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Vol. 8, Issue 28

Canada's most-awarded community newspaper

July 17, 2025

NOTL CAO Nick Ruller.

There's a new Ruller in town

Dan Smeenk Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

Former councillor and fire chief Nick Ruller (last name pronounced like the measuring stick) has returned to Niagara-on-the-Lake as the town's new chief administrative officer.

He officially took over the role on July 7, succeeding interim CAO Bruce Zvaniga, who held the post for the past 18 months.

Ruller, who spent the last year and a half as Brampton's fire chief, said the opportunity to come home and take on the town's top unelected position was a major draw. Before that, he spent two years as a NOTL councillor before stepping down.

He said he distanced himself from the administrative

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St. Davids boxer fights for Olympic dream

Mckenzie Wright has a new coach and new plan, with the L.A. 2028 Games in her sights



St. Davids amateur boxer Mckenzie Wright works out with her new coach, Faisal Ahmadi, in Niagara Falls, N.Y. JACOB ISMAEL

Kevin MacLean | The Lake Report

ckenzie Wright has some unfinished business.

The St. Davids amateur boxer, who narrowly missed out on representing Canada at the 2024 Paris Olympics, isn't giving up.
If anything, she is more

motivated and focused than ever — and now has her sights set on Los Angeles and the 2028 Games.

Fresh from scoring a bronze medal in June at the World Boxing Challenge in the Czech Republic, Wright is at the gym almost every day, training and developing her skills, still hoping to make her Olympic dream a

She almost made it last year, losing some close and controversial decisions, including one to eventual Paris bronze medallist Aira Villegas of the Philippines.

But that was then. "With the way things ended last (Olympics) cycle, with it being that close so many times, I can't leave it like that. I have to right those

Continued on Page 15

Shaw open house aims to address concerns on Royal George rebuild

Daniel Smeenk Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

The Shaw Festival is encouraging public discussion about its proposed rebuild of the Royal George Theatre

in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The organization hosted an open house at the theatre on Wednesday, inviting residents to ask questions and learn more about the Shaw's plans. Ninety people were registered for 13 tours, which each lasted about 30 to 45 minutes.

The tour was split into eight sections showcasing different parts of the theatre: the lobby, auditorium, accessible washroom and delivery area, the stage and

backstage, the greenroom, Royal George bar, which is in the basement, the outside stage door and 188 Victoria St., where one part of the rebuilt theatre would be.

Each section either showed what is wrong with

the current theatre, or what the potential is for a rebuilt one.

Among the problems with the current theatre is its failing clay foundation which causes the basement to flood when it rains. "We spent \$500,000 to fix flooding issues just in January," Shaw Festival CEO Tim Jennings said during a media-only version of the tour, adding that

Continued on Page 2



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Failing clay foundation, flooding basement, accessibility are top of mind

Continued from Front Page

those repairs came out of the organization's operating budget.

Along the tour, placards offered information and addressed some public concerns about the renovation, such as clarifying that the lounge areas and rehearsal halls will not be used for commercial events or weddings.

Another issue, according to fire codes, is that the lobby can only fit 13 people. The Shaw wants it to be larger and more accessible for people with mobility issues. An elevator would be added.

In the theatre space, the number of seats would increase to 350 from 335, but with wider rows and accessible seating.

The tour also emphasized that the building itself is not historic. The facade and interior were designed to have a heritage look. The new building will have the same "look and spirit" as the previous theatre, Jennings said.

Another major concern is the theatre's only accessible washroom is now located in a separate building, forcing patrons to go outside to reach it. The new plan would include an accessible washroom inside the theatre building.

Jennings said the Royal George has been in a constant state of renovation.

"It's been renovated every year for the last 40 years," he said, adding it is important for residents to have a say and a thorough understanding of the project.

"It's the community we've invited," Jennings told The Lake Report before the open house. "We're doing it in small groups so that everybody gets a chance to have their say."

Located on Queen Street, the Royal George is a longstanding cultural landmark in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Built in 1915, it served as a vaudeville and movie theatre for soldiers at Camp Niagara before being purchased by the Shaw Festival in 1980 for theatrical use.

Based on its long list of problems, the Shaw plans to demolish the current structure and rebuild it just north of the existing site.

The proposed building would rise three storeys,

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Jon Duschinsky leads the first tour group of the Shaw Festival's open house in the Royal George Theatre on Wednesday. The proposed new theatre has been controversial among members of the community for the size and look of the building. DAN SMEENK

plus the basement, and include modern features such as multi-purpose rehearsal rooms.

However, the project has sparked controversy, with concerns from residents over its size and location in the historic Old Town.

One concerned resident was Rod Tennyson, who said he wants to see what residents are "up against."

"There's going to be a lot of construction. How long is it going to take?" said Tennyson. "I want to see how it's going to affect the town and the tourist business."

The building's size also bothers a lot of residents, Tennyson said. However, he, like every resident on the tours that The Lake Report spoke to, said they were open-minded.

Jon Duschinsky, an architect for the rebuild, told the first tour group of the night that the project was very much in the "design phase" and that it could change based on feedback.

The crowds were guided through each of the eight sections, and while there were questions about contentious issues, all they were civil.

Artistic director Tim Carroll, who was available during the tour, said he hopes discussions continue to stay polite.

"People are quite right to be concerned about the disruption that's going to come as we rebuild," he said.

"They're quite right to wonder about the character of the main street and want to make sure that what we propose is going to be beautiful. No two people are going to agree, but I think it's been a good robust conversation so far."

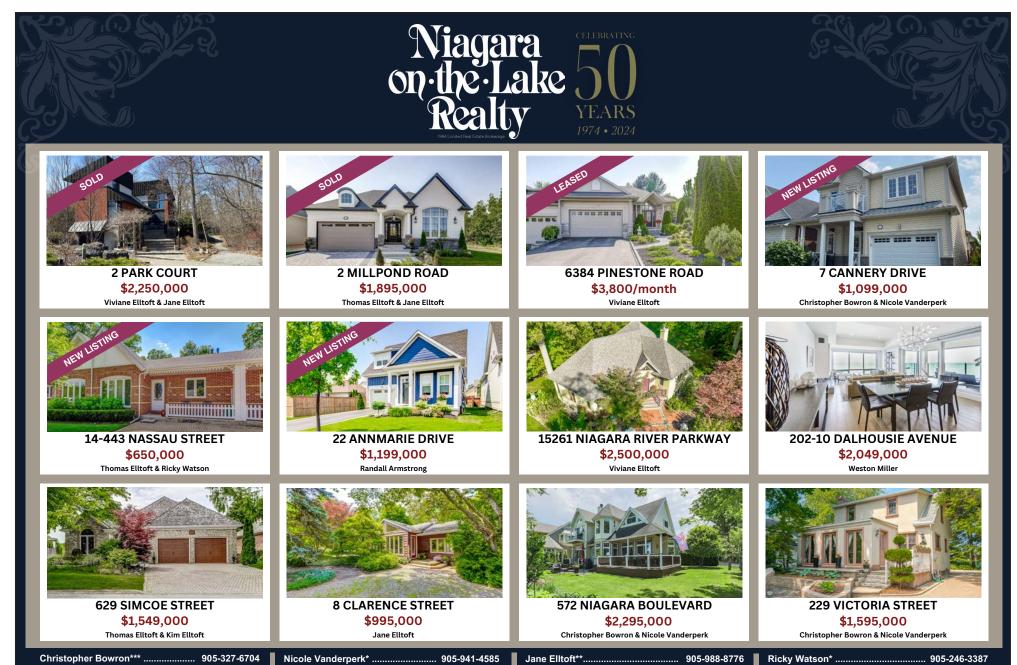
The festival is pursuing what Jennings described as an "aggressive" timeline. Construction is expected to begin next spring, with completion targeted for August 2028.

The province has committed \$35 million to the project and Jennings said the Shaw is essentially on a 30-month timeline starting this January.

The proposal still requires rezoning and other approvals from the Town of NOTL.

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July 17, 2025



THE WILD WEST OF WINE

These stories are part of a series about NOTL's "Wild West" of wineries, examining zoning bylaws, restrictions, how some wineries are ignoring those bylaws and restrictions and operating as they please, and how the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake doesn't appear to be enforcing its own bylaws. And we look at whether the solution is to change the rules to ease restrictions or crack down on those who aren't following the existing rules.

Town looks into Ferox winery after complaint

Paige Seburn Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-onthe-Lake follows a bylaw enforcement process of engage, educate, then enforce — but even after a formal complaint and a Lake Report investigation, Ferox by Fabian Reis winery remains in the education stage, working with the town as it plans to document any further rule-breaking.

Since at least 2022, Ferox has advertised food service, and by 2023, it was promoting events and patio service — all activities restricted to estate wineries, which pay more in commercial taxes for such uses.

In March, The Lake Report approached town staff and the owners about these apparent violations. For some, the situation highlighted broader problems with enforcement, fairness and whether the town's bylaws are still effective or outdated. By April, the town



After a complaint, the Town of NOTL says it's working with the owners of Ferox by Fabian Reis to correct bylaw violations and bring them into compliance. PAIGE SEBURN

had received no reported complaints.

But after we followed up last week, staff confirmed that a complaint has since been filed.

The town's communications co-ordinator Marah Minor said when the town discovers zoning rules being broken, bylaw officers start by letting the owners know and giving them a notice of violation.

"Town staff remains in the education phase of the process," said Minor in an email. This phase involves working with the owners, Fabian Reis and his wife, Stephanie, to correct violations and bring them into compliance with the rules.

