



**NOTL  
summer  
tourism  
guide is  
out now!  
Page 4**

**NOTL  
PROUD**



NOTL residents Anna Lamanna and Tracey Peters.

## 'Being gay was never a barrier'

*This is one in a series of stories written during Pride month in June, to celebrate and shine a light on NOTL's diversity and acceptance.*

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Anna Lamanna and Tracey Peters say they did not have to wait long to know whether Niagara-on-the-Lake would feel like home.

The married couple, who have been together for 20 years, moved to town just over two years ago after retiring from careers in policing.

They came looking for a quieter life after decades of public service in demanding and often stressful environments. They wanted safety, small-town character and a strong sense of community.

They also wanted to know they would be welcomed as a lesbian couple.

"As members of the LG-BTQ+ community, feeling accepted and welcomed was an important consideration when choosing where to settle," Lamanna told The Lake Report.

The answer, they said,

*Continued on Page 14*

# SOLD OUT!

Annual Strawberry Festival draws 5,000, sells out berries by noon



Nancy Nichols, Carol Hunter, Lynn Hunter Hope and Lillian Brooker stand at the Strawberry Jam table during the St. Andrews annual Strawberry Festival, where jars of homemade jam were a popular draw. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Andrew Hawlitzky | The Lake Report

**F**estivalgoers had to be quick to grab the biggest, juiciest berries last Saturday at St. Andrew's Strawberry Festival — nearly the entire stock sold out by noon.

More than 5,000 residents and visitors returned to Simcoe Street for the annual, one-day,

volunteer-run, start-of-summer festival, where proceeds go toward the upkeep of the 200-year-old historic church.

"What it's really about is reaching out to the community and opening the doors," said St. Andrew's treasurer Janice Thomson. "It's a very special

day for us — for everyone."

Thompson said the festival keeps to the traditional format people count on year after year. Visitors who arrived at 8 a.m. came for strawberry pies and scones, knowing they don't last long once the event kicks off.

This year, the team expanded

the entertainment at the request of guests who like to spend more time at the festival, with standout performances by the Bethany Handbell Choir, Olde Time Fiddlers and the four-piece band Revolver and Friends.

*Continued on Page 5*

## \$1.25M added to Mississauga Street project to replace aging sewer system

Zahraa Hmood  
The Lake Report

With plans to revamp one of Niagara-on-the-Lake's busiest streets set to begin later this year, the town is adding \$1.25 million to the project's budget to overhaul an aging sewer system.

The Town of NOTL ap-

proved the additional funding for the full replacement of a sewer beneath Mississauga Street, which municipal staff say is deteriorating.

The municipality plans to rebuild Mississauga Street from Mary Street to Queen Street, a 1.27-kilometre stretch that serves as one of the main routes into down-

town Old Town.

Along with a full reconstruction, the project includes infrastructure upgrades such as improvements to the watermain, sanitary sewer and storm sewer, as well as replacing streetlights and adding

*Continued on Page 3*



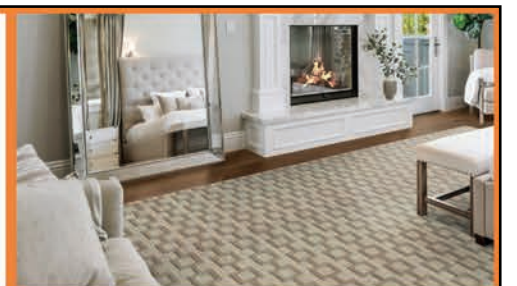
Mississauga Street, an arterial road in Old Town. FILE



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# NOTL asks for **more time** to finish heritage designations

Zahraa Hmood  
The Lake Report

The pressure is on for Niagara-on-the-Lake and dozens of communities across Ontario, as they're half a year away from a deadline that'll see a swath of historical properties get dropped from their municipal heritage lists — clearing the way for them to be redeveloped or demolished.

Now, the Town of NOTL is asking the Ontario government to give it three more years to finish designating as many heritage properties as it can before it's too late.

Council voted on Tuesday to ask the province to extend the Jan. 1, 2027 deadline for issuing notices of intention to designate for properties on the heritage register, asking it to consider a new deadline of 2030.

Originally, the deadline decided on in 2022 was the start of 2025, but the province agreed to delay it.

According to the approved motion, since the province made changes to its Heritage Act in November 2022, starting the countdown for this deadline, the town's



The James McFarland House on Concession 2 Road (not to be confused with the McFarland House) is one of many historical homes in Niagara-on-the-Lake's heritage registry that isn't a designated heritage property yet. FILE

heritage staff has designated 21 properties under Part IV of the act.

It has 178 properties left on the heritage register to designate. In addition, at the start of the year, the town expanded its Queen-Picton heritage district, which will mean efforts to designate 533 properties in that area, located in Old Town, under the Heritage Act.

According to the town's website, properties with Part IV designation cannot be altered without council's consent.

Coun. Erwin Wiens, who introduced the motion, told council it's important for the town to get in touch with the province, including the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and plead its case.

"Our registry is one of the largest in the province, if not the largest," Coun. Erwin Wiens told council. "Many municipalities may only have nine or 10 homes on their registry and they're struggling to get those done, because it does take months to do each one."

Coun. Tim Balasiuk, a member of the municipal heritage committee, voiced

his support for extending the deadline, alluding to challenge that's cropped up in the process: pushback from some who live in heritage homes and don't want to see their homes designated for a variety of reasons.

In two separate cases concerning historical homes on Delater Street, the homeowners told the

town that their insurance companies told them they would significantly hike their premiums once their homes were designated. In response, council voted to freeze the designation of their homes in November last year.

"It's not an easy task to try to get people to designate," Balasiuk said.

Regardless, he said, securing proper protection for these homes is critical, adding some heritage homes should be designated by force.

"There are no other municipalities in Ontario that have these assets," he said. "As the first capital of Upper Canada, we need to do this."

Alongside forwarding their ask to all the relevant provincial offices, the town will make a big push for a deadline extension at the annual Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference, slated for Aug. 16 to 19, where NOTL's councillors and staff will have a chance to sit down and talk to provincial government representatives about the issue.

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

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## Ride for Dad rolls through



A volunteer guides riders in the Ride for Dad motorcycle charity event as they depart the Legion parking lot on King Street. The annual ride raises funds and awareness in the fight against prostate cancer. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

## NOTL man, 80, charged in Turner assault

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

An 80-year-old Niagara-on-the-Lake man has been charged with assault after Garth Turner, a columnist for The Lake Report, was beaten and kicked by a motorist who objected to him walking along the shoulder of Centre Street. The June 12 daylight attack left Turner, a 76-year-old former federal MP, Tory cabinet minister and longtime business journalist, with cuts and severe bruises, including a damaged right eye.

Vision in the eye is slowly returning, Turner said on Tuesday. He wrote about the incident in his column last week.

Niagara Regional Police did not issue any formal announcement regarding the charges and declined to answer several questions from The Lake Report on Wednesday.

However, a police spokesperson stated that Alfred Landoni has been charged with one count of assault.

The police refused to answer several specific questions, including where the accused lives, though The

Lake Report has learned that the man's home is not far from where the incident occurred.

"While we appreciate the interest in this matter, the Niagara Regional Police Service does not routinely issue media releases in relation to minor assault investigations," the spokesperson said in an email.

"Decisions regarding the release of information are made on a case-by-case basis and take into account a number of factors including privacy considerations and the nature of the incident," he said.

"The incident was investigated and appropriate action was taken based on the information gathered by investigators," the police statement said.

However, information about charges like assault and the court proceedings involving such cases are generally considered public information and usually are available to the media.

The police did not answer further questions about their reasons for refusing to divulge more details about the case.

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

## Funding will come from wastewater reserve

Continued from Front Page

bicycle lanes and a new sidewalk. Construction is expected to begin this summer or fall and continue until next spring.

Speaking to council last Tuesday, public works and infrastructure director Jordan Frost said that as the town prepared to begin the project, staff reviewed the sanitary sewer beneath the street and found it was in worse condition than had been "previously understood" during the design phase.

After a review by staff and the town's engineering consultant, R.V. Ander-

son Associates Ltd., they determined replacing the sewer would be the most "cost-effective and sustainable solution," rather than repairing or replacing it later, Frost said.

Council voted in favour of approving staff's request to add \$1.25 million to the project's budget, with the funding to come from the municipality's wastewater capital reserve.

About 390 metres of concrete sewer pipe will be replaced. Frost said the town will complete the sewer work before continuing with the rest of the road reconstruction and that the additional work

will not extend the project's timeline.

The municipality's wastewater capital improvements reserve currently sits at \$5.8 million, Frost said. With \$1.25 million taken out of the reserve, it would fall to about \$4.55 million.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor asked whether the town's wastewater reserves are in a good position and if this funding request would be "depleting" them. Frost said the reserves are "healthy" and can accommodate the town dipping into them at this rate.

"This is infrastructure that is deteriorating and in a state of needing repair.

Whether we do it now or in the future, it is required," he said. "This doesn't put us in a state of concern."

Speaking in favour of approving the \$1.25 million expenditure, Coun. Erwin Wiens said he often hears people complain about construction projects being completed only to be torn up and redone later — and that this situation shows a better approach.

"You identified a situation and you did a great job doing that," he said. "I know it's not free, but in the long run, penny-wise and pound-foolish, we did it the right way."

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Paddleboarders push off near the start of the Niagara River Challenge, hosted by Paddle Niagara. The event marked the second race in the Ontario SUP Race Series, drawing competitors onto the river for a fast, scenic course.  
 DAVE VAN DE LAAR

## Cherry Festival



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## NOTL tourism guide out now

Staff  
 The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's award-winning tourism publication is back for another season.

The Summer 2026 edition of "NOTL: A Guide for Distinguished Explorers," produced by The Lake Report in partnership with Tourism Niagara-on-the-Lake, is now available at hotels, wineries, visitor destinations, local businesses and other locations throughout Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Niagara region.

The annual publication showcases the people, places and experiences that make Niagara-on-the-Lake one of Canada's premier tourism destinations, serving as both a visitor guide and a celebration of the community.

This year's edition features a pair of in-depth culinary profiles on two fine Niagara-on-the-Lake restaurants. Readers will get a look inside AegeanFlavrs, where owners Lina and Chris Fakas are bringing generations of Greek family recipes and hospitality traditions to the town, as well as Revé, the acclaimed



NOTL's award-winning tourism magazine is back for summer 2026, with fresh features and photography.

farm-to-fire restaurant that has earned a reputation for transforming locally grown ingredients into world-class dining experiences.

The magazine also includes features on some of the experiences that define Niagara-on-the-Lake, from Fort George and local farm stands to parks, ghost stories, attractions and shopping, alongside advertising

from many of the businesses that help make the town a destination for visitors from around the world.

Wine journalist, author and sommelier Jill Troyer contributes a feature exploring Niagara's cool-climate Chardonnay and the wineries helping elevate the varietal on the world stage.

It's another packed issue designed to help visitors

make the most of their stay while offering a keepsake they can take home as a reminder of their time in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The publication continues to earn recognition within the newspaper industry. Earlier this year, the Summer 2025 edition of NOTL: A Guide for Distinguished Explorers received first-place honours for Best Vertical Product in the Ontario Community Newspapers Association's Better Newspapers Competition, recognizing excellence in magazine publishing among community newspapers across the province.

More than a tourism guide, the magazine serves as a showcase for the businesses, organizations and individuals who help make Niagara-on-the-Lake a unique place to visit, work and live.

Copies are available free of charge while supplies last.

If you are a bed and breakfast operator and would like to receive some copies for guests, please send an email to editor@niagaranow.com to arrange pickup.

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Clockwise from top left: Ruth Hunter and Joyce Dineley, serving members of the Strawberry Festival, serve up shortcake with fresh strawberries. A quart of strawberries on sale for \$7 — or, if you're really hungry, a flat for \$40. Martha Gleddie and David Lingard are generous with the whipped cream as they serve up strawberry crepes. Two-year-old Georgia Willis eats a back bacon sandwich — a traditional staple of the Strawberry Festival. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

# Strawberries the stars on Saturday

Continued from Front Page

The festival featured the requisite fresh local strawberries with crepes, barbecue, shortcake and frozen yogurt, alongside a silent auction, children's area and live music. Church tours and organ music also ran throughout the day, and a new vintage table with jewellery joined the silent auction inside the parish.

The day also serves St. Andrew's mission to bring more families into the church, which runs a Sun-

day school program and a summer camp for children.

