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Crowds brave 40C heat for July 1 bash and cake celebration



Politicians and political candidates help escort the mammoth Canada Day cake to Simcoe Park on Wednesday. The cake is made by chef Catherine O'Donnell with help from Niagara College students and feeds hundreds of people every year. This year's theme was similar to 2025, with fondant forest creatures and mushrooms. The parade is part of a day-long celebration across NOTL, from Simcoe Park to Fort George to the Legion and Ravine winery in St. Davids. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Strewn Winery to be sold, new hotel in talks for site

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

Big changes are coming to Strewn Winery: after almost 30 years in business, the winery is being sold and may become home to a new hotel with 58 rooms.

Jane Langdon, co-

founder of the winery with her husband, Joe Will, says prospective buyers are interested in purchasing the property and redeveloping part of the land to build a hotel. The winery would stay open.

Continued on Page 6



A rendering of the potential new hotel, with 42 rooms. SOURCED



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Erwin Wiens enters mayoral race with pledge to protect autonomy

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Dozens of supporters filled Lakeview Vineyard Equipment Inc. on Lakeshore Road on Monday evening as Coun. Erwin Wiens launched his campaign for lord mayor with a warning that Niagara-on-the-Lake has to keep control of its own future.

Wiens said the town is facing rising costs, pressure over growth and what he called an ongoing threat of amalgamation.

“Let me be absolutely clear, I oppose amalgamation,” he said. “Our future should not be determined by people that don’t live here, not by bureaucracy or bureaucrats, not by distant decision-makers, not by solutions designed for urban centres that don’t reflect what we are.”

Wiens, who has served on council since 2018 and became deputy lord mayor after receiving the most votes among council candidates in 2022, officially launched his campaign for lord mayor on June 29.

He joins regional Coun.



Erwin Wiens tells supporters NOTL must keep control of its own future as he launches his mayoral campaign Monday evening at Lakeview Vineyard Equipment Inc. PAIGE SEBURN

Andrea Kaiser and businessman Vaughan Goettler in the race to lead the next council after the Oct. 26 municipal election.

He told the crowd he is running on experience, relationships with other levels of government and a promise to keep local control in local hands.

In an interview, he said NOTL’s biggest strength is its economy, pointing to agriculture, tourism, new housing, parks and the town’s quality of life.

The town’s biggest threat, however, is amalgamation, he said, arguing NOTL needs to keep working with the province to protect local decision-making.

“I am running because our community needs experienced leadership and strong relationships at all levels of government to guide us through these uncertain times ahead.”

Wiens also made taxes and spending a major part of his pitch.

“Our families are dealing

with rising costs. Seniors are watching every dollar. Young families are trying to start their lives here,” he said.

As lord mayor, he said he would push for “responsible budgeting,” “accountable spending” and “value for every tax dollar.”

“Fiscal responsibility is not a slogan; it’s a responsibility,” he said.

For local grape-grower Wiens, the mayor’s race is also about the land under NOTL’s feet. He argues the town’s farms, orchards,

vineyards and wineries are central to its economy, identity and future.

“We’re a big deal,” he said. “Protecting (agricultural) lands, supporting irrigation infrastructure and ensuring farming remains viable for future generations will be among one of my highest priorities.”

Wiens also said tourism remains one of NOTL’s greatest strengths, but argued the town “must continue to support local businesses.”

“When managed properly, they will strengthen one another,” he said.

On development, Wiens said the debate on subject should not be positioned as “growth versus no growth.”

“The debate should be about development being supported by infrastructure, supporting the character of the community and being open for all, from the youngest generation to the oldest.”

Wiens is a retired Hamilton police officer, having served 31 years before retiring in 2020. He farms a vineyard with his wife, Dorothy Soo-Wiens, and sits on the town’s agricultural

and irrigation committees.

So far, council candidates registered for the 2026 election include Weston Miller, Steve McGuinness, Gary Burroughs and Sandra O’Connor. Burroughs and O’Connor are current councillors.

Current lord mayor Gary Zalepa has yet to announce his intentions. Regarding whether or not he will be running, he told The Lake Report he is “focused on the matters before council, including working on the Wellington site redevelopment and the completion of items from council’s strategic plan.”

Incumbent councillors Tim Balasiuk, Wendy Cheropita, Maria Mavridis, Andrew Niven and Adriana Vizzari also had not appeared on the town’s registered candidate list.

The next council will be smaller than the current one, after council approved reducing the table to seven members from nine (including lord mayor).

Residents interested in running have until Aug. 21 at 2 p.m. to file nomination papers.

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Goettler promises he'll be 'full-time'

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

It was like a Rotary gathering — a yard packed with some of Niagara-on-the-Lake's biggest movers and shakers, but this time it was a different message.

This time it was politics. Supporters gathered Saturday afternoon at the Line 6 hobby farm of mayoral candidate Vaughn Goettler and his wife, Lauren, to celebrate and support his candidacy for lord mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Addressing a crowd of business owners, investors, longtime residents, realtors and newcomers, Goettler outlined a platform centred on transparency, responsible growth and restoring confidence in municipal government.

The speech drew repeated applause throughout the afternoon, particularly when Goettler pledged to serve as a full-time mayor and said his decisions would be guided solely by what he believes is in the community's best interest.

Goettler spoke of what he sees as some of the biggest issues facing Niagara-on-the-Lake, including the possibility of amalgamation, development pressures and what he described as the need for a stronger official plan.

He argued the town's planning policies have become too fragmented through years of amendments.

"A builder will come into town ... and they're going to drive a Mack truck right through all the wiggle room we have in our official plan," he said.

"We have to tighten it up, and we have to learn how to say no. We can't pave over our agricultural lands. We can't pave over our green space like the Wilderness. We can't build hotels when we don't need them, when we should have seniors' residences instead."

Goettler also said protecting Niagara-on-the-Lake from amalgamation would be a priority, arguing the municipality needs leadership willing to stand up to the province and advocate for the town's interests.



Mayoral candidate Vaughn Goettler draws massive applause with his campaign launch speech, promising to commit himself to NOTL and uniting communities. RICHARD HARLEY

Transparency was another central theme.

"There's not going to be any secrets. There's not going to be closed-door meetings. There's going to be absolute transparency under my leadership in this town," he said.

"I don't have people I'm indebted to, whether it be in the development industry, the winery industry or the hotel industry. I don't owe anybody anything, so you can know that when I vote ... it will be for the benefit of the community, not for the benefit of a few.."

VAUGHN GOETTLER
MAYORAL CANDIDATE

"You will know the state of the finances. You will know what's able to be done and not able to be done, and how we're going to pay for it."

He also pledged to make council voting records easier for residents to follow.

"Half the time, if you try to find out who's voted for something in this town, you have to go back and watch

videos of meetings to see if you can catch a hand being raised," he said. "I will make sure that we have an absolute record of who voted for what, and you are going to be able to hold us on council accountable for those votes."

Goettler said he is seeking office because he wants to serve the community, not because he needs the position.

"I'm not doing this because I need a paycheque. I'm doing this because I love the town," he said.

"I'm not doing it for the fame or fortune. I don't care about titles. I don't care about the money. I care about making a difference for the benefit of this town."

The remarks prompted one of several lengthy rounds of applause from supporters.

He also said residents can trust that his decisions would not be influenced by outside interests.

"I am not conflicted," he said. "I don't have people I'm indebted to, whether it be in the development industry, the winery industry or the hotel industry. I don't owe anybody anything, so you can know that when I vote ... it will be for the benefit of the community, not for the benefit of a few."

Another of the afternoon's biggest ovations came when Goettler promised to serve as a full-time mayor if elected.

"I was happily retired," he said. "People said, 'Well,

you're going to give all that up?' And I said, 'Yeah, I am. I'm going to be your full-time mayor.'"

Toward the end of his speech, Goettler called on residents from across Niagara-on-the-Lake to move beyond divisions between Old Town, Virgil, Glendale and the agricultural community.

"I actually think we have a problem as a community with being divisive," he said, arguing that residents too often view issues only through the lens of their own neighbourhoods.

He said protecting the town's heritage means protecting more than historic buildings.

"Heritage isn't about a building. Heritage isn't about one community," he said. "Heritage is about everything we have — our agricultural lands, our towns, our buildings."

He urged residents to "stand together and stand strong" on issues ranging from development and farmland preservation to transportation and health care, adding that he wants to bring all parts of the municipality together under a common vision.

Goettler ended his speech by asking supporters to volunteer, donate, display campaign signs and encourage others to get involved.

"It's time for a change," he said. "I plan to be that change."

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Accused in hit-run death of farmworker released on bail



Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

A 22-year-old man was released on bail Monday after a migrant farmworker from Mexico was killed in a hit-and-run while cycling in rural Niagara-on-the-Lake late last Friday night.

Gavin Devries, 22, of Niagara-on-the-Lake, faces charges of failing to stop after an accident resulting in death, impaired operation causing death and having a

blood-alcohol level over .08.

Devries is to make his next appearance in St. Catharines court in September.

As a condition of his release, he was ordered to live at his family's home on Line 6 and also was banned from driving. The charges have not yet been tested in court.

The victim, identified in court documents as Sinhue Garcia, was 39 and worked at the massive St. David's

Hydroponics plant on Concession 7 in rural NOTL. His wife also works at the facility.

Garcia and a friend were southbound on Concession 6 near Line 4 about 11:40 p.m. Friday when tragedy struck.

Niagara Regional Police said Garcia succumbed to his injuries at the scene.

The crash occurred about 1.5 kilometres south of the roundabout near St. Michael Catholic School.

Investigators allege the driver fled before emergency crews arrived and did not report the collision. A man was arrested in NOTL a few hours later.

Police said officers from 2 District and the traffic enforcement unit seized a suspect vehicle for examination.

They said anyone who witnessed the collision or has dash camera or surveillance footage from the area around the time of the crash

should contact investigators.

Several farmworkers have died on rural roads over the years in NOTL.

In 2019, a woman known only as Zenaida, who worked at both Tregunno Fruit Farms and St. David's Hydroponics, was killed while walking along Concession 7, not far from the latest crash.

Patrick McCabe, 22, of Pelham was sentenced to two years in prison in that incident.

Sinhue Garcia, from Mexico, leaves behind a wife and two daughters. SOURCED

Farmworkers mourn colleague and friend at roadside vigil

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

He was a husband, a father of two and an employee at a large greenhouse in Niagara-on-the-Lake, coming to town every growing season from Mexico to work and provide for his family back home.

Now, those who knew Sinhue Garcia are grieving the loss of someone they say was a generous and caring person — and whose death has deepened fears about the rural roads farmworkers cycle every day.

Friends, colleagues and volunteers gathered on Sunday evening to mourn the death of Garcia, who was riding his bicycle through the farmlands on Friday night, June 26, when a driver struck him from behind on Concession 6 near Line 4 Road. He died at the scene at the age of 39.

"It's devastated the community," said Brittany Kranz, lead co-ordinator of Farmworker Hub NOTL, at the roadside vigil held at the scene of the collision.

Garcia worked at St. David's Hydroponics for several years as a seasonal farmworker, returning to Canada each year to work at the greenhouse, where a variety of vegetables are grown.

