which Marotta owns.

The Lake Report reached out to the Town of NOTL asking for the name of the company that received the stop-work order. The town did not respond by press time.

In its media statement, the municipality said it remains committed to protecting heritage resources and takes unauthorized alterations seriously.

"Our built heritage is a defining part of our community's identity," the town said.

Officials said they will continue to monitor the property.

Have your say on vacation rentals in NOTL

Staff
The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is asking residents and operators for feedback on vacation rentals through a new public engagement initiative that includes an online survey and two public information sessions later this month.

The review, launched at the direction of council, is aimed at gathering input on the role that vacation rentals, also known as short-term rentals, play in the community and whether any improvements are needed in

how they are managed.

Short-term rentals in Niagara-on-the-Lake include bed-and-breakfasts, cottage rentals, country inns, vacation apartments and villas.

The town says the review will examine what is working well under the current system while also exploring possible changes to licensing, including whether adjustments should be made based on whether rentals are hosted or unhosted, or depending on their location.

An online survey opened April 20 and will remain available until May 11 through the town's Join the

Conversation platform.

"This engagement is an opportunity to connect directly with our community," said Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa in a media release.

Last year, the Town of NOTL enacted a freeze on issuing new short-term rental licences as it continued to study ongoing concerns with the short-term rental industry, including the number of operators in the town and properties without on-site hosts.

Some in town have said unhosted short-term rentals are particularly problematic because of the amount of

real estate they may take up in a neighbourhood and because they're often the site of noise and littering complaints, particularly at cottage and villas.

In addition to the survey, the town will host two public information centres in the Mori Room at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre, where residents can learn more about the review and ask questions.

The first session is scheduled for Wednesday, April 29, from 5 to 7 p.m., followed by a second session on Thursday, April 30, from 1 to 3 p.m.

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Water walk inspires students



With handmade signs in hand, Landon, Maverick, Addison, Alex and Declan of Crossroads Public School take part in a "Walk for Water" Earth Day activity, trekking from the school to Creek Road and back — a route some students completed twice. The day is designed to teach students about the importance of water, from reducing pollution and keeping sources clean to the ongoing challenges many Canadians face in accessing safe drinking water. DAVE VAN DE LAAR



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NOTL weighs fixes for St. Davids flooding

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Residents frustrated by years of flooding in St. Davids pressed Niagara-on-the-Lake staff and consultants at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre last week for answers.

"We cannot knowingly have a problem for 15 years and do nothing, and not expect residents to sit there and go, 'This is not acceptable, we're going to initiate a class action suit,'" resident Shawn Comfort told officials at an April 16 public session where possible fixes were presented to residents. Comfort said he has six sump pumps and has spent \$20,000 of his own money trying to manage flooding. "My property becomes a lake until the culverts catch up," he said.

The session was part of the town's Vineyard Creek Estates stormwater management environmental assessment, launched to address localized drainage concerns and improve the area's stormwater pond.

The project is expected to take about a year and a half to complete and the current public comment period does not yet have a set end date.

Residents were presented with six possible solutions: a downstream stormwater pond at 320 Tanbark Rd., expansion of the existing Sandalwood pond, a new pond at Lowery Park, a new



Darren MacKenzie addresses residents and fields pointed questions during a public session on long-running flooding concerns in St. Davids last week. PAIGE SEBURN

pond at Sparky's Park, underground storage tanks at Lowrey Park and Sparky's Park and a "do nothing" option required under the municipal class environmental assessment process.

Officials are using four criteria: technical feasibility, natural environmental considerations, social and cultural considerations, and financial and project viability.

Presentation materials said the existing Sandalwood pond was built when the area had far less pavement and development. More roads, roofs and driveways now mean rainwater reaches the system faster, putting more pressure on it.

Although officials said climate change and updated rainfall trends were considered in the proposed options, several residents questioned whether the town's traditional "100-year storm" planning standard

still reflects today's heavier rainfall and more frequent extreme weather.

One asked if any solution chosen now would still be enough as more homes are built and weather events become more severe.

"Are we going to be doing this again in another several years?" said Linda Della Rossa.

The Lake Report asked whether the study assumes all possible future growth permitted in that area and if residents will get another chance to comment once more studies are complete — after staff repeatedly said further analysis and evaluation of the options would come later.

Officials said drainage upgrades are being planned for that growth and that final reports will be posted publicly before another comment period.

Concerns also came from outside the immediate study

area. Resident Scott Kirby, who said he lives on Line 1, told officials he has dealt with flooding and wanted to know how downstream impacts would be addressed.

"The message that you oughta be receiving is we need to take a bigger look at this," he said.

"If you're getting people from downstream coming to this, there's a reason that there's a problem."

The paper also sought a breakdown of the pros and cons of the underground storage option, noting some residents might favour it at first glance because it would preserve green space above ground.

Staff said the underground option could come with higher construction and maintenance costs, less storage capacity than an open pond and difficulty directing large storm flows into the system.

Some residents also asked why the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority was not at the meeting, as many questions focused on Four Mile Creek and downstream flooding.

Staff said the authority has responsibilities related to the creek, while some nearby drainage infrastructure is also the town's responsibility.

The authority will review the study and provide feedback, but staff said it does not usually attend public meetings like this.

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com



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Fort Mississauga to **open for tours** in May, June

Tony Chisholm
Special to The Lake Report

I've always been fascinated with Fort Mississauga. It fired my imagination to see the original structure, never fully restored, sitting unused on its own original embankments.

Long after I moved to town, I enjoyed walking the trail in the golf course to photograph the fort in its many moods on the shoreline. I loved the time at sunset when the red bricks were seemingly set on fire by the setting sun.

Fort Mississauga stands as a tower of strength on Lake Ontario. Built just after the War of 1812, this unique site reflects 150 years of British and Canadian military activity.

This treasured place is a testament to the resilience of the local community, the rubble of whose homes was used as building materials to the peoples who laboured to build this fort and protect their homes, including the Coloured Corps — and, to all nations that have called this place home since time immemorial.



Fort Mississauga will be open for in-depth historical tours from May 16 to June 28. FILE

In 1804, a lighthouse was erected at the site by British settlers, which had become known as Mississauga Point. The lighthouse was maintained by Dominic and Mary Henry and saw action during the Battle of Fort George in May 1813. This was the first lighthouse on the Great Lakes but was dismantled in 1814 to make way for Fort Mississauga.

When the British recaptured the Niagara Frontier in December 1813, they chose to replace Fort George which had been left in ruins. Because Fort George did not command the entrance to the mouth of the Niagara River, Fort Mississauga was meant to correct that. The location held a commanding view of Lake Ontario and the

Niagara River.

The new fort started in the spring of 1814, featured a star-shaped fortification and was dominated by the massive central tower. It was built in part from the remains of the lighthouse and bricks salvaged from the town after it was burned by retreating American forces in December 1813.

With the American navy in 1814 controlling Lake Ontario, this work was crucial to the security of British forces in the Niagara Peninsula. A British officer later noted "Mississauga ... is a pretty little fort and would prevent vessels coming up the river."

It is the only remaining example of a square tower within a star-shaped earthwork in Canada.

Since 2019, Fort Mississauga National Historic Site has undergone a series of incredible restoration works to restore the site's cultural resources and provide even more opportunities for visitors to experience a critical period in Canada's history.

From the restored earthworks and stabilized central tower and structures, to the new pedestrian boardwalk connecting visitors to the new pathway and amazing views along the stabilized section of Lake Ontario shoreline, Fort Mississauga is now a must-see experience in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

And now, Fort Mississauga National Historic Site will be open on weekends

from May 16 to June 28, from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each Saturday and Sunday. Join Friends of Fort George staff on-site and explore this historic gem with us.

Our interpreters will be on-site within the grounds of Fort Mississauga with replica artifacts offering tours. Learn about the history of the site, access the interior of the tower, and take part in our historic tours.