"That's part of growing our congregation and inviting more families to come to the church," she said.

A committee of volunteers organized the festival under organizer Kathy Hunter, who works with Julie Hunter and Doug Dine. The team divided the work this year to plan baking, refrigeration and food production in advance, while one congregation member sourced the entertainment and Diane Tickman assembled the lineup of bands.

Festival proceeds go toward maintaining the historic building, which the church property committee plans for five to seven years ahead.

"It is labour intensive work in keeping these buildings looking as beautiful as they do," said Thompson.

Thompson connected the festival's staying power to the strawberry itself, the first fruit Mother Nature shares each year.

"It's about love and friendship and nature and agriculture, everything that really is the focus of

Niagara-on-the-Lake," she said.

The congregation takes pride in preserving a sanctuary that has stood for more than two centuries.

"It's a great testament to what people can do when they work and worship together," said Thompson.

Next up on the local festival calendar is the St. Mark's Cherry Festival scheduled for July 4, followed by the Peach Festival hosted by St. Vincent de Paul Parish on August 10.

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## GARAGE SALE LOCATER

The Lake Report will run a weekly garage/yard sale listing weekly until the end of September. Thinking of having a yard sale? Send us the details and we'll publish it here FREE of charge.

<p><b>SATURDAY: Neighbourhood moving sale</b> 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. 2 Tulip Tree Rd.   21 Tulip Tree Rd.   37 Hickory Ave.</p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>Moving sale</b> 8 a.m. start 33 Colonel Butler Cr.</p> <p><b>Garage sale</b> 8 a.m. to noon 17 Mulberry Ln.</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>2-host garage sale</b> 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. 7 Sentry Circle</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p><b>Moving sale</b> 8 a.m. start 33 Colonel Butler Cr.</p> <p><b>Garage sale</b> 8 a.m. to noon 17 Mulberry Ln.</p>	<p><b>2-host garage sale</b> 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. 7 Sentry Circle</p>	<p><b>SUNDAY:</b> No sales found so far. But that doesn't mean there aren't any. Happy hunting!</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; text-align: center;">Email <a href="mailto:editor@niagaranow.com">editor@niagaranow.com</a> to promote your yard/garage sale! (Professional businesses excluded)</p>
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# Drums welcome **summer** at Ryerson Park

Andrew Hawlitzky  
The Lake Report

Drums, handpan music and a sunset over Lake Ontario marked Niagara-on-the-Lake's ninth summer solstice celebration on Sunday, after flooding washed out the larger Port Dalhousie event.

As the sun dropped toward the horizon at the foot of the Chautauqua neighbourhood, people settled in with lawn chairs and blankets to welcome the longest day of the year.

The event drew some new faces from Port Dalhousie, where the region's main solstice celebration would have marked its 28th year. Flooding at Lakeside Park forced that gathering to be cancelled.

Carla Carlson, who founded Niagara Nature Tours 30 years ago, organizes the solstice events across the region.

"Lake Port Dalhousie



Jeff Seed plays the handpan during a summer solstice celebration at Ryerson Park on Sunday, where spectators joined in with drums and other instruments to mark the longest day of the year and the start of summer in our hemisphere. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

flooded and I couldn't get a permit, so people are at Charles Daley Park tonight doing the same thing," she said.

Drumming Down the Sun

& Yoga in the Park invites people to take part in a sunset drum circle, with percussion instruments available to borrow. The evening began with yoga led by Rianna

Reid, accompanied by Jeff Seed on the handpan.

Carlson said donations collected at the event would go to the Niagara Land Trust, a cause she chose as

a founding member of the organization.

"It just seemed to fit because the solstice is all about nature," she said. "It's an agrarian festival, so on the longest day of the year, the crops are in and everybody feels safe and they're warm."

The celebration draws on Carlson's Swedish heritage. Her great-grandparents came from Sweden, where the start of summer is marked with dancing around a maypole and giving thanks for the growing season ahead.

Loretta Pietrobon has looked after the Niagara-on-the-Lake event for the past nine years as a local representative of Niagara Nature Tours.

The event found its current home years ago, after Carlson and Pietrobon first set up at Queen's Royal Park and discovered the sunset wasn't visible.

"She was there with the people and they were drum-

ming and they were trying to drum down the sun and they realized you couldn't see the sun from there," Carlson said.

Parking has become the event's biggest challenge. A \$150 fine was introduced in the neighbourhood after the COVID-19 pandemic, when residential streets near the water filled with visitors.

Carlson said Pietrobon's work allows the celebration to span three beaches on one lake in a single night.

Pietrobon, meanwhile, hopes someone will eventually take over the local organizing.

"I'm hoping that someone will kind of step up and, well, take over," she said.

Roughly 50 to 60 people turned out as the sky over Toronto glowed pink across the water. The sun set just after nine o'clock, and as the last light faded, the gathering fell quiet.

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

## Adieu, Amélie: Château des Charmes winemaker heads to France

Jill Troyer  
The Lake Report

Closing one door and opening another can tug on your heartstrings, and that's certainly the case for winemaker Amélie Boury.

After 15 years at the helm of award-winning winemaking and innovation at Château des Charmes, Boury is packing up cherished memories and moving on. She's returning to France, where she is from, for an exciting new opportunity there. She leaves Niagara-on-the-Lake this Thursday.

Boury came to Niagara when Paul Bosc Sr. hired her to work as a winemaker at Château des Charmes. He was looking for a successor, and Amélie was perfect. She had studied in France, as Paul Sr. had, and they shared a passion for viticulture as well as winemaking.

The two bonded over grapevines in the vineyard, and wine barrels in the cellar. Paul Sr. became her close mentor. Boury moved quickly into the role of head winemaker, and in 2020 became responsible for the vineyards as well as the winemaking.

Boury is proud of introducing more traditional method sparkling wines during her tenure, including her Blanc de Blancs, and Blanc de Noirs. One wine in particular holds a special place in her heart.

Equileus is an ultra-premium Bordeaux-style blend. It's only made in years where the harvest conditions produce exceptional red grapes. Boury made Equileus with Paul Sr. in 2012 and 2014.

"I made it on my own in 2016, and I was really hoping he would like it. He was so happy when he tasted it," she recalled with a fond smile.

Paul Sr. is the stuff of legend in the Niagara wine industry. He was the first person to plant vinifera grapes on a commercial scale despite experts' conviction they couldn't survive winters here.

He introduced wind machines to the industry, and they became game-changers for growers, preventing damage when the temperatures did drop too low. He could be gruff, but when he met someone who was serious about viticulture and oenology, he had all the time in the world for them.

"I will always treasure my memories with Paul Sr. He was a mentor, a friend, and simply a grand gentleman," said Boury.

Paul Sr. died in December 2023. The winery was sold the following spring, to investors in southwestern Ontario. Marco Piccoli and Anne Givens took over leadership at the winery. Both had previously had long careers with Arterra.



The late Paul Bosc Sr. was Amélie Boury's mentor, helping her to grow as a winemaker. She quickly became a leader at Château des Charmes, first becoming head winemaker, then managing both the vineyards. SUPPLIED

They pledged to honour the legacy of Paul Sr., while moving the winery forward.

Over time, traces of Paul Sr. disappeared from public spaces at the winery. For Boury, it never felt the same after he was gone, so when an exciting opportunity arose in France, it was the right time to transition.

Marco Piccoli, CEO at Château des Charmes, said, "Amélie has a strong legacy as an instrumental contributor not just to Château des Charmes, but the industry overall. She leaves big shoes to fill."

Piccoli said assistant winemaker Jake Achorn will be promoted to winemaker, and Piccoli himself

will take a more hands-on role with winemaking.

Boury will start her own consulting company in France, to take over PY Bubbles from highly regarded consulting winemaker Pierre-Yves Bournerias. He is looking to retire in a year, and has invited Boury to take over his practice.

They'll work together for the first year, before she flies solo. It's quite like her experience with Paul Sr., who at first mentored her, then handed over the reins.

For Boury, "It's a big opportunity. It takes my winemaking career in a new direction. My experience with cool climate winemaking and viticulture, and with many different grape varieties will be a big advantage."

"It's a perfect fit for Amélie, with her expertise in many styles of wine," said Belinda Kemp. She was senior scientist at Brock University's Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute when she and Boury met, and became friends.

"Amélie has a research background and she was an avid supporter of wine research at CCOVI."

Amélie's spouse, Cassandra Weidhaas, has a new opportunity as well. She's an industrial mechanic, and will be working for Perrier Bottling Machines.

Boury has been a valued member of the wine com-

munity in Niagara.

"She's been a great advocate for the industry. She's always been very visible, and a great promoter. She will be sorely missed," said Craig McDonald, a long-time winemaker at Trius, and now an executive at Andrew Peller Ltd.

"I've always respected her for her ability to be the head winemaker, but she's also hands on from viticulture right through to final packaging. I always respect those kinds of winemakers because they're extremely well-rounded and see it from start to finish."

"Amélie has just an incredible amount of energy, and I think that comes through in her wines," he added. "They are very fresh, with some old world complexity. I have a lot of respect for her, as a true winemaker, doing everything"

Peter Gamble, a consulting winemaker in high demand, said, "Amélie has been a tremendous boost to the industry, always out at events. She is a highly skilled professional, and a valued colleague, always ready to help others."

Much as Boury looks ahead to an exciting new chapter, it's still hard to say goodbye. She is very close to her crew of workers from Mexico, and says "it's the hardest thing for me, to leave them."



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# Dads step **behind the gun** at Fort George for Father's Day

Maddy Gordon  
The Lake Report

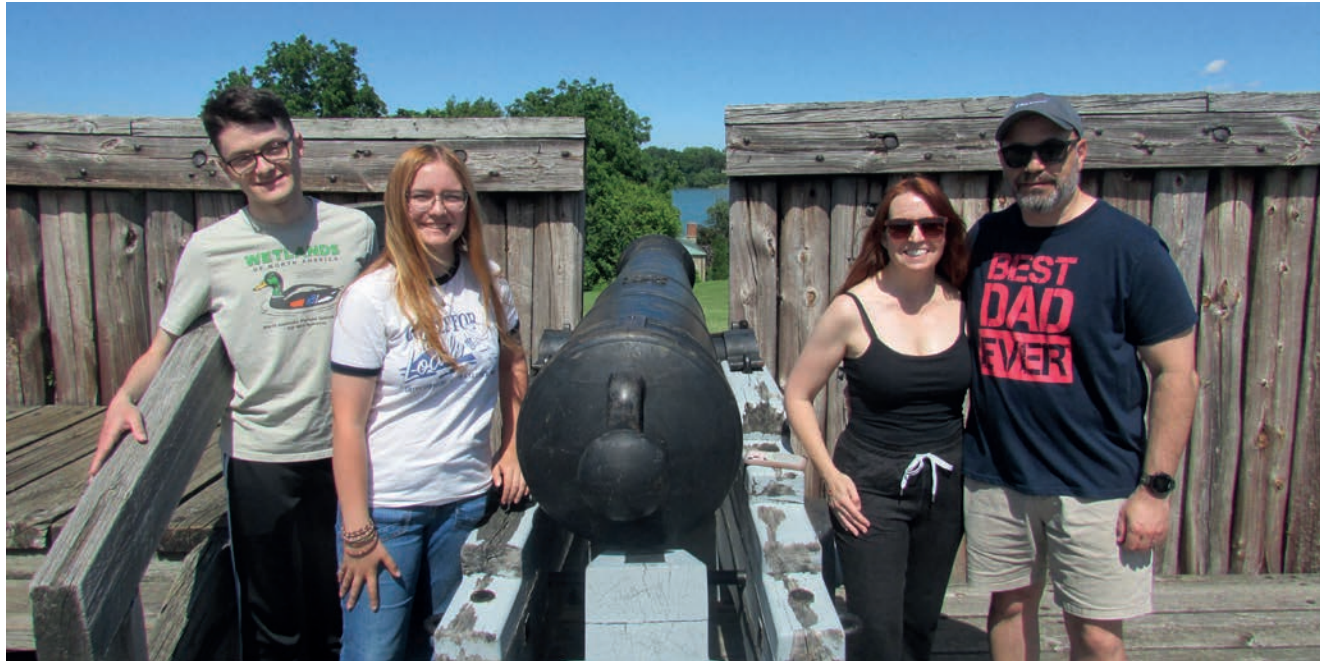
For some, the idea of igniting a 19th-century-style weapon may be intimidating. But for Baird Tucker, it's a "once-in-a-lifetime experience" he couldn't pass up — especially in front of his son.