His death sharpened a warning that people in Niagara who support farmworkers have been repeating for years.

Seasonal workers in the area rely on bicycles to get to town from the farms they live on, whether it's to get groceries, visit the bank, see friends or access services. They do this while cycling on rural roads that give them little room to survive a passing vehicle.

Garcia was riding southbound on Concession 6 with a friend, both keeping as close to the road's edge



Top: Friends, colleagues and volunteers gather on Sunday evening at the place where 39-year-old Sinhue Garcia lost his life on Friday night, after being hit by a driver while riding his bicycle. Bottom: These scratches on the rightmost side of Concession 6 Road show where the collision happened. ANDREW HAWLITZKY/SUPPLIED



as the narrow shoulder allowed, when a vehicle struck him from behind, according to an account the friend gave through translators at the vigil.

The friend pointed to fresh scratches on the rightmost side of the road as the place where Garcia was hit. Garcia landed about 10 metres south in a ditch, where he died.

A cross was placed there and decorated with flowers. By 7 p.m. on Sunday, 18 people had gathered at the vigil, many of them long-time friends and colleagues of Garcia, all mourning his death and supporting the friend who tearfully recalled the traumatic experience. More arrived later and added flowers.

Two other vigils were held the same day at St. An-

drew's Presbyterian Church and St. Vincent de Paul Roman Catholic Church. Garcia's wife attended one of them, according to friends at the roadside vigil.

"They were doing everything right."

BRITTANY KRANZ
VIRGIL'S BOOK NOOK
CO-ORDINATOR

Garcia was known among several farmworkers and local volunteers, said Julia Buxton-Cox, a founder of Bikes for Farmworkers, who knew Garcia for four years.

"He was quiet, but very kind, very generous," she

said. "He would often accompany his friends to go to town when cycling, just to make sure that they stayed safe."

The fear reached a migrant workers' rally in Virgil the same day. Syed Hussan, executive director of the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, said some workers were afraid to ride together to the rally after Garcia's death.

"We were actually going to do a bike caravan today instead of this," Hussan said. "People don't even want to be seen on bikes in groups."

Hussan said the danger comes from decades of treating migrant workers as temporary labour without building the roads, transit and community services they need.

"The reason people keep dying is that there has simply been no treatment of people as human beings," Hussan said.

Hussan said migrant workers have been coming to Niagara for six decades, often for most of the year (typically from late winter, or early spring, to late fall), without the public infrastructure that would let them move safely through the communities they help sustain.

In 2019, a worker known as Zenaida, who also worked at St. David's Hydroponics, was killed in a hit-and-run while walking along Concession 7, a few minutes from where Garcia died. The driver in that case was sentenced to two years in prison.

"This happens too often.

Far too often," Buxton-Cox said.

Garcia's bike had reflectors, Kranz said. People at the vigil said Garcia and his friend were riding properly at the edge of the road.

"They were doing everything right," she said.

Garcia's friend, who is in his first year working in Niagara, was beside him when he died. People at the vigil spoke about getting him support, including counselling.

Richard Lee, executive director of Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers, said in a media release that the company is "deeply saddened" to learn of Garcia's death.

"Like many seasonal agricultural workers, he made significant sacrifices to provide for his loved ones and contributed greatly to the success of Ontario's greenhouse sector," he said. "His hard work, dedication and commitment will be remembered by those who had the privilege of working alongside him."

Virgil's Book Nook, a bookstore that opened in June as part of the Farmworker Hub, directed the proceeds from all of Tuesday's sales to Garcia's daughters in Mexico.

The store is also collecting bicycle safety gear, including lights, reflectors and reflective vests, for seasonal farmworkers who rely on bikes.

Donations can also be made online through Cornerstone Community Church's giving page, ccchurch.ca/giving: those who want donate can navigate to the green "Give Now" button on the page, select the Migrant Worker Resource Centre fund from the pull-down menu and write "Sinhue" in the memo box, so all proceeds are directed to his family.

andrew@niagaranow.com

Immigration cuts will gut farm labour: Migrant workers

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

As the federal government moves forward on plans to continue cutting Canada's immigration levels, migrant farmworkers and their advocates pressed Ottawa for permanent residency at a Virgil rally, arguing the workers who sustain Niagara's farms and elder care are being driven out of Canada.

The Migrant Workers Alliance for Change gathered farm and care workers from across Niagara on Sunday at the Centennial Sports Park pavilion in Virgil, where speakers warned that the federal government's plan to cut the temporary resident population below five per cent and hold permanent resident admissions under one per cent will drive out the workers who feed the region and care for its seniors.

Syed Hussan, executive director of the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, said the government is forcing roughly

a million people out of the country each year by recruiting essential workers on temporary permits, and cutting any pathways to permanent residency they were led to expect.

More than two million people will leave Canada between 2025 and 2027 under the changes, he said. Canada's population fell by about 102,000 in 2025, the first decline since Confederation.

"It is irrational to bring in people to do incredibly essential jobs, promise them permanent resident status and then change the rules in the middle of the game," Hussan said.

More than 4,000 seasonal workers come to Niagara each year to plant, tend to and harvest its crops and grapes. The region holds one of the highest proportions of seniors in the country and faces a growing shortage of elder-care staff.

Teresa, a migrant care worker who first arrived in Niagara in 2019, spoke at the rally about how she works



Syed Hussan from Migrant Workers Alliance for Change says pushing migrant workers out of Canada will be a detriment to the country's economy. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

10-hour days caring for a two-year-old boy in Canada while her own family remains in the Philippines.

She said care workers hold together a system Canada leans on while denying them permanent status and the right to bring their families.

"While I am raising someone else's child, my own family is far away. I left behind people I love," said Teresa.

A migrant farmworker, who identified himself as Devon, read a statement written collectively by Niagara workers, many of whom feared speaking publicly because of possible reprisals from their employers.

The statement described disrespectful treatment at the hands of employers, unsafe heat conditions and illnesses suffered through under threat of replacement. "We are not treated like

workers. We are treated like machines, but even farm equipment gets better treatment," Devon read.

Temporary status gives employers control over their employees, because workers fear losing their place on the farm for the next season, the statement said. Permanent residency would let them change jobs, get health care, attend school and reunite with family.

Hussan said heat stress is a growing danger in worker housing that often traps heat worse than the fields, and that employers have pulled out air conditioners and fans bought by workers.

A provincial NDP private member's bill in Ontario on heat stress for outdoor workers and worker housing has passed first reading at Queen's Park, but it will require the Ford government's support to become law.

The rally landed days after Ontario rejected the federal government's offer to let rural employers raise the share of low-wage

temporary foreign workers in their workforce to 15 per cent from 10 per cent, with Labour Minister David Piccini rebutting that domestic youth unemployment is currently above 15 per cent.

Hussan said rural Ontario faces a care crisis if the workers who staff its health and elder care are forced out, because replacing them will not be simple.

"The more we continue to blame migrants and push for their exclusion, or tie them to temporary status, the worse our overall economy is going to get," said Hussan.

The federal immigration consultation process that closed June 30 will shape Canada's next immigration plan, setting targets for 2027 through 2029. The current plan already cuts temporary resident arrivals to 385,000 this year from 674,000 in 2025.

"Migrants must have a say," said Hussan. "A stable society is one in which everyone has stable rights." andrew@niagaranow.com

Sandra O'Connor says trust, transparency key to re-election bid

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Coun. Sandra O'Connor says another term on a smaller Niagara-on-the-Lake council would mean more work, more pressure and more direct calls from residents.

She still wants back in. Incumbent O'Connor is running again for town council, saying her next campaign will build on the same themes she says guided her this term: trust in council, open decision-making, resident consultation, environmental protection and balanced growth.

She said in May she was leaning toward another term, but did not file right away.

"I was busy doing council stuff and I wanted to get my mind straight about what my platform was going to be."

That platform, O'Connor said, starts with restoring confidence in local government.

"I'm going to basically



Coun. Sandra O'Connor's been part of Niagara-on-the-Lake's council since 2020. SUPPLIED

build on what I worked on this past term," she said. "Some of the overarching things are to build on the integrity of council, the trust in council, the confidence of the public."

If re-elected, O'Connor said she will push for more information to be available to the public, such as getting site plans posted online so residents can see what is being proposed.

"We have to develop more confidence in the public in the decisions we're making. We haven't been doing that

enough," said O'Connor.

She said developers and residents "shouldn't be one versus the other."

"We need to have more balance."

O'Connor said the biggest threat facing the town is governance changes at the Niagara Region, including the province's plan to appoint the future regional chair and new strong chair powers.

She said an unelected chair is "not democratic" and warned NOTL could lose influence if larger municipalities can outvote the town's concerns.

"Other municipalities can outvote Niagara-on-the-Lake's concerns," she said. "I'm concerned about the rural aspect, the agricultural aspect for Niagara-on-the-Lake."

That rural character and the town's cultural, natural and agricultural heritage, she said, is one of NOTL's greatest strengths.

"To maintain that is critical for our economy," she said. "These are our roots, and if we don't protect our

roots, then we can't advance and grow appropriately."

O'Connor said she looks at council decisions "through an environmental lens" and has pushed for stronger flood and storm-water criteria, a forestry management plan and more attention to natural assets in the town's asset management planning.

She said she also wants more advisory committees, including a budget audit committee, and more consultation with NOTL's communities.

"Not just in Old Town, but in all of our villages and our rural areas," she said.

O'Connor also pointed to seniors and health care as issues council needs to keep in mind, saying seniors were not mentioned in the town's strategic plan and that she helped push for a nurse practitioner for non-rostered patients and visitors.

On the old hospital site, O'Connor said she wants to "listen to what the residents have said."

Residents, she said, have spoken about wanting the

site to be used as "a community hub or something for the community, not for tourists, but for the community."

She said she is not supporting any one proposal right now because the town is going through a two-step request for proposals process.

"My main objective is to listen to what people have said — we had extensive consultation — and to go with something that benefits the community."

On the latest development proposal for the Rand Estate, which would building a luxury hotel on the site, O'Connor said she has been told council must treat it as a new application and let the process unfold.

"I have to wait until staff assesses things."

Her concern, she said, is about how a gated community (a part of the current plan) could affect public views of heritage features and raised concerns about whether tree plans and environmental information are being given enough weight.

But she said she will be watching for whether the proposal follows the previous Ontario Land Tribunal ruling.

"I am going to be looking for compliance with what the (tribunal) has said," O'Connor said.

As for the new Royal George Theatre, O'Connor said she supports keeping a theatre on Queen Street but voted against the rebuild proposal because of its size.

"In this particular proposal, I have been consistent in stating that I felt that the mass and scale of the building is too large for our heritage area, our main street."


If elected this fall, she will be joining a smaller council, with six councillors instead of eight.

O'Connor said that will not make the job simpler — with fewer councillors, she said, more residents will be contacting individual members of council.

"It's going to be more work for the councillors that are voted in."


paigeseburn@niagaranow.com

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Public meeting for **Strewn Winery hotel** proposal is July 7

Continued from Front Page

Speaking on why the couple is selling the business, Langdon said it's time for them to move on. "We're seniors. We don't have a next generation coming along," she said. "I love this property dearly. I love everything we have done about it."

