



Bill Redelmeier.

NOTL voters lay out priorities

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

A senior wants more housing options. A parent wants room for young families to stay. A winery owner wants infrastructure that can withstand the next major storm.

As Niagara-on-the-Lake heads toward the Oct. 26 municipal election, residents are weighing what the town needs next — and what they do not want to lose.

Balancing infrastructure needs, taxes and climate concerns

Some residents believe the next council's biggest challenge will be keeping infrastructure in good shape while preparing for climate change and keeping taxes affordable.

Bill Redelmeier, co-founder of Southbrook Organic Vineyards, wants the town to take a long-term approach to infrastructure as increasingly severe rain-

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Taking a hike, for a cause

Healing Hike raises \$50,000 to keep NOTL palliative care services free



Supporters of Community Palliative Care & Wellness make their way along the Heritage Trail Sunday during the inaugural Hummel Family Healing Hike for Palliative Care. The event raised \$25,000, which was matched by the Hummel family for a total of \$50,000 to help keep palliative care services free in Niagara-on-the-Lake and expand the organization's work into Niagara Falls. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Andrew Hawlitzky | The Lake Report

Supporters of Niagara-on-the-Lake's palliative care organization traded their bicycle wheels for hiking boots this year and hit the trails on Sunday morning for the first-ever Hummel Family Healing Hike for Palliative Care, raising money to

keep palliative care services free for NOTL residents and extend them into Niagara Falls.

The hike replaced the annual Hummel Family Healing Cycle Ride in Community Palliative Care & Wellness NOTL's 40th year — this year's fundraiser

raised \$25,000, which was matched by the Hummel family to total \$50,000 for the organization.

Sonya Murray, volunteer co-ordinator for Community Palliative Care & Wellness, told The Lake Report equipment prices have climbed over the last year, as

well as the rent it needs to pay to have spaces to run its programs.

"This helps us keep those things going and keep all of our services free of charge," she said.

Community Palliative Care &

Continued on Page 8



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Karen Taylor-Jones calls for ‘right development, right place’

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

Karen Taylor-Jones was the catalyst for a protest outside Niagara-on-the-Lake town hall two years ago that took the town to task over its decision to greenlight a luxury hotel on King Street. Today, construction on that hotel is underway, being built where the former Parliament Oak public school used to be — where Taylor-Jones went to school as a young student.

It's changes to the community like these — namely, she says, developments that are either too large or in the wrong part of town — that motivated the lifelong NOTLer to enter the council race in this fall's municipal election. "I should have probably run four years ago," she said. "I'm just not happy at all with how things have been going the last four years."

She was particularly inspired to run after a friend encouraged her to do so, also reminding her of the strides her grandmother made in municipal politics more than 80 years ago.

Left: Karen Taylor-Jones was the chief organizer behind a protest against plans for a luxury hotel on King Street, held two years ago in July outside town hall. Right: The lifelong NOTLer, whose grandmother Ruth Petrolia Taylor was the first woman to be elected to town council, says her family's always been concerned with helping the community. FILE/SUPPLIED

Ruth Petrolia Taylor was the first woman to be elected to the council of Niagara-on-the-Lake in 1945. "The family has always been community-minded," she said. "I just have to follow suit, I guess. I want to."

Taylor-Jones entered the race at the last minute — she was one of three candidates to file her nomination papers the day of the deadline, Aug. 21. She's still developing her campaign platform, going through the municipality's policies and its new official plan, which passed this spring. For the moment, she

frames her platform as such: "right development, right place, right scale and right structure."

Right now, she feels that while NOTL does have to build up, development is progressing "a little bit faster" than what the town's infrastructure can handle. One of the biggest development projects she's against is the luxury hotel planned for King Street. She organized the community protest outside town hall on July 31, 2024 in response to council approving the hotel in late June that year. At the time, she criticized the developers for building a hotel in the middle

of a residential area and said councillors were "out of control" and "not doing what the townspeople want."

More than 200 people turned up to the protest outside town hall in Virgil ahead of a council meeting. When councillors showed up, several protesters followed them, some chanting "liar" and "resign."

Despite the turnout and the noise protesters made on at town hall, Taylor-Jones doesn't feel much was accomplished — such as persuading the town to reverse course on the project. "The feeling when we left was that the people were

not really heard."

The Parliament Oak hotel was approved in a 5-4 split vote. If she had been part of council in 2024, Taylor-Jones said, she would've voted against it. As for other development projects down the line of which she may be critical, she said that if elected, she wants to make an effort to defeat those plans. "It's going to be hard," she said. "I'm hoping it's myself that gets in there, because at least I know that I tried my best if it's something that I disagree with."

Another project she's critical of is the rebuilding of the Royal George The-

atre on Queen Street. She said she wishes the original theatre, which last 111 years, could've been better preserved so that it didn't have to be torn down due to its age. "I think it's great that the town is getting a new theatre, but I'm not happy with the height of it," she said. "I think it's going to look out of place at the landscape of our main street."

Furthermore, she said, she hopes the new theatre doesn't open the doors to larger developments in the downtown core. Two years ago, she said, she spent a few days standing on Queen Street during tourist season and speaking with visitors, asking them where they're from and what brings them to town. The majority of them, she said, were from municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area that were once charming small towns like NOTL before they were "swallowed up" by development. "They miss the feeling" of living in a small town, she said. "I don't want that to happen to Niagara-on-the-Lake."

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Adriana Vizzari vows to put families first

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Adriana Vizzari wants another four years on Niagara-on-the-Lake council to finish what she started: making the town a place where young families can put down roots, especially in St. Davids.

But as she seeks re-election, the incumbent councillor is also standing by the town's approach to media access and taking a cautious position on some of NOTL's most contentious decisions, including the Royal George Theatre and Rand Estate.

"I ran in 2022 because I wanted children and families to have a stronger voice at the council table and to be a strong advocate for St. Davids," Vizzari told The Lake Report in an email.

Her priorities for another term are continued investment in parks, recreation and programming, along with infrastructure that keeps pace with growth.

"Those are things that have a real day-to-day impact on families, and I'd want to keep that focus at the council table."

Vizzari points to storm-water improvements, safer crossings and better connections as progress made in St. Davids during her first term.

She also highlights soccer nets added at Sparky's Park, continued investment in the pool, parks and recreation programs, and library programming brought to the village. Her work on the library board has given her another opportunity to advocate for children and families, she said.

"I've worked to make sure development is thoughtful, compatible and supported by the infrastructure our



Coun. Adriana Vizzari is seeking a second term on Niagara-on-the-Lake council, saying she wants to continue her focus on young families, recreation and infrastructure, particularly in St. Davids. The incumbent is also defending the town's approach to media access while taking a cautious stance on major files including the Rand Estate, old hospital and Royal George Theatre. FILE PHOTO

community needs, while advocating for adequate school capacity and continuing to ask questions about the need for a high school."

She says council has also made families a greater priority through initiatives such as the youth discretionary grant. But there is more to do, she said, particularly when it comes to investing in the spaces, programs and infrastructure that make NOTL a place where families can stay and grow.

Vizzari did not support the decision to reduce council to seven members from nine.

"I believe more voices bring more perspectives to the table, especially in a community as diverse as NOTL," she said.

"With fewer councillors, every voice and every vote carries even more responsibility. It makes it even more important that councillors listen carefully to residents and bring those perspectives to the council table."

On the future of the old

hospital at 176 Wellington St., Vizzari isn't committing to any one idea for how it should be used yet.

She said the town has completed community engagement and moved into feasibility, design and financial analysis to better understand the options and costs involved. Council has also begun considering potential partners.

"We need to understand the condition and cost of the building, what uses make sense for NOTL, what is financially sustainable and what options provide the best long-term value for the community."

She takes a similarly cautious approach to the Rand Estate, saying its heritage must be respected while the town considers expert advice, financial implications and a sustainable future for the property.

"I'll continue to do what I've been doing — ask questions, listen, look at the facts and work toward the best outcome for our community."

Asked what council got

wrong in its handling of the Royal George Theatre decision and what she would have done differently, Vizzari did not identify a mistake.

"I think the Royal George decision was a difficult one, and there were a lot of perspectives and competing considerations," she said. "Council ultimately made a decision based on the information and circumstances we had at the time."

Going forward, she said, the focus should be on supporting NOTL's arts, culture and theatre community.

On the town's media access policy, Vizzari backed chief administrative officer Nick Ruller. In February, Ruller directed staff not to answer requests supporting opinion, advocacy or commentary pieces, while continuing to answer factual questions from reporters.

"I support the (chief administrative officer's) approach. Staff need to be able to do their jobs without being put in the position of responding to opinion-based or political questions," she said.

"The town should provide factual information, and I think the media has an important role in holding elected officials accountable for the decisions we make."

Vizzari says she does not want local debates reduced to competing camps.

"Developers versus residents, young versus old, heritage versus growth — pick your division. Those divisions might make headlines, but they don't build communities."

"I want to be part of finding the right balance, listening to different perspectives and making decisions based on what's best for NOTL as a whole."

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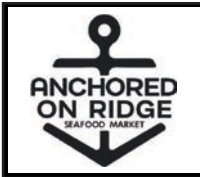
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School's back in session – and **change is in the air**

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The backpacks are back, the classrooms are buzzing and Niagara-on-the-Lake students are settling into a new school year — with some getting used to a new school, too.

Students returned to school this week as a new boundary change sent some children from St. Davids to Crossroads Public School, part of an effort to ease overcrowding and make room for growth across Niagara.

For students this year, though, the first days of school are about more than enrolment and school boundaries.

On Wednesday morning, the second day of school, Crossroads student Victoria George-Libgers said she was feeling excited, especially for gym class and the chance to see her friends.



It's back to school at Crossroads Public School, where students are settling into a new year and some new faces are joining the crowd following a boundary change with St. Davids Public School. Right: Crossroads student Victoria George-Libgers is ready for the new school year, with gym class and seeing her friends topping her list of things to look forward to. PAIGE SEBURN



At St. Davids, principal Carl Glauser said the feeling of a new school year has not lost its appeal.

“Even after many years as a principal, the excitement of the first day of school never gets old. Seeing students return, reconnect with friends and

begin a new year of learning is always special.”

At Crossroads, principal Kate Fish said the school is looking forward to a year of learning, growth and connection, building on the relationships students made before classes began.

A new boundary, a new beginning

The District School Board of Niagara says boundary changes help balance enrolment and make better use of available classroom space.

“The (school board) is experiencing growth across many areas of the Niagara Region,” said Milica Petkovic, the school board’s spokesperson.

The school board did not provide the current enrolment and capacity figures for NOTL schools requested by The Lake Report, so it is not yet clear how much the boundary change has reduced overcrowding.

Petkovic said staff at both schools have worked together for several months to help families prepare. Students and parents were given opportunities to become familiar with their new school community before September.

At Crossroads, Fish said an event called Day in the Life of a Coyote helped incoming students make connections before the first day.

“We were able to start fostering a sense of community before the school year even started,” she said.

Fish said the school is ready to welcome students and help them feel comfortable and connected.

“I’m especially excited to see how the connections made during our Day in the Life of a Coyote event carry forward into September,” she said.

NOTL Coun. Adriana Vizzari, whose children are entering grades 4, 6 and 8 at St. Davids and Grade 9 outside NOTL, said both schools have worked hard to make the transition “as smooth as possible.”

“I know St. Davids families were especially happy to see the five portables gone for the start of the school year,” she said.

“Change is never easy, but I’m hopeful this will help ease the pressure at St. Davids.”

Childcare and the next step

The boundary change has also raised questions about before- and after-school care. As previously reported by The Lake Report, some families moving to Crossroads have had difficulty securing spaces in the YMCA program.