The family travelled from Buffalo, N.Y., on Sunday to attend Fort George's annual Father's Day celebration, where eight dads get in uniform and fire a cannon used during and around the War of 1812.

Although the gun on site is a replica, the volume and recoil from launching it are as real as it was back then.

"You hear about things like this and to actually fire it, it's momentous," Tucker said. "The cannon kind of jerks back a little bit so you're not really knowing what to expect, but it was amazing."

He went to historical re-enactments with his own dad growing up, making the



Some dads prefer to take it easy on Father's Day. Ralph Arbelo wanted to fire a cannon. He and his family, including children Ben, Sydney and Jenny, came to Fort George from Rochester, N.Y. to take in some Canadian history. MADDY GORDON

experience with his seven-year-old son, Maury, even more special.

"It was great," Maury said, after watching his dad light the artillery and deciding he wants to try it one day.

Like his father, Maury enjoys learning about history,

but he still says "watching my dad do the cannon" was the highlight of his first visit to Fort George.

Site supervisor Dan Laroche says families' reactions to one of their own lighting the gun is a warming part of the experience, but the dads' expressions remain the best

part of his day.

"The cleaning and preparation of the gun are done by the trained crew, because there's a lot that could go wrong," Laroche explained. The dads come in to ignite the gunpowder with a linstock, which acts like a large matchstick.

While Ralph Arbelo, who came with his family from Rochester, N.Y., wasn't able to shoot the cannon on Sunday, he said he would like to come back and try it next year. Still, soaking in the history of the fort was a nice way to spend Father's Day for a fan of history.

"The War of 1812 was something I didn't know a lot about so it was nice coming here and learning about it," he said.

Sydney Arbelo, Ralph's daughter, said his intelligence is one of her favourite things about her dad.

"Unfortunately, he's really smart, and a lot smarter than me. It's really good for trivia but then he outshines me because I'm not as good," Sydney said with a smile.

"He has a great sense of humour," Ben Arbelo said about his dad. "I feel like I can really be myself around him, and I think that's great."

The Father's Day event has grown in popularity since joining the fort's summer schedule, this year selling out its eight spots and earning a waiting list of 10 groups.

This year's final spots were booked around a week before Father's Day, and Laroche anticipates similar interest levels next year.

  
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# Mozart & Mystique: An evening of elegance

## NSO returns to St. Mark's church for spectacular concert and garden party

Some experiences are too special to happen only once.

Following last season's sold-out Garden Party, the Niagara Symphony Orchestra is returning to the heart of Niagara-on-the-Lake for another unforgettable celebration of music, community and charm.

On Friday, Oct. 2, 2026, at 5:30 p.m., the NSO will once again transform the beautiful St. Mark's Church, 41 Byron St., into a destination for music lovers with "Mozart & Mystique – Concert and Garden Party at St. Mark's."

The evening begins with a captivating orchestral performance featuring some of Mozart's most beloved masterpieces alongside the evocative contemporary voice of Canadian composer Kevin Lau. Under the direction of NSO music director Bradley Thachuk, audiences will embark on a musical journey filled with elegance, wonder and emotional depth.

The program opens with Mozart's sparkling *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, a work brimming with grace and timeless charm. Acclaimed Canadian oboist Ari Cohen Mann then takes centre stage in Kevin Lau's atmospheric *Prayer in a Green Cathedral*, a work inspired by the majesty and tranquility of the natural world. The evening concludes with Mozart's dramatic and unforgettable *Symphony No. 40*, one of classical music's most passionate and enduring masterpieces.

And that's only part of the experience.

Following the concert, guests will gather on the picturesque grounds of St. Mark's for an elegant garden

soirée featuring wine, food, live music and the opportunity to mingle with NSO musicians and fellow music lovers. Set against the historic beauty of Niagara-on-the-Lake, the celebration offers a uniquely intimate way to experience the orchestra beyond the concert hall.

A featured highlight of the evening is oboist Ari Cohen Mann, one of Canada's most compelling young artists. Renowned for their expressive musicianship and lyrical artistry, Mann brings warmth and brilliance to every performance, making their appearance at St. Mark's an event not to be missed.

"This is the kind of event that reminds us why live music matters," says NSO music director Bradley Thachuk. "It's about bringing people together, sharing extraordinary music and celebrating the beauty of our community."

One evening. Countless memories. Experience the magic of the Niagara Symphony Orchestra.

Tickets are \$150 and limited in availability. This special event is not included in NSO subscription packages, making it one of the season's most exclusive experiences.

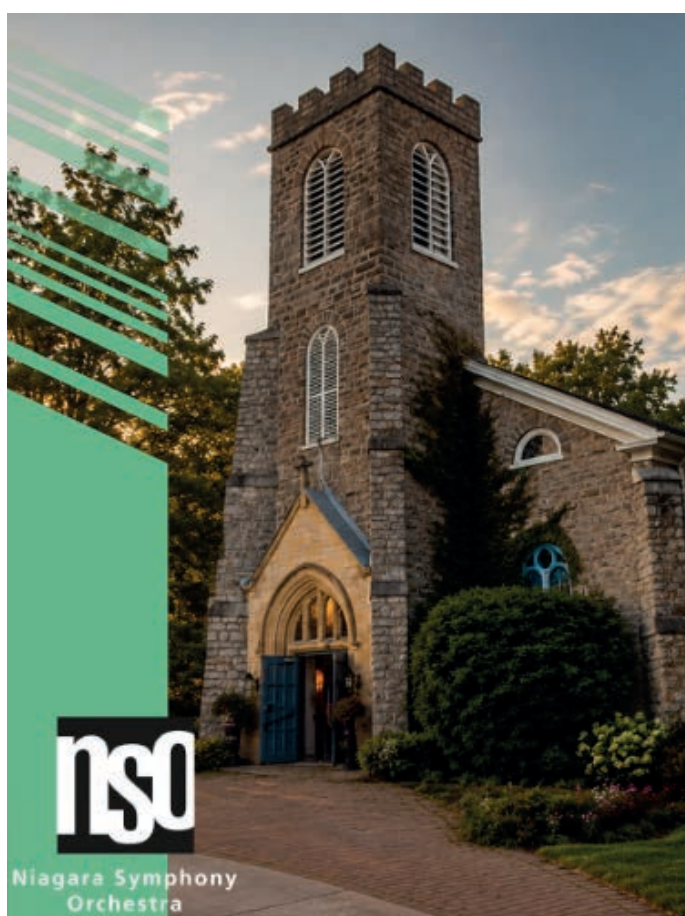
So gather your friends, raise a glass of Niagara wine and join us for an evening where music, conversation and the timeless charm of Niagara-on-the-Lake come together in perfect harmony.

Because on Oct. 2, it's not just a concert — it's an experience.

Reserve your seat today at [niagarasymphony.com](http://niagarasymphony.com).



Canadian oboist Ari Cohen Mann will be featured during the Niagara Symphony Orchestra's "Mozart & Mystique" concert and garden party at St. Mark's Church on Oct. 2. Known for their expressive style and lyrical performances, Mann will perform Kevin Lau's *Prayer in a Green Cathedral*. SUPPLIED PHOTOS



**Mozart Garden Party in NOTL**  
A Special NSO Celebration Event

NSO's wonderful Concert and Garden Party returns at St. Mark's in Niagara On The Lake. Don't miss this beautiful concert in the church and garden Soirée with wine, food, mingling with the musicians, and more music in the beautiful St. Mark's walkway.

**Friday Oct. 2, 2026**  
Concert at 5:30pm  
Garden Party to Follow

**Event Pass \$150**

To purchase your pass please visit [www.niagarasymphony.com](http://www.niagarasymphony.com).



Niagara Symphony Orchestra



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## 'Gardener's Garden Tour' is July 11

Staff  
The Lake Report

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society is inviting residents and visitors to slow down and enjoy some "green therapy" during its annual Gardener's Garden Tour on July 11.

The self-guided tour will feature eight private gardens across Niagara-on-the-Lake, showcasing a variety of landscaping styles, flower beds, water features and garden designs.

Organizers say the event offers visitors a chance to explore some of the community's most carefully cultivated gardens while gathering ideas and inspiration for their own outdoor spaces.

Proceeds from the tour will support three scholarships as well as the horticultural society's community outreach programs.

A special feature of this year's event is a bonsai exhibition presented by members of the Niagara Bonsai



Participants can explore eight carefully cultivated private gardens on July 11. FILE

Society. Visitors will be able to view miniature trees cultivated using traditional Chinese and Japanese techniques and learn more about the art form from experienced growers.

The tour will also include a stop at Ronald Boaks Gal-

lery, where sculptures are displayed throughout the gallery's garden setting.

Experienced home gardeners will be available throughout the day to answer questions, and master gardeners will be on hand to provide advice and

gardening tips for visitors of all skill levels.

The Gardener's Garden Tour runs from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, July 11.

Tickets and tour information are available through the Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society.



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# Watch the **World Cup final** at community centre in July

Staff  
The Lake Report

Whether they call it soccer or football, cheer for Ronaldo or Messi, or just hope their favourite team makes it to the next round of the tournament, fans of the beautiful game will be in high spirits for the next several weeks as this year's FIFA World Cup continues in Canada, the United States and Mexico.

As soccer fans count down the days until the final match of the tournament, set for Sunday, July 19 in New Jersey, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, in partnership with the Farmworker Hub at Cornerstone Community Church, is inviting residents and seasonal farmworkers to gather for a community viewing of the championship match at the NOTL Community Centre.

Doors will open at 2:30 p.m., with town greetings are scheduled for 2:45 p.m., followed by kickoff at 3



French soccer superstar Kylian Mbappé, captain of the France men's national team. SOURCED

p.m. in the facility's auditorium.

Organizers say the gathering was inspired by ideas from community members and the lord mayor, with a focus on fostering inclusion, connection and shared

celebration through sport. The event is open to all soccer fans and is intended to bring together residents and seasonal farmworkers in a welcoming, family-friendly setting.

Brittney Kranz, lead co-

ordinator of the Farmworker Hub, says she's thrilled for this event to bring together NOTL's seasonal farmworkers and its residents.

"The response from our friends on the farms has been overwhelmingly posi-

tive, and many are looking forward to coming together to celebrate this exciting event," she said in a media release. "This event is a wonderful opportunity to build community, celebrate the spirit of the game and

bring people together from across Niagara-on-the-Lake."

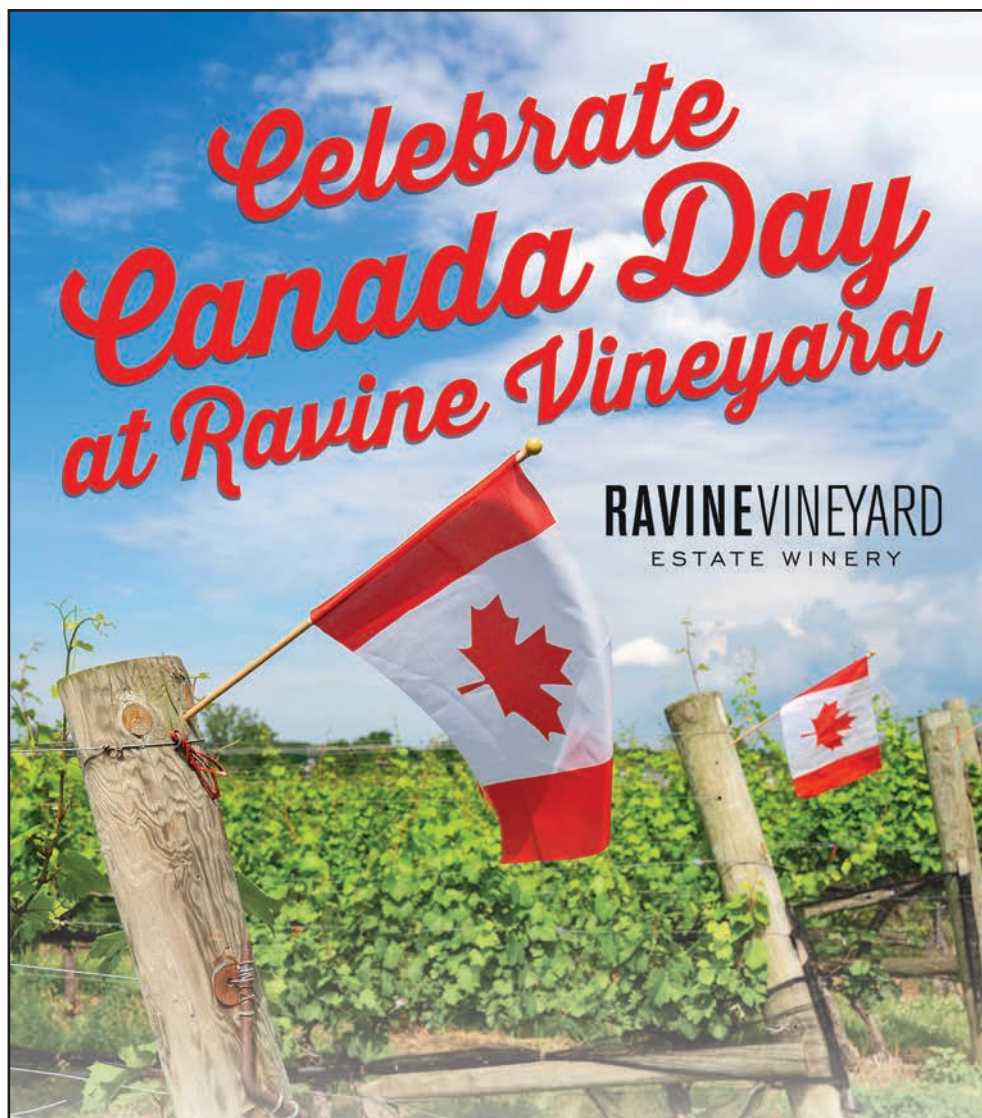
"Sport has a unique ability to connect people from different backgrounds, and we are pleased to support an opportunity for residents and members of our farmworker community to gather, celebrate soccer and build relationships," said Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa.

