



ELECTION 2026

No new candidates registered, incumbent plans to run

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's 2026 municipal election is already beginning to take shape, with four candidates registered so far and one current councillor signalling plans to seek another term.

But several big questions continue to hang over the race, including whether the 2022-26 council table will largely stay intact or if NOTL voters will deliver a major political shakeup this year.

Two people are officially running for lord mayor: Andrea Kaiser and Vaughn Goettler.

Incumbent Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa has not yet confirmed whether he plans to seek another term, saying publicly this month he is watching to see who enters the race before making a decision.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor is currently the only sitting councillor to publicly confirm plans to run again, telling The Lake Report she intends to submit nomination papers for another term.

Kaiser, the town's current regional councillor, says the town needs strong representation as regional governance changes continue across Niagara.

Goettler, an entrepreneur and philanthropist who finished third in the 2022 lord mayor race, has campaigned heavily on opposition to amalgamation and concerns about development pressure in town.

On the council side, Weston Miller and Steve McGuinness are currently the two registered candidates.

Miller, a NOTL realtor and

Continued on Page 8

Stampede bets on families

Organizers say carnival's changing ride lineup has helped create calmer atmosphere



The Himalaya sends riders spinning during the Virgil Stampede last weekend. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Andrew Hawlitzky | The Lake Report

The Virgil Stampede celebrated its 59th year this past weekend, and a lead organizer says focusing on families and adding more children's rides has been a huge success and eliminated most security problems the carnival had in the past.

The Virgil Business Association's annual festival at the Virgil Sports Park went off without a hitch from May 16 to 18, except for when rides were shut down for an hour on Saturday after rain, lightning and high winds moved in.

Albion Amusements has spent

the past several years rejigging the event to cater more to families with young children, and the company's owner-operator, Carrie Robertson, said the weekend's lack of major incidents showed the approach is working.

"Unofficially, we're gearing more towards families than to

teenagers," she said.

"I know a lot of teenagers complain that there's less and less big rides, but there's a reason. There's a method to our madness."

There have been some safety

Continued on Page 3

SORE says new Rand plan 'flies in the face' of OLT ruling

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
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Save Our Rand Estate says Benny Marotta's latest proposal for Niagara-on-the-Lake's Rand Estate is not a reset, but the same battle all over again.

The new application, deemed complete by town staff May 1, proposes a five-

storey hotel with 111 rooms, a spa facility, five three-storey residential buildings with up to 270 residential units and 514 parking spaces across the Rand Estate lands in Old Town.

"What it means is that Mr. Marotta has learned absolutely nothing from the Ontario Land Tribunal judgment," said Lyle Hall, chair of the Niagara Foundation

and a SORE member.

"What he's proposing flies in the face of everything he was told is bad planning and doesn't work."

Several of the application documents refer to the proposal as "Ritz Carlton Hotel, Spa and Residences."

An open house is scheduled for May 25, followed

Continued on Page 2



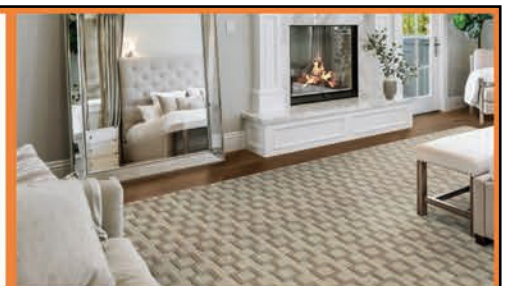
A rendering shows the scale of the latest Rand Estate proposal. Save Our Rand Estate argues the development still relies on the controversial John Street panhandle access criticized by the Ontario Land Tribunal. SOURCED



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Resident group urges council to **reject** new Rand proposal

Continued from Front Page

by a public meeting June 2. According to Ontario's Planning Act, the town has 120 days from the date an application is deemed complete to make a decision before the applicant can appeal for non-decision. That date works out to Aug. 29, meaning the current council term is expected to handle the decision-making process.

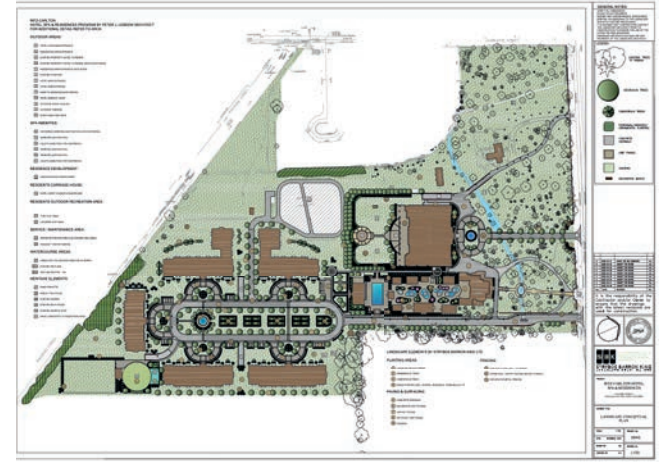
The proposal comes less than two years after the Ontario Land Tribunal rejected Solmar's previous subdivision plan for part of the estate.

The applicant's planning report says the tribunal found the previous plan had problems with the disputed 200 John St. E., panhandle access, safety, and protection of the estate heritage features. The new application says it responds by redesigning the panhandle, studying other access options and proposing changes meant to reduce heritage impacts.

"Section 3 of this report provides a summary of key takeaways from the decision and order of the Ontario



The latest proposal for the Rand Estate would bring a hotel, spa, 270 residential units and 514 parking spaces to the historic property. SOURCED



Land Tribunal," the planning report said, "and how those key takeaways have informed and shaped the proposed development."

"Overall, the proposed redesign of Ritz Carlton Lane generally addresses the issues identified by the (tribunal)," it said.

But the documents also show the residential component would still use the 200 John access corridor and several heritage features would still be removed or relocated rather than kept in place.

"Again, in a community that's spent millions of dollars to fight for the heritage and heritage integrity of

this site, we have a developer who simply won't take no for an answer," Hall said.

He called the proposal "a classic wolf in sheep's clothing."

"It's trying to put the same proposal through with a different framework around it, but it's still bad planning, it's still use of the John Street panhandle, which the (tribunal) told them won't work," he said.

"It's still movement and desecration of parts of the Dunnington-Grubb landscape. It's still far too much density and it's still all the things that the (tribunal) determined was why this project shouldn't work."

Hall said SORE is not arguing the estate cannot be developed.

"Private property rights are something we all enjoy, we all have," he said. "Nobody has ever said or suggested that Mr. Marotta shouldn't have the right to own that property and come forward with a development proposal."

"But what he's come forward with is so egregious, so out of step and so inconsistent with what the highest planning authority in the province is saying," he added. "It just flies in the face of reason that he's back here doing this again."

Coun. Sandra O'Connor

said the town cannot automatically reject an application once staff deem it complete and must follow the process laid out by the province.

"I will be looking at it to make sure it complies with all the points raised in the (tribunal) decision," she said.

O'Connor said she has heard the panhandle is again proposed for the residential component, though she had not confirmed it herself.

"If that's the case, I mean, that was a very definite point that the (tribunal) raised — not using the panhandle. To me, that's critical," she said.

Coun. Erwin Wiens said it is too early to take a position on the proposal and the town still needs to hear from residents, staff and the applicant.

"We don't approve or disapprove of any of any projects based on who the developer is," Wiens said. "We use policies to evaluate each project on its own merits."

Hall said SORE plans to delegate at the public meeting and urged residents to get involved before council makes any decision.

Marotta did not respond to requests for comment by publication time.

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From top, left to right: Ten-year-old George Vanderform is rockin' and rollin' on his way down the large slide — fear of heights? Forget about it. Over at this fire truck ride, Hank Leifso, 2.5, looks like an honorary member of our volunteer fire department. Six-year-old Gwendalyn Marquardt, meanwhile, gets into the swing of things on this ride. What's an afternoon at the Stampede without friends? Henry Dick, 10, Mary Weaver, 10, and Ella Dick, 12, soar on the Sizzler. And, three-year-old Theo Carr tries his hand at the water gun game, aiming for a bullseye. PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVE VAN DE LAAR



Stampede turns focus to **young families**

Continued from Front Page

incidents in the past few years at the Stampede, including physical fights between teenagers on the fairgrounds in 2023 and the seizure of a replica handgun with BB ammunition from a teen trying to enter the carnival in 2024.

Bag checks and a no-backpack policy are now standard at the gate. And this year, Albion added more children's rides, games and seating to draw younger families.

"There's a lot of things that people think it's a little over the top, but it makes families and children feel more secure," Robertson said.

Much of the same entertainment from previous years was still there: Shane Farberman, better known for his role in the Adam Sandler film "Billy Madison" as Doo Doo the Clown, returned for all three days to clown around

with the festival's young attendees. Robertson said he is among the hardest attractions to book, often secured months in advance.

Jenna Kovacs from St. Davids, who attended the Stampede as a child and now brings her seven-year-old son Mason, said the event has added more attractions for younger children than she remembers from her own childhood.

"There's more little-kid stuff, more space to sit, and definitely more security around than there was 30 years ago," she said. "As a parent, you notice that stuff right away, and it just feels a bit safer bringing kids here now."

Melissa Pugliese drove out to the Stampede from Niagara Falls with her children Grace, 6, and Luca, 8, for the family's annual Victoria Day visit.

"We've been here since morning and somehow they still have energy for another ride. I honestly

don't know how kids do it," Pugliese said.

Inside the Meridian Credit Union Arena, Red Roof Retreat volunteers ran the annual nickel sale raffle with prizes donated by more than 80 local businesses, including Shaw Festival tickets, winery tastings, a Whirlpool Jet Boat pass and a toy truck from Penner Lumber.