Each year, Niagara Region assesses demand for before- and after-school care and shares its findings with school boards, which decide whether a program will be established at a particular school and select the provider. Once a program is established, the provider decides how many spaces to operate within its licensed capacity.

The region said it was not specifically aware how the the boundary change will impact child-care demand at Crossroads.

“The school board is responsible for determining if a program may be required to support existing demand,” said Satinder Klair, the region’s director of children’s services.

Klair said decisions about operating additional spaces, including staffing and the use of school space, rest with the child-care provider and school board. The region can help explore options within its mandate when either partner identifies a need or requests support.

He said neither the YMCA nor the DSNB has approached the region about expanding the Crossroads program, though they would not generally need regional approval to add children within its existing licensed capacity.

The YMCA did not re-

spond to The Lake Report’s questions by press time about current capacity or whether expansion is being considered.

Petkovic said the board uses enrolment projections and its long-term accommodation plan to guide future space needs.

The board did not answer whether it assessed the boundary change’s impact on child-care demand before approving it, whether child-care capacity is considered when planning boundary changes, or whether it has discussed additional spaces at Crossroads with the YMCA.

Another childcare option in NOTL has yet to open. Niagara Catholic spokesperson Jennifer Pellegrini told The Lake Report that Way to Learn Daycare rented space at St. Michael Catholic Elementary School in January and has been renovating it since.

Pellegrini said the board is optimistic before- and after-school care will begin in mid-September, pending Ministry of Education and public health inspections, with full-day care to follow later.

For Vizzari, the start of another school year also highlights a longer-term issue: the lack of a high school in NOTL.

“There’s definitely excitement around back-to-school, but for many families in NOTL, there’s also frustration that students are having to leave our community for high school. With my own child entering Grade 9 outside of NOTL, I know how that feels.”

She said she will continue advocating for a high school in town so future generations can have that opportunity.

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com

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Parking study to explore Old Town shuttle

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Does Niagara-on-the-Lake have enough parking, and is it in the right places? The town is collecting data to answer that question while considering how to manage tourism-related pressure without creating the same solution for every community.

A shuttle to and from Old Town and licence plate readers to help enforce parking rules are among the options that may be explored as NOTL studies its parking supply.

Work on recommendations is scheduled for later this year, with the study expected to address everything from visitor spillover onto residential streets to overnight parking and future growth.

The town has hired LEA Consulting Ltd. to examine parking conditions across Old Town, Virgil, Glendale, Queenston and St. Davids. The study will assess whether existing municipal parking is appropriate and look at ways to improve how parking is managed, rather than simply adding more spaces.

Jay Plato, the town's fire chief and director of community and protective services, said the consultant conducted parking surveys in Old Town during August's peak tourism season, measuring demand, available capacity and turnover rates. More surveys are planned for the fall in the other urban areas.

The fall surveys are planned for when schools are back in regular operation, allowing the consultant to examine parking conditions in residential neighbourhoods.



Parking in Old Town is under the microscope as Niagara-on-the-Lake studies whether it has enough spaces in the right places. A shuttle to and from Old Town is among the options that may be explored to ease congestion during peak tourism season. FILE

"Options such as a shuttle service to and from Old Town may be explored as part of the Study," Plato said in an emailed response to The Lake Report.

Old Town has the largest concentration of municipal parking and the highest visitor demand because of its commercial, tourism and cultural destinations, Plato said. The study will examine seasonal changes, visitor activity, residential needs, future growth and operational challenges.

In Virgil, Glendale, Queenston and St. Davids, the focus will include residential parking, overnight pressures, future development and localized constraints. The goal is to develop recommendations suited to each community's conditions.

The study could also consider introducing licence plate readers to make parking enforcement more

efficient, LEA said in a response provided by the town.

Other possibilities include parking permits, demand-based pricing, improved accessible parking, clearer signs and technology to help drivers find and pay for parking.

"At this stage, we are focused on understanding how the existing parking system is working and hearing from the community about their experiences," LEA said.

"Once we have reviewed the survey results and public input, we will use that information to identify how and where the strategies will be most effective in addressing the town's needs."

The town began public engagement efforts Aug. 27, inviting residents, visitors, business owners and employees to share their experiences. Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said the feedback

will help shape the study's direction.

"We know parking affects how people experience our community," Zalepa said in the town's news release. "That's why we're encouraging everyone to take a few minutes to complete the survey and share their ideas. Your feedback will help ensure future recommendations reflect the needs and priorities of our community."

The study is expected to be completed by February. A public information centre and other engagement activities are planned.

Two surveys are available: one for residents and visitors, and another for business owners and employees. People who fit both categories can complete both. The public surveys remain open until Sept. 30 on the town's Join the Conversation website.

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com

Senior run over by own tractor in parking lot

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

A senior working on his own tractor in the Gales parking lot in Niagara-on-the-Lake was accidentally run over Friday afternoon and taken to hospital with non-life-threatening and

non-life-altering injuries, police say.

Niagara Regional Police were called to the scene just after 1:30 p.m. Sept. 4, Const. Jessica Martin told The Lake Report. Police have ruled out the possibility that someone was criminally responsible for the act and are not conducting an investigation.

Martin said the man, 68, had been working on the tractor and got it running, but it was not in gear.

"He basically ran himself over with his own tractor," she said.

Police believe the tractor rolled over him and that he was not pinned underneath it. Martin said police had no fur-

ther update on his condition.

Police tape was put up to secure the scene in case the incident proved serious and evidence needed to be preserved.

The Ministry of Labour did not need to be notified because it was not a workplace accident, Martin said.

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NOTLers want candidates **focused on future**

Continued from Front Page

storms threaten homes and farmland. He is also concerned about development replacing farmland with hard surfaces that increase runoff.

“How are we going to adapt and build up a resiliency that allows us to withstand rainfalls, which obviously are going to get more and more common?” he asked.

He said governments need to work together to update infrastructure that was not built for today’s changing weather conditions, rather than focusing on short-term decisions.

Seniors for Climate in Niagara, founded by Lidija Biro, shared its candidate questionnaire with The Lake Report. It asks about public transit, the Greenbelt, renewable energy, climate change and the future of public services such as water and wastewater.

Among the questions is how candidates would make better use of the town’s climate change co-ordinator, Kassie Burns, and which departments should work more closely with her. Candidates have been asked to respond by Sept. 14, Biro said.

For NOTL post office worker Brenda Ferguson, the priority is straightforward: a council that does not raise taxes.

Old Town resident Sheryl Johnson also wants lower taxes and better infrastructure maintenance. She raised concerns about drainage, the Harrison Irrigation Ditch, overgrown vegetation at intersections and what she sees as inefficient use of town staff.

Johnson also wants more support for farmers growing all tender fruits, “not just grapes.”

Gee Adam, a board member of the town’s horticultural society, wants council to pause development for its term and focus on what she described as serious infrastructure deficits.

She said that work should include planting more trees on public and private property to help absorb excessive rainfall.

For Tanya Rice, founder of Community Initiative

for Animal Rescue, who regularly hosts pet fundraisers at her home on Line 2 Road behind Crossroads Public School, traffic safety is the priority. She said drivers continue to speed on her road despite ongoing construction.

Rice worries that the sidewalks being added to Line 2 Road will not be enough to improve safety, saying drivers already treat stop signs like yield signs. She is also concerned additional housing in Konik Estates Phase 2 could bring more students to the school and increase traffic in the area.

With the road running directly behind the school, she believes a speed limit of 40 kilometres per hour would be more appropriate than the current 50. She hopes the next council will work with the town and Niagara Region to lower the speed limit and ensure it is enforced periodically.

“We need diverse housing, a strong local economy, and opportunities for young families and those who work here, so they can remain in our community.”

JULIA MURRAY
DIRECTOR, ROYAL OAK ACADEMY

“We need enhanced traffic measures on Line 2.”

Virgil resident Alana Hurov, founder and chief executive officer of Niagara 5000, said affordability, school capacity and infrastructure must be considered alongside support for local businesses and tourism, while keeping property taxes affordable.

As an event organizer, she also wants more opportunities for entrepreneurs and a stronger off-season economy.

Making NOTL a place to age

For some residents, the priority is making it easier to remain in NOTL as they age.

Cindy Grant, NOTL’s 2026 Senior of the Year and a leader of the town’s



Tanya Rice points down Line 2 Road, where ongoing construction has done little to ease her concerns about speeding and traffic safety behind Crossroads Public School. Rice wants the speed limit lowered from 50 to 40 km/h and says the next council should push for stronger traffic-calming measures and enforcement. PAIGE SEBURN

seniors housing advisory committee, wants more options for older residents. Rather than one large building, the Virgil resident favours several smaller independent-living facilities with some assisted-living capabilities.

“There needs to be hundreds more units,” she said.

Grant also wants regular, scheduled transit around NOTL so seniors who stop driving can still get around town, including to the Shaw Festival.

For fellow senior Ralph Rickard, an indoor swimming pool remains an unresolved priority.

“Swimming is the best exercise for seniors and we have many seniors here,” he said.

Rickard noted that Vintage Hotels did not resume its former spa membership program after COVID. The company did not respond to a request for comment by press time.

How should NOTL grow?

For Julia Murray, head of school at Royal Oak and a mother of three, growth is necessary, but it must create opportunities for the next generation without changing what makes NOTL a place to call home.

“We need diverse housing, a strong local economy, and opportunities for young families and those who work here, so they can remain in our community,” she said.

Murray wants council to follow the town’s official plan, zoning bylaws and planning policies, with exceptions remaining exceptional.

“We need leadership with the courage to think beyond

the next development application or election cycle,” she said.

Robin Ridesic, founder of the Exchange Brewery on Queen Street, said residents need to feel confident NOTL is “growing thoughtfully.”

She wants council to balance tourism and development with heritage, agriculture and culture while addressing stormwater and parking problems.

“I really think the struggle for Old Town is getting the balance right.”

Ridesic is raising four children in Old Town and said she wants more space preserved for community use. She pointed to the former Parliament Oak school as an example of what she would have liked to see maintained for the community, and said she hopes the former hospital can serve a similar purpose.

Paul-André Bosc, owner of Paul Bosc Estate Vineyard, is concerned about inappropriate commercial development spreading onto rural agricultural land.

He also wants municipalities to support Canadian businesses through “buy Canadian” purchasing policies and “buy local” promotion.

“I am interested in candidates who are interested in making a national issue a relevant, local issue,” he said.

Who will hold council accountable?

For Ed Werner, president of Brox Company Limited, the election is a test of whether council will uphold the town’s rules.

“This election is about the rule of law and the role of the mayor and councillors.”

Werner’s company took Konzelmann Estate Winery and the town to court over outdoor events that were not permitted under the winery’s zoning and site plan. Konzelmann agreed to a permanent injunction, while the court later dismissed Brox’s attempt to compel the town to enforce its bylaws.

Council later approved a zoning amendment allowing outdoor events at the winery, subject to further approvals.

Werner argues that the sequence shows why voters should elect councillors who won’t change existing rules to accommodate prohibited activities.

“Or the laws will continue to be ignored,” he said.

Queenston resident Marion Hasselback also questions whether the town’s bylaws carry weight.

“I don’t understand why we have bylaws and an official plan that is approved by the province, yet they rarely make developers comply,” she said.

Hasselback wants development proposals studied for their effects on sewers, roads and drainage, and rejected when those effects are negative. She expressed frustration with the Ontario Land Tribunal process and what she sees as developers’ ability to successfully challenge council decisions.

“It really feels like it is out of our hands.”

What will strong mayor powers mean for NOTL?

Hasselback is also concerned that strong mayor powers will give too much authority to one person and leave councillors with less say in decisions affecting residents.

Ron Simkus, administrator of the NOTL Residents Association, shares that concern, saying the election carries an added responsibility because of the province’s changes to municipal powers.