Attendees will be able to watch the championship match on a large screen, enjoy free refreshments and snacks and visit an information table hosted by the Farmworker Hub highlighting local community services. A draw will also be held during the event, with one participant selected at random to receive a gift basket.

To help ensure accessibility, transportation will be provided for farmworkers travelling from Cornerstone Community Church to the community centre. Designated bicycle parking will also be available on site.


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# Niagara Thunderhawks fly high

The Niagara Thunderhawks had an impressive showing at the Jess Bates Memorial Tournament in Brantford, where the U11 team scored a 5-4 win over the Sarnia Pacers on June 14 to clinch the big tournament win. It was an intense back-and-forth between the two teams, with the Thunderhawks scoring their winning goal with a minute and 23 seconds left to go in the game. The roster of players, from left: Wyatt McGowan, Kenny Neuhoof, Auston Cwierniewski, Bennett Hope, Lachlan Grant, Reece Nichols, Adrian Hao, Hunter Willms, Hendrix Paradise, Colton Ferguson (goalie), Harry Neale, Hunter Konopka (goalie), Brock Friesen, Mason Laselva. SUPPLIED



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JULY 1, NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE



# Celebrate Canada Day 2026

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**SIMCOE PARK**  
**11:00 AM - 3 PM**  
Rotary Club of NOTL BBQ Lunch

- Live music, kids entertainment, face painters, a stilt walker, and Bluey mascot!
- Antique car display, Tiny Museum



**FORT GEORGE**  
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**4 PM**  
Food Services at Fort George

**6:30 PM - Evening Program begins:**

- Kiddie Militia and drill
- The 41st Regiment Fife & Drum Corps
- Musket Demonstrations

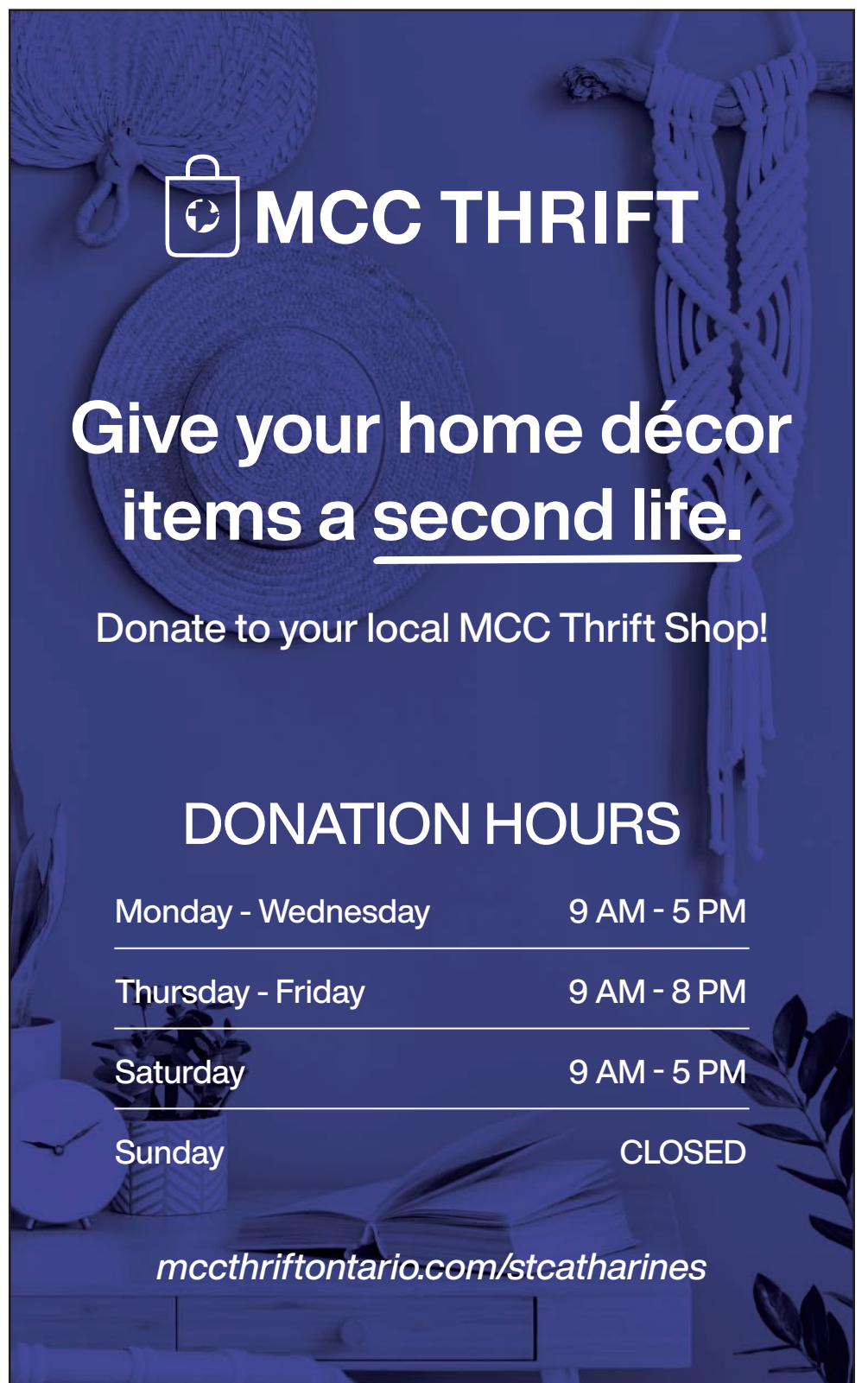



**QUEEN STREET**  
**3 PM**  
The giant "Cake Parade" featuring the 41st Regiment Fife & Drum Corps which will accompany the cake back to Simcoe Park to be sliced and served at aprox. 3:30 pm.

The Cake Parade is made possible through the generous support from: Tourism Niagara-on-the-Lake, Rotary Club of NOTL, Phil's Independent, Erwin Wiens Vinyards and Lion's Club of Niagara, Friends of Fort George. Cake created by: Willow Cakes & Pastries

**10 PM**  
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## Gay couple has always felt at home in NOTL

*Continued from Front Page*

came quickly. "From the moment we arrived, we immediately felt embraced by our neighbours and our broader community."

That welcome, they said, did not take long to feel real.

"Being gay was never a barrier when it came to meeting people and cultivating friendships — in fact, it was quite the opposite," Lamanna said. "We were overwhelmed by how positive, welcoming and accepting the residents of NOTL were."

The couple had been visiting NOTL for years before moving here.

One of their favourite places was Caroline Cellars, where the hospitality and "comfort food" made it feel like a home away from home.

Lamanna now works there part-time as a wine bar tasting associate and called it "a place where that same feeling of family and camaraderie has continued," she said.

Meanwhile, Peters, an avid golfer, found her place at the historic Niagara-on-



Tracey Peters, left, and Anna Lamanna stand on their back deck in NOTL with their rescue Spanish Galgos, Gaia, left, and Reme. The married couple moved to town just over two years ago and say they have felt welcomed by the community from the moment they arrived. SUPPLIED

the-Lake Golf Club.

Since becoming a member, she has joined women's leagues and Solheim events and has been asked to join the club's social committee.

The couple said Peters has developed friendships with women of all ages and has felt "immediately accepted and genuinely embraced" by members, both men and women.

"We have experienced kindness, inclusiveness and genuine friendship (by both women and men), which has

deepened our appreciation for NOTL," they said.

Their life in town also includes their two rescue Galgos Español, a breed of Spanish greyhound.

Lamanna has travelled to Spain several times as a flight patron, bringing dogs home to Canada for adoptive families.

In NOTL, the couple has friends in Old Town and elsewhere in the region who share their passion for the breed. They regularly walk through town with the dogs,

often drawing attention from passersbys because of their calm demeanour and regal appearance, Lamanna said.

She said those walks have become another way to meet people and talk about adoption.

The couple also has a 30-year-old daughter who visits often. They said she loves coming to NOTL and says she feels like she is on vacation every time she visits.

Their home backs onto a vineyard and their daughter says it feels like being in Italy, the country of their descent.

For Lamanna and Peters, the town has become exactly what they were looking for: a place where they could retire, stay involved and be fully themselves.

The people they now call friends, they said, are forward thinkers who have embraced them with open minds and open hearts.

"We were looking for a community that offered a true sense of belonging and feeling at home, and NOTL provided exactly that," Lamanna said.

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

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# What's on for **Canada Day** in NOTL

Staff  
The Lake Report

Get ready to make a wish and blow out the candles, Canada — you're turning 159.

The celebration of this country's foundation is set for next week, on Wednesday, July 1, and it's expected that downtown Niagara-on-the-Lake will be awash in a sea of red and white.

With NOTL being, in many ways, the breeding ground for the creation of Canada as a sovereign nation, the festivities are always aplenty, and this year is likely to be no exception.

Here's what's happening in town on Canada Day:

Free admission at Fort George

A significant landmark in NOTL's military history, the Fort George National Historic Site will be free to enter on Canada Day, with activities taking place at the fort all day from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Visitors can tour the buildings (until 5 p.m.), visit with costumed interpreters, enjoy a musket demonstration and more. From 2 to 4 p.m., there will be cold



Once again, a giant cake will feed thousands of people at Simcoe Park on Canada Day at 3 p.m. FILE

drinks and treats inside the fort, followed by food services starting at 4 p.m.

From there, evening entertainment will get underway at 6:30 p.m., with the kiddie militia and drill, followed by a presentation by the Fort George Infantry and Fife and Drump Corps. After that, the Howling Horns will take to the stage to put on a show featuring blues, dance, classic rock and more.

Finally, round off the evening with a spectacular

fireworks display at 10 p.m., closing off the fort's celebration of Canada Day.

BBQ at Simcoe Park

NOTL's downtown park will play host to a party put on by the Rotary Club of Niagara-on-the-Lake, running from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

At Simcoe Park, enjoy a barbecue lunch, including pulled pork on a bun, Canadian burgers, veggie burgers, jumbo hot dogs and corn on the cob, plus chips and something to drink.

The BBQ will include

live music and kids entertainment, including face painters, a stilt walker and a special appearance from everyone's friendly Australian canine friend, a mascot Bluey.

Alongside all this, there will be rows of antique cars set up at the park for display. And, for the history fans, expect an appearance of the NOTL Museum's Tiny Museum, a mobile version of the town's museum — hundreds of years of history in a seven-by-16-foot house.

Cake Parade on Queen

Sweet-toothed residents and visitors will no doubt be looking forward to a key feature of Canada Day in Niagara-on-the-Lake: the annual cake parade on Queen Street.

A giant cake will be touted through the downtown core in a large Canada Day parade, accompanied by the 41st Regiment Fire and Drum Corps.

The elaborately decorated cake, made each year by Willow Cakes, will tour through the streets before making its way to Simcoe Park, sliced up and served to everyone for free.



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 **SPORTS**

## Robitaille dominates women's 18-hole league at NOTL Golf Club

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

Reigning club champion Louise Robitaille was on top of her game Tuesday in 18-hole women's league play at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club.

