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Hyper-local news for Niagara-on-the-Lake



Museum gets \$2 million | Page 10

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Canada's most-awarded community newspaper

November 13, 2025

Driver jailed for 11 months in crash that killed cyclist, 84

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

A Niagara-on-the-Lake native whose pickup truck struck and killed a senior who was cycling on East and West Line has been sentenced to 11 months in jail.

Richard Alan Moore, 39, pleaded guilty to a Criminal Code charge of failing to stop at an accident causing death after he hit Nestor Chemerika, 84, who was riding his bike on the paved shoulder of the rural road on July 13, 2023. He died 12 days later.

On Wednesday afternoon in St. Catharines Superior Court, Justice Michael Bordin ordered Moore to serve 11 months in custody followed by a 20-month driving ban.

"No sentence imposed can undo the harm to the victim and his family or

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'Free Jimmy Lai now'

NOTL rallies for release of journalist, democracy advocate and hotelier, who has been jailed in Hong Kong since 2020 for his political beliefs



A group walks from Simcoe Park to the Queen's Landing on Wednesday to advocate for the release of political prisoner Jimmy Lai, who has been jailed in Hong Kong for his pro-democracy views since 2020. His niece Erica Lepp helped lead the charge. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Paige Seburn | Local Journalism Initiative | The Lake Report

Tears fell in Simcoe Park on Wednesday as residents, politicians and family members gathered in Niagara-on-the-Lake to demand freedom for

Jimmy Lai — the Hong Kong publisher, democracy advocate and local hotelier now imprisoned for his beliefs.

Among them was Dallas Aufer, a maintenance manager

with Niagara's Finest Hotels, one of Lai's local businesses.

"He is my hero," he said.

"I mean, he stands for freedom for everyone."

Dozens gathered at the park in

Old Town, joined by Lai's niece Erica Lepp, local officials including Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, MP Tony Baldinelli, MPP Wayne

Continued on Page 4

Mayor storms out of council meeting after town delays Shaw rebuild

Dan Smeenk
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake town council has delayed a decision on the Shaw Festival's proposed redesign

of the Royal George Theatre to allow more consultation with the theatre company — during a meeting that ended with Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa leaving in frustration.

The meeting on Tuesday

featured debate among councillors, comments from residents opposed to the proposal and remarks from Shaw Festival executive director Tim Jennings.

If approved, the zoning changes would have

amended the town's official plan and zoning bylaws, allowing the Shaw's current design for the new, larger Royal George Theatre to proceed.

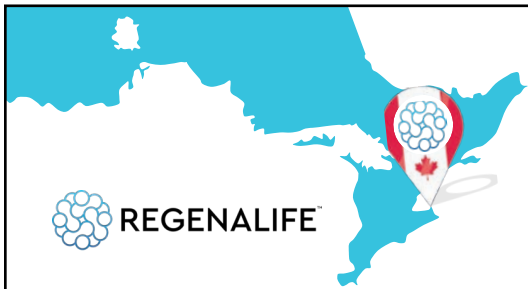
Councillors and residents said their issue was not with

the theatre's replacement itself, but with elements of the proposed design. Concerns focused on public washrooms, accessible parking and the overall size of the new venue.

"It's too big," said Caro-

line Polgrabia, who lives near the current theatre. "All negative heritage, infrastructure, environmental, planning and precedent concerns stem from this

Continued on Page 2



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Victim, father had ‘plenty of years left to live’

Continued from Front Page

replace Mr. Chemerika’s absence from his family and the community,” Bordin told the court.

However, “there is a need to dissuade others from failing to stop when someone has possibly been seriously injured or killed and failing to provide assistance and from covering up the accident,” he said.

A conditional jail sentence, served in the community rather than in jail, as suggested by defence lawyer Jeffrey Manishen, would not be appropriate, Bordin said.

“I’m not satisfied that Mr. Moore’s expression of remorse is paired with insight and signs that he’s come to realize the gravity of his conduct, and as a result, changed his attitude or imposed himself into discipline, which significantly reduces the likelihood of further offending,” Bordin said.

“However, an offender cannot be punished for lack of remorse.”

Acknowledging Moore is an “otherwise positive, functioning member of society,” in this case he put his own interests ahead of the victim’s.

“The principal aggravating feature here is that Mr. Moore tried to cover up the accident by repairing the truck and then denied doing so,” Bordin said.

He agreed with Manishen’s suggestion that Moore serve his time at the Central North Correctional Centre in Penetanguishene. Moore remains in custody there after being charged in a serious boating crash in Muskoka in July. The judge said those charges were not a factor in this case.

Moore, a Niagara Falls-based contractor, initially pleaded guilty before another judge in January 2025.

But in an unusual twist, this past June, that plea was tossed out after a dispute over certain information that should not have been presented to the court.

In June, Moore admitted he was driving the pickup truck that struck Chemerika, though he had initially denied it when questioned by police.

After Moore re-entered his plea he apologized for his actions.

The impact of the crash knocked Chemerika into the roadside ditch, where



Left: Nestor Chemerika’s destroyed bike. Right: Richard Moore. FILE PHOTOS

he was found a short time afterward by a Niagara Regional Police officer on routine patrol.

His crumpled bike was nearby and debris from the truck was strewn on the road. One of its large external mirrors was found at the scene.

Chemerika was still alive when the police found him, assistant Crown attorney Todd Morris told the court.

In arguing earlier for a 12-month jail sentence, Morris repeatedly stated Moore was reckless in not remaining at the scene or returning to help Chemerika.

“I can’t imagine and understand how Richard Alan Moore could just drive away and try and hide what he did and continue on with his life, like nothing happened.”

DENNISE FALZOI
NESTOR CHEMERIKA’S DAUGHTER

Instead, as witnesses and surveillance video unearthed by investigators showed, Moore continued driving toward his home in Niagara Falls.

“We know that (Chemerika) did not die on impact,” Morris said.

“We also know that the accused’s own assistance could have made a difference, especially since he’s a volunteer firefighter.”

Within days of the crash, when police questioned Moore at his home, his truck was still visibly damaged but “it was obvious” some attempts had been made to repair it, Morris said in an agreed statement of facts.

When officers told Moore they were looking for the vehicle involved in a hit-and-run and asked if he had been on East and West Line on July 13, Moore said, “I don’t remember.”

He also denied replacing the passenger side mirror.

It was a Thursday evening, not yet dark, when Chemerika was struck, likely between 7:40 and 7:54 p.m., court heard.

Thursday is fish fry night at the NOTL Legion and police received a tip that Moore was a regular customer there. He worked as a contractor and had clients in NOTL.

On the night Chemerika was hit, Moore, wearing a “volunteer fire department” T-shirt, was captured on video at the Legion buying a pitcher of beer at 7:02 p.m. However, the judge noted, there was no video showing Moore drinking beer that night.

NOTL fire chief Jay Plato confirmed Moore previously was a volunteer with the department but resigned about six years ago.

Video from a home on Niagara Street in NOTL recorded Moore’s pewter-coloured 1999 GMC Sierra pickup travelling toward East and West Line at 7:40 p.m., with no damage to the passenger side of the truck.

Less than 15 minutes later, about 7:53 p.m., video from a home in St. Davids showed Moore’s truck headed toward Niagara Falls. Its passenger side mirror was missing.

Meanwhile, Const. Vincent St. Pierre was on patrol at 8:22 p.m. along East and West Line when he spotted a single black running shoe and some vehicle debris in the middle of the road.

He stopped and found Chemerika in a roadside ditch, barely conscious and badly injured. He was airlifted to hospital in Hamilton.

In victim impact statements presented previously, Chemerika’s family members described how the tragedy has affected them.

“On July 13, 2023, Richard Alan Moore dramatically changed our lives forever. Seeing my dad in the hospital, so helpless and terrified, broke my

heart. There wasn’t a spot in his body that wasn’t cut, bruised or broken,” his daughter Dennise Falzoi said in a statement read to the court by Morris.

“I can’t imagine and understand how Richard Alan Moore could just drive away and try and hide what he did and continue on with his life, like nothing happened. It’s mind boggling,” she wrote.

She, her brother Nestor Jr. and her father’s brother Walter said Chemerika was passionate about staying in top physical condition, going for daily walks, jogs and bike rides.

“Our father endured so much pain and suffering while in the hospital as a result of his injury. His body was so broken and damaged,” the family’s victim impact statements said.

“It was absolute torture and emotionally crippling watching him slowly slip away ... the fear and sorrow in his eyes, not being able to communicate during the last days and hours” as he lay in hospital.

“This whole ordeal is incredibly horrific and devastating for all of our family members and the community,” they added.

“Our father had plenty of years left to live, as his brothers and sisters all lived well into their 90s. This truly devastated everyone, especially his three children and all his grandchildren.”

“Our father was a pillar of the NOTL community, where he lived for over 55 years,” they added.

After the tragedy, friends and neighbours came to Chemerika’s house “literally in tears, hugging us children, telling us of their devastation” over his death.

“We all continue to experience great sorrow, anger, confusion, devastation, PTSD, scarred for life, for this senseless, preventable loss of life.”

“There’s not a day that goes by that I don’t talk or think about my dad. I have a hole in my heart that can never be filled.”

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NOTLers **push for release** of political prisoner Jimmy Lai

Continued from Front Page

Gates and several town councillors, as well as Lai's former employees and community supporters.

"We are so grateful," Lepp said in an interview. "The turnout has blown my mind."

"My uncle loves this town — and today we can really feel the love," she added.

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

He founded Apple Daily, a Hong Kong newspaper widely described as having a pro-democracy editorial position. In Niagara-on-the-Lake, his family owns Vintage Hotels, which manages the Prince of Wales Hotel, Queen's Landing and the Pillar and Post.

Lepp said her uncle's case is about more than one man; it's about the universal right to freedom of speech, "something that's so important on a global level," she said.

"My uncle is being held 23 hours a day in a windowless room — the same way they treat serial killers — and he's a journalist," she said. "And there's other people that are being held as well."

Keeping her uncle's name in the public eye is vital to ensuring his case gets the



Left: Erica Lepp, niece of Jimmy Lai, addresses the crowd in front of the Queen's Landing hotel, which Lai owns. Right: Supporters Bob Woodley, left, and Stephen Lunt advocate for Lai's release during the protest. DAVE VAN DE LAAR/PAIGE SEBURN



attention it deserves, said Lepp: "That's how these matters get the attention that they need."

Auker, who has written letters to Hong Kong authorities calling for Lai's release, had shirts printed years ago in support of him, which he and his wife, Jeannine Sanderson, wore to the rally.

Auker said Lai's choice to give up a life of luxury and face prison showed a selflessness he compared to Mahatma Gandhi.

"He's kind of inspired me to actually be a better man because of it," he added.

