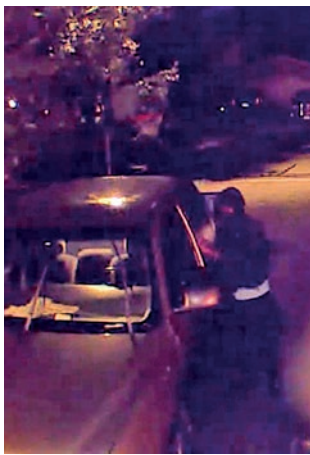




A car is broken into in Garrison Village.

Cars targeted across NOTL as break-ins and thefts rise

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Stolen vehicles, smashed windows and people caught checking cars on security cameras have Niagara-on-the-Lake residents comparing notes after a string of incidents stretching from late last week into this week.

Residents in Garrison Village and around Tanbark Road and Fedorkow Lane are among those who say their vehicles were targeted.

Garrison Village resident Stephanie Penman had her vehicle stolen at about 5:10 a.m. Thursday. A neighbour found it later that day where it had been ditched.

She said police told her another vehicle was then stolen from the area where hers had been left, and that while she gave her statement around 10 a.m. that morning, the officer was receiving more calls from her street.

Her vehicle is now at a

Continued on Page 5

Pucker up, help some pups

Young girl's fifth annual lemonade fundraiser squeezes out \$3,000 for dog rescue



Since starting her annual lemonade stand fundraiser five years ago, 10-year-old Ishani Ayona Pal has managed to raise more than \$10,000 in support of Niagara Dog Rescue — the place that united her with Spot, her beloved furry friend. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

Andrew Hawlitzky | The Lake Report

It started five years ago with a lemonade stand, a love for her rescue dog, Spot, and a dream to help other pups like him who need a place to call home.

Since then, 10-year-old Ishani Ayona Pal has raised more than \$10,000 for a Niagara animal

rescue by running a lemonade stand outside her home in Niagara-on-the-Lake every summer every year.

Ayona Pal was out on Sunday with her friends, selling cold glasses of fresh lemonade and small bags of popcorn to those who stopped by her home in Old Town.

"I want to raise money for the dogs and make sure they get a safe home," she said.

The stand raised \$900 in 2022, about \$1,800 in 2023, more than \$2,000 in 2024 and a little more than \$2,500 last year. Her mother, Urbee Shome, said the family was closing in on \$10,000 raised

over five years before Sunday's totals came in.

"We're close to \$10,000, I think," Shome said. "Pushing."

Then, on Wednesday, after counting up the profits from the weekend, Shome shared that the

Continued on Page 8

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Region to review NOTL's policing bill

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake households are being charged hundreds of dollars more for regional policing than households anywhere else in Niagara — and regional government is now looking at whether there is a different way to split the bill.

Based on 2024 average household assessment, NOTL's regional policing costs worked out to \$786 per household per year. The next-highest municipality, Grimsby, was at \$458 per household, while Welland, the lowest, was at \$255.

Regional Coun. Andrea Kaiser, who is running for lord mayor in this fall's municipal election, has pushed for a review of that system since returning to elected office in 2022, after first raising concerns about the issue during her time on NOTL council years ago.

In June, regional council directed staff to initiate the review.

"This is an issue I first identified when I was serving on municipal coun-

Regional Coun. Andrea Kaiser's been advocating for Niagara Region to take another look at how it decides how much each municipality pays for policing. Based on 2024 housing assessments, the average household in NOTL pays \$786 a year for these services. FILE

cil, and I believed it was important to keep working on it when I returned to elected office at the region," Kaiser said in a media backgrounder sent to The Lake Report.

The gap comes from the way Niagara divides policing costs among its municipalities. The current system relies primarily on property assessment, rather than how much a municipality makes use of the police's services.

In June 2025, regional council passed Kaiser's motion directing staff to examine alternatives to relying on property assessment. Options included

charging on a per-household basis, using development charges for future police infrastructure and creating tiered levies.

"To my knowledge, this was the first time regional council had agreed to formally review the policing cost allocation model," Kaiser said.

"This was never about reducing the quality of policing services. It was about asking whether the way we share those costs across Niagara is fair."

The first staff report that followed "effectively recommended maintaining the existing approach" and

did not fully address the alternatives requested in the motion, the backgrounder said.

Kaiser and other councillors on the corporate services committee pushed to send the report back to staff to complete the original request and more fully examine alternatives to the assessment-based system. Regional council supported that referral in March.

The issue moved beyond that initial staff work this June, when regional council directed staff to begin a review of the policing cost-allocation model itself. The review is to consider factors such as service calls and other measures of policing demand and to explore working with the Niagara Police Service Board.

Kaiser says there is no simple answer to how policing costs should be divided, but the review creates a path to consider alternatives.

"There is no simple solution," she said. "There is more to be done but this is a significant step forward in a more equitable way to levy policing costs in Niagara."

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Nicholas Colaneri wants town hall to act

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Resident Nicholas Colaneri doesn't want Niagara-on-the-Lake's next council choosing between priorities. He wants everything moving at once.

The council candidate in this year's election says the town has spent too long reacting to problems instead of getting ahead of them. He says council tackles one issue while others are left waiting — and there is too much work to keep doing things that way.

"Everything from infrastructure to the airport. Amalgamation to swimming pools. The old hospital to data centres. Policies to accountability," Colaneri told The Lake Report.

"One thing at a time is how this town has been run."

Colaneri said he wasn't planning to run until residents approached him after watching him speak before council on more than 10 applications.

"From the gallery, I could shed light and advocate on their behalf," he said. "At the table, I can vote and act on their behalf."

Colaneri said NOTL's biggest threat is decisions about the town being made outside of it.

"Amalgamation, losing every elected seat at the (Niagara) Region, provincial law that took resident's rights to appeal a planning decision away, power that lets a refused application come back, airport expansion sitting in our fields built for growth in another city."

"None of that is one bad decision, it is a direction," he said.



Colaneri says he wasn't planning to run in this fall's election until residents approached him after watching him speak before council on more than 10 applications: "At the table, I can vote and act on their behalf." PAIGE SEBURN

To him, NOTL's greatest strength is the people who live here and their willingness to show up. Colaneri pointed to farmers and neighbours filling meeting rooms and residents fighting to protect heritage as examples.

"People thinking of people. Most places do not have that."

On development, Colaneri said tension between residents and developers has grown after repeated proposals affecting neighbourhoods.

"Development is not wrong," he said. "Done responsibly and ethically, it is a good thing for a town."

But, he added, "The development has to suit the community."

"Not the other way around," he said. "The rules and the people come first."

Colaneri also wants stronger enforcement when developers repeatedly work without required approvals.

"Stop the work and keep it stopped. Lay the charges the law already allows for."

He said there should be no retroactive approvals for unauthorized work and penalties should be large enough to have an impact on a project.

"Work does not go ahead

without approval by accident. Once, maybe, is a mistake. Twice is how somebody operates," he said. "It should be treated that way."

Colaneri takes issue with how council handled the Royal George Theatre proposal.

Asked what council got wrong, he answered: "All of it."

He said the question of whether the existing theatre could have been kept and expanded should have been answered before approvals moved forward.

"Keep it if it can be kept. If it cannot, show the work."

"Demolition is the one decision you never get to take back," he said. "Ask yourself why nobody ever had to prove it could not be saved."

On the Rand Estate, Colaneri starts with two words: "Protect it."

"If development needs to happen then that comes secondary," he said.

He wants the buildings and landscape treated as the beginning point, with development worked around what can reasonably fit on the property and in the neighbourhood.

Colaneri also wants the old hospital to remain pub-

licly owned and used for the community.

"It should stay ours and it should be what people said they wanted," he said.

He questioned the town's move toward a parking garage concept and suggested exploring whether nearby Parks Canada land could help address parking instead.

"There is Parks Canada land right beside that site," he said. "Could NOTL buy or lease the land to solve the parking?"

Colaneri also weighed in on the town's approach to media questions.

Earlier this year, chief administrative officer Nick Ruller directed town staff not to respond to what the town considers opinion-based media requests, instead focusing on factual and policy-related questions.

"Not a single part of me is okay with this position," said Colaneri.

He said the approach gives town hall too much control over what information reaches residents.

"A town that decides which questions it will answer is deciding what the public is allowed to know," he said.

"That is not communications; that is control."

And, Colaneri said, the problem isn't just about reporters.

"If someone whose job is asking questions cannot get an answer out of this town, what chance does a resident have trying to find out what is happening on their own street?"

With the next council dropping from nine members to seven, Colaneri said the stakes are higher.

"Fewer seats means each one carries more weight."

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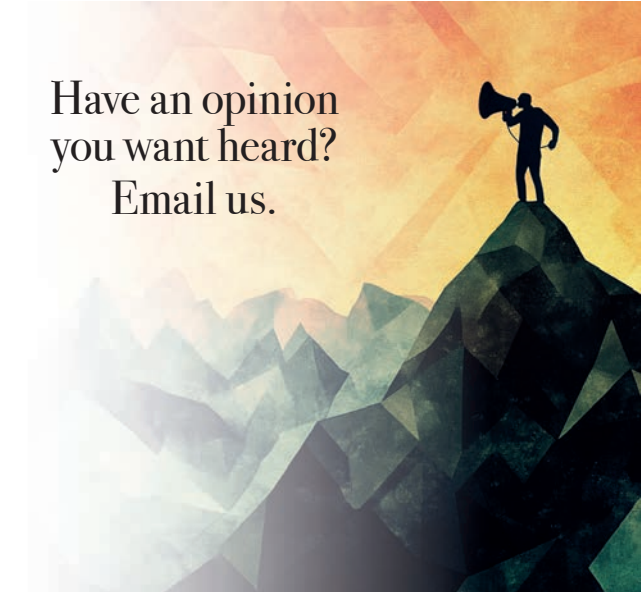
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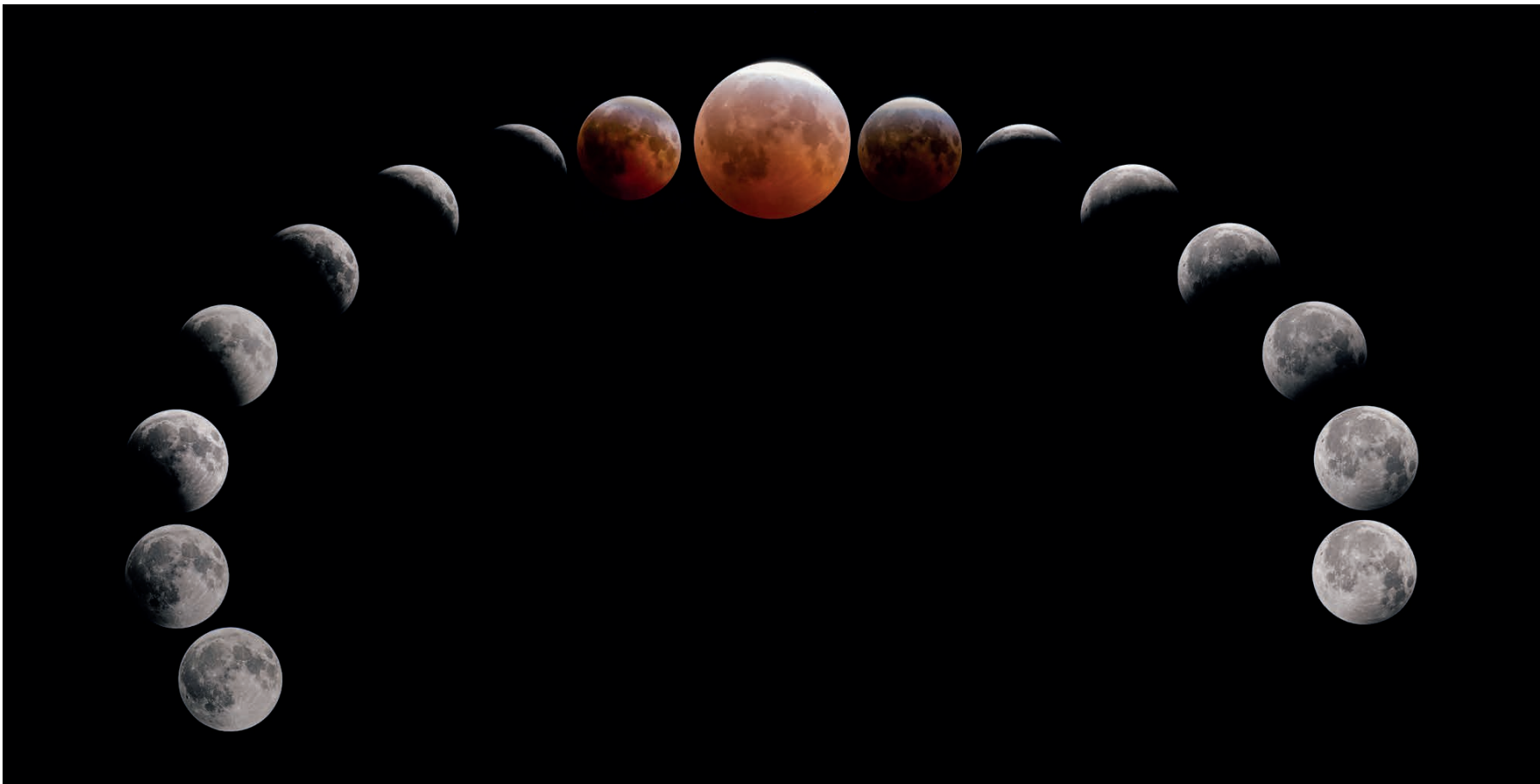
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Partial lunar eclipse captured in phases