“Electing a strong mayor is a really serious issue,” he said.

The association is hosting three all-candidates forums at Crossroads Public School on Sept. 14, Sept. 25 and Oct. 2.

Simkus said its election committee reviewed hundreds of questions and

the results of a May public survey before developing nine questions for each session. Every candidate at a given session will be asked the same questions.

Biro said unanswered questions from the Seniors for Climate in Niagara questionnaire will also be raised at the all-candidates forums at Crossroads.

Keeping NOTL distinct — and its five communities together

Former NOTL councillor Jamie Slingerland, now director of viticulture at Pillitteri Estates Winery, sees amalgamation as the biggest issue facing the town.

He worries it would threaten farmland, local decision-making and the tax base, arguing experienced councillors with provincial relationships are best positioned to defend NOTL.

“The only politicians capable of stopping this are veteran councillors with working relations with the present provincial government,” he said.

“I have been around long enough to know that you don’t put in place a rookie political opponent to deal with an issue this big, it’s just too big of a risk.”

Johnson also believes the town is too unique for a cookie-cutter regional approach.

“We’ll need to maintain our heritage.”

For Penny Milligan, co-founder of the 100+ Women Who Care Niagara-on-the-Lake chapter, NOTL is one town made up of five distinct communities, each with different needs and priorities.

A roundabout in St. Davids may matter little to someone in Old Town, she said, while a Glendale resident may not understand Old Town concerns about development.

“What I feel we need is strong, thoughtful leadership that recognizes and respects these differences while also understanding that we are ultimately one community,” she said.

The question now is how the next council will turn those competing priorities into decisions that serve the town as a whole.

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Top left: Members of the Virgil Business Association present a \$50,000 donation to the Radiant Care Foundation. Top right: Catherine Novick, Leslie Ray, and Dylan Larkin donated \$100,000 to Pleasant Manor's expansion. Both contributions will help fund fitness and wellness equipment for Radiant Care's fitness and wellness centre. SUPPLIED PHOTOS

Help build a healthier, more connected Niagara-on-the-Lake

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Radiant Care Pleasant Manor is embarking on a transformative project in the heart of Virgil that will enrich lives throughout Niagara. Following the opening of its new 160-bed long-term care home, Pleasant Manor is reimagining its former 25,000-square-foot building as a **Community Hub and Fitness and Wellness Centre**. This concept directly supports the municipality's vision of a "Well Community" — a place where people can be active, stay connected and feel supported.

In addition to the focus on fitness and wellness, the Hub will feature a café, library and internet café for socializing and a serenity lounge for relaxation. Truly multi-generational, the centre will also include a daycare for up to 96 children. A standout feature is the Living Classroom, created through a formal partnership with Niagara College and supported by the Ontario Ministry of Long-Term Care. We are excited to welcome the first cohort of students in the Personal Support Worker program in September 2026. On-site training will provide skilled, compassionate caregivers and strengthen the

local healthcare workforce. Office space will allow health-care related organizations to provide services including seniors' exercise and falls prevention programs and other health-related initiatives, making the hub a place where health, care and community flourish. The impact of this project will be immediate and lasting. Seniors will gain greater access to programs that promote strength, mobility and social connection. Families and staff will benefit from much-needed childcare and support services. Students will have a place to learn and grow. Community organizations will have

new opportunities to serve and thrive. Pleasant Manor has the **dream**, the **plan** and the **space** to create this Hub. Construction has already started, with a target for completion in 2027. Now we need your help. A \$5,000,000 capital campaign is underway to bring our vision to life. Donor support will play a vital role in creating a vibrant destination where wellness is encouraged, learning is nurtured, and community comes together, **Your gift today will help transform this vision into a lasting place of wellness, learning and belonging for generations to come.**



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The reimagined Radiant Care Pleasant Manor space will also include a "Living Classroom" where personal support worker students from Niagara College can get hands-on experience, a daycare for up to 96 children, a fitness and wellness centre, a café, serenity lounge, library and internet café and office space for community organizations. SUPPLIED

Hummel hike keeps palliative care free

Continued from Front Page

Wellness has opened two support groups in Niagara Falls and wants to add visiting volunteers and equipment lending there, Murray said. NOTL programs will stay in NOTL, and the Niagara Falls operation will stand on its own.

Executive director Bonnie Bagnulo said she met with Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati and council after Niagara Falls residents asked why they had no equivalent service, and council told her to come.

How much more the organization will be able to grow, she said, depends on money.

“We’re hopeful that over the next little bit of time — I don’t know how much that is — it’ll depend on donations, funding and so on,” she said.

The Hummel family has given about \$150,000 over

six years, Bagnulo said. Last year’s ride raised \$60,000 — \$25,000 of that came from the Hummels.

Murray said the walk along the Heritage Trail replaced the ride to open the fundraiser to people who could not cycle and to give participants time to talk on the trail.

Community Palliative Care & Wellness has lent equipment, sent volunteers into homes and run bereavement groups at no charge since 1986. Bagnulo said many residents pay no attention to palliative care until illness reaches their own family.

“People shy away from palliative care. They always do. You don’t need us until you need us,” she said.

In honour of its 40th anniversary, Community Palliative Care & Wellness plans to host a celebration this fall. Details will be shared in the coming weeks.

andrew@niagaranow.com

NOTL Terry Fox Run returns Sept. 20

Julia Sacco
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake has raised more than \$2 million for cancer research since its first Terry Fox Run in 1991. This year, NOTLers will once again come out to support the cause.

On Sept. 20 at Simcoe Park, 17-year-old Megan Dyck and her mother, Amber, will speak about Dyck’s experience battling cancer.

“We genuinely believe Megan’s still with us because of the research breakthroughs that foundations like the Terry Fox Foundation are making,” Amber Dyck told The Lake Report.

Megan has metastasized clear cell carcinoma. When she was diagnosed with cancer at 13, the outlook was different from today.

At 14, Megan was given a terminal diagnosis, but with treatment at McMaster Children’s Hospital, she has now reached her 17th birthday.



This year’s Terry Fox Run begins at 9 a.m. at Simcoe Park.

“We literally watched her, since that point, coming back to life as the initial five tumours in her lungs shrunk down to one,” Amber Dyck said.

Megan’s tumours are starting to progress again, but Amber Dyck said she recognizes how different things are now.

“We knew what cancer looked like,” she said. “But the new research and the advances that are being made are taking what we know and turning it upside down.”

After Megan’s success, McMaster has been using the same treatment on other patients in the oncology clinic with success.

“It’s really exciting when

you see this rippling effect of research and think of all the lives it can be impacting,” Amber Dyck said.

Megan’s face will be seen across Canada as she and Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Joe Pillitteri grace the cover of Terry Fox Foundation brochures for 2026.

Five thousand brochures were printed and are being handed out across Canada in anticipation of the 46th annual run.

Amber Dyck said the photo was a surprise that she and Megan did not know about until seeing the brochures.

“We’re so grateful, if our faces or our voices can lead to one more person caring and contributing,” she said.

After the run begins, Megan will help at the water station along the route, handing out water as runners go past.

The Niagara College Knights basketball team will also attend in support of teammate Abbey Gooder.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Terry Fox Run festivities will begin at 9 a.m. in Simcoe Park, with the run itself beginning at 10 a.m. The Rotary Club will provide a barbecue, along with pizza from Sandtrap and fruit from a number of NOTL farms.

Those who can’t join the run can still support the cause by donating online, either directly or to a team or participant, through the town’s donation page. Supporters can also donate at terryfox.org.

“Rock Star” shirts are still available through Joan King and in person at the run.

Residents are encouraged to check the event webpage for updates leading up to run day.

juliasacco@niagaranow.com



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He found calling at Red Roof Retreat — now he's back

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

Robert Burciul is experiencing a full-circle moment this year.

Fifteen years ago, he was a high-school student at A N Meyer Secondary School who was assigned to volunteer in a class for students with special needs.

From that experience, he ended up forming relationships with them and, after that, decided he would go into the field of assisting those with special needs.

To get some experience in the field, Burciul, who's from Niagara-on-the-Lake, reached out to someone he knew in town and asked about helping out at an organization she ran.

That person was Steffanie Bjorgan, the founder of Red Roof Retreat, a non-profit organization that provides recreational and respite services to children and young adults with special needs.

"I absolutely fell in love with it," says Burciul of the experience.

Fifteen years later, Burciul, now 30, is back at Red Roof, working as a program co-ordinator, as the charity prepares to open the doors to its new, 5,700-square-foot facility in January.



Robert Burciul, Red Roof Retreat's program co-ordinator, stands outside the organization's new 5,700-square-foot facility on Concession 6 Road. Burciul first volunteered with Red Roof 15 years ago while he was a high-school student and has now returned as the charity prepares to open its expanded home in January. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

When Burciul first started volunteering at Red Roof, the organization was a little more than 10 years old. Opened in 2000, inspired by Bjorgan's quest to find recreational and respite programs for her son, Garrett, who has cerebral palsy, it now serves more than 200 families in Niagara.

"It's such a deeply human place and is, really, a home away from home for so many people."

Right now, while construction is underway on the new building at Red Roof's main property on Concession 6 Road, Burciul and his colleagues are working out of the organization's hub at Cornerstone Community

Church.

While the location may be different, for now, he says what hasn't changed are the people he got to know years ago — the clients, who are still a part of the Red Roof community.

"I've been gone for 10 years and I still know pretty much every single person that comes to our programs."

Before becoming a program co-ordinator, Burciul worked a variety of jobs in the realm of education and personal support work for those with disabilities.

After graduating from Niagara College's educational assistance and adult supports program, he

worked in group homes, day programs for the District School Board of Niagara and helped create life plans with individuals and families at Person Centered Care of Niagara.

Something he says he values about working at Red Roof is the relationship all of the clients have with each other, particularly those who have been in the same programs for more than a decade — it's a significant bond you don't see often in these environments, he says.

"In a lot of the other settings I work, people will assume that everyone that lives together or everyone that attends a program together is friends and will call them friends, and I've never liked that, because it's this assumption," he says. "Especially when you have a handful of people who don't even speak; we don't know how they feel about each other."

"But at Red Roof, so many of them are genuinely friends and really look forward to seeing each other," he says. "I find that really meaningful."

As program co-ordinator, Burciul is responsible for overseeing the variety of services Red Roof provides to its clients: the adult day

program; respite services; youth night; the Saturday camp; and the summer camp — all with the goal of offering physical and personal care, social and emotional support, recreational and leisure activities.

In late August, he says he got to lead a program that he hasn't had the chance to since back when he was a volunteer — the weekend respite program, which sees Red Roof take care of its clients overnight during Friday and Saturday nights.

"It's a really cool experience as a job because it just feels like living life with people."

The respite program is hosted out of Garrett's home. Burciul hung out with him and two other guys Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday — a weekend with the boys.

"It was awesome," he says. "We went to the movies and made some home-made chicken pot pie and did some crafts."

There are four months left until the new Red Roof building is set to open. It'll be 4,600 square feet larger than the old facility (which was 1,100 square feet) and two storeys tall.

"I never really imagined an expansion like that."

When I first heard about it, I was floored."

It'll also be more accessible for those using mobility devices — that last upgrade is crucial, Burciul says.

"The old home, it wasn't built for what we used it for, so it had a lot of narrow hallways and doorways that were challenging to get through with certain wheelchairs."

The team and all the clients, he says, are looking forward to being back at the place they've called home for 26 years.

Speaking on what it takes for a person to be successful in the kind of role he's in, Burciul says there is no one type of personality best suited for the job — it doesn't take any one kind of person to do what he and his colleagues do every day.

"There's a client out there for just about anyone that they could build a relationship with and get to know and be able to support," he says. "It's not one-size-fits-all. Every person we support is different, and therefore they require different personalities out of their staff."

