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Canada's most-awarded community newspaper

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Ontario minister of natural resources Mike Harris Jr.

\$83K for Niagara's fight against invasive phragmites

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The reed grasses growing behind Ontario's natural resources minister at Niagara College's campus in Niagara-on-the-Lake were a ready-made backdrop for his announcement Wednesday: \$5 million to fight the invasive plant species phragmites across Ontario.

Of the \$5 million, \$83,000 will support projects meant to combat phragmites led by partners in the Niagara Phragmites Management Area Collaborative, including the town of NOTL, Niagara College, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, Niagara Region and the City of Niagara Falls.

The conservation authority said it will receive \$15,000 for its own projects and another \$10,000 to lead the collaborative. It did not say how the remaining \$58,000 will be allocated,

Continued on Page 3

Two 'fore' The Show

St. Davids teens Eli Perng and Kaige Zhu are already competing with Canada's top juniors as they set their sights on U.S. college golf — and maybe someday the pros

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

What are the chances?
Two of the most talented, up-and-coming young Canadian golfers are growing up in Niagara-on-the-Lake's tiny hamlet of St. Davids (pop. about 3,000).

Eli Perng and Kaige Zhu attended elementary school together, often competed together and, to top it off, they are great friends and neighbours. They're also smart, engaging and well-spoken beyond their 14 years.

Now they're off to high school after a whirlwind summer in which they played more than a dozen high-level tournaments across Canada and North America.

The dynamic duo graduated from St. Davids Public School in June and this month started Grade 9 at different high schools — Zhu at A.N. Myer in Niagara Falls and Perng at St. Francis in St. Catharines.



Continued on Page 13 They're just 14 but Eli Perng and Kaige Zhu of St. Davids show a maturity beyond their years and are two of Canada's best young golf prospects. CORINNE BOSCH

Sewage-hit resident interrupts St. Davids debate



St. Davids resident Reginald Huggins demands answers from municipal candidates during Wednesday's debate. PAIGE SEBURN

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

A St. Davids resident who stopped a Niagara-on-the-Lake all-candidates debate Wednesday to demand action on sewage backing into homes said not one candidate on stage had earned his vote.

"To be honest with you, there

is nobody up there that would get my vote," said Reginald Huggins, the resident, in an interview with The Lake Report the next day.

Huggins stood up at the St. Davids Lions Club after the moderator announced the start of closing remarks. His question had not been selected and he was not willing to let the evening end without answers.

"Everybody here is getting backwater systems into their houses and no one's telling us what the hell anybody's going to do about it," he said at the debate. "We've got insurance we got to worry about. We've got health we got to worry about. And no one here seems to care about it."

Continued on Page 5

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Scotsman Hotel avoids \$303K parking bill with valet plan

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The Scotsman Hotel has avoided an almost \$303,000 parking bill after Niagara-on-the-Lake council approved a plan allowing all 12 required parking spaces to fit on the Old Town property.

Council also finalized planning changes Tuesday night that reclassify the six-suite establishment at 95 Johnson St. from a country inn to a hotel and allow it to serve food and alcohol in its lounge and courtyard.

The Scotsman's former country inn designation allowed overnight accommodation and breakfast for guests, but not the broader hospitality area its owners were seeking.

"One of the key issues that the applicant ran into with this proposal was the inability to add hospitality space to a country inn," said Aimee Alderman, the town's director of planning, building and development services, during last week's meeting.

Council has redesignated the property from residential to a tightly restricted



Blair McArthur, co-owner of the Scotsman Hotel, tells councillors a proposed \$302,864 parking charge would be a major hurdle for the six-suite inn as it seeks approval to add a hospitality area. PAIGE SEBURN

commercial designation and rezoned it to allow the hospitality area. Commercial cooking equipment will not be permitted.

The main unresolved issue was parking.

The property has eight spaces. Staff determined the hotel, hospitality area and residential unit would normally require 14, but agreed to reduce that to 12.

That still left it four spaces short under the original layout, requiring a \$302,864 cash-in-lieu payment at the town's 2026 rate of \$75,716 per space.

"This seems like a significant hurdle for the Scots-

man to overcome, considering there's only six suites," said Blair McArthur, who owns the inn with his wife, Brenda.

McArthur also pointed to a parking study — requested by the town and paid for by the Scotsman — conducted during peak periods.

"The daily parking demand did not exceed the total supply of parking spaces available," he said.

Planner Dana Anderson of MHBC Planning, representing the owners, also argued the requirement was excessive.

"We respectfully do not see the need for the five

additional parking spaces specific for the hospitality area," Anderson said.

Rather than approve the \$302,864 payment last week, councillors sent the issue back to staff.

Staff returned Tuesday with two options: require eight spaces and charge for the remaining four, or fit all 12 spaces on-site using a dedicated valet service.

Under the valet arrangement, some vehicles can leave only after others are moved.

"For example, a vehicle parked in space 10 could exit only if vehicles occupying spaces 11 and 12 were moved first," the staff report says.

Staff recommended the cash-in-lieu option in its written report because it would provide conventional parking without relying on an ongoing valet operation. But Alderman told council both options were acceptable.

Coun. Wendy Cheropita moved to approve the valet option, seconded by Coun. Tim Balasiuk.

Cheropita called it a "very good solution."

Coun. Andrew Niven

questioned what would happen if the valet service were discontinued.

Alderman said the town can require it through the site plan approval agreement and enter into additional agreements if needed.

Council approved the valet option, eliminating the four-space cash-in-lieu charge.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor supported the parking solution but remained opposed to redesignating the property commercial.

Council then passed the official plan amendment and zoning bylaw, finalizing the planning changes.

The owners had previously proposed using four leased spaces at 129 Johnson St., but staff did not support relying on parking on a residential property and said there was no way to ensure the spaces remained available permanently.

No new rooms, additions or other physical expansion were proposed.

"The function of the site is going to continue to remain, essentially, as is," Alderman said last week.

Niven questioned why the

new use should trigger a larger parking requirement.

"There's no increased guest count and there's no expansion of the existing property," he said.

Alderman said the difference was the hospitality area.

O'Connor also questioned whether changing the property from residential to commercial conflicted with the town's goal of preventing commercial uses from creeping into residential neighbourhoods.

Alderman said staff deliberately narrowed the new permissions to a hotel, hospitality area, residential unit and accessory buildings and structures.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa rejected the idea that the change amounted to typical commercial expansion into a neighbourhood.

"This is not an intrusion of commercial into residential zones," he said. "This is an enhancement of guest services."

Zalepa had moved last week to send the parking issue back to staff, leading to the valet proposal council approved Tuesday night.

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Angel patio **allowed to reopen** for two years

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The Olde Angel Inn's patio could get two more years to solve a property problem — but if the restaurant and patio properties can't be merged, it will have to go for good.

Niagara-on-the-Lake councillors backed a bylaw on Tuesday that would let the existing 210-square-metre patio at 226 Regent St. reopen, after it had to close last December, and keep operating for up to two years.

"In order to move forward with getting the patio in place for next year, we need to put the temporary use bylaw in place," said planner Mary Lou Tanner of NPG Planning Solutions last Tuesday, speaking on behalf of the applicant.

The restaurant operates next-door at 224 Regent St., while the patio space sits on a separate legal property. Opened in 2020 during the pandemic as part of the town's temporary patio program, it had to close at the end of last year after the town decided not to renew the program for this year.

All the other temporary patios that were running in the downtown core also had to close.

Keith Turner, who runs the Olde Angel Inn, represents both properties in the application, but town staff say the two properties would have to be merged for the patio to stay permanently.

"This is not a permanent approval of the patio," planning director Aimee Alderman told councillors.

The temporary bylaw would give the owners time to work through the property, financing and planning issues and determine whether the two pieces of land can be merged. The same operation isn't enough — the restaurant lot and patio lot have to become one legal property on paper.

If they want the patio permanently, the owners would then have to pursue another zoning amendment and other required approvals once the properties are merged.

If that does not happen, Alderman said the patio cannot stay.

"If after two years the owner determines that they are not looking to or can't



The patio at the Olde Angel Inn has been sitting unused since December 2025. Now the restaurant has permission to operate for two years as it works to merge the restaurant and patio properties together. FILE

merge the properties, the patio will need to cease," she said. "The patio would need to be removed at that point in time."

Coun. Andrew Niven questioned why staff considered the parking situation acceptable.

Under the town's zoning bylaw, the 210-square-metre patio would normally require seven parking spaces.

But because of earlier approvals, the Olde Angel Inn has no on-site parking for restaurant or patio customers. Two spaces at 226 Regent St. are reserved for the cottage rentals, while patrons are expected to use nearby municipal parking.

Tanner said the restaurant is licensed for 137 patrons in total, whether they are seated inside or outside.

Because the patio would not increase that number, Jordan Frost, the town's director of public works and infrastructure services, said staff would not expect any additional vehicles at a given time. They therefore had no objection to the parking shortfall as long as the restaurant stays within its existing capacity.

Niven and Coun. Tim Balasiuk were the only councillors to oppose the recommendation.

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Phragmites at Woodend to be **treated this fall**

Continued from Front Page

including how much will go to the town or college.

The collaborative brings together more than 50 participants from 30 organizations.

"The funding supports monitoring, mapping, treatment and collaborative management efforts," said authority spokesperson Erika Navarro in an email.

The authority plans to treat phragmites at Woodend Conservation Area in NOTL this fall. Work has begun at some of the conservation areas slated for treatment, but the authority had not said whether Woodend was among them by publication time.

Niagara College and the town had also not answered The Lake Report's questions about how much funding each will receive and what work it will pay for by publication time.



A Marsh Master can be used to shred phragmites.

Phragmites is a tall reed that spreads through wetlands and along roadsides. Minister Mike Harris called it "a scourge of an invasive species."

When present in an ecosystem, the reeds spread quickly and form dense stands that crowd out native plants and damage wetlands, beaches and wildlife habitat.

Harris said invasive species, including phragmites, cost Ontario roughly \$3.6 billion in lost productivity and other expenses.

At Niagara College's

NOTL campus, president Sean Kennedy said the reeds had become hard to ignore.

"There was a massive and growing phragmites challenge here on this campus."

Kennedy said the college has "made some progress over the past couple of years" removing phragmites, with students in its environmental programs helping with the work. But he said the college would struggle to keep removing phragmites at the scale it wants without the new fund-

ing and resources.

He said the college is financially stretched and has had to make difficult choices about which projects it can afford.

"This is a type of project that we know we need to do, we want to do," he said.

Kennedy hopes to come as close as possible to clearing phragmites from campus in the next year or two.

The Niagara Phragmites Management Area Collaborative has mapped about 48.5 hectares — roughly 120 acres — of phragmites across the Niagara Peninsula watershed.

"The funding announcement today means partners can move from identifying the problem to taking action," said Leilani Lee-Yates, the conservation authority's chief administrative officer and secretary-treasurer.

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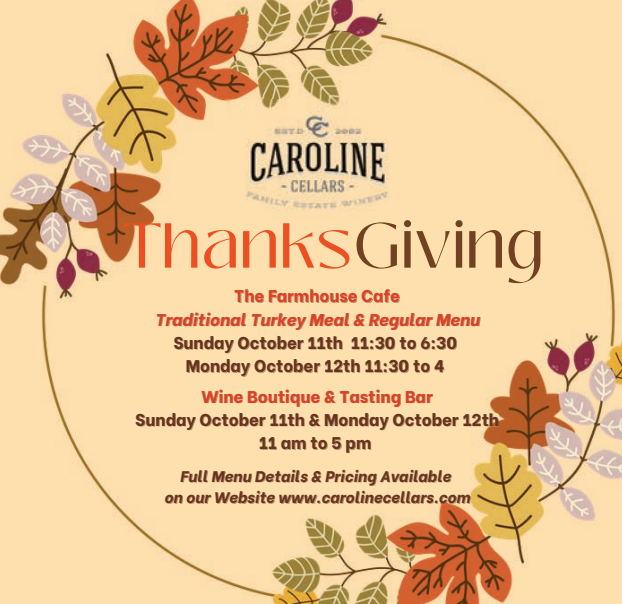

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This is the final week of our garage and yard sale listings until next spring. Thank you to everyone who submitted a sale this season — and to all of you who turned to The Lake Report each week to see what treasures were waiting to be found.

We loved seeing so many people out and about, and we heard from plenty of readers who wanted the listings to continue. So they'll be back next year!

‘Very wet’ Old Town block sparks concerns over two-home plan

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

A plan to replace one Old Town home with two is drawing warnings from neighbours who say a much larger building footprint could worsen drainage on a block they describe as already wet.

The proposal for 189 William St. would split the property into two roughly equal lots and demolish the existing home. Two single-detached homes could eventually be built, with up to 45 per cent lot coverage on each — above the 33 per cent normally allowed there.

“The current house, by the way, it has about 7 per cent lot coverage,” said Michael Fox, who lives around the corner and chairs Friends of One Mile Creek.

Three Niagara-on-the-Lake residents spoke at a public meeting last Tuesday, with drainage and the changing character of Old Town dominating their concerns.



Friends of One Mile Creek chair Michael Fox questions why the town should allow 45 per cent lot coverage at 189 William St., warning that more hard surfaces mean more rainwater has to go somewhere. PAIGE SEBURN

Fox said he is not opposed to splitting the lot, but questioned why the town should allow the higher coverage.