Coun. Gary Burroughs said he remembers Lai from "back in the early '90s, is when I knew him best."

"He was in Niagara and they bought my hotel. I owned the Oban Inn at the time," he said. "He would come to our house for dinner, he and (his wife) Teresa."

Burroughs said it's important for NOTL to rally because Lai left a lasting mark on the community.

"He shouldn't be in confinement," he said. "That's why we're here."

Among those supporting Lai's release was Kevin Roden, who broke down as he spoke about the man he's followed for decades.

"He's a hero of mine and what's happening is wrong," he said.

"He has principles, and he's in jail for his principles,"

he said. "I admire that."

Kevin's father, Roy Roden, said Lai's contributions, "particularly this town," have long earned his admiration.

The two shared a common belief: no one should be punished for their views.

Bob Woodley agrees. He said Lai's imprisonment shows what happens when only one political view is allowed to exist.

"He was representing one side and basically got shut down," he said.

Stephen Lunt said he believes that Lai is "unjustly in prison."

"He's a great benefactor to this town," he added.

"Look around and see what he's done here."

Sig Neuhof, who attended the rally with his wife, Liz Walker, said Lai's advocacy for democratic values has earned his support: "He's done an excellent job in promoting democracy."

"It's important to support him," added Neuhof.

Lidija Biro, a member of Amnesty International's NOTL chapter, said it's time the world becomes more aware that Lai is a "prisoner of conscience."

"He's being held in very difficult conditions. He's an elderly, ailing man, and we would like to see him being released on humanitarian grounds," she said.

"We would like to see Foreign Minister (Anita) Anand do a little bit more

for him," she added.

Biro said the chapter will host a Write for Rights event on Dec. 11 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Community Centre café, where participants can write Christmas letters to Lai.

She said Lai's age and health make his situation especially urgent. Lai turns 78 on Dec. 8.

"At the end of the day, I would just love for my uncle to be able to get out and be able to hug the people he loves," said Lepp.

At the rally, she thanked the crowd for showing the love her uncle always preached, saying his message was simple: "Everything has to be with love."

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com

Foreign ministers **gather in NOTL for G7**, local leaders champion Jimmy Lai

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

As foreign ministers from some of the world's leading democracies met in Niagara-on-the-Lake this week, local officials said the gathering gave Canada an important chance to press for the release of jailed publisher Jimmy Lai.

The G7 — a coalition of major democratic nations including Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy and Japan — meets throughout the year, along with the European Union and other invited partners, to discuss global economic issues, security concerns and other international challenges.

During the press conference for Canada, The Lake Report asked the country's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Anita Anand, whether foreign ministers will be



A rare moment of global diplomacy in town — one local officials saw as a chance to spotlight Jimmy Lai's case. Foreign ministers from the G7 met in Niagara-on-the-Lake on Nov. 11 and 12. From left, EU High Representative Kaja Kallas, Japan's Toshimitsu Motegi, U.K. Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper, France's Jean-Noël Barrot, Canada's Anita Anand, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Germany's Johann Wadephul and Italy's Antonio Tajani. PAIGE SEBURN

pressing China about Hong Kong's national security law and pushing for the release of Jimmy Lai in a unified voice.

She said at the meetings, ministers sought a unified position on core issues "from Sudan to Haiti to the Middle East to Ukraine," calling them "the main topics" of discussion — and the G7 joint statement

made no mention of Hong Kong's national security law or Lai's release.

Anand did not clarify whether Canada would press its G7 partners on the law or Lai's release in the future, but said she would continue raising the issue on her own.

"I have raised this case at every opportunity," she said.

"Media freedom remains an important part of the democratic process. It's essential to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms."

The Lake Report also asked whether any representatives from her team were present to support the rally for him held in NOTL on Wednesday.

"Our schedule is ex-

tremely compressed," she said. "So, to my knowledge, the ministers who are invited to this meeting were in the room for the sessions that we have held."

Discussions spanned over the two days, Nov. 11 and Nov. 12, and carried global weight — but the event also marked a proud moment locally.

Ashley Brown, director of brand and creative strategy at White Oaks Resort and Spa, which hosted the foreign ministers, said the team was "deeply honoured" to welcome such a prestigious event to NOTL.

"In preparation, our team worked closely with Global Affairs Canada through a series of meetings to ensure every requirement for the G7 foreign ministers' meeting was fully understood and met," she said.

Brown said open communication with Global Affairs Canada allowed the resort to plan and carry out

the event smoothly "from start to finish."

"We are immensely proud of our team," she said, adding that "their hard work, professionalism and dedication" made the event a success.

The timing of the G7 foreign ministers' meeting is "very fruitful," said NOTL Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa in an interview.

These meetings make way for productive international conversations about such issues, said Zalepa. If not talked about directly, "it may come up through other conversations."

Tony Baldinelli, Conservative MP for Niagara Falls–Niagara-on-the-Lake, agreed. He said these meetings offer "a perfect opportunity" to highlight Lai's case.

"It's my hope that they will champion the cause," he added.

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NOTL speed cameras removed after province scraps program

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Speed cameras across Niagara-on-the-Lake will soon be shut off after provincial lawmakers voted last week to end automated speed enforcement across Ontario — a move that's prompting discussion among local school boards and municipal officials.

The change means photo radar used in school zones and community safety areas — including Niagara Region sites such as the camera near Crossroads Public School in Virgil and another in St. Davids — will be removed by Nov. 14 at the latest.

Regional transportation director Frank Tassone said the region was already preparing for the change and has a process in place to deactivate the program.

He said councillors have been updated and the region will continue working with the province "to ensure a safe, efficient and reliable road network in Niagara."

It will now move ahead with its "robust road safety strategy" that aims to lower collisions and stop deaths on regional roads, which the region said residents can learn more about at niagararegion.ca/living/roads/vision-zero/program-overview.aspx.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa says the program is effective, noting NOTL's cameras were never in use around the clock, "contrary to what is in the national and provincial media," he said.

"They were being used in the school zones, as we know — two hours in the morning, two hours in the lunchtime and two hours



The speed camera that was vandalized four times outside Crossroads school is no more, after Ontario Premier Doug Ford scrapped the whole speed cam program. FILE

in the afternoon, when classrooms were departing," he said.

"I thought we were doing a really good job of being very balanced with it," he added.

Zalepa said local safety decisions should be made "by local elected people."

"I think the program was a very good program," he said. "I'm disappointed that that's a lever that we don't have in school safety zones."

In late September, Premier Doug Ford called speed-camera programs in Ontario "nothing more than a cash grab," saying the province would instead financially support municipalities in installing other road-safety tools.

Zalepa said no details have been provided yet on what those alternatives might look like for municipalities.

"That's probably what we'll see in future information coming from the staff," he said.

The District School Board of Niagara said school-zone

safety depends on multiple measures working together.

"Pedestrian and road safety are shared responsibilities," the public board said in an email. "A multi-pronged approach supports safe travel for students and benefits the broader community."

The Niagara Catholic District School Board said it supports automated enforcement and other actions that slow drivers near schools.

"Any action taken to ensure the safety of our school community while they are travelling to school — whether by car, bus, foot, or any other means — is an effective way to support student safety," the Catholic board said in an email.

It said it has not communicated an official position to the province or municipalities and plans to discuss the issue at its next meeting "to determine next steps."

It would not say if it was consulted on the decision.

"We would be willing to work with the province and or local municipalities; how-

ever, school boards are not funded by the province for traffic safety," the Catholic board said.

The public board said it "works to ensure safe and active school travel," partnering with Niagara Student Transportation Services, the Niagara Catholic District School Board, Niagara Regional Police Services, local municipalities and community partners.

It would not say whether it supports automated speed enforcement, has communicated an official position to the province or municipalities, was consulted on the decision, or has any traffic data around Crossroads that it can share.

The public board said throughout the year, it "proactively communicates" with families, "to remind them about safety measures and procedures for safely arriving and departing from school."

The new law does not include any new enforcement measures.

It allows Prabmeet Sarkaria, Minister of Transportation, to direct municipalities to install school-zone signs — and to do the work directly if they don't.

It also protects the province and municipalities from lawsuits or compensation claims tied to the cancellation of speed-camera contracts. Redflex Traffic Systems is the vendor contracted by Niagara Region to supply, maintain and operate the camera systems.

The region would not answer questions about what the repeal means for its contract with Redflex Traffic Systems or any potential financial impacts. By press time, the vendor did not respond to similar questions.

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com

NOTL man charged with string of indecent acts

Staff
The Lake Report

A Niagara-on-the-Lake man has been arrested in connection with a series of indecent acts and assaults reported in Grimsby, St. Catharines and Niagara-on-the-Lake over three days, police say.

Niagara Regional Police said officers received several calls about a man committing indecent acts in the three communities.

Investigators allege a man approached several women at a liquor store in Grimsby, making sexual gestures and comments. In another incident, a woman working at a cannabis store in St. Catharines was assaulted.

Police say the same man also threw a bottle of water at a male employee at a farm in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Detectives with the 1 District (St. Catharines/

Thorold) criminal investigations branch identified a suspect and arrested him on Nov. 10.

Kenneth Bettes, 58, of Niagara-on-the-Lake, is charged with three counts of criminal harassment, assault, committing an indecent act and assault with a weapon.

Police say Bettes remains in custody and is scheduled to appear for a bail hearing on Tuesday at the Robert S.K.

Welch Courthouse in St. Catharines.

Investigators say they believe there may be additional victims.

They are asking anyone with information to contact detectives at 905-688-4111, option 3, extension 1009011, or reach out to Crime Stoppers anonymously.

Bettes is described by police as male, white, six feet tall, weighing 240 pounds, with a shaved head and grey facial hair.

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Indigenous veterans honoured at Queenston ceremony

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

When it comes to the role that Indigenous peoples had in some of Canada's most significant battles, Crystal Haverstock says many Canadians are only beginning now to grasp the depth of their military service.

Haverstock, from the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124, was one of several people who spoke at the Valour and Victory Indigenous Remembrance Day ceremony, which saw its largest crowd yet gather at the Landscape of Nations Memorial in Queenston Heights to honour Indigenous veterans.

The seventh annual ceremony, held on Nov. 8, recognized the bravery and service of Indigenous peoples in conflicts from the War of 1812 to modern times with drumming and statements from local Indigenous and civic leaders.

"A lot of the general public does not understand the part that the



Rick Miller and David McIntyre were honoured for their military service during the Valour and Victory ceremony at Queenston Heights, and set a poppy wreath with a dream catcher at the site in honour of their fellow soldiers. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Indigenous played in war since 1812," Haverstock said. "They fought alongside everyone else, and they had specific skills that nobody else had."