Joanne Thiessen, who was volunteering at the table, said the children's prizes drew particular attention from young visitors. "One little boy wanted to take the truck home, but unfortunately, he has to win it first," she said.

Proceeds from the nickel sale support Red Roof Retreat's expansion from a 1,100-square-foot bungalow on Concession 6 to a fully accessible 5,700-square-foot building. Winners were posted to the organization's website Tuesday morning.

The Lions Club raffle offered a \$10,000 cash prize

as its top draw, replacing the cars the club used to give away at the Stampede. Volunteer Shirley Burroughs said Sunday sales were slower than expected. "A \$10,000 cash prize, I think that would be very enticing for people," she said.

Albion Amusements has ties to the Stampede stretching back roughly 50 years, when Robertson's grandfather brought his rides to the event. Robertson said the Virgil Stampede marks the first event of her company's season every year — a streak she said she has no intention of breaking.

The Stampede closed Monday with a fireworks show at Virgil Sports Park. The Virgil Business Association donates net proceeds to Red Roof Retreat, Pleasant Manor Retirement Village and, new this year, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum.

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Town continues to investigate 'illegal destruction' of 19th-century schoolhouse on Niagara Parkway

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

After a developer demolished part of a nearly 200-year-old schoolhouse without the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake's approval last month, the municipality says it's monitoring the situation and figuring out its next steps to keep any more destruction from taking place.

The town issued a stop-work order on April 17 directing the property owner of 14785 Niagara River Pkwy. to halt all work on what is known as the Larkin-Dimitrieff property, owned by prominent developer Benny Marotta.

Photos obtained by The Lake Report, taken from the site that day and the day before, appear to show the schoolhouse roof being dismantled. Following this, a plastic tarp was placed over the top of the building.

"The work the building division observed was the deconstruction of a building, which under the Building Code Act is defined as demolition," town spokesperson Marah Minor told The Lake Report.

At the latest municipal heritage meeting, held May 6, Taya Devlin, manager of policy and heritage planning, spoke to the commit-



Benny Marotta is facing new heat from the town after illegally demolishing the roof of a historic schoolhouse building on his Niagara Parkway property. FILE

tee and said town staff is treating the situation "with the utmost seriousness" and is working to prevent the loss of any more of the building as it investigates the demolition.

"Our built heritage is a defining part of our community, its identity and the town takes any unauthorized alterations seriously," said Devlin. "The town remains committed to ensuring the illegal destruction of heritage properties will not be tolerated."

The Larkin-Dimitrieff property is a designated property under the Ontario Heritage Act. Its history dates back to the early 19th century.

Minor said the property owner is in contact with the

town, which is working to resolve any requirements to obtain the permits needed for the developer to continue work on the property. She noted the maximum financial penalty for failing to comply with the stop-work order and the order to comply is \$50,000.

Devlin told the heritage committee that alongside fines, violating the Ontario Heritage Act means conviction is also a possible penalty.

A municipal staff member told the committee that, as of May 7, a tarp is still covering the top of the schoolhouse, meant to protect it from the rain.

Committee chair Kevin Buis, however, called tarps a "short-term solution."

"If we can get a roof back on it as soon as pos-

sible, that would be the best," he said.

The property sits next to the former site of Glencairn Hall, a 19th-century home at 14795 Niagara River Pkwy. The home burned down last April in a fire police are investigating as criminal arson.

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

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

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New development at former American Hotel inches toward construction in dock area

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

A condo development set to replace the historic waterfront property known as the old American Hotel is moving closer to construction after Niagara-on-the-Lake council gave final approval to an agreement allowing parts of the project to use town-owned land.

Councillors first approved the encroachment agreement for 61 Melville St. at an April 21 committee meeting, allowing parts of the proposed 12-unit, three-storey apartment building.

This includes landscaping, walkways and other outdoor features, to extend onto town-owned land along Melville, Delater and Lockhart streets. The decision was formally adopted on April 28.

Town staff said this agreement was one of the final steps needed to finish remaining paperwork for the project.

During the earlier committee discussion, Coun. Gary Burroughs asked



Once a familiar landmark, the former American Hotel is slated to make way for a new condominium project. FILE

about the timeline: "Now that this is getting done, are we close to shovels in the ground by the developer?"

But no timeline was given.

"Once the encroachment agreement requirement is resolved, we'll be able to move forward with finalizing the site plan agreement," said Aimee Alderman, the director of planning, building and development services.

"Then, the owner of the land will be able to commence construction."

The site plan agreement lets the town keep ownership of the land while allowing approved parts of the project to use portions

of that space.

Staff said these agreements are standard tools that set maintenance responsibilities, limit liability for the town and preserve the town's right to take back the land in future if needed.

Planned frontage changes would create a 1.5-metre sidewalk and add street parking spaces, though no number of spaces was provided in staff's report presented to council.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor questioned the purpose of the encroachment.

"Why is there a need for any encroachment at all?"

Jordan Frost, public works and infrastructure director,

said there is already an encroachment agreement tied to the owner's infrastructure on town land, and the new design would continue that arrangement.

"We're simply seeking to allow them to continue to have similar things, features on our road allowance that they previously had," he said.

The old American Hotel, which is operating as the King George III Inn, was purchased by Blythwood Homes in 2021 for \$1.9 million.

The town approved a three-storey condo for 61 Melville St. in October 2023. On Blythwood Homes' website, there's an open application page for "12 luxury waterfront condos" at the address.

In October, Blythwood Homes, the Niagara-based company behind the new condo development, told The Lake Report that it hadn't submitted a demolition permit for the project and that it's "waiting for the market" in order to determine when it will proceed with one.

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- *Richard Harley, publisher*

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Four in council race so far

Continued from Front Page

president of the Chautauqua Residents Association, has positioned himself as a “resident-first” candidate focused on transparency, growth and quality of life issues.

McGuinness, a Virgil resident and founder of Residents 4 A Better NOTL, has said he decided to run because he believes residents’ concerns are being overshadowed by development and tourism interests.

Couns. Erwin Wiens, Wendy Cheropita, Adriana Vizzari, Maria Mavridis and Andrew Niven all said they have not yet decided if they will run again.

“It’s early still,” Wiens said, while Cheropita said she’s “not sure” if she will run but wants the town to be “left in good hands” no matter what happens.

Vizzari said she is still weighing the decision.

“Serving this community is an honour, but I also need to carefully consider the needs of my young family as I make this decision,” Vizzari said.

As for Niven, he said, “My focus right now is on what’s in front of council.”



Top row, from left: Vaughn Goettler and Andrea Kaiser are running for the position of lord mayor. Goettler is a retired businessman who ran last election. Kaiser is an incumbent regional councillor for NOTL. Bottom row, from left: Weston Miller and Steve McGuinness are seeking positions on town council, both with a resident-first platform.

Couns. Gary Burroughs and Tim Balasiuk had not publicly announced re-election campaigns or responded to requests from the newspaper by press time asking whether they plan to run again.

Nominations officially opened May 1 and candidates can file papers until Aug. 21 at 2 p.m. Voting

day is scheduled for Oct. 26.

This year’s election will mark the first time NOTL residents can vote online. In-person voting will be available as well.

More information about the election can be found on the town’s election webpage at notl.com/elections.

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Harder to care in NOTL

Caregivers in NOTL face gaps, inconsistency in support services

Dan Smeenk
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Caregivers and professionals in and around Niagara-on-the-Lake say support for those caring for sick and dying loved ones is fragmented.

Paul MacDonnell, who lives in Garrison Village, cares for his wife, Debbie, who has Alzheimer's disease. He says she cannot be left alone, making it difficult to leave home for basic errands.

To provide him with assistance caring for Debbie, MacDonnell uses Ontario Health atHome. This provincial agency funds services such as in-home personal support workers, adult day programs and up to 60 days of residential care.

However, he says he's experienced a lack of continuity with the agency.

"I have, over the last four years, had over 200 personal support workers come into this house," he says.

This is an issue not only for his wife, he says, but for others with Alzheimer's, who may be unsettled by unfamiliar faces.

He's not alone: Judith Auty of Virgil cared for her husband, Gord, who had dementia, before his death in February at the age of 92. She described a similar experience.

"We had been assigned people who came and went, and then maybe they'd come back, maybe they wouldn't, maybe they'd be replaced by someone else," she says.

"He couldn't keep track of who these people were or what they were doing."

According to the Ontario Caregiver Organization's Spotlight Report from 2025, 4.2 million Ontarians provide care to a family member, partner, friend or neighbour, and it's expected that number will climb to 6.5 million by 2030.

The situation is particularly relevant to Niagara-on-the-Lake: Statistics Canada data from 2021 indicates 40.5 per cent of the town's population is 65 years or over, and the median age is 57.2 years old, compared to Ontario's median age of 41.6.

This brought Frances Gregotski and Ron Gayadeen, members of the Niagara Respite Care Study Group, to NOTL in February, to tell council about its plans to grow its



Top to bottom: Judith Auty, right, with her daughter Lynn, both of whom took care of Judith's husband, who had dementia, until he died earlier this year. Judith says personal support workers came in and out of the house every day — some never came twice. In Garrison Village, Paul MacDonnell cares for his wife Debbie, who has Alzheimer's disease, in their home. He says he can't leave the house without someone to come in and take over his duties, but the current respite care system leaves much to be desired in offering the right support. DAN SMEENK

Organization's report indicated that one in four caregivers say they need respite care for their family member, loved one, friend or neighbour so that they can have a break.

Gregotski says she hopes the group's pilot project will help fill in the gaps in care needed.

"All the steps forward will not only help caregivers, but there will also be positive benefits to our health-care system, including financial savings, efficiencies within our hospitals and fewer requests for long-term care," she says.

A spokesperson for Ontario Health atHome, in response to an inquiry about the inconsistencies some caregivers have experienced with their services, says the organization encourages patients to speak with their care coordinator to help resolve any concerns they have.

