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Majority of people want housing at old hospital

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Whether it's through housing or a community facility, Niagara-on-the-Lake residents say they want to see the future of the old hospital on Wellington Street serve the people who live in town — and some are nervous what may happen if private developers acquire the property.

Dozens gathered at the NOTL Community Centre Wednesday morning for the first public session in a months-long consultation with NPG Planning Solutions on the former hospital site's next chapter.

The town bought the 2.3-acre property at 176

Continued on Page 2

Native Centre in upheaval

Board members silent after allegations of misconduct, intimidation and misspending



Long-time member Josephine Lavalley live-streams a small Sept. 11 protest outside the Niagara Regional Native Centre. Former leaders, staff and members allege intimidation and financial misconduct has shaken the organization. PAIGE SEBURN

Paige Seburn | Local Journalism Initiative | The Lake Report

The Niagara Regional Native Centre's board of directors is facing new allegations of intimidation, mistreatment and financial misconduct, as former staff and past leaders say programs have been disrupted, em-

ployees feel silenced and almost \$25,000 in payments were issued to board members this year.

Those who worked at and relied on the centre say a culture of fear has replaced the safe space once meant to support Indigenous community members and families.

Former board president Sean Vanderklis said at least 37 of about 50 staff members have quit, been fired or gone on leave, leaving programs vacant and straining the centre's relationship with funders. The Lake Report has not independently

verified these staff numbers.

"All the community comes to me and speaks to me. A lot of staff come to me," he told The Lake Report.

"Staff are fearful of their jobs."

Continued on Page 6

American Hotel developer 'waiting for market' before demolition

Dan Smeenk
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The historic waterfront property known as the old American Hotel is one step closer to being torn down

to make way for a future condo development.

While the town hasn't issued a demolition permit yet for the inn at 61 Melville St., town staff are recommending that the municipality remove a "holding sym-

bol" from the site, which restricted development on the property.

During the town's Oct. 7 committee of the whole planning meeting, the committee voted to forward staff's recommendation to

council for approval during its Oct. 28 meeting.

"The purpose of the removal of the holding is for the removal of the building," Kirsten McCauley, director of community and development services, told

the committee.

Alexa Mills, vice-president of Blythwood Homes, confirmed the company hasn't submitted a demolition permit and said it doesn't know when it will, as it's "waiting for the

market."

"We just haven't firmed it up yet," she said.

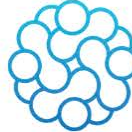
Once the demolition permit is issued, it will be required to be posted at the

Continued on Page 3



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St. Davids stormwater pond **over capacity**, options being reviewed to replace or fix it

Dan Smeenk
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Nearly two decades after it was built, Sandalwood Pond in St. Davids is taking on more than it was meant to handle — and the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake says it's time for an upgrade.

In a press release issued Friday, the town says that while the pond was engineered and designed in 2005 according to appropriate standards, a consultant has identified “capacity challenges, particularly during severe weather events.”

The town hired GEI Consultants to evaluate the stormwater management system and provide recommendations. The consultant confirmed that the pond is experiencing increased water flow.

The town is now investigating contributing factors, including property discharges into the pond and regional water redirection.

GEI Consultants prepared four technical memos between April and September of this year. Council discussed the matter with the firm during a closed session at its Sept. 23 meeting.

In the first memo, dated April, GEI said an unnamed individual raised concerns that the pond was “not operating as intended.” The same individual also reported flooding in adjacent rights-of-way and driveways



The Town of NOTL says Sandalwood Pond in St. Davids does not meet current overflow standards. It said further technical assessments will be done. DANIEL SMEENK

following two heavy rainfalls on June 18 and July 10, 2024.

In the final memo submitted in September, GEI stated that the “contributing drainage area to the Vineyard Creek Estates stormwater management facility included an area larger than it was originally designed for.”

The memo presented four options for upgrading the pond:

Convert the existing pond to one without a permanent pool, including a retaining wall — estimated cost: \$610,000.

Remove the permanent pool in the existing pond and add a stormwater detention tank — estimated cost: \$1 million.

Remove the permanent pool in the existing pond, add a detention tank and an additional pond without a permanent pool — estimated cost: \$2 million.

Keep the current pond and construct an additional one without a permanent pool — estimated cost: \$1.15 million.

Residents have expressed mixed reactions to the findings and proposed solutions. Kip Voegel and Gienek Ksiazkiewicz, a St. Davids resident, responded with cautious optimism, but both believe the issue extends beyond Sandalwood Pond.

“It is a step in the right direction,” said Voegel. “However, it involves more than just Sandalwood (Vineyard Creek Estate stormwater management facility).” Ksiazkiewicz agreed, pointing to other problematic areas such as Tawny Ridge.

Residents of Sandalwood Crescent, which is located near the pond, also shared their experiences. Paul Frantangelo, who

has lived on the street for 14 years, said he has seen the pond overflow in the past.

“It does fill up,” he said. “I have seen the water twice come on the roadway ... about five or six years ago.”

However, he said he doesn't recall flooding during last year's storms.

Jamie Kallio, a resident of seven years, reported flooding in his backyard “last summer or two summers ago.”

“It flooded all the way to the level of my pool in the backyard from the storm drain that drains into that pond,” he said. “Especially (my backyard) being at the base of Sandalwood, they tend to flood very quickly, or at least the drains get overwhelmed quickly.”

Kallio said the pond should drain more quickly and believes too much water is being funnelled into it.

“From what I understand ... I guess all the water from Angel's Drive and from Tanbark and Sandalwood all flows down to that one retention pond, and that's why it gets overwhelmed so quickly,” he said.

“So, any large rainstorms generally have that pond filled to the brim.”

He also called for a fence to be installed around the pond due to the number of children in the area and the risk of accidents during floods.

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Melville Street condo building still **in limbo**

Continued from Front Page

site of the property. Under Ontario law, a holding symbol prevents development on a property until certain conditions are met.

In this case, it was placed on 61 Melville St. by council in October 2023 to ensure a record of site condition and an archeological study were completed.

Town staff say both of those have been completed.

The building's origins date back to 1833, according to a town report. It was owned by the Niagara Harbour and Dock Company until “sometime after 1870.”

By 1890, the site became home to the King George III Inn, previously known as the McMillan Inn and later the American Hotel.

The inn, which is currently unoccupied, was



Council took the holding symbol off 61 Melville St. last Tuesday, bringing it closer to demolition. DANIEL SMEENK

purchased by Blythwood Homes in 2021 for \$1.9 million. Marah Minor, the town's communications co-ordinator, said the town believes Blythwood Homes still owns the property.

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.

During the Oct. 7 meeting, Coun. Wendy Chero-pita raised concerns about mitigating the amount of dust in the air during the demolition process.

“There's a lot of homes there,” she said. “It could be

pretty nasty if there's a lot of dust flying.”

McCauley said dust mitigation measures are included in the site plan, and the town could also speak with the property owner.

Burroughs and Coun. Andrew Niven asked about communication with neighbouring residents.

Niven questioned whether neighbours would be informed about the demolition. McCauley said notification would come through a posted demolition notice on the property.

Coun. Gary Burroughs also asked whether neighbours had been involved in the site planning process. McCauley said records were made public through an information report passed last year.

“A site plan process is not a public process,” she said.

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Monument for peace



A new monument is being unveiled this month at Locust Grove in Queenston, given to Niagara Parks by Soka Gakkai International Canada, one part of a global organization that aims to promote peace, culture and education through Nichiren Buddhism. This monument, located in Locust Grove's picnic area, has a quote from Soka Gakkai International's founder, Daisaku Ikeda, who says, "Peace is the most basic starting point for the advancement of humankind." The official unveiling will happen Thursday, Oct. 23.

DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Chamber lunch spotlights key issues

Dan Smeenk
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report



Andrea Kaiser speaks about local issues while Tony Baldinelli, Wayne Gates and Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa listen during the NOTL Chamber of Commerce's multi-level leadership luncheon at the Prince of Wales Hotel on Tuesday. DAN SMEENK

Tariffs and international trade were on many people's minds during the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce's leadership gathering for all of the town's main political representatives, held on Tuesday in Old Town.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, regional Coun. Andrea Kaiser, NDP MPP Wayne Gates and Conservative MP Tony Baldinelli were at the Prince of Wales Hotel for the Chamber's multi-level leadership luncheon, which saw the political leaders speak on a multitude of topics and issues for the afternoon.

The event opened with a land acknowledgement and greetings, followed by lunch, opening remarks from each politician, and a question-and-answer session.

Baldinelli stressed the importance of the U.S. market to local businesses.

This comes after Prime Minister Mark Carney had his second White House meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump on Oct. 7. Pressure is mounting on Carney to address U.S. tariffs on steel, autos, aluminum and lumber as they continue hurting the Canadian economy.

"This trading relationship is vitally important," Baldinelli said. "The U.S. market counts for 72 per cent of total exports from Niagara businesses, with export trade supporting about 30,000 jobs. This is why we have to find a resolution to the trade impediments."

Zalepa highlighted his role in the Border Mayors Alliance, a group of Canadian mayors from border

communities working to oppose tariffs.

"We're acutely impacted as a border community due to tariffs," he said. "I'm not saying back to the North American Free Trade Agreement, but closer than what we are right now."

Kaiser spoke about the region's push to encourage buying local in response to tariffs. She also urged NOTL wine producers to follow the example of B.C. wineries, which prominently label their products as local.

Some business owners attended the event to hear how leaders plan to support the local economy.

"I wanted to hear what the councillor and the different levels of government ... are thinking about improving," said Tommy Wegge, owner of Harmony Hygge Lifestyle on Queen Street.

He also expressed interest in plans for the former hospital site on Wellington Street, saying, "this town needs more parking spots."

Wegge called the luncheon "an interesting event" and said he was "so happy" to be there.

Richard Liu, owner of Ironwood Cider House, said he came because "the gov-

ernment has a lot of power in terms of the well-being of the community."

He noted a downturn in tourism this year and wanted to hear what leaders had to say about the issue.

"A lot of talk was obviously about tariffs," he said.

Overall, the majority of the discussions reflected the individual platforms of each representative.

One key announcement came from Kaiser, who revealed that a long-awaited police funding report she initiated is nearing release.

"We are expecting that report to come back with possibilities of how that cost is levied in January," she said.