Her impressive low gross score of 81 was the best of the day, ahead of Yolanda Henry (95) and Lisa Allen and Cathy Murray (96).

Robitaille also nailed her tee shot on #4 closest to the pin, repeated the feat on #13 on the back nine and bombed the longest drive on #15.

She also had the second-lowest net score (74) behind Murray (72). Marg Ketcheson, May Chang, Robin Foster and Allen tied for third with 76.

As if that wasn't enough, Robitaille also had a hot putter, tying with Judy Mantle, Marie Ellison, Allen and Henry for second-fewest putts needed over 18 holes.



Louise Robitaille was red-hot on Tuesday during the NOTL Golf Club's 18-hole women's league competition.  
FILE/ RON PLANCHE

Ketcheson led all players, needing just 31 putts. Margot Richardson, Foster and Murray were third-best with 33.

Other winners included Sue Gagne (for sinking the longest putt on #8) and Foster and Henry, who carded birdies on #7 and #8 respectively.

Cathy Saytar had the best score in Tuesday's nine-hole women's league, shooting 49. Sally Miller, Deborah

Williams and Carolyn Cochrane were a shot behind at 50.

Cochrane also had the longest drive on #3 and Saytar was closest to the pin in two on #7.

As well, last week, Julie Smethurst was crowned the Captain's Cup winner for having the lowest net score.

Petra Browning's 43 was the best gross score in the Monday's business women's league.

Other winners were: Christine Merza (longest drive on #1), Angela Redekop (closest to the 150 marker on #2), Mary Beccario (closest to the pin on #4), Cheryl Yamamoto (longest putt sank on #7) and Dee Calder (closest to the pin in two shots on #9).

Last Thursday's men's league competition was rained out. The men's Woofs league will hold its annual Canada Day team scramble next Tuesday, June 30.



### St. Andrew's Presbyterian Strawberry Festival Committee & Congregation Thanks You!

The 2026 Strawberry Festival Committee from St. Andrews Presbyterian Church would like to express our appreciation to the Niagara Community and Visitors for making our 41st Festival on June 20, 2026 another successful event. We would like to make a special mention to those businesses and organizations that gave a helping hand to the Festival Committee in preparation for this important fundraising event to maintain the upkeep of the historic Church and continue outreach programs in our great community.

#### Thank You:

- Seaway Farms
- Harvest Barn St. Catharines
- Tigchelaar Berry Farms
- Independent Grocer Queen Street NOTL
- The Niagara on the Lake Tiny Museum
- Simpsons Pharmacy
- Christian Assembly Hall
- Jack Custers from Your TV The Source & The Cogeco Team
- The Town of Niagara on the Lake
- The Region of Niagara
- The Lake Report

And all of those who so graciously donated to our Silent Auction, Bake Table and New Vintage Booths.

# NOTL Class of 2026



Aiden Harber  
Grade 12, A.N. Myer



Aine O'Neill  
Grade 12, Holy Cross



Amelia Walton  
Grade 8, Royal Oak School



Andrew "Drew" Blythe  
Niagara Nursery School



Aspen Ziraldo  
Grade 8, Royal Oak School



Austin Puffer  
Grade 8, Royal Oak School



Finnegan Campbell, Grade 12,  
Niagara Christian Collegiate



Isaiah Lewis  
Grade 12, Holy Cross



Kaitlyn Mae Polgrabia  
Grade 8, St. Micheal



Kyla Kurflan  
Grade 8, Royal Oak School



Madelyn Stewart, Kindergarten,  
St. Davids Public School



Michael Alexander Collins  
Grade 8, St. Michael



Morgan Mitchell  
Grade 12, Eden High School



Nathan Van de Laar, Bachelor of  
Commerce, University of Guelph



Nimratpal Saraan, Bachelor of  
Science, George Brown



Olive Phillips  
Grade 8, Royal Oak School



Sheldon Walker  
Grade 12, Holy Cross



Sophie Cadeau  
Grade 12, Governor Simcoe



Sophie Kassam  
Grade 8, Ridley College



Vivian Hull  
Grade 8, Royal Oak School



Zara Hamer  
Grade 8, Royal Oak School

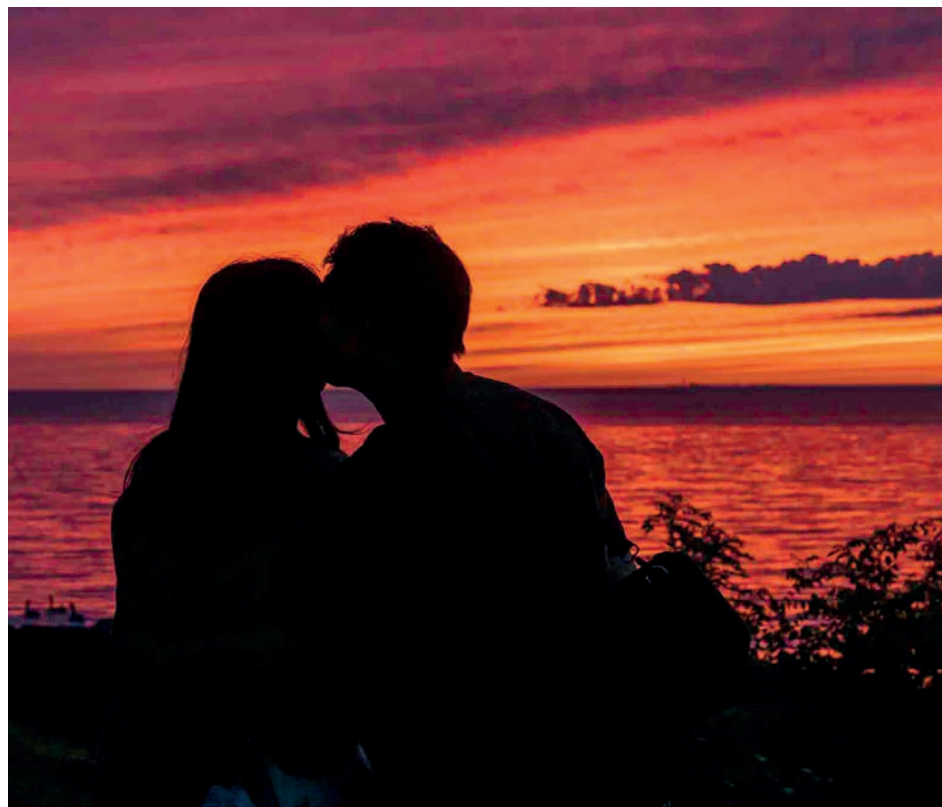
## Congratulations!

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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## Solstice romance

A couple shares a kiss during a solstice sunset at Mississauga Beach, silhouetted against the glowing sky on the longest evening of the year. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

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**BKind Grateful** #81: Be punctual. Respecting someone's time is a form of kindness

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



Contributed by **Patty Garriock**

"What we learn to do, we learn by doing."  
- Aristotle

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## Slow down, you're movin' too fast



Kevin MacLean  
Editor Emeritus

Maybe lightning really can strike twice.  
 Driving back to Niagara-on-the-Lake this past Saturday about 10:30 p.m., motoring along Highway 55 between the airport and Virgil, I was extra vigilant as my wife sat in the backseat, our 13-month-old granddaughter sound asleep beside her.

Exactly a week earlier, on the same stretch of road, I'd had to dodge an oncoming car that was passing a long line of other vehicles in the conga line leaving town after another day in paradise.

I didn't expect to see it happen again, but, unfortunately, the traffic gods (or goons?) had other ideas. What are the odds? And what's the hurry?

That first driver, headlights excessively bright, was using our side of the road to zoom past several other cars — except there seemed to be no room for him to get back in to the proper lane in time.

Clearly seeing two pairs of headlights coming your

way when you're on a two-lane road is more than a little disconcerting.

When this guy first pulled out, it appeared he had less than 500 feet of asphalt before it would be too late. And on a road with dozens of cars moving quickly, it could have been disastrous. Is the hurry worth it?

When drivers are hurtling toward each other at 80 km/h (or more), each vehicle covers almost 75 feet per second. So, seconds actually do count and there's little time to avoid calamity. So, even at 1,000 feet apart, the two will meet in the middle in six to seven seconds.

Thank goodness for the one-metre-wide paved shoulders on that section of Highway 55. I hit the brakes and moved to the right (as I think the car behind me did, though there really wasn't time to check).

With the middle of the road clear, my car and the oncoming one missed each other by a second or two and he went on his merry way while we continued toward Old Town.

It all happened so quickly, there was only time to react. No time to think or analyze.

The previous Saturday, things seemed even closer to disaster, the closing speed felt faster, when the out-bound driver straddled the

centre line as he squeezed past our car. I think a few choice words were uttered by yours truly.

Yes, for the most part outside the urban areas, Highway 55 allows vehicles to pass (when it is safe to do so, as the statute suggests), and these drivers in a huge hurry presumably were visitors trying to get home after a long day at the Shaw or Strawberry Festival or touring wine country etc.

I write this fully knowing that I might sound like yet another "whine country" complainer wondering if we're not all headed to hell in a proverbial handcart.

But locals are not immune to lousy driving practices.

In between these two incidents, last Tuesday afternoon there was the (thankfully empty) school bus that opted for an illegal "Idaho Stop" as its driver rolled through the stop sign and turned left onto 55 from the vicinity of the NOTL Public Library. Really? Why the hurry?

A few kilometres down the road the bus joined the line outside Crossroads Public School to pick up kids at the end of the day.

No big deal, perhaps, but the driver's unnecessary hastiness caused cars to hit the brakes. Hope that never happens when the bus is full.

I've been doing a lot more driving around Niagara and

the GTA of late, and anecdotally at least, am seeing a lot more head-shaking driving decisions. Whether it's lane jumpers, high-speed tailgaters or mid-lining motorcyclists, everyone seems in a hurry.

Then there are the drivers with blindingly bright headlights (sometimes they've mistakenly activated high beams) or the crazy number of people driving at night with no lights, only "marker" lights or just daytime running lights.

On the roads around NOTL, the problems are not just caused by tourists or visitors or whatever you choose to label the folks who keep our town's economy humming.

The speeding and erratic driving we've all witnessed (or been guilty of) on our rural concessions and lines — and even on the narrow laneways of Chautauqua, where I happen to live — is largely locals who know their way around.

The tourists are the ones moving at the speed limit (or less) as they take in the sights.

But seriously, what's the hurry? Barring an emergency, is shaving a few seconds or even several minutes off your trip really worth the risk?

Can't we all just relax a bit and enjoy life, while we can?

kevin@niagaranow.com

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## Hosted rentals don't 'hollow out' our town

Dear editor:

As a former bed & breakfast operator in town and as a past chair of the NOTL Bed & Breakfast Association (2006 to 2008), I read the article "Arch-i-text: Where is the cap on short-term rentals in NOTL?" (The Lake Report, June 18) with some interest.

Frankly, my reaction to it was to be offended. Here are a few comments to explain why.

When we opened our B&B in 2002, there were three types of short-term accommodation being offered in private homes: one to three bedrooms in hosted B&Bs; four or more bedrooms in hosted country

inns; and unhosted accommodation in usually smaller three bedroom houses around town.

There were approximately 330 licences issued by the town in 2003-04, of which about 25 were inactive and about 50 were of the unhosted "cottage" accommodation type.

In season, there was frequently unmet demand for simpler accommodation at prices below those at local hotels.

Those of us on the hosted accommodation side were inspected annually by bylaw enforcement, the fire department and Niagara Regional Health.

We had regulatory and

business reasons for keeping our properties in excellent condition all the time.

And we were there all the time, and again for business reasons, were likely more knowledgeable about the town and its attractions than the general public.

Our private dwellings frequently drew higher property assessments than other nearby comparables.

Simply put, the allegations about hollowing out and the loss of neighbours didn't apply then and doesn't apply now to hosted short-term rentals.

In the 2003-05 period, the town was laser focused on tightening the regulations for hosted accommodation.

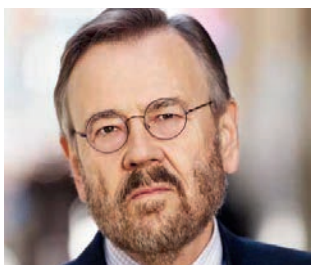
They thought that the problem was in that sector.

In 2007-08, the Bed & Breakfast Association briefed then-lord mayor Gary Burroughs and chief administrative officer Lew Holloway for about an hour on our perception that the more relaxed regulatory environment for unhosted short-term rentals was being seen as an invitation by some to move into the unhosted market. It was more lucrative and less regulated.