Our in-depth tours will take place at 11 a.m.; 1 p.m.; and 3 p.m., each day, and will include a visit to the Sally Port with our staff.

Visiting the site is free of charge, but accessing the interior of the site, or going on a tour costs \$5 per person.

For more information, contact the Friends of Fort George at 905-468-6621 or email admin@friendsoffortgeorge.ca. All proceeds from this initiative will help to support student employment opportunities at Fort George and Brock's Monument.

Tony Chisholm is president of the Friends of Fort George in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

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Jet boats take **first dip** of 2026



Suspended in heavy straps, the \$1.7-million Saute Moutons jet boat is lowered toward the water by a Modern Crane crew from Milton ahead of Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours' April 25 season launch.
 DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Schlange says **change needed** in Niagara

Continued from Front Page

Schlange said the issue is far from settled.
 "I believe this is not over," he said.
 Schlange said Niagara's current system is too expensive, confusing and poorly suited to rising costs, aging infrastructure and growing social pressures.
 "Niagara's numbers — they're not good."
 He said a single-tier government would reduce overlap between the region and local municipalities, creating clearer accountability and allowing faster decisions on housing, planning and infrastructure.
 "Single-tier is so accountable," he said.
 "When I did my budgets in single-tier, I knew that, you know, 100,000 people out there knew it was me and their council. We didn't finger point."
 Schlange said he would return in 18 months with updated figures on Niagara's financial outlook — a timeline that would place councillors roughly one year into their next term after the October 2026 municipal election.
 "Hopefully, the 12 mayors that are running council, the appointed chair and all the municipalities make this happen."
 He pointed to Ottawa, with a mayor and 24 councillors serving about one million residents, and Ham-

ilton, with a mayor and 15 councillors serving roughly 578,000 people. Niagara, he argued, could be governed by one mayor and 16 councillors for a population of about 480,000.
 "Municipal boundaries don't define local neighbourhoods."
 Schlange said the province's recent governance changes for Niagara were also too limited.
 "When I look at what the province announced, I think it was a real missed opportunity," he said.
 "And I'm not sure it's a victory for Niagara-on-the-Lake."
 A key part of his pitch was projected savings.
 Schlange estimated \$30 million in annual net savings based on \$52 million in gross efficiencies, offset by an estimated \$22 million cost to align union contracts and collective agreements across a merged municipality.
 He said those savings would come mainly from reducing senior and middle management layers, buying goods and services more efficiently and spending less on outside consultants.
 Coun. Gary Burroughs said much of Schlange's attention was given to management savings rather than elected officials.
 "Most of your focus was on reducing staff — I've never heard you talk about



Former Niagara region chief administrator Harry Schlange says Niagara could save money under one united government.

reducing council. And yet, this seems to be a focus on this particular presentation," Burroughs said.
 Schlange said council cuts were not where the money would be found.
 "It is not about reducing council," he said.
 "There's no financial savings in reducing 126 to the 17 that I'm recommending."
 "All my savings are on the higher-level senior management roles, middle management roles."
 Burroughs also asked about shared services, often raised as an alternative to amalgamation.
 "Shared services, to me, is a bit of a facade," Schlange said.

"You're not actually saving the money you should be."
 Coun. Sandra O'Connor, citing Ottawa's past amalgamation, questioned whether well-run communities such as NOTL would lose more than they gain in a merged municipality.
 "I, too, was in Ottawa for the amalgamation," she said.
 "How do you address that type of concern, particularly for a community like us, which is quite a rural community?"
 O'Connor said amalgamation in Ottawa "was not a win" for municipalities with strong reserves and well-maintained infrastructure.
 Schlange said newer restructuring models could protect local reserves and community assets.
 "We should learn from that," he said, arguing Niagara should avoid challenges that arose during Ottawa's amalgamation.
 Schlange previously served as chief administrative officer of Niagara Region, Fort Erie and Grimsby, and also worked in a senior administrative role in Brampton.
 "I ran single-tier, upper-tier, lower-tier, at-large council, full-time council, ward council members," he said. "I've also done a number of consolidations in the private sector."
 paigeseburn@niagaranow.com

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Last week to register for next week's seminar on POA Planning 101! This presentation is not one to miss. Whether you've never had a POA before or want to make some updates, I'd love to help you understand your options. Register today!

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Town OKs Konzelmann outdoor events

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Konzelmann Estate Winery is one step closer to legally hosting outdoor events in Niagara-on-the-Lake — but for now, they remain off-limits as approvals are still required following a court ruling earlier this year.

Council approved a zoning change for the winery on Tuesday, permitting an outdoor event space at 1096 Lakeshore Rd.

It has been designated with what the town refers to as a “holding” (or “H”) symbol, which will keep events from happening until the winery secures a site plan approval.

Town staff recommended approval, saying the proposal not only follows planning rules but also will be returning to council anyway, as councillors will need to eventually lift that H symbol.

A February ruling from the Ontario Superior Court



Tom Richardson.

found Konzelmann hosted outdoor events in 2024 and 2025 that were not permitted under its zoning and site plan, and issued a court order barring future events without proper approvals — prompting the winery to seek the zoning change now before council.

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake was also named in the case, but the court has not yet ruled on issues related to the municipality.

The case was brought by neighbouring Brox Company Limited, whose president, Ed Werner, has long opposed expanded outdoor event use on the property.

“While the decision of council doesn’t align with my vision for the future of Niagara’s agricultural area, I hope that this administration will enforce the laws that it has passed,” Werner told The Lake Report.

“Any failure by Konzelmann Winery to follow the laws or by the town to not enforce its laws will only land us in court again.”

Werner’s concerns were echoed during the meeting by lawyer Tom Richardson, who urged council to defer approval until the property complies with the current site plan agreement.

He also asked for tighter restrictions.

“No food, no amplified sound, no fireworks, maximum of six events, only one event at a time.”

Richardson suggested that, if applied — the holding provision should not be lifted until the new site plan agreement is fully complied with.

He warned the dispute could return to court.

“The (court order) will soon be the subject of a motion for contempt of court, due to the failure of Konzelmann to comply with it,” said Richardson.

The winery’s lawyer appeared virtually at the meeting and pushed back, saying the winery will not proceed with events until approvals are in place. He also rejected the idea that Konzelmann is continuing violations or ignoring the court order.

“That is fundamentally false,” said lawyer Paul De-Melo of Kagan Shastri LLP.

“We are in full support of the recommendation report and the zoning by law attached to it,” he said. “It is inconceivable to understand why we would wait to bring the old site plan into place — when it’s being replaced with a new site plan and zoning bylaw.”

For now, Konzelmann remains barred from hosting outdoor events until approvals are in place.

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com



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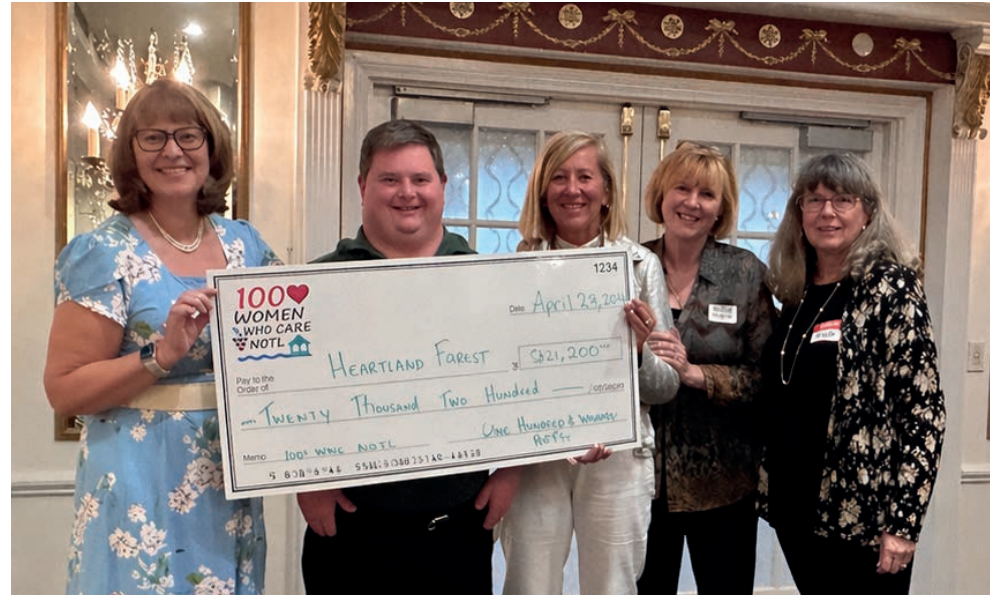
Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

A Niagara non-profit and nature preserve walked away with \$20,400 after 153 women gathered at Queen's Landing for the latest 100+ Women Who Care Niagara-on-the-Lake meeting.