Kaiser raised the issue in June, arguing that Niagara-on-the-Lake pays a disproportionately high share of police costs, which are based heavily on property taxes — often a burden for local homeowners.

Alongside this, she discussed the region's priorities, including infrastructure investment and support for local businesses.

Baldinelli criticized what he called the unsound economic policies of the federal Liberal government and promoted Conservative economic principles.

"It's time for government to get out of the way," he said.

Gates focused on local and provincial issues, including the town's ongoing effort to bring a nurse practitioner to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

He also highlighted broader concerns, such as the "crisis" in health care, the shortage of skilled trades workers, and the importance of the auto sector — a field he knows well from his time as president of Unifor Local 199.

Zalepa addressed the limitations of municipal authority and responded to a question about the future of the former hospital site. While he didn't propose a specific plan, he emphasized the need for public input and private sector involvement.

"Council wants to hear what it is in the community that needs to be addressed," he said, adding that potential outcomes could include "three or five" ideas.

The discussion was moderated by Jeff Boli-chowski, a communications professional with Armstrong Strategy Group and a former journalist at the St. Catharines Standard and Windsor Star.

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From left, Bonita Cawker, Dorothy Soo-Wiens and Peter Warrack look over a flyer for the upcoming Paws for Heroes fundraiser, which aims to help provide service dogs for veterans and first responders living with PTSD. PAIGE SEBURN

Hope for heroes living with trauma

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

A group of Niagara-on-the-Lake volunteers is fundraising to give two people who've served their country and communities something they say can change a life — a loyal dog trained to sense distress before it's spoken.

The Rotary Club of NOTL and members of the Niagara Lions Club are leading Paws for Heroes, a fundraiser supporting the Canadian Veteran Service Dog Unit, an Ottawa-based organization that trains and places service dogs with veterans and first responders across Canada to help with the effects of their line of work, such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

"PTSD affects our first responders and military," said organizer Dorothy Soo-Wiens. "It changes them."

Each dog costs about \$30,000 to recruit, raise and train. The goal is to fund two this year — the first time Niagara has had two local applicants.

Co-organizer Peter Warrack, a retired detective from Northern Ireland, says for certain people, a dog provides an "emotional anchor" to help them with post-traumatic stress.

He experienced some of this stress in his line of work first-hand: his years overseas "during the height of the Troubles" exposed him to violence few can imagine, which "you were just expected to get on with," he said.

"My colleagues were shot in the morning, killed in the morning, and then in the

afternoon, I was attending their autopsy," he said. "I found that extremely stressful."

He said first responders are often taken for granted — "all the services, fire, police, ambulance."

"There was no counselling for me ... A lot of people turned to alcohol, some committed suicide, a lot of broken marriages."

PETER WARRACK
RETIRED DETECTIVE

"There was no counselling for me," he said. "A lot of people turned to alcohol, some committed suicide, a lot of broken marriages."

His wife and fellow organizer Bonita Cawker said those years left lasting scars. "I can remember, he'd be thrashing in the night and he'd have nightmares," she said.

Cawker and Soo-Wiens were inspired after hearing the story of Dwayne Sawyer, president of the service dog unit — a former special forces member who lives with PTSD and credits his service dog with helping him recover. Sawyer will speak at the fundraising event.

"I was in the audience and we thought, yeah, this is a really good cause. We need to do some more," said Warrack. "For those that it works for, it's a life-changing event."

For Coun. Erwin Wiens,

a retired police officer, the cause is personal — he's seen firsthand how years on the job can take a toll.

"We absolutely wanted to get involved," he said.

The fundraiser is about helping first responders and veterans get support before the weight of trauma builds up, which "just wears on you," he said.

"After a while, you just try to compartmentalize it," he said. "Like a layer of paint over a layer of paint."

Wiens said it's not uncommon for first responders to handle two or three traumatic calls in a single day.

"Think about the paramedic who goes to an accident — first call, goes to a terrible accident. Then, after that, goes to a heart attack. And then goes to a suicide," he said.

"Imagine doing that day in and day out."

The lasting effects of trauma change how a person moves through daily life, Wiens added.

"I still take my seatbelt off 15 seconds before I arrive anywhere, because you have to be ready to go," he said.

"I still go into restaurants, or buildings, or anywhere — and I sit with my back against the wall. I do strange, stupid things and Dorothy says, 'Why do you do that?'"

"The trauma gets to you," he said.

He said he's grateful to have had access to "an amazing therapist" — something that wasn't available to him when he started.

"Nowadays, after every horrific call, they bring in trauma people to help you," he said.

Soo-Wiens recalled the kinds of calls that stayed with him — difficult scenes where, as the tallest officer, he was often the one called to step in and help during the hardest moments.

"It's unbelievable, the things they have to deal with," she said.

Although her husband never had a service dog, Soo-Wiens said that experience opened her eyes to how many first responders and veterans may not realize what kinds of help are available — or that something as simple as a dog could change a life.

"This is a way that we can actively help our first responders here that need help," she said.

The Paws for Heroes fundraiser will take place at 7 p.m. on Nov. 1 in a heated private barn.

Several service dogs are coming, including Zeus, an "adorable puppy" currently being socialized before training, Cawker said.

Music by Marty Allen Band from St. Catharines, a silent auction, food and wine will carry the evening, which will be emceed by Joe Pillitteri — "He's amazing," said Soo-Wiens.

Every dollar made from tickets and auctions will go toward the dogs and training, since sponsors are covering all event costs.

The good cause has fetched attention, with most of the \$800 tables of eight already sold out.

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Former staff member alleges bullying and abuse

Continued from Front Page

Community members held a small protest on Sept. 11 that drew three police officers. Protesters said it followed an unannounced board meeting that day, where staff were sent home. The Lake Report has asked the board to confirm its account of the meeting.

The Lake Report contacted all current board members, outlining the allegations and requesting comment. This included president Tammi Givans, vice-president Bobbi Jones Japp, treasurer Wendy Wilson and directors Lacey Lewis and Wandra Griffin.

Roxanne Buck, who Vanderklis said was allegedly removed from her role of director at a Sept. 7 special members meeting, was also contacted.

As of press time, no board members replied or provided a phone number for comment.

Board accused of stalling annual meeting

After board members Jones Japp, Wilson, Lewis and Griffin resigned in February 2023 amid allegations of abusing their powers, they were reinstated late last year — Justice Leanne Standryk from the Ontario Superior Court ruled the board’s previous resignation invalid due to “governance irregularities”

That restored its authority until the next annual general meeting, which Vanderklis said was supposed to be held by Sept. 30 — the required date, he said, following the end of the fiscal year — but wasn’t, preventing members from voting or reviewing the centre’s finances, he said.

Sandy Crawford, former reintegration co-ordinator for the centre’s Indigenous community justice program, alleges the board is aiming to push the meeting back so they are able to stay on longer.

Crawford, who went to the protest, claimed she was denied membership at the centre after being laid off in April, despite seven years of work.

An email sent to Crawford from Givans on Sept. 2 says the centre was unable to

ratify her membership, due to “a question of eligibility” and needing time to review the relevant bylaw because of this, which it was unable to do before the end of a meeting because of an emergency.

“We will be reviewing your application next regularly (board of directors) meeting as we cannot get quorum prior to the special members meeting this week,” the email says.

When Vanderklis was president, he said the board would normally announce the results of special members meetings on social media, congratulating new board members and thanking former ones.

“But that never happened,” he said.

Vanderklis resigned earlier this year, citing “harassment given to us by the court-appointed board members.”

He is now a community member — not a voting member of the organization. The centre distinguishes between board, staff, formal members who carry governance responsibilities, clients enrolled in programs and broader community members who take part in events.

He found out Buck was removed because several members who attended the meeting claimed so, he said, though he would not identify them. The Lake Report has asked Buck to confirm if this is true.

Staff allegedly urged community to speak up amid fear of retaliation

Vanderklis said community members organized a protest on Sept. 11 after staff asked them to speak out, though no employees took part.

“I know staff have reached out and said, ‘Don’t say that,’” he said from the protest grounds. Staff told him they were threatened with dismissal if they stayed at the protest, said Vanderklis, but he declined to name them.

“Anytime I’m here, it’s a risk to my financial well-being, my mental health,” he said, alleging board members previously contacted his employer with false accusations to



Alysia Sandherr worked at the Niagara Regional Native Centre before going on medical leave earlier this year. She says ongoing stress from her experience has taken a toll on her health and well-being. PAIGE SEBURN

undermine him.

He also alleged the Sept. 11 board meeting was held without notice: “You’re allowed to come in, but you’re not allowed to have these arbitrary meetings.”

“How can we support our community when we’re dying inside? My biggest fear is the suicide spikes will rise and a major mental health crisis.”

SANDY CRAWFORD
FORMER PROGRAM MANAGER

In the small protest crowd was long-time member Josephine Lavalley, who said she has been involved with the centre, on and off, for 34 years.

She said she supports peaceful protest but not bullying or intimidation, and that both staff and board members deserve to feel safe.

“I’m really sad that we’re at this point right now,” she said.

Crawford details bullying and wrongful termination

Crawford said she filed a formal complaint in 2019 after what she called bullying by then-staff

member Jones Japp, who is now vice-president on the board.

“Making fun of me because of my weight, by the way I look, everything like that,” she said. “The snotty looks and the eye rolls.”

She said she was laid off as of March 31, even though, she alleges, her contract listed Sept. 1 as the renewal or non-renewal date.

She shared a voice recording of what she said was a March 28 meeting with Roxanne Buck, which was set to address her concerns regarding what she believes was a forged copy of her signature on a contract — a concern she says she repeatedly, unsuccessfully tried to broach with the centre since December.

In the audio, Buck can be heard telling her that because the Niagara Regional Native Centre is not her employer, and rather the “host” of her employment, she needs to take up her concerns with her employer, a third party.

Buck states that Crawford’s contract ends March 31 and that she will not be kept on at the Native Centre due to a lack of funding.

“After March 31, there are no funds available to pay you,” Buck can be heard saying.

In the meeting audio, Crawford can be heard

expressing that her biggest concern is that the centre was not investigating the alleged forging of the document by its employees.

“I expressed my concern about these contracts because nobody has even taken the time for me throughout the entire year,” she said. “We haven’t had a manager or a supervisor or anybody sit in this office for more than two hours.”

