



Water being pumped out onto East & West Line. FILE

NOTL still tallying damage two weeks after first flood

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

More than 200 flood-related service requests have reached Niagara-on-the-Lake after two major storms, but the town still cannot say how many properties or basements flooded, what the damage will cost or whether municipal infrastructure failed.

Two weeks after the first storm, staff also have not determined whether flooded basements were hit by stormwater, sanitary sewage or both.

The town is working to collect all this information as part of a process to apply for and access disaster recovery funds from the province, but says it make take several months before those funds come through — if the municipality is deemed eligible.

"We are continuing to assess the impacts of both significant rainfall events," town spokesperson Christie New said in an email. "At this time, we have received over 200 service requests."

The town received 118 requests before the second flood struck Aug. 2. The town did not specify how many individual properties the more than 200 requests

Continued on Page 3

NOTL player battles back

Dedicated, determined: Spencer Tomczuk drafted to Ontario Hockey League



Spencer Tomczuk was chosen by Kingston in the OHL draft. He was captain of the Niagara North Stars U16 AAA team this season. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Kevin MacLean | The Lake Report

It was an up and down year for Niagara-on-the-Lake hockey prospect Spencer Tomczuk, but you might say all's well that ends well.

After battling a mystery illness that sapped his energy and endurance early in the season, he

eventually was diagnosed with hyperthyroidism, which can be debilitating when you're playing elite competitive hockey.

It slowed him down a bit but didn't deter the captain of the Niagara North Stars U16 AAA team.

When you're playing at that level

in your U16 year, junior scouts attend many of your games and every tournament you play in. A lot is at stake for players who have lofty aspirations.

Tomczuk fought through it all and was drafted to the Ontario Hockey League by the Kingston

Frontenacs in June.

"I had hoped I'd get drafted but I didn't really know where I was going to go," the Virgil resident said in an interview.

Although Tomczuk, who turned

Continued on Page 14

Council splits with heritage committee over next steps for Rand Estate plan

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake council has called on Solmar to show whether its latest Rand Estate proposal can be redesigned to better protect the historic property.

But it stopped short of committing to the heritage committee's recommendation that Benny Marotta's development company save several specific historic features identified in an Ontario Land Tribunal ruling from almost two years ago.

Staff will consider how those findings apply to the new

four-property proposal before reporting back to council, which has not approved or rejected the development.

Council sent the recommendation to staff for consideration as it reviews how those findings apply to the new four-property



A rendering of a proposed Ritz-Carlton hotel for the Rand Estate. FILE

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NOTL not in state of emergency after floods: CAO

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is responding to what it says are misconceptions about municipal emergency declaration after two extreme rainstorms last week led to widespread flooding in town.

In a media release from last Thursday, chief administrative officer Nick Ruller said media coverage and online commentary have incorrectly suggested that declaring a state of emergency would automatically provide access to provincial or federal funding.

That is not the case, he said.

Ontario guidance states that an emergency declaration does not provide automatic access to funding, legal protections or expedited access to resources. Municipalities can also request a range of provincial assistance without declaring an emergency.

He described an emergency declaration as a specific legal and operational tool intended for circumstances in which extraordi-



A vehicle splashes through deep water on a Niagara-on-the-Lake road following last week's heavy rainfall. After two major storms caused widespread flooding, the town is defending its decision not to declare a state of emergency, saying such a declaration would not automatically unlock provincial or federal funding. FILE/DAVE VAN DE LAAR

nary measures are required to protect the community or support a municipal response. It is not a measure of the seriousness of damage or losses experienced by residents.

The Niagara area, including NOTL, experienced two large rainstorms on July 28 and Aug. 2.

The town recognizes that last week's rainfall and flooding have caused significant and consequen-

tial damage to homes, farms and businesses, Ruller said.

"The damage to homes, farms and businesses is significant and deeply consequential, regardless of whether a declaration is made," he said. "The absence of a declaration does not diminish that hardship, nor does it mean the town is failing to act."

Niagara-on-the-Lake continues to assess its circumstances against the

established criteria in its emergency response plan.

Ruller said his assessment is informed by more than 25 years of experience in public safety and municipal leadership, including experience as a community emergency management co-ordinator in Ontario and formal training through Emergency Management Ontario, UNC-Chapel Hill and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's

federal emergency management institute.

The City of St. Catharines declared a state of emergency on Aug. 4. Ruller noted that an emergency declaration by "a neighbouring municipality" reflects that municipality's own conditions, risks and operational requirements. It does not necessarily mean the same action is required or appropriate in NOTL.

"Declaring an emergency

simply because another municipality has done so would be irresponsible and contrary to the evidence-based process expected of municipal leaders," Ruller said.

Municipal staff continue to respond to the flooding, assess damage, document costs, investigate infrastructure concerns and pursue available forms of assistance. Those actions do not depend on an emergency declaration.

The town will continue to monitor conditions and assess whether the established criteria for declaring an emergency have been met, he said.

"If a declaration becomes necessary to protect the community or strengthen the municipal response, the town will act without hesitation," Ruller said.

The town said public scrutiny of its response is appropriate, but emphasized that information about the purpose and effect of emergency declarations should be accurate, particularly as residents continue to deal with the effects of this summer's flooding.

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Water surrounds grape vines on East & West Line after last week's deluge. While the town says the extent of the damage is still being assessed, hundreds of service calls were made and scores of insurance claims have been filed. RICHARD HARLEY

Extent of flood damage **still unknown**

Continued from Front Page

represent.

The first storm dumped 146.26 millimetres of rain on parts of NOTL over five hours July 28, hitting Virgil hardest. Five days later, localized totals topped 110 millimetres as parts of the town flooded again.

The town has not determined which storm caused more damage.

"All five villages and our rural areas experienced impacts to different degrees," New said.

"Some experienced direct flooding while others experienced service disruptions resulting from flooding elsewhere in the system."

Asked whether pumping stations, sewers, drains, ditches or culverts failed, overflowed or became overwhelmed, the town did not identify any specific problems during these latest floods.

"During significant rainfall events, stormwater systems can become overwhelmed due to the volume

and intensity of rainfall," New said.

"Town staff responded by monitoring infrastructure, clearing debris where possible and deploying resources to affected areas. Staff continues to assess system performance following both events."

Assessments of the Cole, Harrison and Szockyj drains remain underway. The town said crews have inspected infrastructure, monitored drainage systems and completed maintenance and debris removal where required, but did not release any findings or say when the work will be finished.

However, there is no firm timeline for a public accounting of what happened.

"A comprehensive report will be presented when resources allow," New said.

The town also has no preliminary estimate of damage to private property, public property or municipal infrastructure.

It is exploring Ontario's Municipal Disaster Recovery Assistance program and Disaster Recovery

Assistance for Ontarians. Staff are speaking with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing about eligibility and available support, but no funding has been confirmed.

In a media release from Aug. 7, the town said it may take several months before funding from either of these programs arrives.

"While the town will advocate for timely decisions and keep the process moving wherever possible, residents and businesses should be aware that assistance is not immediate or guaranteed," it said.

The town has not announced its own compensation or financial assistance program. Residents who believe they have a claim involving the municipality may submit it through the town's standard claims process.

The municipality said it did not consider a local state of emergency necessary because existing emergency and operational resources were enough to manage the response.

As the investigation continues, the town is expanding waste services for residents still clearing damaged belongings and building materials from their properties.

Residents with large flood-damaged items or piles can register for a special curbside collection until noon Friday, Aug. 14, through the town's online form or by calling 905-468-3266 ext. 0.

Residents may place up to five bags of flood-related waste at the curb on their regular collection day from Aug. 10 to 14. The town will also accept flood-related construction, demolition and renovation materials at its operations yard at 1565 Four Mile Creek Rd. from Aug. 12 to 14, between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Regular garbage collection resumes Aug. 17. Residents may put out three additional bags of flood debris on top of the standard two-bag limit until Aug. 21.

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Church celebrates 200 years with 37th annual Peach Festival



Volunteers Mario Palumbo, Cindy Palumbo, Alguire Palumbo and Angelina Palumbo staff the peach table at 37th annual St. Vincent de Paul Peach Festival. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

Sharyn Choules can tell you exactly what it takes to run the biggest fundraiser at St. Vincent de Paul Parish: “too much time.”

She’s one of the organizers behind the church’s Peach Festival, which returned to the parish’s Picton Street grounds in Niagara-on-the-Lake on Sunday for its 37th year.

The one-day event raises money for the parish hall and cemetery, and this year it took 123 volunteers to pull off.

The parish, founded in 1826, is celebrating its 200th anniversary, and the festival is one stop in a season of bicentennial events being held this year.

The planning for the festival starts in January with phone calls to arrange the tents, tables and chairs, Choules said. By May the organizing committee meets once a month, and it adds an extra meeting at the end of July to settle the final details before festival day.

Between 10 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Sunday, volunteers sold peach crepes, sundaes, pie slices and whole pies, ran a raffle and a jewelry table, and hosted live music from Brad Boland and a professional face painter for kids. Demand outran supply at the pie table, where whole pies sold out before the festival closed.

The raffle offered four prizes, with donations this year from Vintage Hotels, Niagara Helicopters and Parks Canada, Choules said. Shoppers could also dig through the second-hand sale.

“We also have the white elephant table, so one man’s junk is another one’s treasure,” she said.

She said the festival has lasted 37 years because the volunteer base runs through every corner of parish life.

“We’re a very close parish and we all join all different committees, so everyone is helping everyone else out,” said Choules. “We’re just here to help the church with its finances.”

In nearly four decades, she can remember the weather winning only once.

“Rain swept in for about a half hour, blew all the tents down, but then we got it up and running and everything was good,” said Choules.

The parish traces its roots to French missionary work in the Niagara region dating back to 1626, and its church stands as the oldest Catholic church in continuous use for regular worship in Ontario. Its bicentennial calendar runs deep into the fall with picnics, a banquet and special masses.

The anniversary itself lands on Sept. 27, and the parish will mark the milestone with a gala at the Prince of Wales Hotel, which the bishop of the Diocese of St. Catharines is expected to attend.

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Chamber fest draws 16,000 people to NOTL

Maddy Gordon
The Lake Report

With a fruity aroma on Queen Street and guests in peachy attire, NOTL was painted orange for the Peach Festival on Friday and Saturday.