In an emailed statement, Reis said the winery is part of "an active zoning bylaw amendment application process."

"We continue to work closely with town staff to bring the application to completion," he said.

The town declined to say when the complaint was received, how many were filed or who submitted them. It also would not confirm when it first began engaging with Ferox or what specific bylaw violations were reported.

The town can't shut down a business for breaking the rules or issue fines for zoning infractions through its usual penalty system, Minor said. These matters must instead go through the provincial offences court.

But that doesn't mean Ferox can do whatever it wants in the meantime — Minor said if violations keep happening, staff document each one to build a court case.

"Immediate action can only be taken if there's a life safety concern, as determined by the police, fire department, or the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario," she said.

The town did not say how long Ferox has to make changes, when the education phase began or the specifics of what that phase involves.

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Seniors advocacy group says NOTL is in dire need of independent-living facility

Dan Smeenk Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

There's a gaping hole in Niagara-on-the-Lake's housing landscape, says Cindy Grant and the 15 members of the town's Senior Housing Advisory Committee: residents grow up and grow old in NOTL, but have nowhere to go when they can no longer live independently in their homes.

Grant brought that concern to council during Tuesday's committee of the whole meeting, where she urged members to take action.

Council agreed, passing a motion directing town staff to continue working with the committee on the issue.

The NOTL Senior Housing Advisory Committee has been advocating for more than two years for the development of independent-living options with support services for aging residents. Currently, NOTL has no such facilities.

Grant said that communities like St. Catharines have



Cindy Grant along with others from her group Senior Housing Advocacy Committee came to council on Tuesday to advocate for an independent-living facility within NOTL. She argues this is an economic driver as well as a good social issue on behalf of seniors. DAN SMEENK

options such as Seasons and Pleasant Manor, among others, but many NOTL seniors don't want to leave town.

"So many people have had to do that with tears in their eyes, because they don't want to leave their community," she said.

She stressed the urgency, citing demographic trends and the increasing demand for senior housing.

"By 2031, one in three

NOTL residents will be 65 or older," she said. "Waitlists are growing for supportive and attainable housing." She also noted the economic benefits such a development could bring.

Several councillors voiced support, including Coun. Tim Balasiuk.

"I totally agree," he said.
"People live their entire
lives in this town only to be
shipped out."

He added, however, that he would prefer to see a larger facility than a smaller one that could become outdated.

Coun. Maria Mavridis asked if seniors are primarily hoping to stay in the Historic Old Town. Grant acknowledged that might not be feasible.

"We are going to have to be a bit realistic," she said, suggesting seniors may need to live elsewhere in NOTL. However, she emphasized that it's important people can access Old Town through transit.

Coun. Erwin Wiens raised concerns about whether a new facility would suit the character of its location. Grant said that was a discussion worth having and that council should be involved in shaping the plan.

She also said several developers have expressed strong interest in her organization's idea, and suggested the site of the old municipal hospital on Wellington Street would be "perfect."

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Dan Smeenk Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

The Rotary Club of Niagara-on-the-Lake is bringing back its signature summer fundraiser on Aug. 28 — with a new name and a refreshed identity.

Formerly known as the Ice Wine Cocktail Party, the event has been rebranded as the Rotary Sunset Cocktail Party Fundraiser. Organizers say the updated name better reflects what the evening has become.

"We felt that that didn't really describe the event," said Nancy Bailey, the club's chair of events and a board member. "Because we have wine stations and have a beer station ... and you can have an icewine cocktail if you want."

Bailey said the club hopes guests will don their best cocktail attire and enjoy an evening of live music, dancing, and what it calls "Niagara's finest food and wine." Local restaurants and wineries will be offering food, wine, beer and cocktails.

"It's a really elegant evening celebrating Niagara's



The Rotary Sunset Cocktail Party Fundraiser will take place on August 28 at 233 Niagara Blvd. SUPPLIED

finest foods and wines," said Bailey. "We're lucky, it's going to be set against the back of a stunning private lakefront property."

The Rotary Sunset Cocktail Party Fundraiser is the Rotary Club's big summer event before the Holiday House Tour in the winter. It is held "every other year," said Bailey, with the last event taking place in 2023.

Bailey said the event already has two sponsors and the support of several local wineries and restaurants, though the club is still seeking additional sponsors.

Fifty per cent of the proceeds will support local charitable organizations, while the remaining half will go to Rotary Interna-

The Rotary Club of Niagara-on-the-Lake is the local chapter of Rotary International, a global organization dedicated to community service and engagement.

The event will be held from 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at 233 Niagara Blvd. Tickets are \$150 and include a \$50 tax receipt.

Those interested in purchasing tickets can visit niagaraonthelakerotary.ca and click Sunset Cocktail Party under the "Events/ Tickets" tab.

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Rotary fundraiser has a new look | Niagara Motors revs up for annual car show on July 26

The Lake Report

If you love beautiful cars and connecting with like-minded car enthusiasts, Niagara Motors' fourth annual car show on July 26 is the place to be.

Dozens of classic, exotic and sport vehicles are expected to show up on the lot at 1537 Niagara Stone Rd. in Virgil next Saturday for people to come and enjoy, with no entry fee for participants or spectators.

Alongside these hot rods, there'll be plenty of entertainment, from a bouncy house, a caricature artist, barbecue and drinks, and a raffle, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Like last year, all the proceeds are going to Red Roof Retreat, a local organization that provides recreational services to children and young adults with special needs.

The show's lead organizer, Matt Habinski, says while around 38 people have officially registered to take part in the show, based on



of classic, exotic and sport vehicles. FILE/RICHARD WRIGHT

last year's situation, where dozens rolled up to the lot in their rides without registration, he expects up to 100 vehicles could be there.

"We're more than happy to accommodate them and give them a spot — assuming that we do have space," he said.

Last July's show featured Model Ts, Thunderbirds, Firebirds, Mustangs and more, custom and factory, dating as far back as the '20s, and plenty of beloved classics from the '50s and '60s.

Habinski says he's excited to see and learn about new types of vehicles — but, like any car enthusiast, he has his favourite.

"I'm definitely biased toward Corvettes. I'm always happy to see Corvettes when they show up," he

To register for the show, visit Niagara Motors' Facebook and Instagram pages, where the Google Forms registration link is posted.



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Ruller is new chief administrator

Continued from Front Page

side while on council, but had an interest while in Brampton. He eventually reached out to the recruiter doing the hiring for the town. He said it was a "typical process" that involved a resume.

Council approved the decision to hire him. It was a unanimous decision from the hiring committee.

In an interview, Ruller was careful but confident. He said he plans to spend his first few weeks as CAO listening, learning and building relationships.

"This week is really just about gathering myself up to speed on current issues," he said. "In the next few weeks, I want to spend a bit of time with interim CAO Zvaniga just as part of the transition."

He was tight-lipped about specific plans but emphasized the importance of collaboration with council and community groups.

Given his deep roots in the community — Ruller spent his school years in Virgil and much of his adult life in Niagara-on-the-Lake — he sees his familiarity as an advantage.

"It's provided me with an opportunity to get situated very quickly," he said. "Because I have familiarity with the organization and some of the existing staff."



Nick Ruller became chief administrative officer last Monday. He said he hopes to build a collaborative municipal government with high performers. DAN SMEENK

He acknowledged the job comes with challenges, noting that the town's relatively small team can make it difficult to respond to all the demands placed on them.

It might be more accurate to say he is a firefighter by calling. He joined the NOTL Fire Department as a volunteer in 1999, then moved to Toronto in 2001 to join Toronto Fire Services.

In 2013, he returned to NOTL, where he served as a firefighter. In 2017, he was NOTL deputy fire

chief and, beginning in 2019, became the town's fire chief. He was elected to town council in 2022 and served until 2024, when he resigned to take the job in Brampton.

Although he continued to volunteer as a firefighter over the past three and a half years — even while serving as a councillor and working in Brampton — he officially resigned from the role just weeks before becoming CAO.

Ruller admitted he

"definitely did not" imagine ending up as a CAO after decades as a firefighter. But he sees a natural link between both roles.

"You're serving a community," he said.

He credited his father for instilling in him that sense of public service: "He has a bit of that approach to community service."

Though no stranger to responsibility as a firefighter, the new CAO said this role brings a broader scope.

"This is different in the sense of the shift to the broader responsibility to the municipality," he said. "There's the financial responsibility and talking about high-performing teams ... This is just broader responsibility."

That sense of responsibility extends to his personal life. Ruller, a father of four — twin girls and two boys — said his free time is limited, but when he has it, he spends it with his family. His children play baseball and softball, and he enjoys cheering them on.

But more than anything, he said, it's his love for the community that drives him, even on difficult days.

"It's a beautiful community, it has a lot to offer," he said. "There's a lot of good that happens on the day-today. Sometimes it's keeping that perspective."

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the-Lake. The couple built

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"It's part of Niagara-

said Lauren Goettler, who

attended the ceremony on

July 9 with her husband.

"Any of our heritage we

can we need to save, and

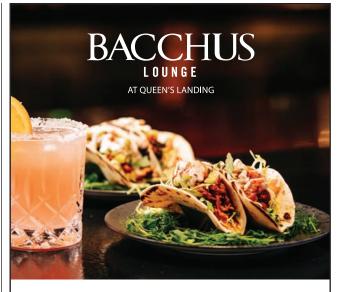
She said the organization

may do more work with the

walking trails are very

on-the-Lake's history,"

industry.