In my opinion, town councils and town staff then and since that time should be held accountable for where the town is today.

**Kenn Moody  
NOTL**

## Hitting the bottom in NOTL



### THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner  
Columnist

Well, the house on the corner in Old Town is still for sale. Since this pathetic weekly column started (you're reading No. 99), it has sat fully renovated yet deeply unloved. Prime location. No cigar.

It's all about price, of course. The first MLS listing was for \$3.9 million. Three years later it sits at \$3.65 million. That lowly six per cent discount in a few dozen months is not enough for Mr. Market. To sell these days a house must be worth about a third less than in the nutso post-COVID days of 2022.

We're back to more than 3,000 houses listed for sale across Niagara. That's pushing a record. Last month only 565 sold, down 10 per cent from the year before. Not so hot.

"With Niagara's sales-to-listings ratio for May landing at 36 per cent, our regional market is staying firmly planted in a buyer's market," says the local real

estate board. "But it's not all doom and gloom friends: the current market reveals the silver lining of an excellent opportunity for those wanting to enter the housing market, and those upsizing."

Aren't realtors predictable? There's always a silver lining. But that's understandable. Scared people don't buy houses. Unless they smell a bargain.

This is where NOTL is different, unique. Not like those tatty 'hoods in the Falls or the Kitty. The average selling price across Niagara is \$575,300 — down eight per cent from last spring. But in NOTL the average leaps to \$861,300 (compared to \$935,000 last year). In the Old Town, the million mark is easily breached.

"We're halfway through the spring market," says realtor Angelika Zammit, "and homes over \$2 million have gained traction." She says in April, a fifth of houses listed for sale found buyers. Last month that increased to 40 per cent. And she claims that "prices have stabilized."

Bad news for the first-time kiddos who thought they could buy a million-dollar place for half-off. This also jives with what TD economist Robert Kavcuc says — that "the price destruction is over."

Agent Greg Sykes agrees NOTL has stopped falling.



While house prices in NOTL have tumbled, real estate here is, on average, 50% more expensive than the rest of Niagara. A buyers' market — so where are they?

"I don't believe we're seeing a broad rebound in prices yet, but I also don't see evidence of a significant further decline," he says. "In many segments, prices appear to be stabilizing after the correction we've experienced over the past few years. Buyers have become more comfortable with today's interest rates, and many have accepted that waiting for dramatically lower rates may not be a winning strategy."

Realistically, buyers who want a house (and can afford one) are now in a time where prices have dropped, inventory is plentiful, competition is scarce, mortgage rates are stable, sellers are motivated (sometimes desperate), bidding wars are rare and conditional offers are a thing again.

Yeah, a buyer's market. So where are they?

"There are plenty of active buyers who are looking," says Bosley broker Patrick Burke. "The challenge is that the current

listing inventory is clearly divided into two camps. Using broad brushstrokes, the properties that are priced accurately are selling in two or three weeks. The others are hanging around for three or four months."

Sykes agrees. "Pricing remains everything. The days of 'testing the market' with an aspirational price are largely behind us. Homes that hit the market at the right price generate activity quickly, while overpriced listings often sit and become stale."

And what about the big picture? Why would people be afraid to purchase something they want and costs a whack less than two years ago?

Well, the economy has flatlined. Trump's war went badly. Inflation is back, so interest rates won't be falling. That trade deal with the U.S. may be cooked. And lots of folks are afraid AI will eat their jobs in the next year or two — a big worry especially for white-collar locals who work remotely instead of trekking to the Big Smoke.

But people still want houses. And, of course, everyone wants to live here. The realtors are pumped.

Just bring cash. *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: ALL ALONE

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

Last issue category: CLOTHES TIME

Clue: U.S. aircrews in B-17s & B-24s popularized this style of often sheepskin-lined flight jacket in World War II.

Answer: What is a bomber jacket?

Answered first by: Gary Davis

Also answered correctly (in order) by:  
Sue Rautenberg, Alison Parsons, Susan Hamilton, Bob Wheatley, Lynda Collet, Adam Nyp, Jane Andersen, Claudia Grimwood, Emma Balsas, Margaret Garaughty, Catherine Clarke, Gordon Yanow, Donna Pearce, Heather Hannan, Esther VanGorder, Nick D'Amore, Jim Baird, Howard Jones, Sylvia Wiens, Katie Reimer, Rob Hutchison, Jim Dandy, Sheila Meloche, Nancy Rocca

Email answers to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto: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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# NOTL becoming a **tourist circus**

Dear editor:  
I have been coming to NOTL for many years to garden and ride my bicycle with a friend who has a home here.  
I have the following questions:  
Why is this town council allowing such unattractive development? Why do they want large, ugly hotels in residential areas?  
Why do they want another hotel on Rand Estate to destroy the natural

beauty and tree canopy of this place?  
Why build a hotel with huge windows then block the view with another box building?  
Why allow such large homes to be built to property line and dwarf neighbours? Why cut old mature trees for bicycle paths when there are lots of trails already?  
Why was old theatre not saved maybe as a movie theatre or coffee house?

Why was a new one not built in field beside existing theatres?  
Why is hospital site not turned into a seniors' home? What kind of planners and council allow this to happen?  
Is everyone in the pockets of Doug Ford or some developer? Is this town just about money? Can this town not be saved from turning into a "tourist circus"?  
**Richard Mitchell**  
*Kawartha Lakes*

## We welcome your letters

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



# Amalgamation or not, we need **cost savings**

Dear editor:  
The March 12 issue The Lake Report had an opinion piece regarding amalgamation authored by David Israelson ("If NOTL doesn't want amalgamation, what do we want?"). He stated:  
"To its credit, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Residents Association quickly came up with a position paper opposing amalgamation, based on research into whether it would save NOTL taxpayers money. Hint: it won't."

The residents association was contacted regarding this supposed research, and it by and large hadn't done any current analysis to determine if there might be cost benefits to be had in an amalgamation.  
The residents association based its "position" largely on information and studies that were 26-plus years old. There wasn't any analysis of the financial/infrastructure/economic situation today in Niagara's municipalities for applicability or relevance. Perhaps they feel that nobody learns from their



Letter writer Gienek Ksiazkiewicz says surely there's a way to find cost savings without amalgamation. FILE

mistakes and history repeats itself.  
Anyway, in my opinion, David Israelson's conclusion was incorrect and he gave the wrong impression of the the residents association to the readers of The Lake Report.  
To be clear, I'm not for amalgamation, (I'm for a ward system where each of Niagara-on-the-Lake's residential areas are represented by an elected officials based on population) but surely there must be cost savings without an amalgamation. Perhaps some sort of consolidation of services amongst all the municipalities within the Niagara Region?

Harry Schlange (17 years in municipal governments) has stated that there were \$250 million of savings to be had through some sort of a consolidation process.  
We know that developers are utilizing our existing infrastructure but are not financing the needed infrastructure expansions needed to accommodate their developments. We have a massive infrastructure deficit.  
The result is NOTL taxpayers are going to foot this infrastructure deficit. We're doing it now. Cost savings are needed somewhere, or we're going to be taxed to death.  
**Gienek Ksiazkiewicz**  
*St. Davids*

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Thursdays 2pm - 3:30pm at NOTL Public Library

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# The world's first trillionaire and the rise of **rule by riches**



Keith McNenly  
Special to The Lake Report

In modern English, the word “oligarch” surged with coverage of post-Soviet privatization and Russian oligarchs placed in control over strategic institutions and industries.

The rise of oligarchs in capitalist societies differs from Russia in origin, but not in outcome. Their story typically begins not with a fire-sale transfer of state assets to political friends, but with entrepreneurship, and early control of valuable markets. The difference often ends there: government policy and public money can accelerate their growth, as government regulators decline to check monopolization.

Once established, capitalist oligarchs use scale and capital to buy up competitors, dominate emerging

technologies, and shape the rules of the market to protect their position: cultivating influence through lobbying, lavish campaign support, and are rewarded with privileged access, and approvals such as corporate mergers.

Citizens feel this in rising prices for goods and services, wage stagnation, loss of opportunity, but most acutely when consolidation reaches information systems: ownership of news, television, cable, and major social media platforms, eliminating effective competition and punishing opposing viewpoints.

The world now has its first trillionaire in the form of American businessman Elon Musk, a single individual whose personal power rivals that of many nations. Unelected and effectively unaccountable, his preferences could produce near-sovereign consequences.

He is the first member of a new exclusivity, a club that under present conditions of influence could cast the middle class into rising levels of penury.

To grasp the scale, imagine someone possessing



Elon Musk in the U.S. Oval Office with President Donald Trump last May, pre-disbandment of the Department of Government Efficiency. WIKIMEDIA

one trillion dollars at the time of Jesus Christ's birth. Even spending \$1 million every day for roughly two millennia, they would still need almost 750 more years to run out — and that ignores investment returns. Compounded income alone could exceed the GDP of many countries.

A trillion dollars could materially relieve a health-care delivery crisis or expand housing supply. Concentrated in one person's hands, however, that hoard is often economically inert, reinforcing inequality and undermining the conditions that sustain a growing middle class.

Oligarchs are now harnessing their newest tool: AI.

When concentrated under corrupt leadership and deployed primarily to enhance private wealth rather than the public good, the consequences are unlikely to be benign.

The earliest effects are already visible in social media's ability to shape public discourse, amplifying narratives that benefit oligarchs and their political leaders, accelerating wealth accumulation while deepening a cult like following.

Social media has traveled a long way from its early promise of simple connection — grandparents sharing photos of their grandkids and family vacation updates.

Social media is increasingly turning its attention to a highly lucrative target: children.

There is no historical or medical precedent that fully prepares us for how early, sustained addiction to algorithmic feeds may reshape development, transforming carefree childhood into a monetized life of attention capture, and we do not yet

know what outcomes will follow as these children reach adulthood. Think of Mao Zedong's cultural revolution “re-education” propaganda camps — but self-serve.

As manipulation scales, reality becomes harder to verify while truth and fiction blur. That is not a reliable environment for the developing minds of coming generations.

In this environment, almost any social media message, good or bad, flattering or condemning, should first be dismissed as manipulation, engineered for profitable clicks. As need of that cynicism becomes pervasive, trust collapses and shared reality fractures.

Nature offers opportunity and imposes constraint in equal measure. Politics often favours only the merest few without balance or constraint. Like a cancer that metastasizes and consumes the body, oligarchy is spreading through the body politic, feeding on political favour, gathering wealth off the backs of the middle class worker.

The remedy is deliberate regulation: democracies

must ensure no individual, firm, or network can dominate markets, buy government consent at scale through media, or AI.

Without hard boundaries including progressive taxation and dissolution of monopolies, oligarchy will continue to deconstruct society until elections, law, and truth become historical artifacts.

Canada is on the right track, starting with regulations to protect children's developing minds from the algorithms of social media. Let's not stop there.

Shared reality is already under attack. Cheap AI can forge convincing video and audio in seconds, turning history from an anchor into quicksand: nothing in social media can be trusted without skepticism's critical examination.

In that world, the most outrageous lie will outcompete the most obvious truth.

The question isn't whether this machinery can be built; it already is.

*Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Keith McNenly was the chief administrator of the Town of Mono for 41 years.*



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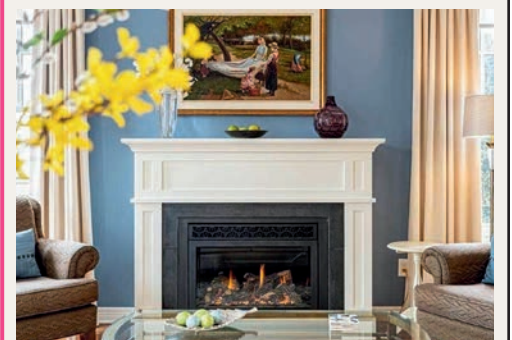
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# Half our vacation rentals are **empty** in slow season



**ARCHITEXT**

Brian Marshall  
Columnist

To wrap our arms around the short-term rental issue, it may be worthwhile to look at some hard numbers.

According to the list of licensed short term rentals published by the town on its municipal website, as of June 2026, there are — based on my count — a total of 385 active short-term rental licenses in place; an increase of 95 active licenses over the 290 short-term rental licenses issued in 2022.

Expressed as a percentage, this represents a growth in short term rentals within the municipality of 32.8 per cent over the four-year period between 2022 and 2026. It's interesting to note that over the same four years, the town's population grew by a mere 5.3 per cent from 19,200 to 20,220.