At the end of the meeting, Crawford is asked to leave her keys and belongings at the centre.

Vanderklis questions board payments

Vanderklis provided copies of three cheques totaling almost \$25,000 issued in May to board members Lewis, Wilson and Griffin. The cheques, drawn from the centre’s account, list no purpose.

Vanderklis alleges these payments were not authorized by the board’s bylaws.

“I think they’re trying to say that the legal fees, that was capped at \$80,000, wasn’t paid out in full by our insurance company,” he said, adding that his insurance provider told him the company had paid those fees directly to the board’s lawyer.

One cheque for \$15,349.23, made out to Lacey Lewis, appears to have been deposited into a Scotiabank account in Niagara Falls. Another, for \$7,041.78, is made out to Wendy Wilson and signed by an unverified signatory. The third, for \$2,000, is made out Wanda Griffin.

Vanderklis says all these cheques, which add up to \$24,391, were cashed, but The Lake Report has been unable to confirm if all three were deposited. Neither Lewis, Wilson, Griffin, nor Buck (who signed the front of all three cheques) would comment on the allegations related to these cheques.

“I’ve written a formal letter to the (Canada Revenue Agency’s) charities directorate,” Vanderklis said, noting bylaws prohibit board members from receiving remuneration. “The law is very clear.”

Staff say families are suffering as programs decline

Crawford said the centre cannot fulfill its role of healing the community if staff themselves are mistreated and struggling — a concern Vanderklis shares, saying it is affecting programs and funding opportunities.

“How can we support our community when we’re dying inside?” said Crawford. “My biggest fear is the suicide spikes will rise and a major mental health crisis.”

Former staff member Alysia Sandherr, who went on medical leave this spring, said the board “wouldn’t even look at you when you’re trying to talk to them about what’s going on.”

She expects to extend her leave past October. “Unless things change,” she said, adding she left mostly because of “the stress, being overworked, all of the drama and being scared to speak up.”

Funding initially approved to support her 16-year-old son’s school trip was later withdrawn “once I went on leave,” she said, forcing her to take out loans.

Sandherr said she has since been hospitalized three times in 28 days for mental health crises and is now on daily medication and in therapy. Relatives cared for her three children and a friend of her daughter who had been living with them.

Crawford, a single mother of two who moved to the area 12 years ago and came to see the centre as her family, said the loss of income has left her at risk of homelessness each month.

Plus, no longer being at the centre has taken away the cultural lifeline she and her children once had, and “a big part of my heart and my soul,” she added.

“Do I want to continue my culture? asked Crawford. “When we’re all feeling unsafe?”

Her children refuse to set foot on the property, she said — a feeling shared by Sandherr’s children, who also no longer attend due to being uncomfortable.

“We don’t have anywhere that we can go,” said Sandherr.

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Holiday House Tour **early tickets** on sale

Staff
The Lake Report

While the weather may be unseasonably warm, this is your official warning: the holiday season is closer than you think.

For those who've been waiting all year long for the chance to say "Tis the season," the early bird tickets are on sale now for the Niagara-on-the-Lake Rotary Club's annual Holiday House Tour.

This yearly event is a block-buster tour of a collection of lavishly decorated homes in Niagara-on-the-Lake, offering tourgoers a chance to soak in local historic and cultural sites adorned for the holiday season.

This year's list includes seven homes in NOTL, which will be open Friday, Dec. 5 and Saturday, Dec. 6, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tickets are good for both days.

Teams of Niagara-based interior designers and garden centres will deck the halls of these seven homes with unique Christmas decor, inside and out.

Early bird tickets are \$49



Tickets are on sale once again to see NOTL homes all dec'd out for the holidays — for a cause.

until Nov. 8, when prices will go up to \$54. As in previous years, there are limited tickets available and they typically sell out quickly.

Also part of the Rotary Club's holiday tour affair are two separate tours/celebrations at the historic McArthur Estate on John Street East: A Merry & Bright Christmas Tour, on Dec. 5 and 6, and A Victorian Candlelight Christmas Tour, on Sunday, Dec. 7.

Co-hosted by the McArthur family and the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, these tours offer guests a look at how the McArthur Estate celebrates the holiday season, with a magical

tour indoors and outdoors on the large estate property.

New this year is the Victorian Candlelight Christmas Tour, which will host a children's book reading by renowned NOTL artist Trisha Romance of her own book, "A Star for Christmas."

Proceeds from this evening will go to support the museum's ongoing expansion project.

Tickets are \$65 for the Merry & Bright tour, which is happening every hour, starting at 3:30 p.m. with the last tour at 7:30 p.m., and \$75 for the Victorian Candlelight tour, happening every hour at 4, 5 and 6 p.m.

Tickets for children under 13 for all Holiday House Tour events are free.

The full list of houses in the upcoming Holiday House Tour, and their decorators:

The Cottage, a contemporary home that marries antique, vintage and modern style, at 54 Brock St. (Sprague Interiors Inc. and Sunshine Express Garden Centre)

Stonewood, a contemporary home with a sculpted garden and pool, at 566

Lansdowne Ave. (Lowkey Farmstead and Willow Cakes Magical Pastry Arts Display)

The Music House, a 1823 family home that served as the original Methodist meeting house, at 155 Gate St. (Rhonda Holloway of Help Me Rhonda's Interiors and Faye McAlpine of FMC Designs)

King's Landing, a 1908 home built by John J. Wright with a view of the Niagara River, Fort Niagara and Fort George, at 289 Ricardo St. (Regal Florist & Garden Centre)

Brockamour Manor, a Regency-style 1818 home built by John Powell, at 433 King St. (Decorator: Garden Club of Niagara)

The Beacon Hill, a 1980s Cape Cod two-storey home, at 686 Charlotte St., (TMV Home Design & Restaging and Sunshine Express Garden Centre)

Woodbourne Inn, an 1839 Georgian/Victorian-style home initially built as a simple Georgian home by William Woodruff, at 214 Four Mile Creek Rd. in St. Davids, (Bloom & Co)

To get tickets, visit holidayhousetournotl.ca.



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Niagara-on-the-Lake

FOODLAND

**Foodland is coming soon to Niagara-on-the-Lake,
are you ready to join the team?**

Later this year, Foodland will open in the vibrant town of Niagara-on-the-Lake — and before that happens, we're looking for people from the community to be part of the very first team. Roles include bakers, meat cutters, cake decorators, and clerks, with opportunities available in both full-time and part-time positions.

*A job fair will be held on **Thursday, October 23, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.**
at the **Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre**. It's a chance to stop by
and meet the team, and learn more about what's available.*

"Our goal with this new store is simple," said Lindsey Bridgeman, franchisee of the new Foodland. "Bring local food to the shelves, create opportunities for local people, and reflect the values of Niagara-on-the-Lake every day."

*For hiring details and updates on the opening, follow **@foodlandnotl** on Facebook and Instagram.*

Book launch has NOTL raising a glass to Paul Bosc Sr.

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Inside the Paul Bosc Estate Vineyard in Niagara-on-the-Lake last Thursday, conversation hushed as a familiar, missed voice echoed through the speakers.

The late Paul Bosc Sr.'s laugh — warm and unmistakable — filled the room, drawing smiles from guests who remembered the man who helped shape Niagara's wine industry.

The Bosc family hosted an invite-only celebration on Oct. 9 at their York Road vineyard, honouring his legacy with a dual event — the launch of "The Winemaker's Gamble," a new biography by NOTL author Jill Troyer and the unveiling of newly built facilities on the property.

Paul-André Bosc, son of the late winemaker, opened the evening with remarks before handing the mic to wine writer Tony Aspler, who penned the book's foreword.



Author Jill Troyer signs a copy of The Winemaker's Gamble for Leonard Pennachetti, president of Cave Spring Cellars, during the Oct. 9 celebration at the Paul Bosc Estate Vineyard — a dual event marking the launch of her book about Paul Bosc Sr. and the unveiling of new facilities on the property. PAIGE SEBURN

Author Jill Troyer then took the stage to discuss the book and play a seven-minute audio montage from her

interview with Paul Bosc Sr. Troyer said the response to her book has been "really positive" and it's been re-

warding to see the story get the attention it deserves.

She said she was thankful for the strong turnout and support at the event, which included dinner and complimentary wine tastings.

Grinning as he listened to the recording, Donald Triggs — Bosc Sr.'s former boss at Château-Gai Wines in Niagara Falls — reflected on their time together.

"We got to work together a lot," he said in an interview. "We had a lot of fun together."

Troyer's new biography follows Bosc Sr.'s journey from his roots in France to founding Château des Charmes in 1978 and becoming the first in Ontario to grow Vitis vinifera grapes on a commercial scale — the classic European varieties behind fine wines.

"Paul developed his whole vision," said Triggs. "Look at the vineyard that's planted around here."

"He broke a lot of the barriers to how it should be done."

Leonard Pennachetti, president of Cave Spring Vineyard and a fellow pioneer in the early years of Ontario's modern wine, said Bosc Sr.'s work "was truly radical."

"We all learned from him," he said.

Bosc brought with him a depth of knowledge from France, exactly what the area's young wine industry needed, Pennachetti said.

"All of the institutions that we rely on today — they didn't exist. We needed to find that information elsewhere," he said.

"There were only a handful of people that even had any knowledge. Paul was one of them."

Pennachetti first heard about Bosc through the Inniskillin circle — he went to the same high school as the winery's co-founder Don Ziraldo, and was part of the same early wine industry network, he said.

Knowing what exists today, he said it's hard to imagine a time when none

of it existed and when experts insisted it couldn't be done. "And here we are now."

Troyer signed copies of her book for guests, many of whom said they were eager to read it.

One of them, Joseph Mulholland, said the book highlights the people and risks behind the town's wine reputation.

"It's nice to hear the other side of the story — it rounds out Niagara-on-the-Lake," he said in an interview.

Hearing those stories "enriches everything the town is about and how we've become a wine destination," Mulholland added.

"The Winemaker's Gamble" sold out quickly at the NOTL Museum but has since been restocked.

It's also available at the Old Niagara Bookshop on Regent Street, and can be ordered directly from the publisher, Mosaic Press, or pre-ordered through Amazon, Indigo and other major retailers.

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#49: In the spring, take a walk with a garbage bag and pick up litter along your route. Better yet, make it a community event.