He said his concern is simple: the more of a property that is covered by roofs, pavement and other hard surfaces, the less rainwater can soak into the ground.

“The concern is that when you make an increase from 33 to 45 there should be a good rationale for it. I haven’t found it in this application so far,” Fox said.

Sue Sherk, a lifelong NOTL resident who lives on the same block, described the area as “very wet” and said groundwater and natu-

ral drainage routes are her biggest concern.

“This is not an argument against change, but rather a plea for respect for our very special town,” she said. “Bylaws cannot be our only consideration if we want to keep our unique character.”

Deb Stevens, who recently moved to William Street

and came forward from the gallery, questioned the scale of the future homes after hearing the applicant say the property owner and potential buyer are considering one to 1.5-storey dwellings.

“There is a difference in what is in the report and what he’s saying now,” she said. “I believe in the report

it indicated that the two dwellings concept drawings were going to be one story.”

“There’s a difference between one storey in our neighbourhood and 1.5.”

The applicant’s planner, Max Fedchysyak of NPG Planning Solutions, said the extra coverage would extend farther into the lots rather than make the homes wider along the street.

He said more than a third of each lot would still be available for yards, trees and water to soak into the ground.

Jordan Frost, the town’s director of public works and infrastructure, told councillors drainage calculations would account for whatever lot coverage is ultimately approved.

If the system cannot handle the resulting runoff, staff would say so.

No decision was made Tuesday. Staff are still reviewing the application and will return to council with a recommendation.

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Authorized by the Official Agent for Erwin Wiens for Lord Mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake campaign.

Sewage backups centre stage at debate

Continued from Front Page

Huggins took issue both with the moderator's decision not to select his question and with candidates' failure to raise sewage backups during their opening remarks or answers before his interruption.

Coun. Maria Mavridis told Huggins the town had submitted residents' applications and was waiting for the province to act. Coun. Erwin Wiens confirmed, "We're waiting for the province."

Huggins pushed back. "This happened two years ago. It was happening again this year and you guys are still waiting for the province," he said. "Come on, you got to start helping us."

He left before the debate ended.

"I shouldn't have to blow up for them to speak about the biggest problem in St. Davids," Huggins said in the interview.

Several candidates then began addressing the problem in their closing remarks.

Coun. Andrew Niven said Huggins had experienced sewage flooding three times in two years. He said he and the town's chief administrative officer had recently sat down with Huggins inside his home.

"He was angry when I met with him as well, but he should be angry because he's going through these issues," Niven said.

He said Huggins' problem appeared to involve a regional pumping station and the town was working with Niagara Region on a response to the issue.

"I think we're going to have a direct line to the pumping station," Niven said. "I think that would alleviate a lot of the issues."

Coun. Sandra O'Connor pointed to two reports presented to council the previous night — one on flooding and another involving almost \$425,000 in additional drainage work.

Council candidate Karen Jones-Taylor spoke about severe flooding at Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124, where she sits on the executive board. She said the branch may not reopen until next year.

"It's devastating," she



Coun. Andrew Niven tells the crowd at Wednesday's debate that he and the town's chief administrative officer, Nick Ruller, recently sat down with Reginald Huggins inside his Millpond Road home — the same home hit repeatedly by sewage backups. PAIGE SEBURN

said. "Something has to be done, something quickly, so it's not happening over and over again."

Coun. Tim Balasiuk said he was also flooded after filing three service requests with the town about a known problem that was not repaired.

"I am a resident first and a councillor second," he said. "They knew the issue — and it didn't get fixed — and I flooded."

"I am going to be an advocate for you," Balasiuk said.

Huggins said the problem in his Millpond Road neighbourhood is not ordinary rainwater flooding, but sewage entering people's homes.

"Everything becomes a biohazard and everything has to be thrown out," he said.

Sewage entered Huggins' finished basement in 2024, forcing workers to cut out drywall and remove damaged belongings. He said his household spent more than a month in a hotel while the home was cleaned.

Among the losses were belongings purchased by his late wife and baseball equipment belonging to his son.

This year, flood detectors alerted the household when sewage began entering the basement again. Huggins said they used a vacuum and pump to remove it, saving some furniture that was raised off the floor. Anything sitting directly on the floor, including cabinets, was lost.

Now, he said, the base-

ment must be ripped out again.

The damage has also left Huggins unable to use the basement "man cave" he built to relax and watch football. "I'm a real football fan," he said.

"That's all gone," he said. "And I don't have a timeline on when it's going to get fixed."

Huggins said residents in the Vintages and nearby neighbourhoods have met, gathered information and prepared a report they plan to send to the town, the region, the provincial and federal governments and Health Canada.

He did not expect candidates to produce an engineering solution on the spot. He wanted someone to acknowledge the urgency and promise to pursue both immediate relief and a permanent fix.

"I need somebody to give me something, some sense of confidence that they are going to look into doing something to help me and my neighbours," he said.

The debate also covered missing sidewalks and crosswalks, the division of responsibility between the town and region, recreation funding, development proposals seeking multiple exceptions to town planning rules, candidates' potential conflicts involving developers and the proposed roundabout at York and Four Mile Creek roads.

Recreation funding became a key focus after resident Ron Pychel warned candidates the town could miss the Dec. 22 application

deadline for Ontario's Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund.

The province launched the fund with \$200 million in 2024 and added another \$300 million this year, bringing its total value to \$500 million. The program helps municipalities pay to repair and upgrade existing recreation facilities or build new ones.

Pychel criticized the current council for failing to pursue the first funding opportunity and warned that the next council would have little time to prepare an application.

Several incumbent councillors said the town could not secure funding earlier because it did not have a "shovel-ready" project and lacked its share of the required funding.

"We've learned that lesson," Coun. Adriana Cater-Vizzari said.

Council candidate Steve McGuinness pushed back on a remark by Wiens at Monday night's lord mayor debate that some issues move at "the speed of government."

"We need to move faster," he said. "We're not asking for a gift. We're asking for a return in investment in our community."

For Huggins, however, a pool and roundabout should not take priority while sewage continues entering homes.

"Why are you worrying about a damn pool," he said, "but you're not worrying about sewage backing up into someone's house?"

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NOTL council candidates condemn Trump

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Since winning back the White House, Donald Trump has threatened Canada’s economy, questioned its sovereignty and even taken aim at the name of the lake Niagara-on-the-Lake sits on.

His administration has slapped tariffs on Canadian goods, including a new 50 per cent tariff on \$27.6 billion worth of products in August. Canada responded with matching counter-tariffs.

Trump has repeatedly floated making Canada the 51st state. In January 2025, when asked whether he would use military force to make that happen, he said no — but said “economic force” was on the table.

Then, last month, he signed an executive order directing the U.S. government to call Lake Ontario “Lake America.” The change applies only to U.S. federal use and does not change the lake’s name in Canada.

For a border town where tourism, agriculture and relationships with Americans are woven into the local economy, what happens south of the border does not necessarily stay there.

So, The Lake Report asked NOTL’s municipal election candidates a blunt question: What do you think of Donald Trump?

Council candidate **Nicholas Colaneri** did not hesitate. “I can’t stand the guy,” he said.

Colaneri said Trump does not respect Canadian sovereignty or Canadians themselves.

“To him, we are something to control and own, to use and abuse, and that is not something I can respect as a Canadian — or even as a human being.”

But he said anger at Trump should not become anger at Americans visiting NOTL.

“Doesn’t mean our doors are closed to you,” said Colaneri, before adding: “Canada first.”

Of the 14 candidates, 13 expressed opposition to Trump, some only after repeated follow-ups. **Karen**



Tim Balasiuk
OPPOSED



Gary Burroughs
OPPOSED



Nicholas Colaneri
OPPOSED



Vaughn Goettler
OPPOSED



Andrea Kaiser
OPPOSED



Maria Mavridis
OPPOSED



Steve McGuinness
OPPOSED



Weston Miller
OPPOSED



Rick Mills
OPPOSED



Andrew Niven
OPPOSED



Sandra O'Connor
OPPOSED



Karen Taylor-Jones
REFUSED TO ANSWER

Jones-Taylor was the lone candidate who declined to give a personal opinion, saying municipal candidates should be judged on local issues and on U.S. decisions only when they directly affect NOTL.

Steve McGuinness called him “a bully” and his presidency “an example of democracy gone awry.”

He said Trump’s leadership style is the opposite of what he expects from a strong leader.

“A strong leader wants to hear dissenting viewpoints and takes counsel from experts,” McGuinness said.

Lord mayor candidate **Erwin Wiens** said he was deeply disappointed by what has happened to the Canada-U.S. relationship.

“I have no support for the president of the United States right now,” he said.

Wiens called Trump’s treatment of Canadians “utterly ridiculous,” while saying he remains confident Canada and the United States can repair their relationship as neighbouring nations.

Fellow lord mayor candidate **Andrea Kaiser** said politicians never know who they may eventually have to

work with, but later made her position explicit and said she opposes Trump.

“In addition to attacking Canadian workers, the Canadian economy and our national sovereignty, Donald Trump is committing reckless acts of economic self-harm with these needless, lawless tariffs,” she said.

“We are not the 51st state, nor will we ever be.”

Lord mayor candidate **Vaughn Goettler** said he is “strongly opposed” to Trump because “he is trying to destroy our country.”

At the same time, Goettler said Trump should not define NOTL’s relationship with the Americans who visit the town.

“A lot of our tourists now come from the United States,” he said. “We welcome them.”

“They are our friends,” he added.

Goettler said he believes the longstanding closeness between Canadians and Americans will outlast the current political tensions.

“There’s a real closeness between our countries and anything that jeopardizes that will ultimately be short in duration,” he said.

Asked if he was a Trump fan, council candidate **Rick Mills** responded: “Of course I’m not. I wasn’t before he was president either.”

He said a friend suggested his spiritual affiliation — more than 25 years in pastoral ministry with Life Abundant Niagara — could lead people to assume he was a Trump supporter, an assumption he rejected.

“It actually saddens me,” Mills said, adding that his

spiritual beliefs do not align with the current U.S. political climate, particularly the treatment of people and allied countries.

Adriana Cater-Vizzari said she “strongly oppose[s]” Trump and has “real concerns about the divisiveness Donald Trump has brought to the relationship between Canada and the United States.”

“Canadians need to stand together to protect our sovereignty, economy and communities,” she said.

Maria Mavridis gave a straightforward answer: “Opposed.” She did not elaborate further when asked.

Sandra O’Connor said she believes Americans “could do better” in choosing a leader and criticized Trump’s comments about Canada becoming the 51st state.

“I oppose Trump,” she said.

She also pointed to her motion directing the town to focus on buying Canadian where possible during the trade dispute, which council approved.

Andrew Niven said he opposes Trump and said his approach to Canada

has created “unnecessary uncertainty,” particularly for a “community like Niagara-on-the-Lake where agriculture, tourism and cross-border relationships” are critical for the economy.

“Whatever happens south of the border, we need to make sure we’re doing our part here and putting NOTL first,” he said.

Weston Miller left little room for doubt.

“I’m strongly opposed. There’s no question,” he said, pointing specifically to Trump’s threats to Canadian sovereignty and the push to rename Lake Ontario.

Still, Miller said American visitors should not be treated differently because of their president.

“I don’t think that our reception to them should change,” he said, but added: “Now, if there was somebody walking down Queen Street with a Lake America sweatshirt on or something, you know, maybe I’d have something to say to that.”

Tim Balasiuk said he does not support U.S. tariffs that harm Canadians and is concerned by comments questioning Canada’s sovereignty.

Asked separately about Trump’s conduct, Balasiuk said personal attacks and belittling others are “not approaches to leadership that I would follow.”

Gary Burroughs said he was unsupportive of Trump.

“Support for Trump? I’m probably a two out of whatever the total is,” he said. “Very low.”

At the same time, Burroughs said NOTL should separate the U.S. government from the people living across the river.

“Our relationship is with the U.S. people, not the U.S. government,” he said.

That distinction ran through many of the answers: Trump is one thing. Americans are another.

Taylor-Jones declined to give her personal opinion of Trump.

Whatever they thought of Trump, most candidates agreed on one thing: NOTL’s relationship with Americans should outlast the person currently in charge of the U.S. government.

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NOTL can grow without losing character, says Erwin Wiens fan

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

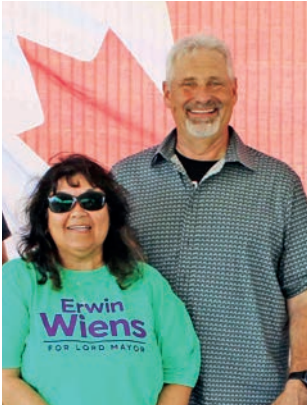
It was a busy Sunday morning for Jason Moleski. Outside the old Virgil public school on Four Mile Creek Road, he was hard at work putting up tents in preparation for Coun. Erwin Wiens' largest public event since announcing in June he'd be running to become Niagara-on-the-Lake's next lord mayor.

About 100 people attended Wiens' campaign barbecue in Virgil on Sept. 13, where supporters put development and property taxes at the top of their list of priorities for the next council.

Moleski was there as one of Wiens' supporters. He moved to NOTL from Port Colborne 13 years ago and volunteered to help set up the event.

He said his support for Wiens rests on how long the family has farmed in town.

"His connection to the community, plain and simple," said Moleski. "His



Erwin Wiens, right, and his wife Dorothy Soo-Wiens.

connections run deep."

