



This composite photo by Dave Van de Laar won Best Photo Essay nationally.

Lake Report dominates national journalism awards

Staff
The Lake Report

A feature story about helping Niagara-on-the-Lake's volunteer firefighters deal with the trauma they witness on the job.

Creative snapshots of the life and times of a growing small town.

An editorial reflecting on Mark Carney's 2025 electoral win and Canadians' rejection of Pierre Poilievre's divisive rhetoric.

And Christmas wrap featuring the artwork of more than 200 Crossroad Public School students.

Those were just a few of the items published by The Lake Report in 2025 that once again earned NOTL's wee community newspaper more awards than any publication in the country.

When the Canadian Community Newsmedia Award winners were unveiled Monday, The Lake Report garnered 22 more national awards, bringing its provin-

Continued on Page 9

Fancy brims, sport of kings

Bi-annual museum fundraiser draws huge crowd to Commons for polo matches

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

Every two years, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Commons transforms into a fitting venue for the sport of kings, and this year was no exception.

Niagara Polo returned to the historic Commons on Saturday, welcoming crowds to watch two polo matches featuring players from the Toronto Polo Club.

Guests dressed for the occasion, honouring the game's rich history and its historical context in this part of the Niagara Peninsula.

Barbara Worthy, community engagement co-ordinator with the NOTL Museum, considers the Commons a historic and special place.

"We witnessed soldiers training here," she said. "That game, which is so precise, allowed them to practice in a very rustic world."

Continuing the tradition is about more than the match itself.

Continued on Page 22



The Canadian Cowgirls put their patriotism on full display at the Commons on Saturday, as part of the opening ceremony for Niagara Polo, a charity polo match that sees teams from the Toronto Polo Club go head-to-head in two four-chukker games — all to raise money for the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Mayoral candidates face off at jam-packed debate

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Vaughn Goettler says Niagara-on-the-Lake should stop new development until it knows its infrastructure can handle more growth.

Andrea Kaiser says a blanket pause could land the town back in court.

Erwin Wiens says the town needs to be careful, strengthen its planning rules and keep investing in infrastructure.

That was one of the clearest splits Monday night as the three lord mayor candidates faced residents at a Niagara-on-the-Lake Residents Association forum that moved through 14 questions on growth, taxes, transparency, tourism, climate

change and how the next mayor should lead.

The forum also exposed clear differences in how each candidate would approach the job.

Goettler argued the town needs a new direction, pledged to do the lord mayor's job for \$1 and rejected strong mayor powers. Kaiser emphasized

Continued on Page 6



The debate packed the gym at Crossroads Public School Monday night. PAIGE SEBURN

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Clayfield luxury hotel opens in the Village after years of work

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

For seven years, John Hawley and David Feldberg planned, redesigned, waited, built and kept going.

On Sept. 9, they finally stood inside their finished hotel.

The new four-storey hotel at Clayfield Commons in Niagara-on-the-Lake held its official ribbon-cutting last Wednesday ahead of welcoming its first overnight guests Sept. 18. Rooms start at \$429 per night.

Feldberg, founder of Stratus Vineyards, had long wanted to create a hotel inspired by the same design and hospitality principles behind the winery.

Across the road, Hawley and his family had spent years building the neighbourhood that would become Clayfield Commons.

When the two met in 2019, their visions merged.

Of the hotel's 102 rooms, 60 are guest rooms and 42 are residential-style accommodations designed for longer stays. It also includes more than 5,400 square feet of meeting and event space.

The Clayfield is set to open for overnight stays on Friday, with 102 rooms available. Speaking to a crowd inside the newly built hotel on Sept. 9, its developers share that the project has been seven challenging years in the making. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Its food and beverage options include Terrain on the ground level, a restaurant focused on Niagara produce, growers and wine, and the Rooftop at the Clayfield on the third floor.

The building's curved exterior takes inspiration from the Niagara Escarpment, while vertical timber elements are meant to echo vineyard rows. It was designed by Montreal-based firm Sid Lee Architecture.

The hotel is also part of Hyatt's Unbound Collection, a group of independent hotels designed to keep their own look and charac-

ter rather than follow one standard model.

At the ribbon-cutting, Hawley said the most exciting part was "today" — simply being there after years of work and sleepless nights.

"We were two guys with a dream and no experience building a hotel. How hard could it be?" he said during his remarks. "Good thing we didn't have any idea."

The most rewarding part has been seeing the community begin to make the space its own, particularly through the farmers' market and public green, Hawley said.

The hotel itself was first proposed in 2018. That year, a 164-name petition was presented to council opposing the proposed hotel and assembly hall, with concerns including parking, increased height and the draw of more tourists to the neighbourhood, which residents feared would bring more traffic and congestion.

The Clayfield's website says its parking area is accessed from Niven Road.

"We've got multiple access points all over the place," Hawley told The Lake Report. "We haven't been able to use them all

because they've been in construction."

Asked whether congestion could become a problem, he said he does not expect it to.

"I don't think it will be," he said. "We planned for it not to be."

Hawley said they also tried to avoid building more parking than needed.

"We also don't want to overbuild parking," he said. "You go to places where there's just hundreds of spots that sit empty all the time and that's not good for the environment."

Clayfield Commons has 448 parking spaces across the development, including spaces serving the hotel.

The goal, Hawley said, was to provide enough parking without paving more land than necessary.

Hyatt Canada's regional vice president of franchise operations and sales, Don Loughheed, said the Clayfield fits Hyatt's one-of-a-kind approach because of its ties to Niagara's landscape, wine, food and community.

Kathy Weiss, CEO of Tourism Niagara-on-the-Lake, said the hotel could also help keep visitors in town longer.

"The longer our visitors stay, the more opportunity they have to discover wineries, restaurants, shops, theatre, heritage, and trails — all of the wonderful businesses and experience throughout our destination," she said.

The years between the idea and opening were spent working through planning, design and construction — a process Hawley said came with "inevitable bumps and challenges."

Feldberg summed up the process with a joke at the ribbon-cutting.

"We didn't realize it would be as easy as it's been," he said, drawing laughter.

"It's never a straight road along the way, but we're really really thrilled with the result."

Hawley said he and his son Adam recently stood in the lobby, looked around and asked each other the same question.

"How did we get here?"

Earlier in his remarks, Hawley praised Adam as his "right hand," saying "none have been more significant" than him.

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\$25M for Royal George, but no Price on name

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The Royal George Theatre's multi-million-dollar rebuild is getting a federal boost of up to \$25 million, helping replace the 111-year-old Niagara-on-the-Lake landmark with a building everyone can access.

And while the historic theatre is being rebuilt from the ground up, the Royal George name will live on.

Lead donors Tim and Frances Price made a \$10-million gift to the project and were offered naming rights, but chose to keep it the Royal George Theatre.

Shaw Festival executive director Tim Jennings told The Lake Report the federal funding will help cover construction and completion costs, along with some design work and other early work dating back to this past spring.

"The funding will come once a final payment agreement is fully executed. It reimburses the Shaw for the approved costs after they are paid," he said.

St. Catharines Liberal member of Parliament Chris Bittle announced the funding last Thursday at the construction site on Queen Street.

Bittle was joined by Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa and Tony Baldinelli, the Conservative member of Parliament for Niagara Falls-Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Other attendees included Niagara Falls member of provincial Parliament Wayne Gates, Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati, NOTL councillors Gary Burroughs, Wendy Cheropita and Adriana Vizzari, and NOTL's regional councillor



Frances and Tim Price's \$10-million donation to the Shaw Festival gave them the right to rename the Royal George Theatre, but the couple decided to leave the name as-is. You can't put a Price on history, after all. PAIGE SEBURN

Andrea Kaiser.

In April 2025, Ontario committed \$35 million to the rebuild, to be paid over three years, bringing total government support for the new theatre to as much as \$60 million.

The new theatre is scheduled to open in fall 2028 with 350 seats, a larger lobby, a rehearsal hall and spaces for community and educational programs. Its façade will echo the look of the original building.

The Shaw's artistic director Tim Carroll said rebuilding the theatre became necessary not only because the old theatre had reached the end of its usable life, but because some people could not use it with dignity.

"I saw people who couldn't come to our shows here because they were in wheelchairs or had mobility issues, or couldn't come with dignity because they had to be wheeled out of the theatre and down, usually a rainy alleyway, to an outside toilet," he said.

"Those days are gone." The Shaw says the entire building will be accessible, including backstage areas, catwalks, the overhead ar-

chitectural details and eas where technicians manage lighting and scenery and other workspaces. The building's design will also include geothermal heating and cooling and rooftop solar panels.

"Those accessible catwalks and grid — it's the first in the world," Jennings said.

"We passionately believe that art is a basic human need and that it must be accessible to everyone. Regardless of age, regardless of physical mobility."

On the subject of the theatre keeping its name, Tim Price's comments were succinct.

"The Royal George is the Royal George," he said. "Let's leave it that way."

That announcement drew applause from the crowd and an emotional response from Jennings, who said he gets "a little choked up" whenever he thinks about it.

"When you have these conversations, they don't always go that way," he said. "So it really was a very special moment for me."

Price said the new theatre's role as an open community gathering place helped inspire the couple's

support. Unlike the former Royal George, the new building is expected to welcome people throughout the day, including during practices or simply for a coffee.

"We know there are lots of people walking back and forth across that street who, yes, they see the theatre, but they really don't know what's going on," Price said.

"But if the door's open — and it's inviting — they'll come in."

That spoke volumes, he said, about "what this magical place can be."

The Shaw's spokesperson, Cathy Cowan, had not responded by publication time to questions about whether the Prices will be offered any other permanent recognition within the new theatre, such as having the auditorium, lobby or another space named after them.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said the theatre has been part of the NOTL community for generations and helped make the town known for arts and culture.

"It's a place where we meet, where we have stories to share, stories stay with us, and where our community sees itself reflected on the stage."

Bittle credited and thanked the Shaw's team for squeezing "every drop that they could have out of this building."

"I'm happy to finally be able to deliver on this discussion that we've had for a decade," he said.

The Shaw began designing a replacement for the Royal George in 2017, but plans to rebuild in 2021 were delayed by the pandemic.