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Goettlers donate \$50K to heritage trail restoration

Dan Smeenk Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

The restoration of the Upper Canada Heritage Trail continues to gain ground, with the team about halfway to finishing the entire trail. and a \$50,000 boost, courtesy of the Goettler family's foundation.

The Goettler Family Foundation presented a \$50,000 donation to the heritage trail committee to support the latest phase of the restoration project, completing a new, one-kilometre section of trail along Concession 1, from Line 3 to Line 4.

The cheque presentation and ceremony took place at the Line 3 trailhead, where the completed portion ends and a dirt path, soon to be upgraded, begins.

A loader rumbled along the unfinished stretch as Tony Chisholm, vice-chair of the heritage trail committee, said the section, go-



From left, Lauren Goettler, Tony Chisholm, Rick Meloen, and Vaughn Goettler, celebrate the donation of \$50,000 from the Goettler Family Foundation. DAN SMEENK

ing up to Line 4, should be completed by September.

Chisholm also said they are about halfway to finishing the entire trail.

"The progress is great," said Chisholm.

Restoration of the trail began in 2017 along the former Erie and Ontario railway line, which operated from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century. The committee aims to transform the overgrown route into a gravel trail.

The work is divided into four phases: right now, crews are busy with phase three, which started in mid-June, going from Line 3 up to, eventually, Line 8.

The first phase, from John Street to East/West Line, was completed last year. The second, from East/West Line to Line 3, finished in May.

The Goettler Family Foundation, operated by Lauren and Vaughn Goettler, made the donation to

trail. Also present at the event were Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, Couns. Gary Burroughs and Wendy Cheropita, and several other town staff.

important."

Chisholm said the total cost for the Line 3 to Line 4 section is still unknown. He added that the full extension to Line 8 could take "a few years" to complete.

Donations to support the trail restoration can be made at heritagetrail.ca.

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Council axes Virgil couple's appeal for town to waive \$750 tree-cutting fee

Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

The town has rejected a Virgil couple's request not to pay \$750 to chop down a tree on their property; however, the municipality is offering the couple some grace in how they could pay the tree-cutting fee.

In November, arborist Harry Althorpe, the town's urban forestry officer, approved the removal of a corkscrew willow tree in the backyard of Gerard and Corrine Baron's home, after they applied for a tree removal permit in September.

However, that permit came with two conditions outlined in a town bylaw: the Barons would need to either plant three replacement trees on their property or elsewhere in town, or pay a \$750 fee.

That \$750 price tag is too steep, say the Barons, who appeared before council during this month's committee of the whole planning meeting.

"The cost of replacing



Councillors says fees must be paid for the removal of a healthy willow tree.

these trees is too high," Corrine Baron told council. "We can't afford it."

Gerard Baron added that hiring an arborist to remove the tree would cost about \$2,000 out of pocket.

Ultimately, council rejected their appeal, citing its need to uphold the municipal tree bylaw.

When the Barons applied for a tree removal permit last September, they cited concerns about the tree's close proximity to a storm drain.

In a letter to the town, they warned the roots could eventually clog the drain and create "a big problem for the neighbourhood." They also said the willow had already killed a smoke tree and an apple tree by blocking sunlight.

Althorpe inspected the tree in November and found it in good health, but still approved its removal. He said corkscrew willows tend to grow large and could eventually overwhelm other vegetation in the yard.

"This tree, within the next five to 10 years, has the chance to really take over their whole backyard," Althorpe told council during the July 8 virtual meeting.

He also noted they wouldn't be exempt from these conditions — their case doesn't qualify for one.

The Barons rejected those conditions, resulting in the town denying their permit. They then exercised their right to appeal to council.

In response to the Barons' appeal to council, Coun. Adriana Vizzari proposed a "friendly amendment" to offer the Barons a payment plan to help cover the cost;

council agreed to Vizzari's suggestion.

This means if the Barons were to keep their permit to cut down the tree, they would have to pay the fee. If they decide not to keep their removal permit, the corkscrew willow tree would remain in their backyard.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor supported the town's position on the case.

"We need to enforce our bylaws," she said.

The bylaw's replanting requirement supports the

town's broader environmental goals, said Coun. Wendy Cheropita.

"It's really important to us for environmental reasons and others," she said, referring to the town's efforts to build a stronger tree canopy, the coverage of trees in the municipal area.

Coun. Maria Mavridis asked if there was a list of acceptable replacement

"We're pretty open to what gets planted, as long as it's not something invasive," Althorpe replied.

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NOTICE OF HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT STUDY AREA BY-LAW

TAKE NOTICE that, on June 24, 2025, the Council of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake passed By-law Number 2025-042 to designate a portion of the Old Town as a Heritage Conservation District Study Area under Section 40.1 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

The boundaries of the Study Area are shown on the map found at

https://www.notl.com/heritage-planning/queen-picton-heritage-conservation-district-study or by scanning the QR code.



Explanation of Purpose and Effect of By-law

The By-law amends By-law Number 2025-010 by replacing the map of the study area which revises the study area to match the proposed new Heritage Conservation District boundary. The provisions of By-law 2025-010 remain in effect for properties within the revised study area.

Notice of Objection

Any person who objects to the By-law may, within thirty days after date of publication of the Notice of Passing of the By-law in The Lake Report, appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal by giving the clerk of the municipality a notice of appeal setting out the objection to the By-law and the reasons in support of the objection, accompanied by the fee charged by the Tribunal, in accordance with Section 40.1(4) of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Grant Bivol, Town Clerk

The Corporation of the Town of Niagara on the Lake,

1593 Four Mile Creek Road, P.O. Box 100, Virgil, ON LOS 1T0

Dated this the 17th day of July, 2025.

Contact: Heritage@notl.com

Animal group, Hendriks launch fundraiser

Dan Smeenk Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

Let Pets Live has worked to protect the lives and welfare of pets in Niagara for 15 years — and this year, a NOTL business is joining the effort.

Hendriks Your Independent Grocer on Queen Street is running a fundraiser in support of Let Pets Live until July 24. Ahead of the charity's annual August fundraiser, the grocer is offering customers the option to add \$2 to their grocery bill to support animal welfare initiatives.

Ginny Taylor, who has partnered with Let Pets Live since 2020, said the collaboration started with Jane Dagg, the Shaw Festival's donor relations director, who has been involved with the charity since the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Jane Dagg knew Tony at Independent," Taylor said. "She said, 'I knew he's done



Clockwise from top left, Brett Sherlock, Scott Middelton, Joey Rigg and James Booty at last year's tournament.

stuff like this before,' and we just went to see him and he was super, he said, 'Absolutely."

Let Pets Live is a Niagara-on-the-Lake-based fundraising organization founded by Ria Rosenberg and her husband, Steven Levy. Since 2011, the organization has hosted an annual golf tournament and auction to raise money for animal welfare causes.

"I think I was born with it," Rosenberg said, referring to her love of animals.

The idea for Let Pets Live came while she was living in California. Having previously worked in public relations, Rosenberg was inspired by a client who ran

an annual golf fundraiser

and decided to apply the

concept to animal rights. Since its inception, Let Pets Live has raised more than \$500,000. Major beneficiaries include Niagara Action for Animals' SNIP Program and the Community Animal Allies of Niagara.

Funds typically go toward services such as low-cost spay and neuter programs, emergency veterinary care, general care and animal shelters.

Taylor said one of the organization's strengths is its low overhead.

"We don't have any admin fees," she said. "Every single dollar we raise goes straight to animals."

The partnership with Hendriks marks a new milestone for the group, which hopes to engage more businesses in future initiatives alongside its annual golf tournament and auction.

"Getting businesses involved, that's how we're going to take this to the next level," Taylor said. "For Hendricks stepping up and being our pilot program this year, hopefully will open the door for us this year. We hope to do this with many businesses, not just Hendricks."

This year's Annual Golf Tournament takes place Aug. 24 at the Niagaraon-the-Lake Golf Club. The form to sign up can be found in the online version of this story.

daniel@niagaranow.com



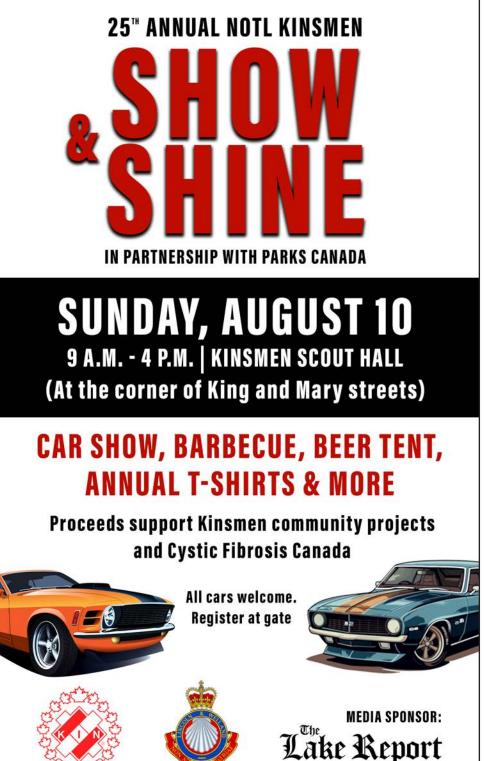
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Jessica Sevier talks connection through songwriting

Rising Toronto artist performs at Jackson-Triggs Aug. 21

Paige Seburn Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

Jessica Sevier hasn't been to Niagara-on-the-Lake yet, but the rising Toronto artist says its small-town charm mirrors the roots that shape her music — and she's sure her performance at Jackson Triggs this summer won't be her last time in town.

