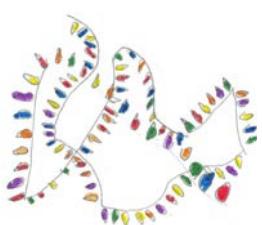
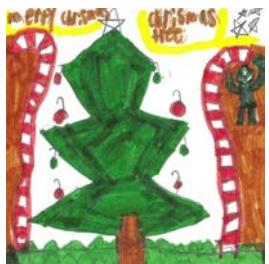


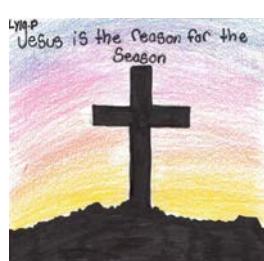
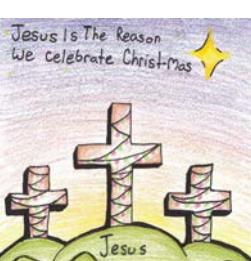
# The Lake Report

The Lake Report | Vol. 8, Issue 50 | December 18, 2025

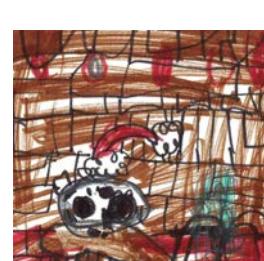
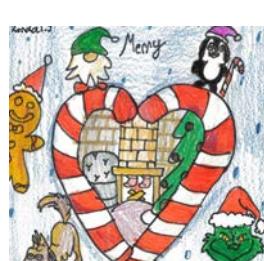
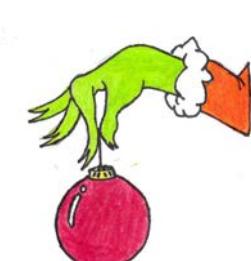
Please enjoy this special holiday wrapping paper, with designs by the students at Crossroads Public School. In total, the paper received 226 submissions from students across grades. You can use the paper to wrap an extra special gift for a loved one, or just put it up on the fridge for the holidays. Thanks to the Coyotes!



# The Lake Report



# The Lake Report

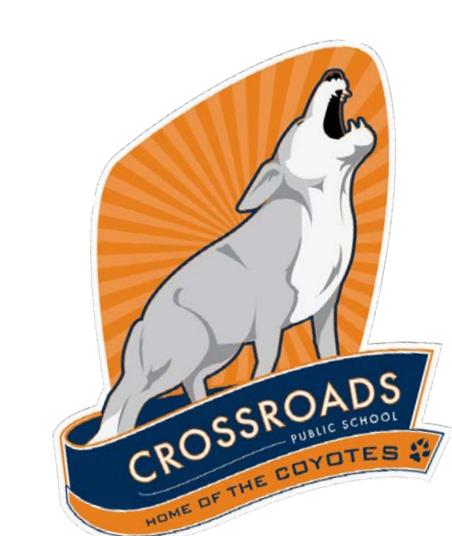
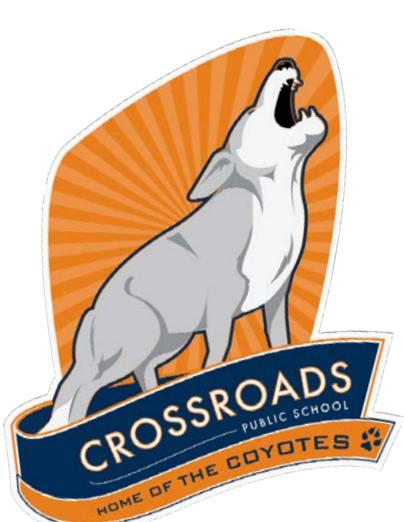




Merry Christmas Taylor



# The Lake Report





**Peninsula  
Flooring Ltd.**

13 Henegan Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake  
(905) 468 2135 | [www.peninsulaflooring.ca](http://www.peninsulaflooring.ca)

**EXCLUSIVE SALE**  
Stain Safe + Pet Guard

**STANTON**  
Elevated by design

# The Lake Report

Lakereport.ca / Niagaranow.com  
Hyper-local news for Niagara-on-the-Lake



**Christmas at the Fort | Page 9**

Vol. 8, Issue 50

Canada's most-awarded community newspaper

December 18, 2025

160-bed  
Pleasant  
Manor  
expansion  
is complete

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Virgil's long-term care home has wrapped up a \$70.5-million redevelopment that has added 119 new beds to the facility. Current residents are expected to move into their new homes next week.

Radiant Care Pleasant Manor's new three-storey building includes 160 beds, organized into five resident home areas of 32 residents each, with each area divided into two 16-resident pods. Radiant Care chief executive officer Tim Siemens said the pods help create smaller, more intimate living spaces.

The Ministry of Long-Term Care approved the expanded retirement home for occupancy on Dec. 16. Existing residents will move into their new rooms on Dec. 22.

A Niagara-on-the-Lake resident, who toured the

*Continued on Page 4*

## Santa comes to town

Christmas parade, tractor parade – Big Red spends some time in NOTL



Ho, ho, ho, Niagara-on-the-Lake! Old Saint Nick is a regular in town this time of year, and at the town's annual Christmas Parade on Saturday, Dec. 13, he was there to spread some holiday cheer, up on his sled greeting spectators lined up on Queen Street. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

**Andrew Hawlitzky | The Lake Report**

**T**his year's Christmas parade in NOTL was a big one — and a long one.

"It might just be the best parade we've had in years," said Margaret Tyrell of Niagara-on-the-Lake, who watched as

marching bands, dance groups and finally, jolly old Saint Nick, moseyed down Queen Street with her son Aiden on Saturday.

Niagara-on-the-Lake's Christmas Parade returned Dec. 13 at near pre-pandemic scale, orga-

nizers say, drawing residents and visitors to Old Town as 102 entries moved through the historic core in clear winter weather.

The parade has returned to its pre-COVID size, said Paul Mace, a member of the NOTL

Christmas Parade committee, after several years of struggling to regain the same level of community attention.

The procession began near

*Continued on Page 11*

## NOTL family of Jimmy Lai saddened by hotelier's guilty verdict

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The criminal conviction of Hong Kong publisher and democracy advocate Jimmy Lai under the re-

gion's national security law comes as no surprise to the family of the media tycoon and Niagara-on-the-Lake hotelier.

"We're not surprised by the outcome," says NOTL resident Erica Lepp. "That

certainly was never a surprise for us. But obviously, we're so saddened by it."

Lai, 78, was convicted in Hong Kong on Dec. 15 under the region's national security law following a years-long case against him.

He's been found guilty of conspiring to collude with foreign forces to endanger national security and conspiracy to publish seditious articles.

Critics of the law say it has been used to target

pro-democracy figures and suppress press freedom.

"It's just a reminder of, kind of, the passage of time and how long this has been going on for," said Lepp.

"There's kind of some feeling of accumulation that's

led up to this moment."

Lai was arrested in August 2020 under Hong Kong's national security law. He has remained imprisoned in solitary confine-

*Continued on Page 3*



**Discover What Traditional Tests Miss**  
AI-Powered Screening Available in Niagara  
**CANCER | DEMENTIA | HEART DISEASE**  
Learn more: [RegenaLife.ca/NOTL](http://RegenaLife.ca/NOTL)



# Province plans to make Niagara a tourism powerhouse

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Doug Ford's plan to turn Niagara into a global tourism powerhouse could have some major effects on Niagara-on-the-Lake, though it's unclear at this time what's in store for the small town neighbouring Niagara Falls, the region's biggest tourism draw at the moment.

The province's new "Destination Niagara" strategy aims to generate an extra \$3 billion a year in economic activity for Ontario and attract 25 million visitors a year to the region, doubling its current number.

In his announcement on Monday, Ford said Niagara has the potential to be "a true tourism powerhouse" and a "world-class destination."

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said it remains unclear how much of the extra \$3 billion would flow directly to NOTL. He added that most discussions with the province have focused on the region as a whole rather than the town specifically.

So far, the strategy includes plans to bring new

tourist attractions, including a London Eye-esque observation wheel, and more casinos to the area. Most relevant to NOTL, there are plans to focus more on the agritourism, wine and culinary sectors and arts and culture offerings like the Shaw Festival.

Stan Cho, provincial minister of tourism, culture and gaming, told The Lake Report this strategy is the "next chapter" in the province's earlier steps to increase tourism for Niagara.

One initiative the province highlighted was Niagara Takes Flight, a provincial project with Niagara Parks that created a flying theatre ride in Niagara Falls, which opened this summer.

When asked how the strategy would affect NOTL specifically, Cho pointed to several initiatives extending beyond the town.

"When you're calling for a request for information on major attractions, that's never been done before," he said. "When you're committing \$35 million to the Shaw for rebuilding capital on a Royal George Theatre, that's never been done before."



Ontario Premier Doug Ford says his government will move quickly to turn Niagara into a world-class tourism destination and hopes it will generate \$3 billion more annually. FILE

The provincial announcement, which did not contain any details about new attractions for Niagara-on-the-Lake, highlighted the bumps it gave the local arts and culture sector, including \$35 million for the new Royal George Theatre and \$250,000 in funding for the Shaw.

To accommodate the millions of new visitors the province wants to attract, it also referenced regional infrastructure projects, some

of which are already public, including expanded capacity on the Queen Elizabeth Way, twinning the Garden City Skyway and increased GO service.

There are also plans to seek the federal government's support in growing the Niagara District Airport, which is preparing for major upgrades and looking to fly more travellers to more places, as part of its new \$195-million master plan.

Ford highlighted the airport in his announcement on Monday and plans to get "all the big planes from around the world" by expanding the airport's runway.

The current master plan indicates that extending the runway by 2,500 feet would allow it to bring in commercial flights from farther destinations in Canada and North America. Ford spoke of extending the runway by 3,000 feet on Monday.

Cho said airport development was a "main priority" when provincial, territorial and federal governments last met.

Wineries were highlighted as a key sector affecting NOTL. The province said it wants to "showcase Niagara region's exceptional agritourism and internationally recognized wine and culinary sectors."

Coun. Andrew Niven, director of marketing and hospitality at Konzelmann Estate Winery, welcomed the announcement.

"From our perspective at Konzelmann, Destination Niagara represents an exciting opportunity to further showcase the strength of Niagara's wine and culinary scene," he said.

Cho also cited a request for quotes to upgrade the Ontario Power Generating Station, plans to convert the Toronto Power Generating Station into a five-star hotel, and upgrades to the Niagara Falls Marina at Miller's Creek as plans that the province has "never been done before."

*daniel@niagaranow.com*

## Happy Holidays

May the magic of the season fill your heart and home with happiness,  
and may the New Year bring you endless joy and new adventures.

Happy Holidays and a Joyous New Year!

**Niagara on-the-Lake Realty**  
1994 Limited Real Estate Brokerage  
50 YEARS  
1974 • 2024

[notlrealty.com](http://notlrealty.com)

## StopGap ramps improve accessibility

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The StopGap ramps have arrived in Niagara-on-the-Lake, marking, for some, a turning point in improving the accessibility of heritage district shops for people with mobility issues.

The town delivered ramps to nine businesses early Friday afternoon: Neob Lavender, Scottish Loft, Fritters on the Lake, Cool as a Moose, Gyros on the Lake, Wine Country Vintners, COWS, Hatley and Craig's Cookies.

The Lake Report spoke with seven of the nine businesses. All welcomed the ramps, and several said people using wheelchairs and walkers already tried them and commented on how much easier it was to get around.

Evelyn Frederick, from Maryland, said she sometimes uses a wheelchair because of her age. She visited Cool as a Moose with David Doermann, a professor at the University at Buffalo. Frederick said the ramps were also good for business.

"I can spend more money," she said exuberantly, laughing.

Jamie-Lynn Jones, manager of Cool as a Moose, said the ramps have not affected customers who are



Jamie-Lynn Jones, manager of Cool as a Moose, shows Evelyn Frederick, from Maryland, and David Doermann of Buffalo over what allows Frederick to get into their new StopGap ramp, which arrived on Friday. DAN SMEENK

able-bodied, which she sees as a positive sign.

"We've had people just walking up and down it," she said. "It hasn't really made a difference with people who don't need it."

The StopGap Foundation was founded in Toronto in 2011. It aims to make single-step businesses more accessible through portable ramps.

After council endorsed StopGap in July, the town invited businesses to apply for ramps. Town staff then worked with StopGap to select a heritage-approved colour and design ramps tailored to the approved locations.

For years, businesses in the area have said heritage rules made accessibility

improvements difficult. Several said the town's endorsement allowed them to place the ramps openly. They also welcomed the town paying for the ramps, saying accessibility serves a broader public interest.

"It's not a bad idea for the town to pay (for) them," said Victoria Bennett, store manager at Craig's Cookies. "Because we should be more accessible in this town."

The rollout marks a milestone for Pamela TurnerSmith, a local accessibility advocate who also has mobility issues.

She said it took three years of advocacy to reach this point, beginning with a letter to former lord mayor Betty Disero.

"The process was slow," she said, "but we got to the end."

"People just expect accessibility, expect that the built environment includes everyone."

Friday was a moment to celebrate. TurnerSmith helped deliver the ramps alongside town staff and the founder of StopGap. She also used one herself at Fritters on the Lake.

"It was a beautiful experience because I've never been in there before," she said.

TurnerSmith said she hopes the program expands to every stepped business in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"We're hoping that's only the beginning," she said.

Town communications co-ordinator Marah Minor said new applications will open in the new year and the town will continue exploring ways to improve accessibility.

"For residents and visitors with accessibility needs, these ramps remove a common physical barrier and make everyday errands, shopping and experiences in our community more accessible," said Minor.

"We're encouraged by how positively businesses have embraced it."

In July, council approved 15 ramps for \$7,500.

[daniel@niagaranow.com](mailto:daniel@niagaranow.com)

**THE FARMHOUSE Cafe**

**Open For Lunch Daily**  
Reservations strongly suggested  
Online booking available! Or give us a call to book  
**905-468-8814**

**Closed December 25, 26 and January 1**

**CAROLINE CELLARS WINERY**

**WINE BOUTIQUE & TASTING BAR**  
Open 7 days a week  
Wine tastings offered daily  
Walk-ins Welcome for Wine Tasting! Reservations available for group bookings

1010 Line 2, NOTL, 905.468.8814 [www.CarolineCellars.com](http://www.CarolineCellars.com)

**St. David's VETERINARY CLINIC** [stdavidsvetclinic.com](http://stdavidsvetclinic.com)

**Merry Christmas & Best Wishes**

House-calls available **905.262.8777**

**airway CPAP inc**

CPAP and sleep apnea supplies.  
Free delivery in NOTL and VIRGIL.  
111A Garrison Village Dr., Suite 202  
For appointment call 289-868-9212.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

**ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 124**  
410 KING ST. NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

**2026**  
**NEW YEAR'S LEVEE**  
JAN. 1, 2026 | 1 P.M. | LOYAL TOAST 2 P.M.  
ALL WELCOME | UNIFORM OR BUSINESS ATTIRE PREFERRED

**HANDYMAN HANS CAN**

Tree and bush trimming/cutting, junk, furniture, bush and yard waste removal, home installations (grab bars, railings, blinds, toilets, lights, fans, vents, TVs), wall mounting, furniture assembly, painting, household cleaning, window cleaning, organizing and **hoarding help**, repairs (eavestroughs, windows, screens, taps, caulking), **moving services**, holiday decoration setup and takedown.

**905-246-1843**

## Hong Kong now a place where 'journalism is a crime'

Continued from Front Page



Jimmy Lai.

Lepp said she has lived in NOTL her whole life and that her uncle first invested in the town because she and her family were there.

She said residents have shown support.

"I can't leave the house without running into someone who asks me how my uncle's doing," she said. "Even people I don't know."

"As it relates to my uncle and his incarceration, the people in Niagara-on-the-Lake have always been very supportive," Lepp said.

A rally in support of Jimmy Lai, organized by local Amnesty International supporters, was held Nov. 12 in NOTL.

In a Facebook post, member Lidija Biro said about 200 people attended.

Biro told The Lake Report that more than 170 signatures were collected at the rally on a letter to federal Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand calling for Lai's release, which was sent to Ottawa.

Asked what could change, Lepp expressed little optimism.

Additional copies of the

kind of any city."

"Now, it's a place where free journalism is a crime," she said. "This verdict is kind of the last nail in the coffin for that, in my opinion."

She said the impact on journalism is stark.