As we bid farewell to August, the galaxy offered up another celestial spectacle, two weeks after this summer’s total solar eclipse. A 16-image composite shows the progression of the partial lunar eclipse of Aug. 27–28, when about 95 per cent of the moon passed into Earth’s shadow, revealing the stages from first contact through the deep umbral phase and back into full illumination. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

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Break-ins becoming common

Continued from Front Page

repair shop and will need to be re-keyed at minimum, she said. Its airbag warning light was also on when it was found, which Penman said indicated the airbag had been disabled.

Her insurance will cover the damage.

Andrew Perrie said someone walked up the driveway of his Lower Canada Drive home at about 4:48 a.m. on Thursday — roughly 20 minutes before Penman's vehicle was stolen — and began checking his vehicles.

The person got inside Perrie's older truck, though there was nothing inside to steal, he said. His security cameras also captured a second person walking west toward Confederation Drive and Garrison Village Drive.

Perrie reported the incident to police.

Three days later, another Garrison Village resident reported an attempted vehicle theft.

Ross Sanders, who lives on Brock Street, said a family member discovered the driver-side rear window of his 2025 Toyota Tundra 1794 Edition smashed between about 2:30 and 3 a.m. Sunday.

After unlocking the truck, they found its wiring had also been tampered with, but nothing was taken because nothing of value had been left inside, Sanders said.

He said a neighbour's doorbell camera captured two people wearing backpacks lingering around the property before the attempted theft. He reported the incident to Niagara Regional Police and said he was told to file a report online.

A spokesperson for Niagara Regional Police told The Lake Report that after checking its record of calls made in the last week, six reports were made regarding stolen vehicles in NOTL: two in Garrison Village, one in St. Davids, one in Virgil and two in Old Town.

"As the investigations are ongoing, all avenues will be explored, including trying to determine whether there are any common links or suspects," said Const. Rich Hingley.

The incidents have left residents with sharply different views of how safe their neighbourhood feels.

Sanders said his experience was another reason for residents to take vehicle security more seriously.

"One-hundred per cent I



Above: Outside Andrew Perrie's home on Lower Canada Drive at 4:48 a.m. on Thursday, his security cameras capture an individual checking the two vehicles in his driveway. Niagara Regional Police logged six reports of stolen vehicles in the last week in NOTL. SOURCED

Left: The aftermath of the break-in of Ross Sanders' car. The vehicle's driver-side rear window was smashed early Sunday morning and its wiring had been tampered with. SUPPLIED

feel like we live in a hotspot for vehicle theft," he said.

He urged residents to consider precautions such as steering-wheel locks, trackers, wheel locks and surveillance cameras.

"Don't assume NOTL is as safe as it used to be. This keeps happening too frequently."

Penman has lived in her home for 21 years and said the experience has also changed how she thinks about safety, particularly as the mother of a four-year-old.

"This didn't happen 10 years ago," she said.

Penman said incidents are happening more often and pointed to reports of people entering homes. She said it makes her wonder "when they might start just coming in the front door."

She said police offered little other information about what happened to her vehicle — "other than here is your car back," she said.

Perrie, despite having dealt with repeated incidents himself, feels differently about his sense of security in town.

"I feel completely safe," he said.

About two years ago, another vehicle was stolen from Perrie's property after both sets of its keys disappeared.

The stolen vehicle ended up with more than \$15,000 in damage. Insurance covered the repairs, Perrie

said, but his premiums went up and the damage followed him when he later tried to trade it in.

He estimates his vehicles have been targeted about five times altogether, but said "it doesn't change my opinion at all" on NOTL.

"In fact, I think Niagara-on-the-Lake is the safest town in all of Ontario. In Canada."

It was not Penman's first experience with a vehicle break-in, either.

She said another of her vehicles had previously been broken into, though nothing was taken that time.

Reports of other incidents this past week have also surfaced on social media.

Fran Garofalo posted in the NOTL 4 All Facebook group that someone got into a locked truck in a driveway in the Bunny Glen Drive, Tanbark Road and Creekside Drive area sometime after 11:30 p.m. Monday and before Tuesday morning.

Items were taken and the vehicle was left a mess, Garofalo said.

In the comments, several other residents shared similar experiences.

Loretta Valstar said her vehicles on Tanbark Road were also targeted at about 2:10 a.m. Tuesday. She described a dark blue pickup truck, possibly a Ford, with a driver and two other people going from vehicle to vehicle. One vehicle was un-

locked and eventually rummaged through, she said.

Wilma Valstar said she had video of a pickup truck and two men going through her car before running back to the truck. She said nothing was taken.

On Fedorkow Lane, Helen Dimitrakopoulos said a neighbour's vehicle was stolen and cash was taken from another vehicle and that camera footage was provided to police.

Arin Derylak said vehicles at her Tanbark Road home had been targeted again, after a similar incident in the past.

Annie Meesh also said her family's truck in Virgil had been targeted Sunday night.

Valstar, Dimitrakopoulos and Derylak did not specify when the incidents they described occurred. The Lake Report reached out to the residents who shared those accounts on social media for further details but did not hear back by press time.

In the meantime, Hingley shared some advice for people looking to keep from becoming the next target of a car break-in.

"As always, we remind people to ensure their vehicles are locked. Don't leave valuable in your vehicles," he said. "If you want an extra layer of theft prevention, there are after-market anti-theft and tracking devices available."

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Class is back in session Tuesday, and for several families in NOTL, it'll mean starting over at a new school. After a change in the District School Board of Niagara's boundaries last year, some students from St. Davids Public School will be joining Crossroads this fall. For a few, there are concerns about the logistics of the transition ahead. FILE

Student shuffle sparks confusion

Parents of students transferring to Crossroads left with unanswered questions about before- and after-care

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The first day of school is less than a week away, and as a boundary change takes effect for the first time, forcing a group of Niagara-on-the-Green students to switch schools, one family is still waiting for an answer to a question it raised almost a year ago: what happens after the final bell rings?

Niagara-on-the-Lake parent Katherine Kivlichan has two daughters — Sophia, entering Grade 4, and Paisley, entering junior kindergarten — who are moving from St. Davids Public School to Crossroads Public School this September, under a boundary change the school board approved last fall to ease overcrowding at St. Davids.

Paisley has yet to secure a spot in the after-school program at Crossroads. She already has after-school care at St. Davids, and emails provided to The Lake Report show the District School Board of Niagara told Kivlichan it arranged a bus with Niagara Student Transportation Services so she could continue attending the program after switching schools.

But Kivlichan says St. Davids principal Carl Glauser has since informed her the

school board's superintendent presiding over St. Davids, Darren VanHooydonk, has retired, providing little clarity and no further update on the arrangement.

The school board said in a statement to The Lake Report that it does not operate child-care programs in its schools. It said Niagara Region manages registration, while individual providers, such as the YMCA, manage their own waitlists and admissions.

The YMCA, Niagara Region, VanHooydonk, Glauser, Niagara Student Transportation Services and Crossroads principal Kate Fish did not respond to The Lake Report's questions by publication time.

On the bus arrangement, the school board did not answer questions about whether it had been finalized, whether it will operate when school starts, who became responsible for following through on it after VanHooydonk's departure or whether families were notified of its status.

It said staff are "working directly with the family regarding their specific circumstances" and encouraged families with questions about transportation arrangements to contact their home school.

In November last year, VanHooydonk told Kiv-

lichan the school board had "already confirmed" a bus with Niagara Student Transportation Services to take students between Crossroads and their existing before- and after-school care at St. Davids.

"We are committed to the interim plan as long as necessary," VanHooydonk wrote after encouraging Kivlichan to apply for a Crossroads space.

Kivlichan said she followed up in February but Glauser could provide little insight, telling her during a phone call that VanHooydonk retired and that he didn't know what to tell her about the promised bus.

"He retired and nothing was done," she said.

Kivlichan first wrote to the school board on Oct. 30, shortly after learning her children would be moving schools. She had put both daughters on the waitlist for the YMCA program at Crossroads, but told the board it was extremely long and asked for a reliable solution before September.

VanHooydonk told Kivlichan the programs are managed by Niagara Region and that the YMCA decides whether to expand the program at Crossroads. He said the school board could provide additional space and would continue expressing the need for growth.

Kivlichan said she loves the teachers and staff at St. Davids and doesn't fault Glauser for the situation. She said she could accept the bus plan falling through, but not being left without an answer.

"It wasn't handled properly," she said. "If it couldn't work out, it is what it is. But let me know."

"Don't write that email and say this is what we're going to do."

Kivlichan works as an account manager for a pharmaceutical company and travels to clinics across southern Ontario and, at times, northern Ontario, while her husband works shifts at Dofasco in Hamilton.

She and her husband have been rearranging their work schedules so somebody can be home when their children get off the school bus.

"We have to make a living, right?"

The delayed opening of another nearby program could be adding to demand for spaces at Crossroads.

At St. Michael Catholic Elementary School, Niagara Catholic says a new Way to Learn Daycare program is expected to begin offering before- and after-school care in mid-September, pending inspections by the Ministry of Education and Niagara Region Public Health, with full daycare to follow.

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Lemonade stand **cause** draws donations from Mexico, India

Continued from Front Page

lemonade stand pushed past the \$10,000 mark after raising more than \$3,000 this summer.

When she was six years old, Ayona Pal got the idea to run a lemonade stand in the summer. She asked her parents if she could do so and they agreed — on the condition the money went to charity. Shome said her daughter picked a cause without hesitating.

“Spot. He’s from there, and we want the dogs there also to find a home like Spot,” Ishani said, referring to the family’s pet dog, who came from Niagara Dog Rescue, the recipient of their donations every year.

Shome said some of the dogs the rescue takes in come from shelters that euthanize animals.