"I think a lot of small town life is very similar," Sevier told The Lake Report.

Singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Sevier grew up in Toronto with a large farm in Cobourg, about 95 kilometres east of the city.

She said she found early inspiration in small-town life — from running through hayfields to listening to Bruce Springsteen and John Mellencamp with her big family.

"That's what kind of taught me how to write," she said.

"I spent a lot of time there as a kid, and that's where

I would listen to a lot of music," she said. "I'd gather inspiration from a lot of the things we did out there."

On Aug. 21, Sevier is set to open for Tenille Townes at the Jackson-Triggs Amphitheatre for the 2025 Summer Concert Series.

General admission seat selection starts at 7 p.m., and the concert will start at 8 p.m. with a 30-minute, genreblending acoustic set featuring her new single, "Good to Drive," and more released and unreleased material, with a few possible covers.

"It's going to be a very fun, high-energy acoustic. We're trying to find some ways to bring some spice to the set," she said.

Co-written by Sevier, multi-platinum singersongwriter Robyn Ottolini and JUNO Award-winning producer Derek Hoffman, "Good to Drive" was released July 4.

It came together quickly during a collaborative session that blended Sevier's Americana-rock style with



Toronto-based artist Jessica Sevier will take the stage at the Jackson-Triggs Amphitheatre on Aug. 21. SUPPLIED

Ottolini's pop influence — and a Bruce-Springsteen-inspired riff she had in mind, brought to life by Hoffman.

The song is about being so consumed by love that you're always ready to drop everything for someone, even if they don't feel the same, Sevier said.

It captures that desperate kind of devotion where you're always on standby, sober and ready to drive — just in case they call.

She said she hopes her songs help others feel less alone in the shared struggles and emotions of their 20s.

"I definitely write hoping to connect with a wide variety of people," said Sevier.

"I think everyone can hear the tone of the song and the tone of the writing and be like, 'Oh my God, I went through something like that.' And that's kind of just what I hope to inspire people with," she said. Sevier has visited the Niagara region before, including stops at country bars like Big Texas in Niagara Falls, and said she's been sampling local wines in anticipation of her first trip to NOTL.

A return trip, possibly with a wine tour and new material in mind, is already on her radar.

"I'm excited to come back already, and I haven't even been," she said. "Once I see it, I bet you I'm gonna have some songwriting inspiration."

As for staying "good to drive" while taking in wine country, Sevier said that visitors and residents should make use of the spit bucket — or line up a designated driver.

"If there's a will, there's a way," she said with a laugh.

Ticket purchasing and more information can be found at tixr.com/groups/jacksontriggs/events.

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com



NEWS (%)



NOTL remembers the Battle of Fort George

Maddy Gordon The Lake Report

Around 250 historical re-enactors pitched tents at Fort George last weekend to bring events of the War of 1812 back to life.

More than 650 visitors attended the commemoration of the 212th anniversary of the Battle of Fort George, which included one of the site's largest demonstrations — an American sneak attack.

The re-enactment portrayed British and American soldiers emerging from two sides of Parade Square, former training grounds now used for the fort's largest demonstrations.

A large crowd gathered to watch both sides shoot muskets, launch cannons and navigate the terrain as they approached one another.

Daryl Learn, a historical storyteller, narrated the demonstration. To prepare for the weekend, he conducted additional research about military tactics and artillery used during the War of 1812.

"A lot of it is discussion with your fellow re-enactors, sharing that information and a lot of reading and passion toward the subject," Learn said.

The process of researching the history of war not only prepares Learn for a detailed narration of a battle re-enactment, but also builds empathy toward others around the world, he added.

"We haven't felt the scourge of war here in over 200 years ... and we lose touch of that," Learn said.

"When we hear about things in Syria, Myanmar or Ukraine, we think that's an over there problem ... but at the end of the War of 1812,



Those who took part in this year's Battle of Fort George re-enactment say they're passionate about reflecting this chapter of history and portraying the events with accuracy. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

almost every building along the Niagara River had been destroyed."

Learn said he hopes to continue spreading awareness through events like Fort George's — an attitude expressed by other re-enactors involved in the U.S. sneak attack demonstration.

Kevin Garrett portrayed a company sergeant in the reenactment. The role's main responsibility is the safety of the soldiers, which in a heat wave means ensuring they are drinking enough water and staying cool.

Part of being a re-enactor means being a community member, Garrett said. He said each person's passion for history builds relationships that make event weekends more fun.

"We've got doctors, lawyers, salesmen, exterminators, teachers, people from all walks of life with this one connecting thing,

which is a love of history," Garrett said. "And when people don't know their history, they are unaware when things are happening again."

He said one challenge in participating in a largescale demonstration is maintaining physical fitness and situational awareness, especially when multiple people are using artillery on the field.

But when the fort closes its doors at the end of the day, re-enactors get to recreate history in a different

The out-of-town re-enactors who participated in the Battle of Fort George event camped in tents at Parade Square and stuck to traditional ways of living for the weekend.

"Some of us cook full meals over the open fire," Lisa Beadle, a re-enactor from Hamilton, Ont., said. She and her boyfriend, Rick Peterson, both acted in the U.S. sneak attack.

Peterson said the reenactors socialize, dance, sit at campfires and occasionally host soirees once the sun sets.

"It's a magical place at night," Beadle said. "There's fires and lanterns, music, everyone is in period dress, so it really is like time travel."

When demonstrations are in full force, the couple said a sense of respect for the soldiers overcomes the ones re-enacting their work.

"The noise and the fog of war give you an idea of how terrifying it was for those men, and we always remember them," Beadle said.

"It gives us an appreciation of the struggles of everybody in the country ... the people who lost husbands and brothers, their homes, crops, livestock,

livelihood, so there's a lot of stakes." Peterson added.

Peterson is a mid-level officer, a role that includes managing the group of soldiers on the battlefield. He said this kind of organizing can be compared to the work of a sports coach.

"You're organizing 10-30 people ... it's kind of the same as if you were a football coach or organizing a corporate picnic. There's a lot of thought that goes into it," he said.

The Battle of Fort George and, more broadly, War of 1812 weekend included demonstrations on Saturday and Sunday.

Some re-enactors, like Kevin Lyn and his father Stephen from Mississauga, Ont., re-enacted on one day and watched the other.

Kevin said the re-enacting experience differs significantly from the viewing experience.

"I've watched myself (on video) afterwards, but I never get to just watch and appreciate the battle," Kevin said. "The tunnel vision you get on the field means all you focus on is reloading and listening to orders."

"You don't get to look at the whole picture," Stephen

When a specific battle, like the Battle of Fort George, is re-enacted, accuracy in the demonstrators' movements is key. But when a general event, like last weekend's U.S. sneak attack, is portrayed, there is less emphasis on following a script or choreography.

"If the Americans were being stubborn and were supposed to fall back but wouldn't, the British commander might bring troops ... and actually push into the flank," Stephen explained, referring to the outskirts of a military formation.

This means any historical re-enactor must be well-versed in the military tactics of the period they are recreating.

Re-enactors at Fort George weren't the only ones who recognized the War of 1812 last weekend.

A panel discussion with Donald Hickey, an acclaimed War of 1812 historian, and Ronald Dale, a historian and genealogist from Niagara-on-the-Lake, was held at the NOTL Museum to explore the event's ongoing sociopolitical presence in North America.

Fort George's next big event is the Fort Major's Tour, where guests are given an in-depth tour of the site and can handle artifacts from the War of 1812.

The first Fort Major day was on July 7, and the remaining dates are Aug. 4 and Sept. 4.







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more members of the community.



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Contributed by Patty Garriock

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- Winston Churchill

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Tiger Moth lands at NOTL airport

This historic Tiger Moth, a primary trainer aircraft for the Royal Air Force and Commonwealth forces during the Second World War, stopped by the Niagara District Airport on its way to western New York, flown by pilot Danny Garyfalakis. Biplanes like this had a home in Niagara during the war, when the district airport was a military flight training facility. SUPPLIED

Opinion

Let's work together to make Shaw's new Royal George Theatre a success



David Israelson Special to The Lake Report

It's hard to know what to make of the fast-growing controversy surrounding the Shaw Festival's plans to replace the Royal George Theatre.

From one perspective, Niagara-on-the-Lake residents should be overjoyed. The Shaw's plans call for a \$150-million overhaul of the site now occupied by the Royal George in the centre of Old Town. The Ontario government, ordinarily not known for its generosity or planning wisdom, is contributing an impressive \$35 million.

The existing Royal George has its virtues, but its charm has faded. It's outdated. There's an objective need to replace it with something better, roomier, accessible to people with disabilities and with space for the programs and amenities that make the Shaw an international attraction and a pillar of Canada's cultural life.

To accommodate all this, the new building will be bigger. The Shaw promises a design that would respect the heritage of Old Town and evoke the memory of the theatre front it is replacing.

Some residents see problems already. As with every renewal, something old will be swept away. The new Royal George will be a bigger building, taking up more of the streetscape in one of the most precious sections of Old Town.

There are concerns about sunlight and shadows, the removal of other buildings to accommodate a larger project and construction. The new building may dominate the block. (But so does the beloved Court House across the street.) Construction is expected to take at least three years.

But as with every renewal, something old will be replaced. Much to their credit, the Shaw has been transparent and available to share their ambitious plans.