"If every journalist now is fearful of telling anything because they're going to go to jail for the rest of their life," she said, "what does that change in terms of the outcome of what's being reported?"

Asked what could change, Lepp expressed little optimism.

"I mean, who's big enough to stand up to China?" she said. "To me, if (Donald) Trump can't make that change, then I'm not sure anybody can."

For those looking to help, Lepp is directing residents to Amnesty Niagara – Group 137 Facebook page to get a copy of an updated letter to the foreign affairs minister.

letter were made available to residents who contacted Biro after the rally, she said, bringing the total to more than 200 signatures.

Niagara Falls—Niagara-on-the-Lake Member of Parliament Tony Baldinelli said Conservatives also condemn the conviction.

"We call for his immediate release," he said in a statement that his team sent to The Lake Report.

"Jimmy Lai is a fierce defender of democracy. On behalf of the Niagara community, that I am so honoured to represent — we continue to be deeply thankful to Mr. Lai and his family for being a big part of our tourism community and investing in our beautiful Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake."

For those looking to help, Lepp is directing residents to Amnesty Niagara – Group 137 Facebook page to get a copy of an updated letter to the foreign affairs minister.

[pajeseburn@niagaranow.com](mailto:pajeseburn@niagaranow.com)



Your local artisan butcher shop  
NOW OPEN FOR BUSINESS!

1397 YORK RD. ST. DAVIDS 905-262-8883

# Care home residents move to new building Monday

Continued from Front Page

new home during a Dec. 12 open house, said she was impressed by that pod-style design — but had some reservations about the bedrooms.

"I have an aging mom," said Lidija Biro. "Perhaps, in the future, she will end up there."

The province is supporting the project through long-term care construction funding, Siemens said, including upfront assistance and long-term subsidies per resident paid over time upon opening.

The first 41 residents moving from the existing home chose their rooms after being shown floor plans and photos during construction.

The remaining 119 beds will be allocated through the provincial placement service, Ontario Health atHome, where prospective residents can apply.

Siemens said the home "should be fully occupied" by February or early March. "We want to pace it."

Biro said she "was a little disappointed" with both the



The newly completed 160-bed Pleasant Manor long-term care home in Niagara-on-the-Lake. PAIGE SEBURN

private and shared rooms.

"They look a little too institutional," she said, likening them to "what you might expect to see, you know, in a hospital."

Pleasant Manor personal support worker Andrea McQuay said the rooms follow provincial safety and accessibility standards and are designed to support residents' independence and care needs, while also maximizing natural light.

"They're nice and bright," said McQuay about the rooms. "And airy."

McQuay said private accommodations cost about \$3,000 a month, compared with about \$2,085 for basic rooms, with rate reductions

available for eligible residents in basic rooms.

Basic accommodations consist of single-bed rooms separated by solid walls, with two rooms sharing a vestibule and bathroom, and each room utilizing a curtain at the entrance to the sleeping area. Private rooms have their own door, vestibule and enclosed bathroom.

McQuay said the use of solid walls between basic rooms — instead of curtains, as in the old building — makes a significant difference in terms of privacy.

"The feeling of being in the basic rooms — it feels like private," she said, "because of that wall."

Siemens also highlighted the home's Montessori-based approach to dementia care, which draws on residents' life histories, interests and past roles to guide activities and daily interactions.

Drew Bellefeuille, a registered practical nurse, said staff consider residents' life histories when assigning rooms — for example, placing someone with a background in agriculture, trades or outdoor work in a room overlooking Penner's Home Hardware.

Siemens pointed to memory boxes outside residents' rooms as another example of how that approach is put into practice.

"We encourage the family and the residents to populate that space," he said, "to tell the story of who the person is or was."

One resident, who previously ran a catering business, chose to display her cabbage roll recipe.

"They were famous for their cabbage rolls," said Bellefeuille.

Administrator of long-term care Bronwen Hadfield said the new home uses

a digital meal-planning system that tracks residents' dietary needs, preferences and allergies in real time.

"The goal is to go paperless," said Hadfield.

It connects directly to the kitchen and to interactive menu boards, which are on each unit and display daily and weekly menus reflecting dietary requirements and menu changes.

"So say they were a minced texture — the menu will pop up to see what they get," she said.

While provincial standards require space for spiritual care, Pleasant Manor also includes a larger great room beside the chapel to accommodate group worship and special programs, Siemens said.

Other amenities include dining and gathering areas, bath and shower facilities on each floor and a hair salon.

Staff have dedicated spaces to rest and recharge, with five staff rooms and one main staff lounge, said Hilary Leveille, housing and capital works co-ordinator.

"We can have massage chairs, tables and chairs and lockers right on the floor

that the staff are providing care to the residents," she said.

Siemens said all of the roughly 20,000 square feet of the former long-term care home will be repurposed into a community hub, including a fitness and wellness centre and a proposed on-site daycare, under a plan approved by the Radian Care board.

The Virgil Business Association has earmarked \$50,000 it raised to help purchase exercise equipment for the project.

He said the new spot will "impact the broader community of seniors" living in NOTL.

Biro said the plans for the former home are "fantastic ideas" and some European senior residences include on-site daycares to foster interaction between seniors and children.

"I think that may be, kind of a goal, for why they're doing it," she said.

"I hope it is," added Biro. "Little kids need, you know, grandparent models. And seniors need to see little kids running around."

[paigeseburn@niagaranow.com](mailto:paigeseburn@niagaranow.com)

# Buying OR SELLING?



THE  
**SYKES** real estate  
TEAM

Evan McCaughey  
289 · 968 · 8128



## Singing in Chautauqua

Santa Claus paid a visit to the Chautauqua neighbourhood last Friday night ahead of his annual appearance in the Niagara-on-the-Lake Christmas Parade the next morning. The jolly old gent, who bore a passing resemblance to NOTL native Kurt Hamm, was on hand for the Chautauqua Residents Association's Christmas carol singalong and he offered rides aboard his horse-drawn carriage. Carollers enjoyed free hot chocolate and treats — and had a live band on hand to accompany their festive tunes. "Carolling in the Park has become an annual tradition in Chautauqua," Weston Miller, president of the residents association told The Lake Report. It was started many years ago by residents who wanted to bring the neighbourhood together during the busy holiday season for a little cheer, he said. "We are fortunate to have been joined by 'Live at the Library,' who shared their musical talent, and by Rhonda Cave of Vineyard to Village Carriages." Band members knew each other from Princess Margaret Public School in Niagara Falls, where they taught music or worked in the library. The free event, open to everyone in town, is funded by membership dues, donations from the community and the board of the association. "We had many people from the neighbourhood and beyond, which was wonderful to see," Miller said.

## NOTL chooses settlement over tribunal

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has reversed course on its response to a proposed York Road development at the Ontario Land Tribunal, opting to pursue a settlement instead of mediation, after staff shared that a settlement would cost \$20,000 less than mediation at the tribunal.

The dispute centres on an application from Christopher Adams of Newcastle Communities, owner of 2052 York Rd., to build another house on the site.

In July, Adams applied for minor variances that would allow changes to the new building's façade and lot frontage. Planning staff recommended approval, but the town's committee of adjustment denied the applications in September, ruling the changes were not minor in nature.

Adams appealed that decision to the Ontario Land Tribunal on Oct. 14, which prompted council to debate



Coun. Andrew Niven says new information led him to change his position on the York Road case. PAIGE SEBURN

its response at an Oct. 28 council meeting.

Staff presented council with three options in a report: option one, retain legal counsel and an external planner to defend the refusal; option two, retain legal counsel and an external planner to pursue mediation with Adams in an effort to settle; or option three, instruct legal counsel to settle the matter by accepting staff's recommendations.

Originally, council chose the second option — a decision later brought back by Coun. Andrew Niven at a Dec. 9 meeting, who brought forward a motion to

reconsider the decision.

He said he changed his position after receiving new information that was not available at the time of the original vote.

Council carried the motion and only Coun. Sandra O'Connor opposed. Council then defeated the second option and voted in favour of the third option, directing legal counsel to pursue a settlement, to be presented to the tribunal.

Niven opened the conversation by stating that he "made a mistake" by supporting the second option.

"I spoke in favour of mediation ... based on the information I had at the

time — and I take responsibility for that."

Niven said staff later provided council with cost estimates for pursuing each choice: option one at \$50,000, option two at \$25,000 and option three at \$5,000.

"The report did not include any cost estimates for the three options," he said.

With that in mind, Niven said he believes the third option "is the most cost-effective and practical path going forward," adding the move is in the best interest of taxpayers.

Niven also noted that since planning staff supported the application, it cannot defend a committee of adjustment refusal at the tribunal. That would require hiring an external planner at additional cost, with no guarantee of success, he said.

Reopening a decision should never be taken lightly, Niven said, but he argued it is appropriate when new information comes forward after a vote.

[paigeseburn@niagaranow.com](mailto:paigeseburn@niagaranow.com)

**FREE HOME EVALUATION**  
**★ (289) 214 4394 ★**  
**CALL ANGELIKA TODAY!**

**TOP 1% AGENT**  
2023/24

**Angelika & Associates**  
LUXURY REAL ESTATE

**ANGELIKA ZAMMIT**  
REALTOR® / OWNER / TEAM LEAD

**MERRY CHRISTMAS**  
**& Happy New Year**

TO ALL OF OUR NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE  
CLIENTS AND FAMILIES!

**SCOTT**  
CONSTRUCTION NIAGARA INC

5233 STANLEY AVE., UNIT 5, NIAGARA FALLS  
[MAIL@SCOTTCONSTRUCTION.CA](mailto:MAIL@SCOTTCONSTRUCTION.CA) | [WWW.SCOTTCONSTRUCTION.CA](http://WWW.SCOTTCONSTRUCTION.CA)

**Legion**  
Branch 124  
Niagara-on-the-Lake

**THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR  
FISH FRY THIS YEAR!**

**NO FISH FRY DEC. 18, 25 OR JAN. 1ST**

**FIRST FRY OF 2026: JAN. 8TH**

**410 KING ST., NOTL 905-468-2353**

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

**TONY BALDINELLI MP**  
NIAGARA FALLS—NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE  
[TONYBALDINELLI@PARL.GC.CA](mailto:TONYBALDINELLI@PARL.GC.CA)  
[TONYBALDINELLI.CA](http://TONYBALDINELLI.CA) • 905-353-9590

**Advertising inquiries?**  
Email [advertising@niagaranow.com](mailto:advertising@niagaranow.com)



**Wishing you and your family a safe,  
joyful and happy holiday season.**

From Councillor Andrew Niven



# Sarah Kaufman reflects on 15 years at the NOTL Museum

Zahraa Hmood  
The Lake Report

When asked to characterize the story of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Sarah Kaufman says it is one of people who step up to make a change for the better.

She traces that line of community involvement throughout a variety of events that have happened in town, from volunteers

stepping up to fight in the War of 1812 to the immigrants who planted the seeds of NOTL's vast fruit-growing and winery operations.

"Even today, there are people in the community who want to improve society or future generations," she says. "It can be very inspiring history to learn from."

This December, Kaufman is closing a chapter in the story of her own involvement to make Niagara-on-the-Lake a better place to live.

She is stepping down as

the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum's CEO and curator, effective Dec. 31, after more than 15 years at the helm of the 130-year-old museum.

"It was a really difficult decision for me to make," she says of leaving. "I'm sad. Excited to start new things, but also sad, because I really love this museum and I really love the community."

In the new year, she'll be

taking on a position as the Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum's curator.

Kaufman grew up in

the city.

Sixteen

years ago, she joined the NOTL Museum to take on some contract work. A year later, she became the museum's managing director.

"When I came on, it was just Amy (Klassen) and I. We were doing everything. I was changing the lightbulbs and shovelling the snow."

Since joining the museum,



Sarah Kaufman, who spent 15 years as the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum's lead curator, says investing in the town's heritage is critical — part of that investment, she says, is supporting places like the museum, so it can spread knowledge of NOTL's history. FILE

Kaufman has led the charge on putting together several new historical exhibitions and projects.

Alongside work on the permanent exhibitions at the museum's main building on Castlereagh Street, the museum has put on a number of temporary exhibitions shedding light on unique aspects of NOTL's history,

plus historical landmarks around town, such as the Voices of Freedom Park in Old Town and the Landscape of Nations in Queenston.

A lot of this work is made possible through collaborations with others in Niagara, who lend their interest, knowledge and ideas to projects, she says.

Community involvement, Kaufman says, makes the museum's work stronger.

"We run the museum, but it's not our museum. We're just the stewards on behalf of the community."

Kaufman says she's aware that many people in town are deeply passionate about the historical parts of the community they live in. She

says she believes the built landscape of NOTL is important and that people have a right to defend it.

Investing in heritage is important, she says. What that also means, she adds, is investing in places like the museum, so it can spread knowledge of that history.

As a result, "any residents, or new residents, or tourists, coming into the community, will already easily understand what it is they're coming into," she says.

That investment is well underway. This year, the NOTL Museum received more than \$2 million from a variety of sources to fund its 8,000-square-foot expansion, adding more space for its exhibitions and archives, plus upgrading its facilities for accessibility needs.

"I'm confident in where the project's at," Kaufman says. "I'm very confident that the project can continue."

While she won't be around as lead curator to cut the ribbon when the newly expanded museum opens, she says she still plans to help out at the museum from time to time as a volunteer.

[zahraa@niagaranow.com](mailto:zahraa@niagaranow.com)



## Home for the Holidays

AS WE CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAY SEASON, FROM THE HEART OF OUR HOME TO YOURS, WE WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND OUR WARMEST WISHES TO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY. MAY THIS SPECIAL TIME OF YEAR BE FILLED WITH COMFORT, JOY, AND CHERISHED MOMENTS SHARED WITH THOSE YOU LOVE. WITH SINCERE GRATITUDE, THANK YOU FOR THE TRUST AND CONFIDENCE YOU HAVE PLACED IN ME THROUGHOUT THE YEAR. I AM TRULY THANKFUL FOR THE RELATIONSHIPS BUILT WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY AND FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE AS YOUR LOCAL REAL ESTATE ADVISOR, NEIGHBOUR, AND FRIEND. I LOOK FORWARD TO CONTINUING TO SUPPORT YOU IN THE YEAR AHEAD. WISHING YOU A VERY HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON AND EVERY GOOD WISH FOR A HEALTHY, HAPPY, AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR.

Michelle & Tim

MICHELLE REYNOLDS, BROKER  
DIRECT: 905.401.8874  
125 QUEEN ST, NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE



CALL OR TEXT MICHELLE 905-401-8874

# NOTL hires new infrastructure director

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has appointed Jordan Frost as its new director of public works and infrastructure, it announced Monday.

Frost will start the role Jan. 5.

The director position was publicly posted in November. In a Dec. 15 news release, the town said Frost will oversee its engineering, environmental services and roads divisions, focusing on safe, sustainable infrastructure that can support future growth.

Frost brings 15 years of experience in the public and private sectors and most recently served as acting director of infrastructure services and manager of engineering for the Town of Fort Erie.

He holds a bachelor of applied science in management engineering from the University of Waterloo and is a professional engineer.



Jordan Frost, Niagara-on-the-Lake's incoming director of public works and infrastructure, brings a local perspective to the role as a resident of the community. **SOURCED**

(P.Eng.) and professional traffic operations engineer.

Frost also lives in Niagara-on-the-Lake, which the town said gives him a local perspective on the town's infrastructure strengths and areas for improvement.

In the release, he said that he is looking forward to working with dedicated town staff to support residents and visitors.

"Opportunities like this do not come around often. Being able to help shape the community where we live, raise our families, and go about our daily lives is truly meaningful," he said.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said Frost's mix of municipal experience and local connection will support council's infrastructure priorities, adding that the

role is critical to addressing residents' concerns and ensuring infrastructure continues to serve the town well into the future.

Chief administrative officer Nick Ruller said Frost has experience leading complex infrastructure projects and is well-suited to lead the town's public works and infrastructure team.

[paigeseburn@niagaranow.com](mailto:paigeseburn@niagaranow.com)



**HOLIDAY GIFT IDEA**  
Vision That Wows  
Still searching for the perfect gift?  
Treat someone (or yourself) to a pair  
of designer sunglasses, blue light glasses,  
or designer frames. It's thoughtful,  
practical — and always in style.  
Happy Holidays!