On Monday night, members of the giving group heard presentations from three finalist organizations — Heartland Forest, Red Roof Retreat and YWCA Niagara Region — before voting to award the pooled donation to Heartland Forest.

Executive director Elisabeth Graham said the organization is rooted in the belief that access to nature should never be a privilege. "We provide a place where people of all abilities can connect, heal and belong," she said.

Heartland Forest is a Niagara Falls non-profit nature centre that operates free, accessible trails and



100+ Women Who Care NOTL co-ordinators Julia Buxton-Cox, left, Penny Milligan, centre, and Audrey (Pellett) Webber, right, present a cheque to Adam Kane, second right, and Elizabeth Graham, second left of Heartland Forest. SUPPLIED

offers outdoor education and recreation programs.

The giving group is part of a global movement that pools member donations to support local causes.

Members each commit to donating \$100 every quarter, nominate eligible local charities and not-for-profits, hear presentations from

three finalists and vote to decide which organization receives the collective gift.

Audrey Pellett, who co-founded the group with Julia Buxton-Cox and Penny Milligan, said two things stand out each quarter.

"The extraordinary number of organizations rising to meet the diverse needs

of our community — and the unwavering spirit of the women in this town who continue to show up, lift each other up and create lasting change," she said.

The group's next quarterly meeting is planned for July.

"We can't wait," said Pellett.

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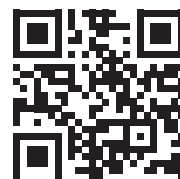
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Pumphouse arts centre receives \$125K donation from Hummel

Staff
The Lake Report

The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre has received a \$125,000 donation from the Hummel family, to be paid over five years in support of the centre's arts programs and operations.

In recognition of the donation, the centre's largest gallery space will be named the Hummel Family Room for the next five years.

The arts centre, located on Ricardo Street, says the room will be used for exhibitions, art classes and special events for residents and visitors.

The donation reflects developer and NOTL resident Rainer Hummel's interest in contemporary art and the family's support for arts initiatives in the community, he said.

"Art has always been an important part of our family's life, and we believe strongly in its ability to bring people together and enrich a community," said Hummel in a media release.

"The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre plays a vital



Natalie Early, Pumphouse chair, Rima Boles, director, Dorothy Soo-Wiens, board member, Rainer Hummel, donor and Lise Andreana, board member. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

role in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and we are honoured to support its mission and help ensure that art remains accessible to all."

The arts centre says the funding will help support programming, artist opportunities and community use of the space.

"The Hummel family's extraordinary generosity represents a significant investment in the future of the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre," said Rima Boles, the art hub's director, in the release.

"This multi-year commitment provides stability and momentum, allowing us to expand programming,

support artists, and create welcoming spaces where our community can connect, learn, and be inspired through art."

Board chair Natalie Early said the donation will help the centre continue its work as a community arts hub.

"On behalf of the board of directors, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the Hummel family for this generous donation," said Early in the release. "Their support ensures the Pumphouse continues to thrive as a vibrant community art hub in Niagara-on-the-Lake."

The centre said the Hummel family is its newest art patron.

First-ever Karen Gansel awards

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

The Shaw Festival may have cornered the performance arts in Niagara-on-the-Lake, but a new national fiction prize claimed its own stage Sunday as writers from across Canada competed for the first Karen Gansel Short Fiction Award

The inaugural award ceremony was held at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre by the Canadian Authors Association, where 95 writers entered, 68 manuscripts moved to judging, six finalists reached the last round, and on Sunday, one winner emerged.

Karen Gansel was a former president of the association's Niagara branch, a national board member and national co-chair, wrote three books, and lived with her husband Ken in Niagara-on-the-Lake for 49 years. "That was her whole day, writing and researching and developing characters," said Ken Gansel, who founded the prize with the Canadian Authors Association in her memory.

Gansel said the contest was a fitting way to carry



Ken Gansel created the writing awards in honour of his late wife, Karen.

forward the work that had shaped much of her life.

"I think she would have enjoyed the fact that I am honouring her in this way,"

The contest asked entrants to write an original short story within 14 days after receiving a prompt devised by Gansel. This year's prompt was based on Cornelius Krieghoff's 1871 painting "The Blacksmith's Shop," which was later issued as a Canadian stamp.

Jordan said about 45 volunteer readers helped assess submissions. Each manuscript was read by three scrutineers before six finalists advanced to a final jury made up of prominent Canadian authors Terry Falis, Gail Anderson-Dargatz and Richard Stursberg.

Jordan said organizers deliberately recruited nation-

ally known authors to judge the final round to give the new contest more profile.

Mark McClure won first prize for his short fiction work "Forge Froide." The story follows a blacksmith in St. Albert, Que., whose forge has sat cold for 30 years after personal loss, until a stranger's arrival in a winter storm begins to reopen the life he shut away.

Barbara Darby placed second for her story, Quintet, and Jean McCarthy placed third for her story, "The Blacksmith's Wife."

Jordan said organizers hope the annual contest can grow into a destination event that draws larger in-person audiences over time, with hopes to receive more than 200 submissions next year and, when complete, he'd like to use the new Royal George Theatre as the event expands.

Gansel is also hopeful the award will continue on an annual basis in his wife's memory.

"I wanted to create a prize that the CAA could use on an annual basis. So the intent is to run this year after year after year," he said.

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



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BKind Grateful #72: Bring snacks to share in a workplace without expecting anything back.

This tiny column gives tips to help promote kindness in our lives and spread joy and happiness.



Contributed by Patty Garriock

“There are many trails up the mountain, but in time they all reach the top.”

- Anya Seton

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Kilning it in Queenston

At Queenston Pottery, artist Carolina García Diez shapes clay on the wheel during the “Three Studios, One Creative Weekend” open-studio event, which also highlighted Flax and Fire and Lakeside Pottery.
 DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Opinion

Massacre on Mississagua



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner
 Columnist

As mentioned, I walk a lot. A ridiculous amount, actually.

After Sunnybrook Hospital teamed up with Home Deport to put 16 screws into my leg (to hold three plates), walking ensures I can keep, well, walking.

And this brings us to the massacre on Mississagua.

On one jaunt this week, I decided to count trees. There are 70 significant ones lining the two sides of that main thoroughfare between the stone wall at Queen and the Timmies at Mary. Some are massive, ancient.

Together they form an awesome canopied and rustic entrance to the heart of this place — the golf course, the chi-chi shops and 47 gelato hangouts.

But soon, 70 will become 29. The folks we elected have greenlit plans to slaughter 41 of those trees, chop away the green above and turn Mississagua Street into something Mississauga would be proud of.

In case you missed it, NOTL is funding (\$3 million) a reconstruction of the main entry road to Old Town. It was approved a



Columnist Garth Turner warns that soon dozens of stately trees lining the entrance road to Old Town will be firewood and sawdust in the town's latest assault. GARTH TURNER

couple of years ago and is now set to start. Like pronto.