The meeting held at council chamber on July 8 was a well-meaning and

transparent opportunity for people to hear directly about the project and to express their views.

I'm sure there will be more opportunities for NOTL residents and the Shaw to exchange going forward. It's important to have an ongoing dialogue based on underlying goodwill and trust.

As many local residents are well aware, a lot of people in Niagara-on-the-Lake feel that they get short shrift when development projects come up for approval at town hall.

There's a perception among many that NOTL is in danger of turning into a mishmash with prison-like winery buildings, projects that cram too many apartments into too small spaces, large, scary hotel projects in residential areas and sprawling, boring housing tracts built where they don't belong.

I think the Royal George renewal is nothing like this at all. I support building a new theatre. Done right, it will bring new energy and vitality to Old Town and will make both the Shaw and Niagara-on-the-Lake a prized place to live, work and visit well into the 22nd century.

It's going to take work from all quarters to make this happen. The project's critics and doubters' views should be respected, heard and addressed in a reasonable way.

But being reasonable also means getting things done. In their bestselling book "Abundance," U.S. authors Ezra Klein and Derek Thompson write about how an excess of well-meaning regulations and protective measures often prevent good things from happening.

"Our capacity to see problems has sharpened while our ability to solve them has diminished," they say.

Let's not go there with the Royal George. There are encouraging signs. For example, the new Niagaraon-the-Lake Residents Association has come out in support of the Shaw's revitalization. Yes, they have some suggestions, but they want to see it happen.

By all means, let's talk and listen. But let's work together to get a great new Shaw theatre.

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



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Speed cam vandal should be charged

Regarding "Not losing any sleep over vandalized speed cam" (The Lake Report, July 3).

We have lived in NOTL for well over 30 years and had been pretty confident (albeit, maybe a little too optimistically) in the safety of our children walking to and from, around, and playing, at their school years ago.

The traffic on Highway 55 and York Road near the current schools is vastly more dangerous. Yousaf Shaikh, of Glendale, states that they aren't losing sleep over the vandalized speed cams because "look, we're all humans and we make mistakes."



Letter writer Lani Parkinson says the person who is cutting down the speed camera should receive the max penalty.

Well, a "mistake," as you call it, with a two+ tonne surging hunk of metal could cost a child, at the very least, a broken limb, or far worse, the freedom to walk or think again, or the unimaginable, their life.

Just a small increase in speed, let alone over the variance of speed allowed by the cameras, could be devastating.

Children do make mistakes, and dart out into traffic, or fall, as they are learning about the seriousness of traffic safety. Drivers are supposed to be adults and are expected to follow rules.

It is a community's

responsibility to protect all children. The cameras are proven to promote the necessary, habitually attentive driving.

So, no more mistakes. Distracted driving kills. Stop making excuses to play Russian roulette with children's lives and follow the flipping rules.

If hefty tickets (or just the threat) slow people down, the mission will have been accomplished. Vandalism of all of Ontario's safety cameras is costing the taxpayers thousands.

I hope the judge prosecutes the vandals of the cameras to the fullest extent of the law.

> Lani Parkinson St. Davids

Our region has some curious safety priorities

Dear editor:

It's interesting to read the two recent, local public safety stories and compare the contrasting approaches to handling them both.

On the one hand, we have the traffic camera at Crossroads School and, on the other, we have the dangerous E. coli levels at Queen's Royal Beach (and, likely, the much-ignored Ryerson Park

In the former case, money seems to be no object in terms of acquiring, maintaining, reinstalling and surveilling the safety technology brought to bear on the potential liability.

In the latter case, it appears that the cheapest and least labour-intensive solution is thought to suffice.

That's a glaring disconnect for anyone with open eyes, especially since it's also glaringly unnecessary.

It would cost very little for the town to plant a placard at Queen's Royal Park with hinged, lockable, clear acrylic displays (one English, one French) into which a designated town employee could routinely insert a

printout of the beach's latest safety rating as found on the QR-related website. Simple, low-tech, reliable

and far more user-friendly. As for the traffic camera, its obvious connection to widening concerns over what seems to be an everintensifying surveillance state makes for a real uphill public sentiment battle on an otherwise flat stretch of road — especially when that battle appears already to have been won, judging by the way drivers have taken to slowing right down there with, or without, the

camera being upright. My simple thoughts, for what they're worth.

> **Bruce Dickson NOTL**

Will tourism bring the curtain down?



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner Columnist

A coyote family has moved onto the site of the demolished Parliament Oak school. Five pups, I'm told.

"Nature always wins," was Dorothy's response, on hearing the news. At least something is alive and thriving where the town's kids once played soccer.

Attempts this past week to learn the status of Benny Marotta's five-star, 129room, conference centre, wedding venue and grandiose hotel came up empty. Neighbours say plans for a big, underground parking garage are a fantasy.

There's enough water below to float a passel of Porsches. Will the thing ever get built? A family of seven would like to know.

Well, the hotel decision sparked NOTL's most recent citizen protest a year ago. But nothing came of it, other than a new residents association dedicated to throwing the current bums out. Now the Royal George eruption has folks again asking that eternal question: Is this a place to live or a theme park for the tourists?

As this edition of The Lake Report goes to press, the Shaw Festival cabal is hosting a "town hall" to explain why it wants to tear



A rezoning notice is posted in front of a Queen Street heritage building to be demolished for the Shaw's planned expansion of the Royal George Theatre. GARTH TURNER

down five buildings (two on the main drag, three residential) and build a massive 51,000-square-foot, five-storey-tall stone-andglass complex smack in the middle of the place.

Has the festival been stung by the outraged response of its neighbours to the Royal George rebuild? I asked Shaw boss Tim Jennings that question. He did not reply.

But others are finding their voice on this matter. So far, none in support, save the local Chamber of Commerce — interesting since three years of Queen Street construction could blow a hole through business.

As mentioned here last week, Shaw employees have been urged to flood local politicians with pro-Fat George template letters, but some people see that as employee coercion.

"What I appreciate most about your latest article was, very subtly, pointing out that they boast of 'overwhelming support' yet urge their employees to write in their support on top of it all," writes a backstager who asks not to be identified. "I can say with confidence that the fear of reprisal is real among the festival's employees."

But the real grief is among the Old Town residents who see construction of this theatrical complex

— higher, wider, denser, longer, taller than any other commercial building — as an assault on the very heritage that defines this weird place.

Just another step in the process of turning Niagaraon-the-Lake into the quaint backdrop for profit. Folks wonder how we elected people so willing to make it

"A modern glass-andstone structure does not belong in the very heart of a 19th-century streetscape," Maria Vaneva told politicians last week as the Royal George plan was discussed.

"It does not belong beside our heritage homes on Victoria Street where the carriages pass. And it certainly does not belong in a designated heritage district protected under the Ontario Heritage Act and a National Historic Site of significant importance."

Sam Young adds: "Our elected officials learn nothing from similar circumstances which have killed thousands of bucket list retirement towns and villages worldwide. All for the same reasons — tourism, tourism, tourism. While a necessary revenue lifeline, this will be the death of NOTL."

"The theatre was welcomed by the community," say Jim and Erika Alexander, "to house their business in NOTL and now the theatre is considering the destruction of our heritage district to accommodate their mis-guided vision and that it is even being considered by our elected officials!"

Many, including Gienek Ksiazkiewicz, are asking why the Shaw can't keep the old theatre as a low-use site (a museum or retail) and build their \$85-million trophy theatre where the old hospital stood.

After all, that's right across the road from the festival's main location. Queen Street will not be ripped up. Half a residential block won't be levelled. Lots of space for parking and, after all, the site's already owned by the town.

Says Jennings in response (and this is his complete reply): "Thank you for the suggestion. That site was investigated previously and unfortunately, due to a quite wide range of issues, it was not a way forward for this project."

The way forward, then, is the way of the Shaw. We are but props.

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

garth@garth.ca



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style. Category: 2X3 (two three-letter words)

> In 2022 Costco's CFO said the \$1.50 price for this and a soda is "forever."

Last issue: BREAD

Clue: A starter containing lactic acid bacteria is used to induce fermentation when making this tangy bread.

Answer: What is sourdough?

Answered first by: Jane Morris

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Bill Hamilton, Bob Wheatley, Susan Hamilton, Lynda Collet, Becky Creager, Hugh Lundy, Howard Jones, Wade Durling, Nancy Rocca, Randie Topps, Jeff Lake, Claudia Grimwood, Mike Gander, Tuija Johansson, Sheila Meloche, Susan Dewar, Elizabeth Oliver-Malone, Catherine Clarke, Jim Dandy, Sylvia Wiens, Margaret Garaughty, Marla Percy, Esther VanGorder, Margie Enns, Kaitlyn Irving, Bill VanGorder

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It's much more than much ado about nothing



ARCHITEXT

Brian Marshall Columnist

This week, I thought we'd begin by asking the question: What is a heritage conservation district?

The Ontario Heritage Toolkit (Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism) defines it as "a concentration of heritage resources with special character or historical association that distinguishes it from its surroundings."

And assert that "the significance of an (heritage conservation district) often extends beyond its built heritage, structures, streets, landscape and other physical and special elements to include important vistas and views between buildings and spaces within the district."

The Ontario Heritage Act provides the authority under which a municipality can designate a geographically

defined area as a heritage conservation district, allowing this level of government to protect the special character of the area by guiding future changes in accordance with the policies established in a heritage conservation district plan.