The event is a tradition for many Niagara locals who come for peach-themed treats and outdoor activities.

This year's festival spanned two days and welcomed more than 16,000 guests, one of the biggest turnouts that Terry Dow, NOTL Chamber of Commerce's interim executive director, says she has ever seen.

The large selection of peach goodies is a highlight for both attendees and organizers.

"Peach cannolis, peach grilled cheese, peach pie, peach custard ... Who knew there would be peach salsa? People get very creative with what they can make with the peaches," Dow said.

Another mouth-watering staple of the festival was the annual pie contest, judged this year by Chamber of Commerce chair David Leveque, original "Peach Princess" Odarka Kish, Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates and Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa. Kish was the winner of the festival's beauty pageant in 1972.

This year's pie contest winner is Charlie Maxwell, whose inclusion of cinnamon and nutmeg made her tart stand out among the 11 entries.

One of the most popular food items of the event is, unsurprisingly, fresh



Since moving to Niagara six years ago, Ally and Ben Shoveller have attended the Peach Festival in NOTL almost every year. "It's really since we've been in Niagara that we've understood how big agriculture in general is," Ben said. MADDY GORDON

peaches. But due to the agricultural damage caused by this summer's flooding, Dow said there were concerns that farmers wouldn't be able to provide the fruit.

"Just to be able to even get farmers out of their farms for two days, especially during the harvest, is a very difficult thing to do," she said. "But we were so lucky. We had four local peach farmers who came to the festival this year."

Tracy Kent, manager at Neob Lavender, said although the flood impacted the lavender farm, the business was able to bounce back and be ready for the festival's thousands of guests.

"A lot of our customers are out-of-town people. There were quite a few buses that actually came into town for the Peach Festival specifically," she said.

"Once people get here and know kind of what the town's going through, help-

ing support the local people is a big draw too."

The Peach Festival supports the local economy through uplifting both local farms and businesses, including Neob Lavender.

For Ally and Ben Shoveller, celebrating local food is a fun part of the festivities.

The couple says they have attended the festival almost every year since moving to Niagara in 2020.

"It's really since we've been in Niagara that we've understood how big agriculture in general is," Ben said.

The family wore peach-themed outfits to the festival, including Peach Festival shirts from Cool As A Moose on Queen Street.

Store manager Alyssa Weasner says the shirts sell quickly due to the community's enthusiasm for the event.

"I think it's such a staple because there are so many local farmers around us, and

it's good to support them as well ... it's good to have an event where we can have them out here," she said.

Like peach shirts at Cool As A Moose and peach lotions at Neob Lavender, NOTL gets innovative when it comes to the Peach Festival.

"I like the creativity and seeing how people decide to incorporate peaches into what they normally do," Ally Shoveller said.

Matching with Percy the Peach, the event mascot, there were big smiles on attendees' faces throughout the weekend — left behind were only empty fruit crates and the faint smell of peach in the air.

"We get to showcase our peaches and the agriculture that we have here in Niagara," Dow said. "You could see by the crowds that were out on Friday and Saturday how much people just look forward to that event every year."

Witness sport of kings at Niagara Polo on Sept. 12

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

More than a hundred years ago, the sport of polo was played on the military training grounds of Niagara Camp — not just as a way for officers to pass the time, but as a means of honing the cavalry's riding and weapon-wielding skills on the battlefield.

Today, while Niagara Camp is no longer active, its land will once again become the sight of the sport of kings this September.

Niagara Polo, an afternoon of charity polo matches held to raise money for the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, is set for Saturday, Sept. 12 at the historic Commons in Old Town.



Teams from the Toronto Polo Club will face off against each other in two four-chukker matches. FILE

General admission early bird tickets are on sale for \$25 per person — starting Aug. 21, they'll go up to \$30.

Teams from the Toronto Polo Club will play two four-chukker polo games, while spectators watch from the sidelines at the Commons. Those attending are encouraged to come dressed for the occasion in polo match attire — fancy hats

are particularly welcome.

Alongside the match, the event will have food and alcohol vendors, artisan booths, a silent auction, pony rides, prizes, a Best Hat contest and more.

The day kicks off with an opening parade of performance and vintage cars, the Grimsby Pipe Band, Fife and Drum Corps from Fort George and more.

At intermission, attendees

can take part in the traditional divot stop, in which everyone crosses the field and stomps the grass down, receiving a glass of sparkling bubbly after (courtesy of Konzelmann Estate Winery).

There will also be intermission entertainment from the Canadian Cowgirls Precision Drill Team and Heavyweights Brass Band.

The event is held once every two years by the NOTL Museum. All proceeds help the museum fund its daily operations.

The event is being held 12 to 4 p.m. with gates opening at 11 a.m. Attendance for those 18 and under is free.

To purchase tickets, or sign up to volunteer for the event, visit niagarapolo.com.

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WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN

Stratus embraces 8,000-year-old winemaking method

Jill Troyer
The Lake Report

Smiles and laughter light up their faces and brows are furrowed in concentration. Thirty guests sit at a long table in the Stratus Vineyards barrel cellar.

It is set with wine glasses, clay and pottery tools. The afternoon of wine-tasting and pottery on June 14 was a celebration of clay and craft.

Guests got their hands dirty with clay under the tutelage of local potter Valérie Bélisle. They made their own miniature amphoras, in the shadow of Stratus' own wine filled vessels, while tasting select wines.

It was a sold-out event, so the winery is offering it again, on Sunday, Aug. 16.

Stratus winemaker Dean Stoyka has been bringing more and more amphoras into the winery as an alternative to oak barrels and stainless steel tanks. Now, the winery has nine amphoras — soon to be 11.

"They're made with different materials, different baking temperatures and coming from different regions of the world because it gives us more complexity, more options in the winemaking," explains Stoyka.

"I like what it does to the wine," he adds. "I like being able to find the purity in the wines coming from amphoras, with nothing getting in the way. Oak is a fun thing to make wine in, but it can be frustrating when you have what you think you had in a wine, then the oak masks it or overpowers it."

Amphoras long pre-date the use of oak barrels. Georgia is considered the first to use clay pots, called qvevri, to age their wine, going back 8,000 years.

Wooden barrels became the vessel of choice later in the Roman Empire, because they were more practical. They didn't break during transport, and they were easy to fix. Wooden barrels have dominated in winemaking for centuries.

Now, amphoras are having a moment.

"They're really catching on like wildfire," says Stoyka, adding, "There's a lot of real innovation and focus these days on that style of winemaking."

Amphoras don't impart flavours to wine, so the flavours from the grapes and the soil can shine. They allow more oxygen in than oak barrels — as much as



Top: Winemaker Dean Stoyka stands with the amphoras used to craft some of Stratus Winery's most distinctive wines. Bottom left: Amphora-aged Sangiovese is still available for those looking to taste the ancient winemaking technique. Bottom right: At a clay-pot-making workshop in June Miniature amphoras take shape at Stratus, tiny versions of the clay vessels used to make wine for thousands of years. DON REYNOLDS/SUPPLIED

three times more.

Winemakers can play with how much oxidation, depending on how porous a given amphora is.

"Amphoras can be more or less porous depending on different baking temperatures and different materials. That allows you to do so much," says Stoyka.

For instance, he says, for tighter, more restrained aromatics, you can use a tighter amphora. If you want more oxidation and more openness to the wine, you can use an amphora that is more porous, made at a cooler baking temperature.

"It shows an open, very beautiful, exciting version

of Chardonnay," he says. Stoyka has made four wines using amphoras only, but he says amphoras and oak can be "synergistic." "You can blend them together, you can keep them separate. Maybe you would have a blend of some new oak or some older oak plus some amphora, so you can

really dial in the flavor profile that you're striving for," he muses. "It's fun when you have these vines going back to 1985. We have 16 varieties, and then all these different vessels. You have a lot of options to do so much experimentation and learn new stuff," he says with

enthusiasm. The 2024 Stratus Sangiovese Amphora is still available. The amphora Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Cabernet Franc sold out quickly after release. The good news is, all three have been produced again, so you can look for them next year.

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Marotta asked to submit new, more sensitive Rand plan

Continued from Front Page

proposal, which has not yet been approved or rejected.

At its July 21 meeting, Aimee Alderman, the director of planning, building and development services, said that although staff supports keeping as many heritage features as possible, it needs more information from Solmar before deciding how the tribunal findings from 2024 apply to the new proposal.

In October that year, the Ontario Land Tribunal ruled on a different development plan for the Rand Estate, finding that plans to build a subdivision there needed to be reworked and that Solmar needs to retain, repair and protect several heritage features of the estate.

“The referral back to staff is not insinuating that we will not abide by the Ontario Land Tribunal orders,” she said.

“It’s simply an allowance to allow staff to receive the information that is required



The current proposal also contains a large-scale Ritz-Carlton branded living community. SOURCED

to reasonably assess all of those heritage attributes.”

Alderman said the previous tribunal case involved two Rand Estate properties, while the latest application covers all four. She said further information from Solmar will allow staff to assess the estate as a whole and consider how the earlier tribunal findings apply to the new proposal.

Solmar is pitching a five-storey, 111-room hotel, a spa, five three-storey residential buildings with up to 270 units and 514 parking spaces across the Rand Estate.

The municipal heritage committee met on July 8 and received a town staff report finding Solmar had not shown its proposed hotel and residential development was the least intrusive op-

tion or that it had exhausted all reasonable heritage-first alternatives.

Staff said the plan would cause “substantial adverse impacts” to the estate’s protected buildings, landscape and other heritage features, including removing or negatively affecting about 215 of its 694 trees on the property.

The proposed hotel would also be larger than the existing heritage buildings and would not be physically subordinate to them.

The heritage committee backed staff’s recommendation that Solmar provide more analysis of the proposal’s effects on the historic estate.

It also added a stronger motion recommending Solmar follow the tribunal’s earlier findings, including preserving key buildings,

landscape features and mature trees.

Council endorsed the call for more analysis of the hotel’s size, road access, parking, residential layout, tree loss and proposed changes to heritage features. But it referred the separate recommendation to staff to determine how the October 2024 tribunal findings apply to the new proposal.

Coun. Sandra O’Connor questioned whether the referral meant Solmar would not necessarily be required to follow the tribunal’s findings.

“Very fine line here,” she said.

Alderman said staff would continue considering the tribunal’s findings while reviewing the new application.