The hotel's proponents shared details of the project with the public at a virtual open house on Monday, with one planner calling it an "exciting opportunity" for a project that hasn't been done before in town.

They were met with questions from residents about how appropriate a 58-room hotel is for an agricultural site and concerns that this would open the floodgates for more development on farmland in NOTL.

The developers behind this proposal are MPI Group and 11999911 Ontario Inc. Russell Jacobson and Adam Jacobson from MPI Group were at the open

house, along with representatives from SGL Planning & Design.

"It is a very unique site, both in its character and history," said Mary Feehely, senior planner with SGL Planning & Design, "that has contributed to the proposal that you're hearing about this evening."

The winery, located at 1339 Lakeshore Rd., sits on the former site of the Niagara Canning Company, established in 1940 by Peter Wall. The fruit cannery operated for eight years before closing in the 1960s.

According to SGL Planning & Design's planning justification report, the developers want to close Strewn Winery's cooking school and convert the space to accommodate 16 of the 58 hotel rooms.

The other 42 rooms would be housed in a new, three-storey building, to be constructed where the cannery used to sit. The new building would be 565 square metres at ground level and



A 42-room hotel is being proposed for the site of Strewn Winery. SOURCED

almost 11 metres tall. "No wine production space will be reduced. No vineyard or agriculturally productive lands will be disturbed. All development is contained within the existing building footprint," the report states.

Alongside accommodating overnight stays, the hotel would have spa amenities for guests only. The application also includes plans for a conference centre within Strewn's wine production building and 178 parking spots. The winery currently has a restaurant and store — those would remain.

The developers' goal is to turn Strewn into a spot for "agritourism," where visitors would learn how wine is made while enjoying an overnight stay.

"We are not trying to create a hotel that is anything but a unique experience," said Russell Jacobson. "These hotels that exist in Niagara-on-the-Lake are beautiful hotels. But they are not aimed at promoting the agricultural aspects of wine country. And that's what we want to create."

The application asks the town to add a site-specific exception to the land's

"agricultural" designation to allow the hotel and conference centre as "on-farm diversified uses."

It proposes an amendment to section 7.5 of the town's 2017 official plan that would permit "on-farm diversified uses" for existing stores, restaurants, conference centres and overnight accommodations with no more than 58 rooms.

"This is a new, on-farm diversified use being proposed here," Feehely said. "This combination of uses doesn't exist elsewhere."

Some who attended the

open house raised alarm bells over the novel nature of this proposal and what it could lead to for NOTL.

"This is a precedent-setting case," said Rich Andres. "You're going to open the door to every winery putting up a hotel. That's a slippery slope if approved."

John Hawley, developer of the Village subdivision in NOTL, had strong words for the developers and planners, calling the project "inappropriate."

"Why do you think every other winery site won't line up and ask for the same thing once this is approved?" he asked.

Feehely rebutted his statement about the project's suitability for Strewn Winery.

"We've looked at everything and it is appropriate and it's a really exciting opportunity," she said.

A public meeting on this proposal will take place Tuesday, July 7 and will start after 6 p.m.

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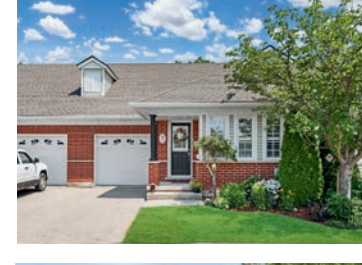
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Shaw's biggest show might be happening offstage

Penny-Lynn Cookson
Arts Columnist

Something very positive is happening at the Shaw. No snooze possible. It is the positive programming of the "Beyond the Stage" events that is changing the underpinning of theatre in our town.

It is a subtle shift from patronizing theatre to a more intentional involvement of understanding what exactly makes theatre tick beyond backstage tours.

The belief that great plays belong in great playhouses and seeing one or two predictable productions, combined with a meal and perhaps a weekend stay, would be enough to keep a theatre company going is no longer feasible. Changing tastes, demographics and economic pressures on theatres cannot be ignored.

There is only one Bernard Shaw production this season and it is not in the Festival Theatre but the Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre. Survival dictates new directions. "Beyond the Stage" is expanding our experiences of theatre by allowing us to witness and explore exciting new paths.

Should "Funny Girl" have been staged may remain debatable. What is not debatable is the value of an inaugural event at the



Classical and contemporary music plays the soundtrack to a tranquil Sunday morning in the lobby of the Festival Theatre for the Shaw's "Coffee Concert." SHAW FESTIVAL

Artists' Village Burton Centre for Lifelong Creative Learning.

It was a "Funny Girl" singalong with the Shaw's music director, Paul Sportelli, at the keyboard. We not only sang along to the music score from our individual songbooks, but we learned many astonishing backstage tidbits from the original theatre and film productions.

For example, they were going to cut the song "People." Barbra Streisand had recorded it as a single, which shot to number one on the charts — "People" was retained.

In the song "Sadie, Sa-

die," Sportelli's discussion with Sarah Farb as Fanny Brice was about how she would give voice to her thoughts in the seduction scene as to speak or sing unguarded thoughts makes us vulnerable. Also, lyrics that didn't quite rhyme needed the Lower East Side accent to make those words rhyme. Fascinating insights.

It was pouring buckets outside as the participants enthusiastically sang and sustained notes right to the end of "Don't Rain on My Parade." Paul was impressed. There will be a "Cinderella" singalong during the holiday season.

For those less inclined to go south of the border these days for state fairs or Buffalo wings, there is the welcome return of "The Gospel Choir," a joyous and uplifting event under the sparkling creative direction of Jeremiah Sparks.

The singers are a diverse group made up of Shaw administrative staff, actor-singers, composers and community folks who love to sing four-part harmonies a cappella.

Out of the African roots of the slavery of the South, gospel singing evolved to provide spiritual resilience, faith and hope in times

of sorrow. As drums and instruments were forbidden, rhythmic traditions of call and response, harmonies, hand-clapping and foot-stomping became a passionate and participatory style.

From the 16th century to the Civil War to the 1920s blues and radio broadcasts, to the Civil Rights movement, to a long list of performers from Mahalia Jackson to Ray Charles, Elvis Presley and the Beatles, gospel has been in our lives.

This recent performance began with a thoughtful "Thank You Lord" and segued to rousing renditions of "So Good," "Lead Me, Guide Me," "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah" and the gentle "Let It Be," written by Paul McCartney.

In 1968, the Beatles were fracturing and Paul was trying to keep them together. His late mother came to him in a dream saying, "It's going to be all right. Let it be." He got up and wrote the melody and lyrics.

There will be further opportunities to hear and enjoy "The Gospel Choir."

Paul Sportelli was at the keyboard of the newly donated Bechstein grand in the lobby of the Festival Theatre for a soothing and entertaining Sunday "Coffee Concert" of classical and contemporary music. The program included the

elegiac Johannes Brahms Trio Opus 40 for piano, violin and French horn, which Sportelli explained was written by Brahms after the death of his mother.

In contrast, the Mozart Quartet in G minor gave us a foretaste of the "Amadeus" production to come. Sportelli gave us a master class of how the 18th-century "Sturm und Drang" movement and the Enlightenment influenced Mozart's variations of buoyant joy to more serious drama.

The last composition was "It's Not All, But It's All Right" from "The Adventures of Roderick Random," music and lyrics created by Paul Sportelli and Jay Turvey. This was sung by Jade Repeta with accompanying musicians including the Shaw's artistic director, Tim Carroll, on guitar.

Sportelli and Turvey are now off to Wales to research and prepare for a new production for the Shaw.

There is much to come with the "Art of Ideas" events and opportunities to discover more about writers, musicians, dance, puppets and theatre, all the "true stories" and tall tales that will continue to intrigue and entertain us.

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

Jazz Crawl hits all the right notes across Niagara-on-the-Lake

Maddy Gordon
The Lake Report

From vineyard sunsets to waterfront views, Niagara-on-the-Lake became one big jazz stage last weekend as music lovers travelled from venue to venue as part of the Niagara Jazz Festival's annual Jazz Crawl.

The crawl began Saturday morning at Ferox by Fabian Reis, followed by the NOTL Golf Club in the afternoon, then Strewn Winery in the evening. Some guests took a shuttle to travel between spots, while others planned carefully to see their favourite artists.

Hamilton couple Caroline Jordan and Peter Zelewsky chose the latter option, ensuring they could hear Barbra Lica sing at Strewn Winery. The pair spent more than six hours on the crawl and hit each stop on the Saturday schedule.

"We are big fans of jazz, we've been following it for years," Jordan said. "This



Over at the NOTL Golf Club, Ashley St. Pierre charms an audience of jazz enthusiasts taking in her performance as part of the Niagara Jazz Festival's Jazz Crawl. MADDY GORDON

is our first time coming to the Niagara Jazz Festival. When they opened, they said, 'This is our 13th (year), like, 13? Where have we been?'

The couple, married for 36 years, says music is a cherished shared interest.

"We like to get out and support live music. Going to the big concerts, we don't really do that," Jordan said.

"This is so much better — you get to hear and feel the music."

The welcoming atmosphere created by the performers and venues is by design, said Mila Bolgar, a volunteer with Niagara Jazz Festival.

Strewn Winery placed its stage facing the vineyards, where guests sipped wine as the sun set. In contrast,

the NOTL Golf Club's patio gave guests a view of Old Fort Niagara, as seagulls squawked along to the jazz.

"People are really happy and excited," Bolgar said. "There's definitely a lot of regulars that will come because they know the Niagara Jazz Festival, but there's a good amount of people that come for a specific artist that's playing."

"We had a lot of people looking forward to seeing Barbra Lica play," she added.

As an 18-year-old jazz singer, Bolgar said the crawl is the kind of event she aspires to perform in. Her favourite part of the experience, she said, is the jazz jams, where multiple musicians follow a leading artist and join the performance.

"People just walk in, usually they'll know about it beforehand, but there's no rehearsal. They just call a random song and then they all play it," she said. "It's super cool to see."

Like a jazz jam, the crawl is a casual, free-to-attend experience.

Myles Brett, NOTL Golf Club hospitality manager, said the event brought "a lot of traffic" but was also a nice surprise for regular members.

"(Music) really adds some value and some extra appeal to the patio," he said. "Even if they're not watching the

performance, just having that background noise really elevates the dining experience."