There are, however, a few qualities that come in handy, he says — patience, flexibility and a big heart.

zahraa@niagaranow.com



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DOORS OPEN 5:30 PM
EVENT 6:30 PM – 9:00 PM

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CANDIDATE FORUM
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**FRIDAY
SEPTEMBER 25TH**

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DOORS OPEN 5:30 PM
EVENT 6:30 PM – 9:00 PM

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE
MUNICIPAL ELECTION
— OCTOBER 26, 2026 —
CANDIDATE FORUM
COUNCILLOR CANDIDATES



**FRIDAY
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Grace United market sells out early, funds church deficit



From left, Carol Gorman, Liz Frank, Johanna Abrahamse and Heinz Probst sell donated produce and preserves at Grace United Church's annual festival market on Victoria Street on Saturday, Sept. 5. The bake sale sold out two hours early. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

Grace United Church's bake table sold out with nearly two hours left in its annual festival market on Saturday, but the church said it needs every dollar just to cover a budget that runs at a loss each year.

Volunteers sold donated produce, jam, chutney and baked goods on the sidewalk outside the Victoria Street church in Niagara-on-the-Lake and donated antiques at an estate sale inside.

Leslie Woodward, a church member and market organizer, said the market is Grace United's biggest fundraiser of the year. The church spends every cent of the proceeds it receives, she said.

"The church operates normally at a deficit because churches are very expensive and church congregations are shrinking and shrinking," Woodward said.

Grace United also gives money to Caribbean farmworkers and Newark Neighbours.

"We can't do the work for the community and give outreach to other groups unless we have the funds," Woodward said.

Heinz Probst, a church volunteer who has farmed in NOTL since 1960, grows most of the produce, collects donations from other growers and makes the jam with longtime member David Greaves.

He said his truck was empty and only a few baked goods remained with an hour and 45 minutes still to go.

Probst, who has done the job for decades, said he had begun to weigh whether to keep going.

"It's a lot of work. It really is a lot of work, putting it all together, driving here, driving there and doing all that," he said. "I'm getting to that age where I'm thinking of giving it up."

His fiancée and friends' daughters staffed the table with him this year, and Probst said their help kept his part of the market running. He said adults between 18 and 30 rarely attend services, so few younger members can replace volunteers who age out.

Pauline Miller, church council chair, also said the aging congregation made it harder every year to find people to run the event.

Inside, Woodward priced donated antiques including elk-bone knives from Sheffield, England, listed at \$40 and valued at about \$120. She said regulars phoned each summer to confirm the market was on, and rain on market day cut sales deeply in the years it fell.

Probst said storms flooded his fields twice this summer and the drain crossing his farm overflowed its banks for the first time since his family bought the land.

Looking ahead to the fall, Grace United is looking forward to hosting its annual Christmas baskets sale in November.

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Myths and legends take over RiverBrink

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

Legends became reality at RiverBrink Art Museum this past weekend, as its riverside grounds were filled with myth-inspired art installations for its third-annual art installation festival, as its director worked to convince Niagara visitors it's not just the region's past that should inspire intrigue, but what it can offer up in the present.

Debra Antoncic, the museum's director and curator, said the biggest obstacle to the On the Brink Installation Art Festival has never been the art itself.

"It's always a challenge to build an audience. People think of Niagara, they think of the historical sites and everything, and we just wanted to push ahead with more of a focus on installation," she said.

The free festival ran Sept. 5 and 6 at the museum's property on 116 Queenston St. in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Four artists from the Niagara region built temporary works on the property to fit this year's theme of myth.



Artist Joanne M. Ring talks with visitors among the colourful fabric mushrooms of her installation, "Marasmus Oreades," inspired by the folklore of fairy circles. Ring was one of four Niagara artists who transformed the RiverBrink Art Museum grounds for the third annual On the 'Brink Installation Art Festival, held Sept. 5 and 6 under this year's theme of mythology. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Kathy Thomas from Queenston planted two wings, each two and a half metres tall, on the grass to represent the Greek goddess of victory Nike landing to crown a victor.

Thomas built the wings from styrofoam and finished them to look like the rough Queenston limestone in Brock's Monument, the memorial on Queenston Heights that carries four carved Nike figures at its top.

Installation art is built for a specific place and a short

time, and Antoncic said that is what suits RiverBrink's location above the Niagara River.

"We're very much an interior space. We've got the conventional museum space," she said. "So really to take advantage of the site, we wanted something like this."

The museum recently rebuilt its side garden with new stairs and a patio.

The other three pieces drew on the Celtic selkie, a fairy circle and an invented "myth of the feathered

dam," in which Kim Collins cast five geese made from reclaimed fabric as inspectors of the Great Lakes.

Antoncic said the museum picked myth because the Greek stories keep resurfacing in contemporary culture and the theme let artists work from different traditions.

Thomas took part in the first festival in 2024, when the theme was land. Joanne Ring, who built this year's fairy circle, returned from the 2025 festival on monuments. The artists walked the grounds with visitors on Saturday afternoon to talk about their work.

The one part of the weekend that fell short was a family workshop where children could build mythical creatures from found materials.

"That hasn't worked so well. I think Labour Day weekend is a tough weekend for families. But the other adults have been enjoying this," Antoncic said.

The Town of NOTL paid for the workshop through its community grants program, and NOTL Tourism sponsored the festival.

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An Aston Martin convertible shares the tarmac with a Cirrus aircraft at the Niagara District Airport, where Niagara 5000 will return Sept. 19 for its Hangar Experience. The event will bring together supercars, private aircraft, motorcycles, a 47-foot pace boat, food, wine and high-speed driving demonstrations. FILE/DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Niagara 5000 aims to raise **\$30K for MacKids**

Staff
The Lake Report

Niagara 5000 will return to Niagara-on-the-Lake for its third iteration, bringing rare supercars, private aviation, marine experiences and more back into town.

This year, the events will be split up over Sept. 18 and 19 in both NOTL and Niagara Falls, with a parade of cars cruising through town on the 18 and a Hangar Experience event taking place at the Niagara District

Airport on the 19th.

The airport is to be transported into a showcase of supercars, private aircraft, motorcycles, a 47-foot Fountain pace boat, fashion, food and wine, autocross and high-speed runs with professional drivers.

Driver registration and tickets for the Hangar Experience are available at the Niagara 5000 website, niagara5000.ca.

Half of every \$300 driver registration will go to MacKids at McMaster

Children’s Hospital.

CEO and founder Alana Hurov aims to raise \$30,000 this year, more than doubling last year’s \$12,500 raised.

The parade on the 18th will feature a number of McLaren, Lamborghini and Ferrari vehicles. Mélanie Villeneuve, daughter of Canadian Formula 1 driver Gilles Villeneuve, will serve as the grand marshal.

Ferrari of Ontario has joined the weekend’s extensive list of sponsors,

alongside other names including Bombardier, Air Canada, Tesla and Maserati of Toronto.

Supercar and vintage-car owners can still register to participate in the Sept. 18 show, parade and cruise. The \$300 registration includes admission for one vehicle and two guests, the Niagara 5000 backyard BBQ and winery experience at Reif Estate Winery.

The exotic car show and supercar parade are free for spectators



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The Lake Report

REMEMBERING

9/11

25th anniversary pullout section

A quarter-century later, Niagara-on-the-Lake continues to pay tribute to first responders, heroes and those lost in 2001 terror attack on United States



Canadian and U.S. flags fly side by side during a past Sept. 11 commemoration at the Queen Street cenotaph, where Niagara-on-the-Lake's annual ceremony was held for many years. The local tradition began in the aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks and this Friday will mark 25 years of residents gathering to remember the lives lost and honour the enduring bond between communities on both sides of the border. **This year's ceremony will be held at 8 a.m. Queen's Royal Park, not at the Queen Street cenotaph shown here.** FILE/RICHARD HARLEY

Just before 9 a.m. on a beautiful, sunny Tuesday almost 25 years ago, the world as we know it changed in a heartbeat.

Nineteen al-Qaeda terrorists hijacked passenger jets that they then crashed into the two towers of the World Trade Center in New York, while another hit the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and the fourth crashed in a Pennsylvania field after passengers fought back.

Nearly 3,000 people died in New York alone and scores of others were killed in the other attacks. In the years afterward, many

others died of diseases related to the rescue and recovery operations.

This terrorist uprising was an attack on life and society as we knew it — and it forever changed everything from airport security to people's trust in a litany of institutions.

But there were positive stories, too.

In Canada, the folks in Gander, Nfld., became famous the world over for welcoming some 30,000 people when passenger planes were forced to divert to the closest Canadian airport.

Over the past 25 years, there have been

numerous tales of heroism and sorrow about that day and this week we again reflect on what happened and how life was forever changed.

And here in Niagara-on-the-Lake, with our American neighbours barely a kilometre away across the river, despite our current political differences, we stand together on the anniversary to remember those who perished and honour those who helped, who sacrificed and who continue today to make sure that the world never forgets what happened on Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2001.



NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

25 YEARS. WE REMEMBER.

On the 25th Anniversary of September 11, 2001, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce honours the lives lost, the families forever changed, and the first responders who showed extraordinary courage. We remember. We honour. We will never forget.

- Board of Directors and Staff, Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce

NOTL to mark 25 years since terrorist attacks

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

On Sept. 11, 2001, American visitors in Niagara-on-the-Lake suddenly found themselves on the other side of the border as their country came under attack.

A year later, NOTL began a tradition that continues today.

This Sept. 11 will mark the town's 25th annual commemoration of the attacks, and for the first time, the chamber of commerce in Lewiston, N.Y. is formally joining in.

Coun. Gary Burroughs, who was lord mayor at the time, remembers hearing about the attacks on the radio while driving to a Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority board meeting in Welland.

By the time he arrived, he said, people at the office were watching the Twin Towers in Manhattan burn down live on television.

Before 9/11, he said, travelling between NOTL and the U.S. was a much different experience. Burroughs owned a business in Lewiston and crossed the border several times a day.

"We were so close back then, the border meant nothing," he said. "It was a different feeling back then before the borders got so tight."

Terry Dow, interim executive director of the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, says what made Sept. 11 feel personal for those in town was its close relationship with the United States, located just across the river.

"On the day of the attacks, there were many American visitors here," she said in an email to The Lake Report.

The NOTL chamber held the first commemoration in 2002, on the first anniversary of the attacks. Janice Thomson, its president at the time, started the tradition.

Thomson remembers the chamber's visitor information centre, then in the lower level of the courthouse, filling with American guests trying to reach family members as news of the attacks spread.

"There was a clear feeling of uncertainty and fear



Since the terror attacks on the United States in 2001, Niagara-on-the-Lake has held a commemoration ceremony every year to honour the victims and first responders on both sides of the border and around the globe. With tensions higher than ever before between Canada and the U.S., Canadians will once again gather Sept. 11 to remember the spirit of co-operation between our nations. FILE PHOTOS

among all parties," she told The Lake Report in an email. "News of border closures were frightening for people."

The chamber began calling hotels and bed-and-breakfast operators after receiving a federal government inquiry about how many people NOTL could accommodate if planes were redirected to Toronto. Many operators offered rooms at no cost, Thomson said. Although the contingency plans were not needed, by mid-afternoon every available room had been booked by American and overseas visitors whose travel plans had been disrupted.

"It takes a special kind of person and organization

to adapt so quickly while caring for terrified human beings in a landscape where we had limited information," she said.

That experience made marking the first anniversary essential, Thomson said. The chamber and town brought together first responders, veterans, schoolchildren and elected officials for a ceremony intended not to draw crowds, but to show respect.

She remembers American visitors who happened upon the ceremony while walking through town and stayed afterward, in tears, to express their appreciation.

"Our tribute was sincere, built on shared grief," she said.