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LOCATOR

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UPCOMING: MULTI-FAMILY GARAGE SALE (5 to 10 families)
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Ravine proprietor hospitalized after truck struck by driver

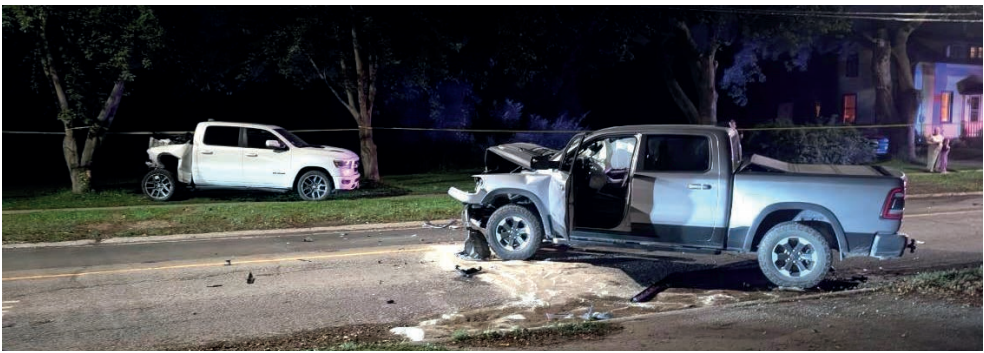
Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

A prominent Niagara-on-the-Lake businessman was hospitalized and is recovering from injuries this week after being rear-ended on Thursday by an accused drunk driver, who moments earlier was being pursued by Niagara Regional Police.

Police said in a media release on Friday they ended the chase along York Road at about 8:49 p.m. on Sept. 10 because the driver of a speeding grey Dodge Ram pickup truck was driving in a “reckless manner,” posing “a risk to public safety.”

Three minutes after, police responded at 8:51 p.m. to a motor vehicle collision on York Road near Four Mile Creek Road, in St. Davids: at the scene, they found the pickup truck had collided with another vehicle.

Police arrested and charged the suspect, 54-year-old Paul-Andre Seguin, with impaired driv-



The two vehicles involved in the collision on Sept. 10 in St. Davids — both Dodge Ram pickup trucks. Paul Harber, who was in the white truck, was hit by the grey truck, which was speeding down York Road. Both trucks were “totalled,” he says. SUPPLIED

ing, along with four other charges. Seguin has been an officer with Niagara Regional Police for 21 years. He was off-duty at the time of the incident.

Paul Harber, brand manager and chief proprietor at Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery, says he was the other driver who was hit by the suspect. The winery is located at the intersection where the collision happened.

A video sent to The Lake Report shows security camera footage that appears to be dated Sept. 10 taken of a white pickup truck backing

out of a parking spot on the side of the road, then reversing before moving forward, preparing to make a left turn onto York Road.

A few seconds after turning onto the road, a second vehicle can be seen speeding down the road before colliding with the back of the white pickup truck.

Speaking to The Lake Report on Monday from Marotta Family Hospital in St. Catharines, Harber said he “sustained injuries” and is focusing on his recovery. He received an MRI and ultrasound at the hospital, he said.

“I’m just happy and lucky that both myself and the other driver are alive. It could have been a lot worse for us,” he said.

On the advice of his personal injury lawyer, he wouldn’t share what his injuries were, but said they were not readily apparent when emergency medical services checked him at the collision site, which is why he was not taken to the hospital immediately following the crash.

“All the injuries that I’ve sustained have come to light after the fact,” he said.

Niagara police said Friday the suspect was taken to an out-of-region hospital with serious injuries after his arrest for drunk driving, but that there were no other injuries as a result of the collision.

The incident began with Niagara police responding to reports of an impaired driver at 8:20 p.m. Responding officers located a grey Dodge Ram pickup truck in the area of Glendale Avenue and Taylor Road.

Police tried to conduct a traffic stop at 8:46 p.m., but said the driver, who was “demonstrating signs” of being impaired, refused to comply and fled the scene, which began the pursuit until police ended it on York Road near Townline Road.

Along with impaired operation of a conveyance, police charged the suspect with dangerous operation, refusing to comply with a demand for an alcohol breath sample, flight from

peace officer and running a red light.

He was released from custody and suspended with pay. He is expected to appear in court on Oct. 6.

Following this incident, the Special Investigations Unit has invoked their mandate.

The SIU is a civilian law enforcement agency that investigates incidents involving police officers where there has been death, serious injury, or allegations of sexual assault.

Monica Hudon, a spokesperson for the unit, told The Lake Report it invoked its mandate because police were following the vehicle prior to the collision and because someone was seriously injured.

When asked how long the traffic stop lasted before the suspect fled the scene and how fast the suspect was driving when the collision happened, she said these questions are part of the SIU’s investigation.

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Last-minute candidate Rick Mills wants NOTL to rein in development

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

At 1:55 p.m. on Aug. 21, Rick Mills was still sitting inside Niagara-on-the-Lake town hall finishing the paperwork that would put his name on the ballot.

Nominations closed at 2 p.m. that day.

Mills had spent years thinking about running for council, weeks collecting signatures and talking it over with his wife — and still waited until almost the final possible moment to make it official.

“It was emotional,” he said.

That was also why Mills kept to himself at town hall that afternoon, initially declining to speak with The Lake Report or identify himself as he filed. He said he did not know who the reporter was at first and, after such a difficult decision, simply wanted to go in and get it done.

Now that he’s in the race, Mills is speaking publicly about what he sees as NOTL’s biggest threat: overdevelopment.

“I think development has gone too quick and I think that it needs to be reined in — and reined in responsibly,” he said.

The lifelong NOTL resident was born in the town’s former hospital, grew up across from the museum on Castlereagh Street and has lived in Virgil for the past 33 years.

His wife is also a life-long NOTL resident — the two started dating while working as lifeguards at the Niagara Pool in the 1970s.

Over the years, people had encouraged Mills to consider running for council, he said, but he did not want to make the decision casually.

Even gathering the required nomination signatures became a test.

Instead of knocking on nearby doors until he had enough, Mills said he intentionally went into all five of NOTL’s communities and sat down with people before asking them to sign.

“I had to sit and listen.”

He told people signing his



Rick Mills, a lifelong NOTL resident, filed his nomination papers just minutes before the Aug. 21 deadline. Mills says concerns about development, taxes and accountability helped push him into the race for town council. SUPPLIED

nomination papers that his name still might not appear on the ballot.

“So if that ticks you off, then you don’t have to sign.”

But by the time he finished, Mills said those conversations had pushed him toward running.

Not everybody in his life thought running for council sounded sane, though.

Mills recalled recently visiting his cousin, Fred Sentineal of Sentineal Carriages, in hospital after he was accidentally run over by his own tractor in the Gales parking lot earlier this month.

“You know what? I am the second craziest person in this room,” Mills recalled Sentineal telling him.

Mills asked who was first. “You. You’re running for council.”

Mills does not describe himself as a politician.

“I just love my town and I think I have something to offer,” he said.

“I’m not coming in this as a politician,” he said. “I’m coming in as a participant.”

Taxes and development are among the first issues he wants to tackle.

Mills said his own property taxes “are increasing quicker than they ever have,” particularly in the past few years. Mills does not mind paying taxes, he said, but wants to be part of council’s discussions and decisions around them.

On development, he said things have moved too fast,

but stopped short of calling it out of control.

“I’m not giving up on my town,” he said.

Asked what should happen when a developer repeatedly proceeds without town approvals or breaks municipal rules, Mills did not hesitate.

“Enforcement, of course.”

“Without accountability, we’re all in trouble,” he said. “Everybody needs to be accountable. Our mayor needs to be accountable. Our (chief administrative officer) needs to be accountable. The councillors need to be accountable.”

That includes developers, Mills said.

He said they have rights, should be respected and are entitled to bring applications forward — but that does not put them above the people who already live here.

“A developer is not greater than a resident,” he said.

On the Royal George Theatre redevelopment, Mills said he followed council’s debate and recognized councillors faced a difficult decision.

But he questioned whether renovation could have played a larger role instead of full replacement.

His answer to what he would have done differently was brief.

“I would have gone slower,” he said.

Mills takes much the same approach to the Rand Estate.

“Proceed with caution.”

He said its heritage and the effect on surrounding residents need to remain central as the property’s future is decided.

Mills was born at the old hospital, but he is not ready to put forward a specific vision for the site.

Instead, he said he is glad the town owns the property and has not rushed into a decision.

“I look forward to being a part of that discussion,” he said.

If elected, Mills would also join a smaller council.

The next term will have six councillors instead of eight, something Mills said he does not particularly like.

But if a smaller council helps NOTL in its efforts to avoid amalgamation, he said, “then so be it.”

His concern is representation.

Mills said Old Town may be NOTL’s best-known identity, but Queenston, St. Davids, Glendale and Virgil all need a voice around the table too.

“They deserve to be acknowledged and very much included, just as much as the people in Old Town are,” he said.

Mills also weighed in on the town’s current approach to local media access. Earlier this year, chief administrative officer Nick Ruller directed staff not to answer requests supporting opinion, advocacy or commentary pieces, while continuing to answer factual questions from reporters.

Mills said staff deserve respect and town leadership has a responsibility to protect its employees.

Councillors and staff likely read local coverage and benefit from it, he said, but added that the relationship with the press needs to be “honed” and built on trust.

“(The press) is very important, but it can’t be misused,” he said.

For all his concerns about where the town could be headed, Mills said what gives him confidence in NOTL is much simpler.

“What we have going for us is one another,” he said. “And we have hope.”

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Different strokes: Mayoral candidates' plans vary

Continued from Front Page

her regional experience and said she wants to continue pushing for changes to how policing costs are allocated. Wiens made the case for staying the course.

Development and infrastructure
Goettler's call for a moratorium drew applause.

"We should not be building until we know where the infrastructure is at," he said.

He pointed to flooding in St. Davids, drainage problems and undersized culverts, and called for a town-supported check valve program to prevent wastewater from backing up into homes.

Kaiser agreed infrastructure should be ready before significant development moves ahead, but rejected a blanket stop.

"Random moratoriums bring us back to court legal cases," she said, arguing the town should instead rely on its official plan, zoning bylaw and other planning tools.

Wiens also urged caution, saying a previous interim control bylaw did not survive litigation. He said the town should instead use its asset management plan to guide infrastructure spending and updated zoning rules to control future growth.

When asked for their three most important criteria when assessing development, Goettler said proposals should fit the community, have infrastructure already in place and benefit residents.

Kaiser said the official plan and comprehensive zoning bylaw should set the rules, with infrastructure, protection of agriculture, heritage and the environment, and residents' quality of life guiding decisions.

Wiens said development should only move ahead when the town has the infrastructure and rules to support it, including an updated comprehensive zoning bylaw and better provincial growth policies.

Where growth should go
All three pointed to Glendale as a major area for future growth, largely because there is little room left for new housing in NOTL's other urban areas.

Goettler warned that should not mean treating Glendale as a "dumping ground" for development residents elsewhere do not want.

Kaiser said she has heard similar concerns from



Niagara-on-the-Lake's three contenders for the municipality's top job: Vaughn Goettler, Andrea Kaiser and Erwin Wiens. At Monday night's debate, they shared disparate views on issues such as how much development the town should allow in the future and how much power the lord mayor should wield in council chambers. PAIGE SEBURN

Glendale residents, who sometimes feel like the "orphans" of NOTL, and said growth there must fit the community and bring the services residents are asking for.

Wiens said growth in Glendale should come with more than housing, including transit, stores, jobs and other amenities needed to build a complete community.