Niagara Dog Rescue director Diane Cartnell visited the stand with volunteers earlier in the day. The rescue made Ayona Pal a sign this year to thank her



This summer, Ishani Ayona Pal raised a little over \$3,000 from sales at her lemonade and popcorn stand in Old Town. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

for keeping the fundraiser going.

Tanya Rice, who sold the family their home about 10 years ago and remains close with them through her own work in animal rescue, has come to the stand each year

since it started.

“It’s been really good for her to see it grow every year,” Rice said.

The family does not promote the stand on social media, Shome said. Word of mouth draws friends

from Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver, and donations have come in from Mexico and India.

“People just see kindness, and then it kind of escalates and surmounts more kindness,” Shome said.

For example, one man made a wrong turn Sunday morning and stopped when he saw the family setting up. Shome said he donated, asked why Ayona Pal was raising money, then said he wanted his company to support the rescue.

“As she gets older, we wonder how much longer she’s going to want to do the lemonade stand,” Shome said. “But she wants to do it every year.”

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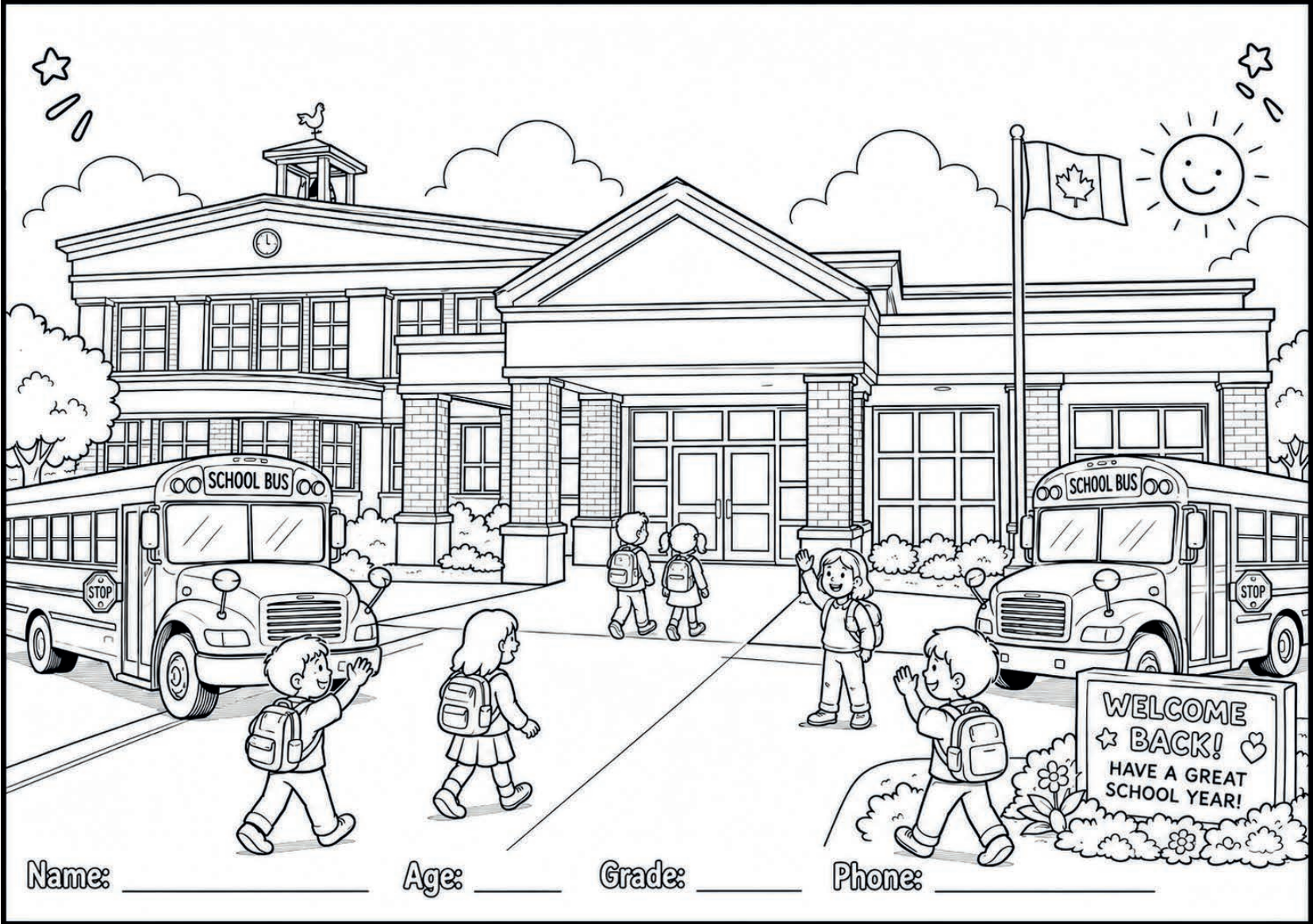


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Back-to-school colouring contest



Test out those fresh markers and pencil crayons on this back-to-school colouring contest.

The contest will be open until Sept. 17 at noon. Please send submissions as early as possible to editor@niagaranow.com. (A high-resolution phone photo will work great).

Or mail submissions to PO Box 724, L0S1J0.

Open to all primary school students in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Must include full name (first and last), age and Grade with submission.

MUST also include a phone number or email contact so we can reach winners.

The Lake Report will select three winners.

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Porters outduel competition to capture Matrimonial Cup

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

One of the most demanding annual tests of golf was played at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club on Friday.

The Matrimonial Tournament, which pairs up member couples in a handicapped, alternate shot contest, is one of the most adventuresome outings each year.

That's because the men, who can be prone to hitting the ball into all sorts of trouble, tend to do exactly that under the pressure of such a prestigious competition.

The result is that the women, who generally hit the ball straight up the middle of the fairway, can find themselves playing from areas of the course into which they've never ventured before.

But, thankfully, it's all in fun.

This year's winners were Carolyn and Drew Porter, whose net 65 score edged out two-time defending

champs Janice and Jim McMacken, who had a net 68.

In third place were Glen and Cathy Murray, with a net 70.

Meanwhile, about 30 club members aged 80-plus competed for the Legends Cup last week.

The competition was close and the winners were Mike Eagen and Richard Sammons.

In regular Woofs league play, Al Kavanagh and Jim Meszaros shot 39 for top spot. Alan Robb was low net with 33.

Ron Planche was closest to the pin on #4 and Ken Willms' birdie on #7 earned him the hidden hole prize.

In other play this past week, Sue Sherk led the Tuesday women's nine-hole league with 47, one better than Deborah Williams.

Carolyn Cochrane and Sharron Marlow were next with 50.

Ellen Smith had the longest drive on #2 and Suzanne Watson was longest on #8. Sally Miller was closest to the pin on #4.



Carolyn and Drew Porter won the 2026 Matrimonial Cup at the NOTL Golf Club. MAX BRAUN

Louise Robitaille was tops in the women's 18-hole league with 88. Carroll Baker and Martha Cruikshank tied for second at 91 while Diana Dimmer was third with 93.

Other winners: Yolanda Henry (closest to pin on #4), Dimmer (longest putt

on #7), Robitaille (longest drive #12) and Cruikshank (closest to the pin in two on #18).

Monday's business women's league was rained out again but Thursday's men's league managed to avoid the same fate.

James Grigjanis-Meusel

and Drew Porter were the day's top shooters with 2-over 38. Jon Schmidt won low net (31) and Porter was second (32).

Dean McCann bombed the longest drive on #1 and Doug Hernder made the longest putt on #5.

Closest to the pin sharp-

shooters were Brock Samson (#4) and Stephen Warboys (#9).

Gross skins (\$35) went to Ricky Watson for birdies on #6 and #8, and to Tom Elltoft for his bird on #3.

Net skins (\$94) were claimed by Jon Schmidt (#5) and Jim Garrett (#7).

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Next year the Shaw will host four productions at the Queen Street court house while it rebuilds the Royal George. FILE

Shaw Festival’s 2027 lineup features ‘South Pacific,’ ‘Grimm Tales’ and more

Staff
The Lake Report

The Shaw Festival is setting its sights on a diverse 2027 season, with two major musicals, classic comedies, a dark take on fairy tales and a return to the works of Bernard Shaw.

The 65th season will feature Rodgers and Hammerstein’s “South Pacific,” “The Color Purple,” “Arsenic and Old Lace” and “Grimm Tales,” among 11 productions across three theatres in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The season begins March 31 and runs until Dec. 23, with “South Pacific” and “The Color Purple” marking the first time in Shaw Festival history that two musicals will be presented on the Festival Theatre stage during the main season.

“Two big, beloved and wildly different musicals on the Festival Theatre stage — surrounded by murder, mayhem, Shaw, Stoppard and a few rather gruesome fairy tales — gives our artists and audiences an irresistible playground for 2027,” said artistic director Tim Carroll in a news release.

“With this diverse range of titles, we’re also working on new ways to share these

shows through our Beyond the Stage workshops and events to bring our audiences even closer to the art, their creativity and each other.”

At the Festival Theatre, “South Pacific,” with music by Richard Rodgers, lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II and a book by Hammerstein and Joshua Logan, previews April 10 and closes Oct. 30.

“Arsenic and Old Lace,” the 1939 black comedy play centering the maniacal Brewster family, put American playwright Joseph Kesselring on the map and became best known through the 1944 film adaptation. It previews May 9 and closes Oct. 9.

“The Color Purple,” the musical based on Alice Walker’s award-winning novel of the same name, features a book by Marsha Norman and music and lyrics by Brenda Russell, Allee Willis and Stephen Bray. It previews June 26 and closes Oct. 31.

The Festival Theatre lineup is rounded out by “Jumpers,” British playwright Tom Stoppard’s satirical exploration of the world of academic philosophy, which previews Aug. 11 and closes Oct. 31.

Meanwhile, the Court House Theatre will con-

tinue to host productions as the construction of the new Royal George Theatre gets underway — the old theatre was demolished in June. The new, larger venue is set to open where the old jewel-box theatre once stood in fall 2028.

Among the productions to be staged at the Court House Theatre, Bernard Shaw’s “Arms and the Man” previews April 28 and closes Oct. 9, marking the first play written by Shaw to be performed there since 2017.

“Our audiences have enthusiastically welcomed the return of the Court House Theatre as a Shaw venue this year, and we couldn’t be more delighted to bring Bernard Shaw back to the stage where the Shaw began in 1962,” said Tim Jennings, the Shaw’s executive director and CEO.

“There’s something very special about celebrating where we started while also looking ahead to the reopening of the Royal George Theatre in fall 2028 and an exciting new chapter for the Shaw.”

The 2027 season will also kick off at the Court House Theatre, with Ira Levin’s “Deathtrap” previewing March 31 and closing Oct. 8.

“Grimm Tales,” adapted from the Brothers Grimm’s “Grimms’ Fairy Tales” by Carol Ann Duffy and dramatized by Tim Supple, brings to life “Cinderella,” “Snow White,” “Hansel and Gretel” and other fairy tales and folklore, as they were told in macabre detail by the Brothers Grimm. This play previews June 9 and closes Oct. 10.

The Court House lineup also includes Agatha Christie’s “The Rats and The Patient,” which previews Sept. 11 and closes Oct. 10.

Meanwhile, over at the Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre, J.M. Barrie’s “What Every Woman Knows” previews May 20 and closes Oct. 10.

“Goblin: Pygmalion” is a creation from the Canadian theatre company Spontaneous Theatre by Bruce Horak, Ellis Lalonde and Rebecca Northan. It previews June 16 and closes Oct. 10.

Lynn Nottage’s “Intimate Apparel” previews Aug. 5 and closes Oct. 9.

The Shaw has yet to announce which productions it will stage for the holiday season, running Nov. 18 to Dec. 23, but says details will be announced in the coming weeks.