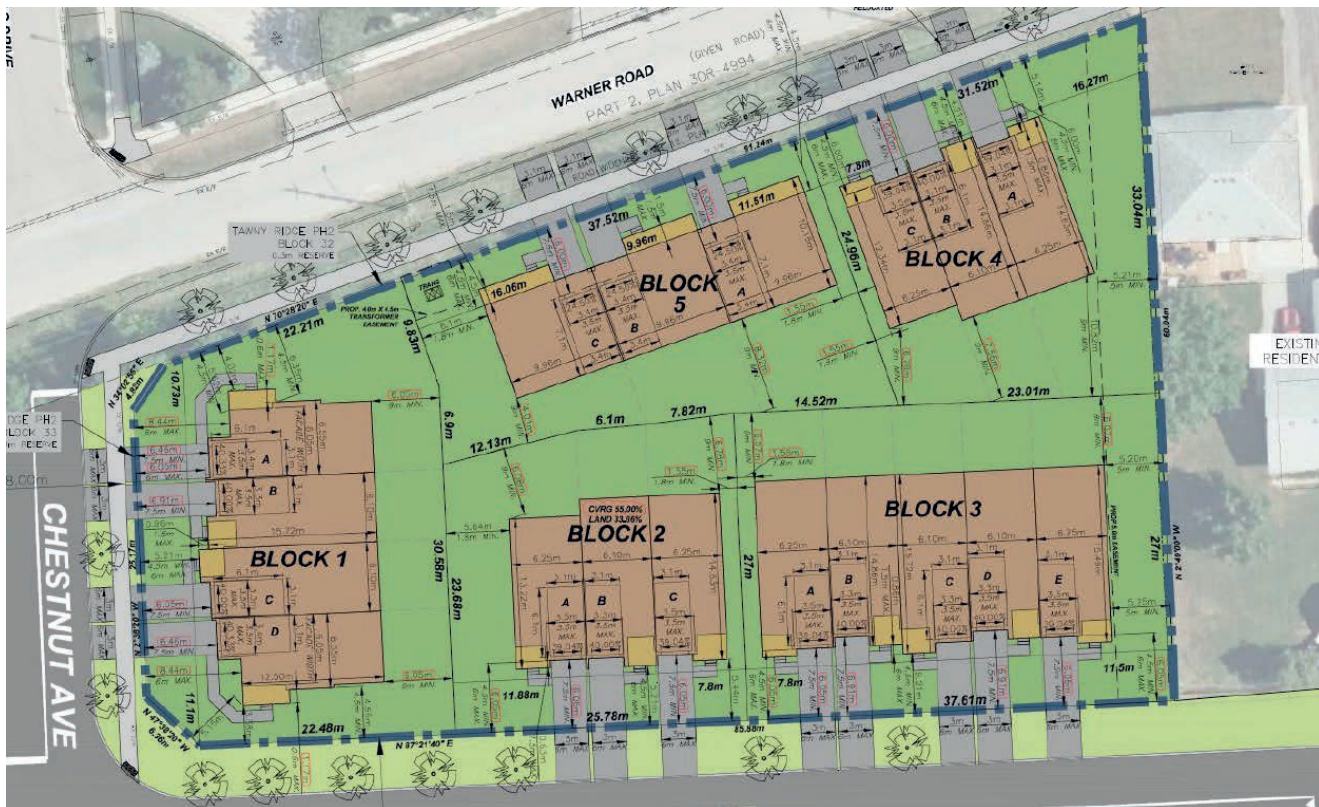
The scenery of the water, combined with the smell of food and the soulful voice of singers like Ashley St. Pierre, sparked the club's interest in hosting more live music events.

"We've got the best view in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and then you add some great jazz music to that, and it's a win-win," Brett said.

The crawl marked 13 years of the Niagara Jazz Festival and the first weekend of this year's summer schedule, the second week bringing the music from NOTL to St. Catharines.

Jordan and Zelewsky, first-time Niagara jazz crawlers but longtime music fans, called the experience "intimate" and "beautiful."

"I think it's really important to support local artists," Jordan said. "The performers have been really amazing."



Eighteen on-street townhouses are coming to the Tawny Ridge Estates in St. Davids. SOURCED

Tawny Ridge St. Davids subdivision gets green light after earlier defeat

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

A St. Davids townhouse plan that hit a wall over stormwater concerns earlier this month is moving ahead after all.

Niagara-on-the-Lake council approved a zoning bylaw amendment and draft plan of subdivision Friday for a part of the Tawny Ridge Estates residential development, clearing the way for 18 on-street townhouse units south of Warner Road and west of Tanbark Road.

The decision came less than two weeks after the proposal failed June 16, when councillors split 4-4 on whether to support staff's recommendation to approve this part of the development.

The application was approved at the June 26 meeting without discussion. Coun. Sandra O'Connor was the only councillor to vote against it.

Coun. Gary Burroughs was not present after send-

ing regrets, but the rest of council was in attendance.

In an email, O'Connor said she has "consistently voted against Tawny Ridge phase two and three" because of her concerns about the pressure this part of the development would put on the stormwater system.

"I could not approve infrastructure that currently exceeds capacity during extreme rainfall."

O'Connor said she could not support the application before proposed upgrades are completed because, according to her reading of the functional servicing report, wet weather flows at St. Davids Sewage Pumping Station #1 already exceed capacity during extreme rain events.

The owner, St. Davids Riverview Estates Inc., had permission for either 20 block townhouses or 30 stacked townhouses on this plot of land. The new plan allows 18 on-street townhouses across five blocks instead.

Town staff recommended

approval, saying the proposal fits planning rules, adds housing in a built-up area and is less dense than what had already been approved for the site.

But at the heart of the June 16 debate was St. Davids' already strained stormwater system.

Burroughs warned the townhouse block would add another challenge to the village's stormwater problems, while Upper Canada Consultants planner William Heikoop said the revised plan drops two units, avoids condo fees for buyers and includes oversized pipes to slow stormwater during storms.

Staff's report says the applicant submitted a functional servicing report and stormwater management addendum and that public works and infrastructure staff accepted the findings and recommendations. More detailed design work will be reviewed through draft plan conditions.

The owner must submit detailed drawings and cal-

culations for the watermain, sanitary sewer and stormwater drainage systems to the town's public works department for review and approval before final approval.

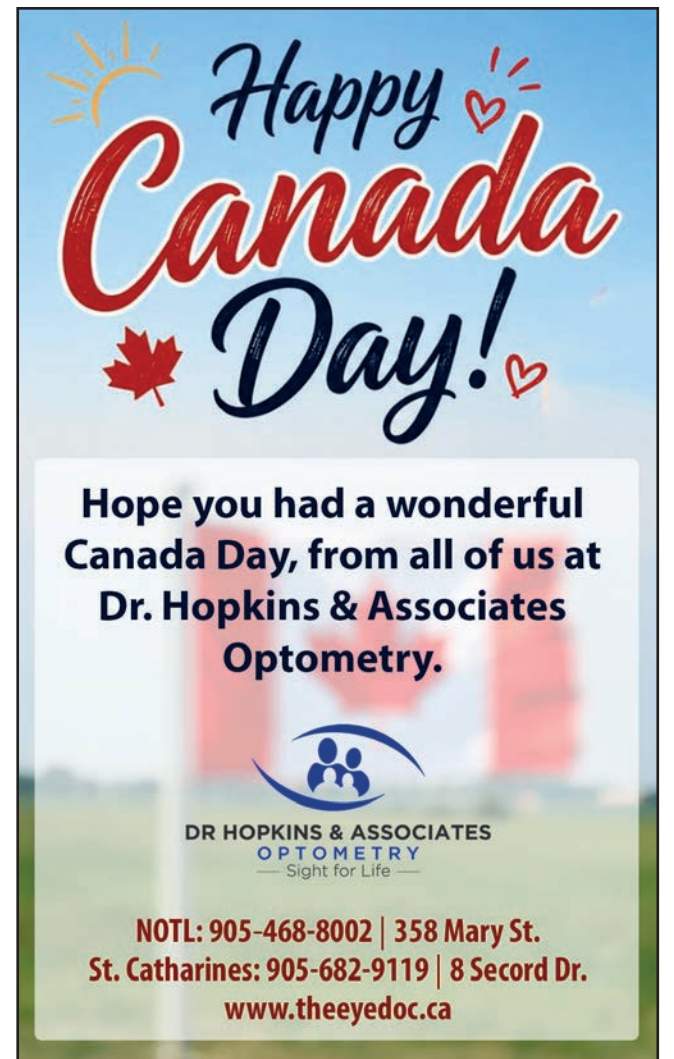
Public comments attached to the report also argued the project should wait until flooding and infrastructure concerns in the Warner and Tanbark roads area are dealt with.

One resident wrote that "any and all decisions regarding Tawny Ridge Estates be deferred" until the town has a stormwater plan prepared by an independent engineering firm.

Another submission said this next phase of the development should not be approved "until the flooding issues in the Warner Road and Tanbark Road area is corrected."

Staff said public concerns about stormwater, density and infrastructure were reviewed and addressed through the application process.

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com







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Garage Sale
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
710 Concession 2 Rd.
Cherry Festival sale
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
41 Byron St.

SUNDAY: High-end estate sale
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
37 Shaws Lane

Email editor@niagaranow.com to promote your yard/garage sale! (Professional businesses excluded)

For Steve McGuinness, acceptance came in **ordinary moments**

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Feeling like a welcomed part of your community rarely comes with fanfare and conspicuous celebration — more often than not, it's the little things that create a sense of belonging.

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, Steve McGuinness says that acceptance, for him, has looked like a seat at a pancake supper table.

It has looked like nights at the Shaw, garden tours, wine country dinners, the candlelight march, the Ice-wine Festival, taking part in the holiday house tour and bringing his grandchildren to the Virgil Stampede.

For McGuinness, who is running for NOTL council, and his husband, Gary Guthrie, belonging in town has not come through a single grand gesture.

It has come through ordinary town life.

“(We’ve) never encountered any difficulties around



Steve McGuinness and his husband, Gary Guthrie, with their grandchildren at a birthday party. McGuinness says going out as a couple in town with Guthrie is a generally positive experience, with no need for them to “be less than our full, genuine selves.” SUPPLIED

identity since relocating to NOTL,” McGuinness said in a written statement.

The couple moved to town in 2018 after years in

Toronto, where they worked in careers in large public corporations. They had visited NOTL often before retiring and, McGuinness

said, “fell in love with” the town, and decided to move here, looking for a slower pace of life.

Not only did they find it, they also found a community where, as a gay couple, they could live openly.

“We often go out socially together as a couple and have never confronted any hostility or negative pressures to hide our relationship or to be less than our full, genuine selves,” he said.

McGuinness and Guthrie met in 2000, began living together in 2004 and were legally married in 2013.

They have two grown children: a son in Waterloo and a daughter who married last month in Calgary. They also have two grandchildren in Waterloo.

McGuinness was born in the United Kingdom and came to Canada by ship in 1966, when he was five, with his two younger sisters.

Today, he and Guthrie share a two-bedroom bungalow in NOTL with their seven-year-old lab, Lucy.

Their life in town is rooted in the rhythms of NOTL.

They enjoy the Shaw Festival, local dining and wine country. Guthrie is an “avid gardener,” so the town’s garden tours have become part of their life here.

McGuinness said the couple is also lucky to have two other same-sex couples as close neighbours in their immediate area.

But their sense of belonging, he said, reaches beyond one street or circle.

“(We) feel broadly integrated with all of the community,” he said.

Asked whether they have experienced discrimination, hostility or exclusion in town, McGuinness described their experience as “generally positive.”

One moment that stayed with him happened at the St. Mark’s Pancake Tuesday supper, where the couple joined a group of strangers at a large table and felt completely welcomed.