Burroughs said that first ceremony carried particular weight because of NOTL's longstanding ties to Americans across the river.

"We were integrated," he said. "When we got to commemoration, it meant something."

"We don't promote it. It's not something to promote. You just do it."

This year's ceremony begins at 8 a.m. at Queen's Royal Park, honouring the 2,977 people killed in the attacks and the sacrifice of first responders.

The Upward Niagara Chamber of Commerce in Lewiston will join the NOTL chamber and town in hosting the ceremony for the 25th anniversary.

That new partnership comes as Canada and the U.S. face renewed tensions over tariffs and trade. Dow said the disagreements give this year's cross-border gathering added significance, but not in a political sense.

"At a time when there can be disagreements between our two countries over trade, tariffs or other issues, Sept. 11 reminds us that the relationship between Canadians and Americans is much deeper than any particular political issue," she said.

"Governments may disagree from time to time, but those relationships between people endure."

Burroughs echoed that distinction.

"Our friendship with the people of the U.S. hasn't changed. The governments seem to be in a mess, and I don't know how we get out of it," he said. "This is a people thing, and it's not a government thing."

For NOTL, Dow said, the attacks have "never felt like an event that happened somewhere else" because "our relationship with the United States is part of the fabric of our community."

This year's ceremony will feature Joshua Vacanti of Lockport, N.Y., a former contestant on The Voice, singing the national anthems. First responders, residents, businesses, elected officials and visitors are invited to attend.

The ceremony was held at the cenotaph on Queen Street until 2024, when work at the site moved it to Queen's Royal Park. The town has supported the commemoration since its beginning, Thomson said, providing road closures, flags and other assistance. In 2024, it joined the chamber as a co-host.

The location stuck. From there, those gathered to remember the attacks can look directly across the water to the United States and Fort Niagara.

"The new location has ultimately added another dimension to the ceremony," Dow said.

For Thomson, the anniversary is not a milestone to be marked once and then set aside.

"This is not a landmark event, should be annual," she said.

Dow agrees that remembrance carries a responsibility to younger generations, who did not experience the attacks firsthand.

"Remembrance only continues if each generation makes the choice to carry it forward."

For NOTL, she said, that means remembering not only the tragedy, but "what followed that terrible day" — "people helping one another, communities coming together and neighbours standing beside neighbours."

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SCAN TO RESERVE

The Canadian who helped stranded U.S. execs get home

John Scott
Special to The Lake Report

The week of Sept. 9, 2001, was the first time the North American Wholesale Grocers Association had held its annual convention outside of the United States.

The delegates included the CEOs of the companies that sourced and sold food products to the grocery industry and for the first time the chair of the association was a Canadian — and he had convinced them to hold the annual meeting in Toronto at the Westin Harbour Castle.

Logistical support for the event was provided by the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors' vice-president of events and logistics, my wife, Michelle Scott. We now live in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

On the morning of Sept. 11, the post-breakfast conference was going smoothly but shortly after 9 a.m. the conference hall thinned out as word of the planes crashing into the Twin Towers began to circulate.

The primarily U.S.-based delegates gathered in the bar area as the Harbour



Michelle Scott holds the official 2001 White House Christmas ornament she received after helping 55 American executives get back home after the 9/11 attacks shut down travel to the U.S. KEVIN MACLEAN

Castle turned on all its televisions. Everyone was concerned but surprisingly controlled.

Michelle recalls images of people repeatedly using their phones to try to learn the fate of loved ones. Several, from the New York area, had family members or friends working in the towers. It was difficult to watch as they frantically called but received no answers.

Michelle found her boss

and told him that these people needed to get home. He told her to do everything she could to make it happen.

She quickly learned that flights were grounded and airspace closed, so she started calling bus companies. She remembers phoning almost every bus company in Toronto until she found one with an available high-way motor coach that could take 55 passengers to New York and Washington the next day.

She told all the delegates that they had three choices to get home: those with private aircraft might wish to stay in Toronto and wait for clearance; those willing to wait could eventually take scheduled flights or other forms of transport; and anyone who wished to could take the bus.

She divided the delegates into three lists that were worked and re-worked over the next 12 hours as the CEOs decided their best path.

She also requested extended stays for everyone at the hotel — but the Harbour Castle's front office refused because they had new guests arriving that evening. After some negotiating, a determined Michelle finally convinced the hotel that, given the circumstances, no new guests were coming that night.

During the day, as people realized they had limited options, the bus list took shape and by 9 p.m. the full complement was set to roll out at 5:30 the next morning.

Michelle received assurances from U.S. border

officials that this busload of U.S. CEOs would be allowed through at Fort Erie.

The conference had scheduled a formal dinner at Casa Loma for that night but changed it to a casual affair — and everyone came.

For those in attendance, it was one of the warmest evenings with other people they had ever experienced. This was not a Canada-U.S. issue, just a group of great people holding on to each other in the wake of an unimaginable tragedy.

All through that event Michelle continued to rework her lists. She had become communications and logistics central for almost everyone.

Around 10 p.m. her boss asked what he could do. "Coffee and donuts for 55 at 5:30 a.m." was her response. And he delivered.

At the appointed hour, an interesting collection of powerful people who were all incredibly fierce competitors, settled into seats on the coach to go home.

Michelle asked the bus driver to call her three times: when he cleared the border; when he made

the first dropoff near New York City; and again when everyone else disembarked in Washington, D.C.

In the aftermath, Michelle received a ton of accolades for the work she had done to "get her people home" and for many years at food industry events in the U.S. those who had been on the bus or were supported by her in other ways centred her out.

They always talked about how remarkably cool and organized she had been on 9/11 and how grateful they were that she had been there.

At Christmas the following few years, the grocers' association would send her the White House Christmas ornament as a token of thanks.

When I recently asked if she would do the same today given the heightened Canada-U.S. tensions, her reply was unequivocal.

"Would I go to the wall to get those people home again? You bet I would!"

I think most Canadians would do the same.

John and Michelle Scott are residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake.



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Left: James Grigjanis-Meusel, shown during the club championships last month, was tops in the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club's men's league last week. The ever-steady Jim Meszaros was second, two shots back at 37. Right: Women's Open champ Diana Dimmer was also first in the 18-hole women's league Tuesday with a score of 87. ERIN PIAZZA

Impressive scores in men's and women's golf leagues

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

There was some sharp shooting in the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club's competitive leagues last week. James Grigjanis-Meusel, runner-up in the Open division of the men's club cham-

pionships, had the hottest hand, firing a 1-under 35 in Thursday's men's league. He was a model of consistency with eight pars plus a birdie on #6. The ever-steady Jim Meszaros was second, two shots back at 37. That also earned him second low net score, one behind Colby Ostromecki's net 33. Other men's day winners were: Jared Mines (longest drive on #1) and Ken Porter (longest putt made on #5). Closest to the pin prizes went to Mike Eagen (#4) and Paul Dickson (#9). Harry Huizer's birdie on

#8 proved lucrative, earning him \$110 as the day's sole gross skin. Net skins worth \$95 each went to John Liotta (#3), Ostromecki (#5) and Nino Ferrantelli (#7). Women's Open club champ Diana Dimmer led all competitors in Tuesday's 18-hole women's league, with a score of 87. May Chang was next with 95, while Carroll Baker, Lisa Allen and Judy Mantle all tied for third with 98. Chang won low net honours (69), followed by Dimmer (71) and Mantle (73). Suzanne Watson had another solid round in Tuesday's nine-hole women's league, leading the way with a solid 43. Sharron Marlow was second with 47, one shot ahead of Sue Sherk. Julie Smethurst was low net winner with 30, followed by Marlow (32) and Watson (33).

COMMUNITY DONATION PROJECT

PORCH PICK-UP FOOD DRIVE

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

TO ARRANGE A PORCH PICK-UP:

Register at **foodfornotl.ca**

or scan the QR code.

Need help registering? Call 905-468-0886.



ITEMS REQUIRED FOR THANKSGIVING HAMPERS:

Stuffing mix, cranberry sauce, canned gravy or mix (turkey or chicken), cranberry and/or apple juice, apple sauce, canned fruit and vegetables (corn, pineapple, peas), snack crackers, cookies

ITEMS REQUIRED ON AN ONGOING BASIS:

Canned salmon, canned tuna, Sidekicks and ramen soup packets, canned chili or spaghetti or ravioli, peanut butter, granola bars, cookies, Chunky Soups – any kind or flavour canned beef stew, Habitant soups, canned ham, corned beef or Spam, Flakes of Ham, Chicken or Turkey, Jams (any flavour), canned fruit, soda, soup crackers, Kraft Dinner, canned beans (kidney, chickpeas, lentils), canned tomatoes, canned potatoes, instant mashed potatoes, tomato sauce, pasta, rice, pudding cups (any flavour), cereal and oatmeal, coffee (any kind — instant/regular/ decaf), tea, shelf stable milk (e.g. condensed, powdered, rice, etc.), paper towels, toilet paper, household items i.e. dish soap, laundry detergent, cleaning products, condiments (salad dressings, mayonnaise, sauces, HP Sauce, soy sauce, Worcestershire sauce, etc.), dried spices, salt & pepper, toiletries (toothpaste, toothbrushes, razors, hand and body lotion, mouthwash, feminine products).



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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The Lake Report



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

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BKind Grateful #92: Help a neighbour troubleshoot a small household problem you know how to fix.

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



Contributed by Patty Garriock
“Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower.”
- Albert Camus

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Weather co-operates for corn roast

Four-year-old Sienna Shaadi enjoys some buttery corn on the cob at Chautauqua Park on Sept. 7, for the neighbourhood's annual barbecue and corn roast. Despite the forecast predicting rain on Monday, Mother Nature did not end up raining on their parade, allowing everyone to enjoy the unofficial last weekend of summer. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Opinion

In NOTL, they're sewing a better world



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner
Columnist

Once it was a school-house. Now it's a wreck. “The foundation was never proper,” she says. “The ceiling and the walls are caving in so when it starts raining we have to scramble and cover all the machines.” This is no dodgy factory. The workers are not only occasionally moist, but also unpaid. The machines don't turn out a saleable product. And people here are far more worried about leaks than tariffs.

I last wrote about this operation on a street near the mouth of the canal a year ago (“The Turner Report: From NOTL bedsheets to soldiers' slings,” July 24, 2025). Before the sewing room started to collapse. The Niagara Warehouse of Hope is a well of optimism in a landscape growing more and more barren. Canada at war with America. Racist parties surging in Europe. Battlefields in Ukraine. Despair in Gaza. Airstrikes in Iran. An angry climate and the greatest wealth disparity in history. It's all here. But so

is the soggy sewing room. “We sew baby blankets,” says Mary Ann Brzezcka. “And bags for new mothers, Slings for the Ukrainian army, and children's hospitals, and whatever we can.” Understatement. Last year the Warehouse — which neither asks for nor accepts government funding — and its sewers turned out 1,550 cloth diapers, 1,000 new-mother bags, 2,700 baby blankets, over 5,000 sanitary pads and a mess of slings, sheets, facecloths, towels and hospital gowns for the wounded.

All this from donated hotel tablecloths, worn bed-sheets and robes which once covered guests at the Prince of Wales Hotel or Great Wolf Lodge.

That's just the output of the sewing room. This place — founded by 88-year-old Mary van der Zalm (she still works there) — reaches out to the world's needy people with an array of essentials. Hospital equipment, clothing, recycled laptops, hot-climate mattresses made of braided milk bags, bicycles, tools, dignity and hope.

Last year, they shipped 14 containers: seven to Cuba, two to the Philippines, two to Ukraine and others to Jamaica, Guatemala, Cameroon and Granada. So far in 2026, another 12 have gone to those same locations, as well as the Ebola-ravaged Congo and South Africa.