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



Contributed by Patty Garriock

“The best way to know life is to love many things.”
- Vincent van Gogh

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Blast from the past

Over at Brock’s Monument on Thanksgiving Day, Oct. 13, the Friends of Fort George commemorated the 213th anniversary of the Battle of Queenston Heights. Commemorative tours were hosted at the site of the battle 213 years ago, detailing how the British and American troops faced off in this clash, which saw the British, aided by their Mohawk allies, come out victorious — while losing Maj.-Gen. Sir Isaac Brock in the fight.

DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Opinion

Door-to-door to oblivion



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner
Columnist



Last week workers protested the loss of something NOTL doesn’t have — personal mail delivery. GARTH TURNER

“That was a spicy column,” the cashier at the grocery store said when I put down my gold-plated Peruvian blueberries. As I thanked her, the woman just leaving overheard.

“Is the paper still publishing? I didn’t read him last week,” she remarked, looking at “him.” So the cashier directed her to a pile of Lake Reports stacked beside the NY Times.

This is what happens when a community newspaper is widely distributed to everybody in town through the post office — and when the posties decide to stop working. Mayhem. Confusion. Gutted, empty columnists stripped of meaning.

Well, we’re back baby. Canada Post workers ended an across-the-board work stoppage and started rotating instead.

Obviously the dispute ain’t over. The union walked out last year (and was then locked out) after contract talks failed and back-to-work measures enacted. This time the job action erupted after a federal report suggested it’s time to end door-to-door mail delivery. The Crown corp, after

all, is drowning in losses.

In NOTL personal delivery ended long ago. But that didn’t spare us from the strike. Slogans were taped on the door. Bags of mail went undelivered. The Lake Report undistributed.

Allow me to tell you a story.

Thirty-five years ago the boss asked me to dive into the future of the post office.

“I want a recommendation if it should be privatized,” Brian Mulroney said one day, as we met behind the gold curtains hanging around the House of Commons chamber. “If not, how do we make it work?”

In 1990 I was an MP and chairman of an influential all-party parliamentary committee. So, being a good little soldier, I started an investigation, called witnesses to testify, including government officials, major clients and union bosses, travelled the country and eventually issued a report.

Called “Moving the Mail,” it concluded that things were seriously messed up. Without reform the postal service would be gutted by email, lose billions and ultimately fail.

The union called me scum. The government sat on the recommendations — which included stopping the delivery of mail door-to-door and a move away from lettermail into the package business. That made sense. And, of course, now here we are.

The current plan is to end door-to-door mail delivery to four million addresses — but over 10 years. This is decades too late, and after Canada Post Corporation lost \$5 billion in the past year and was bailed out with a \$1 billion government loan.

Whatever employees think or want, the post office as we know it is pooched.

Sad. It was formed 16 years before Canada was even born as a country, and operated as a federal government department until 1981. Then it became a Crown corporation with the twin mandates of serving all Canadians, everywhere, and being financially self-sustaining.

But those goals are mutually exclusive. No organization can deliver stuff across a vast nation daily for

pocket change, while operating thousands of vehicles, maintaining 5,755 locations and employing 70,000 people, mostly members of an elbows-up union. Without unaddressed ad mail (like this newspaper) things would be even more dire.

Canada Post Corporation is a zombie outfit. The walking dead. It cannot survive in its present form unless the Carney government gives in — like the Mulroney outfit did — and continues to shovel public money into the furnace.

The annual deficit number could be \$100 billion when the first Carney federal budget drops on Nov. 3. Much of that would be borrowed for “nation-building” infrastructure projects to lessen our dependency on you-know-who.

Mines. Ports. Reactors. Maybe a pipeline. Subs, planes and guns. Big, expensive stuff. And, if it is to survive, more bailouts for the postal service.

Urbanites may not get this, but in much of Canada the post office is Canada. The sole, identifiable, enduring and working link to the federal government. Once that is shuttered, the bond dies. Social media wins. There will be consequences.

Carney says the budget will have two goals. Investment and austerity. The posties must already sense they’ll be on the wrong side of that trade.

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

garth@garth.ca



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We need better ideas to slow down drivers

Dear editor:

Destruction of speed cameras across the province is as ludicrous as the continual, costly replacement of destroyed, unwarranted surveillance technology. All parties to this diversionary debate are missing the wider focus of this pointed destruction.

Canadians — and many people in countries around the world — do not agree to or want even more blatant daily state surveillance of ongoing activities. That is a tool of authoritarian dictatorships to track and punish opponents without legal justification, human interaction or warrant.

State/corporate surveillance gathers, aggregates



Letter writer Daphne Lavers says there must be more effective ways to slow drivers than speed cameras.

and uses massive amounts of individualized data without our knowledge or permission. In Britain, cameras are also being demolished at a prodigious rate, and are now used for live facial recognition — and immediate arrest.

There are highly effective alternate methods

to slow down drivers in school zones — the ostensible purpose of Ontario's current crop of speed cameras — which actually train drivers to all slow down in school zones during school hours.

The most effective — highly-visible signs "school ahead," then an electric sign with the school zone limit above and your speed electronically below.

Further down the road, an "end of school zone" sign. If the speed limit is 60 kilometres an hour, and the school zone is 40 km/h, make that clear rather than bounce back and forth from 70-60-40-50 km/h in a short stretch of road.

The most obvious fix —

run the lit, flashing signs ONLY during school hours. For heaven's sake, do not force a school area slow-down at 9:30 p.m. on a weeknight, let alone 2 p.m. on a Sunday. That is senseless.

Build in some civilized leeway for defined time limits when children are actually present — tickets for one to two kilometres over the limit is machine-stupid and aggravating.

The current strategy is not working. Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result is the definition of — in this instance, very costly — stupidity.

Daphne Lavers
NOTL

Hummel's view on municipal affairs is insightful

Dear editor:

A recent article piece in the paper by Mr. Hummel is a timely piece of writing which may be viewed as figuratively a "call to arms" and literally a "time to engage" at the municipal level ("Letter: Deliberate actions of council led to lawsuits," Oct. 9).

Many share Mr. Hummel's understanding of events and many others

disagree with his approach to solving complex municipal issues.

As someone directly involved in many of the complex issues presented to city council, Mr. Hummel has a unique understanding of the process and should be considered a source of insightful information.

As an individual who has both managed electoral campaigns at all levels and

been a candidate at two levels of government, I can attest that the best solution is to seek electoral office if you disagree with Mr. Hummel, or anyone's, stand on the future development of our community.

Pontificating on a single issue does not make you right — it shows a special interest in a subject with limited understanding of the complexity of these issues.

If concerned about the future of our community, run for municipal office but first learn the "rules of engagement."

It is recommended that you contact the city clerk's office to get a further understanding of the requirements, obligations and deadlines required under the law, to be a candidate.

Derek Insley
Glendale

Let's examine the real issue with Hummel lawsuit

Dear editor:

Mr. Hummel appears to be legally correct in part of what he says ("Letter: Deliberate actions of council led to lawsuits," Oct. 9). This is based strictly on technical court findings. But as he also says, the real issue is not the amount of taxpayers' money that he has received from NOTL, but the causes.

So what is the real issue? According to Mr. Hummel, it does not appear to be a legal one.

He prefers not to mention

anywhere that he and his friend, Mr. Marrota, as developers, are only interested in maximizing their own bottom line. In other words, how much money he can make for himself, regardless of where it comes from and at what cost it may be to others.

On the other hand, in my opinion and experience, the majority of taxpayers residents of NOTL want only to see a respect for the existing character of NOTL and the careful preservation, where possible, of the heritage and

history that exists in NOTL for current and future generations.

This is the real and fundamental issue.

It was for this reason that the previous council enacted the interim control bylaw, soon after election, in order to evaluate and understand what appeared to them and to many residents of NOTL at the time to be out-of-control development. To my knowledge, very few opposed such action on the grounds of legality.

Since that time, many

developers have applied for amendments to the building code to suit their own proposals. However, the appeals made by some developers of council decisions have resulted in high legal fees caused by them and at taxpayers' expense.

What Mr. Hummel seems to be saying is that the NOTL council should agree to the amendments that are requested by them, or be prepared to defend against expensive lawsuits.

Derek Collins
NOTL

We welcome your letters

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

This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style.
Category: **IN THE MOOD FOR**

Recipes for Piedmontese bagna cauda dipping sauce call for these little fishies.

Last issue category: **THE COMMON DEFENCE**

Clue: This traditional excuse for why you don't have your homework is in the original "Saved by the Bell" theme song.

Answer: What is 'my dog ate it'?

Answered first by: Bill Hamilton

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Lynda Collet, Sue Rautenberg, Kimberly Amaral, Susan Hamilton, Bob Wheatley, Wade Durling, Howard Jones, Margaret Garaughty, Tuija Johansson, Jim Dandy, Karen Williams, Katie Reimer, Claudia Grimwood, Edna Groff, David Spencer, Catherine Clarke, Sylvia Wiens, Marla Percy

Email answers to editor@niagaranow.com, with your name, for a chance to win a \$25 Irish Harp Pub gift card every week. (Subject line: Riddle me this)

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Let's review the core principles of good design



Brian Marshall
Columnist

In architecture, there is a series of core principles that, if followed correctly and incorporated with a reasonable level of skill, will result in a “good” (not necessarily inspired) design. These principles are, to my knowledge, taught in every reputable school of architecture very early in their program and consistently referred to thereafter by competent educators. Unfortunately, these core principles are neglected, ignored or improperly applied by far too many practicing architects and results in poor designs which, if constructed, assault the public’s senses with inferior built architecture. Moreover, these fundamentally flawed buildings generally detract from the quality of the associated streetscape, neighbourhood

and community. To use an analogy, they are like a giant wart on the nose of an otherwise attractive face - one can simply not look beyond the wart to appreciate the beauty of the face. In very simplistic terms, let’s define eight of these core principles. Consideration of “site” provides the framework within which a design will form a harmonious relationship to its setting, which includes, but is not limited to, the landscape, topography and surrounding built architecture. In short, a good design will complement and add to its setting. Conversely, the design will fail if it dominates (or is incongruous) with the site rather than integrating within it. “Order” is the underlying rationale of the design, which is couched in fundamental human predispositions that allow the building to be intuitively read by the average person. For example, walls, openings and spaces need to be organized in a fashion that creates a natural flow that says, without words or thought, here is the approach, the entrance and the path to move toward and around the building. The best designs have a



A balanced Georgian symmetrical façade.

level of order that intuitively communicates the location and purpose of everything in the building. To achieve visual harmony and perceptual stability, the design must have “balance” — a building facade wherein the left half has exactly the same visual weight as the right half. The simplest example is the classic Georgian symmetrical façade, with its main entry precisely centred with identical (size and shape) openings placed in the same positions on both right and left sides. However, if the main entry is not centrally placed, the architect must correctly use mass, shape, colour, proportion, placement/location of elements, combinations of materials, etc., to create the visual impression that one side of the house balances the weight of the other side.