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All Persons having claims against the Estate of ALLAN JOHN KURI, late of Niagara-On The-Lake, ON, deceased, who died on or about August 10, 2026, are hereby notified to send particulars of the same to the undersigned on or before October 1, 2026, after which date the estate will be distributed, with regard only to the claims of which the undersigned shall then have notice and the undersigned will not then be liable to any person of whose claims they shall not then have notice.

Dated at Thunder Bay, Ontario on the 3rd day of September, 2026.

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Cerebral and intimate, ‘Ohio State Murders’ is one to see

OHIO STATE MURDERS

(out of five)

Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre, one act, 55 minutes, no intermission. Ends Oct. 3. By Adrienne Kennedy. Directed by Philip Akin.

Penny-Lynn Cookson
Special to The Lake Report

If you have ever experienced discrimination for reasons of colour, language, religion, country of origin, class, wealth, poverty, education, age or gender, “Ohio State Murders” will resonate. If not, there is still much to consider. And why is best said by the renowned playwright herself, Adrienne Kennedy:

“I want them to realize that they’re listening to a very articulate, thoughtful American Black woman and, perhaps, they should pay attention to what she is saying.”

What she is saying is that her plays are “meant to be states of mind.” They are fragmented, non-linear. The imagery is intense. Her lyrical monologues with herself, go back and forth, at times poetic, at other times matter of fact, as she reminisces, switching place, correcting in time and space.

She doubles herself as reader and writer. Her use of twins or doubles in a story is a means of subverting the self within the body. She has said that she doesn’t know who the per-

son is who wrote her plays. Kennedy has written a powerful story of a Black woman’s lived experience of love and betrayal, of ambition, misogyny, sexism, violent racism and resilience. Racism attacks in this case, traumatize her interior self, she makes that interior visible. One thinks of the writing of Sylvia Plath and Alice Munro. How such psychic anguish is revealed differs when said aloud.

In “Ohio State Murders,” a woman briskly enters the theatre (and our theatre). She is introduced to the audience as an acclaimed guest speaker appearing on a university campus. She is the famous academic and writer Suzanne Alexander whose life resembles that of the author Adrienne Kennedy. She has been invited to speak on why she uses violent imagery, including murder and infanticide, in her work.

She is also in Columbus to confront, understand and reveal what happened to her as a first-year student at Ohio State University in 1949. She was ostracized by white students in her dorm, blocked from paths and group memberships, endured doubt that she had written her brilliant papers herself and denied acceptance to advanced English literature courses. Academic racism was insidious and systemic.

Suzanne has a brief affair with her white professor of English literature, Robert Hampshire. She becomes pregnant. She is rejected



Sophia Walker is outstanding as Suzanne Alexander in “Ohio State Murders,” writes Penny-Lynn Cookson, deftly balancing the emotional layers that unfold in her character. MICHAEL COOPER

by him and her middle-class parents, finds a safe haven in New York City but is compelled to return to Columbus and Ohio State University. This decision leads to murder.

The role of Suzanne is a tour de force for Black women and two celebrated actresses, Ruby Dee and eight-time Tony Award winner, Audra McDonald.

In 2022, “Ohio State Murders” was chosen to open the new James Earl Jones Theatre in New York. It was the 91-year-old Adrienne Kennedy’s debut on Broadway after 60 years of playwrighting, essays and influence in the world of theatre and academia.

In this Canadian premiere at the Shaw Festival, Tim Carroll has brought the work of this revered woman of the theatre to our stage.

Sophia Walker as the writer Suzanne Alexander proves her mettle. She is outstanding, deftly balancing the double role of the mature, acclaimed Black writer with the naive, gifted student so keen to learn and her later anger and anguish as a mother experiencing the loss of her children.

André Morin is an ideal match for the scholarly type of university professor scorned by students. Young, cold, bespectacled, wearing a three-piece

suit (in the 1950s), he irritably reads his notes aloud without addressing the class. He doesn’t look up or engage because he would rather be in his office doing his research. The question of why young female students fall in love with their professors does arise here.

The production values are superb. The intimacy of the play is perfect for the Studio Theatre and the actors play consistently to all sides of the space. Melanie McNeill’s terrific minimalist set is a cherry red painted plywood boardwalk. It weaves like a ribbon, rising and falling, imaginatively becoming a path, a bench, an office, or

a library with book spines revealing titles of required English lit reading.

The lighting designed by Jeff Pybus keeps us enveloped in the darkness of the unfolding drama. It tenderly plays on Suzanne’s face during her inner monologues, then shocks us with moments of bright light revelations.

The sound designed by Jacob Lin brings the voices and presence of other characters, not on stage, but caught in memory and, interestingly, not needed in this two-actor production, which is more powerful due to their absence. The original production was written for seven actors. In this production the missing five characters are present in voice-overs that give an added dimension.

Alexis Milligan’s movement direction is to be lauded for the actors’ body language within this minimalist space which keeps us intensely focused. Locations change with “the shift of a hip.”

Adrienne Kennedy’s plays are fragmented, images diffused, the meaning more than literally told, the essence lying in layers of consciousness. Philip Akin’s creative direction builds this mesmerizing story to a recognition of where we end up is often “via the most circuitous route.”

This journey is well worth taking.

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

Find your inner Picasso at Queenston art studio’s painting workshops

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

Whether you’re already handy with a paintbrush and a set of paints, or wouldn’t know what to do if handed a brush and a palette, Sharon Okun and Adam Markovic are inviting you to join them this fall to face the blank canvas and capture life with your own hands.

The couple, who run an art studio and gallery out

of the old Laura Secord school in Queenston, are hosting a three-day painting workshop from Sept. 25 to 27 for painters both aspiring and experienced.

They hope to teach participants the techniques they learned during their classical training in Florence, Italy, guiding them through work in their still life painting, portrait painting with a live model and capturing interior scenes.

Okun and Markovic

started hosted these workshops this June — a few years ago, they used to hold a long-term art workshop with a single group of people, which was meant to last eight weeks but sooned became a weekly get-together that went until the end of 2025.

Then, six months later, they decided to reopen their studio, this time welcoming new people into the fold.

Since relaunching the

workshops in this new format, the experience has been “wonderful,” Okun said.

“I really love that we’re meeting new people,” she said, adding that it’s been uplifting to see people who’ve previously never painted before figure out how it works and become encouraged by their progress.

“It’s just the contagion of somebody being really excited that they can actu-

ally make a bottle look like a bottle. They can express themselves that way,” she said. “That’s really inspiring to witness ... and it’s certainly brought more community into our life.”

Each workshop day will be held from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. It costs \$750 plus tax per person. All art materials and lunch will be provided for the three days.

To reserve a spot, contact Okun at inquiry@sharonokun.com.



The three-day workshop runs from Sept. 25-27. SUPPLIED



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Three more hydro boxes set for makeovers as part of Pumphouse art competition

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

Once a year, dozens of artists — aspiring and professional alike — share their work with the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre in hopes of their creation being selected as the template for a makeover of a hydro box in Niagara-on-the-Lake. This year, 29 artworks are in the running to become one of three tab-leaus that will be used to beautify three hydro boxes in the community — part of a project that’s seen 23 hydro boxes turned into public art so far. The exhibition of this year’s finalists is on at the Pumphouse on Ricardo Street and will be until Thursday, Sept. 17, when the three winning designs will be announced at a ceremony

and its creators awarded \$700 each. Two winning designs will be selected by a jury, while the third is currently being voted on by the community, with voting open until Sunday, Sept. 13. This is the arts centre’s eighth year hosting the competition. Rima Boles, the Pumphouse’s director, says it’s become a “wonderful community tradition.” This year’s theme, “Niagara-on-the-Lake,” has inspired a variety of representations of the town, she said, carrying with them different perspectives of the community. This year’s submissions were also created through a diversity of mediums: painting mediums such as acrylic, oil, watercolour and gouache are well-represented, while some depictions

of life in NOTL made use of digital art tools, photography, collage-making and pyrography. A few works also feature mixed media. “Some artists have taken Niagara-on-the-Lake landmarks to centre their piece around. Some have taken a more abstract or more conceptual approach,” Boles said. “Each one is a creative interpretation of Niagara-on-the-Lake, which is amazing.” As part of the art centre’s exhibition, those who visit the Pumphouse can vote for their favourite design, which will win the People’s Choice Award. “We’ve had a great turnout from the community,” Boles said of the voting process, which began in early August. “The People’s Choice Award is always a popular



Four of the 29 submissions in this year’s contest: from top left, clockwise, “The Vines of Our Times,” by Kim Collins, “Vineyards to the Lake” Cathy Peters, “NOTL in a Bottle” by Tara Korkmaz and “Cloudscape 1” by Maggie Babcock. SUPPLIED

draw for the community to have their say to select an artwork that could possibly end up on a hydro box.” Following this year’s contest, three new hydro boxes will be given a makeover, scheduled for October. That’ll bring the number of beautified hydro boxes in town to 26. The three hydro boxes to be beautified are outside the NOTL Hydro office on Henegan Road, NOTL Town Hall on Niagara Stone Road and the Community Centre on Anderson Lane. For those who haven’t voted yet and wish to do so, the hydro box beautification exhibition is on at the Pumphouse in the Hummel Family Room. Voting is in-person only. Each visitor gets one vote. The awards ceremony, which includes a wine and cheese reception, will run 5 to 6 p.m. on Sept. 17. Those interested in purchasing one of these works can visit niagarapumphouse.ca/exhibitions and find all the exhibited works under “Hummel Family Room.”



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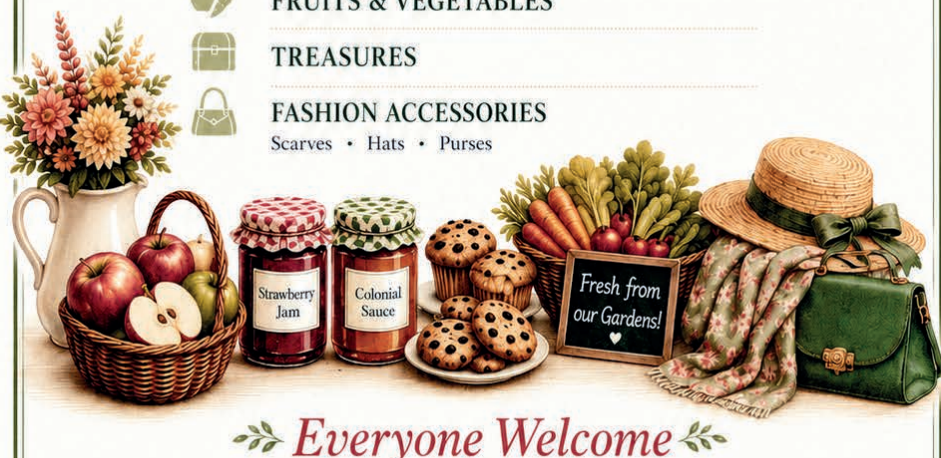
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Community members can participate in a survey for residents/visitors and/or a survey for business owners/employees until September 30.

Further engagement opportunities, including pop-up consultation events and a Public Information Centre, will be provided.

Your feedback will help inform the future of parking in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Thank you for engaging with us!



Take the survey and learn more

- Visit jointheconversationnotl.org/comprehensive-parking-study
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The Lake Report



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BKind Grateful #91: If someone forgets your name, remind them warmly instead of making them feel embarrassed.

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



Contributed by Patty Garriock

“The world, I believe, is far too serious, and being far too serious, it has need of a wise and merry philosophy.” - Lin Yutang

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Singing rock music in church

John Kossop and Dave Rusch of the Turntable Rock Band perform classic rock hits inside St. Saviour Church in Queenston after rain moved the planned outdoor concert indoors. The show was held as a fundraiser for the church. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Opinion

Vistors lament what their president has done



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner
Columnist

So, I asked, what're they telling you?