**DR HOPKINS & ASSOCIATES  
OPTOMETRY**  
Sight for Life —

**NOTL: 905-468-8002 | 358 Mary St.  
St. Catharines: 905-682-9119 | 8 Secord Dr.  
www.theeyedoc.ca**

**Advertising inquiries?**  
Email [advertising@niagaranow.com](mailto:advertising@niagaranow.com)



## Traditional Indian food in the heart of NOTL

### WEEKLY SPECIALS:

#### Samosa Chaat Tuesdays:

Our best selling app for \$18 (reg. \$24)

#### Wine Wednesdays:

50% off bottle of house wine (with meal)

#### Butter Chicken Thursdays:

A house favourite for \$20 (Reg. \$29)

#### Cocktail Fridays:

2oz cocktails for \$15

*Cut this out and bring it in to redeem specials!*

Plus a great selection  
of Canadian/Italian  
dishes for the whole  
family to enjoy!



Menu: [auraonthelake.ca](http://auraonthelake.ca) | 905-468-7222 | 233 King St.

\*Specials may be subject to changes and cannot be combined with other offers.



### Olde Towne Building Company can do it all

- ✓ Bathroom Remodeling
- ✓ Basement Finishing
- ✓ Kitchen Makeovers
- ✓ Windows and doors
- ✓ Covered patios and decks
- ✓ Restoration
- ✓ Commercial renovations
- ✓ And much more!



We strive to provide quality, innovative, and superior workmanship to every project, and put our client's needs above all else.

**GET A QUOTE TODAY!**



**Brandon Noel  
905-325-2766**

**Olde Towne  
Building  
Company**

[www.oldetownebuildingcompany.com](http://www.oldetownebuildingcompany.com)

 MM LALANDE LAW  
PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION

**Collaborative Family Law,  
Wills & POAs, & Estate Law**

As 2025 comes to a close, I would like to extend a big thank you to the NOTL community for such a welcoming and fantastic first year! It has been a real pleasure getting to know so many of you, and I look forward to continuing to provide legal services to you all in the new year. MM Lalande Law will be **closed** for the holidays and will reopen on Monday, Jan. 5. Here's to 2026 and many more years to come! Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

FREE PARKING & WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE

(289) 868-9687 [mmlaw.ca](http://mmlaw.ca)  
[mml@mmlaw.ca](mailto:mml@mmlaw.ca)

Have an opinion  
you want heard?

Email us.



## NOTL's winter magazine is out now

Staff  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's newest seasonal guide is out, just in time for the holidays.

NOTL: A Guide for Distinguished Explorers: Winter 2025-26, produced by The Lake Report, launched this week and is now available throughout town. The annual winter magazine highlights the best of the season, offering visitors and locals a curated look at where to eat, shop and explore during the colder months.

This year's edition features stories on Spirit in Niagara's restaurant and distillery, the newly opened Ravine Vineyard Bakery Café, and the \$1.1-million restoration of Brock's Monument — one of the region's most significant historic projects. It also includes expanded listings and information for winter travellers, from outdoor activities to unique holiday experiences across NOTL.

The guide showcases some of The Lake Report's strongest visual journalism, featuring the best of the



The winter 2025-26 edition of NOTL: A Guide for Distinguished Explorers is out on the streets now. Copies are available around town at tourism hot spots. **THE LAKE REPORT**

paper's photography, including work by award-winning photographer Dave Van de Laar. Stories come from the newspaper's newsroom team as well as community contributors who helped bring the winter edition to life.

Publisher Richard Harley thanked the many local

businesses who supported the issue.

"Our tourism guides wouldn't exist without the commitment of Niagara-on-the-Lake's business community," he said. "Their support allows us to showcase what makes this town special, and we're grateful for their continued partner-

ship."

Harley also noted the ongoing collaboration with Tourism Niagara-on-the-Lake, which once again helped shape and promote the issue.

The guide is distributed free throughout NOTL and is also available online at [lakereport.ca](http://lakereport.ca).

**SHAW 20  
FESTIVAL 25**

# THE FINAL CURTAIN AT THE ROYAL GEORGE THEATRE

## Farewell Fundraiser & Celebration

Sunday December 21, 2025  
Royal George Theatre & Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre

Be part of a historic evening as we honour the artistry and legacy of the Royal George Theatre. Join us for the final 7pm performance of *A Christmas Carol* and a festive Fezziwig Dinner Party from 4-6pm with dinner, music, and dancing.

**CONTACT FOR PRICING AND TO RESERVE YOUR SPOT**  
Email [events@shawfest.com](mailto:events@shawfest.com) or call 1-800-657-1106 ext. 2367



Citrus fruit served both as ornament and food, reflecting what families could import during winter. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

# Christmas like it's 1812

Fort George offers glimpse at holiday life two centuries ago

Andrew Hawlitzky  
The Lake Report

A snow-swept Fort George opened its gates for its annual Garrison Christmas, offering visitors a rare glimpse into how Canadians in the early 19th century celebrated the holidays.

The free weekend open house ran Dec. 13 and 14 at Fort George National Historic Site, showcasing British-influenced Christmas customs adapted to Upper Canada through traditional music, food, crafts and guided tours by staff.

The event marked about 15 years of winter programs at a site that most visitors only see during the summer.

Visitors moved through fire-heated buildings decorated with evergreen boughs, citrus fruit and other period-accurate decorations while interpreters explained how soldiers and families marked the season more than 200 years ago.

"We try to keep it as historically accurate as possible," said Sam Challen, interpretation co-ordinator at Fort George. "Obviously, there was no Canadian Tire or Home Hardware to go and buy tinsel and Christmas lights back then, but many families did try to decorate the best they could."

Decorations leaned on what settlers of British origin would have known, such as decking halls with



Historical cook Madison Hobbins demonstrates period baking in the officer's kitchen, giving visitors a taste of holiday treats people ate 200 years ago. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

greenery. Holly and ivy, both common in Britain, were replaced with local evergreens, including cedar.

Fruit served as both ornament and food with lemons, oranges and a pineapple displayed as prized imports.

Visitors made pomanders by pressing cloves into clementines creating a citrus and spice scent meant to last through winter. Others tied cedar swags with red yarn to hang at home.

Peter Alexander, Fort George's historic music co-ordinator, played some traditional holiday songs and British Army standards, many dating to the 18th century, on woodwind alongside Parks Canada education and military co-ordinator Gavin Watt and longtime Fort George

historian Peter Mitchell, reflecting the role of regimental bands in the early 19th century.

In the officers' kitchen, historical cook and volunteer Madison Hobbins baked cookies on the hearth using translated period recipes.

"We usually use a modern translation of a historic recipe because the original ones did not include precise quantities like we expect today," said Hobbins.

Challen said Christmas differed from much of the year because supplies were highest after harvest. Soldiers often bought extra ingredients like dried fruit, fat and beer to prepare special English meals, including plum pudding.

"Christmas was a time

of plenty for many people because the harvest had just finished and food had been laid up for the winter," he said.

The goal he added was to show the human side of a military site often defined by the War of 1812.

"The people who were here were part of history, but they were also people just like us," said Challen. "Their lives were not only about fighting in the War of 1812."

Fort George plans further winter activities including a New Year's Day levy hosted with the Friends of Fort George and an "Improv 1812" event scheduled for Jan. 24, with details posted on the historical site's website, friendsoffortgeorge.ca.

[andrew@niagaranow.com](mailto:andrew@niagaranow.com)



## MENU

Brined and Roasted Ontario Turkey (both white and dark meat)  
Turkey Gravy | Traditional Stuffing | Whipped Mashed Potatoes  
Winter Vegetables | Cranberry Sauce | Potato & Leek Soup  
Housemade Bread | Sticky Toffee Pudding w/ Rosemary  
Caramel | Shortbread  
Served Cold | Reheat Instructions Provided  
+ Housemade Mince Meat Pies Available for Purchase  
\$36/Dozen

LAST DAY TO ORDER: DEC 19, 2024 5PM  
PICK UP: DEC 24, 2024 @ THE GATE HOUSE 11AM-4PM

**\$65** per guest  
+ hst (min 2 guest order)

[ORDER ONLINE NOW](#)



 **STONE ROAD Pharmacy**  
Caring beyond the prescription

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!**



**GIVE YOURSELF THE GIFT OF GOOD HEALTH THIS YEAR.**

Stone Road Pharmacy  
905-468-3000  
1630 Niagara Stone Rd.

## SWITZER'S AUCTION

### FIREARMS WANTED FOR OUR 2025 AUCTION PROGRAM

FIREARMS, AMMUNITION,  
ACCESSORIES, OR MILITARIA.  
COLLECTIONS, ESTATES OR SINGLE ITEMS.

For Auction or Possible Purchase:  
Contact us: 1-800-694-2609  
Email: [sales@switzersauction.com](mailto:sales@switzersauction.com)  
[www.switzersauction.com](http://www.switzersauction.com)  
for Auction Dates & Details

**WIN BIG!**  
REDISCOVER SOUNDS  
YOU LOVE

Complete a hearing test for a  
chance to **win premium hearing  
aids or a \$100 gift card!**



Book a **FREE** hearing test

**866-474-5701**

**amplifon**  
Hearing Care Experts

\*See clinic for full details. Cannot be combined with other offers. Offer open October 1 - December 31, 2025. Must complete a free hearing test to be eligible to enter. Three monthly winners per prize. Prizes not exchangeable or redeemable for cash.

# Tractor Parade lights up downtown Virgil



PHOTO GALLERY  
See more pictures  
at niagaranow.com

There was Christmas cheer to spare in Virgil on Thursday night as dozens of illuminated trucks and tractors made their way through the streets in the fifth annual Christmas Tractor Parade.

Started in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, the tractor parade has become a yearly tradition for Niagara-on-the-Lake's agricultural community.

Ninety-two trucks and tractors, elaborately decorated in Christmas lights and other decor, left from Centennial Arena at 6 p.m. and made their way down Four Mile Creek Road, up to Pleasant Manor, then made their way around the area, watched on by spectators lined up along the roads and concessions.

Coun. Erwin Wiens, who co-organizes the parade with his wife Dorothy Soo-Wiens, provided livestreamed commentary alongside Joe Pillitteri.

Left: This tractor appears to reference the popular "6-7" meme that took off this year.

## Your Niagara-on-the-Lake Real Estate Professionals

Merry Christmas



CYNTHIA LOFORTI  
REALTOR  
905.329.0353

From our family to yours!  
We're grateful for the opportunity to help  
you find the place you call home. May this  
season bring comfort, joy, and special  
moments shared with the ones you love.  
Cheers to a bright 2026!



AMBER LOFORTI  
REALTOR  
905.359.5780

1 Elvira Way, Thorold  
\$1,129,000



COMFORT AND CONVENIENCE  
JOY MIELE, REALTOR  
Joy@McGarrRealty.com 905.347.3728

89 October Drive, St. Catharines  
\$3,200,000



LAKEFRONT PERFECTION  
NICOLE MARSH-BURKE, BROKER  
Nicole@McGarrRealty.com 905.751.5171

### Holiday Season in Niagara - Events

Niagara is buzzing with excitement! From festive twinkling lights, holiday parades and more, there's no better time to get out and enjoy the festive atmosphere.

December 13<sup>th</sup>

Niagara-on-the-Lake Christmas Parade  
Old Town, Niagara-on-the-Lake

Now to January 5<sup>th</sup>

Winter Wonderland Gardens  
The Gardens at Pillar and Post, Niagara-on-the-Lake

January 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>

Niagara Icewine Festival  
Queen St., Niagara-on-the-Lake



8-1397 York Road, St. David's  
List Price \$1,050,000



PURCHASED  
JOY MIELE, REALTOR  
Joy@McGarrRealty.com 905.347.3728

# Massive Christmas parade draws big crowds to Queen Street

Continued from Front Page

the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124 on King Street and travelled along Castlereagh, Wellington, Byron, Simcoe and Queen streets before looping back to King Street.

"All the reliable came out: the kids and the marching bands. Regardless of the cold weather, they're always the greatest supporters. It's a wonderful parade for a small community, it really is," said Mace.

Road closures were in place from early morning through mid-afternoon to accommodate the route and parade safety.

Ahead of the parade, families gathered at 124 on Queen Hotel & Spa for its annual Santa breakfast, now in its third year.

Children met Santa, received goodie bags and warmed up with hot chocolate before heading to the parade route.

"Honestly, it's a lovely event," said Beth Humphreys, restaurant manager at 124 on Queen Hotel.

"I look forward to it every year. I'm here every year doing it."



Parade floats and vehicles line up along Mary Street, awaiting the start of the parade. It's an organized process, with Santa setting out last. DAVE VAN DE LAAR PHOTOS



**PHOTO GALLERY**  
See more pictures at niagaranow.com



Top: Henry, 6, Charlotte, 5, and Delilah, 5, wave to the passing floats. Bottom: The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124's float promotes its weekly fish fry.

Humphreys said the breakfast was created to celebrate the parade while introducing the newer hotel to the community, and the hotel plans to continue the tradition.

Royal Oak School staff sold hot chocolate, apple cider and baked goods to support school activities, including a student production of "Frozen" in February at the NOTL Community Centre.

Teacher Lorene Dennis said elements from the school's "Frozen"-themed parade float will be reused for the show.

"The float was put together by parent volunteers who put some hard work in, making wooden snowflakes and a big wooden castle."

Nearby, parade volunteers sold commemorative buttons to help cover travel costs for parade attractions like the marching band.

John Strucker, who has

been part of the fundraising effort for eight years now, said the button sales typically raise between \$6,000 and \$7,000 annually.

"When I got up this morning and I saw the sun on the snow, I figured it was perfect for a parade," he said.

Planning for next year's parade begins in July. Mace said the parade committee aims to add "a little something extra" every year.

[andrew@niagaranow.com](mailto:andrew@niagaranow.com)

## FESTIVAL THEATRE ON STAGE NOW!

# IRVING BERLIN'S WHITE CHRISTMAS



## FINAL WEEKS!

A heartwarming holiday musical for everyone dreaming of a white Christmas. Featuring dazzling dance numbers and classic hits like "Blue Skies", "Sisters" and of course, the title song.

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY IRVING BERLIN  
BOOK BY DAVID IVES AND PAUL BLAKE  
DIRECTED BY KATE HENNIG

FEATURING MARY ANTONINI, CAMILLE EANGA-SELENGE, JEFF IRVING AND KEVIN MCLACHLAN.

Production Sponsor **Mary E. Hill**

## ROYAL GEORGE THEATRE ON STAGE NOW!

# A CHRISTMAS CAROL



The magic of Christmas returns as does the miserly Ebenezer Scrooge! Join us for the final show in the Royal George Theatre before it closes.

BY CHARLES DICKENS  
ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY TIM CARROLL  
DIRECTED BY TIM CARROLL

FEATURING SANJAY TALWAR, GRAEME SOMERVILLE, TRAVIS SEETOO AND GABRIELLA SUNDAR SINGH

Buy both *A Christmas Carol* and *White Christmas* and save 20%

Production Sponsor

**SHAW  
GUILD**

**SHAWFEST.COM | 1-800-511-SHAW** **SHAW**  
Niagara-on-the-Lake



**RED ROOF RETREAT'S  
15TH ANNUAL  
GIFTS FROM THE HEART  
HOLIDAY CAMPAIGN**



**Serving children and adults  
with special needs since 2000**

**To donate please visit:  
[www.redrooferetreat.com/  
giftsfromtheheart](http://www.redrooferetreat.com/giftsfromtheheart)**

**St. Davids-Queenston United Church**

1453 York Rd., St. Davids  
[www.stdavids-queenstonuc.ca](http://www.stdavids-queenstonuc.ca)  
Minister: Rev. YongSeok Baek  
Rental inquiries: 905-262-5242

**Sunday Worship  
10:30 a.m.  
Also online,  
visit our website.**

## Mom seeks soccer sponsor for son

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

After nearly losing her son to a sudden medical crisis, Janice Dodd is now watching him chase a dream — and hoping the community can help make it possible.