Strong mayor powers and time on the job
Goettler was the most opposed to strong mayor powers, calling them a "fundamental disconnect with democracy" and saying he would not use them. He said leadership should come through consensus, not by concentrating more authority in the mayor's office.

Wiens called the powers "a tool in a toolbox" municipalities have been given by the province. He pointed to the town's recent budget process as an example of where they can work, saying it saved more than \$200,000 and staff time by allowing the budget to move forward sooner.

But Wiens said he favours council consensus and could not think of many situations where he would need to use the powers.

Kaiser said she sees some value in them around budgets, but would not use them without working with council.

All three said the lord mayor role demands significant time.

Goettler called it a full-time job and said he would do it for a salary of \$1, donating the rest to local charities.

"Any job that's a full-time job is at least a work week, which to me is 40 hours a

week, at least," he said.

Wiens declined to attach a fixed number of hours to the role.

"I don't want to tell you it's a five-hour job or a 10-hour job. It's a job that needs to get done," he said.

Kaiser said she expects she would work 60 to 70 hours a week and argued her regional experience matters because, next term, the lord mayor will be NOTL's only elected representative at the region.

"We don't have time for someone to learn on the job," she said. "I am the only candidate who has that regional experience."

"I plan to fight, with all of my experience at the region, to make sure that Niagara-on-the-Lake keeps its independence."

Climate and flooding

Kaiser called climate resilience a "number one priority" and pointed to rain gardens, swales and permeable surfaces as ways to keep water out of overloaded systems and better handle heavier rainfall.

Wiens said 23 of the town's 27 climate action initiatives had been completed, with four long-term items remaining, and said he wants more tree planting and continued flood-mitigation work.

Goettler argued the idea of a "100-year storm" no longer reflects reality and said the town should rethink how much hard surface is added through development, including considering permeable driveways.

Transparency and town hall

Goettler said town finances should be easier for residents to understand and published more quickly.

Kaiser said residents need meaningful consultation

before decisions are made and elected officials should explain how they arrived at their votes.

Wiens said much of the information residents are looking for is already public, but the town needs to understand why people still feel they cannot access it.

Asked what should happen when staff does not follow council direction, Goettler said residents feel the relationship between staff and council has become "upside down" and are concerned staff is "telling council what to do and council is rubber-stamping it."

Kaiser said council needs to push when its direction is not carried out, pointing to a regional policing-cost report she helped send back after staff recommended the status quo instead of providing the alternatives council had requested.

Wiens said he was "hard-pressed" to think of a time that had happened and stressed it is the chief administrator's job to carry out council policy.

Taxes and accountability
All three pointed to regional costs as a major pressure on NOTL taxpayers.

Goettler said taxes are too high and he would try to keep future increases no higher than inflation. He also argued better bylaw enforcement could reduce costly legal fights with developers.

Kaiser focused on policing costs and said NOTL should not pay more than its fair share because of higher property assessments, while Wiens said the town needs to find efficiencies and keep taxes stable.

Asked whether they had any business, financial or family relationships with developers who could bring

proposals before council, "The answer is no," Goettler said.

Goettler is not financially beholden to anyone who could create a conflict in the role, he said.

Kaiser has long-standing ties to NOTL's wine industry, including family connections to Inniskillin, years working at Reif Estate Winery and ownership of Drea's Wine Co.

She said she has declared conflicts before and would do so again when required — town records show she declared one in 2012 over a proposed noise bylaw because of her employment at Reif.

Wiens focused on conflict-of-interest rules and his record of following them, prompting a few residents to call out: "That didn't answer the question."

Tourism and the airport's future

Goettler said tourism should be managed around residents' quality of life, with the town listening more closely to what residents want and reducing pressure on traffic and parking. He also said he would bring back a tourism committee.

Kaiser said she would revive a tourism economic management committee to bring residents and businesses together.

"I grew up in the tourism industry," she said. "But you can look at my track record — I am absolutely in favour of protecting agriculture, residents' quality of life, and environment first. I believe that we can do both."

Wiens said the town should keep building on its "first ever tourism strategy." He also pointed to the roughly \$4 million a year the town brings in from

parking, saying it helps offset local costs such as transit.

On the Niagara District Airport, Goettler and Kaiser both said they support improvements but are not ready to back expansion without more information.

Wiens supported what he called responsible growth, but said expansion should come last and that he has a "huge problem" with it moving onto agricultural land.

Schools, services and the region

All three said the town should have a high school again.

Wiens said he would work with school boards and the province to bring one back, while Goettler said NOTL should stop giving up institutional land and space needed for community services.

Goettler pointed to Parliament Oak as an example, saying land that was once institutional is now being used for a hotel.

"Could we have done something different? I believe we could have and should have," he said.

Kaiser supported bringing a high school back and said the lord mayor should also use the regional role to push for other services residents need, including urgent care, long-term care and better seniors' services.

At the region, Goettler said he would build alliances with other smaller municipalities, Kaiser said she would push to change how policing costs are allocated while using her regional experience to fight the ongoing threat of amalgamation, and Wiens made preventing amalgamation his top priority.

As the forum wrapped up, Goettler told residents NOTL needs a new direction and said the next council should rethink how the town handles growth, infrastructure and public input.

Kaiser also argued for change, but said her experience at both the town and region would help her deliver it without losing sight of what residents want protected.

Wiens closed by telling residents the town has already laid the groundwork for the next term and should not abandon it.

"Now's not the time for change," he said.

A full video of the debate can be found on the Niagara-on-the-Lake Residents Association's Youtube page at www.youtube.com/watch?v=4famGfEu5qQ.

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com

A MESSAGE FROM THE NIAGARA FOUNDATION

Heritage protection is more than designating historic homes.

It's safeguarding the streetscapes, agricultural lands, architecture, culture, traditions, and identity of Niagara-on-the-Lake that have been under threat.

**So, what should we expect from our elected officials?
Here's our **DO** & **DON'T** list.**

- 1 By-laws aren't suggestions**
DO Uphold protections already in place
DON'T Make residents fight developer-friendly zoning amendments

- 2 Commercial uses don't belong everywhere**
DO Protect neighbourhoods and farmlands from inappropriate development
DON'T Allow hotels or other large-scale commercial complexes in these areas

- 3 Our villages have a distinct sense of place**
DO Preserve our unique character and charm
DON'T Fail to enact new build design guidelines

- 4 Institutional lands are irreplaceable assets**
DO Retain them for community use
DON'T Turn them into visitor parking lots

- 5 Resident quality-of-life comes first**
DO Defend quiet, clean, liveable neighbourhoods
DON'T Expand commercial aircraft noise and emissions over Virgil, Old Town, and rural NOTL

Status Quo or Change?
MAKE YOUR VOTE COUNT ON OCTOBER 26



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theniagarafoundation.com

NOTL backs \$425K drainage plan after crippling summer flooding

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

After a summer of heavy rain exposed weak spots in Niagara-on-the-Lake’s drainage system, councillors are backing a \$425,000 push to find problems sooner and tackle them before they turn into flooding.

The budget amendment supported by council members Tuesday would fund detailed drainage mapping, long-term maintenance planning and new equipment to clear overgrown ditches and municipal drains.

The decision still needs formal council approval on Sept. 22.

The largest piece is \$250,000 for a new mid-mount boom mower that will be installed on an existing municipally owned John Deere tractor.

Another \$75,000 would survey sediment buildup in

the town’s 15 stormwater ponds, while \$50,000 would pay for detailed elevation mapping and imagery and \$50,000 would develop a 10-year maintenance plan for NOTL’s 67 municipal drains.

The money would come from the town’s stormwater management reserve, which is projected to sit at about \$1.87 million at year-end. Staff estimate about \$1.45 million would remain after the work, with no additional pressure on the operating budget or planned capital projects.

Jordan Frost, the town’s director of public works and infrastructure, said the July and August rainfall events highlighted the need to move away from the town’s largely reactive approach to drainage maintenance.

The new mower would also replace the town’s troublesome “Green Machine,” a tractor Frost said has suffered repeated

breakdowns and required frequent repairs.

Staff expect the replacement arm could be in place within six to eight weeks.

In the meantime, chief administrative officer Nick Ruller said crews have put tires back on the existing tractor and are keeping its old arm running.

“So we’ll nurse along the existing equipment, we’ll procure the correct equipment and get that installed, so that we’re ready to go for the new year with a new arm outfit,” Ruller said.

The mower is also expected to help crews clear phragmites and other vegetation from ditches, with higher-risk flooding areas to be tackled first.

“So it will be a ‘try to get to everything as fast as we can,’” Frost said.

In a separate drainage decision the same night, councillors backed appointing K. Smart Associates Limited to prepare



Floodwater swamps Line 6 Road after the July 28 storm. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

a new engineering report on the Szockyj Municipal Drain.

Staff found the 2005 engineering report does not account for runoff coming from lands west of Concession 4 Road, despite water from those areas entering the drain.

The new review will examine capacity, possible improvements and roughly 30 parcels, along with several town roads, that are missing from existing assessment schedules.

Resident Michael Watson, who has pushed for action on the drain, called the de-

cision “another positive step in enabling a comprehensive solution for the future.”

“I attribute the speed of the last 11 months to the strong leadership this council has put in place. Senior staff listened to my concerns, they acted on them.”
paigeseburn@niagaranow.com



2026 Municipal Tax Reminder Notice

Final Second Installment due September 25, 2026
Tax Rates as per Final By-Law No. 2026-019

Payment options:

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- In-person or via the front or side entrance drop box at Town Hall (1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil)
- Electronically from a bank account using your 19-digit roll number

Please allow up to 10 business days for bank payments to process.

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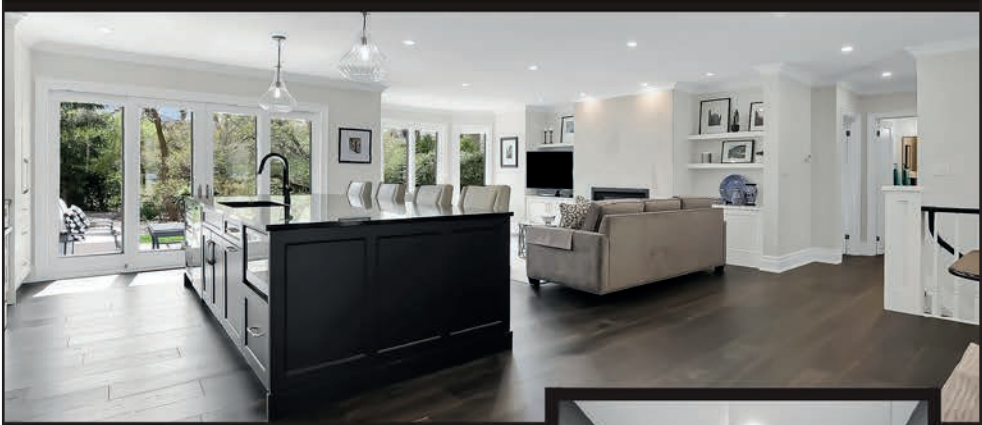
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Jet boat settlement brings \$330K dock deal, river access

Staff
The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has reached a settlement with Niagara Gorge Jet Boating Ltd. that will end a years-long dispute over the Melville Street dock and bring new public paddling infrastructure to the waterfront.