Speaking to The Lake Report, he addressed the subject of development, a contentious issue for some during this election campaign.

During Monday night's lord mayor debate, Wiens spoke against candidate Vaughn Goettler's call for a moratorium on all development in town, saying that could open the municipality up to legal issues and arguing the town should instead use governance rules at its disposal to control future growth.

Moleski said the town cannot halt development, so the next council has to approve the right projects and refuse the wrong ones.

"I would still look to protect the community as it is, but continue to grow and not be forgotten about," he said.

At Sunday's campaign event, Wiens spoke for a few minutes in the afternoon, then talked with attendees one at a time until the barbecue ended at 2 p.m. He said taxes and infrastructure came up most often, and that residents who disagree on those subjects still want the same town.

"We all have a vision, but everybody is on Team Niagara-on-the-Lake," he said. "We just have to find out what that road map is to get where we are."

Wiens joined council in 2018 and took the deputy lord mayor's seat in 2022 after collecting the most votes of any council candidate. He'll face Goettler and regional Coun. Andrea Kaiser in the Oct. 26 election.

He has campaigned on controlling municipal spending, opposing amalgamation and approving development only where the infrastructure can support it.

Later in the day on Sunday, the Farmworker Hub and Virgil's Book Nook screened "We Lend a Hand: The Forgotten Story of the Ontario Farmerettes" at Cornerstone Community Church on Hunter Road. Erwin Wiens Vineyards sponsored the screening.

The documentary follows the 40,000 teenage girls who harvested Ontario crops while farmers and farmworkers served overseas in the Second World War. Many of them picked fruit on Niagara farms, including several in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Wiens said his campaign is planning another event next month at the Royal Manor Inn on Ricardo Street, to respond to questions from residents. Internet voting begins Oct. 5.

andrew@niagaranow.com

Kaiser voters appreciate honesty and experience

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

Andrea Kaiser's no stranger to the world of local politics. For 11 years, she was a Niagara-on-the-Lake councillor and has represented the municipality at regional council since 2022.

Voters such as Chautauqua resident Mary Kilmer-Tchalekian say that experience is why they believe she's the person for the job of leading NOTL for the next four years.

"She's a strong woman and she's had really great experience. I think she would do a fabulous job as mayor," Kilmer-Tchalekian said.

On Sunday, Kaiser hosted a community barbecue at the St. Davids Lions Club, where residents and supporters gathered to enjoy a hot dog (or veggie dog) and talk politics.



Andrea Kaiser and daughter Madison Lepp doled out hot dogs and snacks for residents who wished to stop by the Lions Club and chat. JULIA SACCO

Margret Walker has canvassed for Kaiser in Chautauqua and said she appreciates the regional councillor's honesty.

"I think she speaks the truth," she said. "She doesn't tell stories, she researches what she says."

Kaiser told The Lake Report that a commitment to residents' quality of life is a key part of her campaign to become lord mayor.

"I think that is one of my strengths, being respectful to residents and trying to find some collaboration," she said.

"One of the things we have in common is that we all love NOTL."

Amy Casey, a Kaiser supporter, said that after moving to NOTL from Toronto, she realized how much of an impact municipal governance can have in a smaller community.

"In Toronto you cast your vote and you're one of the millions," she said.

"If you keep up with provincial politics, you can see how they are changing the responsibilities of mayor, regional councils, how the decisions in funding, short-term and long-term are made."

After the first mayoral debate, Casey said it was clear that Kaiser had educated attendees about how local governance works and has

evolved.

"If I had just seen her at the debate and not known her from prior years, I would have still walked away thinking she's the most qualified for the job."

Kaiser said she believes it is very important for NOTL to have someone with regional council experience as its lord mayor.

In May, independently elected regional councillor positions in Niagara were eliminated.

"I am very concerned about amalgamation still being on the table in some respects," she said.

"I was also doing some significant work that I'd like to finish in regard to the policing work that I'd done over the last four years."

Kaiser has long criticized the high cost of police services in NOTL, which she cites as a longstanding concern of residents.

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NOTLer Steve Pohorly named 2026 Grape King

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

In 1971, Frank and Susan Pohorly purchased a plot of land just off the Niagara River Parkway, with the goal of joining the many others across Niagara-on-the-Lake who were running farms of their own.

From there, they created Riverbend Farms, a family business built from scratch, where they also raised their son, Steve Pohorly.

Today, Pohorly is the manager of the family farm, which spans 50 acres of land, including 30 acres of wine grape vineyards. On Sept. 16, it's where he was officially installed as this year's Grape King of Ontario.

"I'm proud to be carrying on that torch," he told The Lake Report.

Being selected as Grape King by the Grape Growers of Ontario is about more than agriculture, he said.

"It's not just about farming, it's about involvement with the industry and innovation. It has a lot to do with growing grapes but it's also a lot to do with your



Steve Pohorly grew up on Riverbend Farms Inc. in Niagara-on-the-Lake and has continued his family's business in grape growing. This year he is named Grape King for his work in agriculture and the community. SUPPLIED

involvement in the community as well."

Pohorly has served as a director with the provincial grape growers association for almost 20 years and sits on several committees, including Ontario Grape and Wine Research Incorporated

and the Niagara Peninsula Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association.

Debbie Zimmerman, CEO of the Grape Growers of Ontario, said in a media release that the Grape King mantle, a tradition that's been around for 70

years, recognizes growers who demonstrate outstanding vineyard management, industry knowledge and a commitment to their community.

"Steve embodies those qualities, and we look forward to seeing him rep-

resent Ontario's grape and wine industry throughout the year ahead," she said.

Looking forward to his new role, Pohorly anticipates a heavier workload and is ready to take it on.

"It was obviously a huge honour to be selected," he said.

He said he hopes to continue the hard work of the Grape Kings who came before him.

"They're great growers but they're also involved in the farming community and the community at large and they've become ambassadors for Ontario wine," he said.

One of grape growers' biggest struggles this year has been unpredictable weather, but Pohorly said overcoming flooding and rain shows the resiliency of Ontario growers.

He said he wants to ensure Canadians know the quality of wine from Niagara.

"Our homegrown VQA wines can stand shoulder to shoulder with any wine region in the world," he said.

With increased tariffs on alcohol imposed by U.S.

President Donald Trump, Pohorly said the bright side is that Canadians want to support homegrown products now more than ever.

Right now, his favourite bottle of wine is the 2025 Sauvignon Blanc from Inniskillin.

"Those are 100 per cent out grapes in that bottle, so it's definitely one I reach for," he said.

Growing up and working in NOTL, Pohorly said he is grateful for the tight-knit community of grape growers who look out for one another.

"We're not cutthroat, we're not rivals. We're here to help each other out, pick each other up," he said.

"We all know that every bottle of wine that we produce has to be great for everyone to succeed."

Pohorly wished to share the honour with the entire Riverbend team, including parents, farmworkers Chris and Craig, wife Breanne and children Maelle and Harrison.

"It's a team effort and I represent our entire farm family."

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NOTL Terry Fox Run raises \$77K

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

Megan Dyck’s family was told to prepare for her final months when she was 14. Her mother stood before hundreds of participants at the Terry Fox Run at Simcoe Park on Sept. 20 and told them that while Megan has been able to celebrate three birthdays since that first diagnosis, their battle is not over.

Amber Dyck said her daughter’s rare clear cell carcinoma has started to progress after immunotherapy held it back for several years. The family is now waiting for research to produce another treatment option.

“Megan’s cancer is slowly growing again, so we continue to pray that research moves quicker than it does and that she will continue to celebrate many birthdays to come,” she said.

After she spoke, runners, walkers and cyclists took off from Simcoe Park along King and Queen streets,



Runners were mostly all smiles. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

raising money for cancer research. The local campaign had raised \$77,106 of its \$140,300 goal, according to the Terry Fox Foundation’s run page. Last year’s target was \$120,000.

Megan was diagnosed at 13. By 14, the cancer had spread to her lungs despite aggressive treatment. Doctors had no known treatment options left, and the family was referred to palliative care.

“We watched Megan deteriorate and were followed by a palliative team who told us to enjoy our final months with her to the best of our ability,” her mother said.



Joan King has organized the local run for almost 20 years. She said the town has raised more than \$2 million for cancer research since Mandy Falconer organized the first run here in 1991.

“Sometimes hope is all you have,” she said.

King, a retired teacher, said she continues the run because Terry Fox never got to finish his work. Fox, who was in the middle of his cross-country Marathon of Hope, died of cancer in 1981 before he could complete his journey.

“[Terry] ran out of time, but we have the time to make a difference and to finish it,” she said.

Carol Dyck, a colon cancer survivor, joined other survivors in red shirts for their yearly photo at the town hall clock. Megan usually joins them, but she missed this year’s photo because she was in treatment.

“You have to be positive when it happens,” Carol Dyck said of her own diagnosis. “I wasn’t the first and I certainly wasn’t going to be the last.”

Members of the Niagara College Knights volleyball team joined the run to support their coach, Abbey Gooder, who recently went through cancer treatment. Team members came to raise money in her name.

Megan has since celebrated her 15th, 16th and 17th birthdays. She is expected to graduate from high school this year.

Her mother told participants their fundraising connects directly to the treatment advances that extended Megan’s life.

“The money you have raised is saving and extending lives. It is making a difference,” she said.

Donations to the local campaign can still be made at terryfox.org. The campaign remains about \$63,000 short of its goal.

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Sold-out *luxury show* takes over airport

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

Maya Patel paid about \$400 to spend four hours beside cars she says she will never own.

The 26-year-old graphic designer drove in from St. Catharines after watching clips of last year's show online. She said the price makes it a once-in-a-lifetime purchase for her.

"I'll never own one, and I'm OK with that," Patel said. "It's still cool for one afternoon I can pretend."

Patel was one of more than 500 guests attending the sold-out Niagara 5000 Hangar Experience, a four-hour car and aviation show at Niagara District Airport on Sept. 19 that aimed to raise money for McMaster Children's Hospital.

Founder and CEO Alana Hurov started Niagara 5000 after her daughter, Katherine, was treated at the Hamilton hospital for juvenile arthritis, diagnosed when she was two. This



A McLaren 620R parks its doors skyward next to a Porsche 911 GT3 RS at the Niagara 5000 Hangar Experience, where more than 500 ticket holders spent Saturday afternoon among supercars and luxury aircrafts. **ANDREW HAWLITZKY**

year the event set a \$30,000 goal for McMaster, more than double the \$12,500 it raised last year.

Half of each \$300 driver registration in Friday's luxury car parade, which travelled from Niagara Falls to Niagara-on-the-Lake, went to McMaster Children's Hospital.

Niagara 5000 reached its \$30,000 goal for the year before Saturday's hangar show opened. Organizers said the final tally is still being counted.

Sherry Bocchini, a vice-president at Hamilton Health Sciences, said 55,000

children from Niagara were treated at McMaster Children's Hospital last year.

The airport setting gave the show something a parking lot could not. Private jets sat on the apron between the cars, and helicopters took off through the afternoon on sightseeing flights over Niagara.

Jared Kaczmarek, a 57-year-old retired Air Canada maintenance technician from Niagara Falls, spent most of his afternoon with the aircraft instead of the Lamborghinis.

"I can go to a car show any weekend in the sum-

mer," he said. "You don't normally get the cars and the jets in the same place."

Inside the hangar, vendors sold watches and espresso, and the Italian Chamber of Commerce of Ontario ran a Made in Italy section built around the Italian brands parked outside.

Mélanie Villeneuve, daughter of Canadian Formula 1 driver Gilles Villeneuve, took the stage to talk about a new film on her father's racing career.

Buffalo Bills offensive lineman Dion Dawkins also attended with teammate Ray Davis. His mineral water brand, Shnow Water 2.0, was the hangar show's official water sponsor.

Friday's public parade drew more than 100 registered supercars to Fallsview Casino Resort before the drivers ran a route through Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Organizers have already started planning next year's edition of Niagara 5000.

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*Artists' Village.
With Anne Cattaneo.*

Penny-Lynn Cookson
Special to The Lake Report

The Shaw's headliner musical show for 2026 is "Funny Girl" starring Canadian Sara Farb as the renowned American comedian, Fanny Brice.

This is the role on stage and screen that famously shot Barbra Streisand into the show business stratosphere. Brice, Streisand and Farb are Jewish. The idea to illuminate the astonishing range and importance of Jewish women to theatre history led to inviting a guest to speak on "Jewish Women in Theatre Pre, During and Post-World War II."

This presentation, given by Anne Cattaneo, was to examine "the impact Jewish women in theatre made to the art form, the growth of American and Canadian theatre and the changes and challenges they faced."

Of this, we did not hear much.

We did learn about dramaturgy as Anne Cattaneo was a dramaturg for many years at the Lincoln Center Theater in New York working with the renowned executive theatre producer, Bernard Gersten.

Available to attendees was a six-page handout with information and advice from Cattaneo's book, "The Art of Dramaturgy," published in 2021. We learned that dramaturgy is the job of a theatre person who is compassionate, collaborative, flexible and understands the structure of plays, text, language and the creative process.

The dramaturg knows theatre history and literature, researches previous plays, records each new play, supports new development and actors and seeks to connect to an audience in great and mysterious ways. This was enlightening.

But what about the topic? Who were these famous and groundbreaking Jewish women? What did they have to overcome to succeed? What drove them forward? Ambition, drive, resilience for certain.