“We want to have a very comprehensive review of all the attributes on the property,” she said.

The referral passed 7-2, with O’Connor and Coun. Gary Burroughs opposed.

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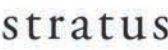


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Once maligned, author Edna Ferber shines again

GIANT LOVE
with author Julie Gilbert

(out of five)

Artists' Village. A Shaw Festival "Women in Theatre" event.

Penny-Lynn Cookson
Special to The Lake Report

Edna Ferber (1885-1968), the author of "Giant," was a short 5'1" but in talent, storytelling, discipline and charisma, she was a giant star in the glittering galaxy of the theatrical and literary world of New York City and of America.

She was a founding member of the Algonquin Round Table. Her novels and short stories appeared on best-selling lists. Her plays on Broadway and the Hollywood films adapted from her stories kept her in a dazzling firmament of success for decades. She graced a U.S. stamp in 2002.

Ferber's "So Big," published in 1924, sold 300,000 copies in a flash, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1925 and was filmed three times. "Show Boat," "Cimarron" and "Saratoga Trunk," "Stage Door," "Come and Get It" and "Ice Palace" starred major actors.

Ferber was in demand, a hard-working celebrity, famed for her opinions, her writing, dinner parties and friendships with Katherine Hepburn, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, Noel Coward, Louis Bromfield and her Broadway collabo-

rators, George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart.

Then, she disappeared, not read, seemingly forgotten, except for an amateur play performed somewhere or the films remembered by film buffs.

Edna Ferber is now having a comeback due to her biographer and great-niece, Julie Gilbert, author of "Edna Ferber and Her Circle." Her new book "Giant Love" offers more insight into Ferber's personal story, her writing of the epic novel "Giant" published to acclaim in 1952 and the making of the popular 1956 Hollywood film, "Giant."

Gilbert recently appeared by Zoom from New York to Niagara-on-the-Lake's Artists' Village at the Shaw. She offered background stories of Ferber but held back her aces to entice us to discover more in "Giant Love."

The respected Academy-Award-winning director George Stevens chose Marfa, a remote small town of 1,500 in west Texas, as "Giant"'s location for the vast Reata Ranch of Bick Benedict. Today, it is more a pilgrimage destination for the structures and studio of the late American artist, Donald Judd, than for "Giant."

Ferber had wanted Burt Lancaster and Robert Mitchum and perhaps Grace Kelly or Audrey Hepburn in the film's lead roles. Stevens wanted young actors in their 20s who could age over the required decades



Edna Ferber's 1952 novel "Giant" was published to critical acclaim and was adapted into a Hollywood film in 1956. Nevertheless, her unflinching portrait of life in Texas, including its excesses and inequalities, was vilified by Texans at the time. WIKIMEDIA

of the story. He chose Rock Hudson, Elizabeth Taylor and James Dean. The rest is history.

Texans vilified the novel and its "outsider" author. Ferber researched her subjects thoroughly and her view of the larger-than-life Texas and Texans pulled no punches.

She saw Texas as too big, too virile, too ruthless, arrogant, blatant, self-complacent, violent. Yet, Texans could be friendly, well mannered, charming and full of vitality — if you were white.

It was too rich. The oil and gas "millionsmillions-millions" contrasted sharply with the too-poor, underpaid Mexicans labouring in hot, flat, vegetable and cottonfields and living in

squalid hovels with wives and mothers old at 25.

"Giant" was focusing on the conflicts between old money ranchers and new money oil barons, their racism, social pecking order and injustices. Texans loved the movie version.

What made Ferber's stories resonate with the American public for so long? Her own story was one of overcoming adversity in Ottumwa, Iowa where she experienced virulent antisemitism from ages five to twelve. It affected her outlook for the rest of her life.

The dry goods store of her Hungarian immigrant father and her German mother failed. They moved to Appleton, Wisconsin, a welcoming environment where

Edna excelled socially and academically at her high school. She became a local cub reporter and then a journalist in Milwaukee, honing her observation and writing skills.

Her first book, "Dawn O'Hara," was rescued from the wastebasket by her mother Julia, who sent it to a publisher and she was on the road to fame and New York in 1912.

Ferber's stories explore multi-generations through change and conflicts within American families and society. She wrote of herself: "I can project myself into any age, environment, condition, situation, character or emotion that interests me deeply. I need never have experienced it, or seen it, or to my knowledge heard or

read about it." Her research was prodigious.

In "Showboat," she wrote of three generations of theatre performers on a river boat travelling the Mississippi without seeing it.

In "Cimarron" she told the story of family hardship and the displacement of the Cherokees after the Oklahoma Land Rush of 1889.

In "Saratoga Trunk" she examined the condemnation of miscegenation in the romance between a Creole woman and a white gambler.

"Come and Get It" was about the lumber robber barons of Wisconsin. "Ice Palace" revealed the exploitation and strife between independent environmentalists and industrialists in pre-Statehood Alaska.

These were powerful stories about building the America she loved and championed.

She sought unusual locations where ordinary people built empires against the odds and where strong, smart women overcame gender, convention and adversity. She called out racism, misogyny and fraud. She chose big, wrote big and lived big.

A feminist, wealthy, fashionable, unmarried, childless, she chose a life she designed for herself. Her novels were protests and she lived as she wrote, standing up for herself and others.

Penny-Lynn Cookson is an arts and culture historian, writer and lecturer living in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

NOTL artist turns her brush to Niagara's agriculture

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

Artist Nancy Wardle puts the people behind Niagara's harvest on canvas in a new portrait exhibition at the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre, arguing that residents admire the region's farms while often overlooking the workers who sustain it all.

FACE IT! Portraits of the Harvest, which opened Aug. 9 in the Joyner Gallery, presents growers, vineyard workers, winemakers and craftspeople from farms and wineries across the region.

Wardle said the series grew from a gap she noticed in how residents see in the place they call home.

"We admire the farms and the orchards and the vineyards. But we don't always stop to think about

the people whose hands make all that possible. And I wanted to make those people visible," she said.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake artist spent six months on the series, working daily in a studio her husband, Greg, built in their back garden. The show is her second FACE IT! exhibition at the Pumphouse, following a 2023 series that portrayed 60 people.

Several of her subjects attended the opening reception, including Dorothy Soo-Wiens and Coun. Erwin Wiens, grape growers with Erwin Wiens Vineyards Ltd., Wayne Blake, a vineyard worker at Stratus Vineyards, and other farm-workers whose portraits hang in the show.

Wardle painted many subjects from reference

photographs and has never met some of them.

Author Jill Troyer introduced her to growers and workers across the region, and Troyer's husband, photographer Don Reynolds, supplied many of the photos.

A photograph gives her information, Wardle said, and her job is to interpret it. She zooms in, changes compositions and colours, removes signs and builds many layers of oil or acrylic paint.

"Every brush stroke is an attempt to capture character rather than simply copy a photo," she said.

Her subjects come from different farms, vineyards and wineries, but Wardle said they share a quiet strength, resilience and pride. Many begin their

days before sunrise and work through winter pruning, harvest heat, floods and frost.

"These portraits are my small way of saying that your work matters, your resilience matters, and your story should be seen," she said.

She wants viewers to leave the gallery connecting familiar Niagara products with the labour behind them.

"Every bottle of wine, beer, cider, basket of peaches, a bunch of grapes and a tray of vegetables begins with someone whose work often goes unnoticed," said Wardle.

On Sept. 1, she will begin an artist residency on Fogo Island, N.L., where she plans a new series of at least 15 portraits of



Artist Nancy Wardle speaks about FACE IT! Portraits of the Harvest, her exhibition honouring the workers behind Niagara agriculture, at the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre on Aug. 9. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

island residents.

FACE IT! Portraits of the Harvest remains on view

in the Joyner Gallery until Aug. 29.

andrew@niagaranow.com

Penner’s cuts rebuilding costs for NOTL flood victims

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

For Niagara-on-the-Lake residents tearing out soaked drywall and rebuilding flooded homes, the next trip to the hardware store will come with some relief.

With that in mind, Penner Home Hardware Building Centre has introduced special pricing on cleanup and construction materials for people affected by this summer’s floods.

“As soon as we saw the devastation from these floods, we knew we had to step up,” said Marcia Penner, business co-owner.

The Penner Flood Relief Pricing Program is designed to help affected residents clean up, repair and rebuild their homes.

It covers materials people may need throughout that process, including cleaning supplies, totes, drywall, insulation, framing lumber, trim, doors, flooring, paint and painting supplies.



From left, Kyle, Marcia and Kevin Penner stand outside Penner Home Hardware, where special pricing is helping flood victims clean up and rebuild. Kyle, the couple’s son, knows the damage firsthand after his own basement flooded. PAIGE SEBURN

There is no single discount across the store. Instead, qualifying products are reduced by different amounts.

“It’s different for the different items, but we have specific items that it’s applicable throughout the store for,” she said.

To receive the special pricing, customers must tell store staff they were affected by the floods and provide proof of the damage.

That can include insurance or restoration documents, photographs or video.

Once their eligibility is confirmed, staff can apply the reduced prices to qualifying purchases.

The program will run until Aug. 31, giving residents time to clear out damaged rooms, speak with insurance and restoration companies and determine what must be replaced.

Penner said the store deliberately avoided setting an earlier deadline because many residents may not immediately know what they need.

“We know how backed up the insurance and restoration companies are, and so, we didn’t want to limit that time frame,” she said.

“We wanted to make sure that people had enough time to, you know, get their spaces cleared out, figure out what they need.”

Many people have already taken advantage of the program, Penner said.

“We have had a great response to this. We’ve had a lot of people come and utilize the program,” she said.

She could not provide an exact number of customers who had used the special pricing but said participation has been high.

“It’s a lot,” she said. “I don’t know a number, I haven’t calculated it. But when I went through, yeah, it’s a lot.”

She said the response from customers has also been positive.

“Everybody is just so grateful and thankful, and coming together as a community, and that’s what it’s meant for.”

The Penner store escaped the flooding, but the disaster still struck close to home. Penner said her son’s house was affected.

She said her son is doing well and the family feels fortunate, but they know many others whose homes were hit.

Penner hopes the reduced prices take some of the financial pressure and stress off residents as they clean up and rebuild.

“Our hearts are with everybody.”