It costs tens of thousands to launch those containers. They leave packed with donated banana boxes



Mary van der Zalm's charity operation has stuffed 12 containers so far this year, filling a void governments have left. And with no government money.

full of supplies aimed at improving the lives of the impoverished, the war-torn, refugees, migrants, dispossessed and unwanted.

Mary's 150 volunteers have moved to help fill a gap by the dismantling of the massive USAID, and to blunt the treatment being afforded families on the move from strife or climate by countries and governments drifting right.

Sadly, says director Brzezcka, Cuba has been cut off. An American blockade is purposefully pitching that island into a

pre-industrial state. The U.S. claims Cuba harbours drones and Iranian military advisors. The island's government says that's false — a pretext for the Trump White House's move to force regime change.

“People are starving,” she says. “We have so many donations for there from people across Canada. But unfortunately, everything is on hold. Cuba is hurting.”

Well, building a new sewing room that volunteer Glenda Jarvis can keep humming ain't cheap. The budget is \$175,000, even with companies like Coton Construction donating materials and services. So far they're about a third of the way to the goal. The demo phase has started. Sewing machines are being moved.

The hope is to be relocated by January. After a local company donates flooring volunteers will be swarming in to do finishing work, paint, and start sewing up a storm.

At a time when tens of millions in public money is being poured into building a theatrical mega-complex, an artists' village and a museum expansion — all to facilitate the tourist trade — the struggle to keep volunteers dry while they turn out baby blankets seems small. It's not. But it does seem to underscore how misaligned this world has become.

Without hope, what's left? Garth Turner is a NOTL resident, journalist, author, wealth manager and former federal MP and minister.

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Parliament Oak concerns not to be ignored

Dear editor:
Bonita Cawker’s recent letter regarding the Parliament Oak development demands a direct response (“Letter: No more misinformation about Parliament Oak, some of us are happy,” Sept. 3), as her claims of “misinformation” completely ignore verified municipal records and engineering realities.

While she claims that the town’s sewer system is “more than capable” and that the massive construction hole somehow saves the neighborhood from flooding, the flooded basements of Old Town residents tell a completely different story. Shoving massive concrete structures into an area with an exceptionally high-water table physically displaces groundwater. This process systematically shifts the flooding burden onto neighboring properties and strains local creek catchments. Furthermore, minimizing widespread community pushback as a “minority group” gloss over a deeply fractured town council



Letter writer Judith Barnes says NOTL needs a leader who listens to residents and allows access to information.

where this luxury hotel project was passed on a razor-thin 5-4 vote. This exact situation highlights why Niagara-on-the-Lake is at a critical crossroads as we approach the municipal election this October. We cannot expect to solve our modern infrastructure deficits and over-development crises by electing the same councillors who steered us into them. To protect our community from commercial growth without accountability and preserve our unique heritage, we need a complete shift in leadership. Unlike career politicians tied to the decisions of past councils, Vaughn Goettler is running as an independent candidate with the practical business background required to fix town governance. His slogan, “A neighbour who listens, a leader who acts,” directly addresses the biggest frustration residents have right now:

the feeling that our voices are entirely ignored by the town council while special interests get exactly what they want. He is the only candidate pledging to serve as a truly full-time mayor whose decisions are guided strictly by community interest. Goettler treats our severe drainage and watershed vulnerabilities as an immediate emergency that must be resolved before dense commercial footprints are permitted to further stress our town. His platform strikes directly at the core threats facing NOTL today and in the decades to come, offering a clear framework to firmly enforce the town’s official plan and aggressively protect our local autonomy from regional amalgamation. Let’s remind ourselves not to go from bad to worse this October. For full disclosure, I am not attached nor actively campaigning for any mayor or councillor candidates.
*Judith Barnes
Old Town*

We don’t need anyone telling us what to do

Dear editor:
When I first read Emily Ratovsky’s lengthy diatribe on her definition of hate, settler-colonial violence, racism and other weaponized name-calling, my first reaction was to not comment and recycle. That didn’t work (“Letter: We must uproot the hate infiltrating our community,” Sept. 3).

Canada is no longer a country of freedom. CBC is financed by our taxes, so no unbiased reporting. Algorithms are programmed to eliminate words and opinions not aligned with leftist ideology. I do not want anymore censorship from officials elected to control the infrastructure of this municipality. I am an adult. I will decide what I watch, listen to and attend. Young families are also made up of adults who are perfectly capable of determining what they read, listen to, attend and eat and drink for that matter. If the Dominion Society can rent a venue, then no other elected or self-appointed morality sheriff has

the right to demand elected officials ban them. Here’s a really novel concept. If you don’t want to attend, don’t. If you don’t like certain music, don’t listen to it. If you don’t like a certain food, don’t eat it. Grownups don’t need yet another gov-a-mommy or gov-a-daddy.
*Elizabeth Hutchison
Virgil*

Airport more than a stop for rich travellers

Dear editor:
I cannot explain how your contributor concluded that rich U.S. citizens have been a major source of aircraft traffic at Niagara District Airport (“Letter: Airport expansion bad news for us and our environment,” Sept. 3). I doubt there is any data to support that conclusion. As the airport manager for four years (2007-2011), let me tell you what I saw.

I saw student pilots learning to fly at the St Catharines Flying Club, for recreation or in pursuit of a career. I saw Air Cadet League of Canada two-seat gliders giving young cadets their first opportunities to experience flight. I saw the Snowbirds doing precision flight demonstrations. I saw airport-based aircraft flying recreationally or on business. None of these were U.S. owned. I saw helicopters providing tours of Niagara Falls. And yes, I did see rich U.S. citizens arrive and clear customs. Larry the Tool Guy, Jay Leno and Reba McEntire were among them, all coming to give performances at the casino. More importantly perhaps, I saw C-130 aircraft from Trenton practicing search-and-rescue proce-

dures on the airfield. I saw the RCMP aircraft doing liaison visits to the region. And I saw medevacs and patient transfers when the hospital helipad wasn’t usable or a helicopter wasn’t available. It’s my fact-based conclusion that the airport is a valuable part of the regional transportation infrastructure.
*Kenn Moody
NOTL*



RIDDLE ME THIS

This week’s riddle is “Jeopardy!” style
Category: A STONE QUARRY

These “stones” used as ballast by ships arriving in 18th c. Savannah were used to pave charming and bumpy streets.

Last issue category: EDIBLE IDIOMS
Clue: It’s something of little importance or value, like, say, legumes in a heap.
Answer: What is a hill of beans?
Answered first by: Susan Hamilton
Also answered correctly (in order) by: Patricia Fraser, Lynda Collet, Sue Rautenberg, Jane Morris, Jim Dandy, Jeff Lake, Donna Pearce, Michael Creager, Emma Balsas, Hedy Wiebe, Nancy Rocca, Gordon Yanow, Melody Reddecopp, Katie Reimer, Claudia Grimwood, Sheila Meloche, Randie Topps, Hugh Lundy, Catherine Clarke
Email answers to editor@niagaranow.com, with your name, for a chance to win a \$25 Irish Harp Pub gift card every week. (Subject line: Riddle me this)
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With Ford attacking democracy, this election is a big one



ARCHITEXT

Brian Marshall
Columnist

The world holds its breath as they watch the oldest modern continuous constitutional democracy being rapidly and systematically dismantled in favour of an imperial presidency. The man who would be autocrat of a reformed nation has directed a legion of lackeys to find all possible precedents buried in 250 years of historical legislation — no matter how tenuous — that might justify the concentration of unilateral decision-making power into the office of the president. These questionable justifications underwriting his executive orders have been fired out with such rapidity that the institutions traditionally responsible for acting as a check and balance on the executive branch have been overwhelmed — if they had not been already subverted by

the appointment of one or more presidential loyalists to the helm. Inundated by these dubious claims, intimidated by a weaponized Department of Justice, attacked by the Department of Homeland Security through ICE, threatened by mobilized military troops and a federalized National Guard in their neighbourhoods, witness of gerrymandering to marginalize the African American and Latino vote, and watching the institutions of higher education, legal firms and the media being muzzled and emasculated, has taken a toll on the American people. Even when eight million people took to the streets in the No Kings protest, they were largely ignored and maligned through the president's social media platform Truth Social — a name eerily reminiscent to that of Russia's state media Pravda Network or, in English, the Truth Network. Many have sounded an alarm regarding the threat to democracy in the United States (e.g. Fareed Zakaria's "The Imperial Presidency" aired on PBS and the Center for American Progress' Aug. 12 report "The Trump Administration Is Interfering in the 2026 Midterm Elections To Entrench the



Doug Ford's recent hot mic slip paints a full picture of his desire to avoid questions and accountability. With his constant attacks on democracy and freedom of information, choosing the right mayor is critical for NOTL. And it can't be one of Ford's dinner party pals. Imperial Presidency") but most American citizens have remained remarkably docile in their apparent belief that "this too in time shall pass." Unfortunately, there is every chance that they will wake up one morning to find that what has passed is their hallowed democracy. Here, Ontario has Premier Doug Ford who, lacking President Trump's power to simply deny access to any media outlet that he deems is not "loyal" to his administration, has resorted to

holding public appearances carefully staged and produced for social media to appear as press conferences but the media is actually not invited. In the most recent example, on Sept. 3 in Mississauga, Ford was caught on a hot mic stating, "Thank God we don't have the media. No questions, no answers. We're good to go." Much like other autocratically inclined politicians, the premier is all about controlling the narrative while assuming the creditability of a traditional press conference to subliminally influence its acceptance by the public. This type of behavior is completely reflective of Ford's attitude toward the electorate in this province. His "ah shucks, I'm just a regular guy" populist presentation is simply a facade behind which his government diligently works to centralize power, control and decision-making in the premier and cabinet ministers' offices. There are many examples of this hidden away in legislation passed by his government during their terms in office however, given the upcoming elections in the fall, let's just focus on two. With the passing of the Better Regional Governance

Act in April of this year, Ford effectively took control of the Niagara Regional Council. This legislation eliminated the 19 independently elected regional councillor positions thereby denying the electorate their democratic right to choose and vote for the individuals they felt would represent them best. The new council will consist only of the 12 mayors of Niagara's municipalities who, according to the legislation, will be vested with a weighted number of votes reflective of the population size of their respective jurisdictions — essentially handing regional decision-making authority to the mayors of St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and Welland. Further, the regional chair will not be elected but rather appointed by the Ford government — to all intents and purposes a Ford employee that is paid for by the region's taxpayers — and, this appointee will have executive powers similar to "strong mayor" powers allowing them to propose budgets, veto certain bylaws and hire or fire regional staff. In practice, the chair will not be responsible to residents of Niagara for the actions and decisions

that impact us; they will be accountable to the Premier and his government. Which brings us to the importance of our local governance — since the councillors and lord mayor are the only folks who we can actually vote for and hold accountable vis-a-vis NOTL's future — and the fact the current council, led by the lord mayor and deputy lord mayor, reduced voter representation by eliminating two council positions thereby enhancing the facility of exercising strong mayor powers (the lord mayor plus two councillors can carry the vote against the majority of council). This, if for no other reason, is why it is vital that each and every resident of Niagara-on-the-Lake needs to conduct due diligence on every one of the individuals registered to run in this election and then vote for who you believe will serve this community best. There are candidate forums running on Sept. 14, 25 and Oct. 2 at 6 p.m. in Crossroads Public School, plus on Sept. 16 beginning at 7 p.m. at St Davids Lions Club. I urge you to attend. Brian Marshall is a NOTL realtor, author and expert consultant on design, restoration and heritage.