"Issues, when reported, are promptly and carefully reviewed with the patient and service provider organization to ensure ongoing quality of care provision is achieved," the statement read.

In the meantime, some in NOTL are stepping up to lend an extra hand.

Tom Hodges, a member of the Respite Care Study Group who lives in St. Davids, says community-led efforts have already supported residents in need, with neighbours helping neighbours when they need it.

He talked about Case Bassie, who had a heart attack while on his bicycle in April 2019. He fell into a ditch, ingested water and had to be revived by a Good Samaritan who gave him CPR.

He suffered a brain injury, which kept him in hospital until October 2019. He required 24/7 care after he was released. He died in February 2020 after a fall.

Hodges says Gayadeen led an effort to help Bassie and his wife, Brigitte.

"He was one of the leaders in this," he says. "In saying, 'Hey, look, Case Bassie, he needs to be taken care of. We just can't have his wife give up her life. Let's take turns.'"

In the end, what happened to Bassie brought the community together, he says.

"We all kicked in, and suddenly, you know, we begin to realize that it's a pretty good, complex issue."

editor@niagaranow.com

"I had a nervous breakdown because of what was happening with the personal support worker services. I literally could not manage trying to manage them and trying to do my own work and trying to function as a human being."

TAMARA SOUTER
NOTL RESIDENT

volunteer-led network that provides temporary relief for caregivers.

The group, founded two years ago, is partnered with Heart Niagara and the Ontario Niagara Health Team.

Gregotski says NOTL has the best demographics to test the pilot project's model.

"We have met with so many people, doctors and organizations within the region, and everyone says, 'We need this, we need this,'" she says.

Gregotski told The Lake Report that Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa supports the initiative and that the group is exploring ways to coordinate services across the region.

"The caregiver support system in Niagara isn't broken. However, there are many areas for improvement," she says.

She identified several of them: co-ordination

between non-profit and for-profit providers, hospital discharge support, awareness of caregivers' needs, access to information, employer support for working caregivers, cultural considerations and persistent service silos.

Sandra D'Alessandro, a personal support worker and CEO of Sandra's Home Health Care Services, says about 15 per cent of her company's work involves caregiver respite. She's also on the board of directors of the non-profit Connecting Care Niagara.

The system, she says, is strained by a shortage of workers.

"We are in such need of personal support workers," she says.

"We're not registered, and therefore they're making between \$19 an hour and maybe \$23 an hour at a private agency. And for

the work they do, it's just not there."

Location can also be an issue: D'Alessandro, who's based in St. Catharines, says it can be difficult to attract workers to NOTL due to travel costs.

"I'm offering \$5 more per hour just to beg staff to work right now," she says.

Ontario Health atHome delivers its services through for-profit and non-profit companies. MacDonnell says this model can lead to inconsistency: workers may cancel shifts, and replacements are not always available.

"You'd think that they would just fill in another personal support worker — well, no, because they're all working for 12 different companies," he says.

The work caregivers do is a significant source of stress. The Ontario Caregiver Organization's report

states that almost half of caregivers, 46 per cent, feel lonely, isolated and depressed and 60 per cent feel burnt out.

Almost one in five caregivers reported taking the person they're caring for to the emergency room because they needed a break, the report added.

Tamara Souter of Old Town spent years caring for her mother, Barbara Woronowicz, who had colon cancer and dementia, while also working from home (Woronowicz now lives in a long-term care home).

Souter's experience with personal support worker services, including Ontario Health atHome, was not positive.

She says the inconsistent scheduling and unpredictability she experienced made an already stressful situation worse.

"I had a nervous breakdown because of what was happening with the personal support worker services," she says.

"I literally could not manage trying to manage them and trying to do my own work and trying to function as a human being."

The Ontario Caregiver





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Concert celebrates 60 years of farmworkers

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

For 20 years, a community-driven concert series in Niagara-on-the-Lake has sought to welcome and thank Caribbean farmworkers whose labour supports the town's agricultural industry.

This year's event will also mark a major milestone.

The 60th Anniversary Concert, set for Sunday, May 31 at Cornerstone Community Church, will celebrate the Caribbean employees who have come to NOTL through the seasonal agricultural workers program over the past six decades.

Niagara Workers Welcome, the organizers of this concert, say the anniversary recognizes the important role Caribbean workers, particularly those from Jamaica, have played in helping local farms, wineries and the tourism sector thrive.

"When the first Jamaicans arrived 60 years ago they were not just providing labour, they brought hope for



A special 60th anniversary celebration of Caribbean migrant workers will take place May 31. SUPPLIED

the future of Niagara-on-the-Lake's agriculture, wineries and tourism," said organizers in a media release.

The concert will feature the return of the Toronto Mass Choir, which performed at the last concert that was held, the 50th anniversary celebration in 2016.

More than 400 Caribbean farmworkers are expected to attend this year's celebration. Organizers say they are working to raise the remaining \$7,000 needed to cover the event's anticipated budget of about \$30 per worker.

The Niagara Workers Welcome concerts be-

gan in 2007 as a way to build stronger connections between local residents and offshore agricultural workers, who organizers said had often remained largely unseen within the community.

The idea for the concerts grew after organizers travelled to Jamaica in early 2007 and saw firsthand the sacrifices many workers make by leaving their families behind for six to eight months each year.

Some workers had been travelling to Canada for more than 35 years while still feeling like strangers in Niagara, organizers said.

The first welcome concert was held at Bethany Mennonite Church in partnership with the Caribbean Workers Outreach Project. Former lord mayor Gary Burroughs delivered an official greeting at the inaugural event.

Since then, the concerts have expanded significantly. In 2010, the event moved to Orchard Park Church, where nearly 600 workers and community members attended a concert featuring the Toronto Mass Choir and Canadian band Newworldson.

Organizers say the annual concerts have become a grassroots community effort focused on expressing gratitude and building friendships between residents and farmworkers.

They are also encouraging employers to help arrange transportation so workers can attend the event.

Donations to support the concert can be made by contacting organizers at niagaraworkerswelcome@gmail.com.



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NOTL farmers market returns **May 30**

Staff
The Lake Report

The return of Niagara-on-the-Lake's summer-long farmers market is facing a one-week delay. However, organizers are hoping to open the market by the end of the month, bringing fresh produce and artisanal goods to the Village neighbourhood.

The annual market was set to open to the public on May 23, but organizers said on Wednesday that due to construction delays at the new site of the market, caused by the cooler weather, it will open on May 30.

"We will miss spending this Saturday with you, but we are very excited about our new space and vendors this coming season," organizers said on Facebook.

The market will run Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. until Oct. 3.

Big changes are in place for this year's farmers market: instead of taking



Due to construction delays in the Village plaza, the NOTL farmers market will have a delayed opening, set for May 30. The market runs 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays. FILE

place in the Village Centre on Garrison Village Drive, the market will operate from its new home, in the parking lot of the future Clayfield Hotel.

This is part of a whole host of changes to the Village neighbourhood, as part of the ongoing Clayfield Commons development

project. In late January, the Village Centre welcomed the opening of grocery store Foodland.

The market will also feature several more vendors, with organizers aiming to host up to 40, compared to 15 last year.

The Market at the Village started a little more than

20 years ago in the Village neighbourhood. All vendors who take part in the market are from the Niagara region.

It will be located at Clayfield Commons Market Square in the Village, at 25 Clayfield Commons.

Vendor applications are still open. To apply, visit marketatthevillage.com.




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Ordinary treasures



People listen intently as antiques appraiser Andre Wagner describes how to tell the value of an old household item, whether that value is historical or monetary. Wagner, whose family has been in the antique business since the '60s, led the appraisal event at Navy Hall on Saturday, where many brought items from their homes like chinaware, brass and silver, hoping to find out what they're worth.

ANDREW HAWLITZKY

Spirit of Niagara launches in NOTL with wellness retreat and **Niagara Health Foundation fundraiser**

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

A new wellness event series raised its first funds for Niagara Health Foundation last weekend, starting small but backed by an organizer who previously helped raise \$1 million for Niagara hospitals.

Spirit of Niagara ran two linked events May 16 at Château des Charmes on York Road in St. Davids and Inniskillin Estate Winery. A daytime luxury wellness retreat brought about 30 guests at \$549 a ticket.

An evening dinner in Inniskillin's historic cellar, priced at \$295 per person, sent proceeds to Niagara Health Foundation, which funds equipment, patient care and research at Niagara Health hospitals across the region.

Organizer Hala Bissada said the donation will be modest given the crowd size, but plans to keep building the event series up.

"Every little bit helps," she said, "and it's a chance for guests to meet new people and become ambassadors for the cause."

Bissada, a 24-year event planning veteran relocating to Niagara-on-the-Lake this spring, ran her first Spirit of Niagara event earlier this year. She said she supported Shine On, a fundraiser for West Lincoln Memorial



From left, Kelsey Marie Acorn, Hala Bissada and Sara Westbrook attend the Glow in the Vines fundraiser in support of Niagara Health Foundation Saturday. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

Hospital Foundation and McNally House Hospice, which she said raised roughly \$1 million.

"Unbelievable they raised a million dollars," she said. "This was a first-time event. It was so magical to be part of that."

Charitable giving is part of every Spirit of Niagara event, she said. "Anything we do at Spirit of Niagara is about giving back."

The daytime retreat ran two and a half hours under a tent at Château des Charmes, with rain arriving later in the afternoon.

Yoga, breathwork, meditation and a sound bath made up the core programs, led by Ashtanga teachers David Robson and Jelena Vesić, breathwork guide

Dane Osorio and sound healer Luciana Santaguida.

Guitarist Gianluca Mauro performed throughout. Workshops and a private winery tour followed, with lunch catered by Vintage Hotels.