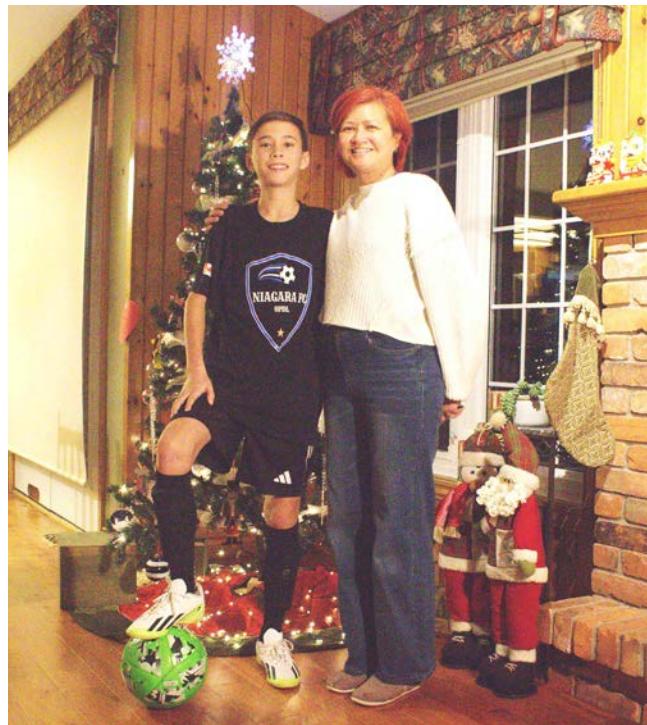
Dodd, of Virgil, is seeking sponsors for her 12-year-old son Christian, who has earned a coveted spot on the elite Niagara Football Club under-13 team, one of Ontario's highest levels of competitive youth soccer.

"There's a significant cost," Dodd said.

Christian, a defender, has been selected for the Ontario Player Development League, which begins in spring 2026 and features teams from across the province. The league runs from under-13 to under-17, with teams playing 20 games each summer.

"It's a very competitive program and he worked really hard the last couple years to get to it," Dodd said.

Christian's journey to that level nearly ended before it began.



Christian Dodd, 12, and his mom Janice both love what soccer brings them, despite the costs. His team, which has two NOTL players, is looking for sponsors. DAN SMEENK

In the summer of 2022, while in Grade 4, he was rushed to hospital with severe pain, vomiting and insomnia. After hours in the emergency room, he was sent home — only for doctors later to discover he was septic.

"I could hardly walk," Christian said.

He was transferred to Mc-

Master Children's Hospital, where surgeons performed two procedures.

"It was a near-death scenario," Dodd said. "He was fighting for his life and he was very resilient."

Christian spent 20 days in hospital and six months recovering at home. When he returned to soccer in 2023, something had changed.

"When I have that I was like 'Wow, that was like, I almost just died, I'd better really appreciate my life that I have here,'" he said. "I gave it my all."

His return to organized soccer in Niagara-on-the-Lake led to rapid progress, eventually earning him a place on an elite roster.

But the price of competitive sport is steep. Dodd said fees for Christian's level are close to \$4,000, with additional tournament and travel costs pushing totals to \$5,000 or more per child.

"For his level, it's close to \$4,000," she said.

Dodd has already secured two \$500 sponsors — The Fine Estates Team and TASC Tulip Farms — and hopes to find more support. She said sponsorships help ensure talent, not finances, determine opportunity.

"The system we have now is based on how much exposure the kids can get into," she said. "We hope this will offset the expenses."

Sponsorship inquiries can be directed to coach Shannon Danku at [coachshannondanku@outlook.com](mailto:coachshannondanku@outlook.com). [daniel@niagaranow.com](mailto:daniel@niagaranow.com)

## HAPPY HOLIDAYS

With warm wishes from your Blue Springs Team!

Wishing our customers, partners and community a very happy holiday season and a bright New Year. Thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to serving you in 2026!

[www.bluespringsirrigation.ca](http://www.bluespringsirrigation.ca)

 **BLUE SPRINGS**  
IRRIGATION & LIGHTING

# Jewish community celebrates and reflects during Hanukkah

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Sunday evening marked the first night of Hanukkah in Niagara-on-the-Lake and around the world. Members of NOTL's Jewish community are celebrating the holiday with family time and reflection.

The town marked the start of Hanukkah with a public celebration in Simcoe Park on Sunday evening beside a large lit menorah. Several local officials were in attendance, as well as members of the local and regional Jewish community.

"Lighting the menorah on the first night was very healing and symbolic," said Perla Zaltzman, who, along with her husband, Rabbi Zalman Zaltzman, operates a synagogue and Chabad Niagara in St. Catharines. The couple spearheaded bringing the menorah to the park.

This is the second year the menorah has been displayed in Simcoe Park, serving as a public symbol of a holiday that is also celebrated privately with family and friends. While Hanuk-



From left, Veronica Balaj, Ada Balaj, Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, Katherine Urquhart and Alana Hurov at the menorah lighting ceremony on Sunday evening. Hanukkah celebrations will continue until the last night of the holiday, on Dec. 22. SUBMITTED

kah traditions include items such as dreidels and specific songs, residents in NOTL observe the holiday in different ways.

Leslie Mann, a NOTL resident who identifies as a "conservative Jewish person," said Hanukkah, like Christmas, often centres on children. His children are grown up and "don't follow the holiday very much," though they still identify

as Jewish. Mann described himself as "laid-back" about the holiday but said he continues to observe some traditions.

"There are those Orthodox Jews who follow it to the letter," he said. "Then there are the average, less Orthodox, more conservatives like me who go along with lighting the candles, maybe a few Jewish foods that are typical to the holida-

day, you know, potato latkes is one of the major ones. I still try to keep up with a few things like that."

Mann said most Jewish people he knows in NOTL celebrate in similar ways. His family also blends traditions, as his wife is not Jewish, and they display both a Christmas tree and a menorah.

This year, Mann entered a Hanukkah-themed tractor in the town's tractor parade in Virgil. He credited Coun. Erwin Wiens and his wife, Dorothy Soo-Wiens, for welcoming its inclusion in what is typically a Christmas parade.

"That is my way of putting it out there to the entire population of NOTL," he said.

Alana Hurov, a reform Jewish resident of NOTL, said Hanukkah is about family, food and gratitude.

"Lighting the menorah is straightforward; most people will do that," she said. "Like any holiday, it's about spending time with your family, having nice dinners ... especially over the last few years, it's about being thankful."

Hurov runs a page called

Jewish in Niagara and said the Jewish community in the region is tight-knit. She attends Chabad Niagara and said she enjoys it, though she does not go to synagogue often.

"There's really only two synagogues in the region. There is a reform synagogue but there's not really have the building per se," she said, adding that reform, conservative and Orthodox Jewish people live throughout the Niagara region.

Zaltzman said Hanukkah celebrations tend to be fairly "uniform," with differences appearing more in cultural practices, such as foods associated with different regions of the world.

Chabad Niagara serves people from multiple cultural backgrounds. Zaltzman said its approach to Judaism is non-denominational and that distinctions between reform, conservative and Orthodox Judaism are not central to her community.

"It's a socially constructed design," she said. "It's not really reflected in the lived experience."

This year's holiday is also marked by grief for many following an attack during

a Hanukkah celebration in Sydney, Australia, this past weekend. Two gunmen killed 15 people at an event on Bondi Beach.

Zaltzman said her husband and son knew people who were killed in that attack and she knew the husband of a classmate who was killed at a Jewish school in France in 2012.

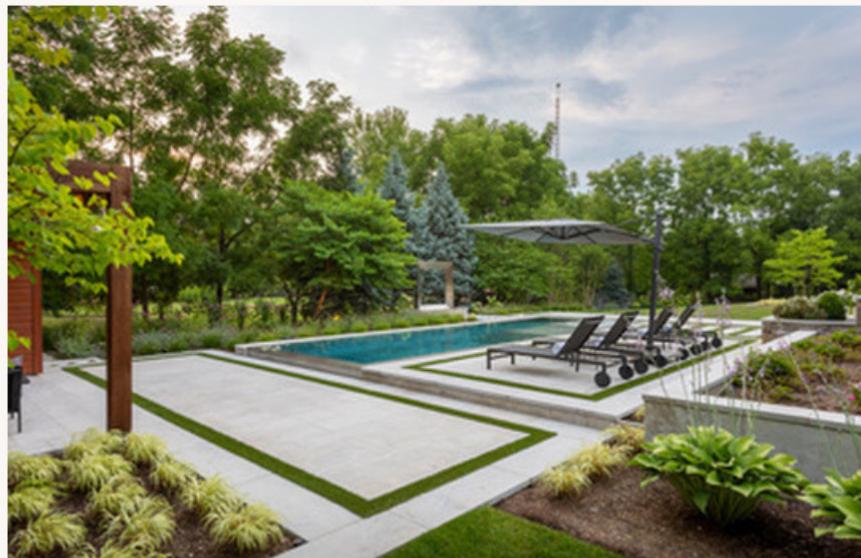
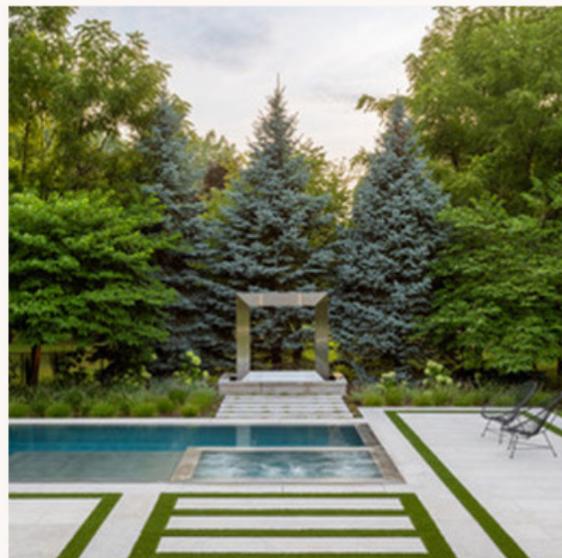
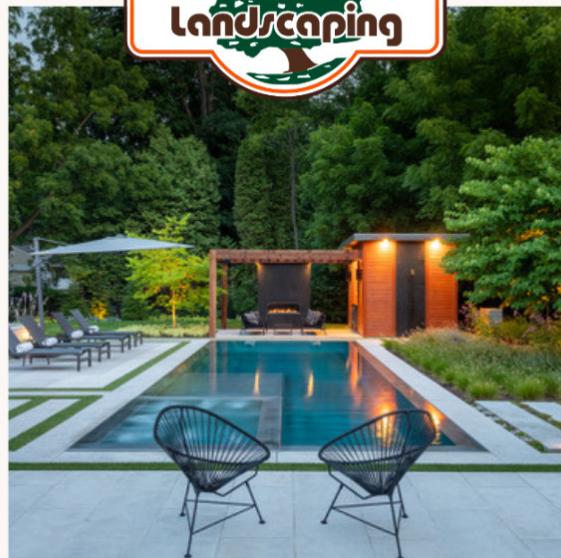
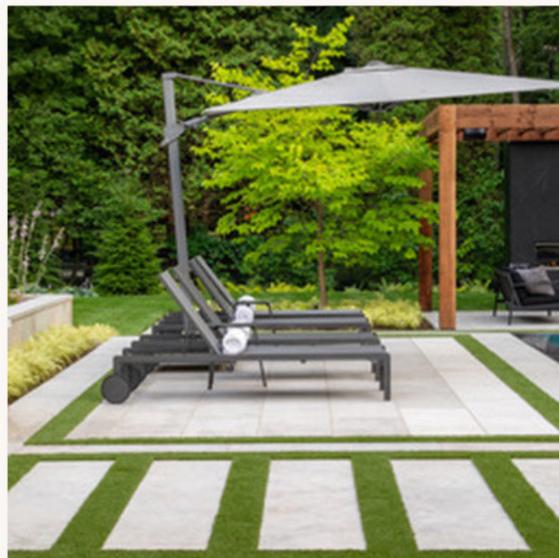
Zaltzman studies contemporary antisemitism as part of her PhD research at Brock University. Mann, Hurov and Zaltzman all said they are deeply aware of the presence of antisemitism and its consequences.

Despite this, they emphasized that Hanukkah remains a celebration of hope and light.

"Hanukkah is about cutting through the darkness and seeing the light," said Hurov. "It's about hope."

Hanukkah is an eight-day festival of lights that commemorates the miraculous burning of one day's worth of oil for eight days during the Maccabean Revolt in the second century before the common era. This year, the holiday runs from Sunday evening to Dec. 22.

*daniel@niagaranow.com*





**ST. MARK'S CHRISTMAS SERVICES**

**Christmas Eve Service**  
4:30p.m. - Christmas carols and festive organ music  
5:00p.m. - Festive Sung Eucharist

**Christmas Day Service**  
10:30a.m. - Festive Sung Eucharist

**Everyone is welcome!**  
St. Mark's Anglican Church  
41 Byron St., NOTL

## NOTL Museum celebrates 130th anniversary

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum opened its doors for free Friday to celebrate its 130th anniversary — to the day.

The museum traces its roots to Dec. 12, 1895, when Janet Carnochan founded the Niagara Historical Society.

The first item in Carnochan's collection is believed to be a Queen Victoria medal given to her in London and later found buried at Fort Mississauga.

Outgoing chief executive officer and curator Sarah Kaufman said the anniversary offered a chance to showcase the museum.

"We just kind of wanted to make the museum open to anyone who wanted to visit," Kaufman said.

To mark the occasion, the museum offered behind-the-scenes tours at 10 a.m.



Outgoing NOTL Museum CEO Sarah Kaufman gives a tour as the museum celebrates its 130th anniversary. DAN SMEENK

and 2 p.m. The Lake Report attended the morning tour.

Kaufman led visitors through archival rooms normally closed to the public. The spaces contain items ranging from cartons of paper records to a 1949

photograph of the Pillar and Post staff, a pig's head costume from one of the first Shaw Festival productions and an original War of 1812 British redcoat.

"Because that area's not often seen by the community," she said. "If they want to come in and check it out ... I'm happy to show off the behind-the-scenes. A lot of people are curious of what's behind the scenes at a museum."

Kaufman said many of the museum's oldest artifacts date to the 1790s. The collection also includes Indigenous arrowheads and Roman Empire-era coins, items she said would have been especially intriguing to early visitors who could not travel to places such as Great Britain.

The museum has held anniversary events throughout the year, including a lecture series. Kaufman cited a talk by local historian Ron Dale, who displayed museum

artifacts during his presentation.

Kaufman said the museum welcomes about 14,000 visitors annually and has 850 members. She credited community support for the museum's longevity.

"I think it's quite inspiring for a little museum like this to have 130 years under its belt," she said. "It's really because of the community around that has helped it to survive this long."

Friday's celebration also included children's crafts, free apple cider and cookies, and a 10 per cent discount in the gift shop. The museum extended its hours to 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., instead of its usual 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Niagara region residents will also receive free admission in February.

The museum was originally housed in the old Courthouse before moving to Memorial Hall, built in 1906.

[daniel@niagaranow.com](mailto:daniel@niagaranow.com)



**SANDTRAP**  
PUB & GRILL

**Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!**  
From Paul, Matt and the Sandtrap Family.

**Gift certificates always make a great present!**

True partnership,  
made from  
the Ring of Fire

There's an area in Northern Ontario rich with critical minerals. By partnering with Indigenous leaders to develop the land, we will create lasting benefits for all Ontarians.

Learn more at [ontario.ca/RingOfFire](http://ontario.ca/RingOfFire)  
Paid for by the Government of Ontario





Mary Couturier  
Sales Representative



Paula Aitken  
Sales Representative



Brian Marshall  
Sales Representative



Elizabeth Pullman  
Sales Representative



Gavin Parravicino  
Sales Representative



Janet Tan  
Administrator



Jason Zarafonitis  
Sales Representative



John Campisano  
Broker



Mahendra Verma  
Sales Representative



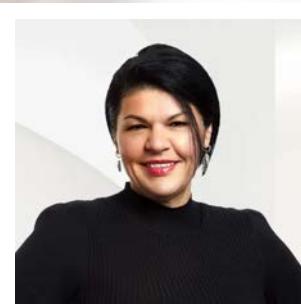
Mandy Bath  
Sales Representative



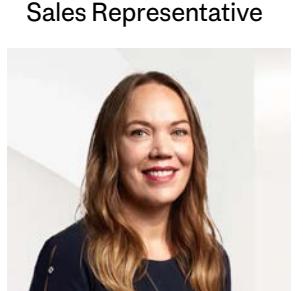
Natasha Vukenovic  
Sales Representative



Peter Fischer  
Broker of Record  
License Partner



Carmela D'Amico  
Broker  
License Partner



Nina Wilson  
Sales Representative



Star Latty  
Administrator



Sherwin Mamaradlo  
Sales Representative

Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!  
- Your local Engel & Völkers Niagara Team

**ENGEL & VÖLKERS<sup>®</sup>**



## NOTL stocking deliveries coming to long-term care homes Friday

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

What began as a way to bring company and joy to isolated seniors during the COVID-19 pandemic has grown into an annual tradition — one that also brings joy to its organizer, Joan King.