The settlement, valued by the parties at about \$330,000, will see the jet boat company supply and install a new floating dock system at 1 Melville St. for kayaks, canoes, paddleboards and other non-motorized watercraft.

The agreement resolves an arbitration dispute dating back to 2022 over unpaid licence fees and the jet boat company's use of the town-owned dock.

Under the settlement, Niagara Gorge Jet Boating will provide the docks, gangways, ramps, mooring

blocks and chains needed for the new system. Once installed, the infrastructure will become town property.

The company will also cover the cost of installing and removing the docks seasonally, adjusting mooring chains as Niagara River water levels change and storing the system during the winter for seven years.

The mooring blocks are expected to be installed this fall, with the floating docks scheduled to be ready for the 2027 recreational season.

To reduce disruption on Melville Street and River Beach Road, the dock system will be launched and removed through the Queenston dock using a jet boat, according to the town.

No commercial use of the new dock is contemplated under the settlement.

The agreement marks a change in use for a site that for years was associated pri-

marily with the commercial jet boat operation.

The town says the new infrastructure will provide easier access to the Niagara River for paddlers while fitting into longer-term plans for the surrounding waterfront.

Niagara-on-the-Lake's 2015 Waterfront Park Land Improvements Master Plan called for a passive waterfront corridor serving residents and visitors and specifically identified an area for launching kayaks, paddleboards and canoes.

A more recent update to the Dock Area Plan has also considered repurposing the Melville Street dock following the relocation of the jet boat operation, including dedicated access for small watercraft.

The town says the settlement does not determine what will ultimately happen through the ongoing Dock Area Master Plan process



Whirlpool Jet Boats now operates out of the Queenston docks. FILE/DAVE VAN DE LAAR

and would not prevent council from approving further changes to the dock or surrounding waterfront.

Council is also expected to receive options in early 2027 for possible transient visitor docking at the site, including information about operations and potential next steps.

The settlement follows a dispute stretching back several years.

Niagara Gorge Jet Boating entered into a 10-year licence agreement with the town in September 2012 for non-exclusive use of the Melville Street dock for its jet boat tours. The agreement was scheduled to expire March 31, 2023.

The relationship became contentious after high water levels in 2019 and pandemic restrictions in 2020 and 2021 limited the company's operations.

Niagara Gorge Jet Boating argued those circumstances significantly restricted its ability to use the dock, while the town maintained licence fees remained owing.

In June 2022, the town issued a notice cancelling the licence agreement over unpaid fees.

The company launched arbitration proceedings the following month, seeking repayment of some licence fees as well as other damages. The town filed its

response to the arbitration in May 2023.

Council discussed the dispute in closed session on Sept. 8 before the parties entered into minutes of settlement.

The agreement resolves all claims arising from the former licence arrangement and avoids the additional cost and uncertainty of continuing with arbitration.

Once the terms of the settlement have been completed, including installation of the new docking system, the town and Niagara Gorge Jet Boating will exchange full and final releases and the arbitration will be withdrawn.

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9/11 memories meet in NOTL

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Glenda Hall spent Sept. 11, 2001 and the week that followed working 12-hour shifts at a military base in Nova Scotia, feeding frightened Americans, finding them places to sleep and helping them call home.

Sally Turner watched the attacks unfold from her home in New York. Twenty-five years later, she happened to be in Niagara-on-the-Lake for the Shaw Festival.

Vincent A. Tummino was there when it happened.

The retired New York City firefighter responded to the World Trade Center attacks as part of the FDNY rescue and recovery effort, losing coworkers and a cousin, who was a retired NYPD sergeant, in the attacks.

Their stories came together last Friday morning at Queen's Royal Park, where Canadians and Americans gathered to mark 25 years since the Sept. 11 attacks and remember a day that changed lives on both sides of the border.

For Hall, now a NOTL resident, the memories began at 12 Wing Shearwater in Halifax, N.S., which used to be called CFB Shearwater when it was part of the former city of Dartmouth.

She was at work when someone told staff to turn on the television. They watched the news, wondering how their lives were about to change. Hall went home that day, only to get a call telling her to return to the base.

Soon, buses carrying stranded Americans began arriving.

"We got busy right away setting up cots in the community centre," Hall said.

Rooms were set aside for families, meals were prepared and the phone company installed banks of phones so people could reach their loved ones.

"People were holding on to us and asking us if we heard about this place, and did we hear about that place, 'Because that's where my daughter works,'" she said. "It was just emotional the whole time."

Hall worked 12-hour shifts for about a week.

One stranded man saw Hall arrive for her shift each day and told her he did not want to see her face again, knowing how many long hours she had been working. Hall would tell him she



Canadian and American first responders make a solemn procession through Queen's Royal Park on the morning of Friday, Sept. 11, to commemorate 25 years since the deadly terrorist attacks on U.S. soil that killed thousands of people. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

did not want to see his face either — because she was hoping he had finally been sent home.

When Hall learned his flight had finally been booked, she wanted to be the one to tell him.

"I ran down to his room and I said, 'You're never going to have to look at this face again,'" she said. "He had tears in his eyes (and said), 'I'm going home.'" "Yes, you are."

Asked Friday what it meant to have helped, Hall kept it simple.

"It was just something we did. We were in the military. You just jumped and went wherever they needed you."

Turner carried a different memory into the park.

The New York resident was visiting NOTL for the Shaw Festival when she decided to attend Friday's ceremony.

On Sept. 11, 2001, Turner was at home when she called her next-door neighbour, who told her something was happening. Turner turned on the television and watched the attacks unfold.

Her first reaction was "shock and disbelief."

"I mean, we just didn't believe this was really happening."

She said the political climate in the United States made seeing Canadians gather to remember the attacks feel especially meaningful.

"It was almost a little embarrassing because of our president," she said.

"We've been accepted. So I feel quite good about that."

For Tummino, a firefighter of more than 36 years

and U.S. Army veteran, there was no television separating him from the attack.

Before beginning his prepared remarks, Tummino looked around at the Canadian crowd.

"It's amazing that I come all the way to Canada on today, and there's probably cities back home where people are just going to work and not even celebrating this occasion," he said.

He later told the crowd: "The story of 9/11 is not only an American story. It is a human story."

Tummino remembered the Canadian communities that took in stranded travellers after U.S. airspace closed, including Gander, N.L., which received 38 diverted flights and sheltered nearly 7,000 passengers.

"Differences dissolved," he said. "Compassion became our common language."

That cross-border bond was at the centre of Friday's ceremony.

For the first time, the Upward Niagara Chamber of Commerce from Lewiston formally joined the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce and town for the commemoration.

Amanda Haseley, president of the American chamber, said she did not see "two separate communities divided by a river or an international border."

"I see neighbours, I see friends, I see communities that have shared a connection for generations."

She thanked NOTL for continuing to remember an attack that took place on American soil.

"You didn't have to do that," Haseley said. "And yet

year after year, our Canadian neighbours have made the choice to remember with us."

Terry Dow, interim executive director of the NOTL chamber, also recognized Janice Thomson, who began the local commemoration in 2002 but could not attend Friday.

"What began as Janice's simple desire to stand alongside our American neighbours has become an annual tradition here in Niagara on the Lake," Dow said.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, and Couns. Erwin Wiens, Gary Burroughs and Tim Balasiuk were among the local officials in attendance.

Zalepa, who also read a message from Premier Doug Ford, said Canada and the United States may disagree at times.

"We may not agree on every issue, much like a family," Zalepa said. "But the bond between our people is deeper than any single disagreement."

Niagara Falls member of provincial Parliament Wayne Gates opened his remarks by thanking Legion members and veterans in attendance for their service.

He said NOTL continues gathering not only to remember those lost, but to "reaffirm our friendship between our communities and our two countries."

Niagara Falls—Niagara-on-the-Lake member of Parliament Tony Baldinelli remembered the Canadians who served in Afghanistan after the attacks, saying more than 40,000 Canadian Armed Forces members were deployed and 158 Canadians died.

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com



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Golf buddies help toast pal’s hole-in-one

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

Any golfer who has played the game for even just a few years dreams of hitting a hole-in-one. Some achieve that, a few have more than one to their name, but for most it remains just a dream. Last Thursday, the stars all rightly aligned for Niagara-on-the-Lake native Quinton Spagnol, who has only been playing the game regularly since the COVID pandemic. Except he wasn’t watching when his ball fell in the hole. But a lot of other people were. Playing in the NOTL Golf Club’s Thursday men’s league, he hit a pitching wedge from the black tees on the 129-yard fourth hole. The 29-year-old watched as his ball hit the green not too far from the hole and started to trickle back toward the pin. A better shot than usual, he thought, but he had no delusions of grandeur.

“I watched it for a couple seconds and I’m like, ‘All right, that’s awesome.’ It’s getting a little bit better and then I looked down at the ground to see if my tee was still there.” “Then all I hear is the group on number five tee block. They’re like, ‘No way!’ They’re all screaming, ‘No way!’ And I look up and there’s no ball on the green any more.” Because it was in the hole. Spagnol is one of 16 golf buddies who play in the popular Thursday league and the guys on #5 and with him on #4 are all friends. So are the guys who were behind him playing their approaches on #3. The fourth group was walking up the third fairway after hitting their tee shots and Nick Elia texted the boys, “Who just hit a hole-in-one?” They joined the party as soon as they made their approaches to #3 and it turned into a communal celebration.