Bissada said the sound bath drew strong emotional responses.

"A lot of emotion here today," said Bissada. "I saw a lot of people crying through the sound bath and things like that because it's a big release."

The evening dinner at Inniskillin seated up to 75 guests and opened with a sparkling icewine reception. Three courses each incorporated icewine, with guests invited to identify the varietal in each dish.

Live music accompanied the dinner. A Niagara Health Foundation representative attended to speak about where the proceeds go. Charitable tax receipts are available to Canadian residents.

Bissada said she has been visiting the Niagara region for years and believes it is underappreciated.

"I don't think people know how special Niagara is — it's in their own backyard and they don't know."

An international event based in Niagara-on-the-Lake is in early talks for 2027, though Bissada said she has not signed anything yet. A Halloween concept called the Spook Easy is also in development.

andrew@niagaranow.com

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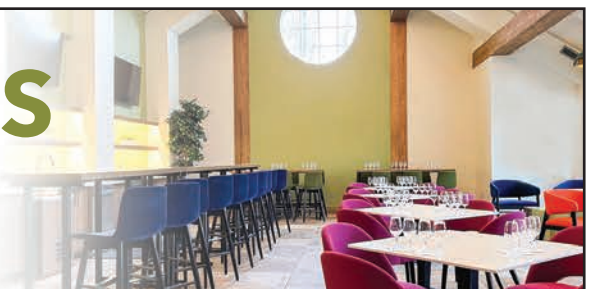
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Step into the world of **surrealist art** at RiverBrink garden party in Queenston

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

If you've ever looked at a work of art by Salvador Dalí, René Magritte or Max Ernst and imagined what it would be like to step into the bizarre and dreamlike worlds they put to canvas, the RiverBrink Art Museum's upcoming garden party may be your chance to enter those tableaux.

The art museum's evening fete on Friday, May 22, called A Surrealist Garden Party, is the first event in what is to be an annual fundraiser, The Art Thing, that raises money for RiverBrink by hosting celebrations inspired by iconic art movements.

The party, being held from 6 to 8 p.m., will immerse visitors in an evening of whimsical décor, interactive art experiences and live performances inspired by the surrealist movement.

Guests are encouraged to arrive dressed in imaginative garden party or surrealist-inspired attire as the museum transforms into what organizers describe



One of many tableaux that made Spanish artist Salvador Dalí famous, from 1948. Expect to see absurdity and whimsy of this kind at RiverBrink Art Museum's surrealist garden party on Friday, May 22. Proceeds support the art museum's yearly programs. WIKIMEDIA

as an altered, dreamlike environment.

Throughout the evening, attendees will encounter artistic installations, sensory experiences and live make-up artistry as models are transformed into fantastical surrealist characters in real time.

The evening will culminate in a "Tableau Vivant," or living artwork, bringing together the transformed performers in a dramatic

scene inspired by surrealist imagery.

"This event is about bringing art to life in unexpected ways," said Debra Antoncic, director and curator at RiverBrink Art Museum.

"We want guests to experience surrealist-inspired creativity and imagination through the décor, the food, and the atmosphere. Guests will step into an altered space and

encounter the transformative power of art."

The event will also feature surrealist-inspired hors d'oeuvres, wine sponsored by Strewn Winery and refreshments.

Organizers say the fundraiser will support the museum's exhibitions, educational programs and community cultural initiatives.

Tickets are \$75 per person. To purchase a ticket, visit riverbrink.org/events.

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Tanner earns **Holmwood Trophy** with net 74

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

Gayle Tanner had the hot hand Tuesday, winning the Holmwood Trophy during competition in the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club's 18-hole women's league.

Tanner carded a net score of 74 to finish three shots ahead of Yolanda Henry.

Other top net scores were Barbara Hastings (78), May Chang (79) and Carroll Baker (80).

Club champion Louise Robitaille took low gross honours with a score of 90, followed by Henry at 94 and Baker at 96.

Cathy Taylor won closest to the pin on #4 and Tracey Peters was closest in two shots on #7.

Marie Ellison led the putting parade, needing just 32, followed by Baker with 33 and Val Chubey, Carolyn Porter and Henry all with 36.

No birdies were recorded, though an aggressive red-winged blackbird was busy dive-bombing players as it protected its turf.

Suzanne Watson and Sharron Marlow led the way in the nine-hole women's



Members of the NOTL Golf Club's Solheim team are preparing for competition against other clubs from around Niagara. Pictured are, front row: Yolanda Henry, Tracey Peters, May Chang, Val Chubey and Maria Townley. Back row: Martha Cruikshank, Margot Richardson, Louise Robitaille, Carroll Baker, Michele Darling, Lisa Allen, Cathy Taylor, Cathy Murray, Diana Dimmer and Ginny Green. Missing: Susan Gagne. SUPPLIED

league. Watson's gross score of 46 was tops, with Marlow close behind at 49. Sally Miller was third with 52.

Marlow's net score of 34 was first, with Watson second at 36 and Penny Bannister third at 39.

No one won closest to the pin on #4 but Peggy Larder was closest to the line on #8.

Jim McMacken was top dog in the Tuesday men's Woofs league, with a 4-over 40. Jim Garrett had low

net with 34 and Randy Churchill's birdie 2 on #9 won the hidden hole contest.

Harry Huizer was closest to the pin on #4 and finished with a birdie as well.

Patrick Craig was in fine form, firing an even-par 36 to earn top spot in last Thursday's men's league. He also scored second-lowest net, with 34, two behind Neville Da Silva's 32.

Jared Mines had another solid round, winning second low gross with 39.

Ricky Watson sank the

longest putt on #8, while Nick Elia bombed the longest drive on #1.

Closest to the pin shooters were Mike Clarke (#4) and Marty Nixon (#9).

Mines also cashed in big on the skins game, winning \$60 gross skins for the only birdies recorded on #6 and #8, plus a net skin worth \$35 on #6.

Mike Eagen scored a gross skin for his birdie on #3 while other net skins went to Stephen Jenkins (#1) and John Foreman (#5).



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Niagara Irrigation Initiative Project

Notice of a Public Information Centre

Upgrading and Enhancing Irrigation Infrastructure in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

Project Background

Part of the broader Niagara Irrigation Initiative, this project is working towards upgrades and enhancements to the existing irrigation system in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Additional capacity in the system is required to meet current water demand, improve drought resilience, and to plan for the future.

To date, the Project Team has reviewed key background and design reports, conducted multiple site visits, released a user survey, consulted extensively with the Town's Irrigation Committee, and drafted a Consolidated Engineering Report, which includes several design alternatives. Based on a technical evaluation and feedback, the Project Team has recommended four solutions to proceed to the detailed design phase.

Join Us - Your Input is Important

The Project Steering Committee, supported by Niagara Region and the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Staff, and the Project Consulting Team, is hosting a Public Information Centre to answer questions and seek feedback about the project.

Public Information Centre

Wednesday, June 10, 2026
6 - 8 p.m. (Drop in anytime)

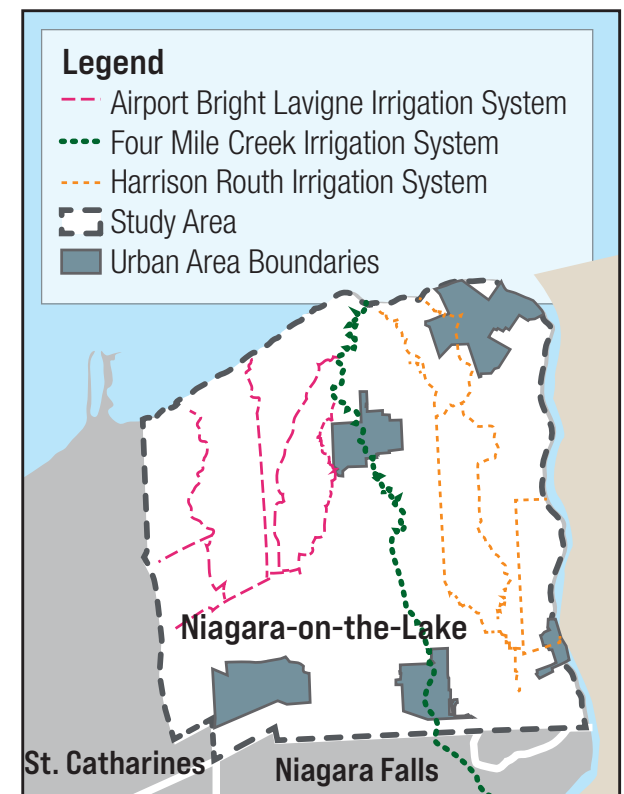
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All members of the public are invited to attend, learn about irrigation in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, get a project update, and provide feedback on the detailed design process. This Public Information Centre will be a drop-in style event and will feature display boards with multiple subject matter experts available for questions. Materials will also be available on the project webpage following the event: niagararegion.ca/projects/irrigation-initiative/

Contact Us

If you are interested in providing feedback on the project but cannot attend, please e-mail us at: irrigation@niagararegion.ca. For additional information, or if you require accessibility accommodations or materials in an alternate format to participate in meetings or events, please contact:

Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP
Manager, Strategic Initiatives,
Niagara Region
905-980-6000, extension 3179
sean.norman@niagararegion.ca



Requests for accommodations should be made in advance to allow sufficient time for arrangements.

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Managing Editor: Zahraa Hmood
Editor Emeritus: Kevin MacLean
Design & Layout: Richard Harley
Advertising: Megan Vanderlee
Contributors: Dr. William Brown, Penny-Lynn Cookson, Patty Garriock, Maddy Gordon, Steve Hardaker, Andrew Hawlitzky, Brian Marshall, NOTL Museum, Ross Robinson, Julia Sacco, Paige Seburn, Kyra Simone, Tim Taylor, Jill Troyer, Garth Turner, Dave Van de Laar, and many more members of the NOTL community.