On Friday, volunteers from across Niagara-on-the-Lake will gather to make and deliver dozens of Christmas stockings to residents in long-term care homes. King said Niagara Long Term Care Residence will receive 102 stockings, Pleasant Manor 65, Meals on Wheels 20 and Meadows of Dorchester in Niagara Falls 120.

A wide range of community members contribute to the effort. Students at Crossroads Public School are making 60 stockings, while Dorothy Soo-Wiens and the Niagara-on-the-Lake Lions Club are producing 30.

“There’s a group of ladies on Nassau Street that made 14,” King said. “It really touches your heart.”

The initiative extends beyond stockings. King said Amika Verwegen and her



Amika Verwegen and her kids Nova, Yuna, Fern and Kazuhiro in 2022 helping Joan King’s efforts to lift the spirits of people in long-term care homes in NOTL. SUPPLIED

children create handmade cards each year, complete with Christmas riddles, for the residents.

Martin Mazza, whose mother lives at Pleasant Manor, will also take part by dressing as Santa Claus and handing out stockings. He’s started doing this three years ago and was originally convinced to do it by King.

He said he finds the experience extremely rewarding. “It’s the one thing I look forward to most at Christmas,” said Mazza.

He also referred to King as a person he respects and as very “community-minded.” King said she started the project during CO-

VID, when long-term care residents were lonely and frightened, in hopes of lifting their spirits.

In a short time, it has become a cherished Niagara-on-the-Lake tradition that highlights the generosity of the community.

“It’s blossomed,” she said. “The community is so generous and so giving.”

King will be at the NOTL Community Centre from 10 a.m. to noon on Dec. 19 to collect completed stockings for long-term care residents. She encouraged people to stop by.

“You can see the collection of stockings,” she said. “You’ll be blown away.”

[daniel@niagaranow.com](mailto:daniel@niagaranow.com)

## Happy Holidays and Merry Christmas!

Have a safe holiday season!



### Wayne Gates

MPP Niagara Falls Riding serving Niagara Falls, Fort Erie & Niagara-on-the-Lake

905-357-0681

wgates-co@ndp.on.ca

[WayneGates.com](http://WayneGates.com)



## Reducing speeding in real time to keep communities safe



Learn more at [ontario.ca/ReducingSpeeding](http://ontario.ca/ReducingSpeeding)

Paid for by the Government of Ontario



Enhanced signage to improve visibility and safety



Speed bumps slow traffic down



Increased police enforcement means fewer speeding cars

Ontario



# NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

**What:** Notice of **Public Meeting** for **Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District Study**  
(under Section 41.1 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.18)

**When:** **Tuesday, January 13, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.**

**Where:** In-person at the Town Hall, Council Chambers, 1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil, or electronically via the directions below

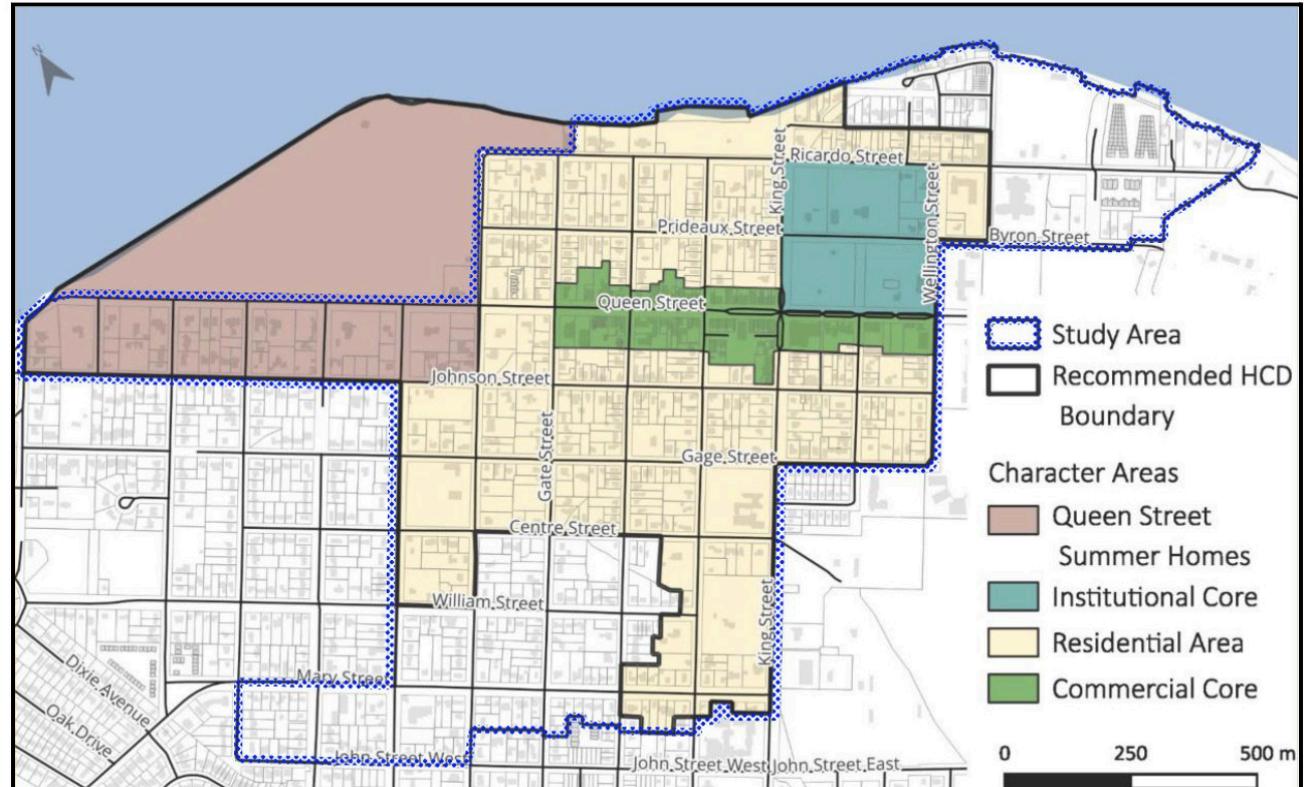
**Regarding:** Heritage Conservation District Draft Plan, Niagara-on-the-Lake

## What is this?

A Heritage Conservation District Plan in Niagara-on-the-Lake provides a framework to define, understand, and manage areas that embody the Town's layered history, from its early Loyalist settlement pattern to its evolution as a regional hub for commerce, agriculture, and tourism. Heritage Conservation districts are valued not only for their historic architecture and streetscapes, but also for their living traditions and community life that together sustain a strong sense of place.

District-specific policies and guidelines support the careful evolution of these areas, ensuring that conservation and new development are guided by the heritage attributes and cultural heritage values that define Niagara-on-the-Lake's distinct character. The Heritage Conservation District Plan serves as both a stewardship tool and a community vision that protects the Town's past while supporting its continued vitality for future generations.

The Heritage Conservation District Plan has been developed and includes; a Statement of Cultural Heritage Value, a Statement of Objectives, properties identified in the Study as contributing and non-contributing, and Statements of Contribution for each contributing property.



## Dialogue is encouraged:

You are invited to attend the Public Meeting to gather information and provide input regarding this matter.

**Town Hall is open for the public to register in advance to attend Committee of the Whole and Council Meetings, including Public Meetings, in-person. Alternatively, the public will continue to have the option to register in advance to participate electronically.**

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

- **Public Meeting** – Clerks Department ([clerks@notl.com](mailto:clerks@notl.com) or 905-468-3266)

(register as soon as possible but prior to 12 noon on Tuesday, January 13, 2025)

If you wish to attend the Public Meeting in-person, registration with the Clerk is appreciated.

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

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

## For more information:

A copy of the report may be obtained on the Town's website [Queen-Picton \(Old Town\) Heritage Conservation District Study | Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake](https://www.notl.com/Queen-Picton-(Old-Town)-Heritage-Conservation-District-Study), or at the Department of Planning, Building and Development Services within Town Hall.

Please contact Sumra Zia, Senior Heritage Planner, at 905-468-6441 or via email at [heritage@notl.com](mailto:heritage@notl.com) if additional information is required.

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

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

- Is not entitled to appeal the decision of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake to the Ontario Land Tribunal under sections (41) (41.1) of the Ontario Heritage Act; and
- May not be added as a party to the hearing of an appeal before the Ontario Land Tribunal unless, in the opinion of the Tribunal, there are reasonable grounds to do so.

Dated at the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, December 18, 2025

Grant Bivol, Town Clerk



**Publisher:** Richard Harley  
**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, Steve McGuinness, NOTL Museum, Ross Robinson, Julia Sacco, Paige Seburn, Dan Smeenk, Kyra Simone, Tim Taylor, Jill Troyer, Garth Turner, Dave Van de Laar, Joanne Young and many more members of the community.



The Local Journalism Initiative is funded by the Government of Canada.



Your Lake Report is the proud winner of 144 national and provincial awards for journalism and advertising excellence.



**#57: With Christmas coming, if you have toys that your children do not play with anymore, consider giving them to charities or goodwill stores so less fortunate children can have a toy under the tree this year.**

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



### Contributed by Patty Garriock

"Our task must be to free ourselves by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty." - Albert Einstein

### HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

#### Email:

Letters: editor@niagaranow.com  
 Story Ideas: editor@niagaranow.com  
 Advertising: advertising@niagaranow.com

#### Phone

Newsroom: 905-359-2270  
 Advertising Department: 905-932-5646  
 Mailing Address  
 PO Box 724, Niagara-on-the-Lake, L0S1J0

### Have a lead on a story?

Call 905.359.2270 or send an email to editor@niagaranow.com



## Have a Merry '67' Christmas!

There was a trend this Christmas. Over the first weekend in December — you know, the 6th and 7th — and right through the holiday parades, we counted no fewer than 67 references to some new meme (that's pronounced me-me, right? We're still not totally sure). Whatever it is, we hope everyone has a happy holiday season — and that all the kids out there get six or seven presents. Or maybe 67. Who's counting?

### Opinion

## Stop yapping. NOTL is pawfect



### THE CHOW REPORT

*Note from Garth:*  
*OK, so he's been bugging me for the past year to write for the Lake Report. Even caught him sniffing around ChatGPT. Now I'm told he has something urgent for this time of year. I give in. Here's my dog, Cody the Chow. Do not embarrass me ...*

Cody the Chow  
 Guest Columnist

Finally. The only embarrassing part, pal, is that it took this long.

It's also embarrassing how you've been yapping, barking and bitching (actually, I like bitches) about Royal George, the Shaw guys, Parliament Oak, Marotta, Airbnb and local politics. Get a grip. Life in NOTL is perfect. Just follow me around town.

Trees anchor this place. Love 'em. Soaring, huge, majestic, perfect for a whizz. Best of all, the trees bring squirrels. Unleashed, I could catch them all. (We have to discuss this bond-age thing.)

This town also has horses — as workers, not decorations. They seem proud and content, while smelling awesome. Big John with the hairy hooves rocks. We sniffed.

The horses help bring the



My pals Helen (left) and Heather at the Stagecoach. I order the same thing every morning — one Milk-Bone and water (straight). SUPPLIED BY HUMAN

tourists, of course. In this past year of human turmoil, doubts, fears and quiet conflict, the people from Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, Washington, Florida and across America were kind.

They seemed genuinely honoured to be here, in a place of less drama and more hope. I can't even count the number of selfies that ensued on Queen Street.

Lying in the doorway of Nina's is an ideal place to meet people, as I make them climb over me to get to the gelato. It's hard to believe how much of that stuff gets scarfed down, or how challenged the young women are who serve it here, or in Carlotta's or Pistacchio's.

But despite the crush of people and the demands, they all let me hang out. They give me time and affection. They're kind, patient and cheerful — even

if we do make them live in Thorold or St. Catharines, for lack of decent, affordable rental housing. (Now I sound like him.)

Everywhere my stumpy legs and XXL paws take me in this town, it's the same. From the staff smoking area in the alley beside the Irish

Harp to the liver treats in

the lobby of Bosley Real

Estate next door to Aura

restaurant, where Nittin and

Anjna unfailingly appear

with a bowl of fresh water

— it's a sense of belonging.

NOTL may attract three million visitors a year, but at its heart are caring, decent people always finding time for a pet, a smile and a stroke of my incredibly handsome fur.

Karen at the Viking shop invites me in and kneels beside me. Customers can wait. Across the street at Upper Canada Native Art, Tom is just as welcoming — although he always tells

people, "The dog is for sale today. Great bargain." In your dreams. Priceless.

The water bowl is always clean and full at Balzac's and the staff showed us where to refill it when they're busy. The door at Ara shoes always opens for me. And at Beau Chapeau they call me their greeter — so I lie on the carpet obstructing all the shoppers, harvesting affection under the "No Drinks, Food or Dogs Allowed" sign.

Then, if you ever need to be reminded why NOTL is perfect, meet me at the Stagecoach.

Every morning, in the dark, my friends await me inside Helen's landmark restaurant. David is always there, and Carol who knows exactly how to break apart the Milk-Bone (red ones only, please) for my delicate, giant chops. Every morning the waitresses step around me as I sup on the silver bowl of ice and water that follows the treat.

But it's not just moi. The dogs of the 'hood have their turn, too — like Dusty, Parker, Bobby, Michou and Daisy, who hoovers every cookie within range. It's this generosity and warmth that defines the business, as it does the street, the neighbourhood and beyond.

I may only be 23 inches tall and four years old, but trust me. We live in paradise.

*Garth Turner, whose column normally appears in this space, is a NOTL resident, journalist, author, wealth manager and former federal MP and minister.*

*garth@garth.ca*

**EVEN A WATER DOG KNOWS  
 WHEN TO STAY DRY  
 - AND COMFY!**

*Interiors by*  
**Better Shade**  
 FAMILY-OWNED SINCE 1955

ONTARIO'S LARGEST RECLINING CHAIR GALLERY  
 469 GLENDALE AVE, ST. CATHARINES



# Council's million-dollar mistake

## Not technicalities. \$1M settlement reflected council errors



Maria Mavridis  
Special to The Lake Report

Commentary surrounding the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake's \$1-million settlement with Hummel Properties Inc. has included claims that the developer "won on a technicality."

As a sitting councillor, I believe it is important to correct the record and explain — clearly and factually — how we arrived at this outcome.

As a refresher, in September, the town resolved a legal dispute with Hummel Properties, which began in 2021 with the company suing the town for misusing an interim control bylaw to halt development on its Niagara Stone Road property in 2018.

This is not about finger-pointing at previous councils, nor is it about assigning blame. It is also not about defending developers.

It is about understanding the facts, the court's findings and what councils must learn moving forward to ensure decisions are made lawfully, transparently and in the best interest of residents and taxpayers.

The Ontario Court of Appeal considered Hummel Properties Inc.'s appeal challenging two interim control bylaws enacted by the town under section 38 of the Planning Act.

These bylaws temporarily halted development, including Hummel's proposed six-unit townhouse condominium project at 2203 Niagara Stone Rd.

Concerns about uncontrolled development and the protection of Old Town's heritage character were a central issue in the 2018 municipal election.

Shortly after the new council took office, they directed staff to prepare

an interim control bylaw, which council enacted on Dec. 5, 2018.

The bylaw was later extended in 2019. Both were repealed in June 2020 following amendments to the official plan.

Hummel applied to quash the bylaws under section 273 of the Municipal Act, alleging illegality and bad faith, and sought damages for misfeasance in public office and negligent misrepresentation.

**“This was not a technicality. It was a substantive and unanimous ruling identifying multiple legal failures.”**

MARIA MAVRIDIS  
NOTL TOWN COUNCILLOR

The Superior Court initially dismissed the application, finding the matter moot due to the repeal of the bylaws and concluding they were valid and not passed in bad faith.

The Ontario Court of Appeal unanimously disagreed.

First, the court held that the matter was not moot and that Hummel continues to pursue civil damages, and the legality of the bylaws is directly relevant to that claim.

The lower court erred in dismissing the case on that basis.

The Court of Appeal found the interim control bylaw was illegal because it targeted land division rather than land use.

Section 38 of the Planning Act permits interim control bylaws to temporarily freeze land uses, buildings, or structures — not subdivision or land division. Subdivision control is governed by a different part of the Act.

The town provided no legal authority supporting the use of an interim control bylaw to prohibit subdivision or condominium approvals. As a result, the bylaw was found to be

enacted for an improper statutory purpose and was *ultra vires* — beyond the town's legal authority.

The court found a second, independent illegality.