“My group mauls me. The group that was behind us on three is sprinting over and the guys that were on the fifth tee block were running toward me, and we all just kind of jumped together. It was unbelievable,” Spagnol recalled. While he remained in a bit of a euphoric daze for the next few holes, he somehow managed to stay focused and ended up shooting his best nine-hole score ever — a 1-over 37. That tied him with Jim McMacken for low gross on the day but also won him the low net prize with a total of 31, one ahead of Stephen Fraser. The ace also earned Spagnol the closest to the pin prize of a bottle of wine as well as a \$45 net skin, which might help defray the costs of his post-round celebration. “The tab was hefty, for sure.” Like a lot of people, he took up golf during the pandemic because, in those days, “that was the only

thing that we could do with people.” Before then, he’d play a few times a year with friends, but nothing organized. When he took up the game during COVID he didn’t even have a full set of clubs. Now, Spagnol particularly enjoys the weekly men’s night and socializing with his large group of golf buddies. And he offered a shout-out to pro shop manager Darren Smith and the entire clubhouse staff for making the whole golf experience special for players. As for previous aces on men’s night, Smith and former club assistant pro Ricky Watson could not recall one. Mark Derbyshire, who has won more club championships than anyone else, noted his father Al had one on #9 “way back when,” but he doesn’t remember anyone else scoring one since. Other men’s league winners last week included: John Liotta (longest putt



Quinton Spagnol is all smiles as he holds the ball that earned him a hole-in-one last week. MATT COFFEY

on #2), Colby Ostromecki (longest drive on #8) and McMacken (closest to the pin on #9). Bill Smethurst and McMacken earned \$55 gross skins for birdies on #4 and #9. In Monday’s business women’s league, Claire Forbes was top shooter with 43. Other winners were: Bobbi Epp (longest drive on #1), Doneve Karpman (closest to the 150 on #2), Christine Merza (closest to the pin on #4), Bobbie Corcoran (sank the longest putt on #7) and Tracey Peters (closest to the pin in two on #9). Sue Sher and Suzanne Watson led the Tuesday nine-hole women’s league as both shot 46. Sharron Marlow was next with 47 and Joan Maida had 49. In the 18-hole women’s league, Yolanda Henry and May Chang were tops with 95. Carroll Baker and Peters both shot 97 and Cathy Murray was third with 98. Chang also had the fewest putts, with 30, and was second in low net with 70 behind Christine Earl’s 68. Margot Richardson was third with net 73. Closest to the pin shooters were Carolyn Porter (#4) and Baker (#9).

COMMUNITY DONATION PROJECT

PORCH PICK-UP FOOD DRIVE

Newark Neighbours, together with our partners from the NOTL Rotary, NOTL Kinsmen and St. David’s Lions Clubs, are holding a porch pick-up food drive. On **Saturday, Sept. 26, 2026**, teams are available to pick up your food donations anytime between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

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or scan the QR code.

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ITEMS REQUIRED ON AN ONGOING BASIS:

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To Our Niagara-on-the-Lake Community

Like many of you, my family and I have seen the impact of this week’s heavy rainfall. It’s been heartbreaking to see so many neighbours dealing with flooded basements and damaged homes.

We’re doing our best to help as many families as we can.

If your basement has been affected, we’re here to help with:

- Water damage repairs
- Basement restoration
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The Niagara-on-the-Lake Soccer Club celebrates another season of fun and teamwork at its closing festival on Saturday. Club president Julia Friesen is all smiles on the field with the players who make up the Timbits Blue Ninjas: Julian Zappitelli, Briar Preston, Layla Taylor, Jack Doyle, Drew Blythe, Jade Fowler, Brooks Sherwin, Austin Neufeld, Miles Bowie, Max Greenside, Cole Houtby and Lennox Pena. SUPPLIED

NOTL Soccer Club celebrates 2026 season at closing festival

Julia Friesen
Special to The Lake Report

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Soccer Club wrapped up another successful outdoor season on Saturday with its annual closing festival at Virgil Sports Park. The day was a wonderful celebration of soccer, community and the hundreds of local children who took part in the 2026 season. Players from the club's youngest Timbits program through the older youth divisions (U-15) came together with their families, coaches and volunteers to celebrate the season and everything they accomplished on the field. The festival featured a full morning and afternoon of soccer, with players and goalies participating in

development activities with coach Rosaly Petriello and coach Phil Riley, scrimmages and games (our U-12 program and U-15 program played versus Thorold Soccer Club) before coming together to receive their end-of-season medals plus some swag (hats and t shirts) from MVP Uniforms. The fields were filled with excited players and families, creating a fun and energetic atmosphere throughout the day. In addition to the soccer, families enjoyed a barbecue, bouncy castle from Niagara Inflatables, and ice cream from L.A. Vibes, while coaches and volunteers helped make the day run smoothly. The festival also gave the club an opportunity to

recognize the tremendous commitment of its volunteer coaches, board members and other volunteers who dedicate countless hours to making the season possible. Our current board has 15 members and we had 16 travel coaches for eight travel teams and 38 house league coaches for six divisions — all volunteers. The club has a list of 29 referees for all of our divisions that help run things throughout the year. The event was proudly sponsored by Meridian, whose support, along with that of the club's many 2026 sponsors, helped make the celebration possible. The NOTL Soccer Club is incredibly grateful for the continued support of local businesses and the community.

The closing festival was a fitting end to a season filled with growth, development, friendships and plenty of memories. Most importantly, it was a chance for the players to celebrate what soccer is all about — having fun, being part of a team and enjoying the game together. The NOTL Soccer Club would like to thank all of its players, families, coaches, volunteers, sponsors and the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake for helping make the 2026 season such a success. The club is already looking ahead to 2027, with travel soccer registration underway and preparations beginning for another exciting year of soccer in Niagara-on-the-Lake.



Three of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Soccer Club's enthusiastic young players at the closing festival: from left, Jane Fowler, Michaela Zappitelli (who plays U-8 girls travel soccer) and Julian Zappitelli. SUPPLIED

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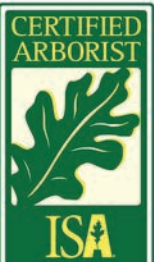
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BKind Grateful #93: Ask someone who is always helping others what you can take off their plate.

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



Contributed by Patty Garriock

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the ones you did. So, throw off the bowlines, sail away from safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream.” - Mark Twain

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Home of the brave

Retired U.S. Army Sgt. first class Ed Doran, who hails from Medina, N.Y., offers a tribute to the first responders who fought to save the lives of many on Sept. 11, 2001 with a patriotic makeover of his 1968 Chevrolet pickup truck. Doran was one of many vintage car owners who had their rides on display at the St. Davids Lions Club on Sept. 13 for the St. Davids Lions Car Show.
DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Opinion

NOTL goes to war — sign war



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner
Columnist

Like many towns around us, Niagara-on-the-Lake tries to stifle democracy. How else would you describe it when citizens are denied use of municipal buildings (like the community centre) to hold a debate among candidates? Council made that decision. Our town also tells people seeking office exactly where they can put election signs. More precisely, where they cannot.

For the record a bylaw dictates no signs anywhere except on private property (that doesn’t include the boulevard or ditch in front of your house). On your lawn, a sign must be at least 3.28 feet from the property line. Not an inch closer. It can’t go up until 60 days before a vote and must disappear a week later.

The good news? Everybody ignores the dumb bylaw. As they should. Elections are not like speed bumps or putting out garbage on the wrong day. They’re emotional and messy. They should engage and seize everyone. People wanting your support should be in your face telling you why.

Signs matter in this pro-

cess. They convey a message about the candidate. They remind you who’s running and show who supports them. I’ve been in a few (federal) campaigns in which “sign wars” were critical forms of mass communication. And you can’t do battle hiding 3.28 feet behind somebody’s hedge.

Well, what do some of the current signs tell us?

Let’s deal with the Chief Poobah position first: the lord mayor. (By the way, that title originated in 1925 when the then-mayor decided it sounded fancier.)



Current deputy mayor Erwin Wiens is a process guy. He’s a former career cop and has lived a rules-based life, now wanting to step up into the role Gary Zalepa is abandoning. His signage is simple, unadorned and has absolutely no message. Not even “elect me.” Count on this guy to sweep the rural areas.



Andrea Kaiser is also an elected person (regional councillor) trying for glory. But she’s conflicted with her intense work as a winery exec, speaker, personal-

ity and proprietor of her own wine label. The sign is bolder than Wiens’ (but you will note that Conservative blue is the couleur du jour this year) and “LORD MAYOR” jumps out. She wants it on her business card.



Vaughn Goettler, the retired HVAC entrepreneur and self-made man, goes for an edgy hip hue. The colour pops out better from lawns and ditches, plus this is the only one of the three offering a reason to vote — for a LM who’ll be a full-time politician.

Wiens runs a grape operation, after all. Kaiser’s busy, busy with her own stuff. No wonder Goettler signs are outnumbering the others by a wide margin. And he’s the urban guy. Where the votes are.



As for the 11 running for a seat on the six-member council, some have zero signage in place at the moment, so let’s hope they have big families and lots of friends. Of those with volunteers hammering in placards, a couple are worthy of mention. Not all

good, though. Like Steve McGuinness. He’s a good egg, a nerdy guy, stickler for policy details and likely to be elected. But his sign sucks.

The “Mc” disappears from a few feet away. The slogan, “Our Heritage. Our Future” is too small and too meaningless. And a QR code? Steve, bro, that’s for realtors.

Weston Miller, Andrew Niven, Gary Burroughs have all turned out b-o-r-i-n-g signage, merely reinforcing their names. Miller suffers the most here for lack of a message, since he’s running for office for the first time. No track record. But given what local leaders have done lately, maybe that’s a good thing.



Finally, the best. Sometimes a political sign has the potential to be a collector’s item. Maria Mavridis nails it. The only one with a picture, a message, bold graphics, a slogan and a visual link to her saucy social message persona.

By the way, many folks have asked who I’m voting for. I will let you know before the big day. That should be the end of my local newspaper career.

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

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

Lost necklace saga shows NOTL spirit

Dear editor:

On Monday evening, I lost a one-of-a-kind pearl necklace while walking along Gate Street. After my husband and I searched the street on Tuesday morning, we reached out to local restaurants and shops on Queen Street asking for help. I also spoke to a neighbour who suggested contacting the Tourist Information Centre, as it often functions as a “lost and found.”

I wrote to the local paper explaining that the pearls had been given to me by my birth mother and held tremendous sentimental value.

Meanwhile, Ron and Barb Zimmerman of Lakeside Pottery had found the necklace while walking on Gate Street Monday evening. Not sure where to take it, Barb thought to email the Tourist Information Centre on Tuesday morning to try to locate the owner.

Following my neighbour’s advice, I stopped in at the Tourist Information Centre late Tuesday afternoon to report it missing. I had barely begun telling my story when I was told, “I know who has your necklace.”

When Barb and I met, it felt as though we were instant friends.

Throughout the search, I encountered remarkable kindness from people at the restaurant, grocery store, Tourist Information Centre and neighbours we met along the way. The experience left us with a wonderful impression of the Niagara-on-the-Lake community.

Most heroic of all, of course, are the Zimmermans, whose pottery is soon to find its way into our home as an enduring reminder of their kindness.

Tammy Wiens
NOTL



Tammy Wiens, left, with Barb Zimmerman, who helped reunite Wiens with a one-of-a-kind pearl necklace she lost while walking on Gate Street. The pearls, a gift from Wiens’ birth mother, hold deep sentimental value. SUPPLIED

Real villain is the Ontario Land Tribunal

Dear editor:

We are heading into a municipal election with the pragmatic councillors being vilified for being pro-development and the pandering councillors wanting to fight any development proposal that does not fit the town’s secondary plan. Staff are likewise vilified for supporting most development proposals when the proposals go before council for final disposition.