Many found it necessary to change their names due



Sarah Bernhardt, a French actress and director, had many starring roles in her career with the Odéon and Comédie-Française in Paris. WIKIMEDIA

to antisemitism. Those with one Jewish parent chose to identify with one or the other or chose a new name.

Some began in the Yiddish Art Theatre founded by Sarah and Jacob Adler in New York in 1918 to present serious Yiddish drama. The Broadway and Hollywood actress Stella Adler (1901-1992) became one of the most influential women in theatre and contemporary acting. She co-founded Group Theater in 1931 and founded the Stella Adler Conservatory of Acting in 1949.

Her students included Marlon Brando, Robert De Niro, Warren Beatty and Salma Hayek. She believed the student's main responsibility was emotional availability, imagination and to "act with your soul."

Women acting in 19th century America included the actress and author Rose Eyttinge (1835-1911). She specialized in fiery, passionate performances that captivated Washington audiences, including Abraham Lincoln. She did not disclose being Jewish.

Adah Isaacs Menken (1835-1868), actress, poet and sculptor, was an American pioneer of vaudeville, burlesque and publicity who converted to Judaism. The highest paid actress of her time, her near-nudity and equestrian feats in Lord Byron's "Mazeppa" astonished her audiences in New York, London and Paris.

Her writing ambition led to meetings with Walt Whitman, George Sand, Charles Dickens and a dalliance with Alexandre Dumas. Married four times, she wrote that women needed to be trained for

"other missions than wife and mother."

Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923) famed French actress, director, sculptor, was born in Paris to a Jewish courtesan mother and a Catholic father. Although she acknowledged her Jewish heritage, she identified as Roman Catholic or atheist.

Her career spanned a lifetime of starring roles with the Odéon and Comédie-Française in Paris and touring extensively with her own company to the United States, Canada, South America and Europe. She entertained the French troops in 1916 on the Verdun and Argonne fronts despite her own leg amputation due to an injury performing "Tosca." She was awarded the Légion d'honneur for her role as a director, not actress, due to her scandalous behaviour.

Molly Picon (1898-1992) actress of stage, screen, radio and television, began in Yiddish theatre and rose to star as Yente the Matchmaker in "Fiddler on the Roof" in 1971. She opened the Molly Picon Theatre and entered the Theatre Hall of Fame in 1981.

Sophie Tucker (1886-1966) began in vaudeville but achieved fame on Broadway, in film and performances singing her hits "Some of These Days" and "My Yiddishe Momme" to audiences including King George V and Queen Mary at the Palladium in London in 1926. She was elected president of the American Federation of Actors trade union in 1938.

Stage actresses who have entertained us for years include Bea Arthur in "Fiddler on the Roof," "Mame" and "Golden Girls." Lauren

Bacall dazzled Hollywood, Broadway and Humphrey Bogart. Joan Rivers kept audiences laughing with her raunchy jokes. Goldie Hawn danced up a storm in the Broadway hits "Kiss Me Kate" and "Guys and Dolls." Tony award winner Judy Holliday was a not so dumb blond in "Born Yesterday."

Theresa Helburn was a director and president of the Theatre Guild in New York which produced a total of 128 non-commercial American and foreign plays including 18 from George Bernard Shaw. Zelda Fichandler rejected the commercialism of New York theatre and co-founded two regional theatres in Houston and the Arena Stage in Washington, D.C.

Writers such as Lillian Hellman, Vicki Baum and Wendy Wasserstein, achieved tremendous success with their award-winning plays on Broadway. Julie Taymor, director and writer of theatre, opera and film has received international acclaim for her outstanding adaptation of "The Lion King."

Rachel Chavkin is currently the artistic director and producer of international touring plays at the TEAM, an experimental theatre ensemble based in Brooklyn. She is currently the most active and acclaimed director on Broadway with multiple Obie and Tony wins and nominations.

The list goes on with the stunning lighting designs of Jean Rosenthal for "West Side Story," "Hello Dolly" and "Fiddler on the Roof." Missing are untold numbers of costume designers, agents, scholars and critics who daily contribute to theatre history.

Carole King, one of the greatest singer-songwriters of all time, has appeared in productions on and off Broadway. Bette Midler, actress, singer, songwriter and author has been awarded Grammys, Emmys, Tonys and Kennedy Center Honours. Special applause is due to Kitty Carlisle Hart, a stage and film actress, television personality, opera singer and as chairperson of the New York State Council on the Arts from 1976 to 1996, a tireless crusader for financial support of the arts.

Such recognition of so many is long overdue.

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



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Golf leagues wrap up play at NOTL club

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

Summer’s gone, fall has arrived and that means the competitive leagues are wrapping up at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club.

But there’s still time for some late-season heroics on the links.

As we reported last week, NOTL native Quinton Spagnol had a hole-in-one on the fourth hole en route to his “best score ever,” a 1-over 37.

He followed that up in style his next time out with another 37. But the real story is in how he did it.

His total was good for second low gross, behind club champion Ricky Watson, who had a 1-under 35 (with birdies on #3 and #8 and a bogey on #5).

Spagnol bogeyed #2 and #3, so he was 2-over when he got to the tee on the par-4 seventh.

The lakeside hole is a dogleg left to a small, two-tiered green, with bunkers



NOTL Golf Club pro shop manager Darren Smith, centre, presents the member-guest championship cup to Tony DeSanctis, left, and Stein Hansen. PAUL DICKSON

in front and out-of-bounds along the back. It’s easy to slide right across the green and land in the penalty area.

It plays to about 300 yards total but a grove of large, mature trees guard the dogleg. If you’re a big hitter, you can try to bomb it over the trees and hope for the best.

That’s what Spagnol did. He unleashed “a straight ball for once,” clearing all the trees, bouncing on the green and rolling to the back fringe, about 50 feet from the hole.

Then he stepped up and sank the putt for an incredible eagle 2 to get back to even-par. With a bogey on

the ninth hole, he nailed his second straight 37.

The eagle also earned him a \$60 net skin.

There are a couple of weeks of men’s league play left. We’ll see what other fireworks are in store.

Other winners: Justin Reimer (longest drive on #1), Glenn Young (closest to the pin on #4), Noel Morris (longest putt made on #5) and Kevin Jackson (closest to the pin on #9).

Earl Shore and Ron Newman were low net winners with 31.

Birdies earned Ted Carmichael (#6) and Doug Hernder (#7) a \$55 gross skin. Patrick Leeder (#2)

and Jackson (#9) also won net skins.

In Monday’s business women’s league, Brandi Currie’s 45 was the top score. Other winners were: Angelique Magi (longest drive on #1), Diana Hall (closest to the 150 on #2) and Terry Huisman (sank the longest putt on #7).

May Chang was closest to the pin on #4 and Kim Breakspere was closest in two shots on #9.

The NOTL club hosted its annual member-guest tourney last week, a 27-hole format featuring nine holes each of best ball, alternate shot and a team scramble.

Flight 1 winners were NOTL’s Ricky Watson and Andrew Bolinger of the LPGA International course while the flight 2 winners were NOTL’s Stein Hansen and Tony DeSanctis of Notawasaga Golf Resort.

In a two-hole playoff to determine an overall winner, Hansen sank a four-foot birdie putt on the last hole to edge out Watson and Bolinger.

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Aiming high: Young golfers are among best in Canada

Continued from Front Page

Both rookies have been selected to play on their high school golf teams. And, although they're barely 14 (Zhu hit that milestone a couple of weeks ago; Pern in May), the pair qualified for the Ontario U17 Championship Aug. 31 to Sept. 2 in Barrie.

Facing a field that included many players more than two years older, they both had solid weeks. Zhu finished in a tie for fifth at 1-over for 54 holes (75-71-71—217) while Perng also made the final-round cut and at +17 and tied for 33rd (77-77-79—233).

But that tourney was just the finale of a summer that saw both boys make significant progress in a game that can be cruel even to the most talented practitioner. The pair love golf, despite its inevitable ups and downs, and both hope to play in the U.S. college system at the highly competitive Division 1 level. And beyond that, there's dreams of "The Show," the pro tour.

Zhu has some insights into what it takes to get there thanks to his older sister Katherine, who played Division 1 golf for Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif., and professionally in China.

She's also married to PGA tour pro Collin Morikawa, so it's no surprise who Zhu's favourite golfer is.

"I really like the way he plays," he says of Morikawa, a seven-time winner on the tour, including the 2020 PGA Championship and 2021 British Open.

And yes, "when I meet him or play with him, sometimes he gives me tips on my game."

Like his dad, Mike, who coaches him at Royal Niagara Golf Club in Glendale, Zhu is also a top-tier junior tennis player, but golf consumes most of his attention these days.

Mike, now in his 60s, is a graduate of Beijing Sport University, where he majored in teaching and coaching elite athletes. He was a top tennis player in China into his 40s.

He coached Katherine until she was older and says



Top: Focus is key to success in elite sport and Eli Perng says he works hard on the mental side of the game. CORINNE BOSCH Bottom: At age 14, St. Davids golfer Kaige Zhu is six feet tall and regularly drives the ball 275 yards. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

he probably will continue to help Kaige for a few more years.

The family also lauds Carl Glauser, the boys' principal at St. Davids, for being helpful in their development and establishing a golf team at the school a few years ago.

"He's a very nice man and he encouraged them a lot," adds Kaige's mom, Jane Chu.

Practice is key to improving and on days when Perng and Zhu are not in a tournament, they'll often be on a practice range, working hard on their already impressive games.

For several years now, Perng has worked closely with Niagara-on-the-Lake native Travis Glass at Eagle Valley, just down the road from his family's home. Zhu usually practises at

Royal Niagara in Glendale.

Their golf resumes and accomplishments are extensive, with many wins and top 10 finishes. But both boys say they are self-motivated, driven to succeed by their love for the game.

Perng has won several U.S. Kids Niagara tournaments, which Glass oversees, but the young phenom traces his golf lineage back much further, to around age 11 months.

"My Nana (Corinne Bosch) got me some plastic clubs and I would just hit golf balls around the house, like tennis balls or anything, pretty much."

His paternal grandad also cut down an old iron and it became his first real club.

Then, around age seven, with encouragement from Glass, who's still his coach, he started playing in tourna-

ments.

And that has led to hectic summers like this past one where he teed it up at courses across Canada and the U.S.

"I've been really busy with a lot of tournaments this summer. So, most of my practising has been practice rounds and warming up for tournaments at many different courses," Perng says.

Competing in tournaments, especially against older, stronger, more experienced kids demands a positive mindset, he says.

And he also keeps an eye on those older players, studying how they play and manage their game.

"Honestly, I'm just focused on what I can do and at the end of the day, that's all I can control," he says.

For instance, on day two

of that Ontario U17 tourney a few weeks ago, "I hit a couple of really bad shots, but I still just focused on the next shot and what I can do better. I did really well at keeping my composure."

He shot 77 that day, a very respectable score that most recreational golfers would be ecstatic with. But at his elite level the goal is to shoot par or better.

At 14, he's got lots of time to work on that. He's 5 foot 7 and still growing but already drives the ball 240 yards or more.

Perng's dad Richard, a radiologist in Niagara, says Eli and Kaige have very different games.

At six feet tall, Zhu "hits the ball a ton, very long (often 275 yards or more off the tee). Eli is much more of a hit fairways and just stay down the middle kind of player," Richard says.

That accuracy helps him play the game at a high level, he says.

Dad accompanies Eli to most tournaments but emphasizes he is there for support, not to push him to excel.

"I don't want him to lose his love of the game and at this stage a parent can do that negatively," Richard says.

Besides, with five kids in the Perng family, all of whom are involved in competitive sports, there's a lot on the go.

Up till this year, Eli, the eldest, also was in competitive hockey, but after suffering a wrist injury last season while playing at the AA level in Niagara Falls, he's decided to hang up his skates.

That injury lingered for months and affected his golf game for much of the season, he says. So, now he's all-in on golf.

Father and son both play at Cherry Hill in Ridgeway, where Eli is the reigning junior boys champion. Dad is no slouch, though, and is a single-digit handicapper.

As Perng's coach at Eagle Valley, Glass is pleased by his protege's progress.

"Eli has made some great strides this season, with under-par rounds in local and (American Junior Golf Association) events in the

States," he tells The Lake Report.

"The hard work and dedication has not gone unnoticed by myself and staff around our course. The future is very bright for him."

Zhu's family retains strong ties to China and over the past few years has spent time each winter on Hainan Island, the southern-most part of the country. There, Kaige worked on his golf and tennis in the cold months, while keeping up with his schoolwork remotely.

Now that Kaige is in high school, dad Mike says how much time they spend in China remains to be seen.

Given his son's youth, it's important not to push too hard on the mental aspect of the game, he says.

"I want to teach him the method, the skills to control your emotions and to try to focus on each shot."

"We never push him to do the training," he adds. "He always wants to do it."

When he's older, he wants his son to be able to look back and recall a "happy childhood."

Kaige has played many sports, initially focusing on tennis and didn't really take golf seriously till about age 10.

When he got into it, "I loved the game, so I felt like I should start playing golf more and then just kind of stuck to it," he says.

He's come a long way in barely four years. While U.S. college golf is the next big goal, in the longer term, "I'd like to be like Collin and play on the PGA tour."

He recognizes there's a lot of work ahead to make that dream come true.

As with Eli, this year his goal was to consistently shoot par or better, whether he was playing in his own age group or against opponents years older.