“Balance” complements and reinforces “order” to reach a design that is approachable, understandable, and most importantly, appears and feels harmonious. Briefly, “hierarchy” is the selective use of secondary and tertiary elements in the design to establish a visual cascade which irresistibly draws your eye (focus) to the principal elements of the building; hence establishing a hierarchy from least to most important. It is vital to ensure that every element used in the visual composition works in concert to create an intuitive understanding of the design by guiding your eyes, and subsequently your movement, toward natural flow points in the design. Working in combination, the next two core principles, “scale” and “proportion,” play a vital role in establishing hierarchy while at the same time contributing to the invocation of a “comforting” emotional response when a building is experienced. In architecture, scale refers to sizing elements according to a known standard — most frequently, the human form. So, by using scale, the designer can maintain consistency between the perceived size

relationships of two specific elements: the elements to the whole and/or the entire composition to the viewer. Proportion is a mathematical discipline developed in ancient times to calculate/design the various elements of a building composition to establish a consistent set of visual relationships between the building’s individual components, the components to the whole, and the whole to its context. Aesthetically complete compositions require that the designer achieve a perceived equality (or ratio) between all elements in the design. To illustrate this, let’s consider the columns on a front porch. If the columns are out of scale or inaccurately proportioned, your eye will focus on the columns, resulting in the overall pattern of the facade being diminished, or worse, it will disrupt that pattern and evoke a subconscious rejection of the architecture. Carefully applied in concert with the other principles we have addressed, “rhythm” and “pattern” speak to the natural human attraction for order. Rhythm can be defined as the regular occurrence of similar and/or identical elements to produce a sense

of predictability, movement and sequence across the visual composition. Pattern is the introduction of surface elements, generally decorative, which visually provide both variety and unity. Here’s the key: items set in cadence create a sense of rhythm and “rhythm repeated” forms a pattern. For very fundamental reasons, history has shown us that the human psyche is both attracted to and secure with order in architecture. Conversely, chaotic or disruptive built architecture can undermine both individual and communal security. Our built environment can and should be a stable, secure platform that supports creative innovation. Bluntly, it’s nearly impossible to launch a spaceship to Mars on the ocean’s waves. To be clear, both traditional and modern architectural expressions can be “good” design — provided the core principles of architecture are adhered to. Next week, we’ll consider these principles in the context of actual proposed designs in our small town. Brian Marshall is a NOTL realtor, author and expert consultant on architectural design, restoration and heritage.



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Can taxpayers **win** when governments budget?



BOTTOM LINE

Steve McGuinness
Columnist

Paying taxes is an obligation of citizenship. Ontarians pay income, sales, payroll, excise and property taxes to four levels of government. At least two government budgets — federal and town — will be released soon. Let's get a head start by previewing what to expect.

The delayed federal budget cycle has now pushed back delivery to fall from spring. New Prime Minister Mark Carney promises a more business-like approach. He promises to separate out capital expenditures from operating costs. Operating costs are recurring expenses to keep government operations running and to meet ongoing commitments. Capital

expenditures are one-time costs to create assets that produce enduring, longer-term benefits.

The growth in operating costs will be much more tightly controlled under Carney than Justin Trudeau. However, no cuts to programs delivering transfers to individuals or provinces, funding health care, are expected. Five million Canadians belong to the Canada dental care plan already. Many young families are also benefiting from \$5 a day child-care (Doug Ford's botched Ontario rollout notwithstanding).

Carney has already committed to continue the new school food program and to accelerate delivery of an automatic tax filing program for low-income earners.

Canada will continue to post one of the lowest national debt to GDP ratios in the industrialized world, despite borrowing to invest significantly in: nation-building infrastructure projects, a new crown corporation to increase affordable housing supply, and strengthening our military.

At the town level, our budget will materialize on a more accelerated and abbreviated schedule this year, courtesy of Doug Ford imposing "strong mayor powers."

After the federal election, we received a "middle-class" tax cut. This term's NOTL council, in contrast, has imposed property tax hikes exceeding general inflation rates and those in surrounding municipalities. These large increases have proven excessive to meet actual costs incurred.

Our treasury department has underestimated revenues by \$20.5 million total in its budget projections the last two years. The town has added \$16.4 million to its accumulated surplus since 2022, with \$12.9 million of that parked in financial assets, unused to purchase tangible assets. \$12.6 million has been added to a laundry list of special reserves. Municipal accommodation tax revenues have surged.

The lord mayor and some councillors defend this padding as prudent to redress a perceived infrastructure deficit. But

what will these reserves actually be spent on? Half a million was earmarked for legal contingencies. We blew through that in settling two recent lawsuits for \$1.2 million. Meanwhile, an indoor pool — a much-needed amenity — is unlikely to make the cut. The current draft of our parks and recreation plan turns a deaf ear to local aquatic supporters.

Perhaps a generous benefactor will seed our aquatic centre? Rule out wealthy developer Rainer Hummel. He's already committed the \$1 million reward he received for suing his town to rescuing the David Secord home and perceives it as a just penalty for voters electing councillors who won't rubber-stamp his developments ("Letter: Deliberate actions of council led to lawsuits," Oct. 9). These elites fly south to swim in winter.

Steve McGuinness was a senior adviser to major financial institutions during his Bay Street career and is now retired in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Send your personal finance questions to him at smcgfinplan@gmail.com.

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Paper road maps have **lost their way** in the tech era



ROSS'S RAMBLINGS

Ross Robinson
Columnist

What a sense of accomplishment it used to be, not so long ago, successfully folding up a multi-panelled road map that had provided accurate directions to a new destination.

Quite often, the map had been used many times before and was ripped along a seam or two. Being trusted as the navigator, usually sitting in the passenger side front seat, was an earned honour, and a road trip rite of passage. I always love riding shotgun with the map, especially since I have never been the best driver.

Last weekend, four of us drove down to State College in central Pennsylvania. My pal, his 16-year-old

son, and his high school buddy. Happy Valley is the home of the Pennsylvania State University, and we had tickets to watch my favourite sport, women's volleyball.

And on Saturday afternoon, it's big-time National Collegiate Athletic Association football against Northwestern University.

Totally bizarre, with 107,000 fans. Some 330 students in the marching band. Thirty-three tubas!

A fraternity brother lives there in a big rambling house and was again happy to put us up. It's a beautiful part of America, and on homecoming weekend, a great opportunity to observe a major college town in all its glory. The unashamed loyalty is almost tribal. I don't say it's better. Just different than here in Canada.

As we left St. Davids, I had my road map out and unfolded to show the route. About a five-hour drive, if I didn't get us lost. As it turned out, I never had to even look at the map. My pal had simply typed our destination address into his GPS, and then trusted it 100



Ross Robinson laments that maps are thing of the past.

per cent: 204 South Church St., Boalsburg, Pa.

I have driven from Niagara to Boalsburg and back about a dozen times over the years, and have the route pretty much memorized. Down to Ellicottville, past the Zippo Lighter factory and museum in Bradford, through the colourful Allegheny Mountains to St. Mary's, then to I-80 East for about fifty miles to the Bellefonte exit. About 20 miles south to State

College and Boalsburg.

It was a bit frustrating, but not once was my knowledge of the route requested. Not even once. And several times, we drove through little towns that I had never seen. Mutton Hollow, Limestone, Kill Buck and several other new names. GPS somehow had it all figured out.

At Sheetz Corners, we found the Texaco Diner, where I watched in amazement as two teenage boys each inhaled more

than a hearty meal. And then, we all had the best-ever apple crisp — with vanilla ice cream.

Still, I was not asked to provide directions. The driver would just glance at the GPS screen, and on we drove. To my amazement, and I don't pretend to understand it, someone somewhere knows every road everywhere. And also, that fall festival was on in Ellicottville, which would slow us down a bit. GPS took us on a detour around town.

Alas, the GPS meister didn't seem to know about the border slowdown at the Peace Bridge going into Buffalo. That was only frustration, adding about forty minutes to our road trip, road trip.

Not to be repetitive, but not once was I asked to help with directions. It is very sad in a way, but the learned skill of navigating with printed road maps is irrelevant now. The world changes, and we can only attempt to keep up.

Even in State College on a very busy weekend, our driver didn't once ask me for directions. It was out of

character for me, but I just sat in the back seat with my mouth shut. He would just glance at his GPS screen and implicitly trust the computers.

Weird, but uncannily accurate and effective.

A bit of "driver distraction?" Perhaps, but it seems to be working. Not once did we get lost, and nobody honked at us.

I will ramble to a conclusion with a timely story. A coincidence

This morning, out by Concession 9 near St. Davids, I came upon a couple driving a Winnebago RV along a gravel section of the road, in the midst of vineyards. They waved at me to stop. I commented on how adventurous they were.

With a German accent, the passenger riding shotgun said, "No, we are lost. We are trusting our GPS, and it told us this was a shortcut. Where is Queenston?"

What to do? Who to trust? How to keep up?

Being technologically stubborn, I am going to hold on to a few of my printed paper road maps for a few more years.

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13 years later, Parliament Hill flag arrived

Dave van de Laar
The Lake Report

On Oct. 3, a quiet delivery landed in Niagara-on-the-Lake: a full-sized Canadian flag that had once flown above Parliament Hill.

The package marked the end of a wait that began thirteen years earlier. In 2012, I emailed the office of then-public works minister Rona Ambrose after hearing that Canadians could request a flag flown on one of Parliament's buildings.

The wait list was decades long — 23 years for a flag from the East Block or West Block, and 35 years for one from the Peace Tower — but it felt like a gesture worth making.

I asked, then forgot about it.