There was a public here-it-is session on the last day of March, the one and only time residents were told what's coming and have their comments noted. By that time, of course, all the engineering had been done, the drawings finished and the fate sealed.

When completed, the road will be significantly wider. Bicycle lanes on both sides. A bike-car buffer space added. A new sidewalk. Fresh pipes installed underneath. Communications wires buried. New faux-heritage streetlamps erected. Ditches and swales dug. All amid the sawdust of dozens of stately trees.

It seems there's no opposition to this. The mayor says: “This project

represents an important investment in maintaining and improving our community infrastructure. By upgrading underground services and enhancing the streetscape, we are supporting long-term reliability while also improving the experience for residents, pedestrians, and cyclists.”

Big boosters of the plan seem to be the folks around the intersection at Mary who rent e-bikes and electric scooters to kamikaze tourists who, until now, have wobbled and careened into traffic headed for snacks and booze. No wonder.

Okay, I know what you're thinking. He's writing about repaving now? How far down the rabbit hole has Garth gone?

But there's more to this. Over the coming months, the Niagara Region will be

ripping up Niagara Stone Road. The town will be shutting down Mississagua. That means the conga line of dump trucks going to the Big Dig at the Royal George will be diverting though Old Town residential streets.

The main drag, Queen Street, will be the scene of immense destruction as Shaw turns heritage buildings into rubble. And towering over the area is, yes, a tower — that massive crane at the Parliament Oak site, where a very, very big hotel is being plunked into a quiet hood of signature houses.

Meanwhile, the downtown folks trying to make a living from the tourists are waiting for politicians to inform them if they can have a patio or not. Merchants have been harassed by bylaw officers telling them how much window space can be devoted to signage. And now uncoordinated, uncaring political decisions promise to make this a summer of dust and noise.

Why do people flock here to visit? To live in this bucolic burg?

For the quiet, the history, the architecture, the streetscapes, the geography — and the green above us. These are the intangibles making life in this place unique inside a world of chaotic change, conflict and AI slop.

Sure, we can live with 41 fewer trees. But not quite the same.

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

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71st ANNIVERSARY SALE

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Susan St Amand, president and chief executive officer of the James A. Burton & Family Foundation, says the foundation's track record of supporting education, arts and culture, health, youth services, housing, environment and Indigenous-led through several major initiatives is evidence that it can handle a community-led project at the old hospital. SUPPLIED

A shared opportunity for 176 Wellington

Susan St Amand
Special to The Lake Report

There are important moments when a community must decide not only what to build, but how — and with whom. Niagara-on-the-Lake is in one of those moments.

The discussion of about 176 Wellington has raised questions regarding the James A Burton & Family Foundation's intent and motive. That is fair. Scrutiny is both welcomed and expected.

We want to clarify our intentions and provide some relevant historical context.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, the James A. Burton & Family Foundation committed several million dollars across Canada. We direct our funding to the many organizations and institutions that shape daily life — education, arts and culture, health, youth services, housing, environment and Indigenous-led initiatives.

At the national level, the foundation supports the Family Enterprise Foundation and Family Enterprise Canada in promoting research and enhancing public understanding of the economic, social and philanthropic influence of family businesses in Canada.

In Calgary, the foundation contributed funds to support cSPACE, transforming historic buildings into shared cultural spaces for long-term public use, in a financially sustainable model.

This approach is grounded in experience. Jim

Burton helped build Arts Umbrella in Vancouver into one of Canada's leading youth arts institutions. That same principle guides the foundation today, which is to expand access, develop talent and create places where people can grow.

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, JABFF's support is tangible.

The foundation has long supported Royal Oak Community School, helping to provide an accessible and excellent educational experience that is affordable for every family in Niagara. Continued support for the school sustains an educational approach based on personalized learning and strong community connections.

Located in the former hospital at 176 Wellington, the school demonstrates how this site continues to serve families in meaningful ways. The foundation's ongoing support helps ensure that Royal Oak remains a place where all families in Niagara can access quality education.

The foundation's multi-year investment in the Shaw Festival goes beyond the stage. It allows professional actors and theatre practitioners to engage directly with residents through school programs, improvisation training and hands-on production. The Burton Centre for Lifelong Creativity builds on this by providing space for people of all ages to develop their creative skills, regardless of experience.

The foundation also supports the Niagara Academy

for Indigenous Relations, promoting education and cultural understanding rooted in Indigenous knowledge.

Across the region, the foundation invests in a diverse cultural ecosystem. It supports the Yellow Door Theatre Project for emerging performers, the Niagara Jazz Festival to expand public access to music, and, recently, the First Ontario Performing Arts Centre to improve understanding of climate change and the environment.

The foundation's work also addresses the conditions that allow people of all ages to participate fully in community life.

The foundation supports Red Roof Retreat, providing inclusive programming for children and young adults with special needs.

In Orillia, Jim Burton's hometown, the foundation led a \$14.5 million project to expand housing and integrated supports for at-risk and homeless people at the Lighthouse.

In Hamilton, the foundation funds ReCreate, which provides creative pathways for youth facing mental health challenges, and HAMSMaRT, addressing barriers to care for homeless individuals. The foundation also supports Home Horizon, Wayside House, Alternatives for Youth in Hamilton, as well as Big Brothers Big Sisters in Simcoe County.

The approach remains consistent. The foundation offers multi-year funding for stability, leverages matching contributions to attract

further support, and invests in building capacity that communities can maintain.

That is the context for 176 Wellington.

The foundation is prepared to work with NOTL to invest capital, planning and partnerships to support a community-serving future for the site. The building would remain publicly owned and benefit from long-term revenues to the Community Health and Well-Being Reserve.

The foundation is interested in 176 Wellington results from three years of stakeholder engagement, surveys and direct community input. The findings match the town's consultation led by NPG Planning Solutions Inc., which cited strong support for a community-focused use centred on education, arts and shared public space.

The foundation would not be pursuing this project without that clear direction from the community and encouragement from community leaders.

The foundation's work has always been guided by a simple idea: answer a good call, invest in people, strengthen community institutions and leave something meaningful behind.

That is what is being offered here — an opportunity to create something that reflects the values of all parts of Niagara-on-the-Lake and serves it for generations to come. Nothing more.

Susan St Amand is president and chief executive officer of the James A. Burton & Family Foundation.



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style
Category: ALSO A CAR PART

**They make Stratocasters
with all the fixins.**

Last issue category: BITE ME

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

Answer: What is bite the bullet?

Answered first by: Sue Rautenberg

Also answered correctly (in order) by:
Susan Hamilton, Lynda Collet, Bob Wheatley, Jane Morris, Margie Enns, Jeff Lake, Michael Creager, Claudia Grimwood, Katie Reimer, Emma Balsas, Nancy Rocca, Susan Dewar, Sylvia Wiens, Marla Percy, Catherine Clarke, Wade Durling, Sheila Meloche, Tuija Johansson, Daniel Smith, Howard Jones

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)

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Actions at old schoolhouse a **violation** of heritage law



Brian Marshall
Columnist

There are those who consider our built heritage just “old stuff” which stands in the way of realizing new development and should be unapologetically demolished.

Then there are those who are uninformed and assume that their governments will take care of heritage.

And, there are the willfully ignorant — like our premier who spends millions of dollars annually on salaries for those in his office who cannot seem to provide advice he listens to — that choose to believe heritage adds no value.

Finally, we have those for whom a mere two centuries of history does not deserve the respect engendered by the built heritage of the old world.

As I have written in the past, preserving our heritage is essential to maintain

cultural identity, foster community pride, and provide tangible links to the past that educate future generations. Moreover, it creates a sense of place that informs and underwrites the unique character of a town.

However, often overlooked are the economic benefits generated by preserved heritage as reported in multiple studies that have been conducted across Canada and the United States.