She is also a Mohawk of the Bay of Quinte who traces her lineage to Joseph and John Brant, whose statues are prominent parts of the Landscape of Nations Memorial.

The ceremony featured fire keeper Brian Kon of the Métis Nation, who tended the sacred flame through the cold afternoon.

"Indigenous people have been among the first to sign up whenever there was a world conflict, to serve and protect the land that was theirs," said Kon.

He said remembrance also means confronting the

exclusion that Indigenous veterans faced when they returned home.

"They couldn't go into legions or participate in the ceremonies. It was only in the last couple of decades that Indigenous people were even allowed to lay wreaths at national monuments," said Kon.

Unlike the sombre tone in typical Nov. 11 ceremonies,

Kon said Indigenous Veterans Day usually features traditional drumming and singing to honour one's ancestry.

Rick Hill, Haudenosaunee historian and knowledge specialist at the First Nation Technical Institute, gave the keynote address and connected the day's purpose to his family memory and the collective freedom of all Canadians. He said his grandfather fought in the First World War and his father in the Second World War.

"I stand here today to honour the countless number of my ancestors and their allies who did the very things that I could not do," he said. "They fought so that you and I could live free."

Tim Johnson, president of the Niagara Academy for Indigenous Relations and co-chair of the Landscape of Nations memorial, reminded the crowd that the site itself was built to preserve authentic Indigenous storytelling and ensure it is "protected from

appropriation and guided by authenticity."

Haudenosaunee knowledge keeper Karl Dockstadter opened and closed the ceremony with the thanksgiving address, calling on the community to think beyond one generation.

"I'd like to think that somebody stood here 50 years ago, and 500 years ago, and 5,000 years ago, offering something like this thanksgiving address," said Dockstadter.

Indigenous veterans Rick Miller and David McIntyre were honoured for their military service.

Miller, a Turtle Clan member from Six Nations and paratrooper with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, reflected on his roots and how his Indigenous identity has guided his life.

"That's what made me jump out of that plane," said Miller.

Organizers expect next year's Valour and Victory to draw an even larger gathering as awareness continues to grow.

andrew@niagaranow.com

Veterans celebrated at Legion dinner with reflection on service

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

For Niagara-on-the-Lake's British Army veteran Peter Warrack, remembrance is not only a day on the calendar but a daily duty.

The Legion's annual veterans dinner on Nov. 8 gathered more than 70 guests to share that sentiment.

Held on the second floor of Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124, the dinner brought together veterans, their families, and community leaders, including MP Tony Baldinelli, member of provincial parliament Wayne Gates, and Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa.

The meal was prepared by Legion volunteers, led by Chrystal Haverstock and Paul Dolby, who represented the Legion earlier that day at Queenston Park's Valour & Victory gathering for Indigenous Remembrance Day.



Guests applaud volunteer cook Chrystal Haverstock for preparing the dinner, recognized by Al Howse as one of the night's key contributors. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

Warrack, who served the army in Northern Ireland before moving to Canada, spoke about the cost of freedom and the importance of remembering those who made it possible.

"Without them, we wouldn't be here today.

And on an ongoing basis, without our forces and our peacekeepers, we wouldn't have the life that we live, which is a very privileged one. Sometimes we take it for granted," he said.

Earlier this year, Warrack received the Meritorious

Service Cross for his anti-human trafficking work. He told guests his perspective on loss was shaped by his time in conflict and the friends and colleagues killed in action.

He recalled the constant danger he faced in Northern

Ireland and his decision to start anew in Canada after years under threat.

"I was in Northern Ireland in the police. I was under threat of assassination. A major bank offered me a job in Canada, so I left the police and came here and had a successful career," said Warrack.

Now based in Niagara-on-the-Lake, he continues to advocate for veterans and first responders through his work raising funds for service dogs through the Canadian Veteran Service Dog Unit that supports those living with trauma and post-traumatic stress.

"We take it for granted. We hear about a fatal car crash somewhere and don't realize what that actually looks like, how the first responder has to go home after that and answer, 'How was your day, honey?'" he said.

Legion Branch 124

president Al Howse said the annual dinner is about visibility and connection as much as remembrance.

"It's good for veterans to get out sometimes, especially the older ones. And it's good for them to be seen with their medals and have everyone recognize what they've done," said Howse.

He added that such events remind the town of what has been won and what could still be lost.

"I don't think everybody fully grasps what we have and what we could have lost and what we could still lose. That's why we do this, that's why we always remember," said Howse.

The dinner also served as an early reflection of what would follow days later, as Niagara-on-the-Lake marked another Remembrance Day with quiet reflection.

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Children didn't waste any time after the first snow of the season on Sunday to get out and start playing. On Wagg Road, two snowmen were out greeting passersby. PAIGE SEBURN

NOTL remembers sacrifices of fallen soldiers in Old Town and Queenston ceremonies

Dan Smeenk
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Roy MacLaren knows the cost of serving one's country and the price often paid for peace.

The former federal minister served as a peacekeeper in Hanoi, Vietnam, in the late 1950s, between the French withdrawal and the arrival of American forces.

He said Canadians served alongside Poles and Indians in a coalition trying to maintain peace.

"We didn't succeed — we had a war," he said.

MacLaren was one of many who attended Niagara-on-the-Lake's Remembrance Day ceremony at the Queen Street cenotaph on Tuesday, in recognition of those who were on the frontlines of wars across the world, including the First and Second World Wars, in which 1.7 million Canadians fought.

Uniformed military personnel, politicians and residents gathered Tuesday to remember people like MacLaren — and the many who are no longer here.

NOTL held two ceremonies on a cold, windy day — one on Queen Street in Old Town and another at Queenston — both following a similar format. Each included two minutes of silence, a flag lowering, an address by a local official and a reading of "In Flanders Fields" by air cadet



Crowds gather all around the clock tower cenotaph in Old Town to pay tribute to the many NOTL soldiers who fought and died for our freedoms. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Avery Froese.

Froese, 17, said she had been accepted into police foundations programs at Niagara and Mohawk colleges. She admitted feeling nervous before reciting the famous John McCrae poem, but said the nerves faded once she began.

"There were lots of lessons on how to march, learning how important Remembrance Day is, especially for those that have fallen," she said. "Even though we don't know them, we know their stories and we want to carry that on."

She was joined by fellow 17-year-old cadet Ethan Epp, who hopes to study engineering. He served in the honour guard formation at the cenotaph.

Both cadets have personal connections to the day's meaning. Epp said his fam-

ily came from the Netherlands, while Froese's family fled Germany to avoid the Nazis.

Royal Canadian Legion president Al Howse, who organized the Queen Street ceremony, said he was pleased with how it went.

"We always make little mistakes that only we notice," he said with a laugh. "But things are good."

A military veteran and recipient of the Silver Jubilee Medal, Howse helped with several domestic operations, including the 1976 Montreal Olympics and the 1998 Ice Storm. He said he enjoys meeting others who have served.

"You always recognize each other's groups," he said. "Sometimes we don't talk about the military at all. We just shake hands and say, 'Welcome, glad to see you.'"

Remembrance Day honours all of Canada's veterans, past and present — including MacLaren's father, who served as an artilleryman in the First World War. He fought in the Battle of Passchendaele, where he was badly wounded and nearly joined the 16,000 Canadians killed there in Belgium.

That war claimed 66,000 Canadian lives in total. Another 42,000 died in the Second World War, 516 in Korea and 159 in Afghanistan.

MacLaren said he has learned that peace can come, but often at a heavy cost.

"I was very happy to see the eventual settlement in Vietnam," he said. "But it took a long time and a lot of lives."

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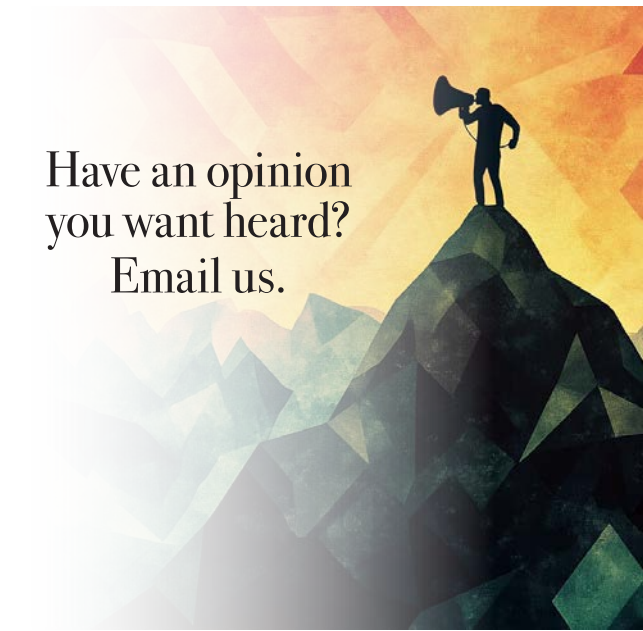
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Barrie Casement, Johyn Leman and Ken Hussey judging one of several entries in the Wonders of Wood's show on Saturday, Nov. 8, which featured hundreds of wood carvings from some of Ontario's artisans. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Carvers find fun an inspiration at Wonders of Wood showcase

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

Carvers from across Ontario gathered at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre last weekend for Wonders of Wood, where intricate creations and heartfelt stories revealed how carving continues to inspire creativity, connection and healing across generations.

Hosted by the Ontario Wood Carver's Association, the weekend event drew artists and visitors from as far as Durham and Peterborough. Organizers say the annual show, now in its second year at the community centre, highlights not just craftsmanship but the deep personal connections forged through carving.

The hall was lined with hundreds of pieces ranging from lifelike wildlife figures to intricate miniatures.

"Wood carving gives people a chance to express artistic talent, to learn a skill, to use their hands, to get off the screen and actually create something of their own," said Barry

Casement, vice president of the Niagara Wood Carvers Association.

He said the association has been part of the region's arts scene for decades, teaching children, creating public art for hospitals and regional buildings and keeping traditional techniques alive. But membership has declined since the pandemic.

"Our biggest problem is getting members, getting the public interested," said Casement. "People are too busy working to afford to live. They haven't got the spare time we had when one job was enough."

Despite challenges, the spirit of the craft has endured. This year's show saw record enthusiasm from both participants and visitors.

Among the winners was adult member Carolina Tapia, whose carving of an Indigenous figure earned a grand prize, and teen carver Caitlyn Deakin, who took home several awards in the youth category.

Former Ontario Wood Carvers president Murray Lincoln, 81, travelled from

Peterborough to attend and share his experiences from his decades in the craft.

"I've been carving since I was seven years old with my grandpa," said Lincoln. "Whenever I needed therapy in life, I carved. It's a lifelong joy."

Lincoln, owner of Misty Hollow Carving Shop, has taught hundreds of students over the years and said the art form can profoundly change lives.