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Contributed by Patty Garriock

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so does hope.”
- Lady Bird Johnson

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Once in a lullaby

Somewhere *under* the rainbow, farmers were out tilling and getting the fields sprayed. This double rainbow was spotted on Wagg Road.
RICHARD HARLEY

Opinion

Amid chaos, some lives are saved



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner
Columnist

“Just read your article,” he wrote. “Is there nothing we can do to save these trees? I’m open to direct action provided I’m not left out on a limb.”

“Seriously, do you know if many feel the same about preserving nature and our beautiful town?”

He signed the note, “Roland of Gage,” which made me think of a guy in a chainmail tunic, iron helmet, metal breastplate and gauntlets dismounting and clanging into Hendriks Independent Grocer.

Well, Roland and many others were outraged to read in this pathetic column that the town planned on massacring 41 of those gorgeous, ancient trees that arch over Mississagua Street as it enters the Old Town heritage district (“The Turner Report: Massacre on Mississagua,” April 23).

It’s progress that, in this case, means rebuilding an iconic local road so more tourists can wobble down the sides on special bike lanes. Along the way, the road will be widened, rebuilt, fitted with a new watermain and sewers, sidewalks and safety buffers

between cars and sometimes-inebriated, cycle-renting, out-of-practice riders from the nether regions of the GTA.

At the only public reveal of the finished plans, the tree slaughter was downplayed. After that event I asked officials if negative public comments had been taken into account.

“Staff and the project consultants are currently reviewing the feedback received,” town spokesperson Marah Minor told me. “No changes are currently in effect as this is in the review and design phase.”

With 41 wooden souls in the balance, we ripped the town a new one.

“Over the coming months the Niagara Region will be tearing up Niagara Stone Road. The town will be shutting down Mississagua. That means the kanga line of dump trucks going to the Big Dig at the Royal George will be diverting through Old Town residential streets,” this column hissed.

“Why do people flock here to visit? To live in this bucolic burg? For the quiet, the history, the architecture, the streetscapes, the geography — and the green above us. These are the intangibles making life in this place unique inside a world of chaotic change, conflict and AI slop.”

Yeah, we can live with 41 fewer trees, we said. But not the same.

Well, apparently, we have news.

The plan presented to locals at the end of March has been redrawn. The



Quietly, a revised plan for the rebuilding of Mississagua Street has appeared. Instead of slaughtering 41 of these signature trees, the toll will now be 17. And we get “heritage” ditches.

arboreal genocide has been rethought. When the tree guys are finished and before the dozers move in, there will be 17 stumps instead of 41.

“This change is the result of design modifications, technical review and feedback received through the public engagement process,” Minor tells me. “Consideration of tree preservation has been part of the discussion since the early stages of the project, including during council meeting discussions in 2023, where council emphasized the importance of maintaining the neighbourhood’s character and retaining trees where possible.”

Construction is set to begin sometime this summer and carry on through the winter. It will coincide with the weeks-long demolition of the Royal George Theatre (after a legal challenge ends), followed by seven months of digging and earth removal from that site on

the main drag.

Hundreds of loads are planned. Every single dump truck will now rumble through streets lined with heritage homes, instead of up Mississagua, as planned.

Chaos.

But wait. The town says that despite widening the roadway, installing new lanes, chopping trees and catering to a greater volume of tourist traffic, that “the heritage look and feel will be maintained.”

How so? “With the use of swales and ditches.” Seriously. Heritage ditches. Oh, and we get new streetlights on posts with decorative tops. Like in Virgil. And Disney World.

Okay, I know. It’s just a road. But when added to the hulking Parliament Oak hotel plunked into a residential hood, the 55,000-foot Royal George mega-complex where heritage structures once stood, the insane plan to turn the old hospital into a tourist parking garage (instead of, you know, a hospital), the coming Hummel hotel on Queen, all those new townhouses in St. Davids, the condo towers of Glendale and the Virgil construction site where 700 pines once stood, you have to ask: how much is enough? Who left the gate open?

This place is in danger of being loved to death.

But thank you. For pardoning the trees.

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

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Teardown of Chapman House a mistake

Dear editor:

The Chapman residence on the Niagara River Parkway is without a doubt one of the finest contemporary houses in Niagara-on-the-Lake. It symbolizes the firm's philosophy of timeless design by creating a cluster of small classical elements connected by glazed walkways.



Letter writer Wayne Murray says the Chapman House is one of the finest contemporary houses in Niagara-on-the-Lake and the decision to OK demolition was a mistake. FILE

I was shocked and disappointed when I heard that our heritage committee casually agreed to destroy such an important house without requiring independent restoration engineers to conduct a thorough inspection. Demolition is the worst of all alternatives for important buildings and should be approved only as a last resort after experienced restoration architects and engineers say that it has to be destroyed for reasons of public safety or that there's no possible way that repairs can be made to stabilize the building.

The committee should also realize that the architect was being given the opportunity to design a new multi-million-dollar house on one of the most ideal properties

sloping down to the Niagara River. His professional opinion obviously is compromised and when asked if the existing home should be demolished, he clearly has a conflict of interest.

The house was designed in the 1960s and is clearly a 20th century building, not an 18th- or 19th-century structure like so many buildings that have been successfully restored and not torn down. But like the cenotaph or clock tower or Queen Street, which is also a 20th-century structure, when a crack appears, you just repair it. The demolition of the cenotaph would never be considered and certainly never be approved.

If there are settlement issues with the Chapman house, you can underpin the foundations and pour a new structure. Our firm has poured new foundations and restored dozens of heritage buildings in the Old Town, some as large as Randwood, so it's nothing new and it's clearly not impossible. While it may be expensive, at less than 10 per cent of the cost of the construction of a new house, demolition doesn't even make economic sense.

This house is very important architecturally. However, I think that allowing its demolition sends a terrible message about the citizens of Niagara-on-

the-Lake who will be seen as not really caring about quality design or heritage buildings. Considering the terrible things that have been allowed to happen recently and are threatening again in the Old Town, this would be a good time to say that's enough.

I think that the heritage committee should rescind their approval to demolish the Chapman residence until independent restoration architects and engineers conduct a full inspection. If they conclude that demolition is necessary, only then should they consider issuing the approval to tear it down.

Wayne Murray
NOTL

Kaiser and future conflict-of-interest problems

Dear editor:

Further expanding upon Garth Turner's opinion piece on Andrea Kaiser, I would be curious to know what would happen if a conflict-of-interest issue were to come up if Ms. Kaiser were lord mayor ("The Turner Report: The next ambition of Andrea Kaiser

For example, if a winery wanted to expand its footprint or change its designation, or a winery/developer wanted to purchase and develop town land, would Ms. Kaiser have to recuse herself from voting on the issue due to a conflict of interest?

Personally, I would be extremely disappointed to

vote for someone whose stand on over-development aligned with my own, only to have them unable to exert their power because they are in the same business as the applicant.

Perhaps Ms. Kaiser could address this when she comes up with her policies.

Sonja Kloss
NOTL



Andrea Kaiser. FILE

New Rand Estate hotel is just desserts for SORE

Dear editor:

Better than Victoria Day fireworks, better than any NIMBY nonsense ever, the new hotel proposal on the Rand Estate is worthy of a celebration for the anti-SORE-people crowd. If this isn't moral justice, I don't know what is.

After spending my tax money (almost \$4 million) — and not to mention the financial opportunity cost lost property tax base over all of these years — to

fight against a reasonable residential subdivision plan, it appears that the best plan ever has now evolved. This is a romantic comedy come true in real life.

And for the icing on the cake, the main access driveway runs along the property boundary of the biggest opponents to the project.

If SORE wants to continue its "battle all over again" as stated in the May 16 news article (Niagara Now, "SORE braces for fresh

Rand Estate showdown as Marotta files new proposal"), then go ahead, but do not use my tax contribution to do so.

By the way, this property is not the Rand Estate anymore — I call it the Marotta Anti-SORE Hotel site, which I will be attending when it is built together with all of my anti-NIMBY friends, who understand property rights, development rights and good municipal planning for sustained financial health of

a small municipality.

This is an absolutely classic case on how to handle the insanity of the anonymous miserable people in this town; suffering fools gladly, a case study of sorts.

I would be happy to start a fundraiser to pay for a Benny Marotta bronze hero statue for the gateway to the Old Town district of NOTL. This is an unbelievably joyous occasion.

Peter Rusin
St. Davids



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

Juice Club was the original name of this smoothie shop founded in San Luis Obispo.

Last issue category: KNIVES OUT

Clue: In a nursery rhyme, the farmer's wife wields a carving knife while clipping this trio.

Answer: What is the Three Blind Mice?

Answered first by: Tuija Johansson

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Sue Rautenberg, Jesse Agnew, Jane Morris, Susan Hamilton, Margie Enns, Emma Balsas, Bill Hamilton, Lynda Collet, Bob Wheatley, Jane Andersen, Jeff Lake, Jim Dandy, Claudia Grimwood, Esther VanGorder, Donna Pearce, Catherine Clarke, Heather Hannan, Nancy Rocca, Howard Jones, Chris Van de Laar, Marla Percy, KC King, Sylvia Wiens, Sheila Meloche, Katie Reimer, Wade Durling

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Batter up, NOTL, for another battle over Rand Estate



Brian Marshall
Columnist

In the ongoing saga of the battle over the development of the Rand Estate property (144, 176, 200 John St. E. and 588 Charlotte St.) the owner has once again made application for official plan and zoning bylaw amendments.

The developers — Solmar (Niagara 2) Inc. and the Two Sisters Resorts Corp. — have trotted out a new proposal which includes a five-storey, 111-room hotel and five three-storey residential buildings, which will contain somewhere between 240 and 277 units; the final total of said residences being dependent upon “the unit sizes and the market demand for the various unit sizes.”