Both players made significant strides and their futures seem bright.

As for how tiny St. Davids managed to turn out two such outstanding sport prospects, perhaps Eli sums it up best.

"I don't know, but it's pretty amazing, though, isn't it?"

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BKind Grateful #94: Give someone the benefit of the doubt before assuming the worst.

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



Contributed by Patty Garriock

“Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another.”
- G. K. Chesterson

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GRAPE STOMP!

Pressure doesn’t just create diamonds — it’s helpful when it comes to winemaking, too. The future wine-makers of Niagara, first-year students at Niagara College’s winery and viticulture technician program, took part in the annual grape stomp at the school’s teaching winery on Monday. They picked fresh grapes from the campus vineyard before splitting up into teams to stomp the grapes under their bare feet, racing to see which team could yield the most juice. Here, student Matt Greco gives it his all in the competition. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Opinion

Two Sisters. Two hotels. One big brawl



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner
Columnist

Angela and Melissa raised eyebrows last week. These sisters, it seems, just can’t get enough.

Mere weeks ago, the Marotta girls were holding court as their new Stone Eagle mega-winery and faux mausoleum opened just outside Old Town, next to the Terminal 4 Clayfield hotel, which opened its doors for overnight stays on Sept. 18. Meanwhile, Dad Marotta was hard at work building the hulking Parliament Oak hotel in the middle of a residential ‘hood.

And now A&M are pumping their latest project. It’s a whopper.

If the sisters get their way with local politicians (once again), the old Rand Estate will turn into a five-storey, 111-room luxury Ritz-Carlton hotel with banquet halls and a conference centre, plus 170 condos in five separate buildings, a spa, retail outlets and 514 parking spaces, above and below ground.

Town staff are studying the proposal, the latest after a former Marotta plan to cover the site with houses was rejected. This time A&M are being aggres-

sive — actively drumming up support with an online campaign, a dedicated website (see twosistersresorts.ca) and a petition aimed at those who will be our brave new leaders after October’s election.

“Today, we’re excited to share another chapter in that story: our vision for the proposed Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Spa & Residences at the historic Rand Estate in Niagara-on-the-Lake,” they say in an email that’s being widely distributed.

“For guests like you who already enjoy visiting Niagara-on-the-Lake, we believe the Ritz-Carlton would provide another exceptional choice for where to stay, while creating an experience that encourages visitors to spend more time discovering our wineries, restaurants, shops, theatre, attractions and beautiful countryside.

And the pitch: “If you share our excitement, we would be incredibly grateful if you would sign the petition and share it with friends, family and others who love visiting Niagara-on-the-Lake and would welcome another world-class accommodation experience in the region.”

The petition has urgency too. The deadline is Oct. 2.

The sisters say their ask is modest. Part of the property already has a zoning that allows a hotel or spa, and they’ve applied for approval to amalgamate and develop adjoining lots, already owned.

Besides, it fits right in with the province’s strategy



Sharing an exciting vision for on-the-Lake

Dear Garth,

If you’ve visited Two Sisters Vineyards, enjoyed our win with us in Niagara-on-the-Lake, you already know what destination so special.

For years, our family has been committed to creating experiences through wine, food and genuine hospitality

The Marotta family is throwing online resources behind its proposal for another major new hotel, scores of condos and a spa on the historic Rand Estate. But it appears NOTL may soon have an anti-development council.

of making this Las Vegas North and doubling tourism.

“A Ritz-Carlton in Niagara-on-the-Lake is a private investment reflective of the direction the province encourages: a reason to stay longer, close to the wineries and the theatres that the strategy is built around,” say the Marottas. “The plan is the province’s. The investment is ours. They point the same way.”

What are the odds of this happening?

Let’s ask the people running to be lord mayor (with super powers).

If Erwin Wiens wins, so do the sisters.

“I am in favour of developing the Rand Estate and the resulting public benefit of new commercial/residential tax revenue for the town, the protection and

restoration of heritage attributes, and the protection of old growth trees,” he tells me. If staff gives a thumbs up on this issue, he’s all in.

But Vaughn Goettler is a hard no.

“I am opposed,” he says. “It flies in the face of the Ontario Land Tribunal rulings to date and should not have been ‘heard’ by staff because it represented an ‘abuse of process.’ Staff should have sent it back and spent no time on it. That would have gotten the attention of the proponents and sent a message that we are not going to be pushed around.”

Andrea Kaiser said she’s aware of the proposal but will consult with staff before commenting.

By the way, the Marottas got Parliament Oak through the political process with votes from Wiens, Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, plus Couns. Wendy Cheropita, Maria Mavridis and Adriana Vizzari.

That was a narrow victory over the nays — Tim Balasiuk, Gary Burroughs, Sandra O’Connor and Nick Ruller (now heading town staff as chief administrator).

Balasiuk, Burroughs and O’Connor are all running again. Other council candidates who’d likely be anti-sisters include Nicholas Colaneri, Karen Jones-Taylor and Steve McGuinness.

The Marotta slate is shrinking.

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

garth@garth.ca

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

An apology to Benny Marotta

Dear editor:

I am writing to express my sincere apology for the Facebook post I made in June 2024 regarding the Marotta business practices.

In that post, I used the word “corrupt” and like words in describing your business practices. I recognize these words were baseless, inappropriate and inflammatory. I regret having made such a post,

which as determined by the Court was ill-motivated and showed a reckless disregard for the truth.

While I remain entitled to hold and express opinions about planning matters, I recognize that my actions went beyond what was appropriate and amounted to an attack on the integrity and reputation of both you and your businesses.

I sincerely regret any harm or distress that my words have caused you, your family or your business associates. It was not my intention to cause personal harm to your family, and I am sorry that my comments had that effect.

I respect the effort and commitment that you and your family have made over the years in building a successful business from the

ground up and contributing to the town and the region, in particular the Marotta Family Hospital.

Regardless of differences of opinion over development projects, I recognize that public discourse should be conducted respectfully and without casting aspersions on others.

**Stewart Hall
NOTL**

Summer floods show it's time to embrace a new perspective on water management

Dear editor:

In a former life, I was an international corporate turnaround consultant and former business owner. Accordingly, I respectfully, totally disagree with Mr. George Herman's letter from Sept. 17 in The Lake Report, proposing a complete house-cleaning of our elected officials, the lord mayor and council members, and replacing them with a slate of rookies.

Company and institutional cultural changes and turnaround situations never, ever pivots around Dear editor:

I read with interest Brian Marshall's Aug. 27 Architect column in which he addressed mitigation strategies for local flooding other than major infrastructure expenditures (“Arch-i-text: We need to rethink how we prevent major flooding”).

He presents some excellent practical ideas which require not large cash investments but, arguably more difficult, a reorientation in perspective.



A flooded Niagara-on-the-Lake home after this summer's severe storms. Letter writer Christine Earl says trees, permeable surfaces and other “sponge city” measures could help reduce future flooding. FILE/DAVE VAN DE LAAR

The first point he makes very forcibly, and with substantial facts to back up his assertions, is the important role that mature trees play in absorbing stormwater and how the careless destruction of canopy trees can lead directly to flooding.

A no-brainer, you might say. Unfortunately, this consequence is seldom considered beforehand.

Secondly, Brian Marshall discusses permeable versus

impermeable surfaces. Alas, impermeable surfaces proliferate in our built environment: roofs, roads, driveways, sidewalks, patios, playing surfaces, etc.

The runoff from these conventionally built surfaces contributes greatly to flooding and to the load on storm sewer infrastructure. There are alternatives to impermeable surfaces — permeable interlock, porous asphalt, permeable rubber,

and gravel or crushed stone contained by a mesh to keep it in place, to name a few.

In addition, low-cost options like rain gardens and bioswales can help to collect and use stormwater in situ. These ideas are encapsulated by the term “sponge cities” which are urban/suburban areas that use natural systems to collect, absorb and slowly release rainwater and runoff.

While we are a small community, we could usefully employ these concepts to enhance our sustainability.

I would very much support Mr. Marshall's call for requirements to build with permeable materials and to enforce lot coverages and setbacks to minimize impermeable surfaces in our town.

The powerful storms and severe flooding this summer should be evidence enough that we need a rethink, as Marshall puts it in his column. Spot on, Brian.

**Christine Earl
NOTL**

A few rookie politicians are fine — but not a lot

Dear editor:

In a former life, I was an international corporate turnaround consultant and former business owner. Accordingly, I respectfully, totally disagree with Mr. George Herman's letter from Sept. 17 in The Lake Report, proposing a complete house-cleaning of our

elected officials, the lord mayor and council members, and replacing them with a slate of rookies.

Company and institutional cultural changes and turnaround situations never, ever pivots around the directions of a new, 100 per cent rookie management structure. Com-

plete house-cleaning, when necessary, is driven by seasoned professionals with proven track records and astute mentoring skills.

In summation, while our frustrations may make us feel good by “throwing all the bums out,” so to speak, such a result would be an unmitigated disaster.

Accordingly, we must elect a blend of new with a very select minority and seasoned old-guard members, who can impart their knowledge and mentor the new rookie members to grow in their new positions.

**Samuel Young
NOTL**

RIDDLE ME THIS

This week's riddle is “Jeopardy!” style
Category: COUNTRY MUSIC

Dolly Parton sang this name, this name, this name, this naaaaaame, “I’m begging of you please don’t take my man.”

Last issue category: WORDS FOR CITY FOLK
Clue: A Yinzer is a person from this U.S. city located at the confluence of three rivers.
Answer: What is Pittsburgh?
Answered first by: Jeff Lake

Also answered correctly (in order) by:
Esther VanGorder, Sue Rautenberg, Sylvia Wiens, Margie Enns, Bob Wheatley, Jane Morris, Nick D’Amore, Lynda Collet, Emma Balsas, Margaret Garaughty, Bob Stevens, Jesse Agnew, Hugh Lundy, Donna Pearce, Catherine Clarke, Claudia Grimwood, Hedy Wiebe, Wade Durling, Marla Percy, Howard Jones, Sheila Meloche

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Would pausing development put NOTL in legal trouble?



ARCHITEXT

Brian Marshall
Columnist

A local radio talk show host on 610 CKTB, Jon Gonzo, runs a weekly segment titled “Myth, Fact and Misinformation,” in which he puts a variety of claims through a fact-checking screen to determine their veracity.

This week, I’d like to take a page out of his book to look at the question of declaring a municipal moratorium on development.

To put this in context, during the mayoral candidate forum held by the Niagara-on-the-Lake Residents Association on Sept. 14, Vaughn Goettler called for such a moratorium and suggested that this temporary suspension would allow the town to complete an infrastructure study that would ensure that any development applications would not overload the existing capacity, which could

result in flooding, drainage issues and sewage backups.

Another candidate, Andrea Kaiser, countered this by stating that, “Random moratoriums bring us back to court legal cases,” and claimed — apparently believing that even in absence of a thorough understanding of existing infrastructure capacity and limitations — the official plan, zoning bylaw and other planning tools would suffice.

Echoing Kaiser’s opposition to the Goettler proposal, the third candidate, Erwin Wiens, observed that a past moratorium bylaw (enacted by town council in December 2018) was “kicked to the curb” by Justice Peter D. Lauwers of the Ontario Court of Appeal (hence the out-of-court \$1 million settlement with Hummel Properties Inc. a year ago) and, similar to Kaiser, pointed to investing in an asset management plan apparently developed in absence of a complete holistic understanding of the existing infrastructure.

That said, let’s first understand what a municipality can do under existent provincial legislation.

In Part V of the Ontario Planning Act (land use controls and related administration), Section



Last week’s mayoral candidate forum saw Vaughn Goettler call for a moratorium on development in NOTL, while Andrea Kaiser and Erwin Wiens said it would open the door to litigation against the municipality. PAIGE SEBURN

38 provides a municipality with the authority to pass an interim control bylaw that effectively establishes a moratorium on development in order that a “review or study be undertaken in respect of land use planning policies in the municipality or in any defined area or areas thereof.”

Further, the Act establishes strict time limits that such a bylaw may be in force — one year with an option for council to extend for an additional year if required, which may not exceed two years in total. It defines that the pause in development must be for a bona fide planning reason(s) which might include such activities as evaluating waste water capacity, traffic grids and so on.

In addition it prohibits the use of an interim control bylaw to be used as an arbitrary way to block a specific, disliked project.

During the first year of the bylaw, only the provincial Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing may appeal it. However, should the municipality extend it into a second year, individuals and developers have the right to appeal the extension to the Ontario Land Tribunal.

Now, in the event that a bona fide study has been undertaken and requires the additional year to be completed, it is extremely unlikely that such an appeal would be launched, since there is a very high likelihood that the Ontario Land Tribunal would refuse to hear such an application.

Therefore, we can suggest that a moratorium for a maximum of two years, such as Mr. Goettler called for in order to conduct an infrastructure study, would be both legal and free from the threat of litigation.

That said, one must ask why the interim control bylaw passed in 2018 did not pass the acid test for legality.

Quite simply, the 2018 bylaw attempted to not only suspend land use applications but also applications for subdivision of land which, according to the ruling of Justice Peter Lauwers in the Court of Appeal for Ontario, are two separate things under the Planning Act (the provisions, processes and appeals governing subdivision of lands being detailed in Part VI of the Planning Act).

As a result, Lauwers determined that the bylaw was enacted for an improper purpose and therefore illegal.