Another happened

through conversation.

McGuinness said he and Guthrie had a “great conversation” with pastors Matthew Unruh and Kevin Bayne at Cornerstone Community Church about “the historic and evolving relationship between the large Mennonite community here and LGBTQ persons.”

He said Cornerstone does not marry same-sex couples in its sanctuary, something McGuinness called “a nationally imposed rule.”

But he said Cornerstone is “an otherwise welcoming faith community at a local level.”

Asked where NOTL still needs to grow, he pointed to public policy.

“The diversity, equity and inclusion committee needs to resume meeting actively again under the next lord mayor to solicit broader inputs to understand how public policy may uniquely impact minority communities,” he said.

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- *Richard Harley, publisher*

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Luxury vehicles return for Niagara 5000

Staff
The Lake Report

A showcase of luxury cars, aircraft, yachts and motorcycles is set to return to the Niagara District Airport this September as part of Niagara 5000, a two-day event organizers say will be their most ambitious yet.

The luxury automotive and lifestyle event will take place Sept. 18 and 19 in Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake, featuring an expanded aviation, yacht, motorcycle and automotive display at the airport alongside supercar events and luxury experiences across the region.

Following a 2025 event that attracted more than 10,000 attendees and showcased more than 230 supercars, Niagara 5000 is expanding its offerings with what organizers describe as a more immersive experience combining exotic vehicles, private jets, yachts and hospitality experiences.

A major attraction at the



Two Aston Martins on the tarmac of the Niagara District Airport. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

airport will be “The Hangar Experience,” which will include a special appearance by Melanie Villeneuve, daughter of legendary Canadian racing driver Gilles Villeneuve.

Villeneuve will take part in a fireside chat focused on a forthcoming feature film about her father’s life and racing career, offering attendees an inside look at the production.

“Niagara 5000 has be-

come a defining moment on Canada’s luxury calendar, and 2026 is our boldest chapter yet,” said Alana Huron, CEO of Niagara 5000, in a media release.

“We’re bringing together the worlds of supercars, aviation, film, and philanthropy in one weekend and doing it in the most spectacular setting in the country.”

This year, the organization hopes triple what it raised for the McMaster

Children’s Hospital, also known as MacKids.

The event will also feature the Niagara Falls Supercar Parade and Exotics Festival, which organizers hope will raise more than \$30,000 for MacKids, supporting priority needs at McMaster Children’s Hospital.

Additional details on featured vehicles, aviation partners, celebrity guests and entertainment are expected in the coming months.

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AT FORT ERIE RACE TRACK
WHO'S GOT THE FASTEST WIENER?

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FORT ERIE RACE TRACK

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Twelve months later, I look back on the absolutely unforgettable first year I've had and I couldn't be more proud to call this town home. What started as a dream has become something I'm truly honoured to be part of. Thank you to all of you who welcomed me, trusted me, and made this first year so meaningful.

And the best part? I'm just getting started! Here's to many more years of serving this fantastic community.

And of course, HAPPY CANADA DAY!



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CANADA DAY 2026



Parents and children alike were dipping into the Simcoe Park wading pool for some relief as temperatures reached high 30s, feeling like high 40s during the afternoon. DAVE VAN DE LAAR



Dominic and Maria Reid, with sons Lucas, left, and Liam, celebrated Canada Day in NOTL at Fort George, where Lucas said the "actual ancient buildings" were part of the appeal.

Canada Day in NOTL is a tradition of indulging in a big cake, live music, free access to Fort George and a Rotary barbecue. Not to mention celebrations at the NOTL Legion Branch 124, which attracts scores of locals to dance and party.

This year was no different. Enjoy this selection of some of our top photos from this year's festivities.

Photography by
Dave Van de Laar,
Paige Seburn,
Maddy Gordon

0 Ca

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Chef Catherine O'Donnell stands beside one of her many Canada Day cakes. For years, she has laboured to create the epic cakes that feed thousands for free at Simcoe Park. DAVE VAN DE LAAR



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, who has yet to make a call on whether he will seek re-election, is seen here handing out slices of cake to a crowd of hungry people at Simcoe Park in sweltering heat. DAVE VAN DE LAAR



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PAIGE SEBURN

Zayn McDadi, 4, and Mayha McDadi, 6, wave their Canadian flags while enjoying Canada Day festivities at Simcoe Park as they wait for the celebratory cake to arrive. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Canada

Canada Day coverage and more photos



... on this year, hands
... VAN DE LAAR



Marty Hopkins and the Honkytonk Heroes play tunes for a packed crowd at the NOTL Legion Branch 124, as people have a few beverages and some barbecue to celebrate Canada. MADDY GORDON

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The
Lake Report

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CANADA - G.O.A.T.!!!

Soccer fans **go wild** after Canada win



The elation was palpable across the country on Sunday afternoon — including at the Sandtrap Pub & Grill — as Canadian soccer player Stephen Eustáquio scored the only goal in the Canada vs. South Africa match at the FIFA World Cup. The game ended in a 1-0 win for Canada, a history-making moment for the men's national team that allowed it to advance to the next round of the tournament. Next, Canada will take on Morocco this Saturday, July 4. Kick-off is at 1 p.m. DAVE VAN DE LAAR



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A red-and-white day as golfers celebrate Canada

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

Decked out in red and white, the men and women of the Niagara-on-the-Lake celebrated Canada's birth one day early, with some fun and games on Tuesday.

The day kicked off with the nine-hole and 18-hole women's leagues holding a joint scramble and fundraiser for Newark Neighbours.

On the course, Yolanda Henry, Carroll Baker, Jane McCrossan and Ellen Smith topped the leaderboard with a score of 3-under 33 over nine holes.

Second was the foursome of Maria Townley, Sharron Marlow, Joan Maida and Chris Walker with 35.

In third place with even-par 36 was the team of Tracey Peters, Ria Rosenberg, Penny Green and Penny Bannister.

Nine-hole league prize winners were Sue Sherk (longest drive) and Sharon



Members of the NOTL Golf Club's nine- and 18-hole women's leagues were awash in red and white on Tuesday to celebrate Canada. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Allen (longest putt), while Peters had the longest drive and Judy Mantle sank the longest putt among the 18-hole league players.

The day's festivities raised \$200 for Newark Neighbours with a 50-50 draw.

The Tuesday Woofs league followed with its own patriotic nine-hole scramble,

with golfers getting a different look at the course as they had to play from the yellow forward tees.

In all, 18 teams comprised of 71 participants took part.

Top dogs were the team of Jeff Jacques, Stephen Fraser, Brian MacIntyre and Simon Gardner who shot 6-under 30.

Right behind in second were Jim Meszaros, Jeff Brookhauser, Charles Swanepoel and Grant Williams at 5-under 31.

In third spot were Brian Ridgeway, Todd Watson, Russ Phipps and Paul Chapman, who combined for a score of 4-under 32.

Watson was the sharp-

shooter on the day, winning the prize for closest to the pin on #4.

In the Monday business women's league, Mary Beccario led all players with 42 to win low gross.

Other winners were: Ashley Boyle (longest drive on #1), Margie Churchill (closest to the 150 marker

on #2) and Holly Anderson (longest putt on #7).

Elizabeth Duc was closest to the pin on #4 and Mary Taylor was closest in two shots on #9.

The popular Thursday men's league was rained out for the second straight week.

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



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BKind Grateful #82: Defend someone who is being unfairly criticized.

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



Contributed by Patty Garriock

“Summertime is always the best of what might be.”
 - Charles Sowden

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Eustáquio has scored for Canada



Kevin MacLean
 Editor Emeritus

It was perhaps this generation’s Paul Henderson moment.

Tied in the dying minutes of regulation with South Africa in their World Cup knockout game last Sunday, extra time and penalty kicks loomed for Team Canada’s men’s soccer team.

Just in time for Canada Day, we needed someone to step up as Henderson did on Sept. 28, 1972. (He actually scored winning goals in the three final games against Russia, but he’s mostly remembered and revered for the magical shot in game 8 with 34 seconds left.)

Foster Hewitt’s legendary call, “Henderson has scored for Canada,” defined what many labelled the goal of the century.

That was a different era. We’re in a new century now and on June 28, 2026, Canadian soccer — played by more kids than hockey or any other single sport — needed a new hero to step forward.

Coming in as a substitute after recovering from a serious injury, captain Alphonso Davies’ play inspired the team in the waning minutes.



More Canadian kids now play soccer than hockey or any other sport. The success of the nation’s men’s team at the World Cup will likely pay big dividends in the future. FILE

But it was the man who had filled his role as captain, who came through and moved his country into the round of 16.

This is never-before-seen territory for the men’s footie program.

When Stephen Eustáquio fired the ball into the back of the net last Sunday in the dying moments versus South Africa, the adulation unleashed at outdoor watch parties, in pubs and in TV rooms across the country was heartfelt and possibly life-changing for some future football stars.

We expect that single act will inspire kids to take up or continue playing the game — and maybe to someday deliver their own heroic performance on the international stage.

Heroes can come in all shapes, sizes and origins. And Eustáquio, who grew up in rural Ontario’s Leamington community before moving with his family to Portugal, proved that. Thankfully, he returned home to represent Canada.

No matter what happens this Saturday when the 30th-ranked Canadians face

Morocco, rated sixth in the world, our men’s team has shown that it is no longer an also-ran, that the country’s developmental programs are working and the future is bright for Canada at the World Cup level.

Could another remarkable World Cup upset be on the horizon?

When Canada hits the pitch in Houston at 1 p.m., an entire nation from coast to coast will be there in spirit, cheering you on. Good luck and may the force be with you.

kevin@niagaranow.com

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Watching the world pass by in Old Town

Dear editor:

A favourite pastime of mine is heading down to Queen Street. After a quick stop at Victoria’s for a flavoured coffee, I love sitting at an outside table and watching the world pass by. As I enjoy reading, it always surprises me when a passerby looks over and smiles. But then, I really shouldn’t be surprised — Niagara-on-the-Lake is one of the friendliest places I’ve ever visited. Strangers will bid

you hello and give a friendly wave from across the street. Coming from a big city, it’s rather unexpected but incredibly nice.

I hope you like dogs because there are plenty here — all shapes and sizes, much like their owners. The shopkeepers routinely put bowls of water out for them, which is just another reason why I love this town. Then there are the delectable aromas wafting from the bakeries, and the temptations of

the candy shops are simply irresistible. Sitting here, I can put my troubles aside for a while. If I’m lucky, I’ll be able to stay a few days in one of the charming local hotels or B&Bs.

Every season here has its own special charm. Hundreds of tulips line the streets in the spring; summer brings an abundance of blooming flowers, and autumn introduces a splendour of colours. Winter I believe is the most magi-

cal time, especially during the Christmas season. The streets are lined with holly, evergreens, and adorned with sparkling ornaments, transforming the town into a magic place.

So, visit when you can, and as often as you can. Maybe you’ll catch me reading a book on Queen Street, watching the world pass by. If you do, don’t forget to smile.

Lucy Kovaliv
 Mississauga

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The adult in the room



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner
Columnist

As I walked by, the big yellow excavator took a bite from the side of the gaping hole it perched above. Moments later it disgorged yards of dirt and debris onto the ground.