His display table featured one of his most meaningful pieces — a wooden greyhound carved years ago by a man recovering from a massive stroke, who Lincoln once helped. The man's family later gave the carving to Lincoln after his passing.

"He thought he was worthless. I built him a tool so he could carve, and his first piece was this greyhound dog. That carving later won a ribbon at the (Canadian National Exhibition). It gave him back his purpose," said Lincoln.

For some, carving has helped ease trauma and pain. Lincoln said his

"comfort birds," small carvings designed to fit in the palm of a hand, have brought peace to seniors, children with autism and veterans with post-traumatic stress.

John Molinaro, the current president of the Ontario Wood Carvers Association, said the growing interest in hands-on creativity is vital in the digital age.

"This is a hand-done hobby, and we need more people to do hand work," said Molinaro. "There's a lot of computer stuff and a lot of work with your thumbs. We can use all fingers."

Organizers hope the success of this year's event inspires new carvers to join local clubs and that the momentum could one day lead to a national carving association.

Those interested in learning to carve can contact the Ontario Wood Carvers Association through its website and connect with a nearby club offering classes and weekly sessions.

andrew@niagaranow.com



Left: Bob Warkenton shows off some of his work. Right: Murray Lincoln displays his carvings. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Town settles with York Road property developer

Dan Smeenk
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

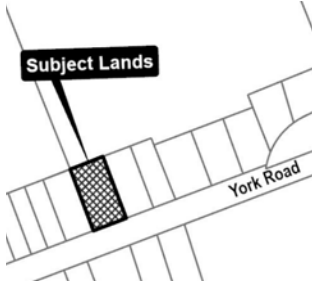
Niagara-on-the-Lake is looking to settle a dispute with a Niagara-based homebuilder after he appealed to allow for specific exceptions to development plans for his property near Queenston.

The builder, Christopher Adams of Newcastle Communities, owns 2052 York Rd. and is looking to build another house on his property. In late July, he applied for a minor variance that would have allowed him to increase the building's façade and cut back the minimum lot frontage.

A minor variance allows a property owner an exception to a town bylaw if the change is considered minor enough not to require a zoning amendment.

The town's committee of adjustment denied the request in September, ruling that this change "is not minor in nature" and not appropriate for the development of this land.

Adams appealed that decision on Oct. 14, leading



to council's discussion on Oct. 28.

Council chose to try and settle to avoid a battle at the Ontario Land Tribunal, which some councillors said would be costly and difficult to win.

"It doesn't make sense to go to a hearing you can't win at," said Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa.

Staff gave the town three options. The first two involved using the town's legal counsel and an external planner to either defend the committee of adjustment's decision or negotiate a settlement with the applicant.

The third option involved settling by accepting staff's recommendation to approve the minor variances.

Council supported the second option: negotiating a settlement, which would be presented to the Ontario

Land Tribunal. Coun. Gary Burroughs, however, argued they should challenge the appeal.

I'm sure that the issue of (the) huge cost of legal defence will come up again in discussions," he said.

"But as I understand this particular property ... the applicant is recommending 60-foot lots and that is just not anywhere in that neighbourhood."

Couns. Maria Mavridis and Sandra O'Connor agreed with Burroughs, both saying the committee made the right decision.

Council remained divided. Coun. Wendy Cheropita supported the third option, saying while she respects the committee of adjustment, she would prefer to go with staff's decision.

"We'd better have some, enough facts and enough evidence so that we are actually going to win this, which I don't think we will, given the evidence that staff have put forward," she said.

Cheropita later questioned whether the town could find an external planner to mediate.

Coun. Adriana Vizzari

asked about the costs of each option.

Kirsten McCauley, director of community and development services, said using only the town's legal services would be the least expensive option.

"It is quite a bit more expensive when you add an external planning consultant and you are adding the full hearing," McCauley said.

O'Connor said Adams should have gone through a different process.

"It would have been better served to have gone through re-zoning," she said.

Local contractor Nicholas Colaneri, who spoke at the committee of adjustment hearing, told The Lake Report he disagreed with council's decision.

"They (council) chose to settle, which was the wrong decision," he said. "I can now do the same thing and say, 'Hey, hang on, you can't deny me because you approved this one over here.'"

Christopher Adams said, "We have not heard from the town as of recent and will likely await their counsel to contact ours."

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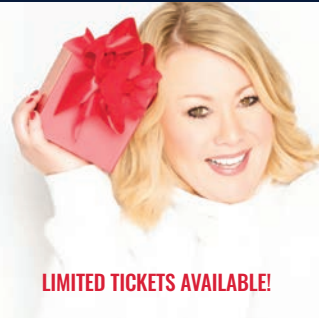


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Feds give the NOTL Museum a \$2M boost for its expansion plans

Dan Smeenk
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum is getting a major boost for its renovation and expansion project, securing \$2 million from the Government of Canada.

The funding announcement on Wednesday was celebrated at the museum on Castlereagh Street, where MPs Chris Bittle and Tony Baldinelli attended the event.

Bittle, a Liberal representing St. Catharines, and Baldinelli, a Conservative representing Niagara Falls, which includes Niagara-on-the-Lake, helped the museum obtain the funding.

Baldinelli told The Lake Report he wrote a letter of support when the town formally applied for the grant, while Bittle helped secure the funding as part of the governing party.

"I was pleased to assist," said Baldinelli. "Not only because I'm the local



NOTL Museum curator Sarah Kaufman says this \$2 million funding was a long time coming — efforts to secure the grant took well over a year. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

member of parliament but because I believe in what they're doing here."

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said the event showed that collaboration between parties is possible.

"Everyone thinks that par-

tisanship is so tight, I see it really work not only locally — both parties work really close together," Zalepa said.

Museum CEO and curator Sarah Kaufman became emotional during her remarks, saying the funding

was a long time coming and that she was grateful for the support.

Kaufman told The Lake Report the effort to secure the grant took "well over a year."

"It was long," she said

with a laugh. "It was a lot of work for staff and for our volunteers to get the community funds where they needed to be in order to apply for the grant. The town of NOTL's funding is what really put us over the edge."

Town council approved \$500,000 in conditional funding for the project in July, contingent on the federal grant being approved.

The decision sparked debate at the time, but Coun. Andrew Niven, who also serves on the museum's board, said it ultimately showed "people cared."

"It shows we made the right decision," said Niven.

Niven said he, Zalepa, Kaufman, and museum board president Susan May Wery — who also attended Wednesday's event — met with Bittle and Baldinelli about eight months ago to share their vision.

"Right away, it wasn't a question of 'We'll wait and see.' It was like 'How can we help?'" he said.

Kaufman said she hopes

construction on the expansion will begin next year, but declined to provide further details on the fundraising total.

The project will include new gallery space, areas for community programming and educational activities, upgraded collections storage and an elevator to improve accessibility between floors.

The museum has also received major donations from both for-profit and non-profit organizations, including \$150,000 from the RBC Foundation to support the elevator project and \$100,000 over five years from the Rotary Club.

Kaufman said she expects another \$20,000 from the Holiday House Tour event on Dec. 7.

MPP Wayne Gates, Zalepa, Couns. Wendy Cheropita and Gary Burroughs, and Sean Simpson — owner of two Simpson's Pharmacy locations and leader of the fundraising campaign — also attended the event.

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Senior planner leaving NOTL for Grimsby

Dan Smeenk
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

After more than three years at the helm of Niagara-on-the-Lake's development department, Kirsten McCauley, the director of community and development services, is departing from the town to take on a new municipal role a couple of towns over in Grimsby.

The Town of NOTL announced Friday that McCauley's last day in her current role will be Wednesday, Nov. 26. The town has not yet named a replacement.

"Niagara-on-the-Lake is a wonderful place," McCauley said in a news release. "I feel so lucky to have been part of the town and I have truly appreciated the support from council and the leadership team."

In the release, the town credited McCauley for her part in driving forward municipal projects such as the



Kirsten McCauley has spent the last three-and-a-half years as the town's director of community and development services and was praised for her professionalism. She is moving on to Grimsby, and her last day is Nov. 26. FILE

development of a secondary plan for Glendale, which will determine the future of the community's development, the town's new official plan, set to be finalized early next year, and a review and expansion of Old Town's heritage conservation district boundaries, among other initiatives.

"I am proud of all the work accomplished during my time here, and I know that the community and development services team will continue to do great work and deliver on

council's strategic plan," she said.

McCauley joined the Town of NOTL in 2022 after a career of working in the Niagara region and Hamilton.

She worked as a planner for the Township of West Lincoln from 2003 to 2007, then spent a decade with the City of Hamilton, primarily in community and recreation planning.

She joined Niagara Region in 2017, serving as a senior planner focused on secondary plans before join-

ing the Town of NOTL in March 2022, taking over the role of director of community and development services from Craig Larmour.

Town staff praised McCauley's leadership and teamwork.

"Her professionalism, collaborative approach, and passion for community development have elevated our planning and development services and set a strong foundation for the future," said chief administrative officer Nick Ruller in the release.

"She will be greatly missed, both personally and professionally."

The director of community and development services is a senior position within the town's administration. The department advises council on building, alteration and development in the community, and understands related policies, bylaws, agreements and permits.

daniel@niagaranow.com



It is with heavy hearts that we share the passing of Dr. Glenn Wicks, one of our valued doctors and a cherished member of our team. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Dr. Judy Wicks who is also a beloved part of our office. We kindly ask for your patience, understanding and respect as we grieve together. 



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Farmer threatens town over flooding tied to municipal drain

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Repeated flooding on a Niagara-on-the-Lake farm has pushed grower Michael Watson to give the Town of NOTL an ultimatum.

After offering the town an Oct. 31 deadline to outline concrete steps to fix the problem, warning he'd take legal action if it didn't, he's now giving it until Nov. 30 to provide a full report before he files a formal information request and takes the first steps in opening up what could be a lawsuit.

Watson says the flooding on his farm happens because water from west of Concession 4 is running into the Szockyj drain, although it's not supposed to.

The town says those areas were built to drain the other way — toward storm ponds, not into the drain.

But major flooding hit Watson's property twice in 2024, he said: on Jan. 26 and July 10.

It damaged hundreds of young peach trees, about 20 to 30 per cent of his greenhouse production area and a third-party truck with electronics inside, and caused lasting humidity problems.

Watson estimates five to ten acres of orchard and

field production space, plus two acres of "critical infrastructure, such as loading docks and parking area," have been affected.

"We want the water entering the Szockyj drain — that should not be — to be redirected, as it should be. Not to flood our farms," he told The Lake Report.