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Irish Harp Pub owner Jovie Joki celebrates the business's 20th anniversary with a party on Monday. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

'More than a pub' Irish Harp celebrates 20 years

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Twenty years ago, a neglected King Street building was given a second life.

Somewhere between the pints of Guinness, first dates, live music and hard times that followed, it became a second home for many in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The Irish Harp Pub marked two decades in Old Town on Monday with an all-day birthday celebration honouring the vision that started it — and the community that kept it alive.

Owner Jovie Joki said the Harp's staying power comes from maintaining the authentic atmosphere of the Irish pub she and late founder Trevor Smyth created in 2006, while continuing to build its place in the community.

Smyth, who was from Portstewart, Northern Ireland, saw the vacant building at 245 King St. and believed it had potential.

The site was purchased, restored and transformed into a pub using contents shipped from Ireland.

"He saw something where others may only have seen a building forgotten by time and he transformed it into

a place that would never be forgotten," Joki told the crowd Monday.

Joki told The Lake Report the secret to lasting 20 years has been carrying on Smyth's legacy, smart marketing and strong community support.

It also helps, she said, that "we all love doing what we do."

Smyth died in 2013, but Joki said the Harp has worked to carry on his original vision while growing into one of the town's entertainment spots.

That role became especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic, she said. The building's layout allowed the pub to close off sections and continue hosting smaller events when larger gatherings were not possible.

"We always had entertainment, but we've really beefed it up to be something else more for the community," Joki said.

For her, that sense of connection is central to what an Irish pub should be.

"In Irish pubs, anyways, it's always about the community gathering, whether it's for entertainment or for sports or just, you know, to get together and chat and be social, right?"

The Harp has become

"so much more than a pub," Joki said.

"For 20 years, we have watched people walk through these doors as guests and leave as friends," she said, adding the pub has hosted countless birthdays, milestones, first dates and reunions.

That history was on display Monday as customers filled the pub for live music, birthday cake from Willow Cakes and special anniversary food and drinks.

The celebration included selected Irish dishes priced at \$20, the first pour of the pub's new Celtic Knot White Stout, a 20th-anniversary stout whisky, and new anniversary merchandise.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa presented Joki with a certificate on behalf of the town and council in recognition of the business' milestone.

Zalepa recalled bringing his children to the Harp when they were young and described it as a place where residents and visitors come together.

"It's a local establishment, local hangout, and it's a place where we can mingle with tourists and residents alike," he said during his speech.

"You serve an important part in the community and it's been a great institution

here."

The anniversary party was also a celebration of the people working behind the scenes. The Harp now has almost 90 employees, Joki said, crediting its staff, management team and her partner, co-owner Jeremy Buckland, with helping the business continue to grow.

Asked what celebrating 20 years means to her as a woman in the hospitality industry, Joki's answer was immediate: "Thankful."

"I have such a great team and a great partner."

Joki said the right people make all the difference.

"I think for any owner, whether it be male or female, that everybody needs help."

Monday's party will not be the Harp's only anniversary event. Joki said the pub plans to celebrate throughout its 20th year, with "bigger and better" events planned each month.

But she said the real measure of the past two decades cannot be found on a calendar.

"The true measure of those 20 years isn't the number of years we've been open; it's the number of lives we've touched, friendships we've made and memories we've shared."

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300 classic cars rev up to Kinsmen's 26th Show and Shine

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

A night of rain threatened the outdoor grounds of the Kinsmen Club of Niagara-on-the-Lake's biggest fundraiser, but the fields dried in time and more than 300 classic cars rolled into the 26th annual Show and Shine on Sunday.

Club president Kenny Slingerland expects the show, held with Parks Canada at Kinsmen Scout Hall, to gross about \$20,000 before expenses. The money supports Cystic Fibrosis Canada and Kinsmen projects across town.

By the time Slingerland spoke with The Lake Report on Sunday afternoon, 330 vehicles had registered. Last year's show brought in 384.

"I'd be glad if we got 350. That'd be spectacular, considering all the things that we've been holding our breath on," he said.

The biggest of those things was the ground



From vintage classics to unique rides and muscle cars, there was no shortage of cool vehicles to check out during the Kinsmen Show and Shine on Sunday. Proceeds from the event will help fund local Kinsmen initiatives and support Cystic Fibrosis Canada. **ANDREW HAWLITZKY**

itself. A wet field under hundreds of tires would have carved ruts into the property the club shares with Parks Canada.

“We got the rain that held off last night, so the grounds are still dry, which is good. No ruts. That’s

what Parks Canada likes to see," said Slingerland.

The show is the club's main fundraiser. Owners paid \$10 to enter a vehicle and spectators paid \$5, with children under 12 admitted free, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

About 25 Kinsmen members run the show, with help from their families.

“Everybody does their share, and their spouses, sons and daughters — everybody pitches in,” said Slingerland.

The British Car Club

showed its vehicles in a dedicated section near the 50/50 draw, an arrangement the Kinsmen have kept for years.

Slingerland said proceeds will help fund the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, the Heritage Trail, Red Roof

Retreat and the club's annual Easter egg hunt, along with other local organizations.

“This is a big thing for us that we use to spread our money around to the rest of the community.”

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NOTL Market Update

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What does this mean for you? Confidence is returning. While the overall year-to-date average sale price sits just over \$1M, warm-weather buyers pushed that average up to \$1.15M. Old Town is leading the charge with a 16% jump in sales compared to last spring, and a strong average sale price of \$1.35M.

The market has shifted over the last decade, but note 2026 is on pace to be at, or near, the top of the previous five years for sales. Whether you are thinking of selling or just curious about your home's value, stop by our Old Town office anytime for a friendly chat!

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE
Annual sales over the past decade

Year	Annual Sales (approx.)
2016	430
2017	350
2018	250
2019	290
2020	450
2021	480
2022	270
2023	260
2024	290
2025	260
2026*	290

Decade average: ~300

*2026 on pace for

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Hummel pledges \$125K to Pumphouse

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre has secured a \$125,000 five-year commitment from Rainer Hummel and his family, money board chair Natalie Early says will expand the art centre’s programs, support artists and improve the spaces the centre shares with the public.

Early announced the gift Aug. 9 at a donor and volunteer appreciation reception at the Ricardo Street arts centre, where she also recognized a renewed \$25,000 gift from lifetime members Geoffrey and Lorraine Joyner. That gift will fund monthly exhibitions in the centre’s main Joyner Gallery.

Early told the room the Pumphouse depends on that kind of support for everything it does, from exhibitions and classes to children’s camps and seniors’ programs.

“Quite simply, we



Board chair Natalie Early thanks donors and volunteers during an appreciation reception at the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre on Aug. 9. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

couldn’t operate without you,” said Early.

The Hummel commitment has been recognized with a bronze plaque on the centre’s legacy wall. Hummel could not attend the reception, so the centre framed a rubbing of the plaque as a keepsake for the family.

Early also thanked Paul Bosc, whose gift paid for Vinifera, a public artwork by James Cameron Smith installed on the Pump-house grounds.

The centre’s dependence extends past money, Early said, and she turned much of the afternoon toward

the volunteers who keep its events going.

“Generosity isn’t measured only in dollars. Some of our most valuable gifts we receive are measured in hours,” she said.

She honoured Sandra Stokes, a former board chair who has co-ordinated Art at the Pumphouse for 12 years and helped build it into a juried show.

She also recognized Sandra Nass Misiak, who recently stepped down as exhibit chair for the Joyner Gallery, and oanne Morandin, a past events chair and former board member.

Early thanked her predecessor as chair as well, a volunteer who led the board through 10 years of growth.

The reception took place inside FACE IT! Portraits of the Harvest, artist Nancy Wardle’s new exhibition of the people behind Niagara agriculture. The show remains in the Joyner Gallery until Aug. 29.

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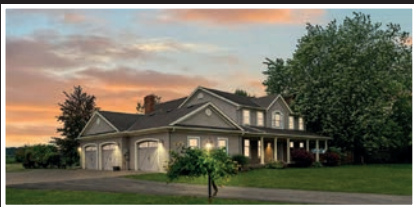
Elegant Old Town home blending historic charm with modern luxury, just a short walk from Queen Street, the waterfront and golf course. Features four bedrooms, multiple fireplaces, a gourmet kitchen, sunroom overlooking a two-tiered yard, spa-like primary ensuite and a finished lower level with rec room and second kitchen.

NOTL | 20 Shakespeare Ave. | \$2,349,800 | MLS: 40836909



This thoughtfully designed three-level home blends luxury finishes with clever custom details, including a gourmet kitchen, elegant living and dining spaces, guest suite and multiple private entrances. Upstairs are two impressive bedroom suites and a loft studio, while the lower level adds two more bedrooms, a home theatre, scotch bar, hobby room and ample storage.

NOTL | 915 Queenston Rd. | \$1,599,800 | MLS: 40842988



Luxurious 3,400-square-foot estate on nearly one acre, featuring a gourmet kitchen, multiple living and entertaining spaces, three bedrooms and elegant ensuite baths. Outside, enjoy an inground pool, covered patio, hot tub and sweeping vineyard views, all within walking distance of St. Davids and local wineries.

NOTL | 594 Niagara Stone Rd. | \$885,900 | MLS: 40811010



Beautifully maintained century home on about one acre in rural Niagara-on-the-Lake, featuring three spacious bedrooms, a bright eat-in kitchen, multiple living areas, a large deck and a detached double garage with hydro. The property also includes a she-shed and unfinished basement, with easy access to schools, the QEW and Old Town.

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NOTL hockey star fights back, drafted to OHL

Continued from Front Page

16 in April, had heard from several teams before the draft, Kingston wasn't among them. So it was a pleasant surprise when the respected franchise chose him in the 14th round, 276th overall.

He attended the Frontenacs' development camp earlier this summer and called it "a great experience."

On every step up the ladder in hockey the pace and skill level increases, but Tomczuk relishes the challenge.

At the Kingston developmental camp, "I thought it was good to see like what I need to work on and just be ready for the main camp next."

That happens at the end of August.

While it would have been nice to have been drafted higher, he says it really doesn't matter — Kingston picked him and



Virgil's Tomczuk family — mom Jodi, Spencer, older brother Gavin and dad Mike. Spencer captained the Niagara North Stars U16 AAA team this season and earned a selection by the Kingston Frontenacs in the Ontario Hockey League draft, all while managing a health challenge. DAVE VAN DE LAAR



now he's committed to getting bigger, stronger and faster to someday have a shot at playing in the OHL and maybe a pro career.