Thus, while change can occur within a Part V designated district, it is effectively limited and controlled by the criteria detailed in the plan.

The Queen-Picton heritage conservation district plan was authored in 1986 and its policies have been in force for nearly four decades.

In the introduction (Section 5A.1, page 15), we read: "To preserve this character and special sense of place is to preserve the building stock. Building stock means not just history, but the attractive human scale older building provides."

On the following page are found the central principles underwriting the policies, namely: "Firstly to conserve, maintain and enhance the historic building stock. Secondly, to guide the design of new building so that it complements the historic district. The intent is to achieve an attractive, coherent, historic streetscape that reads as a whole rather than



The Queen-Picton heritage conservation district plan has policies that have been in place for nearly four decades. The new Royal George Theatre proposal fails to conform to at least six of the seven criteria set out as policy for the district plan, writes Brian Marshall.

a disparate and conflicting set of parts."

So, how does the plan address new buildings?

Found on page 24, it specifies the Queen Street criteria, which must be "adhered to" as follows:

- "The height of new buildings at the street face shall be sympathetic to surrounding buildings."
- "Proportions of alterations, or new buildings, shall complement the proportions of the surrounding buildings."
- "The roof pattern shall be similar to the established roof patterns of the 'A' and 'B' building stock."
- "The placement and proportion of height to width of windows shall complement those of surrounding buildings."
 - "Colours used through

paint and materials shall be historically accurate colours, being of quiet, subtle, natural shades."

building stock" — they

ask to demolish several

19th-century buildings,

to be a simple corporate

decision to clear the land

required for the proposed

design — but, in my as-

sessment, it also fails to

conform to at least six of

the seven aforementioned

the heritage conservation

The height of the pro-

posed building is certainly

not sympathetic to the sur-

rounding buildings, nor are

its proportions. The roof

pattern of the proposed

design is unique within

the heritage district. The

expanses of metal-framed

glass windows and doors

pletely out of keeping with

the surrounding historic

are excessive and com-

district plan.

criteria set out as policy in

which might be suggested

- "Materials appropriate and typical of the heritage district shall be used with an emphasis on natural fabric such as brick, stone and wood as opposed to metals and plastics."
- "Set back of new building shall be similar to that of the existing building so as to maintain an integrity of building edge."

Incidentally, the criteria applied to new buildings on residential streets in the district can be found on page 40 and are largely identical to the cited Queen Street policies.

Not only does the proposal for the Royal George fail to "preserve" and "conserve" the "historic

and Victoria.

colour, particularly given its bracketing drop to ground level on the right wall, will contrast sharply within the context of the surrounding buildings and accentuate the use of metal framing in the openings.

buildings on both Queen

Moreover, the fly tower,

in terms of materiality and

And this does not begin to consider how the modernist, unsympathetic commercial-institutional architectural styling of the proposed design will alter the streetscapes within the heritage district forever.

Change within the heritage district is one thing, but the wholesale flouting of the heritage district guidelines - specifically designed to preserve its "special character" — is a horse of a different colour!

I have said before and will say again: I understand and support the Shaw's overture to bring the Royal George into the 21st century.

That stated, it should not and cannot be a design that sacrifices the integrity of the heritage district on the theatre's altar.

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



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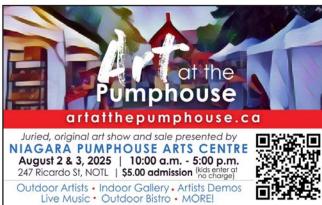
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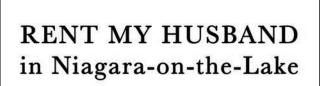


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Theatre drama takes centre stage

Shaw's new theatre should be built at old hospital

Dear editor:

There can be no doubt that the venerable and much-loved Royal George theatre is in urgent need of replacement.

Unfortunately, the plans recently unveiled by the Shaw Festival do not suggest that this will be done in a way that preserves the character of Queen Street and the heritage district as a whole.

Several heritage buildings have been acquired by the Shaw in order to increase the footprint of the theatre: These will be lost. The proposed new building looks very much like a warehouse, despite the promised facade on Queen Street. The "flies" will tower over the surrounding neighbourhood. And the lengthy construction phase will turn a key part of the town's main street into a no-go zone, with prolonged and serious effects on other businesses in the vicinity.

There has to be a better way and it involves moving on from the idea of rebuilding around the current location.

The long-abandoned hospital site seems like an obvious choice. The town has never figured out what to do with it, and many of the ideas that have been put forward have been conspicuously lacking in financial details.

Rebuilding the Royal George close to the Festival Theatre would create a genuine "cultural district" in the town. Construction might well be cheaper and easier on a less confined site than it is likely to be the case at the present location.

In addition, the hospital site is large enough to allow the provision of extra parking, which is always at a premium in Old Town.

No doubt a great deal of negotiation would be necessary to make this happen, including a property swap between the town and the Shaw, and seeking approval from the province for its promised funding to be redirected.

At the very least, this alternative is worth looking into.

James Webber Virgil

Heritage committee has issues with Royal George plan

Dear editor:

At the last heritage committee meeting, everyone agreed that the existing Royal George Theatre couldn't be repaired or expanded and that a new building was required.

However, what most of the committee realized during

the Shaw's presentation was that the new building was going to destroy heritage houses and turn Victoria Street into a service road for trucks backing into a loading dock.

The size of the building would overwhelm not only the buildings on Queen

Street, but also the people and the houses on Victoria and Prideaux streets, where they would be looking at a seven-storey-high blank wall.

Apparently, the Shaw Theatre organization looked at other sites but, for some reason, didn't proceed with them. Hopefully, now being aware of the negative visual and functional effects that this colossal behemoth will have on the community, they will consider launching a search to find a more suitable site.

Wayne Murray NOTL

LETTER OF THE WEEK

New Royal George deserves to be a first-class facility

Dear editor:

The pushback against the new Royal George plan is so emotional and without any attempt to look at the pros and cons.

Some of the pros, as I see it, are as follows:

Theatregoers are the prime visitors for our entire community. Why would we not want to encourage their continued support and increase their numbers?

They stay for several days buying hotel rooms, plus meals and shopping.

Compare this to the busloads of visitors that only go down main street, buying a treat and then leaving again. Or even better, the short-term rental party crowd. Or just the motorcycle gangs that like to roar down main street.

The design for the theatre is a matter of taste, but it sure beats the Dairy Queen. Also, it enhances the look and feel of the old town by adding some much-needed

I wonder how many of these naysayers are theatregoers.

If we don't go first-class with the new facility, then why bother?

Mike Henry NOTL

Have an opinion you want heard?
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NOTL women solid in winning Wood Trophy again

Kevin MacLean The Lake Report

Players representing the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club won the coveted Wood Trophy last week, with a resounding win over other clubs from around the region.

The Wood Trophy, an annual regional competition dating back to 1966, pits teams from across Niagara against one another in a one-day tournament and is played at different courses each year.

Last Thursday at Whirlpool Golf Club in Niagara Falls, NOTL's Carroll Baker, Ginny Green, Yolanda Henry and Tracey Peters placed first.

More than a dozen golfers from NOTL took part and the tourney format uses the best four net scores (after handicap deductions) to determine a team's overall

Niagara-on-the-Lake's net



Women representing the NOTL Golf Club competed at Whirlpool Golf Club last Thursday. The team brought home the Wood Trophy for the ninth time since 2012. SUPPLIED

score of 279 was 11 shots better than the squad from the St. Catharines Golf & Country Club (290) and third-place Sawmill Golf Club in Pelham (291).

NOTL has had a lot of success in the tournament and it's the ninth time since 2012 that the club has won

The Wood Trophy takes its name from the Wood

Manufacturing Company in St. Catharines after Anne Wood donated the original trophy in 1966.

As well, the Flo Monroe trophy, for the lowest overall individual net score, is competed for at the tourney. This year's winner was Nicky Yardley of Sawmill, with a net total of 67.

On Tuesday, the NOTL club's nine-hole women's

league hosted the 150 Shades of Summer team scramble with 39 women competing during the member-guest tourney. The event was part of the club's 150th anniversary celebrations.

The winning team, with an even-par score of 36, consisted of Penny Green, Janet Gatecliff, Nicky Cyr and Jean O'Gorman.

Second place with 39 were Cathy Saytar, Joanne Golla, Brenda LeClair and Andrea Milanetti. In third with 40 were Catherine Novick, Patty Garriock, Susan Flett and Mollie Verrier.

Instead of closest to the pin, prizes were given out for closest to windmill flower arrangements placed on the green. Winners were Linda Williams (#2), Barb Kavanaugh (#5) and Nicky Cyr (#9).

During Monday's business ladies league play, Tracey Peters had the best gross score with 45. Other winners were: Christine Merza (longest drive on #1), Ellen Smith (closest to 150 on #2), Mickey Kerklan (closest to pin on #4), Jennifer Stirling (longest putt #7) and Veronica Yeager (closest to the pin in two on #9).

In men's league action last Thursday, James Grigjanis-Meusel and Jared Mines were on fire, shooting 32 and 33 respectively.

Mines, who was closest to the pin on #4, also was low net, with 29, followed by Ted Wiens at 31.

Other winners: Steven Millward (longest putt on #2), Ron Planche (longest drive on #3) and Peter Falconer (closest to the pin on #9).

Grigjanis-Meusel won two gross skins for birdies on #7 and #9, while Mines earned one for a birdie on #1. Net skins went to Neville Da Silva (#3), Gary Wasylow (#4), Jon Schmidt (#5), Ken Willms (#6) and Quinton Spagnol (#8).