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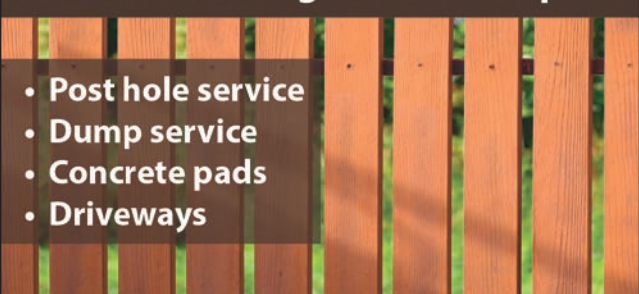
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ROSS'S RAMBLINGS

Ross Robinson
Columnist

Last week, I rambled about the annual back to school phenomenon, and the ubiquity of backpacks. A good number of readers commented that as kids, somehow we managed to get our textbooks, exercise books and supplies to and from school every day without backpacks.

Clearly, society had seen a way to make the lives of students more efficient, and student backpacks quickly became the norm.

And not that long ago, refillable water bottles became standard and accepted. A seemingly necessary part of living life for students now.

I don't mean designer bottled water like Aquafina,

Dasani, Perrier and so many other brand names — how do our landfills and oceans absorb such a quantity of usually single use plastic bottles?

I am referring to the refillable plastic containers that are everywhere. They seem to be a standard giveaway at many athletic events, academic conferences and other meetups.

Usually cheap, usually plastic and colourful, and clutched by millions and millions of humanoids. Or go for top of the line, with YETI or Stanley water bottles priced way up there. But they keep cold stuff cold and hot stuff hot, eh?

Apparently the most common lost-and-found items after many events are refillable water bottles. Not socks or mittens.

Here now, a big rambling jump as I struggle to find my lane this week.

On Tuesday evening, I did a brief and very unscientific bit of research at the Petro-Canada on Mary Street.

To my amazement, a litre of designer water costs much more than a litre of unleaded gasoline. And the variety of gases available



The Stanley tumbler has become one of the more recognizable symbols of the refillable-water-bottle era. Ross Robinson reflects this week on how water bottles — like backpacks before them — quietly went from novelty to an everyday essential for today's students.

— way back in the day, we chose between regular and super.

Now, octanes and many other details make even a quick stop to fill 'er up not a quick stop to fill 'er up. Or am I exaggerating?

It seems that every month or so, I mention a quotation from my Cochrane-born-and-bred mother. This week, I recall her incredulity back in the 1960s when she saw me with a plastic bottle filled with Aqua-

fina or some other type of bottled water.

When she learned I had actually paid about 50 cents for it, she looked at me as if I had come from outer space.

She said, very approximately, "You spent good money on water? We have plenty of good fresh water from the taps, and it's free. What were you thinking?"

She knew a lot about a lot, including how Canada is blessed with so much fresh

water. Have a look at a map of northern Ontario.

Yes, our world seems to be totally discombobulated now, with so many sad and bad things happening in so many places. Things caused by our fearless leaders and by human errors. And unexplainable events caused by Mother Nature and, I guess, higher powers.

So earlier today, a friend and I determined to find some sunshine and good news. Defaulting to simplicity, our conversation pointed us to backpacks and water bottles (the refillable kind).

We totally take both for granted, but what progress they have brought to us. Perhaps society, by default or by design, really is progressing.

Backpacks have gone from canoe trips in the wilderness to streets everywhere. Some little ones, and some great big ones. Some used by wee school children, and some used by busy and disciplined adults who have several important things to do each day.

This week's Ross's Ramblings has mentioned two minor but perhaps important inventions. For no particular reason this summer, I have studiously avoided writing about the well-marketed and much over-hyped FIFA World Cup.

But here I go, recklessly. FIFA leaders, for the right reasons I am sure, decided to increase their revenues with scheduled hydration breaks. No matter how exciting the game, everything came to a halt for a few minutes as the players raised refillable water bottles to their lips.

Wrapping up this Ramblings, before every student had their own water bottle, I remember drinking from water fountains in the school corridors. Our high school had perhaps 20 spread over two floors, for about 800 students.

How sanitary was that? And how did we all survive? Go figure.

We trained for Henley and marathons with only occasional water breaks. Were we tougher? No, we didn't know any better.

Be open minded, and encourage useful societal advancements.

And please, be kind.

rossrocket9@gmail.com

Niagara-on-the-Lake Comprehensive Parking Study

Notice of Public Information Centre

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has retained LEA Consulting Ltd. (LEA) to undertake a Comprehensive Parking Study to address parking opportunities and challenges across the Town's five urban areas.

Public Information Centre

You are invited to attend an in-person Public Information Centre (PIC) to learn more about the study's background and next steps, ask questions and provide feedback.

 Thursday, September 24, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

 Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre, Simpson Room (14 Anderson Lane)

If you would like to formally submit a question or comment about the Comprehensive Parking Study, please contact one of the team members below.



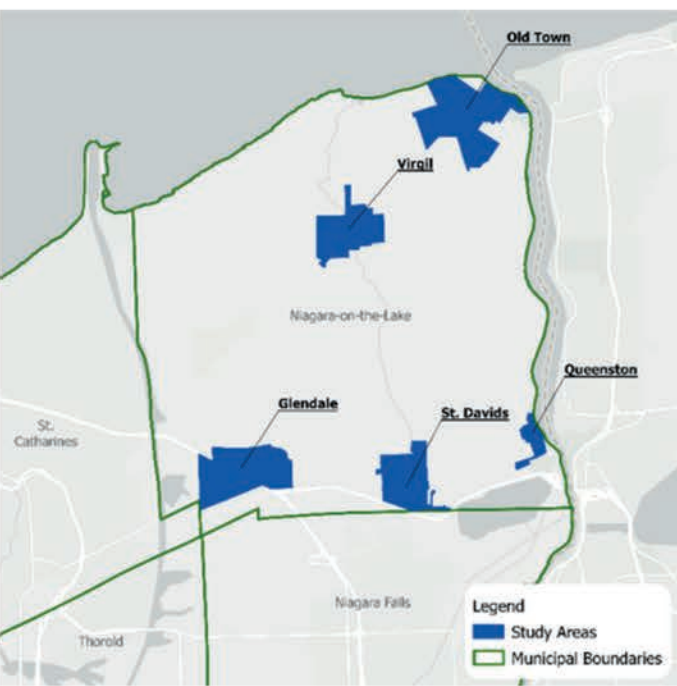
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For more information on the study and project materials, please visit www.jointheconversationnotl.org/comprehensive-parking-study or scan the QR code.





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In the Estate of
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All Persons having claims against the
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Council should police costs, not just pay

Dear editor:

Andrea Kaiser deserves credit for continuing to raise Niagara-on-the-Lake’s unusually high policing costs (“Region to review NOTL’s policing bill,” Sept. 3). But after nearly 15 years in elected municipal office — about 11 years on town council and almost four representing us at the Region — residents are entitled to ask what has actually changed.

Kaiser says she identified the problem while on town council. Yet the allocation formula has not changed and NOTL taxpayers have received no relief.

Perhaps it is time to go beyond asking who pays the bill and start asking what is driving the bill and how we can contain it.

Let’s get the data.

How many police, ambulance and fire calls involve visitors rather than residents? How many involve traffic collisions, cyclists, short-term rentals or emergencies during peak visitor periods? What does serving millions of visitors cost a municipality of only about 20,000 residents?

Visitors away from home



inevitably place different demands on a community. They drive unfamiliar rural roads, cycle unfamiliar routes and stay in accommodations without the support they have at home. Our roads and villages must absorb the resulting traffic and emergency response.

We have experienced serious and fatal bicycle and automobile collisions. We should not attribute those tragedies to tourism without evidence. But they demonstrate why increasing

traffic on rural roads has consequences — including demands on police, ambulance and fire services.

This matters because emergency-service capacity is expensive. If continually increasing visitor volumes eventually requires millions of dollars in additional fire, ambulance or policing capacity, every taxpayer pays, whether they benefit from tourism or not.

That brings us back to tourism policy.

I recently argued in these pages that we should “invite guests, not traffic,” (“Letter: Stop manufacturing the parking problem,” Sept. 3). The same principle applies here. Tourism policy should be judged not just by what visitors spend, but by the public costs their visits create.

Municipal accommodation tax revenue gives council an opportunity to change the incentives. The organization chosen to market and manage tourism should have measurable objectives that favour higher-value, longer-staying visitors rather than simply greater visitor volume.

Its governance matters

too. Responsible accommodation operators have a particular stake in sustainable tourism. They provide parking and, importantly, staff who can assist their guests when problems arise.

Residents, who ultimately pay for municipal services, also deserve a meaningful voice.

Council should establish those expectations before selecting the organization that receives public tourism money, through an open and transparent process with clear criteria and accountability for results.

Kaiser’s policing initiative provides an opportunity to do something more ambitious than redistributing an ever-growing bill.

Find out what is creating the demand. Measure the cost. Then work with the town to reduce it.

And every candidate for lord mayor and council should tell residents whether they support that approach.

Tourism should contribute more to Niagara-on-the-Lake than it costs the community to accommodate it.

Invite guests, not traffic.

Bruce Gitelman
NOTL

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Heritage Trail party doubles \$10K goal

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

A sold-out garden party in Niagara-on-the-Lake raised close to \$20,000 for the Heritage Trail, almost doubling its fundraising goal as volunteers continue working toward the trail’s extension.

The Sept. 3 event drew 85 guests to a private home on the lake in Chautauqua. Tickets sold out in just three days, said Wendy Cheropita, chair of the Heritage Trail event committee.

The evening ran from 6 to 9 p.m. and featured food, wine and a live auction. Organizers had hoped to raise \$10,000 but brought in closer to \$20,000.

The money will support the restoration of the Heritage Trail (formerly the Upper Canada Heritage Trail), a community project that volunteers have been working on for almost a decade.

Cheropita said the funds will go toward extending



Attendees mingle on the lawn during the Sept. 3 garden party, which nearly doubled its \$10,000 fundraising goal. SUPPLIED/WENDY CHEROPITA

the trail, with about five kilometres remaining to be built. The goal is to create a connection along York Road between St. Davids and Queenston, linking with the Bruce Trail.

Beyond the money raised, Cheropita said the event helped bring attention to the trail. Several guests told her afterward that they had walked it and enjoyed the experience.

She said guests described the evening as “the party of the year” and praised its food and wine selection.

Cheropita said sponsors included Brenda and Blair

McArthur, the Scotsman Hotel, the Clayfield Hotel, Pillar & Post, Anne Robinson, the Sentineal family, Zoom Leisure Bikes, Steve Cohen and Joe Carlino, Tony Chisholm, and John and Michelle Scott.

Wine was donated by Stratus, Big Head, Jackson-Triggs and Konzelmann, while Limited Distillery supplied local gin for a signature cocktail. The Independent Grocer on Queen Street donated water and the Exchange Brewery supplied beer.

Tony Chisholm, speaking on behalf of the volunteers,

said the fundraiser was a welcome boost to their efforts.

“This fun and very successful party has produced a very welcome and substantial contribution to the community and our favourite Heritage Trail.”

“The town dissolved the committee — all committees I believe — in advance of the election, so I can’t really officially speak on behalf of the (Heritage Trail) committee,” he added.

The fundraiser comes as volunteers continue to look ahead to the trail’s completion. Its Paws on the Trail event was cancelled this year, and the committee has been seeking updates on when construction of the extension will resume.

This summer’s flooding has also raised questions about the trail’s condition and the timing of future work. The Lake Report has asked the town for an update on construction and the anticipated timeline, but did not receive a response by press time.

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com



Niagara Polo takes over the Commons this weekend. Games and events run from noon to 4 p.m. FILE

The sport of kings returns Saturday

Staff
The Lake Report

The sport of kings returns to Niagara-on-the-Lake on Saturday, fancy hats welcome.

The biannual Niagara Polo match will take place at the historic Commons in Old Town, raising money for the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum.