While some top players are renowned for being solely focused on offence, Tomczuk believes taking responsibility for your own zone is just as important.

"Ever since I was little, I've liked to play both sides of the puck. I feel like having that 200-foot game is key in the game now because you get used to every situation and I think it just helps you out in the in the long run."

He's been spending his summer working out on and off the ice several times a week — and playing a bit of golf.

He placed second in the junior boys division at the NOTL club championship tourney last weekend with rounds of 88 and 84. Not bad for someone who's only been golfing for a few years.

At six feet tall and 178 pounds he's already a solid, right-hand shooting centreman with plenty more growth to come.

His Niagara North team had a stellar season, qualifying for the OHL Cup tourney in Toronto. That event showcased the top 25 minor hockey and prep school teams from Ontario and the northern U.S.

The Stars went 2-1-1, narrowly missing a quarterfinal berth while playing their best hockey of the season.

The next step in Tomczuk's journey, which started more than a decade ago with the NOTL Wolves at the Virgil arena, will have him suiting up with the St. Catharines Falcons Jr. B team to start the season this fall.

The Falcons signed him in June, shortly after the major junior draft, and their training camp begins next week.

His former coach with Niagara North says Kingston and St. Catharines got themselves "a complete player" and talented playmaker in Tomczuk.

"Spencer just has a lot of passion for the game. He's what most people consider a complete 200-foot player," said Jason Glenney.

For the two seasons that Glenney coached him, Tomczuk was the Stars' captain, an honour that is decided in a vote by the players, coaches and trainers.

"He is a lead-by-example type player. He worked hard in practice, did all the little things right."

Even when he was sick, "he still showed up every game and practised and gave everything he had. By the end of the season he was nearly back to 100 per cent," Glenney said.

"A lot of kids, if they're not at their best, they don't want to be out there. Spencer wanted to continue and as a result he didn't really miss any time" despite his health problems.

"I'm sure Spencer didn't have the season that he wanted. But I'm still a believer that it doesn't matter where you get selected," Glenney said.

"He has the opportunity now to prove himself. As a player, you just want that opportunity."

Tomczuk credits Glenney and his coaches over the years for helping him develop and excel — and his parents Jodi and Mike for their support of both him and his older brother Gavin, who also is a talented AAA defenceman.

The family is, of course, proud of Spencer and happy for his success.

"He's worked so hard to get himself to this point," Jodi Tomczuk told The Lake Report. Especially

with his illness this year, "he just persevered and was resilient."

"It's nice that everything fell into place as far as him being drafted and now being able to play with the Falcons, which is super exciting for him."

He learned to skate in Virgil and played his first hockey for the NOTL Wolves.

"This is what he wanted. Since the age of four when he first stepped on the ice you could see his love for the game."

He played his entire minor hockey career at the AAA level, moving from NOTL to Niagara North eight years ago.

With skill development and a multitude of other factors at play, it's uncommon for a player to be able to stay at the AAA level for so long. But Tomczuk established himself with the Stars.

"It was hard to leave the Wolves because there's such a family there," his mom noted.

Now, with the Falcons' season on the horizon, a new adventure is about to begin.

One thing she won't miss is having to buy Spencer new hockey sticks when one breaks. Sticks nowadays can cost hundred of dollars, but at the junior level it's one of the things the team supplies.

"Now, my heart won't break when he breaks one," said Jodi Tomczuk, who's an ER nurse at the St. Catharines hospital. She won't have to pick up another shift to pay for one.

"That'll definitely be nice."

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Golf winners crowned in NOTL club championships

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

Just as winners on the professional tour are often decided “on the back nine on Sunday,” so it was that the men’s and women’s championships were determined at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club this past weekend.

The two-day, 36-hole annual tournament gives hackers of all calibre a chance to compete in a variety of flights according to their handicap, but the marquee matchups pit some of the club’s best male and female golfers against one another in the Open championship.

On Sunday, with nine holes left to play, the two men’s and women’s leaders were tied. Players who had trailed after day 1 of the tourney had made up ground, setting up an exciting and unpredictable final nine holes.

In the final women’s grouping, four of the club’s top golfers were duelling it out.

Martha Cruikshank entered the final day with a two-shot lead over defending Open champ Louise Robitaille but by the turn for Sunday’s back nine everything had changed.

Cruikshank had a tough start to the day and was at 139 over 27 holes, three shots behind Robitaille and Diana Dimmer who were tied at 136.

And Michele Darling, who’d had a tough first round, shooting 105, bounced back with a 40 on the front nine for a 145 total, so the Open title was up for grabs over the final holes.

Dimmer took the lead by one with a bogey on the 11th, then Robitaille grabbed it back with a par on the 12th when Dimmer double-bogeyed with a 7.

The tide turned in Dimmer’s favour on the par-5 14th when she bogeyed and Robitaille ran into some trouble, ballooning to a triple-bogey 8.

That gave Dimmer a slim one-shot lead, which she held to the end as she and Robitaille matched each other shot for shot over the final four holes. Dimmer finished at 184 and Robitaille was right behind at 185.

Darling’s 46 total on the back nine was the best of the group but she wasn’t able to catch the leaders. She and Cruikshank ended up at 191 and 189 respectively.

It was Dimmer’s first women’s Open title at



And the winners are ... With their hardware, from left, Ginny Green (B flight), Michele Darling (A flight), Sheldon Walker (junior boys), Martha Cruikshank (super senior), Louise Robitaille (senior champ), Colby Ostromecki (D flight), Diana Dimmer (Open champ), James Grigjanis-Meusel (A flight), Ricky Watson (Open champ), Paul Dickson (senior), A.J. Harlond (B flight), Rob Chubey (C flight), Don Allen (super senior) and Caroline Cochrane (D flight). Missing: Shelby Leeder (C flight). ERIN PIAZZA

NOTL. Robitaille’s score won the seniors title, while Cruikshank was super senior winner and Darling took the A flight.

Meanwhile, Ginny Green sank a putt on the first extra hole to win the women’s B flight over Lisa Allen after the two were tied at 193 in regulation.

Shelby Leeder was crowned C flight champion with a two-shot win over Judy Mantle, who fought back from six shots behind after round one. And Caroline Cochrane won the D flight for the second consecutive year.

Dimmer was a bit self-deprecating after her win, noting that Robitaille, who has won the Open title five times since 2018, was exhausted after being up much of Saturday night attending the birth of her newest granddaughter.

“There’s reasons why it may have come together like that for me,” Dimmer said with a laugh.

But she was unaware how things stood even as the round wrapped up.

Throughout the finale, “I didn’t know what anybody’s score was,” she said in an interview.

“All I was thinking about is I just wanted to have a nice day and try and play well. I was just trying to hit an OK shot each time.”

She didn’t learn she had won until pro shop manager Darren Smith told her a few minutes before the trophy presentations took place. Dimmer offered a shout-out to the golf club staff and grounds crew for their work in organizing the tournament despite flooding and heavy rain in the past two weeks.

Seven days earlier, many parts of the course were underwater.

“I really want to thank the people at the club, like Darren. All his crew did a great job organizing the champi-

onship while they also had to deal with the challenges of getting the course ready.”

There was a short delay Saturday due to lightning, but otherwise all went smoothly.

While the women’s side crowned a brand new champ, this year again saw the two top male golfers at the club dominate the fight for the men’s Open title.

Defending champion James Grigjanis-Meusel and Ricky Watson duked it out all weekend and it came down to the final three holes after a see-saw battle.

Everything changed on the tricky 16th hole, with its two-tiered green near the lake.

Tied again, both players reached the green in two, with Watson near the back fringe. He putted to a few inches away and made his par.

Grigjanis-Meusel, putting from the top tier to the pin in the back left corner, left his putt a few feet short coming off the slope. When he missed his par attempt, Watson went up a shot with just two holes to play.

Watson solidified his lead on the 17th after Grigjanis-Meusel found the left green side bunker with his second shot.

Watson had hit his iron a bit long to the back of the sloping green and faced a slick, slippery putt. Hit it too hard and he could easily have rolled past by five feet or more.

Instead, he drained it and the accompanying fist pump might have been the most emotion he showed all day to that point.

Grigjanis-Meusel had made a good sand shot to a few feet but missed his par putt, a rarity for the talented four-time men’s champ.

So, heading to the 18th tee, Watson had a three-shot lead.

With out-of-bounds lurking on the right and trees and the spectator gallery on the left side, he made no mistake.

He smashed his tee shot to about 10 feet from the hole on the testy 220-yard par-3. He rolled in the putt for his sixth birdie of the day and a 2-under 70 to claim his third Open title since 2022.

Watson finished even-par

for the tourney, carding a 74 on Saturday.

Over the past seven seasons, Grigjanis-Meusel and Watson, who are good friends, have dominated the men’s Open division.

Grigjanis-Meusel (72-76) earned the A flight trophy by four shots over Brendan Meisener (77-75).

Other winners on the weekend included Paul

Dickson (82-79), who was crowned seniors champion by one-shot over Patrick Craig (81-81).

Don Allen (80-81) took the men’s super senior category by a single shot over first-round leader Rick Janes (77-85) and A.J. Harlond (84-75) scooped the B flight with a stellar final round that included 15 pars and just three bogeys.

Rob Chubey won the C flight with steady rounds of 86-85 for an 11-shot win over his nearest challenger and Colby Ostromecki (92-92) edged Ron Newman by two shots to win the D flight.

In the junior boys category, Sheldon Walker’s 79-80 score was tops, ahead of second-place finisher Spencer Tomczuk (88-84).

The Open champions and seniors winners will represent the NOTL club in the upcoming Niagara Champion of Champions tournament.

kevin@niagaranow.com

To Our Niagara-on-the-Lake Community

Like many of you, my family and I have seen the impact of this week’s heavy rainfall. It’s been heartbreaking to see so many neighbours dealing with flooded basements and damaged homes.

We’re doing our best to help as many families as we can.

If your basement has been affected, we’re here to help with:

-  Water damage repairs
-  Basement restoration
-  Waterproofing improvements
-  Basement renovations once everything is dry

We’re also happy to provide detailed estimates for your insurance company and work directly with your adjuster to help make the process as straightforward as possible.

 If you’re unsure where to start, give me a call. Even if it’s just for advice, I’m always happy to help.