At the time the challenged bylaw was enacted, the Hummel lands were already subject to another interim control bylaw related to cannabis uses.

Section 38(7) of the Planning Act strictly prohibits more than one interim control bylaw from applying to the same lands within the prescribed timeframe.

The court emphasized that interim control bylaws significantly restrict property rights and therefore require strict compliance with statutory limits. The town failed to meet that standard.

The court raised serious procedural concerns regarding the Dec. 5, 2018 special council meeting.

The meeting was called with one day's notice, despite the town's own procedural bylaw requiring earlier notice unless an emergency exists.

The court found that the lower court's acceptance of an "emergency" was inadequately analyzed and did not sufficiently address transparency or open-meeting principles established by the Supreme Court of Canada.

Finally, the court set aside the finding that the town had not acted in bad faith. Because the earlier findings relied on incorrect conclusions about mootness, legality and process, the issue of bad faith remains unresolved and must now be determined at trial.

As a result, the Court of Appeal allowed the appeal, quashed the interim control bylaws as illegal, and ordered a full civil trial on Hummel's claims, including negligent misrepresentation, misfeasance in public office, the legality of the enactment process, and whether the town acted in bad faith.

Costs of the appeal were awarded to Hummel.

This was not a technicality. It was a substantive and

unanimous ruling identifying multiple legal failures.

I have also heard from residents asking why this term of council has held a significant number of closed session meetings. The answer is straightforward and grounded in law.

When council is dealing with active or potential litigation, the Municipal Act requires those discussions to occur in closed session.

This protects the town's legal position and ensures that confidential details are not disclosed to parties who are suing the municipality.

Once a legal matter is resolved, council has committed to sharing the outcome, including financial implications, with the public.

Transparency does not disappear because a matter is discussed in closed session — it is deferred until it is legally appropriate to disclose.

Importantly, how council arrived at the final settlement in this case is publicly available. The procedural steps, reports and decisions leading to that outcome can be found online for anyone who wishes to review them.

There is an important lesson here for all councils — past, present and future.

When considering significant planning tools such as interim control bylaws, councils must always obtain clear legal opinions in advance and, critically, listen to that advice.

It is worth noting that during the previous term, some councillors did raise questions with staff and council about the legality of the actions being contemplated.

Understanding how we arrived at this outcome is essential to ensuring it is not repeated.

Transparency, lawful decision-making and respect for the limits of municipal authority protect not only the town, but also the residents who ultimately bear the financial consequences.

*Maria Mavridis is a councillor for the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.*



*This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style.  
Category: CHRISTMAS SONGS*

**"It's Christmas time in the city,  
ring-a-ling (ring-a-ling), hear them  
ring, (ting-a-ling) — these.**

**Last issue category: THE MIDWEST**

**Clue: From 1900 to 1920 this contest using a rope was an event in the Olympics, with a British team taking the final gold.**

**Answer: What is tug of war?**

**Answered first by: Margie Enns**

**Also answered correctly (in order) by:  
Susan Hamilton, Kimberly Amaral, Sue Rautenberg,  
Bob Wheatley, Lynda Collet, Jesse Agnew,  
Claudia Grimwood, Randie Topps, Jeff Lake,  
Jane Andersen, Esther VanGorder, Howard Jones,  
Wade Durling, Jim Dandy, Nancy Rocca,  
Nick D'Amore, P Wilson, Bob Stevens, Marla Percy,  
Katie Reimer, Catherine Clarke, Jane Morris,  
Sheila Meloche,**

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

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

**Love games? Join us for fun events every  
week at the Irish Harp Pub.  
Details at [www.theirishharppub.com](http://www.theirishharppub.com)**



*Proudly serving Niagara for over 130 years*



**ERICA A. BLYTHE  
(VAN DE LAAR)  
LAWYER**

**Wishing you and  
your loved ones  
Happy Holidays and  
a Happy New Year  
filled with love,  
success, happiness  
and health!**

**Wills & Estates, Real Estate  
and Corporate & Commercial**

**email: [eblythe@msflawyers.com](mailto:eblythe@msflawyers.com)  
phone: 905-354-1585**



**the  
Season of Giving**

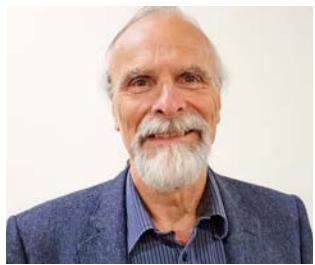
*Last minute holiday gifts for every budget and occasion*

[konzelmann.ca](http://konzelmann.ca) • 905 935 2866 • 1096 Lakeshore Road





# Some reflections on the year behind us



**ARCHITEXT**

Brian Marshall  
Columnist

As my wife and family will attest, I am a workaholic and have been all of my adult life.

The term "work-life balance" was never in my lexicon. Working 80 to 100 hours per week was the norm, not the exception.

Even our relatively infrequent vacations would typically contain some elements of my work.

It's not that I didn't try... On our 25th wedding anniversary, I took my wife on a Mediterranean cruise while promising to "just unplug."

Five days in, I went to her and said, "Not only have I named every deck board on this ship, but I've had a conversation with every single one. Let's disembark in Civitavecchia, go into Rome, visit the Colosseum and tour the Vatican museum.

Then we can take the train up to Florence, hit the Uffizi Gallery, Ponte Vecchio and the Duomo before rejoining the cruise ship in Livorno."

She replied, "Well, you lasted four days longer than I thought you would... Sure, let's go."

Bluntly, to create was my passion so it was never really "work."

That said, for a few days every year, my pen was laid down, projects put aside and surrounded by the love of family, we would celebrate the Yuletide.

Perhaps it was the way I was raised — Christmas Day was a magical event in my parents' house. It was a time of peace, thankfulness and sharing.

By two in the afternoon, the house was full of family — both immediate and extended — representing three, and later four, generations.

Within the hour, my mother would take her place at the piano and every person present would gather around and sing the immortal carols of the season.

It didn't matter if one had the voice of an angel or was tone-deaf; it was about joining our voices and spirits together in celebration of the shared experience of being part of a greater whole.



Work started on digging into the Parliament Oak site this year, sans site permit.

It was understood that this sense of belonging was not limited to just those gathered together around that piano but encompassed all of God's creation.

In my family, Yule was then and remains so now, a time to renew our commitment to, "Walk gently upon the earth and do unto others as we would have them do unto us."

Would that more decisions that affect the history, heritage, character and future of our precious town be made in accordance with these two simple precepts.

In 2025, we have borne witness to a series of assaults on the tapestry of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Consider the following ex-

amples drawn from a much longer list:

In January, council voted to allow severance of the heritage-designated Crysler-Burroughs property at 187 Queen St., disregarding more than 200 years of history, the recommendation of the municipal heritage committee and the vote of the committee of adjustment. And, the proper preservation of the 1822 dwelling remains in question ("We won't be able to save anything," says resident after town settles with Hummel," Jan. 23).

In March, underwritten by council vote, up to 800 mature trees were permitted to be cut down to facilitate the construction of ticky-tacky townhouses in a Virgil development ("Virgil housing development removes at least 700 trees," March 6).

Despite NOTL having the lowest level of tree coverage in Niagara, apparently, saving trees only matters when they don't occupy land that a developer wants to build on.

April saw the complete destruction of Glencairn — the glorious Greek Revival mansion built for John Hamilton in 1832 — in what the authorities have since deemed a "targeted act of criminal arson" ("Glencairn

fire arson, police say," June 19) — and, a few months later, saw the severance of the historic Glencairn property into two parts (one of which was transferred to the owner of neighbouring properties), further degrading its heritage value ("Merger of Glencairn and neighbouring property gets green light," Sept. 4).

In what I deem to be an appalling act of disrespect towards NOTL's designated heritage district, the neighbouring property owners and Old Town's essential historic small-town character, June saw the Shaw Festival trot out plans to replace the old Royal George theatre with a modernist colossus of a building which would completely alter the face of both Queen and Victoria streets ("Residents concerned about size of Royal George rebuild," June 26).

Not only did this proposal call for the demolition of the Royal George, but it included several other historic buildings as well ("Shaw to tear down houses on Victoria Street," Sept. 25).

Demolition permits have been granted and, in November, the council voted in favour of an official plan amendment and rezoning the merged properties to al-

low the proposal to proceed ("Royal George rebuild back on stage," Nov. 20).

Without site plan approval, adequate engineering studies or building permits, a huge crater has been dug on the Parliament Oak property in preparation for the construction of a new hotel in the middle of a residential district — a development council voted in favour of it despite vociferous opposition from the community.

Recently, I was asked, "Do we really need another hotel?"

On Monday of this week, the Ford government announced its "Destination Niagara Strategy," promising new tourist attractions, the development of new casino and gaming experiences, etc.

Forget Clifton Hill... Welcome to Las Vegas, Ontario.

So, I guess the answer to that question could be: the developers knew more about the future than we poor common folks.

Let's hope 2026 is better... It's all I want for Christmas.

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



Darcy Price CPA  
Professional  
Corporation

1627 Niagara Stone Rd., Unit B2, Virgil  
**905-468-5300**

Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

\*Accounting \*Canadian-U.S. Taxation \*Business Services  
Formerly Lida Kowal Professional Corporation

# Warren

RENOVATIONS

905.468.2127

PLUMBING, HEATING &  
AIR CONDITIONING

## J&S Performance

SALES & SERVICE

**HUSTLER**

905-468-9735



901 East/West Line, NOTL



## CLEANING MATE

Always there  
for you

Residential Housecleaning Services

✓ General Liability

✓ Free Estimates

**CALL 289-213-0673**

or book online at [mycleaningmate.com](http://mycleaningmate.com)



**Sunni's Facial Bar**  
Beauty & Wellness



Book a complimentary skin consultation  
and receive a 10% discount  
on your first appointment  
  
[www.sunnisfacialbar.ca](http://www.sunnisfacialbar.ca) 289-257-6854  
Located in Garrison Village



**amplifon** Hearing Care Experts

**WIN BIG!** **REDISCOVER SOUNDS YOU LOVE**

Complete a hearing test for a chance to win premium hearing aids or a \$100 gift card!

Book a FREE hearing test **866-474-5701**

\*See clinic for full details. Cannot be combined with other offers. Offer open October 1 - December 31, 2025. Must complete a free hearing test to be eligible to enter. Three monthly winners per prize. Prizes not exchangeable or redeemable for cash.

**D-Handyman Services**

Painting, wall and ceiling repair  
and much more!

289-929-hand (4263)  
d.handyman.denis@gmail.com  
PO Box 1088  
Virgil, Ontario



Denis Curtis  
Proprietor  
<http://dencurtis.wix.com/d-handyman>



**GRACE UNITED CHURCH**

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE, ONTARIO  
222 VICTORIA ST. 905-468-4044

**Christmas Eve at 4 p.m.**  
[www.graceunitedchurch.com](http://www.graceunitedchurch.com)  
Our 202nd anniversary | 1823-2025

# White Christmas in a very dark and confusing world



## ROSS'S RAMBLINGS

Ross Robinson  
Columnist

How to start my last Ramblings of the year? I just don't know, and I just don't want to be a wet blanket, after reading a very heavy and thought-provoking book for a second time.

"Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man," by Emmanuel Acho, has helped me through the complex and confusing relationships between peoples around the world. And right here in Canada and the States.

Perhaps for shock value, and to get the attention of readers, the author talks about the African diaspora.

I had grabbed my trusty dictionary/thesaurus, which linked the words diaspora and dispersal.

Please permit me to quote: "All black people in America are part of the African diaspora. There's also a white diaspora, though Europeans don't use the term as much. One important thing to remember is that Africans were mostly forced into their dispersion, while in America, Europeans mostly came of their own volition (and also, of course, sans chains)."

This was definitely a heaping helping of new thought for me. And I have always tried hard to understand black America.

Between my four years at university in upstate New York, much travel in many states and to many parts of the world, and being an extrovert, some say I am, in many ways, "pretty cool."

Attending Caribana in Toronto over 20 times, enjoying 10 days at Carnaval in Trinidad, lots of fun Sunday evening



Ross Robinson says "White Christmas" at the Shaw was a first-class experience, matching that of legend Bing Crosby. WIKIMEDIA

"clubbing" at Sa-Fire in Scarborough, and lots of reading, I thought I had a pretty good handle on the multiracial situation.

In reality, how little I understand. My second reading of this book has helped, but still I think, "What can we possibly do?"

Despite great efforts and advancements, people of colour still have trouble finding a Band-Aid that matches the colour of their skin. Think about it. We have so far to go, from educational systems

to systemic racism. Think about it. Seriously.

Dismantling systemic racism will be nothing short of dismantling white supremacy. All of us will have to work together.

Now, I am going way out of this lane as I ramble about white Christmas. Not culturally white, but white snow in Vermont.

Last week I enjoyed Irving Berlin's "White Christmas" at the Shaw Festival. My very basic cultural background happily says, "First class, world class" in all aspects. Physically, artistically and musically, the entire Shaw experience is usually so far beyond me. And right here in little NOTL.

The Shaw people, from the box office to the main stage and the show. Directors, sets and costumes, lighting, sound, everybody and everything.

Yes, I am rambling. I should really be careful and not get too deep this late in the year. But, where are we going as a society? As a people?

Media and technology today allow us to be informed, and almost everything is in real time.

Not that long ago, less than a century, news travelled at a snail's pace, if it travelled at all.

It is all so darned confusing and impossible to process now.

While I was still riding high and positive from White Christmas at the Shaw, I got whacked by the horribleness of recent happenings at Bondi Beach in magnificent Australia as Hanukkah commenced, and at Brown University in Rhode Island during exams.

Finishing up Ross's Ramblings for 2025, I will

share that many times people have asked me why I have spent so much time and money travelling during my life. My stock and well-received response was, "Because it makes the news so much more interesting and relevant."

World travel really has broadened my perspectives. I have spent lots of time at

both Bondi and Brown.

The most meaningful trip of my life was ten years ago, when I spent 12 days in Israel. Despite Sunday school, a Christian summer camp, and much reading, I wasn't really aware that Bethlehem was just across the street from Jerusalem.

About 20 minutes on a crowded public bus. Me, and a whole bunch of peaceful Arabs and Jews, going about their daily lives.

I am not attempting to sound cool or worldly or liberal. Less than 10 years ago, my wise son ripped into me because I had used the "N" word for effect while telling a story.

As Emmanuel Acho writes, "There is no conversation that excuses a white person using the 'N' word. Never. There is too much pain in that word coming from a white mouth."

But I have rambled on, trying to conclude my 2025 season.

Shalom..

[rossrocket9@gmail.com](mailto:rossrocket9@gmail.com)

# Can a voters' revolt in 2026 end developers' rule in NOTL?



## THE FORUM

Steve McGuinness  
Columnist

While Ontario municipalities struggle to balance the property rights of landowners with broader community interests, Doug Ford continues to exert his full weight on one side of the property development scales.

On his watch, the Ontario Land Tribunal — a provincial agency where municipal planning decisions head for appeal — has been further stacked for developers.

Strong-mayor powers have expanded, concentrating planning authority in fewer hands. Our own lord mayor has emerged "stronger," but absent voter consent, leading a lesser democracy.

The Ford changes were avowedly to increase housing supply and improve affordability. Home prices peaked in early 2022, fol-

lowed by an unforeseen housing market deflation of 30 per cent and counting, reacting to interest rate volatility and reduced immigrant settlement targets.

Undeterred, Ford plowed on. Although wealthy landowners' paper gains on land holdings evaporated overnight with reversed greenbelt boundary changes, their contributions to the overflowing Tory war chest never ceased.

Local developer Rainer Hummel worships Doug Ford, but loathes our last town council. He sought damages of \$3.9 million in a lawsuit he filed about the town's December 2018 interim control bylaw. His statement of claim alleged losses were incurred when the interim control bylaw delayed the start of construction at his planned 2203 Niagara Stone Rd. townhouse project.

In agreeing to a \$1-million settlement, this council heaped blame on its predecessor. Strangely, only one other litigant ever filed an interim control bylaw delay loss claim.

In a post-settlement op-ed, Hummel characterized his award as a penalty on voters, exacting a just



Landfill being hauled in to Hummel Properties vacant lot for sale at 2203 Niagara Stone Rd. on Dec. 16.

STEVE MCGUINNESS

price for electing an anti-development council. The implication is that it would be detrimental to repeat that voting behaviour in future elections.

Meanwhile, seven-plus years after the interim control bylaw's effective date and five years after its expiry, his building site remains empty.