Of the existing buildings, it is proposed that the Rand main residence, the Devonian House, a wooden pergola and the Coach House will

be preserved and undergo adaptive reuse, with the main residence becoming a spa, the Devonian House converted to a restaurant, the Coach House a bridal retail store and the pergola retained as a feature in the landscape.

Interestingly, the hotel will carry the Ritz-Carlton brand and the residential units “will be affiliated with the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, where owners will be part of a program where their units may be rented out for accommodation purposes associated with the hotel.”

Before we look at the proposal in more depth, let’s quickly revisit the fact that the last proposal from these developers resulted in the town, a community organization and a direct neighbour being embroiled in a long, costly legal battle before the Ontario Land Tribunal — a body which rejected the developers’ plans — then the tribunal’s chair and the Ontario Superior Court; the former rejected the appeal and the latter did not hear it since the developers withdrew it.

In short, the town’s legal counsel in this case, Nancy Smith, described it as a “complete win.” A result certain town councillors failed to celebrate — Coun. Erwin Wiens, for



Brian Marshall says the new Rand plan is disguising rental units as living spaces. SOURCED

instance, was reported in this newspaper as wishing that “council stops paying to take development proposals such as these to court” (“Success is ‘when the bleeding stops,’ says Wiens of Rand hearing,” Oct. 24, 2024).

Perhaps this reaction can be attributed to the Rand case serving as an example that gives lie to the suggestion the town always loses before the Ontario Land Tribunal, so such undertakings are a waste of money.

Moving on to the current Solmar/Two Sisters application, let’s deal with the obvious elephant in the room.

The five three-storey “residential” buildings are clearly designed and positioned as opportunities for real-estate investors. These units offer an investor a Ritz-Carlton underwritten booking vacation rental bridge without the need for

any other local short-term rental agency offering.

In short, and despite the application’s efforts to present these buildings as residential housing, this presentation seems to be a carefully crafted mask giving the appearance of conforming to provincial residential housing objectives.

A positioning that would serve the developers well in the event the proposal ends up before the Ontario Land Tribunal.

Look, there may be some brave souls who are prepared to live in the backyard of a hotel and event venue, but I doubt there are many, and most of the units in these proposed buildings will simply become additional hotel spaces.

Turning a page, let’s consider the architecture and design of the proposed buildings.

The hotel is promised to be of Second Empire styling

echoing that of the existing Rand Estate and the renderings submitted by the developers show that the architect has followed the precepts of that style.

However, by cladding the building completely in “stone” (likely manufactured) and employing no variation in colour treatment — other than the mansard roof — when combined with its five-storey height, the finished structure will present a hulking, completely dominant massing on the property and sharply diminish the shouldering heritage asset.

Shifting to the proposed “residential” buildings, all five are carbon copies of one another and are not, unlike the design of the hotel, Second Empire but rather a loose mish-mash of architectural elements and styles.

These buildings and their site positioning around a loop access road are much

more typical of a commercial development presentation rather than a residential community.

Still, the proponents of this applicant must believe it strong enough to safely ignore the rulings contained within the tribunal decision on their previous application.

For example: the denial of road access through the panhandle onto Charlotte Street, which the new proposal resurrects as the primary access route for the residential buildings; that more than half of the residential component should be low density — all of the new proposed residential buildings are medium density; the preservation and rehabilitation of the Dunnington-Grubb landscape design and elements including the estate’s Axial Walkway and Mound Garden; and the list goes on.

While it’s accepted that the Rand Estate will be redeveloped, in my opinion, this proposal is another fail on multiple levels and is underwritten by the arrogance of applicants simply who want what they want, full stop.

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

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Ahead of 250th Independence Day, who holds all the cards: **Good or evil?**



Keith McNenly
Special to The Lake Report



With billions of people around the world, most of them inherently “good,” columnist Keith McNenly says he believes those with morals will pull our species toward decency, amid a time where the leader of the U.S. seems to have abandoned it altogether. That inherent leads a “slow, stubborn pattern of progress,” he writes. NASA

Most people are good; that’s how humanity has endured. For all our cleverness — our ability to remake the planet to suit ourselves — our species survives because the larger part of us is pulled toward decency. That’s what allows the slow, stubborn pattern of progress: two steps forward for every one step back.

A small number are exceptionally good. And a few are so profoundly bad they lack basic humanity. At times, the best among us rise to lead. At other times, the worst seize power.

In the 21st century, we’ve been handed something rare: a preview of how our era will be written about. Information is everywhere — along with tools to verify it if we choose.

Ordinary citizens can see behind the curtain as political history is formed in real time. Through modern media, we can make our own observations. In that sense, we’ve all become uncredentialed historians.

In previous generations, only a few ever heard a president, prime minister or king speak informally. Now those in power can message the public instantly, to be viewed on a device we carry all day. We see character and impulse hourly, not through portraits and ceremonies, but through unfiltered performance.

Over the long arc, time bends toward equity and justice — but not smoothly.

Human liberty takes millennia to build, yet regression can happen in years. A city with deep foundations takes generations to construct, but can be ruined in hours by an aggressor’s bombs. Complex modern society is no less fragile.

In the world today only a small circle are represented by superpowers: families, loyalists and oligarchs. Public interests — safety, stability, dignity — come a far second to control. Power in the absence of probity is pernicious.

We’ve entered a hinge-point in history: an authoritarian trend is strengthening among major powers, and aligning against liberal democracy. The one democratic superpower on which we all pegged our hopes and trust has begun sliding toward the same model — serving a few at the expense of everyone else — protected by propaganda and sustained by fear, confusion, and conspiracy.

The American founding generation feared this. Having broken from a king, they worried they might

someday invite a home-grown tyrant. So they built a system to prevent it: federal power divided into three pillars — executive, legislative, judiciary — each meant to restrain the others.

As the American Constitution reaches its 250th anniversary, that design faces its hardest test. The danger is not “a tyrant” in the old sense, because tyranny is often just the symptom.

The goal of modern authoritarians is simpler: theft. Capturing a wealthy nation requires weakening oversight so public wealth can be redirected into private hands.

Think of the founders’ system as a scale. A simple scale needs two equal weights to stay level. A three-arm scale with three equal weights is even more precarious: it can wobble, but it should not topple.

The American Revolution’s famous tricorne hat — designed for maximum visibility — became a symbol of independence. It can also serve as a reminder of the founders’ three-part design: three institutions meant

to balance one another so that no single arm grows heavy enough to obstruct the vision, to tip the whole republic.

The founders left one more safeguard beyond constitutional checks and balances. Even the grandest pillars and monoliths stand useless without a foundation. The scale must stand on something solid, wide, and permanent. The American founders named that foundation in the first words of their project: “We the people...”

So, the world waits on a simple question: can the foundation hold? Can “the people” restore balance as leaders shift the weights to their side of the scale?

Boasts aside, the authoritarian holds only a single card — the joker’s trick of chaos and distraction. The real deck is large. Americans hold roughly 340 million cards. The rest of the world holds billions more, each representing a human stake in liberty, dignity and truth.

When I try to cut through the fog of our time, I sometimes recall snippets of poetry, because poetry can do what argument often can’t: it plants clarity like a waking dream. Bob Dylan put it simply in “Forever Young”: “May you have a strong foundation when the winds a-changin shift.”

The winds have shifted. The bet — by good people in their billions — is that the foundation will hold: the human quest — the need for agency, freedom of thought, equity, justice and liberty.

Authoritarians may claim they hold all the cards. But I know whose hand I’m betting on.

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

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Is it just me or has hockey **changed quite a lot?**



ROSS'S RAMBLINGS
Ross Robinson
Columnist

Before the seventh game of the just ended Sabres/Canadiens playoff series, I truly hoped the NHL would somehow modify the rules to allow both teams to win. Drastic and impossible I know, but both teams were so great and ruggedly likeable. All the players deserved to move on to the third round.

They all skate so fast now. When we watch highlights from the 1960s, it seems they were playing slow-motion hockey. Not that long ago.

I don't think any sport has changed as much as hockey during the past 60 or 70 years. Back in the day, most of the players came from Canada, so we could

say with straight faces, "Hockey: it's our game." We still say that, but with our fingers crossed.

Then, Flin Flon. Now, some stars from Phoenix. Then, Shawinigan. Now Stockholm.

Then, Kirkland Lake and Kapuskasing. Now, Kazakhstan. And both Montreal and Moscow.

Back to the original point, the quality of the players is beyond belief now. How they skate, pass and shoot, and receive passes. The physical pounding they take. NFL players play one game each week, while during the playoffs, our hockey heroes go at it basically every second night.

Just imagine how hard the boards and the plexiglass are, and the players are speeding along on skates, on ice — fast.

I will continue to ramble about hockey. Back only two generations, the ice surface was white. Almost sacrosanct, with only a few painted markings for the blue lines and the checkered red line and faceoff circles and goal creases. The experts were certain there

would never be advertising on the ice surface.

Now, the ads scroll continuously, and I find the whole thing distracting and confusing. Do we really need to have puck carrier names printed on our television screens?

The boards were white too, with only a few blue and red markings. Thank goodness they attempt to be humorous and clever now, sometimes to a fault.

Big games demand a Big Mac. Buds make time for playoffs. That's what Buds do. Genesis, the official luxury car of the NHL. Hyundai, for those who drive hockey. Tylenol, the official pain relief partner of the NHL. Caterpillar, there is no off season. And some potato company has become the official fry of watching hockey. Lay's is a bit presumptuous by challenging, "Betcha can't pick just one."

Back now to the quality of the hockey we are seeing now. And the speed at which the Sabres and Habs played all seven of their second round games.