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BKind Grateful #88: Leave an anonymous note of encouragement for a co-worker.

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



Contributed by Patty Garriock
“In times of stress, the best thing we can do for each other is to listen with our ears and our hearts and to be assured that our questions are just as important as our answers.” - Fred Rogers

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Giving back to the community



The Shaw Festival is spreading the love to a variety of non-profit organizations in Niagara-on-the-Lake this summer, donating \$8,500 total to nine groups in town. The funds were raised through selected preview performances of its production of “One for the Pot.” On Aug. 5, the Shaw gathered with representatives from the following organizations to present them with their donations: NOTL Palliative Care, NOTL Canadian Cancer Society, NOTL Museum, Caribbean Workers Outreach Project, Music Niagara Festival, Niagara Jazz Festival, Niagara PumpHouse Arts Centre, Niagara Nursery and the NOTL Soccer Club. SUPPLIED

Storms remind us who town’s real Ruller is



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner
Columnist

The elected leader of St. Catharines declared a state of emergency after the Big Soak. So did the mayor of Lincoln. But the unelected ruler of NOTL, civic employee Nick Ruller, did not. Maybe the decision by the chief administrative officer was correct. Maybe not. If your house, business or farm was trashed by the storm you probably think reaching for provincial disaster money would be a good thing.

Ruller said it was not technically necessary. But as the self-appointed town czar after the rain crisis, his obligation was to reassure citizens, not lecture them on protocol.

Why not declare a state of emergency as other municipalities that were equally affected? Because Nick Ruller thinks he knows better, based on his first responder experience. It was about him, not us.

In any case, he acted unilaterally. As he did when he banned town staff (including himself) from talking to me.

The point is not the storm. It’s how we’re governed.

Development site plans — essential to knowing exactly

what impact a building, subdivision or new hotel will have on the surroundings — are reviewed and approved by staff. Not the person you elect.

Construction plans, trucking routes, road closures — like with the major Royal George complex in Old Town — are okayed by a staffer. Elected reps never even see them. Signature trees are removed and cell towers approved upon the nod of employees. No politician.

I’m not judging. That’s just the way it is. And part-time, compliant, busy or distracted local politicians let it happen. They facilitate it. Before long, the inevitable occurs. A major community crisis hits and it’s a bureaucrat, not an elected person, at the microphone. Making the video. Writing the policy. Telling you what matters.

Democracy takes a hit when the one assuming that role refuses to speak on the record, be interviewed, or allow underlings to comment. After all, where was the mayor when your basement was a swimming pool, your crops were drowned and illegal pumping from construction sites was overwhelming the sewer pipes?

This brings us to the election.

In October, we get to choose the members of a smaller council to supposedly run the place. (Without public input or debate, the current guys reduced the number of elected people, chipping away at the notion of representative government.)



No emergency here, town czar Nick Ruller said in this social media video after the Big Soak. Garth Turner suggests power is shifting from inattentive councillors to a powerful CAO. Not for the better. SOURCED

The job is no plum. Lots of work and responsibility. Tons of reading and understanding. Listening to constituents, going to meetings, being pilloried on Facebook. All for 20 grand a year. So it takes a special, engaged person to do it.

The mayor’s job is even worse, since he/she will be our sole rep at the regional level, where oodles of tax dollars go. It pays only \$54,000 for what is now a full-time gig.

At the moment there are six contenders for council. Four of them are part of a group that has approved seriously big development projects and seek re-election.

Of the three candidates for lord mayor, two are sitting local politicians. So, of nine names, only three belong to outsiders. It will be a struggle for voters to find a change in direction unless

others step forward.

But Mr. Ruller will still be there. Regardless of who you choose. (He used to be a councillor but is now permanent, and the job pays more than all the elected people combined.)

Now, back to the Soak — and what happened. Apparently nobody we elected knows how much water was shoved into the pipes from major construction sites, or the role that played in backing up the system, flooding basements.

In fact, it’s been left to residents to try and find out what effect 24/7 pumping from the holes at Parliament Oak and Royal George is doing.

Four months ago the NOTL Residents Association filed a freedom-of-information request to find out. No answer yet. Town staff know, but they won’t release that information to us, the citizens. Seriously.

Ron Simkus is an engineer by training, and a director of the NOTLRA.

“I suspect that we just watched Solmar (Parliament Oak hotel developer) pump a million gallons of stormwater into the sanitary sewer in non-compliance with their permit and simply got away with it,” he says. “In the meantime, nearby residents watched their basements backed up with sewage and wondered why?”

Just don’t call it an emergency. Nick said so.

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

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Stormwater drains need to be maintained

Dear editor:
Regarding Brian Marshall's column last week ("Arch-i-text: Addressing stormwater infrastructure issues"), I am not sure why the superintendent of irrigation and drainage needs to spend money on an engineer's report. Isn't that what he is paid for?

Two years ago, Niagara had major flooding. I think that I wrote to the The Lake Report, maybe even the town, that one, very, possible cause of the flooding, on Line 7 Road at least, was probably due to a complete lack of adequate and well maintained stormwater structure.

To put it simply, the ditches and drains, in my case the Cole Drain, need to be clear for water to flow, unimpeded. If forests of reeds and rushes are allowed to grow, well above road level, and congest those drains, their purpose, to allow the free flow of water, is severely reduced.

Two years ago, 2024, my neighbour had stormwater pouring into her basement; the Cole Drain along Line



An obstructed and deteriorating culvert restricted water flow on King Street last week, contributing to severe flooding at the Legion and other nearby businesses. Letter writer Madis Tambre says the town needs to prioritize regular maintenance of its stormwater infrastructure to help prevent avoidable damage during future heavy rainfall events. FILE

7 Road was ingrown with reeds and rushes.

Last year, those reeds and rushes were mowed. Those reeds and rushes grew, and this year's storm, on July 27/28, had water pouring into my basement, over the window wells, to the depth of 5'9", with the Cole Drain again filled with a forest of reeds and rushes.

I was told by someone

at the town offices, that the drains are cleared on a schedule — plants don't grow on a schedule.

I see town vehicles a minimum of every two days, or more. Those drivers should have a duty to report any drain that has reeds or rushes approaching road-level to report them, and then they should be mowed.

It should be a simple

concept: to mitigate flooding, keep the flood gates in order, and the waterways, drains and ditches, designed to carry away flood water, clear of impediments so that water can flow unobstructed.

Too often government entities forgo maintenance, then we pay for that avoidable neglect.

Madis Tambre
NOTL

This year's Peach Festival was a disappointment

Dear editor:
My husband and I took a walk down through the Peach Festival on Saturday to get some peaches.

Not an easy task finding them as most of the offerings were tacky jewellery, clothing, candles and other items not connected to peaches.

No steam-engine steaming cobs of corn, no live music like the All Star Jazz Band and nothing for chil-

dren either. In fact, many of the stalls didn't even appear to have a connection to our town or main street.

Two spots, or maybe three, selling actual peaches. The entire spectacle was appalling — more flea market than peach festival and not at all representative of our festival's history or our heritage town.

I guess it was money-maker for the Chamber of Commerce — draw a

crowd without investing in quality or great entertainment. It certainly wasn't for residents or the higher-end tourists we are supposedly wanting to attract.

In walking around our Old Town streets, cars were jam-packed onto grass boulevards and every space imaginable, including blocking driveways. Another lost revenue opportunity for the town not optimized?

So disappointing — an-

other wonderful tradition gone, to service whom?

Perhaps the Chamber of Commerce should consider moving this flea market up to the parking lot at the Outlet Mall next year and let the agricultural community and local businesses reclaim their Peach Festival.

After all, isn't the Niagara region known for our fabulous peaches?

Judy McLeod
Old Town

Province should support flood relief in Niagara

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.

I would hope that all areas where there was significant water incursion, and/or flooding where no stormwater drains exist, that these sections are put on a development plan to improve stormwater management.

If the costs of these improvements far exceed the financial resources of the town, then requests for financial assistance be forwarded to the Ontario government.

I assume that we did take aerial photos of the municipality on the day after the deluges and/or have detailed record of every basement that was flooded and every agricultural property that

was destroyed.

Concession 4 and Line 2 was under a foot of water and many properties in the adjoining subdivision were inundated with water. Even on Bianca Drive.

To add storm water ditches, culverts, drainage so this doesn't happen again is a major investment. If it not done, then it will be impossible to get flood insurance in NOTL.

We are probably talking \$20-30 million to upgrade and install storm water management. Some of the concessions and Four Mile Creek will require some major work. Something that NOTL would not be able to do alone and would require provincial assistance.

I hope the province agrees.

Malcolm Newton
NOTL



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

Used in everything from daiquiris to gin fizzes, simple syrup is commonly made using equal parts water and this.

Last issue category: BICYCLES ON THE BIG SCREEN

Clue: Bicycles take flight thanks to the magical powers of a mysterious alien in this Spielberg flick.

Answer: What is E.T.?

Answered first by: Susan Hamilton

Also answered correctly (in order) by:
Sue Rautenberg, Bob Wheatley, Jane Morris, KC King, Emma Balsas, Rob Hutchison, Jane Andersen, Lynda Collet, Hugh Lundy, Katrina Nimeth, Becky Creager, Nancy Rocca, Jim Dandy, Nick D'Amore, Howard Jones, Margaret Garaughty, Esther VanGorder, Jeff Lake, Katie Reimer, Claudia Grimwood, Wade Durling, Peter Molson, Victor Zilinskas, Marla Percy, Catherine Clarke, Sheila Meloche, Arlene Goodman

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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More thoughts on **stormwater management**



Brian Marshall
Columnist

Below the base of the escarpment, this town rivals the prairies for being flat. Although our topography slopes down toward the lake, it is very gentle. Consider that over the 7.3 kilometres from the outskirts of St. Davids to the crossroads in Virgil the elevation changes a mere 21 metres.

That sounds like a big drop but, in reality, that's a mere 0.29 per cent slope (2.88 millimetres per metre). Compare that to the optimum slope for a large pipe — one that ensures liquid flowing through the pipe is flowing freely, neither too fast or too slow — being 0.8 per cent or 8 millimetres per metre.

In other words, surface water flowing across NOTL is running at far below optimum speed, moving

sluggishly with a tendency to drop any sediments or suspended matter that may be carried by the water.