“They say they're sorry,” the Beau Chapeau damsel, decked out in the fancy, ah, chapeau, answered. “And they're embarrassed. Like, really. Seriously.”

It was a day or two after Donald Trump had tried to steal our lake, layered new tariffs on tens of billions of our stuff and called us all “nasty.”

On Queen Street, I heard the same story everywhere. The Americans were mortified. Apparently, nobody who comes here from the U.S. voted for that guy. Or will admit it.

But they still come. We embrace them. However, America's making us all worried, tense, apprehensive — especially after our econo-warrior PM became the first and only world leader to stand up to the White House.

Are NOTL houses a casualty of this war?

The latest stats are limp. Home sales across the region have slumped. It takes longer to flog a property. And buyers are paying less.



NOTL real estate is under pressure as the U.S. trade war saps investor confidence. This lux Old Town mansion on almost an acre has been reduced by \$2 million. GARTH TURNER

In Niagara as a whole, prices are lower by five percent from last year, to a benchmark of \$597,200. In pricey NOTL, the average sale has been for \$40,000 less than last year, and now below the 900 mark.

By the way, listings are piling up as sales weaken. This week on MLS, there are 362 pieces of residential real estate on offer, a whopping 100 of which sit in Old Town and just under 60 in Virgil.

For properties north of \$2 million, owners can wait a year (or two) for an offer. In short, it's not 2022 anymore. Or even 2024. Or anytime pre-Trump.

“Unprecedented times for sure,” says local agent and veteran realtor Doug Widdicombe. “The housing market has slowed considerably. There are still buyers, but they are very keen on value and price.”

Indeed. The ask on some landmark properties has dropped by more than half a million. In one notable case by four times that

amount. And still they sit.

“Home prices may have fallen enough to make buyers more comfortable with some economic uncertainty,” says broker Kymberley McKee, “but probably not enough to make them comfortable with the possibility of losing a pay cheque.”

“If the Canada-U.S. situation mostly leads to unsettling headlines but employment remains fairly strong, the housing market could continue to slowly regain its footing,” she adds. “But, if it starts translating into meaningful layoffs — particularly in Ontario — buyers could become cautious again pretty quickly.”

“Personally I'm concerned what the impact will be should tariffs remain high,” warns Widdicombe. “Employment reductions will have an impact, especially on the first, second or third-time homebuyers. Not just in buying a home but the cycle of services they normally use. Then it snowballs. Those financially comfortable are concerned

for their portfolios if nothing else.”

One drag for those trying to sell is competition. The number of listings in Niagara (well over 3,000 homes) is dwarfed only by last year's record level.

“Sales activity stepped down compared to last July,” says Sarah Hart, head of the Niagara Association of Realtors. “While new listings were also down, they were still among the highest levels recorded for any July. Overall supply levels remain historically elevated but are unwinding since peaking in mid-2025.”

And this — slugging sales, trade and job worries and a ton of choice in the market — has put buyers in control, agents say. If it's not perfect, don't bother showing it.

“The-fixer upper is of less interest to my clientele,” says Widdicombe. “It must be finished — turn-key. I haven't found prices have hit the point where buyers are buying quicker. They are looking more intently and demanding a better product knowing they can, considering the number of listings on the market.”

The key word? Caution. Meanwhile, “I'm so sorry” is nice to hear. But we have an ask for the folks from Ohio, Michigan, New York and beyond.

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

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

We must uproot the hate infiltrating our community

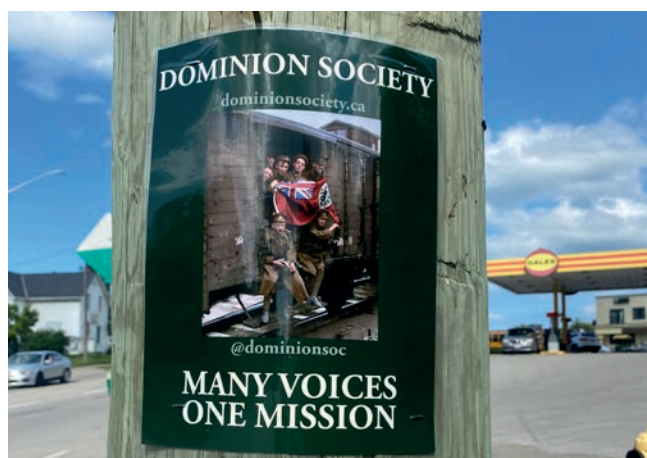
Dear editor:
Last week, I came across something I would have never thought would actually persist in our blooming town.

Small, forest green signs with minimalist type, some donning images of brave soldiers from World Wars returning home.

Dominion Society is a white ethnocentric, supremacist group who are taking advantage of the rise in Canadian patriotism to craft a message of exclusion, hate, and pose a lasting danger to many communities in Ontario.

Just this past year, they attempted to hold rallies in St. Catharines and Hamilton, leading to people feeling unsafe, angry and appalled by local officials' lack of action.

I took a brief moment to check the organization's website, which features a quote from Sir John A. MacDonald. This same man, while our first prime minister, was also a main architect of the residential school system, which persisted for more than 150 years.



Letter writer Emily Ratkovsky captured an image of these posters she saw cropping up in Virgil last week. "The presence this group is trying to set up in our town is a palpable danger to young families, our farmworkers and newcomers," she writes.

Their homepage waxes poetically about our imperial, gold-gilded and blood-soaked past. How the promise of this land is solely for those who follow in their steps.

Crafting such a double-edged sword disguising hate as patriotism is unfortunately fairly simple. Especially as we face economic hostility from our southern neighbors, it would be easy to fall back on "us versus them" to feel like we are protecting what is ours.

Relying on violent settler-

colonialist rhetoric is not the way that we build stronger, kinder and self-sufficient communities where everyone feels welcome. Where everyone feels they can be their most authentic self and put down roots.

We must understand our history as a country for what it is, and then exceed in the effort to do and learn for the better.

The presence this group is trying to set up in our town is a palpable danger to young families, our farmworkers and newcomers.

If we are to see this town develop more, we must not fall for division. We must look out for one another.

The power of a diverse and compassionate community can achieve anything, whether big or small. We must not allow hate the satisfaction or comfort knowing they are making some kind of impact; we've seen how that story pans out over generations.

I implore the town council of Niagara-on-the-Lake take action to ensure this group does not further take up space or influence of any kind.

I implore the council members facing election to take this issue head on, and if they don't, then we see exactly where you lie.

A vision of a growing north Niagara does not include settler-colonial violence. It does not include racism, xenophobia and exclusion. It does not include cheap forest-green polos, polarized sunglasses and khaki pants.

We will always be stronger together than we will ever be apart.

Emily Ratkovsky
Virgil



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style
Category: EDIBLE IDIOMS

It's something of little importance or value, like, say, legumes in a heap.

Last issue category: PLAIN

Clue: The massive European Plain stretches from the Urals all the way west to this other range on the Spanish-French border.

Answer: What is the Pyrenees?

Answered first by: Gary Davis

Also answered correctly (in order) by:
Barry Woods, Margie Enns, Bob Wheatley, Sue Rautenberg, Jeff Lake, Howard Jones, Rob Hutchison, Donna Pearce, Emma Balsas, Claudia Grimwood, Lynda Collet, Sheila Meloche, Ana-Marija Petrunic

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

*REMEMBER TO PUT "WHAT IS" FOR JEOPARDY QUESTIONS!

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How strong mayor powers change council votes

Dear editor:

As Niagara-on-the-Lake voters prepare to elect a mayor and council, it is important to understand how strong-mayor powers have changed municipal government and what that means at the ballot box.

Traditionally, a council of seven members could make decisions by majority vote. Four votes would carry a motion, and no single member held significantly more authority than another. Under strong-mayor powers, however, the balance has shifted.

The mayor now has additional authority over matters such as the municipal budget, certain staffing decisions and the ability to

veto bylaws that are deemed inconsistent with provincial priorities.

Whether one supports or opposes these powers is not the point. The point is that they exist, and voters should understand their implications.

One of the most important facts is that a mayoral veto cannot be overturned by a simple majority of council. It requires a two-thirds vote of the entire council. On a seven-member council, that means five votes are required.

As a result, electing four councillors who share your views may no longer be sufficient to provide effective oversight of municipal government. Four votes can still pass many routine mo-

tions, but four votes cannot overturn a mayoral veto.

If council wishes to maintain its ability to review, challenge, and, when necessary, override decisions made under strong-mayor powers, five votes are required.

This is not an argument against any particular mayoral candidate, nor is it an argument against strong-mayor legislation itself. Rather, it is an argument in favour of balance, accountability, and democratic oversight.

Municipal government functions best when ideas are debated openly and decisions are tested through discussion among independently elected representatives.

Regardless of who becomes mayor, residents should consider whether the council they elect will have the capacity to exercise independent judgment and provide meaningful checks and balances when required.

For voters who are thinking strategically in this election, the question may no longer be, "Which four councillors do I support?"

The more important question may be, "Will there be at least five members of council willing to exercise independent oversight when necessary?"

Strong-mayor powers make that distinction more important than ever.

Al Bisback
NOTL



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Without affordable homes, NOTL can't be for all



Brian Marshall
Columnist

It has often been suggested that the Town of Niagara on the Lake is dominated by its grey-haired citizens over the age of 65. That generality has always bothered me since, as I do our grocery shopping every week, there seems to be an almost equal number of shoppers south of 65 to those of us north of that age.

To satisfy my curiosity, I did a bit of research.

For the purposes of simplicity, I established the age groups in five categories: zero to 19 years, 20 to 34 years, 35 to 54 years, 55 to 64 years and 65-plus years.

The following is based on Statistics Canada census data from 2022: there were 2,930 residents under the age of 19; 2,350 who fell into the group that was 20 to 34 years old; the 35 to 54 year category numbered

3,555; in the 55-to-64-year range we had 4,430 folks; and, the grey-haired residents over the age of 65 totalled 6,900.

In aggregate, NOTL's citizenry under the age of 55 totalled 8,835; 1,935 (or about 22 per cent) greater than the total number of residents over the age of 64. And, sandwiched between, are the 4,430 individuals of late-middle age.

So, in real terms, the majority of town residents are actually under the age of 65 — a fact that is far too often forgotten in the push and pull of municipal governance vis-à-vis planning and services.

Moreover, one is forced to ponder why the demographic group between the ages of 20 and 34 actually numbers the fewest of all the categories.

Certainly part of the answer is that many individuals generally between the ages of 18 and 23 are pursuing post-secondary education in other jurisdictions — some, if they choose to engage in graduate studies, are older.

However, I suspect the real reasons for the small number in this age group are more prosaic.

Namely, there are fewer career opportunities in



The only region-operated affordable housing in Niagara-on-the-Lake is at 300 Davy St. There are 40 one-bedroom units and rent is calculated at 30 per cent of the gross monthly income for the household, plus utilities, up to the maximum market rent amount of \$907 per month. Niagara Region says the wait list is approximately five years for the units. FILE

Niagara-on-the-Lake and its surrounding environs than elsewhere in Ontario and, perhaps even more impactful, housing is simply too expensive and scarce in this town for individuals just beginning their future work trajectory.

Quite bluntly, hospitality, viticulture and agriculture are the career choices of a comparable few, not the many. The town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has focused for so long and with single-minded purpose on tourism that it has largely become a single-source economy.

How do you attract a younger career engaged population if the job opportunities are absent?