He's asking the town to provide a detailed report by Nov. 30 — covering all correspondence, meetings, inspections, surveys and maintenance related to the Szockyj drain since January 2024 — warning that if it doesn't, he'll file an extensive Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act request to obtain those records, noting he'd pursue other legal remedies, including a statement of claim, if the issue wasn't solved after Dec. 1.

Watson said he's still figuring out how much damage the flooding did in financial terms. He added that he held off on planting specialty crops this year until the situation with the drain is resolved.

The town is aware of "isolated flooding events" connected to the drain "during severe weather occurrences," said Darren MacKenzie, the town's acting director of public works and infrastructure.

Staff reviewed drainage



Farmer Michael Watson stands knee-deep in water in his farm's loading dock, demonstrating how storm runoff overwhelms the drainage system during heavy rainfall. The flooding, he says, has repeatedly damaged his crops and equipment. PAIGE SEBURN

patterns and stormwater infrastructure in the area after rain, storm and melt events in 2024 led nearby residents to raise concerns.

Several solutions were studied, including both piped and open-ditch options, but only a piped system was found to be "technically viable," said MacKenzie.

Alternative connections are still being investigated by staff, "including through existing storm infrastructure along Loretta Drive," to see if rerouting is possible, "without contravening watershed boundaries outlined in the 2005 report."

In Watson's Oct. 29 email addressed to the town's

irrigation and drainage superintendent, Brandon Enns, he said town staff had discussed several costly options to redirect water.

However, an implementation timeline for the latest solution proposed "was not something you were able to commit to as of yesterday," he wrote.

"Therefore, I am going to provide you dates that I am prepared to commit to, regarding my next steps."

It was then that he gave staff the Oct. 31 and Nov. 30 deadlines for action.

Watson said he met with Enns several times and had three meetings with staff at town offices between

February 2024 and this past August.

Issuing a cease-and-desist notice over email to Enns on Feb. 13 — to stop directing waters from the subdivision into the west lateral of the Szockyj drain — Watson then agreed on March 20 to hold off until the end of November, as Enns and his colleagues had committed to finding a solution during their meeting that day.

MacKenzie said staff looked at engineering drawings, design briefs and the 2005 Szockyj drain engineer's report "to better understand flow patterns and identify potential contributing factors."

It determined that water from the developed lands west of Concession 4 was designed to drain westward toward storm ponds, rather than into the Szockyj drain.

The town also hired engineering consultant K. Smart Associates to reassess the 2005 report and evaluate options for redirecting water.

Watson said he's tried to stay patient through years of meetings and correspondence with town staff.

"Like many farmers in Niagara-on-the-Lake — who invest their time and equity so others will have food security (and) endure many challenges and obstacles, striving to be successful — I recognize stress that farming can deliver to some," he said, calling the stress "often a silent killer in our industry."

"I am not happy having to take a legal approach, but I am certain justice will prevail — eventually."

The town said it inspects and maintains the drain and communicates "regularly" with affected landowners "as part of routine maintenance," MacKenzie said.

"Staff remain in contact with drainage consultants to determine next steps, which may include updating the engineer's report."

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Town pauses heritage designation of homes

Dan Smeen
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

After two Old Town residents found themselves in a bind with their insurance companies while looking to officially make their homes heritage properties, the town is freezing the designation of their homes.

Niagara-on-the-Lake council voted last Thursday to pause the heritage designation of two dock area properties after homeowners Barbara Worthy and Jim Reynolds spoke to council about how their insurance companies were looking to hike their premiums because their properties would be designated as heritage homes.

Worthy, who came to council speaking about her property at 116 Delater St., questioned why individual homeowners must "bear the brunt" of heritage ownership.



Barbara Worthy talks about problems with the insurance industry and heritage homes. DAN SMEENK

"I support heritage," she said, noting her role as community engagement co-ordinator at the NOTL Museum. "It's kind of strange that I have to be here challenging this."

The discussion followed a municipal heritage committee report from Oct. 1 recommending that the properties be designated.

Council told staff to look into insurance rate impacts and report their findings to both the municipal heritage committee and council.

Reynolds said his insurance premiums with Intact Insurance rose sharply after he and his wife merely inquired about designation for his property at 120 Delater St.

"I think they're looking for ways to shed as much risk as possible," Reynolds told council, speaking about the insurance companies. "Things are evolving quickly in the area of insurance."

He added that 112 Delater St., owned by Bruce Howard and Andrew Cardarelli, was also slated for designation, but the owners withdrew after being told they would lose coverage.

Reynolds supported investigating insurance company practices and suspending heritage designations if no affordable insurance options exist.

"We don't want to see the concept of heritage designation sullied by putting property owners in an impossible financial bind," he said. "An uninsured property is worthless property."

Worthy said her insurer told her she would not have "adequate insurance," offering only coverage for the home's "cash value with depreciation."

"They had very little knowledge about their own policies," she said. "That was very disturbing."

Council members expressed support for the homeowners. Coun. Wendy Cheropita thanked them for sharing their experiences.

"I'm glad the delegations have come forward tonight," she said, "because this is information we didn't have before."

Cheropita also praised the homeowners for their commitment to heritage preservation.

daniel@niagaranow.com



NOTICE OF COMPLETE APPLICATION, OPEN HOUSE AND PUBLIC MEETING

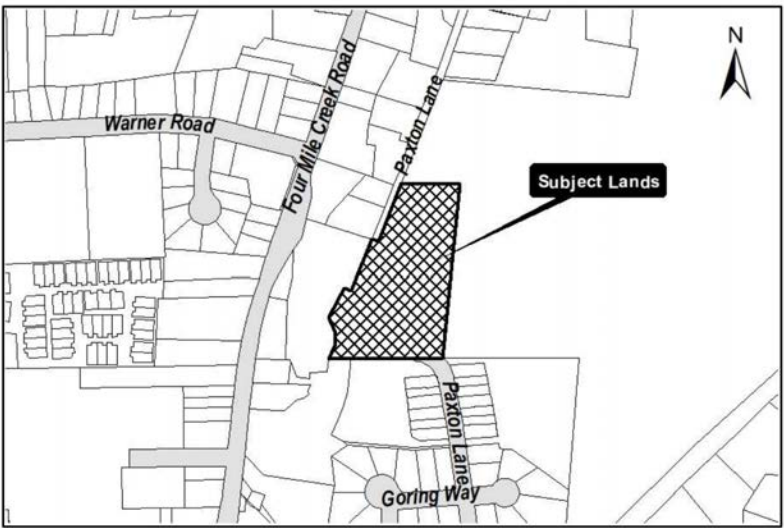
- What:** Notice of **Complete Application, Open House** and **Public Meeting** for a **Zoning By-law Amendment to apply a Holding (H) Symbol** (under Sections 34 and 36 of the *Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.13*, as amended).
- When:** Open House: **Monday, November 24, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.**
Public Meeting: **Tuesday, December 2, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.**
- Where:** Open House: Electronically via the directions below
Public Meeting: In-person at the Town Hall, Council Chambers, 1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil, or electronically via the directions below
- Regarding:** File No. ZBA-25-2025 – 46 Paxton Lane, Niagara-on-the-Lake

What is this?

An application has been received for a Zoning By-law Amendment on the subject lands (see location map), identified as Block 18 within of the Draft Plan of Subdivision known as The Settlement at St. Davids (Extension). The Draft Plan of Subdivision was approved by the Ontario Municipal Board (now Ontario Land Tribunal) on August 16, 2013 (Case PL130165).

The application proposes to amend the “Open Space (OS-14) Site-Specific Zone” on Block 18 to include a “Holding (H)” symbol to preclude any development from occurring within Block 18, until such time as a development application for the lands has been approved and a clearance letter from the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism has been issued confirming that the site has been cleared of archaeological potential.

The application is related to the concurrent request to Modify the Approved Draft Plan of Subdivision on the subject lands (Town File No. 26T-18-25-02), which, among other modifications, proposes to remove the Condition of Draft Plan Approval requiring the conveyance of Block 18 to the Town for the protection of archaeological resources. The applicant would retain ownership of Block 18 for future development, upon removal of the proposed “Holding (H)” symbol.



Dialogue is encouraged:

You are invited to attend the Open House and 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.

The Open House will continue to be held electronically at this time.

If you wish to participate electronically at the Open House or 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 Open House and/or Public Meeting on your computer, tablet or telephone.

- **Open House – Connor MacIsaac (connor.macisaac@notl.com or 905-468-3266 ext. 313)**
(register as soon as possible but prior to 12 noon on Monday, November, 24 2025)
- **Public Meeting – Clerks Department (clerks@notl.com or 905-468-3266)**
(register as soon as possible but prior to 12 noon on Monday, December 1, 2025)

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

If you wish to view the Open House and/or 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 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 application and supporting documents for the proposal may be obtained on the Town’s website at <https://www.notl.com/business-development/public-planning-notices>, or at the Community and Development Services Department within Town Hall. Please contact Connor MacIsaac, Planner II, at 905-468-6430 or via email at connor.macisaac@notl.com if additional information is required.

If you wish to be notified of the future decision with respect to the application, 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:

- a) Is not entitled to appeal the decision of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake to the Ontario Land Tribunal; and
- b) 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.

Please note that third party appeals are restricted for this application as per Bill 185, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024. *Planning Act* appeals may be filed by the applicant, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, a “specified person” (as defined by the *Planning Act 1(1)*), and any “public body” (as defined by the *Planning Act 1(1)*).

Dated at the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, November 13, 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 Smeenck, Kyra Simone, Tim Taylor, Jill Troyer, Garth Turner, Dave Van de Laar, Joanne Young and many more members of the community.

Canada 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.



#53: When visiting a graveyard, take an extra bouquet of flowers and place them on a veteran's grave thanking them for serving and making your life more peaceful.

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



Contributed by Patty Garriock
"Fill the world with music, love and pride."
- Lin-Manuel Miranda

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THE Little George

Mini-model maker Leslie Mann holds his model of the Royal George Theatre.
DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Opinion

Why NOTL has a math problem



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner
Columnist



One in 10 Old Town houses is a ghost rental and more may be coming, thanks to the Airbnb lobby. GARTH TURNER

You're good. In fact, a freeze on new rentals has just been lifted.

That's prompted more debate. A certain crusty columnist has taken shrapnel in the crossfire for suggesting houses should be for families, not Trump refugees.

"As former minister of national revenue, Turner should have a good financial sense and understand the economics of owning a home and why long-term rentals are scarce — and why short-term rentals make sense in a town like ours," says Jason Clements.

Besides being snooty, he's a realtor, the owner (with spouse) of a local property management company for short-term rentals, a former B&B operator, marketing guy for the local industry and part of the town's advisory board on this hoary issue.