Tuesday in the men's Woofs league, Jim Meszaros resumed his dominance of the field, shooting another 1-over 37. Randy McCartney had a 2-over 38 and won low net with 30.

Steven Fraser's eagle 3 on the third hole was the hidden hole winner and Glenn Murray scooped the closest to the pin on #4.

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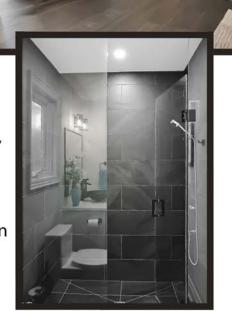
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Have Your Say in the Future of the **Former Hospital Site**



The Town is partnering with NPG Planning Solutions Inc. on a community engagement process to consider future uses for the Former Hospital Site (176 Wellington Street, Old Town.)

Participation Details

- Phase one of engagement includes a survey, idea board and mapping tool
- Deadline: August 1, 2025
- More opportunities to engage are coming in fall 2025





www.jointheconversationnotl.org/former-hospital-site



Boxer isn't giving up Olympic dream

Continued from Front Page

wrongs," Wright says in an interview.

"I think it would be unfair to myself to leave it like that."

It was remarkable that she was so close to making it to the Olympics especially since she came to the process late.

She turned 35 in May, and only returned to competitive boxing in 2023, barely 18 months ahead of the Paris Games.

She had stepped away from fighting for five years and returned to quickly become a national champion and top-level international fighter — something almost unheard of in elite competition.

"When I came in trying to qualify last year, I came back from a five-year hiatus, and I went straight into qualifying tournaments."

She now sees that period as building years, allowing her to improve, get stronger and mature.

"The way I look at it, too, is OK, I'm older, but that means I have more experience. So, with the five-year break that was five years less damage to my body," Wright says.

"I always say, 'Yeah, I'm 35 but I'm only 30 in boxing years' "thanks to her years away from the sport.

After narrowly missing out last June in her final attempt in Thailand to qualify for Paris, she took the summer off.

Incredibly fit and strong, Wright is a lean, mean fighting machine and competes in the 51-kilogram weight class. That's a maximum of 112 pounds.

She split with coach Jesse Sallows of City Boxing Club in Niagara Falls and since last November has been under the tutelage of Faisal Ahmadi — "Coach Sal" — from Niagara Falls,

While she's thankful for her time under Sallows, she says she was ready to move on. "I outgrew the gym" and needed different coaching.

She says she is getting that with Ahmadi while also travelling to Montreal a couple of times a month to train under Canada's national team coaches.

"It's higher-level training. He has been a fantastic coach for me in the short time that we've worked together and the attention that he gives me as an athlete, it's amazing."

"It's the perfect match for me."



Mckenzie Wright narrowly missed qualifying for the 2024 Paris Olympics and now has her sights set on the Los Angeles Games in 2028. JACOB ISMAEL

Coupled with the national coaches from the Olympic Training Centre in Montreal, "I'm a whole new fighter right now. And it's only the beginning."

Mckenzie 2.0 now, because I don't even recognize the fighter who started the (Paris Olympic) qualification. I've completely transformed."

MCKENZIE WRIGHT

"I call myself Mckenzie 2.0 now, because I don't even recognize the fighter who started the (Paris Olympic) qualification. I've completely transformed."

Five times each week she makes the 10-minute drive over the border to work out with Ahmadi. On Fridays she trains on her own and Sundays are her day to rest and recover.

She recognizes that, with Donald Trump's presidency, many are choosing not to cross the border — and hopes people won't judge her harshly for the choice she has made.

Because it is working and ultimately her goal is to do her country proud internationally.

She follows a strict training regimen and is pleased with her development.

So is her coach.

"Since we started working

together, her progress has been incredible," Ahmadi tells The Lake Report.

"We've really dialled in on her defence — trusting her head movement, staying sharp with counters — and it's paying off," he adds.

"She's naturally explosive and fast, so we're building everything around maximizing those strengths."

Wright says she's grown as an athlete as a result.

In the ring, "my ability to adjust, the way I read things, implementing my own strategies, my mindset is a lot clearer now."

"My defence has improved a lot. I'm picking shots better and my footwork has been off the charts. That's something we've really focused on since I started working with Coach Sal."

Sports psychologists also have helped her stay focused and reframe her mindset going into fights.

"Every time I get in the ring with the elite fighters, win or lose, I come out better. I'm just so much better than I used to be," Wright says.

"And being under higherlevel coaches, we're working on the right things. We're practising the right things every single day and I'm executing them in the ring."

She graduated from Niagara College's nursing program last year and works part-time as a nurse at a cosmetic medical clinic in Niagara Falls.

That job, and the small amount of funding she receives through Sport Canada for being a carded, national team athlete, helps cover some of her training costs. But not nearly all of it.

Canadians love their athletes to be successful on the international stage, but government funding for amateur competitors is generally less than \$2,000 a month.

"It becomes a matter of like the chicken and the egg," Wright notes.

"What comes first? How do you get results if there's no funding? But then you don't fund because there's no results?"

It's an age-old conundrum that many top Canadian athletes have had to wrestle with. Often only the most famous, high-profile athletes, including those in track or swimming, have outside sponsorship to help them train and compete.

Still, Wright is ready to give her all for Canada.

She's been successful in several tournaments in recent months, including bouts against fighters from Puerto Rico and Alberta.

With the bronze medal from her Czech sojourn under her belt, and golden performances in the national championships last November and at a tournament in the Dominican Republic in February, next on her fight card is the world championships in Liverpool this September.

"All these tournaments that I've been doing have been helping with my preparation for that," she says.

After England, there's the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Scotland and then Olympic qualification starts in 2027 with the Pan American Games in Peru.

Unlike the last Olympic cycle, she has a head start. And she's plunging into it with confidence and a positive attitude.

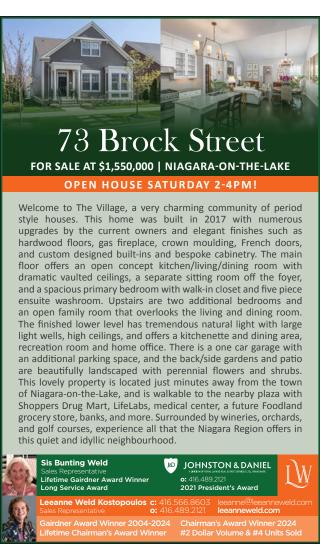
In the past she feels perhaps she was a little bit too focused on results, rather than her development as a hover

"You have to put your focus on the process," she says emphatically. "Trust the process" and things will work out.

"I learned a lot of lessons in the last two years. I think that one day if you look up the word perseverance in the dictionary, you're going to find my face beside it," she jokes.

"There's so much adversity that I keep getting faced with, but I keep pushing through it. That's kind of what makes someone a champion."





Classifieds

GARAGE/CONTENT SALE July 26, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. 6 The Promenade.





Have some fun

Across

- 1. Clap (7)
- 5. Priest (6)
- 9. Benefit (9)
- 10. Unwarranted (5)
- 11. Floor coverings (4)
- 12. Rounded mass of steamed dough (8)
- 15. Seedless raisin (7)
- 16. East Mediterranean democracy (6)
- 17. Involuntary muscular contraction (3)
- 19. Dusky (6)
- 21. Least difficult (7)
- 24. Knockout punch (8)
- 25. Sicilian volcano (4)
- 28. Compel (5)
- 29. Dutch master (9)
- 30. Work over (4,2)
- 31. Soon (7)

Down

- 1. Scaremonger (8)
- 2. Crucial (7)
- 3. "Black Beauty" author --- Sewell (4)

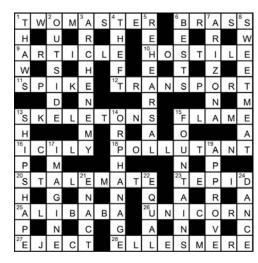
15

23

- 4. Faculty head (4)
- 5. Biased (10)
- 6. Statue-maker (10)
- 7. Bygone (3-4)
- 8. Prevail (5)
- 13. Legislative assembly (10)
- 14. Rickety vehicle (10)
- 18. Furtive (8)
- 20. Edge of the road (7)
- 22. Permanently inactive (7)
- 23. Fly-by-night (5)
- 26. Yuletide (4)
- 27. Group of three (4)

Crossword Puzzle 10 16

Last issue's answers

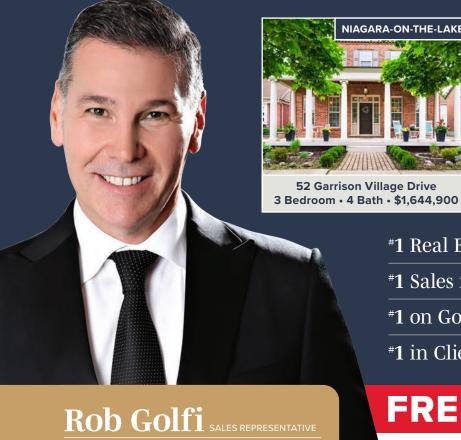


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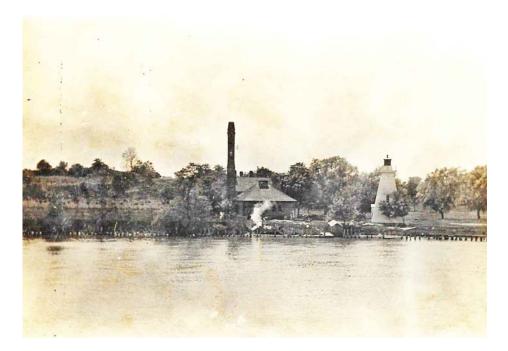
"Based on unit sales and \$ volume of closed transactions in RAHB Jan 1, 2020 - Dec 31, 2024.
"Source: Google Trends and Google Reviews "Source: REMAY LLC rankings for Large Team Residential, 2024. "Source: REDATUM Agents by units—listing and selling combined performance in TREB Jan 1- June 30, 2024, REMAX Excarpment Golff Really Inc., Exforeage, Independently owned and operated