Further, if — as has been the case to date — new

housing developments are geared to the more mature incomes of the 35-to-54 age demographic and no purpose-built, affordable rental buildings are developed, the community effectively denies settlement by those who are in the early stages of their working life and arguably those who are not “doctors and lawyers and such.”

Speaking of the “middle-aged” category, it is this group whose children have been, are being and will be forced to move away from NOTL for job opportunities and affordable living accommodation.

That said, it appears that both the 20-to-34 and 35-to-55 age groups are notably less politically engaged than

their over-65 counterparts.

Very oddly, there is a dearth of published data in Ontario regarding voter turnout by age. In fact, neither the provincial nor most municipal governments in this province actually produce this metric.

However, the sole exception in the Niagara region is the City of Niagara Falls — visit open.niagarafalls.ca/search and you will find data from the last municipal election under “Niagara Falls 2022 Election Results – Recorded Electors by Age.”

It is immediately apparent from this data that the voter turnout in the 20-to-34 age category is approximately 66 per cent lower than that of the 65-plus crowd, while the 34-to-54 group is not

significantly better, at about 50 per cent of its older counterparts.

Despite total voter turnout being notably higher in Niagara-on-the-Lake versus Niagara Falls during the 2022 election, I suspect we can generalize the voter turnout percentages by age over both municipalities. In real terms, these age groups are demonstrably less politically involved than the over 65 demographic.

This proposition is supported by the recent survey results published by the Niagara-on-the-Lake Residents Association (visit notlra.com and hover over the “Governance” tab at the top of website to find the “2026 Survey Results” page), wherein only 23 per cent of survey respondents were under the age of 65 while the remaining 77 per cent of people responding were over that age.

The future of this town should be charted not by the old, but by those who will inherit for decades to come and if not for themselves then for their children.

The majority is not speaking and we desperately need to hear their voices.

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



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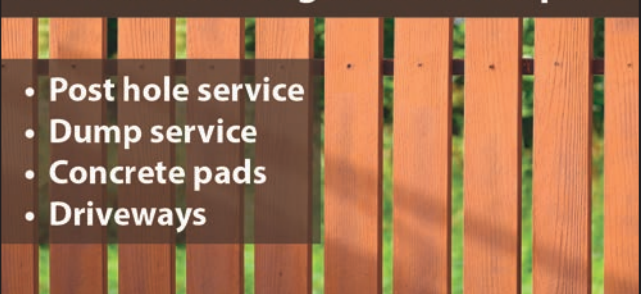
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The **back-to-school** stampede was different in my day



ROSS'S RAMBLINGS

Ross Robinson
Columnist

Let's ramble a bit about how different the whole back-to-school picture is now.

Way back when during my early grade years in Winnipeg and then Toronto, how did we manage without backpacks? How did we carry all our stuff?

Sometimes today, a young child seems to be totally encumbered, outsized by a backpack bigger than the backpacker. Textbooks, binders, clothing and perhaps some sports stuff and a musical instrument.

The backpacks of today are not simply utilitarian. Stylish and colourful, often decorated with a trendy logo or a famous face.

Lunch? I cannot recall

what Mom prepared for my lunch, but it was no doubt nutritious and included the main food groups. And this wouldn't have included any fast-food delights.

Weird as it might seem now, our houses while I was in kindergarten to Grade 6 were always within a reasonable walking distance of the school. Not a lot of "working moms" in those days.

A favourite family story was when Mom called out to my Grade 5 walking pal, Bill Armour, "Bill, would you like to have lunch with us today?" He quickly and politely responded, "What are you having?" At least, that's the legend as it lives on. (With a tip of the hat to Gordon Lightfoot.)

Not that long ago, may I remind everyone? As I ramble along this week, the entire back-to-school phenomenon is so radically different than it was back in the 1950s.

Yellow school buses? Not even a factor back then in Canadian school districts where we lived. Now, a logistical miracle that inconceivably transpires every school day morning.



When he was your age, Ross Robinson walked to school uphill both ways in the snow ... now it's systematic. FILE

Imagine looking down from above at North America at about 7:30 a.m. on a school day. Of course, we didn't have computers back then, or handheld communication devices illustrating the routes and current positions of our bus. Our lives have become

so incomprehensively over-complicated.

And huge shoutouts now to the unsung heroes: school bus drivers and crossing guards. The responsibility, the split shifts and the often compromised weather conditions. How the term "snow

day" has evolved? And I haven't even mentioned the shocking rudeness and incompetence of some car drivers. Please.

Rambling just a bit more, as my deadline approaches, how about before-school and after-school activities? Partly due to the cost of car insurance, not a lot of high school kids have their own cars now.

I become totally flummoxed trying to figure out the logistics and expenses of education today. How do we possibly pay for our schools? To emphasize my query, how do we possibly pay for our schools?

So, I have gone on about the mysteries of education today.

Let me take a challenging big step from the old Parliament Oak Public School site, across King Street to Veterans Memorial Park. Near Branch 124 of our Royal Canadian Legion

Rambling this week, I am reminded that our town really is a small town. With a big basket of goings on and issues.

Happily, and after a year or two off from a sport I love, I am back playing ten-

nis. Patiently, with a strong dose of timidity. Staying vertical used to be expected, but now, no chasing drop shots or lobs. Feet can get tangled up, and down one tumbles for the dreaded fall.

Let me propose a rhyming headline for these words about my current Monday evening Big Hitters and Thursday evening Top Guns men's leagues — "Familiar faces, more braces, and less aces."

So great to be seeing George Schachtschneider (I have done my best on this spelling), Derrick Penman, Mac MacSween and Rick Sherk again. And Shan Jain, Jim "Willam Makepeace" Thackray and so many other determined athletes.

All of us are a tad older, but still familiar faces. More braces on more knees and elbows, and less aces being served up.

My weekly deadline has arrived, so it's time for me to ramble off.

Try to be kinder to each other, especially with the upcoming election campaign upon us.

rossrocket9@gmail.com

No more **misinformation** about Parliament Oak, some of us are happy

Dear editor:

With respect to The Lake Report, can we put Parliament Oak to bed, please? Enough.

It's happening and I look forward to its majesty — others don't and that's fine. What I take issue with is the constant misinformation stirred by Garth Turner, SORE and the Residents Association (a minority group) and others blaming recent flooding on the development.

The flood at the Legion was caused by a culvert blocked to allow the Regent Street culvert repair and then not removed by the contractor. It was not caused by Parliament Oak construction, despite wishful thinking by some.

As recent reporting by

Mr. Hummel explains, Parliament Oak is permitted to pump filtered storm water, i.e. clean water into the sewage system, as is the Royal George. This is standard for major construction.

The town's sewer system is more than capable of handling this and during the storms was operating under capacity.

To understand this in simple terms, we have a big hole (Parliament Oak). Water flows drawn by gravity, i.e. into the hole, not the other way around.

Parliament Oak may have actually saved further flooding. How do I know this? I have consulted with professionals and have done my research.

Bonita Cawker
Old Town

Stop manufacturing the **parking problem**

Dear editor:

There is something wonderfully municipal about our approach to parking.

Council gives municipal accommodation tax revenue to a tourism marketing agency. The agency advertises Niagara-on-the-Lake. Visitors arrive, followed by their cars. Residents complain, taxpayers fund another parking study — and then, apparently, we advertise some more.

Perhaps there is a less expensive solution.

Niagara-on-the-Lake does not lack tourists on peak summer weekends. It lacks space.

This is not only an Old Town problem. Rural roads now carry growing numbers of visitors alongside farm equipment, cyclists, farm-workers and residents, in a municipality bounded by protected farmland, parks, the lake and the river.

That distinction matters.



We already have an outlet mall. Old Town should not become another one. There is no magical vacant parking field behind Queen Street — only homes, heritage streets, parks and neighbourhoods where people actually live.

So why do we act as though every additional visitor is automatically a public good?

Tourism is not one thing. A visitor who stays two nights, parks once, walks, sees a play, has dinner, tours wineries and shops at locally owned businesses brings substantial value.

A visitor who drives into Old Town, circles for parking, buys an ice cream, takes a photograph and leaves brings considerably less.

Yet both count equally in a visitor count statistic.

Perhaps we should stop counting heads and start counting value.

The designated tourism agency should be judged by whether it attracts visitors who stay longer, spend more, travel outside peak periods and explore more of Niagara-on-the-Lake — not simply by whether more people arrive.

That requires council to set the right mandate. Council chose the agency and decided to give it

municipal accommodation tax revenue. If its goals and incentives are wrong, that is not merely an agency problem. It is a governance problem.

And when Old Town is already full?

We could try the revolutionary strategy of not using municipal accommodation tax money to invite more peak-period day-trippers.

No expropriation. No parking garage. No shuttle study. No new signs explaining that the parking lot is full. And almost no taxpayer cost.

Tourism should serve Niagara-on-the-Lake — not require Niagara-on-the-Lake to be redesigned for an unlimited number of tourists.

Before solving the parking shortage, perhaps we should stop manufacturing it.

Invite guests, not traffic.

Bruce Gitelman
Old Town



Closed until further notice.
Thanks for your support - all events have been temporarily postponed. Stay tuned for updates!

Royal Canadian Legion Br. 124 | 410 King St. NOTL | 905-468-2353



Ford takes a page from Trump

Dear editor:

Donald Trump and Doug Ford — not real bright and damn proud of it.

Even though Donald and Doug may appear as brothers under the skin, even brothers may have a falling out, as follows.

Question: How do you bury innumerable attacks on democracy, woodlands, farmlands, wetlands, flood plains, autistic children, the public health system, public education, the Landlord and Tenant Board, freedom of information, etc.?

Well, why not copy Donald Trump, and just start to rant about something that you have never mentioned before? If Trump can do it, why shouldn't Ford and his royal Republicans? Generally speaking, Toronto and Washington should be copacetic in such matters.

Remember the last Ontario election at the beginning of 2025? It had to be held because Trump was imposing tariffs on Canada. Say what? That isn't quite



Premier Doug Ford.

the Premier of Ontario's bailiwick. Don't we have a guy named Mark Carney who is supposed to deal with international concerns?

No matter. The Trump tariffs were good for keeping emerging kerfuffles about "Where is democracy now?", "Where are environmental issues now?",

"Where are health issues now?", and "Where is help for the poor and homeless now?" off the front pages and off television's prime-time news.

Ford was able to bury the legislative opposition by a myriad of "public service" advertisements, attack ads, photo-ops, official government statements, press conferences, pop quotes, etc.

In short, "There's no business like show business."

One wonders whether there is another election in the offing again, as Ford continues to run the province without the legislature, and governs through the Toronto media.

As with Trump, the goal is to be the most recognizable presence out there, as well as being in position to manipulate the public agenda. In which case, actual problems and actual realities never have to be addressed. Not until after the next election anyway.

Kevin McCabe
St. Catharines

Airport expansion bad news for us and our environment

Dear editor:

After reading positions of mayorial candidates, there seems to be little to no opposition to expanding the airport. Yet, local flooding, which surely will not be the last, and climate change are issues affecting all.

Have none of the candidates considered how expansion will lower the air quality and increase noise pollution for residents (the people who elect mayors) just so some rich Americans can scoot in for a weekend?

Why does it seem that the needs of people who live here are subordinate to the people politicians desire to attract?

Development for development's sake is something the unique agricultural area that is Niagara must consider wisely. Now if some

Niagara and provincial politicians talk about recreating a passenger rail system to NOTL, I'd be on board.

F.Y.I., While I live just across the road in Port Weller East, I grew up, attended school and was employed at times in NOTL; Niagara-on-the-Lake remains very important to me.

Dan Brown
Port Weller East

How to respond to economic aggression

Dear editor:

The letter from J. Richard Wright regarding confronting a deranged national leader is spot on. As previous experience has revealed, the reliance on tariffs does not achieve an objective of engendering domestic production.