Not playing favourites,



A real pity both the Sabres and Les Canadiens could not both win, writes Ross.

but my favourite player is Cole Caufield of Les Habitants de Montreal. OK, the Habs. Born and bred in Wisconsin, and the winner of the 2021 Hobey Baker award as the top NCAA ice hockey player. He seems to play the game as it was played back in the good old days, just a lot faster and more skilfully.

Hockey can be such a great game, when played properly.

This season, he became just the seventh Montreal Canadien to score 50 goals in one season. Illustrious company, with Joseph Henri Maurice Richard,

also known as the "Rocket," and Guy Lafleur. After he scored one particularly beautiful deke goal on a breakaway, my daughter asked me if I ever did that. Honestly and humbly, I replied, "I tried it once, but got my feet tangled up, and fell down. A faceplant."

My hockey career was unremarkable, but nobody had more fun or met more interesting people. Carl Brewer was the most unique. A former Stanley-Cup-winning Toronto Maple Leaf, and absolutely a man way ahead of his time. He quit the NHL while still in prime physical condition and decamped to Finland to teach them how to play hockey.

Among many other great Finnish hockey players, remember Teemu Selanne? Not only a great NHL career, but he played in six Olympic Games.

Carl and I travelled to Germany several times in the late 1970s to work at trade shows in Cologne and Munich. We always stayed an extra few days to ski in the French Alps. A book could be written.

The results of his long ago efforts are seen today in the NHL, where so many Finlanders stand out with their incredible, high speed skills. Carl is still known as "the father of Finnish hockey." I went to his funeral years ago in Toronto, and met several of his Finnish fans. Carl was a humble hockey legend who said, "If your IQ is 90, and everyone else in the room averages 80, you seem to be really smart."

I also went to the funeral of Maurice Richard back in 2000 in Montreal. Some 5,000 of us walked behind the Rocket's casket, along Rue Ste-Catherine and Rue St-Denis to Notre-Dame Basilica in Le Vieux Montreal. Over 15,000 of us were inside and outside the church. That's a lot of people bidding Adieu to the Rocket.

Stop me, before I ramble out of control.

The other teams want to win the Stanley Cup. The Canadiens need to win the Stanley Cup.

Enjoy the rest of the hockey season. Vas-y nos glorieux.

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OPENING DAY

SUNDAY, MAY 31

Visitors flock to **reopening** of War of 1812 historic site

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

A thunderstorm did not stop people from turning out on Saturday for the opening of the military fort in Niagara-on-the-Lake that has overlooked the waters of the Niagara River for 210 years.

Fort Mississauga National Historic Site opened to visitors for the first time in years on May 16, after undergoing seven years of restoration work to return it, as best as can be done, to its former glory.

Alongside hosting the opening of Fort Mississauga, the Friends of Fort George raised more than \$200 through an antiques evaluation event at Navy Hall.

Ongoing repairs to Brock's Monument have cut the Friends' on-site revenue since the monument shut down last fall, pushing the group to open new sites and new fundraisers to cover more than \$100,000 in an-



A glimpse inside Fort Mississauga, now open for tours until June 28. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

nual student wages.

Fort Mississauga, inside the NOTL Golf Club property, will remain open Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. until June 28, with interior tours at \$5 per person.

Nearly 750 people visited the fort across the opening weekend, including a bonus Victoria Day Monday.

Tony Chisholm, president of the Friends of Fort George, said all money raised through events like the Navy Hall antiques session goes directly toward

hiring summer students trained by Parks Canada.

"Contributing money to the Friends of Fort George helps us hire more students for the fort so that when tourists come to town, they've got a bigger squad and there's more people to greet them," said Chisholm.

The fort was built in the wake of the War of 1812 to secure British forces in the Niagara Peninsula from the American navy controlling Lake Ontario. Construction started in 1814 and completed in 1816. It was left in

a state of disrepair since it was last used as a training site for Canadian soldiers during the Second World War.

Starting in 2019, however, Parks Canada began to restore the site, re-establishing earthworks, cleaning up debris inside, replacing the roof, stabilizing its central tower, constructing a new pedestrian boardwalk to the front gate and other restoration efforts.

For one day in May 2024, the public was given the chance to see inside the fort

and observe the restoration work, but before then, the fort had never been open to the public for regular visits.

Meanwhile, at Navy Hall, the antiques evaluation drew several local residents hoping to find out the history and value of the items they brought with them, including chinaware, brass, silver and glass items.

Andre Wagner, a member of the Society of Antique Jewellery Historians whose family has been in the antique business since 1965, charged \$10 per item and donated all proceeds to the Friends.

He assessed whether pieces carried historical value, market value or mainly sentimental worth.

Evaluating one resident's piece of decorated crockery, Wagner told the room the item dated likely to the 1920s or 1930s based on its style.

"It's charming from a sentimental point of view, and it also has one of my favourite words: patina,"

Wagner said. "In terms of value, sadly, not so much, so off to Newark Neighbors, that's where that's going to end up."

The Friends of Fort George hired 11 students last year. Grants cover part of that cost, with the remainder raised through events, the Fort George gift shop and Brock's Monument programs.

Restoration work at the monument has cut access to its interior staircase, reducing the group's ability to earn money on site. The Friends plan to operate an outdoor pop-up tent near the monument this summer.

Fort Mississauga tours run at 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. each weekend day and include a visit to the Sally Port, a controlled gateway built into the fort's outer wall. Visiting the grounds is free. The Canada Strong Pass, available June 19 to Sept. 7, covers admission to all Parks Canada sites at no charge.

andrew@niagaranow.com

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 **NIAGARA PARKS**

Working in cooperation with Niagara Region Public Health, The Niagara Parks Commission will be conducting a larviciding program between **June 1 - August 31, 2026**, under the authority of the Local Medical Officer of Health to control larval mosquitoes to prevent their development into vectors of West Nile Virus.

The larvicide Mosquiron 0.12 CRD (ingot, PCP #31079) will be placed by hand into catch basins of Niagara Parks properties located in the Town of Fort Erie, City of Niagara Falls and the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

All larvicides will be applied by Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks licensed applicators or trained technicians.

For further information, please contact:
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1-877-642-7275
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- Across**
- 2. Laboratory glassware (4,5)
 - 8. Entreaty (4)
 - 9. Mesopotamia was here (4)
 - 10. Middle East expert (7)
 - 11. Useful kind of truck (4-2)
 - 12. Employs (4)
 - 14. Bombs (4)
 - 15. American vulture (6)
 - 16. Thickly curled hairdo (4)
 - 18. More mature (5)
 - 21. Bring together (5)
 - 23. Have a taste (3,2)
 - 25. Egyptian water lily (5)
 - 28. Without purpose (4)
 - 29. Kitchen feature (6)
 - 31. Great Lake (4)
 - 32. "Shane" actor (4)
 - 35. Canter round a lure for bees (6)
 - 36. Sticks like glue (7)
 - 37. Sudden assault (4)
 - 38. Rhythmic swing (4)
 - 39. Gastric (9)
- Down**
- 1. Abnormally white (6)
 - 2. Discussed (6-2)
 - 3. "Walkin' back to Happiness" singer (7)
 - 4. How critical things may come (2,1,4)
 - 5. Conveyor (7)
 - 6. If it's in place it's in this (4)
 - 7. Charge per unit (4)
 - 13. Dated (7)
 - 15. Pivotal (7)
 - 17. Not easily hoodwinked (3)
 - 19. The fifth of twelve (3)
 - 20. Flightless bird (3)
 - 22. In poor health (3)
 - 24. Attendance check (4-4)
 - 25. Pitched abruptly (7)
 - 26. Proposition demonstrated by reasoning (7)
 - 27. Registers (5,2)
 - 30. Not quite (6)
 - 33. Small cells (4)
 - 34. Shocking art movement (4)

Crossword Puzzle

Last issue's answers

1	C	A	S	U	A	L	T	Y	5	C	A	N	C	U	N	8			
2	U	U	U	O	9	T	B	H	O										
10	T	H	R	U	S	T	S	11	R	E	U	N	I	O	N				
	S	G	P	E	O	T	A	P											
		12	M	I	N	I	M	A	L	L	Y	13	A	N	I	L			
14	T	N	C									15	M	T	U				
16	R	E	G	A	I	N	S	17				18	E	X	O	T	I	C	S
	E	O		19	W	R	Y	Z											
20	A	S	21	A	R	U	L	E	22	S	I	Z	A	B	L	E			
	D	R	S	A															
24	M	A	R	C		25	I	T	I	N	E	R	A	R	Y				
	I	A	B	I	O	E	R	A											
29	L	O	N	G	R	U	N		30	V	I	L	N	I	U	S			
	L	G	A	G															
31	S	L	E	D	G	E		32	O	K	L	A	H	O	M	A			

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



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EXPLORING HISTORY
WITH NOTL MUSEUM

A brief hose encounter, c. 1920



This photograph shows a young child, about two or three years old, holding a garden hose. They may have been helping in the garden or simply enjoying a summer afternoon. While the child's identity remains unknown, the image captures a familiar moment from childhood that many of us have likely experienced: summers at the beach or at the wading pool at Queenston Heights, running through sprinklers on hot days, water balloon fights and many more. With the recent warm weather, it also serves as a reminder of a long-standing rule: a garden hose in the hands of a small child is no longer a tool, but a fully independent water feature with its own agenda.