I submit that the critics of the pragmatic councillors and of the town staff are identifying the wrong villain. The real villain is the Ontario Land Tribunal which is stacked with pro-development members.

The predecessor to the tribunal, the Ontario Municipal

Board, goes back into the 1930s. In its final years, the municipal board allowed 90 per cent of appeals brought by developers who had been denied permission by a local municipal council to go forward with a proposed development. Under the tribunal, the success rate for development appeals has jumped to 97 per cent.

Budgets are set annually by town council, which includes provision for legal services. Should council fight every development request, even though the success rate for councils defending their denial is unlikely to succeed?

To give one example, the legal fees to defend the development proposal for the Rand Estate cost the town in

excess of \$3,000,000 (a sum spread over a number of financial years and was one likely to support the town’s denial).

In an era of complaints about rising taxes, can we really support giving financial support for cases that the town is likely to lose?

The pragmatic five councillors and the town staff realize that you have to pick your battles spending tax dollars for the few cases where winning before the tribunal is likely to succeed.

A number of years ago, the town lost an appeal relating to a local winery before the Ontario Municipal Board. The winery had offered to settle after negotiating certain concessions with residents adjacent to

the winery. The town turned the offer down.

In allowing the appeal, the municipal board’s decision indicated that it did not have jurisdiction to include the concessions. Thus, the local residents were worse off.

One of the pandering councillors who is running again in the upcoming election indicated that sometimes you have to fight on principle. My response is, “Use your own dime.”

So the question that all who are seeking election should be, “How much are you prepared to spend annually on legal fees and how willing will you be to fund lost causes before the Ontario Land Tribunal?”

Ron Fritz
Queenston

We need rookie politicians to shake things up

Dear editor:

I hope I’m not the only one put off by Mr. Slingerland’s dismissal of rookie politicians (“NOTL voters lay out priorities,” Sept. 10).

“Veteran councillors with working relations” implies

an old boys’ club — a club found in all levels of politics and whose members I term “elected addicts.”

What you know can, and should be, more important than who you know.

The power of ideas and

force of personality is needed to break through the stratification and cynicism that can set in among “veteran” politicians returning to office time and time again.

I disagree with Mr. Slingerland’s characterization of political newcomers and suggest that, if anything, term limits in municipal politics would be more constructive.

George Herman
NOTL



This week’s riddle is “Jeopardy!” style
Category: WORDS FOR CITY FOLK

A Yinzer is a person from this U.S. city located at the confluence of three rivers.

Last issue category: A STONE QUARRY
Clue: These “stones” used as ballast by ships arriving in 18th c. Savannah were used to pave charming and bumpy streets.
Answer: What are cobblestones?
Answered first by: Bob Wheatley
Also answered correctly (in order) by: Rob Hutchison, Jeff Lake, Margaret Garaughty, Nancy Rocca, Howard Jones, Gary Davis, Jim Dandy, Donna Pearce, Wade Durling, Hugh Lundy, Sheila Meloche, Ana Petrunic, Lynda Collet
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Change, or status quo: Notes from the mayoral debate



Brian Marshall
Columnist

Monday evening there was a full crowd of over 400 Niagara-on-the-Lake residents gathered in the Crossroads school's gym to listen as the three candidates for lord mayor responded to a series of questions posed to them by the Niagara-on-the-Lake Residents Association.

These questions were drawn from the input of residents to the association and offered the opportunity for each of the candidates — Vaughn Goettler, Andrea Kaiser and Erwin Wiens — to provide voters with a snapshot of how they would approach the job of Niagara-on-the-Lake's lord mayor.

From the onset of the forum, there was one thing that was crystal clear: two of these candidates — Kaiser, with two terms on town council and one term on

regional council, and Wiens, with two terms on town council (fulfilling the role of deputy mayor in the second term) — accepted their perceived understanding of the limitations imposed by the status quo processes of municipal government while Goettler as the third candidate, carries no baggage vis-à-vis how it has been done and is prepared to envision how it could be done better.

In short, we have two candidates who, should they become lord mayor, will support and perpetuate the current system and one candidate who is willing to take what we've got and work toward something different.

So, how important is experience in municipal politics?

Mr. Wiens claims that municipal finance and accounting is more complicated than its corporate equivalent and that regional amalgamation remains an immediate threat — both requiring experience to ensure that, on the one hand, good fiscal management is maintained while, on the other hand, the threat is staved off.

Certainly the Ford government could resurrect its amalgamation agenda but one wonders: why they would bother?



Andrea Kaiser and Erwin Wiens accept the limitations of municipal government, while Vaughn Goettler wants better, writes Brian Marshall. PAIGE SEBURN

The provincial government's restructuring of the regional council has effectively delivered very similar results to amalgamation by placing voting control in the hands of the three large city mayors and bestowing the equivalent of strong mayor powers on an appointed regional chair beholden to Ford.

Further, it is a solution with less political blowback, since local councils remain to give voters some level of voice in their municipality.

As to the issue of municipal finance complexity, one is not more "complex" than the other, however they do follow different accounting standards.

Government accounting follows the Public Sector Accounting Standards with an intended focus on accountability, transparency, and compliance with public

budgets and laws.

Corporate accounting follows International Financial Reporting Standards for publicly accountable enterprises or Accounting Standards for Private Enterprises and focuses on measuring profit, financial performance and return on investment for shareholders and investors.

Still, while the financial reports are different, the fundamental principles of budgeting and measuring income versus expenses remain consistent and any one with a reasonable level of financial management experience can read and understand both.

As a final note on this front, Mark Carney seems to have settled very comfortably into the role of prime minister without ever holding an elected office in parliament.

Returning to a few of the posed questions, when asked to provide three criteria for assessing development applications, Kaiser remarked that she would follow comprehensive zoning bylaws, consider residents' quality of life and protection of agricultural lands.

Wiens suggested that the new official plan details would be followed and utilized to put "guard rails"

in place while focusing on pushing development to Glendale, since space in the other settlements has largely been exhausted.

Goettler's number one criteria would be assessing whether the proposed development "fit" within the existing neighbourhood or streetscape, then whether or not the present infrastructure could handle it and concluded with was it "best" for residents.

The candidates were asked how many hours per week they were prepared to put in to fulfil the duties of lord mayor.

Wiens replied that it was all about getting the job done; something that could not be captured by specifying a certain number of hours per week.

Goettler committed to "at least" 40 hours per week but also suggested to more if that's what was required.

Kaiser suggested that she might commit 60 or 70 hours each week fulfilling the role.

All the candidates observed that collaboration with council members and staff would be extremely important.

On the issue of transparency, Wiens claims that all the information related to town governance is currently published and openly

accessible.

Kaiser suggests that she would hold more public open houses to obtain voter input on important issues but failed to speak more fully to general transparency.

Goettler had already stated that his policy direction and decisions would be driven by the input of residents however, he suggested that clear communication would be key to that undertaking using the example of regularly publishing a simplified financial statement to keep voters informed.

Speaking to strong mayor powers, Goettler stated that they were an affront to democracy and he will not use them. Wiens remarked that the granted powers were a "tool in the toolbox" and had a place to be used under certain circumstances. Kaiser, while suggesting she was uncomfortable with them, did not rule out their use.

As to the other questions and answers, you will be able to find them on the NOLTRA website shortly and I strongly recommend you access them.

Be informed, make your decision and vote.

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



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ROSS'S RAMBLINGS

Ross Robinson
Columnist

This is definitely not a competition with Terry Fox and the Marathon of Hope. Just a weekly Rambling that will hopefully remind us of an epic Canadian event from the 1980s.

Rick Hansen had been paralyzed in a car crash when he was only 15 years old. The years have gone by, and if he had been bilingual English/French, he just might have been the Governor General of Canada. What a life to reflect upon.

His Man in Motion World Tour took him to 34 countries, travelling over 40,075 kilometres on his wheelchair. He wheeled some eight hours each day, about 85 kilometres.

Two years and one day start to finish, and the 40th anniversary is this year. Now, a new documentary film about his life, "Man in Motion: The Rick Hansen Story," is out, making its debut at the Toronto International Film Festival.

Rick was the founder of the Rick Hansen Foundation, after being galvanized by his British Columbia pal Terry Fox. To summarize, his goal has been to eliminate accessibility barriers and transform the public perception of people with



Rick Hansen. SOURCED

disabilities. For one living proof of the result, just look at several store fronts on Queen Street in downtown NOTL, and their stop-gap access ramps.

Now, I ask you to take an impossibly big step out of your comfort zones, and imagine living life without being able to walk normally and navigate stairs. It's impossible, but just try think about it.

Let's narrow this imagination exercise down to the NEOB Lavender shop. They designed their store with sufficient floor space to accommodate shoppers in wheelchairs, or using canes, walkers or other mobility devices. At many other local shops, people with disabilities must wait outside, in all types of weather.

This rambling is not meant to be pedantic, and I simply hope we will be encouraged to open our eyes a bit wider, and imagine life without full mobility. As the song says, "Imagine."

Going for a walk downtown, or to a concert or restaurant? Are the washrooms, a.k.a. toilets, accessible? Are there stairs or other challenges?

Just think of the planning that folks with special needs must do, and join me in being shut out of many activities due to limited bladder capacity. Well, isn't this just an off-the-wall

Ross's Rambling?

I will now attempt to localize and personalize this story about the Man in Motion, Rick Hansen. How lucky was I to spend just over a week with him at the Honolulu Marathon in December 1986.

Due to fortuitous circumstances and our mutual friend, Canadian Wheelchair Marathon champion Mel Fitzgerald from Newfoundland, Rick became part of our group. Great fun, and even way back then, Rick was a committed, driven person.

Wow, I am rambling out of control this week. I will finish up soon.

Later that year, the Man in Motion World Tour came through St. Catharines. A few running friends and I worked with his team to organize his Niagara Peninsula logistics. I clearly remember his 30-minute stop in front of city hall on Church Street and how he enthusiastically handled then-mayor Joe McCaffery. Then, wheeling along Glenridge Avenue and past my old high school, Sir Winston Churchill.

The excitement, Rick's focus and friendliness and endurance. And the number of cheques (remember those things?) and the total amount of donations we counted up during our lunch stop at the Pen Centre.

The stop-gap ramps have made a difference here in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Please, dear readers, let us encourage our town, our very pretty corner of the world, to do more in the area of accessibility.

Just imagine.

rossrocket9@gmail.com

Royal George rebuild investments a ringing endorsement of NOTL



Wayne Gates
Special to The Lake Report

On Thursday, Sept. 10, the federal government announced they are investing \$25 million into rebuilding the Royal George Theatre. That is on top of the \$35 million the provincial government announced a year ago.

Securing funding for this rebuild has been a top priority for me and for community members who understand the value of the Royal George Theatre, and I can tell you that this new funding shows how strong our community is when we come together.