And there they were. Bricks. The square, clay-red, solid, handmade kind used centuries ago in NOTL. To build fine houses. And secret tunnels.

Regular addicts may recall a column published here months ago (“The boy, the hole and the life below,” Sept. 15, 2025) reporting subterranean structures beneath the former Parliament Oak school.

Tom McMillan recalled a three-foot hole opening in the schoolyard 60 years ago. Below was a 10-by-12 brick room in four feet of water with two heavy arched wooden doors leading off toward King Street.

Before it was a school, it was a mansion. A magnificent one, built in 1847 by a prominent guy: Senator Josiah Plumb, apparently responsible for a tunnel network below.

Well, the new hotel operator had an archeological study done of the site. It cleared the development. Town staff rubber-stamped it. The excavator moved in. Whatever was down there has since disappeared into a dump truck trundling up Mary Street to the pit.

And this brings us to Gary Burroughs.

“The Parliament Oak development has destroyed that neighborhood,” he says. “All the houses around it are for sale now and none of them are selling. It should never have happened.”

But it did. The current council Burroughs sits on is one of the most pro-development, pro-tourism councils anyone can recall.



Historic bricks unearthed at the Parliament Oak site suggest stories of subterranean tunnels could be true. Town staff rubber-stamped a developer’s report that claimed no artifacts. But then, why are old bricks being dug up on the site? GARTH TURNER

That includes Burroughs, with years on council, years as the regional chair, a decade as lord mayor and three decades as the former owner of the boutique Oban Inn.

He is running again at age 80. He has institutional memory in a digital age and a quaint notion that politicians should, you know, do what the people want. Instead of what town staff dictate.

His colleagues at town hall, says Burroughs, are too easily manipulated into big decisions. Like approving a massive hotel in the middle of a residential ‘hood. Or (soon, he reckons) greenlighting a Ritz-Carlton hotel, spa and residences on the former Rand Estate.

Together with the Terminal 4 Clayfield edifice in Garrison Village, these developments put NOTL into tourism overdrive.

With an election looming, Burroughs craves more citizen engagement. Less bureaucracy.

“When it comes to our planning staff, they process everything as if it’s a good

thing. If the application is complete, they say OK, let’s move on it. That also happened with the Royal George, which everyone knows is too big.”

Burroughs points to a growing disconnect between voters and those they vote for. Councillors have come to see the new NOTL Residents Association, “as the enemy, the absolute enemy,” he says.

“When they come to present to us on council, everyone just looks away. Nobody listens. They think they don’t need input. But after this election, hopefully, things will be better.”

Meanwhile the rebel residents are giving no ground.

“If presenting factual information, advocating for greater transparency or encouraging accountability makes some elected officials uncomfortable, that is unfortunate,” says Ron Simkus, speaking for NOTLRA. “I would hope that open discussion, informed debate and public participation would be seen as strengths of a healthy democratic community

rather than as threats.”

Council members, accused of listening to town staff more than citizens, are probably using the group as a scapegoat, says Simkus.

“We all must adopt a philosophy that nobody in our town is stupid, evil or malicious and that nobody would deliberately intend to hurt our community,” he adds. “The fact is, that as human beings, we are all motivated by different components of our lives and it requires comprehension and empathy rather than unwarranted hostility to preclude wasted energy in conflict.”

But conflict we have. With more to come, as Burroughs says the lord mayor will use his “strong mayor” powers to welcome yet another major hotel — “The dirt is going to start flying.”

“This is not the way it should be. We can be more positive. And it starts with listening to the residents.”

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: BUT FIRST, COFFEE

Kopi luwak is an expensive coffee from Indonesia that has passed through this cat-like animal.

Last issue category: ALL ALONE

Clue: A doomed FedEx flight delivers Chuck Noland (oh, Noland, I get it!) to a deserted island for four years in this movie.

Answer: What is Cast Away?

Answered first by: Bob Stevens

Also answered correctly (in order) by:
Sue Rautenberg, Bob Wheatley, Emma Balsas, Jane Andersen, Jeff Lake, Becky Creager, Esther VanGorder, Howard Jones, Claudia Grimwood, Margaret Garaughty, Nancy Rocca, Rob Hutchison, Jim Dandy, Sheila Meloche, Susan Dewar, Donna Pearce, Marla Percy, Catherine Clarke, Blake White, Katie Reimer, Lynda Collet,

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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Save Our Rand Estate stays silent on latest Ontario Land Tribunal ruling

Dear editor:

On June 17, the Ontario Land Tribunal issued a decision in favour of the town and against the Save Our Rand Estate group, known as SORE.

In short, the decision which reacted to a technical motion, effectively stated that SORE could not pursue a zoning change on the former Rand Estate lands without the permission of the owner of the property.

The tribunal went further to clearly imply that SORE is “improper, mischievous, and troublesome” (paragraph 35 on page 8 of case #OLT-25-000553).

After all of these years of SORE defaming the Marotta family name at the pleasure of draining taxpayer money behind the shield of anonymity throughout the life of this issue, the people behind the curtains don’t even have the courtesy of releasing a statement on their SORE website



about the tribunal decision and what that means for the future fight against the Ritz-Carlton hotel development application (we are already two weeks after the decision).

The nerve of anonymous people abusing taxpayer money to fund the relentless pursuit of silly applications has now come out shining loud and clear with this tribunal decision.

The Ontario Land Tribunal is basically saying enough is enough.

The only issue I have with the decision is that the tribunal stopped short

of awarding all of the costs that the SORE group has siphoned out of the town’s piggybank over the last 10 years or so.

Had the decision been the other way around, the anonymous SORE folks would have had a parade before the tribunal’s ink was dry.

The silence surrounding this decision is a coverup; nobody knows about this but everybody should, because SORE just got beat up. The only difference perhaps is that they asked for it and deserved it.

Peter Rusin
St. Davids

Shoutout to the people of NOTL

Dear editor:

Much has been written in this paper and talked about over a cup of coffee or a glass of wine that Niagara-on-the-Lake has lost its soul and has changed not for the better in recent years.

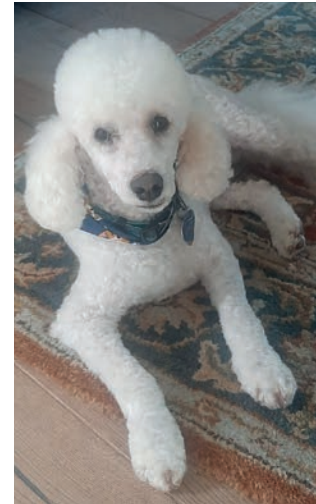
We beg to differ.

Yesterday, while walking in the Commons, our 18-month-old miniature poodle, Yukon, bolted and crossed John Street, where it was believed he had been clipped by a car running into the Two Sisters Vineyard.

What followed was an anguishing nine-plus hours of searching and walking row upon row of grapes — but, we were never alone.

From the moment we announced his disappearance friends, strangers, the Niagara Parks Police came forward to spread the word and help search.

Calls were made to the vineyards and when the phones went unanswered, friends drove to speak to the respective concierges,



Yukon the poodle is back home safe, thanks to help from good Samaritans.

candles were lit, we all prayed and kept walking and driving.

Workers were alerted, Niagara Parks Constable Liz drove the Parkway taking the time to talk to bicyclists and sharing a photo of our wee boy.

Two Sisters went above and beyond placing searchers in a golf cart, driving their vineyard from front to back. There were a couple

of sightings, but he was scared and is ever-so timid so Yukon, too, kept walking.

As we were losing the light, I spotted him. He was returning to where the car parks when he goes to his favourite playground.

He came towards me from the Commons, so he had made a second crossing of John Street. He was soaking wet and filthy — truly the Littlest Hobo. Thankfully he is now home safe and sound, albeit a tad exhausted.

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who answered our plea for help, who shared our posts, searched for him, offered support and helped spread the word. Your kindness, compassion and willingness to help truly made a difference and will not soon be forgotten.

Please remember, NOTL has a soul. It lies within this wonderful community and its residents. We are proud to call this home.

Sue-Ann Ramsden
NOTL

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More tourism seems to be in our future

Dear editor:

Part two of a long-view perspective involves tourism. It may seem that concerns about its facilitation and growth are relatively new. It has, however, been an issue since the 1970s.

I was involved in building out the first wing of the Pillar and Post in 1972, adding modestly to the hotel room count to complement that of the Oban Inn. Coupled with the increased demand associated with the new Festival Theatre, it quickly became a popular landing place for visitors who wanted to stay overnight.

Additions were subsequently added, along with the opening of Queen's Landing and the rapid growth of the bed and breakfast network. Although a Saturday morning trip to Queen Street was better made by bicycle, as car traffic had by then become dominant, the situation seemed sustainable.

It was, in fact, being promoted by our chamber of commerce and leaders of the wider Niagara community, who were attempting to increase the number of visitors as well as encourage



The debate over tourism is nothing new, says Terry Mactaggart. Things like shuttles can help manage impact.

them to linger for two to three nights. Myrtle Beach was used as an example.

Toward the end of the 1970s, however, a few of us became concerned with the growing number of tourists, particularly on summer weekends, without sufficient infrastructure to deal with the related traffic. We believed steps were needed to understand what the probable future could be and what to do about it.

Experience in visiting other communities without adequate controls — mine included an attempt to visit Provincetown, a historic village at the end of Cape Cod, where we arrived, drove around

slowly for an hour looking for parking and had to leave as none was available — suggested what was likely ahead for our Old Town community.

Three remedies were cited, reflecting what appeared to be workable solutions elsewhere. For possibly up to 100 days a year:

- Peripheral parking would be available. Fort George and town-owned lands now occupied by the community centre would be allocated, with a jitney service available to transport tourists into town.

- From, say, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., four blocks of Queen Street would become a walking mall, with prec-

edents elsewhere suggesting merchant sales would increase.

- Bus traffic would be routed away from downtown, relying on the adjacent parking and, for those who wished, the jitney service. This rerouting, in fact, happened.

Here we are, 45 years later, when tourism appears to be the major strategy, new hotel and other rooms are approved without due consideration of the consequences, including adequate infrastructure, which, without other controls, will almost certainly fall short.

So, a question looms large: Has anyone in authority or influence really thought this through? That includes knowledge of citizen revolts about overtourism nearby and throughout the world. I'd easily run out of fingers and toes counting those up.

Tourism represents an opportunity, but can also become a curse. As elections draw near, let's determine which way we are leaning and take the appropriate actions.

Terry Mactaggart
NOTL



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ARCHITEXT

Brian Marshall
Columnist

This is the conclusion to our three-part examination of the issues posed by short-term rentals and variations on that theme.

In simple terms, every unhosted short-term rental unit takes a dwelling out of the long-term rental and/or single family residential market.

These units are used to temporarily house a series of transient visitors who do not contribute to the health of our community — in any fashion other than spending their dollars in the town's tourist-oriented businesses — since only permanent residents actually create social viability.

Furthermore, research has proven that unhosted short-term rentals increase the rental rates of long-term rental units and inflate the purchase price of properties

— particularly dwellings in what would historically be considered an “affordable” home category.