The flag that finally arrived is 4.5 by nine feet — typical of those flown on Parliament's perimeter buildings. A letter from the Senate of Canada confirmed it had been raised on the Senate Building's flagpole Aug. 7 and 8 this year.

Normally, flags remain for a week, but this one flew just two days, likely in the aftermath of a half-masting honouring former Ontario lieutenant-governor



Dave Van de Laar waited 13 years for a Canadian flag that has flown over Parliament Hill. It was raised on the Senate Building's flagpole on Aug. 7 and 8 of this year. SUPPLIED

Hilary Weston. That detail adds a quiet resonance to its history.

The Senate's letter included a reminder of what the flag represents: "We hope that this flag will serve as a reminder of our shared values and the importance of democracy, freedom and peace."

Today, Canadians who apply for a Parliament Hill flag may wait more than 100 years for their turn. That rarity makes this delivery especially meaningful.

As a local photographer who often documents the heritage and beauty of Niagara-on-the-Lake, receiving this flag feels like a full-circle moment.

It is both a national emblem and a personal keepsake — a symbol of patience, pride, and the quiet connections our institutions still forge with citizens.

I plan to preserve it in a shadow box and one day pass it on to my great-niece. It's a small act, but one I hope will carry weight: a reminder of where we come from and the enduring symbols that unite us across generations.

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Community cultural hub is **best use** for old Wellington hospital

David Israelson
Special to The Lake Report

There's a handsome property close to the heart of Niagara-on-the-Lake's Old Town that's waiting for our decision makers to make the right choice about its future. It's the former hospital at 176 Wellington St.

The 2.32-acre site is public property. The town has set up a process for the public to see some details about the property, which now houses Royal Oak Community School, now the only elementary school within Old Town.

The decision will come down to this: will the town cave into developers and a few wealthy special interests who covet the land for themselves and for profit, or will council protect the publicly owned site for the community? Does the community matter?

It sounds like an easy decision, but it's not necessarily so simple. There's a process in place for the

public to look (online) at details about the site.

So far, there are at least three competing ideas about what to do with the property. One of them would turn the property into a hub for different arts, music, historical and Indigenous culture groups — including the Shaw Festival.

It would be a hub where residents and visitors alike could encounter and engage with all the activities that make NOTL one of the most important and dynamic tourism and cultural attractions in North America.

This proposal has already secured significant financial backing from a local philanthropist. That would keep the property in public hands, leased to and managed by an umbrella group that would work with the community-based organizations that want to be there.

Many organizations have already signalled that they're interested. These include not only the Shaw, but also Yellow Door Theatre



Writer David Israelson says the best option for the old Wellington hospital is a cultural community hub. FILE

(youth theatre programs), Bravo Niagara, the Niagara Symphony, Niagara College (which could run culinary classes), the Niagara Parks Commission, Parks Canada, an outlet for the nearby Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum and the Chamber of Commerce.

One-stop shopping for everything that makes NOTL great.

Perhaps most impor-

tantly, an organization called Plenty Canada wants to join the hub to run an Indigenous-led program — filling a long overdue need to bring the area's rich Indigenous legacy to the centre of NOTL.

The other two proposals envision having the town sell the property. That's what happened when the town declined to keep the Parliament Oak Elementary

School in public hands.

What of the other proposals? One is from a Niagara Falls chiropractor and entrepreneur, Dr. Nick Vaccaro. He's been pitching a new development he calls "Wellness Estates." He made a public presentation in August.

Dr. Vaccaro would replace the old hospital building with a three-storey condo building, with as many as 100 tiny residential units selling for between \$550,000 and \$1 million at current market prices. He promises state-of-the-art medical facilities on the main floor and parking below.

Another proposal has more grassroots backing, but it would still turn the old hospital property into a place for a few, not the many. Some locals would like to turn the site into a residential property that would enable aging residents to sell their large, lavish houses and use the proceeds to buy into a new

residential building that would replace the hospital.

Neither of these are terrible ideas. But there are lots of more suitable sites for either of them than this gateway property at one of the entrances to Canada's most beautiful town.

The hub is the only idea that would keep 176 Wellington St. in community hands — for the community and used by everyone, not just a few people who buy in.

Council has made unpopular development decisions before, but it appears to be playing this one more carefully. Let's hope they're listening. Council will likely put out an official Request for Proposals (RFP) in the near future. When it comes time to decide, let's hope our town gets to the hub of the matter and does what's best for Niagara-on-the-Lake.

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

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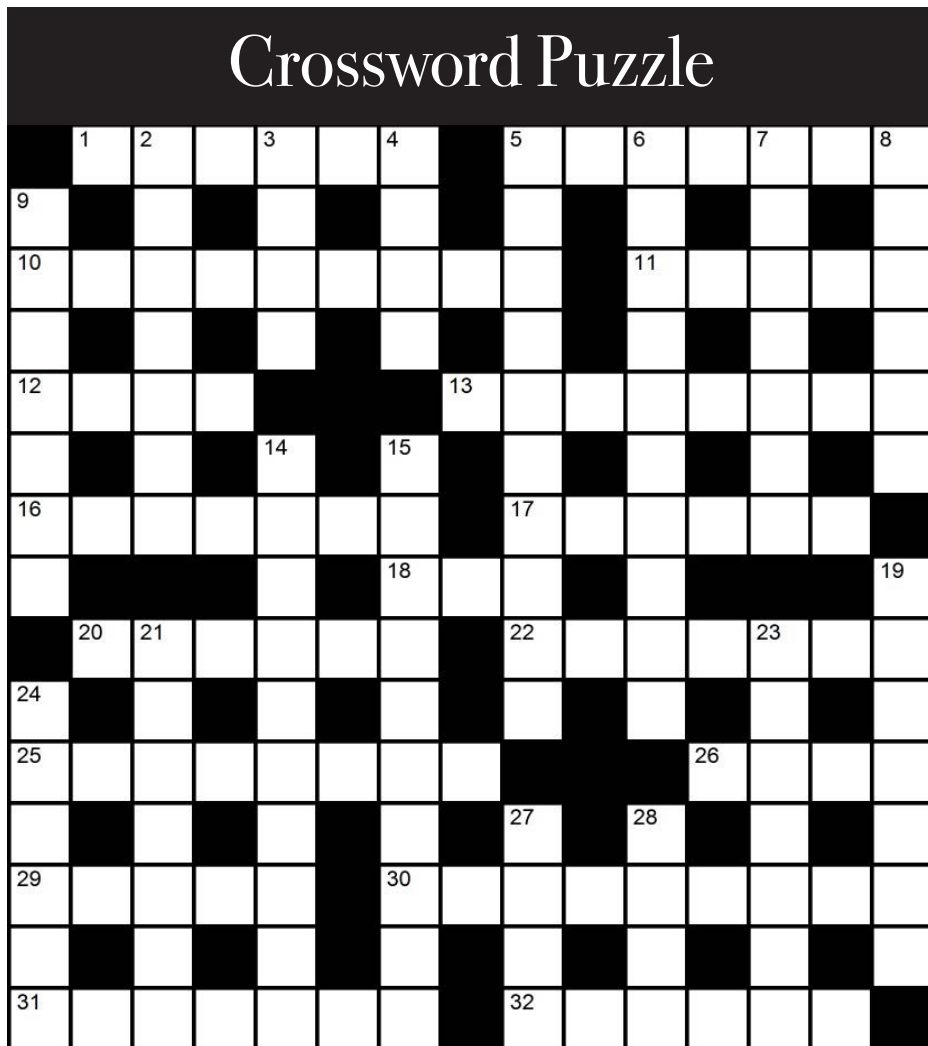


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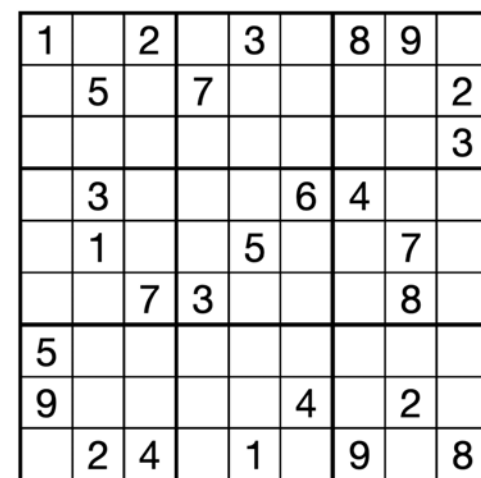
1. Hang loosely (6)
5. Church songbook (7)
10. Under an assumed name (9)
11. Strictly accurate (5)
12. Ogle (4)
13. Not merely local (8)
16. Efflux (7)
17. Stevedore (6)
18. Period of history (3)
20. Bother (6)
22. Not this one and not that one (7)
25. Supporter of a monarch (8)
26. Fijian capital (4)
29. Between (5)
30. Take turns (9)
31. Phantom (7)
32. Pedlar (6)

2. Aged (7)
3. Jokes (4)
4. Send forth (4)
5. Fuel (10)
6. Constituent of vinegar (6,4)
7. Learner (7)
8. Child's toy (6)
9. Crest (7)
14. Torch (10)
15. Lottery (10)
19. Unrealistic person (7)
21. From now on (3,4)
23. Transport charge (7)
24. Keyboard instruments (6)
27. Where many land speed records have been attempted (4)
28. Fill out (4)

Crossword Puzzle



1	T	R	O	S	P	E	R		5	S	U	R	G	E	O	N		8
	Y				L	E			I		E	L			A			
9	P	I	T	T	A			10	P	A	N	E	L	L	I	S	T	
	I	E		N		T			C		A	T			T			
11	C	L	O	C	K	W	I	S	E		12	T	H	E	M	E		
	A	P							L		R		I					F
13	L	E	A	K		A	G	E		15	E	N	V	I	O	U	S	
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	A				L					19	O	B	S	C	E	N		20
	P	U	R	S	E				23	S	W	E	E	T	S	H	O	F
21	T	I		S		T			A		O							C
25	A	M	P	H	I	B	I	A	N		26	R	E	A	P	S		
	I	E		D		F			I		S		R					E
27	N	U	N	N	E	R	Y			28	C	R	O	W	D	E		



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EXPLORING HISTORY
WITH NOTL MUSEUM



Dock area, July 1927

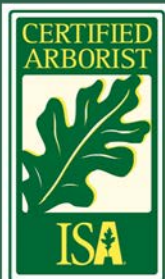
Even though the completion of the Welland Canal in 1833 overshadowed Niagara as the principal shipping route to Lake Erie, our connection to the water continued to be our greatest strength. Small steamships could still be seen moving passengers, mail or goods to and from Toronto. Our fertile fruit lands, the growth of railway systems linking to Niagara Falls and Buffalo and the military presence at Niagara Camp on the Commons meant ships could still be depended upon for the movement of passengers and freight. In 1927 the wharf was still a commercial area. This photograph of the Niagara-on-the-Lake docks shows the Riverside Hotel (just in from the right), which is now the condos built on Riverbeach Road, located across from the dock where the jetboats used to disembark. There is a coal chute two buildings to the left that was used to refuel the steamers. As you continue moving left, you also see the railway station and the Canada Steamship Lines freight shed in the distance, which is now where the sailing club is located.