The Shaw brings about 350,000 people to its shows annually, generating almost \$300 million for our community. For every dollar spent on a ticket, about \$7 is spent at local businesses like our wineries, shops, hotels and more. The Shaw is important, and both the provincial and federal governments recognize the value in investing in the Royal George rebuild, which will make it a world-class theatre.

Niagara-on-the-Lake is a special place that is long overdue for the significant investment that we deserve. Niagara-on-the-Lake has unmatched natural beauty, grape and tender fruit agriculture, arts, culture and heritage.

That means our hard work and advocacy for the Shaw is paying off.



Politicians, donors and Shaw executives are all smiles after announcing a \$25 million investment from the federal government and a \$10 million donation. PAIGE SEBURN

We have to be clear with every level of government — arts and culture are important and they need government support to thrive. Arts, culture and heritage bring people to Niagara-on-the-Lake, but that doesn't happen by accident.

That's why I've worked with officials at every level of government and across party lines. That's what it takes to get investment in our communities.

This rebuild project will create 850 jobs and increase local economic activity in Niagara by \$80 million per year. This funding is going to help sustain our local economy and businesses in the coming years.

As a community, we also need to acknowledge Tim Jennings and his incredible crew of 600 people. They are the people who make the Shaw Festival and the Royal George Theatre what they are.

I've had the pleasure of working with Tim and his team to promote the Shaw and Niagara-on-the-Lake to the provincial government. None of this would be possible without their hard work and dedication.

We have to be deliberate about funding the arts. The same goes for protecting our natural environment and

historical legacy. That's why I've advocated for funding for the Royal George rebuild and fought to stop the development on the Greenbelt. On both counts, our community has succeeded because we spoke with one voice.

It's not just about supporting the arts — it's about upholding the character of our community while we help support local industry. Niagara-on-the-Lake has rich local history, incredible natural beauty, and a robust local economy that is getting stronger every day.

We must keep protecting the elements that make our community great. I will always be vocal in my support for Niagara-on-the-Lake and our local arts and tourism sector.

These funding announcements show us that our hard work has put Niagara-on-the-Lake on the map. This critical funding only comes as a result of working collaboratively with community members and local organizations to show decision makers that Niagara-on-the-Lake is a worthwhile investment. This is a ringing endorsement of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Wayne Gates is the member of provincial parliament for the Niagara Falls riding.

Election needs a historic turnout to restore civic accountability

Dear editor:

There is a clear, historical pattern in Niagara-on-the-Lake: when residents are satisfied with the town's direction, voter turnout drops. Unfortunately, when we become complacent, we pay a heavy price. Tracing our recent municipal timeline reveals exactly how we arrived at our current situation.

In 2018, the community experienced a collective wake-up call. Disappointed with a lack of transparency and a perception of backroom politics, residents turned out in historic num-

bers. A robust 58 per cent voter turnout (8,304 ballots cast) swept in a new council led by Betty Disero.

This ushered in the "comfortable pew" era from 2018 to 2022. Under that leadership, municipal affairs ran smoothly, residents felt protected from out-of-scale development and general satisfaction was high. However, security bred complacency.

Believing our town's character was secure, more than half of the electorate sat out the 2022 municipal election. Turnout plummeted to under 48 per cent (only 7,644 ballots cast). This drop-off

allowed a specific, tightly aligned group of politicians to take complete control of town chambers.

Between 2024 and 2026, we saw a distinct return to secrecy and block voting, effectively shutting out public input while greenlighting rapid developments. Here is just a few of what this low turnout cost us:

Soaring property taxes: Residents faced a massive 6.75 per cent town property tax increase in 2024, immediately following an 8.39 per cent hike in 2023, driven primarily by internal hiring and expanding payrolls.

The \$1-million closed-door settlement: Council signed off on a \$1,000,000 legal settlement to developer Rainer Hummel behind closed doors to resolve municipal blunders, without an open court ever ordering that price.

The Heritage Trail right-of-way: Council secretly voted to hand over a right-of-way to a private mega-developer directly across the Upper Canada Heritage Trail — a space residents spent their own money and volunteer hours restoring. Council only relented after furious public outcry.

The administrative gag order: Strict directives were issued to block staff from answering public information requests from any resident suspected of using municipal data for critical commentary or advocacy.

Now, we are fully immersed in the 2026 election cycle, and the comfortable pew has been completely smashed. The soaring taxes, corporate-style gag orders and aggressive development approvals have proven that we cannot afford to stay home.

We do not just need a casual showing at the polls

this year; we need a historic turnout to restore civic accountability. NOTL requires leadership that is strictly detached from legacy decisions, completely independent of corporate conflicts and fully committed to protecting tax dollars and infrastructure.

I urge every resident to attend the upcoming candidate debates across our local villages and bring tough questions. It is time to leave complacency behind and vote for a full-time, independent council.

Judith Barnes
NOTL



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We need **bold, new ideas** to keep NOTL livable

Dear editor:
“It’s Disneyland minus the admission fee out here” my friend mutters as we return from our morning walk, dodging both tourists and cars streaming into Old Town.

She’s not wrong. Every time a tourist drives on town roads, uses a park or public washroom, leaves garbage in a bin, brings a child to the wading pool, admires the flowers on Queen Street or books an unhosted short-term rental, there is a cost associated with the action — because town staff are behind the scenes, ensuring that these services are carried out in a well-ordered and tidy fashion.

Tourism provides a huge economic benefit for this town (over \$421 million in annual revenue from domestic tourists, according to the Town of NOTL’s website), but as a resident, there is a pressing need to focus on both maintaining and updating our infrastructure, implementing climate adaptation strategies and providing services to a growing population.

New sources of funding must be identified to pay for these items. Ask anyone who lives here — there is no appetite for tax increases. So, where will the money come from?

I searched the town website after the latest round of flooding, and read the climate strategy document titled “Niagara-on-the-Lake Climate Change Adaption Plan” (2022). “Appendix E – Impementation Schedule” of the report was where the rubber hit the road, but unfortunately, many of the actions listed mention lack of funding and/or lack of resources as impediments.

My understanding is that only six of the 27 climate change adaptation initiatives have been completed so far (according to a town report from Feb. 26), and there is no recommended “Green Team” that has been created.

This is disheartening — if our basic infrastructure is overwhelmed during climate events (which seem to happening on a more regular basis), how does Niagara-on-the-Lake remain a viable place to live, never mind a desirable place to visit?

It is now time to change the “Disneyland minus the admission fee” paradigm.



Thousands of visitors descend onto Queen Street every summer during tourist season. Ruth Denyer says the town’s missing an opportunity to make more money from this flow of traffic — such as implementing paid parking for every street within walking distance of the downtown core — and put it toward what locals need. FILE

Sixteen-thousand tourists descended on the Peach Festival this year, and there are 3.5 million tourist visits annually. During high season, cars are parked up and down the streets of Old Town, and many of these spots are not metered.

We are missing an opportunity — what if we made every street within walkable distance of the downtown-core paid parking for tourists? At least for the high season.

And what if we took the parking money, along with other initiatives, such as charging commercial taxes on unhosted short-term rentals, and put any savings towards the implementation of the action items from the serving the needs of our residents?

Yes, someone will always find a reason why any of these suggestions for new sources of funding won’t work, but let’s put on our thinking caps, come up with new ideas and act boldly.

Could we implement a system of staff parking permits for downtown businesses? Or a certain number of guest passes for those looking to host a gathering or have maintenance done on their house and who live within the downtown core? What do they do now?

If you live downtown, tourists take up the free spots already — maybe these residents would be better off with a permitting system. Perhaps a satellite parking system where visitor parking spots in town are “crème de la crème” expensive, and cheaper parking is available on the outskirts of town with a shuttle dropping off our visitors in Old Town or at wineries.

Maybe this strategy would attract the elusive “quality tourist” that we keep hoping to court. Surely there must be some sort of solution we can work out.

Parking fees are lucrative and generate many

dollars with little upfront investment (that is, if the choice is made to forego the proposed \$19-million parking garage on the old hospital site — indeed, parking must be very lucrative if it can generate the funds to pay off that kind of investment), and by increasing the number of paid spaces, we should be able to generate a substantial amount of cash.

And to those who say that any new fees will keep tourists from visiting, I invite you to look at a place close to home and see how they did it: Crystal Beach, Ont.

Tourists pay an admission fee to enter the beach during peak hours — the beach is at capacity most of the summer. Fort Erie realized there was a cost to tourism and implemented fees to pay for it. We need to do likewise.

The time has come to put the needs of the residents first. We need some fresh ideas on the topic of how we will pay for both infrastructure replacement and maintenance, services for a growing population and, most importantly, to implement the measures recommended in the town’s own climate change report.

Given my choice, the priority must be on adopting climate adaption and mitigation strategies first. We know that climate change isn’t just coming — it’s here and it’s now baked into the system.

The “super” El Niño building power this fall is promising to turn the summer of 2027 into one of the hottest ever, with both record droughts and flooding possible.

This is an election year: ask your candidate what ideas they have for new sources of funding so Niagara-on-the-Lake can continue to be a viable place to live — and visit.

Ruth Denyer
NOTL



Mozart & Mystique: An evening of elegance

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

Some experiences are too special to happen only once.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Because on Oct. 2, it's not just a concert — it's an experience. Reserve your seat today at niagarasymphony.com.



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



Mozart Mystique

Niagara-on-the-Lake
Special Event!

nsO

Friday, October 2
5:30 PM
St. Mark's Church

Followed by a
Garden Party and
LIVE Auction



Oboe Soloist:
Ari Cohen Mann

Regular Tickets

\$150

Includes:

- Regular concert seating
- Garden party food and beverage

Visit niagarasymphony.com to purchase regular tickets

VIP Tickets

\$1,000

Includes:

- Two VIP Garden Party tickets with reserved seating at the front of the church, food and beverage
- Recognition in the concert program.
- \$500 charitable tax receipt.