So, Jason, school me. "Let's start with the math," he says. "The average home price in Niagara-on-the-Lake is about \$1.2 million. The mortgage payment alone would exceed

\$4,000 per month, with another \$1,000 for property taxes and roughly \$300 for insurance. That's before considering maintenance, utilities, or a down payment easily exceeding \$200,000."

"A landlord renting that same home for \$3,000 a month would lose money. And they must still account for vacancies, repairs and the risks of Ontario's heavily one-sided Landlord and Tenant Act. The numbers simply don't work. So when critics point to high rents and claim property owners are greedy, they overlook the real issue: it's expensive to own a home here."

You bet, so turning a house into a commercial enterprise is far more profitable than renting it out to a couple, their kid and golden retriever. In a world that's all about money, it makes perfect sense.

But it's also true that by embracing unhosted rentals the town has increased the market value of properties — making them too costly to rent to that family.

But wait, says Jason. This

is a tourist town. Always has been. Always will be. It's why we have a vibrant economy, so suck it up.

"Anyone moving to Niagara-on-the-Lake should understand what kind of community they're joining. Just as those who live in the rural areas accept the sounds of bird bangers during harvest season, residents in town should recognize that NOTL is — and always has been — a tourist community."

Bird bangers equal tourists. He said it, not me. But phooey, counters Bob Bader.

He's a longtime passionate foe of uber-development, tree massacres and all things Marotta — as well as short-term rentals. Already, he says, 10 per cent of the entire Old Town housing stock has been consumed by folks like Jason. And the town just made it worse after a confusing meeting that lifted the freeze and bowed to the Airbnb cartel.

"By the time this gets around to another decision, maybe 20 per cent of housing in Old Town will be short-term rentals," Bader said in his very paper last week, "...a great way to deal with the housing crisis and keep the full-time residents of NOTL happy."

Meanwhile the construction at Parliament Oak continues. What was a school will be a ballroom. But that's OK. No kids left.

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

garth@garth.ca

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Press pause on school boundary change

The following letter was sent to the members of the District School Board of Niagara. A copy was forwarded to The Lake Report for publication.

Dear members of the District School Board of Niagara,

Thank you for your recent communication outlining the process and rationale behind the boundary change affecting students at St. Davids and Crossroads public schools.



Portables sit outside St. Davids Public School, where enrolment continues to exceed capacity. FILE

However, we must express our profound concern and disappointment with both the manner and the accelerated timeline in which this significant decision was made.

It is difficult to comprehend how a decision with such profound implications for the mental health and well-being of growing children could be executed in such a compressed time frame.

As documented in school communications, St. Davids Public School families were first informed on Oct. 7 that information regarding solutions to overcrowding would be made available on Oct. 20, via a report presented at the board's program and planning committee meeting.

Critically, this meeting was not a public forum for input, and the boundary change was approved by the committee without any meaningful consultation with the community that would be most directly and significantly affected,

namely, the families of Niagara on the Green.

Within a span of just two to three weeks, the lives and daily realities of many children and families were upended by a decision made without their voices being heard.

The abruptness of this process left families with no real opportunity to share their perspectives, raise concerns, or participate in shaping a solution that directly impacts their children's educational experience and sense of belonging.

As a result, many feel that a major change has been imposed upon them, rather than developed with them. Further, the way this boundary change has been rolled out by the Board has left many Niagara on the Green students feeling as though they are being kicked out or excluded from St. Davids Public School.

This perception is deeply troubling and could have been avoided. If there

had been an opportunity for genuine consultation and open discussion with the community from the outset, the messaging and transition could have been handled with much greater sensitivity and care, reducing anxiety and fostering a sense of inclusion rather than exclusion.

The board's current approach appears to prioritize operational expediency over the holistic needs of students.

The practice of implementing boundary changes first and dealing with transition challenges only after the fact is, in our view, fundamentally unethical. It disregards the emotional, social, and academic impacts such abrupt transitions can have on children, and places undue stress on families who must scramble to adapt to new circumstances with little notice or support.

There is a critical need for a clear, robust policy, or an immediate update to existing policy, requiring

that any boundary change proposal affecting large numbers of families, and especially young children, must be accompanied by a comprehensive transition plan.

This plan should be developed in collaboration with the affected community, incorporating their feedback and addressing their concerns before any final decision is made.

Only through such a process can the board fulfill its ethical and legal obligation to serve the best interests of its students.

We respectfully request that the board suspend or pause the implementation of this boundary change, engage in genuine consultation with the Niagara on the Green community, and then commit to developing a transition plan in partnership with those most affected before any such changes are approved and realized.

We urge the board to recognize that decisions of this magnitude must not be made in isolation or haste. The well-being of children, the stability of families and the integrity of the educational process all demand a more thoughtful, inclusive, and transparent approach.

Thank you for your attention to these urgent concerns.

Priya Litt
(on behalf of the Niagara on the Green community)
Glendale

Thanks for supporting our pumpkin patch

Dear editor:

Thank you to everyone that bought pumpkins from our wagon on Concession 7. We had a great crop this year with lots of beautiful pumpkins.

Your kind generosity raised \$3,500. All proceeds will be shared between McMaster Children's Hospital and Ronald McDonald House.

Thank you for your support!

**Reid & Gabrielle,
Brook & Brandon,
Peg & Steve Watson
NOTL**



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

This Tesla load-hauling vehicle has invited DeLorean comparisons with its angular, stainless steel body.

Last issue category: "BAD" LANGUAGE

Clue: This racquet sport developed after British Army officers played a game called poona in India in the 1860s.

Answer: What is badminton?

Answered first by: Sue Rautenberg

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Lynda Collet, Bob Wheatley, Jane Morris, Jane Andersen, Jesse Agnew, Jim Dandy, Jeff Lake, Wade Durling, Claudia Grimwood, Kimberly Amaral, Susan Dewar, David Spencer, Tuija Johansson, Katie Reimer, Catherine Clarke, Daniel Smith, Marla Percy, Rob Hutchison

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

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NEW!

An ode to those who've given everything to their country



ARCHITEXT

Brian Marshall
Columnist

I have a Remembrance Day tradition, which began a long time ago and half a continent away.

I was a guest in a gathering at the home of a Canadian veteran who had been disabled by a gunshot wound suffered during his tour as a peacekeeper in Cyprus.

Back in those days, for some inexplicable reason, the bureaucrats in Veterans Affairs considered a gunshot wound taken during peacekeeping “different” than the same injury occurring during a war and that difference resulted in reduced disability benefits and services.

Now, one would think that the running battle with Veterans Affairs may have made this man bitter — and he was — but only toward the faceless bureaucrats in



On Nov. 11, Brian Marshall remembers those lost.

Ottawa.

You see, he was immensely proud of his regiment, his years in the military and the country he served.

And this pride was equally reflected in those attending the gathering — all of whom were career soldiers.

As the evening progressed and the whisky flowed, the conversation turned to reminiscing about tours they had served, missions they had accomplished, those they had served with and those soldiers who had given their health — sometimes their lives — “standing on guard” for their country.

By the time that gathering ended in the very wee hours of the morning, I carried from it an ode written about those soldiers and all the others like them I had

known.

So, on every Nov. 11 since that day, I have shared the evening with a bottle of whisky, those memories and the words that were written down that evening.

It is not a great (or even passably good) composition but every soldier who has read the words has asked for a copy.

Somehow, despite the flaws, it speaks to a shared experience and honours the sacrifice of those who served.

Remember through your words and actions those who have given much — or given all — for this country and our way of life. They have left it in your hands.

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

Amber Teardrops

Still whisky in the bottle
Enough to fill a glass
And raise it to the images
That stare out of the past
The black of night beginning
Cause sunset's come at last
The soldier salutes everyone
Who's walked the iron path
For a hero is just someone
Who doesn't count the cost
And in the trackless wilderness
Has met and loved and lost
With open arms embraced the ice
That fear knives in your heart
And hell is just another place
In which their loved ones fought
So raise another glass and toast
The mirror's empty eyes
A reflection can mean nothing
It can be chock full of lies
Or a picture can be everything
Can say a million words
Depends on who is looking
And what the watcher's heard.
There is a crystal moment
A boy becomes a man
It isn't tween her silken thighs
Nor a gun placed in his hand
It isn't when he kills a man
Nor facing nightmare's rage
It's in the second realized
Survivors love not hate
While there isn't any silence
When the reaper comes to call

There never is an enemy
That isn't fully mourned
You cannot fight the battle
Until you know the man
You cannot leave the dead behind
You hold them in your hands
How many empty chairs are there
How many folded flags
How many children's fathers gone
How many absent wives
How many times a man can't count
How many lives been spent
How many names are carved in stone
Too many of whom went.
Love your enemy as yourself
Cause one of you will die
And he who knows the other best
Is likely to survive
It's those that draw another breath
Pour whisky in their glass
And offer amber teardrops up
To all of those who passed
But know you this my brothers
I'd never change my life
Cause everyone I've loved who's gone
I carry in my mind
There's joy inside the sadness
And a smile within the tears
Every one a hero
Remembered as a saint.
Still whisky in my bottle
So I'll pour another glass
And offer amber teardrops up
To all of those who've passed.



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Perhaps they should start calling it ‘poppy love’



ROSS'S RAMBLINGS

Ross Robinson
Columnist

The red poppy was made famous by Colonel John McCrae's poem "In Flanders Fields" way back during the First World War. It is loved so much by so many people.. And not just Canadians.

Earlier this month, I spent several hours distributing poppies in front of the LCBO and the Valumart (I know, I know, the Independent), on Queen Street in Old Town. Many other locals were involved, and in general, the weather co-operated this year.

Apparently, poppies have been worn in Canada since 1921, and poppy proceeds support programs of the Royal Canadian Legion. Volunteers at branches across our spacious nation

participate every year, and we must not take big and national efforts like this for granted.

Especially in our current world, seemingly so divided and torn over so many issues, it was gratifying to learn that love for the poppy is universal. There is such affection and warmth regarding the wee red flower with the black dot in the middle. People from many countries stopped by to make a donation and get their poppy.

A surprising number had a short personal vignette to share with me. Often about a family member who had served. Or is serving now. During my time on "poppy duty," not one person, of any age or with any accent, shared a negative thought. It was totally love, affection and fondness around the poppy.

How gratifying to learn there is something upon which we all seem to agree. We should call it "poppy love."

But led by social media and other news channels that influence our thinking today, even the poppy has been forced into the limelight this week. Is



Peter Wright helps arrange poppies on the lawn of the NOTL Museum. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

nothing sacred?

As is my habit, I have rambled into this issue. Some Canadian court officials have supported "the discretionary power of judges to ban legal staff from wearing poppies on their clothing."

So I will ask again, "Is nothing sacred any longer?" Just what is the relevance of the poppy?