Now, to drill down

further, it becomes necessary to understand how the administration and current short-term rental bylaw (#2025-032 signed into law on May 27, 2025) of the Town of Niagara on the Lake have defined a "short-term rental" and five iterations of same.

Beginning with the official definition of a short-term rental in the bylaw: "the use of a building for overnight guest lodging for a period of not more than 28 days and includes bed and breakfast establishments, cottage rentals, villas, country inns and vacation apartments."

So, my quick and dirty interpretation of the official definitions relative to the five short-term rental classifications — using the bylaw's alphabetical format — that fall within the current bylaw are as follows:

A "bed and breakfast" is a detached dwelling with a maximum of three guest bedrooms for temporary lodging (less than 28 days) for visitors to the town. The owner of the property must use it as a principal residence and the bed and breakfast operation is an "ancillary use" of the dwelling.

Conversely, a "cottage rental" is a single-detached



One of 201 licensed cottage rentals in NOTL. FILE

dwelling of up to three bedrooms, which is not owner-occupied, that may be rented to visitors and vacationers to NOTL under a single booking for a maximum of 28 days.

While a "country inn" must be owner (or contracted operator) occupied and may vary between three and six rented rooms, dependent upon its urban/rural location within NOTL subject to site specific zoning provisions.

The "vacation apartment" category is quite simple: the licensed short-term rental apartment dwelling unit must be above a correctly zoned commercial space

and the 28 day single booking limitation applies.

Finally, a "villa" has been defined as a single detached dwelling unit with more than four bedrooms (in the agricultural-zoned district limited to six bedrooms) but without the requirement for owner or contracted operator occupation.

Returning to the official list of licensed short term rentals, by my rough count, the town has issued short-term rental licences for 19 villas, 14 country inns, 25 vacation apartments, 126 bed and breakfast establishments and 201 cottage rentals; the last category

representing over half (approximately 52 per cent) of all current licences.

And, while it appears that the number of hosted bed and breakfast establishments has declined since 2022, when the then-president of the B&B Association, John Foreman, pegged the number of licensed bed and breakfasts at 150, the expansion in NOTL's licenced short-term rental sector is clearly due to a rise in offerings that are not owner-occupied.

This is a trend that robs the community of dwellings that would otherwise be in the long-term rental market, states a 2024 study co-authored by David Wachsmuth of McGill and Cloé St-Hilaire of the University of Waterloo ("Supply, demand, or stickiness? A causal analysis of the effects of short-term rental activity on residential rents").

Furthermore, their research led them to conclude that "commercial short-term rentals and short-term rental prices each independently cause increases in residential rents."

Allow me to be very clear, as I pointed out in last week's column: the plus-100-year tradition of cottage rentals in Niagara-on-the-Lake has put an

indelible mark on many streetscapes and certainly those of the Chautauqua neighbourhood.

However, back in the day, a cottage rental was truly that — a family cottage that was rented to vacationers during the times of year when the family did not occupy it. It was certainly not a real-estate investment principally owned to generate a healthy rate of return.

That said, the problem is not cottage rentals per se but rather the uncontrolled proliferation of non-hosted short term rentals — perhaps particularly when there are no controls applied to ensure that short-term rentals are not concentrated in close proximity to one another.

That is why short-term rentals can hollow out a street, a neighbourhood and ultimately a community.

And, why any correctly thinking council — one that represents the good of the town and its residents as opposed to commercial real estate investors — would support proper controls and a cap on the short-term rental market.

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

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# Watches, leather shoes and other products of a bygone era



## ROSS'S RAMBLINGS

Ross Robinson  
Columnist

Again I will seize the opportunity (carpe opportum?) to ramble about how quickly things change in our society.

Two or three or perhaps four years ago, I rambled about how once ubiquitous leather shoes, proudly worn by men for many moons, had been rather quickly replaced by trendier and more utilitarian sports shoes: Brooks, Puma, Adidas, Nike and many other brand names were seen on sidewalks around the world. Not that long ago.

Sitting downtown on Queen Street on a summery day recently, I was shocked at how few passing people were wearing wrist watches on either of their

wrists. Obviously it doesn't take much to shock me. But my goodness, only 20 or at most 30 years ago, I seem to remember it was just understood most of us would wear a watch. Getting our first portable timepiece was almost a right of passage.

I thought about this very unimportant issue, and asked a few trusted confidantes what they thought about the obvious sea change in how we keep track of the time. Hard-working, ever-cheerful and lovely, Carly had a free moment behind the bar at Butler's Sports Bar, a.k.a. "the Sporty."

My unusual question did not phase her. Come to think of it, not much does. She was soon explaining the concept of dominant hands, and remembering how not that long ago, many wrist watches needed to be wound up on a regular basis — carefully, between a thumb and the adjacent forefinger.

I vaguely recall the advent and, seemingly, the miracle of self-winding watches. Somehow, they kept on ticking and tocking, energized by the unconscious move-



The wristwatch, the once-ubiquitous timepiece and accessory, is becoming obsolete, thanks to the advent of the cellphone. Or maybe that happened a while ago. WIKIMEDIA

ments of our wrists as we carried on with our lives.

Bob Potter, my very wise and learned pal in Pennsylvania, was direct and informed me he had nothing to add to this obscure conversation and rambling. He once appeared on Jeopardy, and knows lots of stuff.

So, it was essentially up to me to ruminate about wrist timepieces. I resigned myself to rambling on my own. A solo and lonely ramble this week.

The relatively sudden

demise of a once-accepted part of our lives, almost instantly replaced by handheld devices that mostly pass the time in our pockets.

I watch (if you will pardon the pun) subconsciously and mindlessly as thousands of people pass by each day. More than occasionally, I worry a bit that these important and now necessary devices are going to get lost. Many of them are carelessly put into a pocket, more often a rear pocket than a front pocket.

This was one advantage of wearing wrist watches. They were only rarely misplaced. Since cellphones became the norm, too often we have all felt the momentary panic when we misplace our device (is panic a strong enough word?) and the relief of locating the lost part of our life.

So, I have rambled on about the rapid demise of wristwatches. Much more weighty subjects currently dominate our news cycles.

Would anyone have thought our lives could

be so dominated by one man in Washington, D.C.? An attempt to change the colour of the bottom of the Lincoln Memorial reflecting pool on the mall has become a cause célèbre.

Algae, peeling paint, charges of vandalism. Hopefully the job will be completed before the upcoming huge 250th.

And how few of us had even heard of the Strait of Hormuz mere months ago? Has our world gone bonkers? How can we possibly keep abreast as the news cycles march by?

One local suggestion to wrap up this Rambling that has featured timepieces: Take some time and visit the St. Mark's Anglican Church Graveyard. Near the northwest corner of the historic church, close to the large plot that commemorates the tragedy of the Foam, is a large sundial. Yesterday, at about 11 a.m., the shadow indicated the exact time it was.

Go on a sunny day, because as the inscription says, approximately, "I only tell the time when the sun is shining."

Be curious. And, be kind.

## Notice of Draft Environmental Assessment South Landfill Phase 2 Environmental Assessment



Walker Environmental Group (Walker) initiated an Environmental Assessment (EA) under the Environmental Assessment Act as part of the planning process for the next phase of its South Landfill (Phase 2). The South Landfill (Phase 1), an essential component of Walker's integrated Resource Management Campus in Niagara Falls, is nearing its final capacity. Walker is proposing to develop the next phase to continue to provide safe, affordable, and reliable waste disposal services. Phase 2 will also supply renewable energy to the community and will sustain over 500 jobs in the Region.

### Walker is hosting a public information session to:

- Introduce Walker, its current landfill operations and provide an update on the South Landfill Phase 2 EA
- Review the potential environmental effects, recommended impact management measures, resulting net environmental effects, proposed monitoring requirements, and proposed approvals/permits required for implementing the Preferred Method
- Review the draft EA report and gather feedback prior to its finalization and formal submission to the Minister for review and decision

### Stay Informed:

Stay informed by attending the public information session, or review the material via our virtual information session option:

- In-Person:**  
**Wednesday, July 8, 2026**  
Drop-in anytime between  
**5pm - 8pm at Club Italia (Hall B)**  
2525 Montrose Rd,  
Niagara Falls, ON L2H 0T9
- Virtual:**  
**Wednesday, July 8 - Monday, August 24, 2026**  
Visit the website for more information:  
[www.southlandfillphase2.com](http://www.southlandfillphase2.com)

### Review the Draft Environmental Assessment from July 8 - August 24:

Members of the public, government agencies, Indigenous communities and other interested persons may review the draft Environmental Assessment online and in-person during normal business hours starting July 8. The documents will be made available for review and comments until August 24.

**Walker Head Office:**  
2800 Thorold Townline Road  
Niagara Falls, ON L2E 6S4  
1-866-699-9425

**View Online:**  
[www.southlandfillphase2.com](http://www.southlandfillphase2.com)

Your input is valuable, and we encourage you to submit your comments by mail, email, or phone to Walker, through the contact information below or through the project website.

### Darren Fry, Project Director, Walker Environmental Group Inc.

2800 Thorold Townline Road, Niagara Falls, ON L2E 6S4  
Call: 1-866-699-9425 | Email: [info@southlandfillphase2.com](mailto:info@southlandfillphase2.com)

All personal information included in a submission – such as name, address, telephone number and property location – is collected, maintained and disclosed by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks for the purpose of transparency and consultation. The information is collected under the authority of the Environmental Assessment Act or is collected and maintained for the purpose of creating a record that is available to the general public as described in s. 37 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Personal information you submit will become part of a public record that is available to the general public unless you request that your personal information remain confidential. For more information, please contact the Project Officer or the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks' Freedom of Information and Privacy Coordinator at 416-554-3033 or [foi.mecp@ontario.ca](mailto:foi.mecp@ontario.ca).

[southlandfillphase2.com](http://southlandfillphase2.com)

June 25, 2026

# Have some fun



**Across**

- 9. Inverted slow-mover (5)
- 10. Hyped too high (9)
- 11. Carton containing other cartons (5)
- 12. Exciting experience (9)
- 13. Teetotal (3)
- 14. Once the subject of a financial bubble (5)
- 15. House of worship (9)
- 17. Explode (5)
- 19. It's white for a new Pope (5)
- 22. Construction sites with slipways (9)
- 24. Informal greeting (3,2)
- 26. Temporary home for many serious cases (1-1,1)
- 27. Most employees think this of themselves (9)
- 29. Goes for gold? (5)
- 30. Lofty (9)
- 31. Military subdivisions (5)

**Down**

- 1. Dates (7)
- 2. Backpackers' stopover (6)
- 3. Neither you nor me but the other guy (5,5)
- 4. Sudden attacks (6)
- 5. Portions (8)
- 6. Left behind after a cat vanishes (4)
- 7. Conflict (8)
- 8. Stuck redhead goes crazy (7)
- 16. Pleasant mood (4,6)
- 17. Beneficiary of a Biblical miracle (5,3)
- 18. Corrida star (8)
- 20. Soften minced sausage (7)
- 21. Hold (7)
- 23. The "Ice Age" 9 Across (6)
- 25. Advantageous to both sides (3-3)
- 28. Harassed persistently (4)

## Crossword Puzzle

1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8
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11						12								
				13										
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22								23		24		25		
								26						
27				28						29				
30										31				

Last issue's answers

1	R	A	G	T	A	G		5	P	E	R	I	L	O	U	S		
	B	U	L	L	A	E												
9	H	O	U	R	L	O	N	G		10	M	U	G	A	B	E		
	D	N	S	E	I	A												
11	W	E	B	S		12	S	P	R	I	N	K	L	I	N	G		
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13	S	T	E	W	A		15	R	D	E	S	S		17	A	C	R	E
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	E	L	R	V	O													
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	E	F	A	N	P	O												
28	P	R	O	F	I	L	E	S		29	Y	E	L	L	E	D		

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			9	6	4	1		
3		7						
8	1	7						2
7		5						8
4		2	9	3				
			1					4
	4	5	9	3				
7	1							8



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## EXPLORING HISTORY WITH NOTL MUSEUM



## Lawn bowling at the Queen's Royal Hotel

Established in 1877, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Lawn Bowling Club was among the first lawn bowling clubs in Canada. Its original greens were located on the grounds of the Queen's Royal Hotel, where the sport became a popular attraction for visitors and residents alike. If you visit Queen's Royal Park today, the flat area near Front Street is where games were played. As tourism grew, lawn bowling became a fashionable pastime that attracted affluent visitors from Canada and the United States, contributing to Niagara-on-the-Lake's reputation as a premier leisure destination. In the 1920s, the club relocated to the corner of Johnson and Regent streets, the site of today's Voices of Freedom Park.