Of course there are other accompanying objectives, but the goals of balancing



international trade through tariffs is illusory.

A tit-for-tat tariff war is not worth pursuing.

I suggest the federal government immediately pass a bill on natural resources depletion.

This would require payment to provinces and the feds for material such as potash and other resources being mined. The details of the rates would be a subtle for negotiation.

As a resource-rich country, this source of wealth could be key element in national planning.

Richard Warren Osborn
NOTL

To Our Niagara-on-the-Lake Community

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

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

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

- Water damage repairs
- Basement restoration
- Waterproofing improvements
- Basement renovations once everything is dry

We're also happy to provide detailed estimates for your insurance company and work directly with your adjuster to help make the process as straightforward as possible.

If you're unsure where to start, give me a call. Even if it's just for advice, I'm always happy to help.



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Canada and the **recasting** of democratic leadership



Keith McNenly
Special to The Lake Report

The leadership of the free world has historically passed not from the most innocent nation, but from the power best able to combine force, institutions and a persuasive moral narrative. Britain held that mantle through the age of empires, advancing the seeds of parliamentary liberty and the Magna Carta while simultaneously sustaining a global empire built on the exploitation of colonialism.

Following the First World War, as the British Empire began to dissolve, Britain continued to lead the democratic cause through the Second World War.

For more than two years, the Commonwealth stood as a bulwark against fascism until the United States was drawn into the conflict fol-



In the U.S. or abroad, many are tired of Donald Trump's autocracy. Canada is now a pillar of democracy. WIKIMEDIA

lowing the attack on Pearl Harbor and Germany's subsequent declaration of war against the U.S.

In the aftermath of the war, the United States established itself as the pre-eminent global power and assumed the title of leader of the free world. However, both the British and American eras of leadership were characterized by a profound contradiction: they championed freedom while practicing its selective application.

Britain's legacy was one of constitutional progress paired with colonial exploitation. The United States followed a similar path, masking economic imperialism behind a rhetoric of

liberation.

From the Spanish-American War and the absorption of Hawaii to the strategic propping up of dictatorships in the oil-rich Middle East, American leadership often functioned as a mechanism for hegemony rather than a partnership of equals.

This hegemonic leadership was sustained by a domestic rhetoric of "American exceptionalism" — the myth that only in America could government be openly criticized, and only in America was there a guaranteed peaceful transfer of power.

Today, these pillars are not merely weakening; they are reversing.

We are now witnessing a

critical evolutionary moment in the concept of freedom. Under a resurgence of aggressive nationalism with the return of the Trump administration, the United States has drifted toward a posture of overt authoritarianism.

By deploying punitive tariffs as weapons of state and threatening those who do not comply, the current American leadership has signalled a regression to the belief that might makes right — that the strong may do what they will, and the weak must simply accept the terms.

This shift is not merely an economic strategy; it is a symptom of a domestic political apparatus where a minority-controlled administration, supported by a party-controlled Congress and Supreme Court, has increasingly sidelined the democratic will of its own citizens.

In this climate of coercion, a new model of leadership is emerging. While many nations have meekly accepted American demands to avoid the wrath of the hegemon, Canada has stood its ground.

By resisting economic attacks and refusing to surrender its sovereign capacity to govern, Canada has become the primary democratic voice reminding the world that freedom is not a gift handed down by the powerful, but a right defended by the resolute.

Canada's resistance is particularly poignant because it is conducted by a nation dwarfed in military and economic scale by its attacking neighbour, while sharing the longest undefended border in the world.

Canada's ascent to this emerging mantle is not rooted in the ability to project force or exploit less developed nations. Instead, its leadership is defined by the resolve of an engaged citizenry willing to sacrifice immediate comfort for the preservation of sovereign democracy. It is guided by a leadership focused on building economic strength and diversification to withstand economic warfare.

Canada is not fighting for dominance, but for the principle of autonomy. Furthermore, this resistance is not an act of hostility to-

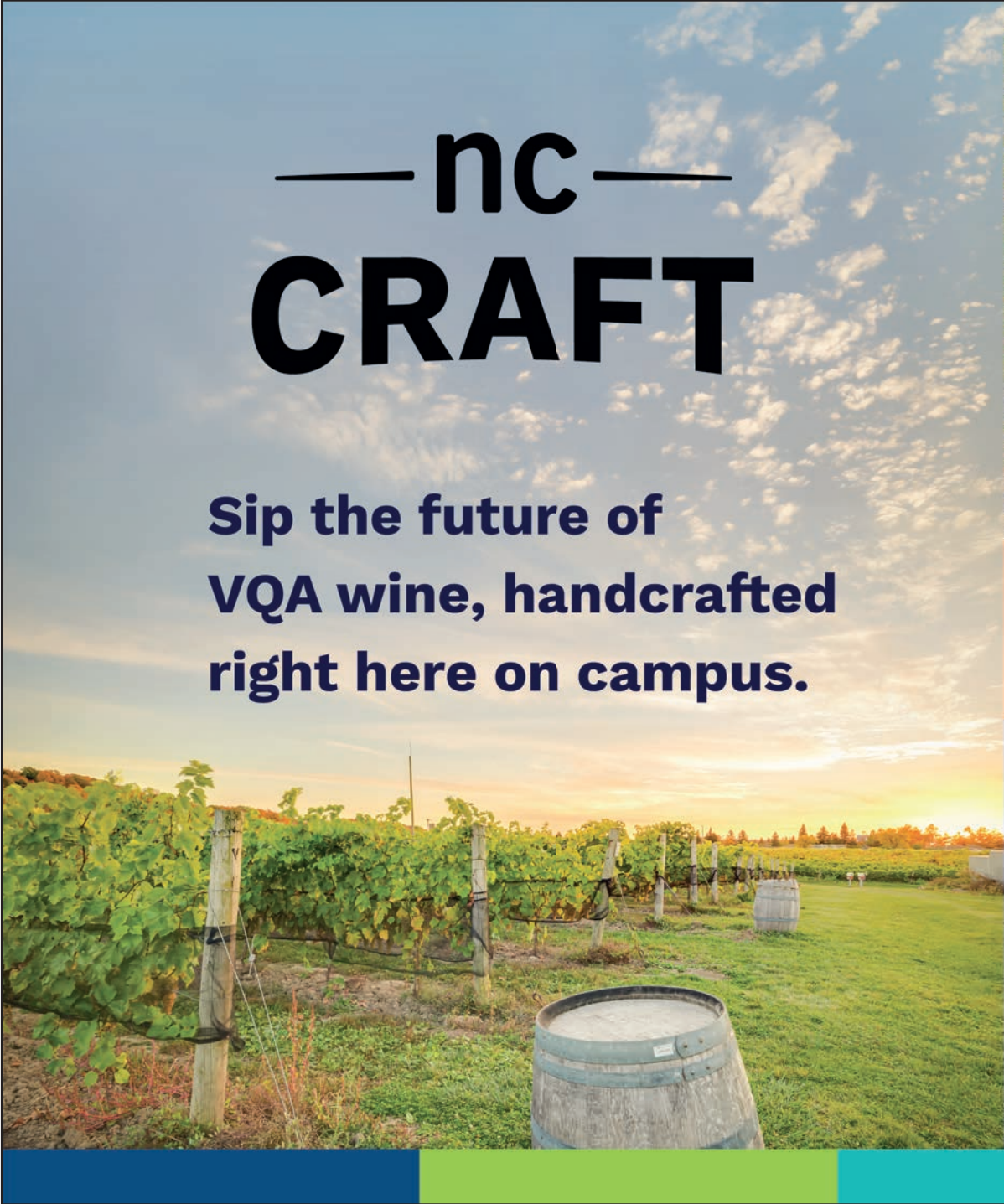
ward the American people, but an act of solidarity with them. By refusing to cave to a coercive regime, Canada provides a vital external anchor, just across the shared border, for American citizens who find themselves trapped under a dictatorial minority rule.

The shift of leadership from the United States to Canada as the moral centre of the free world is not a transition of raw power, but a transition of legitimacy. It suggests that the era of fiat by hegemony is ending, and the era of leadership by principle is beginning.

By demonstrating that a smaller, democratic nation can challenge the pressure of a superpower through strategic resolve and civic unity, Canada is showing the world that the true measure of leadership is not the ability to compel, but the courage to resist.

In doing so, Canada is not merely defending its own borders; it is defending the very idea of a free world.

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



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Have some fun

- Across
1. Insurers cover them (5)

4. Avert scam, abusing studio kit (2,7)

9. Manic-depressive (7)

10. River mouth (7)

11. Die (5,4)

12. Food poisoning bacteria (1,4)

13. Recast (7)

15. Fortification sounds like a horn, maybe (7)

17. Vigorous (7)

19. Distended (7)

21. Instruct (5)

23. Lifted out (7,2)

25. Hackneyed (7)

26. Provocations (7)

27. Ayrshire golf course owned by Donald Trump (9)

28. Book preceding Philemon (5)
- Down
1. Only Hitchcock film to get a Best Picture Oscar (7)

2. Not a leading player (10,5)

3. Top briefs (5)

4. Prospered (7)

5. Less cloudy (7)

6. Corner joint (5)

7. Grounds for acquittal (10,5)

8. Top cutter? (7)

14. Deck speed measure (1,1,1)

16. Long March leader (3)

17. Motown (7)

18. "Waterworld" star (7)

19. Drops in (5,2)

20. They're often changed on little ones (7)

22. Big banger? (1-4)

24. "--- Your Wagon", Frederick Loewe musical (5)

Crossword Puzzle

1

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7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

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Last issue's answers

1. S

2. F

3. W

4. O

5. E

6. F

7. V

8. R

9. O

10. P

11. E

12. N

13. A

14. I

15. R

16. C

17. H

18. O

19. L

20. E

21. R

22. A

23. T

24. R

25. E

26. S

27. S

28. S

29. T

30. O

31. L

32. L

33. B

34. O

35. O

36. T

37. H

38. I

39. O

40. O

41. I

42. D

43. E

44. B

45. R

46. A

47. P

48. Y

49. D

50. A

51. U

52. P

53. E

54. C

55. R

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57. N

58. T

59. L

60. C

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62. D

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68. N

69. T

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71. O

72. L

73. K

74. M

75. U

76. S

77. I

78. C

79. N

80. A

81. D

82. I

83. R

84. A

85. U

86. E

87. S

88. U

89. T

90. E

91. E

92. M

93. E

94. T

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97. R

98. S

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The greasy pole — a Labour Day tradition?

As another Niagara-on-the-Lake summer winds down, many of us are looking forward to one last long weekend before autumn arrives. Labour Day has long marked the unofficial end of summer, but it was once one of the biggest celebrations of the year in town. Organized by the local fire department, Labour Day celebrations along the Niagara River were packed with entertainment. There were boat races, games in the park, an evening hop, canoe-tipping contests and the infamous greasy pole competition, which sounds every bit as painful as it looks in this photograph. One year, organizers decided to add a greased pig race. We can only assume it ended in complete chaos, because it never appeared again in an event listing. Another crowd favourite was, you guessed it, another greased event: the watermelon race. A greased watermelon was tossed into the Niagara River, and the first person to wrestle it ashore won a prize. However you spend this Labour Day weekend, we hope you enjoy the final long weekend of summer, and that it's considerably less greasy than those of Niagara-on-the-Lake's past.