Consider tourism, for example. The research indicates “heritage tourists” spend more per day than other tourists, stay longer at their destination and are much more likely to stay in a hotel, inn or B&B versus staying with friends or family.

According to Horizon Consumer Research and Data, during 2025, the heritage tourism market in Canada generated revenues of just short of \$22 billion Canadian dollars. Further, they project that by 2033 those revenues are expected to reach \$34 billion.

Consolidated research data suggests that this market currently supports well over 200,000 jobs in Canada.

Heritage tourism is just one of several economic boons granted as a direct



No one who understands construction would use a backhoe to remove a roof unless the end game was to demolish the existing building, writes Brian Marshall.

result of preserving our shared history.

So, why don't municipal governments take the preservation of heritage assets seriously?

NOTL can claim it does — we just saw the long-overdue expansion of Old Town's heritage conservation district — but, this isn't about lines on a map. It's about enforcement of the law.

The Ontario Heritage Act (section 69) clearly spells out the penalties and fines for violating the provisions of this legislation.

For knowingly providing false information pursuant to the provisions of the act; or failing to comply with

any order, direction or other requirement made under the act; or contravening the provisions of the act, individuals are liable to a fine of up to \$50,000 and/or to imprisonment for up to one year. For corporations, the fine is up to \$250,000.

In addition to any other penalties, the council of the municipality is empowered to restore the property “as nearly as possible to its previous condition,” and may recover the cost of the restoration from the owner of the property.

Those individuals or corporations convicted of demolishing or removing a building, structure or heritage attribute, the maximum

fine is \$1,000,000.

By the way, the penalties, fines and authority of the municipality to restore applies to cases of demolition by neglect as well.

Allow me to provide some specific NOTL examples.

Miss Young's School at 620 King St. is possibly the oldest surviving log dwelling in Niagara. The lower two courses of logs are rotten and need to be replaced before a near term collapse occurs.

The condition of this building has been definitely known for two years and the owners have refused to supply a plan for its conservation. To my knowledge, no further action has been taken by the town to date (other than refusing to issue a demolition permit).

I have written about the David Secord House at 46 Paxton Ln. ad nauseam in this column so I'll make this short.

There are holes in the roof that have been known to exist for more than five years and the owner refuses to address the issue. The town has issued no recent work orders nor has it initiated any restoration/preservation actions.

Most recently, out at 14785 Niagara River Pkwy. — owned by Mr. Benny Marotta — a backhoe

was deployed to destroy the roof (and damage the stone walls) of the heritage designated 1830's stone school likely built by John Hamilton on his Glencairn estate.

In response to a resident compliant, the town issued a stop-work order until the “appropriate permits and approvals” are obtained.

Further, they state, “This violation may also be subject to enforcement under the Ontario Heritage Act, which provides for significant penalties.”

May I observe there is no “may” about it.

This is a clear and blatant violation of the Ontario Heritage Act and deserves the full weight of the law (with associated penalties) to be visited upon a property owner who, due to his business history, should be fully conversant with this legislation and, by his actions, deliberately chose to break the law.

We prosecute for driving offenses, hate speech, theft, assault and a myriad of other greater and lesser offenses.

Why do we excuse those who murder our history?

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

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A NOTL without the Shaw would be **lacking**

Let's put more wheelchair ramps on Queen Street

Dear editor:

Please, please, please, Garth Turner, give us a break.

Again last week we have read for the umpteenth time your negative and acerbic opinions regarding the construction of the Shaw theatre on Queen Street ("The Turner Report: Getting theatrical over the Shaw," April 16).

We have heard over and over again your personal opinion of all that is and may go wrong.

Furthermore in response to a counter-opinion, you constructed a response that reeked with innuendo about a possible conflict of interest of the writer of that counter-opinion.

Let me say that I am not connected to Shaw in any way except that I think that without Shaw, Niagara-on-the-Lake would be very, very much the poorer.

Furthermore, I believe Queen Street needs as prominent a place for a Shaw theater as can be

found for it. It draws people to it and to the businesses and it a blessed relief from more businesses.

Certainly the short-term inconveniences you keep on and on telling us about are worth getting this valuable theatre for the future.

So "we," well many of us at least, have had enough of your negative views. If you must, please give us a break, something positive, about something else.

Peter Rand
NOTL



Letter writer Peter Rand says the Shaw Festival is an integral part of NOTL and that we should celebrate the construction of a new, modern theatre complex.

Is a **parking structure** the right use for the old hospital site?

Dear editor:

Council is in danger of making a generational mistake at the former hospital site.

The issue is not merely whether 150 parking spaces can be squeezed onto the property.

The issue is whether Niagara-on-the-Lake is now prepared to spend \$9

million to \$18 million on a paid parking structure without first proving that people will use it, that the debt risk is acceptable, and that this is even the right response to the problem.

Those who criticize an arts, cultural and education concept as something that might eventually cost taxpayers money should

answer a simple question: what happens if the parking structure is under-used?

What happens when there is still free parking elsewhere in town, usage falls short, revenue disappoints, and the debt remains? Taxpayers pay. That is what happens.

This is why the white-

elephant concern is real.

There is also a larger policy failure here. Niagara-on-the-Lake keeps trying to solve the consequences of mass tourism while refusing to address the cause.

If the tourism model continues to chase raw volume, buses and high-turnover day traffic, then

pressure on Old Town will intensify no matter how much parking is built.

Residents will lose more land, more peace, more character and more control.

The hospital site should not become a monument to that failure.

AnnLiz Simpson
NOTL

Dear editor:

A couple of weeks ago, I was looking for a gift for a newborn. A friend told me that I should check out Hatley's.

Unfortunately, I use a wheelchair and was not sure if I could get in.

Luckily when we arrived at the store, there was a sign that said a ramp would be provided if needed. The sales lady brought the ramp to the side door and I was able to go in and shop.

There are many great stores and restaurants at Niagara-on-the-Lake that I would like to patronize.

Hopefully, more businesses will put out ramps or find other solutions to make it easier and possible for disabled people.

Dina Ritacca
Etobicoke



ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITY

Short Term Rentals

The Town is gathering community and operator feedback on how Short Term Rentals are regulated, and there are multiple ways to share your feedback.



Complete the Online Survey

- April 20 to May 11
- www.jointheconversationnotl.org/short-term-rentals
- No registration is required.



Attend a Public Information Centre at the Community Centre's Mori Room (14 Anderson Lane)

- Wednesday, April 29, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.
- Thursday, April 30, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
- No registration is required.



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Humans vs. K-9s: Who really domesticated whom?



Keith McNenly
Special to The Lake Report

Human science tells a tidy story about how humans domesticated dogs, but that's not the real story.

Tens of thousands of years ago, the Earth held a meeting.

Human populations had begun to grow — agriculture appeared. Villages formed, then fortified and fought other villages. Individual violence became tribal.

Humans accelerated destruction of land, forests, other species and then each other. Humans became a problem.

Earth recognized the worrying trend and called a meeting. Fungi took minutes and would receive field reports — because fungi are the only ones with a robust communication network.

A plan emerged.

Observers would be needed to report progress back to the committee. Crows were considered because they are everywhere, but they did more talking than listening. After considering many species, a bear was interviewed.

Committee: "How do you negotiate dispute settlement?"

Bear: "We don't negotiate, we end it."

The bears got the job.

Committee discussions took eons but went generally like this: The human species was becoming too destructive and violent — an intervention was required.

The wind came in first as usual and said it could send tornadoes and hurricanes to wipe them out. Water floated the idea of deluges.

Earth landed its own insight: humans don't need to be punished, just softened. The wise owls contributed that the human ego would require any plan be executed in a way that humans would believe it was their idea.

Wolves realized humans were doing the "pack" thing all wrong — using it for

harm, not mutual benefit. Real packs protect, warn and put the group first. Wolves lived this; humans had to be taught — domesticated.