To be fair to the town’s legal counsel, who I assume they consulted prior to trotting out the bylaw, the Ontario Supreme Court justice actually ruled in favour of the municipality’s position — it took the senior court to overturn that decision and establish a clear legal precedent in Ontario separating “land use” from “subdivision.”

But the senior court did not stop there. Justice Lauwers also questioned whether the immunity provisions contained in Ontario’s Municipalities Act, which pro-

tect the municipality from a tort remedy (legal requirement to compensate the “injured person” for financial and non-monetary losses) if, in a future trial, “bad faith” could be legally demonstrated, thereby exposing the town to malfeasance liability and a court-imposed financial settlement to be paid to the plaintiff based on their proving financial and non-monetary losses by the enactment of the bylaw.

We will never know if the \$1 million dollar out-of-court settlement with the plaintiff (Hummel Properties Inc.) was reasonable or completely out of bounds, since there was no published requirement for the developer to actually prove monetary losses pursuant to the settlement.

All this said, should any future council enact an interim control bylaw, underwritten by a duly compliant study, it will be largely legally unassailable.

So, does the claim that a development moratorium shall result in litigation fall into myth, fact or misinformation?

For a properly framed and executed bylaw, the answer is misinformation.

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



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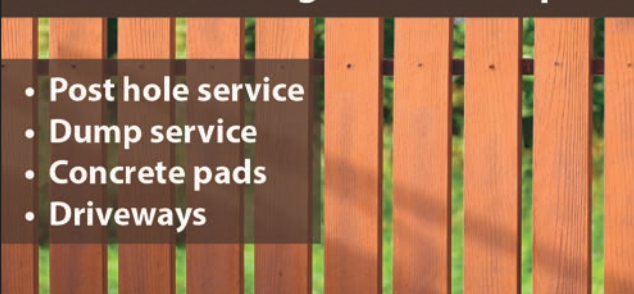
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A close-up photograph of a squirrel perched on a thick, textured tree branch. The squirrel has greyish-brown fur with a lighter, almost white, patch on its chest and belly. Its large, dark eyes are focused on the camera, and its small, reddish-brown ears are prominent. The squirrel's bushy tail is visible behind it, showing a mix of grey and white. The background is a soft-focus view of green foliage and a bright, sunny sky, suggesting a forest setting.

rossrocket9@gmail.com

289-968-8128

The town’s stuck in a circular financial dilemma

Dear editor:
Over the years, many of us have publicly and privately wondered what are town staff and councillors thinking when they make decisions that don’t appear in the best interests of its residents.

This four-part series of short letters to the editor will hopefully give some insight into that thinking behind the decision-making regarding flooding, finances, infrastructure, consultant reports, transparency versus privacy and safety.

A meeting was held on June 29 between Coun. Erwin Wiens, Jordan Frost (engineer and director of public works and infrastructure) and a number of St. Davids residents to discuss a variety of issues that perhaps can shed some light on the aforementioned topics.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa had, in a prior year, shrugged off one of the significant rainfall events we’ve had as a once in 500-year storm. Histori-



cal concerns and warnings from residents about water drainage fell on town council’s and staff’s deaf ears. Water drainage and flooding problems have existed in St. Davids, Four Mile Creek and many other NOTL locations for years. After many years of ignoring the problem specifically in St. Davids, the town finally recognized there was one.

They recently purchased more than nine acres for approximately \$1.9 million to establish a much larger reservoir to handle increased water flows from approved developments.

While the town seems to have found a solution to this problem, the solution won’t be operational, (according to Mr. Wiens), for another two years. In the meantime, construction and approvals on new developments continue, further stressing the existing inadequate system.

Doesn’t this sound like, and look like, development approvals preceding the adequacy of infrastructure to service new developments? Wouldn’t an inadequate infrastructure be justification for disallowing any further unwanted developments until the infrastructure was brought up to date?

I think the Ontario Land Tribunal would be out of its mind to approve developments when the infrastructure is critically inadequate. But our town council have

decided to appease these development requests, and not contest them at the Land Tribunal. Instead, they have approved them modifying the existing policies and guidelines.

Mr. Frost pointed out that hydrological studies in St. Davids (and probably other parts of NOTL) had been conducted by consultants (paid by the developer). Those consultants concluded there was no cause for concern — the system could handle the additional water flows.

He indicated that the hydrological analysis took into account 100 and even 500-year storms. I’m not sure he has seen the flooding impacts of recent storms.

Mr. Frost stressed that developments were important to the financial health of the town. Our taxes would jump significantly if they were not approved. The implication was this source of revenue was the driving and overwhelming factor to approve developments. Other factors weren’t mentioned.

It seems like the town is a circular financial dilemma. Stopping developments results in lower revenue to fund infrastructure, increased property taxes and unhappy residents who elect council. Approving developments results in infrastructure exceeding existing critical levels, a moderate increase in property taxes and residents enduring infrastructure shortcomings.

Which evil do they choose? The one where the electorate aren’t too impacted financially?

So, as Brian Marshall asked: what happened to all the development fees received from developers over the years that should have funded infrastructure?

Kyle Freeborn would have been instrumental in recommending the allocation of funds to specific requirements, but after 14 years, he’s not longer employed with the town.

To be continued ...
Gienek Ksiazkiewicz
St. Davids



We welcome your letters

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

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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Niagara should **be itself** — not mimic other vacation spots



Keith McNenly
Special to The Lake Report

Sometimes it helps to reduce complicated issues to “simple truths.”

I first arrived at that idea decades ago when I was invited by the provincial government to take part in seminars on provincial and municipal planning policy. What struck me was how often provincial ministries and their consultants went beyond setting broad provincial interests and instead micromanaged how those interests had to appear in local official plans.

Their main objective, then as now, was clear: local planning must support economic growth. I did not disagree with that. What I disagreed

with was the one-size-fits-all, top-down method of imposing detailed rules on hundreds of very different municipalities.

My suggestion was simpler. Let the province state its broad goals — its “simple truths” — and let municipalities interpret them according to local realities, with the province retaining final approval once local plans are completed.

One of those truths is that a strong economy matters. Another is that a healthy environment matters — and in my view, more. It is always more expensive to repair environmental damage than to prevent it, and in the end those costs fall back on the economy itself.

Niagara is a perfect example of the connection between nature and prosperity. This extraordinary landscape, created by glacial retreat and the Niagara Escarpment, is not just scenery. It is a foundation for agriculture, tourism, hydroelectric power and

regional identity.

I saw the same principle in the Hockley Valley area, about 100 kilometres north of Toronto, where I served as chief administrative officer. Also partly within the Niagara Escarpment, that area’s glacial gravel deposits created both rich aquifers and valuable aggregate.

The aquifers feed streams, rivers and ultimately the Great Lakes system that supports Niagara Falls. The gravel, meanwhile, helped build the GTA. Both resources served the economy, but they were also in tension.

That is why planning is not really about choosing one interest over another. It is about balance. Both aquifers and gravel matter. Sustainability, to me, means finding that balance so that growth does not destroy the environment that makes it possible in the first place.

That is also why one-size-fits-all planning does not work. What suits Toronto or Hamilton cannot simply be imposed on rural towns.

In Mono, we argued successfully that our greatest contribution to the wider regional economy was not development but environmental protection. Our aquifers were just as important in the long term as urban subdivisions elsewhere. They could not be replaced once damaged, and groundwater-based communities cannot be expected to contribute in the same way as cities drawing on Lake Ontario.

The same simple truth applies in Niagara-on-the-Lake. If the province wants a strong economy, local people should have the freedom to determine how their community contributes to it. Municipalities are different. Their assets are different. Their solutions should be different, too.

Here, the central tension is not between gravel and water but between development and heritage. As this newspaper’s columnists argue, built heritage is too often treated as an obstacle to commercial growth,

when in fact it is one of the region’s greatest economic strengths.

People do not travel to stay in hotels. They use hotels so they can experience a place. They come here for the landscape — from the pastoral beauty of wine country to the spectacle of Niagara Falls — and for the built heritage, history, culture and character that make this region unlike anywhere else.

Destroy those things, and the argument for more development begins to collapse. Hotels, housing and attractions should be built without destroying the very assets that bring people here in the first place.

That is why Niagara-on-the-Lake should not be treated as an extension of a “Vegas North” casino economy. We are not a desert entertainment strip. To borrow parlance from the Shaw Festival, we should not be cast as a rival to the Falls’ main stage, but as a distinct and complementary

act in the wider theatre of Niagara.

The province may need growth, but the best way to achieve it is by allowing communities to shape their own contribution to the larger economy. Local councils, too, when given the opportunity to approve or modify development proposals, should listen to citizens. If local judgment matters, it must mean more than replacing provincial fiat with municipal deafness.

Niagara-on-the-Lake has a duty: to protect the history, landscape and agricultural character that make this region economically vibrant and unlike anywhere else. The recurring lesson is simple: provinces, regions and big cities use broad brushes, while local communities paint the details.

Any place can imitate Las Vegas. There is only one Niagara.

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

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Think bigger about the town’s recreation future

Dear editor:

Since the original closure of the Virgil pickleball courts in 2023, their reopening in 2025, and their final closure in 2026, Niagara-on-the-Lake council has repeatedly discussed finding a suitable location to rebuild the courts and provide both the general public and the pickleball community with a place to play.

To date, however, no action has been taken to move this forward.

That is why the current Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund opportunity deserves serious consideration.

The fund is a \$500-million Ontario government program that provides funding to municipalities for the construction of new facilities and improvements to existing recreation infrastructure.

This year may also be the final opportunity for NOTL to qualify for special consideration that could provide up to 70 per cent provincial funding of eligible project

costs, rather than the standard 50 per cent.

With that opportunity available, why not think bigger?

Rather than submitting an application only for the St. Davids pool, the town should also investigate an application for a dedicated indoor pickleball facility — or, explore whether the two could become part of one integrated recreation project.

An indoor facility would not replace the importance of outdoor recreation. It would complement it by providing something NOTL currently does not have: a year-round place for residents to play pickleball, regardless of rain, wind, heat or cold.

Pickleball has become an important part of our community’s recreational life. A dedicated indoor facility could support residents of all ages and abilities, provide year-round programming and potentially generate revenue through memberships, tournaments,

lessons and other activities.

There are several questions worth exploring now:

Could an indoor facility be located near the new St. Davids pool?

Could an existing town asset, such as the former Virgil pickleball site, be repurposed?

Could the town work with the local pickleball community to develop a partnership model?

Could the pool and an indoor pickleball facility be incorporated into a larger, multi-use recreation complex?

A combined recreation project could create a significant community hub serving residents throughout the year. Shared parking, utilities, staffing and programming could create operational efficiencies, while a larger facility could support youth programs, seniors’ recreation, fitness, aquatics, pickleball tournaments and other community events.

It could also have tourism and economic benefits. A



A provincial infrastructure fund could help Niagara-on-the-Lake develop a permanent, year-round home for pickleball, letter writer Ron Pychel argues. FILE

modern recreation complex could attract regional tournaments, training camps and events, bringing visitors and additional spending to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Most importantly, it would allow the town to address two important recreation needs while taking advantage of provincial funding that may cover a significant portion of eligible costs.

The Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund supports major new-build projects of up to \$10 million. That makes this an opportunity worth investigating — not after another funding window has closed, but now.

NOTL has an opportunity to think beyond simply

replacing what was lost in Virgil. We can look at what our community will need five, 10 and 20 years from now and build recreation infrastructure that serves residents year-round.

The questions before council are straightforward: What is possible? What could it cost? What partnerships could make it work? And what provincial funding could help make it happen?

These questions deserve answers before the fund’s Dec. 22 deadline.

Let’s make sure that several years from now, we are not looking back and asking why NOTL failed to pursue an opportunity that was right in front of us.

Ron Pychel
Virgil

Does change in NOTL include a casino or jet airport?

Dear editor:

Strong mayor powers may possibly bring huge changes to our beloved town.

But what kind of changes do citizens actually want?

Two important issues which I believe must be addressed by every single candidate for lord mayor and councillor:

“Should Niagara-on-the-Lake’s future include a casino? Or a jet airport?”

I think NOTL citizens should know these answers before we vote.

Will Wilson
NOTL

Rookie politicians have their work cut out for them

Dear editor:

Watch out, or the bureaucrats will rule.

In regards to the debate carried out by Mr. Herman (“Letter: We need rookie politicians to shake things up,” Sept. 17) and Mr. Slingerland (“NOTL voters lay out priorities,” Sept. 10) on the merits of electing rookie or incumbent councillors to office, the only winners in a rookie council is the bureaucracy.

The first major priority of a new council is the budget. How does a rookie know of the decision-making process of solidifying a working budget?

It is not the responsibility of the bureaucracy to teach a rookie “the ropes.” The bureaucracy is there to answer questions — what questions would a rookie know to ask?

Certainly classes are offered to rookie councillors, but bureaucrats tend to fail at teaching.

The best that a rookie could hope is find a mentor among the newly elected incumbents who is willing to share the knowledge — other than that, a rookie needs to overcome a sharp learning curve, based on an education of the system, or the bureaucrats rule.

Good luck with that.

Derek Insley
NOTL

We need a return to principles and values in NOTL

Dear editor:

I applaud Jim Huggins who, at the candidates’ session sponsored by the St. Davids Ratepayers Association, confronted the panel regarding the sewage and flooding crises plaguing our homes.

Honest and direct questioning must be the tone of such forums, given that a lack of transparent communication has too often characterized local governance over the past term.