## The big science behind lab-grown mini-brains



DR. BROWN

Dr. William Brown  
Columnist

You may think quantum physics, mathematics and cosmology are challenging — if so, try creating a human brain.

One of the major breakthroughs in understanding the development of the brain in the last decade was to create miniature brains.

One key step was made by Shinya Yamanaka, who discovered that fully mature cells such as human fibroblasts could be reverse engineered in the presence of as few as four transcription factors into becoming independent pluripotent stem cells (iPS), which were similar to natural undifferentiated stem cells with the same genes. For this work, he was awarded a Nobel Prize in 2012.

Those pluripotent stem cells can then be redirected to become stem cells for the brain and more specifically, develop into mini versions of neocortex or other specified regions of the brain.

Mini-brains have limits, the most important of which is the fact they have no blood supply and therefore depend on diffusion of oxygen and nutrients to sustain them and get rid of cellular garbage. This limits their size to a few millimetres, as well as how far they can develop. However, some

laboratories have found ways to keep mini-brains alive for several months, even a few years.

But however small they are, they replicate in amazing detail the earliest development of, for example, the six-layer cortex of human neocortex, typical of human embryos at equivalent stages of embryonic development.

This strongly suggests that the developmental sequence in mini-brains is very similar to natural development of the human brain and, importantly, much of that development at the genetic and molecular levels takes place at an early stage.

The brain begins with a single neural stem cell containing all the genetic information needed for the mature brain, which in its fully developed form, contains a hundred billion or so nerve cells together with trillions of connections linking them together and to the peripheral sensory, motor and autonomic nervous systems — themselves very complex.

The whole process is amazing. Development from stem cells to maturity is an exquisitely choreographed and timed sequence characterized by differentiation into several thousand different types of cells, each of which migrates to specific destinations, where they make selective connections with other specific cells. Most of the development takes place in the embryo and childhood, tapering off progressively in the second and third decades.

One early discovery made with mini-brains was to compare the development of neanderthal brains with



Mini-brains, known as cerebral organoids, are grown from human pluripotent stem cells and are often just a few millimetres large. They mimic the human brain in its early stages of development. WIKIMEDIA

those of modern humans. Studies revealed that a change in a single gene of several hundred that control brain development, differed between the two homo species, and substitution of the neanderthal version of that gene into a human mini-brains created a more simplified neocortex with fewer neurons compared to the normal human version.

Differences between mini-brains created from autistic subjects and schizophrenic subjects offer insights into how these disorders alter the architecture and function of the human brain and could serve as experimental models to develop and test new drugs that might be helpful managing these disorders without the need for human subjects in the early drug development phases.

Most of the research with mini-brains concentrated on the neocortex. Until recently, when scientists de-

veloped mini-brains specialized for other regions of the brain and then connected them together to create what they call assembloids.

To no one's surprise, these assembloids from different regions of the brain readily make connections with and even talk to one another using the usual methods of electrical signaling and transmission in the brain.

Readers can see where this might go. If scientists are able to assemble a whole brain or even a large part of the brain as well as a sustaining blood supply, would they not have created something very close to a human brain but disconnected from any outside senses (vision, sound, smell and taste) and forever trapped unable to get about as humans do?

That's a nightmare in the making, yet conceivable given the technological advances so far. Were scientists successful, the resulting brains would surely raise questions: are mini-brains conscious? Are they sentient?

It wasn't so long ago that many were concerned about the potential power of gene editing to change human evolution. Similar concerns now surround the power of AI to disrupt human life. Brain organoids are in their early stages of development and well behind AI, although some scientists recently created hybrid systems by combining AI with arrays of human nerve cells.

Scary.  
*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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The Lake Report

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## Lorraine Genevieve Stapleton



STAPLETON, Lorraine Genevieve —  
July 26, 1937 – Jan. 14, 2026

Loved by so many and respected by all, Lorraine Genevieve Stapleton passed away on Jan. 14, 2026, in Scarborough, Ontario, while residing at Seven Oaks Long Term Care. She was 88 years old.

Lorraine was the devoted wife of the late Dennis Martin Stapleton, and a loving mother to Vanessa Stapleton-Schlesiger and the late Roxanne Stapleton. Lorraine was predeceased by her beloved son-in-law, Wolfgang Peter Schlesiger.

Lorraine is survived by her brother Gerald Dan Powlik, nieces Laura Anne Gatz, Karen Leslie Powlik, and Sandra Elizabeth Powlik of Langley, British Columbia, and step-brother Clayton Waitas (Linda) of Calgary, Alberta. Lorraine was predeceased by her brother Roger John Powlik, nephew James John Powlik, step-brother, Terry Waitas, all of Calgary, Alberta, and her sister-in-law, Lynne Powlik of Langley, British Columbia.

Lorraine was a cherished sister-in-law to Edie McBean, Robert McBean (Lita), Douglas MacBean (Eve), Marilyn Jones, Helen MacBean (Jim), and Joseph MacBean. She was predeceased by brothers-in-law Russell McBean and Russell Jones, and sister-in-law Tracey Tung.

Born in Thorsby, Alberta, to Ukrainian parents, John and Anne Powlik (née Radowitz), Lorraine grew up in a small, close-knit community. She fondly remembered her father's newly built movie theatre, her family cottage on Pigeon Lake, the lifelong friendships formed during her school years, and gatherings where she played the piano, accompanying her father on the violin.

At just 17 years old, Lorraine lost her mother unexpectedly. In the face of profound grief, she stepped forward to help support her father and care for her younger siblings. Her selflessness and sense of responsibility during those formative years became hallmarks of the woman she would become.

Lorraine studied nursing in Edmonton, Alberta before discovering her true vocational calling in dental nursing. She served on the executive of the Alberta Dental Nurses' and Assistants Association, and in 1960, was the President of the Edmonton Dental Society. Years later, Lorraine's natural leadership and strong commitment to service continued, working as a Dental Health Educator and as Dental Assistant with the Lanark, Leeds and Grenville District Health Unit.

In 1963, Lorraine married Dennis in Vancouver and settled in the seaside town of Beach Grove, Delta, British Columbia. Together they built a life filled with adventure, travel, resilience, and love while raising their family in British Columbia, Quebec and finally, Carleton Place, Ontario.

In 1989, Lorraine and Dennis began a life overseas, living in India and Greece. Time abroad was a gift, broadening their perspectives and bringing with it lifelong friendships and treasured memories.

Upon returning to Canada, they settled in Niagara-on-the-Lake and operated Lorden House Bed and Breakfast for 21 years, welcoming guests from all over the world. Lorraine was an active volunteer, supporter of the Shaw Festival Theatre, a member of the Red Hat Society and St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church. Community was very important to her.

Family was at the heart of Lorraine's life. Her husband and two daughters were the center of her world. The love she held for them was a constant source of strength, purpose, unwavering devotion and happiness. The loss of her daughter Roxanne was a sorrow she carried with quiet courage, while continuing to surround those she loved with care and support. She warmly embraced her son-in-law, step-grandchildren, and step-great-grandchildren, treasuring the bonds they built together over the years.

A natural connector, Lorraine had a rare gift for making people feel seen, remembered, and valued. Through phone calls, handwritten letters and cards, she maintained lasting friendships and deep family connections. Relationships mattered to Lorraine—and she nurtured them with care, loyalty, and generosity. She was a thoughtful listener and a devoted friend. Her kindness and positive outlook left a lasting impression on all those she met.

Lorraine found joy in life's simple pleasures: tending her garden, wearing one of her many hats, taking daily walks, and cheering on the Toronto Blue Jays. Nothing pleased her more than gathering with family and friends over coffee, and a plate of good quality cheese and crackers. Lorraine loved to laugh, and to bring others joy. On occasion, she'd slip into a Ukrainian accent—invariably bringing smiles and laughter.

In her final years, Lorraine faced significant health challenges, including Alzheimer's disease with courage, grace, and remarkable determination. Although her health gradually declined, Lorraine continued to approach each day with dignity, strength, and an enduring spirit.

Special thanks to the nurses, personal support workers, and staff at Seven Oaks Long Term Care. The family extends sincere gratitude to her devoted caregivers—Peighton, Lynne, Violet, Hazel, and Amy—whose kindness, friendship and steadfast support enriched Lorraine's life and helped her remain engaged in mind, body and spirit until the very end.

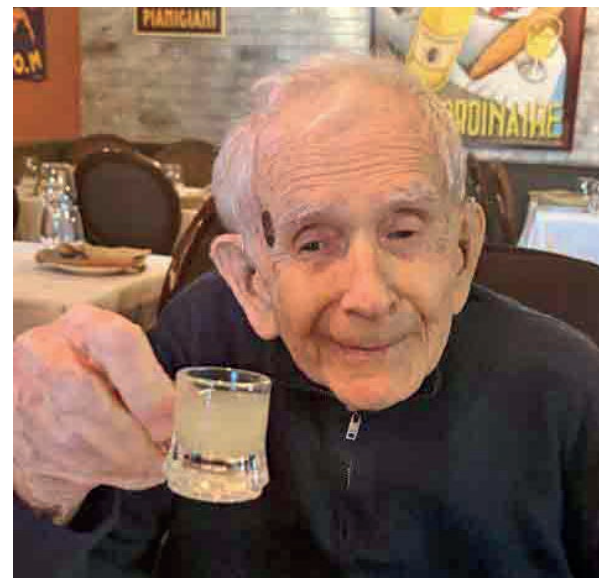
A Funeral Mass will be held on Thursday, July 9, 2026, at 10 a.m. at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. An interment and celebration of life will follow the funeral mass.

In lieu of flowers, Lorraine would have appreciated a simple act of beauty: plant a flower in your garden and water it often.

Memories, photos and words of condolences may be shared at Aftercare under Tributes ([www.aftercare.org](http://www.aftercare.org)).

Donations in Lorraine's memory may be made to the Alzheimer's Society of Durham Region ([alzheimer.ca/durham/en](http://alzheimer.ca/durham/en)), Here 4 Hope ([here4hope.ca](http://here4hope.ca)) or the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) ([von.ca/en/donation-form](http://von.ca/en/donation-form))

May her memory be a blessing and a source of comfort to all who knew and loved her.



## Donald 'Don' Keith

KEITH, Donald Edward —

Every good story deserves to be told, and Don Keith spent a lifetime telling his.

On Wednesday, June 17, 2026, surrounded by family in the comfort of his home, Don peacefully completed the final chapter of a remarkable life, just days after celebrating his 92nd birthday.

Don's story began in Montreal on June 6, 1934. As the years unfolded, his journey took him to Toronto and eventually to Niagara-on-the-Lake, where he built lasting friendships and became a cherished member of the community. For the past 27 years, he called Kings Point home and took great pride in helping shape its development, leaving a legacy that remains part of the community today.

One of Don's greatest gifts was his memory. He could recall people, places, and moments from decades past with remarkable detail, bringing history to life through the stories he loved to share. Whether recounting an adventure, remembering an old friend, or reflecting on days gone by, Don had a way of making every story worth hearing. He was a historian at heart and a storyteller by nature.

His story was also one of love. Don is now reunited with his beloved wife, Kathleen Kenwood Keith, whose passing on June 17, 2011, left a space in his heart that never truly closed. Together they shared a life rich in memories, laughter, and companionship.

He leaves behind several nieces and nephews, along with countless friends and neighbours who came to know him affectionately as "Uncle Donnie." His kindness, generosity, and genuine interest in others made everyone feel welcome in his company.

Don appreciated the finer things in life; not extravagance, but simple pleasures: a good meal, a great restaurant, a bottle of wine shared among friends, and conversations that lingered long after the table had been cleared. He had a saying whenever the cost of something came up: "It's okay, it's just the price of a bottle of wine." It was a lighthearted reminder not to sweat the small things and to focus instead on what truly mattered.

The family extends heartfelt thanks to the dedicated teams from March of Dimes Canada and Niagara North Palliative Care, whose compassion and support helped make Don's final chapter one of comfort, dignity, and peace.

If Don were writing the ending himself, he likely wouldn't want grand gestures. Instead, he would encourage a simple act of kindness. In his memory, do a good deed for someone in need, share a story with a friend, raise a glass, and remember that life's best moments are often worth far more than the price of a bottle of wine.



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