It should be noted that these observations do not apply to bed & breakfast establishments operated in owner-occupied dwellings; town residents who are, by and large, some of the strongest contributors to a healthy, vibrant community.

Moreover, the published research does not generally advocate for the complete elimination of unhosted short-term rentals, but rather suggests that the total number in any given municipality and geographic concentration of these units must be carefully managed to avoid the identified negative impacts to the long-term rental market, the preservation of “affordable” property offerings and the social health of the community.

Hence this columnist's call for a cap on the number of unhosted short-term rentals and ongoing enforcement oversight of this type of operation.

And speaking of unhosted short-term rentals, it has come to my attention that, for reasons which remain publically opaque, the town is suggesting the dwelling units being built above the commercial spaces in Clay-



A short-term rental home on Davy Street. FILE

field Commons shall not be included in this category.

Say what?

Adam Hawley, in an interview with The Lake Report in January 2025 (“Clayfield Hyatt hotel planned for the Village,” Jan. 9, 2025), stated that: “The hotel will not be owned by Hyatt but instead will function as a franchise. We [Traditional Neighbourhood Developments] are the owners and developers of it — it's not going to be owned by Hyatt or anybody else.”

If, as Hawley attested, these units will be owned by a development corporation and not the hotel chain, it seems to me that the corporate owner will

actually be an institutional real-estate investor in multiple conjoined dwellings (analogous to a real estate investment trust, known as a REIT) and the hotel franchise — typically considered a unique legal entity under the parameters of normal franchise agreement law under “separation of entities” case law — will simply be filling the role of a contracted booking and maintenance agency.

Quite frankly, even if Hawley's lawyers had been able to structure a workaround to avoid the restrictions of the Arthur Wishart Act and convinced the Hyatt's legal folks by defraying their “vicarious

liability” exposure, the elephant in the room must observe the following:

Should the town simply roll over on the Hawley short-term rental exemption overture without contest, it will largely curtail, by legal precedent, any municipal oversight on future development applications that might seek to leverage the Clayfield exemption to extend the acceptable legal parameters captured therein — the current Randwood application comes to mind.

Thus, bit by bit, the legal underpinning by which a municipality can defensibly justify decisions to preserve its community in the face of a developer's application are eroded.

Then, we have the “fun with words” issue.

Honestly, after reading “planning justification reports” attached to multiple applications submitted to the town, I'm starting wonder if the principal authors of these documents are not required to pass a graduate course in Edward Bernays' school of manipulating public opinion.

As a textbook case, consider the planning justification report included with the application for rezoning and official plan amendments that would allow

for the construction of a 58-room boutique hotel on the Strewn Winery lands at 1339 Lakeshore Rd.

At no point in the planning justification report is this development identified as a “hotel,” rather the author(s) of the report go to great extremes in attempting to stretch the provincial definition of allowed “farm-stay accommodations” — which, according to the current legislation still requires a local short-term rental or bed & Breakfast licence in order to operate — to encompass their overture.

A 58 room B&B ... really?

But, it is my guess that the authors of the planning justification report anticipated local resident and possible municipal pushback to an application for a hotel built on agricultural lands and indulged in prevarication in an attempt to mitigate the issue.

Unfortunately, this approach to massaging the language of planning applications is not the exception, but has almost become the norm.

So many things need to be addressed.

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

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Don't overlook this province on your next cross-country trip



ROSS'S RAMBLINGS

Ross Robinson
Columnist

Very few people enjoy a short road trip more than me. Or better still, a medium-length or long road trip.

And for whatever reason, since I was a young lad, I have been a keen reader and observer of licence plates. My dad used to come up with mathematical and geographical games that made trips on the Canadian Prairies pass faster, as we would drive from Winnipeg to Regina or Edmonton or Port Arthur/Fort William.

Weird, I know, but many families have their quirks, and we loved visiting relatives.

Just last week here in Niagara-on-the-Lake, I spotted a bit of an outlier of a licence plate on Queen Street, near the cenotaph.

From New Brunswick.

Subconsciously, that day, I had passed many of the usual Canadian plates. Indeed, Ontario is to be discovered, Quebec remembers, British Columbia is beautiful, Alberta has wild roses, and Manitoba is friendly. Yukon notes the Klondike, Nova Scotia is our ocean playground, and the slogans continue.

But it seems New/Nouveau Brunswick is our most patriotic province. This officially bilingual province's licence plate reads "New/Nouveau Brunswick Canada." And, the individual plate number.

This piqued my interest, and I did a quick Google search on provincial licence plates. Only New Brunswick proudly includes the word "Canada."

Due to its geography and a rather low population count, we don't tend to think of New Brunswick too often. For many Canadians, it's a necessary part of the road trip between Ontario and Quebec and the other three Atlantic provinces.

And it's not a short pass through on the Trans-Canada Highway. A long drive,



with lots and lots of trees to marvel at. Did they name Robinsonville after one of my relatives?

Just think back some 40 years to our magnificent Terry Fox and his Marathon of Hope, which started in Newfoundland and Labrador and went through New Brunswick. Running a marathon each day, through all types of weather. Sometimes, 10, 11 or 12 hours, moving with his unique gait and determined look. The Marathon of Hope has now raised about \$900 million dollars for cancer research.

Be with us on Sunday, Sept. 20 this year, as NOTL continues to take part. You will feel the enthusiastic

vibe in Simcoe Park, with the irrepressible Joan King at the helm again. Watch for more details as Sept. 20 approaches.

And although I have been fortunate to spend a lot of time in our Maritimes, I still find some names confusing. Even now, I hesitate before saying Saint John or St. John's. Feel free to check up on me, but methinks it's Saint John, N.B. and St. John's, N.L. And be sure to pronounce Newfoundland properly.

There is the totally wonderful Cabot Trail, best driven in a clockwise direction, and also the Cabot Tower at the top of Signal Hill in St. John's. It com-

Ever taken a close look at a licence plate from New Brunswick? It's one of the only provinces where the plates have the word "Canada" on them (the other one is Nova Scotia). True patriot love, indeed.
ROSS ROBINSON

memorates John Cabot's discovery of Newfoundland. And the first transatlantic wireless communication is well explained on two plaques.

I do hope you organize a road trip, road trip to New Brunswick sometime soon. When in that neck of the woods, get off the Trans-Canada at Moncton and experience Magnetic Hill. A classically Canadian roadside attraction, only about 30 minutes out of the way, and very well-signed.

Our peripatetic family was there in 1960, or 1961, and the memory is vivid. Magnetic Hill is a natural phenomena, an optical illusion if you will. Called a

gravity hill, it tricks us with nearby rising and descending terrain.

Point your car uphill, facing the gradual slope. Soon, your automobile will be moving in the "wrong direction," seemingly uphill. If this sounds kind of weird and hokey, it is. But a not-to-be-missed Canadian experience.

It is called trashy on Wikipedia, but they are wrong. It's great. And, only 10 bucks per vehicle, or 60 bucks for a tour bus. Such a deal.

My parents were determined to show us the Maritimes, after their three years based in Halifax during the Second World War. The folks there were so hospitable then — And still are.

On 9/11, Gander, N.L. led the league in welcoming surprise guests for a night or two or three, and I do hope you have enjoyed the hit show "Come From Away."

My goodness, hasn't this just been an unusual version of Ross's Ramblings?

We can all agree that people down east are special and kind. Enjoy a lobster dinner and some chowdah.

rossrocket9@gmail.com

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Across

- 1. Total (3-2)
- 4. Fat bakers make a hash of the morning meal (9)
- 9. Framework of hexagonal cells (9)
- 10. Petty officer on a merchant ship (5)
- 11. Game with traps and checks (3,6)
- 12. Headed (5)
- 13. "Good Will Hunting" star (4,5)
- 15. Cheap WW2 sub-machine gun (4)
- 17. Of the present month (4)
- 19. Victories (9)
- 23. Overtly aggressive man (5)
- 24. Perceptive (9)
- 26. Where you are now (5)
- 27. Noiseless (9)
- 28. Aping (9)
- 29. Sides in an eternal battle (5)

Down

- 1. Belief that there is no God (7)
- 2. Not strict (7)
- 3. Cargoes (8)
- 4. Tolerate (5)
- 5. At an early stage (9)
- 6. Sticky snacks? (6)
- 7. Kind of rifle (7)
- 8. Switched on (5,2)
- 14. Il Duce (9)
- 16. Humiliates (8)
- 17. Tel Aviv native, for example (7)
- 18. Feudal Japanese warrior (7)
- 20. Support for an orator (7)
- 21. Artists' models (7)
- 22. Battle of Jericho leader (6)
- 25. Colloquialism (5)

Crossword Puzzle

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Last issue's answers

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EXPLORING HISTORY

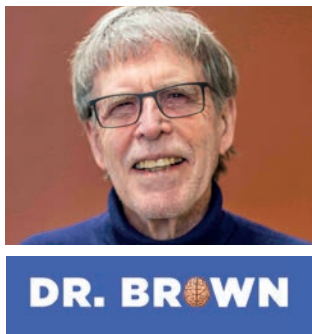
WITH NOTL MUSEUM



Girl Guides and the royal visit of 1939

Girl Guides have been a familiar part of community life in Niagara-on-the-Lake, participating in parades, public celebrations and service activities throughout the year. This photograph was taken during the excitement surrounding the 1939 Royal Tour of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, the first visit to Canada by a reigning monarch. Across the country, Guides helped welcome the royal couple and took part in commemorative events. For many young women, Guiding offered opportunities to develop leadership skills, serve their community and form lifelong friendships. While Guiding has changed over the years, one tradition remains especially popular: selling Girl Guide cookies. First introduced in Canada in 1927 as a fundraiser, the iconic cookies have become a cherished tradition, helping support Guiding activities while satisfying generations of sweet-toothed Canadians. Today, many residents still look forward to cookie season as much as the Guides themselves.

AI solved a math problem that **stumped us for decades**



Dr. William Brown
Columnist

Is anything safe from artificial intelligence these days?

It's hard to pick up the New York Times or science and engineering journals, including high-quality, generalist journals such as *Science* and *Nature*, without weekly, even daily reminders about the latest achievements in AI.

Those reminders fuel concern about the growing omnipresence of AI not only in science, but the wider public work space and, in this column's case, mathematics.

Mathematics is the linchpin key to understanding the universe on the largest and tiniest scales. That was certainly the case for Einstein's general relativity theory in 1915 and 10 years later Heisenberg's and

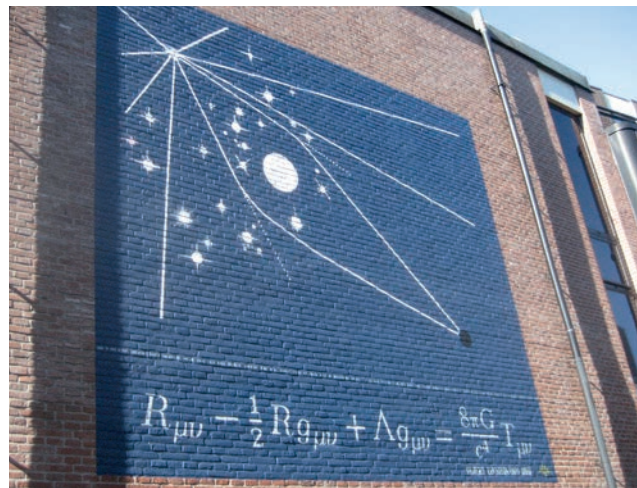
Schrödinger's independent mathematical solutions for describing quantum mechanics, and in the latter half of the 20th century, was the case for mathematical models designed to explain the universe's beginning and expansion — efforts that all led to Nobel prizes.