Enter, Project FOG (Field Operatives of Gentleness).

Phase one: Puppy acquisition (the bonding funnel)

There is a reason puppies look the way they do. Heads slightly too big. Movements slightly too clumsy. Eyes big and round, and contain an expression best translated as, "I have faith in you even if you don't." Humans are not immune to this.

A puppy is essentially a small, warm application that installs itself directly into the human nervous system. A human cannot argue with a puppy without feeling slightly ashamed. That is not a weakness. That is the beginning of education.

Phase two: The carpet curriculum (humility training)

A strange feature of dog life is the "accident," which usually occurs on the carpet even when a cleanable floor exists within a few inches.

Many have assumed this is confusion. The Earth



A young girl and her dog share a quiet moment — a small example of the bond that, over time, teaches care, patience and connection to the world around us. SOURCED

committee assures us it is not. Hard floors teach wiping. Carpets teach character.

Phase three: The tools (subtle, effective, occasionally damp)

FOG agents were equipped with several behaviour-shaping techniques.

The head tilt: a small

angle of inquiry that causes humans to explain themselves. Explaining is how humans accidentally learn.

The big-eyed stare: an interface that redirects dominance into care. It creates a pause — the brief moral space in which a human can choose to be better.

Licking: often misunderstood as affection alone, licking is also diplomacy. It interrupts spirals. It resets shame.

The walk protocol: the most successful intervention of all. Twice a day, a dog requires a human to go outside and notice the world. It is difficult to remain grandiose while holding a bag of poop.

Phase four: Adulthood (routine becomes stewardship)

The true genius of dogs is that, after the puppy phase fades, the responsibility does not. It gives unconditional love. It needs breakfast and water. It needs the outside world. It needs you to show up.

Slowly, without fanfare, the human becomes someone who practises care even when it is inconvenient.

This is how you domesti-

cate a powerful species: not with commandments, but with habits.

Phase five: Old age (the short lifespan lesson)

And then comes the part no one jokes about.

Dogs do not live as long as humans. The course is brief — 12 to 15 years, sometimes less. Which means humans learn, again and again, the hardest lesson: love is not possession.

Caring for an old dog teaches something that no app can teach: That worth is not tied to productivity.

That devotion does not end when someone becomes slower, weaker, inconvenient.

That grief is not a failure of love — it is the proof that the training worked.

The Earth committee did not design dogs to break human hearts. It designed dogs to open them, and opening has consequences.

The most dangerous species on Earth was not conquered. It was befriended, one household at a time, by a creature sometimes small enough to fit in your arms and wise enough to require your best self.

Happy Earth Day.



Mother's Day Tea

May 10

An Annual Tradition!

Order a delectable High Tea box, filled with savoury sandwiches, scones and treats. Sidle up to the tea stand for a hot cuppa' or glass of bubbly (\$). Add a pre-tea workshop and craft an elegant fascinator. Make a day of it by taking in *Funny Girl*. What better way to celebrate Mum?!

Tea \$85. Tea and Workshop \$95. Ticket to *Funny Girl* extra.

Plan ahead for Father's Day

June 21

Raise a glass and share a toast to celebrate Dad with a curated whisky flight prepared by The Shaw's in-house culinary team and take in a performance of *Jeeves & Wooster*. Paired with delectable tastings, you'll have no problem proclaiming, "Here's to you, Dad!"

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Change happens slowly, but it's **going to happen**



ROSS'S RAMBLINGS

Ross Robinson
Columnist

As we tenaciously grind our way through the last weeks of a very long and cold winter, I have been reflecting, ruminating, on how change is inevitable.

It wasn't that long ago that NOTLers were in a complete tizzy trying to stop several nationally known purveyors of fast foods from opening here. Has it really been twenty five years? It sort of snuck up on us, but now we have four Tim Hortons locations, all "part of the landscape." They all seem to be good

citizens, and good corporate neighbours. And two McD's.

Remember the angst? The Niagara Advance newspaper and town council meetings were dominated by citizens expressing reasons why we should keep "them" out of "our" town. Often factually, and often emotionally.

In the end, town councillors were convinced that if a proposed business fulfilled the previously agreed upon criteria, they had the right to open and try their luck right here.

While the proposed McDonalds across from the old high school took most of the flak, an application to open the Mary/Mississauga Tim Hortons sort of slipped by, mostly under the radar. Since then, three more Tim's franchises have set up shop in NOTL.

In years past, I had been a very interested spectator to the same emotional processes while living in Huntsville and Banfuhfuh.



Ross Robinson says change isn't always bad — such as the Tim Hortons and McDonald's restaurants that were greatly protested in ages past. He says more change is coming.

Yes, not just people who proudly call Niagara home are fiercely and sometimes overly emotional. The way it used to be should be the way it should always be, and all that.

The owners of our four Tim Hortons franchises all understand that in the future, additional Tims locations might open.

Perhaps one might be on the Niagara Parkway corner where the currently unused Kurtz Market was located for so long? And how about

in Queenston, on the site of the old Yellow Jersey Ice Cream Shop? Next to the very unique Land Rover collection.

Having written this rambling Ross's Ramblings, without prejudice and just for fun, to encourage readers to reflect and ruminate, I think back to my high school history teacher in the 1960's at Sir Winston Churchill S.S. in nearby St. Catharines.

Mr. Wadsdorth was strict and by the book, and taught

us all life lessons too. At least those of us who were not too smart or cocky to learn. By studying history, one can often predict the future.

So let us accept that change is coming to Niagara-on-the-Lake. So be it. But let us work in good faith, together and respectfully, to get the best possible results for the most people possible.

I do not purport to have answers. But I know for certain that we are fortunate

to have many intelligent citizens in town, who want the best for our futures.

Listen to one another, be open minded and respectful, and look toward a changed future.

Rambling out west now, when the railways were being built across our vast Canada in the 19th century. Much land needed to be expropriated from Indigenous peoples. Some First Nations leaders understood that change was inevitable, and negotiated in good faith. They did everything in their power to get the best deal possible for their people.

Other leaders refused to accept change, and so sadly ended up with essentially nothing. Unfair and tragic.

They didn't understand the golden rule. "Them that's got the gold makes the rules."

I am really rambling, way out of my lane, so it's best if I bid y'all adieu.

Please be kind.

rossrocket9@gmail.com



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FEATURED

Sisters show off renovation skills in **reality TV competition**

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

Marcy and Melissa Mus-sari grew up watching their family show them the magic of being able to transform their living space into something new.

The two sisters were raised in Niagara-on-the-Lake in a home their parents spent years renovating.

“Throughout our whole life, both of our lives, we’ve lived in this renovated home,” said Marcy. “We’ve just watched the house take on a whole new look and a whole new function.”

That lit the spark of creativity in both of them at an early age.

“I always remember, growing up, asking my mom to take me to open houses and redecorating my room, redecorating my sister’s room, taking pieces from the house and then bringing it downstairs to our playroom,” Marcy said. “I was always creative.”

Today, they’re still in the world of building and designing. Marcy, the older sister, is an interior designer, while Melissa is a contractor.



NOTLers Marcy and Melissa are competing for \$100,000 on the new season of “Renovation Resort.” HOME NETWORK

Together, they put their prowess to the test as contestants on the new season of Home Network’s “Renovation Resort.”

The show spotlights four renovation-savvy duos from across North America, each tasked with creating a lakeside vacation

home in the Kawarthas. The winning team at the end of the eight-week-long endeavour will get a \$100,000 prize.

Each week, the duos focus on bringing a separate room or area of the house to life. No two homes will look alike: each design and build

is unique, depending on the vision of each team.

“Our style is more of a rustic, nautical style. It really blends Melissa and I’s aesthetic,” said Marcy. “And our childhood, what our family is interested in.”

Every day on the show is a challenge, Melissa said:

decisions often have to be made on the fly. It’s kept them on their toes.