We have witnessed an over-reliance on closed-door sessions and a shortage of meaningful public engagement on critical community issues, from heritage trail access to costly out-of-court awards. We must hold our local government accountable more than just at election time.

When critical decisions — such as filling mid-term council vacancies — are decided behind closed doors rather than through open, traditional processes, the foundational trust between the community and its leadership erodes.

We cannot afford another four years where public consultation is treated as an inconvenient afterthought rather than a core demo-



cratic obligation.

We hear a great deal of talk on the campaign trail about “experience,” but we must ask ourselves what that entrenched approach has delivered for our neighborhoods.

A look at the St. Davids roundabout project reveals the limits of that administrative style: a contentious design pushed through despite widespread resident concern and clear warnings from our community planners.

True leadership means listening to the town, not just managing it from the top down.

Public voting records confirm what this town is fully aware of: we have had

two dedicated individuals on council who consistently support the democratic process and fight for the community.

They stood alone in voting against bypassing proper procedures for mid-term appointments, and they opposed granting multi-million dollar breaks to developers at the taxpayers’ expense. Their integrity and alignment with the community are commendable, and we owe them our gratitude for holding the line.

However, the reality of our current municipal dynamic is that a couple of isolated voices — no matter how dedicated — cannot alone shift the direction this town is embracing. When the system itself lacks openness, even our most principled representatives find their perspectives sidelined.

Moving forward, it is unfair to expect a few individuals to carry this heavy burden. We need to elect a completely unified, energized team — leaders who will act as a loud collective megaphone for the public and actively champion a culture of openness.

Look no further than how our local representation has been eroded. Under the

Municipal Act, a strict Jan. 1 deadline exists to alter council composition — a timeline explicitly designed to guarantee proper public notice, debate and resident input.

Missing that democratic window should have paused the conversation. Instead, a hasty municipal motion was pushed through on March 24 to bypass that timeline, requesting provincial intervention.

The resulting late amendment to Bill 100 stripped us of two local council seats this election year, without a single town hall meeting or resident vote.

The new council must address this legacy of internal structural issues, kicking aside democratic principles, and now compounded by the imminent threat of amalgamation.

This is not the time for green-lighting and managing endless developments; this is a time for creating a strong team and a path forward, dedicating all our resources and energy toward protecting our borders, enacting our vision and values.

With regional governance frameworks shifting under the provincial govern-

ment’s restructuring plans, we should never have lost those extra council seats at a time when we needed local representation the most.

The compression of our voice means Niagara-on-the-Lake’s representation at the regional table will be intensely restricted.

Our next lord mayor and councillors will serve as our solitary line of defence for our voice, our heritage, and our unique place in Canadian history. If we elect a leadership prone to quiet consensus, our historic lands and commensurate culture, agricultural base and local tax dollars will be completely swallowed by larger urban interests.

This October, we are electing more than just some maintenance of the status quo; we are electing a diplomatic shield to protect our town from political erasure.

Its wisely said, “Fool us once, shame on you; fool me (us) twice, shame on me (us).” This community cannot be given a second chance to be blindsided. We deserve fresh, informed, principled, articulate and energized leadership.

Judith Barnes
NOTL

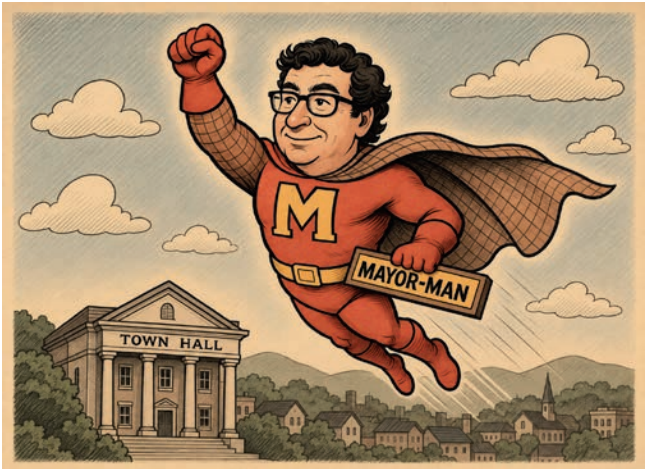


Our next mayor should reject strong powers as **undemocratic**

Dear editor:
Since the introduction of strong mayor powers by the provincial government in 2022 to spur housing development, no less than 20 Ontario municipalities have rejected the use of them as undemocratic — including Stratford, which went so far as launching a court action to have them declared unconstitutional.

The essential problem with strong mayor powers in Niagara-on-the-Lake is that they will allow the lord mayor to override the majority decisions of council by convincing two of the six councillors to support his/her position in overturning the majority decision of council which is simply undemocratic and unacceptable under any circumstances.

It is understood there are some benefits to administrative streamlining of staffing and budgeting, but when it comes to policy decisions on planning and bylaws, our lord mayor and councillors cannot resort to using this ill-conceived tool.



Letter writer Bob Bader says any use of strong mayor powers is undemocratic and should be refused. FILE

That is why we need a specific pledge from each lord mayor candidate stating that he/she firmly promises to never use strong mayor powers to defeat a majority vote of our elected council.

Furthermore, we need a specific pledge from each of our council candidates that he/she will never support the lord mayor in using strong mayor powers to defeat a majority vote of council.

Anything like, “I’ll only use it as a last resort, or

to overturn unacceptable development or some other circumstance” is still undemocratic and wrong.

Oh, and anyone who points to the lord mayor’s completely egregious attempt to veto the cold-storage commercial project at the end of May as to how the current system works satisfactorily is simply throwing shade (“Council kills St. Davids farm storage proposal — again,” May 28).

Bob Bader
NOTL

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HSGN
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This is not the Niagara-on-the-Lake that raised me. But with kindness it can be

To the residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake, I have spent a great deal of time thinking about whether to write this letter.

Over the last four years, I have accepted that being an elected official means having my votes questioned, my decisions challenged and my record scrutinized. That is democracy.

But there should still be a line between challenging someone's political record and questioning whether they belong in public service because of their mental health.

This week, someone sent me screenshots of a lengthy discussion on a Facebook page where I am blocked and unable to respond.

The post questioned my ability to serve as a councillor because I have spoken publicly about experiencing anxiety in large, loud and confrontational crowds. It ultimately suggested the responsible thing for me to do would be to withdraw from the election.

The author does not know me personally.

So there is something she – and perhaps many others – may not know.

My anxiety around large crowds stems, in part, from having experienced epileptic seizures in public.

Anyone who has experienced a frightening medical event in public may understand how that experience stays with you. A large, loud crowd can sometimes trigger a very real fear and physical response.

Yes, there have been occasions when a council chamber became extremely loud – yelling, clapping, heightened emotions – and I stepped outside.

But I came back.

I may have missed a committee vote while briefly outside, but I returned and was present for council votes.

A few minutes outside a room do not erase four years inside it.

They do not erase the research, preparation, constituent calls, meetings, motions, debates and votes. And they certainly do not erase a lifetime of accomplishments while living with anxiety.

I have built businesses. I have worked in hospitality and events for decades. I founded Anchor Niagara and organized events attended by thousands of people. I have served on community boards, spoken publicly, participated in difficult debates and faced protests, criticism and even a death threat.

I have raised a daughter.

And for four years, I have served this community as a councillor, bringing forward initiatives dealing with rental licensing, business licensing, youth and community grants, heritage, tree protection, bylaw modernization, seniors and youth programming, road safety and other policy changes.

People are free to disagree with every one of them. They are free to challenge every vote I have cast.

But mental health should never become an election weapon.

The suggestion that someone experiencing anxiety should step away from public life troubles me far beyond what was said about me.

What message does that send to the teenager struggling with anxiety who dreams of becoming a leader?

To the mother managing her own struggles while raising her children and going to work every morning?

To someone living with a visible or invisible disability who wants to contribute to their community?

That public life isn't for them?

That they should step aside?

I refuse to accept that.

Four years ago, my family worried about exactly this

When I first seriously considered running for council, my dad – a father and natural protector – was concerned.

He knew me and he knew how I was raised. He didn't like the idea of his daughter being exposed to the chaos that can come with public life.

My family raised me to be humble and private. When you help someone, you don't need recognition. When you donate, you do it quietly. When you give back, you don't expect applause.

You give because it is the right thing to do.

That made politics uncomfortable. Suddenly, things our family had always done quietly became things I was expected to talk about publicly – where I had volunteered, what I had contributed

and why I deserved someone's vote.

We weren't raised to tell people about the good things we did.

We were raised to do them.

My stepmom worried too, particularly about what public life might mean for my mental and physical health.

But there was another part of my family's story that shaped my decision.

I lost my mother when she was only 44 years old after a long battle with cancer.

I watched my mother fight for her life.

And through it all, **she never gave up.**

She never shied away from life because it became difficult. Even while facing her own battle, she gave enormously to this community.

My stepmom understood my dad's instinct to protect me. But she also understood the example my mother left behind.

And so, in my mom's honour, my stepmom encouraged me to run.

That means more to me than I can adequately explain.

My family knew public life might be difficult for me. But they also knew fear should not be the reason I stopped giving back.

And I know why I decided to run anyway.

Because this community helped raise me, and I believed it was my turn to give back in another way.

This is the Niagara-on-the-Lake community that raised me

My family came to Niagara-on-the-Lake in 1992, when I was 12 years old.

I grew up here. My parents operated businesses here, including Taylor's Bakery on Queen Street. I grew up watching them work, watching neighbours help neighbours and learning what it meant to belong to a small community.

At 19, I was appearing before the Heritage Committee advocating for changes on Queen Street.

Now we are raising the next generation here.

My daughter has grown up watching her mother serve this town.

And our children are watching all of us.

They see what adults write online. They see how we speak about people with whom we disagree. They see whether someone's vulnerability becomes ammunition and whether kindness is something we talk about or something we practise.

They are learning from us what the word **community** means.

That matters far beyond one election.

Somewhere along the way, our public conversation seems to have adopted a word I wish we would stop using so freely:

Fight.

Fight development. Fight council. Fight town hall. Fight a hotel. Fight a parking lot. Fight change. Fight each other.

Why does everything have to be a fight?

I don't want "fighting" to define Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Democracy does not require us to become enemies.

We can disagree about development without attacking one another. We can debate density, heritage, parking, tourism, infrastructure and taxes without assuming someone who reaches a different conclusion doesn't care about Niagara-on-the-Lake.

We can challenge decisions without attacking the people who made them.

We can preserve our heritage while acknowledging another generation needs somewhere to live. We can welcome visitors while protecting residents' quality of life. We can plan for tomorrow without pretending yesterday never mattered.

That is the Niagara-on-the-Lake I believe in.

I am a councillor, but that title is only one small part of who I am.

I am a daughter. A mother. A sister.

I am a friend, a neighbour and a member of this community. Public office makes my decisions open to criticism. It should. But it does not make me less human.

So debate my votes. Challenge my decisions. Question my record. Ask why I supported something or opposed it. Hold me accountable.

But please remember that I am part of this community too.

Someday you, your child, your spouse, your parent or someone you love may struggle. They may experience anxiety, live with an invisible disability, become overwhelmed or need a little

understanding while continuing to contribute enormously to the world around them.

When that day comes, I hope this community doesn't tell them to step aside.

I hope we make room for them at the table.

And if the person who wrote those words about me ever needs my help as her councillor, I will be there too.

I won't ask whether she supported me, criticized me or voted for me.

Because that is how I was raised.

You don't help someone because they can do something for you. You help because someone needs you.

That is kindness.

That is public service.

That is community.

Strength isn't never becoming overwhelmed. Sometimes strength is recognizing what is happening, stepping outside for a few minutes, collecting yourself, walking back through those doors and continuing to do the job.

That is what I did.

My mother taught me that strength doesn't mean life never knocks you down. It means you continue to live, love, contribute and give what you can for as long as you can.

My dad wanted to protect me. My stepmom wanted to protect me too. My mother taught me to keep going.

I carry all three of them with me.

And now, looking at my own daughter, I realize the example we set today becomes the definition of community her generation carries tomorrow.

We owe the next generation something better than fighting.

We owe them kindness, respect and disagreement without cruelty.

We owe them a community where someone's mental health is never used to tell them they don't belong.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake that raised me taught me that community isn't something you fight over. It's something you quietly give to, care for and build together.

And finally, to answer Anne Dryden directly

To answer Anne Dryden's suggestion that I "do myself and the public a favour," step away and make room for the other candidates:

I will never step away from this community.

I will never turn my back on it.

And I will never give up on it.

If speaking openly about this costs me an election, so be it.

"Doing the right thing" has always been my motto.

I have spent four years making decisions based on what I believed was right after doing the work, reading the reports, asking questions and listening to residents.

People have every right to disagree with those decisions, including my vote on a hotel.

But if disagreement with that vote leads someone to invoke my anxiety, epilepsy or mental health as a reason I am somehow less capable of serving, then this becomes about something much bigger than me or one election.

It becomes a conversation about **what kind of community we want Niagara-on-the-Lake to be.**

I know the community that raised me.

It taught me to give quietly. To help without expecting recognition. To stand up when something isn't right. To keep going when life becomes difficult. To disagree without losing our humanity.

And, above all, **to never turn our backs on one another.**

Whatever happens in this election, I will still be Maria.

A daughter. A mother. A sister. A neighbour.