This town has always had a challenge with water — Niagara Stone Road was originally called the Black Swamp Road — and historically has engaged in multiple significant investments focused on managing water.

The cumulative result is many, many kilometres of municipal drains that run across the town.

For example, the Harrison Drain, which has 14 branches running into the principal drain and covers an area roughly bordered by Concession 3 and Concession 1 starting at York Road and finishing by connecting into Two Mile Creek north of East and West Line. This single complex drain system literally services hundreds of rural and agricultural properties and it is only one of many.

To get a full picture of just how extensive the drain infrastructure is, do a Google search for the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake's Municipal Drains & Irrigation Key Map.

This infrastructure requires ongoing and diligent maintenance in order to work effectively.



The Harrison Drain 1 on Line 6 Road shows what neglected maintenance results in — a clogged mess. BRIAN MARSHALL

Over time, the sluggish water deposits sediments in the drain course and the build-up gradually reduces the capacity of the drain and promotes the growth of invasive water plants (like phragmites) which further impede water movement.

Further, shrubs and trees find root along the banks of the drains; adding to the problem creating blockages and trapping debris during rain events.

Without proper maintenance — which typically includes bottom clean-out to remove siltation, brushing the banks to remove plant growth and trees, and clean-out, repair and/or replacement of pipes and culverts — in a short period of time, a drain can lose its effectiveness to manage water and help to prevent flooding.

Another component in the municipality's infrastructure system are stormwater management facility ponds. Unfortunately, none of my research has turned up an official list of the existing ponds.

Essentially, these ponds are engineered basins designed to temporarily hold or retain water that falls during a storm event. Each pond acts to accumulate and subsequently slowly release water into the drains and/or natural waterways thereby prevent flooding, reduce erosion, and trap pollutants and sediment.

Stormwater management facility ponds fall into two categories: wet and dry.

A wet pond maintains a permanent pool of water throughout the year. They remove pollutants by allowing sediment to settle

and through biological uptake, as plants absorb excess nutrients. Because they permanently hold water on an ongoing basis, wet ponds are also called retention ponds.

Alternatively, a dry pond is designed to hold water for a short period of time (48 to 72 hours) before allowing the water to discharge to a nearby stream or drain. Dry ponds control peak flows of runoff, help improve water quality and lessen the effects of erosion.

Between rain events, a dry pond looks like a large, grassy low area. Because they detain water for a brief time before allowing it to flow out, dry ponds are also called detention ponds.

Obviously, the water levels in both types of ponds can increase dramatically as a result of a storm event. However, since the total volume of a wet pond is already partially occupied by permanently retained water, to manage an equal amount of rainfall, a retention pond will need to be larger and/or deeper than its detention pond equivalent.

Moreover, just like the drains, these ponds require regular ongoing maintenance, which is easier and cheaper with a dry pond

since it doesn't have to be periodically drained for clean-out.

In all reality, proper ongoing annual maintenance of our drains and stormwater management facility ponds would cost a very healthy chunk of change — that's the price for protecting our properties.

Unfortunately, this vital work has been chronically underfunded and largely neglected by our elected councils for decades. We have a legacy debt, which must be paid.

So, while declaring a state of emergency doesn't automatically free up provincial funds, it certainly is a clear statement to the province of our crisis in terms of funding our failing infrastructure.

If Premier Doug Ford wants "more homes built faster," the province needs to step forward to underwrite creating infrastructure in NOTL that will support that build-out.

The other alternative? Freeze all developments until the infrastructure will ensure it doesn't drown in the next storm.

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



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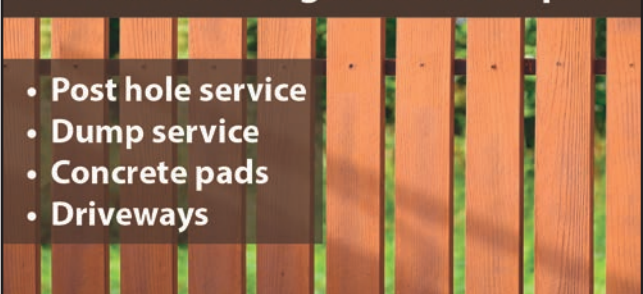
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Legion **rises above** adversity after last week's flood



ROSS'S RAMBLINGS

Ross Robinson
Columnist

For many NOTLers, for many years, “the Legion” has been a social constant. Of course, for some of us, more of a constant than for others.

The weekly Fish Fry, Scrabble, Karaoke, Euchre, and of course the traditional bar that makes no airs. So much of a social hub for so many locals. Badges and memorabilia from hundreds of other Legion branches, and a good library of military themed books.

Solid people, cold drinks and very fair prices. Photographs and names from our past.

And now, it has been ripped away by last week's history-making flooding. However, what has most

impressed me has been the total lack of whining and drama about this distressing event.

Even the members who do most of the work as volunteers have just been saying, “It happened, so now let's get on with it and get our Legion branch open again.”

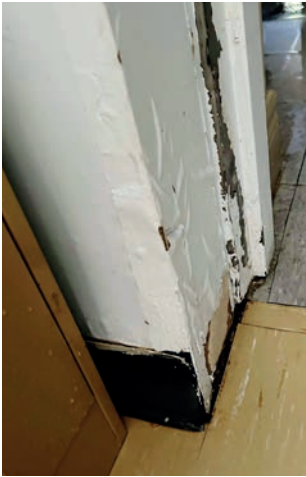
The members have been totally understanding and patient.

Can we even imagine the amount of work that has to be done around Niagara to dry us out? Images in the newspapers have been overwhelming, showing the reality of the situation.

Our Great Lakes contain some 20 per cent of the world's fresh water, or so I have been told. Now, that's an amazing statistic. (Always remembering that 87 per cent of statistics are made up on the spot.)

Living around the Great Lakes (the acronym is HOMES) makes us feel at ease with water. We usually don't even think about it. What a natural asset we have here in Canada. In that way, the envy of the world.

This all leads me to write



The water damage to the Legion drywall is more than a foot high — but in an almost magical coincidence, it stopped almost exactly before it hit the poppies in the main office. A little bit of light in the dark. LIAM ARCHIBALD



about an incredible coincidence.

Just last month, I had finished reading Pierre Berton's book “Vimy,” about the famous 1917 First World War battle that has been so well documented. Perhaps due to a family connection, I have now read this book twice. Vimy Ridge has often been described as a turning point in the development of our Canada as a fully autonomous nation.

Yes, Pierre Berton explains military strategy and the geography of the

region in northern France. But my major thought from this historical novel has always been, “How did the troops maintain morale?” Let me put out a few things to think about during their time spent in the trenches. Unimaginable.

How tough were they? And with no finish line in sight. Week after week, month after month. Endless, and yet they somehow maintained discipline and morale.

Mud, cold and rainy weather, unsanitary sanitary conditions and open

latrines, cold stew and cold tea and coffee. Unwashed and wet clothes, and grabbing some “shuteye” for an hour or two when possible.

And here come the two words I cannot wrap my head around. Flooded trenches. Often flowing water, and not clean water. Muddy and cold water, sewerage, rats, bigger rats, and the injured and dead. Again, unimaginable.

How did they maintain any semblance of morale? I have done some more research preparing to ramble this week, and understandably here in Niagara-on-the-Lake, the immensity of the flooding in the trenches is dominating my thinking.

Reflect on the expression “trench foot.” Men standing in water, sometimes for days on end. Wet and cold feet would swell, and sometimes get infected.

Not to pile on, but just today I read a few pages about life in the trenches in a New Zealand military history book: “Then there was the smell. Stinking mud mingled with rotting corpses, lingering poison gas, open latrines, wet clothes and unwashed bod-

ies to produce an overpowering stench.”

Am I being melodramatic? As I read Pierre Berton's descriptions of life in the often flooded trenches, I shiver. How tough were they?

And not that long ago.

So how will the good people of north Niagara rebound from the indescribable flooding? Somehow, and by helping each other keep our morale up.

I have spoken to many people since the recent flooding, and have been amazed at the empathy and sympathy dominating conversations.

Our leaders will lead, our workers will work, and we Niagarans will keep our morale up and help each other.

I should have ended this Rambling, but just one more thought. Thank goodness the torrential flooding didn't occur back in June, while the good folks recently shooting the movie were here. They paid a lot of money to rent the parking lot at the Legion.

What a messy situation that would have been.

rossrocket9@gmail.com



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An opportunity NOTL should not miss

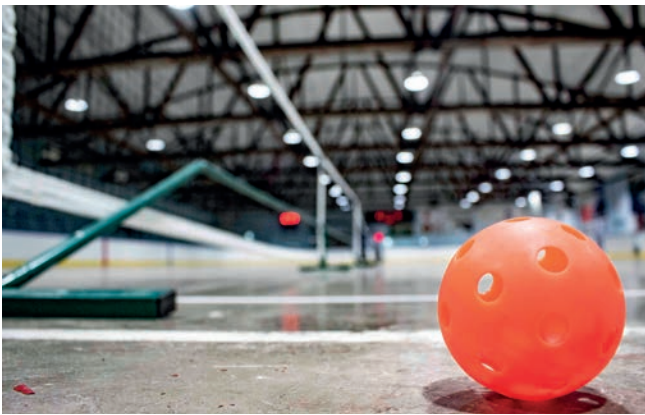
Dear editor:

It has now been more than a year since the Niagara-on-the-Lake Pickleball Club presented town council with a proposal to partner in the development of a dedicated pickleball facility.

Since then, demand for pickleball has grown significantly and the community's outdoor pickleball courts have been permanently closed. As a result, the need for adequate and accessible pickleball facilities is greater today than it was when the proposal was first presented.

Niagara Falls and the Chippewa area have faced similar challenges: growing demand for recreational opportunities and a shortage of adequate sport and recreation facilities. Recognizing their responsibility as community leaders to support the health, well-being and quality of life of their residents, they took action and applied for funding through the Ontario government's Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund.

Their initiative and hard work have recently paid off. The Ontario government announced an investment



Ron Pychel says Niagara-on-the-Lake should be applying for funding to build a dedicated pickleball facility. FILE

of \$11.1 million to help upgrade Willoughby Arena, retrofit the YMCA and refurbish the Niagara Olympic Club's track and field infrastructure.

The infrastructure fund was created to help municipalities fund the repair, renovation and construction of sport and recreation facilities in their communities.