Mathematics is about relationships. Take that simplest and powerful equation, $E = mc^2$ which simply states that energy (E) is equal to mass (m) times the speed of light (c) squared (c^2) — an equation Einstein came up with in 1905 as one of four major triumphs that year.

Before Einstein, who would have imagined that such a relationship could be expressed so simply, and precisely, with no other modifying factors? That takes conceptual genius, expressed in this case by mathematics and foreshadowed by Einstein's thought experiments.

Or what about Einstein's later equation that related the curvature of space-time to mass — so wonderfully illustrated on an exterior brick wall in Leiden, Germany?

To those who live and breathe mathematics, especially as applied to physics, mathematics can be beautiful



Mathematics is key to understanding the universe and is able to represent complex concepts with a near-artistic simplicity, such as in this illustration in Leiden, Germany of Albert Einstein's field equation. WIKIMEDIA

because of its power to express nature in such precise condensed ways.

Indeed, Steven Weinberg, a Nobel Prize winner for his contributions to the standard model for describing atomic physics, felt that one of the reasons Einstein's theoretical model, general relativity, was so widely accepted early on was that the math underpinning his theory was so beautiful.

So, readers might be sympathetic to mathematicians world-wide who were upset when OpenAI found a solution to a long-standing mathematical problem that hitherto had not been solved

by humans. Perhaps more upsetting was that OpenAI's solution was novel.

Mathematicians worldwide were so upset that some banded together and published a manifesto of sorts, called the Leiden Declaration on Artificial Intelligence in an attempt to establish ground rules for AI.

Aside from bruises to egos rubbed the wrong way by highly publicized releases of triumphs by OpenAI in mathematics, the underlying concern was lack of transparency by the companies about their methods, including how

their algorithms work and, in some cases, evolve to become even more potent.

Then there's the practical problem accompanying the onslaught of AI — how human mathematicians can vet a growing slew of papers using AI.

That's a real problem, and not only in mathematics but any fields such as physics, which depend so much on mathematics. How can you judge a paper's math when it's been generated by AI, and you have no clue how AI got to the solution? Those are fair points.

These problems with AI are just the tipping point, because the power of AI seems to increase exponentially — unlike human intelligence, as Steven Weinberg reminded us.

Nor is it just OpenAI: there's a growing number of AI companies including Google's Deepmind and Anthropic, to say nothing of several new start-ups.

Back in May, I wrote about Richard Dawkins and his encounter with Claude and the question of whether Claude was conscious and intelligent ("Dr. Brown: Richard Dawkins believes AI may be conscious ... but is it?" May 14). My take on

was that AI is certainly intelligent, based on its ability to learn and solve problems, but with a caveat.

ChatGPT came out in late 2022 and look what's happened since. Plot the curve for human intelligence and AI's intelligence and the differences are obvious.

Human intelligence based on the same criteria — our ability to learn and solve problems — has barely changed in 100,000 years, but our collective knowledge and understanding of nature has increased exponentially, especially in the last few hundred years.

By comparison, AI's data base has also increased exponentially, especially in the last few years and will continue to do so as it learns more from us and evolves its own machine equivalents to Einstein's thought experiments to autonomously come up with novel solutions beyond its data base — a power that will increase much faster with the coming of quantum computing.

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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Cherry Festival is Saturday

Staff
The Lake Report

Life can be sweet, or it can be sour — if you don't mind a little bit of both, then Niagara-on-the-Lake's annual cherry festival has you covered.

The season of summer fruits continues this July with the return of St. Mark's Cherry Festival, set for Saturday, July 4, offering up a bounty of fresh cherries and cherry desserts for all.

St. Mark's Church will be selling 700 of its homemade cherry pies, made by the women of the church, plus 160 quarts of fresh cherries, grown at Quiet Acres on Lakeshore Road. The pies, meanwhile, are baked with sour cherries from Cherry Lane in Vineland.

Alongside fresh cherries and whole pies, the church will be selling cherry pie by the slice with ice cream, ice cream floats, cherry jam, cherry tea brand and



lots of other homemade baked goods.

The yearly cherry festival, which precedes the strawberry festival in June, is a staple of summer in Niagara and has been going on for dozens of years.

"This is the biggest event for St. Mark's, and everyone looks forward to participating," said Jo-Anne Hill, festival chair. "It's also a time to engage with the whole NOTL community and show our warm hospitality to visitors from far and wide."

Proceeds from the festival support the maintenance

and upkeep of St. Mark's Church, which has called Byron Street home for well over 200 years.

Volunteers have been hard at work for the past six months getting ready for the festival: making the pies and jams, pricing and displaying the church emporium — china, clothing, linen, purses and more will be sold — and collecting and organizing the books that will be sold.

Alongside the emporium and book sales, there will be a barbecue area with hamburgers, hot dogs, peameal bacon on a bun and vegan options.

"We encourage visitors to bring their family and enjoy the children's area, and our historic church will also be open for tours and reflection," Hill said.

The festival gates open at 9 a.m. Hill said the lineup typically starts around 7:30 a.m. and whole pies tend to sell out around 11:30 a.m. Attendance is free.

Obituary

William Charnetski



CHARNETSKI, Dr. William Alexander —
June 22, 1940 – June 25, 2026

With profound sadness and deep gratitude for a life well lived, the family of Dr. William Alexander Charnetski announces his peaceful passing on June 25, 2026, at Hotel Dieu Shaver Health and Rehabilitation Centre in St. Catharines, Ontario, surrounded by the love of his family and held in the arms of his beloved wife, Emily.

Born on June 22, 1940, in Stettler, Alberta, Bill was the son of Alexander and Mary Charnetski (née Turko). Raised in Edmonton, Alberta, he developed a lifelong devotion to his Ukrainian heritage, his faith, and his community. As a young man, he was actively involved in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and its cultural traditions. He loved Ukrainian dancing and, together with a close group of friends, was among the first

dancers in what would become the world-renowned Shumka Dancers.

Faith remained the foundation of Bill's life. Though he once seriously considered entering the ministry, he ultimately followed a different path, carrying his faith into every aspect of his life through service, generosity, and quiet leadership. Throughout the years, he remained deeply committed to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, serving in numerous leadership roles, including Presidency of the church in Ottawa, and offering his time and talents wherever needed.

Bill was a widely respected researcher. He earned both a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Science from the University of Alberta, followed by a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin. He dedicated his professional life to agricultural research with Agriculture Canada, spending much of his distinguished career at the Research Station in Lethbridge, Alberta. When he was transferred to Ottawa in 1986, he continued to pursue the work he loved. At heart, Bill was always a researcher — curious, thoughtful, and committed to advancing knowledge for the benefit of others.

One of the greatest blessings of Bill's life began during his university years when he met the love of his life, Emily (née Bodnarchuk). They were married on September 2, 1962, in Brooksby, Saskatchewan, in a week-long celebration that family and friends would fondly remember for decades. Together they built a loving partnership grounded in faith, respect, laughter, and unwavering devotion. This September, they would have celebrated their 64th wedding anniversary.

Bill was a devoted husband, a proud father, and an adoring grandfather. Nothing brought him greater joy than spending time with his family and celebrating their accomplishments.

More than any award or professional accomplishment, Bill will be remembered for the way he brought people together. He loved conversation, community, and shared experiences. Whether hosting friends, volunteering, travelling, or celebrating family milestones, he had a gift for creating connection. He was often the spark behind a gathering and the person who made it feel complete. Those who knew him will remember his generosity of spirit, his genuine interest in others, and his ability to turn ordinary moments into cherished memories.

Following retirement to Niagara-on-the-Lake in 2001, Bill and Emily embraced a life of service and adventure. They travelled extensively and devoted countless hours to volunteer work. Through Rotary, Bill participated in humanitarian projects in Africa, India, and Central America, generously giving his time and energy to improve the lives of people facing hardship. In recognition of his extraordinary service, he was honoured with several Paul Harris Fellow recognitions.

Closer to home, Bill and Emily also dedicated over 20 years to the Shaw Festival, where they volunteered for more than two decades and formed many cherished friendships.

Bill will be lovingly remembered by Emily, his beloved wife and partner of nearly sixty-four years; his son William Jr.; his daughter-in-law Kerry; his daughter Joanne; and his treasured grandchildren Cole, Ava, Caleb, and Ethan. He is also survived by his brother John (Shirley), his sister Marion, his nephew David (Leanne), his brother-in-law Don (Bonnie), and many nieces, nephews, extended family members, and dear friends.

The family extends its heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Bagchee-Clark and the compassionate staff of Hotel Dieu Shaver, as well as Dr. Iram Ahmed and Nurse Practitioner Erin Jarvis of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Family Health Team for their exceptional care and kindness.

A traditional funeral service will be held at St. George Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 8 Augusta Avenue, St. Catharines, Ontario, on Tuesday, July 7, 2026, at 10 a.m. A private family interment to follow. A Celebration of Life will take place at Strewn Winery in Niagara-on-the-Lake on Wednesday, July 8 from 4 to 7 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Bill's memory may be made to St. George Ukrainian Orthodox Church or Rotary International, two organizations that reflected the faith, service, and generosity that guided his life.

Bill's family takes comfort in knowing that he leaves behind a legacy of faith, integrity, service, and love. His memory will live on in the hearts of all who were fortunate enough to know him.

May his memory be eternal.

Vichnaya Pamyat.

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Congratulations!

Congratulations to all of this year's graduates! Whether you're celebrating the end of kindergarten, Grade 8, high school, college or university, this milestone marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter. Your hard work, growth and determination have brought you to this moment, and your community is proud of all you have accomplished. We wish you every success, happiness and opportunity in the years ahead. Best wishes from all of us at The Lake Report and Sandtrap Pub & Grill.



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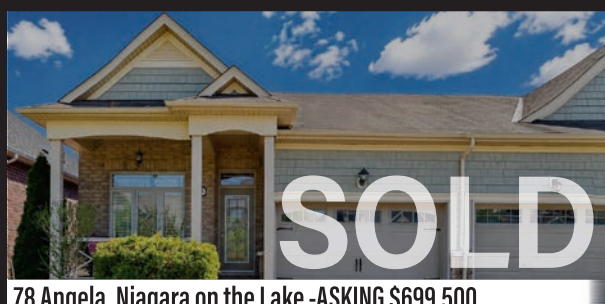
1068 Niagara Stone, Niagara on the Lake - \$950,000



855 Line 1, Niagara on the Lake - \$1,750,000



326 Concession 3 - \$995,000



78 Angela, Niagara on the Lake - ASKING \$699,500



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