“They like to throw in a design detour onto us, so you really have to think on the spot, design on the spot,” she said. “It was fun to do that together, try to work together on how to

bring it to life.”

The Mussaris are the only sibling duo in the competition this season. Melissa said they wanted to be sure to treat each other respect throughout the whole experience, in spite of all the ups and downs.

Fortunately for them, having known each other all their lives gives them a boost, as well.

“We know each other so well that in those stressful situations, if I just give Marcy a look or she gives me a look, we know, ‘OK, don’t say anything,’ or, ‘She needs a second to breathe,’” said Melissa.

Overall, however, taking part in the competition and building the lakehouse has been a blast for both of them, they said.

“We get to see it from drywall to the finished product and being able to do that with Marcy has just been so much fun,” Melissa said.

Season three of “Renovation Resort” is streaming now exclusively on StackTV. New episodes air every Sunday.

zahraa@niagaranow.com



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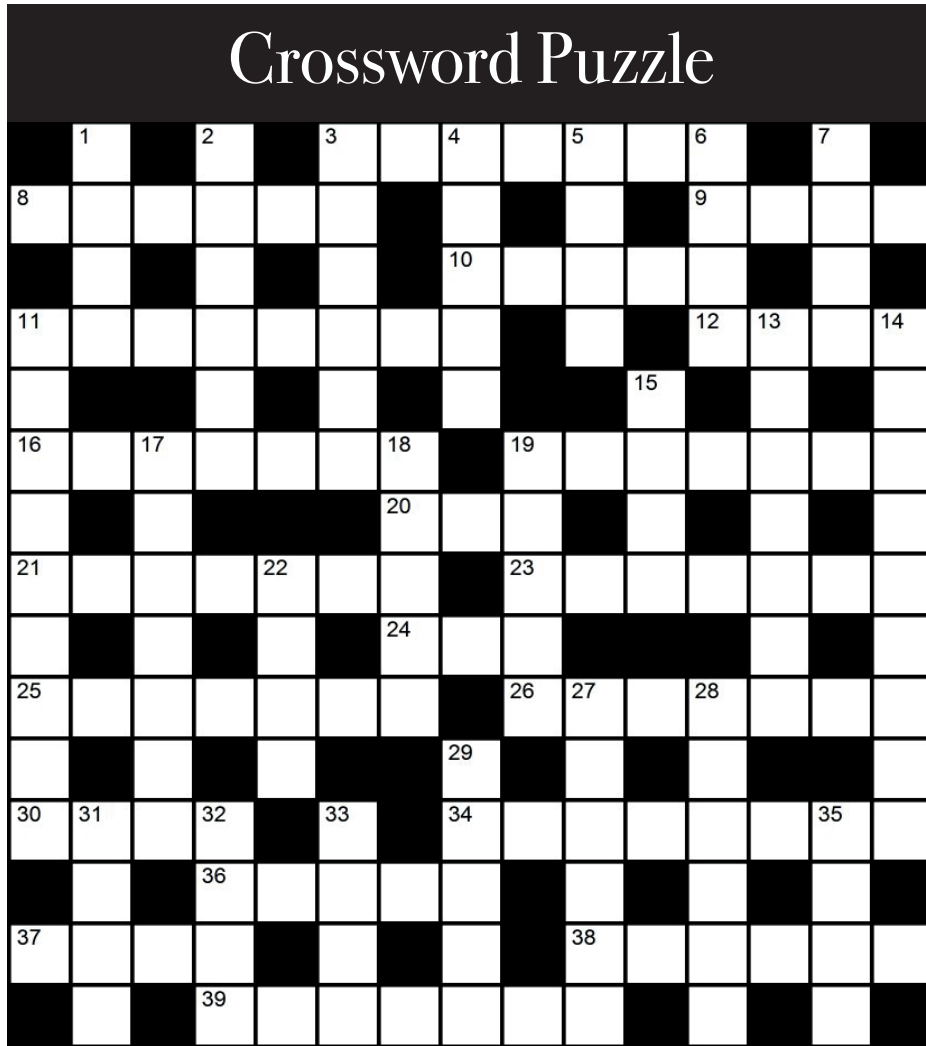


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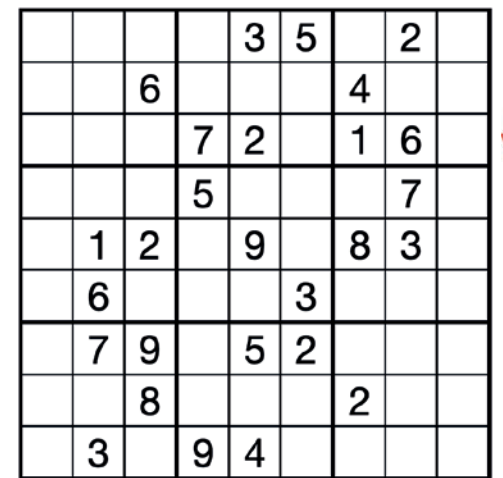
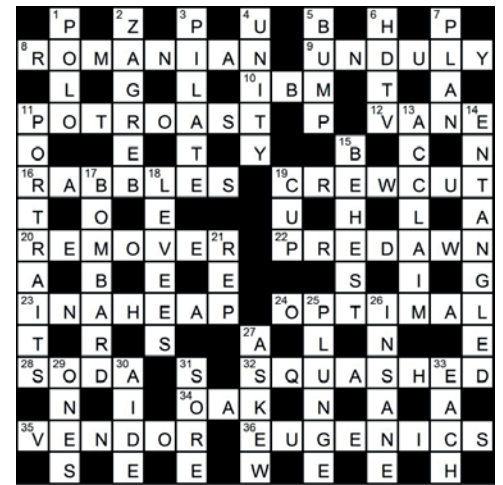
- 3. Ringed (7)
- 8. --- Goldberg, actress (6)
- 9. Highway (4)
- 10. Lax (5)
- 11. Last (8)
- 12. Heavy blow (4)
- 16. Predicted (7)
- 19. Spark off (7)
- 20. Belonging to us (3)
- 21. Old match (7)
- 23. Its capital is Montevideo (7)
- 24. Involuntary muscular contraction (3)
- 25. Up-to-date (2,5)
- 26. Covered (7)
- 30. Young lady (4)
- 34. Instruction to keep cool (4,4)
- 36. Tyrone county town (5)
- 37. Forbidden action (2-2)
- 38. Vortices (6)
- 39. Learned the ropes (7)

Down

- 1. North Wales seaside resort (4)
- 2. Incentive (6)
- 3. Shrill chirping insect (6)
- 4. Canons (5)
- 5. Landlocked SE Asian nation (4)
- 6. Sketched (4)
- 7. Father (4)
- 11. Spreading out (9)
- 13. Top brass (4-3)
- 14. Death for a cause (9)
- 15. Place (4)
- 17. Earthquake scale (7)
- 18. Value (5)
- 19. Armistice (5)
- 22. Smoke duct (4)
- 27. Approached (6)
- 28. Assent (6)
- 29. Grey (5)
- 31. "Prince ---", Borodin opera (4)
- 32. Spoils (4)
- 33. Individual facts (4)
- 35. Sediment (4)



Last issue's answers



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EXPLORING HISTORY
WITH NOTL MUSEUM



The enduring legacy of Sherlock block

If you've ever stopped in at Just Christmas on Queen Street, you've stood where this photograph was taken more than a century ago. Known to this day as the Sherlock block, the Sherlock family operated a dairy, a livery stable, and several storefronts along Queen Street, including this one. They even ran an ice plant behind the building, delivering ice door-to-door by horse and buggy — perhaps by one of the very wagons seen here. At the time this photograph was taken, the ground floor was home to Vern Davey's butcher shop, one of several businesses lining this busy stretch of Queen Street. After Davey's tenure, the space later became the printing and publishing office of the Niagara Advance. The man standing at the centre of the image is Edward Sherlock, then serving as chief of police and closely connected to the building's enduring name.