Is it time for science's veterans to **step aside?**



DR. BROWN

Dr. William Brown
Columnist

How productive are older scientists? Some claim to be very productive, citing a bulging CV of papers to justify their claim. Maybe, but Venki Ramakrishnan, a Nobel Prize winner in chemistry had this to say about aging and innovative ground-breaking work in his 2024 book, "Why We Die":

"People who advocate that Americans should work until they are 70 are typically in cushy, remunerative white-collar jobs that are fun and intellectually engaging for octogenarians. Many academics work well into their 80s. Some claim they are doing the best work of their lives, but evidence suggests otherwise — they become brand names, amass resources and funding and manage to churn out first-rate work from their lab but the innovation and

most if not all the work, is provided by first-rate young scientists — older scientists have a different role to play as facilitators, not originalists. It is very rare for an older scientist to break new ground."

That's what Ramakrishnan had to say about the relationship between age and productivity in science, based on his experience as a scientist in chemistry, who was innovative and deserving enough to win a Nobel Prize, yet realizes that his laboratory years are well past him at 70. Recent data backs his opinions up.

Data from 12.5 million scientists in fields such as computer science, social science mathematics, physics, medicine, chemistry and biology was collected and analyzed with very much the same result as Ramakrishnan suggests: scientists in the later decades of their career were far less likely to come up with truly ground-breaking, innovative work — the kind that has the power to shake up and significantly change a field (much as AI has done in recent years).

Older scientists were more likely to cite their own or other research dating to their more active periods in their own research and less likely to cite recent, possibly



As China accelerates past the U.S. in the realm of scientific achievements, Dr. William Brown points out that unlike in Western institutions, in China, most of the up-and-coming scientists are relatively young — and more likely to break new ground. UNSPLASH

innovative research leading in different, perhaps challenging directions compared to their own research.

At the highest level, that's what's reflected in winners of Nobel prizes in physics, chemistry and medicine. Although it's not unusual for these scientists to be in their 70s or older when they win their Nobel Prize, the work that led to their Nobel Prize was, characteristically, carried out several decades earlier.

The chief problem posed by older faculty hanging on in into their 70s or more is that by staying, they limit opportunities for young scientists to secure jobs as teachers and scientists in universities. And worse,

might stifle field-changing innovative research.

That's what probably happened to research in Alzheimer's disease, which was stuck for decades with the "amyloid model" based on the notion that the disease was caused by the accumulation of beta-amyloid (and tau) proteins — hence the treatment of patients with drugs designed to rid the brain of those accumulations to treat the disease.

Clinical trials revealed that several monoclonal antibody drugs were very good at clearing the brain of beta-amyloid. But evidence those drugs significantly changed the curve of cognitive decline was far less impressive.

The whole field was muddled by pharmaceutical companies and clinical trialist physicians desperate for success, as well as, some would claim, corruption.

Senior researchers sometimes have advantages: a broad historical grasp of their field, laboratories that are often well-resourced, experienced colleagues to work with and important connections with others in the field.

However, those same laboratories can be stifling for budding young scientists who challenge traditional views and are open to fresh ideas.

There's yet another problem. Too many established scientists may make it nearly impossible for even the most gifted aspiring young scientist to see a path to a career position.

These days many live from paycheck to paycheck, dependent on funds that in the current uncertain funding climate, are drying up, especially in the U.S. but elsewhere too.

Science in the U.S. and Europe has been in golden age for funding, public and private since the Second World War — that is, until recently.

The balance has solidly shifted toward China for the basic sciences and engi-

neering. This year, China overtook the U.S. for high-quality institutions and innovation in the last decade.

For example, this year in chemistry, China took two-thirds of the top 100 spots, including 23 of the top 25 spots. That's amazing.

And unlike Western institutions where faculties and resources are aging, in China, most of the up-and-coming scientists are relatively young who, based on recent evidence, are more likely to produce ground-breaking research, which in turn fuels their economy and trade.

The Western world needs innovation and at least so far in AI, U.S. companies have the lead. But probably not for long given China's long-term investment in the sciences.

Our response to China's success should be to plan for the long-term, not the next election cycle, foster and reward excellence and invest in the young, if we hope to keep up with our competitors around the world. Pax Americana and America Über Alles is over.

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.

Willowbank School of Restoration Arts celebrates 20th anniversary on Sept. 19

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

Twenty years ago, a heritage property in Queenston that was rescued from the threat of demolition began a new chapter in its history as a place where people would learn not only to cherish the past, but how to preserve it for generations to come.

Today, the School of Restoration Arts at Willowbank in Niagara-on-the-Lake is one of a handful of educational programs in the country that's teaching people the ins and out of preserving and restoring historical buildings and other heritage sites.

This fall, the Willowbank school is celebrating 20 years since its foundation in 2006, with plans to invite the public onto its 13-acre property to tour the 19th-century Willowbank Estate, learn more about what the school does and take part in day-long activities — including an evening concert.

"We're delighted to welcome the community to this celebration," said Katie Houghton, Willowbank's executive director.

The estate building itself was built between 1832 and 1834 for Alexander Hamilton, son of Robert Hamilton, one of the founders of Upper Canada. In the early 2000s, it faced the threat of demolition or commercialization.

In response, NOTL resident Laura Dodson created



Since 2006, students have been receiving an education at the Willowbank school in how to preserve and restore buildings and other historic properties. The estate itself is a historic property dating back to the 1830s. FILE/DAVE VAN DE LAAR

the Friends of Willowbank, which helped to raise more than \$1 million to buy the property and turn it into the School of Restoration Arts it is today. It was designated a National Historic Site in 2003 and began operating as a school three years later.

The 20th anniversary celebration is set for Saturday, Sept. 19, with a free community afternoon gathering being held from 1 to 5 p.m. It'll feature heritage demonstrations, an artisan market, activities for children and tours of the school's Indigenous Love Garden, used to grow sacred medicines: tobacco, cedar, sage and

sweetgrass. "This day will be a celebration of all things heritage, including local artisans, vendors, and faculty sharing their skills with the community," Houghton said.

Then, in the evening, Willowbank will host the Woodshed Orchestra for a performance from 6 to 9 p.m., with a mix of jazz, blues, R&B, soul Balkan and Klezmer influenced-music. Tickets for that concert are \$20.

All the proceeds from the celebration will go toward supporting the school's goal of restoring its historic

manor house and allow everyone to safely access the third floor, which the school hopes to use for teaching, learning and community uses.

Willowbank is looking to raise up to \$193,000 for the project — that amount is going to be matched by Parks Canada, which is pledging to support the project. This means the school could have up to \$386,000 for its restoration efforts.

"We hope to welcome you to Willowbank, whether you're new or returning. This is a very special place and everyone is welcome," Houghton said.

Obituary

Helga Froese-Rahn



Froese-Rahn, Helga (nee Reimer) of NOTL passed away following a brief battle with cancer on August 30, 2026 at the age of 88, surrounded by her loving family.

Born in Simonsdorf, West Prussia (Germany) on October 26, 1937, she came to Canada in 1951. She is survived by her children, Ed, Rick (Erika), Debbie (John) Peters; as well as 12 grandchildren and 20 great grandchildren. Predeceased by her two husbands, Jacob (1988) and Henry Rahn (2023), her brother and sister-in-law, Gerhard (2015) and Ingrid Reimer (2023), and daughter-in-Law, Helen (2023).

She will be remembered by her active volunteerism in her church and community which included serving at the Christian Benefit Thrift Store (53 years) and Warehouse of Hope. In 2019 she was honoured to receive the Lord Mayor's Volunteer Award.

As a younger woman she served on the Niagara Grape Growers Action Committee which was an outspoken advocacy and marketing group formed in the 1970's by women in farm families to support Ontario's struggling grape and wine industries. She enjoyed weekly meetings, events and social connections with neighbours and the wider grape farming community.

The family will receive friends at Niagara United Mennonite Church, 1775 Niagara Stone Rd. (Hwy 55), NOTL on September 3 at 10:00 am for a time of visitation followed by the funeral service at 11:00 am. Internment immediately following the service at Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery for those who wish to attend.

If desired, memorial donations can be made to the Mennonite Central Committee or Radiant Care Pleasant Manor.

Online condolences at www.tallmanfuneralhomes.ca



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

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Writers' Circle members' latest works hit shelves this fall

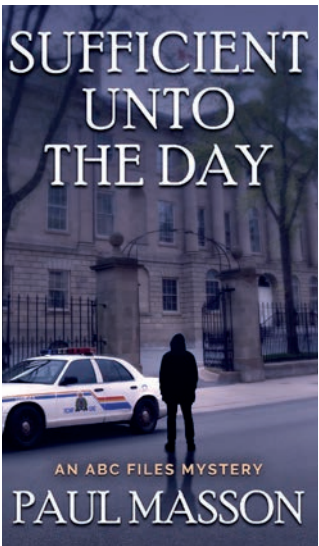
Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

One writes mystery novels. The other, science-fiction. They may come from different literary worlds, but when it comes to bringing their ideas to life, they know how to help each other out.

Niagara-on-the-Lake authors Richard West and Paul Masson are both celebrating the publication of a novel this month, and say while they may work in different genres and approach writing differently, as members of the NOTL Writers' Circle, each has gotten helpful feedback on their latest works.

Masson and West held a joint book launch at the NOTL Public Library on Tuesday to discuss what inspires their writing, how they build fictional worlds and how an idea becomes a finished novel.

Masson's "Sufficient Unto the Day" is the eighth novel in his mystery series "The



"Sufficient Unto the Day" is Paul Masson's eighth book in his mystery series "The ABC Files." "Magic Trick" is Richard West's fourth book, this one in the genre of science-fiction and alternative history. SUPPLIED

ABC Files," which follows the staff of a detective agency spread across North America as they tackle puzzling cases, sailing adventures and life-threatening danger.

West's "Magic Trick" combines science-fiction with alternative history. The novel, set during the 1990s, tells two intersecting sto-



ries: an astronomy student who discovers a strange phenomenon in the sky and an alien race called the YIST, which has evacuated the Moon and hopes to find refuge on Earth.

The two authors met about eight years ago through the NOTL Writers' Circle. Both are members of the group, which gives

beginner and experienced writers an opportunity to receive peer feedback and supportive critiques.

West joined in 2016, while Masson came aboard around 2018. Over the years, the two have read and commented on each other's work.

"Richard was nice enough to read and give me comments — be a beta reader, as they call it — before I published this book," Masson said of "Sufficient Unto the Day."

"I've also read and commented on some of his things and I realized how different our genres are," he said. "I thought it would be interesting to actually have a conversation about how we do things — some things the same, some things differently."

That conversation eventually grew into the idea for a joint book launch.

West describes one major difference between his writing process and Masson's: Masson is a "planner,"

while West is a "pantser" — a writer who flies by the seat of his pants.

"A planner figures out what his or her book's about, maps it out and then merrily writes chapters, and they all fit together in the plan," West said.

"I'm completely the opposite. I'll write a short story, and then I'll get nudged into thinking, 'Well, perhaps I could write another sequel to that.' And next thing you know, I'm writing chapters. I have no idea whatsoever where the book's coming from."

For West, a retired engineer, writing "Magic Trick" has been a long and winding journey. He first developed the idea in the '90s, when he attempted to write a full-length story for the first time.

As he learned more about writing and publishing, he published three books and repeatedly returned to the original idea, expanding and refining it along the way. "Magic Trick," his fourth

book, brings that journey to an end.

"Sometimes, I'm absolutely amazed when I'm getting through a book that I never expected would go that far," he said of his process. "As with a bunch of us [writers], we find the same thing. We suddenly find the book's telling me what I've got to write, not me telling the book."

Masson, a retired economist, came to fiction writing after years of writing about economics for academic journals, peer-reviewed periodicals and newspapers.

He said fiction engages a different part of himself — more personal than the "logical, impersonal, rational mind" he used in his previous work.

"I attribute things to my characters that are emotions, fears, opinions that may well be wrong. There's more of myself in the fiction than in the non-fiction writing that I used to do," he said.

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