And a member of this community.

An election can determine whether I have a seat at the council table.

It can never determine whether I have a place in the community that raised me.

And I will never stop giving back to it.

– Maria Mavridis
Councillor, Daughter, Mom,
Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

*"I am a daughter,
a mother, a sister, a friend
and a neighbour.
I am a member of this
community too." ♥*



Let's Choose a Kinder Conversation.



**MENTAL HEALTH AFFECTS
1 IN 5 CANADIANS.**
You likely know someone
who is living with one.



**TALKING ABOUT MENTAL
HEALTH REDUCES STIGMA**
and builds stronger,
healthier communities.



**WE SHOULD BE LIFTING
EACH OTHER UP**
not using someone's mental
health as a political weapon.



**A MORE COMPASSIONATE
COMMUNITY**
is a stronger community
for everyone.

*Compassion, respect and understanding
belong in our community — always.*



Mental Health Should Never Be An Election Issue.

COMPASSION BUILDS STRONGER COMMUNITIES.
STIGMA HOLDS US ALL BACK.

Someone sent me screenshots of a full discussion taking place on a Facebook page that I am blocked from accessing or responding on. The post questions my ability to serve as a Councillor because I have been open about experiencing anxiety in large, loud and confrontational crowds. It even suggests that the "responsible" thing for me to do is withdraw from the election.

Anne Dryden – I don't know you personally, but since you chose to publicly question my ability to serve, I would like the opportunity to respond. Because I cannot do so on the page where you posted this, I will respond here.

Yes, I have anxiety.

My anxiety around large crowds stems in part from having experienced epileptic seizures in public. When you have experienced something like that, being surrounded by a large, loud crowd can trigger a very real fear and physical response. That is not a character flaw. It does not determine my intelligence, my judgment, my preparation or my ability to make decisions as a Councillor.

I did leave rooms at times, but I always came back.

I may have missed a committee vote while briefly outside, but I returned and was present for Council votes. Other members of Council have also stepped out of meetings for various reasons, and there have been occasions when members did not attend meetings at all. A momentary need to leave a room does not erase four years of work, preparation, votes, motions, constituent calls, meetings, community events and decisions.

Making this election about someone's mental health is disgraceful.

It is harmful, unfair and spreads stigma. Mental health challenges do not make someone less capable, less intelligent or less committed. They make us human.

I have done the work.

During this term, I brought forward initiatives on short-term and long-term rental licensing, the Master Business Licence Program, youth and community grants, the Queen Street Heritage District Secondary Plan, tree protection, by-law modernization, seniors and youth programming, road safety and other policy changes. I asked difficult questions, cast difficult votes and kept doing the work — even when it wasn't easy.

One day, you – or someone you love – may struggle too.
You may need an elected representative who understands what it feels like to be overwhelmed, scared, or simply trying to get through something difficult while still carrying responsibilities. And if that day comes, I will be there for you too. Because representation isn't about being perfect. It's about showing up, doing the work, being accountable for your decisions and serving people — including the people who don't support you.

A stronger, kinder NOTL for everyone. ♥



MAKING THE INVISIBLE **VISIBLE**

HIDDEN disabilities 

Paid for by the Maria Mavridis campaign.



- Across**
- 1. U S space group (1,1,1,1)
 - 3. Court game (10)
 - 10. Consequently (9)
 - 11. Female sovereign (5)
 - 12. Survive (7)
 - 13. Bowling pin (7)
 - 14. Skin eruption (4)
 - 15. Pachyderms (9)
 - 19. Sue (9)
 - 21. German Mrs (4)
 - 24. Passage (7)
 - 27. Surrey commuter village (7)
 - 28. Trembling poplar (5)
 - 29. Mouth organ (9)
 - 30. Science of numbers (10)
 - 31. Undiluted (4)
- Down**
- 1. Belonging to a country (8)
 - 2. Enticement (9)
 - 4. Papal (9)
 - 5. Leg joints (5)
 - 6. Mexican liquor (7)
 - 7. Proficient (5)
 - 8. Beam over a door (6)
 - 9. Started (5)
 - 16. Medley (3-6)
 - 17. Frighten, usually by violence (9)
 - 18. Take away (8)
 - 20. Squeeze together (7)
 - 22. Las Vegas setting (6)
 - 23. Racecourse (5)
 - 25. Island in the Bay of Naples (5)
 - 26. Resort lake in both California and 22 down (5)

Crossword Puzzle

1		2			3	4		5		6		7		8
				9										
10										11				
12								13						
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		19			20							21		
22										23				
24		25				26		27						
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30												31		

Last issue's answers

1	E	M	S	V	S	I	B	O
2	D	R	A	M	A	T	I	S
3	I	N	R	O	E	A	R	P
4	C	H	A	N	C	E	L	
5	T	G	A	I	M	Y		
6	M	E	S	S	E	N	G	E
7	P	M	T		R		P	U
8	S	P	E	C	I	E	S	
9	A	N	C	U		T	L	E
10	L	O	T	S		T	R	U
11	M				S	P	E	L
12	B	A	R	R	I	E	R	
13	O	E	X		I	D	I	A
14	O	W	L	E	T		S	H
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	6			7	9			
	7	2	5		1		8	

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EXPLORING HISTORY
WITH NOTL MUSEUM

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and the Covenant Chain



Prior to the War of 1812, alliances had been established between the Crown and many First Nations, including the 1764 Treaty of Niagara, which was negotiated by Sir William Johnson for the Crown. This treaty affirmed and extended the Silver Covenant Chain of Friendship with 24 Native nations, including the Haudenosaunee and other members of the Western Lakes Confederacy. At this time, First Nations acted with full agency, managing their own affairs in the context of nation-to-nation status with Britain.

After the war, the Chain of Friendship was left to tarnish.

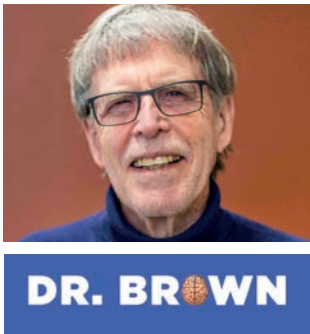
First Nations who had fought alongside their British and Canadian allies faced neglect and policies designed to strip them of their cultures, lands, and resources. The Indian Act, passed in 1876, advanced a policy of assimilation and to implement this, residential schools were established. These schools did significant harm to Indigenous children by removing them from their families, denying them the use of their languages, exposing them

to mental, physical, and sexual abuse by staff, and coerced them to reject their own cultural beliefs.

In 2008, the Government of Canada apologized for its role in the residential school system and established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Its calls to action include greater education about Indigenous peoples' histories and contributions to Canada. And the history of Indigenous contributions during the War of 1812 is an important part of that story, particularly here in NOTL.

The Haudenosaunee and other First Nations played a vital role in defending this region alongside their British and Canadian allies. The wampum belts being shown by the Six Nations chiefs in this picture from 1871 is a reminder of the diplomatic relationships and agreements that shaped this history. After the war, that relationship was neglected and the Silver Covenant Chain of Friendship was allowed to tarnish. Truth and reconciliation asks us to acknowledge what happened to those relationships and to consider how they can be renewed.

mRNA to black holes, Nobels show science's marvels



Dr. William Brown
Columnist

To win a Nobel Prize is regarded as the highest honour for most scientists. And for good reason: to look at the list of laureates in physics, chemistry and medicine or physiology is to see some of the finest, most groundbreaking work in science over the last hundred and twenty-five years since the Nobel prizes were founded by Alfred Nobel.

Progress in the sciences has a long and rich history over the centuries but the magnitude of progress in the sciences throughout the 20th and now first quarter of the 21st century stand out for science's very broad scope, depth and exponential growth and is mirrored by changes in almost every field of engineering.

Before I began the annual reviews of Nobel prizes in 2017, I was well aware of the work of neuroscientists such as Sherrington, Erlanger and Gasser, Hodgkin and Huxley, Eccles and Katz, all of whom won a Nobel Prize that had something to do with the bio-physics or physiology of the

nervous system — which were “need to know” material for me in neurology and neurophysiology.

However, I was largely unaware of the broad body of high-quality work in other areas of sciences such as cosmology, quantum physics, chemistry and much of medicine outside the nervous system.

Quantum physicists Steven Weinberg and Richard Feynman, both theoretical physicists and Nobel laureates, believed that if you wanted to learn something, find some way to teach it.

That's precisely what they did, and what I've tried to emulate for the last 10 years, when I've shared with the public what I learned from the work of leading scientists who won Nobel prizes in the sciences each year. It wasn't easy, but doing so, I expanded my horizons in science well beyond what I understood as a clinical neurologist and neuroscientist.

This year is the 10th anniversary of the annual program at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library that reviews the keystone three sciences awarded Nobel prizes — physics, chemistry and medicine or physiology — and related disciplines in mathematics and engineering.

There also coverage of the economics and peace prizes covered by David Elkins and the literature prize — perhaps the toughest of the lot to cover — by Valmai Elkins.



The development of mRNA vaccines against COVID-19 earned Katalin Karikó and Drew Weissman the 2023 Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine. SOURCED

As part of the anniversary celebration, David, Valmai and I intend to highlight the best of the winners in the last 10 years, including 2026.

It's difficult to pick winners in the sciences, because the quality is so uniformly high every year. However, there are favorites of mine.

In 2017, the first year of the series, a Nobel was won by Weiss, Barish and Thorne for developing an exquisitely sensitive device designed to detect faint waves in space-time generated by the collision of two very distant middling-sized black holes.

Gravitational waves were considered a possibility by Einstein, based on his masterpiece work, general relativity, but he thought (and rightly so for the time) that the ripples in space-time would be far too feeble to pick up with the tools of

his time. He was right then, but three decades of hard work by the three laureates, backed by hundreds of scientists and engineers, showed it was possible.

That stunning Noble Prize was awarded two years after the first gravitational waves were detected. It turns out that space is crowded with gravitational waves generated by collisions between black holes, a black hole and a neutron star, or between two neutron stars. So far however, no gravitational waves generated by the Big Bang have been detected.

The Nobel committee wasted no time in awarding a Nobel Prize to Penrose, Genzel and Ghez in 2020 for their work in finding a giant black hole at the center of the Milky Way and showing that black holes were a robust prediction of

general relativity. This prize was awarded one year after pictures of the first black hole finally showed unequivocally that black holes existed.

But of all the physics prizes, my favorite was won in 2022 by Zeilinger, Aspect and Clauser, who showed that particles such as photons or electrons could behave as one (entangled), sometimes at enormous distances, a notion considered impossible by Einstein in this, his last challenge to his friend Niels Bohr, and quantum physics, which Einstein considered fell short of a complete theory because of its lack of causality.

Einstein may have lost the challenge posthumously, but many living physicists agree — he was right to question quantum physics as a complete theory, devoid of causality. I'm not a physicist, but I'm on Albert's side.

My favorite chemistry prize was the 2021 Nobel won by Charpentier and Doudna for their pioneering work in gene editing using a guide molecule (CRISPR) designed to latch onto a specific target gene coupled with an enzyme (Cas 9) to cut part or all of the dysfunctional gene out.

The method wasn't perfect, but in the succeeding decade led to other methods in gene editing to make the genetic engineering more precise and less prone to off target hits.

For the medicine prize, how can I not site Karikó

and Weissman's key work in developing mRNA vaccines, without which millions infected with COVID-19 would have died?

And finally, a favorite of mine was the solo award of the medicine Nobel prize to Svante Paabo for his pioneering work developing tools for studying ancient nuclear DNA.

His work led to fascinating revelations of sex between closely related species such as denisovans, neanderthals and modern humans, methods for studying why ancient species such as neanderthals went extinct and tracking migrations patterns and group sizes among ancient humans and modern humans.

Truth be told, all the Nobel prizes I've reviewed have been fascinating, and thank goodness for prizes such as the Nobel Prize and now many other prizes which highlight the best of science — something urgently needed in these days of social media and ramped misinformation.

This year's series on the 2026 Nobel Prize, taking place at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library, will begin on Wednesday, Oct. 28 and take place every Wednesday until Dec. 9.

Dr. William Brown is a professor of neurology at McMaster University and co-founder of the InfoHealth series at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.



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Obituary

The Eady Family

Craig, Danna, Remus, Pavel

It is with profound sorrow that we announce the tragic deaths of our son, **Craig Eady, 44**; our daughter-in-law, **Danna Eady (Farrar), 41**; and our beloved grandsons, **Remus, 13, and Pavel, 10**, following a plane crash in Fresno, California, on Sept. 5, 2026.

Born and raised in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Craig attended Parliament Oak School and Niagara District Secondary School before later settling in California with his family. He is lovingly remembered by his parents, Rick and Sylvia Eady; his siblings Amanda (Nikkel), Kyle and Lindsay; their families; and many extended family members and friends.

Craig and Danna leave behind their two surviving children, **Felicity, 18**, and **Lucien, 17**, who are now facing the unimaginable loss of their parents and brothers while trying to rebuild their lives and plan for their futures.

A donation page has been established to help provide Felicity and Lucien with much-needed financial stability and support in the months and years ahead. Donations of any amount would be deeply appreciated and can be made through **SupportNow – The Eady Family**, or by scanning the QR code below.

We are profoundly grateful for the love, kindness and support that has been shown to our family during this devastating time.

Craig, Danna, Remus and Pavel will be deeply loved, missed and remembered always.

We welcome your letters

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

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