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In war, survival leaves its mark — even on man's best friend



DR. BROWN

Dr. William Brown
Columnist

A article in the New York Times published on Feb. 8 chronicled changes in formerly domesticated dogs lost or abandoned by their masters in war zones in Ukraine caught my eye recently, because of corresponding physical, behavioral and emotional changes in soldiers exposed to violent combat in the First and Second World Wars, Korea, Vietnam and countless other conflicts in the 20th and now 21st century.

Some readers may remember the movie "Saving Private Ryan," which vividly captured the violence on Omaha Beach on D-Day and the following few weeks as seen through the eyes of a fictional small unit.

When I practised in Boston, it was a safe bet with men of a certain age that most would have served in some capacity during the Second World War. I remember asking one man whether he had seen "Sav-

ing Private Ryan." Those words barely left my lips before his head dropped between his knees, and he began to sob to the stunned surprise of his wife.

It turned out that he had been in the third wave to land on Omaha Beach and within minutes his unit lost a third of the men with whom he had trained. He was soon wounded severely enough to warrant transfer back to the U.S. for care.

Later when he settled down in my office, he revealed that he had never shared that chaotic few minutes of terror so well portrayed in the movie, with anyone except a few surviving buddies.

It was the chaos and sounds in that opening scene of that movie which recreated those few moments that triggered his response in my clinic. It doesn't take much imagination to realize that similar terrifying experiences were common, sometimes lasting many weeks and even a few months for front line troops.

A similar tale was shared with me by a Canadian scientist with whom I worked at Western University one summer. He too was terrified by his experience as an infantryman in Italy and northwest Europe, and many years after experienced nightmares. My great-aunt's first husband share similar



A soldier and his dog share a moment of quiet companionship — a bond that offers comfort and stability amid the stress and uncertainty of life in a war zone.

traumatic experiences at the Battle of the Somme in the First World War.

Similar physical and emotional trauma involved many millions of civilians in the 20th century and conflicts in this century, the worst of which recently involve Ukraine, the Middle East and Africa.

So, is it any surprise that pet dogs might be affected by violence of the kind reported by the author of the New York Times article?

The article reported that "dogs on the front line, in a remarkably short period time, had become more like wild dog species, such as wolves, coyotes or dingoes — even their ears took on a different shape, with more pointed ears more frequent

than floppy ears."

The author's observations reminded me of studies by the Russian geneticist Dmitry Belyaev in the 1950s.

Belyaev changed the behavior of wild foxes — normally wary and aggressive — into domesticates, whose behavior was transformed within a few generations into pet-like behaviours by mating the most docile foxes of both sexes in successive generations.

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

Similar, even more rapid changes have been observed with some birds on the Galápagos Islands, whose beak size and shape can change in a season or two in response to environmental change.

A similar mechanism probably explains changes within a few generations in the size, shape and colour of cichlid fish in Africa's Lake Victoria in response to environmental changes.

The changes in the foxes were much too quick for natural selection acting on random mutations. Such rapid and dramatic behavioral and physical changes suggest the strong hand of epigenetics — the selective activation and silencing of suites of existing genes.

In the case of the foxes, epigenetic changes silenced genes associated with natural "wild" behavior and associated anatomical traits, while favouring "docile" traits. And those epigenetic changes were passed on from generation to generation. That makes sense to me and offers a plausible story.

However, the behavioral changes in formerly domestic dogs within a generation or two in Ukraine can't be explained by natural selection or epigenetic changes. They reflect adaptive changes from a safe, coddled life to

a life where hunger, wariness and fear are constant companions.

No wonder some dogs hang out with other dogs and humans who might offer companionship, safety, warmth, food and water. Wouldn't we in similar circumstances?

The behavioral changes induced in dogs in combat zones are consistent with similar behavioural and emotional changes in humans faced with violence in Africa, Israel, Gaza, Lebanon and Iran, which, like the experiences of so many veterans in so many wars, can emotionally scar people for a lifetime.

And it's certainly possible that continued violence over several generations could change the behavior of affected successive generations.

The present is bad enough but, as Bill Gates once pointed out, what happens now, whether starvation or constant fear, can change later generations in the way foxes were changed by epigenetic changes, but might prove harder to reverse. Think later generations of Palestinians in Gaza here.

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.



Obituary

Alan Robertson



ROBERTSON, Alan William — Alan William Robertson, a proud Scotsman, passed away peacefully at the age of 86.

He was a devoted husband to Ann, a loving father to Amanda (Hayden) and Claire (Ken), and a cherished grandfather to Liam, Andrew, Hannah, and Josh. His greatest joy was his family, and he will be remembered for his quiet

integrity, kindness and pride in his heritage.

Born in Edinburgh, Scotland, Alan married Ann in 1963. Trained as a millwright, Alan traveled to Labrador to work for the Iron Ore Canada company before permanently emigrating to Canada in 1973 and settling in Toronto. He enjoyed his work with the City of Toronto, where he trained young apprentices and loved sharing his skills, wisdom, and support.

With his technical and methodical mind, Alan could build or fix practically anything and was always happy to share his skills with his family, friends and neighbours. Together with Ann, Alan enjoyed 20+ years of peaceful retirement in Niagara-on-the-Lake. He kept himself busy with home improvement projects, trips to Scotland and Palm Desert, and the “enduring hardship” that came with supporting his beloved Toronto Maple Leafs.

Alan is lovingly remembered and will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

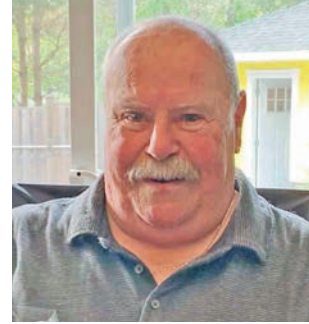
Special thanks to Tim Reynolds and neighbours for all of their help during this difficult time.

Cremation has taken place. For those who wish, memorial donations may be made to the Canadian Cancer Society.

Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com.



James Stewart



STEWART, James Wilfred —

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of James Wilfred Stewart, known to most as Jim and to many friends as Jimmy. Jim passed away peacefully, with his family by his side on Tuesday, March 3, 2026.

Jim was a devoted husband to his beloved wife, Pamela, and a proud and loving father of Lori (Gord) and Bradley (Robyn). One of the greatest joys in his life was being a grandfather to his cherished granddaughter,

Jordyn. The two of them shared an incredibly special bond especially at Christmas time when their friendly competition to outdo one another with gift wrapping became a much-loved tradition filled with laughter and warmth.

Predeceased by his parents, Allan and Anne Stewart, and his brother, Allan Leslie Stewart. Jim will be lovingly remembered by his sister, Lois (Frank) Falconer, along with nieces, cousins, extended family members and friends whose lives were brighter because he was in them. His beloved cat, Shadow, will also miss her Dad and the daily routines and companionship they shared.

Jim was a car enthusiast and enjoyed attending car and air shows with his son, always able to point out the make and year just by the subtle differences, this came from years of experience working as a body man and painter.

Jim also had a passion for cooking and spent many hours outdoors on the grill. He will be deeply missed by all who had the good fortune to know him, but his memory will live on in all the stories shared, the traditions he helped create and the love he leaves behind.

In honouring Jim’s life, we are gathering to raise a glass and share fond memories between 1 and 4 p.m. on Saturday, May 2, 2026 at Manhattan Bar & Grill, 405 Vine St., St. Catharines.

Arrangements entrusted to Considerate Cremation & Burial Services, 26 Nihan Dr., St. Catharines (between Lake Street and Scott Street), 289-362-1144.

Online condolences may be made at CCBSCares.ca.



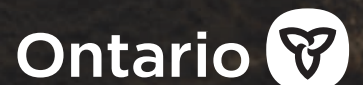
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