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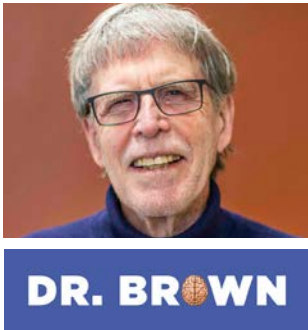
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Artificial intelligence takes a bite out of deadly snake venom



Dr. William Brown
Columnist

The 2018, 2023 and 2024 Nobel prizes in chemistry have brought us to a present when artificial intelligence has been harnessed to not only figure out the 3D structure of proteins and hence their probable function, but also create proteins tailored for very specific purposes and, in some instances, do so quickly.

Now we're beginning to see the practical fruit of such amazing achievements applied, in this case, to treat venomous snake bites.

Venomous snake bites occur on all continents except Antarctica, but are most prevalent in India and much of South Asia, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Australia, much of sub-Saharan Africa and South America. They are the lowest in Europe.

Despite the fact that Australia has many dangerous venomous snakes, bites are rarely fatal because of public awareness and education,

well-stocked antivenom supplies and provision of prompt first-class care.

Unfortunately, that's not the case in much of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, where antisera are often not available on-site because of the need to keep them refrigerated and the high cost of the antiserum.

But there's another problem.

Some families of snakes are especially dangerous because the toxins in the venom are too complex and/or simply fail to trigger a sufficient immune response in horses or pigs used to create antisera.

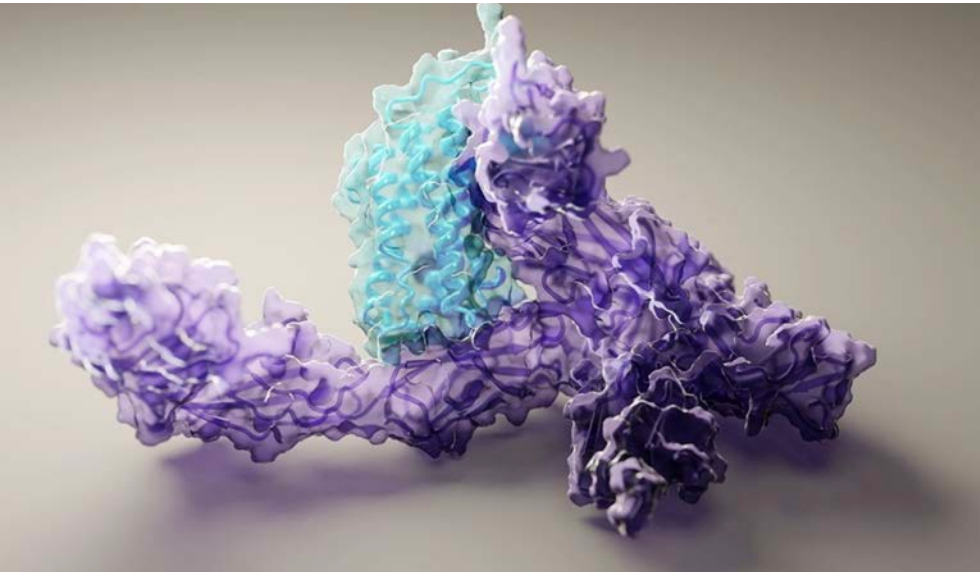
That's the case with the venom from the three-finger family of snakes with over 300 species variants, including the black mamba, coral reef, krait, taipan and cobra snakes, to name the most lethal and infamous.

Enter modern technology — AI to the rescue.

The solution came in four steps.

Step one: determine the precise molecular and 3D structure for each of the major toxins from three-finger snakes using X-ray crystallography.

Step two involved an iterative program called RoseTTAFold diffusion, developed by David Baker, a Nobel Laureate in chemistry in 2024, and colleagues, to create proteins



RoseTTAFold, developed by Nobel Laureate David Baker, created proteins that precisely fit specific toxins contained in snake venom — and it didn't take long to do.

that would precisely fit each of the toxins.

Step three: with those protein models in hand, create matching artificial genes to, in step four, produce in high volume, precise, engineered proteins to neutralize each of the major toxins in three-finger venoms.

There you have it, in four steps.

Of course, getting each step right took time, all except RoseTTAFold. Reportedly, the latter program took less than ten minutes to solve the structure problem for each protein to precisely fit the target toxin.

The beauty of the whole approach is that it can be scaled up to create relatively cheap antisera, tailor-made for each type

of toxin that does not require refrigeration.

Does it work? Yes, in laboratory animals. Clinical trials are coming.

In 2024, it was obvious just how powerful these computational programs could be for determining the 3D structure of a protein.

For example, Google's AlphaFold 2 program solved the 3D structure problem in minutes for individual proteins once the program knew the precise amino acid sequence for each protein and proved to be just as good as X-ray crystallography — a much slower, laborious and much more expensive technique for working out the 3D structure of proteins.

I can't speak for read-

neered the development of metal-organic frameworks, which can capture and store a wide variety of molecules safely.

On a less savoury note, AI is heavily involved in designing military equipment from highly expensive generation five or six stealth aircraft to very cheap and effective drones in Ukraine, Russia and the Middle East, and other programs designed to keep tabs on us with almost every interaction we have with our computer devices.

High-tech AI programs have the potential to substantially improve diagnostic and treatment medicine. On the scale of the universe, operating and analyzing data from the James Webb and the new Rubin telescopes would be impossible without AI. And that's the case in many other areas in the basic and applied sciences and engineering, which have become heavily dependent on AI.

The six-week series on the 2025 Nobel Prize awards at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library begins on Wednesday, Nov. 5 at 2 p.m. Hope to see you there.

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.

Right time for a tree

The following column was written by the late Joanne Young, garden expert and coach, and was originally published in the Sept. 8, 2022 edition of The Lake Report. After several weeks of publishing the highlights of her column to celebrate her love of gardening, which she shared with the whole community, this will be the final column.



Joanne Young
Columnist

They say that the best time to plant a tree is 50 years ago — the next best time to plant a tree is now.

Trees are just not pretty to look at: they improve soil and water conservation, store carbon, moderate local climate by providing shade, regulate temperature extremes, increase wildlife habitat and improve the land’s capacity to adapt to climate change.

Did you know trees can help lower your energy bills? During those chilly winter months, trees do us a great service by blocking strong winds from reaching our home, leading to reduced heating costs to the tune of 25 per cent.

And in the summertime, they offer shade that keeps your house cool. Properly placed trees also add value to your property. It is well proven that spending time near trees will reduce your stress levels and improve your overall health.

I don’t think anyone could argue with the benefits of having trees on your property or surrounding you. A properly placed tree is the key — choosing the appropriate tree for your space. Here are some considerations when choosing the best tree for your garden.

Consider a native variety: Native trees are well-suited to our climate and soil types and, once established, require much less water and fertilizer than non-native species.

Native species of trees also play a vital role in attracting pollinators and songbirds. Some larger growing native trees include red oak, pin oak, white oak, sugar maple, red maple, black gum, Kentucky coffee tree and tulip tree.



Fall temperatures and soil provides the best conditions for optimal root growth when planting a new tree.

Smaller-growing native species include sassafras, pawpaw, pagoda dogwood, blue beech, serviceberry and striped maple.

What’s your goal for the tree?: Do you want a tree for ornamental reasons such as providing flowers, fruit or beautiful fall colour? Do you want one that will provide shade?

If so, make sure you think about the tree’s placement ahead of time. If morning shade is your goal, you need to have space to plant the tree on the east to south/east side of a sitting area.

If you want the tree to provide afternoon shade to a sitting area, you need to plant it on the south to west side of that same area.

Maybe you want trees to offer privacy from neighbours or unwanted views? How close to the fence do you want the tree? Keep in mind that some trees can have at least a 20-foot spread.

Planting a wide-growing tree too close to the fence would mean a large part of the canopy will be growing over the fence into your neighbour’s yard.

In that case, you may want to consider planting a narrow columnar-type such as pyramidal English oak, Dawyck beech, Armstrong red maple, or slender silhouette sweetgum.

What space do you have?: Some of the most common issues I come across have

to do with not choosing the appropriate tree for your space.

Most of the time, the overall height of the tree is not too much of an issue, but the width of the mature tree is.

If I had a dollar for every time I heard someone say, “Well, it won’t get that size in my lifetime,” I would be well taken care of.

The truth is that they will grow faster than you think. So, do a little research prior to purchasing your tree. If possible, look at more mature trees to get an idea of the canopy size and shape, or look at pictures online to give you a better visual of what they will grow to be.

Your local garden centre should be able to help narrow down your choices. Just because a tree may be more columnar in form does not mean that you can plant it three to four feet out from the house.

By taking some time to do your homework, you will be better informed when you are ready to make your purchase and end up with a tree that will be able to live in its new home for many years to come.

Fall is a great time to be planting new trees in your garden. With the soil still warm from the summer heat and the air temperatures cooling, these are the best conditions for optimal root growth.

Happy tree shopping.

Obituary

Leno Valentino Mori



MORI, Leno Valentino —
Nov. 3, 1927 – Oc. 10, 2025
A life well lived
“He who plants trees loves others beside himself,”
Thomas Fuller

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of loving husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather Leno Mori.

As Oct. 10 began, Leno quietly took his leave of this world after an arduous illness.

Predeceased by Leno are his parents, Vittorio and Pierina (DalBianco) Mori, his sister Yolanda (Eugene) Lamoure, and his wife of 48 years, Philomena (nee D’Amelio). He is also preceded by his children, Robert and Albert Mori.