Page 17 July 17, 2025









Niagara-on-the-Lake Pumphouse from the Niagara River, 1891

This is a unique perspective of the former pumphouse (now the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre) from the Niagara River. Built during the late 19th-century boom period, the pumphouse supplied the town with water from the Niagara River until 1983. The steam pumps also generated electricity for our growing town. The lighthouse is seen on the right side of the photograph. Both buildings still stand today. You can see a dock with a small boat house out in front and the pilings of a previous dock, or perhaps shore protection from the spring ice flow, all along the shore. During its heyday, the pumphouse would have been considered "out of town," but today there are a number of homes along this shoreline. On the hill to the left is the remains of Fort George, which wouldn't be reconstructed until the 1930s.



What events hosted by the NOTL Chamber contribute significantly to the local economic impact?

The NOTL Chamber not only supports its members through Business and networking events but also hosts Signature Events — the next is the Peach Festival Weekend — that culminates in our Shades of Summer Dinner happening in the heart of town!

Limited tables remain! Queen Street turns pink with our vibrant block party in front of the Historic Courthouse in Niagara-on-the-Lake on Sunday, August 10 at 5 p.m. Don your finest rosy or pink attire and enjoy live entertainment, Niagara-on-the-Lake wines, outdoor dining under the stars, all in the heart of the Heritage District.

Visit <u>www.niagaraonthelake.com/shades-of-summer-2025</u> for more information.

Have a fabulous productive week!

For more information regarding membership, please reach out to Stacey Mulholland, Membership Officer at stacey@niagaraonthelake.com or call 289-547-7556.





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Achieve your landscape goals in a small space



GROWING TOGETHER

Joanne Young Columnist

You would naturally think that it would be easier to landscape a smaller area than it would be to design a larger garden area, but that is not necessarily true.

Small spaces can have their own set of challenges when it comes to garden design

One of the first considerations in transforming a small space is to create a view or a focal point. This may take the shape of a pergola or arbour. Maybe it is a quaint sitting area. It could even be a piece of art or water feature.

Just like any garden, you need to have something that will catch and capture your attention and cause your eyes and mind to rest. Let your imagination go when dreaming of what your focus will be. Perhaps a stone wall, or a cute potting shed. What about an unusual plant specimen with a unique texture or colour?

Even though your space may be small, it is good to create different zones or "rooms" in the garden. It may seem contrary to logic, but breaking up open areas of a small space will actually make it feel larger. By simply adding a pathway or a small sitting area with a bench can make your space feel larger than it is.

The use of lines also plays an important part of designing a small garden. Using long, straight lines tricks your mind into thinking a small garden landscape is bigger than it is. If using straight lines in a geometric pattern, make sure that all lines run parallel to one another to maintain a simple look.

In a small space, your eye gets overwhelmed when navigating multiple curves or lines. The garden will feel small and cluttered. Small spaces call for a clear, simple overall design. Begin designing your garden by thinking about the shape of



Create a plan for your garden using strong shapes and simple lines, writes Joanne Young.

garden beds and seating areas from a bird's-eye view.

Create a plan using strong shapes and simple lines. A rectangular planting bed, for example, may be more space-efficient than a bed with curves.

In smaller-sized gardens, it is necessary to create some vertical interest. Anything that leads the eye upwards will make the garden feel larger.

This could be done by adding a compact tree, such

as Stewartia, that will still be in scale with your yard and not overwhelm it. Other ways to add vertical accents include adding vines on fences, walls and arbours, or even using espaliers on fences and walls.

Taking advantage of different textures is another way to make a small garden pop. Big, bold tropical plants create a lush feel, especially in a small landscape. Their large leaves can manipulate the scale of a small backyard to help it feel larger, and their unusual shape helps to boost the "cool" factor of the area.

Having a good mix of coarse and fine-textured plants gives the garden a sense of depth, making some areas of the garden visually come towards you and other areas visually recede.

Warm colours such as red, orange and yellow all jump out at the eye and appear closer, making the space feel smaller. Cool colours — blues, mauve, pink and white — on the other hand, recede, making a space feel larger than it is.

For example, a set of blue chairs at the far end of a rectangular garden will make the space feel larger than a set of red chairs in the same place. This colour concept applies to plants as well as furnishings.

Help your small-space garden feel larger by embracing a cool colour palette. Use warm colours for accents here and there.

These are just a few things to consider when designing a small garden area.

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

Obituary

Paul McCormack



McCORMACK, Paul — Paul McCormack passed away peacefully on July 11, 2025, at the age of 62, after a brief but courageous battle with sarcoma. Beloved husband of Maureen for 39 years, proud father of Clare (Paul Jacob) and Connor (Charlie Gould), and cherished brother to Mark, John, and Jennifer. Paul will be remembered for his kindness, wisdom, and quiet strength. A celebration of Paul's life will be held on Sunday, July 20, 2025, at Dodsworth & Brown 2241 New St., Burlington, ON, L7R 1J2 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., with words of remembrance at 7 p.m. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in Paul's memory to the Sarcoma Foundation of Canada: http://sarcomacancer.ca.

In the midst of a sweltering hot summer, let's talk about ice



ROSS'S RAMBLINGS

Ross Robinson Columnist

There I was, at the weekly Thursday fish fry at our local Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 124 on King Street near the tennis courts and the public pool.

The fish fry is open to the public, almost always well attended, and the talented, enthusiastic fish fry crew always hits the ball out of the park. Their blue career apparel adds a certain class.

Six volunteers upstairs in the kitchen, two more selling tickets and taking the cash just inside the front door, and the young food runners delivering the food. Three championshiplevel coleslaw artists always create a brilliant

side order to complement the fish and fries.

The wonderful bartenders are kept busy and work hard with welcoming attitudes.

The fish is always haddock, deep-fried to order. There is the occasional request for catfish or cod, but haddock always prevails.

Now, to the source of Ross's Rambling for this week. As a relatively new Legion member, I have happily become very comfortable at a regular table, with several longtime NOTLers. Lise, Sig, the peripatetic and charming Marlene, Ben, Wally and regular fun other folks.

After all the work has been finished upstairs, hardworking Henry Adamowski usually joins us to enliven the conversation. We eat and chat, and these chatty new friends sometimes unwittingly provide me with a unique perspective on local history.

Last week, I kept hearing the word "ice."

Local tales from decades ago and the ice bridge across the river from our



Feeling the heat? There's plenty of ice things to do in NOTL that can help you cool down. ${\tt CHATGPT}$

town to Youngstown. With the necessary, really frigid temperature levels and sustained winds from the northwest, the mouth of the river would be packed solid for weeks at a time. Some brave daredevils would scramble across the border.

No documentation needed, and not that long ago. Shortly after 9/11, the dreaded passport legislation became part of our lives. A shock to the system, but we were forced to adapt to this new reality.

For decades, ice cream cones were all the rage on Queen Street. Jim Smith's comprehensive, interesting and educational hard cover NOTL history pictorial book explains what a big treat ice cream cones were for local youngsters.

We won't even talk about the historic pricing for these special treats, or the prices people happily pay now for cones or cups with their favourite flavours.

And when did gelato deftly elbow its way into our local lives?

A natural progression of the word "ice" brings us to the current oenological headliner here in certain parts of the Niagara Peninsula.

Only a few decades ago, icewine became all the rage, and local wineries have won numerous prestigious prizes at wine expos around the world.

All the stars seemed to have aligned. Terror, temperature and talented people. An enabling microclimate. Wine tourists from around the world, more than willing to open their wallets wide for this sweet treat, to be savoured here or back home, around the world. It really is amazing, isn't it?

This is what happens when a group of intelligent, hard-working people work synergistically for the common good. Sharing ideas, tenaciously producing world-class wines.

Chapeau to the Niagara wine industry for icewine and their other award-winning wines.

This column has been a struggle, to be certain. The word "ice" has been part of Niagara for a long time, and will no doubt stay with us. Evolving, with new contexts.

As a fun aside, and to end this column, let me report that during our current oppressive (remember this in January and February) heat wave, a few local food and beverage establishments ran out of ice.

You just can't ever predict the future. Or the present. We all do our best to keep up.



33rd Annual PEACH FESTIVAL 2025

A celebration of the Niagara-on-the-Lake peach harvest

FRIDAY, AUGUST 8TH 12PM TO 7PM AND SATURDAY, AUGUST 9TH 10AM TO 6PM

This year's Peach Festival will expand beyond Queen Street to include Simcoe Park, offering families a chance to enjoy our local green spaces and improve pedestrian flow. In addition to original live music at Friday's Peach Pit in Simcoe Park local businesses are invited to participate in a Friday afternoon mini-market featuring unique peach-themed products. Visit www.niagaraonthelake.com for more information.

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