My poppy research took me to an article by Jamie Sarkonak in the National Post dated Nov. 8, 2025. I quote her lead paragraph:

"The poppy is a symbol of remembrance that's supposed to transcend political tiffs, honouring those who sacrificed their lives to ensure Canada's continued existence. And yet, to some judges in the country, it's now considered so political that it must be banned from the courtroom."

Thankfully, some sanity seems to have entered the conversation. A spokesman for Ontario Attorney General Doug Downey told the National Post that

me that so many Aussies have served side by side with Canadians.

A couple from India donated more than enough for two poppies, to remember our veterans for military service back in their country during the Second World War. And for peacekeeping efforts more recently.

Let's remember here that Canada's former prime minister Lester Bowles Pearson was awarded a Nobel Prize for peace in 1957, for his efforts with the United Nation Peacekeeping Force to solve the Suez Crisis.

My wandering mind had me humming, "And they call it puppy love." This led to "And they call it poppy love."

We Canadians never miss an opportunity to remind people that Ottawa's own Paul Anka had a massive hit with this song in 1960. He apparently wrote it while thinking about Mouseketeer Annette Funicello.

Still with me? How about another factoid I learned this week? Dolly Parton wrote this much-loved song in 1959, when she was only 13 years old.

rossrocket9@gmail.com

Is this town council's 'final answer' on 2026 budget?



BOTTOM LINE

Steve McGuinness
Columnist

The town's budget office recently unveiled its initial 2026 base budget proposal, which must be finalized by Dec. 3. Councillors have until Nov. 17 to propose amendments.

This new budget process is more compressed and accelerated than in prior years. This change was imposed on May 1 when the province conferred strong mayor powers on our town without voter consent. It consolidates and vests power in a small cabal of town treasury staff, plus the CAO, lord mayor and deputy lord mayor.

Last week, in the article "Town aims to keep 2026 tax hike low at 1.81 per

cent," Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, while expressing a preference for governing collaboratively, refused to rule out using his veto power. His comments are puzzling.

There will be a full open council meeting where any proposed amendments will be voted up or down on a simple majority basis. The one-on-one backroom meetings he proposed with councillors are unnecessary.

We will know with certainty whether council consensus in favour of any amendments coalesces before the eight-day mayor veto period begins. Amendments would only be open to veto if they pass council on a greater than 50 per cent basis.

The base budget is flawed in many respects. First, it fails to bring spending levels back into line with general price inflation and fails to generate sufficient new revenues to balance against a seven per cent expense hike.

Second, one-time reserve releases from surplus are used to artificially reduce the property tax increase



In the words of Regis Philbin, Steve McGuinness asks council, "Is that your final answer?" SOURCED

down to 1.81 per cent. This creative financial engineering is manipulative and unsustainable beyond the upcoming election year.

Are incumbent councillors supporting this sleight of hand to enhance their re-election chances, gambling on our gullibility, to buy votes?

Third, the rate of increase in the current operating account transfer to the capital account is shrinking, relative to prior years. For the first three years of this term, council claimed to have

inherited an infrastructure deficit necessitating steep tax hikes.

But these hefty increases have, in fact, proven unnecessary. We've actually experienced favourable unbudgeted non-tax revenues to pad our surplus.

So, suddenly, the budget office is now dramatically reversing course, raiding that surplus to minimize this year's tax increase.

Municipal accommodation tax (MAT) revenues (the room taxes paid by tourists) are still not being optimized to fund capital improvements. They could alternatively, for example, seed construction of an indoor pool. There is also room to hike our four per cent MAT rate upwards toward the Toronto rate (temporarily hiked from six to 8.5 per cent). Finally, there's our fair share of new municipal infrastructure funding commitments announced in last week's federal budget, which are unbudgeted.

Fourth, the budget squanders an opportunity to generate additional planning application fees by

unlocking full-cost recovery pricing.

Instead of meeting this Planning Act requirement full on, council hedges by capping the increases at averages charged in surrounding municipalities. This cap, ostensibly to enhance competitiveness, should be lifted.

Otherwise, taxpayers will continue to subsidize planning department costs that are more appropriately passed through to the wealthy developers consuming these town services.

Shockingly, our planning application fees have not been increased in the last 20 years. That massive loss is unrecoverable now. But we can at least recover full costs going forward.

A motion to move in that direction failed to move forward at council after chief administrative officer Nick Ruller advised that staff needed a 90-day time extension to revise the fee recommendations upwards.

Lord Mayor Zalepa has also blamed the previous council for the extra legal fees and lawsuit settlement costs flowing from

their prudent decisions to constrain development. It's doubtful those extra expenses were included in the cost base the town consultant proposes charging back.

Developers make site acquisition and building location decisions based on balanced considerations. The differences in planning application fees across municipalities are not a material motivating factor.

Commercial developers want to build here in NOTL to capture a larger consumer market base, compromising both tourists and residents. That's why the Niagara Outlets mall, our biggest taxpayer, is here. Most surrounding municipalities cannot match NOTL's three million tourists a year competitive advantage.

I hope this isn't NOTL's final budget answer. It can and should be improved.

Steve McGuinness was a senior adviser to major financial institutions during his Bay Street career and is now retired in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Send your personal finance questions to him at smcgfinplan@gmail.com.

2025

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Learn about NOTL’s non-profits on Nov. 19

Dan Smeenk
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Community Day is returning this year, giving residents and newcomers a chance to connect with local not-for-profit organizations. Hosted by the Niagara-on-the-Lake Newcomers Association, this event will see participating organizations set up information tables inside the NOTL Community Centre for people to learn about local services, see which ones might meet their needs, or find volunteer opportunities.

Megan Wood, president of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Newcomers Association, which organizes the event, said they’ve been running it for several years, with about 30 not-for-profit groups registered to participate. “The goal is to bring all the not-for-profit organizations that are available to people in NOTL,” she said. “It’s kind of a one-stop shop.” “Many of the not-for-profits ... get volunteers from the community,” said Wood. “People who want to offer their time can learn



Jeannie Manning, left, and Mike Clarke of the NOTL Rotary Club at last year’s Community Day hosted by the NOTL Newcomers Club. This year’s Community Day will be back at the NOTL Community Centre on Nov. 19. SUBMITTED

about the organizations and then sign up for volunteering. So, we certainly see a lot of that.” Wood said many vendors return each year: “They wouldn’t do it if it wasn’t helpful to their organization.” Attendees will be welcomed at the door, she added, noting that the sense of connection and goodwill is what organizers aim for. “It’s a great offering to the community,” said Wood. Community Day takes

place Nov. 19 from 1 to 3 p.m. at the NOTL Community Centre. Participating organizations include the River-Brink Art Museum, NOTL Library, Writers’ Circle, NOTL Palliative Care, NOTL Historical Society and Museum, Friends of Fort George, Shaw Guild, Meals on Wheels, Niagara Foundation, Niagara Workers Welcome, Evergreen Community Choir, Town of NOTL, NOTL Ambassadors, Newark Neighbours Food Bank and Thrift Shop,

May Court Club, Community Palliative Care and Wellness NOTL, Outreach Services Seniors Community Programs and Services Niagara Region, Niagara Pumphouse Arts Theatre, Retired Women Teachers of Ontario, Niagara Bruce Trail Club, NOTL Cat Rescue, Rotary Club of NOTL, Adult Day Program, Community Centre, TD Niagara Jazz Festival, Seniors for Climate in Niagara, CFUW, and Start Me Up Niagara/Niagara’s Mobile Closet. daniel@niagaranow.com



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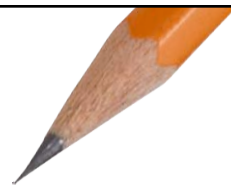


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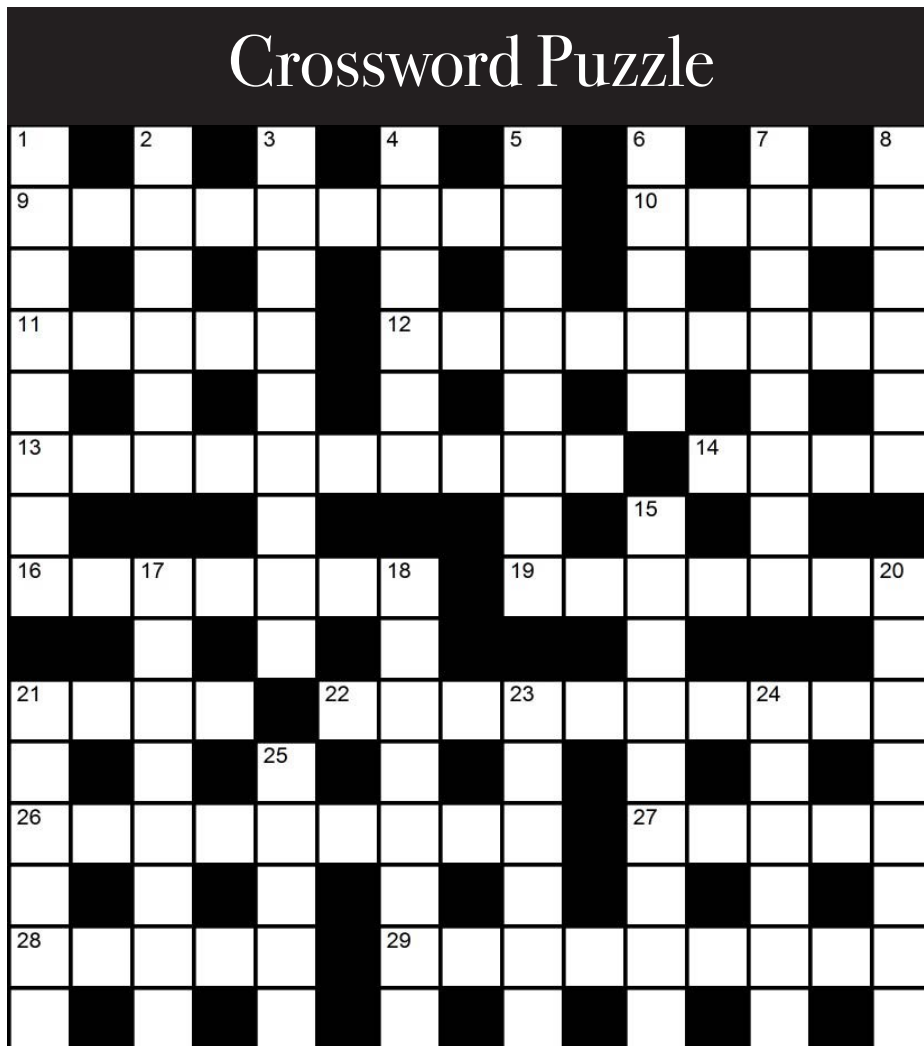
Have some fun