With \$500 million committed — the largest investment in the sport and recreation sector in Ontario's history — the program represents a significant opportunity for communities to address aging or inadequate recreational infrastructure.

However, opportunities

like this do not necessarily remain available indefinitely. The first round of provincial funding supported nearly 100 projects across Ontario, including 17 new facilities and the revitalization of 77 existing ones.

That raises an important question for Niagara-on-the-Lake: if the town intends to pursue a dedicated pickleball facility, has it applied for funding — or is it planning to do so?

If the town has not yet applied, hopefully it will seriously consider doing so while this funding opportunity remains available. Failing to secure available provincial funding would make it considerably more

difficult to proceed with the project and could jeopardize its future altogether.

The need is clearly there. Demand is growing, the existing outdoor courts are gone and the health, social and community benefits of pickleball are well-established. A dedicated facility would provide residents with a place to participate in the sport year-round while supporting active living, social connection and community wellbeing.

Niagara Falls and the Chippewa area have demonstrated what can happen when municipalities recognize a need and actively pursue available funding opportunities. Niagara-on-the-Lake has an opportunity to do the same.

This is not simply about pickleball. It is about investing in the health, well-being and quality of life of our community — and making sure that when funding opportunities become available, Niagara-on-the-Lake is at the table.

Hopefully, this is an opportunity our town will not let pass us by.

Ron Pychel
Virgil

Whether you're a driver, pedestrian or cyclist, we should all be courteous

Dear editor:

I appreciate John McCallum's thoughtful response to my July 16 letter. We agree on more than we disagree ("Why do car drivers control our roads?" July 16; "Rural roads are dangerous — cyclists, please be very careful," July 23).

Every road user — whether driving, cycling or walking — has a responsibility to obey the law and to treat others with courtesy and respect. Cyclists who ignore stop signs or ride unpredictably deserve criticism. So do pedestrians who cross carelessly.

Road safety isn't about assigning equal blame; it's about recognizing unequal consequences.

When a cyclist breaks a rule, they most often put themselves at risk. When the driver of a two-tonne vehicle makes a similar lapse in judgment, the conse-

quences can be catastrophic for someone else. That is why the law places a higher duty of care on drivers.

Mr. McCallum also points out that many rural roads were never designed for today's traffic. I completely agree. Better road design, paved shoulders where feasible, and improved cycling infrastructure would make our roads safer for everyone.

This should never become an "us versus them" debate. The overwhelming majority of drivers and cyclists are responsible people simply trying to get home safely.

The reality is that every one of us is, at different times, a driver, a cyclist or a pedestrian. We all benefit when our roads are safer.

If we can all show a little more patience, courtesy and understanding, we'll all be better off.

Frank Hayes
NOTL

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- Across**
- 1. Pulled a face (8)
 - 6. Deeply felt (6)
 - 9. Business combination (6)
 - 10. Rain gently (8)
 - 11. Orts (9)
 - 12. Hangs around (5)
 - 14. Undiluted (6)
 - 16. Units of sound intensity (8)
 - 18. Weird things (8)
 - 20. Charge with a crime (6)
 - 21. Expect (5)
 - 23. Stopped (6,3)
 - 26. Fighting axe (8)
 - 27. Scheduled (6)
 - 28. Public address (6)
 - 29. Rule out in advance (8)
- Down**
- 2. Returned to office (2-7)
 - 3. Power (5)
 - 4. Murderous painter of "The Supper at Emmaus" (10)
 - 5. Craved (7)
 - 6. Calvary inscription (1,1,1,1)
 - 7. Retired (4,2,3)
 - 8. Team race (5)
 - 13. Providing grounds for a lawsuit (10)
 - 15. Bring into being (9)
 - 17. Midlands cathedral city (9)
 - 19. Conceited and snobbish (5-2)
 - 22. Shout with joy (5)
 - 24. Whimsically funny (5)
 - 25. Sprint (4)

Crossword Puzzle

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

Last issue's answers

1	T	2	T	3	R	4	R	5	S	6	D	7	M
8	A	T	H	L	E	T	E	9	L	O	G	I	C
10	M	A	I	F				11	M	A	G		
12	W	R	I	G	G	L	E	D					
13	O	L	A	R				14	R	R	O		
15	R	E	A	C	T	O	R		16	U	S	U	A
17	T	N	E	A				18	E	M	I		
19	H	I	D	E		17	C	L	E	F	T	19	S
20	N	V	A					21	S	P	A	21	N
22	S	C	R	E	E	N	S		22	T	H	E	R
23	I	R	I					23	A	R	N	A	
24	S	T	U	M	P	S		24	G	L	O	B	U
25	I	O	T					25	I	I	E		
26	U	N	A	R	M	E	D		26	T	R	A	N
27	G	E	R					27	Y	N	S	H	

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EXPLORING HISTORY
WITH NOTL MUSEUM



1956 CNE solo swim

This photograph shows the crowd gathered at what is now Queen's Royal Park for the 1956 Canadian National Exhibition swim across Lake Ontario. Unlike Marilyn Bell's successful crossing two years earlier, the 1956 event ended with no official finishers as swimmers battled rough conditions, cold water and exhaustion. On Sept. 9, 1954, 16-year-old Marilyn Bell became the first person to successfully complete a solo swim across Lake Ontario, covering 51.5 kilometres (31.4 miles) from Youngstown to Toronto. After learning that the Canadian National Exhibition had invited only an American swimmer to attempt the crossing, Marilyn entered unofficially and became the only swimmer to reach the finish. Today, the Lake Ontario crossing remains one of the world's most challenging open-water swims. A plaque at the foot of King Street in Queen's Royal Park honours those who have successfully completed the journey. Good luck to all of those who are planning on making the swim this summer.

In anti-aging quest, the brain is the biggest obstacle



DR. BROWN

Dr. William Brown
Columnist

Last week, we examined how fertilized eggs differentiate into our body's systems and organs and thousands of cells which differ widely from one another in function and appearance — a process exquisitely timed and associated by selective activation of specific genes while silencing other specific genes (“Behold, I make all things new”: Can we reverse aging?” The Lake Report).

Withdrawing histone coverage of selected genes activates those exposed genes, while tagging genes with methyl groups silences genes in an overall process called epigenetics.

Every cell has the same DNA but the pattern by which some genes are selected to be active, and others suppressed, differs from cell-to-cell depending on the ultimate function of the cell — to become, for

example, specialized cells in the liver, kidney, skin, brain and so on.

The overall process of specialization (differentiation) of cells, despite all possessing the same DNA, is amazing and in much simpler form, was probably present almost from the beginning of the first cells nearly four billion years ago.

Unfortunately, as I pointed out last week, with increasing age, living cells accumulate molecular mistakes in the form of mutations in DNA as well as mistakes in epigenetic marking of genes with methyl groups and histone coverage or exposure of genes.

Both processes — mutations and epigenetic errors — can create faults in cellular processes which manifest as dysfunctional changes and perhaps death of cells, prompted in some cases by environmental triggers such as excess ultraviolet light, while in other cases, metabolic stress and chronic inflammation can trigger faulty epigenetic and gene changes.

In its simplest form, rejuvenation of aging skin cells has been created in tissue cultures in which old cells revert to younger looking and better functioning cells in response to



adding transcription genes to the tissue culture similar to what Yamanaka's team, used to turn mature fully differentiated skin cells into pluripotent stem cells, more or less stripped of their epigenetic changes (see last week's article).

Better, was to use fewer transcription factors to return old skin cells — not to their original stem cell origins, but just enough to revert old cells to healthy young skin cells without the risk of creating cancerous cells along the way. It worked.

Rejuvenating specific types of skin cells in tissue culture to younger versions of themselves is one thing. But restoring old organs such as the heart, kidney, liver or pancreas to younger healthier organs is altogether far more challenging

— many more types of cells would need to be rejuvenated.

This makes the goal of restoring the whole body, including the brain, to a younger version all but impossible, however much the wealthy and powerful might want to go on for another decade, another 50 years or, perhaps in their wildest dreams, become immortal (a dream of emperors past and present).

The trickiest organ to rejuvenate is the brain, if only because of the incredibly complex wiring, whereby even single neurons may contact thousands of other neurons in very complex ways. Furthermore, much beyond the first few years of life, multiplication of nerve cells stops.

Indeed, many cells in the nervous system are pruned

early in development in competitions between nerve cells for making the best connections.

Some new functioning nerve cells may be created in the adult hippocampus but so far there's no evidence of creation of new nerve cells elsewhere in the adult brain.

Serial MRI studies of the brain from before birth to the late decades in life reveal thinning of the neocortex as early as the second decade of life and white matter losses beginning in early mid-life and accelerating in the later decades of later life, to say nothing of the increasing frequency of white matter changes and small ischemic changes in the brain, much past seventy years of age.

For those reasons, it's hard to imagine how rejuvenation, however successful in other organs, could succeed for the brain.

When counts of nerve cells have been made, such as the substantia nigra, losses of nerve cells may exceed 50 per cent before symptoms of, say, Parkinson's disease appear.

The point here is that rejuvenating the brain might hold the line or possibly slow decline a bit, but not return our brain back to where it was when we were 20.

That's way beyond the science as it exists, even if high tech start-up companies hoping for a lucrative returns for their overhyped rejuvenation studies, suggest otherwise.

Finally, for a humorous take on aging there's a wonderful article which appeared in the New York Times in 2013 by David Brooks and Gail Collins on aging, titled “How to Be Old.”

Here's the best part. I quote:

Brooks: “You don't have to be rich to opt for the biblical model. Spend the years between 80 and, say, 140 arguing with God, leading various peoples across the dessert, producing many offspring and becoming known throughout time as a holy prophet. Though of course you've got to have connections in high places.”

Collins: “This appears to be a model that only works for men. Where I got my youthful religious training, the highest aspiration for a female was the title ‘Virgin Martyr.’ Already missed the boat on that one.”

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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IT'S BEEN A WILD FEW MONTHS.

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Some nearly gave us a heart attack.

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But it got me thinking...

I bet the people of NOTL have even better stories!

So I want to hear yours.

What's the craziest real estate experience you've ever had?

It can be good, bad, funny, unbelievable, frustrating... anything that makes for a great story.

Text or email me a few sentences. Next week, I'll pick a couple of my favourites (with your permission) and feature them right here in this newspaper.

I have a feeling this is going to be entertaining.



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