There's a for-sale sign out front with a new application to jam three more townhouses in, as a lure to councillors confusing density with affordability.

Someday, Hummel may answer a key break-even question: whether his resale proceeds will exceed his \$1-million damage award

plus his acquisition cost.

Unfortunately, this experience typifies the persistent ongoing abuse of our planning process.

The town must accept all complete planning applications submitted with applicable fees.

But no project completion stale-date needs to be specified on the forms, meaning no firm or binding time commitment to construct any approved plan is enforceable.

Instead, the municipality is writing an option.

Once issued, this option adds value to the site. Developers are licensed to list it for resale, hyping the enhanced zoning approval, in pursuit of a quick flip profit.

Plus, these options hurt housing affordability by inflating land prices. In this frozen real estate market, our pile of unbuilt approved applications will inevitably grow taller, gathering dust. Home seekers will remain unhoused.

Now let's go back to eavesdrop on a local dinner table in December 2024. Although an agenda and minutes for that unannounced meeting with Premier Doug Ford remain unpublished,

key details are known.

Convened by deputy lord mayor Erwin Wiens, behind the closed gates of his cousin Hummel's palatial Phillips Estate, discussion topics ranged from agricultural irrigation (Wiens is a grape farmer) to Shaw Festival CEO Tim Jennings' new theatre plans.

Now, roughly a year and three pivotal council meetings later, the Shaw's new theatre plan is fully approved.

This followed the theatrics of Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa storming out of the first session, alleging procedural breaches.

While concerns linger over the sheer dominance its bulk will cast over our heritage district, councillors cited tweaks — adding a handful of accessible parking spaces and admitting the general public to restrooms — as decisive vote swinging influences.

Otherwise, the frenzied 2025 development pace leaves NOTLers desperately seeking an emergency escape.

On top of the million given to multi-millionaire Hummel, the forgiveness of a \$900,000 regional development charge to the even

wealthier Benny Marotta also irks residents who have been shouldering 2025 town property tax rates 7.92 per cent higher than last year.

The newly constructed buildings unveiled this year also fail to impress.

Townies debate whether the Hyatt Clayfield Hotel's mirrored glass homage to airport terminal designs outshines the mausoleum-esque stucco drabness of the neighbouring Stone Eagle Winery.

Panicked developers sense public opinion shifting. Reacting desperately, Solmar resuscitated its Rand Estate townhouse application, without addressing key ruling elements made by the Ontario Land Tribunal in upholding the town's prior rejection.

As the time-clock ticks down to next October's election, a strong voter backlash against developers' rule beckons.

Steve McGuinness, CPA, is retired from a career in financial management on Bay Street. He holds degrees in political science and business administration. He offers reflections on public policy issues within our community. [stevemcguinness94@gmail.com](mailto:stevemcguinness94@gmail.com)



## We don't have money for trail expansions

Dear editor:  
I realize this may sound trivial, but to me it is important.

It is in regard to the trail that is being built from John Street to York Road using the old railroad bed beside Concession 1 Road.

I do not mind that this trail was being built with money from citizens or groups. However, the \$170,000 now being given by our town to this project does not sit well with me ("Whistle post discovery halts heritage trail work as committee backs staffing plan," Niagara Now, Dec. 9).

It might be different if we, as taxpayers, had excess funds to use. Plus, let's not forget that we already have a great path operated by the parks and running parallel and it is a mere half a mile away.

If council thinks this \$170,000 is a drop in the bucket, then possibly they could spend that using their own monies instead of my money.

I concur, this does sound like a drop in the bucket,



but how many drops make a flood?

If, for some stupid reason, we were all forced to have income and expenses that were totally based on cash transactions, our councillors might not spend as if money were no object.

I challenge each town councillor and employee to make a personal effort to only spend what they actually make, rather than spending money just because they "want" something.

Does "balance the books" not mean anything?

But then, if the town can grant developers all kinds of concessions that raise your and my tax dollars, then should we just all "roll over" and let it be what it will be?

I'm just sayin'.

**Susan Pohorly**

NOTL

## Who is Shaw building its new theatre for?

Dear editor:

Pick a hot day in September for a day at the theatre. The theatre bell is ringing and you are quickly making your way to your seat. Excitement is in the air.

You walk up to the top balcony and oddly find yourself up in the nosebleed seats. You ask the attendant and find that there is no mistake. Those are the two for \$360 seats you had purchased.

The show starts while they pick a volunteer from the audience who will act as an extra actor and give up his afternoon at the theatre to entertain the rest of us.

At intermission, you look around to assess the audience with whom you are sharing this afternoon. Average age: 65. Average income: \$150,000 or more.

The show is, at best, at the level of a good high school production.

You happen to be a local among mostly visitors. Most of them don't know that the Shaw theatres are in expansion mode and, frankly, they would not care.

They are enthralled by the Niagara-on-the-Lake experience of food, wine, a



Artist Rendering - Unity Design Studio

The Shaw Festival's rebuild of the Royal George will include an homage to the original.

yesterday atmosphere and the Shaw all wrapped up in a beautiful bow.

But I care. Because this is my backyard. That's when I ask myself a ridiculous question: "Who exactly are they building a new theatre for?"

Certainly not for the 70 or 80-year-old patrons. And it's certainly not for the 50s and younger audience, entirely missing from this theatre scene.

Perhaps they are expanding for the 60-to-65-year audience, which may represent 20 to 30 per cent of the audience, as I see it.

Suddenly, it becomes clear to me that the Shaw as

we know it is losing touch with new realities.

The loyal audience they have enjoyed is slowly fading away and it is not being replaced by a younger audience.

The plays, musicals and other entertainment offerings that have been key to their success are no longer appealing to younger generations whose taste and attention span have been forever altered by social media and easy access to a plethora of entertainment choices.

My ridiculous question comes up again: "Who are they building for?"

Perhaps they believe that

if only they produce a new building, the audience that has been sorely missed will come.

Perhaps they believe that as long as they have donors and government grants at their disposal, current and future audience patterns really do not matter much.

Perhaps it's a wishful slippery slope to insignificance.

I am asking the board of directors of the Shaw Festival to face the easy question: "Who are they building a new theatre for?"

The cash-strapped 20, 30 and 40-year-olds OR the cash-rich 70-year-olds?

**Lydia Madonia**

NOTL

## Thank you, Niagara-on-the-Lake

Thank you for helping shape a Community-First future for 176 Wellington Street.

We listened.

Community members shared insight, experience, and thoughtful leadership.

Above all, you told us this must be a multi-generational place for community use — a place to gather, learn, create, and innovate.

Over the past year, more than 1,200 residents and community members shared their ideas and aspirations for the future of 176 Wellington Street.

Through the Town's public consultation led by NPG Planning, an independent Abacus Data survey, and more than 140 conversations with local organizations and community leaders, a clear message emerged: this place matters, and its future must serve the community.

The Community-First vision now taking shape for 176 Wellington Street is grounded in what we heard from you.

For your generosity of time, your care for this community, and your belief in what is possible, we offer our sincere thanks.

Please visit [176wellington.ca](http://176wellington.ca).

The James A. Burton & Family Foundation

## A COMMUNITY-FIRST VISION 176 Wellington St.

A thriving gateway for culture, learning, and connection.

**JAMES  
A. BURTON  
& FAMILY FOUNDATION**



TEXT OR CALL GREG TODAY @ 905.329.3484



**SOLD!**

44 STONERIDGE STREET  
LIST PRICE \$1,399,000.00

*Another one*

**GREG SYKES**

**FREE HOME  
EVALUATION**

CALL OR TEXT GREG DIRECT

**905.329.3484**



**RE/MAX**  
NIAGARA  
REALTY LTD., BROKERAGE  
INDEPENDENTLY OWNED AND  
OPERATED

**#1 Realtor in Niagara on the Lake since 2021** \*transactions and volume

# Have some fun



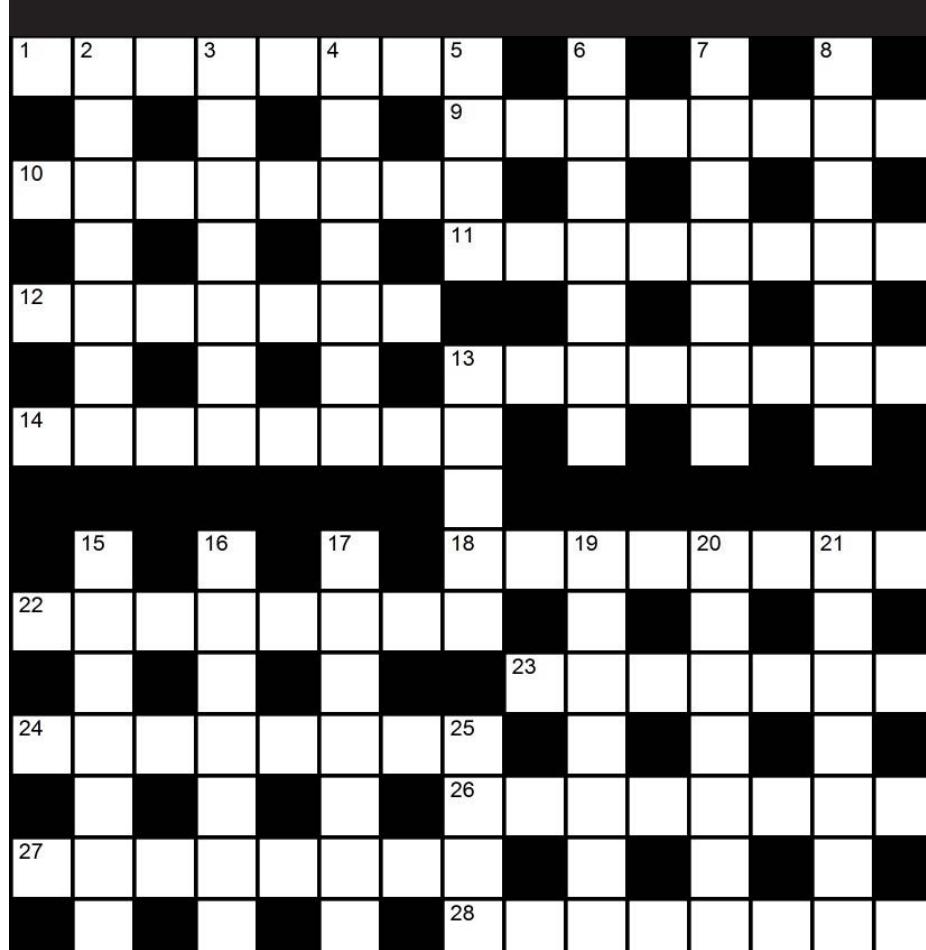
**Across**

1. Fabric (8)
9. Longing (8)
10. Merchant (8)
11. Imagine (8)
12. Candidate (7)
13. Precarious (8)
14. Turns around (8)
18. Exceptionally tense (8)
22. Portuguese jellyfish (3-2-3)
23. Austere (7)
24. Hallway (8)
26. The world of schools and universities (8)
27. Its capital is Little Rock (8)
28. Locate exactly (8)

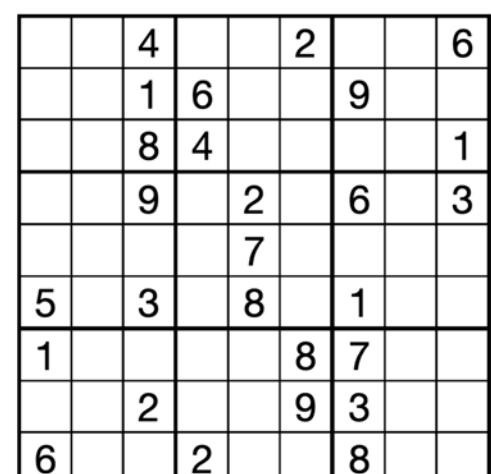
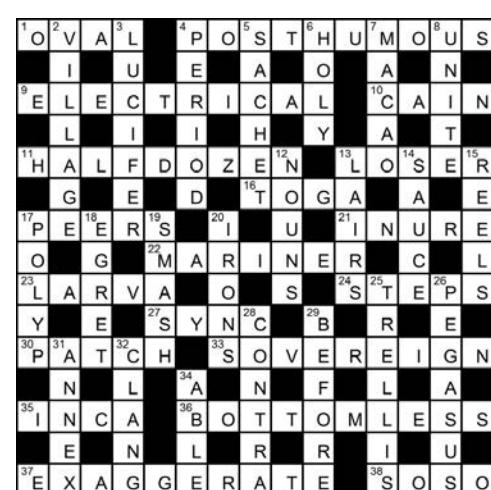
**Down**

2. Breathtaking (7)
3. Vague (7)
4. Ailment (7)
5. Small harp-like musical instrument (4)
6. The gathering of crops (7)
7. Uncommon (7)
8. Cuddle (7)
13. Doorkeeper (5)
15. Stonework (7)
16. Portal (7)
17. Like Abba (7)
19. Make clear (7)
20. Underwater missile (7)
21. Inhabitant of e.g. Tehran (7)
25. Coarse file (4)

## Crossword Puzzle



### Last issue's answers



MEDIUM



## MAXIMIZE EXPOSURE!

Your home, **advertised from Niagara to Toronto** — not just in town.



23 FOUR MILE CREEK ROAD #411  
1 BED • 1 BATH • 685 SQ. FT.  
\$279,000



4743 RYERSON CRESCENT  
7+2 BEDROOM • 3 BATH • 2,500 SQ. FT.  
\$979,000



19 OAKLEY DRIVE  
2 BEDROOM • 3 BATH • 1,615 SQ. FT.  
\$1,249,900



2 BUNNY GLEN DRIVE  
4 BEDS • 4 BATHS • 3,225 SQ. FT.  
\$1,549,900



Call the brand that gets your home **NOTICED!**

Ask about our **Golfi Home Warranty**. Full protection for one year.<sup>+</sup>

905-641-0308 • [Sold@GolfiTeam.com](mailto:Sold@GolfiTeam.com) • [www.GolfiTeam.com](http://www.GolfiTeam.com)

\*Source: RE/MAX LLC rankings for Large Team Residential, 2025. <sup>+</sup>Conditions apply. RE/MAX Escarpment Golfi Realty Inc., Brokerage. Independently owned and operated.



SCAN FOR A FREE  
HOME EVALUATION

**EXPLORING HISTORY**  
WITH NOTL MUSEUM



## Dreaming of a white Christmas

Is it just us, or does everyone secretly hope to hum Bing Crosby's "White Christmas" when Christmas rolls around? Winter has certainly made itself at home this month, and when the frost isn't nipping at our noses, there's nothing better than heading outdoors to enjoy a few classic winter activities. A white Christmas isn't just a modern wish — it's exactly what folks used to know, as seen in this delightful 1930s photograph of the community skating rink in Simcoe Park. Look closely and you'll spot the original four-legged "Zamboni" hard at work keeping the ice clear. This view is from Byron Street toward King Street. In the background, the corner of Queen Street appears on the left, with the back of the Apothecary visible, and the former Trisha Romance Gallery at 177 King St. near the centre right. As Bing Crosby put it best, "May your days be merry and bright" — and may your Christmas be white, just like this scene from Simcoe Park. Merry Christmas from the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum.

**COME AND ADORE  
THE CHRIST CHILD  
THIS CHRISTMAS!**

**CHRISTMAS EVE  
SERVICE**

**DEC | 24TH | 4 PM**

**TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH  
2027 NIAGARA STONE ROAD  
NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE**

[WWW.TRINITYNOTL.COM](http://WWW.TRINITYNOTL.COM)  
TRINITYNOTL@GMAIL.COM

Have an opinion  
you want heard?  
Email us.



# Want to live longer and better? Maybe it's in our DNA



**DR. BROWN**

Dr. William Brown  
Columnist

Most of us want to live longer and better. Hence the widespread interest in all that might prolong life and wellness.

The list of life boosters is long: meditation and mindful practices, physical fitness, Mediterranean and other healthy diets, a myriad of vitamins and supplements, social activities, pets, and avoiding foods and drinks considered "pro-inflammatory" or downright toxic.

The trends are fed by social media, plenty of health gurus and, to some extent, solid science.

In my youth, few middle-agers made it into their 80s. Most succumbed to cancer, heart disease or stroke well before then.

My mother was 66 when she died following a long history of uncontrolled hypertension (190/120 or more when I took it) and

later heart failure or what was called "dropsy" in those days — swollen lower legs and feet.

My father died in his late 70s with a history of atrial fibrillation and a final intracerebral hemorrhage. For both my parents, not much could be done by the medicine of the day.