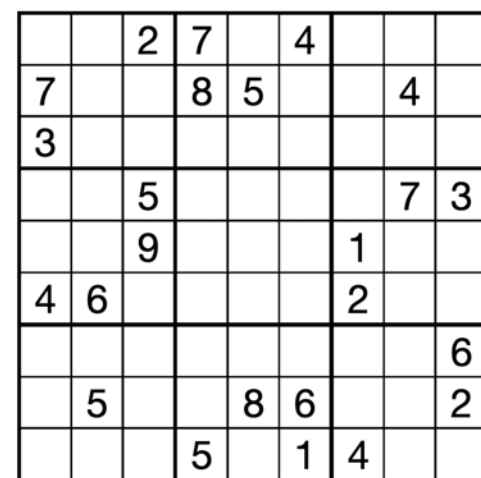
9. Radical (9)
10. Accommodate (5)
11. Find the answer (5)
12. Holy Land (9)
13. Increase in speed (10)
14. Finishes (4)
16. "The great grey-green, greasy ---
River" (Kipling) (7)
19. Scholar (7)
21. Possesses (4)
22. Quantifiable (10)
26. Heaven or hell, maybe (9)
27. Sort of line dance (5)
28. Marijuana (5)
29. Dear (9)

1. Army dining room (4,4)
2. Leaning letter (6)
3. Armed resistance (9)
4. Smoked herring (6)
5. Sporting competitors (8)
6. Silence! (5)
7. Group of spectators (8)
8. Makes over (6)
15. Grease (9)
17. Lack of variety (8)
18. Unequal (3-5)
20. Adolescent (8)
21. E.g. Seville (6)
23. Drowsy (6)
24. Outlaw (6)
25. Experiment (5)

Crossword Puzzle



Last issue's answers



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EXPLORING HISTORY WITH NOTL MUSEUM



Victory homes, 1950

Following the Second World War, the federal government gave up part of the Niagara Commons for special housing as a way to honour local veterans returning home. This block, originally known as the “Carnochan subdivision,” was previously part of the Agricultural Fair Grounds. Today, the homes are located on Castlereagh, Davey and Nelles streets. Financed by the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, comfortable, prefabricated single-family homes were made available. Married veterans, with at least one child, and a local connection, were preferred. They were able to rent these homes for \$39/month and by 1962, they had the option to purchase the home at \$6,800 with a \$500 down payment. This photograph shows the homes, many of which still exist today, on Castlereagh Street. The large building on the right-hand side is Memorial Hall, part of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum.



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Thank you for pausing to remember the brave men and women who gave their lives in service to our country, and to those who remain and deserve our unending support.

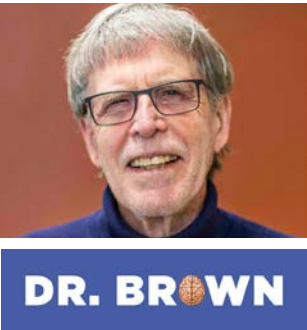
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How answers beget more questions in the world of science



Dr. William Brown
Columnist

Science, as with life in general, poses questions all the time. One mountain climbed often leads to another and another — and so, with breakthroughs in science.

As important as they may be, they often trigger more questions. That’s the story of science from its very beginnings with early modern humans and their predecessors.

And so, it was when Albert Einstein developed his theory, which linked space-time with mass, a theory he called general relativity.

His goal was to show how mass changed the curvature of space-time — a tough task that took several years and help from experts in the mathematics of curves. But in the end, he succeeded brilliantly.

However, what he didn’t anticipate were several important implications of his equations.

For example, if a mass

was large enough, it might bend space-time into a gravitational sinkhole, a singularity — an implication pointed out to him by a German mathematician and physicist, who at that time was a serving artillery officer on the Eastern Front in the First World War.

Such possibilities were later called black holes.

Reviewed by other theoretical physicists, his equations also suggested that the universe might be expanding and if so, might have begun with something very much smaller, a theoretical insight supported by Hubble’s observations that galaxies were speeding away from one another, presumably carried by an expanding universe and led to the suggestion that the universe might have begun with what later was famously called the Big Bang.

Soon, a provisional cosmological model for the evolution of the universe followed, but solid scientific evidence was missing until, by chance in the 1960s, two electrical engineers discovered weak radiation in the radiofrequency bandwidth whose source they could not identify on earth, but which later was shown to emanate from all quarters of the universe.

Theorists suggested the radiation was what was left of the primordial Big Bang



Recent observations made with the James Webb Space Telescope suggest that the formation of stars and galaxies began much earlier than previously thought. WIKIMEDIA

burst of intense energy and heat, which was stretched into the microwave range by the expansion of the universe and accompanied by a drop in temperature to just a few degrees above zero degrees Kelvin.

Further observations of what was now called the cosmic background radiation and the accompanying variations in temperatures throughout the visible universe were consistent with minor differences in the distribution of matter dating back to the earliest universe, just enough for gravity to act on and create the first stars and galaxies. The accumulating evidence led to several Nobel Prizes.

However, that model may need to change.

Recent observations made with the James Webb Space Telescope suggest that the formation of stars and galaxies began much earlier than suggested by the standard model. There’s even the wild suggestion

that “too early” mature galaxies might be from another galaxy.

I choose the current standard model of the universe because it illustrates that all models are provisional and, even if based on the best data available, might have to change in the light of new evidence.

That’s precisely what’s happening these days as new evidence comes to light about the earliest period in the universe based on the James Webb telescope. And whenever periods of uncertainty emerge, they naturally invite challenges not only in cosmology, in this case, but other fields as well.

Which leads me, in my 86th year, to ask a few questions.

So, here goes — and by the way, I don’t expect many answers in my lifetime.

On the matter of the universe:

How big is the universe beyond what we can see

with the best telescopes?

What preceded and perhaps triggered the Big Bang?

How was primordial energy transformed into specific particles and fields?

If there are other universes, would they have the same combinations of particles and forces as our universe?

Beyond dark matter’s impact as a gravitational shaper of matter in the universe, precisely what form of matter is dark matter?

And if dark matter isn’t enough controversy, what’s dark energy, which is very controversial these days and depending on who and what you read, seems to vary in time from the beginning of the universe to the present?

On the matter of life:

Does life exist elsewhere in the universe? Is it carbon based as life is on this planet?

Is there intelligent life equivalent to or even exceeding human intelligence in the universe?

What will become of our species and millions of other species in the next 100, 1000, 10,000, 100,000 and 1,000,000 years and so on?

Will gene editing be used to create super-intelligent humans? How long can meaningful human life be extended with the aid of advances in biology and health care?

On the matter of AI and quantum computers:

What’s going to be AI’s impact on the future of nations and individuals? How will quantum computers transform the world?

Readers will have plenty of other questions, some of them science-oriented but might be of a more mystical or theological nature for some.

However, as these and other stories turn out in the coming decades and centuries, it’s clear to me that change is in the wind and likely to speed up unless some natural or human-generated catastrophe sets the clock back in the future.

Who in 1900 would have anticipated the enormous changes in nation-creating and breaking, and all the changes in science that have so changed human lives sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse and sometimes catastrophically, as some current world leaders threaten these days.

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.

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.

Shaw Festival unveils show lineup and casting for 2026 season

Staff
The Lake Report

The Shaw Festival has announced the casting and creative teams for its 64th season, which runs from April 2 to Dec. 23, 2026. Artistic director Tim Carroll said the lineup showcases some of the top talent in theatre today. “I couldn’t be more delighted or proud to introduce to you the remarkable team of artists who will be making magic for you in 2026,” he said in a statement. “The directors, designers, musicians and performers listed here represent the peak of their professions. I can’t wait to see how they bring to life the bold new worlds of



The old Court House in NOTL will host three shows next year. FILE

these pieces. Their talent and passion will surely create memories that will stay with you long after the lights have faded to black.” The season includes “Funny Girl,” running April

24 to Oct. 3, with Sara Farb making her Shaw debut as Fanny Brice alongside Qasim Khan as Nick Arnstein. Eda Holmes directs. Peter Fernandes stars in Ray Cooney and Tony Hilton’s “One for the Pot,”

running May 27 to Oct. 11 and directed by Chris Abraham. “Sleuth” opens the season April 2 and runs to Oct. 9, with Patrick Galligan and Sepehr Reybod in the lead roles. Fernandes

directs. “Jeeves & Wooster in Perfect Nonsense” runs May 8 to Oct. 10, featuring Jeff Irving as Bertie Wooster and Damien Atkins as Jeeves. Tom Rooney and Michael Therriault lead “Amadeus,” running July 8 to Oct. 4 and directed by Carroll. A workshop presentation of a new play written and directed by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins runs Aug. 1 to Sept. 5. At the Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre, Fiona Sauder directs “The Wind in the Willows,” running May 22 to Sept. 27 with Gabriella Sundar Singh, Sharry Flett, Shawn Wright and Lawrence Libor in principal roles.

Carroll also directs Bernard Shaw’s “Heartbreak House,” running June 20 to Oct. 3 and starring Rooney and Allison Edwards-Crewe. Adrienne Kennedy’s “Ohio State Murders” runs July 19 to Oct. 3, directed by Philip Akin and featuring Sophia Walker and André Morin. Holiday-season casting for “Rodgers + Hammerstein’s Cinderella” and “A Year with Frog and Toad” will be announced next year. Casting for the full season remains ongoing. Tickets go on sale to the public Dec. 6 at shawfest.com or 1-800-511-7429. Friends of The Shaw have had early access since Nov. 1.

‘A Christmas Carol’ will be Shaw’s last show at Royal George Theatre

Staff
The Lake Report

As the Shaw Festival readies to begin the demolition of the 110-year-old Royal George Theatre to make way for a new theatre on Queen Street, it’s

performing its swan song for the theatre in the form of Charles Dickens’ timeless holiday classic. Tickets for the Shaw’s latest production of “A Christmas Carol” are now on sale, with the show on stage at the Royal George

on Queen Street from now until Dec. 21. Directed by artistic director Tim Carroll, the holiday production stars Sanjay Talwar as the miserly Ebenezer Scrooge, who is visited on Christmas Eve by the ghosts of Christmas

Past, played by Gabriella Sundar, Present, played by Kristopher Bowman, and Future, who warn him to change his selfish ways. This will be the last production hosted at the current iteration of the Royal George Theatre

before it is torn down to make way for the new, larger theatre. The festival company plans to demolish the theatre early next year, with the new facility expected to be completed by summer 2028. Alongside “A Christmas

Carol” is another holiday production being hosted at the Shaw Festival Theatre at 10 Queen’s Parade: Irving Berlin’s “White Christmas” is on now until Dec. 21. To buy tickets for either production, visit shawfest.com/holiday-season.

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