Tickets are available for \$30 each through the Niagara Polo website. The event will feature two four-

chukker games with players from the Toronto Polo Club.

The day will also include a traditional divot stomp, halftime entertainment from the Canadian Cowgirls and Heavyweights Brass Band, food and alcohol vendors, artisan booths, a silent auction and pony rides.

Guests can also enter the Best Hat contest.

Gates open at 11 a.m., with events running from noon to 4 p.m.

Tickets are available at niagarapolo.com.

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- Across**
- 1. Thinly (8)
 - 5. Puny person (6)
 - 10. Fan (9)
 - 11. Cubist's first name (5)
 - 12. All ears (9)
 - 13. Collection for public display (4)
 - 16. Molar (7)
 - 18. "The Naked Gun" star Leslie --- (7)
 - 20. Tilling tool (3)
 - 21. Escapee (7)
 - 22. Well-being (7)
 - 23. Auction (4)
 - 25. Early years (9)
 - 29. Poem about rural life (5)
 - 30. Like stormy weather (9)
 - 31. Die after seeing this town? (6)
 - 32. Unexpected question (4,4)
- Down**
- 1. Band of cloth (4)
 - 2. Frog (9)
 - 3. Noticed a wise one, or a North American bird of prey (7,3)
 - 4. It used to be spoken in Rome (5)
 - 6. Elvis swivelled his (4)
 - 7. It's got things to do (2-3)
 - 8. Articulates (10)
 - 9. Hot off the press (5-3)
 - 14. Belligerence (10)
 - 15. His athlete exercised in the best condition (10)
 - 17. Pulsating (8)
 - 19. Never-ending TV series (4,5)
 - 24. Hoard (3,2)
 - 26. Stretchy clothing material (5)
 - 27. Balm ingredient (4)
 - 28. Web page language (1,1,1,1)

Crossword Puzzle

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Last issue's answers

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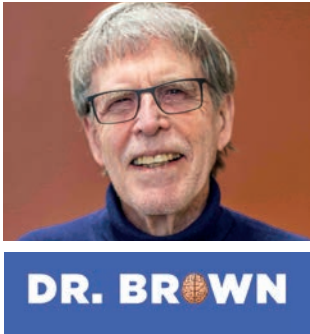
EXPLORING HISTORY
WITH NOTL MUSEUM



From the cavalry to the polo field

We'd love to have a photograph of cavalymen playing polo, but sadly, no such image has made its way into our collection. Polo and cavalry, however, have a long history together. The King's Dragoon Guards played the game during their stay in Niagara from 1838 to 1842, and the Royal Canadian Dragoons also played on the Commons in the 1930s. For cavalry units, polo was more than a spectator sport. It was a useful training tool that allowed riders to hone their skills on horseback while carrying a mallet in one hand, rather than a sword. Nearly 200 years later since that first game, we get to see polo return to the historic Commons. On Sept. 12, come witness the "sport of kings" — the Toronto Polo Club takes to the field for the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum's Niagara signature fundraiser, Niagara Polo. General admission tickets are still available. We hope to see you there.

Climate change is already here — and worse is coming



Dr. William Brown
Columnist

Weather is what we experience every day and every hour — even, sometimes, from minute to minute — and it varies depending on where we are. Climate, on the other hand, tracks long-term trends such as changes in mean global surface temperatures over decades, centuries and longer periods.

For example, Earth's climate is influenced by its orbital path around the sun, which changes on a roughly 100,000-year cycle. It is also influenced over shorter cycles by changes in Earth's tilt and precession.

The roughly 100,000-year cycle helps account for major swings in mean global temperatures between glacial and interglacial periods. The latter are associated with higher

ocean levels, warmer temperatures, lakes and rivers and often abundant vegetation and other life. During glacial periods, ocean levels drop and, at higher latitudes such as western Europe during the last ice age, life for humans and Neanderthals was much tougher.

These swings between interglacial and glacial periods are reflected in changes in mean global temperatures.

Earth's climate is influenced by the relatively short wavelengths of incoming light energy from the sun. That energy is absorbed by Earth and radiated back into space at longer wavelengths, as infrared radiation. Some of that outgoing energy is absorbed by greenhouse gases such as water vapour, methane and carbon dioxide.

Methane and carbon dioxide, unlike water vapour, can remain in the atmosphere for much longer periods. Historically, their concentrations were relatively small and the amount of outgoing heat energy shed into space more or less balanced the incoming energy from the sun.

The problem arose as



levels of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide increased to the point that more outgoing energy became trapped in the atmosphere. The result is an increase in temperatures in both the atmosphere and on Earth's surface.

The world's oceans act like a huge heat sink, able to absorb and buffer much of that additional heat — but only to a point. As they absorb more heat, ocean temperatures increase, especially near the surface.

Making matters worse, a hotter atmosphere can hold more water vapour

and therefore more heat, aggravating the warming problem.

The central villain in this climate tragedy is carbon dioxide generated by the burning of fossil fuels. Sophisticated climate models make that clear despite the claims of climate change deniers.

It was one reason the Nobel committee in 2021 stepped beyond its usual cautious role by emphasizing the strength of the scientific evidence for global warming and raising the alarm about what could happen if mean global temperatures continued to rise much beyond one to two degrees Celsius. Beyond certain thresholds, warming can trigger feedback effects that contribute to still greater temperature increases and more severe effects on climate and weather.

Looking back, mean global temperatures began to climb around the middle of the last century and have risen much faster so far this century, alongside the worldwide use of fossil fuels.

Unfortunately, Earth remains on track for much higher temperatures because

accumulating carbon dioxide can trap additional heat in the atmosphere for a long time, with no quick way to reverse the trend.

Making matters worse are predictions that the coming El Niño event could be among the strongest in centuries, supercharged by a band of unusually warm tropical water in the central Pacific moving toward South America. It could bring large areas of heavy rainfall or drought this fall and next year, depending on the region, while adding to already high global temperatures driven by greenhouse gas emissions.

If all that sounds like a recipe for disaster, it surely is.

We have witnessed the effects of rising mean global temperatures in recent summers, evident in the widespread destruction of forests by wildfires in North America and Europe, record-breaking summer temperatures, extreme rainfall and flooding and, elsewhere, severe drought in places where seasonal rains would normally be expected, including parts of India.

What can be done?

The science behind climate change and its principal culprit — rising greenhouse gas emissions generated primarily by burning fossil fuels — has been clear for decades.

However, building a consensus strong enough to bring all of the world's countries together has proven impossible in the present political climate.

The same stubborn reluctance to resolve ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere reveals humanity's fatal weakness: the innate tribalism that divides people, even in the face of major tragedies such as those in Sudan, Gaza, Lebanon, Israel and Iran.

Need I go on?

I don't know what the answer is, or whether any solution is even possible at this stage, but the outcome where climate change is concerned seems certain.

Far worse weather is in store in the coming decades, with no solution in sight.

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

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Obituary

Charles Massey Scrivener

SCRIVENER, Charles Massey —
Sept. 8, 1954 – Sept. 4, 2026
It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of Charles “Charley” Massey Scrivener on September 4, 2026, at the age of 71, following a courageous three-year battle with cancer.

Charley was the beloved husband and best friend of Patricia Lally Scrivener (née Phelan), with whom he shared 28 wonderful years of marriage. He was a loving father to Katherine Scrivener (Philip Olsen), James Scrivener (Heather Caffrey), Melissa Hogan (James Kirby) and Christopher Garcia (Beatriz), and a deeply loved grandfather to Marquis Hogan, Noah Garcia, Aria Garcia, Ava Garcia, Pippa Olsen, Kai Olsen and Henry Scrivener.

Charley was predeceased by his parents, Richard Harding Scrivener and Margaret Mary Scrivener (née Howse). He is survived by his siblings, Paul Scrivener (Brenda Kritzer), Louise Scrivener and John Scrivener (Stella Powelczyk), as well as nieces Laura, Andrea and Marni.

Born and raised in Toronto, Charley attended Upper Canada College, where he nurtured friendships that began in Junior Form in the Prep and continued through his years in Howard’s House. Many of those friendships endured throughout his life. His passion for history had its roots there, along with his unmistakable sense of humour that became one of his defining characteristics.

Charley went on to attend both the University of Toronto and York University. His enthusiasm for history remained a lifelong passion, reflecting his broader curiosity about the world, the places he visited and the people he encountered.

His university years also began a lifelong association with Zeta Psi. Charley remained an involved and much-loved member of the fraternity, regularly attending its



Commemoration Banquet and business meetings. Drawing on his background in finance, he generously contributed his time, experience and valued counsel to support the organization.

Charley enjoyed a successful career in finance, spending almost 34 years with CIBC before retiring in 2011. His intelligence, sound judgment and financial expertise extended well beyond his professional life to the organizations and communities he cared about.

After moving to Niagara-on-the-Lake in 2021, Charley embraced his new community. He joined the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum Board in October 2023 and became Treasurer in October 2024. Though his time on the Board was far too short, he was a supportive, engaged member and a strong voice for the Museum.

Charley approached life with curiosity, enthusiasm and an unmistakable competitive spirit. Sport was a constant throughout his life. He played soccer and cricket in his younger years, enjoyed golf and was an avid tennis player. He played at the Royal Canadian Yacht Club and later

joined the Niagara-on-the-Lake Tennis Club, where he valued the camaraderie as much as the competition.

He also possessed a wonderful sense of adventure. Charley loved motorcycle riding and the freedom of a long road ahead. Favourite journeys took him through upstate New York, along the California coast and the Amalfi Coast, where winding roads and spectacular scenery perfectly suited him.

Some of his fondest early memories were rooted in family places. At the family farm in Belhaven, Ontario, his youth included mucking stalls and helping raise purebred Aberdeen Angus. He also treasured summers spent at the family cottage on Toronto Island and later Eastbourne on Lake Simcoe.

Above all, Charley was a sailor. A longtime member of the Royal Canadian Yacht Club, he served as Vice Commodore from 2005 to 2007 and more recently became a member of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Sailing Club. Over the years he loved both racing and cruising, but his favourite place was always behind the helm of his sailboat, with the wind in the sails and open water ahead.

Sailing captured much of what Charley loved about life: skill and competition, freedom and adventure, friendship and the promise of whatever might lie beyond the horizon.

Charley also loved to travel, sharing many of his greatest adventures with Patricia. Together they travelled the world, explored new places and created a lifetime of memories. She was his constant companion, partner in adventure and the great love of his life.

Those fortunate enough to know Charley will remember someone impossible to forget: handsome and charming, intelligent and curious, quick-witted and wonderfully sarcastic. He could make people laugh with

a perfectly timed observation, delivered when it was least expected.

Beneath the wit was an exceptionally kind, gentle and loving man. Charley was deeply loyal to his friends, devoted to his family and generous with his time and talents. He treasured friendships that stretched back decades and gave freely to the schools, clubs and communities that had enriched his life.

Charley faced his three-year battle with cancer with tremendous courage. Through an extraordinarily difficult chapter, his strength, humour, intelligence and love for his family remained very much a part of him.

His greatest legacy lives in the people whose lives he touched: family, lifelong friends, fraternity brothers, sailing companions, tennis partners, colleagues and community members.

He will be remembered in the places he loved, in friendships that lasted a lifetime, on a winding coastal road, in an obscure piece of history he almost certainly would have known something about—and, perhaps most of all, on the water: behind the helm, the sails full, with open water ahead.

Charley lived adventurously, laughed often and loved deeply. He was loved beyond measure and will be profoundly missed.

A Celebration of Charley’s life will be held on September 27, 2026, at the Royal Canadian Yacht Club Island Clubhouse. Further details will be shared with family and friends.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Charley’s memory may be made in support of cancer research or to a favourite charity.

Forever loved, forever remembered and forever missed.



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