For VIP tickets, visit niagarasymphony.com or email terry@niagarasymphony.com

Have some fun

- Across
9. Playwright (9)

10. Moor (3,2)

11. Space surrounding an altar (7)

12. Quickly (7)

13. Runner (9)

14. Cougar (4)

18. Distinct sort or kind (7)

20. Surgical knife (7)

21. A great deal (4)

22. Herald (9)

26. Hedge (7)

28. Books of maps (7)

29. Young hooter (5)

30. Abbreviated (9)
- Down
1. Decree (5)

2. Executives (10)

3. Biting (9)

4 Fiddle (6)

5. Old liners (8)

6. The Roman Empire's home country (5)

7. Large mass of floating ice (4)

8. As thumbs are (9)

15. Disagreeable (10)

16. Psalter (5,4)

17. Moon (9)

19. Astonishment (8)

23. Lea (6)

24. Threescore (5)

25. Stage whisper (5)

27. Depend (4)

Crossword Puzzle

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Last issue's answers

1 S P A R S E L Y 5 S H R I M P

2 M P A B I N R

3 U P P O R T E R 11 P A B L O

4 H H T I A S O N

5 L I S T E N I N G 13 E X P O

6 A B E D H U

7 G R I N D E R 17 N I E L S E N

8 G A O 20 H O E A O C

9 R U N A W A Y 22 W E L F A R E

10 E L T P S

11 S A L E 25 C H I L D H O O D

12 S A A M Y I P H

13 I D Y L L 30 I N C L E M E N T

14 O U O C R S R M

15 N A P L E S 32 F A S T B A L L

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7 1

9 5 2

1 2 5

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3 5 4

6 2 3

7 8

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Dr. Kahkewaquonaby

Kahkewaquonaby (Dr. Peter Edmund Jones) is believed to have been the first licensed First Nations doctor in British North America. He earned his medical degree from Queen's University in 1866 and went on to practise medicine in Brantford, right here in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and eventually New York City. Later in life, Jones became chief of the Mississaugas of the New Credit and advocated for First Nations rights. His letters and political work show him pushing for greater control over First Nations affairs and the protection of Indigenous rights. There is an unexpected connection to Canada's history of residential schools in his family story. His father, who was a Methodist minister, raised funds in England to help build a school for Indigenous people that later became one of the first residential schools in Canada. Dr. Jones achieved something remarkable in becoming a doctor at a time when few Indigenous people had access to higher education. In the generations that followed, residential schools denied countless Indigenous children the education and opportunities that Jones had been able to pursue.



Check out this 19th-century Queenston estate and learn about the School of Restoration Arts at its open house on Saturday. FILE/DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Willowbank to celebrate 20th anniversary Saturday

Julia Sacco
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Once home to prominent Upper Canada couple Alexander Hamilton and his wife, Hannah Jarvis, the Willowbank School of Restoration Arts has had many lives since the structure was built in 1834.

Twenty years ago, the Queenston heritage property began its newest journey as a place for students to learn

about heritage preservation and the restoration of buildings and heritage sites.

To celebrate its 20th anniversary, Willowbank will host a free community event Saturday, Sept. 19, from 1 to 5 p.m. The event will feature heritage demonstrations, an artisan market, activities for children and tours of the school's Indigenous Love Garden, where sacred medicines — tobacco, cedar, sage and sweetgrass — are grown.

From 6 to 9 p.m., the Woodshed Orchestra will perform a ticketed mixed-genre set. Tickets cost \$20.

Proceeds from the celebration will go toward the school's restoration of the historic manor house, allowing safe access to the third floor.

Willowbank is looking to raise up to \$193,000 for the project, an amount that Parks Canada has pledged to match.

juliasacco@niagaranow.com

Helping seniors find joy, purpose and connection

Emerging research – and the lived experience of older adults themselves – points to a powerful truth: the later chapters of life are not defined by limitation or preservation, but by possibility.

Join us at The Shaw for a wide variety of Positive Aging programming this fall.

Improv for Nimble Minds

Fall Sessions: Sept 30 | Oct 7, 14, 21

Improve your cognitive agility and stay present in the moment with this fun and engaging class. Participants will explore the art of improvisational theatre and strengthen their brains. \$10 per class.

Zest, Zing & Oomph! A Scene Study

Sept 30 | Oct 7, 14, 21, 28 | Nov 4, 11, 18

The scene study experience offers a wonderful opportunity to stay mentally active, connect with others and express oneself, fostering joy, creativity and a sense of fulfilment on the stage and in this stage of life. The workshop will culminate in an invited presentation on November 18. \$160.

Actors' Secrets Revealed

Session 1: Oct 1, 8, 15, 22 | Session 2: Nov 5, 12, 19, 26

Join us for this series where actors reveal how they learn all those lines. Memorization is a healthy way to exercise your brain. Each session takes you through the techniques that actors at The Shaw use in their daily practice to prepare. You'll have friends asking, "How do you learn all those lines?" Strengthen your brain and boost your confidence. Perfect for theatre lovers, lifelong learners and anyone who is aiming to support their cognitive health. \$40 per session.

Conf-Dance!

Oct 2, 9, 16, 23 | Nov 6, 13, 20, 27

This progressive four-week session is a playful intro to the basics of different dance forms that you have seen on the Festival stage. Build physical strength and improve your balance through technique and even a bit of choreography! \$10 per class.

Age-Friendly Nature Walk – Older Adults

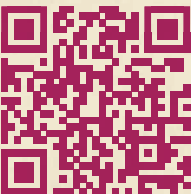
October 10

Healthy for the mind and the body! Led by conservationist Owen Bjorgan, this immersive walk invites participants to explore the beauty of Paradise Grove's historic oak canopy and the Niagara River. \$10.

Age-Friendly Nature Walk – Intergenerational

October 17

A special opportunity for older adults to bring young adventurers on an expedition through Paradise Grove, led by conservationist Owen Bjorgan. Adventurers will be provided with a magnifying glass and scavenger hunt to spark curiosity and connection across generations. \$10.



Plus, so much more. To discover more about Positive Aging experiences visit shawfest.com/positiveaging or email education@shawfest.com

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Funds raised will benefit Rotary Community & International Projects.

Cocktail Attire. Rain or shine event.
Large tent and covered areas.

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Obituaries

Anne Enns



ENNS, Anne Marie — Anne Marie Enns passed away on Sept. 8 at her home at Pleasant Manor at the age of 91. Anne Marie was born on July 4, 1935 in Deutsch Kasun (Poland) and immigrated to Niagara-on-the-Lake in 1950 after the upheaval of the second world war. She married Jake Enns on Jan. 23, 1954.

Anne Marie’s life revolved around her family and her church community. She was the ultimate hostess and was always cooking and baking. The parties she and Jake hosted were legendary. Her greatest joy was making Monday night dinners for her family, which she did for over 25 years. She was active in the Women in Service and was in charge of the kitchen at the church. She was elected as the first female church council chairperson. She served as a liaison to the Pleasant Manor Board for many years. In 1971 she and Jake opened Enns Battery and Tire. Although she had no formal training, she learned to do the bookkeeping and was the driving force behind the success of that business. In their retirement she and Jake enjoyed winters in Florida and summers up north. She also spent a lot of time in her beautiful gardens which gave her great satisfaction. She accepted her failing health with strength and grace and leaves us with cherished memories to treasure. She is predeceased by her beloved husband Jake (2012). Dear mother of Victor (Joyce) Enns, Rudy (Dorothea Wiens) Enns, Rita (George) Pauls, and Karen Enns. Cherished grandmother of Megan (Don) Robinson, Robin (Ron Visser) Enns, Mark (Cheryl Hando) Enns, Emily (Kyle Van Ginneken) Enns, Jeremy (Katherine) Enns, Julieanne (Stephanie Domanico) Enns, Kyle (Juliana) Pauls and Kristen Pauls. Great grandmother of Nathaniel, Grace, Isla, Gemma, Spirit, Arthur, Phoebe, Darin and Liam. The Funeral Service took place on Friday, Sept. 11 at 11 a.m. at Niagara United Mennonite Church (1775 Niagara Stone Rd., Niagara-on-the-Lake) Visitation began at 10 a.m. and luncheon followed the service. Interment took place at Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery. Memorial donations to Radiant Care Pleasant Manor would be appreciated by the family.

Brian Boucher



BOUCHER, Brian Gene — Brian Gene Boucher passed away on August 19, 2026, at 70. Raised in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Brian was a husband, father, aviator, firefighter and educator. During his 29-year career with Air Canada and aviation work around the world, he shared

his knowledge and experience. He loved hockey, his pets, working with his hands and the French River cottage he built. Brian is survived by his wife of 40 years, Jean; his daughter, Mallory, and her partner, John-Daniel; and his siblings, Mark and Rita. Celebrate Brian’s life Sept. 26 from 1 to 4 p.m. at Fire Station 4, 5 Dumfries St., Queenston.

Ann Meuris



MEURIS, Ann Emily — The Meuris family sadly announces the quiet & peaceful passing of Ann Meuris (Née Ujvari) on Sept 9th, 2026. She is predeceased by her proud Hungarian parents, Béla & Roza Ujvari. Loving wife and travel companion to John for 46 years. Mother to Jeremy

(Jess) Meuris and Jessica (Nick) Everets. Older sister to Diana (John) Uyen. Beloved “Ada” (grandmother) to Jaclyne & Ally Everets. Ann was small in stature but big in personality. She will be incredibly missed and her absence leaves an unfathomable hole in the lives of all those who knew and loved her. Condolences may be left at: www.circleoflifecbc.com

For obituary and memorial inquiries, please contact megan@niagaranow.com.

Polo takes over Commons for a day of fundraising and fun

Continued from Front Page

“It allows us to have a fundraiser that supports the museum and everything it does, using history at the core,” she said. Kim Tsoi, a player on the VRG Capital team, was named Most Valuable Player after the first match. Tsoi, an orthopedic oncologist in Toronto, began playing polo about 10 years ago. This year marked her first Niagara Polo appearance. “It was an amazing event,” she told The Lake Report. “It’s a really nice way to showcase the sport that we all really love to play.” For Tsoi, polo complements her work as a surgeon and provides a way to relieve stress.



The Yoxall family shows up in style to the NOTL polo jamboree: adorned in their best late-summer attire and rocking their fanciest hats, they take in the scenery at the Commons in this vintage ride (featured in the event’s car show). DAVE VAN DE LAAR

“It makes me better at my job to be honest, just to step away and spend that time with the horses,” she said. Tsoi said people love polo for a number of

reasons, but part of what makes the sport special is the relationship between player and horse. “Having that partnership with an animal is an amaz-

ing feeling,” she said. For some guests, the polo match was an opportunity to dress the part. Mandi Gould, the Shaw Festival’s associate of cor-

porate sponsorships, came dressed in red and white vintage wear. “Every day is Canada Day,” Gould told The Lake Report. Her outfit consisted of vintage reproduction pieces and a hat from Beau Chapeau on Queen Street. Gould told The Lake Report she regularly dresses in vintage clothing, but put together a unique outfit for the occasion. The polo match featured a best hat contest, which encouraged attendees to get creative with their head-pieces. Tracy Scott travelled to NOTL from Vancouver for the match and brought eye-catching headwear with her. The hat consisted of a headband decorated with real peacock feathers, which

Scott attached herself. “My daughter works at an alpaca farm rescue so she gave me those,” she said. Scott said she was able to put the piece together the day before. Ann Jaanus of Stevensville said the secret to her floral hat was an expert use of zip ties. Jaanus used a Dollarama Halloween hat as the base, weaving different Dollarama flowers and garland through it. “Go big or go home,” she said. Whether attendees came to watch the game, admire the historic fashions or enjoy the halftime entertainment, all funds raised went toward the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum’s operations. juliasacco@niagaranow.com

PHOTO GALLERY

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