President Franklin Roosevelt, a shadow of his former self in 1944-1945, died at 66 in 1945 of an intracerebral hemorrhage and, like my mother, had a long history of moderate to severe uncontrolled hypertension.

His closest ally throughout the war, Winston Churchill, lived to 90 despite several heart attacks during the Second World War, several post-war transient ischemic attacks and strokes and in his last years, progressive cognitive decline before a final stroke that signalled the end.

Not bad for a man who enjoyed cigars, food and drink and exercised only as much as needed to do his job — no gyms or trainers for him. Maybe what saved him was his energy, curiosity (in science too) and prolific writing.

With the technology at hand now, Roosevelt, my parents and perhaps even Churchill might have lived



In spite of his various health problems, including several heart attacks during the Second World War, Winston Churchill, the former prime minister of the United Kingdom, lived to 90 years old. WIKIMEDIA

a decade or more longer in better health.

Then there's the case of super-agers such as Mariana Lenharo. She lived to 117 years.

At the time of her death, she had two daughters in their 90s, exercised regularly, was lean, ate a Mediterranean diet supplemented by three servings of yogurt a day, liked to read and by laboratory measures was stunningly healthy.

Her gut microbiome and immune system were healthy, there were no pro-inflammatory factors, none of the usual risk factors in her blood, including her lipid profile, survived COVID-19, had no risky genes and possessed genes common to some species of dogs, worms and flies

associated with extreme lifespans.

Leaving me to wonder, with a health report card like hers, why did she die? Why not 150 years?

The case of Lenharo highlights a fundamental issue. Our fate is not dictated by the sum of all the diseases we develop in our lives, especially in the later decades of life.

Cell organelles and processes wear out just as parts wear out in appliances, engines and even computers. In the latter instance, mistakes creep into the software and memory systems and so with us — exemplified by age-related corruption of DNA and mutations, which affect the structure and function of proteins that every cell, including our

nerve cells, depends on.

That progressive corruption of our DNA and proteins goes a long way to explaining why many neurodegenerative diseases are associated with corrupted proteins such as beta-amyloid and tau in the case of Alzheimer's disease.

Alpha-synuclein in Lewy Body dementia or in the case of frontotemporal dementia and LATE (limbic age-related TDP-43 encephalopathy), a cause of dementia in the late 80s and 90s, the accumulation of TDP-43 protein.

There are other examples of dysfunctional proteins, but the point I'm making is that they probably reflect errors upstream in mRNA or DNA, primarily related to aging.

Of course, aging isn't the only factor because some neurodegenerative diseases are related to inherited genetic abnormalities in DNA, for instance, in some cases of Alzheimer's disease.

That aging is a major factor driving mortality is obvious in MRI studies of the brain from early life to death. Neocortical thinning begins in the late 20s and 30s. White matter loss begins a decade later, well before any clinical signs.

But what about whales and long life? Bowhead

whales live well past 200 years and one factor stood out: bowhead whales are much better at repairing DNA errors.

Most life forms have DNA repair mechanisms in place, but bowhead whales are better at it — hence healthier proteins and longer life.

Venki Ramakrishnan, a Nobel laureate in chemistry and other scientists take rapamycin, an immunosuppressant, as an anti-aging agent.

Other scientists are exploring the potential benefit of GLP-1 drugs as a potential life prolonger based on their proven effectiveness for reducing weight and the risks of diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Readers might want to check out Ramakrishnan's 2024 book, "Why We Die: The New Science of Aging and the Quest for Immortality," and the 2024 six-week series on aging at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library, as well as an earlier series on mindfulness and meditation — both on YouTube and accessible through the library's website.

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.



## FEATURED

## Obituaries

## Jeffery 'Jeff' Edwards



EDWARDS, Jeffery — Jeffery Bryan Edwards, who preferred the name "Jeff," was born on Sept. 26, 1977, and raised in Niagara Falls, Ontario. He was called home to be with his Lord and Savior on Dec. 13, 2025.

A beloved husband to Monica, Jeff was a pillar of strength and devotion. Together, they nurtured a family filled with love and laughter, raising their five wonderful children, Trevor, Charles, Cheyene, Brenden, and

Judah, to be individuals of character and grace. Born to Karen and John, and siblings to Johnny and Missy (Paul). Jeff's presence was a source of joy and comfort to many in his life. Uncle to many both here and in British Columbia.

Dedicated to his business Edwards Trucking Solutions Ltd., where he was a driver, a mentor and friend to his colleagues. His commitment to his work was surpassed only by his dedication to his faith and family.

As a Christian, Jeff's life was a testament to his belief in love, compassion, and serving others. Jeff's legacy is not one of material possessions but of the profound impact he had on the hearts and souls of those who were privileged to know him.

A visitation will be on Friday, Dec. 19 from 4 to 6 p.m. at Mountain Park Church (6970 Mountain Rd, Niagara Falls) with a service the following day on Saturday, Dec. 20 at 11 a.m. In lieu of flowers please consider donating to [www.orangeshirtday.org](http://www.orangeshirtday.org) — a charity in recognition of Every Child Matters, a cause Jeff held dearly.



## Maureen Collins

COLLINS, Maureen — July 7, 1945 - Dec. 9, 2025

At the age of 80, Maureen Collins (Allanson) passed away peacefully on December 9th, 2025, after a 30+ year journey with M.S. And even though it brought its challenges, she didn't let it define her. Up until the end, Maureen maintained her wit, kindness, happy nature, love of chocolate and expressed gratitude for her long life, full of wonderful and varied experiences.

From a happy Yorkshire farm upbringing, Maureen pursued and 20 year career in nursing,

primarily in the I.C.U., where she met the love of her life, Roy. Together they embarked on an adventure in Canada, with their two children, Heather & Chris. After 24 years in Ontario, Maureen and Roy's wanderlust took them farther west to B.C. for the next 15 years, where they forged many new friendships and began to travel the world. In 2009, they returned to Ontario to be closer to their family.

Maureen's life will be remembered and celebrated by her husband of 60 years, Roy, her children Heather (Jim), Chris (Rica), grandson Braedon, sisters Christine (Tony), Denise (Chris), sisters in law Len (Mike), Mary (David), many nieces and nephews, close friends Jenny Van Pelt, Brian Smart, fierce protector, Ben (Border Collie) and our wonderful friends in St. David's, N-O-T-L. Special thanks for the dedicated care from the staff at Pioneer Elder Care.

For those who wish, memorial donations may be made to Gillian's Place, The M.S. Society or the charity of your choice. A Celebration of Life for family and friends will be held at a later date.

Remember Maureen with her brilliant blue eyes and radiant smile that could light up a room.

## Neil Smith



SMITH, Neil — March 17, 1955 - Nov. 27, 2025.

Dearly loved and deeply missed by Jody, Jordan, Amy, Haylie, Paige, Quinn, many friends and beloved pets. Forever in our hearts.

*To place an obituary or memorial for a loved one, please contact [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com).*

**When life changes,  
Sedona Care is there.**

At our Sedona Care Communities, Chapel Heights and Pioneer Elder Care, we are committed to changing the story ... your story, each and every day.

Are you considering retirement living for yourself or a loved one? **You are not alone.**

Locally owned and operated, life at our properties begins with beautiful retirement residences offering Independent living, Supportive living, Enhanced care and Memory care.

Kindness and compassion are at the heart of our values.

Join Us! For a complimentary lunch for two.

For reservations call 905.371.0121 or visit [sedona-care.ca](http://sedona-care.ca)

**SEDONA**

CARE COMMUNITIES

## Tomokazu 'Kaz' Nakamura



NAKAMURA, Tomokazu 'Kaz' —

It is with heavy hearts that the family of Tomokazu 'Kaz' Nakamura announces his passing at home on Thursday, Dec. 11, 2025, at the age of 52. Kaz was the beloved husband and devoted companion of Paul Newman. He was a cherished brother to Mieko and her husband Yuji, and a loving uncle to Aki. He will also be lovingly remembered by his mother-in-law Nancy, and his brothers-in-law Andrew (Sarah) and Simon (Rachel). Kaz will be fondly remembered by his many friends and all who knew him.

Kaz had an unmistakable zest for life. A true world traveler, he loved exploring new places alongside his husband Paul. Some of his most treasured times were spent

closer to home, hiking and portaging through the Muskoka region and Algonquin Park. Kaz and Paul also cherished quiet moments together on their deck, reading, sharing wine, and simply enjoying each other's company.

Kaz was a proud graduate of Keio University. Gifted with an exceptional aptitude for languages, Kaz spoke English, Spanish, French and German. He was also musically talented, able to pick up and learn new instruments with remarkable ease. Proud of his Japanese heritage, Kaz loved sharing his culture with others and embraced opportunities to learn about people from all walks of life. Becoming deeply involved in the Niagara-on-the-Lake community was very important to him.

Kaz's nephew Aki held an especially meaningful place in his heart, more like a younger brother or son. Kaz delighted in taking Aki along on his travels and sharing new experiences together. When at home, Kaz found joy in the kitchen, where he loved cooking and experimenting with new dishes.

Creative, energetic, loving, and compassionate, Kaz valued family above all else and will be deeply missed.

In keeping with Kaz's wishes, cremation has taken place. In memory of Kaz, donations to the Humane Society of Greater Niagara would be appreciated by his family. Online condolences may be shared on Kaz's tribute page at [EssentialsNiagara.com](http://EssentialsNiagara.com)

Have an opinion  
you want heard?  
Email us.



# Hort society brings flowers to seniors

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Flowers for Seniors returned Tuesday as residents at Pleasant Manor and Niagara Long Term Care Residence received poinsettias from the Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society.

Tina Dirks, who has lived at Pleasant Manor since January, placed a red poinsettia on the table in her room shortly after it arrived. She said the flowers make the season feel more like Christmas.

"I just want to thank them for being thoughtful, thinking of us and sending us beautiful flowers," Dirks said.

Chelsea Bilton, a therapeutic recreation supervisor at Pleasant Manor for 15 years, said Dirks' reaction reflected how residents typically respond.

"I think the expression is the biggest part," she said. "You show them the poin-



Ingrid Regier, a Pleasant Manor resident and member of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society, presents poinsettias to Connie Rudzits at Pleasant Manor during the society's dropoff on Tuesday. DAN SMEENK

settia and they smile. ... They're very grateful."

Susan Dodd, president of the horticultural society, said 160 poinsettias were delivered to the two long-term care homes. Five volunteers prepared the plants at June Floral and Garden in Virgil, where

boxes of flowers lined the floor before delivery.

"Both owners (that June Floral and Garden has had in their time) have been very community-minded and they've always supported the work of the horticultural society," Dodd said.

Dodd said the society

has made the deliveries for "at least 20 years" and described the effort as a "Christmas gesture" using a plant closely associated with the season.

Society member Kim Mustill, who helped prepare the flowers, said the program reflects the group's mission.

"This is one of the things the horticultural society wants to do," she said. "They want to give a bit of Mother Nature back to the community."

Founded in 1906, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society says it is one of the oldest organizations of its kind in Ontario. The group delivers plants to long-term care residences twice a year, in December and April.

This will be the last Christmastime Flowers for Seniors at Heritage Place in the current iteration of Pleasant Manor, as a newer, larger building will open this winter.

[daniel@niagaranow.com](mailto:daniel@niagaranow.com)



## Joy on Every Plate

Enjoy the season with flavours crafted to delight.



Christmas Dinner

DECEMBER 24 & 25

New Year's Eve Dinner

DECEMBER 31

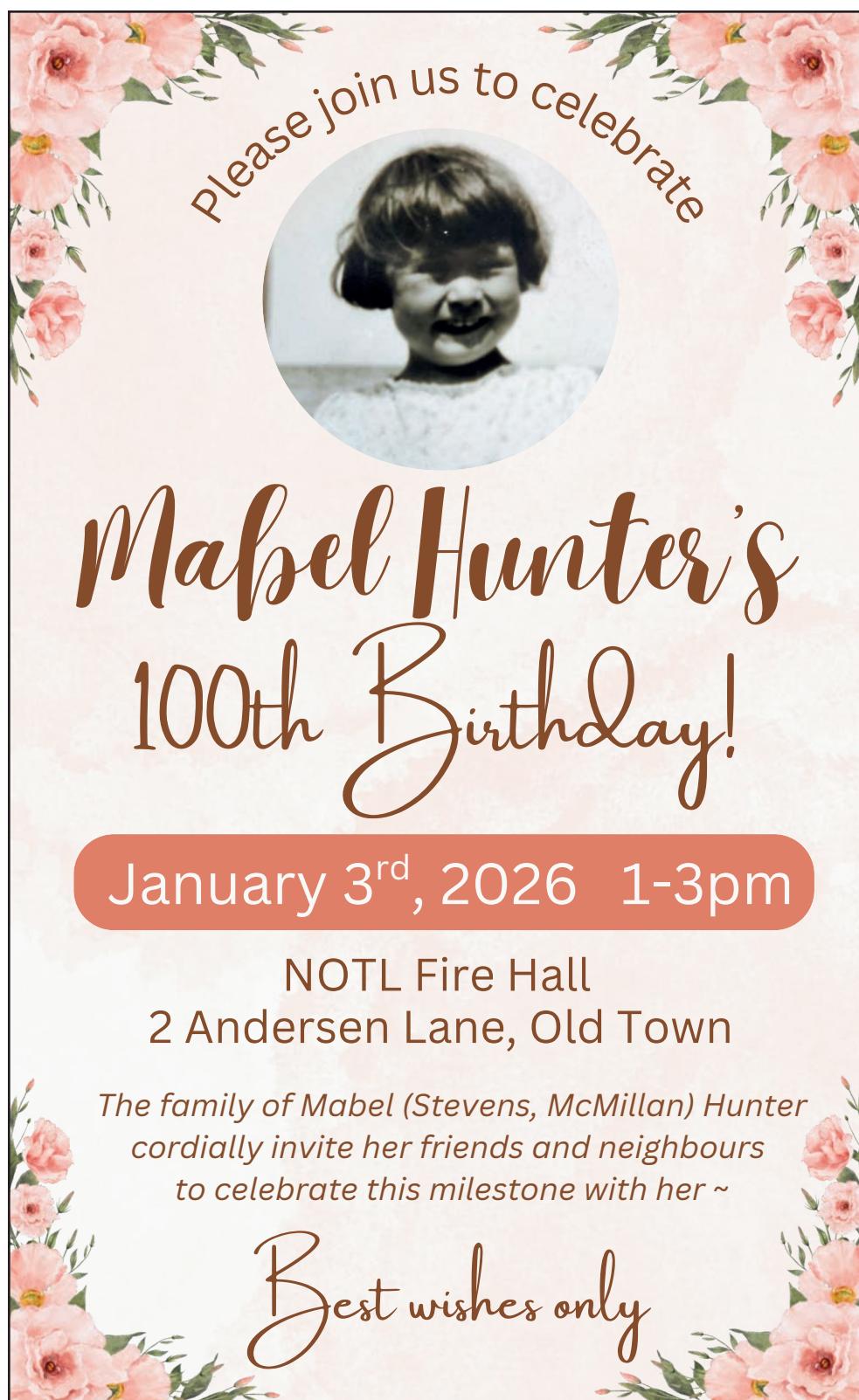
RESERVE YOUR TABLE TODAY

Menus available online. Dining options and times vary by property. Reservations required.

[niagarasfinest.com](http://niagarasfinest.com) | 1-800-474-0632 | Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON

 Share the gift of great experiences with our gift e-cards. Buy online today!

**Advertising inquiries?**  
**Email [advertising@niagaranow.com](mailto:advertising@niagaranow.com)**



Please join us to celebrate  
  
**Mabel Hunter's  
100th Birthday!**  
January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2026 1-3pm  
NOTL Fire Hall  
2 Andersen Lane, Old Town  
*The family of Mabel (Stevens, McMillan) Hunter cordially invite her friends and neighbours to celebrate this milestone with her ~*  
*Best wishes only*



**NIAGARA'S FINEST MEN'S AND LADIES DESIGNER FASHION**  
  
**GW**  
GARY WATERS  
**OPEN BOXING DAY FROM 11-5**  
271 MERRITT STREET ST. CATHARINES  
[garywaters.ca](http://garywaters.ca)

Wishing you and your family a joyful holiday season filled with love, warmth, and happiness & blessings in 2026.



**ANGELIKA ZAMMIT**  
REALTOR® / OWNER  
**289-214-4394**

*Angelika* & ASSOCIATES  
LUXURY REAL ESTATE





# The Lake Report



# The Lake Report