Leno and Phil celebrated the blessing of seven children. Richard (Bonnie), Robert (Tonie), Paula, Bill (Shelley), Linette (Dave), Albert (Tara), and Angela (Mike).

Many loving grandchildren will also miss Leno; Sabrina (Nick), Renata (Brandon), Anisa (Marty), Miguel (Raine), Paul (Natasha), Ricky, Christianne (Michael), Tyler (Nicole), Rylee (Dan), Jeremy (Rachelle), Lindsey (Brandt), Tiffany, Zachariah, Felicia, Noah, Kayla (Mathieu), Matthew, and Alyssa.

He is also survived by many great-grandchildren, Nikolas, Ethan, Angelina, Natascha, Myla, Cassandra (Mat), Owen, Connor, Margaret, Mariah, Sienna, Isla, Angus, Callum, Liam, Dylan, Brayden, Alden, Hunter, and Isabelle. Leno was also pleased to be the great-great-grandfather of two children, Jaxson and Penelope.

In addition to being blessed with a large family, Leno was well-loved by a myriad of nieces and nephews and had many cherished relationships with countless cousins.

Leno was a farm boy from Virgil, Ontario and was deeply entrenched in the farming and agriculture industry. His business grew, and he became a successful international businessman. However, Leno never forgot his roots. As a son of Italian immigrants, he established Mori Nurseries in 1950 in Ontario. As the business grew, he acquired businesses in the United States and a joint venture in Mexico. He established a royalty program for Giesla Dwarf cherries in North and South America. As a dedicated nursery businessman, Leno is recognized as a legend in the industry. He also spent many years involved in the community as a town counsellor and a major contributor to the Virgil Businessmen’s Association. He is credited with making significant contributions to projects such as the restoration of the NOTL old courthouse, Centennial Arena, and Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Center. Leno was named Citizen of the Year for Niagara-on-the-Lake in 1983.

Leno’s faith was paramount to him, and he lived his life trusting in the Lord. With his quiet manner, he influenced and aided many people. He served on several parish committees. He was on the national executive and served as a key leader for the Full Gospel Businessmen’s International in Canada for many years. Those who worked for Leno often basked in his warmth and gentle presence, during which he always had a smile. His staff excelled under his mentorship and guidance due to his kind, calm, and respectful nature, many of them having been employed for decades. Leno remarried Heidi (nee Putzer), and recently they celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary. Leno assisted in raising two of his great-grandchildren, Owen and Connor, and opened the family home to Brooklyn several years ago. Leno was no stranger to adversity. He faced many challenges and handled them all with dignity and honour right to the very end. His kind soul will be greatly missed. May he rest in peace. The family will receive friends at Morgan Funeral Home, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-Lake, on Thursday, October 16th, 2025, from 1 to 4 pm. and 6 to 9 pm. Funeral Mass for Leno will be held at St. Vincent de Paul Church, 73 Picton St, Niagara-on-the-Lake, on October 17th, 2025, at 11:00 am, with the right of committal at Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery to follow. In memory of Leno, donations may be made to a charity of your choice, the Power to Change project, Share Niagara, or Covenant House. May God bless you all, and may we carry on and make Leno proud! Memories, photos, and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com



Have an opinion you
want heard?
Email us.





NOTICE OF COMPLETE APPLICATION AND OPEN HOUSE

What: Notice of **Complete Application** and **Open House** for a **Modification to an Approved Draft Plan of Subdivision** (under Section 51 of the *Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.13*, as amended).

When: **Monday, October 27, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.**

Where: Electronically via the directions below

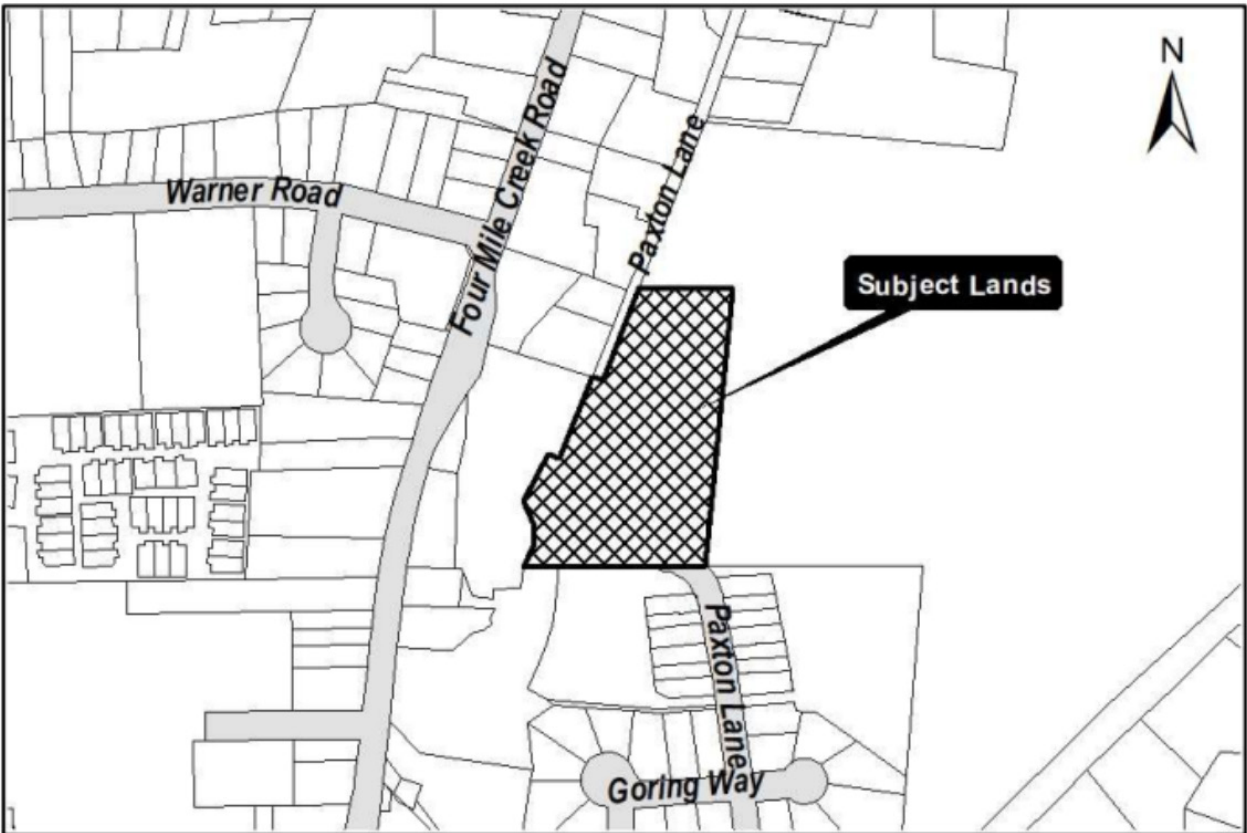
Regarding: File No. 26T-18-25-02
The Settlement at St. Davids (Extension) Draft Plan of Subdivision Modification
46 Paxton Lane, Niagara-on-the-Lake

What is this?

An application has been received for a Modification to an approved Draft Plan of Subdivision on the subject lands (see location map).

The application requests to revise the approved Draft Plan of Subdivision on the subject lands (Town File 26CD-18-12-01), which was approved by the Ontario Municipal Board (now Ontario Land Tribunal) on August 16, 2013 (Case PL130165).

The application requests to permit 12 single-detached dwellings and four blocks containing a total of 17 townhouse units, and to remove the existing detached dwelling known as the Paxton House, which is designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA) from the approved Draft Plan. The application further requests to revise select Conditions of Draft Plan Approval related to the restoration of the Paxton House, and requirements related to the conveyance of open space blocks containing archaeological resources to the Town for park space.



Dialogue is encouraged:

You are invited to attend the Open House to gather information and provide input regarding this matter.

The Open House will continue to be held electronically at this time.

If you wish to participate electronically at the Open House, you must register in advance with the Town Staff noted below. You will receive an email on the date of the meeting with instructions to connect to the Open House on your computer, tablet or telephone.

• **Open House** – Connor MacIsaac (connor.macisaac@notl.com or 905-468-3266 ext. 313) (register as soon as possible but prior to 12 noon on Monday, October 27, 2025)

If you wish to view the Open House for information purposes, registration is not required. The meeting will be recorded and available for viewing after the meeting on the Town’s website at <https://www.notl.com/council-government/mayor-council/meetings-agendas-minutes>

Please Note: Written comments on the application are encouraged and must be submitted to the Town Clerk, at 1593 Four Mile Creek Road, P.O. Box 100, Virgil, ON L0S 1T0 or via email at clerks@notl.com referencing the above file number. Unless indicated otherwise, all submissions, including personal information, will become part of the public record.

For more information:

A copy of the application and supporting documents for the proposal may be obtained on the Town’s website at <https://www.notl.com/business-development/public-planning-notices>, or at the Community and Development Services Department within Town Hall.

Please contact Connor MacIsaac, Planner II, at 905-468-3266 ext. 313 or via email at connor.macisaac@notl.com if additional information is required.

If you wish to be notified of the future decision with respect to the application, you must submit a written request to the Town Clerk including your name and the address to which such notice should be sent.

If a person or public body does not share their views in writing to the Town Clerk or orally at a statutory Public Meeting before a decision is made, the person/public body:

- a) Is not entitled to appeal the decision of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake to the Ontario Land Tribunal; and
- b) May not be added as a party to the hearing of an appeal before the Ontario Land Tribunal unless, in the opinion of the Tribunal, there are reasonable grounds to do so.

Please note that third party appeals are restricted for this application as per Bill 185, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024. Planning Act appeals may be filed by the applicant, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, a “specified person” (as defined by the *Planning Act 1(1)*), and any “public body” (as defined by the *Planning Act 1(1)*).

Dated at the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, October 15, 2025
Grant Bivol, Town Clerk

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 \$999,000 15 ANDRES STREET	 BEST PRICE IN THE COMPLEX \$885,000 7 WINDSOR CIRCLE	 PRICE IMPROVEMENT \$889,000 15756 NIAGARA RIVER PARKWAY	 \$1,675,000 10-222 RICARDO STREET	 \$2,100,000 507 MISSISSAUGA ST



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