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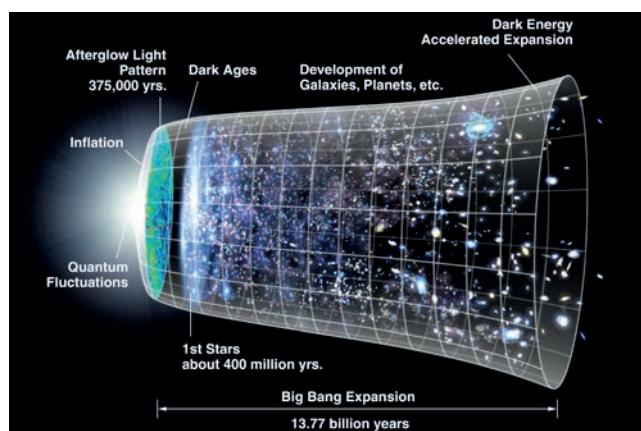
Dr. William Brown
Columnist

was very much larger than previously imagined.

Hubble's studies also showed, using the Doppler effect, that those galaxies were speeding away from one another, faster, the farther away they were. Hubble initially resisted the suggestion that the reason galaxies were moving away from one another was they were being carried by an expanding universe.

Earlier, Alexander Friedman used Albert Einstein's newly developed (1915) theory of general relativity to formulate a mathematical theory for the expanding universe first in 1922 and again in 1924. Later, Georges Lemaitre, a Belgium priest and physicist, rediscovered Friedman's theory and added the all-important concept that the universe may have started with what he called a "primaeval atom" 1927.

The theoretical and observational evidence that the universe was not only expanding but might have been very much smaller and energetic led to the theory that the universe began with something extraordinarily small and hot, which, for reasons yet unknown, suddenly expanded creating a very hot plasma soup of elementary charged particles trapping photons of light in the soup. The universe continued



to expand and cool to a time roughly a third of a billion years later, when the universe had cooled enough for opposite charges to link up forming hydrogen, helium and a bit of lithium atoms, which freed up photons to escape and, for a while, literally light up the universe.

Continued expansion of the universe stretched the remaining dispersed heat energy eventually into the microwave range with temperatures just a few degrees above absolute zero.

All this theoretical speculation came to a head with solid evidence — as theoretically predicted by James Peebles and his colleagues: cosmic radiation in the microwave range was found by Penzias and Wilson. The collective work led to three separate Nobel Prizes, first to Penzias and Wilson, (1978) then for confirming satellite evidence for the cosmic

radiation my Mather and Smoot (2006) and finally to Peebles for his theoretical work on the cosmic radiation and dark energy (2019).

This masterful body of research both theoretical and observational in cosmology was capped by the theoretical predication and then observational support for minute variations in the density of matter, without which gravitational clumping to form stars and galaxies would have been impossible from the outset.

Except for a very brief period of very rapid inflationary expansion the universe was assumed to expand at a constant rate, as inferred by the name "Hubble constant." As Peebles pointed out, the expansile force equaled the cosmological factor Einstein had introduced into his equations to restore stability to the universe, only for him to withdraw

It all started with a big bang. Our universe was born out of an incredibly small and hot starting point that rapidly expanded over billions of years into the cosmos we know today. But what's next for the universe? Scientists theorize that the rate of growth is speeding up, thanks to the prominence of dark energy in space. WIKIMEDIA

the constant when he realized the evidence for an expanding universe was overwhelming.

However, the 2006 Nobel Prize in physics to Saul Perlmutter, Brian P. Schmidt and Adam G. Riess suggested the universe is accelerating. Which led to the stunning theoretical suggestion that the universe might be made up of dark energy (69 percent), responsible for accelerating the expansion of the universe, dark matter (26 per cent) and ordinary matter — the kind we're familiar with making up a paltry five per cent of the total.

Dark energy and dark matter are "dark" because they don't interact with the electromagnetic spectrum — we can see their effects but not the dark energy or dark matter. That's poses a real problem for physics because it suggests that 95 per cent of the universe is a mystery.

That mystery is one of the reasons why so much time on the James Webb Space Telescope and the new Vera Rubin Telescope is committed to sorting out what's what when it comes to measuring the rate of expansion of the universe — is expansion the same everywhere and for all times in the universe or are there variabilities and if so, why?

The implications are dramatic. An accelerating expansion of the universe without any obvious cosmic brakes, except possibly giant black holes, is a universe whose matter is so dispersed that stars can't form, with the result that the universe eventually goes dark and cold with no place for life.

Those questions won't be answered in my lifetime but perhaps in my children's time, although funding these days for expensive ventures like telescopes is shrinking fast.

However, whatever the mysteries of dark matter and energy, we've made incredible progress in the last century and a quarter and a huge achievement for our species.

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.

Andrew Mantegna



MANTEGNA, Andrew Joseph —
It is with broken hearts that we announce the sudden passing of Andrew Joseph Mantegna at age 40 on May 13, 2026. Cherished and loving husband of Inna, adored and adoring father of daughter Elizabeth, beloved son of Douglas Mantegna and Kathleen O'Marra, and dearest "mini me" brother of Lucas Mantegna (Sofia Garcia).

He is lovingly remembered by in-laws Mayya and Grigori Shaykevich of Russia, his aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews living both here and in the U.S., as well as his many friends, especially those he grew up

with in Oakville, Tanner Wills and Dan Neary, who were always there for him. And then, there is little dog Marley, always at his side, who is missing him very much.

Andrew is predeceased by caring Grandparents Ella and Alfred O'Marra of Port Credit, and Frank Mantegna and Winifred Hughes of the U.S.

After studying at Niagara College, Andrew worked in the hospitality industry and later in construction. His interests and experiences in life were many. He loved the "beautiful game" of soccer, and played it well as a young man; he was an ardent Maple Leafs fan; loved snowboarding; took up scuba diving, achieving the level of Rescue Diver. He followed politics and current events closely and loved to discuss them. More recently, he developed a natural gift for gardening, teaching his little girl the pleasures of getting hands in the soil. Andrew faced challenges, including psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis, conditions that can be very difficult to live with and be accompanied by periods of depression.

We are comforted by happy, beautiful memories of our Andrew. We remember how handsome he was; his out-going nature and the easy, open charm he extended to everyone - anyone who met Andrew always remembered him; his enthusiasm for new pursuits; his sense of fun and the laughter he shared with family and friends. Above all, we remember the Andrew who loved his family and is deeply, deeply loved by us.

"He was my North, my South, my East and West"

Visitation will be held at Morgan Funeral Home, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-Lake on Thursday, May 21 from 12 to 2:30 p.m. Funeral mass will be celebrated at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church on Friday, May 22 at 1 p.m, followed by interment at Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery. For those who wish, memorial donations may be made to Psoriasis Canada (PsoCan) or Arthritis Society Canada Psoriatic Arthritis.

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



Harold 'Bud' Moulson



MOULSON, Harold "Bud", SBStJ —
March 9, 1937 – May 12, 2026

With great sadness, we announce the death of Bud Moulson after a long and hard-fought battle with chronic disease.

Son of Harold and Evelyn (nee Eyres), Bud was proud to have been born at the original Hospital for Sick Children and raised in Toronto. Bud leaves behind his wife, Leslie (nee Kennedy); his son, Geoff (Nancy) and their children, Tyler, Erin and Eric; his son, Chris (Anne) and his children, Ryan and Brody; former daughter-in-law, Jackie Alexander; sister- and brother-in-law, Carole and Jim Lusby; nieces, Danielle,

Michelle, Jen, Jill and Megan; as well as many great nephews and nieces. He was predeceased by his brother Ron and sister-in-law Marlene.

Family was so important to Bud. Whether he was cheering on the kids at a tee-ball game, participating in Camp PUBGAL activities, hosting in Florida or proudly sharing their adult achievements, his sons and grandchildren were a particular source of joy and pride. Friends also meant the world to Bud, particularly those from the Niagara British Car Club.

Bud was noted for his strong work ethic. On his bike, he delivered newspapers as a kid, then prescriptions for a drug store. When the pharmacy bought a car, Bud was able to get his license at age 15 so he could continue to help his Mom and Dad. When, at his first job with CN, a strike was called, Bud got a job with Sam the Record Man. When we moved to Virgil, he attended a job fair, which led to his working at two different local wineries.

He was proud of his 37 years of dedicated service at Levitt-Safety Limited, working in many different roles where he introduced innovative emergency care and industrial safety equipment as well as ISO certification for branches across the country. Facilitating back-up fire protection in the pits at the Toronto and Vancouver Indy races was a role he developed and enjoyed.

Bud's volunteer service is too extensive to detail. To honour some of his work in emergency care and CPR, he was invested as a Serving Brother within the Venerable Order of St. John by Governor General Schreyer in 1981.

Bud's interest in high-level rescue and auto extrication led to his coordinating seminars at Seneca College in the 1980s for firefighters and EMS personnel. These were the impetus for these skills being routinely taught today in Ontario emergency services.

Special thanks to Dr. Karen Berti, SE Health nurses Bernadette and Deirdre, the many PSWs who provided tender, loving care and NOTL Palliative Care.

Cremation has taken place and an inurnment will be held at Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery, 1483 Lakeshore Rd., Niagara-on-the-Lake on Saturday, May 23, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.

Donations in Bud's memory may be made to the charity of your choice or the Princess Margaret Foundation.



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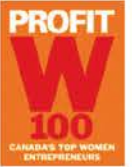


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*So many of you in this town trust me every single day with the
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— and that's something I truly never take for granted. It's an
enormous privilege to be part of such an important chapter in
people's lives.*

*Especially over the last seven years since moving right into the
heart of town, Niagara-on-the-Lake has become so much more
than just the place I work it's become home. And truthfully, this
community has quite literally changed my life.*

*On a lighter note many of you have been politely (and not so
politely) telling me for a while that it might be time for a new
headshot.*

So I listened.

*While this isn't quite the photo you'll eventually see on my signs
around, I figured it was at least a step in the right direction.*

*Thank you for your trust, your support, your referrals, and all the
kind chats around town over the years.*

Have a wonderful week everyone — and I'll see you around town.

Greg

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